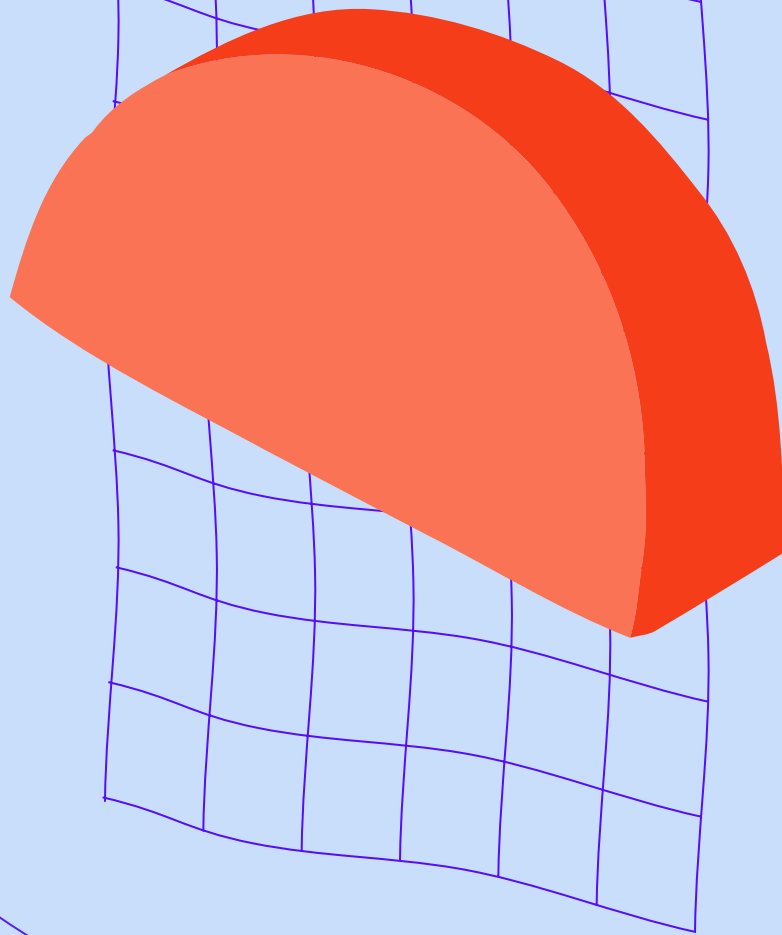


Welcome\_

Civic Signals

# Encourage the humanization of others



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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



**Humanization** is the affirmation of the human nature of others. It involves recognizing the inalienable humanity of other individuals and including those individuals in our moral considerations.

## Why It Matters

Dehumanization can contribute to discrimination and a failure to be concerned about undeserved suffering and, in extreme situations, has facilitated some of mankind's most violent acts. In contrast, humanization acts to help prevent cruelty and aggression. When we humanize others, just actions towards them appear to us as simply the right thing to do. Humanization is also a key part of personal reconciliation and peacebuilding after severe societal conflicts.

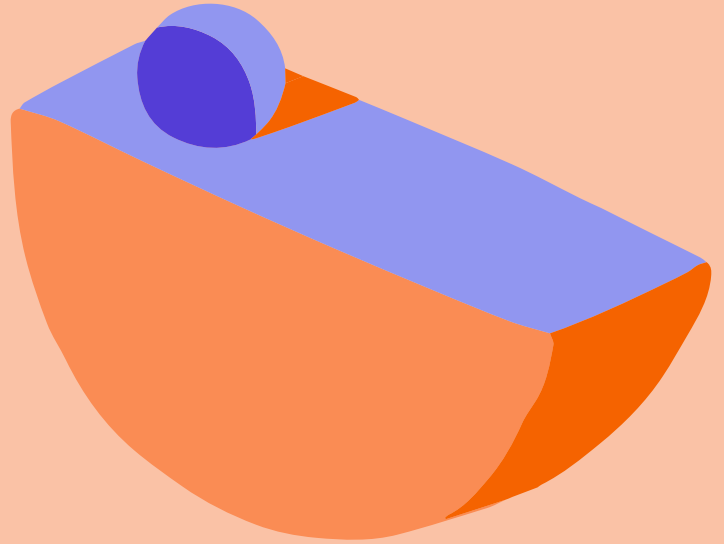


*The world is already a harsh place; you don't want online to be like that too... Every word matters. Every word changes life." – Wali, Malaysian focus group participant*

## Putting the Signal Into Practice

- Immediately after the genocide in Rwanda, members of the Hutu and Tutsi groups harbored feelings of anger, hatred, fear and suspicion towards each other. But after cooperating in coffee and handcraft collectives, mutual support and even friendship took root, researcher Ezechial Sentama found. <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/21377>
- Spaceship Media brought together hundreds of American women with diverse political views for discussion in a Facebook Group. The participants said they walked away from the project with better listening skills and a fuller understanding of the "other." <https://www.niemanlab.org/2018/12/so-many-times-we-forget-to-listen-how-spaceship-media-moderated-a-facebook-group-of-400-political-women-without-it-going-off-the-rails/>
- In Sacramento, Capital Public Radio and community groups hosted "Story Circles" about housing issues, gathering homeowners, developers, affordable housing advocates, and the homeless. More than 80% of participants said the event increased their empathy for others. <https://mediaengagement.org/research/making-strangers-less-strange/>
- In Seattle, NPR member station KUOW paired members of groups, such as Trump voters, Muslims, immigrants, transgender people, and cops, with others unlike them. Communications researchers Valerie Manusov and Danny Stofleth and KUOW's Ross Reynolds found attitudes towards these outgroups significantly improved, even three months later. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2019.1649763>
- Many other examples of interventions that decreased prejudice can be found on the database site Wise Interventions. Choose "intergroup relationships" under Social Area, here: <https://www.wiseinterventions.org/database>

# Literature review



**By Tamar Wilner,**  
With thanks to Nick Haslam,  
University of Melbourne  
and Dora Capozza,  
University of Padua

## What the Signal Is

The signal of encouraging people to treat others humanely is connected to the idea of “outgroup humanization.” To understand outgroup humanization, we need to examine two sets of concepts: outgroups (as opposed to ingroups) and humanization (as opposed to dehumanization).

Every person belongs to ingroups. Psychologist Gordon Allport wrote in the 1950s that an indicator of an ingroup is when members use the term “we” to refer to themselves. Ingroups can include families, schools, clubs, cities, states and nations.

Social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner further refined the definition of an ingroup, noting that members see themselves as belonging to the same social category, are emotionally involved in this categorization, and reach some consensus about who is and isn't a part of the group.

For every ingroup, there often is one or more outgroups. Members of an ingroup tend to favor each other and discriminate against members of outgroups. People use group distinctions to define themselves as “better” or “worse” than others.

Humanization is the affirmation of the distinctively or typically human characteristics

of others, such as intelligence, rationality, self-control, culture, emotions, individuality, and imagination, according to psychologist Nick Haslam. It involves recognizing the inalienable humanity of other individuals and seeing them as deserving of moral treatment. Humanization acts to help prevent cruelty and aggression. When we humanize others, just actions towards them appear to us as simply the right thing to do.

Dehumanization, on the other hand, is the "denial of full humanness to others," according to Haslam. Dehumanization may involve comparing outgroup members to animals or to inanimate objects, or failing to attribute human qualities to them. When we humanize, we see a person as fully evolved and as emotionally rich, with depth and individuality.

It is now very well established that people have a tendency not only to favor their ingroup relative to outgroups, but also to humanize their ingroup and dehumanize outgroups.

We argue here for the signal of outgroup humanization, which one can think of as "seeing others as human beings, despite your differences."

## Related Concepts

We want to acknowledge several important concepts that are related to outgroup humanization, but that we have chosen not to focus on explicitly. First, we think outgroup humanization is a better goal than "outgroup respect." Interdisciplinary social scientists Maykel Verkuyten and Kumar Yogeeswaran wrote that respect involves regarding each other as equal citizens "with the same rights

and liberties." One might argue that we don't owe such an obligation to those whose views are beyond the pale: If someone has sworn to kill us, for example, he may not deserve the same rights and liberties. But we should still view that person as human.

Second, we choose to prioritize "humanization" over "empathy," though the two concepts are closely related. Empathy consists of the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another, psychologist Mark Davis has explained, and includes tendencies to adopt the other's point of view, to transpose oneself into the feelings and actions of another, and to have "other-oriented" feelings such as sympathy. Although perceiving another as human could activate empathetic reactions, the causal chain could go the other way, too: Haslam's review of the literature found that empathy is often seen as a prerequisite for humanization. We choose to focus on outgroup humanization because of the strong literature base showing the benefits and achievability of humanization.

Third, it's important to note that humanization is distinct from mere liking or having a positive evaluation of a person. We can view someone as fully human while not particularly liking them, and conversely, can like someone without fully humanizing them (as we would a pet cat, as Haslam has pointed out). Below, we explain why humanization in particular is important and why we choose to make it one of the 14 Civic Signals.

## Why It's Important

Bandura argued that the way we judge our own morality depends on how we think about the people we mistreat – specifically,

whether we think of them as human. "It is difficult to mistreat humanised people without risking personal distress and self-condemnation," he wrote.

In fact, Bandura found that people refuse to behave cruelly towards others who they have humanized, even in the face of authoritarian orders to do so. In a 1975 experiment that Bandura conducted with psychologists Bill Underwood and Michael Fromson, participants overheard themselves being described by the experimenters in either humanized terms, characterized as perceptive and understanding; in dehumanized terms, as animalistic and worthless; or with no evaluation. Instructed to administer electric shocks on a 1-10 scale to actors who failed at a task, those who heard the humanizing terms consistently gave mild punishments, compared with the strong shocks delivered by those who heard dehumanizing terms. This experiment suggests that humanizing terms can counteract aggression, the authors concluded.

Not only do people who humanize others refuse to do bad things, but they also proactively choose to do good things, viewing even heroic actions as simply their human duty. Bandura gave the examples of non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust, and of a young American helicopter pilot who risked his life during the Vietnam War to rescue a dozen villagers during the My Lai massacre perpetrated by his countrymen. "The affirmation of common humanity can bring out the best in others," Bandura wrote.

Humanization is also a key part of reconciliation. Two sides in a conflict need to see each other as human beings who have more in common than not, according to social psychologist and conflict resolution specialist

Morton Deutsch. That can mean understanding each other through everyday roles such as parents, teachers, and shopkeepers. Humanizing the other side frequently leads to teamwork and cooperation, conflict resolution professor Jay Rothman wrote. And humanizing the opposing side also facilitates forgiveness, according to research conducted in Northern Ireland by behavioral scientist Tania Tam and colleagues.

Humanization plays an important role in peacebuilding efforts after severe conflicts, such as the genocide in Rwanda, according to human rights researcher Ezechial Sentama. Efforts to foster humanization have succeeded in reconciling members of previously opposing groups in Rwanda, Sentama found (see "How we can move the needle," below).

Social psychologist and justice researcher Susan Opatow explored the flip side: To her, dehumanization is a form of "moral exclusion." In moral exclusion, individuals or groups are perceived as lying beyond the boundaries in which one applies moral values and considers fairness, so harming them seems acceptable or even just.

As a result, dehumanization has facilitated some of mankind's most violent and discriminatory acts, including genocide, torture, religious persecution, political repression and human rights abuses. Psychologists assert that dehumanization enabled the Holocaust, My Lai massacre, slavery in America, and genocide in Rwanda.

Short of the worst atrocities, dehumanization plays a role in many other injustices. Members of advantaged racial groups tend to dehumanize members of disadvantaged racial groups, several studies have found.

A study by psychologist Phillip Atiba Goff and colleagues found that news articles are more likely to portray black defendants than white defendants in apelike terms, with such terms including "animal," "ape," "barbaric," "jungle," "savage," and "wild." And they found that these descriptions are associated with harsher penalties being applied to black defendants.

Management professors Adam Waytz and Juliana Schroeder distinguished between dehumanization by commission, which comes from an active desire to distinguish one's group or to do harm, and dehumanization by omission, which comes from indifference, or a passive failure to consider others' mental states. Although dehumanization by commission is responsible for horrific examples of intragroup violence, Waytz and Schroeder argued that dehumanization by omission is responsible for many of the injustices of everyday life, and is just as consequential.

For example, dehumanization leads to a failure to address or be concerned about undeserved suffering, Opatow wrote. Leyens and colleagues argued that a form of outgroup dehumanization was a factor in Belgian television stations' decision to devote much more airtime to the death of 10 Belgian soldiers in Rwanda than to the genocide that killed more than one million Africans.

Although we've described some of the consequences of dehumanization, the purpose of this signal is to promote and highlight efforts to humanize others.

## How We Can Move the Needle

Luckily, it's possible to improve ingroup members' attitudes towards the outgroup. A large body of research has supported Gordon Allport's contention that intergroup contact reduces prejudice, according to an analysis by psychologists Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp. Contact's effect on attitudes is especially pronounced when the ingroup members perceive the outgroup members they meet as being typical of the outgroup, social psychologist Rupert Brown and colleagues found. But a significant amount of research suggests that not all contact decreases prejudice. In fact, negative contact can increase racism and prejudice, perhaps even more strongly than positive contact decreases these attitudes, as psychologist Fiona Kate Barlow and her co-authors reported.

It's important to keep in mind, however, that lack of prejudice isn't the same thing as humanization. Recent studies have examined whether contact is associated with humanization, and here the findings are encouraging. In a pair of studies, an Italian group of researchers led by social psychologist Dora Capozza repeatedly found that positive contact was linked with greater outgroup humanization. The researchers suggested a possible process at play: Participants may have reclassified the "us" and "them" of ingroup and outgroup into a larger "we."

Ezechial Sentama found a striking example of this process in his study of coffee and handcraft cooperative workers in Rwanda. Immediately after the genocide there, members of the Hutu and Tutsi groups harbored



feelings of anger, hatred, fear and suspicion towards each other. But after cooperating in the collectives, these feelings subsided, and each group experienced re-humanization of the other. Mutual support and even friendship took root.

Less dramatically, several initiatives appear to have yielded real-life improvements in characteristics related to humanization. In Sacramento, California, Capital Public Radio partnered with community organizations to host "Story Circles," small gatherings of residents who ate meals together and talked about housing issues. Participants included a mix of homeowners, developers, affordable housing advocates, and the homeless. More than 80 percent of participants said they felt the event increased their empathy for others, which is associated with enhanced humanization.

In Seattle, NPR member station KUOW paired members of groups in the news – such as Trump voters, Muslims, immigrants, transgender people, and cops – with other people who didn't typically interact with those groups. The groups were chosen because they have all been depicted at times as an "other" – that is to say, dehumanized. Communication professor Valerie Manusov and her graduate student Danny Stofleth evaluated the "Ask A..." series of events, together with KUOW's executive producer for community engagement Ross Reynolds, and found that attitudes towards these outgroups significantly improved, even three months after the event. The authors attribute the success of the events to their non-hierarchical and non-threatening nature, which they say conforms to Allport's conception of the ideal interaction for improving attitudes towards outgroups.

## How to Measure

One approach used widely by social psychologists, developed by researchers such as Dora Capozza and colleagues, is to examine the degree to which people assign human characteristics to their ingroup and outgroup. For example, there is a well-established tendency for people to attribute more "uniquely human" emotions (emotions believed to be unique to our species, such as nostalgia or guilt) to their ingroup than to the outgroup. The tendency to humanize outgroups can therefore be assessed by examining whether people perceive outgroups as having such uniquely human emotions as much as their ingroup. The same can be done by looking at uniquely human traits (e.g., conscientious, imaginative) rather than emotions, or by looking at traits that represent what people see as our "human nature." People see these human nature traits (e.g., passionate, curious, and impulsive) as fundamental to what makes us human, and people who are perceived to lack them are often perceived as robotic or objectified.

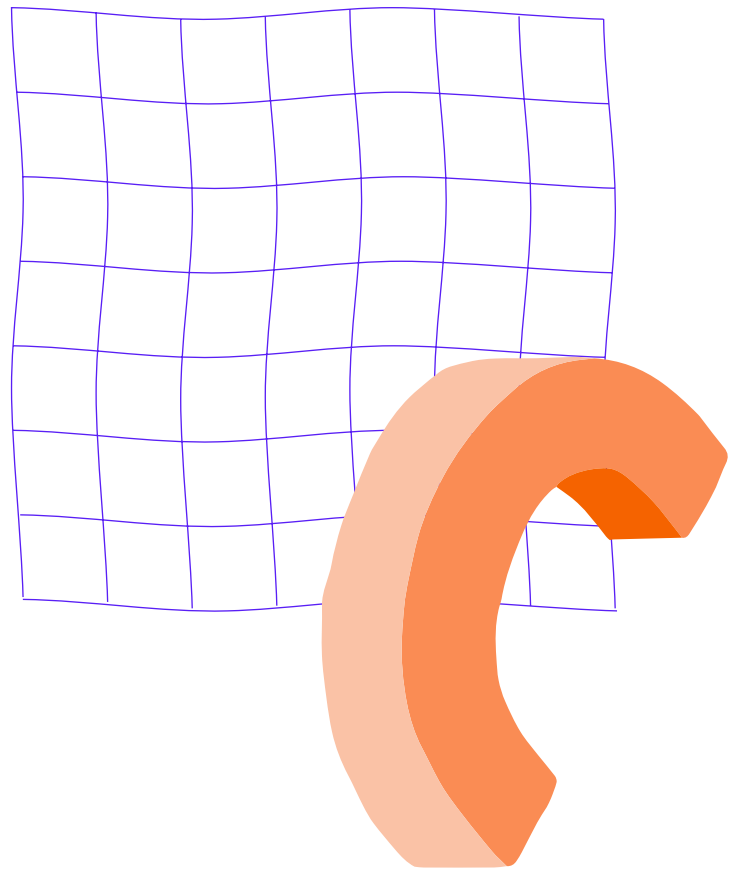
Management professor Nour Kteily and colleagues used a blunter approach: They showed participants a version of the famous "Ascent of Man" graphic, which depicts the evolutionary path from apes (a rating of 0) to modern Homo sapiens (a rating of 100). They then asked participants to indicate where along the path they saw various outgroups as falling. Astonishingly, many participants rate some human groups below 100 – some groups have received average ratings as low as 50 – implying that they perceive members of these groups as primitive, unevolved, and bestial.

It may be possible to build automated detectors of dehumanizing speech. For

example, Douwe Kiela and colleagues at Facebook built a detector of hateful memes, using a definition of hate speech that included dehumanizing speech. The detector still performed poorly compared to human classifiers, however. Meanwhile, computational social scientist Julia Mendelsohn and her coauthors measured dehumanization by breaking it down into four dimensions: negative evaluations, denial of agency, moral disgust and use of vermin metaphors.

Other suggestions, culled from a workshop conducted in collaboration with the Center for Social Media Responsibility at the University of Michigan in April of 2019, include

analyzing social media text for outgroup language such as “us” and “them.” To identify humanizing content, one might look for content that references multiple groups, is being shared across groups, and is yielding positive responses from the groups.



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# Expert Q&A



## Three key questions with **Nick Haslam**, The University of Melbourne

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

The principle of treating others humanely is fundamental to building a tolerable world online and off. Humanizing others is key to treating them with respect and dignity, and not seeing them as one-dimensional caricatures or stereotypes. It encourages us to take other people's voices seriously and to value them, and thereby makes it more likely they feel heard and understood rather than ignored or dismissed. Just as dehumanization, the opposite of humanizing others, can lead to downward spirals – when people believe they're seen as less than human by others, they reciprocate by seeing

those others as less than human themselves – humanizing can create virtuous cycles of mutual respect. It makes disagreements less likely to escalate into conflict, and more likely to be resolved constructively without name-calling and polarization. Common ground is more likely to be sought and found when there is a default assumption that the other person's views are likely to be just as complex and heart-felt as one's own. When disagreements persist, humanizing the other allows us to expand the range of acceptable opinions rather than writing off other views as stupid, stubborn, or evil. Humanizing others also promotes helping others and forgiving them when they have wronged us. All in all, recognizing the

humanity of others is a vital foundation for a functioning society.

**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?**

The perfect platform would encourage humanizing expression and interaction, and make people aware when these are lacking. It would have an automated means of identifying probable instances of dehumanizing expressions for moderation and flagging these expressions for users, who may not be aware of their adverse effects on constructive dialogue. It would also find a way to reward respectful and humanizing exchanges rather than simply flagging or penalizing disrespect and dehumanization. Rather than simply identifying negative sentiment or conflict – phenomena that are related to but distinct from dehumanization – it would aim to promote constructive resolution of disagreements or respectful disengagement from them when resolution cannot be found.

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

Measuring something as apparently abstract and open-ended as “treating others humanely” is a significant challenge. Arguably it is harder to assess humanizing than dehumanizing. The most promising way to evaluate whether a platform is succeeding on this principle is therefore to measure the presence of subtle or blatant dehumanization. There are several ways in which this might be done. One is to assess whether blatant dehumanization is present, such as the use of animal or disease metaphors to

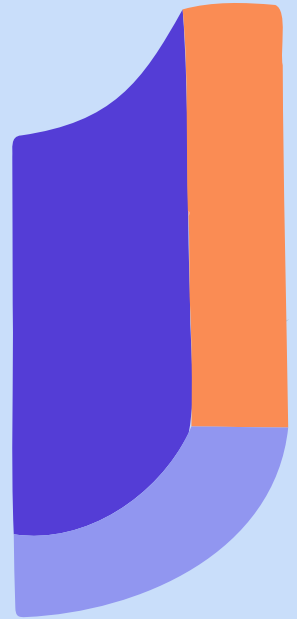
refer to individuals or groups. That assessment overlaps to some degree with efforts to assess hate speech, although some hate speech may be virulently negative without using dehumanizing metaphors and some dehumanizing language may not rise to the level of virulent hate. Another way to assess dehumanization somewhat more subtly is to measure evidence of disgust or contempt toward other individuals or groups, even if this does not take the form of dehumanizing metaphors. A final way is to evaluate whether expressions on the platform deny agency to others, seeing them as passive or merely acted upon.

Measuring these phenomena is not straightforward but progress has been made by researchers in computational linguistics, who have documented changes in some of these indicators of dehumanizing language (e.g., in media discussions of LGBTQ people).<sup>1</sup> Indicators such as these could be tracked to ensure that dehumanizing expressions, and changes in their frequency, can be identified.

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1 Mendelsohn, J., Tsvetkov, Y., & Jurafsky, D. (2020). A framework for the computational linguistic analysis of dehumanization. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2003.03014.pdf>

# 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 “encourage people to treat others humanely,” 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.<sup>1</sup> Only statistically significant results are shown and discussed.

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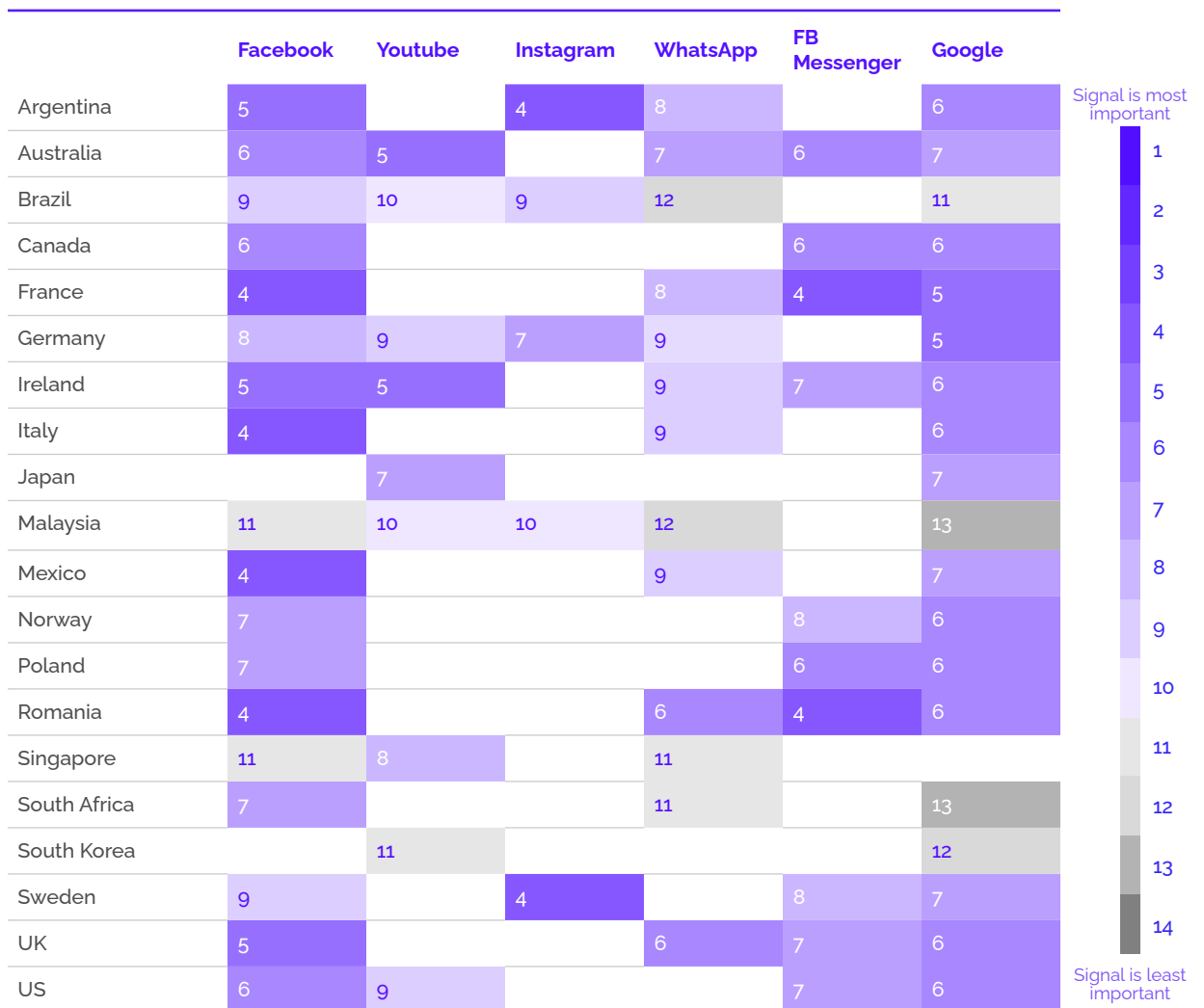
<sup>1</sup> The analyses include only countries where at least 200 people responded that the social/ message/ search platform was the one that they use most frequently, and then only those platforms where we had data for at least 1,000 people. For Google, this includes all 20 countries. For Facebook, 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. Although the signal was not rated as most important across the countries and platforms we analyzed, it ranked as the fourth most important signal for Facebook superusers in France, Italy, Mexico, and Romania, Instagram superusers in Argentina and Sweden, and Facebook Messenger superusers in France and Romania.

## Importance ranking: Encourage humanization of others

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.



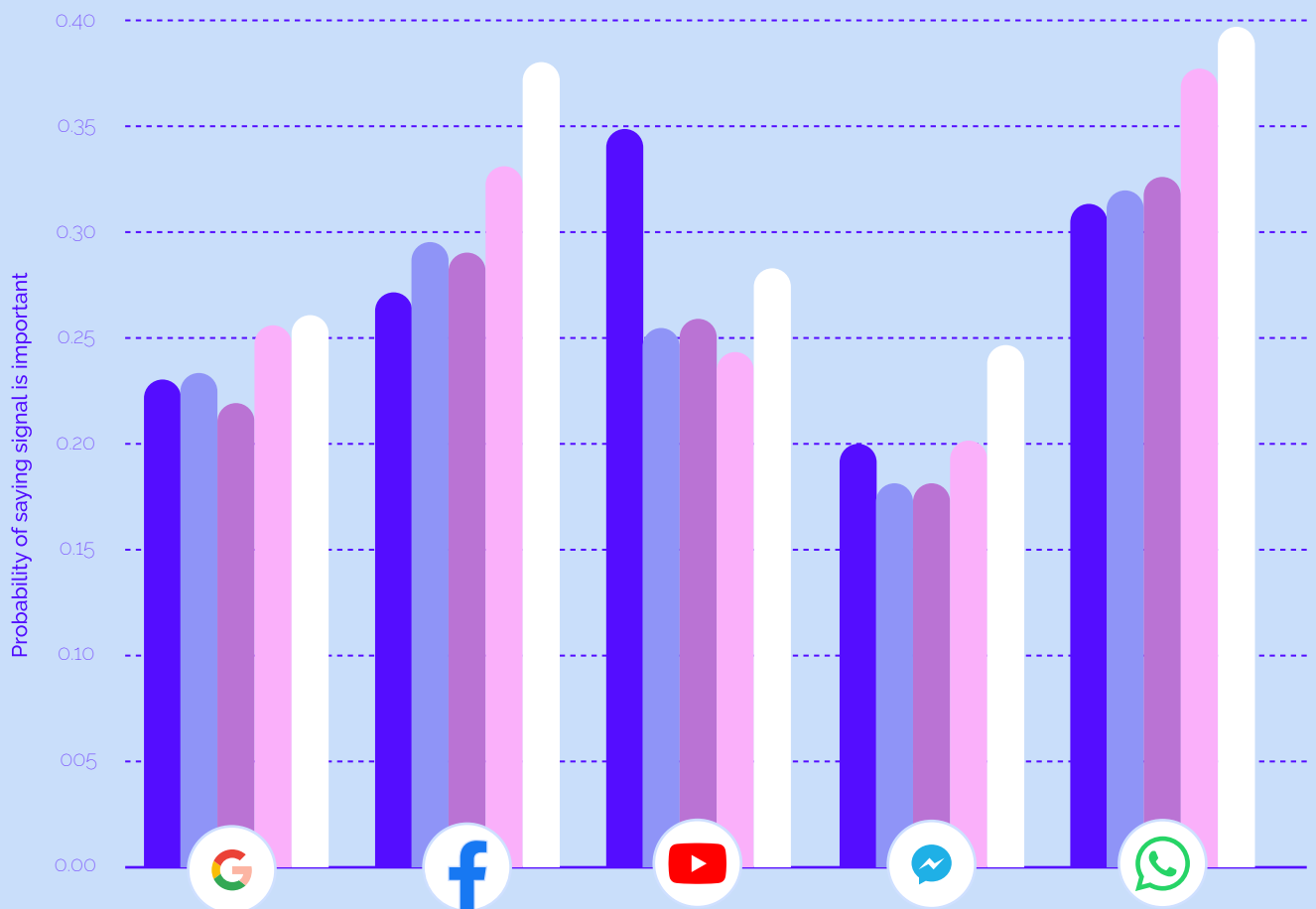
Data from the Center for Media Engagement. Weighted data. Asked of those who indicated that a given social media, messaging or search platform was their most used. Question wording: Which of the following do you think it is important for [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] to do? Please select 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 Age<sup>2</sup>

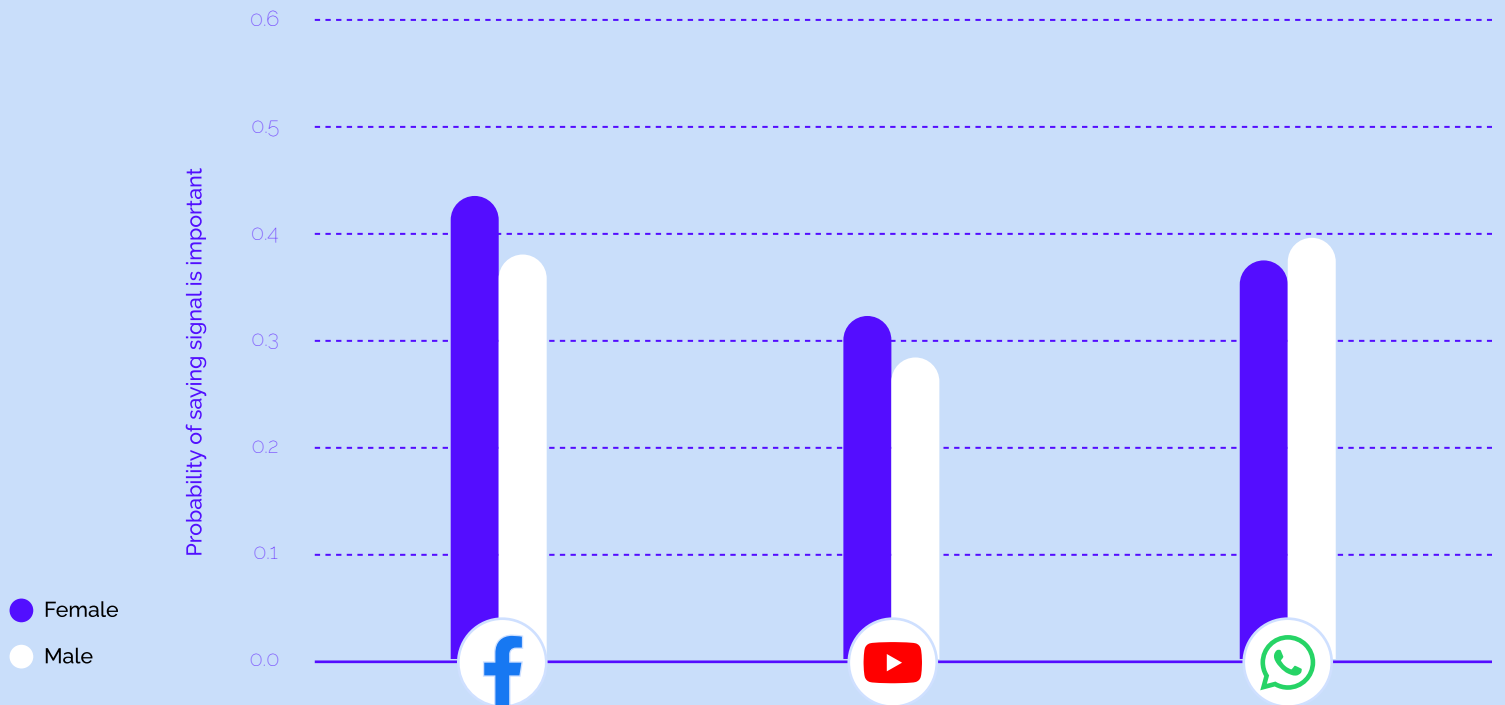
Age predicted whether people thought that “encouraging people to treat others humanely” was important for all five of the platforms we examined. Except for YouTube, superusers who were older were more likely to think that the signal was important than those who were younger. For YouTube, those who were younger (18-24) were more likely to say that the signal was important compared to the other age groups.

<sup>2</sup> 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

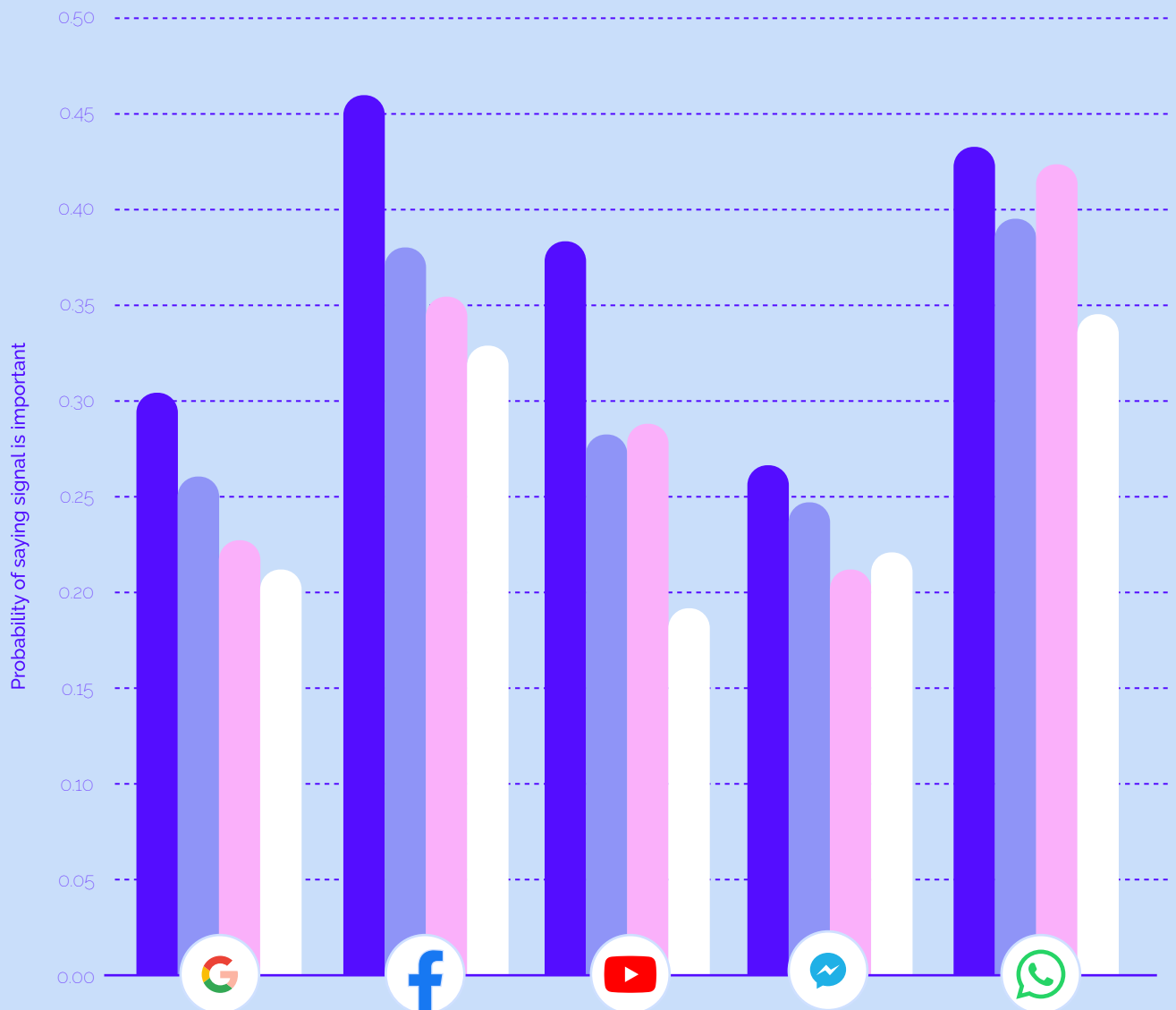
Men and women differed in the importance they ascribed to “encouraging people to treat others humanely” only for three platforms: Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp. For Facebook and YouTube, women were more likely than men to think that the signal was important. For WhatsApp, men were more likely than women to say that the signal was important.



## Importance of the Signal by Ideology<sup>3</sup>

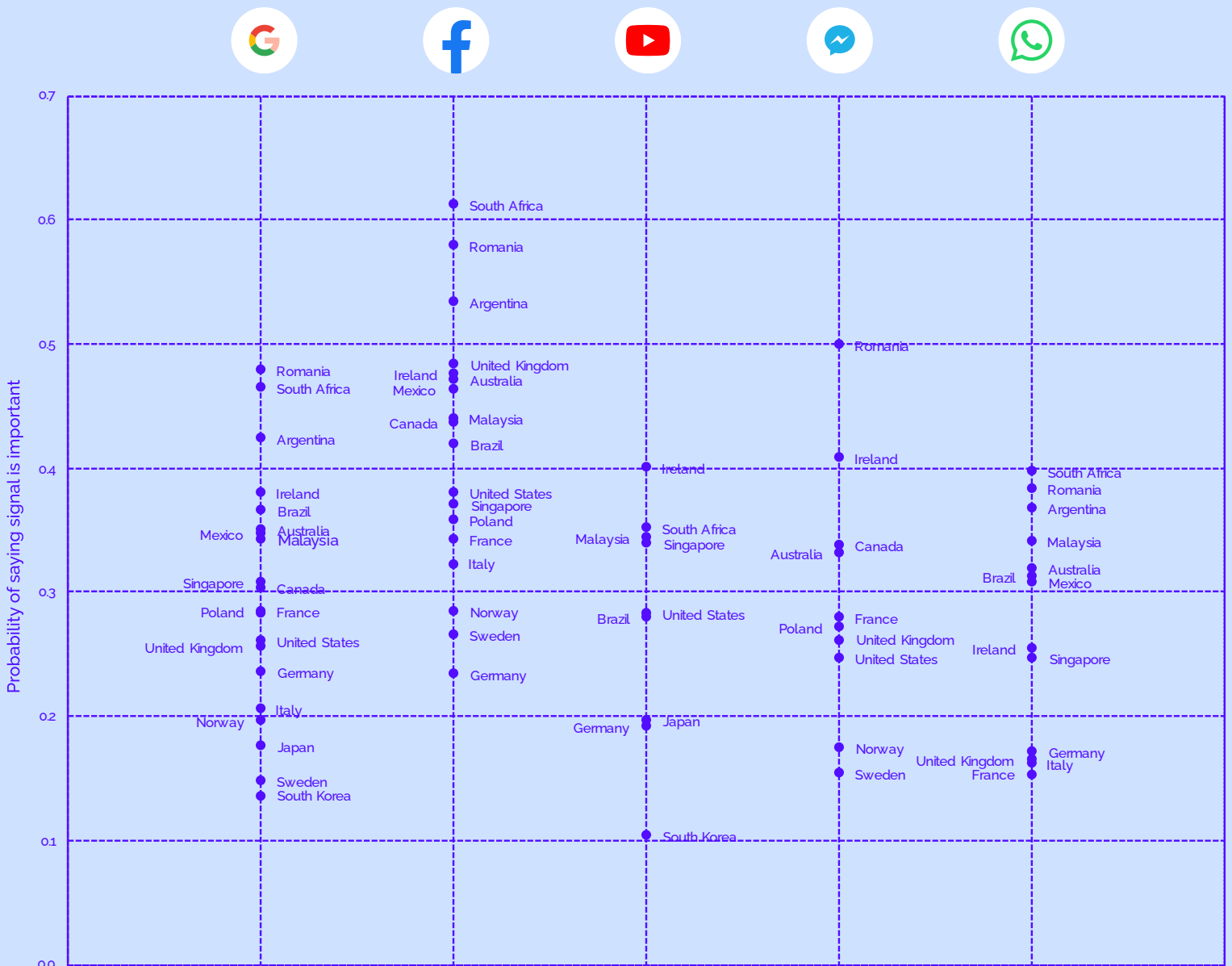
When it came to ideology, there were differences across all five platforms in saying that “encouraging people to treat others humanely” was important. For Google and Facebook, those on the left were more likely to say that the signal was important than those with other ideologies and those in the middle rated the signal as more important than those who did not know their ideology. For YouTube, those on the left again rated the signal as more important than all others, and those who didn't know their ideology rated the signal as less important than all others. For Facebook Messenger, those on the left and in the middle rated the signal as more important than those on the right and those on the left also rated it as more important than those who did not know their ideology. For WhatsApp, those on the left rated the signal as more important than those in the middle and those who didn't know their ideology rated the signal as less important than all other ideologies.

<sup>3</sup> 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 superusers thought that “encouraging people to treat others humanely” was. The chart below shows the probability of saying that the signal is important by platform and by country. Overall, survey respondents in South Africa, Romania, Argentina, and Ireland were more likely to endorse this signal as important across platforms. Fewer respondents endorsed the signal as important across platforms in South Korea, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Japan.



# 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. On average, superusers rated the platforms as performing neither well nor poorly. Superusers in Brazil, Malaysia, Poland and Romania tended to rate the platforms more positively on this signal than those in other countries.

## Performance index: Encourage humanization of others

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.

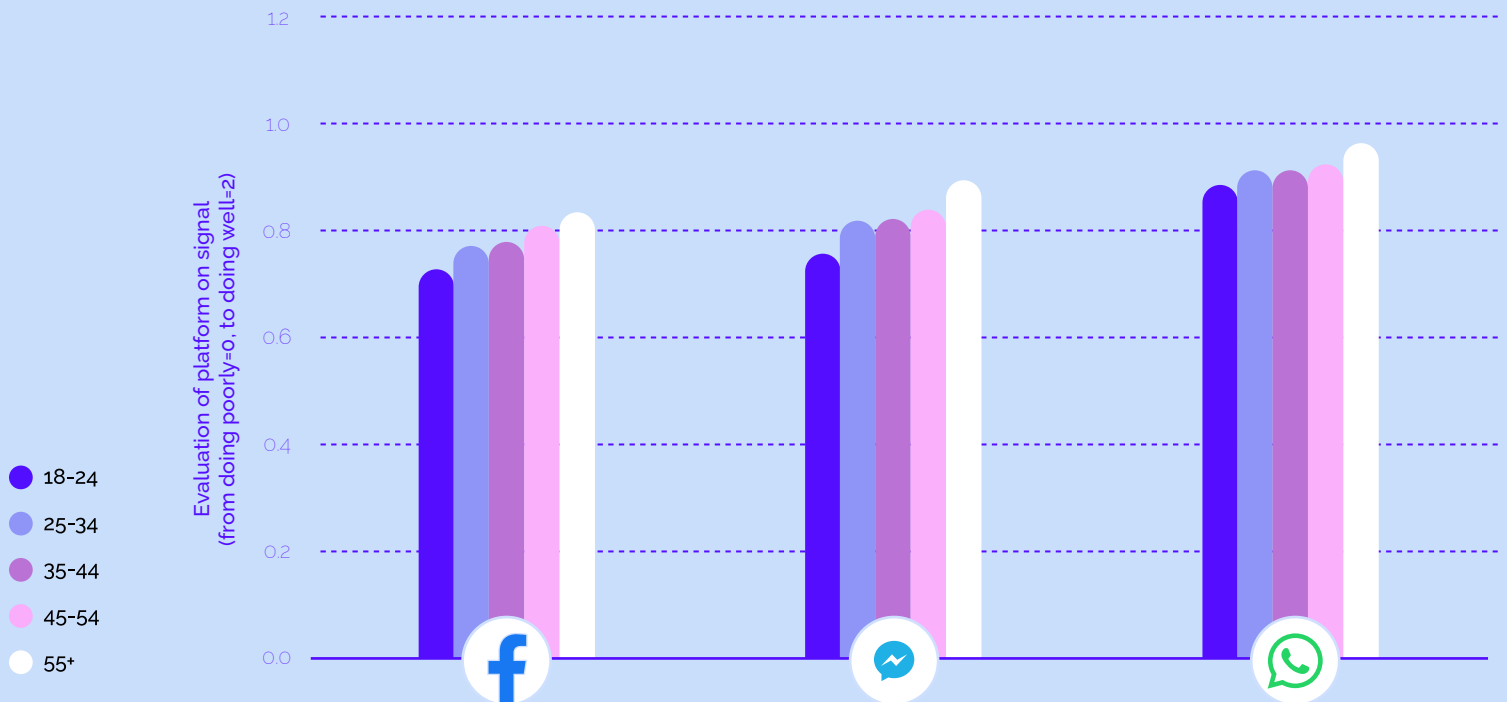


Data from the Center for Media Engagement. Weighted data. Asked of those who indicated that a given social media, messaging or search platform was their most used. Question wording - Which of the following do you think [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] does well at? Please select all that 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 Age<sup>4</sup>

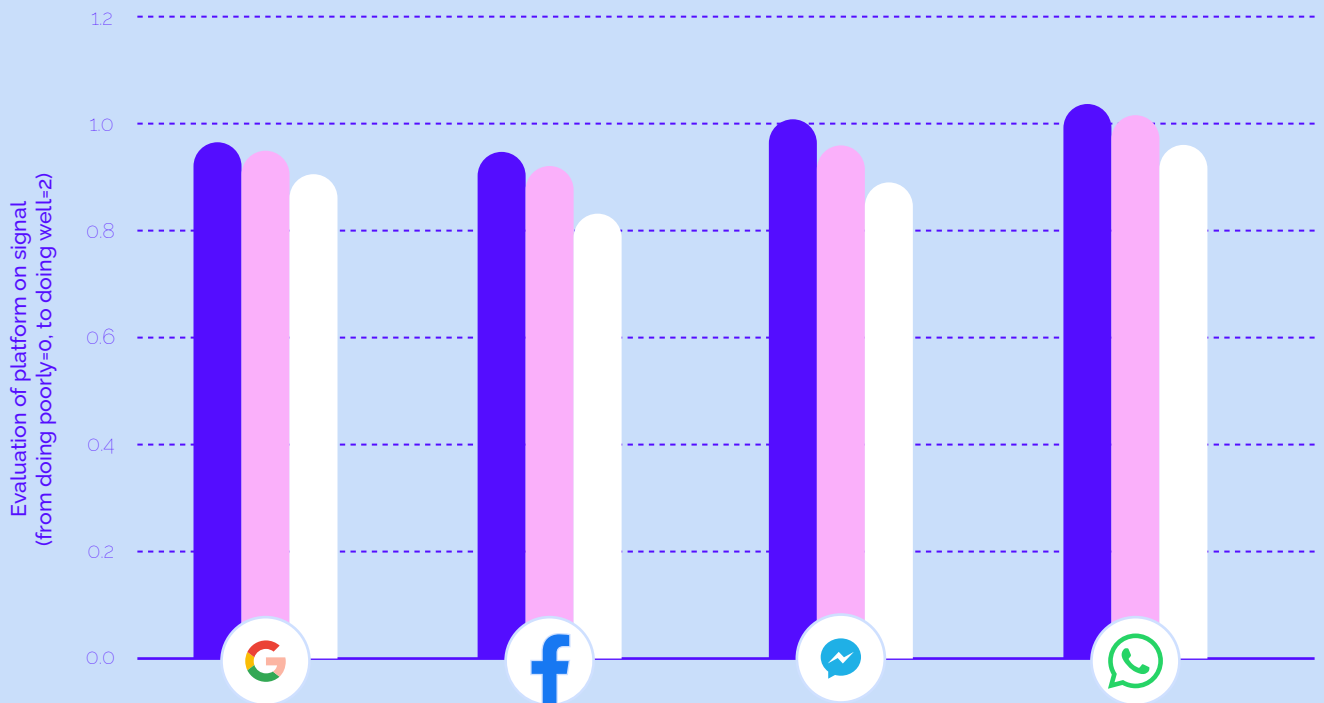
For three of the five platforms (Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp), older superusers rated the platform's performance on "encouraging people to treat others humanely" more positively than did younger or middle-aged respondents.

<sup>4</sup> 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).



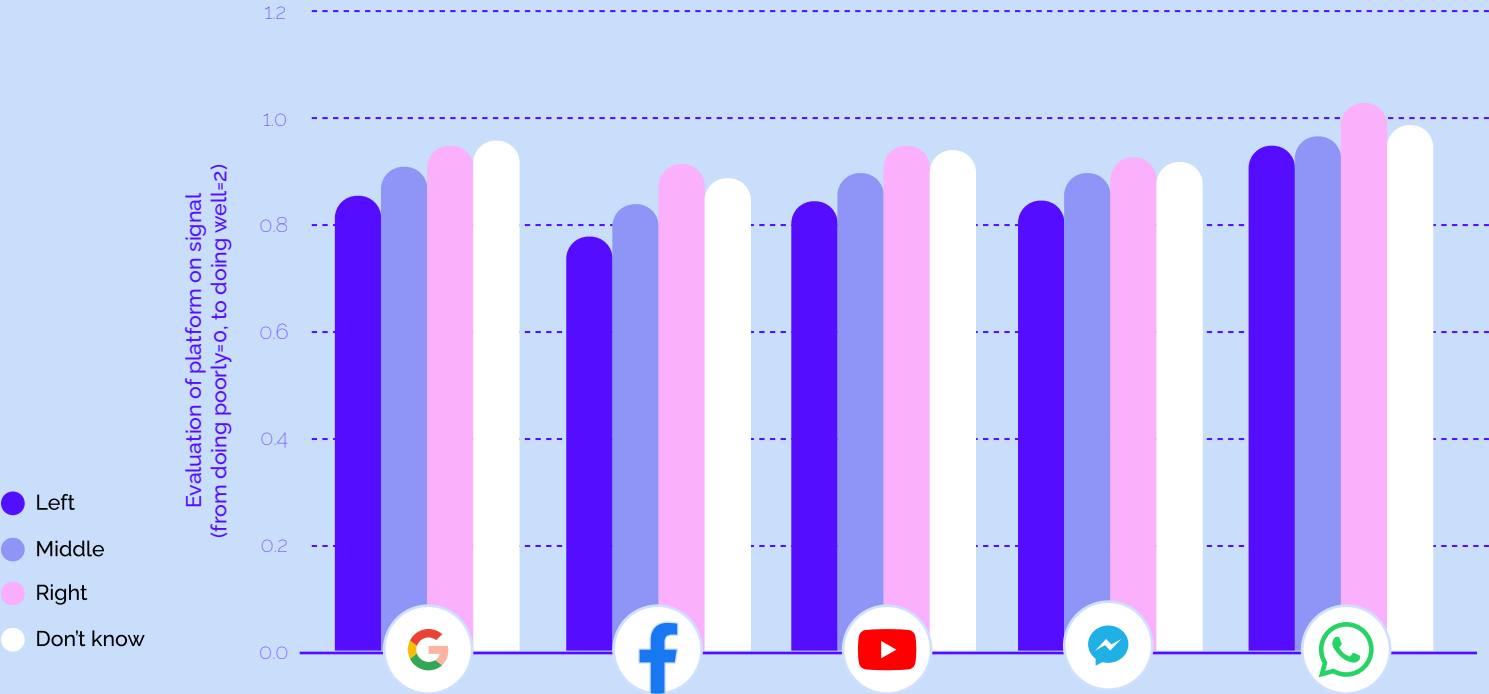
## Platform Performance on the Signal by Education

For four platforms (Google, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp), education significantly predicted what people thought about how well the platform was doing at "encouraging people to treat others humanely." For these platforms, less educated superusers thought that the platforms did a better job than did more educated superusers.



# Platform Performance on the Signal by Ideology

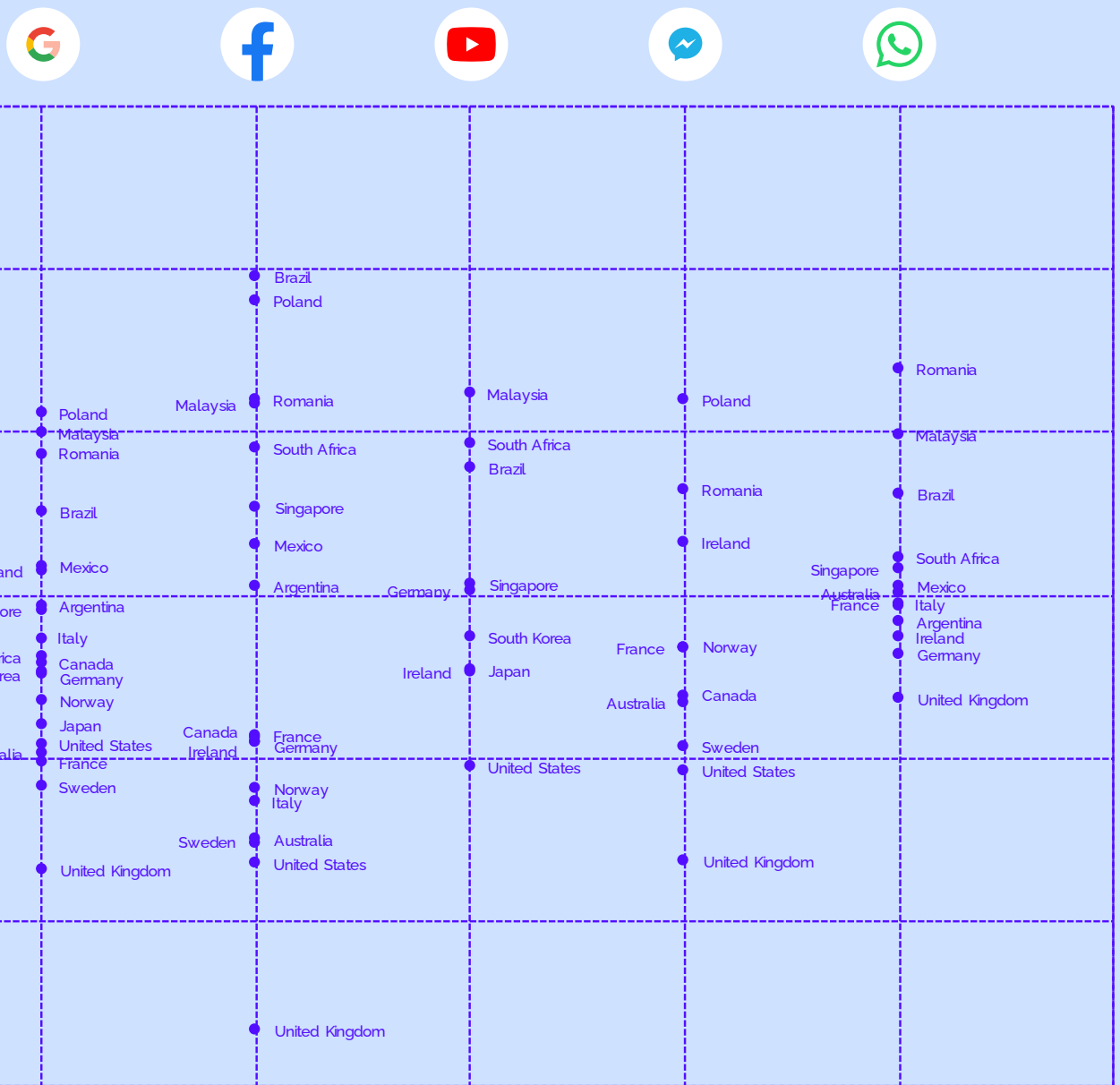
There were differences by ideology across all five platforms on what superusers thought about the platform's performance with respect to "encouraging people to treat others humanely." For Google and Facebook, those on the right and those who didn't have an ideology rated the platform's performance on this signal more positively and those on the left rated the performance more negatively relative to those with other ideologies. For YouTube, those on the left rated the platform's performance as worse than did those on the right or who didn't know their ideology. For Facebook Messenger, those on the left rated the platform as performing worse than did those with other ideologies. For WhatsApp, those on the right rated the platform's performance as better than those with other ideologies did and those who didn't know their ideology rated the platform's performance as better than did those on the left.



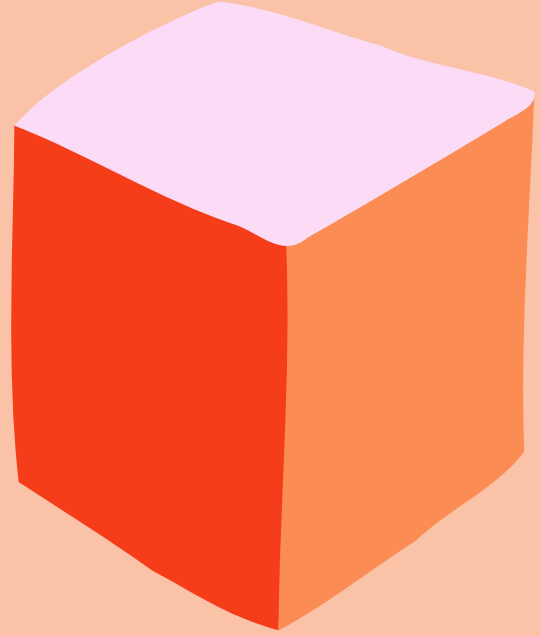


# Platform Performance on the Signal by Country

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 Brazil, Poland, Romania, Malaysia, and South Africa tended to say that the platforms performed better with respect to this signal than those in the United Kingdom, the United States, Sweden, and Australia.



# 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 thought it was important to be kind to people online and that this behavior should be the norm. “The world is already a harsh place; you don’t want online to be like that too,” explained Wali, of Malaysia. “... Every word matters. Every word changes life.” Elisa, of the United States, expressed a similar view, focusing on the social nature of social media platforms:

“I just think if you’re going to be in a group of people, and you’re going to be on something that is social like that, you have to be nice to people.”



*[Inhumane content] needs to be controlled a bit better... in my opinion, although some measures were said to be undertaken by Facebook, I personally don’t see it yet.” – Elisabeth, German focus group participant*



*When you treat people more humanely, you can have several views. You can put yourself in their shoes. You can reflect and be more humane, no matter the gender, religion, or ethnicity. These are the principles that we have to have.” – Adriano, Brazilian focus group participant*

Some participants mentioned benefits of treating others humanely. Maria, of the U.S., suggested that it allows “a healthy conversation.” As Adriano, of Brazil, explained, such a conversation may include diverse points of views and more reflection: “When you treat people more humanely, you can have several views. You can put yourself in their shoes. You can reflect and be more humane, no matter the gender, religion, or ethnicity. These are the principles that we have to have.”

However, participants acknowledged that humanization is a tough goal to achieve. They thought the online environment looked substantively different than they wished it did because it was marred by incivility, homophobia, and racism. Deesha, of Malaysia, remarked that “many people are not humane,” prompting laughter from other participants. “You see so many wrong things in comments,” explained Jô, of Brazil. “You see racist, homophobic attacks.”

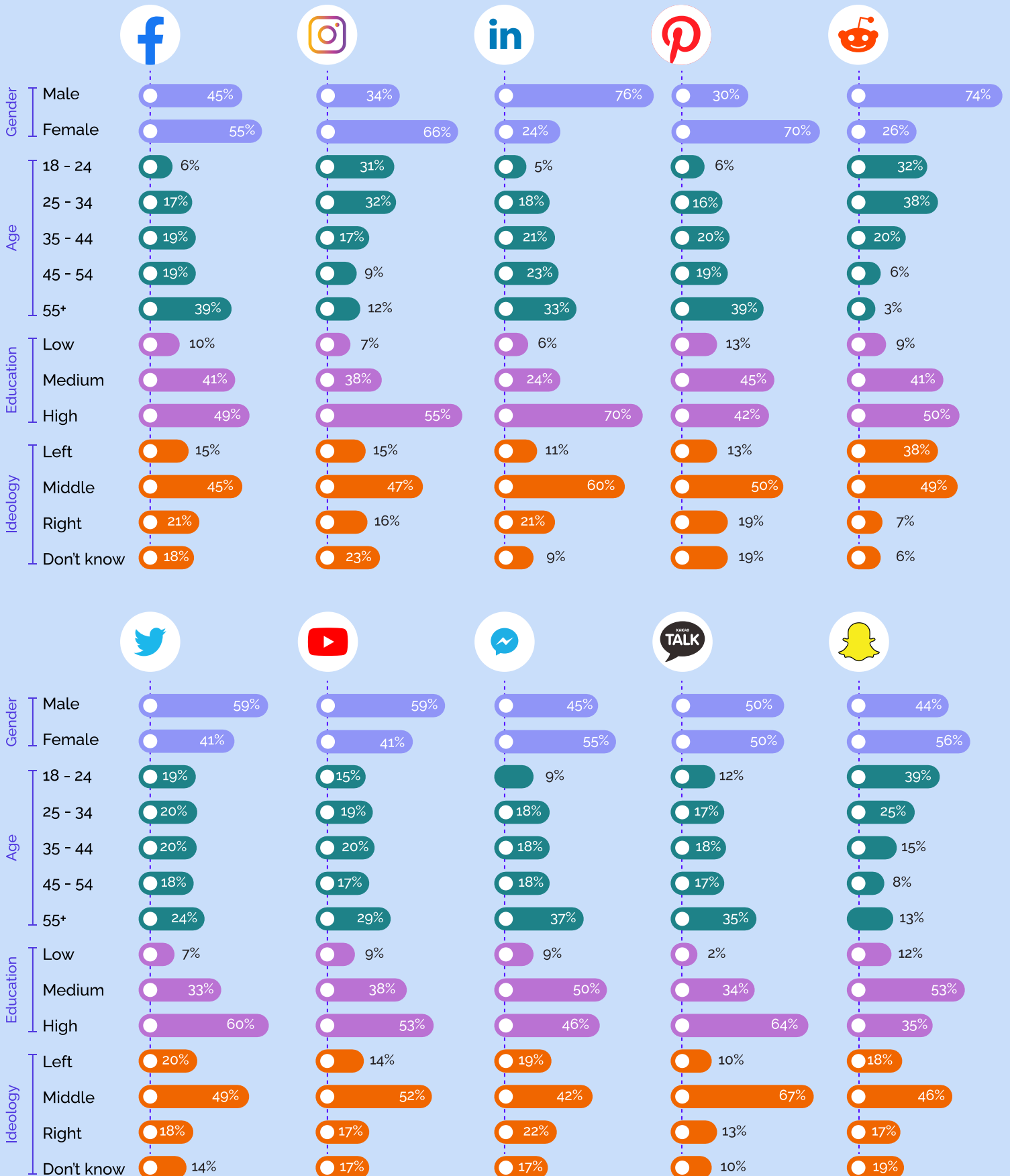
Participants discussed what can or should be done to deal with inhumane expressions.

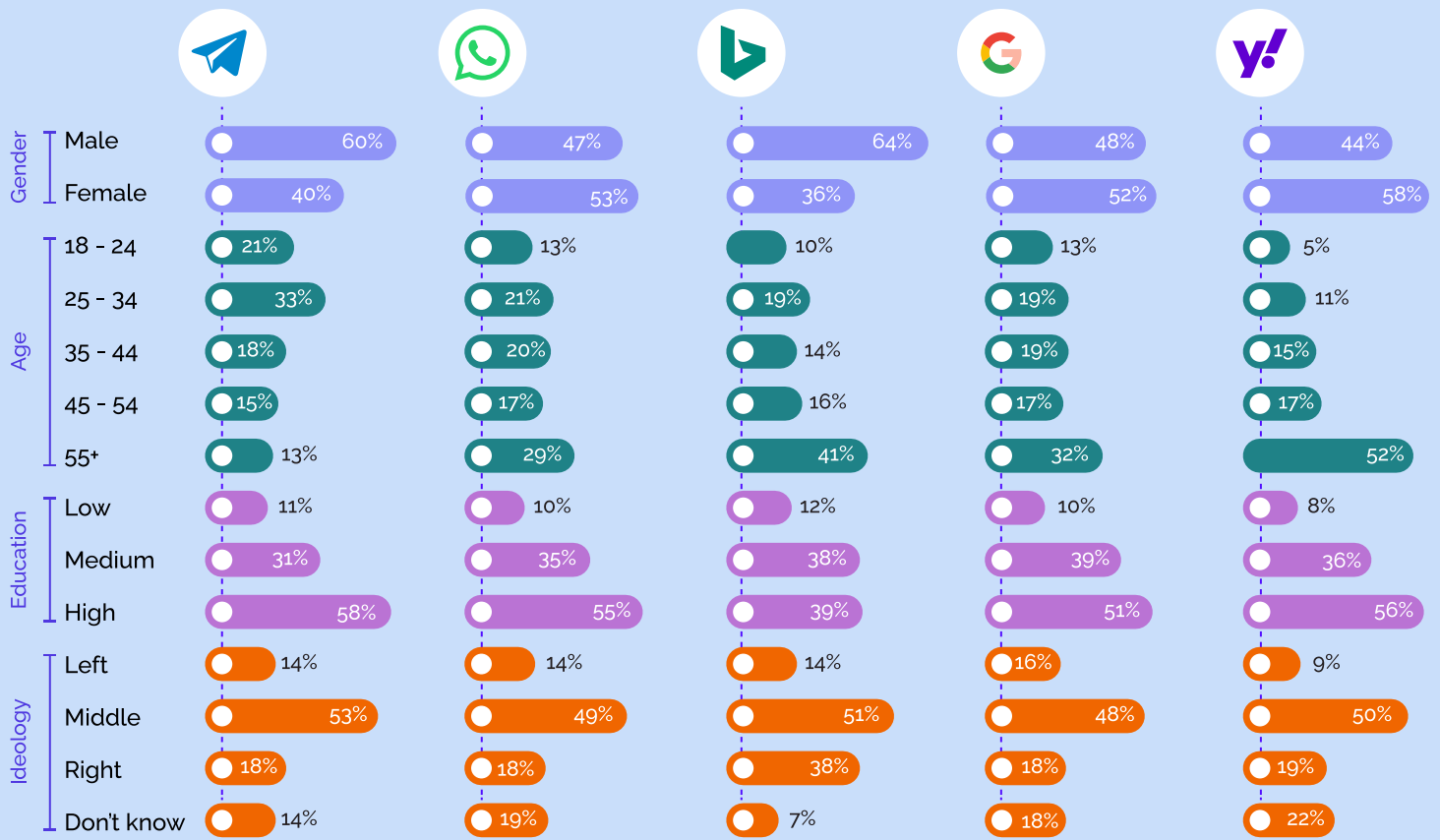
Sean, of the U.S., suggested that content moderation by social media companies is important. As Elisabeth, of Germany, noted, inhumane content “needs to be controlled a bit better... in my opinion, although some measures were said to be undertaken by Facebook, I personally don't see it yet.” Ahmet, of Germany, raised the problem that even if people's accounts on social media are blocked due to their activity or the content they post, the offenders can reopen new accounts and get around the ban. Therefore, inhumane expressions cannot be avoided completely.

Although most people agreed that treating others humanely was important, a few suggested that this isn't necessarily social media platforms' job to enforce. “It should be a societal norm,” said Nkosinathi, of South Africa.

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



