

The Key To Confidence: Focus on Millennials and Parents

This factsheet presents findings from the global OEKO-TEX® study “The Key To Confidence: Consumers and Textile Sustainability” that are focused on two key target audiences: Millennials and Parents of Young Children.

Millennials, born roughly between 1981 and 2000, are a particularly important demographic cohort. They currently make up almost a third of the world’s population and are coming into positions of leadership economically, socially and philosophically.

- They have been raised under the shadow of climate change – and have grown up in a more “certified world” than those in older generations
- Millennials made up thirty-two percent (32%) of the OEKO-TEX® sample and more than half of them were parents

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Millennials and Climate Change

- Like people of all generations, Millennials are very concerned about climate change:
 - Millennials identify “climate change” as the second most pressing concern today (tied with “my personal finances” and “illness and disease” and right after “terrorism”)
 - Eighty-two percent (82%) of Millennials consider climate change to be a real and very serious problem and 70% indicate that they are committed to “living a sustainable, environmentally friendly lifestyle”
 - Millennials tend to think systemically about the interdependent relationship between human and planetary health and, as such, are motivated by both altruistic, global concerns (like “preserving the earth for future generations”) and concerns that are more personal (like “keeping me and my family safe and healthy”)
 - More than any other generation, Millennials use the Internet and Social Media for information about climate change

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Millennials and Sustainable Textiles

- It is with respect to textiles and perceptions of the textile industry that differences between Millennials and those in older generations become most evident:
 - Millennials are slightly more knowledgeable about the industry than those in older generations and are more aware of facts about its impact (for example, chemical and water use, environmental impact and waste)
 - As such, they are considerably more likely than those in the older generation to consider the textile industry a major polluter: 26% of Millennials identify the textile industry as a major polluter versus 16% of those aged 55+

- Millennials are also more concerned about the presence of harmful substances in a range of products, including clothing and home textiles, than those in the older generations
 - 43% of Millennials are “extremely” or “very” concerned about harmful substances in clothes and 41% about home textiles (versus 31% of Boomers+ for both types of products); these concerns no longer lag far behind concerns about other product types, like food
 - Millennials’ concerns are greater in manufacturing countries like India and China

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The Heightened Concerns of Parents of Young Children

- When we start to look at concerns about harmful substances, a sub-group of distinct importance emerges: parents, particularly parents of babies and young children. In studies of transition to sustainable behaviors, parenthood often emerges as a key catalyst of change:
 - Accordingly, 51% of parents of babies and young children are “extremely” or “very” concerned about harmful substances in clothes and 48% about home textiles (versus 28% of those in households without children* for both product types)
 - In China, 82% of parents of kids ages 6 and under are “extremely” or “very” concerned – and in India, 77%
 - While extremely important to all, safety from harmful substances and socially/environmentally responsible production are even more important to parents of young children than they are to those without children in the household
 - For parents, the integrity of home textiles is as important as the integrity of clothing
 - Parents of young children are more aware of and more likely to have purchased eco-friendly clothing and home textiles than those in households without kids and are much more likely to view these products positively as “high quality”, “soft”, “innovative” and “unique”

* Households without children include Millennials who are not yet parents, as well as others in child-free households

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Millennials and Parents: Trust, Transparency, Brands & Certifiers

- Millennials have heightened needs for trust and transparency than others, related perhaps to their use of the Internet and Social Media. They generally do not take claims at face value and are sensitive and quick to suspect “greenwashing”:
 - Almost seven in ten Millennials aware of eco-friendly clothing – and 2/3 of parents of babies and young children – check claims like “eco-friendly” or “sustainable” on textile products “always / often / sometimes“
 - They are more likely to have purchased certified clothes and home textiles and are more aware of textile certifiers like OEKO-TEX®
 - 54% of parents of babies and young children globally are aware of the OEKO-TEX® label [internal fact only]
 - Brands are also particularly important agents of trust and transparency for Millennials and parents of young children: it is particularly important for them to “know the values and principles of brands of clothing [they] buy” and to “know what small steps [brands] have taken to be more sustainable”
 - They are more likely than others to check brands’ sustainability practices and/or to check Social Media or other online sources
 - However, this is a particularly busy stage of life as many have both jobs and young families. As a result, they are particularly bothered by the time it can take to check claims. As such, brands and certification labels play a particularly important role as shortcuts to trust and transparency for Millennial consumers and parents

- A closer look at Millennials substantiates our hypothesis that the more that is known about the textile industry and its impact, the more heed people will take about the textile products they buy and the brands they favor – and the more important trust, transparency and proof of claims will become
- These factors become even more important once Millennials pass the threshold into parenthood
- Millennials, therefore, are giving us a glimpse into a future where consumers will want easy assurances that the products they buy and the brands they favor are “doing the right thing” to help them “live a better textile life”

– Summary – Direct quotes

There are two reasons why I purchase certified clothing. First, I try to avoid exposing myself and my family to the type of chemicals used in the manufacturing. And secondly, I want to support companies that are manufacturing clothing without the use of chemicals and harmful substances because it's better for the environment in the long term.

Millennial

I want my kids to be exposed to as few chemicals as possible. It feels good just knowing I've bought a product that isn't harmful.

Millennial

I buy certified clothes to promote healthy workers, a healthy earth and healthy wearers of clothing. I want to know how my clothes are produced and what is in them.

Millennial

My country is so badly polluted that if we can't take the responsibility of keeping the earth pollution-free, at least we can keep ourselves away from harmful substances. It is so important that our clothes degrade and not cause more pollution.

Millennial

Even though nothing can be 100%, a label like OEKO-TEX® gives me almost complete trust that the clothing I buy is free of chemicals. Clear information stops me from buying clothes that aren't safe or that are produced in an irresponsible way.

Millennial

Buying certified clothes is my first step towards the prevention of the environmental damage caused by our present lifestyles. It allows me to help the environment, even if it's just in a small way and helps me make better decisions about the clothes I buy.

Millennial

With OEKO-TEX® I know the research has been done better than what I could do and I can trust it. I want to make intelligent, informed choices in my purchases. OEKO-TEX® seems dedicated to making the earth better.

Millennial

I always buy eco-friendly clothes for my baby girl because her skin is very sensitive and soft so it needs the best care. I think eco-friendly products are good for the health of the whole family.

Millennial

The world is heading towards disaster due to global warming and climate change so we have to do everything possible to protect the environment. This means buying sustainable products and supporting industries that produce environmentally friendly products. We also have to think about workers in the industries and fair treatment, good working conditions, good pay...

Millennial

Every little thing we can do to ensure that the environment is healthy will be better for future generations.

Millennial

I want to be a good steward of the earth that was gifted to me.

Millennial