

Ofcom Media Plurality Quantitative Report

October 2022

Contents

1	2	3	4	5
Background and methodology	News consumption habits	Public understanding of personalisation online	Public attitudes towards Online Intermediaries	Critical engagement with news

01

Background and methodology

Background and objectives

The news market in the UK has changed rapidly, with a significant increase in the amount of news available online. Within this evolving context, Ofcom launched a programme of work to understand what impact changes in the market might mean for media plurality. Currently, Ofcom has statutory duties to secure and maintain a sufficient plurality of providers of different TV and radio services. These rules do not cover online intermediaries. Ofcom has identified three features not currently captured under the existing regulatory framework that may present a risk to media plurality:

- Online intermediaries and their algorithms control the prominence they give to different news sources and stories.
- The basis on which online intermediaries serve news via their algorithms is not sufficiently transparent.
- Consumers do not always critically engage with the accuracy and partiality of online news.

As part of this work, Ofcom commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct quantitative research to help them:

- Explore understanding of online news and online intermediaries' role in it
- Measure attitudes towards the impact of OIs
- Explore the impact of OI use on critical engagement and media plurality
- Analyse the level of discrepancy between claimed news consumption online based on a survey and passively tracked online news consumption

Quantitative methodology in detail



The objective of the survey was to explore consumer knowledge Online intermediaries (OIs), attitudes towards them and their impact on news consumption habits.

The questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Demographics
- Ownership and interests
- Attitudes towards technology and institutions
- Consumption of news
- Attitudes towards media plurality
- Awareness of OIs
- Critical engagement with online news content
- Citizens knowledge quiz



Ipsos conducted two surveys:

1. A representative survey of UK adults aged 16-75+ conducted online using Ipsos proprietary panels.
2. A survey of UK adult members of Ipsos Iris, Ipsos' passive measurement panel. All panel members consent to the tracking of their online activity across devices which was mapped against their responses to the survey. Interviews were conducted online.

A total of **2,557** interviews were conducted: **1,483** iSay interviews and **1,074** iris interviews

Quotas were set by age, gender, region, education and social grade. Data have been weighted to account for any shortfall in quotas.



Fieldwork for the iSay panel took place between **29th July – 16th August 2022**.

Fieldwork for the Ipsos Iris panel took place between **29th July – 22nd August 2022**.

For each survey fieldwork began with a soft launch of c. 100 completes. Data was checked for consistency and quality before full launch.

Passive tracking data for 1,074 online news users from the Ipsos iris panel was collected for the month of July (1-31st July).



Data presented in this report combines results from the nationally representative survey of UK adults and the survey of Ipsos Iris panellists.

Prior to combining the data sets, key questions from each data set were reviewed for differences in the distribution of response patterns. A propensity weight was calculated and was used as a pre-weight before additional weighting was applied to correct for demographic differences. Several iterations of logistic regression were run to minimise the error in the distribution of responses between the 2 data sets for the key questions. This included running different variable selection procedures, identifying statistically significant variables and running multiple propensity weighting schemes.

Executive summary (1)

- UK adults use a **mix** of online and offline sources to access news and information.*
- While there is still a heavy reliance on traditional news sources (such as TV, radio and print media), **online news sources are increasingly used to access news and information**. In fact, use of online news is **likely underreported**: a fifth of participants in the survey did not recall using online news in the last month or so when asked, but had accessed news online in the month or so prior to taking the survey.
- A majority have used an online intermediary (such as a search engine, social media site or news aggregator) to access news and information in the past, with **Facebook, Google Search, YouTube and Twitter** the most popular sources for news.
- **The public are unclear about the processes that online intermediaries (OIs) use to tailor the news and information they see**. Two in three claim to know very little or nothing about the way in which OIs personalise content, and while a third think the news and information they see online is tailored, a similar proportion think it is not.
- The public are comfortable with **some** aspects of their online behaviour being used to tailor the news and information they see, such as the news sources they have visited previously, or the topics they have searched for. They are less comfortable with more 'close' personal information being used, such as their date of birth, and some **express a desire for more control** over how the news and information they see is tailored to them. **However few take action to prevent their activity being tracked online**.
- On balance the public are **unsure whether personalisation is a good or a bad thing**.
- A majority agree that the public should be exposed to a range of different opinions, views and information from a variety of sources. While OIs are seen as a useful tool for accessing reputable sources of information and providing entertaining news, social media in particular perform less well on accuracy, impartiality and quality of news they provide.

* News and information' was a term self-defined by respondents

Executive summary (2)

- When assessing the legitimacy of news and information online the public are most likely to consider **who shared the content** and the **headline**, with younger groups more likely to consider **the verification tick**.
- Most are **confident** in their theoretical ability to spot false news online, more so than in the ability of others.

02

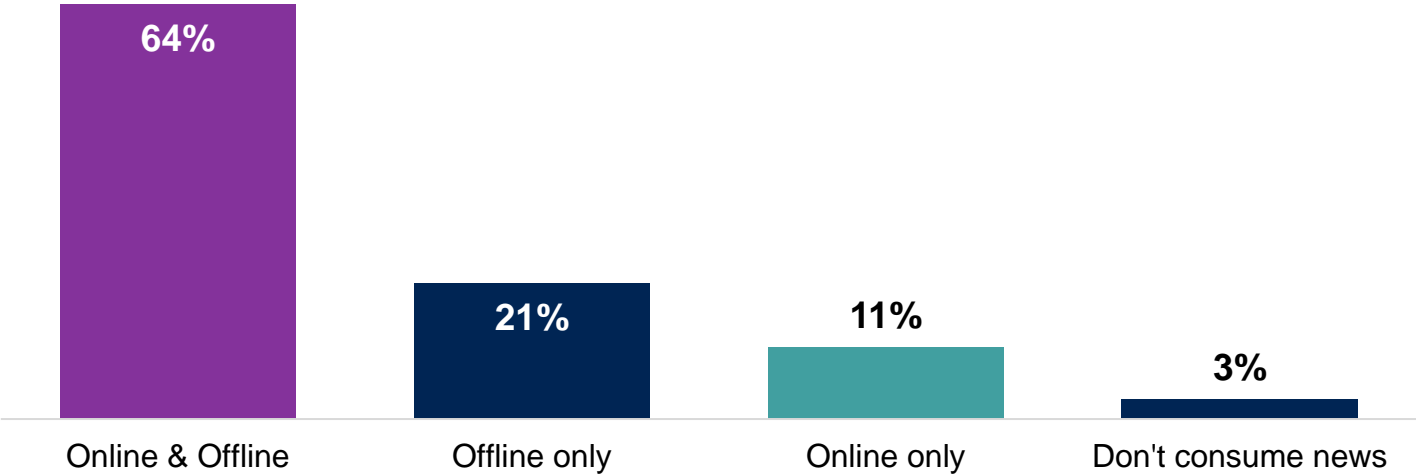
News consumption habits

Most adults use a mix of online and offline sources to access news.

It is typical that UK adults access news via a **range** of sources. For most (**64%**) this includes a **mix** of online and offline sources.

A minority access news via offline (21%) or online (11%) sources only. Those that use offline sources only are **typically older (aged 65+)**, while those that use online sources only **typically younger (aged 16-34)**.

Just **3%** claim not to consume news (although may consume news via word of mouth).



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

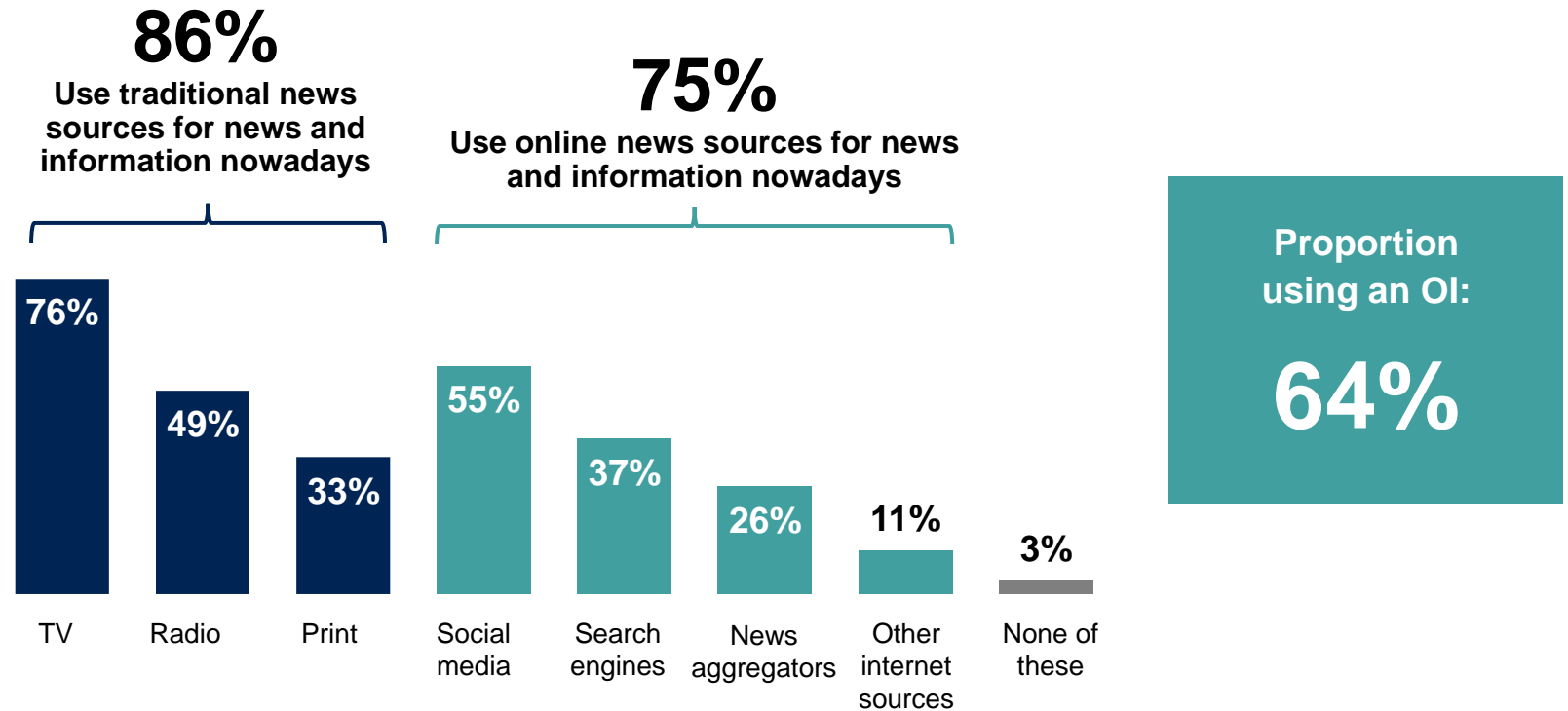
Data combined from SOURCES1. Which of the following platforms, if any, do you use for news nowadays (i.e., which have you used in the last month or so)?; and SOURCES2. You said you use internet sources (on any device) for news nowadays (i.e., which you have used in the last month or so). Which, if any, of the following do you use to get news from? Base: all adults (2,557).



Whilst TV news has the highest reach, online news sources, and in particular social media, are also core news services

While people still rely on **traditional news sources** (such as TV, radio and print media, used by 86%), **online news sources are used by a majority (75%)**.

Younger age groups are more likely to use online news sources (**87%** of those aged 16-34 report using at least one online source for news monthly versus **59%** of those aged 65+), while **reliance on traditional news sources increases with age**.



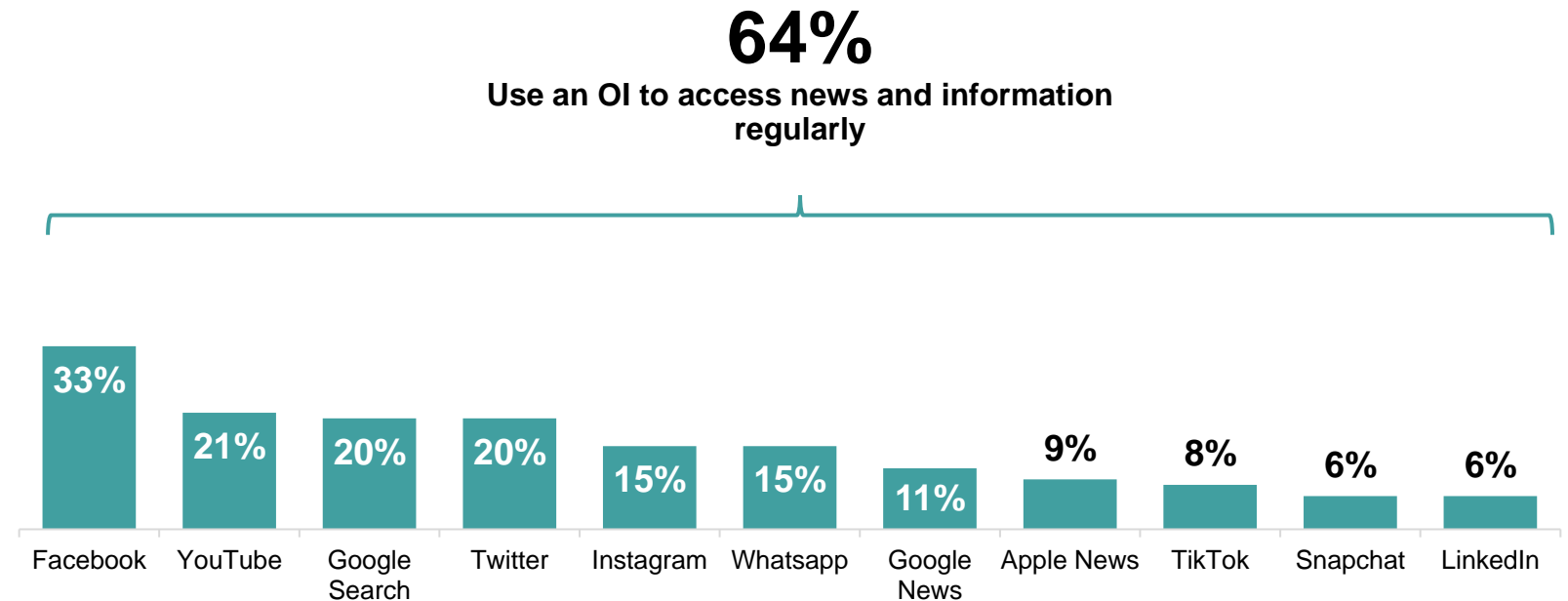
Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

Data combined from SOURCES1. Which of the following platforms, if any, do you use for news nowadays (i.e., which have you used in the last month or so)?; and SOURCES2. You said you use internet sources (on any device) for news nowadays (i.e., which you have used in the last month or so). Which, if any, of the following do you use to get news from? Base: all adults (2,557).

The public use online intermediaries (OIs) to access news regularly.

Two in three (64%) use an OI to access news and information regularly, with **Facebook, YouTube, Google Search** and **Twitter** the most popular sources for news.

Younger groups are more likely to use an OI to access the news, as are those in socio-economic group AB. This is the same for those that only use OIs to access the news – who are also more likely to be **female** (68%) than **male** (30%).



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

SOCIALMEDIA1. Thinking specifically about social media (on any device), which, if any, of the following do you use to access news nowadays? INTERNET_4. Which, if any, of the following news aggregators do you use nowadays? ONLINESOURCES1. Thinking specifically about other internet sources (including apps), on any device, which, if any, of the following do you use for news nowadays? Base: all participants (2,557)

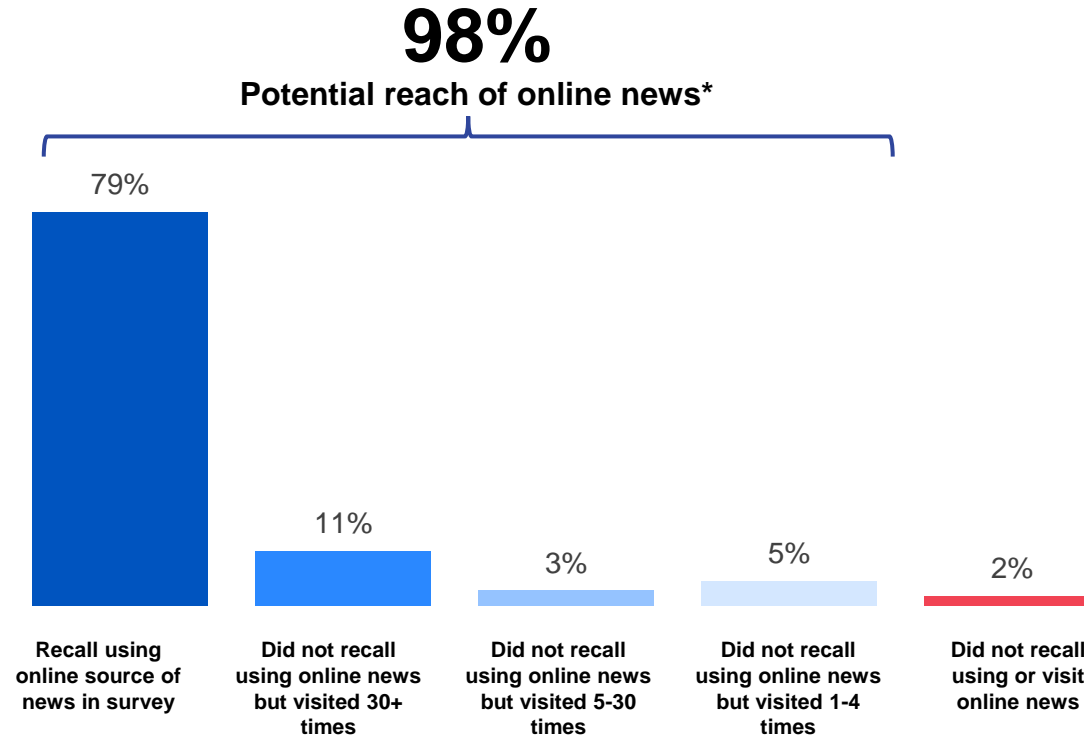
It is likely that use of online news is underreported.

Some participants claim not to use online news, but appear to do so when passively tracked.

While **eight in ten (79%)** recall accessing online news in the last month, **a fifth (19%)** do not.

One in ten (11%) are '**unconscious frequent**' users of online news, **accessing it 30+ times**.

A further **3%** make less frequent visits (between 5-30) to online news sites over a month, and **5%** make just 1-4 visits. It may be plausible that these lower frequencies are by accident or due to some dual use of devices.



**There are several reasons why 98% should be treated as an upper potential reach of online news among online adults:*

- 1. Passive tracking data for online reach may see slight inflation due to non-Iris panellists (such as family members) using devices while signed in as Iris panellist.*
- 2. The period of passive tracking (July 2022) is roughly, but not necessarily exactly, the month prior to each panellist taking the survey where they were asked about online news consumption - some panellists took survey as late as the 22nd August. The survey asked about usage of online news 'in the past month or so'.*
- 3. Ipsos Iris panellists may have higher online activity than the average UK adult.*

Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

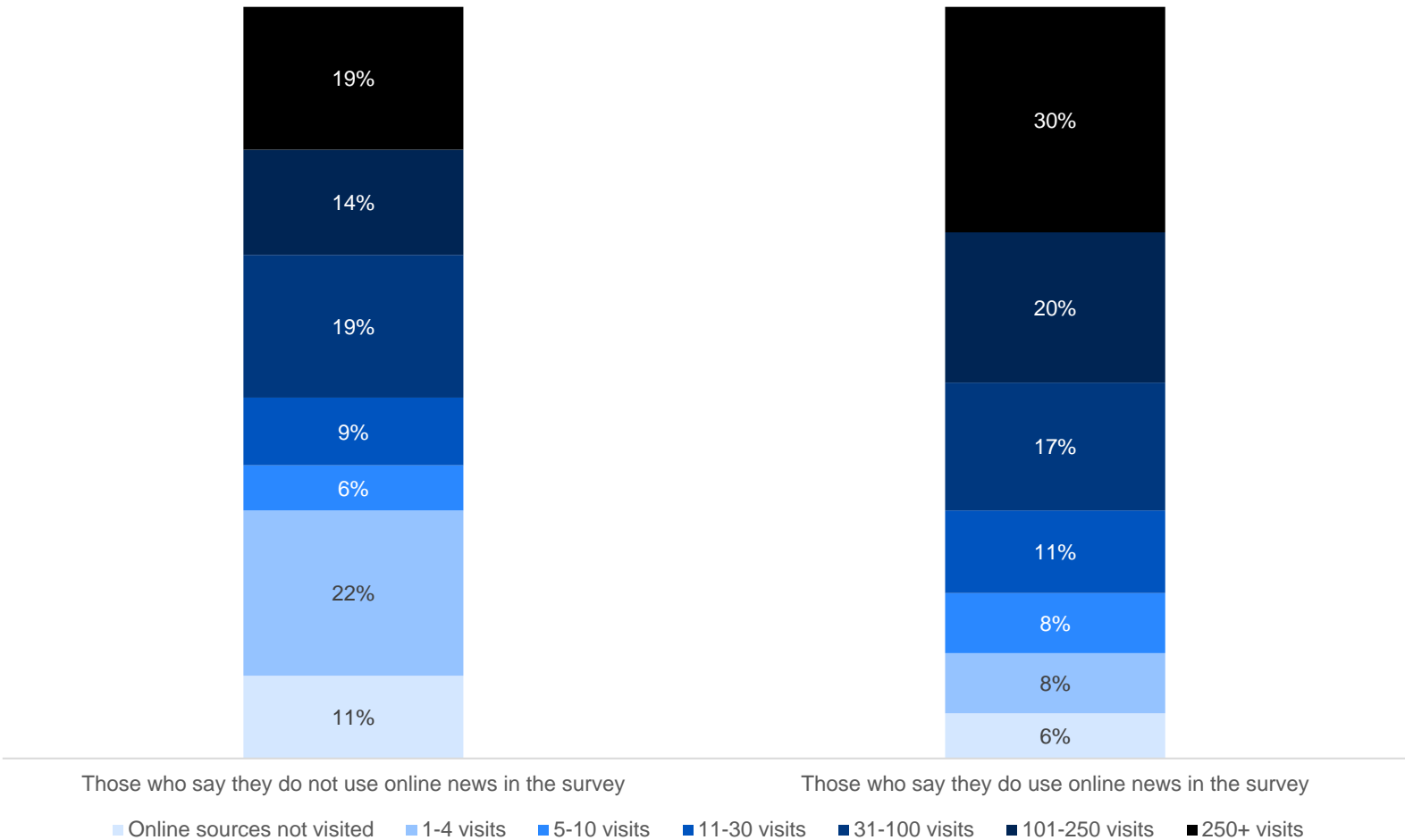
Base: 1,074 Iris Panel Members who also participated in an online survey in July-August 2022. Online passive data captures all app and website visits across multiple devices in the month of July 2022. NB: passive data excludes accessing news directly on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The passive tracking was conducted in the month prior to participants completing the survey, where respondents were asked to record their use of online news 'in the last month or so'.

Most of those who did not recall accessing news online had visited at least one source of online news in the previous month.

Just over **half (52%)** of those who did not recall accessing news online in the survey had made over 30+ visits to an online news site in the last month. Only **one in ten (11%)** recalled accurately that they had not accessed online news.

Among those who said they did use online news, a small number (6%) had not accessed these services over the last month (on the devices we tracked).

Note that this analysis excludes visits to social media for news.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

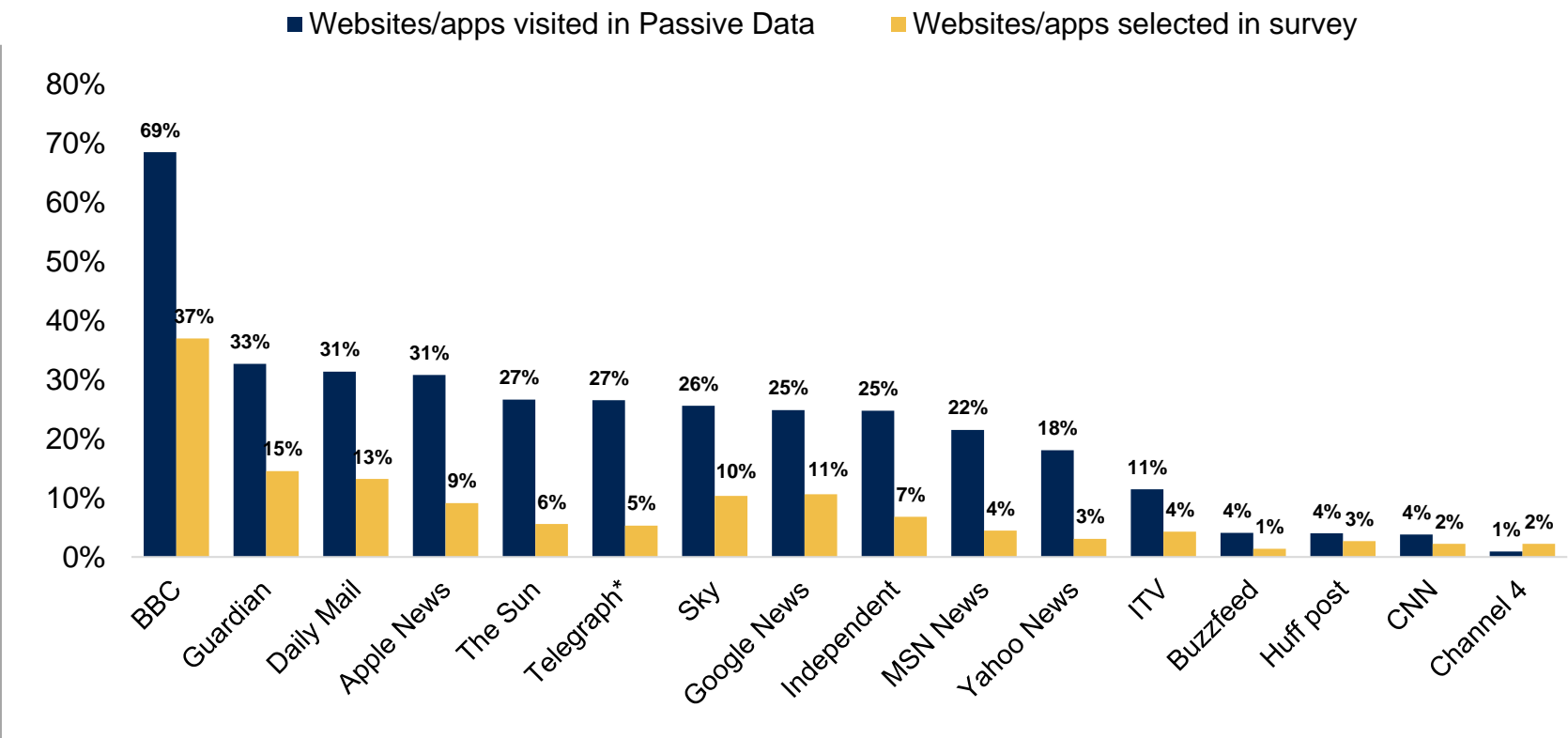
Base: 1,074 Iris Panel Members who also participated in an online survey in July-August 2022. Online passive data captures all app and website visits across multiple devices in the month of July 2022. NB: excludes accessing news directly on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The passive tracking was conducted in the month prior to participants completing the survey, where respondents were asked to record their use of online news 'in the last month or so'. Base of those who reported they don't use any of these online news sources 153. Base of those who said they do use online sources 921.



The gap between claimed and actual use of online news is consistent across all online news sources.

When comparing the claimed use of online news sources and the passive data at an individual website/app level, there is a **clear gap between claimed and actual usage for each website/app**, although the proportion of users that recalled their visit does vary by source.

Among those sources with reach above 10% in passive tracking, people who had visited the site generally struggled to recall doing so in the survey.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

Base: 1,074 Iris Panel Members who also participated in an online survey in July-August 2022. Online passive data captures all app and website visits across multiple devices in the month of July 2022. The passive tracking was conducted in the month prior to participants completing the survey, where respondents were asked to record their use of online news 'in the last month or so'.

* Please note that passive tracking data will include visits to the Telegraph where the user cannot access the full article behind the paywall.

03

Public understanding of personalisation online

The public are split evenly on whether the news and information they see online is personalised to them.

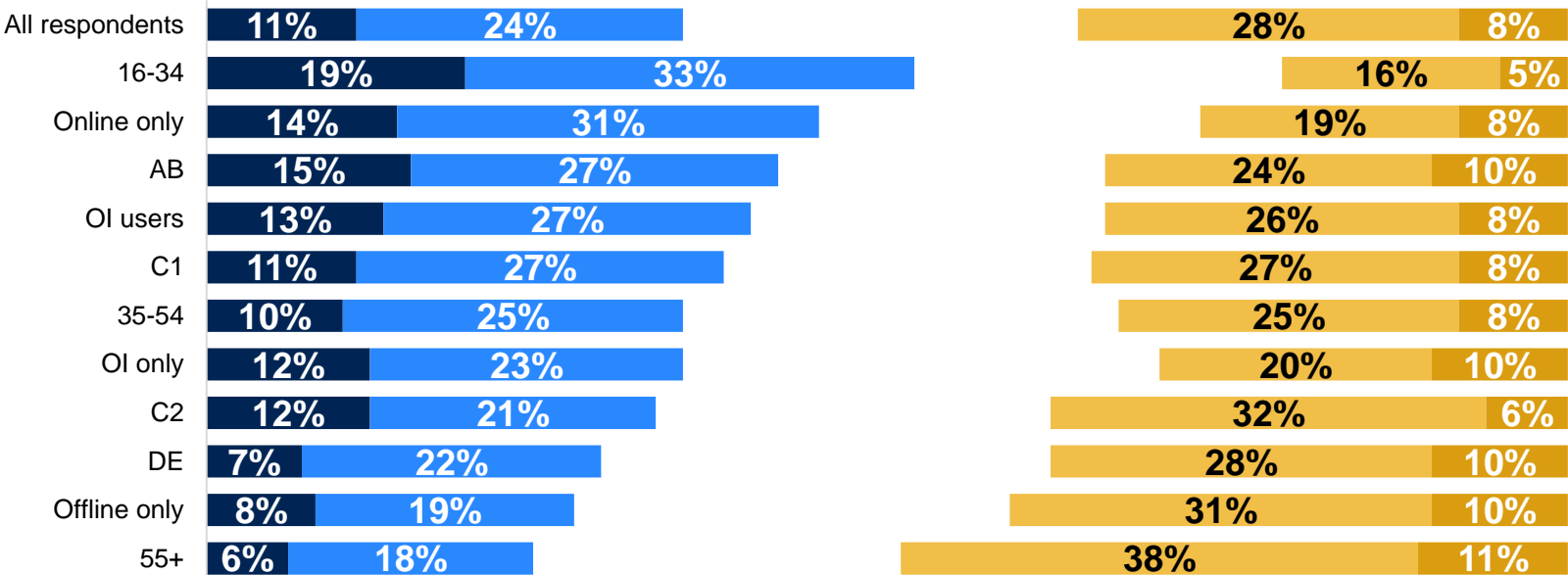
While around a third (35%) of people think the news and information they see **is tailored** to them, a similar proportion (36%) think it **is not**. The rest (29%) hold no opinion.

Awareness that online news may be tailored is higher among **younger groups, those that consume online news / use Ols to access news and information, and those from social grade AB.**

A: The news or information people see online **is tailored** to them personally

B: The news or information people see online **is not tailored** to them personally

■ Strongly agree with A ■ Tend to agree with A ■ Tend to agree with B ■ Strongly agree with B



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom, AWARENESS. For the following pair of statements, please say which, if any, is closest to your views. Base: All participants (2,557).



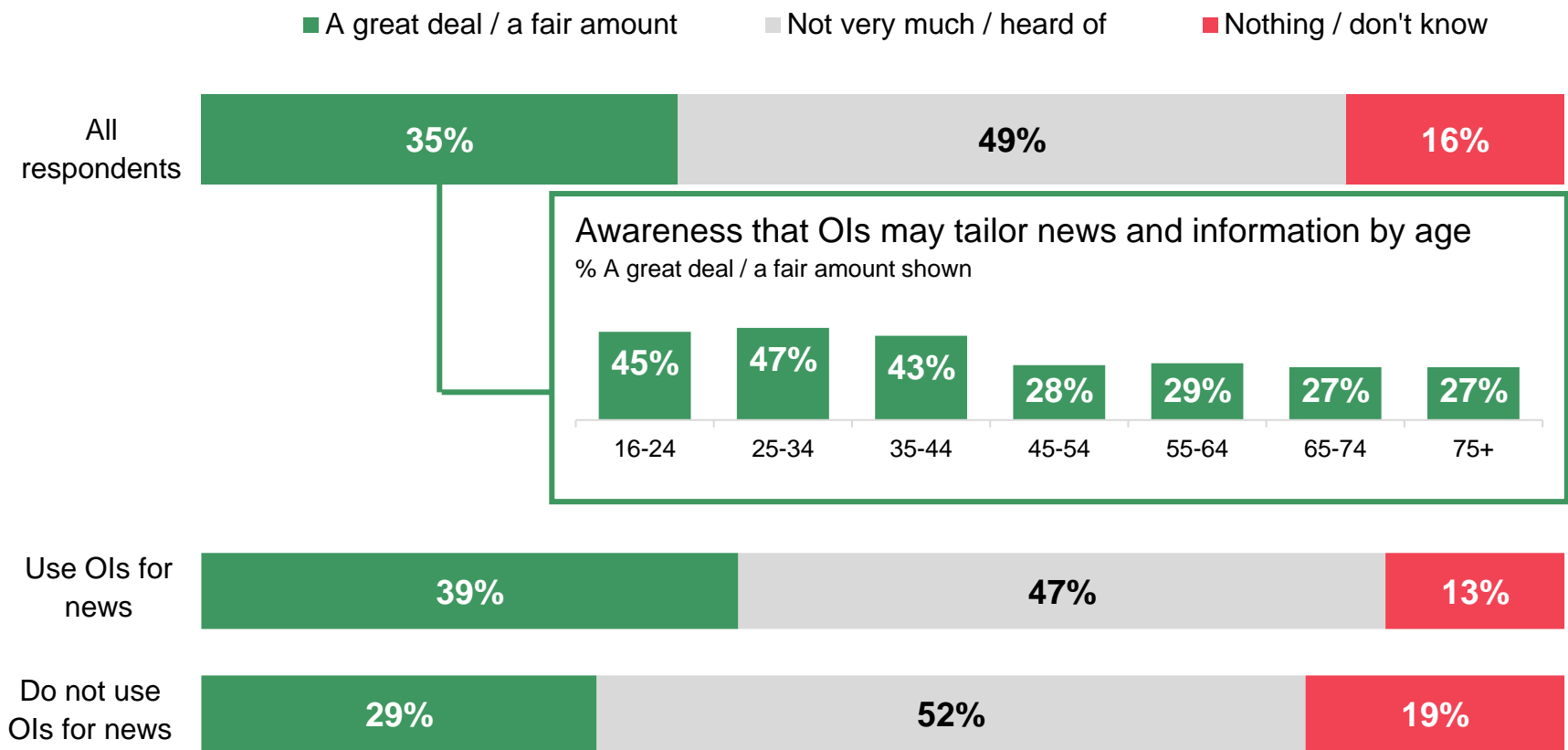
Two in three claim to little or nothing about the way in which Ols personalise content – while a third say they know at least a fair amount.

Users of Ols for news are more likely to claim to have knowledge about how they personalise content than those who do not use them for news.

Those more likely to claim deeper familiarity are **younger groups**, which likely stems from this group being heavier users of Ols overall.

Those in socio-economic group AB also claim to know more about the way in which Ols tailor results.

Before this survey, how much, if anything, did you know about the way search engines, news aggregators and social media feeds tailor the results you get when looking for news?



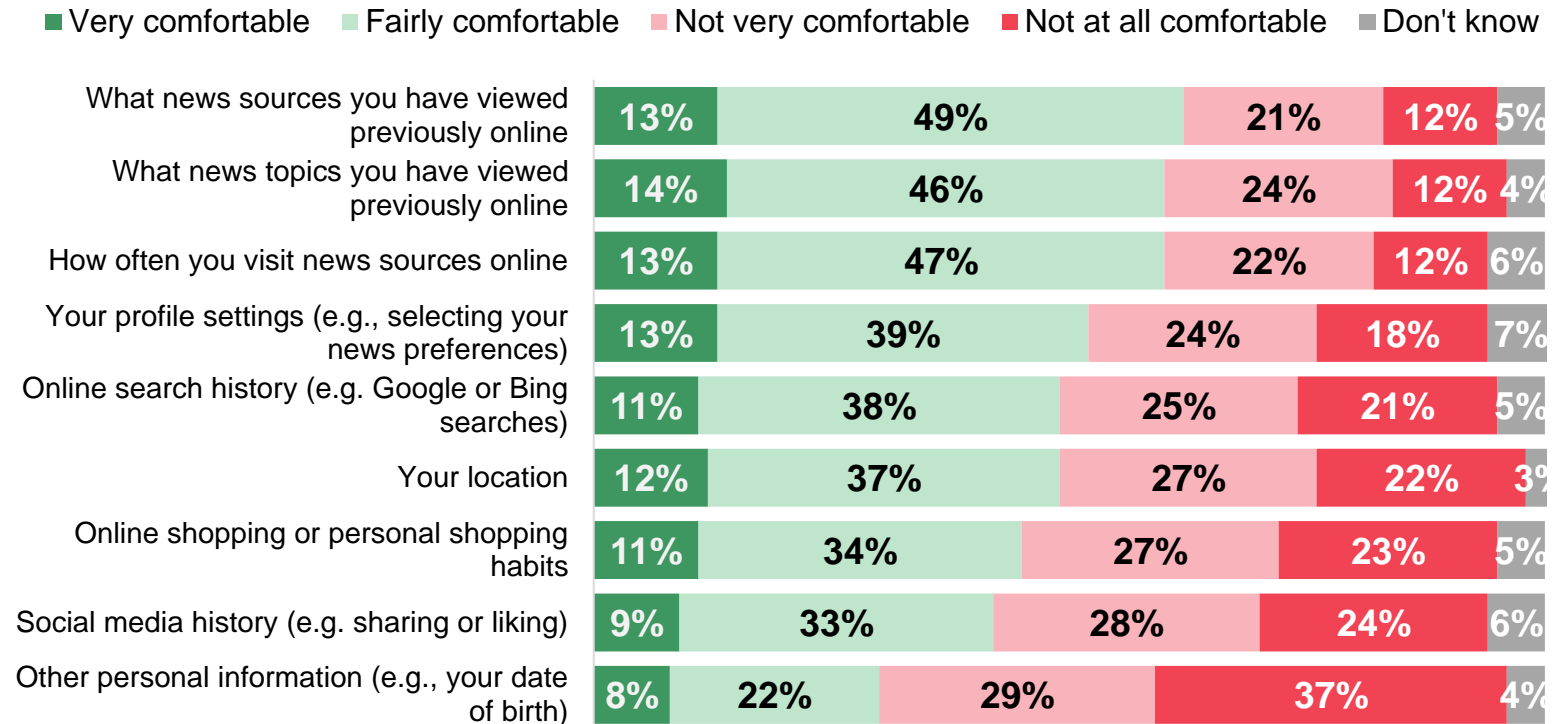
Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom, OIS1. Before this survey, how much, if anything, did you know about the way search engines, news aggregators and social media feeds tailor the results you get when looking for news? Base: All participants (2557), All who use online intermediaries (social media, news aggregators and search engines) for news nowadays (1,777), All who do not use online intermediaries for news nowadays (718)



Those using Ols for news are comfortable with some elements of their online activity being used to personalise content, but are less comfortable with the use of ‘close’ personal information.

Six in ten are comfortable with Ols using the news sources (62%) or topics (59%) they have viewed previously to tailor the news and information they see online versus use of more sensitive personal information, such as their date of birth (30% comfortable, 66% not comfortable).

Younger groups are more comfortable with Ols using their personal data to personalise the content they see across statements.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,

O17, To what extent, if at all, would you be comfortable or not comfortable with the following being used to help tailor the news articles/posts/videos you see online when using search engines, social media, or news aggregators for news? Base: All who use online intermediaries (social media, news aggregators and search engines) for news nowadays (1,777).

Almost half of OI users express a desire for more control over how the news and information they see is personalised to them.

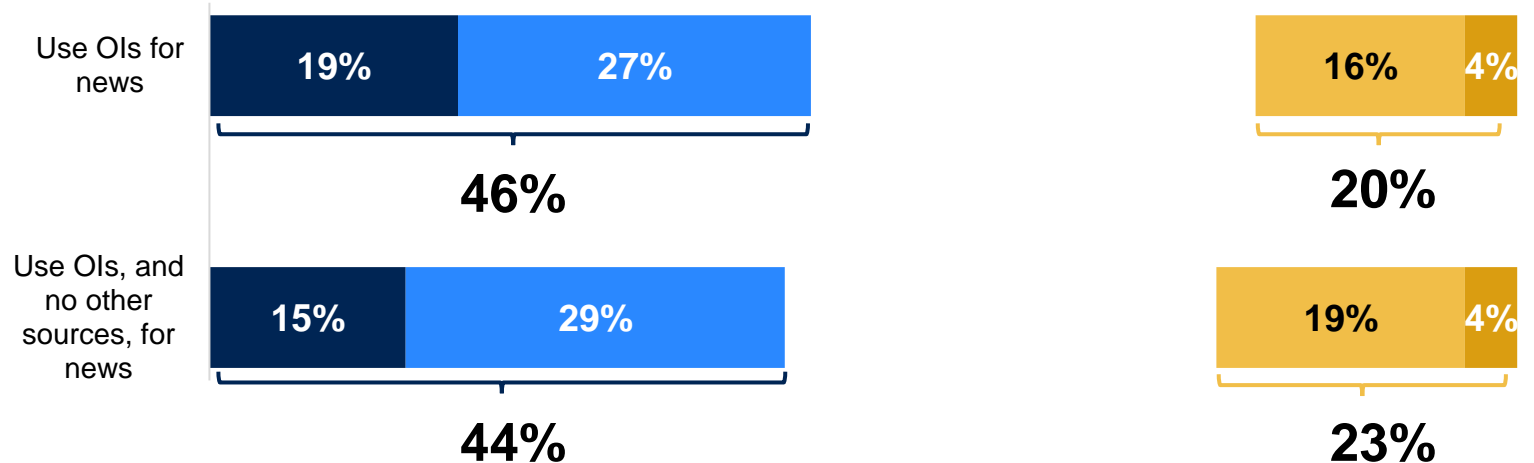
Similar proportions of those that use OIs (among other sources) for news and those that use OIs only **express desire for more control over the news and information they see** (46% and 44% respectively), while **a fifth** (20% and 23% respectively) are happy for content to be personalised for them without their involvement.

However, a third are unsure whether they want more control.

A: I would like total control over how my news and information online is tailored to me through use of my personal internet data

B: I would rather news and information online was tailored to me as apps/websites see fit, without needing my involvement

■ Strongly agree with A ■ Tend to agree with A ■ Tend to agree with B ■ Strongly agree with B



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,

OI5. For each of the following pairs of statements, please say which one is closest to your views. Base: All who use online intermediaries (social media, news aggregators and search engines) for news nowadays (1,777).

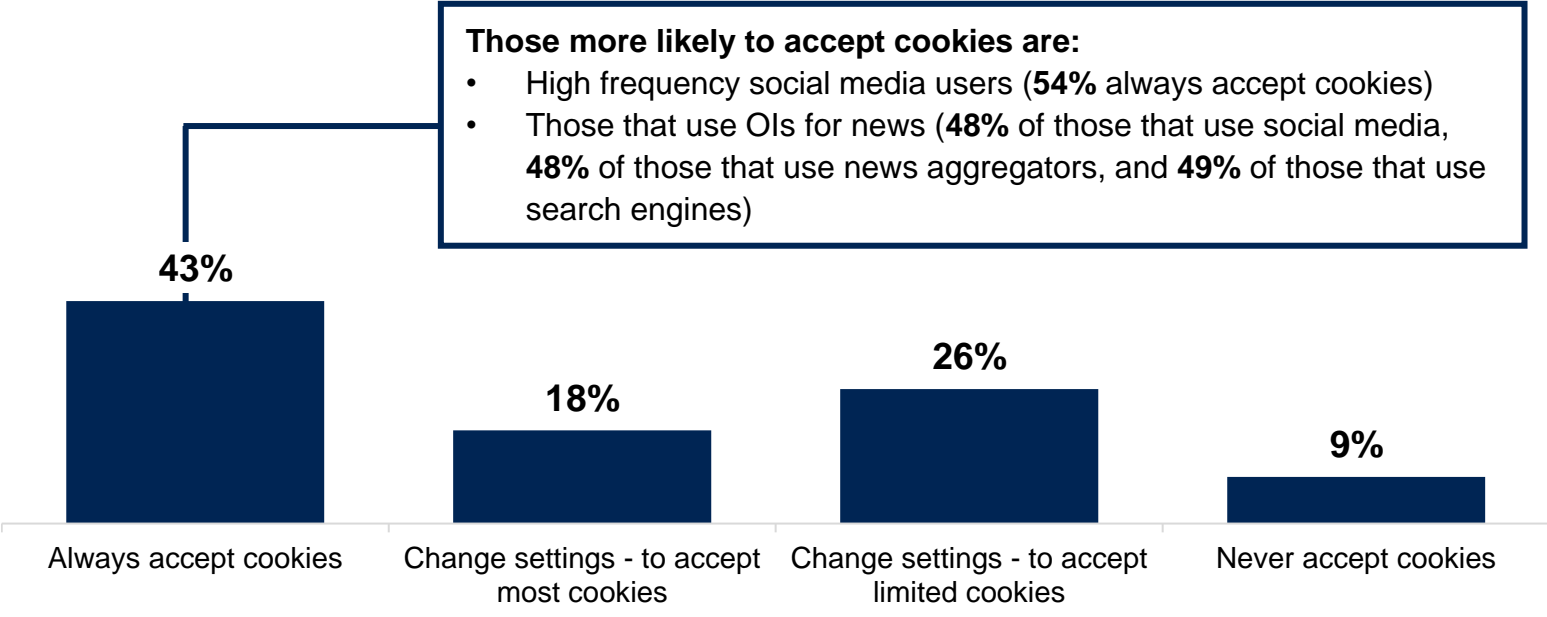
Many do not take action to prevent their activity being tracked online.

Control of cookies is not directly comparable to theoretical control of news tailoring, but it is interesting to examine whether people make use of the tools they already have at their disposal for controlling how their data is used.

Two in five (43%) always accept cookies, with **one in five (18%)** changing their settings but accepting most cookies.

Those who say they would like control over how their news is tailored using their personal data are not less likely to ‘always accept cookies’ (44% always accept them).

Proportion that accept cookies, change settings, or never accept cookies when visiting a news website or application.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom, COOKIES. In a typical month thinking about each visit to a new website or application, do you accept cookies, change settings, or never accept cookies? Base: All participants (2557).



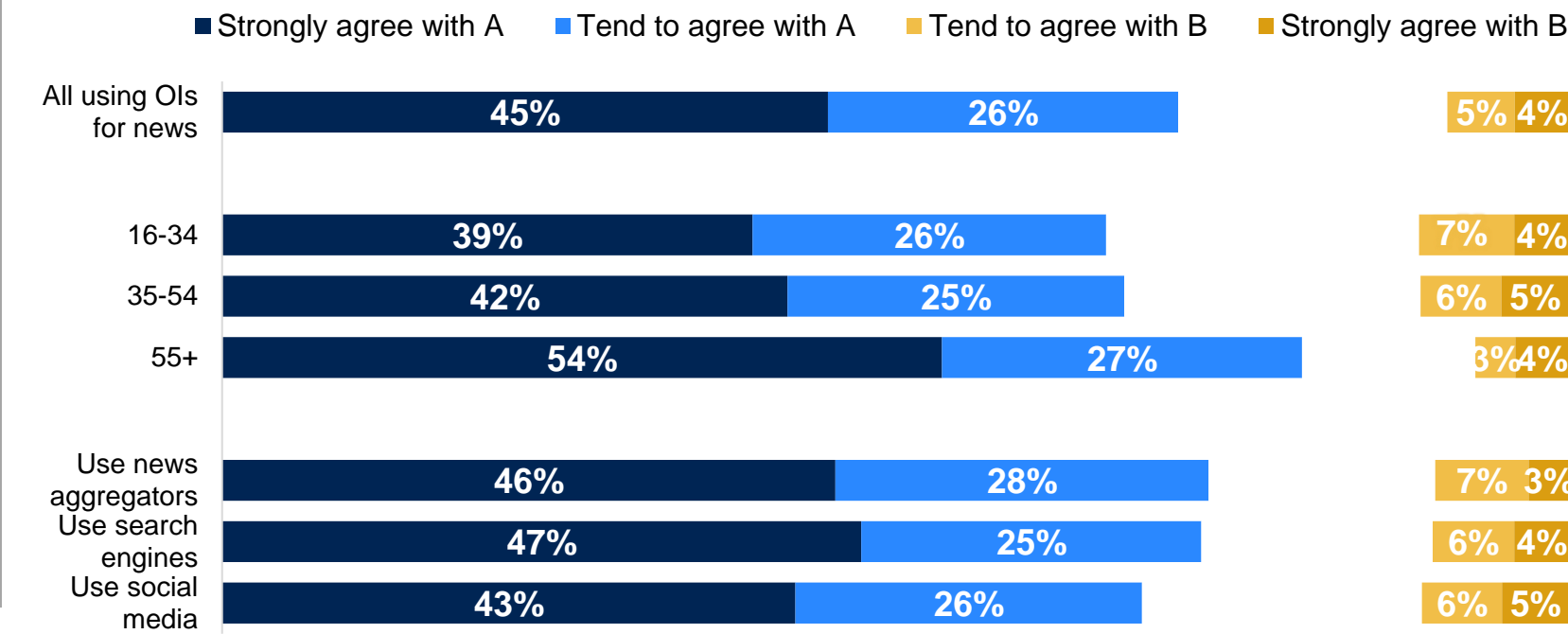
A majority of those using OIs for news think it is important there are protections in place online to avoid misleading or fake content.

Around three quarters (**71%**) of those using OIs for news think it is important that there are protections in place online to avoid misleading or fake content, with nearly half (**45%**) strongly agreeing. Only one in ten (**9%**) think there should be no restrictions.

A similar proportion across all OIs agree protections are important, while older age groups place more importance on these protections than younger age groups.

A: It is important that there are protections in place online to avoid misleading or fake news

B: It is important that no restrictions are put in place to limit what people say online



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,
 OI6. For each of the following pairs of statements, please say which one is closest to your views. Base: All who use online intermediaries (social media, news aggregators and search engines) for news nowadays (1,777).



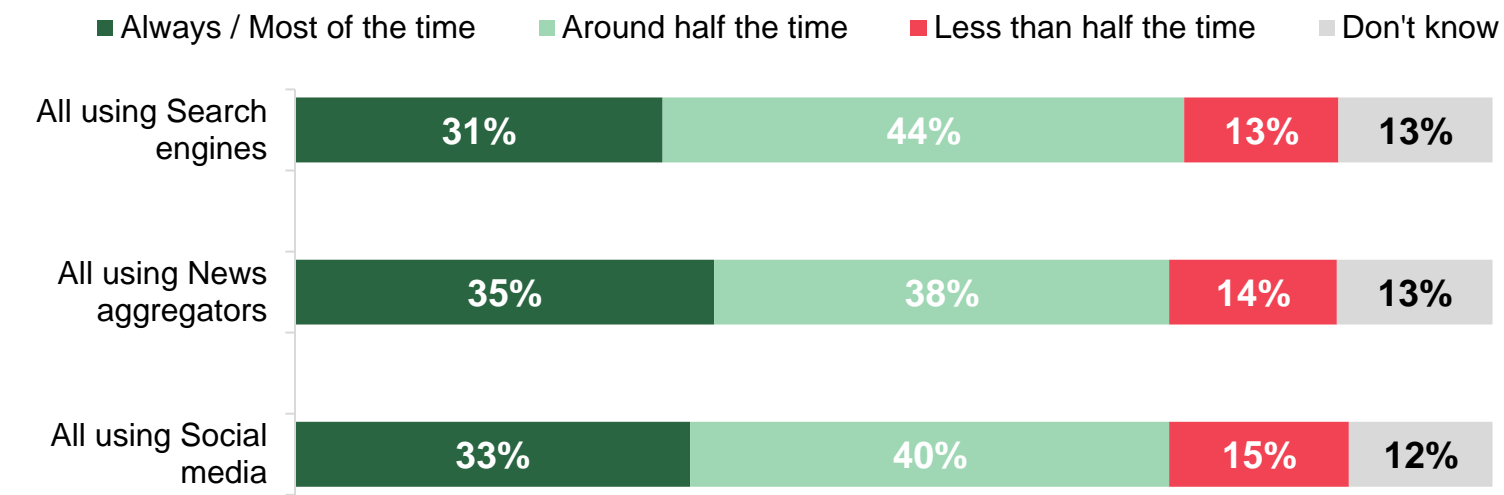
Some claim to always or mostly see news and information that agrees with their pre-existing views when using OIs.

A **third** of those that use search engines (31%), news aggregators (35%), and social media (33%) for news say they see news and information that agrees with their pre-existing views and beliefs **always** or **most of the time**.

There is **little variance by OI type**, with each perceived to be just as likely to show news that agrees or challenges pre-existing views and beliefs.

Younger groups are more likely to report seeing news that agrees with their pre-existing views across all OIs.

When using each of the following, how often, if at all do you see news that agrees with your pre-existing views and beliefs?



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom
SEARCH_ENGINE2. When using search engines to find news, how often, if at all, do you see news that agrees with your pre-existing views and beliefs? NEWS_AGGREGATOR2. When using news aggregators how often, if at all, do you see news that agrees with your pre-existing views and beliefs? SOCIALMEDIA3. When using social media apps/websites to find news, how often, if at all, do you see news that agrees with your pre-existing views and beliefs?
Base: All who use search engines (1,072) news aggregators (738) social media apps or websites (1,502).for news nowadays



More OI users prefer to see news and information that challenges their views and beliefs than those who don't

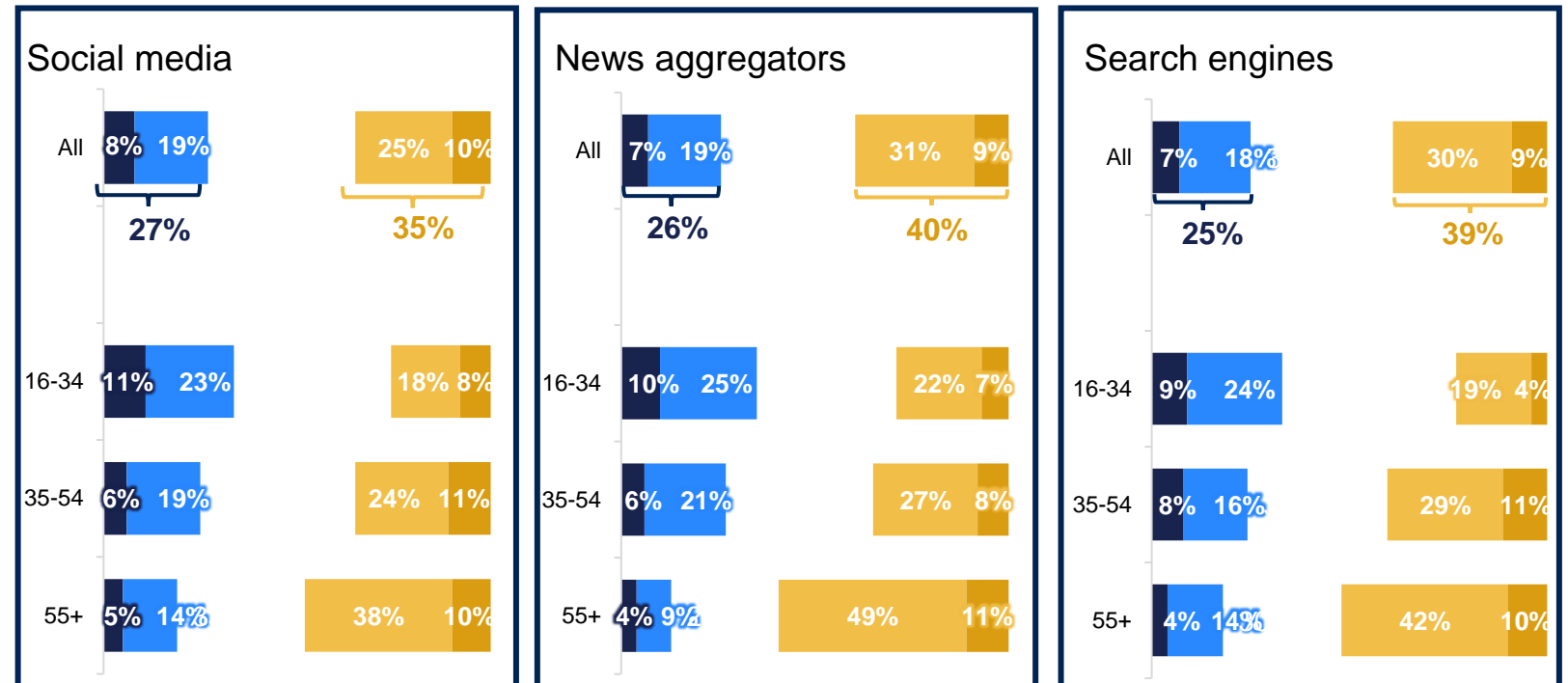
Around **two in five** of those who use OIs for news say they prefer to see news that offers them new perspectives and challenges their views, while a **quarter** prefer content that is personalised to them.

Younger groups are more likely to state a preference for more personalised content over those aged 55+, who would prefer to see news that challenges their views.

However, for each OI type, a third (3 in 10) of both groups also agree with both statements equally.

A: I prefer that the news I see on ... is in line with my interests and views

B: I prefer that the news I see on ... offers me new perspectives to challenge my views



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,

SEARCH_ENGINE3. When using search engines, please say which, if any, of the statements below is closest to your views. NEWS_AGGREGATOR3. When using news aggregators, please say which, if any, of the statements below is closest to your views. SOCIALMEDIA4. When using social media, please say which, if any, of the statements below is closest to your views. Base: All who use search engines (1,072) news aggregators (738) social media apps or websites (1,502) for news nowadays

The public list a variety of reasons both for and against personalised content.

A perceived positive of personalisation across Ols is that it shows people **content relevant to them**.

However, many think this results in a **lack of variety** and are concerned about the impact this has on wider society (e.g. **echo chambers, greater polarisation of views**). There are also concerns that personalisation may be **open to commercial influence**.

Search engines
(positive mentions 18%, negative mentions 37%)

+ Personalisation shows results relevant to me
+ Personalisation saves time because I don't need to sort through information I'm not interested in

- Personalisation leads to a lack of variety, people need alternative perspectives
- Personalisation can create echo chambers

News aggregators
(positive mentions 16%, negative mentions 41%)

+ Personalisation recommends content that is specific to my interests
+ I still have the autonomy to decide what I read
+ The personalised content I see is mostly from reputed news agencies

- Personalisation might be commercially driven
- Personalisation does not challenge the views I already hold
- I want to decide what I read myself

Social media
(positive mentions 11%, negative mentions 54%)

+ I am on social media to see content I am interested in – personalisation shows me that content
+ I use social media mainly for entertainment purposes rather than education

- Fake news may be promoted to me
- Personalisation might be commercially driven
- It is an intrusion of my privacy / I am concerned about how my personal data is being used

Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

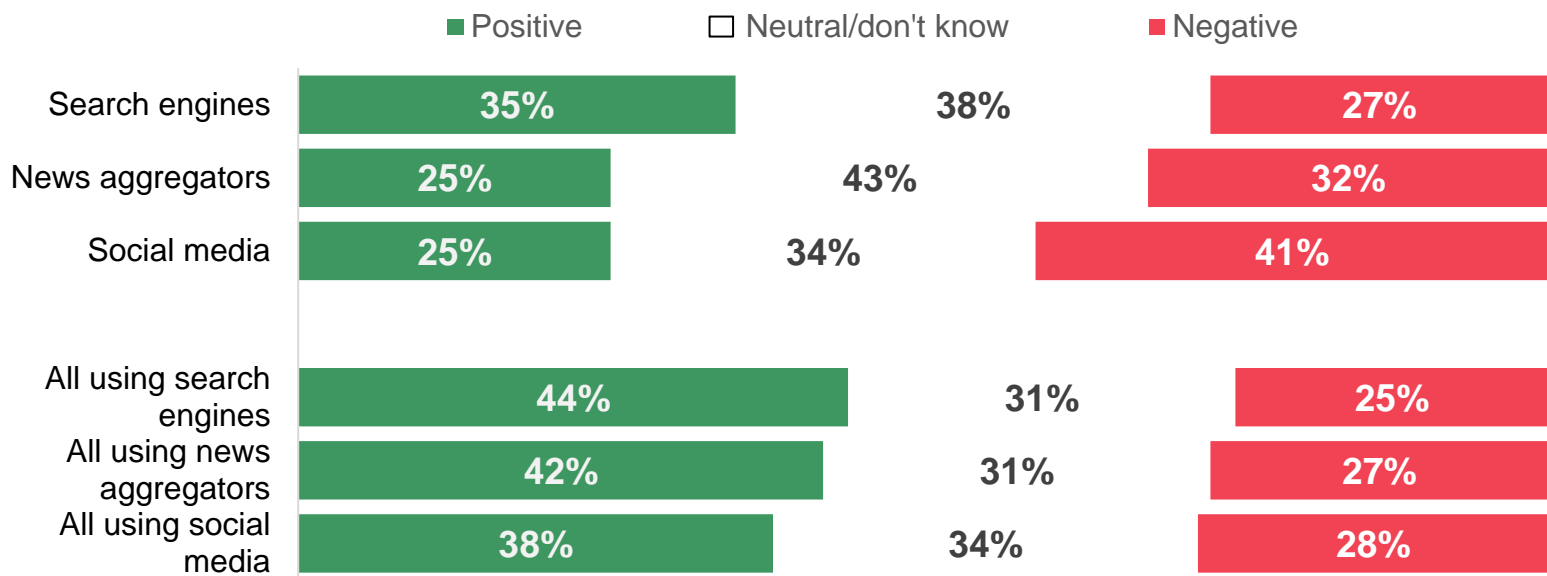
OIS3A. Why do you say that you feel <PIPE IN ANSWER FROM OIS2 SEARCH ENGINES> about the fact that search engines tailor the results you get when looking for news? Base: all asked (836), OIS3B. Why do you say that you feel <PIPE IN ANSWER FROM OIS2 NEWS AGGREGATORS> about the fact that news aggregators may tailor the results you get when looking for news? Base: all asked (831), OIS3C. Why do you say that you feel <PIPE IN ANSWER FROM OIS2 SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDS> about the fact that social media feeds may tailor the results you get when looking for news? Base: all asked (835)

The public and users of OIs have differing views on whether personalisation for news is a good or a bad thing.

Among all online adults, tailoring on search engines is perceived more positively, while tailoring on social media is perceived most negatively.

Users of each OI have different views. Greater proportions of users (4 in 10) of each OI say tailored news and information is a good thing. Perceptions of tailoring on social media are more negative among the wider public than among those who use them for news.

For each of the following types of recommender system how positive or negative, if at all, do you feel about them tailoring the results you get when looking for news?



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom, OIS2. For each of the following types of recommender system, how positive or negative, if at all, do you feel about them tailoring results you get when looking for news? Top chart base: All participants (2,557). Bottom chart base: All who use search engines (1,072) news aggregators (738) social media apps or websites (1,502).for news nowadays

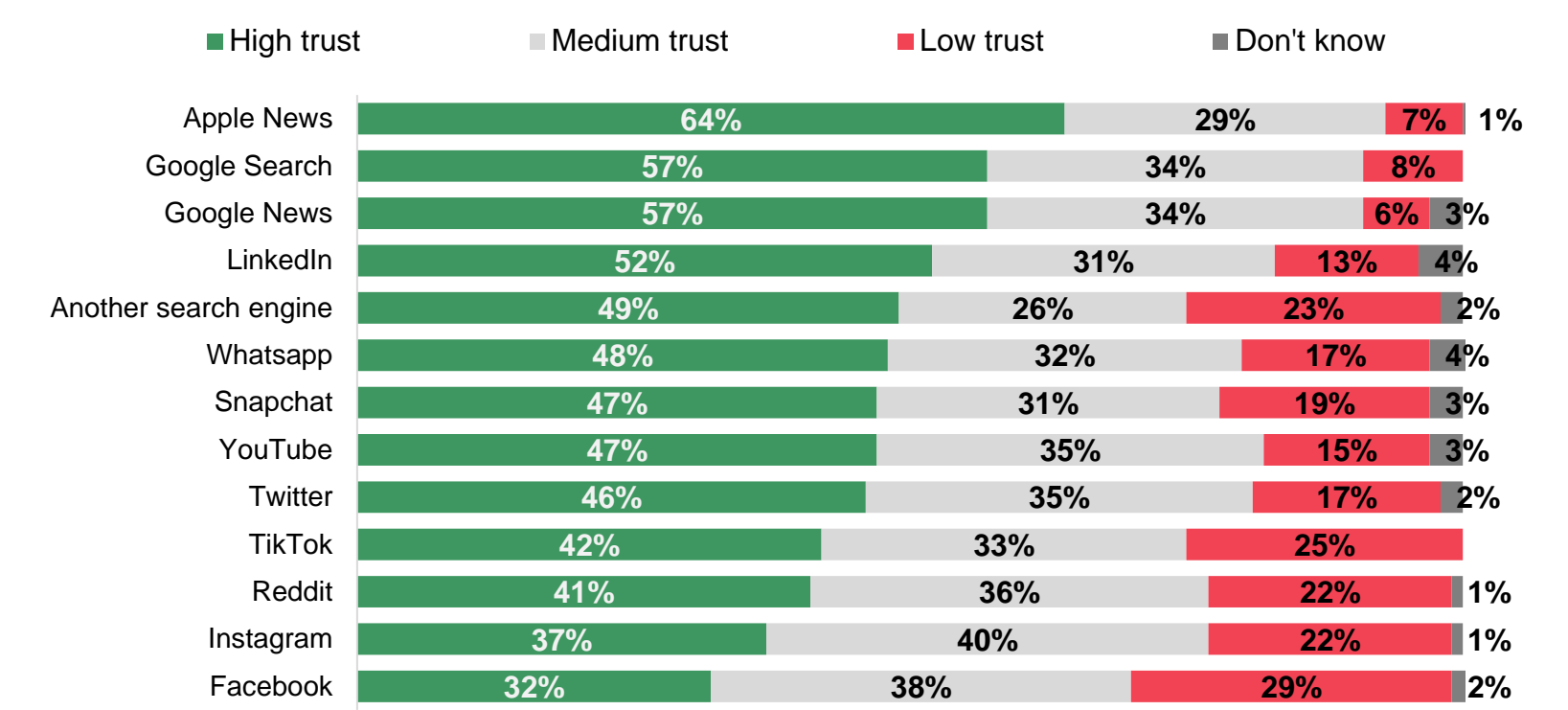


04

Public attitudes towards Ols

Users of social media companies trust them less for news than users of other Ols.

Users of Ols trust the news and information they receive from sources such as **Apple News, Google News and Google Search** over the news and information they receive from social media platforms, such as **Facebook** and **Instagram**.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom
TRUSTSOURCE, Now thinking about the following sources, you said that you use for news. To what extent, if at all, do you trust the following as a news source? Base: users of each brand

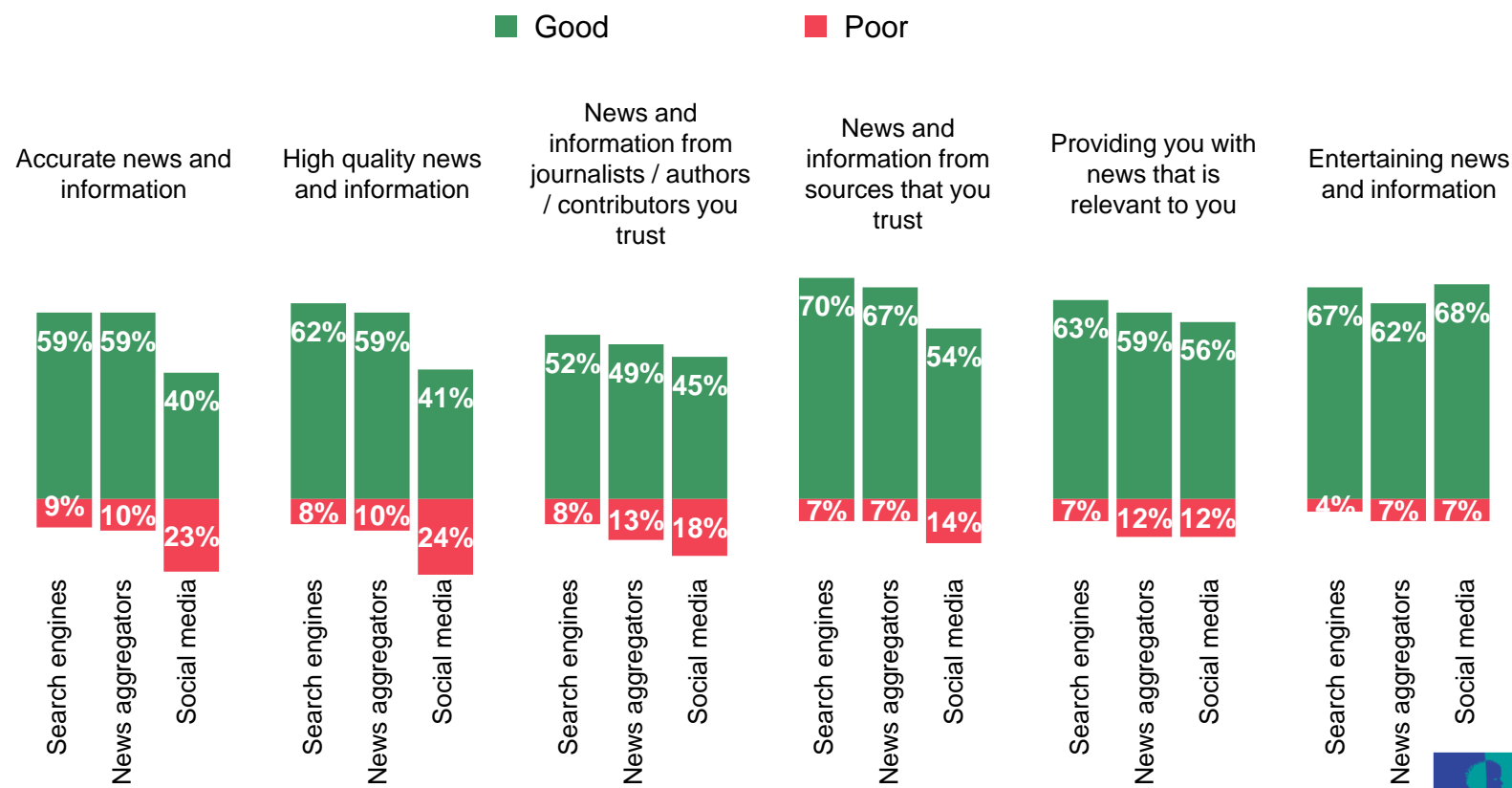


Social media performs worse than other OI for providing accurate or high quality news and information

Users of OIs rate them as good at providing them with **news and information from sources that they trust**, and **entertaining news and information**.

Social media rates less well versus other OIs for the **quality** and **accuracy** of news and information provided, although younger groups rate social media more positively across measures.

On balance, how would you rate search engines / news aggregators / social media on each of the following?



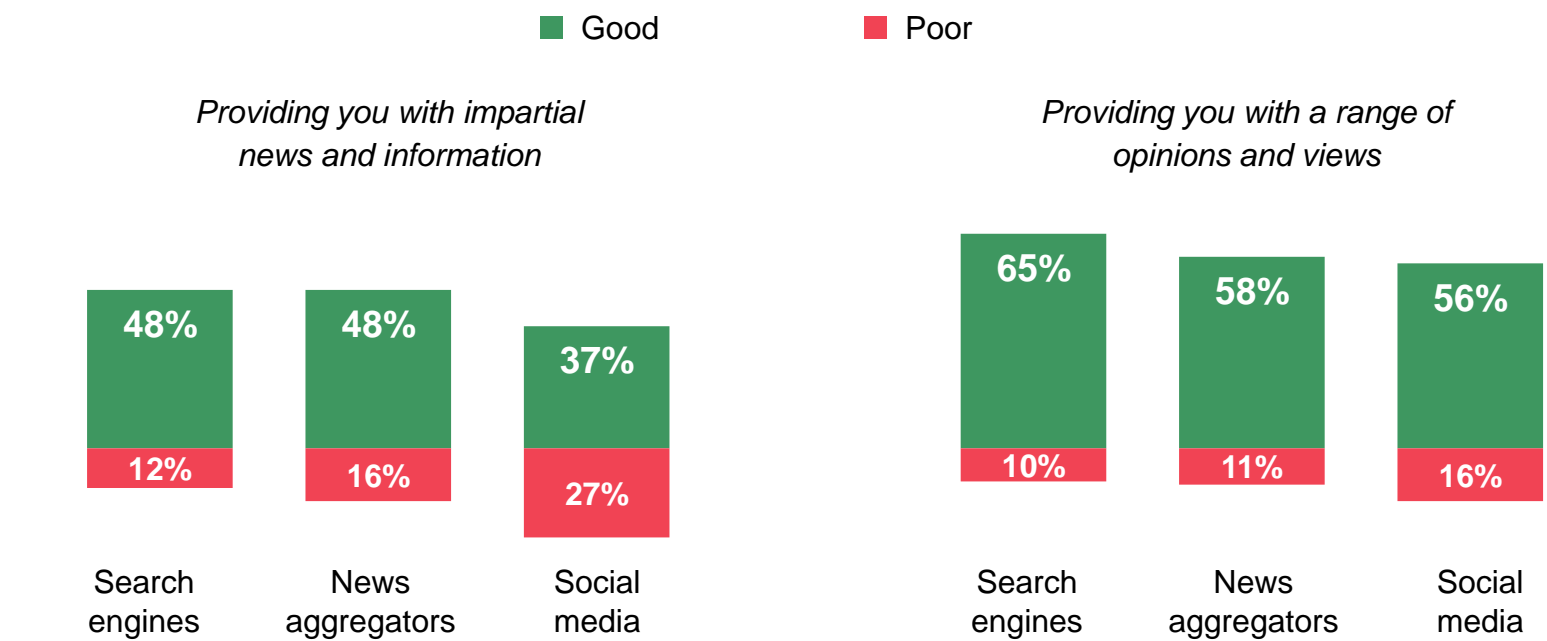
Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom, SEARCH_ENGINE1. On balance how would you rate search engines on each of the following..? Base: all using search engines (1,072), NEWS_AGGREGATOR1. On balance how would you rate news aggregators on each of the following..? Base: all using news aggregators (738), SOCIALMEDIAS2. On balance how would you rate social media on each of the following..? Base: all using social media (1,502)



Users of Ols rate them less well for providing impartial news and information, especially social media.

Under half rate Ols as good at providing them with impartial news and information, and **more than half** at providing them with a range of opinions and views. Social media is viewed less positively than other Ols on being impartial.

On balance, how would you rate search engines / news aggregators / social media on each of the following?



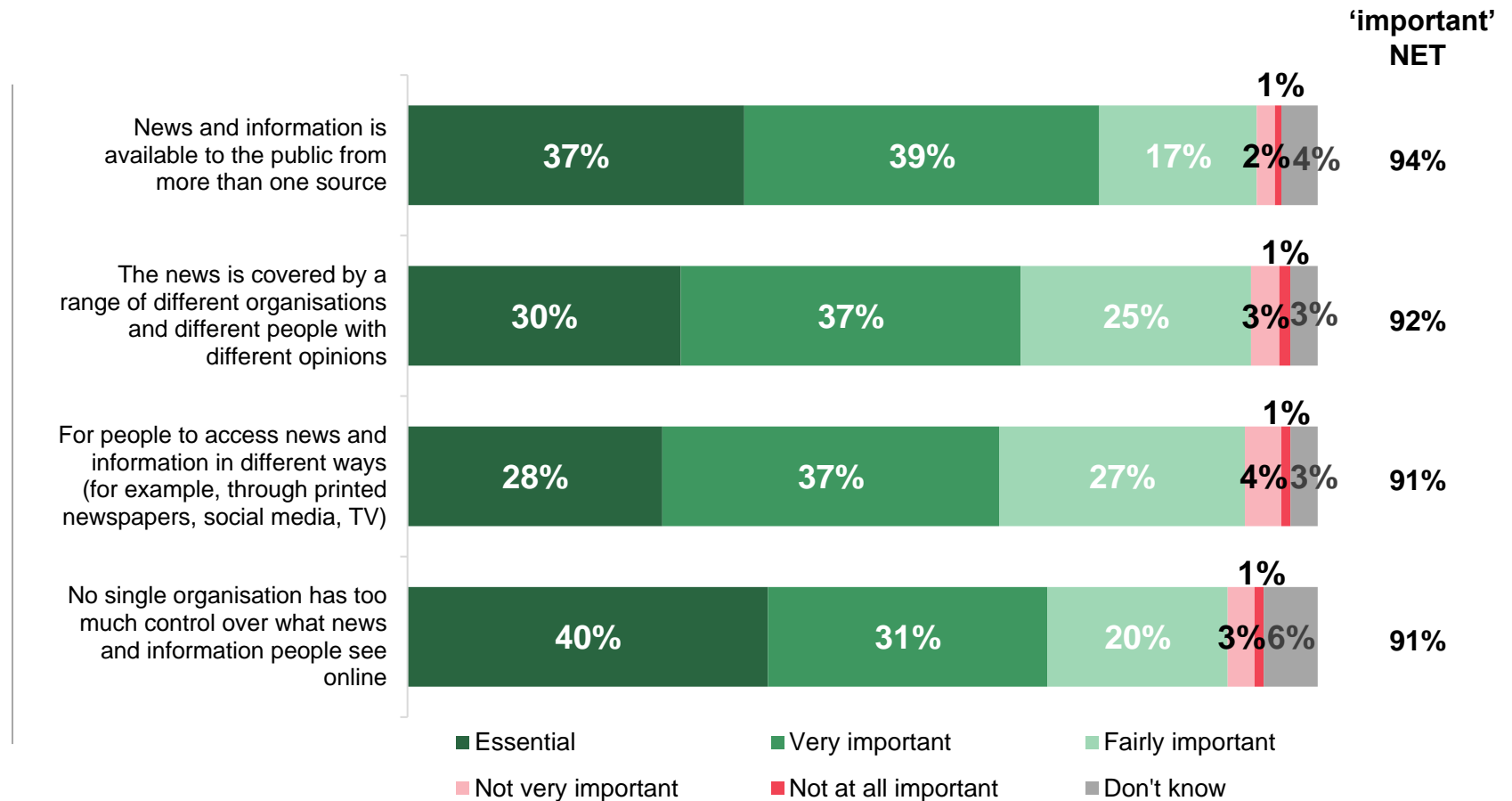
Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom, SEARCH_ENGINE1. On balance how would you rate search engines on each of the following..? Base: all using search engines (1,072), NEWS_AGGREGATOR1. On balance how would you rate news aggregators on each of the following..? Base: all using news aggregators (738), SOCIALMEDIAS2. On balance how would you rate social media on each of the following..? Base: all using social media (1,502)



A majority agree that news and information available to the public should come from more than one source .

They also believe it should be covered by a **range** of different organisations and people with different opinions (**92%**), be available in **multiple formats** (**91%**), and that **no single organisation should have too much control over the news** (**91%**).

Those that use OIs (among other sources of news) are more likely to agree that each aspect is essential or very important.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,

MEDIAPLURALITY. *Thinking about the role of news and information in UK society, how important, if at all, do you consider each of the following?* Base: All participants (2557).

Among non-users of search engines, news aggregators or social media, lack of trust is the stand-out reason for not using them.

These vary by type of OI, although a lack of trust is a consistent theme.

Search engines	News aggregators	Social media
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Go straight to news apps / websites for updates – using a search engine adds friction to the experiencePrefers to use other, more trusted sources of news	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of awareness that news aggregators existLack of relevant informationLack of trust in news aggregators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of trust in the information providedNews on social media is felt to be too often sensationalised or fakeLack of trust in social media in generalPrefers to use other, more trusted sources of news



It requires effort I'm not asking for news it's just there on home screen or notification."

(Male, 16-24, Survey response)



Because there is enough information available via local, national and international news outlets."

(Female, 55-65, Survey response)



I don't trust news on social media. There is no accuracy or control over what is published."

(Male, 25- 34, Survey response)

Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom

SEARCHENGINE, You've said earlier that nowadays you look at news online but do not use search engines. Please tell us why you do not use search engines? Base: all asked (914), NEWSAGGREGATOR, You've said earlier that nowadays you look at news online but do not use news aggregators. Please tell us why you do not use news aggregators? Base: all asked (1,199), SOCIALMEDIAS1, You've said earlier that nowadays you look at news online, but do not use social media for news. Please tell us why you do not use social media for news? Base: all asked (500)

05

Critical engagement with news

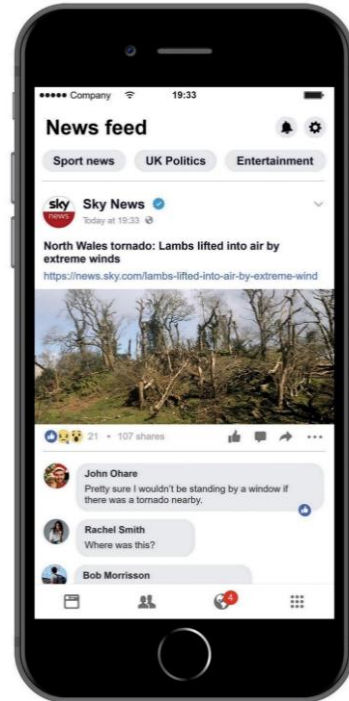
To better understand how the public critically assess the news and information they see online, survey participants took part in an exercise.

Participants saw one of three articles and were asked whether they thought the article was genuine, and what made them think that.

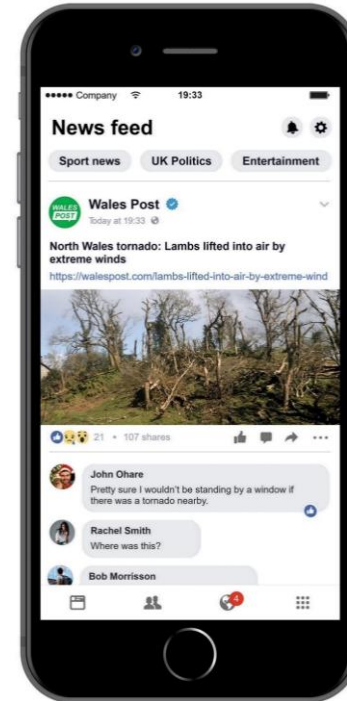
One news article was designed to look like it came from a genuine outlet, one was designed to look genuine but was shared by a dummy outlet (Wales Post) and one was posted anonymously and designed to look suspicious. Participants were asked to decide whether the article was **genuine or not**.

This analysis was exploratory and experimental. The story used was published on several news outlets in April 2022.

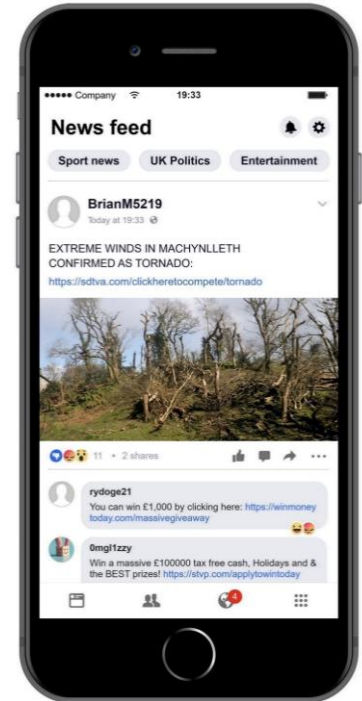
Genuine outlet



Dummy outlet



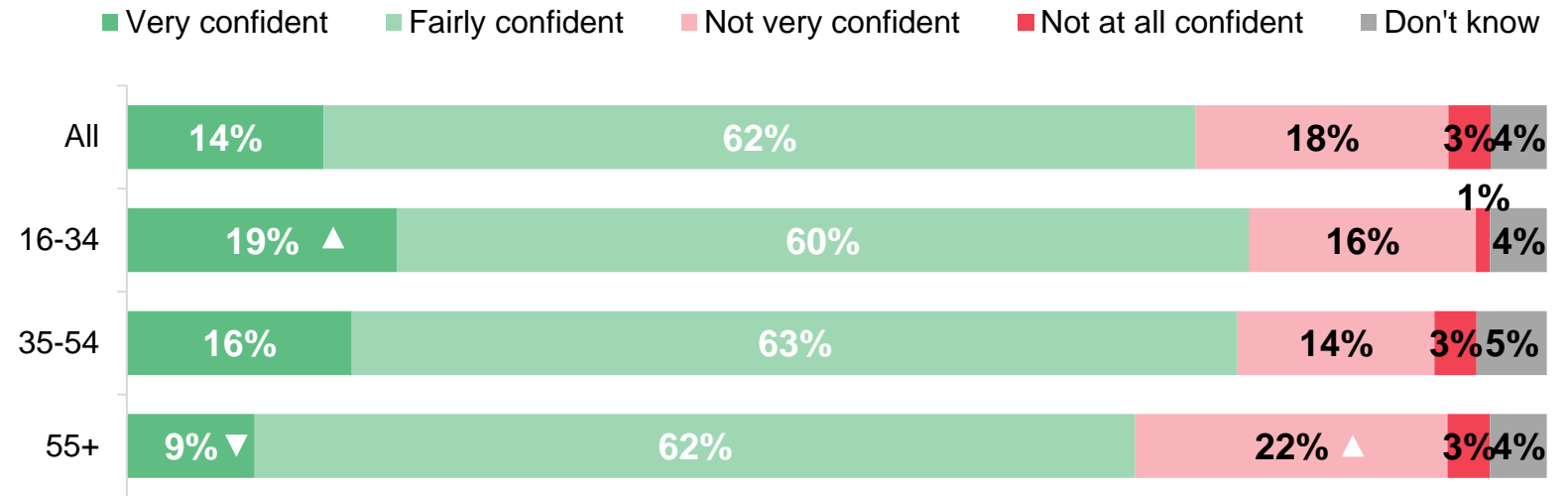
Anonymously posted



Prior to taking the test, most were fairly confident in their theoretical ability to spot misinformation online.

Three in four (76%) reported being very or fairly confident in their ability to judge whether the news they see or read online is true or false.

Younger groups were more likely to be confident in their abilities compared to older groups.



Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,

CONFIDENT3 How confident, if at all, are you in your ability to judge whether the news you see or read online is true or false?

Base: All participants (2557).

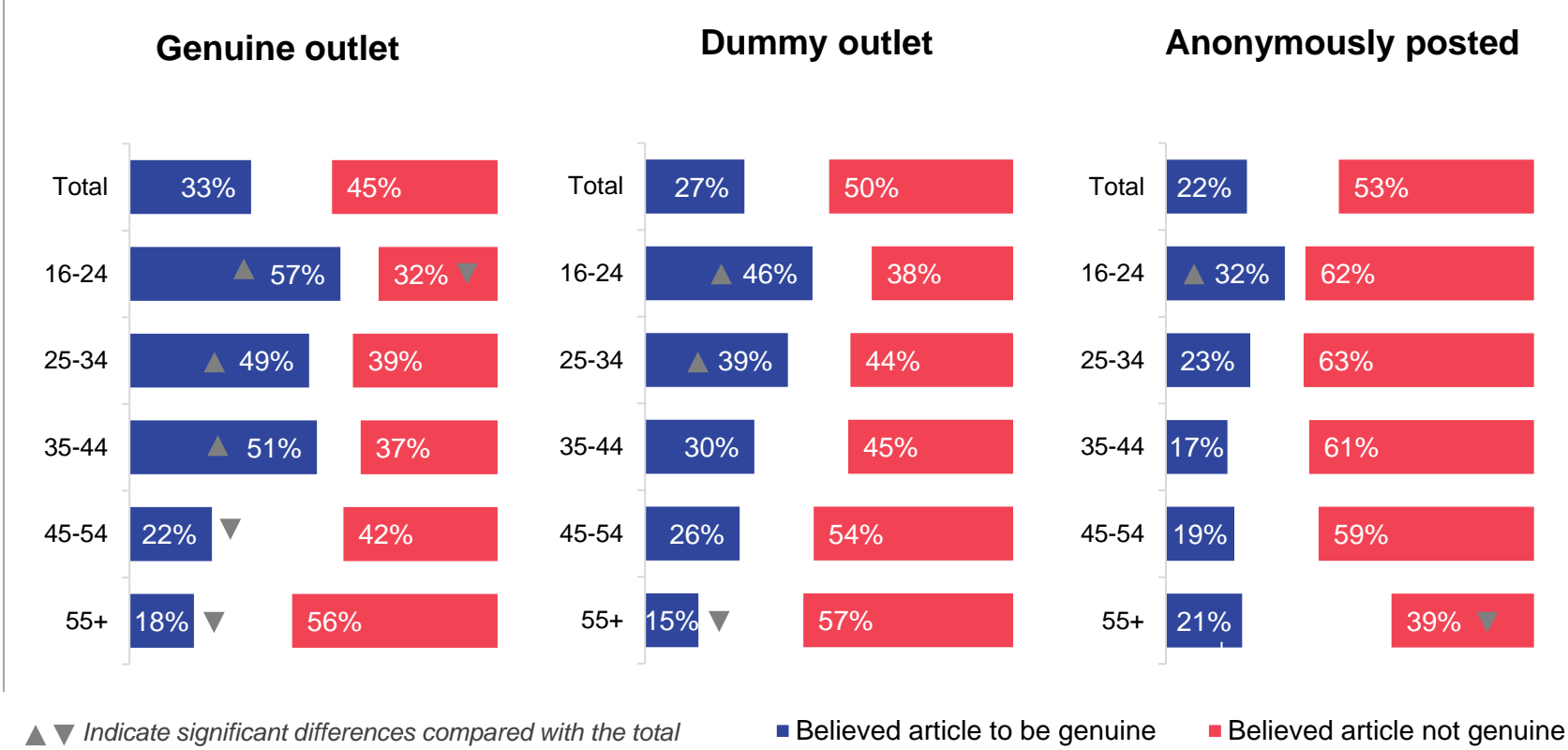
▲ ▼ Indicate significant differences compared with the total

Participants were more likely to decide each article post was not genuine, especially so for older participants.

Around **half** of participants thought that each article was not genuine, including the one designed to look like it was from a genuine outlet.

Scepticism was driven by **age**. **Younger groups** were more likely to think each article was genuine versus older groups – older groups were more likely to give no opinion, or think an article was not genuine.

This pattern holds within use of Ols. Among those that use Ols younger participants were more likely to think all articles were genuine versus older participants.

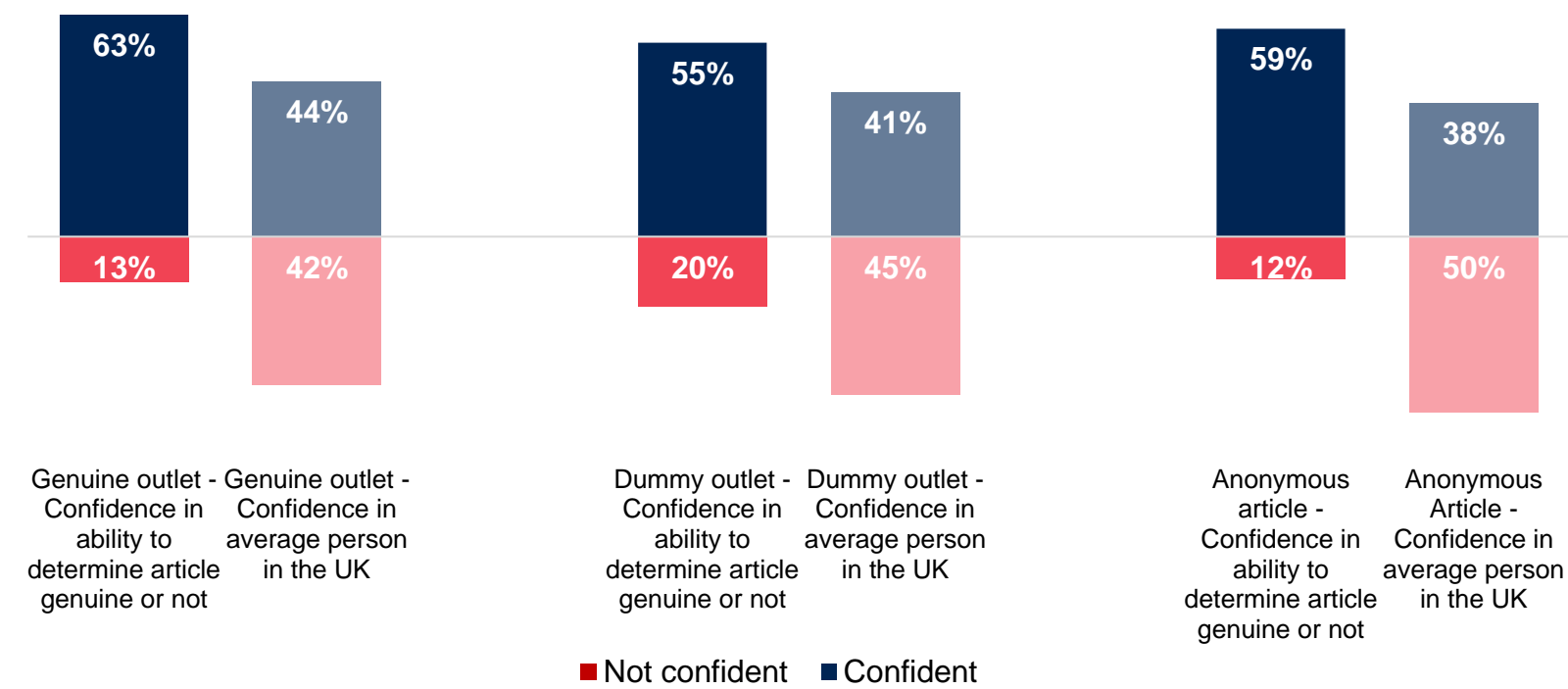


Participants were more confident in their own ability to identify genuine from fake content than in the ability of others.

Over half felt confident that they had correctly identified whether the article was genuine or fake, whereas around **two in five** felt confident in the ability of the average person in the UK to do the same.

Younger groups were more confident in their answers regardless of the article they saw (typically rating themselves 10+ points above other age groups).

How confident, if at all, are you that the article is genuine/not genuine? / How confident, if at all, do you think the average person in the UK would be in deciding whether this article is genuine or not?

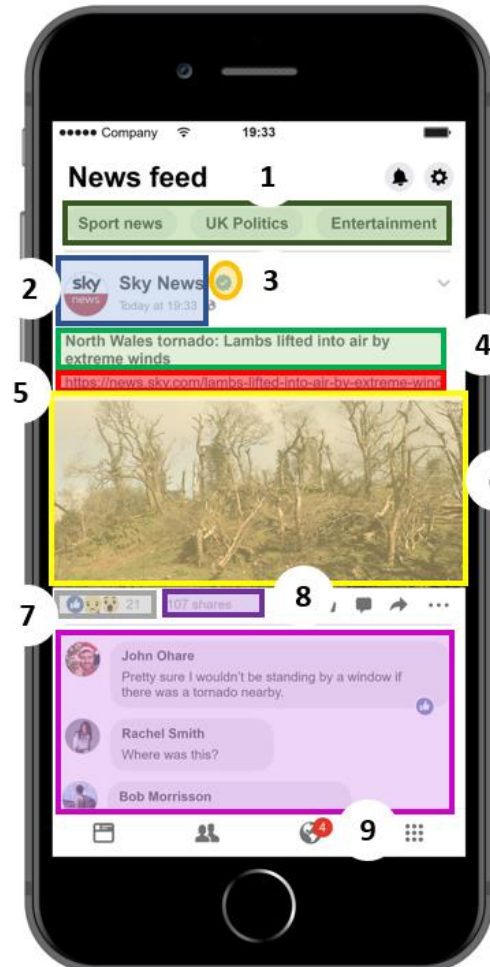


Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,
CONFIDENT1. How confident, if at all, are you that the article is genuine/not genuine? / CONFIDENT2. How confident, if at all, do you think the average person in the UK would be in deciding whether this article is genuine or not? Base: All asked (c. 800 per article)



Participants were asked which elements of the article made them think it was genuine or fake.

Participants could choose from **nine** different aspects of the article (eight for the anonymously posted article which did not include the verification tick).



- 1 Banner
- 2 Sharer
- 3 Verification tick
- 4 Headline
- 5 Link
- 6 Image
- 7 Reactions
- 8 Shares
- 9 Comments

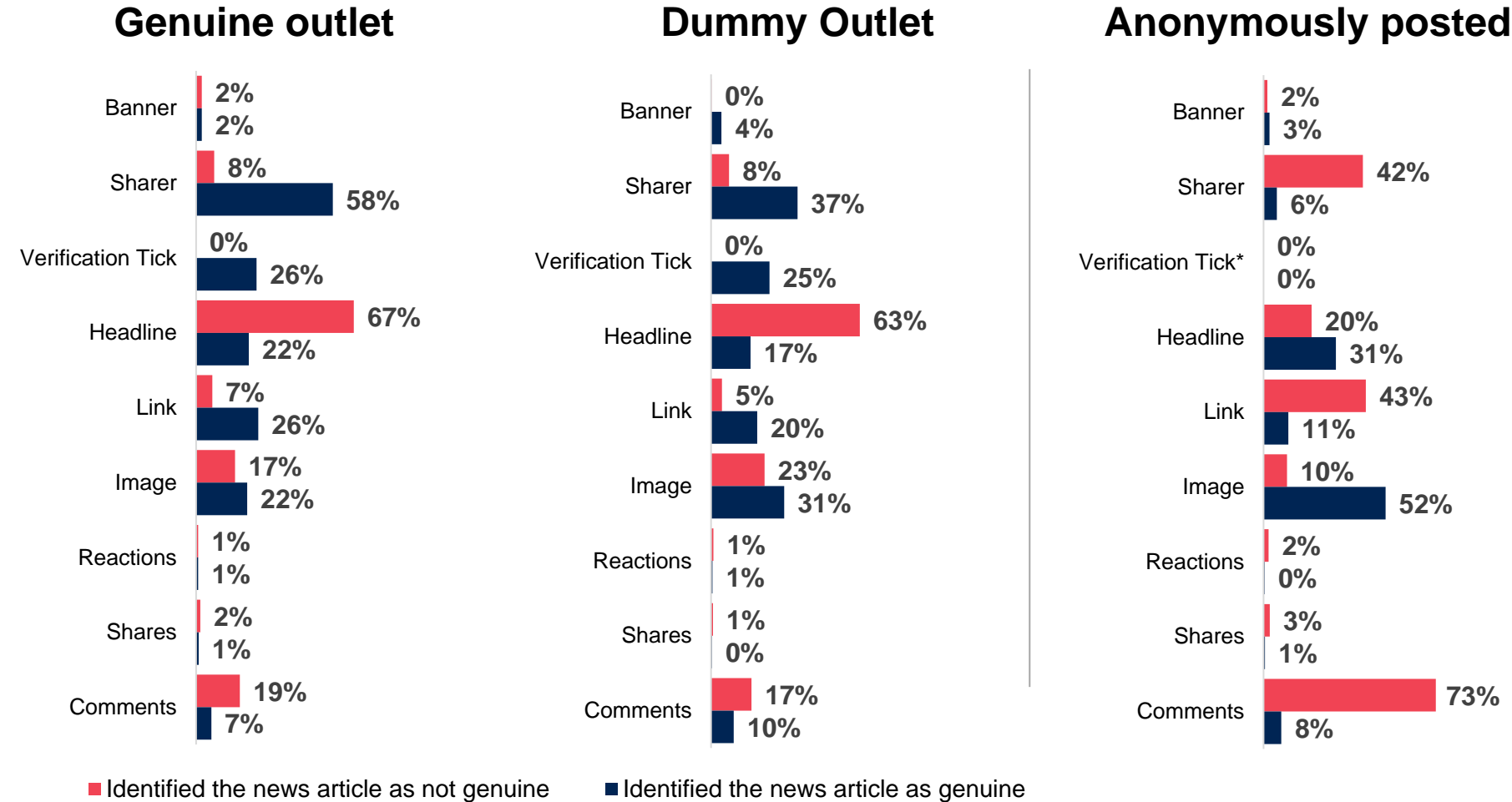
People were generally persuaded by only one or two key aspects of an article when judging whether it was genuine or not.

These varied by article, and whether they felt it was genuine or not genuine.

The results suggest that people were often looking for, or persuaded by, one or two key aspects of an article when judging its authenticity, such as the sharer, headline or attached comments.

Often, they selected aspects of the articles that, on their own, would not be always be reliable indicators of authenticity – in particular the headline and the images accompanying the article. Few selected the ‘verification tick’ where it featured, although younger age groups were more likely to do so.

The results suggest there is a risk people may not always use reliable information when making judgements about the legitimacy of news online



* Verification tick was not included for the anonymously posted article.

Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom,

PHONENEWS2. Please select the elements in the image below, that make you think this news is <IF CODE 1 'genuine'> <IF CODE 2 'not genuine'>. Base: All asked about article from genuine outlet and identified as genuine (305) and not genuine (396), All asked about article from dummy outlet and identified as genuine (234) or not genuine (402), All asked about anonymously posted article and identified genuine (162) or not genuine (464).

Judgements about whether an article was genuine or not were not always based on reliable information.

We asked respondents to explain why certain aspects of each article contributed to their views about their authenticity.

The **sharer** was viewed as an important indicator of whether something seemed genuine, regardless of whether participants recognised the brand.

However, even the **article imagery** could be seen as visual proof that an article was genuine.

Genuine outlet	Dummy outlet	Anonymously posted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Those that thought the Sky News article was genuine said it was because it was shared by a brand that they recognised and trusted.The presence of a verification tick also confirmed it as a genuine article.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Those that thought the Wales Post article was genuine said it was because it was shared by a legitimate brand. It was assumed to be a local brand, which built trust.The image also provided 'proof' of the incident mentioned in the headline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Those that thought the anonymously posted article was not genuine said it was because of the comments beneath it. They were typical bot or spam comments.Those that thought the article was genuine said it was because the image provided 'proof' of the incident.
<p>“ Sky News logo followed by the infamous blue tick, that proves the legitimacy of the account holder.” (Male, 16-24)</p>	<p>“ Have never heard of Wales Post, though could research if sufficiently interested.” (Female, 75+)</p>	<p>“ It shows the picture of the headline...it relates.” (Male, 16- 24)</p>

Source: Ipsos UK/Ofcom
PHONENEWS2_OPEN. Please explain the reasons why the highlighted elements of this article make you think it is <IF CODE 1 'genuine'> <IF CODE 2 'not genuine'>



Thank you

Ipsos MORI



Ipsos Standards & Accreditations

Ipsos's standards & accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Moreover, our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.



ISO 20252 – is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911 / MRQSA & incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme); it covers the 5 stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos UK was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



MRS Company Partnership – By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos UK endorse and support the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commit to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation & we were the first company to sign our organisation up to the requirements & self regulation of the MRS Code; more than 350 companies have followed our lead.



ISO 9001 – International general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994 we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



ISO 27001 – International standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos UK was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) & the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) – Ipsos UK is required to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Data Protection Act; it covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.



HMG Cyber Essentials – A government backed and key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos UK was assessment validated for certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.



Fair Data – Ipsos UK is signed up as a 'Fair Data' Company by agreeing to adhere to ten core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252 and with the Ipsos UK Terms and Conditions.