

# Being “Liberal” in America

POLITICAL ACCURACY AND DIVISIONS STUDY

*Younger generations of Americans identify as “very liberal” at twice the rate Baby Boomers do.*

## Executive Summary

- 1 In prior generations, liberals were considerably more likely to be Black Americans, but in more recent generations, white and Hispanic Americans are reporting elevated rates of liberal self-identification.
- 2 Younger generations of Americans identify as “very liberal” at twice the rate Baby Boomers do.
- 3 Younger generations are substantially less likely to identify as “conservative” or “very conservative.”
- 4 Keep in mind: peoples’ political worldviews do change as they age, and some evidence suggests that people do, in fact, become more conservative as they grow older (Peterson et al., 2020).

### SUGGESTED CITATION

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*How do rates of identifying as “liberal” vary in the United States according to peoples’ generation, sex and race?*

## Research Question

Analysts have recognized for decades now that the world is becoming more liberal.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the more removed people are from basic survival concerns, the more liberal their worldviews become, in the sense of being more accepting of cultural differences and more protective of civil rights.<sup>2</sup> Some analysts have noted how paradoxically intolerant and dogmatic this trend has become in Western societies (i.e., the societies most removed from basic survival concerns): amongst many Western progressives, for example, all group disadvantages are assumed to always be a result of oppression, with oppression always being driven by white people (and usually men).<sup>3</sup> Thus, it would seem that at the extremes, liberalism and the human tendency towards tribalism<sup>4</sup> interact to produce both a demand for equality and justice *as well as* an insistence that one demographic group (white/European people) is accountable for most or all of the oppression and corruption in the world.<sup>5-7</sup> In light of the controversies and nuances inherent in identifying as a modern liberal, in this report we ask: how do rates of identifying as “liberal” vary in the United States according to peoples’ generation, sex and race?

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*When thinking about social / cultural issues, where would you place yourself on the political continuum?*

## Methodology

### DATA SOURCE

- Paranormal and Conspiratorial Ideation Study (PADS); collected in July-August 2021; n = 2,898
- Political Accuracy and Divisions Study (PADS); collected in August–October 2022; n = 2,938

### DATA QUALITY CONTROL

- Used Qualtrics Panel Services and quota sampling.
- All participants in this dataset passed attention, response time, fraud, duplication, and bot checks.

### MEASURES

- *Political Orientation*: Respondents were asked, “When thinking about social/ cultural issues, where would you place yourself on the political continuum?”
- *Generation*: based on age at time of data collection. Gen Z (18–25 years), Millennial (26–41 years), Gen X (42–57 years), and Boomer (58–76 years).

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## Summary of Findings

- 1 Amongst older generations (Baby Boomers and GenX), Black Americans and particularly Black men are more likely to identify as liberal (see Fig. 1).
- 2 Amongst younger generations (Millennials and GenZ) the probability of identifying as “liberal” is more evenly distributed across racial groups, though amongst GenZ respondents, Hispanic females and white males were especially likely to identify as “liberal” (see Fig. 1).
- 3 Overall, around 44% of Gen Z, 38% of Millennials, 33% of GenX and 36% of Baby Boomers identify as “liberal” or “very liberal” (see Fig. 2).
- 4 Relative to prior generations, younger people today are more likely to identify as moderate and substantially more likely to identify as “very liberal” (see Fig. 2).

*Relative to prior generations, younger people today are more likely to identify as moderate and substantially more likely to identify as “very liberal.”*

## Have an interpretation?

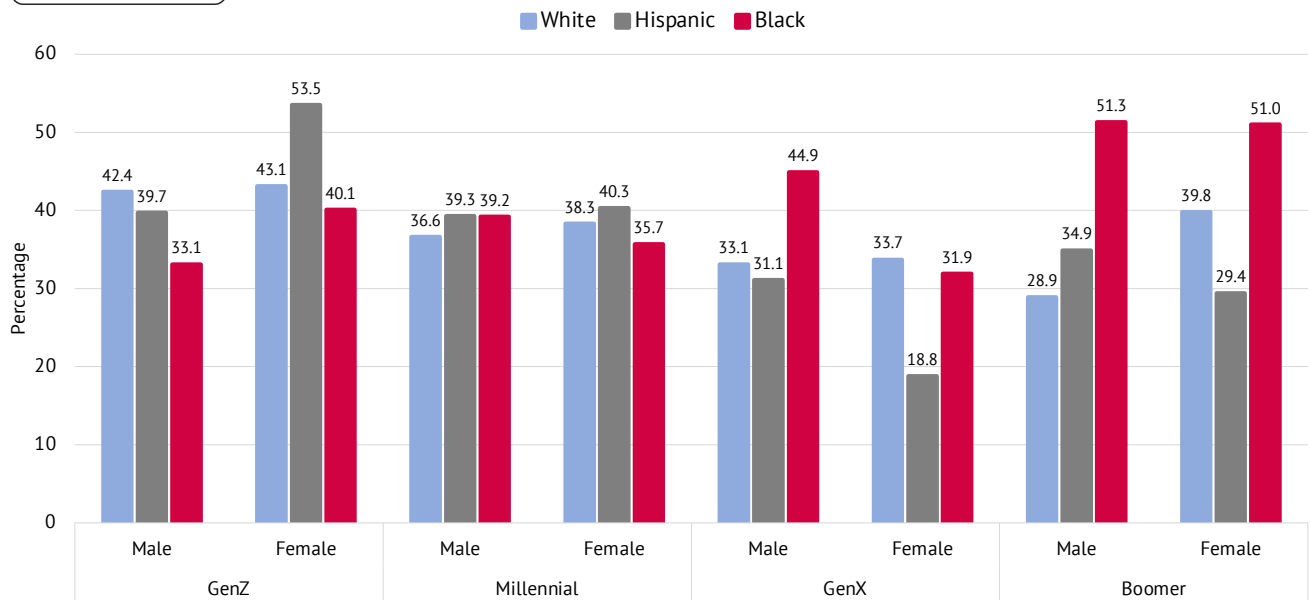
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FIGURE 1

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Percentage of People that Identified as Liberal  
**Generation x Race x Sex**



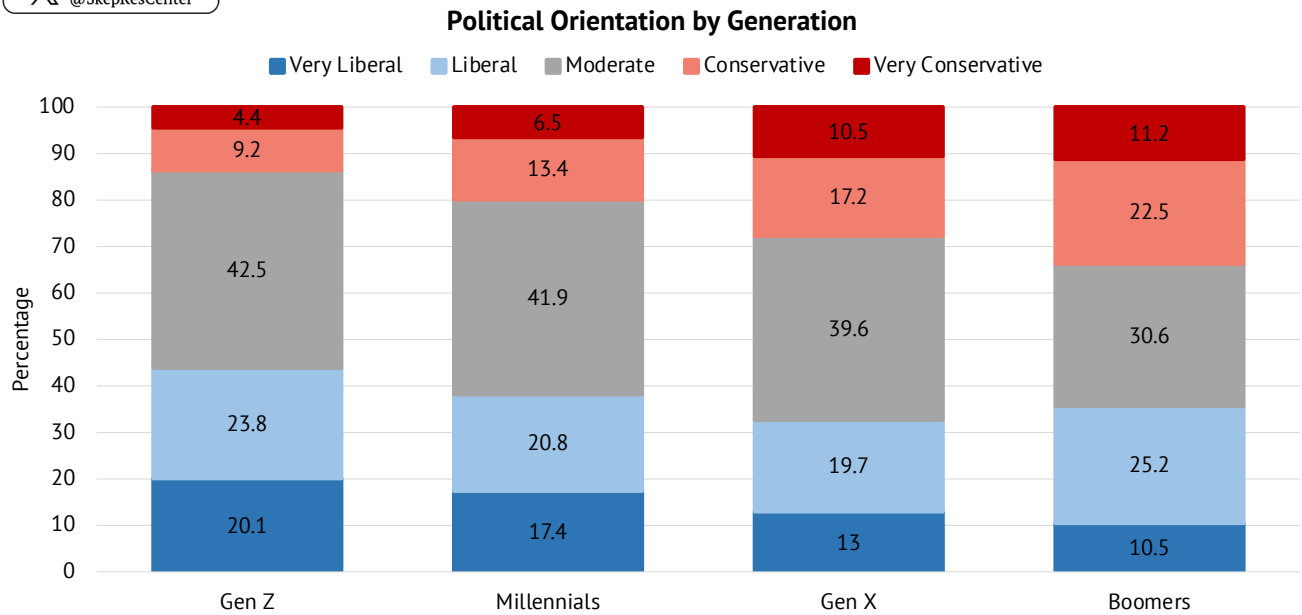
Data Source: (1) Political Accuracy and Divisions Study and (2) Paranormal & Conspiratorial Ideation Study. N = 5,640

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FIGURE 2



*Younger generations are more likely to identify as liberal or moderate; less likely to identify as conservative.*



Data Source: (1) Political Accuracy and Divisions Study and (2) Paranormal & Conspiratorial Ideation Study. N = 5,836

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## References

- 1 Pinker, S. 2018. *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. NY: Viking Press (Penguin Random House).
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