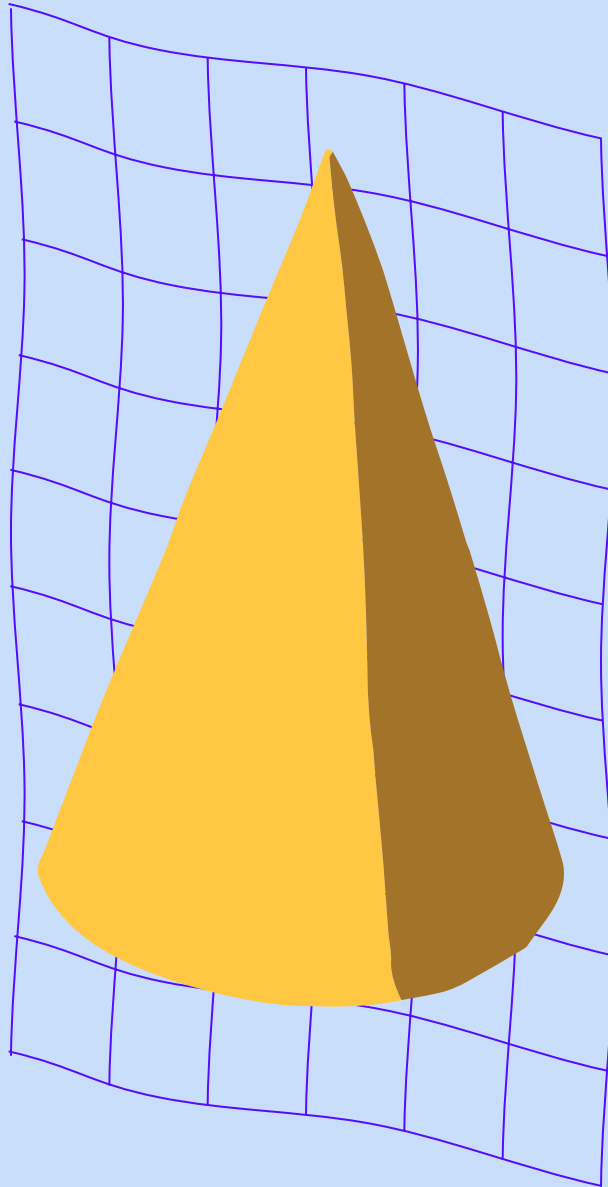


Welcome_

Civic Signals

Invite everyone to participate



This signal is part of Civic Signals, a larger framework to help create better digital public spaces. We believe it's a platform's responsibility to design the conditions that promote ideal digital public spaces. Such spaces should be designed to help people feel Welcome, to Connect, to Understand and to Act. These four categories encompass the 14 Civic Signals.

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At a glance



Inviting everyone to participate, or “social inclusion,” means improving people’s ability and opportunity to take part in society – especially for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of some identity they hold.

Why It Matters

Inclusion is, first of all, a good for its own sake. Knock-on effects include the surfacing of diverse viewpoints, which can lead to better decision making and people learning about topics with which they were not previously familiar. Inclusion can also lead to online resources more equitably benefiting a variety of demographic groups, and can increase tolerance and trust.



“It doesn't mean everybody has to [participate], but everyone has the right to.” – James, U.S. focus group participant

Putting the Signal Into Practice

- The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) maintains a list of U.S. state and local initiatives to expand internet access, device access and tech support in light of the COVID-19 crisis. <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/state-covid-19-digital-inclusion-response/>
- NDIA also regularly updates a list of internet service providers offering free and low-cost internet plans. <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/free-low-cost-internet-plans/>
- Over 190 countries have signed Connect 2030, the strategy framework of the International Telecommunication Union, a UN agency. Targets include that by 2030, 60% of households in developing countries and 30% in the least developed nations should have internet access. <https://www.itu.int/connect2030>
- Through the non-profit Recode, youth in seven Latin American countries learn about basic computing, web design, coding, virtual and augmented reality and more. Over 90% of participants said skills including collaboration, communication, creativity, and problem-solving improved as a result of the courses they took. <https://recode.org.br/>
- In the U.S., the non-profit E-Democracy created online forums for two low-income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Participants said they learned new information and were exposed to alternative viewpoints as a result of using the forum, and elected officials also said they paid attention to posts. <http://e-democracy.org/if/edeminclusivefordeval.pdf>
- Today E-Democracy hosts over 50 local forums for 17 communities in three countries. <http://forums.e-democracy.org/>

Literature review



By Tamar Wilner,
Center for Media Engagement
With thanks to Jan A.G.M. van
Dijk, University of Twente

What the Signal Is

As it applies to online platforms, “inviting everyone to participate” is about ensuring that one group isn’t advantaged above others. Building inclusion on social media requires understanding both the principle of social inclusion and that of digital inclusion, because digital exclusion tends to reinforce existing social exclusion, according to communication science researcher Jan van Dijk.

We start with examining the meaning of “social inclusion.” One approach, put forward by political philosopher Iris Marion Young,

is to define inclusion as the extent to which those affected by a decision have been able to influence the decision-making process. The value and importance of inclusion in the online public sphere goes beyond shared decision-making, however. This sphere is not just a space for deliberating democratic choices, but for other activities, such as community-building, sharing experiences, building movements, and creating art. That is why we use a wider definition of inclusion. We look to the World Bank, which defined social inclusion as “the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society.” We also see great merit in education and

informatics professor Mark Warschauer's definition, which called inclusion "the extent that individuals, families and communities are able to fully participate in society and control their own destinies."

According to van Dijk, there are four aspects of digital inclusion. The first is the motivation to engage with the online world, and a positive attitude about that engagement. Second is the physical access to devices and the internet. The third aspect is the acquisition of skills to perform various online activities. These three aspects are in effect conditions that are necessary, but not sufficient, for actual digital usage – which is the fourth aspect. Actual usage is affected by how much time and effort use takes, the time people have available, digital usage by those around them, and demographic factors including employment status, education, age, gender and geographical location. Usage also requires that people find attractive uses of digital technologies and, according to van Dijk, part of this attraction is the feeling of being welcome in online communities.

Digital inclusion also implies equality when it comes to the various uses of technology. Van Dijk wrote that there is a divide between people who use the internet mostly for informative, educational, career-related and civic purposes, and those mainly using it for entertainment, communication and consumerism. This divide is problematic because, like much of the digital divide, it tends to reinforce existing social inequities. For example, people in higher socio-economic classes are better able to use the internet to advance their education and careers, van Dijk noted.

This signal is about designing public spaces in ways that are accessible to people of diverse backgrounds. "Inviting everyone to participate" doesn't mean that all sentiments are welcomed, however. Indeed, if people express points of view that exclude others, then that violates the signal. Some groups that have often been digitally excluded, that we think platforms should make a special effort to make feel welcome, are the poor, the less educated, older adults, ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, rural residents, the unemployed, and the socially isolated.

At the same time that we consider these patterns of inclusion and exclusion within countries, there is also evidence of exclusion across countries. While the Pew Research Center found that use of the internet, ownership of smartphones and use social media in developing nations has risen over the past five years, gaps remain between the rates in these countries and in advanced economies. Access doesn't ensure inclusion, but it is a necessary first step. As van Dijk's work reminds us, having sufficient skills and finding the use of social media attractive are just as important.

Related Concepts

Inviting everyone to participate ensures greater diversity, but inclusion and diversity are not the same. Having diversity means there are a variety of people present, whereas inclusion means that people feel valued, and feel comfortable participating. Netflix vice president of inclusion strategy Vernā Myers put it this way in a Harvard Business Review article: "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."

Inclusion is also similar in some ways to belongingness. Some researchers, notably management professor Lynn Shore, describe inclusion as satisfying one's needs for belonging and uniqueness. For the purposes of this project, however, we see inclusion and belongingness as distinct. Belongingness is a subjective feeling, one of membership in a group; and we think it's important enough to be its own Civic Signal (called [Cultivate Belonging](#)). Inclusion is more objective, and has to do with the ability of people to speak up and share their views. It also emphasizes hearing the voices of people from marginalized groups. What's more, an excess emphasis on belongingness can actually work against inclusion. People can feel intense belonging in an atmosphere that only admits those with like-minded views, but this is hardly a welcoming and inclusive environment for a diverse population. For all these reasons, we think inclusion should be its own signal.

We also note that making people feel welcome online goes well beyond making people feel safe, with the latter required for the former. We address the latter in our separate white paper on [Ensure People's Safety](#).

Why It's Important

Inclusion is, first and foremost, an intrinsic good. As codified in many legal protections around the world, people strive for societies which do not discriminate, intentionally or unintentionally, against marginalized groups.

Inclusion also has knock-on effects. The most immediate impact of inviting everyone to participate is the surfacing of diverse

voices, viewpoints and backgrounds. This is desirable for a number of reasons.

Psychologist Charlan Nemeth found in multiple experiments that exposure to minority viewpoints led to better decision making. Participants engaged in more original thinking, used a greater variety of problem-solving strategies, paid attention to more aspects of the situation, and demonstrated that they reexamined their assumptions. Perhaps most importantly, those exposed to minority viewpoints found more correct solutions than those only exposed to majority viewpoints.

Nemeth also found that when exposed to minority viewpoints that disagreed with their own, participants were more likely to search for information on a topic, compared with participants exposed to a majority viewpoint that disagreed with their own. Those exposed to the minority viewpoint also tended to read information on all sides of an issue, whereas those exposed to the majority chose to read articles favoring the majority view.

When inclusion is found on platforms, it allows users to encounter diverse individuals. According to online forum users themselves, interviewed by internet communication researcher Jennifer Stromer-Galley, such exposure helps people to understand the range of opinions that exist on a topic. Such online encounters often contrast with real life, where there are more barriers to diverse socialization. Participants also indicated that learning about topics with which they were not previously familiar, and discovering their own stances on issues, sometimes changed their minds. Political communication scholar Rune Karlsen and colleagues found that 45% of those who debate politics or societal

issues online claimed to learn something new from the experience. The authors' findings also suggest that while debate with opposing individuals often leads to reinforcement of the participants' views in the short term, in the long term it can lead to learning and attitude change.

As a result of designs, frameworks and moderation that surface diverse voices and viewpoints, we also expect inclusive platforms to yield more equitable benefits across demographic groups. Media theorist Pieter Verdegem writes that social media can enable socially excluded people to organize for self-help. Media and communication scholar Ellen Helsper warns that no comprehensive studies have shown that technological access reduces widespread inequalities within nations – but that marginalized groups might be able to use technology to prevent further inequalities.

Finally, when individuals from a variety of backgrounds spend time together, they form a type of social tie called a bridging tie. This can lead to increased tolerance and trust, as political scientist Robert Putnam explains. These processes are the subject of two of our other signals, [Bridge Bridges Between Groups](#) and [Encourage the Humanization of Others](#).

How We Can Move the Needle

Since digital inclusion tends to reinforce social inclusion, society needs to fight both simultaneously, van Dijk explained. He described five axes for addressing these interlocking problems. The first is to maintain or improve social mobility through welfare programs that encourage people to keep

developing their digital skills. The second is to increase the number of long-term social programs designed to help disadvantaged groups in their communities. Third is the provision of less expensive technology, including devices, software, services and subscriptions. The fourth axis is to create digital media that is easier and more attractive to use, particularly for those with disabilities or illiteracies. Finally, there need to be better rules and regulations for digital media – both promulgated by governments to manage media companies, and by media companies to manage their social spaces.

Van Dijk sees tech companies that operate free platforms as able to help with the fourth and fifth axes. These companies can create more accessible and easy to use discussion venues, and they can improve moderation and the rules for using particular discussion forums – for example, by preventing more hate speech, discrimination and antidemocratic expressions. They should also offer more transparency over these processes.

We think tech companies can also take inspiration from media and civic organizations, which have demonstrated ways of facilitating inclusion, both in person and online. In Akron, Ohio, the nonprofit civic engagement group the Jefferson Center collaborated with 42 news outlets to host Your Vote Ohio, a series of events in which participants discussed political news coverage as well as candidates' positions. In one three-day event, the organizers stratified the selected participants to represent the population of Summit County in age, race, income level, and political beliefs, and paid each a \$400 stipend, as well as travel and childcare expenses. These ideas have their roots in deliberative polling, a method championed by communication scholar James Fishkin.

In Latin America, the non-profit Recode operates nearly 700 “digital empowerment centers” in seven countries, targeting low-income young people ages 14 to 29. Youth learn basic computing and how to access the internet, web design, coding, technology for social impact, virtual and augmented reality and more. Over 90% of participants said skills including collaboration, communication, creativity, and problem-solving improved somewhat or a lot as a result of the courses they took.

In the U.S., the non-profit E-Democracy created online forums for two low-income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Forum members not only came from a variety of cultures, but even spoke different languages. E-Democracy staffers started many of the conversation threads, and the organization found that this helped to increase the number and diversity of forum members. Participants said they learned new information and were exposed to alternative viewpoints as a result of using the forum, and elected officials also said they paid attention to posts.

In creating new products, or evaluating existing ones, platforms can work to ensure that they don't advantage one group over others. They also can take inspiration from the case studies described above to include more groups in the public spaces they create.

How to Measure

A first step for platforms to measure inclusion is to look at the demographics of their users, including age, gender, income, education and ethnicity. They should com-

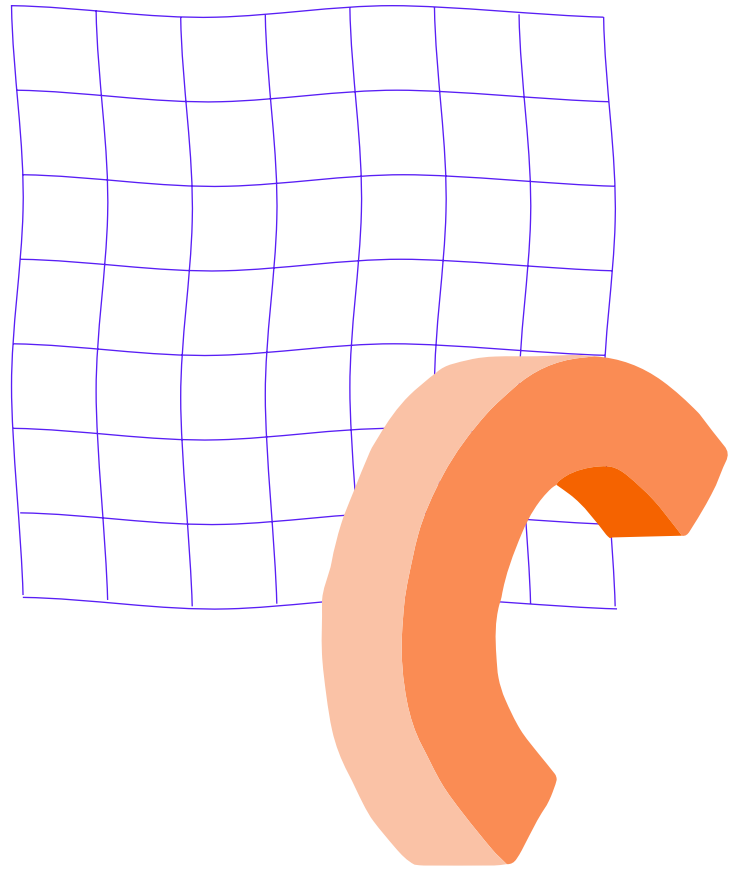
pare these to the demographic distribution in a given country, region or locality. More specifically, tech companies should measure which of their individual apps, or even functions within apps, are used by which demographics. For example, some apps and functions are more oriented towards education or career development, while others are geared towards socializing, entertainment or shopping. Platforms need to measure who tends to use applications of civic importance, especially, and whether marginalized groups are being excluded from these applications. This is not to say that all platforms need to be created for all people, but a systematic exclusion of a particular group should be seen as worrisome. And platforms aiming to create truly public spaces should be attentive to potentially excluding people.

Another area of importance for inclusion is discussion forums and messaging functions. Without inclusion, a tiny elite often dominates the conversation. Measurements of the amount of inclusion in discussion and messaging can involve counting the number of posts, or sequences of posts, according to demographic characteristics.

Finally, measuring tone in discussions and messaging is also vital to understanding the inclusiveness of a platform. At the very least, hate speech must be monitored (see our signal [Ensure People's Safety](#)), and the degree of humanization of others should also be considered (see our signal [Encourage the Humanization of Others](#).) But as “making people feel welcome” is a positive signal that goes above and beyond safety and humanization, so too should measurement of tone go beyond the more basic signals. One way to measure tone is with Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), a text analysis program designed by linguist

James Pennebaker in collaboration with computational experts and other cognitive researchers. LIWC can measure many features of language, including positive and negative emotions (specifically, anger, anxiety and sadness), signifiers of various cognitive processes (such as insight, differentiation, and uncertainty), and core drives (such as affiliation, achievement and power), and aspects of informal speech (such as swear words). Political scientist Maria Giuseppina Pacilli and social psychologist Terri Mannarini used vulgar words and emotional terms as proxies to detect hostility on the pages of male and female public figures, thus measuring a type of tone that is anti-

thetical towards inclusion. It appears there is much more scope for researchers and platforms to develop measures of tone that are positively welcoming, as opposed to those that are prohibitive of inclusion.



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Expert Q&A



Three key questions with **Jan A.G.M. van Dijk**, University of Twente

How does this principle help create a world we'd all want to live in?

Today, inclusion of participation in web platforms is needed to participate in society in every domain: work, living in a community, engaging in all kinds of culture, following the news, entertainment, politics and civil life. Especially, the principle should help us to prevent the appearance of second or third class citizens and workers or employees who have no chance on the labor market. The positive effect of inclusion is creating better opportunities of participation online than in the traditional offline outlets in every domain.

If you were to envisage the perfect social media, messaging or web search platform in terms of maximizing this principle, what would it look like?

Accessibility, affordability and usability are prime characteristics of these platforms needed for inclusion. Accessibility means having an Internet connection and more than one access device (PC, laptop, tablet, smartphone or smart TV). Affordability means that people with low education also can use every device and every available application on these platforms. Usability means that the applications are so easy to use and so attractive that even someone with a low level of digital skills or literacy is able to use them.

How would you measure a messaging, social media, or web search platform's progress against this principle?

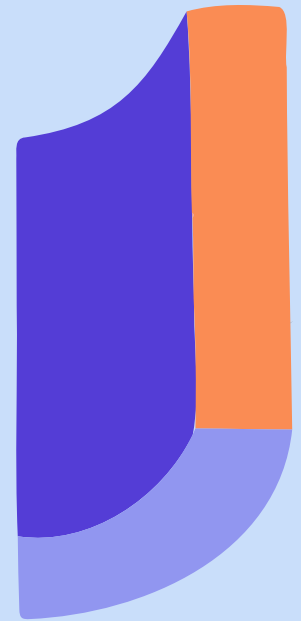
First look for the demographic data of the users. Platforms at least have data about the age and gender of their users. Commercial platforms often have many other personal data about users. Income, education and ethnicity are three other demographics needed to estimate the level of inclusion. Of course the distribution of the population in a country, region or locality is the goal of comparison and inclusion. Contemporary platforms have a relatively wide diffusion, at least in the developed countries. One of the problems for inclusion is that some applications are used much more by people of a certain age, sex, education level and ethnicity. This is called the usage gap in the digital divide literature. Some users are primarily using the platforms for education, career development and business, while others primarily use them for entertainment, simple communication and shopping. So the platforms have to measure which of their applications are used by people of which age, gender, education, ethnicity, etc., and try to improve the accessibility, affordability and usability (attractiveness) of the more advanced applications needed for civic, worker and consumer participation. When the platforms are not able to do this themselves they can consult the growing scientific literature about the use and participation of social media applications.

Some applications are used for messaging and discussion. Here often social media analysis is used by the platforms themselves or companies or researchers. Part of this is so-called social network analysis, measuring the level of activity of users of these applications. Often a small elite dominates

the discussion with others only reading and making no contribution. Similarly, first there is a burst of activity, but relatively quickly the discussion is extinguished, until a particular post ignites the discussion again. Discussion app suppliers and moderators have to measure the number of posts, comments, chats (sequences), mentions of appreciation and advice by users of all demographic characteristics they know, for a period of time. Social media analysis of the tone of the discussion can measure when polarization and hate speech occur. These phenomena decrease the trust and inclusion of users.

This tone of discussion often is a problem in public discussions. Platforms are also used in the business environment, for instance creating so-called Communities of Practice (COP). Here the same network analyses can be done for the level of activity and participation of workers or employees in these COPs: number of posts, comments and instances of advice and the leaders, bridges and followers in these discussions.

Survey results



**By Jay Jennings, Taeyoung Lee,
Tamar Wilner, and Talia Stroud,
Center for Media Engagement**

We conducted a survey with participants in 20 countries to understand more deeply how the signals resonated with people globally. Please find more about the methodology [here](#).

The survey asked people to evaluate whether it was important for platforms to “give everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background,” and asked people to assess how well the platforms perform with respect to this signal. People were only asked about the platforms for which they are “superusers,” by which we mean people who identify the platform as their most used social media, messaging, or search platform.

We analyzed how different demographic and political groups rate the importance of this signal, as well as the platforms' performance. In particular, we looked at age,

gender, education, ideology, and country. We did this analysis for five platforms: Google, Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp.¹ Only statistically significant results are shown and discussed.

¹ The analyses include only countries where at least 200 people responded that the social/ message/ search platform was the one that they use most frequently, and then only those platforms where we had data for at least 1,000 people. For Google, this includes all 20 countries. For Facebook, this includes 18 countries and excludes Japan and South Korea. For YouTube, this includes Brazil, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States. For Facebook Messenger, this includes Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the U.K., and the United States. For WhatsApp, this includes all countries except Canada, Japan, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Sweden, and the United States. Note that the total number of respondents varies by platform: Google = 19,554; Facebook = 10,268; YouTube = 2,937; Facebook Messenger = 4,729; and WhatsApp = 10,181. The larger the sample size, the smaller the effect that we are able to detect.

Importance of the Signal

We first examined whether platform superusers thought that the signal was important. For YouTube superusers in Brazil, Germany, and South Korea, Instagram users in Germany, and Facebook users in Malaysia, this was the most important of all 14 signals.

Importance ranking: Invite everyone to participate

A ranking of "1" means that the signal was seen as the most important of the 14 signals for superusers of a given platform in a given country based on a survey of over 20,000 people across 20 countries.

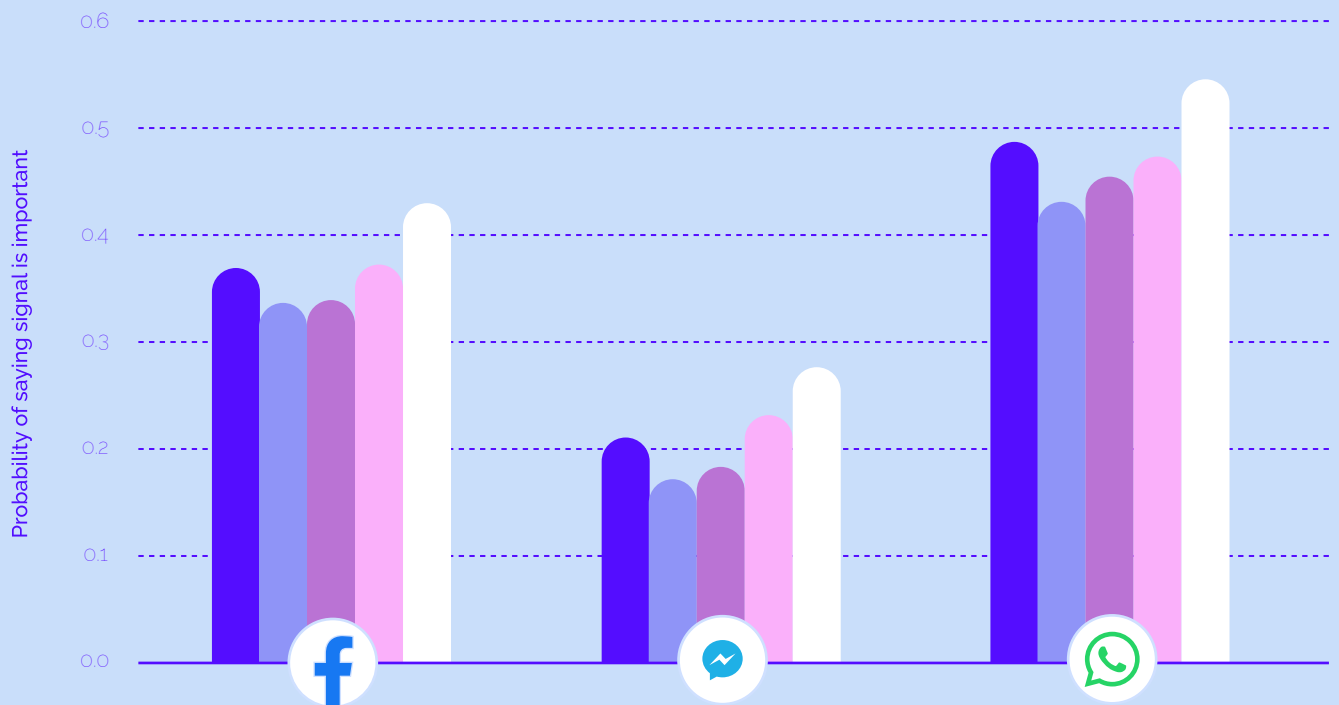
	Facebook	Youtube	Instagram	WhatsApp	FB Messenger	Google	
Argentina	12		8	9		13	Signal is most important
Australia	5	4		5	5	8	1
Brazil	2	1	2	5		5	2
Canada	4				5	8	3
France	6			9	5	7	4
Germany	3	1	1	8		10	5
Ireland	6	3		5	6	8	6
Italy	8			10		8	7
Japan		6				6	8
Malaysia	1	3	2	6		5	9
Mexico	10			11		10	10
Norway	4				7	8	11
Poland	2				4	5	12
Romania	7			5	6	7	13
Singapore	4	3		5		7	14
South Africa	2			6		7	
South Korea		1				5	
Sweden	2		3		6	6	
UK	7			7	8	9	
US	4	3			5	7	Signal is least important

Data from the Center for Media Engagement. Weighted data. Asked of those who indicated that a given social media, messaging or search platform was their most used. Question wording: Which of the following do you think it is important for [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] to do? Please select all that apply. Data only shown for those countries where at least 200 survey respondents said that the platform was their most used social media, messaging, or search platform.

Importance of the Signal by Age²

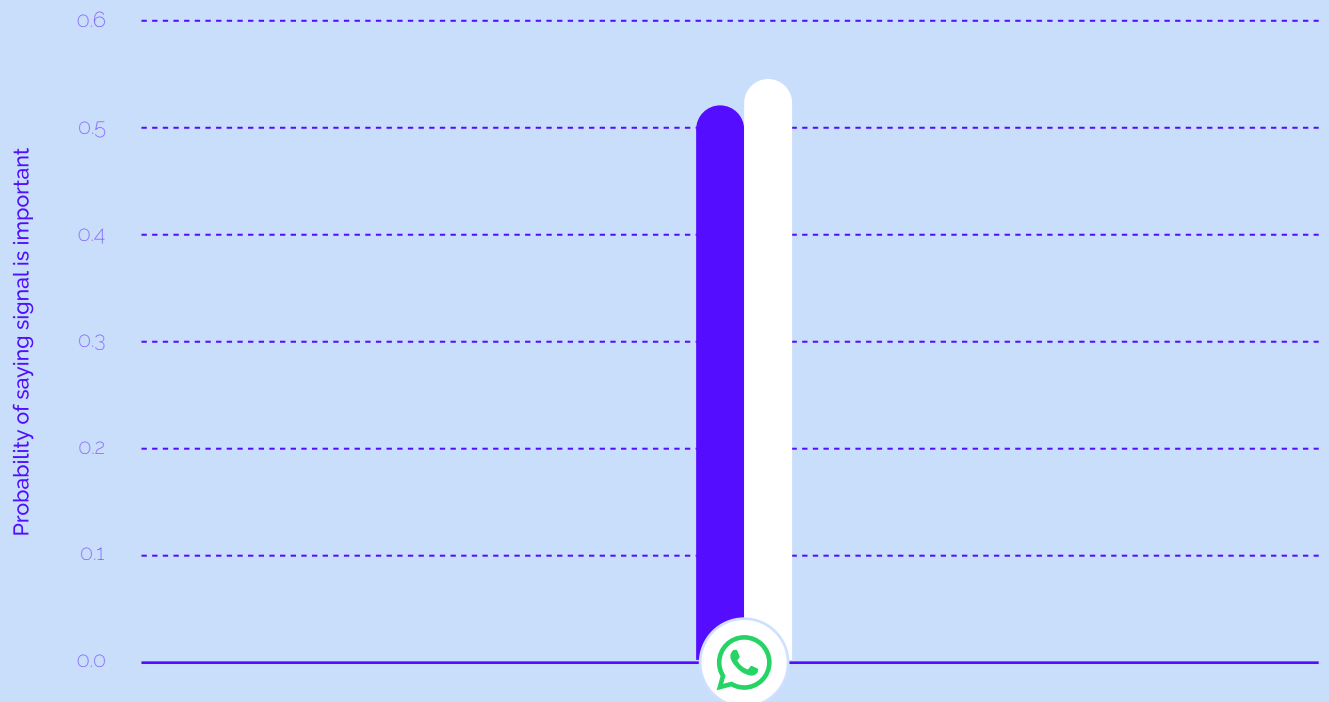
Age predicted whether people thought that “giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background” was important for three of the five platforms: Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. For all three, those who were older (55+) were more likely to think that the signal was important. For WhatsApp, those who were 18-24 also were more likely than those who were 25-34 to say that the signal was important.

² Results shown are predicted probabilities, calculated from a logistic regression analysis predicting that the signal is important based on age, gender, education, ideology, and country, each treated as a categorical variable. The baseline (based on the excluded categories) is a 55+ year old male with high education and middle ideology from the United States (except for WhatsApp, where the baseline is South Africa).



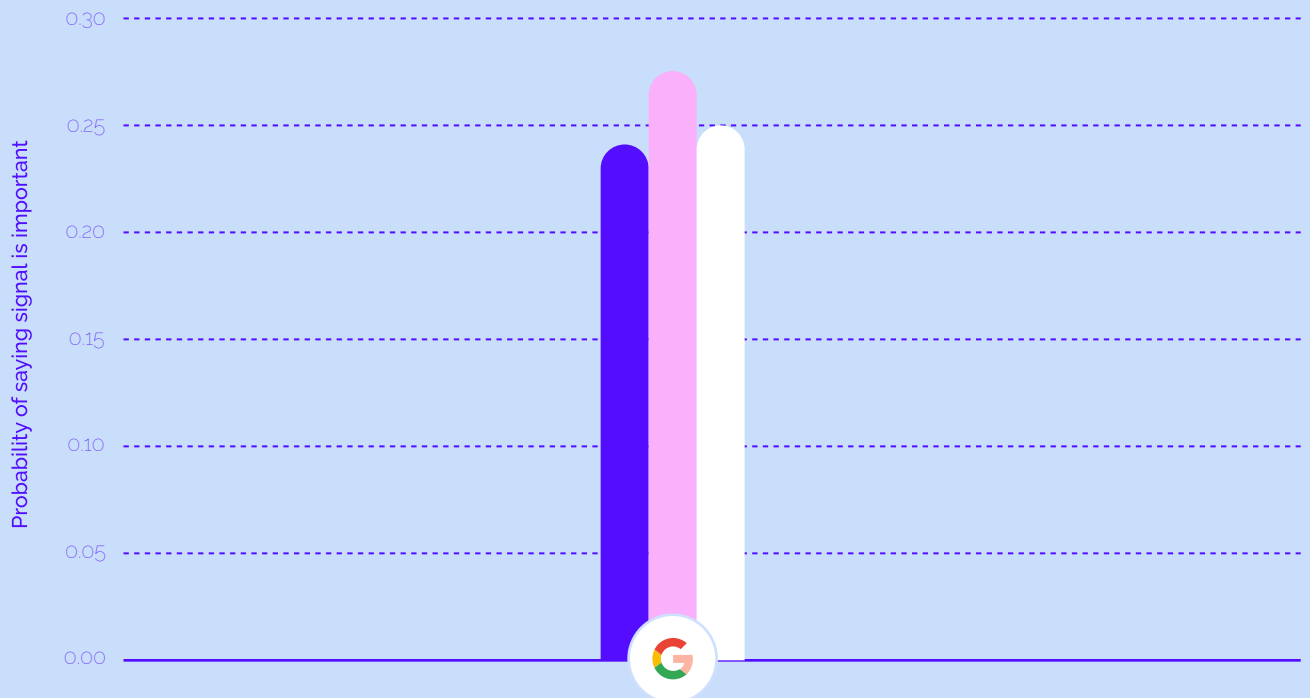
Importance of the Signal by Gender

Men and women differed in the importance they ascribed to "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background" only for one platform: WhatsApp. Here, men were more likely than women to say that the signal was important.



Importance of the Signal by Education

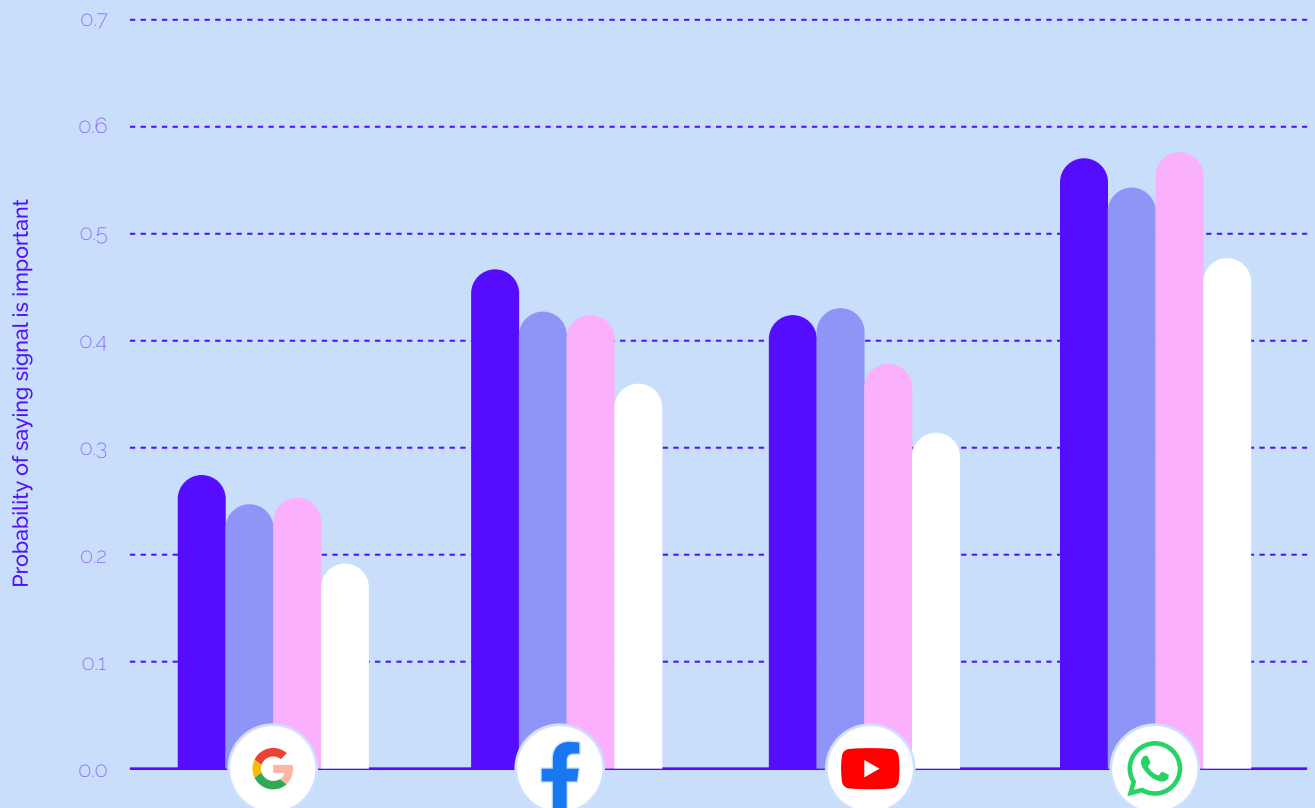
The importance of "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background" varied by education only when people were evaluating Google. Here, those with middle levels of education were more likely to think that the signal was important than those with lower or higher levels of education.



Importance of the Signal by Ideology³

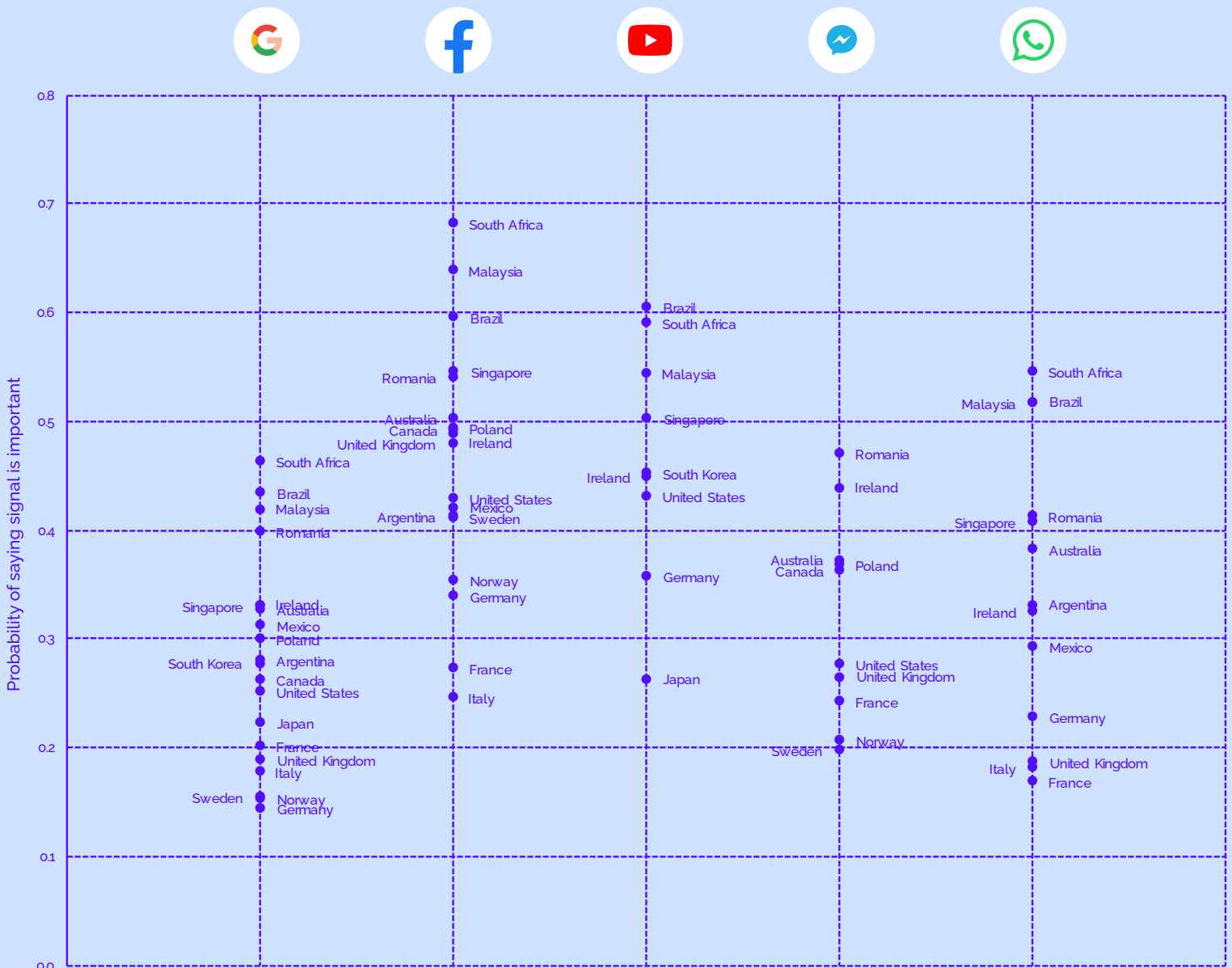
When it came to ideology, those on the political left were *more* likely and those saying that they didn't know their ideology were *less* likely to say that "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background" was important, compared with those on the right and those in the middle for Google and Facebook. For YouTube, those saying they don't know their ideology were less likely to state that the signal was important compared to those in the middle and those on the left. For WhatsApp, those who didn't know their ideology were less likely to believe that the signal was important. Those on the right were slightly more likely to believe that the signal was important than those in the middle.

³ Ideology was asked on a 10-point scale and people were given the option of saying "don't know." This was recoded into 4 categories (1 through 3, 4 through 7, 8 through 10, and "don't know").



Importance of the Signal by Country

There was significant variation by country for all five of the platforms we examined based on how important people thought that “giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background” was. The chart below shows the probability of saying that the signal is important by platform and by country. Overall, superusers in Brazil, Malaysia, and South Africa were more likely to endorse this signal as important across platforms. Fewer superusers endorsed the signal as important across platforms in France, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Sweden.



Platform Performance on the Signal

For specific platforms, superusers were first asked to say on which of the signals they thought that the platform was doing well, and then on which of the signals they thought that the platform was doing poorly. We then categorized people's responses as (0) believe that the platform is doing poorly, (1) believe that the platform is doing neither well nor poorly, or (2) believe that the platform is doing well. In general, social media superusers rated the platforms as performing better on this signal than search and messaging platform superusers did.

Performance index: Invite everyone to participate

Responses of "2" indicate that everyone in a particular country thought that the platform was performing well on a signal; responses of "0" indicate that no one in a particular country thought that the platform was performing well on a signal based on a survey of over 20,000 people across 20 countries.

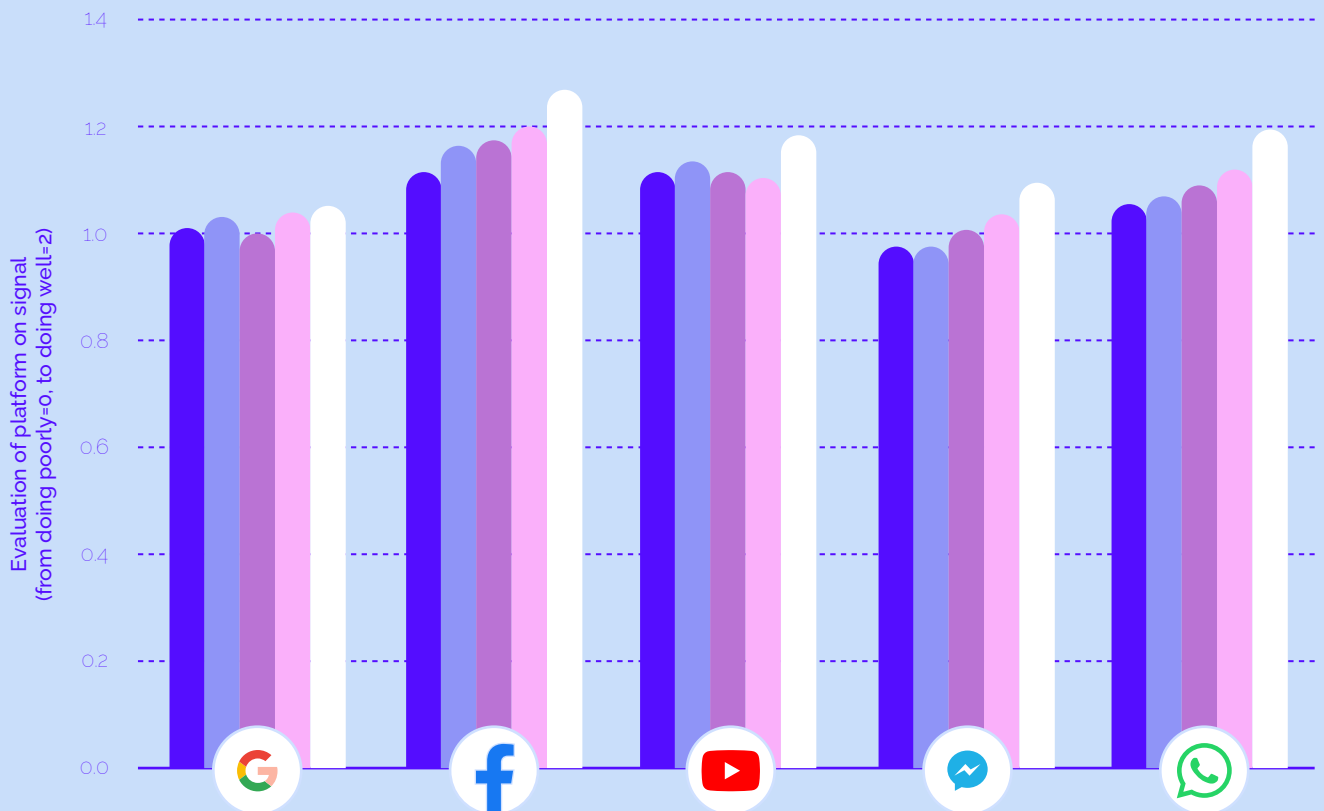


Data from the Center for Media Engagement. Weighted data. Asked of those who indicated that a given social media, messaging or search platform was their most used. Question wording - Which of the following do you think [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] does well at? Please select all that apply. And which of the following do you think [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] does poorly at? Please select all that apply. Data only shown for those countries where at least 200 survey respondents said that the platform was their most used social media, messaging, or search platform.

Platform Performance on the Signal by Age⁴

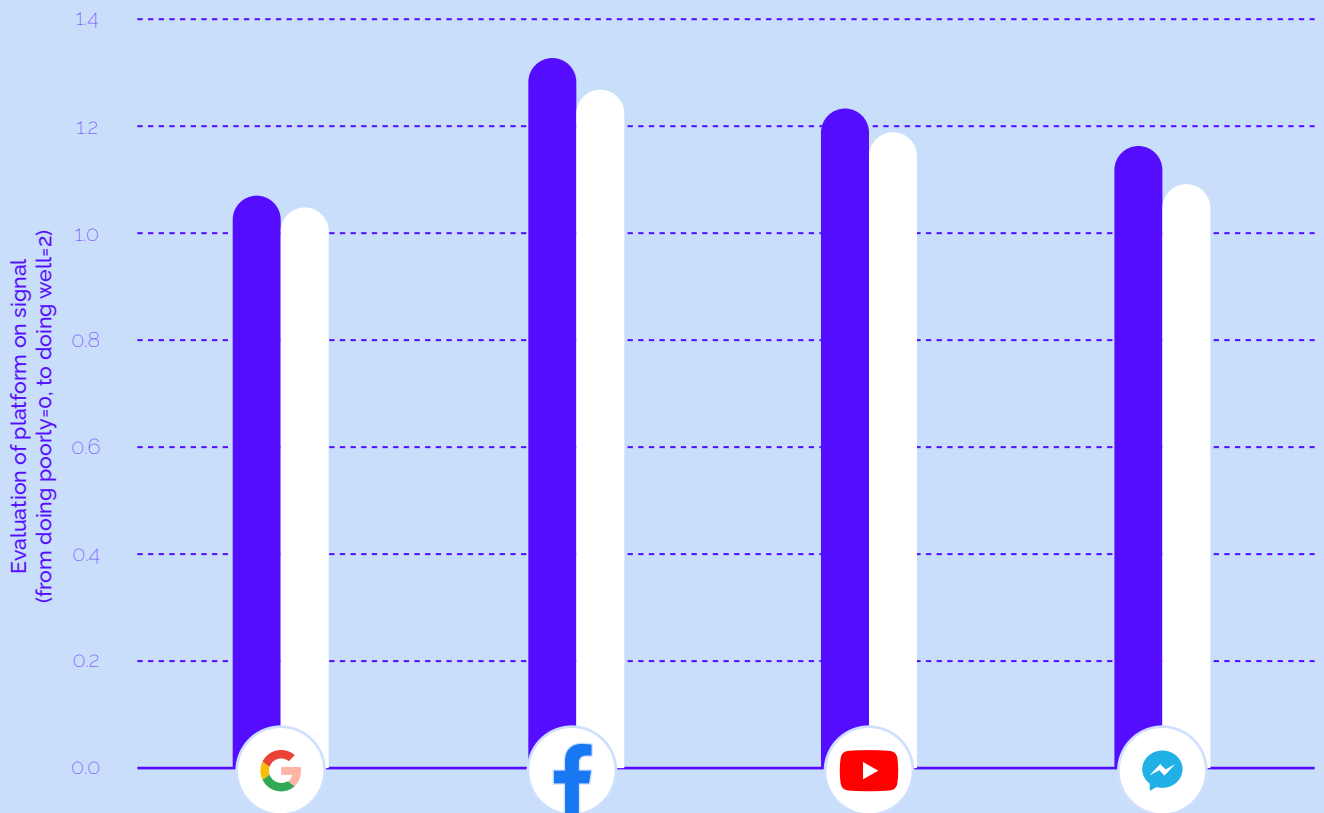
For four of the five platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp), older respondents rated the platform's performance on "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background" more positively than did younger respondents. For Google, those 55 and above rate the platform more positively than those 18-24 and those 35-44.

⁴ Results shown are predicted responses, calculated from a regression analysis predicting that the signal is important based on age, gender, education, ideology, and country, each treated as a categorical variable. The baseline (based on the excluded categories) is a 55+ year old male with high education and middle ideology from the United States (except for WhatsApp, where the baseline is Germany).



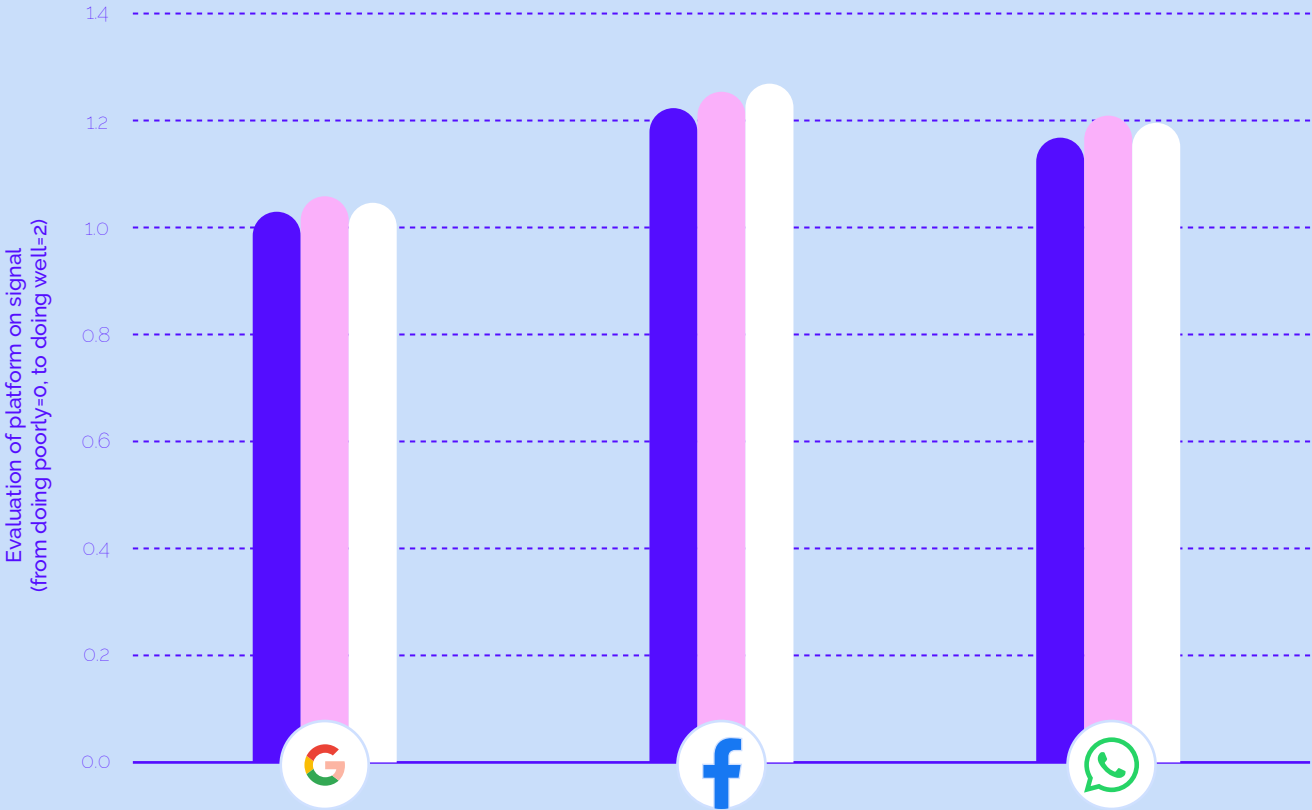
Platform Performance on the Signal by Gender

For four of the five platforms we examined, women rated the platforms' performance on "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background" better than did men.



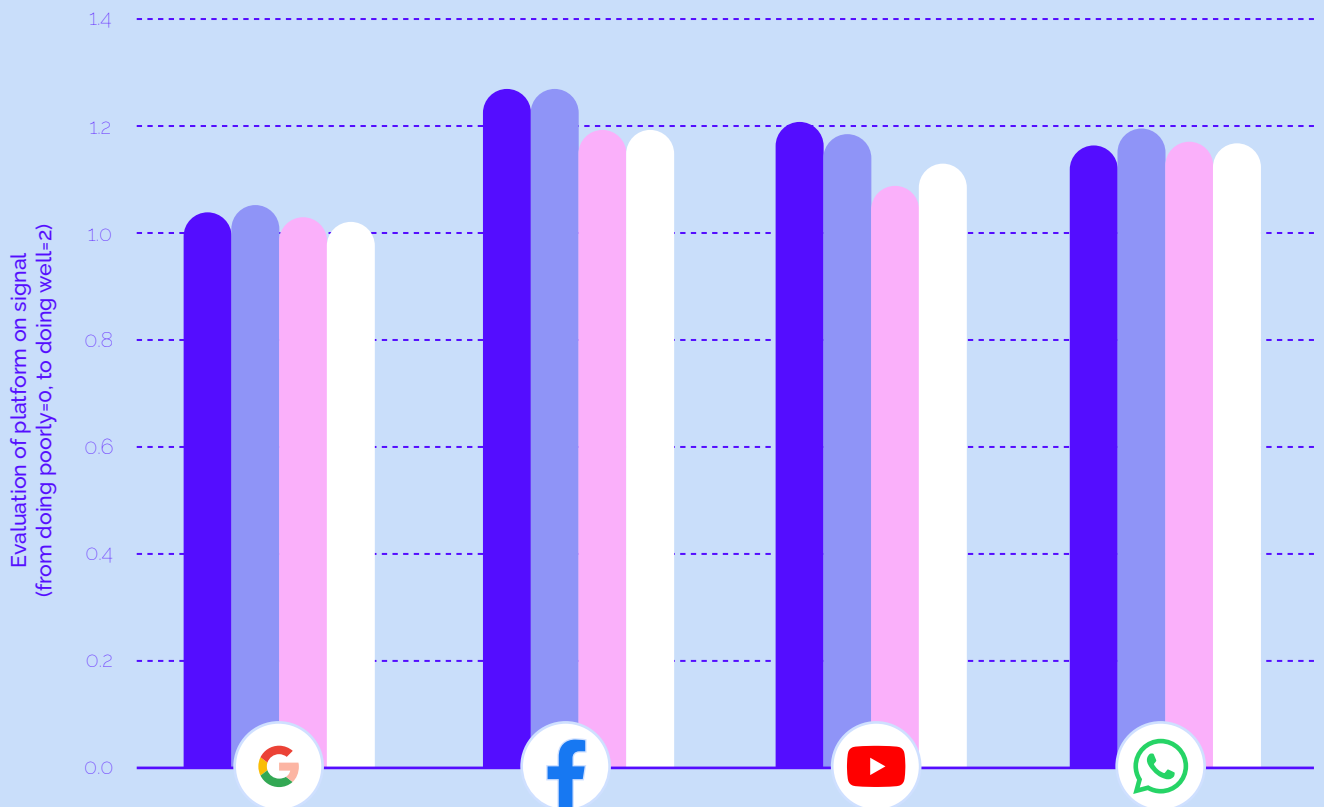
Platform Performance on the Signal by Education

For three platforms, education significantly predicted what people thought about how well the platform was doing at "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background." For Facebook, more educated respondents rated the platform more positively than did less educated respondents. For Google and WhatsApp, those with middle levels of education thought that the platform did a better job than did those with low levels of education.



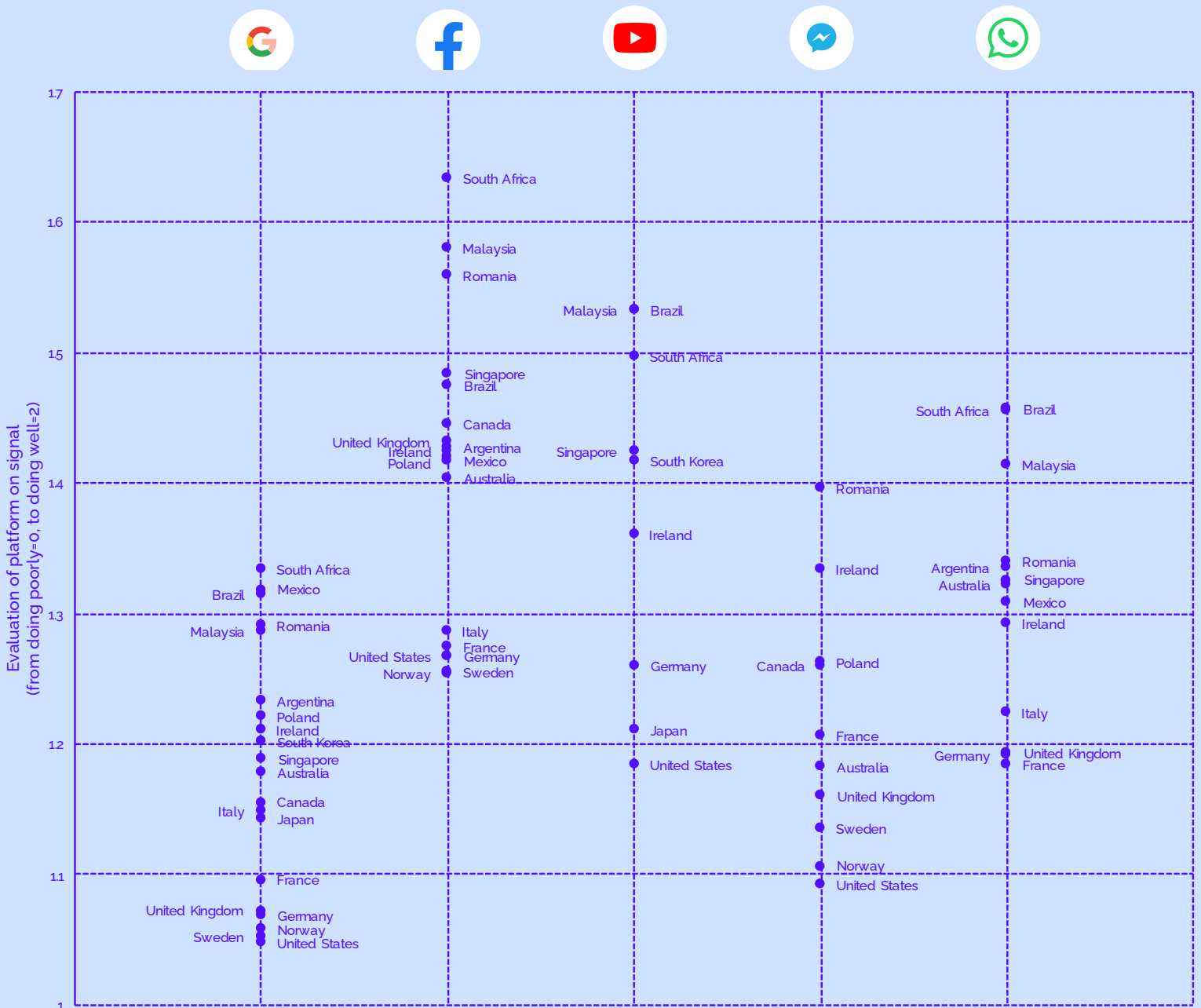
Platform Performance on the Signal by Ideology

Those who didn't report an ideology rated Google more poorly on this signal than did those with middle ideologies. Those on the political right and those who reported they didn't know their ideology evaluated Facebook more poorly on "giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts, regardless of their background" than did those on the left or in the middle. For YouTube, those on the left and with middle ideologies rated the platform's performance more positively than did those on the right. For WhatsApp, those in the middle rated the platform's performance more positively than did those who did not know their ideology.

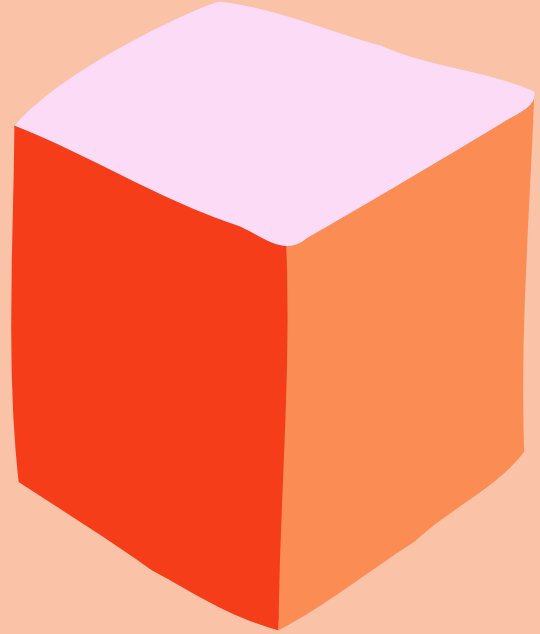


Platform Performance on the Signal by Country

There was variation by country in evaluations of platform performance. The chart below shows how superusers rated the platforms' performance in each country, controlling for age, gender, education, and ideology from "doing poorly" (0) to "doing well" (2). In general, those in South Africa, Malaysia, and Brazil tended to say that the platforms performed better with respect to this signal than those in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and France.



Focus group report



By Gina Masullo, Ori Tenenboim,
and Martin Riedl,
Center for Media Engagement

We conducted two focus groups in each of five countries (Brazil, Germany, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United States). Please find more about the methodology [here](#). Participants were asked to reflect on their social media experiences and the proposed signals. With respect to this signal, participants made several observations. Please note that all names included are pseudonyms.

Participants generally agreed that social media should give everyone a chance to share thoughts, regardless of people's gender, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics. As James, of the United States, put it: "It doesn't mean everybody has to [participate], but everyone has the right to." Participants noted that more voices online provide the potential for people to learn from each other. But they were also worried that inclu-

siveness opens the door to hateful content on social media.

Most participants supported inclusiveness to facilitate the



Social media are there for this purpose, to bring people together." – Ivo, Brazilian focus group participant



I had to think about extreme right-wing groups. If you encourage them to contribute their opinion too, you have to delete it, because certain things, which are shared, must never be online.”
– *Jacqueline, German focus group participant*

expression of diverse viewpoints. “Everyone gets a chance, not making anybody feel like they’re getting left out – their backgrounds or whatever the case is,” explained Mark, of the U.S. “...I mean, to a certain extent culture-wise, and how you look, and who you are, I think everyone should have an equal chance.” Nur, of Malaysia, expressed a similar sentiment, noting that social media are “supposed to be for everybody... Why limit to some people?”

Marcus, of South Africa, pointed out that people could benefit from diverse views. “It is always good to hear someone else’s point of view and where they come from,” he said. Others noted that diverse voices could unite people. “Social media are there for this purpose, to bring people together,” explained Ivo, of Brazil.

However, many participants were concerned that being too inclusive on social media could backfire, providing a platform for toxicity. “I had to think about extreme right-wing groups. If you encourage them to contribute their opinion too, you have to delete it,

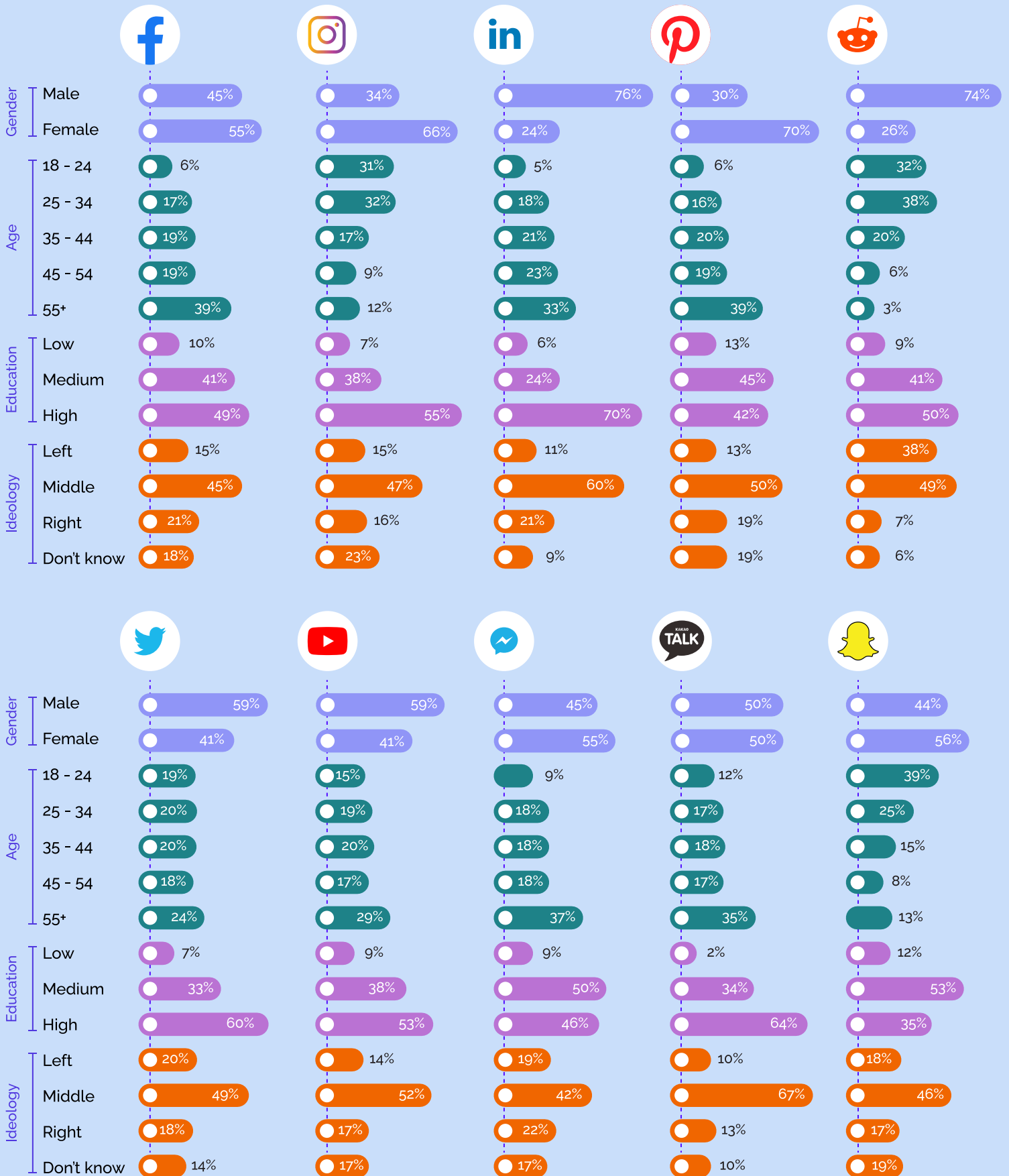
because certain things, which are shared, must never be online,” explained Jacqueline, of Germany. Mary, of the U.S., expressed a similar viewpoint. “There should be some sort of censorship if ... you’re showing someone how to make a bomb, it’s like alright, red flag,” she said.

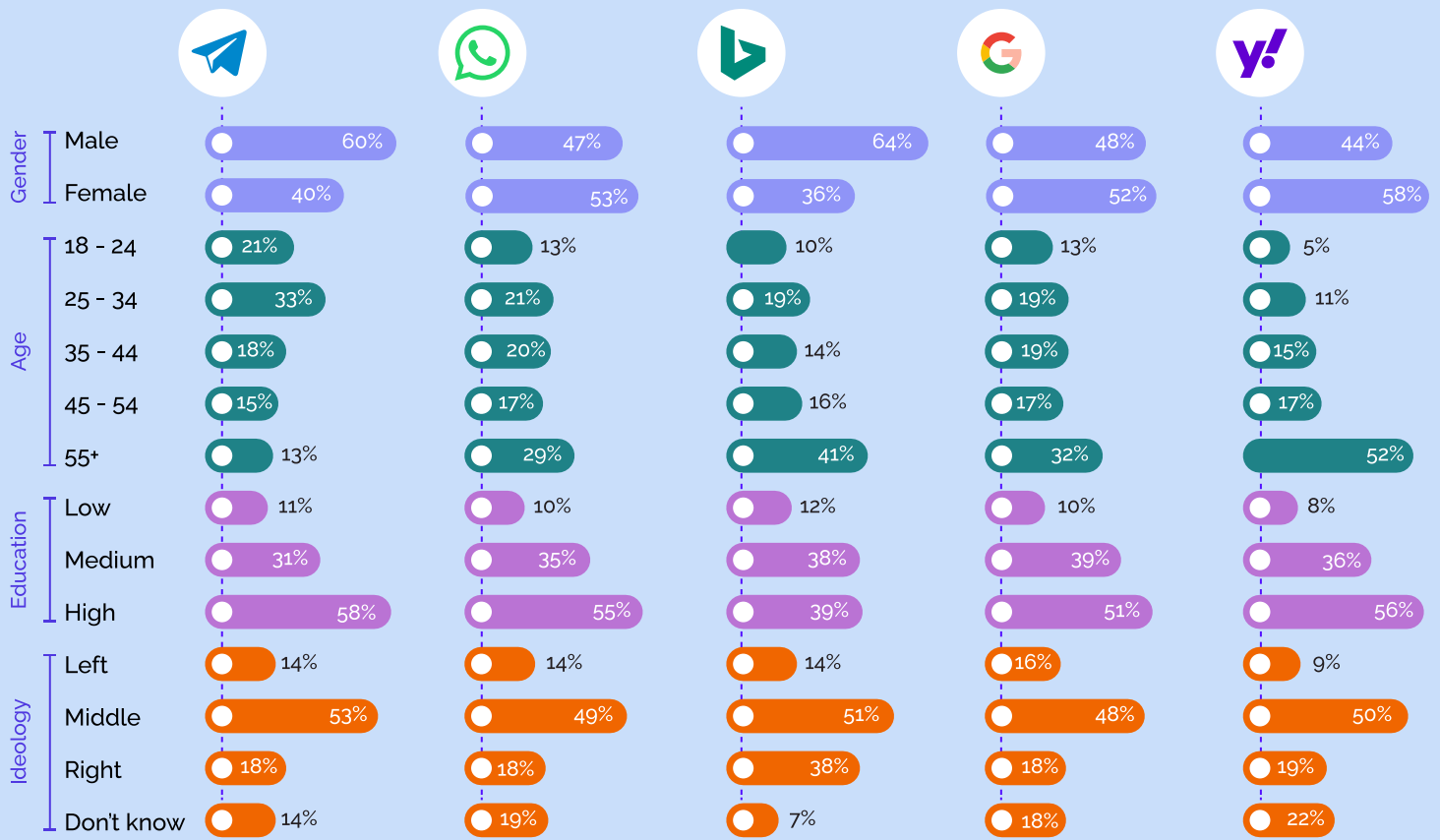
Others were more comfortable with allowing even the most virulent voices because they felt those voices would not dominate, although this was a clear minority viewpoint among our participants. Thoughts from Andrew, of the U.S., exemplify this perspective:

“I don’t agree with the white nationalists at all, but I think they should have an opportunity to participate in the conversation,” he said. “I think the reason why everybody should be able to participate is because, hopefully, in the majority we would feel that what they are doing is wrong. And if they’re able to get their voice out, we as a collective can say that they’re not doing the best. Hopefully, the voice of the majority will say that that is obviously bad.”

User demographics from survey

Based on the survey respondents across all 20 countries, we looked at the demographics of superusers. For example, of those naming Facebook as their most used social media platform, 45% are male and 55% are female.





Logo glossary

Social media



Messaging



Search engines



