



# Survey on the impact of online disinformation and hate speech

SEPTEMBER 2023



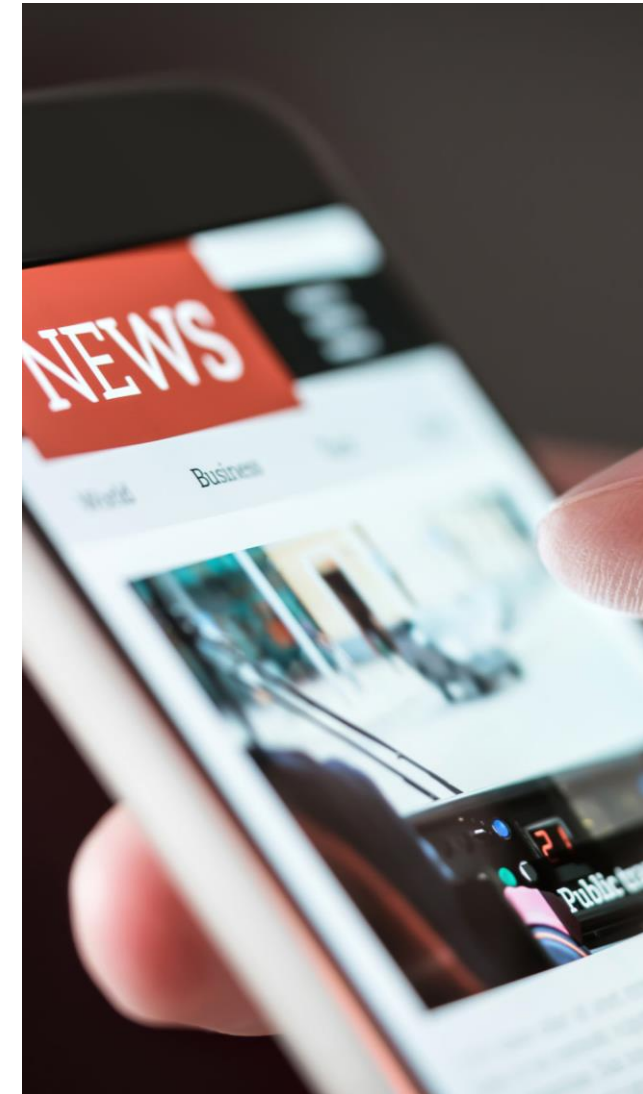
# A GLOBAL SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF ONLINE DISINFORMATION AND HATE SPEECH



Ensuring access to reliable information is a basic prerequisite for informed debate on all of the challenges societies face. However, as social media platforms have become the preferred source of information for a growing number of citizens, concerns have been raised about the prevalence of falsehoods and hate speech, propelled by opaque algorithms that can favour engagement over factuality, and exacerbated by active exploitation by some political leaders and other actors. The issue of the governance of these platforms – what is the most effective approach, who is responsible, how can we protect and not harm human rights? – has come to the forefront of public debate in recent years.

As it concludes a year-long global consultation to develop guidelines to safeguard freedom of expression and access to information in the governance of digital platforms, UNESCO also wanted to give a voice to citizens on the impact of online disinformation and hate speech in their daily lives: Do they feel that it is a major issue? Are often confronted with it? What solutions do they favor to combat it?

The reliability of online information being even more crucial during elections, UNESCO and IPSOS decided to conduct the survey in 16 countries where general elections will be held in 2024, and pose questions specific to this context: Do they feel that disinformation have already had an impact on political life in their country? Are they concerned that disinformation will impact the next campaign?



# SURVEY DESIGN



## TARGET

Survey conducted in 16 countries among representative samples of the national population of Internet users aged 18 and over in each country. A total of 8 000 individuals were interviewed (500 per country).

Each country was chosen because a national election is foreseen in 2024.

Study conducted for UNESCO



## COLLECTION DATE

From 22th August to 25th September



## METHOD

Online interviews.

Representative samples of the population of Internet users aged 18+ in each of the surveyed countries.

Quota method: gender, age, occupation, region and market size.



This report has been drawn up in compliance with the international standard ISO 20252 "Market, social and opinion research".

This report was reviewed by Mathieu Gallard, Client Director, Ipsos Public Affairs.

# DETAILS ON READING THE RESULTS

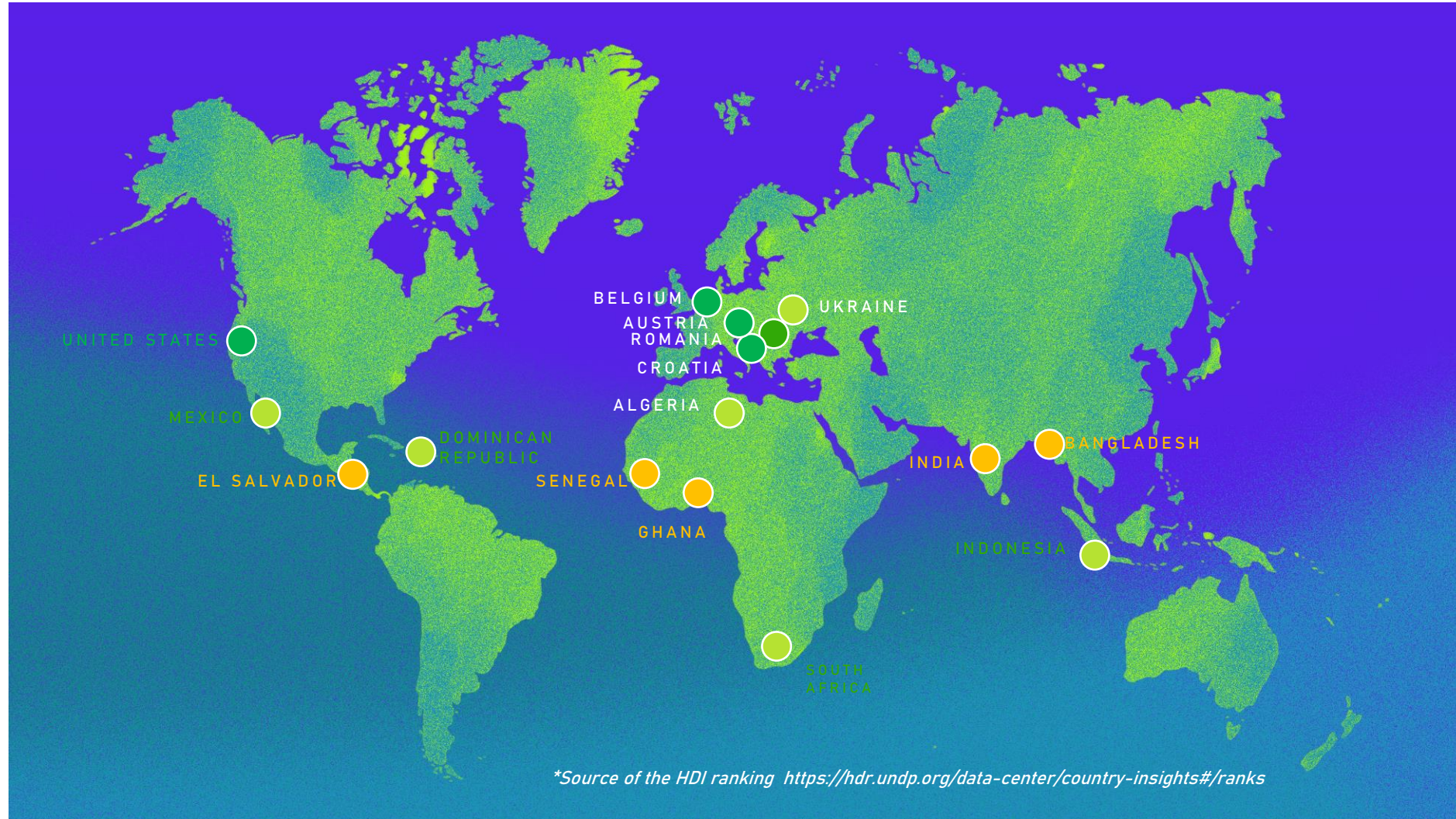
The “Global Country Average” we use in this report reflects the average result for all the countries where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country.

In addition, in order to analyze the results in more detail, in this report we have systematically presented, in addition to the overall results, the results for three groups of countries:

















Countries **with a very high HDI\*** (>0.800): Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Romania, United States

Countries **with a high HDI\*** (0.700 to 0.799): Algeria, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, Ukraine

Countries **with a medium or low HDI\*** (<0.700): Bangladesh, El Salvador, Ghana, India, Senegal



# COUNTRY DETAILS

	NEXT ELECTION*	HDI	ESTIMATED POPULATION <i>(2022, WORLD BANK)</i>
 Algeria	December 2024, presidential election	0.745	44 900 000
 Austria	September 2024, parliamentary, european elections	0.916	9 000 000
 Bangladesh	January 2024, parliamentary elections	0.661	171 200 000
 Belgium	June 2024, parliamentary, regional, local, european elections	0.937	11 700 000
 Croatia	July 2024, parliamentary, european elections	0.858	3 900 000
 Dominican Republic	May 2024, presidential, parliamentary elections	0.767	11 200 000
 El Salvador	February 2024, presidential, parliamentary, local elections	0.675	6 300 000
 Ghana	December 2024, presidential, parliamentary elections	0.632	33 500 000
 India	April 2024, parliamentary, local elections	0.633	1 417 200 000
 Indonesia	February 2024, presidential, parliamentary elections	0.705	275 500 000
 Mexico	June 2024, presidential, parliamentary elections	0.758	127 500 000
 Romania	November 2024, presidential, local elections	0.821	19 000 000
 Senegal	February 2024, presidential election	0.511	17 300 000
 South Africa	April 2024, parliamentary, provincial elections	0.713	59 900 000
 Ukraine	Presidential, parliamentary elections	0.773	38 000 000
 United States	November 2024, presidential, Congress elections	0.921	333 300 000

2 579 400 000  
PEOPLE COVERED, or  
roughly on third of the  
world's population

\*The list of surveyed countries was based on the calendar of elections as per information publicly available in August 2023. This does not imply any judgement from UNESCO regarding the final decisions of when elections will actually take place.

# ANALYSIS OF KEY RESULTS

The use of social media as a daily source of information has rapidly grown over the past 15 years, to the point of now surpassing print media, radio, and even television.

On average in the 16 countries surveyed, 56% of internet users frequently use social media to stay informed about current events, far ahead of television (44%). However, it is worth noting that differences exist among population groups: television is the primary source in the most developed countries (55% compared to 37% for social media), while it lags significantly in countries with high (42% vs 63%) or medium/low levels of Human Development Index (HDI) (37% vs 68%).

Unsurprisingly, those under 35 are also much more inclined to use social media for information compared to those aged 55 and older (67% compared to 31%).

We also note that television is used somewhat more for information during election campaigns. Indeed, traditional media, especially television, are the most trusted sources in terms of credibility and quality of the news they provide to the public. Overall, 66% of those surveyed have trust in the news broadcast on television, 63% in radio news, and 61% in print media news, compared to only 50% for news gathered from social media. Here again, there are major differences between countries, with confidence in all the sources of information surveyed much lower in affluent countries than in the developing ones.

# ANALYSIS OF KEY RESULTS

The significance of social media as a source of information, especially during election campaigns, is even more crucial given that citizens believe disinformation is highly prevalent there. Across all 16 countries, 68% of internet users told us that social media is the place where disinformation is most widespread, far ahead of groups on online messaging apps (38%) and media websites/apps (20%).

This sentiment is overwhelmingly prevalent in all countries, age groups, social backgrounds, and political preferences. This is even more important as citizens feel that the issue of disinformation is a real threat: 85% express concern about the impact and influence of disinformation on their fellow citizens, a figure that reaches 88% in countries with high levels of HDI and 90% in those with medium/low HDI. They are even more inclined (87%) to believe that this phenomenon has already had a major impact on the political life in their country.

Moreover, the same percentage (87%) is worried about the impact of disinformation on the upcoming elections in their country with 47% being "very concerned" (this figure reaches 63% among those who describe themselves as "very interested" in politics).

# ANALYSIS OF KEY RESULTS

In addition to disinformation, the phenomenon of hate speech is also widespread according to the public: 67% of internet users have encountered it online (including 74% of those under 35). They overwhelmingly believe that hate speech is most prevalent on Facebook (58%), followed by TikTok (30%), X (18%), and Instagram (15%). According to citizens, it is primarily LGBT+ people (33%) and ethnic or racial minorities who are victims of online hate speech in their country, although there are significant variations between countries.

In this context, citizens strongly believe that the issues of disinformation and hate speech must be addressed by both governments and regulatory bodies (88%) and social media platforms themselves (90%). They even think, in similar proportions, that both these actors should play an "active role" (at 89% and 91%, respectively) in combating them during election campaigns. From this perspective, residents of countries with intermediate or low levels of HDI are even more inclined to desire a strong intervention from both public authorities and the private sector.



# ANALYSIS OF KEY RESULTS

More specifically, an overwhelming majority of internet users agree with the idea that “governments and regulators should be able to require social media platforms to put in place trust and safety measures during election campaigns to protect the integrity of elections”: 89% endorse this proposal, which garners consensus across all countries, age groups, social demographics, and political preferences. It's also worth noting that in the public's view, international organizations such as the UN or UNESCO can have a role to play in combating disinformation: 75% endorse this idea (with 83% in medium/low HDI countries), and 33% endorse it “strongly.”

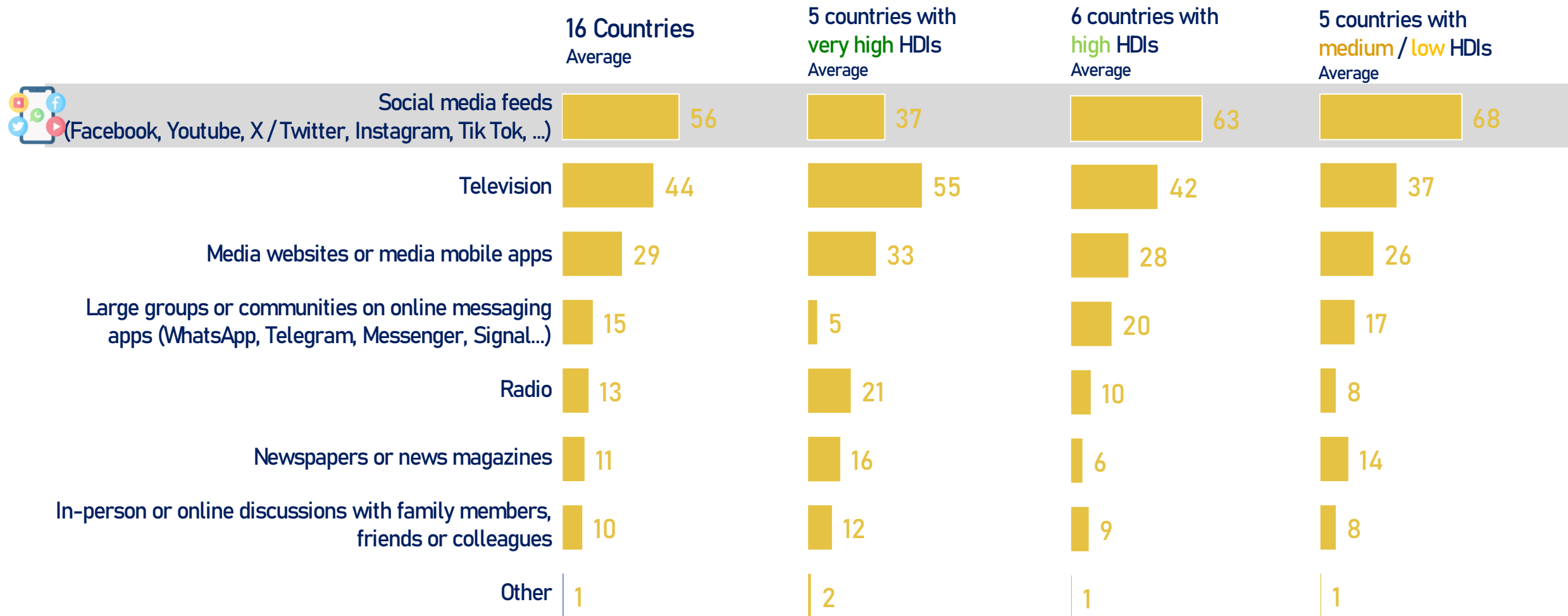
Finally, the study shows that while they are very aware of the problem, citizens themselves could take stronger actions to address the growing phenomenon of online disinformation. At this point, only 48% of them have already reported online content related to disinformation in the context of an election campaign, including 17% who have done so “often.” In detail, those aged 18-34 (55%) and people who describe themselves as “very interested” in politics (55%) are significantly more likely to have already reported this type of content.

# USAGE AND TRUST IN SOCIAL MEDIA



# Social media the main source of information globally

Question : Where do you primarily get your news and information from?  
(Whole sample) - Up to 2 answers per respondent



Globally, people aged under 35 are most likely to use social media (67%). Older people (55 years and over) mainly use television (64%).



# Social media the top source of information in almost every country

Question : Where do you primarily get your news and information from?  
(Whole sample) - Up to 2 answers per respondent



COUNTRY  
AVERAGE



ALGERIA



AUSTRIA



BANG.



BELGIUM



CROATIA



D. REP.



EL  
SALVADOR



GHANA



INDIA



INDONESIA



MEXICO



ROMANIA



SENEGAL



SOUTH  
AFRICA



UKRAINE



UNITED  
STATES

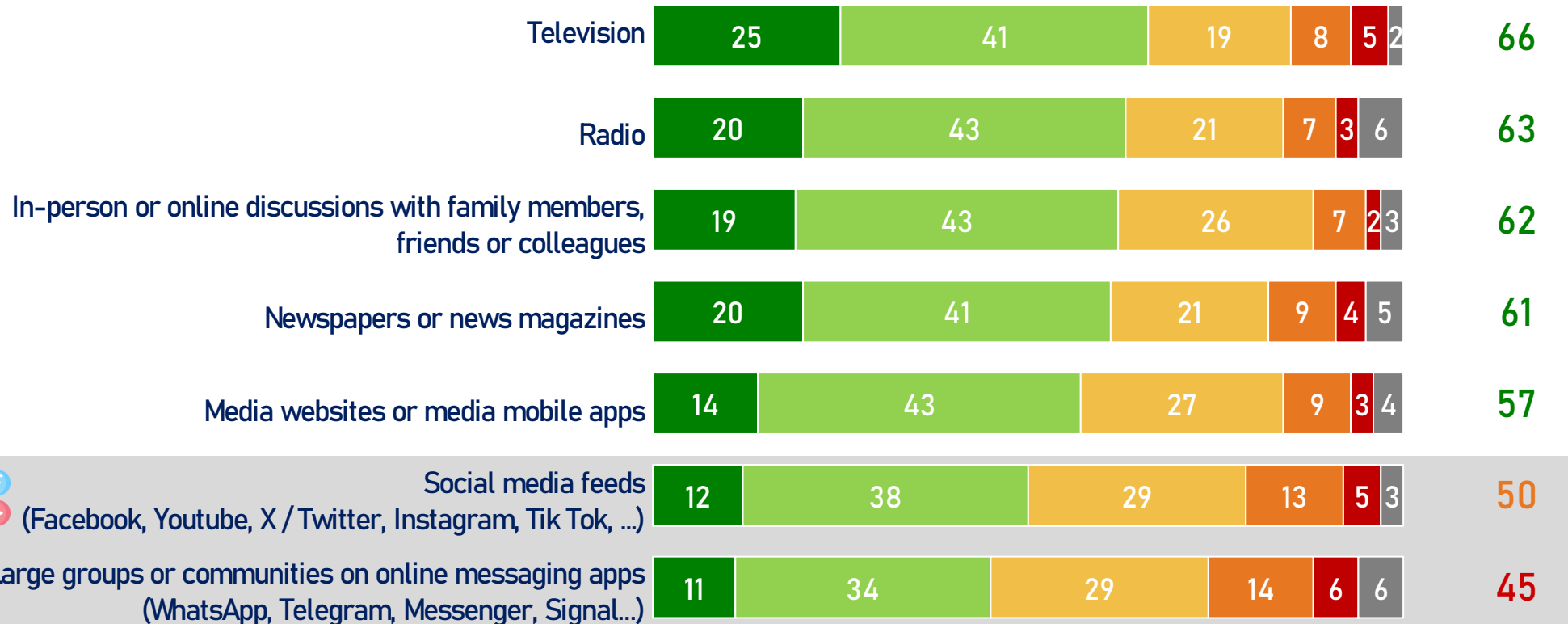
Social media feeds	56	55	36	69	27	36	71	74	73	56	68	61	39	67	57	66	47
Television	44	37	45	25	55	57	26	44	37	42	50	55	68	35	53	29	53
Media websites or media mobile apps	29	35	25	21	39	41	29	23	22	24	35	25	33	38	26	18	25
Large groups or communities on online messaging apps	15	17	4	19	2	8	12	9	24	17	20	9	6	17	10	52	6
Radio	13	4	31	-	29	16	9	6	14	6	3	14	16	13	28	4	11
Newspapers or news magazines	11	4	26	18	18	10	7	7	4	37	6	9	9	5	8	1	16
In-person or online discussions with family members, friends or colleagues	10	13	13	15	9	16	10	6	7	8	8	9	9	5	4	10	12

# Trust in social media lower than traditional media

Question : To what extent would you say you trust the news and information provided by these sources of information?  
 (Whole sample – Each item is only displayed for people telling that they use this source of information)

🌐 16 Countries Average

% Trust



➤ Trust is significantly lower among people aged 55 and over, among people living in rural areas and among those with lower levels of education.



# Confidence significantly lower in High HDI countries

Question : To what extent would you say you trust the news and information provided by these sources of information?  
 (Whole sample – Each item is only displayed for people telling that they use this source of information)



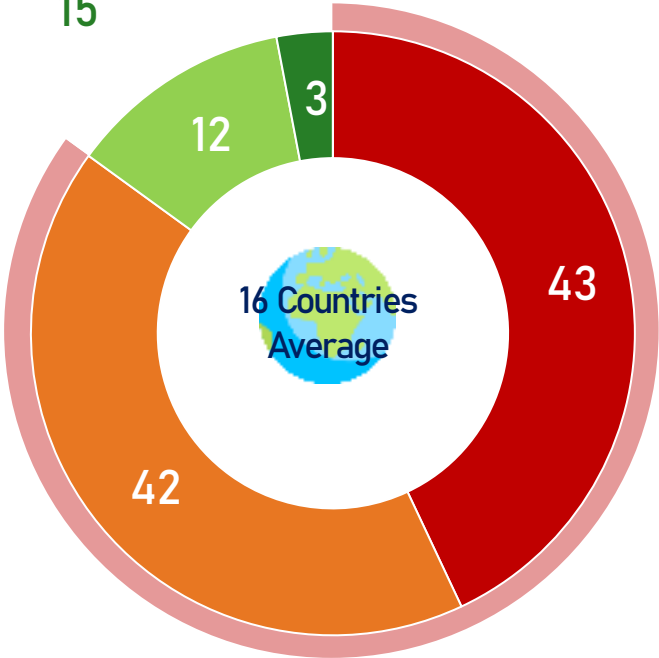
# EXPOSURE TO DISINFORMATION



# 85% concerned about the impact of disinformation in their country

Question : Would you say you are concerned about the impact and influence of disinformation and “fake news” on the population in your country?  
(Whole sample)

**% NOT CONCERNED**  
**15**

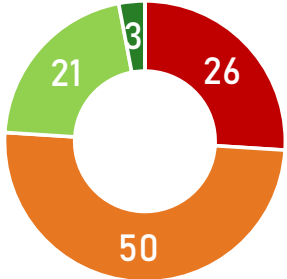


16 Countries Average

**% CONCERNED**  
**85**

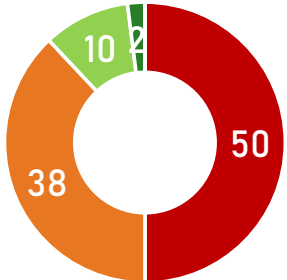
- 87% of managers and professionals vs 83% of blue collars
- 87% of those with higher education vs 74% of those with lower education
- 87% of those living in urban areas vs 79% of those living in rural areas

6 countries with very high HDIs Average



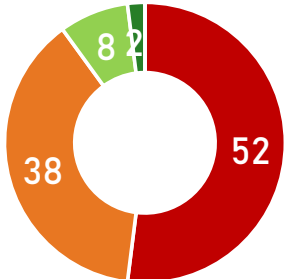
**% CONCERNED**  
**76**

6 countries with high HDIs Average



**% CONCERNED**  
**88**

5 countries with medium / low HDIs Average



**% CONCERNED**  
**90**

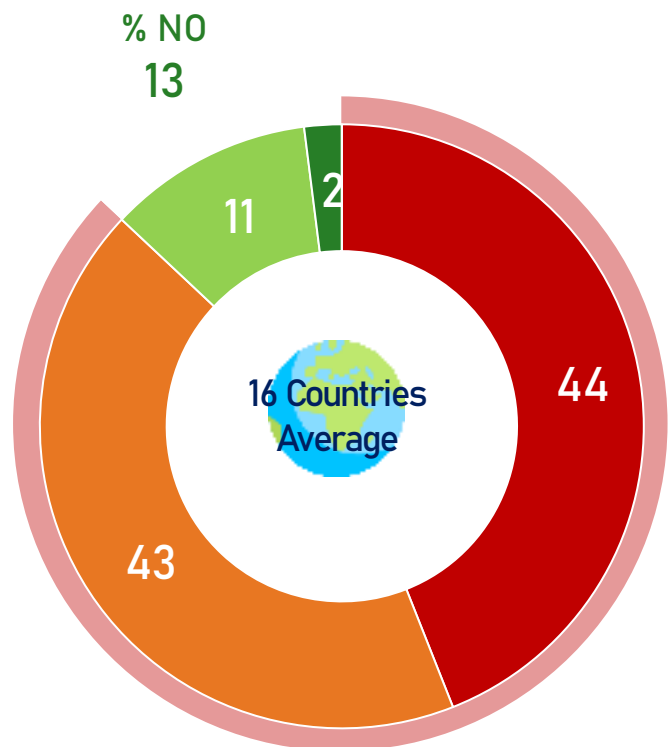




# Vast majority say disinformation has already had a major impact on political life, especially in countries with lower HDI

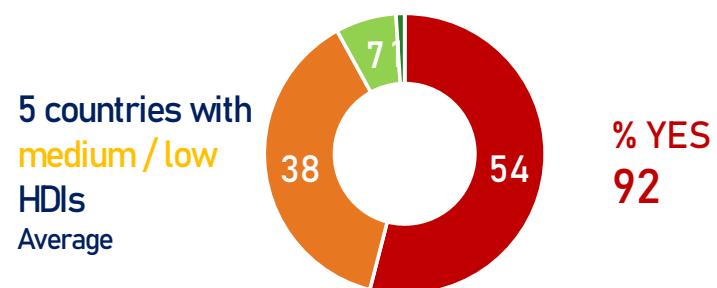
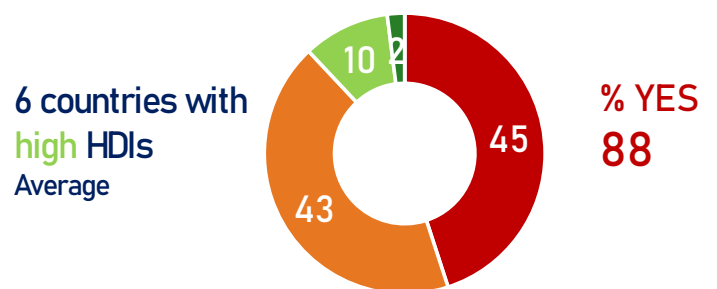
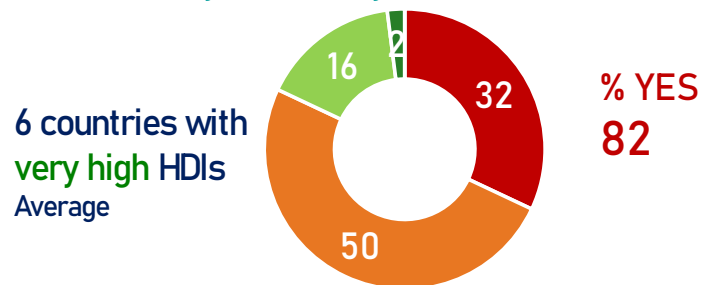
Question : Do you think that disinformation and “fake news” have already had a major impact on political life in your country?

(Whole sample)



**% YES 87**

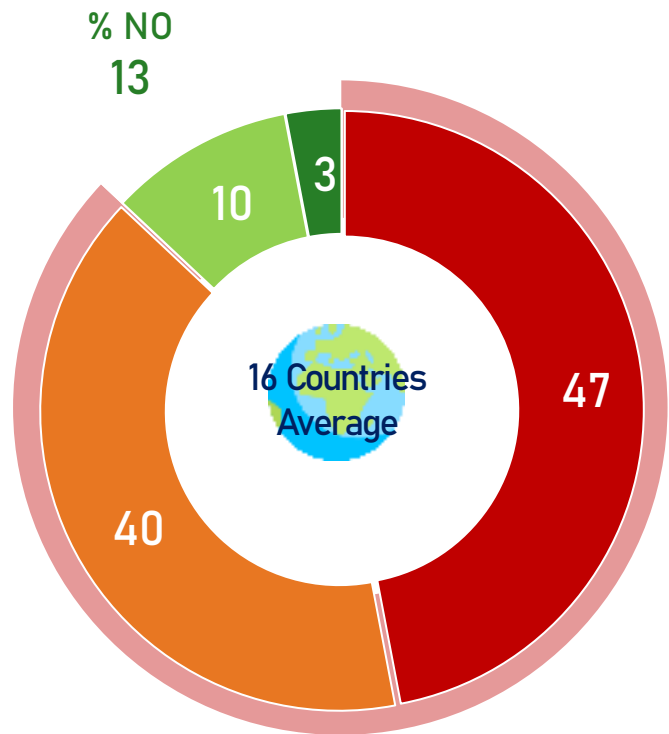
• 92% of those who are very interested in politics vs 82% among those are not at all interested



# Very high concern about possible impact of disinformation on upcoming elections

Question : And more specifically, looking ahead to next year's elections\* in your country, are you concerned that disinformation and "fake news" could have an impact on the campaign and on the vote of a significant proportion of voters ?

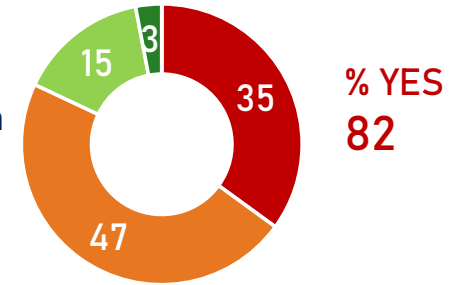
(Whole sample)



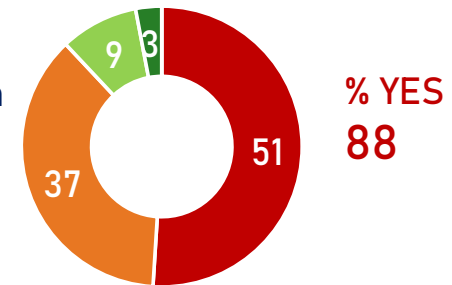
**% YES  
87**

- 91% of managers and professionals vs 85% of blue collars
- 89% of those with higher education vs 78% of those with lower education
- 92% of those who are very interested in politics vs 78% among those are not at all interested

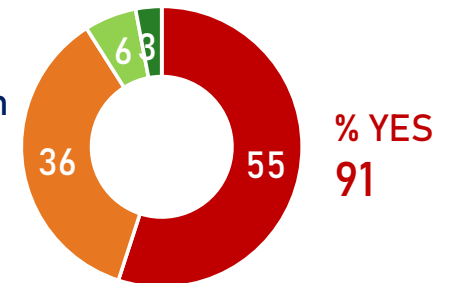
**6 countries with very high HDIs Average**



**6 countries with high HDIs Average**



**5 countries with medium / low HDIs Average**

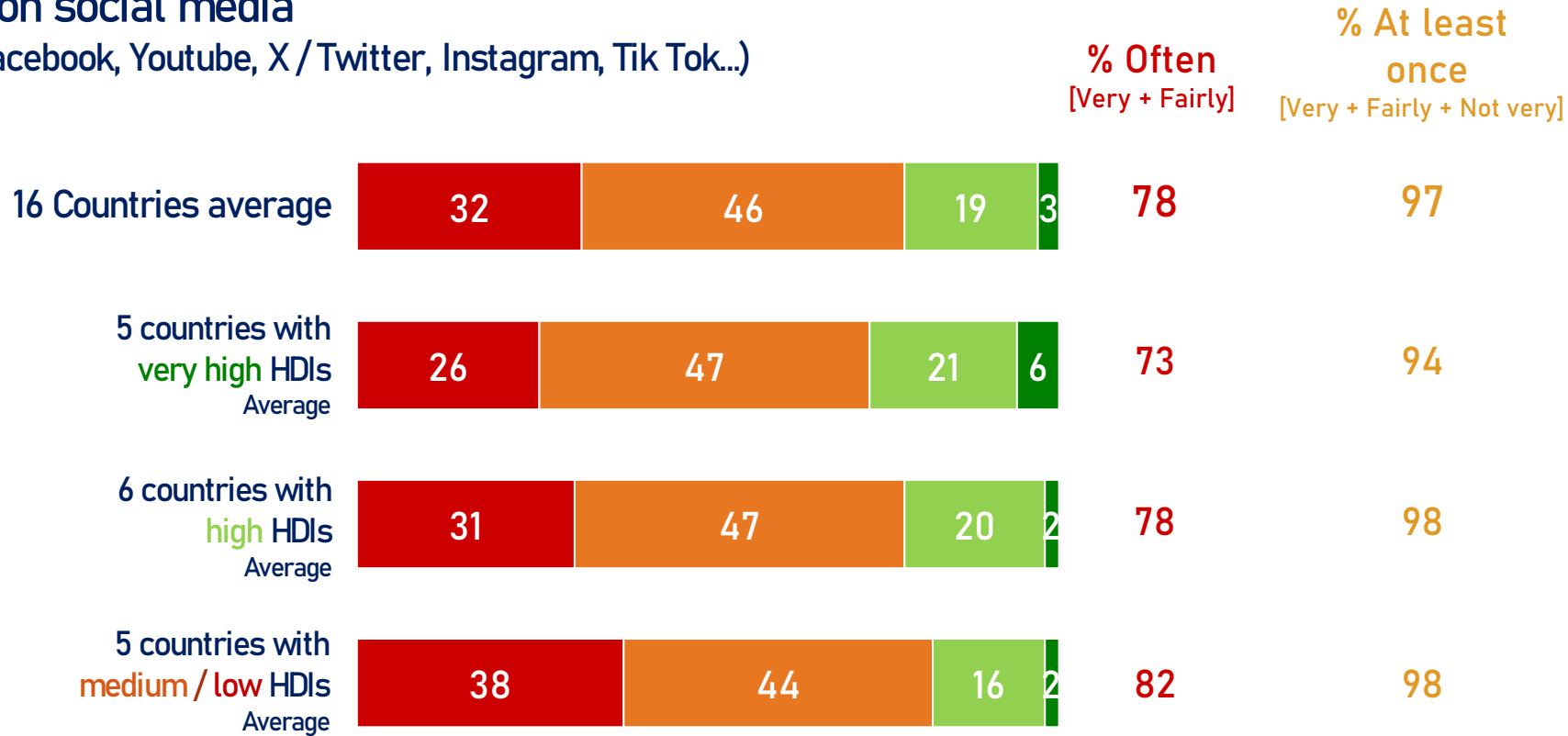


(\*next elections in Ukraine)

# 78% often read deliberately falsified info on social media

Question : How often would you say you read things that have been deliberately falsified...?  
(Whole sample)

 ... on social media  
(Facebook, Youtube, X / Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok..)

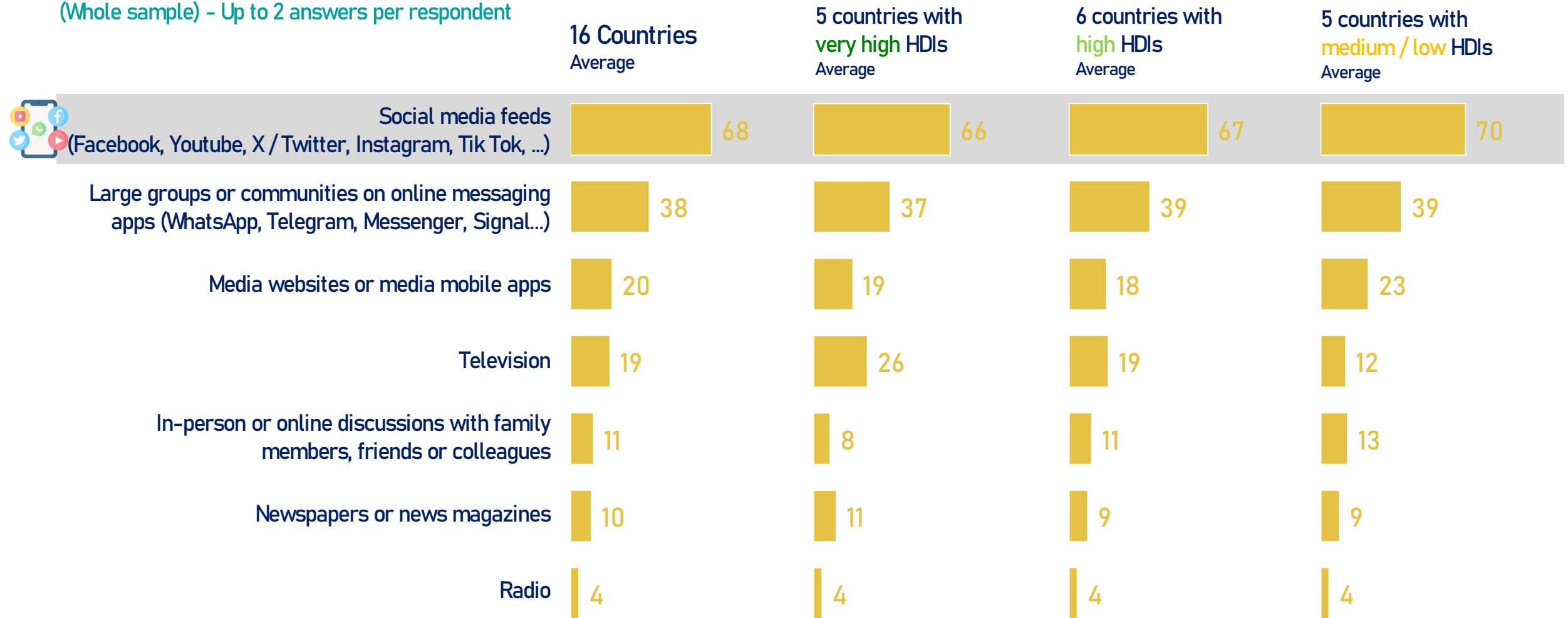


**94%**   
have at least once been misled or influenced by disinformation before finding out it was false in the media or on social media



# Most feel disinformation more widespread on social media than other media

Question : On which information sources do you think disinformation and “fake news” are most widespread?  
 (Whole sample) - Up to 2 answers per respondent




















➤ Newspaper and magazine readers are more likely than others to believe that disinformation and fake news are widespread in social media feeds (74%)



# Social media identified as top source of false information in every country

Question : On which information sources do you think disinformation and “fake news” are most widespread?  
(Whole sample) - Up to 2 answers per respondent

	 COUNTRY AVERAGE	 ALGERIA	 AUSTRIA	 BANG.	 BELGIUM	 CROATIA	 D. REP.	 EL SALVADOR	 GHANA	 INDIA	 INDONESIA	 MEXICO	 ROMANIA	 SENEGAL	 SOUTH AFRICA	 UKRAINE	 UNITED STATES
Social media feeds	68	57	75	71	78	53	73	69	79	64	75	67	58	69	77	54	64
Large groups or communities on online messaging apps	38	40	44	38	43	34	32	30	47	42	45	33	33	39	48	37	31
Media websites or media mobile apps	20	21	14	23	15	24	19	17	18	23	22	16	19	34	15	15	22
Television	19	17	17	9	12	34	7	14	7	17	14	24	41	11	11	38	28
In-person or online discussions with family members, friends or colleagues	11	13	5	9	11	7	11	13	13	17	8	11	7	11	13	8	12
Newspapers or news magazines	10	11	14	6	6	20	5	15	4	11	5	8	8	9	9	17	9
Radio	4	3	3	2	3	5	4	3	6	4	1	6	4	4	3	5	4

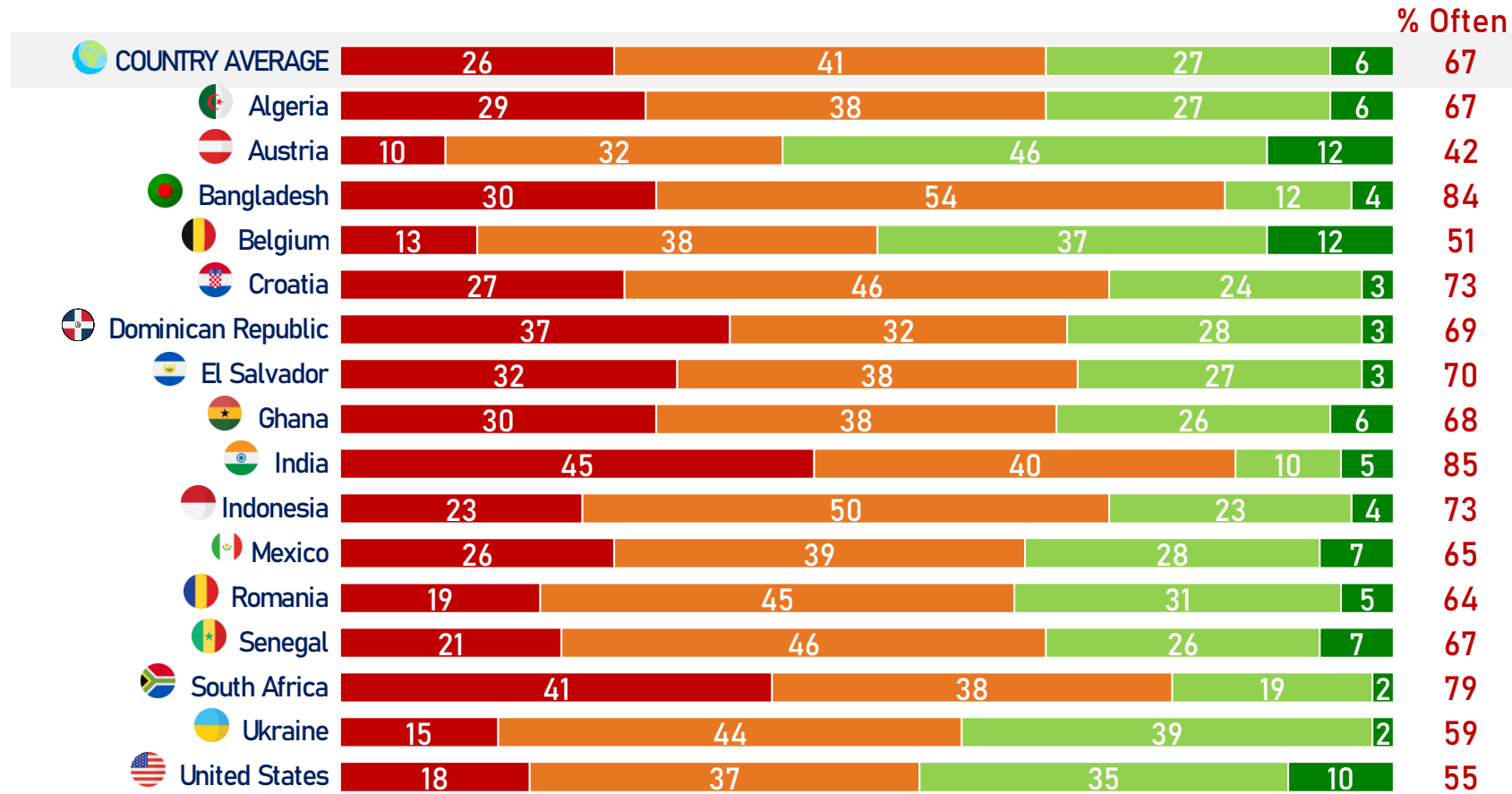
# EXPOSURE TO HATE SPEECH



# Two thirds often encounter hate speech online

Question : *Let's talk about hate speech. This is a form of hate speech or incitement to violence that can sometimes be found online on social networks, the "comments" section of articles or online instant messaging. Hate speech can target individuals or groups of people (ethnic, racial or religious minorities, LGBT+ people, people with disabilities, etc.). How often would you say that you come across online content that seems like hate speech?*

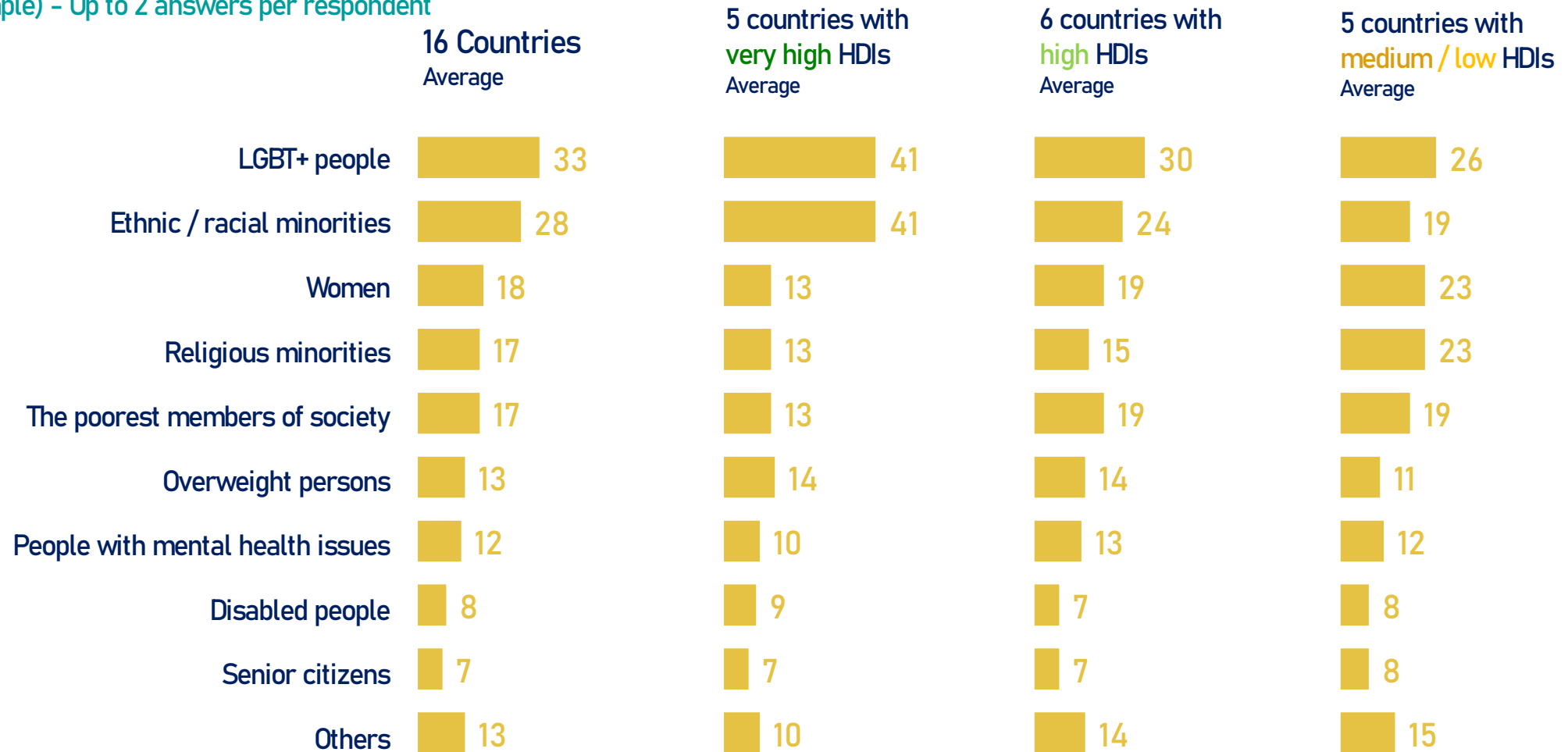
(Whole sample)



# LGBT+ people and ethnic/racial minorities seen as most often targeted

Question : Who do you think are the main victims of hate speech on social networks in your country?

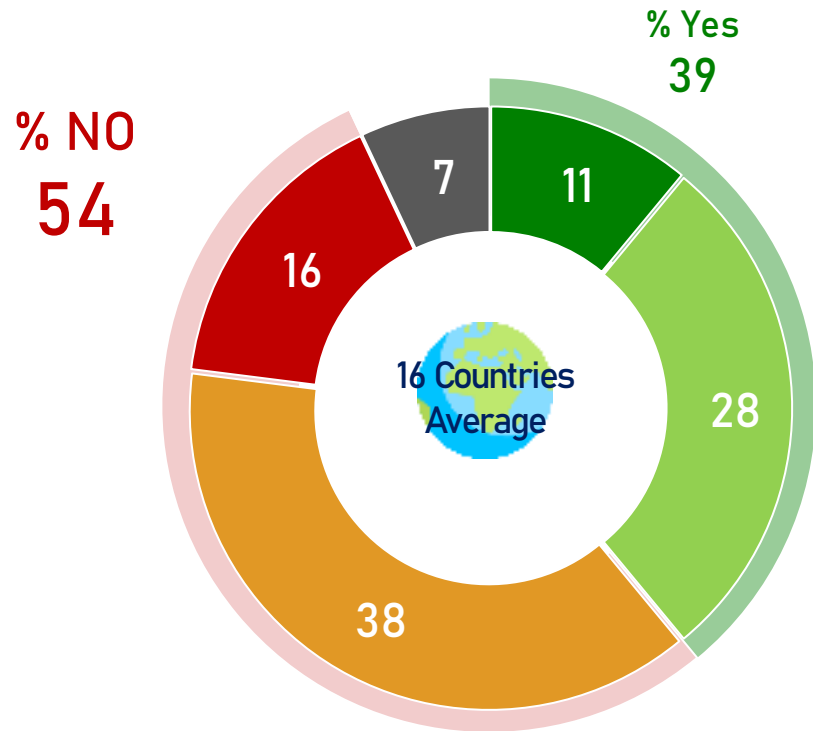
(Whole sample) - Up to 2 answers per respondent



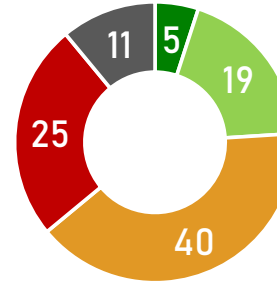


# Mixed perceptions of social media actions to combat hate speech

Question : Do you think online platforms are doing enough to combat hate speech?  
(Whole sample)

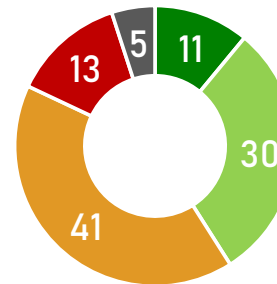


6 countries with  
**very high** HDIs  
Average



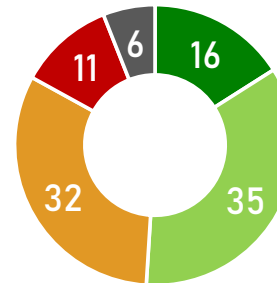
**% YES: 24**  
**% NO: 65**

6 countries with  
**high** HDIs  
Average



**% YES: 41**  
**% NO: 54**

5 countries with  
**medium / low** HDIs  
Average



**% YES: 51**  
**% NO: 43**



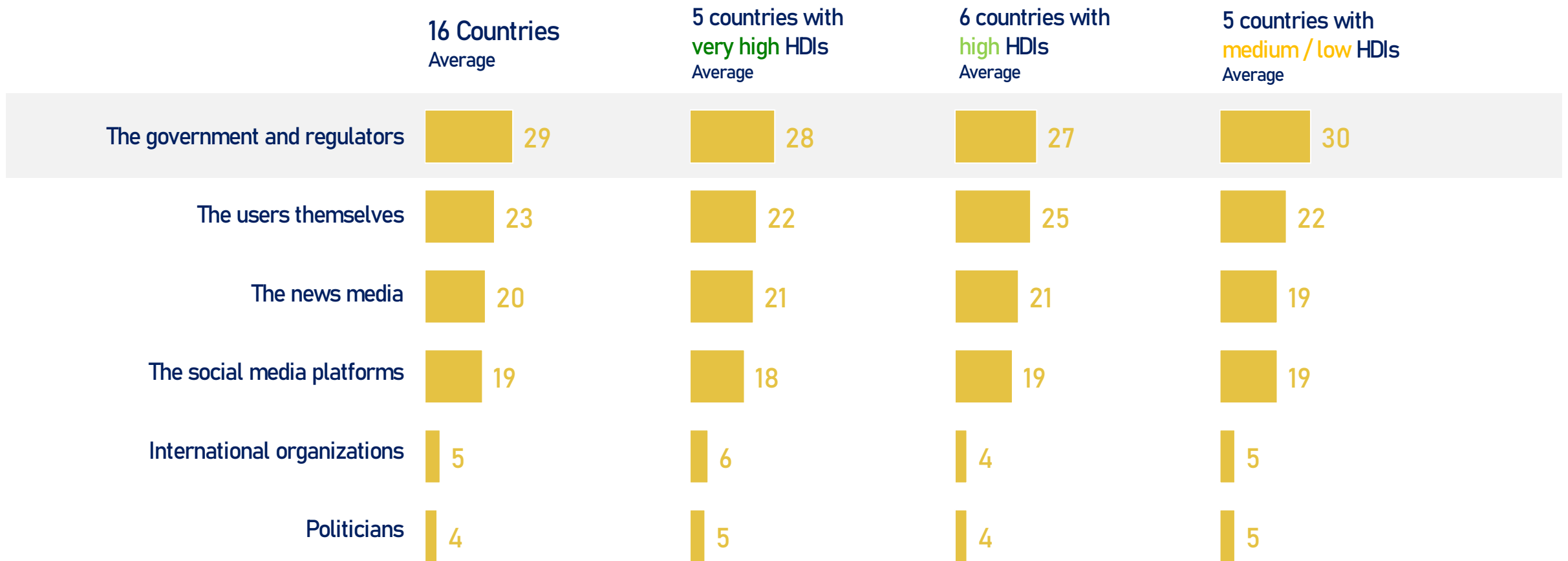
# PREFERRED SOLUTIONS



# Government and regulators seen as primarily responsible for identifying and countering online disinformation

Question : Who should be mainly responsible for identifying and countering online disinformation or “fake news”?

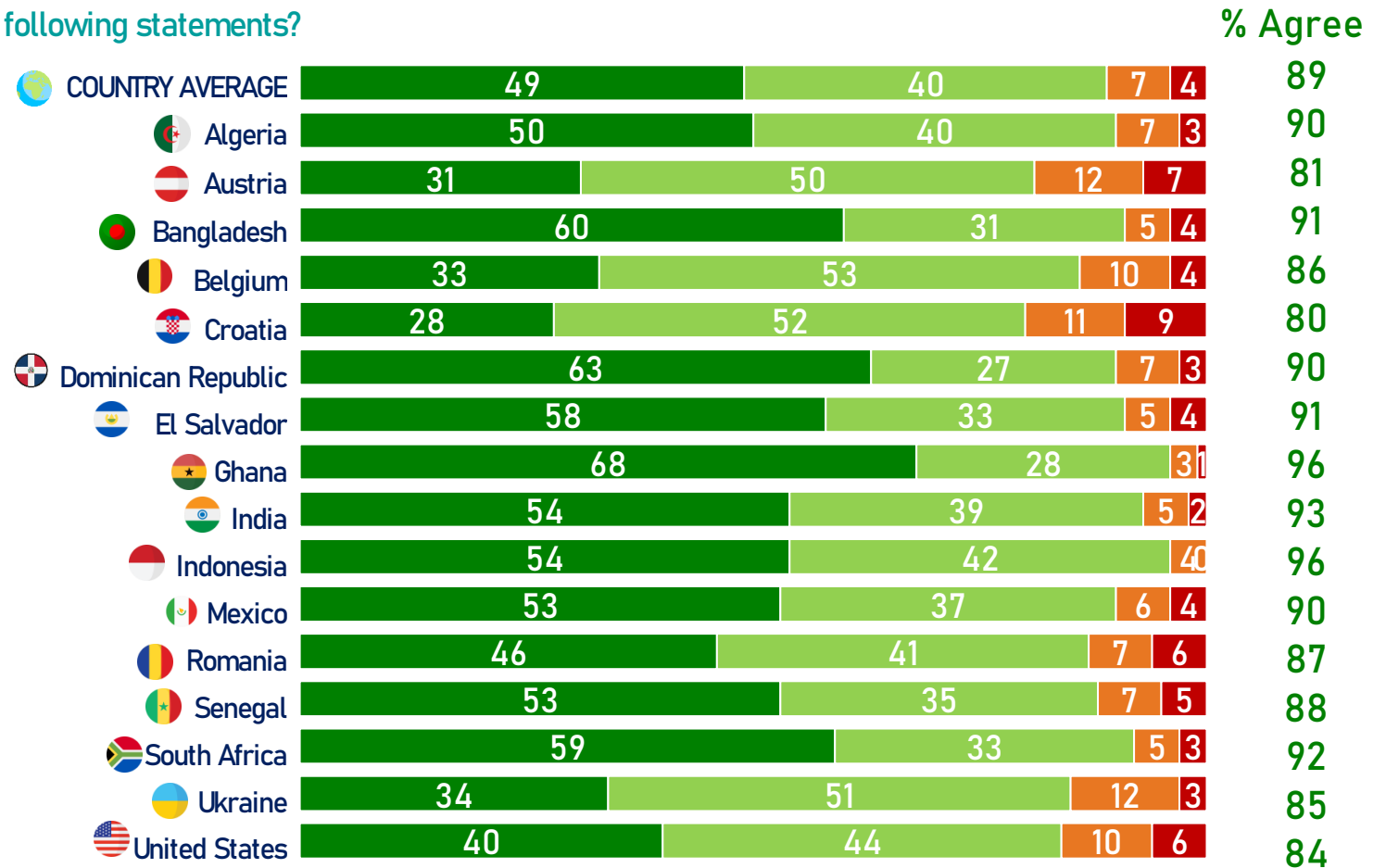
(Whole sample) - Only one answer possible



# Broad approval for governments and regulators requiring social media platforms to put in place trust and safety measures during election campaigns

Question : Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
(Whole sample) - Only one answer possible

“Governments and regulators should be able to require social media platforms to put in place trust and safety measures during election campaigns to protect the integrity of elections”



STRONGLY AGREE

SOMEWHAT AGREE

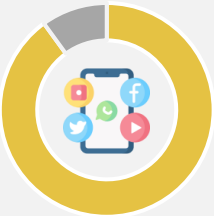
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

# All stakeholders have a major role to play, including during election periods

Question : Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
(Whole sample)

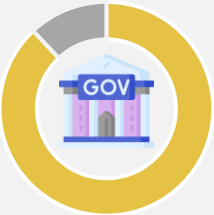
## IN GENERAL



90%

THINK THAT ONLINE DISINFORMATION AND "FAKE NEWS" ARE SERIOUS ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED BY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

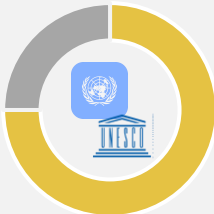
VERY HIGH HDI : 86%    HIGH HDI : 90%    MEDIUM / LOW HDI : 92%



88%

THINK THAT ONLINE DISINFORMATION AND "FAKE NEWS" ARE SERIOUS ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORS THROUGH REGULATION

VERY HIGH HDI : 82%    HIGH HDI : 90%    MEDIUM / LOW HDI : 90%



75%

THINK THAT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE UNITED NATIONS OR UNESCO HAVE A MAJOR ROLE TO PLAY IN COMBATING DISINFORMATION AND "FAKE NEWS"

VERY HIGH HDI : 67%    HIGH HDI : 76%    MEDIUM / LOW HDI : 83%

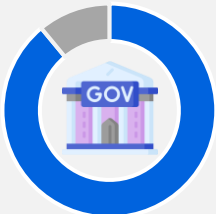
## DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS



91%

THINK THAT, DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SHOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN COMBATING DISINFORMATION AND "FAKE NEWS"

VERY HIGH HDI : 86%    HIGH HDI : 93%    MEDIUM / LOW HDI : 93%



89%

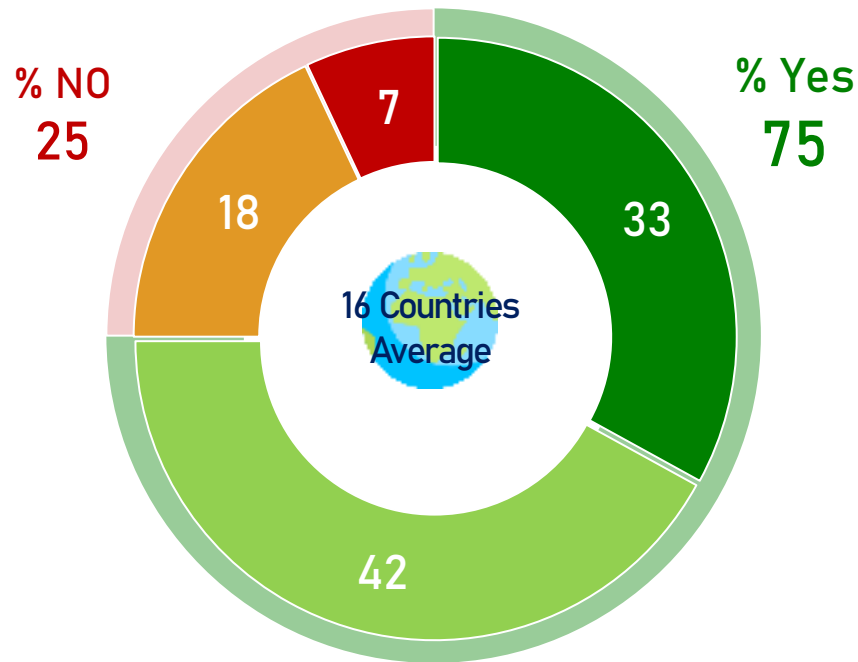
THINK THAT, DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, THE GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORS SHOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN COMBATING ONLINE DISINFORMATION AND "FAKE NEWS"

VERY HIGH HDI : 84%    HIGH HDI : 91%    MEDIUM / LOW HDI : 92%

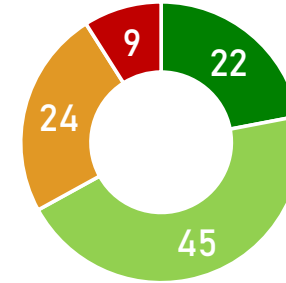
# International organizations also expected to take action

Question : Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
(Whole sample)

International organizations such as the United Nations or UNESCO have a major role to play in combating disinformation and “fake news”

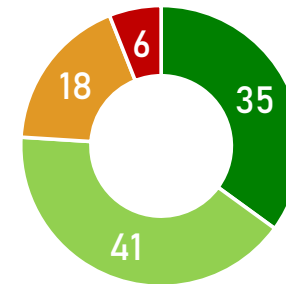


6 countries with  
very high HDIs  
Average



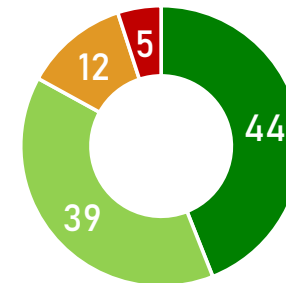
% YES  
67  
% NO  
33

6 countries with  
high HDIs  
Average



% YES  
76  
% NO  
24

5 countries with  
medium / low  
HDIs  
Average



% YES  
83  
% NO  
17

STRONGLY AGREE

SOMEWHAT AGREE

SOMEWHAT DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

# APPENDICES

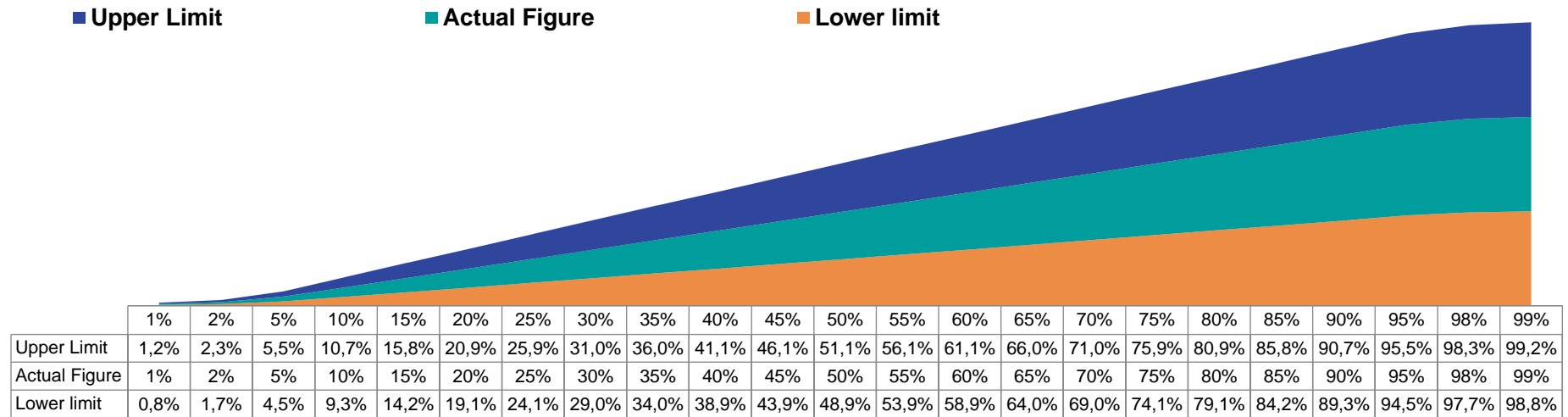




# RELIABILITY OF RESULTS

## Spreadsheet

- In this instance, with regard to this study:
  - Confidence interval: **95%**
  - Size of sample: **8001**
- The proportions observed are between :





# OUR COMMITMENT



## Professional codes, quality certification and data protection

Ipsos is a member of the following French and European professional Market Research and Opinion bodies:

- **SYNTEC** ([www.syntec-etudes.com](http://www.syntec-etudes.com)), French Union of Market Research companies
- **ESOMAR** ([www.esomar.org](http://www.esomar.org)) the European Society for Opinion and Market Research

Ipsos France is consequently committed to applying **the ICC/ESOMAR code** for opinion and market research. This code of conduct defines the ethical rules for Market Research professionals and sets out the protection offered to participants.

Ipsos France complies with the applicable laws. Ipsos has appointed a Data Protection Officer and has implemented a compliance plan to GDPR (Règlement (UE) 2016/679). For more information about the Ipsos Data Protection & Privacy Policy relative to personal data : <https://www.ipsos.com/en/privacy-data-protection>

The retention period applicable to interviewees' personal data be as follows, unless otherwise agreed with the client :

- 12 months upon Ad Hoc Study completion
- 3 years upon each wave completion of a Continuous Study.



Ipsos France has received ISO 20252: 2012 certification by **AFNOR CERTIFICATION**

- This document was drawn up in accordance with these international Codes and Quality standards. The technical elements relative to the execution of the project are described in methodological approach or survey overview in the report.



- This project was carried out in accordance with these international Codes and Quality standards

# RELIABILITY OF RESULTS :

## Self completion online surveys IIS

To ensure the overall reliability of a survey, all possible error components must be taken into account. That is why Ipsos imposes strict controls and procedures at each stage of the survey process.

### UPSTREAM OF THE DATA COLLECTION

- **Sample** : structure and representativeness
- **Questionnaire** : the questionnaire is worded by following an editing process with 12 compulsory standards. It is proofread and approved at a senior level and then sent to the client for final validation. The programming (or questionnaire script) **is tested by at least 2 people and validated.**
- **Data collection** : the interviewers are trained in survey techniques through a dedicated training module prior to any participation in a survey. In addition, they receive or attend a detailed briefing at the start of each survey.

### DURING THE DATA COLLECTION

- **Sampling** : Ipsos imposes very strict operating rules for its selection frame in order to maximize the random nature of the sample selection : random selection from telephone listings, quota method, etc.

- **Fieldwork monitoring** : collection is monitored and checked (exclusive link, IP validation, panelists' behavior monitoring penetration, interview length, consistency of responses, participation rate, number of reminders, etc.)

### DOWNSTREAM OF THE DATA COLLECTION

- The results are analyzed in accordance with the statistical analysis methods (confidence interval versus sample size, significance tests). The first results are systematically checked against the raw results from the data collection. The consistency of results is also checked (particularly the results observed versus comparison sources in our possession).
- In cases where sample weighting is used (margin calibration method), this is checked by the processing teams (DP) and then validated by the survey teams.

# ABOUT IPSOS

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Ipsos is the world's third largest market research company, present in 90 markets and employing more than 18,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP  
[www.ipsos.com](http://www.ipsos.com)

# UNESCO

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UNESCO works to promote freedom of expression online at a time when the digital ecosystem offers new opportunities but also multiplies challenges for freedom of expression.

In September 2022, UNESCO started a global multistakeholder consultation to develop guidelines for regulating digital platform to safeguard freedom of expression, access to information, and other human rights, while dealing with content that can be permissibly restricted under internal human rights law and standards.

The Guidelines outline a set of duties, responsibilities and roles for states, digital platforms, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, media, academia, the technical community and other stakeholders to achieve this goal. Read more at [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

