VOICES ON MISINFORMATION

What people think about it
& why advertisers should care

MAGNA MEDIA TRIALS | ZEFR
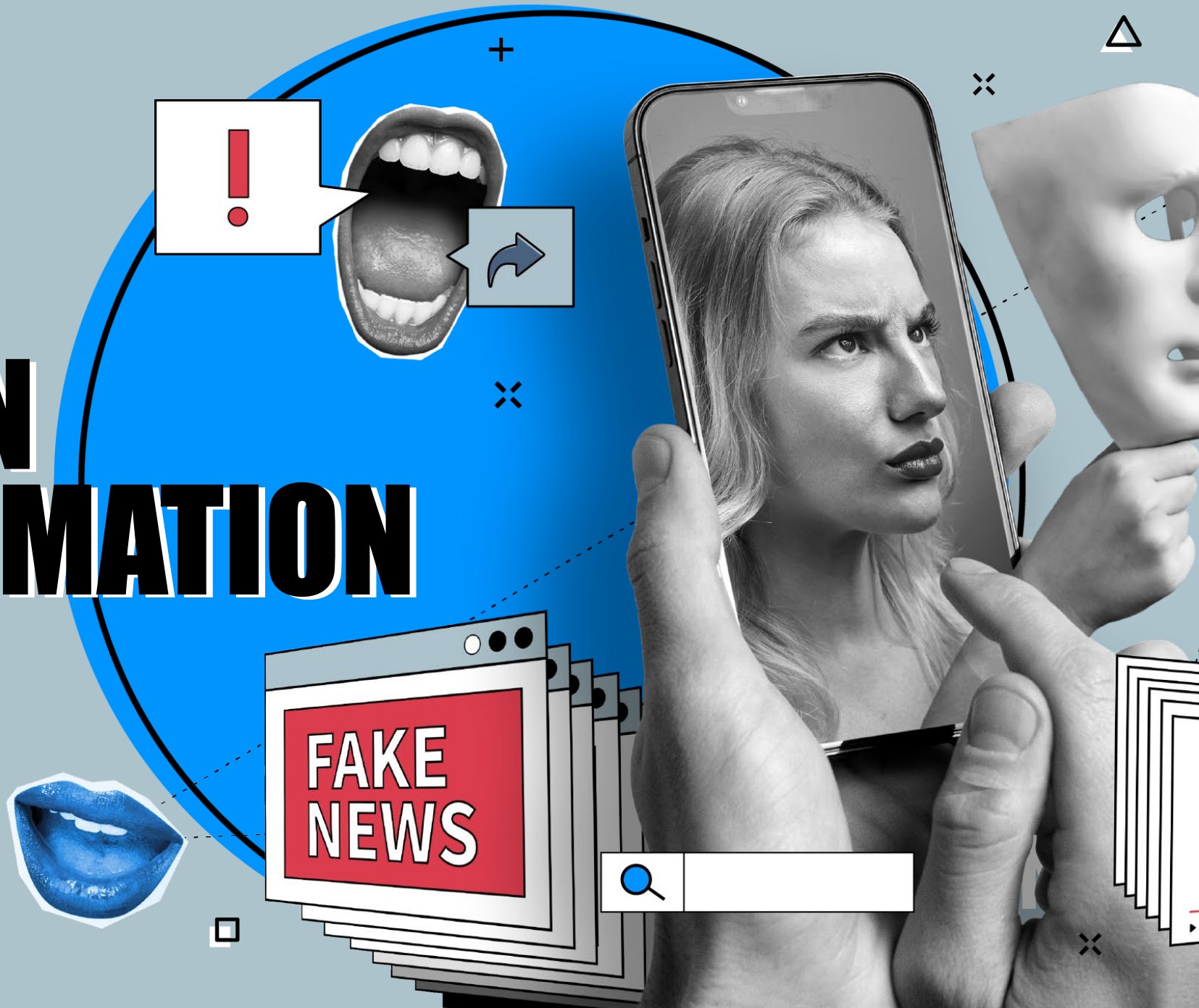
MISINFORMATION IS AT THE TOP OF EVERYONE'S MIND

Misinformation search frequency on Google: 01/2022-10/2022

Online searches for "misinformation" skyrocket around pivotal moments, such as the US 2022 elections

Jan-22 Feb-22 Mar-22 Apr-22 May-22 Jun-22 Jul-22 Aug-22 Sep-22 Oct-22

Data Source: Google Trends (https://www.google.com/trends)
Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term.

THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY IS RESPONDING

In June 2022, the Global Alliance of Responsible Media announced that misinformation would be the 12th category of its brand safety and brand suitability framework, reinforcing its importance to the future ad-supported media

OUR MISSION

1 Understand how people feel about the state of misinformation today

2 Quantify how misinformation impacts the way people feel about brands that appear adjacent to it
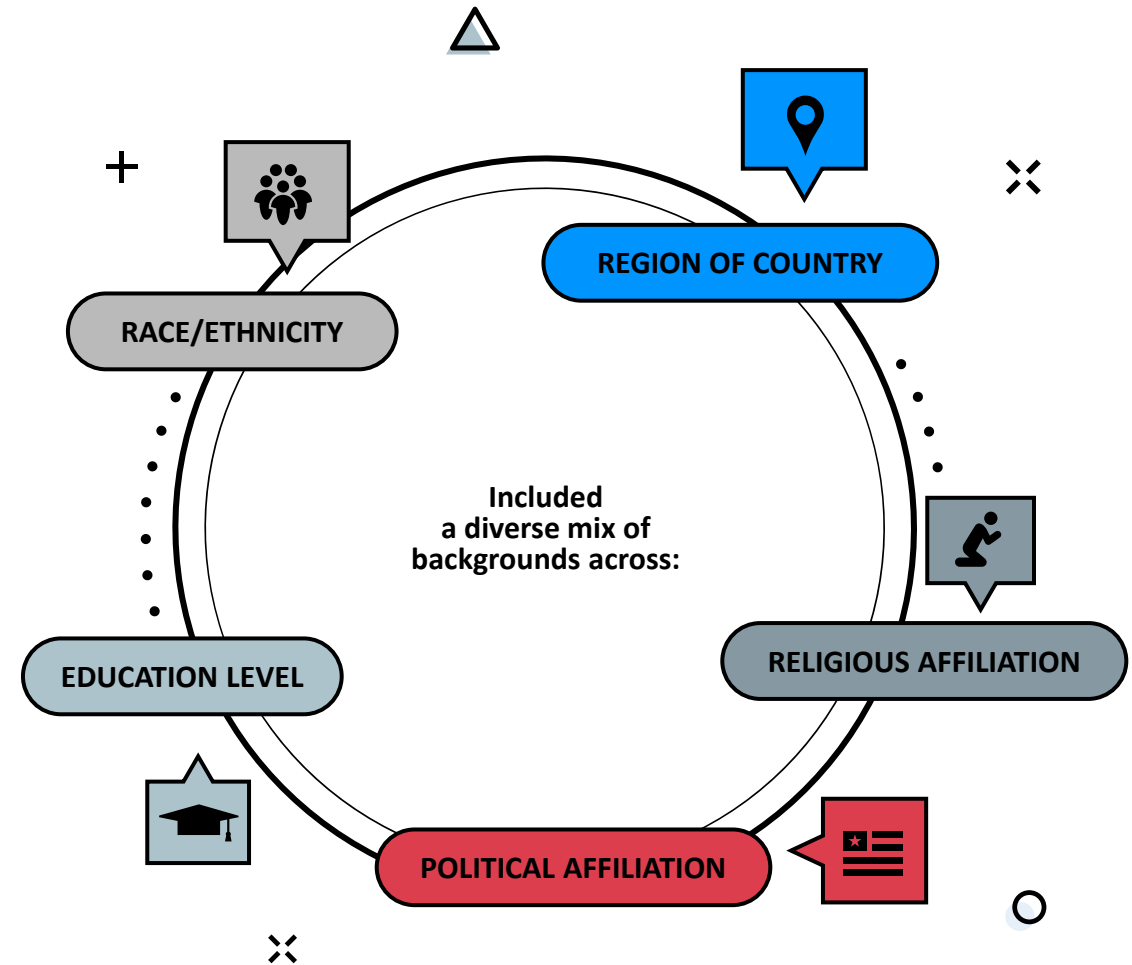
OUR METHOD: QUALITATIVE

FOCUS GROUPS

Conducted a series of focus groups to uncover how people feel about the state of misinformation today, as well as their perceptions on brand involvement with it

Total: n=18   **Focus Groups**: n=4

Included a diverse mix of backgrounds across:

- REGION OF COUNTRY
- RACE/ETHNICITY
- RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
- EDUCATION LEVEL
- POLITICAL AFFILIATION

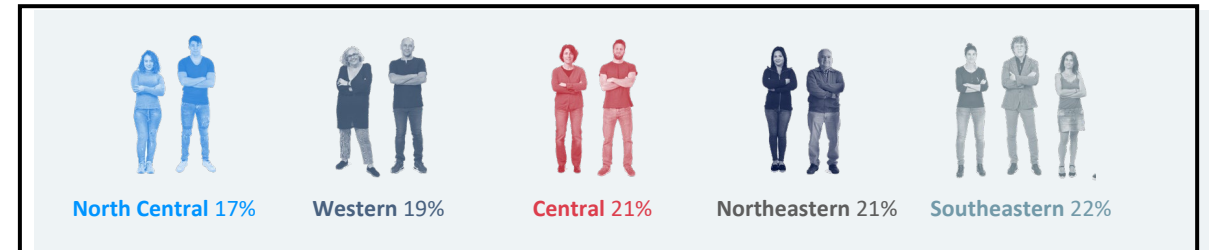# OUR METHOD: QUANTITATIVE

ONLINE SURVEY

Survey to understand POV on misinformation, as well as measure potential brand impact when brand is associated with misinformation
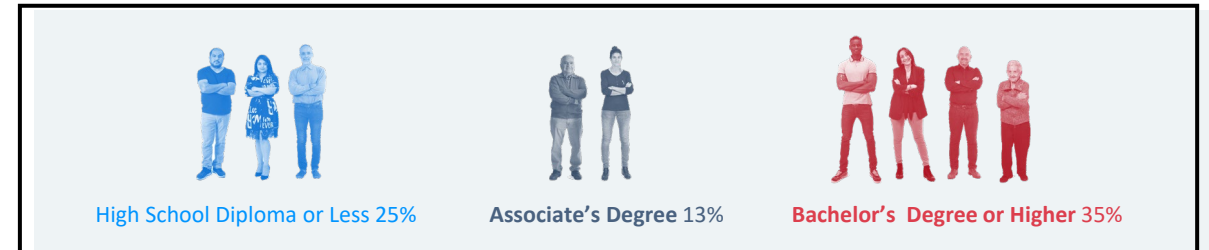
Total: n=2,045   **Participants**: Nationally representative online panel

NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE QUOTAS TO ENSURE UNBIASED SAMPLE:

REGION OF PRIMARY RESIDENCE

North Central 17%   Western 19%   Central 21%   Northeastern 21%   Southeastern 22%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

High School Diploma or Less 25%   Associate's Degree 13%   Bachelor's Degree or Higher 35%

POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Left Leaning 22%   Somewhere in the Middle 40%   Right Leaning 25%

THE BASICS OF MISINFORMATION

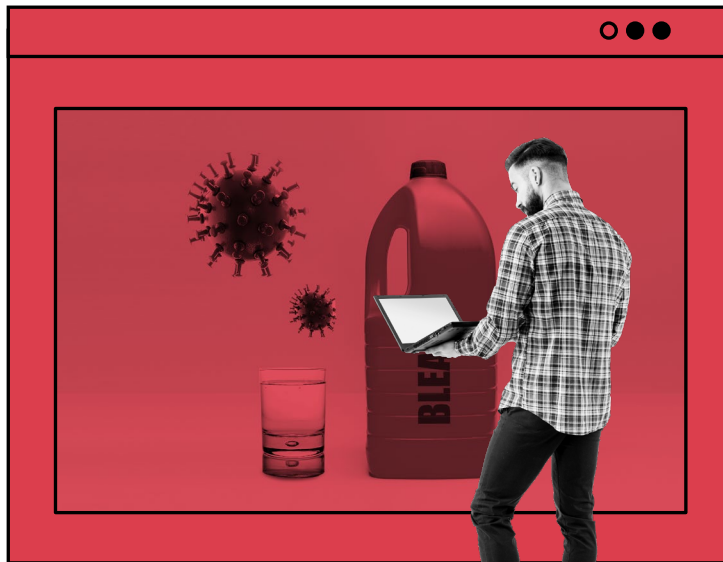What people think about it

PEOPLE ARE BOMBARDED BY MISINFORMATION, AND IT'S ONLY INTENSIFYING

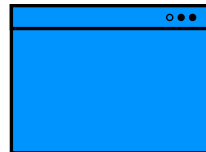**I see misinformation...** *% Selected*

93% Frequently or sometimes

7% Rarely or never

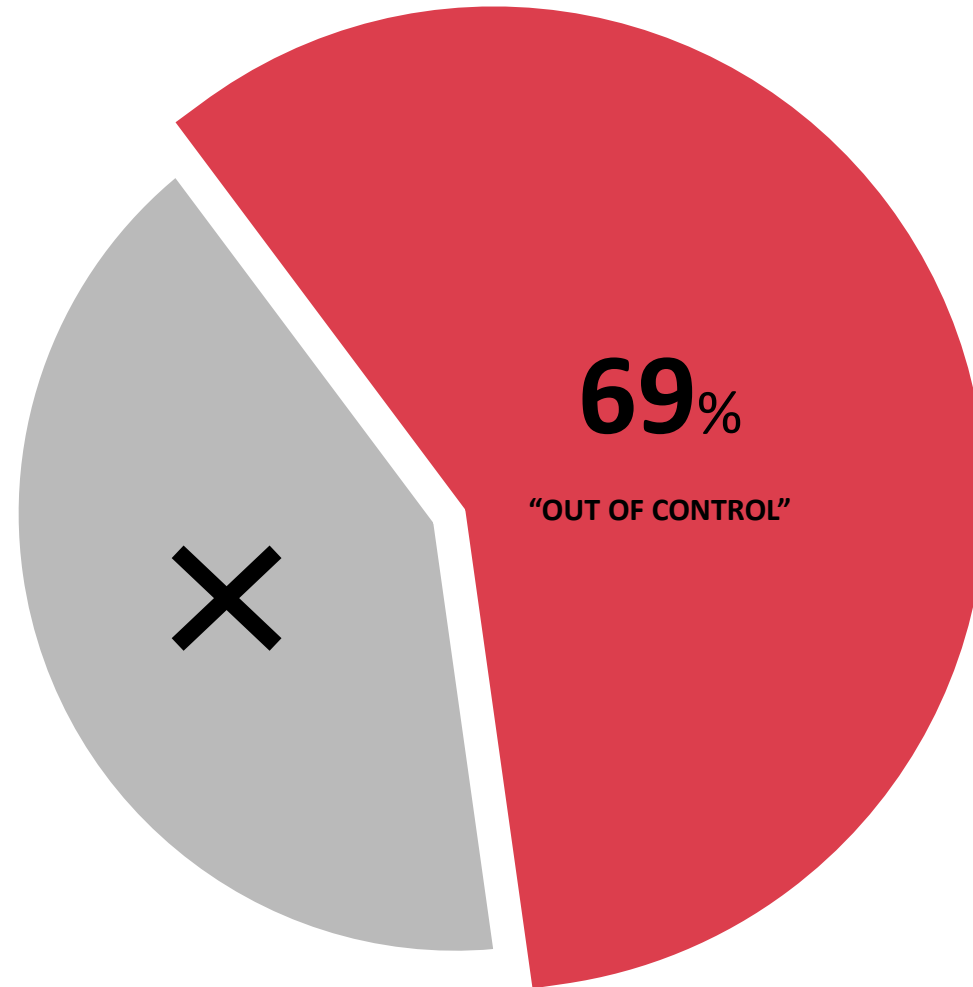**Misinformation is increasing over time,** *% Strongly/Somewhat Agree*

YES

82% It's increasing

NO

Question: How often do you think you see misinformation? | Total N = 2,045
Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about misinformation? | Total n= 2,045

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MISINFORMATION FEELS LIKE AN UNMANAGEABLE PROBLEM

I feel misinformation is...
% Strongly/Somewhat Agree

69%
"OUT OF CONTROL"

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about misinformation?
Total N = 2,045

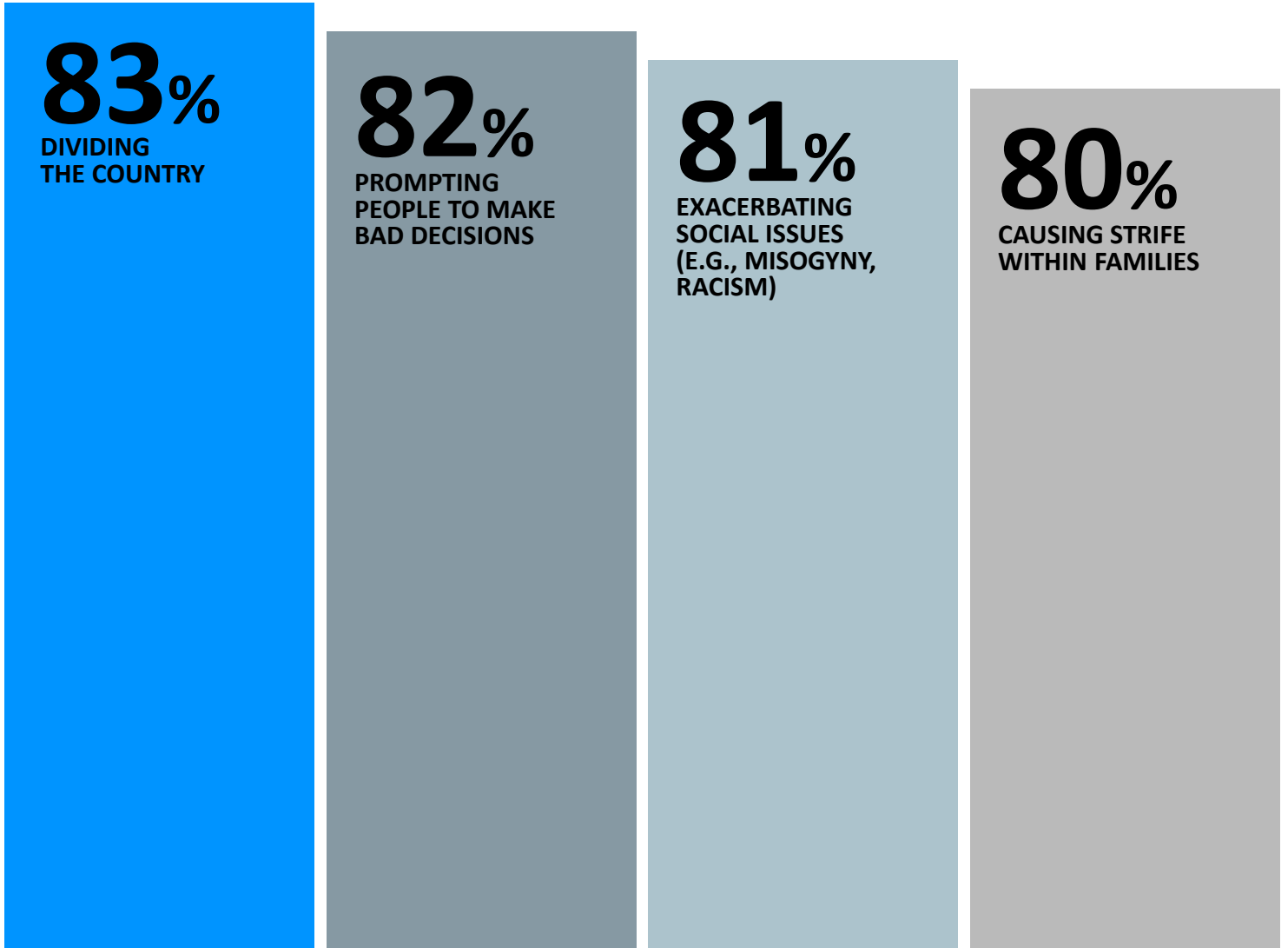# PEOPLE ACROSS THE POLITICAL DIVIDE AGREE — MISINFORMATION IS A GROWING ISSUE

Regardless of political affiliation, the majority of people believe that misinformation is cause for concern

I feel misinformation is… By Political Affiliation
% Strongly/Somewhat Agree
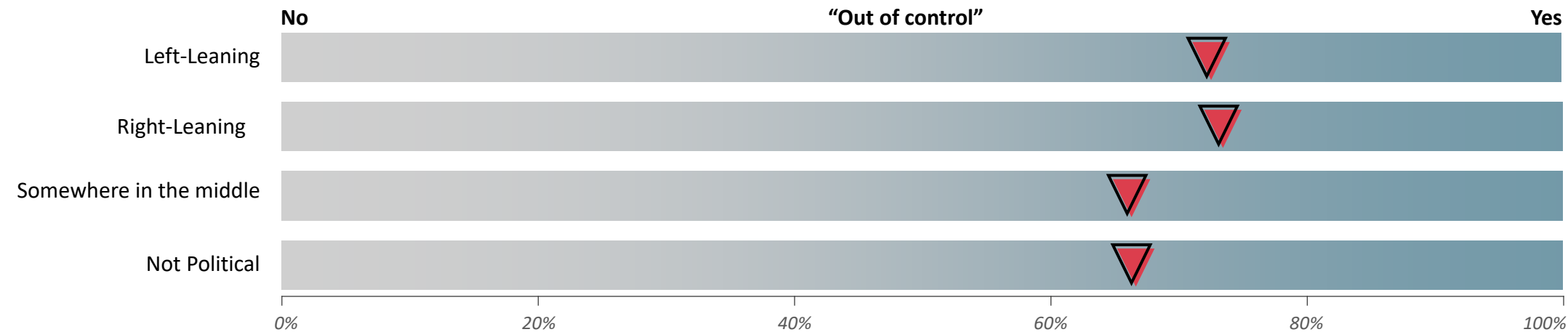
MISINFORMATION IS HAVING REAL AND SERIOUS EFFECTS ON OUR SOCEITY

Misinformation is...
% Strongly/Somewhat Agree

83%
DIVIDING THE COUNTRY

82%
PROMPTING PEOPLE TO MAKE BAD DECISIONS

81%
EXACERBATING SOCIAL ISSUES (E.G., MISOGYNY, RACISM)

80%
CAUSING STRIFE WITHIN FAMILIES

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about misinformation?
Total n= 2,045

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PEOPLE ARE FEELING THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISINFORMATION ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

Personal Stories From People About How Misinformation Has Impacted Them
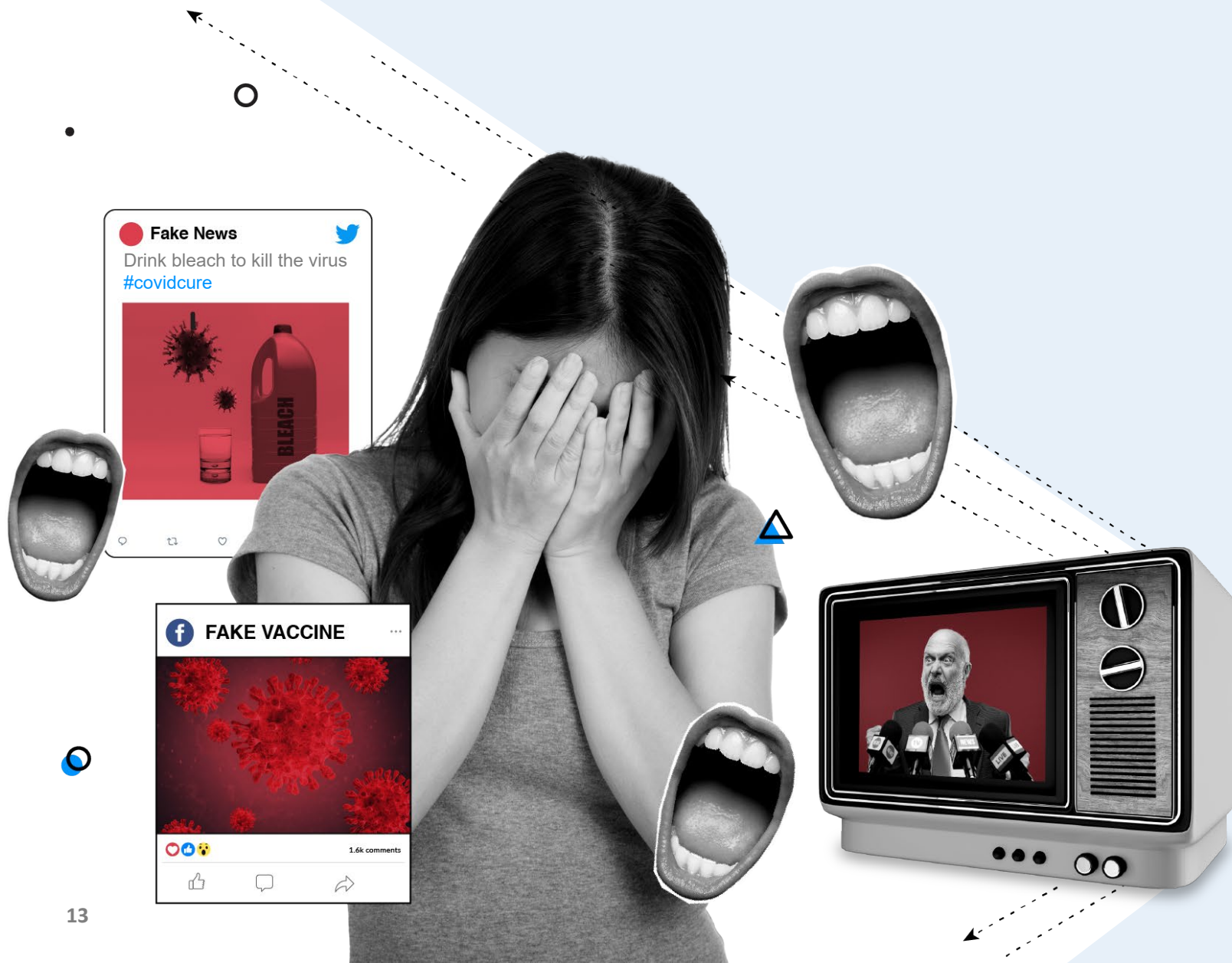
"My cousin lost her husband, who was a father and grandfather, to COVID. He got sicker and sicker, but they didn't believe COVID was real and only got him to the hospital at the very last moment. Moments after finding out he had passed, her son--a 40-year-old man--was sure the hospital killed his father."

"My wife is transgender and one of the smartest down to earth people I know. The misinformation about transgender people that floats around causes a lot of hurt."

"As a queer person, false information has been very harmful to myself and my friends. Misinformation that is created to make our community look bad based off of things we do not say or have concerns about."

"Arguments within the family have heated up more often due to opposing viewpoints. Mostly little squabbles here and there but more frequent now a days."

Question: You mentioned misinformation has personally affected you or your family. Please share the worse, best, or wildest story you have about how misinformation has affected you or your family.
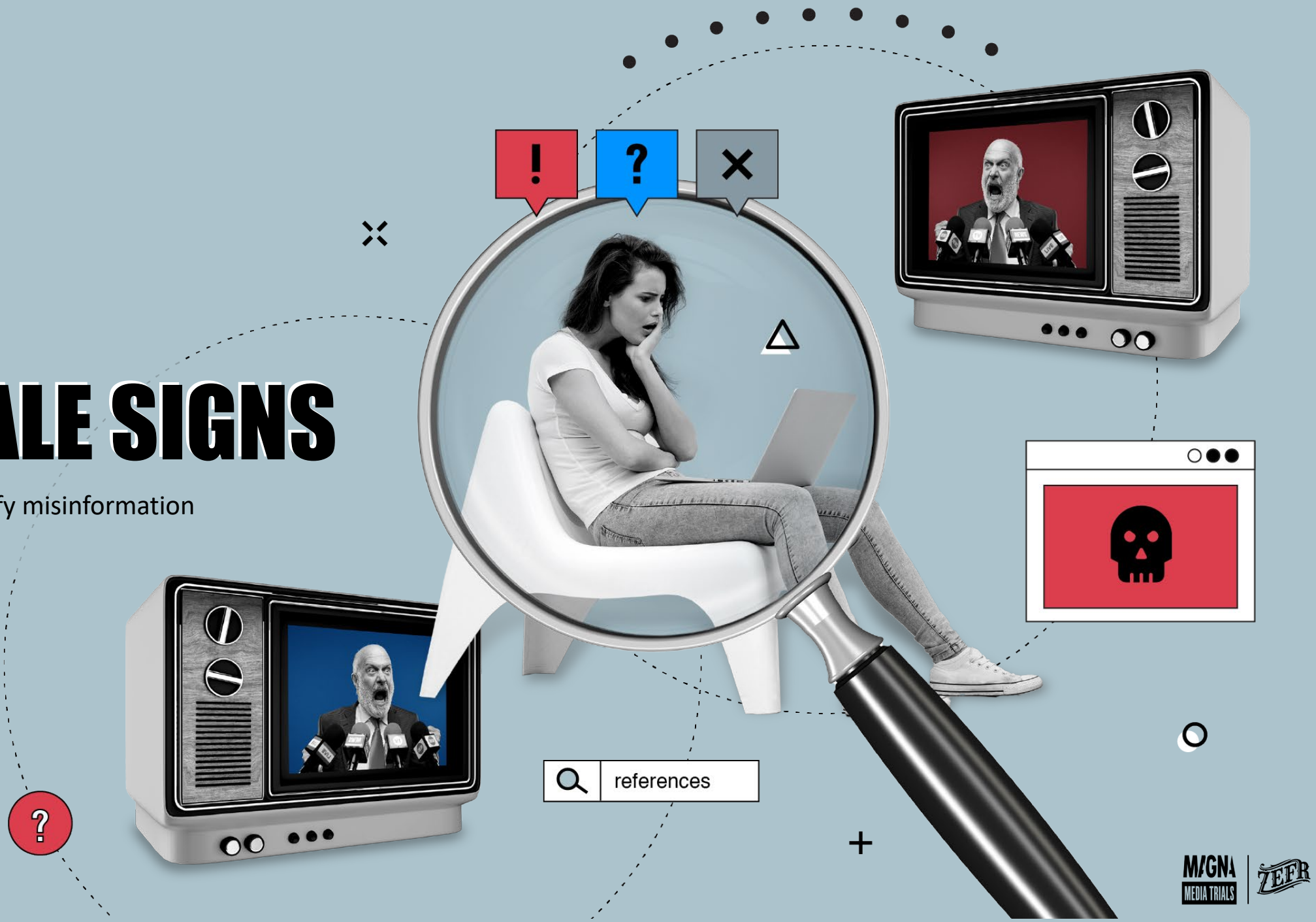
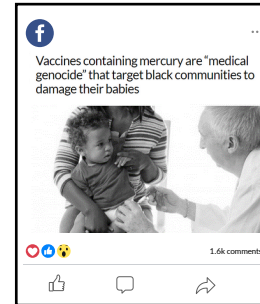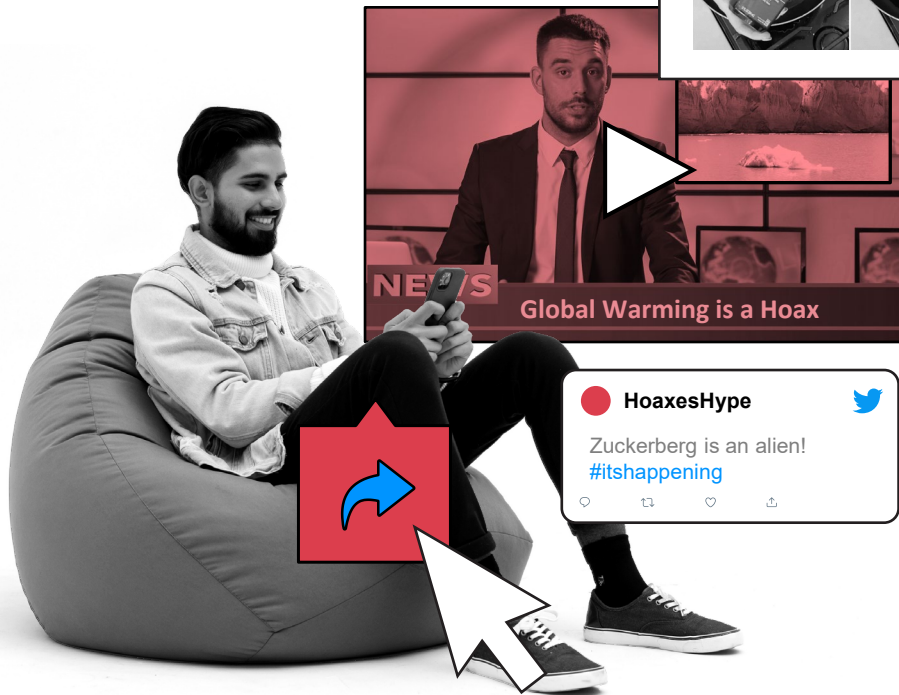MAGNA MEDIA TRIALS | ZEFR

KEY FINDING

Misinformation is ubiquitous and people only see it as a growing problem. It bothers people at a deep level, as most have been personally affected by it in some way or other.

Fake News
Drink bleach to kill the virus
#covidcure

FAKE VACCINE
1.6k comments

THE TELLTALE SIGNS

How people identify misinformation in the real world

MISINFORMATION TAKES MANY SHAPES AND FORMS – IT'S NOT JUST POLITICS

Global Warming is a Hoax

NEWS

HoaxesHype
Zuckerberg is an alien!
#itshappening

Vaccines containing mercury are "medical genocide" that target black communities to damage their babies

1.6k comments

> ## Real stories of misinformation
>
> "One thing I've seen is that racism and sexism is no longer an issue because the employment and promotion of people of color and women is becoming more visible even though it has not progressed enough to shorten the wage gap in this country."
>
> "I have been hearing the Nyquil chicken story lately where people are pouring Nyquil on chicken and cooking it. It is very scary."
>
> "Conspiracy theories about Covid-19 vaccinations and how they were created to affect our biology and minds and how the government is trying to do something sinister with these vaccinations."
>
> "About celebrities dying. That Willie Nelson is dead. Or Betty White came back to life."
>
> "An obvious one is the claim the election was rigged. Independent of whether you even believe in electoral politics, it obviously wasn't."

Question: What is one misinformation story you frequently see or hear about?

THE SHEER VOLUME OF MISINFORMATION LEADS TO DIFFICULTIES IN IDENTIFYING IT

"

[The state of information is] Definitely getting worse. You know, we do have a lot of information that's going around, so it makes it really hard to differentiate which one is right from which one is wrong, what is the truth, what is not the truth.

Megan

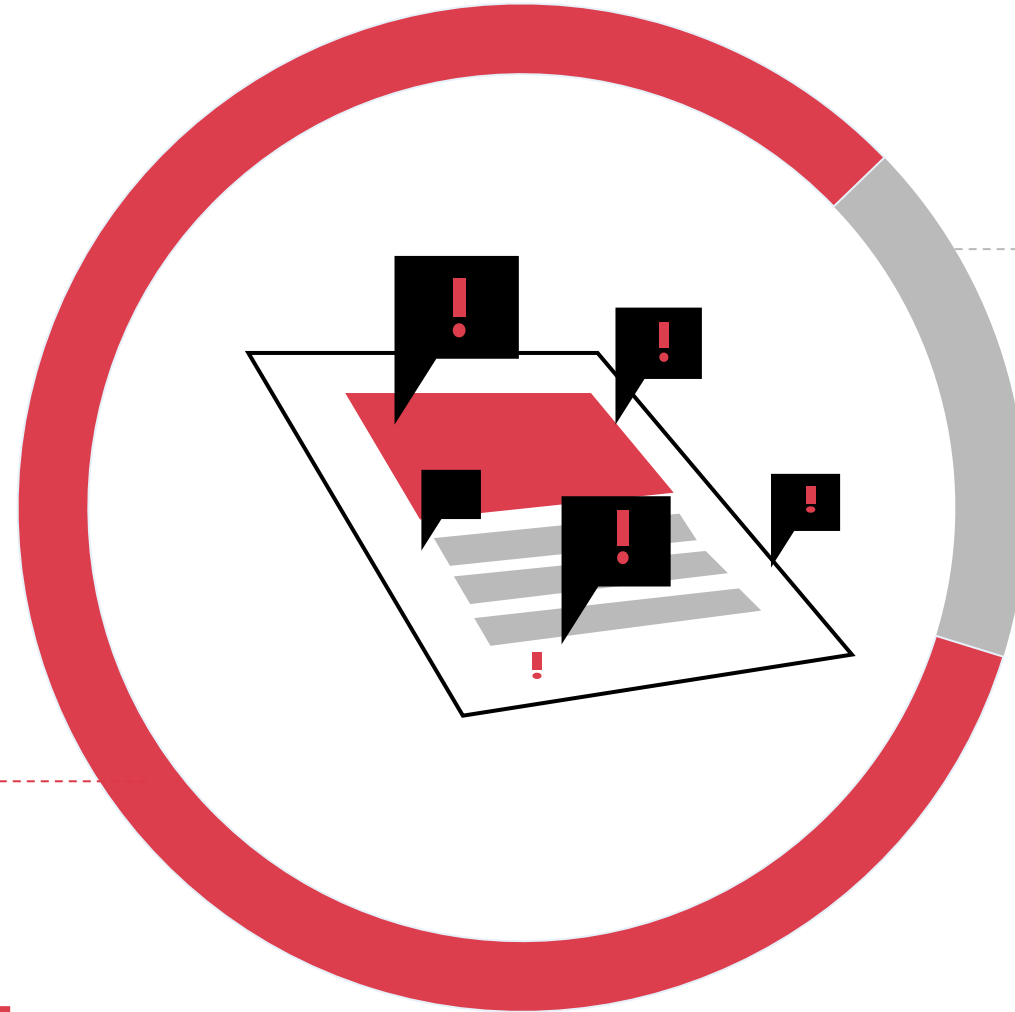# PEOPLE GENERALLY BELIEVE OTHERS ARE THE PROBLEM

"

It's just confusing to me that people can believe it. And I have a friend that believes lot of that stuff...But it just boggles my mind. Like how people can actually believe it.

Stephanie

MOST EVERYONE REQUIRES MULTIPLE SIGNS TO VERIFY INFORMATION

Number of signals people use to identify misinformation
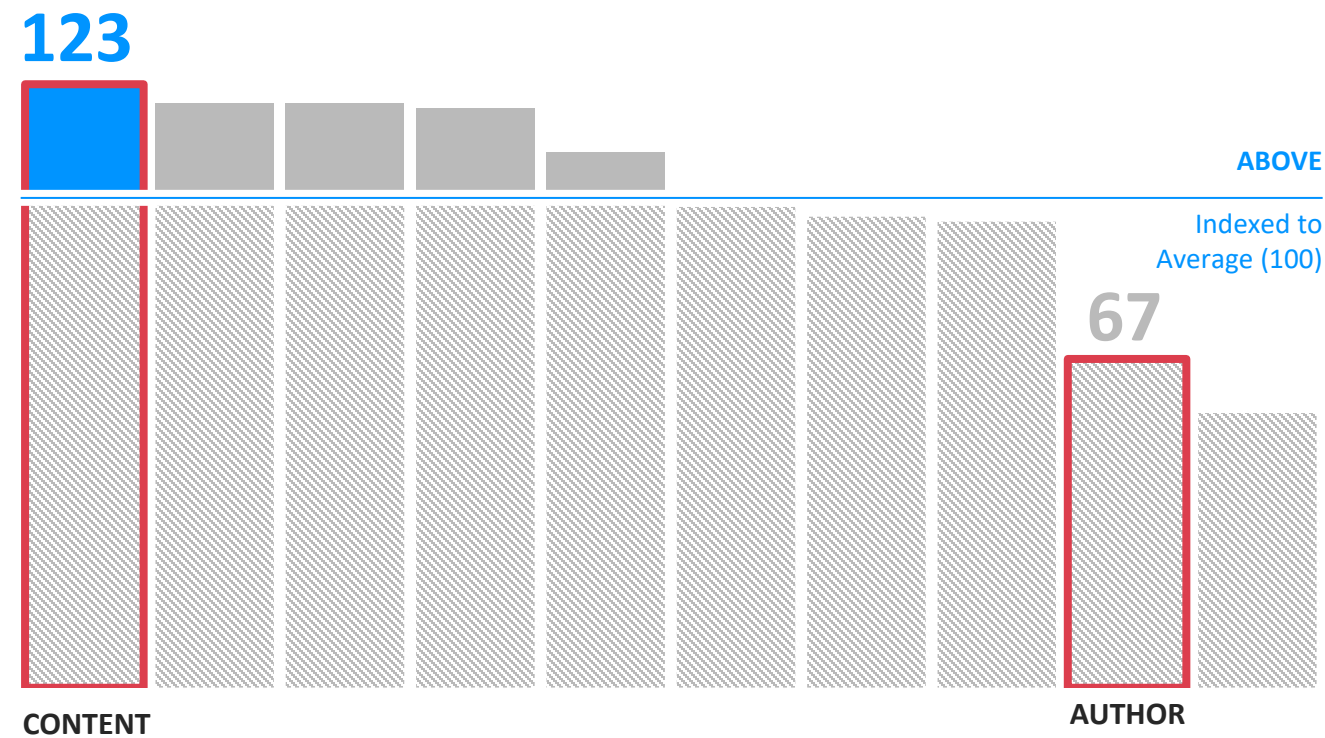
- % Selected

17% Use 1 to 3

83% Use 4 or more

Total N= 2,045
Question: Using the list below, please select the items that you use to determine if something is misinformation.

AMONG THE SIGNALS USED, THE AUTHOR IS FAR LESS IMPORTANT A SIGNAL THAN THE CONTENT ITSELF

123

ABOVE

Indexed to Average (100)

I use the following to determine if something is misinformation…

% Selected

67

CONTENT

AUTHOR

Question: Using the list below, please select the items that you use to determine if something is misinformation.
Total N= 2,045

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MISINFORMATION THRIVES ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND TELEVISION

I think I see misinformation appear on...
- % Frequently/Sometimes

194
157

ABOVE

Indexed to Average (100)

28
27
16

SOCIAL MEDIA | TELEVISION | NEWS WEBSITES | PODCASTS | TRADITIONAL RADIO

Question: How often do you think you see misinformation appear on the below platforms?
Total N = 2,045

MAGNA MEDIA TRIALS | ZEFR
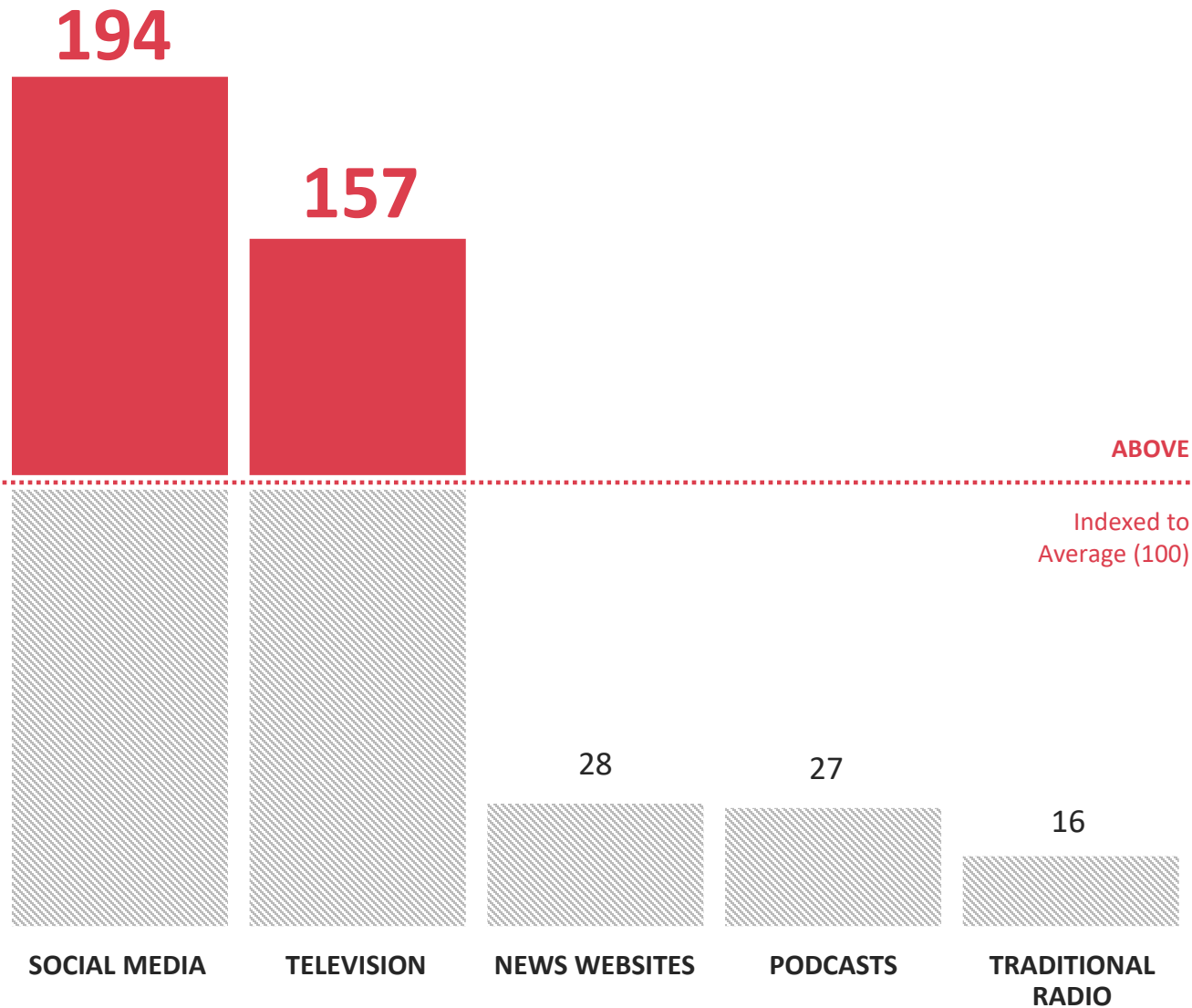
SOCIAL MEDIA PROVIDES A FERTILE LANDSCAPE FOR MISINFORMATION TO FLOURISH

The ability to personalize feeds on social media platforms can result in feeds riddled with limited world views and opinions, likely increasing exposure to the same misinformation over time

> " I think part of the problem with social media is everybody gets in their own echo chamber. So people are only seeing the same feeds from the same people. There's no diversity in the information that they're getting…

Misty

> " I think the place I see most questionable information is [social media platform]. It's really hard to figure out where some of these stories and memes really came from in the first place. And they've been shared and reshared so many times you have no idea who made that, what their motivation is.

Jeremy

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PEOPLE AREN'T RELIABLE SOURCES FOR REPORTING MISINFORMATION, AS MOST HAVE IGNORED IT

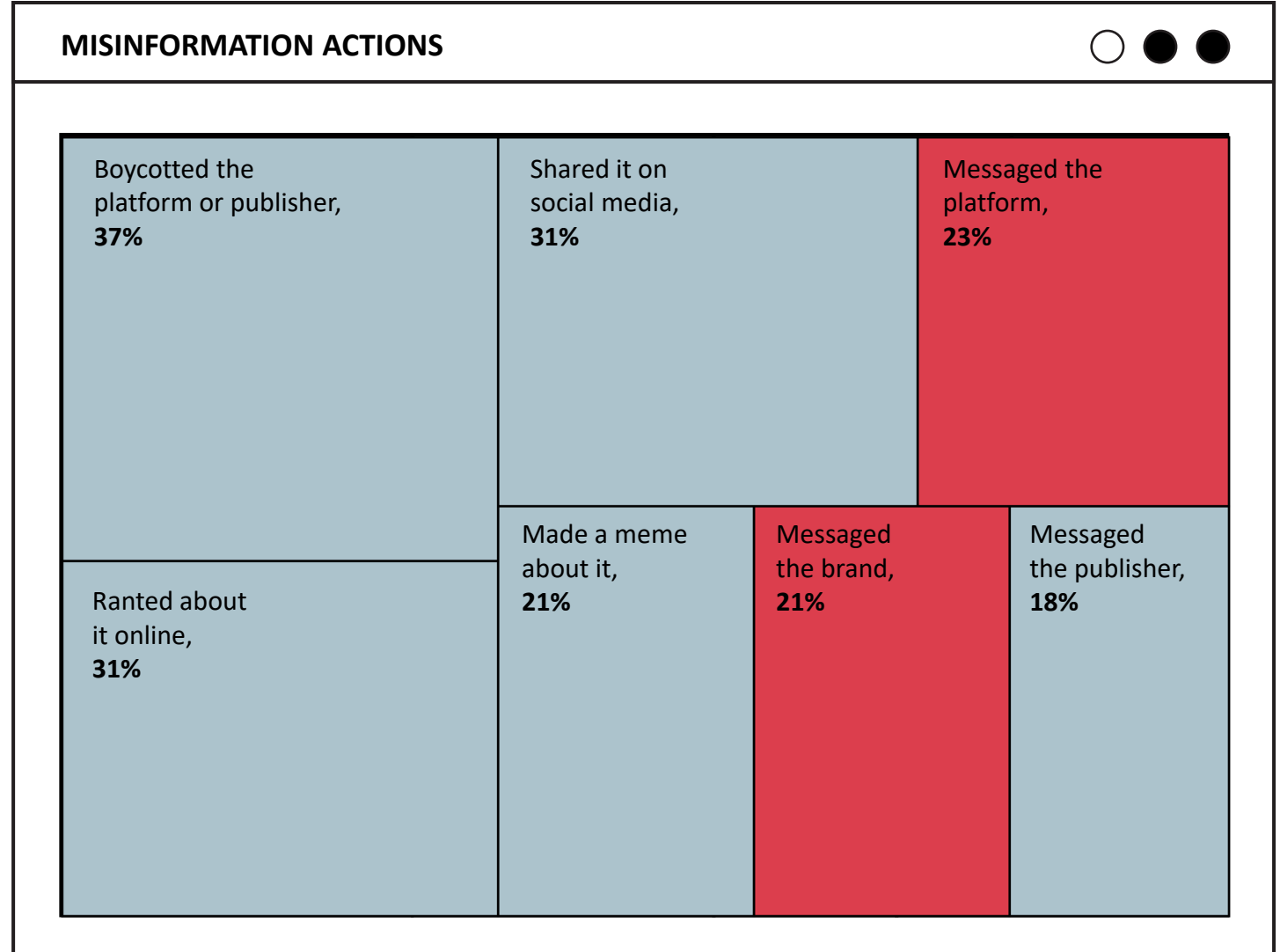**I have taken the following action when seeing misinformation...**
- % Selected

78%

Ignored It

Question: What actions have you ever taken after seeing misinformation?
Total N = 2,045

BRANDS AND PLATFORMS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE NOTIFIED BY USERS WHEN MISINFORMATION IS PRESENT

Only 23% of people choose to message the platform when they see misinformation

I have taken the following actions when seeing misinformation…
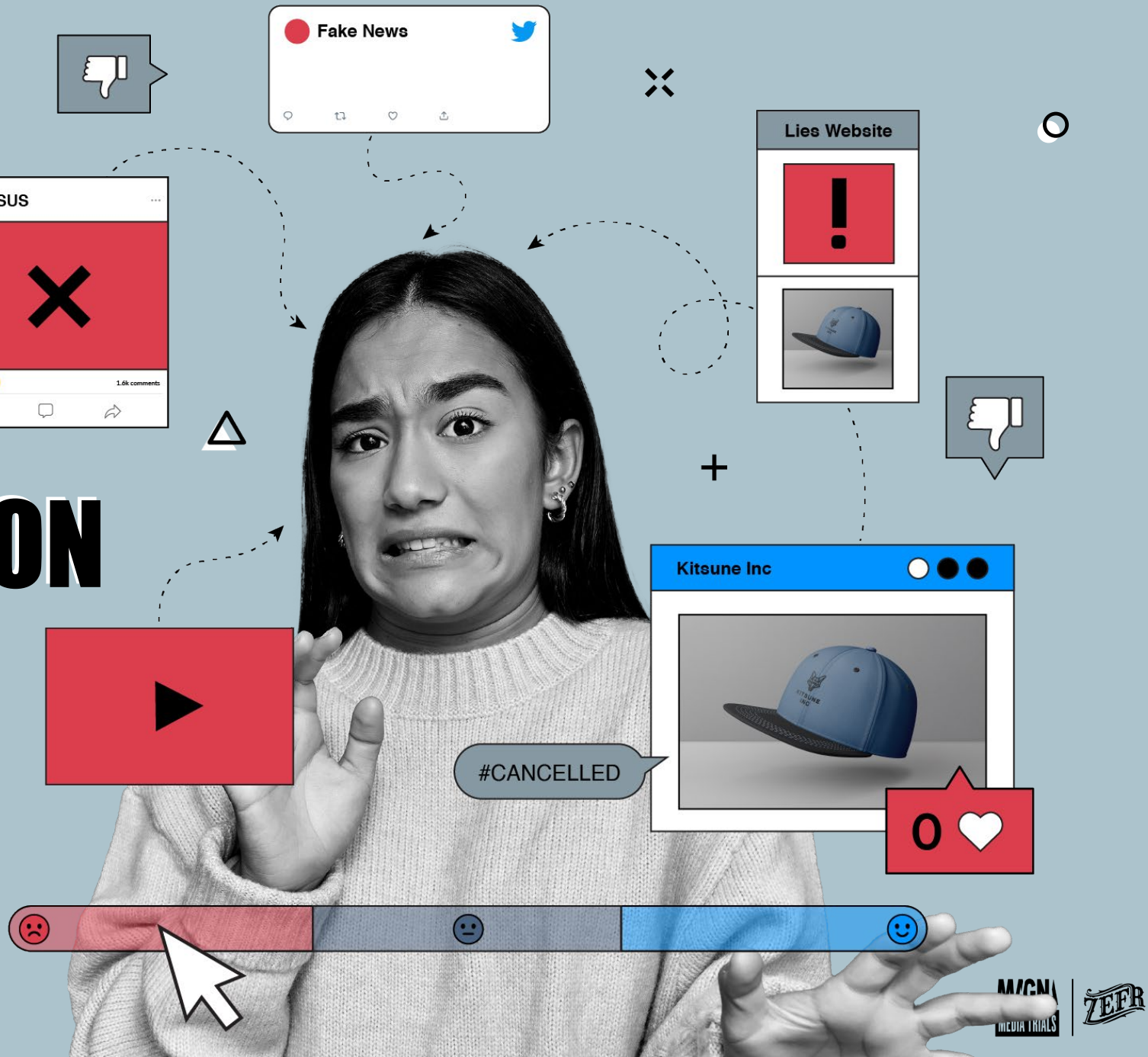- % Selected

MISINFORMATION ACTIONS

Boycotted the platform or publisher, **37%**

Shared it on social media, **31%**

Messaged the platform, **23%**

Ranted about it online, **31%**

Made a meme about it, **21%**

Messaged the brand, **21%**

Messaged the publisher, **18%**

Question: What actions have you ever taken after seeing misinformation?
Total N = 2,045

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KEY FINDING

People are constantly exposed to misinformation, most prominently on social media and television. Platforms cannot rely on user reporting to detect misinformation, as most people either do not message the platform or ignore misinformation altogether.
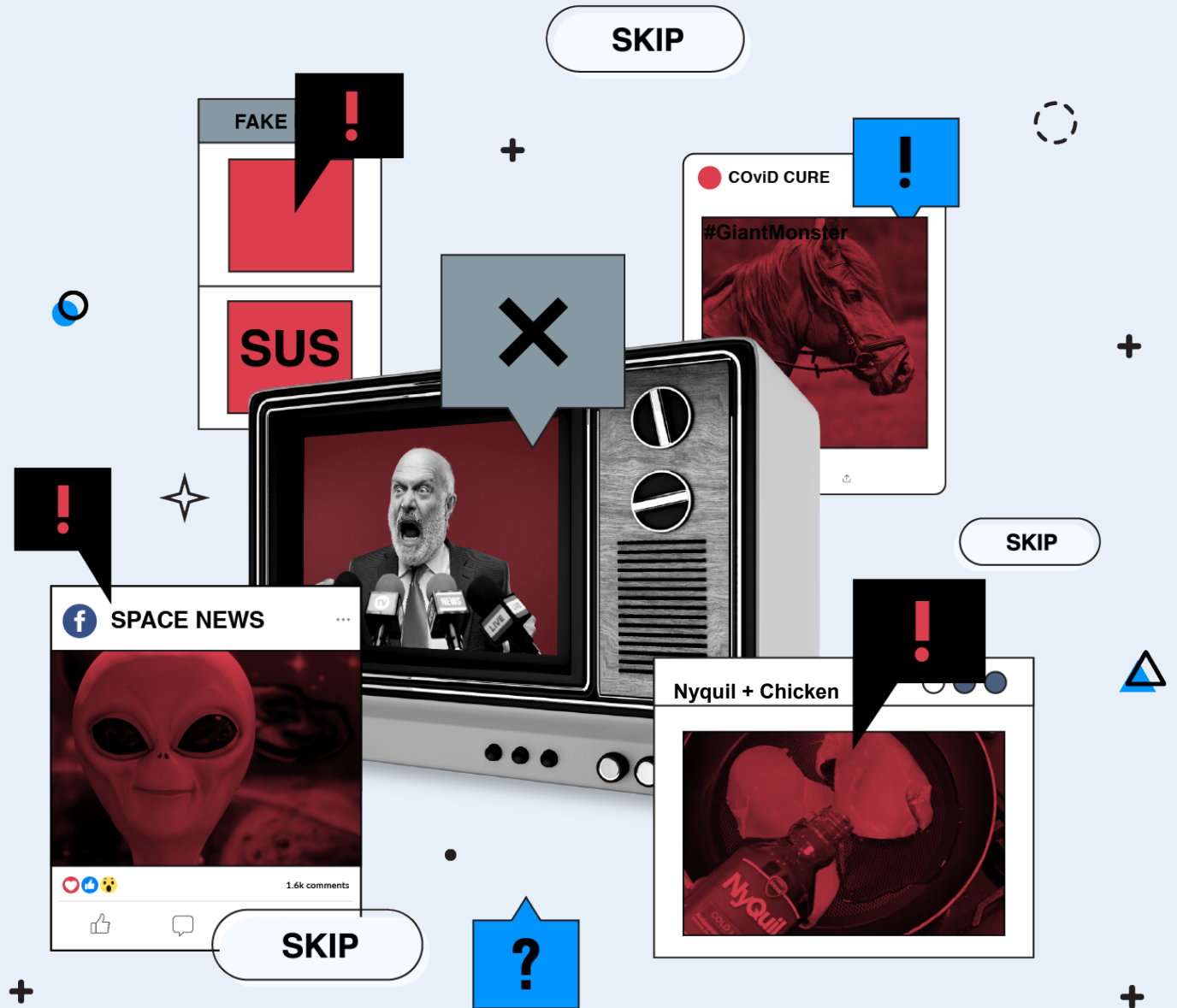
BLAME IS EQUALLY SHARED WHEN BRANDS APPEAR ADJACENT TO MISINFORMATION

When a brand's ad appears next to misinformation, I think _____ is at fault
- % Selected

The platform
49%

The publisher or author
53%

The brand
44%

ADJACENCY MATTERS TO PEOPLE

Why people believe the brand was supporting the misinformation reported

"Why else would they be paying that website or brand to run an ad for them? I feel they would stick to trusted reputable brands or sources since they know some people/customers see them as a trusted reputable brand."

"Simply because its ad appeared next to the misinformation. It would appear that [brand] supports that misinformation."

"Because that close of an association makes you think that the ad money went to the platform that published the misinformation."

"[Brand] has purchased time or space. By choosing where to spend their money, they are making a support decision."

"Because they are not being careful where they advertise."

Question: You mentioned you'd feel that [brand] was supporting the misinformation reported. Why is that?

MAGNA MEDIA TRIALS | ZEFR
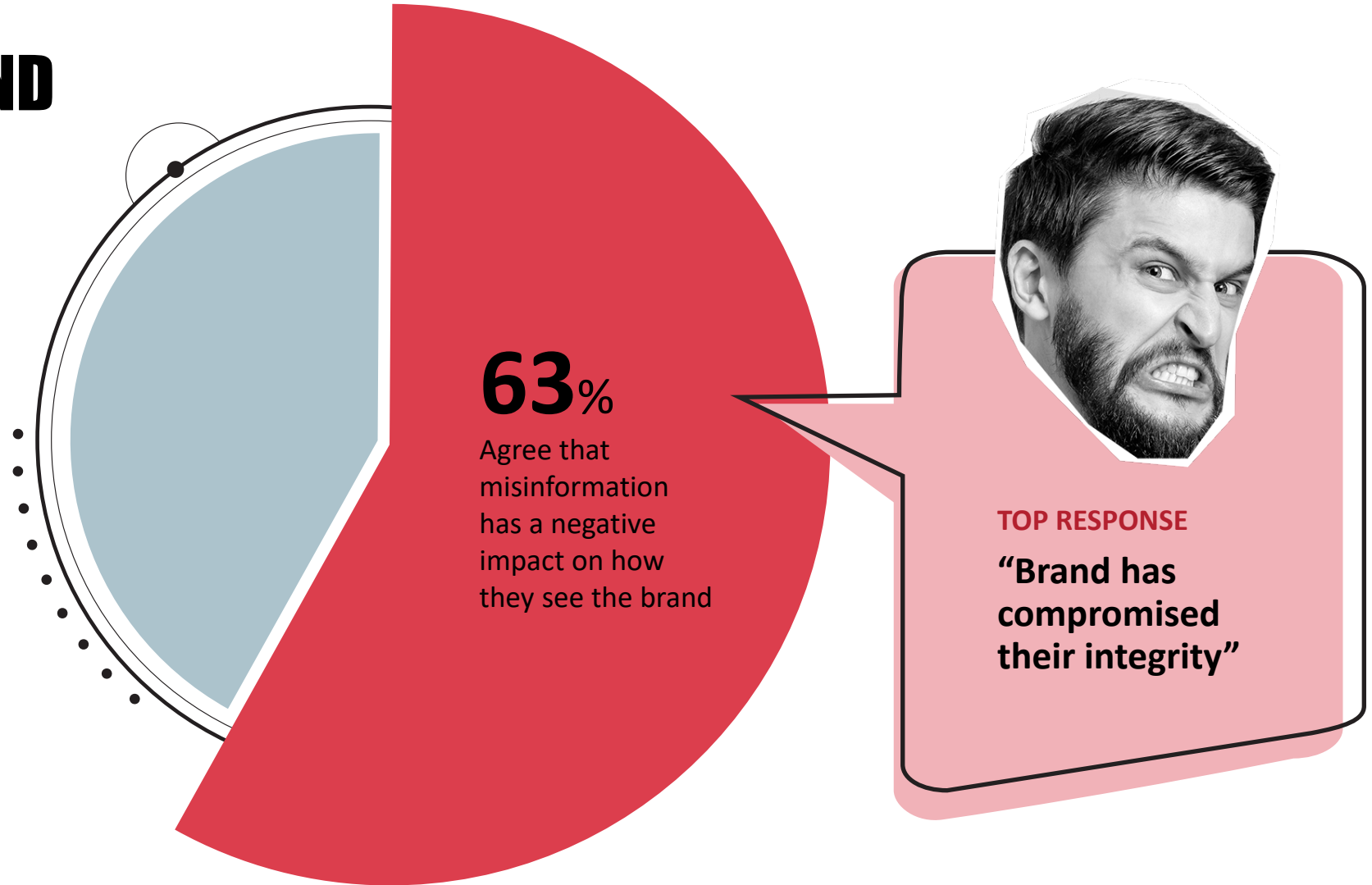
HOW DOES MISINFORMATION IMPACT BRANDS?

To assess the impact of misinformation on brands, we asked people about real
brands using hypothetical scenarios

7 COMPANIES REPRESENTING AN ARRAY OF VERTICALS

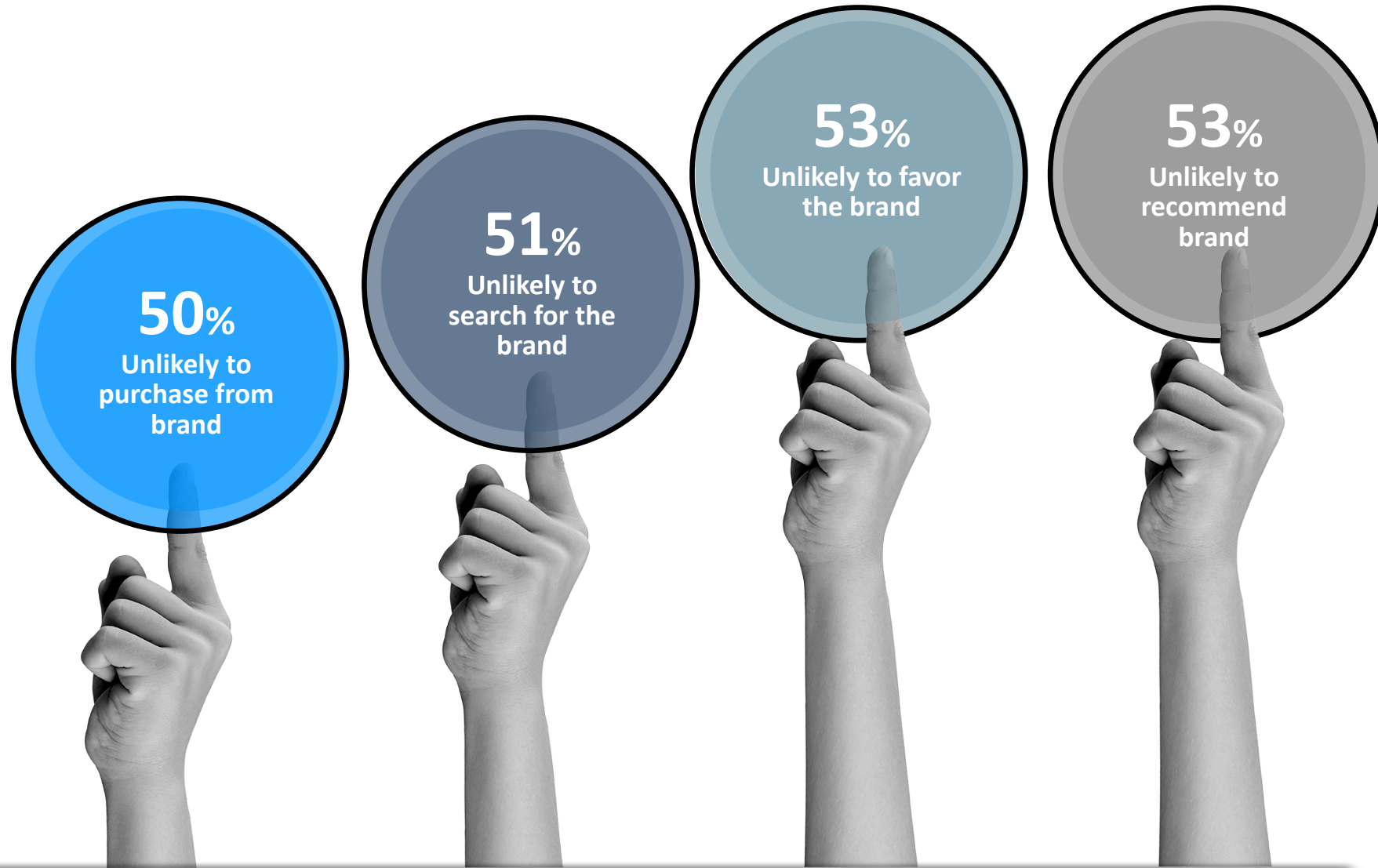|		
Apparel	QSR*	Finserv
Auto	Telecom	Grocery

✓ **Brand Perceptions**

✓ **Brand Favorability**

✓ **Purchase Intent**

✓ **Search Intent**

**COMPANIES REPRESENTING
AN ARRAY OF VERTICALS**

*Quick Service Restaurant
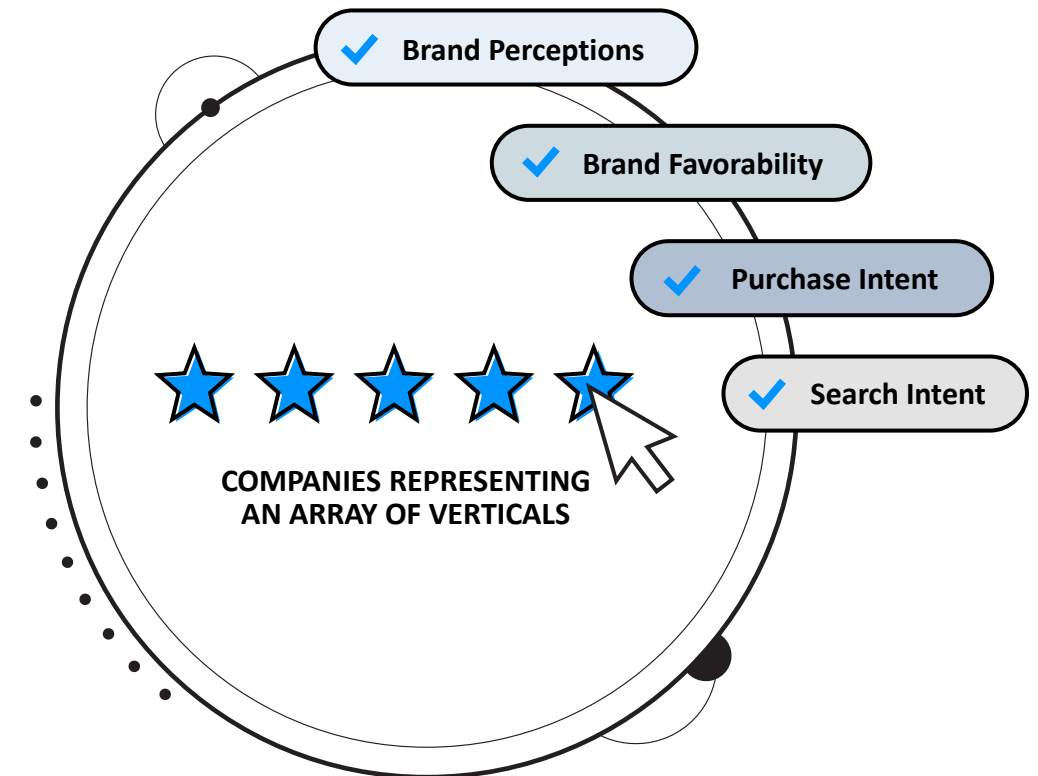
MISINFORMATION CHALLENGES BRAND INTEGRITY

If brand was associated with misinformation...
Net Score

63% Agree that misinformation has a negative impact on how they see the brand

TOP RESPONSE

"Brand has compromised their integrity"

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the below statements about [brand]? I'd feel...
Other options: Brand is being reckless; Less respect for the brand; The brand is supporting the misinformation reported; Distrust for the brand
Total n=2,045

ADJACENCY TO MISINFORMATION IMPACTS BOTH FUTURE GROWTH AND TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

50% Unlikely to purchase from brand

51% Unlikely to search for the brand

53% Unlikely to favor the brand

53% Unlikely to recommend brand

When it appears that brand supports misinformation, I am…
- % Strongly/Somewhat Disagree

PURCHASE INTENT   **SEARCH INTENT**   **FAVORABILITY**   **RECOMMEND**

Question: If it appears that [brand] supports misinformation, how likely are you to do the following?
Total n=2,045

ZEFR

PEOPLE PROACTIVELY AVOID COMPANIES THEY BELIEVE ARE SUPPORTING MISINFORMATION

"
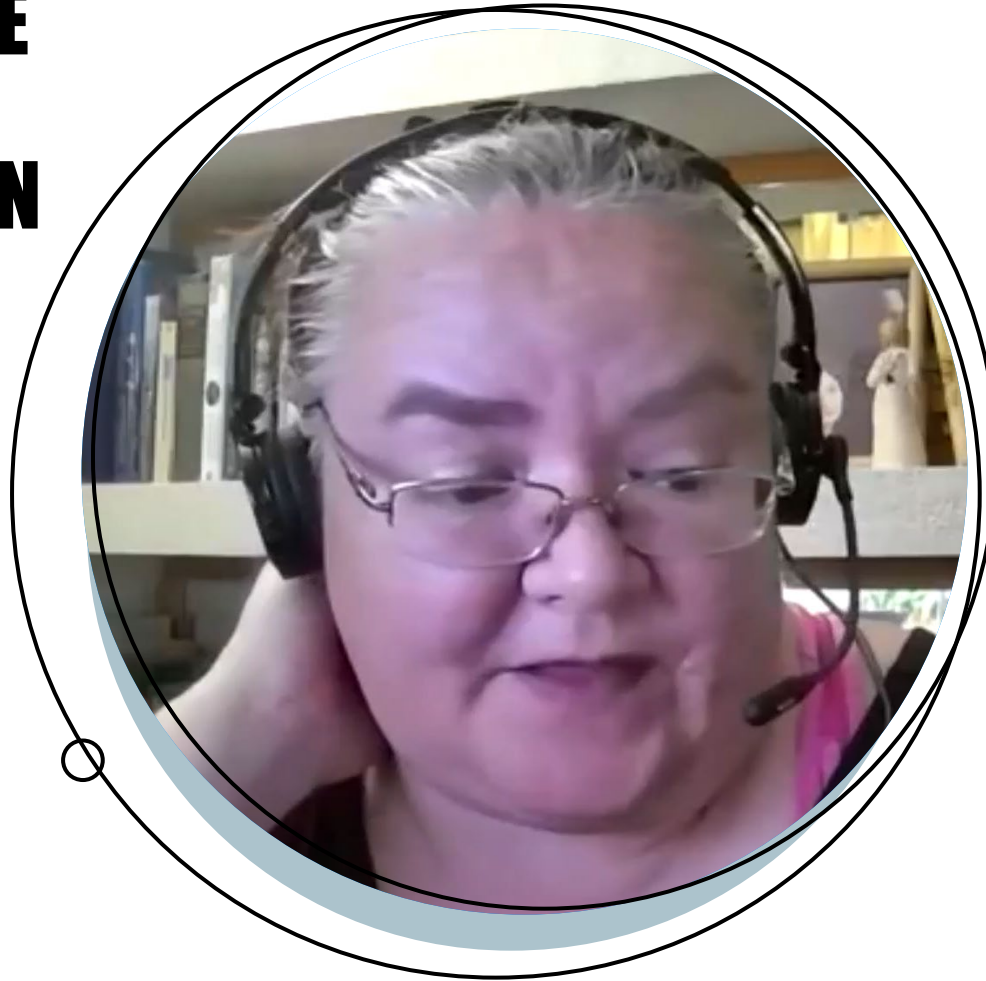
If I honestly think that a company is supporting something I am adamantly against, I go outta my way to try to avoid them. If it's possible for me to avoid going to that business or using that product, I absolutely do. I 100% choose to spend my money when I can. It's not always possible, but when I can, I choose to use, you know, my dollar, even though it's just one person, but I try to do that.

Misty

PEOPLE WANT BRANDS TO BE PROACTIVE ABOUT MISINFORMATION

When it comes to misinformation, brands should...
- % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

87%
Take responsibility when associated with misinformation

86%
Make every effort to avoid being next to misinformation
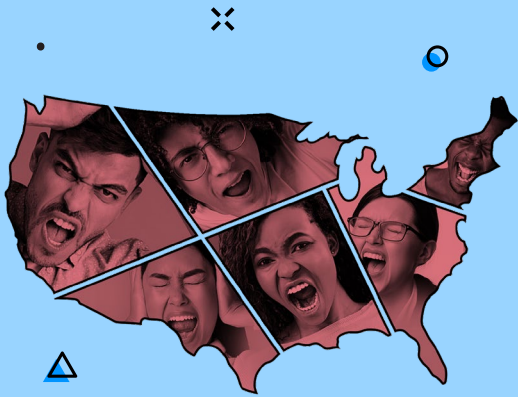
84%
Have a policy about misinformation

79%
Express their stance on misinformation

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KEY FINDING

People want brands to be proactive in tackling misinformation. Brands adjacent to misinformation have much to lose and should take every precaution to avoid it.

#CANCELLED

SUS

1.6k comments

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IMPLICATIONS

MISINFORMATION IS A UNIVERSAL ISSUE

Misinformation has real impact on people. It transcends politics, and people across the political divide are agreeing on issues around misinformation. Most people see misinformation as only getting worse over time, as well as contributing to widespread social issues.

USER REPORTING DOESN'T CUT IT

Brands can't rely on someone else to tell them there's a problem with misinformation, as most people don't report it. To mitigate the issue, brands need to depend on autonomous 3rd parties outside of user reporting to vet for misinformation.
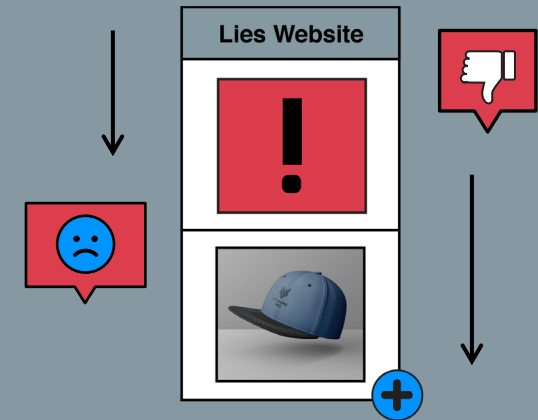
BEING PROACTIVE PROTECTS FUTURE GROWTH

To negate the negative impact of misinformation, brands need to be proactive in tackling it head-on. Being associated with misinformation both impacts brands' bottom line, as well as the potential for immediate and future growth.