



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

# The Class of 9/11

Bringing a New Generation of Practical Patriots into Public Service

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## PREFACE

May is graduation month for colleges and universities across the United States. This year the Class of 2005 will mark their special day as many classes have before them — by listening to political leaders, journalists, philanthropists, academic superstars and perhaps a sports hero or two provide words of wisdom during a commencement address. Considering their unique position as the first class to have had each of their four years of college informed by the ongoing war on terror, we thought it would be fitting to mark their graduation by listening to what they had to say.

While anecdotal evidence of the impact of 9/11 on the Class of 2005 abounds, this report is the first grounded in a survey of, and in-depth one-on-one sessions with, its graduating seniors. The goal is to provide an authoritative and informative look at how 9/11 has shaped their worldview, influenced their thoughts on public service and informed their upcoming career choices. We believe that it will serve as an important resource for government leaders, policymakers, journalists and others with an interest in this unique class of young Americans.

This research study is part of the Partnership for Public Service's ongoing effort to provide the quality information, insightful analysis and practical solutions needed to make the government an employer of choice for talented, dedicated Americans. Through its unique series of reports, issue briefs, surveys and research projects (such as the "Best Places to Work in the Federal Government" rankings), the Partnership is helping to shed light on the changes we need to make to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The Partnership's mission is to inspire a new generation to serve and transform the way government works. To advance these dual goals the Partnership's research both draws upon and helps inform our other efforts including educational outreach, legislative advocacy, awareness raising activities and hands-on partnerships with government agencies.

Special thanks are due to Partnership research director Marc Porter Magee, the primary author of this report.



Max Stier  
*President and CEO*  
*May 2005*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**F**or college seniors in the Class of 2005, May marks the end of a four-year academic journey, one that began just days before the attacks of 9/11. While other graduating classes have come and gone in this post-9/11 era, the Class of 2005 is the first to have had its whole college experience shaped by the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent war on terror. Drawing on a survey of over 800 graduating seniors that was conducted in the final month of their academic careers and in-depth one-on-one interviews with over 100 of those who participated in the survey, this report provides a unique window into how the war on terror has shaped their view of government, the role of patriotism in their career choices, the key factors driving interest in public service and what government agencies can do to better recruit talented young workers.

In this first-of-its-kind research study, we find that:

1. *The students in the Class of 2005 are practical patriots who were deeply affected by 9/11*, but most say it did not alter their career path.

More than three-quarters of the members of the Class of 2005 describe themselves as patriotic and nearly half say that the events of 9/11 made them more so. However, while the majority of those made more patriotic were instilled with a greater love of country and inspired to display the flag, **only one in five students said it made them more interested in government service and even fewer said it made them consider joining the military.**

2. *The window of opportunity to recruit a new generation to public service is closing*, in part because of polarization over the Iraq war.

Asked which event had a bigger impact on their view of the United States, the students were split evenly between the attacks of 9/11 and the war in Iraq. However, while more than two-thirds of those citing the attacks of 9/11 said it gave them a more positive view of the U.S., **more than three-quarters of those citing the war in Iraq said it gave them a more negative view.** While the vast majority still expect a 9/11-style attack in the next five years, as they prepare to leave school the fear of being unemployed or going into debt far exceeds their fear of another terrorist attack. Perhaps because of the split over Iraq and these other concerns, **six out of 10 seniors reject the idea that they should have been asked to do more to help fight the war on terror.**

3. *Government needs a smarter sales pitch and a more robust reform agenda* that balances appeals to patriotism with new approaches to pay and prestige.

The upswing of patriotism that resulted from 9/11 did not give the government a free pass in recruiting talent. In fact, **fewer than one in ten college seniors say that the opportunity to serve their country is their top reason for considering a government career.** A successful recruitment effort must not only show young people how their work in government can make a difference but also address their practical concerns about pay and prestige head-on by moving forward with market-based pay reforms, rewarding top performers with meaningful performance bonuses and engaging in a much more aggressive push to raise the prestige of government jobs among parents, teachers and peers.

Other important findings from this research study include:

- ★ Students who live in or around Washington, D.C. are more likely than the rest of the country to be very interested in working for the federal government, to say that getting a government job would make their parents proud and to describe themselves as very patriotic. **Students living in or around New York City are more likely than the rest of the country to say that 9/11 made them interested in government service.**
- ★ **When asked what career choice would make their parents most proud, less than one in four seniors say getting a government job** compared to more than two-thirds who say starting your own business or getting a job in the private sector.
- ★ While the government has increasing needs for the most talented academic achievers, **“A” students in the Class of 2005 express less interest in a government job than those with “B” and “C” averages.** Further, the proportion of seniors who say getting a government job would make their parents most proud declines as grades increase.
- ★ While Democrats, Republicans and Independents express the same level of interest in government service, **students who describe themselves as “very conservative” are more interested in serving in government than students who describe themselves as “very liberal.”**

The report that follows provides a concise analysis of the results from this research, exploring the characteristics of the first graduating class from this new 9/11 generation, the key drivers of interest in public service and how best to talk about government jobs with this new crop of college graduates.

## THE 9/11 GENERATION

*An analysis by Tom Freedman and Jim McLaughlin*

This year's graduating seniors entered college in 2001, just days before the attacks of 9/11. This survey of, and one-on-one sessions with, this class of young people from all across America reveals a serious-minded, patriotic new generation. These young people expect to live with a lifetime of war, but are focused as much on practical necessities as the abstract difficulties of the war on terror.

The 9/11-generation was profoundly affected by the events of that day — less than one quarter said it didn't affect them personally. And they expect to continue dealing with terrorism. More than two-thirds think it is likely we will have a serious 9/11-like attack again in the U.S. in the next five years.

The data reveals that fully 30 percent of graduating seniors do not think the war on terror will ever be over and another 27 percent expect it will go on beyond their lifetime. That means more than half of graduating seniors do not expect to live to see the end of the war against terrorism. By contrast, only 17 percent of these young adults think it will end within five years.

*“I had never given much thought about the government prior to 9/11 but since it I have been more involved, wanting to vote, wanting to have a say, forming opinions. I think it is difficult to be in government at such a time because every move is going to be scrutinized and disagreed with. I think it is a difficult balancing act ...”*

*— Female, “not at all interested” in government service*

Despite thinking the war may prove intractable and more attacks inevitable, the Class of 2005 is not obsessed with it. They are a practical bunch. Their greatest fears are going into debt (32 percent) and being unemployed (31 percent). Fewer than one in seven say their greatest fear is more terrorism. This is an understandable concern with more than half predicting they will graduate with debts of at least \$5,000 and 20 percent saying they will owe more than \$20,000. They want government to focus on budgets and social security, not steroids. The class did not feel it should have been asked to do more since 9/11 — almost 60 percent rejected that notion.

This new generation is being affected by the events in Iraq as well as 9/11. Asked to compare the impact of the war in Iraq with the events of 9/11 on their view of the U.S., a surprising 42 percent said the war in Iraq had more of an effect on their view of the U.S., while 45 percent said the 9/11 attacks. And while those who cited the 9/11 attacks said it made them feel more positively towards the U.S., 85 percent of those who cited the Iraq war said it made them feel more negatively.

For this generation, perceptions of these two key events shape how they view government and politics. College seniors who said that the 9/11 attacks had a bigger impact on their view of the U.S. were 20 percentage points more likely to say they trusted government to do the right thing than those who said the war in Iraq had a bigger impact.

Finally, it seems likely that regional differences play some role in the perception of 9/11. For instance,

fully one quarter of college seniors from the New York area said 9/11 made them more interested in government work while in the rest of the country only one in five had that reaction. And, while the sample size is relatively small, a significantly larger proportion of those who live in the Washington, D.C., area consider themselves patriotic, with half of District area residents saying they were very patriotic compared to only one-third of the rest of the nation.

*Tom Freedman, a consultant for the Partnership, was Senior Advisor to the President during the Clinton Administration. Jim McLaughlin is a nationally recognized public opinion expert and Republican consultant who has worked for over 50 Members of Congress, eight U.S. Senators and five governors.*

## INTEREST IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

**H**ow has this class's unique position as the first class to have gone through college during the post-9/11 period shaped their interest in public service?

Interest in serving in government is up slightly, but not significantly so. Overall, 23 percent of this year's graduating college seniors say that they are very interested in working for the federal government. This number is slightly higher than the 18 percent of seniors in the class of 2003 who said in a Brookings Institution poll that they had given very serious consideration to working for the federal government.

When asked directly about how the events of 9/11 influenced their interest in government service, 21 percent of college seniors said it made them more interested and 15 percent said it made them less interested — a net gain of six percent. However, fully two-thirds of seniors (64 percent) said it had no effect. The one-on-one chats echoed this sentiment: seniors do not report a significant connection between 9/11 and their career choices. While the events of that day impacted how they think about their government and the world, it does not drive the professional choices they are making now.

*Moderator: What comes to mind when you think of public service?*

*"I think of public service as anything done that benefits others/communities more than the individual performing the work... If it is unpaid work it makes a bigger impact."*

*– Female, "not sure" of interest in government service*

Although the survey reveals a slightly higher level

of interest in government service, it also suggests that the view of government work as public service continues to decline. Only 19 percent of this year's graduating seniors described government work as "completely" a form of public service, down nine points from the 28 percent who did so in the Class of 2003. By contrast, 30 percent say nonprofit work is public service and 81 percent say the same about volunteering.

In the one-on-one sessions, there were two recurring elements of this generation's definition of public service. First, it is thought to have a direct, firsthand impact on the people who are being served. The college seniors think of public servants as people "in the trenches" such as teachers, firefighters and those working in community nonprofits. Second, there is a strong perception that public service is, by definition, very low paying, or is even done for free.

*"I think most kids my age have been led to believe that they shouldn't settle for anything less than top-tier ... high-salary, high recognition, the kind of thing your parents can brag about."*

*– Female, "somewhat interested" in government service*

In the Brookings survey of the Class of 2003, 49 percent of college seniors identified their parents as a "very helpful" source for career advice, compared to 39 percent who cited their professors, 26 percent who cited their peers and only 22 percent who cited their college's office of career services. When members of the Class of 2005 were asked in our survey to reflect on what career path would make their parents most proud, 37 percent said starting your own business, 30 percent said getting a job in the private sector and 22 percent said getting a job with the federal government. Only

nine percent said getting a job with a nonprofit would make their parents most proud and just 2 percent the same about joining the military.

What might convince more graduating seniors to serve?

For the most part this cohort indicates that they are motivated by high salaries and prestige, and therefore do not consider public service or government work a good fit. Although they say this with some chagrin, they also accept it as a reality that they must function within.

*“Most of this generation has been raised to get the job, get the goal, get the promotion, and public service doesn’t provide for the same kind of external accomplishment. Not the same kind of recognition we’re looking for. It’s not a healthy thing but it’s how we’ve been raised. This is the age of movie stars and sports heroes and who wants to do public service when you can be a millionaire?”*

– Male, “not at all interested” in government service

In the chat sessions, respondents consistently cited good pay and the opportunity to work on interesting issues as their key motivators. This pattern is also clear in the survey results. When asked “Which one reason would make you most likely to consider a career in government?” good pay and benefits was the top choice of 43 percent of this year’s graduating seniors, compared to 22 percent for “working on issues that interest me” and 10 percent for job security. In terms of the one reason that would make them not consider a career in government, one-third (33 percent) said “too much bureaucracy”, followed by “salaries not high enough” (14 percent), “don’t know what careers are available” (12 percent) and “never

been asked” (11 percent).

*Moderator: What would you need to see or hear to believe that public service is a viable career path for you?*

*“I’d like to be able to believe that I’d be able to make a difference while earning the same kind of money and benefits as I would working for a private company. And that there’d be the same opportunity for career advancement as in a private company.”*

– Male, “not very interested” in government service

Consistent with previous surveys of college students, the majority (57 percent) cited “improving public education” as an area where the government should do more. Reducing poverty (39 percent), providing accessibility to health care (36 percent) and addressing rising health care costs (32 percent) rounded out the top four.

#### *Field of Study and GPA*

As the needs of government agencies continue to shift from clerical and general managerial work to more high skill areas, the government will increasingly engage in a “war for talent” with both businesses and nonprofits. Although interest in government service does not vary a great deal between public, private, technical and community colleges, it does vary significantly in terms of area of study.

A 2005 Partnership report on future government hiring needs, entitled *Where the Jobs Are*, showed that one of the areas of greatest need was in engineering and sciences, with over 23,000 job openings occurring over the next two years.

The Class of 2005 survey reveals that in terms of level of student interest, government and political

science majors top the list with 70 percent saying they are very interested in working for the federal government. While demonstrating less interest than government majors, students in the natural sciences (such as biology, chemistry or physics) still ranked above average, with 32 percent saying they are very interested. However, only 21 percent of mathematics, engineering and computer science majors say the same. Not surprisingly, given the traditional focus on careers outside of the federal government, majors in business and accounting (16 percent) and education (10 percent) had the lowest level of interest.

Majors in mathematics, engineering and computer science — perhaps the most sought after group of graduates in the job market today — were the most likely to cite “serving your country and community” as the one reason that would make them choose a career in government. Ironically, students majoring in government or political science were the least likely to say the same.

Interest was also found to vary according to measures of academic performance. While 25 percent of students with a “B” average and 24 percent of those with a “C” average say they are very interested in serving in government, only 20 percent of “A” students say the same. Further, the proportion of seniors who say getting a government job would make their parents most proud declines as grades increase: 27 percent of “C” students cited a government job compared to only 22 percent of “B” students and just 20 percent of “A” students. By contrast, the proportion citing a private sector job increases from an average of 28 percent among “B” and “C” students to 34 percent among “A” students. Similarly, while 12 percent of “A” students say that a nonprofit job would make their parents most proud, only 8 percent of

“B” and “C” students say the same.

When asked which one reason would make them most likely to consider a career in government, “A” students were less likely than “C” students to cite pay and benefits (42 vs. 49 percent) and job security (8 vs. 14 percent). By contrast, they were more likely than “C” students to mention working on interesting issues (24 vs. 15 percent) and having a challenging job with responsibility (10 versus 6 percent). Finally, when asked which one reason would make them less likely to consider government service, “A” students cited too much bureaucracy more often than “C” students (34 vs. 28 percent).

### *Participation, Patriotism and Trust*

While most students do not view government work as public service, interest in government service is connected with other possible forms of public service, such as volunteering. While 28 percent of those who volunteer five times a month or more say they are very interested in government service, only 21 percent of those who never do volunteer work say the same.

*“I think in general people have become more patriotic and willing to help others. How long this will last...I don't know. It seems to me like we may have already settled back into how we were before 9/11.”*

*– Female, “somewhat interested” in government service*

Another important indicator of interest in government service is patriotism. Students who describe themselves as “very patriotic” are nearly twice as likely as those who say they are “not at all patriotic” to be very interested in government service (31 versus 16 percent). It is important to note, however, that while patriotism runs deep in

this group, the chat sessions demonstrate that they seldom acknowledge it as driving their career decisions. For the Class of 2005 career decisions, it is believed, need to be treated in a very practical, businesslike way — their futures are riding on them.

The survey results also reveal that perhaps the most powerful indicator of interest in government service is trust in government. Students who trust the government to do what is right “all the time” are more than five times more likely to be very interested in government service than those who “never” trust the government (45 versus 8 percent). Interestingly, “C” students are almost twice as likely as “A” students to say that they trust the government to do what is right “all the time.”

#### *Demographics and Background Characteristics*

Demographic characteristics and a student’s background can also be important influencers of interest in government service. For example, while the proportion of graduating seniors very interested in working for the federal government is fairly consistent between the Northeast (25 percent), South (28 percent) and West (26 percent), only one-half as many seniors (13 percent) from the Midwest say they are very interested in government service.

Interest in working for the federal government is about the same regardless of whether a student’s parents are college graduates or high school dropouts, but it does vary according to parents’ income. While 30 percent of students from families making less than \$25,000 per year say they are very interested in government service, only 18 percent of those from families making \$100,000 per year or more say the same.

Although a number of federal agencies offer debt relief plans, the amount of debt held by a student is not a significant indicator of interest in government service, with 24 percent of those with no debt and 27 percent of those with \$20,000 or more saying they are very interested in government service.

There are important differences in terms of race and ethnicity. While 20 percent of White non-Hispanics and Asians are very interested in government service, nearly twice as many African Americans (39 percent) and Hispanics (43 percent) say the same.

Finally, in terms of political party, nearly the same proportion of Democrats (24 percent), Republicans (25 percent) and Independents (24 percent) say they are very interested in working for the federal government. However, 27 percent of graduating seniors who describe themselves as “very conservative” say they are very interested in government service; only 18 percent of those who describe themselves as “very liberal” say the same.

## TALKING ABOUT GOVERNMENT SERVICE

**W**hat do these findings mean for federal agencies eager to recruit talented workers from this new crop of graduates?

While some members of the Class of 2005 are already very interested in serving, expanding this pool of interest will require both a smart sales pitch and a more prominent reform agenda that tackles young people’s concerns about government service head-on. This research suggests that there are three key drivers that must be addressed: Patriotism, Pay and Prestige.

### *Patriotism*

*“For me, honestly, if I knew that I would actually be making a difference in areas that I was concerned about I would be more likely to enter into public service.”*

*– Female, “not sure if interested” in government service*

While members of the Class of 2005 did experience a sustained upswing in patriotism as a result of 9/11, most do not connect this greater love of country with serving in their country’s government. To better tap these broad patriotic sentiments, government agencies will have to do a better job of showing young recruits how their work in government will actually make a difference for their community and country. If they can do that, the results from this survey suggest that they could significantly increase interest in government service, particularly among hard to recruit students such as those with math, engineering or computer science backgrounds.

### *Pay*

*“Nowadays with the rising cost of just about everything our number one concern is working in a job that will pay your bills and provide your future family with whatever they need. Should your job also bring you happiness and greater success then it is just an added bonus.”*

*–Female, “very interested” in government service*

Almost half of all graduating seniors cited pay and benefits as the one reason that would make them most likely to consider a career in government. These seniors also feel that the government cannot match the salaries the private sector offers and does not reward high achievers. Modernization efforts aimed at aligning pay with

the market and rewarding high achievers with meaningful performance bonuses would go a long way toward reaching this new crop of college graduates.

### *Prestige*

*“Kids from kindergarten to high school need to know how important it is to do public service. It’ll help when public service stops being something our society as a whole kind of looks down on.”*

*–Male, “not at all interested” in government service*

Members of the Class of 2005 are eager to prove to the world that their time in college has been worthwhile. Whether a job is held in high regard is crucial to their career decisions. Yet two-thirds of seniors say getting a private sector job or starting their own business would make their parents prouder than getting a job in government. The highest academic achievers, those with “A” averages, are the least likely to say that a government job would make their parents proud.

If government agencies are to succeed in recruiting these high achievers they will need to make a much more aggressive push to raise the perceived value of government jobs among both the public at large and key influencers, such as college students’ parents, teachers and peers. If they can do so while also infusing these positions with the greater responsibility that high achievers connect with greater job prestige, they will have taken a large step forward in their quest for talent.

## CONCLUSION

The attacks of 9/11 woke up the Class of 2005 and made them start paying attention to how the government impacts their lives. Yet, as this research study has demonstrated, it did not lead them to a fundamental rethinking of their career goals. In one respect this can be seen as healthy. These graduating seniors expect to live with a lifetime of war, but are also determined to not let the terrorists dominate their lives.

However, these results also suggest that much more must be done if we are to obtain the infusion of young talent we need in government to meet the public challenges ahead. Bringing this new generation of practical patriots into public service will require an aggressive and sustained

effort to both change the way government jobs are viewed and reform the way government works.

By making the case for government work that rewards performance with pay, celebrates outstanding achievement and has a real impact on the lives of their fellow Americans we can ensure that the members of the Class of 2005 will be remembered more for what they did for their country after leaving college than for what they witnessed in their initial weeks there.

*The full survey results and a more in-depth overview of the chat sessions are available online at [www.our-publicservice.org/research](http://www.our-publicservice.org/research).*

## METHODOLOGY

The national survey of graduating college seniors was conducted between May 2nd and May 5th, 2005 by iModerate, a specialist in Internet research and online one-on-one qualitative sessions for leading research organizations and Fortune 500 companies.

An Internet survey was chosen as the best means for overcoming the traditional barriers to reaching a relatively transient student population characterized by a lack of telephone landlines and the frequent changing of telephone numbers and addresses. Participants were selected using Survey Sampling International's SurveySpot Panel, which recruits a representative sample of individuals to participate in online surveys. Respondents who completed the survey were entered into a drawing for a variety of cash prizes. The sample of 805 college seniors has an accuracy of +/- 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval.

A subgroup of 101 of these 805 participating seniors also took part in real-time, in-depth, one-on-one sessions conducted using by iModerate's highly-trained full-time moderators between May 2nd and May 3rd, 2005. Respondents were randomly intercepted during the survey to participate in the one-on-one sessions, which were held in a chat box format and were continuously monitored for quality control purposes. Moderators utilized a user snapshot containing variables from the survey to tailor the session to the individual respondent. The average session lasted between 20 and 25 minutes. Upon session completion, respondents were directed back to the survey to complete the remaining questions.



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

# The Class of 9/11

## FULL SURVEY RESULTS

### Region

Northeast	154 19.1%
Midwest	200 24.8%
South	260 32.3%
West	191 23.7%

### What is your gender?

Male	346 43.0%
Female	459 57.0%

### What is your age?

MEAN	22.39
MEDIAN	22.00
18	3 0.4%
19	1 0.1%
20	17 2.1%
21	180

	22.4%
22	262 32.5%
23	227 28.2%
24	60 7.5%
25	52 6.5%
26	1 0.1%
34	1 0.1%
49	1 0.1%

**What state do you live in?**

Alabama	11 1.4%
Alaska	1 0.1%
Arizona	15 1.9%
Arkansas	10 1.2%
California	100 12.4%
Colorado	10 1.2%
Connecticut	9 1.1%
Delaware	-
District of Columbia	1 0.1%

## THE CLASS OF 9/11

## SURVEY RESULTS

Florida	40 5.0%
Georgia	22 2.7%
Hawaii	2 0.2%
Idaho	6 0.7%
Illinois	38 4.7%
Indiana	19 2.4%
Iowa	11 1.4%
Kansas	10 1.2%
Kentucky	12 1.5%
Louisiana	14 1.7%
Maine	1 0.1%
Maryland	15 1.9%
Massachusetts	30 3.7%
Michigan	21 2.6%
Minnesota	24 3.0%
Mississippi	7 0.9%
Missouri	17 2.1%
Montana	2 0.2%

## THE CLASS OF 9/11

## SURVEY RESULTS

Nebraska	5 0.6%
Nevada	1 0.1%
New Hampshire	-
New Jersey	20 2.5%
New Mexico	5 0.6%
New York	55 6.8%
North Carolina	22 2.7%
North Dakota	5 0.6%
Ohio	33 4.1%
Oklahoma	12 1.5%
Oregon	8 1.0%
Pennsylvania	34 4.2%
Rhode Island	2 0.2%
South Carolina	13 1.6%
South Dakota	-
Tennessee	16 2.0%
Texas	44 5.5%
Utah	13 1.6%

Vermont	3 0.4%
Virginia	18 2.2%
Washington	25 3.1%
West Virginia	3 0.4%
Wisconsin	17 2.1%
Wyoming	3 0.4%

**1. Have you already graduated or do you expect to graduate from college in 2005?**

Yes	805 100.0%
No	-
Not sure	-

**2. Which of the following best describes the type of school you currently attend?**

Public university	465 57.8%
Private university	199 24.7%
Community college	87 10.8%
Technical school	37 4.6%
Other	17 2.1%

**4. Which of the following best describes your current field of study?**

Humanities/Liberal Arts	113 14.0%
Social Sciences (such as	133

Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, etc)	16.5%
Natural Sciences (such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, etc.)	78 9.7%
Mathematics, Engineering, or Computer Science	87 10.8%
Business or Accounting	159 19.8%
Education	49 6.1%
Government or Political Science	23 2.9%
Other	163 20.2%

**5. On a letter grade scale, what is your Grade Point Average equivalent to?**

A	136 16.9%
A-	175 21.7%
B+	177 22.0%
B	147 18.3%
B-	82 10.2%
C+	49 6.1%
C	27 3.4%
C-	3 0.4%
D+	-

D	1 0.1%
D-	-
F	-
Not sure	8 1.0%

**6. On average, how often do you do volunteer work?**

Never	194 24.1%
Less than once a month	302 37.5%
1-2 times a month	179 22.2%
3-5 times a month	69 8.6%
More than 5 times a month	61 7.6%

**7. When you graduate, what amount of student debt do you expect to have?**

None	221 27.5%
Less than \$5,000	99 12.3%
\$5,001-\$10,000	98 12.2%
\$10,001-\$15,000	102 12.7%
\$15,001 - \$20,000	95 11.8%
More than \$20,000	166 20.6%
Don't know	24 3.0%

**8. How interested are you in working for the federal government?**

Very interested	186 23.1%
Somewhat interested	351 43.6%
Not very interested	148 18.4%
Not at all interested	73 9.1%
Not sure	47 5.8%

**9. What would make your parents most proud?**

Getting a job with the federal government	173 21.5%
Joining the military	14 1.7%
Starting your own business	303 37.6%
Getting a job with a non-profit organization	74 9.2%
Getting a private sector job	241 29.9%

**10. Do you trust the federal government to do what is right all of the time, most of the time, sometimes, rarely, or never?**

All the time	35 4.3%
Most of the time	321 39.9%
Sometimes	358 44.5%
Rarely	79 9.8%
Never	12 1.5%

**11. In which of the following 3 areas do you think the federal government should do more to solve the country's problems?**

Improving relations with other countries	217 27.0%
Fighting terrorism	158 19.6%
Protecting the homeland	167 20.7%
Protecting the environment	211 26.2%
Providing retirement benefits	98 12.2%
Addressing rising health care costs	261 32.4%
Providing accessibility to health care	290 36.0%
Reducing poverty	313 38.9%
Improving public education	459 57.0%
Promoting family values	161 20.0%
None of these areas	10 1.2%

**12a. How important is it to you that Congress address the following issues? End-of-life issues /euthanasia**

Very Important	148 18.4%
Somewhat Important	302 37.5%
Not very Important	256 31.8%
Not at all Important	99 12.3%

**12b. Steroid use**

Very Important	54 6.7%
Somewhat Important	173 21.5%
Not very Important	339 42.1%
Not at all Important	239 29.7%

**12c. Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve**

Very Important	273 33.9%
Somewhat Important	318 39.5%
Not very Important	157 19.5%
Not at all Important	57 7.1%

**12d. Strengthening congressional ethics rules**

Very Important	313 38.9%
Somewhat Important	360 44.7%
Not very Important	114 14.2%
Not at all Important	18 2.2%

**12e. Confirming judges nominated by the President**

Very Important	202 25.1%
Somewhat Important	324 40.2%

Not very Important	221 27.5%
Not at all Important	58 7.2%

**12f. Balancing the federal budget**

Very Important	455 56.5%
Somewhat Important	303 37.6%
Not very Important	40 5.0%
Not at all Important	7 0.9%

**12g. Reforming social security**

Very Important	440 54.7%
Somewhat Important	279 34.7%
Not very Important	62 7.7%
Not at all Important	24 3.0%

**13a. To what extent do you think the following is a form of public service? Is working for a nonprofit a form of public service completely, somewhat, not too much or not at all?**

Completely	243 30.2%
Somewhat	469 58.3%
Not too much	76 9.4%
Not at all	17 2.1%

**13b. Is working for government a form of public service completely, somewhat, not too much or not at all?**

Completely	153 19.0%
Somewhat	420 52.2%
Not too much	171 21.2%
Not at all	61 7.6%

**13c. Is working for a business a form of public service completely, somewhat, not too much or not at all?**

Completely	64 8.0%
Somewhat	271 33.7%
Not too much	319 39.6%
Not at all	151 18.8%

**13d. Is volunteering a form of public service completely, somewhat, not too much or not at all?**

Completely	649 80.6%
Somewhat	129 16.0%
Not too much	18 2.2%
Not at all	9 1.1%

**14. Which event had a bigger impact on your overall view of the U.S. today?**

The 9/11 attacks	364 45.2%
The war in Iraq	336 41.7%
Neither	105 13.0%

**15a. Did the 9/11 attacks give you a more positive or negative view of the U.S.?**

More positive	251 69.0%
More negative	113 31.0%

**15b. Did the war in Iraq give you a more positive or negative view of the U.S.?**

More positive	48 14.3%
More negative	288 85.7%

**16. How patriotic are you, personally?**

Very patriotic	283 35.2%
Somewhat patriotic	391 48.6%
Not very patriotic	112 13.9%
Not at all patriotic	19 2.4%

**17. Since the events of 9/11, are you more patriotic, less patriotic, or has your sense of patriotism remained about the same?**

More	352 43.7%
Less	73 9.1%
About the same	380 47.2%

**18. In what ways specifically have you become more patriotic?**

Greater love for my country	299 84.9%
Considering joining the military	50 14.2%
Display the flag	178 50.6%
Attended a patriotic rally	46 13.1%
Considering working for the government	100 28.4%
Registered to vote	160 45.5%
Worked on a political campaign	50 14.2%
Other	17 4.8%

**19. Have the events of 9/11 made you more interested or less interested in working for the federal government, or have they had no effect on your interest?**

More interested	165 20.5%
Less interested	124 15.4%
No effect	516 64.1%

**20. From the following list, which one reason would make you most likely to consider a career in the federal government?**

Good pay and benefits	348 43.2%
Job security	84 10.4%
Serving your country and community	66 8.2%
Challenging job with responsibility	71 8.8%
Working on issues that interest me	176 21.9%
Exciting people to work with	10 1.2%
None of the above	50 6.2%

**21. From the following list, which one reason would make you not consider a career in the federal government?**

Salaries not high enough	109 13.5%
Too much bureaucracy	268 33.3%
I have too much student debt	29 3.6%
I can't make a real difference	21 2.6%
Not a fun or interesting place to work	50 6.2%
I don't know what careers are available	100 12.4%
Never been asked to consider working for the federal government	85 10.6%
No job to match my skills or goals	59 7.3%

None of the above	84 10.4%
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**22. When do you think the war on terror will be over?**

In the next 1 to 5 years	138 17.1%
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In 6 to 10 years	110 13.7%
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In 11 to 20 years	62 7.7%
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More than 20 years	38 4.7%
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Not in my lifetime	216 26.8%
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Never	241 29.9%
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**23. Since 9/11, do you agree or disagree that young Americans, like yourself, should have been asked to do more to help fight the war on terror?**

Strongly Agree	60 7.5%
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Agree	273 33.9%
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Disagree	329 40.9%
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Strongly Disagree	143 17.8%
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**24. What are you most fearful of at this time?**

Terrorist attack	108 13.4%
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Being unemployed	251 31.2%
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Going deeply into debt	261 32.4%
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Being unable to continue	63
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studies	7.8%
None of these	122 15.2%

**25. In which of the following ways did the attacks on 9/11 affect you, personally?**

No effect	185 23.0%
More religious	118 14.7%
More patriotic	286 35.5%
Live more for today	262 32.5%
Worry about my future safety	240 29.8%
More active in my community	80 9.9%
Brought me closer to friends and family	232 28.8%
Other	71 8.8%

**26. In your opinion, how likely is it that the United States will experience another serious terrorist attack, like 9/11, in the next 5 years?**

Very likely	143 17.8%
Somewhat likely	412 51.2%
Not very likely	222 27.6%
Not at all likely	28 3.5%

**27. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education of your parents?**

Less than H.S. graduate	18 2.2%
H.S. graduate	82 10.2%
Some college	234 29.1%
College graduate	471 58.5%

**28. Which of the following best represents your race or ethnic group?**

White, non-Hispanic	624 77.5%
Hispanic	40 5.0%
African American	49 6.1%
Asian/Pacific	60 7.5%
Other/mixed	32 4.0%

**29. In the 2004 presidential election, did you vote?**

Yes	627 77.9%
No	178 22.1%

**30. In the 2004 presidential election, the candidates were Democrat John Kerry and Republican George W. Bush. For whom did you vote?**

Kerry	339 54.1%
Bush	260 41.5%
Someone else	27 4.3%

Did not vote	1 0.2%
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**31. Which party do you consider yourself to be a member of - Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Libertarian?**

Democrat	284 35.3%
Republican	257 31.9%
Independent	175 21.7%
Libertarian	24 3.0%
Other	65 8.1%

**32. Which description best represents your political ideology?**

Progressive/very liberal	66 8.2%
Liberal	171 21.2%
Moderate	313 38.9%
Conservative	167 20.7%
Very conservative	34 4.2%
Libertarian	24 3.0%
Other	30 3.7%

**33. How often do you attend church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship?**

More than once a week	67 8.3%
About once a week	159 19.8%
Once or twice a month	130 16.1%
Only on religious holidays	130 16.1%
Rarely	171 21.2%
Never	148 18.4%

**34. Which of the following best represents your parents' household income last year before taxes?**

Less than \$15,000	56 7.0%
\$15,000-\$24,999	48 6.0%
\$25,000-\$34,999	81 10.1%
\$35,000-\$49,999	91 11.3%
\$50,000-\$74,999	147 18.3%
\$75,000-\$100,000	96 11.9%
\$100,000 or more	153 19.0%
Don't Know	133 16.5%



# The Class of 9/11

## CHAT SESSION SUMMARY

### **PRIMARY OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of the iModerate sessions were to:

- Learn what was driving respondents' interest/lack of interest in working for the federal government
- Understand how these respondents define public service and government work, and how they think of these as career choices
- Gauge the impact 9/11 has had on this group of students' views of public service and working for the government, and on their career choices
- Establish the best ways to speak to and reach this audience so that they consider the federal government as a viable career path

### **REPORT OVERVIEW:**

- Executive Summary
  - The Federal Government as Employer
  - Public Service
  - What Motivates the Class of 2005?
  - The Impact of 9/11
- Main Findings
  - Perceptions of Working for the Federal Government
  - Definition of Public Service
  - Class of 2005 and Public Service
  - Impact of 9/11
  - Other Topics
  - How To Reach Out to These Students

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **The Federal Government as Employer**

- Respondents often remarked about the good pay, benefits and job security of a federal government job, but were very unclear about what exactly a government job might entail in terms of content.
  - Students had a vague notion of the government as a place where they'd have the opportunity to work on issues that matter to them.
- The idea of “the federal government” can be daunting and impenetrable. These students do not understand how many facets there are to the federal government and struggle to see how it could fit their education and interests.
- Finding a way to move past the “the government” and present examples of specific opportunities would help dimensionalize public service and bring the relevance into focus.
- Humanizing the government as a vibrant, dynamic group of people working towards goals, effecting change, and having a true impact is critical. The Class of 2005 wants to be in charge of their future and do not easily connect a government job to this goal.
- Respondents who were “very interested” in working for the federal government consistently cited good pay, benefits and job security as their key motivators.
  - Others have a clear career objective (CIA, NASA, international relations) and see the government as the only—or the most logical—place to meet their goal.

### **Public Service**

- For the Class of 2005, “public service” is not a phrase that they immediately equate with government or even with higher-level, issues-based initiatives.
- While these respondents believe that some government jobs can be considered public service, this was not a top of mind or particularly strong response.
- The key element of their definition of public service a direct, firsthand impact on the people who are being served. They think of people such as teachers, firefighters, and local organizations that work “in the trenches.” The military was also often thought of in this category.
- Additionally, there is a strong perception that public service work is, by definition, very low paying, or is even done for free.

### **What Motivates the Class of 2005?**

- For the most part these respondents state that they are motivated by high salaries and recognition, and therefore do not consider public service or government work as a good fit for them. Although they say this with some chagrin, they also accept it as a reality that they must function within.
- While student loan debt does factor into their desire for high salaries, they are most likely to cite societal expectations and pressure to achieve as the driving factors in wanting to earn as much as possible.
- For others, a desire to work for the greater good does exist, but the government is not viewed as the way to do this. In their minds it is often a place where people toil in obscurity with limited ability to actually have an impact.

- If they are giving up the potential for high compensation they were groomed to desire, they want to ensure that they will at least make a difference.
  - Presenting the federal government as a place where things actually *do* get done, where change is affected and hard work does pay off, is necessary to establish its relevance for this group.

### **The Impact of 9/11**

- 9/11 woke up the Class of 2005 and made them start paying attention to the government. As a result of this, they are “critical consumers,” a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of the old “Question Authority” era.
- Respondents frequently talk about 9/11 and the war in Iraq in the same breath. For many, the war is very close to home and has dampened the enthusiasm that 9/11 brought out.
- Students do not report a significant connection between 9/11 and their career choices. While the events of that day impacted how they think about government, it does not drive the professional choices they are making now.
- Patriotism runs deep in this group but they seldom acknowledge it as driving career decisions. Patriotism is thought of as an emotional, human connection, whereas career decisions need to be treated in a very practical, businesslike way—their futures are riding on them.

**MAIN FINDINGS****PERCEPTIONS OF WORKING FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

- **What are the jobs?**

These respondents do not understand exactly what “working for the federal government” means. While they easily make top of mind associations to politics, the FBI, the IRS, etc..., they do not have a larger picture of the opportunities available to them.

Regardless of their interest level they base their limited assessment of a government job on the stereotypes of job security, low pay, bureaucracy, etc... with little awareness or definition of what the actual work could entail.

As a result of this, the government does not play a meaningful role in their discussion or evaluation of different career paths.

*It also comes from the universities as well. They encourage people to find jobs in private sector fields and do not offer much towards public service...In college public service jobs are not something that one is approached with. The various opportunities would need to be addressed and how they apply to my field of study would be important as well.*

(Female, not very interested)

*This [survey] is the first type of thing I've been introduced to about jobs with the government.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

*I have never heard anyone my age say, “Man, I really want to work for the SBA or USDA.” People think of Wal-Mart or Sprint as a place you can climb the ladder and make money. They have nothing against the SBA or USDA they just do not think of them when looking for jobs.*

(Male, not sure if interested)

Based on this, it is critical to explain to new college grads what, in fact, is available. These students want to use their degrees, make money, and make a difference. They are in large part open to the idea of working for the government. They just need to be told what that could look like.

*Just let us as students know that we can have a shot of getting employed by the federal government. I would be honored to work for the federal government as would many students.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

*Many kids my age have no idea how to go about starting a career in the federal government. Maybe they could post entry exams as they do with the civil service tests in major cities...I know if they did something like that in Boston I would go.*

(Female, very interested)

- **Let them hear it “from the horse’s mouth”**

Because respondents do not have a grasp of government jobs available to them, they also lack a clear picture of the types of people who work for the government.

Consequently, it is more difficult for them to imagine themselves working for the federal government. Their limited understanding makes it hard for them to see it as a potential professional home.

Our respondents repeatedly stated that talking to someone who actually works for the government would be among the most effective ways for them to view it as a viable career path for themselves.

*Being able to meet with actual representatives of the agencies who will discuss what they do personally is very informative...That working for the government can be really fulfilling as a career. Not many people, myself included, really see anything that would be satisfying about a public service career.*

(Female, not very interested)

*I think I would need to know someone that works for the government and be able to hear what they have to say. It would also put a face to something I don't know a whole lot about....*

(Male, not very interested)

Showing accomplished people in real government jobs, working on high-profile, compelling issues and getting results could put the federal government in a context that appeals to these students while also dispelling some of the stereotypes.

*Advertisements that give real examples of people working for the government. It would give their profile...this would give government jobs a face, someone who is testifying about what they do and how much they enjoy it...If I would know that there are people out there who love their government job then I would be more inclined to be interested in working for the government.*

(Male, not very interested)

Mod: *What would you need to see or hear to make you think public service is a viable career path for someone like you?*

Guest: *People in those jobs enjoy what they do, are paid well, job security, good benefits. A physical person to set the example.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

## DEFINITION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

- **What they think it is**

Members of the Class of 2005 have countless definitions of public service, however the majority share several important elements:

- Work that serves the greater good, most often a particular group of individuals
- Low pay, not done for profit
- In-the-trenches, hands-on roles that directly impact the people being served

*Public service can be defined in an infinite number of ways...Anybody who has a career focused not on themselves but on the greater good of the community around them. It is questionable if the politicians of today are actually looking out for the greater good of their fellow man.*

(Female, very interested)

*I think of public service jobs as being very satisfying but not necessarily very well-paying. I would like to be financially secure.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

A significant number of respondents specifically mentioned firefighters, police officers, teachers, and those who work with a particular constituency as examples of public service.

*Public service? Well law enforcement, maybe non-profits that are subsidized by the government, other service jobs like firefighting etc.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

*I think of social workers. I guess I define public service as doing something that is for the benefit of the general public, or at least a specific group within the general public.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

- **How government fits into this**

Respondents did not show a consistent opinion as to whether government is or is not a public service. For the most part they agreed that it can be considered a public service, but they do not believe that the term applies to all government work.

This perception is directly related to an impression that much of the work of government is inefficient busywork being conducted in a grey maze of cubicles by people who don't want to be there, or by people whose work will never have an impact.

There is a degree of dedication, excitement and impact that respondents connect to public service that is not part of their current image of the work the federal government performs.

*When I think of government jobs I think of an office worker who more or less doesn't want to be there, and I see a public service job and people who can be out of the office and are motivated to help people grow and improve.*

(Male, not very interested)

*For me, honestly, if I knew that I would actually be making a difference in areas that I was concerned about I would be more likely to enter into public service.*

(Female, not sure if interested)

*Most already think that being a cop or firefighter is rewarding... Portraying an office job like in the IRS would be quite hard to make people think it is rewarding.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

*When I think of careers in public service I think of teachers, mentors, people willing to sacrifice some of their time to encourage and raise the standard of living of the poor...I think of the government as more of keeping structure in our society.*

(Male, very interested)

Mod: *Do you think that government jobs are public service jobs? Why or why not?*

Guest: *I don't think all of them are. For example I don't think the IRS serves the public per se. I realize that some of our tax dollars that are collected eventually serve the public but I don't think all of that is collected is put toward its intended purpose.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

Many of those who did think that government could be considered public service thought of public service at a more macro level—effecting change for the larger community rather than helping specific individuals.

*I think that public service is serving the larger community whether this is a local or national service. I think it can be done through volunteer work or a paid job...It's anything that can be done to bring about the greater good or to allow a nation/community to function correctly. I think that public service can be thought of in terms of a sort of civil religion. We are often too quick to think of public service as a selfless soldier giving his life for his country or a politician working for the government, and while these can be the part they aren't the whole. However, I think this likely stems from our American tradition of government by the people, so we feel that if someone completely sacrifices themselves for the public good that it public service.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

*The government exists for the people so yeah, working for the government is therefore for the people but it's for ALL the people, the whole mass, and when I think of public service I think of these people working for a specific group of people...When I think of public service I think that you are working for all the orphans or abused children in your specific area or all the unemployed.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

- **Who does it and why?**

Respondents stated that people who pursue public service work are doing so at the expense of what this generation has been raised to believe is paramount—making money and achieving recognition.

A saving grace is that public service—as distinct from government—is a place to make an impact, which can support the desire among the Class of 2005 to be recognized for their achievements.

*We are a much more aware generation. We want to make a difference and the government is not a place to do that.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

*Nowadays with the rising cost of just about everything our number one concern is working in a job that will pay your bills and provide your future family with whatever they need. Should your job also bring you happiness and greater success then it is just an added bonus. It takes a certain type of person to get into any field of public service. It takes a person that does not put themselves first but everyone else's concerns before theirs. And to those few that choose those careers usually money is not the driving factor behind their motivations.*

(Female, very interested)

*They're good people who truly want to help people. Money has not become the driving factor of their career choices.*

(Male, not at all interested)

*Some are just big time born leaders and they want to be a top-dog type person. Others have a heart to serve and they want to help others...they have been leaders or servants their whole lives...Like the kids you play with when you're 3. Some want to play hospital and be a nurse and help others get better others want to organize and coach a soccer team.*

(Female, not at all interested)

## **CLASS OF 2005 AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

The iModerate sessions revealed that respondents are split in their opinion as to whether or not the Class of 2005 is less likely than other generations to pursue public service work.

While a significant number of respondents did agree with this claim, others disagreed, stating that they and their peers feel compelled to make a difference.

A key factor to note, however, is that this drive to serve and make a difference does not equate to a desire to work for the federal government. It is more likely to mean a desire to work in the non-profit sector or in some other capacity loosely defined as public service.

- **More likely**

Many respondents who believe that they and their classmates are potentially interested in careers in public service have clear requirements.

They know that choosing such a career path most likely would mean they are accepting lower long-term earning potential. To offset this, they want to be assured that they will have the opportunity to make a difference and be recognized for their achievements.

Mod: *What would you need to see or hear to believe that public service is a viable career path for you?*

Guest: *I'd like to be able to believe that I'd be able to make a difference while earning the same kind of money and benefits as I would working for a private company. And that there'd be the same opportunity for career advancement as in a private company.*

(Male, not very interested)

Mod: *Is it accurate to say that people of your generation, specifically in the Class of 2005, are not very likely to want to pursue a career in public service? Why or why not?*

Guest: *I think most of the people I know can be pretty cynical and as a result are not likely to want to serve a greater cause because they don't feel they'll be effective. Instead, materialism and the desire to take care of oneself seem to dominate. That is not to say that no one or nothing can motivate them. I think that if people are asked to serve in the public service sector in a specific field they're more likely to respond affirmatively...but if one simply said public service it wouldn't be very motivating.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

- **Less likely**

The desire to make money, while driven in part by student loan debt, is also very closely tied to the idea that a lucrative career is the most reliable indicator of success. Making as much money as possible—while achieving as much recognition as possible—are thought of as the logical payoff for years of hard work and are also easily understood symbols of success that society can use to classify them.

*I think that many people have grown up in a certain lifestyle that allows them to live a very reasonable lifestyle. Many of those who don't already live in that affluent community feel pressured by society to strive for that.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

Guest: *I think it is accurate mostly because we have been raised to think a high salary is the most important thing and that we are all capable of pursuing and attaining these extraordinary careers...I think most kids my age have been led to believe that they shouldn't settle for anything less than top-tier when really they don't all qualify...top-tier is high salary, high recognition, the kind of thing your parents can brag about.*

Mod: *Do you think working for the government or in public service is top tier? Why or why not?*

Guest: *No, it is not top tier because it does not bring a sense of superiority or achievement. I mean it might, in certain situations. If you mean Congressman, then yes, it is top tier.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

Guest: *Most of this generation has been raised to get the job, get the goal, get the promotion and public service doesn't provide for the same kind of external accomplishment. Not the same kind of recognition we're looking for. It's not a healthy thing but it's how we've been raised. This is the age of movie stars and sports heroes and who wants to do public service when you can be a millionaire?...Kids from kindergarten to high school need to know how important it is to do public service. It'll help when public service stops being something our society as a whole kind of looks down on.*

(Male, not at all interested)

*Especially from where I go to school most people would prefer to make money than get caught up in what people consider government jobs to be—ineffective, highly political, lots of bureaucracy, nightmare jobs.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

*We are selfish. We want immediate gratification and we want to help ourselves, as sad as that is to say.*

(Female, not at all interested)

*In all honesty I'm looking for something that can secure my future financially, where I can get a nice house and such and not have to worry about my bills. I don't see a government job being a six-figure-salary type thing.*

(Male, not very interested)

## IMPACT OF 9/11

While virtually all respondents acknowledged being touched by 9/11, for many the flood of patriotism that swept the nation has faded amid the realities of school, finding a job, and supporting themselves in the “real world.”

Many respondents believe that 9/11 has little, if any, impact on them and their peers as they go through their day-to-day lives. They state that it does not shape their decisions or drive their interests in any meaningful way.

The more lasting impact of the events of 9/11 appears to be in a heightened awareness of and attention to the government. Government has become a more important part of their consciousness, of their social and academic discourse, and of their political opinions.

- **“Critical consumers”**

The Class of 2005 was straddling the fence between adolescence and adulthood on 9/11/2001. While the college years are a time when most students start to pay more attention to their government, as they are finally able to vote and participate in the national debate, the fact that these students were making that transition during such an emotionally charged time in our nation's history was formative.

*It has totally shaped the way many of us feel about the government. Some of us don't feel safe, don't feel the government is doing everything that they can to prevent some things that have occurred, others feel that the government is doing well with what we have. Overall I think we watch what's going on around us more than we did before.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

*I think 9/11 and the Iraq war made people more attentive to news and politics. So more people voted. And more people try to voice their opinion.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

- **Wanting to be heard**

Our respondents want their opinions to be heard. This desire stands in contrast to the perception that the federal government is not a place where the individual has a voice. If they want to make a change, have an impact, get things done, and be recognized, they express skepticism that the government is the place to do that.

*I had never given much thought about the government prior to 9/11 but since it I have been more involved, wanting to vote, wanting to have a say, forming opinions. I think it is difficult to be in government at such a time because every move is going to be scrutinized and disagreed with. I think it is a difficult balancing act and at times I find I applaud the government...It tells me I don't want a government job because I couldn't handle such stress.*

(Female, not at all interested)

*There is little room for voice in the government...there is a set of established ways and little can be done to change them.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

Mod: *How do you think the fact that the Class of 2005 will be the first to go through college entirely in a post-9/11 world has impacted the way that you and your classmates feel about public service and the federal government if at all?*

Guest: *Frankly I haven't noticed any difference. Those who are interested were interested before, though perhaps more strongly. Those who were never interested are no more so today. It seems to have more to do with pre-existing views rather than anything that changed in college or by 9/11.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

- **Taking sides**

9/11 and the Iraq war are very polarizing for this group. Many of them equate working with the government with supporting this administration. If you're against the war, they ask themselves, why would you work for the government?

*The decisions made in regard to the war in Iraq make me want to stay away from federal government work.*

(Female, not sure if interested)

*For the most part I think the Class of 2005 might view the government in a slightly negative light than it would have before given the events like the war in Iraq for example. But sadly a lot of students couldn't care less.*

(Female, not very interested)

Mod: *How do you think the fact that the Class of 2005 will be the first to go through college entirely in a post-9/11 world has impacted the way that you and your classmates feel about public service and the federal government if at all?*

Guest: *I think it makes the Class of 2005 split. There are more people at both sides. Either they see it as a call to public service or disillusioned. More people have a stronger opinion I guess.*

Mod: *Do you think that 9/11 shapes the way you feel about government? Please explain?*

Guest: *After 9/11 I was more patriotic and I think everyone was. But with the Iraq war less people are patriotic and more people disapprove of the war.*

Mod: *How does that influence your choice of careers if at all?*

Guest: *I personally don't really take that into consideration. I take each job as it is. More like job function and how happy I would be doing this job. More selfish reasons I guess. It doesn't really matter if it's public or private job to me.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

## OTHER TOPICS

Our discussions with iModerate respondents also included secondary questioning around the following points:

- Is there a difference in their perception of federal versus state or local government work?
- How do they think of civil versus military service?
- If the federal government asked them to serve, would they be willing to do so?

While we did not have the opportunity to raise these questions with every respondent, we did include them when time allowed.

- **Federal versus state or local service**

When discussing “government work” in general, respondents’ top of mind responses almost always had to do with the federal government. Upon probing, state and local work was described as more action-oriented. In their minds, federal work is where the decisions are made, and state and local work is where those decisions are implemented.

*There is a small difference. The local level is able to be in constant contact with the people and the federal has to get their information from our local and state leaders.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

Mod: *Can you tell me a bit about how you think of federal service versus service at a state or local level? Is there a difference in your mind? Please explain.*

Guest: *I view the difference simply as jurisdiction. The federal government is responsible for issues that affect the entire country while the state and local services are in charge of a smaller area.*

Mod: *As far as reputation prestige ability to make a difference do you think there's a distinction?*

Guest: *Not really in prestige or reputation. I think people assume that the federal government has more power than state and local but really they just have power over different issues and areas. As far as making a difference you could make a difference in both its just that federal affects a larger area of change than state or local.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

*I think the more local governments are trying to improve how things are in those certain communities. But I definitely don't think that they are doing everything that they can. I think that they make improvement to keep the people happy yet there are so many issues that they don't even touch for whatever reason. See I think that the government does good things but they limit themselves. I don't know if this is true but just the way I feel.*

(Male, not very interested)

- **Civil versus military service**

For some respondents, working for the federal government and/or in public service had quick connection to the idea of military service, but this was not an overwhelming connection.

Members of this group were very likely, however, to connect government work to, the FBI and CIA, and public service to police and firefighters.

*The scopes of the jobs are different. The ideas are the same. There is honor and integrity involved with both. They both create heroes. They both foster courage. Whether you're saving a country or saving a kitten from a tree I feel that those individuals doing their part to make the world a better place deserve my respect.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

*Civil service is doing what is best for society (civilians) and military service is working for the government to achieve what's best.*

(Female, not very interested)

*I can't speak for everyone but I know a lot of people view public service as joining the military and a lot of people are scared to do that. Also a lot of people my age are worried about their financial status and they feel that public service won't satisfy them financially.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

- **Willingness to serve if asked**

When specifically asked this question, most respondents said that they would be willing to help out in some way. While they are not motivated to take that step on their own—or are unsure what step that would be in the first place—they were unlikely to admit that they would say “no” if asked to help.

*I would be willing to serve in whatever way I could. I would do this because I believe it is first of all my responsibility as a citizen of a democracy. Secondly it is necessary for people to be willing to serve if we want to maintain and pursue the goals set forth by the founders of this nation.*

(Female, somewhat interested)

Of note is that these students expressed a desire to have some control over what they agreed to do to help. Rather than just blindly saying “yes, I will serve” they want to be certain that their service will be compensated, rewarding, and acknowledged. This supports the notion discussed earlier that this generation has a strong desire for recognition and control.

Guest: *I think it would all depend on what it is. If it is something I feel passionately about then I would definitely consider it. But if I didn't care for what there were asking me about then I wouldn't be very interested.*

Mod: *What would you need to hear from the federal government to make you want to serve?*

Guest: *I think I would need to hear the government tell me what kind of future I could have working for them but for me hearing isn't what does it; it is seeing. I would most influenced by seeing how things operate rather than hearing. Because it is easy to say something to please the listener but much harder to show it.*

(Male, not very interested)

Guest: *Sure...if it was either A) something I would enjoy doing and I would be financially safe or B) the pay and benefits were great.*

(Male, somewhat interested)

Guest: *I'd help with a legitimate non-religious charity I'd give blood no problem. I'm sure not going to a war I don't like or helping a cause I don't believe in. I'd have to be compensated if I had to lose time at work. The service would definitely have to be selective and not some arbitrary requirement for voting. You know? The service would be tailored to each person's beliefs and needs.*

(Male, not at all interested)

## HOW TO REACH OUT TO THESE STUDENTS?

- The first obstacle to attracting these students to jobs with the federal government is making them aware of them. They just don't know what's out there for them or how to find out about the opportunities.

- Career fairs and the careers offices at their schools are a logical step, although presence in these venues won't be effective without an improvement in baseline awareness.
- General outreach campaigns (they suggest MTV and the Daily Show) will be useful in positioning government work as part of the career landscape.
- Once government work enters their minds, they will need to see it as a place where exceptional individuals work on meaningful projects and have an impact on the greater good. This is in stark contrast to a current perception that it is an inefficient bureaucracy.
- They also need to believe that they will make a decent living and be recognized for their achievements.
- “Working for the government” also needs to be presented as non-partisan to help them see that a job with, for example, the National Institutes of Health need not be an endorsement of any administration.