



The demographic gaps of media as a stress relief

An Ipsos Point of View

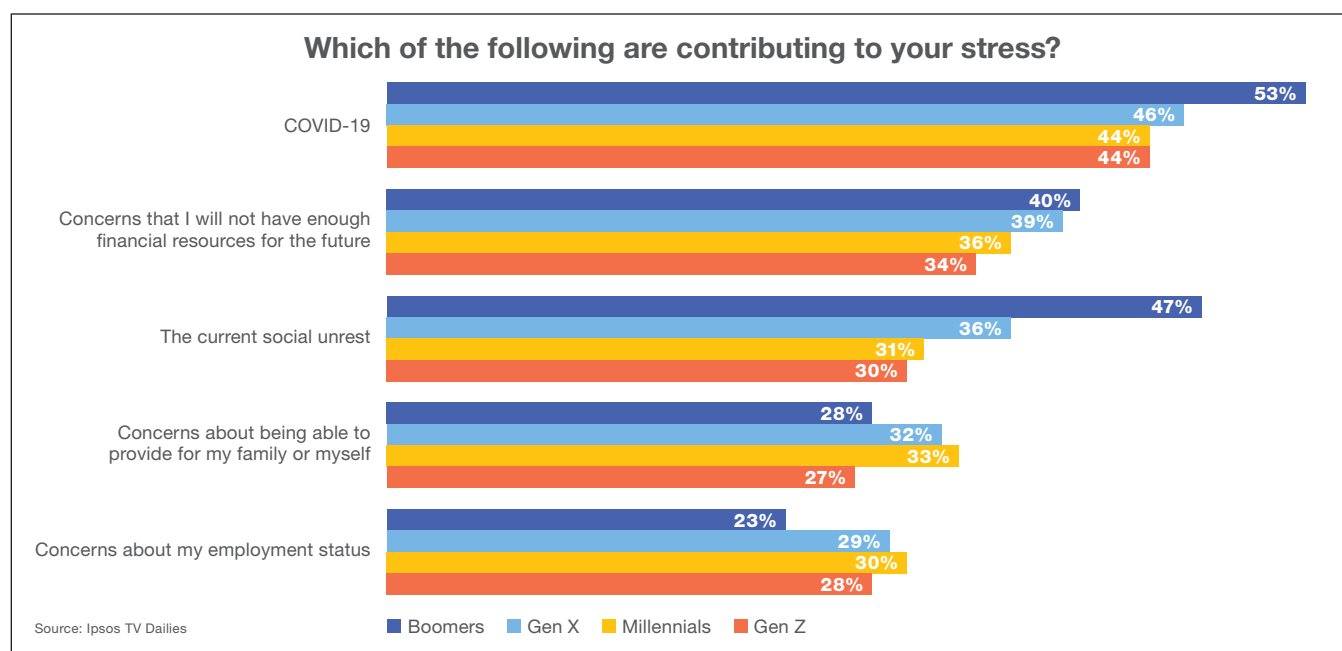


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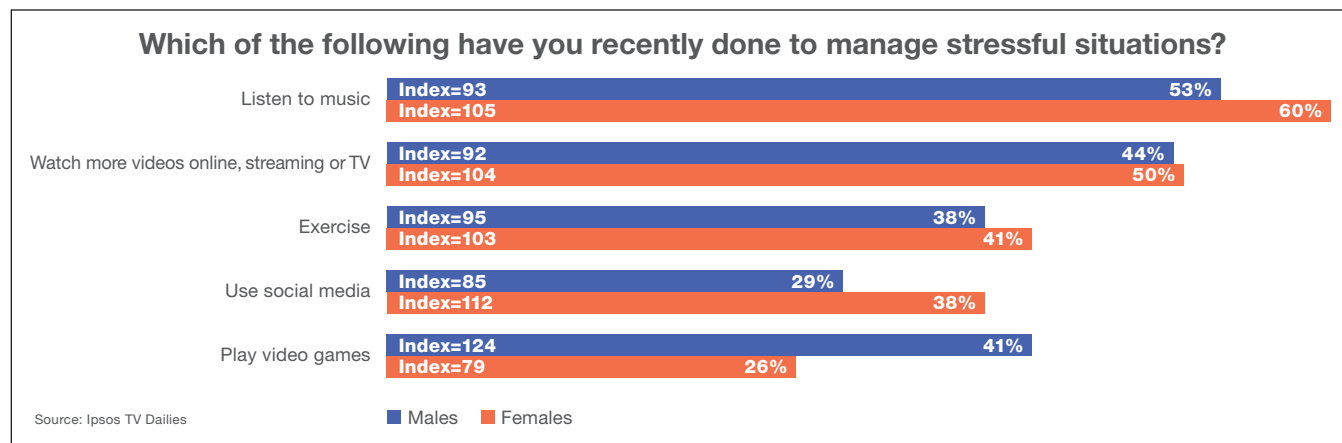
If one word could be used to describe 2020 thus far, stressful would be a good and accurate choice. In fact, a new wave from the Ipsos TV Dailies longitudinal media tracker reveals 32% of Americans report feeling highly stressed. In a related POV, we looked at how people are using media as a stress relief and escape. Taking a deeper dive, we see gender and generational differences when it comes to what is causing stress and how different groups are coping with it.

Across demographics, COVID-19 is driving the most stress in our lives now, followed by related worries over not having enough financial resources for the future and the current social unrest.



Women and younger Americans are feeling the highest levels of stress. Women, overall, report feeling more stressed about each of the top five stressors, from economic concerns to social issues and family. The skew is most pronounced among concerns about financial resources for the future, and social unrest. Men did express greater concern over one topic of note—dating.

Generationally, Millennials are worried about issues that hit more personally—such as money. Boomers, in contrast, are more stressed out about macro issues, such as the country’s social unrest and the upcoming elections. Gen Z appears to be equally worried about their financial resources and the social unrest taking place. It is perhaps this burden of being worried about both personal and broader issues that is taking its toll on Gen Z.



Media plays a huge role in how people cope with stress in their lives. Listening to music is the top stress-reliever for all generations.

While looking at the usage of media to cope, women tend to use it to escape or disengage from issues. They do so by avoiding watching news. They also accomplish this by managing what they see on social media. Men, on the other hand, choose engagement over withdrawal and are more likely to watch shows about current issues, while also being less likely to avoid watching the news.

When it comes to what shows they watch, women are more likely than men to watch three of the top five genres: comedy, drama and crime, while men are more likely to watch action and adventure programming. Women are also more likely to prefer romance, cooking, mystery and reality, whereas men prefer sports and sci-fi.

The Ipsos Tracker reveals women are more likely to take part in creative and social activities to help manage the stress in their lives. When it came to options like cooking, painting, writing or reaching out to a friend or family member, women over men, overwhelmingly sought to do these activities to help mitigate the stress.

Overall, while stress levels between men and women seem similar, when we do a deeper dive, we uncover some great differences in the stressors and coping mechanisms between genders. Although both heavily rely on media options as a stress reliever, what they are looking for in these options varies greatly.

What Can Brands Do?

De-stressing Gen Z: Brands must keep messaging and content positive for this younger generation—inspire them if you can, amuse them as you must. Content platforms and creators must also enable content experiences that are brief, funny and musical. Perhaps this is what’s behind the success of platforms, like TikTok, as they mastered entertainment when everyone needed an escape, even if brief.

Gender Differences not Gender Divide: It is important for brands to take mindsets into consideration in the content and brand experiences they offer people during these stressful times. It is important to find the balance between communication, calm and escape in brand content and creative. These mindsets serve as signals for what tone needs to be set by and is expected from brands.

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