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The Black MILLENNIAL

A Report on Millennials and Voting

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Introduction

The millennial generation, like Generation X and the baby boomers before them are often studied to determine the impact they have on society and its collective views and to identify those things that significantly impacted their generation. Any number of events in science, education, technology, mobility, economics and demographics, to name a few, have all marked the various generations in different ways. For purposes of this report, the authors look at the millennial generation to determine its views on social and political science.

Defining the “millennial” by age is not universally established yet. But for purposes of this report, we adopt the age span of people born between 1981 and 1996.¹ Millennials are a fascinating group to study as they are currently the largest living adult generation in America and demographically, when compared to their parent’s generation, millennials are better educated, more racially and ethnically diverse, slower to marry and older when starting families.

Politically, millennials appear to lean more toward progressive politics than prior generations though their voter turnout has been reported at lower levels than the generations before them. The millennials are increasingly important to consider as their generation will be the next generation in charge of our world and looking at their trends may help determine the nation’s political trajectory.

In the 2018 Midterm elections, Millennials cast 26.1 million votes, far higher than the number of votes they cast in 2014. The voting rates increased the most for the Millennial generation, roughly doubling between 2014 and 2018 – from 22% to 42%.² In the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton won 55 percent of the millennial vote while Donald Trump only garnered the support of 37 percent of the millennial electorate.³

There are over 75 million millennials in America, making up almost a quarter of the total U.S. population and 30% of the voting age population.⁴ Racially, Millennials are about 56% white and 30% are classified as Hispanic, Asian and bi- or multi-racial.⁵ 14% of millennials identify as Black/African American. It is this group of millennials, Black/African American that this report focuses.

As of 2018, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Surveys, Blacks comprised 20 percent of the citizen voting age population in Houston and 22.8 percent of the citizen voting population in Harris County.

1 Using the period used by the Pew Institute. Dimock, Michael. “Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins.” Pew Research Center: Facttank News in the Numbers, 17 Jan. 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins>.

2 Cilluffo, Anthony and Richard Fry. “Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X outvoted older generations in 2018 midterms.” Pew Research Center: Facttank News in the Numbers, 29 May 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/29/gen-z-millennials-and-gen-x-outvoted-older-generations-in-2018-midterms>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

3 Galston, William A. and Clara Hendrickson. “How Millennials voted this election.” The Brookings Institution, 21 Nov. 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2016/11/21/how-millennials-voted>. Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.

4 Frey, William H., “The Millennial Generation: A demographic bridge to America’s diverse future.” Metropolitan Policy Program at The Brookings Institution, Jan. 2018. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-jan_brookings-metro_millennials-a-demographic-bridge-to-americas-diverse-future.pdf.

5 Id.

The Black MILLENNIAL

A Report on Millennials and Voting

Houston elections bear out the strength of the Black vote. In every election that has taken place since 1979, a Black candidate has been elected to one of the five citywide council positions. During this period, non-mayoral Black candidates have won over 30 citywide contests, including the City Controller position in 2009, 2011 and 2013. Black registered voters within the city have propelled several Black mayoral candidates into



a runoff election: Sylvester Turner in 1991, Lee Brown in 1997 and 2001, Gene Locke in 2009 and Sylvester Turner in 2015 and 2019. Of those, Brown’s mayoral candidacy fared well, leading him to become a three time elected Mayor of Houston, and Sylvester Turner in 2015 (2019 is pending).⁶

In September 2019, Democratic candidates for president of the United States of America chose to debate the issues at Texas Southern University, a historically black college/university. Throughout the week of the debate, the school of Public

Affairs, through its political science department, conducted focus groups and surveys to identify and understand what black millennials identified as the pressing issues of the day and where they saw themselves politically and within the larger population.

To be sure, there were certain features of society that stood out with millennials that were also present as more vigorous external forces including technology, changes in the workforce, artificial intelligence, and changing media, all of which were addressed during the focus groups and survey. We found the results from both to be compelling.

Estimated Registered Voters, July 2014

County Com. Prct.	Reg. Voters	White	Black	Spanish-Surnamed	Asian-Surnamed
1	527,359	28.9%	51.4%	16.0%	3.7%
2	429,842	49.2%	12.3%	36.3%	2.1%
3	526,222	60.0%	18.9%	13.9%	7.2%
4	544,891	62.0%	17.5%	16.1%	4.5%
Total	2,028,314	50.1%	25.6%	19.8%	4.5%

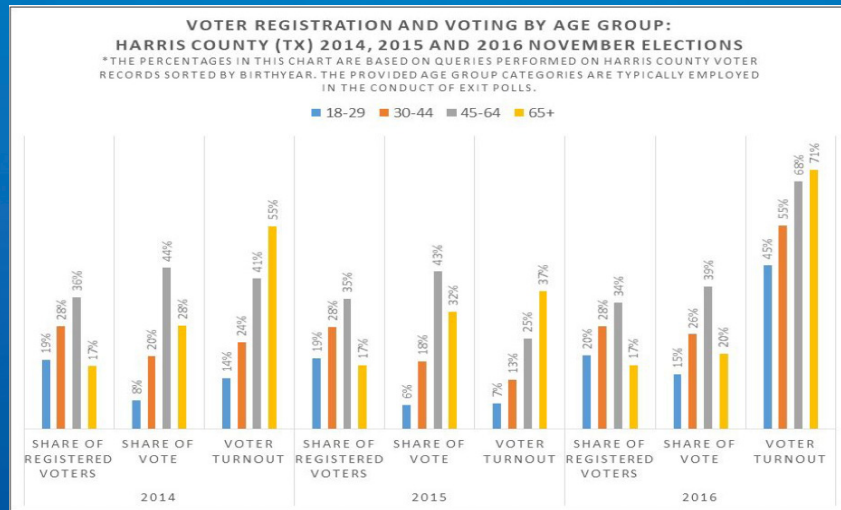
⁶ DeLeon, Hector, “Houston Voter Profile: What Does The Houston Electorate Look Like?” The HECTORDELEON PERSPECTIVE. <http://www.hectordeleon.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Profile-of-Houston-Electorate.pdf>.

Estimated Registered Voters, July 2018					
County Com. Prct.	Reg. Voters	White	Black	Spanish-Surnamed	Asian-Surnamed
1	586,232	27.8%	49.4%	18.8%	4.1%
2	476,793	47.2%	11.8%	38.8%	2.2%
3	597,219	58.1%	18.3%	15.9%	7.7%
4	626,796	60.1%	17.0%	18.1%	4.8%
Total	2,287,040	48.6%	24.6%	22.0%	4.8%

Methodology⁷

- The estimated Spanish-surnamed registered voters were garnered by performing a query using a US Census Bureau List of over 12,000 Spanish-surnames. **NOTE: A query conducted with a larger list of Spanish surnames results in a higher count of Spanish-surnamed registered voters.**
- The estimated Asian registered voters were garnered by performing a query using Lauderdale-Kestenbaum Asian surnamed lists.
- The estimated White and Black registered voters were garnered by isolating the non-Spanish and non-Asian surnamed registered voters and then multiplying it by the White and the Black voting age population percentage.

Voter Registration and Voting by Age Group⁸



7 DeLeon, Hector, "Harris County, TX ESTIMATED Voter Registration Roll Comparison: July 2014 vs July 2018" The HECTOR-DELEON PERSPECTIVE. 5 Aug. 2018. <https://www.hectordeleon.com/harris-county-tx-estimated-voter-registration-roll-comparison-july-2014-vs-july-2018>.

8 DeLeon, Hector, "Voter Registration and Voting by Age Group: Harris County (TX) 2014, 2015 and 2016" The HECTOR-DELEON PERSPECTIVE. 16 Sept. 2018. <https://www.hectordeleon.com/voter-registration-and-voting-by-age-group-harris-county-tx-2014-2015-and-2016-november-elections>.

Millennials and Voting

This report is written to share these findings as we more fervently discuss the state of the black millennial and how their voices will impact society.

This report is designed to address four questions:

1. Who are the black millennials?
2. The results of the Survey and Focus Groups
3. How black millennials assessed the democratic candidates for the 2020 presidential race
4. How black millennials would vote in the presidential and local mayoral races if the elections were held today.

Who are the Black/African American Millennials?

Black millennials are defined, in part, by fluid lines of birth years, which begins around 1981 and ends around 1996. Overall, millennials are a generation shaped by the Iraq War, the Near-Depression, the rebuke of science and climate change, staggering income inequality, high student debt, changing workplace paradigms and the ascension of Barack Obama to the highest political office in America, the Presidency of the United States.

While there is a proliferation of studies of the millennial, generally, studies specifically aimed at black millennials are sparse. There are some indications of who the Black/African American millennial is and, at the risk of engaging somewhat in our own racial profiling, this report attempts to provide a somewhat stereotypical look into this group. First, black millennials appear to be secure with their voices and have, in some circles, been called the movement generation. From vigorous challenges of police and judicial based injustices⁹ to seeking non-traditional ways of realizing their American Dreams, this group unabashedly tells its own story. Second, millennial politicians are looking outside traditional black political seats as they set their sights on becoming mayors, governors and national legislators.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that black millennials are far more likely to live in urban communities rather than in suburban or rural locations. They live at home with their parents longer, marry later and start families at later ages than their grandparents' and parents' generations. Black millennials are less forgiving of America's failures; in the words of one Black millennial, "I thought that, after 400 years in this country, black people wouldn't have to remind the world that our lives matter. But I was wrong."¹⁰

She is not alone. Black millennials think differently from millennials overall on the issue of race. For example,

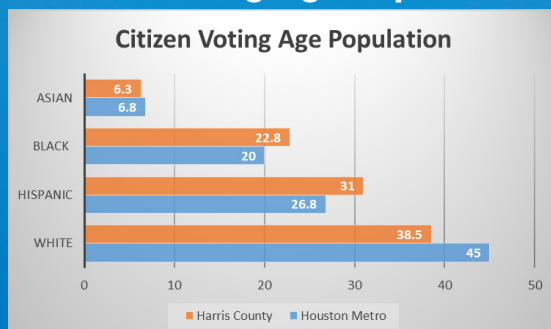
⁹ Black millennials have been at the forefront of challenges to the unjust justice system from the killings of Sean Bell, Aiyana Stanley-Jones and Trayvon Martin to the fight for increased minimum wages to changing the way we think about things like 'reform' which has evolved to 'transforming'.

¹⁰ Allen, Reniqua, "The Missing Black Millennial." The New Republic. available at <https://newrepublic.com/article/153122/missing-black-millennial>. 20 Feb. 2019.

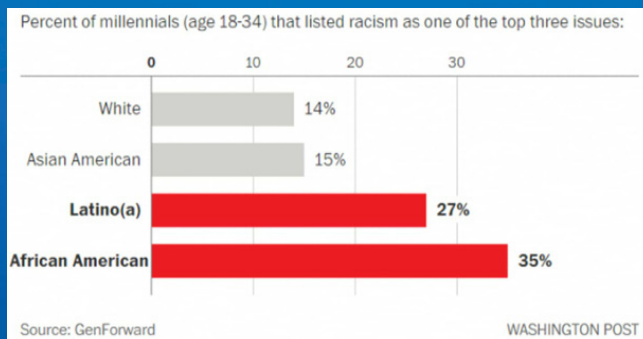
a recent Washington Post study showed that Black millennials are more likely to identify race/racism as a major problem in America and they are more likely than their non-black peers to list police brutality as a top problem in America.

In 2018, Black millennials comprised 33 percent of the black voting age citizens in the Houston metro area and 35 percent of the black voting age citizens in Harris County.¹¹ They also comprised 6.6 percent of the voting age citizens in the Houston metro area and 7.9 percent of the voting age citizens in Harris County. This data shows that black millennials have a greater voting potential than the Asian demographic in Harris County and black millennials' voting potential is slightly less than the Asian demographic in the Houston metro area.¹²

Citizen Voting Age Population



Millennials are Divided Along Racial and Ethnic Lines in the Importance of the Problem of Racism in the Country Today¹³

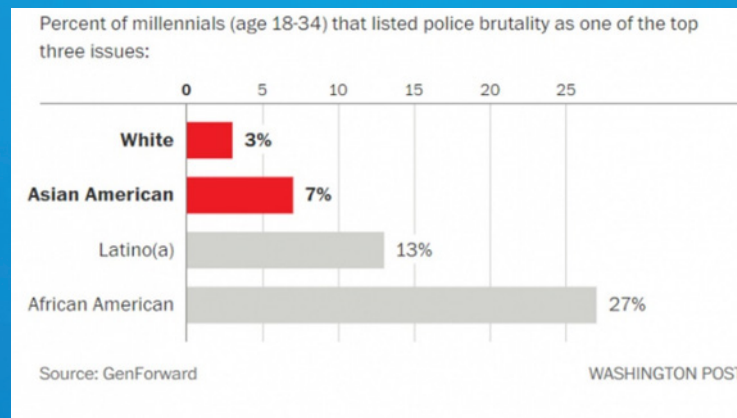


11 Data was calculated from US Census Bureau American Community Surveys 2018. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.

12 Data was calculated from US Census Bureau American Community Surveys 2018. Data for Houston is the Houston Metropolitan Area. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.

13 Lewis, Nicole, "Think millennials are woke? A new poll suggests some are still sleeping on racism." The Washington Post, 10 Aug 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/08/10/think-all-millennials-are-woke-a-new-poll-suggests-some-are-still-sleeping-on-racism>.

African American Millennials Far More Likely to List Police Brutality as a Top Problem in the Country Today¹⁴



“Cashiers are going away, but other jobs are created.”
“There are a shortage of IT professionals. Focus on retraining.”

About the Focus Groups

Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas conducted four focus groups during the week of the Democratic primary debates held on its campus in September 2019. Houston serves as a unique backdrop for this discussion because it has one of the highest metropolitan population growth rates (eighth in the nation) for millennials with a ranking of third in Black Millennials population growth.¹⁵

The focus groups were designed to understand how Black millennials see the world. It looked primarily at their impressions of technology and the changing workforce. Findings revealed that the participants were generally both hopeful and thoughtful.

Members of the first focus group, comprised of a mixture millennials and generation X, expressed concern and optimism about the impact of new technologies on the workforce, and most agreed that technology will eliminate some jobs and create new ones. There was a strong sense that this workforce transformation is already happening and noticeable, with companies like Tesla and Amazon among the most visible.

14 Id.

15 Supra note 4.

Participants in this first focus group were optimistic that, despite the loss of jobs, technology innovations will create new jobs in their place. In order to do this, members of the focus group stressed that the existing workforce needs to be retrained in areas of growing demand. The at-risk areas included jobs in retail, manufacturing, and trucking.¹⁶ The growing demand areas included jobs in IT and STEM fields.¹⁷

The focus group discussed facial recognition technology and how law enforcement should be allowed to utilize the technology when trying to solve crimes. The majority expressed concerns with the accuracy of the facial recognition technology and potential for false arrest. There is additional worry that the imaging of the photographs could vary due to skin tone. Overall, the group believes that thoughtful policies need to be put in place to protect people from the inherent and implicit biases of these types of technological advances.

There was consensus that technology, personal computers and cellphones, should be used in the future for voting for the general population with safe guards in place that protect against security vulnerabilities and voter fraud. The group believed that using these readily accessible electronics would greatly increase voter turnout.

These black millennials embraced celebrities' first amendment rights to use social media and other nontraditional platforms to express their political opinions and leanings. However, when asked how impressive celebrity opinions were the millennials believed that celebrity opinions and sit downs with politicians had little effect on their views of politicians or would not likely sway their vote.

This view on celebrity influence was shared by the second focus group convened to give their opinions. The second focus group, constituted mainly of millennials, found that black millennials are likely heavy consumers of news from a variety of major newspapers and television networks through their digital brands. The group still used traditional news reporting media like ABC News, CNN, The Wall Street Journal, and NPR and found their reporting to be more accurate than other sources. However, but they relied heavily on digital news from Twitter, Snapchat, and Youtube through websites and cellular phone applications and rarely read traditional print newspapers.

The second focus group shared the sentiments of the first focus group regarding the use of technology in voting. One issue they saw arising from the easy accessibility to voting would be that the convenience could encourage disinterested voters to vote but also would encourage people to vote as a joke.

16 Thompson, Derek, "The Silent Crisis of Retail Employment." The Atlantic. 18 April 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/04/the-silent-crisis-of-retail-employment/523428>.

17 Fayer, Stella, Alan Lacey and Audrey Watson, "STEM Occupations: Past, Present, and Future." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. January 2017. <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2017/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future/pdf/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future.pdf>.

About the Survey

Following the democratic primary presidential debates, TSU conducted a survey of 205 participants. The survey respondents were likely voters in the presidential elections as well as the election for Houston's mayor; 58.33% were registered voters in Houston.

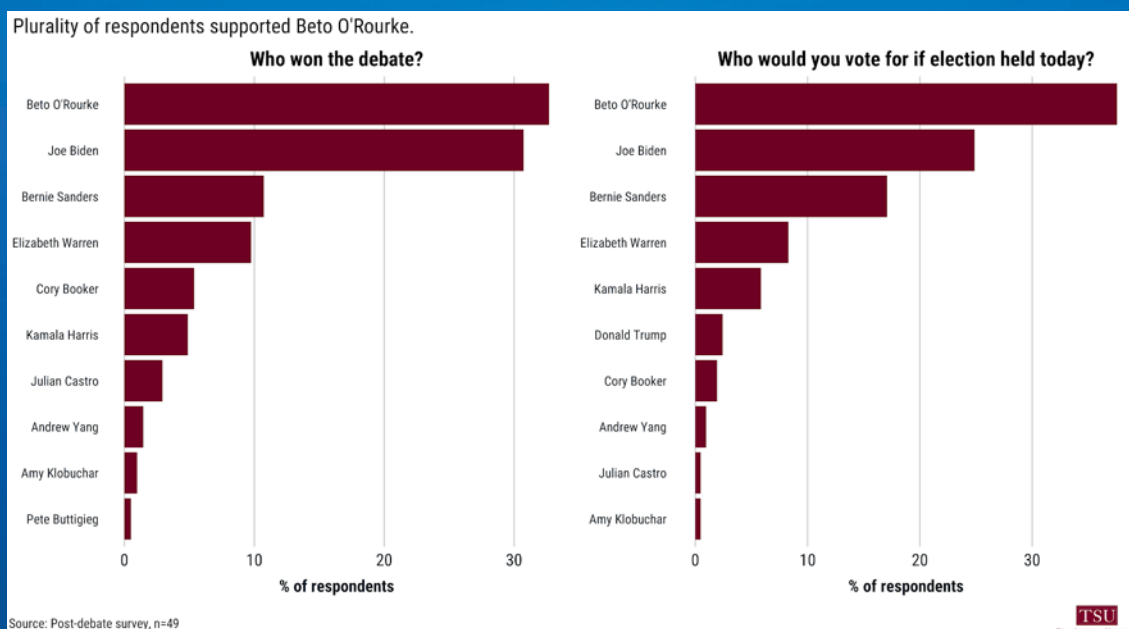
Demographics

The respondents were 63% female, 36% male, 0.5% Non-binary and 0.5% abstained from answering the question. The self-reporting racial breakdown was 85.4% black/African American, 7.8% white, 5.4% multiracial, 1% Asian and 0.5% native Hawaiian/pacific islander. The age grouping was 17-24 (73%), 25-29 (10.2%), 30-39 (9.3%), 40-49 (2.9%), 50-59 (1.5%), 60-60 (1.5%) and unknown (1.5%).

Slightly more than 30% of the respondents thought that Beto O'Rourke won the debate, followed by Joe Biden at a little over 30%. The remaining candidates had 10% or less support among the black millennials, with Pete Buttigieg polling last at about 1%.

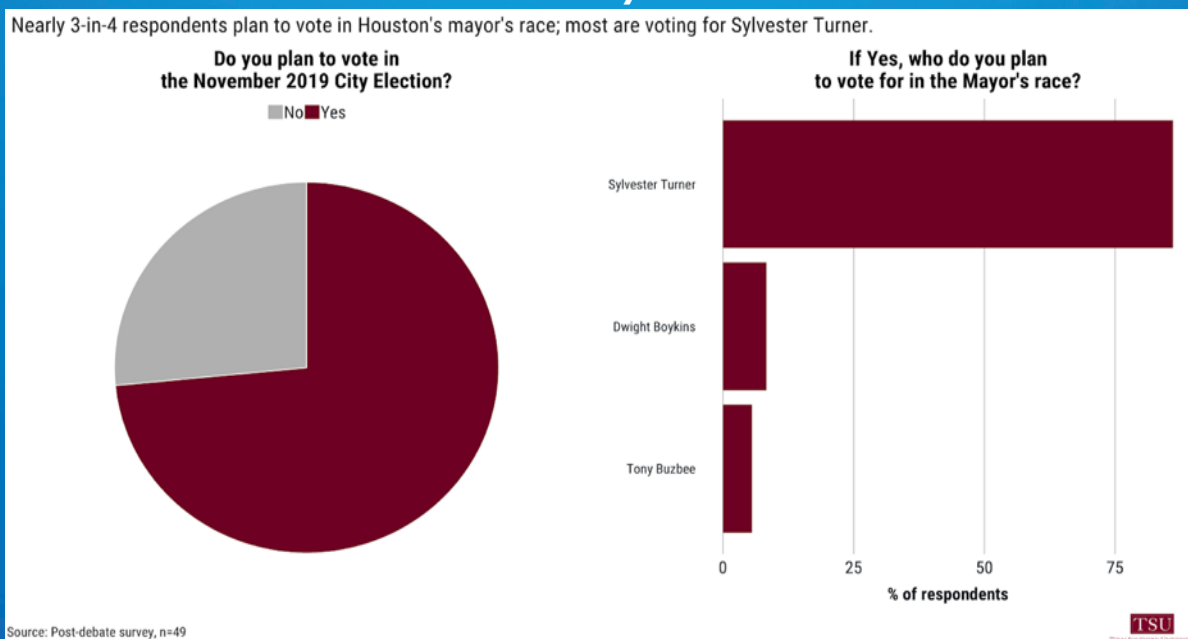
When asked who they would vote for for president if the election was held today, about 38% responded Beto O'Rourke. Joe Biden came in at a distant 25% with Amy Klobucher and Julian Castro polling last at about 1%.

Who Won and Who Would You Vote For?



The post-debate respondents were also asked about their preferences in the upcoming Houston mayoral election. Respondents showed a clear preference for Sylvester Turner, who was by far the favorite with about 80% of the respondents supporting his candidacy. Dwight Boykins polled second at about 12% ahead of Tony Buzbee who was favored by about 8%.

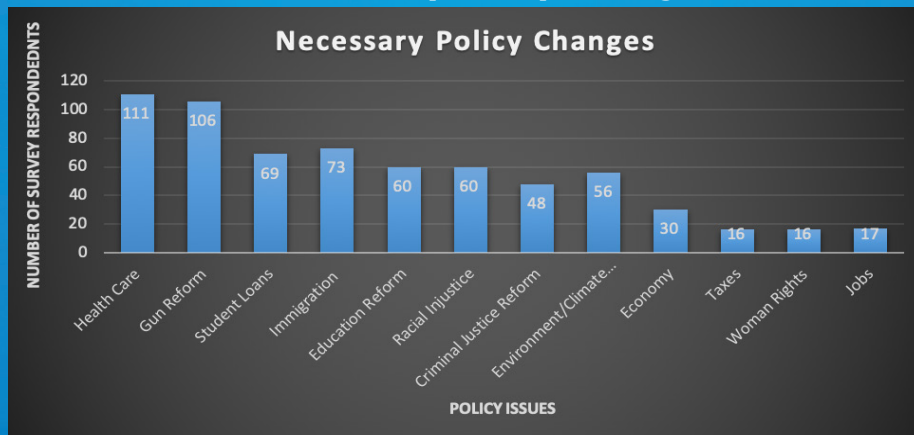
Houston Mayor's Race



What are the most important policy issues that need to be addressed by Congress and the President?

The survey respondents were asked to name the three most important public policy issues facing America that Congress and the President need to address. This question was a write-in question where rather than selecting from an answer bank of choices, the respondents could select any policy issue. The two overwhelming choices were Healthcare and Gun law reform with 111 and 106 individuals selecting these choices respectfully. The next top issues in order were immigration laws (73), student loans (69), racial injustice (60), education reform (60), environment/climate change (56), criminal justice reform (48) and the economy (30). The rest of the choices with over 10 respondents choosing that policy issue can be seen in the chart below. The choices that were limited to five respondents or less choosing an issue were left off this reporting.

Necessary Policy Changes



Conclusion

Black/African American millennials have not been often studied when compared to their white counterparts but they are highly engaged and aware of current events and politics. They trend toward being registered democrats but appear open to other parties. For example, more of them supported Trump for reelection, about 5% which is greater than those who supported Corey Booker (4%), Andrew Yang (3.5%) or Julian Castro and Amy Klobucher (each at about 1%).

They are hopeful for their futures and the future of the United States, but suffer traumatic disappointment from the state of race, the justice system and the grossly disparate family incomes. This report provides a limited view of this dynamic generation which should be studied more closely and on a much broader scale.



Their voices are strong and compelling... we should listen.



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