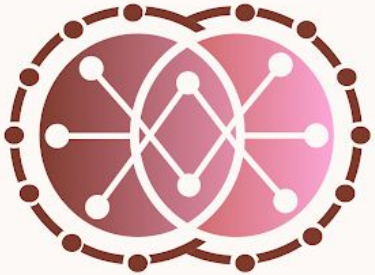

WHATIF

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WHATIF

Preliminary Results

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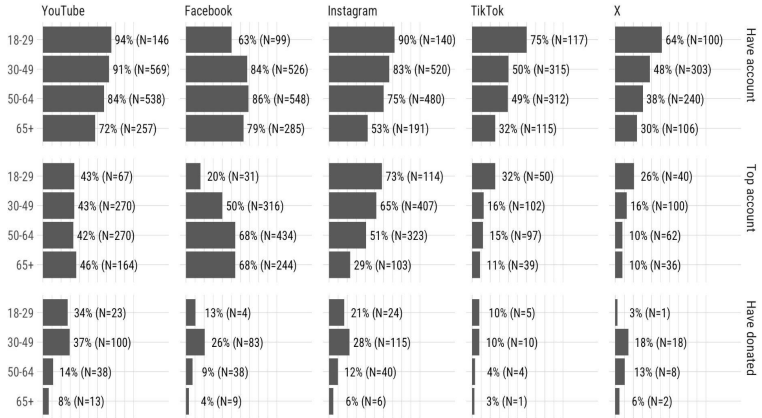
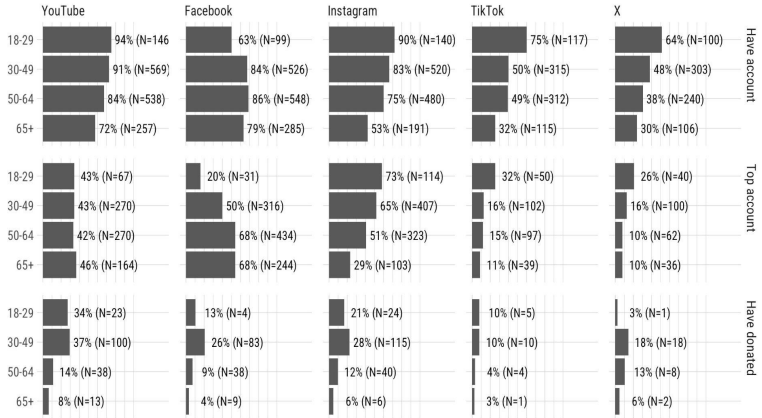
ES data collection: Two sets of results



Overview of **data donations** collected

ES data collection: Two sets of results

Co-authored with Silvia Majó-Vazquez, Georgia Dagher, et al.



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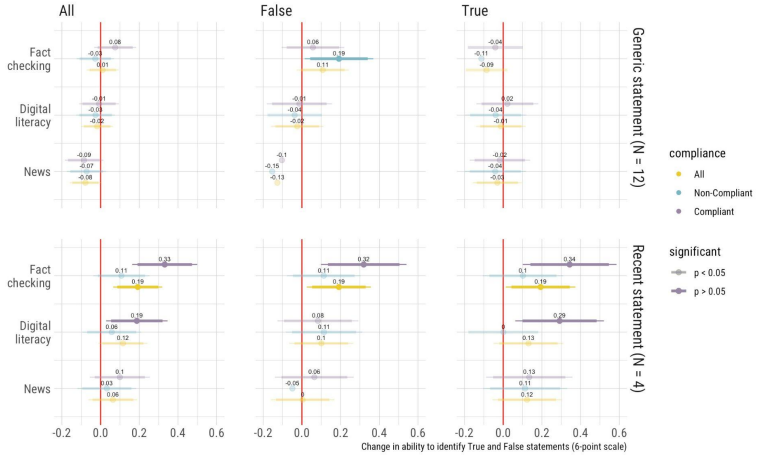


Experimental **intervention** between waves

ES data collection: Two sets of results

But first a **recap** of what **WHAT IF** is...

Overview of **data donations** collected

Experimental **intervention** between waves

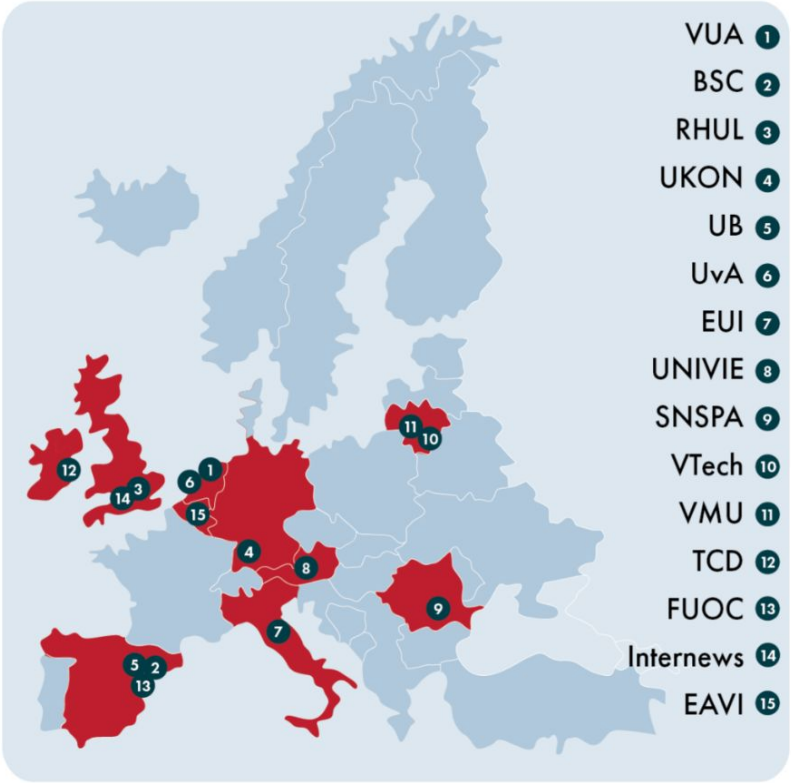
Members

3-year Horizon project (2025-2028)

13 universities

2 societal partners (Internews, EAVI)

10 countries



Objective

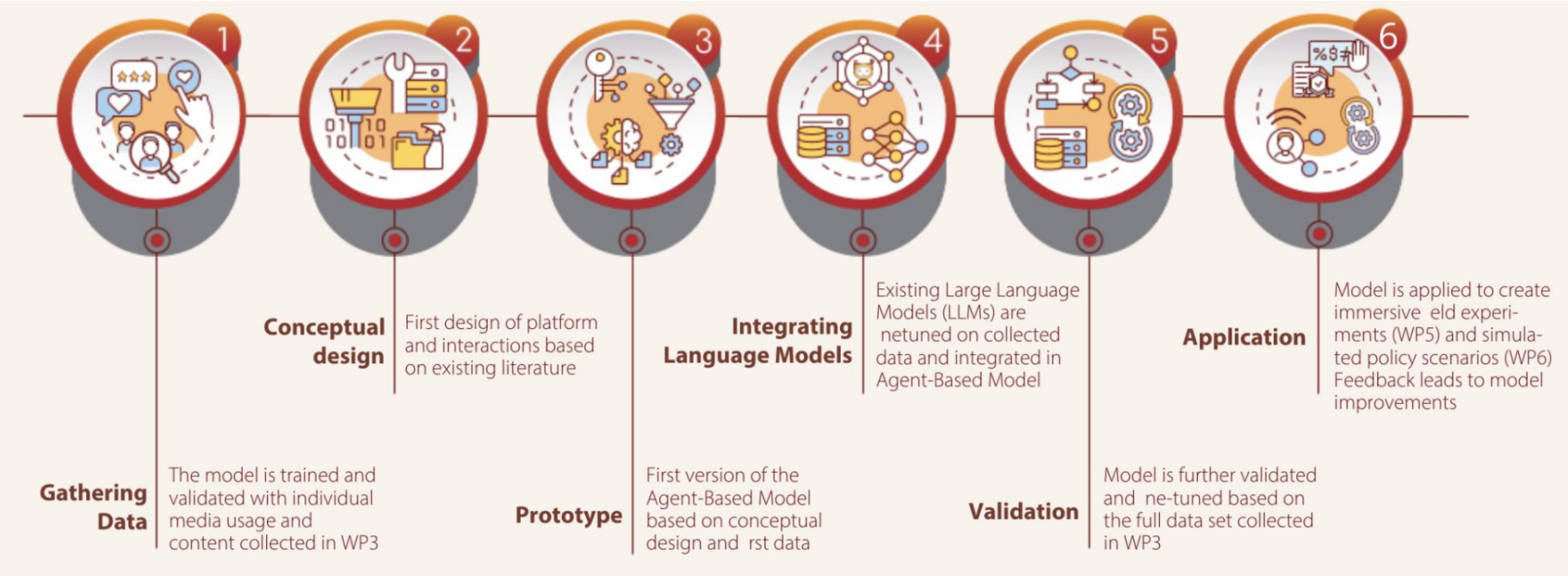
WHAT-IF addresses the challenges of disinformation, hate speech, and polarized information environments by creating an empirically grounded simulation of the digital political information landscape.

Create a digital twin of the political information environment

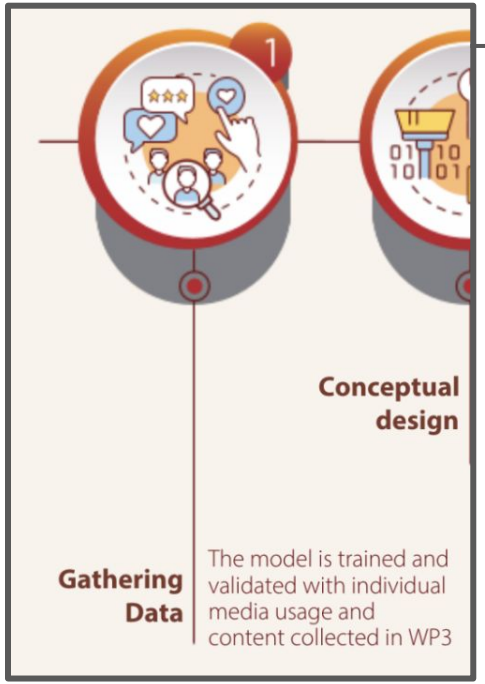
Test the effect of social media content, algorithms and platform affordances

Develop evidence-based policies and regulations

Approach


1
2
3
4
5
6
Gathering Data
The model is trained and validated with individual media usage and content collected in WP3
Conceptual design
First design of platform and interactions based on existing literature
Prototype
First version of the Agent-Based Model based on conceptual design and rst data
Integrating Language Models
Existing Large Language Models (LLMs) are netuned on collected data and integrated in Agent-Based Model
Validation
Model is further validated and ne-tuned based on the full data set collected in WP3
Application
Model is applied to create immersive eld experiments (WP5) and simulated policy scenarios (WP6) Feedback leads to model improvements

Approach



4 Countries

ES, LT, NL, RO

Panel Survey

2-wave
1,800/country
Media consumption + political att./behavior

Digital Traces

Browsing
Social media takeouts: FB, IG, YT, TT, X
Adapting tool from D3I project

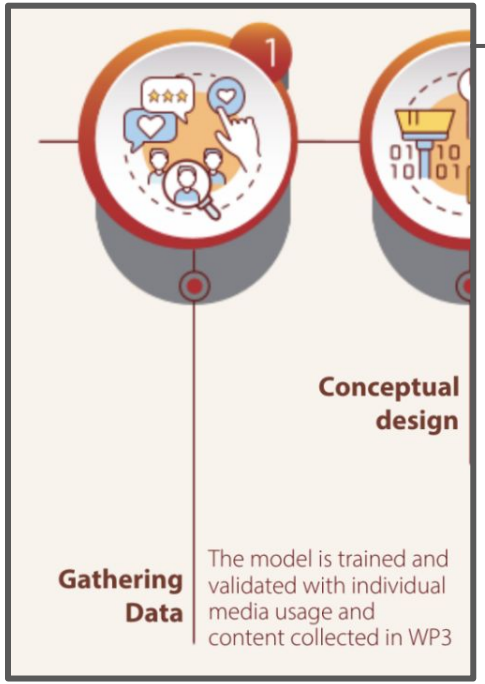
News Scrapers

Get content of news participants accessed

Platform Data

Get SM content participants followed/engaged

Approach



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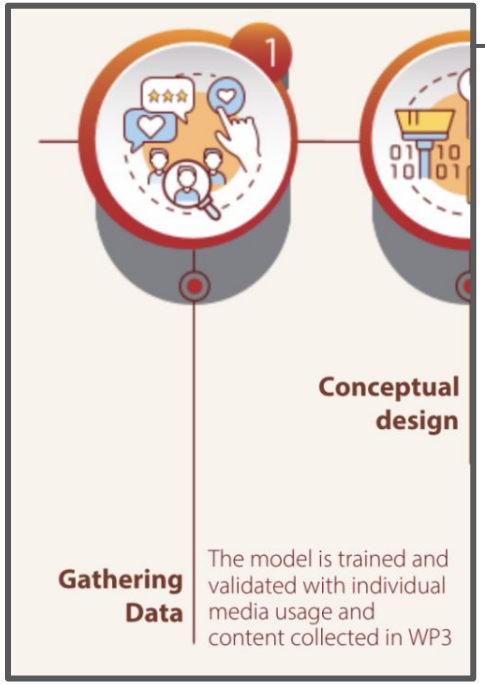

Experimental **Intervention** between the 2 waves in **ES** (and **RO**)

4 Countries
ES, LT, NL, RO

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2-wave
1,800/country
Media consumption + political att./behavior

Digital Traces
Browsing
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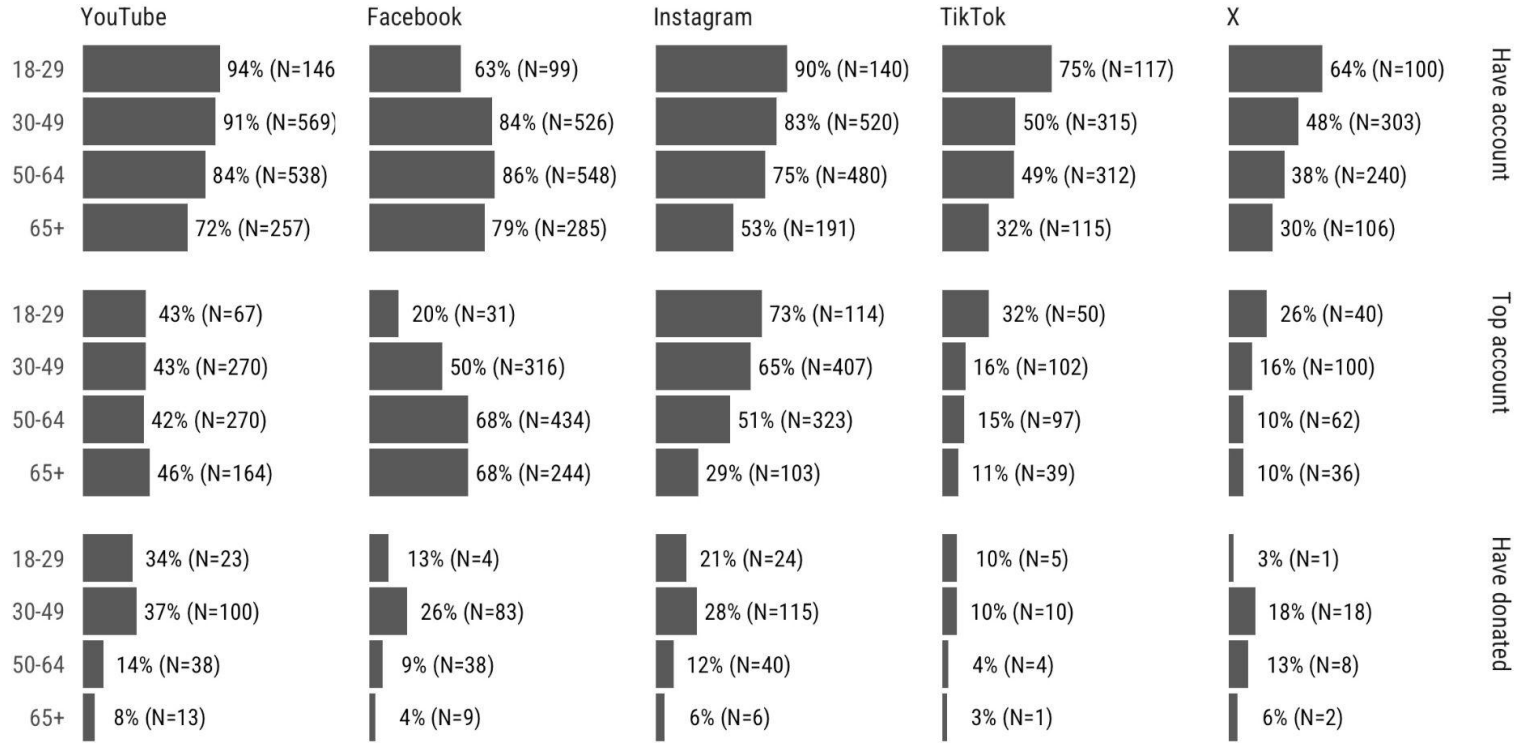
ES panel survey and data donation

- NetQuest-Bilendi
- W1: N = 1,780
- W2 (5 weeks): N = 1,459
- Fully-tracked panel: browsing data for all (laptop + mobile): 10 weeks
  - 5 weeks prior to W1
  - 5 weeks between W1-W2
- Data donation for their top-2 social media platforms (FB, IG, TT, YT, X)
  - N = 326 (~20%)

ES panel survey and data donation



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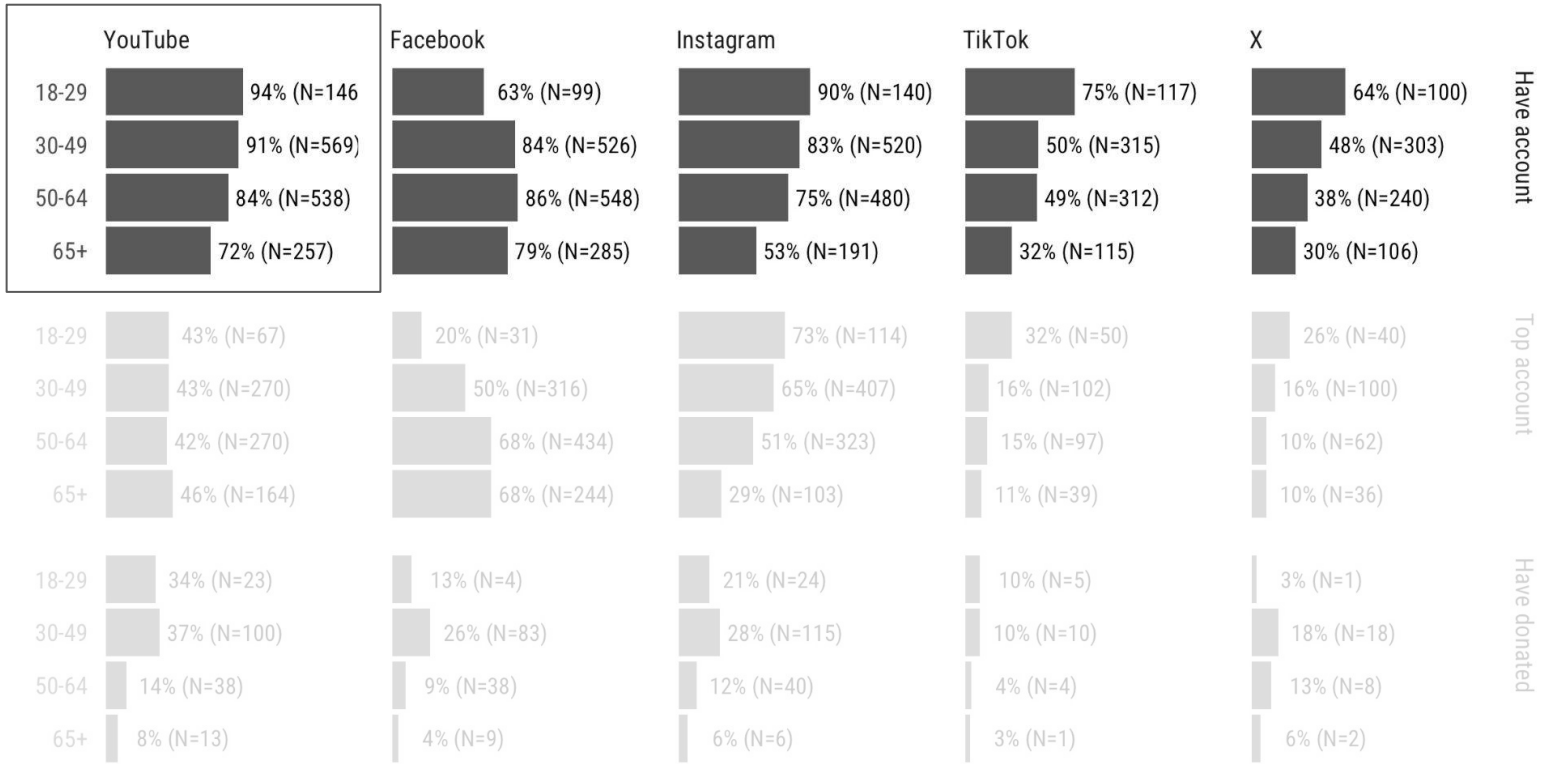

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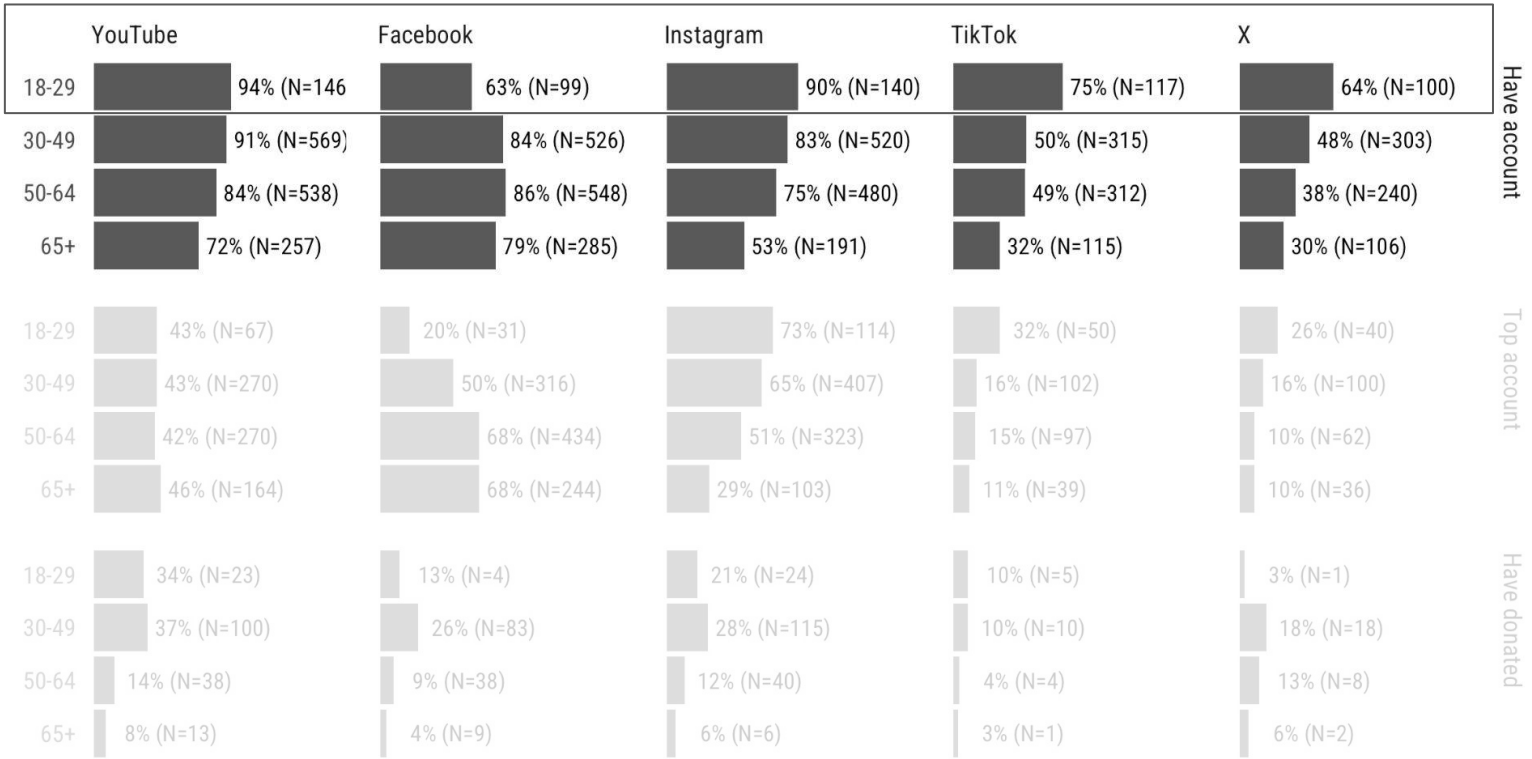

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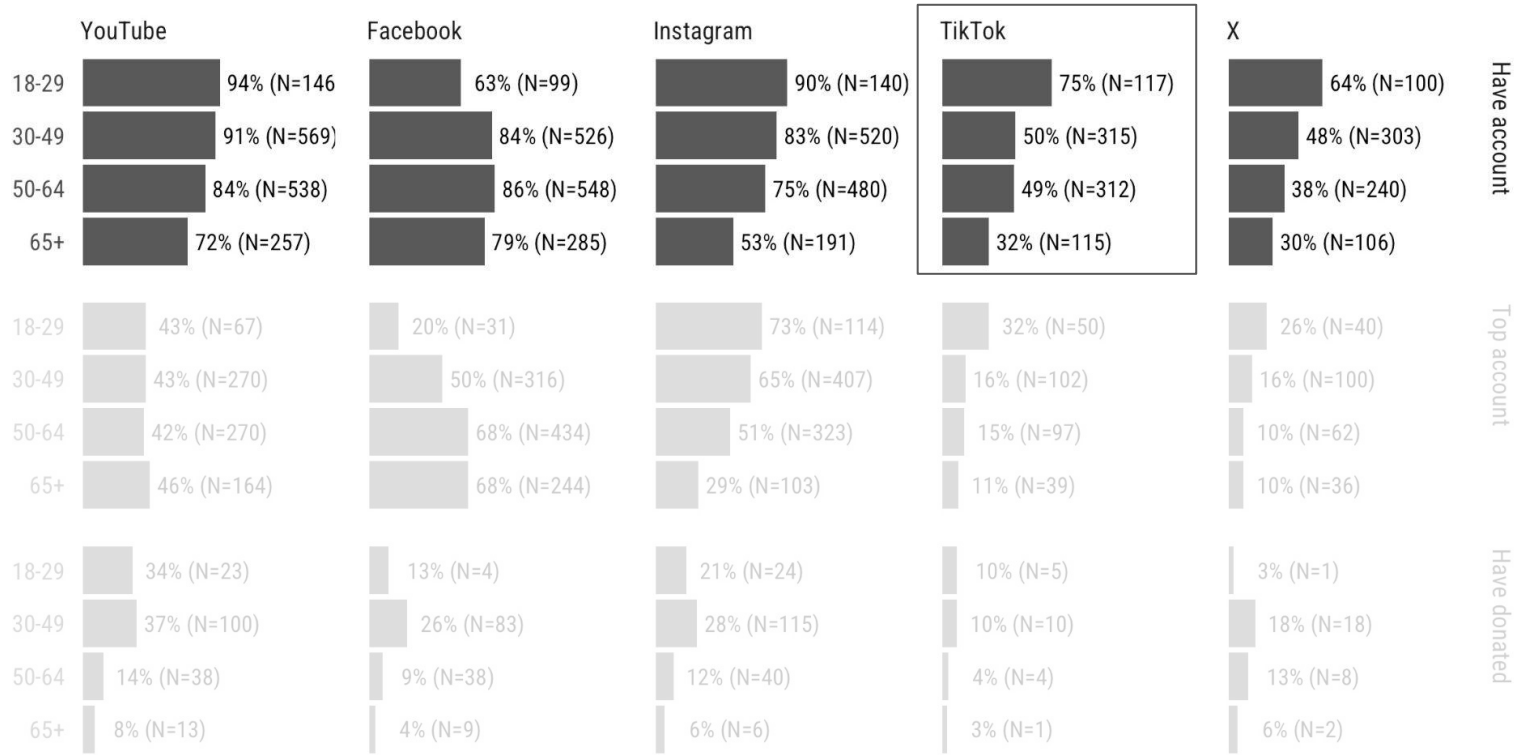

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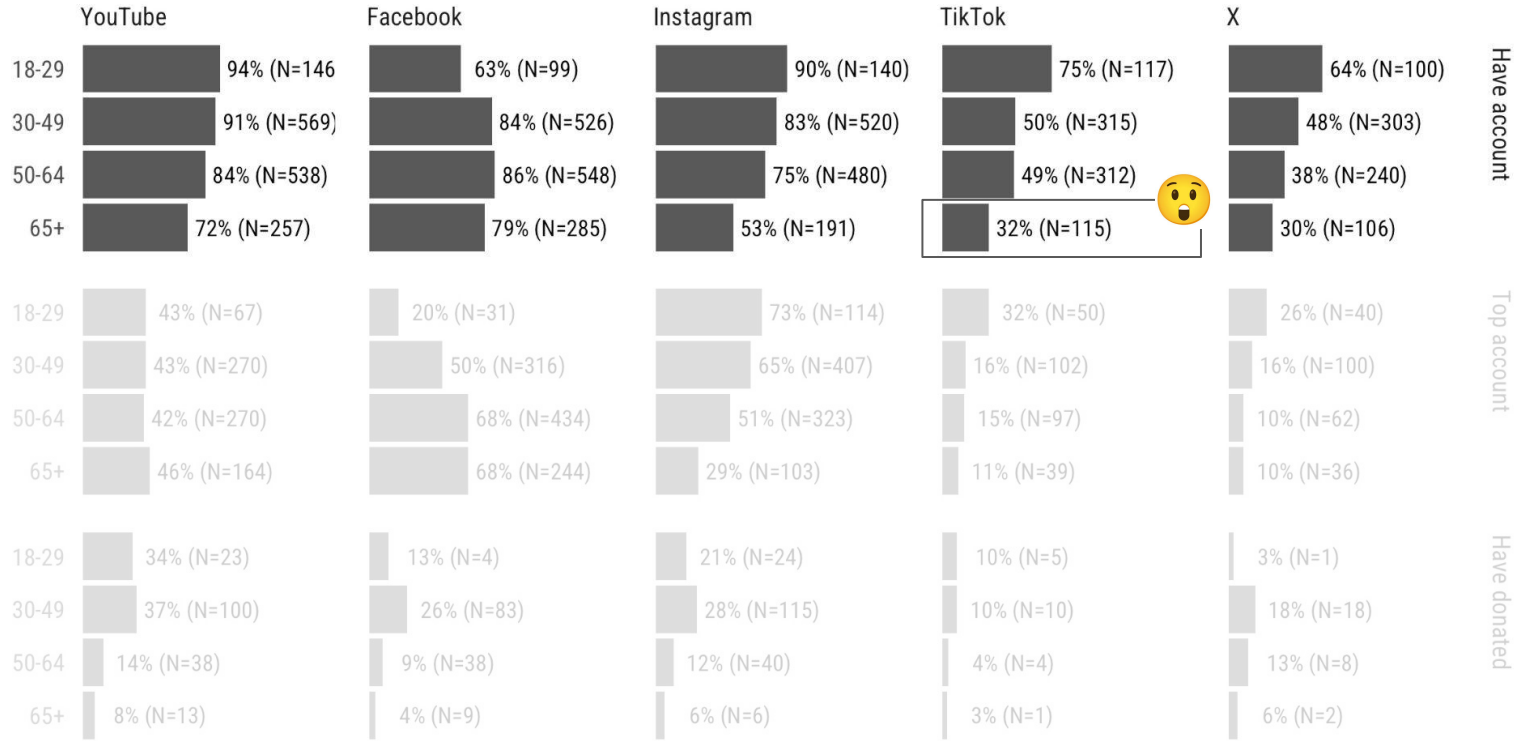

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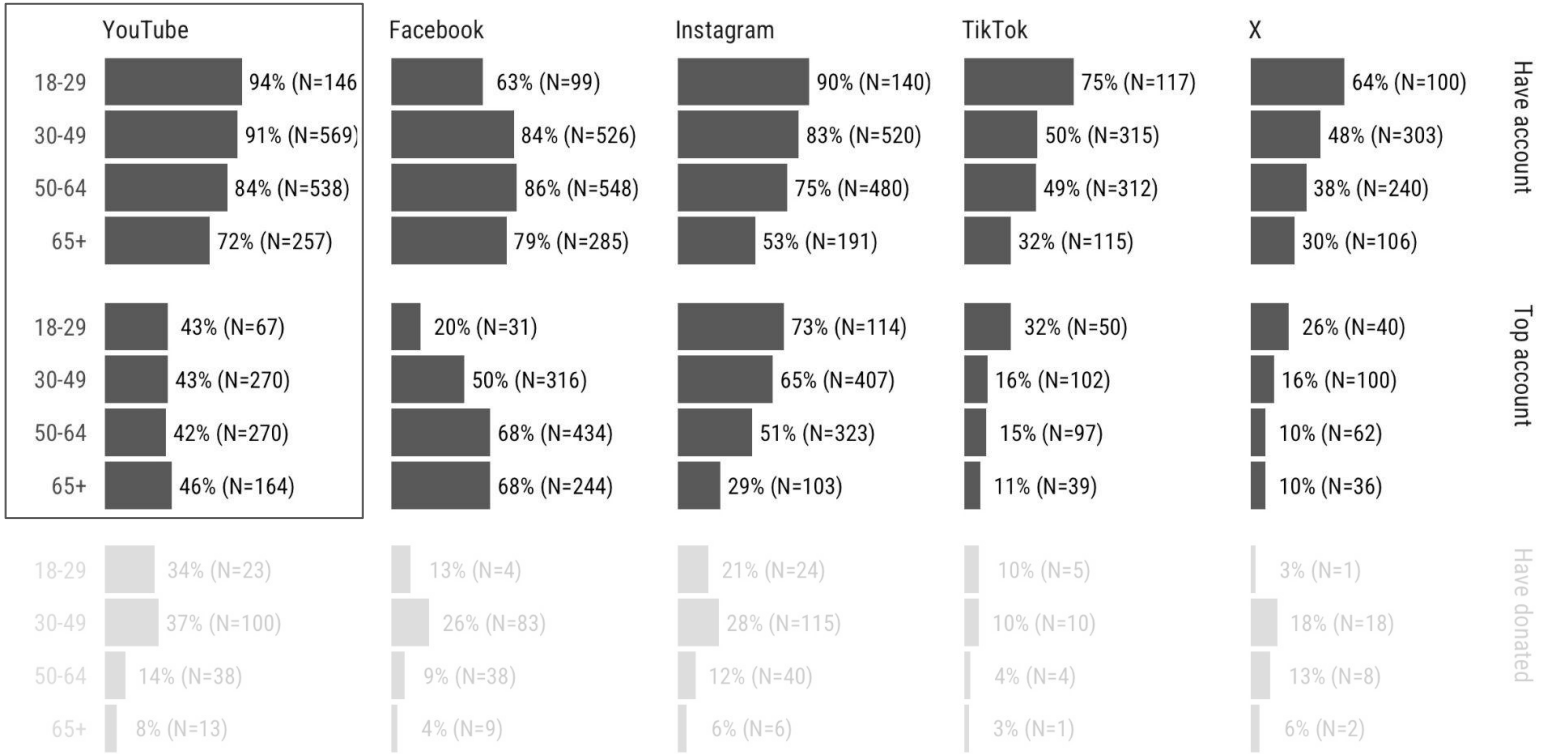

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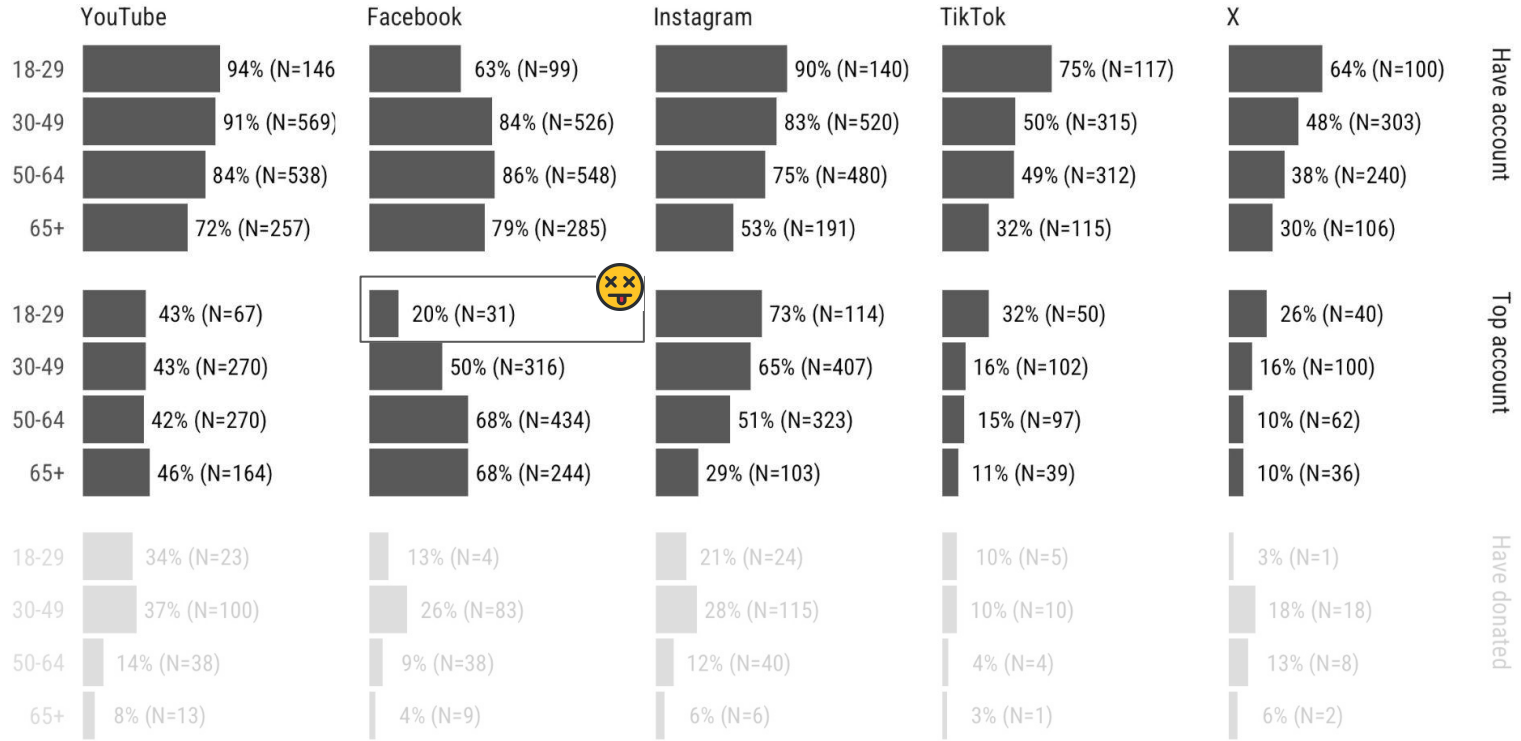

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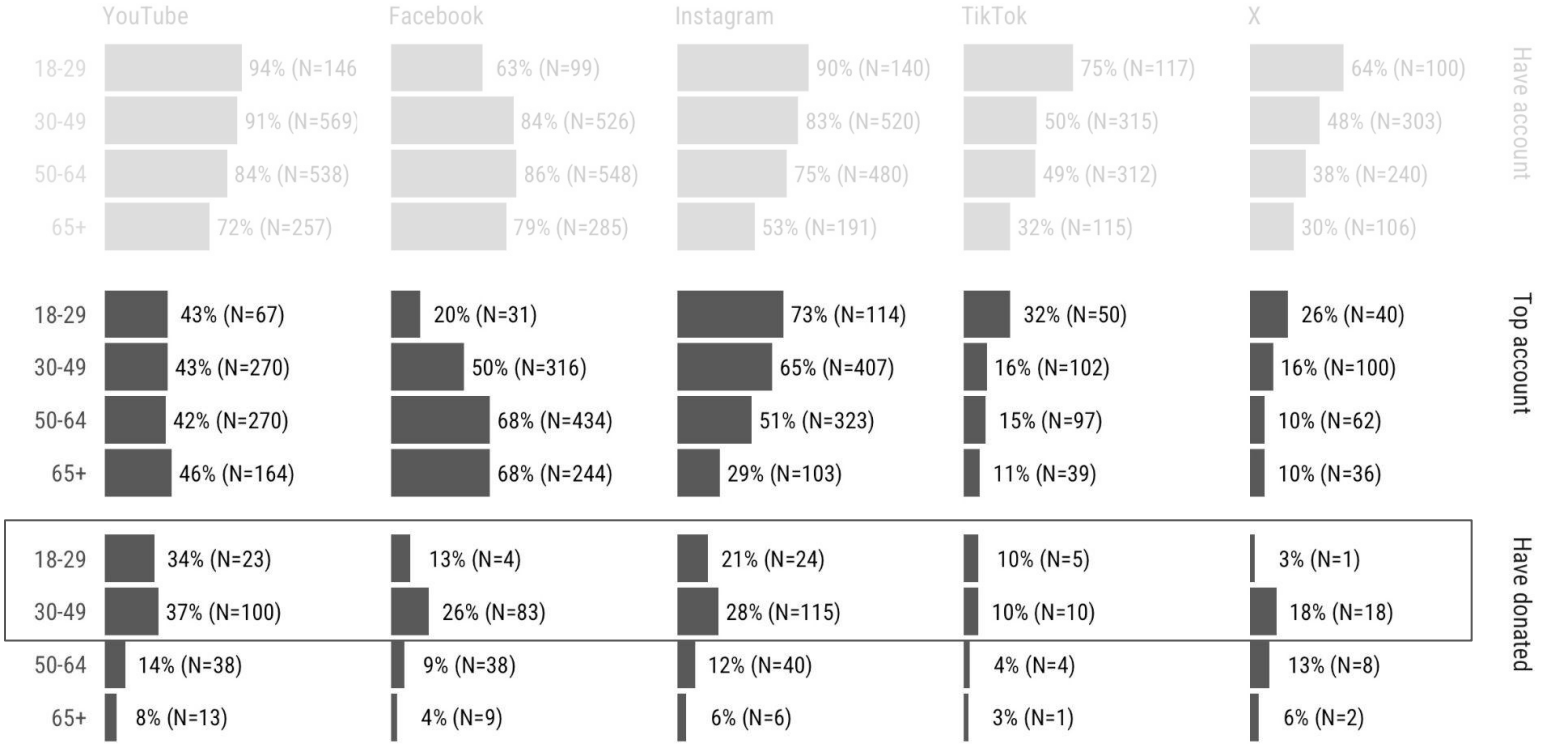


ES between-wave intervention

- Misinfo inoculation interventions work:
  - Fact-checking; debunking
  - Media/digital literacy

- Yet, are there some negative effects?
  - Are people becoming more skeptic of news/information in general? More likely to think that true news are false?

ES between-wave intervention

4 groups (N ~ 425 per group)**:**

(1) Control

(2) News Boost: high-quality new quality (**El Pais** & **El Mundo**)

(3) Fact Checking: debunking articles from **Maldita**

(4) Digital Literacy: educational articles from **Learn To Check**

For 1 month, visit website with 2 stories updated 3/times a week

ES between-wave intervention

We've pre-registered 4 studies:

- **Accuracy belief**
- Deepfake discernment
- Well being
- Policy positions and affective polarisation

ES between-wave intervention

Outcome:

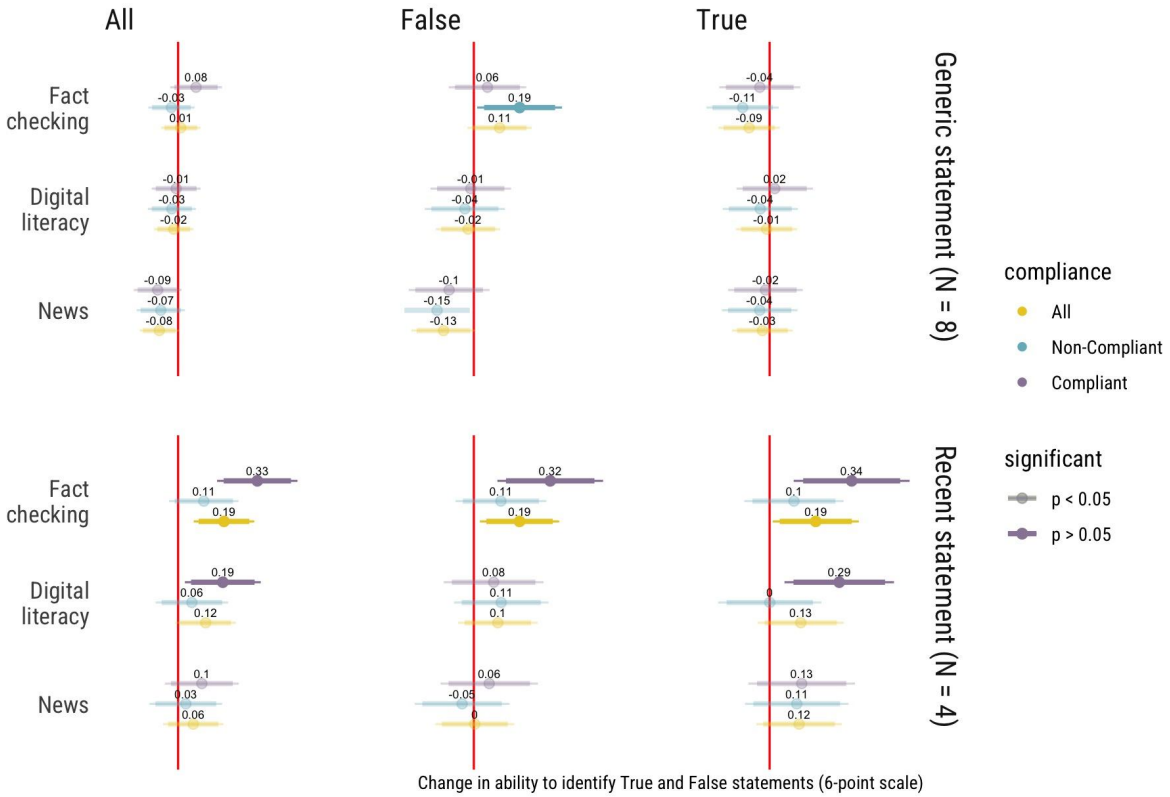
- rate **8 generic statements** (same in W1 and W2)
- rate **4** statements on **specific recent developments** (W2 only)
- topics: **immigration** and **climate change**
- **balanced**: true/false and liberal/conservative
- from **extremely accurate** to **extremely accurate** (6-point scale)

ES between-wave intervention

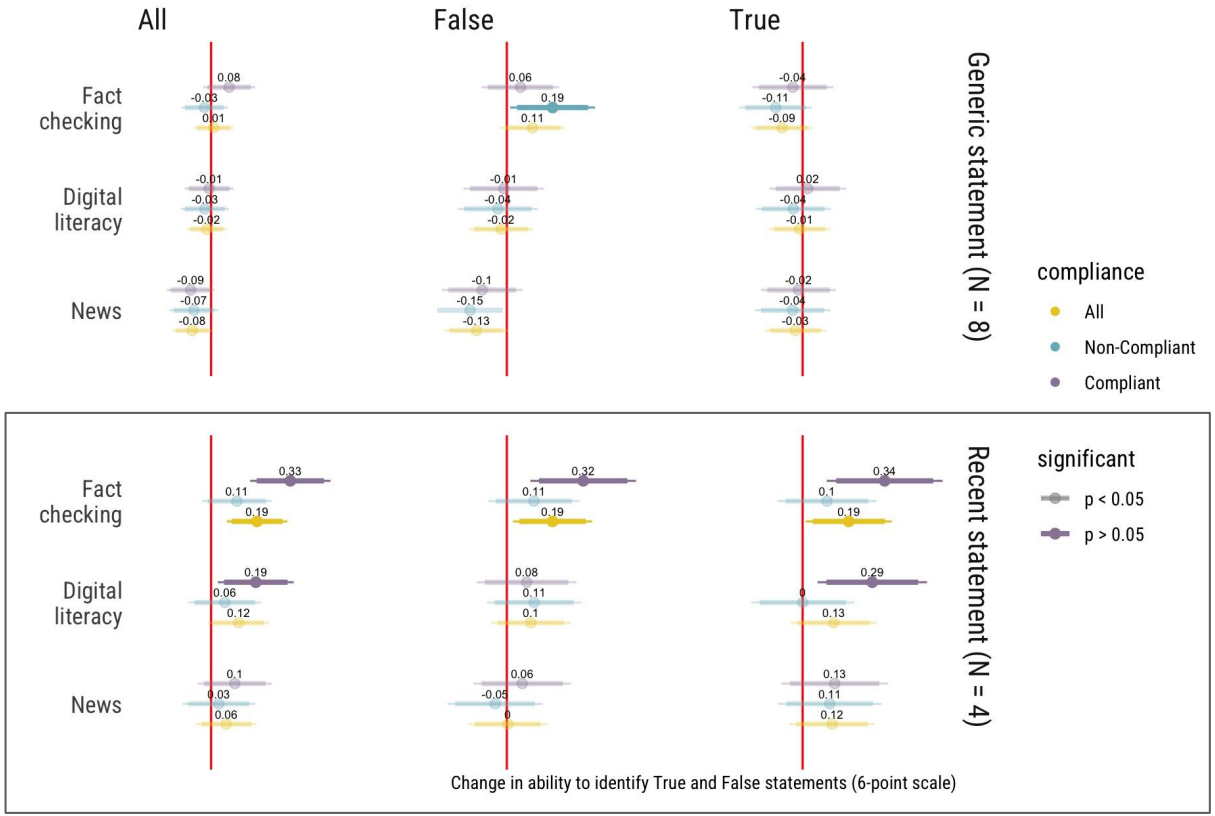
Expectations:

- all treatment groups will get **better** at identifying **False** information
- Fact-checking & Digital-literacy will get **worse** at identifying **True**

ES between-wave intervention



ES between-wave intervention



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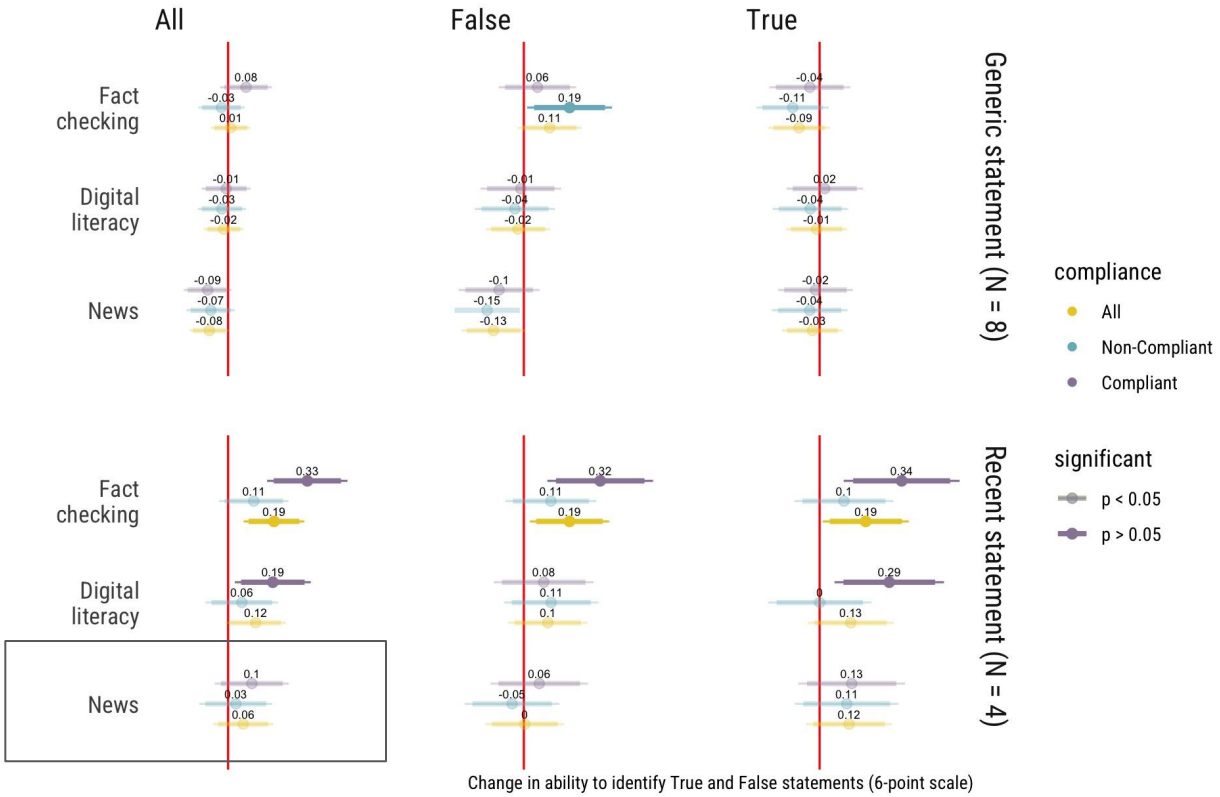

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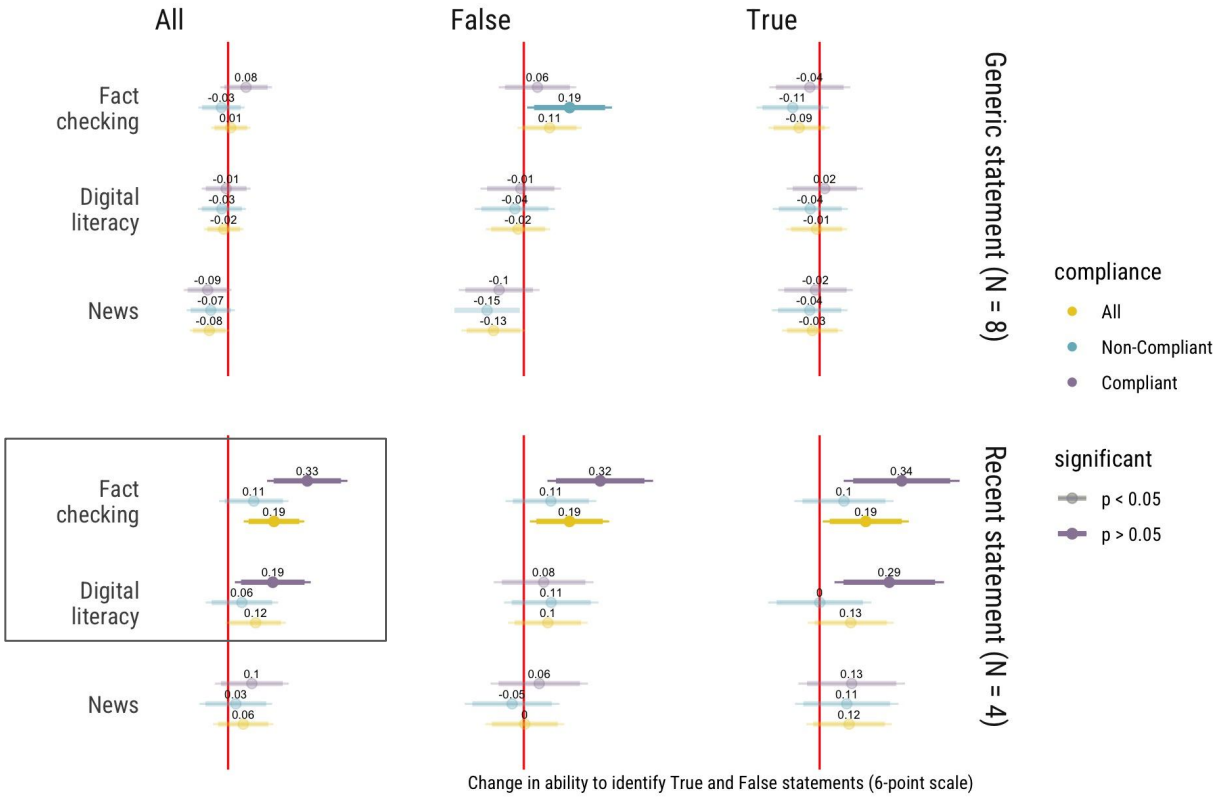

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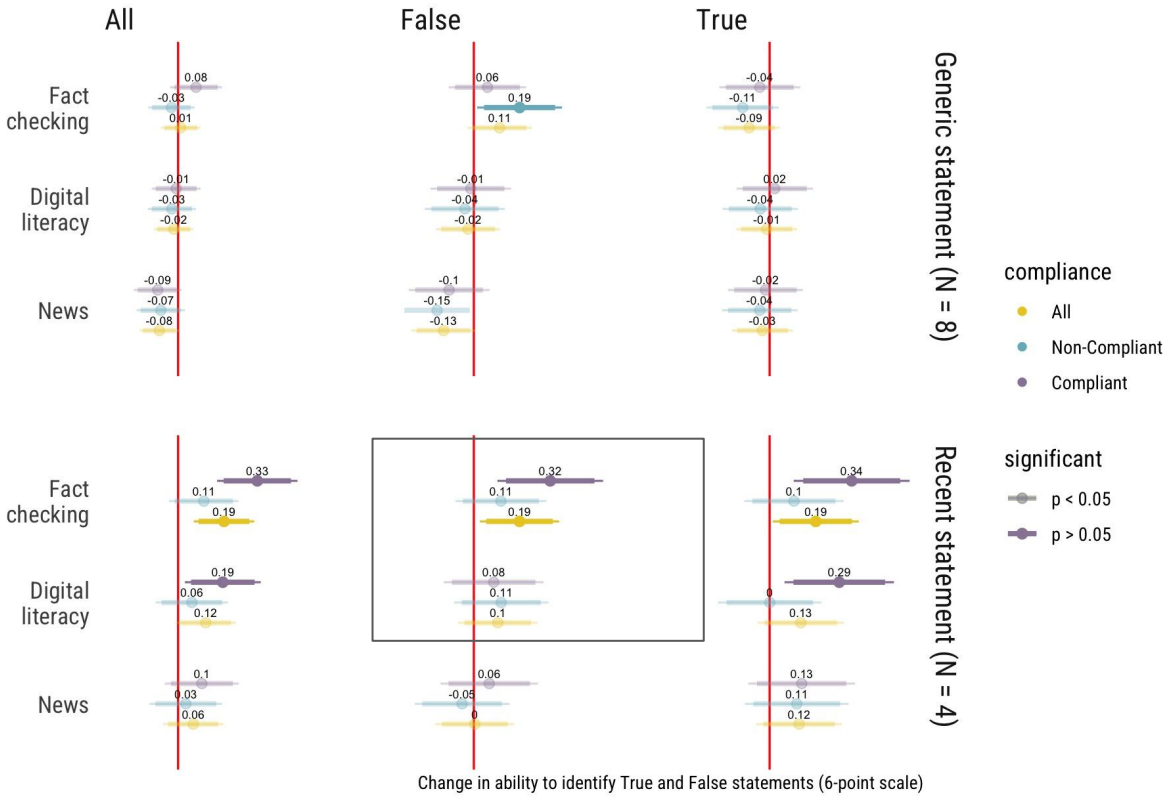

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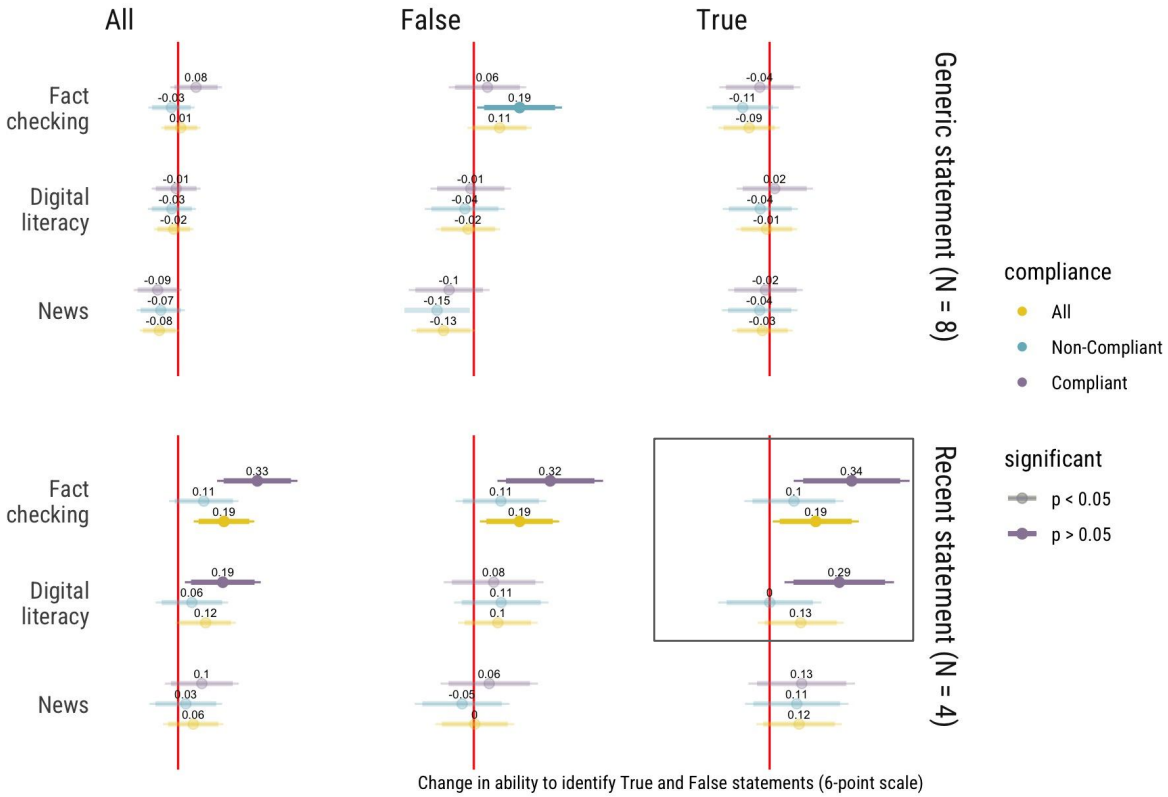


ES between-wave intervention

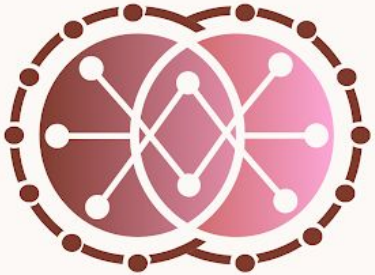
Takeaways:

- **Traditional inoculation strategies** work, and do not seem to have the hypothesized negative effects
- Increased **news exposure** didn’t really work as an alternative

ES between-wave intervention

Next steps:

- Same (or very similar) study in **RO** very soon → findings robust?
- With small variation: **more effective formats** for news exposure



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