

August 2017

Millennial Evaluations of Donald Trump and the Future of American Politics

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

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

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Preferred citations:

Media: GenForward University of Chicago: July 2017 Report

Academic: Cohen, Cathy J., Matthew D. Luttig, Vladimir E.

Medenica, and Jon C. Rogowski. 2017. "Millennial Evaluations of Donald Trump and the Future of American Politics"

About GenForward

> *The Survey*

The GenForward Survey is the first of its kind—a nationally representative survey of over 1,750 young adults ages 18-34 conducted bimonthly that pays special attention to how race and ethnicity influence how young adults or Millennials experience and think about the world. Given the importance of race and ethnicity for shaping the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of young people, we believe researchers make a mistake when they present data on young adults in a manner that assumes a monolithic Millennial generation and young adult vote.

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

In this report, we present GenForward survey data collected between June 23 and July 10, 2017. We provide an extensive look at how Millennials think about politics and political officials in both the Republican and Democratic parties.

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Key Findings

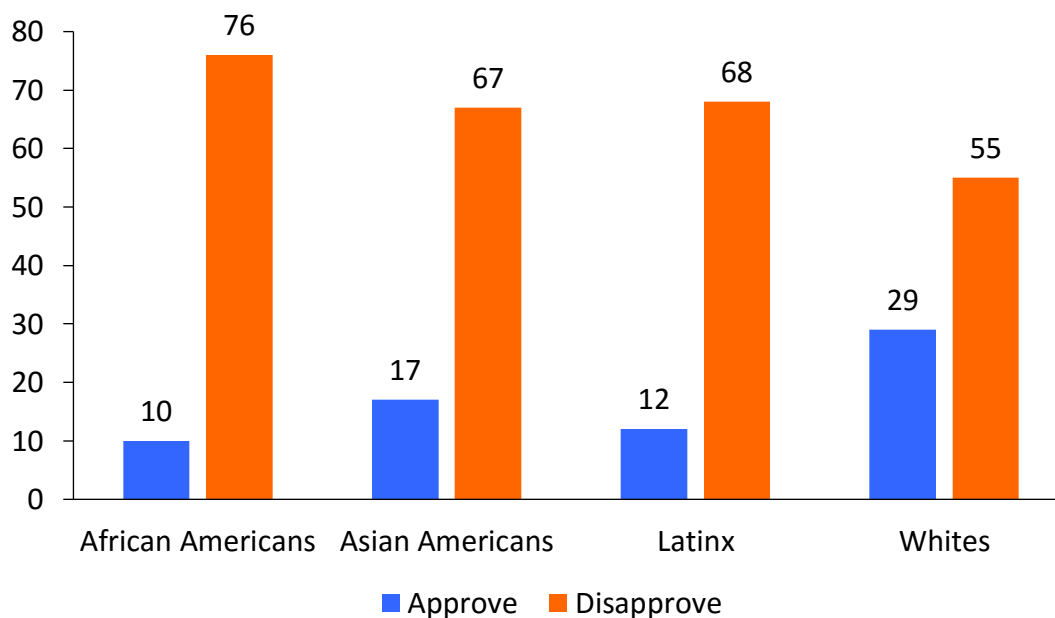
- Majorities of Millennials across all racial and ethnic groups disapprove of Donald Trump's performance as president. Disapproval among whites has increased from a plurality of 47% to a majority of 55% since May.
- Only 19% of white Millennials state they can believe and trust the president. Their support is double that of any other racial/ethnic group.
- A majority of white Millennials (58%) believes that Trump will do what is right for the country "**most**" or "**some**" of the time. In contrast, majorities of African American (58%) and Latinx (52%), and a plurality of Asian American Millennials (47%), say Trump will "**never**" do what is right for the country.
- Pluralities of African American (48%) and Latinx (38%) Millennials believe Trump will be impeached before the end of his term. A majority of white Millennials believe he will stay in office for all four years (54%). Asian American Millennials are evenly divided on the question (37% each).
- Congress is less popular than the President (19% vs 29%) among white young adults. Approval of Congress and Trump is roughly equivalent among African American (8% vs 10%), Asian American (18% vs 17%), and Latinx (13% vs 12%) Millennials.
- Majorities of Millennials across racial/ethnic categories think the country is "off on the wrong track." Latinxs (32%) and African Americans (43%) are more likely to believe the economy is doing poorly. Pluralities of whites (37%) and Asian Americans (37%), however, perceive the economy as good rather than bad.
- Majorities of African American (62%), Latinx (59%), and Asian American (60%) Millennials believe the Democrats should employ a strategy of resistance against President Trump and the Republicans. Majorities of whites Millennials, however, prefer that Democrats cooperate (63%) with Trump and Republicans to reach compromises where possible.
- Millennials differ in who they would like to see lead the Democratic Party. African Americans (49%) and Asian Americans (43%) would prefer to see Barack Obama as the party's leader while white (35%) and Latinx (41%) Millennials think Bernie Sanders is the best candidate to lead the party.

I. Perceptions of Donald Trump

Donald Trump’s presidency has recently passed the six-month mark. Despite entering office with an [approval rating](#) of approximately 44%, growing concerns about Russian collusion, failure to repeal and replace Obamacare and inaction on campaign issues like tax reform and immigration have all contributed to a noticeable drop in public approval. A July [poll](#) from The Washington Post/ABC News put the president’s approval rating at 36%, prompting ABC news to call it “the lowest six-month approval rating of any president in polls dating back 70 years.” Our findings show that disapproval of President Trump is even greater among young adults, particularly African American, Latinx and Asian American Millennials.

Figure 1 presents Donald Trump’s July approval and disapproval ratings for each racial and ethnic group among Millennials ages 18 to 34. As the figure shows, majorities in all racial/ethnic groups disapprove of Donald Trump’s performance as president. While not much has changed for African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinxs since our last analysis in May, disapproval among whites has increased from a plurality of 47% to a majority of 55%.

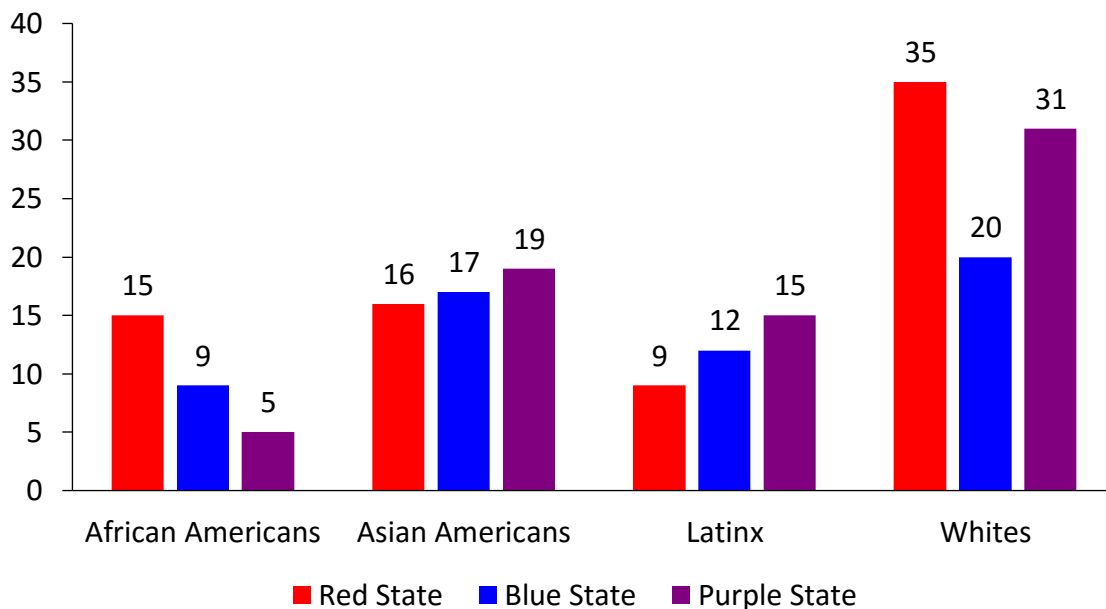
Figure 1. Donald Trump Approval Rating



President Trump’s low approval ratings extend to Millennials living in states that traditionally vote for Republican presidential candidates in the Electoral College. Figure 2 shows his approval rating broken down by both race and red, blue, or purple states. We define red and blue states as consistently voting for the Republican or Democratic candidate in the last four presidential elections. Purple, or swing, states are those that did not consistently vote for one party’s candidates in all four previous elections.¹

For Millennials of color, approval ratings vary slightly based on the political context of the state they live in. Two findings stand out. First, Trump’s approval rating is 10 percentage points higher among African American young adults living in red states compared with African American young adults living in purple states. Second, white Millennials living in red states are 15 percentage points more approving of the president than white respondents in blue states. Even in red states, however, President Trump receives far from majority approval from white Millennials.

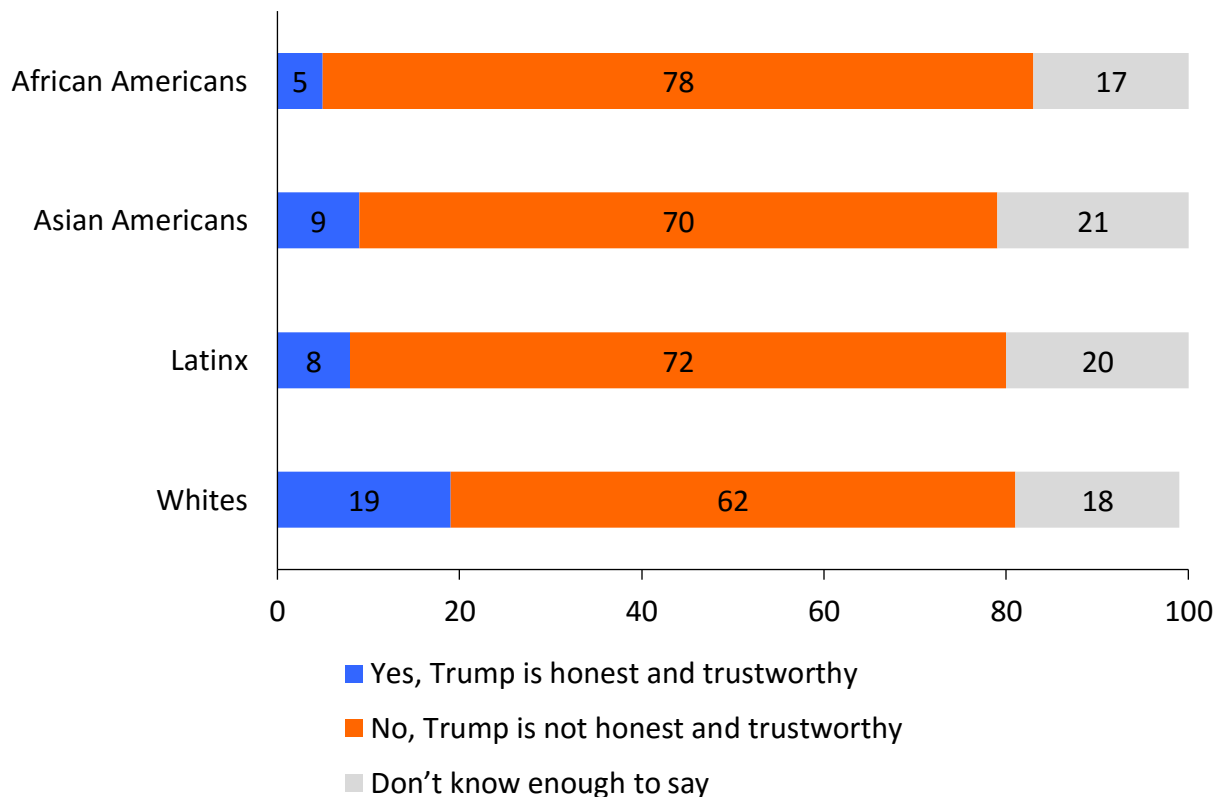
Figure 2. Donald Trump Approval Rating by Red/Blue/Purple State



¹ n = 620, 669, and 547 for red, blue and purple states, or 34, 36, and 30 percent, respectively.

In addition to expressing overwhelming disapproval of President Trump’s short time in office, over two-thirds of Millennials do not perceive President Trump as honest or trustworthy. As Figure 3 highlights, this perception is greater for Millennials of color. Indeed, while 19% of white Millennials think that President Trump is honest and trustworthy, far fewer Millennials of color hold that same view. African Americans report the lowest numbers, with only 5% believing President Trump is honest and trustworthy. This stands in contrast to our December 2016 [survey](#) where large majorities of African Americans (87%), Asian Americans (87%), Latinxs (81%), and whites (71%) said President Obama had been honest and trustworthy.²

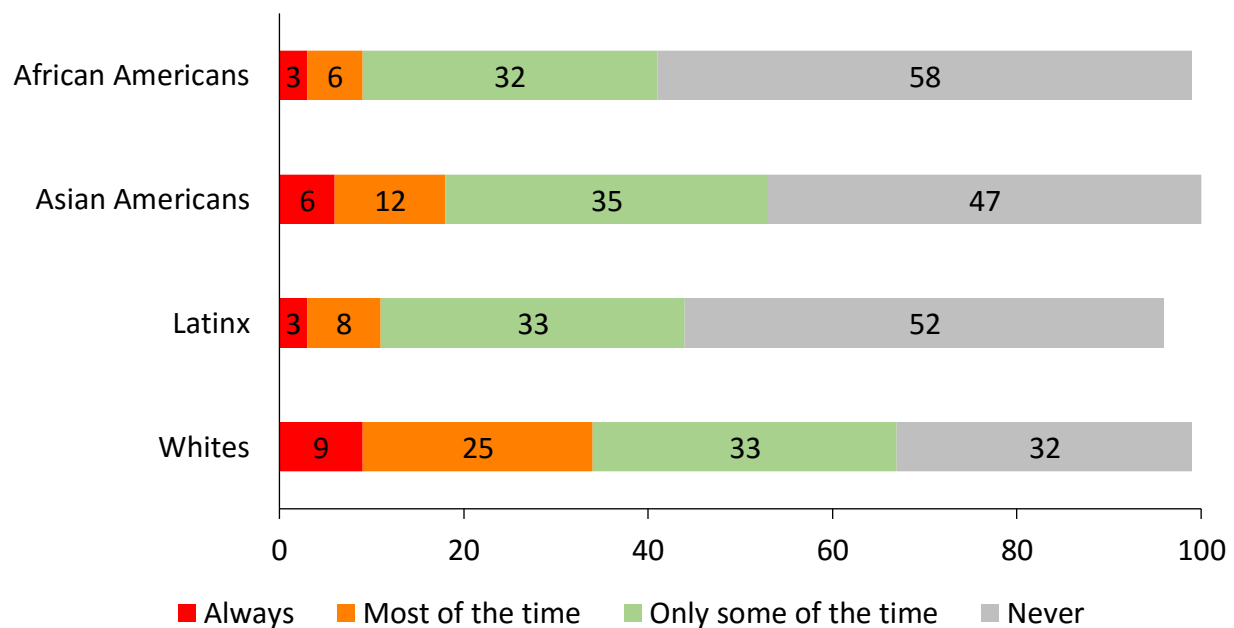
Figure 3. Do you think that President Donald Trump is honest and trustworthy, or not?



² The 2016 survey sampled adults ages 18-30 whereas the July survey includes adults ages 18-34.

Figure 4 explores whether Trump’s trustworthiness extends to issues of policy and if he can be trusted to do what is right for the country. A majority of white (67%) and Asian American (53%) Millennials believes that President Trump will do what is right for the country “always”, “most”, or “some” of the time. Majorities of African American and Latinx Millennials, however, say that President Trump can “never” be trusted to do what is right for the country.

Figure 4. How much of the time do you think you can trust President Trump do what is right for the country?

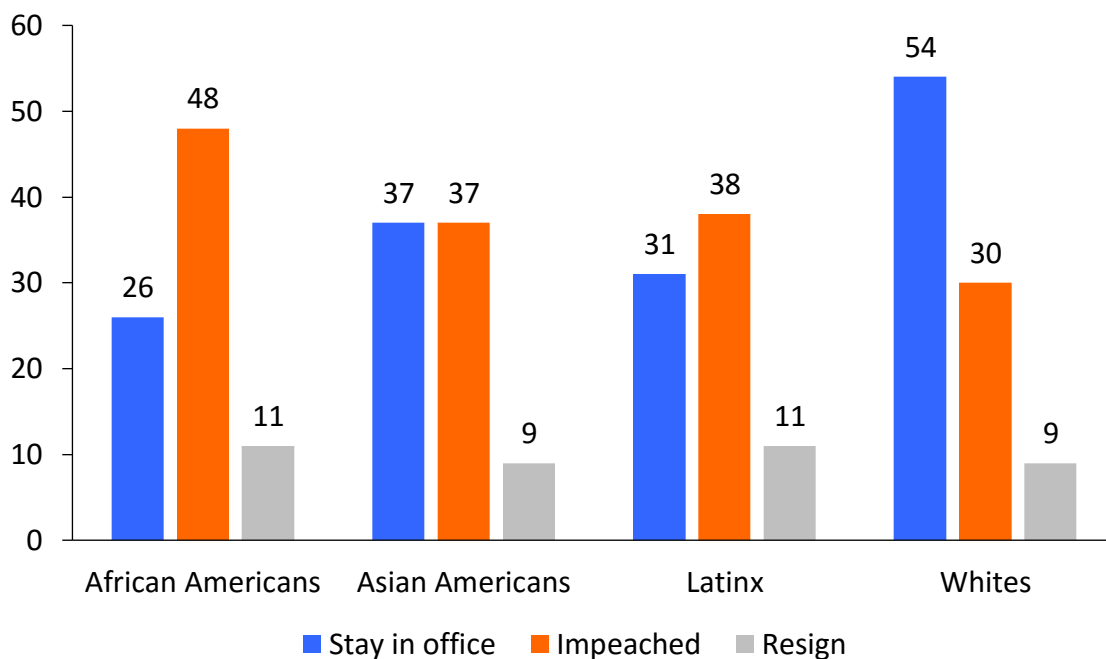


In addition to distrusting the President to do what is right for the country, many Millennials also doubt that President Trump will remain in office for the entirety of his term. A recent USA Today/iMediaEthics [poll](#) found that only 36% of all adults believe Trump will “probably” or “definitely” complete his four-year term.

Among Millennials, we find that assessments of Trump’s future as president vary across racial and ethnic groups. Figure 5 indicates that only a quarter of African American and 31 and 37 percent of Latinx and Asian American Millennials, respectively, believe the President will serve the entire four years of his term. More specifically, Millennials of color, particularly African Americans and Latinxs, are much more likely to believe President Trump will be impeached. A majority of white

Millennials (54%) believes the president will serve his entire term while Asian Americans are more evenly divided.

Figure 5. Do you think that President Trump will be president for the entire four years of his term, or not?



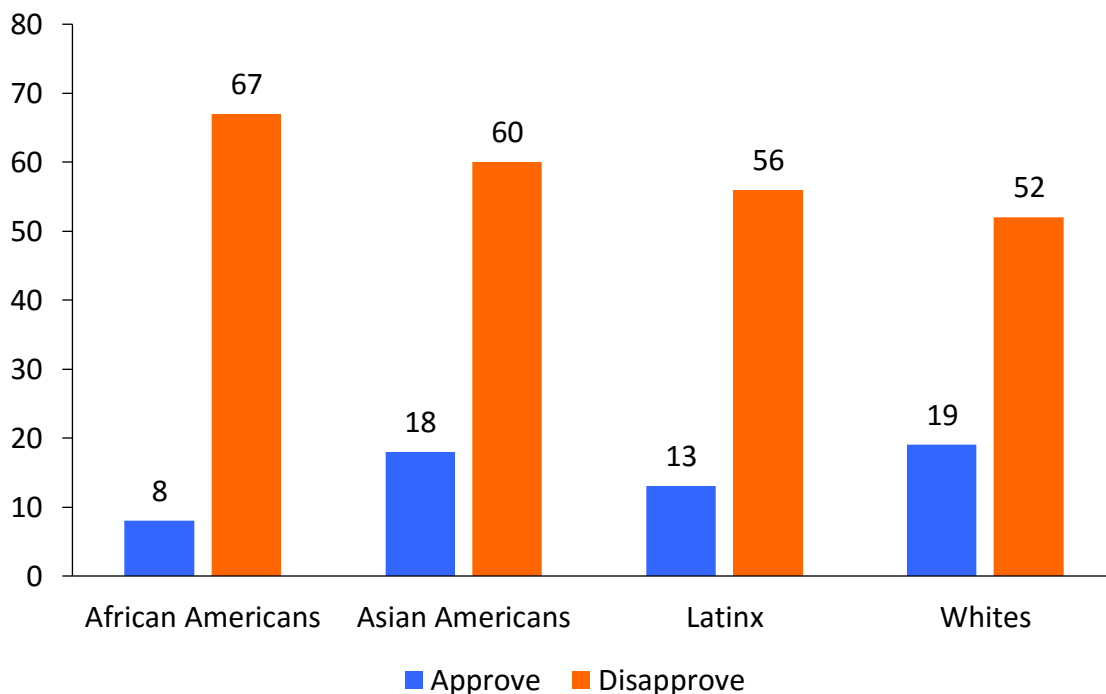
II. Evaluation of Congress and Political Parties

Do Millennials' negative evaluations of President Trump extend to Congress and our nation's two major political parties? Figures 6 and 7 address this question by providing data on Congressional approval rating as well favorability towards the Democratic and Republican Party.

As we found in our May survey, we see widespread disapproval of Congress across all racial and ethnic categories. The percentage of young whites who disapprove of Congress increased from 47% in May to 52% in July. This increase is primarily driven by a drop in respondents who neither approve nor disapprove of Congress'

performance, which could be due partly to Congress's continued efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act despite widespread public opposition to the Republicans' plan.

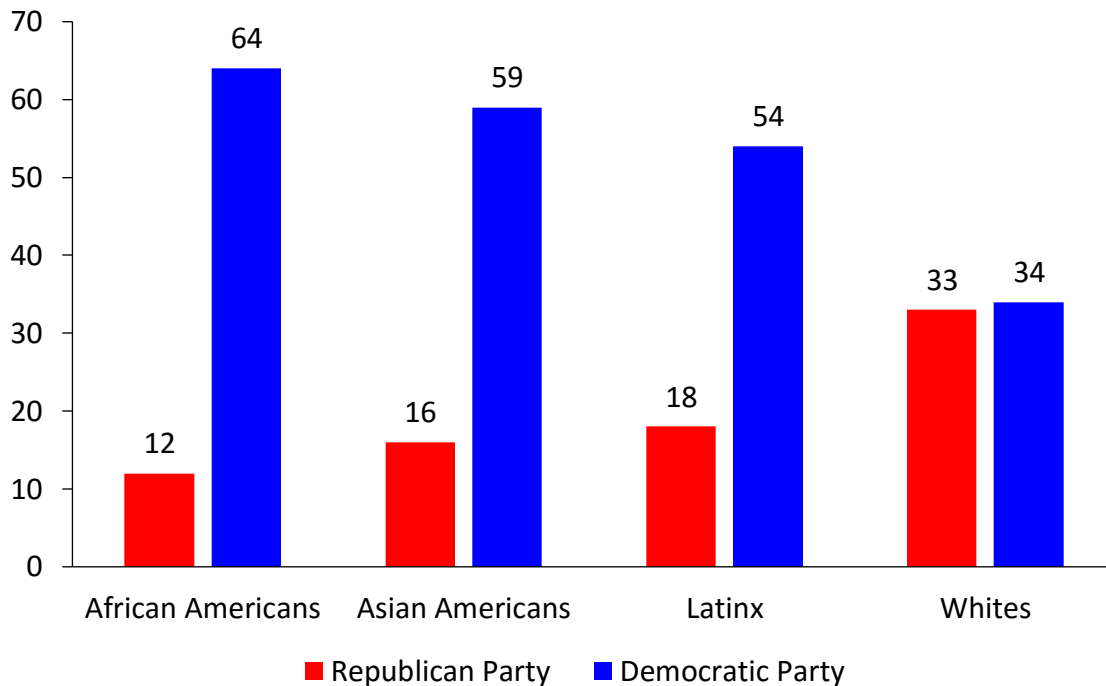
Figure 6. Congressional Approval Rating



Attitudes toward the two major political parties also differ significantly between African Americans, Latinxs, Asian Americans, and white Millennials. Figure 7 shows that Millennials of color predominately hold more favorable views of the Democratic Party compared to the Republican Party; majorities of African American, Latinx, and Asian American Millennials hold favorable opinions of the Democratic Party. Indeed, it seems that favorability/unfavorability toward the Democratic and Republican parties has polarized among African American and Latinx youth since [2014](#).

White Millennials, on the other hand, remain much more evenly split than young adults of color in their attitudes toward the political parties. Both the Democratic and Republican parties are viewed favorably by approximately a third of white Millennials. Compared to this past May, our data suggest that the Republican Party has experienced a small drop (three percentage points) in favorability among young whites.

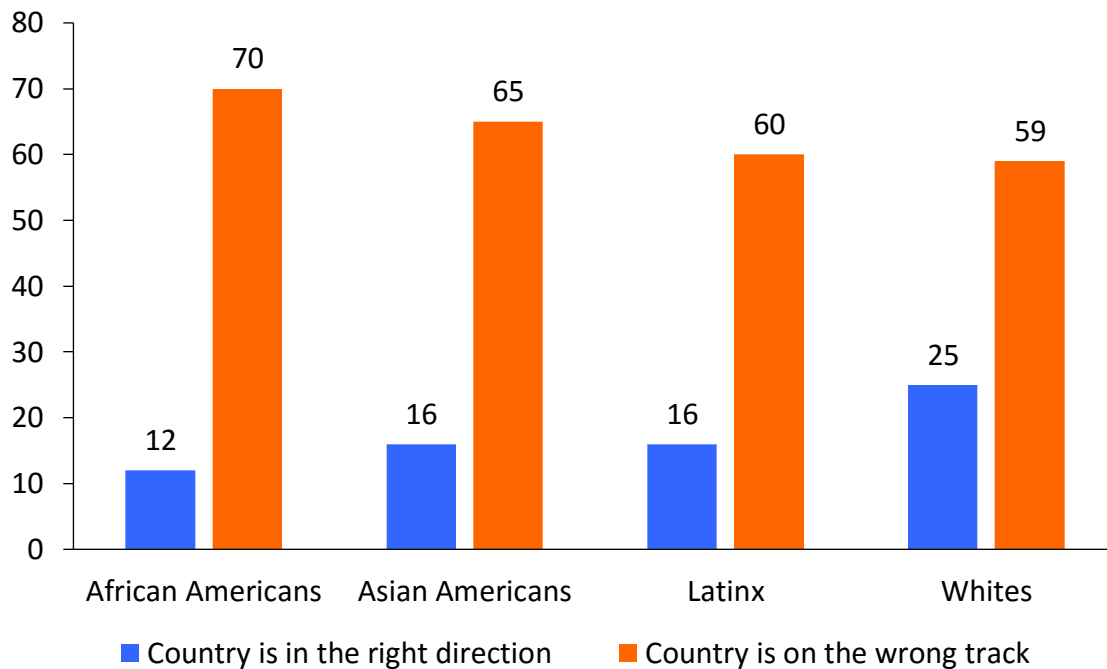
Figure 7. Favorability of Political Parties



III. Issues Facing the Country

On our most recent survey, we also examine how Millennials think the country is doing overall, particularly regarding the economy and the most pressing issues facing the nation. Broadly speaking, we see widespread concern surrounding the general direction of the country. Figure 8 shows that healthy majorities of Millennials across all racial and ethnic groups believe the country is off on the wrong track.

Figure 8. Would you say things in this country are generally headed in the right direction or off on the wrong track?

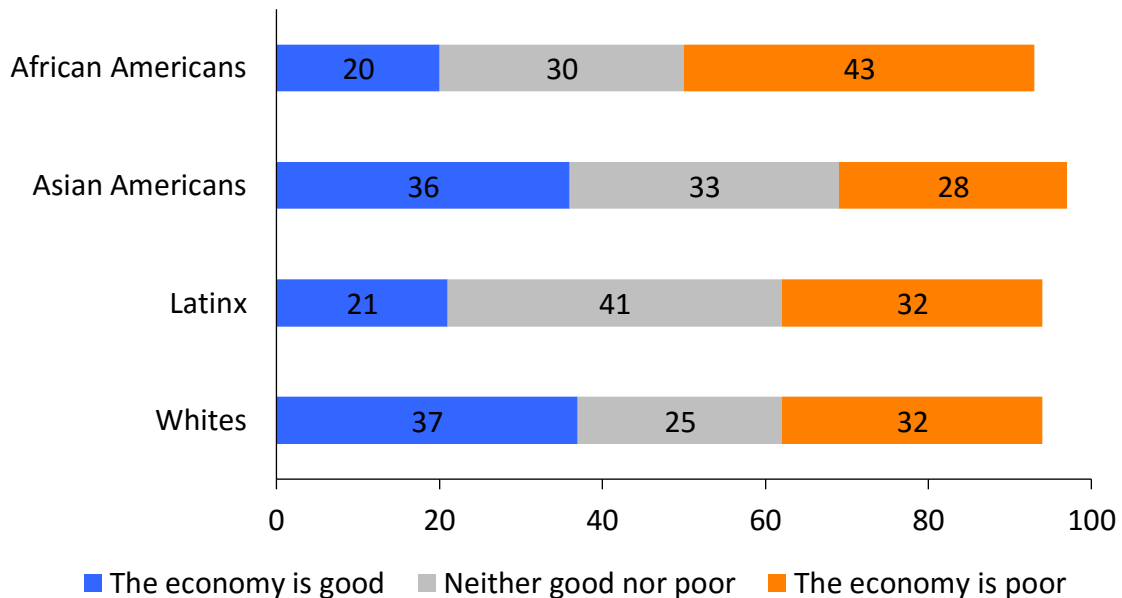


Despite shared worries about the direction of the country, there is quite a bit of variation in perceptions of the nation’s economy. As Figure 9 shows, pluralities of white and Asian American Millennials report that the national economy is doing well. Latinx and African Americans are more likely to indicate that the economy is poor, though there are important differences between the two groups.³

African Americans are the most likely to state the economy is doing poorly (43%) by roughly ten percentage points more than any other group. Interestingly, equivalent percentages of Latinx and white Millennials report that the economy is poor (32%). Latinxs, however, are much less likely to say that the economy is doing well when compared to whites (21% versus 37%) and are most comparable to African Americans in this view (20%).

³ Original response options in the survey included both “very” and “somewhat” good/poor categories. These have been collapsed into the single “good” or “poor” percentages presented here.

Figure 9. Perceptions of the Nation's Economy



When asked about the most important problem facing the country today, most Millennials were quick to highlight health care as the number one issue, with the notable exception of Latinx respondents. For Latinxs, health care is a secondary concern to immigration.

Broad agreement, except for Latinx respondents, on the importance of healthcare reflects a difference from past surveys, suggesting that Millennials are listening and responding to the increased attention to healthcare in the news. Beyond their agreement on the importance of healthcare, Millennials express considerable differences across racial and ethnic groups about the most important issues facing the country when we delve a bit deeper. African Americans and Latinxs, for example, both list racism as a top-three concern, whereas whites and Asian Americans place greater priority on education. Police brutality is only listed as a top-three concern by African Americans. Asian Americans are the only group to highlight climate change and the environment as a top three concern. And whites are alone in their worry over terrorism/homeland security.

Table 1. Most Important Problems Facing the Country Today

| | African Americans | Asian Americans | Latinx | Whites |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| First most cited | Health Care (39%) | Health Care (48%) | Immigration (40%) | Health Care (45%) |
| Second most cited | Racism (35%) | Education (28%) | Health Care (33%) | Education (26%) |
| Third most cited | Police Brutality (27%) | Climate Change (21%) | Racism (27%) | Terrorism (24%) |
| <i>N</i> | 506 | 251 | 521 | 510 |

The differences reflected in Table 1 mirror both current debates in policy as well as group proximity to issue areas. Racism, for example, may be especially salient for African Americans and Latinxs in the context of increasing video evidence of police brutality and incendiary rhetoric on immigration. Shared concerns over health care, on the other hand, may be evidence of priming by national coverage of Republican attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

IV. How Millennials Envision the Political Future

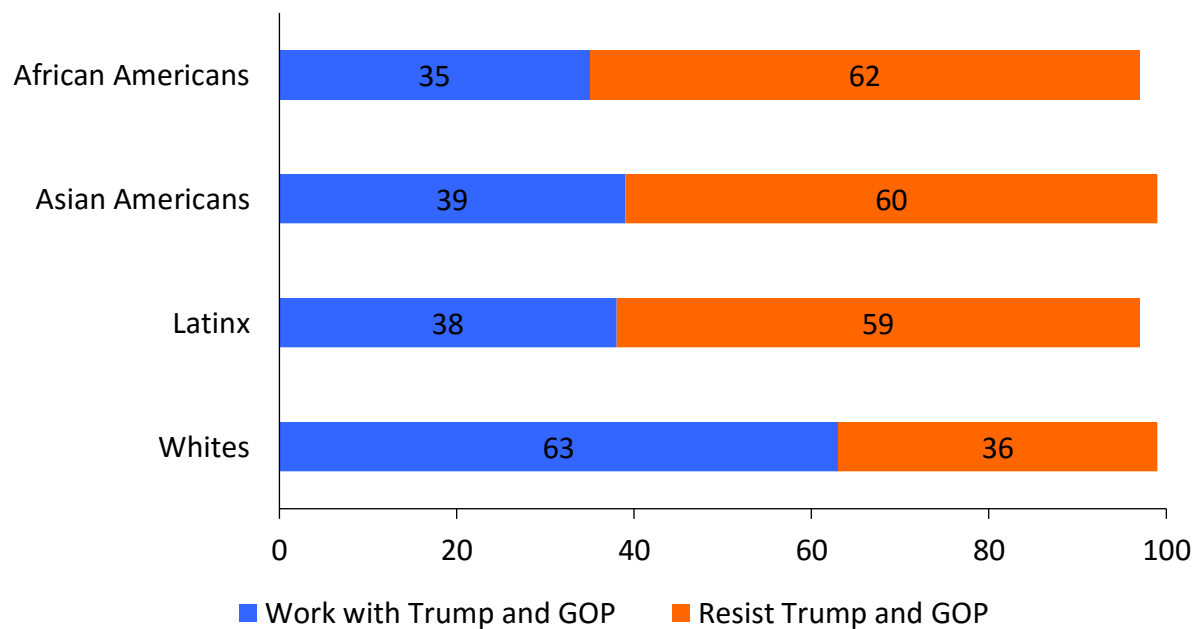
Given their disapproval of the President and Congress, negative views on the direction of the country, mixed feelings about the economy, and diversity of opinion on the most important problems facing the nation, how do Millennials envision the political future? How does the country move forward given our current political climate? How might the president and the two major parties approach legislating?

As Figure 10 suggests, the answers to these questions depend on whom you ask. White Millennials are the only group where a majority (63%) believes the Democrats should cooperate with Trump and other Republicans. Millennials of color overwhelmingly disagree. Indeed, similar proportions of African Americans (62%), Latinxs (59%), and Asian Americans (60%) advocate for a Democratic strategy of

explicit resistance to Trump and congressional Republicans and the policies they advocate.

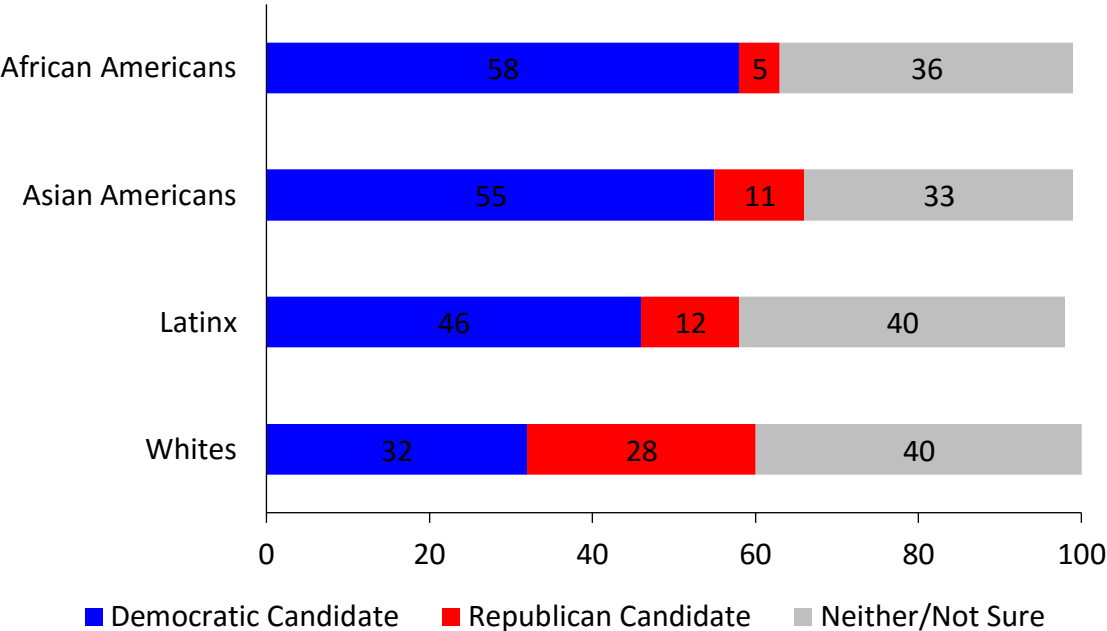
This pattern is driven largely by the preferences of respondents who identify as Independents. Millennials who are Independent and white are more likely to believe in Democratic cooperation (65%) while Millennials of color who identify as Independent believe in resistance. Democrats and Republicans across racial and ethnic categories are otherwise polarized, with Democrats more likely to advocate for resistance and Republicans more likely to advocate for cooperation.

Figure 10. Should Democrats Work with or Resist Trump?



Preferences for Democratic strategies of resistance or cooperation align with anticipated vote choice in the 2018 midterm elections, as can be seen in Figure 12. Majorities of African American and Asian American and a plurality of Latinx Millennials report that they plan to vote for a Democratic candidate for Congress in 2018. Their responses stand in contrast to those of white Millennials for whom 32% say they will vote for a Democrat while 28% plan to vote for a Republican candidate.

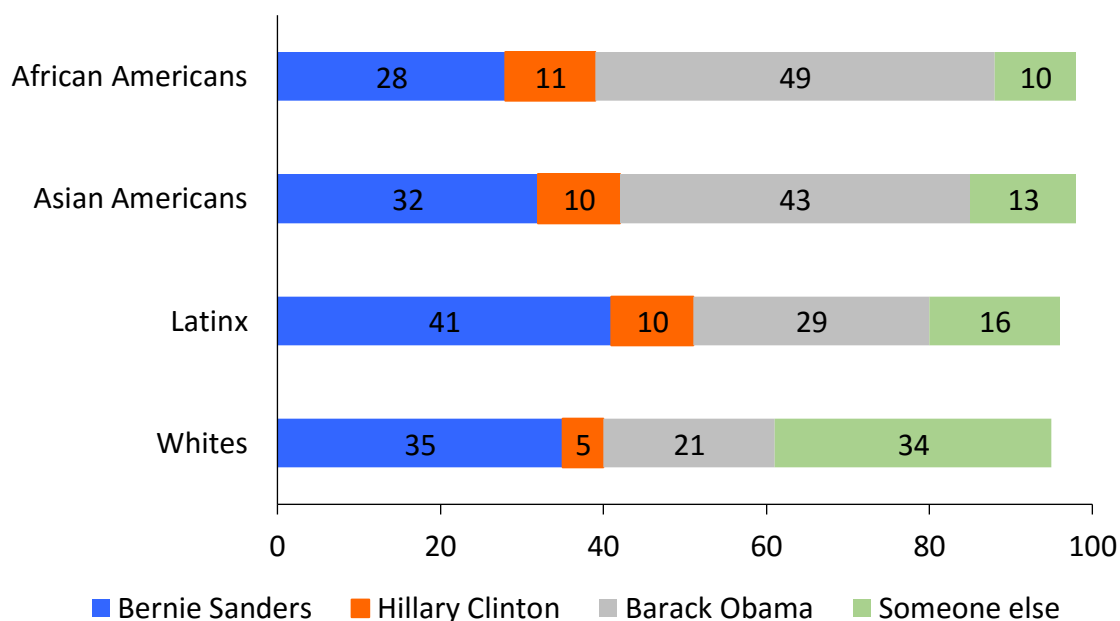
Figure 12. In the congressional elections in 2018, do you plan to vote for a Democratic or Republican Candidate?



In the run-up to 2018 midterms, the Democratic Party will need to establish both a strong platform and leader if it hopes to secure the votes of Millennials. And despite a strong preference for the Democratic Party, Millennials of color are fragmented on who is the best leader for the party. For example, pluralities of African (49%) and Asian Americans (43%) believe that Barack Obama would be the best leader while Latinx (41%) and white Millennials prefer Bernie Sanders (35%).

Strikingly, Millennials exhibit very low levels of support for Hillary Clinton, despite the fact she won the popular vote in 2016 almost becoming the first woman president of the United State. Less than 11% of young people in every racial and ethnic category believe Hillary Clinton would be the best leader of the Democratic Party, which is a significant departure from the high levels of support Clinton received from Millennials of color at the ballot box and in polls leading up to the election. Now, Asian Americans, Latinxs, and whites would all prefer “someone else” to Hillary Clinton to lead the Democratic party. This may also be the case for African Americans who prefer Clinton (11%) to someone else (10%), a one-percent difference that falls well within the margin of error.

Figure 13. Best Leader for the Democratic Party



State electoral context does not significantly change thoughts on the future leadership of the Democratic Party. Table 2 indicates that African Americans across all states prefer Barack Obama to other potential leaders. Support for Bernie Sanders, however, does increase for African Americans in purple states by about ten percentage points compared to red and blue states. African Americans in red states are also more supportive of Hillary Clinton (18%)—over four times as much compared to blue states (4%) and more than double compared to purple states (7%). Indeed, at 18%, African Americans in red states express the most support for Hillary Clinton than any other group.

Support for Hillary Clinton is lowest among whites in red states, with only 1% of respondents believing Clinton would be the best leader of the Democratic Party. Support for Barack Obama is also lowest among whites in red states (17%). White Millennials in red states are most supportive of Bernie Sanders or “someone else” to lead the Democratic party.

Table 2. Best Leader for the Democratic Party by Race and State Context

| | Bernie Sanders | Hillary Clinton | Barack Obama | Someone Else | N |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------|
| <i>African Americans</i> | | | | | 506 |
| Red States | 25 | 18 | 47 | 8 | 225 |
| Blue States | 23 | 4 | 52 | 15 | 102 |
| Purple States | 34 | 7 | 48 | 9 | 179 |
| <i>Asian Americans</i> | | | | | 251 |
| Red States | 34 | 7 | 45 | 9 | 48 |
| Blue States | 33 | 9 | 43 | 13 | 154 |
| Purple States | 25 | 15 | 39 | 15 | 49 |
| <i>Latinx</i> | | | | | 521 |
| Red States | 36 | 11 | 30 | 21 | 152 |
| Blue States | 43 | 10 | 27 | 13 | 225 |
| Purple States | 43 | 9 | 30 | 14 | 144 |
| <i>Whites</i> | | | | | 510 |
| Red States | 38 | 1 | 17 | 38 | 180 |
| Blue States | 36 | 6 | 23 | 28 | 167 |
| Purple States | 32 | 7 | 24 | 36 | 163 |

When we focus on party identification⁴ instead of state electoral context in views about who best should run the Democratic Party we see a few significant changes worth noting. First, for African Americans who identify as Independent Bernie Sanders emerges as the more popular candidate to lead the Democratic Party over Barack Obama by a small difference of five percentage points, while Obama is strongly preferred by African Americans who identify as Democrats. Second, we find that

⁴ Party affiliation was determined based on responses to the question, “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?” Leaners are treated as Independents. Respondents who identified as “Something Else” are not included in this analysis.

support for Hillary Clinton to lead the party is highest among Asian Americans who identify as Republican (36%), however, the small number of Asian American Republicans in the sample overall (17) limits the conclusions we can draw from this finding.

Table 3: Best Leader for the Democratic Party by Race and Partisanship

| | Bernie Sanders | Hillary Clinton | Barack Obama | Someone Else | N |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------|
| <i>African Americans</i> | | | | | 506 |
| Democrat | 26 | 11 | 57 | 5 | 323 |
| Independent | 41 | 10 | 36 | 11 | 105 |
| Republican | 5 | 14 | 17 | 51 | 19 |
| <i>Asian Americans</i> | | | | | 251 |
| Democrat | 34 | 9 | 52 | 3 | 138 |
| Independent | 31 | 5 | 46 | 12 | 61 |
| Republican | 15 | 36 | 8 | 41 | 17 |
| <i>Latinx</i> | | | | | 521 |
| Democrat | 44 | 14 | 36 | 6 | 245 |
| Independent | 45 | 7 | 33 | 11 | 122 |
| Republican | 48 | 6 | 12 | 32 | 57 |
| <i>Whites</i> | | | | | 510 |
| Democrat | 36 | 11 | 27 | 22 | 151 |
| Independent | 40 | 1 | 27 | 25 | 156 |
| Republican | 29 | 1 | 13 | 51 | 135 |

Conclusion:

The data presented in this report offer a unique view into the political attitudes and opinions of Millennials, both on current issues as well as looking forward to the

midterm elections in 2018. On nearly every topic—from evaluations of Donald Trump and his performance in office to rankings of important problems facing the nation to preferred strategies of Democratic cooperation or resistance—important differences emerge across racial and ethnic groups, particularly between white Millennials and Millennials of color, though also within the larger group of Millennials of color.

At the six-month mark of his administration, white Millennials are substantially more likely to approve of Donald Trump's performance as president, consider him honest and trustworthy, trust that he will generally do what is right for the country, and will stay in office for the remainder of his term. Similarly, they are more likely to hold favorable views of the Republican Party, believe the economy is doing well, and think that the country is generally heading in the right direction. White Millennials are also more likely to support cooperation with President Trump and Republicans by the Democratic Party.

This is not the case for Millennials of color, though there is variation between African Americans, Latinxs, and Asian Americans. While Millennials of color largely disapprove of Donald Trump and do not consider him honest or trustworthy, Asian Americans are more likely to trust he will generally do what is right for the country and will remain in office. They also report perceptions of a stronger economy than do African Americans and Latinxs. Indeed, African American Millennials are the most likely to believe President Trump will be impeached and state the economy is doing poorly by over ten percentage points than the next closest group on each measure. Whereas African Americans and Asian Americans largely agree that the best candidate to lead the Democratic Party is Barack Obama, Latinx Millennials instead prefer Bernie Sanders. Latinx youth are also the only group not to list health care as the most important problem facing the country, instead naming immigration as their top concern.

V. Study Methodology

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

A total of 1,836 interviews were conducted between June 23 and July 10, 2017 with adults ages 18-34 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia, including completed interviews with 506 African American young adults, 251 Asian American young adults, 521 Latinx young adults, 510 white young adults, and 48 young adults with other racial and ethnic backgrounds. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and via telephone and web modes.

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

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

Of the 1,836 completed interviews in the GenForward June survey, 94 percent were completed by web and 6 percent by telephone. The survey completion rate is 29 percent. The weighted household panel recruitment rate is 20.5 percent and the weighted household panel retention rate is 91.1 percent, for a cumulative AAPOR Response Rate 3 of 5.4 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.94

percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. Among subgroups, the margin of sampling error at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 5.83 percentage points for African Americans, +/- 8.09 percentage points for Asian Americans, +/- 6.19 percentage points for Latino/as, and +/- 6.02 percentage points for whites.

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

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