

Who Reads More?: Comparing Book Consumption Between Various Groups



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Abstract

In the Pew Research Center (2019) Core Trends Survey for Internet & Tech, one item asked respondents how many books they consumed during the past 12 months. Based on this data, the present research addresses five questions. How are sex and average number of books consumed related? How are generational cohort (Millennials, Generation X, and Boomers) and average number of books consumed related? How are educational attainment and average number of books consumed related? How are income and average number of books consumed related? How are political party affiliation and average number of books consumed related? Analysis (focused on graphics) shows differences across each of the five sets of comparisons.

Focus of Research

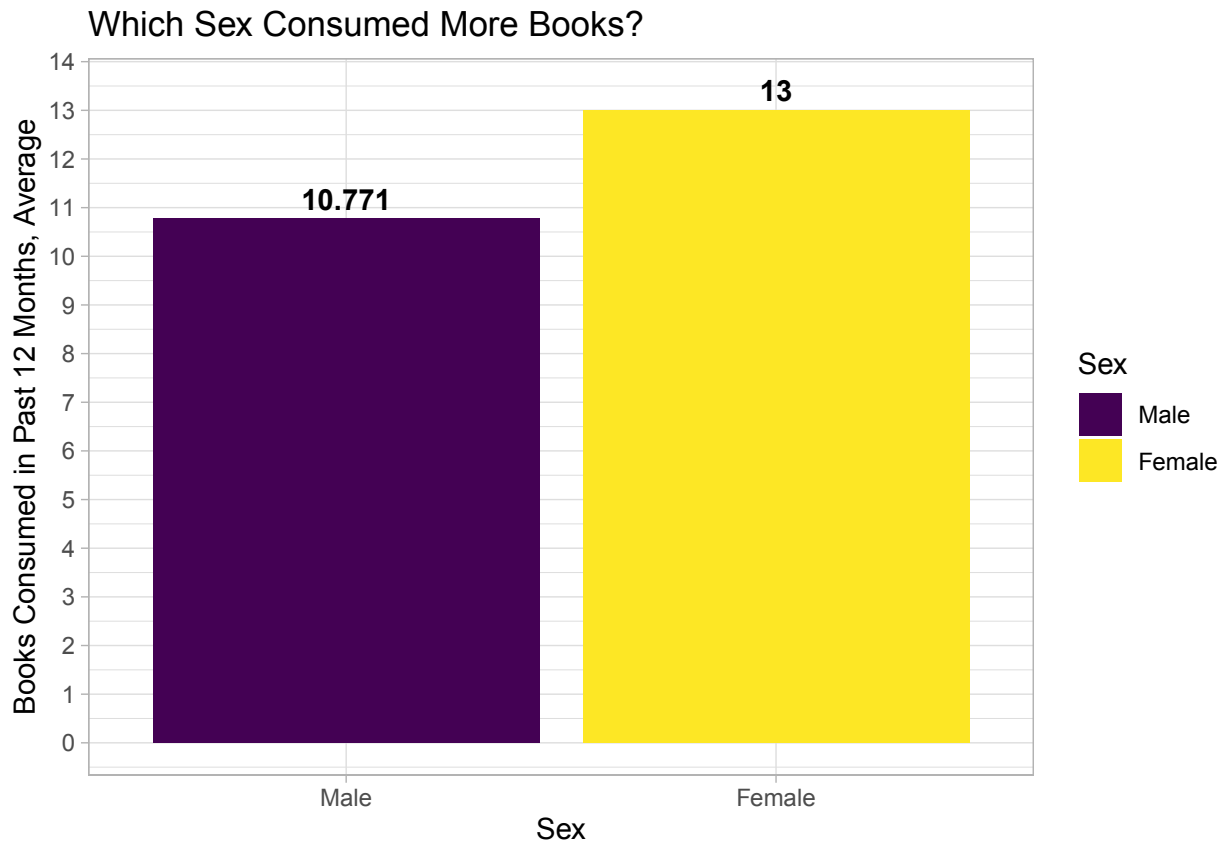
It seems intuitive that various groups of people would differ in how many books they consume on average. The Pew Research Center (2019) asked respondents ($n = 1,503$) within the U.S. about their technology usage (including books consumed, across printed, electronic, and audio books) and demographics. The variables in the present study include: number of books consumed in the past 12 months; age; sex; educational attainment; annual family income; and political party affiliation. Having selected those variables, responses were then filtered according to various criteria. First, because each item included response options such as “Don’t know,” and “Refused,” respondents were excluded who failed to provide clear, distinguishable answers per each examined variable. Then, because respondents who indicated they had consumed 97 or more books were lumped together in the dataset (and because there were relatively few of such responses), only individuals

who indicated consuming 96 or fewer books were included. Because other possible political affiliations were lumped together, only individuals who indicated political affiliation of Democrat, Independent, or Republican were included. Overall, after filtering responses based on the preceding criteria, 931 of the original 1,503 survey respondents were included. With the variables and responses selected for and filtered, the focus of the present study is to graphically present the differences found between various demographic groups when directly compared within their respective types of demographic classifications. R (R Core Team, 2020), along with Tidyverse (Wickham et al., 2019), was used to analyze and graph the data.

Importance

According to Perrin (2019), Pew Research Center data indicates about a quarter of adults within the U.S. reported consuming zero books within the past year, including printed, electronic and audio books. If we wish to help improve this situation, then understanding specific demographic groups who report consuming fewer books is an important step toward planning effective societal interventions.

Who Reads More: Males or Females?



Who Reads More: Older or Younger People?

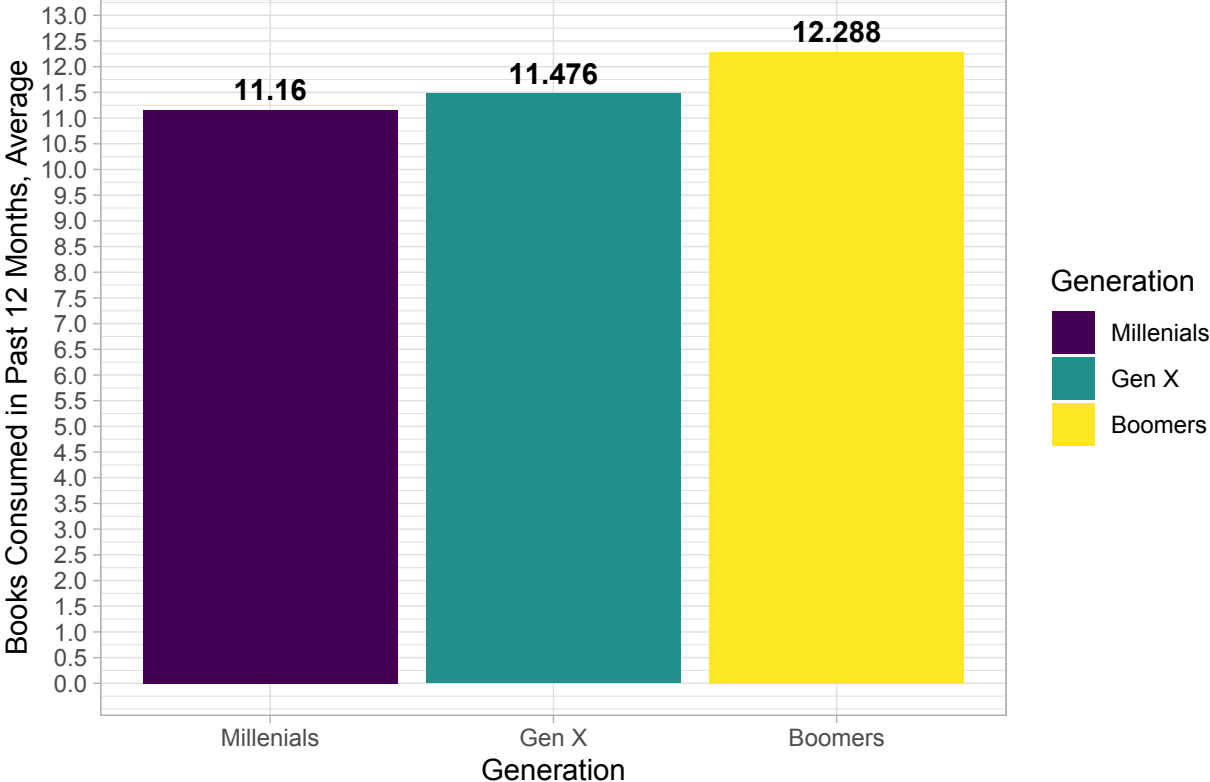
First, a Breakdown by Chronological Age...



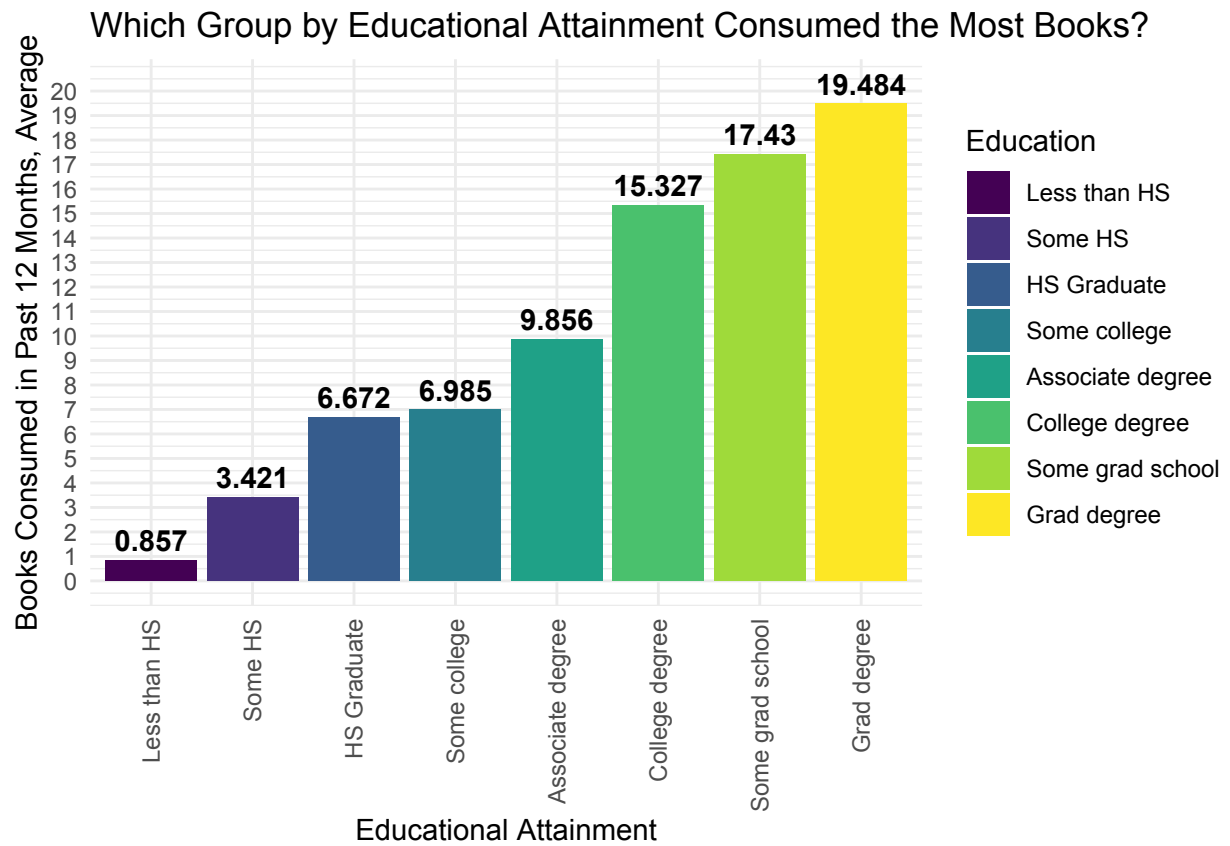
Now, a Breakdown by Generation...

Dimock (2019) described generational cutoff points which were established by the Pew Research Center. These cutoff points were used to divide respondents into generational cohort groups according to their age. Because the youngest described generation (Generation Z) is present and on-going, meaning that many members are minors and therefore precluded from the original dataset, it was excluded. Because the oldest described generation (the Silent generation) had limited representation in the original dataset, it was also excluded.

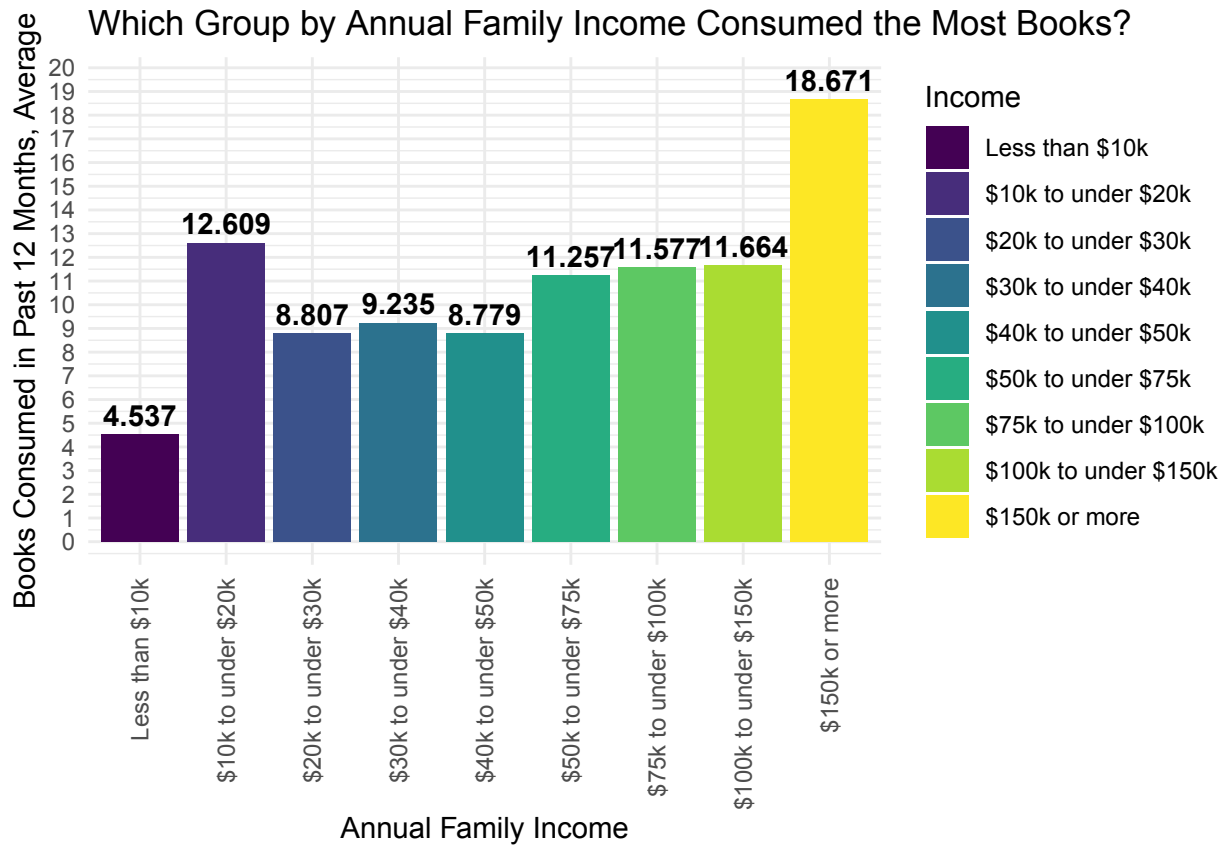
Which Generation Consumed the Most Books?



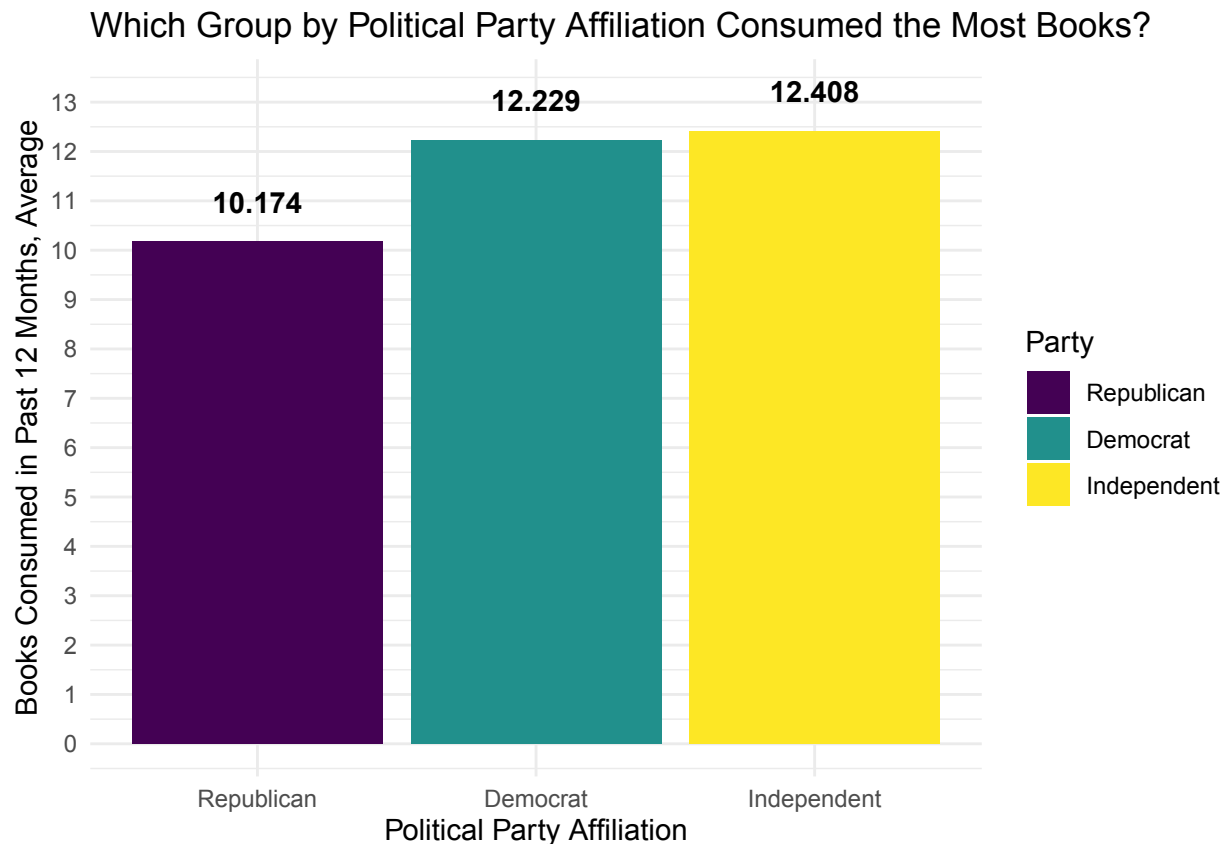
Who Reads More: By Educational Attainment?



Who Reads More: By Family Income?



Who Reads More: By Political Party Affiliation?



Conclusions

The data showed that: 1. Females consumed more books than males; 2. Boomers consumed more books than Gen X, and Gen X consumed more books than Millennials; 3. People with higher educational attainment consumed more books; 4. People with higher annual family income consumed more books; and 5. Independents read more books than Democrats, and Democrats read more books than Republicans.

References

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Perrin, A. (2019). *Who doesn't read books in America?*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/26/who-doesnt-read-books-in-america/>

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