

Gen Z's Political Coming of Age During Quarantine in the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The United States has experienced political division for all of its history, and modern times are not an exception. Numerous factors, ranging from the cultural divides between rural and urban areas to the prevalence of modern digital media, have contributed to this, but another major factor contributing to modern political polarity has been age (Gimpel et al., 2020; Krutz & Waskiewicz, 2019, lesson 8.4). Divisions along the lines of age have been created by differences in the environments in which generations grew up (Fisher, 2020a), and quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic is one such environment. My paper aims to explain how this pandemic influenced Gen Z's political development.

Thus, my research embodies the question "How did quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic correlate with Gen Z's development of political worldviews in Broward County?" To answer this, I used Google Forms to conduct an online survey of members of Gen Z who attend public high schools in Broward County (Florida). It asked questions pertaining to the survey recipient's political experiences throughout the pandemic. I hypothesize that (a) Gen Z's consolidation of political views during quarantine resulted in their increased political involvement during quarantine and as quarantine restrictions ease, (b) the extra free time that quarantine provided Gen Z with largely gave Gen Z the opportunity to think about and therefore develop their political views, and (c) many members of Gen Z felt more confident about their political views as quarantine restrictions began to ease compared to before quarantine.

Literature Review

Generational Politics

Generational politics—how different age cohorts interact with politics—is a core aspect of this literature review, and Dr. Patrick Fisher, a political science professor at Seton Hall

University, has heavily explored this field over the past two decades in the journal *Society*. Fisher (2020a) found that before millennials entered the electorate in the 2000s, “there tended to be little difference between the generations in vote choice” (p. 27). However, since entering the electorate, “Millennials have consistently identified themselves ideologically to the left of [older] generations” (p. 26). Such a trend has involved millennials supporting a more “activist government,” as opposed to elderly Americans’ preference of a government less involved in citizens’ lives (Fisher, 2008, pp. 506-508). Therefore, data supports the idea that in recent history, younger Americans have gravitated toward liberal politics and modern Democrats, whereas older Americans have gravitated toward conservative politics and modern Republicans.

Different views toward social issues also separate these age groups ideologically. Fisher (2008) discussed how younger Americans are significantly more likely than the elderly to be concerned about equality, which might derive from how seniors today “are the age group least likely to live in poverty and overall are the wealthiest age group” (pp. 505-506). He cited that “while 80% of those 65 and older believe that more emphasis needs to be placed on traditional values, only about one half of those 18-34 felt the same way,” and while a majority of Americans between the ages 18 and 34 favored gay marriage and gay adoption, the opposite was true for Americans 65 and older (p. 509). Such trends illustrate the higher social conservatism of older Americans in comparison to young Americans, which further supports the idea that there exists a political divide between Americans of different ages.

Political Coming of Age

A notable phenomenon within generational politics is the concept of “political coming of age,” which is what creates ideological gaps among different age groups. Dr. Fisher (2020a) explained this:

Differences between generations can be the byproduct of the unique historical circumstances that members of an age cohort experience, particularly during a time when they are in the process of forming opinions. Partisan identities [that] are adopted in early adulthood stabilize quickly, and thereafter become highly resistant to more than transient change. (p. 23)

In other words, members of a given age group often live through a distinct social, political, and cultural environment. As a result, in their early adulthood, those members of the given age group develop a distinct set of political worldviews that sticks with them throughout the rest of their lives. In corroboration with Fisher's notion that these political opinions usually remain with a generation past early adulthood, a recently developed model of political socialization indicated that "events at age 18 are about three times as powerful as those at age 40" (Cox, 2014). Younger Americans are more likely to have their political views influenced by life experiences than older Americans are. Especially with the rapid globalization of the world, it is possible that younger generations experience society in increasingly different ways, creating a situation in the modern United States where older Americans hold political opinions that largely contrast with those of younger Americans.

Political coming of age is present in all generations, as explored by Fisher (2020a). He described how the Greatest Generation voted slightly more Democratic than other age groups at the end of the 1900s, likely since their "memories of the Great Depression and World War II [led] them to have a lasting faith in the [*sic*] government activism" (p. 27). He also discussed how "the Silent Generation has consistently been notably to the right ideologically" (p. 26), and their pro-small government attitudes likely derive from their political coming of age during Cold War conflicts, for which many members of the age cohort were drafted (Fry et al., 2018). These

examples indicate how political coming of age applies to generations regardless of the ideologies they ultimately retain, and evidently, Fisher's findings corroborate with the higher impactfulness of events at a younger age as described by Cox (2014).

As stated, millennials (or Generation Y) have repeatedly shown themselves to be more Democratic than any other generation (Fisher, 2020a, p. 26). Their high racial diversity and education, along with the "global" outlook they obtained in growing up with the Internet, contributed to their liberal leanings (Fisher, 2018, pp. 37-38). However, more significant is that many millennials experienced their political coming of age during the W. Bush administration.

Republican President George W. Bush (served from 2001 to 2009) was quite unpopular with this age cohort. Throughout Bush's tenure, low US GDP growth, the Iraq War, and the association of Christian conservatism with the Republican Party would not sit well with the relatively secular, socially liberal, and global-minded millennials who were the young Americans at the time (Fisher, 2010, pp. 298-299). As a result, millennials would develop a preference for liberal politics over conservative politics, which would allow President Obama to win 66% of the under-30 vote in the following election cycle (Fisher, 2010, p. 296). The millennial generation marks a new era of political division along the lines of age because of their unique political coming of age, which would contribute to their subsequent preference for the Democratic Party.

Generation Z

Generation Z is currently the youngest generation in the American electorate, consisting of those born after 1996 (Parker & Igielnik, 2020, para. 1). Because Generation Z (often shortened to Gen Z) is still rather young, conclusive and in-depth data regarding their voting behavior and political coming of age is not available, therefore creating a gap in the existing literature on generational politics.

Reports by the Pew Research Center comprise the existing data and predictions related to Gen Z's politics. Parker et al. (2019) found that Gen Z mirrors millennials in many ways; similar to millennials and in contrast to other generations before them, Gen Z has a high preference for an activist government and is unlikely to agree with the statement that "the US is better than all other countries in the world." Because Gen Z gravitates toward liberal views similar to those of Gen Y, it is plausible that Gen Z's politics may develop in a similar way. As for their demographics, Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation, soon to be the most educated generation, and the first generation to grow up with smartphones (Parker & Igielnik, 2020, para. 4). These similarities to millennials might shape Generation Z's politics in a way that reflects how Generation Y's politics developed.

The past few years in American politics might also confirm this trend. Republican President Donald Trump's platform largely appealed to older, rural, white, non-collegiate Americans—the opposite of Gen Z and millennials (Fisher, 2020b, para. 3). Thus, young Americans who came of political age during his presidency might have developed anti-Trump sentiments in the same way that millennials developed anti-Bush sentiments. In the 2020 presidential election, "Gen Z gave Biden a plurality of 39 percentage points...the highest plurality any generation has given a presidential candidate since 1952" (P. Fisher, personal communication, September 21, 2021). Considering that a significant portion of Gen Z still has not reached voting age, this does not definitively show the political leanings or the political coming of age of this age cohort, but it does show a potential trend.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Gen Z is another gray area to be explored by researchers in the coming years. The shutting down of schools during the pandemic caused members of Gen Z across the US to learn virtually from home for months. COVID-19 increased

Gen Z's exposure to electronic devices, with "72% of parents of children in grades K-12 [reporting that] their kids are spending more time on screens compared with before the outbreak" (McClain et al., 2021). Cauberghe et al. (2021) added to this finding, discussing how members of Gen Z reported increased use of social media during the pandemic to cope with the world's situation and try to improve their mental health. The long-term effects of e-learning on members of Gen Z during the pandemic, along with constant exposure to digital media, are yet to be discovered. As previously stated, the more "global" outlook that millennials acquired in growing up with the Internet contributed to the age group's liberal leanings (Fisher, 2018, pp. 37-38), and therefore, there might exist parallels between Gen Y's and Gen Z's exposure to digital media and modern technology that could create similar trends in the development of their politics.

With this in mind, much is unknown about Generation Z, as not enough members of this generation have voted for there to be conclusive data, and data regarding how Gen Z was affected by the pandemic in the long term does not yet exist. In particular, there is a lack of literature that discusses Gen Z's political coming of age during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is presently still ongoing. It might be true that this age cohort's political coming of age has been shaped by the Trump presidency and the pandemic, and Gen Z's similarities to Gen Y might indicate parallels between their political comings of age. However, all that exists at the moment is speculation, which has led me to the method detailed below.

Method

Overview

My method involved the following main steps: (a) the creation of the survey, (b) the distribution of the survey, and (c) the compilation and analysis of the survey data.

Designing the Survey

To explore how quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic correlated with Gen Z's development of political worldviews in Broward County, I conducted an online survey through Google Forms. It was conducted in Broward because this was the largest sample pool I could access, and I used Google Forms because of its device compatibility and user-friendliness. Appendix A features a full copy of the survey I created for this research.

Almost all the components of my survey needed to be created from scratch, so I drew inspiration from an existing Pew Research report by Parker et al. (2019). In contrast to my survey, the Pew Research survey did not investigate a particular environment in which members of Gen Z developed their politics—rather, it focused solely on Gen Z's political attitudes. Still, I was able to borrow question wordings from this survey for my own questions that asked about the participant's political views.

A survey method best matched my research question because data pertaining to Gen Z's political coming of age did not exist. As such, I needed to generate my own data, and a survey best accomplished this goal. My survey questions found out when members of Gen Z consolidated their political views relative to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with whether quarantine itself had a relation with Gen Z's development of such views.

Ethical Concerns

I began my survey design by first considering any ethical concerns that my method would need to address. Participants would need to give their informed consent, have the right to withdraw from the survey at any point in time, and reserve their rights to anonymity and confidentiality. I designed the first page of my survey (see Appendix A) to factor in these ethical concerns and introduce the survey participant to my research.

Even if the survey recipient provided me with their informed consent, they were allowed to close out of the survey at any point in time and leave it incomplete. I set the Google Forms interface of my survey such that participants were required to answer every question of the survey should they want to submit it. Thus, I would not receive half-complete survey results from an individual recipient, which could skew my results on a question-by-question basis. For the same reason, not all of the survey questions had “Neither” or “Prefer not to say” options.

The Questions

Demographics Section. After completing the introduction of the survey, I moved onto the actual questions through which data was obtained from the recipients. In the demographics section, I asked about the age and school of the participant so I could ensure the recipient was a member of Gen Z at a high school in Broward (see “Survey Sampling” heading). I also collected the gender and the race of the participant so I could ultimately identify any potential trends with regard to those demographics (see Appendix B). These questions included “Prefer not to say” options in the event that participants were uncomfortable sharing this much personal information.

Multiple-choice Section. After finishing the demographics section, recipients moved onto the survey’s multiple-choice section, which provided the bulk of my data. I chose to make the majority of my survey multiple-choice questions to counterbalance the chance that survey recipients might provide low-quality responses and to make the data compilation process efficient and easily presentable. I also limited myself to 20 multiple-choice questions so participants wouldn’t lose interest in the survey or tire of it as they completed it. (See Appendix B for in-depth discussion of all my survey questions.)

Free-response Opportunity. After completing the multiple-choice section, participants moved to the optional free-response opportunity at the end of the survey. I did not expect to receive many answers to this part of the survey since it was optional and since it required more effort to complete than the previous questions (typing instead of clicking on options). As a result, I included only one free-response question. I still felt this option was necessary to include in the survey to counterbalance the limiting quantitative nature of multiple-choice questions. Furthermore, it was likely that I did not consider every possible factor within quarantine that could have affected Gen Z's politics while creating the multiple-choice section. It was possible that at least a few recipients could provide unique insights about their political coming of age through this question to supplement insights from my multiple-choice questions.

Survey Sampling

The target audience of my survey was members of Generation Z who attend high school in Broward County Public Schools. Gen Z includes those born after 1996 and before 2012—currently aged approximately between 9 and 24 (Parker & Igielnik, 2020, para. 1). However, because my research involves the development of political worldviews—a rather mature process—my survey targeted high schoolers between the ages 14 and 24.

My survey was distributed via snowball sampling between January 24, 2022 and March 6, 2022. I sent the link to my survey to a total of 38 students across six Broward high schools, and this group of students spread the survey to students they knew, and so on. I used snowball sampling because it was most convenient, given my direct access to my target sample.

Data Compilation and Analysis

Google Forms automatically organized the data collected from the survey, and from there, I could see how the sample as a whole responded to each question. Many of my

multiple-choice questions could be divided into subgroups, as plenty of them were the same questions, just asked with a different time qualifier. I formatted the questions in this way so I could see whether the participants experienced any changes in their political views, thoughts, or engagement over the course of the pandemic. Below I show the figures from which I made such interpretations, and they contain the total number of responses I received for each answer choice on my survey.

The data generated by my survey aligned with my research question in that by identifying any changes over quarantine that the participant experienced with regard to their politics, I might have found a correlation between Gen Z's political coming of age and quarantine. If options on my Likert-type questions received pluralities in the way mentioned above from the recipient pool, this could be a telling sign that quarantine was related to Gen Z's development of political worldviews.

Results

Sampling Outcome

Ultimately, my survey had 173 responses. Of my responses, four had to be discarded for not coming from a Broward student, and one of those four students did not consent to the use of their answers for research purposes; I was left with 169 viable responses to analyze.

This section of the paper explores the most significant responses to my survey. The rest may be found in Appendices B and C.

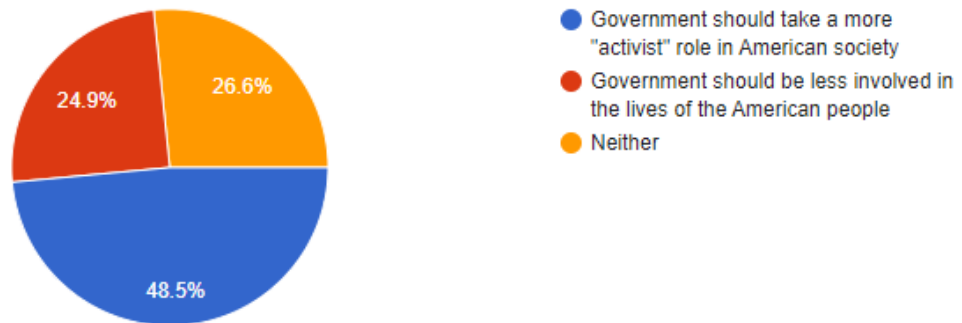
Multiple-choice Responses

Gen Z's Political Views and Engagement with Regard to the Pandemic

Figure 1*Responses to Questions 2 and 3*

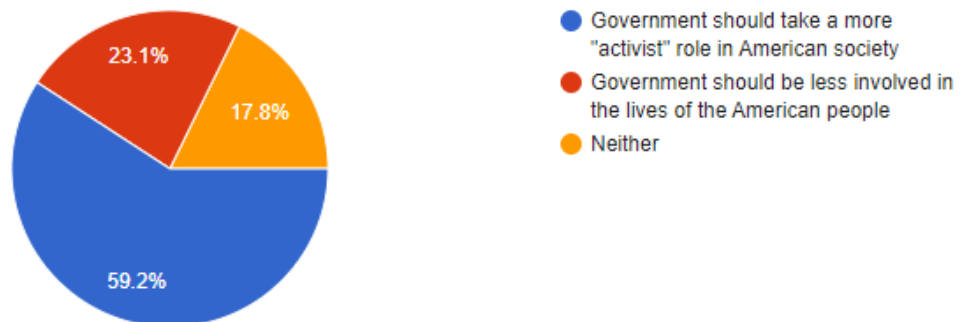
2. BEFORE quarantine in response to COVID-19 began in March 2020, which of the following most closely matched your views, even if neither is exactly right?

169 responses



3. After quarantine restrictions in response to COVID-19 began to ease, which of the following most closely matched your views, even if neither is exactly right?

169 responses



Note. All given figures are my own screenshots from my Google Forms survey.

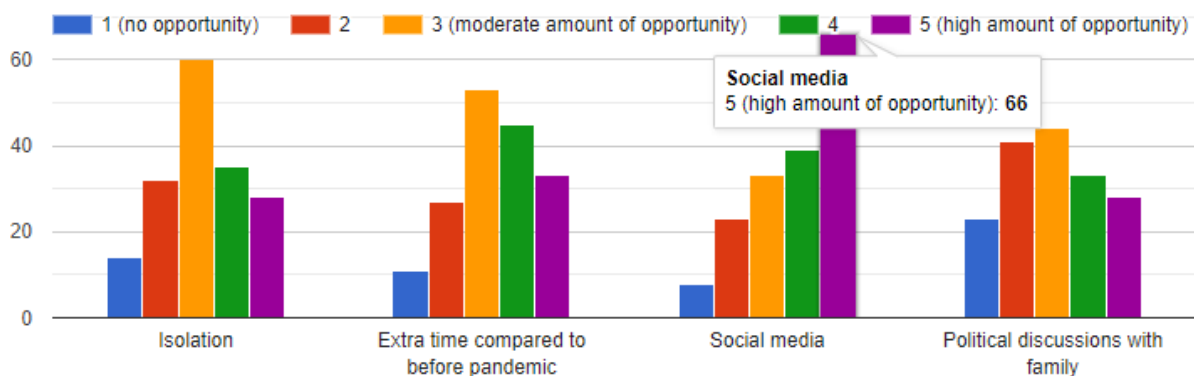
This pair of questions asked about the sample's political leanings before and after quarantine. The most significant takeaway from this is that between the pre-quarantine period and the post-quarantine period, there was an 8.8% decrease in the share of Gen Z who were "independent" or "undecided," and a 10.7% increase in the share of Gen Z who leaned to the left

ideologically. The shift of the sample away from leaning in “neither” direction politically could indicate that quarantine acted as an environment for Gen Z’s consolidation of political views, but this on its own bears no definitive conclusions. While the fact that the majority of my sample had more liberal views after quarantine was not significant for the purposes of my research, it is consistent with the works of Parker et al. (2019), who hinted at Gen Z’s liberal leanings.

Figure 2

Responses to Question 4

4. Please rate the extent to which the following factors during quarantine gave you the opportunity to evaluate your own political views.



This question asked the sample about the extent to which specific aspects of quarantine gave them the opportunity to evaluate their political views. The prominence of exposure to social media can immediately be noticed, with Gen Z giving social media a large plurality at 5, thus reporting that social media gave them a high amount of opportunity to evaluate their views.

Even though Gen Z gave each of the other factors a plurality at three, distinct curves can still be analyzed. If “isolation” and “extra time” are compared as factors, even though “isolation” was given a larger plurality at three, more of Gen Z rated “extra time” at a 4 or a 5. Overall, the extra free time quarantine gave Gen Z to evaluate their own views might have been more

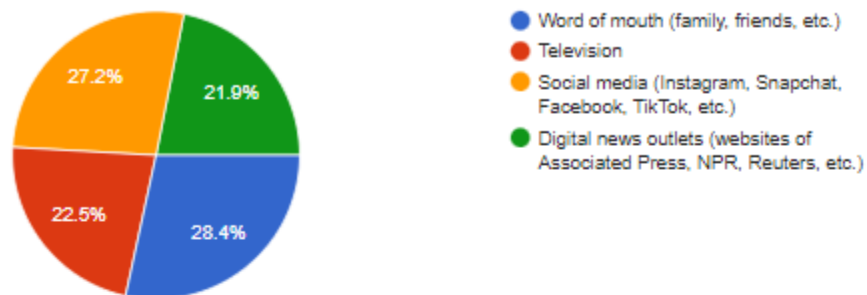
impactful than the isolation factor of quarantine.

As for “discussions with family,” a much more even distribution may be noted, with the second-place plurality at 2, but the third-place plurality at 4. It may be the case that political discussions with family influenced Gen Z on a family-by-family basis (i.e. the extent to which these discussions impacted survey participants might have been dependent on the extent to which individual families had such discussions).

Figure 3*Responses to Questions 5 through 7*

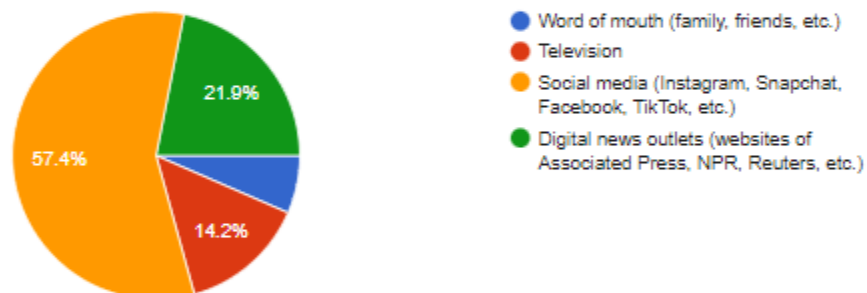
5. Through which medium did you consume most of your political news BEFORE quarantine?

169 responses



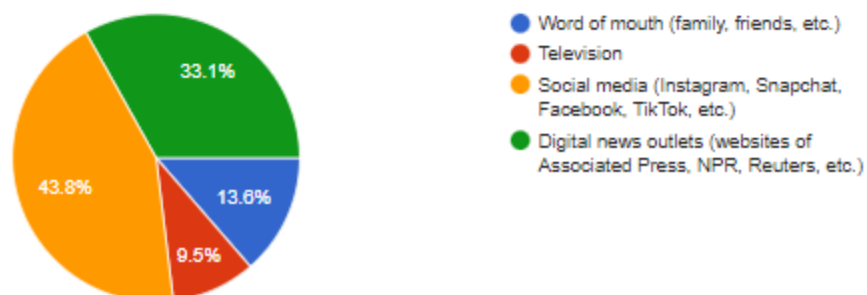
6. Through which medium did you consume most of your political news DURING quarantine?

169 responses



7. Through which medium do you consume most of your political news AS QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS EASE?

169 responses



This set of questions added specificity to the political media Gen Z was exposed to throughout quarantine. Before quarantine, there was a relatively even split between these mediums of political news used by Gen Z, with “word of mouth” having a plurality and “social media” coming in at a close second. However, between then and quarantine, there was a 30.2% increase in the consumption of political news via social media. Given that during quarantine scrolling on a phone was the fastest and easiest way to consume information, this is unsurprising.

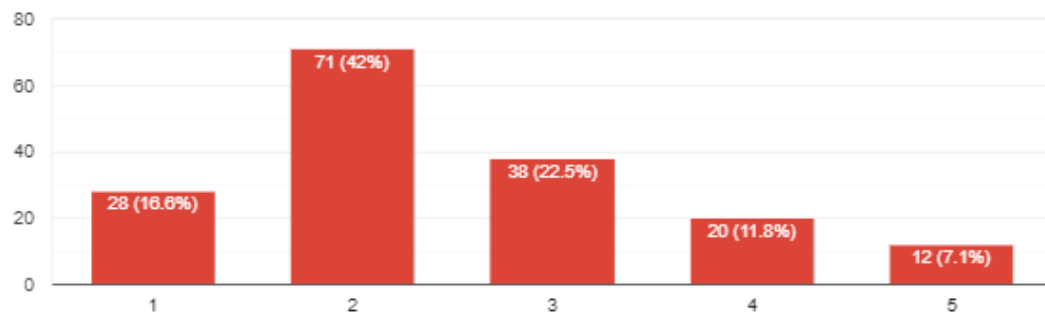
The most significant takeaway from this set of questions is that there existed a sustained use of social media even as quarantine began to end, with the usage of social media falling after quarantine but only by 13.6% (presumably due to the resumption of in-person activities). The idea is again reinforced that quarantine, by increasing Gen Z's exposure to political media, provided the generation with the opportunity to consolidate their own political views. More importantly, these results add that this exposure to political media was largely through social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

It is also noticeable how Gen Z's use of digital news outlets stayed the same before and during quarantine, but it increased by 11.2% by the time quarantine began to end. The increase might indicate a willingness by the sample to rely on more in-depth analytical sources of political news rather than the short-form social media content that was focused on during quarantine, and this again supports the idea that quarantine influenced the way Gen Z approaches politics.

Figure 4*Responses to Questions 8 through 10*

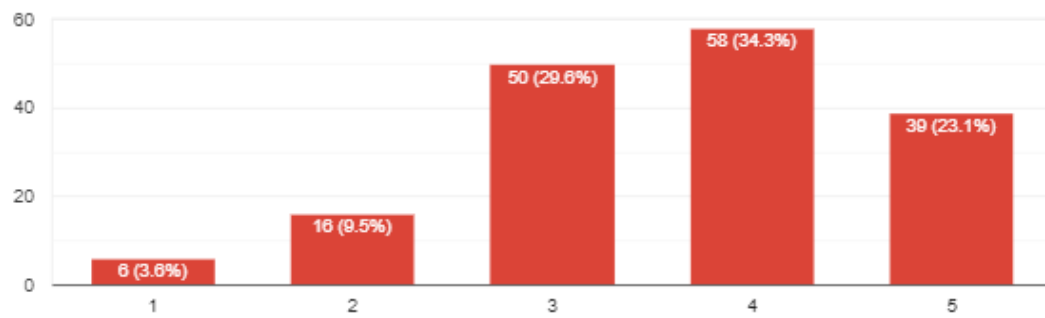
8. To what extent were you engaged with political news/media BEFORE quarantine?

169 responses



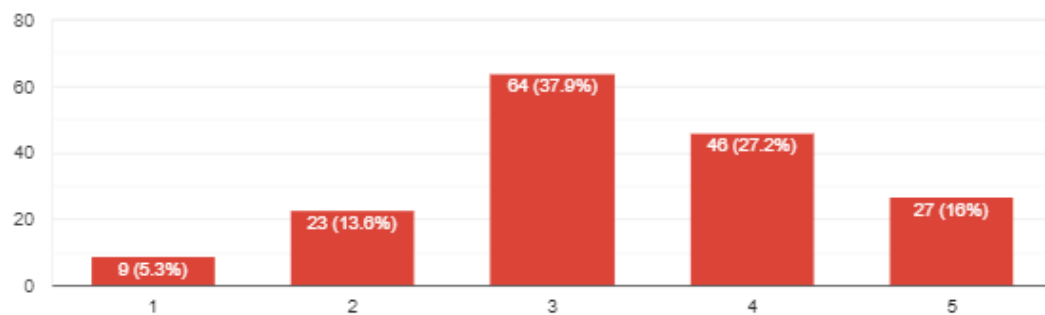
9. To what extent were you engaged with political news/media DURING quarantine?

169 responses



10. To what extent were you engaged with political news/media AS QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS EASE?

169 responses



These questions further inquired about Gen Z's increased exposure to digital media during quarantine by focusing on their engagement with that media. Before quarantine, Gen Z provided a plurality at 2, indicating that they had had less than moderate interaction with this media. During quarantine, a large rightward shift may be noted in the curve of the graph, with Gen Z providing a plurality at 4 and indicating that they had had much higher interaction with political media during this time. Most significantly, during the post-quarantine period, there had been a sustained amount of engagement with political media, with the top three pluralities provided by the recipients still located on the right side of the graph. These results corroborate with previous sets of questions in indicating that quarantine, by increasing Gen Z's exposure to political media, provided the generation with the opportunity to consolidate their own political views.

Gen Z's Political Involvement with Regard to the Pandemic

Figure 5

Responses to Question 11 (Before Quarantine)

11. Please select all that apply.

169 responses

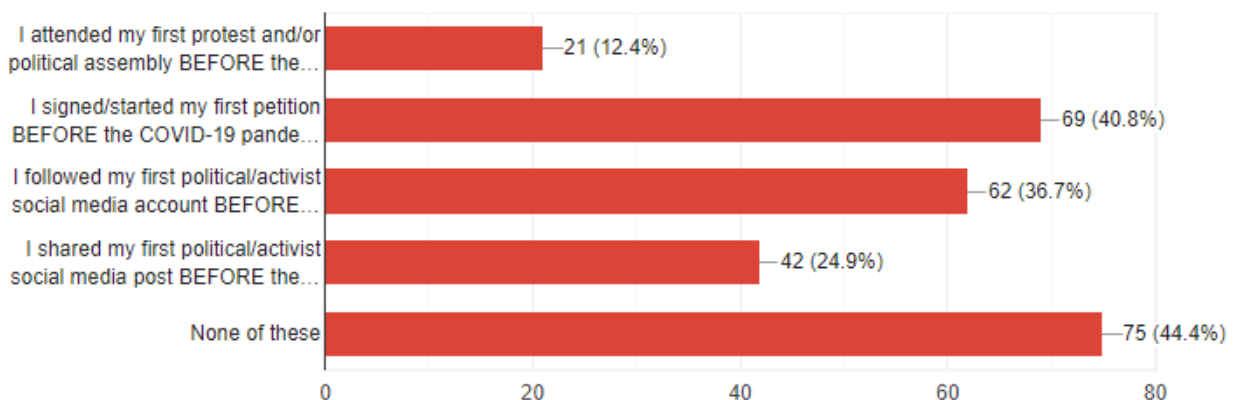
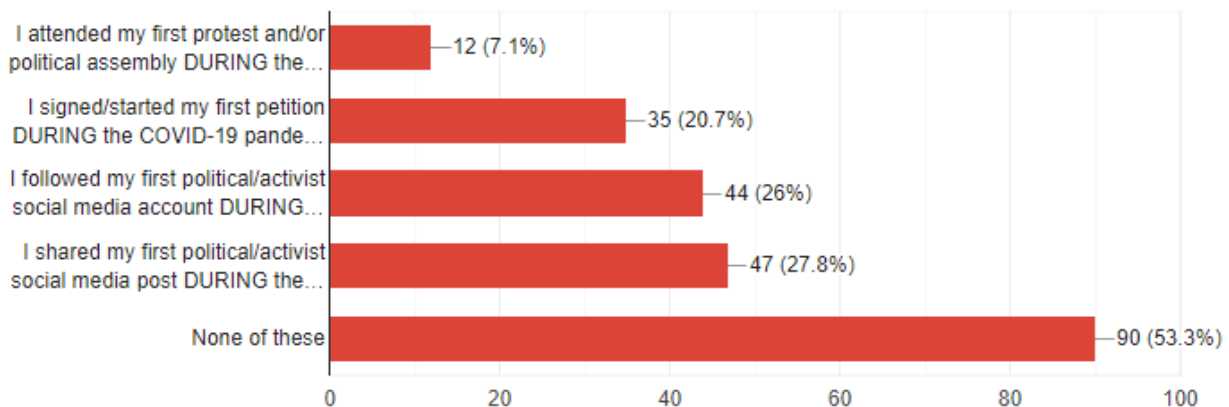


Figure 6*Responses to Question 12 (During Quarantine)*

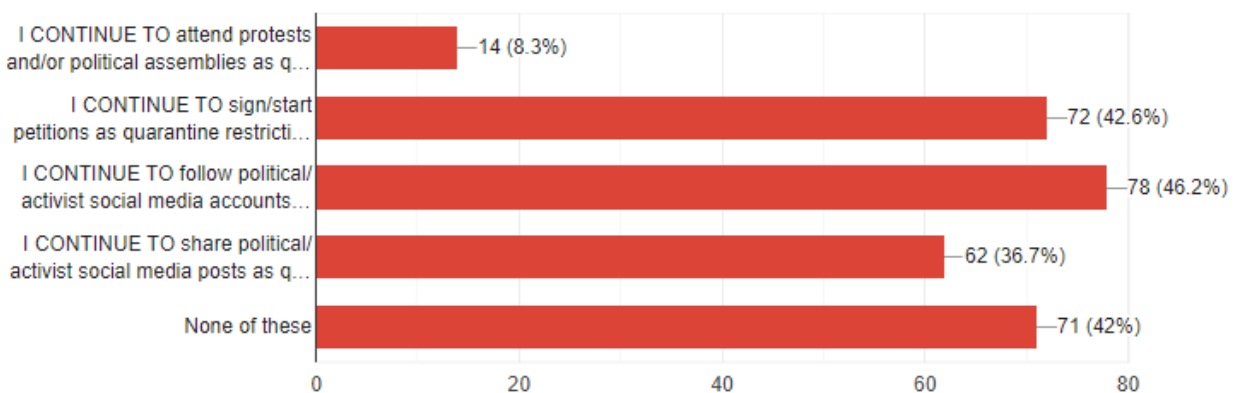
12. Please select all that apply.

169 responses

**Figure 7***Responses to Question 13 (After Quarantine)*

13. Please select all that apply.

169 responses



Questions 11 through 13 focused on the sample's involvement with politics in terms of real life actions. The first two of these questions asked about the first time the recipient engaged in the given political activities relative to quarantine. A slump in participants' first-time civic involvement during quarantine can be noted, and these rates of civic participation had been lower

than those before quarantine. Such a decline was possibly caused by the lack of motivation members of the sample might have experienced during quarantine, along with limitations on activities in the outside world (e.g. protests) caused by COVID-19. It is eminent how during quarantine, the portion of the sample who engaged with civic activities gave the two social media-related activities pluralities, corroborating with previous results pertaining to political media.

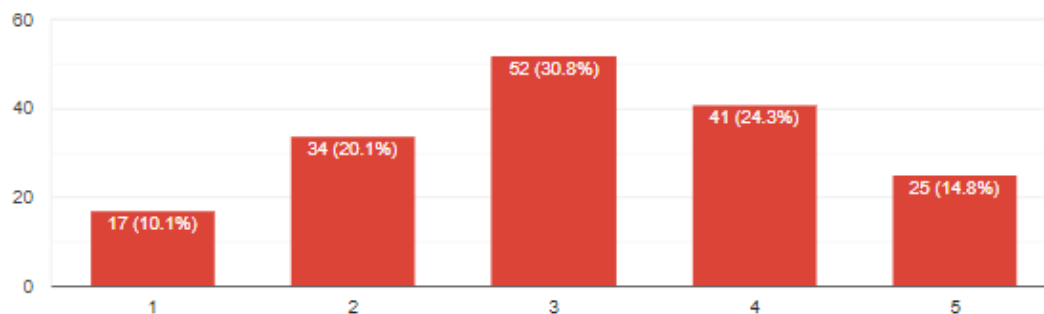
Most significantly, there was a large increase in Gen Z's political involvement in the post-quarantine period in comparison to the previous two time periods. In Figure 7, if every response is accounted for (including those that answered "none of these"), "continuing to follow social media accounts" wins the plurality; this is not present in the pre-quarantine and quarantine time periods. The increased and sustained political involvement might indicate that participants had developed a political mindset during quarantine that would encourage such activity, and this once again supports the idea that quarantine acted as a catalyst for Gen Z's consolidation of political views.

Gen Z's Political Confidence with Regard to the Pandemic

Figure 8*Responses to Questions 16 through 18*

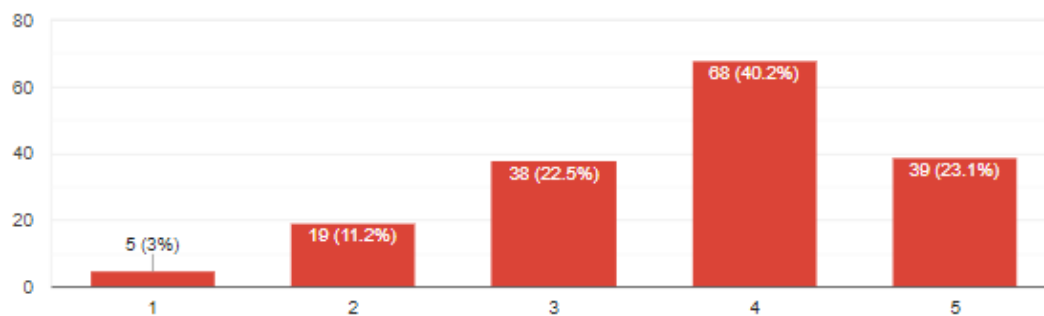
16. To what extent were you confident in your own political views BEFORE quarantine?

169 responses



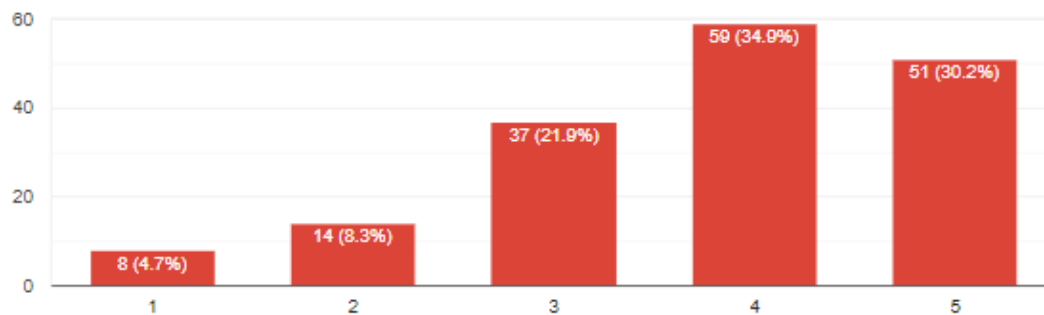
17. To what extent were you confident in your own political views DURING quarantine?

169 responses



18. To what extent were you confident in your own political views AS QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS EASE?

169 responses



A major factor in Gen Z's political coming of age is the extent to which their political views are ingrained in their minds, and relative to quarantine, there existed sustained political self-confidence. Before quarantine, there existed a relatively even distribution, with the sample giving a plurality at 3, indicating that they mostly had had a moderate amount of confidence in their own political views. However, this curve shifted to the right over time, with the share of participants who responded with 4 or 5 going from 66 before quarantine to 107 to 110. Gen Z's increased political confidence over this timespan once again indicates that quarantine might have influenced Gen Z's consolidation of political views.

Free-response Answers

This section of the survey ultimately received far more responses than I had anticipated—a total of 68. However, most of the responses involved the expression of political opinions, partisanship, or ideas already covered by the multiple-choice questions and thus did not provide new insight into Gen Z's political coming of age (see figures below). I categorized responses as “insignificant” if they were unrelated to topics in my multiple-choice section; if they stated simple facts; and if they only involved opinions about government as an entity, about a political officeholder in the past or present, or about a political party/leaning.

Figure 9

Examples of Insignificant Free-response Answers

Please enter below any thoughts on your development of political views during quarantine that the previous questions may not have captured.

68 responses

Trump lost 🤔

The extra time that I spent at home allowed me to gain more insight on politics.

Not a fan of the government, either party

Figure 10*Anti-conservative Free-response Answer*

Conservatists are fools, they whine about the decay of traditional values, yet they enthusiastically support technological progress and economic growth, it never occurs to the conservatist that rapid changes in technology and economy are not possible without changes in all other aspects of socieity, and that said changes inevitably break down traditional values.

Figure 11*Anti-liberal Free-response Answer*

Democrats are fucking stupid and it amazes me how many people are age from both sides follow everything so blindly.

In spite of this, I found that those responses that did discuss ideas already covered by my MCQs largely corroborated with my interpretations of the MCQ results. For the members of Gen Z who experienced any consolidation of political worldviews, social media played a role in this shift, and quarantine had enabled that increased exposure to social media. Some members of Gen Z also cited how extra time and events (such as the Black Lives Matter movement) during quarantine at the very least allowed them to learn about and recognize the importance of political issues. (See Appendix C for all free-response answers).

Figure 12*Corroborating Free-response Answer*

During quarantine, I felt as though the best way to use my time was by taking a deeper look into our current economical and political circumstances. It was very overwhelming especially because it seemed as though my particular race was being targeted. I tried to remain ignorant during that time of quarantining, but it seemed as though that was the only thing to appear on TV or my social media feed, so I couldn't really stop myself from learning and finding my political standing. Now that quarantine is over and we are out and about, I haven't had time to really look into the country's political and economic state. all this to sa that was grateful for quarantine in the sense that I leaned so much.

Discussion**Hypotheses**

My hypotheses had been made based on personal political experiences throughout quarantine and my perception of peers' experiences throughout quarantine. I had hypothesized that Gen Z's consolidation of political views during quarantine resulted in their increased political involvement during quarantine and as quarantine restrictions eased. As shown by Figures 5 through 7, this hypothesis was partially supported by my results. Participants' first-time civic involvement during quarantine had been lower than that before quarantine, therefore refuting the part of my hypothesis stating that Gen Z experienced increased involvement during quarantine. However, participants reported civic engagement after quarantine at rates higher than those during the other two periods for three of the four given categories, supporting the aspect of my hypothesis stating that Gen Z experienced increased involvement as quarantine restrictions ease.

I had also hypothesized that the extra free time that quarantine provided Gen Z largely gave Gen Z the opportunity to evaluate and thus develop their political views. Figure 2 displays that while "extra time" during quarantine did provide Gen Z with mostly a moderate amount of opportunity to evaluate their own political views, social media was significantly more influential in this regard. So, this hypothesis was not highly supported by my results.

I had additionally hypothesized that many members of Gen Z felt more confident about their political views as quarantine restrictions began to ease compared to before quarantine. Figure 8 indicates an increased and a sustained political self-confidence among members of the sample throughout quarantine, therefore supporting my third hypothesis.

Study Limitations

The largest limitation of my research is that its results may be biased. I am human, so there is always the chance for my own opinions and errors to have influenced my results or

interpretations at some point during the process. There had been limited pre-existing data on Gen Z's political coming of age, so my large dependence on the works of Dr. Fisher could have possibly influenced my results. In the grand scheme of generational politics in the US, snowballing is not the most effective sampling process, and my sample size of less than 200 students (all from Broward) is not highly generalizable. Furthermore, there is always the potential for recipients to have lied or answered inaccurately, skewing my results.

Another limitation of my research is that it does not provide absolutes with regard to Generation Z's politics—rather, it provides predictions and trends. My survey proves correlation, not causation, and my results also do not conclusively explain the long-term effects of quarantine on Gen Z. It could be the case that COVID-19 is not at all central to Gen Z's political coming of age and that the US is yet to see other major events that could shape the youngest voting generation's politics.

A final limitation of my research is that I do not heavily explore my free-response answers despite receiving many. I had originally intended to focus mostly on my multiple-choice questions, and the free-response opportunity was included just as a supplement. My purpose remained the same, in spite of the extra research opportunities that might have developed.

Significance

My research contributes to the existing academic literature on divisions along the lines of age within American politics. Such divisions can stall healthy civil discourse, which is necessary for sustaining American democracy. Understanding the connection between American political divisions and age may allow researchers to further investigate means of ideally alleviating these tensions. Learning about Gen Z's politics in the context of COVID-19 may also hint at Gen Z's

political worldviews in the future and thus help to understand what a United States with Gen Z voters and legislators would look like.

My discovery about Gen Z's increased exposure to social media as caused by COVID-19 provides previously nonexistent insight into the political experiences of the first generation to grow up with social media (Parker & Igielnik, 2020) and underscores political scientists' discoveries about the growing influence social media has on social interactions throughout society. It conveys how social media has even attained the ability to catalyze the development of political views among an age cohort and might even be considered a core aspect of the political socialization process in the modern world. My results may also encourage further research into this topic; a larger organization (like Pew Research Center) may be able to use a survey similar to mine to investigate Gen Z's political coming of age across the US rather than just in Broward County and to collect more representative data. A new study might also focus on the influence of social media in particular on Gen Z's politics or dive deeper into free-response answers like those in Appendix C.

Conclusion

Quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic gave Gen Z ample opportunity to evaluate and consolidate their own political views, and while factors during quarantine (like isolation and extra free time) played a role in this, increased exposure to social media during quarantine by far had the greatest influence on Gen Z's development of political worldviews. My results pertaining to Gen Z's consumption of media certainly corroborated with the works of McClain et al. (2021) and Cauberghe et al. (2021), who noted the major increase in Gen Z's exposure to the digital world during the pandemic. My results added a lens of specificity, emphasizing that Gen Z's exposure to media was largely through social media platforms and that this trend involved

increased exposure to politics.

At a time when direct access to the outside world was limited, constant access and exposure to media provided Gen Z with heightened awareness of current events, and this enabled Gen Z to develop and harden their political opinions. The generation's increased involvement in political activities and increased self-reported political confidence as quarantine restrictions eased corroborated with their development of political opinions.

Overall, these findings answer my research question and indicate that quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic did correlate with Gen Z's development of political worldviews in Broward County. I had created my survey questions such that I would be able to identify any changes over quarantine that participants experienced with regard to their politics, and I did ultimately see trends in this manner. I noted changes in Gen Z's political confidence, political engagement, etc., and the common denominator among all these changes was quarantine, thus indicating a relationship between quarantine and these trends. Members of the sample, in response to other questions, directly described the importance of factors during quarantine such as social media in the sample's political evaluations, further supporting the existence of this relationship.

My research process was certainly rigorous, albeit satisfying and fruitful. It progressed rather smoothly only because I put in the time and planning necessary, and seeing my work come to fruition in the form of figures and graphs made all the effort worthwhile. With infinite time and resources, I would have certainly expanded my sample to address the low generalizability of my results or created additional survey questions to hone in on Gen Z's consumption of social media, but in any case, the door remains open for those future studies involving Gen Z's political coming of age, with my research as described in this paper to act as a resource.

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Appendix A

Copy of Survey

Gen Z's Political Coming of Age during Quarantine - Survey

- STUDY TITLE:

The Political Coming of Age of Generation Z in Broward County during Quarantine in the COVID-19 Pandemic

- RESEARCHER:

- PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

To investigate the extent to which quarantine during COVID-19 correlated with Gen Z's development of political views and whether quarantine during COVID-19 may be considered a time in which many members of Gen Z had their political coming of age. ("Political coming of age" refers to the phenomenon in which a given individual develops certain worldviews or political ideologies due to the socio-political climate during which they grew up.)

- SURVEY:

This survey will ask the recipient questions about their development of political worldviews before and after quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will ask questions about changes in their worldviews, along with how engaged they were with politics before and after quarantine. It will ask about the recipient's consumption of political news before and after quarantine, the recipient's voter eligibility, and the recipient's confidence in their own political views. It will also ask about the political leanings of the recipient's parent(s).

This survey is meant to be taken by members of Gen Z who are currently in high school within Broward County Public Schools.

- ESTIMATED TIME IT WILL TAKE TO COMPLETE SURVEY:

This survey--if the recipient chooses to complete it in its entirety--will likely take about 15 minutes to complete.

- RISKS:

Minimal risks are involved in taking this survey. Given the online nature of this survey, any information entered is susceptible to cyberattacks. The chances of this happening are low, as Google encrypts the data input into the survey, but I cannot eliminate this risk.

In any event, should this risk be worrying, the recipient may withdraw from taking this survey at any point in time.

- SIGNIFICANCE OF SURVEY:

Divisions in American politics have been present since before the country's independence, but such divisions along the lines of age are rather unprecedented. Political divisions along the lines of age can stall civil discourse, and healthy civil discourse is necessary for sustaining American democracy. Confirming the connection between the American political divide and age may allow researchers to further investigate means of ideally alleviating these tensions. Learning about Gen Z's political coming of age in the context of COVID-19 may also provide hints as to how the American Congress and the

American electorate may operate in the future as more members of Gen Z enter them.

• **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Data that identifies the individual survey recipient will not be shared in any form. Survey recipients will reserve their right to anonymity. Should individual survey recipients be referred to in my research paper, I will refer to them with pseudonyms or numbers (e.g. Participant 2).

• **HOW LONG DATA WILL BE KEPT:**

Data will be kept until the end of this academic school year (2021-2022) or until my report for my AP Research class is complete. After this, data that identifies individual survey recipients will be disposed of.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] with any questions or concerns.

All that is required to take this survey is a device that can use the Internet and access this Google Form. The survey needs to be completed only once by each participant, and it is preferable that the participant give thought to each question for the collected data to be as accurate as possible.

Your completion of this survey is entirely VOLUNTARY. You may withdraw from this survey at any point in time.

If you agree to the above criteria and would like to continue with this survey, please indicate this by filling out the prompt below.

* **Required**

1. Do you agree to the criteria listed above and consent to the use of your answers for research purposes? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

There are three parts to this survey:

- Demographics section
- Multiple-choice section (20 questions)
- Free response section with a text box that allows you to enter any thoughts or opinions that the multiple-choice questions may not have given you the opportunity to express

Demographics Section

2. What is your age? (in years) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 14
- ☐ 15
- ☐ 16
- ☐ 17
- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ 20
- ☐ 21
- ☐ 22
- ☐ 23
- ☐ 24
- ☐ Other

3. What school do you attend? *

4. What is your gender? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Nonbinary
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: _____

5. What is your race? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Mixed Race
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: _____

Please select the answer choice that best applies.

Multiple-Choice Questions

6. 1. To what extent would you consider yourself a politically active person? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not active at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highly active

7. 2. BEFORE quarantine in response to COVID-19 began in March 2020, which of the following most closely matched your views, even if neither is exactly right? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Government should take a more "activist" role in American society
- ☐ Government should be less involved in the lives of the American people
- ☐ Neither

8. 3. After quarantine restrictions in response to COVID-19 began to ease, which of the following most closely matched your views, even if neither is exactly right? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Government should take a more "activist" role in American society
- ☐ Government should be less involved in the lives of the American people
- ☐ Neither

9. 4. Please rate the extent to which the following factors during quarantine gave you the opportunity to evaluate your own political views. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	1 (no opportunity)	2	3 (moderate amount of opportunity)	4	5 (high amount of opportunity)
Isolation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extra time compared to before pandemic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political discussions with family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. 5. Through which medium did you consume most of your political news BEFORE quarantine? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Word of mouth (family, friends, etc.)
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Social media (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)
- ☐ Digital news outlets (websites of Associated Press, NPR, Reuters, etc.)

11. 6. Through which medium did you consume most of your political news DURING quarantine?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Word of mouth (family, friends, etc.)
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Social media (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)
- ☐ Digital news outlets (websites of Associated Press, NPR, Reuters, etc.)

12. 7. Through which medium do you consume most of your political news AS QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS EASE? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Word of mouth (family, friends, etc.)
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Social media (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)
- ☐ Digital news outlets (websites of Associated Press, NPR, Reuters, etc.)

13. 8. To what extent were you engaged with political news/media BEFORE quarantine? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Constantly

14. 9. To what extent were you engaged with political news/media DURING quarantine? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Constantly

15. 10. To what extent were you engaged with political news/media AS QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS EASE? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Constantly

16. 11. Please select all that apply. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ I attended my first protest and/or political assembly BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ I signed/started my first petition BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ I followed my first political/activist social media account BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ I shared my first political/activist social media post BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ None of these

17. 12. Please select all that apply. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ I attended my first protest and/or political assembly DURING the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ I signed/started my first petition DURING the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ I followed my first political/activist social media account DURING the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ I shared my first political/activist social media post DURING the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ☐ None of these

18. 13. Please select all that apply. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ I CONTINUE TO attend protests and/or political assemblies as quarantine restrictions ease.
- ☐ I CONTINUE TO sign/start petitions as quarantine restrictions ease.
- ☐ I CONTINUE TO follow political/activist social media accounts as quarantine restrictions ease.
- ☐ I CONTINUE TO share political/activist social media posts as quarantine restrictions ease.
- ☐ None of these

19. 14. Which of the following best applies to you? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I was eligible to vote before the COVID-19 pandemic began
- ☐ I became eligible to vote during quarantine in the COVID-19 pandemic
- ☐ I became eligible to vote as quarantine restrictions eased
- ☐ I am currently not eligible to vote

20. 15. Which of the following best applies to you? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I voted in an election for the first time BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic
- ☐ I voted in an election for the first time DURING the COVID-19 pandemic
- ☐ I voted in an election for the first time as quarantine restrictions ease
- ☐ None of these (I haven't voted before)

21. 16. To what extent were you confident in your own political views BEFORE quarantine? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not confident at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Highly confident

22. 17. To what extent were you confident in your own political views DURING quarantine? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not confident at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Highly confident

23. 18. To what extent were you confident in your own political views AS QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS EASE? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not confident at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Highly confident

24. 19. Which of the following most closely matches the views of your parent/guardian (1)? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Government should take a more "activist" role in American society
- ☐ Government should be less involved in the lives of the American people
- ☐ Neither

25. 20. Which of the following most closely matches the views of your parent/guardian (2)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Government should take a more "activist" role in American society
- ☐ Government should be less involved in the lives of the American people
- ☐ Neither

Free Response
Opportunity

This section is optional. If you would like to skip it, please submit the Google Form.

26. Please enter below any thoughts on your development of political views during quarantine that the previous questions may not have captured.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Appendix B

Multiple-choice Development and Results

Development of Multiple-choice Described in Results

I included Questions 2 and 3 to gauge the political leanings of the survey recipient and to see if this might have changed over the course of quarantine. Any changes here as reported by participants might have indicated that quarantine had some relation to Gen Z's political coming of age and their development of political worldviews. Just like the Pew Research report by Parker et al. (2019) from which I borrowed question wording, I did not simply ask the participant whether they self-identified as a Democrat or a Republican, as directly asking about party affiliation could potentially appeal to the more emotionally-charged partisan aspects of politics, which could make this question a leading one.

I included Question 4 to investigate what exact aspects of quarantine influenced Gen Z's politics and the extent to which these aspects did so. I chose to ask about "Isolation" and "Extra time compared to before pandemic" because "quarantining" as an action intrinsically involved isolation and having extra free time, and I reasoned that these factors could have easily given members of Gen Z the opportunity to engage in self-reflection and evaluate their own political views. I chose to ask about "Social media" because of Gen Z's increased use of technology throughout the pandemic (McClain et al., 2021; Cauberghe et al., 2021). I reasoned that this could have increased their exposure to political social media and thus given them the opportunity to evaluate their own views. I also chose to ask about "Political discussions with family" because quarantine forced many members of Gen Z to spend more time at home in isolation with their families, and, as described by Krutz and Waskiewicz (2019), the family is often considered one of the most important parts of a child's political socialization (lesson 6.1). I made the answer

choices for this question on a 5-point Likert-type scale, as this (in contrast to “Yes” or “No” options) would allow me to better compare the relative prominence of each of these aspects of quarantine in the lives of the survey participants.

I included Questions 5 through 10 to investigate any change in the main medium by which participants received most of their political news throughout COVID-19 and any change in the extent to which participants were engaged with political media throughout COVID-19. In asking these questions, I aimed to find any changes in Gen Z's overall political engagement, which might have related to Gen Z's increased exposure to technology during quarantine. I created the answer choices for Questions 5 through 7 based on what I perceived as the main media categories by which political news is consumed. For Questions 8 through 10, I used a 5-point Likert-type scale for answer choices, as this would make it easier for me to compare participants' engagement at the three different times asked about. I did the same for many subsequent questions.

I included Questions 11 through 13 to measure any changes or consistencies in participants' civic engagement throughout the pandemic. These questions were also meant to help me find any changes in participants' overall political engagement, focusing on civic engagement/actions rather than just media consumption. Any changes here as reported by participants would indicate some relation between quarantine and Gen Z's political involvement. I created the answer choices for these questions based on what I perceived as the main types of modern civic engagement. I didn't include “donating to a political campaign” as an answer choice here because most of Gen Z was too young to do so legally.

I included Questions 16 through 18 to investigate any changes in the participants' confidence in their own political views throughout the pandemic. I reasoned that should the

pandemic and/or quarantine have provided members of Gen Z with the opportunity to consolidate their own political views, they would have indicated more confidence in their views over time.

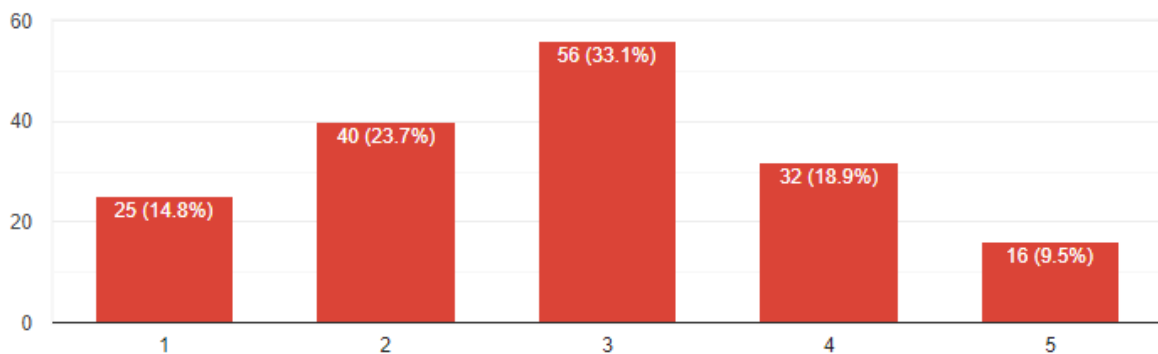
Other Multiple-choice Questions

Figure B1

Responses to Question 1

1. To what extent would you consider yourself a politically active person?

169 responses



I included Question 1 in my survey to gauge the intensity with which the recipient would respond to the rest of my survey. My expert advisor provided insight in this part of the question-creating process, explaining that if a participant considered themselves highly politically active, they would be more likely to care about my survey questions (given the questions' political nature) and put more thought into answering them. While this question did not provide me data on a given individual's political coming of age, it did help me in categorizing survey participants along the lines of how politically active they self-identify as, adding specificity to my overall results.

In this graph, a relatively even distribution/curve may be noticed, and members of my sample provided a plurality at 3, indicating that a significant portion of them were moderately

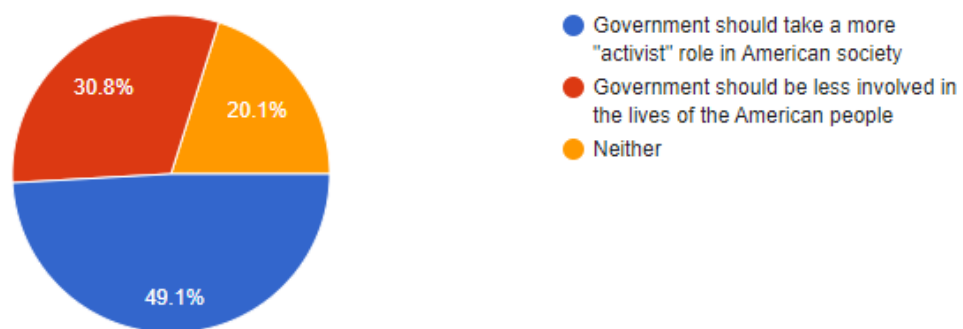
politically active. The key takeaway from this distribution is that my survey was not taken wholly by intensely political members of Gen Z nor by members of Gen Z who rarely think about politics; thus, the generalizability of my results is not offset by this.

Figure B2

Responses to Questions 19 and 20

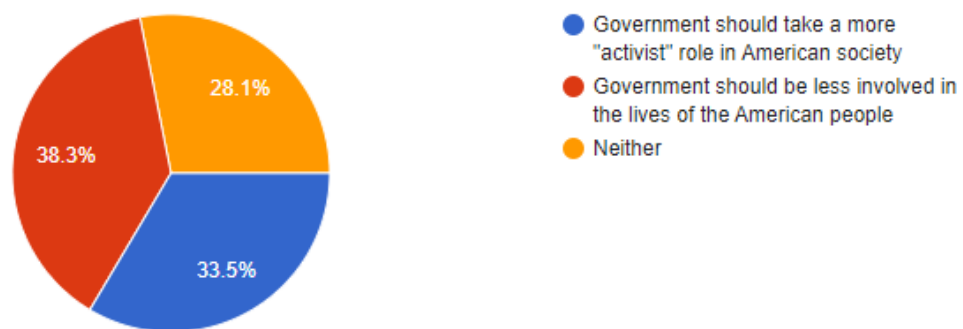
19. Which of the following most closely matches the views of your parent/guardian (1)?

169 responses



20. Which of the following most closely matches the views of your parent/guardian (2)?

167 responses



I included Questions 19 and 20 because they would allow me to compare the participants' political views to those of their parents/guardians and to see if the participant's views became more similar to or more different from those of their parents/guardians throughout the pandemic.

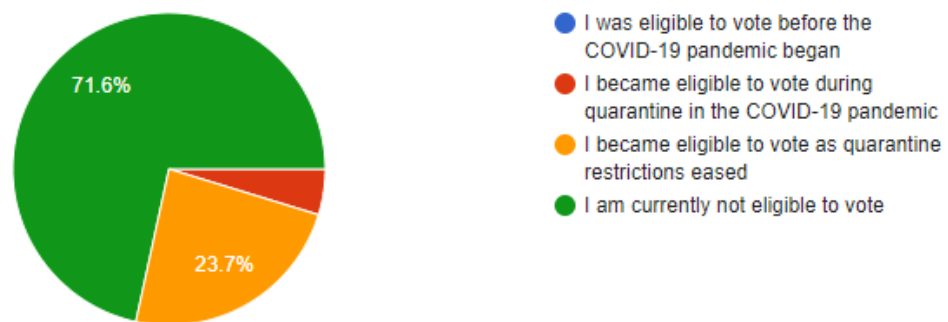
As mentioned before, the family is often considered one of the most important parts of a child's political socialization (Krutz & Waskiewicz, 2019, lesson 6.1), and quarantine forced many members of Gen Z to spend more time at home in isolation with their families. I reasoned that in asking these questions, I would be able to better observe the influence of the family on Gen Z's political coming of age during quarantine.

Ultimately, my results showed that "family discussions" were not as influential in providing Gen Z with the opportunity to evaluate their own political views as other factors within quarantine, such as social media (see Figure 2). As a result, this pair of questions is not highly insightful. Still, it is worth noting that the share of the sample's parents that leaned in the conservative direction was greater than the share of the survey participants that leaned in the conservative direction both before and after quarantine. Gen Z's parents' higher conservatism corroborates with the conclusions of Fisher (2020a), who pointed out the political differences along the lines of age between younger and older Americans.

Figure B3*Responses to Questions 14 and 15*

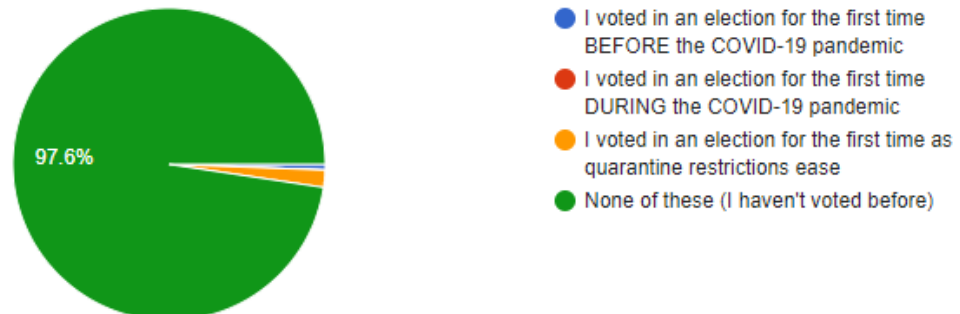
14. Which of the following best applies to you?

169 responses



15. Which of the following best applies to you?

169 responses

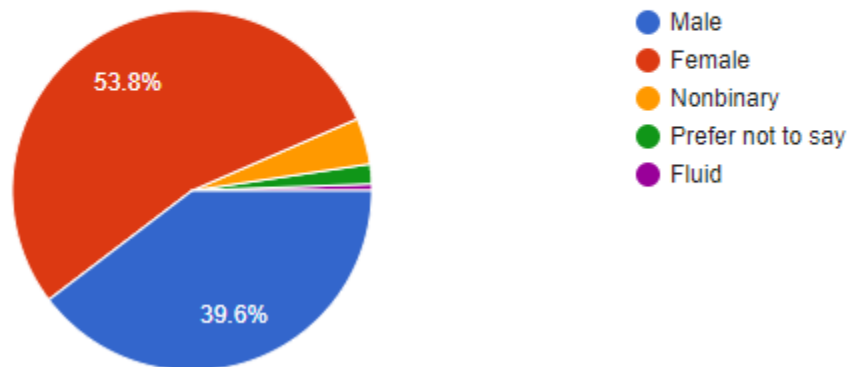


I simply included Questions 14 and 15 to further inquire about the participant's civic engagement with regard to COVID-19, focusing on voting. I created separate questions that asked about voting behavior rather than including them in Questions 11 through 13 (which asked about civic engagement throughout quarantine) because not all of Gen Z was eligible to vote, and I needed to account for this by asking a question about when the participant was eligible to vote (if they were). As I had expected, the vast majority of my sample had not voted, still indicating that Gen Z's conclusive voting behavior is data the academic community has not yet received.

Figure B4*Responses to “Gender” Demographic Question*

What is your gender?

169 responses



Note. Figures B4 through B6 were part of the demographics section of my survey.

Figure B5*Screenshot 1 of Responses to “Race” Demographic Question*

What is your race?

169 responses

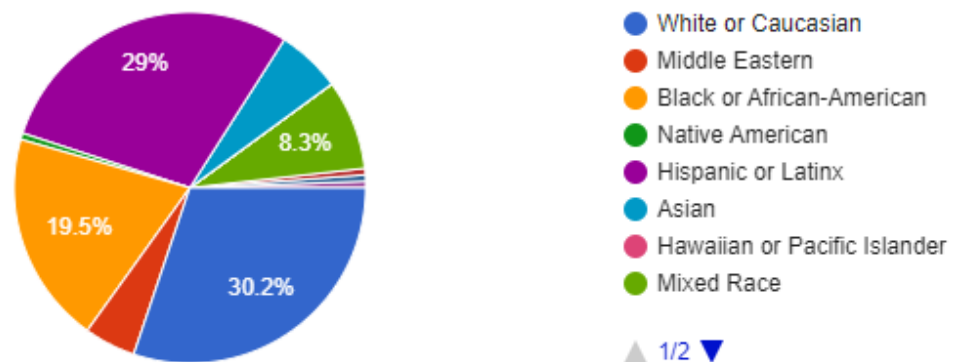
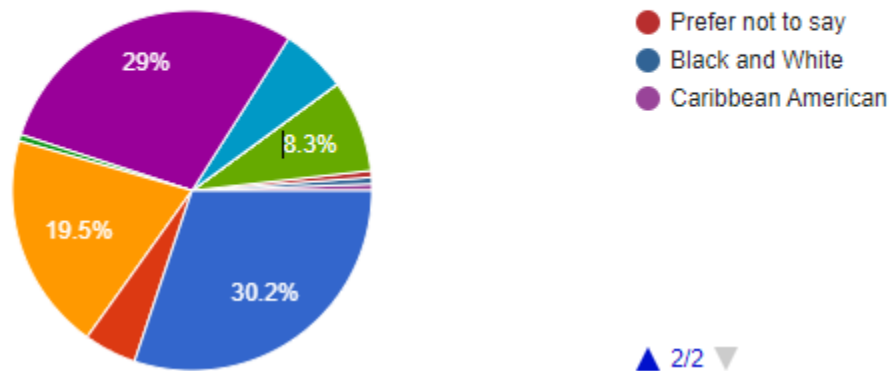


Figure B6

Screenshot 2 of Responses to “Race” Demographic Question

What is your race?

169 responses



Overall, the demographics of my survey recipients mostly represented the high diversity of Gen Z, as described by Parker and Igielnik (2020, para. 4), and they supported the generalizability of my results. An interesting takeaway from Figure B4 might be that the majority of my survey recipients were non-male, in spite of politics often being perceived as a male-dominated field. Such a trend—along with the sample’s diversity—might be indicative of the future demographic composition of the American electorate and Congress as more of Gen Z enters them.

Appendix C

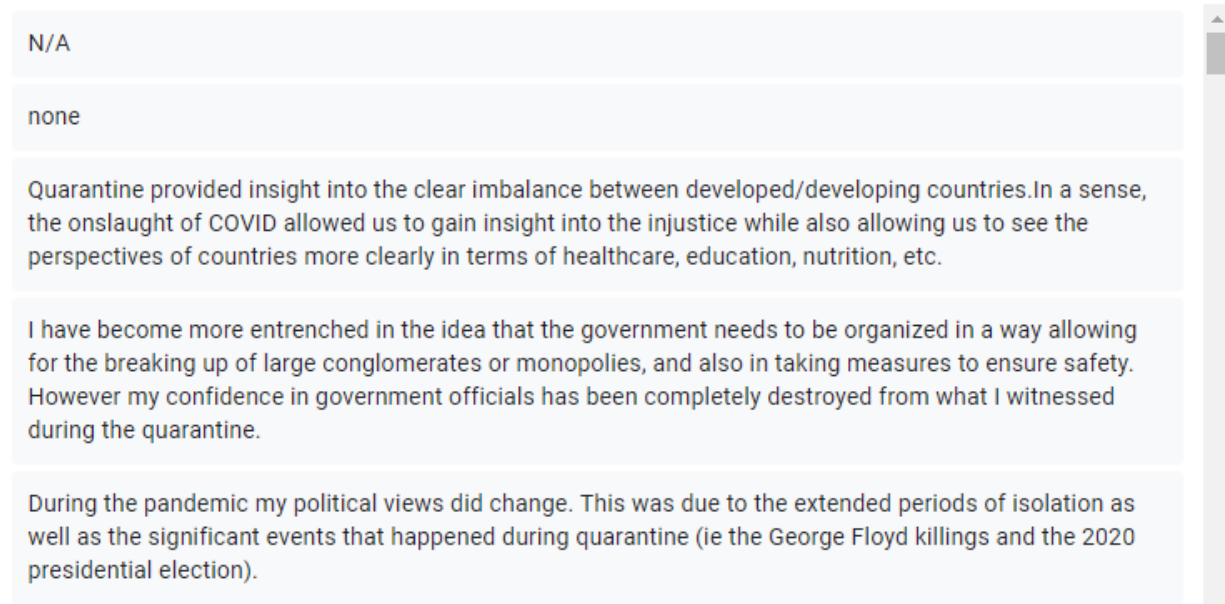
All Free-response Results

Figure C1

Screenshot 1 of Free-response Answers

Please enter below any thoughts on your development of political views during quarantine that the previous questions may not have captured.

68 responses



The screenshot displays a survey interface with four text boxes for free-response answers. The first box contains 'N/A', the second contains 'none', and the third and fourth contain detailed paragraphs about political views during quarantine. A vertical scrollbar is visible on the right side of the response area.

N/A
none
Quarantine provided insight into the clear imbalance between developed/developing countries. In a sense, the onslaught of COVID allowed us to gain insight into the injustice while also allowing us to see the perspectives of countries more clearly in terms of healthcare, education, nutrition, etc.
I have become more entrenched in the idea that the government needs to be organized in a way allowing for the breaking up of large conglomerates or monopolies, and also in taking measures to ensure safety. However my confidence in government officials has been completely destroyed from what I witnessed during the quarantine.
During the pandemic my political views did change. This was due to the extended periods of isolation as well as the significant events that happened during quarantine (ie the George Floyd killings and the 2020 presidential election).

Note. Information that could potentially reveal the identity of the survey recipient (e.g. social media handles, names of classes/clubs/schools) was redacted. Please contact the researcher with any inquiries.

Figure C2*Screenshot 2 of Free-response Answers*

I think I actually wasn't as active during quarantine. I didn't keep up with the news or anything, so I was very unconfident in expressing my opinions on certain issues at the time. Now as restrictions ease, I'm getting back into keeping up with current events and being able to formulate political opinions based on these events.

I think for me the views themselves changed more than how I consume and how much I consume media. I used to be mega liberal on some issues I didn't understand, but now that I understand these issues I'm still liberal but I feel more confident in how I view certain topics. I was always "confident" but now I can say I better understand my viewpoints.

Involved heavily in [REDACTED] so research is a key aspect to my development in my event. I research a lot before the pandemic, and only increased this amount over quarantine.

While I do not consider myself politically active whatsoever, because of the pandemic and quarantine I began to hyper focus on how the government was handling COVID. I feel it necessary for the government to intervene in such crises to a relatively high extent to maintain the peace and safety of the citizens. While I don't believe the government should be so overbearing or engaged in the day to day life of citizens there may remain certain cases where the government should be or have the power to become more involved in handling its citizens.

Figure C3*Screenshot 3 of Free-response Answers*

Before quarantine began, I was uneducated and uninterested in politics. I've always known I've wanted to help people. However, being in the midst of a global pandemic truly showed me how that goal would be achieved: through my voice and political activism. In truth, I'm a fairly timid and quiet person that prefers to listen rather than speak. Watching people suffer and not be able to advocate for themselves was the main reason why I have become so politically involved and outspoken. The individualized nature of quarantine gave me the chance to focus on [REDACTED], conquer my nerves, and speak in the manner I do today. Without quarantine, I would likely still want to practice [REDACTED] rather than spend my time reading articles and becoming educated on some of the most pressing political issues that plague society.

Gov isn't bad it just needs to be changed to work

Frankly, because of my involvement in certain extra curriculars, I find that while I am not politically active in changing the world around me, I am politically informed and know a lot about politics.

Events such as the January 6th insurrection made me re-evaluate police policy.

Figure C4*Screenshot 4 of Free-response Answers*

Before quarantine, I was quite moderate on most stances because I wasn't really informed as of yet. During quarantine, I began learning more and more about our current political climate and started to realize how much I dislike almost everything our governments do. As COVID restrictions eased, I began questioning the actual structure of our governments and began exploring different ideologies/governmental systems.

Yeah

I support the governmental ideas that help people like welfare and other programs but I am not a big fan of the current government overall. I feel that the government and the media take advantage of the American people and are too blinded by money to see that what they are doing is wrong.

Well during quarantine, I played a lot of historically accurate games and I had a [REDACTED] class in the later half of 2020 and beginning of 2021. I feel like events such as George Floyd and other occurring kind of made me want change. I kept finding myself point at others saying "why isn't this changing", but going off of a saying that one of teacher told me is that, if you point at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you.

Quarantine was a time of social exposure for the right and wrong reasons. If you were negligent in digesting and coming to personal terms with politics during this time, I believe it is still reflective today.

Figure C5*Screenshot 5 of Free-response Answers*

For social media medium, I use trusted news sources, not random stuff people find on insta and share it without doing research. Examples of new sources I use on insta are [REDACTED]

To supplement my answers with getting my news from social media, what I mostly mean is through YouTube videos. One of my favorite channels, [REDACTED], makes great videos explaining the current geopolitical/cultural state of the world and how history continues to affect today's world in ways that I never thought of. Another YouTube channel that changed my mind on many views is [REDACTED] who made me question my beliefs.

I do also believe that there sometimes is purposeful division of people by the media. I am very against this and believe it could be countered by studying history and figuring out why exactly things are the way they are. I try to use this quote when examining new information, "false information is worse than no information at all."

Trump lost 🤔

The extra time that I spent at home allowed me to gain more insight on politics.

Figure C6*Screenshot 6 of Free-response Answers*

Not a fan of the government, either party

not only does the idea of time in itself allow for reflection, but political media exposure expands to higher degrees. More time spent on social media leads to an inevitable exposure to politics regardless of their views, and have a significant effect

Personally, I feel that my views have become more moderate along the course of the pandemic, although I still lean right. I had usually received political news from political talk shows and podcasts, but I now find myself obtaining political information solely from online outlets such as NPR, Reuters, etc.

I believe that before quarantine I was definitely leaning more to the Right, and as Covid progressed I became more and more liberal.

Covid ruined politics.

Figure C7*Screenshot 7 of Free-response Answers*

To offer more inside info incase I didn't really clarify. A lot of my political views weren't really founded because I rarely followed politics in media (I didn't think AT FIRST Christians should be involved in politics). Only reason they grew is through word of mouth THROUGH my friends who were close to me during quarantine. Something I strongly believe now is that if government was less active (stopped handing out stimulus checks) people would get active again in working and the economy would gradually become stable again.

government should intervene in society when needed. however, they must do it in the best interest of the people.

n/a

During quarantine, I felt as though the best way to use my time was by taking a deeper look into our current economical and political circumstances. It was very overwhelming especially because it seemed as though my particular race was being targeted. I tried to remain ignorant during that time of quarantining, but it seemed as though that was the only thing to appear on TV or my social media feed, so I couldn't really stop myself from learning and finding my political standing. Now that quarantine is over and we are out and about, I haven't had time to really look into the country's political and economic state. all this to sa that was grateful for quarantine in the sense that I leaned so much.

Figure C8*Screenshot 8 of Free-response Answers***Figure C9***Screenshot 9 of Free-response Answers*

Figure C10*Screenshot 10 of Free-response Answers*

I started to get into politics during late 2019 as the primaries were first kicking off. I entered with little knowledge or refined politic beliefs leaving me to constantly shift my politics beliefs as I went along. However the pandemic started to go into full force and as we entered quarantine for the following months I was able to use some of the time to reflect on myself. This time also allowed me to follow politics that would truly align with what I believed in. I mainly used YouTube as my primary source during this time as news outlets and other informative channels posted videos on current on going issues.

During the quarantine, I began to question my beliefs and the beliefs of others a lot regarding both domestic and international issues; I also became aware to more nuances regarding political issues and found a way to better label political views by becoming aware of more politicians, political platforms, and issues that harm myself and others. Over the pandemic while glued to the only resources I had, I became extremely empathetic to social issues, exponentially furthering my empathy towards the wellbeing of other making me more political and eager to partake in political and social issues in the future.

Especially with January 6th this changed my views on certain issues like BLM and police brutality

I believe that during this time many more people took into politics because they were exposed to many more issues to have opinions on and their views were highly based on where they received their news from.

Figure C11*Screenshot 11 of Free-response Answers*

Quarantine allowed for people to be alone with their thoughts, and it furthered questioning around one's beliefs.

During quarantine i became like fully immersed in political theory, like I was reading Marxism based off of what people on the internet said, I had started writing political theory myself on the interaction of race and capitalism innmodern society. Now I am completely detached from that, I stopped paying attention, I only passively listen to NPR now.

I wasn't interested in politics and never really knew much about it but when covid 19 came I started to spend more time on social media and became aware of the problems and improvements that our government needs.

Most of my views have stayed the same before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United States specifically, all beauocracy is tied around the power process currently in the world, and different iterations of ideals are maintained and upheld by politicians to give confort to our multi-cultural nation as to keep the true intentions of our post-industrialized nation state secret.

Figure C12*Screenshot 12 of Free-response Answers*

Democrat or Republican, either constitute will uphold a certain idea, denounce a certain idea, or refuse to answer questions or certain ideals if there is fear around the loss of position or network, or if given the right amount of money via lobbyist.

Conservatists are fools, they whine about the decay of traditional values, yet they enthusiastically support technological progress and economic growth, it never occurs to the conservatist that rapid changes in technology and economy are not possible without changes in all other aspects of socieity, and that said changes inevitably break down traditional values.

Likewise a traditional democratic viewpoint of accepting technological progress and economic growth, even with it's vast changes of socieity as a whole, does not sit well with me personally.

Now with my political opinions I do not really feel the need to express or collectivise my opinions, likewise I do not feel a great need to judge other's opinions whether left-leaning or right-leaning. I more so like to understand why someone would think the way they think rather than compare the way they think to my own mindset. My beliefs can be somewhat extreme, but never have I thought to shun, verbally attack, or pyshically attack another human due to our political views not aligning.

Figure C13*Screenshot 13 of Free-response Answers*

Democrats are fucking stupid and it amazes me how many people are age from both sides follow everything so blindly.

I believe that I developed a false sense of knowledgeability on political topics through social media propaganda, but in reality they were one-sided views. I'm not active in trying to learn more at the moment though

Before covid I was never into politics and Im still not but I do realize they are much more important than what I thought before.

I now think the government should now be more strict on immigration regulations during the pandemic.

Quarantine has allowed me more time and content to determine my political veiws, with the government enacting mandates and restrictions regarding the pandemic.

Nothing really, I'm not really politically active or interested but thank you for asking

Figure C14*Screenshot 14 of Free-response Answers*

I used to think I was purely democratic, however upon doing my own research, there are certainly some Republican beliefs I share, even though I lean more democratic

During and before the quarantine I was somewhat political and would have the occasional argument with adults but as the quarantine went on I realized that I'm so young that my opinion doesn't matter so I slowly cared less about politics to the point where I don't care about them anymore

I feel like I have become more separate from my parents views as quarantine lessens. Before quarantine and post quarantine my parents had views that opposed my own but I was scared about discussing it with them. As quarantine measures lessen and with the use of social media, I have developed more confidence in my political opinions and a stronger independence from my parents views.

The political and social issues that arose from the pandemic caused me to think about politics, and follow up with the news more often.

My views shifted a lot more towards protecting human rights as I learned more about myself

"Democracy dies in darkness"

Figure C15*Screenshot 15 of Free-response Answers*

I feel that as though more young kids are becoming involved in politics, they do not have proper education on both sides. Many will support their side, yet have no idea what they actually stand for. I also believe most of what young kids are seeing about politics is misinformation through social media; this is very toxic to younger generations. Another important issue is the extremity of violence and backlash that has developed during the pandemic. Many receive threats and even experience assault just for stating their opinion. Idk if this helped with your survey but I felt like ranting anyways.

The government needs to settle down a bit and let the American citizens do what they need to during this outbreak.

I think social media might have influenced a lot of teens to pay attention to important topics however some of them did not encourage a deeper research before stating an opinion. It's always important to verify the sources, and actually base your opinion on strong arguments can help you support/develop your point of view.

My parents are on different sides of the scale. My parent (2) being more unbiased than parent (1) but that has made me view both sides and realize I don't identify with any side of the scale.

Figure C16*Screenshot 16 of Free-response Answers*

Personally, I feel that many people either go extreme left or extreme right without checking and looking into both sides more.

Before quarantine I was only exposed to the republican view points of my family members. During quarantine with the extra time I was able to branch out and do my own research and contemplate my own views of the world. Now, as restrictions ease I consider myself a democrat and am very secure and passionate about my political views.