



Background on the Millennial Generation

The new generation of young people born between 1977 and 1997 has been dubbed the Millennial Generation.¹ They are entering the electorate in large numbers every year. Here is some information about them and about members of this generation who are currently in the electorate (18-29 year olds).

After years of Gen X, which never got its political legs, this **new generation of youth, the Millennials, is a re-engaged generation.** Political scientists, reporters, and politicians alike agree that there is something different about this generation's civic engagement levels and attention to politics.

This generation of youth is large, very large, and in the new reality of close elections, they are a bloc that will play an important role in deciding elections in the next decade. Seventy-five million in 2006, the Millennial Generation is approaching the current size of the Baby Boom generation. **By 2015, potential Millennial voters ages 18-38 years old will be one-third of the U.S. electorate.**

The Millennial Generation is engaged in community service and politics, and becoming more so:

- ✓ Millennials are more likely to have volunteered within the past year than any of the other three generations (Gen X, Baby Boomers and the Greatest Generation).²
- ✓ In 2005, an all-time high of 83.2 percent of college freshmen reported that they volunteered at least occasionally during their high school senior year. 70.6 percent volunteered weekly.³
- ✓ On Election Day 2004, young voter turnout skyrocketed. The increase continued in 2005 and 2006.
 - **2004:** More than 20 million 18 to 29 year olds voted in 2004, a 4.3 million jump over 2000. (U.S. Census) Voter turnout among 18-24 year olds increased an unprecedented 11 percentage points over 2000 levels, nearly three times the overall electorate's increase. (U.S. Census)
 - **2005:** Young voter turnout grew in student-dense precincts in Virginia (15%) and New Jersey (19%) during the 2005 gubernatorial elections, even while turnout among all ages dropped.⁴
 - **2006:** On November 7th, young voter turnout increased for the second major election in a row. Turnout among 18-29 year olds increased by an estimated 24%, or two million more young voters than in 2002, the previous midterm elections. (CIRCLE exit poll analysis)
- ✓ Political awareness among college freshman is on the rise for the fifth consecutive year to its highest level in more than a decade: 36.4 percent considered keeping up with political affairs to be "very important" or "essential," an increase from 28 percent in 2000.⁵
- ✓ Sixty-eight percent (68%) of college students say they follow national political news closely^[1]. And 34 percent consider keeping up with politics to be "very important" or "essential," an increase from 28 percent in 2000.^[2]

Millennial Generation voters are concerned about the same issues as older voters, but want you to talk to them about issues in ways relevant to their lives

- ✓ A 2006 Young Voter Strategies survey of young adults found that gas prices (19%), education (15%), jobs & the economy (12%), and Iraq (10%) are top issues they see as in need of Congressional action.

¹ Definitions of the Millennial Generation vary; the most commonly accepted is that of young people born 1977-1997.

² Campus Diversity Report, *Today's Generation DotNet*.

³ UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, *The American Freshman, Fall 2005*, pp. 1.

⁴ CIRCLE, analysis of raw precinct data from New Jersey and Virginia. www.newvotersproject.org/2005_election.

⁵ UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, *The American Freshman, Fall 2005*, pp. 2.

^[1] Harvard Institute of Politics, *Redefining Political Attitudes and Activism*, November 16, 2005.

^[2] UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, *The American Freshman, Fall 2004*.

- ✓ Harvard's 2006 survey of college students found that 43 percent are most concerned about war/terrorism (up from 33% in 2004), 19 percent about social issues, and 10 percent about the economy (down from 20% in 2004).

Both Democrats and Republicans have a stake in turning out young voters in 2006 and beyond (just different groups of young voters). We're their votes to win – or lose.

Winning young voters today means winning close elections now and building toward being the party in power the future.

The Democrat Case for Targeting Young Voters

- Young voters are a gift to the Democrats.
 - In 2006, 18-29 year olds voted 60-38 in favor of Democratic congressional candidates⁶, a 22 point Democratic advantage (nearly three times the party ID advantage of 8 points).⁷
 - College students polled in 2006 support Democrats by a 26 point margin.⁸
 - Young voters are the only age demographic that John Kerry won in 2004 (55% to 45%) besides the very oldest voters.
 - If Democrats win over young voters today, they can both win elections now and build a strong base for the party in the future.
 - Research shows that partisan loyalty develops during the youth vote years. Young adults have voted Democratic for two elections in a row and Democrats have a chance in 2008 to win them over for life.
- Young voters, particularly young Democrats, are very dissatisfied with the current direction of the country and the Republican leadership, and are hungry for change.
- Young voters, particularly college students, are increasingly engaged in their communities and paying attention to politics. They will vote IF asked, and campaigns can and should reach out to them – on campus, at home, via new technologies, and over the phone.

The Republican Case for Targeting Young Voters

- Today's young Republicans are very loyal Republicans – but they need to be targeted and turned out.
 - According to Republican pollster Ed Goetas (The Tarrance Group), young Republican voters are more loyal and more intensely Republican than older Republicans.⁹
 - 60% of young Republicans believe the country is headed in the right direction (compared to 32% of voters of all ages, as polled by Goes-Lake in April 2006).
 - Among young Republicans, President Bush has a favorable rating of 76% and the Republican Party has a favorable rating of 85%. (compared to 46% of voters of all ages, as polled by Goes-Lake in April 2006).
- Young Republicans are most concerned about issues that are at the top of the GOP agenda. According to the Young Voter Battleground Poll, Young Republicans top issue concerns are 1) energy independence 2) Reforming Social Security so that young people can invest a portion of their earnings and 3) Believing that our major crisis is a decline in morality and values.
- Republicans lost young voters by a substantial margin in 2004, and can't afford to let that margin grow. Young Republicans are out there and will vote—if asked. Campaigns can turn them out with simple, low-cost techniques.

STATS on the Millennial Generation

⁶ National Election Pool Exit Polls, 2006, via CNN.com

⁷ Young Voter Strategies, *Young Voter Battleground Poll*, 2006.

⁸ The Leon & Sylvia Panetta Institute For Public Policy, Survey of College Students, 2006.

⁹ GOP analysis of the Young Voter Strategies, *Young Voter Battleground Poll*, 2006.

Today's young adults are huge in number, racially and ethnically diverse, more educated, marrying and having children later, and more technologically savvy than any generation in U.S. history. Below are key facts about this large and growing generation.

Demographics¹⁰

Young adults are huge in number.

-Millennials (born 1977-1997): Today, there are 75 million 12-29 year olds in the U.S.

-Young Voters: Today, there are 41.9 million 18-29 year old citizens in the U.S.

These populations are growing...

-In 2000, there were 70.8 million people in the U.S. between ages 12 and 29 years of age. Today, there are 75 million.

...And will continue to grow

In 2015, potential Millennial voters 18-38 years old will be more than one-third of the U.S. electorate.

Race and Ethnicity

Millennials are the most diverse generation in history, both in identification and in lifestyle

- Only 61 percent of Millennial adults are white; 15 percent are black, 4 percent are Asian, and 17 percent are Hispanic. In comparison, 84 percent of Americans over 65 years of age identify as white.¹¹

-Between 1972 and 2000, the percentage of young Americans (15-25 years of age) identifying themselves as white steadily decreased from 88 percent to 65 percent. During the same period, the percentage of young citizens who are Hispanic has grown over 10 percentage points from 5 percent in 1976 to 16 percent in 2000.¹²

-A study by Teenage Research Unlimited in Northbrook, Ill. found six of 10 teens say their friends include members of diverse racial backgrounds.

-About 33 percent of children under 18 are racial or ethnic minorities, and about 20 percent of elementary- and high school-age students are immigrants or children of immigrants, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

-Since 1970, interracial marriages, though still not common, have increased from less than one percent of U.S. marriages to almost six percent of marriages in 2000.¹³

-A Gallup Poll on interracial dating found that 95 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds approve of blacks and whites dating. About 60 percent of that age group said they have dated someone of a different race.¹⁴

-In 2000, the Census found that about 6.8 million Americans indicate a mixed ethnic heritage (about 2.4 percent of the U.S. population). Nearly 46 percent those are under age 18.

Religion

Despite common wisdom, today's young people are quite religious—and may be growing more so—although not as wed to traditional forms of worship as older adults.

-A 2006 Harvard survey found that seven out of ten of America's college students believe that religion is somewhat or very important in their lives. Further, one-quarter of those students say they have become more spiritual since entering college.¹⁵

-A survey of nearly 1,400 adults between 18 and 25 years of age found that 27 percent report "religion and God are a central part of their lives" and another 46 percent report positive, though uncertain, feelings about "their religious identities." This 46 percent of respondents "lean towards informal and expressive practices over the formal and institutional involvement."¹⁶

¹⁰ All facts in "Demographic Statistics" are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau Population Projects 2000 to 2050, available at <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/usproj2000-2050.xls>.

¹¹ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, *OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era*, 2004.

¹² CIRCLE, *The National Youth Survey 2002*.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 census.

¹⁴ The Gallup Organization, *Most Americans Approve of Interracial Dating*, October 07, 2005.

¹⁵ Harvard Institute of Politics, April 2006.

¹⁶ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, *OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era*, 2004.

Marriage and Family

-Today's young adults are delaying marriage. In 1970, the average age of marriage was 23 years for men and 20.8 years for women. Today, the average age of marriage is 27 years for men and 26 years for women.¹⁷

-Today's young Americans (18-24 years old) are 20 percentage points less likely to be married than they were in 1972. Over the past thirty years, young people have become more likely to delay their time to first marriage, a trend similar across all racial/ethnic populations.¹⁸

Economic Circumstances

The Millennial Generation is the most educated generation in American history

Enrollment in post-secondary education is increasing:

-Between 1970 and 2004, the school enrollment rate for 18–19 year olds jumped from 48 to 64 percent.¹⁹

-Between 1970 and 2004, the enrollment rate of adults ages 20–24 increased from 22 to 35 percent, from 8 to 13 percent for those ages 25–29, and from 4 to 7 percent for those ages 30–34.²⁰

-Between 1972 and 2003, the percentage of high school graduates immediately enrolling in college increased from 49 to 64 percent.²¹

High school degree attainment is high: 87 percent of 25-34 year olds have high school diplomas.²²

More and more adults are going to college: Two-thirds (67%) of 25-34 year old high school graduates have attended college and 35 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.²³

Young adults are more likely than any other age group to lack health insurance

-Approximately 1 in 3 young adults lack health insurance, compared to 1 in 6 Americans, overall.²⁴

-More than one-third (34.9%) of 19-24 year olds and 30.6 percent of 25-29 year olds lack health insurance.²⁵

-19-34 year olds make up 40 percent of the non-elderly uninsured, but are only 25 percent of the non-elderly population.²⁶

Young adults are swimming in debt

-Today, the average college graduate leaves school with \$20,000 in student loans. This is up from \$12,100 in 1992-1993 (in inflation-adjusted dollars).²⁷

-In 2003, more than 25 percent of college graduates had student loan debt over \$25,000, up from 7 percent in 1992-93.²⁸

-Average credit card debt among indebted young adults increased by 55 percent between 1992 and 2001 to \$4,088 (2001 dollars).²⁹

-Adults 25-34 years of age have the second highest rate of bankruptcy, just after those aged 35 to 44.³⁰

-From 1992 to 2001, 18 to 24 year olds saw a sharper rise in credit card debt -- 104 percent -- to an average of \$2,985 (2001 dollars). This is 22 percent higher than that of their Baby Boomer counterparts in 1989.³¹

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, *Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex*, May 2006.

¹⁸ CIRCLE, *Youth Demographics*, October 2002. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey data 1972-2000.

¹⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.edu.gov>.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² 18to35 analysis of Census Bureau data, 2002. <http://www.18to35.org/policy/fact-jobs.html>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The Kaiser Family Foundation, *Uninsured Workers in America*, July 2004.

²⁵ Institute of Medicine, *Insuring America's Health*, 2004.

²⁶ Kaiser Commission for Medicaid and the Uninsured, *Health Insurance Coverage in the U.S.*, 2002.

²⁷ National Center for Education Statistics, *Debt Burden*, March 2005, p. 27.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action, *Generation Broke*, October 2004.

³⁰ Ibid

Young adults' earnings are declining and increasingly dependent upon additional education

-In 1972, the typical male high school graduate aged 25 to 34 earned \$42,000, in inflation adjusted dollars. Three decades later, male high school graduates in this age group are earning just over \$29,000.³²

In 1972, a young-adult male with a bachelor's degree or higher earned on average \$52,087 (2002 dollars). In 2002, young male college grads earned \$48,955.³³

Unemployment is higher among young adults than among adults overall

-According to a 2003 government report, unemployment among young adults is 2-3 times higher than among adults overall. That year, the unemployment rate was 5.7 percent for all, but 9.6 percent for 20-24 year olds and 16.1 percent for 16-19 year olds.³⁴

Lifestyle

Millennials are tech-savvy and increasingly uses the Internet for social and informational reasons

-According to a Pew Research report, 88 percent of 18-29 year-olds are online, compared to 71 percent of 50-64 year-olds and just 32 percent of those aged 65 and older.³⁵

-Nearly two-thirds of 18-30 year olds check their email daily, 70 percent use the Internet daily, and about one-quarter use peer-to-peer online communications such as Facebook.com or instant messaging.³⁶

-Virtually all (97%) of college students surveyed in 2006 had visited Facebook.com in the past month.³⁷

- Two-thirds of Internet users aged 18 to 29 reported using the Internet for voter registration information at some point in 2004, and 25 percent of 18 to 29-year-old voters cited the Internet as either their first or second choice for information on the election.³⁸

-Twenty-three percent of 18-29 year olds say they regularly learn something about the election from nightly network news, down from 39 percent in 2000. There also have been declines in the number of young people who learn about the campaign from local TV news (down 13%) and newspapers (down 9%).³⁹

-One-fifth of young people say they get campaign news from the Internet regularly, and 21 percent say the same about comedy shows such as Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show.⁴⁰

Young Voter Strategies, a nonpartisan project in partnership with the Graduate School of Political Management at The George Washington University, provides the public, parties, candidates, consultants and nonprofits with data and research on the youth vote as well as best practices to effectively mobilize young people. For more information, including the latest opinion polling, demographic research, and campaign toolkits, visit www.youngvoterstrategies.org

³¹ Ibid

³² National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2004*, Indicator 14, Table 14-1.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Employment Situation*, 2003.

³⁵ The Pew Internet and American Life Project, *Generations Online*, 2006.

³⁶ Young Voter Strategies, *Young Voter Battleground Poll*, May 2006.

³⁷ Harvard Institute of Politics, 2006.

³⁸ Declare Yourself, *The Emerging Electorate Survey*, 2004. www.declareyourself.com/press/PDFs/report04.

³⁹ Pew Research Center for People and the Press, Jan. 2004. <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=200>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.