



The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research

# MTV/AP-NORC YOUTH CULTURE POLL: YOUNGER GENERATIONS STAND OUT ON IDENTITY, ACCEPTANCE, AND PROGRESSIVE POLICIES

Gen Z distinguishes itself on issues of identity and in its progressiveness on social and political issues compared to Gen X and even Millennials, according to a new survey of these generations from MTV Entertainment Group and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. But even within Gen Z, issues of identity, sources of stress, and support for policies differ based on race and ethnicity, age, gender, and ideology, presenting a picture of the upcoming generation that is divided along many of the same lines as their predecessors.



© 2020 AP Photo / Ted S. Warren

When it comes to their own identity, Gen Z places greater emphasis than Gen X and Millennials on the importance of personality, hobbies, and fandom. They also differentiate themselves from older generations on the importance of making a difference and a sense of belonging in their lives, with the youngest Gen Zers—teens ages 13-17—even more likely than those ages 18-24 to feel that a sense of belonging (64% vs. 57%) and making a difference (62% vs. 55%) are important.

Not surprisingly, education also stands out in the lives of Gen Z: two-thirds cite it as important to their identity and other areas of their life, and a third cite it as a potential barrier to them achieving their future goals. The youngest Gen Zers place even more importance on education than older Gen Zers when it comes to their

## Three Things You Should Know

From the MTV/AP-NORC Gen Z Poll  
Among Gen Z Ages 13-24:

- 1) 66% think their generation is motivated to make positive change to the country, but just 14% feel that they have a lot or a great deal of control over what the government does.
- 2) 38% feel like unplugging from technology would make them more stressed.
- 3) 70% of Black and 51% of Hispanic Gen Zers think their race and ethnicity is important to their identity compared to just 25% of white Gen Zers.

identity, its importance to their life overall, and the likelihood that it will be a barrier to them achieving their goals.

When evaluating the state of the world and their role in it, Gen Z shows some measured optimism. Two-thirds think their generation is motivated to make positive change in the country, but only 14% think they can make a lot of impact on what the government does. About half think their standard of living is better than their parents. But about half also think that the world their generation is facing is worse than what most others have, and just a quarter think it is better. Overall, Gen Z's attitudes on the state and direction of the world align closely with Millennials, with Gen X holding more negative views.

Gen Z grew up in a digital world, and their relationship with technology differs from older generations. Along with Millennials, Gen Z is more likely to cite social media as a major source of stress. Gen Z teens age 13-17 are especially likely to think that unplugging from technology would lead to more versus less stress, with 46% reporting this. Those ages 18-24 look more like other generations, with 33% thinking it would make them more stressed.

Attitudes about technology are shifting, with technology more intertwined with the stresses of life for young people. Compared to a study from 2007 that interviewed those ages 13-24—the same ages as Gen Z today—there has been an increase in the number who feel unplugging from technology would make them more stressed (up from 31% to 38%), and more youth today also believe it would make them *less* stressed (up from 24% to 35%). The share who felt it would make no difference fell from 44% to 27%.<sup>1</sup>

Politically, Gen Z and Millennials are more supportive than Gen X of policies like barring workplace discrimination based on gender identity, a universal basic income, and reducing funding for the police, and more opposed to increasing security on the U.S. border with Mexico. They are more accepting of depictions of same-sex couples in media and hold more positive views of gay, lesbian, and transgender people.

With these trends regarding identity and social attitudes, there is still quite a bit of diversity in opinion within Gen Z—especially by race and ethnicity, gender, age, and ideology.

Race and ethnicity and gender are particularly salient. Overall, about 4 in 10 Gen Zers cite their race or ethnicity as important to their identity, and this is driven largely by people of color: 7 in 10 Black Gen Zers and half of Hispanic Gen Zers cite identity as important, compared to just a quarter of whites. Similarly, gender is more important to Gen Z women than men. More female Gen Zers also experience stress about their body image compared to male Gen Zers (38% vs. 24%). Older Gen Zers ages 18-24 are also more likely than younger Gen Zers to cite body image as a major source of stress (35% vs. 27%).

Sharp ideological divides emerge within Gen Z—just like older generations—with issues of race being a touch point. Gen Z liberals are more accepting of all-Black executive teams and casts on TV shows and movies than conservatives, while conservatives are more accepting than liberals of all-white executive teams.

Additionally, Gen Z liberals favor policies like a universal basic income, barring workplace discrimination based on gender identity, and reducing funding for law enforcement, while Gen Z conservatives favor increased border security and deregulation of business.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Associated Press-MTV Poll. 2007. <http://surveys.associatedpress.com/data/KnowledgeNetworks/2007-08-20%20AP-MTV%20Youth%20Happiness.pdf>

In the workplace, Gen Z places greater value on diverse and empathetic leadership, strong diversity and inclusion policies, opportunities for mentorship, and employers that are committed to reducing their environmental impact; Millennials hold similar attitudes. Gen Z also values employers providing mental health resources for staff, and more than two-thirds support paid days off for mental health. Remote work options are not a high priority for any generation, and all favor a hybrid model of some days at home and some days in the office rather than either a fully remote or full-time in-office approach.

As consumers, members of Gen Z in particular want a brand to be environmentally conscious, treat its employees fairly, and support charitable causes they believe in. Gen Z and Millennials also place greater emphasis on companies taking a stand on social and political issues compared to Gen X, with 4 in 10 of each saying so compared to just 3 in 10 Gen Xers, and both are more likely than Gen X to attribute their purchasing decisions to whether the brand values diversity.

Across Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X, COVID-19 is considered the most important issue facing the country, and all three generations cite similar levels of stress over fear of getting infected by the virus and the uncertainty about the state of the pandemic in the fall. The pandemic has made things like having fun, maintaining mental health, being happy, and maintaining relationships with friends more difficult for many in these age groups. But overall, about a quarter of those from these generations think that the pandemic has made maintaining good relationships with family and personal growth easier.

Overall, about half of those ages 13-56 favor mandating COVID-19 vaccination for attending public high school. Rates are similar when looking only at high school age teens, with 53% favoring a COVID-19 vaccination mandate for attending public school. Though, liberal teens are much more supportive than conservative teens.

This nationwide poll was conducted by MTV and The AP-NORC Center from September 1 to 19, 2021, using TrueNorth®, which combines a sample from AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago, with a nonprobability panel sample. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 3,764 people ages 13-56 living in the United States, including 2,683 members of Gen Z ages 13-24, 668 Millennials ages 25-40, and 413 members of Gen X ages 41-56. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.3 percentage points.

Key findings include:

- Gen Z is most likely to say their personality (78%), education (65%), hobbies (54%), and fandom (34%) are important to their identity. Millennials rate many of these as highly important to them as well, while Gen X shows less agreement on what is important to their identity.
- Gen Z most often cites financial security (78%), having fun (72%), career success (70%), and education (68%) as important to their lives.
- Gen Z (32%) is more likely to cite body image as a major source of stress, compared to Millennials (25%) and Gen X (15%).
- Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Gen X to support policies like prohibiting workplace discrimination based on gender identity (62% each vs. 53%), a universal basic income (48% each vs. 36%), and reducing police funding (30% and 34%, respectively, vs. 18%).

- Even within Gen Z, political divisions emerge on a host of issues, with Gen Z liberals more supportive than conservatives of mask mandates in public (73% vs. 33%), COVID-19 vaccine mandates (65% vs. 23%), a universal basic income (71% vs. 31%), a ban on AR-15s and similar semi-automatic weapons (63% vs. 28%) and reducing police funding (56% vs. 17%).
- Gen Z conservatives are more supportive than liberals of increased border security (54% vs. 23%) and reducing government regulation of business (44% vs. 29%).
- Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Gen X to think that not identifying as a man or woman is acceptable (46% each vs. 32%). They are also more likely to think it is acceptable to pull an old movie or TV show off the air because of offensive content (32% and 31%, respectively, vs. 18%).
- Within Gen Z, more liberals think an all-Black cast is acceptable (72%), compared to moderates (52%) and conservatives (50%).
- Similarly, more Gen Z liberals think an all-Black executive team is acceptable (62%), compared to moderates (47%) and conservatives (45%). Gen Z conservatives are more likely to find an all-white executive team acceptable (46%), compared to moderates (39%) and liberals (37%).
- Fifty-three percent of Gen Z and 50% of Millennials think it is important for their employer to have a strong diversity and inclusion policy, compared to 38% of Gen X.
- Gen Z is more likely than Millennials or Gen X to say that a company's environmental consciousness (39% vs. 33% and 31%, respectively) and support of charitable causes they believe in (34% vs. 25% and 23%, respectively) are major reasons why they choose to buy a specific brand.

## **GEN Z IS MORE LIKELY TO CITE EDUCATION, PERSONALITY, HOBBIES, AND FANDOMS AS CORE TO THEIR IDENTITY.**

Americans ages 13-56 most often cite being a parent, personality, education, and social issues as important to their identity. Personality is also more important for younger generations, with 78% of Gen Z saying that their personality is important to their identity, compared to 71% of Millennials and 61% of Gen X. Gen Z is particularly likely to define themselves by their passions, as they are more likely to cite the importance of their talents or hobbies, fandoms, and age, compared to Millennials and Gen X.

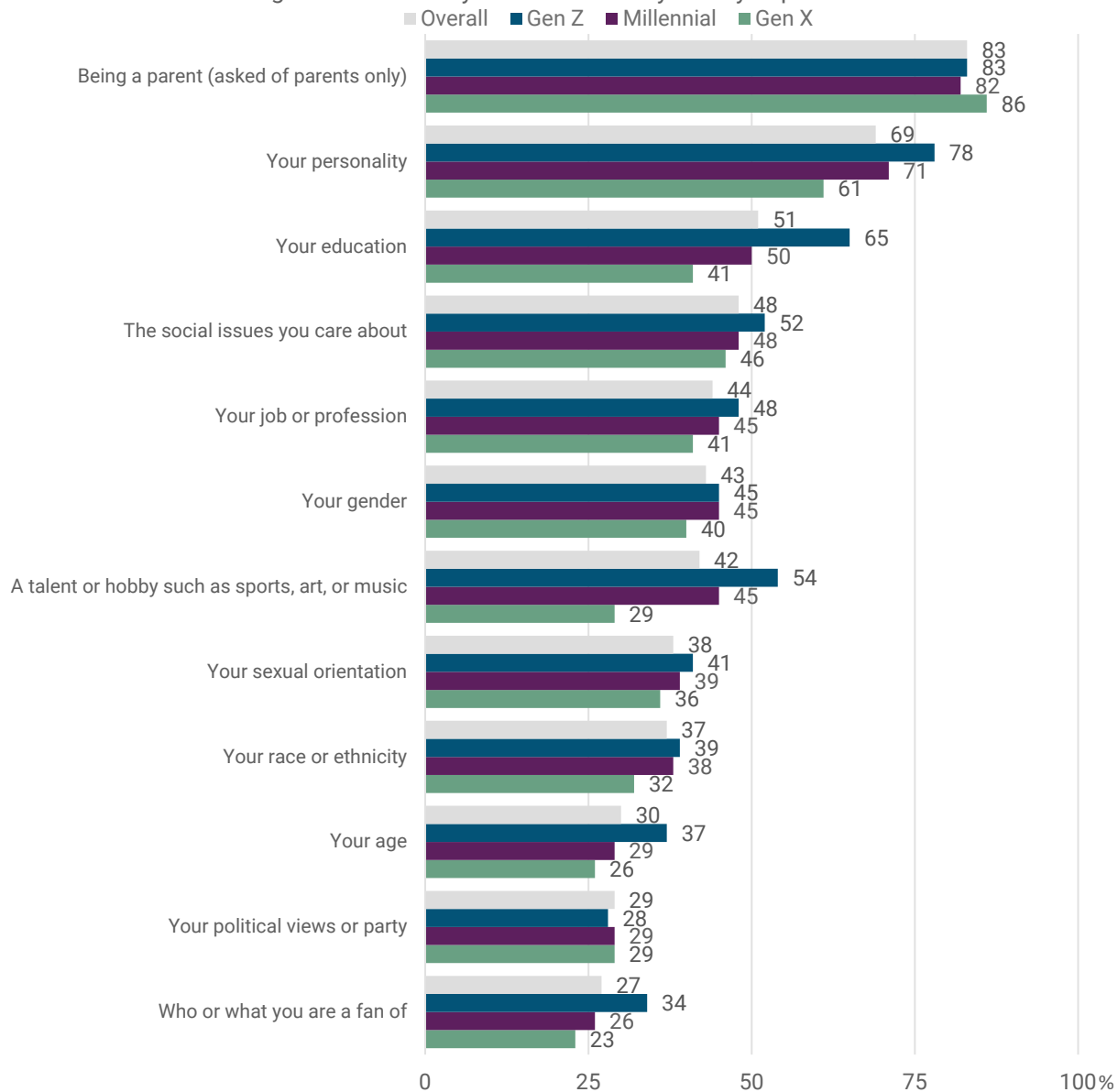
Gen Z is more likely than Gen X to cite their job or profession as important. Gen Z also places more importance on their education. The large difference in the importance of education is driven mostly by younger Gen Z people ages 13-17—76% of whom cite this as important, compared to 58% of older Gen Z people ages 18-24.

Additionally, Gen Z is more likely than Gen X to cite the importance of race and ethnicity to their identity. This is driven strongly by Gen Zers of color, as 70% of Black respondents, 51% of Hispanic respondents, and 46% of those of another race believe their race or ethnicity is important to their identity, compared to only 25% of white Gen Zers.

Female Gen Zers are more likely than their male counterparts to say their gender is important to their identity (48% vs. 42%).

## Gen Z is more likely to cite personality, education, hobbies, and fandoms as core to their identity.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say each is extremely or very important



**Question:** How important is each of the following to your identity?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.

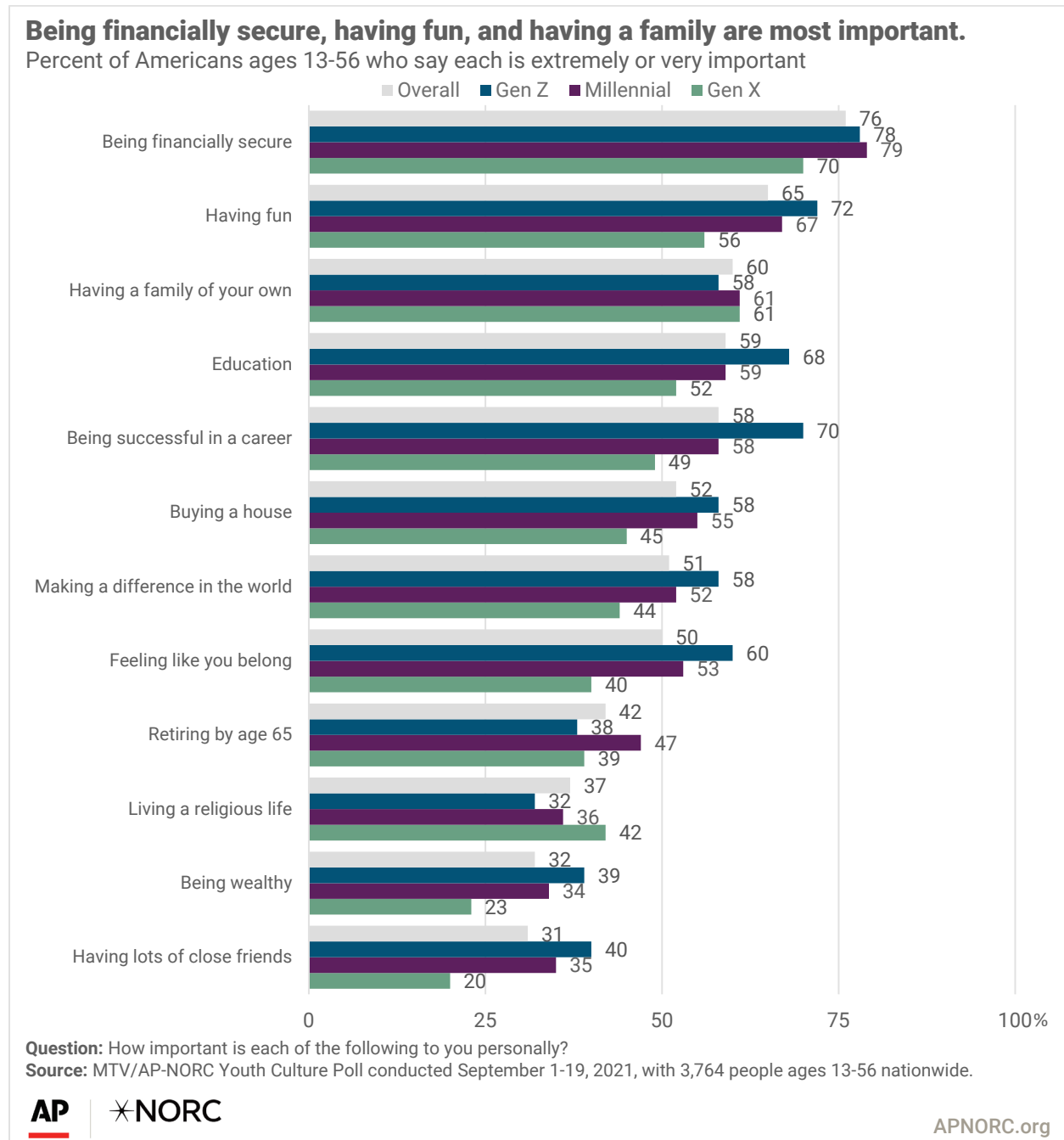
**AP** | **NORC**

APNORC.org

Regarding values in life overall, members of Gen Z offer a mix of short- and long-term goals. While financial security, having a family, making a difference, and career success are important to them in the long term, they also value having fun, their education, and a sense of belonging.

Gen Z stands out from older generations on the importance of a sense of belonging, making a difference, education, and career success, as they are more likely than Millennials and Gen X to think each of these is important. These differences are largely driven by younger Gen Z people ages 13-17: they are more likely than those ages 18-24 to place importance on a sense of belonging (64% vs. 57%), making a difference (62% vs. 55%), career success (77% vs. 65%), and education (79% vs. 60%).

Gen X is more likely to think living a religious life is important compared to Gen Z.



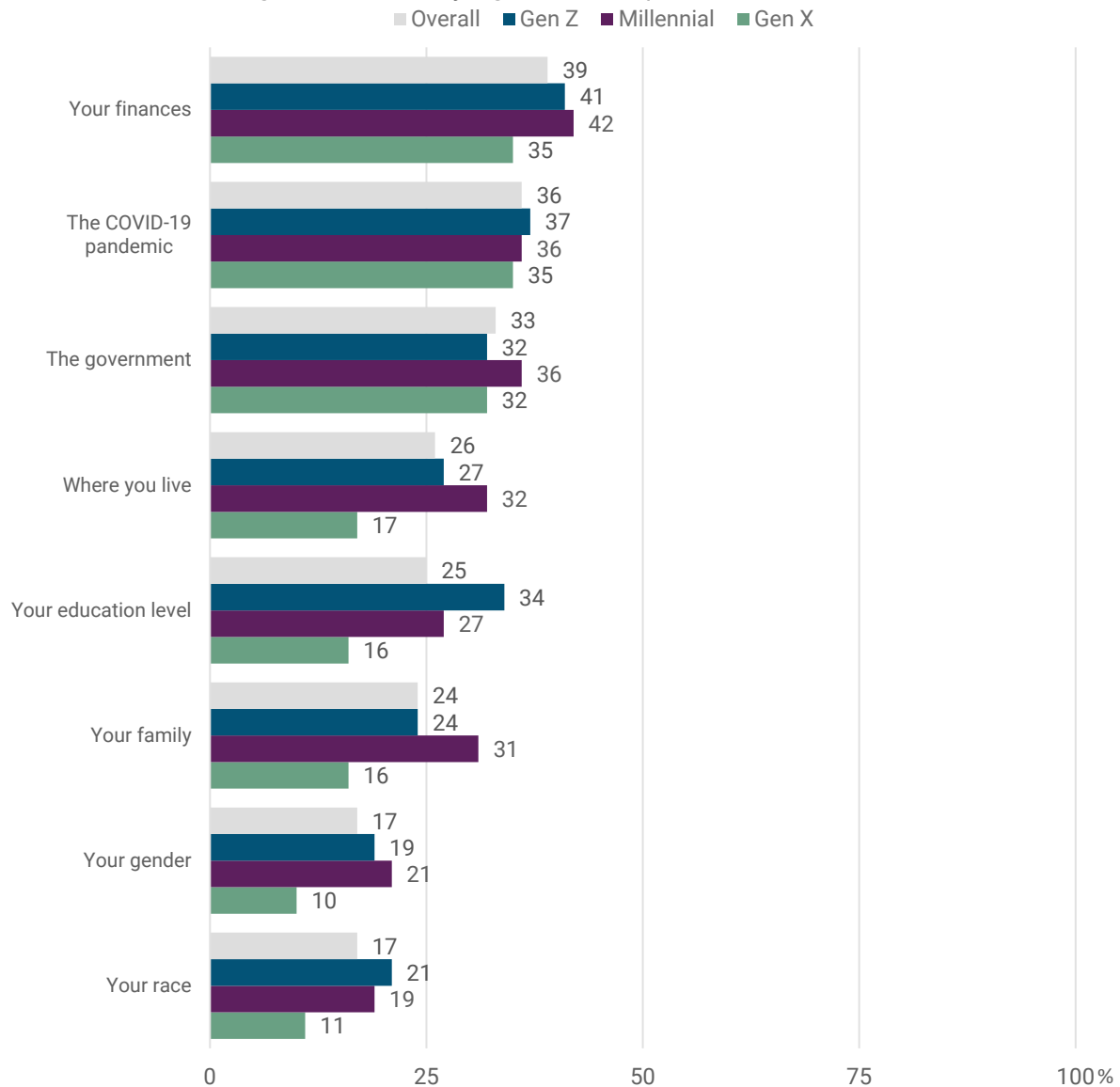
When asked how much certain factors will get in the way of achieving their goals for the future, personal finances, COVID-19, and the government are most often cited by respondents. Again, the importance of education to Gen Z comes through, with 34% thinking their level of education will be a barrier to achieving future goals, compared to 27% of Millennials and 16% of Gen X. Younger Gen Z people ages 13-17 are more likely to think their level of education will be a barrier compared to the older Gen Z cohort (39% vs. 30%).

Both Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Gen X to cite their race or gender as barriers, with roughly 2 in 10 thinking these identities will have a substantial impact on attaining their future goals.

Thirty-one percent of Millennials believe their family will be a barrier, compared to 24% of Gen Z and 16% of Gen X who think the same. Millennial parents are more likely than Millennial non-parents to feel this way (41% vs. 20%).

### Personal finances, COVID-19, and the government are the most cited barriers to achieving future goals.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say a great deal or quite a bit



**Question:** How much do you think each of the following will get in the way of achieving your goals for the future?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.

## **YOUNGER GENERATIONS FEEL GREATER STRESS ABOUT BODY IMAGE AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.**

Thirty-two percent of Americans ages 13-56 frequently experience stress in everyday life, and another 49% sometimes do. Just 15% rarely experience stress, and 3% never do. Levels of stress are similar across generations: 35% of Gen Z, 30% of Millennials, and 33% of Gen X regularly experience stress. A 2007 survey of those ages 13-24—the same age of Gen Z now—found that 38% frequently experienced stress in their everyday lives.<sup>2</sup>

Family, finances, and uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 are the most common major sources of stress these days. Gen Z and Millennials cite discrimination they experience and social media as stressors more often than Gen X.

Notably, body image is a major source of stress for 32% of Gen Z compared to 25% of Millennials and 15% of Gen X. Within Gen Z, female Gen Zers are more likely than their male counterparts to report body image as a major source of stress (38% vs. 24%), though both genders feel similarly about the amount of stress that comes from social media.

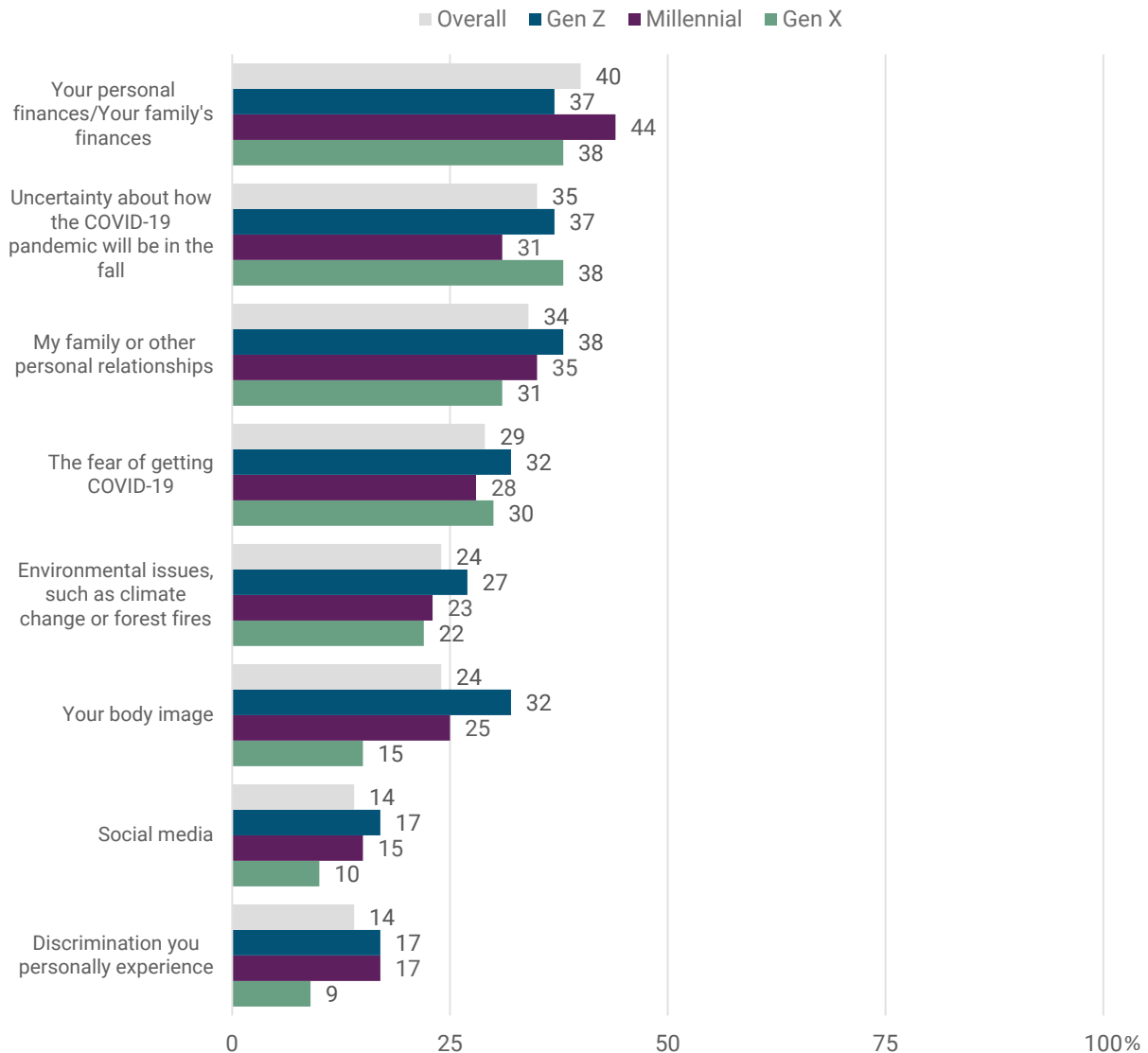
Older Gen Z people ages 18-24 are more likely than younger Gen Z people to cite body image as a major source of stress (35% vs. 27%).

---

<sup>2</sup> The Associated Press-MTV Poll. 2007. <http://surveys.associatedpress.com/data/KnowledgeNetworks/2007-08-20%20AP-MTV%20Youth%20Happiness.pdf>

## Family, finances, and uncertainty around COVID-19 are the most common major sources of stress.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say each is a major source of stress



**Question:** Would you say each of the following is a major source of stress, a minor source of stress, or not a source of stress at all?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.

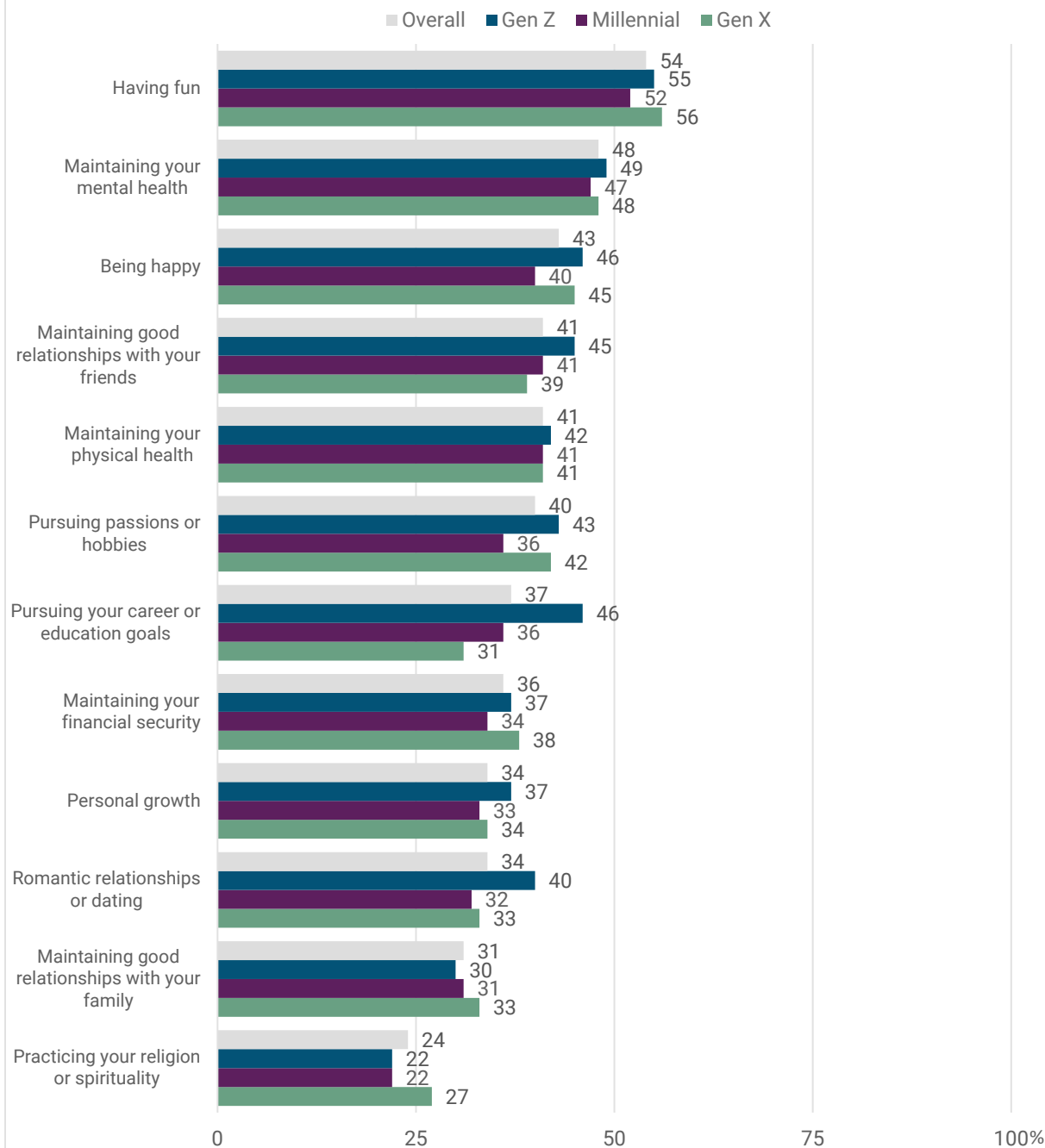


APNORC.org

Overall, COVID-19 has made many things more difficult across all generations, with things like having fun, maintaining mental health, maintaining good relationships with friends, and being happy being the most commonly impacted activities. But for roughly a quarter of these generations, the pandemic has made maintaining good relationships with family and personal growth easier.

## COVID-19 has made having fun, maintaining mental health, maintaining good relationships, and being happy more difficult.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say each is much or somewhat more difficult



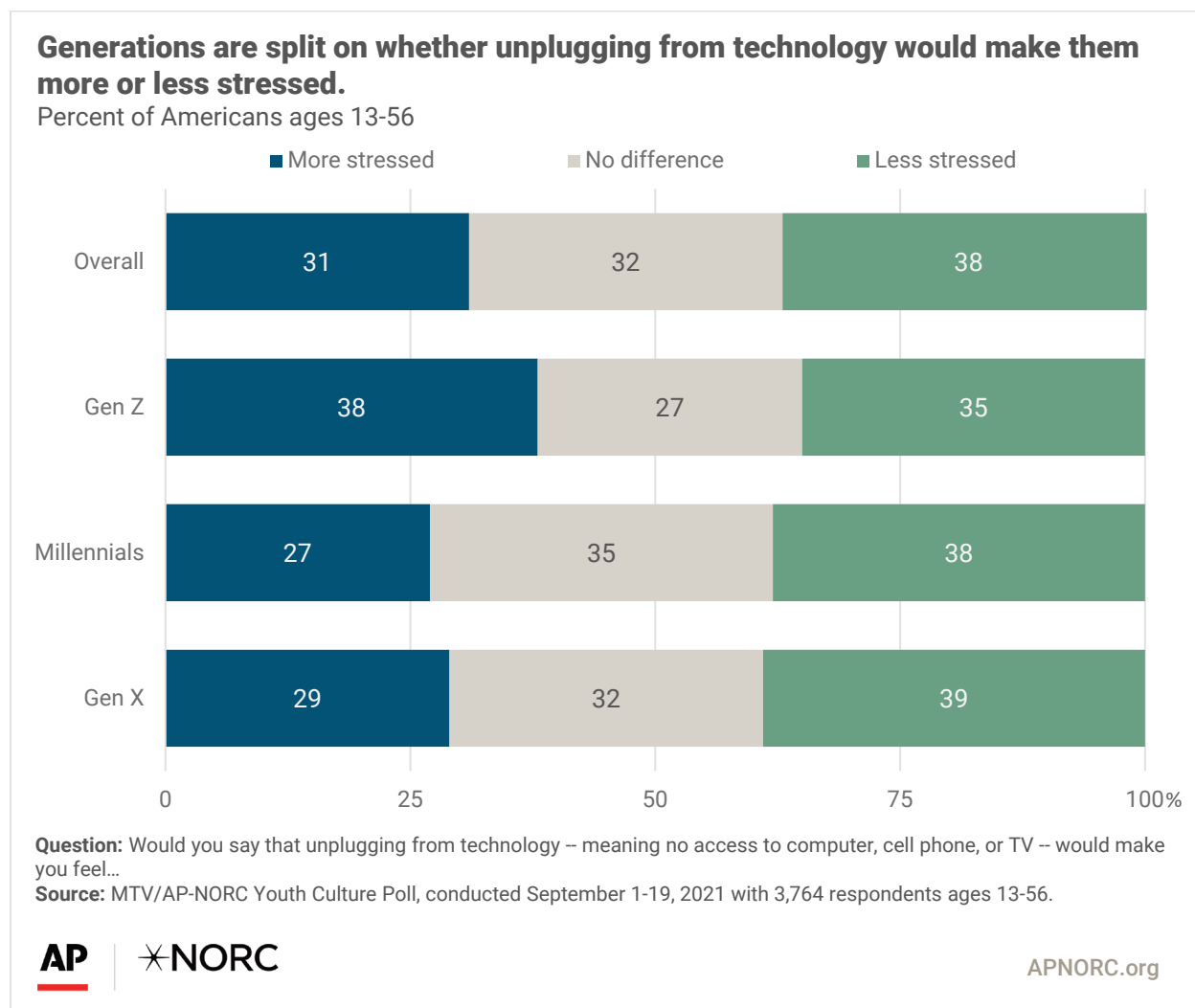
**Question:** Would you say the COVID-19 pandemic has made each of the following easier, more difficult, or neither easier nor more difficult?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.

Respondents are split on whether unplugging from technology would make them more stressed or less stressed, with the impact of unplugging differing by generation. Overall, 38% would feel less stressed, 31% would feel more stressed, and for 32% it would make no difference.

Younger Gen Zers ages 13-17 are more likely than those ages 18-24 to say that unplugging from technology would make them more stressed (46% vs. 33%). Those ages 18-24 are more similar to older generations on this matter.

In 2007, among those ages 13-24—the same ages of Gen Z today—31% said that unplugging from technology would make them more stressed, whereas just 24% would feel less stressed, and 44% felt it would make no difference.<sup>3</sup>



These differences in stress are not due to differences in how much TV or video content each generation consumes. Fifty-seven percent of Gen Z, 55% of Millennials and 56% of Gen X watch more than 10 hours of TV or video content a week.

<sup>3</sup> The Associated Press-MTV Poll. 2007. <http://surveys.associatedpress.com/data/KnowledgeNetworks/2007-08-20%20AP-MTV%20Youth%20Happiness.pdf>

## **GEN Z IS PROGRESSIVE ACROSS AN ARRAY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES, THOUGH THEY ARE NOT A POLITICAL MONOLITH.**

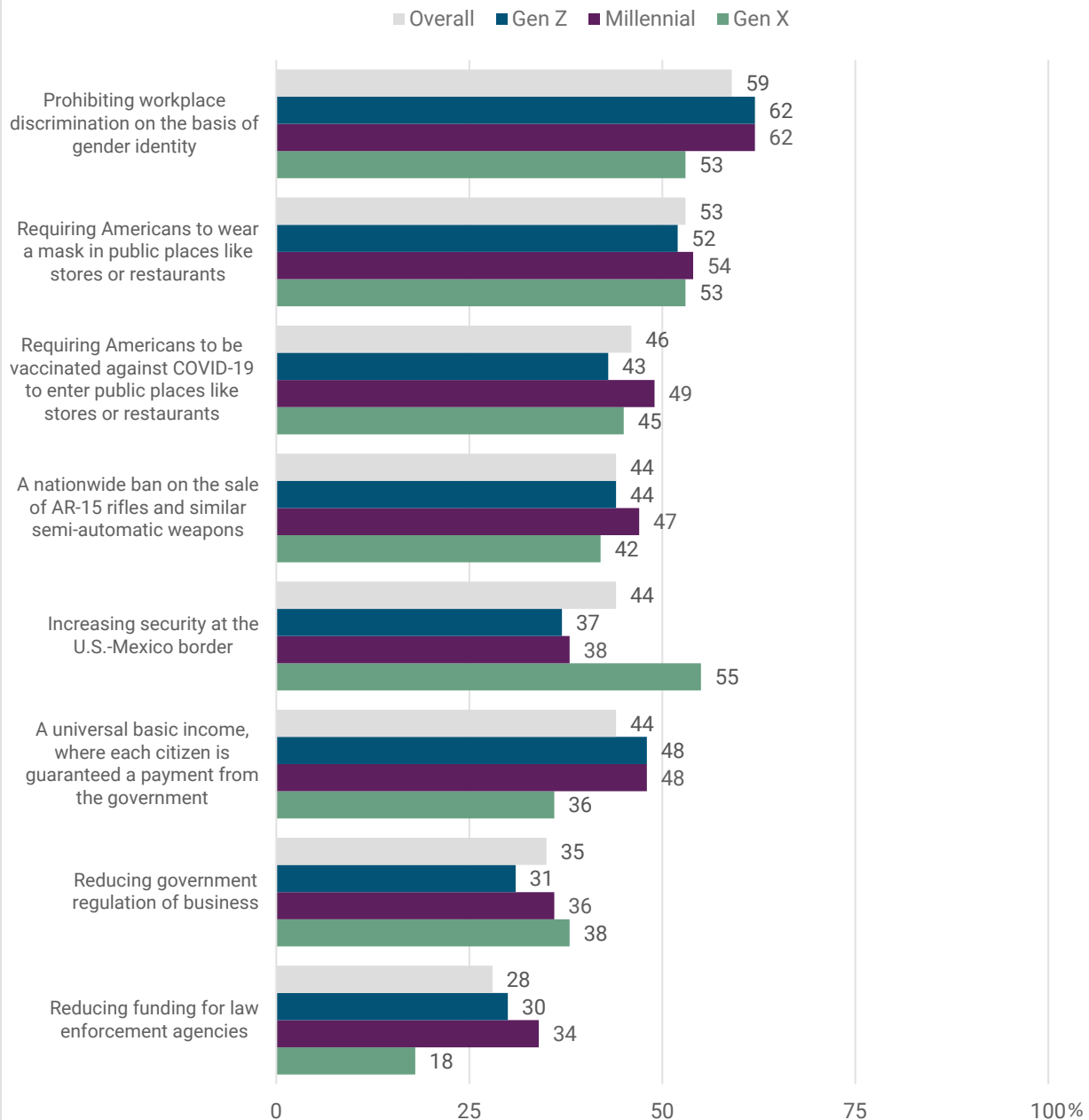
A majority of people ages 13-56 support banning workplace discrimination based on gender identity and mandating the use of face masks when inside public places. More support than oppose requiring COVID-19 vaccines to enter public places, a universal basic income, increasing security on the U.S.-Mexico border, a nationwide ban on the sale of semi-automatic weapons, and reducing regulation of business, but none of these policies have majority support.

More oppose than support reducing funding for law enforcement agencies.

The younger generations are more likely than Gen X to approve of defunding the police, barring workplace discrimination based on gender identity, and providing a universal basic income. On the other hand, a majority of Gen X favors increasing security at the country's southern border, but less than half of younger people agree.

**Do you favor these policies?**

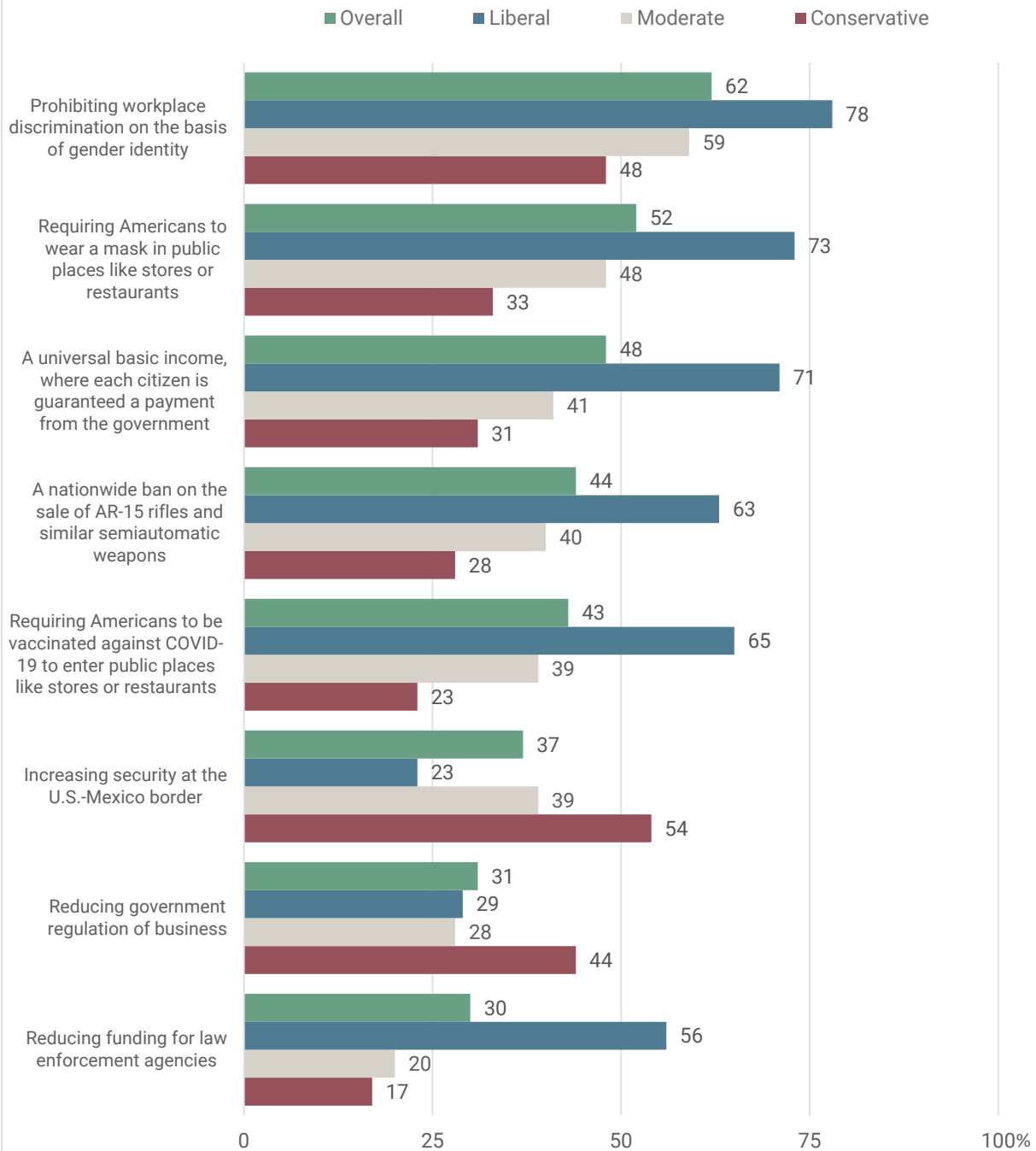
Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who strongly or somewhat favor

**Questions:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following?**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.

Within Gen Z, support of these measures varies by political affiliation along similar lines as other generations. Though the younger generation is more likely to favor reducing funding for law enforcement, barring workplace discrimination based on gender, and providing a universal basic income, Gen Z liberals are more likely to support these policies than moderates and conservatives. Further, Gen Z conservatives are more likely to favor increasing security at the U.S.-Mexico border and deregulation of businesses. Similar ideological divides remain among teens.

**Do you favor these policies?**

Percent of Gen Z who strongly or somewhat favor

**Questions:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following?**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.

There is more generational agreement on the most important problem facing the country: Gen Z (32%), Millennials (26%), and Gen X (31%) all cite COVID-19 and the Delta variant most often as the top issue. For each generation, the economy is the second most important issue. All other issues are offered by 10% or less of those ages 13-56.

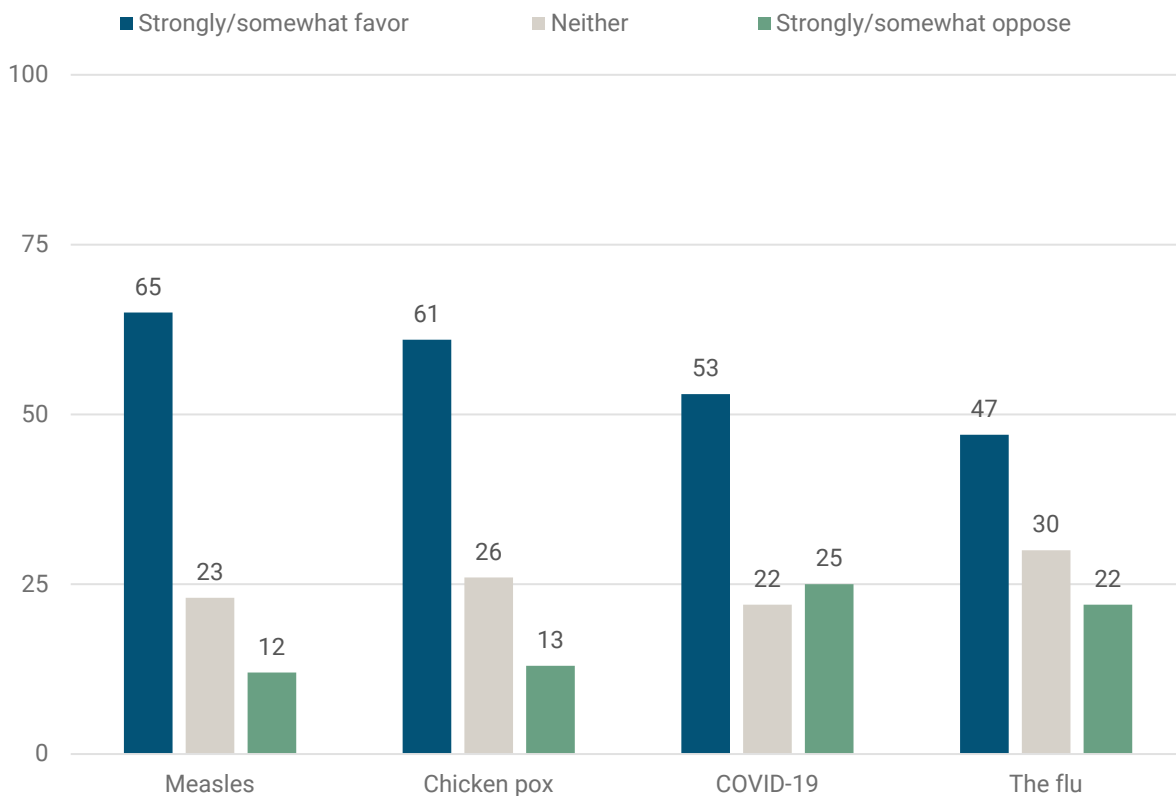
When it comes to policies regarding vaccination to attend public high schools, more than 6 in 10 support mandating vaccination against the measles and chicken pox. Fewer—but still a majority—favor mandating COVID-19 vaccination. Forty-seven percent support mandating a flu shot. These attitudes are similar across generations.

However, within Gen Z, liberals are more likely than moderates and conservatives to support a vaccination mandate for measles (78% vs. 59% vs. 51%), chicken pox (75% vs. 57% vs. 52%), COVID-19 (74% vs. 47% vs. 29%), and the flu (64% vs. 46% vs. 34%).

A majority of high school age teens favor vaccination mandates to attend public high school: 63% for measles, 62% for chicken pox, and 53% for COVID-19 and the flu.

### Should vaccinations be required to attend high school?

Percent of Americans ages 13-56



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose requiring each of the following vaccines for students to attend public high school?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021 with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.

## **YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE PARTICULARLY ACCEPTING ON SOCIAL ISSUES, PARTICULARLY LGBT ISSUES.**

While Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Gen X to hold progressive viewpoints on some controversial issues facing society today, those ages 13-56 overall agree on whether many social issues are acceptable.

Overall, two-thirds of Americans ages 13-56 think it is acceptable for a person to choose not have children, and 57% think it is acceptable for a person not to marry their partner. Just 6% and 11%, respectively, think these are unacceptable.

Among this age group, more also say that a person not identifying as a man or woman is acceptable than unacceptable (42% vs. 29%). Members of the Gen Z and Millennial generations tend to be more tolerant of non-binary individuals. Forty-six percent of both Gen Z and Millennials consider it socially acceptable for a person not to identify as male or female, while 24% of Gen Z and 23% of Millennials find it unacceptable. In comparison, only 32% of Gen X say an individual characterizing themselves as non-binary is socially acceptable, and 38% regard it as unacceptable.

Thinking about what appears in media, 52% of those ages 13-56 think a movie or TV show about a same-sex relationship is acceptable compared to 21% who think it is unacceptable. Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to find this acceptable compared to Gen X (57% and 55%, respectively, vs. 45%).

Just 27% think pulling an old movie or TV show off the air because of offensive content is acceptable, while 45% think it is unacceptable. Gen X feels more negative toward retrospective censorship of films or television programs than members of younger generations—just 18% think it is acceptable versus 32% of Gen Z and 31% of Millennials.

Overall, more think an all-Black cast in a movie or TV show is acceptable (56%) versus unacceptable (12%). Fewer say an all-white cast is acceptable (45%), though just 19% say it is unacceptable.

In business, 48% find an all-Black executive team acceptable compared to 17% who find it unacceptable. Forty-one percent find an all-white executive team acceptable, and 25% find it unacceptable.

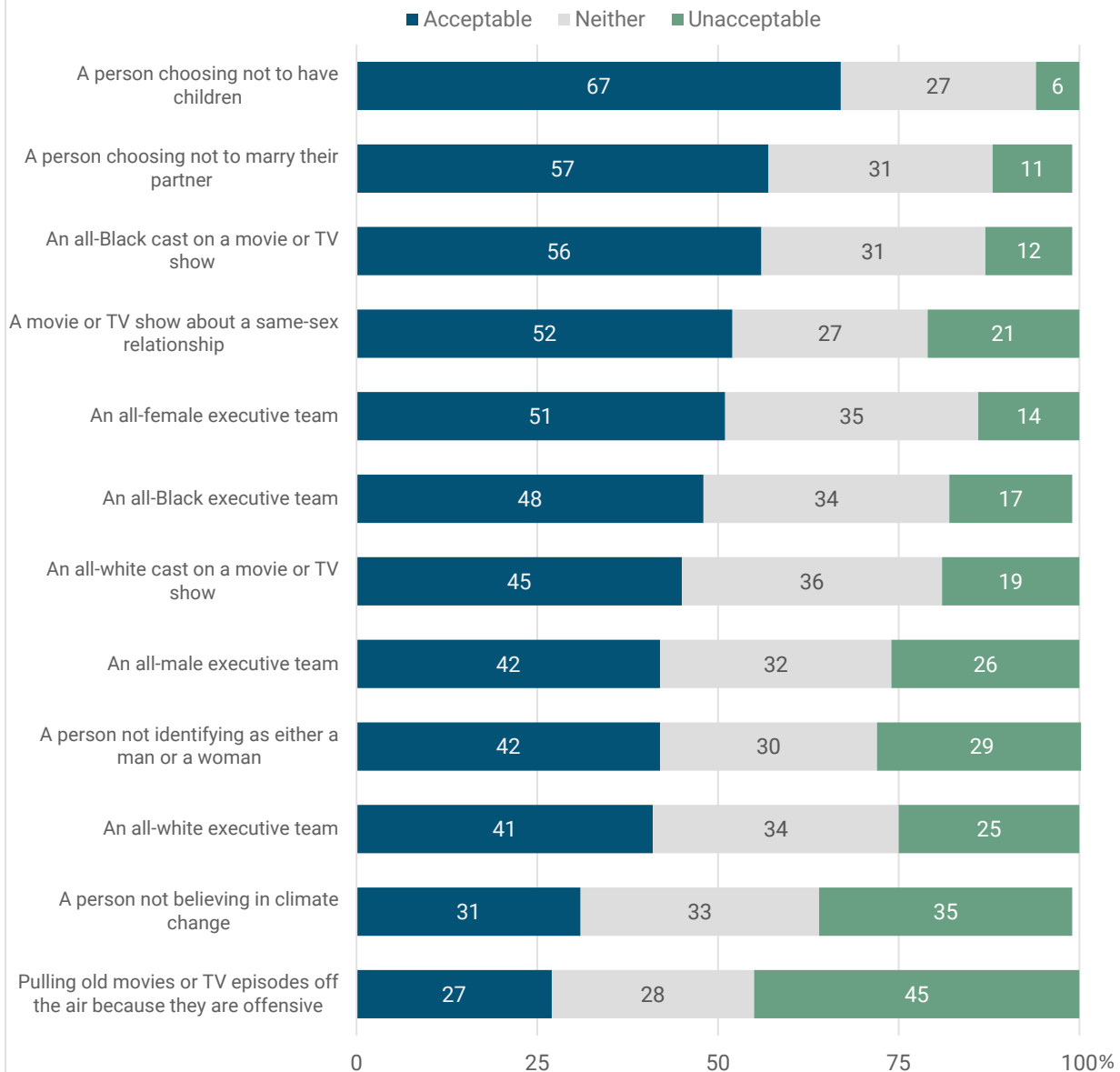
Again, there are differences within Gen Z along ideological lines, particularly on topics related to race.

Within Gen Z, liberals are more likely to think an all-Black executive team is acceptable (62%), compared to moderates (47%) and conservatives (45%). Gen Z conservatives are more likely to find an all-white team acceptable (46%), compared to moderates (39%) and liberals (37%). Similarly, more Gen Z liberals think an all-Black cast is acceptable (72%), compared to moderates (52%) and conservatives (50%). However, Gen Z feels similarly across ideologies about whether all-white casts are acceptable, with 46% of liberals, 43% of moderates, and 46% of conservatives believing they are acceptable.

Fifty-one percent of those ages 13-56 find an all-female executive team acceptable compared to 14% who find it unacceptable. Just 42% find an all-male executive time is acceptable, and 26% find it unacceptable.

**What is socially acceptable?**

Percent of Americans ages 13-56



**Question:** Would you say each of the following is socially acceptable, socially unacceptable, or neither acceptable nor unacceptable to you personally?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.



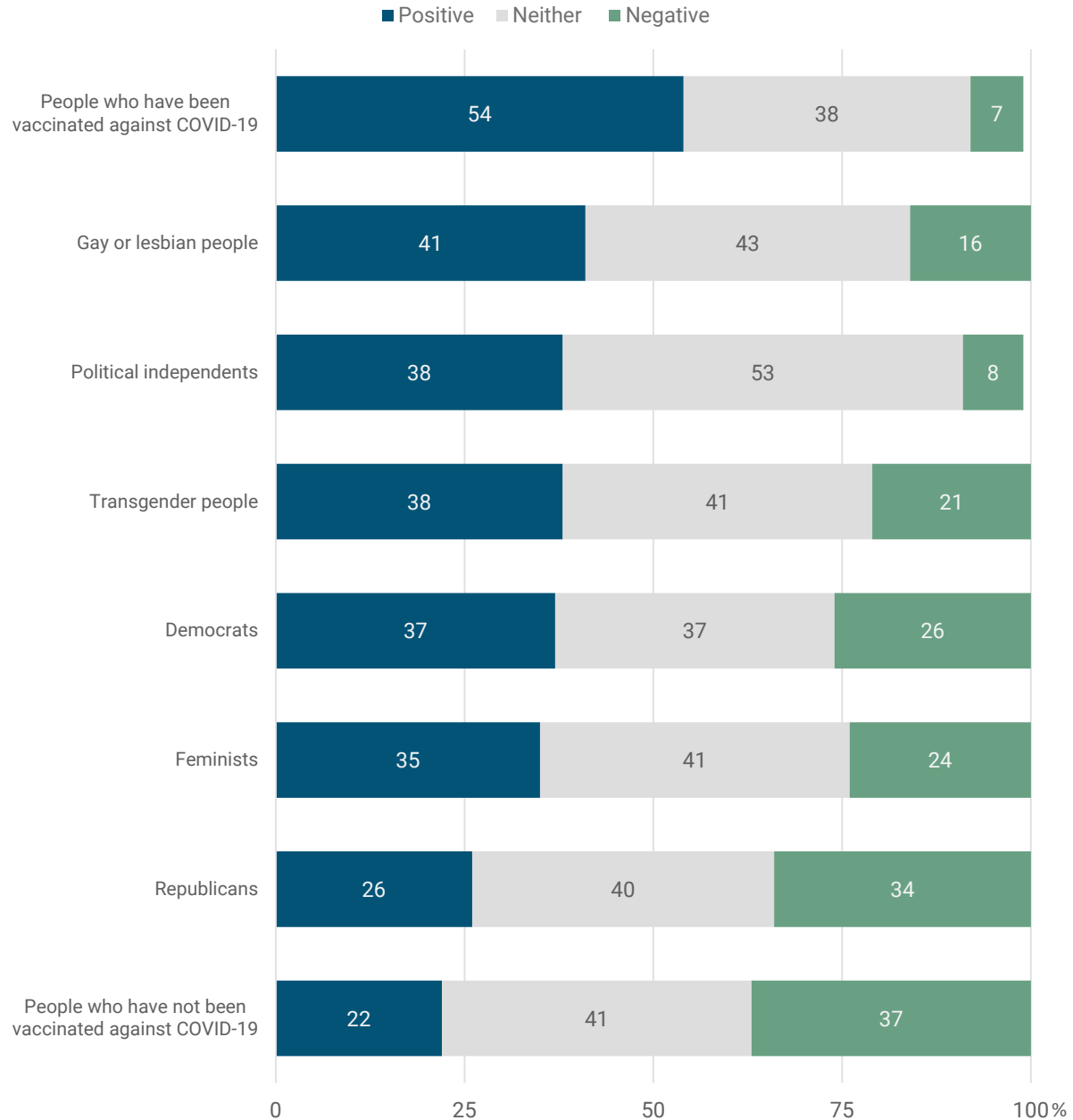
APNORC.org

Overall, people ages 13-56 view a variety of groups of people more positively than negatively. However, there are a few exceptions to this pattern: Republicans and people who have not been inoculated against COVID-19. Republicans are viewed favorably by 26% and unfavorably by 34%. People who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine are also viewed negatively in the aggregate, with 22% viewing them positively and 37% viewing them negatively.

The generations only differ in their opinions of these groups when it comes to LGBT people. While 44% of Gen Z and 43% of Millennials have a positive view of gay and lesbian people, only 35% of Gen X say the same. Similarly, 41% of Gen Z and 42% of Millennials have a positive view of transgender people, compared to 30% of Gen X.

## More see Republicans and those who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19 negatively than positively.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56



**Question:** Would you say you have a positive, negative, or neither positive nor negative view of each of the following?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.



NORC

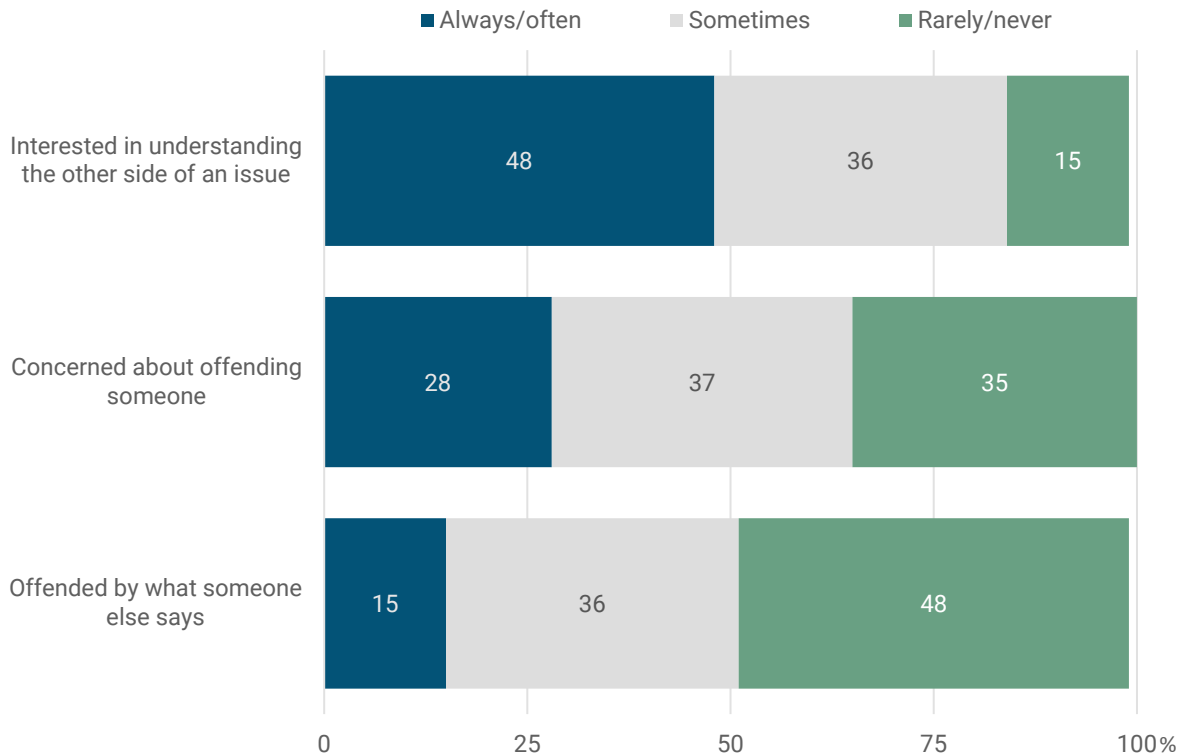
APNORC.org

When discussing politics, 48% of those ages 13-56 are always or often interested in understanding the other side of an issue, while 36% are sometimes and 15% are rarely or never interested in this. These rates are similar across generations.

More are concerned about offending someone else, compared to being offended themselves in these discussions. Twenty-eight percent are often or always concerned about offending someone during political discussions, while just 15% are often offended during these discussions. Forty-eight percent are rarely or never offended during political discussions. Gen Z (34%) and Millennials (30%) are more often worried about offending someone than Gen X (19%). No differences emerge in how often these generations are personally offended.

### When discussing politics, how often are you...

Percent of Americans age 13-56



**Question:** When having a conversation about politics, how often would you say you are...

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.



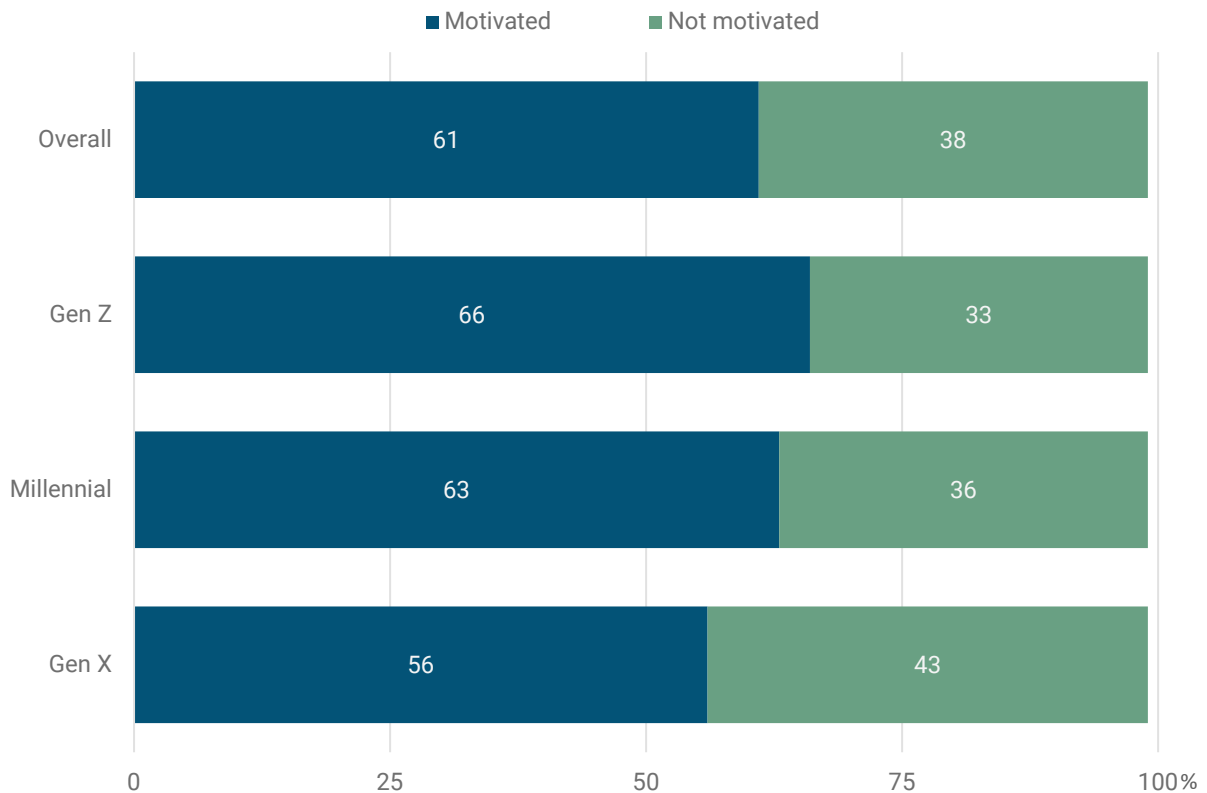
APNORC.org

## GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS ARE MOST MOTIVATED TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGE, THOUGH FEW THINK THEY CAN AFFECT GOVERNMENT ACTION.

Among Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X, 61% think that their generation is determined to make positive changes in the country. While majorities of all three generations agree that their own generation is motivated to make things better, Gen Z is especially likely to think so compared to Gen X.

**Two-thirds of Gen Z think their generation is motivated to make positive change.**

Percent of Americans ages 13-56



**Question:** Which statement comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right? My generation is feeling motivated to make positive changes in this country. My generation isn't motivated to make positive changes in this country.

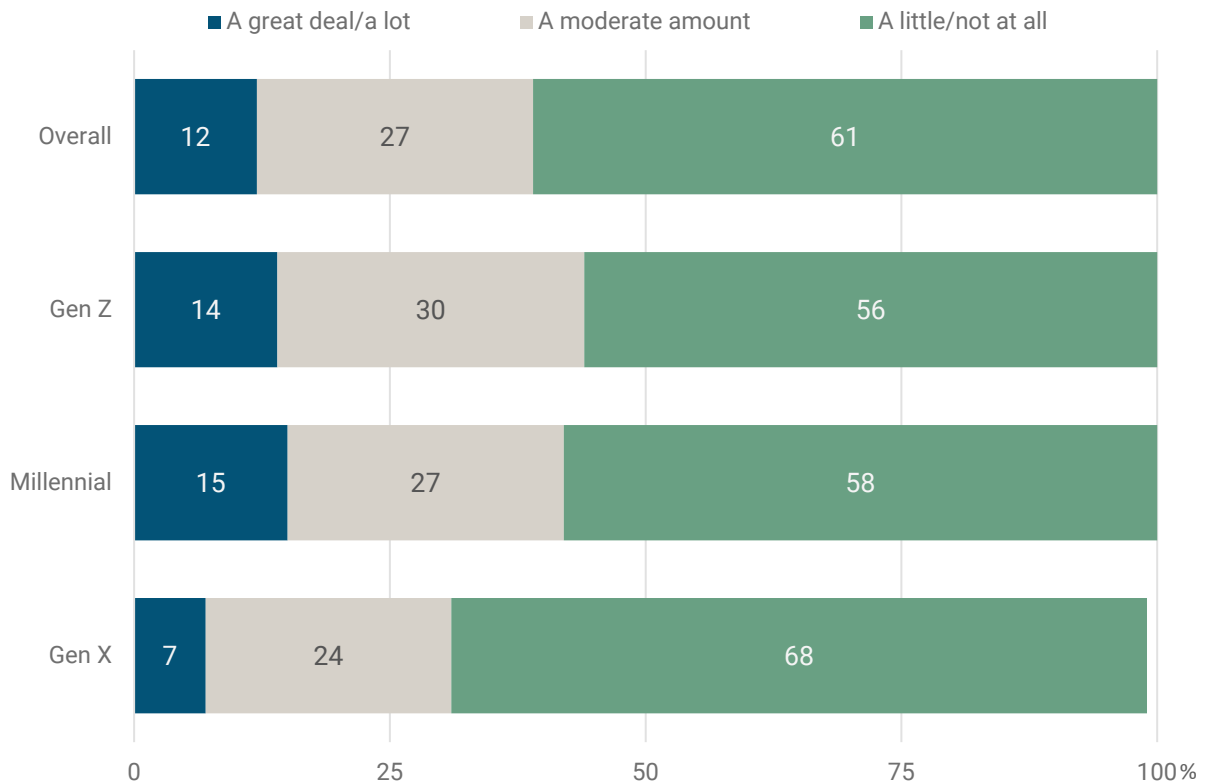
**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.

**AP** | **\*NORC**

APNORC.org

However, only 12% overall think people like them can have a great deal or a lot of influence on government change, and 27% say they can have a moderate effect. While Gen Z and Millennials are more optimistic about their ability to effect change than Gen X, just 14% of Gen Z and 15% of Millennials think they can have a lot or great deal of impact on what the government does.

## Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than Gen X to say they can impact what the government does.



**Question:** How much can people like you affect what the government does?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.

**AP** | **NORC**

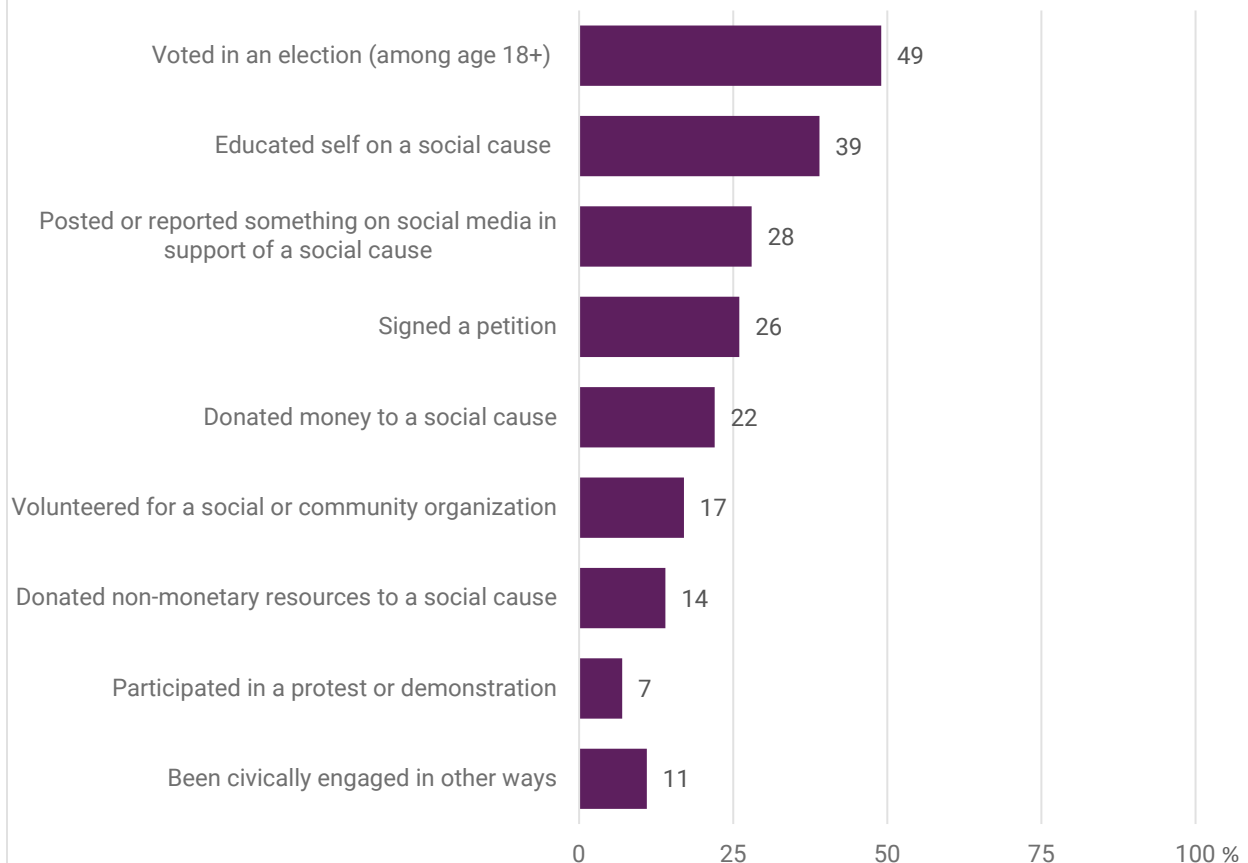
APNORC.org

When it comes to taking action, however, there are no clear differences between the generations. Overall, about three-quarters of those ages 13-56 have done or participated in at least one of the activities asked about in the survey. Aside from voting, the most common actions in the past year were becoming educated on a social cause, posting about a cause on social media, and signing a petition.

All three generations are similarly likely to have taken action, and Gen Z overall shows high rates of participation. Looking more closely at Gen Z, 63% of those ages 13-17 and 81% of those ages 18-24 have taken at least one of these political actions in the past year.

**In the past year, have you...**

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who have

**Question:** Which of the following is true for you over the past 12 months?**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.

✱NORC

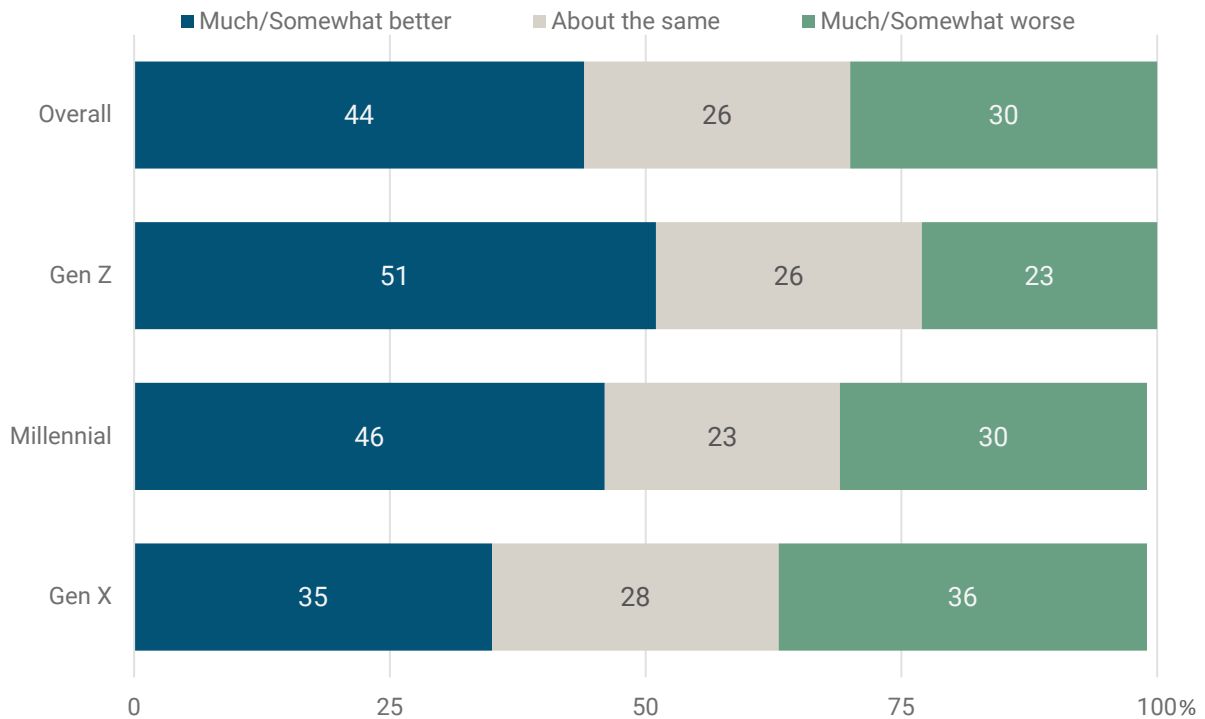
APNORC.org

## WHILE ALL GENERATIONS SHARE SOME PESSIMISM, GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS ARE MORE UPBEAT ABOUT THE PRESENT AND FUTURE COMPARED TO GEN X.

While members of all three of these generations have mixed views of the state of the country, Gen Z and Millennials have a more positive outlook on most measures.

Thinking about the present, 51% of Gen Z thinks their standard of living is better than their parents' was at the same age, while just 23% think it is worse. Similarly, 46% of Millennials think their own standard of living is better, compared to 30% who think it is worse. On the other hand, just 35% of Gen X think they are better off than their parents.

## Gen Z and Millennials have a more positive outlook on their standard of living than



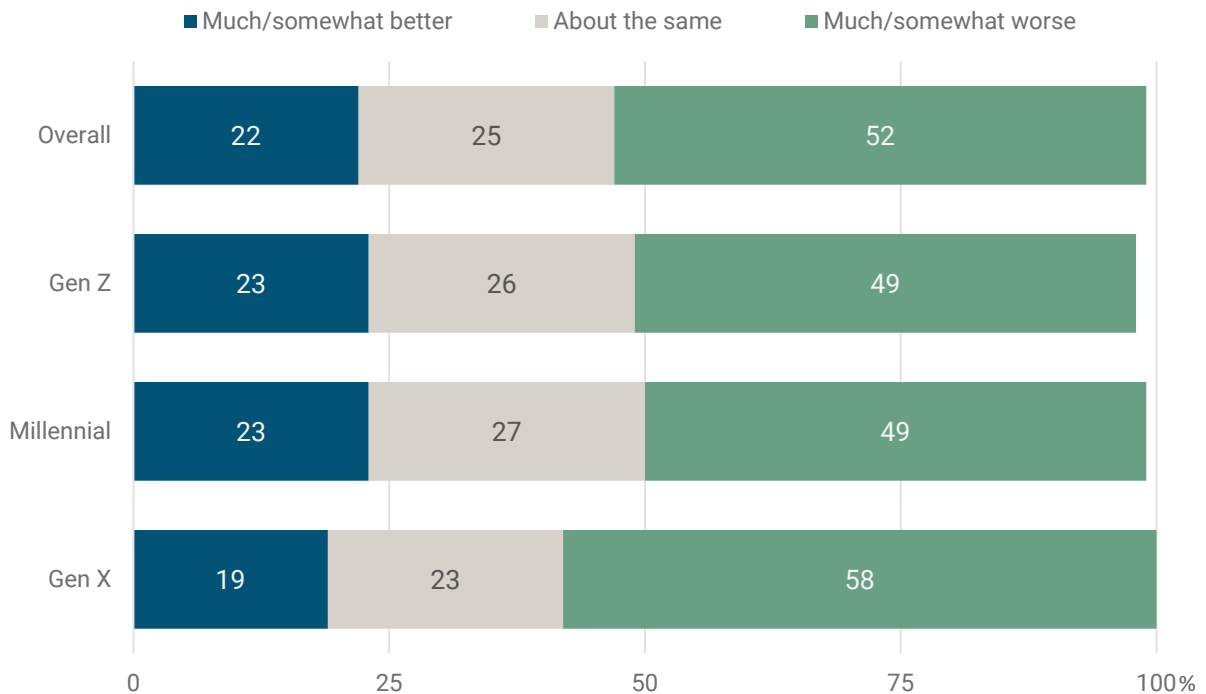
**Question:** Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your own standard of living now is better, worse, or about the same as theirs was?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.

A majority (58%) of Gen X think they are facing a world in worse shape than what earlier generations had to deal with. Just less than half of Gen Z and Millennials share that view.

## Gen X has the most negative view about the world their generation is facing, compared to other generations.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56



**Question:** Would you say the world your generation is facing is better than most other generations have faced, worse than most other generations have faced, or about the same?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.

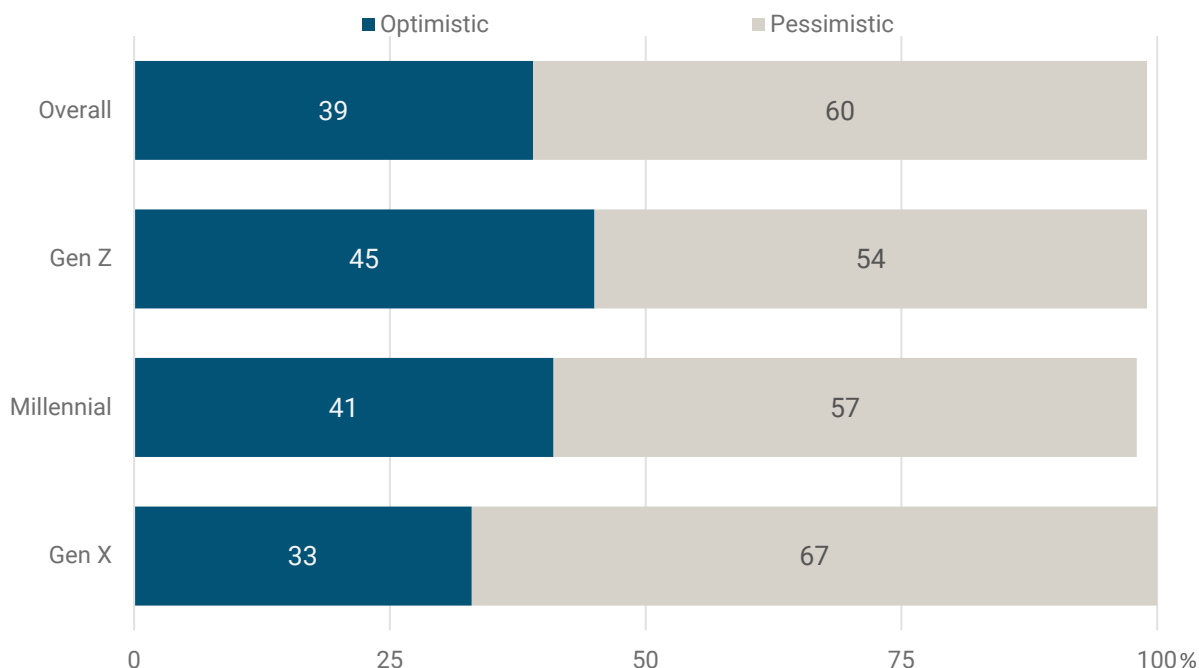
**AP** | **NORC**

APNORC.org

Looking ahead, about half of Gen Z (51%), Millennials (46%), and Gen X (43%) are optimistic about the future of the United States, and they do not differ significantly. Looking specifically at their outlook on politics, a majority of each generation is pessimistic about Americans across the political spectrum coming together to work out their differences, but Gen Z (45%) and Millennials (41%) are somewhat more likely to be optimistic about it than Gen X (33%).

## While all three generations are more pessimistic than optimistic about Americans working out their political differences, Gen X is the most pessimistic.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56



**Question:** These days, do you feel optimistic that Americans of different political views can still come together and work out their differences, or are you pessimistic that Americans can do that now?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll, conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 respondents ages 13-56.



★NORC

APNORC.org

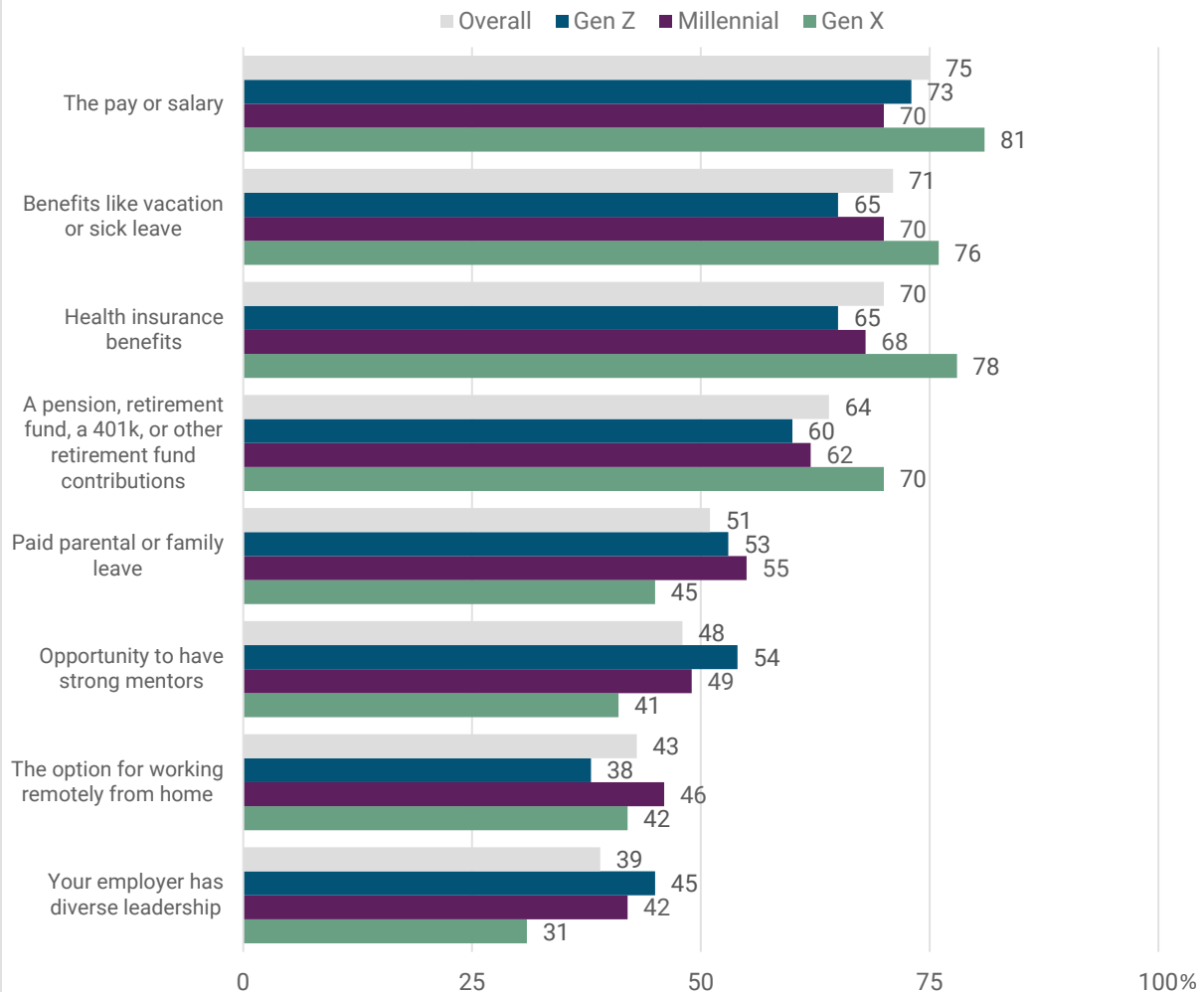
## BEYOND SALARY AND TRADITIONAL BENEFITS, GEN Z ALSO LOOKS FOR DIVERSE LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE.

In the workplace, all three generations are most likely to value pay (75%), vacation or sick leave (71%), and health insurance (70%) when considering a new job. More than half overall also value a pension or retirement contributions (64%) and paid family leave (51%). Fewer (43%) think an option for remote work is extremely or very important.

Looking at generational differences, younger generations like Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to value that an employer has diverse leadership. Gen Z is also more likely to value strong mentorship in the workplace than Gen X. Gen X is more likely than younger generations to value pay and health insurance. Each generation feels similarly about the importance of remote work.

## Younger generations value diverse leadership with their employers more than Gen X.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say each is extremely or very important



**Questions:** Thinking about when you have finished your education and are looking for a job, how important are each of the following to you?

When you are looking for a new job, how important are each of the following to you?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.



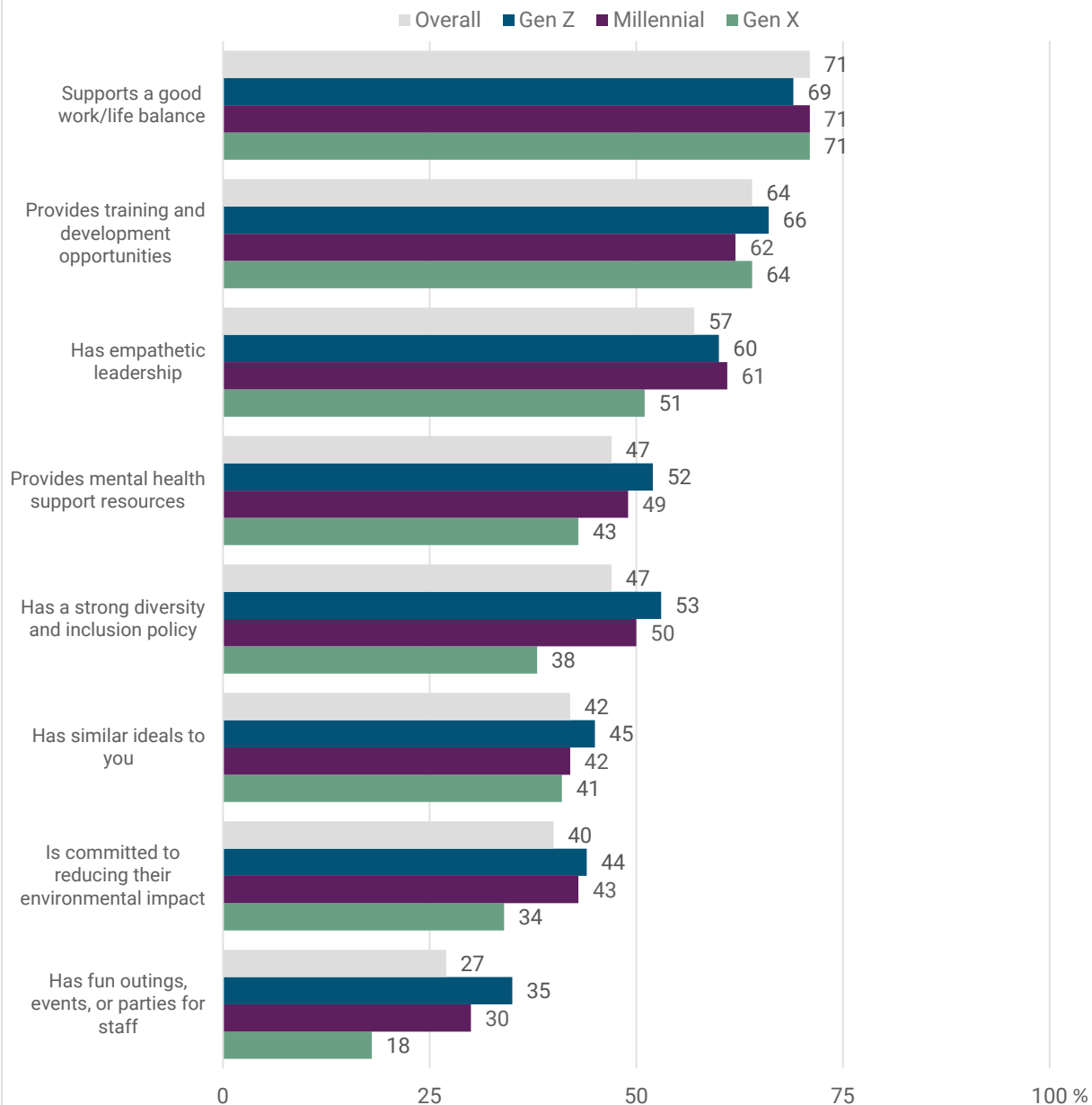
APNORC.org

Both Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to value empathetic leadership, strong diversity and inclusion policies, and employers that are committed to reducing their environmental impact. More than half of Gen Z places high importance on mental health resources, too. About a third of Gen Z values fun events for staff. Within Gen Z, teens are more likely than older Gen Zers to value mental health resources (58% vs. 47%), a strong diversity and inclusion policy (57% vs. 50%), and fun events (41% vs. 31%).

Sixty-eight percent of Gen Z supports companies providing employees with paid days off for mental health, including 70% of teens and 67% of older Gen Zers.

## Work/life balance, training and development opportunities, and empathetic leadership are the most important employer characteristics.

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say each is extremely or very important



**Questions:** How important is it to you that your employer...

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.



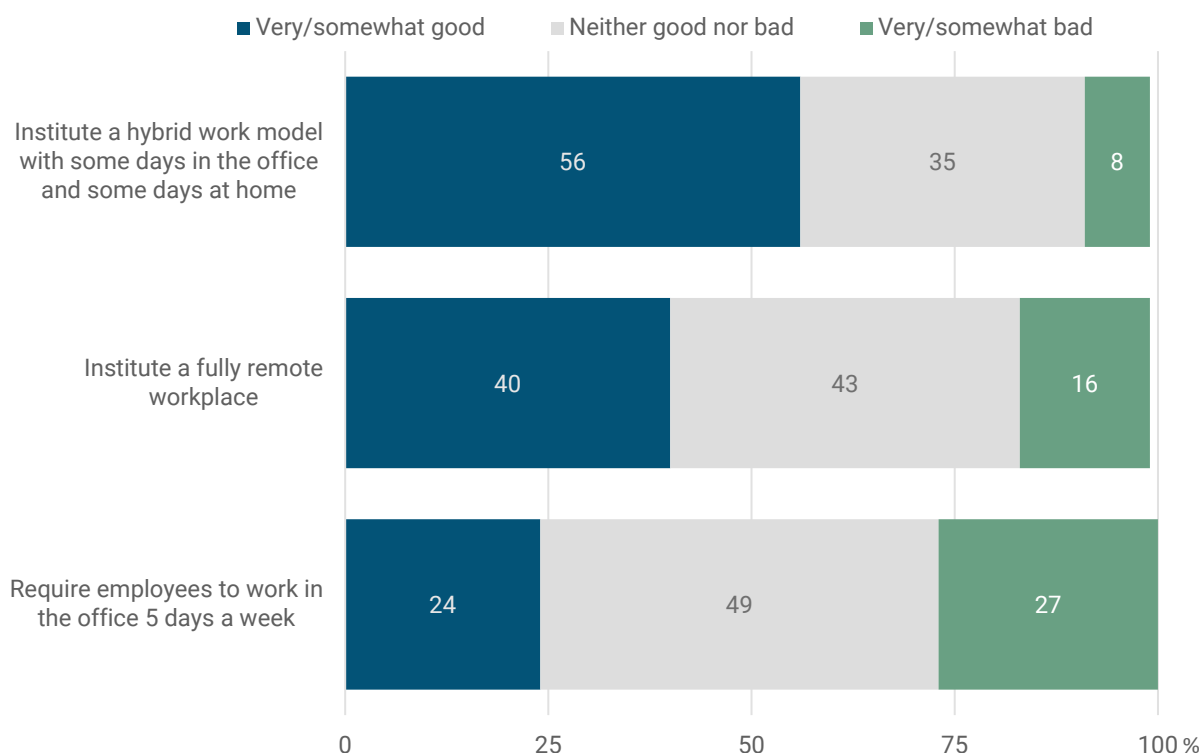
✱NORC

APNORC.org

Thinking about the future of the workplace after the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted many to work remotely, 56% of those ages 13-56 think it's best to have a hybrid approach going forward, with some days in the office and some days at home. Fewer think a fully remote workplace would be good, and even fewer favor asking employees to come to the office 5 days a week.

**Most prefer a hybrid approach of remote and in-office work.**

Percent of Americans ages 13-56

**Question:** Do you think it would be good, bad, or neither good nor bad for companies in the U.S. to do each of the following?**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.**AP** | **\*NORC**

APNORC.org

## ALL GENERATIONS LOOK FOR GOOD VALUE FROM THEIR PREFERRED BRANDS, BUT GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS ALSO WANT COMPANIES TO SUPPORT IMPORTANT CAUSES LIKE DIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

As consumers, what those age 13-56 want the most is value, though social consciousness is also important to some.

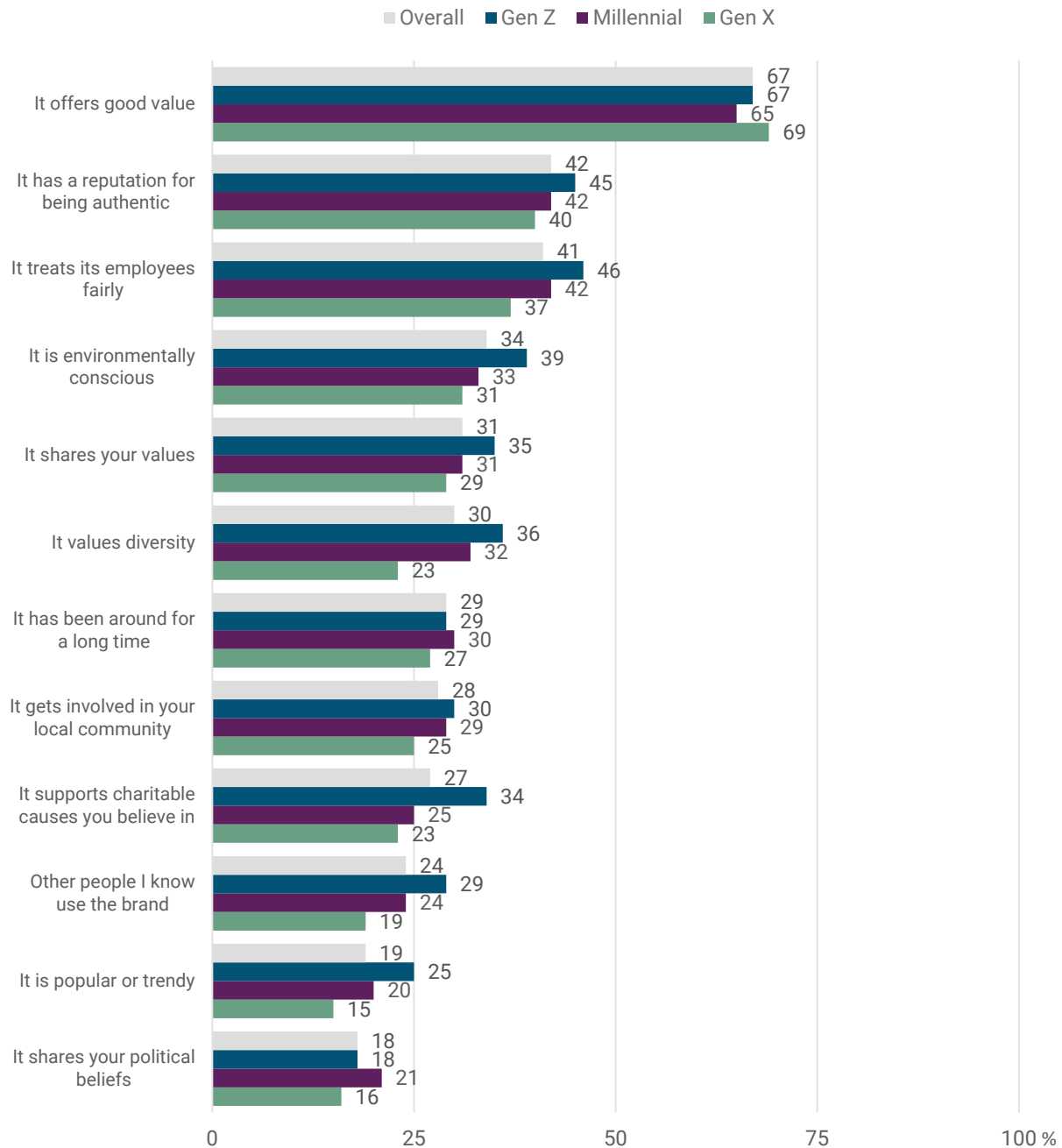
Overall, 37% think that companies have a lot or a great deal of responsibility to take a stand on social and political issues, while another 37% think that companies have some responsibility. Twenty-six percent do not think companies should be responsible for this. Gen Z and Millennials are particularly likely to think companies should have a greater share of responsibility, with 40% of each saying so, compared to 30% of Gen X.

But when asked why they choose to buy a specific brand, the most common reason offered across generations is that the brand offers good value. Still, some individuals—and particularly Gen Z—cite that they choose brands because they support charitable causes they believe in, they are environmentally conscious, and they treat their employees fairly. Gen Z and Millennials are also more likely to cite a brand valuing diversity as a major reason for purchasing its products.

Gen Z is more likely than Millennials or Gen X to cite a brand's popularity or trendiness as a major reason for purchasing from the brand.

**Gen Z values charitable and environmentally conscious brands.**

Percent of Americans ages 13-56 who say each is a major reason



**Questions:** Would you say each of the following is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason you choose to buy a specific brand?

**Source:** MTV/AP-NORC Youth Culture Poll conducted September 1-19, 2021, with 3,764 people ages 13-56 nationwide.



APNORC.org

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from MTV. Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago, The Associated Press, and MTV collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using both probability and nonprobability sample sources. Interviews for this survey were conducted between September 1 and 19, 2021, with people ages 13 to 56 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The probability sample source is AmeriSpeak®, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides 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.

Adult panel members ages 18 to 56 were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 939 completed the survey—929 via the web and 10 via telephone. Teen panel members ages 13 to 17 were drawn from AmeriSpeak Teen, and 488 completed the survey—484 via the web and 4 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. The final stage completion rate is 29.3%, the weighted household panel response rate is 18.6%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 75.3%, for a cumulative response rate of 4.1%. The overall margin of sampling error for the AmeriSpeak sample is +/-4.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect.

Dynata provided 2,337 non-probability interviews—1,170 with people ages 13-17 and 1,167 with people ages 18-56. The Dynata sample was derived based on quotas related to age, race and ethnicity, gender, and education. Interviews were conducted in English and via the web only. For panel recruitment, Dynata uses invitations of all types, including email invitations, phone alerts, banners, and messaging on panel community sites to include people with a diversity of motivations to take part in research. Because nonprobability panels do not start with a frame where there is known probability of selection, standard measures of sampling error and response rates cannot be calculated.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a raking process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling in both probability and nonprobability samples resulting from the study specific sample design. Raking variables for both the probability and nonprobability samples included age, gender, census region, race/ethnicity, and education. Population control totals for the raking variables were obtained from the 2020 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of people ages 13-56.

In order to incorporate the nonprobability sample, NORC used TrueNorth calibration—an innovative hybrid calibration approach developed at NORC based on small area estimation methods in order to explicitly account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample. The purpose of TrueNorth calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample so as to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

First, the nonprobability sample is raked for each age group of interest (13-17; 18-24; 25-56) to the following sociodemographic characteristics: sex, education level for adults 18-56, parent's highest level of education for teens 13-17, census region, and race/ethnicity. Additionally, the nonprobability sample is raked to more granular age overall (13-14; 15-17; 18-24; 25-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-56) and race/ethnicity by gender (non-Hispanic white men; non-Hispanic white women; all other men; all other women). Second, the weighted AmeriSpeak sample and the calibrated nonprobability sample were used to develop a small area model to support domain-level estimates, where the domains were defined by race/ethnicity, age, education, and gender. The dependent variables for the models were:

- Q3NEW3: Would you say the world your generation is facing is better than most other generations have faced, worse than most other generations have faced, or about the same?
- Q7BNEW: How much can people like you affect what the government does?
- Q8\_1: Would you say each of the following is a major source of stress, a minor source of stress, or not a source of stress at all? The fear of getting COVID-19
- C17: How much responsibility do you think a company has to take a stand on important social and political issues?

These were found to be key survey variables, in terms of model fit. The model included covariates, domain-level random effects, and sampling errors. The covariates were external data available from other national surveys such as health insurance, internet access, voting behavior, and housing type from the American Community Survey (ACS). Finally, the combined AmeriSpeak and nonprobability sample weights were derived such that for the combined sample, the weighted estimate reproduced the small domain estimates (derived using the small area model) for key survey variables.

The overall margin of error for the combined sample is +/- 3.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. The overall margin of sampling error among those age 13-24 is +/-2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The overall margin of sampling error among those age 25-40 is +/-5.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The overall margin of sampling error among those age 41-56 is +/-7.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect.

For more information, email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).

## CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

### From NORC at the University of Chicago

Dan Malato  
Betsy Broaddus  
Marjorie Connelly  
Andy Shi  
Ridge Knapp  
Jennifer Benz  
Trevor Thompson  
David Sterrett

### From The Associated Press

Emily Swanson  
Hannah Fingerhut

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. Online: [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more.

Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org)

## ABOUT MTV ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

MTV Entertainment Group reaches over 1.4 billion people around the world on linear platforms in 180 countries and with more than 765 million social followers – making it one of the preeminent youth media companies in the world. Connecting with its audiences through nine iconic brands including MTV, Comedy Central, VH1, CMT, Pop, Logo, Smithsonian Channel, Paramount Network and TV Land. Additionally, MTV Entertainment Studios produces award-winning series, movies and documentary films. MTVE uses its reach for social impact, spearheading broad change-driven coalitions through mental health and civic engagement campaigns.