



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on November 9, 2011

Poll: Young Americans Favor Less Government Spending

The latest U.S. jobs report positioned October as the 32nd consecutive month that unemployment has hovered near or above the 9 percent mark. However, the current unemployment rate does not accurately reflect the percentage of young Americans still struggling to find work. For instance, at the end of August, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [reported](#) a youth unemployment rate (ages 16 to 24) of 18.1 percent, about twice as high as the overall unemployment rate.



“Every day, at a very personal level, young adults are being negatively impacted by the poor economy,” [said](#) Paul Conway, Generation Opportunity president and former Chief of Staff of the U.S. Labor Department. “The unemployment numbers are particularly concerning when you consider that 43% of young adults are not satisfied with their current level of employment.”

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Because of job shortages and wage and benefit cuts, 77 percent of young people say they will have to delay a major life change or purchase, including buying homes, saving for retirement, pursuing higher education, paying off student loans, or starting a family.

According to Generation’s poll, only 31 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds approve of President Obama’s performance in dealing with youth unemployment. Regarding the general perception of Washington governance, 69 percent say our congressional leaders are failing to “reflect the interests of the younger generation.” Moreover, 61 percent indicated that a candidate’s record in office and positions on current affairs “will be more important than charisma and likeability” when they vote in the 2012 presidential election.

What may seem most consequential is a seemingly transformative change in Millennials’ perceptions of government spending and economic policy. According to Generation’s poll:

- 76% of overall Millennials would favor a decrease over an increase in federal spending from its current level if given the chance to set America’s fiscal priorities.
- 69% prefer reducing federal spending over raising taxes on individuals in order to balance the federal budget.
- 59% of overall Millennials agree the economy grows best when individuals are allowed to create businesses without government interference.



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- 53% of overall Millennials agree if taxes on business profits were reduced, companies would be more likely to hire.
- Millennials — when asked on a scale of 1 (meaning not at all) to 5 (meaning a very big concern) how much of a concern America's current "financial debt"/"deficit" rates, 66% indicated very big concerns with America's "financial debt" and 71% indicated very big concerns about America's "deficit."

Contrary to the Occupy Wall Street movement — which comprises many people in a similar age range — the Millennials in Generation's study perceive that if taxes on business profits were reduced, job producers would be more apt to expand operations and hire new employees. "You don't hear much about that in the mainstream news," asserted Conway. "You know when people are trying to tell the story of what people at Occupy Wall Street theater demonstrations are saying, but the fact is that those young adults 18 to 29 are pretty smart."

Among the poll's top three "greatest threats to American National Security," terrorism was only third on the list (39 percent), topped by the national debt (62 percent) and indebtedness to foreign nations (50 percent). About three-quarters of young people see China as a threat to the United States and more than half express skepticism that the United States will be a global leader 10 years from now. An overwhelming majority (70 percent) believe the government should allow energy developers to expand production of domestic energy sources, such as oil, natural gas, and coal.

Conway suggests that political leaders, Democrats and Republicans alike, should withdraw from their congressional quarters and venture out into the field and talk to small businesses, young entrepreneurs, and all of those who produce jobs in this country. "People don't feel as though small businesses and startups are in an environment right now where the government understands what needs to get done, which is get out of the way," [said](#) the organization's president. "People are frustrated, extremely frustrated."



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