

III Africa-Spain Journalists Meeting

How do African audiences engage with disinformation and what do they know about fact-checking?

Dani Madrid-Morales | @DMadrid_M | dmmorales2@uh.edu

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Outline

1. Africans' **views** on disinformation
2. Kenyans' **views** on disinformation and fact-checking
3. African audiences' **engagement** with disinformation
 1. Motivations to share
 2. Knowledge about fact-checking
4. Evidence-based **strategies** to address disinformation
5. Recipe for “**success**”

Data Sources (I)

- The tables, figures and charts in this presentation come from **six studies** I worked on:
 1. A [study on misinformation](#) in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa conducted in 2019 with 755 respondents (referenced in the slides as **Study 1**), with Prof Herman Wasserman from the University of Cape Town.
 2. An experiment on how to correct health misinformation in Kenya and Senegal conducted in 2021 with 300+ participants (**Study 2**), with Dr Melissa Tully from the University of Iowa and co-funded by the [Waterhouse Family Institute](#) for the Study of Communication and Society.
 3. An (ongoing) survey on disinformation in South Africa and Ethiopia conducted in 2021 with over 4,000 participants (**Study 3**), with Prof Herman Wasserman from UCT.


Data Sources (II)

- The tables, figures and charts in this presentation come from **six studies** I worked on:
 4. A [survey on China-related COVID-19 hoaxes](#) conducted in 2020 in Kenya, South Africa and the US with 2,700 participants (**Study 4**), with Profs. Herman Wasserman at UCT and Temple Northup at San Diego State University.
 5. A [series of focus groups](#) in 2019 and 2020 in six African countries, including Kenya, involving over 200 participants (**Study 5**), with a network of researchers from Africa and North America.
 6. An [experiment](#) in 2021 involving 1,600 Facebook users in South Africa to test different strategies to reduce COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, with Prof Herman Wasserman at UCT (**Study 6**).

Data Sources (III)

- This presentation also refers to findings and data from other sources publicly available online:
 1. The [2021 Digital News Report](#) by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, which includes data from Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria (referenced in the slides as **DNR**)
 2. Round 8 of the [Afrobarometer](#), a pan-Africa social and political values survey in more than 30 countries, which includes a battery of question around disinformation (referenced in the slides as **Afrobarometer**).
 3. A series of surveys conducted between 2016 and 2021 by the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC (US) on misinformation and social media use, [including a study](#) with respondents from Kenya (referenced in the slides as **Pew**)

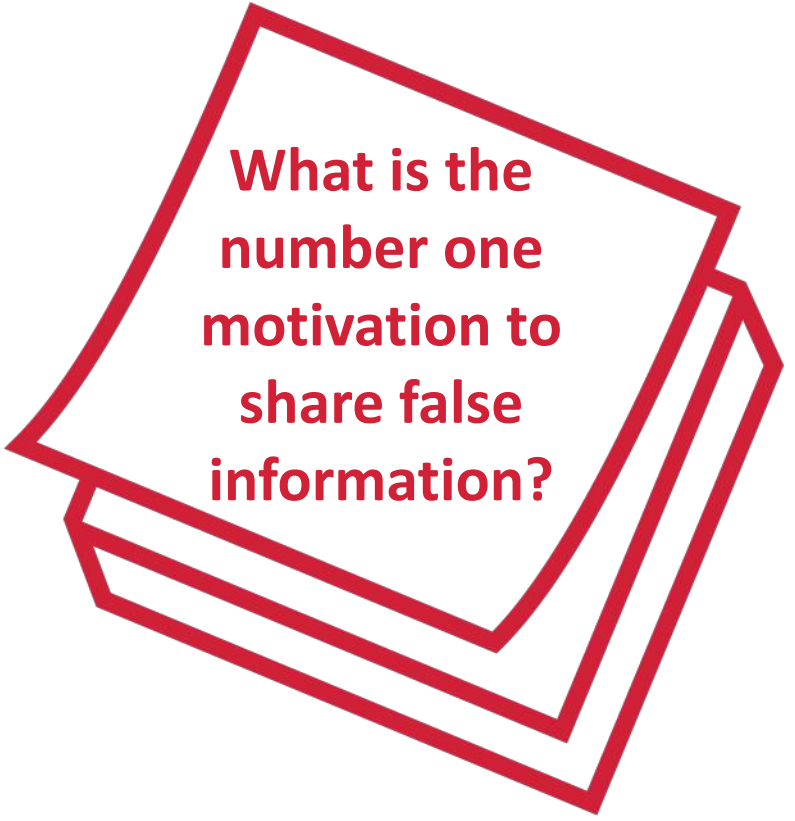




**What is the
biggest source of
disinformation in
the country?**



**What % of
Kenyans say they
have knowingly
shared false
news?**

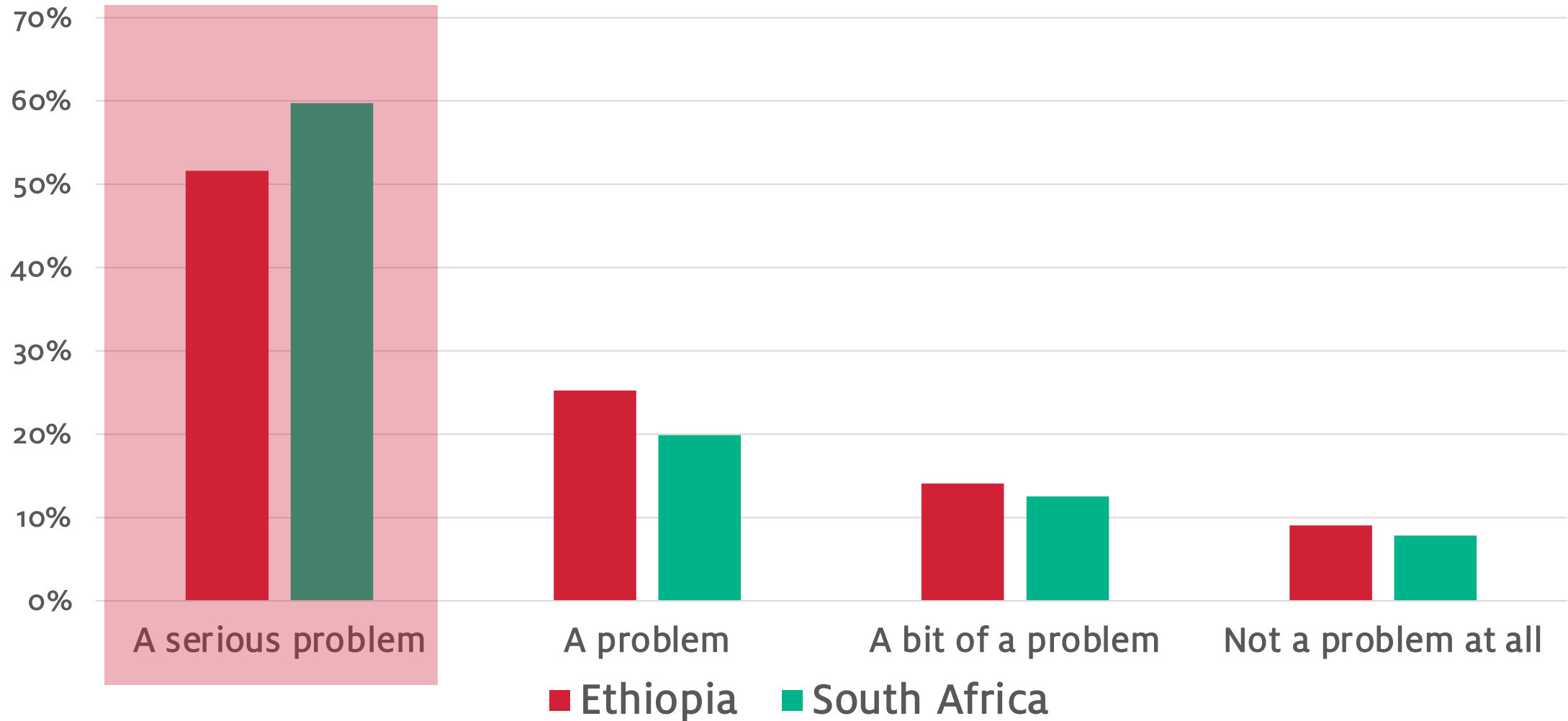


**What is the
number one
motivation to
share false
information?**



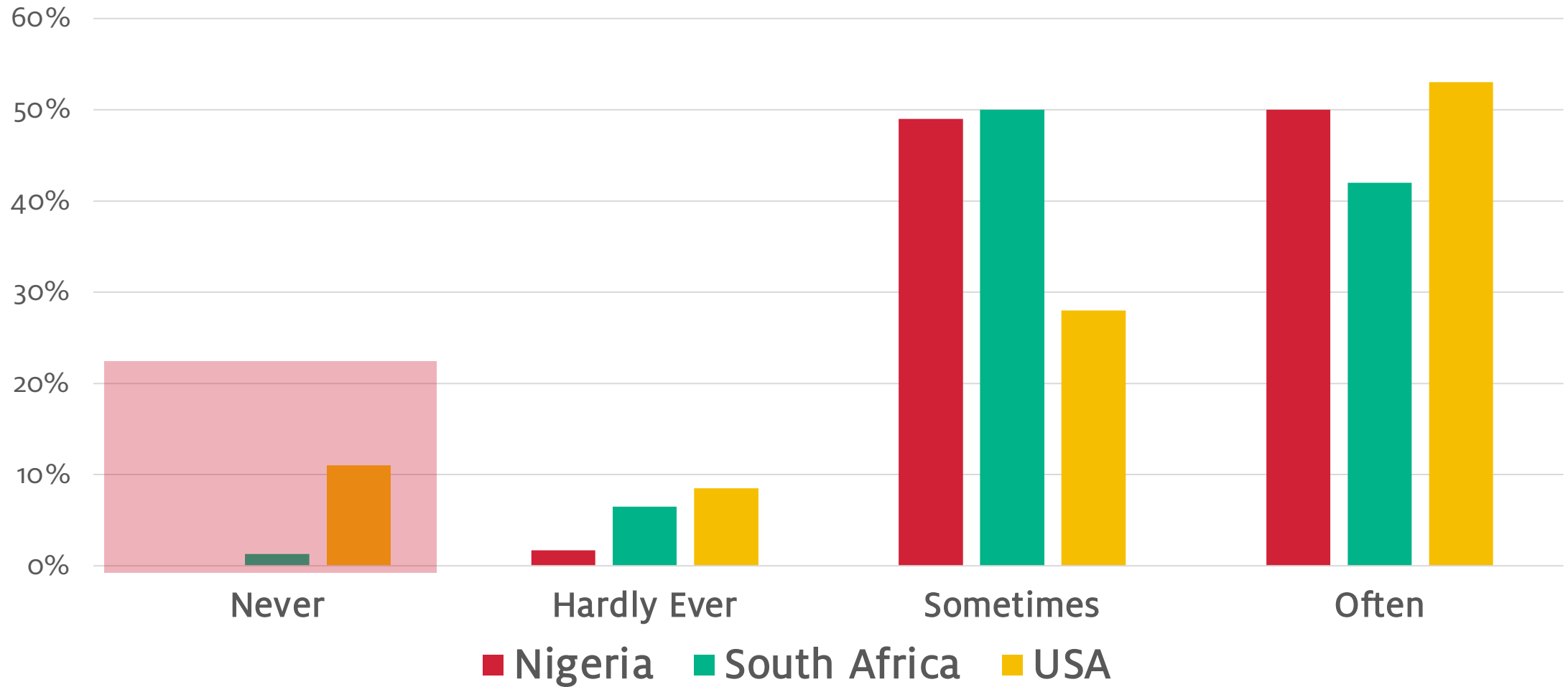
Africans' views on disinformation

How much of a **problem** is disinformation in your country?



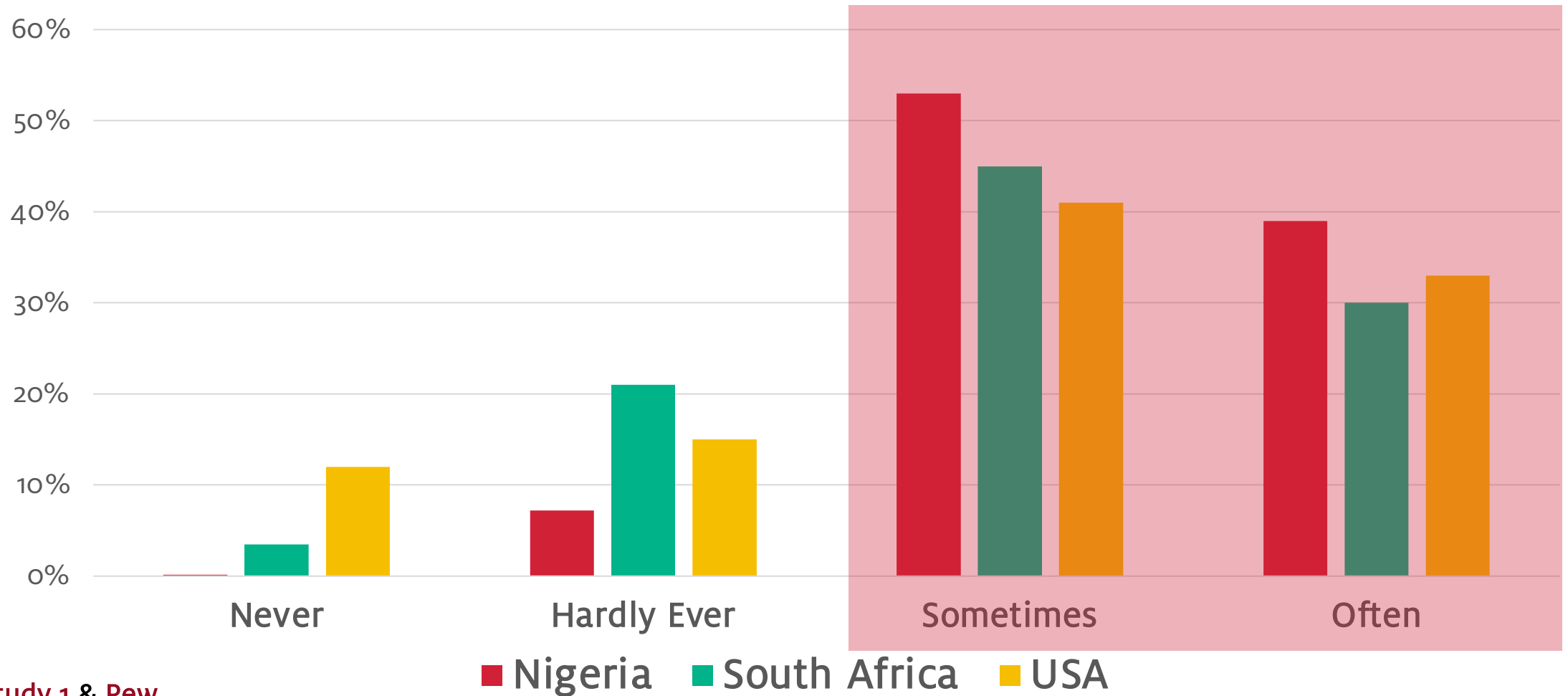
Source: Study 3

How often do you see political news online that is **not accurate**?



Source: **Study 1 & Pew**

How often do you see political news online that is **made up**?



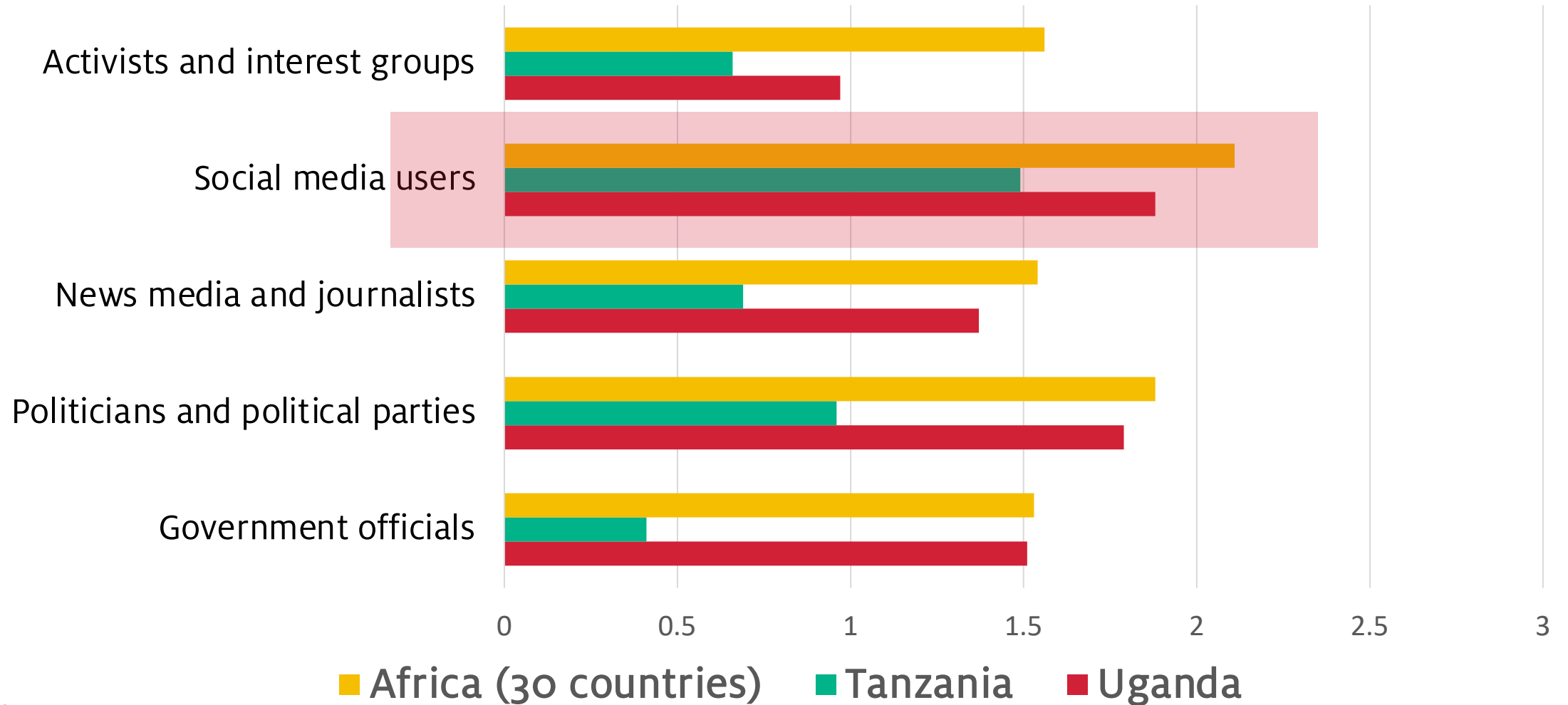
Source: Study 1 & Pew



**What is the
biggest source of
disinformation in
the country?**

[illegible]

How often do (...) spread **false information**?



Source: Afrobarometer

How concerned are you about false information **about COVID-19** on (...)?



28%
Facebook



More in ...
Philippines,
Slovakia



15%
**Messenger
apps**



More in ...
Brazil,
South Africa,
Colombia



7%
**Search
e.g. Google**



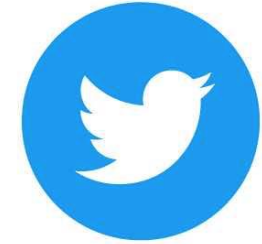
More in ...
Taiwan,
Kenya



6%
YouTube



More in ...
South Korea,
India



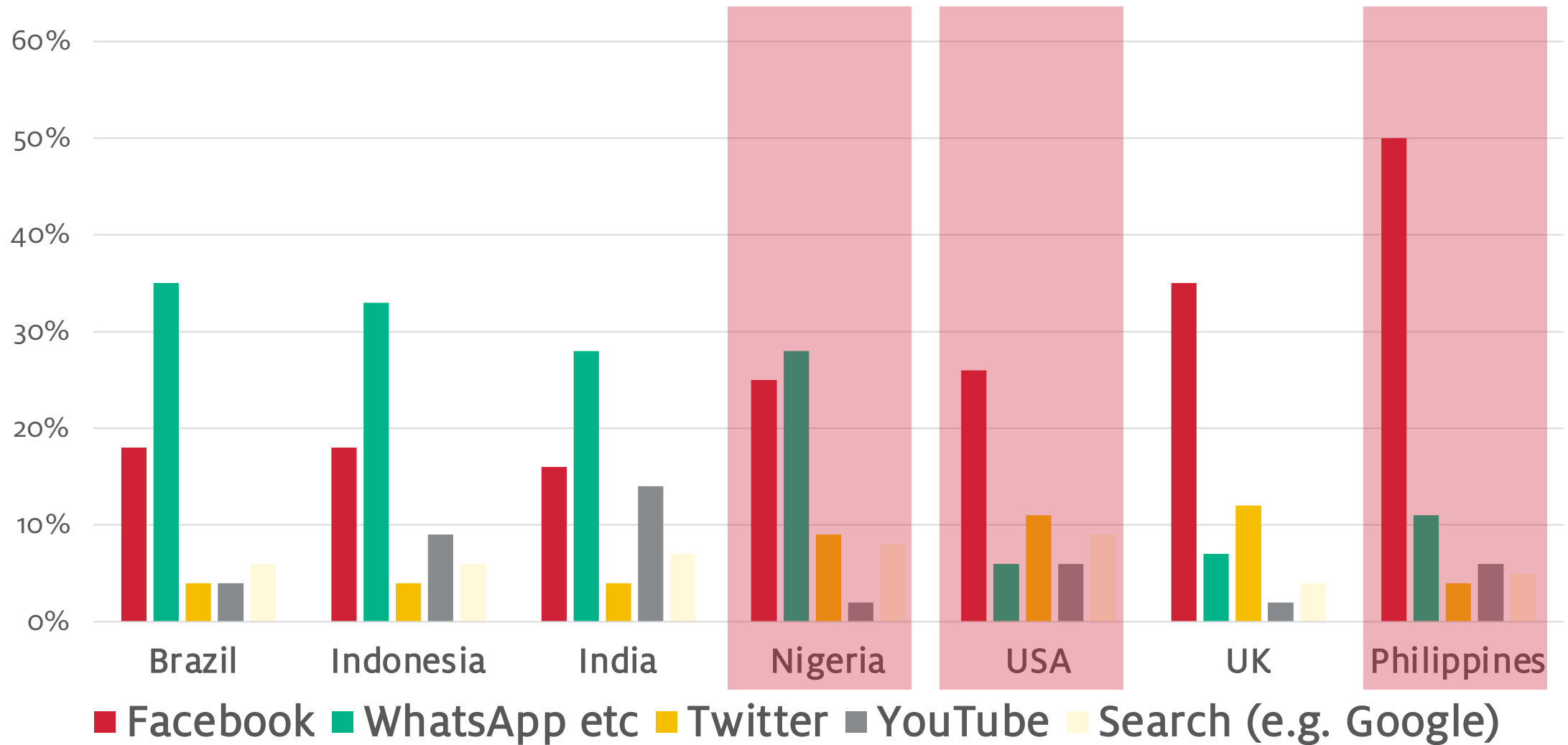
6%
Twitter



More in ...
USA, UK

Source: **Study 1**

How concerned are you about false information **about COVID-19** on (...)?



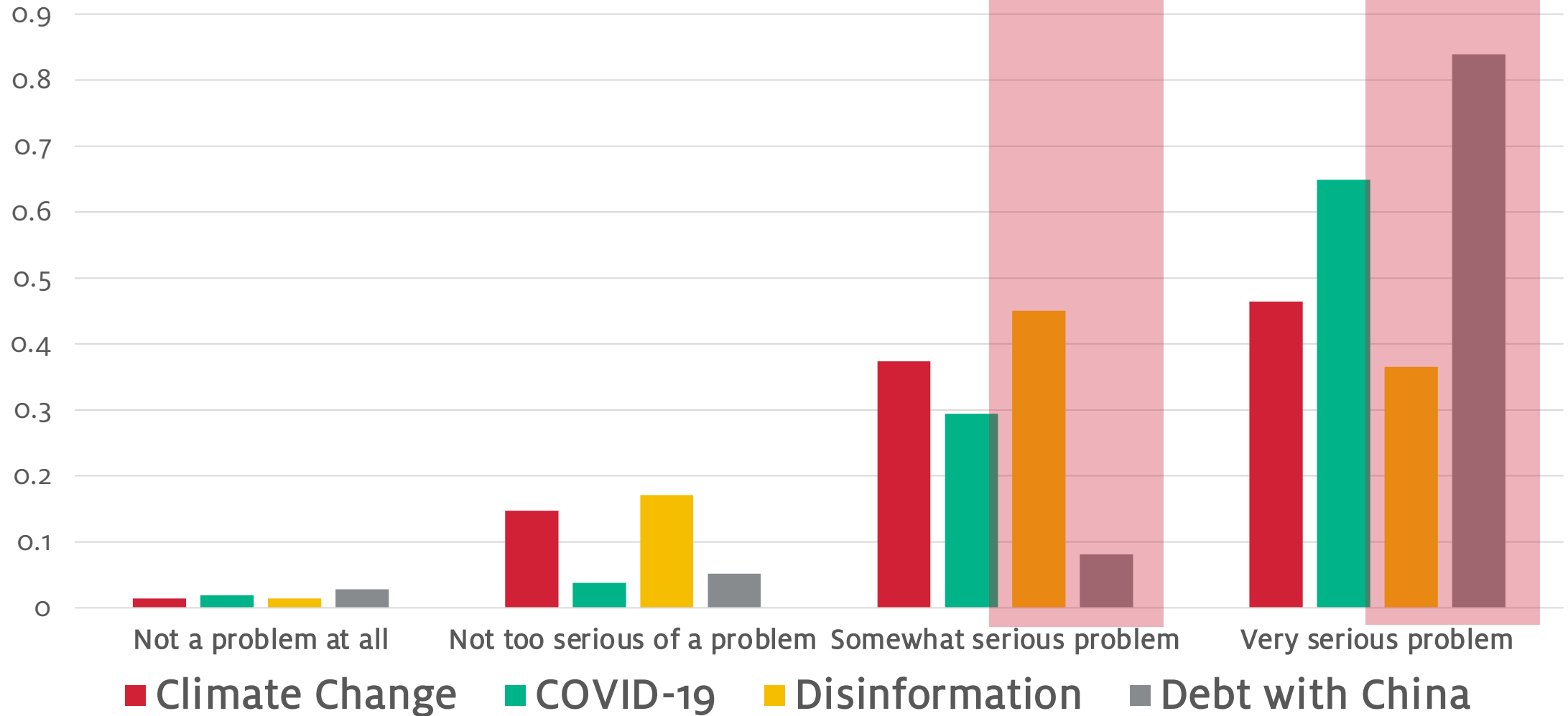
Source: DNR

context



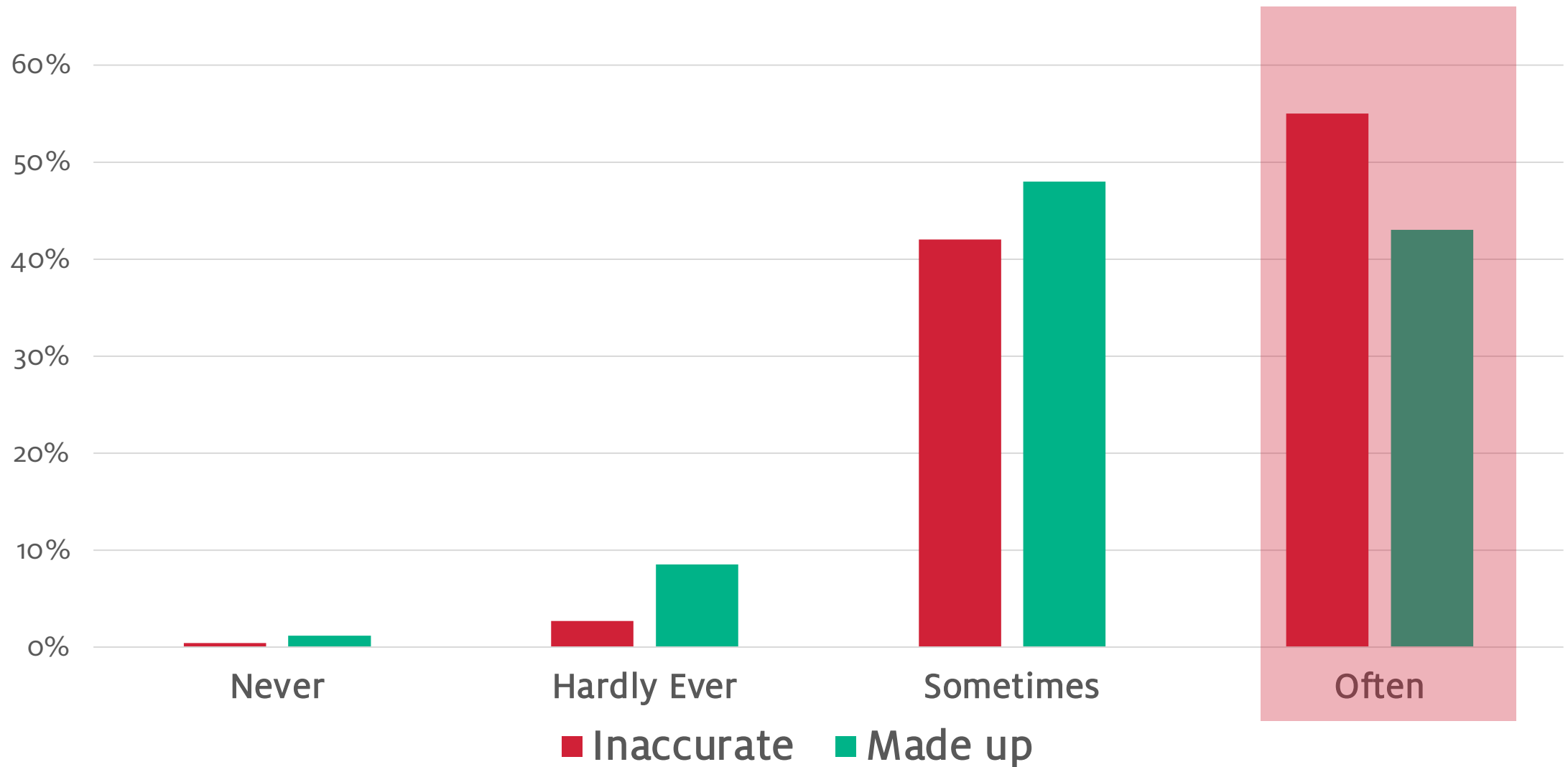
Kenyans' views on disinformation and fact-checking

How much of a **problem** is (...) in Kenya?



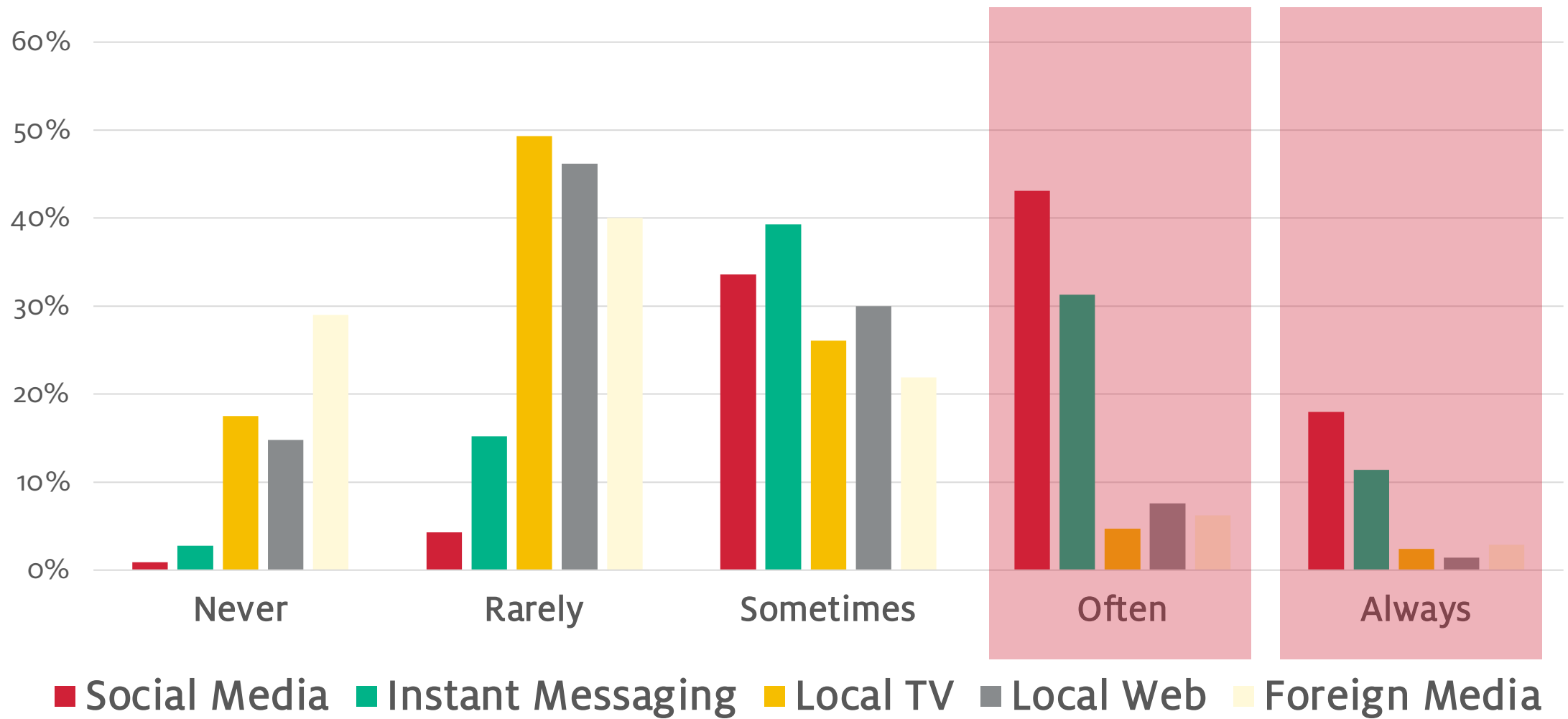
Source: **Study 2**

How often do you see **political news online** that is (...)?



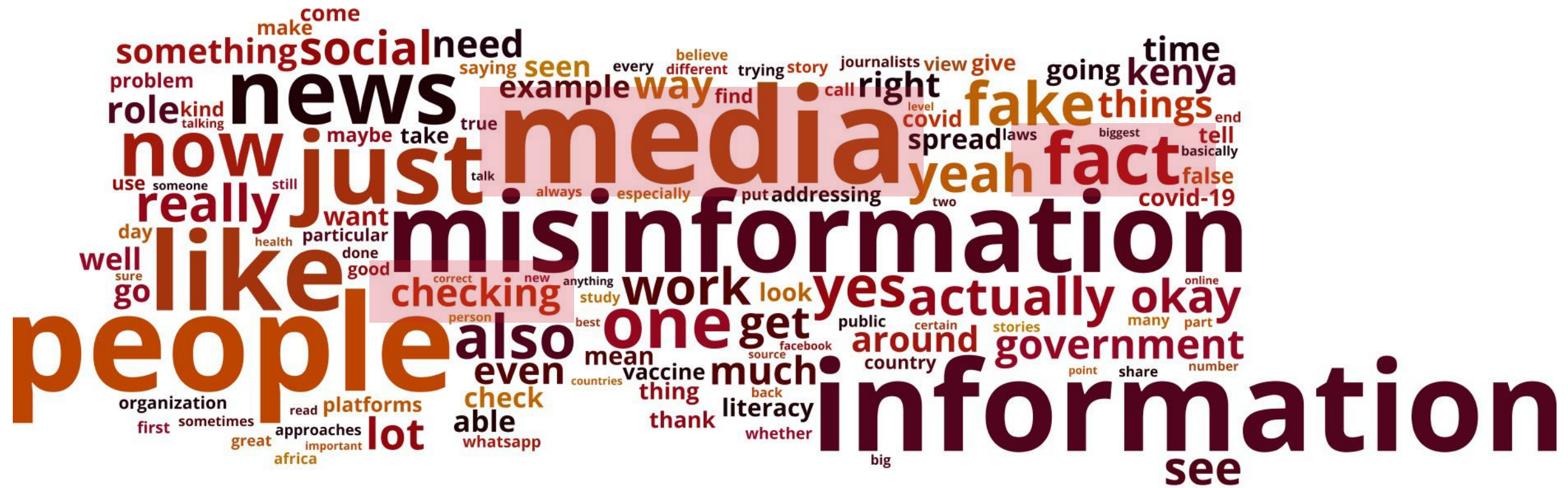
Source: **Study 1**

How often do you come across **false news about politics** on ... ?



Source: **Study 2**

Mis/disinformation in the eyes of media professionals



Source: **Study 2**

Mis/disinformation in the eyes of **media users**



Source: **Study 2**

Media professionals vs. media users



Fact-checking knowledge (Young urban residents)

Interviewer: How often do you use fact checking websites?

Jhon: **Rarely**

Interviewer: What about you Wambui?

Wambui: **I don't check**

Interviewer: You don't check at all, Jack?

Jack: **I don't**

Interviewer: Abdi?

Abdi: **I don't**

Source: **Study 5**

Fact-checking knowledge (Older urban residents)

Interviewer: How often do you use fact checking sites?

Mary: Occasionally

Interviewer: James?

James: I have curated my feed **around credible sources**, those ones that have the tick besides them so most of the news I get to count on that so **I don't usually fact check coz its already.**

Source: Study 5

Fact-checking knowledge (Young rural residents)

“Okay, yes, they are there, for example you go to the **established news** for example you go to the Nation Media website, Standard Group, **rarely will you get anything they have not confirmed** to be the true information.”

Source: **Study 5**

Fact-checking knowledge (Young rural residents)

“I usually **rely on the media groups information**, especially in most cases newspapers because those guys before they write information or they gather information from somewhere or anybody or any place, they do it cautiously because it may lead to defamation cases or libel or slander, therefore, they are usually cautious and for that reason I rely on their information.”

Source: **Study 5**

How much do you trust **information** that comes from (...)?



Source: Study 2



trust

Audiences' engagement with disinformation

What would you do if you saw this post on your **Facebook timeline**?

SHARE

CORRECT

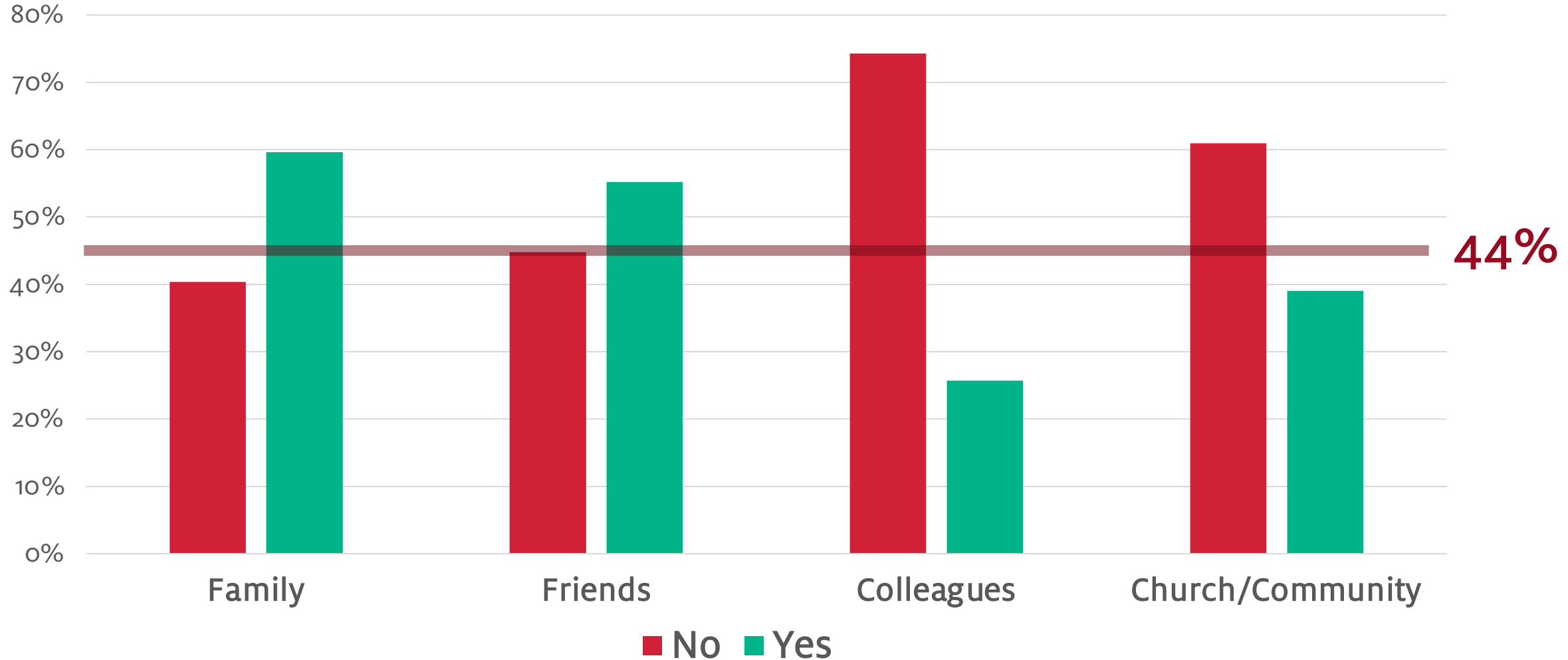
REPORT

IGNORE

VERIFY

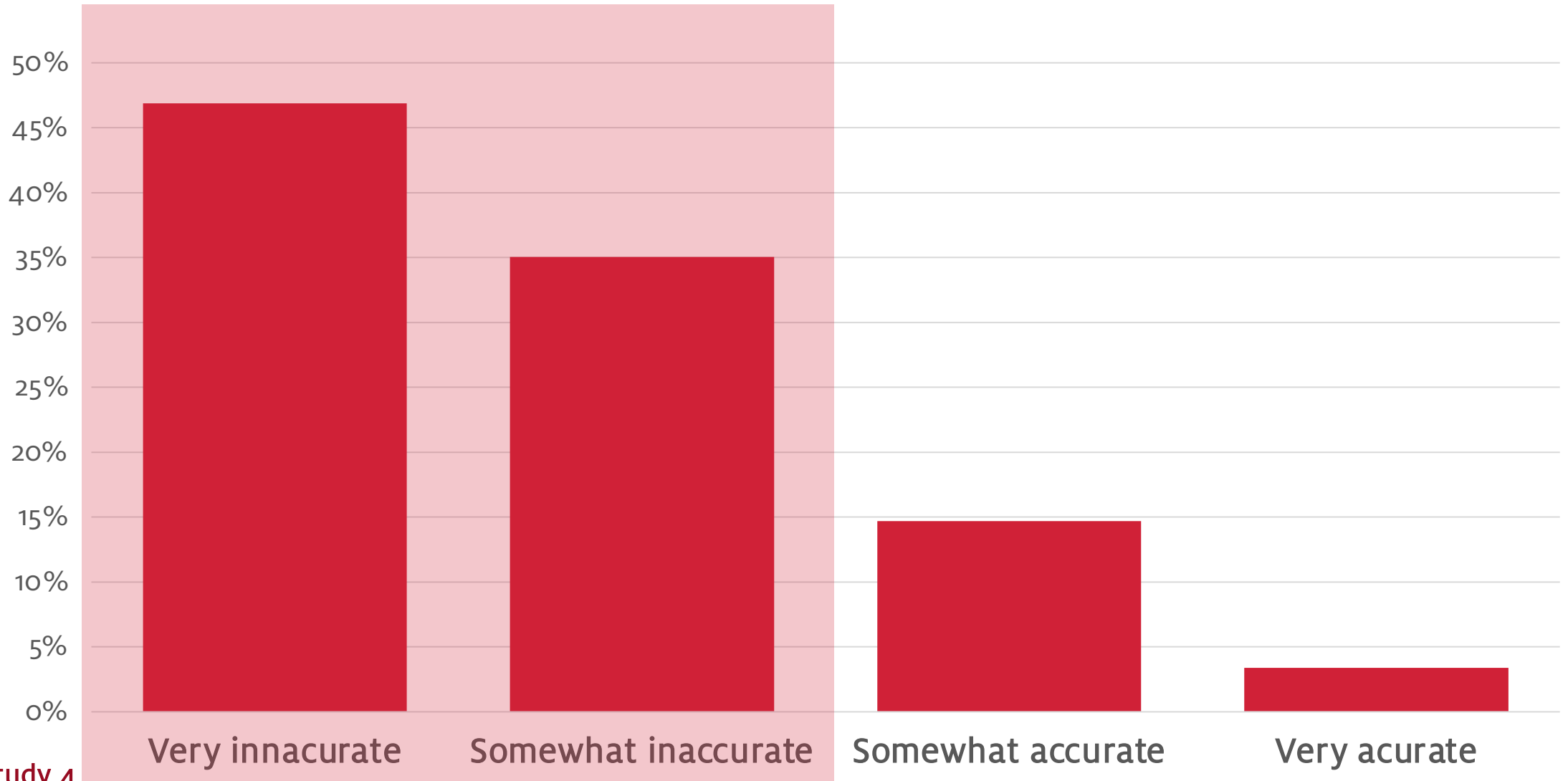


If you saw this post on social media, would you **share it** with (...)?

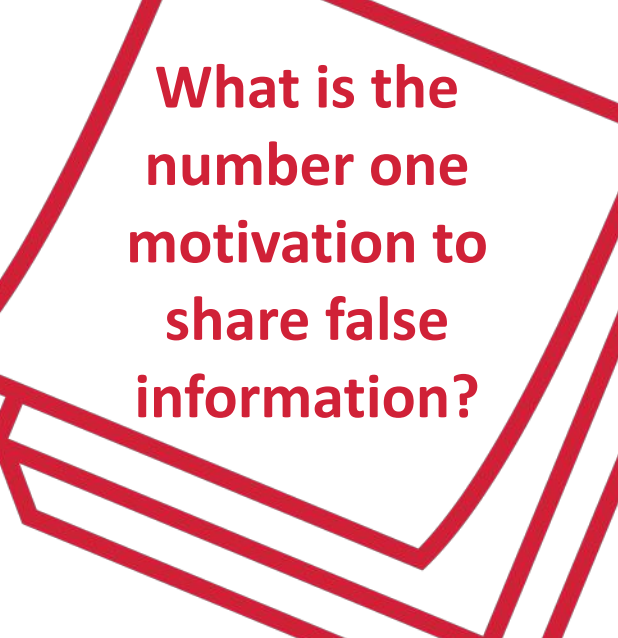


Source: **Study 4**

How **accurate** do you think this social media post is?



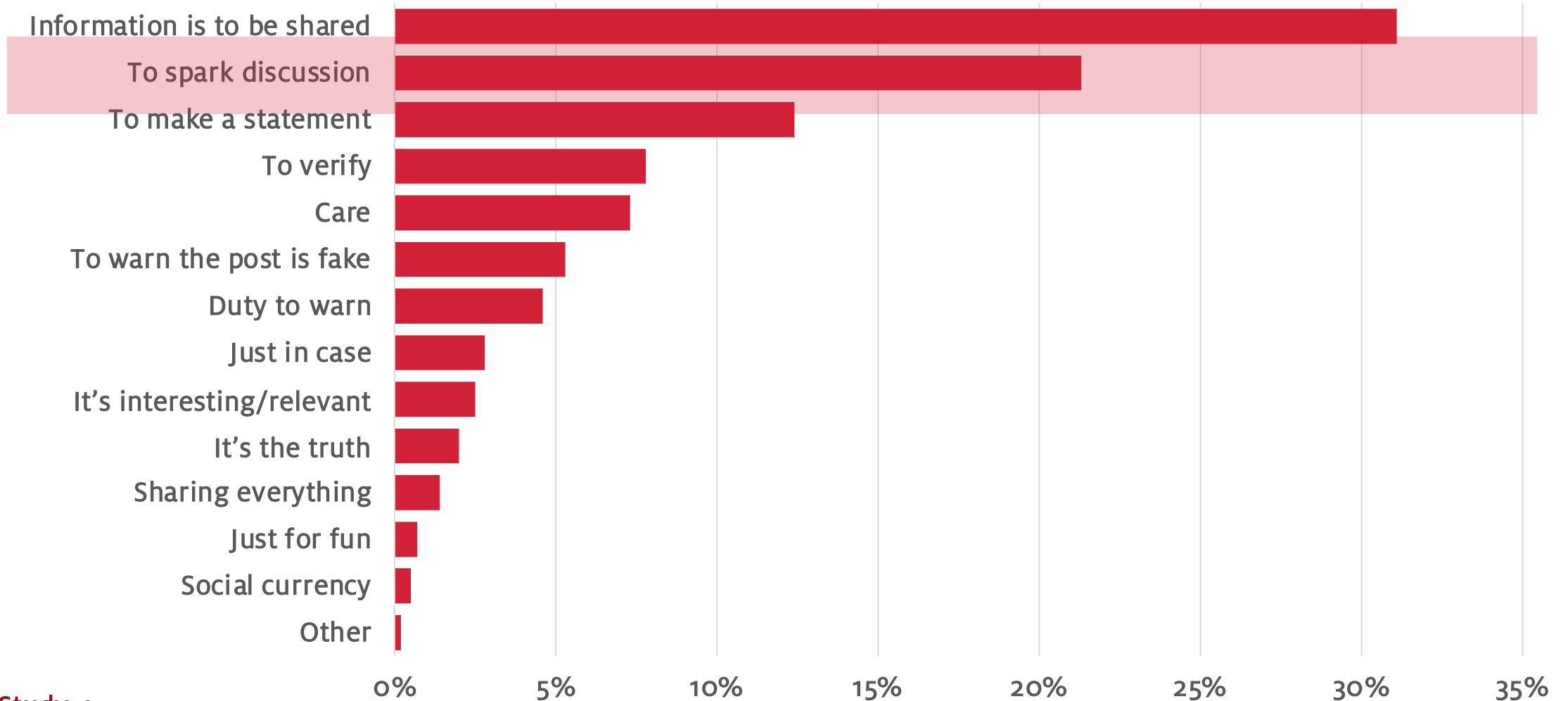
Source: **Study 4**



**What is the
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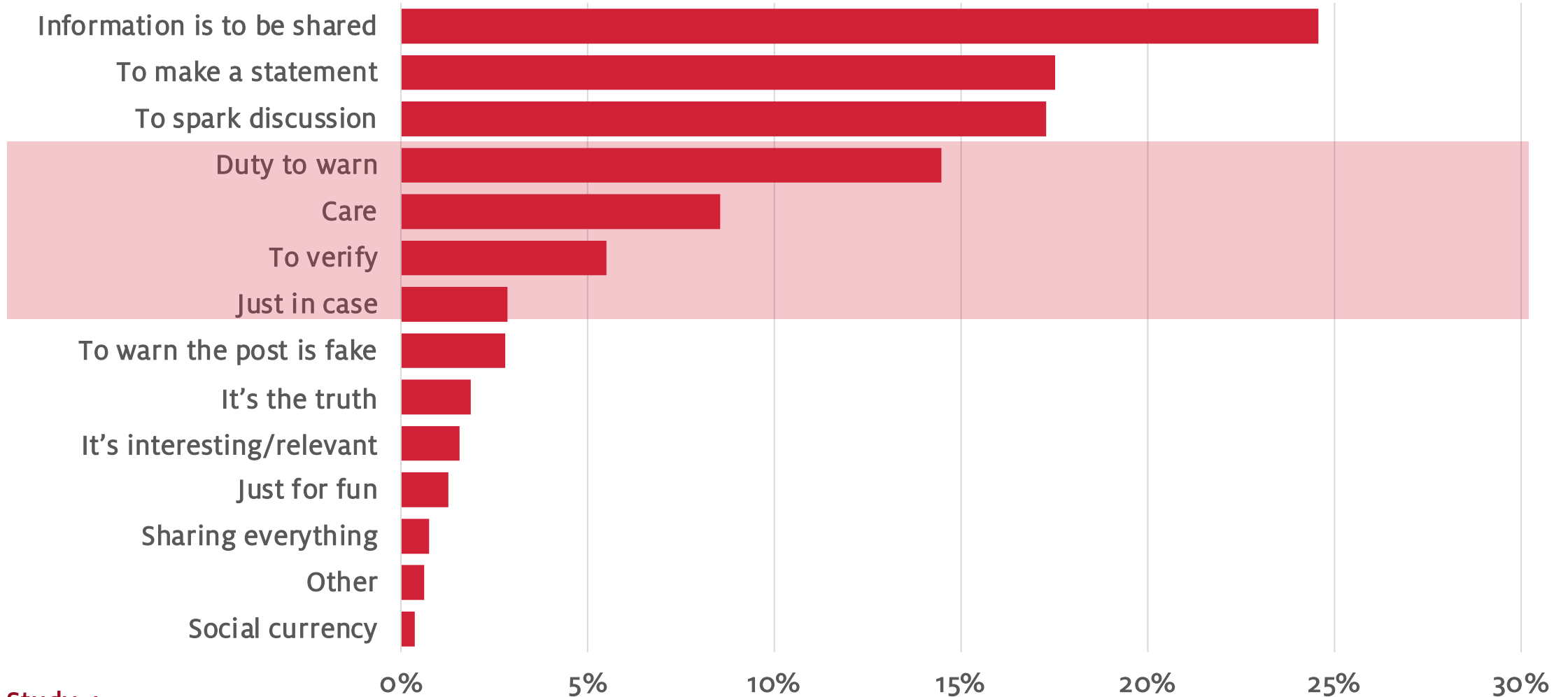
[illegible]

You said you would share this post, **can you tell us why?**



Source: Study 4

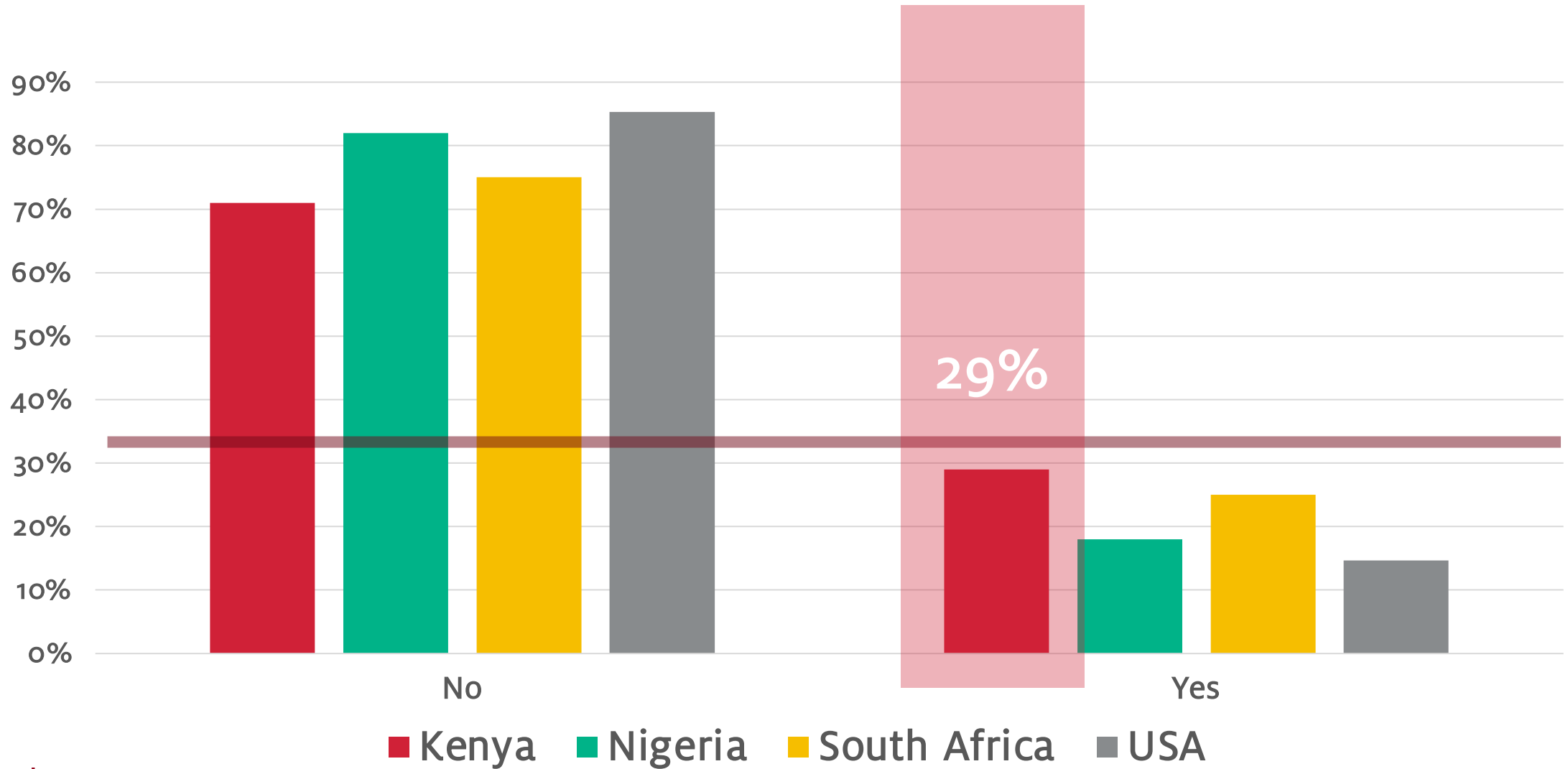
You said you would share any of these posts, **can you tell us why?**



Source: **Study 4**

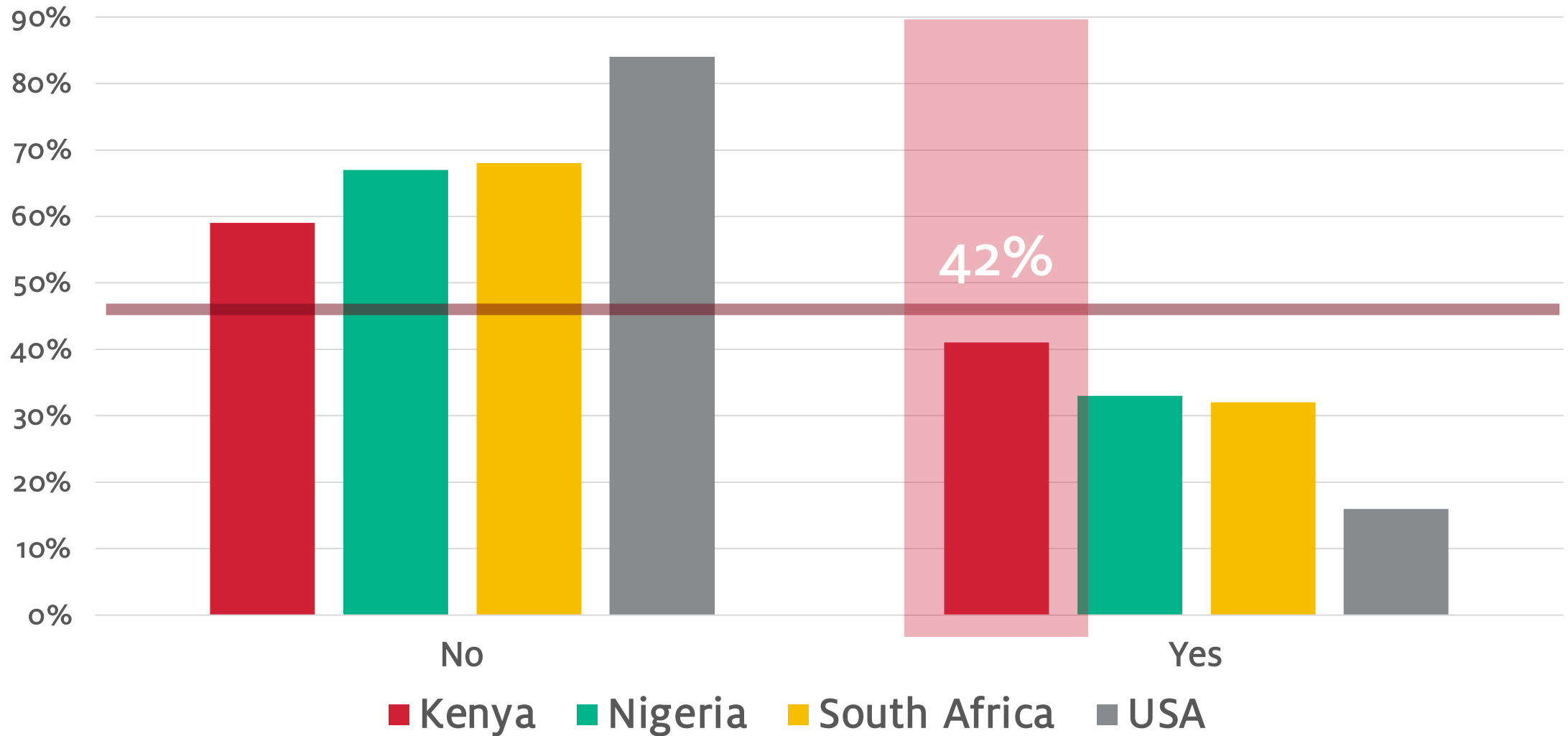


Have you ever shared a political story that you thought **was made up**?



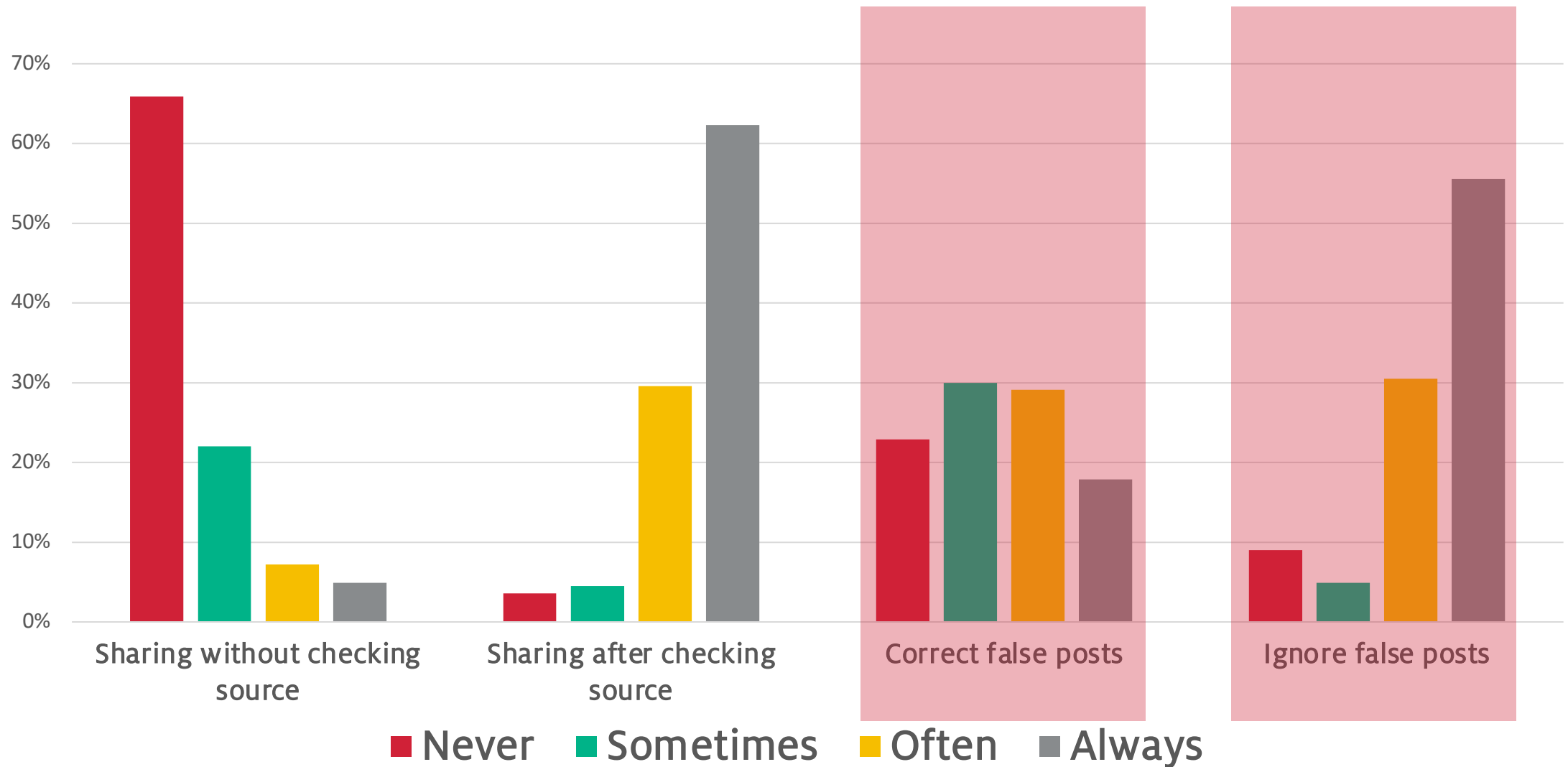
Source: Study 1

Have you ever shared a political story that **you later found** out was false?



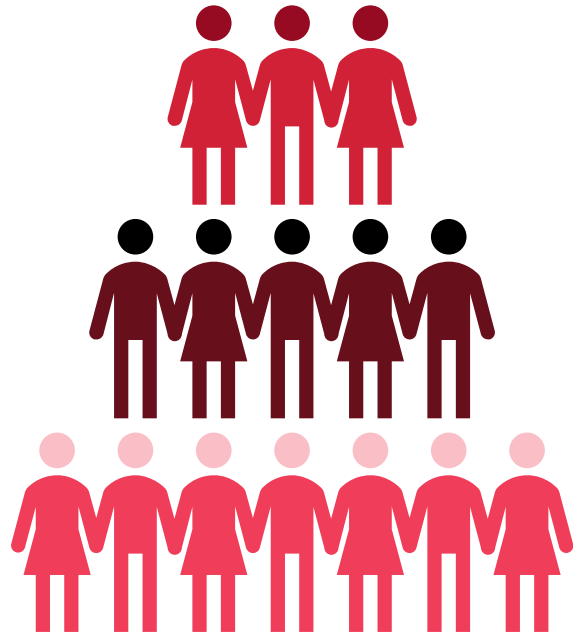
Source: Study 1

How often do you **engage** in each of the following?



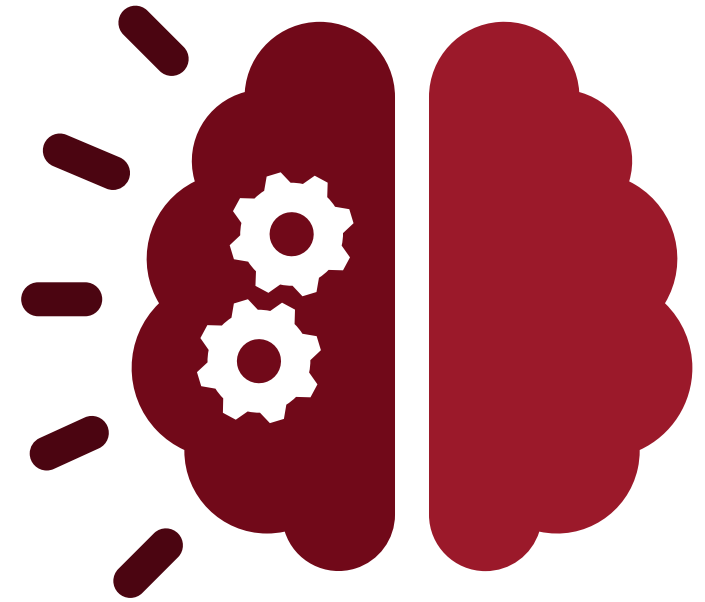
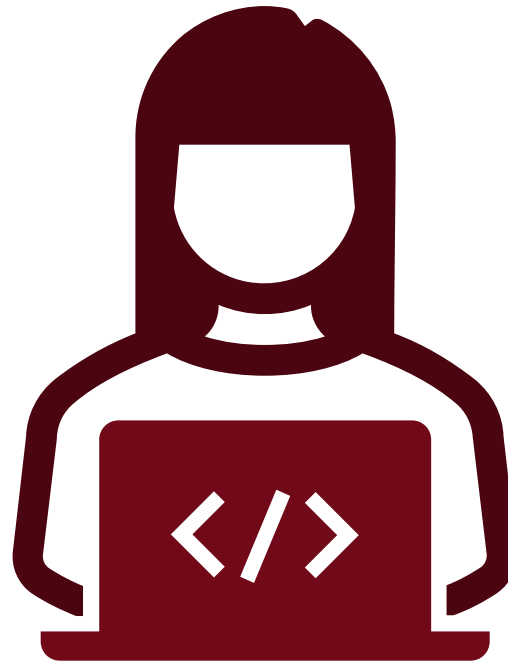
Source: Study 2

What explains **different behaviors** with misinformation?



social factors

**media and
misinformation
literacy**



**psychological
factors**

Rose



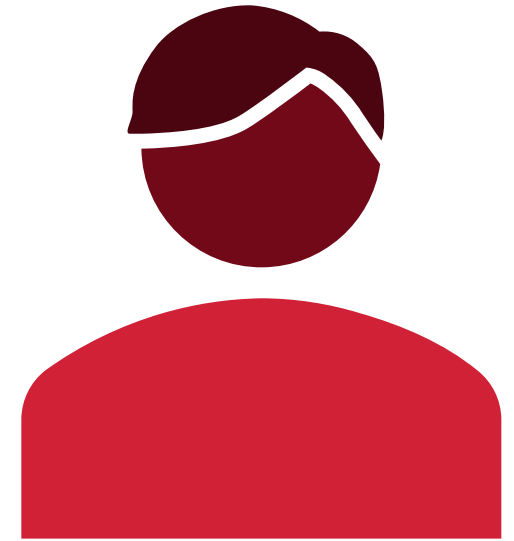
Lives in Naivasha
58 years of age
Works as a School Administrator
Likes Christian news
Gets news mostly on WhatsApp & TV

George



Lives in Eldoret
42 years of age
Works as a Businessman
Wakes up at 4am and reads all the papers

Joy



Lives in Kisumu
39 years of age
Works as a Sales Representative
Interested in international news & gossip
Gets news from AJE & BBBC on Instagram

Source: **Study 2**

Rose says...

“You can correct, you can start by correcting and at times yes you get some ideas when people talk of **especially politics**, and maybe you’re not agreeing with that so you comment, yes.”

Source: **Study 2**

George says...

“It’s a big problem [sharing disinformation] because one **it may land you to jail**, two you send in something that it might be your neighbor who’s the one you’re circulating, what happens there **there will be that bad blood between you and your neighbor**. Someone might even attack you, and look for you wherever you are because they see you’re the one who has done this to them”

Source: **Study 2**

Joy says...

“I can share some links and stuff like that but again, not to everyone, to particular people, Yeah not to my status, not to my stories. I will share what I need to share to specific people, maybe not even more than ten (...) **I’m a fun-loving person, I’m an extrovert so the world has to know what am up to.”**

Source: **Study 2**

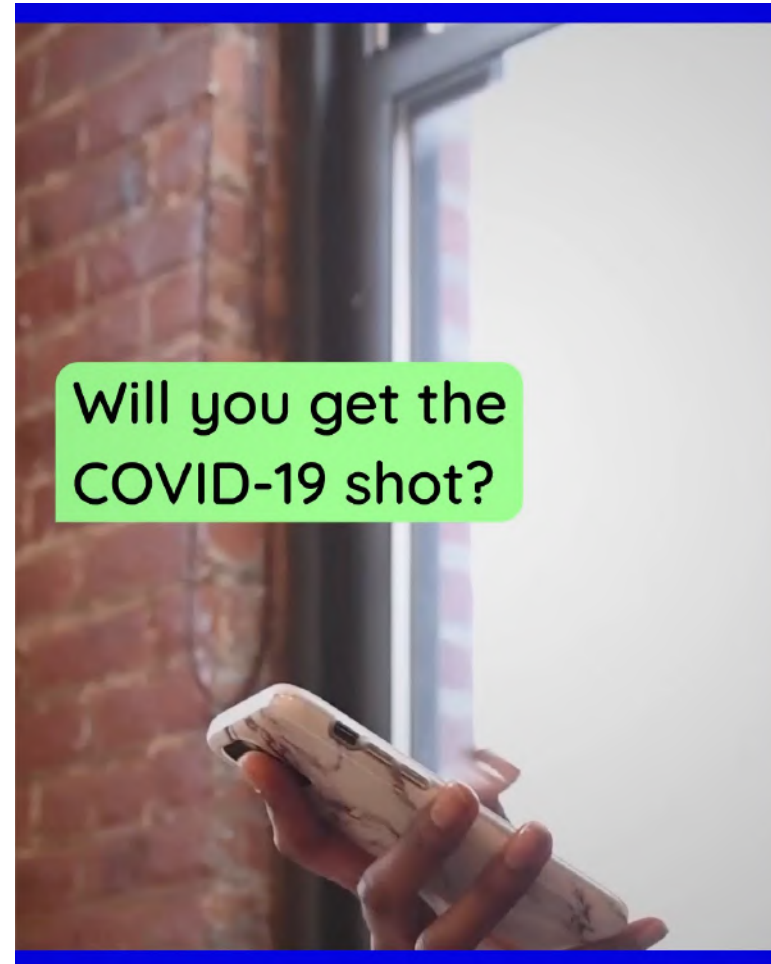
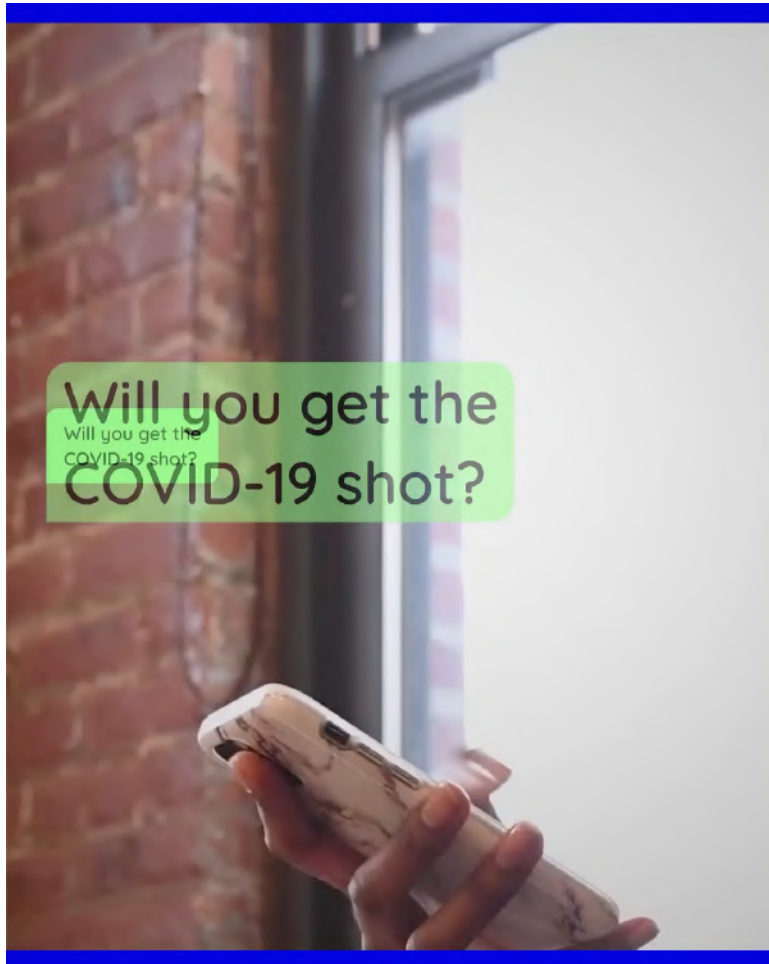


audience-centered



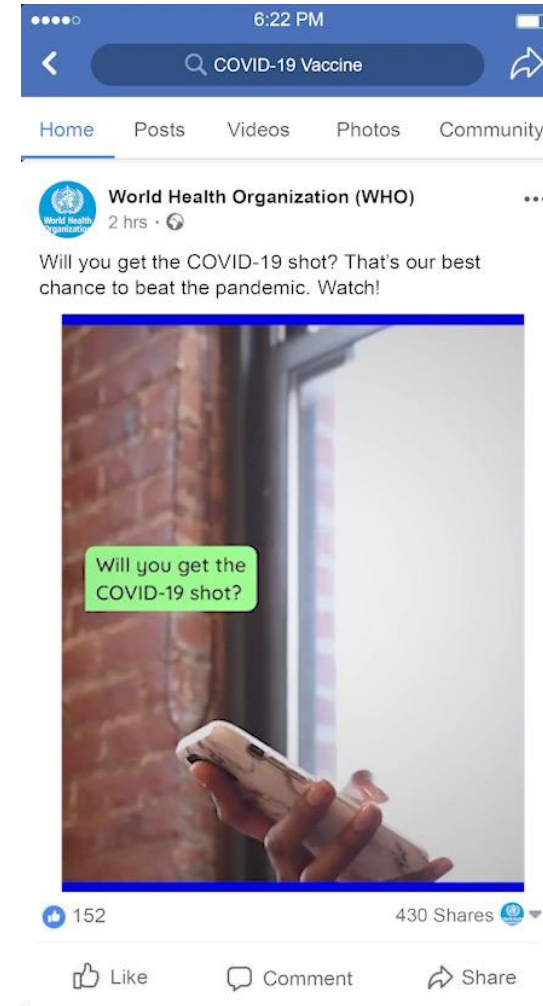
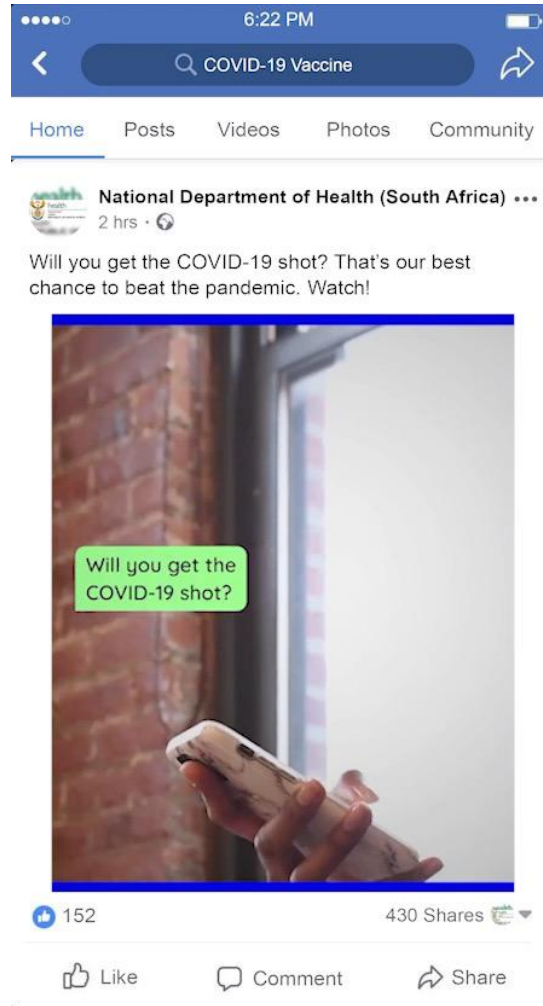
Evidence-based strategies

A/B Testing (I)



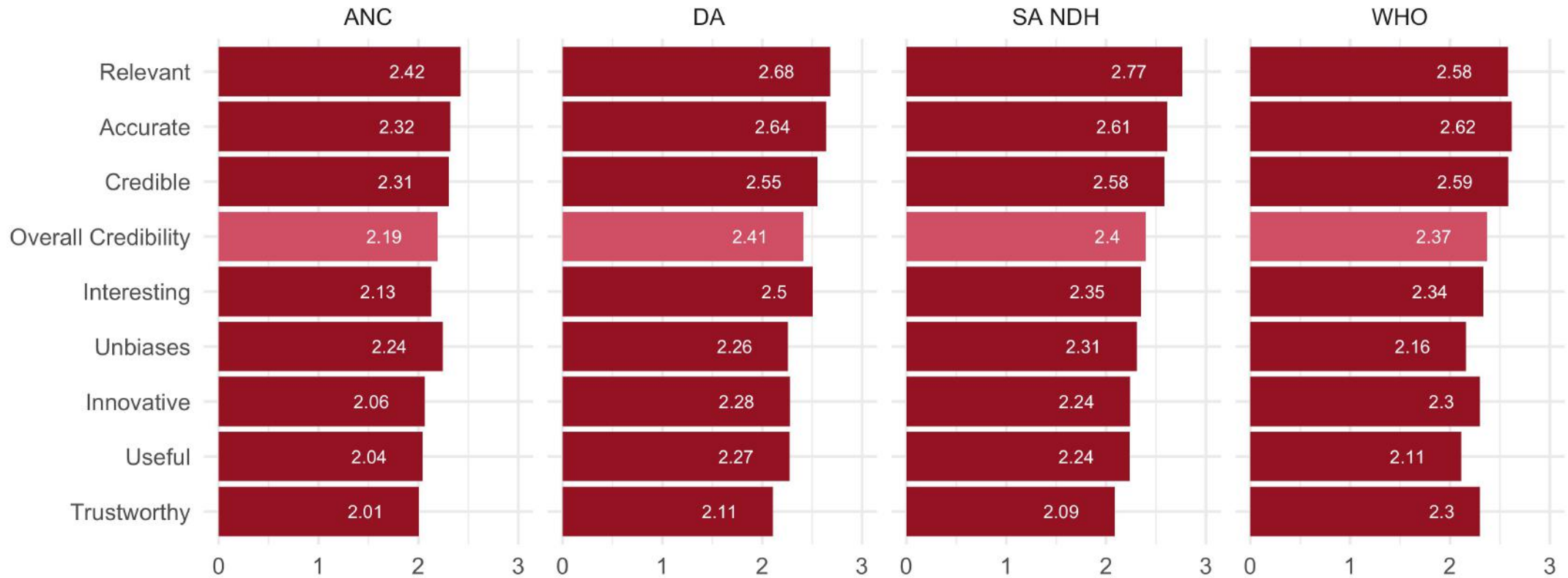
Source: Study 6

A/B Testing (II)



Source: Study 6

A/B Testing (III)



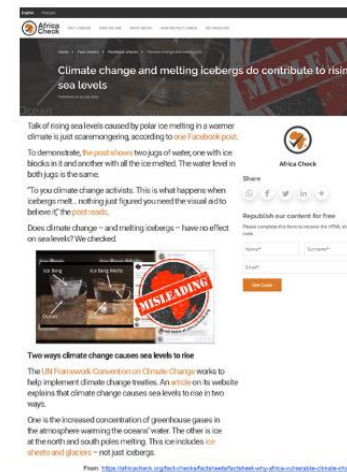
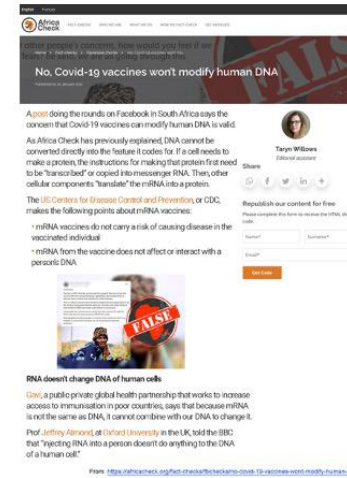
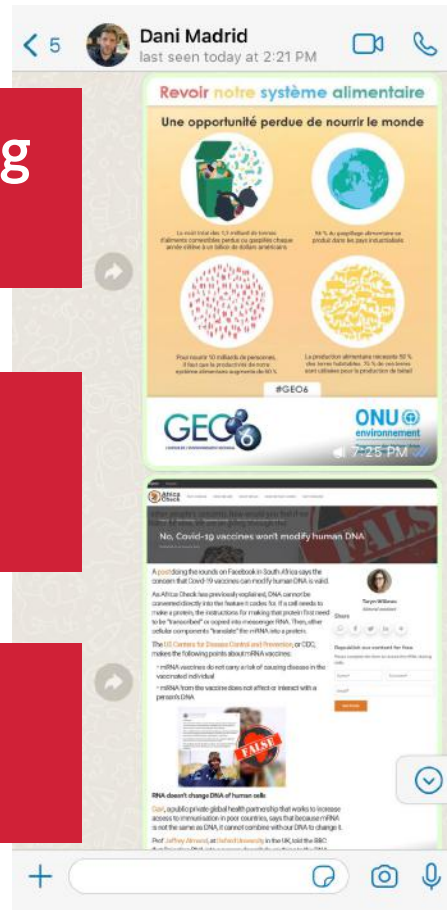
Source: Study 6

Use existing tools (I)

Broadcasting
Lists

Chatbots

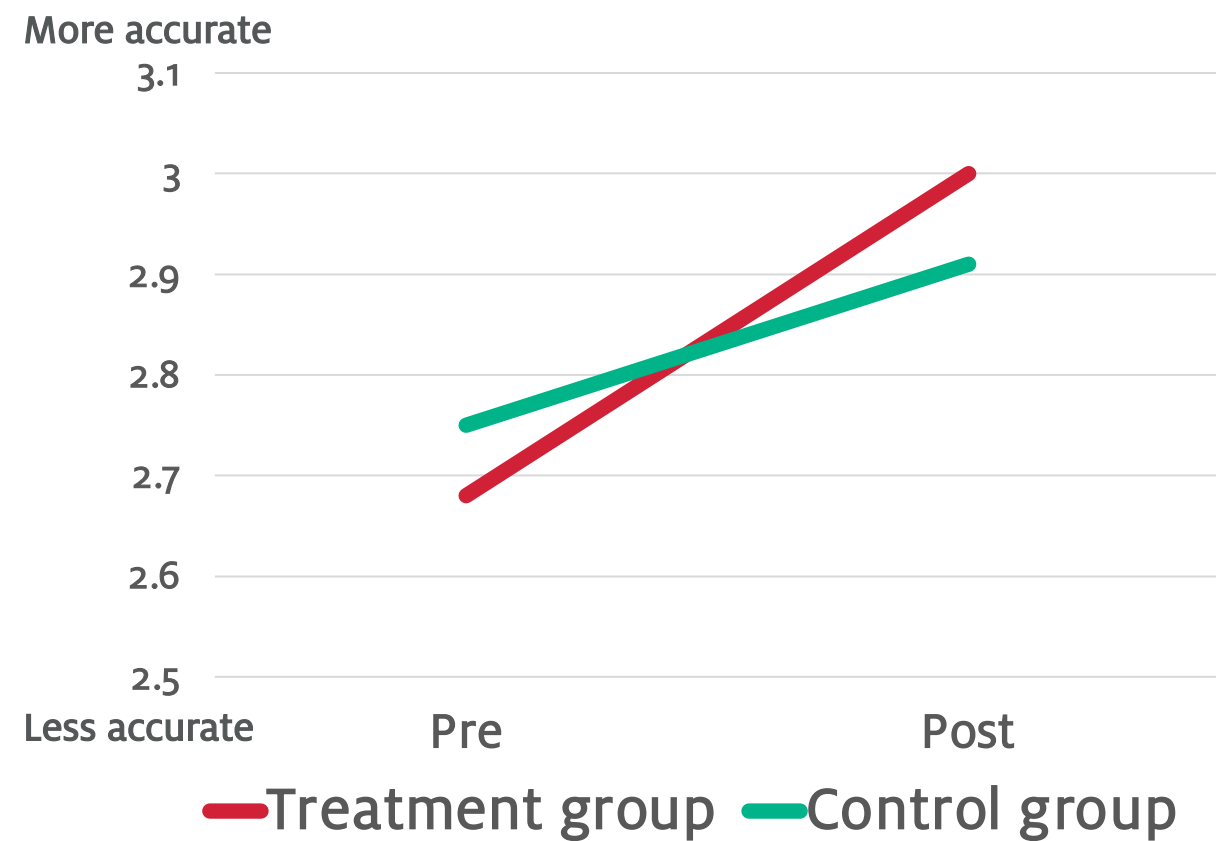
Business
Accounts



Source: Study 2

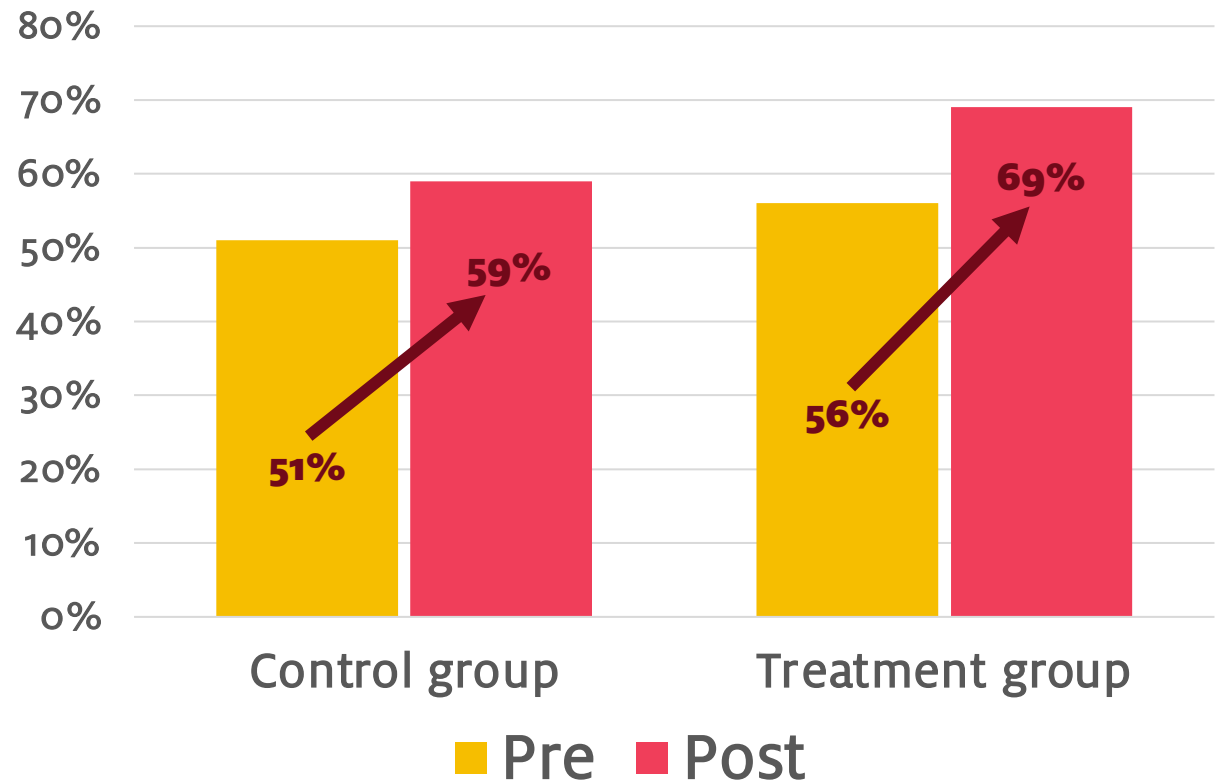
Use existing tools (II)

Accurate **beliefs** about COVID-19



Source: **Study 2**

Acceptance of **COVID-19** vaccine






evidence-based

Recipe for “success”

**context
trust
audience-centered
evidence-based
facts**



(more) impactful fact-checking

Final Takeaways

1. There are **no fit-all solutions** to combatting disinformation – interventions are going to depend on platform, medium, target-audience.
2. Knowing who **your audience** is crucial to designing strategies and products that are going to be effective in what you are trying to achieve.
3. Doing something to tackle disinformation is good and important but doing **something that works** is even better. This is why evidence-based solutions are important.

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