



the gandalf group

FRIENDS of Canadian Media

A Survey of Canadians

Regulating Social Media Platforms

January 2024



Sample

n=1300 Canadian adults

Quotas/weight to reflect the gender, age, and regional distribution of adults in Canada

Includes an oversample of the population aged 18-34



Margin of Error

MOE for a probability-based sample would be

+/- 2.7%, 19 times out of 20

Differences between subgroups are noted arrows ↓↑ when statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level.



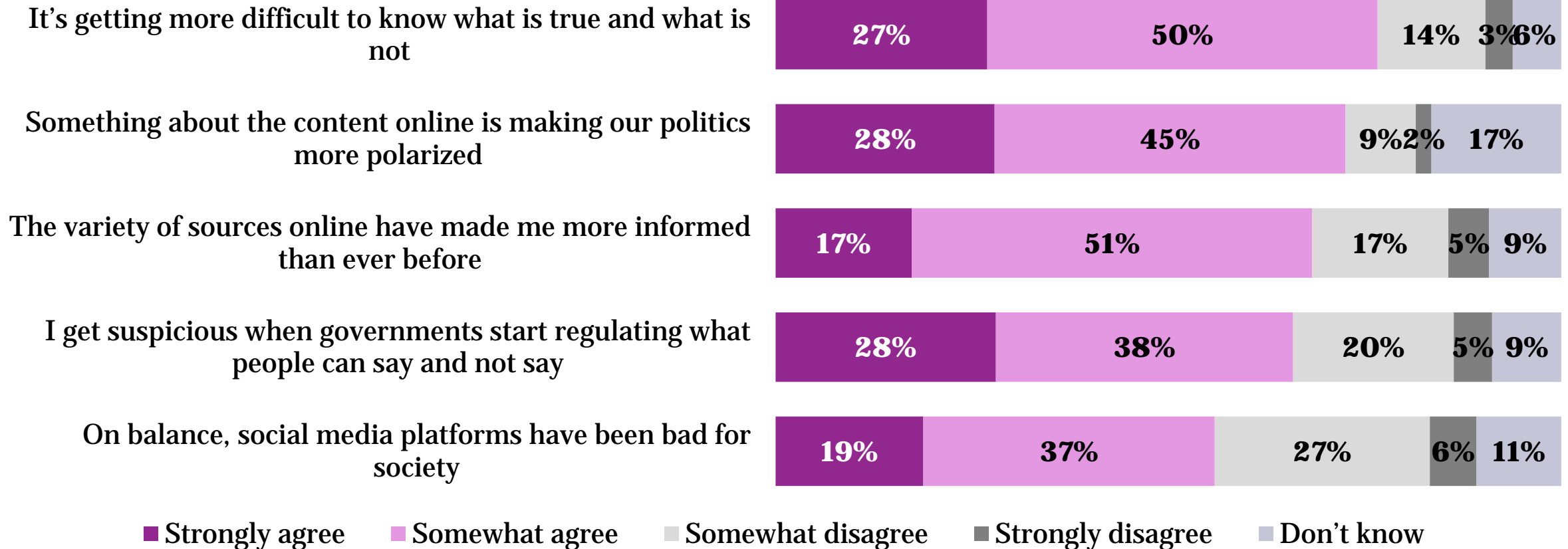
Online Study

November 10 – 16, 2023



Trust in News & Online Content

There's some ambivalence about online content. Many feel truth is difficult to ascertain yet are satisfied with their options. Fewer will agree that social media platforms have been bad for society. Overall, there is little strong agreement with these competing assessments of the online universe.



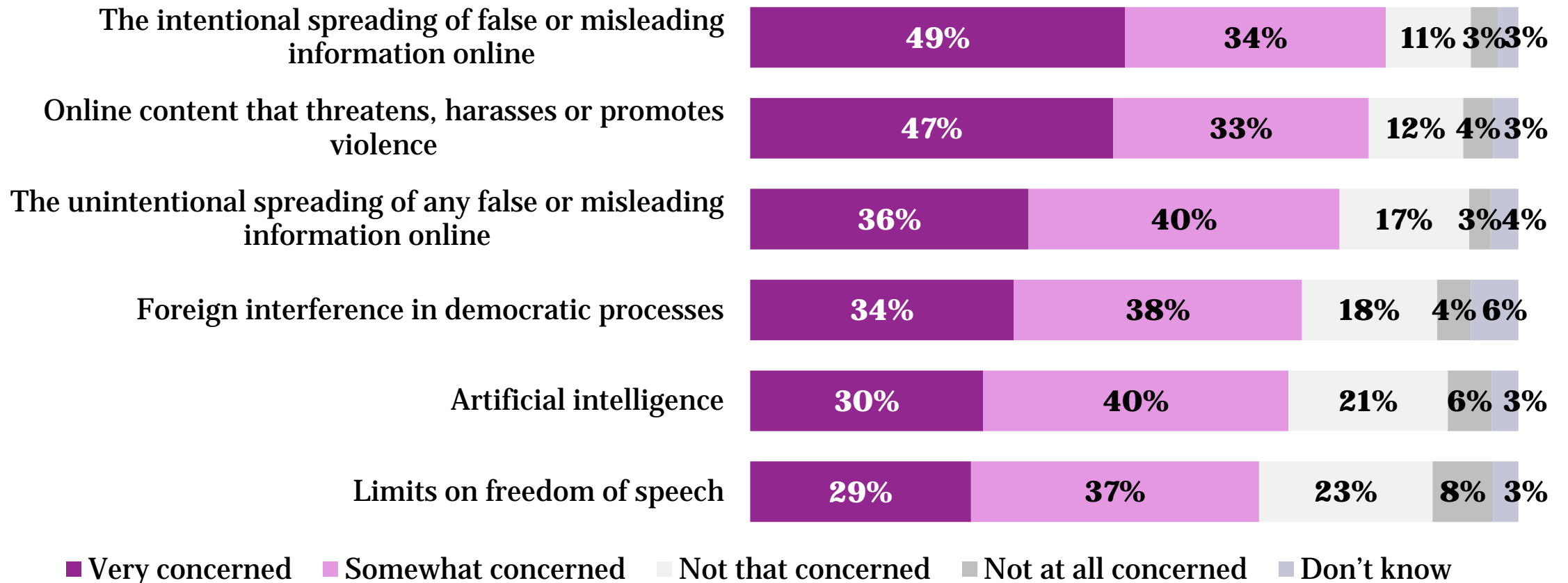
And how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

n= 1300



Concerns

Yet there's substantial concern about deliberate bad acting on the internet, intentional falsehoods or threatening/harassing content. Unintentional falsehoods are not quite as concerning. But all are more concerning than limits on freedom of speech.



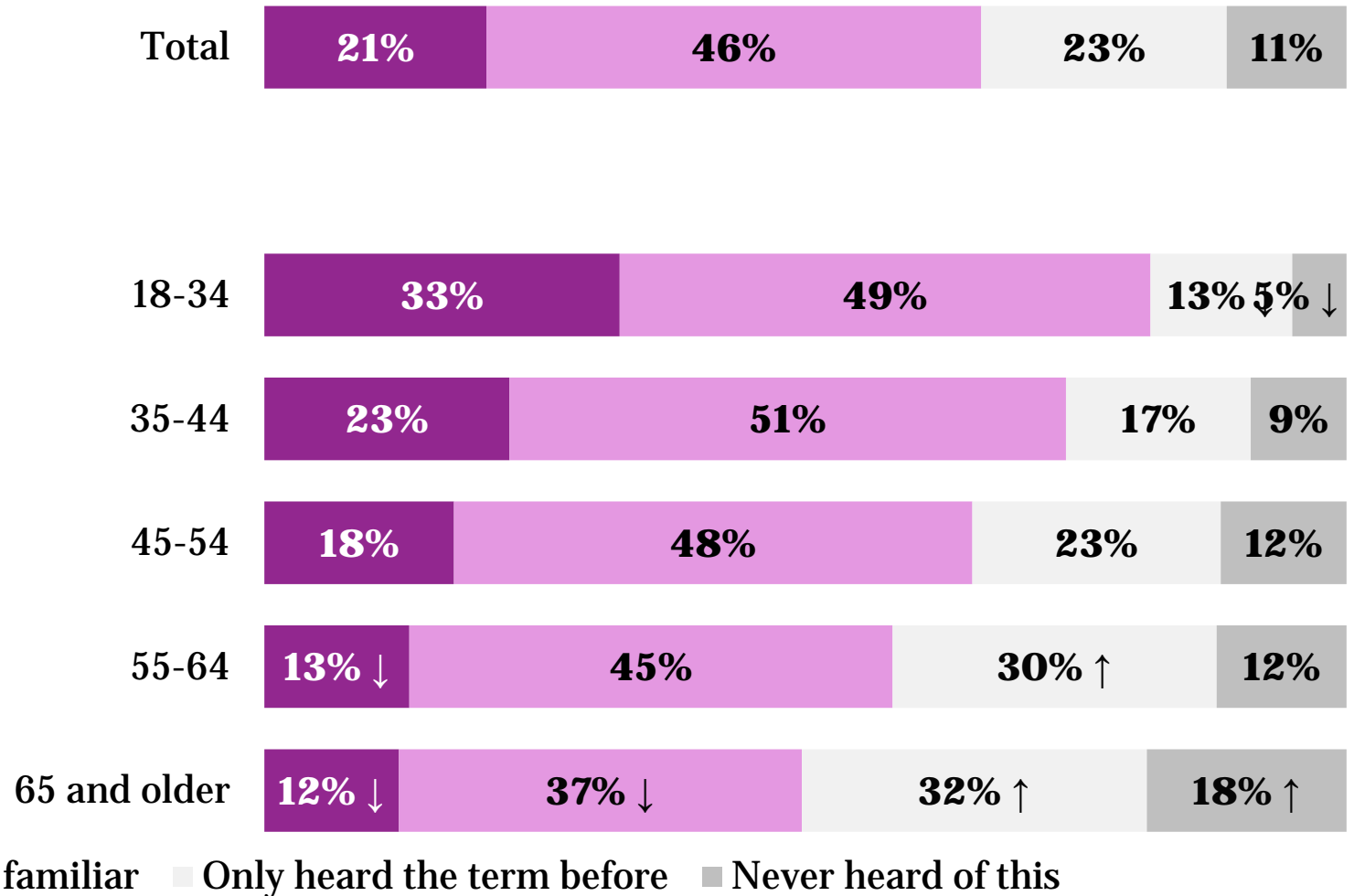
How concerned are you about the following issues in Canada?

n= 1300



Familiarity With Algorithm-based Content

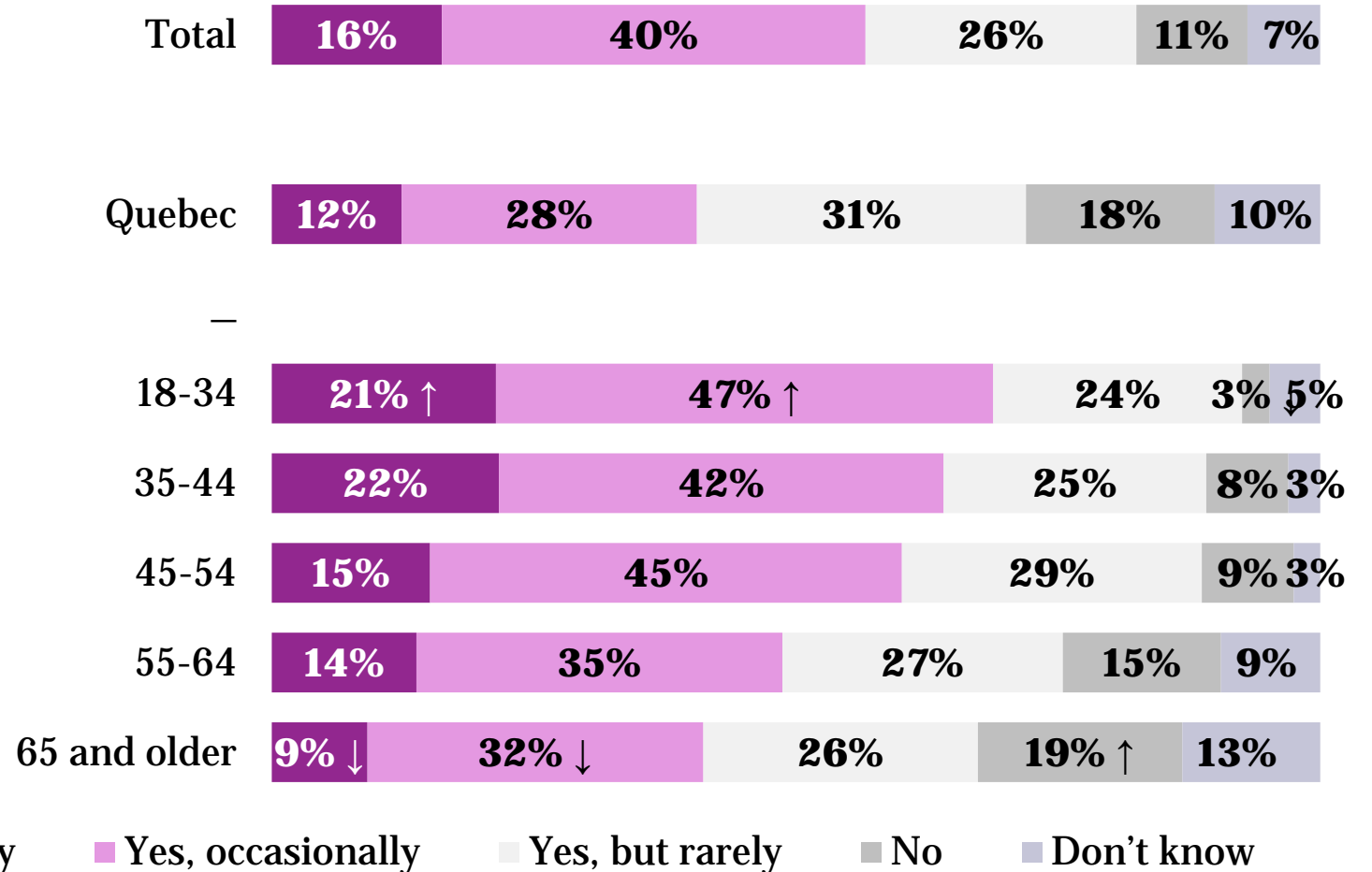
Awareness of the importance of algorithmic content drops significantly among Canadians aged 55+.





False Information

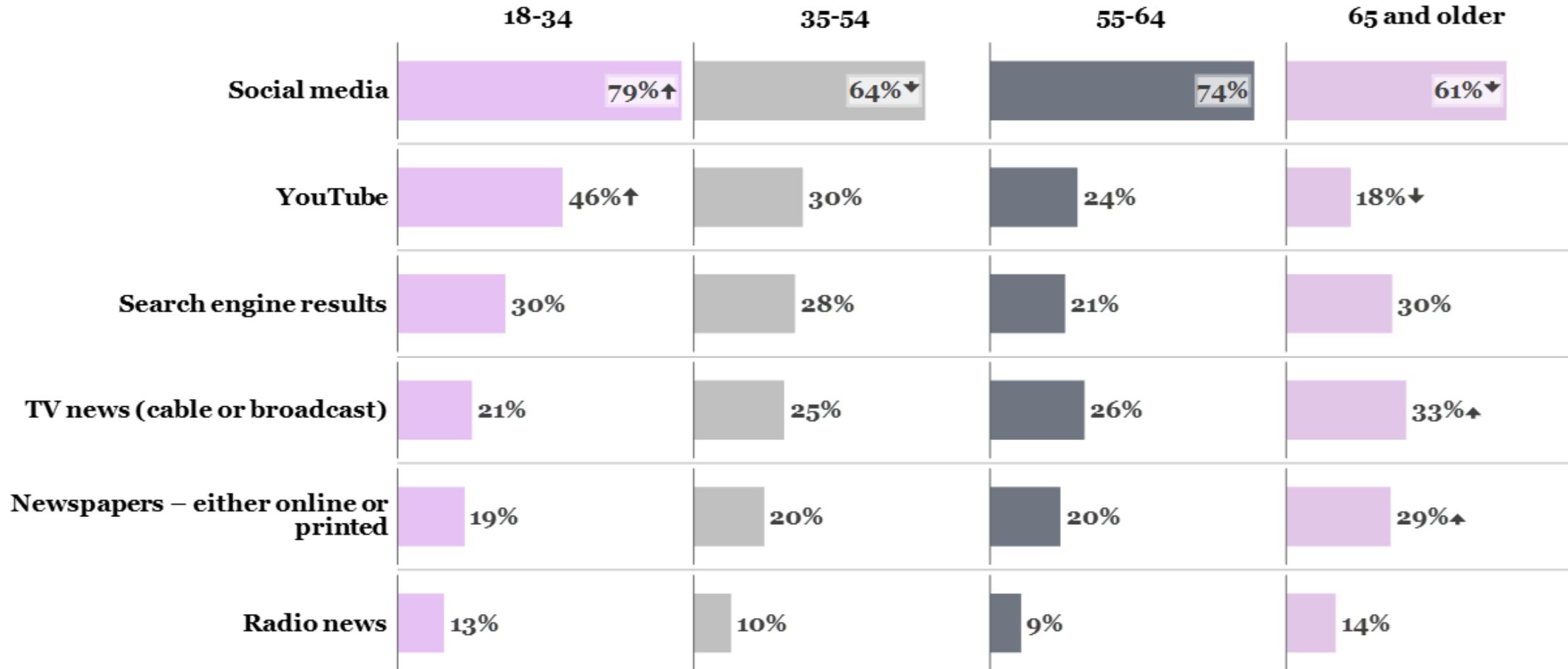
Half feel they encounter information they later learned was false, at least occasionally.
Fewer say this is frequent. Younger Canadians are far more likely to say they encounter this.



Have you ever encountered information online that you later came to realize was false or misleading?



Sources of False Information



[if yes to previous] Excluding sources that officially corrected errors or mistakes, where have you encountered information that you later came to realize was false or misleading? [Select all that apply]

Asked of those that have encountered misleading information n= 1086

% choosing each



Regulating Online Platforms

- Four ideas for regulating the internet enjoy broad support from Canadians
 - Platforms having to follow guidelines for true & safe content online
 - Legislation with significant financial penalties
 - Allowing users to turn off or alter algorithms
 - Forcing users to read content before sharing

- Most believe:
 - government can and should make a difference to ensure truth and safety
 - and think it can be done without undue infringement on freedom of speech



Regulating Online Platforms

Online platforms should have to follow guidelines or codes that promote trust and safety online



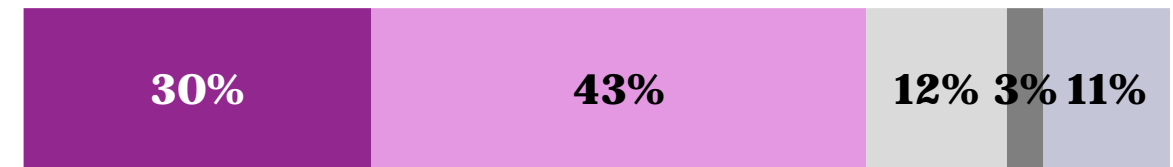
Online platforms should be required to give social media users the option to turn off or adjust settings & algorithms that determine what content will be delivered to them



Online platforms should be subject to legislation that promotes trust & safety online with serious financial penalties for platforms that fail to comply



Online platforms should require users to review content fully before being able to share it



■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

How much do you agree... with the following statements people might make about the regulation of online platforms?

n= 1300

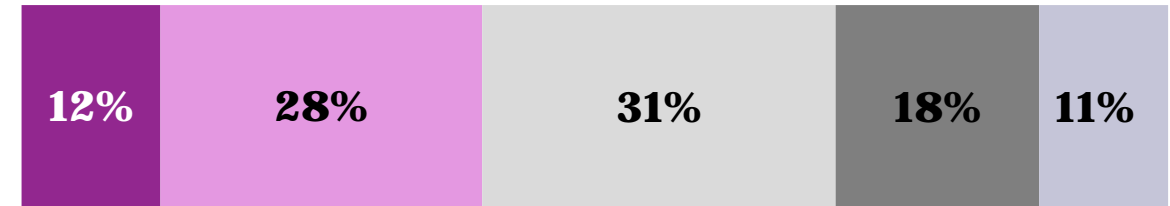


Regulating Online Platforms

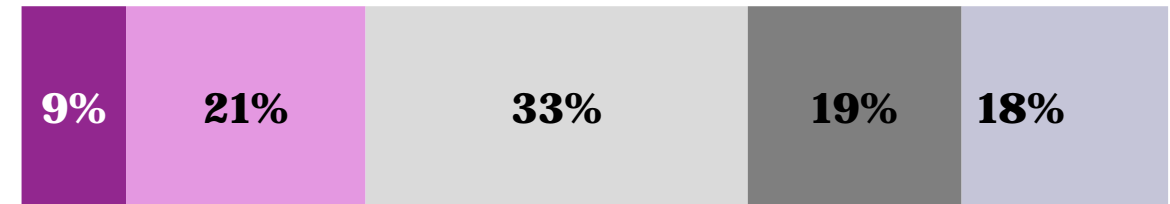
Government regulation cannot significantly reduce the amount of harmful or misleading content that is shared online



Any regulation of online platforms is an infringement on freedom of speech



We don't need more legislation in addition to existing Criminal Code laws



■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

How much do you agree... with the following statements people might make about the regulation of online platforms?

n= 1300

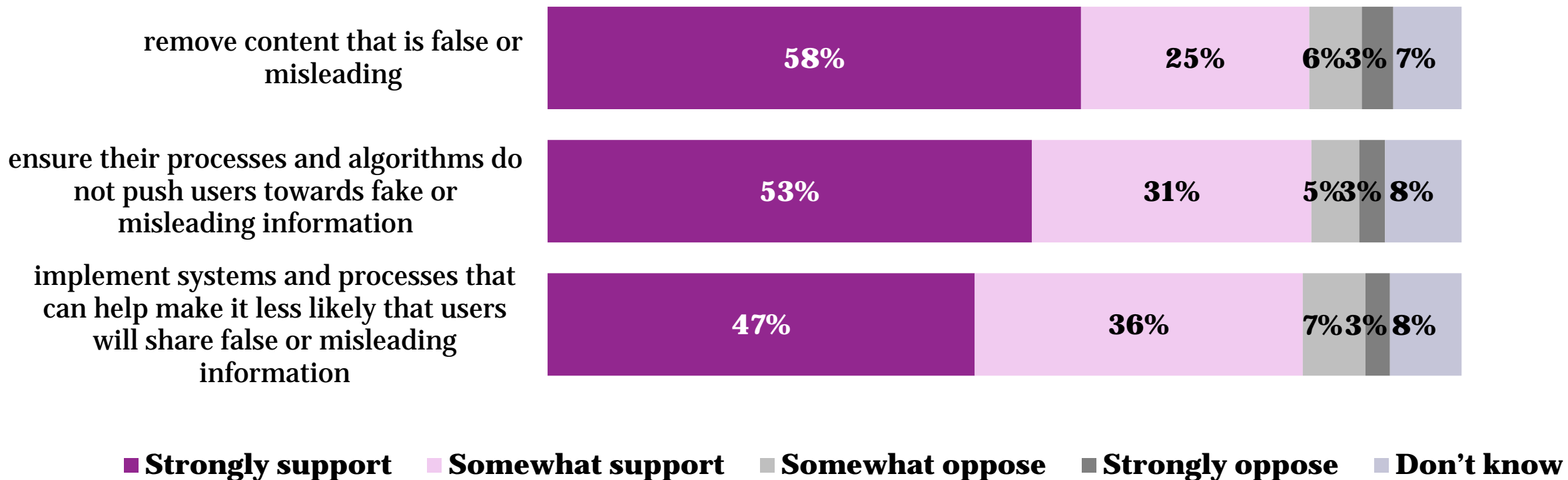


Regulating False Online Content

There is very strong support and almost no opposition to requiring platforms to stop promoting false information.

There is slightly more for requiring the removal of such content and slightly less for tools to reduce sharing of that content.

Regulation that would require online platforms to...

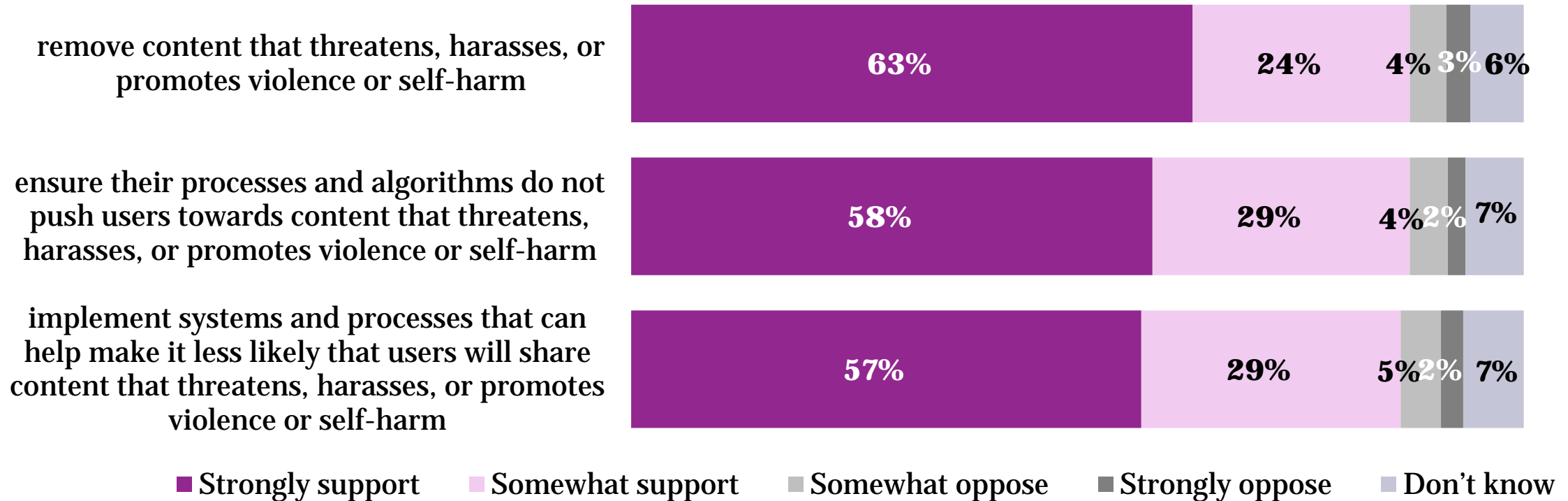




Regulating Content That Promotes Harm

There is somewhat stronger support when it comes to removing or reducing content that is violent or harmful.

Regulation that would require online platforms to...



How much do you support or oppose [SPLIT SAMPLE, a: requiring/b: regulation that would require] each of the following in Canada when it comes to online CONTENT THAT THREATENS, HARASSES, OR PROMOTES VIOLENCE OR SELF-HARM?

n= 1300



Clear Majority Support Across Partisan Groups

% of each voting group that supports each (strong/somewhat support combined)

Regulation to...	Certain/likely Liberal voters	Certain/likely CPC voters	Certain/likely NDP voters	Certain/likely Bloc voters
<i>Remove content that threatens/promotes harm</i>	92%	87%	93%	95%
<i>Remove false/misleading content</i>	91%	81%	90%	91%
<i>Ensure algorithms do not push content that threatens/promotes harm</i>	94%	87%	93%	92%
<i>Implement systems that make it less likely users share content that threatens/promotes harm</i>	92%	85%	92%	93%
<i>Ensure algorithms do not push misinformation</i>	91%	80%	91%	88%
<i>Implement systems that make it less likely users share misinformation</i>	92%	80%	91%	81%

How much do you support or oppose [SPLIT SAMPLE, a: requiring/b: regulation that would require] each of the following in Canada when it comes to online CONTENT THAT THREATENS, HARASSES, OR PROMOTES VIOLENCE OR SELF-HARM... [&] FALSE OR MISLEADING CONTENT ONLINE?



Clear Majority Support Across Age Groups

% of each age group that supports each (strong/somewhat support combined)

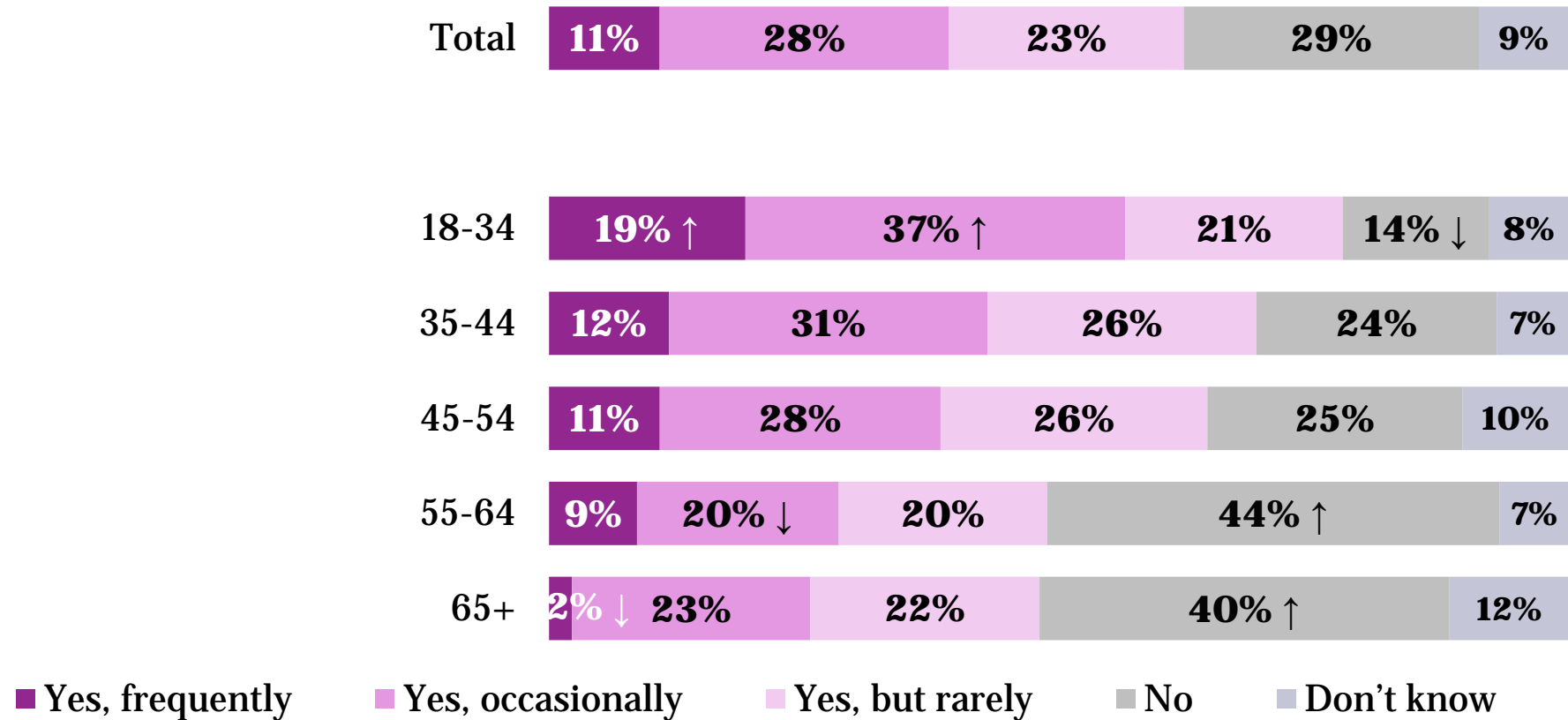
Regulation to...	18-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
<i>Remove content that threatens/promotes harm</i>	82%	86%	84%	90%	95%
<i>Remove false/misleading content</i>	77%	77%	82%	87%	93%
<i>Ensure algorithms do not push content that threatens/promotes harm</i>	84%	84%	83%	90%	94%
<i>Implement systems that make it less likely users share content that threatens/promotes harm</i>	82%	82%	85%	88%	93%
<i>Ensure algorithms do not push misinformation</i>	79%	80%	81%	86%	91%
<i>Implement systems that make it less likely users share misinformation</i>	78%	78%	81%	84%	91%

How much do you support or oppose [SPLIT SAMPLE, a: requiring/b: regulation that would require] each of the following in Canada when it comes to online CONTENT THAT THREATENS, HARASSES, OR PROMOTES VIOLENCE OR SELF-HARM... [&] FALSE OR MISLEADING CONTENT ONLINE?



Encountering Harmful Content

Most have encountered content they believe is harmful to themselves or others: 39% at least occasionally, 1 in 10 frequently.



Have you ever encountered content online that you considered harmful, either to yourself or others?

n= 1300



Nature of Harmful Content

Participants defined harmful content as either relating to false information or promoting hate or violence.

Inappropriate or biased or acts of fraud are also mentioned but less often.



[if yes to previous] What was it about the nature of the content that you encountered or typically encounter online that you consider harmful? Please describe what makes it that way.
[Open-ended]

Those that have encountered harmful content online n=826

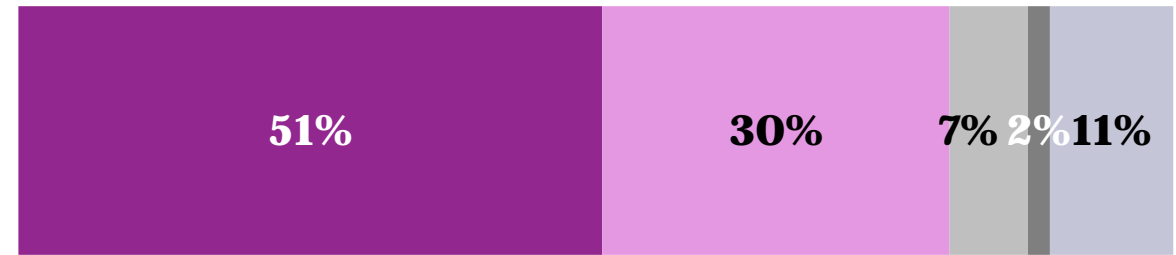
% mentioning each



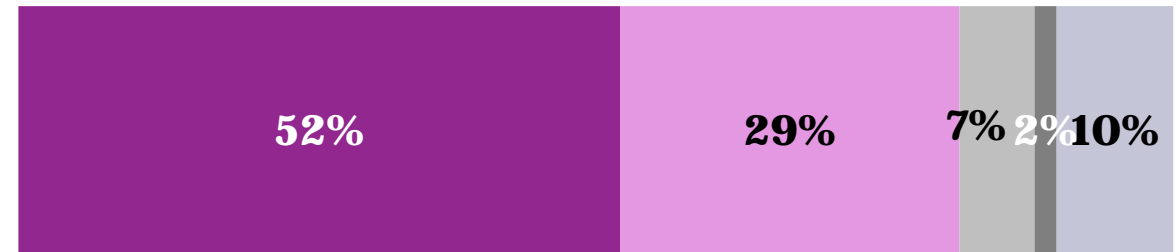
Responsible Digital Advertising

Concern about where advertisers are buying space appears equally high whether it's on sites that promote false or harmful content.

Companies that advertise online should not buy digital ads on websites or social media platforms that regularly deliver false or misleading information



Companies that advertise online should not buy digital ads on websites or social media platforms that regularly deliver content that threatens, harasses, or promotes violence or self-harm



■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know



- Everybody in Canada is online a lot.
- Younger Canadians are online more & in different ways.
 - They are more exposed to and somewhat more tolerant of misinformation.
- There are some pockets of concern about free speech limitations.
- Yet most think the online world should be less *Wild West* & regulated more to reduce harm.



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