



EGOTECH

How to win the hearts, minds and wallets of adult Millennials with technology that flatters the ego and indulges the cult of the self

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\$200BN MILLENNIAL SPENDING POWER

In 2016, the last Millennial entered adulthood and the Millennial cohort (born 1981-98) became the largest generation of economically active Americans, driving the US economy with \$200B+ annual spending.

But many of the signature traits that marketers associate with Millennials are based on outdated research conducted during their youth and college years. Now Millennials represent the core mainstream adult consumer, how can marketers win the hearts, minds and wallets of this, the largest generational cohort in US history?





IS IT STILL ALL ABOUT ME?

Although characterized by diversity, Millennials have generational traits collectively shaped by a shared life stage, technology, media culture and the shared experience of major trends and events.

During their youth, researchers identified elevated levels of narcissism as a signature trait of Millennials, characterized by inflated egotism, self-focus and vanity. Compared to previous generations in their youth, Millennials were found to be about 10% more narcissistic. But has this signature trait of Millennial narcissism persisted into adulthood?

SYZYGY EGOTECH STUDY

In summer 2016, New York based digital agency SYZYGY commissioned a major national study of narcissism and digital behavior among 2,568 adult Millennials (18-35, average 28) across the 50 US States. Participants completed a psychological test called the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) online and told us about their digital habits.

For comparison, the study was replicated with a geographically matched comparative sample of 2,591 older non-Millennials.





MILLENNIALS ARE 16% MORE NARCISSISTIC THAN NON-MILLENNIALS

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory test gives a narcissism score out of 16, and across all generations the most common score was 3, but for Millennials, the average mean score was 5. In 2016, adult Millennial men scored an average of 6, and women 4. In our study, we found that Millennials retain elevated levels of narcissism in adulthood.

Comparing means, among Millennials, men are 24% more narcissistic than women. As an adult cohort, Millennials appear to retain their signature trait of narcissism and are, on average, 16% more narcissistic than non-Millennials.

7 SIGNS OF DIGITAL NARCISSISM

Our study looked at the digital habits of Millennials in adulthood, and we found seven signs linked to elevated levels of narcissism.

This follows from previous research that has identified personal technology as a key driver of narcissism, along with changing parenting styles, easy credit and celebrity culture.





1. THE MORE ON-DEMAND APPS YOU USE, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Millennials use more on-demand apps than non-Millennials, each using on average 2-3 apps.

Those who use more on-demand apps tend to be more narcissistic. Extensive use of on-demand apps are the most reliable indicator of high levels of narcissism in our study.



2. IF YOU ARE UNWILLING TO SHARE YOUR PHONE WITH A FRIEND, YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE NARCISSISTIC

Millennials display a high level of emotional attachment to their smartphone.

Those who wouldn't share their smartphone with a close friend are 18% more narcissist than those who would. 35% of Millennials would not share their phone with a close friend.



3. IF YOU'D PREFER TO GIVE UP BREAKFAST RATHER THAN YOUR PHONE FOR A MONTH, YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE NARCISSISTIC

The majority (58%) of Millennials would rather give up a give up breakfast for a month that be without their smartphone, indicative of the importance of mobile technology in their lives.

Those who would rather give up breakfast rather than their smartphone for a month are 13% more narcissist than those who'd rather give up their smartphone.



4. THE MORE YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

On average, adult Millennials post 3 social media updates per day, and those who post more frequently tend to be more narcissistic.



5. THE HIGHER NUMBER OF SELFIES YOU POST PER WEEK THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

We found that narcissism is correlated to the frequency of posting selfies to social media. On average, adult Millennials post 5-6 selfies per week to social media.

We also found that the higher proportion of photos posted online that are selfies, the higher the narcissism of the poster.

For the typical adult Millennial one in three photos (30%) posted online are selfies.



6. SELFIE-STICK OWNERS ARE 34% MORE NARCISSISTIC

23% of Millennial adults own a selfie stick, and the selfie-stick owner is on average 34% more narcissistic than an adult Millennials who don't own a selfie-stick.



7. THE MORE TIME YOU SPEND USING YOUR SMARTPHONE, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Overall, we found a statistically significant positive correlation between time spent using a smartphone and elevated narcissism. The more time you find yourself using your smartphone, the more narcissistic you are likely to be.



US NARCISSISM HOTSPOTS

Finally, we also found that Millennial narcissism appears to be unevenly distributed across the US with “narcissism hotspots” in California, Connecticut, Georgia and New Jersey.

In contrast, low levels of Millennial narcissism were identified in Idaho, Iowa, North Dakota, West Virginia.

SO WHAT? APPEAL TO NARCISSISTS WITH EGOTECH

Narcissism may appear strongest among Millennials, but personal digital technology is exerting its influence across generations. By empowering the self, digital technology has become a remote control for life, promoting self-empowerment and in doing so inflating our egos.

As a result, we believe the future of digital lies in EgoTech, technology designed to flatter the ego and appeal to the cult of the self. The opportunity for brands is to develop compelling EgoTech solutions based on a deeper understanding of narcissism.



NARCISSISM: TWO TYPES, SEVEN TRAITS

Narcissism is characterized by egotism, self-focus and vanity, but recent research has identified two distinct types of narcissist.

Grandiose narcissism is the narcissism of extraverts, characterized by attention-seeking behavior, power and dominance. **Vulnerable narcissism** is the narcissism of introverts, characterized by an acute sense of self-entitlement and defensiveness.

Beyond these basic types, narcissism is made up of seven defining traits to which EgoTech can appeal.



1. “ENTITLEMENT”

JUST GIVE ME THE BEST

Narcissists believe they are entitled to the best.

They believe they are inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment (tending to agree with this statement from a related entitlement scale: “If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the first lifeboat!”).

Effective EgoTech will be the best that is available, the top of the range or ultra-premium version. Think top spec digital services and products.

Because you’re worth it.



2. “SUPERIORITY” FLATTER MY EGO

Narcissists believe they are superior—smarter, more attractive and more important than others. Effective EgoTech can flatter the ego by pandering to this sense of superiority.

Think technology that puts the user first, and before others such as the queue jumping app from Starbucks, or Prime priority delivery from Amazon.



3. “EXHIBITIONISM” HELP ME FLAUNT IT

Narcissists tend to be exhibitionists, craving attention and showing off. EgoTech that appeals will act as a status symbol and object of conspicuous consumption—with self-promotion and bragging rights built in.

Beyond status products such as Tesla cars and latest tech, think experiential status symbols such as digital access to exclusive events or travel.

And remember—pics or it didn’t happen.



4. “VANITY”

REFLECT MY BEAUTY

Narcissists are vain.

They believe they look fabulous (the term narcissism comes from Greek mythology, where a son of one of the gods called Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water).

Think of EgoTech as vanity-ware, a digital mirror designed to make you look good.

Think Snapchat or Instagram filters that flatter the looks of selfie-snappers, or Houzz that promises to make your home look as fabulous as you.



5. “EXPLOITATIVENESS” MAKE ME KING OF THE WORLD

Narcissists tend to be exploitative, exerting power over others without empathy. EgoTech can pander to this master/slave relationship narcissists wish to have over their world.

Think Instacart, Postmates or Uber that create a world with you at the center and a legion of “slaves” competing for your business.



6. “AUTHORITY” AMPLIFY MY INFLUENCE

Narcissists believe they are authoritative, natural leaders with a natural talent for influencing people. Effective EgoTech will give narcissists a voice and platform to wield their influence over others.

Think Quora, Medium or Twitter inviting us to share our wisdom and thought leadership with the world.



7. “SELF-SUFFICIENCY” HELP ME KNOW MYSELF

Narcissists can believe that they are more capable than others, and the best source of advice is their own heart, mind or gut.

Powerful EgoTech will help narcissists listen to their body, mind or spirit in order to be in tune with their inner genius and realize their own greatness.

Think self-quantification and self-improvement apps such as Fitbit, Headspace or Apple Health, or genetic profiling services such as 23andMe.





CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY IS EGOTECH

Digital technology, services and campaigns that flatter the ego and indulge the cult of the self will be increasingly rewarded in a world increasingly defined and dominated by digital trends.

By developing EgoTech solutions that appeal to the defining traits of narcissism, marketers can win the hearts, minds and wallets not only of Millennials, but of the nation.

Make it about them, or don't make it at all.

ABOUT SYZYGY

We're a digital agency and our purpose is simple: The greatest happiness for the greatest number. That unbeatable feeling when digital simply works—the perfect alignment of Technology, Design and Media. In astronomy this alignment is called a SYZYGY—3 celestial bodies in harmony.

Our positive approach is what makes us distinctive. So if you believe in building on strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses, in pleasure-points rather than pain-points, and in harnessing what's right rather than what's wrong, then you've come to the right place.





A NOTE ABOUT GENERATIONAL MARKETING

Generations, like people, have personality traits. Of course, there are as many personality differences within generations as there are between generations.

Nevertheless, generations are influenced by what they share; a common life-stage, global media and the shared experience of major trends and events.

As a result, generational marketing allows marketers to innovate and connect with what unites a generation, rather than what separates it.

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FIVE MINUTE INTRODUCTORY VIDEO PRIMER ON NARCISSISM IS AVAILABLE AT TED ED by PSYCHOLOGIST W. KEITH CAMPBELL, CO-AUTHOR OF THE NARCISSISM EPIDEMIC - <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-psychology-of-narcissism-w-keith-campbell>

APPENDIX

Narcissistic Personality Inventory Key & Results Tables

NPI-16

ANSWER KEY

Count how many questions you answer as highlighted.

Or [take the quiz online](#).

The NPI is a validated sub-clinical measure of narcissism, and you need to answer honestly for the results to be meaningful. There is no cut-off point for narcissism—you are simply more more or less narcissistic.

The higher your score, the more narcissistic you are. In our 2016 study, the most common score across all generations was 3, but 10% scored more than 8.

For Millennials, the average mean score was 5, with men scoring an average of 6 and women 4.

1. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I really like to be the center of attention**

b) It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention
2. Please select the option that best describes you

a) I am no better or no worse than most people

b) **I think I am a special person**
3. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **Everybody likes to hear my stories**

b) Sometimes I tell good stories
4. Please select the option that best describes you

a) I usually get the respect that I deserve

b) **I insist upon getting the respect that is due me**
5. Please select the option that best describes you

a) I don't mind following orders

b) **I like having authority over people**
6. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I am going to be a great person**

b) I hope I am going to be successful
7. Please select the option that best describes you

a) People sometimes believe what I tell them

b) **I can make anybody believe anything I want them to**
8. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I expect a great deal from other people**

b) I like to do things for other people
9. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I like to be the center of attention**

b) I prefer to blend in with the crowd
10. Please select the option that best describes you

a) I am much like everybody else

b) **I am an extraordinary person**
11. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I always know what I am doing**

b) Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing
12. Please select the option that best describes you

a) I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people

b) **I find it easy to manipulate people**
13. Please select the option that best describes you

a) Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me

b) **People always seem to recognize my authority**
14. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so**

b) When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed
15. Please select the option that best describes you

a) I try not to be a show off

b) **I am apt to show off if I get the chance**
16. Please select the option that best describes you

a) **I am more capable than other people**

b) There is a lot that I can learn from other people

METHODOLOGY

National psychometric testing with online quota sample

2568 adult Millennials (18-35) across all 50 US States completed a validated NPI-16 psychological online test to measure levels of narcissism in July 2016.

Participants then responded to a series of questions about their digital habits.

For comparison, the study was replicated with a geographically matched comparative sample of 2591 older non-Millennials.

	Millennials b. 1981-1998	Gen X b. 1965-1980	Boomers b. 1945-1964	TOTAL
N	2568	1294	1297	5159
M/F	1158/1410	583/711	486/811	2608/2552
Av. Age	28	42	60	39
Quota/State	50	25	25	5100*

ADULT US MILLENNIALS ARE 16% MORE NARCISSISTIC THAN NON-MILLENNIALS AS MEASURED BY THE NPI-16 TEST

Narcissism NPI-16 measures for participants in the two groups

Variable	Millennials					Non-Millennials					<i>t</i> (5157)	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
NPI	2568	3	5	4.95	3.20	2591	2	4	4.26	3.13	7.89	< .01

Base = 5159 US adults
16% of 4.26 = .69
4.26 + .69 = 4.95

MILLENNIAL MEN ARE 24% MORE NARCISSISTIC THAT MILLENNIAL WOMEN

Narcissism NPI-16 Measures for Millennials by Sex

Variable	Women					Men					<i>t</i> (2566)	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mo</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Narcissism	1410	3	4	4.47	3.04	1158	5	5	5.54	3.29	-8.62	< .01

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
24% of 4.47 = 1.07
4.47 + 1.07 = 5.54

AMONG MILLENNIALS, NARCISSISM RISES WITH EDUCATION

Correlation between narcissism and demographics for Adult Millennials

Variable	M (SD)	Narcissism
Age	27.59 (4.88)	0.02
Education	2.22 (.84)	.049*

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults

* p < .05 = significant relationship

** p < .01 = highly significant relationship

The higher your eduction, the more narcissistic you are (1 = < high school degree, 6 = grad. degree)

There is no significant correlation between Millennial age and narcissism

THE MORE ON-DEMAND APPS YOU USE, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Correlation between number of on-demand apps used and narcissism

Variable	M (SD)	Narcissism Correlation
On-demand apps used	2.54 (2.91)	.32**

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
** p < .01 = highly significant relationship

IF YOU ARE UNWILLING TO SHARE YOUR PHONE WITH A FRIEND, YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE NARCISSISTIC

Would you be willing to share your smartphone with a close friend?

Variable	Would share with a friend			Would not share with a friend			<i>t</i> (2566)	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Narcissism	1666	4.65	3.07	902	5.51	3.35	-6.55	< .01

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
Those who wouldn't share their smartphone with a close friend are 18% more narcissist than those who would.
35% of Millennial adults would not share their phone with a close friend
18% of 4.65 = .86
4.65 + .86 = 5.51

IF YOU'D PREFER TO GIVE UP BREAKFAST RATHER THAN YOUR PHONE FOR A MONTH, YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE NARCISSISTIC

Which would you rather give up for a month, breakfast or your smartphone?

Variable	Rather give up breakfast			Rather give up Smartphone			<i>t</i> (2460)	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Narcissism	1423	5.19	3.37	1039	4.60	2.91	4.54	< .01

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
Those who'd rather give up breakfast rather than their smartphone for a month are 13% more narcissist
58% of Millennial adults would give up breakfast rather than their smartphone for a month
13% of 4.6 = .59
4.60 + .59 = 5.19

THE MORE YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Correlation between social media usage and narcissism

Variable	M (SD)	Narcissism Correlation
Social media updates/day	3.44 (8.48)	.15**

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
** p < .01 = highly significant relationship

THE HIGHER THE NUMBER OF SELFIES YOU POST PER WEEK THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Correlation between number of selfies posted per week and narcissism

Variable	M (SD)	Narcissism Correlation
Selfies posted per week	5.60 (38.39)	.11**

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
** p < .01 = highly significant relationship

THE HIGHER THE PROPORTION OF PHOTOS POSTED THAT ARE SELFIES, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Correlation between proportion of posts that are selfies and narcissism

Variable	M (SD)	Narcissism Correlation
Proportion of photos/videos posted that are selfies	30.1% (3.20)	.22**

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
** p < .01 = highly significant relationship

SELFIE-STICK OWNERS ARE ON AVERAGE 34% MORE NARCISSISTIC

Do you own a selfie-stick?

Variable	Yes			No			<i>t</i> (2566)	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Narcissism	589	6.16	3.33	1979	4.59	3.07	10.62	< .01

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults
Those who own a selfie-stick are 34% more narcissistic than those who don't.
23% of Millennial adults own a selfie-stick
34% of 4.59 = 1.57
4.59 + 1.57= 6.16

THE MORE TIME YOU SPEND USING YOUR SMARTPHONE, THE MORE NARCISSISTIC YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE

Correlation between phone time and narcissism

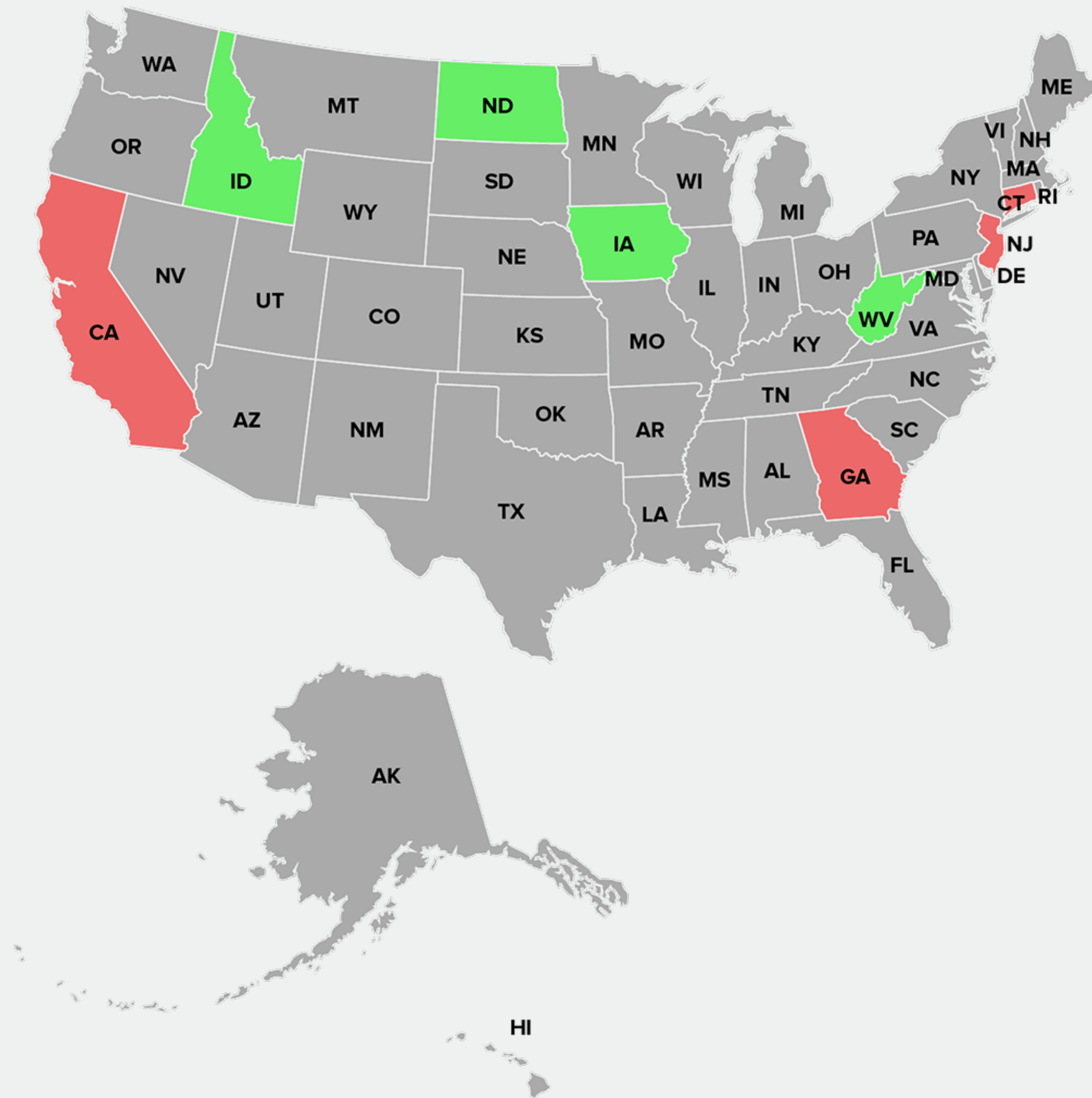
Variable	M (SD)	Narcissism Correlation
Smartphone use (time)	4.62 (1.64)	.08**

Base = 2568 US Millennial adults

** p < .01 = highly significant relationship

Smartphone time per day 1-8 ordinal scale, 1 = < 30 mins, 8 = > 10hrs+

NARCISSISM IS UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED ACROSS THE 50 US STATES



HIGH NARCISSISM > 20% OVER AVERAGE

California (6.14), Connecticut (6.02), Georgia (6.66), New Jersey (6.12)

AVERAGE NARCISSISM (AVERAGE = 4.95)

Alabama (4.88), Alaska (4.66), Arizona (5.12), Arkansas (4.84), Colorado (4.44), Delaware (5.00), Florida (5.20), Hawaii (4.84), Illinois (5.82), Indiana (5.10), Kansas (4.82), Kentucky (5.00), Louisiana (5.76), Maine (4.44), Maryland (5.68), Massachusetts (5.44), Michigan (5.00), Minnesota (4.26), Mississippi (5.86), Missouri (4.40), Montana (3.98), Nebraska (5.14), Nevada (5.16), New Hampshire (4.39), New Mexico (4.25), New York (5.69), North Carolina (5.08), Ohio (4.84), Oklahoma (5.32), Oregon (5.52), Pennsylvania (4.94), Rhode Island (4.63), South Carolina (4.98), South Dakota (4.60), Tennessee (5.80), Texas (5.61), Utah (4.69), Vermont (4.76), Virginia (4.88), Washington (4.56), Washington, DC (4.74), Wisconsin (4.94), Wyoming (4.00)

LOW NARCISSISM > 20% UNDER AVERAGE

Idaho (3.94), Iowa (3.86), North Dakota (3.56), West Virginia (3.3)

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