

Millennials and Water: How Our Largest and most Eco-Concerned Generation Views Water Issues

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by Sherri Walker

Millennials. Generation Y. Individuals born between 1980-2000. They are the [most diverse \(42% identify as non-white\)](#), [most educated \(61% attend\[ed\] college\)](#) and [most technology-immersed](#) generation on the planet. They feel close to their parents, [care about making healthy choices](#) in their life and are worried about the economic choices of past generations on their future. And because they are the [largest generation in the world today](#), their attitudes and practices have the potential to impact society, business, and the planet in impactful ways. Learning what is important to Millennials is good practice and good business. [*photo c/o [ticketingtoday.com](#)*]



For example, Millennials are very [concerned with the environment](#). One poll found that 76% of Millennials are environmentally-conscious compared with 24% of their parents' generation. And Millennials are willing to put their money where their mouths are by paying more for "[sustainable offerings](#)," or "products and services that come from companies who are committed to positive social and environmental." This explains why [Millennials choose to buy TOMS shoes over Nike brand even with Nike spending millions in marketing](#). These young consumers feel



good about TOMS socially-conscience "buy one, give one" policy of providing shoes to individuals in need around the world and show their support with their purchasing power. [*photo c/o [thebrief.com](#)*]

However some studies find Millennials to be "[attitudinally](#)

[green but not practically green](#),” meaning that while they profess to want to make environmentally sustainable changes in the world “many of their day-to-day practices do not align with their beliefs.”

For example, only [33% of Millennials recycle](#) compared to 51% of all other age groups; [40% drink water from reusable containers](#) instead of disposable plastic bottles compared to 43% of all other Americans; and [40% avoid letting the water run](#) while washing dishes or brushing teeth, compared to 49% of older generations. *[photo c/o youtube.com]*



And when it comes to issues around water, water shortages, and water cleanliness, Millennials still have a lot to learn. More Millennials than other generations do not understand where their water supply comes from, and most are [not concerned with a water crisis happening](#) to their water supply. In fact Millennials were found to be “[least likely to be worried about water quality, least likely to take action to preserve water quality](#).”

[Millennials themselves admit](#) that though they believe its important to conserve water and take steps to get the most out of their water supply, they realize that they don’t think about water as much as they should. In a survey taken for this article, 64% of responding Millennials said they think water is relatively important as a world issue, but don't know a lot about the global water shortage. And 82% of respondents feel that Millennials know there are water problems, but aren't too



worried with water-related concerns facing the world. Almost all the responding Millennials said they conserve water in some fashion on a daily basis by doing things such as turning off the water when they brush their teeth, only running full loads of laundry/ dishes, and recycling. *[photo c/o citylab.com]*

This isn’t to say that all Millennials are disengaged from water issues facing society today. In fact some of the most intriguing exploration and advances in sustainable practices are being pursued by this generation of innovators, including [dual-flush toilets](#) that save water and an [edible water blob](#) that reduces plastic bottles. Another example is Chris Matthews and Justin Sonnett, two recent college graduates who are Co-Founders of SAROS – a wave-powered desalination unit that provides fresh water to coastal and island communities facing water shortages. Matthews and Sonnett,

who graduated with engineering degrees from The University of North Carolina in Charlotte, have been working for the past two years on creating and optimizing the SAROS unit in hopes that they will be able to help some of the [750 million people in need](http://www.sarosdesalination.com) have access to clean water. [photo c/o www.sarosdesalination.com]



As this powerful rising generation continues influencing the world in economic and social issues, it will be intriguing to see the impact they have on our economy, our society, and our environment.

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