

# GEN Z'S POLITICAL & CIVIC OUTLOOK

2016 National Study On the  
Unexpected Viewpoints of the  
Generation After Millennials

By  
The Center for  
Generational Kinetics  
and Jason Dorsey



THE CENTER FOR  
GENERATIONAL KINETICS®

**JASON DORSEY**



“The generation after Millennials, known as Gen Z, iGen, and Centennials, is just beginning to formulate its opinions about politics, social norms, and culture. There isn’t much in the way of a national attempt to gather and uncover these views, partly because Millennials have been the focus for so long. However, the oldest of this emerging generation are now eligible to vote!

Given the tight races seen across the country, understanding Gen Z’s needs and winning their votes takes on new urgency.

So, we decided to ask them what they think about politics, social norms, culture, and more.

To provide context for Gen Z’s answer, we included insights from every generation for a richer view of how Gen Z is similar to and different from Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers. These other generations are Gen Z’s older siblings, parents, and grandparents.

**What Gen Z has to say about topics like immigration, health care, and voting has profound implications for our collective future**, and what we discovered is that this fast-emerging, pragmatic generation has quite a few opinions of its own.”

- Jason Dorsey,  
Gen Z Expert and Chief Strategy Officer  
The Center for Generational Kinetics







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# MEET GEN Z:

## THE NEW GENERATION OF ADULTS

Currently age 20 and under, this new generation goes by many names: Gen Z, iGen, Centennials, and others.

We prefer the term Gen Z, as it's a natural progression after Gen X and Gen Y (aka Millennials). As this generation continues to flex more spending power, enter the workforce, and contribute to the larger social discussion, it will have a profound impact on trends that affect all of us. This includes social media use, technology, consumerism, and even civic behavior.

Gen Z's views and outlook regarding politics and the direction of our country—from attitudes toward elected officials to issues such as immigration and health care—provide a never-before-seen snapshot of the next generation of American citizens. Very little is known about this generation and even less is known about their political and civic attitudes. While Gen Z may be discussing some of these things in government class, it is critical to have a data-driven “sneak peek” at these attitudes before they show themselves at the voting booth or in the workforce.

The Center for Generational Kinetics led this landmark study on Gen Z's Political and Civic Outlook as a first step toward understanding the viewpoints that will profoundly affect each one of us—leaders, managers, marketers, and policymakers alike. This jump-start in understanding is absolutely critical to preparing for, communicating with, influencing, and instructing this new generation of citizens. Their fresh ideas and perspectives may be the solutions for some of our pressing issues and will certainly be key to understanding the political trends coming down the pike as more of these young people enter adulthood and take their place in the public discourse (in person and via social media!).

Please contact our research and strategy team to answer questions about the findings from the study and our larger **2016 Landmark Study Series on the Generational After Millennials**.

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[Click here](#) to watch the acclaimed TEDx video about the generation after Millennials.



# MOST OF GEN Z CAN'T YET VOTE, BUT NEARLY HALF STILL THINK VOTING IS IMPORTANT

Since the founding of the United States, voting has been seen as the cornerstone of freedom and a measure of governmental fitness and legitimacy. In his great treatise, *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville asserted that, “The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.”

In fact, the act of voting was seen by the Founding generation as so crucial that Thomas Jefferson said, “Impress upon children the truth that the exercise of the elective franchise is a social duty of as solemn a nature as man can be called to perform...”

So how does Gen Z feel about voting?

It looks like a decent sized portion of parents raising this new generation may have heeded Jefferson’s words. The study found that although voting is less important to younger generations than to older ones, there is still hope. In fact, we found that nearly half of Gen Z, 47%, says voting is important. When compared to the 73% of Baby Boomers who say the same thing, this may look like a death knell to American democracy.

But what changes this picture entirely is adding the lens of life stage. Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials are more likely than Gen Z to say voting is important because they are steeped in the world of careers, bills, families, taxes, and everything else that accompanies adulthood. In essence, they have skin in the game. Naturally, when you have something to gain or lose by your participation you are far more likely to take action.

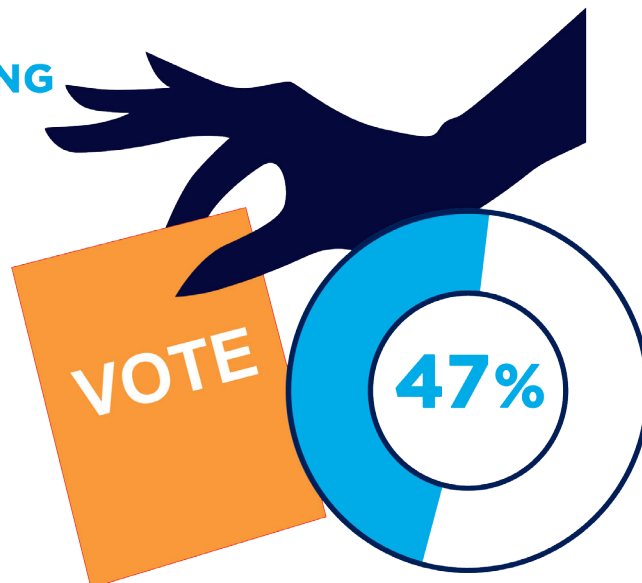
But what if you didn’t yet have any skin in the game?

What if you didn’t yet have many or any of these pressures or responsibilities? What if most, if not everything, was provided for you? What if you had no need to pay attention to the policy-driven state of the world around you? Would you still think an action such as voting to be important?

This is what makes Gen Z’s 47% remarkable. The vast majority of this generation is still comprised of youths who don’t yet drive, earn taxable

## GEN Z AND VOTING

**Almost half** of Gen Z says voting is important even though most cannot yet vote! Knowing that most of Gen Z has yet to have much real-world experience, this percentage is encouraging!



# MOST OF GEN Z CAN'T YET VOTE, BUT NEARLY HALF STILL THINK VOTING IS IMPORTANT

income, or even pay any of their own bills, and most of them are still in school! Nearly half of Gen Z still view voting as important even without the real-world experience that often lends value to the act of voting. If voting is important to them now, we anticipate it being much more so in the future.

And for the other half of Gen Z that sees voting with neutrality or even as being unimportant, we have yet to see if getting an education and entering adulthood will increase their perceived importance of voting. This is especially possible considering the impact that policy decisions have on events like obtaining permits, buying a home, running a business, paying taxes, or making any sort of trek through the legal system...rites of passage Gen Z has yet to come across

This is extremely significant for our future. Calvin Coolidge, our 30th president, believed that our entire governmental system depended on whether citizens exercised their right to vote. He said, "If the people fail to vote, a government will be developed which is not their government... Unless citizens perform their duties there, such a system of government is doomed to failure."

**Our Take:** As Gen Z grows up and starts to participate in many of the adult functions that are affected by governmental policies, it's likely that they'll place a greater importance on voting. For right now, close to half of Gen Z already sees voting as important even though most aren't yet able to vote, which bodes well for the future of representative democracy.

## Insights:

- 47% of Gen Z say that voting is important, which is less than any other generation.
- The majority of Gen Z is still in school, can't drive, and doesn't yet pay any taxes. These and other passages into adulthood may eventually have some influence on the voting views and behaviors of this generation. The fact that 47% of this generation says voting is important even without real-world experience may actually be encouraging.

## Impact:

- If Gen Z were to abdicate the civil act of voting, it would lessen the overall ability of our government to truly represent the American people. The implications of this could be vast and would undoubtedly echo through every level and function of government. But since this generation seems to already be paying attention, a fresh wave of voters is on the horizon and many of them are taking their civic duty seriously before they even have the chance to exercise it.





# GEN Z'S TRUST FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS ISN'T HUGE, BUT STILL GREATER THAN OLDER GENERATIONS

Any discussion about voting naturally leads to an examination of the fitness of the elected officials themselves, the ones we did (or in many cases did *not*) vote into office. We have to ask ourselves whether we like the job these officials are doing, whether we trust them, and whether they have earned our future votes.

What would be your view of these elected officials if you did not even have the ability to vote? Would you trust them? Would it differ from the opinions of those who did actually choose these officials? This is what we sought to uncover by asking Gen Z about their trust for the elected officials currently leading the U.S., including the president, vice president, and Congress.

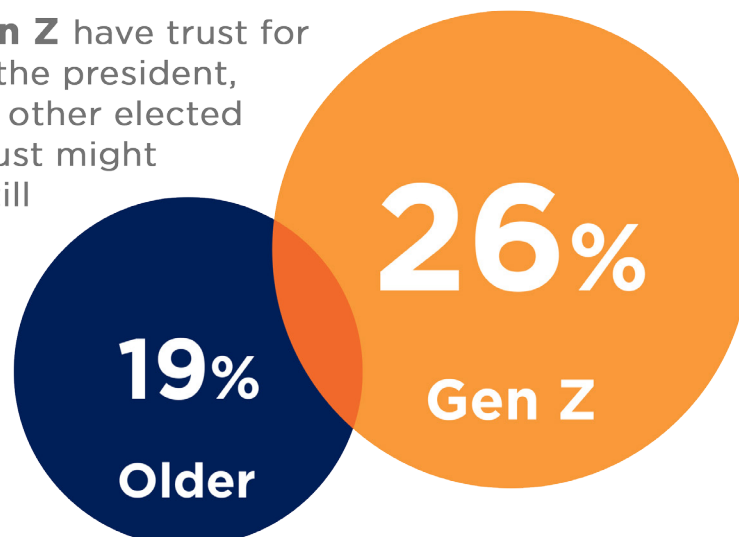
Our study revealed that overall, trust for the president, vice president, Congress, and other elected officials is not very high, regardless of generation. In fact, even though they reported the highest levels of trust, only 27% of Millennials say that they trust the elected officials currently leading our country.

Interestingly, our study found that though members of Gen Z for the most part cannot vote yet, they have a much higher level of trust than either Gen X or Boomers, and only slightly lower than Millennials. The numbers of those reporting that they trust current elected officials explain it best.

- Boomers 14%
- Gen X 15%
- Millennials 27%
- **Gen Z 26%**

## GEN Z DOESN'T TRUST ELECTED OFFICIALS

**Only 26% of Gen Z** have trust for elected officials (the president, VP, Congress and other elected officials). Their trust might be low, but it is still higher than other generations.



# GEN Z'S TRUST FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS ISN'T HUGE, BUT STILL GREATER THAN OLDER GENERATIONS

As for the study's previous finding about the importance of voting, there remains a possible connection between viewing voting as important and trust for elected officials. If little trust exists, will importance be placed on the act of voting or will it be ignored as an exercise in futility? As Gen Z matures and enters the voting age bracket en masse, this possible connection will become ripe for exploration.

It also remains to be seen with both Millennials and Gen Z whether their continual progression into adulthood will affect their levels of trust in current elected officials. This is a moving target, of course, since elected officials change and we are approaching a new congressional term and a new administration in the White House. But it still opens the question as to whether Millennials' and Gen Z's more positive assessment of officials is a result of youthful idealism (some might even call it naivety) or whether it is tied to these specific elected individuals.

**Our Take:** Gen Z's higher level of trust in elected officials is likely indicative of both their optimism and their inexperience. But 26% still isn't a stellar rating and elected officials have a long way to go toward winning the trust of the American people, even those who can't yet vote. It's imperative that this trust be won if Gen Z is to become a generation of active voters. On the other hand, perhaps this distrust is just the spark needed to propel new voters to the polls. That, plus a catchy hashtag and a chance to post a voting selfie on Instagram!





# GEN Z'S TRUST FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS ISN'T HUGE, BUT STILL GREATER THAN OLDER GENERATIONS

## Insights:

- Overall trust for the president, vice president, Congress, and other elected officials is not very high right now, regardless of generation.
- Gen Z, the generation that for the most part cannot vote yet, reports a much greater level of trust in current elected officials than Gen X and Baby Boomers.
- Millennials are the only generation to have more trust in current elected officials than Gen Z, but only by one percentage point.

## Impact:

- If Gen Z doesn't have a strong trust in elected officials, this may make them less likely to place importance on voting.
- Gen Z's greater level of trust in elected officials than their parents and grandparents could be tied to youth, a lack of understanding of the broader picture, or it could in fact be tied to current officials. In other words, they may naturally trust any elected officials more than older generations because they are young and trusting of adults and their leadership. Or, they could have a greater trust due to the actual individuals currently in office. This is a question we may never get the opportunity to answer since we have a system that continually replaces elected individuals.

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# WHEN IT COMES TO GEN Z'S OUTLOOK ON THE ECONOMY & JOB OPPORTUNITY, GEN Z SEES THINGS MORE LIKE THEIR *PARENTS*

Gen Z is shaping up to be a pragmatic group in many ways, undoubtedly due both to the realist's skepticism and reserve of their Gen X parents and the uncertainty of the economy in recent years. They are likely too young to recall the collapse of 2008, but they most certainly watched older Millennial siblings move back home, watched parents search for jobs, and saw grandparents take forced, early retirement.

So when it comes down to it, what does this new generation think about the economy right now in terms of jobs and future economic success? Do they think we're headed in the right direction? We asked them these very questions and found that Gen Z looks very much like their parents and grandparents and very different from Millennials in their view of where the economy is headed.

In fact, only 24% of both Gen Z and their Gen X parents and 25% of their Boomer grandparents feel that the economy is headed in the right direction. This is in stark contrast to 31% of Millennials who see the economy as headed in the right direction.

What about job opportunities? The study found that when it comes to the view of job opportunities the story is much the same, although Gen Z is slightly *less* likely than Gen X and Boomers to say there are plenty of job opportunities in the U.S. right now. Millennials feel the most positive about this, although not significantly higher than other generations.

- Boomers 28%
- Gen X 28%
- Millennials 30%
- Gen Z 27%

## IS THE U.S. HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

**Gen Z is less likely** than Millennials to see the economy as heading in the right direction, meaning more jobs and economic success in the future.



**Millennials 31%**

**Gen Z 24%**



# WHEN IT COMES TO GEN Z'S OUTLOOK ON THE ECONOMY & JOB OPPORTUNITY, GEN Z SEES THINGS MORE LIKE THEIR *PARENTS*

So what are the implications when less than one-quarter of this generation feel that there will be more jobs and economic success in the future... and they have yet to even finish school and search for jobs? And what are the implications when only slightly more than one-quarter feel there are plenty of job opportunities right now? There is of course always a doomsday interpretation of this, something to the effect of this new generation being less incentivized to work when they already largely feel like job opportunities are scarce.

However, necessity is the mother of invention, and this bleak outlook on the traditional job market could actually be the catalyst for new business growth and other entrepreneurial endeavors. If there aren't jobs, it just might be inspiration to create some.

**Our Take:** This perceived lack of positive economic direction and job opportunities could be the seedbed of entrepreneurialism for a very realistic and pragmatic generation. If decent jobs are not readily available, it just might inspire a new generation of small-business owners and job creators.

## Insights:

- Gen Z has a similar outlook to their parents' on the economy's direction in creating more jobs in the future.
- Less than one-quarter of Gen Z feels as if the economy is headed in the right direction.
- Just over one-quarter of Gen Z feels as if there are plenty of job opportunities in the U.S. right now.

## Impact:

- When a generation that largely has yet to look for jobs already feels like there aren't enough job opportunities and that we aren't headed in a direction that will create them in the future, the impact could be bleak. However, it could also inspire ingenuity and the creation of new jobs through entrepreneurial endeavors.

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# DOES GEN Z THINK THE U.S. IS HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION? THE SURPRISING ANSWER

In a continuation of the somewhat somber assessment of our current direction, Gen Z is less likely than both Millennials and Gen X to say it thinks the U.S. is headed in the right direction. In fact, less than a quarter of Gen Z feels positively about the direction we're headed.

In contrast, 38% of Gen Z feels that the U.S. is *not* headed in the right direction and 39% are in the middle, or what we call neutral, about the issue. They are neither in agreement nor disagreement that we're headed in the right direction. They might actually be conflicted about the issue, thinking we are correctly tackling some things and incorrectly tackling others, or they might never have given serious thought to the matter. Older generations are less likely to be neutral about this question. They clearly feel that we either are or are not headed in the right direction...mostly not. For example, 56% of Baby Boomers feel the U.S. is not headed in the right direction.

These aren't the kinds of results one wants to see in an annual review, or any other assessment of that nature. Yet this is a snapshot of how Americans feel about the current direction of our country. What can be done about this? After all, we do live in a democratic society where the people sit in the driver's seat of our collective destiny. So maybe more civic action is the answer. But that leads squarely back to the voting issue.

The upside of Gen Z's lackluster view of the country's direction goes hand in hand with this new generation's pragmatic tendencies. If a realistic and sober estimation of the problems and issues facing us is the best weapon for developing strategies to solve them, it just might be that these youngest citizens will enter adulthood fully aware of reality and equipped to positively impact it. After all, solutions can only come after recognition of a problem.

## GEN Z'S FEELING ABOUT THE U.S...DISMAL

Gen Z feels similarly to other generations about the direction of the US right now: Dismal. Only 23% of Gen Z think the US is headed in the right direction.



# DOES GEN Z THINK THE U.S. IS HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION? THE SURPRISING ANSWER

**Our Take:** Gen Z tends to see the world with a stark lens of reality. But this isn't in a negative sense, as in thinking all is lost. Instead, Gen Z's realistic and at times somber views of our country's direction are pragmatic rather than fatalistic. Like the other instances, this could spell opportunity rather than finality.

## Insights:

- Gen Z is less likely than Millennials and Gen X to say the U.S. is headed in the right direction.
- While only 23% of Gen Z feels the U.S. is headed in the right direction, 38% feel that the U.S. is *not* headed in the right direction.
- Across generations, there is a somber assessment of the current direction of the U.S., with Millennials giving the most positive score at 28%.

## Impact:

- The dismal view of our country's current direction is sobering but could also be the jolt of reality the next generation needs to invent solutions to the problems we're facing. A realistic assessment of a situation is the first step to readjusting an undesirable course.

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# GEN Z IS UNDECIDED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Health care has been a hot topic for decades now, but never more in the limelight than with the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. While Gen Z was mostly too young to catch the nuances of the debate surrounding this legislation during its passage, it's members have since undoubtedly experienced its effects either firsthand or through family members. We asked Gen Z a series of questions about health care accessibility to assess their take on the state of health care as it pertains to them personally.

We found that Gen Z is the generation least likely to believe it has access to affordable, quality health care. Less than half of Gen Z, 44%, say they have access to this type of health care. In contrast, more than half of Millennials (51%) and Baby Boomers (55%) feel they have this access.

So how does the Affordable Care Act play into this? Gen Z is nearly split on whether they think this legislation has positively or negatively impacted their ability to have access to affordable, quality health care, with 30% saying it has had a negative impact and 33% saying it has had a

positive effect. The biggest finding though is that Gen Z doesn't appear to be overly set in its thinking about this issue. Forty-two percent report being in the middle on the positive vs. negative implications of access produced by the Affordable Care Act.

When compared to other generations, Gen Z is least likely to see the Affordable Care Act as negatively impacting their ability to get affordable or quality health care, but they are less likely than Millennials to think they have access to affordable, quality health care *because* of the Affordable Care Act.

Less access after the Affordable Care Act:

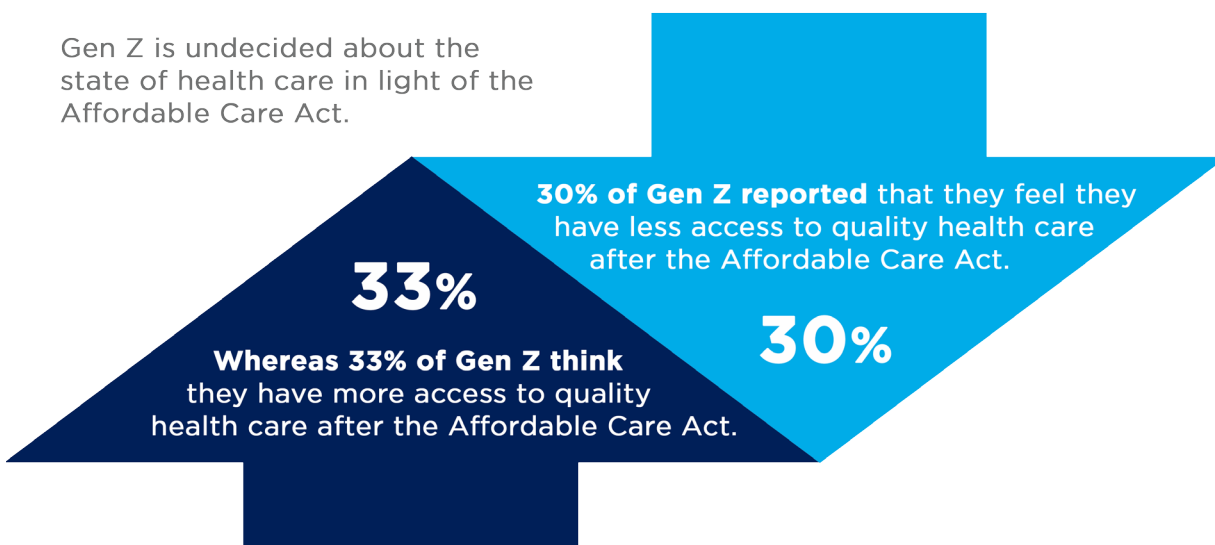
- Boomers 46%
- Gen X 37%
- Millennials 32%
- **Gen Z 30%**

More access after the Affordable Care Act:

- Boomers 30%
- Gen X 28%
- Millennials 39%
- **Gen Z 33%**

## VIEWS ON THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Gen Z is undecided about the state of health care in light of the Affordable Care Act.



# GEN Z IS UNDECIDED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE ACCESS

The success or failure of the Affordable Care Act has not yet been determined in the minds of Gen Z. As members of this new generation take over the reins of purchasing and managing their own health care, they are likely to have more fixed opinions. As it stands though, there is currently no consensus.

**Our Take:** The future of the Affordable Care Act is still undetermined as it pertains to the next wave of voters. As they begin to take charge of their own health care, Gen Z will develop more solid views on not only this legislation, but also the larger picture of health care as a whole.

## Insights:

- Gen Z is the generation least likely to believe it has access to affordable, quality health care.
- Gen Z is nearly split on whether they think this legislation has positively or negatively impacted their ability to have access to affordable, quality health care, with 30% saying it has had a negative impact and 33% saying it has had a positive one.
- Gen Z doesn't appear to be overly set in its thinking about the implications of the Affordable Care Act. Forty-two percent reported being in the middle on the positive vs. negative impact on their access to care.
- Gen Z is the generation least likely to see the Affordable Care Act as negatively impacting their ability to get affordable or quality health care, but they are less likely than Millennials to think they have access to affordable, quality health care because of the Affordable Care Act.

## Impact:

- While Gen Z doesn't currently have heavy opinions one way or the other about access to health care or whether this access has been helped or hindered by health care legislation, these young people will likely have more fixed opinions as they start to make their own health care decisions and provide for their own coverage.

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# DOES GEN Z THINK MINORITIES AND WOMEN GET A FAIR SHAKE WHEN IT COMES TO SUCCESS AT WORK OR IN BUSINESS?

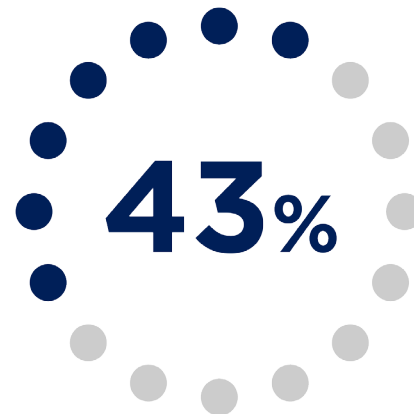
Gen Z is the most diverse generation in U.S. history. It is so diverse that its members often only recognize diversity in its absence because this diversity is such a core part of their experience. We wanted to uncover what this diverse generation thinks about opportunities available to minorities and women, specifically as it relates to the opportunity to be successful at work or in business.

Our study found that Gen Z is the least likely of all generations to think there is equal opportunity for minorities to succeed at work or business in the U.S. Only one-third of Gen Z, 33%, believe this equality to exist while 39% of both Gen X and Millennials and half of Boomers agree.

When it comes to women having equal opportunity to succeed in work or business, Gen Z feels more positively, with 43% saying there is equal opportunity. This increased positivity is shared by other generations. Both Gen X (44%) and Millennials (45%) think there is more opportunity for women, which is more than those who thought the same for minorities. Baby Boomers rate the equality of opportunity for women nearly on par with minorities, with 49% saying there is equal opportunity there.

## DIVERSITY BREEDS AWARENESS

Gen Z's innate diversity creates awareness of what minorities face in business. **Only 33% think that minorities have equal opportunity for success in work or business** compared to 43% of older generations.





# DOES GEN Z THINK MINORITIES AND WOMEN GET A FAIR SHAKE WHEN IT COMES TO SUCCESS AT WORK OR IN BUSINESS?

From a broader perspective, less than half of Gen Z thinks there is equal opportunity for women to have success at work or in business and even fewer feel this to be true for minorities. So what are the implications of this? This question will be answered with time, but it seems there are two paths for Gen Z to pursue when it comes to this issue. Inequality can be tolerated or addressed and it will be fascinating to watch which tactic Gen Z employs. As a generation very accustomed to diversity, it may be that this state of inequality naturally changes as Gen Z brings its different perspective into adulthood and the workforce. It doesn't seem likely that a generation so steeped in diversity will choose to tolerate inequality.

**Our Take:** Diversity is natural and expected with Gen Z and as this generation ages and enters the workforce (both as employees and as business owners) they will bring this diversity with them. Minorities and women will increasingly have equal play in business as the attitudes and outlooks of this generation influences businesses, corporations, and communities.

## Insights:

- Gen Z is the least likely of all generations to think there is equal opportunity for minorities to succeed at work or business in the U.S.
- In the larger picture, however, less than half of Gen Z thinks there is equal opportunity for women to have success at work or in business and even fewer feel this to be true for minorities.

## Impact:

- Only time will tell how Gen Z chooses to address the large equality gap it sees for women and minorities when it comes to the opportunity for success in business or at work.
- As a generation very accustomed to diversity, it may be that this state of inequality will naturally change as Gen Z brings its different perspective into adulthood and the workforce.

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# DOES GEN Z SEE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AS A PROBLEM? THE SURPRISING ANSWER...

The issue of illegal immigration has crept to the forefront of public awareness in recent years. There is a seemingly endless power struggle between the legislative and executive branches as to which has the right, will, and strategy to address the issue. We wondered, since Gen Z is the generation most accustomed to diversity, would its viewpoint on illegal immigration be different from older generations?

What we found is interesting. Assumptions can be made about Gen Z and its views on illegal immigration depending on the context used. For example, our study revealed that Gen Z is much less inclined than other generations to see illegal immigration as a problem. The numbers are pretty striking.

Illegal immigration is a problem in the U.S.

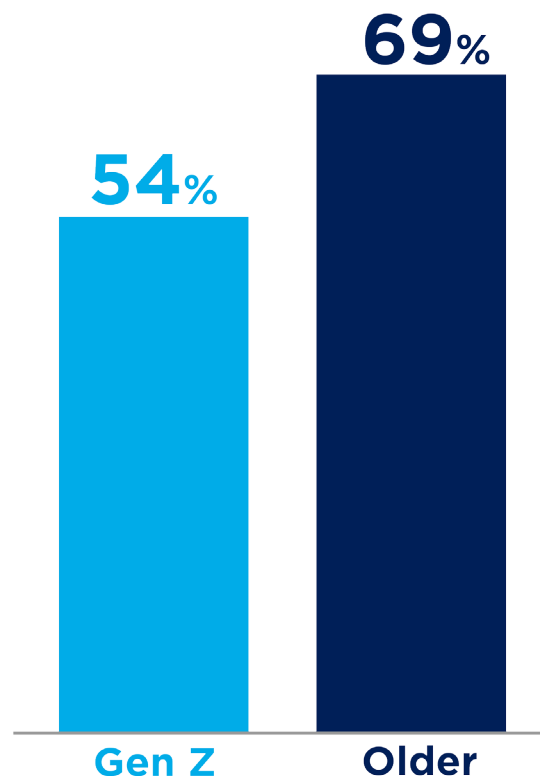
- Boomers 78%
- Gen X 70%
- Millennials 60%
- **Gen Z 54%**

In the context of a cross-generational analysis, the takeaway is that Gen Z does not see illegal immigration as a problem. However, viewed in the context of a generation on its own, it starts to look like Gen Z is concerned about illegal immigration after all. For instance, we found that more than half of Gen Z, 54%, see illegal immigration as a problem in the U.S., and 26% are in the middle, most likely because they feel too uninformed to make an evaluation of the issue. It turns out that only 21% of Gen Z say that illegal immigration is not a problem in the U.S.

Asking 14-year-olds (or older teenagers for that matter) about a societal topic like illegal immigration is a gamble. After all, the more cynical among us wonder if they put down their mobile devices long enough to even notice these issues, let alone weigh in on them. But we feel confident in saying that this group is noticing, and in many cases, even analyzing the larger issues around them.

## ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AS A PROBLEM

**54% of Gen Z** sees illegal immigration as a problem. This is considerably less than older generations.



# DOES GEN Z SEE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION AS A PROBLEM? THE SURPRISING ANSWER...

**Our Take:** The pragmatic approach Gen Z seems to take in many aspects of life is no different with this issue. While many of these minors don't yet have an opinion about illegal immigration, it appears many more do. If more than half of this generation sees it as a problem from their youthful, non-voting perspective, perhaps they will also be the first ones to effectively address it.

## Insights:

- Gen Z is much less inclined than other generations to see illegal immigration as a problem.
- Still, more than half of Gen Z (54%) see illegal immigration as a problem in the U.S.
- It turns out that only 21% of Gen Z say that illegal immigration is not a problem in the U.S.

## Impact:

- Assumptions can be made about Gen Z and its views on illegal immigration depending on the context used, whether compared to other generations or standing on its own.

## Learn More:

- [GenHQ.com/Gen-Z](http://GenHQ.com/Gen-Z)
- [GenHQ.com/Opinions](http://GenHQ.com/Opinions)

## Share your thoughts and comments at:

- [Twitter.com/WhatTheGen](https://twitter.com/WhatTheGen)
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# GEN Z ISN'T READY TO THROW IN THE TOWEL ON THE AMERICAN DREAM

Gen Z takes a pretty hard look and has a seemingly dismal view about many aspects of our society and political culture. Distrust in elected officials, dissatisfaction with the way our country is run and the direction of our economy, and deep problems like gender and racial inequality, access to healthcare, and illegal immigration don't paint a pretty picture for this generation, nor does it give us any indication on how they will react.

So in light of all this seeming negativity, how does Gen Z feel about that quintessential American ideal, the "American Dream"?

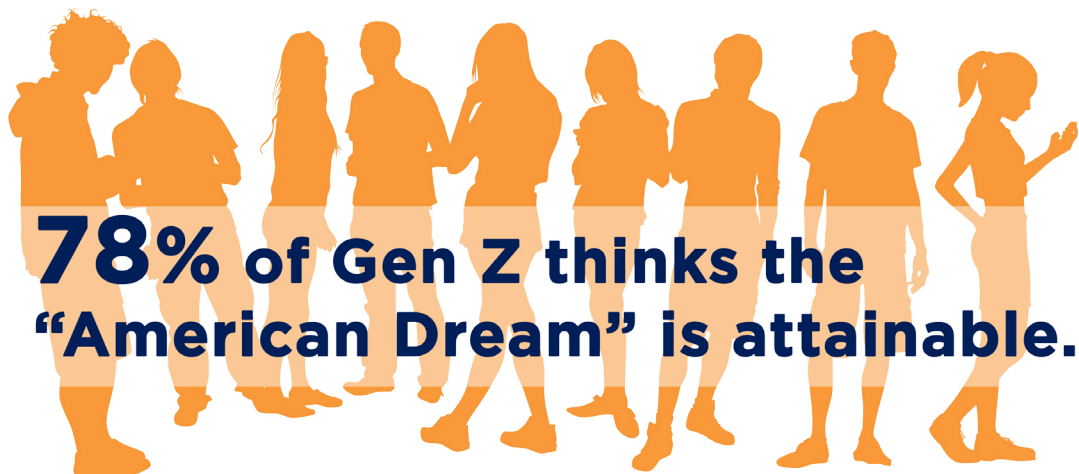
It turns out that while Gen Z recognizes some very real problems facing our country, they aren't ready to quit society altogether or make a collective exodus overseas. In fact, the study revealed that more than any other generation, Gen Z believes in the American Dream. What is the American

Dream, exactly? We defined it as the ideal that no matter where you as an individual start out in life, whether new to the U.S., currently poor or facing other challenges, that you have an equal opportunity in America to achieve success through hard work, determination, and initiative. We discovered that 78% of Gen Z believes this version of American Dream is attainable!

What this says about Gen Z is revealing. This view of the American Dream doesn't align with a group of critical naysayers ready to abandon all hope. On the contrary, we believe that Gen Z is simply pragmatic and realistic, much like their Gen X parents. They have only known the bust – not the boom – of the economy, which makes them cautious and practical in their assessment of their future prospects. What it has not done, however, is crush their hope that change is possible.

## GEN Z ISN'T READY TO THROW IN THE TOWEL

Despite the seemingly pessimistic outlook of this generation, Gen Z still believes strongly in the American Dream, even more than other generations.



# GEN Z ISN'T READY TO THROW IN THE TOWEL ON THE AMERICAN DREAM

**Our Take:** Gen Z's critical look at the economy, trust in elected officials, illegal immigration, and healthcare may look negative and pessimistic. We believe instead, however, that this stems from their realism and pragmatism, tendencies they are inheriting from their largely Gen X parents. These views are less a doomsday proclamation and much more a measured assessment of the current state of affairs. This inventory Gen Z is taking is the first step in addressing the problems that currently plague the U.S. Gen Z wants full disclosure about the challenges ahead because one must fully grasp a situation in order to solve problems. The data show that this generation is very aware of the society they will inherit, and it is at least encouraging to know that they are starting to think about their place in it.

## Insights:

- 78% of Gen Z believes the American Dream is attainable!
- This is the highest of any generation.

## Impact:

- Gen Z's realistic view of our society and political environment doesn't include rose-colored glasses. This generation sees and acknowledges some very real problems, but this acknowledgment opens the door for change.
- Gen Z is set to change the world when its members put action toward the problems they see.

## Learn More:

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# CONCLUSION: WHAT WE SEE SO FAR WHEN IT COMES TO GEN Z

Gen Z is a complex, thoughtful generation that in some cases looks a lot like its predecessors and in other cases looks very different. This generation after Millennials is soon to become the fastest-growing generation in the workforce, marketplace, and in adult society. They are already the super majority in our traditional higher education system.

We're only beginning to feel the impact of Gen Z, but we can already see early indications of future behavior in Gen Z's perceptions about current issues like illegal immigration and health care, as well as its views about the importance of civic behaviors such as voting. The opportunity to learn what our youngest citizens think about the directions our country and economy are currently headed in is a great chance to assess ourselves.

If we are willing to analyze Gen Z's views, we will have the opportunity to alter course where it may need adjustment. We will also have the chance to affirm the youngest among us as contributing members of society and unlock the insights and ingenuity of an entirely new generation. This is truly a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

At The Center for Generational Kinetics, our passion is uncovering the mind-set, behaviors, and best practices that solve the challenges and unlock the talents Gen Z brings as employees, customers, and citizens.

We know the challenge that the generation after Millennials brings is only going to increase, but we also believe the opportunity they drive as employees, customers, and citizens will increase proportionately.





# CONCLUSION: WHAT WE SEE SO FAR WHEN IT COMES TO GEN Z

Gen Z is about to change the world as we know it. The Center for Generational Kinetics is committed to preparing you to make the most of that change.

This report, Gen Z's Political and Civic Outlook, is the second in our landmark series on the generation after Millennials, known as Gen Z, iGen, and Centennials. Visit [GenHQ.com/Gen-Z](http://GenHQ.com/Gen-Z) to sign up now for the complete report series and watch the acclaimed TEDx talk, "What We Know About the Generation After Millennials."

Thank you for being a bridge between generations.

Sincerely,

Jason Dorsey and  
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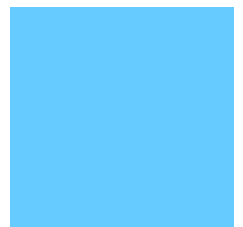
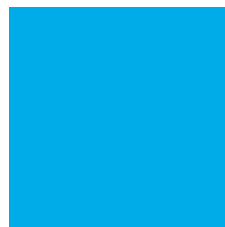
# ABOUT THE CENTER FOR GENERATIONAL KINETICS

The Center for Generational Kinetics is the leading expert and research firm on Millennials, generational differences and the generation after Millennials, Gen Z.

The Center's team of PhD researchers, strategists, and speakers help companies and organizations solve tough generational challenges driven by emerging generational trends and differences.

Each year, The Center works with over 150 clients around the world, from car manufacturers and hoteliers to insurance, healthcare and technology. The Center's team is frequently quoted in the media about the effect of generational differences on everything from shopping and parenting to working and retirement.

Learn more at [GenHQ.com](http://GenHQ.com).



# ABOUT THE LANDMARK GEN Z SERIES

As experts in the field of generational research and Millennials, we at The Center for Generational Kinetics naturally became very curious about the generation following Millennials, those born 1996 and after. As researchers, our first inclination was to start digging to find out everything we could get our hands on in the way of research about this group. We read all sorts of materials but it didn't take very long to realize that the findings were all sounding familiar and the data points (when there were any to be had) were looking the same. It was then that we realized there is actually very little known about this new and exciting generation and we immediately began plans to conduct our own original research about this group.

That first research plan quickly grew in scope as we realized that one study on this generation would barely scratch the surface of what we want to uncover. So it is with great pleasure and excitement that we present to you the first installment in our landmark study series of Gen Z (also known as iGen). Stay tuned...there is much to come.

# NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

This research study was commissioned and led by The Center for Generational Kinetics. The survey was administered to 1,000 U.S. respondents age 14-69, with an additional 250 oversample of ages 14-17. The sample was weighted to the current census data, and participants were screened for U.S. citizenship.

The survey was conducted online from October 15, 2015 to October 21, 2015 and has a confidence interval of +/-3.1%.

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