



MILLENNIALS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Many political and policy issues stretch across generations, as decisions made by voters and leaders today can have an impact for decades to come. The situation the next generation will inherit - the fiscal shape of our nation's benefits programs, the safety of the world in which we live - is determined by choices made today.

Perhaps no issue is so clearly generational as that of the environment. Today's millennials - roughly speaking, those born in the 1980s and 1990s - will most acutely feel the effects of policies that are implemented, or not implemented, that focus on protecting the earth. Millennials, of all the generations, are the least likely to call themselves "environmentalists", according to the Pew Research Center.¹ At the same time, young voters place slightly more importance on the environment, relative to other issues, than do older voters.² Young people are also much more likely than their elders to think that climate change is a serious, man-made problem.³

While the environment and climate change rarely surface as the single most important issues on voters' minds, there is evidence to suggest that they are a "gateway" issue, like immigration or LGBT rights, with America's millennials. Young people believe that, despite technological innovation which has revolutionized and improved many areas of our lives, that innovation and change has not necessarily improved how we treat our environment. They tend to think our environment has gotten worse in recent years, and will continue to get worse in the future. And four-in-ten millennials say they don't trust either party on environmental or climate issues, or aren't sure who they think would do a better job.

The following report, commissioned by the Alliance for Market Solutions, examines the results of an opinion research study on these issues conducted by Echelon Insights, including a survey of 800 registered voters age 18-35, as well as a set of focus groups conducted of young center-right adults in Charlotte, NC during January 2017. (The survey included an oversample to achieve 400 interviews with young Republicans; these interviews were weighted down to the appropriate proportion of the population in the overall results.)

Looking at millennial consumer and lifestyle choices, views on environmental protection and the issue of climate change, this research dives into where millennials stand on the environment, what they believe should - and shouldn't - be done to protect the environment, and what they think can - and can't - be done to address the issue of climate change.

¹ <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/sdt-next-america-03-07-2014-3-10/>

² <http://www.people-press.org/2016/07/07/4-top-voting-issues-in-2016-election/>

³ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/07/01/chapter-2-climate-change-and-energy-issues/>

Key Findings

- + Young voters are worried about the way things are going in America today, and that concern extends to fears about the state of the environment.
- + They tend to think the environment has gotten worse over the last three decades and will continue to do so for the next three.
- + Millennials think technology is rapidly transforming their lives, but are less confident technology is improving how we handle our environment.
- + They try to make environmentally-conscious decisions in their own lives, but say those decisions are usually driven by a desire to save money on gas or power bills.
- + Nonetheless, they lean toward supporting environmental protections that might increase the costs of goods and services.
- + Most millennials believe the climate is changing and is doing so due to human activity, though there is some uncertainty about *how* human action causes or accelerates climate change.
- + Millennials aren't sure how seriously climate change will affect their own generation, but believe strongly that it will affect their children's generation.
- + They also think that society should be taking action to stop or slow climate change, though they are less certain that it is possible to do so, and are not at all clear on what policies would need to be implemented to stop or slow climate change.
- + The strongest reasons to support climate action - stretching across political ideologies - are the health impacts of harmful emissions and the value of risk mitigation; weather and sea-level rise arguments are successful but slightly less so, especially with young Republicans.
- + Most millennials disagree with reasons to not take action on climate change, such as the potential ineffectiveness of action or the potential costs of action.
- + Millennials are open to policy ideas such as a carbon tax that could stop or slow climate change, even if those policies were to increase the cost of goods or services that require carbon emissions to produce.
- + In general, millennials say the issues of climate and the environment are at least somewhat important to how they vote, and those who place greater importance on the issue are those most supportive of taking action on climate.

MILLENNIALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Young Americans are worried about the way things are going in America today, and that concern extends to fears about the state of the environment. A majority - 57 percent - say that they think things in the United States are headed off on the wrong track. Young Republicans are cautiously optimistic - 55 percent say America is on the right track- as do young Trump voters (64 percent), but young independents (21 percent) and Democrats (17 percent) do not agree.

Among the issues that worry millennials the most are the economy and jobs (23 percent name it as their top issue), immigration (17 percent), healthcare (16 percent), and climate change and the environment (13 percent). Concern about the economy is particularly pronounced among independents (29 percent), while young Republicans are most focused on immigration (25 percent).

In order to see how worry about climate change and the environment stack up against two other issues, respondents were presented with four different issues - air pollution, climate change, illegal immigration and gun violence - and asked how concerned they are about each.

Of those four, air pollution and climate change were the two that millennials had the most concerns about. Eight out of ten young voters say they are concerned about air pollution, with 44 percent saying they are "very concerned". Some 77 percent of young people say climate change is something they are concerned about, with nearly half (49 percent) saying they are very concerned. In the aggregate, gun violence trails the environmental issues slightly as a concern, with seven-in-ten saying they are concerned about the issue. Illegal immigration is a concern for 58 percent of young people.



77%

of young people say climate change is something they are concerned about

However, with all issues tested, there are sharp divides by partisanship: young Democrats are twenty points more likely to be concerned about gun violence than young Republicans, 28 points more likely to be concerned about air pollution, and 41 points more likely to worry about climate. Meanwhile, young Republicans are twenty-six points more likely to be concerned about illegal immigration than young Democrats.

Nonetheless, while they are less likely to have serious concerns than their peers of other parties, even a majority of young Republicans (61 percent) say they are concerned about air pollution and climate change (51 percent).

Young Americans tend to think that the quality of the environment has declined over the last thirty years, and will continue to decline over the next three decades.

Some 45 percent say they think the environment has gotten worse over the last thirty years, with another 20 percent saying they think it hasn't really changed either way and 27 percent saying they think it has improved. In the focus group sessions, respondents were asked if they thought the environment was getting better or worse. While some said they thought people were more educated about how to care for the environment, others noted that the demands placed on our environment have increased. "I guess it's different in the sense that they didn't have as much ability to produce as much pollution or trash that we do nowadays just from the sheer amount of people that are in any given area," said one Republican respondent.

In the survey, views on the future of the environment tracked closely with views of the past. Only three-in-ten millennials think that they expect the environment will be in better shape three decades down the road, while 42 percent think it will be worse, including nearly a quarter (23 percent) who think it will be *much* worse. One focus group respondent in the Independent focus group noted it was hard to envision what the future might look like in terms of things like clean energy. "I think the progression of technology is almost impossible to say where it's gonna look like, when you think about the advances we made in all different types of various technology in the last 30 years, I think we're pretty naïve to say that we would know what it's gonna look like."

Technology is driving rapid change in many other arenas, but millennials are less likely to think innovation is changing how we handle the environment.

Millennials are on the front lines of the ways technology is revolutionizing the ways people live their lives. In order to gauge just how they compare the rate of change across different sectors, respondents were asked how fast or slow they think technology has changed how people do a host of activities: communicate with each other, travel from place to place, purchase products, power their homes, and protect the environment.

Communication and commerce are two areas where millennials perceive a great deal of rapid change; 81 percent of millennials think we have seen fast change in "how we communicate with one another" and 81 percent say change has been fast in "how we purchase products." For communication, a majority - 55 percent - say change has been *very fast*.

When it comes to two items that more closely link to the environment - how we travel from place to place and how we get power to our homes - there is a general view that these arenas are changing fast, though fewer than four-in-ten think that change is "very fast" in either of these sectors.

Some 59 percent of millennials think that "how we travel from place to place" is changing quickly, though only 23 percent think that change is happening quickly. In focus groups, respondents often noted Elon Musk and Tesla as an example of how change is happening in this space, with one respondent saying "[Elon Musk] is trying to reinvent our source of power."

On the question of "how we get power to our homes," 54 percent say they think this is changing fast, though only 16 percent characterize the change as "very fast". Our focus group respondents noted that they felt more clean sources of energy were being relied upon these days, but were not necessarily sure if that change was happening fast enough. In the words of one Republican woman from the focus groups, "Solar power, I think, has probably grown tremendously over the last few decades that probably wasn't there in our parents' or grandparents' generation, or as efficient, necessarily." When asked why they think change might not be happening quickly, some of our center-right respondents pointed to worries that special interests were blocking clean energy from being more readily available. One of the Republican men said, "I think that it's because there's a whole lot of money in that industry and it keeps some of the innovation or some of the, I guess, advancement of alternatives probably down."

Finally, a majority of millennials - 58 percent - think "how we protect the environment" is either changing slowly or isn't changing at all. In focus groups, respondents noted that they think people are now more aware of how their behavior affects the environment, but many noted the things they do personally that help the environment - such as trying to recycle or reduce their energy use - are done out of habit and have been practices that have been around for a while.

When it comes to some of those actions which are good for the environment - recycling, reducing energy consumption, using alternate transportation means - a majority of millennials say they do these things at least occasionally. But for most of these items, the primary reason they take these actions is out of personal financial interest. They'd like to save the earth, but they'd really like to save money, too. And if being "green" costs them more, there are limits to how environmentally-friendly they will be.

% who say this is changing fast

81%

How we communicate with one another

81%

How we purchase products

59%

How we travel from place to place

54%

How we get power to our homes

38%

How we protect the environment

Millennials do things that help the environment, but being "green" isn't usually the main driver - unless "green" stands for "money."

Turning off the lights when they leave a room is something a majority of millennials say they do all the time (54 percent) or most of the time (31 percent). In our focus groups, one respondent said that she finds herself following her husband around the house, shutting off lights, in part because it is a habit she grew up with, saying "I go behind my husband and shut off all the lights that he leaves on." The survey results seem to confirm that this is something done largely for cost and habit reasons; 73 percent of those who say they turn off the lights say one of the main reasons they do so is "it saves me money" and another 49 percent say they do it because it is "just a habit." Only one third expressly name "it helps the environment" as a main reason why they shut off the lights.

A majority of millennials say they at least occasionally bike, carpool, or use public transit, and a third of those say they do it mostly to help the environment, and two-thirds say they try to keep the thermostat low. (Alternative transportation is more common among younger millennials, while being mindful of the thermostat is more prevalent among older millennials.) For both actions, only about a third of those who do them - alternative transportation or thermostat vigilance - say it is largely about protecting the environment. For those choosing to bike, carpool, or use public transit, the main reasons they do so are that it "saves me money" (50 percent) and that "it is convenient" (40 percent), though the environment is in a much closer third-place on the list. And for the thermostat, while three-quarters (73 percent) say the main reason they do it is to save money, the second most chosen answer is that the environment is protected.

Recycling is the only action that is not primarily driven by financial concerns; only 29 percent of millennials think they recycle because it saves them money. In this case, the environment is the main driver, with three-quarters saying that "it helps the environment" is the main reason they choose to recycle, with another 34 percent saying it "is just a habit."

Reasons why millennials make green choices

	LIGHTS OFF	BIKE / CARPOOL / TRANSIT	THERMOSTAT	RECYCLING
It saves me money	73%	50%	73%	29%
It is convenient	8%	40%	15%	10%
It is just a habit	49%	10%	24%	34%
It helps the environment	33%	33%	34%	73%
It is healthy to do	5%	14%	5%	18%
I just like to	6%	20%	10%	10%
Unsure	1%	2%	3%	1%

Young Republicans are more likely than their peers to specifically say they turn off the lights for money-saving reasons than environment-saving reasons, but are not much more likely than young Democrats to name costs as a reason to bike, carpool, or take public transit. And when it comes to thermostat monitoring, it is young independents who are the most likely to say they do so for cost reasons. Recycling, meanwhile, is done mostly for environmental reasons by millennials of all stripes.

While millennials care a lot about the environment, when it comes to tradeoffs between cost and the environment, millennials are not always willing to pay more for goods or services in order to do the "green" thing.

Respondents in the survey and focus group were presented with two hypothetical situations - a relatively low-cost tradeoff over "environmentally friendly" dish soap, and a more high-cost tradeoff over clean power - and in both cases leaned toward the less costly option.

The first choice - between a "standard bottle of dish soap" or an "environmentally friendly bottle that costs 50 cents more" - divided respondents fairly closely. Nearly half (49 percent) say they'd opt for the standard dish soap, while 42 percent said they'd pick the slightly more expensive "environmentally friendly" option. In focus groups, respondents weighed the pros and cons of each choice, with some expressing skepticism of products that claim to be "environmentally friendly." One female Independent focus group respondent noted that environmentally-friendly "seems one of those phrases that doesn't mean anything, and it's more of a marketing toy, like all-natural food, means nothing but they put it on there."

For those who chose the environmentally friendly product, some were motivated by a desire to be "green" while others said they were likely to choose it because of perceived personal health benefits (a desire to use fewer "chemicals" or dyes, etc.). In the survey, there was a significant party divide, with 63 percent of young Republicans opting for the cheaper, conventional soap compare to 57 percent of young Democrats who choose the more environmentally friendly option. (However, this masks a fascinating divide within the Democratic Party; fewer than half of the young Democrats surveyed in this study are white, and though Democrats are most likely to choose the environmentally-friendly option, it is white respondents who are also most likely to choose the "environmentally-friendly" product.)

The second contrast presented - between paying one's current power bill or having a power bill that was higher but for energy coming from clean sources - told a much clearer story, with only a quarter choosing the higher, "cleaner" power bill. Nearly two-thirds, 64 percent, said that their current power bill is what they'd choose. For some in our focus groups, the added cost wouldn't be a burden, but others were clear that pricier clean energy is a luxury they can't afford. A female independent respondent said "considering

49%

of millennials say they think that when it comes to environmental protection rules, they would err on the side of **"strong environmental protection rules, even if it makes things more expensive to buy"**

42%

of millennials say that we **"need to be sure environmental protection rules aren't too strict, so that we can keep the cost of energy and the products we buy as affordable as possible"**

our bills, the needs of our family right now, I don't think I would choose to make our problem higher." Three-quarters of young Republicans say that they'd choose the cheaper power bill, and they are joined by a majority of young Democrats and nearly seven-in-ten independents.

Millennials lean toward supporting stronger environmental protections, even if they increase the costs of products and services.

Though they hesitate to say that they'd personally be willing to pay more for products and services that are supposedly cleaner or "greener", a slim plurality of millennials (49 percent) say they think that when it comes to environmental protection rules, they would err on the side of "strong environmental protection rules, even if it makes things more expensive to buy". However, some 42 percent say that we "need to be sure environmental protection rules aren't too strict, so that we can keep the cost of energy and the products we buy as affordable as possible." This slight advantage for the "strong environmental protection" position is driven almost entirely by the views of young Hispanic respondents, who by a two-to-one margin say they favor strong protections even if it makes things more expensive; white and African-American respondents alike are evenly divided on the question.

Young independents and young Democrats are very aligned on the tradeoff between strong environmental protection and potential added cost to consumers; majorities (53 percent for independents, 59 percent for Democrats) choose strong environmental protection, compared to only a quarter (25 percent) of young Republicans.

Most millennials get information about environmental issues from digital sources such as Facebook or YouTube.

Overall, when asked where they get their news about the environment, the top response was "Facebook or other social media" at 36 percent, followed by YouTube (30 percent), CNN (30 percent), and friends and family (30 percent.) This varied by political affiliation and age within the millennial generation; the youngest millennials (aged 18-24) were significantly more likely to say social media (41 percent), friends and family (39 percent), and YouTube (35 percent) than were the older millennials surveyed.

Top three sources of environmental news

REPUBLICANS	INDEPENDENTS	DEMOCRATS
Facebook & other social media 33%	Facebook & other social media 40%	CNN 43%
Fox News 30%	YouTube 33%	Facebook & other social media 32%
Friends & Family 30%	Friends & family 32%	YouTube 32%

MILLENNIALS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Most millennials believe climate change is happening and man-made, though there is uncertainty about the specific cause. By and large millennials believe that the earth's climate is changing and that this change is mostly being driven by human activity (62 percent), with another 26 percent saying that the climate is changing but mostly because of natural causes. Another six percent say the earth's climate isn't really changing.

Breaking results out by party, a slim majority of young Republicans reject the idea that climate change is a real and man-made phenomenon, and either believe climate change is mostly due to natural causes (35 percent) or is not happening (16 percent). Nonetheless, 41 percent of young Republicans view climate change as a real and man-made phenomenon, a figure that is significantly higher than for Republicans as a whole (Pew finds only 15 percent of conservative Republicans and 34 percent of moderate and liberal Republicans believe climate change is caused by human activity). Young independents (59 percent) and young Democrats (77 percent) overwhelmingly view climate change as being caused by human activity.

When further pressed on what is responsible for climate change, less than half of all millennials choose "carbon emissions causing the greenhouse effect" as the factor most responsible for climate change. In the focus groups, while a small handful of respondents were quite articulate about the causes of climate change, many others candidly noted that they weren't sure exactly how climate change worked. "So I know that the emission from fossil fuels and



62%

Of millennials believe that the earth's climate is changing and that **this change is mostly being driven by human activity**

over-population, all that are causing carbon dioxide and methane and a couple other bad things to the environment, to reproduce and it's heating up the earth because of the greenhouse effect. And because of that, water is expanding, so ocean levels are raising, ice is melting so ocean levels are rising," said one young woman. The ozone layer was mentioned as a potential cause in both focus groups; "So I think the real question is how much is man exacerbating that process...like carbons and all these different gases, they're released into the ozone depleting it," said one young man in our independent group. In the survey, 17 percent of millennials say they think ozone layer depletion is the main cause of climate change.

Millennials aren't sure climate change will seriously affect them, but think it will seriously affect the next generation. Overall, 69 percent of millennials do say that they expect climate change will affect them during their lifetime. However, only 28 percent think that effect will be serious; another 41 percent think climate change will "somewhat affect" them. Specifically asked if they are feeling the effects of climate change *right now*, 45 percent say yes, while 39 percent say no and an additional 7 percent say they don't think climate change is occurring. Young Republicans, among whom about half said they expected to be at least somewhat personally affected by climate change, did not tend to think the impact would be severe with only 13 percent of them saying they expected climate to have a serious impact on their lives.

Where there is more consensus is over the potential impact of climate change on future generations. A majority of millennials (53 percent) believe climate change will *seriously* affect the next generation, with another quarter saying it will at least somewhat affect them. Even a quarter of young Republicans think climate will have serious consequences for the next generation. In the focus groups, our center-right respondents were apt to discuss climate as something that worried them about the *next* generation. "I think it would affect my kids' generation," said one young mother in the Republican focus group.

Millennials think we should try to stop or slow climate change, but aren't very confident that we actually can.

Over three out of four millennials (77 percent) say that we should try to stop or slow climate change, with a majority (55 percent) saying we should *definitely* try to stop or slow climate change. Very few think we shouldn't try to stop climate change (11 percent) or that it isn't happening at all (6 percent). Even young Republicans largely think we should try to stop or slow climate change, with 57 percent saying we should try. Some 62 percent of young Trump voters say we "should try to stop or slow climate change." On the question of whether we should try, young independents are fairly similar to young Democrats in their response.

However, on the question of whether we *can* do anything about climate change, young independents look a lot more like young Republicans: more skeptical of what is possible. Overall, 69 percent of respondents say we "could definitely" or "might be able" to stop or slow climate change, but only three in ten (31 percent) say they think we can definitely do something about it. Much of that enthusiasm comes from young Democrats, among whom 44 percent think we "could definitely" stop or slow climate change. Young independents are less sure, with only a quarter (26 percent) thinking climate change could definitely be slowed or stopped, and only 16 percent of young Republicans feeling the same way.



77%

of millennials say that we should **try to stop or slow climate change**

Whether one feels climate change can be stopped or slowed has a significant relationship with how important the issue is to one's vote; among those who say climate change is "very important" to how they vote, 94 percent think we either definitely or probably could do something about climate; that falls to 74 percent among those who say climate change is "somewhat important" to their vote, and to only 37 percent among those who say climate change isn't very important to how they vote.

Significant majorities of millennials believe that weather, health risks, sea level rise, and risk mitigation are valuable reasons to try to stop climate change.

Four different messages about reasons why "we should stop or slow climate change" all earn support from seven out of ten millennials.

The message receiving the highest level of agreement - "We should try to stop or slow climate change because the pollution that causes climate change also presents a health risk to people" - earns 76 percent agreement, with nearly half of all millennials (49 percent) strongly agreeing. Even six out of ten (61 percent) of young Republicans agree with the statement, 26 points lower than the figure for young Democrats (87 percent). On this message, variation in agreement across gender, age, and race is negligible.

Receiving a similar level of support is the argument that; "Even if we aren't sure exactly what the effects of climate change will be, we should try to do something to slow or stop it, because it is responsible to protect ourselves against the risk that the consequences could be really severe."

Some 75 percent of millennials agree with this message, including 62 percent of young Republicans and 88 percent of young Democrats. Notably, this message is the strongest among young conservative Republicans, with 62 percent in that group saying they agree. In the focus groups, one young man in the Republican focus group noted "[Polluting is] not going to stop until there's immediate consequence for those types of actions, which we haven't really seen anything to convince anybody to change behavior or anything. The more that we can protect now, it's going to benefit us exponentially in the long run if we can protect more upfront."

Trailing very slightly are two messages that focus more on the weather and sea level impacts of climate change, and much of the lower agreement on these messages is driven by resistance from young Republicans. Some 72 percent agree that "we should try to stop or slow climate change because it is causing more extreme weather, such as hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires,"

% who say they agree

76%

We should try to stop or slow climate change because the pollution that causes climate change also presents a health risk to people

75%

Even if we aren't sure exactly what the effects of climate change will be, we should try to do something to slow or stop it, because it is responsible to protect ourselves against the risk that the consequences could be really severe

72%

we should try to stop or slow climate change because it is causing more extreme weather, such as hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires

70%

we should try to stop or slow climate change because melting ice caps and rising sea levels will damage our coastal cities

though support drops more dramatically among young Republicans, where some 54 percent agree, compared to 87 percent of young Democrats. Asked if they agree that "we should try to stop or slow climate change because melting ice caps and rising sea levels will damage our coastal cities" some 70 percent of millennials agree, with 53 percent of young Republicans agreeing with the statement.

Millennials are significantly less receptive to messages about why action should not be taken to try to stop or slow climate change, including messages about China and the costs of action.

Respondents were presented with three messages arguing that "we should not try to stop or slow climate change" for various reasons, and majorities or near-majorities of millennials disagreed with each of the rationales presented.

Of all arguments against taking action on climate, the most successful message tested focused on the costs incurred by taking that action. Some 28 percent agree "we shouldn't try to stop or slow climate change because curbing emissions would require government restrictions and taxes that would raise the cost of living," though 45 percent disagree with the statement. Agreement overall is fairly soft, with only 11 percent "strongly agreeing" with the statement. Men, Hispanic respondents, African-American respondents, and young Republicans were the most receptive to the argument, with young Republicans leaning in agreement by a 41-28 margin. (This argument was the only argument opposed to climate action to have more net-agreement among young Republicans.) Young independents, meanwhile, disagree with the argument by a 26-43 margin.

The argument that "we shouldn't try to stop or slow climate change because anything we do would be pointless as long as countries like China and India are still polluting" is agreed with by only 27 percent of millennials, though it has the highest "strong agreement" of all three arguments (14 percent). Said one young man in the Independent focus group, "I mean it doesn't really matter really what America does. It's more like the demand from growing and like emerging markets. So Africa is really really bad about pollution and China and India are the worst...So I mean it's China and India and Africa that are really screwing it up." However, even among young Republicans, this message is a break-even message (34-35), though young conservative Republicans lean slightly in agreement (37-33). Only a quarter of young independents agree with the message.

Finally, the survey tested the idea that "we shouldn't try to stop or slow climate change because it would be a distraction from other more important issues that we should be focusing on instead." Only 26 percent of millennials agreed with this message, though this message is relatively supported among young Republicans, with 42 percent of young Republicans agreeing and only 29 percent disagreeing. At the same time, only 21 percent of young independents and 21 percent of young Democrats agree.

% who say they agree

28%

we shouldn't try to stop or slow climate change because curbing emissions would require government restrictions and taxes that would raise the cost of living

27%

we shouldn't try to stop or slow climate change because anything we do would be pointless as long as countries like China and India are still polluting

26%

we shouldn't try to stop or slow climate change because it would be a distraction from other more important issues that we should be focusing on instead

MILLENNIALS AND CLIMATE POLICY

Millennials are unsure specifically what should be done to combat climate change. Even among millennials who think climate change can be slowed or stopped, there is no clear consensus of what should be done. In the survey, 34 percent of respondents said we should reduce pollution, carbon emissions, or our energy consumption – but respondents did not generally volunteer specific policies to do so.

One in five (19 percent) favored either investment in renewable fuel sources, and 13 percent expressed a general opinion that we should “go green.” Only 8 percent of respondents specifically said they wanted the government to increase regulation or pass legislation limiting emissions.

Half of millennials had not heard of the Paris Climate Accords, though most of those millennials oppose President Trump's decision to withdraw. While a majority of millennials with a four-year degree or more, as well as a majority of young Democrats *had* heard of the issue, only one-third of young Republicans and young Independents had done the same. Those who said climate change was very important to how they vote were much more likely to have heard of the Paris Climate Accords than those who place less importance on the issue.

Respondents who had heard of the Paris Climate Accords were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords, and only 29 percent agreed with the decision, while 63 percent said they disagreed. On this question, young Republicans differed dramatically from their independent and Democratic counterparts; two-thirds of young Republicans support President Trump's decision, while only 19 percent of young independents and 23 percent of young Democrats felt the same. Over 70 percent of non-Republican millennials disagreed with the decision to leave the Paris Accords. Notably, *within* the Republican subsample, there was a significant divide between “conservative Republicans” and “moderate or liberal Republicans,” with 73 percent of conservative Republicans agreeing with President Trump's decision, compared to only 43 percent of the moderate and liberal young Republicans.

"When people think climate change, they think, oh, it's not my problem, that's the next generation's or whatever. Well, it kind of is our problem now."

- INDEPENDENT MALE RESPONDENT IN CHARLOTTE, NC

Only one-third of young voters have heard of a "carbon tax", though those who have tend to be supportive of it by a wide margin. Some 32 percent of millennial voters say they have seen, read, or heard something about a "carbon tax", and much like the Paris Climate Accords, awareness tends to be highest among Democrats and those with at least a four-year college degree.

Among those who said they had heard anything about a carbon tax, before hearing any further information about the idea, 58 percent say they think it is a good idea, while only 15 percent think it is a bad idea. While Democrats who have heard of a carbon tax before are largely of the mind that it is a good idea (74 percent), young independents and Republicans are less certain, though in both cases more believe it is a good idea than believe it is a bad idea.

In the focus groups, few respondents had ever really heard about a carbon tax. As a result, in the survey, respondents were provided with a brief, neutral description of a carbon tax that neither sought to advocate for or against the policy. Given the complexities of how a carbon tax can be structured and implemented, the question was crafted to be as simple as possible, and was posed to all respondents in the survey. A carbon tax was described in the following way:

"Very simply, a carbon tax is a tax that is placed on things that produce carbon emissions. Things that produce more carbon emissions would have to pay more in the tax, based on how much they produce. So, for instance, a power plant that burns coal and produces a lot of carbon would have a higher tax to pay than a power plant that uses wind or nuclear energy. Given this, would you say implementing a carbon tax is a good or bad idea?"

Following this description, a majority of millennials (59 percent) said they thought a carbon tax was a good idea, while 11 percent said they thought it was a bad idea. Another 20 percent said they thought it was neither a good nor bad idea, while 9 percent were unsure. Among young Republicans, 44 percent thought the idea was a good one, while 23 percent thought it was a bad idea and another 23 percent thought it was neutral. Some 41 percent of young Trump voters thought a carbon tax was a good idea, while 22 percent thought it was a bad idea. Young Democrats overwhelmingly favored the idea (77-4), while half of young independents (50 percent) also said a carbon tax as described was a good idea.



59%

of millennials said they thought a carbon tax was a good idea

11%

of millennials said they thought it was a bad idea

The survey then presented respondents with a choice about their own personal spending and how it might be affected by the implementation of a carbon tax. Respondents were asked:

A carbon tax could wind up making things more expensive if it takes a lot of carbon emissions to produce those things. However, the hope is that it would encourage more companies and consumers to make choices that lead to less carbon going into the atmosphere. Thinking about your own life, which comes closer to your view? We need to protect the environment. I would be willing to pay a little more for my power bill or for some consumer goods if it meant reducing the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. OR Protecting the environment may be important, but I would not be willing to pay any more money for my power bill or some consumer goods.

In this contrast, a majority (51 percent) say they would be willing to pay more for goods or power that generates a lot of carbon emissions, while 31 percent say they would not be willing to pay more. Here, while young Democrats lean heavily toward saying they would be willing to pay more (74 percent), young independents look more like young Republicans, with 39 percent of young independents saying they'd be willing to pay more for things under a carbon tax. For young Republicans, one third (33 percent) say they'd be willing to pay more, though half (50 percent) say they would not.

MILLENNIALS AND THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE

Millennials overall tend to think Democrats are more suited to handle the issues of the environment and climate change than Republicans, though many say they do not trust either party on the issue.

As previously mentioned, in a variety of questions, young Independents share a worldview on the environment and climate that more closely aligns with their Democratic peers than their Republican peers. This does *not*, however, lead to young independents giving the Democratic Party strong marks on the issue. While the vast majority of young Democrats (82 percent) think their own party is best to handle the issue of the environment, that plummets to only 17 percent among young independents, with most saying the "don't trust either party" on the issue (49 percent) or that they simply aren't sure (22 percent).

In the aggregate, when asked if they trust the Democratic or Republican party more to handle the issue of the environment, Democrats hold a 21-point lead over the G.O.P. (40-19), but that lead is driven almost entirely by the fact that young Democrats are more enthusiastic about their own party on the environment than young Republicans are about their own. For young independents, so many simply distrust both parties that the Democratic Party holds only a five-point advantage on the issue with this group over the Republican Party (17-12).

Switching to the specific issue of climate change, some 42 percent of millennials say they trust the Democratic Party more to handle the issue of climate change, while only 16 percent say they trust the Republican Party more. Three-in-ten (29 percent) say they do not trust either party, and another 12 percent who say they are unsure. Much of Democrats' advantage on this issue is driven by young Democrats' support for their own party, with



Young independents **mostly do not trust either political party** to handle the issue of the environment

79 percent of young Democrats saying they trust their own party more (compared to only 54 percent of young Republicans trusting their own party). Young independents give Democrats an advantage - 24 percent trust the Democratic Party more on climate, while only 6 percent trust Republicans more - and this advantage is more significant than the advantage they award Democrats on the environment generally. However, half of young independents still say they do not trust either party on the issue. "At the end of the day, Democrats or Republicans want more or less the same thing," said one Independent focus group participant.

Most millennials say political candidates' stances on climate and the environment are important to how they vote. Some 71 percent of respondents report that these issues are either somewhat or very important to how they vote, with one third (33 percent) overall saying the issues are very important. Majorities of young voters of all political affiliations say this issue is important to them, though the intensity of importance varies by party; only 13 percent of young Republicans say the issue is very important, while 33 percent of young independents and 45 percent of young Democrats say the same.

The coalition of young people who will reward political leaders for taking action on climate seems much larger than the coalition who believes strongly that action should not be taken. Importance placed on the issue has a strong relationship with how concerned respondents are about climate change; 56 percent of those who are "very concerned" about climate say this is a very important issue for them in voting, compared to only 4 percent of those who say they are not very or not at all concerned. It also has a relationship with whether one believes we should be doing something about climate change; 42 percent of those saying we should do something about climate change say this issue is *very* important to how they vote, while only 5 percent of those saying we shouldn't take action say the same.

Taking a position on climate change that says action shouldn't be a priority is a "deal-breaker" with almost half of young voters. While it is challenging to ask survey respondents to predict their behavior in a hypothetical situation, respondents were presented with a scenario in which they agreed with a political candidate "on other things" but that politician held the following position on climate: "*Climate change is happening but we don't know how much humans are causing that change, so we should focus on other issues.*" One-in-five respondents said they weren't sure what they would do in that hypothetical situation.

However, some 46 percent said they either "could never" (15 percent) or "probably would not" (31 percent) vote for a candidate who held that position, *even if they agreed with them on other things*. About a third said they either probably would (24 percent) or definitely (9 percent) would vote for someone if they agreed with them on other things. Over half - 57 percent - of those who say climate change is not really an important voting issue for them fall into this camp.

For young Democrats, this example position on climate would likely be a "dealbreaker" for most; 23 percent say outright they could never vote for someone holding that view, and another 41 percent say they probably wouldn't even if they agreed with that candidate on other issues. Young independents are fairly split; 38 percent say they would either never (11 percent) or probably not (27 percent) vote for someone holding this view, while 35 percent said they probably (24 percent) or definitely (11 percent) would. While nearly half of young Republicans said this would not really be a dealbreaker for them, one third (32 percent) say that it probably or definitely would be.

Deep dive: Young Republicans

- + **Young Republicans are not deeply concerned with environmental issues compared to other issues such as immigration, though half do say they are concerned about climate change.** Overall, only four percent of young Republicans name either climate change or the environment as their top issue. When presented with four different issues, nearly eight-in-ten young Republicans say they are concerned about illegal immigration, six-in-ten say they are concerned about gun violence and air pollution, and half are concerned about climate change. They are also slightly more positive about the direction of the environment in the US, both over last thirty years and their expectations for the coming thirty years.
- + **Young Republicans are just as likely as their peers to try to conserve energy; their rationale for doing so is much less likely to be explicitly about the environment.** Young Republicans are just as likely as young Democrats to personally engage in energy conservation practices. Their reasoning, however, is much more about fiscal prudence than about saving the earth.
- + **Young Republicans very slightly less likely to think we are making rapid technological advances in environmental protection and energy.** In the survey, there is almost no partisan difference in perceptions of how fast technology is changing how we shop, travel or communicate. Yet on whether technology is changing environmental protection, only 9 percent of young Republicans think we are making "very fast change", and only 14 percent think we are making very fast change in how we get power to our homes - both figures are seven to nine points lower than the figures for young Democrats.
- + **Cost is king; young Republicans are less likely to say they're willing to pay more for "greener" products or energy.** By a two-to-one margin, young Republicans say they would not choose an "environmentally-friendly" dish

soap that costs more, and three-quarters say they would prefer their current power bill over one that is more expensive but costs more. Only 25 percent say they'd prefer policies that strongly protect the environment even if they make goods more expensive; 63 percent say we should focus on making things affordable. Specifically asking about carbon emissions, half say they would not be willing to pay more for goods in order to curb carbon, while a third say they would.

- **However, young Republicans do seem at least somewhat open to the idea of policies that would make less environmentally friendly things the more expensive buy relative to "greener" products.** When presented with the idea of a carbon tax, by a 44-23 margin, young Republicans say they think the policy is a good idea. Flipping on its head the notion that greener products are the more expensive ones may have the potential for traction. In focus groups, respondents were clear that they think cost incentives matter and can drive behavior; indeed, they're the group most likely to say they let costs drive their energy consumption decisions.

- + **Slightly more than half of young Republicans trust their own party most on the environment and climate change, though it is not a high-priority issue for them.** Only 58 percent of young Republicans think their own party is best on the environment; one-in-ten give that issue to the Democrats, while another third say they aren't sure or don't trust either party. On the issue of climate change, the results are similar; 54 percent of young Republicans trust their own party, while 12 percent trust the Democrats and the remaining third trust no one or are unsure. And while 59 percent say this is an important issue set to them when it comes to their vote, that importance is soft; only 13 percent say it is "very important" compared to 45 percent of young Democrats.

- + **Young Republicans are split on what is driving climate change, placing them at odds with their peers of other political parties.** The plurality - 41 percent - say that the climate is changing and human activity is the driver. However, 35 percent believe climate change is mostly about natural cycles and another 16 percent aren't certain it is occurring. This position contrasts *dramatically* with where millennials of other political persuasions stand, with 59 percent of young independents and 77 percent of young Democrats saying they think climate is due to human activity. Only 25 percent of young Republicans specifically identify greenhouse gases as the driver of climate change, compared to 44 percent of young independents and 62 percent of young Democrats.
- + **Half of young Republicans believe climate change will affect them during their lifetimes, and even more believe the next generation will be affected.** Only 13 percent of young Republicans think they will be "seriously affected" by climate change during their lifetimes; that figure doubles to 26 percent when they are asked about *the next generation*. Only 22 percent of young Republicans think climate change is having an effect on their lives right now, compared to 48 percent of young independents and 55 percent of young Democrats.
- + **Despite uncertainty about the causes or potential impacts of climate change, most young Republicans would like to see action taken to try to address it, and half think it is possible to slow or stop climate change.** While climate change is not generally perceived as an imminent threat by young Republicans, they are nonetheless generally

open to the idea of taking some kind of action to try to combat climate change. Some 57 percent say we should try to stop or slow climate change, including 28 percent who say we *definitely* should. Half say we either probably or definitely *can* stop or slow climate change if we try, though this optimism is reserved; only 16 percent think it is definitely possible to stop or slow climate change.

- + **Arguments about health and responsibility are the most resonant with young Republicans as reasons why we should try to stop or slow climate change.** While just over half of young Republicans think that extreme weather (54 percent) or sea-level rise (53 percent) are why we should take action to stop or slow climate change, the health impacts of pollution that contributes to climate change (61 percent) and the idea that it is responsible to protect ourselves against the risk that climate change could turn out to be severe (62 percent) gain slightly more agreement. The responsibility message also earns the highest "strongly agree" at 27 percent.
- + **Young Republicans lean toward worrying that policies to combat climate will raise cost of living and take attention away from other issues.** However, notably, the "agree" figures for each message tested in all cases are lower than the level of agreement with the messages in favor of climate action. Most resonant is the message that climate is a distraction from other issues (42 percent) and the idea that climate action would raise taxes and cost of living (41 percent); only 34 percent agreed that pollution in China and India is a reason the US should not try to address climate change.



METHODOLOGY

This report was commissioned by the Alliance for Market Solutions and the research and analysis work contained in this report were conducted by Echelon Insights.

The research contained in this report was conducted of two phases: a pair of focus groups and a national survey.

The focus groups were conducted in Charlotte, NC during mid-January 2018. Each focus group contained ten participants of mixed gender between the ages of 18-35. One focus group included only individuals who identified as either somewhat or very conservative Republicans. The second focus group included only individuals who identified as either moderate Republicans or conservative independents.

The survey research was conducted of 800 registered voters aged 18-35 nationwide in the United States, with an oversample to achieve a total of 400 interviews of young Republicans. (Oversample interviews were weighted to represent the appropriate proportion of the sample of US millennials overall.) The survey was conducted via an online panel hosted by Survey Sampling International, and was in the field January 13-15, 2018. Results were weighted by age, gender, race, education level. Overall results were also weighted by partisan identification to ensure oversample interviews represented the appropriate proportion of the overall sample of US millennials.

