



Ofcom 7th May Election News Survey 2026

15th September 2026



Research background and objectives

Elections in English regions, Scotland and Wales took place on May 7th 2026, within an ever-evolving news ecosystem.

Ofcom is the UK communications regulator and oversees election coverage on licensed television and radio services to ensure it complies with the Broadcasting Code. This requires election coverage to be fair and duly impartial and that news is duly accurate.

The research was designed to understand how people across Great Britain accessed news and information about the elections; the sources they used and trusted; their awareness of, and exposure to, AI-generated or potentially misleading content; and their broader interest in, and sense of being informed about, current affairs.

Key objectives:

- Identify whether people encounter election-related content and what type if they do.
- Understand the role of social media, local outlets, national broadcasters and alternative sources.
- Explore how people perceive the election-news they encounter

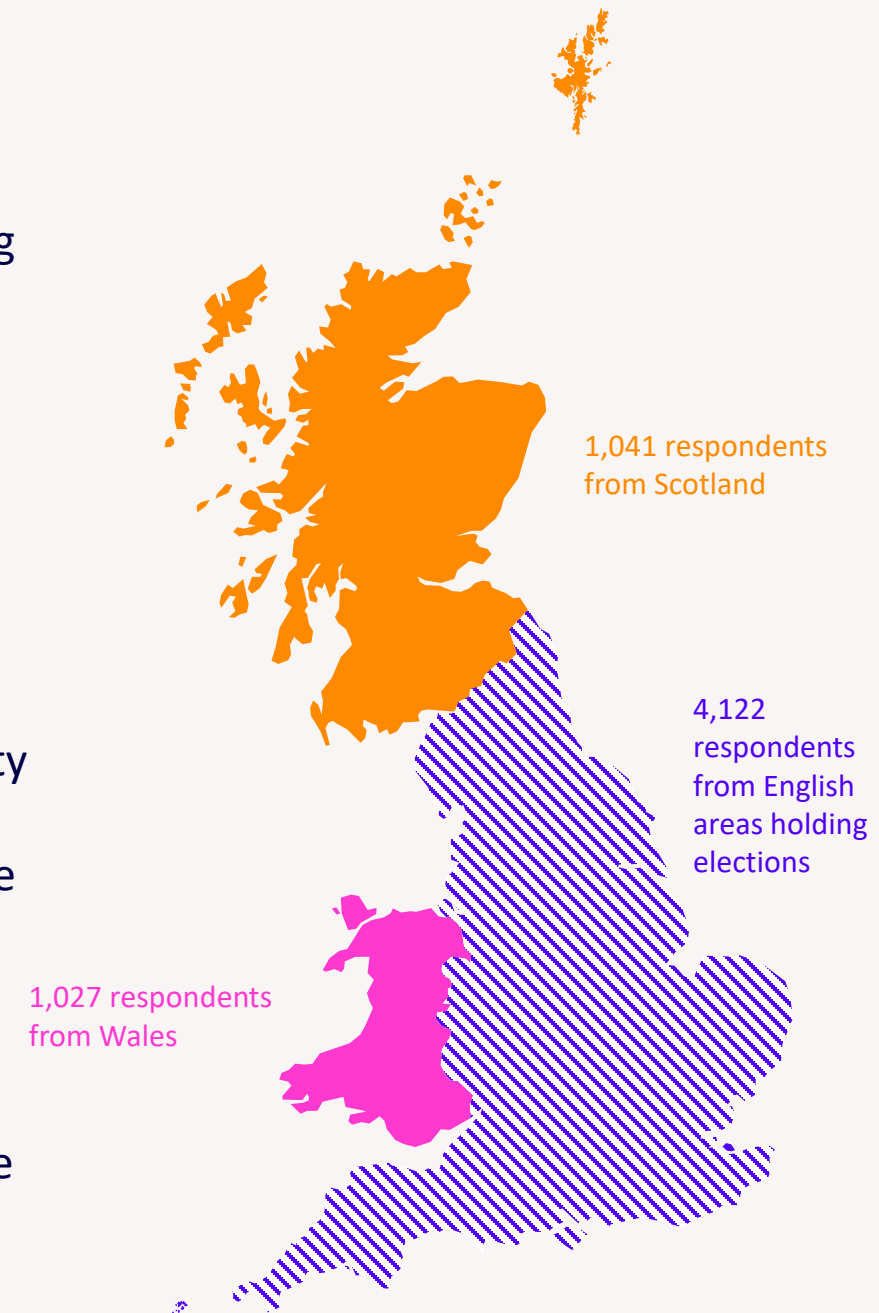
Methodology

Savanta conducted an online survey on behalf of Ofcom immediately following the May 2026 election held across England, Scotland and Wales.

6,190 online adults were surveyed. Fieldwork was conducted between 9 – 24 May 2026, immediately following local council elections / London Borough Mayoral Election in England, the Senedd / Welsh Parliament election in Wales and the Scottish Parliament election in Scotland, which were held on May 7th 2026.

Quotas were set by age, gender (interlocked), region, social grade and ethnicity to achieve nationally representative samples in each nation. The sample was weighted by quotas to ensure representation. For England – respondents were screened by region and then local authority to determine electoral eligibility. Caution should be exercised when reviewing the whole sample as it reflects areas holding elections rather than the whole of the UK / Great Britain.

When comparing responses of different groups, the data has been significance tested at a confidence interval of 95%. Arrows up or down illustrate where responses for that group are significantly different to the total sample.



Note on terminology

Respondents were asked questions on the election based on their location. Throughout this deck we refer to the election to cover all elections that took place on the May 7th 2026.



**Were asked questions on the
Scottish Parliamentary Elections**



**Were asked questions on the local council
election and / or the London Borough
Mayoral Elections**



**Were asked about the Senedd /
Welsh Parliament Elections**

Executive summary (1)

1

People use a **mix of different media** to consume news with TV news being the most commonly consumed (regardless of age) from the list provided to respondents. BBC TV News is the most widely consumed source. The majority of respondents from Scotland and Wales also consume nation-specific news content.

2

Interest in election news was similar to interest in news generally, and respondents did not feel notably better informed during the election period. Among people with lower interest in election news, the most common reasons were a belief that the election would not lead to meaningful change and a lack of trust in politicians.

3

Attitudes towards election news were mixed. The majority agreed it was important to engage with multiple election sources about the election, but perceptions towards election news accuracy were mixed (however, when asked about individual election news source trust in accuracy was higher).

Executive summary (2)

4

TV was the most used media platform for election news. Excluding election-specific campaign materials, election news consumption broadly reflected people's general news habits. Most respondents used more than one way to access election news.

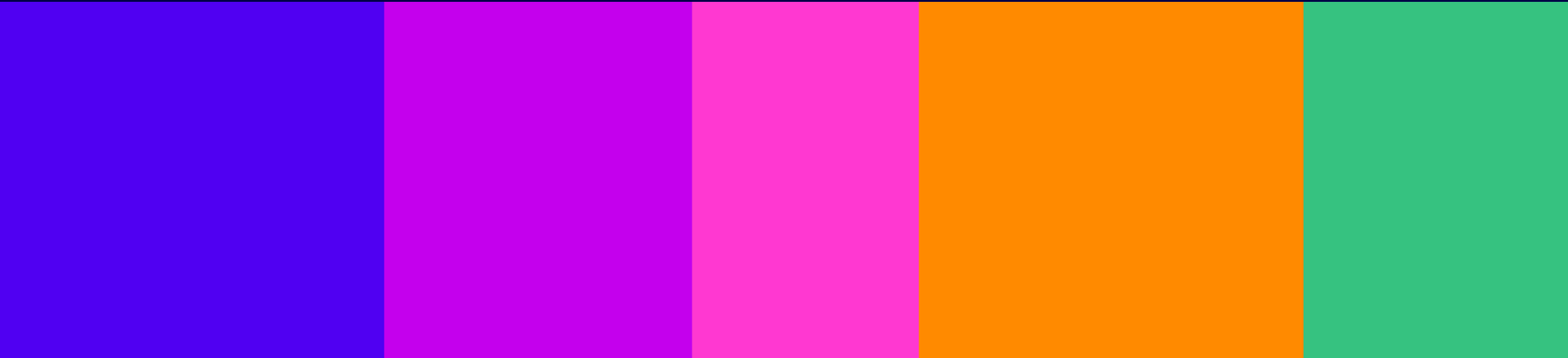
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Perceptions varied across the different ways to access news about the election. Users were more likely to think the way the news they accessed accurate than not and most found them generally trustworthy. Across all five characteristics measured, Channel 4 was the highest-ranking individual source across all the characteristics.

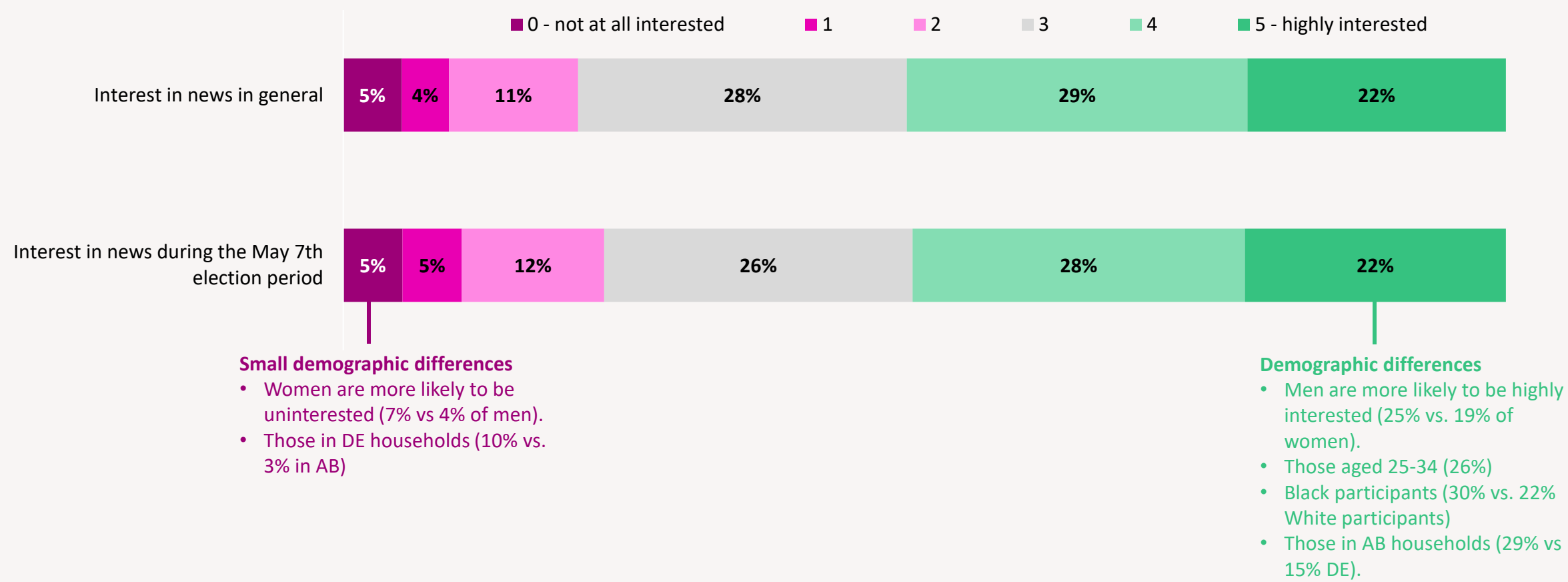
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Two-thirds of participants who were aware of the election reported **encountering election-related content they believed to be misleading**. Around a third who saw what they considered to be misleading content believed this to be AI-generated, while a similar proportion were unsure. This reflects that confidence in identifying AI-generated content was mixed, with around a third confident and a similar proportion not confident. Among those who encountered AI-generated election content, around half said they ignored or scrolled past it.

Interest in ,and opinions of, election news



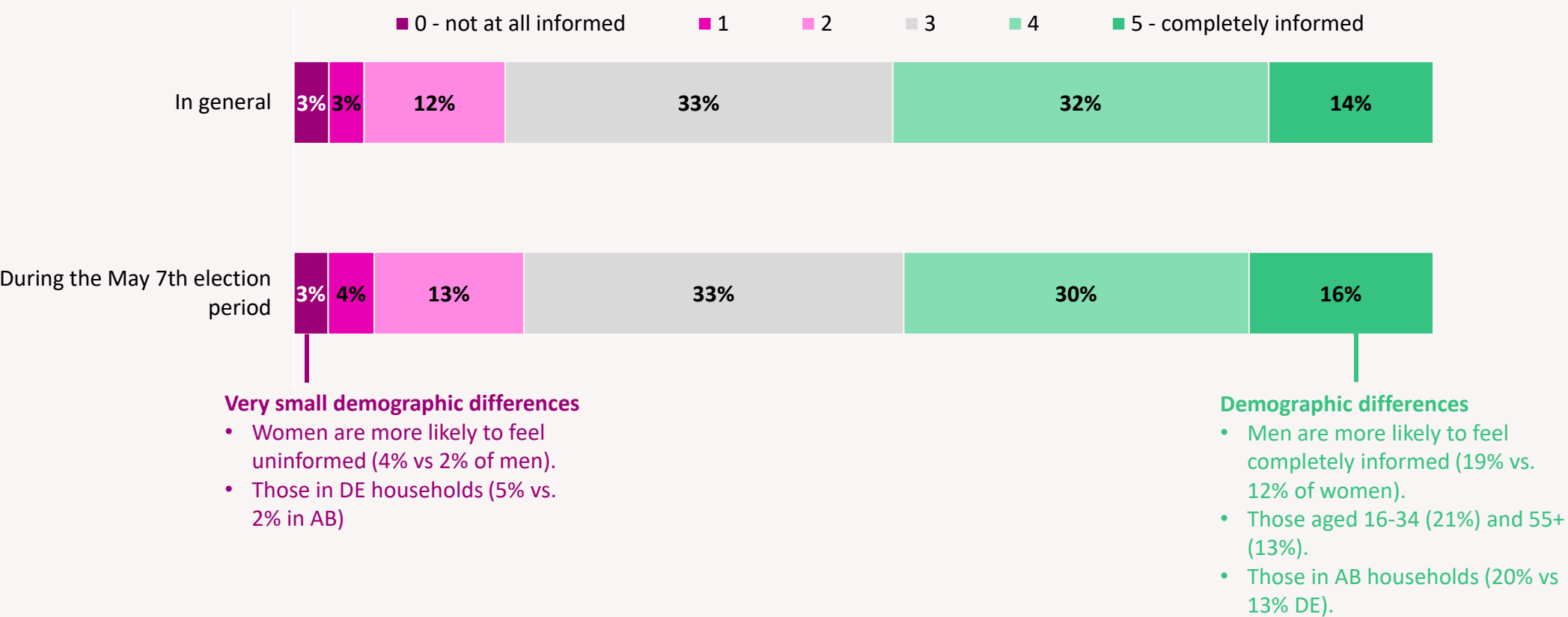
Interest in news during the election period was very similar to interest in news in general



Q7. How interested, if at all, are you in the news and current affairs, with 0 being not at all interested, and 5 being highly interested? In general / During this recent election period. Base: All respondents (6,190), All aware of the elections (5,550)

People felt similarly informed about news in general and the specific election news

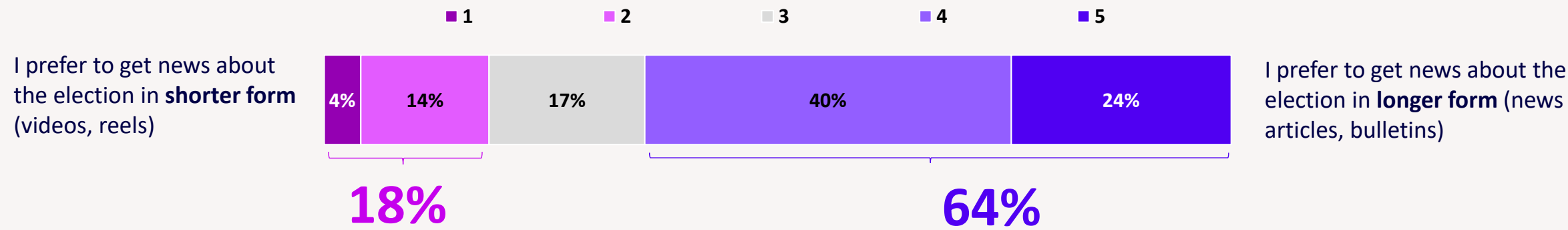
How well-informed people felt by the news



Q8. How well-informed, if at all, do you feel about the news and current affairs, with 0 being not at all informed, and 5 being completely informed? In general / During this recent election period.
Base: All respondents (6,190), All aware of the elections (5,550).

Most people aware of the election tended to prefer longer-form content

Which statement comes closest to your views...



Younger adults were significantly more likely to prefer short form content

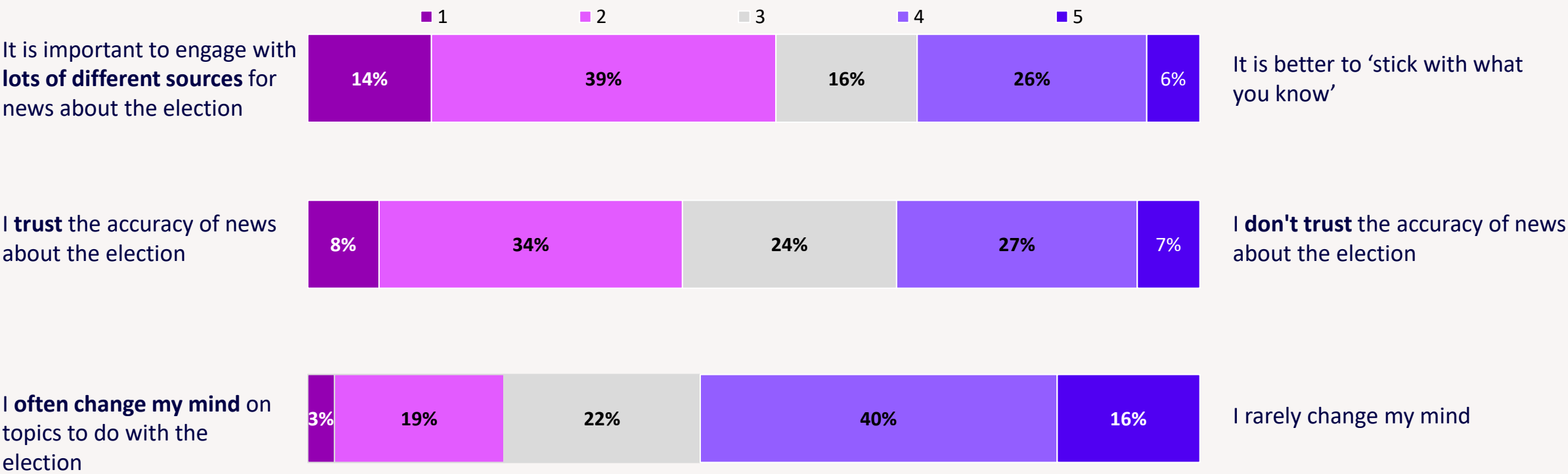
- 40% of 16–24-year-olds tended to prefer short form content.
- 31% of 25-34-year-olds

Older adults were more likely to prefer long form content

- 74% of 55–64-year-olds tended to prefer long form content.
- 82% of 65+.

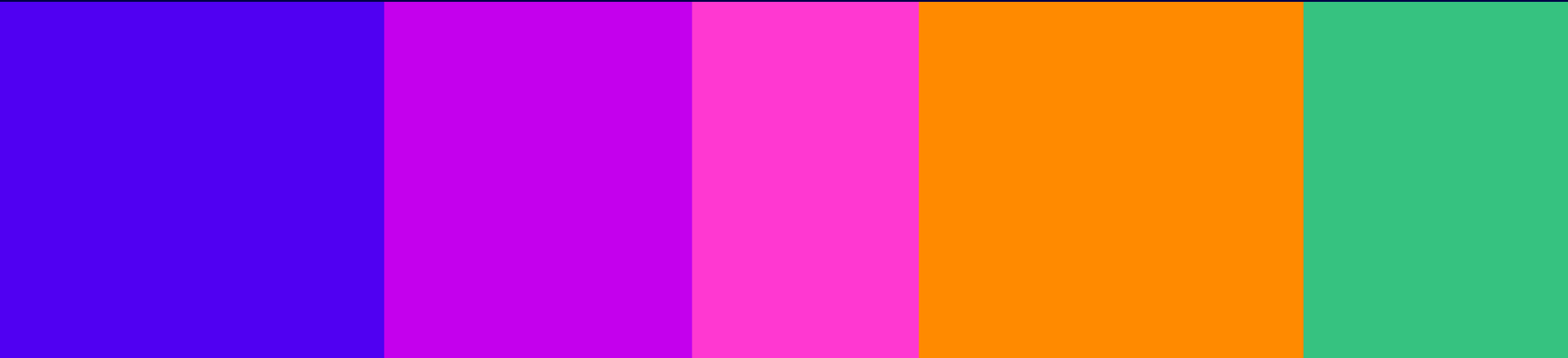
About half felt it was important to engage with different sources, but trust in election news was mixed and few said they changed their mind on election topics

Which statement comes closest to your views...



Q10. For each pair of statements, please drag the slider to indicate where your own view lies and click to confirm your choice before moving to the next pair of statements.
Base: All aware of the elections (5,550).

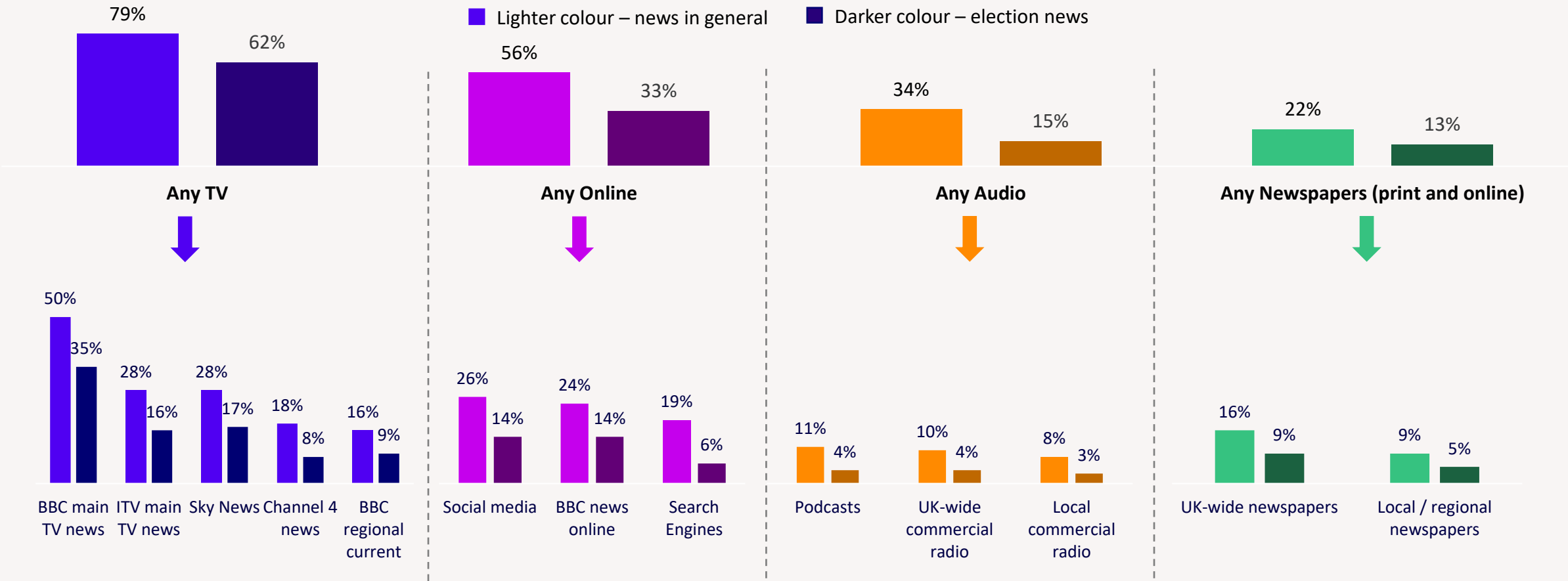
Consumption & ratings



The pattern of accessing news about the elections largely mirrored overall news habits

News consumption by medium

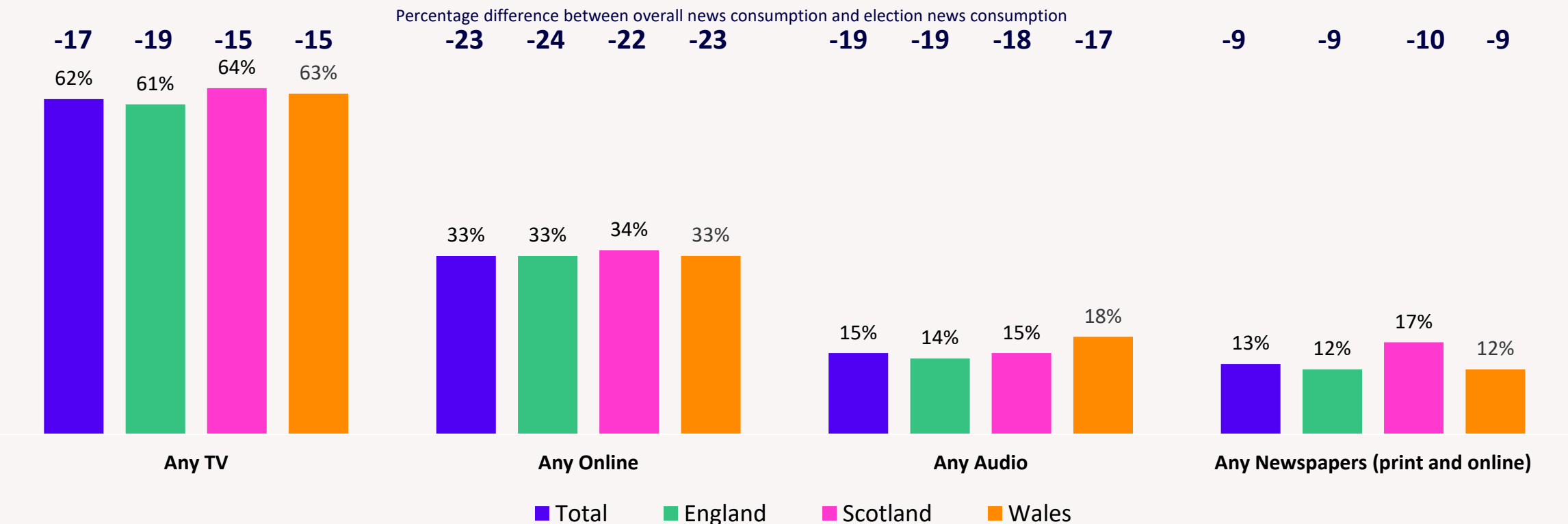
Lighter colour – news in general Darker colour – election news



Q1. We'd like you to think about where you get your news and information. In general, which of the following sources, if any, do you tend to use for news and current affairs? / Q3A. Thinking about the weeks leading up to the elections, through which of the following sources, if any, did you see news and information about the election? Base: All respondents (6,190) / All aware of the election (5,550).

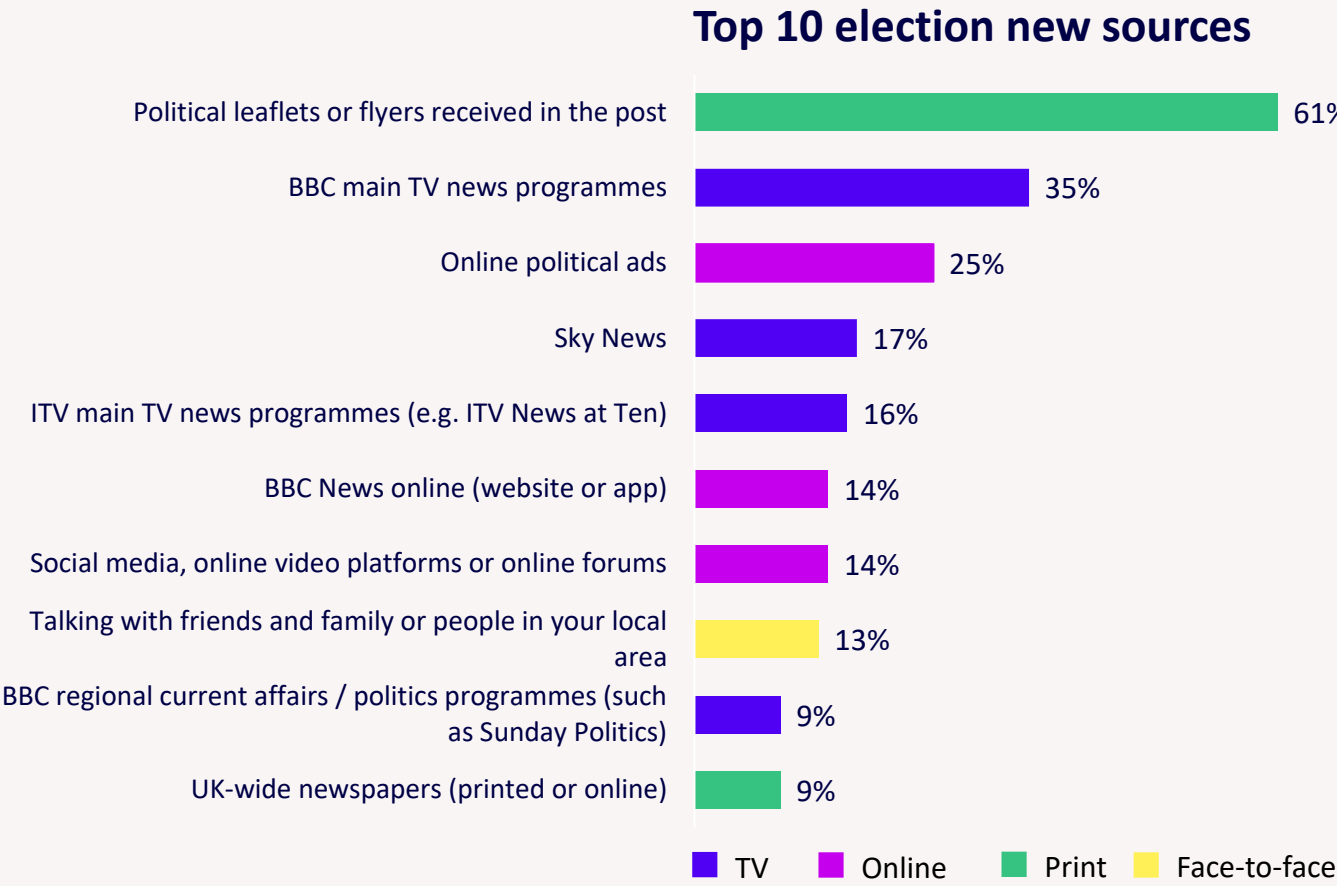
TV the primary way for people to get their election news with the majority of those aware of the election seeing coverage this way

% of people using each platform for election news, by nation



Q3A. Thinking about the weeks leading up to the elections, through which of the following sources, if any, did you see news and information about the election?
Base: All aware of the election (5,550), England (3,566), Scotland (1,002), Wales (977).

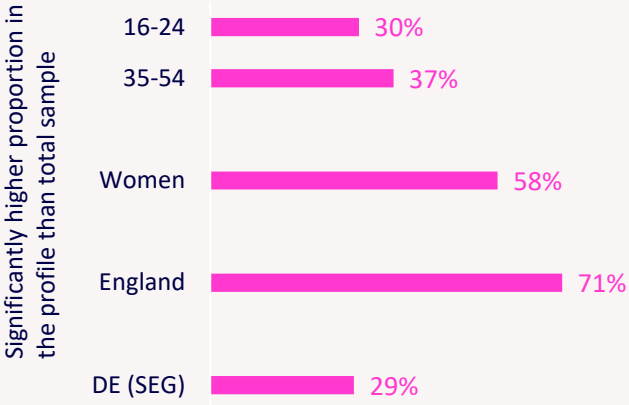
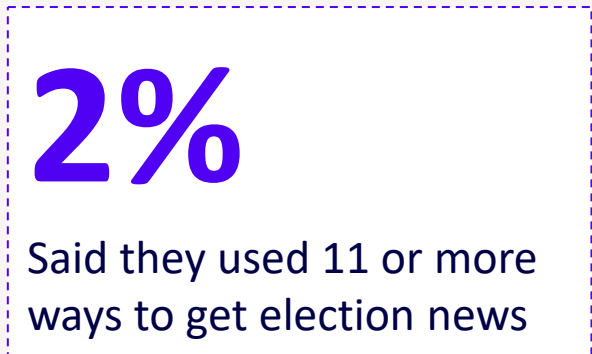
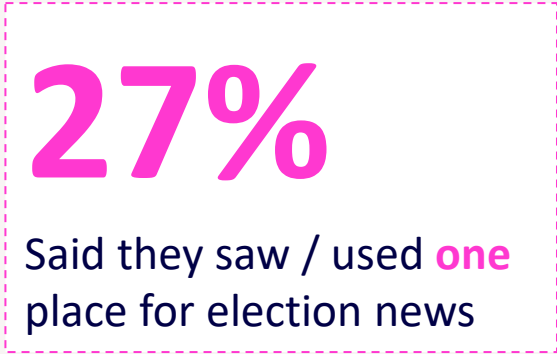
BBC main TV news programmes, Sky News and ITV main news programmes were the top 3 media sources of election related news and information.



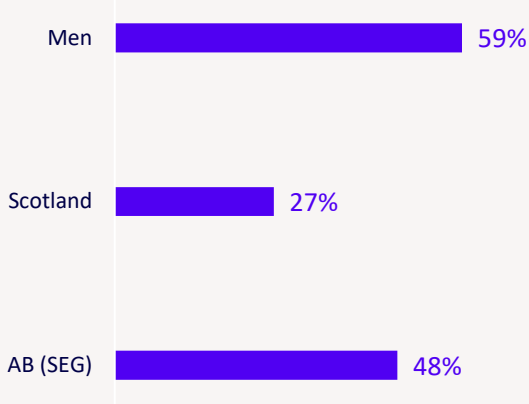
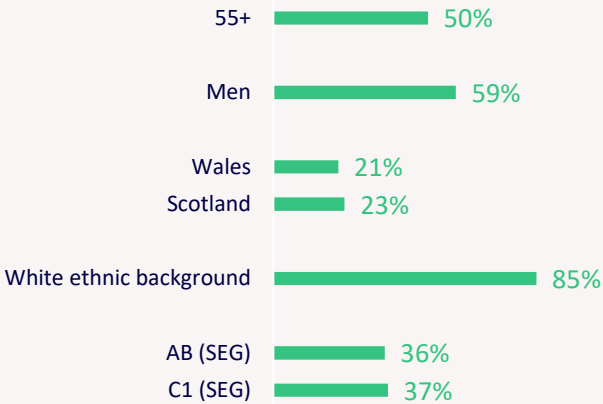
Q3A. Thinking about the weeks leading up to the elections, through which of the following sources, if any, did you see news and information about the election?
Base: All aware of the election (5,550).

The majority used between two to five different ways for election news, with around a quarter seeing only one.

Number of election news sources



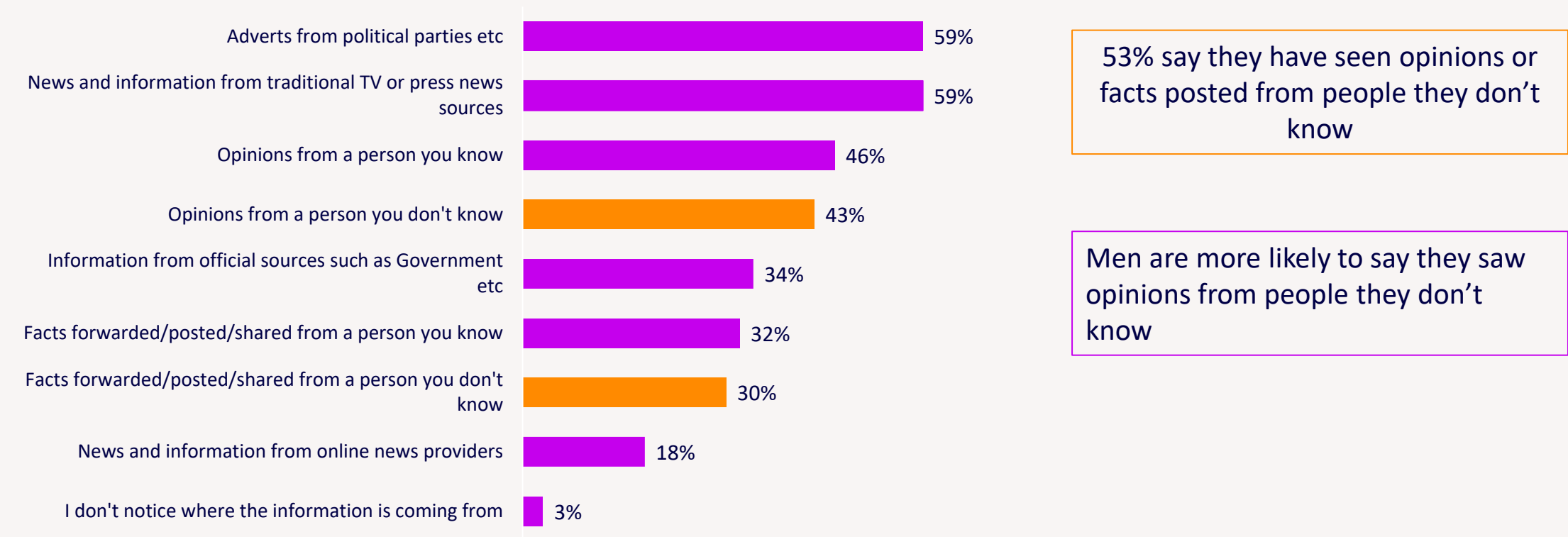
No significantly higher differences in profile



Q3A. Thinking about the weeks leading up to the elections, through which of the following sources, if any, did you see news and information about the election? Base: All aware of the election (5,550), used one election news source (1,485), used between two and five (3,106), used between six and ten (635), used eleven or more (131).

Those who see election news on social media tend to see adverts or news from traditional news sources, but a substantial proportion see opinions and facts from people they don't know

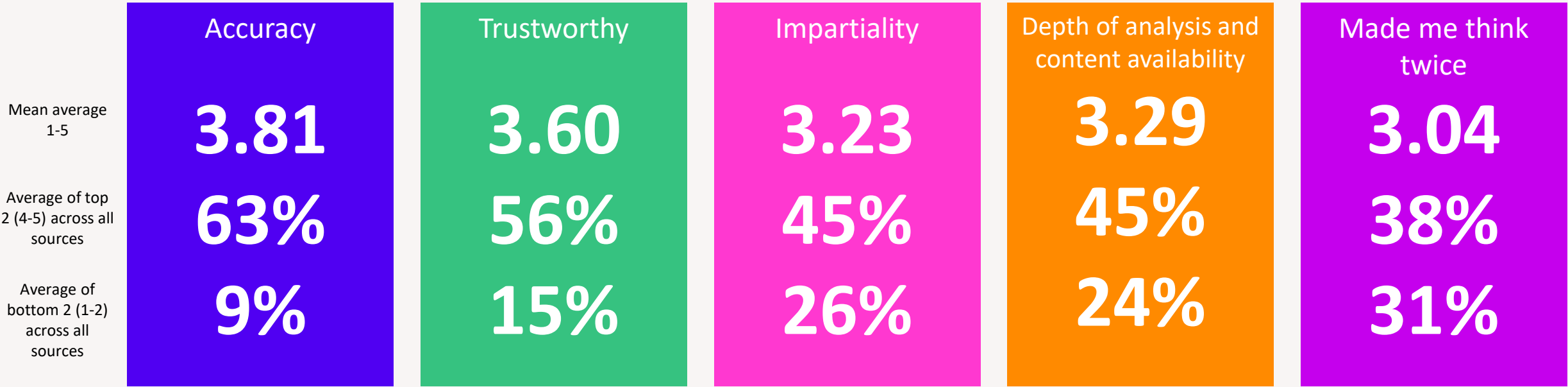
Type of election news seen on social media, online video platforms or online forums



Q4. In the previous question you said that you used social media, online video or online forums for news and information about the election. Within the last weeks, which of the following, if any, have you seen on these platforms? Base: All who had seen news and information on social media during the election (812).

Across all ways to access election news, users were more likely to say it was accurate and trustworthy. Opinions were divided on impartiality and depth of analysis.

Using the following scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is NOT AT ALL and 5 is COMPLETELY, to what extent do you think the following...

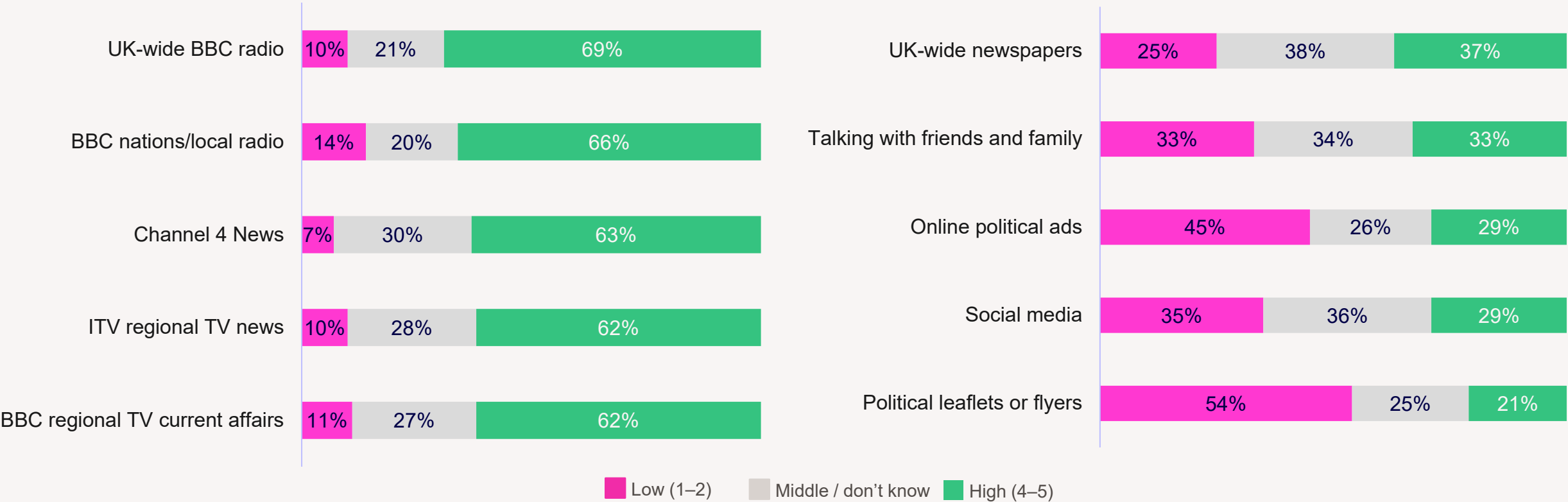


Q5. Using the following scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is NOT AT ALL and 5 is COMPLETELY, to what extent do you think these statements apply to the following sources for news about the election? Base: All who used each election news source.

BBC radio and Channel 4 users were more likely to rate their election coverage as impartial

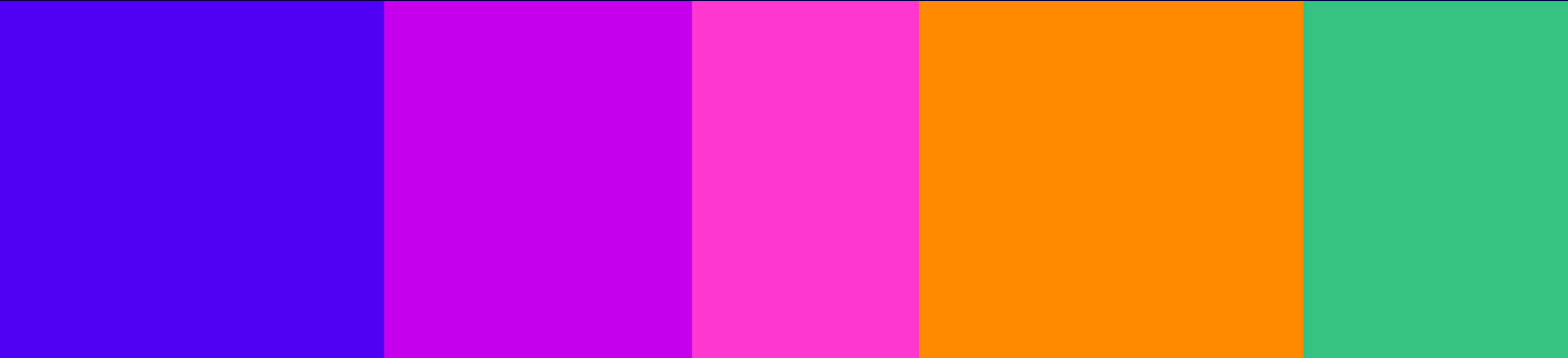
Using the following scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is NOT AT ALL and 5 is COMPLETELY, to what extent do you think the following is impartial

HIGHEST RATED LOWEST RATED



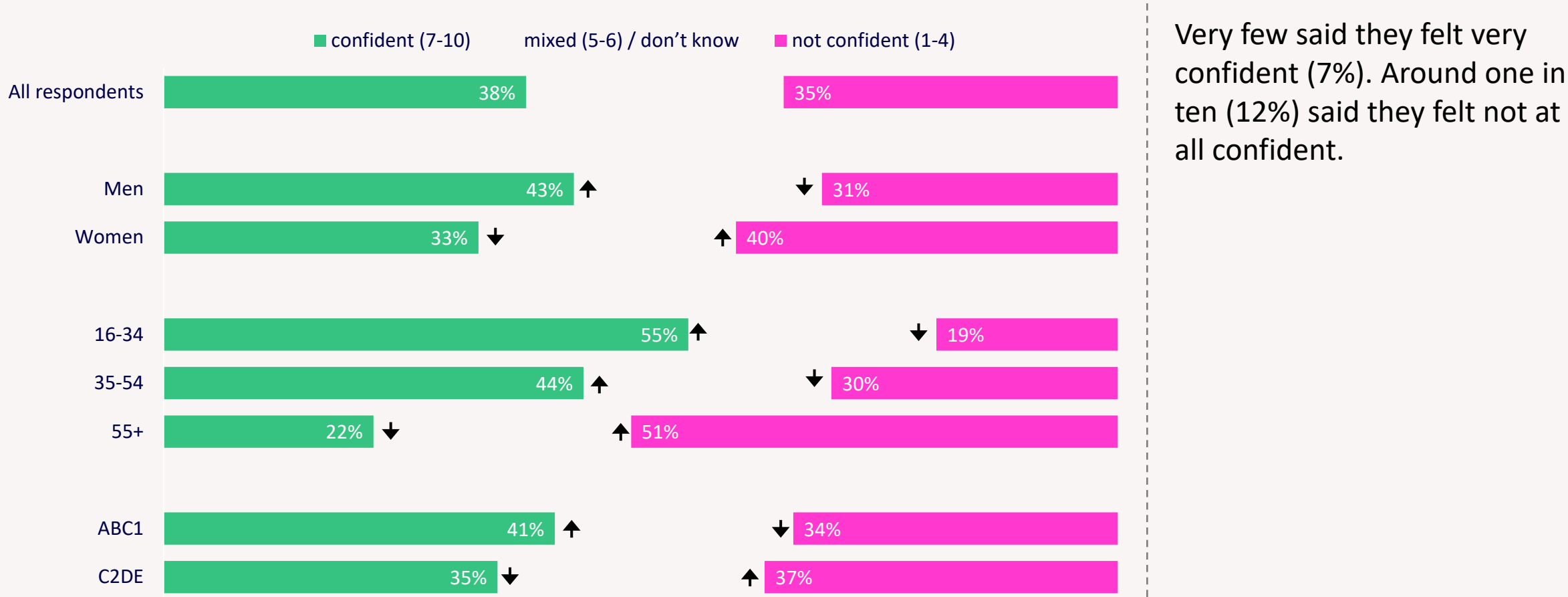
Q5. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is NOT AT ALL and 5 is COMPLETELY, to what extent do you think each source is impartial? Base: All who used each election news source (between 104–3,368). Only sources with a base above 100 shown. Social media includes video-sharing platforms and online forums.

AI & misleading election information



Confidence in identifying AI-generated content varies significantly by age, with younger adults much more confident than older adults

On a scale of 1-10 confidence identifying AI generated audio, image, videos or text online



Very few said they felt very confident (7%). Around one in ten (12%) said they felt not at all confident.

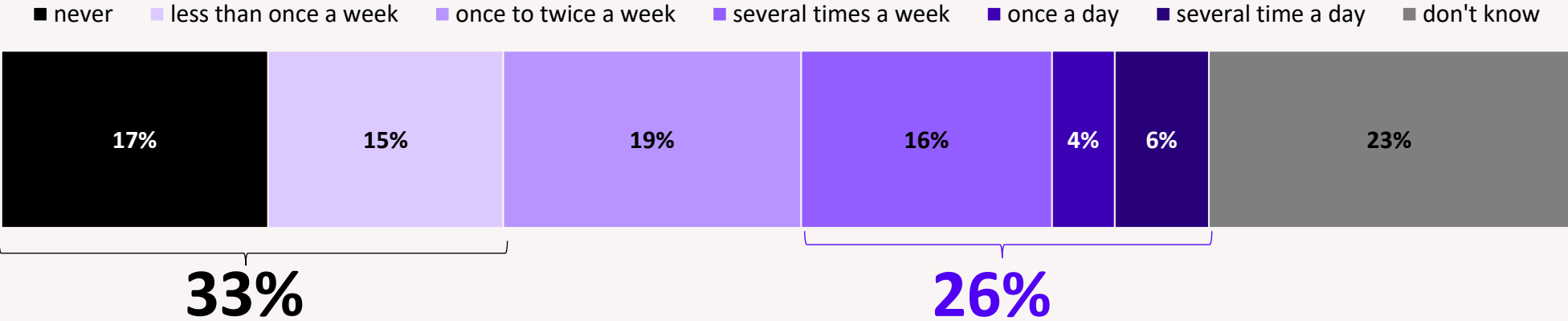
Q11. On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident, if at all, are you that you could identify AI generated audio, images, videos or text if you saw them online?
Base: All respondents (6,190), 16-35 (1,763), 35-54 (2,041), 55+ (2,386), Men (2,985), Women (3,173), ABC1 (3,513,), C2DE (2,677).

↑ Significant differences between statements indicated by arrows
↓

The majority said they came across some misleading election content with around a quarter encountering it often in the last few weeks

60%
reported they saw misleading election content

Frequency of coming across misleading election content



Demographic differences

- Those aged 55+ were more likely to say they saw misleading election content never / less than once a week (40%).

Demographic differences

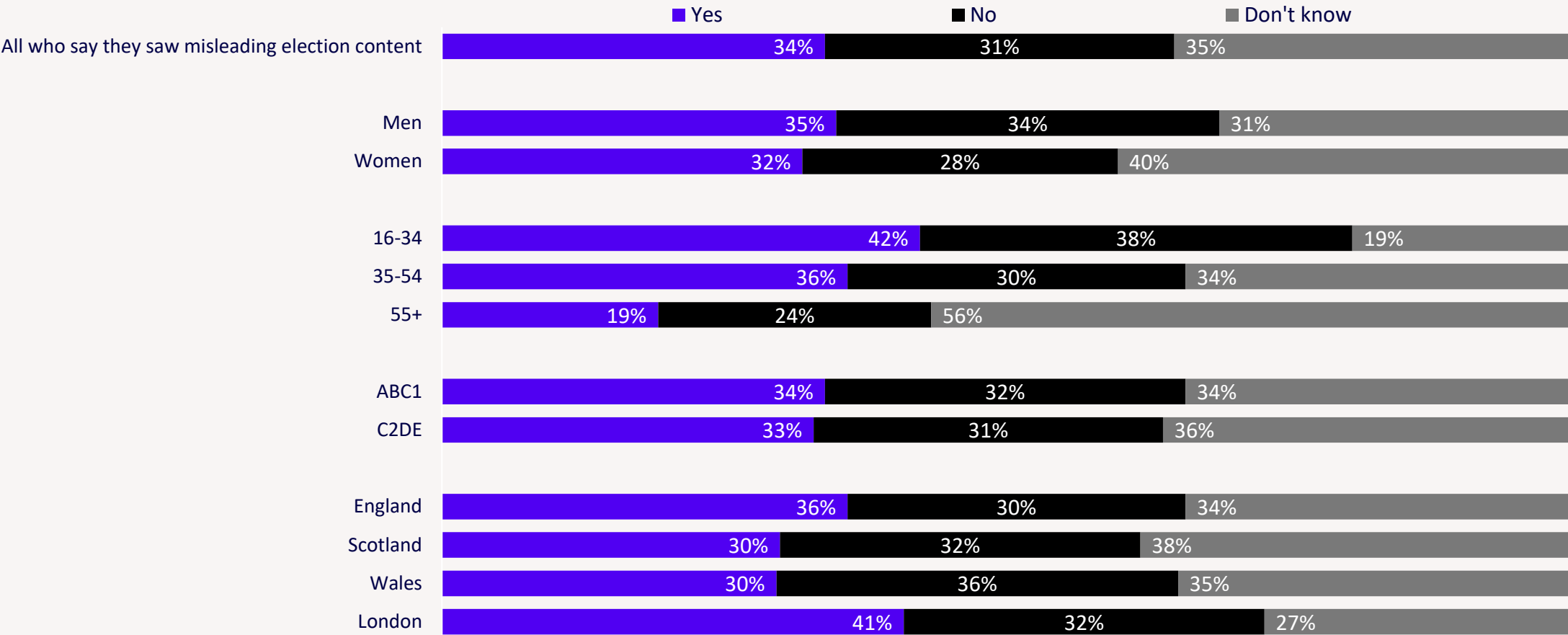
- Those aged 16-34 were more likely to say they saw misleading election content often (38%).
- Those in London (30%).
- Those in AB social grade (30%).

Demographic differences

- Those aged 55+ were more likely to say they didn't know whether they had seen misleading election content (32%).
- Those in DE social grade (28%).

Around a third say the misleading election content they saw was AI-generated. However, another third weren't sure whether the content they saw was AI-generated

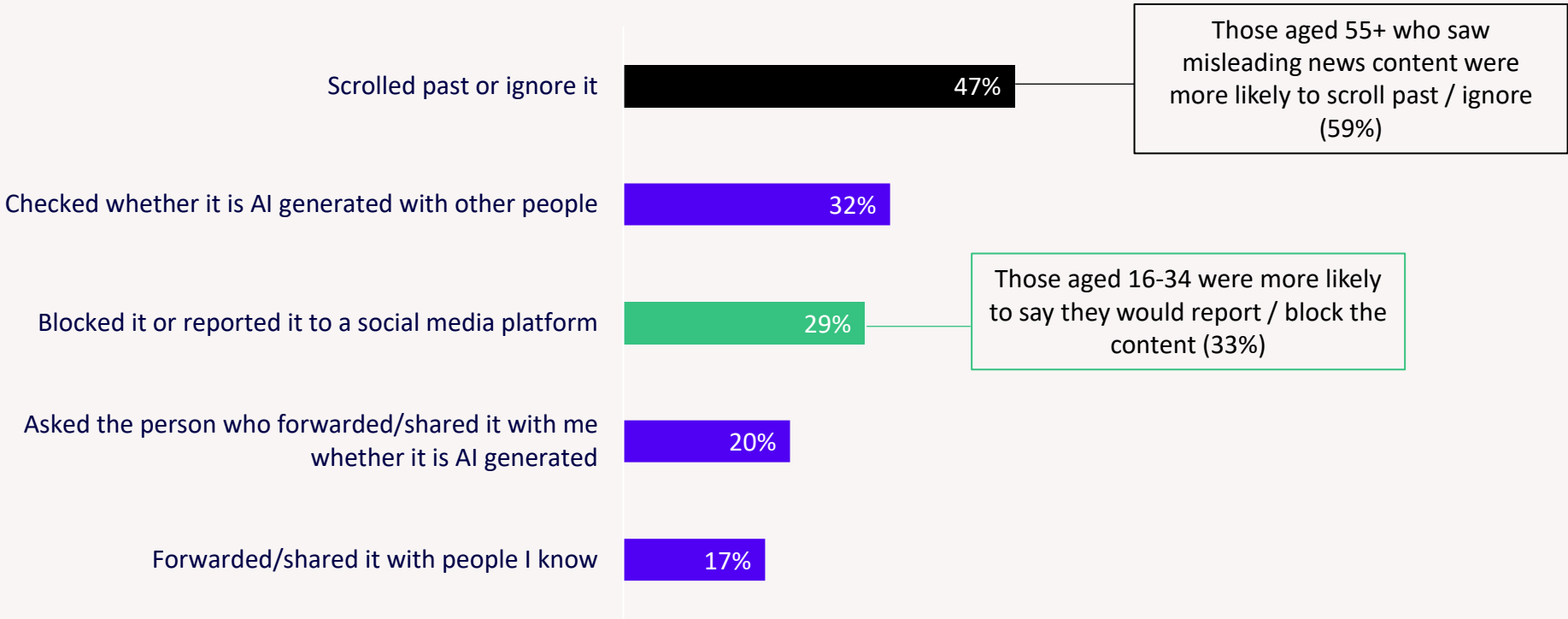
Whether misleading election content was AI-generated



Q12a. You said you have seen content about the election in the last weeks that you believe was designed to mislead or misinform. Was this content generated or otherwise manipulated with AI?
Base: All who say they saw misleading election content (3,320), 16-35 (1,210), 35-54 (1,180), 55+ (930), Men (1,751), Women (1,558), ABC1 (2,003), C2DE (1,317).

The most common reaction to encountering potentially misleading AI-generated election content was to ignore it

Actions taken when they saw misleading AI-generated election content



Younger adults (16-34) were more likely to take action against potentially misleading AI-generated content by reporting, asking if it was AI, or checking if it was AI.

Q13. When you came across misleading election content you felt may have been AI generated, which of the following actions did you take, if any? Base: All who said they saw misleading AI-generated election content (1,120).