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A hand holding a smartphone displaying a group of young women, with the title text overlaid.

CONNECTING WITH THE **CULTURE-MAKERS**

How young women are setting trends
and driving consumer behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Whether it's tumbler cups, yogurt, or skincare, there are certain brands that manage to catapult past the checkout counter and into cultural conversations. They become more than just products as they intertwine with identity and earn a unique connection with consumers.

With increased regulation around data and addressability, marketers have reprioritized cultural relevance as one of the best ways to engage with their target audiences. Achieving this, however, is easier said than done. Brands aiming to be part of the cultural zeitgeist must get ahead of trends, and to do so, they must connect with those who create them.

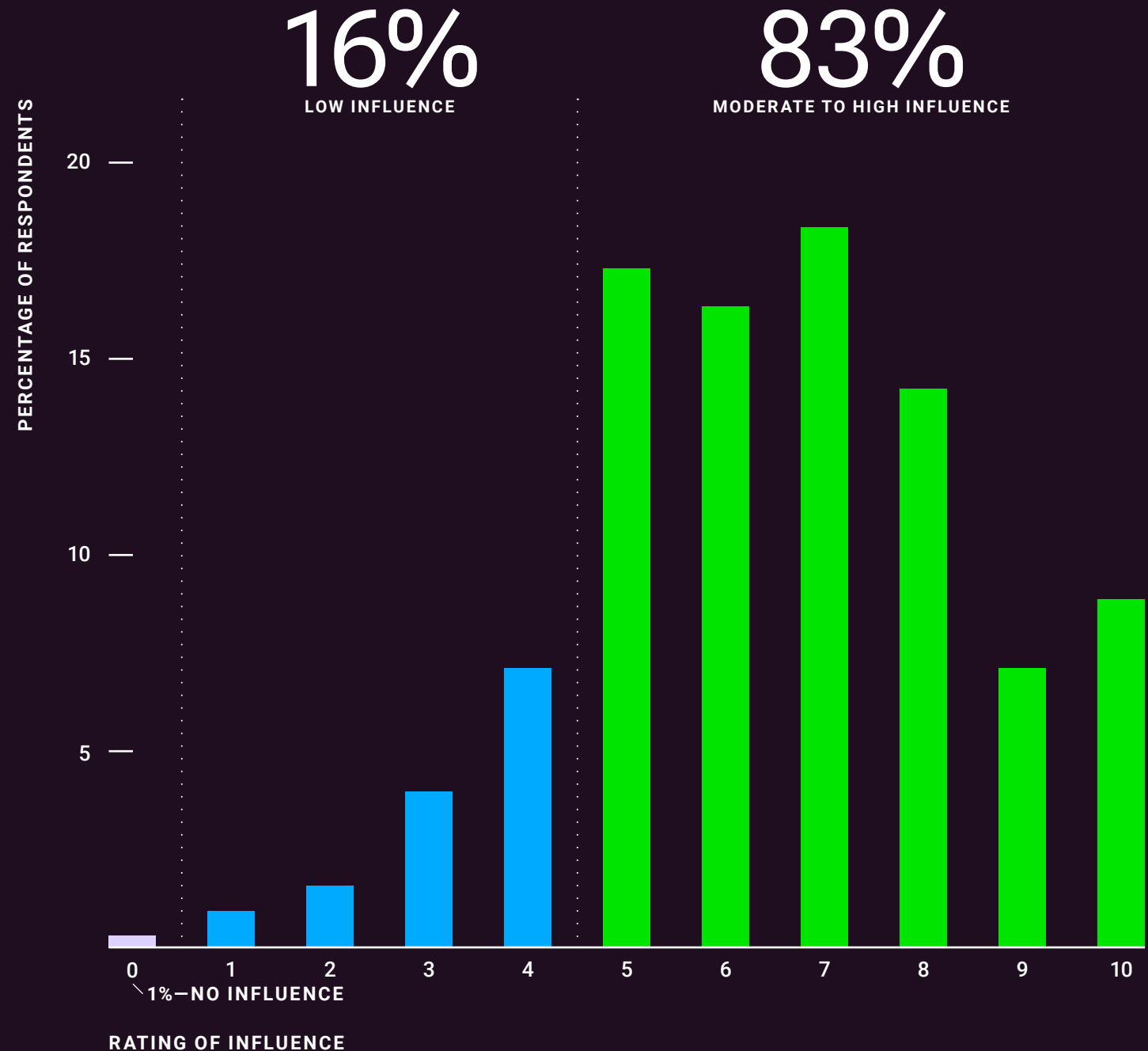
SO WHO ARE THESE TRENDSETTERS?

While Gen Z likely comes to mind, there's a subgroup within this demographic that seems to wield an outsized power of influence. It's the same group that drove the Beatles to their icon status back in the '60s and determines how wide or skinny our jeans are today: young women.

In a GALE survey focused on the impact that teenage girls have on U.S. consumer behavior and attitudes, 97% of respondents who say they have a teenage girl in their lives—whether currently living with them or not—acknowledged this demographic had direct influence on them. And 83% rated the overall influence of teenage girls on culture at large as moderate or high.

Here, we'll examine the nuances of this influence, providing insights on how these culture-makers are impacting their families, friends, and beyond.

FIG. 1: STRENGTH OF TEENAGE GIRLS' INFLUENCE ON CULTURE*
RATING OF INFLUENCE LEVEL ON SCALE FROM 0-10, BY PERCENT WHO CHOSE EACH RATING



*AS RATED BY CONSUMERS WITH A TEENAGE GIRL IN THEIR LIFE

PROXIMITY & RELATIONSHIP

Unsurprisingly, the strength of influence these young women have on others is closely tied to relationships. Individuals who have day-to-day proximity with a teenage girl, such as living in the same household, reported higher levels of influence from this demographic across categories. They were more than twice as likely to give a high rating for their influence on overall culture.

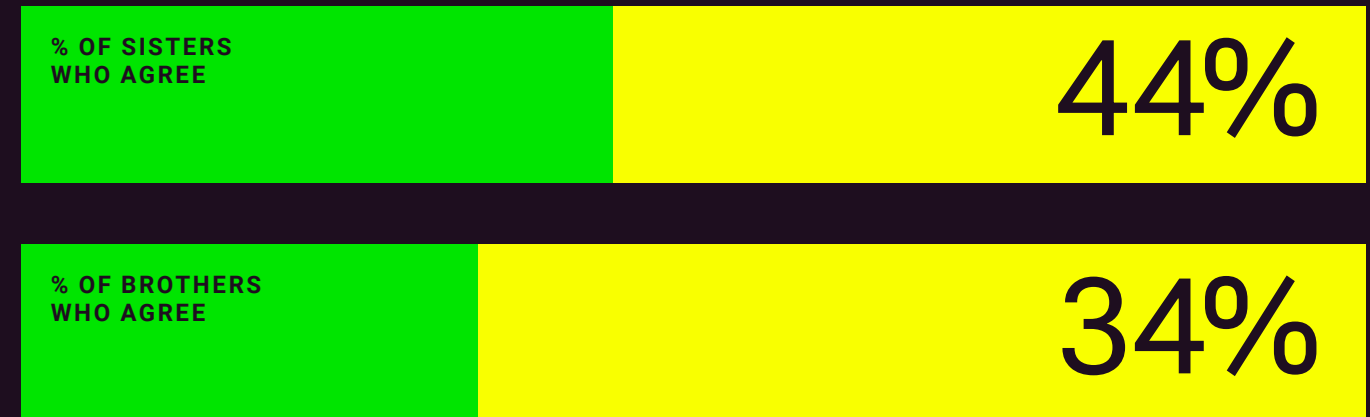
Mothers, in particular, are strongly influenced by teenage girls across various aspects of life, including food, health and wellness, and technology. This is noteworthy given outside research has consistently shown that women hold considerable purchasing power in the U.S., often buying on behalf of their own household and beyond. It's also significant given the growing number of single-parent homes within the U.S., with recent Census data showing 80% of those being run by mothers.

While women generally reported a higher influence from teenage girls compared to men, men were more willing to credit this demographic with influence on specific activities within categories. For example, a strong percentage of men report influence from teenage girls on which TV shows or movies to watch (54%), which hobbies/activities to participate in (48%), which apps to download (48%), and which food/beverage brands (52%) and fashion brands (47%) to buy.

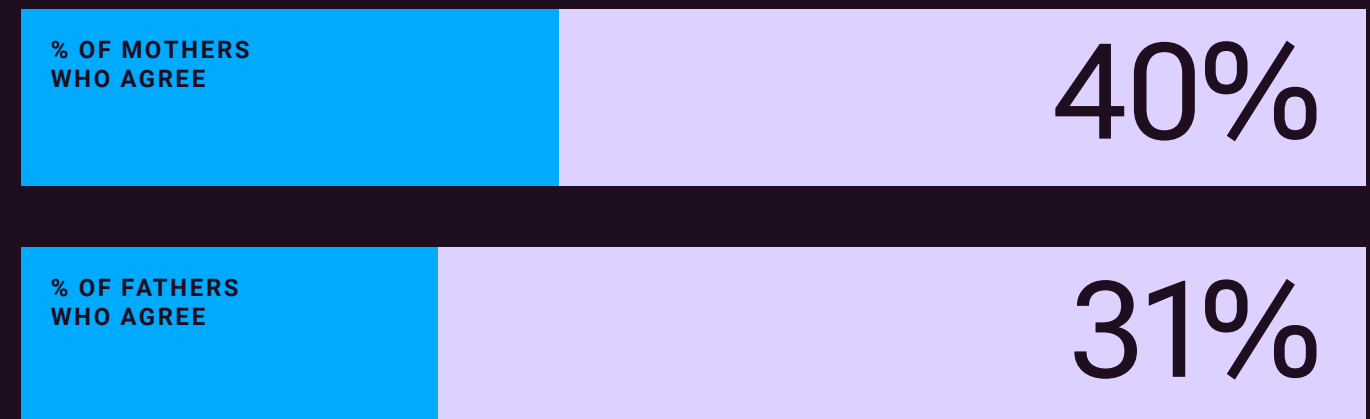
It's fair to assume there may be gender dynamics at play with influence attribution. While nearly a quarter of brothers said teenage girls mainly influence superficial aspects of culture, more than a third "completely" agree this group has more influence on overall culture than teenage boys or other Gen Z subgroups.

FIG. 2: GENDER DYNAMICS WITH INFLUENCE ATTRIBUTION
PERCENT THAT "COMPLETELY AGREE"

TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE MORE INFLUENCE ON CULTURE THAN TEENAGE BOYS



TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE MORE IMPACT ON CULTURE THAN I DID AS A TEEN



**“I WATCH WHAT THEY DO,
WHAT THEY WEAR, WHAT THEY SAY,
WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM.”**

– Research Participant

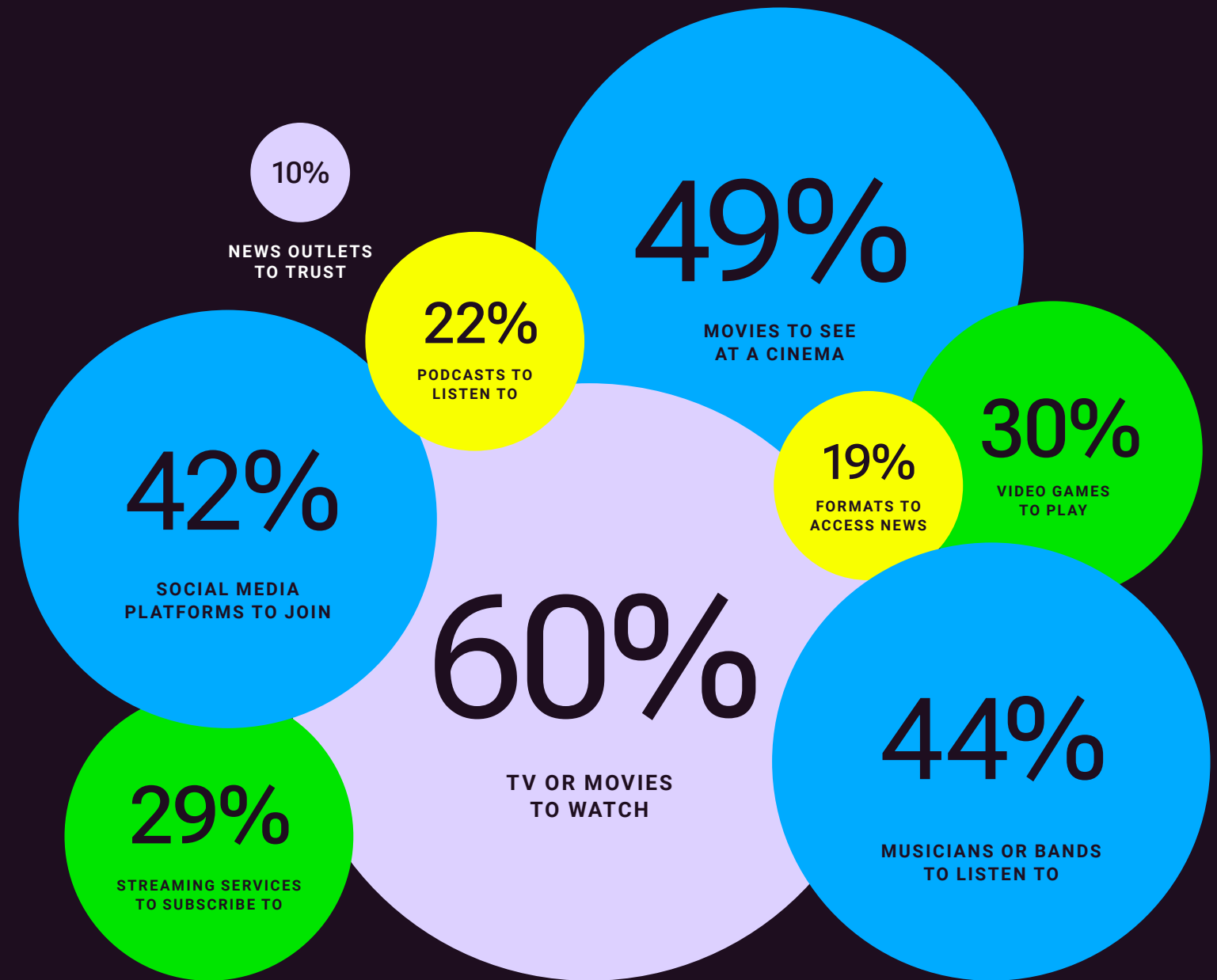
INFLUENCE ACROSS CATEGORIES

When examining across eight categories, more than half of respondents perceived teenage girls to have at least a moderate level of influence in every category except for finance. Around two-thirds of all respondents acknowledged these young women have moderate to high influence on them when it comes to media and entertainment, fashion, food, health and wellness, and technology. Some key findings across these top five categories are as follows.

MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

Teenage girls hold the most influence over which TV shows or movies others watch, followed by music preferences. They do not have a strong influence on which news outlets to trust (10%), which mirrors overall lower reported influence on political leanings.

FIG. 3: TEENAGE GIRLS' INFLUENCE ON MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT
PERCENT WHO SAY TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE INFLUENCED THEIR DECISIONS AND BEHAVIORS



INFLUENCE ACROSS CATEGORIES

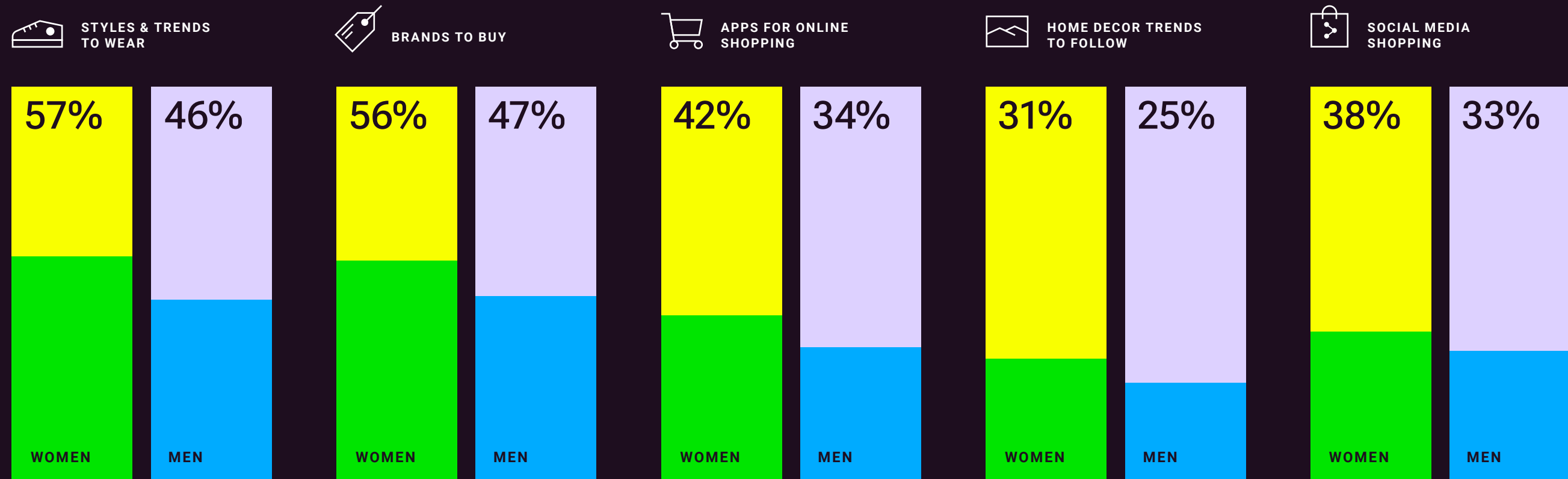
FASHION & STYLE

Teenage girls wield high influence on which fashion trends to wear and brands to buy. Here, levels of influence across gender are more pronounced, with women reporting greater influence on most behaviors. The one area where men report greater influence from teenage girls than women is regarding which e-commerce apps to download.



Men are nearly twice as likely as women to be influenced on which e-commerce apps to download.

FIG. 4: INFLUENCE ON FASHION AND STYLE
PERCENT WHO SAY TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE
INFLUENCED THEIR DECISIONS AND BEHAVIORS



INFLUENCE ACROSS CATEGORIES

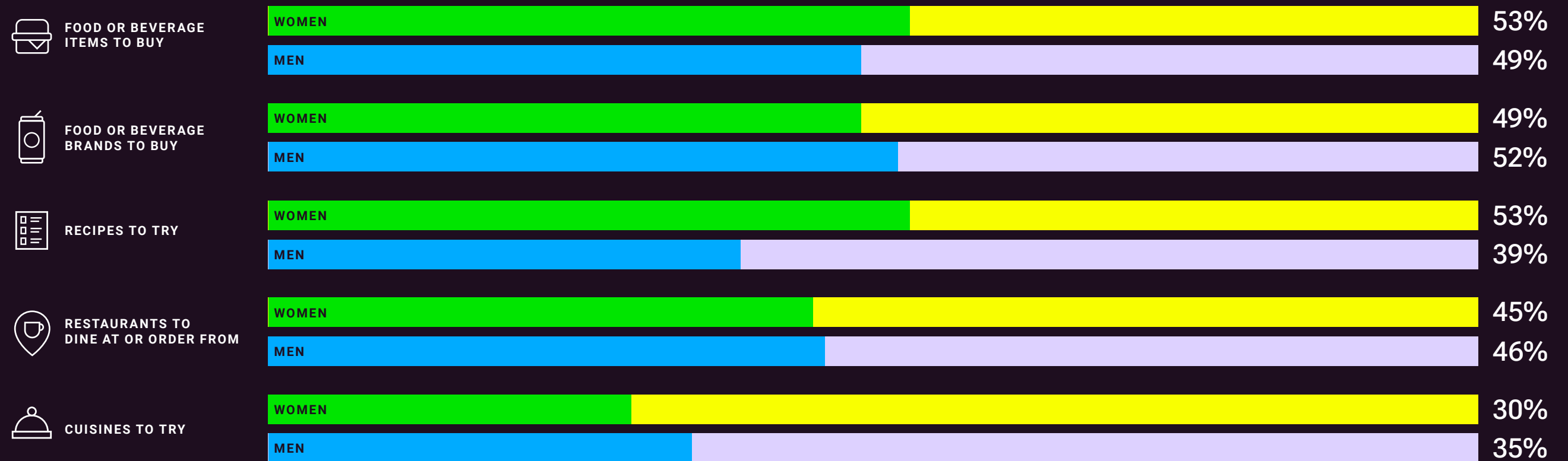
FOOD & BEVERAGE

Here, teenage girls predominantly influence which food and beverage items (e.g., ice cream or apples) and brands to buy, as well as which recipes and restaurants to try. While women tend to be more influenced by this demographic's recipe recommendations, men were slightly more influenced on which cuisine types to try.



Those who live with a teenage girl are nearly three times more likely to report high influence on food and beverage choices.

FIG. 5: INFLUENCE ON FOOD AND BEVERAGE
PERCENT WHO SAY TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE
INFLUENCED THEIR DECISIONS AND BEHAVIORS



INFLUENCE ACROSS CATEGORIES

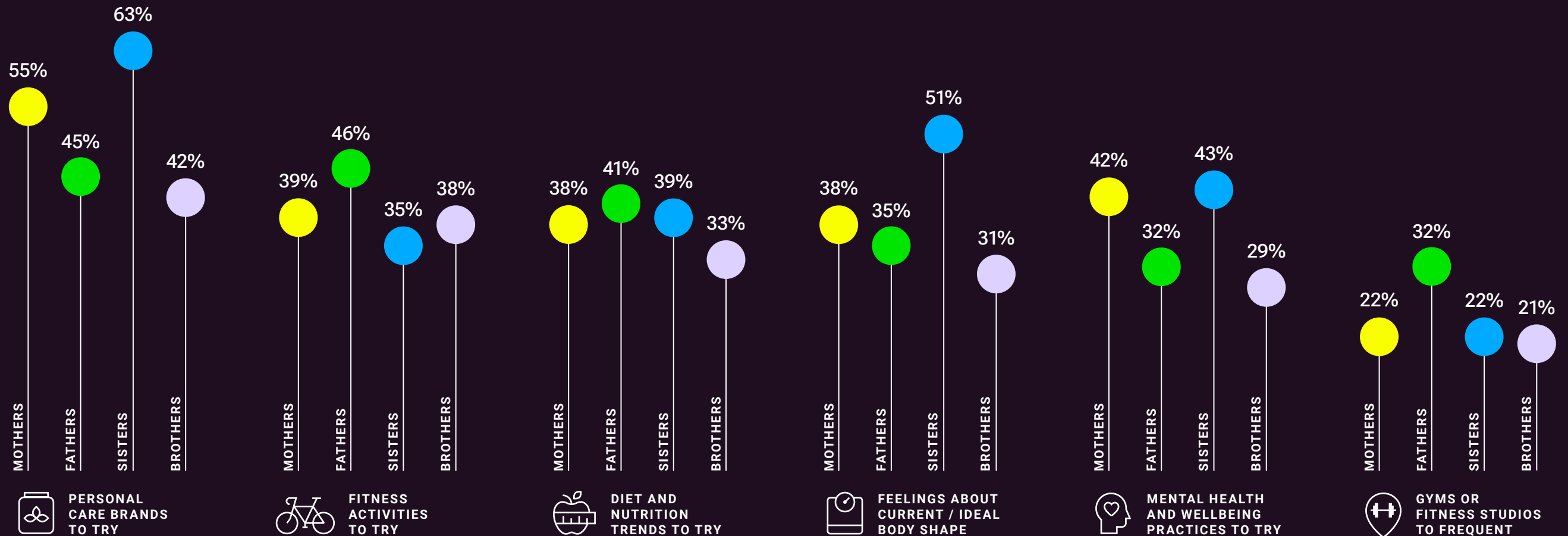
HEALTH & WELLNESS

Within health and wellness, sisters of teenage girls report particularly high levels of influence from them, especially regarding personal care products and their feelings about their ideal body shape. Fathers, on the other hand, reported the highest levels of influence regarding fitness activities and diet or nutrition trends.



Hispanic/Latino respondents were nearly twice as likely to report influence regarding mental health and wellbeing practices.

FIG. 6: INFLUENCE ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS
PERCENT WHO SAY TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE INFLUENCED THEIR DECISIONS AND BEHAVIORS



INFLUENCE ACROSS CATEGORIES

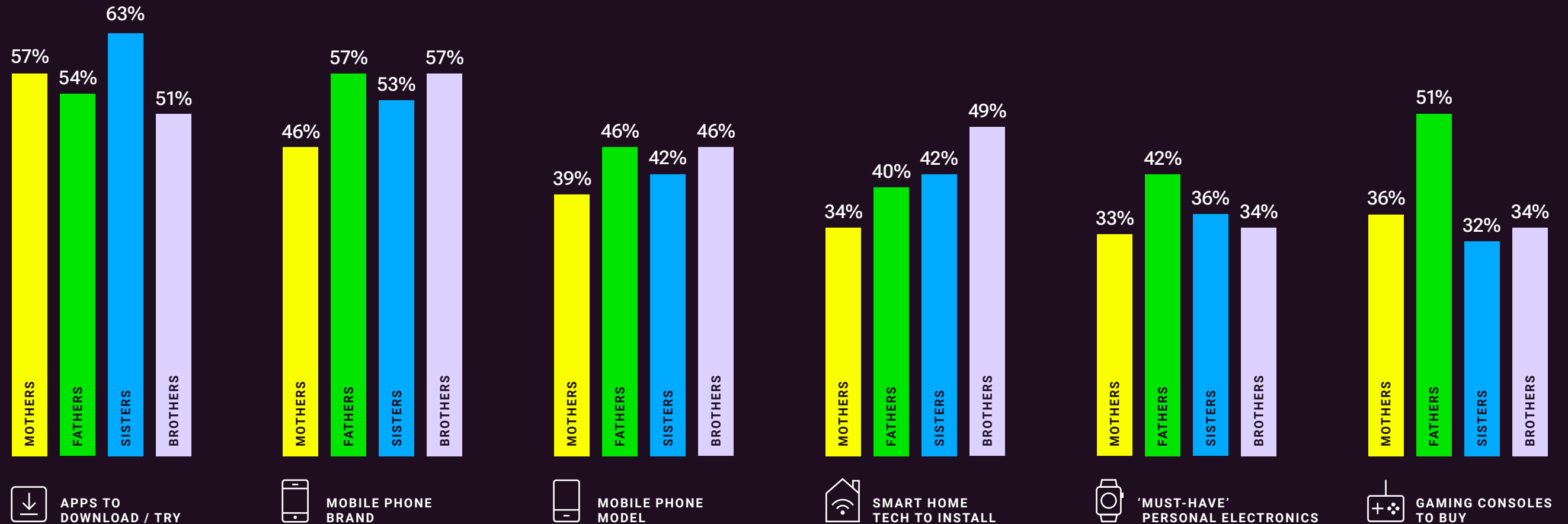
TECHNOLOGY

Technology is an area where men, particularly fathers, report greater influence from teenage girls than average, most notably around which gaming consoles (51%), mobile brands (57%), and personal electronics (42%) to buy. Overall, teenage girls have a strong influence on which apps others will download.



Fathers are nearly twice as likely to report influence regarding gaming console choices.

FIG. 7: INFLUENCE ON TECHNOLOGY
PERCENT WHO SAY TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE INFLUENCED THEIR DECISIONS AND BEHAVIORS



**“SHE INFLUENCES SO
MANY THINGS IN MY LIFE,
JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING.”**

– Research Participant

CULTURAL & ETHNIC IMPACT

Across all categories, cultural and ethnic factors play a role, with Black and Hispanic/Latino individuals reporting stronger levels of influence from teenage girls.

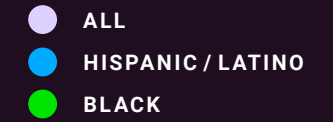
Black consumers were the only demographic in which some respondents rated teenage girls' influence on the categories of politics and finance as high (9 or 10 on scale from 0-10).

Among Hispanic/Latino individuals, some areas where respondents reported a higher degree of influence from teenage girls than average include fashion brands, music, mental health practices, travel destinations, social issues, and finance apps.

Among Black respondents, some areas were politics, e-commerce, interest in video games, food delivery and fitness apps, and sustainability practices.

The economic power of Black and Hispanic/Latino consumers in the U.S. has been rapidly growing over the past decade. It's become increasingly important for marketers to better understand family and community dynamics within these demographics in order to authentically connect with those who help drive culture and decision-making.

FIG. 8: INFLUENCE LEVEL BY ETHNICITY
0-10 RATING OF THE INFLUENCE TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE ON ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR BY CATEGORY



THE POWER OF SOCIAL

The power of proximity isn't limited to the real world, particularly among Gen Z—who regularly builds connections online. This was clearly reflected in the survey results, with social media having a significant impact on the degree to which respondents ranked the influence of teenage girls across categories.

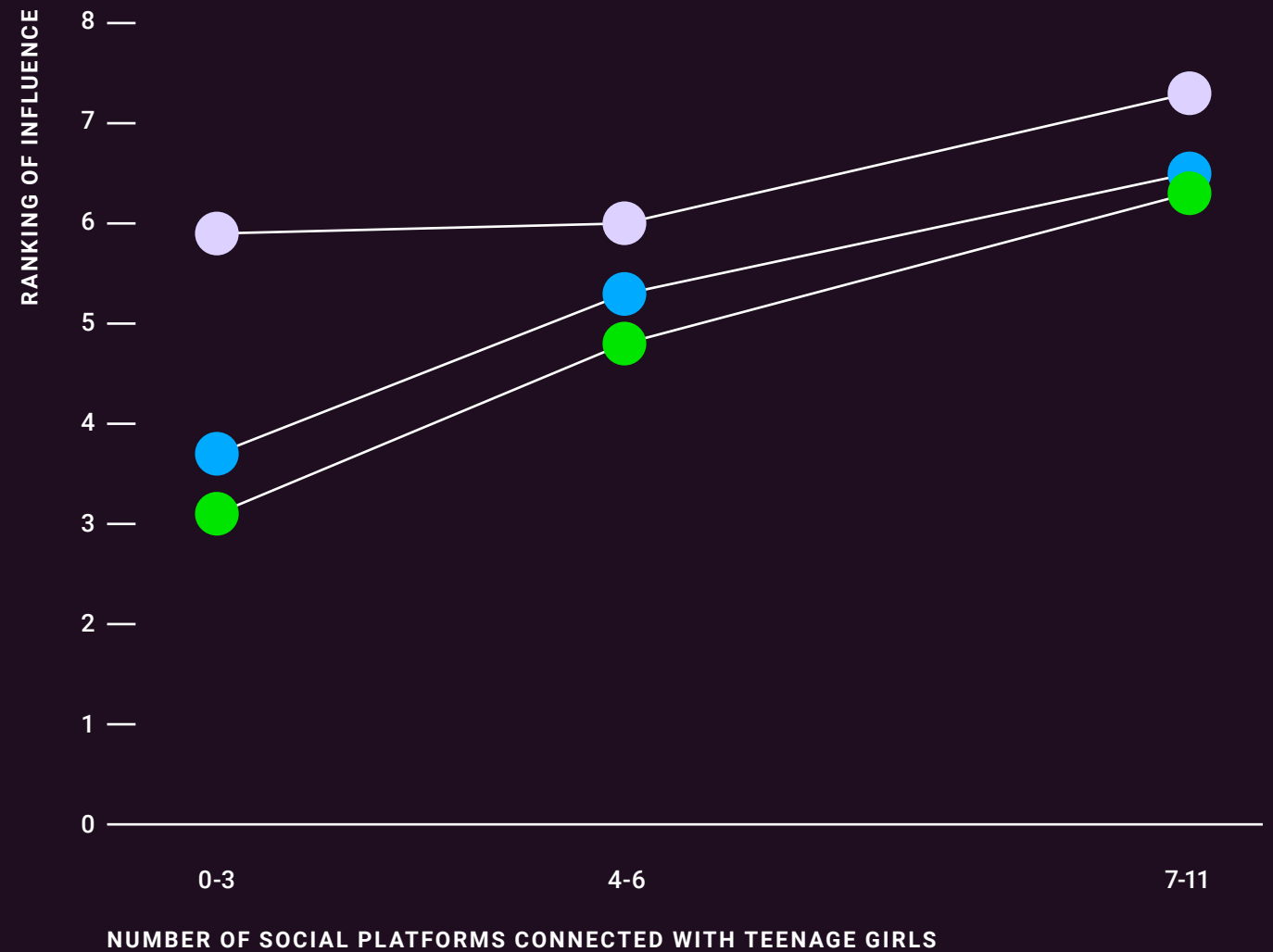
Consumers who engage with this demographic on four or more social media platforms tend to give higher influence ratings.

In the categories where teenage girls received the lowest overall rankings on influence—finance and politics—there was a notable increase in influence correlated with the number of platforms the respondent was connected to a teenage girl.

When asked whether teenage girls are especially good at building their influence through social media, 40% of respondents “completely” agree. While this number is substantial, it also suggests that at least half of consumers underestimate the power of social and how young women are using it to drive trends.

FIG. 9: INFLUENCE LEVEL BY SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS
0-10 RATING OF THE INFLUENCE TEENAGE GIRLS HAVE ON
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR BY CATEGORY

- OVERALL CULTURE
- POLITICS & CAUSES
- MONEY & FINANCE



For marketers seeking to connect their brands with culture, authentically engaging with young women is a promising place to start. This demographic wields significant influence over family members and beyond—particularly among women, Black, and Hispanic/Latino consumers—shaping the behaviors and attitudes that drive cultural trends.

Teenage girls have held this power of influence for decades, yet they are often underestimated, with their interests downplayed as trivial. But with the reshaping of modern families and increasing prevalence of multigenerational households bringing them into closer contact with broader demographics—coupled with widespread use of social media—their influence is only poised to expand.

The outsized influence of young women germinates in households, often proliferates online, and ripples out throughout the real world, giving rise to trends in communities of all sizes. By understanding this group of trendsetters and establishing genuine connections with them, your brand can become a part of culture.

**“TEEN GIRLS ARE
DEFINITELY DRIVERS
OF TRENDS.”**

— Research Participant

GALE