

Generation “War”?

Survey Finds Few Takers

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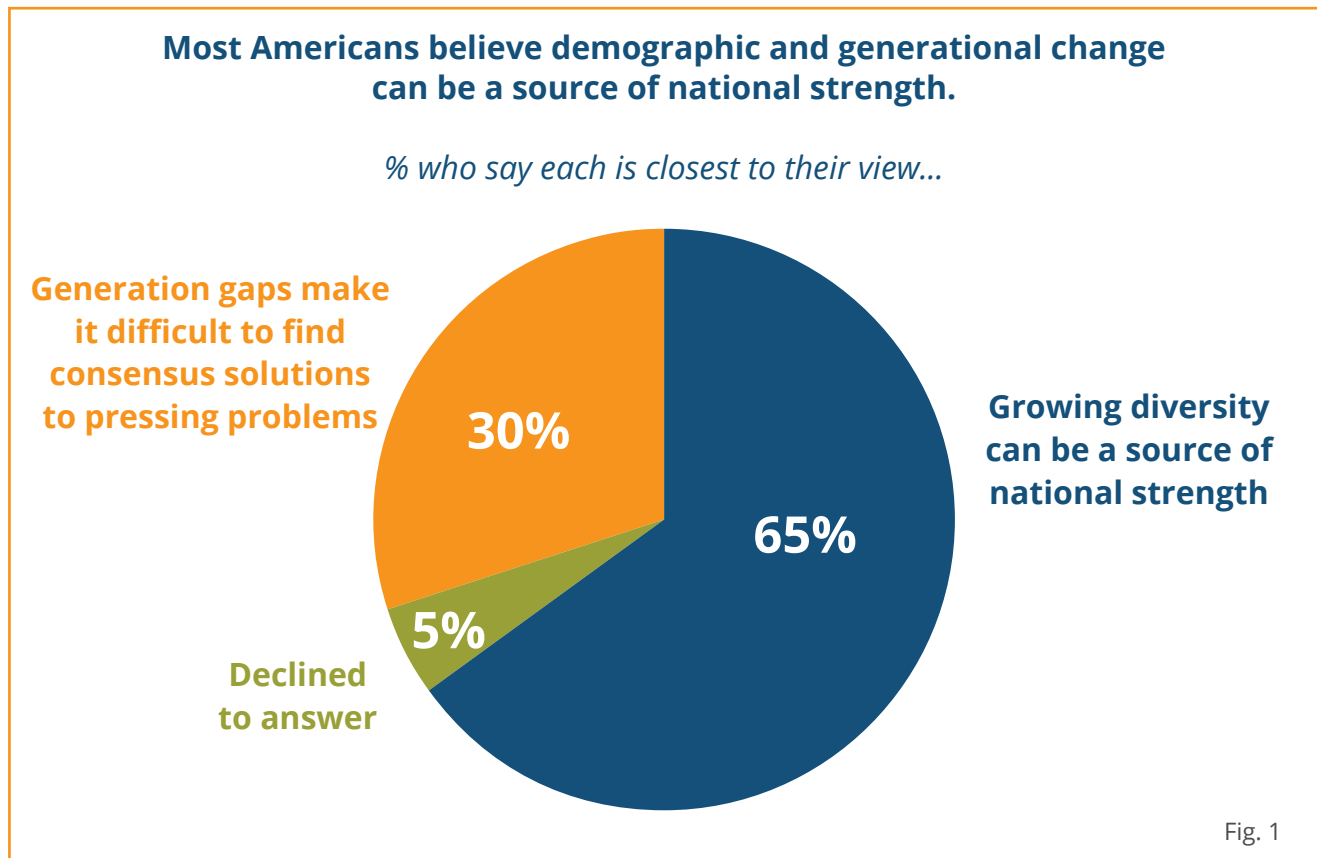
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Generation “War”? New Encore Survey Finds Few Takers

In a year awash in political, racial and economic polarization, a nationwide survey by Encore.org has found that the American public values the interdependence of younger and older generations, and has little appetite for a “generation war” (Fig. 1).

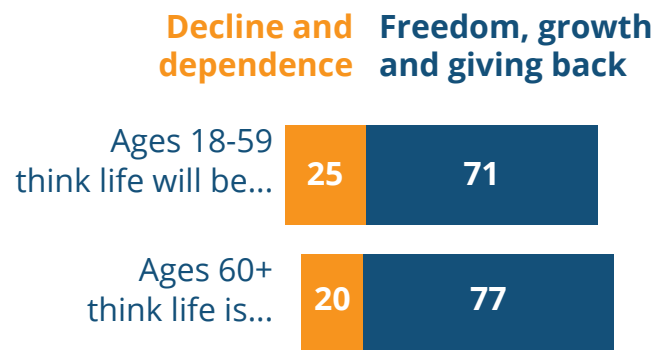


On the contrary, most Americans believe that cooperation between young and old will be a source of national strength in an era characterized by rapid population aging, growing racial diversity and persistent partisan gridlock.

Most adults of all ages also say they expect that the aging of the population will be good for American society as a whole and that life after age 60 will be or already has been a time of freedom, growth and giving back for them personally. (Fig. 2).

Most adults say life after 60 is, or will be, good for them...

% who say life after age 60 is/will be a time of mostly...



...and a majority say growing number of older adults is good for America

% who say impact of aging of U.S. population will be...

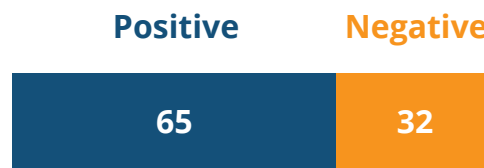
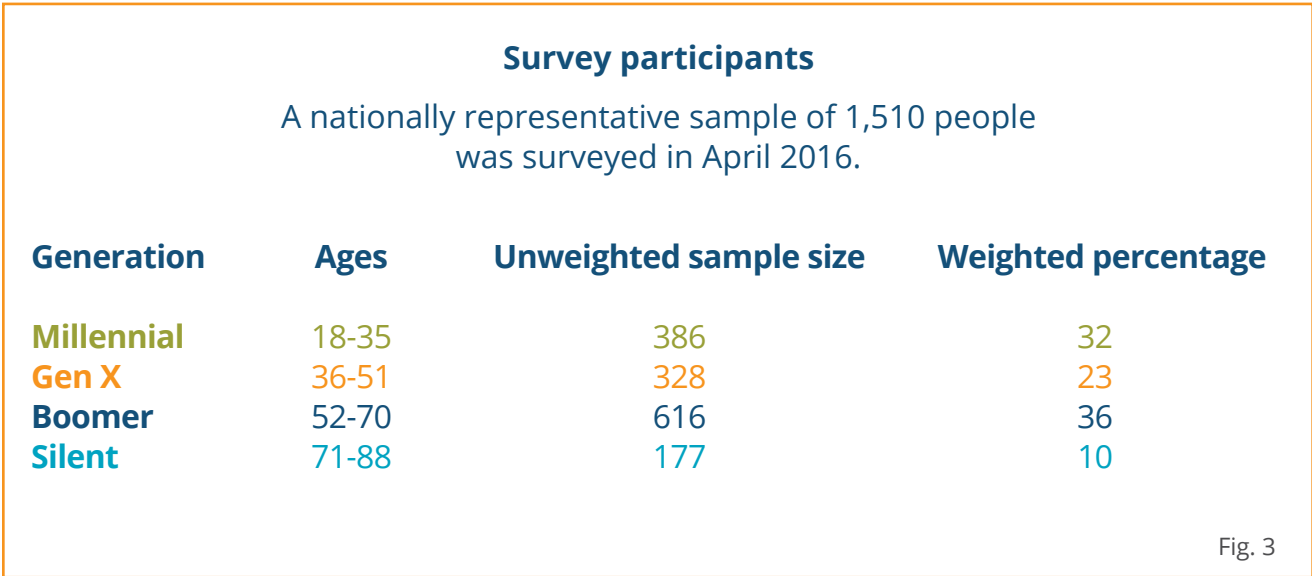


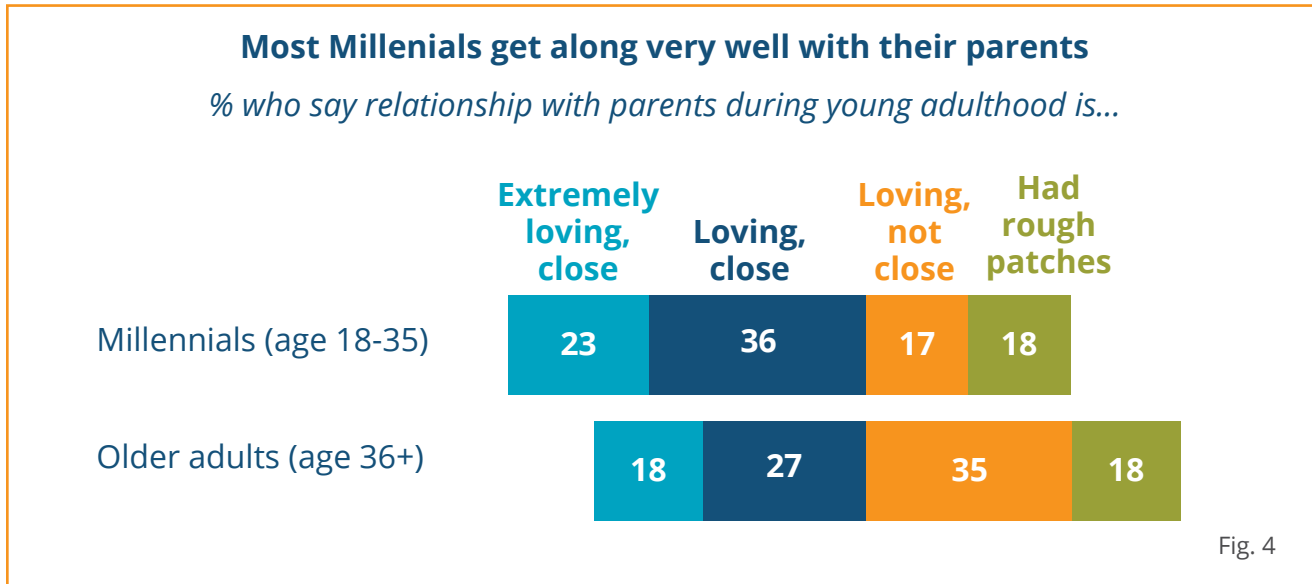
Fig. 2

And in a campaign year that featured a sharp debate about America's future, nearly all respondents said that giving future generations the chance to prosper is one of the key characteristics of a great nation.

All of these views are widely shared across conventional dividing lines — age, race, gender, income, party and ideology — making intergenerational relations and population aging the rare realm of modern life about which a dyspeptic, divided public is both upbeat and in accord (Fig. 3). (These and other data are derived from a nationally-representative survey sample of 1,510 adults ages 18 and older conducted online from April 7-20, 2016 by the GfK Group; methodology is detailed on page 15).

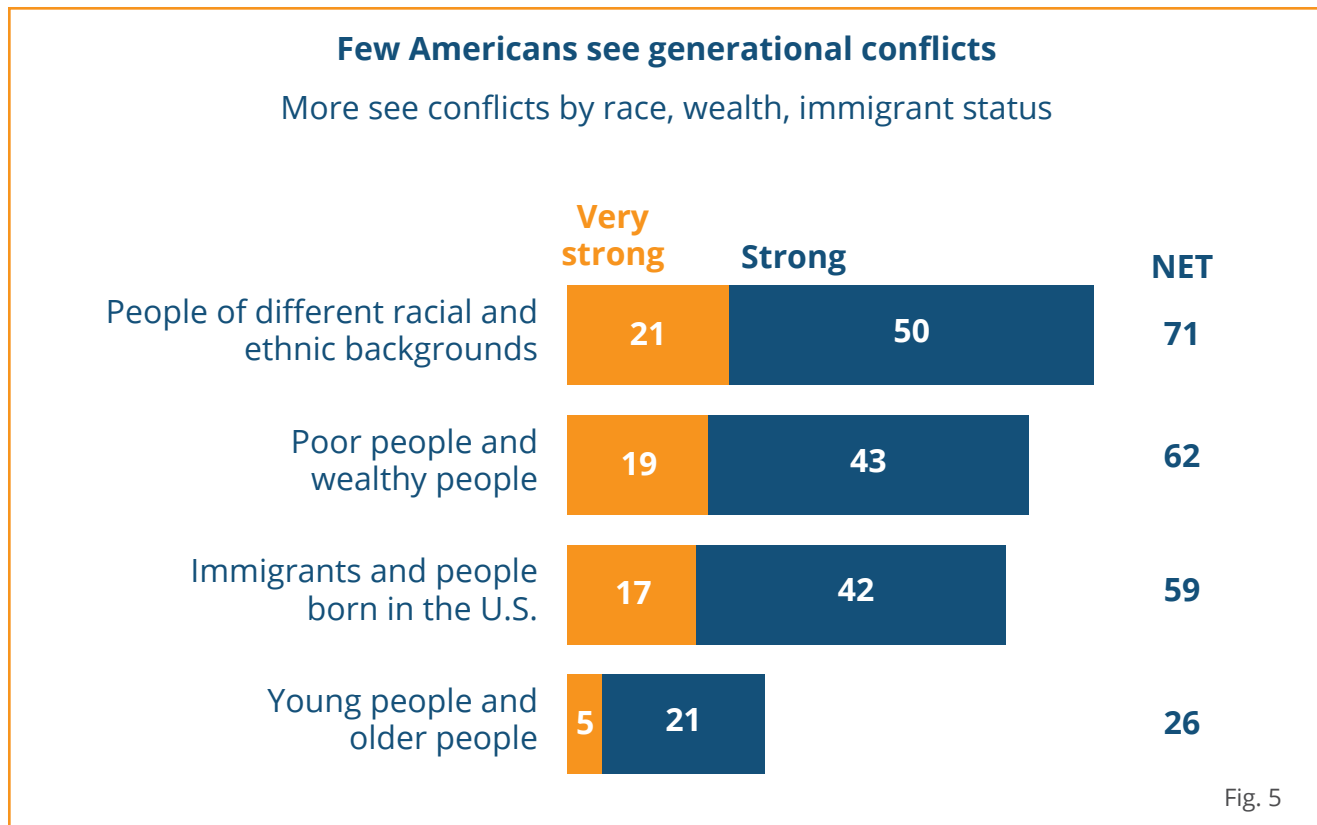


The seeds of today's intergenerational good will are rooted in family life, where the survey finds that the bonds between parents and young adult children are closer now than in previous decades (Fig. 4).



Six in ten Millennials say their relationship with their parents is “loving and close.” By contrast, fewer than half of middle-aged and older adults say the same was true of their relationship with their own parents back when they were the age that Millennials are now (Fig. 4).

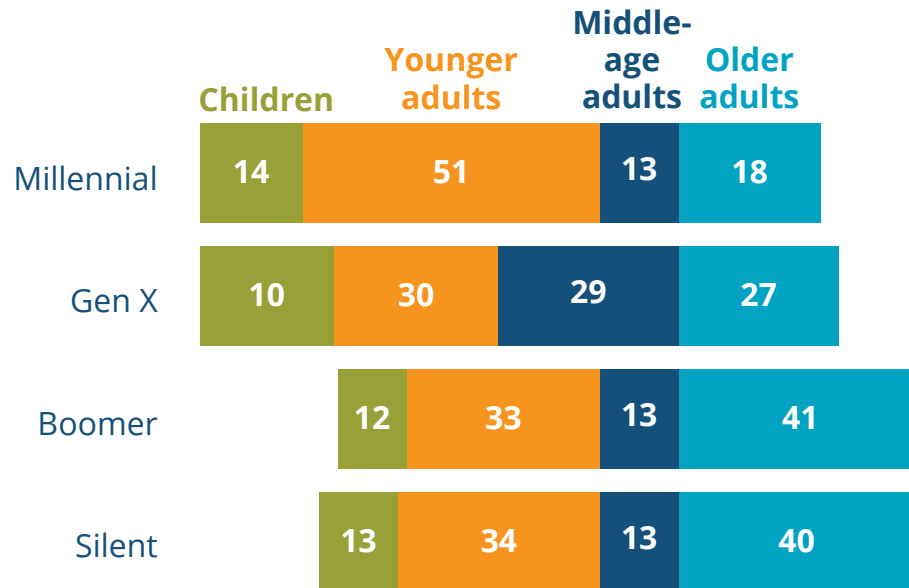
Expanding beyond the family, the survey asked respondents to assess four different areas of potential social conflict between different demographic groups. Roughly one in four respondents (26 percent) said there are strong conflicts between younger and older people. However many more people see strong conflicts between immigrants and U.S. natives (59 percent), the poor and the wealthy (62 percent), and different racial and ethnic groups (71 percent).



This relative good will between the generations persists even in the face of some significant differences by age cohort in how the public weighs the economic challenges confronting young and old in modern America. In this context, each generation tends to identify its own challenges as the most pressing.

A plurality of older adults say that their generation faces the greatest difficulties in today's economy. By contrast, a majority of younger adults say this unhappy distinction belongs to their generation or to today's children (Fig. 6).

Generations differ over which age group faces the most economic challenges
% who say each group faces the biggest economic challenges



Generations differ over which age group is most in need of more community support

% who say each group is most in need of more community support

■ None | ■ Children & Youth | ■ Younger Adults | ■ Older Adults

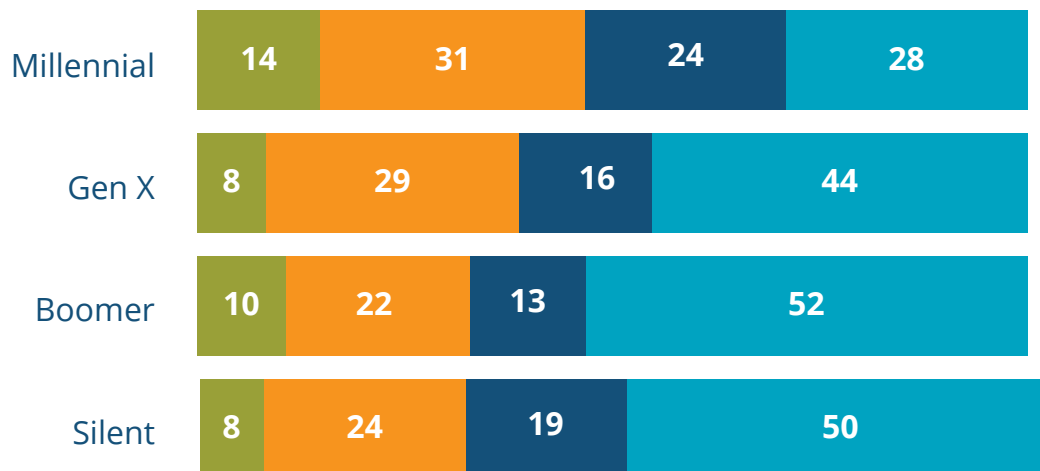
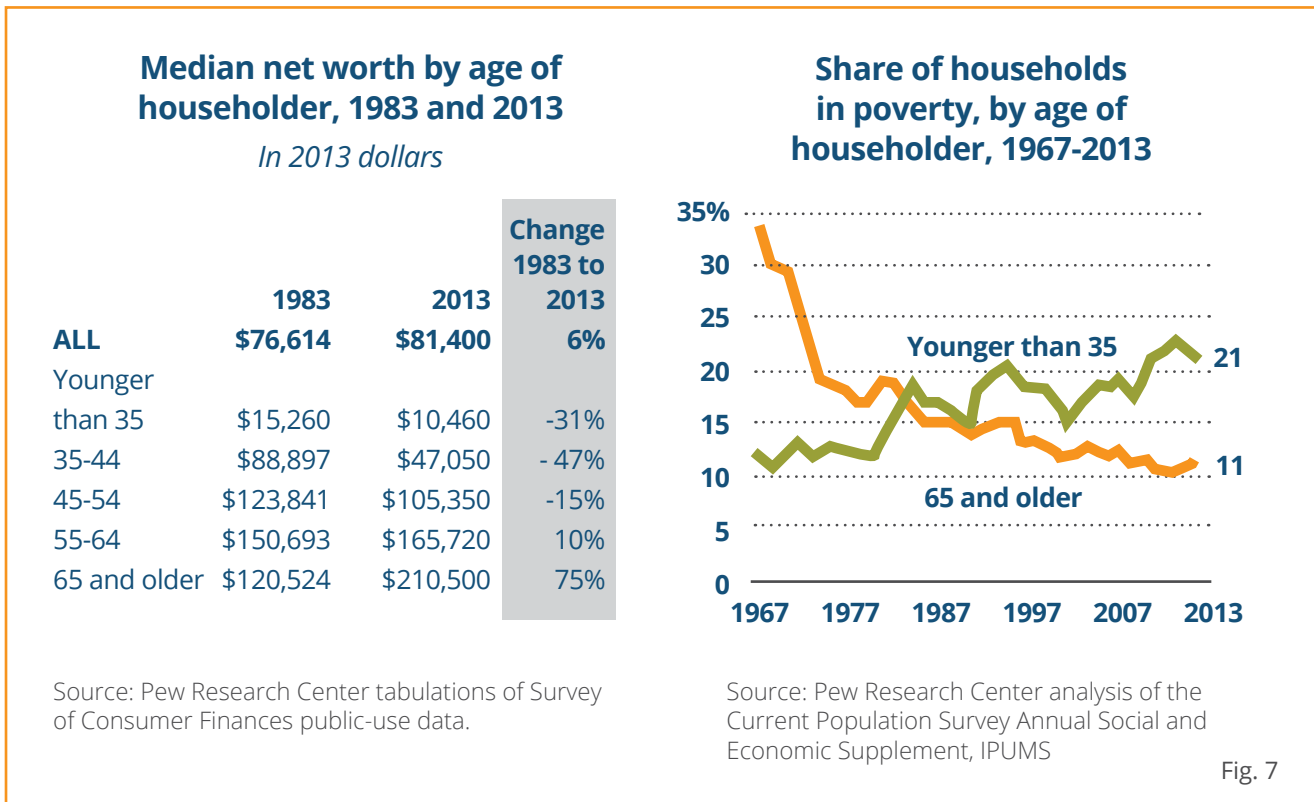


Fig. 6

Likewise, Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation are much more likely than Millennials to say that older adults most need more support from local communities.

Government economic data support the Millennial perspective: Half a century ago, the old were the poorest age cohort in America. Now, according to the Census Bureau, the young are the poorest and the old are the least likely to be poor. Also, according to the Federal Reserve Board, the median wealth of households headed by adults 65 and older is 75 percent higher in inflation-adjusted dollars than it was for age-peers in 1983. Median household wealth is 31 percent lower for households headed by adults under the age of 35 than it was for their same-aged households in 1983 (Fig. 7).



In line with these trends, the survey also finds that financial assistance and other forms of family support now flow “downstream” — from older parents to adult children — at nearly twice the rate they flow in the opposite direction. This is not surprising in an era when one in three Millennials lives with their parents, up from one in five (20 percent) of their same-aged counterparts who did so half a century ago. And in nearly half of all families today, grandparents are helping to raise grandchildren (Fig. 8).

In families, most support flows downstream

% of all adults who say this is happening in their family right now

■ A lot | ■ Some

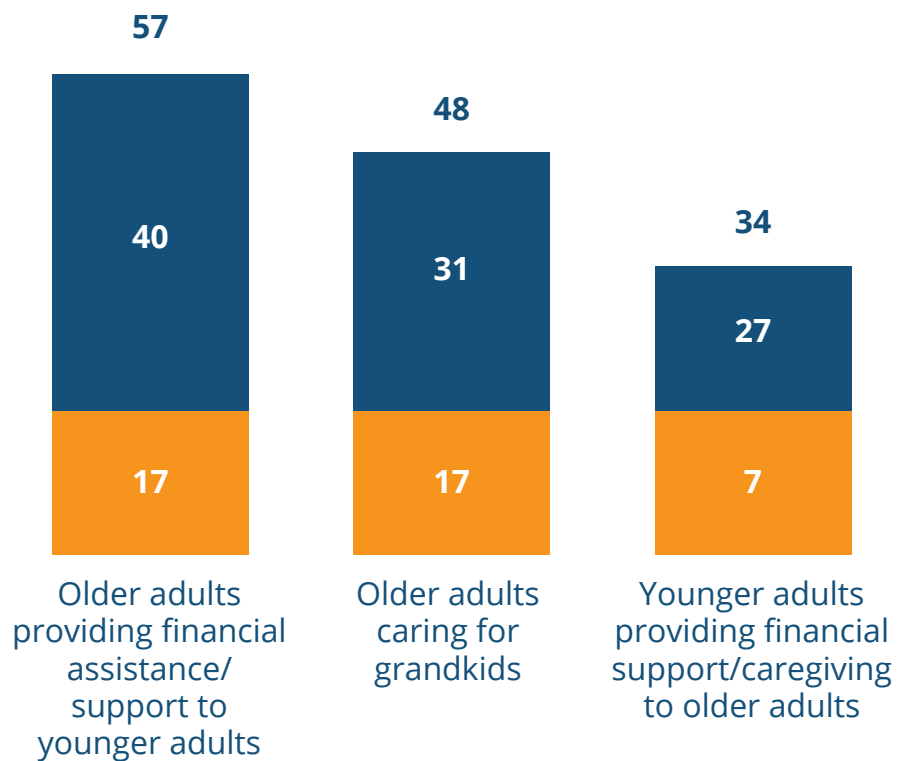


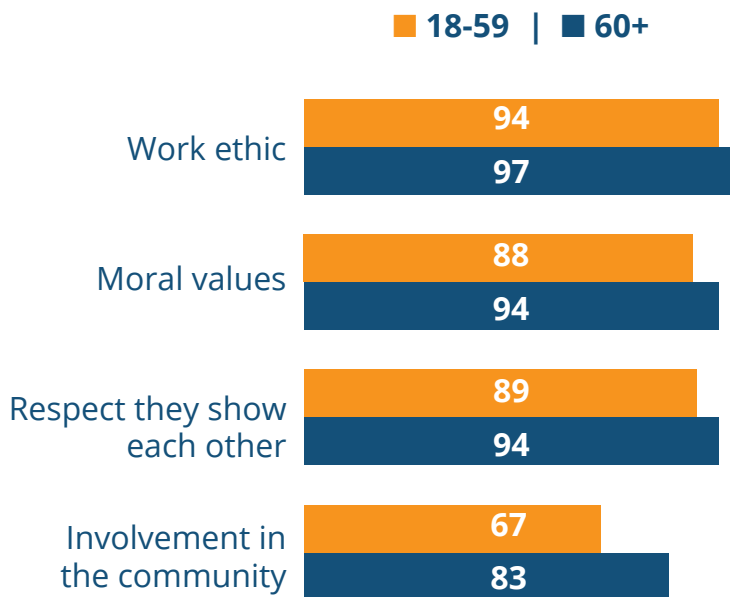
Fig. 8

Admiration for Older Adults

By lopsided margins, young and middle-aged adults express widespread admiration for older adults' core values. The majority of respondents under age 60 say that older adults have stronger moral values, a superior work ethic, greater community involvement and more respect for others than do younger adults. By even greater margins, older adults agree (Fig. 9). However, all generations agree that younger adults are better than older adults in the realm of race relations.

Older people viewed more positively than the young in many realms...

% who say older people are better compared with younger people in each realm



Based on respondents who say older people and younger adults differ on each attribute.

...but younger people are seen as better at race relations

% who say younger people are better compared with older people



Based on respondents who say older people and younger adults differ on attitudes towards races and groups not like them.

Fig. 9

Generations, Diversity, America's Future

The demographic changes transforming the United States today have created a population with unprecedented generational differences. Older adults today are predominantly white and politically conservative; younger adults are increasingly non-white and liberal, contributing to the polarization of modern politics.

On Tuesday, November 8, 2016, for the third presidential election in a row, there was a sizeable difference in how younger and older adults voted. According to election day exit polls, Republican Donald Trump carried adults ages 65 and older by 53 to 45 percent, while Democrat Hillary Clinton carried adults ages 18 to 29 by 55 to 37 percent.

However, this young-old partisan gap of 13 percentage points was somewhat smaller than it had been in 2008 (21 percentage points) or 2012 (16 percentage points). And when the public was asked in Spring 2016 about the impact of generational differences on the nation's future, most were optimistic and aspirational.

The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate which of the following ways to think about demographic change they believe is more accurate, even if neither is exactly right:

- In America today, rapid demographic change has created a population in which young and old don't look or think alike. Older Americans are more likely to be white and conservative; younger Americans are more likely to be non-white and liberal. These generation gaps will make it difficult to find consensus solutions to our nation's most pressing problems **(30 percent chose this answer)**.
- Older and younger Americans need each other. It's a natural part of the human life cycle. It's also one of the reasons America has flourished throughout our history. Our growing diversity in the 21st century can be a source of national strength as long as we remember that as Americans, we all have obligations to one another and to future generations **(65 percent chose this answer)**.

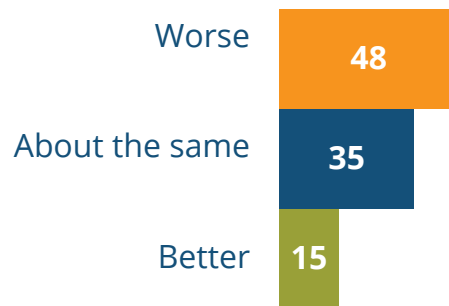
There wasn't much difference by generation in the responses to this question. Some 63 percent of respondents ages 18 to 59 chose the second option, as did 71 percent of respondents ages 60 and older.

At the same time, the harsh economic trends of the 21st century — including the shrinking of the middle class, the stagnation in median household income, the great recession and the rise of income and wealth inequality — have led to widespread pessimism about the well-being of future generations.

Fewer than one in six adults of all ages say that today's children will have a better standard of living than most adults have now. About half say that today's children will wind up doing worse and about a third say they will do about the same (Fig. 10).

Public thinks today's generation of children will have a lower standard of living

% who say that when today's children grow up, their standard of living will be ___ than most adults today



...but is more optimistic about their own children

% who say that when their own children grow up, their standard of living will be ___ than theirs is now

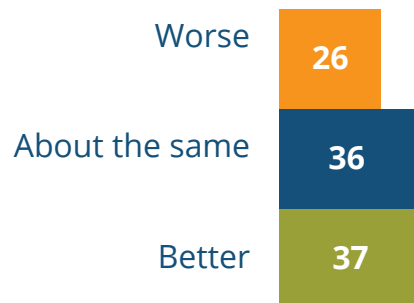
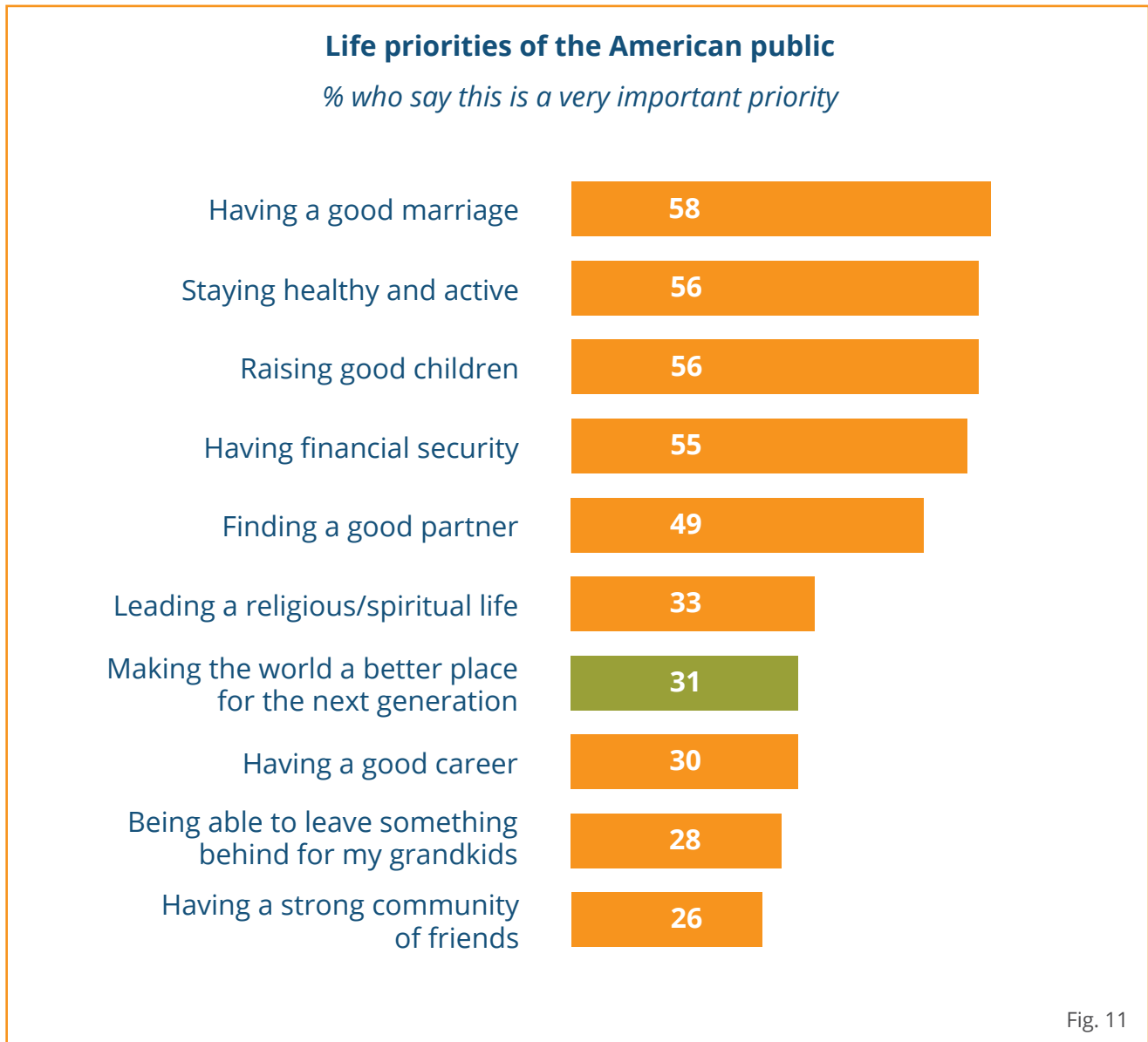


Fig. 10

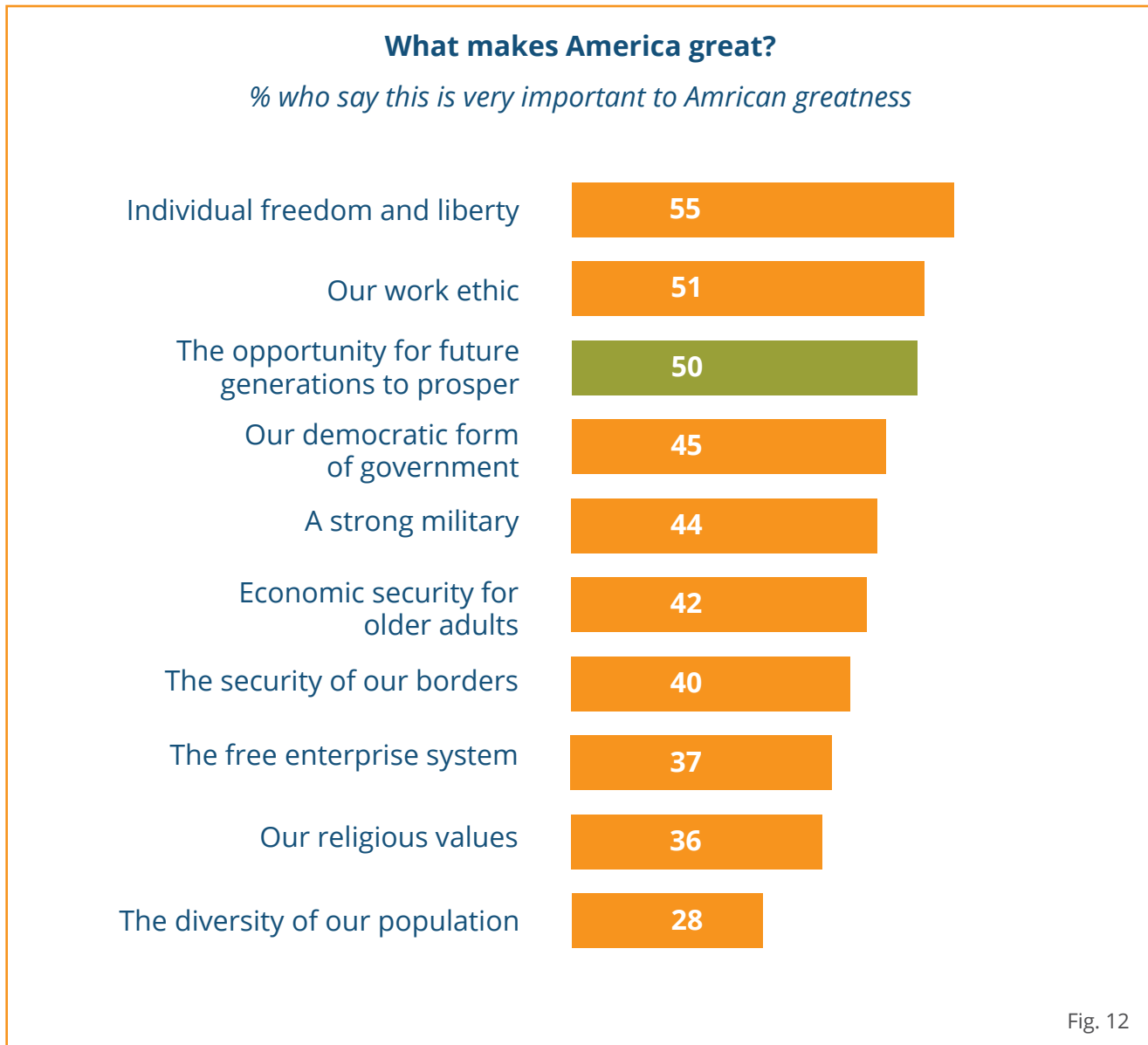
Some of this pessimism falls away when survey respondents are asked about their own children, however. Nearly three-quarters of respondents say their children's future standard of living will be the same (36 percent) or better (37 percent) than that of their parents. One in four say it will be worse.

Notably, many Americans link their own sense of purpose in life and as well as their belief in America's greatness as a nation to the well-being and prosperity of future generations.

Eight in ten survey respondents say making the world a better place for the next generation is one of the "very important" (31 percent) or "important" (49 percent) priorities in their lives, akin to living a religious (spiritual) life, having a good career, and having a strong community of friends, but not as important as a good marriage, raising good children, staying healthy and active, and having financial security (Fig. 11).



As for the nation as a whole, nine in ten survey respondents say that the opportunity for future generations to prosper is “very important” (50 percent) or “important” (41 percent), putting it near the top of a list that includes individual freedom, work ethic, democratic governance, a strong military, economic security for older adults, border security, religious values, free enterprise and diversity (Fig. 12).



Survey Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on a survey conducted with a nationally representative sample of adults 1,510 adults 18 years of age or older interviewed online between April 7-20, 2016. The sample included additional interviews with random samples of non-Hispanic African-Americans and Hispanics, for a total of 300 African-Americans and 304 Hispanics, including 137 who took the survey in Spanish. The sample is weighted so that these groups represent the same proportion in the sample as in the general U.S. population. The complete survey instrument is [here](#).

The survey was conducted by the GfK Group using KnowledgePanel, its nationally representative online research panel. KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability sampling methods and include both those with internet access and those without (KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it and, if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel). A combination of random digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies have been used to recruit panel members. The panel includes households with landlines and cellular phones, including those only with cell phones, and those without a phone. KnowledgePanel continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish.

All active members of the GfK panel were eligible for inclusion in this study. In all, 3,268 panelists were invited to take part in the survey. All sampled members received an initial email to notify them of the survey and provide a link to the survey questionnaire. Additional follow-up reminders were sent to those who had not yet responded as needed.

The final sample of 1,510 adults was weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender and, within gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income, home ownership status, metropolitan area and internet access to parameters from the latest available supplements of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). This weight is multiplied by an initial sampling or base weight that corrects for differences in the probability of selection of various segments of GfK's sample and by a panel weight that adjusts for any biases due to nonresponse and noncoverage at the panel recruitment stage (using all of the parameters described above). Details about the GfK panel-level weights can be found [here](#).

Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting at each of these stages. The margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is plus or minus 2.8 percentage points for results based on the full sample (n=1,510). Sampling error for African-American respondents is 6.2 percentage points and for Hispanic respondents it is 6.1 percentage points. Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.