



**Empowering**

**Influencers:**

**Creating**

**Fair & Equitable**

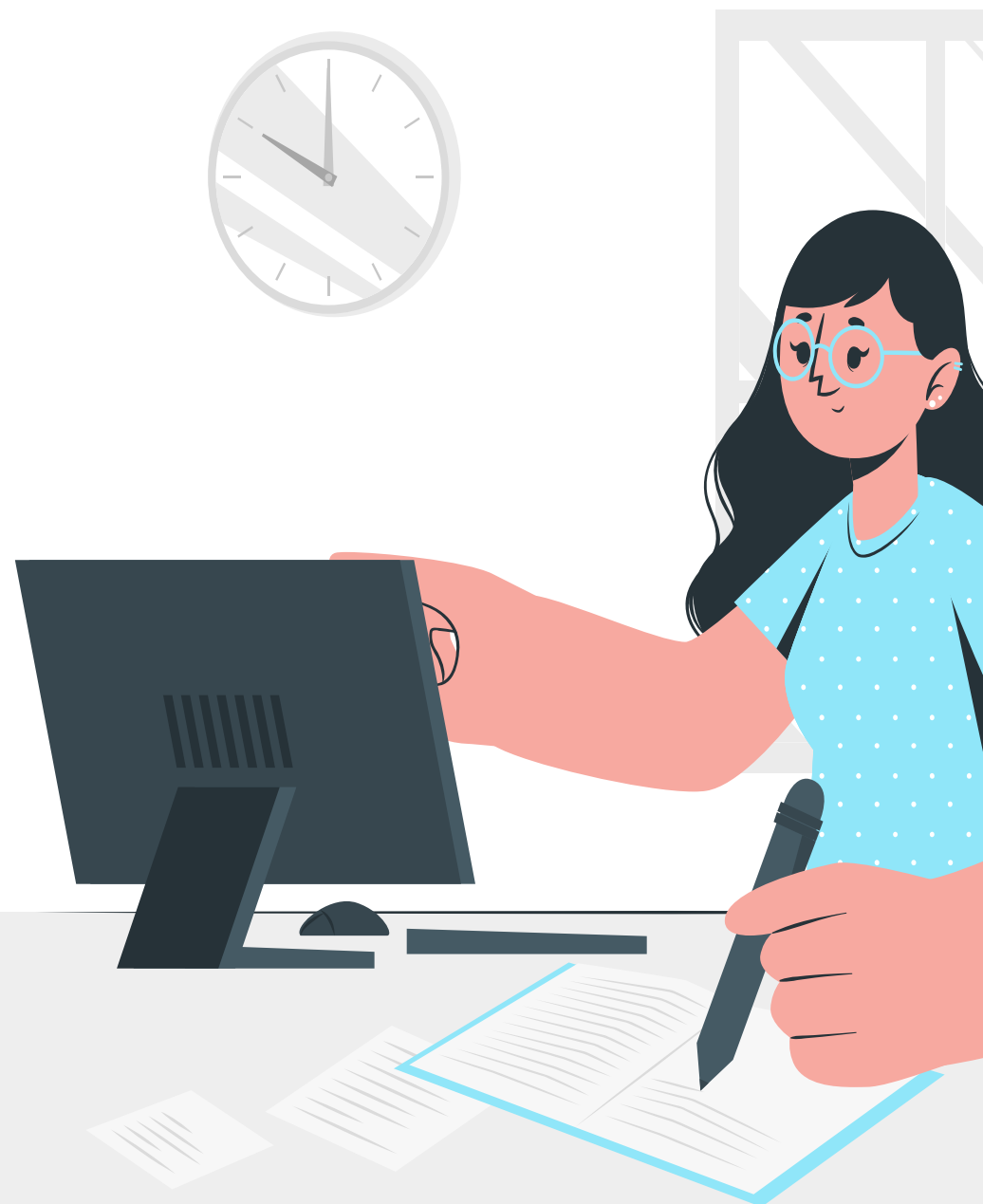
**Communication**

**for Collaboration**

**Shelby Hatcher**

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# Executive Summary

The invention of social media has changed the world of mass communication and advertising in unprecedented ways. Influencer content can send products to viral status and create emergency demand overnight.

Collaboration projects between influencers and companies should be **mutually beneficial**, as brands reach niche audiences and influencers gaining credibility. Unfortunately, these collaborations **easily turn into exploitive manipulations** founded on a lack of honest and transparent communication.

## **THE ISSUE**

**Companies are taking advantage of the naivety of influencers in intellectual property rights**

## **THE SOLUTION**

**Use the Knowledge Gap Hypothesis as the foundation for a database of resources meant to empower influencers during negotiations**

# Influence of the Influencer

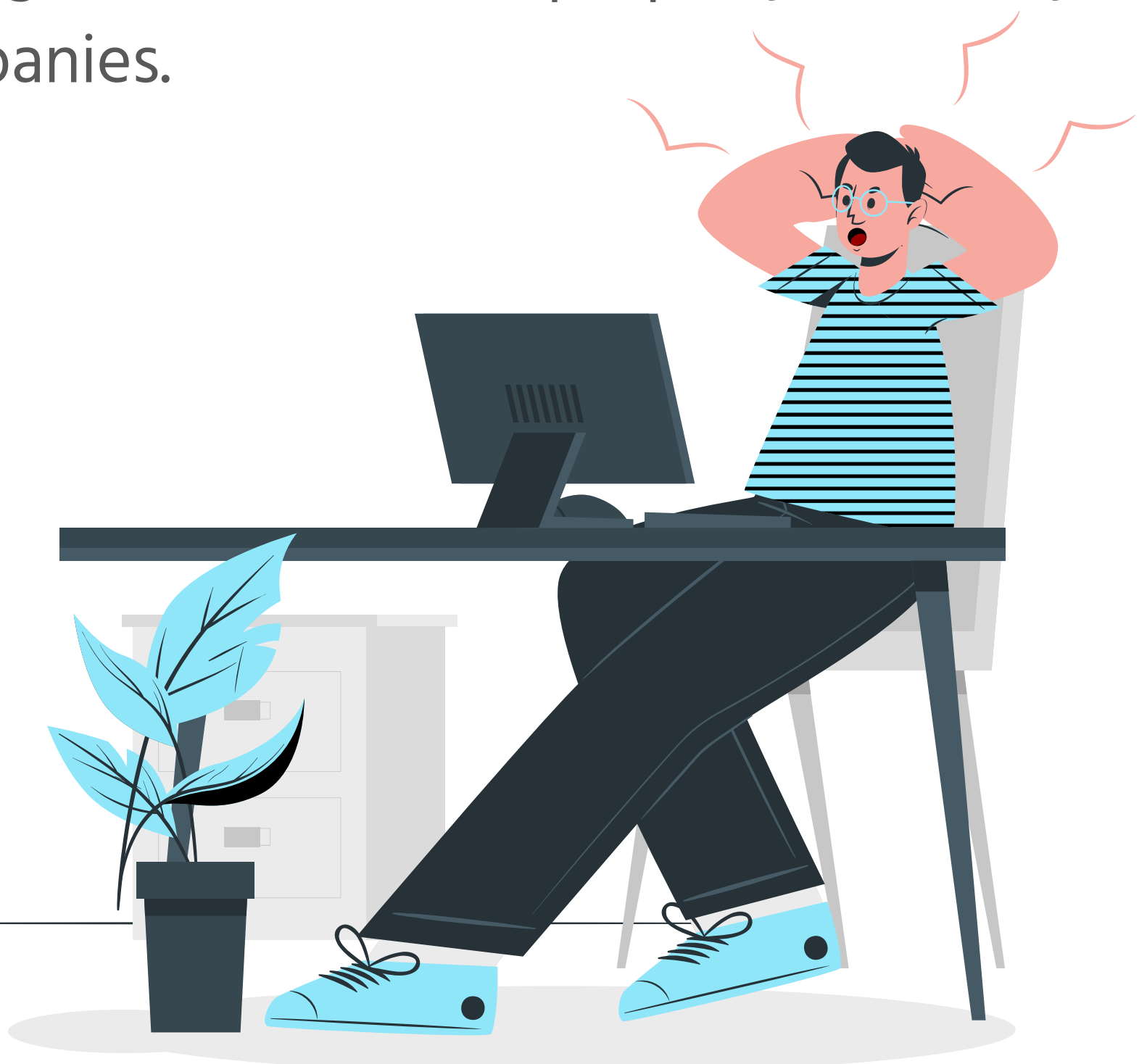
Followers create parasocial relationships with influencers, interacting with them as friends. The depth of these relationships can range from general interest in their “friend’s” actions to becoming obsessed and believing **they have a genuine relationship with an influencer.** (Game Quitters, 2023)



**The loyalty that influencers create in their fan bases gives them phenomenal power to sway consumer opinions, purchasing decisions, and act as intermediaries between brands and consumers. Influencers have made themselves irreplaceable in mass communication and advertising.**

# Collaboration Catastrophe

- **Lack of Transparency:** brands withhold important information about compensation, expectations, and intellectual property rights causing misunderstanding and disputes.
- **Exploitative Clauses:** Some companies sneak clauses into collaboration contracts that give them ownership of all past and future content created by influencers, stealing profits.
- **Information Asymmetry:** Most influencers never learned legal and contractual aspects for collaboration - resulting in disadvantage during negotiations.
- **Theft of Intellectual Property:** when influencers do not know their rights they risk having their intellectual property stolen by companies.



# Knowledge Gap Hypothesis

The Knowledge Gap Hypothesis predicts that as information becomes more accessible through mass communication, the gap of knowledge between higher and lower socioeconomic classes increases.

Higher socioeconomic classes consume knowledge at a higher rate due to their freedom of time

**Does not** assume that those of lower status do not consume knowledge or remain completely ignorant

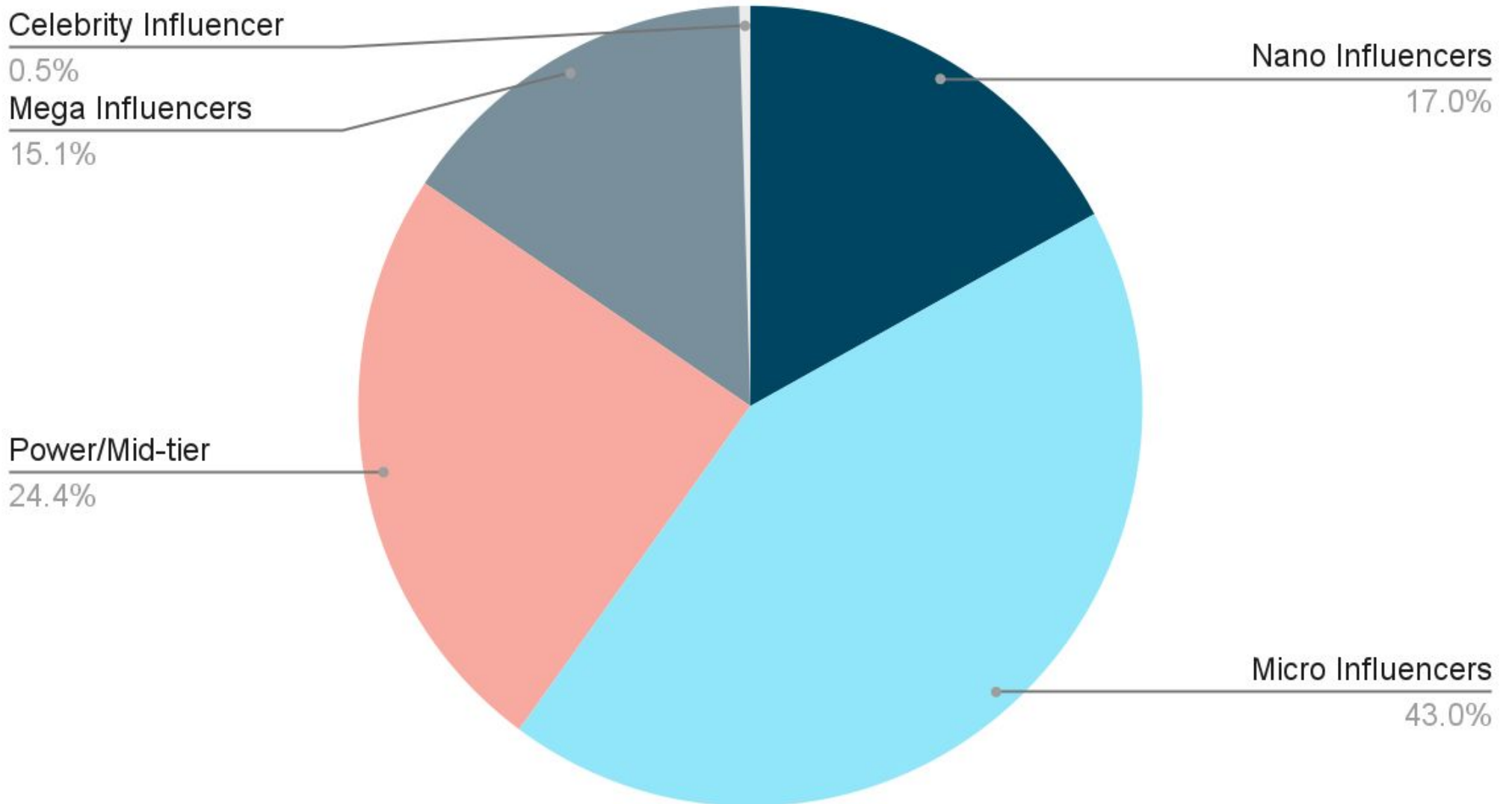
Upper class becomes more aware of **social issues and injustices** while the lower class is unaware

Emancipation of the lower class becomes increasingly difficult as the demographic is left unaware of political issues that may affect them (Thomas, 2017)



# Influencers as a Society

## Influencer Society Demographic



**Nano influencers:** between 1,000 and 5,000 followers

**Micro influencers:** between 5,000 and 20,000 followers  
(Low Socioeconomic class)

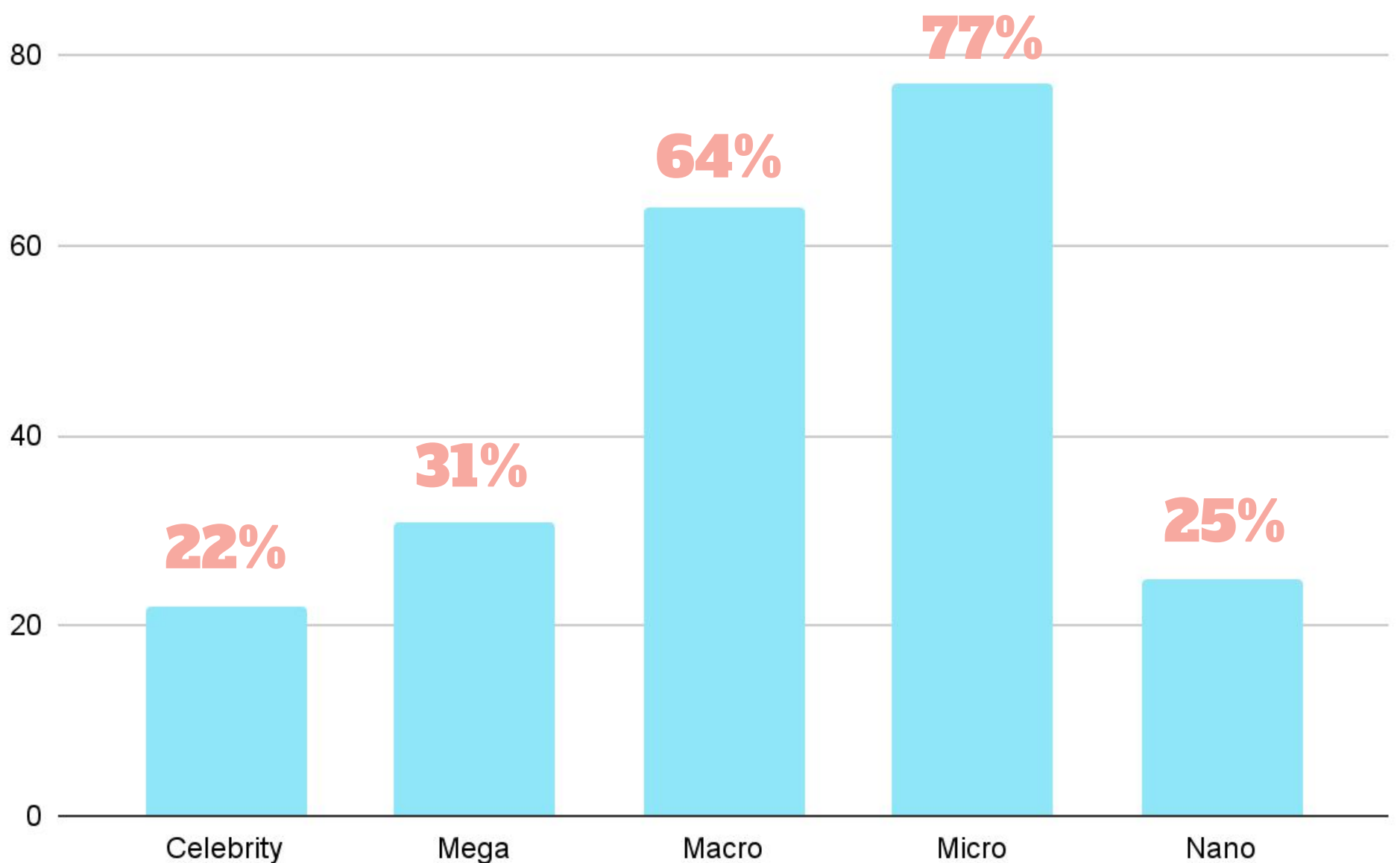
**Power/mid-tier influencers:** between 20,000 and 100,000 followers

**Mega influencers:** between 100,000 and 1 million followers  
(Middle Socioeconomic Class)

**Celebrities:** more than 1 million followers

(High Socioeconomic Class)

# Status Appeal to Companies



Marketers prefer to work with micro and macro influencers because they are less likely to have a large support system but still have a large enough audience.

There is an argument that lower class influencers do not need this help because they do not have the following for brand collaboration projects, however this idea is untrue and damaging to negotiations.

- Assuming low class influencers have no need for the information feeds into the knowledge gap
- Low class influencers usually have no training or mentors to guide them in the process of brand collaboration



# The Knowledge Gap Hypothesis in Influencer Society

**The best approach to bridging this knowledge gap involves diversifying and expanding networks within influencer society.**



By applying a class system, we can assess how the knowledge gap affects influencer society. For instance, high-class influencers have access to organizations like the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA), while middle and lower-class influencers do not. Joining SAG-AFTRA provides high-class influencers with union protection and benefits (Thomas, 2017).

Research has shown that **information seeking, issue interest, interpersonal discussions, community pluralism, and network density are all factors that can reduce knowledge gaps** (Li & Cho, 2021). Social media offers a substantial platform for networking. To address this, we propose creating a **platform accessible to influencers** of all classes, allowing them to **share their experiences with specific brand collaborations, share resources, and hold companies to ethical standards**. This platform will help influencers navigate negotiations, learn from each other's successes and mistakes, and ensure ethical standards are maintained within the influencer society.

# Conclusion

Content Creation has changed advertising and mass communication as we know it by offering never before seen interaction with target audiences.

**The imbalance in negotiations between creators and companies can be fixed through a social platform designed for creators to learn from resources and others, the best ways to protect their intellectual property**



The Knowledge Gap Hypothesis explains why mega-influencers do not face the same issues that smaller creators face: access to information and resources. The best way to overcome this gap is to create a space where knowledge can flow freely between influencers of different statuses and where influencers can access resources such as lawyers or articles that can help guide them in the education of their own rights. This platform will empower influencers to create fair and equitable communication for collaborations.

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