Executive Summary

College-age Millennials (age 18-24) are considerably more racially and ethnically diverse than the general population. Fewer than 6-in-10 (57%) Millennials self-identify as white, compared to 72% of the general population. Approximately 1-in-5 (21%) identify as Hispanic, 14% identify as black, 6% identify as some other race, and 3% identify with two or more racial categories.

When asked to offer one or two words that describe how their generation is different from their parents’ generation, 4-in-10 (40%) younger Millennials describe themselves more negatively than their parents, compared to 19% who describe their own generation more positively, and 40% who give more neutral comments. The most frequently mentioned difference between the generations was a neutral assessment that Millennials are more “tech-savvy” than their parents (16%).

Like Americans overall, college-age Millennials (age 18-24) are most likely to cite jobs and unemployment as a critical issue facing the country. More than three-quarters (76%) say that jobs and unemployment represent a critical issue. Majorities also report that the federal deficit (55%) and education (54%) are critical issues facing the nation. Only about 1-in-5 say that social issues like abortion (22%) or same-sex marriage (22%) are critical issues.

About 6-in-10 (61%) college-age Millennials say they are registered to vote, but fewer than half (46%) say they are absolutely certain they will vote in the 2012 election.

Younger Millennials generally identify as political Independents but lean toward the Democratic Party. A plurality (45%) of younger Millennials identify as Independent, compared to 33% who identify as Democrat and 23% who identify as Republican. Including “leaners,” nearly 6-in-10 (58%) Millennials identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party, compared to 39% who identify with or lean toward the Republican Party. Only 3% report that they do not lean toward either political party.

Among college-age Millennial voters, Barack Obama holds a 7-point lead over a generic Republican candidate at this point in the 2012 presidential campaign. Nearly half (48%) of Millennial voters say they would prefer that Obama win the 2012 election, compared to 41% who say they would like to see a Republican candidate win. Eleven percent say they are not sure or say they would like to see a third-party candidate win the election. Among Millennial voters who favor a Republican candidate, most would prefer it if Mitt Romney or Ron Paul won the nomination (34% and 30% respectively).

- Obama holds a considerable advantage over Mitt Romney in terms of favorability and excitement about his candidacy. A majority (52%) of college-age Millennial voters say they have a favorable opinion of Barack Obama, compared to only 32% who have a favorable view of Romney. More than 7-in-10 (72%) Obama supporters say that they would be excited to cast a vote for him,
compared to 54% of Romney supporters who say they would be excited to vote for him.

- Barack Obama holds overwhelming leads over a generic Republican opponent among black Millennial voters (92% vs. 2% respectively) and Hispanic Millennial voters (61% vs. 28% respectively). In contrast, a majority (55%) of white Millennial voters say they would prefer that a Republican candidate win the 2012 election, compared to one-third (33%) who say they would like to see Obama win re-election.

**Younger Millennials report significant levels of movement from the religious affiliation of their childhood, mostly toward identifying as religiously unaffiliated.** While only 11% of Millennials were religiously unaffiliated in childhood, one-quarter (25%) currently identify as unaffiliated, a 14-point increase. Catholics and white mainline Protestants saw the largest net losses due to Millennials’ movement away from their childhood religious affiliation.

- Today, college-age Millennials are more likely than the general population to be religiously unaffiliated. They are less likely than the general population to identify as white evangelical Protestant or white mainline Protestant.
- Millennials also hold less traditional or orthodox religious beliefs. Fewer than one-quarter (23%) believe that the Bible is the word of God and should be taken literally, word for word. About 1-in-4 (26%) believe Bible is the word of God, but that not everything in the Bible should be taken literally. Roughly 4-in-10 (37%) say that the Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God.

**Younger Millennials are divided on whether the American Dream – the idea that if you work hard you’ll get ahead – holds true today. They are moderately optimistic about their long-term financial prospects, when they use their parents’ financial situation as a point of comparison.**

- A plurality (45%) of younger Millennials believe that the American Dream once held true, but not anymore, while 4-in-10 (40%) say the American Dream still holds true. One-in-ten (10%) younger Millennials say that the American Dream never held true.
- Approximately 4-in-10 (42%) of younger Millennials believe that, in their lifetime, they will be better off than their parents, compared to 18% who expect to be less well off than their parents, and 38% who predict that their financial situation will be about the same as their parents’.

**College-age Millennials see the need for economic reform to address the gap between the rich and the poor.**

- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of college-age Millennials agree that the economic system in this country unfairly favors the wealthy, while (24%) disagree.
Majorities of members of all political parties agree: 85% of Democratic Millennials, 71% of Independent Millennials, and 59% of Republican Millennials.

- A strong majority (63%) of younger Millennials agree that one of the big problems in this country is that we don’t give everyone an equal chance in life. Approximately 3-in-10 (28%) disagree, saying that it is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.
- Nearly 7-in-10 (69%) Millennials believe that the government should do more to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, while 28% disagree.
- Younger Millennials strongly favor (72%) a policy sometimes called the “Buffett Rule,” which would increase the tax rate on Americans earning more than $1 million a year. Majorities of Republican, Independent and Democratic Millennials support the “Buffett Rule.”

Despite holding some moral reservations about abortion, a majority of college-age Millennials support legal abortion, as well as community access to abortion services.

- A majority of college-age Millennials say that abortion should be legal in all (24%) or most cases (30%). More than 4-in-10 say that abortion should be illegal in most (28%) or all cases (16%). Roughly 6-in-10 (59%) Millennials believe that at least some health care professionals in their community should provide legal abortions.
- A slim majority (51%) of Millennials believe that having an abortion is morally wrong, compared to 37% who say it is morally acceptable.

Although younger Millennials are divided on the morality of gay and lesbian sexual relationships, a solid majority support allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally.

- Nearly 6-in-10 (59%) college-age Millennials favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry, compared to 37% who are opposed.
- Millennials are nearly evenly divided over whether sex between two adults of the same gender is morally acceptable (48%) or morally wrong (44%).

Younger Millennials strongly support the central components of the DREAM Act – allowing illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college (61% favor, 35% oppose). Two-thirds (66%) of Democratic Millennials support the policy, compared to fewer than half (49%) of Republican Millennials.

Despite the Millennial generation’s racial and ethnic diversity, there is evidence of considerable racial tensions among younger Millennials, which also run along party lines.

- College-age Millennials are divided on whether the government has paid too much attention to the problems of blacks and other minorities over the past few decades (49% disagree, 46% agree).
When asked whether discrimination against whites has become as big a problem today as discrimination against blacks, younger Millennials are nearly evenly divided (48% agree, 47% disagree). Almost two-thirds (66%) of Republican Millennials agree that discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities, compared to only 36% of Democratic Millennials.

Millennials’ feelings toward present-day Christianity are fairly ambivalent. Approximately three-quarters (76%) of younger Millennials say that modern-day Christianity “has good values and principles,” and 63% agree that contemporary Christianity “consistently shows love for other people.” On the other hand, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Millennials say that “anti-gay” describes present-day Christianity somewhat or very well. And more than 6-in-10 (62%) Millennials also believe that present-day Christianity is “judgmental.”