



Millennials not scared of outside world

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Over the course of the 2016 campaign, there's been an awful lot of talk about how terrible and dangerous the rest of the world is. Listening to Donald Trump and company you can easily imagine the world consists of nothing but terrorists, free-riding allies, trade cheats and currency manipulating superpowers.

Given the overheated rhetoric, it's not hard to see why a surprising number of Americans are supportive of a wide range of nationalist and xenophobic proposals, from banning Muslims from entering the country (supported by 33%) or keeping track of Muslims in a database (supported by 44%), to building a wall on the Mexican border (supported by 46%). But one very important group of Americans does not share these views. In fact, the millennial generation (ranging from 18-35 years old), embraces a much rosier view of the rest of the world. As America's largest generation, millennials stand poised to make their views heard this November.

Let's start with foreign threats. The campaign has been full of dire warnings about everything from terrorists posing as refugees to the resurgence of Russian aggression. But even though the world looks like it's on fire to the candidates and older Americans, millennials take a much more relaxed view when it comes to threat perceptions.

On Iran, for example, just 27% of millennials see Iran as a "very serious threat" to U.S. security, compared to 60% of older Americans. As a result, millennials have been the most supportive of Obama's nuclear deal with Iran. Younger Americans are also less worried about China, whose rapid rise and recent actions in the South China Sea have prompted a great deal of hand wringing in Washington. A recent Pew poll found that 55% of Americans under 30 have a favorable view of China compared to just 27% of those over 50.

Even terrorism doesn't prompt as much hand wringing among young people. Year after year the Chicago Council on Global Affairs polling has found that millennials are less likely to see terrorism as a critical threat to U.S. national security, while other polls have consistently

shown that millennials are the least supportive of sending U.S. ground troops to the Middle East to fight them.

When it comes to foreign trade millennials also have a more optimistic approach to engaging the world. During the campaign, both Democratic candidates have come out in opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as have most of the Republican candidates. Trump has taken his opposition to free trade the furthest, calling for the imposition of massive tariffs on Chinese goods in response to what he sees as unfair trade practices.

Despite the attacks, a recent Gallup Poll reveals that 58% of Americans support free trade. The full story, though, is that there is an almost 20 point gap in support for trade between younger and older Americans. In fact, millennials are the only generation in which an overwhelming majority believes foreign trade represents an economic opportunity rather than a threat to the economy.

Finally, what about immigration: one of Trump's favorite issues and the source of the harshest attacks in the most recent Democratic debate? So far we've heard a lot of negatives about immigrants, along with a lot of tough talk about building walls and deporting people who are here illegally. Many older Americans like these proposals. Younger Americans, on the other hand, who are the nation's most racially and ethnically diverse generation, don't like them nearly as much.

In fact, when it comes to immigrants and refugees, millennials are the most welcoming generation. With respect to building a wall, millennials are at odds with their elders: just 37% of millennials favor building a wall along the border compared to 58% of Americans over 50. The fact that 11% of millennials are themselves the children of immigrants probably helps explain their more positive attitudes toward immigration. A 2015 Pew Research Center poll shows that 54% of Americans 18-29 years old think immigrants are making American society better in the long run, compared to just 44% of older Americans. And a 2014 Gallup Poll revealed that 68% of millennials think immigration should remain at present levels or increase, compared to 56% of older Americans.

Poll numbers aside, it's clear that this year's remaining presidential hopefuls -- whose average age is 57 for Republicans and a whopping 73 for Democrats -- are talking about the rest of the world in ways that sound off to the average millennial ear.

For those who view the world as a terrifying place with dangers lurking around every corner, the millennial generation's attitudes are either naïve or irresponsible. But for those who believe the world outside is not quite so bad and that the threats facing the United States are limited, millennials' views represent a sense of optimism sadly lacking in Washington and on the campaign trail.

Either way, America's largest generation will bring a unique perspective to the ballot box this November.

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