



The War on Gaza

News consumption in Lebanon

A survey on how people follow the war, perceive the coverage and verify claims.

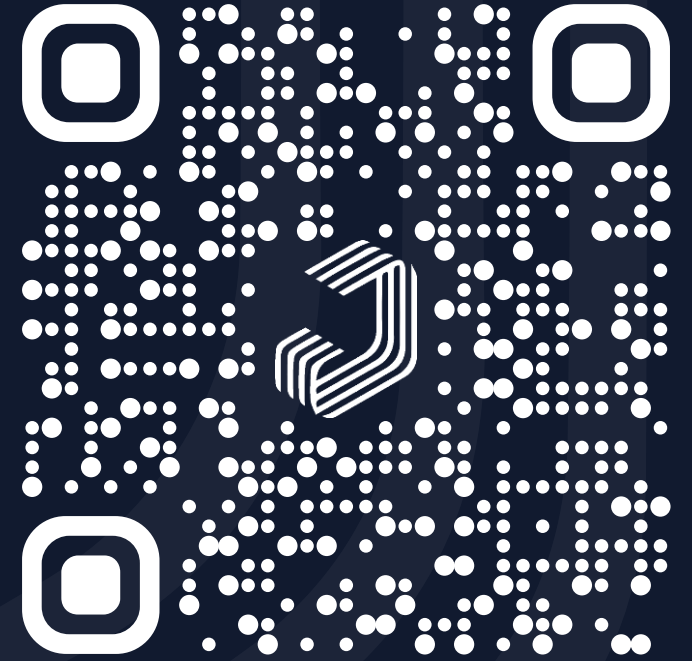
21 December 2023

SIREN

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the European Union**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey was carried out between 3 – 12 November and aims to provide a rapid snapshot of how media coverage of the war in Gaza is being consumed in Lebanon. The survey holds statistical significance at a 95% confidence level, showing a margin of error of $\pm 3\%$.

Among the 332 individuals who responded to DALIL's nationwide telephone survey, 45% say they are following news coverage minute-by-minute or hourly. A further 42% are following daily.

Television is the most popular medium, while YouTube and Lebanese news websites are the least popular. Facebook is the most used social media platform for news. WhatsApp is also significant for reaching people aged 18 to 59.

There is extremely limited awareness of how to verify claims among those following news of the war in Gaza. Fact-checking organisations in Lebanon also appear to be barely reaching news consumers in the country.

Media consumers in Lebanon have generally high levels of trust in the coverage of events in Gaza across a variety of platforms, particularly social media coverage. More research is needed to understand what causes people to see particular media sources as trustworthy in this context.

People in Lebanon have an overwhelmingly positive view of social media's role in leading to a resolution of the war, citing how it helps them stay informed and access news.

Respondents feel that misinformation has a mostly negative effect. Even though disinformation is circulated and indeed promoted widely on social media platforms, especially since the start of the war, few mentioned this as a concern.

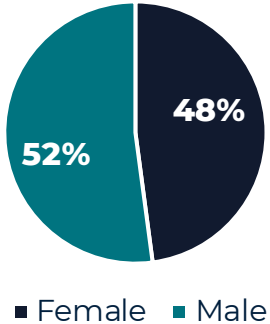
Media consumers in Lebanon meanwhile are making their minds up quickly about the news they are exposed to, and are not forming their opinions on events based on all available information. More research is needed to understand how confirmation bias such as this operates in this context.

Overall, the survey points to a continued and heightened importance of investing in media and information literacy training; in bolstering the capabilities of fact-checking organisations in Lebanon and beyond; and in widening public access to news verification tools.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

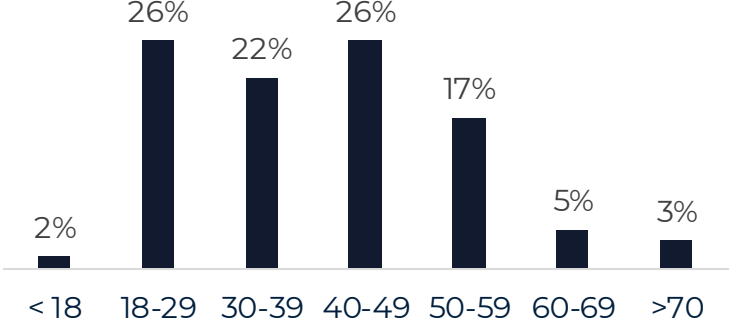
The randomisation of the survey sample yielded results that reflects national demographics.

Gender distribution

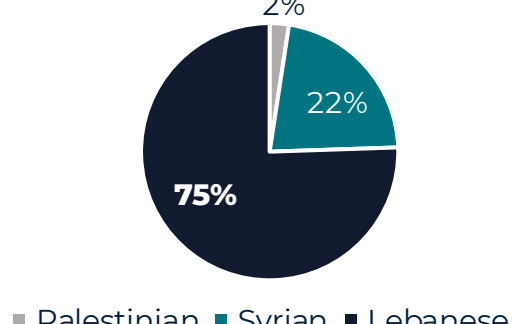


Over the course of one week, four enumerators were assigned to make calls to a sample of randomly generated phone numbers, including both mobile and landline numbers and fill out the survey that was conducted on a voluntary basis, including both Lebanese and non-Lebanese individuals. The final sample comprised 332 successfully filled surveys.

Age distribution

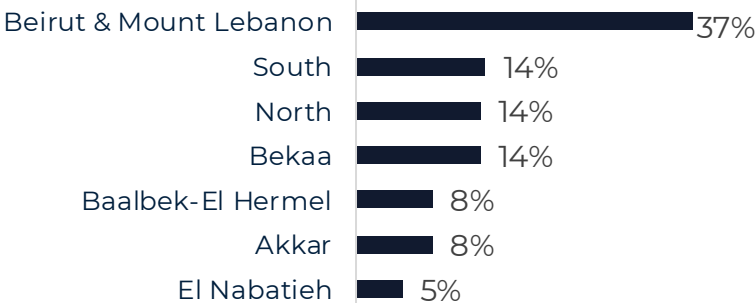


Nationality distribution



92% of respondents consume news media only in the Arabic language, of which 30% follow Al Jadeed TV, 29% Al Jazeera TV, and 18% MTV.

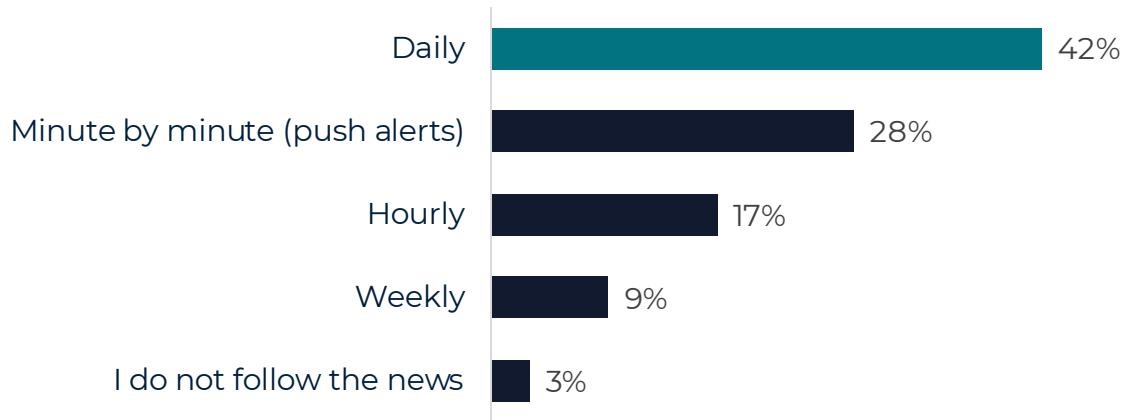
Governorate distribution



FOLLOWING THE NEWS

Just under half the respondents follow the news minute-by-minute or hourly. A further 42% are following daily. Television is the most popular medium, while YouTube and Lebanese news websites are the least popular.

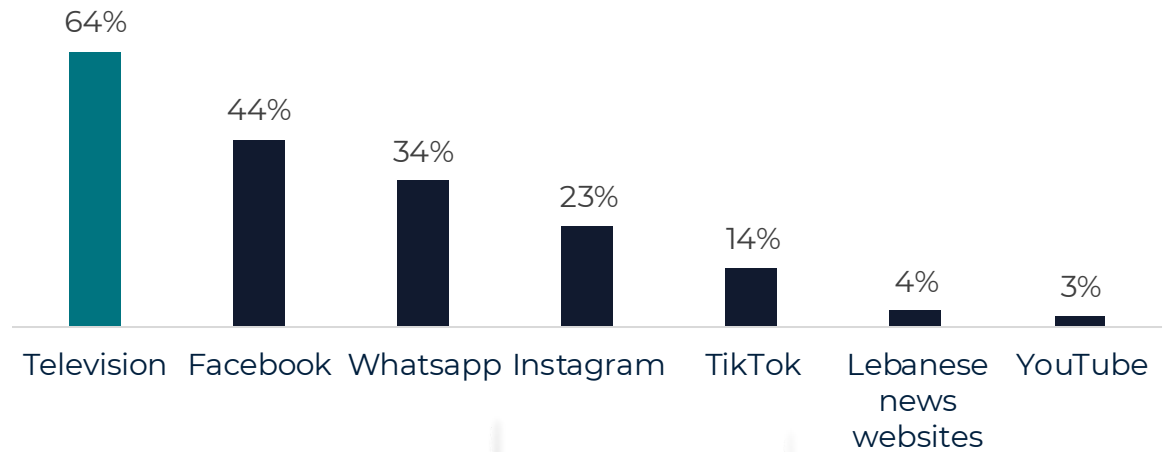
How often do you keep up with the news about events in Israel/Palestine since Oct. 7



Top three TV outlets that people use for news about the events in Israel/Palestine since Oct.7 in all languages



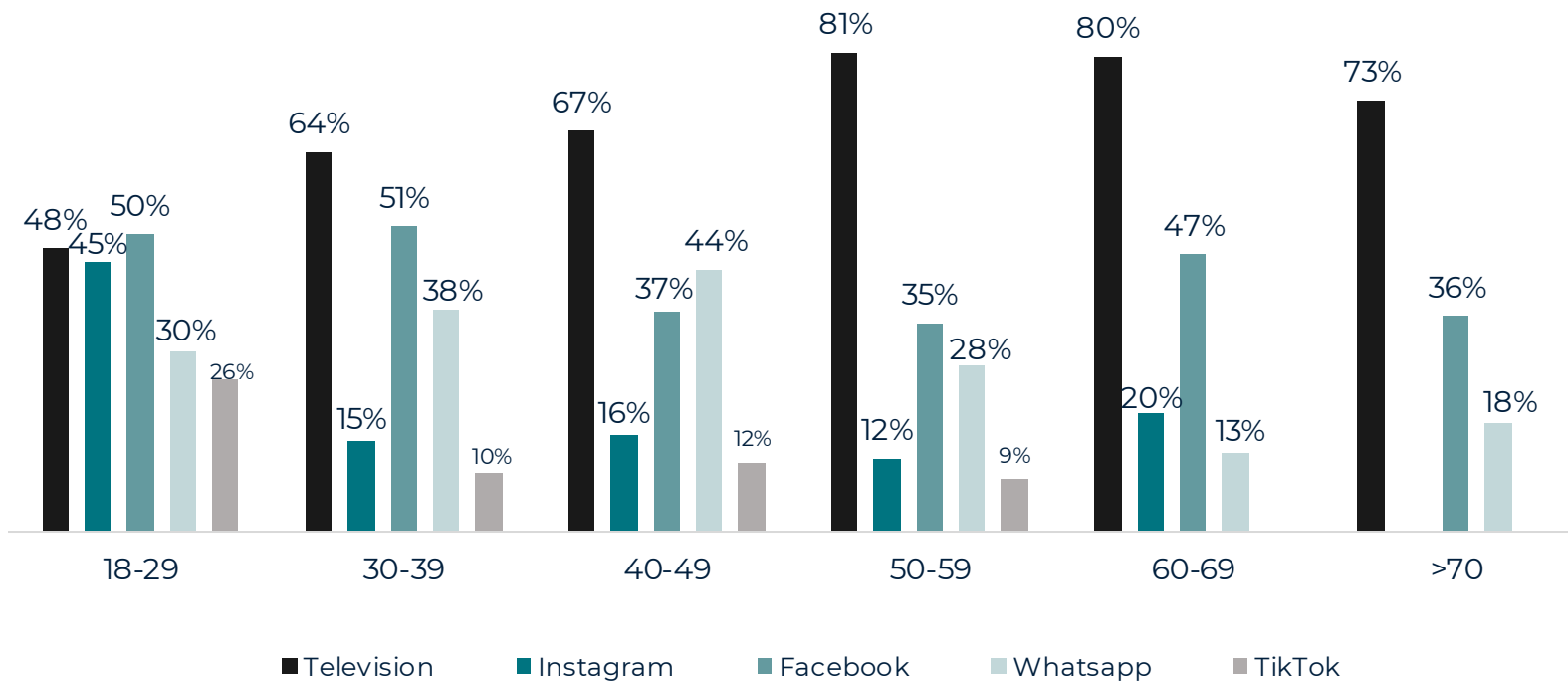
Where have you been getting your news about events in Israel/Palestine since Oct. 7 (multiple selection)?



FOLLOWING THE NEWS

Those aged 18-29 buck a trend by following news primarily on Facebook rather than on TV. Facebook is the most used social media platform for war coverage. WhatsApp is also significant for people aged 18 to 59.

Where have you been getting your news about events in Israel/Palestine since Oct. 7 (multiple selection)?



Television

On average 73% of respondents aged 30 to 70+ use television as their news source for coverage of the war.

Facebook

Most people aged 30-39 use Facebook (51%) to follow the war, while usage declines to 37% among those aged 40-49, remaining relatively stable thereafter.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp sees the highest usage (44%) among those aged 40-49, while respondents aged 60-69 show the lowest adoption rate at 13%.

Instagram

Among individuals aged 18 to 29, 45% rely on Instagram for their news coverage of the war. In all age groups thereafter, usage is below 21%.

FAMILIARITY WITH FACT-CHECKING

The vast majority of news consumers in Lebanon are not familiar with fact-checking tools or processes, and 95% do not know of any fact-checking organisations.

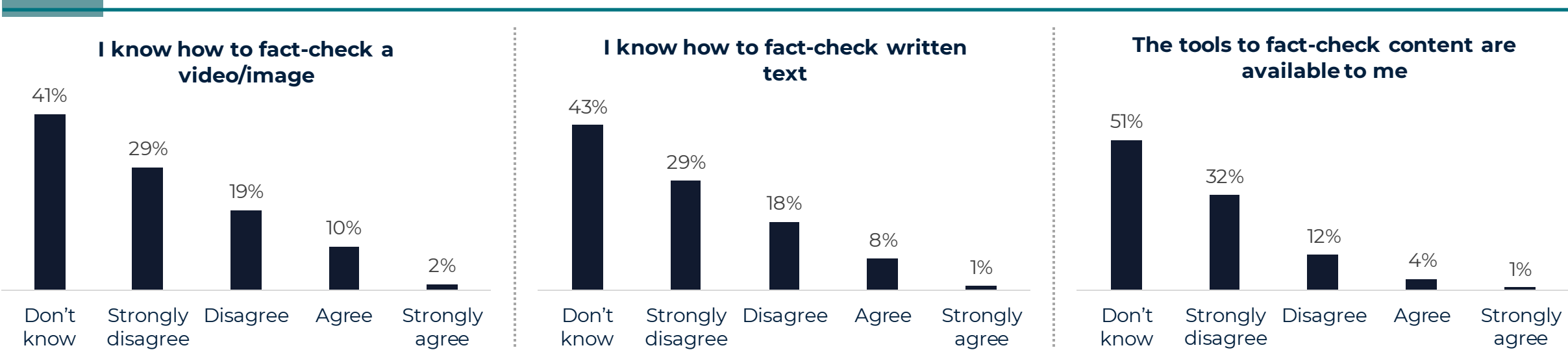
91% of respondents are not familiar with fact-checking processes and tools

95% are not aware of, or don't follow, the work of fact-checking groups

78% feel AI generated content has a mostly negative effect on the media landscape

72% of the one-third who had encountered AI-generated content said it was obviously fake

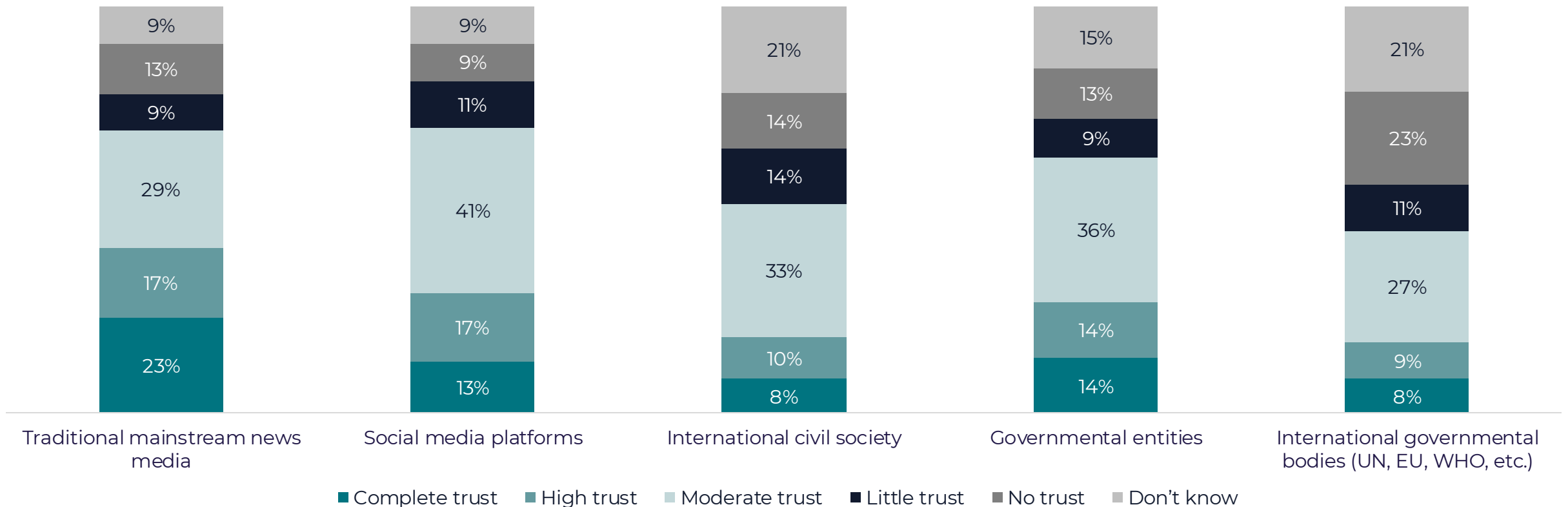
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



TRUST IN MEDIA

While fact-checking knowledge is low, trust in the media is relatively high. Seventy-one percent of news consumers have moderate, high or complete trust in social media as a source. That figure stands at 69% for traditional sources.

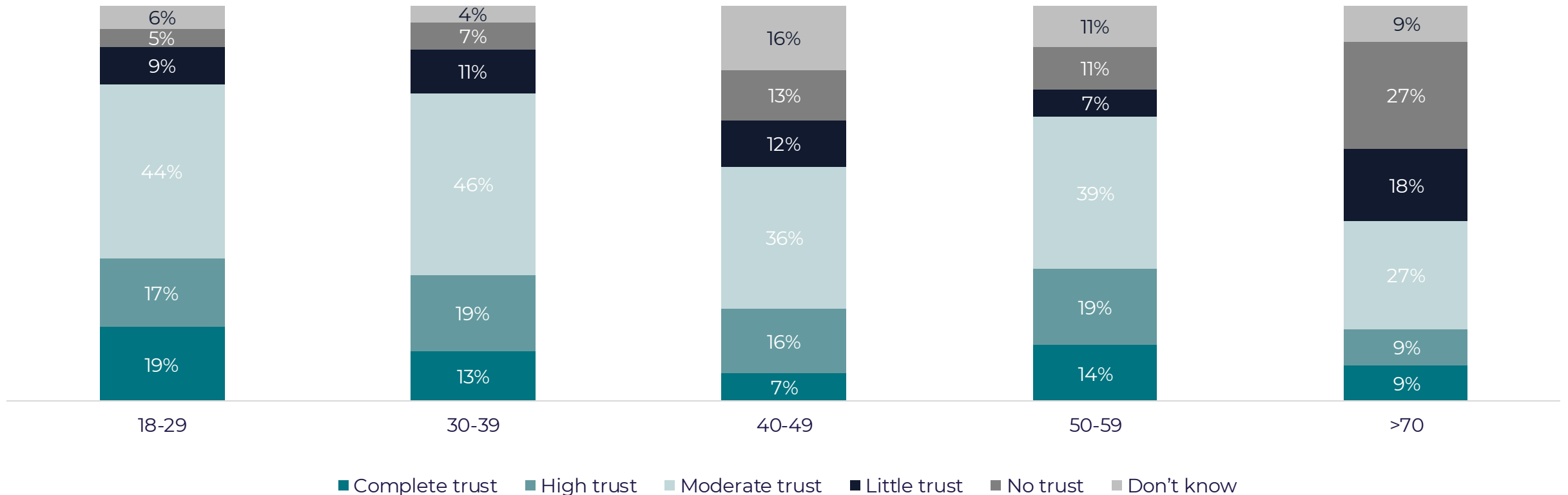
How much trust do you have in the following entities as news/information sources around events in Israel/Palestine since Oct. 7?



TRUST IN MEDIA BY AGE GROUP

Those over 70 and aged 40-49 have the lowest trust levels in social media as a news medium for Gaza coverage, while those aged 18-29 and 30-29 have the most positive outlook, with similarly high levels of trust in it.

How much trust do you have in social media as a news/information source about events in Israel/Palestine since Oct. 7 (age breakdown)?

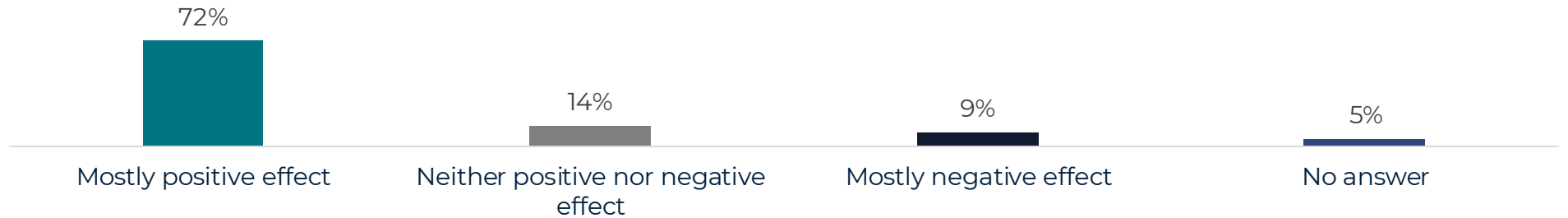


PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

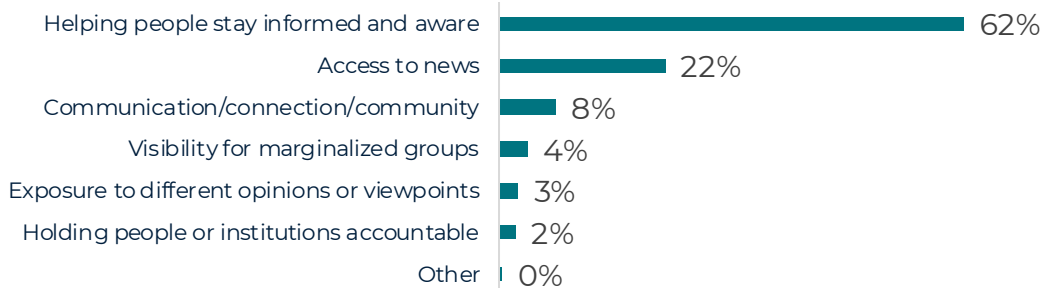
People in Lebanon have an overwhelmingly positive view of social media's role in the war, citing how it helps them stay informed and access news. Few are concerned about disinformation on social media platforms.



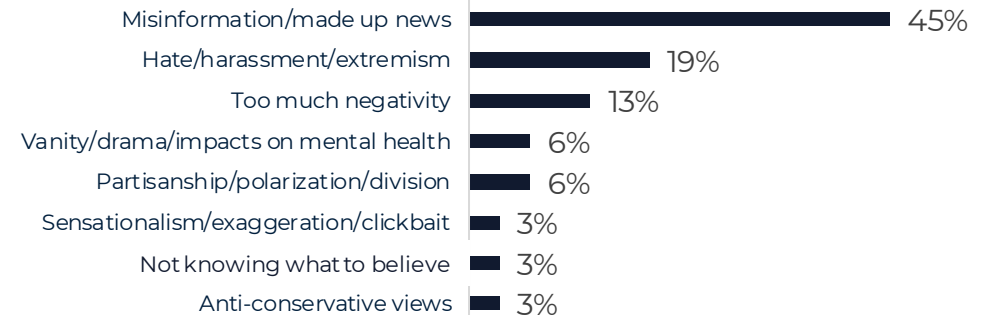
Overall, what effect would you say social media has on the chance of the conflict in Israel/Palestine being resolved?



If mostly positive, what is the main reason you think social media has a mostly positive effect on the chance of the conflict in Israel/Palestine being resolved?



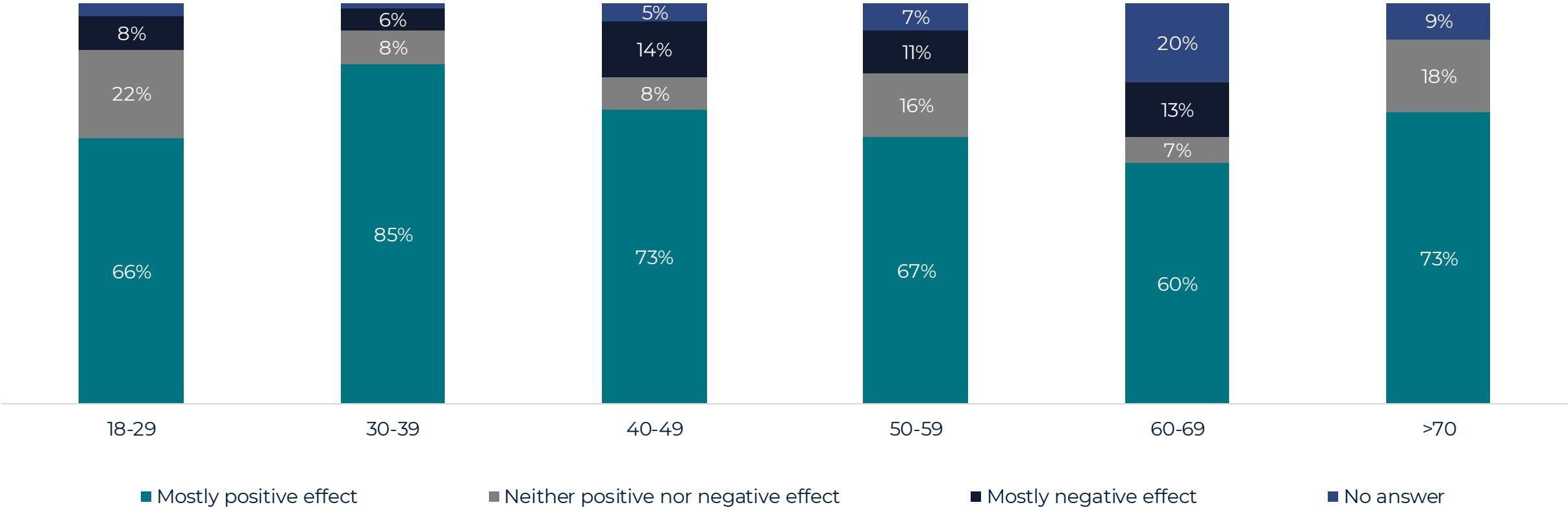
If mostly negative, what is the main reason you think social media has a mostly negative effect on the chance of the conflict in Israel/Palestine being resolved?



PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY AGE GROUP

People aged 30-39 have the most positive perceptions of social media. Those aged 40-49 register the highest levels of concern about its possible negative effects.

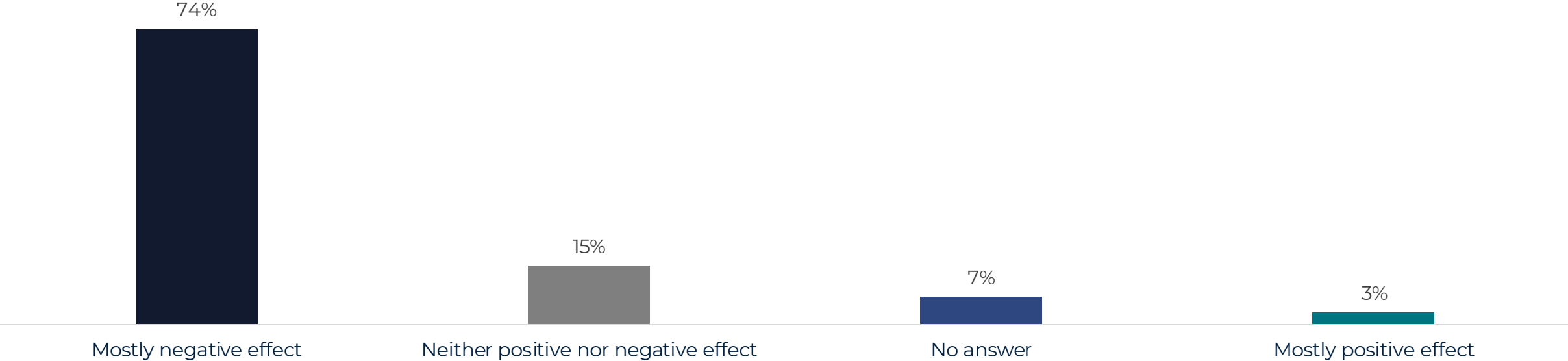
Overall, what effect would you say social media has on the chance of the conflict in Israel/Palestine being resolved (age breakdown)?



PERCEPTIONS OF DISINFORMATION

People overwhelmingly agree that disinformation has a mostly negative effect, even though few cited it as a concern when asked about the impact of social media, where misinformation circulates freely.

What effect do you think misleading information has on the chance of the conflict in Israel/Palestine being resolved?



➤ **74%** of respondents believe that the spread of misleading information mainly hinders the prospects of the conflict in Israel/Palestine being resolved.

FORMING OPINIONS AND VERIFYING CLAIMS

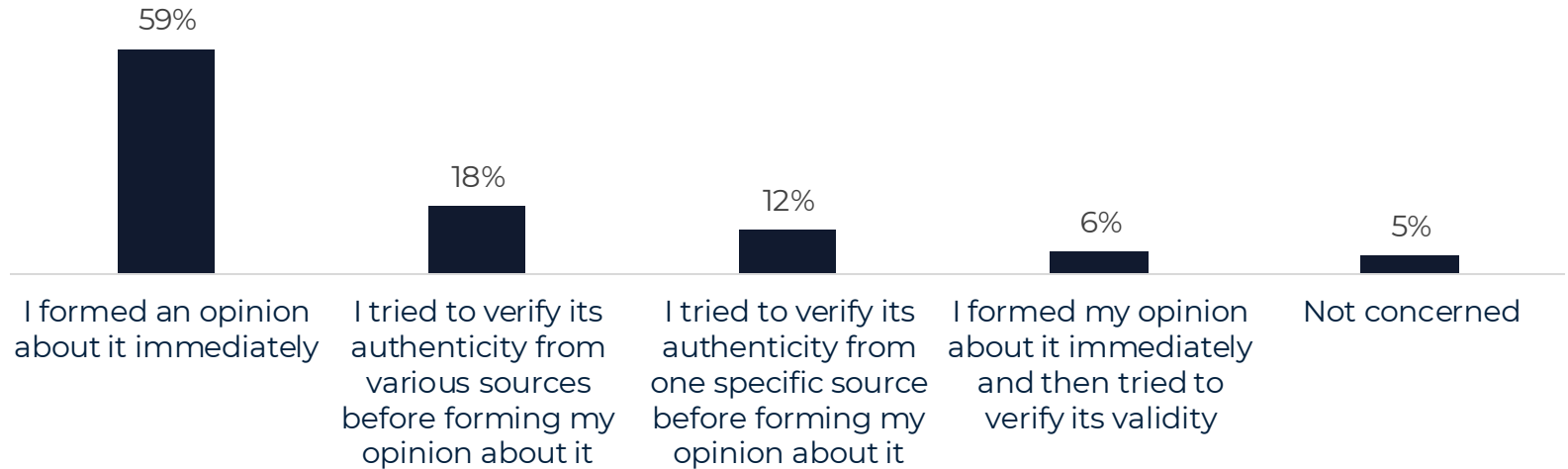
The vast majority of people form their opinions on news topics quickly, and relatively few take steps to verify claims made in news reports.

“500 Palestinians were killed in an Israeli raid that targeted the vicinity of the Al Ahli Hospital”

BREAKING NEWS

In today’s media landscape, speed and sensationalism are promoted over thoroughness and accuracy. The rise of AI-generated media and weak content moderation in the Arabic language have only added to the tsunami of untrustworthy content online. Vigilance among media consumers is key to a healthy media environment, along with a tendency to verify claims.

How did you react to this news when you heard it for the first time?



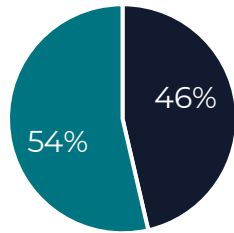
- **89%** of respondents asserted that they heard this news immediately following its publication.
- **59%** of respondents said they formed an opinion right after learning about this piece of news.
- **30%** of respondents attempted to verify the news before forming their opinion.



SIGNS OF CONFIRMATION BIAS

A small majority of respondents are aware of later narratives suggesting the Al Ahli Hospital was struck by a stray Palestinian missile. Of those, 78% say their confidence in the initial report is not affected by the existence of several competing narratives.

Did you know that there are other narratives claiming that the Al Ahli Hospital was a stray Palestinian missile?

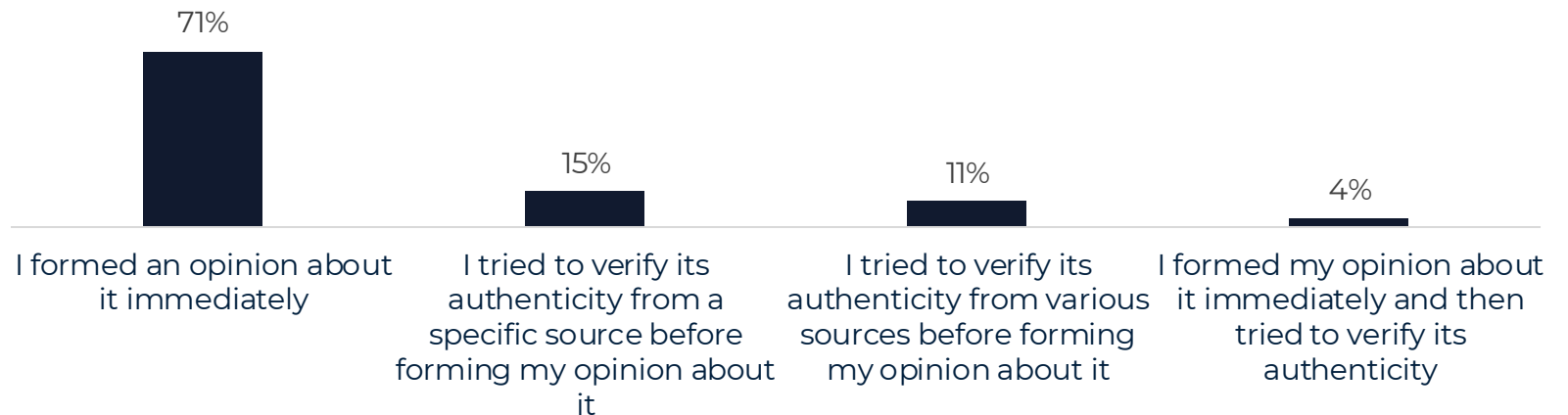


- No, I have not heard of these narratives
- Yes, I have heard of these narratives

Among those who said "Yes, I have heard these narratives"

- **78%** of respondents indicated that they had no conviction whatsoever in them
- **72%** said their confidence in the initial report was not affected by the existence of several competing narratives.

If you have heard of other narratives, how did you react to them when you first heard them?



- Most participants immediately formed an opinion upon hearing alternative narratives about the Al Ahli disaster.
- **26%** engaged in a verification process to confirm the accuracy of the news before forming an opinion.
- **4%** formed an opinion right away and then tried to check if the news was true or false.

CONCLUSIONS

The limited awareness of fact-checking organisations suggests that the work of these groups is not reaching the average news consumer following the war on Gaza.

Given the primacy of television and high levels of trust in it as a news source, partnerships between fact-checking groups and local broadcasters could help fact-checkers reach the majority of media consumers where they are. This could also enable greater experimentation with the format of news verification reports.

The tendency of media consumers to follow the news minute-by-minute or hourly means that fact-checking groups need to be assertive in getting their work to a hungry audience in close to real time.

This could involve experimenting with mobile apps to push content to audiences, or using web plugins to flag biased and possibly misleading content. However, both of these options require an already engaged audience along with considerable human and financial resources to develop such tech solutions.

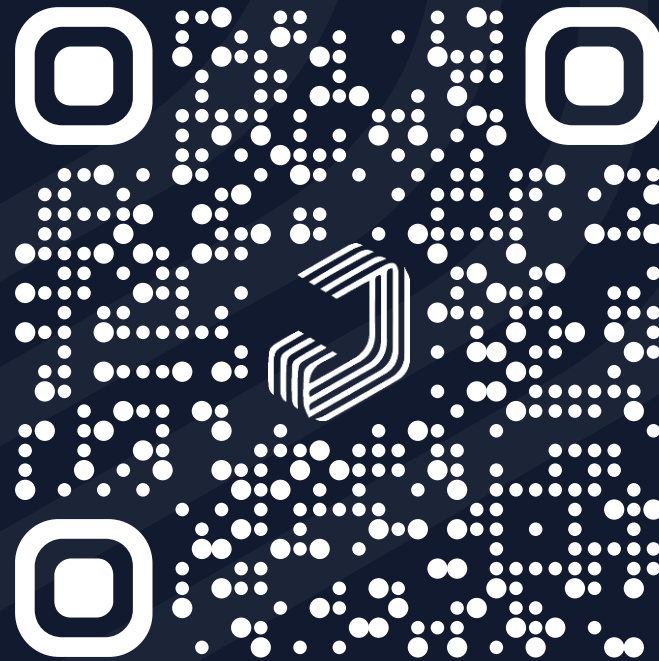
Other possible solutions could involve leveraging social media platforms and messaging apps more effectively. The survey showed Facebook to be the most used social media platform for news on the war across all age groups bar those aged 40-49. Fact-checking organisations would do well to focus their distribution efforts on Facebook if not doing so already.

Given fact-checking groups' limited resources, and the weaker performance of organic content on Facebook, donors could also consider allocating funding for these groups to promote their fact-checks and build a wider follower base.

WhatsApp is used considerably more than Instagram for Gaza war news coverage, highlighting its importance for fact-checking organisations. It is therefore important for fact-checking groups to have a presence on the messaging platform, especially as it allows for real-time user engagement and community sourcing of fact-check requests.

Community management on WhatsApp can, however, take up a considerable amount of time. Donors may wish to support these groups to develop AI chatbots that are capable of answering fact-checking requests on WhatsApp and linking users to verified news content.

The limited awareness of how to fact-check images, video and text indicates a need for wider media and information literacy training. The signs of confirmation bias reinforce this need. Given the threat posed by information disorder, it would be advisable for these skills to be included in school curricula. Fact-checking organisations could also be supported to deliver this training and to run campaigns in their areas of operation, potentially in cooperation with local newsrooms and public authorities. These trainings and campaigns should include information on what fact-checking tools are available, what they do, and how to use them.



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