



CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM

**To:** Eric Greenberg  
**From:** Karl Agne  
**Date:** October 5, 2007

*Greenberg Millennial Survey Analysis*  
*National Mixed Mode Survey of 2,000 Americans Under 30*

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The Millennial generation is a unique and potentially transformative group of Americans. They are the largest generation in American history, and by the presidential election of 2016, they will represent approximately 1-in-3 American voters. They are the most ethnically diverse generation of Americans, with nearly 40 percent belonging to minority groups. More important than their sheer numbers or demographic composition, they have exhibited very unique behaviors and attitudes as they have begun to enter the electorate and engage in our nation's public debate. They are deeply unhappy with the current direction of the country, but they also display a surprising level of optimism for the future. Similarly, they are disgusted with the current political debate in the country but also eager to engage in that debate and to help take the country in a new direction.

Gerstein | Agne Strategic Communications conducted a national survey of two thousand 18-29 year olds on July 20 – August 1, 2007 employing a mix of survey methodologies to explore the unique beliefs and attitudes of this generation and the many ways in which they are poised to transform our nation's political culture. By moving beyond standard questions of behavior and traditional political measures to a deeper understanding of the core values that animate their daily lives and their vision for the future – both in their individual lives and for the nation as a whole – this survey provides critical insights into this potentially historic generation.

Millennials have a clear sense of generational identity that reaches across borders. They do not see themselves at odds with older generations of Americans, but they believe their generation has a unique set of beliefs and experiences that set them apart in very important ways. They are deeply frustrated with the current direction of the country. Seeing little hope for real change within the current political system, Millennials believe that innovation and new ideas are the only path forward, and they are eager to engage in collective social movements to reshape the world around their own values and priorities.

The worldview of the Millennial generation revealed in this survey is shaped by two overriding dynamics that lie at the heart of their current beliefs as well as their goals for the future of the country and that set this generation apart from those that have come before them. The first is a commitment to the common good over individual gain, an ethos that reaches across traditional divisions such as race, ideology, and partisanship. In many ways, this generation's dedication to the common good is a throwback to an earlier political worldview, epitomized by the spirit of FDR's New Deal and Kennedy's famous inaugural speech, that has been completely turned on its head over four decades of the so-called conservative revolution. They have rejected the primacy of individual rights (regardless of social consequences) and the trickle down economic policies that have been the foundation of modern conservatism. However, it is critical to note that they do so while embracing innovation and entrepreneurship and holding a deep cynicism about the effectiveness of a government currently dominated by conservatives. They do not fit neatly into any classic ideological category and are clearly eager to establish a new paradigm.

The second dynamic that fundamentally shapes the Millennials' worldview is a comprehensive rejection of the country's current leadership and dominant institutions. Whether it be Congress and the federal government, major corporations, or organized religion, these young Americans believe the large institutions that dominate so much of our modern society have comprehensively failed, placing narrow self-interests ahead of the welfare of the country as a whole. Despite this harsh assessment, they are not pessimistic about the future – in fact, they are quite optimistic – and believe that new leadership can transform government and corporations. However, they believe that the best way to effect this change is through collective social movement – ordinary citizens rallying together to force these massive entities to equate the common good with their own self-interest and to then hold them accountable for short-sighted actions that betray these principles. Their commitment to the common good defines their rejection of the current societal institutions as well as their prescription for transforming those institutions.

Connecting with this generation and helping them to understand the historic opportunities they embody begins with these common values and beliefs. But the ultimate goal, and the greatest challenge, is translating their worldview into an agenda that they not only believe in but also believe can be accomplished in the current dysfunctional environment. That task begins with the unique role of technology in shaping this generation and the confidence it has given them in the power of innovation to fundamentally change the world, including seemingly intractable problems such as America's health care crisis, our dependence on foreign oil and fossil fuels, and the breakdown of the public education system.

## Embracing the Common Good, Rejecting Modern Conservatism

Understanding the Millennial generation and the way these young Americans view their world begins with their embrace of the common good, both at a personal level and in a broader social and political context. The concept of the common good has been used in philosophy, ethics, and political science for ages as a measure of policies or actions that benefit the greatest number of individuals in a given community. Within the modern debate, the term is a direct rejection of the special interest-driven, short-term thinking that these Americans believe characterizes current corporate and political leadership:

**Securing the common good means putting the public interest above narrow self-interest and group demands; working to achieve social and economic conditions that benefit everyone; promoting a personal, governmental and corporate ethic of responsibility and service to others; creating a more open and honest governmental structure that relies upon an engaged and participatory citizenry; and doing more to meet our common responsibilities to aid the disadvantaged, protect our natural resources, and provide opportunities rather than burdens for future generations.** (John Halpin and Ruy Teixeira, *The American Prospect*, April 27, 2006)

Millennials express the primacy of this framework in measures of their personal values, their description of the challenges facing our country today, and their policy prescriptions for where the country must go from here. Millennials believe they are a very unique generation in many ways, as we will explore in greater detail, but they also see themselves as part of a much bigger picture. As a result, they are focused not just on the importance of individual rights but also the responsibilities of the individual to the various communities in which they live. And they indicate a willingness to personally accept those responsibilities, not just on a theoretical level, but in the context of their own daily lives.

**Q47.** *I am willing to personally make significant sacrifices in my own life to address the major environmental, economic, and security challenges facing our country.*

➤ 78 percent agree

**Q43.** *In our country, each generation has a responsibility to wisely use the country's resources and power so that they can provide the next generation a secure, sustainable country that is stronger than the one they inherited.*

➤ 91 percent agree, 53 percent strongly agree

The level of agreement on these measures is striking, and we see it throughout this survey. There are few attitudinal measures that could garner such broad support in a survey of all Americans. However, within this generation, we see many measures that demonstrate

widespread agreement across traditional lines such as gender, education, and race – none more so than the statement on generational responsibilities to those who come after them.

The Millennials' commitment to the common good is not just about individual choices. They also believe that the largest institutions in our society face similar responsibilities. They overwhelmingly embrace the notion of corporate citizenship, asserting that corporations have social obligations that supersede their fiduciary responsibilities to their shareholders.

**Q37.** *Businesses and corporate leaders have a responsibility to try to make the world a better place, not just make money.* (74 percent)

vs.

*Businesses and corporate leaders' responsibility to their shareholders is to make money, not to worry about making the world a better place.* (26 percent)

These attitudes are clearly a rejection of the corrupt corporate culture and widespread fraud epitomized by the Enron and Tyco scandals, but they also apply to more common examples such as corporate polluters, companies that abuse our natural resources, and employers who fail to meet their obligations to their workers. At the same time, it is definitely not suggestive of a belief that efforts to maximize profit and exhibit corporate citizenship are somehow antithetical to one another or that responsible corporate behavior is necessarily damaging to a company's bottom line.

Similarly, these young Americans believe that government has a responsibility to balance the rights of the individual, which it must protect, with the needs of the broader society.

**Q38.** *Government has a responsibility to pursue policies that benefit all of society and balance the rights of the individual with the needs of the entire society.* (63 percent)

vs.

*The primary responsibility of government is to protect the rights of the individual.* (37 percent)

Taken together with their overwhelming commitment to intergenerational responsibilities and each individual's responsibility to sacrifice for the common good, these attitudes represent a stunning rejection of the ideological foundation of modern conservatism.

### **The Breakdown of Faith in Institutional Leadership**

Millennials believe that the leaders of the major institutions in our society – government, corporations, and religion – have failed the individuals upon whom they rely for power and our country as a whole. Furthermore, they believe that their rejection of these institutions is one of the key factors that sets them apart from earlier generations of Americans. They wear their cynicism and distrust of modern leaders and institutions with pride, but they are not nihilistic;

they simply believe that we can do better, and they believe that they themselves are best prepared to offer that leadership.

Frustration with the current political system and with the function of government at every level is revealed in multiple measures throughout this survey. By a margin of almost 2-to-1 (49 to 25 percent), Millennials say they are less likely than previous generations to believe that government has a positive role to play. By a margin of nearly 4-to-1 (63 to 17 percent), they are less likely than previous generations to trust government and political leaders. Their core frustration with government lies in the rejection of their common good philosophy by current leaders, as well as the broader political and partisan system in which those leaders thrive.

**Q36.** *The two-party political system in our country is working because it offers voters a clear choice between two different visions for our country's future. (29 percent)*

vs.

*Democrats and Republicans alike are failing our country, putting partisanship ahead of our country's needs and offering voters no real solutions to our country's problems. (70 percent)*

Corporate and political leaders alike are taken to task by these young Americans, who believe the selfish and short-sighted actions of a few can have very serious long-term consequences for our country and its security.

**Q44.** *Our current political and corporate leaders are abusing their power for selfish gains, wasting our nation's resources for their own short-term gain and threatening our long-term security.*

- 82 percent agree, 45 percent strongly agree

Our country's growing health care crisis, the degradation of our environment and natural resources, and our dependence on fossil fuels (particularly foreign oil) are identified as the most glaring and most urgent examples of this failed leadership.

**Q53.** *Our nation's continuing dependence on oil has weakened our economy and stifled innovation, left us dependent on foreign countries - some of whom sponsor terrorism against us - and dragged us into unnecessary wars.*

- 93 percent agree
- 37 percent say it is 'a crisis that our country must address immediately'

**Q54.** *With costs rising out of control and the quality of health coverage declining, the health care system in our country is broken, and we need to make fundamental changes.*

- 96 percent agree
- 38 percent say it is 'a crisis that our country must address immediately'

**Q58.** *Man-made causes are destroying our environment and the Earth's delicate ecosystem. As a result, we could see massive, irreversible damage to the Earth's landscape during our lifetimes.*

- 91 percent agree
- 35 percent say it is 'a crisis that our country must address immediately'

Similar to their rejection of political and corporate leaders, Millennials are highly skeptical about the role of organized religion in our society. Nearly half (46 percent) say they are less likely than previous generations to join a church or other organized religious community. But it is important to emphasize that their reticence is focused specifically on organized religion; they do not reject faith or spirituality in a more general sense. In fact, nearly 3-in-4 (73 percent) consider themselves to be 'spiritual,' and more than half (56 percent) say they are more likely than older generations to express their personal spirituality outside of organized religion.

Recognizing the consequences of the failures of our current leaders at so many levels and the structural impediments to breaking the grip of these leaders and their short-sighted policies, Millennials are very concerned about the future. A plurality (46 percent) believes that, 20 years from now, their generation will live in a country that is worse off than the one we live in today, while another 20 percent believe it will be about the same; only 1-in-3 (34 percent) currently express optimism for a better future. And so it is not surprising to find that they are impatient for change and ready to accept the responsibility of making it happen themselves.

**Q45.** *Young Americans must take action now to reverse the rapid decline of our country. If we wait until we are older, it will be too late.*

- 89 percent agree, 48 percent strongly agree

**Q46.** *Life in the future in America will be much worse unless my generation of Americans takes the lead in pushing for change.*

- 85 percent agree, 42 percent strongly agree

## **Rejecting Politics As Usual**

The extent of Millennials' rejection of politics and the two-party system can not be overstated. As highlighted above, they simply don't trust government and political leaders, who they strongly believe are selling out the country and the people who elect them for their own selfish goals, from partisan advantage to taking care of special interests to pure greed. And while Millennials manifested their desire for change by voting in large numbers for Democrats in 2006, it is clear their skepticism extends to both parties – 70 percent say 'Democrats and Republicans alike are failing our country.'

When asked how they identify themselves in partisan terms, a plurality of Millennials call themselves Independents (39 percent); this is approximately 15 points higher than in polls of all adults. Another 36 percent consider themselves Democrats (only 16 percent strong Democrats) and less than 1-in-4 (24 percent) identify themselves as Republicans (only 10 percent strong

Republicans). This proclivity to refuse to identify with either political party is surprisingly consistent across this generation, with African-Americans (64 percent Democrats, 33 percent strong Democrats) the one glaring exception.

Perhaps most importantly, a clear majority of Millennials (56 percent) say they are more likely than previous generations to support an emerging third political party.

**Q51.** *There should be a third political party in our country that fits between the Democrats and Republicans and offers a viable alternative to the two major parties.*

- 76 percent agree, 35 percent strongly agree

At several previous periods in our history, frustrated Americans have looked outside the two-party system for new leadership that would offer an alternative to what they perceived as a failed political system. But in the end, no real alternatives have emerged, and these voters have either gone back to the two-party system or dropped out of the country's political life altogether. In 1992, Ross Perot appealed to older, predominantly white male voters who had long ago abandoned the Democratic Party and felt the Republican Party had failed them as well. In 1998, Jesse Ventura used a strong anti-establishment message and took advantage of profoundly weak nominees from the two major parties to win the governorship of Minnesota with surprisingly high support from younger voters and disenchanted lower income voters across the state. Other modern examples exist, but they are clearly the exception; no sustained challenge to the entrenched two-party system has emerged and garnered significant public support in this country at any point during the lives of these Millennials.

This moment, and this generation, are not like those that have come before. The 2006 election results revealed the extent of voters' frustration, and it was particularly noteworthy because of the high turnout among voters under 30. Rather than tuning out a political culture that they view as obsolete and broken, these voters plugged in and sought to force a new direction. But the election results have not mollified them. Across the entire electorate, President Bush and Congress are both near record low approval marks, while both political parties are now at their lowest levels of favorability. Americans are rejecting the entirety of our modern political system in a way that we have not seen before.

This is the political environment in which the political worldview of these Millennials is being forged, and it will have long-term ramifications on our country's public life. Just as Vietnam, Watergate, and the culture wars of the 60's shaped the political identity of the Baby Boomers and overshadowed our country's politics for nearly 40 years, the current political environment and the dominant forces shaping it – not just war in Iraq and terrorism but corporate and political corruption, climate change, our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil, and the burgeoning health care crisis – will shape the Millennial generation and the political debate that they will increasingly grow to dominate for decades to come.

## Defining the Millennial Generation

Beyond the demographic distinctions that make this such a unique and historic generation of Americans, there are unmistakable social and ideological characteristics that Millennials believe set them apart from previous generations of Americans. Perhaps most importantly, it is clear that they do see themselves as a diverse group of individuals who are united through shared beliefs and interests and whose collective actions have the potential to shape the world in which they live.

There is a deeply felt sense of generational identity among these Americans under 30 years of age. An incredible 90 percent agree that their generation shares specific beliefs, attitudes, and experiences that set them apart from generations that have come before. This sentiment is broadly shared across the entirety of the generation, with at least 85 percent of virtually every subgroup in agreement. However, there is a clear difference in intensity on this measure based on political engagement; although total agreement is essentially equal, 53 percent of those who believe that political activism is very effective and 48 percent of those who frequently discuss politics with others ‘strongly agree’ with this sentiment, compared to 32 percent among the rest of their generation. This is a promising sign, in that those who are already moving into activism and seeking to influence the political process are guided by this sense of generational identity.

Looking beyond our own borders, we see that a large majority of these young Americans (68 percent) feel a bond with their fellow Millennials in other countries. There is surprisingly little differentiation on this measure regardless of gender, race, age, or education. On a similar note, we asked whether they felt they had more in common with older Americans or young adults of their generation in other countries. A majority find more commonality with those of their own generation in other countries (54 to 44 percent), although some notable groups – particularly those with a high school degree or less and union households – disagree and feel they have more in common with older Americans.

## *A Common Worldview*

Millennials identify three dominant experiences that have shaped them as a generation and helped forge their shared worldview. The most important factor shaping their generation has been the rise of the Internet, cell phones, text messaging, e-mail, and similar advances in personal technology. The degree to which these technologies have changed their personal interactions, intellectual development, and relationship to the world around them can’t be overstated. But there is also a larger and more basic impact – the lesson absorbed by all Millennials that new technologies and innovation can fundamentally reshape the world. This lesson is evident in their ability to reconcile profound pessimism about the country’s current direction with a passionate belief in their own ability to put the country back on the right track and to solve challenges that have haunted this country for generations.



This highly personal experience is followed by two seminal social experiences – the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the war in Iraq (which these voters overwhelmingly oppose). The major advances in personal technology have ‘shrunk’ the world for this generation, exposing them to virtually unlimited, instantaneous information about events and allowing personal contact with individuals anywhere around the globe. At the same time, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 made these young Americans face fundamental questions about America’s role in the world and the way we are perceived by those outside our country. The war in Iraq, which they overwhelmingly view as a mistake, has further reinforced their doubts about America’s role and their belief that the current leadership in our country is not only ignoring critical challenges but making matters worse through their pursuit of a narrow, self-serving agenda.

Beyond these three seminal influences, Millennials identify a series of issues that they believe have not been adequately addressed. As these problems have been allowed to fester and grow worse, they have shaped the worldview of this younger generation and set a clear agenda for them:

- *America’s dependence on fossil fuels like coal, natural gas, and oil (76 percent very important in shaping this generation)*
- *America’s dependence on foreign oil (75 percent)*
- *Declining quality and rising inequality in America’s public education system (75 percent)*
- *The rising cost of health care and growing number of uninsured (74 percent)*
- *Lack of long-term job and retirement security (74 percent)*
- *Increase in obesity and chronic disease (74 percent)*
- *Rapid shift of the U.S. economy from manufacturing to services, information, and technology (73 percent)*

### ***Shared Values and Beliefs***

As Millennials seek to make sense of the world they are inheriting and set a course for the dramatic changes they feel are necessary, it is important to recognize that they share some fundamental values and beliefs that differentiate them from other generations and provide the basis for their potential ascension into a leadership role in this country.

We have already detailed the core common good values that define their sense of individual and collective responsibility in public life, as well as their rejection of the major institutions which dominate our society and the failed leadership they have demonstrated. Building upon this foundation, a very compelling, value-based narrative emerges, beginning with an acceptance of their own personal responsibilities and culminating in their faith in innovation and entrepreneurship to make change a reality:

## 1. Change isn't going to just happen; Millennials must take action

Given the degree to which Millennials believe the country is currently headed in the wrong direction, it is obvious to them that change will not occur without an outside influence that forces current leaders to react and adapt. And Millennials are not willing to sit back and wait for others to act – they are ready and willing to take on the responsibility of leadership themselves.

**Q45.** *Young Americans must take action now to reverse the rapid decline of our country. If we wait until we are older, it will be too late.*

➤ 89 percent agree, 48 percent strongly agree

**Q46.** *Life in the future in America will be much worse unless my generation of Americans takes the lead in pushing for change.*

➤ 85 percent agree, 42 percent strongly agree

## 2. Despite their youth, Millennials can make a difference

As highlighted earlier, Millennials are extremely negative about the direction of the country, and that in turn has made them pessimistic about the outlook for their generation, with 2-in-3 saying they believe that, 20 years from now, they will live in country that is about the same (20 percent) or even worse off (46 percent) than it is today. However, they are far from resigned to their fate and believe they can make a difference, personally and collectively.

**Q48.** *My generation of Americans has better opportunities to make a difference and produce structural change than previous generations.*

➤ 79 percent agree

**Q35.** *Addressing the big issues facing my generation starts with individuals willing to take a stand and take action. (80 percent)*

vs.

*Individuals can't make a real difference in addressing the big issues facing my generation. (20 percent)*

## 3. The road to change is through collective social movements rather than traditional institutions

The challenges facing the country are tremendous, and individual action can make a difference, but it will not be enough. If this generation so thoroughly rejects the traditional institutions for enacting large scale social change, how will they move the country in a different direction? This brings us back to the role of technology in shaping this generation. With their innate understanding of heretofore impossible levels of global

social networking and information sharing, they identify ‘a collective social movement’ as the most effective means for addressing the major challenges facing the country.

Q68/69 – MEANS FOR ADDRESSING NATION’S CHALLENGES			
	Most Effective	2 <sup>nd</sup> Most Effective	Combined
Collective social movement	38	22	60
Government action	16	24	40
Individual action and entrepreneurship	16	19	35
Media and popular culture	16	17	33
International cooperation	12	18	30

#### 4. Innovation, new ideas are keys to realizing their goals

Millennials pride themselves not only on their recognition that the status quo has failed but also their refusal to be constrained by past conventions. Of all the attributes on which we asked them to compare themselves to earlier generations of Americans, they identified their willingness to ‘embrace innovation and new ideas’ as the variable that most differentiates them from older Americans. More than 3-in-4 Millennials (78 percent) say they are more likely to embrace innovation and new ideas, including 44 percent who say they are much more likely to do so – more than 10 points higher than any other variable tested. However, they see their embrace of innovation not as a radical departure from earlier generations but rather as a new step forward in a tradition that highlights the best of our country and the unique American spirit.

*Q49. Throughout our history, America's success has been built on innovation and entrepreneurship. As we confront the many challenges facing us today, it is that same spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship that is needed to maintain America's strength in the 21st century.*

➤ 87 percent agree, 38 percent strongly agree

Their belief in the power of innovation and the ability of Americans, no matter how dire the current situation, to innovate their way to a new paradigm is the foundation of how Millennials view the future. Despite their current frustration, they remain optimistic for the future and maintain a strong belief in their own ability to effect change on a national or even global level.

#### Defining the Challenges and Taking Action

Looking beyond their general disaffection with so much of the country’s leadership and direction, Millennials have a very clear sense of the specific challenges facing the country and the relative importance of addressing those issues. This survey reveals two tiers of concern in terms of the challenges facing the country today. The first tier is dominated by health care and the various issues surrounding energy and the environment.

### Health Care

**Q54.** *With costs rising out of control and the quality of health coverage declining, the health care system in our country is broken, and we need to make fundamental changes.*

- 96 percent agree
- 38 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

**Q56.** *The health of our country is collapsing under an epidemic of chronic, preventable diseases as we slowly poison our own bodies through environmental pollution, overmedication, and unhealthy diets.*

- 93 percent agree
- 28 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

While the chronic disease issue is not currently perceived to be of the same urgency as cost and quality of the broader health care system, it is a critical issue to highlight because it more effectively offers avenues for individual action and ties into the environmental concerns that also occupy this top tier of Millennials’ concerns.

Looking at outlines for action that Millennials can undertake to address the great challenges facing the country, the following health care proposal – which goes beyond cost and access to address the root causes of our health care crisis – was rated the most effective.

**Q72.** *Provide quality health care and nutrition for all children in our country, regardless of their financial condition. Poor nutrition is creating an epidemic of preventable chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity, that will cost our country billions of dollars and ruin the lives of millions of children.*

- 82 percent very effective

### Energy and the Environment

**Q53.** *Our nation's continuing dependence on oil on has weakened our economy and stifled innovation, left us dependent on foreign countries - some of whom sponsor terrorism against us - and dragged us into unnecessary wars.*

- 93 percent agree
- 37 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

**Q58.** *Man-made causes are destroying our environment and the Earth's delicate ecosystem. As a result, we could see massive, irreversible damage to the Earth's landscape during our lifetimes.*

- 91 percent agree
- 35 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’



**Q67.** *Our reliance on fossil fuels is a by-product of the interests of those currently in power. We need to invest in and innovate new energy sources in order to protect our quality of life and prosperity.*

- 96 percent agree
- 33 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

This issue is clearly the one where Millennials are most focused at this time and most inspired to take individual action, yet there is a potential and desire to do so much more. They view the problem in broad and dramatic terms (security, global climate, economy, health, etc.), and they are looking for equally dramatic solutions. They will continue to recycle and purchase ‘green products’ and so on, but they are desperate for bigger solutions that speak to the enormity of the challenge.

**Q59.** *Our country must take extreme measures now, before it is too late, to protect the environment and begin to reverse the damage we have done.*

- 94 percent agree
- 33 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

**Q42.** *We must make major investments now to innovate the next generation of non-fossil fuel based energy solutions. (74 percent)*

vs.

*We should continue on our current path, gradually shifting the mix of sources used to meet our energy needs. (26 percent)*

Given these numbers, it is no surprise that a bold plan that addresses the many facets of the energy challenge is broadly popular, with the massive investments required offset by the long-term security, environmental, and economic benefits.

**Q70.** *Launch a concerted national effort, similar to the Apollo Program that put a man on the moon, with the goal of moving America beyond fossil fuels and inventing the next generation of energy, based on new technologies such as hydrogen or fusion. This aggressive plan would require a huge national investment but would produce millions of new jobs, could dramatically reduce environmental damage, and free us from our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil.*

- 70 percent very effective

A notch below health care and energy, there is a second tier of issues that are not viewed with quite the same urgency but are still very important to Millennials and critical to building the future they envision for our country. These issues are based more on economic concerns – including obscene wealth inequality, debt, and a growing trade imbalance – and systemic biases that make it increasingly difficult for ordinary Americans to reach their economic goals and to enjoy equal standing under the law.

### Education, Equality, and the Middle Class

**Q57.** *We have an unequal education system in our country, where students in affluent areas enjoy better resources and learning environments while those in rural areas and inner cities too often receive an inferior education.*

- 92 percent agree
- 31 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

**Q63.** *Americans' basic civil rights are being undermined more every day. Government and business have compromised our privacy, the corporate media tells us what they want us to hear rather than the facts, and justice is for sale to anyone who can afford the right lawyers.*

- 92 percent agree
- 31 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

**Q66.** *Hurricane Katrina revealed the extent to which our country is divided into two Americas, one of which lacks many basic needs and is largely ignored by our government. The growing gap between the wealthy and the rest of us must be addressed, because no democracy can survive without a large, vibrant middle class.*

- 90 percent agree
- 30 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’

In addition to the concrete and quantifiable threats of health care and energy, Millennials are also very focused on what they perceive to be a steady erosion of the rights and opportunities of the middle class – a dynamic that is harder to measure but unmistakable in its growth. They see an ever-expanding gap between the wealthy and privileged few on the one side and the rest of our country on the other. This is linked closely to the co-opting of society’s major institutions for the benefit of these privileged few and is once again an affront to the common good values which drive this generation.

Millennials see education as the key to reversing the tide of rising inequality in our society as well as re-establishing our country in an increasingly competitive global economy.

**Q73.** *Provide equal funding for public education and learning resources for all children and all communities, regardless of economic class. This is a critical investment in the human potential of our country and its ability to compete in a global economy.*

- 80 percent very effective

### **Turning Beliefs Into Action**

Since Millennials view collective social movement as the most effective means of achieving change and are clearly impatient to make change happen, it is critical to identify the

members of this generation who are translating their beliefs into social and political action and those who are failing this critical test. The pessimism created by the wide-scale failure these young Americans see in the world around them and their belief that the corruption and shortsightedness they condemn is not isolated to individual leaders but endemic to the institutions they serve are the greatest barriers to Millennials achieving the collective mandate that now lies before them. Effective leaders of this generation will inspire their fellow Millennials to act on their common good values, to find new paths of effecting change that circumvent traditional institutions. They will demonstrate the power of political activism to the skeptics among them through their own successes.

Overall, Millennials believe they are more likely than previous generations of Americans to seek to influence their local communities and the broader world in which they live through a variety of actions, including engaging in volunteer activities or community service, trying to directly influence and communicate with elected officials, joining an independent or issue-based political movement, and engaging in political activism. Nearly 3-in-4 say they believe community volunteerism is effective as a means of solving the major challenges facing our country; 69 percent say the same about political activism. But translating these sentiments into action is always more difficult, as less than 1-in-4 Millennials actually engage in community volunteerism on a regular basis.

There are some clear divisions within this generation among those who are actively engaged and those who share many of the same beliefs but are not acting on those beliefs in significant numbers. Education is the most glaring, with college grads far more active in public affairs than those with a high school degree or less. Race is also a critical factor; African-Americans in this generation emerge as the most engaged, while Hispanics volunteer in their communities and discuss politics at similar levels to whites and African-Americans but are far less likely to actually register and vote.

<b>MEASURES OF POLITICAL AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT</b>				
	<b>Volunteer</b>	<b>Reg. to Vote</b>	<b>Will Vote In '08</b>	<b>Talk Politics</b>
College grads	71	87	76	71
H.S. or less	50	57	46	53
White	60	79	65	64
African-American	58	80	70	64
Hispanic	59	63	57	64

The current activists of the Millennial generation tend to be white or African-American, older than 25 years of age, higher educated and higher income. They also tend to identify as partisans, while the 40 percent of Millennials who identify as Independents are far less likely to be registered to vote or to say they will vote in 2008. We see no significant differences between union households and non-union households, nor do we see real differences based on gender or marital status. However, having children creates an interesting dynamic; those with kids are less likely to volunteer or to talk politics but more likely to register and to vote. Religion remains a

motivator for political engagement, with born-again Christians the most active and engaged group, while those who have no religious affiliation are least likely to volunteer or to vote. Tapping the full potential of this historic generation will require motivating those who are least engaged in traditional social and political institutions – most notably the Independents, the secular, and those without kids.