



NOVEMBER 2016

# CAUSE, INFLUENCE & THE WORKPLACE

**The Millennial Impact Report Retrospective:** Five Years of Trends

Research by  ACHIEVE

Supported by  THE CASE FOUNDATION

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# CAUSE, INFLUENCE & THE WORKPLACE

The Millennial Impact Report Retrospective: Five Years of Trends



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# A LETTER FROM DERRICK FELDMANN

*President of Achieve*

Dear Reader,


In five years of research, we've heard from more than 75,000 millennials—and we're not done yet. As we release this retrospective, we are interviewing millennials about their activities related to the historic 2016 presidential election. The interviews are the final step in nine months of data collection for our first study of how this generation's attitudes and behaviors toward causes might change during our country's most public event.

We have released preliminary reports for the first two waves of the pre-election research and will publish the complete report in early 2017. We think our findings on how millennials have viewed themselves and behaved during this election cycle will surprise many.

Without a doubt, when combined with the trends and conclusions presented in the five-year retrospective you are about to read, this year's data will refine the unfolding narrative of the millennial generation.

Our goal from the start has been to give millennials a voice in building this narrative. I believe we have achieved that goal, and I'm proud of our team for the measures they have taken to make sure millennials could be heard. Our qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection have consistently revealed a much more complex generation than believed, one whose members are seeking engagement through authentic experiences with the causes they care about.

This generation will influence how causes raise funds and engagement far into the future. To us, it's an exciting future to contemplate—and to be prepared for.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derrick Feldmann', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Derrick Feldmann**  
President, Achieve

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Achieve, sponsored by the Case Foundation, has studied the behavior and attitudes of millennials (those born 1980-2000) since 2009. The Achieve research team assessed the data and conclusions reported during the first five years to identify any trends or anomalies previously undetectable.

When we began our research, this generation was most often described in negative terms: Lazy. Apathetic. Entitled. Five years later, we have amassed data that inarguably refutes those notions. As a result, we have reached one overarching conclusion:

**The size and force of the millennial generation combined with social media and pivotal world events of the past five years require nonprofits to develop new ways of engaging audiences lest they risk being left behind as millennial preferences fundamentally alter cause engagement.**

In analyzing five years of research data, we identified six common findings:

1. Intrinsic passion for a cause is millennials' primary motivator.
2. Millennials volunteer and give modestly to multiple causes in early engagement.
3. Among millennials, women give more money than men, and older individuals more than younger ones; larger donations correlate with higher total volunteer hours.
4. Peers are a critical influence on millennial giving.
5. Millennials want to use and develop their skills through cause engagement.
6. Millennials learn about and donate to causes digitally, using each platform distinctly.

Analysis of the research as a whole brought us to the following key conclusions:

- Millennial engagement in causes is moving from cursory interest to activism, reflecting a maturation of the generation's inherent desire to do good.
- Millennial engagement with causes will expand as this generation ages and as causes learn to connect with individuals more effectively.
- Millennial preferences in cause engagement will alter current models of giving and views on how to effect change in the world.

Why do these findings matter, and what can causes do with the information presented here?

The common findings and conclusions reported here support the research team's early hypothesis that this generation is eager to connect, get involved with and give to causes they are (or become) passionate about. They do not separate their personal lives from their professional lives in this desire; regardless of what brings them to a cause, they are most interested in making a valuable, and valued, contribution toward improving their world.

These data are a reliable assessment of what soon will be most causes' largest source of donors and supporters. Nonprofits, causes and the companies that support them can use the information presented here to inform decisions related to growth, recruitment, fundraising and sustainability for many years to come.

### **A Look Ahead to the 2016 Millennial Impact Report**

Understanding the millennial vote during the 2016 presidential election.

We began tracking millennials' behavior nine months prior to the election. Ours was one of a very few, if not the only, study published (Wave 1, released on June 21, 2016, and Wave 2, released on October 26, 2016,) showing that a greater number of millennials identified themselves as conservative-leaning than any other political ideology (Wave 1). The day immediately following the vote, we surveyed millennials about their election-day behavior and will follow up on these responses during the qualitative methods phase of the study that begins later this year.

The full 2016 Millennial Impact Report will provide valuable insight into what became a truly unpredictable election cycle. Are millennials still idealistic? Do they still value authentic experiences? How do they feel about causes post-election as compared to six months earlier? Our report will help answer these and many other burning questions. Publication is scheduled for early 2017.

# MILLENNIALS: WHY WE STUDY THEM

We have had the rare opportunity of studying the beginning of a generation born into a world far removed from that of their predecessors. These millennials—people born between 1980 and 2000—are replacing baby boomers as consumers and coworkers. To ensure they also replace retiring nonprofit donors, nonprofits must understand their intrinsic motivations.

The potential influence of this new segment of our population cannot be overstated. Millennials make up the nation’s largest living generation. Already at 75.4 million, their numbers are expected to peak in 2036 at 81.1 million, surpassing the baby boomers’ highest peak by nearly 3 million (U.S. Census Bureau, April 2016).

We know that their baby boomer parents grew up in a time where consumers tended to remain at the same job or company and support the same institutions for many years. Millennials, however, have taken advantage of the personal and professional opportunities afforded by a global economy and digital connectivity. They travel more, buy more, change jobs more, obtain more education, develop relationships far differently and share more personal information than any previous generation.

<b>75.4 million U.S. millennials in 2016</b>	<b>\$300 billion annual spending</b>
<b>Will peak at 81.1 million in 2036</b>	<b>Will be 50% of workforce by 2020</b>

Moreover, millennial lives have been stamped with world events unknown to other generations. Millennials were the first young people whose growing-up years are forever characterized with the frightening unpredictability of terrorist attacks, global government crises and a periodically unstable U.S. economy. These dynamics have taught millennials that the only certainty in their lives is uncertainty.

Meanwhile, as this generation began to grow in size and enter adulthood, capitalism and consumerism took notice. For-profit companies recognized the need to capture this group’s attention as a fresh audience for their products and services. Nonprofits, too, knew that their donor base was beginning to change, but not surprisingly, most did not have the resources to conduct major studies or new test marketing programs.

Achieve, a research and marketing agency for causes, and the Case Foundation, a pioneer in risk taking and innovative philanthropy, decided to become partners in their desire to provide research-based information about millennials to organizations trying to understand and better engage this generation as donors, volunteers and employees.

We knew that previous studies assessing millennial donors and volunteers had been executed, but only from the cause's point of view. Thus, we created the Millennial Impact Report to examine them from the millennials' viewpoint by allowing millennials to express their preferences and describe their interests in causes themselves.

We quickly began uncovering evidence that brought many assumptions about this generation into question. As our research progressed, we expanded our scope of interest to include millennial behaviors related to universities soliciting these young people, as well as to the employers using cause involvement to recruit and retain them.

Over the past five years, our comprehensive, evidence-based research has revealed that this generation is eager to connect, get involved with and give to causes they're passionate about. We also have been able to conclude that millennials do not distinguish between their personal and professional lives when engaging in causes. No matter what part of their life brings them to the cause—friends, family, university, co-workers, employer—they are most interested in making a valuable, and valued, contribution.

This five-year retrospective attempts to apply findings from half a decade to a comprehensive understanding of millennial interests, engagements and motivations as they relate to cause work, whether it's by giving, volunteering, social media sharing, activism, employment or voting in a national election.

The 2016 Millennial Impact Report will be published in early 2017, and the 2017 Millennial Impact Report is already in the planning stages. Our research is complemented by our annual MCON gathering, which brings together leaders from a cross-section of industries and causes to explore new strategies and insights for millennial engagement.

We are continuing to study this fascinating generation because we still see stereotypes applied to them. Though our research repeatedly has shown this not to be the case, *The Washington Post* reported as recently as June 2015 that

*“...stingy participation in traditional workplace corporate social responsibility programs may have helped forge the notion that the famously self-involved millennials are selfish. A recent Reason-Rupe poll shows that a majority of Americans, including millennials themselves, describe the generation as “selfish” and “entitled.”*

Allowing the misconceptions and misunderstandings of this generation to stand would be to the detriment of the individuals in the cohort as well as to the causes and nonprofits that need a clear picture of this growing audience.

The youngest members of this generation are just 16 years old. Where their predecessors had barely begun to care about causes at their age, these young people have spent every minute of their lives amid a generation of individuals eager to connect, get involved with and give to causes they’re passionate about.

Society’s future looks bright, and Achieve will continue to be a thought leader in the dialogue about this remarkable generation.



# REPORT FOCUS SUMMARIES

## 2011 MILLENNIAL DONORS REPORT

The initial Millennial Donor Survey and Millennial Donors Report, published in 2010 and 2011, respectively, revealed that donors in the up-and-coming generation were generous people who, though they appreciated and were highly involved with technology, made their philanthropic decisions based more on personal connections than virtual ones.

## 2012 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

Research for the 2012 report found more evidence supporting the giving approaches in the prior study, along with new indications that this otherwise progressive generation had some traditional notions. Most notably, trust played a huge role in their giving decisions, and, along the same line, they were more likely to volunteer for organizations if they had already donated to them.

## 2013 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

In 2013, researchers focused on how nonprofits might fully invest in the millennial generation by diving deeper into the influence of peer engagement and fundraising design/messaging. Data revealed millennials were interested in the people and issues organizations help rather than in the institutions themselves.

## 2014 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

As companies increasingly relied on corporate social responsibility (initiatives to help people and communities) as assets to inspire recruitment, retention and productivity, they naturally were partnering with nonprofits on social issues in greater numbers than ever before. To improve nonprofits' understanding of what programs and partnerships would resonate with the next generation of employees, the 2014 research focused on millennials' preferences in the workplace—how they engaged with their employers and what they looked for in corporate cause work.

## 2015 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

Building on our examination of employee workplace preferences in 2014, our 2015 research sought to pinpoint who and what influences millennial employees to become actively involved in company cause work.

## 2016 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

Few events in the U.S. bring social issues and causes to the forefront more than presidential election cycles. Research consistently indicates millennials value cause engagement. Would a presidential election affect this generation's philanthropic interests and involvement? This research is underway, with the first two of three wave trends reports already published at [themillennialimpact.com](http://themillennialimpact.com).

# TRENDS AND KEY FINDINGS

We have culled the following findings and trends from five years of qualitative and quantitative research. Organizations can rely on these to inform their decision-making processes for the future.

**Common Finding 1: Intrinsic passion** for a cause is what inspires millennials to act charitably. However, others can cultivate philanthropic behavior using key extrinsic motivators.

**FIVE-YEAR DATA SUPPORTING THIS FINDING** *(Note: Because survey questions fit the report’s unique focus each year, it is impossible to compare line items from one year to the next.)*

2011

84% volunteered due to a compelling mission or cause

85% gave due to a compelling mission or cause:

52% education-related

50% human service

35% religious

33% arts and culture

2012

42% gave to whatever inspired them in the moment

2013

79% volunteered for a cause they were passionate about

69% gave when inspired by a nonprofit

2014 (employees)

92% gave to a company that had a positive effect on the world

55% said a company’s cause work helped persuade them to accept a job

2015 (employees)

31% gave to a company-sponsored program due to passion about the cause/issue

29% participated in workplace volunteering due to passion about the cause,

8% due to an incentive; overall, 79% felt they made a difference

43% would be more likely to give if part of a competition

31% who gave to a workplace campaign said employer matched a portion of the gift

13% gave to a workplace campaign because of a matching gift

56% of employees and 51% of managers would be more likely to volunteer if incentivized

69% of employees and 77% of managers would be more likely to give if their company matched that gift

## Common Finding 2: The majority of millennials volunteered and gave charitably in modest amounts to multiple nonprofits.

**FIVE-YEAR DATA SUPPORTING THIS FINDING** (Note: Because survey questions fit the report's unique focus each year, it is impossible to compare line items from one year to the next.)

### 2011

- 79%** volunteered in past year
- 93%** gave to a nonprofit in past year
- 58%** gave single largest gift of less than \$150
- 63%** gave to three or more nonprofits

### 2012

- 63%** volunteered in past year
  - 58%** short-term project
  - 46%** ongoing
- 75%** gave to nonprofit in past year
  - 68%** gave single largest gift of \$150 or less
- Typical respondent gave to **five** nonprofits; **87%** expected to support at least as many the following year

### 2013

- 73%** volunteered in past year
- 83%** gave to nonprofit in past year
- 63%** said single largest gift was \$100 or less

### 2014 (employees)

- 47%** volunteered in past month
- 87%** gave to nonprofit in past year
- 65%** gave up to \$499

### 2015 (employees)

- 72%** volunteered in past year
- 84%** gave to nonprofit in past year
- 67%** gave up to \$499

**Common Finding 3: Female millennials give more financial support than males**, and older millennials give more financial support than younger ones. In addition, larger donations correlate with more volunteer hours in all segments.

**FIVE-YEAR DATA SUPPORTING THIS FINDING** *(Note: Because survey questions fit the report's unique focus each year, it is impossible to compare line items from one year to the next.)*

## 2011

Millennials ages 30-35 gave substantially more money to nonprofits during the past year than did millennial donors ages 20-29

**19%** who gave \$1,000 and up volunteered once a week, while only **11%** of those who donated less than \$1,000 volunteered as often

## 2012

**37%** preferred to support a nonprofit by giving both money and time

## 2014 (employees)

**91%** of females donated to charities, compared to **84%** of males

**54%** of females gave through a company-sponsored campaign, compared to **45%** of males

**91%** older than 30 donated to a nonprofit, compared to **85%** of employees ages 25-30

**57%** older than 30 had participated in an employee giving campaign, compared to **45%** of those ages 25-30

## 2015 (employees)

Females volunteered **4%** more than males

Females gave **3%** more to company-sponsored cause campaigns than males

Females were **4%** more likely than males to donate and **6%** more likely to volunteer due to passion about the cause

Male managers are **6%** more likely than females to donate when incentivized

## Common Finding 4: Peer-to-peer engagement, including that which occurs in the workplace, is a critical influence on and vehicle through which millennials charitably give and volunteer.

**FIVE-YEAR DATA SUPPORTING THIS FINDING** (Note: Because survey questions fit the report's unique focus each year, it is impossible to compare line items from one year to the next.)

### 2011

- 52%** gave charitably because of a friend or peer endorsement
- 61%** prefer to volunteer with family and friends, **56%** with an organized group

### 2012

- 64%** helped raise money by spreading the word about an organization's work
- 84%** called on friends, 80% on family and 49% on co-workers when fundraising for an organization

### 2013

- 56%** volunteered to maximize their social connectedness
- 75%** liked, retweeted or shared a nonprofit's social media content
- 46%** preferred asking people to donate to a designated nonprofit in lieu of physical gifts
- 45%** were not afraid to ask family and friends for money when they felt strongly about a cause

### 2014 (employees)

- 87%** felt encouraged to volunteer or participate in their company's cause work or community initiatives
- 77%** preferred to engage in cause work with groups of fellow employees—**62%** with their departmental co-workers—over doing so independently
- 44%** participated in a company-wide service day
- 47%** volunteered for a service project with their team or department
- 54%** of female and **45%** of male employees gave charitably through a workplace giving campaign

### 2015 (employees)

- 22%** gave in response to employer solicitations in past year
- 48%** have donated to a workplace campaign in their lifetime
- 50%** have volunteered for a company-sponsored initiative at some point in their career
- 45%** of employees said some of their past year's volunteer time was through company-offered or -promoted opportunities
- 14%** participated in workplace volunteering because a peer or coworker asked
- 46%** were more likely to make a donation and **65%** to volunteer if a co-worker asked and/or participated
- 27%** would be more likely to make a donation and **44%** to volunteer if a supervisor participated
- 21%** would be more likely to donate if a CEO asked them



## Common Finding 5: Opportunities to use and develop skills and areas of expertise are prime motivators in millennials' philanthropic engagement.

**FIVE-YEAR DATA SUPPORTING THIS FINDING** (Note: Because survey questions fit the report's unique focus each year, it is impossible to compare line items from one year to the next.)

### 2011

**40%** were moved to volunteer by networking or professional development opportunities  
**43%** were already involved or interested in joining a young professionals group;  
**77%** were interested because of networking opportunities, while **75%** were interested due to professional development opportunities

### 2012

**48%** wanted to use their educational background or professional expertise to help a nonprofit  
**57%** were involved as a nonprofit board, committee or young board/committee member

### 2013

**46%** volunteered to broaden their skillset  
**72%** were interested in joining a young professionals group  
**30%** were interested in serving on a nonprofit organization's board or advisory committee

### 2014 (employees)

**53%** were inspired to work where they could use their passions and talents to the fullest  
**94%** enjoyed using their skills to help a cause  
**44%** actively volunteered their skills to help a cause

### 2015 (employees)

**25%** of millennial employees volunteered through work to use their skills or expertise  
**77%** would be more likely to volunteer if they could use their specific skills or expertise to benefit a cause

**Common Finding 6: Millennials primarily use digital technology** (websites, social media, mobile platforms, applications) to access information about and donate to causes and nonprofits, yet each platform plays a distinct role.

**FIVE-YEAR DATA SUPPORTING THIS FINDING** (Note: Because survey questions fit the report's unique focus each year, it is impossible to compare line items from one year to the next.)

## 2011

**71%** gathered information about nonprofit organizations via website search  
**62%** preferred to learn about an organization through email;  
**58%** preferred to give directly through the organization's website  
**6%** donated via text, **4%** via Facebook and **1%** via mobile apps

## 2012

**77%** had smartphones; among those, **79%** interacted with a nonprofit via that phone  
How? **67%** sent or read an email, **51%** read or posted on Facebook  
Facebook was by far the most popular social media platform for online interaction, with **67%** doing so.  
How would they use Facebook? **74%** would share information about "cool events,"  
**69%** would share statistics and **65%** news about the cause  
**65%** prefer to learn about a nonprofit by visiting their website; **55%** prefer social media,  
and **65%** prefer news and updates delivered by email  
**70%** prefer to donate and **72%** prefer to learn about volunteer opportunities through a nonprofit organization's website

## 2013

**83%** had smartphones.  
How did they use them? **80%** read emails and articles about nonprofits, and **70%** accessed information about a nonprofit via Facebook  
**49%** actively followed and **65%** actively connected to 1-5 nonprofits on social media  
How? **75%** liked, retweeted or shared content, **46%** donated to the cause, **45%** read a blog post, **47%** signed a petition or pledge and **40%** requested help from their network  
**65%** received emails or e-newsletters from 1-5 nonprofits, **52%** signed a petition or pledge, **52%** donated, and **49%** shared or forwarded news  
**84%** donated to an organization through its website

## 2014 (employees)

**93%** learned about a company's cause work through its website  
Very few used Facebook (**22%**), LinkedIn (**12%**) or Twitter (**11%**) to do the same

## 2015 (employees)

**30%** donated through an online/mobile platform other than the organization's website

# FIVE-YEAR SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

**Millennial engagement in causes is moving from cursory interest to activism, reflecting a maturation of the generation's inherent desire to do good.**

Early in the life of this generation, the term “millennial” became equated with apathy and entitlement in the public discourse. Five years of research has illustrated to us that, on the contrary, millennials are intrinsically motivated to do good. Their engagement begins with efforts to stay informed about causes they become interested in, usually through cursory social media activity. When deeply moved, however, they start to actively champion causes, using crowdsourcing platforms and social media to raise funds, volunteers and awareness for those causes.

**Millennial engagement with causes will expand as this generation ages and as causes learn to connect with individuals more effectively.**

To become interested and begin engagement, a millennial must receive a cause's message. To a generation that grew up without digital technology, this generation's use of it may appear obsessive; however, our research reveals digital technology plays a vital role in how millennials engage with causes and influence each other to do so. After all, this is the way millennials interact with the world today. Thus, causes that fail to create a social media strategy to “deeply move” millennials do so at their own risk.

As they age, millennials' cause engagement tends to strengthen. Young millennials distribute their resources modestly across multiple nonprofits, mostly in the areas of education, human services, religion, and arts and culture; in doing so, they consider their time, talent and money as resources of equal value. Older millennials dedicate an increasingly larger portion of their resources and do so in a more targeted fashion.

**Millennial preferences in cause engagement will alter current models of giving and views on how to effect change in the world.**

Millennials are already involved in cause work and, to some extent, are already redefining parts of it. They do not respond to the “ladder of engagement” model long used by nonprofit organizations, wherein the cause’s needs supersede the audience’s preferences. Instead, they follow a self-directed path of discovery, learning and action on behalf of a cause, a journey in which their personal and professional personas are no longer divided. This impulsive and opportunistic engagement model reinforces the sense of authenticity in the experience, something our research has shown is extraordinarily important to this generation.

Along this path of discovery, millennials develop skills and expertise by inspiring and coordinating cause involvement within their existing social networks, both online and off. As their relationships with others naturally multiply and deepen through adulthood, the effects of millennials’ philanthropic behaviors and especially their better-informed activism also will multiply. Concurrently, they will be educating and engaging future generations of philanthropists and activists, reshaping the cause space and how we all achieve success within it.

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**Sneak Peak: 2016 Millennial Impact Report**

What part did millennials play in the outcome of the 2016 election?

We began tracking millennials’ behavior nine months prior to the election. Ours was one of a very few, if not the only, study published (Wave 1, released on June 21, 2016, and Wave 2, released on October 26, 2016,) showing that a greater number of millennials identified themselves as conservative-leaning than any other political ideology.

The day immediately following the vote, we surveyed millennials about their election-day behavior and will follow up on these responses during the qualitative methods phase of the study that begins later this year. While these are still underway, we are finding Donald Trump supporters who may not have identified as such prior to the election. So far, those who voted for Trump have said he appealed to them “because he is a businessman.”

The full 2016 Millennial Impact Report will provide valuable insight into what became a truly unpredictable election cycle. Are millennials still idealistic? Do they still value authentic experiences? How do they feel about causes post-election as compared to six months earlier? Our report will help answer these and many other burning questions. Publication is scheduled for early 2017.

## Wave 2 Findings:

*(as published October 2016)*

- Education and health care remain the first- and second- highest social issues of interest for millennials, but employment/wages edged out the economy as the third-highest issue of interest.
- More than a quarter of millennials surveyed do not want to vote for either major party candidate.
- Millennials continue to have some level of trust in government to do what is right, though the majority don't rate that trust as high.
- Millennials still consider themselves activists, but without showing a strong affinity for direct action in support of or opposition to an issue.
- Slightly fewer millennials believe people like them can help make the United States a better place to live, with the biggest drop seen among females.
- Facebook is still the most popular social media platform on which millennials post about issues they care for, and the majority of millennials posted about an issue on social media in the past week.

One conclusion we can state with certainty: **We all still have much to learn about this generation.**



# FUTURE OF THE MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

## **2016 Millennial Impact Report**

Few events in the United States make social issues and affiliated causes as public and popular as presidential election cycles. Started in March 2016, this year's research is investigating how millennials' cause engagement behaviors may change during an election year, and how these changes may be influenced by significant demographics—political ideologies, geographical location, age, gender and race/ethnicity—or by the candidates for election. We have presented the results of the first two of three waves, each wave to contain three months of survey data. Researchers will follow up these surveys with qualitative interviews to investigate why millennials responded the way they did. A final summary report will be released in early 2017. The trends detailed within this report will aid causes and organizations in their preparation for the future, guiding them in planning efforts to best engage and motivate this generation for their social issue during a future election year.

## **2017: Social Issues**

The 2017 Millennial Impact Report will delve deeper into one aspect of the 2016 report: millennials' interest in social issues and social justice.

## **themillennialimpact.com**

Achieve and the Case Foundation strive to make information about our research and findings available online. The repository for all Millennial Impact Reports, #GivingTuesday2015, the Millennial Impact Four-Year Summary, the 2015 MIR Six-Month Update, the Millennial Impact Top 100, the 2015 Millennial Impact Report webinar and Millennial Impact Benchmarks is online at [themillennialimpact.com/research](http://themillennialimpact.com/research). On providing your name and email address, you will be able to download any report listed. We will continue to make reports available on this site in the future.

## **Interactive Data**

The Achieve team is investigating methods for publishing Millennial Impact Report data online in a manner that will allow the general public to carry out basic data mining.

