

R U Ready 4 Us?

An Introduction to Canadian Millennials




canadian  millennials
AN ABACUS DATA PRACTICE

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Who are the Millennials? Why are they so different from me and is there anyway I can avoid them? These are a few of the questions we have heard as we discuss strategy with our clients. Canadians in general are also wondering the same thing. In a recent Abacus Data survey, most Canadians told us they had some concerns about Millennials and view us rather negatively. The Millennials are entering the Canadian work force with larger numbers every year, are an influential consumer group, and if mobilized represent a largely untapped yet powerful political and economic force.

We use the term “Millennials” to describe people born between 1980 and 2000 and while this applies to youth all over the world we seek to describe only those living in Canada. In an effort to define our generation many have nicknamed it *Generation Y*, as it follows *Generation X*. Among others the Millennial generation has been nicknamed the *echo boom* for its similarities in size and force to the North American Baby Boom generation. In Canada this generation makes up just over a quarter of the total population, representing about nine million citizens and is expected to have the same impact as the Baby Boom generation on politics, the workplace, culture, and business though, we believe more intensively due to the role the internet, social media, and shifting demographics will play in the next 25 years.¹ The Millennials are identified by this distinction and awarded titles such as, the *net generation*, *screenagers* and *digital natives*, for this is the first generation to transition from childhood to adulthood during the Internet age. Growing up during this time has fundamentally changed the way that Millennials communicate, shop, work, engage and think about life, with a force comparable only to the Baby Boom generation strengthened by the power of the Internet and communications technology the Millennial generation will have a real influence in Canada throughout our lifetime.

This paper, released in conjunction with Abacus Data’s new Canadian Millennials website, seeks to explain why our generation should not be ignored and why a look at the Canadian cohort, separate from Millennials in other countries, is so important.

As Millennials, we share many traits and attitudes and we grew up in much of the same environment as others in our generation. This shared experience and upbringing differentiate us from other Canadians. Yet, our research confirms that there are some universal “Canadian” values that unite Canadians from different generations such as our unwavering support for universal health care or our shared love for hockey. In fact, we share many other core values with Canada’s Gen Xers, Baby Boomers, and even with the Greatest Generation who fought through and survived the Great Depression and World War II.

But ultimately we are different. We know that and our goal, as a research organization, is to highlight the impact of these differences to our clients, the media, and the public. Corporations, policy makers, and brands willing to adapt and change will succeed. Those who stubbornly stick to old ways will be far more likely to fail. We hope to be the bridge, the interpreter, and the facilitator between our generation and organizations that want to learn and adapt to a future Canada that will undoubtedly be dominated by Millennials.

¹ Elisabetta Corvi, Alessandro Bigi and Gabrielle Ng, “The European Millennials Versus the US Millennials: Similarities and Differences,” 2007: Università degli Studi di Brescia.

WHAT DO NON-MILLENNIALS THINK ABOUT US?

As a starting point to our discussion, let us consider what non-Millennials think about us “youngsters”. From nicknames to name calling, Canadian Millennials are clearly defined in the minds of Canadians outside of our generation. In a recent Abacus Data survey², we asked 1,005 Canadians to tell us whether they associate particular words with the Millennial generation. While fully three-quarters agreed (75%) that this generation is notably tech-savvy and about one third (34%) would describe them as “connected,” we found that many Canadians have a negative view of Generation Y using terms like “materialistic” (56%), “coddled” (50%) “lazy” (37%) and “entitled” (34%) to describe us. On the positive side, around a quarter described Millennials as “open-minded” (26%) and “confident” (20%), though, and indicative of the stereotypes of our generation, only 13% of non-Millennial Canadians would describe us as “motivated” and fewer, only 3%, consider us to be “loyal.”

Although non-Millennial Canadians have their concerns about us, previous studies have shown that most Millennials are optimistic, hard-working and want to make a difference in the world.³ The core values of American Millennials that emerged out of a Think2040 think tank of 2123 participants in 2010 included a deeply held concern for equity, respect for society, and a belief in community empowerment and self-determination. This report outlines some Millennial priorities that were uncovered, finding that Millennials are imagining a more “*equal, accessible, empowered, and community-minded*” country.⁴ A McCann World Group Study of Millennials from all corners of the world identified the three key motivations that connect this generation globally. They found the need for *justice, authenticity, connections* and *community* as the most prominent characteristics along which our generation is unified.⁵ Edelman’s 8095 study identified *taking action* as a core value. They acknowledge that, “while Millennials take action in different forms, the nearly ever-present connection to their peers plays a pivotal role. From joining online communities to viewing and recommending videos or news stories action has become part of the very fabric of social interaction and living.”⁶ Community empowerment, equality, accessibility, justice, authenticity, taking action. Are Canadians wrong about us? Is it possible that older Canadians just don’t get us or are we really like that? Inter-generational conflict and misunderstanding is common. Overcoming these misconceptions and differences is what our new research practice is all about.

² Abacus Data survey of Canadians aged 31 and older, December X to X, 2011, n=1,005 from an online sample of over 150,000 Canadians

³ L. Lancaster and D. Stillman, *When Generations Collide*, 2002, New York: Harper Collins Publishing.

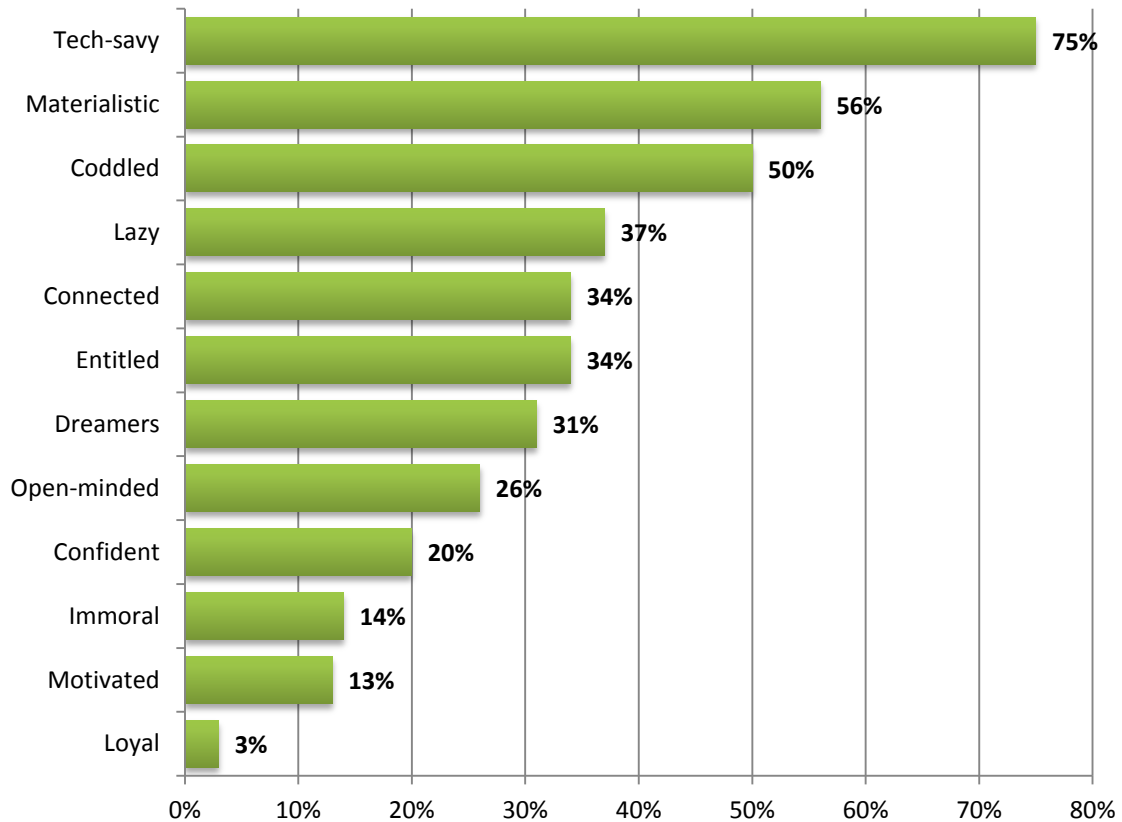
⁴ *Blueprint for the Millennial America*, Roosevelt Campus Network, 2010, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/44487427/Blueprint-for-Millennial-America>>.

⁵ *The Truth About Youth*, McCann World Group Study, May 2011, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/56263899/McCann-Worldgroup-Truth-About-Youth>>.

⁶ *The 8095 Exchange: Millennials, Their Actions Surrounding Brands and the Dynamics of Reverberation*, Edelman, <http://www.edelman.com/insights/special/8095/8095whitepaper.pdf>

How Non-Millennial Canadians Describe Millennials

(Source: Abacus Data, December 2011)



Our objective in this paper is to clarify misconceptions about our generation and preview some of the findings coming out of a survey we conducted in November 2011. We conducted a wide-ranging survey of Canadians Millennials (aged 18 to 30, n=1,000) and Canadians over 30 (n=1,000) to uncover similarities and differences among us.

In reviewing current discussions and past research about what sets the Millennial generation apart we hope to provide readers with an understanding about who the Millennials are and where there are inter-generational similarities and differences. We want to understand whether there is any truth to these concerns about the generation and we aim to help describe the Millennial view by highlighting our generation's expectations and aspirations as we enter the workplace, decide what to purchase, and even whether we participate in public life.

As Millennials growing up in the same era we share some traits that characterize our behaviours and attitudes as a generation. Throughout this article we aim to uncover these *cohort effects* that are specifically characteristic of the Canadian Millennial generation. While we cannot expect to fully explain *why* we (Millennials) are the way we are, our aim is to give some context to the environment in which we grew up and how that makes us different from generations that came before us.

GROWING UP MILLENNIAL

“Youth is the key period in which social generations are formed,” Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch explain in **Managing Millennials**.⁷ Growing up in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, we developed under different circumstances than our parents and Generation X. There are some traits specific to our upbringing that distinctly characterizes the behaviours and attitudes of our generation.

During the 1990s, there was a North American trend toward increased federal spending on kids. For the first time since the 1920s infrastructure for children rose faster than spending on seniors or working-age adults.⁸ Canadians invested more in public libraries, the public education system, youth sports and took a greater interest in creating optimal conditions for young people to learn and grow than ever before (citation).⁹

That said, the early eighties also saw the highest number of women in the workplace than ever before.¹⁰ During this period, most families with two-working parents entered their children into non-government daycare. While most kids started half-day kindergarten at the age of four, full-day kindergarten classes began the following year in preparation for grade school.

The self-esteem movement caught hold in the 1980s. “Its aim was to build self-confidence in children by taking a more nurturing approach to early education.”¹¹ We believe we are special and destined for great things because we were consistently told this not only by our parents but by our teachers, coaches, guidance counselors, and the media. Where our predecessors were raised to play by their own devices with much less structure and guidance offered by their parents, we grew up with enhanced security and immediate, sometimes instant support and reassurance from our parents. We crave feedback and encouragement because most of us were raised with it. And unlike other generations, we are somewhat less competitive because we grew up during a time where effort was more important than grades, where team-work and attitude was more important than outcomes.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL LIFE

Beyond our unique upbringing what truly separates us from other generations is our technological immersion and our comfort with using digital tools to navigate and communicate. As Millennials we inherently understand the role that communications technology, the Internet, and instant access to information plays in Millennial life.

⁷ Espinoza, Chip, Mick Ukleja and Craig Rusch. *Managing Millennials: Discover the core competencies for managing today's workforce*. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, Hoboken, New Jersey: 2010) p. 16.

⁸ Julian Sanchez, *Misreading Millennials: The politics of a rising generation*, *Reason Online*, December 2003.

⁹ *Improving the Quality of Life of Canadians and Their Children*, Budget Report, Department of Finance Canada, 2000, <<http://www.fin.gc.ca/budget00/soc/soc1-eng.asp>>.

¹⁰ Nancy Zukewich, *Women in the Workplace*, Statistics Canada, 1993, <<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=11-008-X19920041296&lang=eng>>.

¹¹ Espinoza, Chip, Mick Ukleja and Craig Rusch. *Managing Millennials: Discover the core competencies for managing today's workforce*. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, Hoboken, New Jersey: 2010) p. 9.

- We know, for example, that we can communicate and trade music with our friends across town or on the other side of the planet through instant messaging and online sharing platforms.
- We know from sitting in lectures in college or university that most of us can find the answers to our professors' discussion questions before they even finish writing them on the board (by the way, chalkboards are so 1980s).
- As we've been told, we know that these things that come naturally to us are useful skills envied by older generations. Like most Canadian Millennials we grew up as our household's "technology officers"¹² and we were empowered by this unique position from an early age.¹³

As *digital natives*, Millennials were the first generation to be exposed to the Internet and wide computer access before hitting the work force. We not only integrate instant communications into our lives, but do so seamlessly and without the need for instructors or tutorials.

Generational research has identified the Millennials' familiarity with technology as "the single most important difference between Gen Y and earlier generations"¹⁴

"Millennials would rather give up their sense of smell than their cell or smart phone."

Research in the United States found that twenty percent of American Millennials began using computers between the ages of 5 and 8.¹⁵ Moreover, the Pew Research Center has found that among American Millennials, 62% are connected wirelessly to the Internet when they are away from home or work and 88% text during this time. Their surveys have found that 65% of Millennials are disconnected one hour a day or less.¹⁶ In a survey of 5,000 American college freshman conducted in 2011 Mr. Youth found that 80% use two or more devices while simultaneously watching TV¹⁷ This ability to multitask "talk, walk, listen, type and text" defines our generation.¹⁸ We regularly and easily integrate technology use into most if not all aspects of our daily lives.

These trends are mirrored in Canada, for years Canadians (as a whole) have been the most prolific users of services such as Facebook and YouTube, the likely result of high levels of Internet accessibility. The Broadband Report published by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission states as of November 2011 broadband Internet access service is available to over 98% of households and¹⁹ demand for access to Internet content, whether audio, video, or data is continually increasing. Additionally, tools to help us access the Internet remotely are now more prominent than ever, today six in ten (59%) Millennials and five in ten (49%) Canadians aged 31-59 own a smartphone, five percent of

¹² Five Ways to Friend the Class of 2015, Mr. Youth, 2011. <http://meet2015.com/Content/Pdf/MrYouth_ClassOf2015.pdf>.

¹³ While this is not a blanket statement, we aim to explain the case for most, but not all Millennials. The CRTC has found that today 98% of Canadian households have access to the Internet, therefore qualifying that not all homes in Canada interact with technology in the same way.

¹⁴ Melissa S. Bristow, Make Way For Generation Y, Kiplinger Letters, <<http://www.kiplinger.com/businessresource/forecast/archive/how-generation-y-will-work-and-live.html?si=1>>

¹⁵ S. Jones and M. Madden, "The Internet Goes to College: How students are living in the future with today's technology," *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, 2002.

¹⁶ The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change. Pew Research Social Trends, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/Millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>

¹⁷ Five Ways to Friend the Class of 2015, Mr. Youth, 2011. <http://meet2015.com/Content/Pdf/MrYouth_ClassOf2015.pdf>.

¹⁸ The Millennials are Coming, CBS News, May 23, 2008, <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/11/08/60minutes/main3475200.shtml>>.

¹⁹ Broadband Report, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, November 2011, <<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/broadband/bbreport1111.htm#n2.3>>.



Meet the **Simple Lifer**, one of six unique Canadian Millennial segments identified by our research and statistical modeling

Canadians own a tablet.²⁰ Research conducted by Edelman and StrategyOne, which surveyed Millennials from eight countries, found that one in five Millennials surveyed have posted a video of themselves online.²¹

The Edelman report explains that “mobile is its own subculture,” and Millennials are happy with this: “74% of Millennials believe that new technology makes their lives easier, with more than half saying that it helps them to be closer with their friends.”²² Given a list of things (including cosmetics, their car, their passport, their phone and their sense of smell) and told they could only save two, 53% of those aged 16 – 22 and 48% of those aged 23 – 30 would give up their own sense of smell if it meant they could keep an item of technology like a cell phone or laptop.²³ This McCann study helps explain that, “for young people technology is more than a useful tool or an enabler, it truly is their fifth sense.”²⁴

There are 10.3 million Canadian Millennial Facebook profiles. According to an Abacus Data survey done in 2011, 9 in 10 Millennials have a Facebook account, 8 in 10 Gen Xers have an account and 7 in 10 Baby Boomers have an account. While technology use in Canada is not exclusive to Millennials, the way we use that technology is unique. The same Abacus Data survey in 2011 asked respondents how are they most likely to hear about a noteworthy event that happened in their circle of friends. While Canadians over 45 years of age were most likely to say they would find out by a telephone call, almost one in two Millennials (46%) said they would most likely hear about it first on Facebook with text message (20%), in-person (14%), phone calls (14%), and email (8%) rounded out the list. Whereas the telephone and email dominate communications with older generations, Facebook is the dominant communication tool for Canadian Millennials.

The importance of social media in our lives has other, perhaps more meaningful effects on our decisions. In the past, Canadians would routinely watch the evening news on television or read through a paper copy of the day’s newspaper. Exposure to different news stories and articles was common. Ironically, in a world with 24-hour cable news stations and an endless supply of news and information, customized Facebook and Twitter feeds isolate Millennials and other Canadians from a wide breadth of news and information.

²⁰ Broadband Report, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, November 2011, <<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/broadband/bbreport1111.htm#n2.3>>.

²¹ *The 8095 Exchange: Millennials, Their Actions Surrounding Brands and the Dynamics of Reverberation*, Edelman, <http://www.edelman.com/insights/special/8095/8095whitepaper.pdf>

²² *The 8095 Exchange: Millennials, Their Actions Surrounding Brands and the Dynamics of Reverberation*, Edelman, <http://www.edelman.com/insights/special/8095/8095whitepaper.pdf>

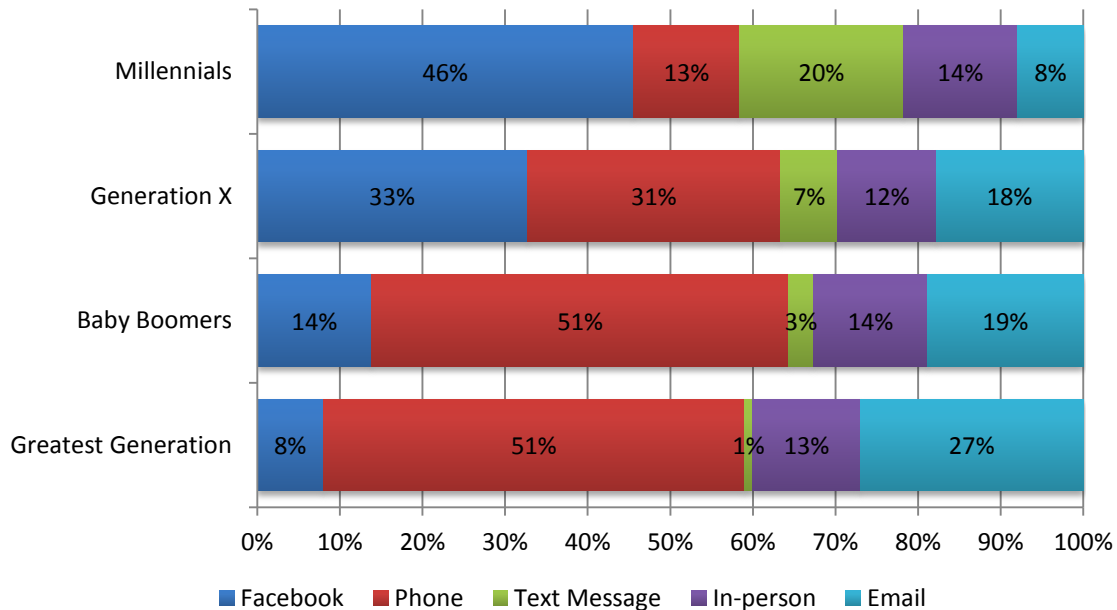
²³ *The Truth About Youth*, McCann World Group Study, May 2011, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/56263899/McCann-Worldgroup-Truth-About-Youth>>.

²⁴ *The Truth About Youth*, McCann World Group Study, May 2011, <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/56263899/McCann-Worldgroup-Truth-About-Youth>>.

Facebook: The Millennial Connector

(Source: Abacus Data, November 2010)

Q: If a noteworthy event happened within your circle of friends, how are you most likely to hear about



We can customize our news sources more easily now and when we rely on our Facebook friends and Twitter follows for news and information, we are more likely to close ourselves off to new ideas. We hypothesize that the decline in voting rates and political engagement in Canada and in other developed countries is partly caused by what we term “social media isolation”. Millennials with no or few friends interested and/or engaged in politics can be completely isolated from what is happening in politics leaving them uninformed, uninterested, and therefore unlikely to participate.

There is no doubt that technology defines the Millennial Generation. While Canadians from all generations are online and almost all Canadians have access to the web, Millennials are defined not only by our technological prowess but by how naturally it comes to us. Generations that follow us will share these traits, but our real-time connection to information has important consequences on how we work, shop, and consume.

PRIORITIES AND ASPIRATIONS

Entering a bleak employment market with a concerning shadow painted across the global finance system Millennials are faced with notable barriers to success. A recent New York Magazine article quotes a *spottily employed* American Millennial “Life is just getting easier...in terms of access to entertainment. Facebook and video games and Twitter and internet memes and Google Books and smartphones and free apps have made life on a small budget a lot more diverting.” This fact affirms that while we may be

worse off than our parents financially, some feel that “we are better off culturally.”²⁵ The New York Magazine article depicts the Millennials’ *surprisingly durable optimism* “... members of our cohort believe they’ll live a more fulfilled life, have better relationships, even if they don’t live in larger houses or drive fancier cars than their parents.”²⁶

A large-scale Pew study published in 2010 showed that about 90 percent of American Millennials either say that they currently have enough money or will eventually meet their long-term financial goals.²⁷ Jean Twenge, author of *Generation Me*, says the most prominent shift she has seen so far among young people in this economy is an apparent decrease in materialism, “We are less interested in stuff, but still very interested in self.”

“Life is just getting easier... in terms of access to entertainment. Facebook and video games and Twitter and internet memes and Google Books and smartphones and free apps have made life on a small budget a lot more diverting.”

While optimistic, we seem to be adjusting our expectations accordingly. A Canadian study of university students found that “most Millennials appear to understand that their first job may not fulfill all of their wants. Perhaps, given the current economic climate, there may be an implicit understanding that accepting a less-than-ideal position may be necessary in the short term for longer-term career attainment.”²⁸ Similarly, young people are more willing than ever to stay at their parent’s house until they find the job they want.

According to the 2006 Canadian census as made available by Statistics Canada 60 percent of Canadians aged 20 to 24 were living at their parents’ house. They explain, “young adults could remain or return to the parental home for reasons such as school attendance, financial difficulties, lack of job opportunities or cost of living in a particular area.” This report found that the GTA and Vancouver had the highest proportion of young adults who lived in their parents’ home, due no doubt to the higher cost of living in those communities. Additionally, according to a recent report from the Canadian Real Estate Association’s, the average home price in Canada climbed to \$363,000 in October 2011, more than double the price set a decade earlier.²⁹ This elevated market creates a barrier to home ownership for young Canadians. We have found that, for many Millennials, home ownership and career are at or near the top of their priorities list.

Our most recent Millennial study has found that for Millennials a successful marriage or relationship and having a successful career rank well ahead on the Millennial priorities list, (78 percent of Millennials rank having a successful marriage among their top three priorities and 59% rank having a successful career among their top three.)

²⁵ Noreen Malone, The kids are actually sort of alright, New York Magazine, Oct. 16, 2011, <http://nymag.com/news/features/my-generation-2011-10/>

²⁶ Noreen Malone, The kids are actually sort of alright, New York Magazine, Oct. 16, 2011, <http://nymag.com/news/features/my-generation-2011-10/>

²⁷ The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change. Pew Research Social Trends, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/Millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>

²⁸ Eddy S. W. Ng, Linda Schweitzer, Sean T. Lyons, New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation, *Journal of Business Psychology*, 16 February 2010.

²⁹ The Canadian Real Estate Association, “National Average,” http://www.crea.ca/public/news_stats/statistics.htm

Around four in ten Millennials (39%) rank owning a home near the top of their priorities list. Comparatively, 37% ranked “having lots of free time to relax” is a top priority among 37% of 18-29 year olds, whereas 30% of 31-59 year olds ranked the same attribute in their top three. That said, 38% of Millennials ranked “making a difference in the world” among their top three, with 13% of Millennials ranking this their number one priority.

Pew Research’s 2010 American study, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next* confirms what we found explaining that Millennials “are generally happy with their lives and optimistic about their futures.”³⁰ They found that for American Millennials marriage, children and an established career remain primary life goals.

Above all, Millennials ranked having a successful marriage or relationship as their number one priority right now. We found that held true across all generations with having a successful marriage or relationship the number one priority for at least half of those aged 31 – 44 (51%), 45 – 59 (55%) and 60+ (61%).

While there are obvious similarities between Millennials and other generations in the way they set their priorities we stand out in two areas: (1) wanting to make a difference in the world and (2) wanting lots of free time to relax and enjoy life. If we have adjusted our expectations based on our financial and cultural climate, it seems we are also adjusting our priorities to be different than that of our parents.

MILLENNIALS AT WORK

In 1981 there were six people working for each retiree. However Statistics Canada projects that by 2031 that ratio will be reduced to three working-aged people to every one dependent person. As we exit the current recession a lot of responsibility will be placed on our generation to drive a productive and successful economy that will support a great number of retired and dependent Canadians. It is necessary for this smooth transition that our generation is not only understood, but is empowered to take on important roles.

Most Canadians think that Millennials are less motivated to take on responsibility and produce quality work

But while the necessity is there, the connection is not. Of those who regularly work with Millennials 41% find that our generation has a very different attitude or view of workplace responsibilities and another 46% find that they have a somewhat different view.³¹ Compared to workers of other age groups most Canadians think that Millennials are less motivated to take on responsibility and produce quality work. 47% find that they are somewhat less motivated and 25% find that they are much less motivated. While this may seem pessimistic, when we look specifically among those who regularly work with Millennials, one in ten (11%) find that they can be more motivated than other employees.

³⁰ A Portrait of Generation Next: *How Young People View Their Lives, Futures and Politics*, Pew Social Trends, <<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2007/01/09/a-portrait-of-generation-next/>>.

³¹ Abacus Data Millennial Survey, November 2011.

The 2010 US National Association of Colleges and Employers' annual survey of college graduates found that 41 percent of job seekers turned down offers in 2010 concluding that, Millennials are just not willing to compromise happiness and motivation for a job they don't love. However, the youth (15 – 24) unemployment rate as reported by Statistics Canada in November 2011 was 14.1% compared to an overall unemployment rate of 7.4%.³² Canadian economists predict that "a mix of spending cuts and tax hikes," should be expected in our near future and, while we may be better off than the United States, retirement security remains to top concern for Canadian Millennials since "between 1991 and 2009, the proportion of Canadian employees covered by a private pension plan fell from 45% to 33%."³³

As market researcher Tina Wells explains in her book, *Chasing Youth Culture and Getting it Right*, "young people are more often working for themselves or in small collectives...technology has given this generation an opportunity to start businesses with little or no up-front investment, and at a very young age."³⁴ Based on Wells' findings she concludes that "Millennials would simply rather work for themselves than anyone else."³⁵

However a 2010 survey report by Career Edge Organization found that most Millennials want a traditional job with salaries, pensions and benefits. This report explained that Millennial adults prioritize workplace collaboration and culture. They hope to make a difference and maintain a work/life balance.³⁶ As Tulgan's "Not Everyone Gets a Trophy" explains the Millennials do not seek long-term traditional career paths, they look for purpose and meaning in the work they are doing today.³⁷ However, findings from our own research on Canadian Millennials support a different conclusion.

The Abacus Data survey from November 2011 found that Millennials and other generations shared the same top three attributes when asked what they value in a job. However, the distribution and order of these three attributes provides valuable insight into the Millennial generation at work.

When it comes to a job, Millennials value money first and foremost; while other generations were most concerned with their job security, Millennials want to be paid well for the work they do and be able to lead the kind of life they want outside of the workplace. Millennials are not nearly as concerned with security as other generations since other Millennials told us that they are much more likely to change jobs, or even industries multiple times through their careers, so they look to salary and the team environment as drivers for employment satisfaction.

Arguably Millennials are just as hard working as other generations, 68% of Millennials started their first paid job by the age of 16, compared to 69% among older generations. 41% of Millennials are working fulltime and 26% are working part-time jobs. While most Millennials like or love their current job (74%),

³² Labour force characteristics by age, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/111202/t111202a1-eng.htm>

³³ Tim Shufelt, Generation unlucky: From boom to gloom, Financial Post, Oct. 15, 2011.

<http://business.financialpost.com/2011/10/15/generation-unlucky-from-boom-to-gloom/#more-101110>

³⁴ Tina Wells, *Chasing Youth Culture and getting it right; How your business can profit by tapping today's most powerful trend setters and tastemakers*, (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey: 2011) p. 154.

³⁵ Tina Wells, *Chasing Youth Culture and getting it right; How your business can profit by tapping today's most powerful trend setters and tastemakers*, (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey: 2011) p. 155.

³⁶ Lesley Ciarula Taylor, What Twentysomethings want from their jobs, <http://www.thestar.com/business/article/884676--study-what-twentysomethings-want-from-their-jobs?bn=1>

³⁷ Tulgan, "Not Everyone Gets a Trophy."

about two in ten Millennials feel indifferent towards their job. Compared to only 14% of 31-59 year olds who feel the same way, “meh.” This indifference confirms that many Millennials won’t stick around in a job that does not motivate and engage them if a better one comes along.

We want the same things but we go after it in a different way. While what we’ve found reveals some marginal differences in workplace expectations and career drive Tina Wells may be partially right in saying, we’re just not willing to settle for a job we don’t love. In fact Millennials will take on jobs they feel indifferent about, but this may reinforce Canadians’ concerns about Millennial “loyalty.” While security, money and the team hold as the top three priorities consistently across all generations, Millennials more highly value flexibility and advancement. We’re hard working, and driven just like other generations, though we are defined by our want for a more flexible workplace and some kind of work-life balance.

MILLENNIALS AS CONSUMERS

The cohort effects that characterize the way we interact at work carry through to what we buy, why we buy it, and how we interact with brands. The high expectations we have of our employers carries over to the expectations we have with the brands we use in our lives. And these expectations, shaped by our upbringing and media use, mean that we like brands that are authentic, aspirational, align with our values, and connect with us online. More important, successful brands ask something of us – they ask us to contribute, to engage, and to purchase their products.

The challenge with marketing and selling to us is that we have instant access to information. We can find answers to questions and fact check claims far more quickly than other consumers. The moment we suspect that a brand’s claim is inauthentic, we can quickly verify the information and decide whether the brand is worthy of our business. For this reason, our generation is attracted to authentic brands – those that know who they are, are proud of who they are, and are not afraid to tell us how our values align. Think about some of the brands that have been successful in building loyalty with Millennials. Apple, Nike, Starbucks, and Loblaws come to our mind first. But others like TD Bank, Wind Mobile, the Virgin group of companies, Porter Airlines, and Ford have all embraced authentic, aspirational, and what we call, “charming” brand images. These appeal broadly but we think they are particularly appealing to Canadian Millennials.

Constantly bombarded with media and information, we have become very good at quickly sorting through what is valuable and what is not. Where our parents and Gen Xers grew up with a select group of mentors and resources from whom they would seek information and develop conclusions, we have developed strong critical thinking skills and judgment to narrow down the vast information resources to which we are exposed. As Yarrow and O’Donnell found in their research, this elevates the role of sorters, people, brands or institutions that we rely on to help them make decisions and find what they need.³⁸ We

³⁸ Kit Yarrow and Jayne O’Donnell., **Gen Buy; How tweens, teens and twenty-somethings are revolutionizing retail.** (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco: 2009).

are highly skeptical of traditional advertising and because we are used to getting help from other sources of information to make decisions we actively block out sources we consider being inauthentic.

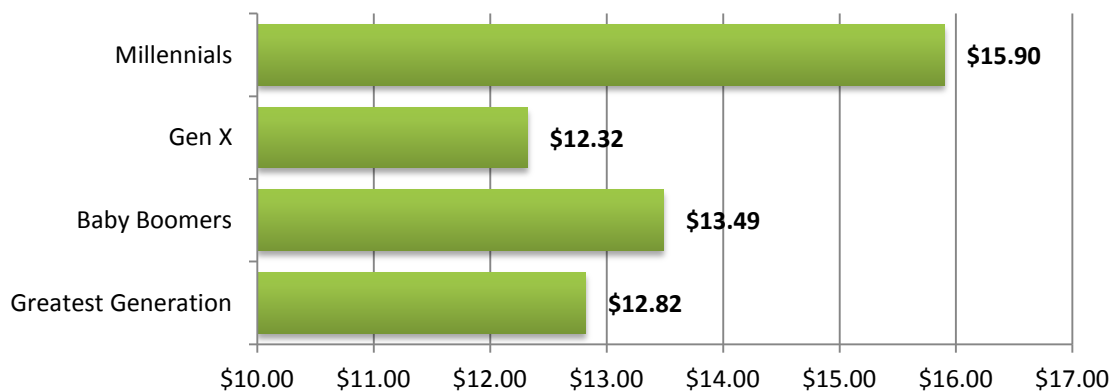
Due to our routine of continually checking email, text messages, and browsing online we have grown to expect an almost instant response from questions or queries, have no tolerance for delays, and can become frustrated when feedback is not returned immediately. We have become accustomed to rapidly reviewing material and we usually know exactly what product we want before entering the store to make a purchase.

And while we are well suited to and enjoy group interaction, we still seek unique identities. Though we have grown to trust groups to help us accomplish goals, we constantly search for personal definition. As a result, brands that allow for some form of customization will ultimately stand out from the crowd. By purchasing a specific brand we are telling our peers something about ourselves and this may provide another avenue for us to connect with others and express our uniqueness or personal brand.

Finally, most Millennials in Canada consider themselves to be ethical consumers. A survey conducted by Abacus Data for the Corporate and Community Social Responsibility Conference in December 2010 found that 51% of Millennials over 18 years of age considered themselves someone who shops for products and services that they consider to be made ethically, that is, with minimal harm to, or exploitation of, humans, animals, or the environment. More significant, members of our generation said they would spend more, on average, 16% more for a product they knew was ethically made – higher than any other generation.

Canadian Millennials Willing to Spend More on \$100 Product if they Knew it was Ethically Made

(Source: Abacus Data, December 2010)



This means that brands that embrace corporate consciousness and demonstrate true social responsibility will be embraced by a large portion of our generation and earn our loyalty. We want to feel good about the brands we use, wear, eat, and drive because what we buy is a statement of who we are. And

connecting with us through corporate consciousness can build a powerful bond between us a consumer and you as a brand.

Millennials are able to tailor their online persona to reveal themselves exactly how they want to be perceived. As social media brand developer, Nick Fuller explains, we have “hand-selected every photo, wall post, tweet and ‘like’ that has been tied to our digital persona, and have carefully built outward facing identities.” Following this calculation process, the millennial will choose or deny a brand based on how it adds or detracts from our own social brand persona.

So the moral of our story then is that Millennials are unique consumers and ignoring our expectations and demands will mean certain failure for those brands. But not all Millennials are alike. In fact, both of us (your esteemed authors) are quite different from each other. That is why the Canadian Millennial practice designed a proprietary segmentation of our generation that we think accurately captures the uniqueness of the personalities within Generation Y. This segmentation drives our strategic advice and research services for our clients.

MILLENNIALS AS CITIZENS

As in the workplace and in the marketplace, Millennials will likely clash with members of other Canadian generations in the public or political arena. Don Tapscott author of *Grown Up Digital*, identifies Millennials as “authorities on the digital revolution that is changing business, commerce, government, learning and democracy.” He has specifically set out the need for our systems of government and democracy to reinvent themselves to address this.

Today with about 5 million people aged 18 – 29 Millennials make up 20 percent of the voting population. In 2020 we will make up 35 percent of the Canadian voters. Yet, by all accounts, Millennials are not participating at the same rate as other Canadians thus limiting the true power of the generation in public affairs and government in Canada.

Paul Howe, an academic at the University of New Brunswick, examined the decline of youth political participation in Canada. In his book, *Citizens Adrift* (a Canadian Millennials Must Read by the way), Howe examined historical and current patterns of participation and engagement concluding that young Canadians are, in fact, increasingly detached from the political and civic life of the country due to waning political knowledge and changing norms and values about social integration among Canadian Millennials.

This lack of formal participation in political life has become *the* defining feature of our role in the public life of Canada. While most Millennials are not engaged in politics, do not vote, and cannot name significant political leaders in the country, there are a subgroup who are intensely motivated and active in political life. One only has to consider the new crop of Millennial NDP MPs elected in 2011 or the young political staff running the political offices of ministers, premiers, or the Prime Minister across the country. Millennials active in politics likely have a disproportionate influence, not only election outcomes, but on policy making and political strategy than any other generation in Canada.

But beyond politics, intergenerational conflict in Canada will likely centre around four key policy areas: (1) healthcare, (2) energy and the environment, (3) economic development, and (4) retirement security.

How we approach these issues are similar to other generations in that we are concerned about our personal situation first and then the greater community in which we live. But what is unique about our generation is not what we think about these issues. For example, in a recent Abacus Data survey, Millennials were just if not more committed to Canada's universal healthcare system. Millennials are also just likely to be concerned about the pace of development in the oil sands and the sustainability of public and private sector pensions and retirement plans.

In the *M-Factor*, generational researchers Lancaster and Stillman explain that "while Xers saw independence as strength, millennials see collaboration as power."³⁹ Our access to immediate and international publishing has enabled this generation to go beyond simply freedom of speech but a new configuration of customized media and news and more easily enable freedom of assembly. Now, thanks to social media and networking, groups are mobilizing through collective interests and have shown that together they can make a big impact.

Not only are we working with each other to produce, we can also rely on each other for back up. Through online connection we can mobilize the support of our extended networks to lobby for our cause. Our voice is supported by strength in numbers and it takes less effort to organize a physical group of supporters if invitations and calls for action can be widely distributed immediately online at no cost.

Millennials when engaged in the democratic process can become activated to have a voice on issues that are important to them. With differing views on important Canadian institutions, our economy, health care and green energy Millennial opinions will become more and more influential as government policy is developed. And when we finally realize that our voices are powerful and that by exercising our right to vote we can collectively change the outcome of elections, participation rates will start to increase.

In our Abacus Data survey in November 2011, three quarters (76%) of Canadian Millennials agreed that the government should be responsible for seeing that everyone has a decent standard of living. This was only somewhat higher than other Canadians. Canadian Millennials are not anti-government by any means and believe, like most Canadians in fact, that government can play a positive role in providing a basic level of support to people in need.

When it comes to health care, Canadian Millennials expect that in the next 20 years, the Canadian health care system will look very similar to the way it is now. Almost half (48%) expect that some elements will change but it remain a completely funded system. Additionally another 10% do not expect to see any

³⁹ Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman, **The M-factor: How the Millennial generation is rocking the workplace.** (HarperCollins Publishers, USA: 2010).

changes and assume that in the next 20 years the health care system will look very similar to the way it does now.

Interestingly, Canadian Millennials were the least likely of any generation to expect change toward privatization of health care services. Our hunch is that this might change as the weight of paying for the system in the future falls onto the shoulders of our generation.

Finally, when it comes to energy policy, Canadian Millennials told us that they would be willing to pay more for electricity if it was generated from renewable energy sources. While almost one in two Canadians agreed with this statement, Canadian Millennials were somewhat more likely to agree (56%) confirming expectations that more of us will pay more to do something that is better for the environment.

As might be expected, our generation is more supportive of government involvement on these key issues. Younger generations have always been to the left of their older counterparts. But there is something unique about us, especially in contrast to Generation X. We are less concerned about ourselves, expect political leaders to work together, and want to be asked to participate or get involved. The speed and breadth of our communications and the level of education we have obtained means Millennials are a largely untapped political force in Canada. Strengthened by social networking tools and an almost immediate access to information, if and when Canadians Millennials are ignited to act the impact will be huge.

WILL GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES TEAR US APART?

We know that Millennials think differently, communicate differently and have different life expectations than any other generation. Growing up with the Millennial generation we understand these differences first hand and as more and more of us enter the workforce, take on leadership roles in business and government (remember the reaction the media had to the new, younger team of NDP MPs), and become a powerful force in the consumer market, these generational divisions may bring greater conflict.

Non-Millennial Canadians are right: Millennials are confident, tech-savvy and certainly connected. We were raised believing that we are important, special, and even gifted people who can achieve anything. Moreover, our natural comfort with technology and a digital world means we can easily weed out inauthentic claims, connect with friends and acquaintances around the world, and work from home. When motivated we can be more productive, innovative, and industrious than those before us.

But are we fundamentally lazy and unmotivated? Well, some of us are. As a generation, we work hard when motivated and encouraged but we also value flexibility, free time, teamwork, consensus, and the ability to enjoy the fruits of our labour. Like other generations, most of us want to make a good living and own our own home someday. We are not any more materialistic than generations that came before us.

Although Millennials come across as entitled, we are this way because we have been told that's what we should expect. Ultimately we are eager to contribute and have been adapting our own expectations and priorities to suit a world that has been set up for us.

So the gauntlet has been thrown and we hope you agree with us that the Millennials are here and are not going anywhere.

Are you ready for us, the Canadian Millennials?

Our research practice is designed to help businesses, policy makers, and non-Millennial Canadians to *be ready and succeed* because they have engaged Millennials at their level with researchers and strategists who understand them and relate to them.

For more information, visit our website at www.canadianmillennials.ca or contact us at:

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