



## The United States Conference of Mayors- Zogby Strategies 2020 National Youth Poll

# A Survey of Gen Z & Millennials' Behavior & Values

*Polling Conducted by:*



JOHN ZOGBY  
STRATEGIES

DATA > ANALYZE > REPORT > STRATEGIZE



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



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About The U.S. Conference of Mayors:

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1,400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Learn more at [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org).



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# Sample Characteristics

Demographics	18 – 29 Likely Voters
Male	501
Female	501
Transgender/Non-binary	--
Age 18 – 24	501
Age 25 - 29	501
Democrat	391
Republican	311
Independent/unaffiliated	301
White	493
African American	168
Hispanic	187
Asian	79
Other	59
Demographics	18 – 29 Likely Voters
College Degree	702
No College Degree	300
Large City	346
Small City	258
Suburbs	247
Rural	137
Progressive	117
Liberal	222
Moderate	297
Conservative	178
Very Conservative	58
Libertarian	22

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# Methodology

- John Zogby Strategies (JZS) was commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Mayors to conduct a nationwide online survey of 1,000 18 – 29 year old (registered) likely voters about current political issues, their values, and behavior. The online survey was conducted December 9th – December 11th, 2019.
- The margin of error for the sample of 1,002 is +/- 3.2 percentage points.
- Each email invitation was password coded and secured to prevent each respondent from taking the survey more than once. Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. **As a rule, we do not rely on the validity of very small subsets, especially smaller than 70 respondents.** At that subset we can make estimations based on the data, but in such cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative.
- While additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order, JZS took steps to reduce such error.
- Slight weights were added for age, education, gender, party, and race to be representative of the 18 - 29 population of the United States.

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# Executive Analysis

## Future Economic Outlook

- Only 19% feel that the *worst of the financial crisis* of a decade ago is behind them. The largest plurality (30%) say that they are still *in the headwinds and that it is hard to plan their future*, and another 28% suggest that their sentiments *depend on who is elected President*.
- A slight majority (54%) believe in the most basic form of the American Dream (*to be better off financially than your parents*) whereas one-third do not believe they will be better off than their parents.
- A plurality (49%) are optimistic about their *job prospects and social relationships in a fast-changing world*. On the flip side, 42% are *concerned about what the future holds for them*.

## Top Two Issues that Impact Presidential Vote

- Overall, the top issue is the economy and jobs (29%), followed closely by access to health care (25%). The top five are rounded out by issues related to education and student debt (20%), global warming (18%), and immigration (18%).
- While young men are more likely to cite the economy (32%) than women (26%), women feel more influenced by the need for health care (29%) than men (21%).
- **“Other combined”** includes choices – reducing crime and gun violence (16%), poverty/closing wealth gap (14%), protecting civil rights, particularly among minorities (14%), rebuild our nation’s infrastructure (11%), mental health and substance abuse (10%), gender/racial pay equality (10%), and those not sure (3%).

## Defining Issues for the Two Generations

- Global warming may prove to be one of the defining issues for younger Millennials and Gen Z. Overall, **80% say that it is a major threat to human life on earth as we know it – 52% strongly agree**. In another question on the same topic, almost three to one (58% to 21%), young voters agree with the statement that the climate crisis warrants bold measures vs. a rejection of strong action because of the costs to act.
- Also, three out of five of these two age cohorts either try to reduce their carbon footprint *practically every day* (25%) or *in major life decisions only* (35%). Only 27% rarely consider.
- A second defining issue for these cohorts is gun violence. These young voters were asked to check off from a list of actions they felt would “most likely curb gun violence”. Their most preferred selection was enacting *universal background checks* (45%). Second place were *red flag laws* which allow law enforcement to ban firearm possession by those individuals who are considered to be a threat to society (33%).

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# Executive Analysis, continued

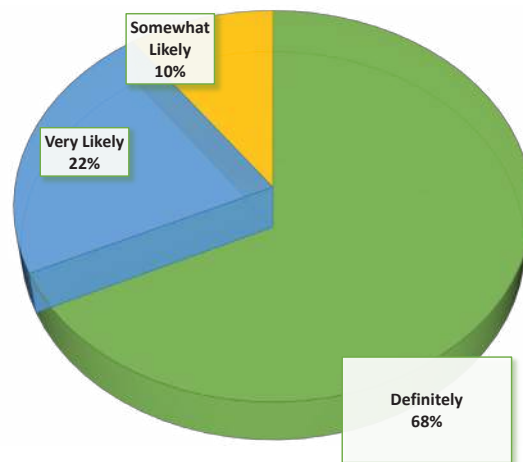
## Overall Outlook - a Balance of Cynicism and Optimism

- There is noticeable cynicism when it comes to anticipating interference in the upcoming 2020 Presidential election results, as well as current job prospects and future economic outlook.
- On the flip side, there is a sizeable amount of 18-29 year olds who hold a positive outlook regarding AI's impact on the future economy; a strong majority want cities to pave the way in curbing global warming in light of Washington gridlock; and a solid majority believe in the long run that they will be better off financially than their parents.

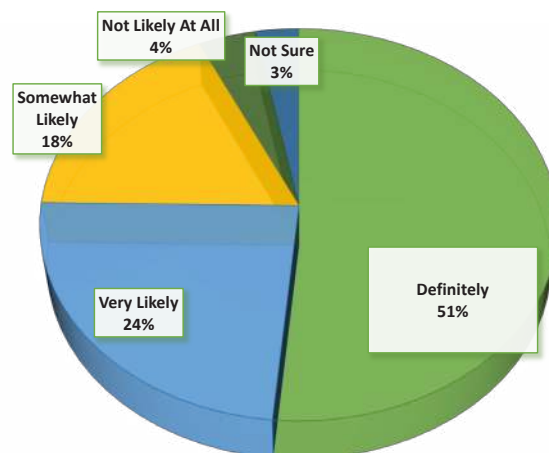
## Final thoughts to consider:

- Young women have provided the deciding vote in recent years. They do differ from men in the emphasis on issues like **health care, guns, and global warming**.
- Younger Born Again voters are not your “grandfather’s Christian conservatives.” We have been following this trend for the past two decades. They may tilt conservative on some issues, but they are committed to better communities and a better world, and they favor serious action on **climate and guns**.

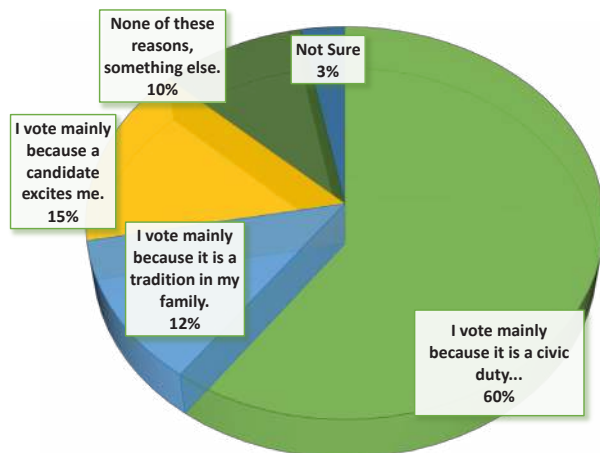
# Likelihood of Voting in 2020 Presidential Election?



# Likelihood of Voting in 2020 State Primary or Caucus?

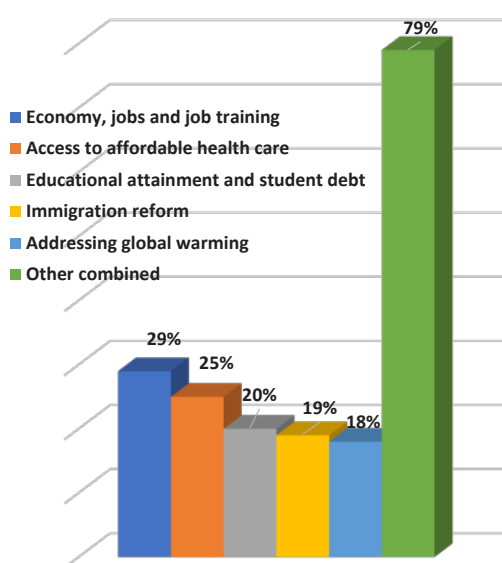


# Which of the following best describes what influences you to vote?



- A majority of 18-29 year old voters say they are motivated out of civic duty (60%), while just 12% cite tradition or family influence, and 15% need a candidate to excite them.
- The numbers are a solid majority across the board, although slightly less (50%) of independents suggest they vote out of civic duty.

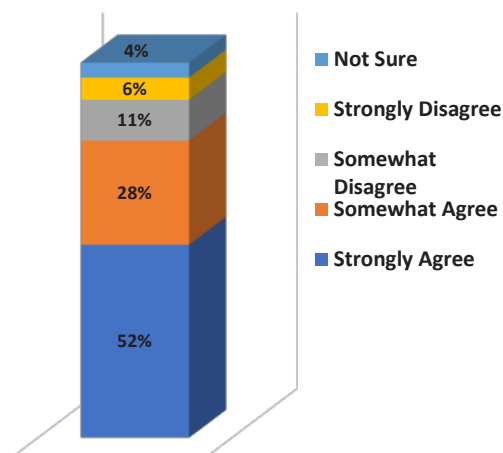
# Top two issues that will most effect your decision who to vote for [select two]?



- Overall, the top issue is the economy and jobs (29%), followed closely by access to health care (25%). The top five are rounded out by issues related to education and student debt (20%), global warming (18%), and immigration (18%).
- While young men are more likely to cite the economy (32%) than women (26%), women feel more influenced by the need for health care (29%) than men (21%).
- **“Other” includes choices** – *reducing crime and gun violence (16%), poverty/closing wealth gap (14%), protecting civil rights, particularly among minorities (14%), rebuild nation’s infrastructure (11%), mental health and substance abuse (10%), gender/racial pay equality (10%), and those not sure (3%).*

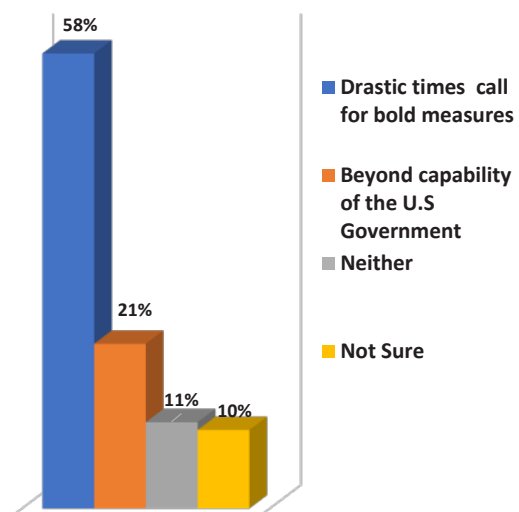


# Do you agree or disagree that Global Warming is a major threat to human life on earth as we know it?



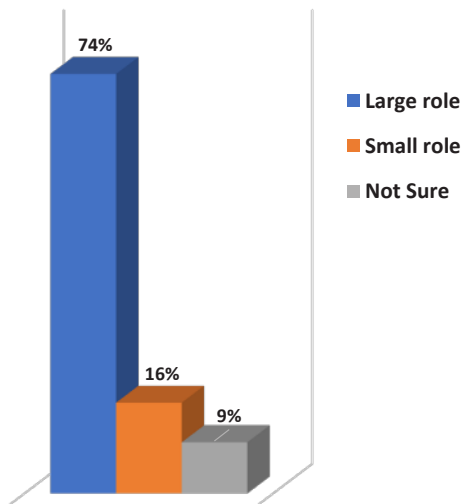
- Global warming may prove to be one of the defining issues for younger Millennials and Gen Z. Overall, 80% say that it is a *major threat to human life on earth as we know it* – 52% strongly agree.
- Young men (76%) and women (82%) are in unison, although 60% of women strongly agree while 43% of men do. Gen Z and Millennials speak with one voice on this, as do all races.

## Which of the following statements best describes your stance on how to address Global Warming?



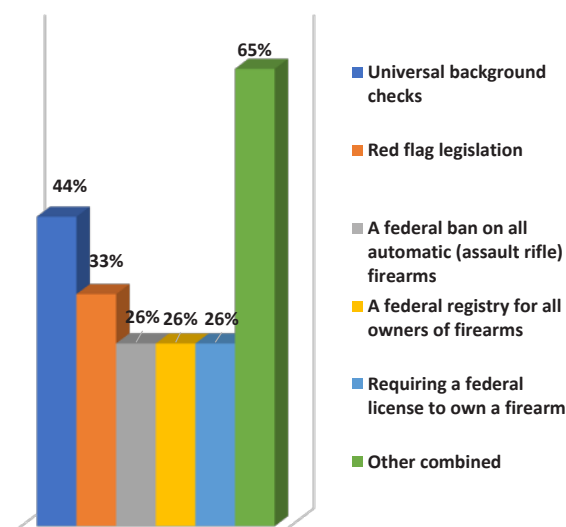
- By almost three to one (58% to 21%), young voters agree with the statement that the climate crisis warrants *bold measures* vs. a rejection of strong action because of the *costs to act*.
- This sentiment is shared by men and women (men 52%-26%, women 64%-15%), Born Again/Evangelicals (50%-25%), Democrats (78%-14%) and independents (58%-16%), whites (53%-22%), Hispanics (65%-17%) and African Americans (58%-23%).

## In light of Washington gridlock, what role do you believe States and cities should play in addressing Global Warming?



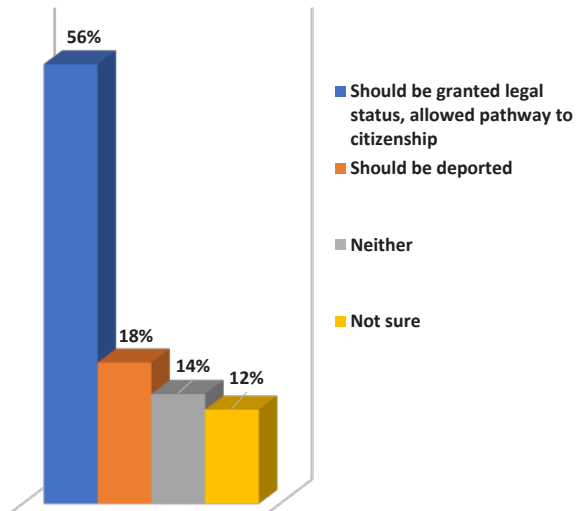
- In the absence of strong federal action, 74% of the sample agrees that states and cities should play either a large role (35%) or somewhat large role (39%) in attacking global warming.

## Which of the following forms of legislation do you think are most likely to curb the recent wave of gun violence [choose all that apply]?



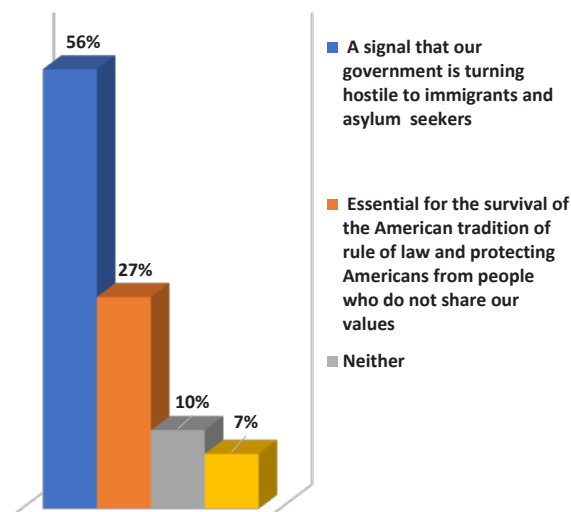
- A second defining issue for these cohorts is gun violence. These young voters were asked to check off what they felt would be the actions that would *most likely curb gun violence*.
- Overall and across the board with 45%, the top choice was enacting *universal background checks* – including 52% among women, 50% among Born Again/Evangelicals, 47% of all whites, and 41% of non-whites.
- Second place were *red flag laws* which allow law enforcement to ban firearm possession by those individuals who are considered to be a threat to society (33%).
- **“Other” includes choices** – federal law mandating smart technology (21%), legislation allowing teachers to carry (17%), banning all firearms (11%), no legislation is necessary (8%), and those not sure (8%).

## ...best describes your stance on DACA, or the Dream Act, regarding the issue of immigration?



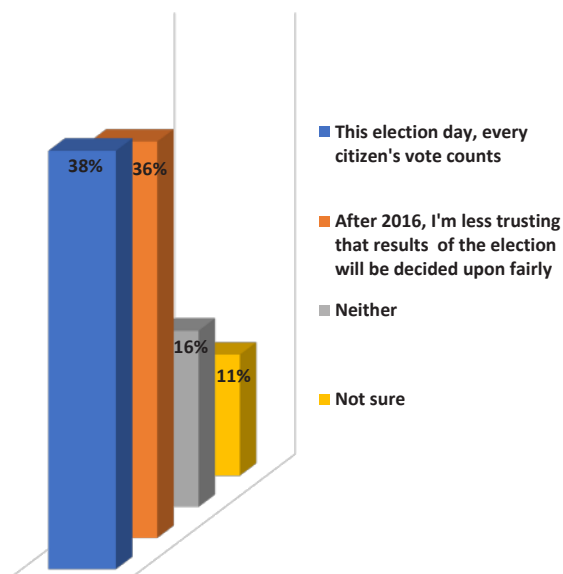
- Overwhelmingly, the most diverse age cohorts in US history support young *Dreamers*. A majority of 56% prefer that they be granted the rights of US citizens, while only 18% say they should be deported.
- Support is this great across the board – men (53%-23%), women (60%-12%), those with passports (61%-18%) and those without passports (51%-17%), Catholics (64%-17%), Protestants (50%-19%), Born Again/Evangelicals (50%-18%), Democrats (74%-12%) and independents (58%-13%). On this one, only Republicans are least supportive with 33% favoring citizen rights and 29% preferring deportation.

## ...best describes your stance on building a border wall along the southern border?



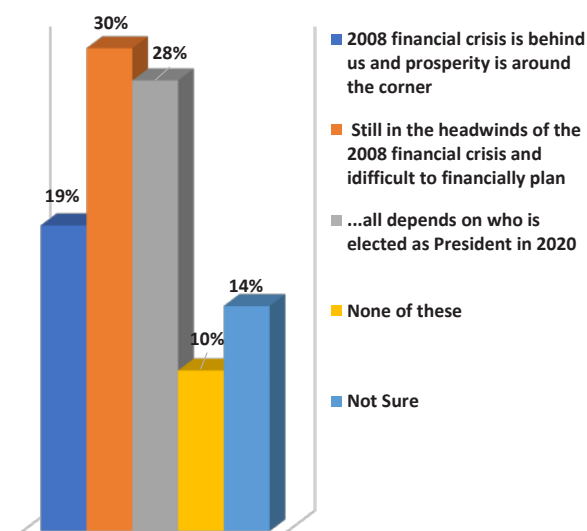
- By two to one, these young voters believe that building a border wall is a *poor solution*, while only 27% feel it is essential.
- Again only Republicans have a majority who favor the wall (53% to 27% who oppose it) – while majorities of other groups feel the wall is a bad answer.

## ...best describes your view on whether or not your vote counts in the upcoming Presidential election?



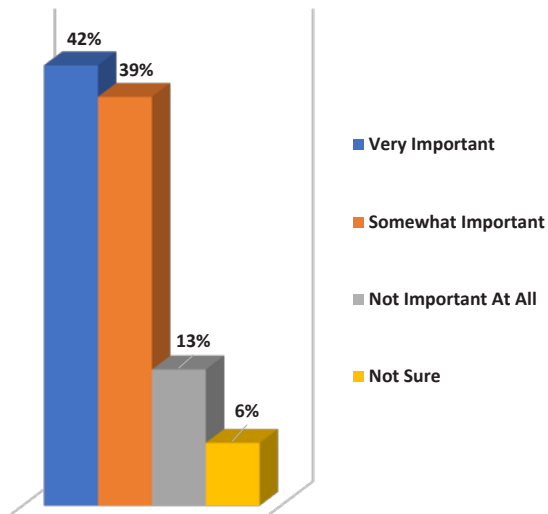
- Having been born into a nation with disputed elections and hacking technology, these young voters are not very sanguine about their vote. The sample is actually of likely voters, but 36% still feel *less trusting of the results of elections*, and only 38% feel that *every vote counts*. The skepticism is across the board.

## Regarding the economy and job outlook, do you feel that...?



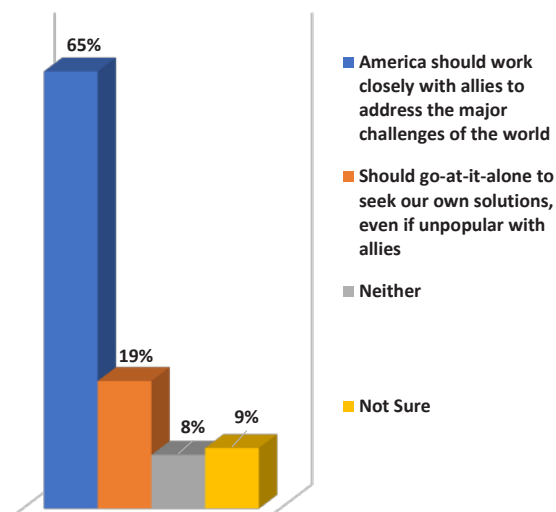
- Only 19% of these cohorts feel that the *worst of the financial crisis* of a decade ago is behind them. The largest plurality (30%) say that they are still *in the headwinds* and that it is hard to plan their future, and another 28% suggest that their sentiments depend on who is elected President.
- On this issue, partisanship reigns supreme with 15% of Democrats vs 29% of Republicans expressing optimism and 37% of Democrats and 20% of Republicans expressing the pessimistic view.

# How important is it to you that the U.S. is the strongest military power on the planet?



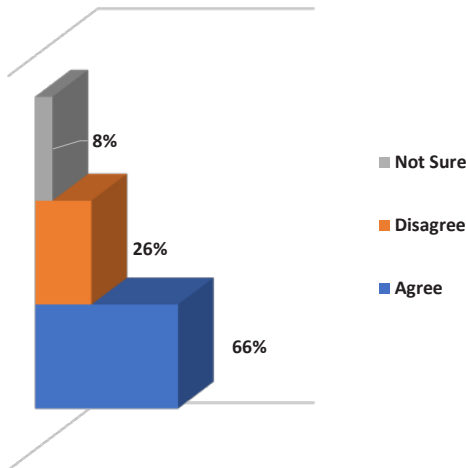
- These are not citizens of the post-World War II “American Century”. Four of ten (42%) say *very important* and roughly the same (39%) say *somewhat important*. Democrats and independents again line up with each other – 33% Democrats and 34% of independents say very important, while 42% and 43% respectively say somewhat important. Three in five Republicans (59%) line up with the strongest military while 33% say somewhat important.

## ...statements about the role of American foreign policy come closest to your view?



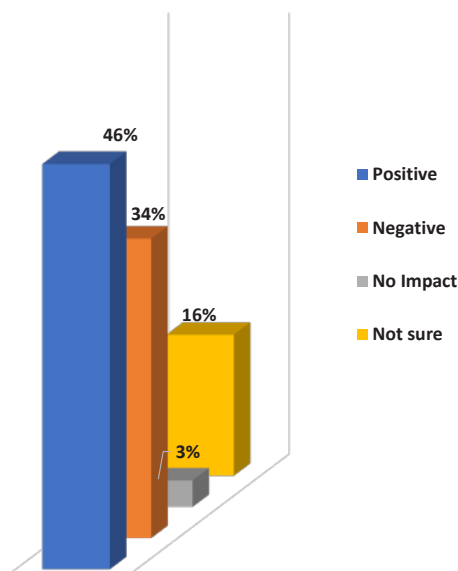
- In more poignant results of the transition from the American Century, two in three (65%) want the US to work on global crises *closely with allies* while 19% favor a *go-at-it-alone* policy.
- This includes 57% of men, 73% of women, 64% of Catholics and Protestants, 66% of Born Again Evangelicals, 77% of Democrats, 49% of Republicans, and 65% of independents.

# Do you agree or disagree that the U.S. must have the strongest economy in the world?



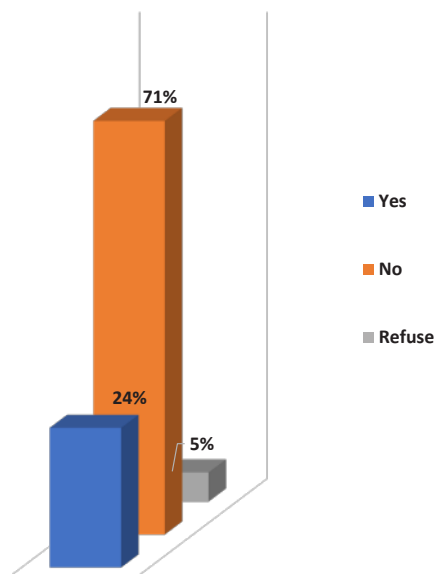
- Two in three (66%) agree that the US should have the strongest economy in the world.

# What impact will the rise of Artificial Intelligence have on the future of the economy and your job prospects?



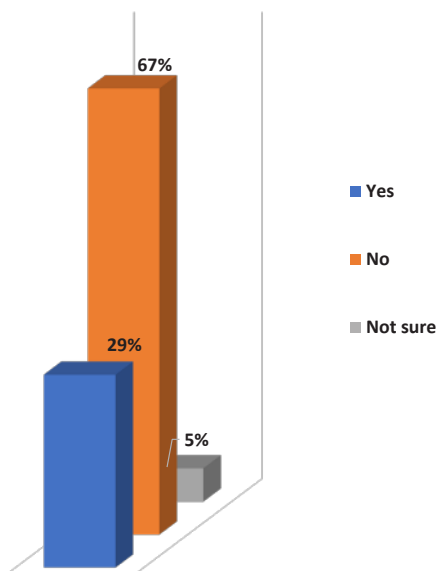
- Overall the children of new technology appear less troubled about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the economy and their job prospects. Less than half (46%) believe that the impact will be either very or somewhat positive while 34% think it will be negative.
- Men are more optimistic (52%-32%) than women (40%-37%), as are those with passports (52%-32%) over those without passports (39%-37%). Hispanics (46%-32%) and African Americans (52%-32%) also weigh in positively.
- But while Democrats (53%-31%) and Republicans (44%-34%) tilt favorably, independents are really mixed (40%-39%).

## Do you own a firearm?



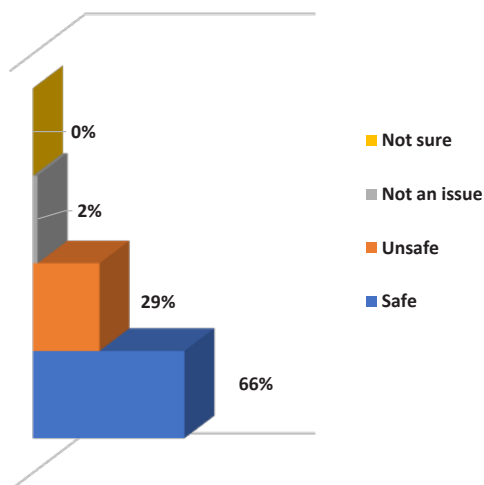
- Seven of ten (71%) report that they don't own a firearm, whereas almost one-quarter (24%) do; leaving 5% who refuse to answer.
- Region plays a factor regarding gun ownership with 13% from the East, 20% from the West, 25% from Central/Great Lakes, and 32% from the South.
- Regarding gun ownership, there is also a noticeable divide between those 18-24 and 25-29 (18% and 30% respectively).

## Have you, a relative, or a friend been directly affected by gun violence?



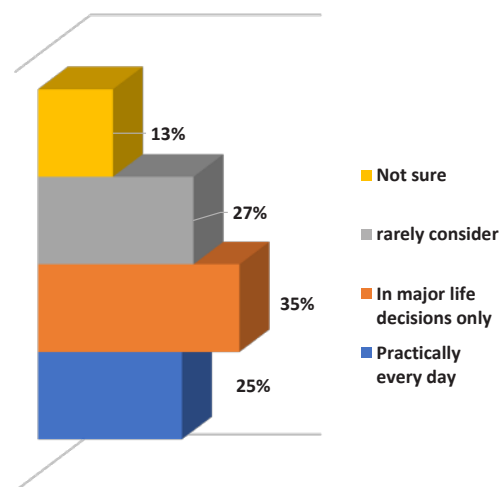
- While almost three of ten (29%) say they have a *relative or friend who has been directly affected by gun violence*, roughly two-thirds (67%) do not.
- African Americans (44%) and Progressives (42%) report notably higher than the overall when it comes to having a relative or a friend directly affected by gun violence.

## Regarding any gun violence in your community, how safe do you feel?



- Two-thirds report that they feel safe in their community, regarding the issue of gun violence. Notably, nearly three of ten (29%) don't.
- Regarding those who feel safest – Republicans (80%) and Whites (74%) lead the way. On the flip side, those who feel least safe include African Americans (45%) and Democrats (39%).

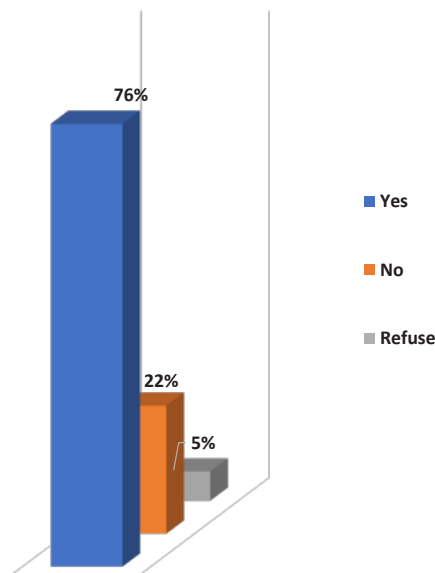
## Which of the following best describes how often you attempt to reduce your carbon footprint?



- Three out of five of these two age cohorts either try to reduce their carbon footprint *practically every day* (25%) or in *major life decisions only* (35%). Only 27% *rarely consider*.
- Not surprisingly, Progressives rank highest among those who select *practically every day* (36%), with Liberals trailing not too far behind at 32%.

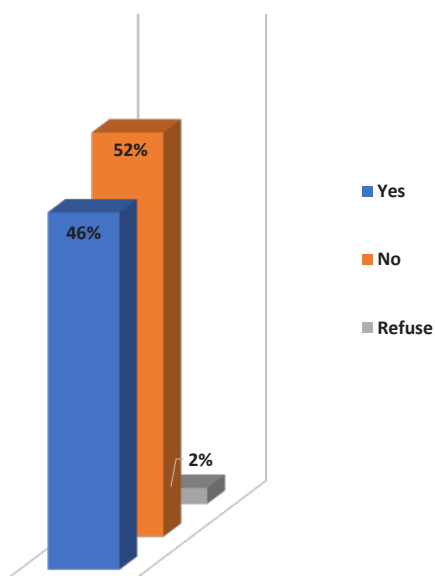


## Do you have a close friend who is... A member of a different race?



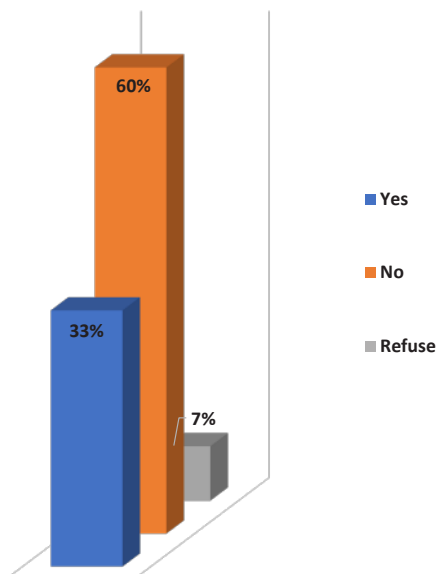
- Overall, the two most diverse cohorts, report over three-quarters (76%) who say they have a friend that is of a different race.
- Regarding race, Whites and Hispanics report highest with 78%, Asians at 74%, and African Americans with 63% who report having a friend of a different race.
- Looking at the full spectrum of ideology also reveals a pattern with 85% of Progressives, 82% of Liberals, 70% of Moderates, 74% of Conservatives, and 60% of those Very Conservative (although they are statistically low) – say they have a friend that is a member of a different race.

## Do you have a close friend who is... An immigrant?



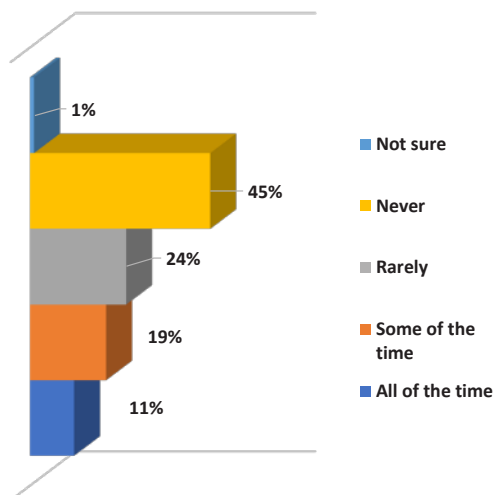
- Our sample is almost evenly split on those who have a friend who is an immigrant and those without.
- A regional breakdown reveals that those from the East are most likely to have an immigrant friend (55%); residents from the West are not far behind with 54%. Those from the South and Central/Great Lakes report lower (41%, 39% respectively).

## Do you have a close friend who is... In the US without legal papers?



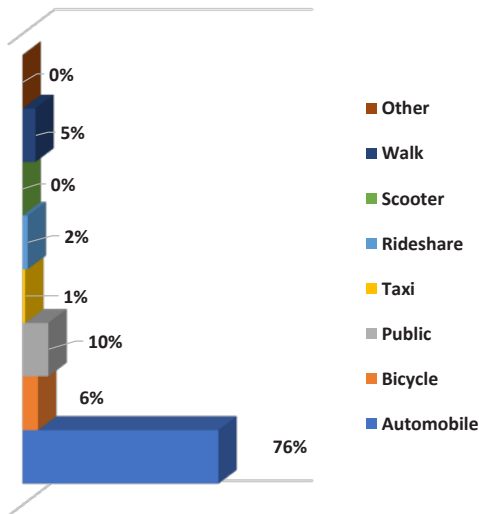
- Of those who say they have an immigrant friend, one third say their friend is without legal papers.

## How frequently would you say you adhere to a vegan or vegetarian diet?



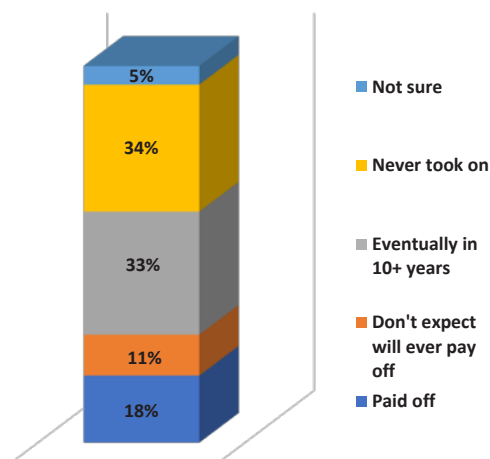
- About one of ten (11%) say they follow a vegan or vegetarian diet *all of the time*. Almost one-fifth (19%) report *some of the time*.

# What is your primary mode of transportation?



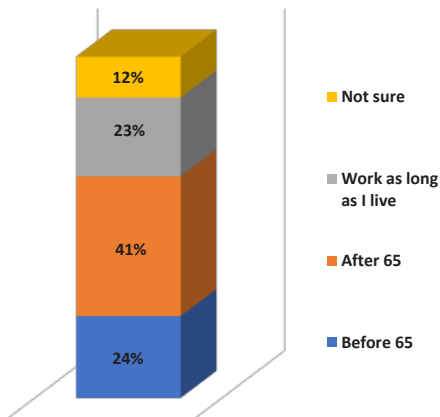
- A super majority (76%) of Gen Z and Millennials primarily rely on a car for transportation. A very distant second place is public transportation (10%).
- There is a noticeable difference between those age 18-24 (69%) and those 25-29 (83%).
- Race is also a factor – 87% of whites, 67% of Hispanics, 63% of Asians, and 57% of African Americans all report that an automobile is their primary mode of getting from place to place.

# Which of the following best describes your college debt situation?



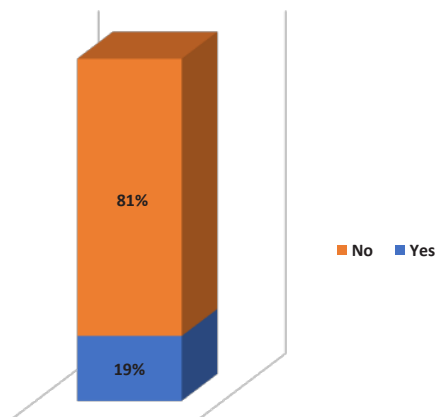
- A plurality (34%) say they have *never taken on any student loan debt*. Another one-third believe *they will pay off their student loan debt, but it will take over ten years to do so*. Almost one-fifth (18%) have paid off their student debt already, and 11% believe they will *never pay it off*.

# Currently, do you expect to retire at some point or work as long as you live?



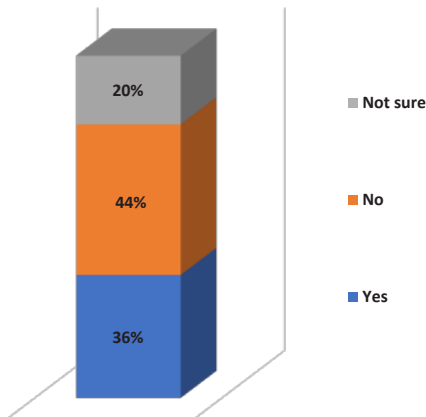
- A plurality (41%) believe they will retire after 65. About one-quarter (24%) believe they will retire before 65, while again, almost one-quarter (23%) believe they will work as long as they live.

## Do you vape



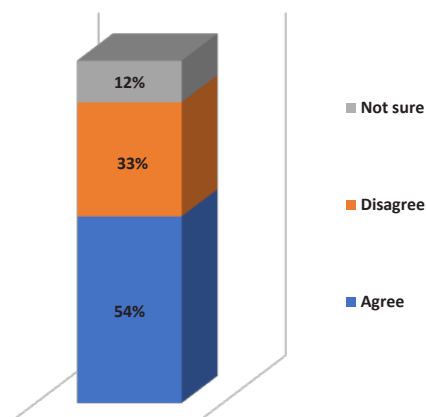
- Four out of five (81%) of survey respondents do not vape.
- Men are slightly more likely to report vaping than women (23% to 14%).

## Do you believe that when you reach the appropriate age, Social Security will still be available for you in the future?



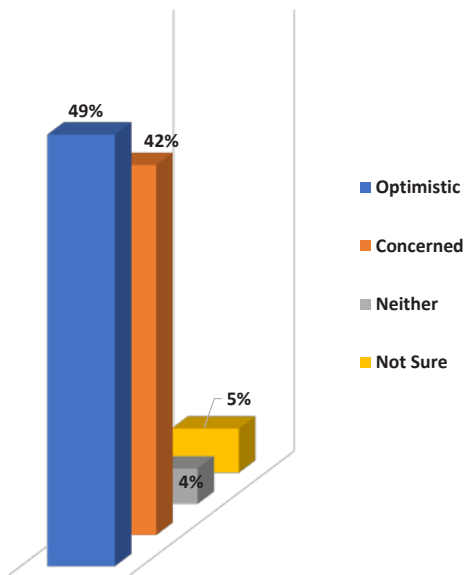
- A plurality of Gen Z and Millennials (44%) do not believe Social Security will be available to them by the time they retire.

## Do you agree or disagree that you will be better off than your parents financially?



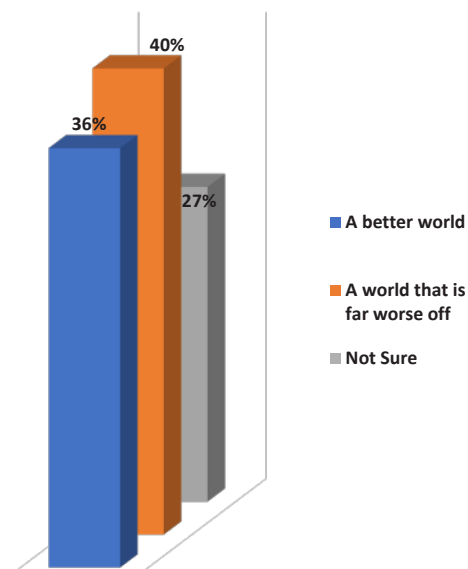
- A slight majority (54%) believe in the most basic form of the American Dream (to be better off financially than your parents) whereas one-third do not believe they will be better off than their parents.
- Race is a factor with 69% of African Americans believing they will be better off than their parents, followed by 56% of Asians, 54% of Hispanics, and 50% of White.

## Which statement best describes your attitude about the future?



- A plurality (49%) are optimistic about their *job prospects and social relationships in a fast-changing world* whereas 42% are concerned about what the future holds for them.
- Men are slightly more optimistic than women (54% to 45%) and those with a valid passport report (55%) are optimistic vs. 43% of those without a passport who report having concern about the future.

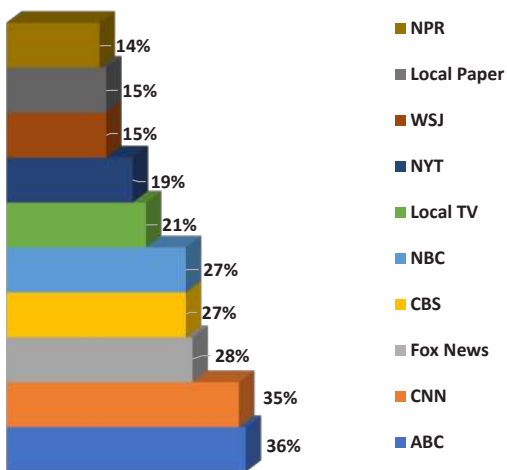
## Do you feel your parents have left you a better world or one that is far worse off?



- Millennials, and in particular Gen Z, have known a world of continuous disruption. It is of little surprise that a plurality (40%) believe their parents have left them with a world far worse off. However, almost the same amount (36%) believe their parents have left them with a better world. Over one-quarter (27%) are not sure.
- Gender plays a significant factor with 41% of Men far more likely to believe a better world vs. just 26% of women.

# Which of the following news sources do you trust in covering the 2020 Presidential election?

## Top 10



- The top 5 consisted of all major networks.
- Race played somewhat of a factor regarding the top 3 choices:
  - Whites – Fox News (33%), ABC (31%), and CNN (31%)
  - Hispanics – CNN (41%), ABC (33%), and CBS (28%)
  - African Americans – ABC (54%), NBC (39%), CBS (37%)
  - Asians – CNN (55%), ABC (39%), and CBS (37%)



**THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS**

*Tom Cochran*

Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director

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