

DRIVERS AND IMPLICATIONS OF INFORMATION DISORDER IN LATIN AMERICA

INTERNETLAB



Introduction



The study “**Drivers and Implications of Information Disorder in Latin America**” has mapped out elements of the dynamics of online information dissemination and consumption across the region, focusing on understanding users' behaviour on digital platforms, their perceptions of the reliability of sources and information, and their perspectives on strategies to counter misinformation.

Conducted in partnership with **Rede Conhecimento Social**, this study contributes to the project “**Resisting Information Disorder in the Global South: Identifying drivers, developing responses, evaluating strategies**,” whose Latin American chapter is coordinated by InternetLab.

Methodological step-by-step

Quest/Act-ion workshops with a group of citizen researchers

Dec. 2023 - Oct. 2024

A group composed of citizens from different countries who actively participate in building the research process: from qualifying the topic and raising hypotheses to constructing and reviewing interview guides and questionnaires. After the data collection stage, the results are analysed collectively.

Workshops with the Research Council

Dec. 2023 - Nov. 2024

A group of researchers and experts from across Latin America who contribute with suggestions and guidance for the study, as well as deepen the analysis and consolidate the lessons throughout the process.

Research governance meetings (InternetLab and ReCoS)

Development of questionnaires and interview guides
Mar. 2024

Qualitative data collection
Mar - May 2024

Quantitative data collection
July 2024

Technical processing and data tabulation
August 2024

Report production
Sep. 2024 - Jul 2025

Communication and advocacy
Aug. 2025 onwards

Quantitative Sample (survey)

COLLECTION: 6,065 responses from people aged 16 or older, via online panel.
 Sample proportionally distributed across countries (listed below), with a posteriori weighting and analyses organised into five territorial groups:



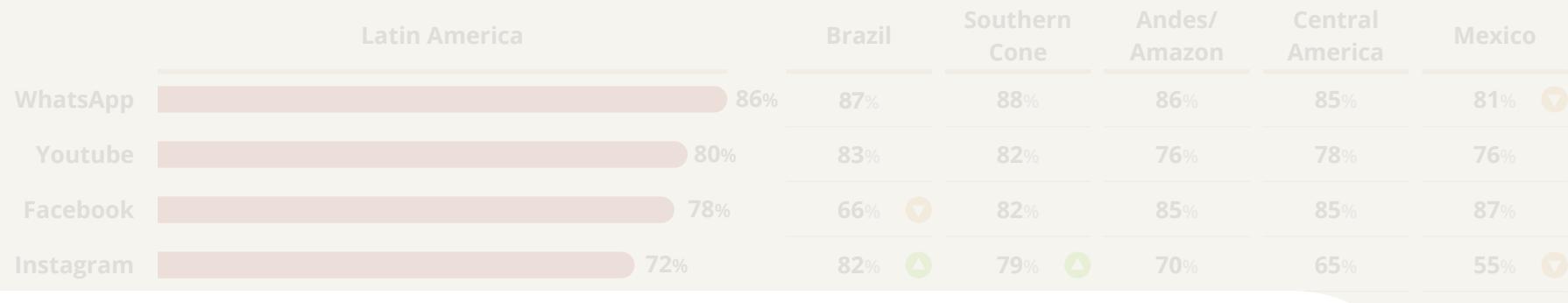
Qualitative Sample

COLLECTION: people aged 18 or older, with internet access and active use of social networks, from different backgrounds in terms of race, gender, social class, education, region of residence and political orientation Data were collected via an online platform:

Territorial grouping	Discussion groups	In-depth interviews
Brazil	Brazil	-
Southern Cone	Chile	Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay
Andes/Amazon	Peru	Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela
Central America	Costa Rica, Dominican Republic	El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico
Mexico	Mexico	-
Total	6 discussion groups (5 - 6 people each).	13 in-depth interviews

Use of platforms in Latin America

Platforms used in the last 2 months

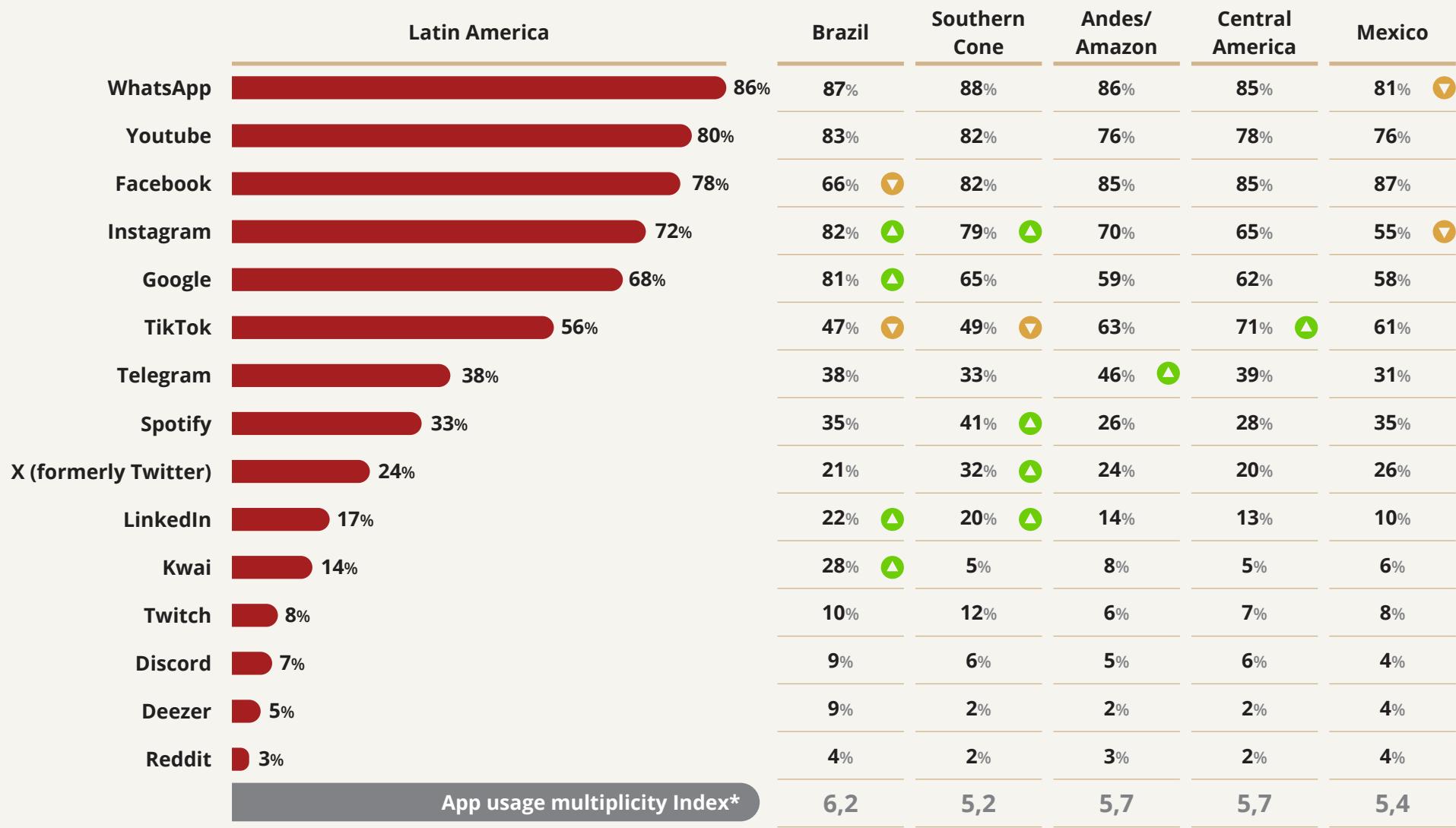


In Latin America, Meta's platforms are the most widely used, particularly WhatsApp, followed by those of Google. Brazil and the Southern Cone stand out for their higher usage of YouTube, while Central America stands out for TikTok.



*The Multiplicity Index refers to the average number of platforms used by respondents. Q: In the past two months, if you think about digital platforms, which of these networks or platforms have you used? (MR) No limit on answers. Total base: 6,065

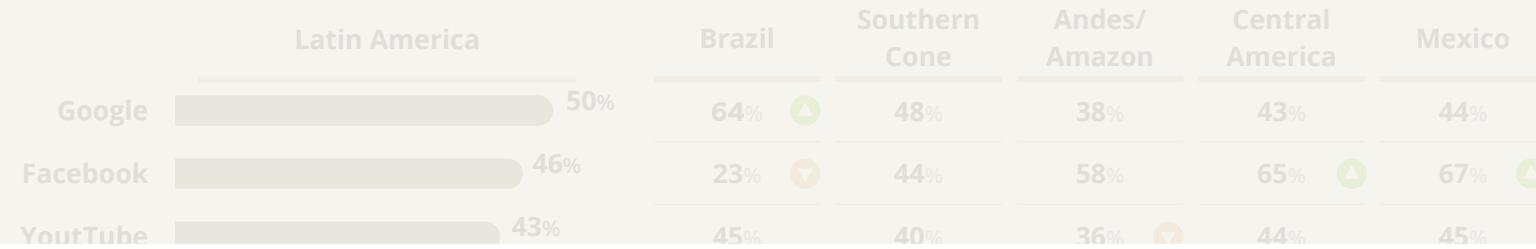
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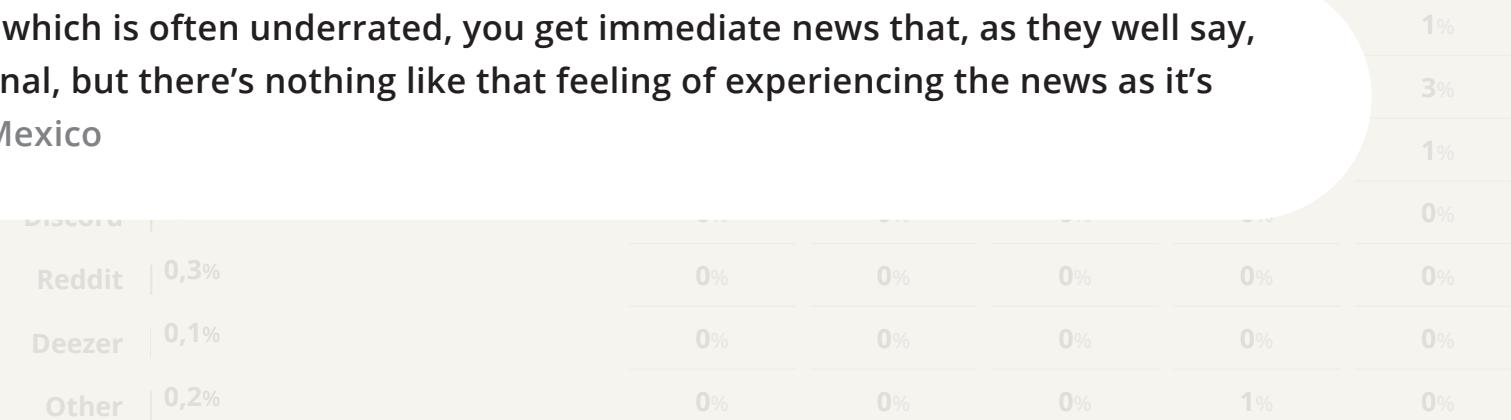
Searching for information on platforms

Platforms used to obtain information or search for news

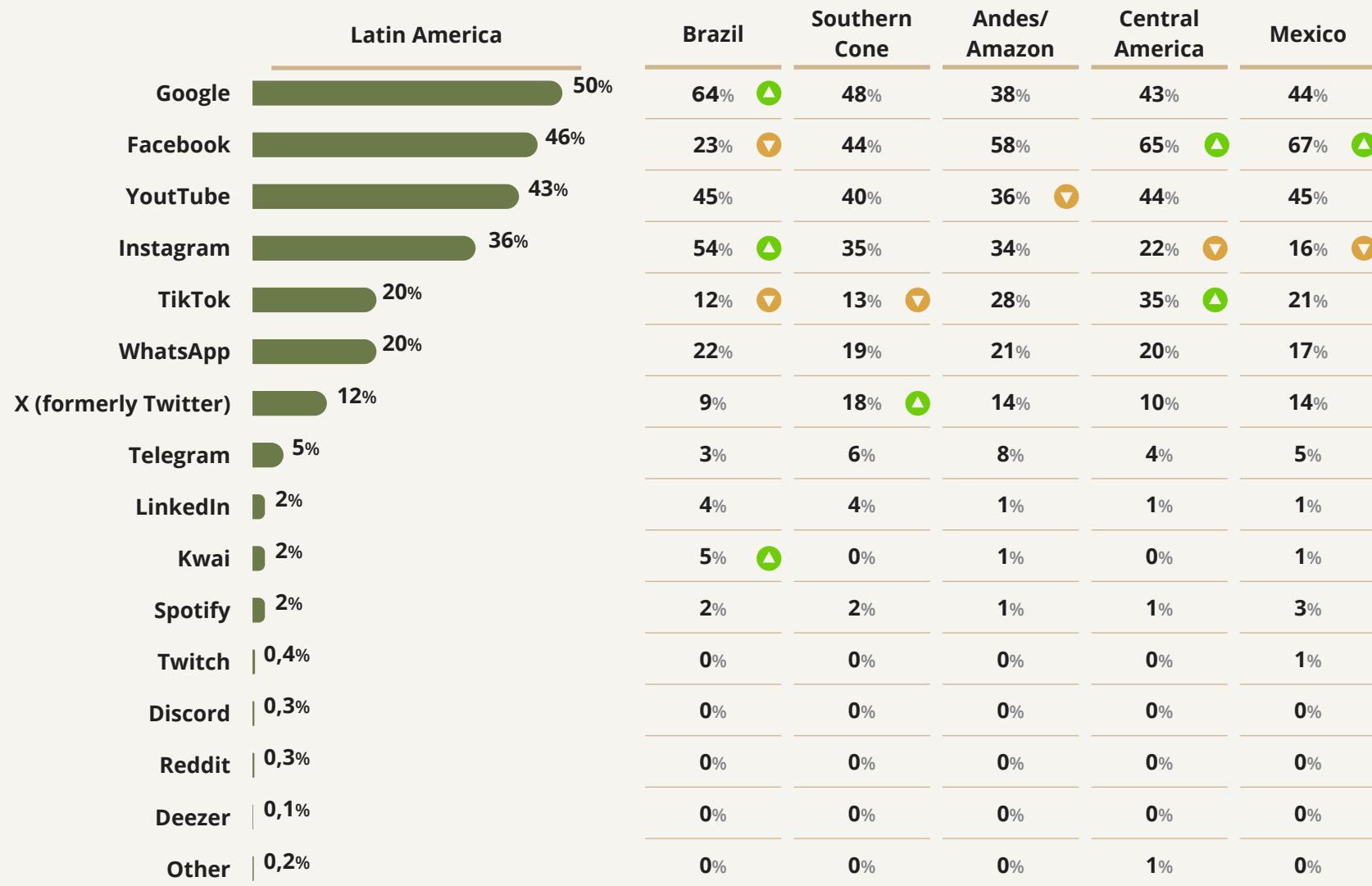


In Latin America, the platforms most used for news consumption differ significantly across territorial groupings, with Google and Instagram predominating in Brazil, while the Andean/Amazon America, Central America and Mexico stand out for the prevalence of Facebook. In Central America, TikTok also stands out as a relevant source for news consumption.

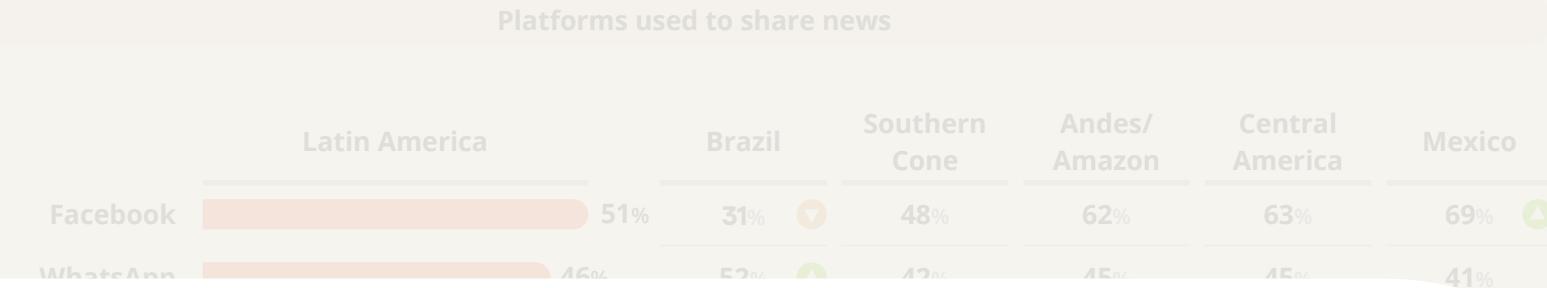
“ Sometimes on TikTok, which is often underrated, you get immediate news that, as they well say, might not be professional, but there's nothing like that feeling of experiencing the news as it's happening.” Man, 46, Mexico



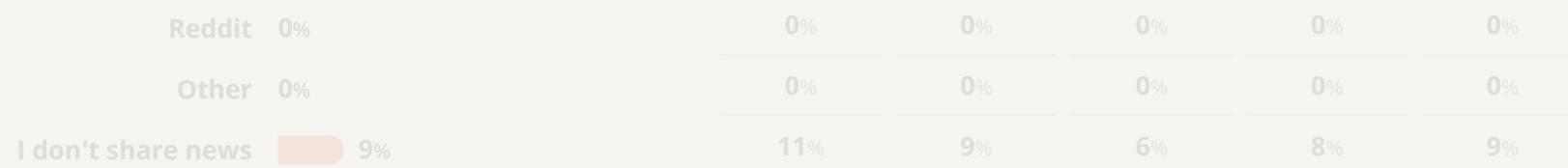
Platforms used to obtain information or search for news



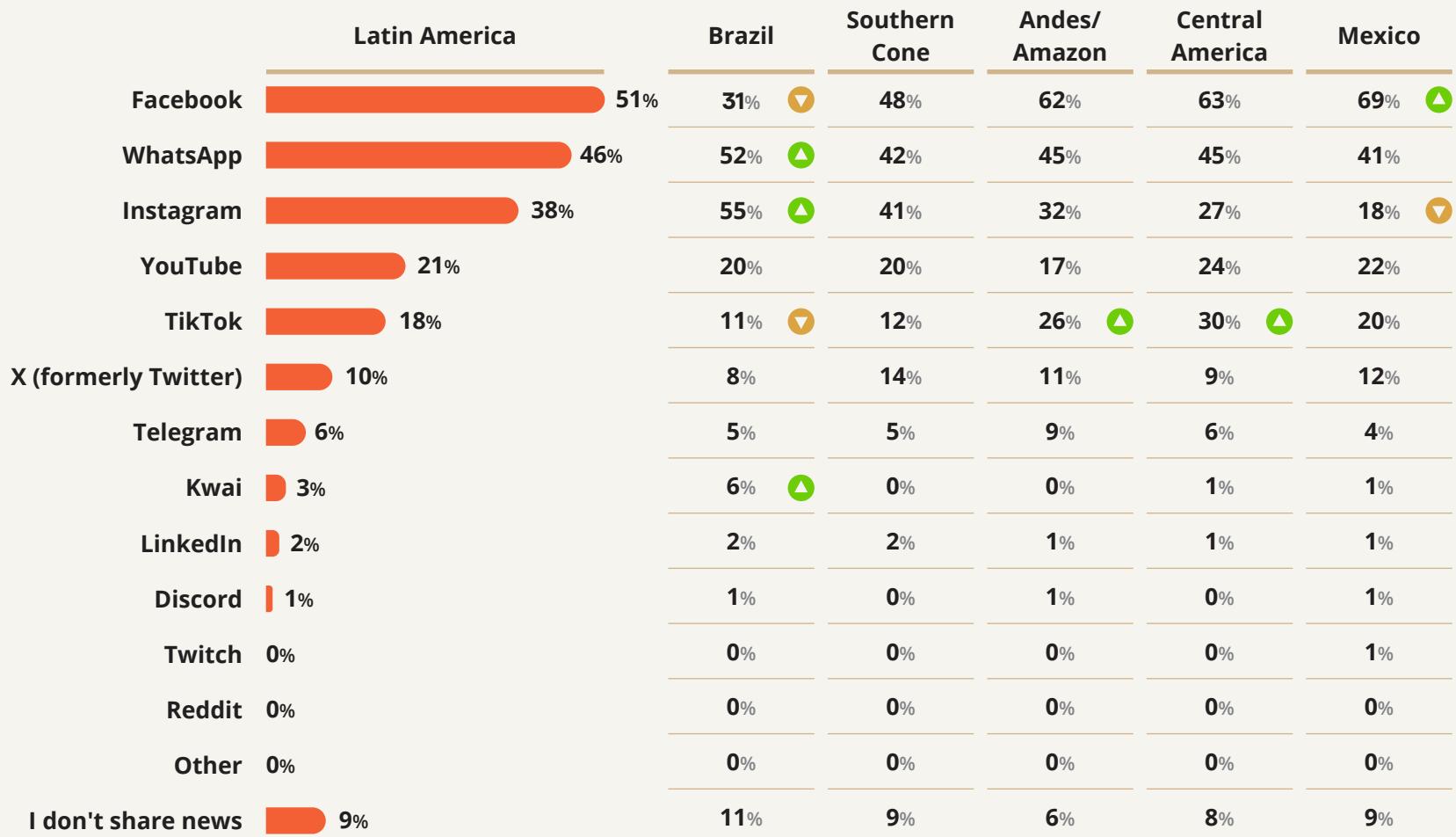
Sharing information on platforms



The circulation of content across platforms is reflected in different usage patterns when it comes to sharing (rather than consuming) information. Facebook appears as the platform where people most often report sharing news in Latin America, with notably lower usage in Brazil, where the rate is half that of Mexico, Central America, and the Andes/Amazon region. In Brazil, the use of WhatsApp and Instagram stands out, while in Central America and the Andean/Amazon region, TikTok shows higher usage for news sharing than in other territorial groupings.

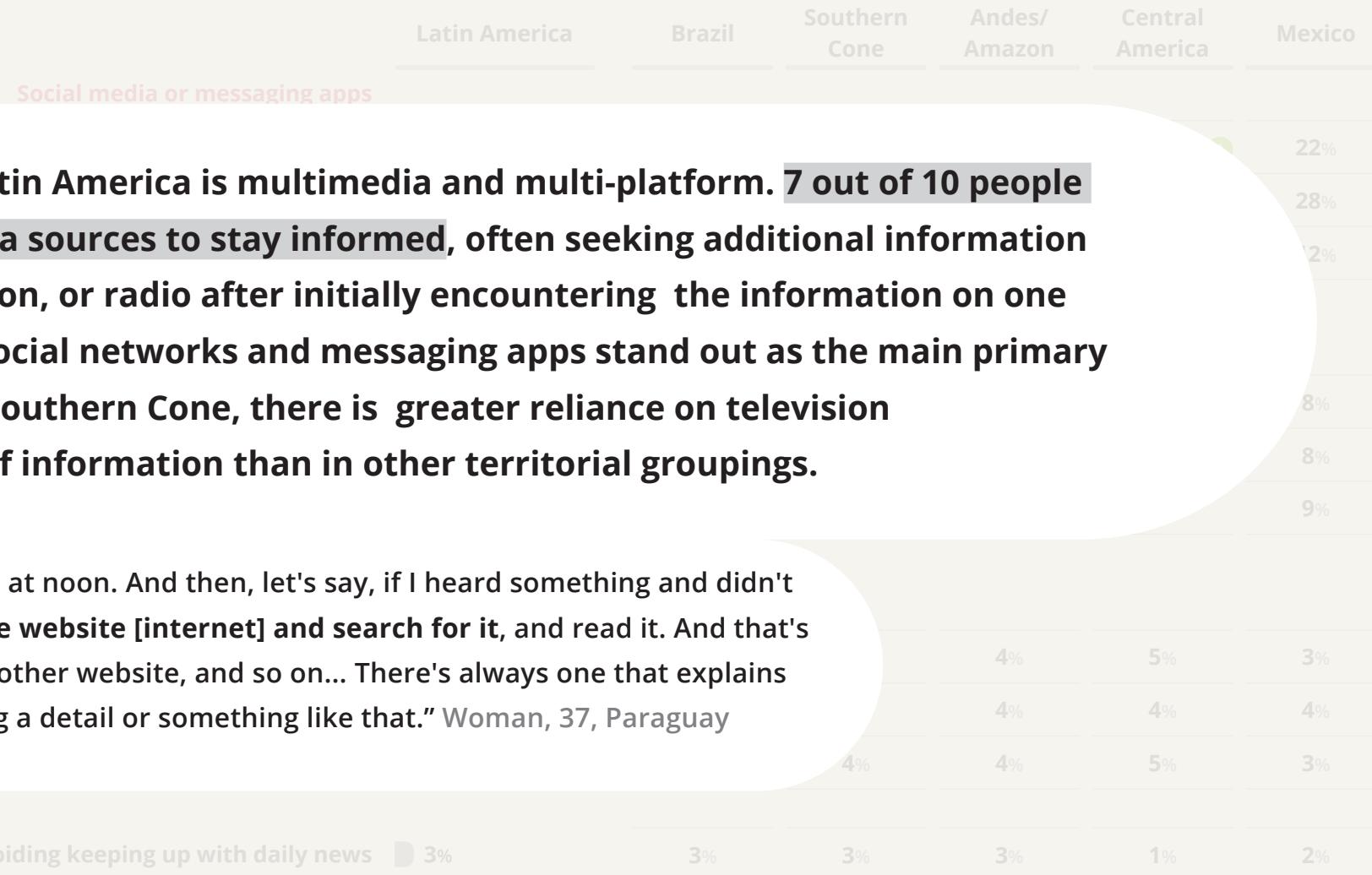


Platforms used to share news

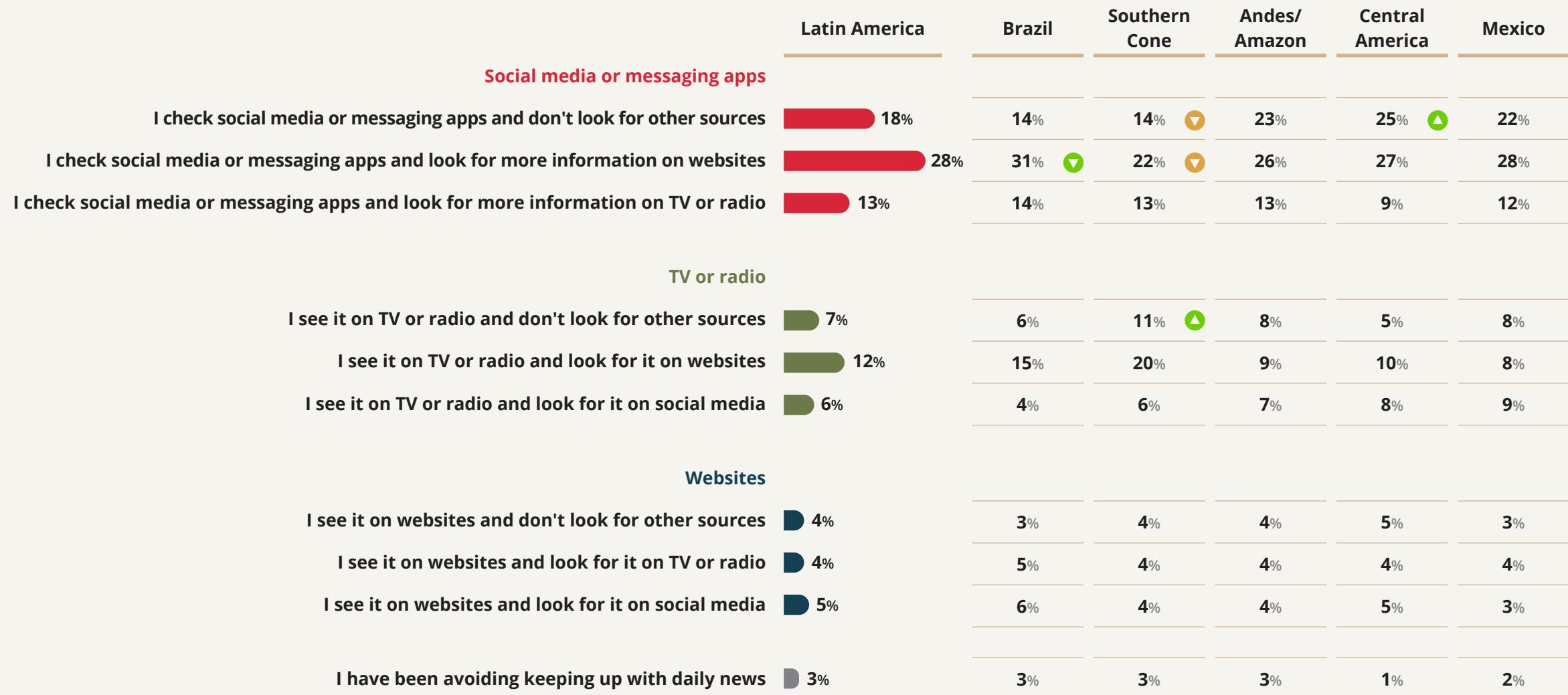


Information consumption dynamics

How they get their daily news



How they get their daily news



Views on the coverage of relevant topics in the media

Perception of fake news or misinformation circulating on all media platforms

Latin America

Brazil

Southern
Cono

Andes/
Andean

Central
America

Mexico

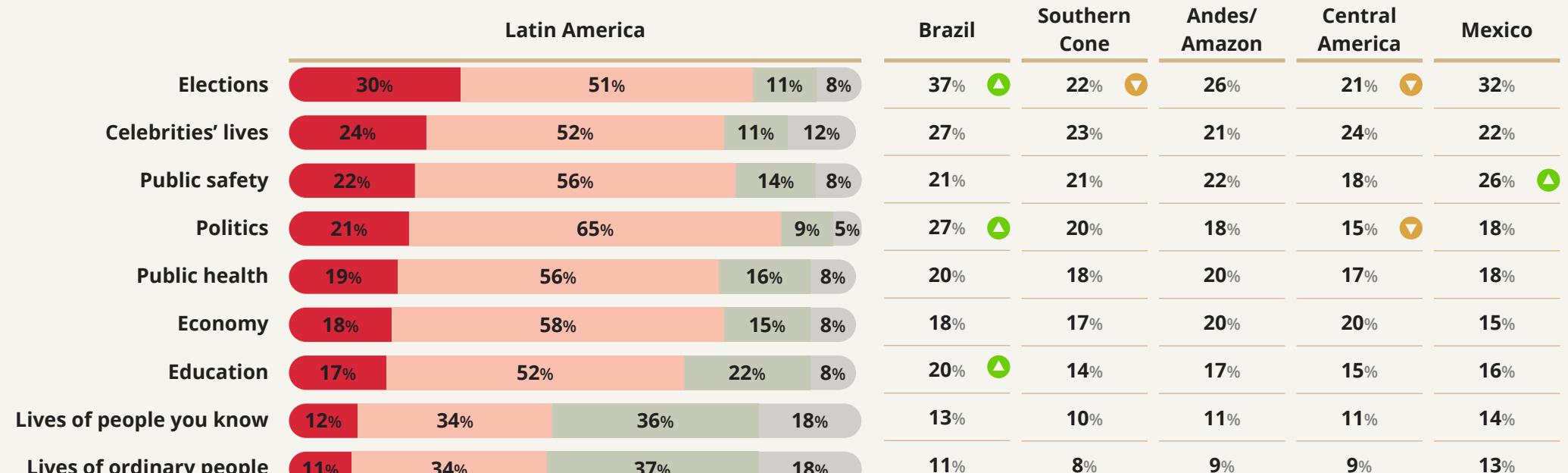
There is a widespread distrust of information circulating across all media. More than half of respondents say that all or most of the news circulating on a wide range of topics is false. This scenario only changes when the information concerns the lives of ordinary or well-known people, whose proximity generates greater trust. In Brazil, electoral topics stand out, with a stronger perception that all or almost all of the information circulating is misinformation.

“I think that [public safety] is such a tainted issue today, with drug trafficking and insecurity, with the issue of politicians and the money that moves around during that, and the powerful groups that are mixed up and connected, that I find it very difficult today to discern between what is real news and what is fake news on a news website or something like that.” Man, 40, Argentina

16%	11%	11%	14%
9%	9%	13%	

ing or almost everything

Perception of fake news or misinformation circulating on all media platforms



● Everything or almost everything ● Quite a lot

● Nothing or almost nothing ● I don't know

% everything or almost everything

Views on the coverage of relevant topics in the media

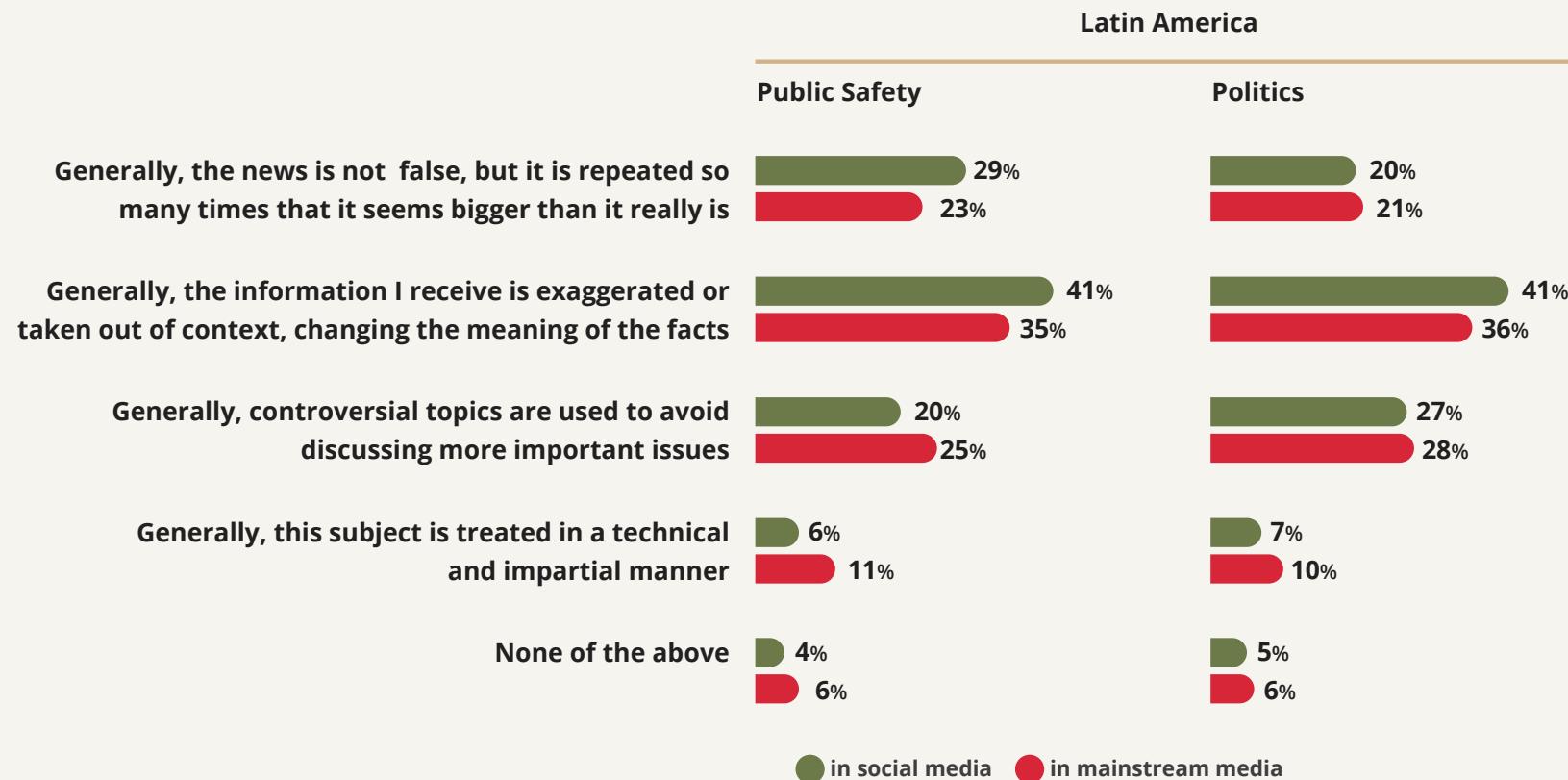
Perception of how the media covers:

Latin America

Far beyond the binary of truth or falsehood, the mistrust expressed by respondents stems from the perception that there are distortions in how information circulates in various forms. Regarding public safety, across Latin America, the majority say that the information they receive is exaggerated, taken out of context, or repeated so many times that it alters the meaning or weight of the facts. This perception is stronger on social media than in the traditional media. When it comes to politics, there is a growing perception of smoke screens being used in both traditional and social media.



Perception of how the media covers:



Perception of how the media covers:

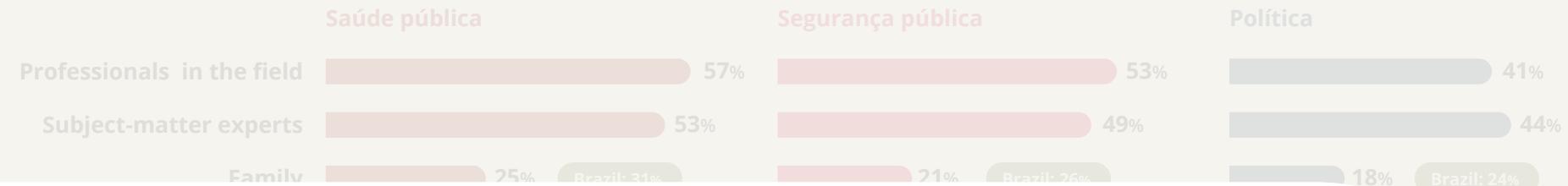
“ Last November [2023], there were some riots here, protests over a contract that was signed for mining here in Panama. And this channel I'm talking about specifically was spreading misinformation about the events that were taking place in the city. It was very media-oriented, as if to encourage more people to take to the streets when in reality the problem wasn't that big. But their reporting was exaggerated...” Woman, 28, Panama.

“ Basically, what happens in this country is that private networks and television stations tend to exaggerate the news a little. Public stations provide more concise information.” Man, 49, Colombia

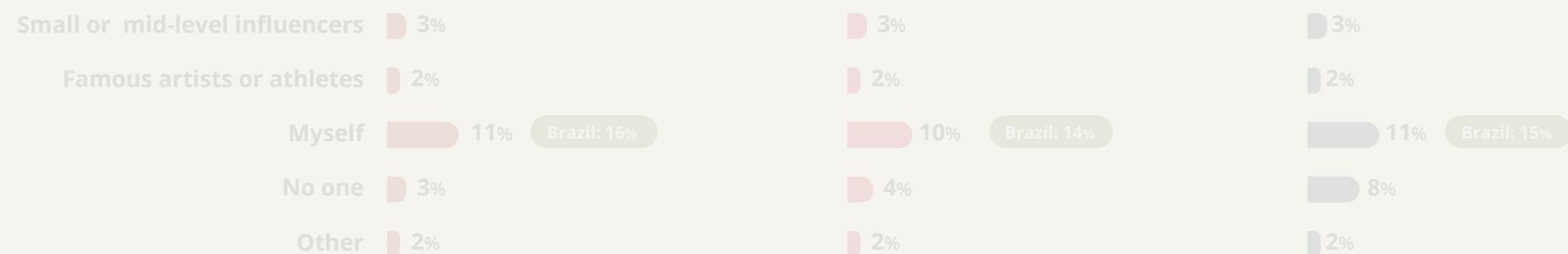


Reliable references for different subjects

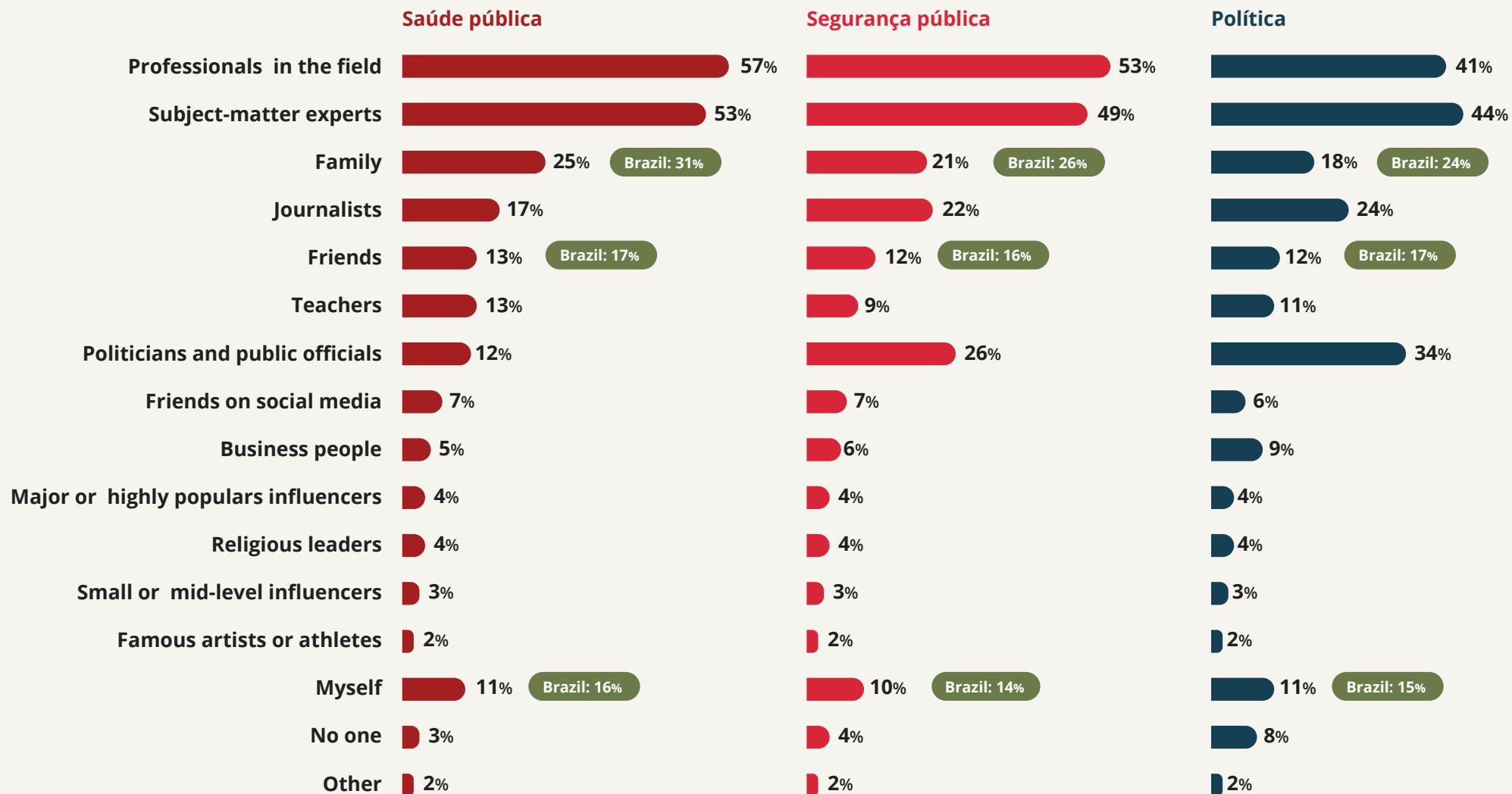
Most reliable people to speak about:



In general, professionals and specialists are perceived as the most reliable voices when discussing Public Safety, Politics, and Public Health. Brazil stands out for showing higher levels of trust in people who are close, such as family and friends. It is also noteworthy that many people value their own judgment on those matters: around 1 out of 10 consider themselves a reliable source of information, a rate significantly higher in Brazil, about 1.5 in 10 identify themselves as a trustworthy source.



Most reliable people to speak about:



Information consumption habits

that differ from those in traditional media.

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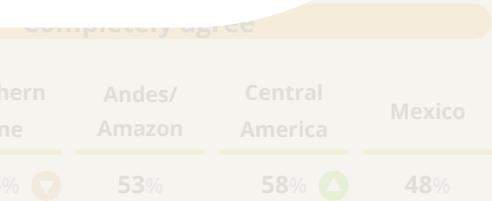
9%

On platforms and social networks, I can verify for myself whether a new story is true

I prefer getting my news from platforms and social networks because it arrives faster

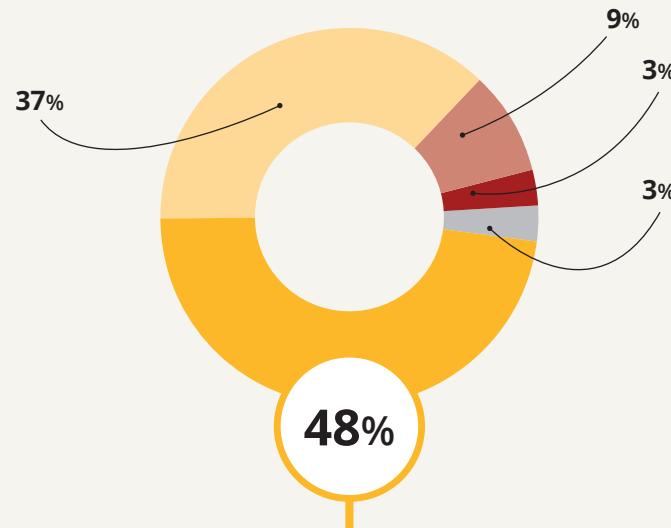
Users see speed, autonomy, and access to alternative perspectives as key factors driving their preference for consuming information on online platforms. 5 out of 10 people in Latin America say they prefer to get their information from online platforms, as they believe that news reaches them faster through these channels. Alongside this sense of speed comes the perception of greater autonomy in searching for and consuming information, with 7 out of 10 respondents agreeing totally fully or partially, that platforms are tools that allow them to verify the accuracy of news stories. Through these platforms, 8 out of 10 say they can access opinions not represented in traditional media

“Traditional media [TV/radio] merely provide you with feedback on the information they are giving you, but you cannot react immediately to what they are saying. The advantage of social media is that as soon as you receive something, you can react to the information you are receiving” Men, 61, Puerto Rico

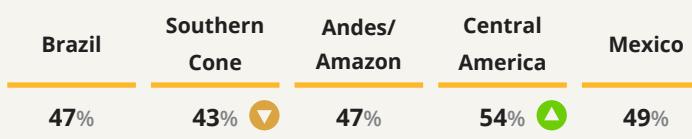


Completely agree Partially agree Partially disagree Completely disagree I don't know

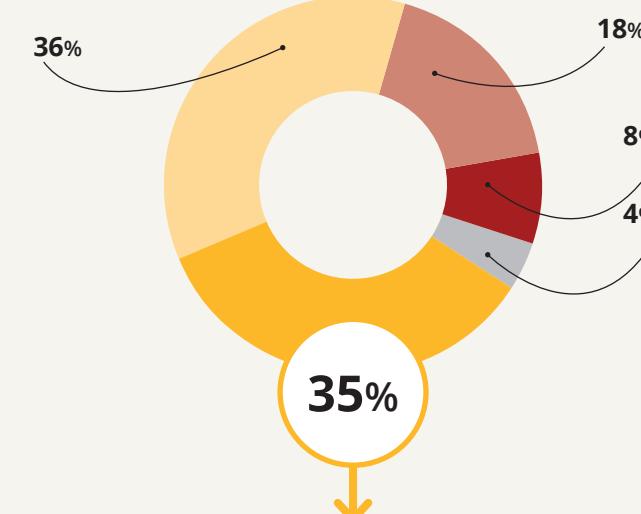
On platforms and social networks, I find opinions that differ from those in traditional media.



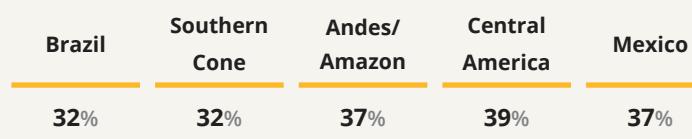
Completely agree



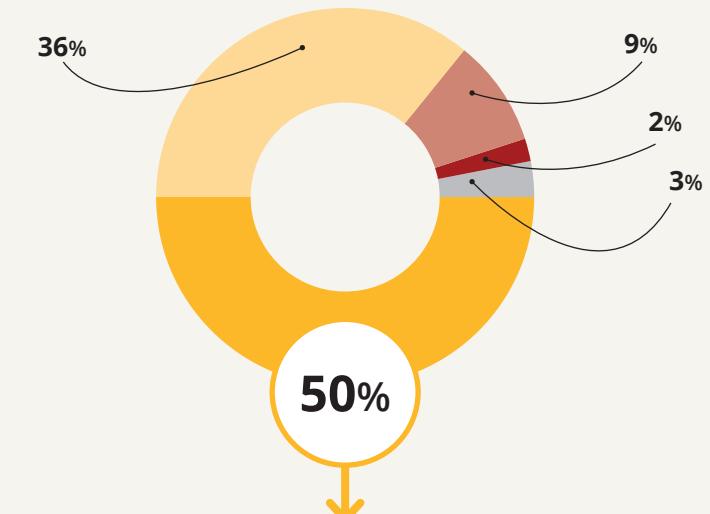
On platforms and social networks, I can verify for myself whether a new story is true



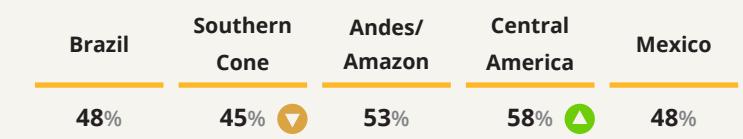
Completely agree



I prefer getting my news from platforms and social networks because it arrives faster

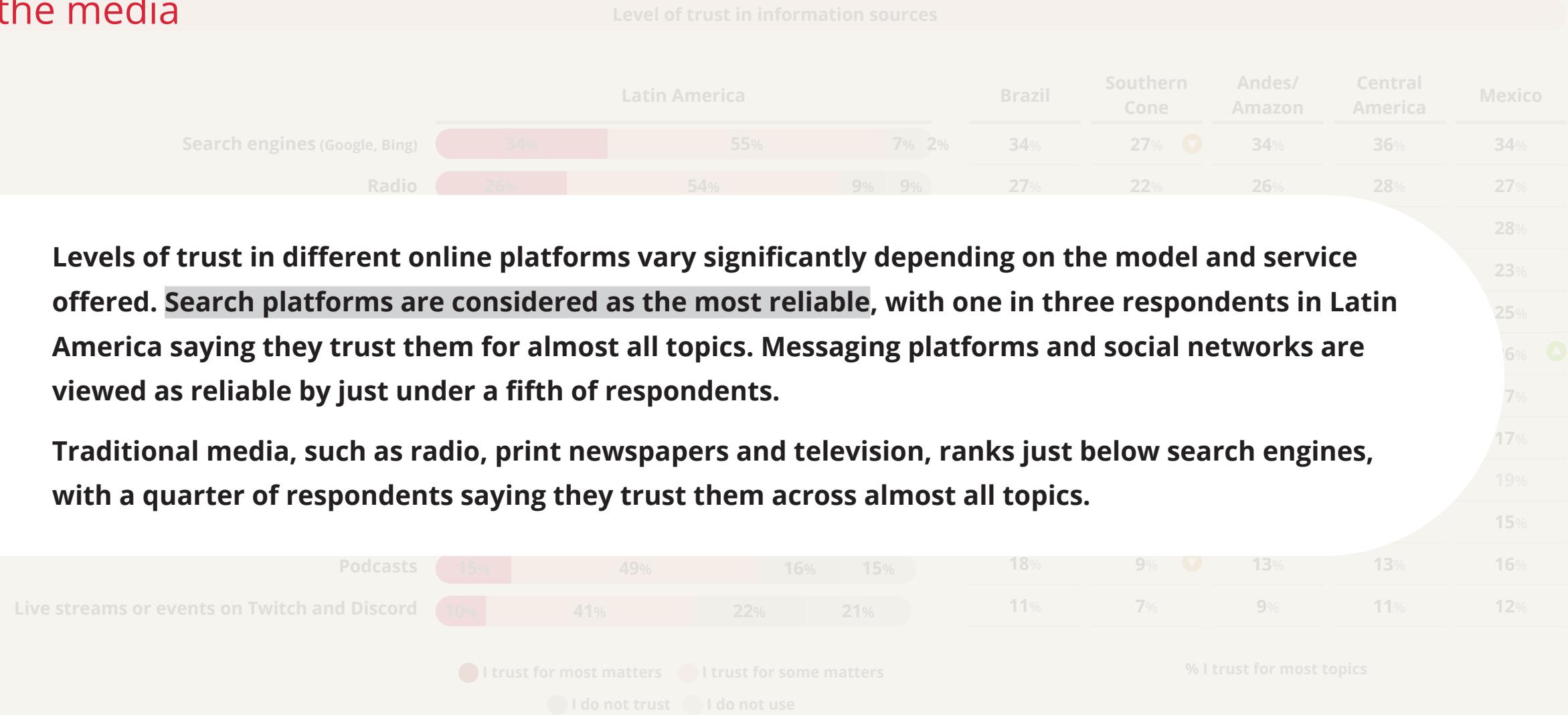


Completely agree

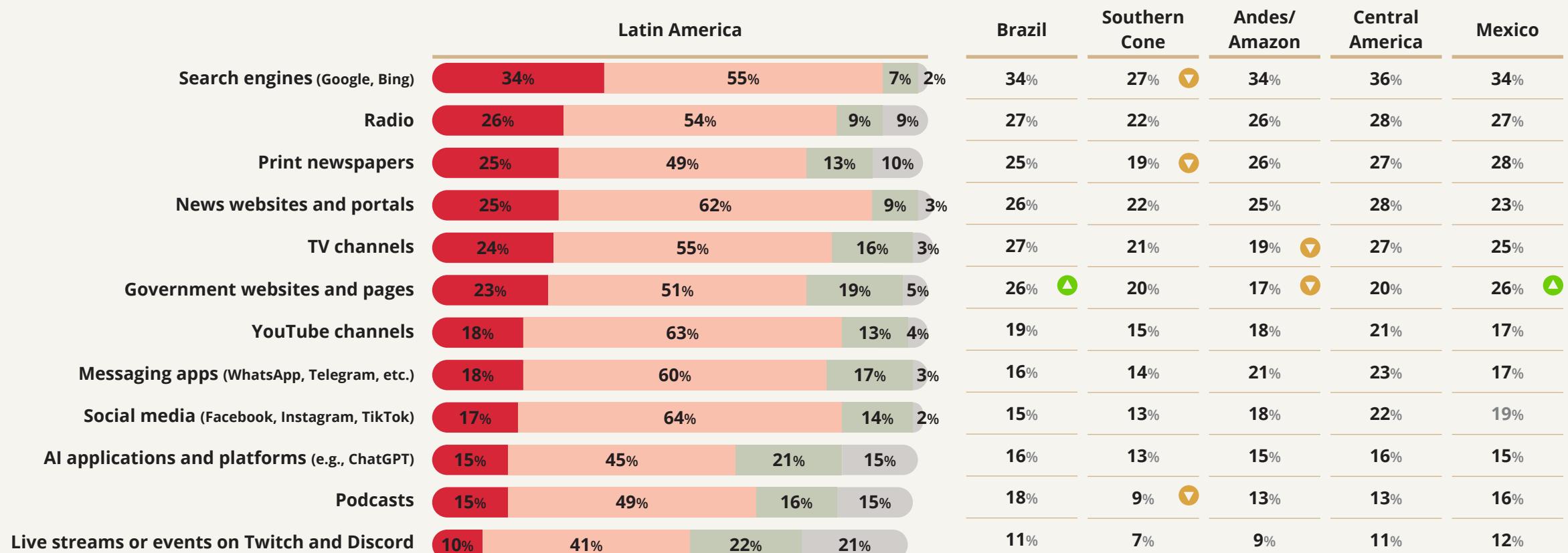


Completely agree Partially agree Partially disagree Completely disagree I don't know

Trust in the media



Level of trust in information sources



● I trust for most matters ● I trust for some matters

● I do not trust ● I do not use

% I trust for most topics

Trust in the media

Level of trust in information sources

Latin America

Brazil

Southern Cone

Andes/Amazon

Central America

Mexico

34%	36%	34%	28%	27%
19%	27%	25%	27%	28%
20%	17%	20%	26%	25%
15%	18%	21%	21%	17%
14%	21%	23%	17%	17%
13%	18%	22%	19%	19%
16%	13%	15%	16%	15%
18%	9%	13%	13%	16%
11%	7%	9%	11%	12%

Although a significant proportion of respondents mention traditional media (such as television and radio) as more trustworthy, some express greater trust in digital media, which they see as sources that provide information not covered by traditional outlets.

“Traditional media, I can tell you, includes newspapers, magazines, news programmes, television. [...] For me, traditional media, such as written information, carries more weight in terms of the veracity of what is being said” Man, 61, Puerto Rico.

“In fact, at this moment, through [digital] platforms, we are able to access true information, which is often not provided by the news programmes.”
Woman, 52, Costa Rica

● I trust for most matters
● I trust for some matters
● I do not trust
● I do not use

% I trust for most topics

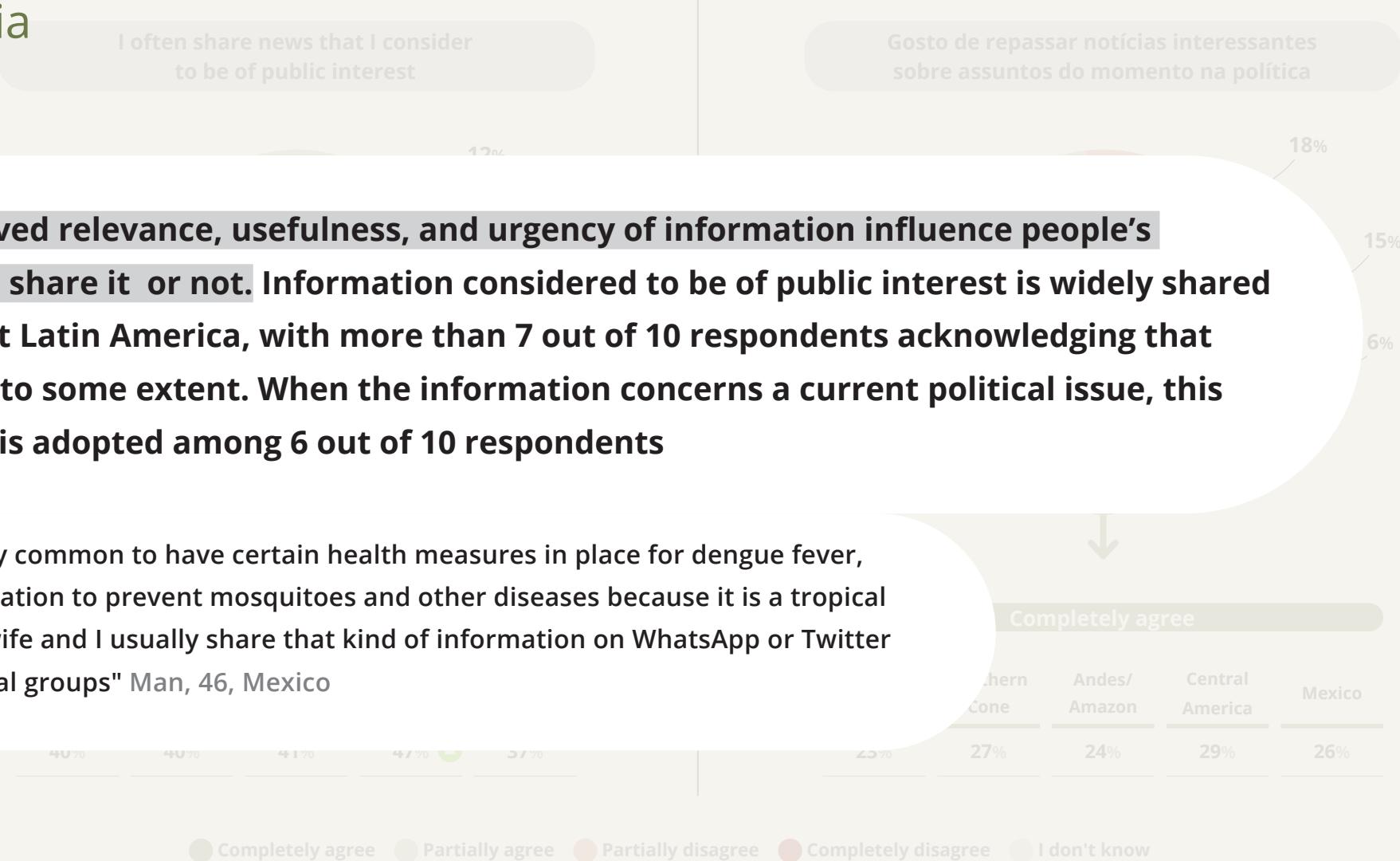
Behaviour on social media

I often share news that I consider to be of public interest

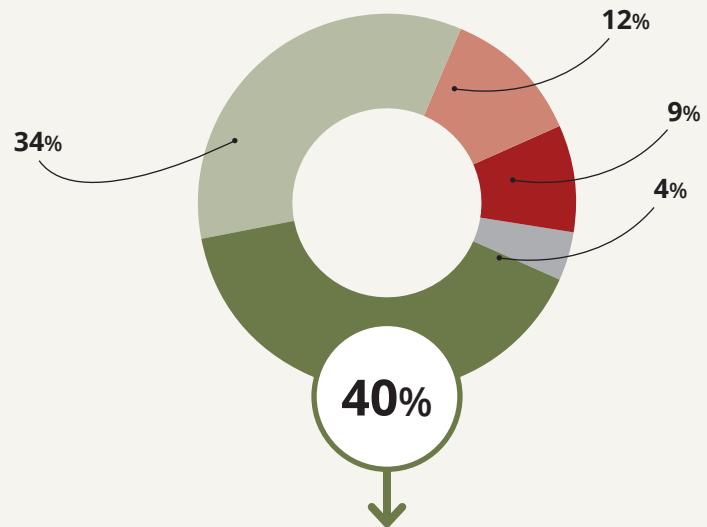
Gosto de repassar notícias interessantes sobre assuntos do momento na política

The perceived relevance, usefulness, and urgency of information influence people's decision to share it or not. Information considered to be of public interest is widely shared throughout Latin America, with more than 7 out of 10 respondents acknowledging that they do so to some extent. When the information concerns a current political issue, this behaviour is adopted among 6 out of 10 respondents

“ Here, it is very common to have certain health measures in place for dengue fever, such as fumigation to prevent mosquitoes and other diseases because it is a tropical area. So my wife and I usually share that kind of information on WhatsApp or Twitter in specific local groups" Man, 46, Mexico



I often share news that I consider to be of public interest

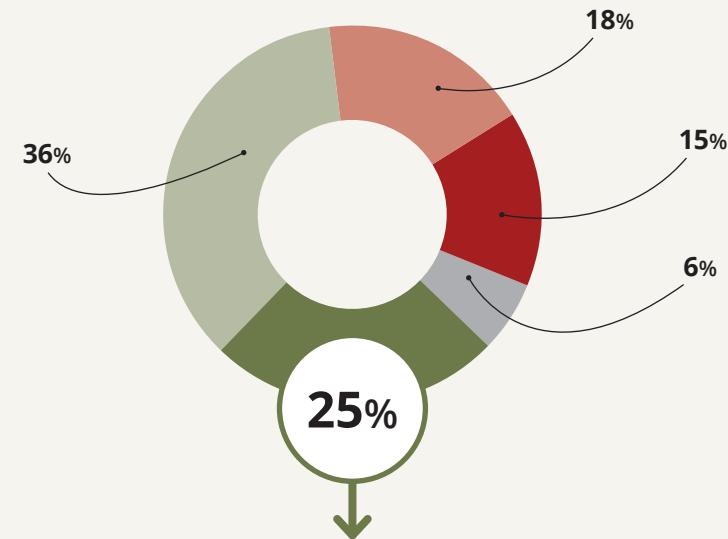


Completely agree

Region	Percentage
Brazil	40%
Southern Cone	40%
Andes/Amazon	41%
Central America	47% 
Mexico	37%

 Completely agree  Partially agree  Partially disagree  Completely disagree  I don't know

I like to share interesting news about current political issues



Completely agree

Region	Percentage
Brazil	23%
Southern Cone	27%
Andes/Amazon	24%
Central America	29%
Mexico	26%

Verification strategies

Helping to verify news or posts that are publicly labelled by platforms as fake or manipulated news

I often look at comments on posts as a way to check the veracity of published information

The platforms' mechanisms for alerting users to fake or manipulated news are effective

6%
3%

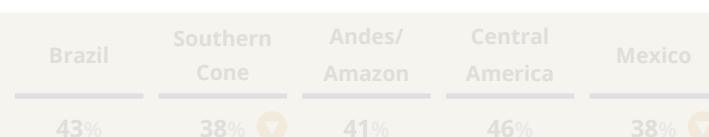
11%

21%

9%

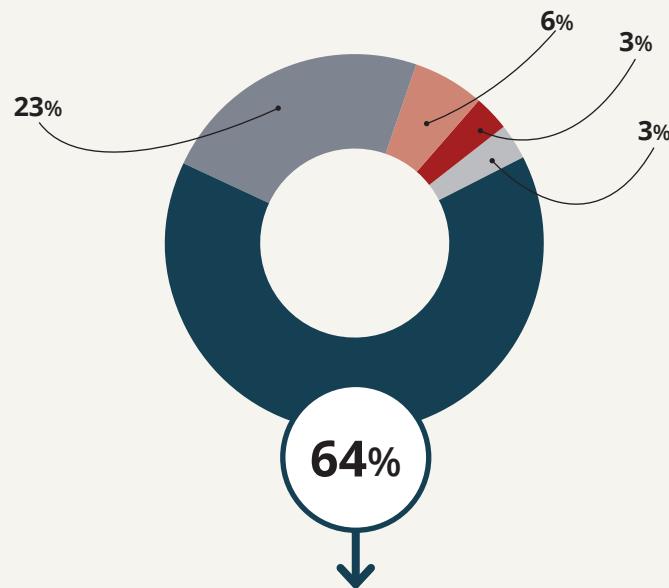
11%

Users value easy access to information that allows them to verify the accuracy of content directly within its context. The presence of verification labels prevents people from sharing dis/misinformation, with almost two-thirds of respondents stating that they do not share content that has been labelled as false by platforms. In addition to labels, comments on a publication are also used as a verification mechanism, a behaviour at least partially adopted by 8 out of 10 respondents. It is noteworthy that the value placed on verification labels is not directly reflected in the perception of their effectiveness, which is partly explained by their presence, still considered insufficient.



 Completely agree  Partially agree  Partially disagree  Completely disagree  I don't know

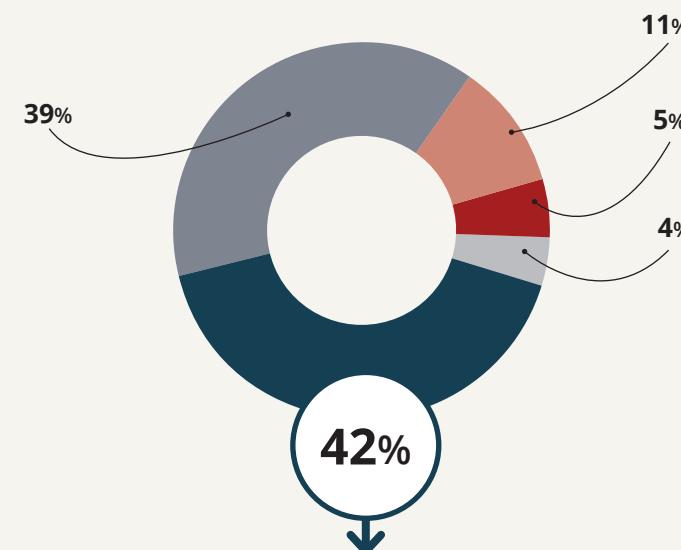
I do not share news or posts that are publicly labelled by platforms as fake or manipulated news



Completely agree

Brazil	Southern Cone	Andes/Amazon	Central America	Mexico
70%	60%	60%	65%	58%

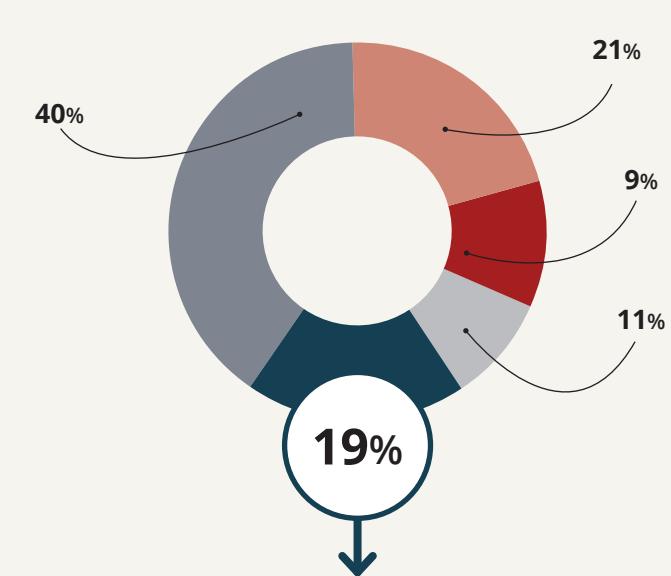
I often look at comments on posts as a way to check the veracity of published information



Completely agree

Brazil	Southern Cone	Andes/Amazon	Central America	Mexico
43%	38%	41%	46%	38%

The platforms' mechanisms for alerting users to fake or manipulated news are effective

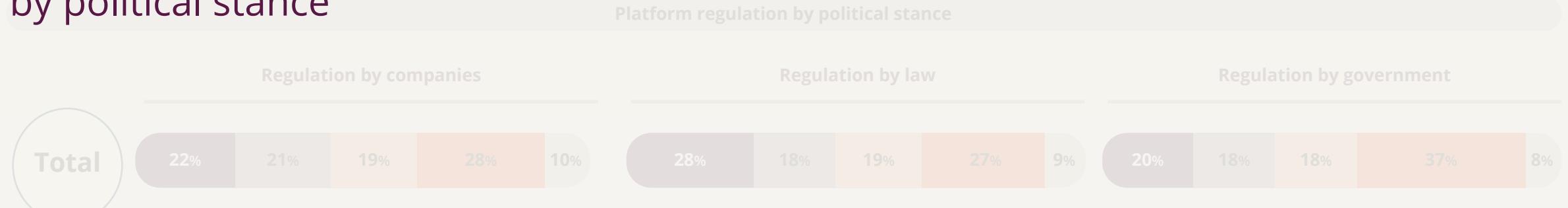


Completely agree

Brazil	Southern Cone	Andes/Amazon	Central America	Mexico
19%	15%	18%	21%	21%

● Completely agree ● Partially agree ● Partially disagree ● Completely disagree ● I don't know

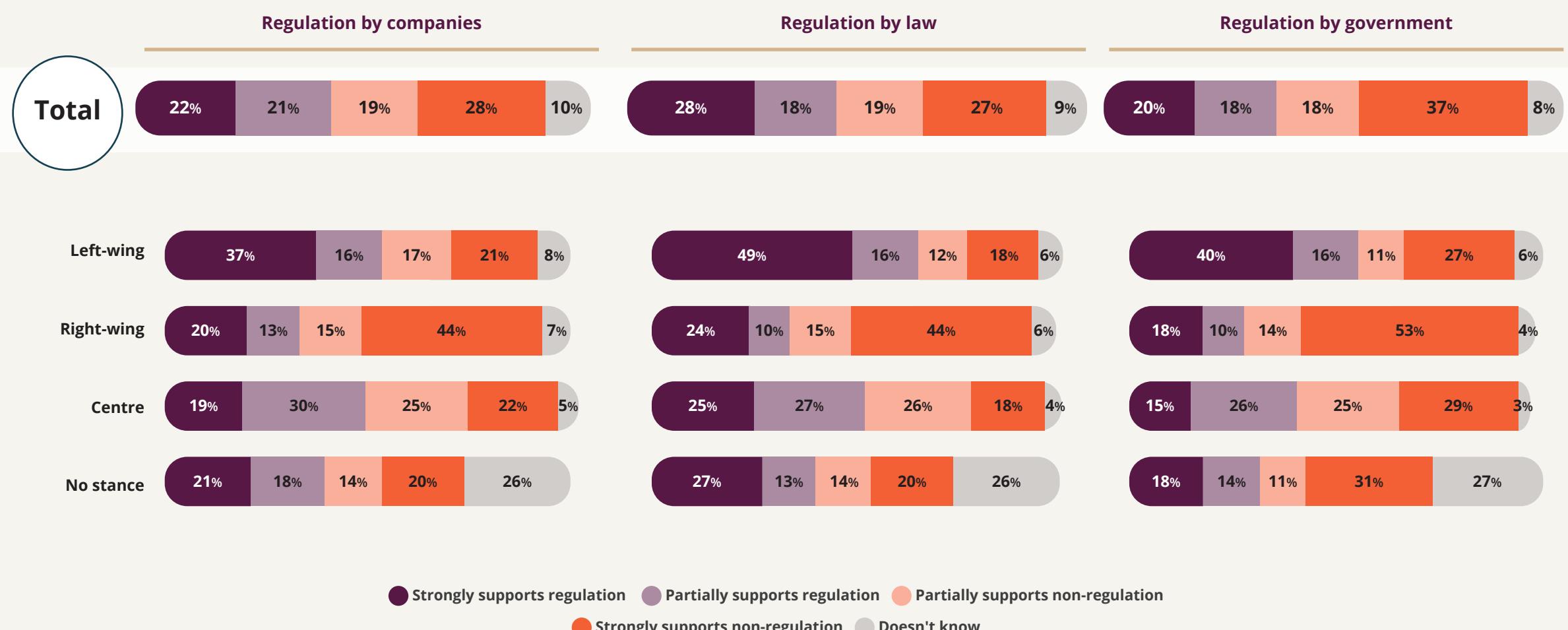
Platform regulation by political stance



Pessoas que Four out of ten people in Latin America are in favour of some form of platform regulation, an issue that shows significant differences across political positions. People who identify as left-wing are more supportive of all types of regulation than any other group, especially regulation by law. By contrast, most right-leaning respondents favour non-regulation in all scenarios, especially rejecting government regulation. About half of those in the political centre support some form of regulation, mainly by law or by companies, but rejection increases when government-led regulation is considered.

● Strongly supports regulation
 ● Partially supports regulation
 ● Partially supports non-regulation
● Strongly supports non-regulation
 ● Doesn't know

Platform regulation by political stance



Thinking about your position on social media regulation, where would you place yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning total support for social media regulation by law, and 10 meaning total support for non-regulation of social media by law? (UR) Total base: 6,065

Thinking about your political views, where would you place yourself on a scale from left to right, with 1 meaning completely left-wing, and 10 meaning completely right-wing? (UR) Left-wing base: 784 | Centre base: 2,230 | Right-wing base: 1,925 | Don't know base: 1126

How to cite this report:

INTERNETLAB; REDE CONHECIMENTO SOCIAL.
Vectors and implications of informational disorder
in Latin America. 2025. São Paulo, 2025.

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Support:

This research was undertaken with the support
of the International Development Research
Centre, Ottawa, Canada. The views expressed
herein do not necessarily represent the views
of the IDRC or its representatives.

