



MILLENNIAL  
**RUNNING**  
STUDY

**EMBARGOED UNTIL FEBRUARY 12, 8AM EST**

A partnership between:  &  RacePartner™

With research by:  Achieve

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### For More Information:

- **Millennial Running Study**  
[millennialrunningstudy.com](http://millennialrunningstudy.com)
- **RacePartner**  
[racepartner.com](http://racepartner.com)
- **Running USA**  
[runningusa.org](http://runningusa.org)
- **Achieve**  
[achieveguidance.com](http://achieveguidance.com)

When I started with Running USA in early 2014, the running industry was in the middle of what we termed its “second boom.” Many forces were driving growth in the industry, but none matched the increase of female runners.

As we fielded media inquiries, spoke with industry leaders and continued to track the trend, two thoughts formulated for me:

If women are the current boom in the sport, what role would Millennials play? How might the largest generation since Baby Boomers – and the most technologically advanced generation ever – impact running events?

These thoughts led me to speak with various people, and, in 2014, it was the forward-thinking team at RacePartner who agreed to tackle the questions head-on.

Lawyers I know will typically advise not to ask questions you don’t already know the answers to. In this case, the more questions we had, the more we wanted to learn. Millennials have strong purchasing power, are highly active and engaged in fitness and are very closely tied to their communities in ways that differ from the past.

Running USA has long been the national resource for data and analysis in the sport of running and road races. We believe that providing event organizers and those in the supply chain critical insights about all demographics is vital to our mission. The Millennial Running Study is an opportunity for us to continue sharing these insights, but one that’s on a new scale for us – and the running industry as a whole. The results from this study will help shape business approaches, marketing and communications plans and hopefully, even the way our industry considers this generation.

The entire process of the Millennial Running Study was a collaboration. From a few phone conversations in late 2014 to several office meetings and recruiting research partners, Running USA is proud that all involved jumped in, did their part and can now help shape future conversations.

Finally, I wish to publicly acknowledge the tremendous contributions of Rob Anderson, Slade Sundar, Derrick Feldmann and their entire teams for believing in the concept and especially for making this important research possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Harshbarger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Rich Harshbarger**  
CEO, Running USA

## About the Research

The Millennial Running Study, presented by Running USA, sponsored by RacePartner and with research by Achieve, is the first of its kind that focuses specifically on the Millennial generation within the endurance sports industry.

The purpose of this research is to understand the attitudes and behaviors of Millennial (born 1980-2000) runners toward their participation in run/race/walk events, with the goal of using these data to direct the way events are executed in the future.

**In this report, “running events” are defined as public, organized run/walk events.**

These events are typically in lengths of 5K (3.1 miles), 10K (6.2 miles), half-marathon (13.1 miles), marathon (26.2 miles) and ultra-distance (more than 26.2 miles).

This focus on the Millennial generation is not to compare it to generations of the past; it is to predict and prepare for views and behaviors of the future.

The research team will release data from this study four times over the next year. These releases will detail findings from both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews, observations, testing and analysis) research methods.

### Release 1: The 2015 Millennial Running Study

The following report details findings from the initial release of the study. In this report, findings are based on responses from Millennial running event finishers about their reported behavior toward and perceptions of running events as well as their motivations for participating in these types of events. This release is based solely on quantitative methodology distributed via an online survey.

The research team will continue to release data three more times over the course of the year, including expanded quantitative findings as well as qualitative interviews and observations that will validate the quantitative data.

### Subsequent Release Qualitative Comparison

*To be released later in 2016*

A subsequent release of this year’s study will consist of one-on-one interviews. The purpose of this additional release will be to compare anecdotal comments and experiences with the data detailed in this initial report. Release two will be completed during the next six months and will include findings and interviews once research and analysis are complete.

## Methodology

In total, 24,067 Millennial runners attempted (but didn't necessarily complete) this survey. Of the 16,792 respondents who completed the survey, 15,631 were Millennials. This report details the findings of Millennial respondents only. The survey was fielded from October 9, 2015 to October 31, 2015.

An estimated 18,173,000 Millennials aged 18-34 are joggers/runners,<sup>1</sup> which establishes a 99 percent confidence level for this sample of Millennial runners, with a margin of error of 1.03 percent.

To uncover the trends related to this generation's attitudes, behaviors and perceptions, the Achieve research team designed a multi-staged, mixed methodological research study. In an attempt to recruit a nationally representative sample, Achieve worked in collaboration with Running USA to identify research partners that hosted running events with high rates of Millennial participation.

Once applications were received, invited research partners were selected as part of the sample based on the following: geographic location, number of event participants, number of Millennial event participants, type of event and participant demographics. When the recruiting process ended, 24 research partners agreed to participate; 16 research partners disseminated surveys to participants of their events.

### **The study's research questions included:**

- How is this group of young adults changing the way people stay fit?
- Where are race directors most likely to feel their influence?
- What needs to be adjusted as this audience continues to grow and age so they keep coming back year after year?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.runningusa.org/2014-running-industry-report?returnTo=annual-reports>

## Millennial Runner Respondents



**15,631 Total Respondents**

**Born 1980-2000**

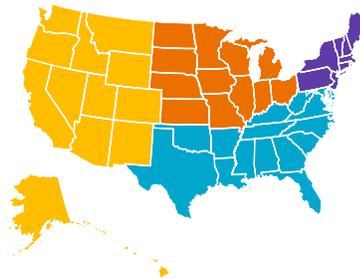
**Gender:** 73% Female / 27% Male

In Running USA's 2015 State of the Sport – U.S. Race Trends report, female runners made up 57 percent of finishers (10.7 million women vs. 8 million men).<sup>2</sup> This trend of women outnumbering men in the running industry holds true in this sample, which was comprised of 73 percent female and 27 percent male.

**Race/ethnicity:**

79% White	2% Black
10% Hispanic/Latino(a)	2% Other
5% Asian	2% Prefer Not to Answer

In a 2011 Running USA survey of nearly 12,000 “core runners” (people who frequently enter running events and train year-round), 90 percent of respondents were Caucasian, 5.1 percent Hispanic, 3.9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and, most surprisingly, only 1.6 percent African-American. Other surveys report similar statistics, including one from Runner’s World. Though the National Sporting Goods Association reported a 56 percent growth in participation in running over the past 10 years, the African-American population in the sport of running has remained low, as is shown in this Millennial Running Study as well.<sup>3</sup>



**94% Live in the U.S.**

- 34% in Midwest
- 28% in West
- 27% in South
- 11% in Northeast

### Demographic Highlights

**Marital Status:**

47% Single, Never Married  
 40% Married  
 10% Living with Partner

**Employment:**

79% Employed Full-Time  
 5% Employed Part-Time  
 10% Students

**Education:**

47% have earned Bachelor’s Degrees  
 28% have earned Master’s Degrees  
 6% have earned a Professional Degree  
 4% have earned a Doctorate Degree

**Annual Income** (*Un-partnered or unmarried respondents reported personal income only; partner/married respondents reported household income.:*)

50% earn between \$50,001-\$150,000  
 18% earn between \$50,001-\$75,000  
 15% earn between \$75,001-\$100,000  
 17% earn between \$100,001-\$150,000

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.runningusa.org/2015-state-of-sport-us-trends>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.runnersworld.com/runners-stories/why-is-running-so-white>

The sport of running isn't just enduring – it's been growing and thriving for the past several years. According to Running USA's 2015 State of the Sport report, running events increased 300 percent from 1990 to 2013 and held strong in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

Some of that growth and sustainability can be attributed to the Millennial generation.

Nearly 42 million Americans are considered runners/joggers today, and approximately 18,173,000 of those are between the ages of 18 and 34 years-old.<sup>5</sup> Millennials (born 1980-2000) now account for more than a quarter of the nation's population,<sup>6</sup> which speaks to their profound ability to change the norms of the workplace, philanthropy, culture, technology, recreation and societal behavior – including the sport of running.

The purpose of this study is to understand the attitudes and behaviors of Millennial runners toward their participation in run/race/walk events: what motivates them to register for and participate in events; why they are interested in running and fitness; how causes play a role in their choice of running events. This data should be used to direct the way events are executed in the future.

This research indicates that Millennial runners participate in running events for two main reasons: health & fitness and the overall experience. Because Millennials in general are noted as having an affinity for “doing good,” as research has shown through the Millennial Impact Project (themillennialimpact.com), this study also sought to understand if or how philanthropy has an influence on runners' attitudes and behaviors toward running events.

**This study analyzed Millennial runners who participate in competitive running events (such as 5Ks, half-marathons, etc.).** This study did not analyze Millennial participants in noncompetitive, exclusively charity-driven events such as Relay for Life, Walk to End Alzheimer's, etc.

Thus, this report is separated into three categories: Health & Fitness, Experience and Philanthropy, which help answer preliminary questions like:

- Why do so many Millennials get involved in running?
- What can organized running events – and the event directors and teams putting these events on – do to keep this generation interested and engaged?
- Will these fitness-conscious Millennial runners follow in their forerunners' footsteps and drop out of the race at age 35?
- Is this generation defining a turning point in the running industry?
- Why do Millennial runners volunteer for running events?

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.runningusa.org/2015-state-of-sport-us-trends>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.runningusa.org/2014-running-industry-report?returnTo=annual-reports>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-113.html>

Due to the generation's vast population in the United States, Millennial runners' attitudes toward and participation in running events can vastly change the landscape of the running industry in the future. The findings from this study will help event directors understand the dynamics behind this generation's motivations and how they participate in running events.

Thus, event directors should use the findings in this report to address questions such as: How do Millennial runners view, participate in and engage with institutions that facilitate running events? How will this generation redefine the sport and industry of running? Do causes have an impact on a Millennial runner's decision to participate in a running event? How can event directors harness this data to change the way they create and execute events in the future?

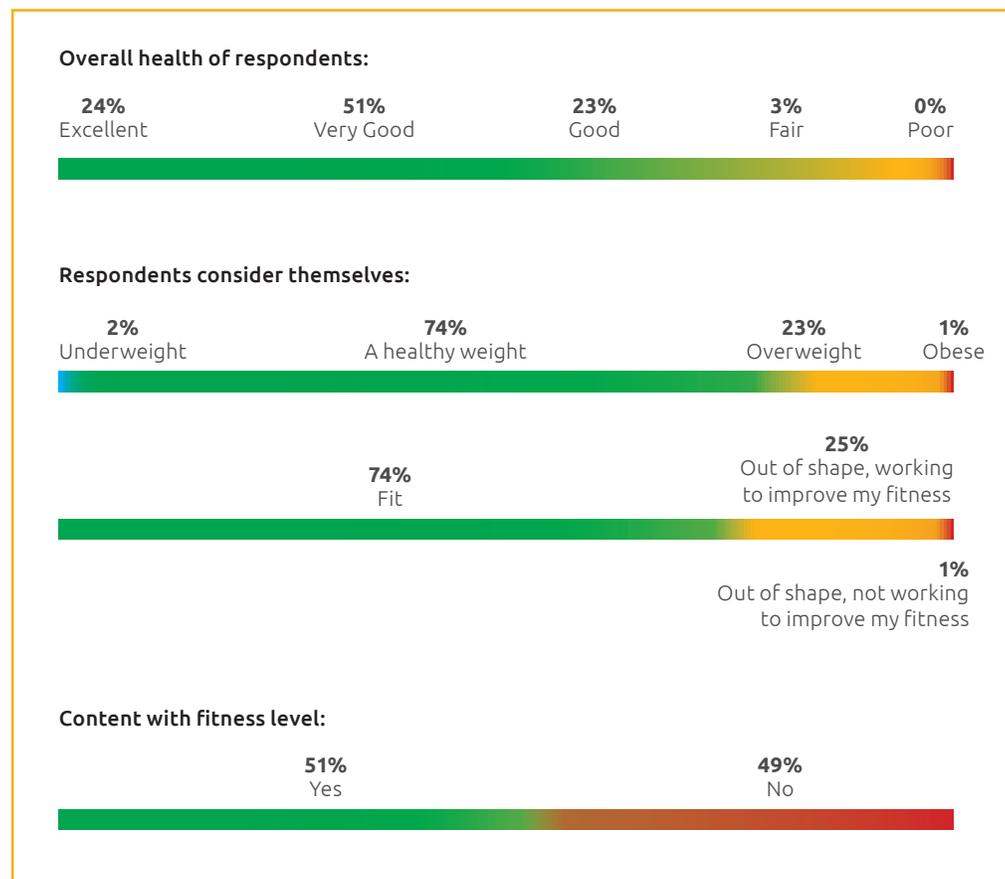
From the findings of this study, Millennial runners participate in running events primarily due to two reasons: They are interested in health and fitness, and they desire a quality event experience for themselves and their supporters. The study also analyzed whether they view such events as opportunities to support causes that are important to them.

## Health & Fitness

### Millennial runners predominantly consider themselves healthy and fit.

The majority of the sample reported their health as “very good,” while similar percentages reported their health as “excellent” and “good.” Nearly three-quarters of respondents considered themselves at a “healthy weight,” with most of the remaining respondents reporting themselves as “overweight.” Only very small percentages indicated they are either underweight or obese.

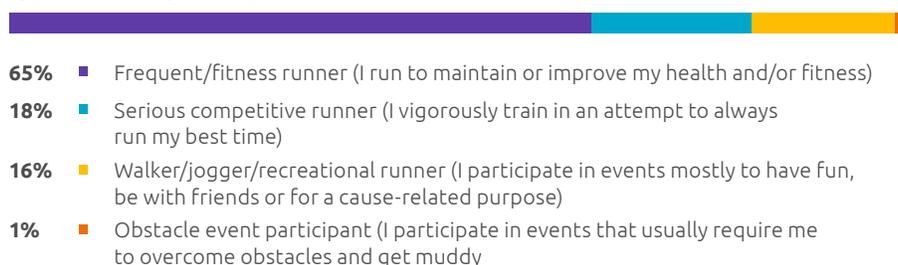
Although nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated they were “fit” and one-quarter reported being out of shape but currently working to improve their fitness, the sample was nearly equally divided by respondents who were content with their fitness level and those who were not.



## Millennial runners participate in running events to maintain or improve health and/or fitness more than any other motivator.

The analysis is clear: Millennial runners run for health above all other reasons. Two-thirds of respondents report being frequent or “fitness” runners, indicating they run to maintain or increase their health and wellbeing. Health – both improving and maintaining – is also the top motivator for participating in running events.

### Types of running participants:



## Millennial runners' top three motivations for participating in running events are:

1. To improve physical health (increase fitness, decrease weight, etc.)
2. To maintain physical health (maintain fitness, maintain weight, etc.)
3. To run in a new or unique environment

## Most Millennial runners haven't been running long – but they are already dedicated, regardless of events.

Millennial runners seem to quickly pick up and commit themselves to the sport of running. The majority of Millennial respondents appear to have recently adopted the sport, but their responses indicate they appear to be dedicated runners whether they are training for an event or not.

### Number of years participants have been running:



### Participants typically run:

#### When *not* training for an event:

Run throughout the year: **76%**  
 Run 6+ months throughout the year: **8%**  
 Run a few months throughout the year: **7%**  
 Run a few weeks throughout the year: **5%**  
 Don't run at all (if not training): **4%**

#### When training for an event:

Train all year: **24%**  
 Begin training 6+ months prior: **9%**  
 Begin training a few months prior: **53%**  
 Begin training a few weeks prior: **10%**  
 Don't train at all: **4%**

**Millennial runners are just as active in other non-running physical activities.**

Millennial runners don't just run to be healthy – they also participate in numerous other physical activities to boost health and fitness. The most popular non-running activities Millennial runners participate in include weight training, outdoor activities (such as hiking, backpacking and rock climbing), cycling and aerobics or fitness classes. Twenty-three percent of Millennial respondents reported participating in “other” activities besides running, which consisted of activities like yoga, triathlons and at-home workouts (P90x, etc.). From these respondents, only a very small percentage – six percent – report not participating in any other activity besides running.

Other physical activities Millennial runners participate in:	
<b>49%</b> Weight training	<b>19%</b> Organized sports
<b>43%</b> Hiking, backpacking, rock-climbing	<b>14%</b> Skiing
<b>38%</b> Cycling	<b>11%</b> Golf
<b>31%</b> Aerobics/fitness classes	<b>9%</b> Crossfit
<b>24%</b> Swimming	<b>7%</b> Tennis
<b>23%</b> Other	<b>6%</b> No other activities in addition to running

**Key Takeaways**

Millennial runners participate in running events because they love to run and challenge themselves. They consider themselves healthy and fit, and their number one motivator for participating in running events is to improve and/or maintain their health and well-being. Though the majority of Millennial runners haven't been running long, they have quickly become dedicated to the sport.

**Why this information is important**

Millennial runners participate in events because they want to further their health and fitness goals above all else. This information can help event directors across the country better understand the attitudes and behaviors of Millennial runners toward their participation in run/race/walk events – and use it to direct the way events are executed in the future.

**Recommendations**

Millennial runners want to be active, and that's the primary driver for participating in running events. When building an event, event directors should prioritize the opportunity for participants to be active and physically challenged above experiential value-adds. Opt to create an event that is first and foremost able to be valued by runners for attributes like its course, challenge to fitness, etc.

## Experience

Second to health and fitness, Millennial runners participate in running events for the overall experience. The type and length of event, cost of event, as well as social features of the event (for both themselves and their supporters/spectators), seem to be the most important elements of these event experiences to Millennial participants.

### Events focused on running garner more interest than fun or untimed runs.

Millennial respondents are more interested in registering for and participating in races that are focused on the run than fun and/or untimed runs such as a Color Run or Zombie Run.

- In this report, a “fun run” is defined as a noncompetitive running event.

Interest in event types is especially determined by race length. Overwhelmingly, half-marathons (13.1 miles) seem to be the most popular event type among Millennial respondents, followed by 5K (3.1 miles) and 10K (6.2 miles) races – both in types of runs Millennial runners registered for and finished in the past 12 months and in types of events respondents want or plan to register for and finish in the coming year.

### Type of Running Event Finished in the Past 12 Months vs. Plan to Run in the Next Year

	Finished in the past 12 months	Want to run in the next year
Fun Runs/Untimed Runs	23%	46%
5K (3.1 miles)	64%	61%
10K (6.2 miles)	48%	66%
Half-marathon (13.1 miles)	65%	82%
Marathon (26.2 miles)	30%	30%
Ultra Distance (more than 26.2 miles)	3%	8%
Road Running Relay	7%	15%
Obstacle Event (e.g. mud run)	12%	25%
Triathlon	9%	20%
Other	10%	5%
None	5%	<1%

### Millennial runners leverage digital and social media to learn about events.

Millennial participants report learning about running events via social media and internet searches much more than any other type of medium. Respondents learn of events least through newspapers. However, only a small percentage of runners report learning of events through blog posts.

Of those respondents who indicated they learned about events through social media, nearly all was via Facebook, followed by Instagram and Twitter, respectively.

#### How participants learn about events:

<b>64%</b>	<b>Social media</b>	<b>10%</b>	E-newsletter
<b>57%</b>	Internet search	<b>8%</b>	National running magazines
<b>38%</b>	Face-to-face contacts	<b>7%</b>	Other
<b>28%</b>	Running store	<b>4%</b>	Blog
<b>25%</b>	Running or fitness expo	<b>3%</b>	Newspaper
<b>21%</b>	Website		

#### Social media platforms for learning about events:

<b>95%</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>5%</b>	Google+
<b>39%</b>	Instagram	<b>5%</b>	LinkedIn
<b>27%</b>	Twitter	<b>1%</b>	Tumblr
<b>9%</b>	Pinterest	<b>&gt;1%</b>	Other
<b>5%</b>	Youtube	<b>&gt;1%</b>	None

**Millennial runners are most likely to register for events a month in advance via computer or laptop, and they prefer to be communicated with via email.**

Nearly all of Millennial respondents indicated they registered for running events at least one month in advance, with almost half reporting they registered at least three months in advance of the event.

For the most recent event Millennial runners participated in, the majority of respondents used a computer or laptop to register. However, only a small portion reported registering using a mobile device, and even fewer registered via a tablet.

Once registered, nearly all respondents preferred to receive event information via email – and the majority only prefer to be communicated with a few weeks prior to the event.

<p><b>How long before events Millennial runners register:</b></p> <p><b>48%</b> At least three months prior to the event</p> <p><b>41%</b> At least a month prior to the event</p> <p><b>9%</b> Within the month of the event</p> <p><b>1%</b> Within the week of the event</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> The day of the event</p>	<p><b>Method of registration for the last event respondents participated in:</b></p> <p><b>80%</b> Computer or laptop</p> <p><b>11%</b> Mobile device</p> <p><b>5%</b> Tablet</p> <p><b>1%</b> In-person (onsite the day prior or day of event)</p> <p><b>1%</b> Through another person (e.g. team registration)</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> Phone</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> Mail</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> Other</p>
<p><b>Preferred communication methods (after registration):</b></p> <p><b>94%</b> Email</p> <p><b>2%</b> Facebook</p> <p><b>2%</b> Text</p> <p><b>1%</b> App</p> <p><b>1%</b> Mail</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> Blog</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> Instagram</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> Twitter</p> <p><b>0%</b> Youtube</p>	<p><b>Frequency of preferred communication methods (after registration):</b></p> <p><b>46%</b> A few weeks before the event</p> <p><b>30%</b> During the three months before the event</p> <p><b>13%</b> Throughout the year</p> <p><b>8%</b> Only immediately after registering</p> <p><b>3%</b> During the six months before the event</p> <p><b>&lt;1%</b> No communications at all</p>

**Physical and experiential aspects of running events have the most impact on a Millennial runner’s decision to participate. Event sponsors, age group awards and real-time social media have the least impact.**

When making a decision to register and participate in a running event, Millennial participants most look at the distance/length, cost and physical challenge of the race. Experientially, they are interested in events with quality branded items or giveaways (“swag” such as t-shirts, bags, etc.), on-course entertainment, post-event parties and the ability to participate with friends.

Least important to a runner’s decision to participate include the event sponsor, age group awards and auto-generated social media feeds prior to and/or during the event.

Some aspects have mixed results with participants, including courses that are considered qualifiers for other races, the course’s impact on the environment and pre-event expos.

**Top five important elements of events that determine interest/participation:**

*Rated Important to Very Important*

- 95%** Running event distance
- 84%** The cost of a running event
- 76%** Timed events
- 74%** Instant results as one finishes the event
- 64%** Quality of other event branded items/giveaways (e.g. "swag" such as t-shirts, bags, discount coupons, etc.)

**Elements that do not have an impact on a runner's decision to participate:**

*Rated Somewhat Important to Not At All Important*

- 57%** A particular company is the event sponsor
- 47%** Age group awards
- 40%** Event-generated social media feeds in months, weeks and days before event
- 40%** Event-generated social media feeds from the course and finish line

**Elements that have mixed reviews on a Millennial runner's decision to participate:**

	Rated Very Important or Important	Rated Somewhat Important or Not At All Important
Certified or qualifying course	31%	38%
The course's impact on the environment/sustainability	30%	36%
Pre-event expos with offerings like health screenings, product samples, merchandise sales, etc.	38%	34%

**Millennial respondents are more likely to be interested in events that are well-known and have spectator opportunities; they are not very interested in training groups.**

Millennial participants are most interested in events that are highly-regarded and/or well-known. Next, they're interested in events with special opportunities for spectators watching/supporting them throughout the event (e.g. designated seating areas, social events, providing an app/texts to keep them directly informed about your progress, etc.), running apps and lower cost events with fewer benefits (such as electronic timing, awards, medals, etc.).

Participants are least interested in virtual/digital training groups or in-person training groups. Elements of running events with mixed reviews among respondents include travel and VIP experiences.

Participants are very interested in races with the following elements:		
<i>Rated Interested to Very Interested</i>		
<b>84%</b>	<b>Participating in a well-known event</b>	
<b>59%</b>	Special opportunities for spectators watching/supporting you throughout the event	
<b>53%</b>	Running apps	
<b>47%</b>	Lower cost running event with fewer benefits	
Participants are not very interested in the following elements:		
<i>Rated Somewhat Interested to Not At All Interested</i>		
<b>57%</b>	<b>Virtual or digital training groups</b>	
<b>45%</b>	In-person training groups	
Elements that have mixed reviews on a Millennial runner's decision to participate:		
	Rated Very Interested or Interested	Rated Somewhat Interested or Not At All Interested
Traveling to an event more than three hours outside a participant's local community	43%	41%
Event VIP experiences (e.g., private areas that provide pre- and post-event food and beverages, restrooms, gear storage, massage, etc.)	38%	41%

**Millennial runners, in general, prefer events with lower entry fees regardless of distance.**

When it comes to events they frequently participate in, Millennial runners are most willing to pay \$26-\$50 to register. That amount steadily increases based on event distance: For example, Millennial runners who primarily run marathons and half-marathons are more likely to be willing to pay more for those types of races (though they still prefer, overall, to pay \$26-\$50).

The majority of Millennial respondents indicated they would not be willing to pay for elements such as training groups, apps or spectator/VIP experiences.

**How Much Runners Are Willing to Pay for Events in Which They Most Often Participate (by Event Type)**

	Fun Run or Untimed Run* (e.g., Color Run)	5K (3.1 miles)	10K (6.2 miles)	Half-Marathon (13.1 miles)	Marathon (26.2 miles)	Ultra Distance (more than 26.2 miles)	Road Running Relay*	Obstacle Event (e.g., mud run)	Triathlon
\$150+	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	5%	2%	2%	4%
\$126 - \$150	2%	3%	3%	3%	5%	6%	4%	3%	4%
\$101 - \$125	5%	5%	6%	6%	9%	9%	7%	6%	7%
\$86 - \$100	10%	11%	11%	13%	15%	14%	12%	11%	14%
\$76 - \$85	11%	11%	12%	13%	13%	13%	13%	12%	13%
\$66 - \$75	13%	13%	14%	15%	13%	14%	14%	14%	13%
\$51 - \$65	17%	16%	16%	16%	14%	14%	15%	17%	15%
\$26 - \$50	23%	23%	21%	18%	16%	14%	19%	21%	17%
\$25 or less	16%	16%	15%	14%	12%	11%	13%	14%	13%

\* 1 percent in this category did not choose a response

**Participants would not be willing to pay for the following:**

- 83%** Virtual or digital training groups
- 70%** In-person training groups
- 70%** Running apps
- 59%** Special opportunities for spectators watching/supporting you throughout the event
- 59%** Event VIP experiences

## Key Takeaways

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Above all else, Millennial runners participate in running events because they love to run and challenge themselves. The Millennial runners surveyed are most interested in timed, well-known events, and they appreciate physical and experiential aspects more than expensive add-ons.

Millennial runners leverage social and digital media to learn about and register for events, and they prefer to be communicated with via email and only in the days leading up to the race. The preferences of this generation of runners are receiving communication that is straightforward and simple in its messaging and frequency.

## Why this information is important

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Millennial runners have particular preferences when it comes to learning about, registering for and participating in running events. As one of Millennial runners' top motivators for choosing and participating in events is the overall experience, this information can help event directors across the country better understand the attitudes and behaviors of Millennial runners toward their participation in run/race/walk events – and use it to direct the way events are executed in the future.

## Recommendations

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Above all, event directors would do well to allocate their time and energy into offering runners the lowest cost, highest quality event possible in order to attract Millennial participants. Additionally, event directors should:

- Utilize social media (especially Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) as well as your website to communicate information about your event.
- Communicate with participants via email – and do so sparingly leading up to the event.
- Determine a moderate price range for entry fees (not exceeding \$100; ideally \$26-\$50).
- Skip extra costly amenities like a VIP experience or event app.
- Consider planning events that offer unique experiences or are set in distinctive locations.

## Philanthropy

As found in the Millennial Impact Project ([themillennialimpact.com](http://themillennialimpact.com)), the most comprehensive and trusted study of the Millennial generation and their involvement with causes, this generation has an affinity for “doing good.” The 2015 Millennial Impact Report specifically showed that 84 percent of Millennials surveyed made a charitable contribution in 2014.

Similarly, Millennial runners are interested in supporting cause work they are passionate about through running events. However, event directors should note that philanthropy is not the primary reason for participating in events for these Millennial runners. Likewise, the event is not their primary way to support a cause or charity.

Throughout this report, “cause work” is used to describe any initiatives or programs that are charitable in nature.

Additionally, Millennial runners are more likely to volunteer for an event if an incentive is provided, as well as if a friend or family member is involved in either the “ask” or the event.

### **Nearly all of Millennial respondents have participated in a running event that supported a cause or charity – but the cause wasn’t the primary reason they participated.**

The majority of Millennial runners in this study indicated they had participated in an event that supported a cause or charity, with most of that group responding they participated in such an event during the past 12 months.

However, among the Millennial runners who have participated in an event that supported a cause or charity during the past 12 months, the majority of respondents reported that they had participated in running events because they were primarily interested in the actual event. Only a little more than a third of respondents indicated the cause or the charity that the event supported was the primary reason for participating in that event. And only a third reported that running events (in general) were their primary way to support causes and charities.

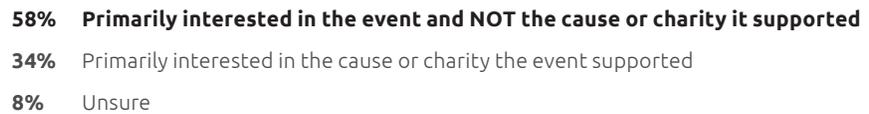
#### Have you ever participated in a running event that supported a cause or charity?



#### Have you participated in a running event that supported a cause or charity during the past 12 months?



#### Participation in a running event that supported a cause or a charity:

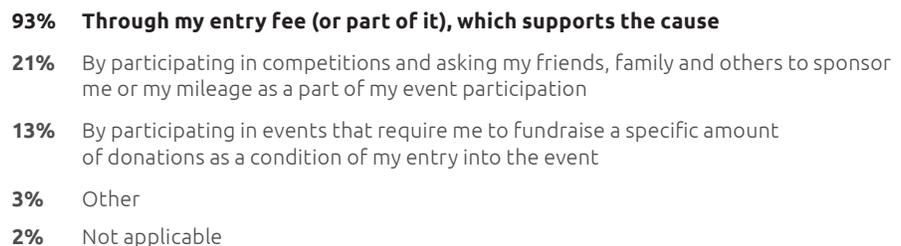


**When Millennial runners participate in running events that support a cause or charity, their primary method of giving is through their entry fee. A smaller percentage fundraise on behalf of the cause in addition to their registration fee.**

Among the Millennial runners who have participated in an event that supported a cause or charity during the past 12 months, nearly all reported they supported the cause or charity through their entry fee. Only about one-fifth of respondents donated by participating in competitions that asked friends, family and others to sponsor them or their mileage as a part of their event participation, and even fewer donated by participating in events that required them to fundraise a specific amount of donations as a condition of their entry in the event.

The majority of Millennial runners surveyed, however, plan to continue participating in running events that support a cause or charity in the next 1-2 years.

#### Ways runners give when participating in running events that support a cause or charity:

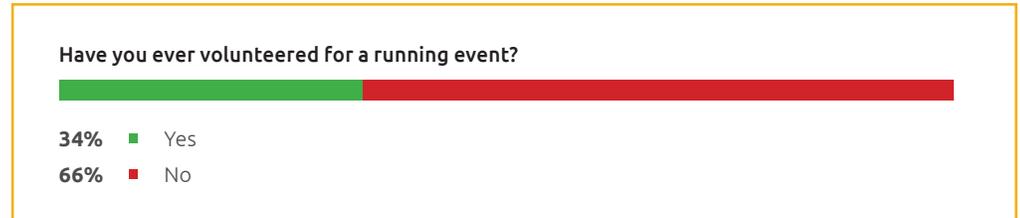


#### Do you plan to sign up for a running event that supports a cause or charity in the next 1-2 years?



**Only about a third of Millennial respondents have ever volunteered for a running event.**

A little more than a third of respondents indicated they had ever volunteered for a running event, with the majority of these individuals reporting they had helped with tasks on the day of the event. Less than half had volunteered during the days leading up to the event, helping with tasks such as set-up or packet pick-up.



**Method of volunteering:**

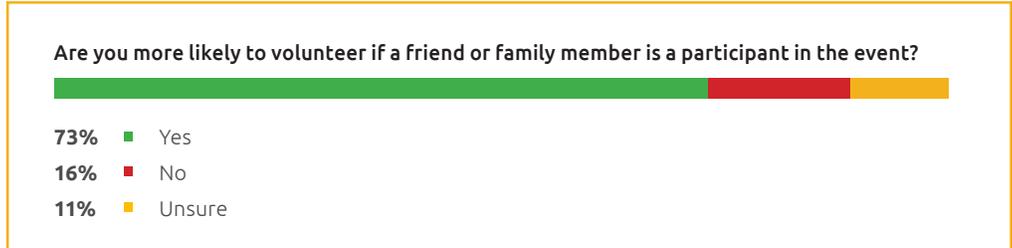
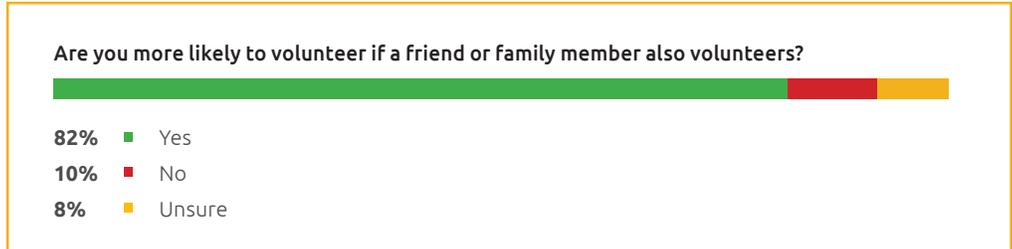
<b>82%</b>	<b>Helped with tasks on the day of the event</b>
<b>41%</b>	Helped with tasks on the day(s) before the event
<b>18%</b>	Recruited other volunteers to help with the event
<b>15%</b>	Helped with the logistical planning of the event during the weeks/months leading up to the event
<b>4%</b>	Other
<b>2%</b>	Not applicable

**Millennial respondents primarily volunteered for running events because of their passion for the cause/charity the event supported, followed by receiving incentives or encouragement from a friend/family member.**

These Millennial runners volunteered for three predominant reasons: being passionate about the cause the event supported, receiving an incentive (e.g., t-shirt, gift, name recognition or free or reduced entry fee) and being encouraged by a friend to volunteer. In fact, among the Millennial runners who have ever volunteered for a running event, a large majority reported being more likely to volunteer if a friend or family member also volunteered for the event, and just under three-fourths of respondents are more likely to volunteer for an event in which a friend or family member is a participant.

**Motivation for volunteering at running events:**

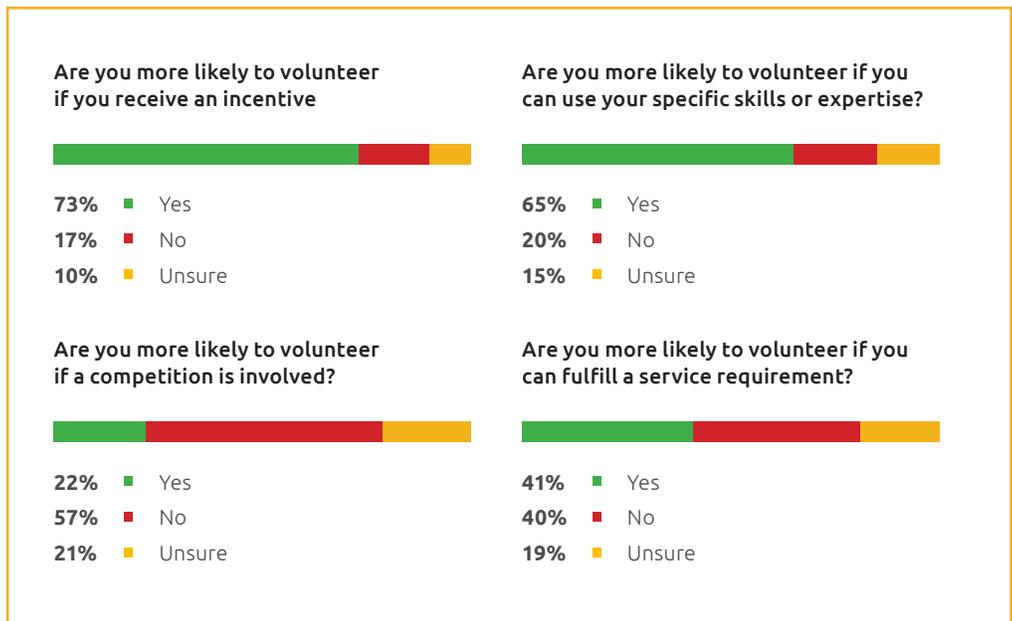
<b>35%</b>	I was passionate about the cause the event supported	<b>16%</b>	Other
<b>33%</b>	I received an incentive for volunteering	<b>15%</b>	It fulfilled a service requirement (ex. for school or a club)
<b>31%</b>	A friend encouraged me to volunteer	<b>2%</b>	It involved a competition
<b>23%</b>	I knew I could use my skills to benefit the event	<b>2%</b>	I'm not sure
<b>22%</b>	An event organizer encouraged me to volunteer	<b>1%</b>	Not applicable



**Millennial runners are influenced to volunteer by incentives or if their skill set is used; competition is not a major influencer.**

Nearly three-fourths of Millennial runners reported they would be more likely to volunteer for an event if incentives were provided. Millennial runners are also more likely to volunteer for running events if they are able to use specific skills or expertise.

More than half of Millennial runners, however, indicated competitions would not make them more likely to volunteer for an event. It was also unclear if fulfilling a service requirement made respondents more likely to volunteer at running events, with nearly equal percentages responding yes and no – and many reporting they were unsure.



## Key Takeaways

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Nearly all of Millennial respondents have participated in a running event that supported a cause or charity, but the cause wasn't the primary reason they participated. When Millennial runners participate in running events that support a cause or charity, their primary method of giving is through their entry fee – and only a small portion fundraise on behalf of the cause in addition to their entry fee.

Only a portion of the Millennial runners surveyed have ever volunteered for a running event. Of that group, they primarily volunteered because of their passion for the cause/charity the event supported. Incentives, utilizing their skills and having a family member or friend either running in the event or also volunteering increased the likelihood a respondent would volunteer, but including a competition was not likely to encourage volunteerism.

## Why this information is important

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Though Millennials as a generation are wired to “do good,” cause work or charity incorporation is not as much of an influential factor in encouraging runners to participate in the event as the experience or health/fitness aspects. In addition to helping event directors understand the influence of doing good on Millennial runners' participation in run/race/walk events, this information can also help event directors better understand how to attract event volunteers.

## Recommendations

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Events that support causes or charities still need to put the primary focus on the running and experience of the event instead of on the cause itself.

To engage volunteers, consider the following:

- Offer health and fitness-focused incentives.
- Utilize your volunteers' individual skill sets or expertise.
- Enlist family members and friends of participants or other volunteers.

## Key Takeaways and Further Recommendations

From our quantitative findings, we can extract three key takeaways for event directors to better understand the attitudes and behaviors of Millennial runners toward their participation in run/race/walk events – and better execute events in the future that engage and retain Millennial runners.

### **Authenticity is key.**

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When planning running events, continue to allocate time and energy into offering the lowest cost, yet highest quality event possible. No-nonsense, no-frills events resonate best with Millennial participants, who want to further their health and fitness goals and tend to prefer the simple and straightforward. Omit costly add-ons: They don't want them, and they won't pay for them.

In addition, it's important to primarily consider providing opportunities with unique experiences, and/or ones that are in naturally beautiful settings. As the experience of running events is a top motivator for participation, consider the experiential and social aspects of events – prior to, during and post-event – for the participant and their supporters.

### **Run for running's sake.**

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While planning, focus primarily on the opportunity to be active – and not necessarily to support a movement. Millennial runners participate in events because they want to maintain or improve their fitness: They want to run. They appreciate the challenge of running and appear to select events based on their health and fitness goals.

Rather than flashy event sponsors, focus on building an event that is valued/honored and well-known. Create a quality course that will challenge runners' endurance, strength, personal best times, etc.

In addition, get to know your Millennial runners. Although Millennials are known for "doing good," it doesn't appear that Millennial runners use running events as the primary means to engage in cause work. If your event is raising money for a cause, consider that as a secondary aspect of the event, and not the primary draw for Millennial runners. But be aware of current events and about what this group is most passionate.

Finally, when recruiting volunteers for events, offer health and fitness-focused incentives, like reduced or free registration to highly revered events or gifts that will assist in their maintenance and improvement of their own health and fitness. Also, understand this groups' skill sets so they can make a difference and improve things through their volunteering.

## **Communicate with a purpose.**

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When contacting Millennial runners, provide information that has value. Use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter a few months in advance of an event to highlight the unique features, the value-adds and the factors that differentiate it from other seemingly similar events.

After Millennial runners have registered, use email as the platform to not only communicate event details, but to also provide knowledge about health and fitness. Be cognizant of new trends and data, as well as traditional training information, to share information that is relevant and useful for the Millennial runner who wants to live more healthfully. But beware of over-communicating, and only communicate strategically-timed, meaningful information.

## Conclusion

Millennial runners are passionate about health and fitness, and running is an important aspect of that passion. This study has found that this generation has particular preferences when it comes to learning about, choosing, registering and participating in running events – and it's important for event directors to understand those preferences in order to best attract, engage and retain Millennial runners.

This study sought to understand what motivates Millennial runners to register for and participate in events; why they are interested in running and fitness; and how causes play a role in their choice of running events.

Through the findings detailed in this study, it's clear that Millennial runners are most influenced by two main areas: health & fitness and the overall experience. Above all else, the top motivator for Millennial runners is to maintain or improve their health and fitness, and it's up to event directors to leverage this information in order to plan and execute the best events that will appeal to this generation.

By communicating strategically, truly getting to know their Millennial runners and creating authentic, straightforward events focused on physicality and experience, event directors can speak to the preferences of Millennial runners today. And as the landscape of running events – as well as the sport and industry of running – continues to be shaped by Millennial runners, event directors will be able to anticipate and leverage emerging trends in order to execute the best running events possible.



Running USA is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization devoted to improving the status and experience of distance running and racing in the United States through collective marketing and promotions, information and communications within the industry and to the national media, services to events and industry members, and the development of American world class stars. It seeks the advancement of the sport and the provision of value to each of its members' events and businesses.

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Achieve is a research and campaigns agency for causes and the leaders of The Millennial Impact Project. We help organizations understand the behaviors of today's donors, activists and employees who are redefining cause engagement. We work with organizations committed to making the world a better place. Our services are ideal for organizations and companies who want to understand and reach new donors, audiences, volunteers, activists or employees.

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