Religious and Ethnic Pluralism

Feelings about Religious Subgroups

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate a variety of religious subgroups on the same 100-point scale described earlier. Generally, younger Millennials expressed warm feelings toward Christians, who receive an average rating of 68, and Jews, who receive an average rating of 61. They are more ambivalent, overall, in their feelings toward Muslims, Mormons, and atheists. Muslims, Mormons, and atheists received similar average ratings (48, 46, and 46, respectively), suggesting that Millennials, on average, have lukewarm feelings toward these groups.

There were some striking variations among subgroups, particularly between religiously unaffiliated and white evangelical Protestant Millennials. Perhaps unsurprisingly, religiously unaffiliated Millennials are significantly more likely than white evangelical Protestants to give atheists a favorable rating (69 vs. 26 respectively).

Level of educational attainment makes a difference in terms of Millennials’ feelings toward certain religious groups. Millennials who have at least a bachelor’s degree are also more likely to favorably rate minority religious groups than are Millennials who do not have a high school degree. Millennials without a high school degree rate atheists more coolly, on average, than Millennials with a bachelor’s degree (41 vs. 55 respectively). Similarly, Millennials without a high school degree have cooler feelings toward Muslims (42) and Jews (55), compared to Millennials with at least a bachelor’s degree (54 and 65 respectively).

Democratic Millennials rate Muslims more positively than do Republican Millennials (56 vs. 37 respectively). They also hold friendlier views toward atheists than do Republican Millennials (51 vs. 36 respectively). Notably, Democratic and Republican Millennials give Mormons roughly the same average rating (49 vs. 46 respectively).

Feelings about Present-Day Christianity

Millennials hold conflicting views about present-day Christianity. When asked whether present-day Christianity is “relevant to your life,” nearly 6-in-10 (58%) college-age Millennials agree, while 40% disagree. However, when asked to consider the extent to which they associate present-day Christianity with certain positive or negative adjectives and descriptions, majorities of Millennials agree that both – the good and the bad – describe present-day Christianity “somewhat” or “very” well.

Almost two-thirds (64%) of Millennials say that “anti-gay” describes present-day Christianity somewhat or very well. Over 6-in-10 (62%) also believe that present-day Christianity is “judgmental,” while 58% agree that “hypocritical (saying one thing, doing another)” describes present-day Christianity well. Half of Millennials say that “too involved in politics” describes present-day Christianity well.
There is, however, an equally strong consensus about positive characteristics associated with present-day Christianity. Around three-quarters (76%) of younger Millennials say that modern-day Christianity “has good values and principles,” while 63% agree that “consistently shows love for other people” describes present-day Christianity well.

Christian Millennials and religiously affiliated Millennials disagree on many aspects of present-day Christianity, although there are some points of agreement. About 8-in-10 religiously unaffiliated Millennials believe that the terms “judgmental” (84%), “hypocritical” (84%), and “anti-gay” (79%) describe present-day Christianity somewhat or very well. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of religiously unaffiliated Millennials also say that present-day Christianity is too involved in politics. More than two-thirds (68%) believe that Christianity teaches the same basic idea as other religions. A majority (56%) say that present-day Christianity has good values and principles, although only 8% that say this description fits very well. Relatively few religiously unaffiliated Millennials say that present-day Christianity consistently shows love for other people (41%) or is relevant to their life (18%).

### College-age (18-24) Millennials' Views of Present-Day Christianity

*Percent saying term describes present-day Christianity somewhat or very well*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Religiously Unaffiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgmental</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocritical</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Gay</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Involved in Politics</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Same Basic Idea as Other Religions</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Good Values and Principles</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently Shows Love for Other People</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant to Your Life</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Public Religion Research Institute, Millennial Values Survey, March 2012 (N=2013)

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Millennial Christians, for the most part, offer a starkly different appraisal of their faith. Nearly 9-in-10 (88%) say that Christianity has good values and principles, and more than three quarters say that Christianity is relevant to their life (77%) and consistently shows love for other people (76%). At the same time, a majority of Christian Millennials agree that present-day Christianity is anti-gay (58%) and judgmental (54%). Fewer than half believe it is hypocritical (49%) or too involved in politics (40%).

There is the greatest agreement between Christian and religiously unaffiliated Millennials on whether Christianity teaches the same basic ideas as other religions (65% vs. 68% respectively), and whether Christianity is anti-gay (58% vs. 79% respectively).

Partisan differences for the most part mirror differences between Christian Millennials and religiously unaffiliated Millennials, except on the question of whether present-day Christianity is anti-gay. Notably, the gap between Republican Millennials and Democratic Millennials who believe that present-day Christianity is “anti-gay” (61% vs. 69% respectively) is narrower than the gap between Christian and religiously unaffiliated Millennials.

**Associations with Mormons**

In the survey, respondents were asked to report which word, in their mind, best describes Mormons. For the largest number (15%) of younger Millennials, Mormons could be described with a word that fell into the category of “religious/faith/Christian.” About one-in-ten (9%) describe Mormons as a “cult/misguided,” while the same number (9%) say that Mormons are “strange/different.” Eight percent of Millennials associate “polygamy” with Mormons. Millennials also associate Mormons with “Utah/Mormons/LDS” (6%), “people/normal/OK” (5%), “friendly/kind/nice” (4%), “strict” (4%), and “conservative/traditional” (3%).

In addition to these specific categories, 12% of Millennials offer a generally negative term, while 6% report a generally positive term.

**American Muslims and Islam in Society**

College-age Millennials are divided on whether the values of Islam are at odds with American values and way of life (49% disagree, 47% agree). Nearly two-thirds (66%) of Millennials, however, agree that Muslims in their local community should be permitted to build an Islamic center or mosque, provided they followed the same rules and regulations required of other religious groups.

There are significant partisan differences on these questions. Over 6-in-10 (62%) Republican Millennials believe that the values of Islam are at odds with American values, compared to around 4-in-10 (42%) Democratic Millennials. Similarly, Democratic Millennials are more supportive of allowing Muslims in their local community to build a mosque or Islamic center, compared to Republican Millennials (75% vs. 55% respectively).
Millennials without a high school degree are less likely than those with at least a bachelor’s degree to support allowing Muslims in their local community to build an Islamic center or mosque (49% vs. 74% respectively).

**Immigrants and Change in Society**

*Change vs. Traditional Values*

A solid majority (62%) of college-age Millennials (age 18-24) agree that what makes America great is that it is open to change and new ways of doing things. Around 3-in-10 (28%) disagree, saying that what makes America great is that it protects traditional values and ways of doing things. There are substantial partisan divides on this question. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of Democratic Millennials agree that America’s greatness comes from its openness to change, compared to only 41% of Republican Millennials.

Majorities of every religious group except white evangelical Protestant Millennials agree that what makes America great is that it is open to change, including 61% of white mainline Protestant Millennials, 67% of black Protestant Millennials, 68% of Catholic Millennials and 76% of religiously unaffiliated Millennials. Fewer than one-third (32%) of white evangelical Millennials agree while a majority (54%) of white evangelical Protestant Millennials say that America’s greatness comes from its ability to protect traditional values.

Millennial women are significantly more likely than Millennial men to say that what makes America great is that it is open to change and new ways of doing things (68% vs. 57% respectively)

*Impact of Newcomers on American Society*

College-age Millennials are divided on the impact that the growing number of newcomers from other countries has on American society. Nearly half (48%) say that the growing number of newcomers strengthens American society, compared to 42% who say that the growing number of newcomers threatens traditional American customs and values.

There are sizeable variations by race and party affiliation. Hispanic Millennials (64%) are significantly more likely than black (47%) and white (41%) Millennials to believe that the growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens American society. Democratic Millennials are also more likely than Republican Millennials to believe that the growing number of newcomers strengthens American society (59% vs. 29% respectively).

There are also substantial divisions between religious subgroups. White evangelical Protestant (59%) and white mainline Protestant (58%) Millennials are significantly more likely to believe that the growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens traditional American customs and values, compared to Catholic (44%) and religiously
unaffiliated (32%) Millennials. Notably, Latino Catholic Millennials are more than twice as likely as white Catholic Millennials to believe that the growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens American society (70% vs. 33% respectively).

The DREAM Act

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). Republican Millennials are more divided. Forty-nine percent of Republican Millennials support the proposal, while 48% oppose it. In contrast, about two-thirds (66%) of Democratic Millennials support the policy, while only 3-in-10 (31%) are opposed.

With the exception of white evangelical Protestants, Millennials across all major religious groups favor the DREAM Act. Fifty-five percent of white mainline Protestant Millennials favor the proposal, as do 61% of black Protestant Millennials, 67% of non-Christian affiliated Millennials, 68% of Catholic Millennials, and 71% of religiously unaffiliated Millennials.

There are no differences in support by education attainment level. Nearly equal numbers of Millennials with a college degree and those who have not finished high school favor allowing illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college.

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Support for the DREAM Act by Religious Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Favor (%)</th>
<th>Oppose (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Millennials</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Christian Affiliated</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Mainline</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Evangelical</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Millennial Values Survey, March 2012 (N=2,013)
Ethnic and Racial Minorities

Feelings About Minorities

When asked to evaluate their feelings toward certain ethnic minorities on the same 100-point scale described earlier, Millennials, on average, report warm feelings toward both Hispanics (62) and African-Americans (67).

There are few significant demographic or educational differences, although Democratic Millennials are modestly more likely than Republican Millennials to report warm feelings toward Hispanics (66 vs. 55 respectively). White evangelical Protestant Millennials also rate Hispanics slightly more positively than do white mainline Protestant Millennials (63 vs. 50 respectively).

Government Attention to Minorities’ Problems

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). There are substantial racial differences on this issue. Only around one-quarter (24%) of black Millennials and slightly more than one-third (37%) of Hispanic Millennials agree that the government has paid too much attention to the problems of blacks and other minorities, compared to 56% of white Millennials.

There are also striking differences according to political party affiliation. Republican Millennials are twice as likely as Democratic Millennials to believe that over the past couple of decades, the government has paid too much attention to the problems of blacks and other minorities (65% vs. 32% respectively).

About 6-in-10 white mainline Protestant (61%) and white evangelical Protestant (58%) Millennials also believe that the government has paid too much attention to the problems of blacks and other minorities. Catholics are nearly evenly divided (50% agree, while 49% disagree), although white Catholics are substantially more likely than Latino Catholics to agree (65% vs. 38% respectively). A slim majority of religiously unaffiliated Millennials (53%) and a much stronger majority of black Protestants (71%) disagree, saying that the government has not paid too much attention to the problems of blacks and other minorities.

Perceptions of Reverse Discrimination

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). As with the previous question on government intervention on behalf of blacks and other minorities, there are dramatic differences by race, political party affiliation, religious affiliation, and educational type. A solid majority (58%) of white Millennials believe that discrimination against whites has become as big a
problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities, compared to only 24% of black Millennials and about 4-in-10 (39%) Hispanic Millennials.

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. Strong majorities of white evangelical Protestant (68%) and white mainline Protestant (63%) Millennials agree with this statement. A slim majority (52%) of Catholics also agree, although white Catholics are substantially more likely than Latino Catholics to say that discrimination against whites is as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities (62% vs. 41% respectively). A majority (55%) of religiously unaffiliated Millennials disagree, along with roughly 7-in-10 (72%) black Protestant Millennials.

Millennials with a bachelor’s degree are significantly less likely to agree that discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities, compared to Millennials who have not completed high school (43% vs. 57% respectively).