

Politics is Brat: Political Memes within The 2024 Presidential Election

AP Research

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While driving my friend to school, we discussed the funny videos about the 2024 Presidential candidates that we saw on TikTok earlier that morning. Despite neither of us being able to vote, I wondered what she thought would make someone suitable for the Presidency. I asked her if she could vote, which of the candidates would she select?

“I’d vote for Kamala 'cause she likes coconut trees.”

Accompanying the rise of the digital age, political content is now more accessible. The 1993 public release of the World Wide Web enabled millions of users to create graphics and websites, engage in chat room discussions, and have unlimited access to information. This freedom of expression has significantly evolved in the last 30 years. As of 2023, nearly two-thirds of the world population utilizes the Web to access millions of websites, including various social media platforms (Ring, 2023). This population includes not only adults but also teenagers with Internet access. This growth in demographics resulted in a new digital subcategory of politics fueled by media outlets, political campaigns, and bipartisan algorithms. However, no other outlet prompts a more prominent discussion than the political meme. The term “meme” originates from evolutionist Richard Dawkins’s *The Selfish Gene*, where he defined his new term as a small cultural unit, such as snippets of songs or books, transmitted from person to person through imitation, which is similar to the function of the biological gene (Dawkins, 1976). But just as the world evolves, so does the new meaning of “meme.” Modernly, a meme is a small piece of digital content, typically a graphic or video accompanied by ironic or humorous text, amplified across multiple social media platforms. Political memes are primary examples of this format, further amplifying their appeal and prominence to social media algorithms. Teenagers, who are increasingly prevalent on social media, have become largely

prone to viewing these forms of media. Furthermore, as political memes are typically humorous and sarcastic, younger minds become attracted and feel compelled to engage further. Although one may believe that enabling teens to have unlimited political information will encourage them to be politically participative and informed, there is also a heavy risk. The vast majority of political memes spread misinformation, to which young, inexperienced minds are especially vulnerable. The jokes and songs occupying youth political conversations focus on out-of-context quotes and social media phenomena, not actual policy.

However, the impact of this humor-based focus remains unmeasured in the academic field. Most measurements on the impacts of memes derive data from Millennial demographics surrounding prior Presidential elections, such as the 2008 and 2012 elections. This research paper aims to answer the following question: To what extent does political entertainment through social media content impact possible political engagement amongst Midwestern 17-18-year-old Gen-Z voters in the 2024 Presidential election? Research in this area must be conducted to develop a political understanding of a lesser-known voting block, Gen Z. Because approximately 48% of Gen Z ages 18-29 obtains political information from TikTok (McClain, 2024), this emphasis on humor over policy must be understood to fully comprehend the mindset of future adults. Conducting research will provide a political analysis of a crucial voting demographic, as well as insight to how politicians can consider Gen-Z when developing their campaigns.

Literature Review

With the rise of modern politics, the future becomes increasingly daunting and uncertain, especially for those who will live in this imminence for the longest period of time. However, this fear does not daunt the citizens that compose Gen Z, as they are willing to make a change and make their voices heard. According to a 2023 Tufts CIRCLE report, approximately 28.4% of

youth ages 18-24 cast a ballot in their first general election. This is comparable to the 26% of Millennials and 23.6% of Gen-X voters in their respective first elections (Medina, 2023).

Although this report derives from a general election data pool, the increased involvement of youth in politics cannot be disregarded. Gen-Z, as they reach adulthood and begin to set the pathway of their future, is now deemed responsible for civic participation in governmental elections. Accompanying Gen-Z's newfound political responsibility, Tufts CIRCLE conducted a representative study among participants aged 18 to 29, aiming to uncover the unstudied political agenda of the young voter demographic. Researchers concluded that social media was a very common source of political information, especially through the use of memes (Booth et. al., 2023). The participatory politics of the new generation of voters is built from a reliance on digital media, which can be narrowed down to memes (Kahne et. al., 2014). The definition of a meme within this research is understood to be a small piece of digital content, typically a graphic or video accompanied by ironic or humorous text, amplified across multiple social media platforms, which is a modern edition of Richard Dawkins's original concept (Dawkins, 1976). Most of these factors take the form of a fan edit, mixtape, or dance (Walker, 2024). A broader implication of these small pieces of digital content is referred to as a meme phenomenon, demonstrated by the "Kamala is Brat" internet craze that will be discussed in a later section of this review. It is essential to study how Gen-Z voters, who use social media as a primary source of political information, interpret political media because that media may lead to a political alignment that later impacts the function of our government.

Exemplification and Appeals

The concept of a meme is no stranger to American politics, as they are comparable to and commonly categorized as modes of propaganda, which were notoriously utilized throughout both World Wars. However, what makes memes so unparalleled is that wartime propaganda used a top-down technique, where the government made works for the public to examine, while memes utilize a bottom-up approach that originates from citizens (Fenton, 2014). This bottom-up technique is further amplified by the increasing accessibility to content that the Internet provides, making political journalism no longer confined to corporations and governments (Fuchs, 2018). Anybody, regardless of political affiliation, economic status, or level of education, can create an image with ironic text and distribute it to the masses with the tap of a button. Concurrently, these widely shared pieces of information contribute to a subtle value many Americans unknowingly foster: relatability. Voters analyze candidates in search of consistency in agendas, intimate insight into their personal lives, down-to-earthness, and the ability to do and say what they want without influence from other political powers (Luebke & Engelmann, 2023). Such a value can be traced back to the Midwestern Front Porch Campaigns that were often utilized by Republican candidates from 1888 to 1920. These campaigns consisted of candidates sitting on their front porches and discussing their personal lives with a crowd of people. This paints the image of a humble family man and henceforth resonates and identifies with voters (Bourbon, 2019). This is analogous to the previously mentioned “Kamala is Brat” phenomenon, which took young social media users by storm during the campaign cycle of 2024 (Luse, 2024). The craze derives from singer-songwriter Charli xcx’s album *Brat*, which highlights the trashy, party-based lifestyle that many youth experience. Finding Democratic Presidential Nominee Kamala Harris to be “Brat,”

which Charli xcx publicly deemed her to be in a post on social media site X (Atchison, 2024), generates her to be relatable and relevant to the Gen-Z voter demographic. Not only was the Vice President amplified by young voters, but also by her campaign strategy that played into the trend and provided more content that could be made into memes, which has been utilized by other campaigns for political success (Verma & Sardesai, 2014). Yet, this concept of relatability is often met with the dual standard “ordinary-but-exceptional” trap, which expects politicians to be approachable and like any other citizen while simultaneously leading the nation to new, remarkable highs (Clarke et. al., 2018).

Negative Effects

The current literature on the negative effects of political memes derives from studies on partisan fighting and the all-too-controversial echo chamber phenomenon. Modern politics has become a dramatic spectacle since the rise of media and television, shifting the voter focus from policy to personality as early as the 2008 Presidential Election (Gurevitch et. al., 2009). This focus on the personal characteristics of each Presidential candidate has dramatically increased the polarization of the nation, compelling voters to utilize memes as a form of weaponry in “Meme Wars” (Al-Rawi, 2021). The policy-to-personality shift has further fostered a new understanding of political strategy, favoring memes rooted in relatability and humor rather than other forms of digital campaign content (Malone, 2024). Yet in most cases, public acknowledgment of memes from a politician can be fatal to the campaign and make politicians appear desperate (Bernstein, 2024). This generates a dual standard for Presidential campaigns, expected to appeal to the digital community and simultaneously the younger generations, but not to the extent that it becomes unfashionable. Moreover, accompanying the expansion of access to political meme production and unregulated distribution, the risk of fake news becomes

indisputable (Yerlikaya & Aslan, 2020). Although fact-checking programs and flags have been implemented through “community notes” on multiple social media platforms (Drolsbach, 2024), not every instance of fake or minorly inaccurate information can be flagged by algorithms. When an abundance of such false information clutters an entire algorithm, one can be immersed in a “media mirage” that is designed to fully engulf viewers within a political concept, otherwise known as an echo chamber (Rogers & Niederer, 2024). Media mirages cause viewers to be completely immersed in one political perspective, repeatedly confirming their own bias and not allowing any sort of outside opinion to make their way onto their feed. Additionally, with the entertainment value of political memes, younger digital citizens are then left trapped in a consistent cycle of scrolling.

Positive Effects

The current literature on the positive effects of political memes consists of a hopeful stance on political participation and unity amongst like-minded voters. Within a 2012 Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project survey, researchers discovered that 60% of American adults utilize social networking sites like Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), and 39% of these participants engaged in 1 of 8 activities within political social media engagement (Raine et. al., 2012). As social media has become drastically more prevalent with advancing technology, it is viable to assume that this rate has paralleled this growth. This universality gives ample room for political memes to reinforce, challenge, and transgress political boundaries and serve as frontiers of common beliefs to a widespread audience (Mortensen & Neumayer, 2021). In a qualitative exploratory study conducted amongst a focus group of college students, researcher Joel Penney (2020) concluded that a vast range of engagement and shared political beliefs fosters communities of solidarity for those who think similarly, generating a power to promote genuine

political statements and possibly influence peers. Meanwhile, these groups of solidarity can utilize the humorous content of political memes as a coping mechanism for displeasing political occurrences. This discussion on the emotional impact of political memes is progressed by researcher Faiswal Kasirye (2019), who contends that memes can inflict firm emotions, such as anger and sadness, and therefore go viral due to the human brain's perception of information and the need to indulge further. The pairing of firm emotion, humor, virality, and unity sparks memes as a form of resistance against dominant media messages, enabling passion and participation amongst a new generation of voters (Ehrlichman & Pluretti, 2023). Not only this, but the format of a meme makes becoming politically engaged a more playful and enjoyable process. Memes encourage a new form of political participation, which may serve as a jumping point for more political action, such as writing to legislators, donating to causes, and developing firm opinions. Such aspects have a significant probability of making politicians more compelled to consider a voter's values and take action (Arceneaux et. al., 2016). This will in turn generate politics and government to be a stronger representation of the American people, reflecting the true needs and principles of the nation. The power of a meme is a playful invitation to join the political conversation, amplifying voices that may otherwise not be heard amongst a new generation of voters.

Gap

In the current academic standpoint of the effect of political memes, the majority of research relies on data collected from over 10 years ago, from generations outside of Gen-Z or foreign countries. A considerable amount of academia in this field focuses on the digital landscape of the late 2000s and early 2010s, which is centered around the political monopoly once held by cable TV (Gottfried et. al., 2016) (Shah et. al., 2007). Furthermore, there are few

viable studies on recent elections, such as the 2020 and 2024 Presidential elections, rather opting for a focal point on the Presidential elections of 2008, 2012, and the uncommon 2016 discussion (Yang & Dehart., 2016) (Vromen et. al., 2016). This is in part due to the time that it takes to conduct a full-scale research project. Another contributing factor to my gap is the prevalence of foreign studies, which often fit the criteria and focus of my research, but are collected from Gen-Z members of different nations (Collin, 2015). As there is little information on the prevalence of the impact of political memes on younger Gen-Z voters in the United States, this research is to serve as a foundational study to establish the extent to which political memes do impact how Gen-Z citizens cast their ballots in Presidential elections.

Method

Spanning from January to February 2025, I conducted a survey among juniors and seniors within my local Midwestern high school. I utilized a survey method because the questionnaire could be sent to a large amount of my desired demographic and filled out within a brief time period. It was crucial that my survey could obtain widespread outreach because my research aims to establish a significant, majority-supported relation between political memes and the perceptions of a broad generational demographic, which has already been narrowed to a local standpoint. When beginning to format my survey, I found a reference within Audrey Halversen and Brian E. Weeks' "Memeing Politics: Understanding Political Meme Creators, Audiences, and Consequences on Social Media" (2023). This model study has similar goals and discussion points to my research and utilized a two-wave national survey for data collection. The researchers also formatted their survey utilizing a 7-point Likert scale amongst roughly 10 phrases that prompted agreement or disagreement from participants. After communicating with and requesting permission to utilize the model study's prompts from researcher Audrey

Halversen, I began to create my survey. To condense the amount of time required to complete the survey and therefore increase the probability of participation, I modified the original 7-point Likert scale to a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree...Strongly Agree). I then utilized 8 out of the 10 original prompts from “Memeing Politics,” along with 5 personally configured prompts. These 13 prompts were sorted into categories that aligned with discussion points found within my literature review. (Appendix A).

Ethics

The survey within my research was engineered to fit ethical research guidelines, especially as my desired demographic consisted of those barely unable to vote age (17) and those newly eligible to vote (18). I ensured an ethical method of collection by adding a disclaimer at the beginning of my survey, affirming that participants were 18 years of age or had parental permission to further engage with my study. Furthermore, all responses generated from my survey remained completely anonymous, with all form settings set to comply with such a standard. I as the researcher, when encouraging students to complete my survey, did not check individual responses within the survey application. It was also crucial that my survey remain completely anonymous to ensure the comfort of participants, as political outlooks are often a more private matter of discussion. Additionally, I ensured that my survey required a minimal amount of time and did not require strenuous effort, appealing to child labor laws and regulations of the same degree. Participants were also able to exit the survey at any time.

Procedure

After finalizing my prompts and ensuring that they complied with ethical practices, I sent my survey to the junior and senior classes of my local Midwestern high school. This was done through Gmail and sent through the messenger of my research advisor, as she had the

administrative capabilities to send a mass email. After its initial release, I engaged in a month-long multiphase strategy that consisted of a new method of promotion every week. For the first phase, I started by simply sending out the survey and setting up a corresponding organization system within Google Sheets. The following week, I communicated with my school's guidance office and compiled a list of teachers who primarily taught juniors and seniors. I then generated a QR code that directed participants to my survey and wrote a letter to teachers explaining my research and my request for their assistance. This QR code and letter were placed into the aforementioned teachers' mailboxes and were then hung on their classroom whiteboards. Students were able to scan the code before and after class, meaning my QR code did not disrupt instructional time. In the third week of my study, my research advisor resent my survey through Gmail, as the first wave consisted of an abundance of faulty links, then one last successful link due to an unexpected Google Forms update. This original frenzy deterred many possible participants, so I found it necessary to send out one lone working link. For the final week, I purchased a diverse array of candy, displayed them in a box, and began incentivizing students who had already taken or then took my survey. This complies with my anonymity principle as I did not view the responses after participants submitted their survey, look at the participants' screens while they took the survey, or view any individual responses. After the month of data collection, I closed the response window and implored teachers to remove the QR code from their boards.

Sample

During the first week of my data collection, I scheduled a meeting with the assistant principal at my local Midwestern high school and requested the total enrollment of juniors and seniors, as they are my target demographic. This amounted to 776 possible participants. My goal

was to have a majority sample size, which equated to 388 students. I deemed this majority to be necessary because my research aims to be representative of a generational cohort. As my possible outreach could not extend to every 17-18-year-old in the United States, I reached for the most possible. Yet, due to the time constraint of my survey, I was able to obtain 160 respondents, which is approximately 41% of my 388 desired cohort. This number is still substantial for my data, so the data of my research will consist of a total population of $n = 160$.

Findings

Within my survey, I utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This provided a specified outlook by participants, displaying their true feelings regarding the provided prompts. However, to maximize clarity within my findings section, I condensed these options to Positive Perception (Agree and Strongly Agree), Negative Perception (Disagree and Strongly Disagree), and Neutral. This consisted of adding the results of the combined options together, generating three agreement points rather than five. The answers to the prompts were then compared to their counterparts within their designated category, which then was evaluated to either prove or disprove an original category hypothesis. These hypotheses are engineered to establish a conclusion to my research question: To what extent does political entertainment through social media content impact possible political engagement amongst Midwestern 17-18-year-old Gen-Z members in the 2024 Presidential election? For concise clarity within this section, I will only be discussing results that are the most significant.

Circulation: Creating v. Reposting

The two questions within this category focused on the circulation of political memes and by whom they are created. Circulation is significant to political engagement through memes as it is how they are amplified and created. Without circulation, memes would not be such a global phenomenon as we know them to be.

Table 1: *Creating memes versus sharing the memes created by others. n=160*

Perception Level	Created and Posted Memes	Shared Memes Made by Another
Positive Perception	7	65
Neutral	15	25
Negative Perception	138	70

Note: Graphs on Appendix B and C.

The data of the creation and posting of memes individually is dramatically skewed to the negative perception, while the data of sharing memes made by another is almost even between positive and negative perception. This indicates that participants generally did not create memes of their own and shared them on social media but rather opted to share memes that came across their feeds.

Exposure

Within this category, I asked a singular question that aimed to give a relative measurement of how often participants viewed political memes. Viewing political memes is the catalyst event to possible effects, both negative and positive, giving ample necessity to study the regularity of such viewership.

Table 2: *Regularity of viewing political memes. n=160*

Perception Level	“I regularly saw memes about the 2024 Presidential election.”
Positive Perception	138
Neutral	13
Negative Perception	9

Note Graph on Appendix D.

The number of responses that resonated with agreement is staggering compared to the neutral and negative counterparts. The results of this data conclude that a firm 86.3% majority of participants regularly regarded political memes, making the viewership of political memes a

thoroughly experienced occurrence. Such a fortified majority makes the impact of political memes unavoidable as they are a very commonly regarded form of media.

Sharing Intentions

The goal of this section is to identify the intentions of participants as they circulate political memes. This is connected to my research question as it clarifies the “why” of such a mass media occurrence.

Table 3: *Intentions of sharing memes. n=160*

Perception Level	Persuade	Inform	Expose
Positive Perception	44	72	63
Neutral	24	28	29
Negative Perception	92	60	68

Note Graphs on Appendix G, H, and I.

While the results of the persuasion section are weighted towards negative perception, the inform and expose sections are more evenly distributed between the three agreement points. This suggests that intentions of informing and exposing are more possible amongst participants, but persuading is a relatively unintended action.

Emotional Appeals

Political memes are largely based on humor, as they are, by definition, memes. This section aimed to specify the emotional impacts of political memes, focusing on humor and ease.

Table 3: *Intentions of sharing memes. n=160*

Perception Level	Found political memes to be humorous	Funny memes make politics less worrying
Positive Perception	126	76
Neutral	23	34
Negative Perception	10	47

Note Graphs on Appendix J and L.

Within this distribution, participants largely displayed positive perceptions to finding political memes to be humorous. However, contrary to a popular association that humor makes complex subjects more manageable and lighthearted, the data suggests that this notion is less prevalent amongst my sample group.

Discussion

Upon completing my data collection period, I began analyzing my data by observing the answer frequency to each prompt. I then developed a reasoning for these frequencies, comparing the majority to the minority. Then, I added conclusions within each prompt to the categorical discussion, contributing to an overall result from each category, as paralleled by my model study (Halverson & Weeks, 2023). These results are then attributed to answer the varying aspects of the research question.

Circulation

This section included two prompts that aimed to designate how political memes are created and spread. One prompt asked if participants created and shared memes themselves, while the other asked if participants typically just reposted a meme made by another person (Appendix C). The most drastic of these responses was the 86.3% of participants who displayed a negative perception of creating memes themselves. This negative association decays within the second prompt (Appendix B), as only 43.8% displayed a negative perception of reposting memes made by others. Participants demonstrated a more positive agreement to reposting memes rather than creating memes themselves, affirming a previously developed hypothesis: Gen-Z members do not want to put effort into creating political memes, rather opting to simply reshare. Developing a new meme requires an original joke/caption and graphic editing to make an engaging picture. The lack of meme development within this chosen demographic could be

attributed to various reasons, such as time constraints and access to editing software. Instead, they are more likely to reshare a funny meme that comes across their feed. However, the negative perception remains a considerable portion of the responses, warranting that participants often do not create or share memes altogether.

Exposure

Yet, when asked how often they viewed political memes (Appendix D), 86.3% of participants demonstrated a positive perception of regularly viewing political content. Although participants may not be creating or resharing political memes, they are vast consumers of such content and may be discreetly affected. Whether it be confirming their own biases or broadening their outlook, participants are definitively exposed to political memes and are subject to the correlating effects. This viewership may also be a part of a political media echo chamber, which would be an escalated level of political effect.

Expressions

When asked how participants express their political beliefs through either posting their opinions (Appendix E) or commenting on other news-related posts (Appendix F), the vast majority of respondents displayed a negative perception. This reaffirms the aforementioned ideal that a majority of Gen-Z members do not typically demonstrate the dedication of creating, reposting, or engaging with political memes but are still highly prone to viewership and its correlating effects.

Emotions and Appeal

Within the emotion-based category of my study, an additional prompt was in this category that was not in my original findings section. This prompt asked participants if they viewed political memes and found them to be relatable. 52.9% of respondents demonstrated a

positive perception, while 27.1% and 20% held neutral and negative stances, respectively (Appendix K). The simple majority displayed a positive perception of relatability in political memes because that is what political memes are designed for. They are designed to resonate with the common people, as they are generated by the common people rather than being created by a less-engaging corporate technique (Fenton, 2014). Further prompts then asked respondents if they found Presidential candidates who make memes about themselves to be more approachable and relatable, therefore appealing (Appendix N), and if they became swayed to a candidate by a defaming meme about an opposing candidate (Appendix M). Within these results, 47.9% of participants displayed a positive perception of candidates making memes about themselves. This ties to the previous prompt about relatability amongst political memes, finding relatability to be a sought-after virtue amongst my participant demographic. Additionally, 60% of respondents displayed a negative perception of being swayed to an opposing candidate by defaming political memes. The results from these two prompts can be utilized as insight into how Gen-Z voters engage with digital election campaigns. Per these results, candidates should focus on connecting to the younger generation through political memes about themselves rather than making a futile attempt to sway voters away from competitors.

Implications

In response to my original question, “To what extent does political entertainment through social media content impact possible voting amongst Midwestern 17-18-year-old Gen-Z members in the 2024 Presidential election?” it is suggested that political memes have a subtle yet significant effect on Gen-Z members. Respondents within this study concluded that they frequently viewed political memes and valued relatability and humor amongst these forms of media. However, participants did not tend to directly engage with political memes through means

such as regularly reposting, creating, or commenting. This goes against the original assertion presented by researchers Sara Erlichman and Roseann Pluretti, who stated that the emotional pairings conducted by political memes serve as a way to promote political passions and engagement (2021). However, just because participants are not actively engaging does not mean they are not prone to the effects of viewing political memes. Most respondents found political memes humorous or relatable, amplifying their capability to slowly seep into the subconscious of young minds. Moreover, political memes could also be a part of a larger echo chamber, which, if riddled with humor and relatability, could violently engulf viewers into a whirlwind of political bias or even misinformation.

Limitations

My target demographic, being from a small suburban Midwestern high school, is not entirely representative of all members of Gen Z. Many Gen Z members have become politically active and utilize memes in the campaign conversation, but my sample does not fully relay these ideals. If given the opportunity, with fewer time constraints on my high school calendar, I would reach for more representatives that would possibly push beyond just one school. I would reach for the entire state of my residency, or possibly the nation. Furthermore, I would add phases of my research that include a content analysis of a collection of political memes and interviews with participants where they could express their full outlook on political memes. These two additional methods would offer more qualitative results that could be analyzed for further thematic consistencies and applied to my existing conclusion.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

My study, consisting of a survey that was conducted within 4 weeks amongst Midwestern 17-18-year-old students, concluded that participants did not tend to directly engage with political memes through actions such as creation, reposting, or commenting. However, members did indicate that they commonly associate memes to be relatable and humorous, therefore appealing in nature. The most drastic finding of this study is that of the percentage of my cohort that either agreed or strongly agreed to regularly viewing political memes, being 86.3%. All of these notions coincide with my original assumptions and hypothesis: that participants would be frequent viewers of political memes and would find them to be humorous and relatable, yet would not make memes of their own or repost memes regularly.

Body of Knowledge

Upon my initial review of the current conversation of political memes, I found the understanding to be based upon studies of older generations such as Millennials and Gen-X. I was compelled to fill this gap in the literature as Gen-Z is a crucial voting demographic that is an up-in-coming force in the political sphere. Moreover, I was curious to develop a consensus on the aspects of political memes that influenced the Gen-Z members that make up my own community, localizing the issue to make it irrevocably tangible. The results of my study both affirmed and disproved notions from previous scholarly works. In concerns of values amongst Gen-Z, both my study and researchers Gurevitch, Coleman, and Blumler (2009) concluded that modern politics has heavily shifted in focus from policy to personality. This is why viewers of political memes tend to value relatability amongst candidates, as echoed in the results of my study. Concurrently, writer Clare Malone (2024) calls attention to the advancing campaign

strategy that political memes embody, recommending politicians to take advantage of this newfound directive. Within my research, I expanded on Malone's assertions by identifying that relatability and touches of humor were the aspects of memes that were most positively received by Gen-Z voters. Despite these agreements, my research does not firmly support Erlichman and Pluretti's (2023) original claim that political memes are a playful invitation to become more politically active. Although memes did prove to be identified as humorous and therefore playful, the participants of my demographic did not demonstrate a positive level of political activity despite being frequently exposed to said memes.

Further Research and Significance

If one were to conduct a study similar to my own, I would recommend modifying my research question and utilizing a larger sample size beyond a singular school. Although my study is largely representative of the local and accessible portion of Gen-Z, it cannot be entirely representative of the entire Midwest or national population. Expanding on my research by pushing past city lines would garner a nationally affirmed result of the effects of political memes, which could be used to draw media and government attention to the implications of said effects. Gen-Z is a vital demographic as they are the direct future of our world, so it is crucial to understand the ways in which they evaluate possible leadership. By developing this understanding, an assessment can be made on how politicians can tailor their campaigns, but also as to how initiatives focusing on political literacy can bring attention to the policy side of government. After all, Presidential elections and the future of our government cannot simply depend on dances to the YMCA and coconut trees.

Appendix

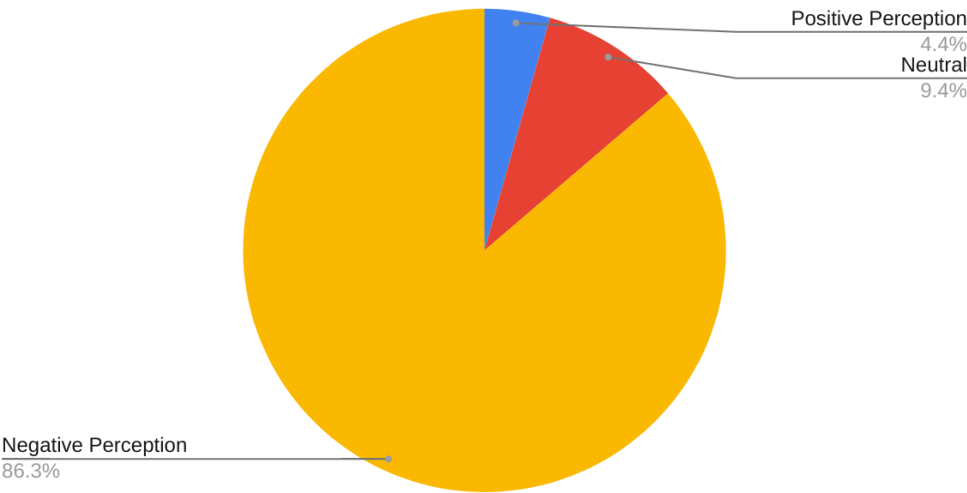
Appendix A

Category	Questions within Survey
Circulation	I regularly created and posted memes/videos about the 2024 Presidential election or candidates.
	I regularly shared or posted memes/videos about the 2024 presidential election or candidates that were created by someone else
Exposure	I regularly saw memes about the 2024 presidential election or candidates.
Political Expression	I regularly shared or posted my own opinions about the 2024 presidential election or candidates.
	I regularly commented on news or information about the 2024 presidential election or candidates that were posted by someone else.
Sharing Intentions	I shared news or political information to persuade other people about a political issue or candidate.
	I shared news or political information to expose or make fun of a political candidate or campaign.
	I shared news or political information to provide information to other people about a political issue or candidate.
Emotional Appeals	I viewed political memes/videos and found them humorous.
	I viewed political memes/videos and found them to be relatable.
	When I see an unflattering meme about one Presidential candidate, I become more drawn to the opposing candidate.

	Presidential candidates who make memes about themselves are more approachable and relatable, therefore appealing.
	Funny memes make politics less worrying.

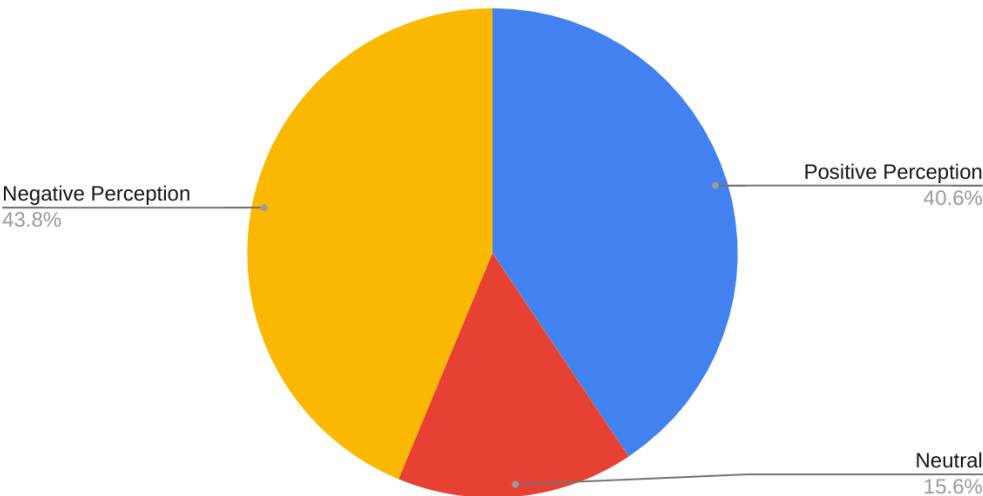
Appendix B

I regularly created and posted memes/videos about the 2024 Presidential election or candidates.



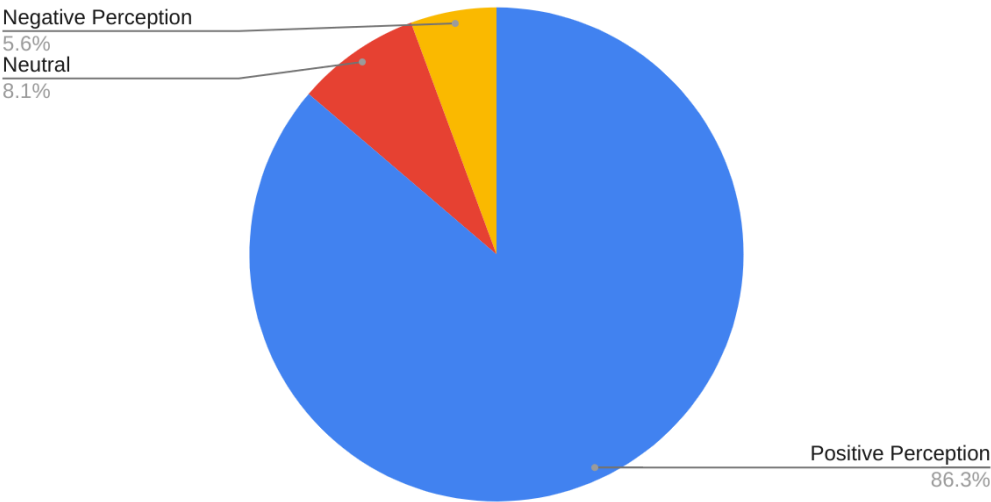
Appendix C

I regularly shared or posted memes/videos about the 2024 presidential election or candidates that were created by som...



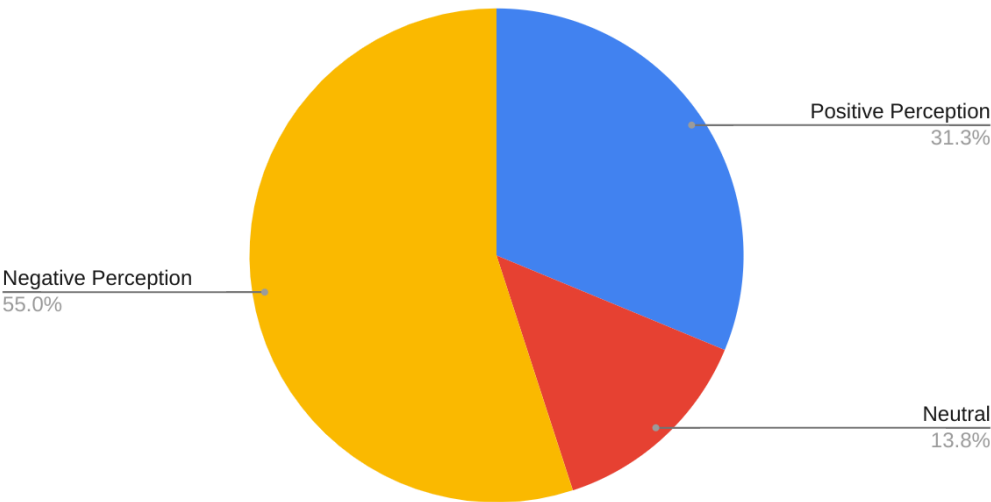
Appendix D

I regularly saw memes about the 2024 presidential election o...



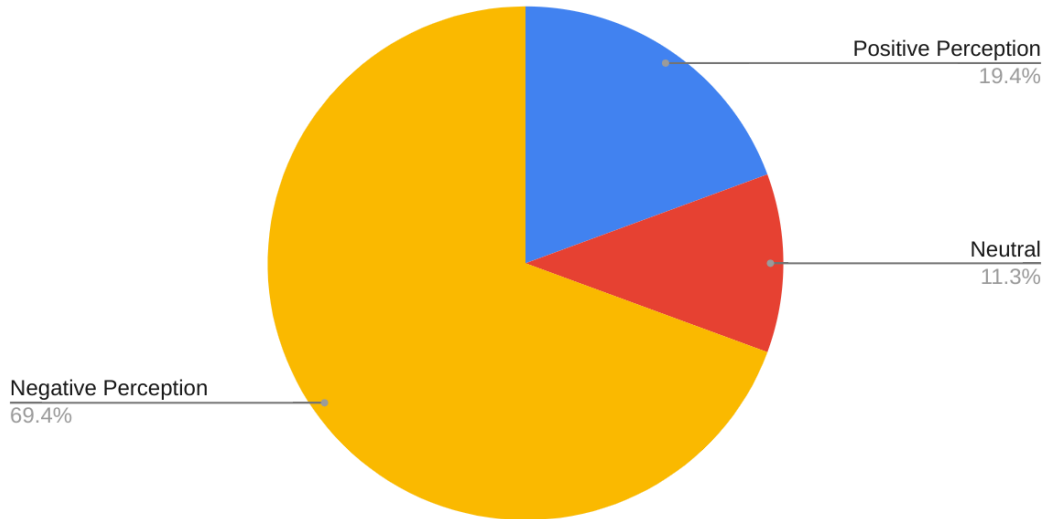
Appendix E

I regularly shared or posted my own opinions about the 2024...

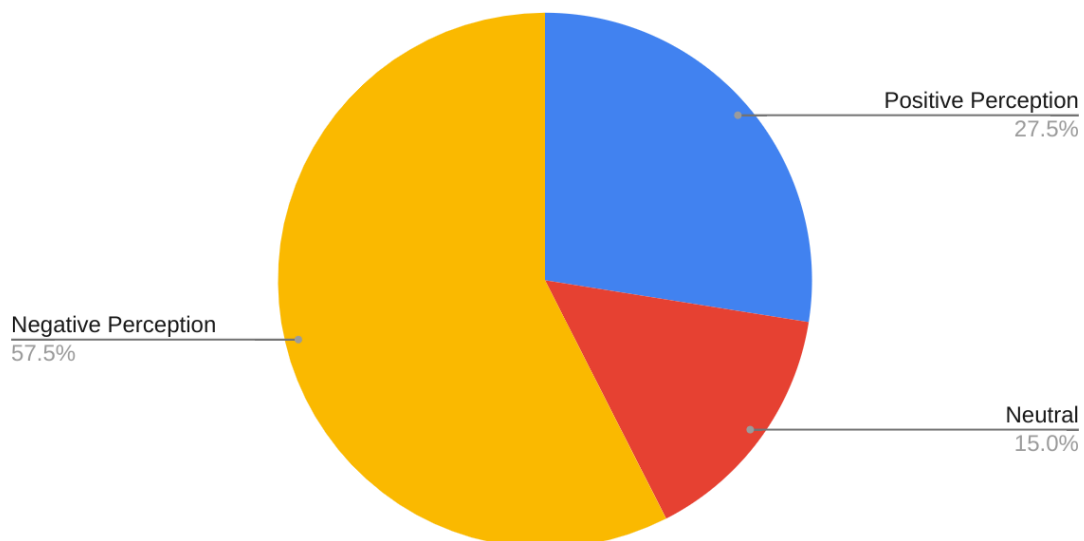


Appendix F

I regularly commented on news or information about the 202...

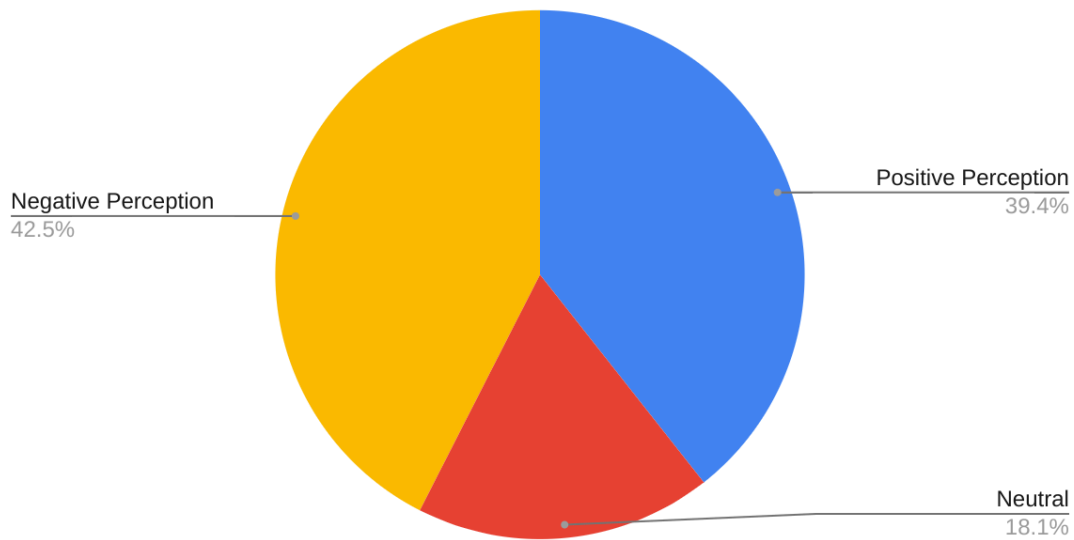
**Appendix G**

I shared news or political information to persuade other people about a political issue or candidate.



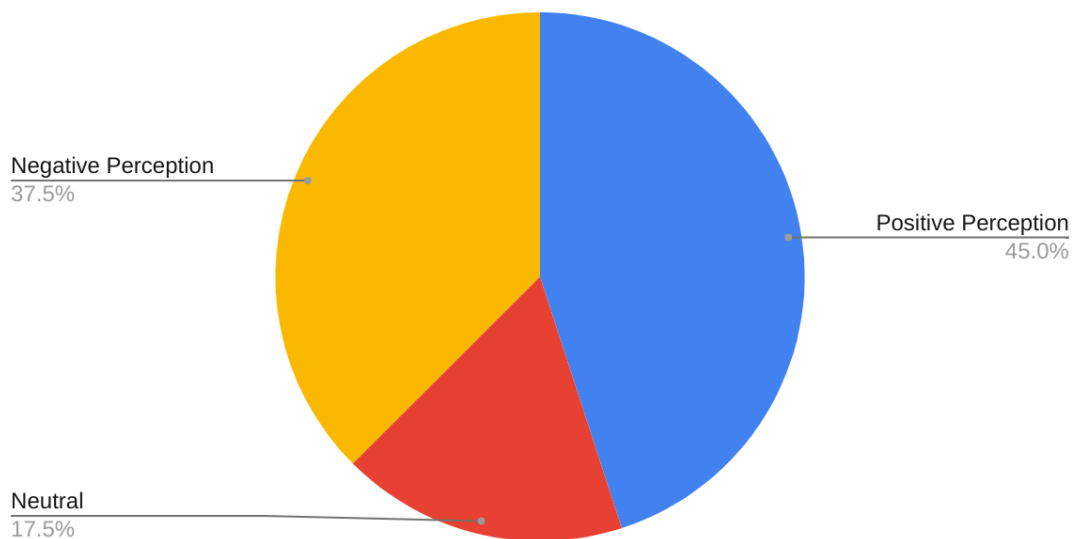
Appendix H

I shared news or political information to expose or make fun...



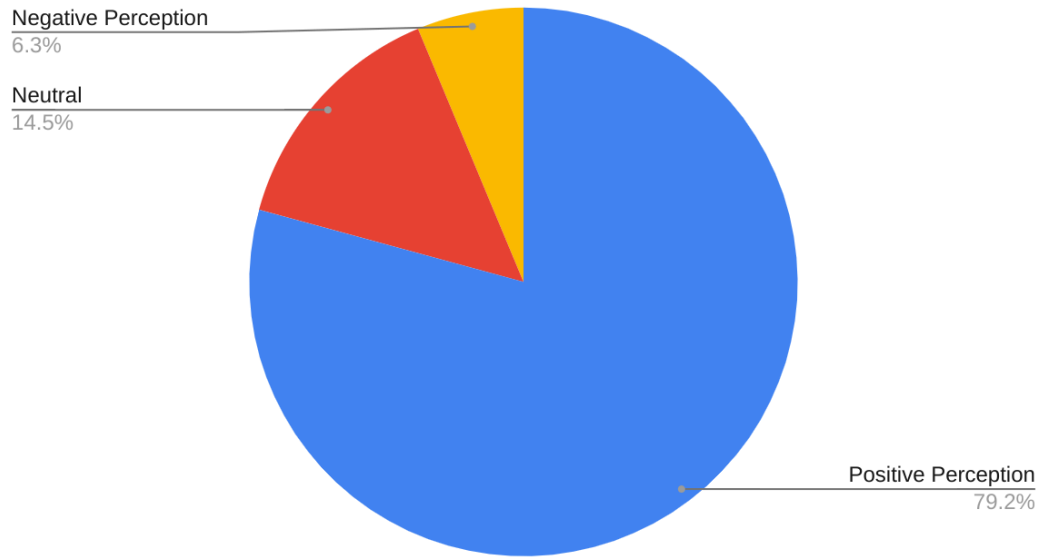
Appendix I

I shared news or political information to provide information t...

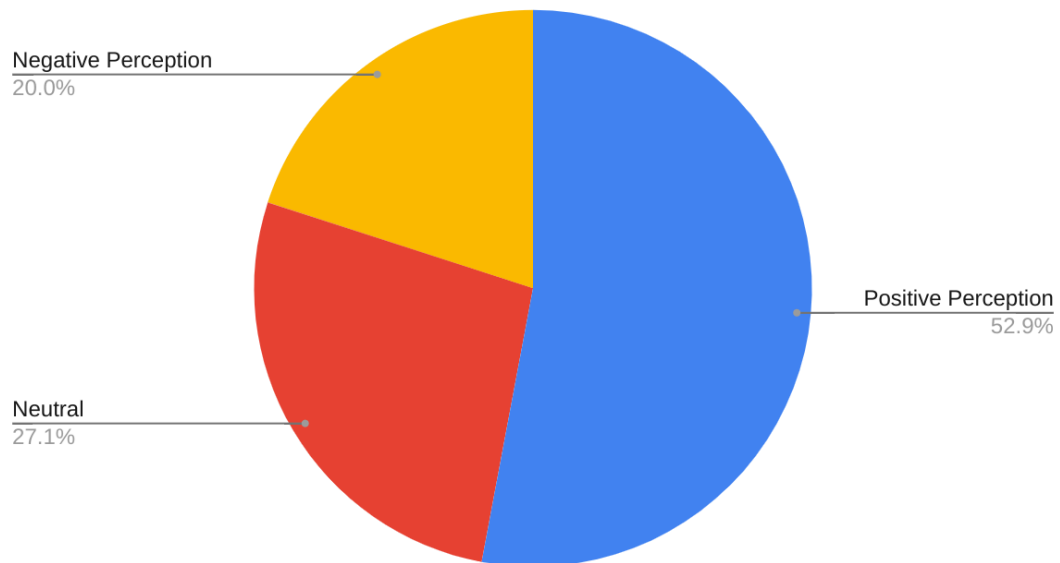


Appendix J

I viewed political memes/videos and found them humorous.

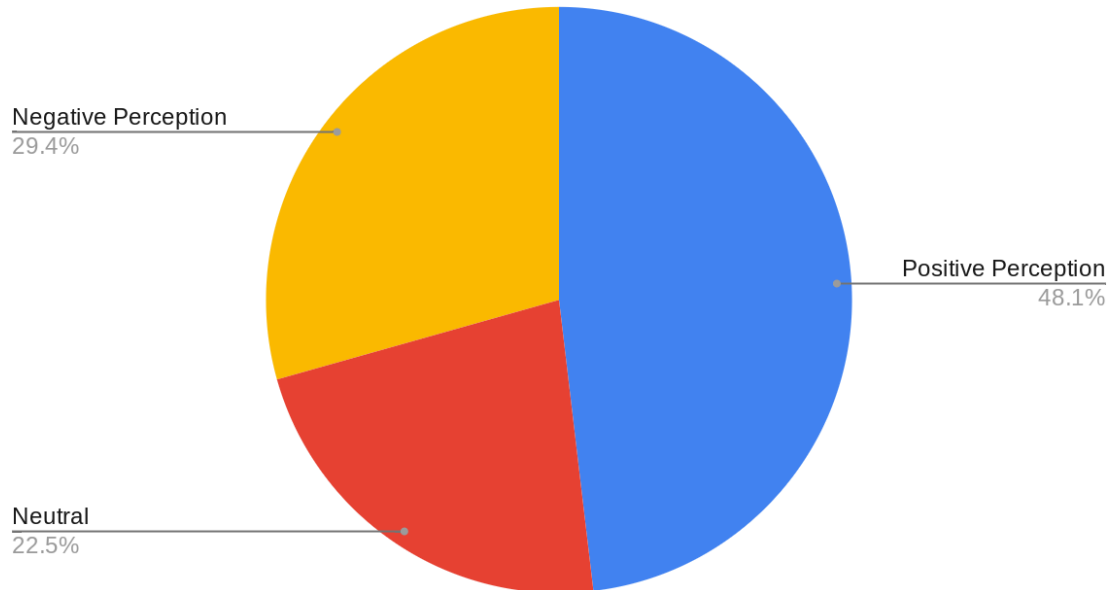
**Appendix K**

I viewed political memes/videos and found them relatable.

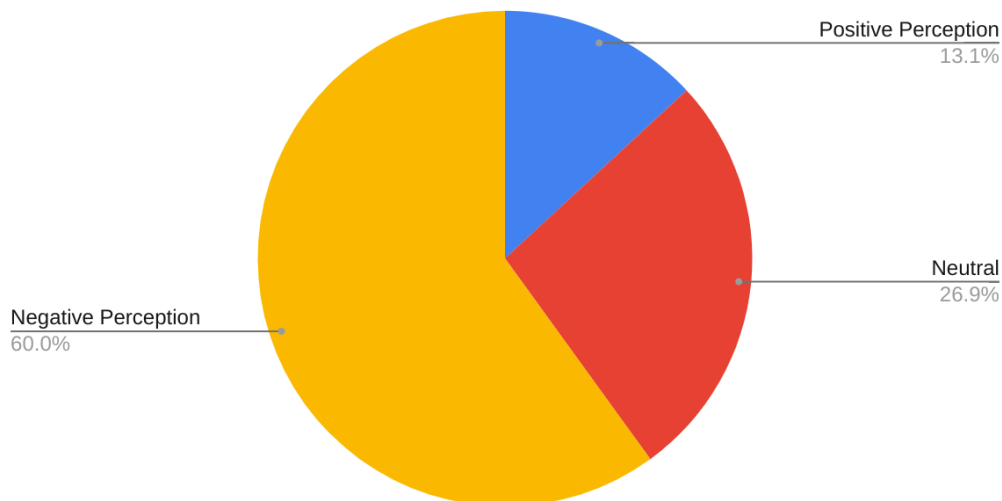


Appendix L

Funny memes make politics less worrying.

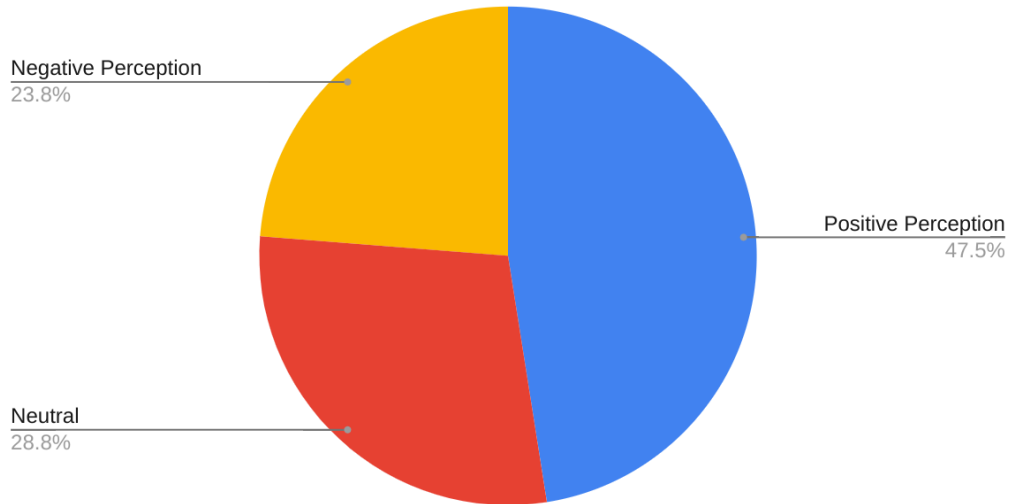
**Appendix M**

When I see an unflattering meme about one Presidential candidate, I become more drawn to the opposing candidate.



Appendix N

Presidential candidates who make memes about themselves are more approachable and relatable, therefore appealing.



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