



# Millennials



**UNCLAIMED**

generation



## **About This Report**

The Reason-Rupe 2014 Millennial Survey was conducted by the Reason Foundation and made possible thanks to generous support from the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation. YouGov conducted the survey collecting responses from 2,000 young adults ages 18-29 between February 28 and March 11, 2014. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.4%.

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# I. Key Findings

Findings from the Reason-Rupe 2014 Millennial Survey of young Americans 18-29 reveal this cohort flouts traditional political allegiances: They trust neither political party, are social liberals and fiscal centrists, and are supportive of both business and government. They favor free markets, but aren't sure whether markets or government best drive income mobility. In all, millennials are neither a Democratic nor a Republican generation; they remain politically unclaimed.

## ◇ **Millennials remain the politically unclaimed generation.**

- Despite overwhelming support for Democratic presidential candidates since 2004, fully 34% of millennials call themselves independent, over triple the rate among Americans over 30. ►
- Millennials are less partisan than their elders. Just 43% identify as Democratic or Democratic leaning, compared to 49% of Americans over 30. But millennials are far less Republican: Only 22% identify as such compared to 40% of those over 30. ►
- Millennials are open to non-traditional candidates. 53% would support a socially liberal, fiscally conservative candidate. In fact, liberal millennials (60%) would be more receptive than conservatives (43%). ►
- Millennials don't trust either of the two major political parties, but see Democrats as the better of two bad options. ►
  - » 28% of millennials trust "neither" party to handle any of the issues surveyed.
  - » 50% trust neither Democrats nor Republicans to handle privacy.

## ◇ **Millennials flout traditional political groupings. They are social liberals and fiscal centrists with the potential to become more fiscally conservative as they age.**

- 62% identify as socially liberal and 49% as fiscally liberal. But they largely prioritize social issues over economics. ►
- 67% support legalizing same-sex marriage (including 54% of Republican millennials). ►
- Majorities support legalizing marijuana (57%) and online gambling (58%) as well as other products and activities governments have banned or sought to ban. ►
- 78% say the budget deficit and national debt are major problems. ►
- 55% say the taxes businesses pay are the right amount or even too much, while 44% say companies pay too little. ►

◇ **Support for activist government declines as millennials learn its costs, make more money, and take on more responsibilities.**

- When tax rates are not explicit, 54% of millennials favor “larger government with more services” and 43% prefer “smaller government with fewer services.” But once tax rates are mentioned, support flips and 57% favor smaller government and 41% want larger government. ►
- Among millennials making less than \$20,000 a year, 53% support income redistribution and 39% oppose. Among those making \$40,000 or more annually, support flips: 42% support and 54% oppose. ►
- Millennials who pay for their health insurance oppose paying more to provide coverage to the uninsured (39% to 59%), but millennials whose parents’ pay favor increased premiums (57% to 42%). ►
- When millennials learn they may get back less from Social Security than they contribute, 51% support private retirement accounts even if doing so cuts benefits to current seniors. ►

◇ **Millennials are favorable to business, entrepreneurship, and government.**

- Millennials have a positive view of competition (70%) and profit (64%), and 55% say they’d like to start their own business one day. ►
- Millennials firmly oppose a state-managed economy: 64% prefer a free market over an economy managed by the government (32%). ►
- But millennials also favor active government. A plurality (48%) say government should do more to solve problems, and 58% say the state should spend more on assistance to the poor. Seven in 10 support public guarantees for housing, health insurance, and income. ►
- Despite supporting government action, millennials are aware of its inefficiencies and potential for corruption:
  - » 66% say government is inefficient and wasteful (up from 42% in ‘09). ►
  - » 63% say regulators favor special interests over the public. ►
  - » 58% say government agencies generally abuse their power. ►

◇ **Millennials speak a language distinct from older Americans that leads to confusion understanding their values.**

- Only 16% of millennials can accurately define socialism<sup>1</sup>, making it less surprising that up to 42% prefer socialism and 52% favor capitalism. ►
- Concrete policies such as cutting spending (65%) or taxes (58%) receive more support than abstract calls to reduce government’s “size” (53%). ►

◇ **Millennials believe in self-determination and endorse the values underpinning the free market system:**

- Millennials primarily hold individuals responsible for their success, choosing personal decisions such as hard work (61%), ambition (39%), and self-discipline (36%) as the top explanations of wealth. Poor life choices (40%), lack of job opportunities (37%), and lack of work ethic (31%) are the most common explanations of poverty. ►
- Millennials largely see fairness as getting what you earn rather than what you need. Nearly six in 10 desire a society where wealth is distributed according to achievement, even if that means unequal outcomes. ►

## II. Executive Summary

Young Americans (ages 18-29) have shifted markedly left in their voting behavior over the past decade. While support for Democratic presidential candidates has hovered around 48 percent among Americans over 30, the number has surged among millennials. In 2000, 48 percent of 18-29 year olds cast their vote for Al Gore, but by 2008, 66 percent voted for Barack Obama, as did 60 percent in 2012.

Despite record-breaking Democratic presidential voting among 18- to 29-year-olds, millennials have little confidence in either of the major political parties. Disproportionate frustration with the GOP and increased social liberalism among the cohort has led them to vote Democratic despite perceiving the party as significantly more liberal than their own attitudes. But today's millennials are no more likely than older Americans to identify as Democrats. Rather, they are more independent and less Republican.

Millennials came of a politically impressionable age during or shortly after the George W. Bush presidency and Republican congressional control that left the country with a ballooned federal budget deficit and national debt and two unpopular wars. The Republican Party—which rhetorically lays claim to free markets, limited government, and fiscal responsibility—found itself lacking credibility and was left holding the bag when the 2008 financial meltdown hit.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even self-identified Republican millennials don't trust the GOP to handle fiscal and foreign policy issues, where it has historically held the advantage. The GOP's hard line on divisive social issues has also distanced the most socially tolerant generation in history. The Republican Party's policy mishandlings tainted not just its own brand, but those who share its rhetoric. Messengers selling free markets and limited government under the GOP banner have found it more difficult to reach a trusting audience.

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the worst since the Great Depression, the ensuing sluggish economy has left a third of millennials under- or unemployed and a third living at home with their parents. As corporate profits soar and millennial job prospects remain uncertain, it's not hard to imagine that the tumult has tainted millennials' confidence in the free market system.

Yet despite the economic turbulence of the past few years, millennials are not statists clamoring for government management of the economy. Quite the opposite. Millennials are still free marketeers—they like profit and competition, they prefer capitalism over socialism, and most say they'd like



to start their own business one day. They enjoyed growing up in the midst of fast-paced technological progress and change, which has likely led to their appreciation of business, entrepreneurship, technology, and choice.

However, in the midst of an uncertain economy, they are simply not sure if the centuries-old American belief that the free market system drives economic opportunity still applies. It is this uncertainty that has likely bolstered their increased support for government action. A plurality of millennials says there is more government should be doing, while older Americans want government to do less.

Nevertheless, millennials are not committed to one ideological form of government action. When asked about policies to stimulate the economy, some of which would increase the scope of the federal government (such as raising taxes on the wealthy) and others of which would decrease it (such as cutting spending by five percent), millennials endorsed all the policies. Millennials favor action, and they appear to be less motivated by the governing philosophy behind the action.

Young Americans are less enthusiastic about activist government than they were immediately after President Obama took office in 2009, but the cohort still favors social welfare spending and a variety of government guarantees. Millennials are less opposed than older generations to government reducing income differences. At first glance, they are also more likely than older Americans to say they prefer a larger government with more services.

While millennials are supportive of activist government, they also recognize it comes with its own problems. There has been a surge in the share of millennials who think government is wasteful and inefficient, and millennials believe the national debt and deficit are major problems that must be addressed. Most also think government agencies abuse their power and that regulators don't prioritize the public interest when writing and enforcing regulations.

While millennials favor government taking a role in protecting people, they are permissive when it comes to personal choice. Millennials see themselves as social liberals and favor legalizing same-sex marriage (including a majority of Republican millennials), marijuana, and online gambling, and they opt for consumer choice on a number of products and activities many governments have sought to ban.

Social and cultural issues are currently more central to millennials' political judgments than economic policy. When asked to explain the reasons for their ideological identifications, social and cultural concerns largely defined

their labels. Moreover, political candidates' stances on these issues play a more important role than economics in explaining voting behavior. For instance, while a majority of young Americans say they would support a socially liberal, fiscally conservative candidate, liberal millennials are nearly 20 points more likely than conservatives to say so. In addition, while millennials see themselves as closer to Republican governor and potential presidential candidate Chris Christie on economic issues and closer to likely Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton on social issues, they say they are voting for Clinton.

It shouldn't come as much surprise that social tolerance matters more than economics to this age cohort. Few have married, purchased a home, had children, or paid much in taxes yet—all experiences that can make economics more salient. Indeed, this report finds that millennials become more fiscally conservative as their income rises or as they learn they will be responsible for paying for things. Support for income redistribution, government guarantees, and government spending for the poor all decline as they age and make more money. Similarly, as millennials roll off their parents' health insurance plans and begin paying for their own policies, they begin to oppose paying higher premiums to provide for the uninsured.

Perhaps most striking, millennials only prefer a larger government over a smaller one when tax rates are not explicit. When millennials learn a larger government requires high taxes and a smaller government low taxes, their support flips and they reflect older cohorts' preference for small government. Plus, the race/ethnicity gap on the size of government disappears among white, Hispanic, and Asian millennials when taxes are mentioned.

The fact that support for large government decreases if high taxes are required indicates millennials do not automatically connect size of government with cost. This further suggests that old post–World War II and Cold War language about the dangers of “big government” may carry less meaning for millennials than it has for previous generations. Concrete policies that effectively reduce governmental scope garner greater support than ambiguous calls to reduce government's “size.”

Similarly, the term “socialism” may not convey the same meaning it once did. Millennials are more favorable toward socialism than they are to a government-managed economy, even though the latter is arguably less interventionist. It appears they are less likely to favor extensive government involvement in the economy if it's explained using familiar language. While 18- to 29-year-olds may be uncertain about whether free markets offer economic opportunity to all, most still endorse the underlying values

of the free market system. Millennials say hard work brings success, as older generations do. They also believe in self-determination and say that individuals are and should be primarily responsible for both their successes and failings, even if this leads to unequal outcomes. Millennials are concerned about growing income inequality,<sup>3</sup> but they prefer a competitive, merit-based society that rewards personal achievement over one with little income inequality.

In sum, millennials have the potential to remake American political attitudes as they mature over the next decade and economic issues become more salient. Young Americans' values and beliefs reveal intrinsic ingredients indicating they may become the most socially tolerant, fiscally responsible generation: (1) Millennials value individual autonomy and see themselves as considerably socially liberal but not economically liberal. Moreover, there is little reason to expect them to become less supportive of gay rights and other social tolerance causes as they age.<sup>4</sup> (2) Young people are fiscal centrists and will likely become more fiscally conservative as forthcoming experiences—paying higher taxes, buying a home, starting families—make economics more relevant to their lives. Already, millennials are shifting away from redistributive policies as they make more money and take on more responsibilities. (3) They endorse the values of hard work, self-determination, and competition that underpin free market capitalism.

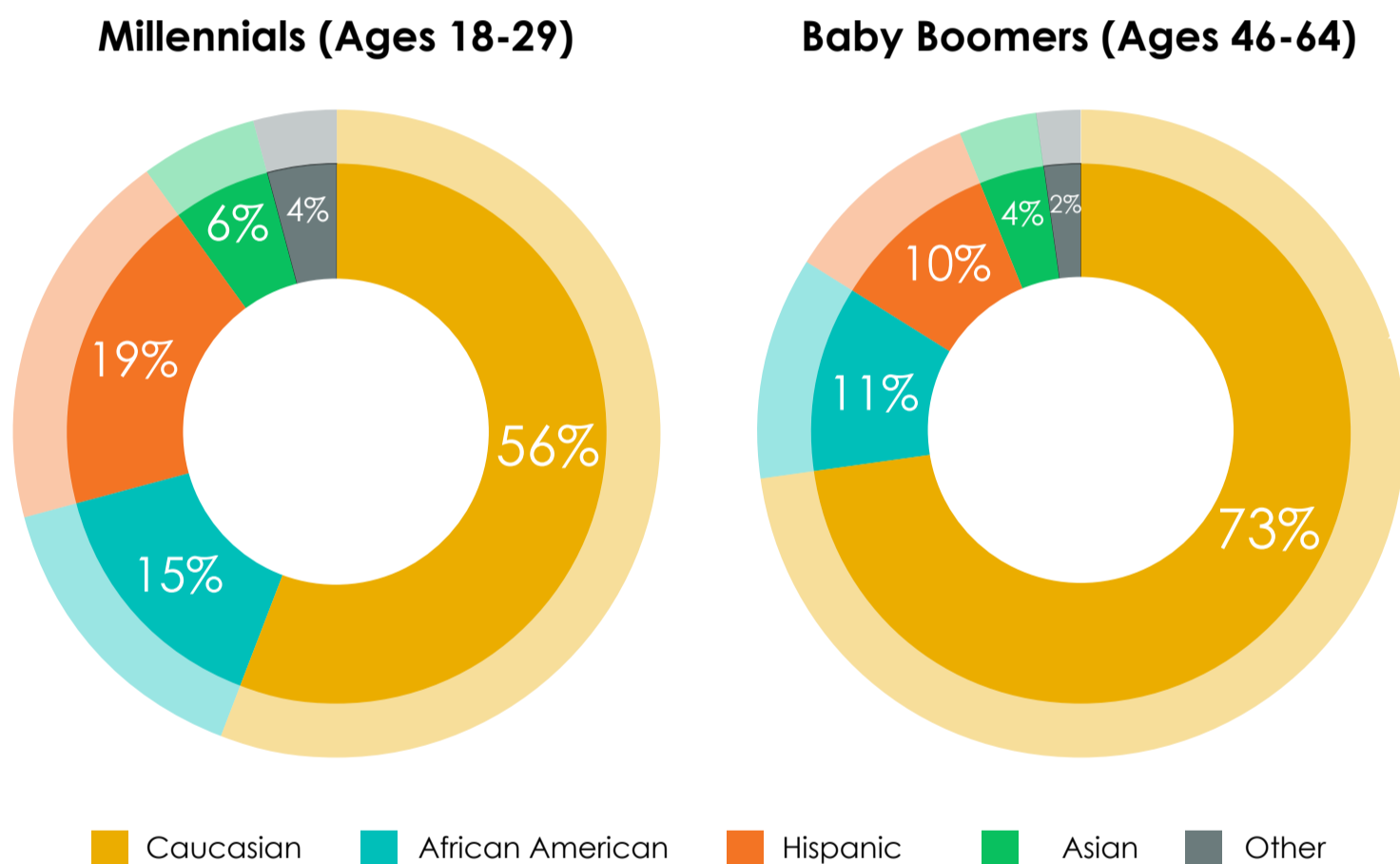
Young Republicans are already exhibiting a shift toward social liberalism while remaining fiscally conservative, demonstrating a libertarian trend on the right. Young Democrats are highly supportive of a potential candidate who is both socially liberal and fiscally conservative, also signaling openness to non-traditional candidates on the left. Overall, these trends suggest that millennials are up for grabs and that both political parties, particularly Republicans, will need to move toward greater fiscal responsibility and social tolerance to remain competitive among this cohort.

### III. Who Are the Millennials?

In this report, we refer to young Americans aged 18-29 years old as millennials. This cohort is substantially more diverse than earlier generations, with many new Americans. Fifty-six percent self-identify as Caucasian, 19 percent as Hispanic, 15 percent as African-American or black, six percent as Asian, and four percent as another race. In contrast, 73 percent of their parents' generation, the Baby Boomers, are white, 10 percent are Hispanic, 11 percent are black, and four percent are Asian.<sup>5</sup>

## Who We Are

### The Race/Ethnicity of Millennials and Baby Boomers



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll; Pew Research Center 2010

Millennials are also more likely to be members of families who have more recently come to the United States. The Pew Research Center reports that 14 percent of millennials were born outside of the United States and 11 percent have at least one immigrant parent.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, only five percent of the Baby Boom generation had at least one parent who was foreign-born. Millennial nativity is actually most similar to the generation born before and during World War II, many of whose parents came to the U.S. during the immigration wave of the late 1800s.<sup>7</sup>

Latino and Asian American millennials are more likely than African-American or Caucasian millennials to come from newly arrived families. Pew reports that among all adult age groups, 51 percent of Hispanics are immigrants and 20 percent are children of immigrants; 74 percent of Asian Americans are immigrants and 19 percent are children of immigrants.<sup>8</sup> Eight percent of blacks and four percent of whites are foreign-born.<sup>9</sup> America's foreign-born are fairly recent immigrants, with nearly two-thirds arriving after 1990.<sup>10</sup>

About a fifth of millennials are college graduates, four in 10 are current college students, and another four in 10 are not currently in school. Roughly a third of millennials report working full-time, and another third list going to school as their primary vocation. Another third are under- or unemployed.

Not many millennials are homeowners yet. Only 19 percent say they currently own their house or condo, and 38 percent rent their apartment. Among Americans over 30, by contrast, 71 percent own a home and 25 percent rent.<sup>11</sup> Thirty-five percent of millennials say they still live at home with their parents—half of these millennials also say they are under- or unemployed.

Most millennials are unmarried—71 percent—while 20 percent are married. This is half the marriage rate of their parents' generation when they were the same age, according to the Pew Research Center.<sup>12</sup>

A third of millennials say religion is “very important” in their lives, 32 percent say it is “somewhat important,” 17 percent say it is “not too important,” and 22 percent say it is “not at all important.”

# IV. How Do Millennials Describe Their Political Views?

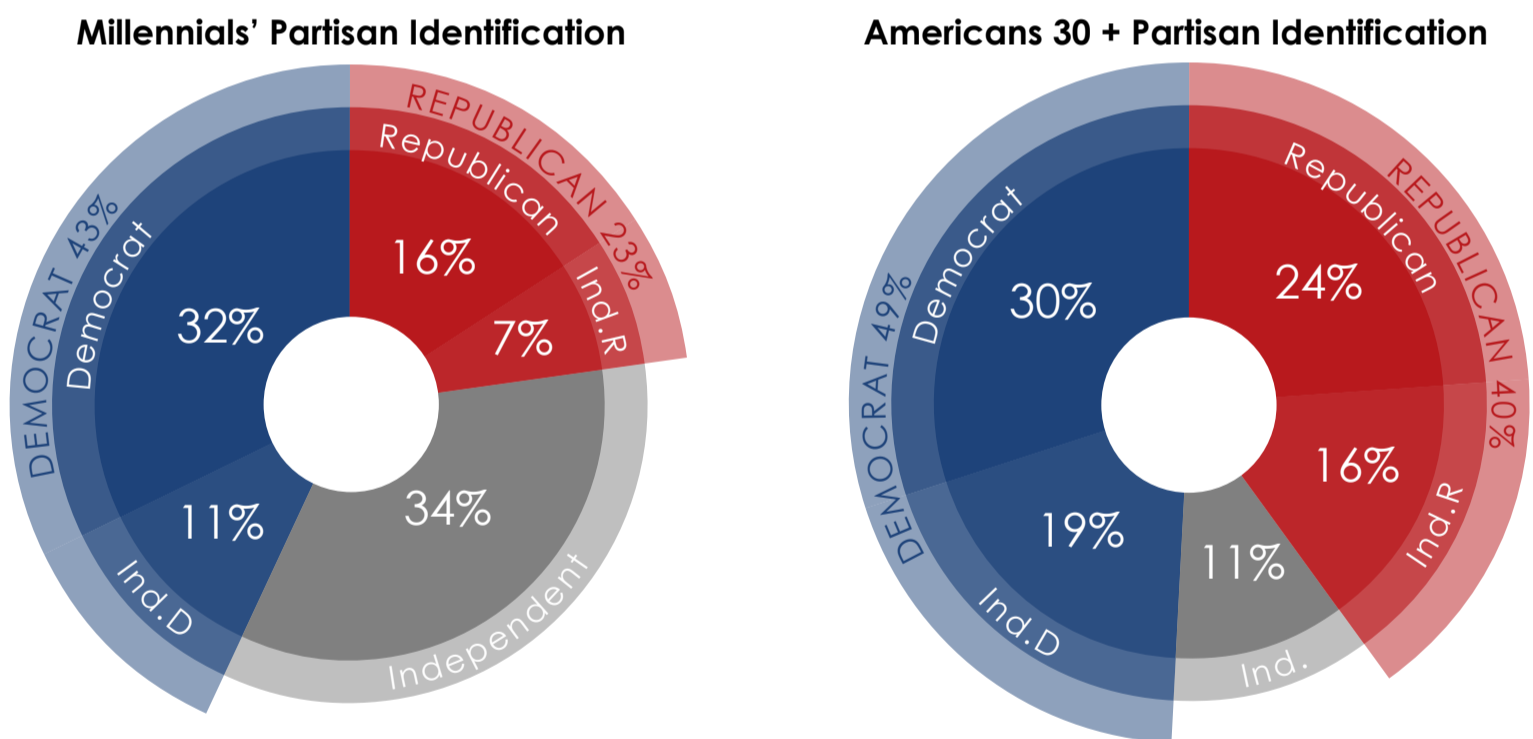
*Millennials Are More Independent, Less Republican*

Millennials voted for President Barack Obama over Mitt Romney 60 to 36 percent in the 2012 presidential election, but our survey finds they are not overwhelmingly Democratic. Instead, they are no more Democratic than older Americans, but they are more independent and less Republican.

When first asked, a majority of millennials (52%) says they are politically independent of either the two major political parties. A third identify as Democrats and 16 percent say they are Republicans.

## Party Identification

Millennials Are More Independent and Less Republican Than Americans 30+



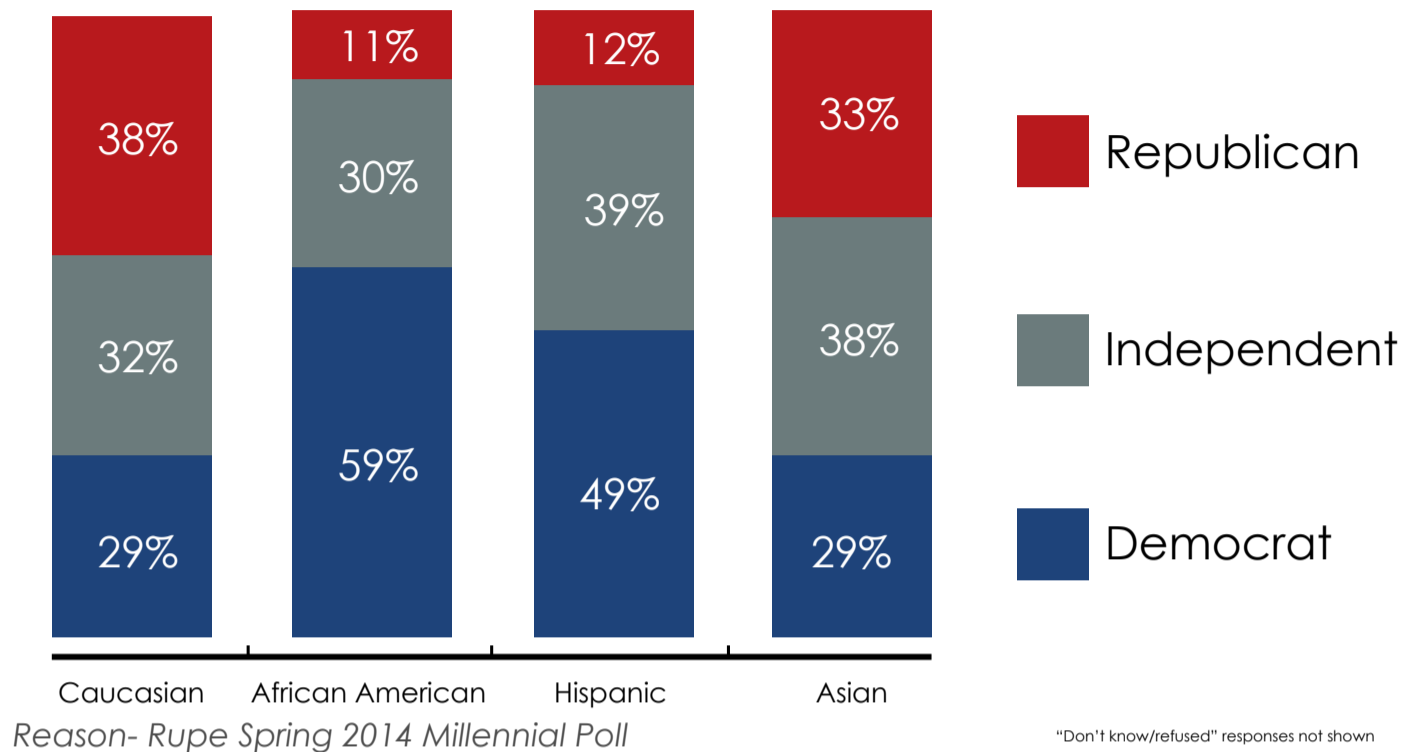
Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

Taking into account partisan-leaning independents, a plurality (43%) say they are Democratic or lean Democratic while only half as many (23%) identify as Republican. A remarkably high number, 34 percent, say they do not lean toward either party, remaining politically independent. Only 11 percent of Americans over 30 remain independent when asked which way they lean.<sup>13</sup>



# Party Identification

## by Race/Ethnicity

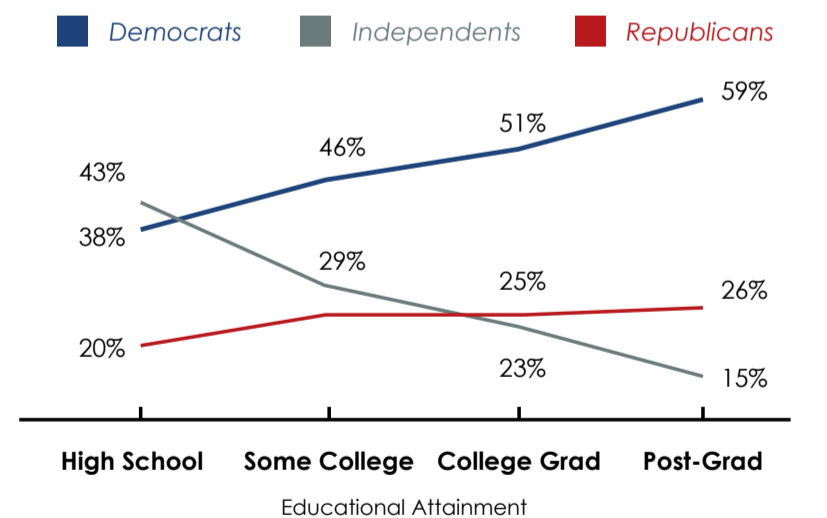


Remarkably, given recent voting trends, millennials are slightly less likely (43%) to identify as Democratic than Americans over 30 (49%). Yet, they are almost half as likely (23%) as Americans over thirty (40%) to identify as Republicans.

This muted Republican affiliation and greater political independence is what distinguishes millennials from older Americans.

White and Asian millennials have similar partisan profiles, with about a third identifying as Democrats, a third as Republicans, and a third as independents. Nearly half of Hispanic millennials identify as Democratic, four in 10 as independent and 12 percent as Republican. Nearly 60 percent of African-American millennials identify as Democratic, a third as independent, and 11 percent as Republican.

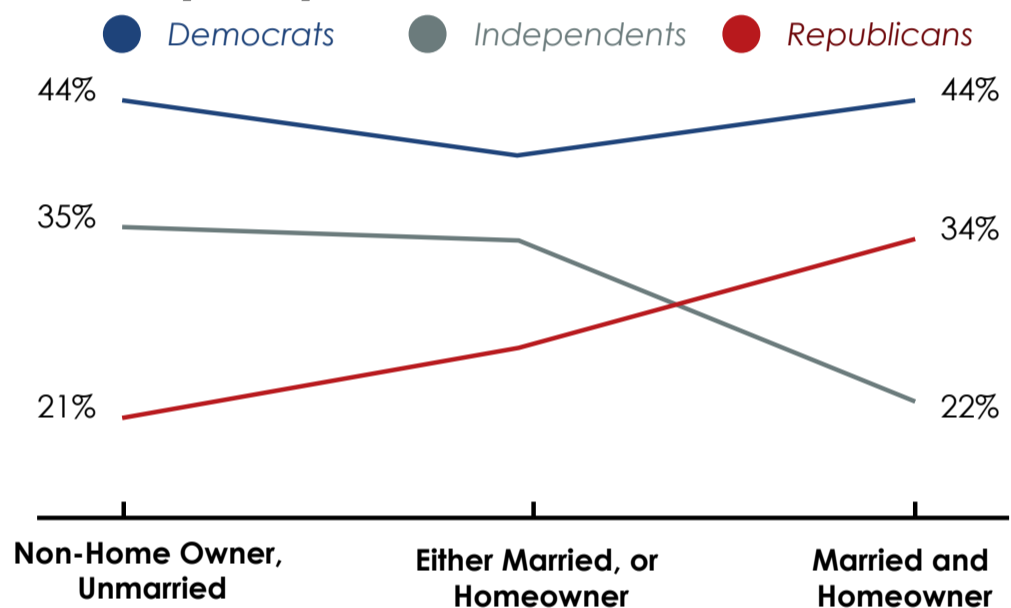
### Millennials Become Less Independent and More Democratic the Longer They Are in School



Millennials' life experiences also correlate with their partisanship. The longer millennials are in school, the less politically independent and the more Democratic they become. Among millennials with high school diplomas, 43 percent identify as independent and 38 percent as Democratic. Among college graduates this switches, and 51 percent identify as Democratic and only 23 percent as independent. Among those who have pursued post-graduate degrees, 59 percent identify as Democratic and 15 percent as independent. Interestingly, Republican identification does not vary substantially with education.

However, Republican affiliation does increase moving from unmarried millennials who don't own homes (21%) to married millennials who do own homes (34%). While Democratic identification doesn't substantially vary across homeownership and marital status, independent identification declines from 35 percent among unmarried non-homeowners to 22 percent among married homeowners.

### Millennials Become Less Independent and More Republican As They Buy Homes and Get Married



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

It is not clear whether added responsibilities such as marriage and homeownership increase the likelihood that millennials will become Republican or whether Republican millennials are more likely to buy homes and get married younger.

### Millennials' Political Ideology

One's partisan identification tends to indicate a favored assortment of policy preferences, while one's political ideology represents values, principles, and an orientation toward politics. Our survey finds that millennials' ideologies are primarily an expression of their social and cultural values more than economic policy preferences.



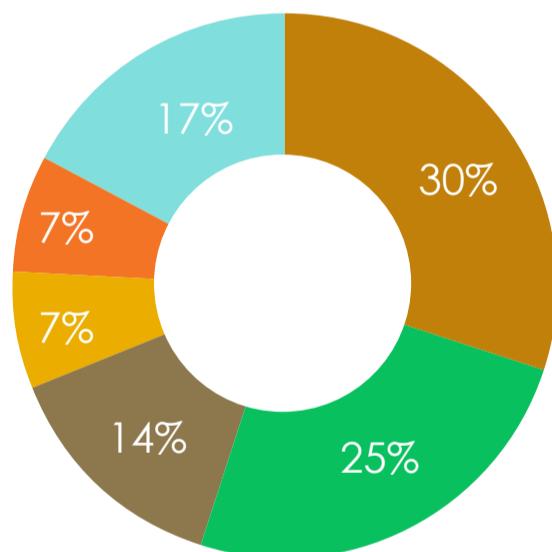
## Millennials Are More Liberal, Less Conservative

Conventional surveys ask respondents if they identify as liberal, conservative, or moderate. The Reason-Rupe survey offered millennials the opportunity to also self identify as progressive, libertarian, or something else. Doing so revealed that seven percent of millennials identify as progressive, another seven percent are libertarian, and 17 percent say some other ideology explains their political views.

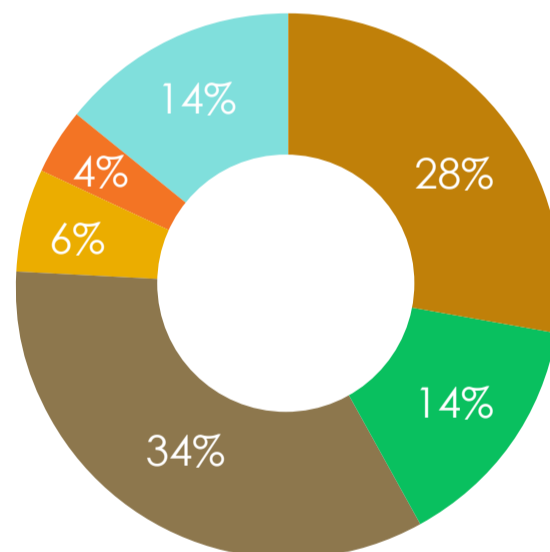
Millennials are far more likely than Americans over 30 to identify as liberal. While only 14 percent of Americans over 30 call themselves liberals, 25 percent of millennials do the same. Conversely, millennials are half as likely as Americans over 30 to identify as conservative, 14 percent to 34 percent. Roughly equal across age groups, three in 10 identify as moderate.

## Millennials Are More Liberal and Less Conservative than Americans over 30

Millennials' Partisan Identification



Americans' 30+ Partisan Identification



Conservative Liberal Moderate Something Else Libertarian Progressive

Reason-Rupe Spring 2014

Interestingly, while millennials are no more likely to identify as Democratic than older Americans, they are considerably more comfortable using the liberal label to describe their political views. This raises several questions. Does the word "liberal" mean something different to millennials than older cohorts? Does it convey liberal policy preferences across social and economic issues?

The survey finds evidence to suggest the liberal label does convey different meaning for young Americans, and that they do distinguish between social and economic liberalism. For instance, among self-identified liberal millennials, 67 percent indicated they were strong social liberals while only 49 percent said they were very liberal on economic issues. Moreover, millennials are largely basing their ideological labels on social matters rather than economics.

## Millennials Tell Us What Their Political Label Means to Them

### *Social Issues, Not Economics, Largely Define Political Labels*

To better understand what these political labels mean to millennials, they were asked to use their own words to explain why they describe themselves as a liberal, moderate, conservative, libertarian, or progressive. The results indicate that social issues largely define these terms, particularly for liberal millennials (Full coding results can be found in Appendix 2).

*“Why do you describe yourself as liberal?”*

Coding and categorizing self-identified liberal millennials' responses revealed that only 32 percent explained their beliefs in terms of conventional (social and economic) liberalism. For instance, one of those 32 percent wrote:

- “I believe in government making lives better for those less fortunate, public funding for education and science, progressive taxation, and for complete personal freedom on social issues.”

Nearly the same amount of liberals (33%) explained their beliefs only on the basis of social tolerance, openness, and personal freedom. Many specifically identified LGBTQ rights as their primary reason for being liberal:

- “I think of ‘liberal’ in terms of social issues, and I’m very open to other styles of living.”
- “I support same-sex marriage.”
- “I don’t even know if [being liberal] is accurate—I do not believe in social control.”

Some of these social liberals exhibited strongly libertarian undertones, desiring little government interference in their personal lives:

- “Because I believe individuals’ rights are more important than the rights of the government.”

- “Because I believe people should have freedom to do what they want in their personal lives without government interference.”

Many millennials’ social liberalism was grounded in their conviction that all people should be treated with equal dignity, regardless of ethnicity, heritage, or sexual orientation:

- “I believe in tolerance and diversity. I don’t believe people should be discriminated against according to income, race, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, education, or heritage.”

Both conventional and social liberals often emphasized that social issues mattered more to them than economic issues:

- “I am more concerned about social issues and people’s quality of life than economic issues.”
- “Although I’m on the fence regarding economic issues, my liberalism in social issues far outweighs my conservatism in economic ones.”

Another 29 percent either couldn’t or wouldn’t explain why they are liberal. Often, they decided they were liberals because they really didn’t like conservatives.

- “I really don’t know, I just don’t agree with conservatives, so I am the total opposite, which I see as liberal.”
- “While I find myself disagreeing with most Democrats I know I find myself further disagreeing with conservative policies. Particularly social policies.”

The remaining six percent of liberals said they had both liberal and conservative views (See Appendix 3 for a full breakdown).

### *“Why do you describe yourself as conservative?”*

Unlike liberal millennials, the plurality of conservatives (24%) used their label based on both social and economic issues. As one respondent explained:

- “Hard work and determination should determine your status in life [and] not leaning on a nanny state which is where we are headed if we are not careful. I believe this country ran well for many years without any help from big government. We do need government but limited. It has way too much power right now, and in history time and time again that never ends well for the country or the people of the country.”

Another 15 percent of conservatives explained their label only in terms of economics and the size of government:

- “I don’t believe in raising taxes, I believe in less government control.”
- “Government is only good when it’s limited and restrained. Constitution is the law of the land. My rights are not for the government to regulate.”

Both conventional and economic conservatives often based their labels on fairness, believing everyone should pull his own weight and that government should not foster dependency:

- “I believe if a person doesn’t work they shouldn’t eat.”
- “I support rights of citizens to responsibly live their own lives, instead of relying on government mandates, and government funding to decide what we do all while overtaxing us to fund the citizens who have realized that they can live more comfortably off government redistribution of my income than by working themselves.”
- “I don’t think the government should have control over the people, and make us dependent on them.”

Another 15 percent of conservatives expressed their views in terms of social conservatism, religious traditionalism, and skepticism of change:

- “I actually have morals and live by the Bible”
- “I don’t support views that are outside the social norms.”
- “I believe that there is more to be learned from traditional social constructions than in the innovations and experiments put forth by contemporary society.”

A considerably high share of conservatives, 43 percent, did not know how to explain why they are conservative or chose not to do so. The remaining three percent of conservatives said they had both liberal and conservative views (See Appendix 3 for a full breakdown).

### *“Why do you describe yourself as moderate?”*

Predictably, many millennials chose the “moderate” label because they have both liberal and conservative views on various issues (27%):<sup>14</sup>

- “Elements of conservatism and liberalism appeal to me. On some issues I’m fairly conservative, on others I’m fairly liberal.”
- “Because I feel like a mix between both sides, don’t feel particularly strongly either way.”

Some moderates were more specific about which liberal and conservative views they shared. Fifteen percent said they are not merely centrists, but are actually on the left on social issues and on the right or moderate on fiscal issues:

- “[I’m] conservative on economic issues and liberal on human rights.”
- “I tend to like conservative views on economic issues, but I despise how conservatives view social issues. I prefer liberal views on social issues, but I don’t normally agree with their economic views.”
- “I am a Business and Econ major making me very conservative on economic issues, but I am much more progressive on social issues.”

Another 14 percent of millennials say they are moderate because neither the liberal or conservative label fits them.

- “I’m not liberal and definitely not conservative.”
- “Because I don’t really agree with either party.”

The remaining 44 percent of moderates didn’t know how to explain their label or opted not to explain it. (See Appendix 3 for a full breakdown).

### “Why do you describe yourself as (progressive) or (libertarian)?”

Millennials who self identified as libertarian or progressive were more likely than their peers to explain the label in terms of economics.

Forty-one percent of libertarians explained their label in terms of both economically conservative and socially liberal views. Another 22 percent cited only economics and small government. The remaining 37 percent didn’t know how (or chose not) to explain their label or said they had liberal or conservative views. Interestingly, libertarian responses were fairly consistent regardless of whether they identified as Democratic, Republican, or independent. Libertarians tend to believe people work things out without interference, both in markets and social norms, and that government should not prevent people from making choices or shield them from the consequences of those choices. Some adopted the libertarian label because they agreed with Democrats on social issues but with Republicans on economics.<sup>15</sup>

- “I believe in freedom. Full stop. I believe in free markets and free people. People should have the freedom to do business with whom they choose, to live their lives the way they choose and to have the opportunities that red tape severely limits. I believe in very limited federal government and limited state government too. Government exists to defend our innate liberties—not to tell us how to live, how to earn and spend our money or what morality to ascribe to.” (Independent, Leans Republican)
- “I have the philosophy that if you let things be, they will naturally do what they are supposed to. If you interfere with nature too much, you will corrupt it. That



being said, you have rights as long as they do not take someone else's rights away or harm them." (Independent)

- "I'm swayed to the democratic side mostly by social issues. I like a lot of republican economic philosophy on free markets." (Independent, Leans Democratic)

Among progressives, 43 percent described their labels based on their economic and social views, with a strong emphasis on change; 17 percent only explained in terms of social issues. The remaining 40 percent didn't know how or want to explain their label or had both liberal and conservative views. Progressives tend to view themselves as left of liberals and as individuals who value evolving social norms over preserving existing values. They have an optimistic view of government, believing it can make changes for the better, and are very distrustful of large business that they believe cannot be influenced by the people.<sup>16</sup>

- "Progressives believe in making the world a better place for all people not just some people. We believe that everyone should have freedom from discrimination, to vote, from want, worry, and fear. We believe that there are things more important in life than money and that the will and conditions of the majority should take precedent over the few. And we believe in using science and reason to judge and determine the best path forward instead of refusing to believe something because you don't want to. And most of all we believe in justice and progress and moving forward—not backward." (Strong Democrat)
- "I believe in the ability of government to solve problems and to help people. I believe that we must always look forward and consider new and untried solutions to old and unsolved problems. I believe that civil liberties must be protected, that national defense should be just that: defense, that diplomacy is our most effective route to solving international problems, that all people are equal regardless of their racial, gender, ethnic, sexual, etc. identity. " (Strong Democrat)
- "'Liberal' sounds too much like the lightweight Democrats who think they're radicals simply because they support gay marriage. I'm much more left than that." (Independent, Leans Democrat)

Systematically quantifying millennials' responses reveals that for most liberal and progressive millennials, their ideological label primarily reflects social liberalism, not necessarily economic liberalism. Overall, 68 percent of self-identified liberals' explanations mentioned elements of social tolerance and personal freedom, while only 35 percent mentioned economics. Progressives were similar on social issues (64%), but slightly more mentioned economics (47%).

## TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT LIBERTARIANS AND PROGRESSIVES

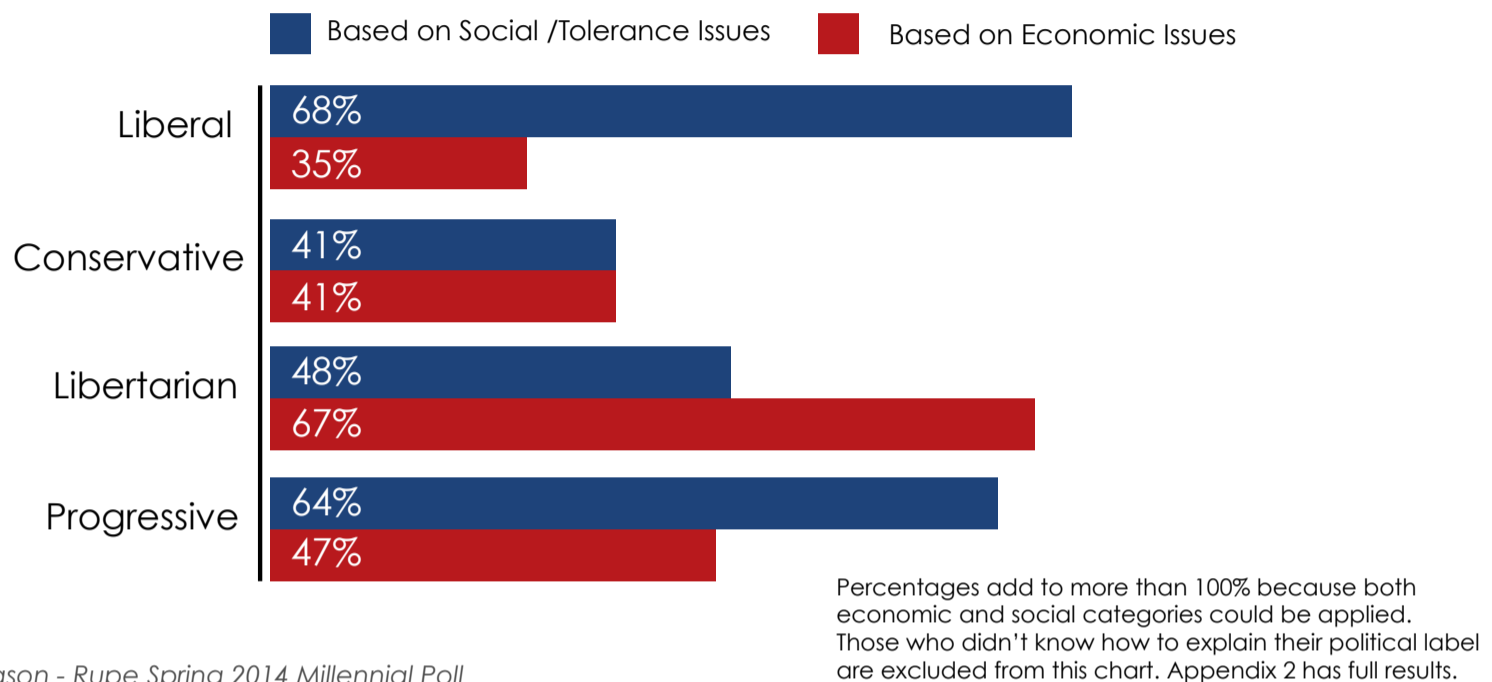
Most surveys don't offer respondents an opportunity to self-identify as libertarian or progressive. Offering these choices in our survey revealed that seven percent of millennials identify as progressive and seven percent as libertarian. Here we take a look at who these millennials are.

Libertarians	Progressives	All Millennials
<b>What are their demographics?</b>		
68% Male 32% Female	53% Male 47% Female	50% Male 50% Female
56% White 14% Black 21% Hispanic 8% Asian 1% Other	58% White 15% Black 15% Hispanic 7% Asian 5% Other	57% White 15% Black 15% Hispanic 7% Asian 4% Other
<b>How do they identify politically?</b>		
22% Democratic 50% Independent 28% Republican	71% Democratic 15% Independent 13% Republican	43% Democratic 34% Independent 23% Republican
<b>Would they prefer a society where the income gap is small regardless of achievement or where wealth is distributed according to achievement?</b>		
15% Egalitarian Society 83% Meritocratic Society	54% Egalitarian Society 43% Meritocratic Society	40% Egalitarian Society 57% Meritocratic Society
<b>What kind of economic system do they want?</b>		
73% Capitalism 23% Socialism	35% Capitalism 64% Socialism	52% Capitalism 43% Socialism
<b>Does government have a responsibility to reduce the income gap?</b>		
61% No 33% Yes	20% No 69% Yes	48% No 45% Yes

# Why Do Millennials Choose an Ideological Label?

## Millennials Base Political Labels More on Social Issues than Economics

Why do you describe yourself as \_\_\_\_\_?



Conservative millennials are considerably less likely than liberals to rely on social matters to define their label. Instead, conservatives' affiliation equally conveys their views on both economics (41%) and social issues (41%). Economic conservatism (67%) as well as social liberalism (48%) define libertarians' label.

## Ideological Self-Placement on Economic and Social Issues

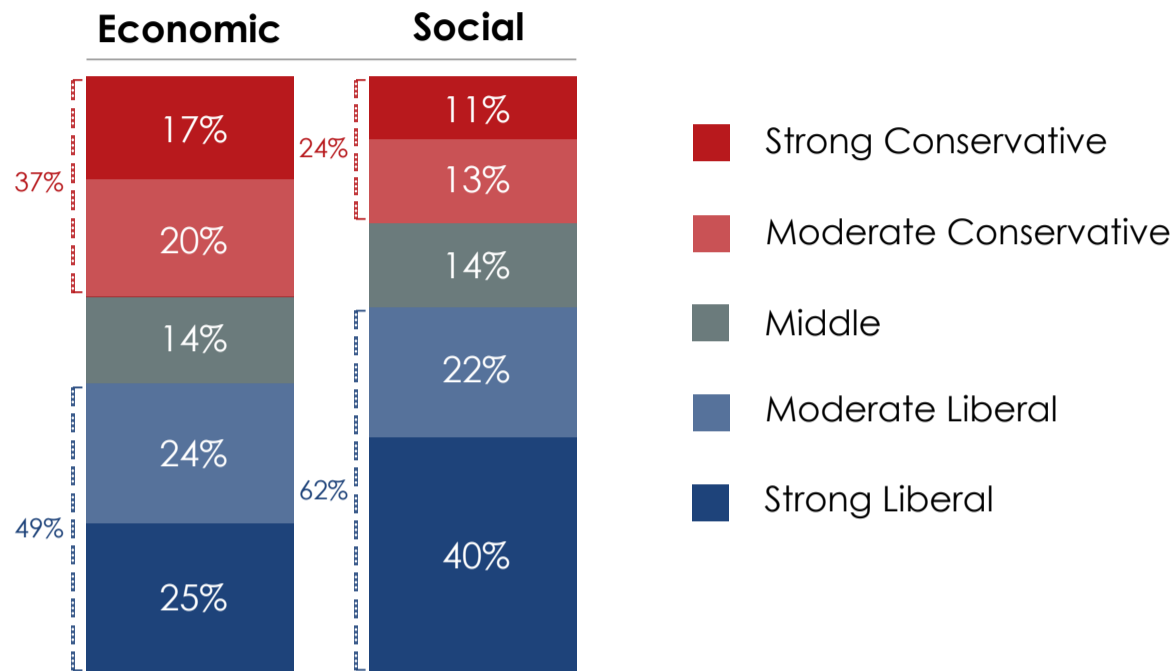
### Millennials Are Social Liberals and Fiscal Centrists

Examining how millennials explain their political views demonstrates that traditional ideological labels don't allow them to distinguish their positions on social tolerance from those on economics, spending, and taxes. Consequently, the Reason-Rupe survey also asked millennials to indicate their ideological position on social issues and economic issues independently.



# Millennials Are Social Liberals, Fiscal Centrists

Millennials Predominately Identify as Socially Liberal, but Are Divided on Economic Issues



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

To indicate their political positions, respondents slid a marker between two endpoints representing social liberalism and social conservatism, and then again between economic liberalism and economic conservatism. They did the same based on their perception of President Obama's position on both scales, and then again for former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Gov. Chris Christie, Sen. Rand Paul, and the Republicans in Congress.

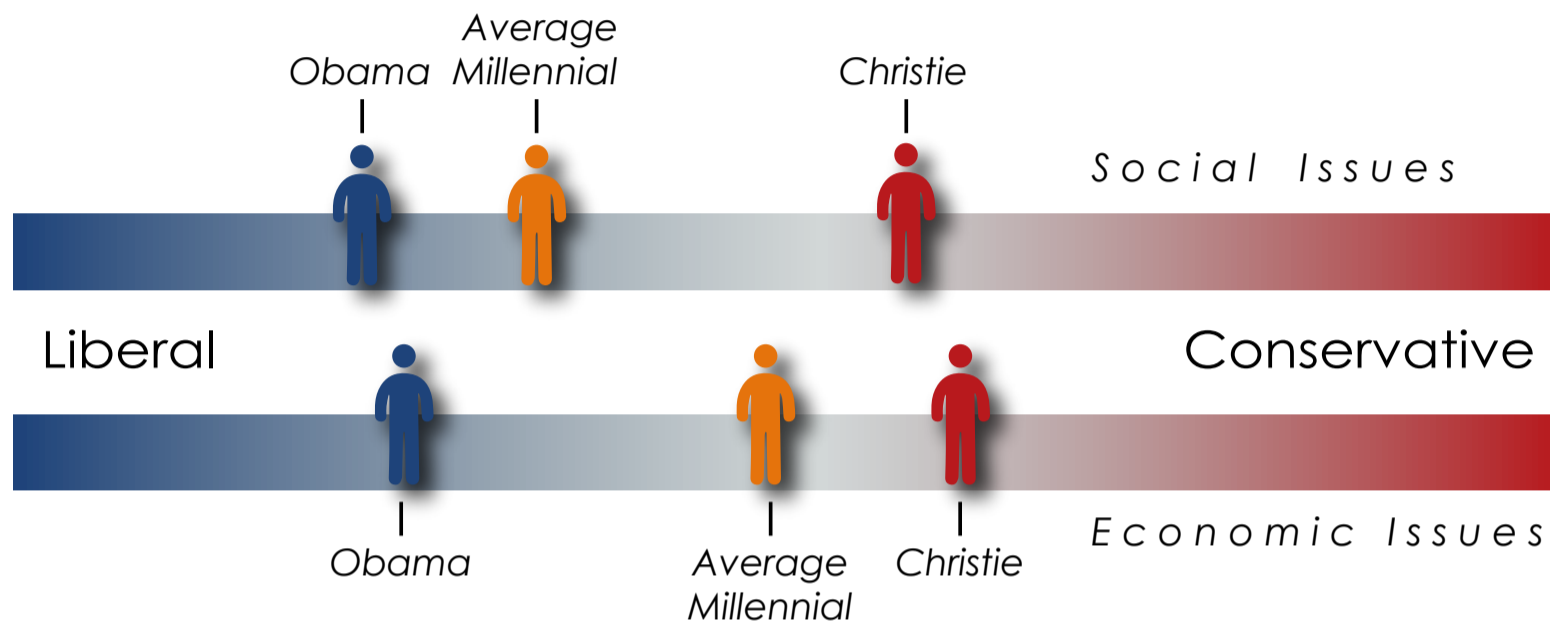
Millennials are predominately socially liberal, 62 percent, but only 49 percent indicate they are fiscally liberal. In other words, the average millennial is a social liberal and fiscal centrist.

Millennials see themselves as similar to President Obama on social issues, but more moderate than him on fiscal issues. In almost reversed fashion, millennials perceive themselves as close to Gov. Chris Christie (R-NJ) on economic issues, but distant on social issues. On economics, they see themselves right in between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Rand Paul. They feel furthest from Republicans in Congress on both social and economic issues, but primarily social.

# Where They Stand

How Millennials Perceive Obama & Christie's Social/Economic Positions Compared to Their Own

*On social/economic issues, how liberal or conservative would you rate yourself and the following people?*



*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*

Overall, millennials are indeed closer to Democrats than Republicans, but social issues are driving this distance. If only economics, rather than social issues, divided the political parties, millennials would find themselves right in the middle. However, factoring in social issue positions moves millennials into the Democratic camp. (See [Box: Beyond Left and Right](#)).

The below chart doesn't necessarily reflect an accurate measure of these politicians based on their records, but is a measure of millennials' perception. And perception is what matters when they vote. Indeed, as the following section will show, millennials' perceived ideological proximity to Hillary Clinton has bolstered support for her presidential candidacy.

# Beyond Left and Right

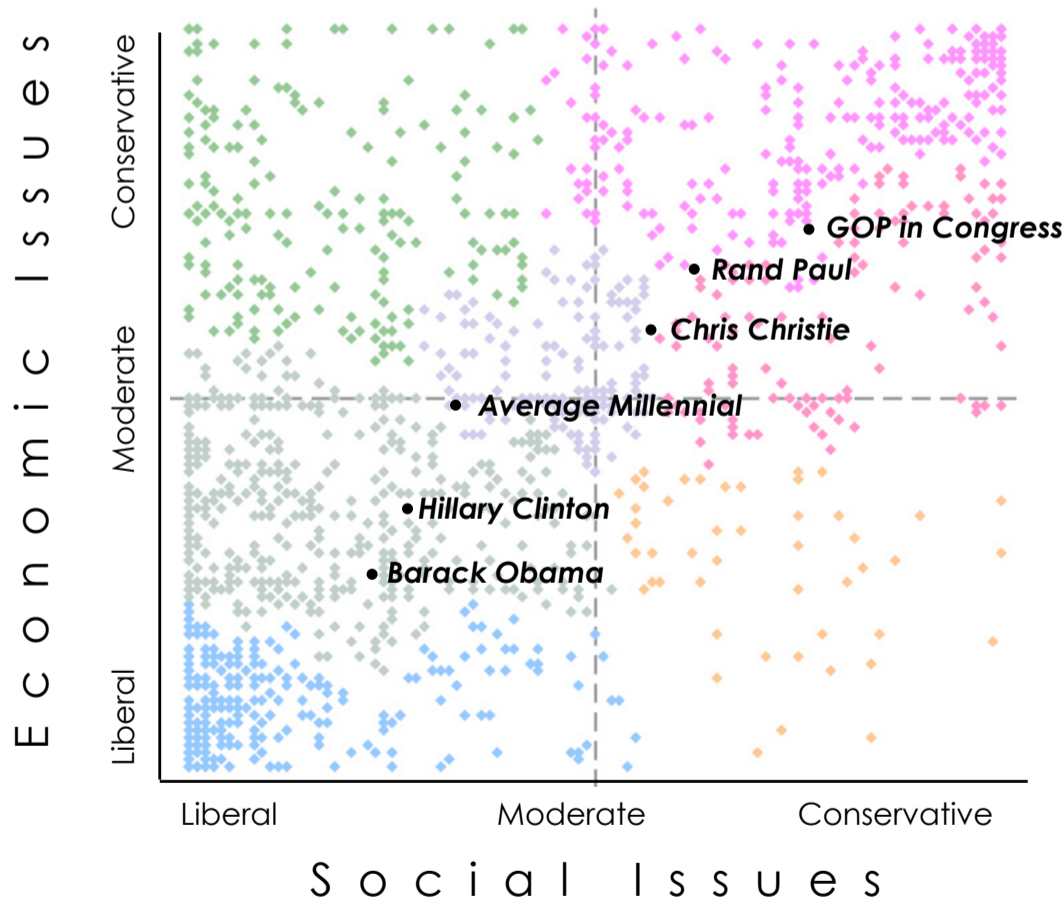
*Social Issues Are Driving the Distance Between Millennials and Republicans*

Plotting each millennial's perceived ideological placement on social and economic issues respectively on a 2-dimensional graphic demonstrates several things:

- First, millennials don't fall into the traditional left-right mold of American politics. A considerable number see themselves as socially liberal and economically conservative (17%) and some as socially conservative and economically liberal (6%).
- Second, the millennials' center of gravity is socially liberal and fiscally centrist.
- Third, social tolerance issues, not economics, are primarily driving the distance between millennials and Republicans.

## Millennials' Perceived Ideological Position on Economic and Social Issues

*On economic/social issues, how liberal or conservative would you rate yourself, President Obama, Hillary Clinton, Rand Paul, Chris Christie, and the Republicans in Congress?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

Note: Different colors represent clusters of ideological groups, derived from hierarchical cluster analysis

Note: A cluster analysis which finds natural groups of respondents found the following: The largest group was of social liberals who were moderately liberal on economic issues (Grey-28%), followed by left liberals (Blue-18%), centrists (Purple-17%), right conservatives (Pink-14%), libertarians (Green-12%), social conservatives who were moderately conservative on economic issues (Magenta-8%), and communitarians (Orange-4%).

## V. Who Are Millennials Planning to Vote For?

The fact that millennials view themselves as close to Hillary Clinton ideologically corresponds with strong support for her presidential candidacy. (See [Box: Beyond Left and Right](#)). The Reason-Rupe poll asked millennials to select from a list of 15 possible presidential candidates whom they would be willing to vote for and then which candidates they would not vote for in 2016<sup>17</sup> (See Appendix 4 for detailed results).

Hillary Clinton fared best, receiving the highest number of yes votes—53 percent of likely millennial voters. Most other Democratic candidates also received more yes votes than votes against them. Vice President Joe Biden came in second with 30 percent, and Elizabeth Warren had 22 percent. Every Republican candidate was underwater, receiving more “no” votes than votes in favor. Rand Paul received the most votes of any Republican candidate (17 percent) and was the least underwater of the Republicans (-12 percent) among likely voters.

### Millennial Presidential Vote Choice 2016

*Who of the following would you consider voting for?  
Who would you NOT vote for in the 2016 presidential election?*

	Yes Vote	No Vote	Yes Vote- No Vote	Undecided	Total
Hillary Clinton	53%	27%	26%	20%	100%
Joe Biden	30%	27%	3%	43%	100%
Elizabeth Warren	22%	17%	5%	61%	100%
Rand Paul	17%	29%	-12%	54%	100%
Paul Ryan	17%	37%	-20%	46%	100%
Chris Christie	15%	40%	-25%	45%	100%
Cory Booker	15%	12%	3%	73%	100%
Marco Rubio	11%	27%	-16%	62%	100%
Mike Huckabee	11%	34%	-23%	55%	100%
Jeb Bush	10%	37%	-27%	53%	100%
Ted Cruz	9%	34%	-25%	57%	100%
Gary Johnson	9%	12%	-3%	79%	100%
Martin O'Malley	9%	9%	0%	82%	100%
Bobby Jindal	8%	24%	-16%	68%	100%
Peter King	3%	22%	-19%	75%	100%

REASON-RUPE SPRING 2014

*Among Likely Millennial Voters*

# Would Millennials Vote for a Non-Traditional Candidate?

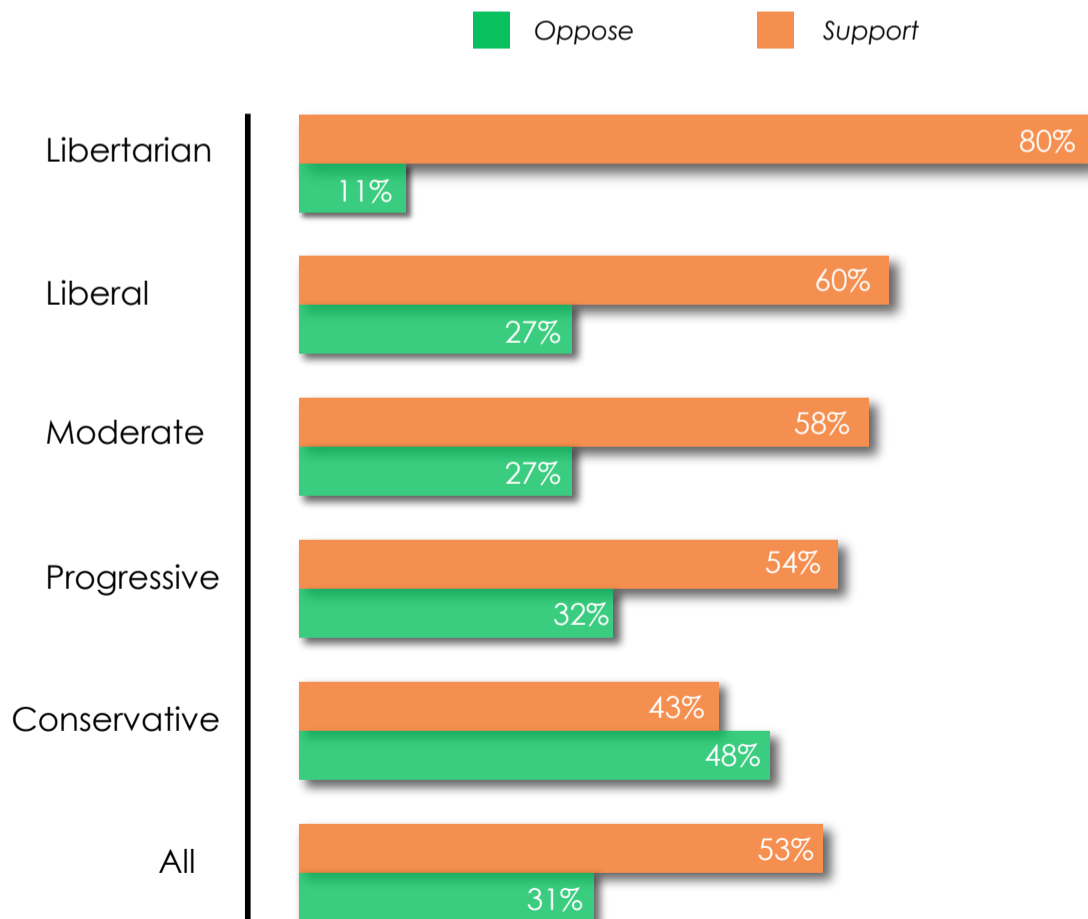
*Millennials, Particularly Liberals, Would Vote for a Fiscally Conservative, Socially Liberal Candidate*

When millennials go to vote, most candidates are either conventional fiscal and social liberals or fiscal and social conservatives. But how would this cohort of liberal-leaning independents respond to a candidate who is socially liberal but also economically conservative? In other words, how would millennials respond to a libertarian-leaning candidate?

**53%** Would vote for a fiscally conservative, socially liberal candidate

The survey found that a majority of millennials, 53 percent, would support a candidate who described him or herself as socially liberal and economically conservative, 16 percent were unsure, and 31 percent would oppose such a candidate.

## Who Would Support a Socially Liberal, Fiscally Conservative Political Candidate?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

In fact, besides libertarians, liberal millennials were the most supportive of a libertarian-leaning candidate by a margin of 60 to 27 percent. Conservative millennials were most opposed (43% to 48% opposed).

Since a socially liberal, fiscally conservative candidate mainly attracts liberals over conservatives, this further suggests that social issues, rather than economics, may be primarily driving millennials' voting behavior. It may also be that young adults are simply not that economically liberal. Both comport with this report's earlier finding that social issues are primarily driving millennials' political labels and they are more socially liberal than economically liberal.

The survey also finds that a libertarian-leaning candidate would appeal to both Democratic and Republican voters. For instance, 60 percent of Hillary Clinton voters, 61 percent of Rand Paul voters, 71 percent of Chris Christie voters, and 56 percent of those who approve of President Obama all say they would support a fiscally conservative and socially liberal candidate.

Millennials who registered to vote are also more likely to support a socially liberal, economically conservative candidate (58%) than non-voters (48%). Support for such a candidate also increases with educational attainment. Forty-nine percent of those with a high school degree or less would support a socially liberal, economically conservative candidate, compared to 63 percent of those with post-graduate degrees.

Religious millennials are far less likely to support a libertarian-leaning candidate. Among those who say religion is very important to them, 43 percent would oppose this non-traditional candidate, and 44 percent would support. Among those who say religion is not important to them, 58 percent would support a libertarian-leaning candidate, and 24 percent would oppose.

While partisanship and voting intention often vary by race and ethnicity, this is less so for a socially liberal and economically conservative candidate. Fifty-five percent of both white and Latino millennials would support such a candidate, while 30 percent would oppose. Slightly fewer African-American and Asian American millennials would support the candidate, by a margin of roughly 46 percent in support to 37 percent opposed.



# VI. How Much Confidence Do Millennials Have in the President, Congress, and Major Political Parties?

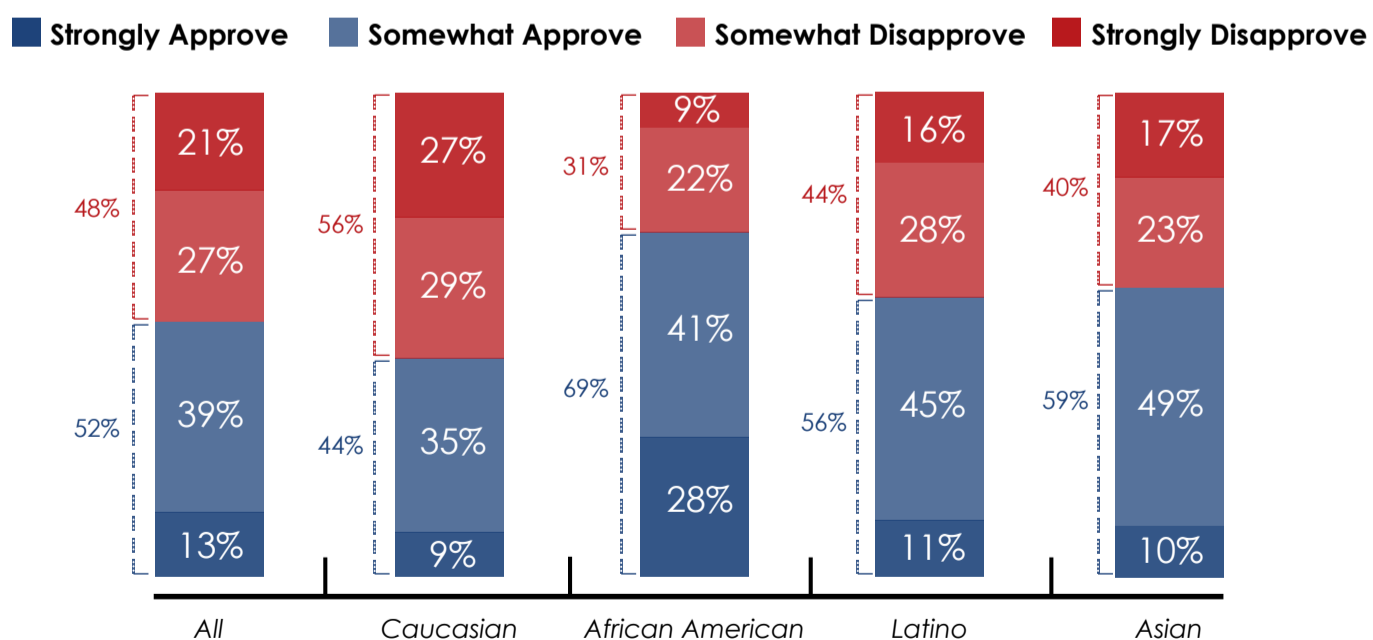
## Presidential and Congressional Approval

Millennials' enthusiasm for President Obama has waned since he captured 60 percent of their vote in the 2012 presidential election. Still, a majority—52 percent—says they approve of his job performance, while 48 percent disapprove. Intensity is not in the president's favor, with nearly twice as many strongly disapproving (21%) as strongly approving (13%).

Among those who say they voted for Obama in 2012, 21 percent say they now disapprove of him, while 79 percent remain at least somewhat satisfied with their choice (56 percent say they “somewhat approve” while 23 percent “strongly approve”).

While it's not surprising that three-fourths of Democrats approve and three-fourths of Republicans disapprove of President Obama, politically independent millennials disapprove of President Obama 53 to 46 percent. A majority (56%) of Caucasian millennials disapprove, but majorities of African-American (69%), Asian (59%), and Latino (56%) millennials approve of the president's job performance.

## Slight Majority of Millennials Still Approve of President Obama



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Similar to millennials' approval of President Obama, 52 percent also approve of Congressional Democrats' job performance, while 45 percent disapprove. Fifty-nine percent disapprove of Congressional Republicans, while 37 percent approve. Presidential approval is highly correlated with attitudes toward Congressional Democrats, but those who approve and disapprove of the president are equally likely to dislike Congressional Republicans (6 in 10).

## Trust in Political Parties

### *Millennials Don't Like Either Party, Democrats Viewed as the Better of Two Bad Options*

Millennials don't have much confidence in either of the two major political parties. When asked who they trust most to handle a series of issues, neither Democrats nor Republicans receive a majority of support on any of the 15 issues surveyed. Instead pluralities say they trust "neither" party to handle 12 of the 15 issues. Pluralities trust Democrats the most on gay marriage, the environment, and poverty. On none of the issues do a plurality of millennials trust Republicans.

Half of millennials say they trust neither party to handle privacy, with 27 percent trusting Democrats and 17 percent saying the same of Republicans. The high lack of confidence in both parties

**50%** Trust neither Democrats nor Republicans on the issue of privacy

is understandable, since both the current Democratic president and his Republican predecessor expanded government surveillance programs. Moreover, both political parties have staked nearly the same position on the issue, meaning those who disagree with the status quo lack a partisan alternative that represents their views.

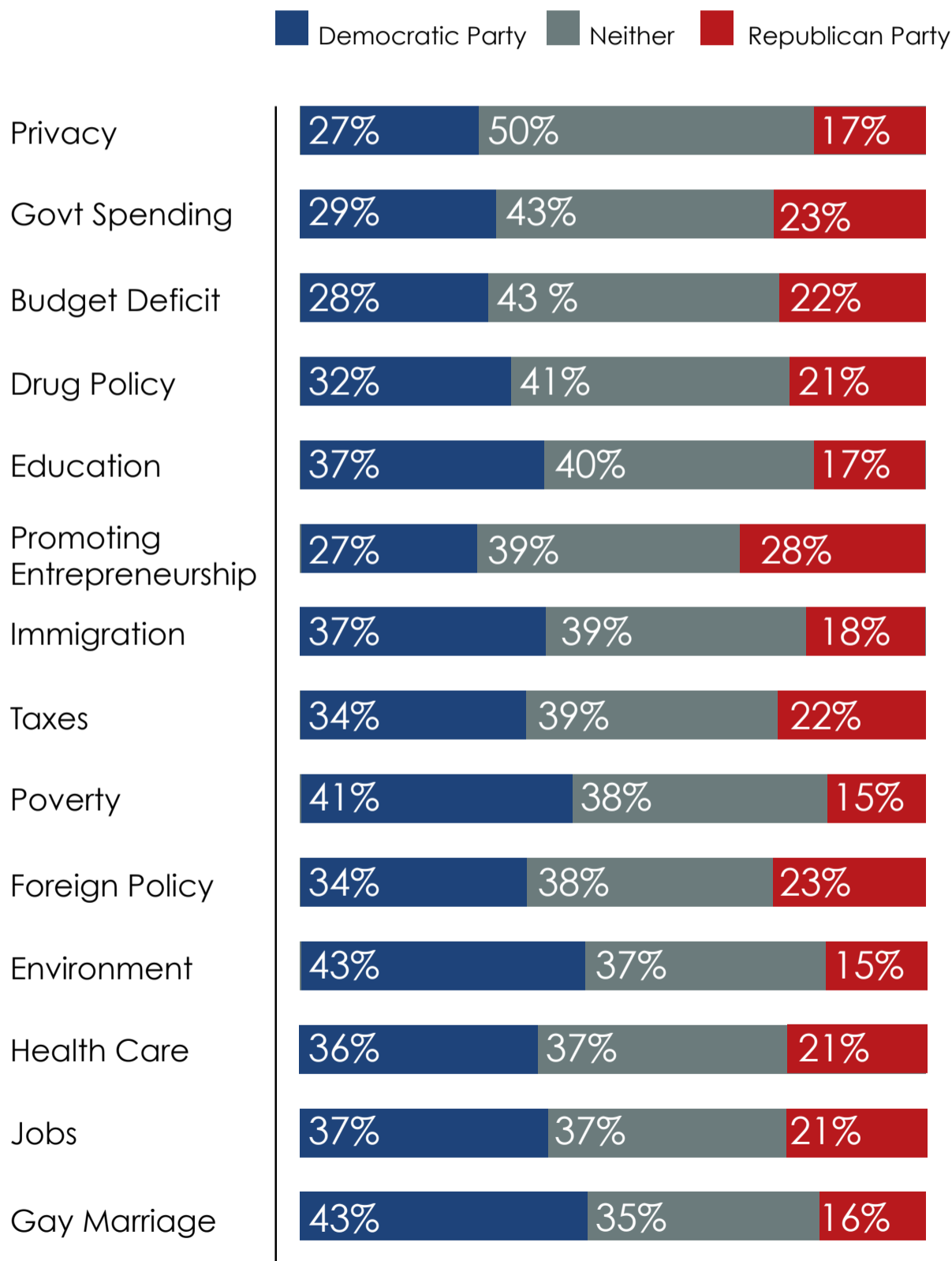
The next two issues in which large pluralities trust neither party include government spending and the budget deficit. Historically, these two issues have advantaged Republicans, yet less than a quarter of young adults say they trust Republicans to handle these issues now.<sup>18</sup> Confidence in Republicans is so low that 4 in 10 millennials would rather endorse no one than Republicans on government spending and the deficit. Even then, Democrats come out ahead of the GOP, with three in 10 preferring Democrats and two in 10 trusting Republicans when it comes to fiscal responsibility.



Other issues that have traditionally advantaged Republicans, such as taxes and foreign policy, don't garner support for either party and see Republicans losing ground to Democrats. A third of millennials trust Democrats to handle taxes and foreign policy, a quarter trust Republicans, and nearly four in 10 trust neither.

## Millennials Don't Like Either Party; See Democrats As Better of Two Bad Options

*Who do you trust to handle the following issues?  
The Democratic Party, The Republican Party, or neither party?*



Although civil liberties and fiscal responsibility are important issues for millennials, the economy and jobs are given highest priority.<sup>19</sup> While Republicans and Democrats do rhetorically have different approaches to promoting job creation and economic growth, neither party has convinced a majority that their approach is best. However, nearly twice as many trust Democrats (37%) as Republicans (21%) to promote job creation. Another 37 percent say neither party is best at promoting jobs in the economy.

Drug policy is another issue where both parties take similar positions and millennials trust neither. Forty-one percent say neither party can adequately handle drug policy, but slightly more trust Democrats (32%) than Republicans (21%).

The only issue on which Republicans could credibly compete with Democrats is promoting entrepreneurship: 28 percent trust Republicans and 27 percent trust Democrats. While Republicans talk about promoting small business, start-ups, and entrepreneurship, it is possible that young people either have not heard this message or don't think Republicans are serious or competent on the matter. However, millennials don't think Democrats will do a very good job either in creating conditions to foster entrepreneurship.

While millennials have little confidence in Republicans to handle important issues, their view of Democrats isn't much better. On issues that Democrats have traditionally had an advantage on, such as education, immigration, and health care, trust in Democrats doesn't exceed 40 percent. Nevertheless, support for Democratic handling is double that of Republicans for education (37 to 17 percent) and immigration (37 to 18 percent).

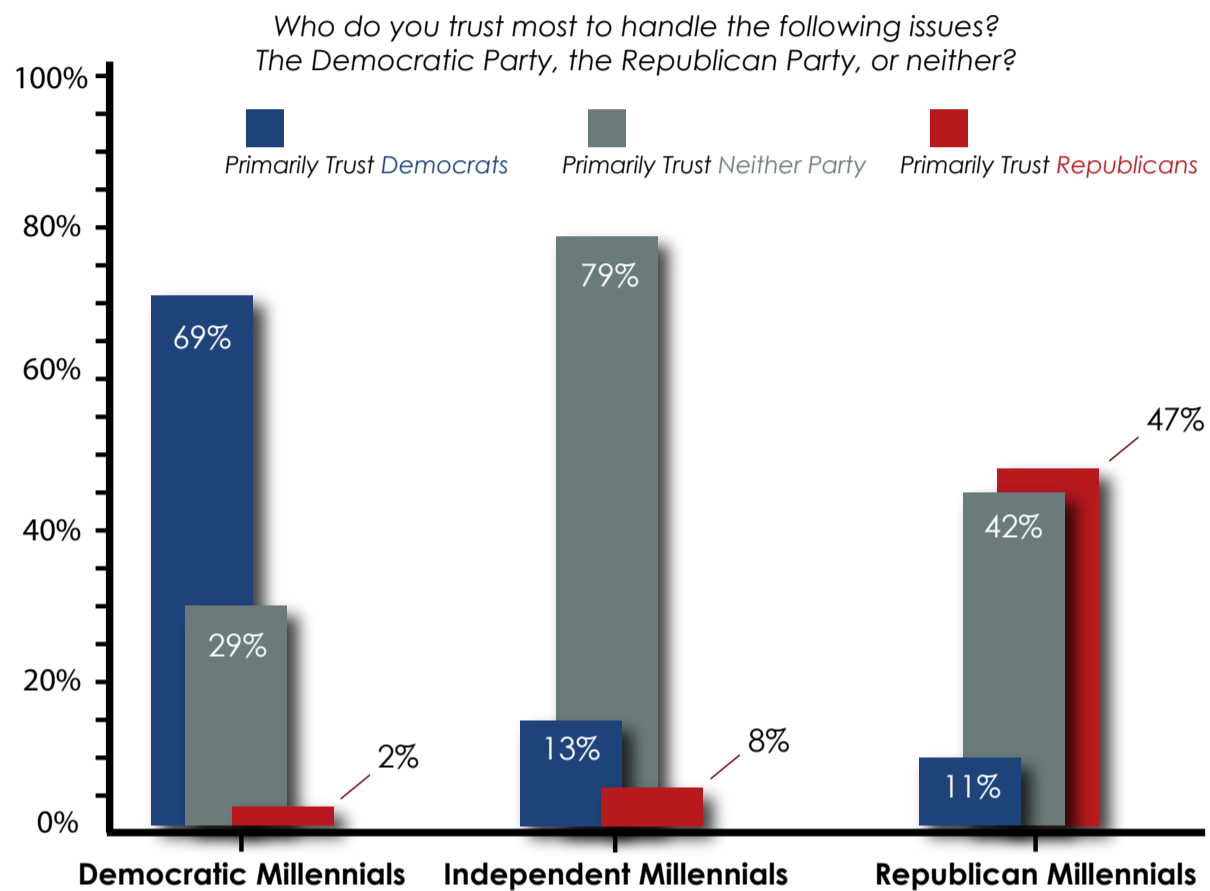
While a slim majority (51%) say they have a favorable opinion of the Affordable Care Act, the Democratic overhaul of the health care system, only 36 percent of millennials say they trust Democrats to handle health care overall. Only 21 percent trust Republicans; a plurality (37%) say neither party can properly handle health care issues.

Another reason Democrats are handily beating Republicans is that Republican millennials trust the Democratic approach on a number of issues. Nearly a third of Republican millennials prefer Democrats' handling of same-sex marriage and the environment, and a quarter prefers Democrats' handling of poverty. No more than 15 percent of Democratic millennials trust Republicans on any issue.

Compiling these results into a Party Trust Index shows that not even Republican millennials trust the Republican Party to competently handle

the nation's most pressing concerns. On all 15 issues combined, only 47 percent of Republican millennials primarily trusted the Republican Party while 69 percent of Democratic millennials trusted the Democratic Party.

### Most Republican Millennials Don't Trust Their Party to Handle Policy; Independents Consistently Reject Both Parties; Democrats Like Their Party



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

Political science research has shown that political independents tend to lean one partisan way or the other, but millennial independents are still overwhelmingly unwilling to endorse the parties on the issues. Of all millennials, 28 percent refused to endorse either political party on any of the 15 issues surveyed.

**28%** Don't Trust Either Party to Handle Any of the 15 Issues Surveyed

Among the millennial cohort, Republicans are no longer viewed as most competently able to handle issues on which they have historically had the advantage. While Democrats aren't viewed favorably either, they are viewed as the better of two bad options. Given millennials' low level of confidence in both major political parties, it is less surprising that more than half initially say they are independent rather than affiliate with a partisan label they don't trust.

## VII. What Are Millennials' Views on the Role of Government?

*Millennials support government action, but with declining enthusiasm*

Several years ago, early optimism for President Obama seemed related to young people's enthusiasm for government action.<sup>20</sup> While millennials remain more supportive of active government than older Americans, this section demonstrates that their confidence in government has waned in recent years. The gap between young and old has narrowed on both the role of government and the perception of government inefficiency.

Millennials don't think government should promote traditional values, but they accept the century-old consensus that government should ensure a certain basic standard of living for those who cannot find the means to obtain it themselves and that government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest.

They support raising taxes to increase financial assistance to the poor, they think government should guarantee access to health care, and a slim majority favors guaranteeing access to college. Yet support for expanding social services declines as millennials obtain more education and make more money.

Young adults aren't convinced that government should redistribute wealth to reduce the income gap, and as their incomes levels increase their support for redistribution steadily declines.

In efforts to stimulate the economy, millennials support both policies that would expand the scope of the federal government and those that would limit it. Their attitudes indicate a preference for action rather than a strong endorsement of the ideology behind a policy.

Based on millennials' current trajectories, there is reason to believe they may become less supportive of government action as they age and make more money. However, there is little reason to expect them to later favor government promoting traditional values. They will likely remain a socially tolerant generation and may become more skeptical of government action over time.

# What Do Millennials Think Government Should Do (Or Not Do)

*Millennials Want Government to Do More, But Less So Than in the Past*

Several years ago, polls revealed that young people were significantly more likely than older generations to say government should “do more” to solve problems. For instance, in 2010 the Pew Research Center found 53 percent of millennials wanted government to do more, compared to 45 percent of 30- to 45-year-olds, 43 percent of 46- to 64-year-olds, and 39 percent of seniors.<sup>21</sup>

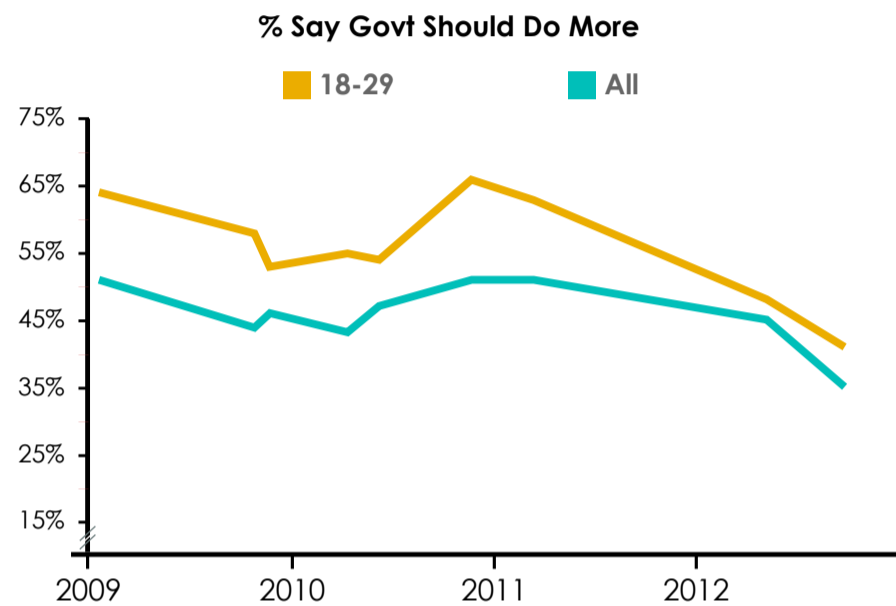
Aggregating polls over the past few years indicates that the share of millennials who wanted government to do more peaked in 2011, reaching about six in 10. Since then, support for more government action has declined among this age group, and the gap between millennials and older Americans has begun to narrow.

Nevertheless, more millennials support greater government action than think government is already too involved. In our survey, 48 percent say government should do more to solve problems, 37 percent say government is doing too many things that would be better left to businesses and individuals, and 15 percent aren't sure.

The survey delved deeper to better understand what millennials want government to be doing more of.

## Millennials Have Become More like Cohorts over 30 When It Comes to Wanting Govt to Solve Problems

*Should government do more to solve problems?*



Source: CBS News Feb 2013, Pew Sept 2012, NBC/WSJ Jun 2011, NBC/WSJ Feb 2011, NBC/WSJ Aug 2010, Pew Jun 2010, Pew Jan 2010, NBC/WSJ Dec 2009, NBC/WSJ Feb 2009.

**48%** Say Govt Should “Do More” To Solve Problems

**37%** Say Govt Is Doing “Too Many Things”

## Millennials Want to Increase Spending for the Poor

In contrast to their European peers, American millennials agree government should spend more to help the poor even if it leads to higher taxes. A Demos/IPSOS MORI poll in the United Kingdom found that British millennials were

**58%** Say Govt Should Spend More on Financial Assistance to the Poor, Even if Higher Taxes Required

less likely than older cohorts to agree “the government should spend more on welfare for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes.” (Less than 30% agreed)<sup>22</sup> The Reason-Rupe millennial survey found 58 percent of American millennials agree government should “spend more on financial assistance to the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes.”<sup>23</sup> Forty-percent of millennials disagree.

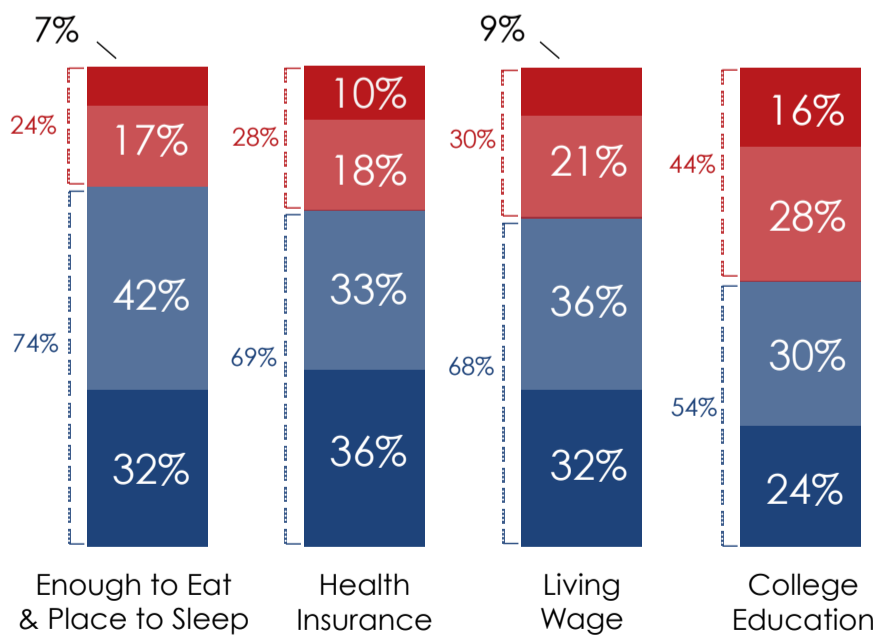
## Millennials Support Government Guarantees

On a number of specific issues, millennials favor some level of government guarantee to help provide for the least advantaged. Millennials were asked if government should or should not “guarantee” to every citizen enough to eat and a place to sleep, a living wage, health insurance, and a college education.

# Millennials Favor Govt Guarantees

Does government have a responsibility to guarantee the following or not?

■ Definitely Yes   
 ■ Generally Yes   
 ■ Generally No   
 ■ Definitely No



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

“Don’t know/refused” responses not shown



On each of these issues, a majority says government “definitely” or “generally” should guarantee these goods and services to its citizens. Support is considerably higher for guaranteeing housing and food (74%) than guaranteeing college (54%).

Only a quarter says it is not the government’s job to guarantee a place to sleep and food, but nearly double (44%) says government should not have a role in guaranteeing college diplomas. Nearly seven in 10 say government should guarantee health insurance and a living wage.

While support for government guarantees is high, the degree of support varies, with about a third saying government should “definitely” guarantee and 30 to 40 percent saying it should “generally” guarantee housing, health insurance, and a living wage. A quarter says government should “definitely” guarantee a college education while a third says it should “generally” guarantee it.

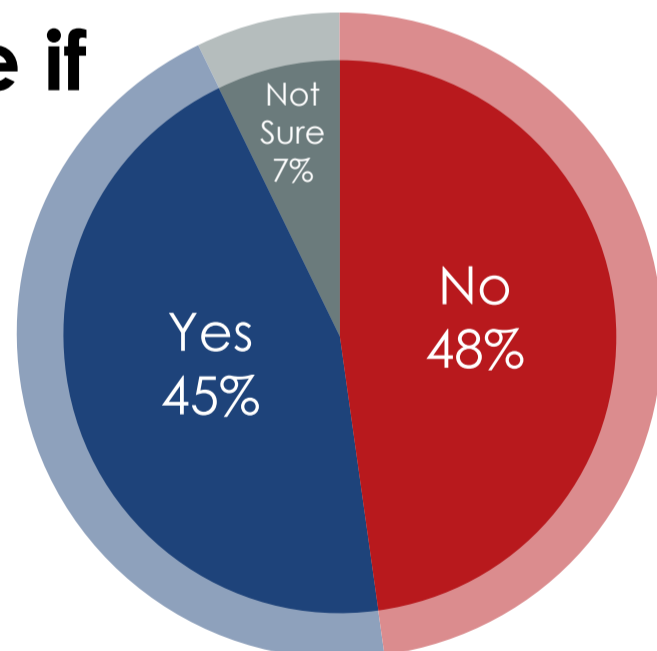
### *Millennials Are Divided on Redistribution*

Millennials are evenly divided on whether the government should play an active role in closing the widening income gap in this country. Forty-eight percent says it is “not the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes,” while 45 percent says it is government’s responsibility.

## **Millennials Aren’t Sure if Govt Should Reduce Income Gap**

*Does government have a responsibility to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes?*

*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*



Millennials are more likely than older Americans to say government should intervene. A national September 2013 Reason-Rupe poll found 65 percent of Americans over 30 thought it was not government’s responsibility to reduce income differences, while only 30 percent said it was.

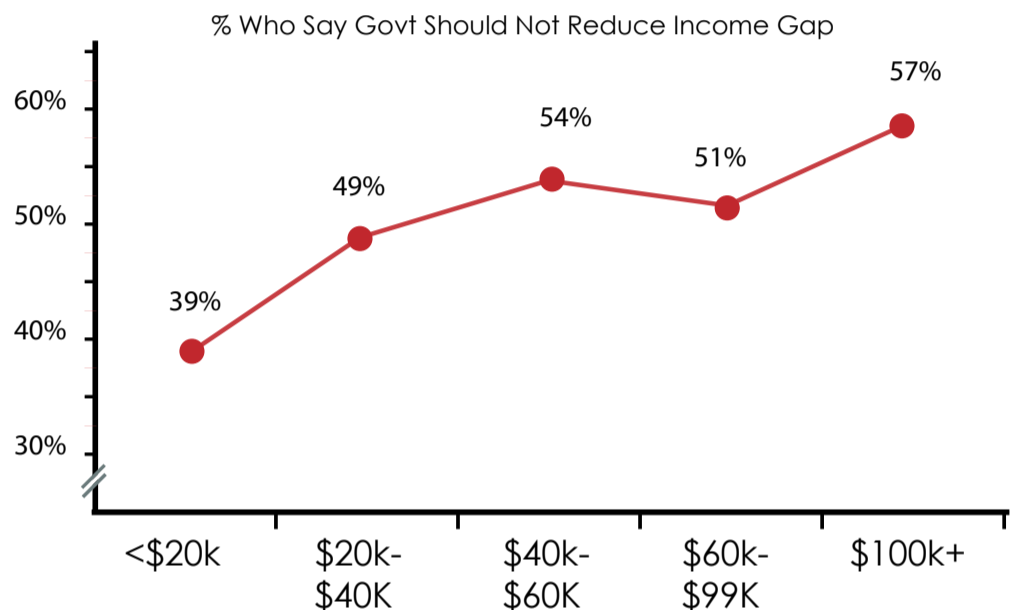
## Support for Redistribution and Govt Social Spending Declines with Income

There is reason to believe that support for government redistribution, welfare spending, and government guarantees may recede as millennials age and make more money.

For instance, opposition to redistribution rises with income even within the millennial cohort. Among those making less than \$20,000 a year, 39 percent oppose government reducing income difference while 53 percent support. In contrast, among those making more than \$40,000 a year, 54 percent oppose and 42 percent support wealth redistribution. Similarly, those who are employed full-time oppose income redistribution 54 to 40 percent, while the unemployed favor it 51 to 40 percent.

### Opposition to Income Redistribution Rises with Income

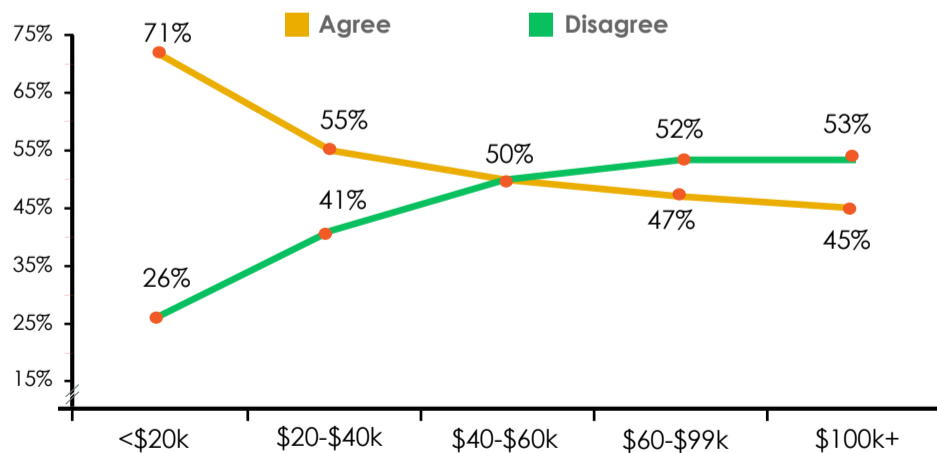
Does government have a responsibility to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

### Millennials Are Less Willing to Pay More to Expand Social Safety Net the More Money They Earn

Should the government spend more on financial assistance to the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

In similar fashion, support for paying higher taxes to increase financial assistance to the poor declines with income and education. Seventy-one percent of those making less than \$20,000 a year support raising taxes to increase financial assistance to the poor; this number drops to 47 percent among those making over \$60,000 annually. Likewise, two-thirds of those with high school diplomas or

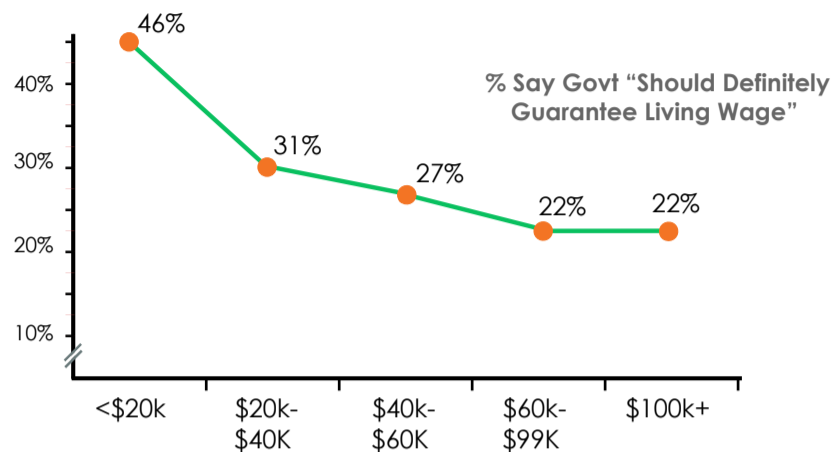
less support high taxes to expand the safety net, compared to 50 percent of college graduates.



Intensity of support for government guarantees also declines with income. For instance, 46 percent of millennials making less than \$20,000 a year say the government “definitely” should guarantee a living wage, compared to 22 percent among those making more than \$60,000 a year.

## Support for Government-Guaranteed Living Wage Declines as Income Rises

Does government have a responsibility to guarantee every citizen a living wage?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

These data indicate that as millennials find employment, get promoted, make more money, and pay higher taxes, their support for activist government may recede. The fact that today a third are under- or unemployed and a third are living at home is stalling upward mobility and likely bolstering support for increased government action.

### Millennials Accept Government Regulation of Business, Like Earlier Generations

When it comes to government regulation of business, 46 percent of millennials agree “government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest,” while 37 percent say “government regulation of business often does more harm than good” and 18 percent aren’t sure. These results comport with national surveys that also find millennials are no more likely than older Americans to say government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest.<sup>24</sup>

**46%** Say Govt Regulation of Business Is Necessary to Protect the Public

Education increases the likelihood that a millennial believes government regulation is necessary to protect the public interest. Among those with high school diplomas or less, 40 percent say regulation is necessary, as do 48 percent of those with some college experience, and 53 percent of college graduates.

Millennials’ support for business regulation is tempered by their perception that government regulators do not usually act on behalf of the public interest, favoring special interests instead. When millennials were asked how

most government officials behave when writing and enforcing regulations, 63 percent said these regulators usually act on behalf of special interests, 18 percent thought regulators primarily consider the public interest, and 19 percent weren't sure (see Section VIII).

*To Stimulate the Economy, Millennials Support Policies that Limit and Policies that Expand Governmental Scope*

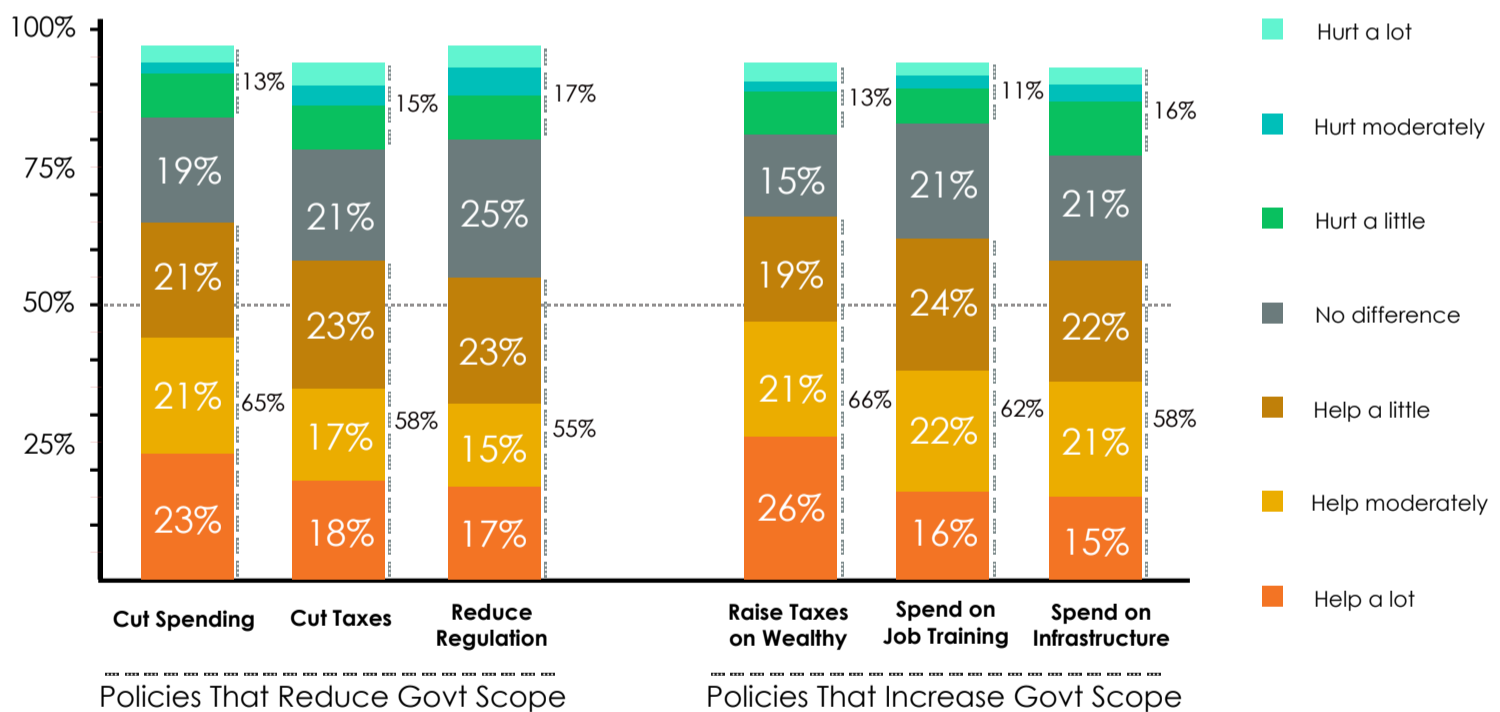
Millennials were asked about a number of policies proposed from across the political spectrum to help stimulate the economy. Some proposals aimed to stimulate the economy through reducing governmental scope while others effectively expanded government's role. Millennials were also offered the opportunity to indicate the degree to which they believed a policy to be effective or ineffective.

Both policies that limit governmental scope as well as policies that expand it received majority (and nearly equal) support.

**To Stimulate the Economy, Millennials Want Action**

Millennials Support Policies that Both Increase and Reduce the Scope of Government

*Would each of the following primarily help or hurt the economy?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Raising taxes on the wealthy (66%) and cutting government spending by five percent (65%) were the most popular. Even a slim majority (51%) of Republican millennials say raising taxes on the wealthy will help the economy, and a majority (59%) of Democratic millennials say cutting spending will help the economy.

Policies that receive support from roughly six out of 10 millennials include increasing government spending on job training programs (62%) and national infrastructure (58%), and cutting taxes (58%). Fifty-five percent say reducing the number of government regulations on business would help. Intensity of support for cutting government spending and raising taxes on the wealthy is nearly double that of the other proposed policies.

Notably, 42 percent of millennials think scaling back regulations will either make no difference (25%) or will actually harm the economy (17%). About a third of millennials are unconvinced that cutting spending or taxes, raising taxes on the rich, or spending on job training and infrastructure will help the economy.

**Millennials  
simultaneously favor  
policies that limit and  
policies that expand  
government**

These results suggest that millennials like action. They think somebody should do something to help improve the economy, but they have less of an ideological preference as to how.

#### *Millennials Don't Want Government to Promote Traditional Values*

Millennials are considerably less supportive than older generations of government promoting traditional values.

Averaging responses to this question from August 2011 to February 2014 finds roughly 47 percent of all Americans think government should promote traditional values.<sup>25</sup> Only 38 percent of millennials agree. Instead, 47 percent of millennials say government should not promote a particular set of values; 15 percent aren't sure.

Education decreases support for government promotion of traditional values among millennials. Of those with high school degrees or less, 41 percent say government should not promote traditional values, but this number increases to 57 percent among those with college degrees.

## VIII. Do Millennials Have Confidence in Government?

Millennials believe government has a role to play in regulating business, providing for the poor, and stimulating the economy. But they are also wary of government and its ability to enact positive change.

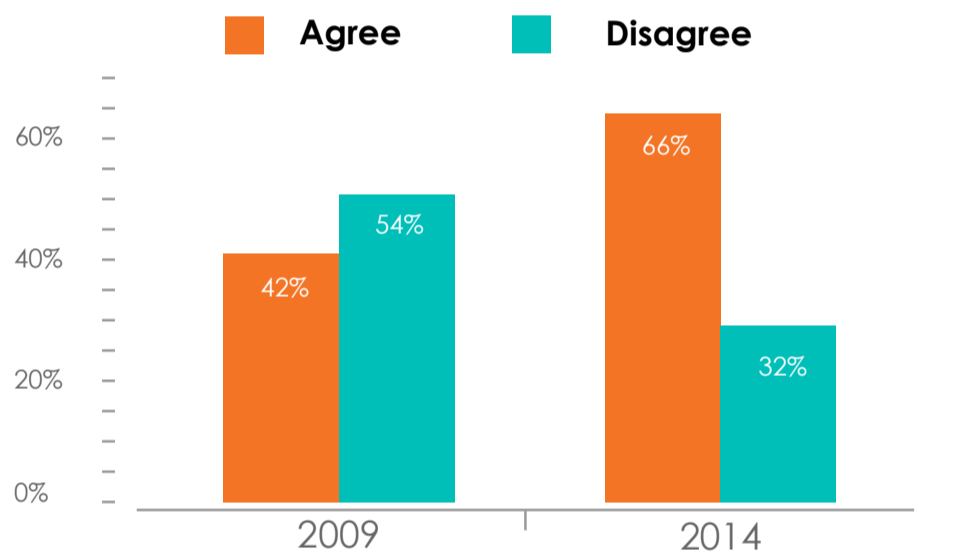
### *Millennials Think Government Is Wasteful*

The perception that government is wasteful and inefficient has surged among millennials in the past five years.

In 2009, the Pew Research Center found that only 42 percent of millennials thought government was “usually inefficient and wasteful,” compared to six in 10 among Americans over 30. This number has crept up in recent polls.<sup>26</sup> By 2014, using the exact same wording as the question Pew asked in 2009, we found the share of millennials who agree the government is wasteful and inefficient has shot up to 66 percent, while 32 percent disagree.

### **Increasing Number of Millennials Say Govt Is Wasteful and Inefficient**

*Do you generally agree or disagree with the following statement: when something is run by the government, it is usually inefficient and wasteful.*



"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Pew Research Center 2009; Reason - Rupe Spring Millennial Poll, 2014

Even millennials who favor a broader role for government view it as wasteful. Fully 57 percent of millennial Democrats say government is wasteful, as do 69 percent of independents and 81 percent of Republicans.

### *Millennials Accept Regulation, but Perceive It to Serve Special Interests*

Millennials generally favor government regulation of business to protect the public interest. However, nearly two-thirds (63%) say that when

**63% Say Govt Regulators Favor Special Interests over the Public Interest**

government regulators write and implement regulations, they generally act on behalf of narrow special interests, not the public. Only 18 percent think regulators generally have the public interest in mind when deciding how to regulate businesses, and another 19 percent aren't sure. While liberal and moderate millennials are more trusting of regulators, majorities of liberals (56%) and moderates (59%) still expect special interests to benefit more than the public from regulations. Conservatives (82%) and libertarians (85%) are the most likely to say special interests benefit the most.

### *Millennials Think Government Agencies Abuse Their Power*

In the aftermath of government contractor Edward Snowden's revelations about the federal government's surveillance programs, the American people have been essentially asked to trust government officials to do what is right. However, Reason-Rupe data reveal that millennials don't believe government agencies generally do the right thing.

The Pew Research Center found that young people were more supportive than older cohorts of Edward Snowden's choice to release classified information about the existence of government surveillance: 60 percent said it served the public interest and 34 percent said it harmed it.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, they were the only age group to disapprove (55%) of the data collection program.

The Reason-Rupe millennial poll finds one driver of support for Edward Snowden is that 58 percent of millennials think "government agencies generally abuse their power" while only 25 percent think they "generally do the right thing."

Concern extends beyond partisanship. Majorities of Democrats (53%), independents (53%), and Republicans (73%) worry government agencies abuse their power. Nevertheless, Democrats (33%) are nearly twice as likely as Republicans (16%) to believe these agencies do the right thing. There are only small differences across race/ethnicity, although African-American millennials (66%) are slightly more likely to believe government agencies abuse their power than their peers (56%).

**58% Say Govt  
Agencies Generally  
Abuse Their Power**



## IX. Do Millennials Want “Big Government”?

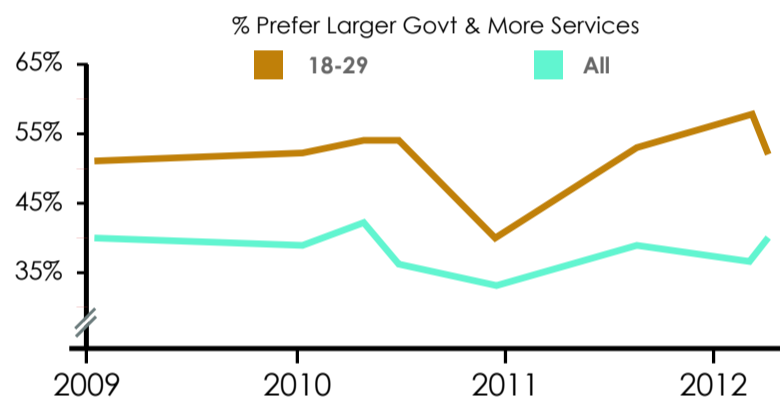
*Millennials Prefer Small Government Over Large Government if High Taxes Are Required*

At first glance, it would seem millennials prefer a large government. A majority (54%) says they prefer a “larger government with more services” while 43 percent say they would rather a “smaller government with fewer services.”

These numbers are in stark contrast to national statistics, which find only 35 percent of Americans want larger government providing more services and 60 percent want smaller government with fewer services.<sup>28</sup> These results indicate that millennials are far more likely to favor activist government over limited government compared to older generations.

### Millennials More Supportive of “Larger Government” than Americans 30+

Would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a larger government providing more services?



Source: Pew Sept 2012, Likely Voters, CBS News Aug 2012, Pew Jan 2012, CBSNY Times Apr 2011, CBS/NYTimes Oct 2011, Pew Aug 2010, Pew Apr 2010, Pew Mar 2009

But there may be some caveats.

Typically, “big government” has implied high taxes, heavy regulation, and the power to play favorites and control individuals. However, debate about the role of government was put on hold in the aftermath of 9/11, when millennials came of a politically impressionable age. Furthermore, the national enemy was no longer a large totalitarian regime like the Soviet Union, but terrorist groups from whose attacks our government sought to protect us.

This raises the question: Do millennials know what the phrase “big government” means? Recent evidence suggests they may not.<sup>29</sup> If millennials don’t know what large government is, do they know what it costs? If not, perhaps their preference for “more services” over “fewer services” drives their desire for “larger government.”



To investigate this, Reason-Rupe divided the sample in half and asked one half:

*“If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a larger government providing more services?”*

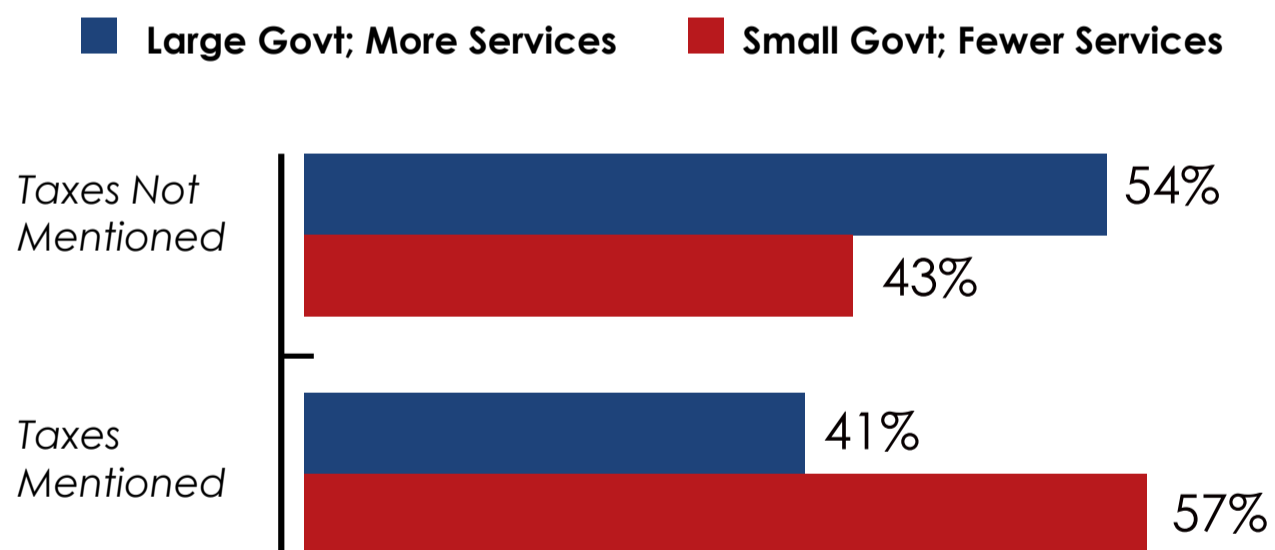
It then asked the other half of the sample the same question but with explicit tax rates:

*“If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services with low taxes, or a larger government providing more services with high taxes? “*

When taxes are mentioned, millennials’ preference for large government flips, and a majority (57%)— favor small government and 41 percent favor large government.

## Support for Large Government Flips if High Taxes Required

*If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller govt providing fewer services (with low taxes), or a larger govt providing more services (with high taxes)?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

“Don't know/refused” responses not shown

Our results indicate that millennials don’t immediately make the connection between larger government and the high taxes it requires. Consequently, support for “larger government providing more services” among millennials doesn’t necessarily imply an endorsement for a large activist government that levies heavy taxes. Instead, many are favoring “more services” rather than more services plus high taxes. Perhaps older Americans would also favor more over less government services if they felt it wouldn’t cost them.

## Are Non-white Millennials More Likely To Support Large Government?

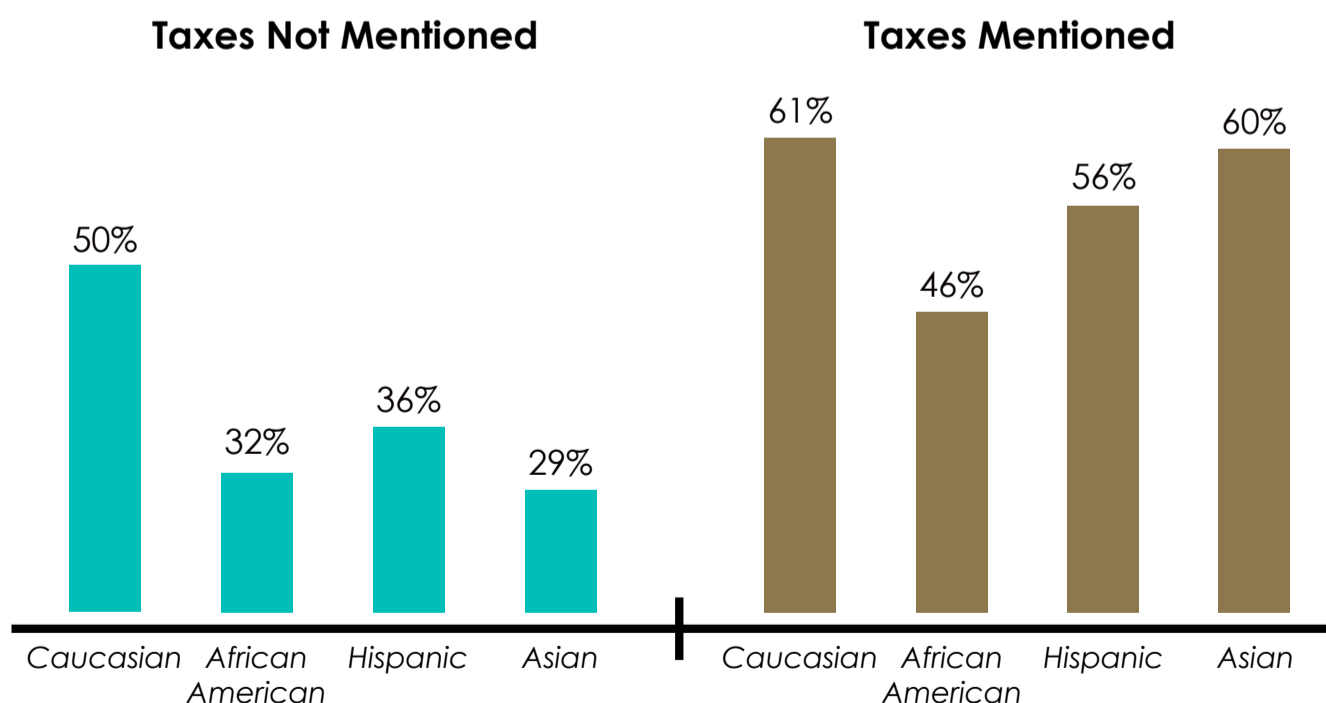
Congruent with findings from the Pew Research Center, white millennials (50%) are considerably more likely to favor smaller government when taxes are not mentioned than African-American (32%), Latino (36%), and Asian American (29%) millennials.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, at first glance, non-white millennials are far more likely to favor larger government.

However, after considering taxes, the racial gap on the preferred size of government starts to disappear. The share of Latino, Asian, and white millennials preferring small government is statistically identical, with roughly six in 10 in support. African-American millennials are divided, with a slim majority favoring larger over smaller government, even if that means higher taxes (53 to 46 percent). It appears that white millennials are more likely to implicitly associate large government with high taxes.

## When Taxes Are Explicit, Racial Divide on Size of Govt Begins to Disappear

*If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services (with low taxes), or a larger government providing more services (with high taxes)?*

### % Who Favor Small Government



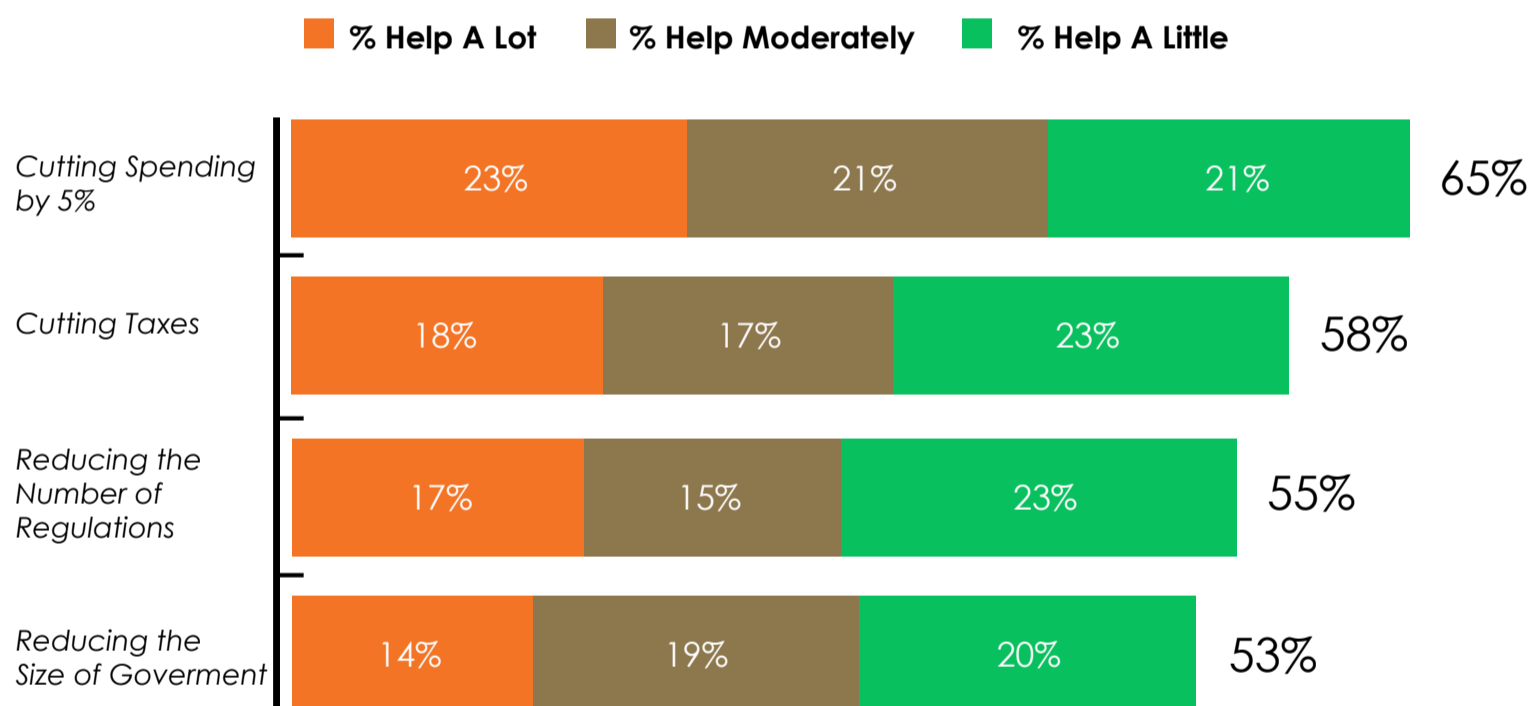
Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

Available data suggest that Latino and Asian millennials, many of whom are themselves immigrants or children of recent immigrants, will likely experience a good deal of upward income mobility. For instance, the Pew Research Center reports that the median annual household income for first generation Hispanics is \$34,600, and this increases to \$48,400 among the second generation.<sup>31</sup> Since higher incomes often diminish support for government services,<sup>32</sup> our results indicate that desire for activist government may decline over the next decade if large government and high taxes are explicitly connected in voters' minds.

## Concrete Policies to Limit Govt Are More Popular Than Calls to Reduce the Size of Govt

*In your view, would each of the following primarily help or hurt the economy, or would they not make much difference?*

### % Say Primarily Help Economy



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

Chart excludes those who said "no difference" or "primarily hurts"

### Millennials Respond More Favorably to Concrete Proposals to Limit Government Than Abstract References About Government's Size

If the abstract notion of government's "size" does not convey the same substantive meaning for millennials that it has for previous generations, perhaps more concrete policy proposals would garner greater support than calls to "reduce the size of government."

To test this, the survey presented millennials with several policy proposals aimed at reducing the scope of government, including cutting government

spending by five percent, cutting taxes, and reducing the number of regulations. They were asked if each proposal would primarily hurt or primarily help the economy. The survey then compared responses for these concrete proposals to responses for whether the relatively abstract act of “reducing the size of government” would primarily help or harm the economy.

Concrete policies that effectually reduce government’s scope receive greater support than the proposal to reduce government’s size. Cutting government spending receives the greatest support, with 65 percent saying it would “primarily help” rather than harm the economy, followed by cutting taxes (58%), reducing the number of regulations (55%), and reducing government’s size (53%). Intensity of support also reflects this pattern, with a quarter of millennials saying that cutting government spending would help “a lot,” compared to 14 percent who have a similar favorable intensity for shrinking government.

In sum, cutting spending and taxes garners more support than reducing government’s size. Offering explicit methods for how to reduce the power and scope of government may better resonate among millennials than just asserting the need to rein in “big government.”

## X. What Are Millennials' Views of Business?

Millennials have a positive view of business, and many have entrepreneurial ambitions.

A majority of millennials (55%) say they'd like to start their own company one day, compared to 43 percent who say they don't have this desire.

Entrepreneurship is universally appealing across the cohort, without many significant differences across political and demographic groups. Exceptions include those with more education and income, who are less likely to be entrepreneurial, and those with higher levels of religiosity, who are more likely.

**55% Would Like to Start Their Own Business One Day**

When asked to select between two statements, a plurality (47%) of millennials agree that the "strength of this country today is mostly based on the success of American business." Another 33 percent instead say "American business gets more credit than it deserves for keeping the country strong." Nearly a fifth aren't sure which statement they agree with most. When a version of this question has been asked on national polls, millennials are not significantly different from Americans over 30.<sup>33</sup>

There are predictable differences across political ideology, particularly driven by white liberals. Sixty-one percent of conservatives agree U.S. strength depends on business success, as do 50 percent of moderates. Only 38 percent of liberals agree, while a plurality (41%) says business gets more than its due credit. Liberals are one of the most likely ideological groups (21%) to say they aren't sure about American business. Libertarians and progressives diverge most significantly on businesses' value: 67 percent of libertarians agree U.S. strength rests on business success while a plurality (47%) of progressives say business gets more credit than is justly deserved.

While millennials generally have a positive view of business and entrepreneurship in America, most also believe that government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest. When asked which statement about business regulation they agreed with more, 46 percent said "government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest," while 37 percent said "government regulation of business usually does more harm than good." Another 18 percent didn't know what they thought of business regulation. Compared to national surveys, millennials are not substantially different from older generations on business regulation.<sup>34</sup>

## Millennials Like Profit and Competition

“People Not Profit” signs are popular at Occupy Wall Street rallies, but hostility toward profit is not representative of the average millennial. Instead, young Americans are favorable toward the concepts and values that undergird business and entrepreneurship, including profit and competition.

To measure millennials’ favorability toward profit and competition, they were asked to indicate where they would place themselves between two statements about competition and profit respectively.

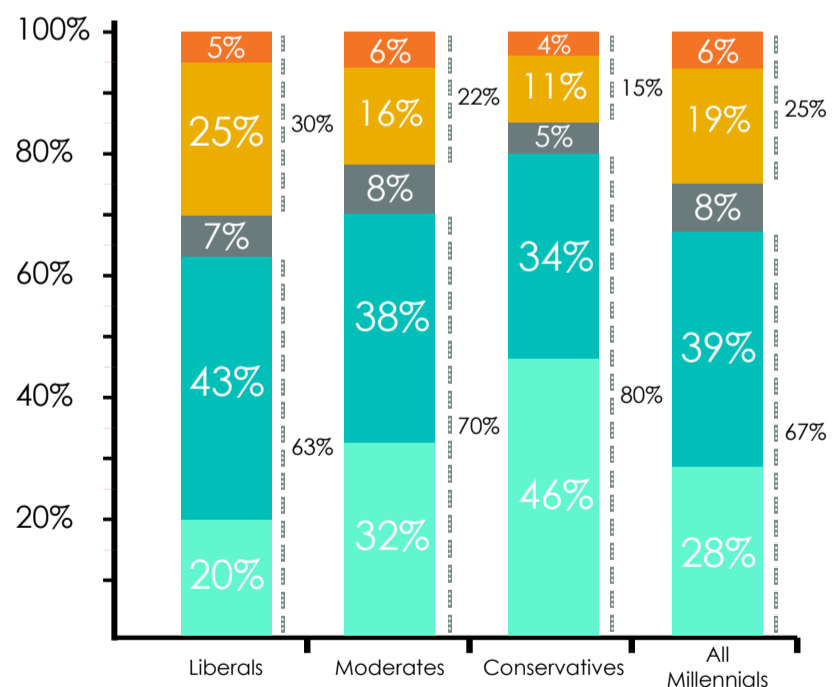
Seventy percent indicate they are primarily favorable toward competition because it “stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas.” (Nearly a third have a highly favorable view and 40 percent have a somewhat favorable view). A quarter generally has an unfavorable perception of competition, because it is “primarily harmful” and brings out “the worst in people.”

Sixty-four percent indicate they have a generally favorable impression of profit because it “encourages businesses to provide valued products to attract customers.” (More than a quarter has a strongly favorable view and 37 percent have a somewhat favorable opinion). A quarter has a primarily unfavorable perception of profit, because it “encourages businesses to take advantage of their customers and employees.”

## Millennials Favorable Toward Profit and Competition

*Are profit and competition primarily good or primarily bad?*

- Say Primarily Bad - Strongly
- Say Primarily Bad - Somewhat
- Not Sure
- Say Primarily Good - Somewhat
- Say Primarily Good - Strongly



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

While the general concepts of competition and profit are not controversial, millennials’ strength of favorability toward them varies. Forty-six percent of conservative millennials rate both profit and competition very highly compared to 20 percent of liberal millennials. Thirty-two percent of



moderates also have a strongly favorable view of profit and competition. Nearly a third of liberals have an unfavorable opinion of these concepts, compared to 15 percent of conservatives and 22 percent of moderates.

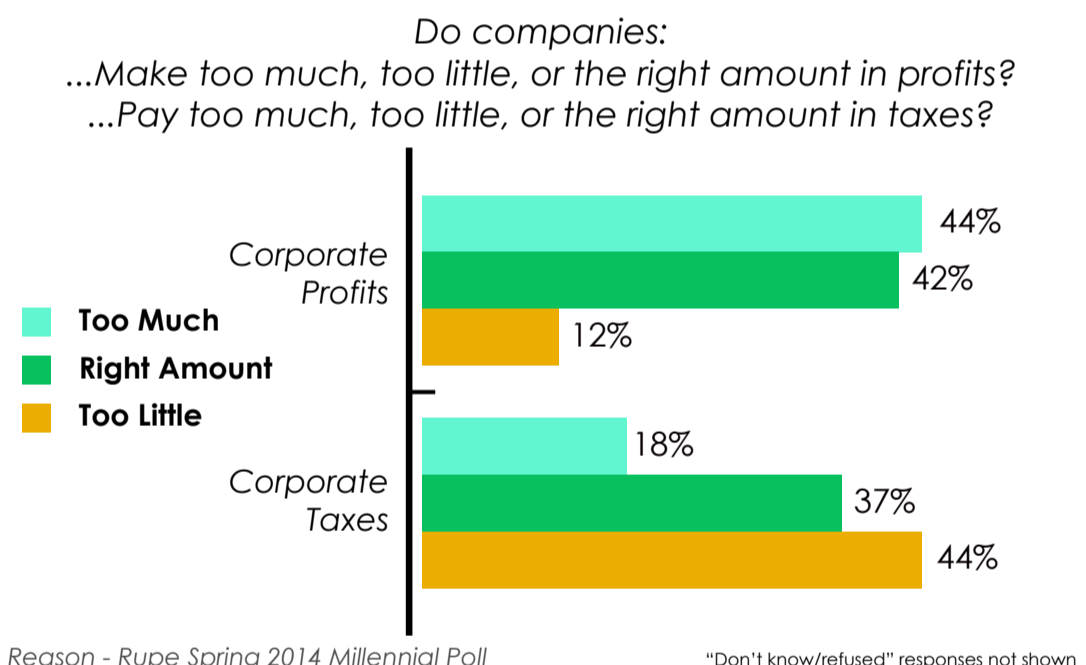
In sum, the millennial cohort has a tempered but favorable endorsement of major tenets underlying market capitalism.

### *For Millennials, Business Is Not The Enemy*

Less than half of millennials say American companies make too much in profits (44%) and the same amount says companies pay too little in taxes (44%). Instead, a majority (54%) says business profits are either the “right amount” (42%) or too little (12%). Similarly, a majority (55%) says companies’ taxes are either the “right amount” (37%) or too high (18%).

Partisan differences exist, as more millennial Democrats than Republicans say companies are making too much in profits (54 to 31 percent) and paying too little in taxes (56 to 27 percent). The partisan differences appear partly driven by white Democrats, while non-white Democrats are more favorable toward business.

## **Most Millennials Don’t Think Business Profits Are Too High or Taxes Too Low**



These results further demonstrate that millennials are not hostile toward business, but generally favorable.

### *For Millennials, Less Expensive Imports May Trump American-Made*

When it comes to buying products at competitive prices or products made in America, millennials are divided. Fifty-two percent say they’d prefer to purchase a lower-priced product of equal quality made in another country, but 45 percent would prefer to purchase a higher-priced product of equal quality made in the United States.

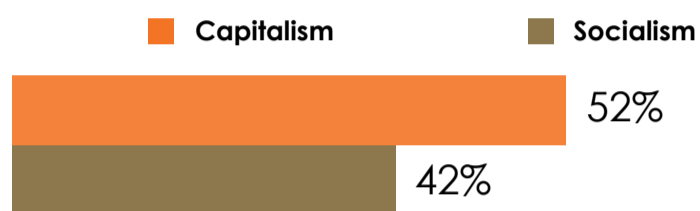
Despite Republicans' rhetorical support for free markets, country loyalty may come first. A slim majority (51%) would rather purchase a higher-priced product made in America while 43 percent would choose a less-expensive product of equal quality made in another country. Nearly the inverse is true of millennial Democrats. Fifty-four percent Democrats opt for the lower-priced product made abroad and 44 percent would rather the more expensive American-made product. Independents are nearly identical to Democrats on this issue.

# XI. What Kind of Economic System Do Millennials Want?

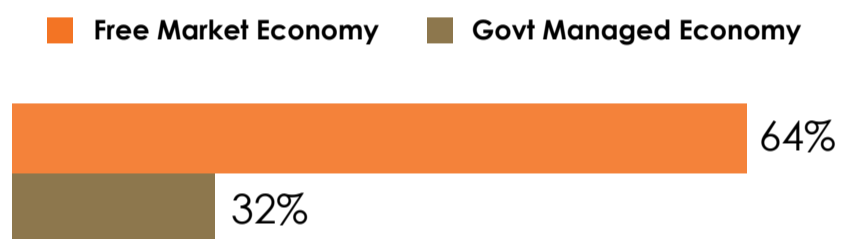
Millennials are favorable toward business, and while their confidence in government has waned, they still believe it should be doing more to improve society. But this doesn't explain what relationship they think should exist between government and business—in other words, what kind of economic system they desire. When asked to choose, millennials choose capitalism over socialism, albeit with less enthusiasm than one might expect. Yet they enthusiastically choose a free market economy over an economy managed by the government.

## Millennials Favor Free Market Economy Over Govt Managed Economy, Capitalism Over Socialism by Smaller Margin

Which is the better system: capitalism or socialism?



Which is the better system: free market economy or an economy managed by the government?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll "Don't know/refused" responses not shown

*52% of Millennials Pick Capitalism over Socialism; 64% Prefer a Free Market Economy Over a Govt-Managed Economy*

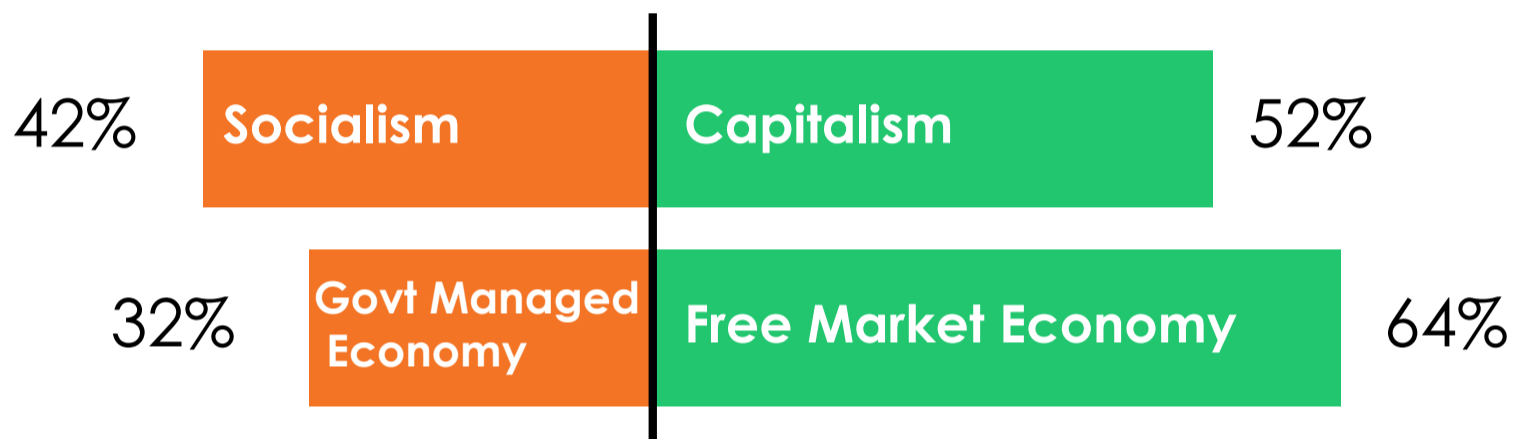
Half of the millennial respondents were asked to select the “better system,” capitalism or socialism: 52 percent chose capitalism and 42 percent chose socialism. This may surprise some, since among a national sample only 31 percent of all Americans have a favorable view of socialism.<sup>35</sup> But when the other half of the sample chose between a “free market economy” and an “economy managed by the government,” 64 percent chose a free market economy and 32 percent favored an economy managed by the government.

## Millennials May Not Know What Socialism Means

Millennials appear to be more favorable toward socialism than a government-managed economy, even though the latter is arguably less interventionist. This raises the question: Do millennials know what socialism means?

# Socialism Holds Up Better Next to Capitalism than a Govt Managed Economy Next to the Free Market

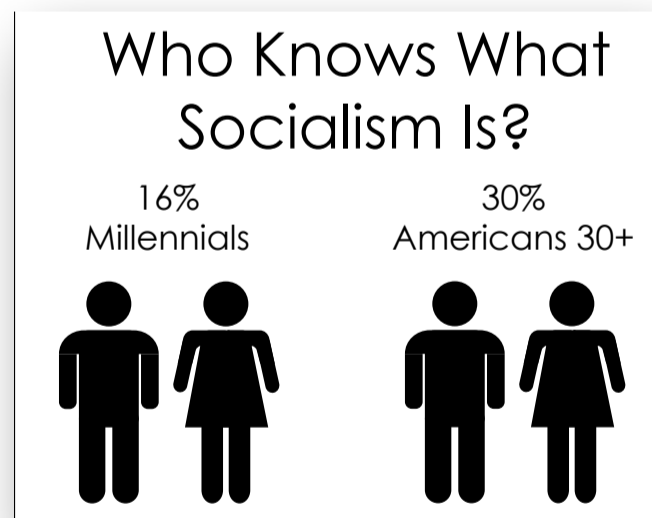
Which is the better system?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Perhaps not. A 2010 CBS/New York Times survey found that when Americans were asked to use their own words to define the word "socialism" millennials were the least able to do so. Accord to the survey, only 16 percent of millennials could define socialism as government ownership, or some variation thereof, compared to 30 percent of Americans over 30 (and 57% of tea partiers, incidentally).<sup>36</sup>



This may explain why socialism garners greater support than a government-managed economy. Interestingly, millennial support for a government-managed economy (32%) mirrors national favorability toward the word "socialism" (31%).<sup>37</sup> Millennial preferences may not be so different from older generations once terms are defined. Indeed, millennials' preferred economic system becomes more

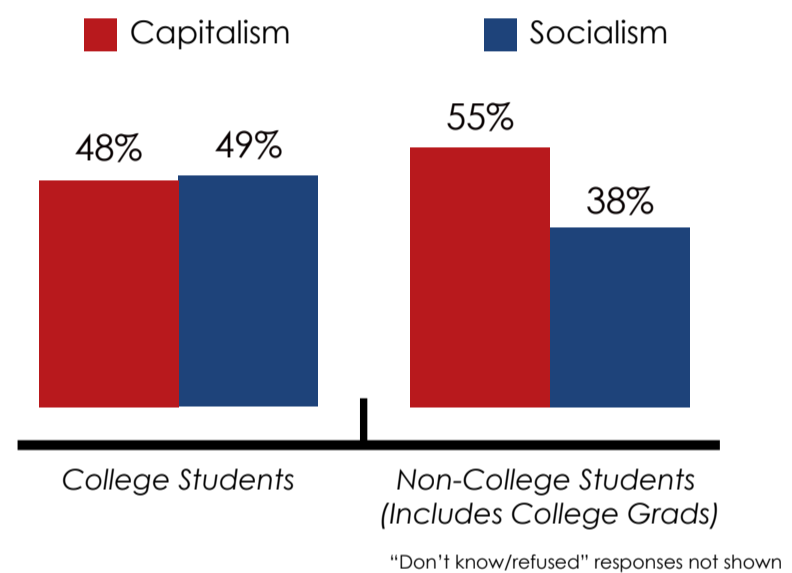
pronounced when it is described precisely. Language about capitalism and socialism is vague, and using these terms assumes knowledge that millennials may not have acquired yet. Moreover, these words may have taken on different meaning in the minds of most millennials, especially for a cohort who didn't grow up during the Cold War and came of political age during the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. For instance, capitalism may imply government favoritism instead of a free market, and socialism may imply protecting the vulnerable.

### *Support for Socialism Peaks in College*

There is evidence that support for socialism and a government-managed economy rises when millennials attend college and then recedes after they graduate.

## **Millennials More Favorable to Govt Intervention While in College**

*Which is the better system: capitalism or socialism?*



*Reason- Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*

College students are evenly divided between socialism (49%) and capitalism (48%). Conversely, millennials who are not currently in college favor capitalism to socialism 55 to 38 percent. (College graduates are similar to other non-students in support for capitalism).

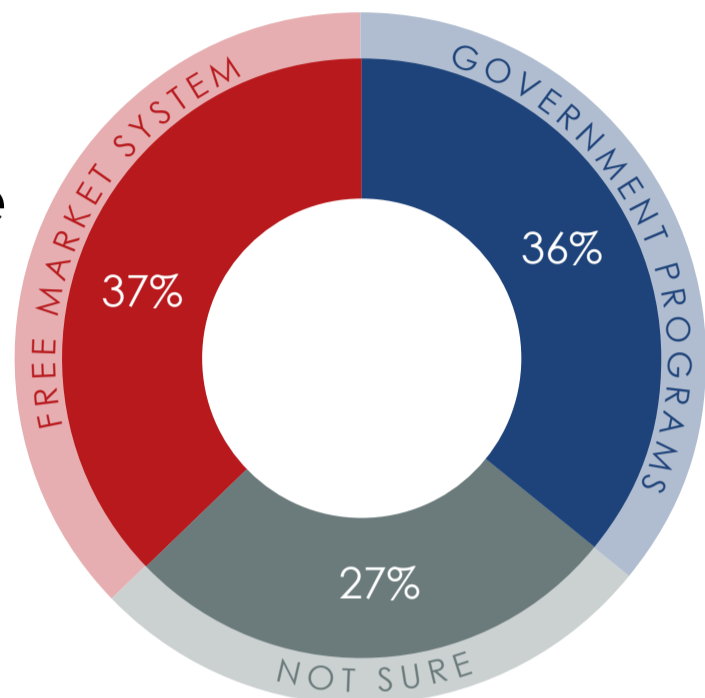
## Millennials Like Markets But Aren't Sure if they Promote Opportunity

Millennials like the market-based economic system. However, they are unsure if markets are the best means of promoting economic opportunity. This uncertainty over whether markets or government help drive income mobility may be a significant factor in their increased support for government action.

## Millennials Are Divided On Whether Markets or Government Best Promote Economic Opportunity

*Which do you think is most effective in promoting economic opportunity: the free market system or government programs and services?*

*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*



When asked to choose, 37 percent say the free market system is the “most effective in promoting economic opportunity” while 36 percent think “government programs and services” are the best way to promote opportunity. A significant share, 27 percent, are not sure whether markets or government programs do the best job ensuring economic opportunity. While many people think both the free market system and government programs are important, the question was intended to measure which was most important.

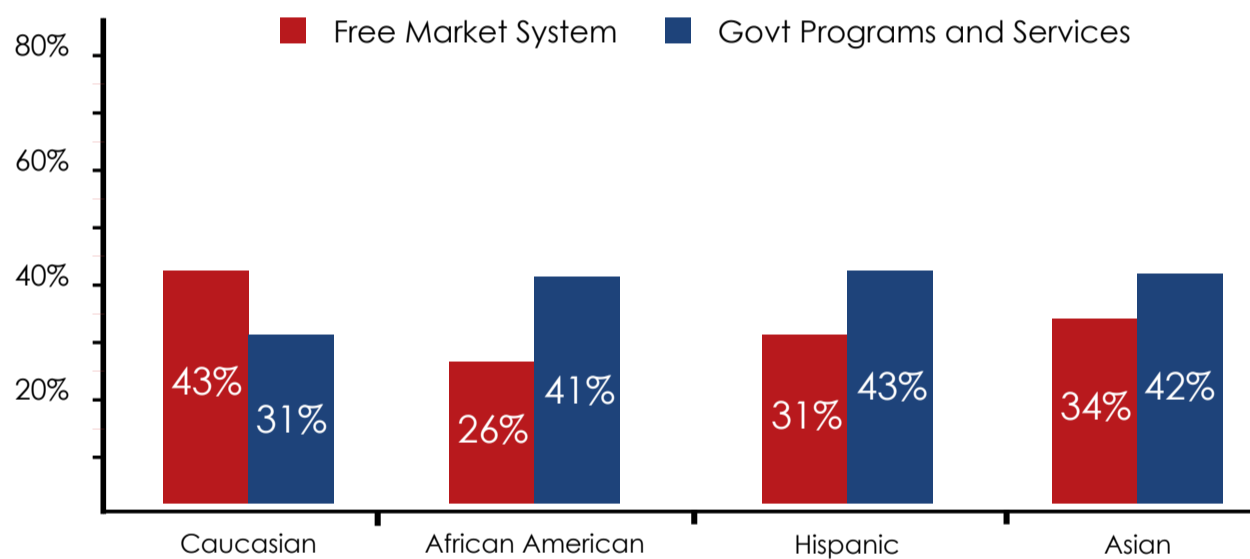
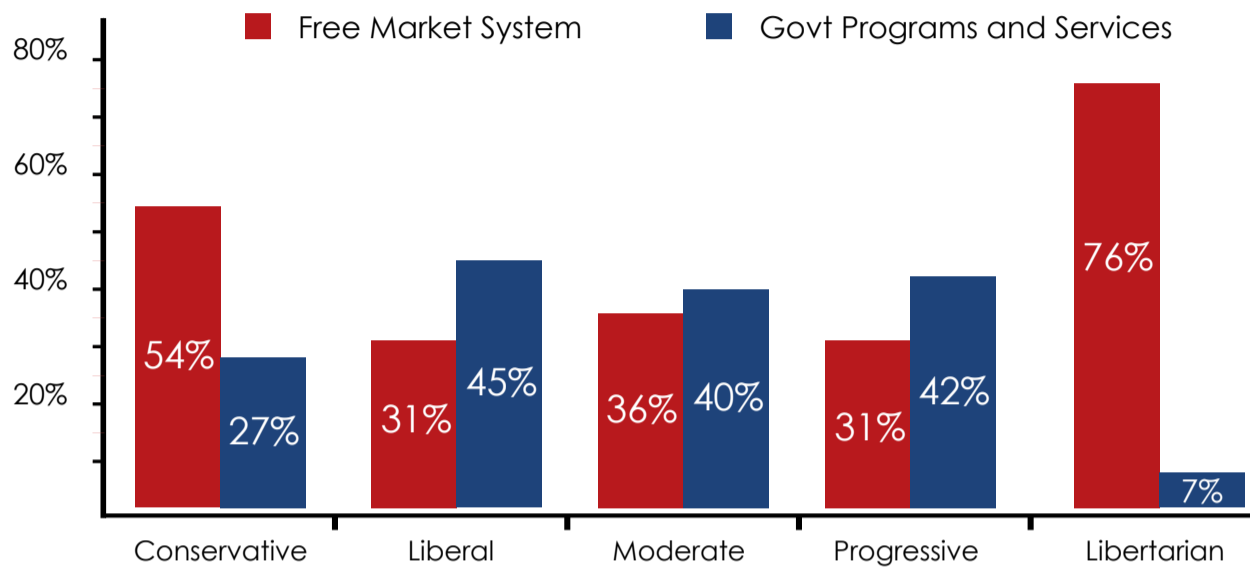
Belief that markets better promote economic opportunity rises with education. Of those with high school degrees or less, 31 percent say markets work best, but among college graduates this number rises to 44 percent. (Education does not increase the view that government services best provide opportunity).

Self-described conservatives (54%) and libertarians (76%) strongly endorse markets as the best vehicle for climbing the income ladder. Conversely, pluralities of liberals (45%) and progressives (42%) think government programs and services are most effective. Moderates are divided, with 40 percent expecting government services and 36 percent expecting markets to best drive income mobility.



# What Better Promotes Economic Opportunity?

Which do you think is most effective in promoting economic opportunity: the free market system or government programs and services?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

White millennials (43%) are more likely than African-Americans (26%), Hispanics (31%), and Asian Americans (34%) to believe the free market system can provide them with the best chance to rise. Roughly four in 10 non-white millennials expect government programs and services best promote economic opportunity. A quarter of white, Hispanic, and Asian-American millennials and a third of African-American millennials aren't sure which is better.

This debate hinges on two different ideas about what drives income mobility. One view is that when government stays out of the way and does not discriminate among citizens or hinder opportunities, individuals who work hard reap rewards and move up the income ladder. This view lends itself to the belief that free markets drive economic mobility. The other view

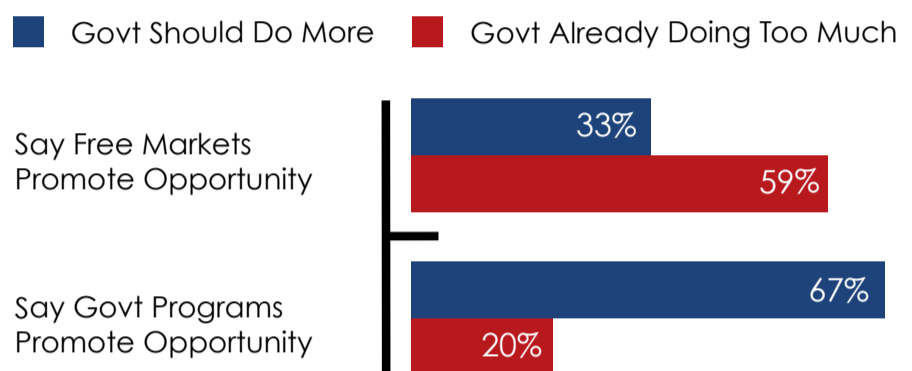
is that government needs to help level the playing field and that a state which actively seeks out and promotes opportunities for its citizens is key to economic mobility.

*Ambivalence Over Market- or Government-Driven Income Mobility Likely Behind Increased Millennial Support for Government Action*

Millennials' uncertainty about whether markets or government drive people up the income ladder may partly explain their views on government action.

**Skepticism that Markets Drive Income Mobility Linked to Support for Govt Activism**

*Which do you think is most effective in promoting economic opportunity: the free market system or government programs and services?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Among those who think markets best promote opportunity, 59 percent think government is doing too many things, 54 percent don't think it's necessary to increase government spending for the poor, and 58 percent say government shouldn't redistribute wealth to reduce income inequality.

Among those who think government programs and services are most effective in promoting economic opportunity, 67 percent think government should be doing more than it's currently doing, 74 percent want to increase government-provided financial assistance to the poor, and 56 percent say government should redistribute income.

Millennials came of an impressionable political age in the midst of the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. A third are living at home with their parents. Gallup has reported that one in three young adults are underemployed, more than twice as likely as older Americans.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, 46 percent of millennials believe they will be worse off than their parents' generation, 36 percent believe they will be the same, and only 16 percent think they will be better off.

For a significant share of millennials, who have not yet experienced or observed market-driven mobility and success, government action appears to be a viable alternative. Consequently, greater support for government among this cohort may be in part driven by the difficult economy that has undermined the view that markets offer more upward mobility than the state.

## XII. How Do Millennials Think the Economic System Works?

Millennials' underlying assumptions about how the economy and government operate can help explain why young people think what they do.

### *Millennials Aren't Sure Whether a Rising Tide Lifts All Boats*

Do millennials view wealth in society as a fixed pie? Or do they think that wealth can grow for everyone's benefit, like the oft-used phrase justifying free markets: "a rising tide lifts all boats"?

Millennials were asked to select which statement they agree with more, "people generally get rich at the expense of others" or "wealth can grow so there's more for everyone." The plurality of millennials (48 %) think people usually get rich at the expense of others, a zero-sum view of wealth in society. Forty-three percent say wealth can grow so there's more for everyone. Millennials are fairly similar to the national population on this question.<sup>39</sup>

Assumptions about wealth generation correlate with millennials' partisan affiliation: 56 percent of Democrats say people generally get rich at the expense

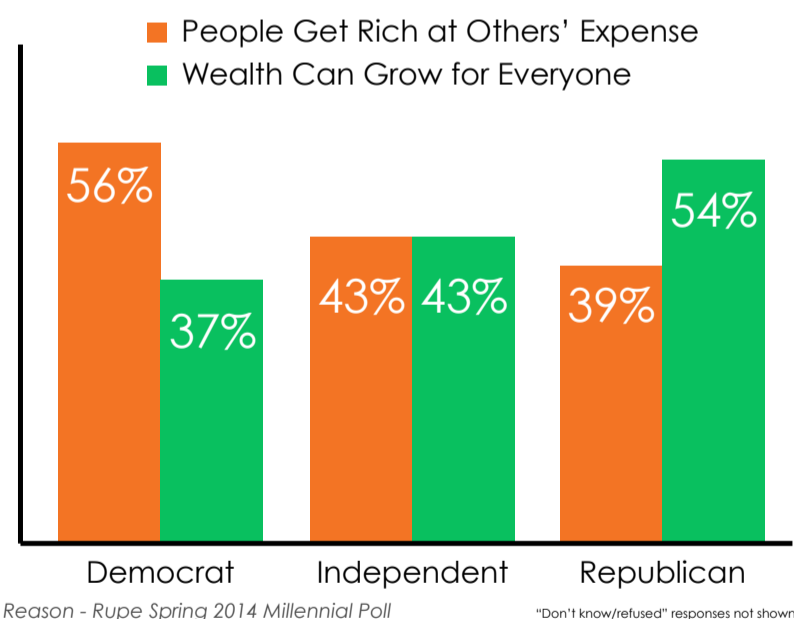
of others, while 39 percent of Republicans agree. Conversely, 54 percent of Republicans say wealth can grow so there's more for everyone, while 37 percent of Democrats agree. Independents are evenly divided.

Millennials' perception about wealth being a fixed or growing pie doesn't vary substantially across race, income, and education, but it does correlate with their attitudes toward business and government.

**48% Say People Get Rich at Others' Expense**

### **Democratic Millennials Mostly View Wealth as a Fixed Pie**

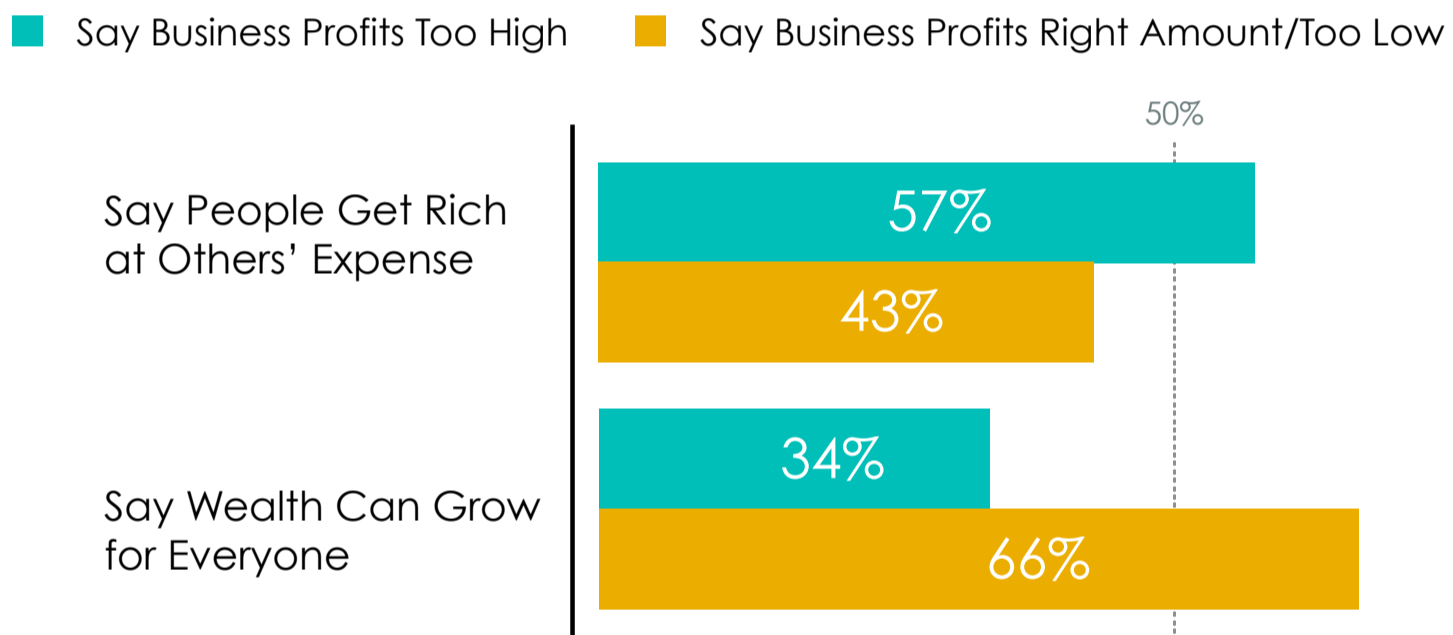
*Which do you agree with more: people generally get rich at the expense of others, or wealth can grow so there's more for everyone?*



Those who think people get rich at the expense of others are more likely to say that businesses make too much money (57%) than the right amount or too little (43%). Among those who say wealth can grow so there's more for everyone, 66 percent aren't concerned about business making too much money while only 34 percent are concerned. In other words, millennials are critical of corporate earnings if they implicitly assume those profits came at their own expense. However, if millennials feel they can succeed along with others, they are less concerned about company profits.

## Belief that Wealth Is Fixed Pie Tied to Anxiety Over Company Profits

*Which do you agree with more: people generally get rich at the expense of others, or wealth can grow so there's more for everyone?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

The fact that a third of millennials are under- or unemployed and a third are living at home during an era of rising income inequality, record corporate profits, and high executive pay, may have led many millennials to believe that America's rich rose at their expense.

**58% Say Most People Can Get Ahead with Hard Work**

## Millennials Say Hard Work Pays Off

Nevertheless, millennials still endorse the age-old American creed that hard work will bring success. Similar to older Americans, 58 percent say “most people who want to get ahead can make it if they’re willing to work hard” while 35 percent think “hard work and determination do not lead to success for most people.”<sup>40</sup>

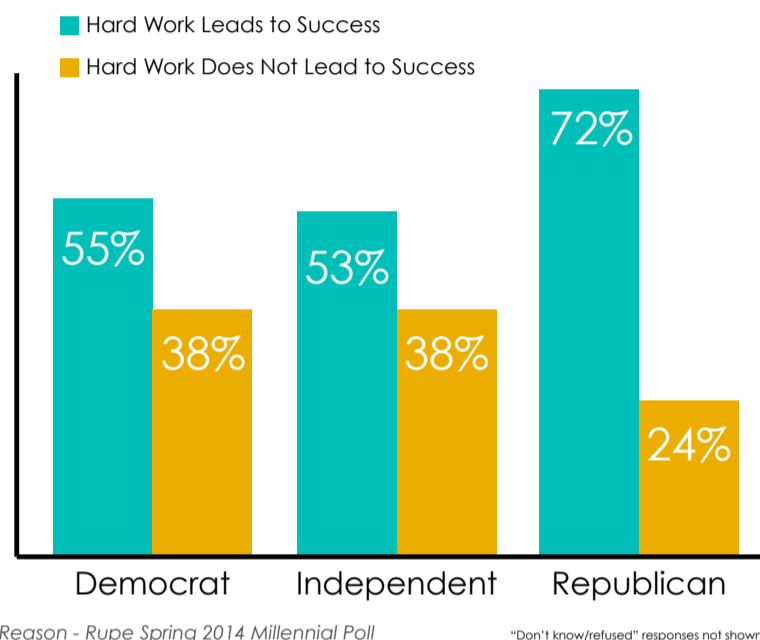
Majorities of Democratic, independent, and Republican millennials believe their hard work will pay off. However, Republicans (72%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (55%) and independents (53%) to say hard work and determination bring success.

The belief that hard work pays off is strongly related to free market

preferences. Fully 73 percent of those who say hard work brings success prefer a free market system, while 24 percent prefer a government-managed economy. Among those who say that hard work does not generally bring success, roughly half prefer an economy managed by government and half a free market economy.

### Republican Millennials More Likely to Believe Hard Work Brings Success

Which do you agree with more: Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard, or hard work and determination do not lead to success for most people?



## Do Millennials Believe in Self-Determination?

### Millennials Believe Self-Determination Drives Wealth and Success

Central to understanding millennials' views about government, society, and the economic system is examining what they think causes wealth and poverty.

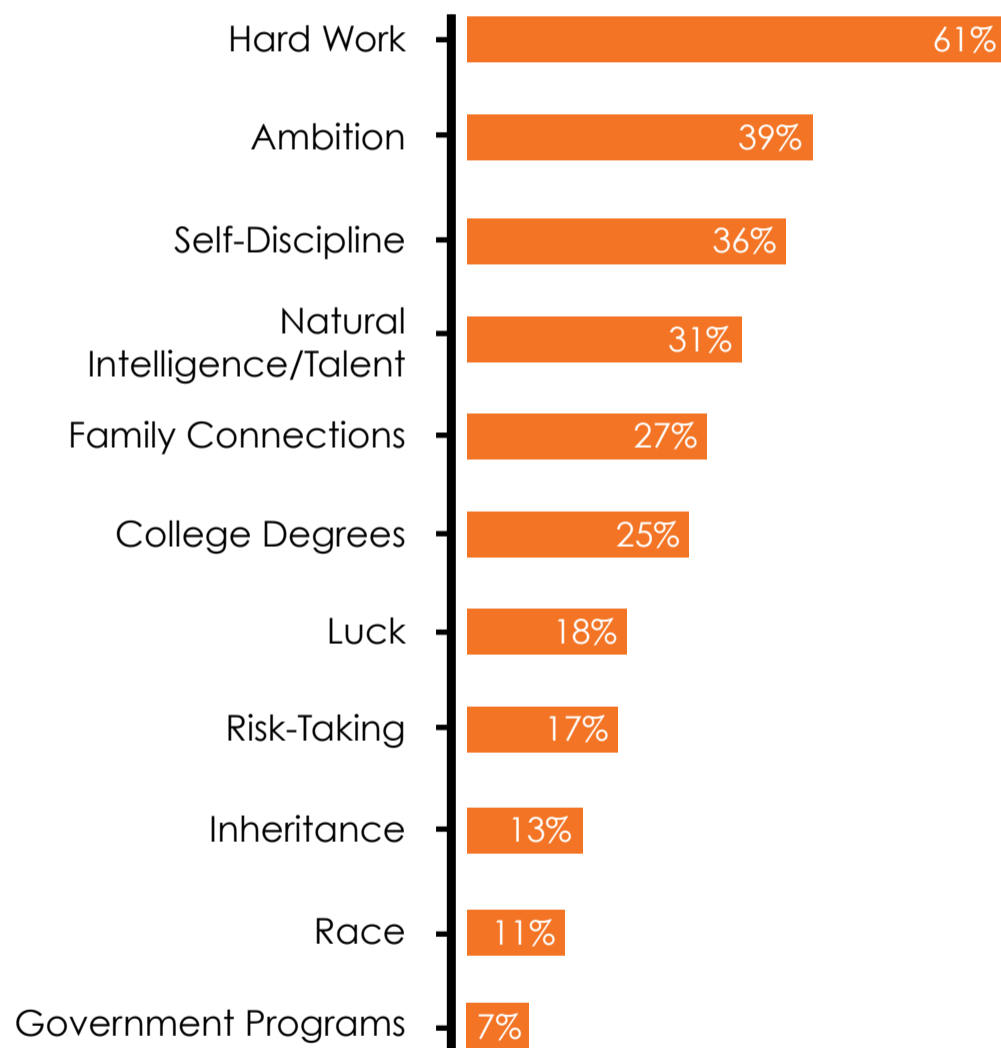
To measure this, millennials were asked to select from a list and rank the three most important causes of a person's wealth and success. Some were factors within an individual's control, like hard work and self-discipline, while others were external factors that individuals could not determine, such as inheritance and family connections.

A majority of millennials primarily view individual decisions rather than external or environmental factors as most important in explaining success

and wealth. Sixty-one percent say hard work is among their top three most important reasons for a person's success; in fact 28 percent ranked hard work the most important explanation. Other top explanations for success include ambition (39%) and self-discipline (36%).

## Millennials Say Hard Work, Ambition, and Self-Discipline Most Important for Success

*Which of the three following reasons do you think are most important in determining a person's wealth and success?*



*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*

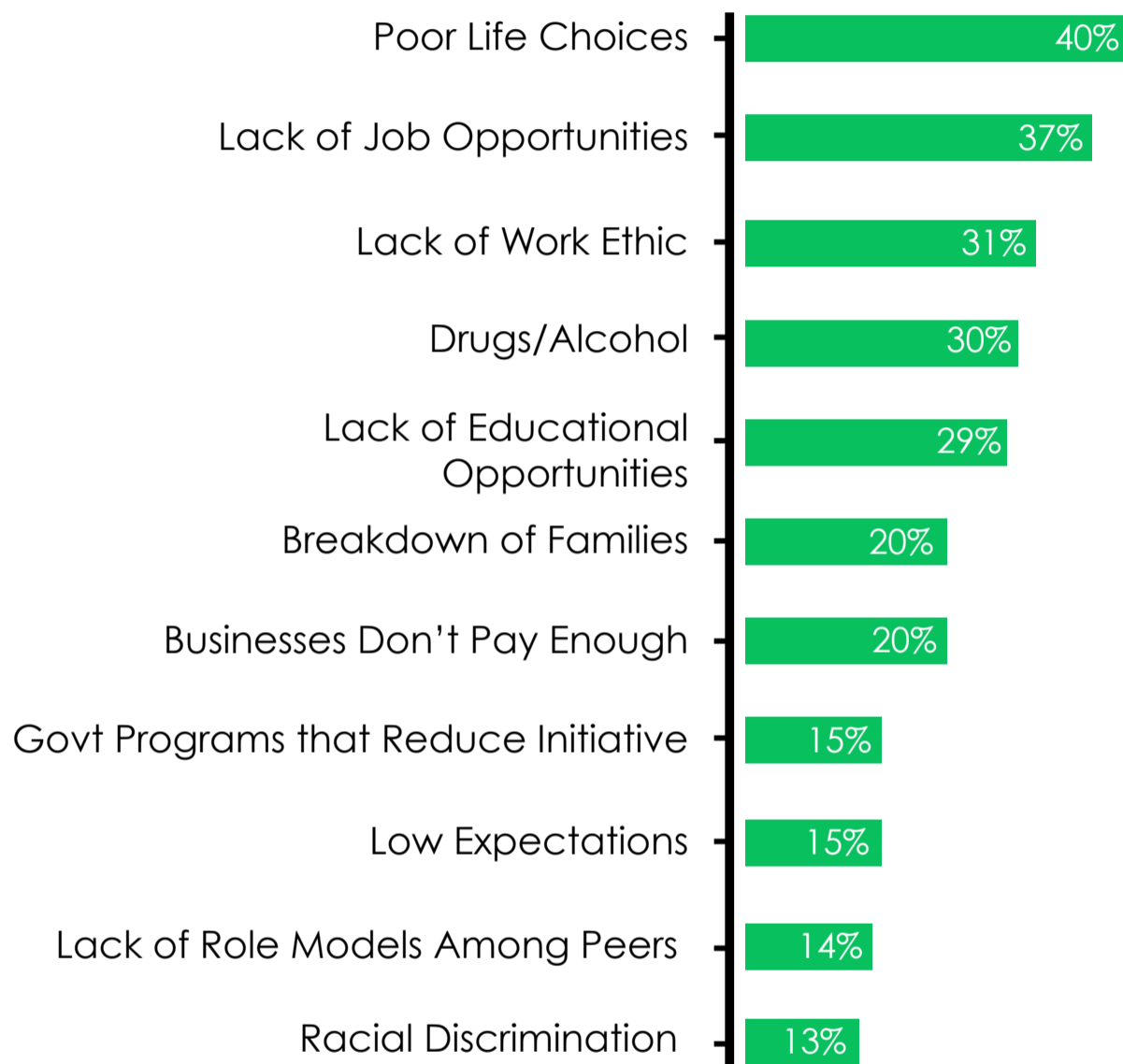
The remaining reasons include natural intelligence (31%), family connections (27%), college degrees (25%), getting lucky (18%), risk-taking (17%), inheritance (13%), race (11%), and government programs (7%).



*Millennials Primarily Blame Personal Decisions for Poverty, But Also Think Environmental Factors Are Important*

## **Millennials Blame Poverty on Poor Life Choices and Lack of Job Opportunities**

*Of the following, which three reasons do you think are responsible for the continuing problem of poverty in this country?*



*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*

Millennials were also asked to select from a list and rank the three most important reasons for the continuing problem of poverty in the United States. Some were factors within an individual's control, such as work ethic and life choices, while others were external factors that individuals could not determine, such as available job and educational opportunities. Millennials are inclined to view poverty as within a person's control, but they give external factors more credit for poverty than for wealth. The top two most selected explanations for poverty include poor life choices (40%) and a lack of job opportunities (37%). The next three explanations were virtually

tied—lack of work ethic (31%), drug and alcohol abuse (30%), and lack of good educational opportunities (29%). Three of the top five most selected explanations for poverty—poor life choices, lack of work ethic, and drug abuse—are factors generally determined by individual decisions, while lack of job and educational opportunities are generally outside a person's control.

The remaining explanations of poverty include the breakdown of families (20%), businesses not paying high enough wages (20%), government programs that reduce initiative (15%), low expectations (15%), lack of role models among peers (14%), racial discrimination (13%), lack of government funding and programs (12%), and inadequate access to health care (9%).

## **Do Beliefs About Self-Determination Help Explain Political Attitudes?**

Millennials' attitudes toward government and the economic system are in part explained by whether they tend to attribute the causes of wealth and poverty to forces beyond an individual's control or to individual decisions. Indeed, research has shown that individuals vary in their disposition toward viewing events in their lives as internally or externally controlled, and these expectations have been shown to impact behavior and political preferences.<sup>41</sup>

To measure millennials' general tendency to perceive wealth and poverty as primarily internally or externally determined, millennials' first-ranked explanations for wealth and poverty were categorized as either primarily within or outside of a person's control, and then averaged.<sup>42</sup> (See Appendix 5 for a full methods explanation).

Fifty percent of millennials ranked some kind of personal decision as most important for the causes of both wealth and poverty. Thirty-eight percent ranked environmental or external factors as most important for explaining wealth and 46 percent for explaining poverty. Thus, millennials believe external forces cause poverty more so than wealth.

**50% Rank  
Personal Decisions  
as Most Important  
Cause of Wealth  
and Poverty**

Majorities of millennials who believe success and poverty are primarily within individual control prefer a competitive/meritocratic society where wealth

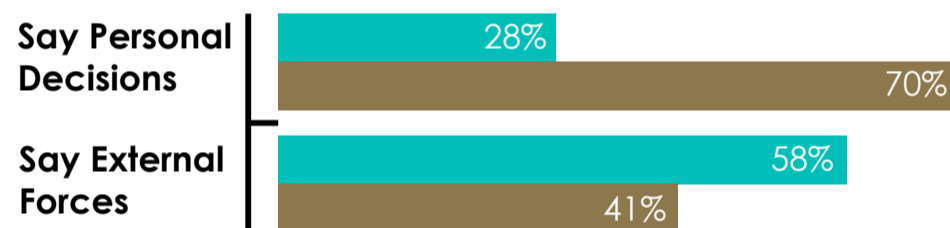
is distributed according to achievement (70%), favor smaller government (62%), and say government does not have the responsibility to redistribute wealth (54%).

Conversely, majorities of millennials who believe that poverty and success are primarily the result of factors outside of individual control prefer an economically egalitarian society where the income gap is small regardless of achievement (58%), prefer a large government (60%), and say government should redistribute wealth (54%).

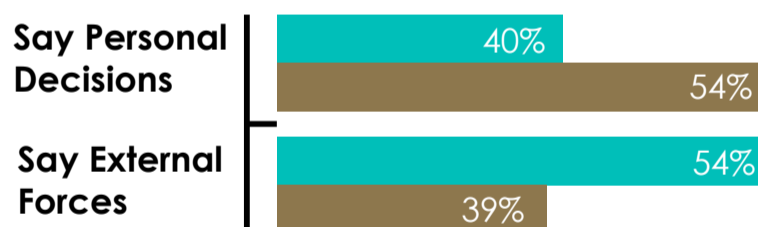
## Belief in Self-Determination Tied to Attitudes Toward Government and Redistribution

*Do Personal Decisions or External Forces Primarily Determine Wealth and Poverty?*

■ Prefer Egalitarian Society      ■ Prefer Competitive/Merit-Based Society



■ Govt Should Reduce Income Gap      ■ Govt Should Not Reduce Income Gap



■ Larger Govt, More Services, Higher Taxes      ■ Smaller Govt, Fewer Services, Lower Taxes



"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Millennials were categorized as those who primarily believe personal decisions determine wealth and poverty and those who primarily believe external forces determine wealth and poverty.

These results provide a strong indication that how millennials explain success and economic struggle shape whether they believe individuals are responsible for their situations, if wealth is earned and deserved, and consequently if an egalitarian or competitive society is most fair.

### *Beliefs About Self-Determination Tied to Economic Ideology and Partisanship*

Beliefs about the extent to which individuals can determine success or poverty do not vary substantially across various demographic groups, but are strongly tied to political identity.

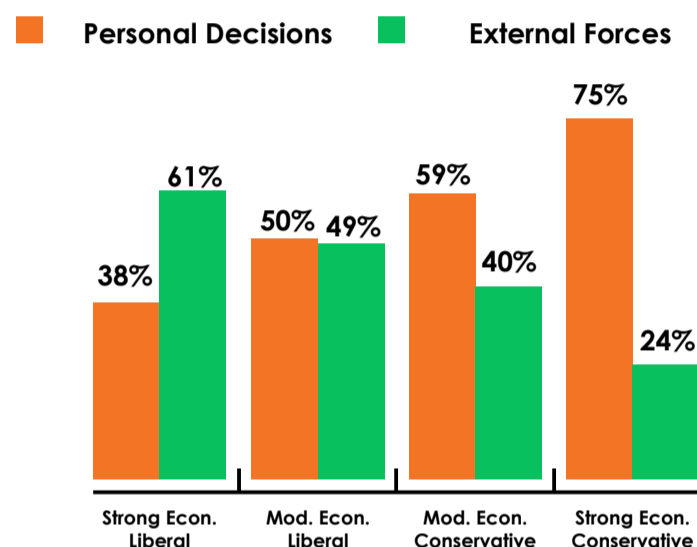
Republicans (62%) and independents (52%) are more likely than Democratic millennials (42%) to believe factors within a person's control, such as hard work and good choices, are the primary determinants of poverty. Democratic millennials are more likely (56%) to believe external factors, such as a lack of job and educational opportunities, primarily explain poverty, compared to 40 percent of independents and 34 percent of Republicans.

Republicans are equally likely to believe individual decisions explain wealth and poverty. Democratic millennials are slightly more likely to believe personal decisions explain success (49%) than poverty (42%). Independents are evenly divided.

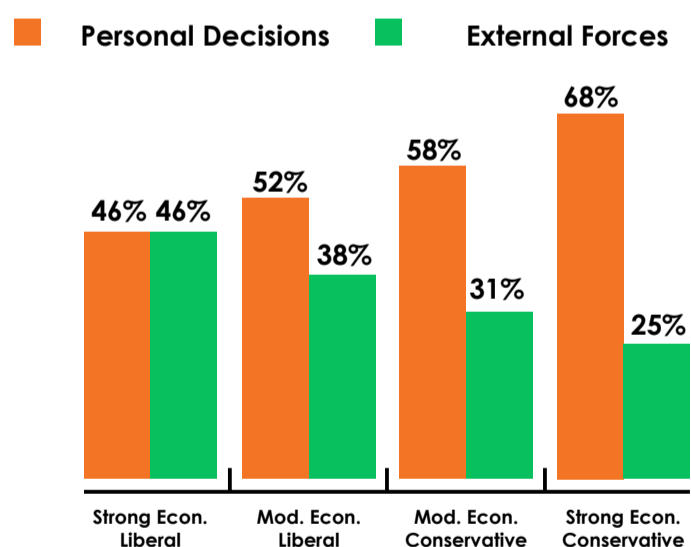
Economic ideology is also strongly correlated with perceptions of self-determination for wealth and poverty. Three-fourths of strong economic conservatives say individual decisions are more important for explaining poverty, compared to 38 percent of strong economic liberals. Similarly, 68 percent of strong economic conservatives say personal decisions primarily drive success, compared to 46 percent of strong economic liberals.

### **Economic Ideology Strongly Tied to Beliefs About Self-Determination**

*What do you think is most responsible for the continuing problem of poverty in this country?*



*What do you think is most important in determining a person's wealth and success?*

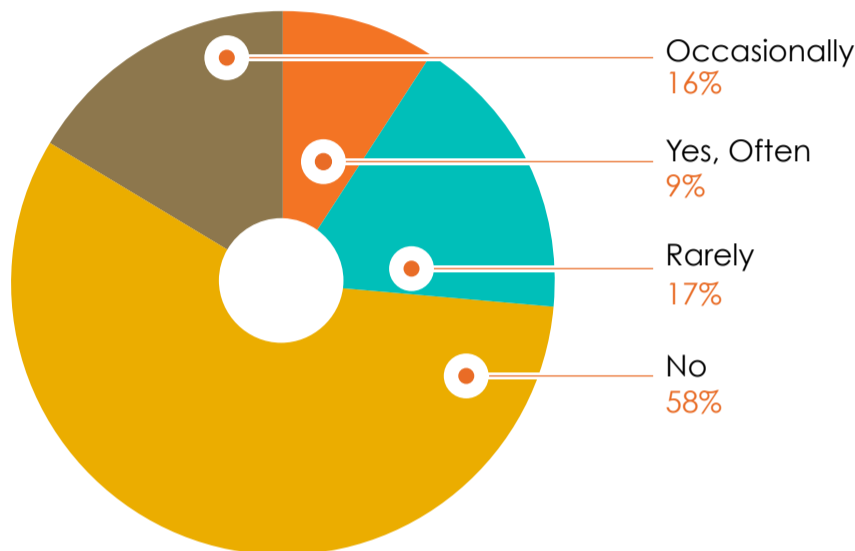


Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll "Don't know/refused" responses not shown

# XIII. Is Experience with Discrimination Tied to Political Attitudes?

More than four in 10 millennials report experiencing discrimination based on their race, gender, or sexual orientation, and this correlates with their views about government and the economic system.

## 42 Percent of Millennials Report Experiencing Discrimination Based on Their Race/Ethnicity, Gender, or Sexual Orientation



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

While 58 percent report not having experienced discrimination, 42 percent say they have—including nine percent who say they've experienced discrimination "often," 16 who say "occasionally," and 17 percent who say "rarely."

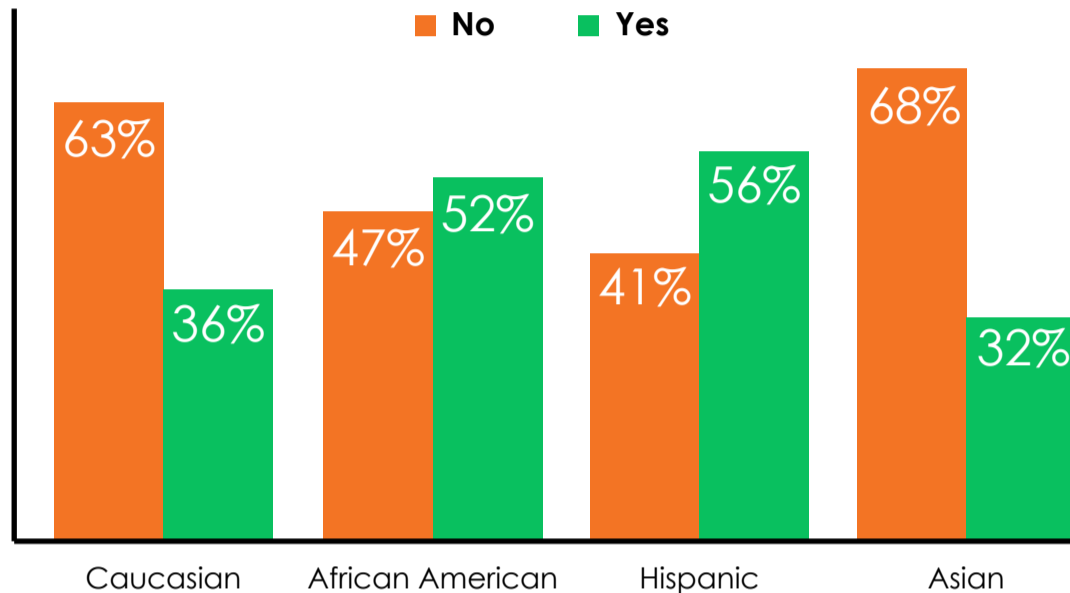
Looking across racial groups, roughly two-thirds of white and Asian millennials say they have not experienced discrimination but 56 percent of Latino and

52 percent of black millennials have. Slightly more women (45%) than men (40%) say they've been targeted, but the difference is within the survey's margin of error.

Fifty percent of Democrats say they have experienced discrimination, while 49 percent have not. In comparison, only a third of independent and Republican millennials say they've experienced discrimination, while two-thirds have not. Accounting for race, we find white Democrats (45%) are about 1.5 times as likely as white Republicans (31%) and independents (30%) to say they have been targeted. (This partisan trends exists for both male and female millennials).

## Majorities of Hispanic and African American Millennials, and a Third of Caucasian and Asian Millennials Report Being Targets of Discrimination

*Was there ever a specific instance when you personally felt discriminated against because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?*



*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

### *Experience with Discrimination May Impact Attitudes Toward Government and the Economic System*

Reported experience with discrimination correlates with how one views government, markets, and society. People who feel singled out are less supportive of capitalism and more supportive of wealth redistribution and an egalitarian society.

In order to account for differential reports of discrimination among racial groups, the following considers how non-white millennials' experience with discrimination correlates with political preferences.

Among non-white millennials who do not report having experienced discrimination, 53 percent favor capitalism over socialism and 60 percent favor a competitive/meritocratic society where wealth is distributed according to ones' achievement. However, among non-white millennials who report experiencing discrimination, a majority (52%) favors socialism over capitalism and only 49 percent prefer a competitive/meritocratic society.

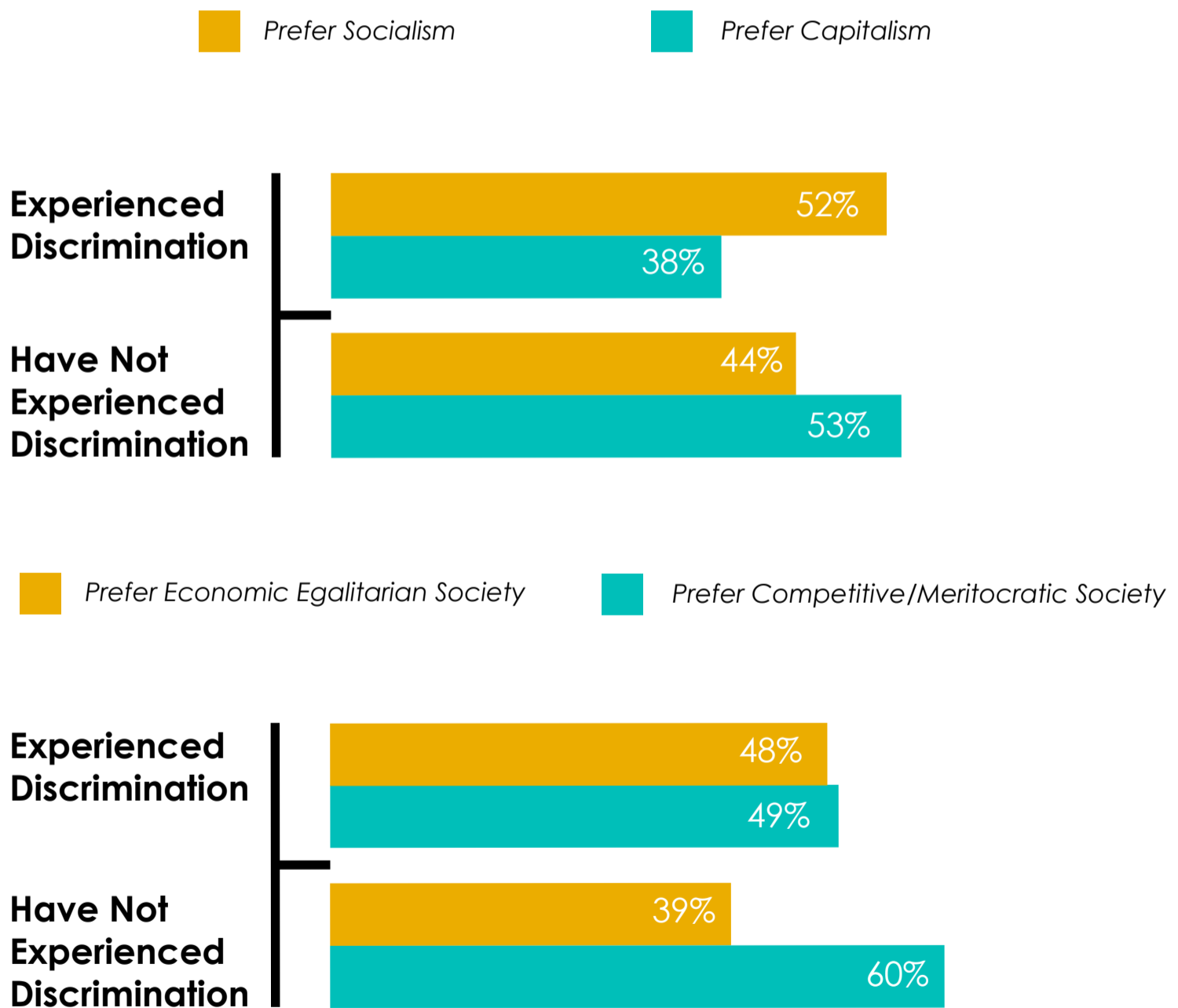
While we cannot be certain that experience with discrimination is bolstering support for government intervention, it's reasonable to suspect that it



might. Arguably, these kinds of experiences undermine individualism by reinforcing the idea that external factors interfere with the relationship between work and rewards, tainting the fairness of the economic system. In turn, individuals could view government intervention as a justified means to protect them from an unfair system.

## Non-white Millennials Who Have Experienced Discrimination More Likely to Favor Socialism and an Egalitarian Society

*Was there ever a specific instance when you personally felt discriminated against because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?*



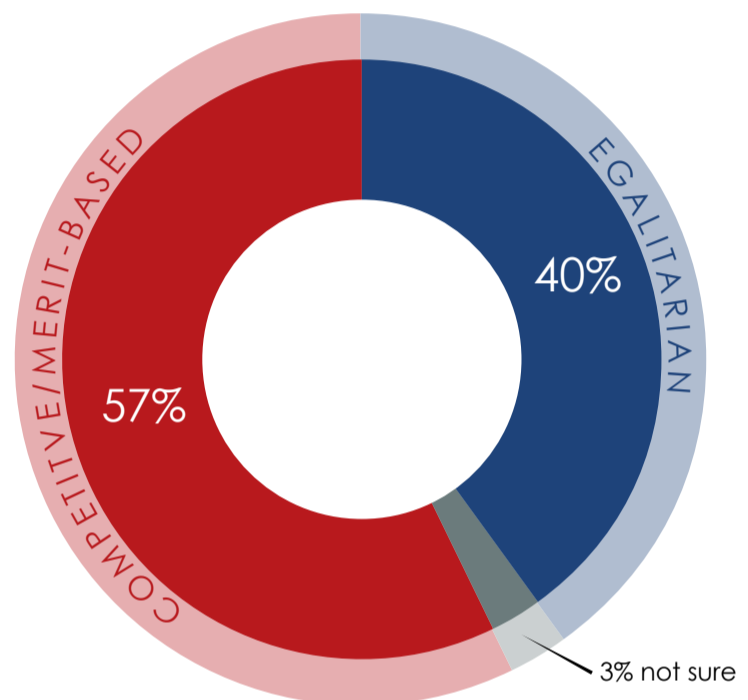
## XIV. What Do Millennials Believe Is the Ideal Society?

A previous section examined millennials' underlying assumptions about how society and the economy operate. In this section, Reason-Rupe investigates millennials' ideal society outside of the realm of American politics and partisanship. The survey asked millennials a question also asked on the World Values Survey intended to measure if one has a preference for an economically egalitarian or competitive/meritocratic society.

### Millennials Prefer a Society Where Wealth Is Distributed According To Achievement

*Would you rather live in a society where the gap between rich and poor is small regardless of achievement, or where wealth is distributed according to one's achievement?*

*Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll*



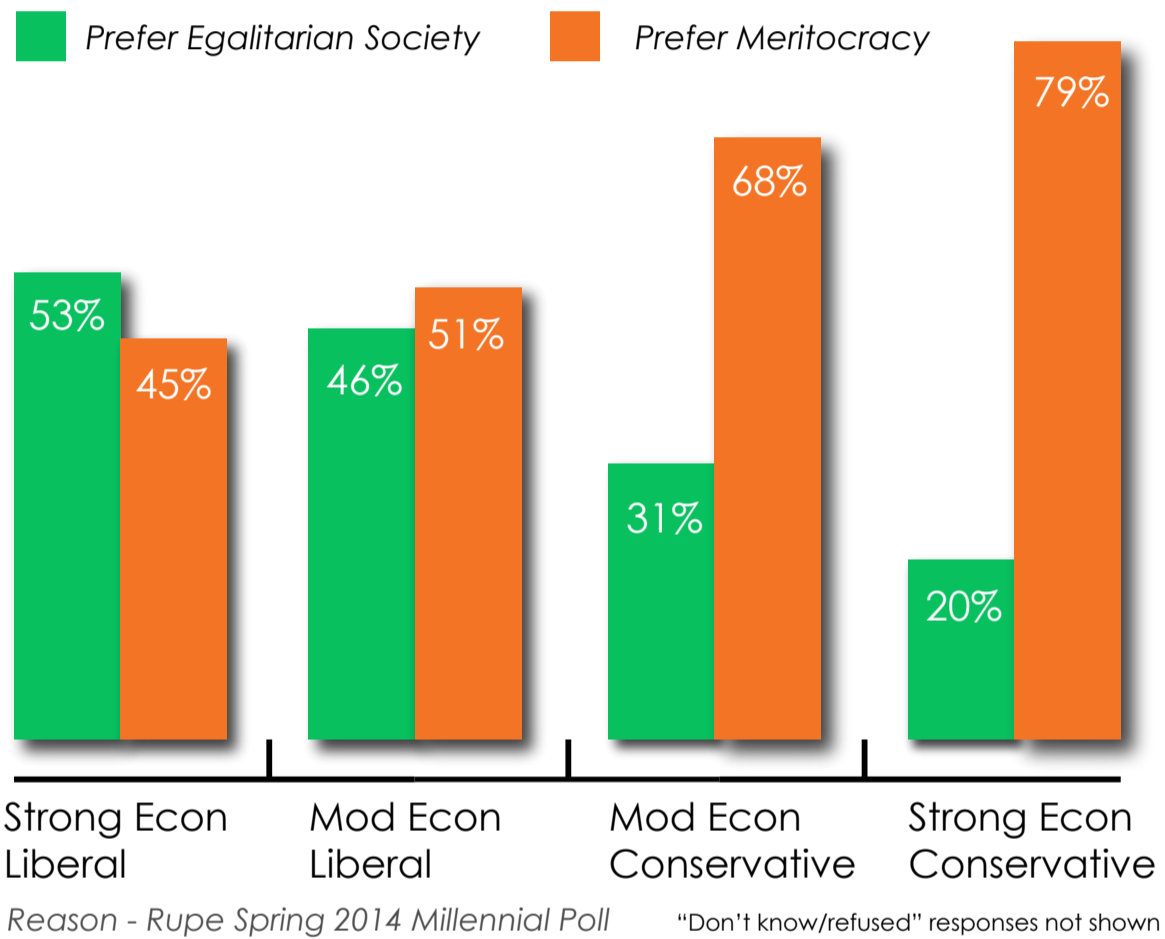
*“If you had to choose, would you rather live in a society where the gap between rich and poor is small regardless of achievement, or a society where wealth is distributed according to one's achievement?”*

Millennials are solidly in the competitive, meritocratic camp: 57 percent say they prefer a society where wealth is distributed according to one's achievement and 40 percent opt for an economically egalitarian society where the income gap between rich and poor is small regardless of achievement.

Economic conservatism is strongly tied to a preference for a competitive, meritocratic society and economic liberalism is tied to preference for an egalitarian society. Among millennials who indicated they were very economically conservative, 79 percent prefer a competitive society, compared to 45 percent of strong economic liberals. Conversely, 53 percent of strong economic liberals prefer an egalitarian society compared to 20 percent of strong economic conservatives.

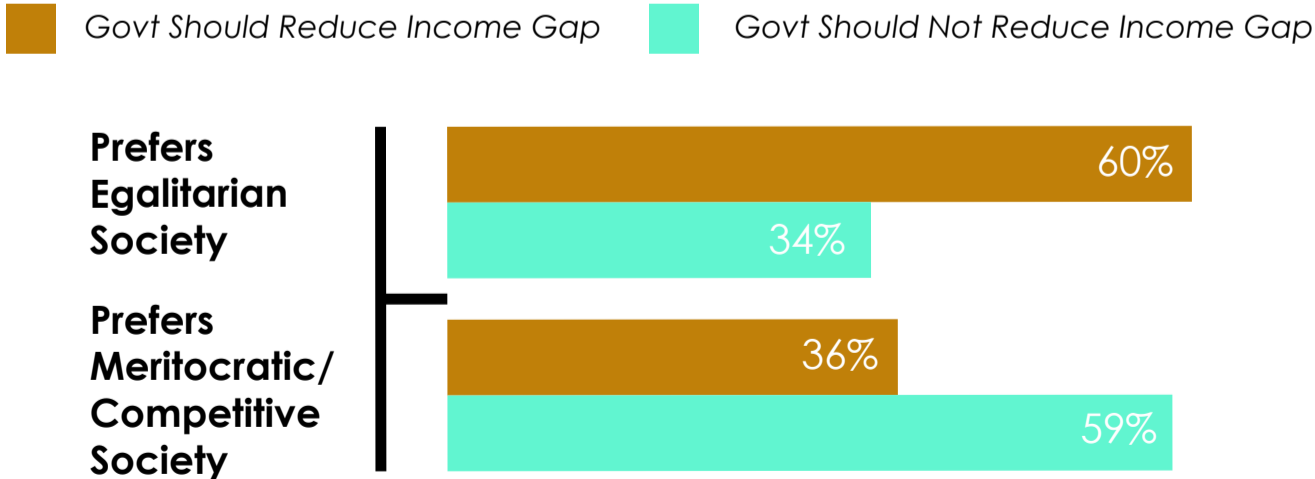
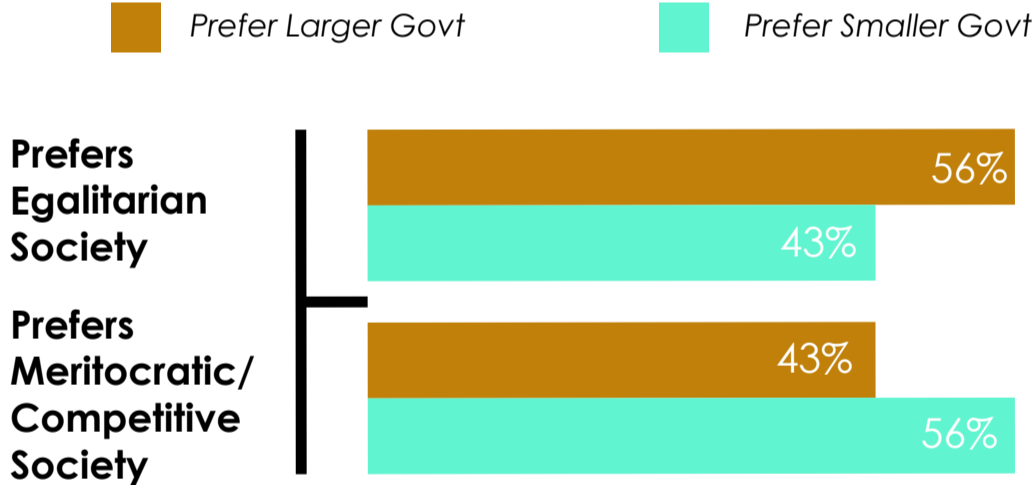
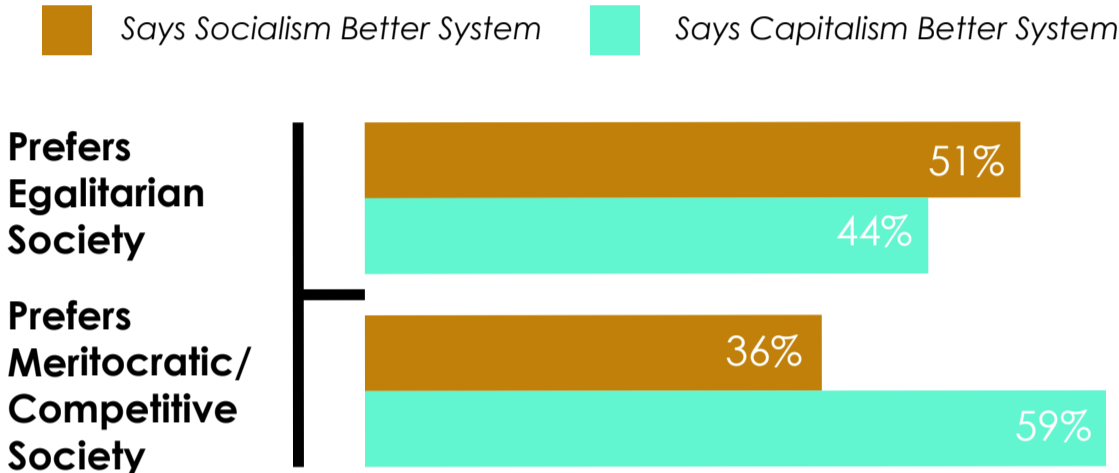
## Economic Ideology Strongly Tied to Preferences for Egalitarian or Meritocratic Society

If you had to choose, would you rather live in a society where the gap between rich and poor is small regardless of achievement, or a society where wealth is distributed according to one's achievement?



# Preference for an Egalitarian or Meritocratic Society Tied to Attitudes Toward Government, Redistribution, and Capitalism

Would you rather live in a society where the gap between rich and poor is small regardless of achievement, or a society where wealth is distributed according to one's achievement?



There are not many significant differences across demographic groups, but political groups do vary. Egalitarian preferences correlate highly with attitudes toward government and the economic system. Egalitarian millennials say government should redistribute wealth (60%), say socialism is better than capitalism (51%), and prefer a larger government with more services (56%). Millennials who prefer a competitive/meritocratic system are essentially a mirror image, and say government does not have a responsibility to reduce income differences (59%), prefer capitalism over socialism (59%), and favor a smaller government (56%).

Conservatives (72%) and libertarians (83%) strongly favor a competitive/merit-based society, as do 57 percent of moderates, 49 percent of liberals, and 44 percent of progressives. Progressives and liberals are more likely to favor an egalitarian society, 54 and 50 percent respectively, as are 40 percent of moderates, 27 percent of conservatives, and 16 percent of libertarians.

## **How Do Beliefs About What's Fair Help Explain Political Views?**

To further understand millennials' preferences for an egalitarian or merit-based society, Reason-Rupe investigated millennials' conceptions of fairness. Psychologists have found that fairness judgments shape how individuals perceive government action and distributions in society.<sup>43</sup> However, there are two distinct ways of conceptualizing fairness. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt explains that while "everyone cares about fairness...there are two major kinds. On the left, fairness often implies equality, but on the right it means proportionality—people should be rewarded in proportion to what they contribute, even if that guarantees unequal outcomes."<sup>44</sup> While libertarians and conservatives disagree on social and cultural issues, libertarians tend to line up with conservatives in their conception of fairness.

To examine millennials' conceptions of fairness, Reason-Rupe asked a number of agree/disagree statements intended to measure the extent to which millennials think fairness is about equality or meritocracy. Respondents were scored as being more likely to view fairness as getting what you earn (meritocracy) or getting what you need (egalitarian).<sup>45</sup> (See Appendix 5 for a full methods explanation). While most everyone endorses both these values, the context and degree vary across individuals.

# What's Fair?

## Getting What You Earn or Getting What You Need?

Meritocratic Concept of Fairness	Egalitarian Concept of Fairness
<p>“Reap What You Sow”</p> <p>People who hold a meritocratic view of fairness want everyone to be rewarded in proportion to their achievements and failings</p>	<p>“To Each According to His Need”</p> <p>People who hold an economic egalitarian view of fairness desire the removal of economic inequalities among all people</p>
<p><i>It is important to allow people who make bad decisions to face the consequences of those decisions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree                      28%</li> <li>• Agree                                    31%</li> <li>• Somewhat Agree                    25%</li> <li>• Somewhat Disagree                7%</li> <li>• Disagree                                2%</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree                  4%</li> </ul>	<p><i>I think it's morally wrong that some children inherit a lot of money while other children inherit nothing.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree                      11%</li> <li>• Agree                                    15%</li> <li>• Somewhat Agree                    24%</li> <li>• Somewhat Disagree                20%</li> <li>• Disagree                                13%</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree                  12%</li> </ul>
<p><i>People should be allowed to keep what they produce, even if there are others with greater needs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree                      16%</li> <li>• Agree                                    23%</li> <li>• Somewhat Agree                    34%</li> <li>• Somewhat Disagree                14%</li> <li>• Disagree                                4%</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree                  2%</li> </ul>	<p><i>A fair society would be one in which everyone ended up with roughly the same amount of money.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree                      8%</li> <li>• Agree                                    14%</li> <li>• Somewhat Agree                    24%</li> <li>• Somewhat Disagree                20%</li> <li>• Disagree                                14%</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree                  13%</li> </ul>
<p><i>A fair society would be one in which people succeed or fail based on their own merits.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree                      22%</li> <li>• Agree                                    27%</li> <li>• Somewhat Agree                    31%</li> <li>• Somewhat Disagree                10%</li> <li>• Disagree                                2%</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree                  2%</li> </ul>	<p><i>People have an obligation to help those in need.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly Agree                      16%</li> <li>• Agree                                    25%</li> <li>• Somewhat Agree                    35%</li> <li>• Somewhat Disagree                10%</li> <li>• Disagree                                4%</li> <li>• Strongly Disagree                  6%</li> </ul>

Note: “Don't know/refused” not shown.



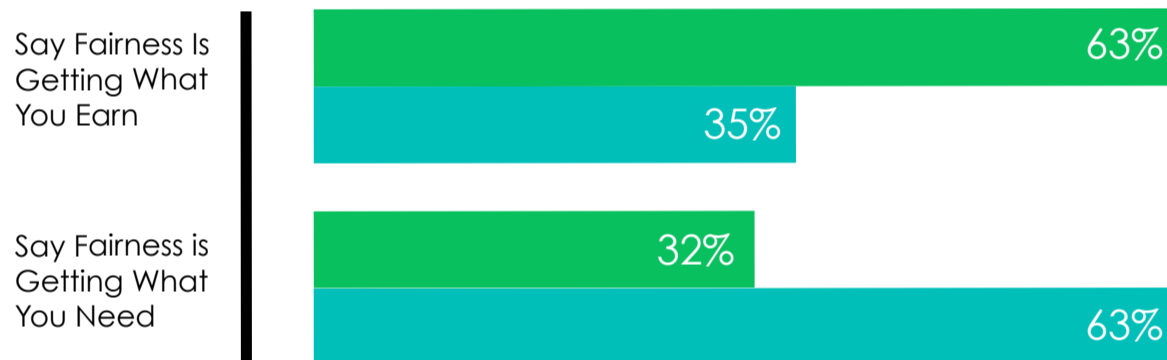
Different conceptions of justice among millennials are tied to their support for (or opposition to) redistribution and capitalism.

Among millennials whose sense of fairness is particularly attuned to meritocracy, 63 percent oppose wealth redistribution to reduce income inequality, 61 percent prefer capitalism over socialism, and 64 percent want a smaller government even if taxes aren't mentioned. In nearly reversed fashion, of millennials who conceive of fairness in terms of equality, 63 percent favor wealth redistribution, half favor socialism over capitalism, and 65 percent favor larger government when taxes aren't mentioned.

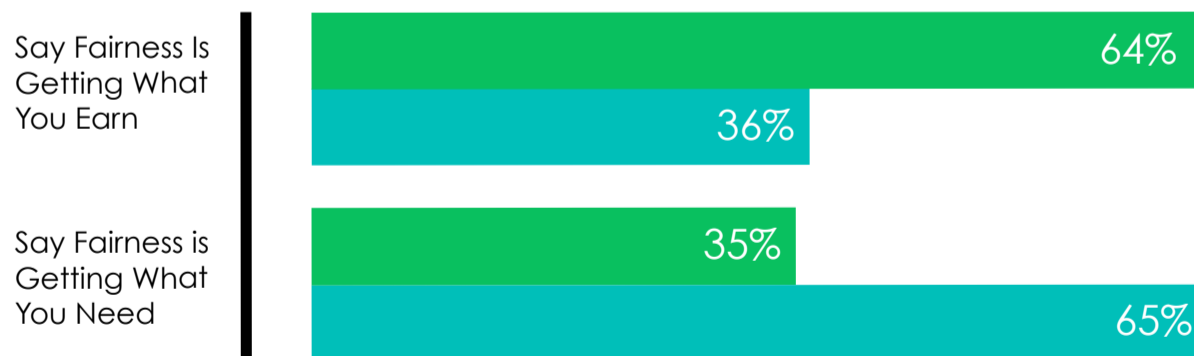
## Support for Redistribution and Small Govt Tied to Different Concepts of What's Fair

*Is fairness getting what you earn or getting what you need?*

■ Govt Should Not Reduce Income Gap
 ■ Govt Should Reduce Income Gap



■ Prefer Smaller Govt
 ■ Prefer Larger Govt



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Note: Answers were averaged across questions measuring the two conceptions of fairness: egalitarian (getting what you need) and meritocratic (getting what you earn). Millennials were categorized as those that primarily think fairness is getting what you earn and those that primarily think fairness is getting what you need. To do this, responses across Q35a, Q35b, Q35d and Q35h Q35i respectively were averaged and then scaled to represent the quartiles (See Report Toplines and Appendix 5). The above chart shows results for the top quartile for each type of fairness.

## XV. Where Do Millennials Stand on the Issues?

Millennials used their own words to describe what issues matter most to them, offering a measure of issue salience. Predictably, concern about the economy tops the list (28%), followed by health care or Obamacare (18%), jobs (16%), government spending and the deficit (13%), equal rights (11%) particularly gay rights and racial and gender equality, education (10%), foreign policy (9%), and the environment (8%). (Appendix 3 shows the full results). Issues highly salient in previous decades including crime, taxes, and welfare each fail to exceed five percent of responses. The remainder of the survey asked about a number of these issues, including spending, taxes, health care, Social Security, education, and civil liberties.

*“What are the most important issues facing the country today?”*



### Fiscal Issues

Millennials have a favorable opinion of a number of economic policies advocated by either the Democratic or Republican parties. As shown in Section VII, majorities of millennials support raising taxes on the wealthy (66%), cutting government spending by five percent (65%), increasing government spending on job training programs (62%) and national infrastructure (58%), and cutting taxes (58%). As with all generations, when policies are presented without trade-offs the public supports both those that increase and decrease government spending.

Most millennials agree that the federal budget deficit and national debt are major problems, 78 percent to 22 percent. However, their intensity of concern is muted. Only 49 percent say the debt and deficit are major

problems “that must be addressed now.” A third believe they are a major problem but “should be addressed when the economy is better.” Thirteen percent say they are a minor problem and six percent say they’re not much of a problem.

Similar to Americans of all ages, 72 percent of millennials favor raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour, while 27 percent oppose.

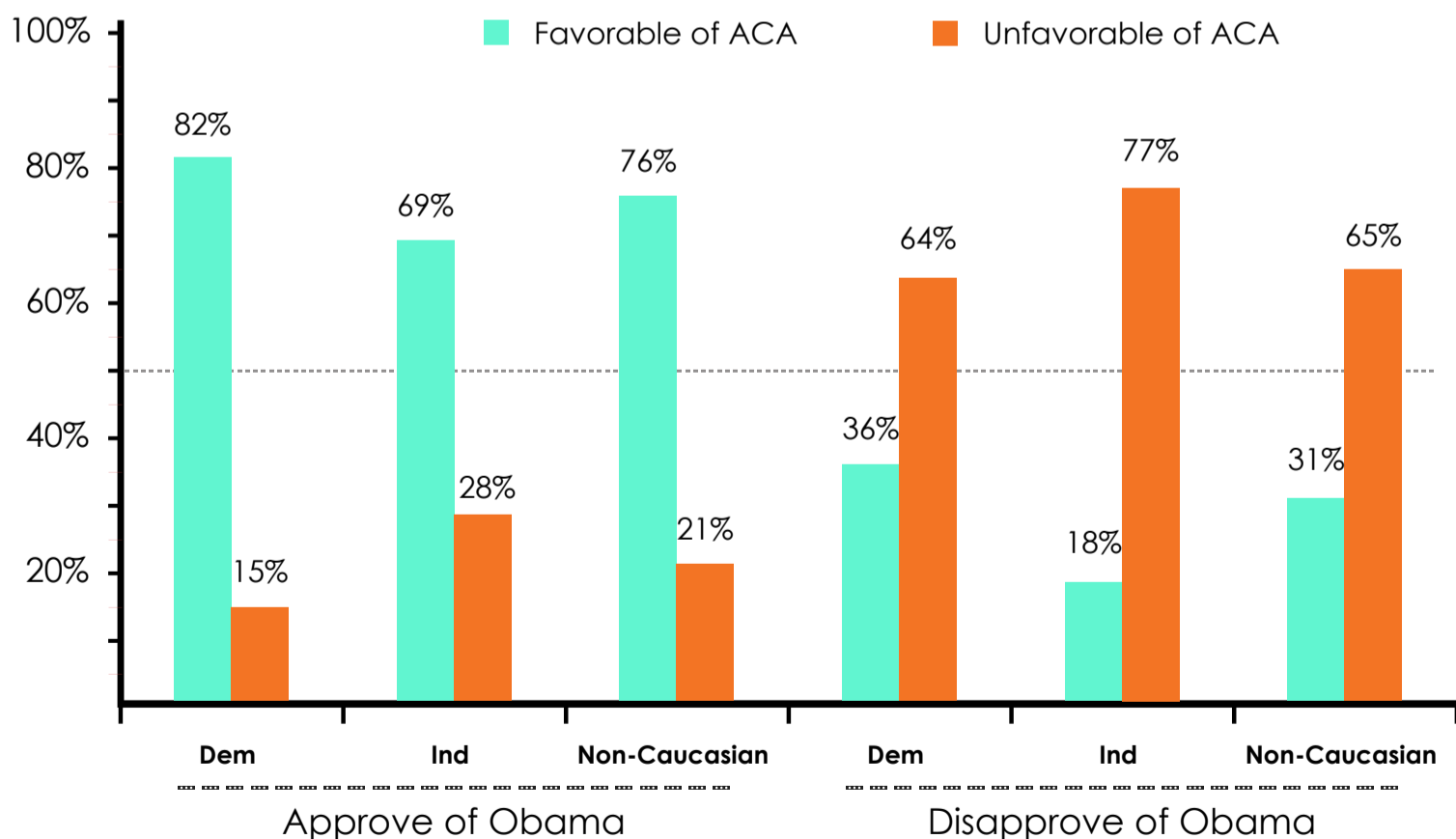
## Health Care

The survey found that two-thirds of millennials currently have health insurance and a third do not. Of millennials who have insurance, a third obtain it through their employer, 19 percent have individually purchased plans, 39 percent are on their parents’ plan, and five percent have health insurance policies through their university or college.

Among the third who do not have health insurance, 54 percent said they would obtain it by the deadline this year, and 44 percent planned to pay the federal fine instead.

## Support for Affordable Care Act Tied to Support for President Obama

*Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the new federal health care law, also known as the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

At the time this survey was conducted, 51 percent of millennials had a favorable view of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, while 46 percent had a negative opinion.

Support for the ACA is highly tied to attitudes toward President Obama—understandably, since this has been viewed as his presidency’s signature law. Accounting for partisanship and race, Democratic, independent, and non-white millennials’ unfavorable views of the president correspond with unfavorable views of the ACA, and vice versa.

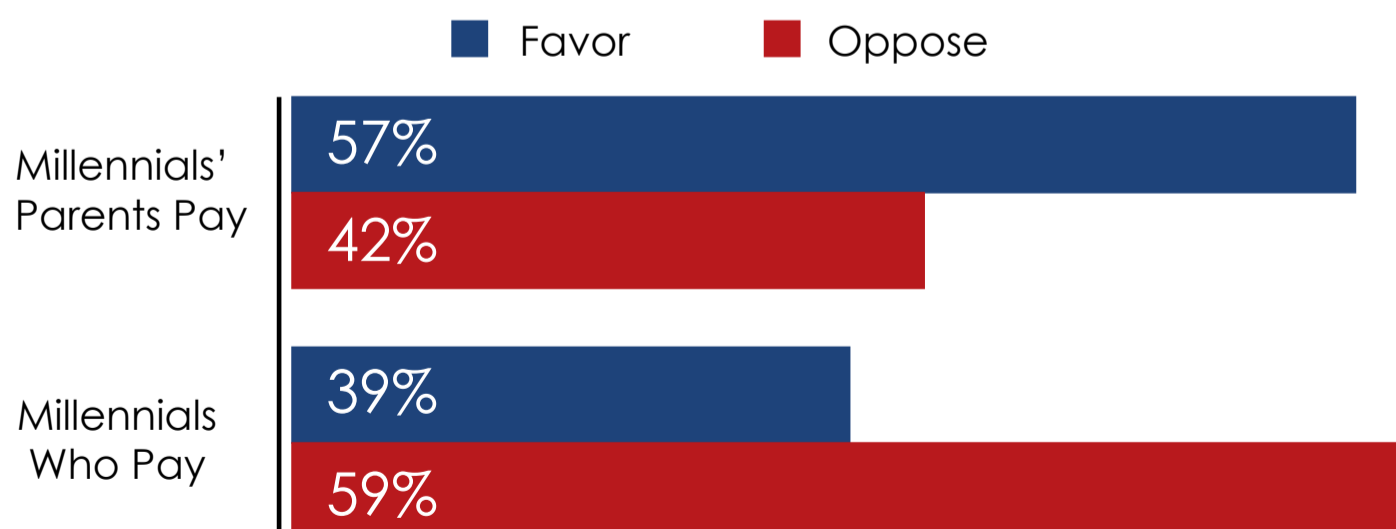
While millennials are more supportive of the ACA than opposed, they do not support all of its components. Millennials are unwilling to pay more for health insurance in order to help provide coverage to the uninsured, 55 percent to 43 percent.

Willingness to pay more to provide for the uninsured is dependent on whether the millennial is currently paying for his own health insurance.

Millennials who pay for their health insurance oppose paying more to provide coverage to the uninsured, but millennials who don’t pay for their insurance and instead are on their parents’ plan say they favor paying more. In other words, millennials’ support for redistributive health insurance reforms depends on whether they personally will be held responsible for the cost to provide for others. While they support the idea of providing for the uninsured, they are not willing to shoulder the cost.

## Millennials Who Pay for Their Health Insurance Oppose Paying More to Provide Coverage for the Uninsured

*Would you favor or oppose paying more for health insurance if it helped provide health insurance coverage for the uninsured?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

Both those who purchase their insurance individually or through their employer and those who are on their parents' plan support paying higher premiums if the benefit was universal rather than redistributive. Fifty-three percent favor paying more if it "resulted in expanded benefits for everyone, such as maternity care and mental health care," while 44 percent oppose.

## Social Security

Fifty-three percent of millennials say Social Security is "unlikely" to exist when they are 67 years old, while 45 percent say it probably will remain. But if it does exist at that time, even fewer millennials believe government will provide them

**53% Say  
Social Security Is  
"Unlikely" to Exist  
When They Retire**

with the same level of benefits that today's seniors receive. Only 34 percent say they are confident that government will provide them with the same level of retirement benefits as it does for today's retirees. 64 percent say they are not confident.

Education decreases the likelihood one believes Social Security will continue in the future. A majority (54%) of those with high school degrees or less expect Social Security to continue, compared to 36 percent of college graduates.

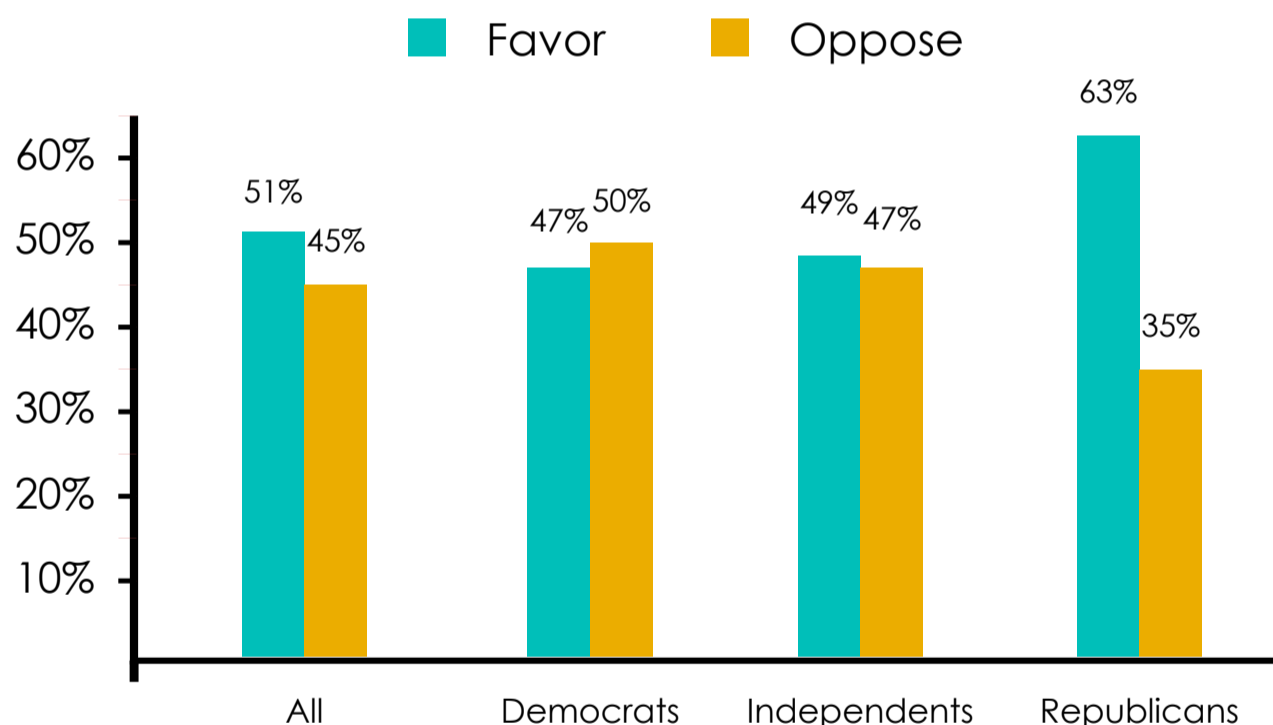
There are not substantial differences across partisans when it comes to Social Security's future existence, although Democrats are slightly more likely to believe it will remain. However, there are considerable differences across race/ethnicity. While 62 percent of white millennials say Social Security is unlikely to remain, 55 percent of African-American, Latino, and Asian millennials instead say it's likely to continue. Nevertheless, strong majorities of all race/ethnic groups expect that government will not provide the same level of retirement benefits to them as it does for current retirees.

## Millennials Support Private Retirement Accounts, Even if Cuts to Seniors' Benefits Required

At first glance, nearly three-fourths of millennials support “changing the Social Security program so younger workers can invest their Social Security taxes in private retirement accounts.” After respondents learn that doing so would require reducing benefits to current seniors, support declines but remains a slim majority: 51 percent continue to favor private accounts, while 45 percent oppose.

### Slim Majority of Millennials Favor Private Retirement Accounts Even if It Reduces Benefits to Current Seniors

*Would you favor or oppose allowing younger workers to invest their Social Security taxes in private retirement accounts if doing so required reducing Social Security benefits to current and future seniors?*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown

When it comes to private accounts, there are not significant differences across race/ethnicity but there are meaningful partisan differences. Sixty-three percent of Republicans and a plurality of independents (49%) favor private retirement accounts, even if it reduces benefits to current seniors, but a plurality (50%) of Democrats oppose.

Millennials' underlying values help explain their Social Security policy preferences. Among those who highly endorse meritocratic fairness, 61 percent favor private retirement accounts. Conversely, among those least favorable toward meritocratic fairness, 55 percent oppose private



retirement accounts. Similarly, among those who believe wealth and poverty are primarily within the control of the individual, 57 percent support private retirement accounts. Fifty-three percent of those who believe wealth and poverty are primarily due to external factors oppose privatizing Social Security. In other words, millennials who believe in self-determination and meritocracy are more likely to think individuals should be more responsible for their own retirement.

## Education

Three-fourths of millennials say college is a worthwhile investment, although their resolve varies. Thirty-five percent say college is “definitely” a worthwhile investment and 40 percent say it is “probably” worthwhile. Both millennials who have attended college and those who have not agree the investment is worthwhile (82 percent and 64 percent, respectively).

Although most millennials say college is worthwhile, they still think the cost is overly inflated. Fully 82 percent of millennials with college experience think universities and colleges could provide the same quality of education at a lower price, whereas 16 percent believe current tuition levels are necessary to maintain the quality of education offered. The longer respondents are in school, the more they believe the costs are inflated.

Considering one method to reduce costs, 60 percent say “colleges could cut the number of administrators without harming the quality of education,” while 39 percent say “reducing the number of administrators would harm the quality of education.”

Support for cutting administration increases the longer millennials are in school. Forty-six percent of those who haven’t attended college think universities could cut the number of administrators without harming educational quality, compared to 71 percent of college graduates.

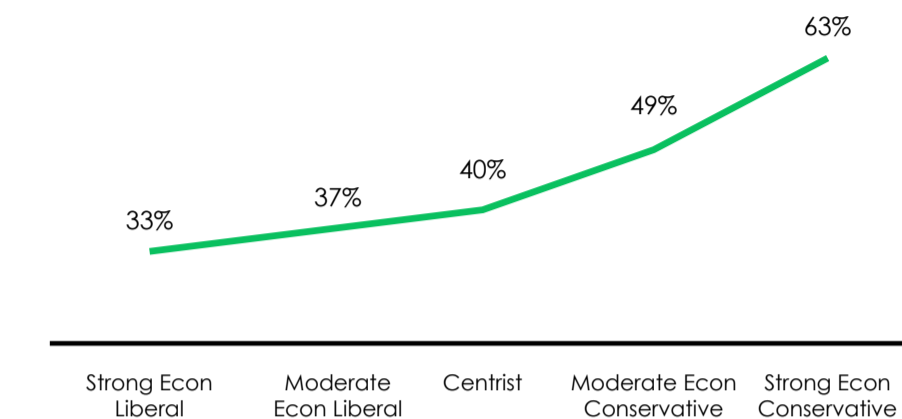
While some charge universities and colleges with a liberal campus bias, 56 percent of those with college experience say university professors “present topics in the classroom in a politically balanced way” while 40 percent say professors “show a political bias.”

**75% Say  
College Is a  
Worthwhile  
Investment**

Overall, 21 percent of millennials with college experience detect a liberal bias on their campuses, 14 percent see “some other bias,” and five percent see a conservative bias.

## Economic Ideology Tied to Perception of Bias on College Campuses

% Say college professors present topics in the classroom that show a political bias



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

Liberal (31%) and progressive (28%) millennials are the least likely to perceive any bias in their universities, whereas majorities of conservative (55%) and libertarian (70%) millennials observe bias.

When asked what kind of bias, 72 percent of conservatives and libertarians observe a liberal bias, 8 percent say a conservative bias, and 20 percent say some other type of bias.

Fiscally conservative millennials are more likely to feel that their universities demonstrate political bias on campus. Among strong economic liberals, only 33 percent say university professors exhibit a political bias in the classroom, compared to 37 percent of moderate economic liberals, 49 percent of moderate economic conservatives, and 63 percent of strong economic conservatives.

Millennials who perceive a political bias are also less likely to say college is a worthwhile investment. Among those with college experience who didn't perceive any campus bias, 41 percent say college is “definitely” worthwhile compared to 29 percent among those who say there is bias. Millennials who believe instruction is imbued with political bias appear less likely to value the quality of education they received.

## Lifestyle Liberty

Millennials say a number of activities and products that many local and state governments are trying to ban or strictly regulate should be allowed. Majorities say selling food from food trucks, selling large sugary drinks in restaurants and theaters, drinking alcohol, offering plastic bags in grocery store check-outs, wearing Google Glass in public, buying traditional incandescent light bulbs, eating foods with trans fats, viewing adult pornography online, using e-cigarettes in public places, gambling online, and using marijuana should be permitted.

The survey probed deeper to investigate millennials' attitudes toward a number of largely illegal drugs. Fifty-seven percent of millennials say people should be allowed to use marijuana. This includes 34 percent who say it should be completely allowed and 23 percent who say mostly allowed but perhaps with some restrictions. Forty percent say marijuana should be prohibited. Only 22 percent think using cocaine should be permitted, while 73 percent say it should be prohibited.

When asked what, if any, action should be taken against someone who uses marijuana, 45 percent say Americans should be completely allowed to use the drug, while 20 percent say they should pay a fine, 18 percent want to require them to attend a rehabilitation facility, and 14 percent want marijuana users to go to jail. This demonstrates that while a majority of millennials favor legalizing marijuana, many wouldn't be opposed to discouraging its use.

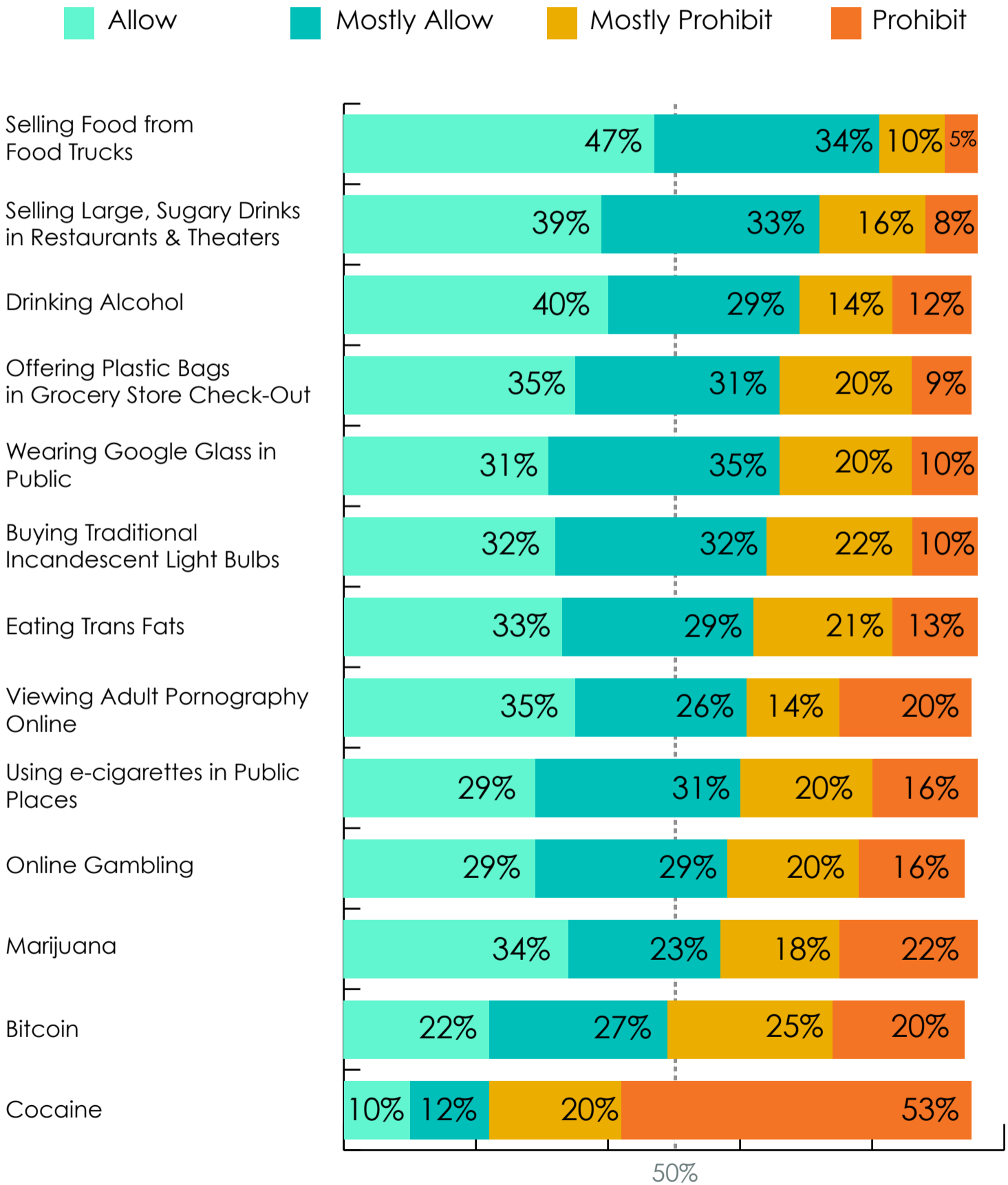
Millennials are less tolerant of harder drugs like Ecstasy, cocaine, and heroin. About a third say using these drugs ought to lead to jail time, while about four in ten say consumers of these drugs should attend a rehabilitation facility. About 10 to 20 percent say users should simply pay a fine and only 10 percent say heroin, cocaine, and Ecstasy should be completely legal with no penalties.

Millennials are evenly divided about Bitcoin, a new digital currency, with 49 percent who say it should be allowed and 45 percent saying prohibited. However, young adults are considerably more in favor than older cohorts. In a Spring 2014 national survey, Reason-Rupe found that only 34 percent of Americans over 30 thought the government should allow people to use Bitcoin, while 49 percent said it should be prohibited.

While libertarians tend to be similar to conservatives on economic issues, on freedom of activities and product consumption libertarians and progressives are most similar. In fact, libertarians and progressives are most likely to say these activities and products should be allowed, followed by liberals and moderates. Conservatives are the least likely to say these should be allowed.

# Millennials Largely Favor Individual Choice over Govt Regulation

*Do you think the government should prohibit or allow the following?*



## Same-Sex Marriage

Nearly seven in 10 millennials favor legalizing same-sex marriage, including 43 percent who strongly support and 23 percent who somewhat support legalization. Twenty-nine percent oppose legalizing marriages between same-sex couples, including 19 percent who strongly oppose and 12 percent who somewhat oppose.

**54% of Republican Millennials Support Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage**

Even a majority of Republican millennials support legalizing same-sex marriage, 54 to 45 percent. Independents support legalization 60 to 36 percent and Democrats 78 to 21 percent. Nearly a third of Republican millennials say they trust Democrats more than Republicans to handle this issue; only nine percent of millennial Democrats feel the same about Republicans.

Conservative millennials stand out in opposition to same-sex marriage: Only 31 percent support while 69 percent oppose. Strong majorities of moderates (65%), liberals (85%), libertarians (72%), and progressives (77%) support making same-sex marriage legal.<sup>46</sup>

## Is Same-Sex Marriage a Deal-Breaker Issue?

Legalizing same-sex marriage has become a deal-breaker issue for many millennials. Fully 45 percent say they could not vote for a candidate who disagreed with them on this issue, even if they agreed on other issues. Fifty-two percent say they would continue to support such a candidate.

Feelings are strong on both sides of the topic. Roughly 25 percent of millennials say they could not vote for a political candidate who opposes same-sex marriage, even if they agreed with the candidate on other issues. At the same time, another 20 percent say they could not vote for a political candidate who *supports* same-sex marriage, even if they agreed with the candidate on other issues. But since the median millennial voter supports legalizing same-sex marriage, and the trend is continuing toward greater support, the issue most likely presents a challenge to the Republican Party which has repeatedly codified their opposition to same-sex marriage in their party platform.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the issue presents a hurdle to candidates who support free markets and also support legalizing same-sex marriage. For instance, a liberal millennial explained:

- “I am very socially liberal, and even if my economic views were more conservative I could not vote for a conservative candidate. It seems that if a politician is economically conservative, they are also socially conservative.”

Indeed, about a third of millennials anticipate that a candidate who “favors free markets and less government spending” also opposes same-sex marriage. This suggests that fiscally conservative, socially liberal candidates will need to make extra efforts to emphasize their support of both personal and economic freedom. Otherwise, a significant share of millennials may dismiss free market candidates because they assume they disagree on social issues.

**33% Expect Free-Market Candidates to Also Oppose Same-Sex Marriage**

## Abortion

Sixty-one percent of millennials say abortion should generally be legal and 37 percent say it should generally be illegal. This is slightly more supportive than national surveys. For instance a spring AP/GfK Knowledge Networks survey found 56 percent of Americans said abortion should generally be legal and 42 percent said generally illegal.<sup>48</sup>

Millennials' support for abortion legality is nuanced, though. A quarter say abortion should be “legal in all cases” while 36 percent say it should be “legal in most cases.” Twenty-three percent say abortion should be “illegal in most cases,” and only 14 percent say it should be “illegal in all cases.”

Even though a majority of Republicans support same-sex marriage, another hot-button social issue, a majority (55%) generally opposes abortion. While 45 percent of Republicans say abortion should be legal. Independents split toward keeping abortion legal, 55 percent to 41 percent. Nearly three-fourths of Democrats think it should be legal, and 25 percent say illegal.



## Drinking Age

A majority (52%) of millennials say the legal drinking age should be lower than it is today. Nearly a quarter says government should not set any drinking age, and a third says it should be under 21. Forty-six percent oppose lowering the legal drinking age. These results are not significantly different between those under and over age 21.

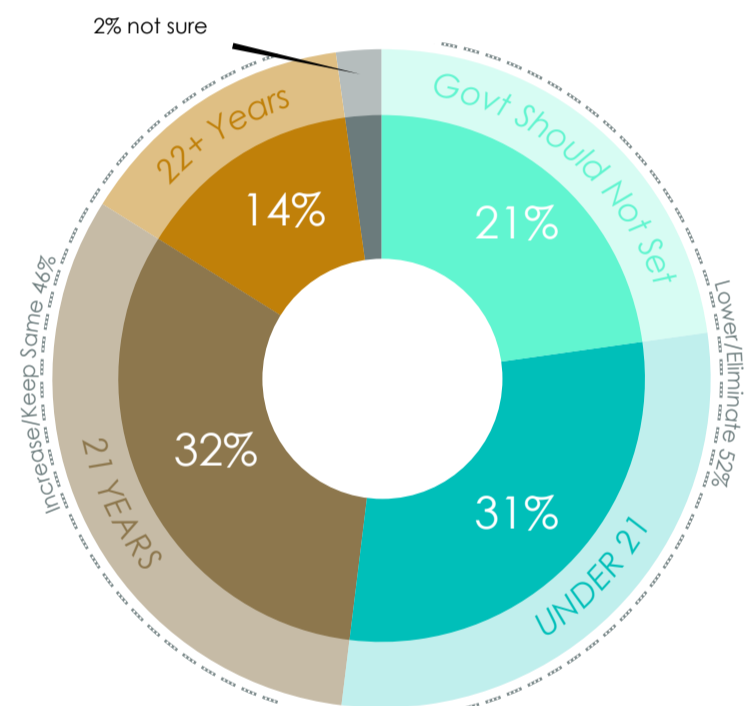
Support for lowering the legal drinking age increases with education. A majority (53%) of those with high school degrees or less don't think we should lower the legal drinking age, compared to 61 percent of college graduates who think we should.

Perhaps surprisingly, while millennial conservatives are the only political group that opposes lowering the legal drinking age (58% oppose, 41% favor), millennial Republicans are most likely to favor doing so (39% oppose, 61% favor). In fact, Republicans are even more supportive than Democrats (49%) and independents (49%).

Perhaps one reason a majority supports lowering the drinking age is that 54 percent think policies intended to reduce underage drinking are ineffective. But also, that a quarter think these policies actually "create more problems than they solve." Only 22 percent think current drinking age policies are effective.

## Millennials Favor Lowering or Eliminating Drinking Age Laws

*What do you think the legal drinking age should be?*



Reason- Rupe Spring 2014

## XVI. Do Millennials' Underlying Values Impact Their Support for Individual Autonomy?

The survey asked millennials several questions about their underlying values to better understand why they favor more or less government involvement when it comes to personal choices and social issues.

Strongly related to millennials' preferences on social policy is their level of agreement with the statement "sometimes the government needs to make laws that keep people from hurting themselves." Fully 70 percent of millennials generally endorse this view, with 15 percent strongly agreeing, 26 percent agreeing, and 29 percent somewhat agreeing. Another 26 percent say they disagree with this statement.

Among those who think government should not make these sorts of laws, 69 percent say the drinking age should be lowered, whereas among those who say government needs to protect people from hurting themselves 54 percent oppose lowering the drinking age. This indicates that support for retaining the current legal drinking age is at least partially tied to the idea that government knows what's best for individuals.

Similarly, among millennials who say government should not make laws to protect people from hurting themselves, 34 percent say people should be allowed to use cocaine, nearly double the share among those who want government to protect people.

Interestingly, even though millennials think government should have some role in protecting people from hurting themselves, a majority (53%) also agree that individuals "should be allowed to do dangerous and self-destructive things, as long as they don't put others at risk." Forty-three percent disagree.

A majority, 57 percent, agree that "the law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong," while 38 percent of millennials disagree. Among those who say unjust laws should not be obeyed, 57 percent say people should be allowed to use marijuana without penalty, compared to 38 percent of rule-followers. Moreover, rule-followers are nearly twice as likely to say cocaine users should go to jail as those who think one should disobey bad laws.

Millennials who say bad laws should not be obeyed are more likely than

those who say laws should always be obeyed to think people should be allowed to gamble online, use e-cigarettes in public places, view pornography online, buy large sugary drinks in restaurants and theaters, and consume alcohol.

## **XVII. Concluding Thoughts**

*“To understand the man you have to know what was happening in the world when he was twenty.” –Napoleon Bonaparte*

America’s millennial generation is a demographic sleeping giant with the power to revolutionize the political landscape of the United States. Millennials are a product of the political crucible of the first decade of the 2000s. As such, they are highly disillusioned by a political system that has lost credibility in their eyes through repeated episodes.

Following Napoleon’s advice, we understand the generation’s disenchantment more clearly. Millennials came of a politically impressionable age in the years shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, experiencing the steady erosion of civil liberties under two different parties, fighting in long and costly military interventions overseas, and bearing the heaviest brunt of one of the worst recessions since the Great Depression.

At the same time, millennials’ life experiences have been impacted by the gay rights movement emerging into the social mainstream, along with new efforts at rolling back the war on drugs via sentencing reform, marijuana decriminalization and legalization experiments.

This tumultuous environment has shaped Millennials, but how they will come to influence it remains to be seen as they mature. The clearest political trends among millennials are their staunch social liberalism and relatively ambivalent fiscal views. As a group, millennials vote Democratic en masse, but not necessarily out of support for the party as much as out of even greater dissatisfaction with a GOP platform seen increasingly as out of touch with their priorities.

Though millennials currently tend to support the general concept of government guaranteeing “positive” rights such as education, health care, and income, many of their underlying attitudes indicate they may become a generation that is both socially liberal and more fiscally conservative over the coming decade:

(1) Millennials are already **strongly socially liberal**, and we have little reason to anticipate millennials will become less tolerant or supportive of gay rights as they age.

(2) Millennials are currently **fiscally centrist**, and there are reasons to expect they may become more fiscally conservative as they age. First, the fact that a socially liberal cohort doesn't automatically identify as fiscally liberal shows they distinguish between the two. Moreover, while they see themselves as ideologically near Democrats on key social issues, they perceive Democrats to be significantly further left than them on economics. Second, they are currently prioritizing social tolerance over economics. However, once they start making more money, paying higher taxes, buying homes, and starting families, there is reason to suppose that economic issues will become more central to their political judgments. Third, data in this report already show that as millennials make more money they become considerably less supportive of redistributive economic policies and an extensive social safety net. Moreover, as trade-offs become clear and millennials bear the cost of a policy, they favor economically conservative alternatives.

(3) Millennials **endorse the underlying values behind a free market**. A majority of the cohort appreciate the value of profit and competition, hard work, and most harbor entrepreneurial ambitions themselves. Most fundamentally, the majority of millennials believe they determine their own economic successes and failures. Complementing this view, most millennials believe in a meritocratic society, because they define fairness as primarily gaining what you have earned rather than receiving an equal amount as everyone else. The free market system is based on the premise that people are responsible for their labor and can direct their own lives, which millennials tend to believe.

(4) Millennials highly **endorse individual autonomy and personal freedom**, values essential to a free society. Their respect for self-ownership and personal responsibility may help explain why millennials are reluctant to prohibit many potentially risky substances and activities older cohorts have sought to ban.

This unique combination of values and beliefs is the reason the millennial generation is politically unclaimed. Jaded by hypocrisy in both parties, millennials are far more independent than their older counterparts. Given their social liberalism, fiscal moderation, and underlying philosophical predisposition to support meritocratic policies and individual autonomy, they have the potential to become one of the most liberty-friendly generations ever as they get older.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Survey Methodology

The Reason-Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Survey was conducted by the Reason Foundation and made possible thanks to the generous support from the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation. YouGov conducted the survey between February 28 and March 11, 2014, and interviewed 2,362 respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 who were matched down to a sample of 2,000 to produce the final dataset. The margin of sampling error for the entire sample is +/- 3.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Statistical results are weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies. When feasible, answer choices within questions were rotated or randomized. Likely voters are those who said they are registered to vote and plan to vote in the 2014-midterm elections, with a margin of error +/- 5.6%.

YouGov conducted the survey online with its proprietary Web-enabled survey software, using a method called Active Sampling. Restrictions are put in place to ensure that only the people selected and contacted by YouGov are allowed to participate.

The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, education, party identification, ideology, and political interest. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2010 American Community Survey sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). Data on voter registration status and turnout were matched to this frame using the November 2010 Current Population Survey. Data on interest in politics and party identification were then matched to this frame from the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey. The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and ideology. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

## Appendix 2: Breakdowns of Ideological Labels

# How Millennials Explain Their Ideology

How Millennials Explain Their Ideology	All	Self identified...				
		Conservative	Moderate	Liberal	Libertarian	Progressive
Traditional Liberal: Social and Economic	12%	-	2%	32%	-	43%
Social Liberal Only	11%	-	5%	33%	2%	17%
Rejection of Labels and Parties	10%	-	14%	1%	-	2%
Has both Liberal and Conservative Views	9%	1%	27%	2%	2%	-
Social Liberal and Economic Conservative	5%	2%	5%	1%	41%	-
Economic/Small Govt Conservative Only	4%	15%	1%	-	22%	-
Traditional Conservative: Social and Economic	4%	24%	1%	-	4%	-
Social Conservative/Traditionalist Only	3%	15%	2%	-	1%	-
Social Liberal, Moderate on Economics	2%	-	5%	2%	-	4%
Social Conservative, Moderate on Economics	<1%	-	1%	-	-	-
Don't Know/Refused	40%	43%	37%	29%	28%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

REASON-RUPE SPRING 2014 MILLENIAL POLL

Note: Based on coding of open-ended responses explaining why they choose that political label.

Margins of Error for ideological groups include: Conservative: 8.2%, Moderate: 6.8%, Liberal: 6.3%, Libertarian: 12.8%, Progressive: 11.3%.



## Appendix 3: Millennial Issue Priorities

*What are the most important issues facing the country today?  
(Open-Ended)*

<b>Most Important Issues</b>	<b>% Mentioned</b>
Economy	28%
Health care/ Obamacare	18%
Jobs	16%
Spending/Deficit/Debt	13%
Equal Rights/Civil Rights	11%
Education	10%
Foreign Policy/National Security	9%
Environment	8%
Poverty	6%
Immigration/Illegal Immigration	5%
Income inequality	5%
War	4%
Govt Abuse/Corruption	4%
Moral Issues/Social Issues	4%
Civil Liberties/Privacy	4%
Obama/Politicians/Leadership	3%
Taxes	3%
Welfare/Dependency/Irresponsibility	3%
Ineffective Govt/Gridlock	3%
Crime	2%
Closed-Mindedness/ Anti-Science	2%
Gun Violence/ Gun Control	1%
Energy/ Oil/ Gas Prices	1%
Inflation/Devalue Dollar	1%
Regulation	1%
Ambiguous	2%
Don't know/Refused	18%

REASON-RUPE SPRING 2014

## Appendix 4: Millennial Voting Preferences

Hillary Clinton is the most well known candidate and also garners the highest share of votes, 53 percent, among likely millennial voters. Most of the Democratic candidates receive more yes votes than votes against them. Vice President Joe Biden comes in second with 30 percent and Elizabeth Warren with 22 percent. Every Republican candidate is underwater receiving more “no” votes than votes in favor. Rand Paul receives the most votes of any Republican candidate (17 percent) and is the least underwater of the Republicans (-12 percent) among likely voters.

Among likely voters, 45 percent indicate they would vote for at least one Republican presidential candidate and 66 percent would vote for at least one Democratic candidate offered.

### Millennial Presidential Vote Choice 2016

*Who of the following would you consider voting for?*

*Who would you NOT vote for in the 2016 presidential election?*

	Yes Vote	No Vote	Yes Vote- No Vote	Undecided	Total
Hillary Clinton	53%	27%	26%	20%	100%
Joe Biden	30%	27%	3%	43%	100%
Elizabeth Warren	22%	17%	5%	61%	100%
Rand Paul	17%	29%	-12%	54%	100%
Paul Ryan	17%	37%	-20%	46%	100%
Chris Christie	15%	40%	-25%	45%	100%
Cory Booker	15%	12%	3%	73%	100%
Marco Rubio	11%	27%	-16%	62%	100%
Mike Huckabee	11%	34%	-23%	55%	100%
Jeb Bush	10%	37%	-27%	53%	100%
Ted Cruz	9%	34%	-25%	57%	100%
Gary Johnson	9%	12%	-3%	79%	100%
Martin O'Malley	9%	9%	0%	82%	100%
Bobby Jindal	8%	24%	-16%	68%	100%
Peter King	3%	22%	-19%	75%	100%

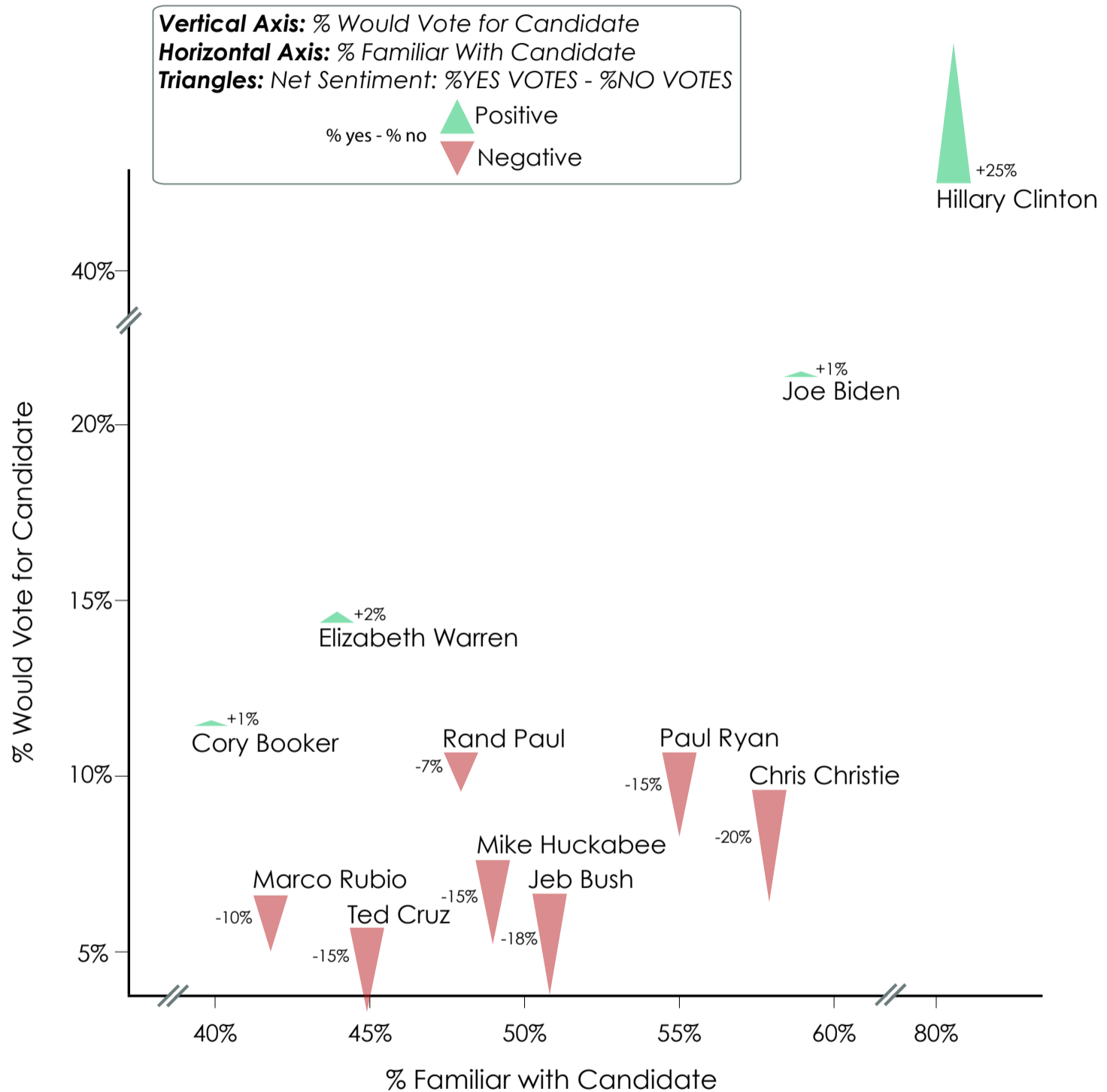
REASON-RUPE SPRING 2014

*Among Likely Millennial Voters*

Name recognition helps potential Democratic presidential candidates more than Republican candidates. The more familiar millennials are with Democrats, the more likely they are to say they'd vote for them; the effect is muted among Republican candidates.

# Millennial Vote Choice 2016

Who of the following would you consider voting for?  
Who would you NOT vote for in the 2016 presidential election?



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

When likely millennial voters were asked to select their first choice for president, the top five vote-getters include three Democrats—Hillary Clinton (39%), Elizabeth Warren (9%), and Joe Biden (7%)—followed by two Republicans, Rand Paul (6%) and Paul Ryan (6%).

The top vote-getters among Republican likely voters are Rand Paul and Paul Ryan, who tie at 14 percent. Mike Huckabee comes in next with 13 percent, followed by Chris Christie with 12 percent, a virtual four-way tie.

Fifty-seven percent of Democratic likely voters prefer Hillary Clinton, followed by 15 percent who select Elizabeth Warren. A plurality of independent likely voters also select Hillary Clinton (34%), followed by Gary Johnson (10%), and Rand Paul (9%).

The steep Democratic voting advantage among this cohort, despite their being fiscal centrists, shows that millennials' social liberalism may be a key driver behind their Democratic voting preferences.

### First Choice 2016 Presidential Candidates

Candidate	All	Dem	Ind	Rep
Hillary Clinton	39%	57%	34%	8%
Elizabeth Warren	9%	15%	3%	4%
Joe Biden	7%	9%	7%	2%
Rand Paul	6%	1%	9%	14%
Paul Ryan	6%	1%	7%	14%
Mike Huckabee	5%	<1%	5%	13%
Chris Christie	5%	2%	2%	12%
Gary Johnson	4%	1%	10%	5%
Cory Booker	3%	4%	3%	1%
Ted Cruz	3%	1%	4%	6%
Jeb Bush	2%	1%	1%	6%
Marco Rubio	2%	<0%	2%	5%
Bobby Jindal	2%	1%	1%	3%
Martin O'Malley	1%	2%	1%	1%
Peter King	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
No Preference	7%	6%	12%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

REASON-RUPE SPRING 2014 MILLENNIAL POLL  
(Among likely millennial voters)

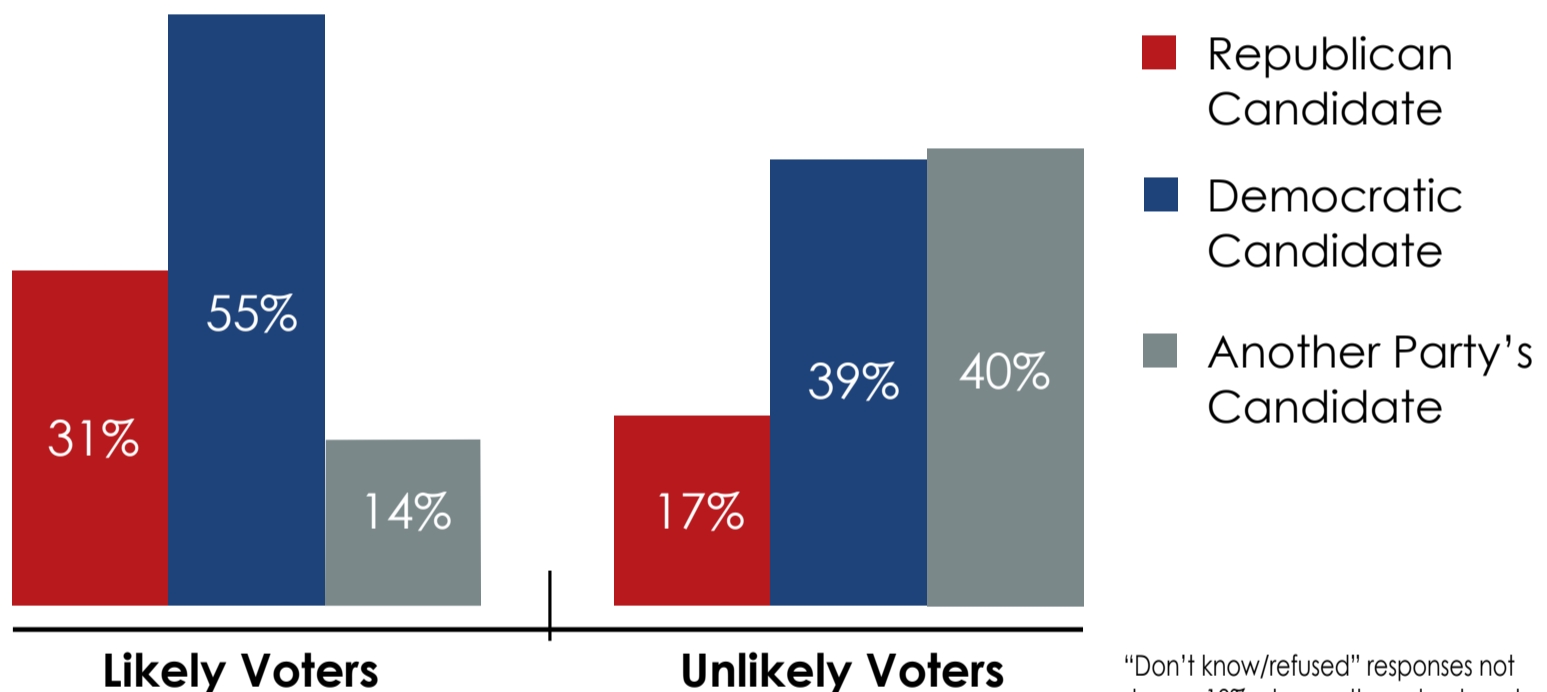
## Midterm Voting 2014

With the midterm election around the corner, a majority (55%) of likely millennial voters plan to vote Democratic in the 2014 midterms, 31 percent say they will vote Republican, and 14 percent say they plan to vote for another party's candidate.

The non-voting half of millennials are 26 points more likely than probable voters to say they would rather vote third party, nearly half as likely to prefer a Republican candidate and 16 points less likely to vote Democratic.

### 2014 Millennial Voters like Democrats, Non-Voters Skeptical of Both

*If the elections for Congress were held today,  
would you vote for the...*



Reason - Rupe Spring 2014 Millennial Poll

"Don't know/refused" responses not shown; 18% who say they plan to vote but are not registered also not shown.

#### *Why aren't these millennials voting?*

One could argue the reason many millennials aren't planning to vote is that they simply are not interested in politics. However, the fact that 40 percent of non-voters would rather vote for a third-party candidate than a Democratic or Republican candidate indicates that dislike for both major political parties may also keep them home on Election Day.

## Appendix 5: Explaining Methods Behind Indices

### Self-Determination Index

*Belief in Self-Determination: Do Millennials Say Personal Decisions or External Forces Primarily Explain Wealth or Poverty?*

Millennials were categorized based on whether they believe personal decisions or external forces primarily determine wealth and poverty, respectively.

To do this, millennials' first-ranked cause of wealth was coded as either within an individual's control (including hard work, self-discipline, risk-taking, and ambition) or outside a person's control (inheritance, natural intelligence, family connections, getting lucky, race, and government programs). College degrees were categorized as "both" because arguably both individual decisions and external forces determine a college education.

Then millennials' first ranked cause of poverty was coded as either within an individual's control (including poor life choices, lack of work ethic, drug/alcohol abuse, breakdown of families, government programs that reduce initiative, and low expectations) or outside a person's control (lack of job opportunities, lack of good educational opportunities, businesses that don't pay enough, lack of role models among peers, racial discrimination, lack of government funding and programs, and inadequate access to health care). Responses to these two questions were then averaged, which identified millennials who primarily believe personal decisions drive wealth and poverty and those who primarily believe external forces cause wealth and poverty.

### Fairness Index

*What's Fair: Getting What You Earn or Getting What You Need?*

Millennials were categorized as those who primarily think fairness is getting what you earn (meritocratic) and those who primarily think fairness is getting what you need (egalitarian).

To do this, answers were averaged across questions measuring the two conceptions of fairness respectively: egalitarian (getting what you need, Q35h, Q35i) and meritocratic (getting what you earn, Q35a, Q35b, Q35d), and then scaled to represent the quartiles. Charts show results for those who highly rated each conception of fairness (top quartile).



## Notes

1. A CBS/New York Times April 2010 survey found only 16 percent of 18-29 year-olds defined socialism as, or equivalent to, government ownership of the means of production.
2. A CNN/ORC poll from October 2009 found 47 percent would blame “George W. Bush and the Republicans” if the economy did not improve over the next 12 months; 45 percent would blame “Obama and the Democrats.” Similarly, a Resurgent Republic poll from December 2009 found that 47 percent blamed the Bush administration for the “current state of the economy,” compared to 34 percent who blamed the Obama administration. The remainder didn’t know, said both or said neither.
3. See Harvard Institute of Politics Survey, Spring 2012, p. 42
4. Angus Campbell, et al., *The American Voter* (unabridged edition) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); John Crittenden, “Aging and Party Affiliation” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* vol. 26, no. 4 (1962), pp. 648-657; Nicholas L. Danigelis, Melissa Hardy, and Stephen J. Cutler, “Population Aging, Intracohort Aging, and Sociopolitical Attitudes” *American Sociological Review* vol. 72, no. 5 (2007), pp. 812-830.
5. Baby Boomers statistics found in Pew Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, Feb 2010.
6. Pew Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, Feb 2010.
7. Pew Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, Feb 2010; 11 percent of Silents also had at least one immigrant parent.
8. Pew Research Center, *Second-Generation Americans: A Portrait of the Adult Children of Immigrants*, Feb 2013, at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/02/07/second-generation-americans/>.
9. Pew Hispanic Center, 2011. *Statistical Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States. Table 6 Population, by Nativity, Race and Ethnicity: 2011*, Pew Research Center, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/01/29/statistical-portrait-of-the-foreign-born-population-in-the-united-states-2011/#6>.
10. Pew Hispanic Center, 2011. *Statistical Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States. Table 8 Foreign-Born, by Region of Birth and Date of Arrival: 2011; Table 1 Population, by Nativity and Citizenship Status: 2000 and 2011*, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/01/29/statistical-portrait-of-the-foreign-born-population-in-the-united-states-2011/>.
11. Pew Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, Feb 2010.
12. Pew Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*, Feb 2010.
13. Reason-Rupe March/April 2014 Quarterly National Poll, at [reason.com/poll](http://reason.com/poll)
14. Often moderate millennials would explain they generally agreed with liberals or conservatives “but” for one thing. Their qualifiers are amusing because they demonstrate how some millennials view liberals to infringe on free speech, individual autonomy, and religious liberty or conservatives to be exclusionary. For instance, one millennial said she supported liberal policies like gay marriage “but” also supported

First Amendment rights, suggesting that she perceives liberals do not care about free speech. Another also expressed support for LGBT equality “but” didn’t want “the government to control every facet of our lives.” Another explained that she supported marriage equality and marijuana legalization “but” also supported religious freedom. Another millennial suggested he favored conservative economic policies “but” was gay, suggesting that he doesn’t feel welcome among conservatives.

15. The following quotes are exemplary of how libertarians described their views:

- “I believe in freedom. Full stop. I believe in free markets and free people. People should have the freedom to do business with whom they choose, to live their lives the way they choose and to have the opportunities that red tape severely limits. I believe in very limited federal government and limited state government too. Government exists to defend our innate liberties - not to tell us how to live, how to earn and spend our money or what morality to ascribe to.” (Independent, Leans Republican)
- “I have the philosophy that if you let things be, they will naturally do what they are supposed to. If you interfere with nature too much, you will corrupt it. That being said, you have rights as long as they do not take someone else’s rights away or harm them.” (Independent)
- “I’m swayed to the democratic side mostly by social issues. I like a lot of republican economic philosophy on free markets.” (Independent, Leans Democratic)
- “I believe in limited broadly distributed power and authority. I believe in high degrees of personal freedom for everyone, and absolute equality before the law for all people.” (Independent, Leans Democratic)
- “I think that, for the most part, the government should stay out of areas where people can handle themselves; they should be allowed to make poor choices if that’s what they’re going to do. Government’s role should be to manage things (eg interstate highways, international relations) that can’t be done by smaller groups.” (Independent, Leans Democratic)
- “Because I don’t care what other people do as long as they aren’t hurting others, and I very much dislike/distrust the government.” (Independent)
- “I am all for justice and rules, but you can’t fully control what someone is going to do, I believe in freedom to almost the utmost point.” (Strong Democrat)

16. The following quotes are exemplary of how progressives described their views:

- “I am liberal on both social and economic issues and find the Democratic Party to be too conservative.”
- “‘Liberal’ sounds too much like the lightweight Democrats who think they’re radicals simply because they support gay marriage. I’m much more left than that.”
- “I adapt to a new evolving society rather than conserve traditional old school values.”
- “Progressives believe in making the world a better for place for all people not just some people. We believe that everyone should have freedom from discrimination, to vote, from want, worry, and fear. We believe that there are things more important in life than money and that the will and conditions of the majority should take precedent over the few. And we believe in using science and reason to judge and determine the best path forward instead of refusing to believe something because you don’t want to. And most of all we believe in justice and progress and moving forward--not

backward.”

- “I believe in the ability of government to solve problems and to help people. I believe that we must always look forward and consider new and untried solutions to old and unsolved problems. I believe that civil liberties must be protected, that national defense should be just that: defense, that diplomacy is our most effective route to solving international problems, that all people are equal regardless of their racial, gender, ethnic, sexual, etc. identity. “
- “I do not believe that corporate profits should be considered when working to create social value. “

17. Candidates include Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker, Martin O'Malley, Chris Christie, Jeb Bush, Mike Huckabee, Paul Ryan, Ted Cruz, Bobby Jindal, Peter King, Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, Gary Johnson

18. Over time political parties have developed reputations for being best able to handle a particular issue on which they appear most qualified and most interested in solving. For instance, conventionally, Republicans have an advantage on taxes, spending, and the size of government. Democrats are viewed better to handle social welfare and intergroup relations. See John R. Petrocik, “Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections with a 1980 Case Study” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1996), pp. 825-850; John R. Petrocik, William L. Benoit, and Glenn J. Hansen, “Issue Ownership and Presidential Campaigning, 1952-2000” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 118, no. 4 (2003-04), pp. 599-626.

19. When asked to use their own words to describe the most important issues, the most frequently mentioned issue was the economy and jobs (44 percent). Also the Harvard Institute of Politics Spring 2014 poll found a plurality (48%) of millennials saying economic issues are the most important issues today, Harvard Institute of Politics April 2014 Survey; [http://www.iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files\\_new/Harvard\\_ToplineSpring2014.pdf](http://www.iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files_new/Harvard_ToplineSpring2014.pdf).

20. Pew Research Center. “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next.” Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2010.

21. Pew Research Center. “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next.” Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2010.

22. Ipsos MORI Generations, “Spending More on Welfare Benefits,” MORI Generations, <http://www.ipsos-mori-generations.com/welfare>.

23. Since the term “welfare” has taken on a pejorative meaning in the United States, the Reason-Rupe survey substituted the phrase “financial assistance.” See Pew Research Center, “Question Wording,” <http://www.people-press.org/methodology/questionnaire-design/question-wording/>

24. Pew Research Center. “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next.” Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2010; also see following polls: Public Affairs Council, Jun 2012\*\*18-34, 35-44, Pew Feb 2012, United Technologies/National Journal Sep 2011, Public Affairs Council, Jun 2011\*\*18-34, 35-44, Pew 2008.

25. Reason-Rupe Surveys August 2011 to February 2014, [reason.com/poll](http://reason.com/poll).

26. Pew Research Center. “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next.” Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2010, also see Democracy Corps July 2013, Pew Apr 2012,

Pew Sep 2011, Pew Mar 2009; Pew Research Center. "A Pro-Government, Socially Liberal Generation: Democrats' Edge among Millennial Slips." Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2010.

27. Pew Research Center. "Public Split over Impact of NSA Leak, but Most Want Snowden Prosecuted: Young People Say Leak Serves Public Interest." Washington DC: Pew Research Center, 2013.

28. AP-GfK/Knowledge Networks Poll, October 2013, Republicans get most blame for shutdown, tea party is potent and divisive factor. [http://ap-gfcpoll.com/main/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AP-GfK-October-2013-Poll-Topline-Final\\_POLITICS.pdf](http://ap-gfcpoll.com/main/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AP-GfK-October-2013-Poll-Topline-Final_POLITICS.pdf)

29. CRNC Report.

30. Pew Research Center. "The Generation Gap and the 2012 Election." Last Modified November 3, 2011. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/11/03/the-generation-gap-and-the-2012-election-3/>.

31. Pew Research Center, Second-Generation Americans: A Portrait of the Adult Children of Immigrants, Feb 2013, at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/02/07/second-generation-americans/>.

32. Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, "Preferences for Redistribution in the Land of Opportunities" Journal of Public Economics, vol. 89 (2005), pp. 897-931.

33. See Public Affairs Council Survey Jun 2012, Public Affairs Council Survey Aug 2011.

34. See Public Affairs Council Survey June 2012, Pew Research Center February 2012, United Technologies/National Journal September 2011, Public Affairs Council Survey Aug 2011.

35. Pew Research Center. "Little Change in Public's Response to 'Capitalism,' 'Socialism'." Pew Research Center, Last Modified December 28, 2011. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/>.

36. CBS/New York Times Survey, April 2010.

37. National favorability toward the word "socialism" found in Pew Research Center. "Little Change in Public's Response to 'Capitalism,' 'Socialism.'" Pew Research Center, Last Modified December 28, 2011. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/>.

38. Jacobs, Dennis. 2012. "One in Three Young U.S. Workers Are Underemployed." Gallup. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/154553/one-three-young-underemployed.aspx>.

39. Reason-Rupe August 2011 National Survey .

40. Reason-Rupe September 2013 survey. Sixty-three percent say most people who want to get ahead can make it if they are willing to work hard. 34 percent said hard work and determination are no guarantee for success for most people, <http://reason.com/poll/2013/09/10/reason-rupe-september-2013-national-survey>

41. Julian B. Rotter, "External Control and Internal Control," Psychology Today, June 1971, p. xx; Hanna Levenson and Jim Miller, "Multidimensional Locus of Control in Sociopolitical Activists of Conservative and Liberal Ideologies" Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol. 33, no. 2 (1976), pp. 199-208; L. Eugene Thomas, "The I-E



Scale, Ideological Bias, and Political Participation” *Journal of Personality*, vol. 38 (1970), pp. 273-86.

42. Millennials’ first ranked choice—the most salient choice—was categorized for both explanations of wealth and poverty respectively. Causes coded as within an individuals’ control include hard work, self-discipline, risk-taking, and ambition. External causes for wealth include inheritance, natural intelligence, family connections, getting lucky, race, and government programs. College degrees were categorized as “both” because arguably both individual decisions and external forces determine a college education. Causes coded as within an individual’s control in regard to poverty include poor life choices, lack of work ethic, drug/alcohol abuse, breakdown of families, govt programs that reduce initiative and low expectations. External causes for poverty include a lack of job opportunities, lack of good educational opportunities, businesses not paying enough, lack of role models among peers, racial discrimination, lack of government funding and programs, and inadequate access to health care.

43. See Kenneth A. Rasinski, “What’s Fair Is Fair-or Is It? Value Difference Underlying Public Views About Social Justice,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53, no. 1 (1987): 201-211.

44. Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), p 161.

45. Answers were averaged across questions measuring the two conceptions of fairness: egalitarian (getting what you need) and meritocratic (getting what you earn). Millennials were categorized as those who primarily think fairness is getting what you earn and those who primarily think fairness is getting what you need. To do this, responses across Q35a, Q35b, Q35d and Q35h, Q35i respectively were averaged and then scaled to represent the quartiles. Charts show results for those who highly rated each conception of fairness.

46. Across ideological and political groups by support/oppose, Conservative: 31/69%, Moderate 65/35%, Liberal 85/14%, Republican 54/45%, Independent 60/36%, Democrat 78/21%, respectively.

47. Republican Party 2012 platform states: “the union of one man and one woman must be upheld as the national standard, a goal to stand for, encourage, and promote through laws governing marriage,” [http://www.gop.com/2012-republican-platform\\_Renewing/#Item1](http://www.gop.com/2012-republican-platform_Renewing/#Item1).

48. AP/GfK Knowledge Networks Survey, April 2014.