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GenNext: Fall 2024 Survey

America's youngest voters want a leader who will shake things up and get America back on track, even if it means breaking the rules. Those opinions are underscored by a fearful outlook toward the future and concerns for their financial wellbeing. Gen Z likely voters are in step with their older counterparts in that the economy is front and center in deciding their vote for President. However, Gen Z likely voters are less likely to say that preserving democracy is a deciding factor in their vote. Despite their pessimism about the future, Gen Z likely voters believe in the power of their vote, a sentiment echoed across all generations.

These are the findings from the Marist Poll's latest GenNext survey. GenNext is an innovative research project that focuses on the opinions of America's next generation of leaders and how they compare with older Americans. Here's the twist – working in tandem with the professionals at the Marist Poll – student researchers conduct each survey from start to finish. This time around, Marist student researchers Matt Pater, Luke Sassa, Caroline Smith, and Neel Viswanathan developed questions about Americans' political views in the weeks leading up to the 2024 Presidential Election. Their results follow:

Gen Z Likely Voters Are More Likely Than Other Generations to Say the U.S. Needs a Rule-Breaking Leader

About two-thirds of likely Gen Z voters (66%) either strongly agree or agree that America has gotten so far off track that the nation needs a leader who is willing to break some rules to set things right. This compares with 44% of Millennials, 34% of Gen X, and 27% of Baby Boomers and likely voters in the Silent/Greatest Generation who have the same view.

Regardless of generation, likely voters have pits in their stomachs when thinking about the future of the nation. Majorities of all generations – 58% of Gen Z, 64% of Millennials, 57% of Gen X, and 64% of Baby Boomers and the Silent/Greatest Generation – are more fearful than hopeful about the future of America.

Despite their pessimistic outlook toward the future of the nation, America's youngest voters perceive power in their vote. In fact, most (80%) report that they strongly agree or agree with the idea that their vote will matter in the 2024 Presidential Election. Similar proportions of Millennials (79%) and Gen X likely voters (81%) have the same view. Among Baby Boomers and those in the Silent/Greatest Generation, 90% think their vote will have an impact in this year's presidential election.

Regardless of generation, Americans believe tackling inflation should be the priority for the next president. Gen Z likely voters (60%) are more likely than any other generation to have this opinion. 49% of Millennials, 47% of Gen X, and 43% of Baby Boomers and likely voters

in the Silent/Greatest Generation think inflation should be atop the next president's agenda.

While 57% of U.S. likely voters say their personal priority is maintaining relationships with family and friends, even if it means sacrificing financial security, America's youngest voters are not the ones driving that opinion. In fact, a majority (51%) of Gen Z likely voters say their priority is financial security, even if it means sacrificing personal relationships. Millennials divide (48% financial security to 52% relationships). For Gen X, Baby Boomers, and Silent/Greatest Generation likely voters, the opposite is true. 61% of Gen X and 60% of Baby Boomers/Silent/Greatest Generation say personal relationships are their priority.

Gen Z Less Likely Than Other Generations to Say Preserving Democracy is Deciding Factor in Vote

When thinking about the issues that are pivotal in deciding their vote for President, the greatest chasm between Gen Z likely voters and other generations exists on the issue of preserving democracy. Gen Z (46%) is less likely to say that preserving democracy is a deciding factor in voting this year than it is for Millennials (61%), Gen X (72%), and Baby Boomers/Silent/Greatest Generation (78%).

In contrast, there is a great deal of consensus on the issue of the economy. Regardless of generation, the economy is the key motivator for likely voters (Gen Z: 69%, Millennials: 68%; Gen X: 67%; Baby Boomers and Silent/Greatest Generation: 65%).

For only Gen X is the issue of abortion not a deciding factor for a majority of likely voters. 40% of Gen X likely voters say it is a critical issue in their vote compared with 51% of Gen Z, 51% of Millennials, and 52% of Baby Boomers and the Silent Greatest Generation. The immigration issue is less important for likely voters of Gen Z and Millennials. 45% of likely voters in each of these generations say this issue is a key motivator in deciding their vote compared with 52% in Gen X and 50% of Baby Boomers and those in the Silent/Greatest Generation.

Gun policy is a deciding factor for more than four in ten likely voters, regardless of generation (Gen Z: 46%; Millennials: 45%; Gen X: 42%, and Baby Boomers and the Silent/Greatest Generation: 44%).

Gen Z (37%) likely voters are more likely than any other generation to say the war between Israel and Hamas is a deciding factor when casting their ballot. 25% of Millennials, 23% of Gen X, and 21% of Baby Boomers and those in the Silent/Greatest Generation have this view.

More likely voters in Gen Z (36%) and Millennials (32%), compared with Gen X (27%) and Baby Boomers and the Silent/Greatest Generation (21%) say a candidate's position on LGBTQ+ rights is a game changer in their vote for President.

Climate change is a more pressing issue for America's youngest likely voters (36% of Gen Z and 36% of Millennials) than it is for Gen X (27%) and Baby Boomers/ the Silent/Greatest Generation (30%).

Gen Z Less Likely to See the American Dream as Attainable

Given Gen Z's pessimism for the future and their concerns about their financial security and inflation, it is not surprising that they, along with Millennials, are less likely than other generations to agree or strongly agree that the American Dream is still attainable.

While 72% of U.S. likely voters believe the American Dream is still available for the taking, 52% of Gen Z and the same proportion of Millennials (52%) believe they can still achieve the American Dream. This compares with 80% of Gen X and 85% of Baby Boomers and members of the Silent/Greatest Generation.

Regardless of generation, there is skepticism that young Americans will be able to purchase their own home by the time they turn 35. In fact, about two in three Gen Z likely voters (66%) think it is not very likely or not likely at all that they will own a home by the time they are 35 years old. 69% of Millennials, 64% of Gen X, and 59% of Baby Boomers think it is unlikely that America's youth will be able to own a home by their mid-thirties.

There is also consensus across generations that a young person today will not have a better life than their parents. 58% of Gen Z likely voters, 55% of Millennials, 50% of Gen X, and 54% of Baby Boomers and likely voters in the Silent/Greatest Generation say it is not very likely or not likely at all that today's youth will surpass the prosperity of their parents.

About the Marist Poll's GenNext Student Researchers:

Matt Pater is a senior at Marist College studying Political Science with a minor in Music. Matt is a research associate and head coach at the Marist Poll.

Luke Sassa is a Marist College senior majoring in Communications with concentrations in Sports Communication and Journalism. Luke is enrolled in the College's honors program and serves as the Editor-in-Chief of Center Field, Marist's online sports publication. In addition to his work on GenNext, Luke is a Head Coach and Quality Assurance Associate at the Marist Poll.

Caroline Smith is a Marist College senior majoring in Psychology with minors in Cognitive Science and Professional Writing. She plans to pursue a graduate degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Caroline is currently interning with the Marist Poll and working on GenNext while learning more about questionnaire development, data collection, and data analysis.

Neel Viswanathan is a senior at Marist College majoring in American Studies and Journalism. He is a Media Associate at the Marist Poll and would like to work in journalism after graduation.

What is GenNext?

GenNext is an innovative research project from the Marist Institute for Public Opinion that captures the opinions of young Americans to illuminate the issues and topics that motivate, inspire, and excite America's next generation of leaders.

And here's the twist – student researchers mount each survey from start to finish. Working alongside professionals at the Marist Poll, Marist students determine what to ask and how to ask it.

In doing so, they learn best practices for measuring public opinion, including information and data fluency, identifying topics, writing scientifically rigorous questionnaires, and collecting, analyzing, and reporting the results of the survey to the public.