

THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

By Madsen Pirie and Robert M. Worcester

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Adam Smith Institute

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Biographical information

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Dr. Madsen Pirie is President of The Adam Smith Institute

Professor Robert M. Worcester is Chairman of MORI Social Research Institute.

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1. The Millennial Generation

The Boomers

First there were the baby boomers. As the armed forces returned after the Second World War, a bulge in the birth rate was labelled the *baby boom*. As it rippled through the United States, where the term was coined, the group came to represent 78 million people, or 30 percent of adult Americans. They had their counterparts in Britain and other European countries. In this country, they numbered over a third of the adult population, some 14 million people aged now in the 35 to 54 age band.

The baby boomers represented a coherent group of people who grew up amid similar experiences and who shared values. To marketing people they were a consumer group to be assessed and targeted. They were better educated than their predecessors, with 83 percent holding high school diplomas and one quarter of them with college degrees. They were richer than their predecessors. As America prospered in the 1950s and 60s, the baby boomers embodied the increased spending power which resulted.

The birth rate bulge put pressure on facilities such as schools, but the baby boomers represented a demand which brought with it opportunity for others. They were a vast market to be catered for. They ate out more than any previous generation; they spend more on clothes and shoes; they bought the cars and consumer goods whose output kept business and industry growing.

The baby boomers were more than a marketing opportunity, however. They were a generation which shared experiences and were partly shaped by them. They were the people whose teenage years heralded the arrival of rock 'n' roll and the advent of a specific youth culture. In America they drove their Chevis to the levies. The first wave of them were in their late teens when President Kennedy died. Later ones were the flower children of the late 60s, rebelling against authority and the Vietnam war, and pushing back the boundaries of sexual activity and drug taking.

The oldest of the baby boomers began to turn 50 two years ago, but still show traits in common which mark them out as a group and distinguish them from their predecessors and perhaps their successors. They have been reaching the top slots of their professional careers, and dominate the worlds of business, finance, politics, and the professions. Earlier work has shown how they have continued their rebellion throughout their lives, as a cohort, being more 'challenging' than either those that preceded them, or followed.¹

They have been characterized as the Peter Pan generation, the one which prefers to stay young. They look, act and dress younger than any previous generation did. They have large disposable incomes; they invest, and have a taste for adventure and

¹ See Chapter 18 in *We British*, Jacobs and Worcester, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1990.

travel which they happily indulge. They are health conscious, they diet, they exercise and most of them no longer smoke cigarettes.

Their taste in popular music, which established a gulf between them and their own parents, is something they have retained, as generations have before them. When MORI interviewed people across the age bands in 1995 for the Independent on Sunday as to their musical tastes, the most interesting differences were between those then in the 16-34 age group, and their elders, between 35 and 55. This showed that the differences between generations are not just age differences, but a formative experience for each cohort which at least partly will form attitudes that will stick with them for the rest of their lives.

Ironically, they have closed the generation gap which they opened, by not ageing themselves. They are reported to regard 80 as the onset of old age, and dislike even the notion of retirement. They see opportunities to engage in voluntary work or less stressful activities, and to indulge themselves, but not to seek a life of inactivity. Many, at 50, still have unfulfilled dreams.

The baby boomers are characterised today by their conventionality, in contrast to those who are following them. When MORI's 'Socio-Consult' Study was published in the Demos booklet 'Freedom's Children'², it showed a rapid falling off of the proportion of its cohort in terms of 'living on the edge', risk taking, and especially on 'crude hedonism' compared with later cohorts.

"100% on my own effort. Government efforts and abilities do not — and never have — influenced my destiny."

Generation X

The next cohort after the baby boomers to be identified as a coherent group are those called *Generation X*. Specifically, these are the young adults born between 1965 and 1975. The first wave of these have already entered their 30s, and even the youngest of them turned 23 this year. They have been highlighted by market researchers because of characteristics which mark them out from the baby boomers who preceded them.

Generation X, like the baby boomers, have a cohesiveness which enables them to be described as a group. They, too, shared and were shaped by common experiences. The easy prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s was not as much a part of their upbringing as those they follow. They have known recessions and restricted job markets, and can recall a time when nearly one in four households had someone unemployed. They have witnessed rising crime and social tensions, and have lived in times of increased environmental awareness and concern. Just a few years ago, the environment was second only to health care as the problem more thought important than any other, while among adults generally, it only ranked eighth.

² See Chapter 1 in *Freedom's Children*, Wilkinson and Mulgan, Demos, 1995.

The big political event of their teenage or early adult years was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the departure of totalitarian Communism as a viable alternative to free market capitalism and popular democracy. That demise took with it the daily threat of thermonuclear annihilation under whose shadow the baby boomers grew to maturity. Generation X no longer views nuclear holocaust among the likely futures for the planet. While they grew up with the threat, they saw it disappear just as they were reaching maturity.

As a market group, Generation X is second only to the baby boomers. With over 40 million of them in the US alone, they represent nearly 16 percent of the population there, and one quarter of all adults. Recent figures indicate they have \$125 billion of discretionary income, and spend \$200 billion annually, including \$30 billion on eating out and \$13 billion on clothes. Clearly they already constitute a major force in the economy. Here in Britain, they represent 14 percent of the adult population, and tended to spend every penny they had, mostly on themselves. They tended to establish families much later than earlier generations. In a decade, the average age of first birth moved up from 23 to 27, as more women attended university rather than take a secretarial job, and then entered the job market as a career, not 'just a job', and as they then chose to put off marriage, cohabiting instead, until ready to have children, on their own timetable.

Their spending habits differentiate them from their baby boom predecessors. They seek value, with Generation X women in particular preferring to buy clothes in speciality stores and discount stores rather than from department stores. Their meals are more likely to be taken in fast food outlets. Generation X is more likely to buy its footwear from named shoe outlets, and to spend an average of \$5 more on a pair of athletic shoes than the boomers do.

Members of Generation X have less money than their older counterparts. They respond by avoiding the expensive items such as new cars, TVs, VCRs, and fax machines, and buying less expensive items such as car stereo CDs for their used cars. They buy more on credit, and are two and a half times more likely to buy pagers as any other age group, accounting for 38 percent of all pager purchases between them.

Generation X stay at home longer. More of these young adults live with their parents than at any time since the Great Depression. They are not as affluent as their predecessors, more comfortable with high technology, and less loyal to particular brands.

They have been variously described as "resilient," "tough," "independent," as might be expected for the first generation of latch key kids. Less favourable epithets include "angry," "alienated," and "lazy." Commentators agree that they show more concern for environmental issues. Thus on a variety of issues and attitudes, Generation X seems to have an identity distinct from the boomers who preceded it. What is interesting is that the successors to Generation X are already exhibiting traits and characteristics which mark them off as different again.

"For the coming century, peace and prosperity."

The Millennial Generation

The young adults who reach the age of 21 just before or just after the turn of the millennium constitute the *Millennial Generation*. They are today's 16-21 year-olds. In both Britain and the USA, most of their conscious lives have been lived under a revitalized market economy. Indeed, they have known no other kind of government than ones committed to such a programme.

Most of them have spent virtually all their teenage years against a backdrop of economic boom and a rising stock market. They have seen standards of living rise steadily, but have not seen the same level of job security which their predecessors could look to. For the Millennial Generation the idea of a job for life belongs to the history books.

Even before this survey of their attitudes and aspirations, we know some things about the Millennial Generation in the UK from the general statistics which apply to the age group, as well from anecdotal and general observation. We know that, apart from the odd exceptional year, their score of good GCSE passes rises steadily over time, and that more of them each year pass A-levels with high grades.

One-third of them will go through university or college education, a very much higher proportion of the cohort than for the boomers or Generation X. More will come out with degrees, and even though this no longer automatically guarantees a long term job, it will lead most of those who do to a higher than average lifetime income. A degree, even though they have now to contribute toward it financially, is one of the best investments many of them will ever make.

We know that the Millennial Generation takes to clubbing as a favoured form of recreation, and we are told that a proportion of them add recreational drugs such as Ecstasy to enhance the experience. Use of cannabis is widespread, according to official figures. Some of the age-group's sectionalized music tastes, divided into categories such as *house*, *garage*, *techno* or *indie*, occasionally break out into the more popular charts.

Marketing people tell us that the Millennial Generation are more ferociously brand conscious than their predecessors, especially when it comes to clothes and shoes. Even though they do not have as much disposable income as the older and more affluent members of the baby boom or Generation X, the Millennial Generation are prepared to pay the high prices that the top brands command.

Much to the despair of health professionals, smoking among the young is widespread and quite fashionable. The previous stereotypical smoker was of an older person who could not give up the habit. A more modern picture is of a young person who smokes for a few years in late teens and early 20s, and then gives it up.

The Millennial Generation remain consumers of that other traditional recreational drug, alcohol. They are the market which alcopops were aimed at, and at which a range of new designer beers has been launched along with designer pubs. They give the impression of a group quite prepared to indulge in the things they enjoy.

They are also the first Internet generation. They are more computer literate than their predecessors, and at ease in the World-wide Web. Large numbers have e-mail addresses, 16 percent compared with 11 percent of the adult population, and increasingly they have access to pagers (14 percent) and mobile phones (32 percent).

They travel abroad, and many of them have friends in other countries, met either on foreign trips, or over the Internet. They are concerned about their appearance, spending enough money on cosmetics and personal hygiene to have specific products introduced and marketed to their age group.

"Working together, human kind can accomplish far greater things technologically and ethically."

The new survey introduced here does not look at them commercially as a potential market, but as the generation which will rise to prominence in the first two decades of the new millennium. It explores their attitudes and the aspirations, and attempts to ascertain what they esteem, whom they respect, and what they seek out of life. It is the first snapshot of the lives and values of the generation which will be the first to give shape to society in the next millennium.

The New Survey ³

1. New Generation, New Labour?

There is good news for Tony Blair in the voting intentions of young people. Of those who said they would vote if there were a general election tomorrow, more than three out of five plump for him, with 61 percent expressing support for Labour. The Tories, by contrast, cannot even command one in five, collecting just 17 percent. These figures include the 16-17 year-olds who were asked to express how they would vote if they were old enough to do so. These voting intentions compare with 27:49:16 in 1997 among 18-24 year olds, 35:38:19 in 1992 among that cohort then. Thus Labour, always doing relatively well with the youngest cohort, is running away, and now running into the 'compressed spring' phenomenon, having such a large share that it will be difficult to add to it, and more likely we will see it slip. The Tory share of this cohort has halved during the '90s, and is now ten points down on its 1997 share of the vote, and lower than any quarter going back to the war, excepting the fourth quarter of 1997, when the Conservatives bottomed out at 16 percent.

"Each to their own."

The Tories are now only just ahead of the Liberal Democrats, who currently attract 14 percent. Compared with national voting intentions, the figures show that young people are more likely to be Labour supporters than their parents or grandparents, and to quite a marked degree. Although environmental issues are often reported to be a prime concern of young people, this does not find expression in their voting intentions, with only 2 percent of the sample declaring support for the Greens.

It is by no means all good news for Tony Blair, though. Fully one quarter of those questioned were either undecided (13 percent), or said they would not vote (12 percent). This represents a sizeable block of young people who seem so far uncommitted to the New Labour crusade, or indeed to any political programme. Typically, 'don't knows' don't vote, and it is likely that at the next election, fewer than half of this group will turn out to vote.

2. An apolitical generation

Even more disturbing for Tony Blair is the news that the Millennial Generation has little faith in the party political process. Regardless of their party support, fully 71

³ 'The Millennial Generation' Survey was carried out by MORI Social Research Institute exclusively for The Adam Smith Institute among a nationally representative sample of 648 young people, aged 16-21, interviewed face-to-face across 53 constituency sampling points between 19-27 September 1998. In addition, voting and other demographic data included in this report are taken from the MORI Annual Aggregate 1997, from a sample of 5,374 people aged 18-24 interviewed last year.

percent think that the way they vote will make little or no difference to their life. Half of those questioned, 50 percent, think it will make "not very much" difference, with a further 21 percent believing it will make no difference at all.

Plainly this is a generation which does not look to the political parties to solve problems and improve their lives. Only 21 percent, just over one in five, think that their vote might make "a fair amount" of difference, and only 4 percent think it could make "a great deal" of difference. With well over two out of every three young voters this skeptical of political activity, we could be witnessing the emergence of an apolitical generation. Yet many are prepared to take action on things that disturb them. More than a quarter have helped on fund-raising drives.

During the past two decades, the state in Britain has retreated from the ownership of industries such as coal, steel, car manufacture and ship-building, and has divested itself from the provision of utilities such as telephones, gas, electricity, water and railways. Even the mass state services such as education, health and pensions have seen variety proliferate and individual choices come to play an increasing role. Plainly the state is less important than it was in all of these areas.

At the same time, on a global scale, the ability of one nation to determine its future by its own actions has diminished. Britain's membership of the European Union has caused a shift to Europe in some of the areas which were formerly controlled through its national political process. The rise in importance, meantime, of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the G7 group, coupled with the increased speed and significance of international exchanges, have also diminished the degree to which individual nations can exert independent action.

"I want to be successful, but I also want to be happy."

The response of the 16-21 age group to the impact of voting could be a recognition that politics is less important than it used to be because it decides less than it used to. Beyond the borders of the UK there take place events which impact on British lives, and yet which are beyond our national control. Within those borders, the state plays a less active role in the economy of most households, where individual activity has risen in importance.

Changes such as these could have led the coming generation to view political activity as less important than their predecessors, and to expect less from it than they did.

3. A home of your own?

The Millennial Generation seems to expect less from government than was provided for their predecessors. Twenty years ago 35 percent of the population lived in state-provided council housing, and at subsidized rents. Many more had their names on lengthy waiting lists for such homes, and stories would emerge from time to time about people engaging in activities which gave them a higher priority on those lists. Media stories suggested that some people feigned disability and either pretended to have, or actually had, extra children so they would qualify for more immediate housing. Housing was something widely regarded as part of the state's job.

The 16-21 year-olds no longer think so. Nearly two out of three (65 percent) think it should be their own responsibility, rather than that of government, to ensure that they have somewhere suitable to live. Only 28 percent see this as the government's task.

Two decades of council house sales and a rise in the proportion of home owners appear to have moved housing away from state responsibility, in the eyes of the young at least. Britain now has one of the highest proportions of home ownership in Europe (and indeed the world), with 70 percent owning their own home. It seems a long way from "homes fit for heroes" after the first World War, or Harold Macmillan's promise of the early 1960s that his Conservative government would build 1,000 houses a day. Young people expect to provide their own housing without the government being involved.

One in ten of young people already have bought their own home, perhaps with parental help, and another 43 percent are in the process of buying a home with the help of a mortgage, adding to over half either having bought or who are buying. They are disproportionately private renters, with their 12 percent of the adult population representing just over a third, 34 percent, of all those in private rental accommodation. Nearly three in four have a car in the household, and four in ten live in a home with at least two cars.

4. Employment is my job?

An even larger proportion of the age-group regards it as no business of government to provide them with a job. Fully 87 percent think this is their own responsibility, with only 10 percent putting the onus onto government.

This runs counter to previous assumptions that it is up to government to make sure that everyone has a job. The presumption of full employment as an achievable policy goal was part of the post-war consensus. It disappeared with the stagflation of the late 1970s, when the Phillips curve went vertical and no amount of inflation reduced unemployment. Nonetheless, young people marched across Britain in the early 1980s demanding jobs from the government.

Jobs for young people is an important plank in the policies of the present government. The New Deal provides state-created jobs as well as private ones partly funded by a state subsidy to employers. Government assumes that it must be the job provider of last resort.

The belief by the Millennial Generation that a job is their own responsibility could be a reflection of the belief that government simply *cannot* provide the jobs. People have seen that unemployment goes up or down, depending on the economic cycle, and that government does not have all that much influence on that cycle. Young people think that *they* can influence whether or not they get a job, but they seem less sure that the government can.

Half of 18-24 year olds are in full-time work, and another 9 percent are part-timers. One in nine reports being unemployed.

5. From college to pension?

A majority of the young people consider that it should be the responsibility of government to ensure they receive an adequate pension and a university education. Over half, some 56 percent, think that a pension is something which government should secure, versus 36 percent who think it should be their own responsibility. Similarly, 57 percent consider that government should pay for university education, as against 38 percent who think they should do it themselves.

For people aged 16-21, government has offered a universal pension and a free university education not merely since they were born, but even since their parents were born. Their whole lives, and those of their parents, have been lived against the background of state provision of these services. Despite this lifetime background of public funding, the survey shows that more than one in three young people now think that they should make their own provision for these services.

The high percentage favouring personal provision, even with a clear majority supporting government responsibility, might be a reflection of the fact that universal provision has recently been challenged in both cases. This year students began to make a contribution towards their own university or college fees, limited to £1,000 a year for those from families deemed sufficiently wealthy. The status of a universal pension from the government has also recently been called into question, with analysis showing it likely to represent a decreasing fraction of the average wage in future, and diminishing in perceived value.

The answers on houses and jobs, together with the large minorities favouring self support on pensions and university education, might be taken to indicate that many young people expect less from government than their predecessors, for whom all four items were simply seen as part of government's job. This would perhaps help to explain why so many of the 16-21 year-olds think that the way they vote will make little or no difference to their lives.

6. Just no respect...

The bad news for politicians continues when young people are asked to nominate the groups of people they have most respect for. Only 5 percent say they would put MPs among the two or three groups for which they have the most respect, and an even lower figure, 2 percent, would say they include journalists among those most respected. These are the lowest scoring categories, just worse than trade union leaders on 6 percent and company directors on 7 percent.

At the top end of the scale are doctors, clocking up respect from 75 percent who include them among their top three most respected occupations. Policemen come second with 49 percent, then teachers on 46 percent. All other groups score below 25 percent.

When the same respondents were asked which groups they have *least* respect for, it is journalists (48 percent) and MPs (36 percent) who top the table. Only 2 percent include doctors in this category, although 17 percent do list policemen. This might imply that while policemen command wide support among this age group, some youngsters have had negative experiences or impressions that have coloured their perceptions of the police.

Teachers are listed as least respected by only one in ten. In terms of a net score ("most respected" rating minus "least respected" figure), this takes teachers to second

place, after doctors and ahead of policemen. A breakdown of the answers shows a huge gain in respect for teachers by 18-20 year-olds. Compared with their counterparts 12 years ago, 47 percent of these young people list teachers, as against the 32 percent who did so in 1986, nearly half as many again. What is the cause of this rise? Perhaps the end of the persistent militancy and strikes among teachers that characterised the profession in the '80s, and rising educational standards as well?

The low scores on respect for both journalists and MPs might be the impact of recent events. The reputation of the tabloids for intrusive journalism has commanded a great deal of attention in recent years, and came to a head over coverage of Diana, Princess of Wales, even though the coverage was to some extent manipulated. The young people who rate journalists so low might be thinking of the tabloid writers who invade the private lives of celebrities, rather than the worthy political correspondents of major papers. It should be added, that young people are not alone in their poor ratings for MPs and journalists; low esteem for them is shared by older people as well.

Similarly, the recent coverage of alleged 'sleaze' among MPs might have coloured popular opinion of them by young people. Tory involvement with alleged "cash for questions" and extra marital affairs has been followed by Labour's *Formula One* affair and the ministerial off-shore trusts. Young people's respect for MPs in general might be low because of such widely publicized stories. It is also possible that the low rating for MPs is part of a movement away from respect for politics by young people, and could be taken with their view that voting will make little or no difference, and their lower expectations of government services.

Company directors score poorly in the 'respect' stakes, with 7 percent listing them positively, and 26 percent listing them amongst the 'least respected.' Like journalists and MPs, directors have not enjoyed a good press of late, and it could be that "fat cat" stories over the last few years have contributed to the negative image they now enjoy among young people, as well as their remoteness from the lives of these young people.

One further point of interest to the scores is that while respect for doctors remains consistently high throughout the 16-21 age band, the respect for teachers increases as one moves up that age band, while that for policemen declines. The 15 and 16 year-olds respect teachers less than do the 20 and 21 year-olds, while the reverse is true for policemen. It is noticeable how the 'least respect' score for teachers goes from 16 percent at age 15-16, down to 5 percent for age 20-21.

It is possible that the high score for teachers is connected with the new importance now given to education ("education, education, education.") There has been public emphasis on quality teachers, including higher pay and knighthoods. It could also be that the positive advertising campaign which points out that everyone can remember a good teacher, has had some effect in raising the status of teachers.

7. Anything except government?

The fragmentation of the job market is reflected in the ideal career preference of the 16-21 year-olds. There simply are no career choices which stand out ahead of the others. Instead there is a variety of choices without any clear favourites. No choice

commands more than 12 percent from their spontaneous reaction to our asking about their career aspirations.

The computing and information technology sectors may be written up as fashionable careers, but they attract only four percent of the age group questioned. The much vaunted and even more fashionable media industry, covering journalism and broadcasting, interests only six percent, despite tales of media studies becoming dominant among career-related university courses.

The heady world of advertising, public relations and consultancy might feature in sitcoms and TV soaps, but it registers only three percent among the career ambitions of real world youngsters. This is markedly less than the five percent who look to the armed forces for a career.

Business and industry clock up ten percent, with a further five percent expressing interest in the related financial sector, including banking, accountancy and insurance. This 15 percent total is broadly similar to the 14 percent which the professions accumulate, with eight percent listing "lawyer, doctor, etc," and a further six percent choosing education in the form of "lecturer, teacher."

Those who choose the combined group of public services, including "nursing, social work, police, etc," total 12 percent, but this represents an unequal 5 percent of males and 19 percent of females. This was the biggest gender difference in percentage terms for any of the career choices (although computing and IT, with eight percent for males and just one-percent for females, has a bigger ratio difference)

There is a big decline in the proportion choosing public administration (civil service/local government). Two decades ago it was the largest single career choice listed; now it interests only 1 percent of the age group. It seems again part of a trend which has diminished government in the eyes of young people. The Millennial Generation does not seem to respect it, to value it, to expect things from it, or to want to be part of it.

8. The risk takers

They may want to work in a variety of different fields, but large numbers of the Millennial Generation are pretty clear who it is they want to work for: *–themselves*. Asked to list career and personal aspirations, a huge 48 percent express a desire to own their own business. Compare this with the 1 percent who seek a career in the civil service. This is part of a movement over the years away from 'safe' jobs for life such as civil service or local government, and into more adventurous and risky activity.

There are few careers more risky than starting and running a business, with the risk of huge losses, which often include investment loans secured against the home. Working their way steadily up the employment ladder might have appealed to their predecessors, but today's youngsters seem to want more excitement. There is no gender differences in the answers; as many females as males aspire to owning their own business.

Owning one's own business, in whatever field, is perhaps seen as a route to success, for 43 percent list becoming a millionaire before the age of 35 as a career goal.

Clearly, the group includes a high proportion of would-be entrepreneurs who feel that success of this nature is something to be aimed at. It is inconceivable that such large numbers of previous generations would have thought such aims to be at all viable.

It might be that the increased numbers achieving this kind of success, and the high visibility they have been accorded in the media, have given today's youngsters the feeling that they, too, can do it, and encouraged them to aim this high themselves. It is interesting to reflect that their parents grew up in a world where most of them expected to start work after school and to stay in the same job for life.

9. On a personal note

The more social, non-career aspirations are thoroughly traditional. The figure for those who include 'owning their own home' as something they aspire to is 59 percent. Clearly, this is seen as something important enough to include. Although we are told from time to time that stories of falling house prices and negative equity have put people off home ownership, the coming generation remain heavily committed to the idea.

An equally traditional goal, of having children, is included by 46 percent. This sits ill with predictions which have been made that huge numbers will opt for the singles lifestyle, and avoid the ties which parenthood bring. Owning their own home and having children are very down to earth goals, shared equally by both men and women, and seem to suggest that, while the Millennial Generation are ambitious risk takers in their career goals, they opt for the domestic security of traditional goals in their home life.

Several of them aim quite high on the national or world stage. More than one in five, 21 percent, include representing their country in a sport among the things they would personally like to achieve. Similarly, 15 percent, more than one in seven, include "writing a book." Less specific, but no less ambitious, perhaps, are the 18 percent (over one in six) who simply want to be famous.

10. Is it worthwhile?

When asked to nominate two or three items from a list of worthwhile things to achieve, having a successful career is included by 50 percent, and scores higher than any of the other goals listed. A smaller number, 38 percent, mention "to be happily married with a family." When the respondents are asked to choose a single goal, however, more choose that one than any other. It seems that decades of stories about the breakdown of the family, and the promotion of alternative lifestyles, have not deterred the 16-21 year age group from preferring a happy marriage and a family. This echoes the high placing given to having children in an earlier question.

The very basic aim to live a long and healthy life is picked out by 39 percent of those asked. Only slightly less, 34 percent, opt for an exciting and varied life. Thus, the long and healthy life will preferably not be a boring one. A vision of their own future for the Millennial Generation might include less government, more economic risk-taking, greater self-reliance and ambition, but it also includes very traditional

personal wants for home, marriage, family, health and long life. The satisfaction of these wants could provide the base from which they reach out to make their mark on the world.

The only other relatively high score is accorded to "being respected," which is included by 37 percent. The 16-21 age group is notorious for the peer pressure which its members are reported to feel subject to, and this could be a reflection of that pressure. On the other hand, that so many mention being well thought of is a social indicator; they do not tend to see the future only in terms of personal goals.

"A university degree, an interesting and successful career in the RAF, and time and opportunity to take part in my hobbies of sailing and walking."

11. Getting ahead

The Millennial Generation do not think that class or connections are the key to success. The things which are important to achieving success in life include first and foremost, determination. This is listed by 72 percent. Plainly character comes high on the list of what it takes to succeed.

Almost as many, 70 percent, include education among the things which aid success. This might reflect the increased respect which they accord to teachers. Whatever it takes to make it in today's world, the Millennial Generation thinks you have to be educated to do it.

Class does not matter, according to the youngsters. Only 9 percent of them include a privileged background in the factors which aid success. Only 19 percent think that good connections matter. They do, however, include another personal quality: 56 percent of them opt to include the ability to get on with people. Being good at that helps one to succeed. Girls included this more than boys, with 61 percent featuring it as against 51 percent for boys.

The upshot is that the classless, meritocratic society has already arrived for the Millennial Generation. Birth, breeding, and background do not matter. It is who you are which counts, and not where you came from or who you know. In two words, education and character are the keys to success in their eyes. Whether they make it or not is something they think is up to them. They perceive no ceiling, and no aspirations which a previous generation might have termed "above their station."

It seems to imply that whatever else they think might be wrong with Britain today, they do not think it lacks opportunity for those with ambition, whatever their background. In this respect, as in their readiness to opt for owning their own business and aspiring to be millionaires, the Millennial Generation appear to have moved closer to the kind of aspirations thought to typify their American

counterparts, rather than towards an attitude more representative of the European approach.

12. The things that count

Being honest is far and away the most worthwhile quality they admire in other people, with 78 percent including it in the things they respect. After that, they like people to be caring; 49 percent list it in the factors which earn their respect.

These are both fairly conventional things which most people would probably rate as worthwhile. Honest and caring people have been admired for centuries, and in this respect the 16-21 year-olds are going for qualities which are admired nearly universally.

The only other relatively high scores are for those who are ambitious (37 percent), dedicated (35 percent), and independent (33 percent). This fits in with the earlier finding that this generation is itself ambitious, and rates determination as the most important quality for success. In lauding independence, they perhaps reflect the fact that many of them want to own their own business.

They say that they do not particularly respect those who are attractive, with only 6 percent including it. An even lower score, 4 percent, is gained by those who are fashionable. Despite their widely alleged fashion consciousness, the 16-21 year-olds say they do not respect those who are fashionable.

In an age when magazines seem to feature scarcely anything except attractive and fashionable people, the next generation claim they do not regard these as admirable qualities. They opt instead for less superficial factors which get closer to what a person is rather than how they appear.

"I consider it quite important that individuals have the ability to determine their lifestyle."

13. Almost anything goes

The Millennial Generation is a markedly tolerant one. It is by no means in sympathy with government bans, imposed or proposed, on several activities. The only things which a majority of them think should be illegal in Britain are the use of Ecstasy and fox hunting with hounds. There are slightly more females than males in favour of prohibition of each of these. The six in ten who are opposed to the use of Ecstasy is made up of 62 percent women and 57 men. There are clear majorities of both sexes in each case backing a ban on fox hunting.

The use of Ecstasy is widespread on the club scene, which is a notable feature of the big city scene for young people. Ecstasy has featured in a handful of deaths which

have been given huge publicity, and in some cases been the subject of public advertising campaigns against its use. It could be the danger perceived in its use which persuades the 16-21 age group to oppose legalization.

Fox hunting with hounds is the only activity not already illegal which most young people would ban. There are, on the other hand, several currently illegal activities for which only a minority of young people support the law as it stands. It is possible that the publicity attracted by the Parliamentary bill and by the anti-hunting lobby has fanned hostility. It is also possible that the Millennial Generation retains the fondness for animals (in this case foxes) for which the British have long been renowned.

"Chances of success? To be honest it depends how I feel when I get out of bed each day!"

The other activities listed fail to secure hostile majorities. Owning a handgun in a licensed gun club raises the largest hostile vote, at 36 percent (38 percent female, 31 percent male), but this is nowhere near a majority. The ownership of handguns, even in gun clubs, has been made illegal following the Dunblane massacre. The ban fails to find support from a majority of the 16-21s, however.

Another celebrated ban which prevents restaurants and butchers selling beef on the bone commands only 8 percent of the youngsters in support of it. Widely mocked at the time as "a ban too far," it was depicted by some journalists as the very embodiment of the nanny state. Scientific assessment of risk put the chance of death from contracting the new variant of CJD from beef on the bone at between one in a billion and one in four billion. These are spectacularly lower than the risks incurred during the pursuit of innumerable activities which continue to be legal. The 16-21 age group does not support the ban.

Nor does it favour the agreed ban on tobacco advertising. The government proposed to ban tobacco advertising connected with all sports activities except Formula One racing. European directives are moving towards a total ban. The Millennial Generation does not support such moves. Only 14 percent think that tobacco advertising should be illegal.

On a similar subject, only 16 percent of the youngsters back the idea of outlawing smoking in public places. Their tolerance for tobacco might be influenced by the fact that many of them will have friends who smoke cigarettes, and perhaps some may even smoke themselves. Certainly, these are very small figures in support of a ban.

Crackdowns by various Home Secretaries talking tough about smut on films, television and video, find no echo from young people. Only 11 percent support a legal ban on scenes of explicit sexual activity in such media. The banning of certain films or TV channels would not find support from the 16-21 age group.

An even lower proportion back the idea of a ban on scenes of explicit violence on the visual media. Of those questioned, 6 percent are in favour of a ban. It would

appear that campaigns to clean up television and films are not likely to attract much support from younger people.

Asked whether gay and lesbian sex between consenting adults should be illegal, 12 percent say yes. Thus any lobby to repeal the fairly tolerant legal climate which currently prevails is unlikely to attract large numbers of young people in support.

Similarly, moves to clamp down on abortion, which are made from time to time by anti-abortion groups, find little support from this age group. No more than 15 percent favour making abortion illegal.

The tolerance for tobacco smoking seems to extend to another kind of smoking, because only 25 percent think that the use of cannabis should be against the law. This compares with the 60 percent who support the ban on Ecstasy, and suggests that young people make a clear distinction between the two. It could be that they perceive Ecstasy to be less dangerous than cannabis, or perhaps that more of the age group are familiar with it.

"Very important to be tolerant, provided no serious harm is inflicted."

14. Not personally...

When asked about their own use of illegal drugs, nearly one in three (32 percent) admit to having used them. Two in five (40 percent) claim to have been offered illegal drugs, but to have never used them. Just over one in four (26 percent) say they had never even been offered illegal drugs. If they are answering honestly, the figures indicate that most of the age group encounter illegal drugs at some stage, even if they do not personally consume them.

Summary and Conclusion

This survey presents a snapshot of the Millennial Generation, the successors to the Baby Boomers and to Generation X. These are the people who reach the age of majority at either side of the turn of the millennium. Their attitudes and aspirations will help to shape the early years of that millennium.

- Most of them support New Labour rather than the Conservatives.
- Even more of them think that the way they vote will make little or no difference to their lives.
- The great majority of them think it will be up to them to secure a home and a job, not a task for government.
- A majority think that it is government's job to provide university education and a pension, but more than one in three think it should be up to themselves.
- They respect doctors, policemen and teachers. Respect for teachers in particular has risen in recent years.
- The least respected figures are journalists and politicians.
- Only 1 percent look to careers in the civil service or local government, a significant decline over the decades.
- 48 percent would like to own their own business.
- Some 43 percent list becoming a millionaire by age 35 among their aspirations.
- They put traditional things, such as owning their own home and being happily married with children, high on the list of their personal goals.
- They value personal qualities in others such as honesty and a caring approach, rather than superficial qualities such as being attractive or fashionable.
- They do not think that background or connections are important ingredients in success, but they do think that determination and education are the factors that count.
- They are tolerant. A majority favours a ban on Ecstasy and fox-hunting, but not bans on abortion, beef on the bone, owning a hand gun in a gun club, cinema and TV sex and violence, tobacco advertising or smoking in a public place.
- One in three admit to using illegal drugs. Two in five have been offered, but have not consumed them.

The picture painted is of a generation which differs in many respects from its predecessors. They do not expect much from the political process, and accord little or no respect to its practitioners. They do not look to government to provide their jobs and houses. They are risk takers, wanting to own their own business. They are ambitious, and aspire to be millionaires by 35. They are tolerant, and do not want the law used to ban many things.

On a personal level they look to down-to-earth goals such as a happy marriage with children, and they esteem personal qualities such as honesty.

The Millennial Generation seem to be self-confident and self-dependent. They aim high and do not think themselves limited by background. They think it is what you are that counts. These qualities suggest that the future will feel the impact of the Millennial Generation quite soon, and that the new millennium might well be in safe hands.

*"My future — my career, relationships, etc.
— will depend wholly upon my own
abilities and efforts."*