
The Decline of Patriotism in Modern Day Society

Patriotism on the Decline

Indian chief Tecumseh once said ["Let us form one body, one heart, and defend to the last warrior our country, our homes, our liberty, and the graves of our fathers"](#) (Tecumseh).

Patriotism is on the decline in America. Veterans have sacrificed their lives and their comfort to keep our country safe and free. Even though America's history is full of acts of incredible acts of heroism inspired by patriotism, evidence shows that there is a lack of patriotism in modern America.

According to Merriam Webster's dictionary, patriotism is defined as "devotion and love of one's country" ("Patriotism" 852). When people watch the Olympics, they want to support the country they are from because they feel a sense of national pride. To support what patriotism is like, look at a family situation. What would happen if a family was not loyal to each other? What if children did not respect their parents, or if a spouse cheated on spouse? This would cause discord in the family and the family would eventually fall apart if nothing was done to prevent it. What about a football team? What if a coach didn't tell the players what the play was? What if the players decided not to do their jobs? In a functioning society, no one is less important than another person. We all have jobs to do and we have to work together to accomplish those jobs.

Patriotism is on the decline. We need only turn on the TV to find out what is seemingly wrong with America. The media is constantly giving us different and distorted views of what each news anchor believes to be right. With the increase of technological advances throughout the past decade and a half could be contributing to the decline of patriotism.

America is classified by age. There are several generations that make up the majority of Americans. The oldest generation, the Silent Generation, is composed of those aged 86 through 69; the Baby Boomers are aged 68 through 50; Generation X is ages 49 through 34, and the Millennials are ages 33 through 18 (Vavreck).

Patriotism especially seems to decline though the younger generations. AARP conducted a social survey that interviewed people over the age of 18. Fifty-seven percent of those polled described themselves as patriotic, while twelve percent described themselves as not very patriotic. Seventy-four percent of those over the age of 50 say they're extremely or very patriotic compared to sixty percent of those aged 35 to 49 and thirty-two percent of those age 18 to 34. Twenty-five percent say they've become more patriotic over the last five years while eleven percent have become less patriotic (Holley).

The A.N.E.S. (American National Election Study), conducted a survey about patriotism in America. They asked people different questions about how they felt about different aspects of America. Answers could range from "extremely good" to "not good at all." The first question the A.N.E.S. asked was "How does seeing the American Flag Make You Feel?" Seventy-nine percent of Americans responded that it makes them feel at least good. However, there were seven percent that said the flag made them feel not good at all. Many people still have a great regard for America as a whole. When polled, ninety-five percent said that they at least liked

America, while only one third of one percent said they hated it (Vavreck).

These statistics may convey a sense that patriotism is still going strong. However, if you look at the fine print, you will find discrepancies between the generations. Eighty-one percent of the Silent Generation that was polled, said that they loved America. Now we can see that only fifty-eight percent of the Millennials feel the same way. Seventy-eight percent of the Silent Generation said that they consider their American identity to be very important to them. Going down the generations, that drops to seventy percent for the Baby Boomers, sixty percent for Generation X, and only forty-five percent of Millennials believe that their American identity is important (Vavreck).

What if only thirty-three percent of people put their hands over their heart when the Pledge of Allegiance was said? When asked how they feel when they see Old Glory flying, ninety-four percent of the Silent Generation reported that it made them feel good. but only sixty-seven percent of Millennials say the same. Some may say that it is an “age thing” but if we investigate further, we see the true beginning of the survey in 1988 (Vavreck).

In 1988, Generation X members were aged 23 and younger. Seventy-three percent of them said that looking at the flag made them feel a sense of pride. That is the exact same percentage that was reported by Generation X'ers in 2012. Looking at the Baby Boomers in 1988, when they were aged 24 to 42, eighty-two percent said that seeing the flag made them feel good. This is almost the same percentage in the 2012 survey: eighty-seven percent. This pattern suggests that patriotism doesn't shift through the cycle of life, but instead it stays with the generation (Vavreck).

Could this be because thirty-one percent of Silent Generationers polled served in active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? Was it because they endured WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War? Only four percent of Millennials have served in the Armed Forces (Vavreck). Of the 19.3 million veterans in the United States in 2014, 9.4 million veterans were over the age of 65. Seven million were Vietnam War veterans, 1.1 million served in WWII, 5.5 million were veterans of the Gulf War, and 4.4 million served in peacetime (“American”).

The trends are showing that those among the older generations have more respect and reverence for American symbols such as the flag, and the national anthem. They are more likely to take offence at things such as disregarding the flag code, or perhaps not standing up when the national anthem is played. Younger generations, aren't as excited about these symbols, but they do respect classic ideals for justice and equality. In contrast, younger generations would more likely take offence in a case where women were not being paid equally with men, or when same-gender marriage was not legal in all states. In fact, only thirty-seven percent of older generations believe that unequal chances in life are big problems, while fifty-seven percent of younger generations believe that it is a bigger problem that needs to be addressed (Vavreck).

How does one show more support for their country? One of the first things people think of when they want to show patriotism is voting. It may seem that one vote doesn't matter, but when we vote, we are giving the candidates we agree with a chance to make the world better. It may seem like our votes won't make a difference, but in fact, they do. In the 2000 presidential election, there were almost 6 million votes cast in the state of Florida. When the votes were counted, George W. Bush won the election by only 537 votes (Remy, 487)!

Approximately only thirty percent of registered voters in the United States vote (Adams). It is also important to be educated about the candidates and the current president to understand what their policies are. People are more likely to vote when they educate themselves on the nation's issues. Many people will find that they are more eager to vote when they see that the issues directly affect themselves.

Other ways to show patriotism are being polite to the elderly and handicapped. We can do this by making sure we obey the signs for handicapped parking, and giving up our seats on public transportation for those who need them. We can fly the American flag on national holidays, we can work hard at our jobs to help the economy. Driving safely is a way to exercise responsibility and make the streets safer. It is also important to keep our country clean by making sure we put our trash in garbage cans, and doing our best to recycle where available. Sometimes, it may be required for us to leave our jobs for a time and serve on a jury. This will help justice come to pass (Britt).

Perhaps the most profound way one can show their patriotism is by serving in the military. There are currently 2.5 million men and women serving in the United States military. If these veterans have given so much for their country, should they not be given back to? Only twenty-seven percent of veterans had at least a bachelor's degree in 2014. Many veterans are reported homeless, and it is hard for them to find jobs. The most likely reason for this is because many veterans come back from their service struggling with P.T.S.D. or injuries from their time serving. The effects of this disorder can make it hard for veterans to come back to the states and adjust to normal life. It can even make it hard to do daily tasks. In 2014, there were 3.8 million veterans who had a service connected disability. To judge the extent of these injuries, doctors use a percentage system. One hundred percent is the most severe and zero percent is not severe at all. 1.1 million veterans have an injury severity rating over seventy percent ("American").

What can we do for these heroes who have defended our country? Sometimes all that they need is a listening ear, or a friendly smile. We can always go to a veterans hospital and meet the people in there. Anytime you see a person wearing a uniform or a hat that shows their military division, we can shake their hand and thank them for their service. These veterans of our country have such rich stories to tell. We can learn from their history, and learn how not to repeat it.

Evidence shows that patriotism is on the decline in the United States. This may prove to cause great difficulties in our society. We can only hope that people will begin to feel love of country again; otherwise, America may continue a slow decay to eventual destruction.