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# Most Millennials Resist the 'Millennial' Label

Generations in a Mirror: How They See Themselves

# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT:

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# Most Millennials Resist the 'Millennial' Label

# Generations in a Mirror: How They See Themselves

Millennials will <u>soon become</u> the nation's largest living generation. They already have surpassed Generation X <u>to make up the largest share</u> of the U.S. workforce.

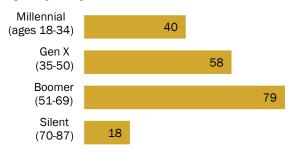
Despite the size and influence of the Millennial generation, however, most of those in this age cohort do not identify with the term "Millennial." Just 40% of adults ages 18 to 34 consider themselves part of the "Millennial generation," while another 33% – mostly older Millennials – consider themselves part of the next older cohort, Generation X.

Generational identity is strongest among the Boomers: 79% of those 51 to 69 consider themselves part of the "Baby Boom generation." Among those 35 to 50 (the age range for Gen X), 58% consider themselves part of "Generation X."

The oldest cohort of Americans is by far the least likely to embrace a generational label. Just 18% of those ages 70 to 87 (the age range of the Silent Generation) actually see themselves as part of the "Silent Generation." Far more Silents consider themselves part of adjoining generations, either Boomers (34%) or the Greatest Generation (also 34%).

### Millennials Less Likely Than Boomers, Gen X to Embrace Generational Label

% of those in each generation who consider themselves to be part of that generation...



American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. Respondents could select more than one generation label.

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The national survey by the Pew Research Center was conducted March 10-April 6 with 3,147 adults who are part of the <u>American Trends Panel</u>, a nationally representative sample of randomly selected U.S. adults surveyed online and by mail. Respondents were given five commonly used terms for generations, including the "Greatest Generation," and asked whether they considered themselves part of these generations.

The survey finds that some generational names – particularly Boomers – are more widely recognized than others. Among all respondents, fully 89% say they have heard of the Baby Boom generation, while 71% have heard of Gen X. A majority (56%) have heard of the Millennial generation, but just 15% of all respondents (including only 27% of Silents) have heard of the Silent Generation.

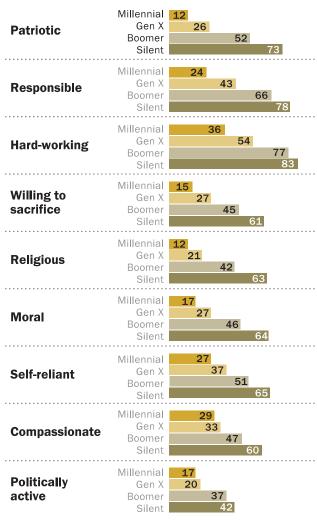
The survey also asked if a number of descriptions applied to the people of their generation. Silents are far more likely than people in younger age cohorts to view their own generation in a positive light. Large majorities of Silents say the people of their generation are hard-working (83%), responsible (78%), patriotic (73%), self-reliant (65%), moral (64%), willing to sacrifice (61%) and compassionate (60%).

Boomers also tend to have favorable impressions of their generation, though in most cases they are not as positive as Silents. By contrast, Gen Xers and Millennials are far more skeptical in assessing the strengths of their generations. And Millennials, in particular, stand out in their willingness to ascribe negative stereotypes to their own generation: 59% say the term "self-absorbed" describes their generation, compared with 30% among Gen Xers, 20% of Boomers and just 7% of Silents.

To be sure, some of these differences may be related more to age and life stage than to the unique characteristics of today's generations. Responsibilities tend to increase with age. As a result, it is possible that, in any era, older people would be more likely than younger people to view their generation as "responsible." In addition, differences between old and young in such realms as patriotism, religiosity and

# Generation Gaps: Silents, Boomers See Themselves in a More Positive Light

% of each generation saying each term describes their generation overall



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015.

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political activism have been evident for many years. (See this <u>explainer report</u> for more on our approach to studying generations.)

On several measures – including hard work, responsibility, willingness to sacrifice, and self-reliance – the share in each generation expressing positive views declines step-wise across age cohorts, from the oldest to the youngest.

For example, 83% of Silents describe the people of their generation as hard-working, as do (77%) of Boomers. A narrow majority of Gen Xers (54%) say people of their generation are hard-working, while 36% of Millennials say that phrase describes people in their cohort.

The survey includes 18 descriptions – a mix of positive, negative and neutral terms. On some terms, such as environmentally-conscious, entrepreneurial and rigid, there are no significant differences across cohorts in the shares saying each applies.

There is only one description – "idealistic" – on which a generation other than the Silents views itself most positively: Somewhat more Millennials (39%) than Gen Xers (28%), Boomers (31%) or Silents (26%) describe their generation as idealistic.

# **Generational Identity**

Generational names are largely the creations of social scientists and market researchers. The age boundaries of these widely used labels are somewhat variable and subjective, so perhaps it is not surprising that many Americans do not identify with "their" generation.

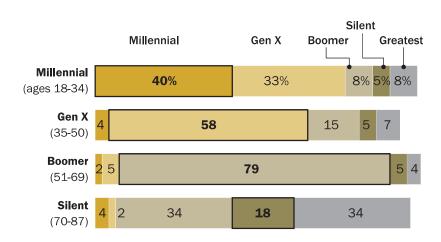
Yet the Boomer label resonates strongly with the members of this generation; the name arose from the fertility spike that began shortly after World War II and continued through the early 1960s. Fully 79% of those born between 1946 and 1964, the widely used age range of this generation, identify as Boomers. That is by far the strongest identification with a generational name of any cohort.

The Millennial generation also encompasses a broad span of adults (currently those born from 1981 to 1997). But just 40% of those in this cohort consider themselves Millennials, while as many as a third (33%) say they belong to Gen X. Among older Millennials (ages 27 to 34), 43% consider themselves Gen Xers, while 35% identify as Millennials. Yet even among younger Millennials (ages 18 to 26), fewer than half (45%) consider themselves part of this generation.

Most adults (58%) born between 1965 and 1980, the birth years of Gen X, identify with "their"

# Generational Identity: The Power of 'Boomer'

Share of each generation that identifies as ...



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. 'Other' responses not shown. Respondents could select multiple generation labels.

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generation. Notably, relatively few Gen Xers (just 4%) identify as Millennials, but 15% consider themselves Boomers. Among younger Gen Xers (ages 35 to 42), 68% identify with Gen X; among older Gen Xers, fewer (48%) see themselves as part of this generation, while 24% identify as Boomers.

Just 18% of those in the Silent Generation (born 1928 to 1945) consider themselves part of this generation. In part, this reflects the low visibility of the term "Silent Generation," though it has

been in use for more than half a century. In coining the name in 1951, *Time* magazine described the Silents as "working fairly hard and saying almost nothing."

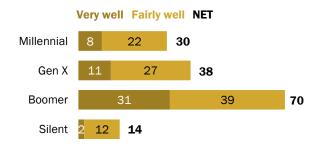
Most Silents identify with either the Greatest Generation – people born before 1928 – or as Boomers. Older Silents (age 80 to 87) tend to see themselves as part of the Greatest Generation;

51% say they are part of that cohort. Among younger Silents (70 to 79), close to half (45%) identify as Boomers.

Aside from being asked about their generational identity, respondents also were asked how well each generational term applies. In this case, the differences between Boomers and the other three generations are even starker. Seven-in-ten Boomers (70%) say the term "Baby Boom generation" applies to them very well (31%) or fairly well (39%). Among other generations, no more than about four-in-ten (38% of Gen X) say their generational label is a good fit.

# Large Majority of Boomers Say Their Generational Label Is a Good Fit

% of each who say their generation label applies to themselves ...



American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015. Based on total.

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# Generational Traits: Negative, Positive, Neutral

As with many positive generational descriptions, there also are wide differences over whether

negative terms apply. Millennials are far more likely than older generations to say the terms "self-absorbed," "wasteful," and "greedy" apply to people in their age cohort.

While 59% of Millennials describe the members of their generation as self-absorbed, 49% say they are wasteful and 43% describe them as greedy. On all three dimensions, Millennials are significantly more critical of their generation than older age cohorts are of theirs.

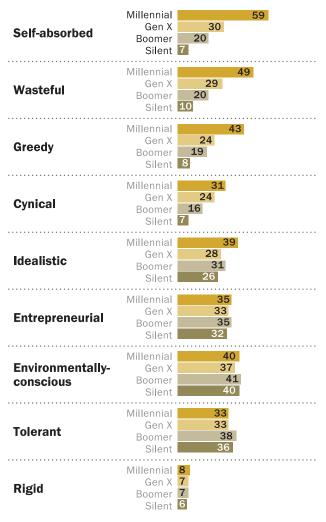
And while Silents are more likely than other generations to say that several positive terms describe their generation, they also are less likely to say some negative terms apply. Only about one-in-ten Silents see the people of their generation as self-absorbed (7%), wasteful (10%) and greedy (8%) – by far the lowest shares of any cohort.

There are smaller differences among generations over whether the term "cynical" describes people in their age cohort: 31% of Millennials say it applies, compared with 24% of Gen X, 16% of Boomers and just 7% of Silents. Relatively few across all generations — only about one-in-ten — say the term "rigid" applies.

Millennials are more likely to characterize their generation as "idealistic," but the differences are not large. About four-in-ten Millennials (39%) say the term idealistic applies to people in their

# Millennials Most Likely to Attribute Negative Traits to Their Generation

% of each generation saying each term describes their generation overall



Source: American Trends Panel (wave 10). Survey conducted Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015.

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cohort, compared with 28% of Gen Xers, 31% of Boomers and 26% of Silents.

On three other descriptions – "environmentally conscious," "entrepreneurial," and "tolerant" – there are no significant differences across generations.

To be sure, young adults are more likely than older people to say there is strong evidence of climate change and to prioritize the development of alternative energy over expanding the production of fossil fuels. Yet Millennials (40%) and Gen Xers (37%) are no more likely than Boomers (41%) or Silents (40%) to describe the people in their generation as environmentally conscious.

And while Millennials are more accepting of <a href="https://homosexuality">homosexuality</a>, interracial marriage and hold more positive views of immigrants, about the same share of Millennials (33%) as those in older age cohorts consider the people in their generation tolerant.

# About the American Trends Panel Survey (ATP)

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by the Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults living in households. Respondents who self-identify as internet users (representing 89% of U.S. adults) participate in the panel via monthly self-administered Web surveys, and those who do not use the internet participate via telephone or mail. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Data in this report are drawn from the March wave of the panel, conducted March 10-April 6, 2015 among 3,147 respondents (2,833 by Web and 314 by mail). The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 3,147 respondents is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

All current members of the American Trends Panel were originally recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, a large (n=10,013) national landline and cellphone random digit dial (RDD) survey conducted January 23rd to March 16th, 2014, in English and Spanish. At the end of that survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The invitation was extended to all respondents who use the internet (from any location) and a random subsample of respondents who do not use the internet<sup>1</sup>.

Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel. A total of 5,338 agreed to participate and provided either a mailing address or an email address to which a welcome packet, a monetary incentive and future survey invitations could be sent. Panelists also receive a small monetary incentive after participating in each wave of the survey.

The ATP data were weighted in a multi-step process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the propensity to join the panel and remain an active panelist varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey. Population density is weighted to match the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census. Telephone service is weighted to estimates of telephone coverage for 2014 that were projected from the July-December 2013 National Health Interview Survey. It also adjusts for party affiliation using an average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys, and for internet use using as a parameter a measure from the 2014 Survey of

When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

Political Polarization. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus
Total sample	3,147	2.4 percentage points
Millennial (age 18-34)	601	5.4 percentage points
Generation X (age 35-50)	721	4.9 percentage points
Baby Boomer (age 51-69)	1,305	3.6 percentage points
Silent (age 70-87)	501	5.9 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The Web component of the March wave had a response rate of 78% (2,833 responses among 3,634 Web-based individuals enrolled in the panel); the mail component had a response rate of 61% (314 responses among 512 non-Web individuals enrolled in the panel). Taking account of the response rate for the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization (10.6%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the cumulative response rate for the March ATP wave is 3.4%<sup>2</sup>.

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Prior to the October wave, 962 web panelists who had never responded were removed from the panel. Prior to the November wave, 37 mail non-web panelists who had never responded were removed from the panel.

# 2015 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL WAVE 10 MARCH FINAL TOPLINE March 10 - April 6, 2015 TOTAL N=3,147 WEB RESPONDENTS N=2,833 MAIL RESPONDENTS N=314<sup>1</sup>

#### OTHER QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

#### **ASK ALL:**

GEN1

For each of the following terms, please check the box next to those that you have heard of before. If you are unsure, do not check the box. **[RANDOMIZE A-E WITH F ALWAYS LAST]** [Check all that you have heard of]

		Yes, have <u>heard of</u>	Not selected/ No answer
a.	Greatest Generation Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015	41	59
b.	Silent Generation Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015	15	85
c.	Baby-Boom Generation Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015	89	11
d.	Generation X Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015	71	29
e.	Millennial Generation Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015	56	44
f.	None of the above <b>[EXCLUSIVE PUNCH]</b> Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015	6	94

#### **ASK ALL:**

GEN2

These are some commonly used names for generations. Which of these, if any, do you consider yourself to be? If you use another term to describe your generation, please choose "other" and tell us that term. [LIST a-e IN ORDER; REVERSE ORDER FOR HALF SAMPLE, WITH f ALWAYS LAST] [Check all that apply] SOFT PROMPT TEXT "If you're sure you want to skip, click Next."

		Yes, consider <u>myself to be</u>	Not selected/ No answer
a.	Greatest Generation		
	Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	10	90
	Silent [N=501]	34	66
	Baby-Boom [N=1,305]	4	96
	Generation X [N=721]	7	93
	Millennial [N=601]	8	92
b.	Silent Generation		
	Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	6	94
	Silent [N=501]	18	82
	Baby-Boom [N=1,305]	5	95
	Generation X [N=721]	5	95
	Millennial [N=601]	5	95

**GEN2 CONTINUED...** 

Question wording in this topline is that from the web version of the survey. Question wording and format was adapted for the paper questionnaire delivered by mail; this questionnaire is available on request. All questions asked in both modes unless noted.

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	Dalas Danas Consumbing	Yes, consider myself to be	Not selected/ No answer
C.	Baby-Boom Generation Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	35 34 79 15 8	65 66 21 85 92
d.	Generation X Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	27 2 5 58 33	73 98 95 42 67
e.	Millennial Generation Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	15 4 2 4 40	85 96 98 96 60
f.	Other [SPECIFY]  Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total  Silent [N=501]  Baby-Boom [N=1,305]  Generation X [N=721]  Millennial [N=601]	9 12 6 8 12	91 88 94 92 88

#### ASK IF GEN2a SELECTED:

GEN3a How well would you say the term GREATEST GENERATION applies to you?

#### BASED ON TOTAL:

Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at	No	GEN2a not
<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	all well	<u>answer</u>	<u>selected</u>
3	5	1	1	0	90
13	19	2	*	0	66
1	2	*	1	0	96
2	4	1	*	0	93
1	4	2	1	0	92
	well 3	well         well           3         5           13         19           1         2           2         4	well         well         well           3         5         1           13         19         2           1         2         *           2         4         1	well         well         well         all well           3         5         1         1           13         19         2         *           1         2         *         1           2         4         1         *	well         well         well         all well         answer           3         5         1         1         0           13         19         2         *         0           1         2         *         1         0           2         4         1         *         0

#### ASK IF GEN2b SELECTED:

GEN3b How well would you say the term SILENT GENERATION applies to you?

#### **BASED ON TOTAL:**

	Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at	No	GEN2a not
	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>all well</u>	<u>answer</u>	<u>selected</u>
March 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	1	4	1	1	0	94
Silent [N=501]	2	12	2	2	0	82
Baby-Boom $[N=1,305]$	1	2	1	1	0	95
Generation X [N=721]	*	4	1	*	0	95
Millennial [N=601]	1	2	2	1	0	95

#### **ASK IF GEN2c SELECTED:**

GEN3c How well would you say the term BABY-BOOM GENERATION applies to you?

#### **BASED ON TOTAL:**

	Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at	No	GEN2a not
	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>all well</u>	answer	<u>selected</u>
March 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	11	17	5	1	*	65
Silent [N=501]	8	19	5	1	1	66
Baby-Boom $[N=1,305]$	31	39	8	1	*	21
Generation X [N=721]	3	7	3	1	*	85
Millennial [N=601]	*	4	3	*	0	92

#### **ASK IF GEN2d SELECTED:**

GEN3d How well would you say the term GENERATION X applies to you?

#### **BASED ON TOTAL:**

	Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at	No	GEN2a not
	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>all well</u>	answer	<u>selected</u>
March 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	4	13	9	1	*	73
Silent [N=501]	0	1	1	*	0	98
Baby-Boom [N=1,305]	1	3	1	*	0	95
Generation $X [N=721]$	11	27	18	2	*	42
Millennial [N=601]	2	<i>17</i>	12	1	*	67

#### **ASK IF GEN2e SELECTED:**

GEN3e How well would you say the term MILLENNIAL GENERATION applies to you?

#### **BASED ON TOTAL:**

	Very	Fairly	Not too	Not at	No	GEN2a not
	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	<u>well</u>	all well	answer	<u>selected</u>
March 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	3	8	3	*	*	85
Silent [N=501]	1	2	1	*	1	96
Baby-Boom [N=1,305]	*	1	*	1	*	98
Generation X [N=721]	*	3	1	0	0	96
Millennial [N=601]	8	22	9	1	0	60

#### **ASK ALL:**

GEN4

Thinking about people in your generation overall, which of the following words or phrases describe your generation? [Check all that apply] [RANDOMIZE ITEMS a-r] SOFT PROMPT TEXT "If you're sure you want to skip, click Next."

		Yes, describes my generation	Not selected/ No answer
a.	Greedy		
	Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	26	74
	Silent [N=501]	8	92
	Baby-Boom [N=1,305]	19	81
	Generation X [N=721]	24	<i>7</i> 6
	Millennial [N=601]	43	<i>57</i>
b.	Tolerant		
	Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total	35	65
	Silent [N=501]	<i>3</i> 6	64
	Baby-Boom [N=1,305]	38	62
	Generation X [N=721]	33	67
	Millennial [N=601]	33	67

#### **GEN4 CONTINUED...**

c.	Rigid	Yes, describes my generation	Not selected/ No answer
C.	Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	7 6 7 7 8	93 94 93 93 92
d.	Patriotic Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	36 73 52 26 12	64 27 48 74 88
e.	Entrepreneurial  Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total  Silent [N=501]  Baby-Boom [N=1,305]  Generation X [N=721]  Millennial [N=601]	34 32 35 33 35	66 68 65 67 65
f.	Environmentally conscious  Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total  Silent [N=501]  Baby-Boom [N=1,305]  Generation X [N=721]  Millennial [N=601]	40 40 41 37 40	60 60 59 63 60
g.	Idealistic Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	32 26 31 28 39	68 74 69 72 61
h.	Cynical Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	22 7 16 24 31	78 93 84 76 69
i.	Hard working  Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total  Silent [N=501]  Baby-Boom [N=1,305]  Generation X [N=721]  Millennial [N=601]	59 83 77 54 36	41 17 23 46 64
j.	Responsible Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	48 78 66 43 24	52 22 34 57 76

#### **GEN4 CONTINUED...**

		Yes, describes my generation	Not selected/ No answer
k.	Moral Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	35 64 46 27 17	65 36 54 73 83
1.	Religious Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	30 63 42 21 12	70 37 58 79 88
m.	Self-absorbed Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	33 7 20 30 59	67 93 80 70 41
n.	Politically active Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	27 42 37 20 17	73 58 63 80 83
0.	Self-reliant Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	41 65 51 37 27	59 35 49 63 73
p.	Wasteful Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	30 10 20 29 49	70 90 80 71 51
q.	Compassionate Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total Silent [N=501] Baby-Boom [N=1,305] Generation X [N=721] Millennial [N=601]	39 60 47 33 29	61 40 53 67 71
r.	Willing to sacrifice  Mar 10-Apr 6, 2015: Total  Silent [N=501]  Baby-Boom [N=1,305]  Generation X [N=721]  Millennial [N=601]	33 61 45 27 15	67 39 55 73 85

K1-K13 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OTHER QUESTIONS HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE