

Millennials Crave Economic Stability And Opportunity

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Though the Great Recession has largely receded, its effects on the Millennial generation—the generation that began its careers during the height of the crisis—have not. New research conducted by Hart Research Associates and Public Policy Polling on behalf of the Center for American Progress and Center for American Progress Action Fund from 2013 to 2016 shows that Millennials' attitudes toward the economy have been shaped by the recession, with more Millennials citing economic stability as their top economic priority than any other goal. Frustrated by laws that advantage the wealthy few and corporations, Millennials seek an economy that works for everyone, and a government that ensures everyone has equal opportunity to economic success.

Millennials Prioritize Stability Over Prosperity

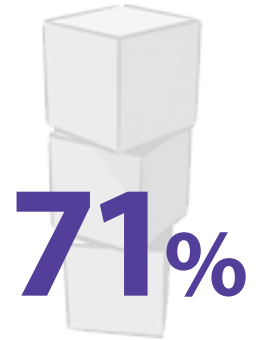
Still feeling the effects of the recession's high unemployment and low wages, Millennials crave economic stability over prosperity, hoping to avoid future downturns. Millennials want an economy that doesn't simply better distribute existing resources, but expands opportunities for all.

- When asked to choose their economic goal, Millennials' top choice two years in a row was "economic stability."
- Only 40% of Millennials express satisfaction with the state of the current economy today, with 60% dissatisfied, including 23% very dissatisfied.
- Just 13% of Millennials believe they are "getting ahead" economically, while 64% feel they are "getting by" and 23% feel they are "falling behind."
- With living costs continuing to soar, 57% of Millennials are extremely concerned about wage stagnation and fewer than half (46%) say their incomes are going up or staying even with the cost of living.

Creating An Economy That Works For Everyone

Millennials believe that the single most important goal for the nation's economic future is to create an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few. They value economic opportunity over economic equality, and the chance for everyone to get ahead. Millennials accept disparities in outcomes, but not in opportunity: a majority believes everyone deserves a fair shot to succeed, but that the deck is stacked in favor of the rich.

- Millennials value hard work, but don't think hard work is being rewarded: two-thirds (66%) of Millennials say that "the rules in America have changed—hard work and sacrifice are not rewarded anymore."
- To fairly compensate hard work and merit, most Millennials (58%) prioritize equal opportunity over reducing income inequality between the richest 1% and the rest of the country (42%).
- 36% of Millennials cite "economic opportunity" as an important quality for today's economy, while just 25% say the same for "economic equality."
- 71% of Millennials say they are concerned that "too often, government stacks the deck in favor of the rich and against average people" and 64% cite politicians looking out for the wealthy and big corporations as the biggest blockade to a strong economy.



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Government Shouldn't Just Be For The Wealthy

While Millennials support the influence of the government within the economy, they want a government that works for average people, and their perception is that the system is rigged in favor of the powerful. They believe politicians give special privileges to big businesses and the wealthy, and want progressive legislation to make education more accessible and reform the tax code so the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes.

- 60% of Millennials say "we need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems," while 40% that believe "the free market can handle these problems without government being involved."
- 52% of Millennials are concerned that corporate CEOs make 273 times as much as the average worker, and 49% are concerned that corporate CEOs

give themselves multi-million-dollar bonuses and pensions. Nearly half (47%) also express concern over big corporations such as Verizon or G.E. paying no income tax some years.

- 64% of Millennials blame flat-lining incomes on politicians looking out for the wealthy and corporations instead of average people.

A Strong Middle Class Creates A Strong Economy

While most Millennials don't self-identify as middle-class, they express strong support of the middle class and believe a strong middle class is the key to a strong economy.

- Just 29% of Millennials personally identify as "middle class."
- 72% of Millennials agree (of which 35% strongly agree) that "a strong middle class isn't just the result of a strong economy—it's the way to build a strong economy." They believe that what first made America a great economic success was building a strong middle class, instead of being divided between the rich and the poor (59%), rather than a commitment to "free markets instead of big government" (41%).



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Millennials Support Progressive Economic Policies

Though Millennials strongly support a wide variety of progressive economic policies, their main priorities are job creation and raising wages.

- **Apprenticeship and job opportunities for young people:** 75% of Millennials favor expanding job apprenticeship programs, and 72% support creating summer and year-round job opportunities for young people. A majority (66%) say they are much or somewhat more likely to vote for a candidate who will put young people to work by using federal funds to rebuild American infrastructure, American manufacturing, and clean energy initiatives. Millennials say creating jobs is their highest economic priority, and many say raising wages is a goal.
- **Education:** 77% of Millennials say that government has a responsibility to make sure all children receive a high quality education from pre-K to grade 12. And 73% of Millennials favor a policy of expanding access to early childhood education.

- **Student Debt:** More than half of Millennials are concerned about the rising costs of college and two-thirds of Millennials believe the government has a responsibility to ensure students can afford to graduate without major debt. 71% believe borrowers should be able to refinance their student loans. Most Millennials say they are much more (43%) or somewhat more (35%) likely to vote for a candidate who supported free public colleges for families who earn less than \$125,000, versus just 6% who say they would be somewhat less likely and 5% who say they would be much less likely.
- **Child care and paid family leave:** 69% of Millennials say they would be somewhat or much more likely to vote for a candidate who has a plan to put affordable child care and paid family leave within reach for young Americans, while 16% say it would make it somewhat or much less likely.
- **Minimum Wage:** 67% of Millennials would be much more or somewhat more likely to vote for a candidate who supported raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, whereas 19% would be much or somewhat less likely to do so.
- **Taxes:** 47% of Millennials say reforming the tax code to end tax breaks for millionaires would help the economy, and they also express strong support for expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

All data, conducted between 2013 and 2016, is from polling from Hart Research Associates and Public Policy Polling on behalf of the Center for American Progress and Center for American Progress Action Fund and is available upon request.