

2025



AP[®] Seminar

Free-Response Questions

Set 1

SEMINAR

Directions:

The AP Seminar Exam has 2 parts: Part A, which contains 3 prompts, and Part B. You can move back and forth between Part A and Part B at any time, but you should manage your time carefully, spending approximately 30 minutes on Part A and approximately 90 minutes on Part B.

Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list is not acceptable.

You may use scratch paper for notes and planning, but credit will only be given for responses entered in this application. Text you enter as an annotation will **not** be included as part of your answer. You can go back and forth between questions in this section until time expires. The clock will turn red when 5 minutes remain—**the proctor will not give you any time updates or warnings.**

Note: This exam was originally administered digitally. It is presented here in a format optimized for teacher and student use in the classroom.

PART A
TIME – 30 MINUTES

Read the following passage and then respond to prompts A1, A2, and A3.

- A1. Identify the author’s argument, main idea, or thesis.
- A2. Explain the author’s line of reasoning by identifying the claims used to build the argument and the connections between them.
- A3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence the author uses to support the claims made in the argument.

Excerpted from Abrams, Zara. “The Urgent Necessity for Paid Parental Leave.” *Monitor on Psychology*, vol. 53, no. 3, American Psychological Association, 1 Apr. 2022.

Despite widespread public support and strong evidence of its mental and physical health benefits, the United States remains one of just six countries worldwide that do not offer paid parental leave.

“We have this whole abundance of child development research about the importance of early attachment, but our policies aren’t lining up with that,” said Darby Saxbe, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Southern California who studies family environments and transitions....

Without [paid family leave], workers are guaranteed only unpaid leave—up to 12 weeks without losing their jobs—through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), passed in 1993.

But many people can’t afford to take unpaid leave, and about 44% of U.S. workers don’t even qualify for benefits through FMLA, which excludes smaller employers and many parttime workers (Employee and Worksite Perspectives of the Family and Medical Leave Act, Abt Associates, 2020)....

Plenty of research shows that mothers fare better when they have paid time off after giving birth, including a 51% decrease in the risk of rehospitalization (Jou, J., et al., *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, Vol. 22, 2018)....

Parental leave policies are also linked with better mental health. Women who aren’t able to take as much time off—especially those who return to work in under 2 months—face more depressive symptoms and more marital and self-esteem problems (Bullinger, L. R., *Journal of Health Economics*, Vol. 66, 2019; Feldman, R., et al., *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2004)....

Research suggests that underprivileged families may benefit most from parental leave policies, starting with better birth outcomes, including fewer early term births, possibly owing to decreased stress during pregnancy (Stearns, J., *Journal of Health Economics*, Vol. 43, 2015).

But these families are often ineligible for such benefits because of the limits of the FMLA and inconsistency in state and employer policies. People who get paid leave are much more likely to be affluent, well educated, and White. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicate that about 47% of White parents, 41% of Black parents, and just 23% of Hispanic parents have access to paid leave (“Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Access To and Use of Paid Family and Medical Leave,” *Monthly Labor Review*, 2019)....

Increasingly, psychologists are studying how offering leave to fathers can benefit the whole family. [Studies of the] “fathering brain” provide insight into how parental instincts develop and why family leave is a crucial part of that process....

“We develop responses to our babies because we’re in charge of them, not because moms are perfectly designed to be the primary caregiver,” Saxbe said.

[An Israeli study of] both same-sex and heterosexual parents [found] that “primary caregiver” gay fathers displayed amygdala activation similar to the mothers in the study, whereas “secondary caregiver” gay fathers had brain activity that more closely resembled heterosexual fathers....

In a randomized, controlled trial of first-time fathers, those who carried their babies in a soft carrier attached to their bodies showed more amygdala activity when they heard babies crying than those who used a [car seat] carrier (Riem, M. M. E., et al., *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, Vol. 132, 2021).

“This strongly suggests that it does not matter who you are, but it does matter what you do,” said Marian Bakermans-Kranenburg, PhD, a professor of neurobiological and environmental determinants of parenting and child development at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and a principal investigator of the study....

When men take leave, their partners also benefit. Following a Swedish policy reform that increased fathers’ ability to stay home, mothers had fewer physical health complications and were less likely to take prescription medications for anxiety (Persson, P., & Rossin-Slater, M., *NBER Working Paper No. 25902*, 2019)....

But paid leave is even harder for fathers to obtain, which particularly harms same-sex male couples...(Wong, E., et al., *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2020)....

Paid leave is associated with lower infant mortality rates and higher rates of vaccination, especially for families below the poverty line (Khan, M. S., *Child and Youth Services Review*, Vol. 116, 2020; Choudhury, A. R., & Polachek, S. W., *Vaccine*, Vol. 39, No. 21, 2021). Women with access to more paid leave also breastfeed more, which can boost a child’s immunity and development (*Paid Family Leave: A Crucial Support for Breastfeeding*, CLASP). Improvements in child physical health carry through at least until elementary school...(Lichtman-Sadot, S., & Bell, N. P., *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2017)....

Paid maternal leave is also associated with a distinct profile of brain activity in infants that may indicate more mature early cognitive functioning. Natalie H. Brito, PhD, an assistant professor of applied psychology at New York University, and her colleagues found that patterns of infant electroencephalogram (EEG) activity were different across paid and unpaid leave groups, even when controlling for income, education, occupation, perceived stress, and other factors.... “Paid leave was most likely to predict this pattern of infant brain function over and above everything else,” Brito said....

Brito's research also shows that parents' paid leave is associated with better language skills in toddlers and fewer infant behavioral problems for mothers with less education (Kozak, K., et al., *Infancy*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2021). Further studies suggest that longer maternal leaves are linked to fewer cognitive and behavioral problems, even when controlling for factors like the quality of child care and the home environment (Berger, L. M., et al., *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 115, No. 501, 2005; Brooks-Gunn, J., et al., *Child Development*, Vol. 73, No. 4, 2002).

"It's the resources and the time that families have after childbirth—during one of the most important periods of brain development—that really matter," Brito said.

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END OF PART A

PART B
TIME – 90 MINUTES

Read the four sources carefully, focusing on a theme or issue that connects them and the different perspective each represents. Then, write a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well-written argument that presents your own perspective on the theme or issue you identified.

You must incorporate at least two of the sources provided and link the claims in your argument to supporting evidence. You may also use the other provided sources or draw upon your own knowledge. In your response, refer to the provided sources as Source A, Source B, Source C, or Source D, or by the author’s name.

Write a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well-written argument that presents your own perspective on the theme or issue you identified.

Source A

Excerpted from Atkins, Paul. “Why is Talking About Power Important?” *ProSocial World*, 11 May 2023.

What is power?

Miki Kashtan defines power as “the capacity to mobilize resources to attend to needs” (2014, p. 130). I like this definition of power because it names the idea that we don’t use power for the sake of it, we use it to satisfy needs, either our own or those of others.... If someone uses their power to benefit only or primarily themselves, we might say they are acting selfishly. If someone uses their power to benefit themselves *and* others then we might say they are acting prosocially....

Power is, first of all, a capacity—it is the potential to achieve specific outcomes. In our individualistic society, some people mistakenly see this capacity as residing in the individual. But power is always relational. We might think of power as having different bases or sources such as access to information, authorization by others, expertise, or even likeability. But even the last of these (usually called “referent power”) is a capacity to achieve outcomes based upon a relationship.

[American political scientist Elinor] Ostrom expressed the relational nature of power in another way, recognizing that even personal power was a function of “the value of the opportunity (the range in the outcomes afforded by the situation) times the extent of control” (Ostrom, 2005, p. 50). Capacity, and therefore power, varies significantly from situation to situation. A ‘powerful’ CEO may be utterly powerless to influence the behavior of her teenage daughter, for example.

Second, power is the capacity to meet needs. So what are needs?...

Humans, like all living things, need water and nutrients. But humans, with their capacity for language, have also constructed a rich set of psychological needs which can be more or less broadly specified but typically include aspects of experience such as selfdetermination, belonging, agency, fairness, and meaning. Needs, along with purpose and values, make up one aspect of ‘what matters to me,’ i.e. the selection conditions for behavior. But whereas constructs like ‘purpose’ and ‘values’ are aspirational and reach for the future, needs are present-focused....

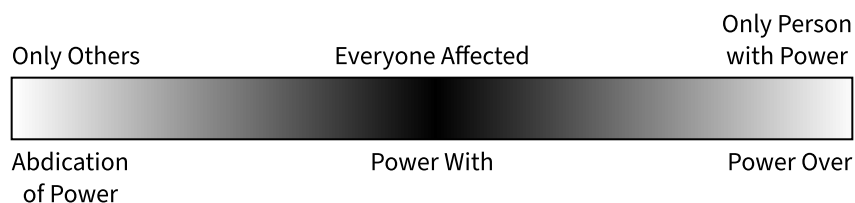
Finally, power involves “mobilizing resources”. A resource is simply a stock of some sort that can be drawn upon to get things done. Resources can be anything in our life-world. They can be ‘outside’ ourselves (such as money, tools, or relationships) or ‘inside’ ourselves such as skills, knowledge, and even more or less useful patterns of responding to stress and challenge.

Whose needs? Power-over and power-with others

In behavioral terms, [helping people shift from ‘me’ to ‘we’] means [going from] making decisions for the good of oneself to making decisions for the good of the group, including oneself. Ostrom’s core design principles are an elegant description of a set of social patterns that tend to decrease the likelihood of purely self-interested behavior and increase the likelihood of behavior for the good of the group. And the addition of the psychology of behavior change creates a set of ‘internal’ conditions that support flexible and functional adoption of these social patterns in ways that are helpful rather than rulebound.

So, if power is the capacity to mobilize resources to attend to needs, then the obvious next question is ‘whose needs?’ This question gives us a way of understanding different types of power, represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Different forms of power depending upon whose needs are satisfied (Kashtan, 2015, p. 132).



If we use our power to serve only ourselves, and we are unaffected by the needs of others, then we can call that ‘power-over’ others (Follett, 1940). At the other end of the spectrum, we might give away our power such that others make choices for us, or we make choices based purely on others’ wishes.

In between these two extremes, is a form of expression of power where we strive to mobilize resources to attend to the needs not just of ourselves but also of others. We can call this ‘power-with’ others as opposed to ‘power-over’ others.

This is a continuum of choice, and in that sense, it is each person’s responsibility in each moment to decide if they wish to give away their power, use it to meet only their own needs or use it to meet both their own and others’ needs....

Different contexts provide more or less support for power over, power with, or abdication of power. Groups that rely upon cultures of hierarchy provide strong support for powerover behaviors while groups that rely more upon collective choice arrangements provide strong support for power-with behaviors. What ends up happening is a function of both our personal characteristics and our context....

Power-over is invariably coercive power. If we want to make someone do something for our benefit but not for theirs, then we need to rely upon punishing experiences such as fear, changing the contingencies of behavior such that it is now in their interests to do what we want. Power-over only works when we can deliver consequences for non-compliance that motivate people to do what we want. This typically restricts the range of choices the other can make such that their only remaining choice is to do what we want or suffer the consequences. When we are forced to do something, we invariably do it with less creativity and vitality than when we freely choose our actions. In groups, this means that power-with behavior tends to evoke more creative and robust solutions....

Power properly understood

Power is like electricity, it can be used to shock people or it can be used to build and run life-saving ventilators. It can destroy or it can create. If we see power as a bad thing, then those of us who long for a more cooperative world are likely to diminish our influence in the world for fear of inappropriately exerting power-over. But armed with a more nuanced sense of power-with, we can better give voice and action to the more beautiful world that our hearts know is possible.

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Source B

Unfortunately, we do not have permission to reproduce the excerpt from the article “How the Shoulder Pad Became a Symbol of Female Empowerment: A History Lesson” by Nandini Maharaj, on this website.

Source C

Rich, Adrienne. "Power." *The Dream of a Common Language*, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978.

Living in the earth-deposits of our history

Today a backhoe divulged out of a crumbling flank of earth
one bottle amber perfect a hundred-year-old
cure for fever or melancholy a tonic
for living on this earth in the winters of this climate.

Today I was reading about Marie Curie:¹
she must have known she suffered from radiation sickness
her body bombarded for years by the element
she had purified
It seems she denied to the end
the source of the cataracts on her eyes
the cracked and suppurating² skin of her finger-ends
till she could no longer hold a test-tube or a pencil

She died a famous woman denying
her wounds
denying
her wounds came from the same source as her power.

"Power". Copyright © 2016 by the Adrienne Rich Literary Trust. Copyright (c) 1978 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, from COLLECTED POEMS: 1950--2012 by Adrienne Rich. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

1: Marie Curie (1867–1934) was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the first person to win the award twice. Her groundbreaking research on radioactivity led to the discovery of polonium and radium, as well as the further development of X-rays and radiation therapy for cancer treatment. She died of aplastic anemia, likely from exposure to radiation.

2: forming or discharging pus

Source D

Excerpted from Desjardins, Jeff. “Generational Power Index.” *Visual Capitalist*, 2021.

Each generation is shaped by its own unique historical context and cultural experiences, creating a shared perspective about the world that is different from their elders.

Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise us when any given generation takes the opportunity to shape the society around them, bending both political and economic structures to align with their values.

In the inaugural edition of our Generational Power Index (GPI), we aim to accurately break down the landscape of generational power in the current moment. To do this, we quantify power in the U.S. using three key categories:



All three categories are combined together to create our flagship metric: Overall Power....

Humans, in their quest to categorize and codify the world, largely agree on the idea of “generations”. Shared experiences and demographic shifts add up to noteworthy similarities within cohorts of the population. The Baby Boomers were a particularly easy generation to identify. The postwar era was a strong unifying force and the sheer numbers of new humans was a clear demographic event....

Born in a post-WWII era, Baby Boomers lived their working years in a relatively prosperous economy. In contrast, many Millennials have started their careers in the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis....

Methodology

All of the data we gathered is from publicly available sources, such as government websites and industry rankings....

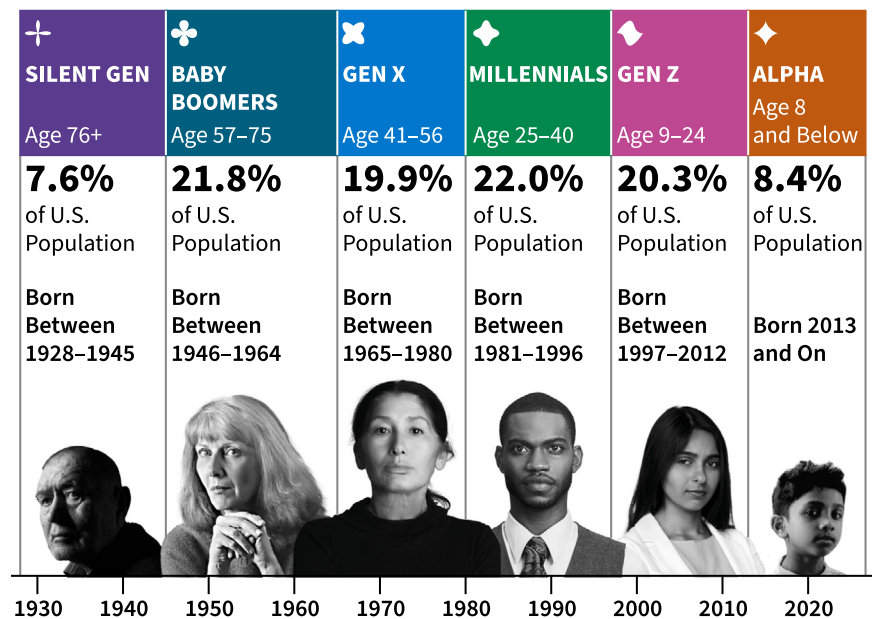
Geographically, our data is primarily U.S. based. Global data was used for metrics we determined to have cross-border reach.... It was also used in certain instances where U.S. data was not available.

How we defined generations

Since our report primarily uses U.S. data, we used the most-widely cited Western definitions used by institutions such as the Pew Research Center and the U.S. Federal Reserve.

However, it’s worth noting that other definitions exist. This is particularly evident in Eastern countries that have faced different political, socioeconomic, and cultural events.

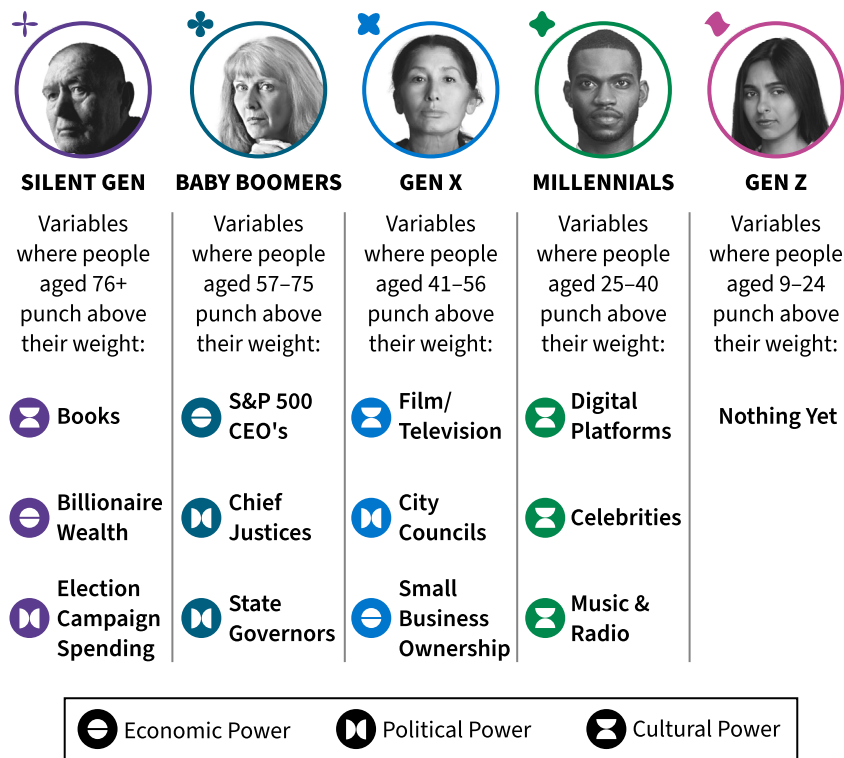
Below are the age ranges of generations, and their distribution within the current population of the United States.



The newest generation to enter the fray, the oldest among Gen Alpha will be 8 years old in 2021. Within the next decade, they'll begin voting, entering the workforce, and are set to be the most digitally-savvy yet.

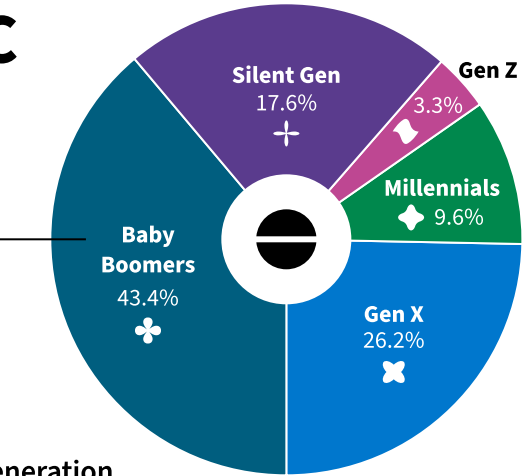
OVERSIZED POWER

In comparison to their population weighting, most generations have disproportionately higher power in certain variables.

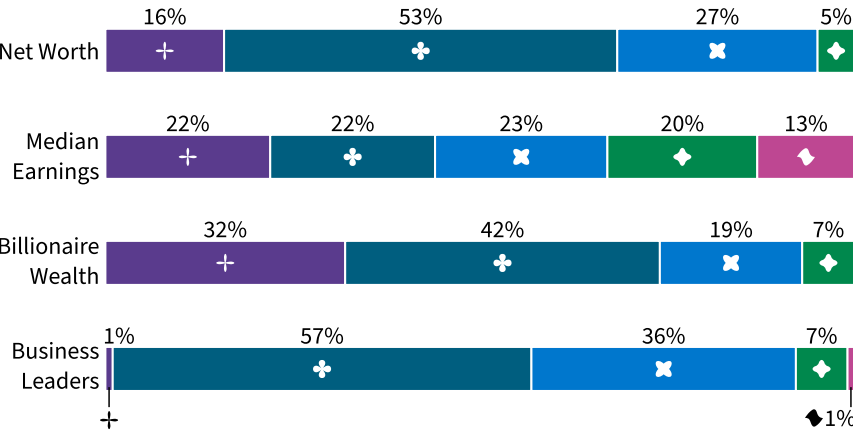


ECONOMIC POWER

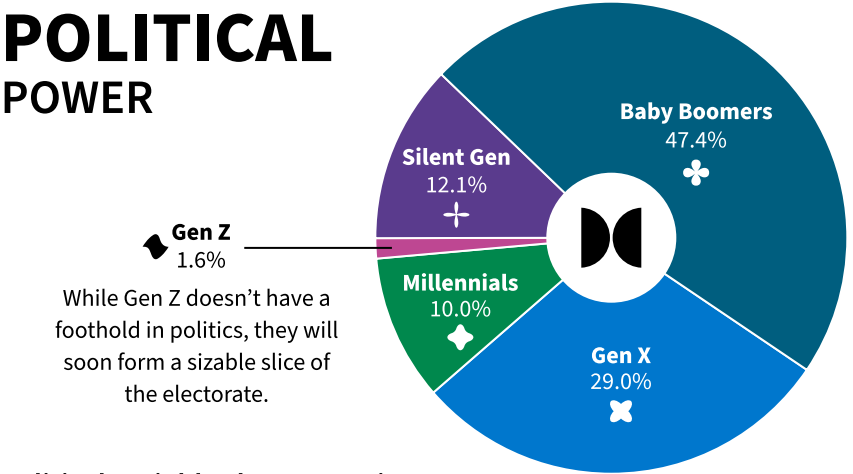
Baby Boomers currently hold the most Economic Power—more than Millennials, Gen X, and Gen Z combined.



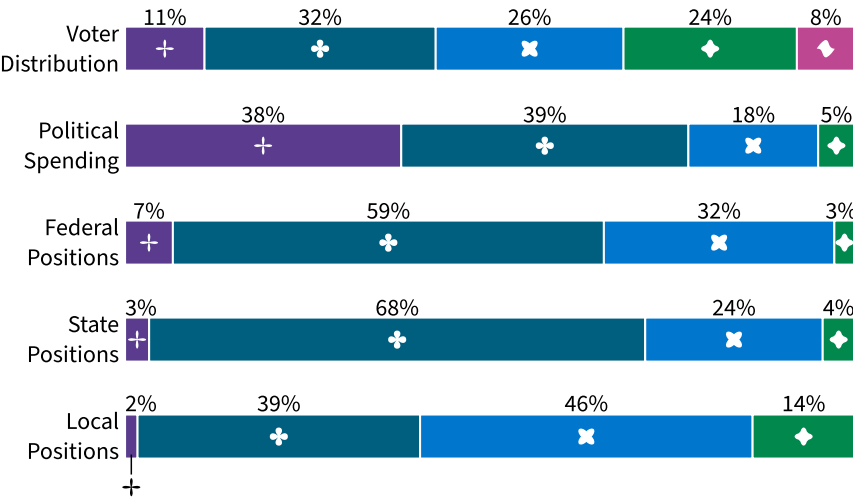
Economic Variables by Generation



POLITICAL POWER

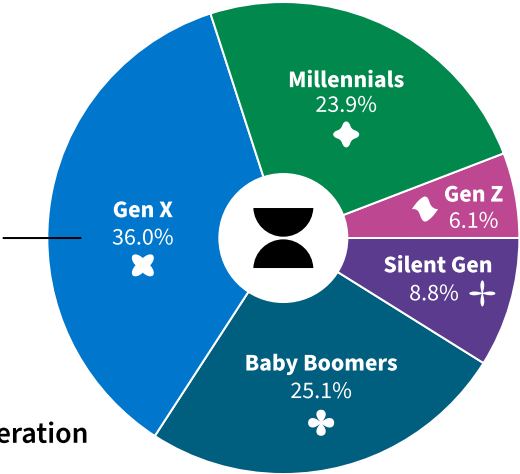


Political Variables by Generation

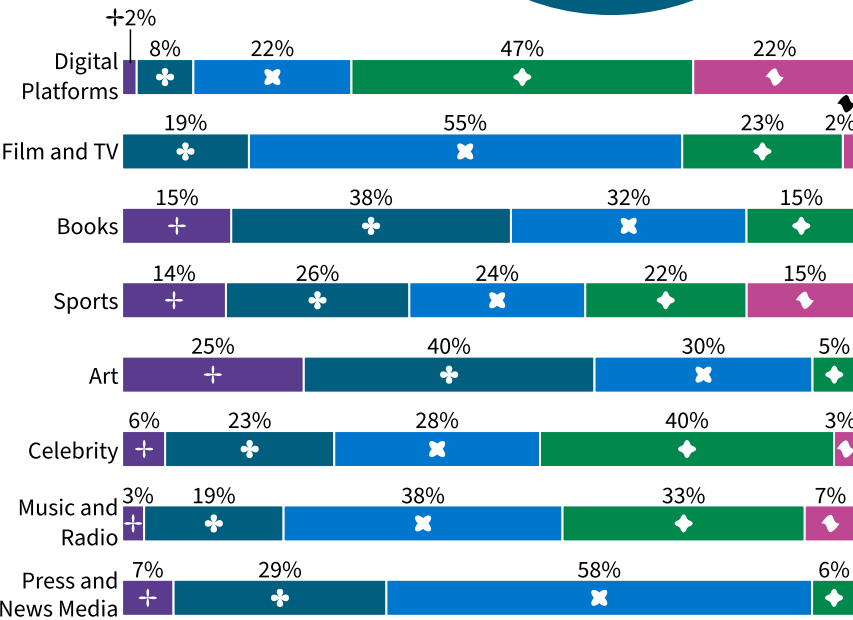


CULTURAL POWER

Gen X dominates the Culture category, with Millennials gaining ground in a number of areas.



Cultural Variables by Generation



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END OF EXAM