

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021

Finland, 23rd June

Richard Fletcher, Lead Researcher and Co-author

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Now representing half the world's population



Online poll conducted between January to early February 2021

Market	Sample size	Population	Internet penetration
Europe			
UK	2,039	67m	95%
Austria	2,000	9.0m	88%
Belgium	2,008	11.6m	94%
Bulgaria	2,018	7.0m	67%
Croatia	2,008	4.1m	92%
Czech Republic	2,007	10.6m	88%
Denmark	2,005	5.8m	98%
Finland	2,009	5.6m	94%
France	2,012	65m	92%
Germany	2,011	82m	96%
Greece	2,017	11.1m	73%
Hungary	2,032	9.7m	89%
Ireland	2,031	4.8m	92%
Italy	2,010	59m	93%
Netherlands	2,006	17m	96%
Norway	2,010	5.4m	98%

Market	Sample size	Population	Internet penetration
Poland	2,009	38m	78%
Portugal	2,101	10.2m	78%
Romania	2,010	19m	74%
Slovakia	2,024	5.5m	85%
Spain	2,019	46m	93%
Sweden	2,005	10.1m	96%
Switzerland	2,000	8.6m	94%
Turkey	2,022	83m	83%
Americas			
USA	2,001	327m	96%
Argentina	2,007	45m	93%
Brazil	2,009	211m	71%
Canada	2,036	37m	90%
Chile	2,009	18m	78%
Colombia	2,046	49m	63%
Mexico	2,036	131m	65%
Peru	2,010	33m	68%

Market	Sample size	Population	Internet penetration
Asia Pacific			
Australia	2,034	26m	84%
Hong Kong	1,501	7.6m	89%
India	2,049	1393m	54%
Indonesia	2,007	276m	71%
Japan	2,004	126m	95%
Malaysia	2,019	33m	89%
Philippines	2,029	111m	78%
Singapore	2,034	5.9m	88%
South Korea	2,006	51m	96%
Taiwan	2,042	24m	92%
Thailand	2,015	70m	82%
Africa			
Kenya	2,005	55m	85%
Nigeria	2,051	211m	73%
South Africa	2,009	60m	58%

Polling by



Supported by



Lockdown impact

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Some news fatigue setting in? the crisis continues

% using print TV news weekly, 2016-21:



“I must admit that first of all I started watching it, really engrossed in it, and then as time went on, I found it quite depressing so I just cut it off.”

Female, 25, UK focus group

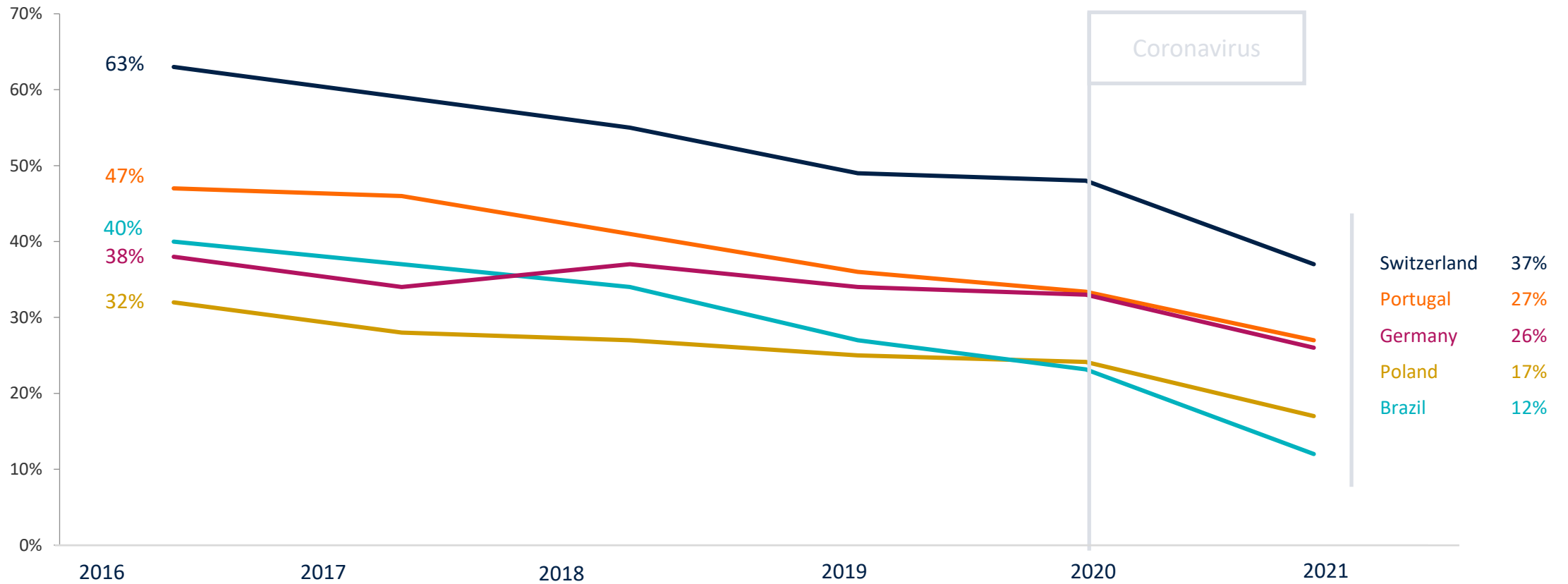
“I’ve consumed less TV and radio because if it’s consistently COVID, COVID, COVID, or consistently political fluff, then I just turn it off.”

Male, 58, US focus group

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Base: Total 2013–21 samples in each market (most n = 2000).

Accelerated decline for print

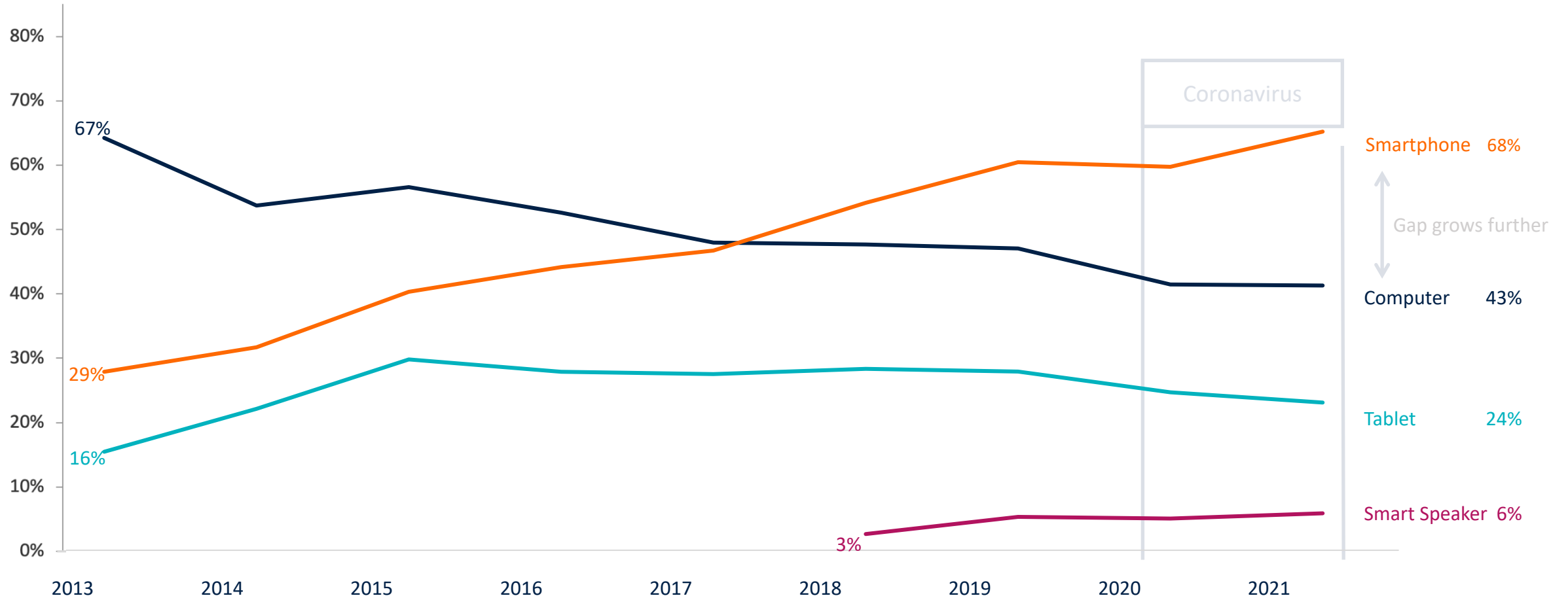
% using print weekly, 2016-21:



Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Base: Total 2013–21 samples in each market (most n ≈ 2000).

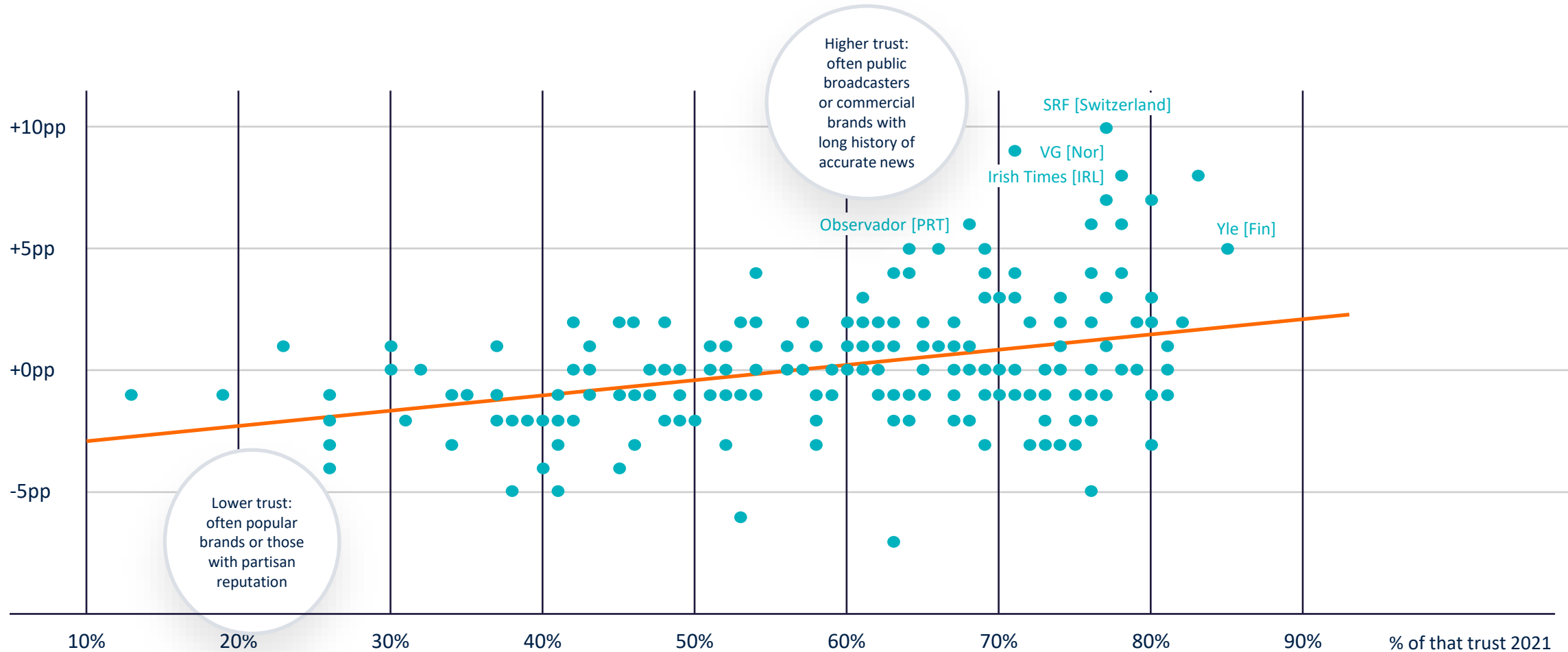
Smartphones are more important than ever

% using each device weekly – UK, 2013-21:



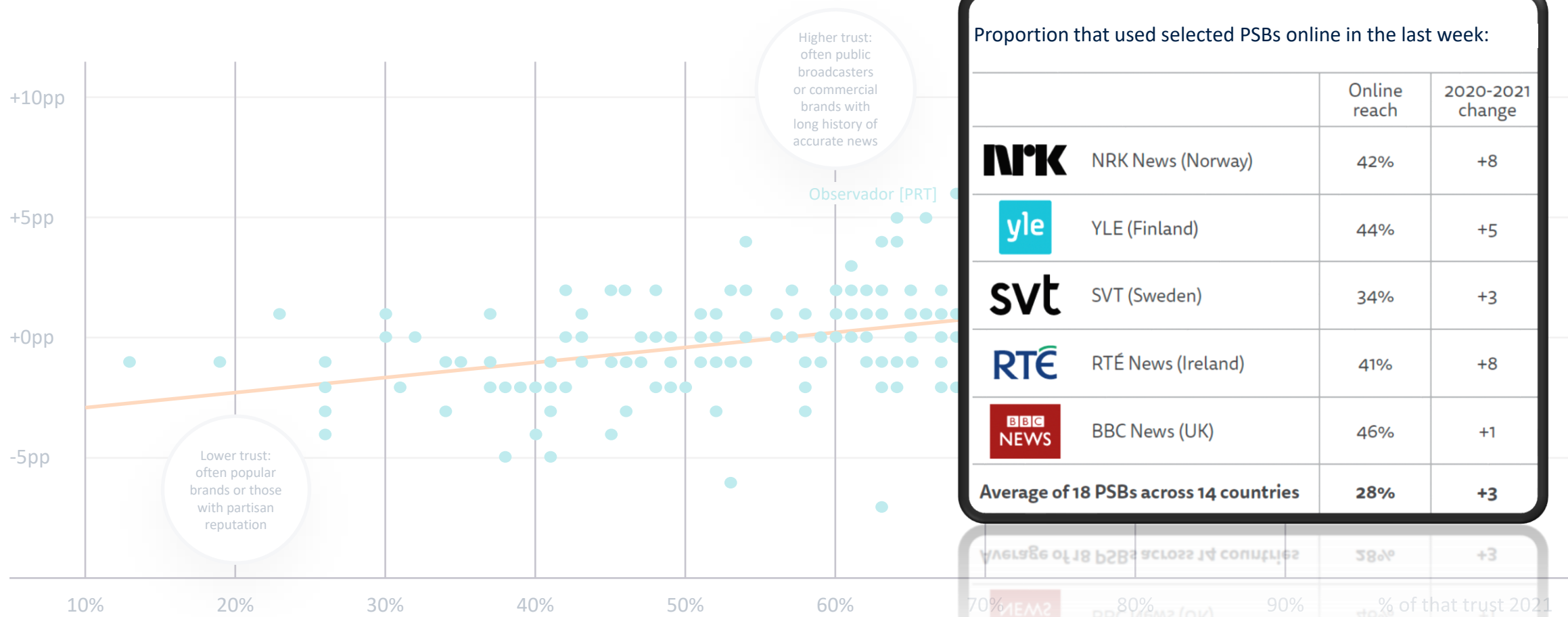
Trusted brands still doing better online a year on...

Change in online reach, 2020-21:



Trusted brands still doing better online a year on...

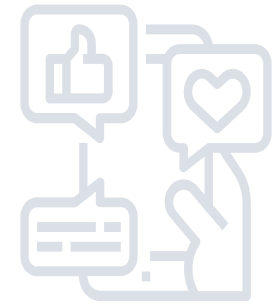
Change in online reach, 2020-21:



Q5b. Which of the following brands have you used to access news online in the last week (via websites, apps, social media, and other forms of internet access)? Q6_2018_trust. How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is?
 Base: Total 2020-21 samples in selected markets (n = 2000). Note: The association between 2021 trust and change in online reach (2021-20) was tested using a multilevel model to account for clustering within countries (b = .06, p = .01).
 Included markets are UK, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Overall trust in the news is up across countries

Percentage that says they **trust most news most of the time**

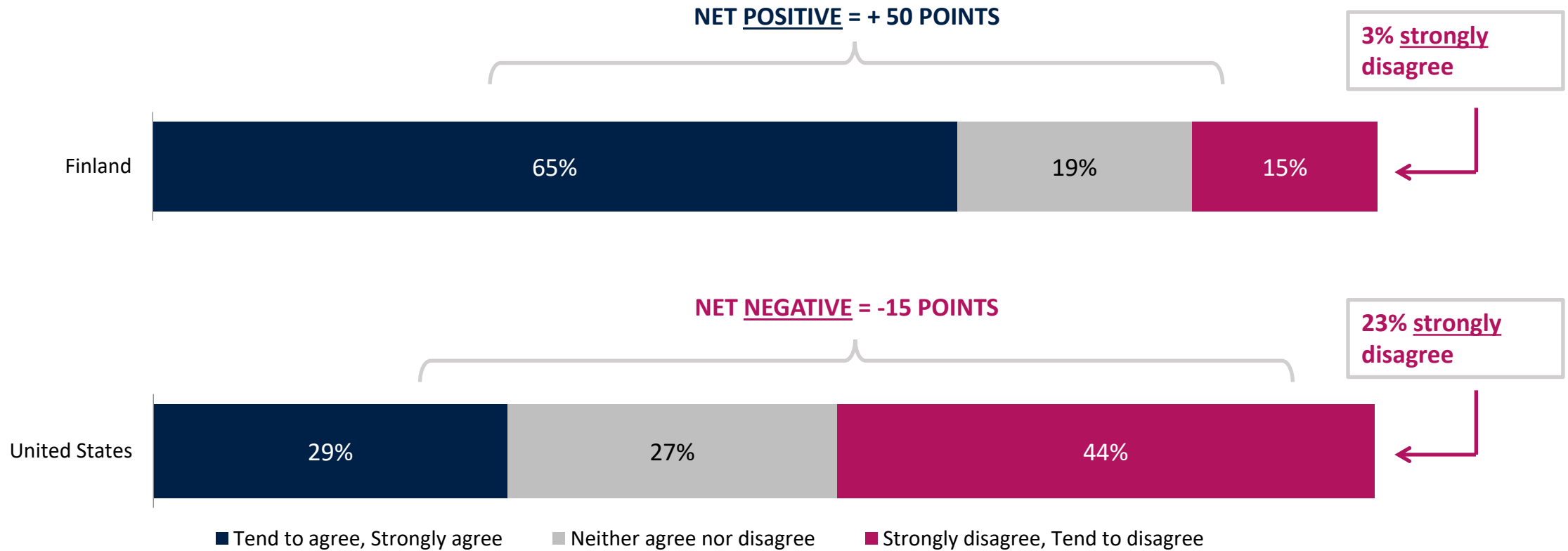


Q6_1/2/3/4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust the news/news I use/news in social media/news in search most of the time.
Base: Total sample in all markets: 92,372

Finland vs United States compared

Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I think you can trust most news most of the time:



Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I think you can trust most news most of the time.
Base: Total sample in each market: Denmark = 2009, USA = 2001.

Misinformation

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More people say they have seen misinformation about COVID-19 than about politics

Much higher levels in Africa and Latin America than in Europe:



54%

say they have seen
misinformation about
COVID-19



43%

say they have seen
misinformation about
politics



29%

say they have seen
misinformation about
celebrities



20%

say they have seen
misinformation about
climate change

Politicians are seen as a big part of the problem

Higher in countries where COVID-19 has become highly politicised such as Brazil

% that find each most concerning – all markets:



29%

Most concerned about behaviour of **politicians**



16%

Most concerned about behaviour of **ordinary people**



15%

Most concerned about behaviour of **activists**



11%

Most concerned about behaviour of **journalists**



9%

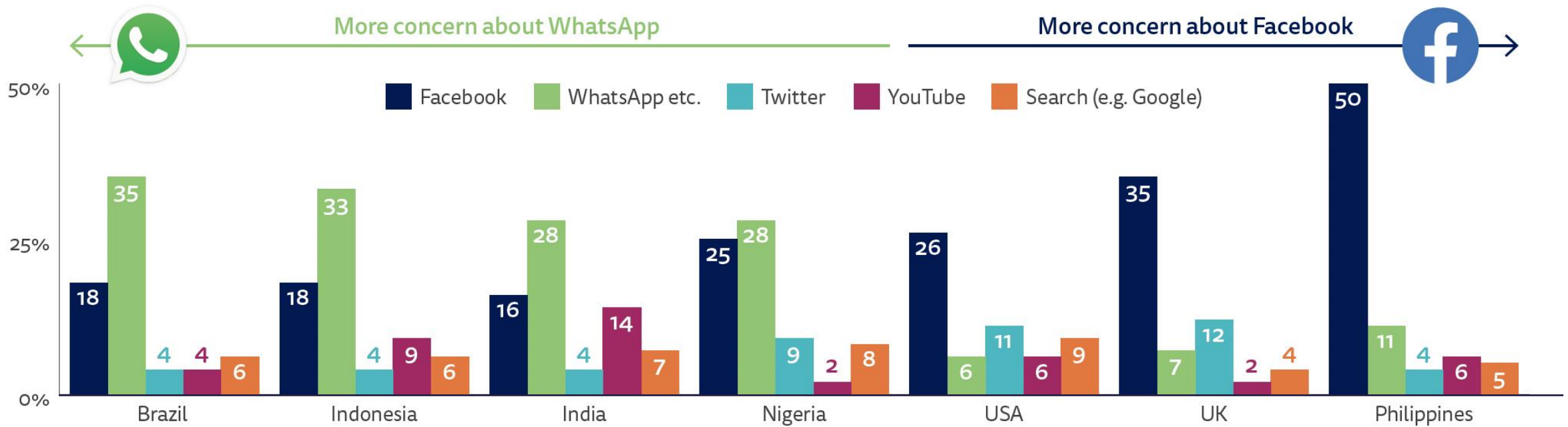
Most concerned about behaviour of **foreign governments**

41% in Brazil, but just 19% in Germany and 10% in Norway

False & misleading misinformation is spreading through different platforms

Can be harder to spot and debunk in messaging apps like WhatsApp

% that find each most concerning – selected markets:



Turning increased trust into revenue?

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Majority reluctant to pay for online news the last year

subscription, membership, donation or one-off for an article or e-edition

“It’s literally everywhere
so the need to pay for it,
I don’t really see it.”

Female, 25, UK focus group

was 9% in 2016

17%

Netherlands
(+3)

28%

“I can get all the information that I need
with the aggregator App that I use.
I don’t see the need for any subscriptions.”

Male, 54, Germany focus group

NO NORWAY
45% (+3)

SE SWEDEN
30% (+3)

FI FINLAND
20%

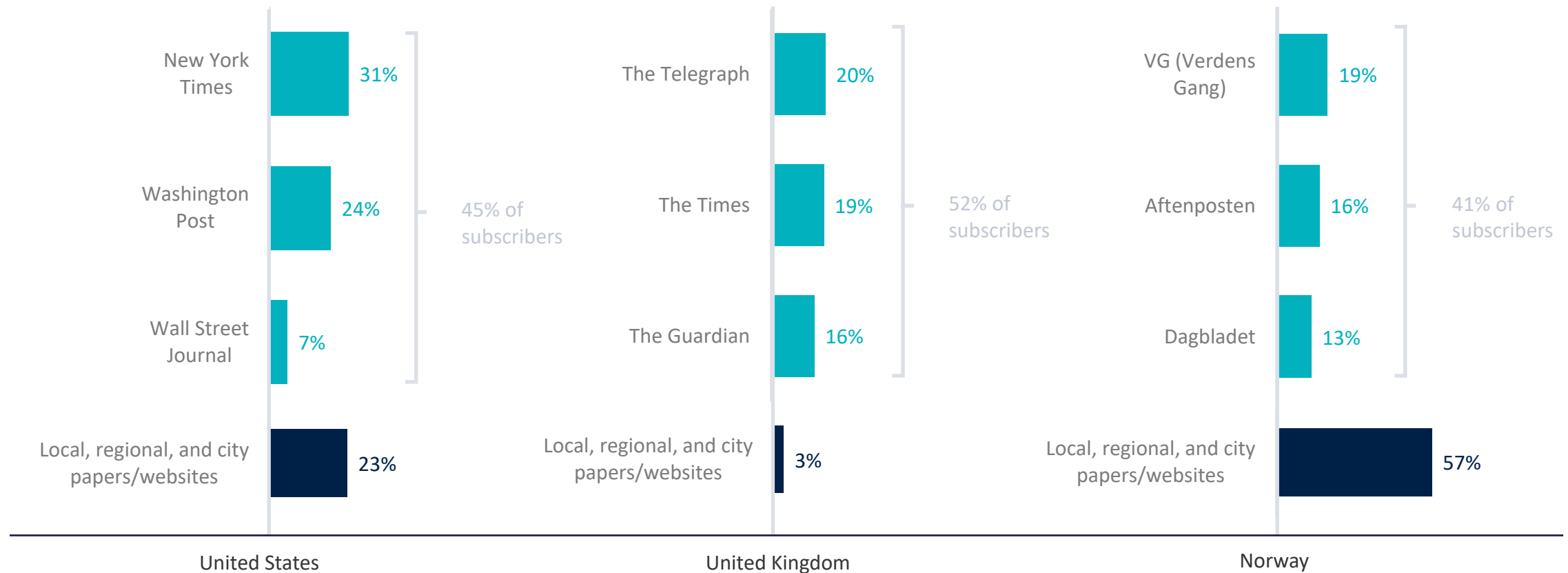
DK DENMARK
16%

BUT LITTLE PROGRESS ELSEWHERE

FR France 11%, DE Germany 9%, GB UK 8%

Quality national titles still benefitting most...

Winner takes most dynamics persisting



Median number of subscriptions = 2

Why are people taking out more than one subscription?



VALUES BASED

“I believe strongly and profoundly in the value of fact-based, investigative journalism.

If I want to live in a free and democratic society, I believe it is my duty as a citizen to support a free, independent, and fact-based press and media”

*Subscribes to **nine** publications including New York Times, W Post, Indy Star, Economist, Wall Street Journal, ProPublica, NY review of Books, New Yorker and Guardian (R-W)*

M, 54, USA



SPECIAL OFFERS

“I got an offer for Aftonbladet + for SEK 1 – I took it (on top of local paper)

F, 45 Sweden



DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

“Each provides a different perspective about different topics and fills different needs.

They tend to provide accurate or alternative viewpoints”

Wall Street Journal, The Athletic (Sport), National Review (conservative opinion magazine/website)

M, 52, USA



BREADTH AND DEPTH

“Apple News+ provides the greatest breadth of information.

New York Times and Washington Post offer the most in-depth information”

M, 62, USA

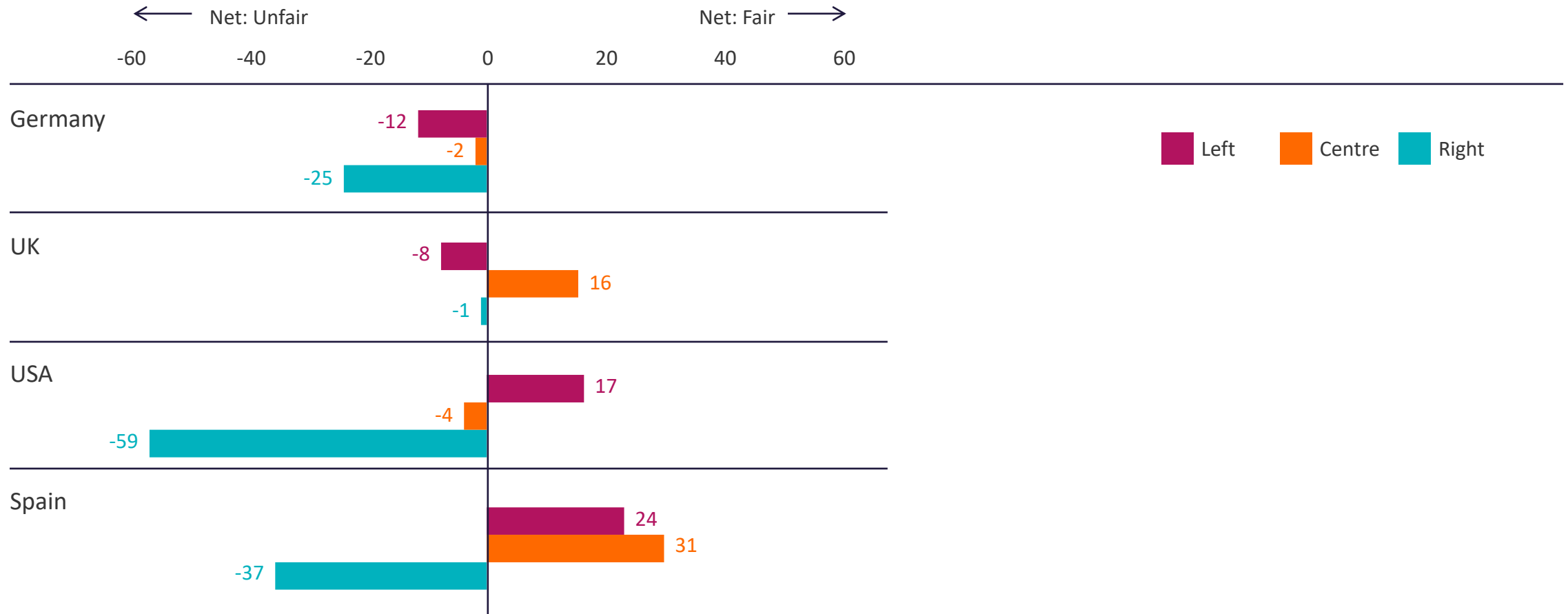
How fair is the news?

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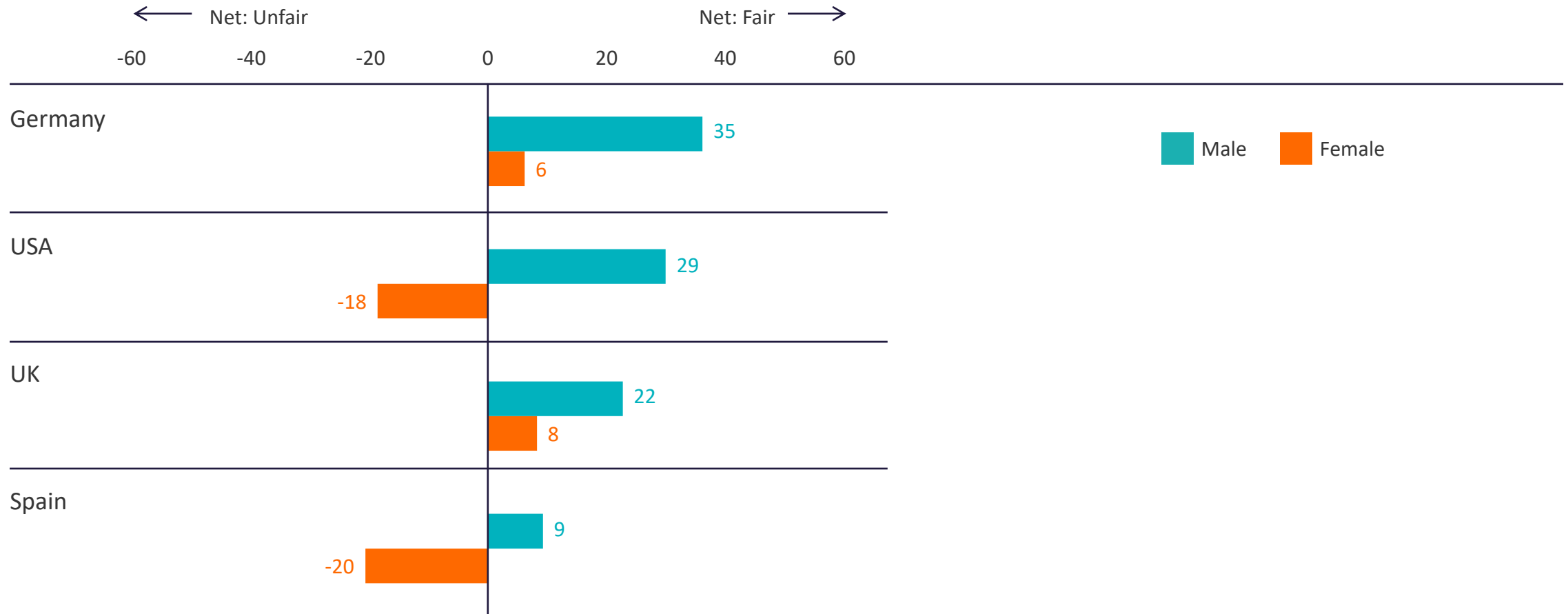
Perceptions of fairness by politics

Those on the political right feel the news media is unfair to them. In Spain and the UK criticism of the media also comes from the left.



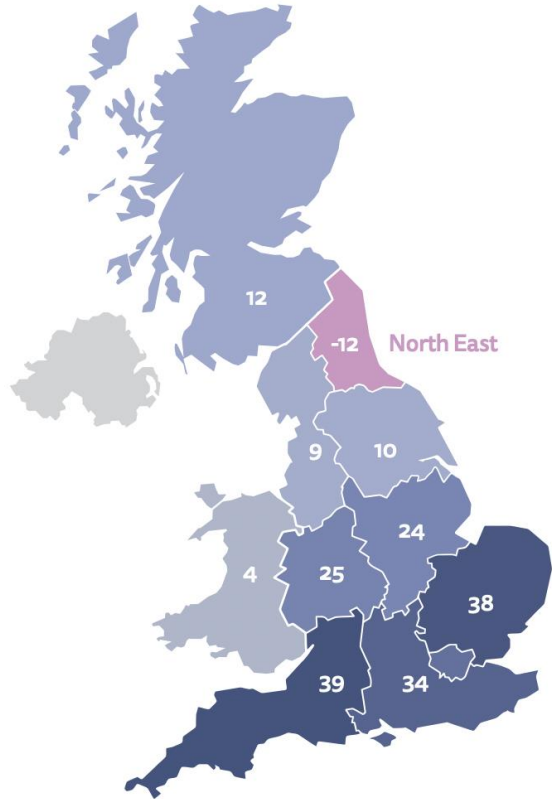
Perceptions of fairness amongst the young

Young people in general and young women in particular are most likely to feel media coverage is unfair
18-24s:

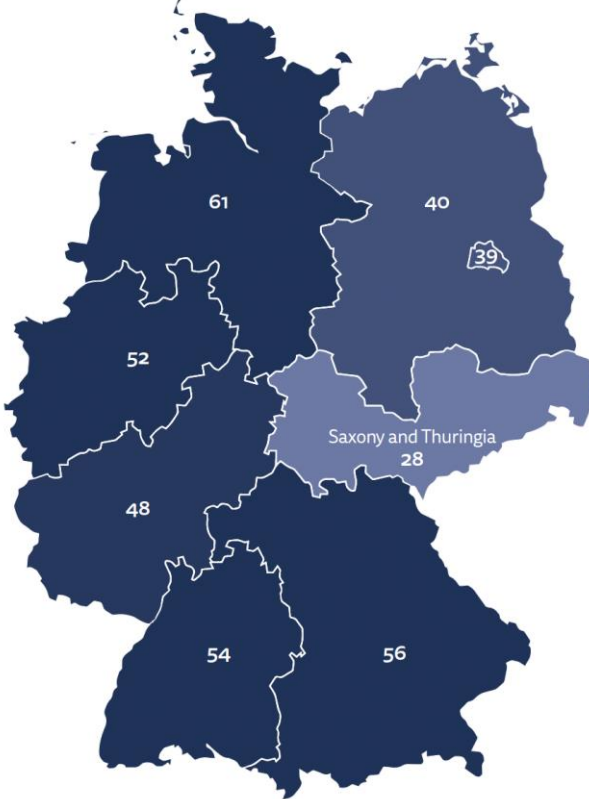


Perceptions of fairness by region

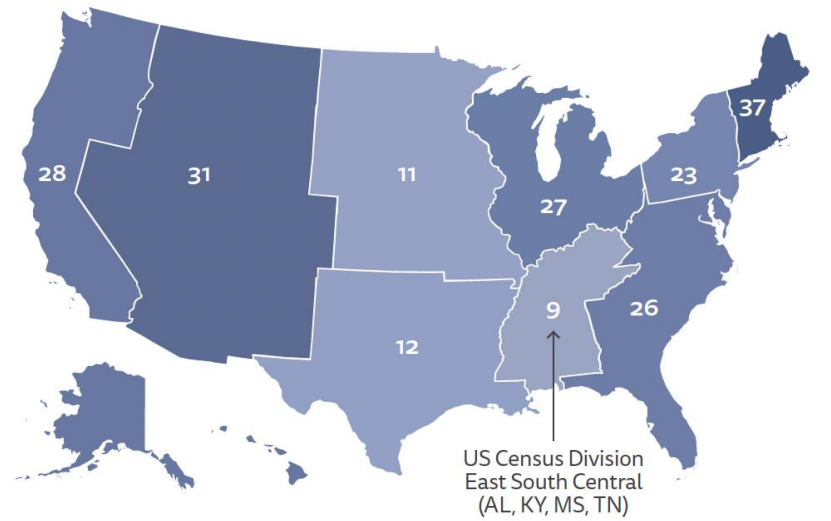
Net: unfair Net: fair



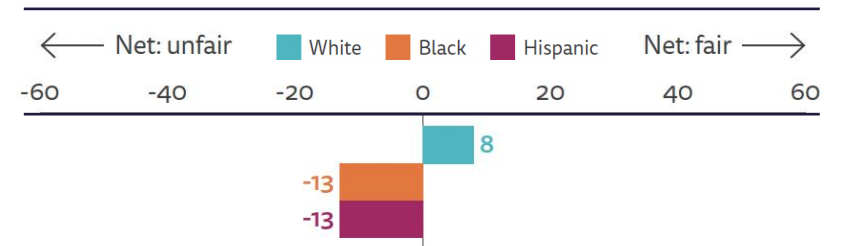
Net: unfair Net: fair



Net: unfair Net: fair



USA By race/ethnicity



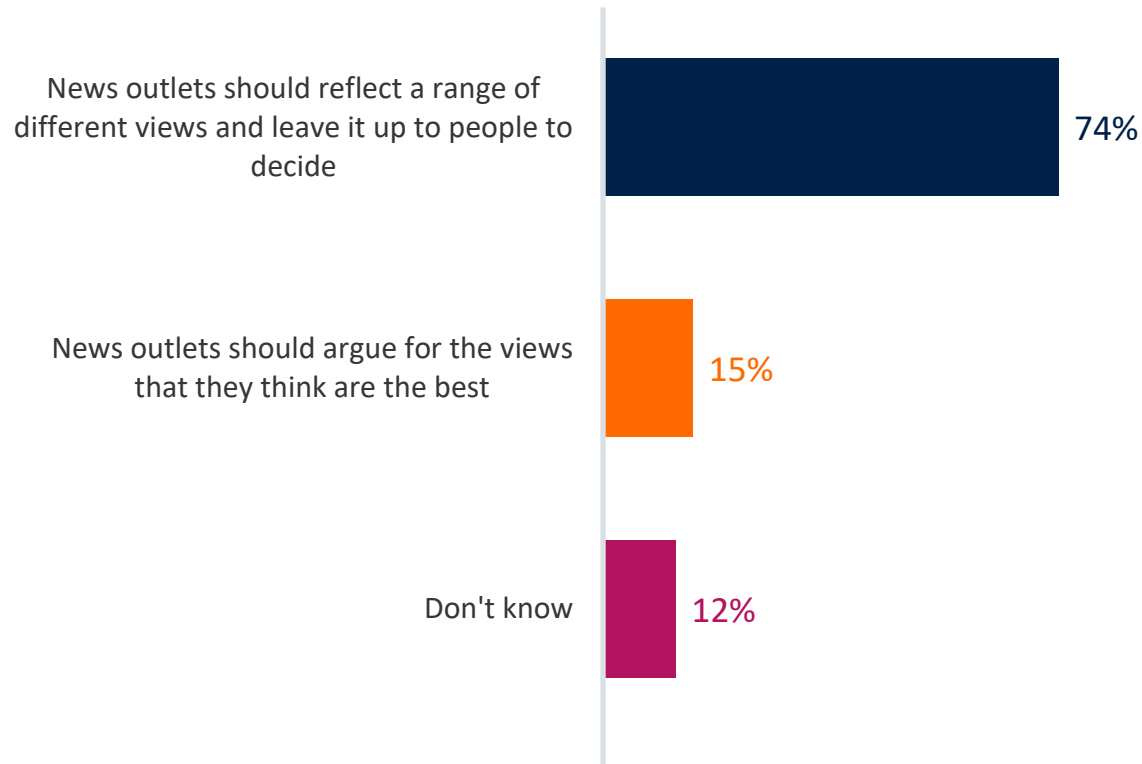
Impartiality

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Across all countries, audiences still want a range of views

Still a strong commitment to **ideal** of impartial and objective news



With subjects like politics and COVID-19 – it is really important to “remain neutral and allow the reader or listener or the watcher to make their decisions on their own about how they feel about something”

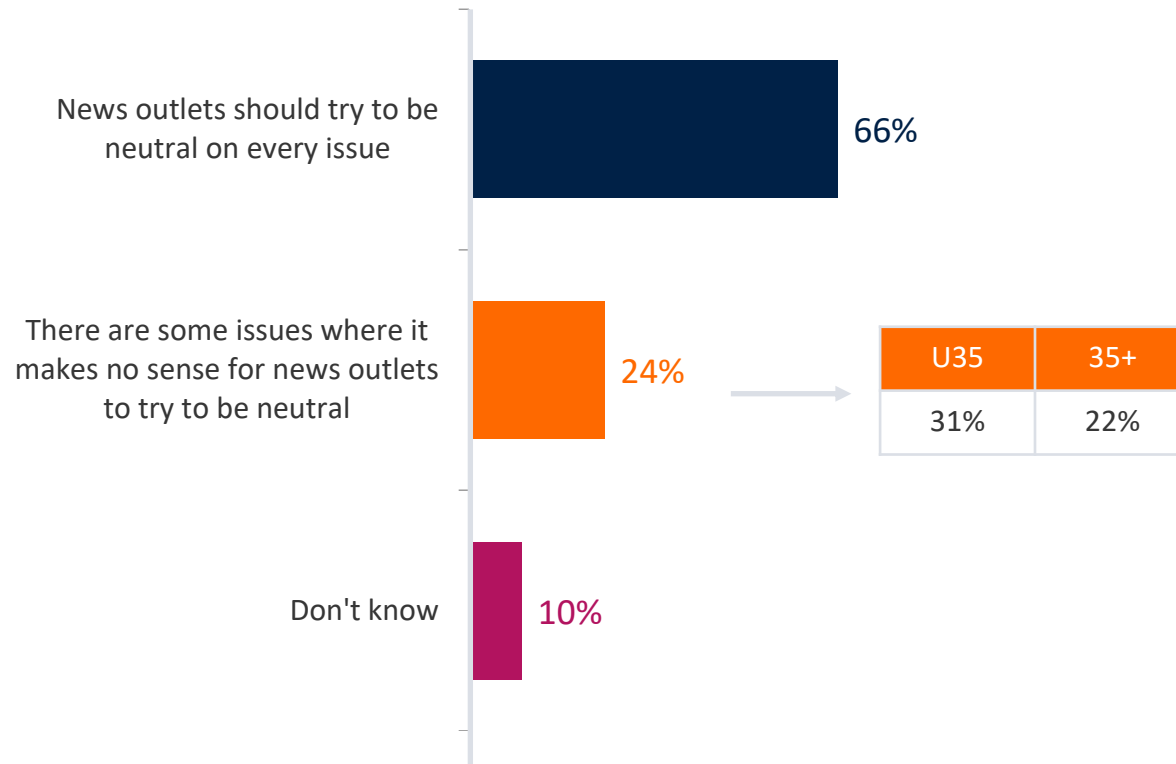
F, 21, UK focus group



Q_IMPACTIAL1_2021/2_2021. Thinking about the news in general in your country, when news outlets report on social and political issues, which of the following comes closest to your view?
Base: Total sample in all markets: 92,372.

But there are some issues where it is hard to be neutral

Younger groups are more likely to want news organisations to take a stand on **some issues**



“It’s OK to lean to another side on [a subject] like domestic abuse and [for a journalist] to express an opinion on that”

F, UK focus group

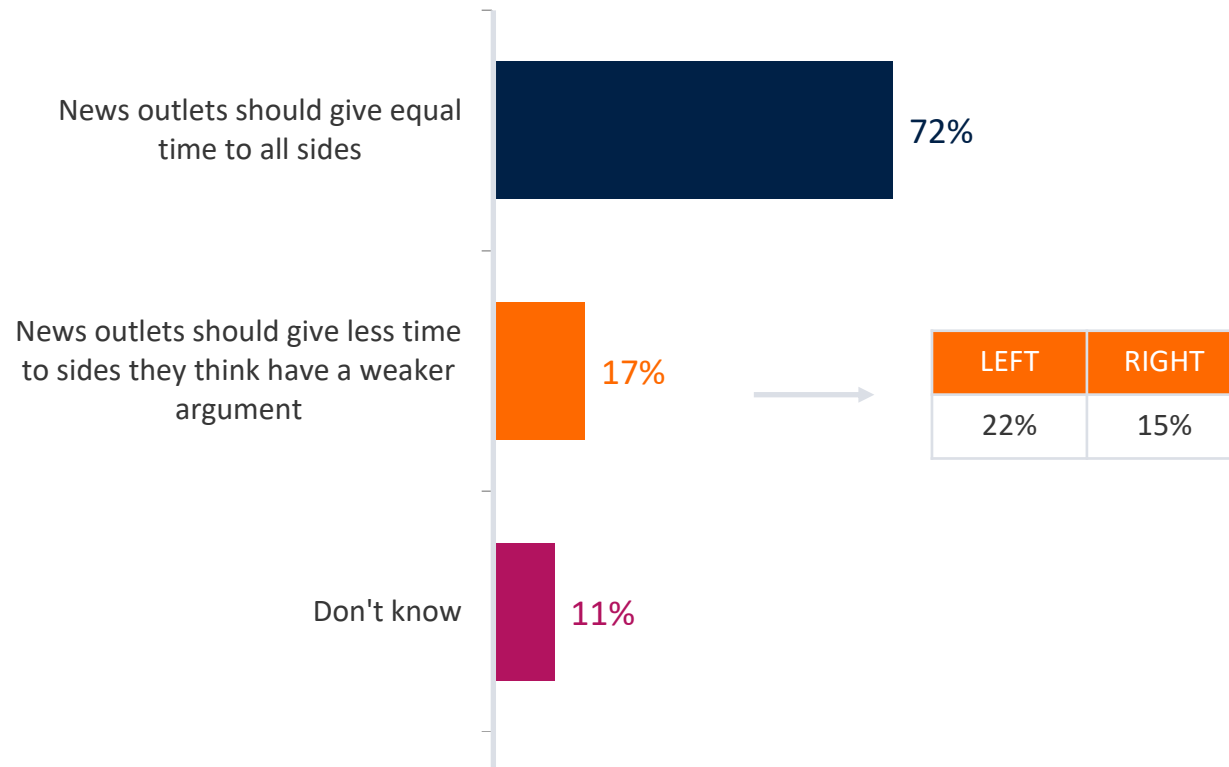


“

Q_IMPARTIAL2_2021. Thinking about the news in general in your country, when news outlets report on social and political issues, which of the following comes closest to your view?
Base: Total sample in all markets: 92,372.

Commitment to equal time to all sides of an argument

Public has a strong preference to allow all views to be heard but those on the left (and young) more likely to want to close down some debates



“

These [anti-vaccination] opinions exist, so we have to see them ... Do not just sweep it under the table and then suddenly be surprised that something exists”

“

F, Germany focus group



Q_IMPACTIAL3_2021. Thinking about the news in general in your country, when news outlets report on social and political issues, which of the following comes closest to your view?
Base: Total sample in all markets: 92,372.

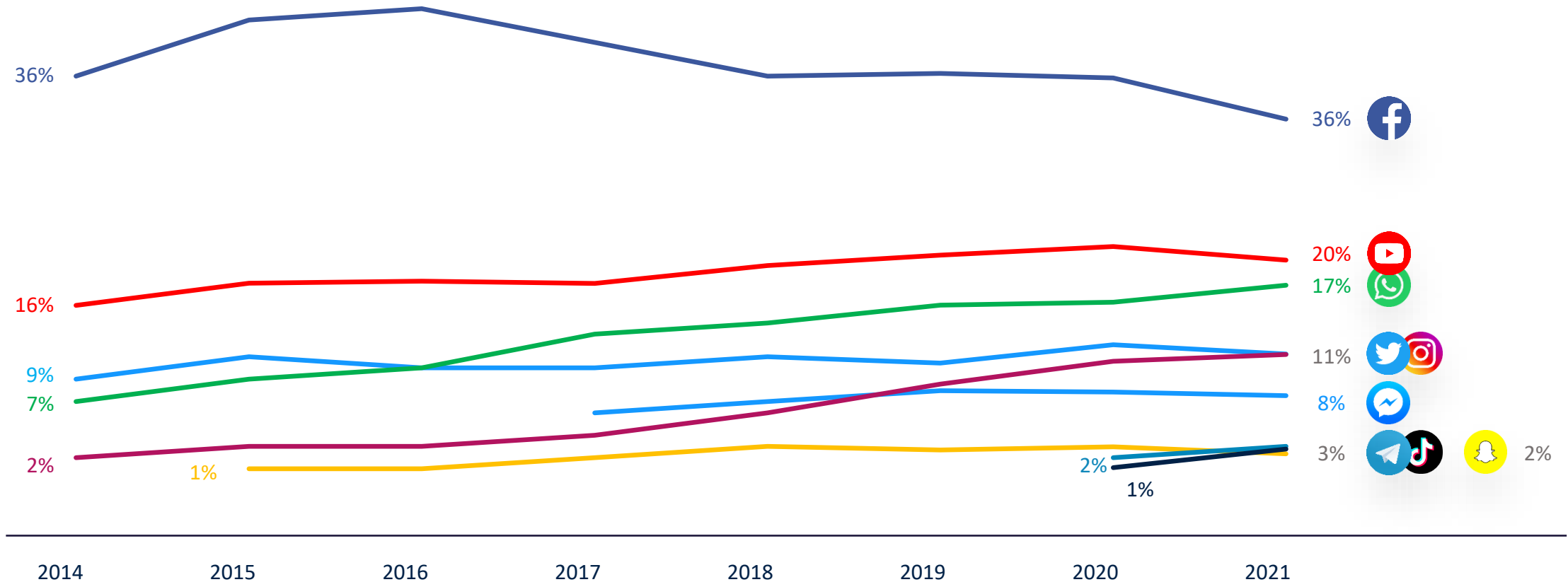
Gateways and social media

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Facebook becoming less important for news, visual networks like Instagram (and TikTok) on the rise

% use each social network for news weekly (2014-21)



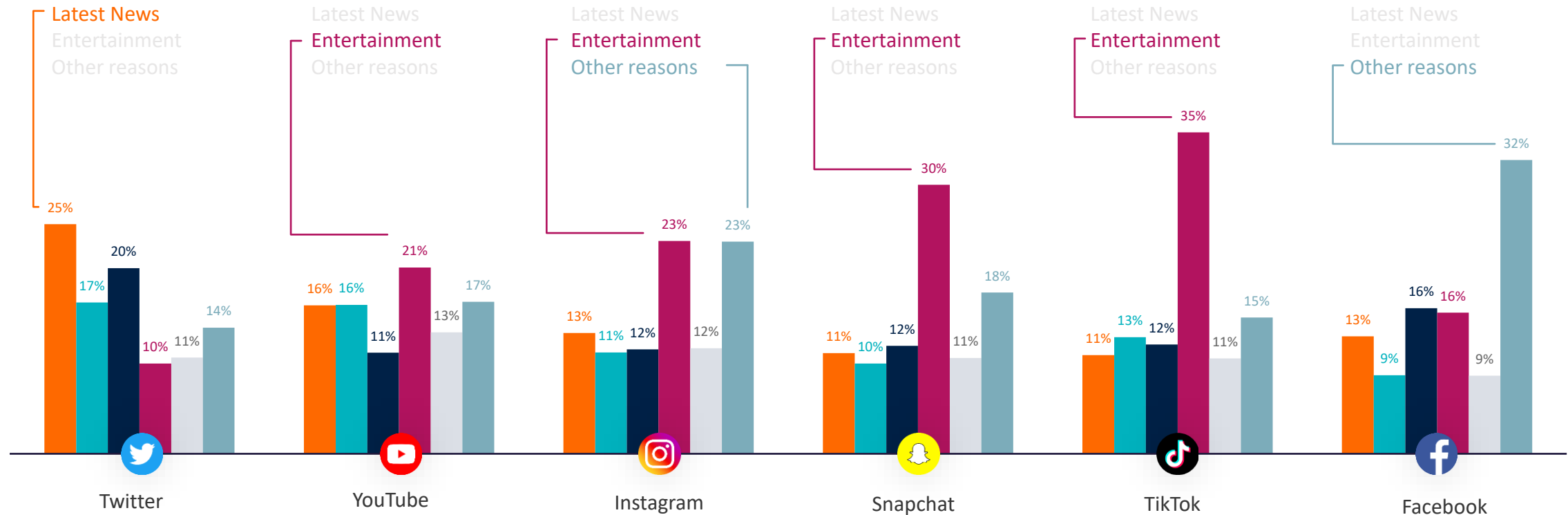
Q12B. Which, if any, of the following have you used for news in the last week? Base: Total 2014-21 sample in selected markets (most n ≈ 2000).

Note: From 2015–21 the 12 countries included are UK, USA, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Australia and Brazil. In 2014, we did not poll in Australia or Ireland.

Motivations around news are very different across networks

Main motivation for each network

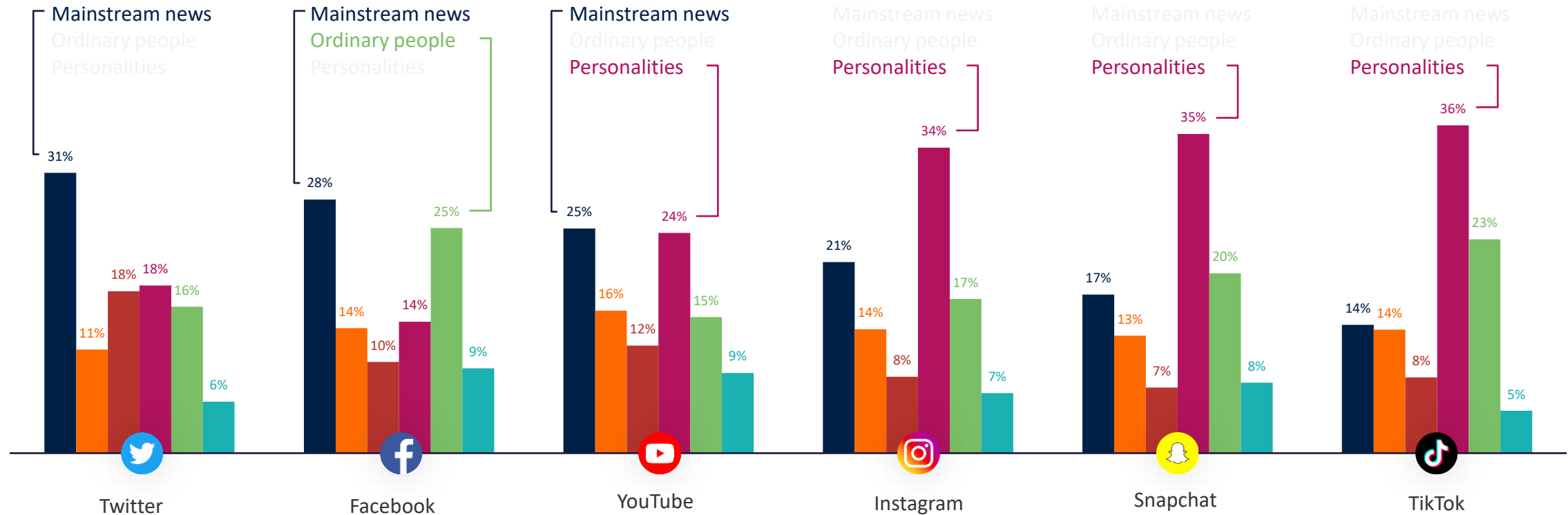
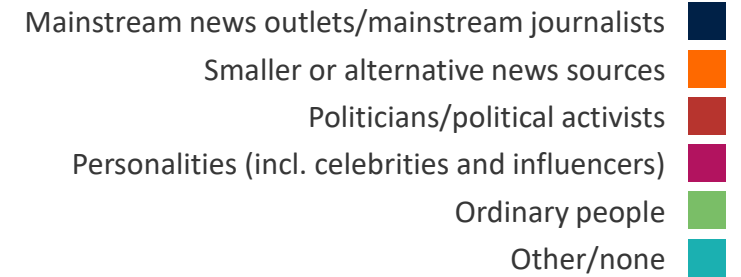
- Good place to get the very latest news
- Enjoy the debate and comments alongside the news
- Gives me news that is personally important to me
- Gives me perspectives not available in mainstream media
- Fun and entertaining way to pass the time
- I mostly see news while I'm there for other reasons



Q12_Social_motivations. You said that you use [social network] for news... What is the MAIN reason that you use [social network] for news?
 Base: All that use Twitter/Facebook/YouTube/Instagram/Snapchat/TikTok for news in all markets: 6,338/28,762/15,663/6,570/924/1,500.

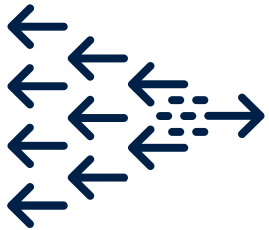
Where do we pay most attention when it comes to social platforms?

Mainstream media and journalists often lead conversations in Twitter and Facebook but they struggle to get attention in newer networks.



Q12_Social_sources. You said that you use [social platform] for news... When it comes to news on [social platform] which of these do you generally pay most attention to?
 Base – all markets Twitter= 6,338, Facebook=28,766, YouTube=15,667, Instagram=6,571, Snapchat=925, TikTok=1,500

Emerging questions

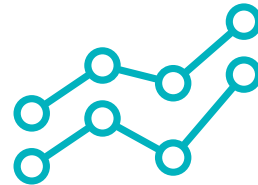


COVID-19 has **accelerated digital change** and put further pressure on traditional models.

Are we going fast enough?



How can the news media build on the **trust premium** gained during the pandemic?



How much further can pay models go?
What about those not prepared to pay?



How can publishers win over those who feel that coverage is unfair to them?



How to engage younger audiences in social media and beyond?

Access or download the full report

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk>

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