

FULL FACT UK PUBLIC ATTITUDES RESEARCH

April 2024

Key findings

1

Most of the UK public find it **hard to identify** false information online and believe it is **harming democracy** in the country.

2

A quarter of the UK public – particularly regular users of **social media** – are worried their political opinions are **based on false information**.

3

Most of the UK public expect false information to **influence the next general election result** and back the regulation of political claims.

Methodology

Ahead of the general election in 2024, Full Fact commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct research among the UK public to understand attitudes to misinformation and politics.

Much has changed in the UK since the study was previously run in 2021, and therefore a new read on public opinion was required.

Experts have called the current macro context a ‘polycrisis’. In the past three years the UK has been through COVID-19 lockdowns and vaccinations, seen three Prime Ministers in one year, while the war in Ukraine and subsequent inflation and interest rates have risen to levels that, to a new generation, are unknown.



Fieldwork was conducted from the 19th – 21st December 2023.



2000 15-minute online, self-completed interviews were completed by a nationally representative sample of the adult UK public across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Data shown in this report refers to the UK General Public unless otherwise noted.



Quotas were set on age, gender and region to match UK population profile. The data is weighted so that the sample composition best reflect the demographic profile of the UK adult population according to the most recent census data.

01

Misinformation & the media

The majority are worried about the spread of false or misleading information.

Q. To what extent, if at all, are you worried about the spread of false or misleading information about the news, current affairs or issues that affect you? (% worried)

Base (all adults): 2000

Q. What would you say are the most important issues facing Britain today? (Top 20)

Base (all adults): 2000



68%

are worried about the spread of false or misleading information

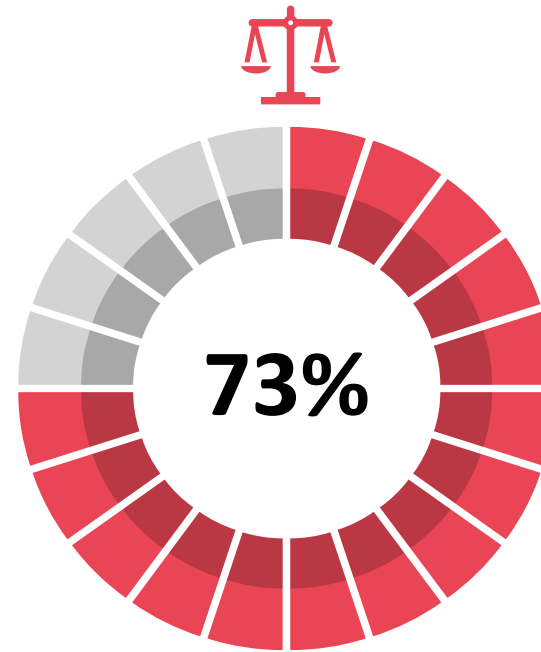


23%

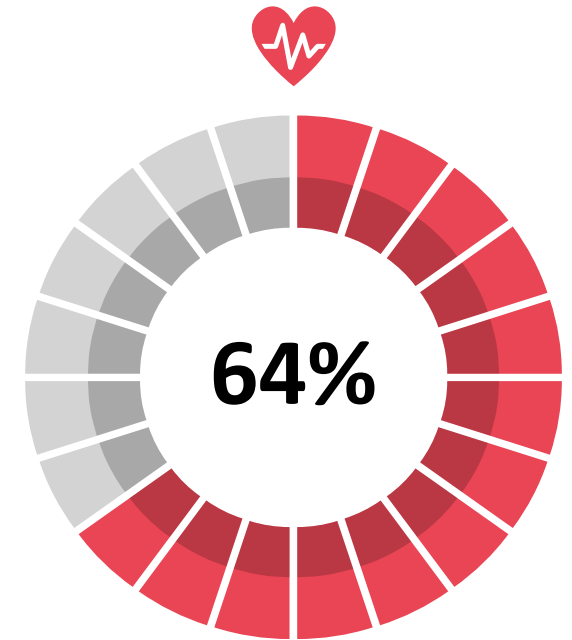
Nearly a quarter say the spread of **fake news and misinformation** is one of the **most important issues** facing Britain today (above taxation, pensions and defence).

Most think the prevalence of false information online is harming UK democracy, politics and people's health.

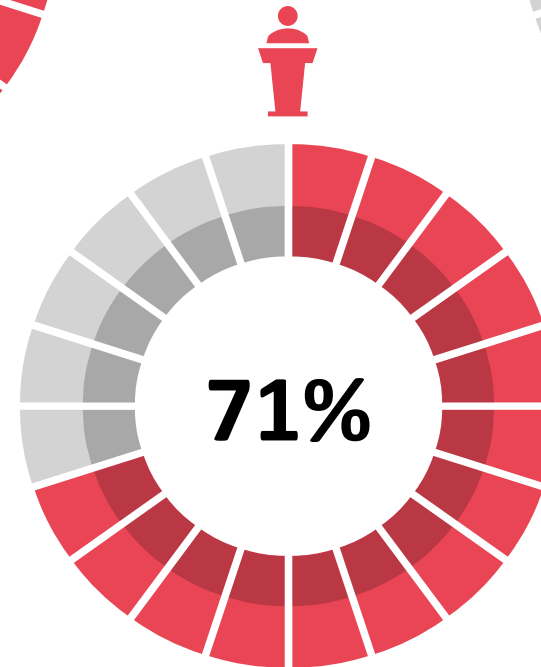
False information online has...



...a negative effect on
democracy in the UK



...a negative effect on
people's health



...a negative effect on
UK politics

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base (all adults): 2000

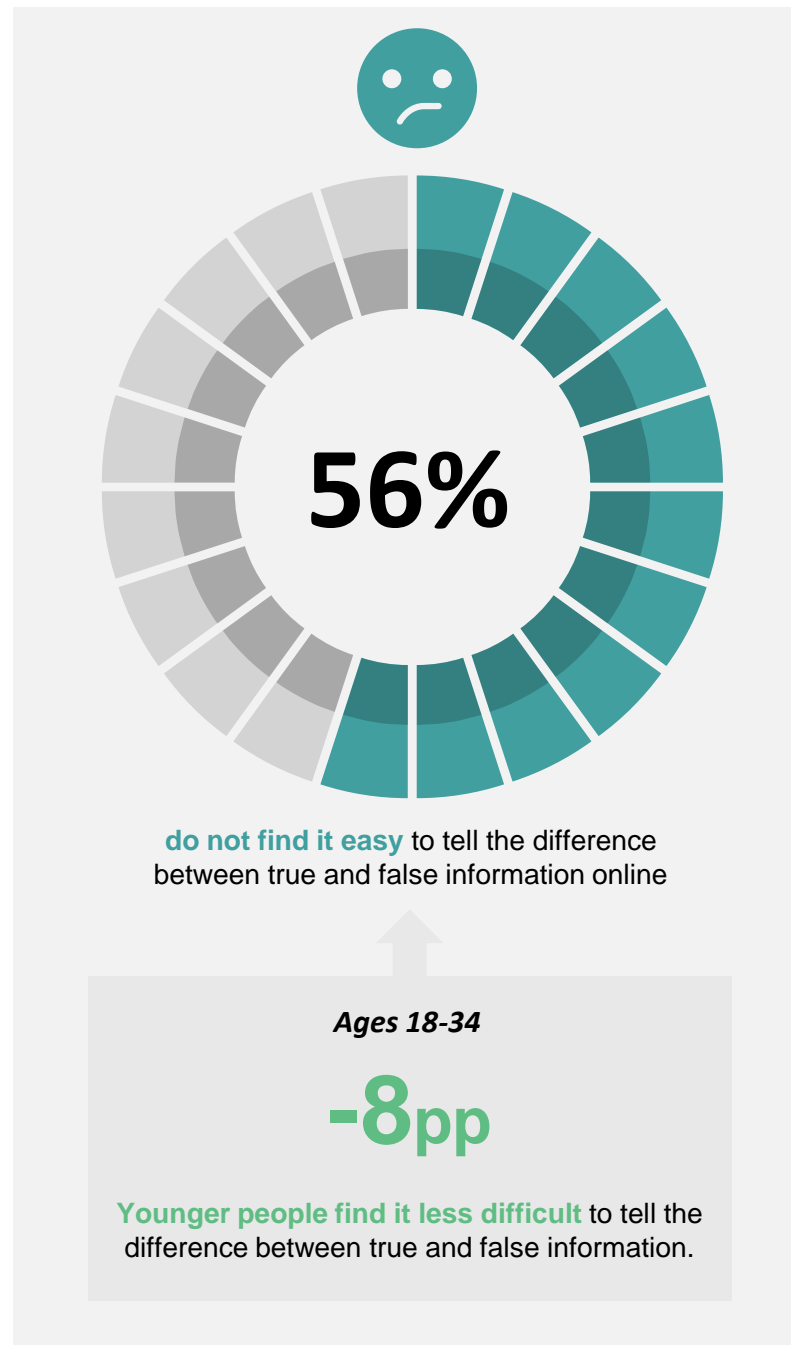
At least half think it's not easy to tell true information from false online or trustworthy sources, and one in three has falsely believed a news story.

Q. Thinking about all the different types of information in the news and current affairs that you see online, how easy or difficult do you find it to tell the difference between [...]. (% difficult / neither easy or difficult)

Base (all adults): 2000

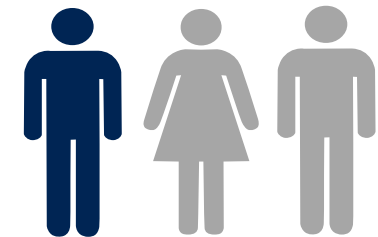
Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base (all adults): 2000



Half say they do not find it easy to tell which sources are trustworthy and which are not*

*50% 'not easy'

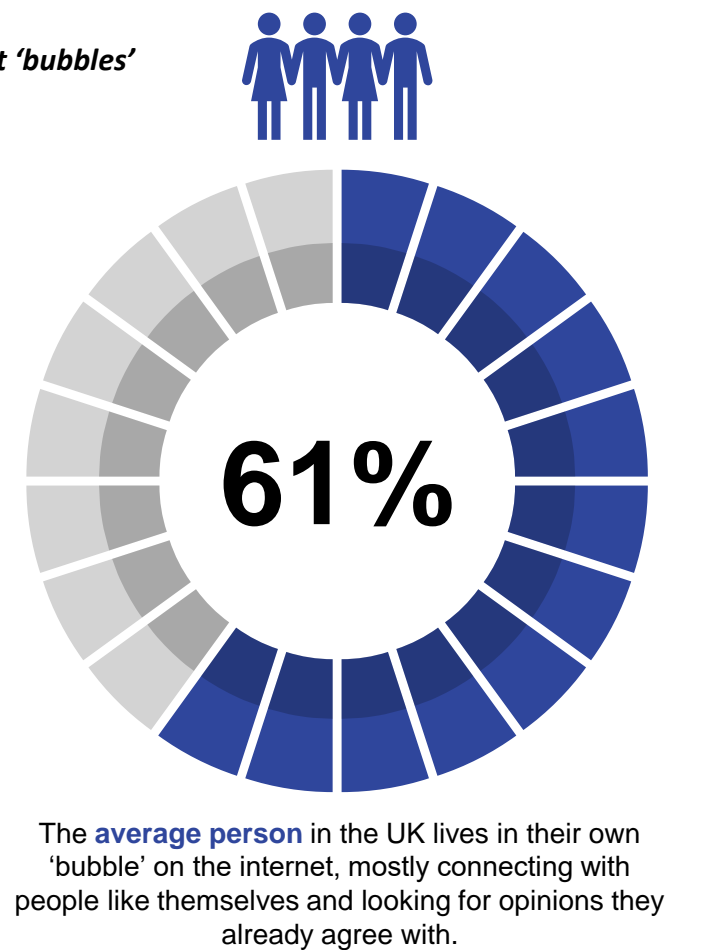
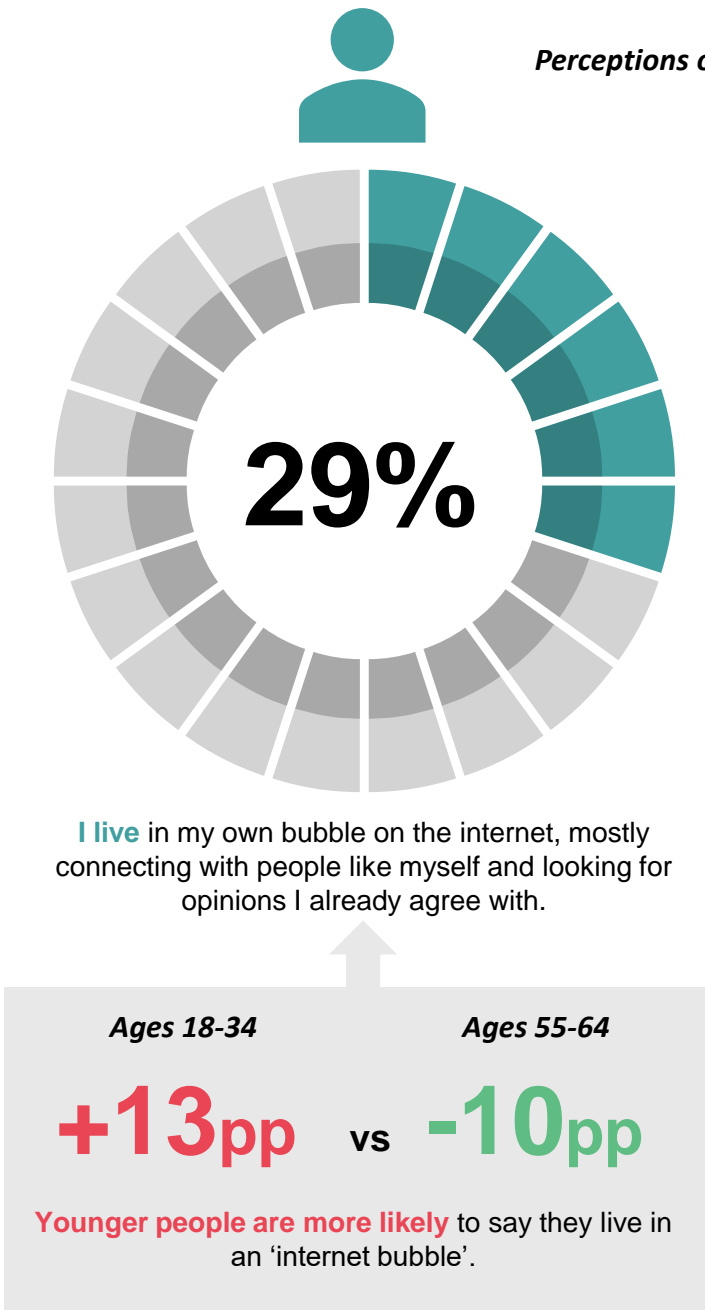


1/3 have falsely believed a news story was real until they found out it was fake*

*34% agree

While most don't think they live in an 'internet bubble', they are much more convinced that others do.

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)
Base (all adults): 2000



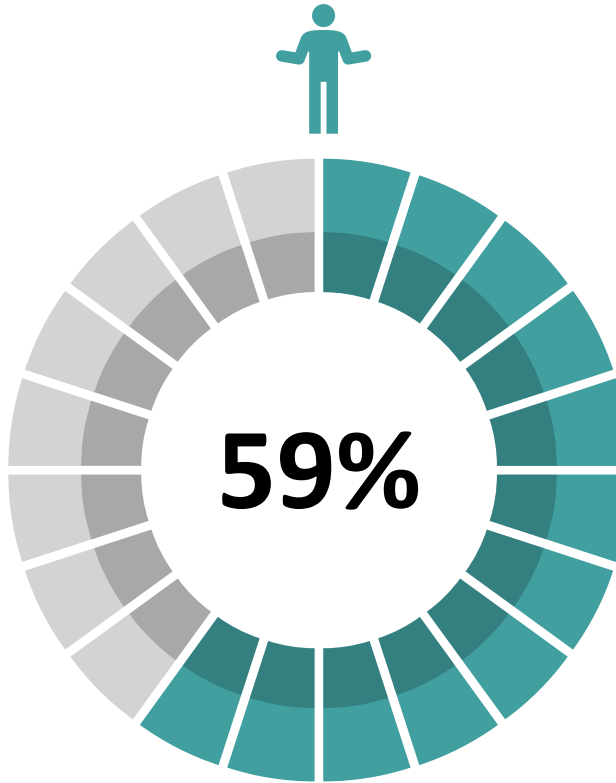
More than half think the average person in the UK is indifferent to facts but they themselves always do further research on the news.

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base (all adults): 2000

Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

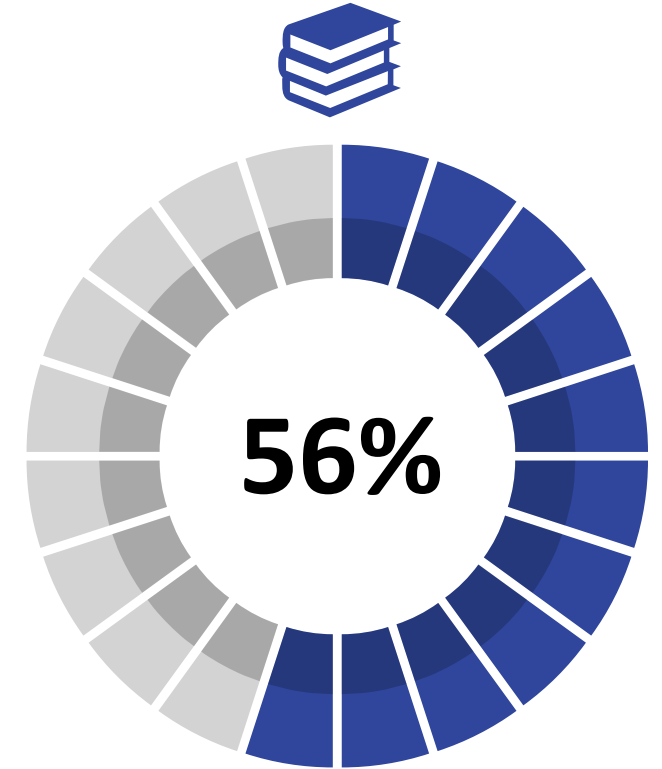
Base (all adults): 2000



The **average person in the UK** doesn't care about facts about politics and society anymore, they just believe what they want.

+13pp

Those who say they have **changed their voting preference because of false or misleading claims in politics** are significantly more likely to think the average person doesn't care about facts anymore.



I always **do further research on the news** and current affairs information before I believe it.

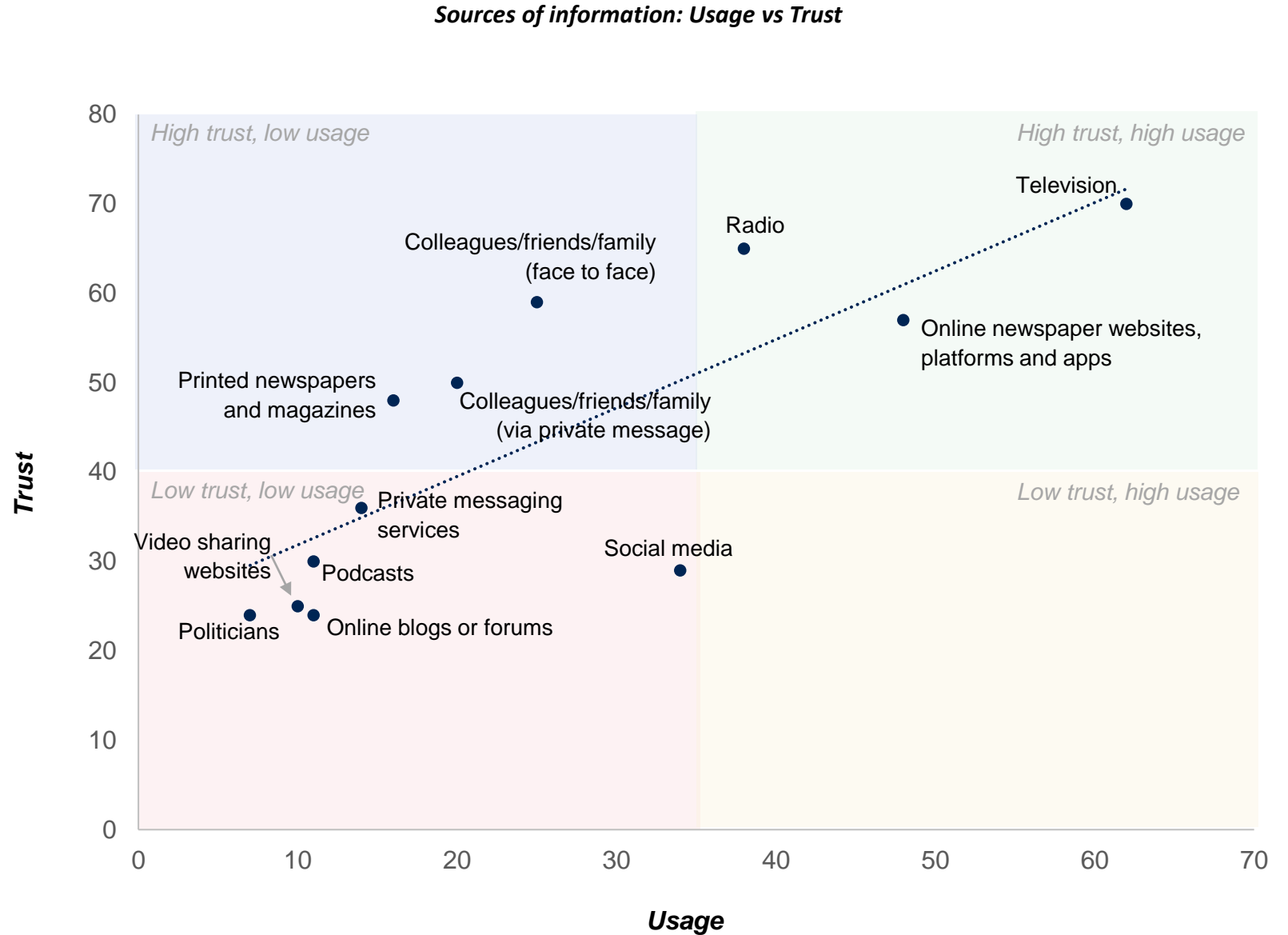
Television remains widely used and highly trusted, in contrast to video sharing websites.

Q. Where, if anywhere, do you typically get your information from about the news, current affairs, and issues that affect you?

Base (all adults): 2000

Q. To what extent, if at all, do you trust what you read or hear from each of the following? (% trust)

Base (all adults): 2000



Note: Usage of media sources was asked about local, regional and national printed newspapers and magazines separately. The figure for 'Printed newspapers and magazines' is therefore an average of these three ratings.

Social media is overwhelmingly blamed for false information, and approximately half feel Government should take responsibility.

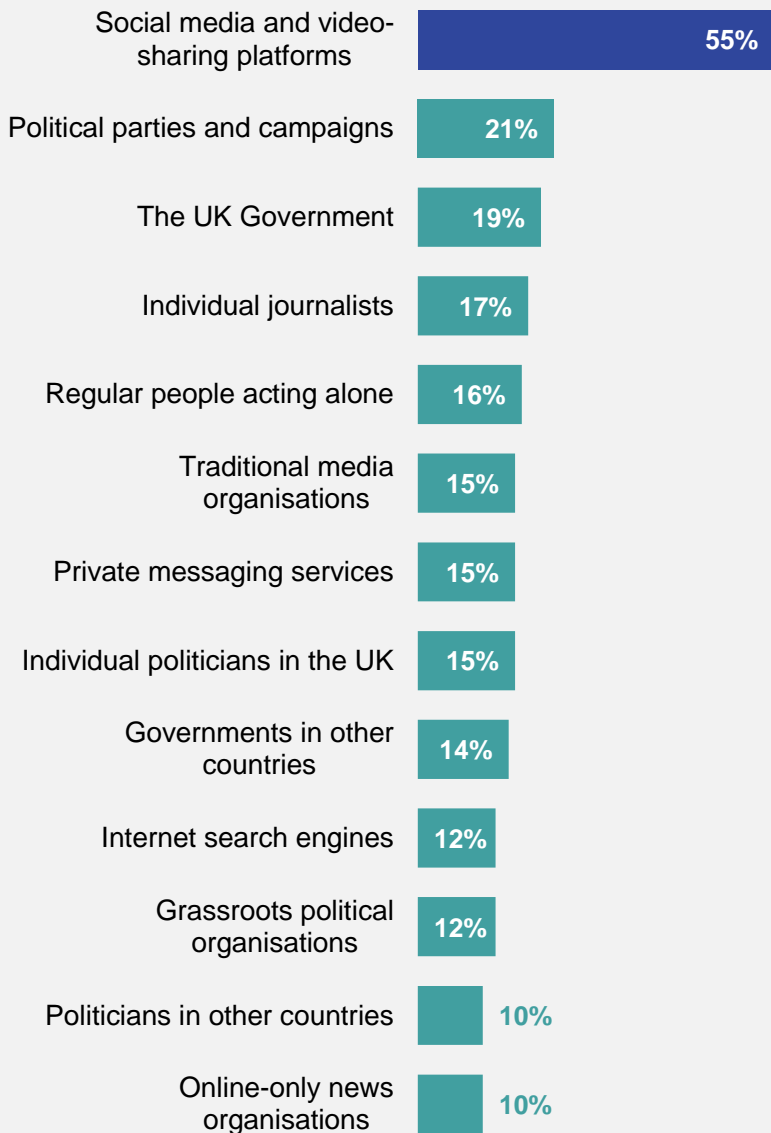
Q. Who, if anyone, do you think is most to blame for the spreading of false or misleading information in the news, current affairs, or about issues that affect you?

Base (all adults): 2000

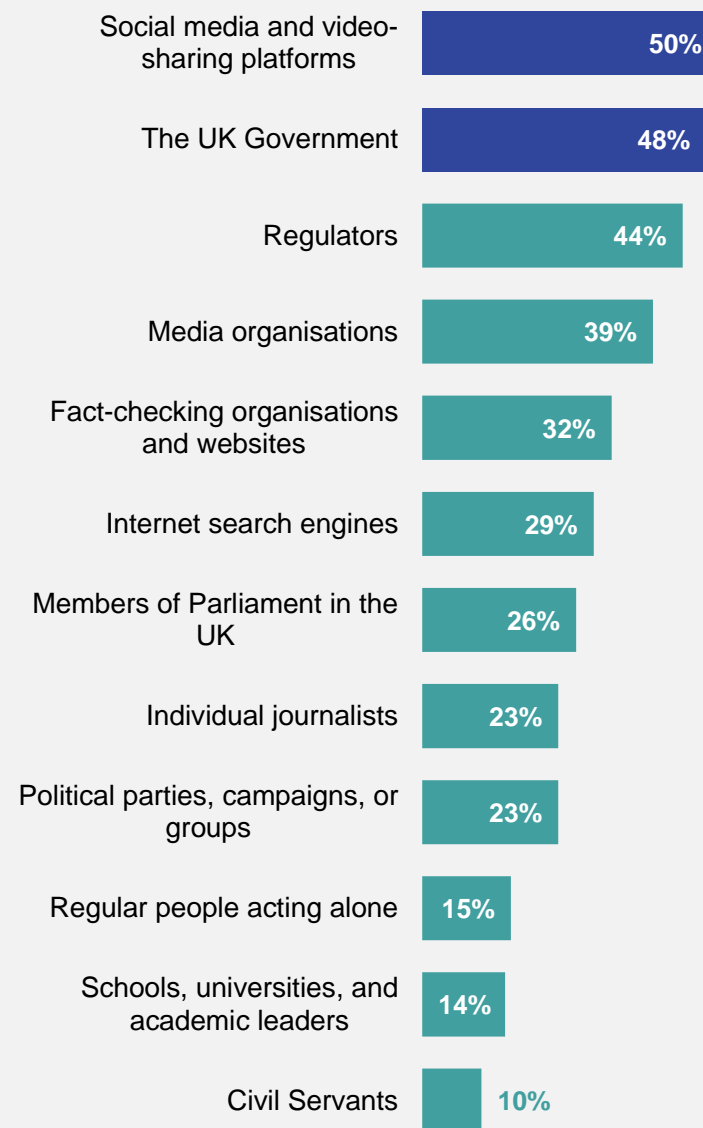
Q. In your opinion, who, if anyone, should be responsible for tackling the problem of spreading false or misleading information in the news, current affairs or issues that affect you?

Base (all adults): 2000

Sources most to blame for spreading false information



Responsibility for tackling the spreading of false information



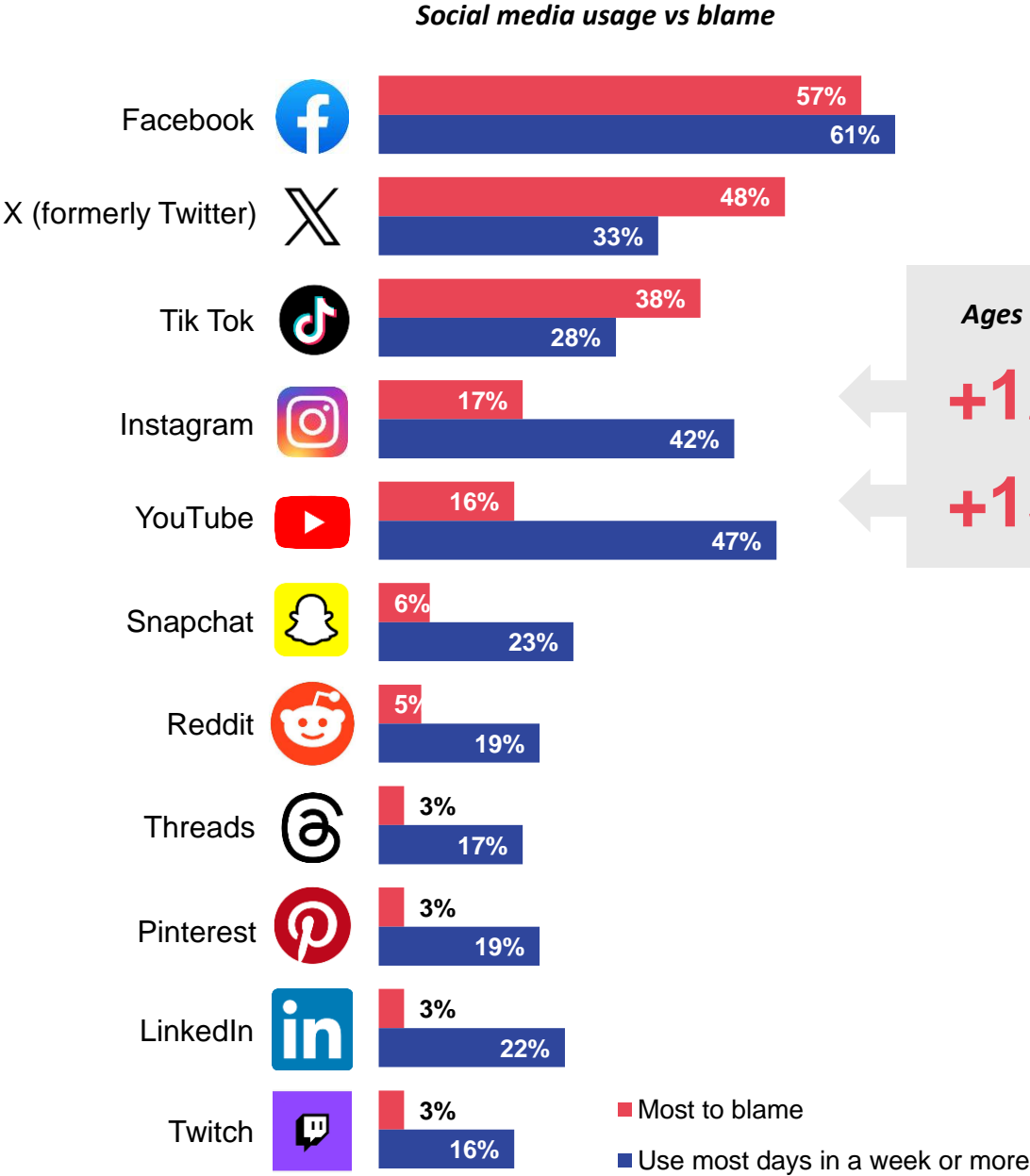
Facebook is the most used and most blamed for spreading false or misleading information.

Q. How often, if at all, do you use each of the following social media platforms or messaging services? % most days in a week or more

Base (all adults): 2000

Q. And which of the following social media and video-sharing sites do you think are most to blame for spreading false or misleading information in the news, current affairs, or about issues that affect you?

Base (use social media): 1100



Ages 18-34

+12pp

+15pp

Younger people are more likely to think **Instagram** and **YouTube** are to blame for spreading false information.

The vast majority think false information is deliberately spread, with pushing an agenda being the top motivation for doing so.

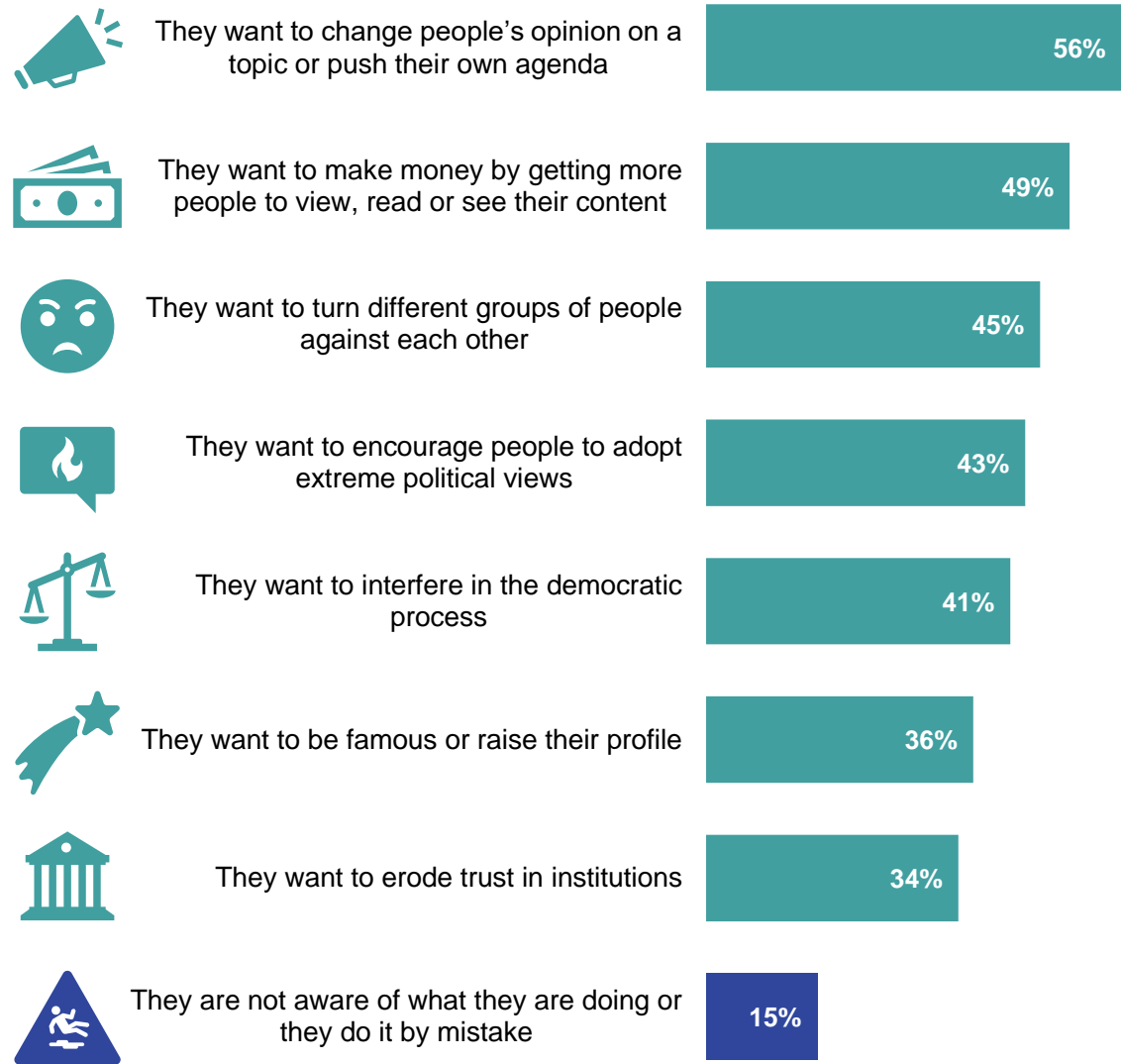
Q. What do you think are the main reasons, if any, some people or organisations spread false or misleading information in the news, current affairs, or about issues that affect you?

Base (all adults): 2000

Q. To what extent, if at all, are you worried about the spread of false or misleading information about the news, current affairs or issues that affect you? (% worried)

Base (all adults): 2000

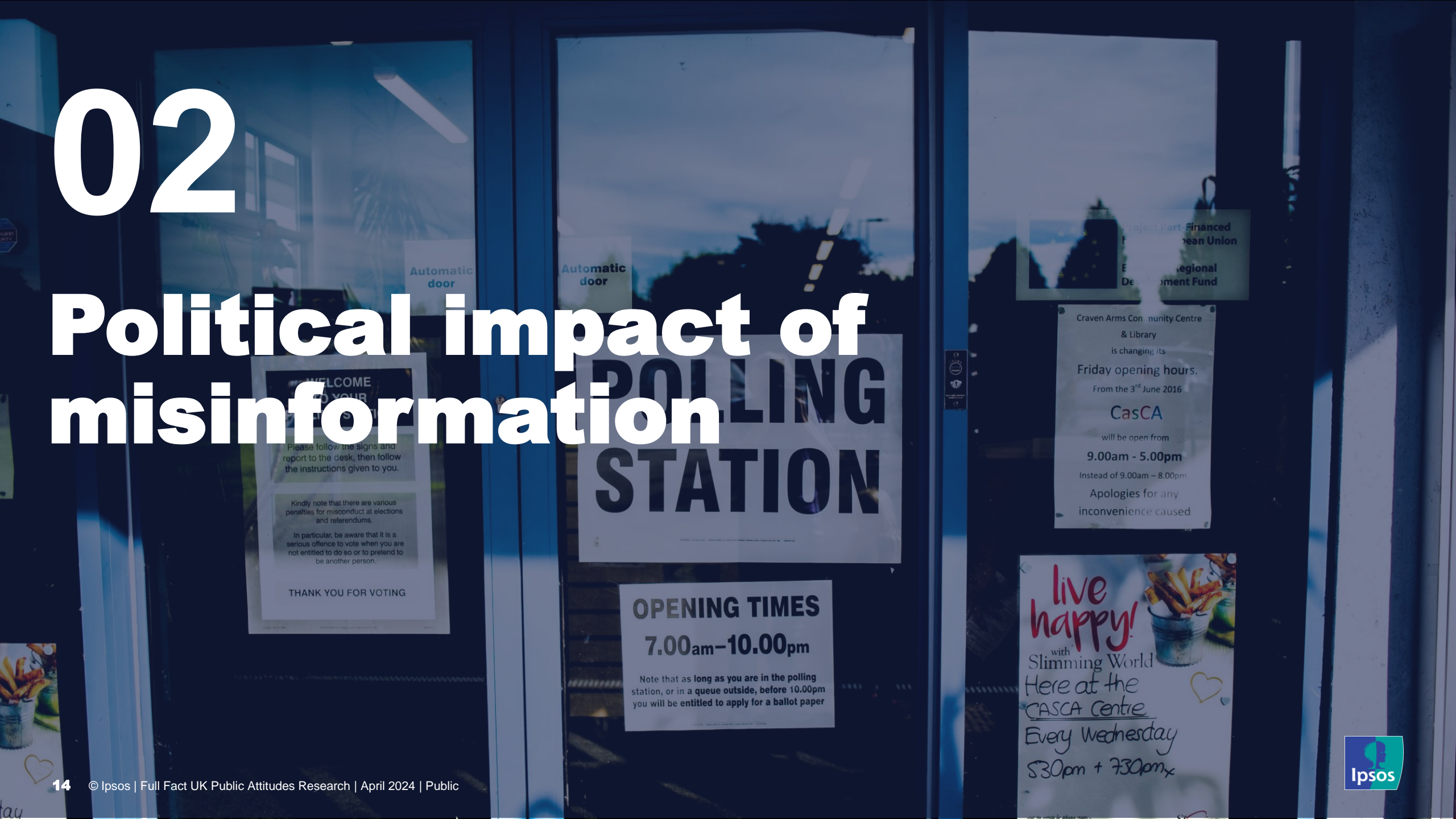
Reasons for spreading false information



Those who are **worried about false information** are significantly more likely to state **all factors** as motivations except for the **accidental spread** of false information.

02

Political impact of misinformation



Most think voters will be misled by false claims in next election campaign, and a quarter are worried their own political opinions are based on false information.

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

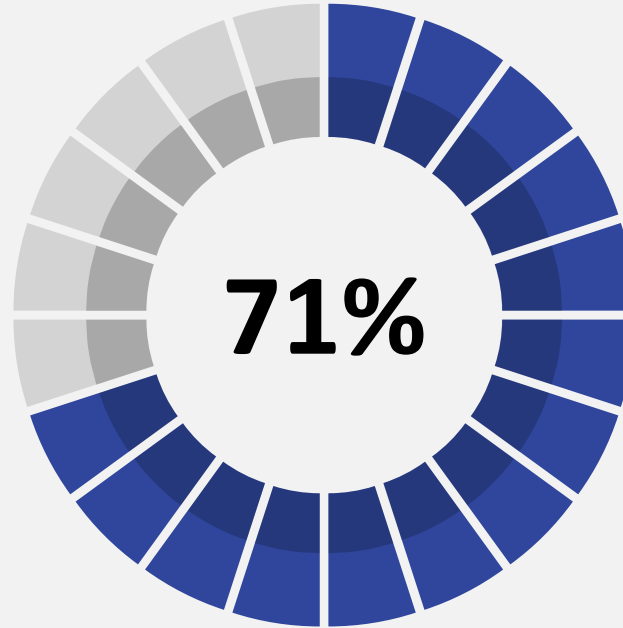
Base (all adults): 2000

Q. Out of the following list, please select the top 5 media channels you watch, read, or listen to.

Base (social media in top 5 channels): 853

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

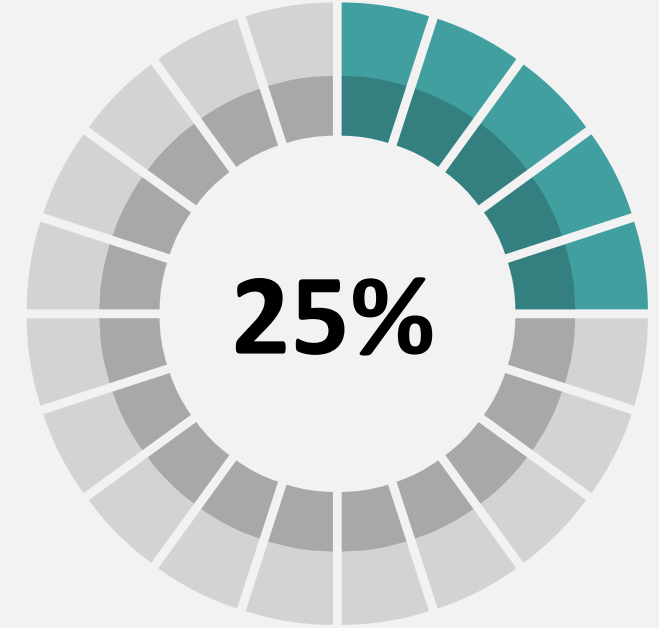
Base (agree negative effect on democracy): 643



I am concerned **voters will be misled** by false or misleading claims in the election campaign.

80%

Those who think **false information online has a negative effect on democracy** in the UK are significantly more likely to feel that voters will be misled by false claims.



I am worried that **my own political opinions** are based on false or misleading information.

34%

Those who say **social media channels among their top 5 media sources** are more likely to be concerned that their own political opinions are based on false information.

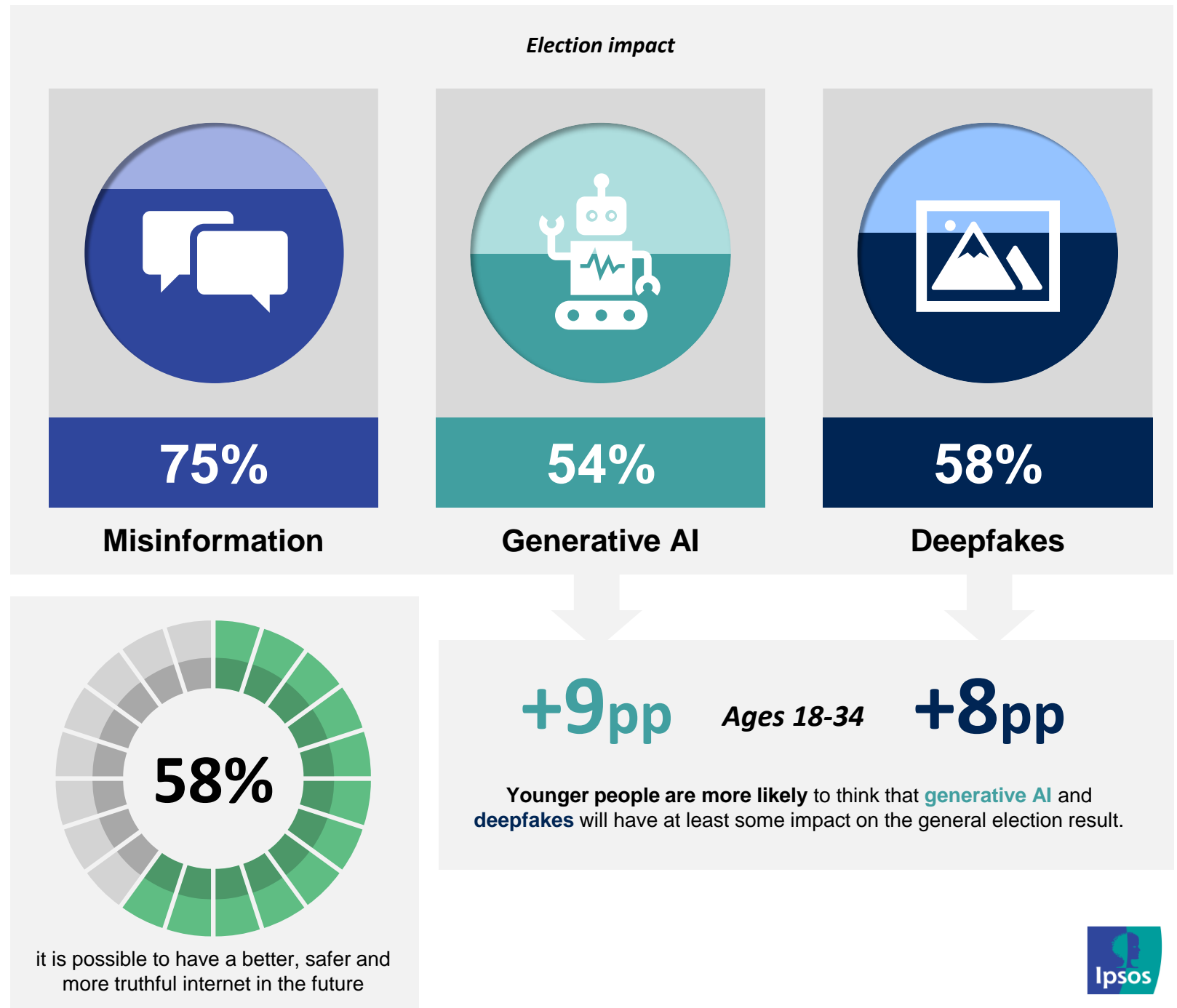
Most expect misinformation, generative AI, and deepfakes to have an impact on the election result.

Q. Thinking further about the upcoming election, what impact, if any, do you think the following will have on the general election result? % At least some impact

Base (all adults): 2000

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base (all adults): 2000

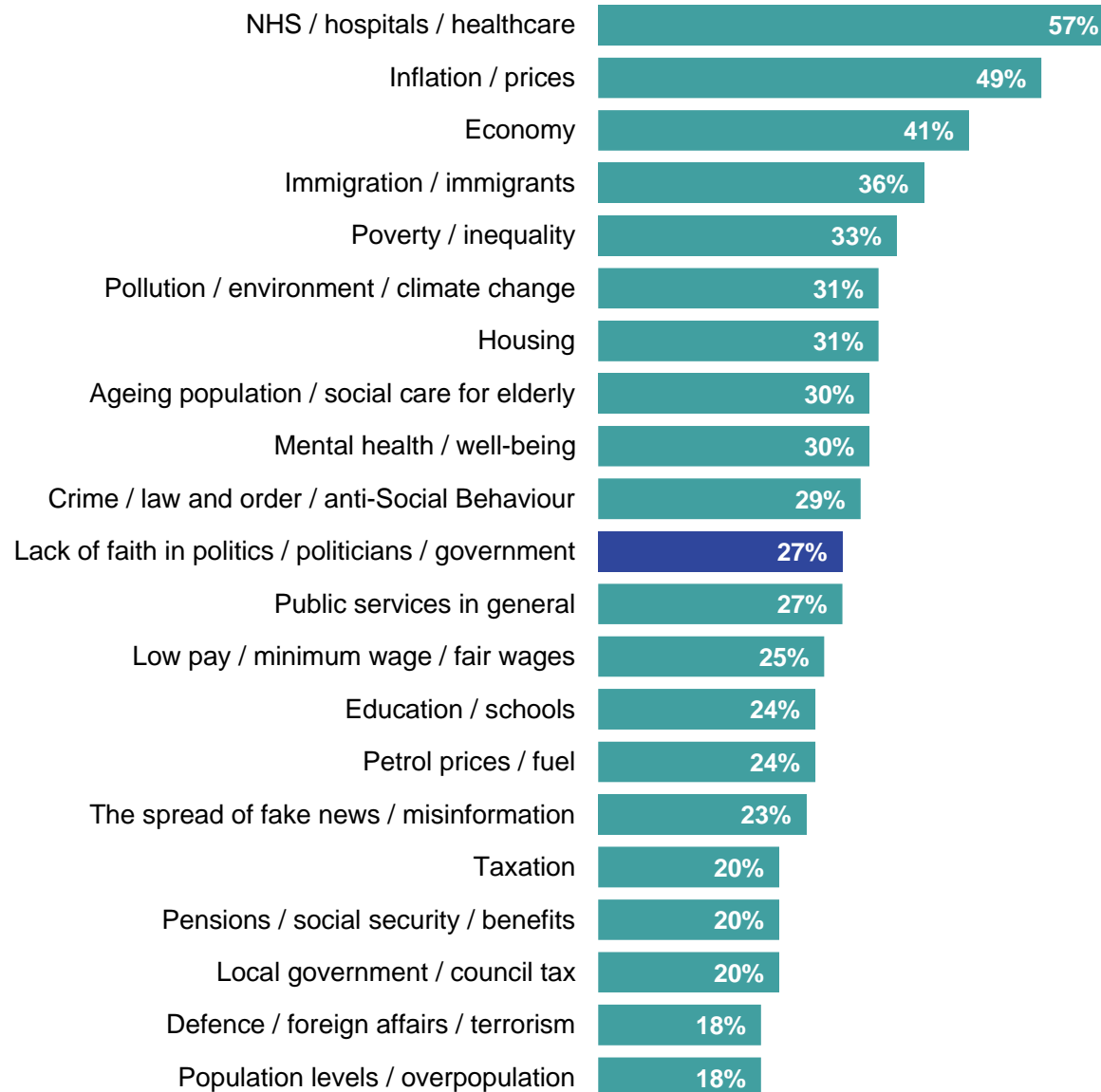


Lack of faith in politics is seen as a greater issue facing Britain than education or wages.

Q. What would you say are the most important issues facing Britain today? (Top 20)

Base (all adults): 2000

Most important issues facing Britain



Faith in the political system is very low – most think lying has increased in the last five years, and politicians are the least trusted source of news.

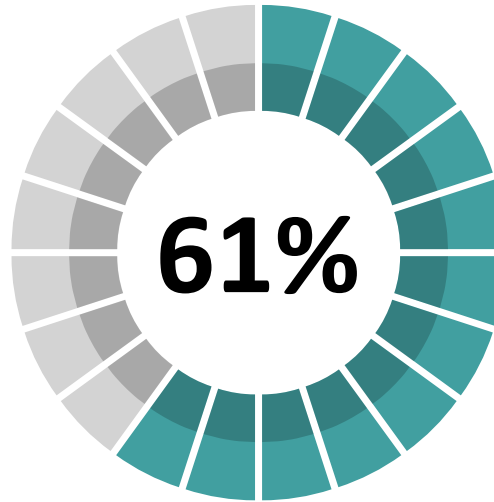
Q. And finally, do you think there is more, less or about the same amount of lying and misuse of facts in politics and media in the UK than there was five years ago? (% more)

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

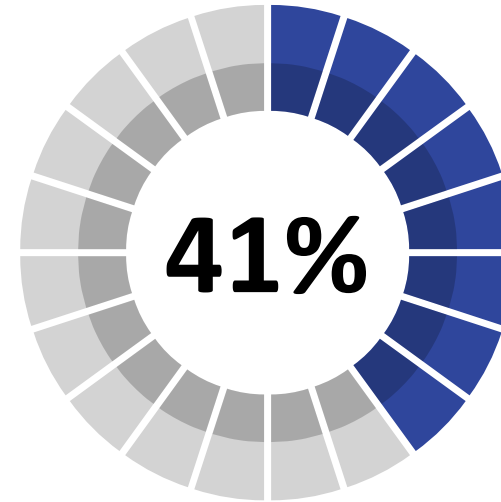
Q. Below is a list of different ways you might get news about politics and current affairs. To what extent, if at all, do you trust what you read or hear from each of the following?

Bases (all adults): 2000

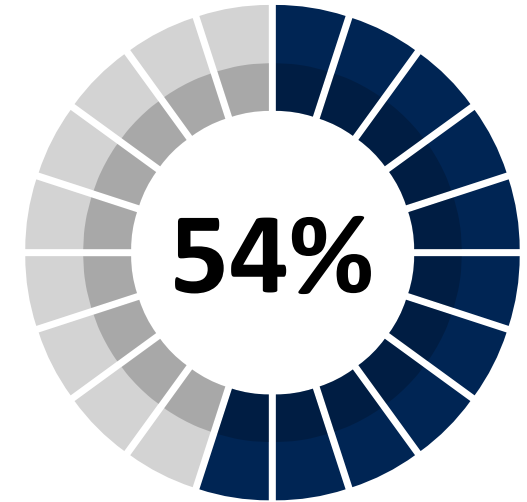
Trust in politics and politicians



think there is **more lying and misuse of facts** in politics and media in the UK than there was five years ago



think traditional parties and **politicians act against their interests**



tend to **ignore what parties and politicians say** because they don't know if they can be trusted



Politicians are considered the least trustworthy source of news about politics and current affairs.

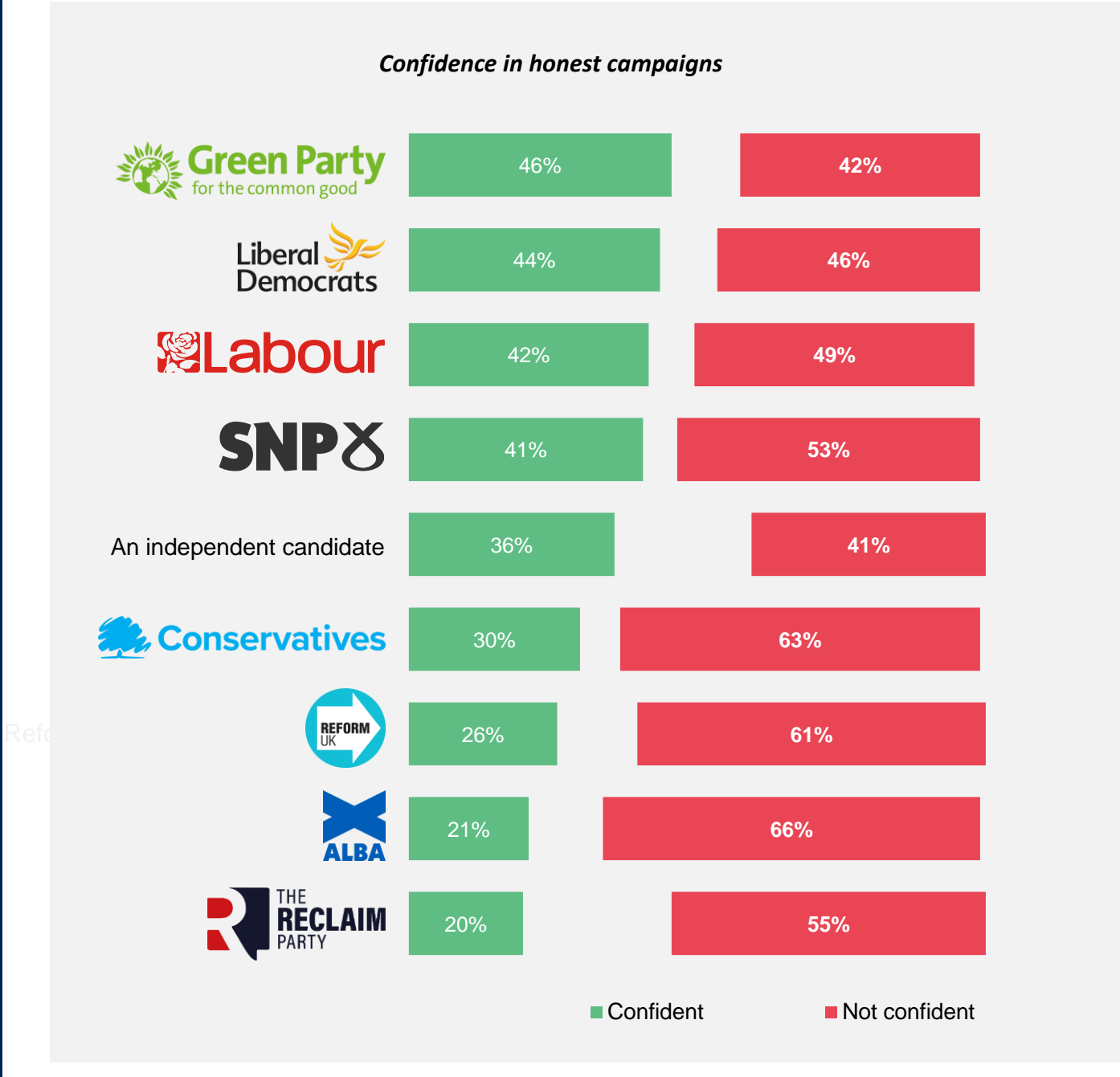
65% do not trust what they read or hear from politicians.

The public is highly sceptical that parties will be running honest campaigns.

Q. Thinking about the upcoming general election, how confident, if at all, are you that the following political parties will run honest campaigns?*

Base (all adults): 2000

*respondents were asked about political parties across all nations, but as base sizes for Wales and Northern Ireland are below n=100, these aren't shown.



Manipulating evidence is seen as the most unacceptable behaviour in campaigns; the public strongly back regulation of political adverts.

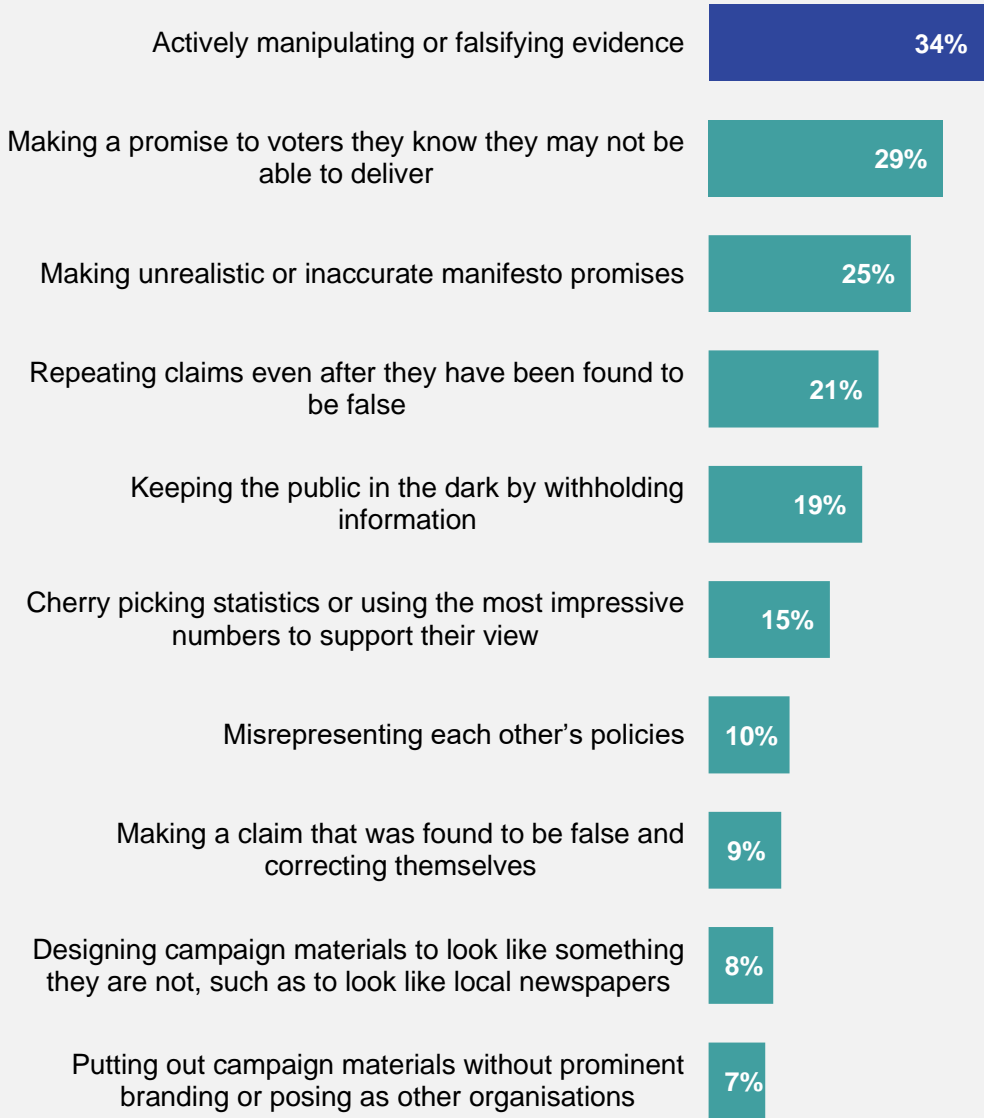
Q. Below is a list of behaviours politicians and parties may engage in as part of a general election campaign. Which of these, if any, do you consider to be the most unacceptable?

Base (all adults): 2000

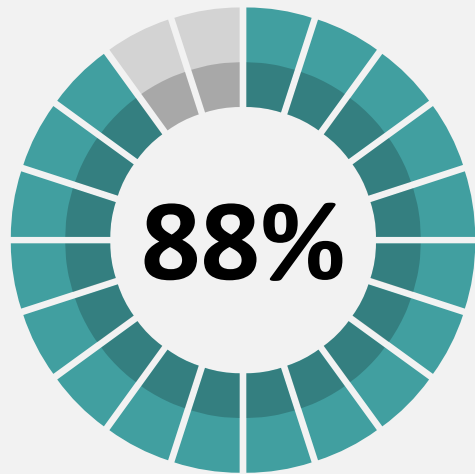
Q. Do you think it should or should not be a legal requirement that factual claims in political adverts must be accurate?

Base (all adults): 2000

Most unacceptable behaviours among political parties



Legal requirement for political adverts

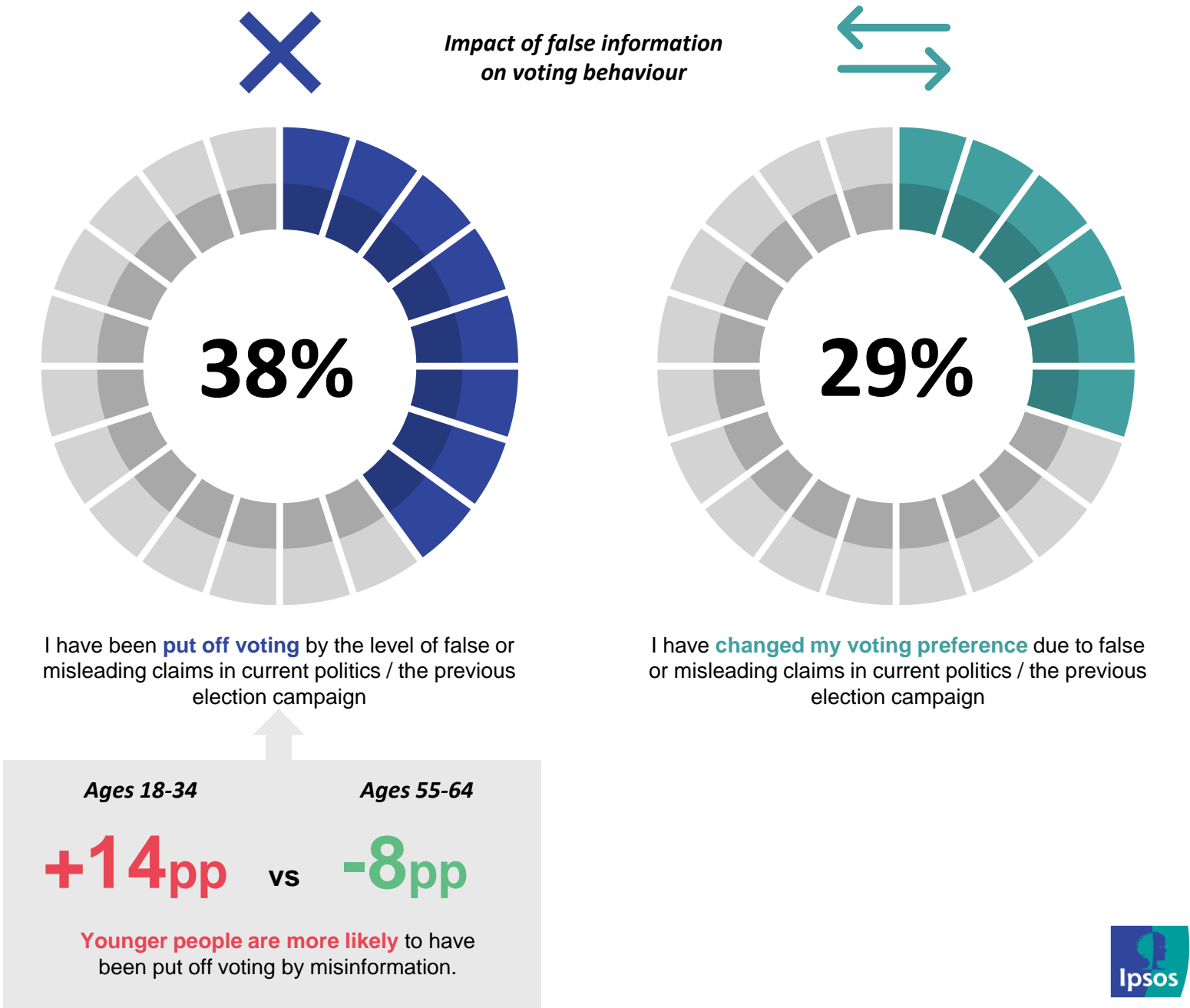


think it should be a legal requirement that factual claims in political adverts must be accurate

Over a third have been put off voting due to misleading political claims, and more than a quarter have changed their voting preference.

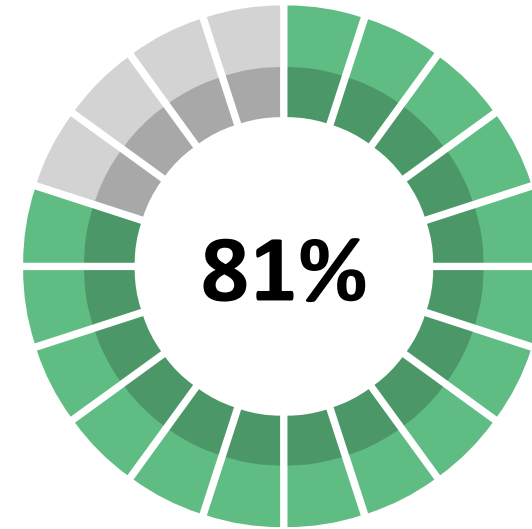
Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. % agree

Base (all adults): 2000



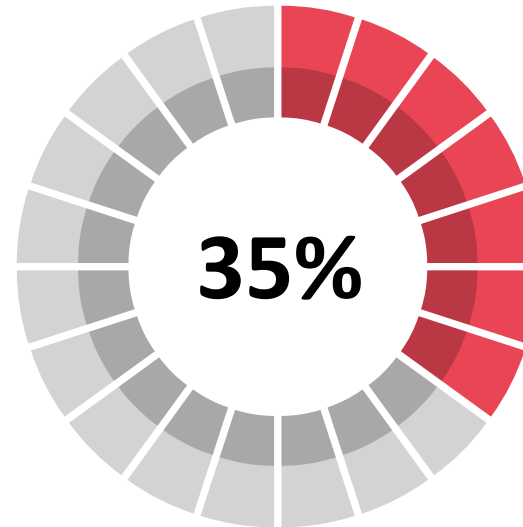
Four in five want to see politicians held to account on their claims, but only a minority feel empowered to make a difference.

Most feel that...

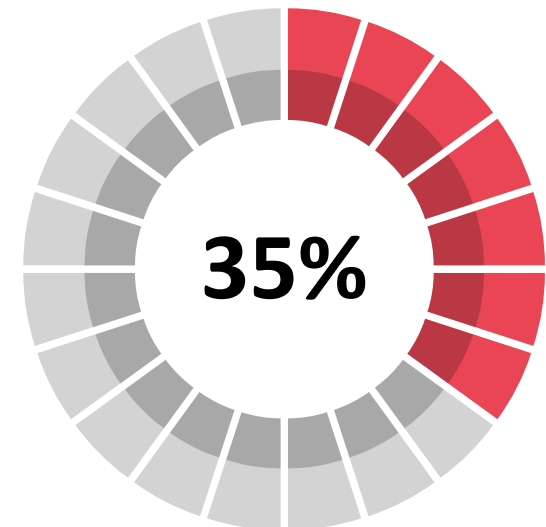


It's important to **hold public figures to a higher standard and demand truth from politicians**

Only minorities feel that...



People like me have the power to **hold politicians to account**



When people like me get involved in politics it is **possible to make real changes to how the UK is run**

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

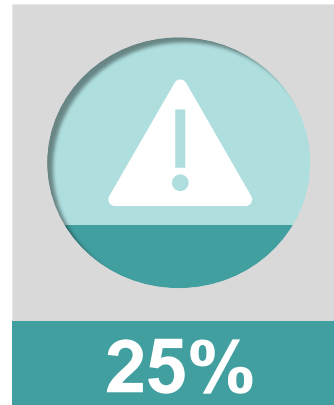
Base (all adults): 2000

There is high support for parties adopting honest standards in manifestos and having spending commitments independently checked.

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base (all adults): 2000

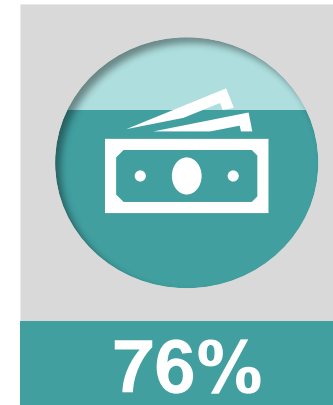
Political party manifestos



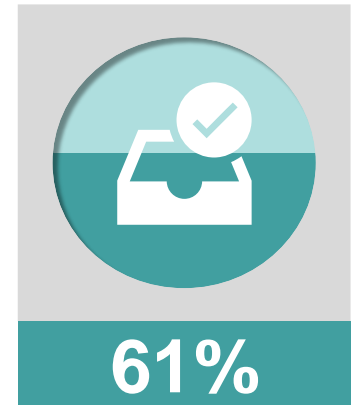
I trust what I read in or hear about political party manifestos



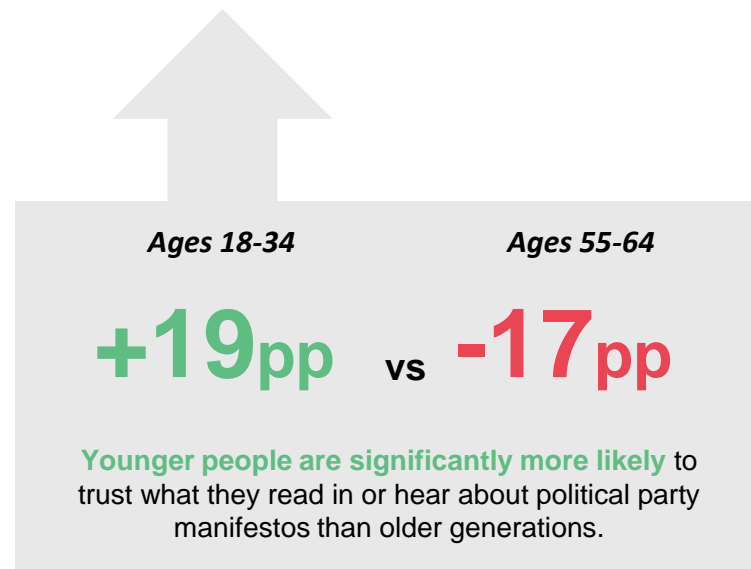
I support political parties adopting a set of standards for honesty and transparency in manifestos



The spending commitments political parties make in their manifestos should be checked and costed by an independent body



The commitments made in political party manifestos are important to me when determining my vote



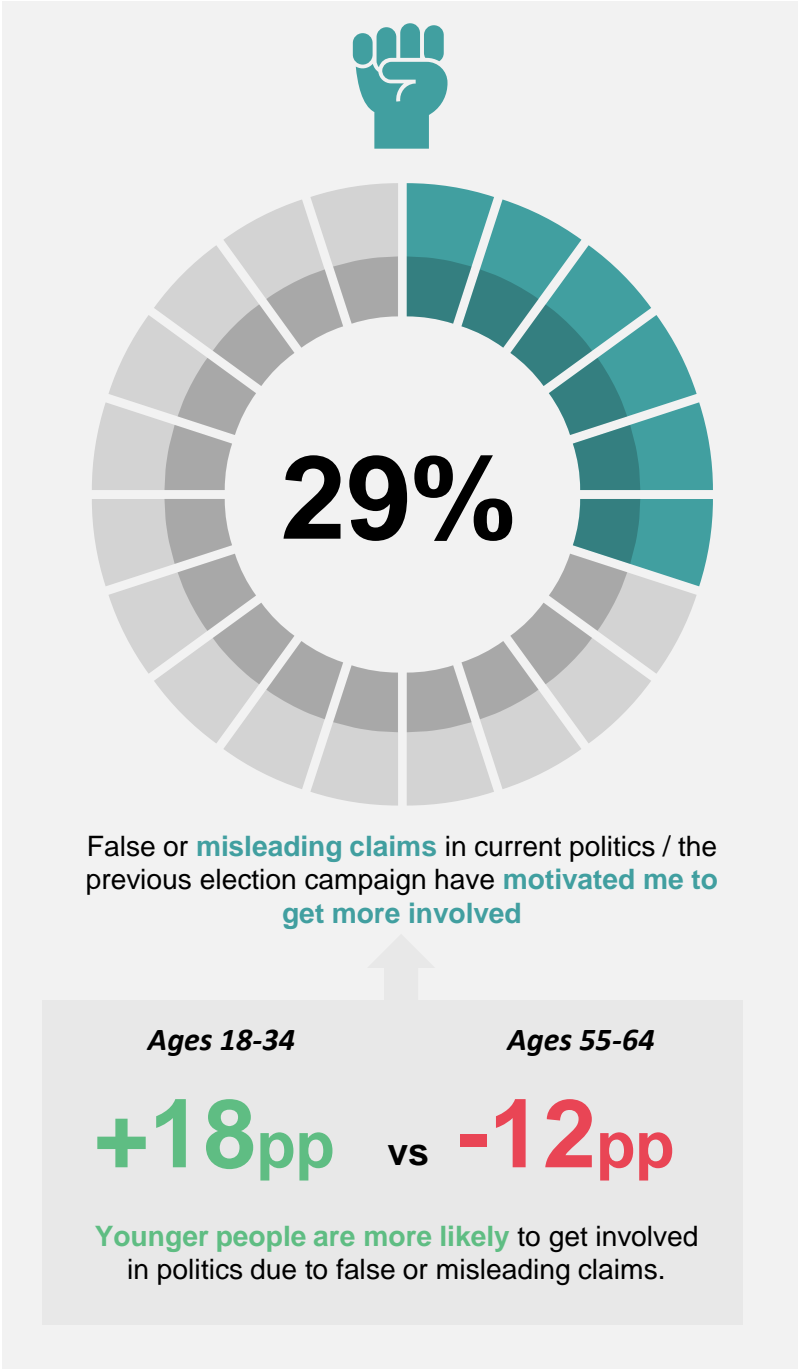
Nearly a third have been motivated to get more involved due to false claims in politics and the previous election.

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. % agree

Base (all adults): 2000

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base (those who agree it is possible to make real changes): 706



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Ipsos UK

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Ipsos contacts

Name:

JAMES
ALLEN

Details:

james.allen@ipsos.com

Name:

CHANTAL
D'OFFAY

Details:

chantal.doffay@ipsos.com

Full Fact contacts

Name:

THOM
CALLAN-RILEY

Details:

thom.callan-riley@fullfact.org

Name:

OMER
HAMID

Details:

omer.hamid@fullfact.org