

# WHO IS MORE INVOLVED IN CAUSES TODAY, WOMEN OR MEN? YOU MAY BE SURPRISED.

A research study brief from the 2017 Millennial Impact Report detailing gender differences in cause-related behavior.

Historically, the Millennial Impact Project has witnessed females to be more engaged in philanthropic behavior than males.<sup>1</sup> However, based on dramatically reduced levels of engagement in the past year, women's belief that social change is possible seems to have suffered. Male millennials, on the other hand, have either maintained or increased their cause-related involvement and their positive outlook.

What prompts these widely dissimilar attitudes between the genders?

Researchers from Achieve have studied millennials, those born 1980-2000, for nearly a decade. These latest findings are from research conducted for *The Power of Voice: A New Era of Cause Activation & Social Issue Adoption*, the 2017 Millennial Impact Report. The ongoing Millennial Impact Project is supported by the Case Foundation.

1 - 2016 Millennial Impact Report, p. 29.

Note: References to male millennials and female millennials reflect survey respondents' self-identification.



## Key Findings in Gender-Based Cause Behavior

We began studying cause-related behavior in light of a presidential election campaign in early 2016 and completed the second phase of our 2017 research in August, well into the new president's first year in office. During our analysis, a few things became evident as we drew correlations between gender and cause-related behaviors.

### ► GENDER SHIFTS IN VOTING INTENT BEGAN EARLY IN 2016.

In every presidential election since 1980, the proportion of eligible female adults in the general population who voted has exceeded the proportion of eligible male adults who voted<sup>2</sup>. Did millennials reflect the same gender difference in the 2016 election?

No, they did not. Among millennials, more males said they registered to vote than females, and more males than females reported ultimately voting.

#### **Voter intent vs. action:**

*Voter registration.* Initially, fewer female millennials than males reported having registered to vote in the 2016 election. As the campaign wore on, the percentage of females who said they'd registered declined, while the percentage of registered males remained steady. By Election Day, 78 percent of females compared to 86 percent of males would tell us they were registered and intended to vote.

#### **At the ballot box.**

Those figures dropped on Election Day, as they normally do, with two-thirds (65%) of millennials studied confirming they cast a vote in the election. Of those voters, however, a substantially lower percentage were females (55%) than males (76%).

### ► GENDER-BASED VOTING BEHAVIOR RELATED TO CAUSE ENGAGEMENT.

Voting obviously was considered a powerful action in the minds of millennials, since it's the No. 1 action both genders preferred to take in support of a cause. However, the typical actions rounding out the top five for males all involve overt behaviors: signing petitions, contacting political representatives, using social media and participating in marches/rallies. Females, however, reported that if they didn't vote, their next-most-likely behavior was to take no action. Of course, they may have chosen to take no action based on apathy, but another consideration is that "no action" could have been a conscious and well-considered decision on their part that held meaning for them.

#### **Top Most Typical Actions Taken in Support of a Cause**

Males	Females
voted	voted
signed petitions	no action
contacted political rep	signed petitions
social media	social media
march/rallies	purchasing behavior

► **CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL CHANGE DIVERGED BY GENDER.**

Female millennials' belief in their own ability to create social change deteriorated throughout the presidential campaign and has dropped substantially since the election, whereas males' confidence was consistent.

Considerably fewer female millennials (41%) said they believed strongly in their ability to improve social challenges through their individual actions than did male millennials (65%). Men also expressed higher levels of confidence than women that organizations they support could create positive change.

**Do you think your actions will lead to improvements?**

	Male	Female
Yes	65%	41%
No	13%	15%
Unsure	21%	44%

**Please rank your level of confidence in [an organization's] actions toward solving [topic of interest].**

	Male	Female
Not At All Confident	7%	8%
Somewhat Confident	18%	30%
Confident	34%	27%
Very Confident	34%	17%
Unsure/Not Applicable	6%	17%



► **FEMALE MILLENNIAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL CHANGE DROPPED WHILE MALE INVOLVEMENT REMAINED STEADY OR INCREASED.**

Millennials in general reported not changing the frequency of their cause-related actions since the election. However, the ones who reported doing more far outnumbered those who said they've done less – and males tended to be the gender that had increased the frequency of cause-related activities.

Moreover, female attitudes are reflected in how they described themselves in relation to cause activity. Among all respondents, *activist* was seen as highly hands-on and perhaps somewhat confrontational to authority, while *supporter* described more passive activities. Males used *activist* more than females; more than half of females saw themselves as *supporters*.

**When you are performing these actions, how would you best explain your role?**

	Male	Female
Activist	26%	15%
Advocate	17%	16%
Ally	13%	9%
Supporter	41%	57%
Other, please specify...	2%	2%

► **DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION MAY KEEP FEMALE MILLENNIALS LESS INVOLVED THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS.**

Overall, substantially more women than men are dissatisfied with President Trump. By about the same margin, female millennials think the president has not adequately addressed the causes they care about.

**Currently, how satisfied are you with President Trump?**

	Male	Female
Extremely Unsatisfied	25%	44%
Unsatisfied	14%	15%
Neutral	26%	22%
Satisfied	20%	13%
Extremely Satisfied	15%	6%

How well do you think President Trump has addressed the causes and social issues that are important to you?

	Male	Female
Not Well At All	33%	52%
Somewhat Well	16%	12%
Unsure	20%	22%
Well	19%	9%
Very Well	12%	5%

Similarly, females believe the United States is headed in the wrong direction compared to males. However, when asked if the country would be back on track in a year, the genders showed much less differences of opinion.

All things considered, how would rank the current direction our country is taking?

	Male	Female
Absolutely Wrong Direction	11%	15%
Wrong Direction	19%	33%
Unsure/Too Soon to Tell	29%	36%
Right Direction	30%	13%
Absolutely Right Direction	12%	3%

Where will the country be in one year from now?

	Male	Female
Totally On Track	7%	2%
On Track	25%	16%
Unsure	28%	36%
Off Track	26%	28%
Totally Off Track	13%	17%

## Top Takeaways

1. The presidential election campaign marked a divergence in millennial cause participation by gender.
2. Millennial females' belief in their own ability to effect change has weakened substantially, as has their belief in the organizations they support to create change, while males' belief in themselves and their organizations has remained steady or has increased.
3. Male millennials are more likely to view themselves as activists than females; the latter see themselves in a supportive role for causes they care about.

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## Conclusion: Reflect your audiences' interests and behaviors when designing campaigns for cause engagement.

Words and visuals that build on solution-oriented actions toward winnable moments in time will help activate engagement with all genders and ensure that millennial supporters can build more support for your cause.

## Research Methodology

### Phase 1: Discovery – Qualitative

Telephone interviews and focus groups with a small purposive sample of millennials from across the four recognized U.S. geographic regions.

### Phase 2: Investigation – Quantitative

Survey in the field July 19 - Aug. 8, 2017, to a proportional quota sample based on Census Bureau millennial cohort data for gender, race, age, education level and geographic region. This was a nonprobability sample of 3,000 participants matching same demographics from an opt-in panel.

### Phase 3: Ethnographic Inquiry

Immersion in progress.

Complete reports with full methodology descriptions can be downloaded at [TheMillennialImpact.com](http://TheMillennialImpact.com).

Please note: For purposes of this study, Achieve researchers asked respondents to self-identify gender as male, female, nonbinary/third gender or prefer not to answer.