

**Passage 1.** *The Economist* writes about how the millennials' time has come.

- 1 Some people despair of the young. Books such as "Generation Me" by Jean Twenge and "The Road to Character" by David Brooks describe young Americans as deluded narcissists. Having constantly been told they are special, they are now far more likely than their elders to believe that "if I ruled the world, it would be a better place" or that "somebody should write a biography of me." 5
- 2 They are materialistic, too. About 65% of American college students expect to become millionaires, and some are not too fussy about how they get to the top. In one study of high-school students, 95% admitted to having cheated in tests. The millennials' expectations of life are so out of kilter with reality that "they will probably get less of what they want than any previous generation" frets Ms. Twenge. 10
- 3 Moral panic is not confined to America. Chinese parents worry that their "little emperors" have grown up lazy, spoiled and promiscuous. When a video of a young couple engaged in an obscene act in the fitting room of a trendy clothes shop in Beijing went viral last year, officials vowed to arrest the culprits, spluttering that their behaviour was "against socialist values". Young Beijingers just laughed; a number made pilgrimages to the store to take defiant selfies outside. 15
- 4 Where some see a generation in crisis, others think the young are adapting quite well to the circumstances of a changing world. They flit from job to job not because they are fickle but because job security is a thing of the past. They demand flexible hours and work-life balance because they know they do not have to be in the office to be productive. They spend six hours a day online because that is how they work, and also how they relax. Their enthusiasm for new ideas (and lack of spare cash) has kick-started money-saving technologies from Uber to WhatsApp. They take longer to settle down and have children, but so what? They will also be working far later in life than their parents did. 20
- 5 What will the world be like when today's young people are in charge? Some worry that it will be more cynical. In China, for example, eight out of ten students say they want to join the Communist Party, but of those who do, only a handful are motivated by a belief in the system. Party membership opens doors, and millennials grab opportunities where they can. Others take a cheerier view. When the millennials rule, society will be "more meritocratic and better governed", says a young journalist in Malaysia, where the current prime minister has given a confusing explanation of why nearly 700 million U.S. dollars was found in his bank accounts (he denies wrongdoing). When the millennials rule, the world may also be greener. They have shown great ingenuity in using resources more efficiently by sharing cars, bikes and spare rooms with strangers. 25 30
- 6 The young are less racist than the old, too. The majority of youngsters in Brazil, Russia, India and China agreed that their generation is accepting of people from different races, and that they differed from their parents on this topic. American students are so touchy about any hint of racism that they sometimes see bigotry where there is none. When a professor at Yale suggested that students should be free to choose their own Halloween costumes, activists furiously protested that without strict rules, someone might wear an offensive one. Still, today's oversensitivity is vastly preferable to the segregation of yesteryear. 35 40
- 7 Tolerance is unlikely to erode as the millennials grow older. They may grow more fiscally conservative as they earn more and notice how much of their pay is gobbled up by tax. They may move to the suburbs and buy a car when they have children. But they will not suddenly take against their friends who look different or love differently. Perhaps a future world ruled by millennials may not be such a bad thing after all. 45

**Passage 2.** *Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic discusses the complexities and paradoxes surrounding millennials.*

- 1 They have been called entitled, lazy, and the most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world – but are millennials, also known as Gen Y, really that bad? How different are they from previous generations, and how consequential are these differences?
- 2 As it turns out, millennials are complex, which explains the wide variety of views about them. Indeed, the most interesting fact about millennials is the paradoxical nature of their character – a tension between opposites that must be reconciled. This tension presents a challenge, not only to millennials themselves, but to those trying to understand them. For instance, they are perceived to be ambitious but lazy. There is no clearer evidence for millennials' entitlement than the discrepancy between their ambitious aspirations and their lukewarm work ethic. Since much of Gen Y has been persuaded – first by overprotective parents, then by grade inflation and the unrealistic promises from universities – that their high expectations would eventually translate into actual achievements, it should come as no surprise that millennials are less interested in working hard to achieve them. Unfortunately, millennials have bought into the idea that the cause of success is high self-belief; not discipline, self-knowledge or humility. This keeps their hopes in their (self-perceived) talents intact, as if sooner or later their exceptional potential will be discovered, even if they do not devote much time to harness it.
- 3 Interestingly, millennials are seen as hard to motivate, but more passionate about their work. At first, this may seem puzzling: how can a generation with over-the-top aspirations and delusional goals be happier at work, especially when they are disadvantaged vis-à-vis older, more experienced peers, and less successful than them? The answer is that Gen Y sees work as less central to their lives, and that they value work-life balance more than other generations do. Ironically, this makes millennials' demands and standards lower – when you see work as "just making a living", you expect to find meaning in other areas of life such as education, relationships, or hobbies.
- 4 Millennials believe in fun rather than work, and, accordingly, they expect to have fun at work. This is why Google, Microsoft and many other firms have transformed their offices into playgrounds, and why many employers have had to restrict access to social media sites at work. That said, the news is not all good. Even among millennials, only a minority of people are fully engaged at work and data suggests that in certain parts of the world, engagement levels are lower among millennials than their predecessors. In short, hiring more millennials will not necessarily boost engagement at your workplace.
- 5 Yet another paradox of millennial character is how they are hyper-connected, but self-obsessed. Although the ubiquity of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram has led to the suggestion that millennials are incredibly sociable, the reverse is probably true. Millennials are hyper-connected, but they display little interest in others except as an audience. As the YouTube slogan suggests, their main ambition is to broadcast themselves, even if it requires collecting disposable friends and engaging in inappropriate self-disclosure with strangers.
- 6 Superficially, this phenomenon may be attributed to the social media revolution, but it is probably the other way around: the power of social media is just highlighting how vain we have become. Indeed, narcissism levels have risen steadily during the past few decades, making millennials more self-obsessed than their predecessors. In the US, narcissism has increased at the rate of obesity and is the main explanation for the apparent extraversion of millennials – it is exhibitionism and attention-seeking, but camouflaged as sociability.
- 7 While narcissism has a bright side (confidence, assertiveness, and charisma), it is still problematic: narcissists struggle to form intimate relationships, they take credit for others' accomplishments, and behave aggressively when confronted with negative feedback or rejection. They are impulsive and driven mainly by instant gratification, which explains the success of hook-up apps like Tinder or sexting apps like Snapchat.
- 8 Given all these paradoxes and complexities surrounding millennials, we may want to start asking ourselves not how we can change them, but how we will cope with them.