

# Hate in Social Media

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Nationwide comprehensive representative survey of internet users  
eligible to vote, conducted: 22-29 June 2021, n=3,009

July 23 2021





# Study design

## 📅 Survey period

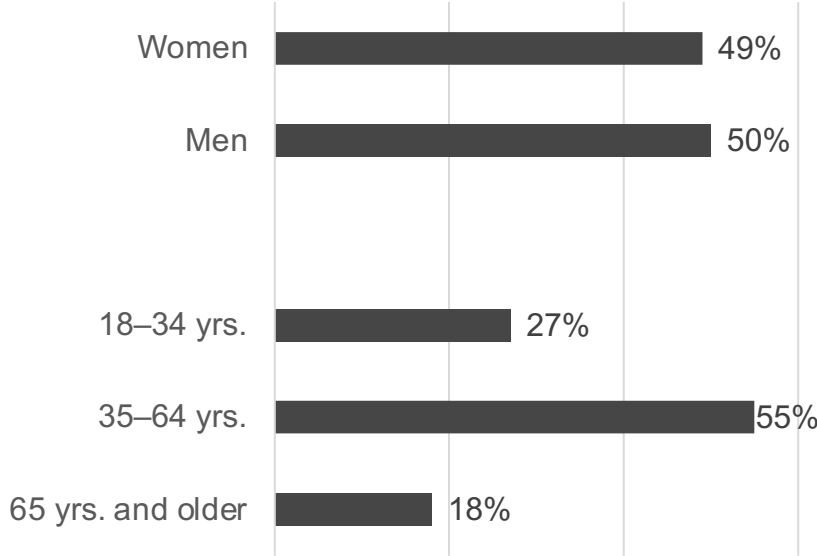
June 22 to June 29 2021

## 🔍 Survey method

Online survey / CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview)

## 🕒 Sample size and population

n = 3.009 internet users eligible to vote



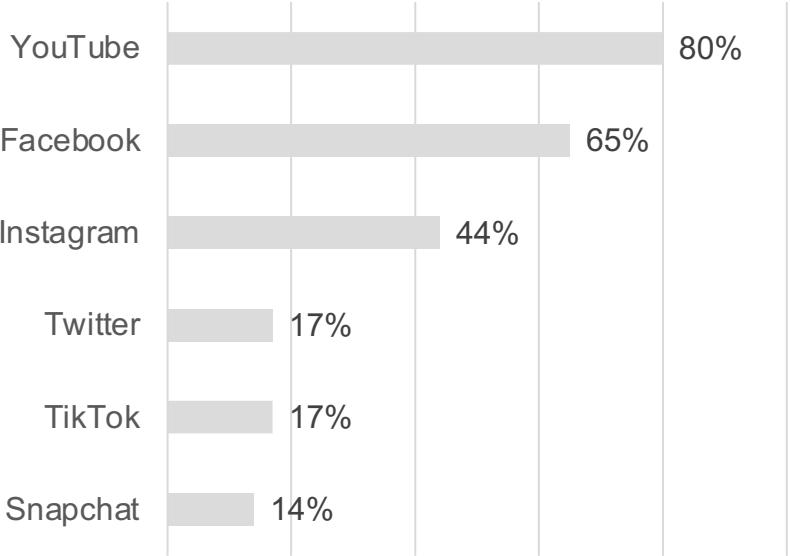
Data is weighted to ensure that the results are representative.

\* Maximum margin of error for n=3,009 with a 95% confidence interval: +/- 1.8%.

## 📖 Definitions

Social media users

Users of the various services

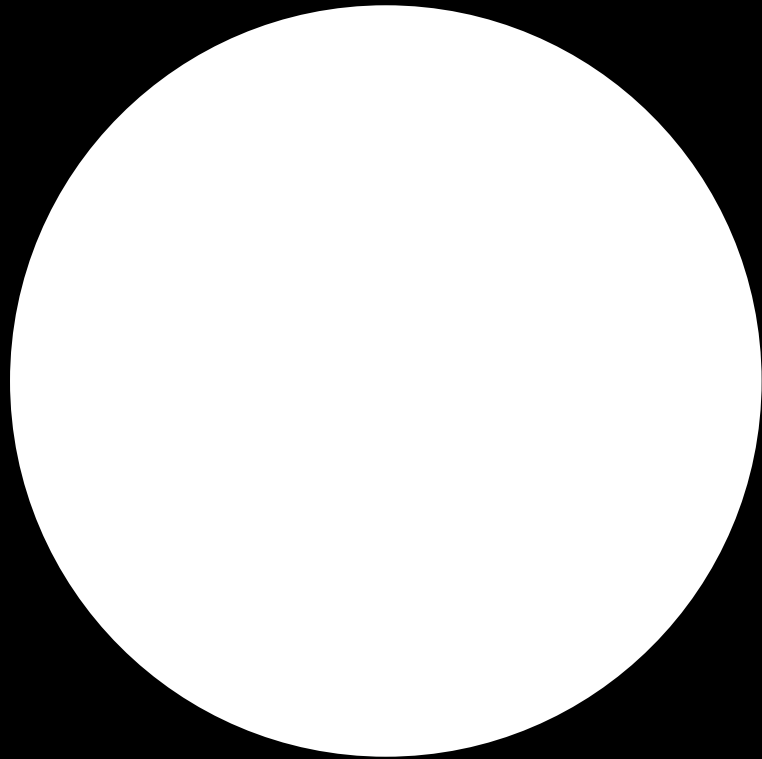


**91%** of all internet users use at least one of the above-mentioned sites (= social media users)

Deviations from 100% due to rounding

# Executive Summary

- Democracy thrives on debate, participation and, in the digital arenas, having a voice. But our **digital debate spaces** – especially the social media channels powered by big tech – are **corroded by hate and incitement to hate**.
- 85 percent of the internet users eligible to vote in our representative survey see **hate comments on the internet as a (very) big problem for our society**. But there are differences: While young women (18-34 years) see hate as especially problematic (93 percent), it is less of a problem for AfD voters (62 percent), for example. People almost equally expect **politics** (77 percent) and **platforms** (75 percent) **to solve the problem**.
- Particularly disturbing are the figures on personal experiences. **38 percent** of internet users eligible to vote have already been personally exposed to **numerous forms of hate on the internet** – young people even more frequently.
- **Young women, people with an immigrant background or non-heterosexual people** are especially affected. For example, every third woman between the ages of 18 and 34 has been sexually harassed on social media.
- There are **consequences**: More than one in three has become **more cautious about expressing opinions online**, and more than half of the respondents perceive **negative influences on their own mental health** through the use of social media.
- Since the digital debate spaces do not offer sufficient protections, **the debates on them are not representative of our society** either. Only a small minority (15 percent) frequently express their views on political issues online, while 63 percent rarely or never do so. Especially younger men or AfD supporters express themselves disproportionately often on political topics.



01

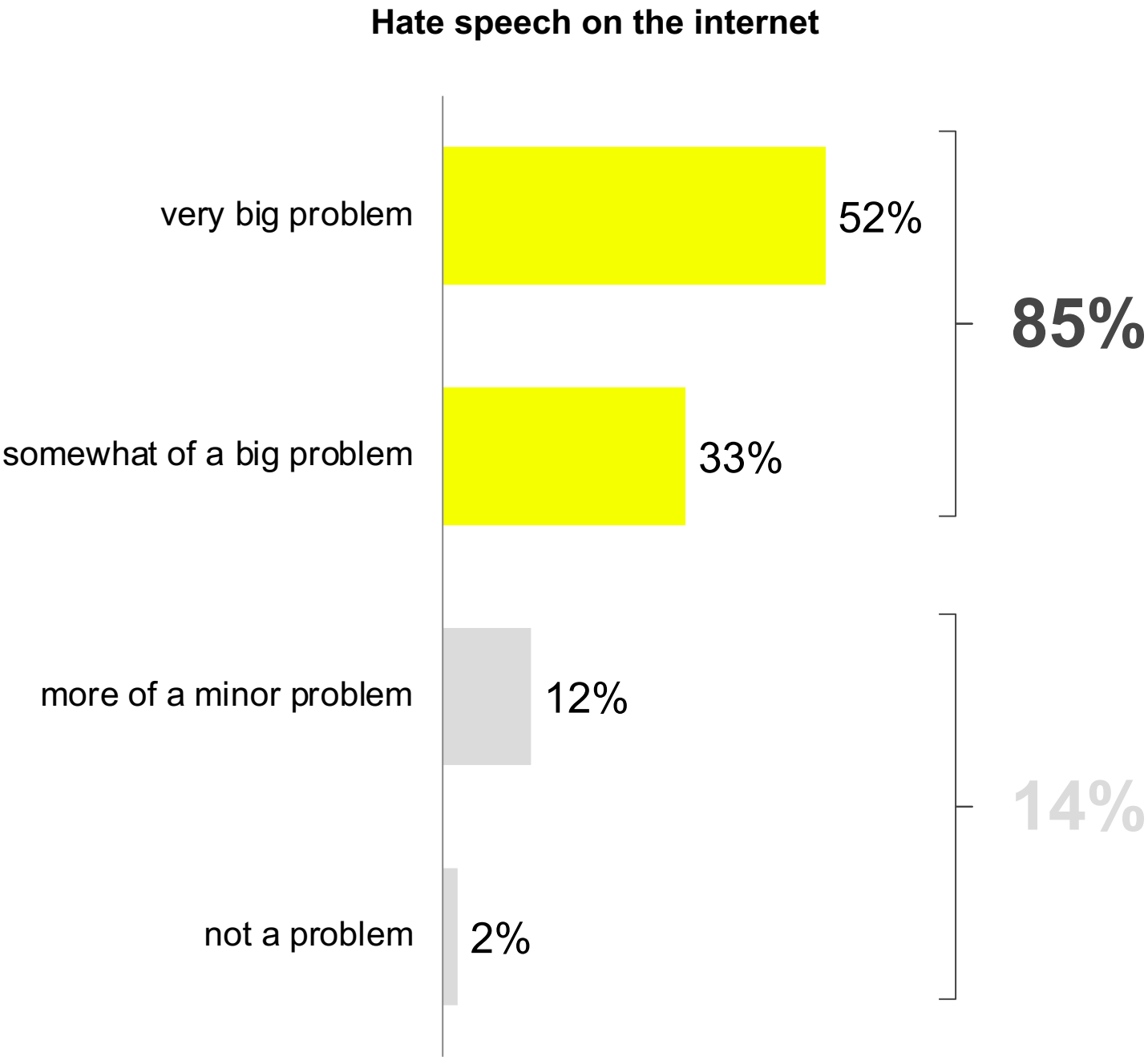
# Perception of problem

Perception of problem

85% consider hate speech on the internet to be a somewhat to very big problem for society.

Perception of hate speech as a problem

To what extent do you think the following are a problem for our society?



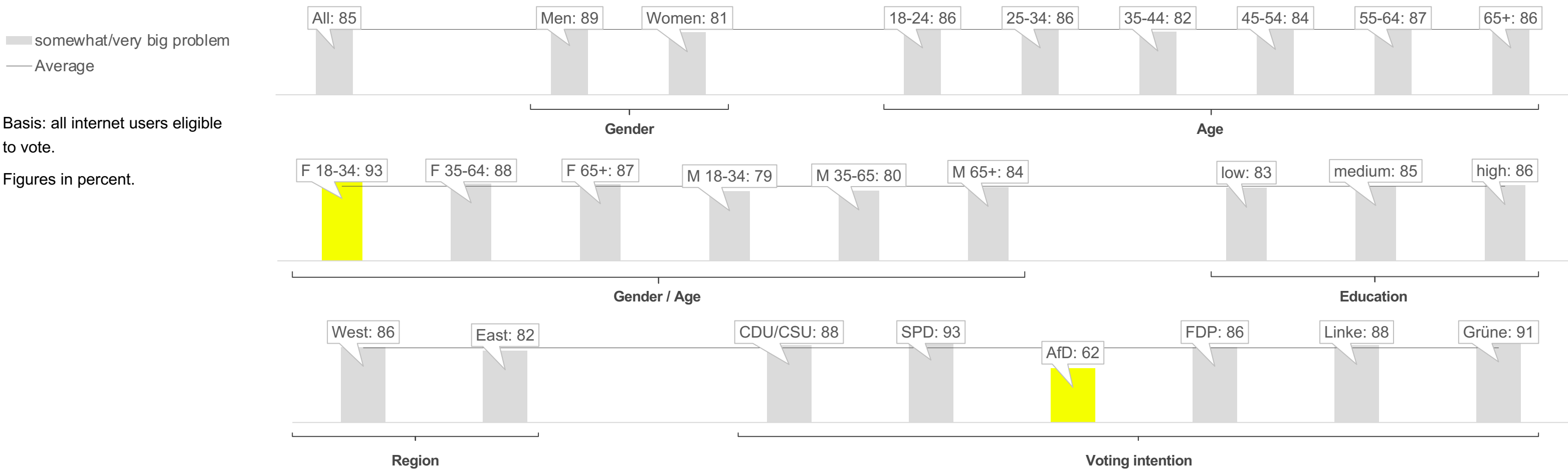
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

Missing values: don't know.

Perception of problem

Greatest level of perceived problems with hate speech on the internet observed among young women, lowest among AfD voters

Hate speech on the internet



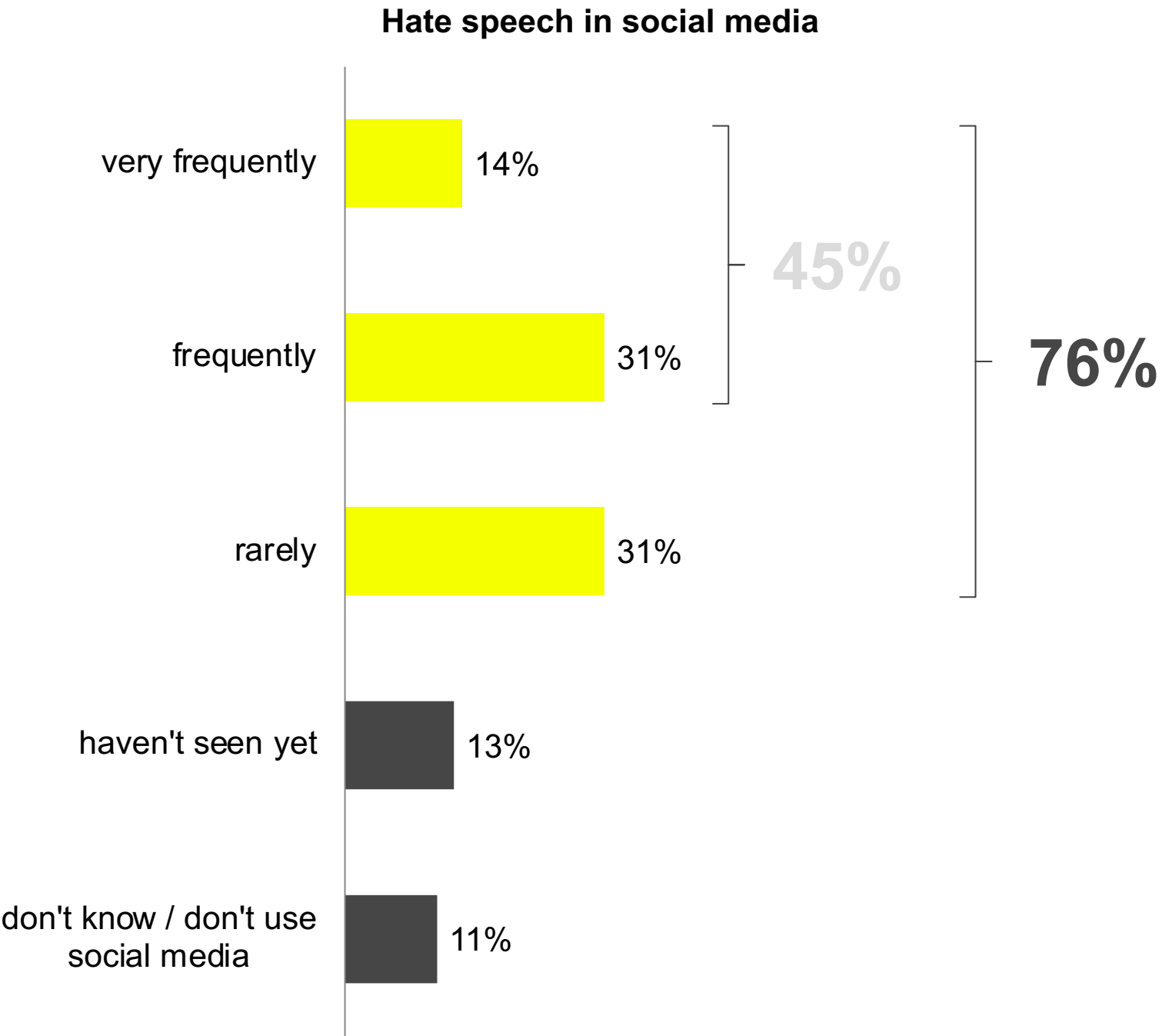
Perception of problem

Around 3 out of 4 internet users have already perceived hate speech on social media, 45 percent even (very) frequently.

Perceived frequency of hate speech

How often have you personally seen hate comments, that is, insults or threats, on social media?

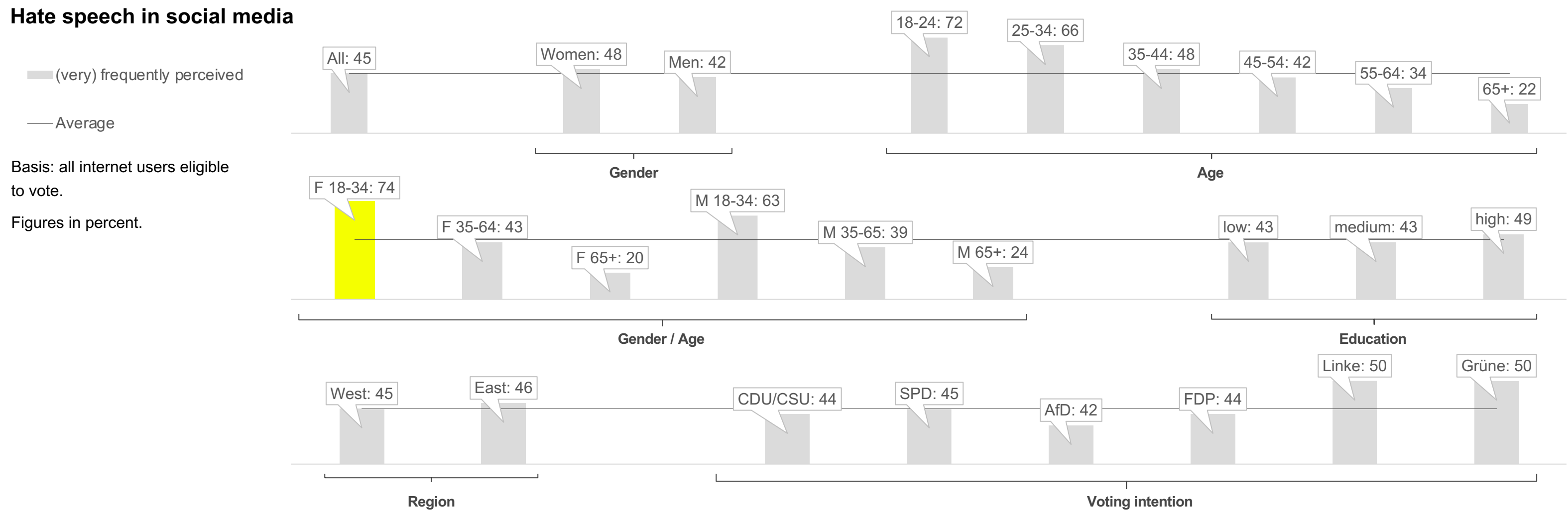
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.



Perception of problem

Women, especially young women, perceive hate speech in social media more frequently.

Hate speech in social media



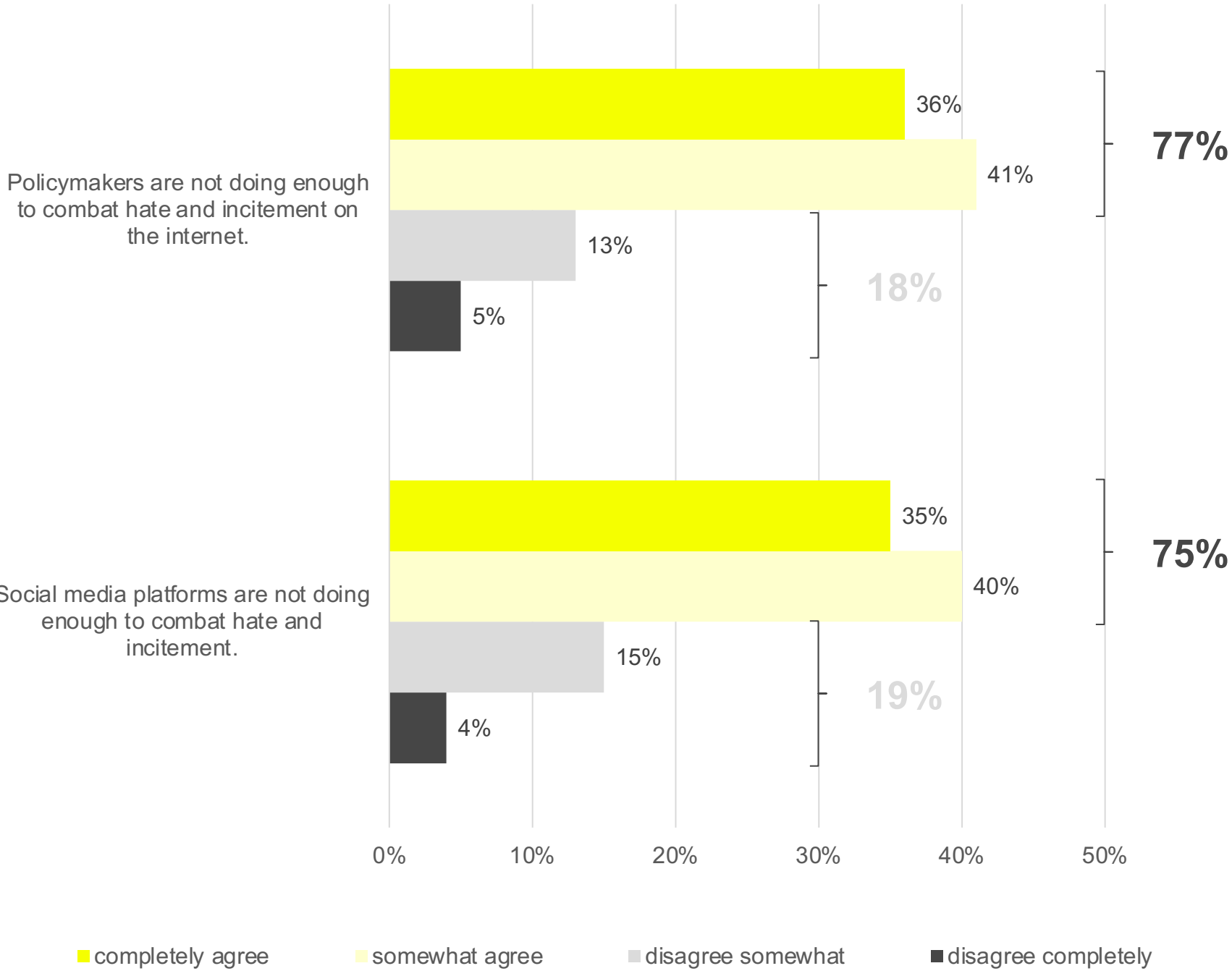


Perception of problem

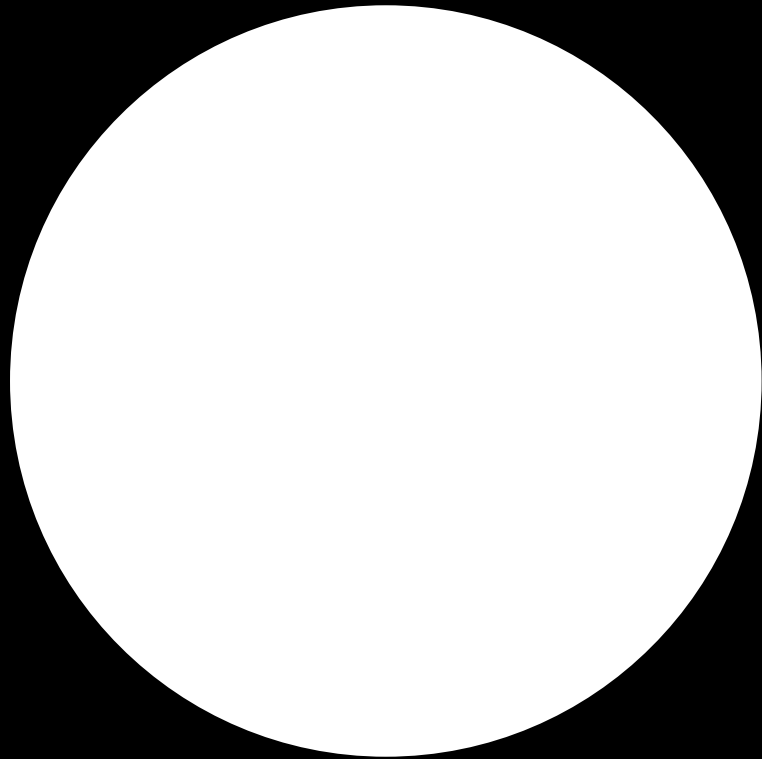
Stronger measures against hate and incitement to hate are expected to an equal extent from platforms as from politics.

Responsibility / regulation

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?



Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.  
Missing values: don't know.



02

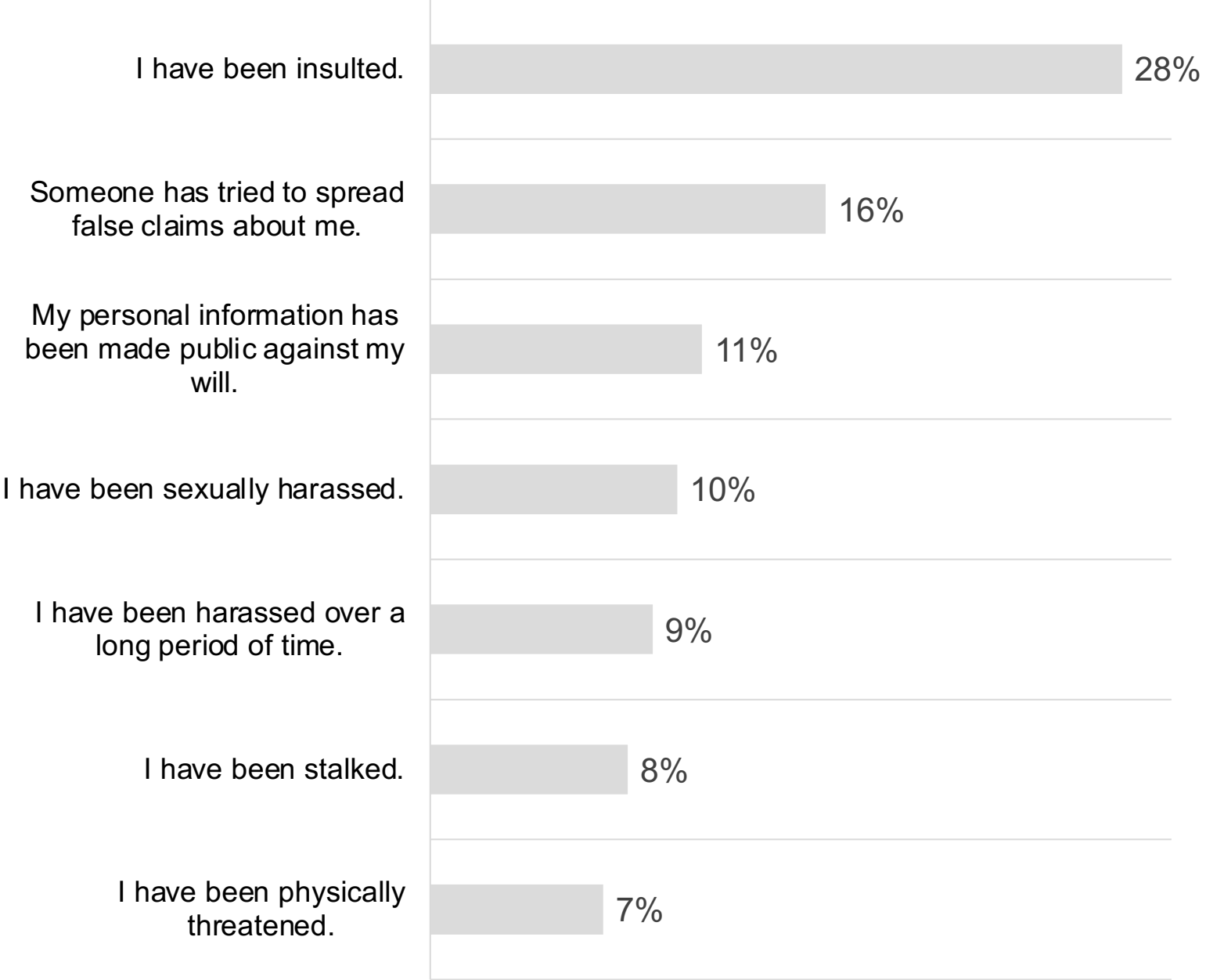
# Concern and experiences

Concern and experiences

One in four internet users has already been insulted on social media, one in ten sexually harassed.

Experience with hate on social media

Which of the following have you personally experienced on social media?

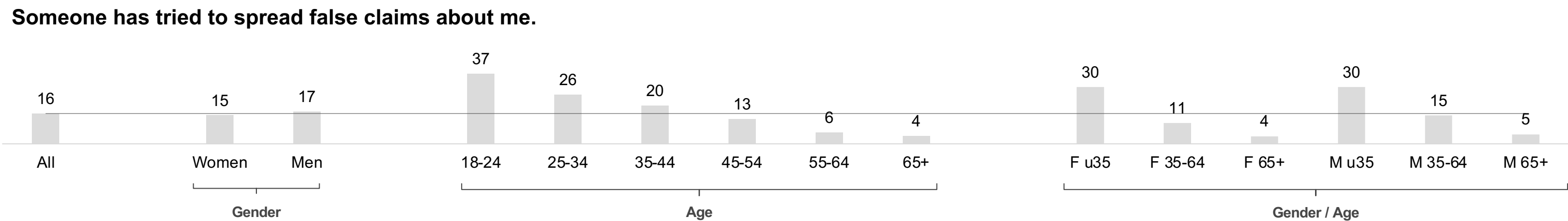
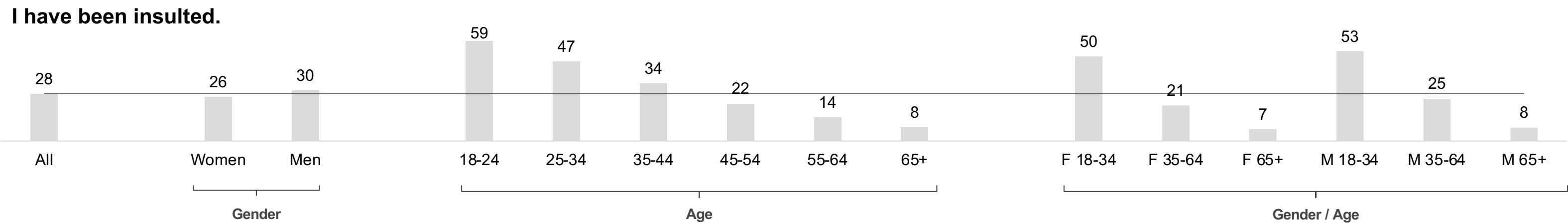


■ Yes, this has already happened to me on social media.

Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

Concern and experiences

Insults are the most widespread and most likely to affect younger people

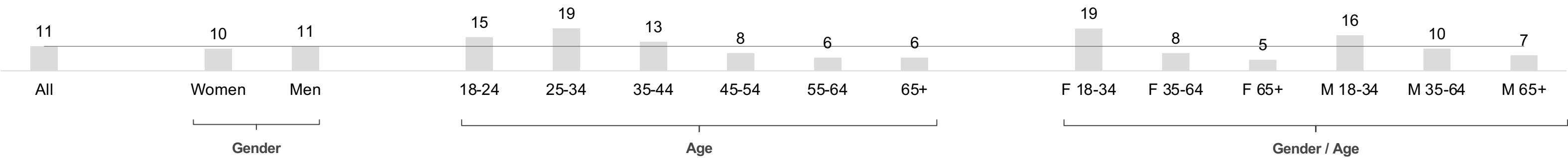


Basis: all internet users eligible to vote. Figures in percent.

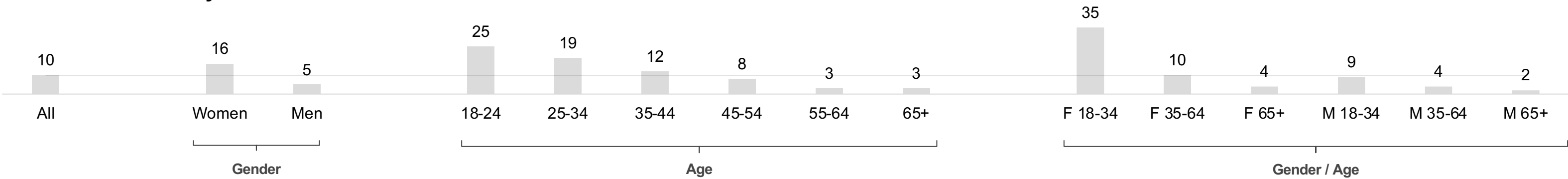
Concern and experiences

One in three women between the ages of 18 and 34 has been sexually harassed on social media.

My personal information has been made public against my will.



I have been sexually harassed on social media.



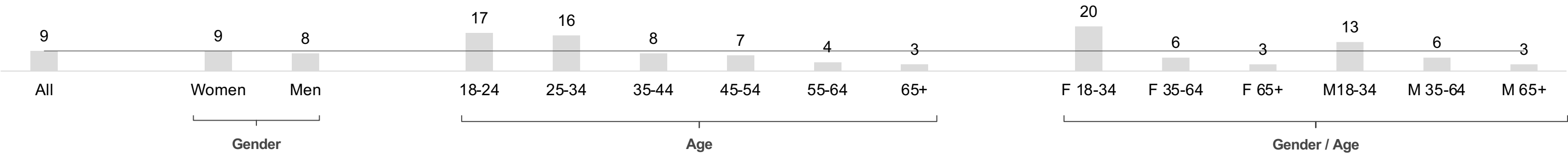
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote. Figures in percent.



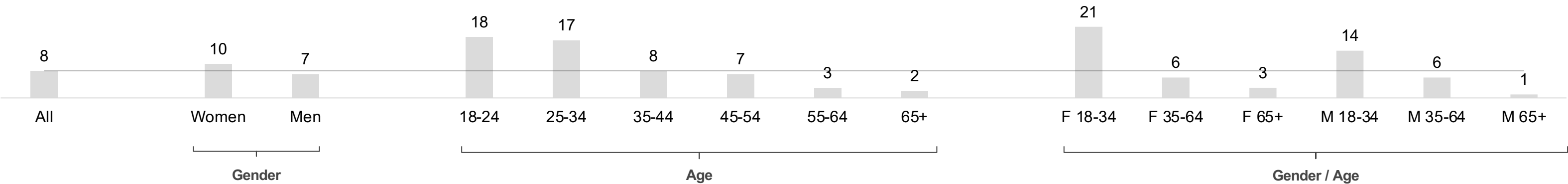
# Concern and experiences

Harassment over a longer period of time and stalking on social media also mainly affect young women.

I have been harassed over a long period of time.



I have been stalked on social media.

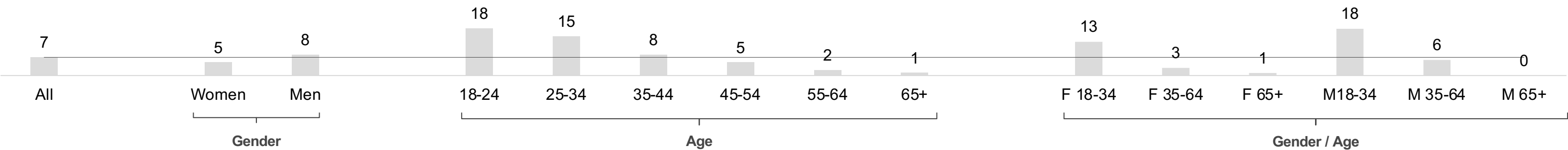


Basis: all internet users eligible to vote. Figures in percent.

Concern and experiences

Physical threats in social media are more often directed against young men.

I have been physically threatened.



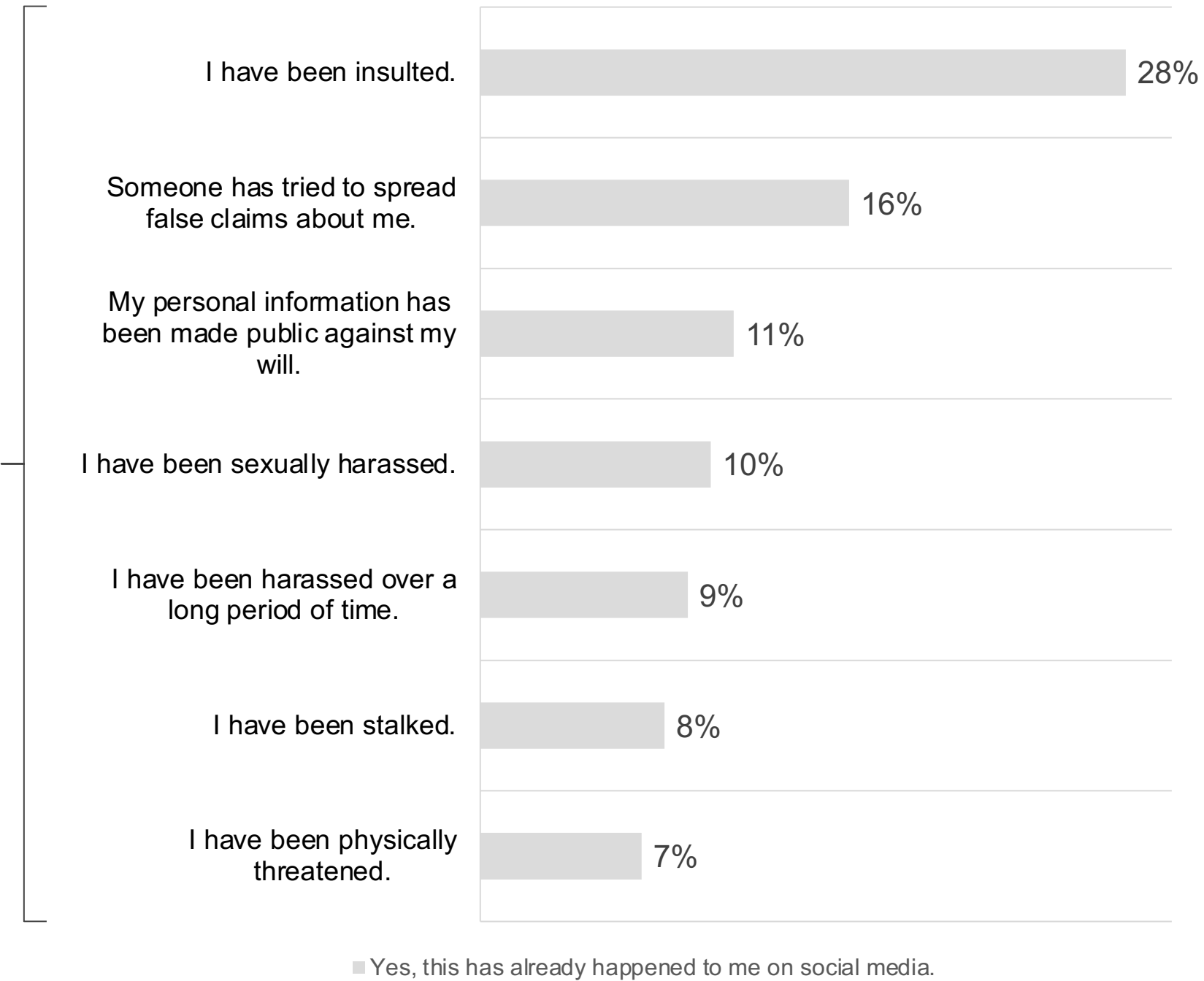
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote. Figures in percent.

Concern and experiences

38% of all internet users have been affected by at least one form of hate on social media.

**38%** have been affected by at least one form of hate on social media.

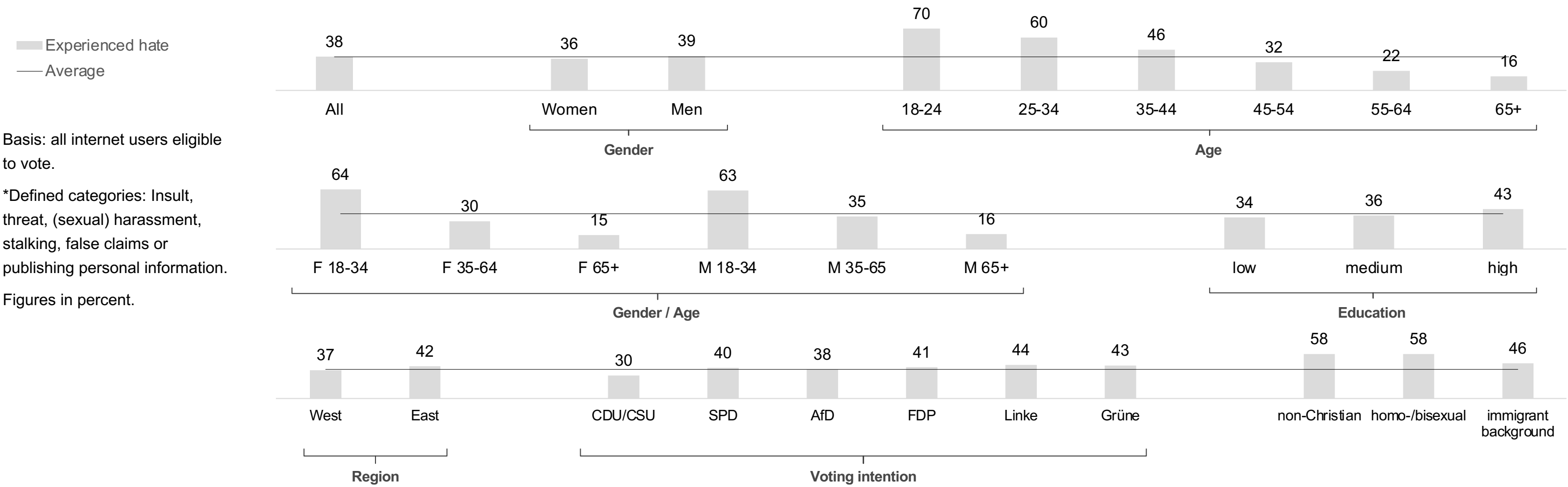
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.



# Concern and experiences

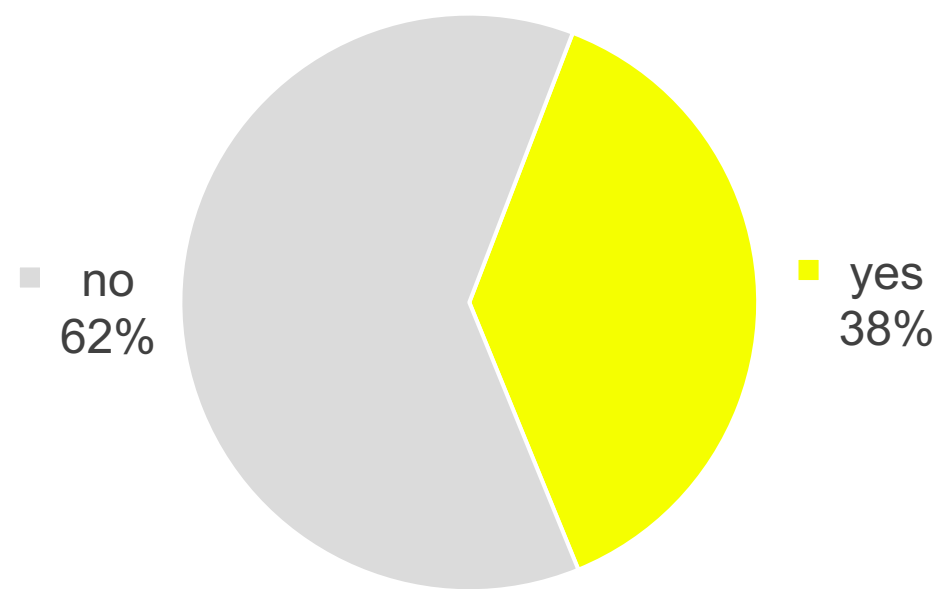
Younger people and minorities such as people with an immigrant background or homosexuals/bisexuals are affected more often than average.

Have personally experienced at least one form of hate\* on social media.



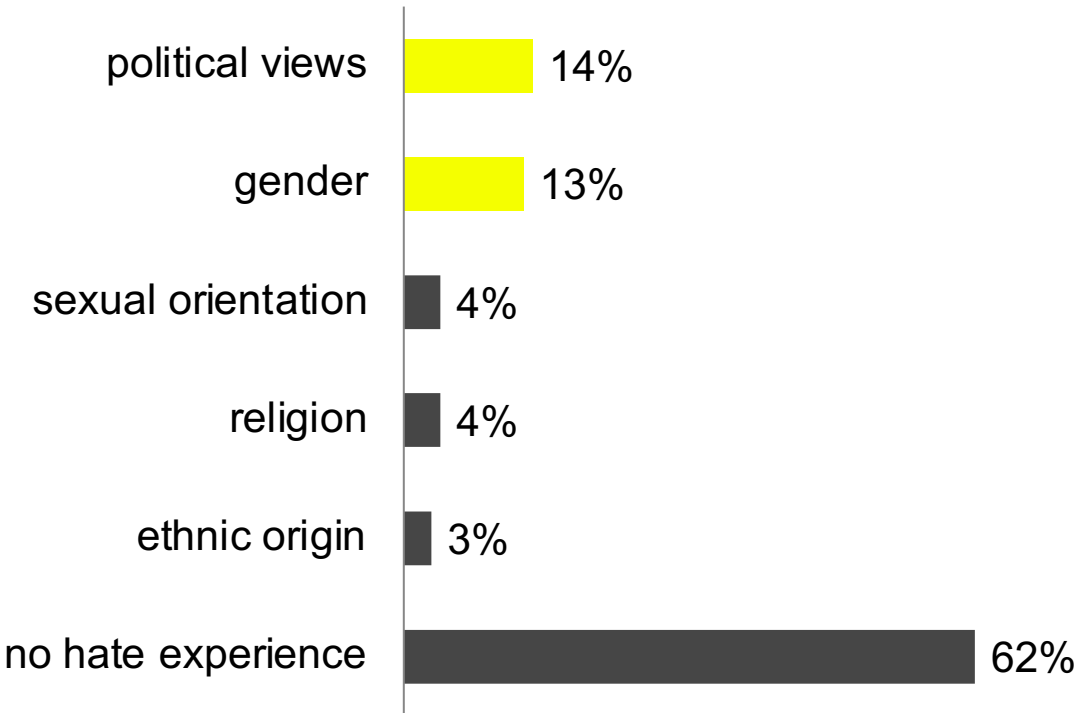
# Perceived reasons for experienced hate are most often political views or own gender

**Hate in Social Media**  
already personally been a victim of hate on social media



Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

**Why?**  
Do you think this has happened to you on social media because of your ... ?



Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

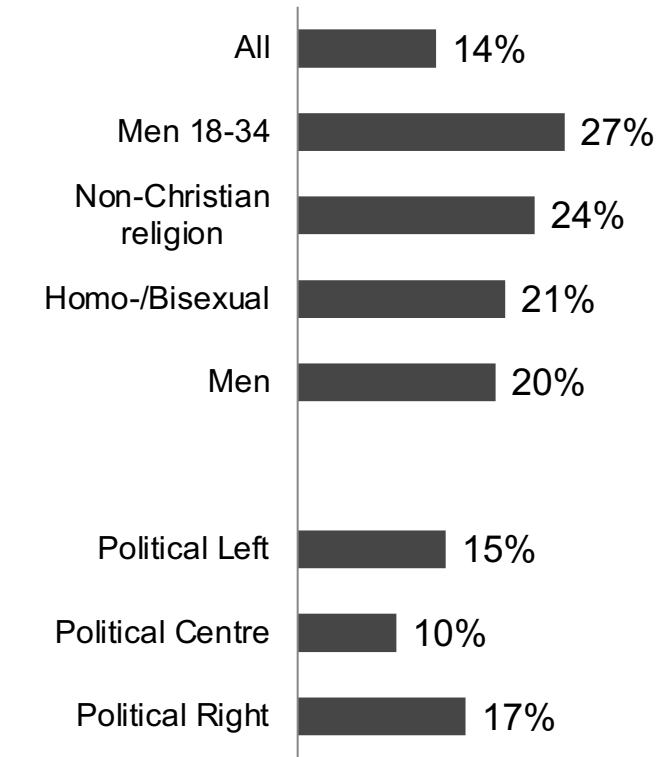
Multiple answers possible.



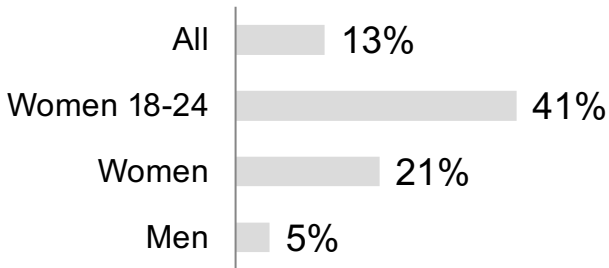
Concern and experiences

Perceived reasons for hate experienced vary greatly between different groups.

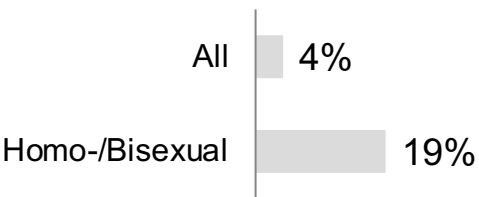
Hate experienced on social media due to **political views**:



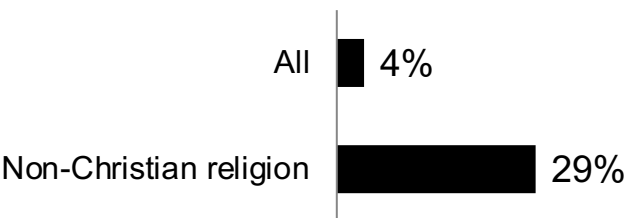
Hate experienced on social media due to **gender**:



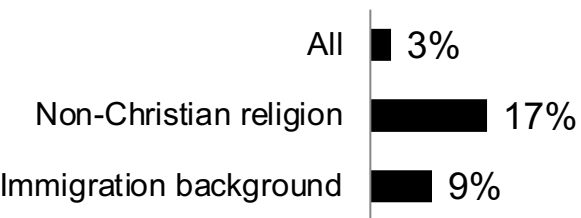
Hate experienced on social media due to **sexual orientation**:



Hate experienced on social media due to **religion**:



Hate experienced on social media due to **ethnic background**:



**Legend:** 41 percent of all female internet users between the ages of 18 and 34 have already experienced hatred in social media because of their gender. One in ten internet users with an immigrant background has already been a victim of hate online because of their ethnic background.

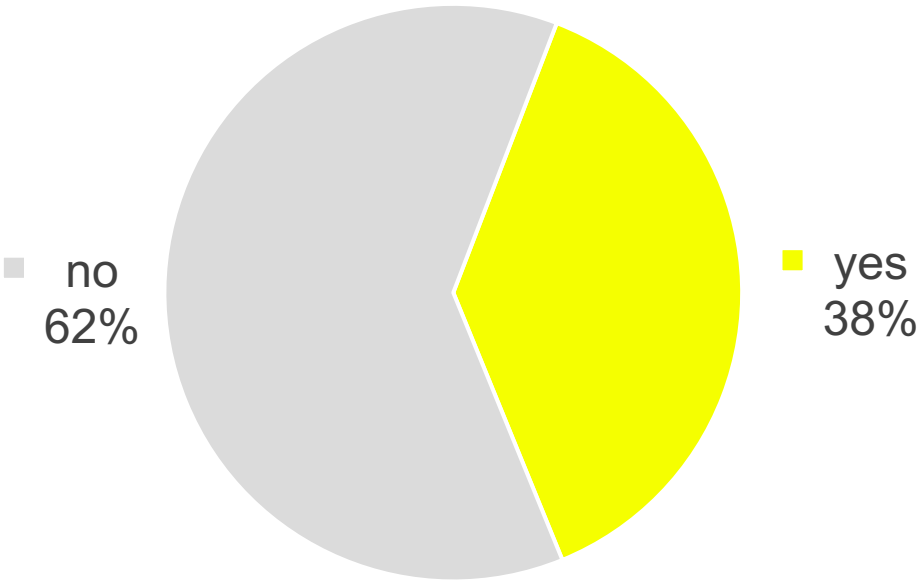
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.  
\*Political self-identification on a left-right scale of 0-10. Grouped values: 0-4=left, 5=centre, 6-10=right.

Concern and experiences

“Crime scenes” of hate: most frequently Facebook, followed by Instagram

Hate in Social Media

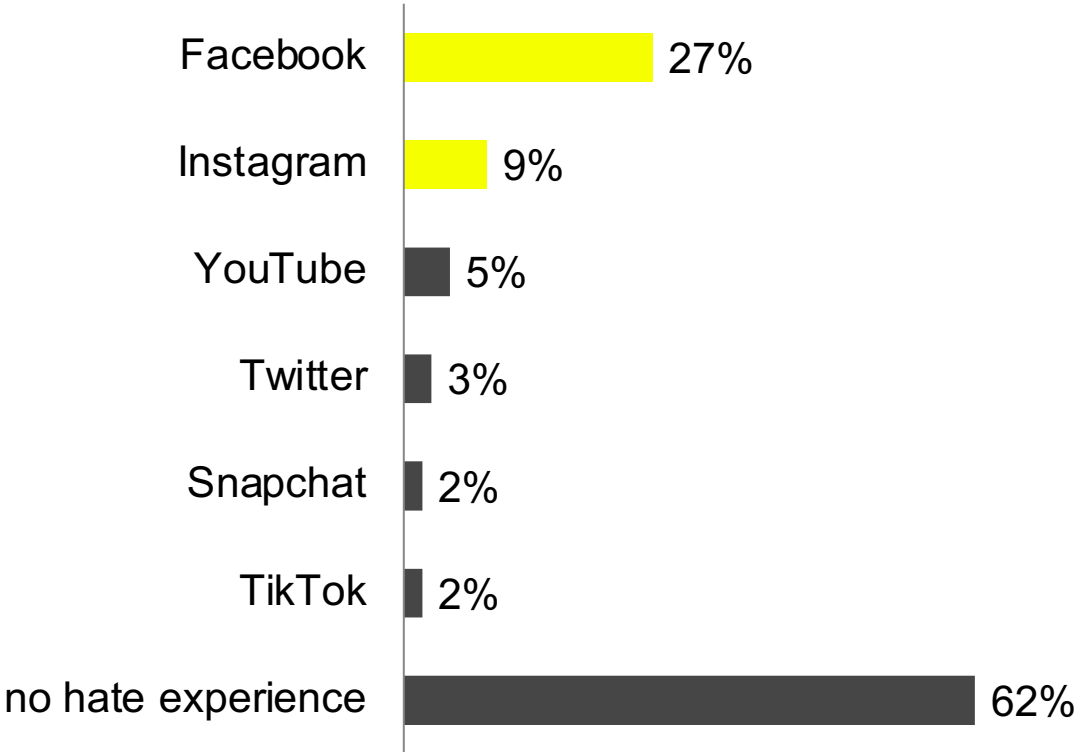
already personally been a victim of hate on social media



Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

Where?

On which social media platform(s) have you had such an experience?

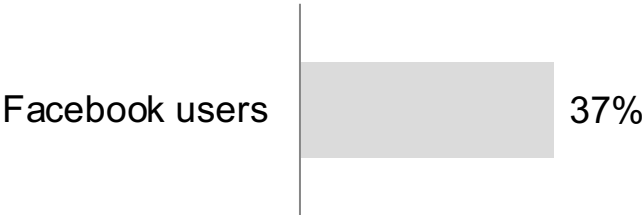


Basis: all internet users eligible to vote. Multiple answers possible

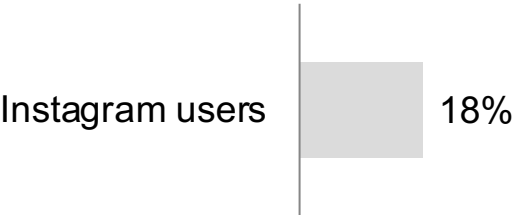
Concern and experiences

With regard to the respective users of the platforms: One in three Facebook users already had a hate experience there

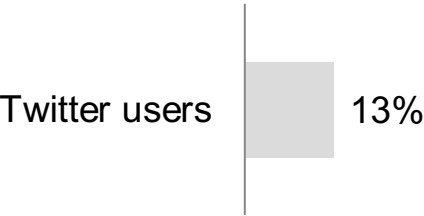
Hate experience on **Facebook**:



Hate experience on **Instagram**:



Hate experience on **Twitter**:



Hate experience on **Snapchat**:



Hate experience on **TikTok**:



Hate experience on **YouTube**:



**Legend:** 37 percent of all Facebook users have already had a hate experience on the platform / One in ten TikTok users has had a hate experience there.

Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

03

# Possible consequences

Possible consequences

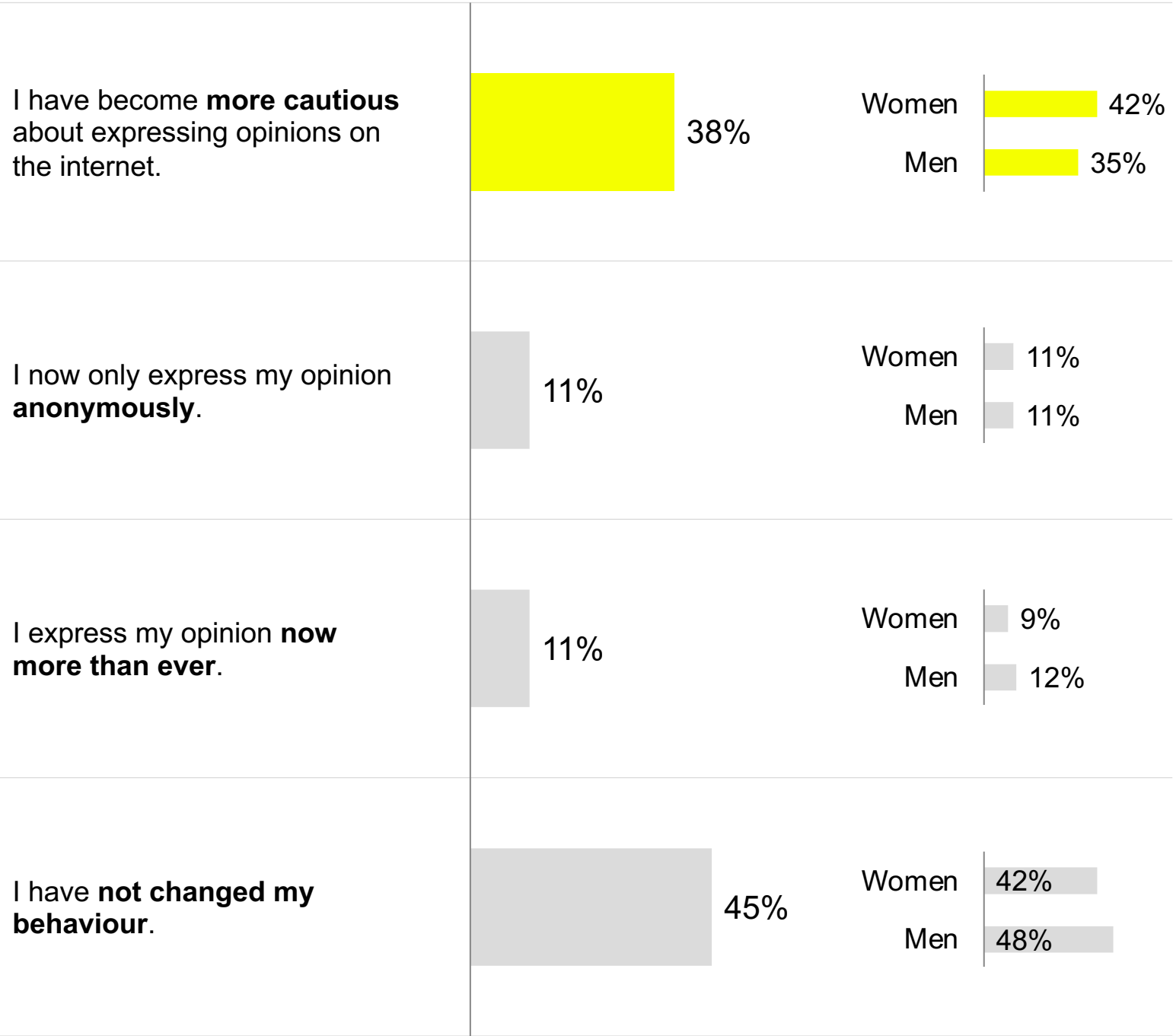
Around one third of those who have experienced or witnessed hate have become more cautious in expressing their opinions

Consequences of hate on social media

Have the hate comments that you have seen or experienced yourself led you to change your behaviour when it comes to expressing your opinion on the internet?

Basis: all eligible internet users who have already seen hate comments on social media or have themselves been victims of hate on social media.

Multiple answers possible.





Possible consequences

Irrespective of age and gender, a clear majority prefers to keep a low profile in political discussions on social media

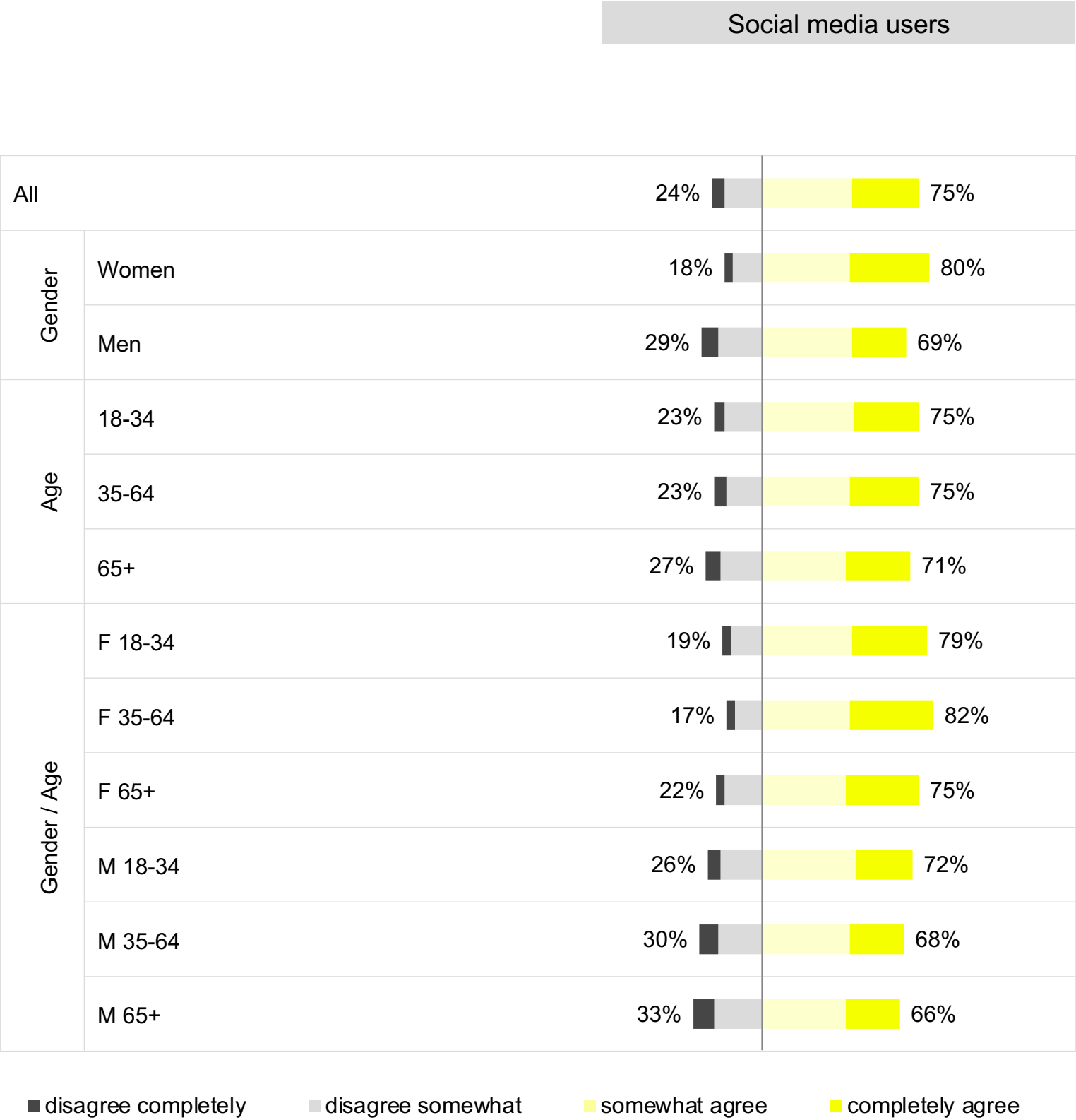
Perception of social media

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

*„I prefer to hold back in discussions about politics on social media.“*

Basis: all social media users.

Missing values: don't know.



Possible consequences

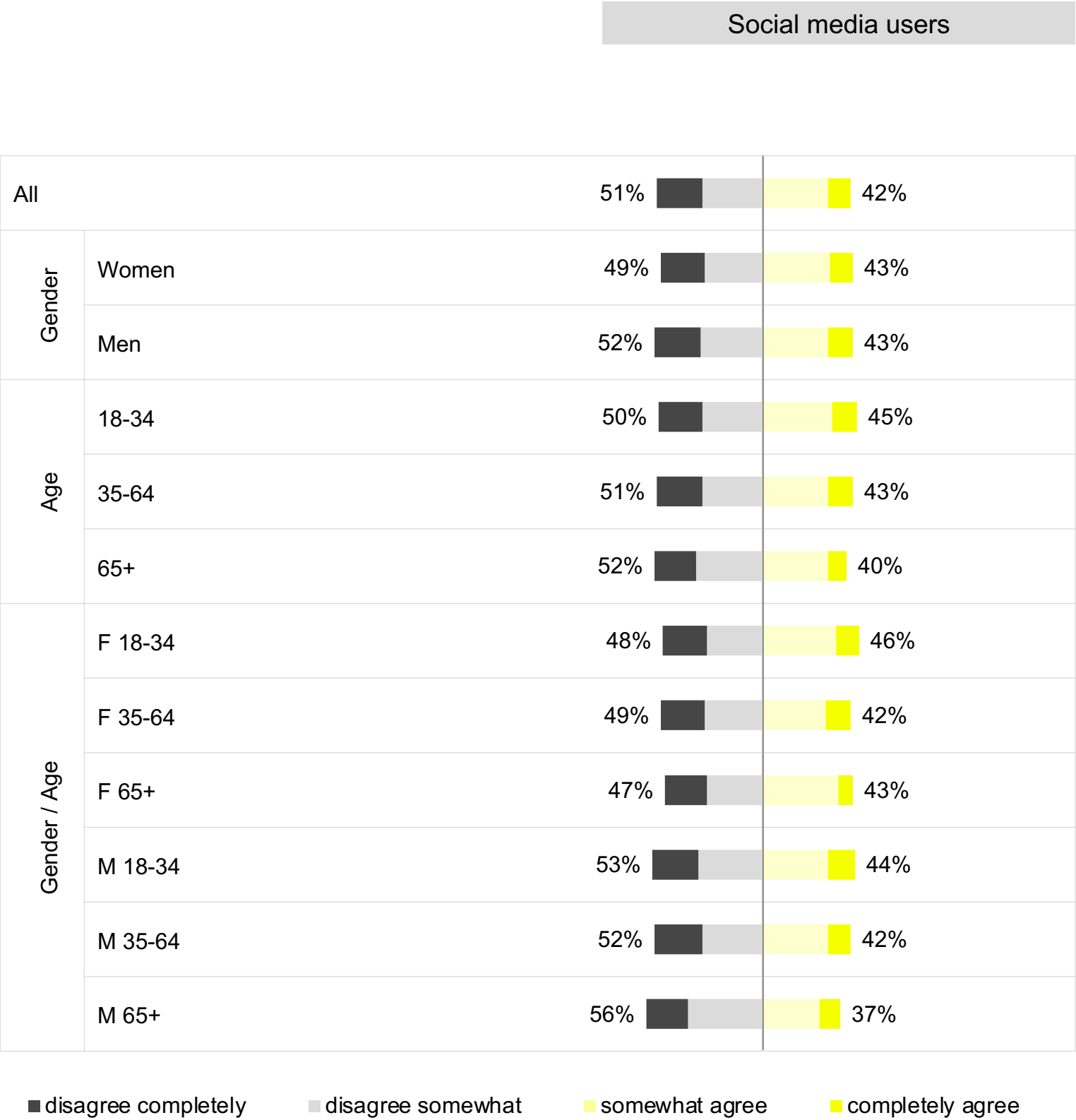
“Political correctness” causes 42 percent to be reluctant to speak their mind on social media

Perception of social media

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

„Because of political correctness, I sometimes am hesitant to say what I really think on social media.“

Basis: all social media users.  
Missing values: don't know.



# Possible consequences

People who are politically more “right-wing” are more likely to feel inhibited by “political correctness” on social media

## Perception of social media

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

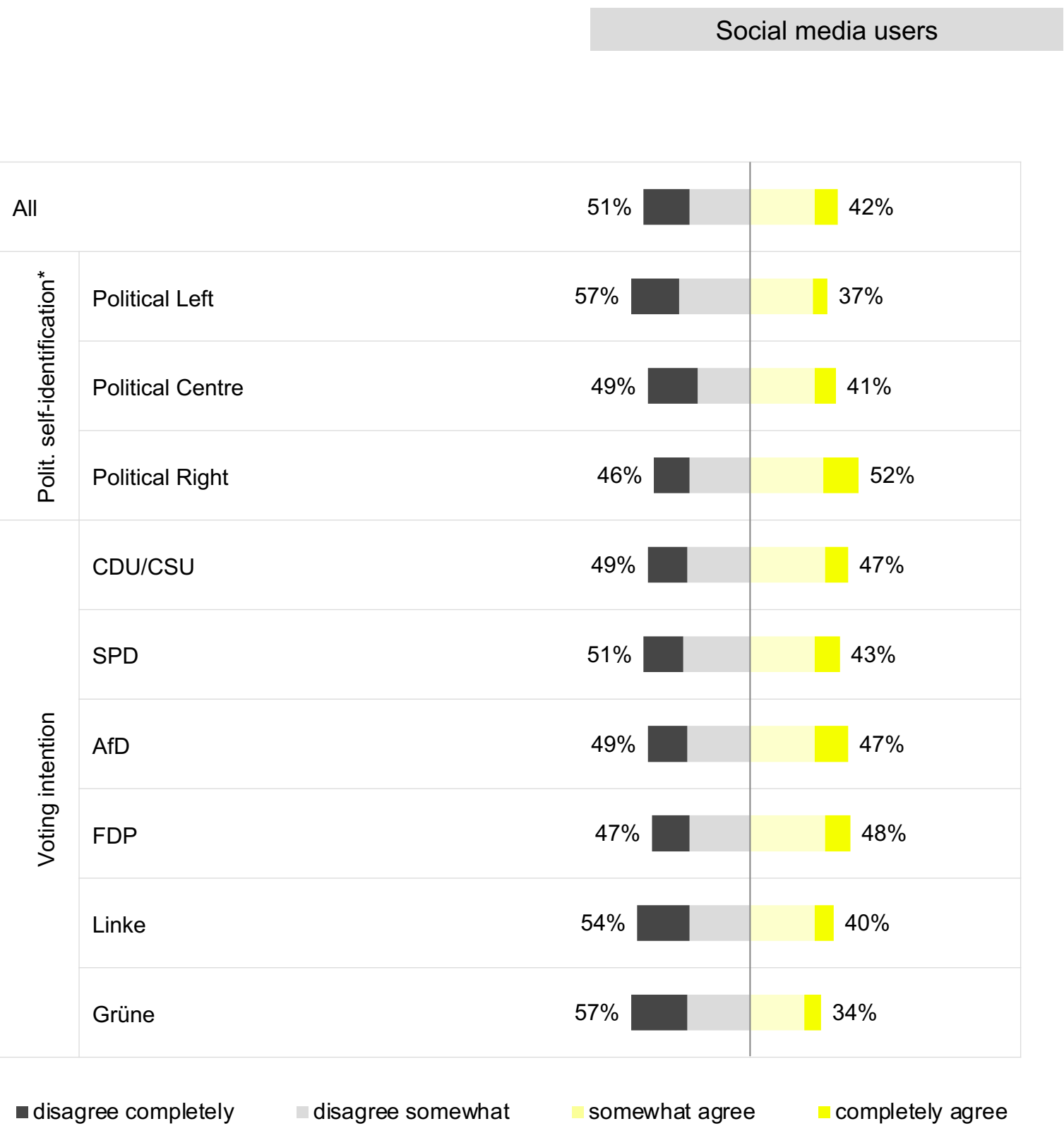
*„Because of political correctness, I sometimes am hesitant to say what I really think on social media.“*

Basis: all social media users.

Missing values: don't know.

\*Political self-identification on a left-right scale of 0-10.

Grouped values: 0-4=left, 5=centre, 6-10=right.



Possible consequences

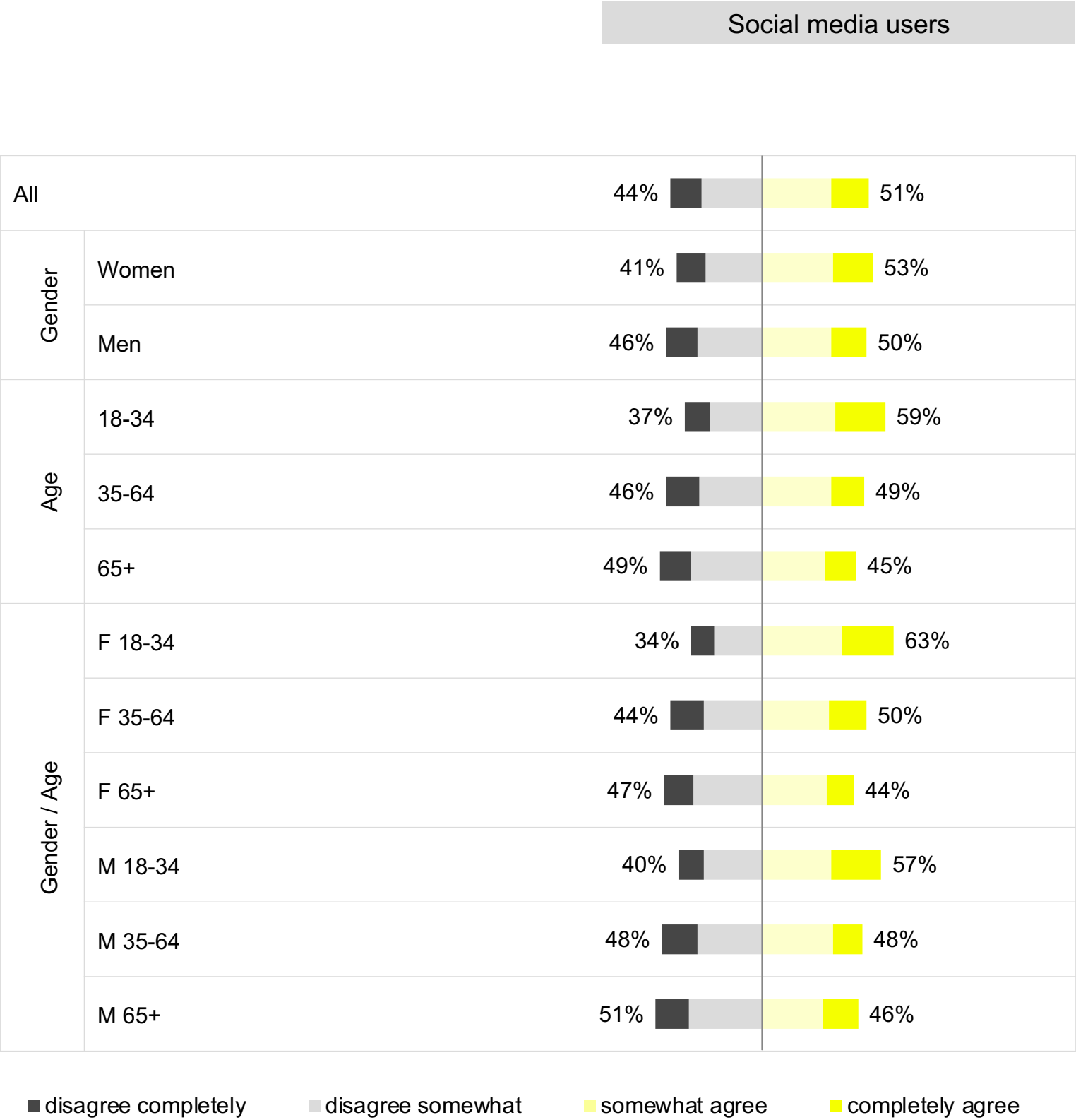
Half of social media users see their own mental health negatively affected by its use.

Perception of social media

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

„It's not good for my mental wellbeing to spend a lot of time on social media.“

Basis: all social media users.  
Missing values: don't know.



Possible consequences

Younger people in particular would like to spend less time on social media – but (so far) haven't been able to do so.

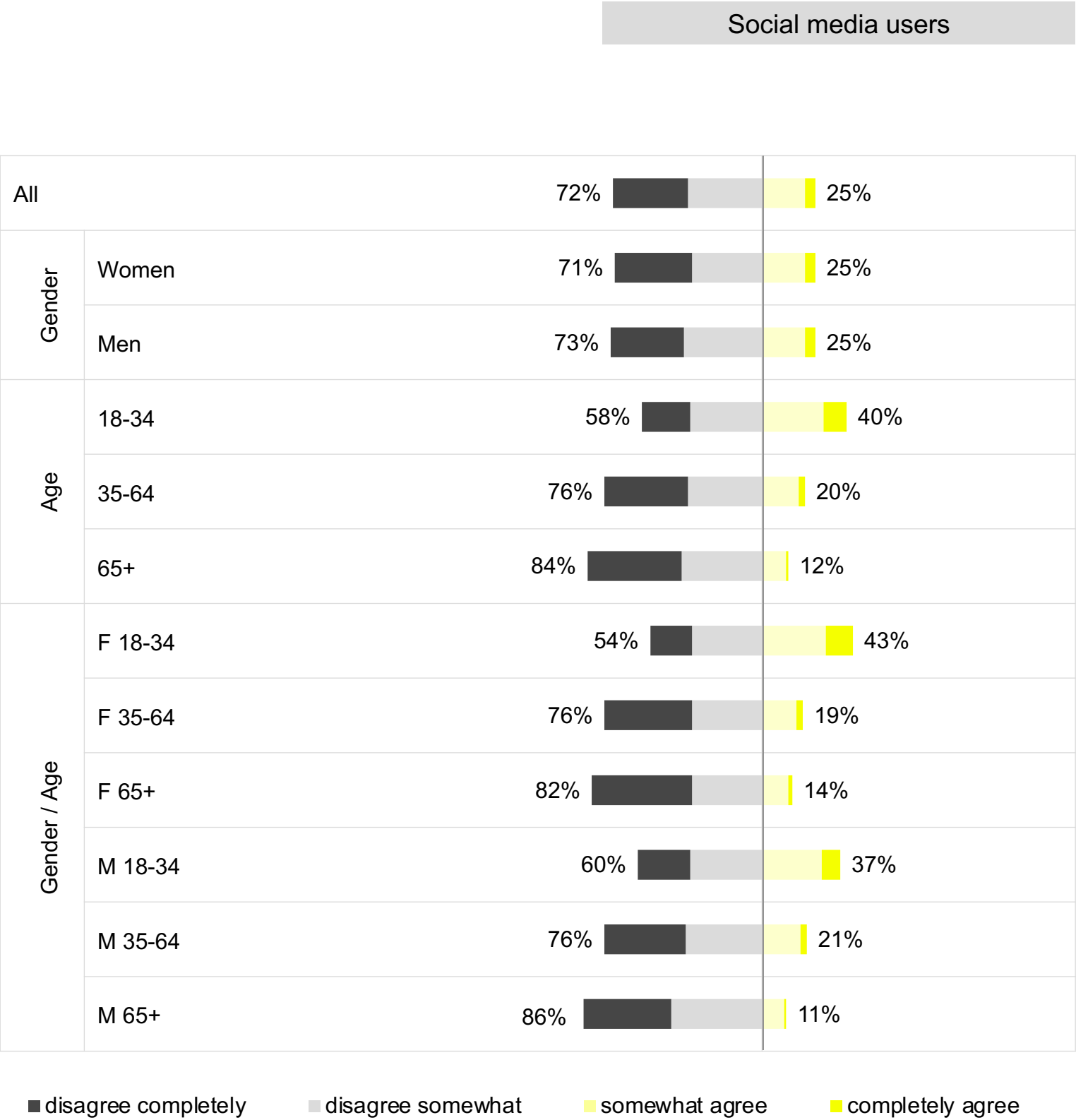
Perception of social media

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

„I wish I spent less time on social media, but I can't help myself.“

Basis: all social media users.

Missing values: don't know.





Possible consequences

One in five Facebook users would like to close their account, but they don't want to lose access to other apps.

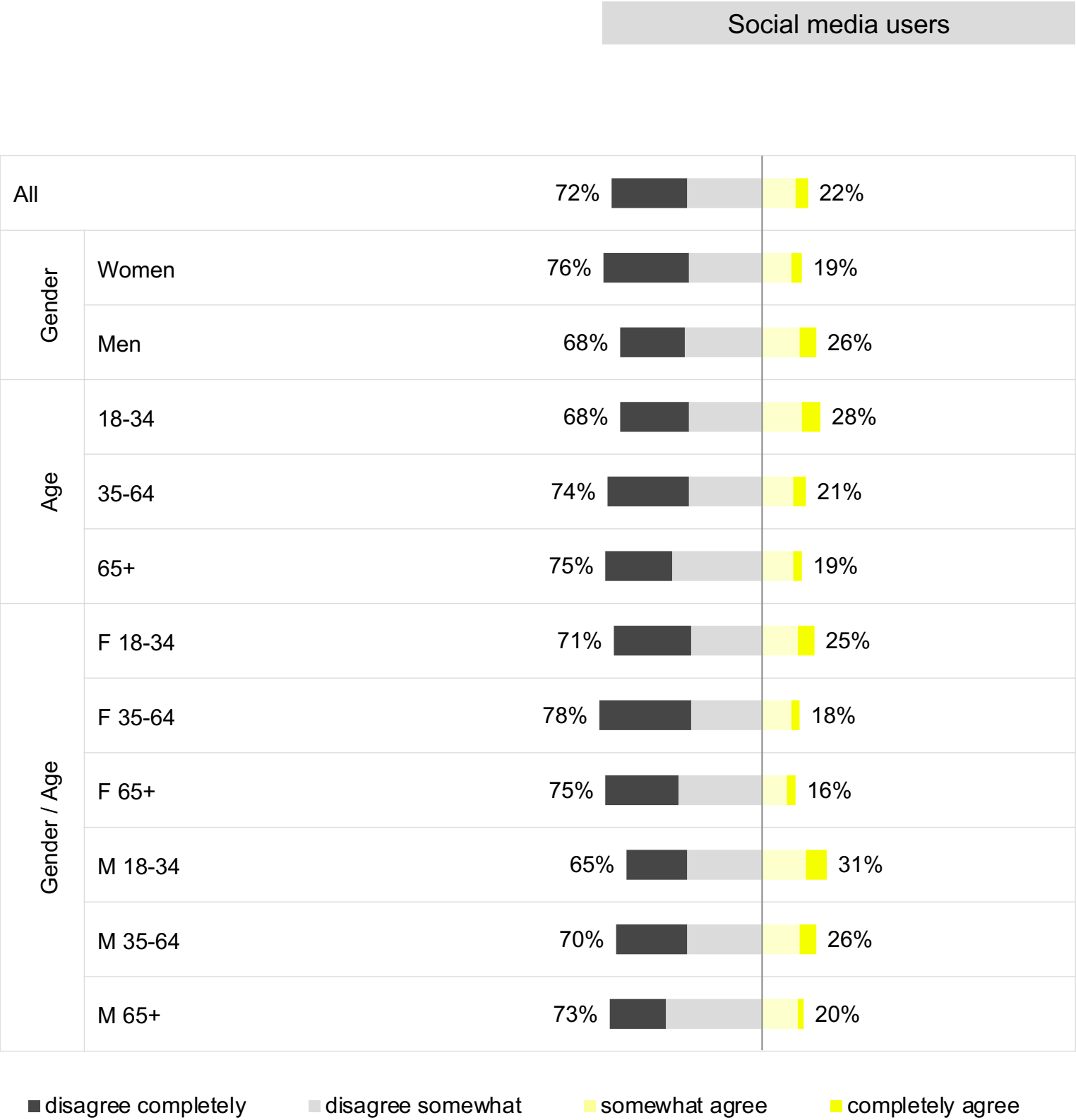
Perception of social media

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

„I would like to close my Facebook account, but then I would lose access to many other apps.“

Basis: all social media users.

Missing values: don't know.



04

# Spotlight: (young) women

Spotlight: (young) women

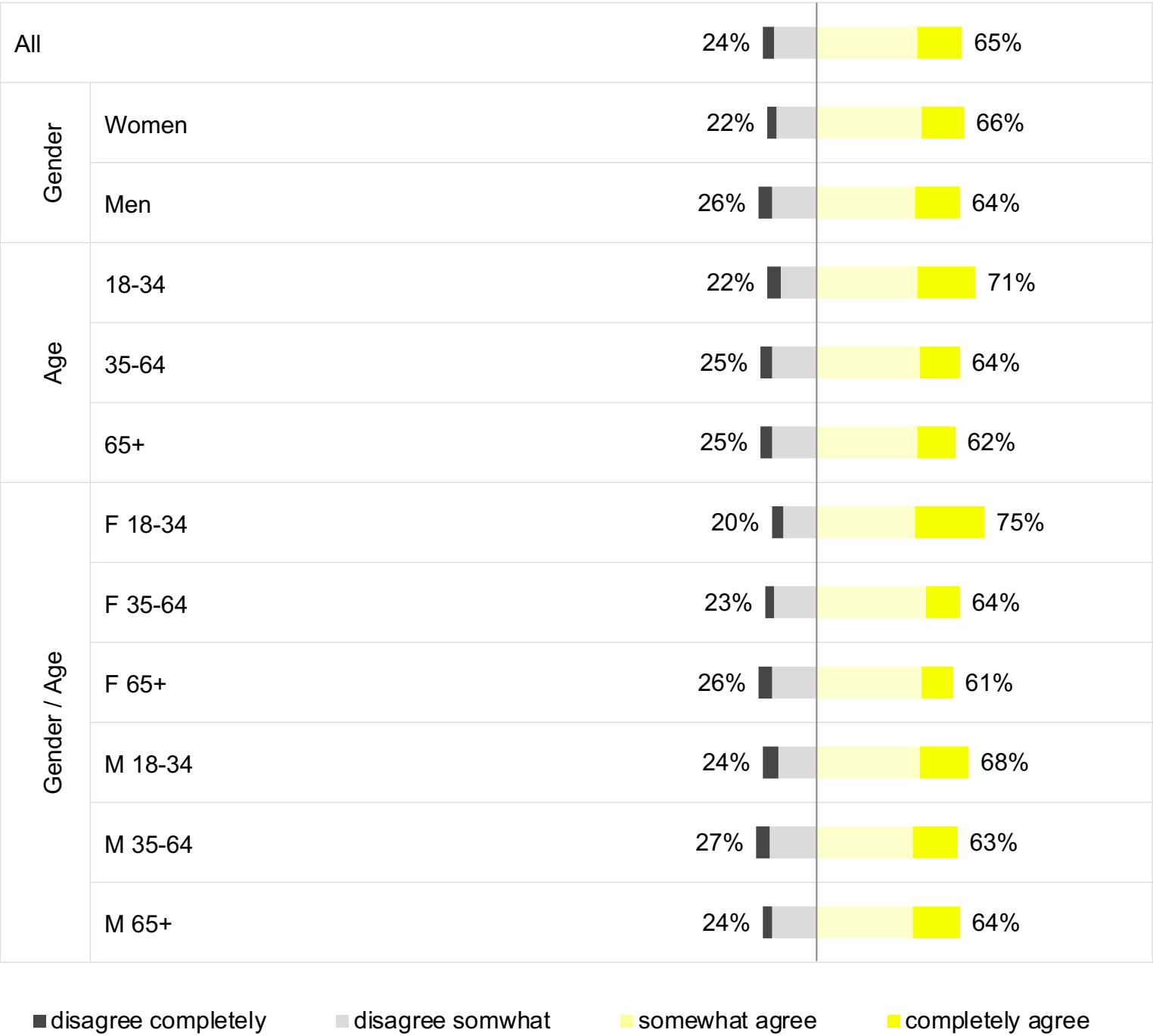
Majority of internet users see women as particularly affected by hostility on social media

Hostility against women

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements about social media?

„Women are especially often victims of hostility on social media.“

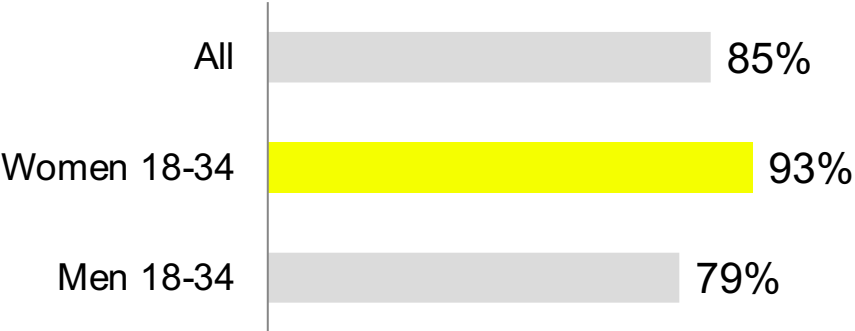
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.  
Missing values: don't know.



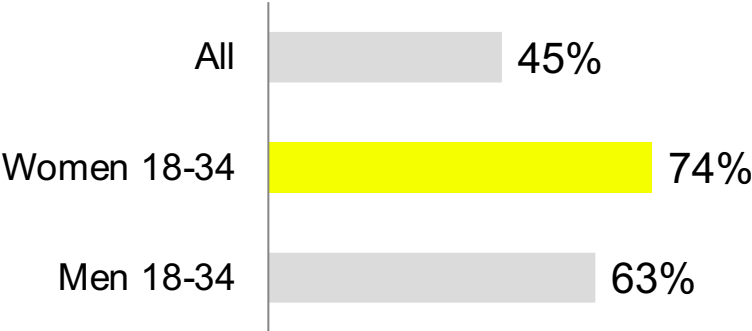
Spotlight: (young) women

Young women are more likely to see online hate as a problem.

*Hate speech is a somewhat/very big problem for society:*



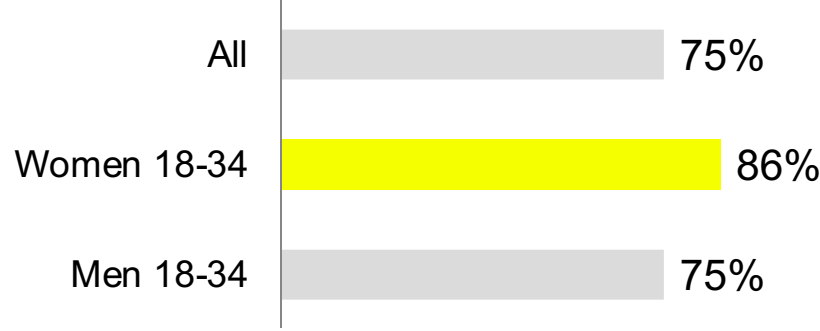
*Perceive hate speech (very) frequently:*



*Policymakers are not doing enough to combat hate/incitement on the internet.*



*Social media platforms are not doing enough to combat hate/incitement.*

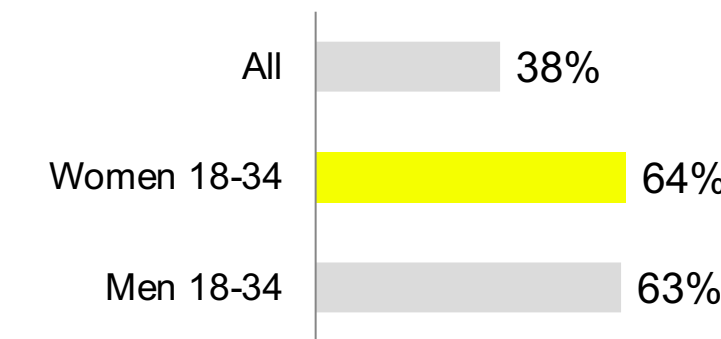


Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

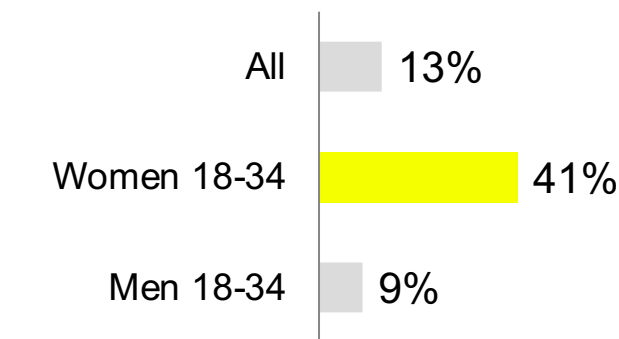
Spotlight: (young) women

# Young women are the most frequent group of victims of hate on social media

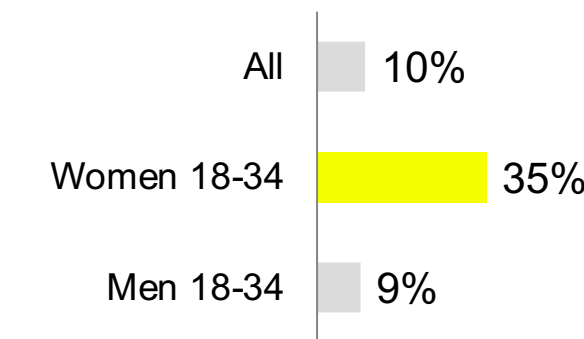
Having a **hate experience** on social media:



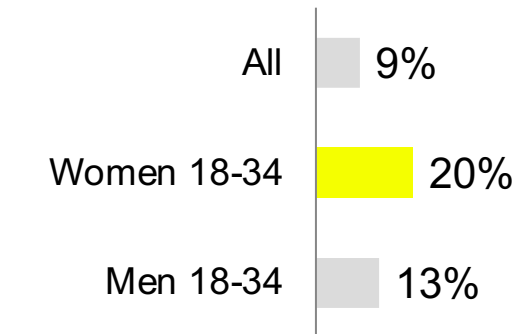
**Experiencing hate** on social media because of gender:



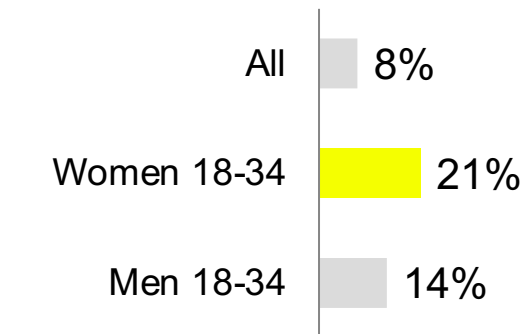
Have been **sexually harassed** on social media:



Have been **harassed** on social media **over a long period of time**:



Have been **stalked** on social media:

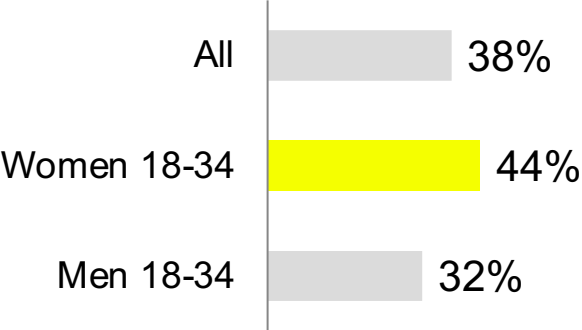


Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.

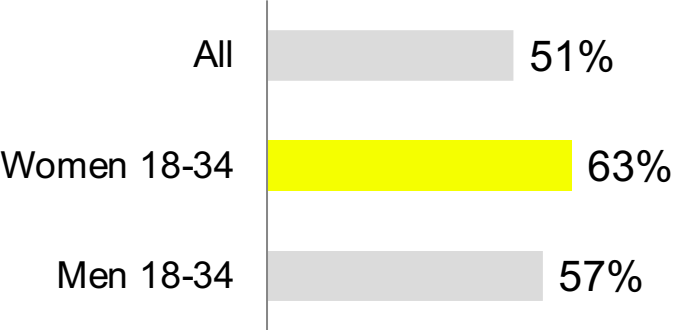
Spotlight: (young) women

Possible consequences: Young women are more cautious about expressing opinions on the internet after experiencing hate.

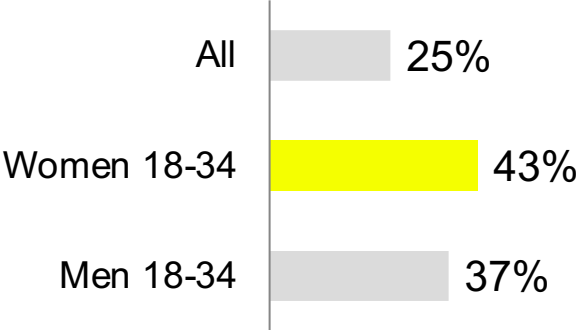
Have become **more cautious about expressing opinions** on the internet.\*



It's not good for my **mental wellbeing** to spend a lot of time on social media.\*\*



I wish I spent **less time on social media**, but I can't help myself.\*\*



Basis: \*all eligible internet users who have already seen hate comments on social media or were themselves victims of hate on social media

\*\*all social media users..

05

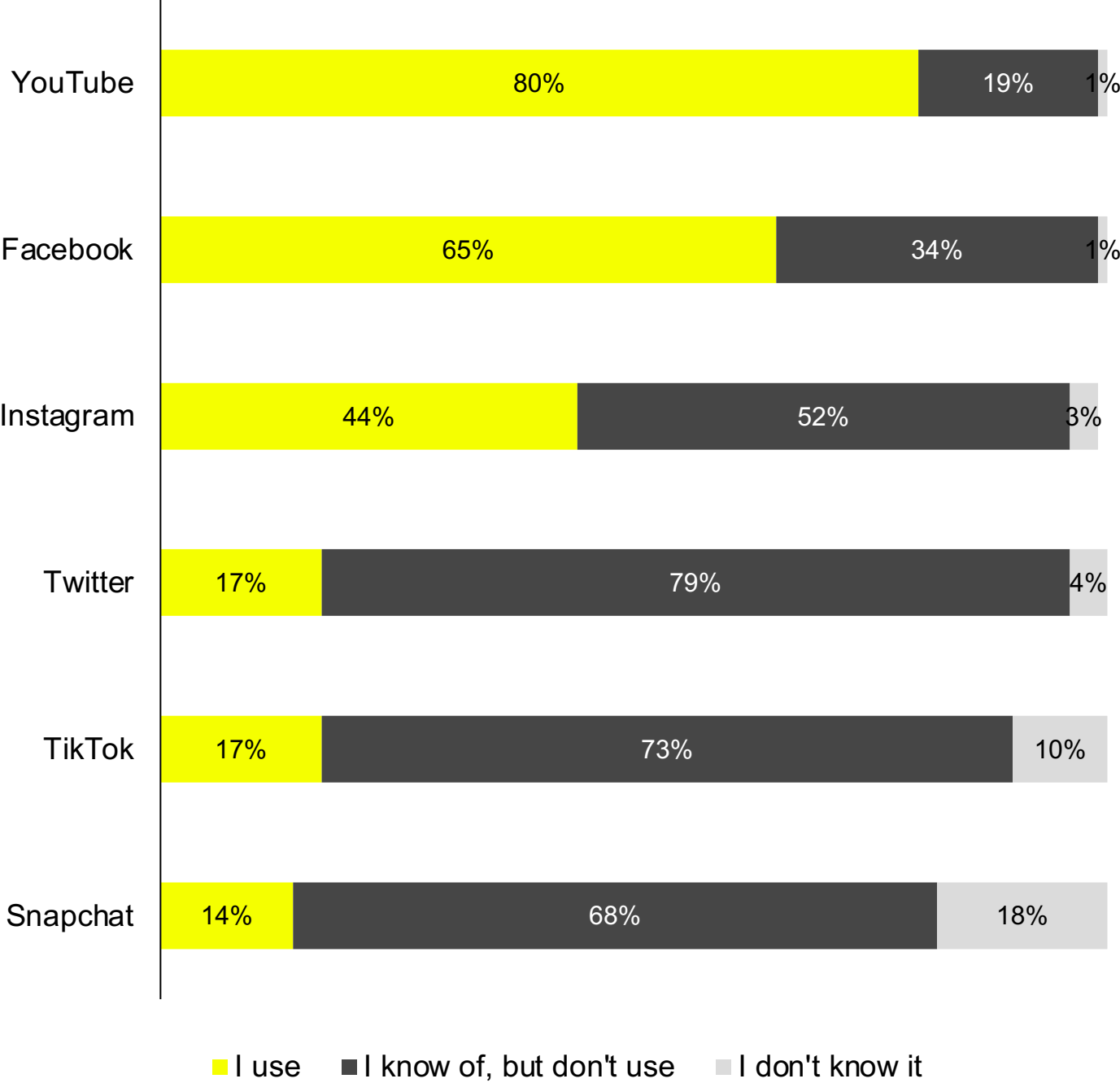
# Appendix: Social media use

Appendix: Social media use

YouTube, Facebook and Instagram are the most used social media.

Usage and familiarity with social media

Please indicate whether you are familiar with and use each of the following.



Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.  
Deviations from 100% due to rounding.



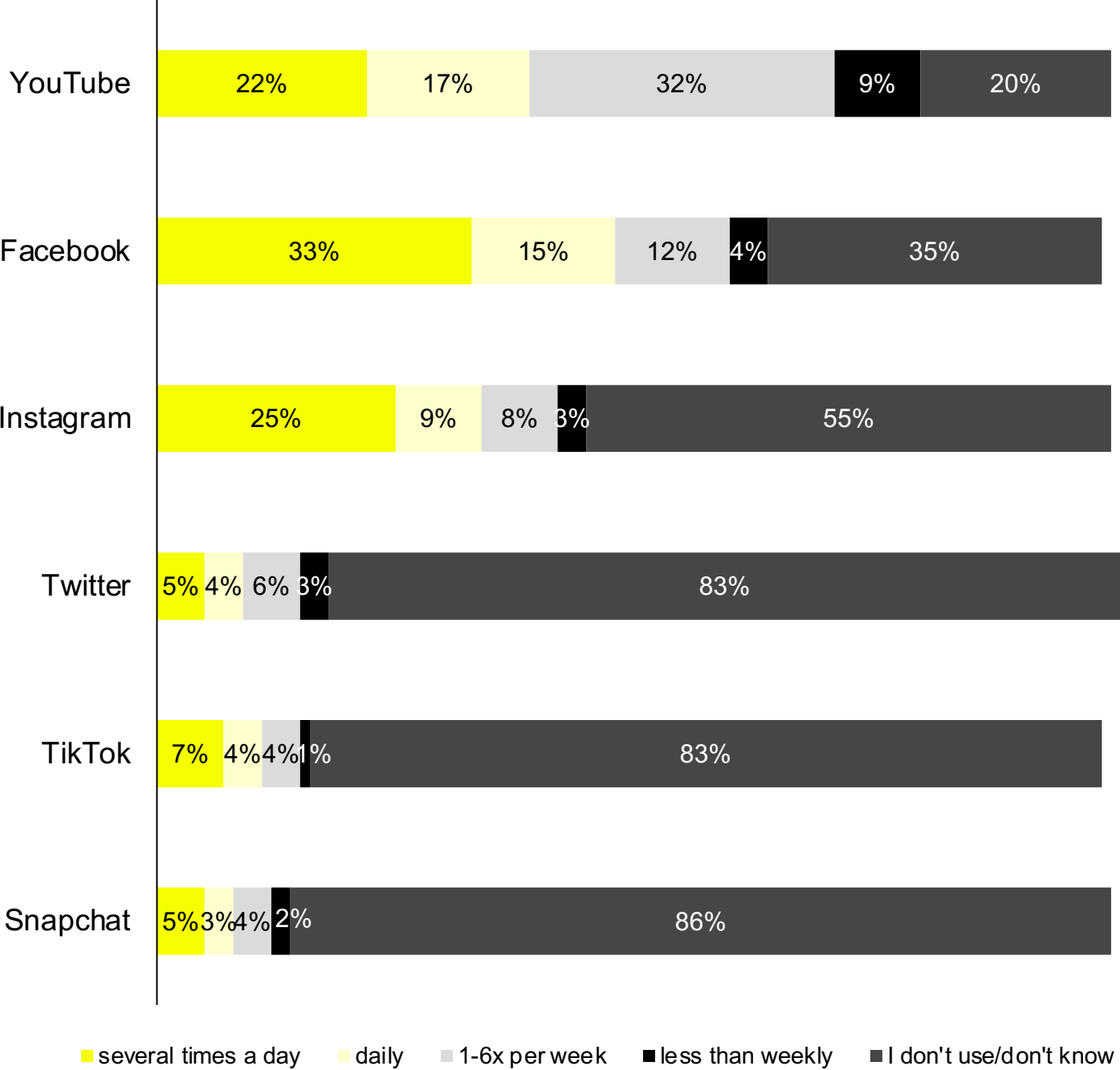
Appendix: Social media use

High proportion of very active users:  
one third of internet users use  
Facebook several times a day

Intensity of use of social media

Please indicate whether you are familiar with and use each  
of the following.

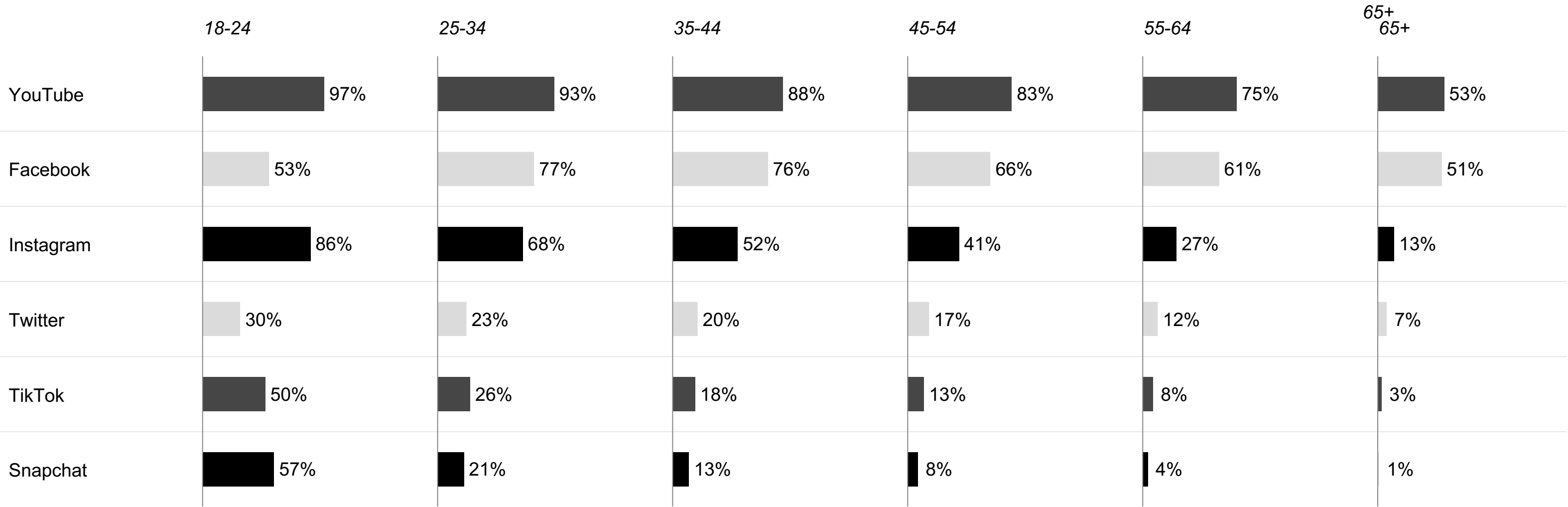
And how often do you use or visit each of these?



Basis: all internet users eligible to vote.  
Deviations from 100% due to rounding.

# Significant differences in usage according to age

Social media usage by age



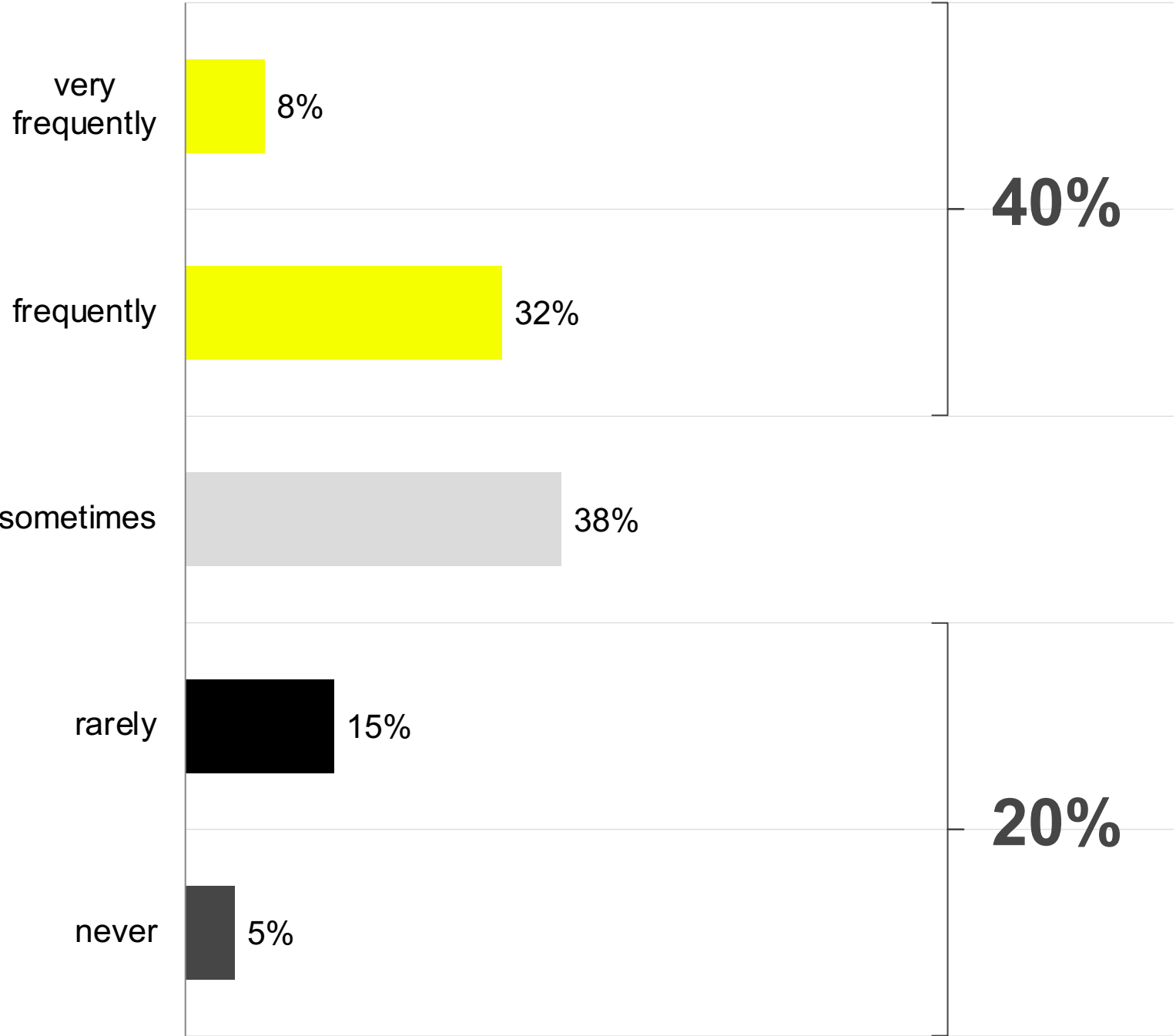
Basis: all internet users eligible to vote. Values represented; "I use".

Majority of social media users come across political content there, 40 percent even frequently to very frequently

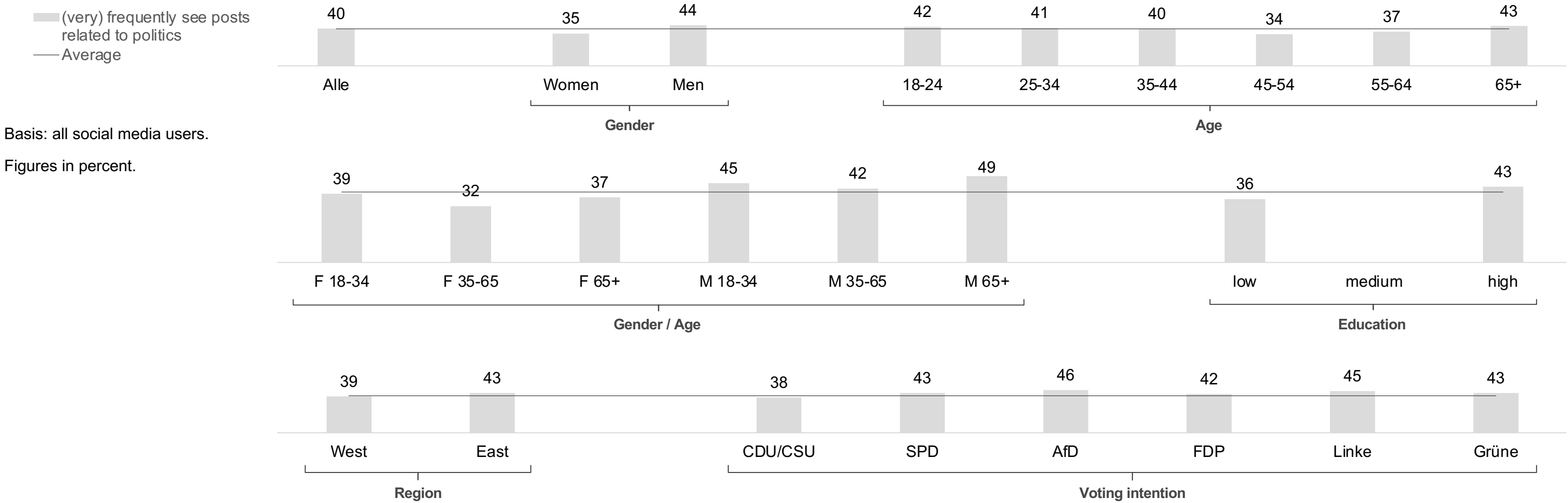
Politics in social media

Thinking about the posts you come across on social media, how often are they about politicians, parties or political issues?

Basis: all social media users.  
Missing values: don't know.



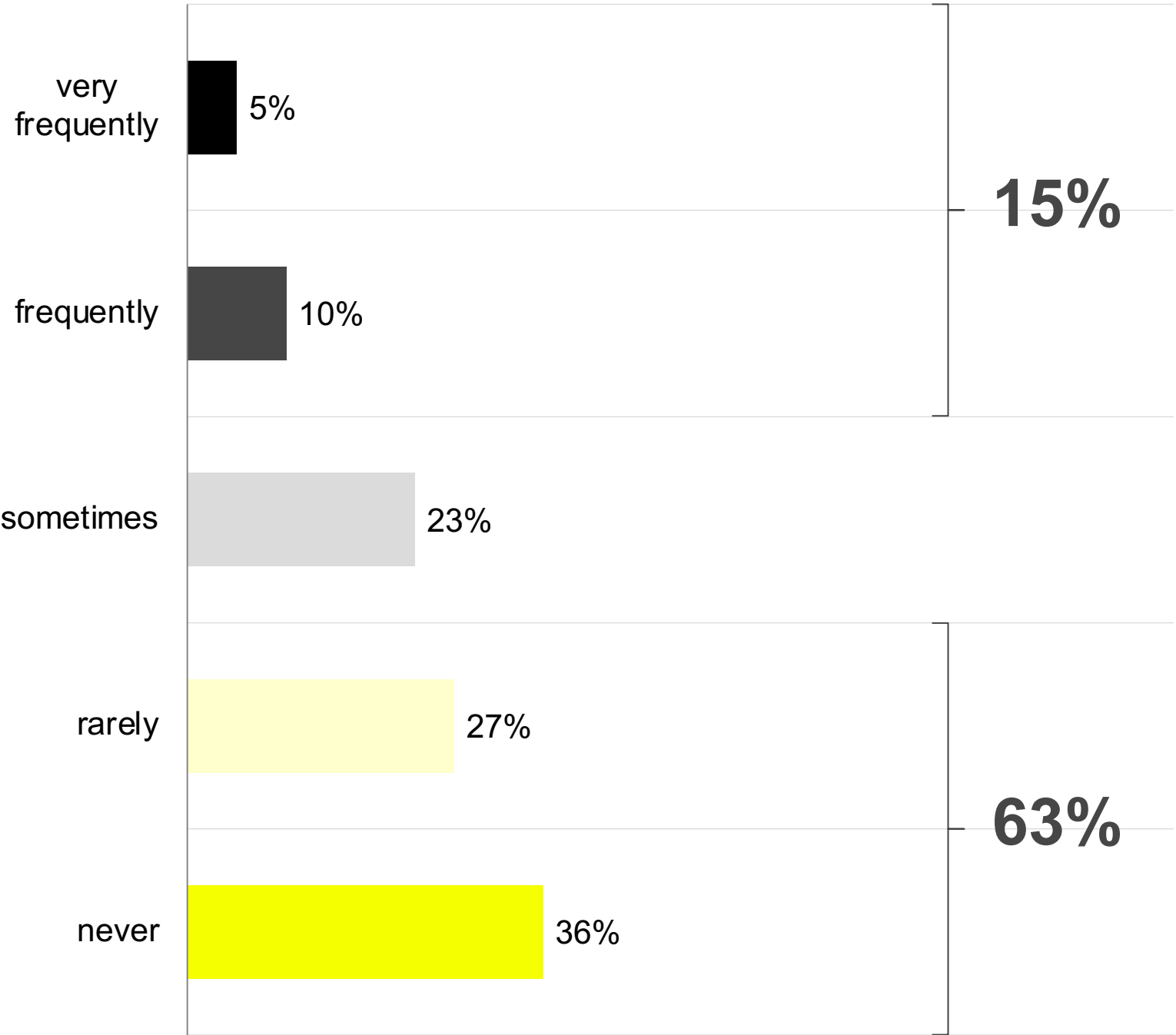
# Political content in social media is more often perceived by men



The majority, however, rarely or never actively engage in political topics on social media.

Politics in social media

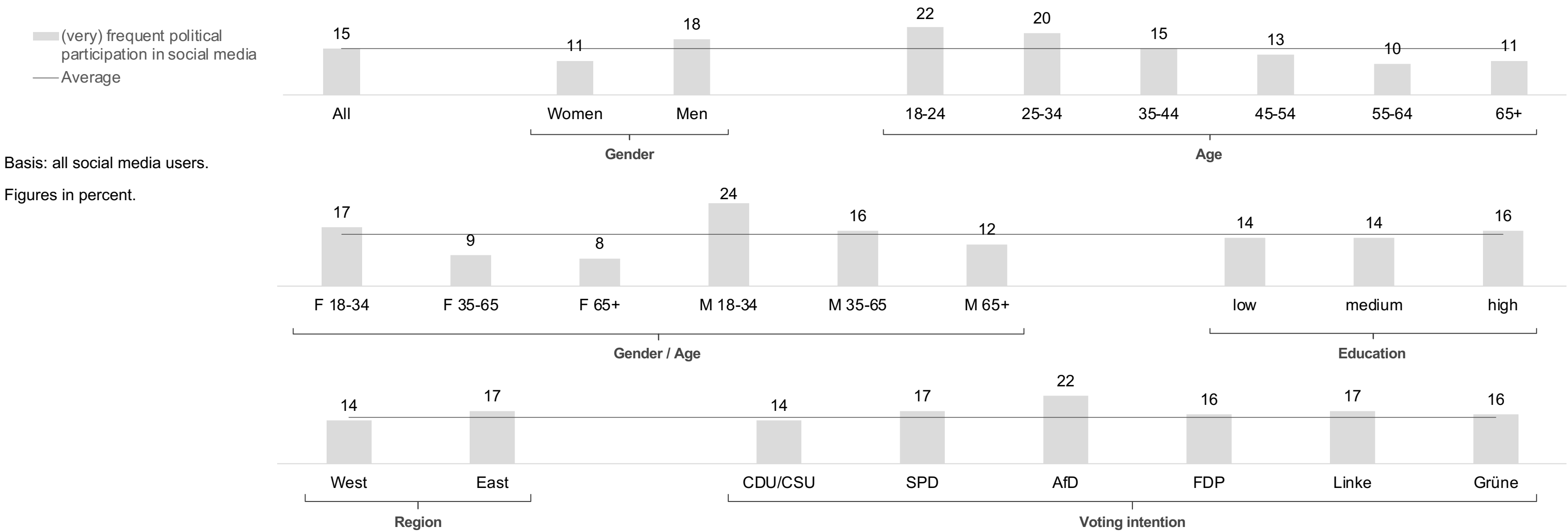
How often do you find yourself liking, sharing, commenting on or writing posts about politics on social media?



Basis: all social media users.

Missing values: don't know.

# More often politically active on social media: younger people, men and AfD voters



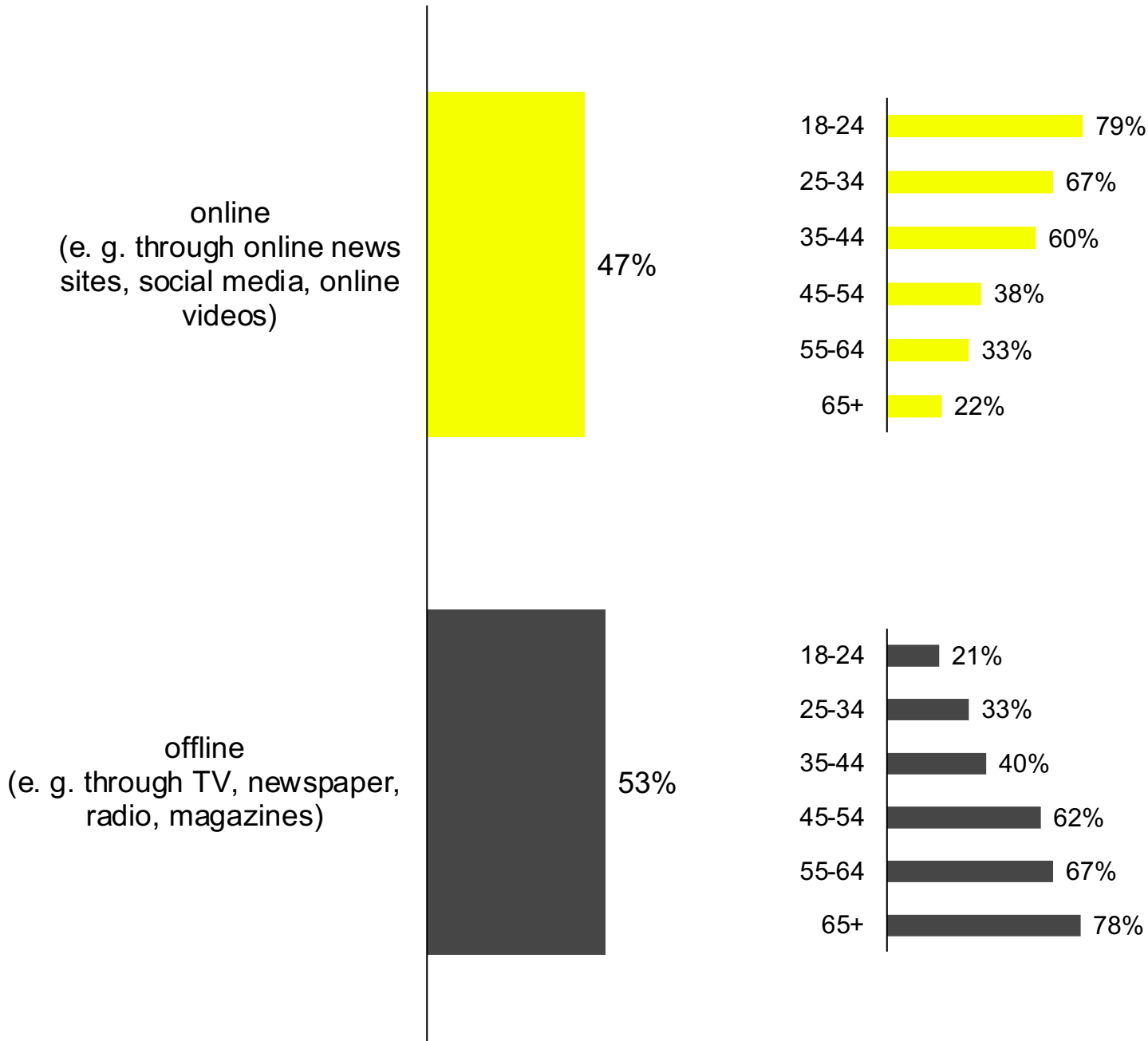
Basis: all social media users.  
Figures in percent.

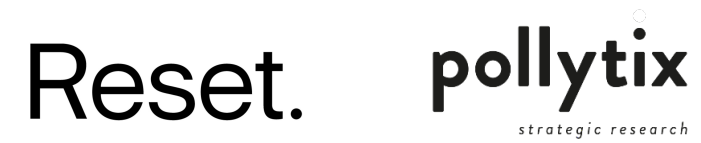
Around half are more likely to get information on politics and the upcoming federal election online - strongly age-dependent.

Political information - online vs. offline

Are you more likely to get most of your information on political issues, such as the upcoming federal election, ...?

Basis: all eligible internet users.





**Reset.** is an initiative that advocates for digital technologies to serve democracy again. Above all, it focuses on the regulation of big tech so that disinformation, hatred and manipulation can be reduced.

**pollytix strategic research** is the agency for opinion research and research-based consulting at the interface of politics, business and society.

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