



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 8, 2010

The Millennial Generation, Jobs, and Reality

In a microcosm, Scott Nicholson, at age 24, represents his Millennial Generation well: He graduated from college two years ago and is still looking for work.

But he's optimistic nevertheless. He moved back into his parents' home in an upper-middle-class neighborhood outside of Boston, and spends his mornings searching corporate websites for "suitable" job openings. His parents are feeding and clothing him, as well as paying his cell-phone charges and insurance premiums. But they are beginning to get concerned, especially when Scott was finally offered a position at a nearby casualty insurance firm, as a claims adjuster — and he turned it down.



The Millennial Generation (ages 18-29) has been poked, prodded, and analyzed endlessly to determine their "unique" characteristics that separate them from Gen X (ages 30-45), the Boomers (ages 46-64) and the Silent (ages 65 and older), which, among others include an unwillingness to settle for less than they want. They "expect to earn more than their parents ... and already know that they don't want to live and work like their parents [did]," according to Richard Sweeney. He calls this "their defining characteristic of spirited individualism."

Scott's mother, a full-time executive at an entertainment company, isn't quite so sure. "No one on either side of the family has ever gone through this and I guess I'm impatient. I know he is educated and has a great work ethic and wants to start contributing, [but] I don't know what to do." Despite months of looking for work and sending out résumés with a cover letter several times a week, he was finally offered a position that would have paid him \$40,000 a year to start. But Scott considered such a position beneath his educational level, latent abilities, and zeal, considering it a dead-end job. Louis Uchitelle, writing about Scott's situation in the *New York Times*, said Scott prefers to "hold out for a corporate position that would draw on his college training and put him ... on the bottom rungs of a career ladder."

Pew Research's recent survey "Millennials — A Portrait of Generation Next" notes that Millennial members' "entry into careers and first jobs has been badly set back by the Great Recession, but they are more upbeat than their elders about their own economic futures as well as about the overall state of the nation.... Despite struggling (and often failing) to find jobs in the teeth of a recession, about nine-in-ten either say that they currently have enough money or that they will eventually meet their long-term goals. But at the moment, fully 37 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds are unemployed or out of the workforce."

Until the right position comes along, Scott is content to do some local odd jobs in the neighborhood — putting up a fence, cutting grass, and doing some gardening. As Scott said, "As frustrated as I get now



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... I'm in a good situation in a lot of ways. I have very little overhead and no debt.... Otherwise I would have to have a job."

Economic reality may force Millennials like Scott to grow up in a hurry. Reports of a weakening economy, lackluster job statistics, and unrelenting government interventions in the name of "helping" the economy (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) don't bode well for the expectation that something more "suitable" is right around the corner. Instead, parents of Millennials like Scott might want to remind their adult children of the realities of life, and of their responsibilities for taking care of themselves as contributing citizens, rather than continuing to live at home waiting for better opportunities to jump up and attack them.

As Pew Research put it in their survey Overview, "Millenials [are] confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change." How those characteristics might change as the economy continues its decline is open to debate. For now, they will need every bit of that optimistic and upbeat outlook, and eventually be glad to find any work at all, even if the job fails to meet their educational and personal expectations.



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