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Millennials Speak Out About the Direction of the Country

A summary of key findings from the first-of-its-kind bimonthly
survey of racially and ethnically diverse young adults

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<http://www.genforwardsurvey.com/>

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Genforward: A survey of the Black Youth Project

i. Black Youth Project and the GenForward Survey



For over 10 years, the Black Youth Project (BYP), housed at the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture at the University of Chicago, has dedicated its work to understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by young people of color in the contemporary United States. We are committed to disaggregating the larger category often labeled Millennials because our previous research has shown important differences in lived experiences and political attitudes among young adults of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.¹ We continue this mission with our GenForward surveys. The report reflects the Black Youth Project's sustained commitment to documenting and amplifying *knowledge, voice* and *action* among young people, particularly young people of color.

The GenForward Survey is the first of its kind—a nationally representative survey of over 1750 young adults ages 18-34 conducted bimonthly that pays special attention to how race and ethnicity influence how young adults or Millennials experience and think about the world. Given the importance of race and ethnicity for shaping the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of young people, we believe researchers make a mistake when they present data on young adults in a manner that assumes a monolithic Millennial generation and young adult vote.

Millennials now represent the largest generation of Americans, and they are by far the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in the country.² About 19 percent of millennials identify as Latino or Hispanic, 13 percent as Black or African American, and 6 percent as Asian American. Thus, to fully understand how young adults think about elections and politicians, issues such as terrorism or gun violence, as well as their economic futures and race relations, we apply an intersectional lens and pay attention to characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

In this report, we present GenForward survey data collected between April 14 and May 1, 2017. We provide an extensive analysis of young adults' views of the early months of the Trump presidency, their perceptions of the nation's economy, and their key policy priorities.

¹ See, for example, our previous report, *Black Millennials in America* (available at http://blackyouthproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BYP_ReportDesign04b_Dec03_HiRes.pdf).

² See: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/>.

ii. Key Findings



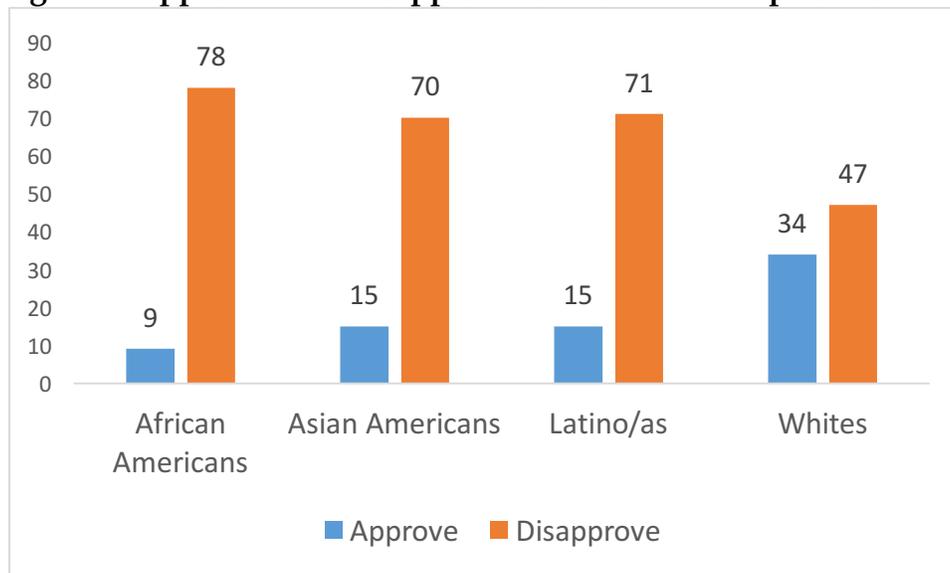
- > Majorities of African American (78%), Asian American (70%), and Latino/a (71%) Millennials disapprove of President Trump's performance as president. Whites are more divided in their approval of President, with 34% approval and 47% disapproval.
- > Congress has problems. It is no more popular than Trump among young people of color, and is less popular than President Trump among young whites.
- > African American, Latino/as and Asian American Millennials view the Democratic Party much more favorably than the Republican Party while White Millennials have fairly negative views toward both parties.
- > Millennials of all racial and ethnic groups hold negative views of the economy, with only 13% of African Americans, 28% of Asian Americans, 19% of Latino/as, and 29% of whites reporting that the national economy today is very or somewhat good.
- > Majorities of Millennials in all racial and ethnic groups say that the country today is on the wrong track. Sixty-four percent of African Americans, 63% of Asian Americans, 67% of Latino/as, and 54% of whites say that the country is off on the wrong track.
- > There continue to be large differences across race and ethnicity in perceptions about the most important problem in America. For example, African Americans and Latino/as list racism as one of the three most important problems in the country, but this issue is not one of the top three issues for young whites or Asian Americans.
- > The issue of health care is of concern to many Millennials. African Americans (26%), Asian Americans (33%), and whites (32%) all identify health care as one of the three most important problems facing the country.

III. Evaluations of Donald Trump, Congress, the Parties and Direction of the Country

During the month of April, Donald Trump marked his 100th day as President amid rising tensions with North Korea, uncertainty over the Republican solution to health care, and increased scrutiny of his administration’s ties to Russia. Our findings show that in the past month young people, especially young people of color, expressed deep disapproval of President Trump and concerns about the direction of the country.

Figure 1 presents Donald Trump’s approval and disapproval rating for each racial and ethnic group among Millennials. As the figure shows, young adults largely disapprove of the job Donald Trump has been doing as president. Majorities of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as disapprove of Donald Trump’s performance so far as president. Whites also register disapproval of Trump but only a plurality of young whites report negative views of the President.

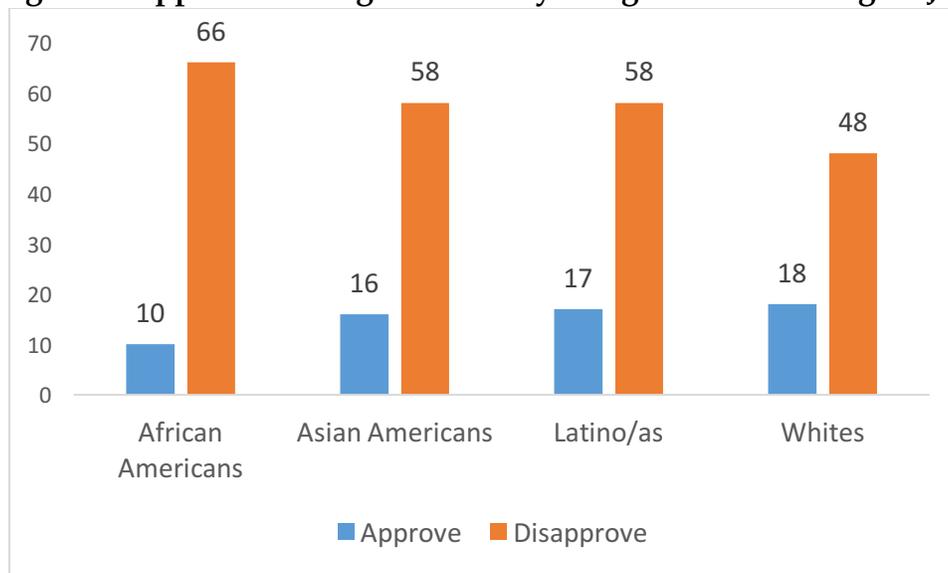
Figure 1. Approval and Disapproval of Donald Trump as President



Young people also express widespread disapproval of Congress. Figure 2 shows that majorities of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as disapprove of

Congress. Notably, among white Millennials Donald Trump has higher approval than Congress, but a plurality of young whites similarly disapprove of Congress.

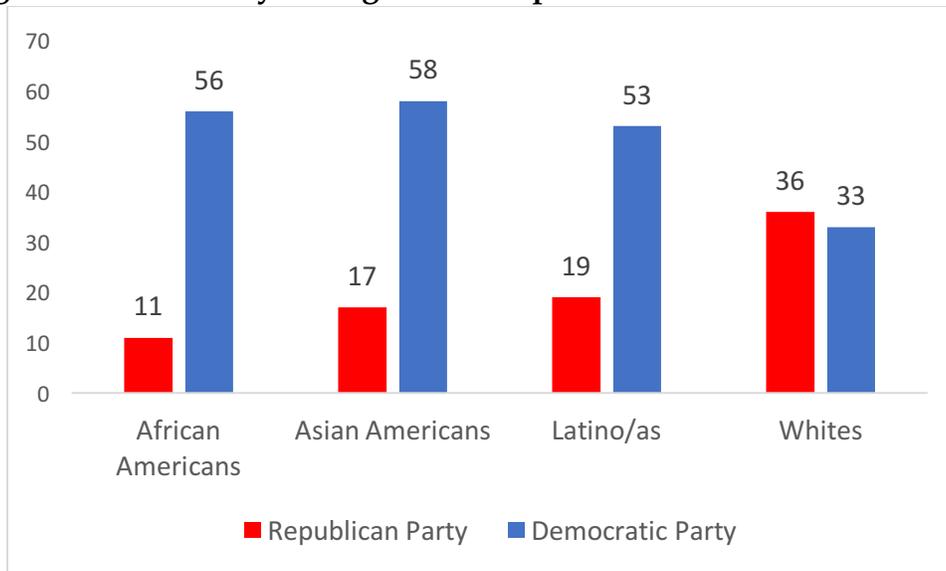
Figure 2. Approval Ratings of the Way Congress is Handling its Job



How do Millennials view the two major parties? As Figure 3 illustrates, there is a wide gap in views about the two parties among young adults of color. As we found for approval ratings of Donald Trump and Congress, few young people of color view the Republican Party favorably. By contrast, majorities of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as view the Democratic Party favorably, although there is room for their support to grow.

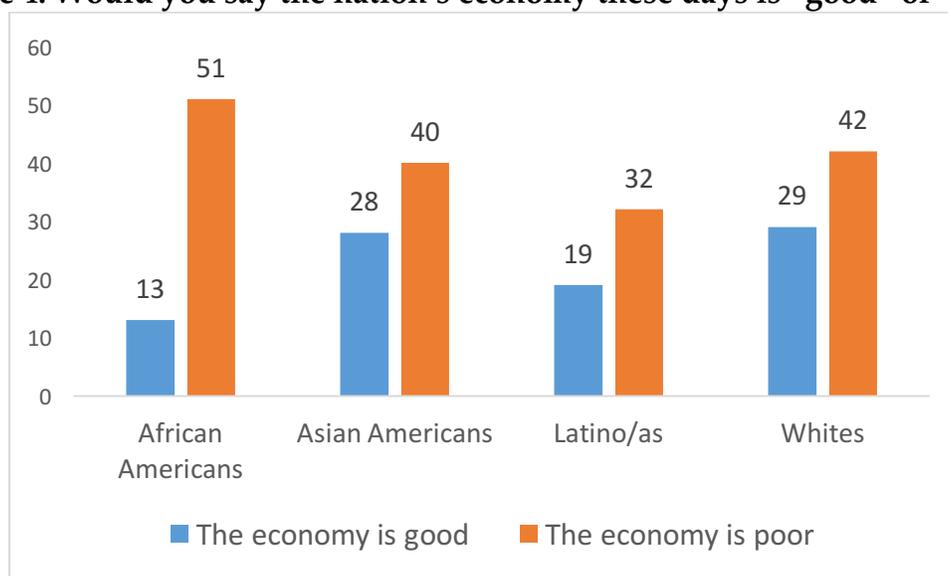
Among young whites the data in Figure 3 suggest a different story. Slightly more white Millennials express favorable views of the Republican Party than the Democratic Party. Donald Trump and the Republican Party's struggles among Millennials are real, but their low approval ratings among young adults are driven largely --- though not exclusively --- by their abysmal ratings among Millennials of color.

Figure 3. Favorability Ratings of the Republican and Democratic Parties



Given their opinions of President Trump, we also wanted to know how young people felt about the state of the economy and their opinion about the direction of the country more generally. Figure 4 presents the percentage of Millennials who describe today's economy as very or somewhat "good" and the percentage who say the economy is very or somewhat "poor." **Millennials of all racial and ethnic groups report rather negative perceptions of the nation's economy.** More than half of African American Millennials believe the economy is poor, followed by whites (42%), Asian Americans (40%) and Latino/as (32%). Despite some good economic news in the form of declining unemployment during the first part of 2017, young peoples' experiences of and perceptions of the economy are more negative than positive.

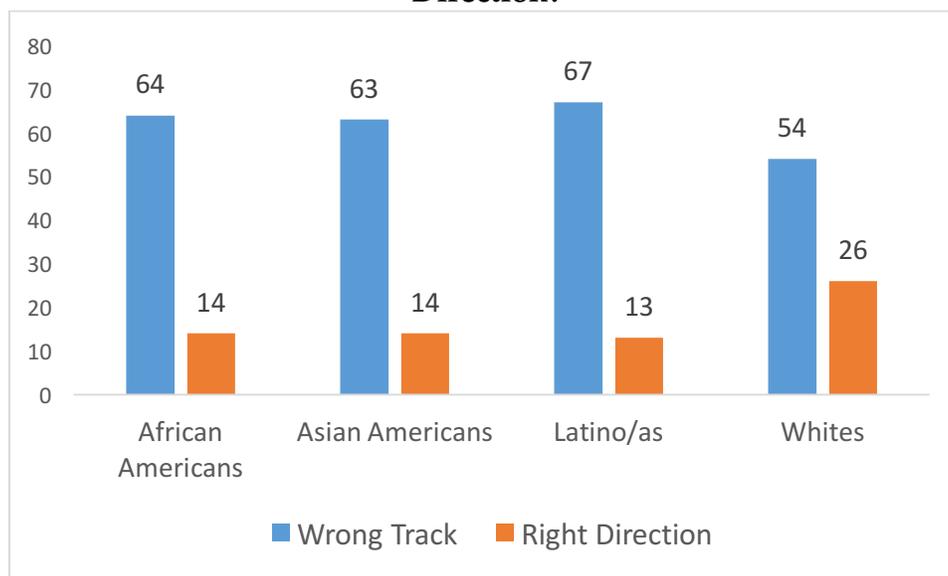
Figure 4. Would you say the nation’s economy these days is “good” or “poor”?



The previous data suggests that Millennials have a gloomy outlook about the state of the country. That perspective was similarly reflected when we asked Millennials whether they view country as “on the wrong track” or “headed in the right direction.” Figure 5 confirms that **majorities of young people across race and ethnicity say that the country is on the wrong track.** And—like views of President Trump and Congress—young people of color express the most negative sentiments about the current direction of the country.

Figure 5 shows that majorities of Millennials of color are overwhelmingly more likely to express negative views than positive views about the current direction of the country. White Millennials are also more negative than positive, but more young whites than young adults of color see the country as heading in the right direction—perhaps in response to Donald Trump’s election victory.

Figure 5. Are Things in This Country Off on the Wrong Track or Headed in the Right Direction?



IV. Most Important Problem

What issues or problems are today at the top of the list of young peoples' concerns? Our survey suggests that young adults' issue priorities both reflect national debates and vary substantially across race and ethnicity. Table 1 highlights the three most frequently listed "most important problems" within each racial and ethnic group and shows that the issues young adults care most about vary by race and ethnicity.

The most frequently cited problem identified by African Americans is racism (37%), followed by health care (26%), with poverty and education tied as the third most cited problem (24%). Among Asian Americans, health care (33%), education (28%) and immigration (23%) are listed as the most important problems. Latino/as' most frequently cited problem is immigration (47%), followed by racism (39%), and terrorism and homeland security (24%). And finally, young whites identify health care most frequently (32%), followed by terrorism and homeland security (25%), and the national debt (25%).

Table 1. The Three Most Important Problems, by Race and Ethnicity

	African American adults 18-34	Asian American adults 18-34	Latino/a adults 18-34	White adults 18-34
Most cited problem	Racism (37%)	Health Care (33%)	Immigration (47%)	Health Care (32%)
Second most cited problem	Health Care (26%)	Education (28%)	Racism (39%)	Terrorism and Homeland Security (25%)
Third most cited problem	Poverty and Education (24% each)	Immigration (23%)	Terrorism and Homeland Security (24%)	National Debt (25%)
N=	528	262	518	504

Question: What do you think are the three most important problems facing this country today? Respondents select three from a list of 22 issues (see the toplines). *N* = 1,853. The percentage of respondents listing each issue as one of the three most important problems is listed in parentheses.

While differences definitely exist in the perceived most important problem by race and ethnic group, there are some issues that seem to cut across race in terms of priorities. Health care, for example, is among the top 3 concerns for all groups except Latino/as. This likely reflects the intense media attention paid to this issue over the past few months as the Republican Congress and President Trump have worked on repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. Thus, when issues gain national attention we see young people across race and ethnicity placing greater priority on the issue as an important problem. For other issues, however, there are important differences across race and ethnicity likely reflecting their lived experiences—as in the priority placed on racism by African Americans and Latino/as and Latino/as’ and Asian Americans’ emphasis on immigration.

V. Study Methodology

The GenForward April/May survey is a project of the Black Youth Project at the University of Chicago. Interviews were conducted with a representative sample from GenForwardSM, a nationally representative survey panel of adults ages 18-34 recruited and administered by NORC at the University of Chicago and funded by grants to the Black Youth Project at the University of Chicago from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

A total of 1,853 interviews were conducted between April 14 and May 1, 2017 with adults ages 18-34 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia, including completed interviews with 528 African American young adults, 262 Asian American young adults, 518 Latino/a young adults, 504 white young adults, and 41 young adults with other racial and ethnic backgrounds. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and via telephone and web modes.

The GenForward survey was built from two sample sources: Fifty-nine percent of the completed interviews are sourced from NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel. AmeriSpeak is a probability based panel that also uses address-based sample but sourced from the NORC National Frame with enhanced sample coverage. During the initial recruitment phase of the AmeriSpeak panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face).

Forty-one percent of the completed interviews are sourced from the Black Youth Project (BYP) panel of young adults recruited by NORC. The BYP sample is from a probability-based household panel that uses an address-based sample from a registered voter database of the entire U.S. Households were selected using stratified random sampling to support over-sampling of households with African Americans, Latino/as, and Asian Americans ages 18-34. NORC contacted sampled households by U.S. mail and by telephone, inviting them to register and participate in public opinion surveys twice a month.

Panelists on both the BYP and AmeriSpeak panels are invited to register for the panel via the web or by telephone to participate in public opinion surveys.

Of the 1,853 completed interviews in the GenForward April survey, 93 percent were completed by web and 7 percent by telephone. The survey completion rate is 32 percent. The weighted household panel recruitment rate is 22.4 percent and the weighted household panel retention rate is 94.2 percent, for a cumulative AAPOR Response Rate 3 of 6.8 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.46 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. Among subgroups, the margin of sampling error at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 6.81 percentage points for African Americans, +/- 8.24 percentage points for Asian Americans, +/- 7.19 percentage points for Latino/as, and +/- 6.43 percentage points for whites.

To encourage cooperation, respondents were offered incentives for completing the survey that ranged from the cash-equivalent of \$3 to the cash-equivalent of \$10.

The interviews from the two probability-based sample sources were combined for statistical weighting and analysis. The combined panel samples provide sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. The statistical weights incorporate the appropriate probability of selection for the BYP and AmeriSpeak samples, nonresponse adjustments, and also, raking ratio adjustments to population benchmarks for 18-34 year old adults. A poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and over-sampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. The poststratification process was done separately for each racial/ethnic group and involved the following variables: age, gender, education, and census region. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults ages 18-34, and the 18-34 year-old populations for African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, and non-Latino/a whites, were used for all analyses.