Trust and Confidence in News Sources

SEPTEMBER 2018

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METHODOLOGY

- These are findings of an Ipsos self-funded study.

- For this study, a sample of n=750 Singapore Citizens and Permanent residents were interviewed from July 30th to August 2nd, 2018.

- Quotas and weighting* were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects the overall population distribution, based on Singapore Department of Statistics population estimates.

- The precision of online surveys is measured using a credible interval. In this case, the results reported are accurate to +/- 4.1 percentage points of the views and perspectives of all Singaporeans aged 15-65 (at 95% confidence). Credible intervals are wider among subsets of the population.

- Red and green arrows represent significant differences between a demographic subgroup and the rest of the population at 95% confidence.

* On respondents' age, gender and ethnicity

BACKGROUND

In recent times, the term 'fake news' has become ubiquitous, crossing cultural and geographical lines to enter the common lexicons of countries worldwide.

Singapore is not immune to this cultural phenomenon. Over the past month alone, the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods called for additional laws to help the Government intervene in the dissemination of misinformation online[1]; while PM Lee was himself the victim of 'fake news', having been falsely quoted on website soliciting bitcoin investments[2].

While discussion regarding 'fake news' has become more commonplace, until now, there has been a paucity of research into the susceptibility of Singaporeans to fake news. For this reason, Ipsos commissioned a survey of n=750 Singaporeans to investigate this issue.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **79% of Singaporeans aged 15-65 are 'somewhat' or 'very confident' in their ability to detect 'fake news'. Rates of confidence are higher among males and those with university degrees.**

- **When presented with five 'fake news' headlines* and asked if they were real or not, 91% incorrectly identified one or more as being real. There is no correlation between confidence and ability to detect 'fake news' (r=0.01).**

- **45% agree that they have falsely believed a fake news story until they found out otherwise. Levels of vulnerability are higher among those aged 15-24 (55%).**

[1] Sim, R. (2018). *Select Committee on fake news: 22 recommendations unveiled to combat online falsehoods*. [online] The Straits Times. Available at: https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/select-committee-on-fake-news-22-recommendations-unveiled-to-combat-online-falsehoods [Accessed 26 Sep. 2018].
[2] Lee, J (2018). *PM Lee warns of bitcoin scam site using his name*. [online] The Straits Times. Available at https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/pm-lee-warns-of-bitcoin-scam-site-using-his-name [Accessed 26 Sep. 2018].
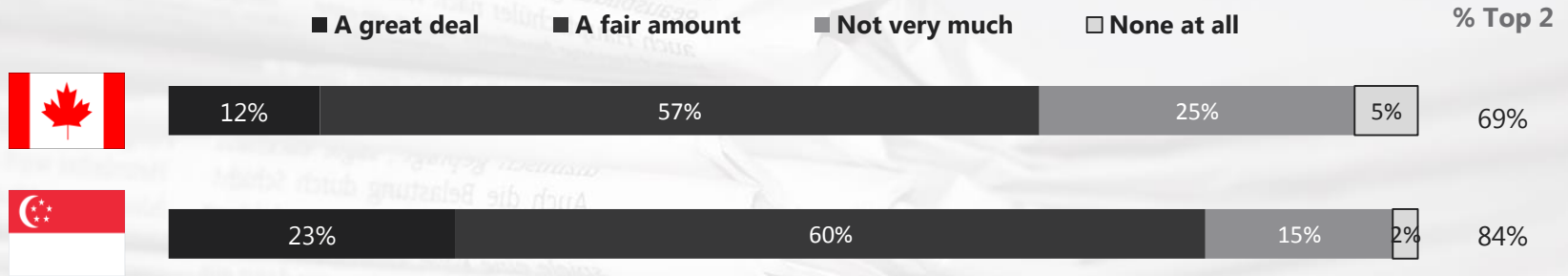
DETAILED FINDINGS

TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN TRADITIONAL NEWS MEDIA

A majority of Singaporeans report having 'a fair amount' of trust and confidence in traditional news media (60%), while 23% have 'a great deal' of trust. Although absolute distrust in traditional media is rare (2%), lower levels of confidence are less uncommon (15% 'not very much').

Singaporeans are significantly more likely to trust traditional media 'a great deal' than Canadians (23% and 12% respectively); however, levels of strong distrust are similar in both populations (Canada 5%, Singapore 2%).
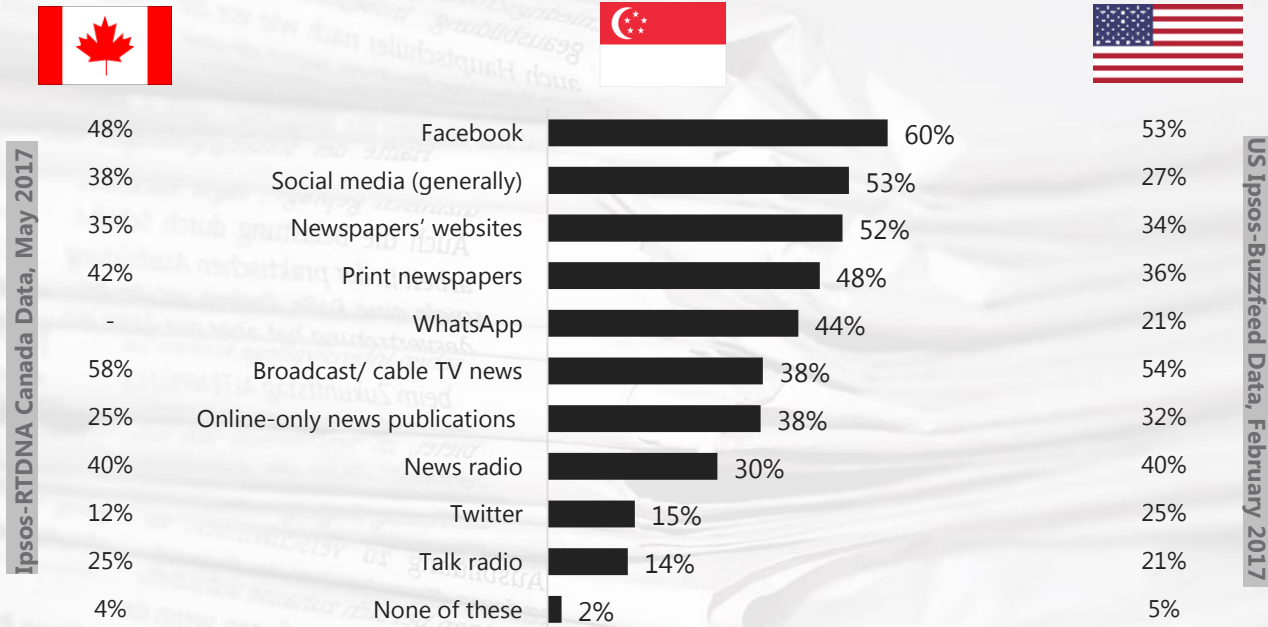
■ **A great deal**   ■ **A fair amount**   ■ **Not very much**   □ **None at all**   **% Top 2**

Canada: 12% | 57% | 25% | 5%   69%

Singapore: 23% | 60% | 15% | 2%   84%

Singapore 2018	Total	GENDER		AGE					EDUCATION			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC / Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
A great deal/ A fair amount	84%	**80%↓**	**87%↑**	83%	85%	80%	86%	83%	84%	86%	82%	80%

Q1. In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in traditional news media - such as newspapers, news magazines, TV and radio news - when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly?
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

Ipsos

NEWS MEDIA ACCESSED IN PAST MONTH

Singaporeans derive their news from a wide variety of media channels. In contrast to the US and Canada, online sites (including social media) are the primary sources of information for many Singaporeans: Facebook is the most commonly accessed (60%), followed by social media (generally; 53%) and newspapers' websites (52%). More than four in ten (44%) consumed news shared with them via WhatsApp in the month preceding the survey.

Fewer indicated that they get their news from traditional media sources such as broadcast/cable TV news (38%), news radio (30%), and talk radio (14%).

Canada (Ipsos-RTDNA Canada Data, May 2017)		Singapore	US (US Ipsos-Buzzfeed Data, February 2017)
48%	Facebook	60%	53%
38%	Social media (generally)	53%	27%
35%	Newspapers' websites	52%	34%
42%	Print newspapers	48%	36%
-	WhatsApp	44%	21%
58%	Broadcast/ cable TV news	38%	54%
25%	Online-only news publications	38%	32%
40%	News radio	30%	40%
12%	Twitter	15%	25%
25%	Talk radio	14%	21%
4%	None of these	2%	5%

Q3. In the last month, have you gotten news from any of the following?
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

NEWS MEDIA ACCESSED IN PAST MONTH

Older Singaporeans (aged 55-65) are most likely to consume news contained in traditional sources, such as broadcast/cable TV news (45%) and print news (64%). Conversely, younger Singaporeans (15-24) are least likely to use traditional media to access news, with only 32% having accessed news via broadcast/cable TV; 31% print newspapers, and 21% news radio in the preceding month.

	Total	GENDER		AGE					EDUCATION			
		Male	Female	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-65	≤HS	JC/ Pre-U + Poly	Degree	Others
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
Facebook	60%	62%	58%	65%	68% ↑	63%	54%	51% ↓	64%	62%	58%	53%
Social media (generally)	53%	55%	52%	70% ↑	67% ↑	58%	39% ↓	36% ↓	45% ↓	51%	58% ↑	52%
Newspapers' websites	52%	58% ↑	47% ↓	55%	44% ↓	55%	55%	51%	38% ↓	45% ↓	60% ↑	65%
Print newspapers	48%	51%	45%	31% ↓	35% ↓	50%	56% ↑	64% ↑	39% ↓	48%	51%	57%
WhatsApp	44%	45%	43%	41%	44%	43%	42%	51% ↑	41%	44%	46%	45%
Online-only news publications	38%	41%	34%	47% ↑	42%	38%	37%	25% ↓	24% ↓	36%	44% ↑	41%
Broadcast/ cable TV news	38%	39%	37%	32%	37%	35%	40%	45% ↑	32%	41%	40%	32%
News radio	30%	31%	29%	21% ↓	26%	34%	35%	32%	24%	31%	33%	15% ↓
Twitter	15%	17%	14%	29% ↑	16%	20%	8% ↓	7% ↓	10% ↓	20% ↑	16%	12%
Talk radio	14%	11%	17%	15%	16%	14%	15%	10%	13%	14%	16%	4% ↓
None of these	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	2%	2%

Q3. In the last month, have you gotten news from any of the following?
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

Ipsos

NEWS MEDIA ACCESSED IN PAST MONTH

Despite the fact that most Singaporeans access the news more frequently via non-traditional channels (such as digital sources), there are nonetheless higher levels of trust in traditional channels (such as print newspapers, broadcast/cable TV news and news radio).

|	In the last month, have you gotten news from any of the following?	Do you trust the news you read or hear from…	
		All the time/most of the time	About half the time/rarely/almost never
Facebook	60%	**24%**	**72%**
Social media (generally)	53%	**28%**	**70%**
Newspapers' websites	52%	**63%**	**35%**
Print newspapers	48%	**65%**	**34%**
WhatsApp	44%	**23%**	**73%**
Online-only news publications	38%	**30%**	**63%**
Broadcast/ cable TV news	38%	**63%**	**34%**
News radio	30%	**59%**	**37%**
Twitter	15%	**17%**	**63%**
Talk radio	14%	**42%**	**51%**

FREQUENCY OF TRUST

The extent to which Singaporeans trust the news they access via traditional and non-traditional channels differs according to their demographic profile. Males are significantly more likely to trust digital channels, including: online-only news publications and social media (34% trust 'all the time'/'most of the time'); Twitter (30%); and WhatsApp (29%). On the other hand, older Singaporeans – those aged 45-54 and 55-65 – trust traditional sources more, including print and news radio.

% All the time/most of the time	Total	GENDER		AGE					EDUCATION			
		Male	Female	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-65	≤HS	JC/ Pre-U + Poly	Degree	Others
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
Print newspapers	65%	65%	65%	66%	53% ↓	61%	72% ↑	73% ↑	55% ↓	72% ↑	64%	73%
Broadcast/ cable TV news	63%	61%	64%	65%	63%	54% ↓	68%	62%	52% ↓	67%	64%	73%
Newspapers' websites	63%	62%	63%	67%	60%	56%	67%	63%	51% ↓	65%	66%	70%
News radio	59%	59%	58%	55%	61%	52%	66% ↑	59%	53%	63%	58%	61%
Talk radio	42%	44%	40%	42%	47%	38%	44%	37%	40%	46%	40%	43%
Online-only news publication	30%	34% ↑	25% ↓	30%	37%	29%	28%	25%	29%	25%	33%	27%
Social media	28%	34% ↑	22% ↓	33%	34%	29%	24%	19% ↓	30%	24%	29%	28%
Facebook	24%	21% ↑	14% ↓	29%	21%	18%	15%	6% ↓	17%	15%	19%	15%
WhatsApp	23%	29% ↑	17% ↓	19%	25%	23%	22%	24%	26%	21%	22%	22%
Twitter	17%	30% ↑	19% ↓	26%	32% ↑	25%	20%	19%	28%	20%	26%	19%

Q4. Do you trust the news you read or hear:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CONSUMING NEWS

While the majority of Singaporeans value veracity of the news above all else (77%), 14% place greater weight on the news' ability to evoke certain emotions in them, while a smaller group (9%) appreciate news contents' that aligns with their personal opinions.

14%

9%

77%
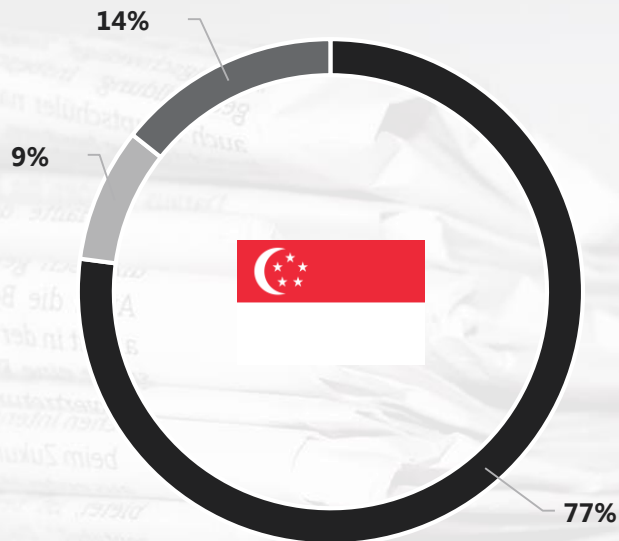
- That the facts are truthful
- That the news aligns with my opinion
- That the news makes me feel a certain way

Q5. When watching, reading or listening to news, what is most important to you:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)
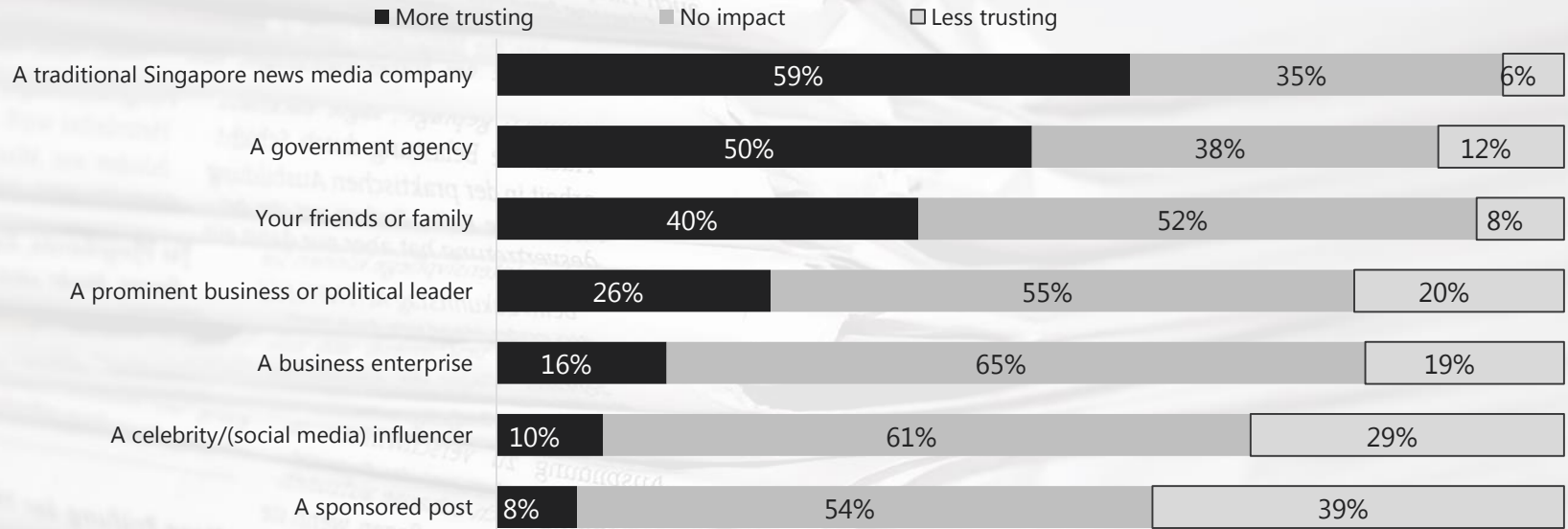
IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN CONSUMING NEWS

Certain demographic groups in Singapore are more likely than others to prioritise the truthfulness of the news. Females (81%) and those aged 55-65 (86%) are significantly more likely to value veracity of the news above other factors. On the other hand, males (11%) and those aged 15-24 (14%) are significantly more likely to consider alignment with their own opinions to be more important.

% All the time/most of the time	Total	GENDER		AGE					EDUCATION			
		Male	Female	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-65	≤HS	JC/ Pre-U + Poly	Degree	Others
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
That the facts are truthful	77%	**74% ↓**	**81% ↑**	71%	74%	74%	79%	**86% ↑**	71%	**84% ↑**	75%	85%
That the news makes me feel a certain way	14%	15%	13%	15%	15%	16%	15%	11%	18%	**9% ↓**	16%	11%
That the news aligns with my opinion	9%	**11% ↑**	**6% ↓**	**14% ↑**	11%	10%	6%	**3% ↓**	11%	7%	9%	5%

Q5. When watching, reading or listening to news, what is most important to you:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

THE INFLUENCE OF SOURCE UPON SINGAPOREANS' TRUST OF THE NEWS

As previously highlighted, Singaporeans are relatively reliant upon social media as a source of information. However, the extent to which they trust news stories accessed on social media is contingent upon who shares it.

Traditional Singapore news media companies (59% 'more trusting') and Singapore Government Ministries and Statutory Boards (50% 'more trusting') are the most trusted sources on social media. On the other hand, sponsored posts (39% 'less trusting') have the least credibility in the eyes of Singaporeans.

■ More trusting　　■ No impact　　□ Less trusting

Source	More trusting	No impact	Less trusting
A traditional Singapore news media company	59%	35%	6%
A government agency	50%	38%	12%
Your friends or family	40%	52%	8%
A prominent business or political leader	26%	55%	20%
A business enterprise	16%	65%	19%
A celebrity/(social media) influencer	10%	61%	29%
A sponsored post	8%	54%	39%

Q6. Are you more or less trusting of a news story if it has been shared on social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) by the following sources:
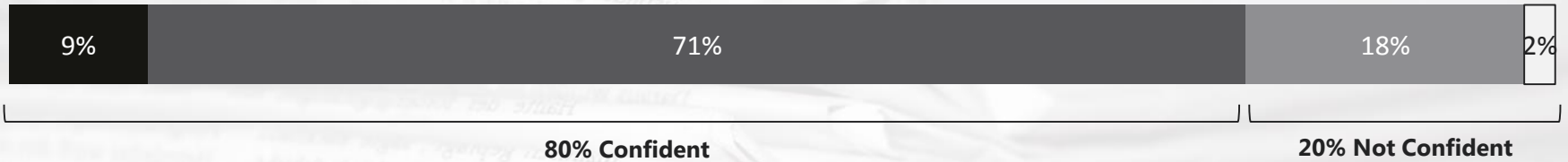Base: All Respondents (n=750)

Ipsos

'FAKE NEWS'

CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

Eight in ten (79%) Singaporeans are at least somewhat confident in their ability to distinguish between legitimate and 'fake' news. Younger Singaporeans are more confident than older Singaporeans; as are university graduates, compared to those with lower levels of educational attainment.

■ Very confident   ■ Somewhat confident   ■ Not very confident   □ Not at all confident

9%	71%	18%	2%

80% Confident   **20% Not Confident**

	Total	GENDER		AGE					EDUCATION			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
Very confident + Somewhat confident	79%	82%	77%	80%	82%	83%	80%	**72% ↓**	**72% ↓**	78%	**85% ↑**	**66% ↓**
Not very confident + Not at all confident	21%	18%	23%	20%	18%	17%	20%	**28% ↑**	**28% ↑**	22%	**15% ↓**	**34% ↑**

Q8. How confident are you in your ability to distinguish between legitimate and accurate news, fake news, false news and alternative facts?
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

ABILITY TO DETECT FAKE NEWS

Despite this confidence, Singaporeans are relatively inaccurate in identifying 'fake news'. When shown a series of ten headlines from digital channels and asked to indicate which ones were 'fake news', four in ten (43%) correctly identified two or fewer 'fake news' headlines out of five.

The pass/fail rate was broadly similar across gender, age and education lines. Interestingly, there was no correlation between people's confidence in their ability to detect fake news and their actual ability (r=0.01). Further, Singaporeans who disagree that they are 'newsies' (those obsessed with staying up to date with the news) were significantly more likely to have passed (66%) than those who agree (54%).

Score	%
3/5	27%
4/5	21%
5/5	9%

Pass, 57%

Fail, 43%

Score	%
0/5	10%
1/5	14%
2/5	19%

	Total	**GENDER**		**AGE**					**EDUCATION**			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
Pass	57%	54%	61%	63%	**46%↓**	54%	64%	61%	**46%↓**	59%	61%	62%
Fail	43%	46%	39%	37%	54%	46%	36%	39%	54%	41%	39%	38%

Q9. Please look at the ten images below. Please select the ones that you believe are fake news.
Base: English Respondents (n=793)

PERCEPTIONS OF FAKE NEWS

Two in ten (22%) Singaporeans agree that they have no idea how to distinguish between real and fake news, while 38% disagree. No significant differences in agreement were observed according to demographic profile.

I have no idea how to distinguish between real news and fake news

■ **Strongly agree + agree**   ■ **Neither**   ■ **Strongly disagree + disagree**

22%	40%	38%

	Total	**GENDER**		**AGE**					**EDUCATION**			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
% Agree	22%	22%	23%	26%	25%	19%	22%	20%	23%	23%	22%	20%

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

PERCEPTIONS OF FAKE NEWS

Almost half (45%) of all Singaporeans admit to having falsely believed a fake news story. Younger Singaporeans (aged 15-24) are particularly susceptible to 'fake news', with more than half (55%) agreeing.

I have falsely believed a news story was real until I found out otherwise

■ **Strongly agree + agree**   ■ **Neither**   ■ **Strongly disagree + disagree**

45%	39%	16%

	Total	**GENDER**		**AGE**					**EDUCATION**			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
% Agree	45%	42%	48%	**55% ↑**	44%	41%	48%	39%	42%	49%	44%	45%

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
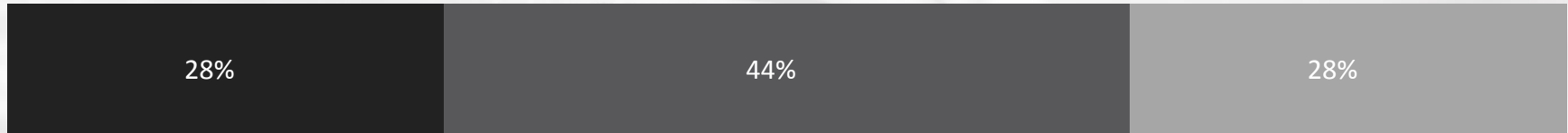Base: All Respondents (n=750)

PERCEPTIONS OF FAKE NEWS

More than one quarter (28%) of Singaporeans agree with the statement 'If I disagree with a news story, it is likely fake'. Singaporeans with lower levels of educational attainment – High School or lower – are significantly more likely to agree with this statement (35%).

If I disagree with a news story, it is likely fake

■ **Strongly agree + agree** ■ **Neither** ■ **Strongly disagree + disagree**

28%	44%	28%

	Total	**GENDER**		**AGE**					**EDUCATION**			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*162*	*194*	*351*	*43*
% Agree	28%	31%	26%	21%	33%	24%	29%	32%	**35% ↑**	27%	26%	23%

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

PERCEPTIONS OF FAKE NEWS

Furthermore, more than four in ten (43%) Singaporeans indicated that they trust news that they agree with. This trust is more commonplace among males (47%), and less often held by those aged 35-44 (35%).

I trust news that I agree with

■ **Strongly agree + agree**   ■ **Neither**   ■ **Strongly disagree + disagree**

43%	40%	17%

	Total	**GENDER**		**AGE**					**EDUCATION**			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*497*	*100*	*93*	*60*
% Agree	43%	**47% ↑**	**39% ↓**	45%	44%	**35% ↓**	45%	46%	46%	43%	42%	37%

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

PERCEPTIONS OF FAKE NEWS

One third (33%) of all Singaporeans consider themselves to be a 'newsie'. Males (39%) and those with a high level of educational attainment (University degree or higher; 38%) are more likely to consider themselves as such.

I consider myself a "newsie" – I'm obsessed with staying up to date on what's happening in the news

■ Strongly agree + agree   ■ Neither   ■ Strongly disagree + disagree
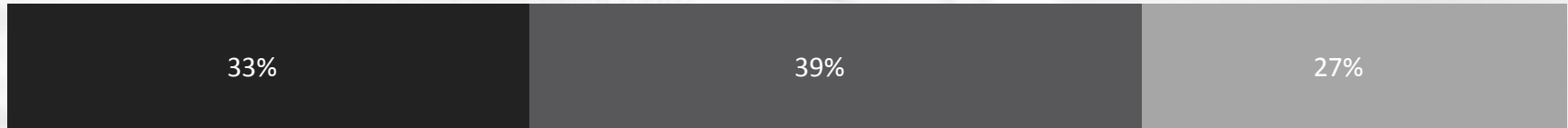
33%	39%	27%

	Total	**GENDER**		**AGE**					**EDUCATION**			
		Male	**Female**	**15-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-65**	**≤HS**	**JC/ Pre-U + Poly**	**Degree**	**Others**
Base: all respondents	*750*	*373*	*377*	*113*	*137*	*138*	*180*	*182*	*497*	*100*	*93*	*60*
% Agree	33%	**39% ↑**	**28% ↓**	27%	33%	33%	38%	34%	31%	28%	**38% ↑**	36%

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
Base: All Respondents (n=750)

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