



Improving Trust in Local News With Younger News Consumers

June 2025

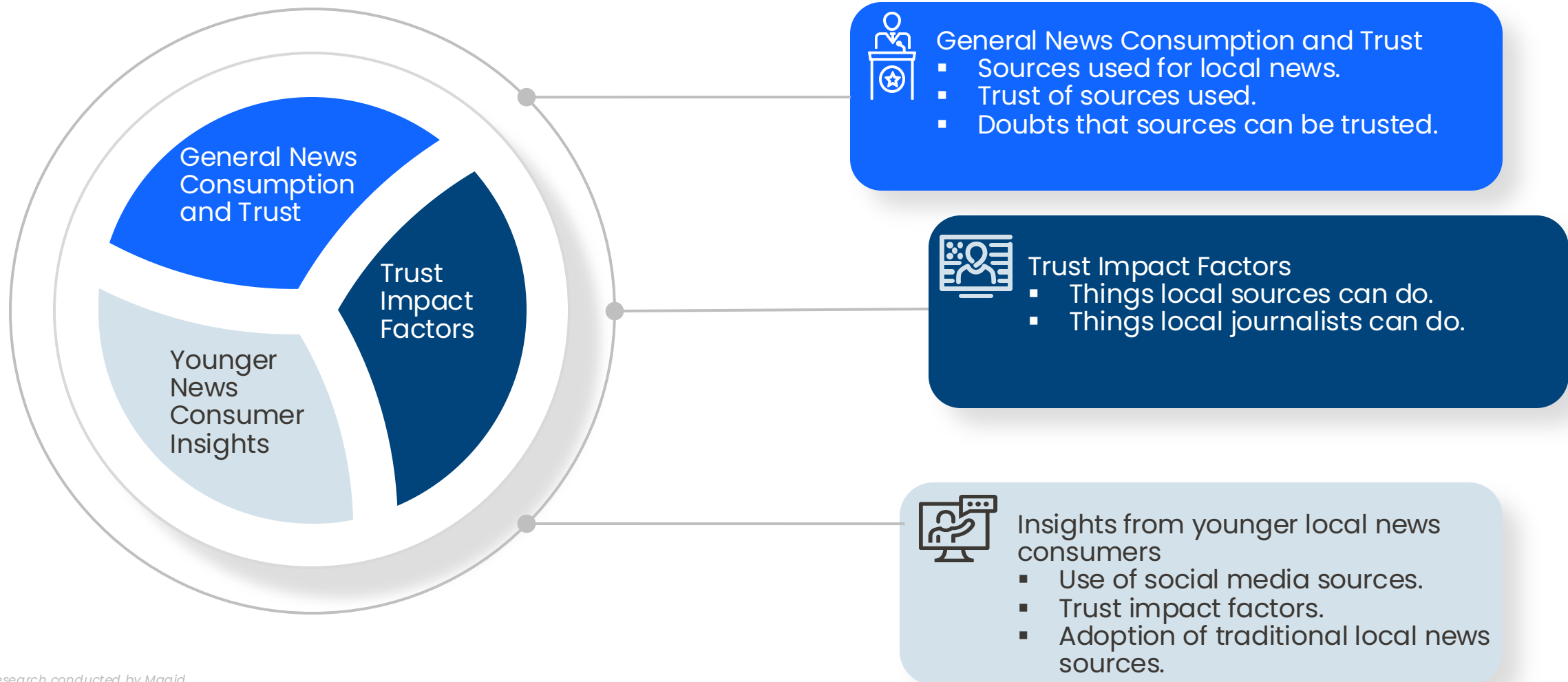
Magid

**COURAGEOUS
THINKING**

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Objectives and goals

Primary goals of research: Identify trust impact factors, especially among younger local news consumers.



Quantitative Research Methodology



Online interviews were conducted with a national sample of 2,000 adults 18–64 years old. An oversample of consumers 18–34 years old brought the total sample to 2,375.



Respondents were contacted randomly and qualified for the sample if they consume LOCAL news on any of 14 sources at least once a week. Throughout the analysis, respondents are also categorized as either:

- Frequent news consumers: Those who consume local news once a day or multiple times a day.
- Casual news consumers: Those who consume local news once a week or several times a week, but not daily.



Interviews were conducted in April 2025. Average survey length: 20 minutes.

Quantitative Sample – General Population



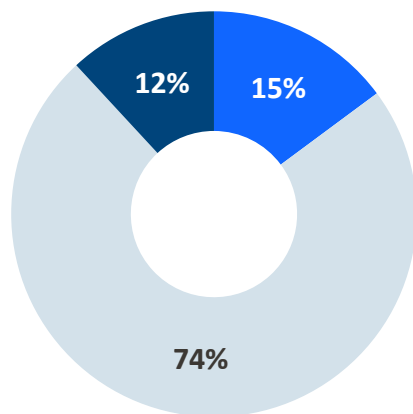
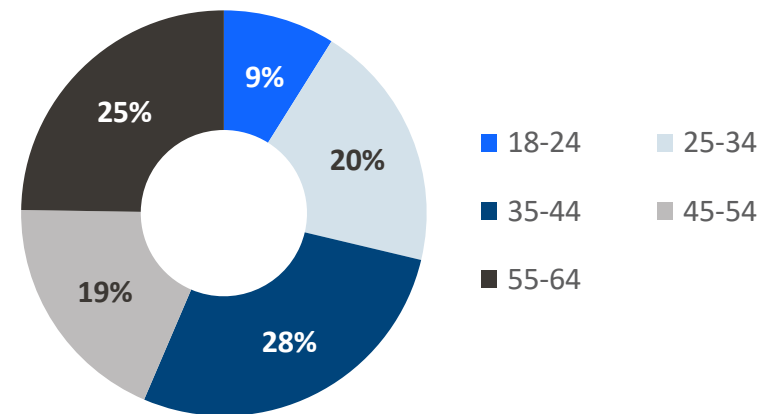
50%
Female



49%
Male

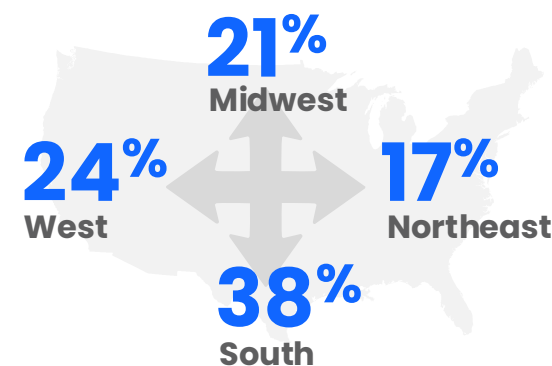


1%
Non-binary



■ African American
■ White
■ Other / DK / NA

19% identified as being of Hispanic or Latino origin.



Quantitative Sample – General Population + 18–34 Oversample



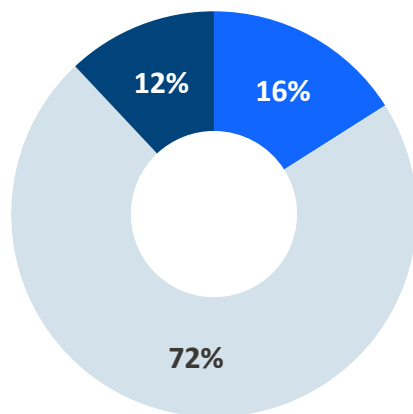
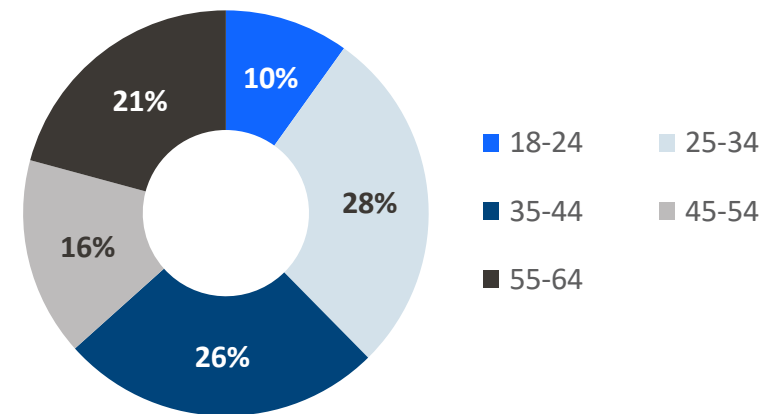
47%
Female



52%
Male

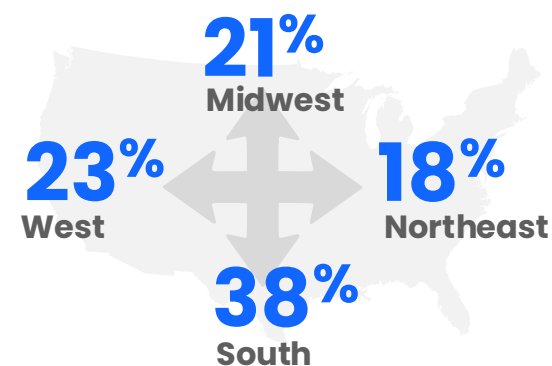


1%
Non-binary



■ African American
■ White
■ Other / DK / NA

*19% identified as being of
Hispanic or Latino origin.*



Qualitative Research Methodology



Online interviews/activities were conducted with 27 local news consumers 18–34 years old.



Respondents were contacted randomly and qualified for the sample if they consume LOCAL news on any source at least once a week.



The research was conducted in May 2025.

Executive Summary of Findings

1

Younger News Consumers Are More Skeptical They Can Trust

Local news consumers 18-34 years old are more likely than older consumers to question whether they can trust local news. While they evaluate traditional platforms like local TV and local radio well; they do so at lower levels than older consumers.

Younger consumers use eight digital and social sources at levels significantly higher than older news consumers. But only 35% give these eight sources – on average – a strong trust evaluation.

Local news sources and journalists will need to target digital and social platforms for trust building.

2

Competition With Influencers & Content Creators For Trust

Younger news consumers believe content creators, influencers, and podcasters can be considered journalists, depending on how they gather and verify their information.

The data shows only moderate agreement that sources and platforms from traditional news outlets are automatically more trusted.

That said, content creators, influencers, and podcasters – in general – receive poor evaluations for overall trust.

3

Demonstrative Action Can Help Local News Sources & Journalists Build Trust

There are nearly two dozen things local news sources and outlets can do to build a trust relationship with younger news consumers, including:

- Apologizing for mistakes
- Being transparent about how information is gathered
- Asking tough questions of government officials and politicians
- Demonstrating knowledge of the local community
- Being authentic and genuine

Overall, 67% local news consumers (73% of 18-24-year-olds) say they would be less likely to use a source if just one journalist couldn't be trusted.

Executive Summary of Findings

4

Preventing The Spread of False or Disinformation

63% of 18-34-year-olds (59% 18-64) say false or disinformation is at least somewhat prevalent in local news coverage.

When asked who should be most responsible for preventing the spread of false or disinformation, younger news consumers said local news outlets and their journalists are most responsible:

- Local news outlets/journalists (45%)
- Government agencies (25%)
- Social media platforms (19%)
- News consumers (9%)

5

Casual News Consumers Trust Less

There is a clear correlation between the frequency of consumption and overall trust.

Casual news consumers – those who consume local news once a week or multiple times per week, but not daily – are more likely to question whether they can trust traditional and non-traditions sources of local news.

47% of these casual news consumers are 18-34 years old.

6

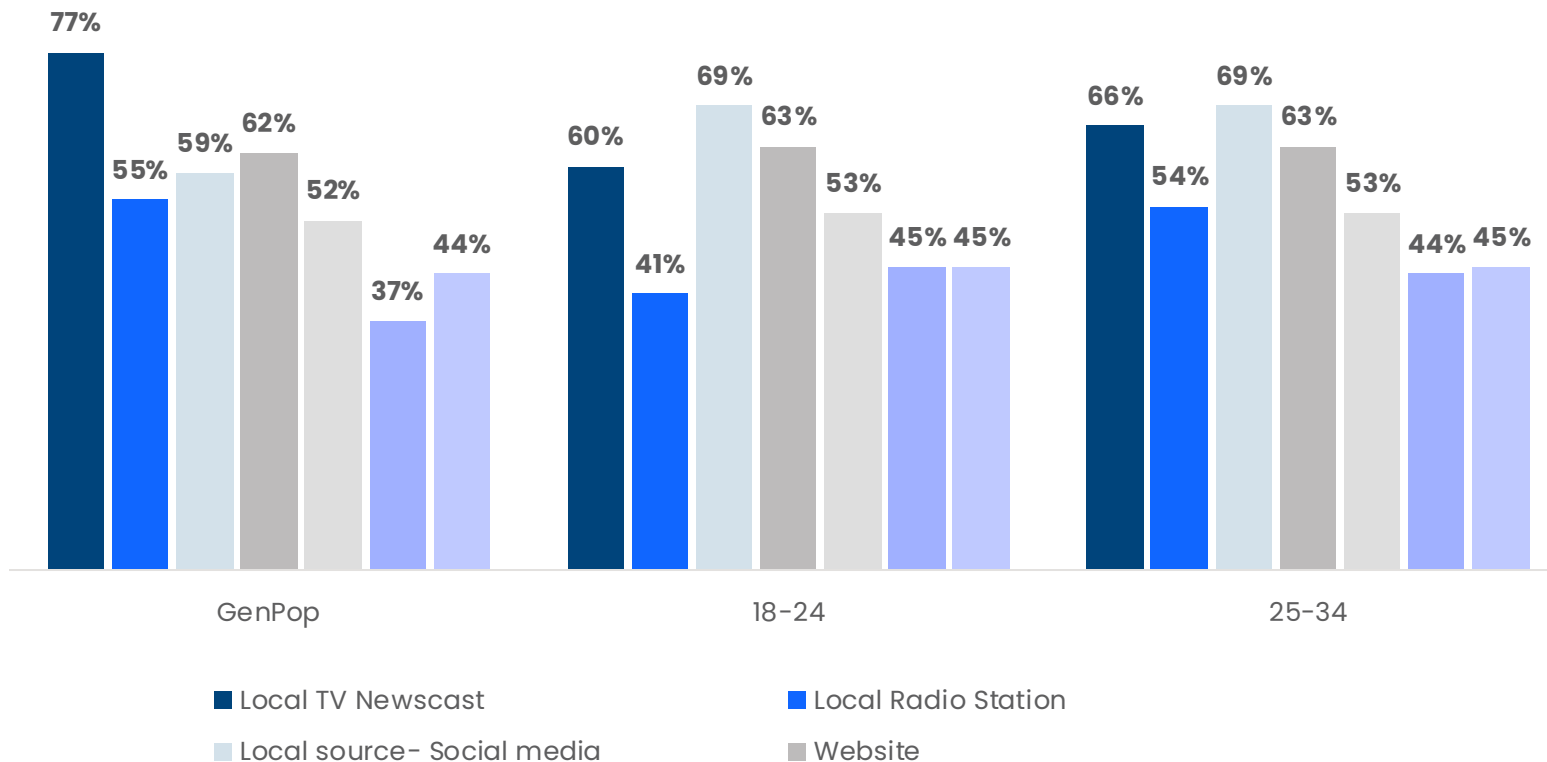
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools, Technology & Trust

Among local news consumers with a positive or neutral view first reaction (70% total) to Artificial Intelligence (AI):

- Transparency about the use of AI tools and technology in the reporting and production process is moderately important.
- Using the technology to limit mistakes is most likely to help build trust with the audience.
- Using AI to create news content without the clear oversight of a journalist and using AI generated voices or personas are the areas with high negative scores.

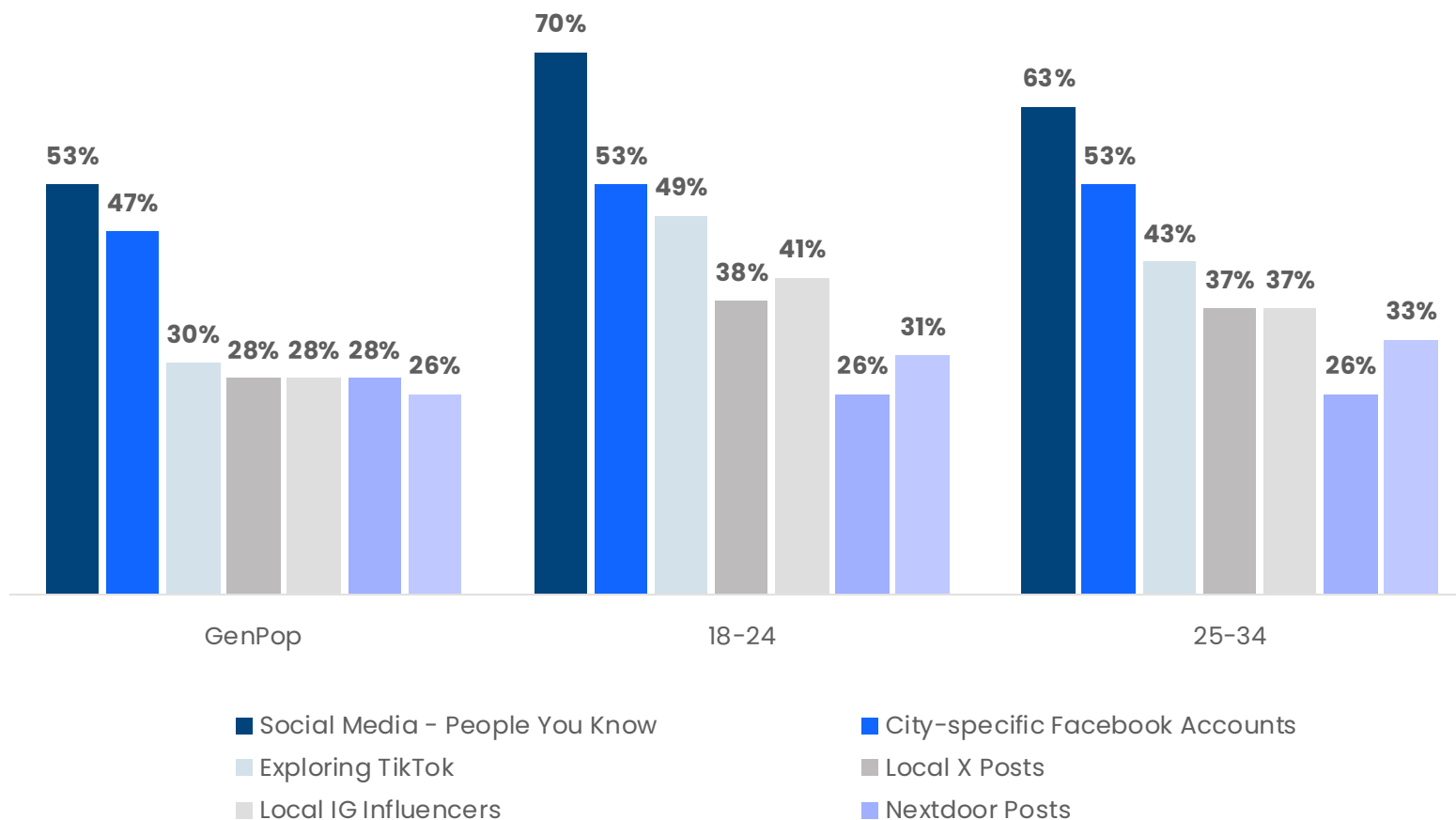
General News Consumption and Trust

Weekly+ use of traditional local news sources



- Overall, 69% say it's very important to get local news from a local source of any kind on a daily basis.
 - 63% (18-24)
 - 62% (25-34)
 - 49% (Casual Consumer)
 - 85% (Frequent Consumer)

Weekly+ use of non-traditional local news sources



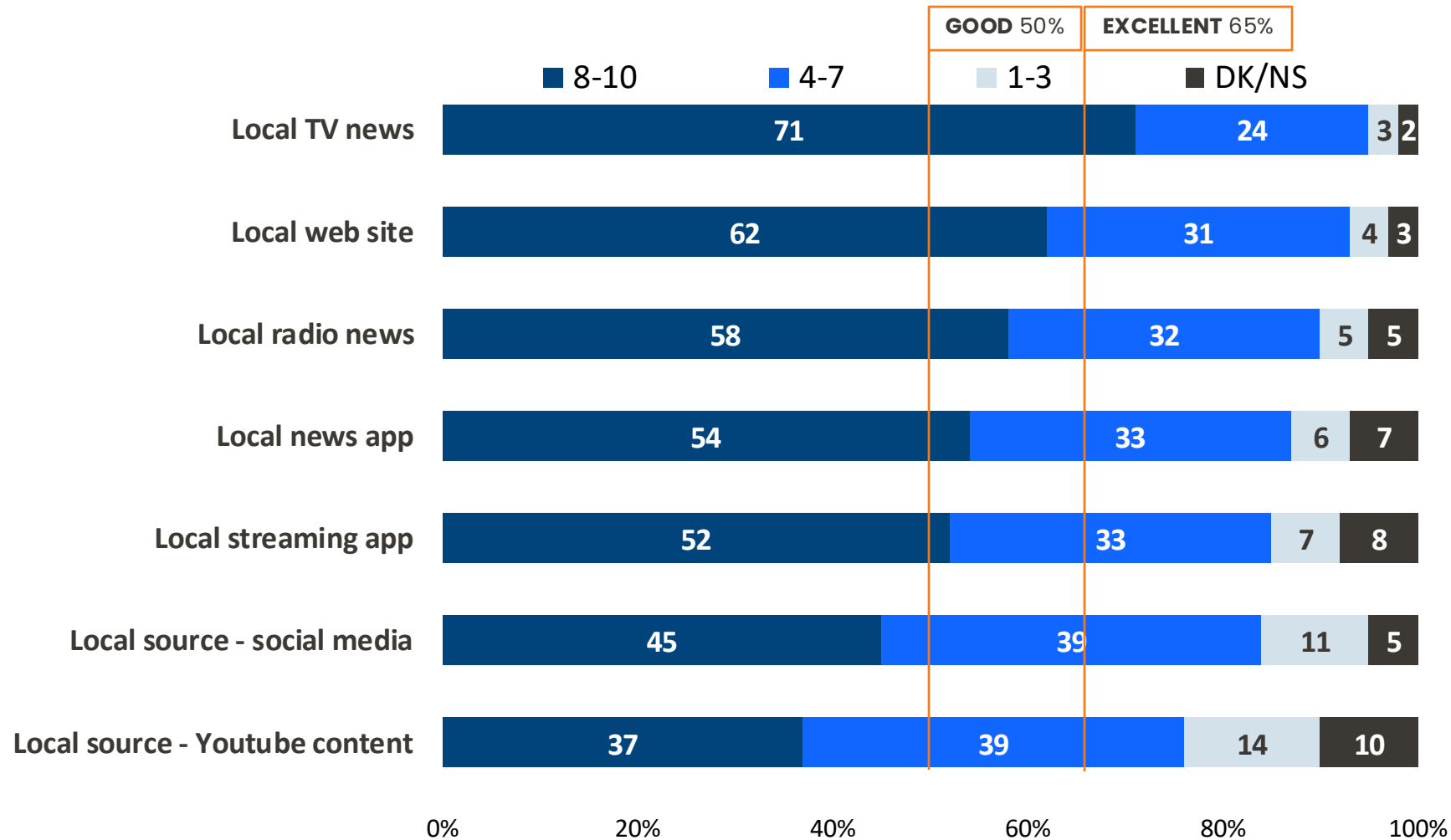
- 18-34-year-olds over-index older news consumers on weekly+ use of eight sources:

- Social Media – Local source
- Social Media – People I know
- Facebook city groups
- YouTube
- Instagram influencers
- TikTok
- Local X Posts
- Podcasts

Engagement with local news sources & journalists

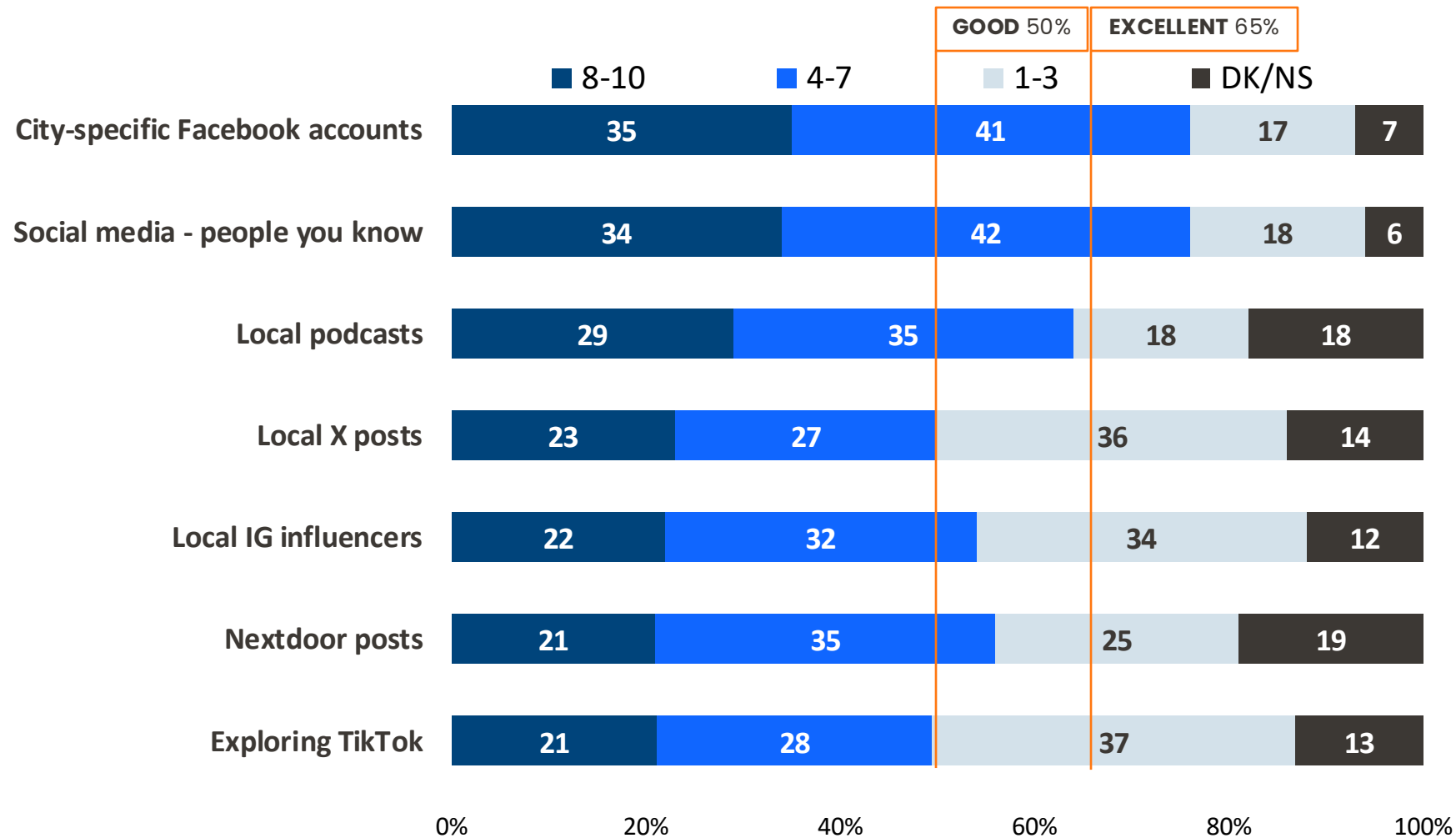
Type of Engagement	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	18-34 (N=886)
I have never directly engaged	52%	40%
Shared a local news post or article	29	35
Commented on a local news story on social media	24	29
Took part in a survey, poll, or audience feedback session	18	22
Emailed or called a local newsroom or reporter	10	11
Submitted a tip, photo, or video to a local news outlet	9	12
Attended a live event hosted by a local news organization	9	12
Sent a direct message to a local reporter or outlet	8	9
Tagged Local news organization or reporter in a social media post	8	10
Other	1	0

Trust in LOCAL news – GenPop Sample



- 8-10 scores reaching 50% considered good. 8-10 scores reaching 65% considered excellent.
- Most sources from traditional news outlets generate good-to-excellent levels of trust with the 18-64 audience.

Trust in LOCAL news – GenPop Sample



- 8-10 scores reaching 50% considered good. 8-10 scores reaching 65% considered excellent.
- All non-traditional sources have poor levels of trust with the 18-64 audience.

Trust in LOCAL news

8-10 Scores

Source	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	18-24 (N=232)	25-34 (N=654)	Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)
A local TV station's local newscast	71%	60%	64%	59%
A website from a local news source	62	59	61	53
A local radio station's newscast/programs	58	51	56	47
Mobile news app from a local news source	54	52	54	45
Streaming app from a local news source	52	50	50	42
Social media from a local news source	45	47	50	38
Content from a local news source on YouTube	37	37	41	30
City-specific accounts on Facebook	35	32	40	29
Social media accounts from people you know	34	39	38	28
Listening to podcasts about your local area	29	33	35	23
Posts from local X accounts	23	29	28	16
Local influencers on Instagram	22	28	26	17
Reading posts on Nextdoor	21	21	24	16
Exploring local TikTok posts	21	33	26	17

Questions about trust in LOCAL news

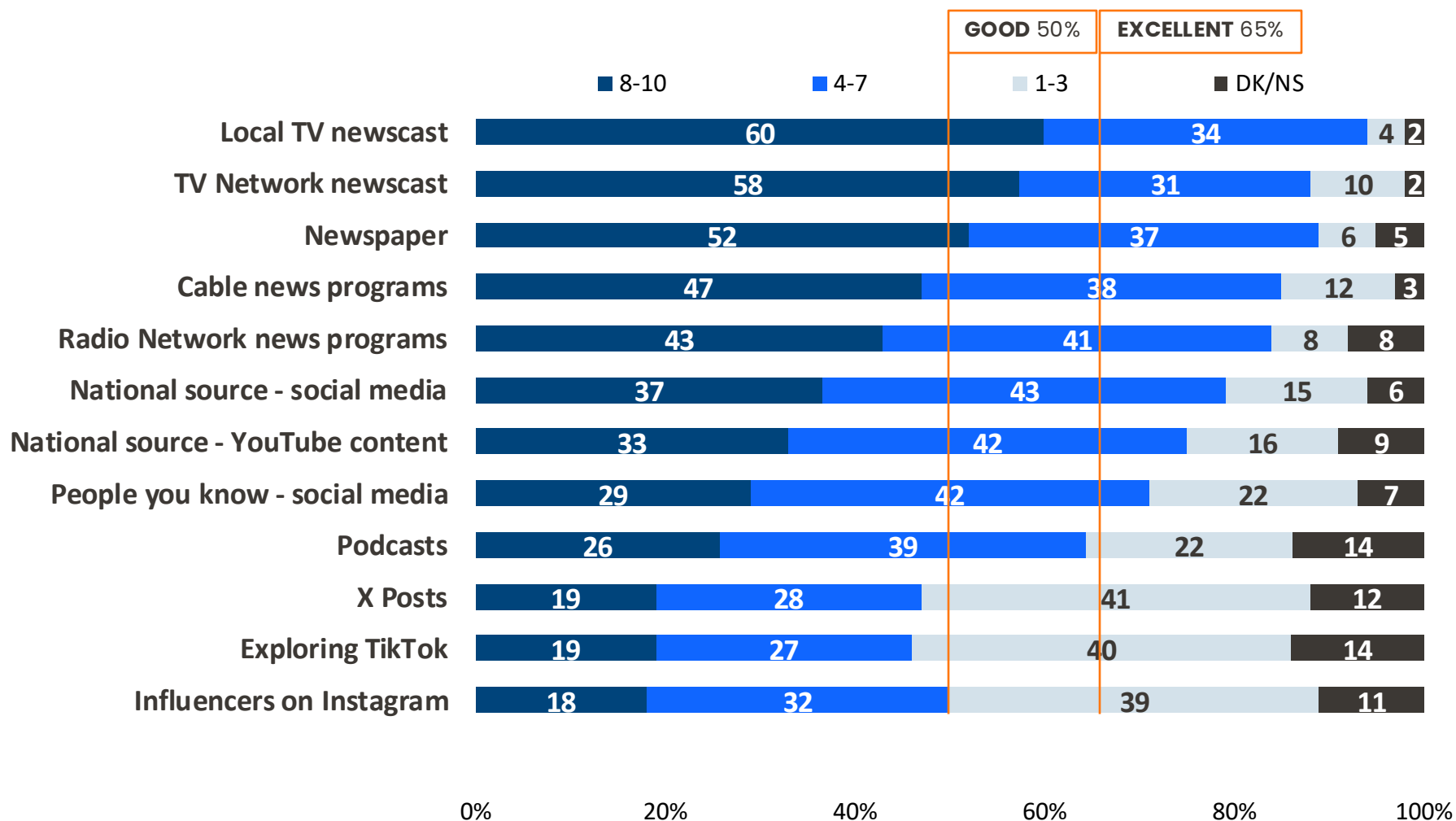
% Yes, Have Questioned Source
(Among those who evaluate trust in source 1-5)

Source	GenPop Sample	18-34
A local TV station's local newscast	51	33
A website from a local news source	25	20
A local radio station's newscast/programs	29	23
Mobile news app from a local news source	14	16
Streaming app from a local news source	9	11
Social media from a local news source	30	37
Content from a local news source on YouTube	17	20
City-specific accounts on Facebook	25	33
Social media accounts from people you know	23	30
Listening to podcasts about your local area	5	9
Posts from local X accounts	18	30
Local influencers on Instagram	17	25
Reading posts on Nextdoor	19	13
Exploring local TikTok posts	13	23

Top Reasons Given For Questioning Trust in Source
(Among those who have questioned any source)

1. Bias
2. Inaccuracy
3. Sensationalism
4. Clickbait
5. Influences/Agendas

Trust in NATIONAL/WORLD news – GenPop Sample



- 8-10 scores reaching 50% considered good. 8-10 scores reaching 65% considered excellent.

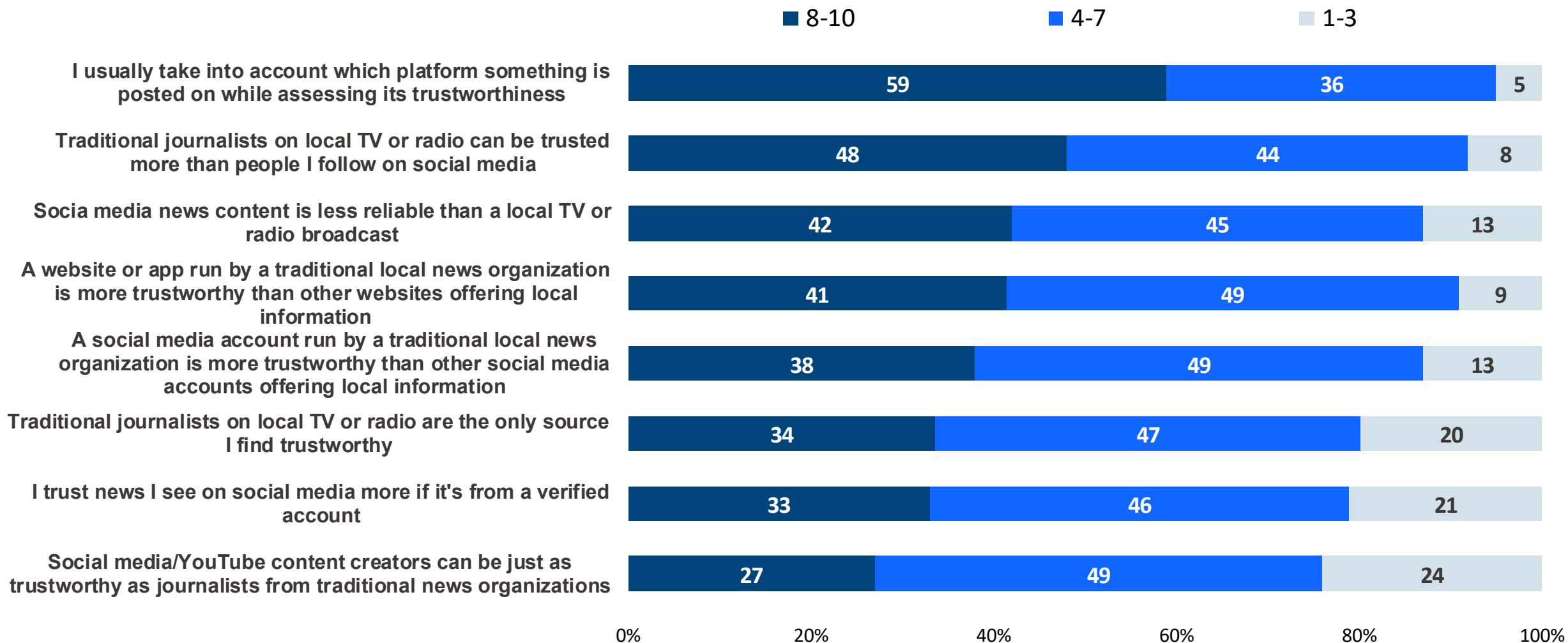
Trust in NATIONAL/WORLD news

8-10 Scores

Source	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	18-24 (N=232)	25-34 (N=654)	Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)
A local TV station's local newscast	60%	48%	55%	50%
Network TV newscast/program	58	55	52	47
Newspaper (print or digital)	52	43	49	42
Cable news channel programs	47	41	43	37
Network Radio news programs	43	35	42	34
Social media from a national news source	37	39	40	31
Content from a national news source on YouTube	33	36	39	27
Social media accounts from people you know	29	30	34	22
Listening to podcasts	26	29	28	19
Posts from X accounts	19	28	24	13
Exploring TikTok accounts or content	19	28	26	14
Influencers on Instagram	18	26	23	14

Perceptions About Trust and Journalism

Perceptions about trust and journalism



10= Strongly agree. 1= Strongly disagree.

T2a: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Perceptions about trust and journalism

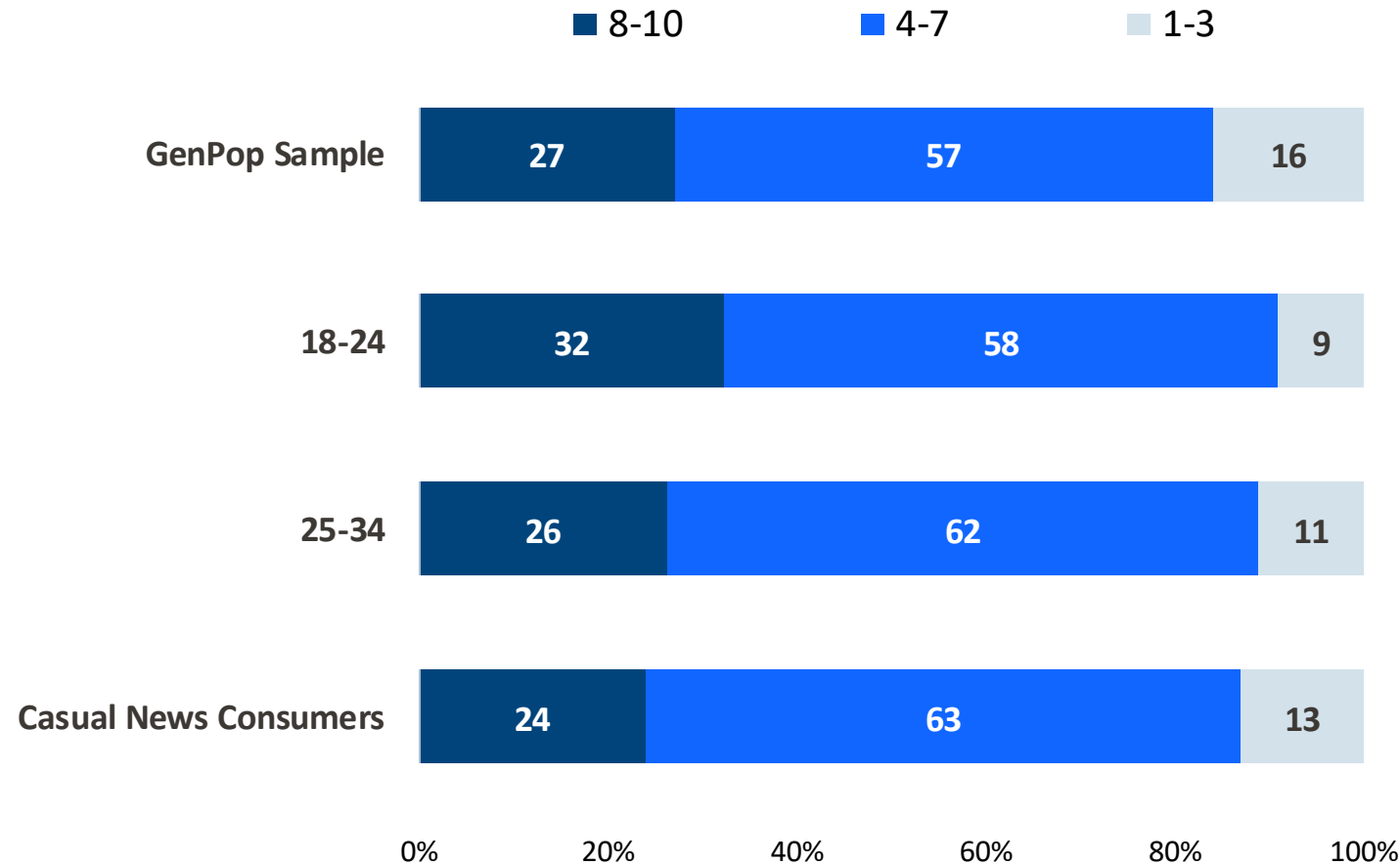
8-10 Scores – STRONGLY AGREE

Agree/Disagree Statements	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	18-24 (N=232)	25-34 N=654	Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)
"I usually take into account which platform something is posted on while assessing its trustworthiness."	59%	63%	57%	54%
"Traditional journalists on local TV or radio can be trusted more than people I follow on social media."	48	44	42	40
"Social media news content is less reliable than a local TV or radio broadcast."	42	42	39	34
"A website or app run by a traditional local news organization is more trustworthy than other websites offering local information."	41	40	41	33
"A social media account run by a traditional local news organization is more trustworthy than other social media accounts offering local information."	38	40	40	32
"Traditional journalists on local TV or radio are the only source I find trustworthy."	34	27	31	25
"I trust news I see on social media more if it's from a verified account."	33	31	39	30
"Social media/YouTube content creators can be just as trustworthy as journalists from traditional news organizations."	27	34	33	24

10= Strongly agree. 1= Strongly disagree.

T2a: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Prevalence of false or disinformation in local news



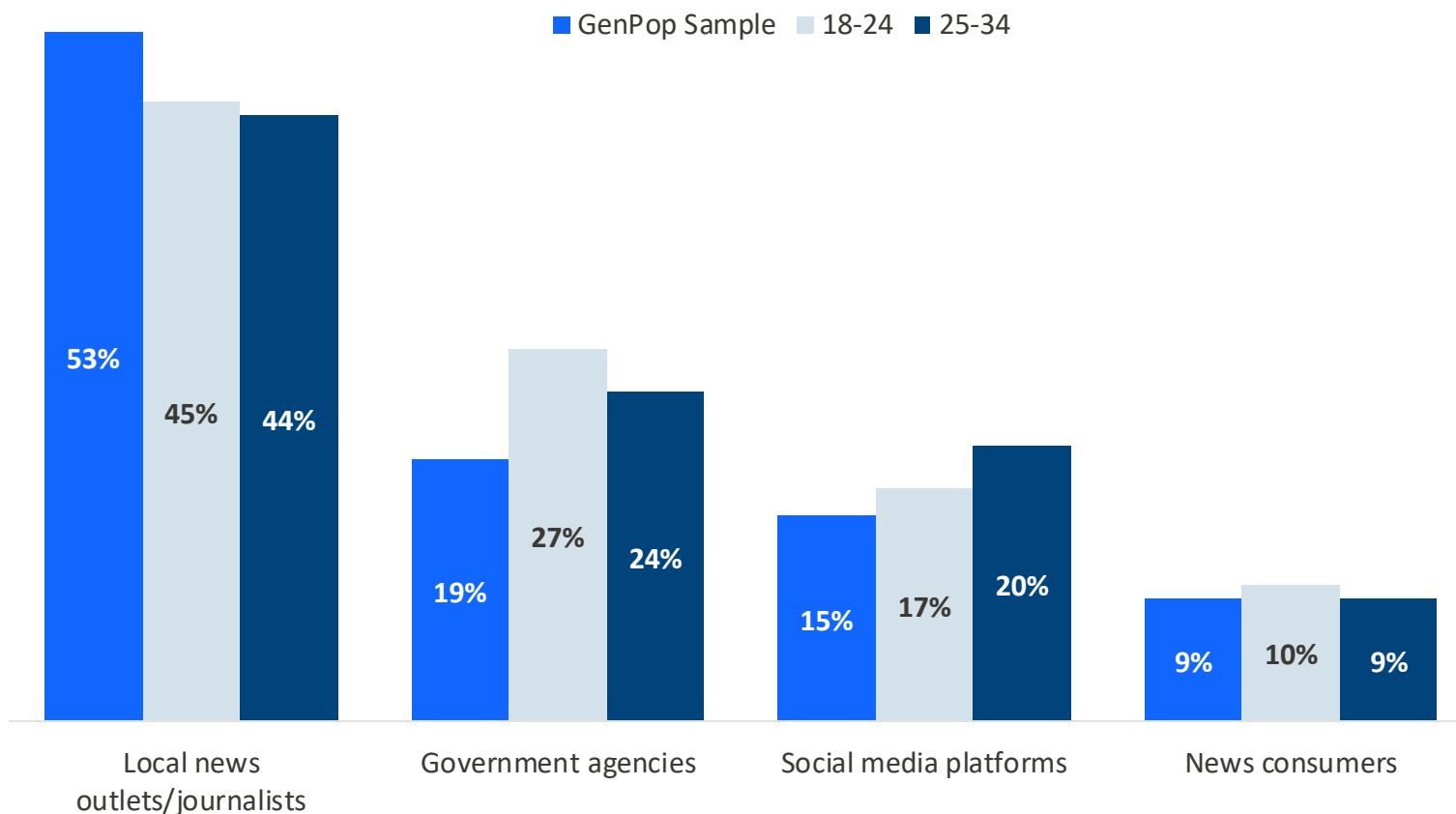
- Most news consumers (59%) indicated at least some prevalence (6-10 score) of false or disinformation in local news coverage.
- 63% of 18-34-year-olds believe false or disinformation is at least somewhat prevalent.

10= Extremely prevalent. 1= Not at all prevalent.

T3a:How prevalent do you think false or disinformation is in local news coverage?

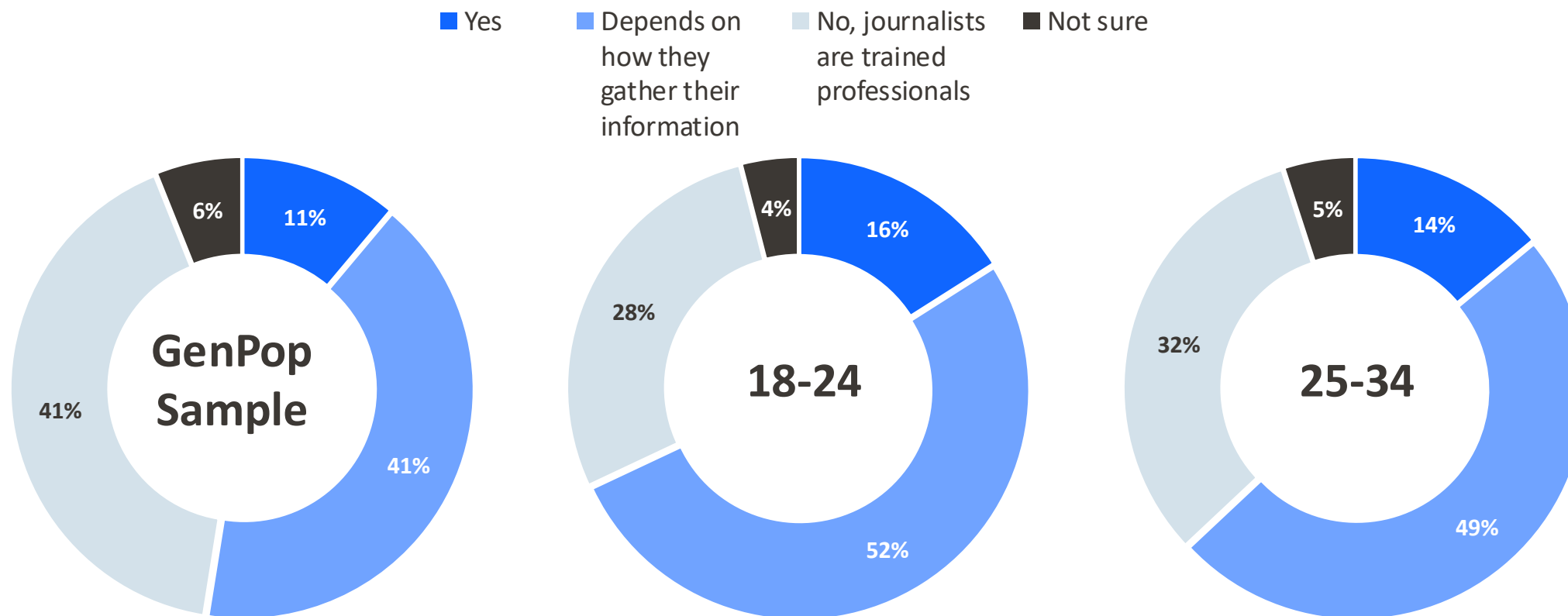
Responsibility for preventing the spread of false or disinformation

WHO IS MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF FALSE OR DISINFORMATION?

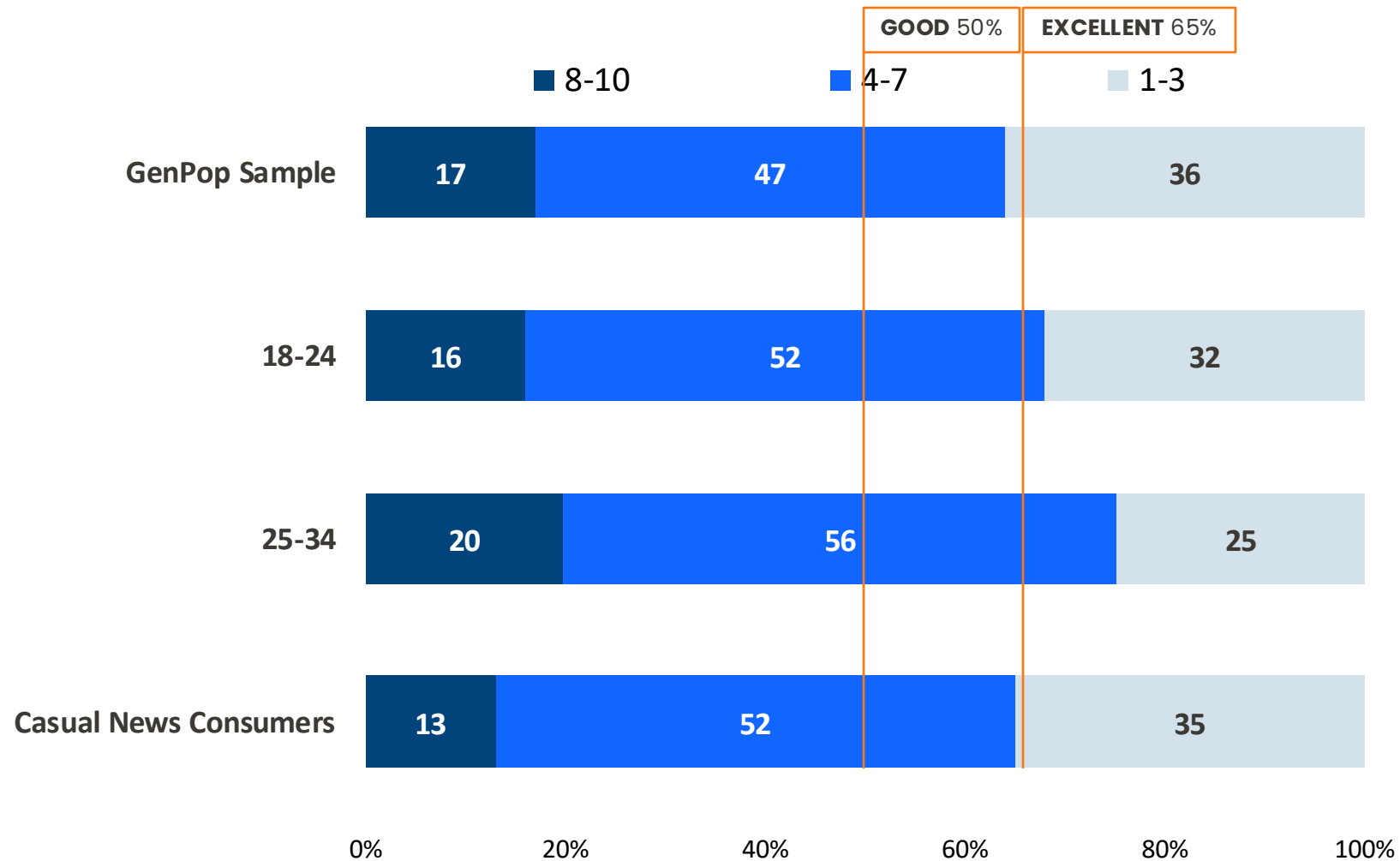


- Most news consumers (59%) indicated at least some prevalence (6-10 score) of false or disinformation in local news coverage.
- 63% of 18-34-year-olds believe false or disinformation is at least somewhat prevalent.

Do you consider content creators, influencers and podcasters to be journalists?



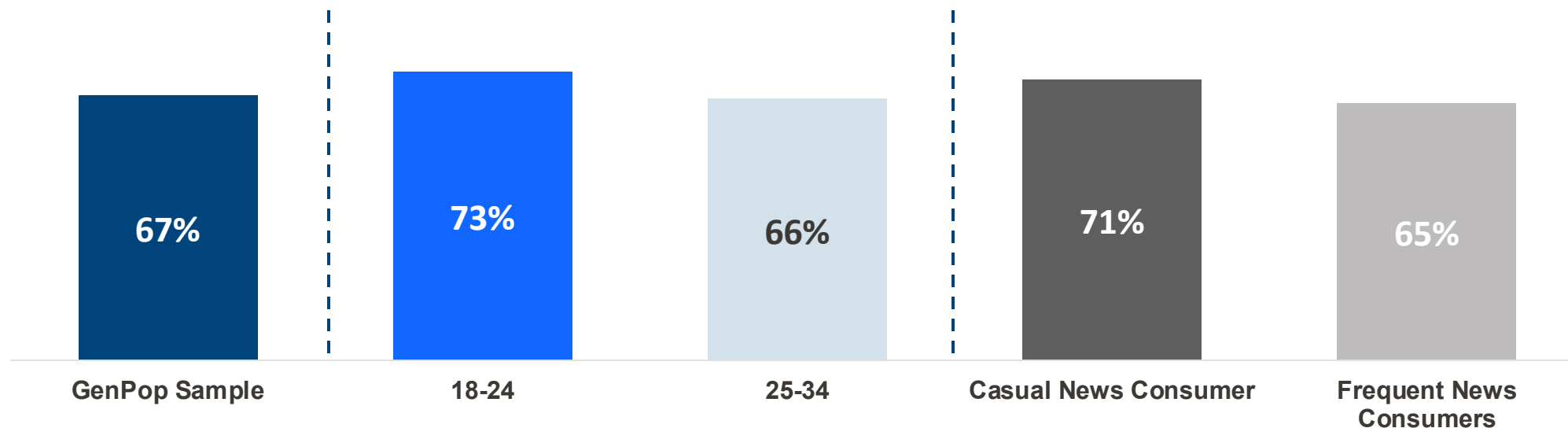
Trust in Content Creators



- 8-10 scores reaching 50% considered good. 8-10 scores reaching 65% considered excellent.
- Overall trust in the information from influencers, podcasters, or social media content creators is poor.

Trust impact on use of source

Less Likely to Use Source if One Journalist is Not Trusted



What Drives Trust For Local Sources & Local Journalists?

Elements that drive trust in SOURCES

■ (8-10) ■ (4-7) ■ (1-3)



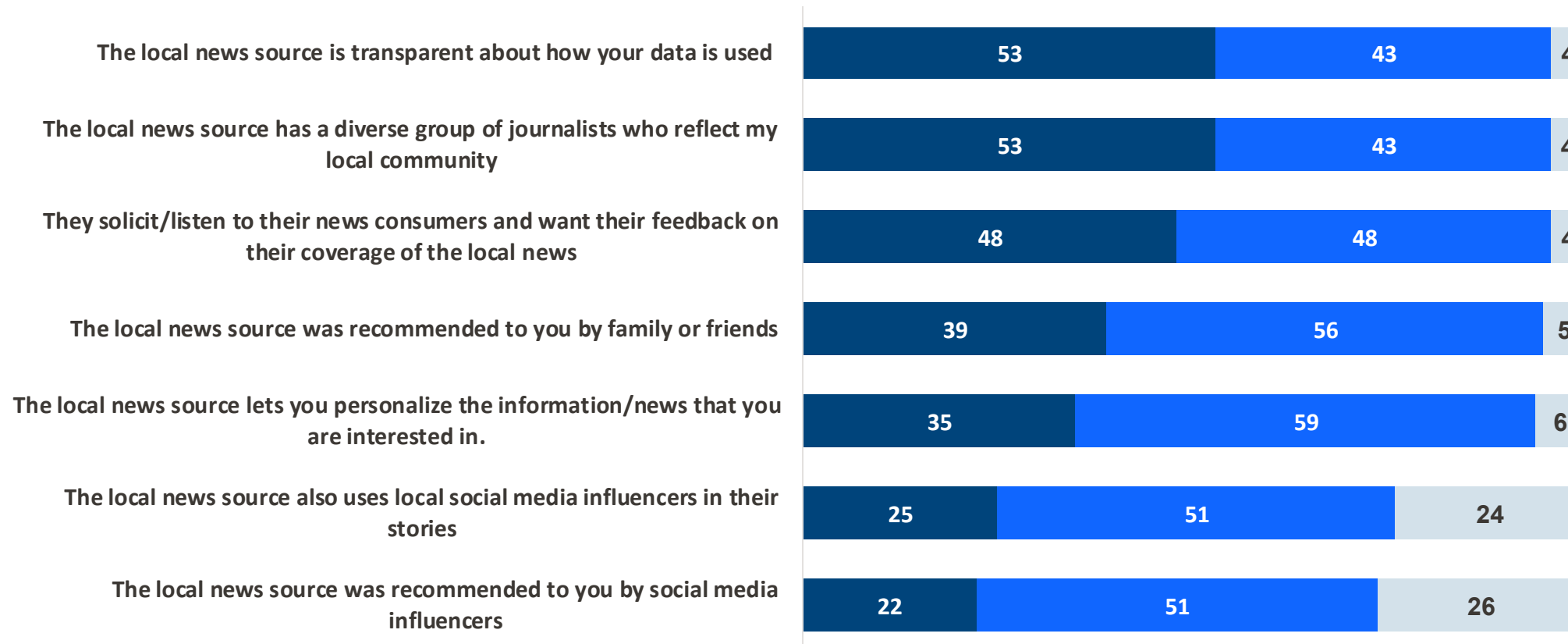
- 8-10 scores above 50% considered to have strong impact.
- 8-10 scores above 65% considered to have extremely strong impact.

10= Trust much more. 1= Trust much less.

T5: If the local news source you use most for local news does/is the following, how would this affect your trust in the source to be accurate?

Elements that drive trust in SOURCES

■ (8-10) ■ (4-7) ■ (1-3)



- 8-10 scores above 50% considered to have strong impact.
- 8-10 scores above 65% considered to have extremely strong impact.

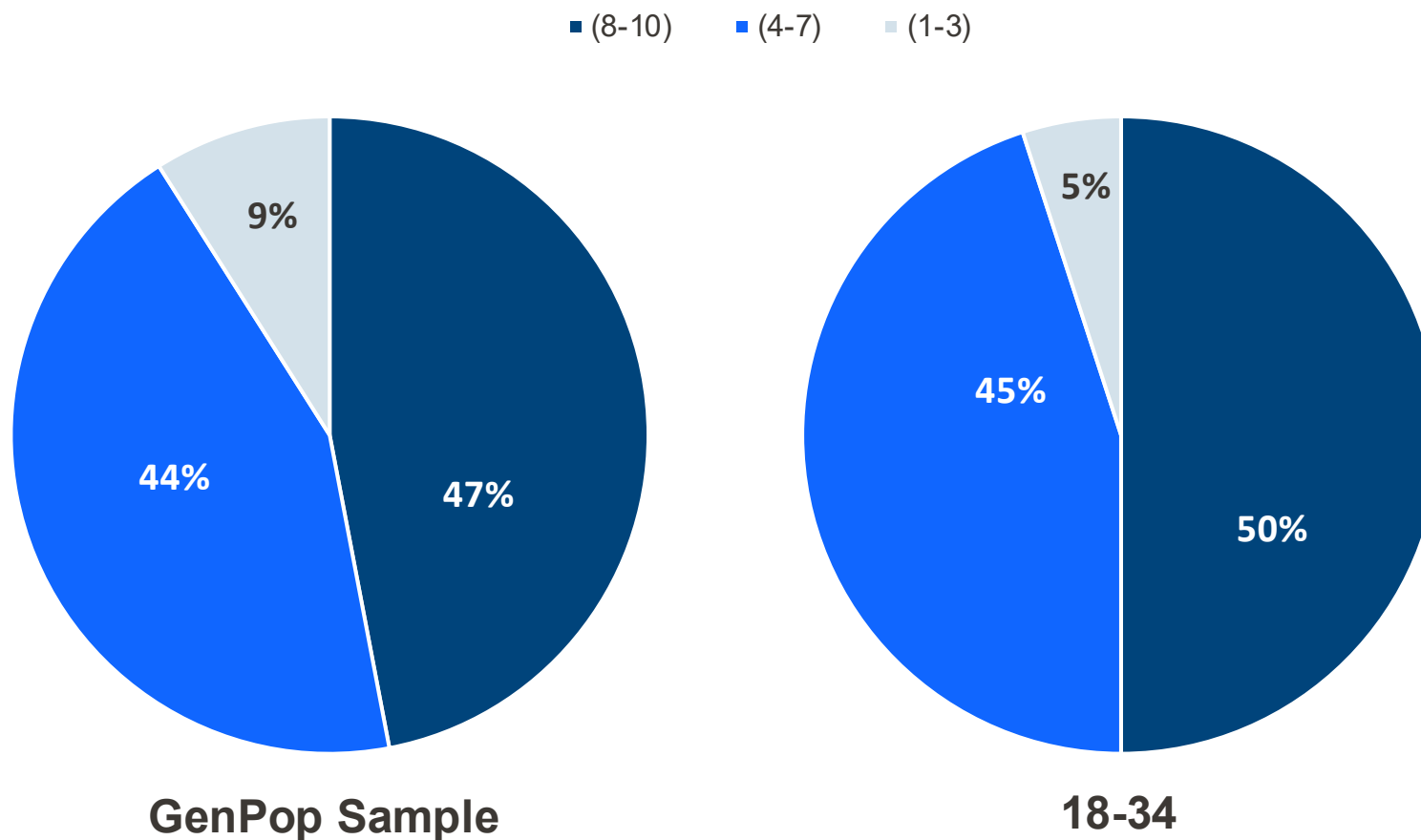
Elements that drive trust in SOURCES

	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	8-10 Scores		Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)
		18-24 (N=232)	25-34 N=654	
When they make a mistake or error, they own up to it and apologize	67%	66%	64%	62%
The source is consistent and dependable on big, important local news stories I care about	61	57	58	51
The local news source has specific journalists you know whose work you trust	59	57	55	50
They have journalists who are experienced covering local news	59	57	54	52
They have the ability to cover the local news without making mistakes or errors	59	54	56	52
They are involved with the local community and are in touch with important things happening in the community	58	59	57	51
They have journalists who are from the local area and know the area well	57	54	57	50
The local news source is transparent about how your data is used by its app or website	53	50	54	46
The local news source has a diverse group of journalists who reflect my local community	53	55	51	45
They solicit and listen to their news consumers and want their feedback on their coverage of local news	48	50	47	40
The local news source was recommended to you by family or friends	39	41	40	32
The local news source lets you personalize the information/news that you are interested in	35	40	37	29
The local news source also uses local social media influencers in their stories	25	30	28	21
The local news source was recommended to you by social media influencers	22	24	28	18

10= Trust much more. 1= Trust much less.

T5: If the local news source you use most for local news does/is the following, how would this affect your trust in the source to be accurate?

Importance of journalists reflecting community



10= Very important. 1= Not at all important.

T5a: How important is it for you to see reporters and journalists in your local media outlets who reflect your background and community?

Elements that drive trust in JOURNALISTS

■ (8-10) ■ (4-7) ■ (1-3)

They ask tough questions of government officials and politicians.



They are open and transparent about how they get their stories and information



They are authentic and genuine



They are balanced in their coverage of local news stories, explaining all sides to important local stories



They are knowledgeable about the local community and what issues are important to local news consumers



They include "experts" in their news stories who are credible and knowledgeable



They have local stories that focus on what is being done to solve or work towards solutions to local issues/problems



- 8-10 scores above 50% considered to have strong impact.
- 8-10 scores above 65% considered to have extremely strong impact.

10= Trust much more. 1= Trust much less.

T5.5: If a local news journalist does/is the following, how would this affect your trust in the source to be accurate?

Elements that drive trust in JOURNALISTS

■ (8-10) ■ (4-7) ■ (1-3)

They do not take any specific "position" on important or controversial local news stories.



They do not make mistakes or errors in their local news coverage



They are involved with local community organizations



For TV and radio journalists specifically, they sound like they are competent and don't stumble and have difficulty communicating



For TV and radio journalists specifically, they sound like they are talking to me and not reading



They explain why they choose to cover the stories they cover



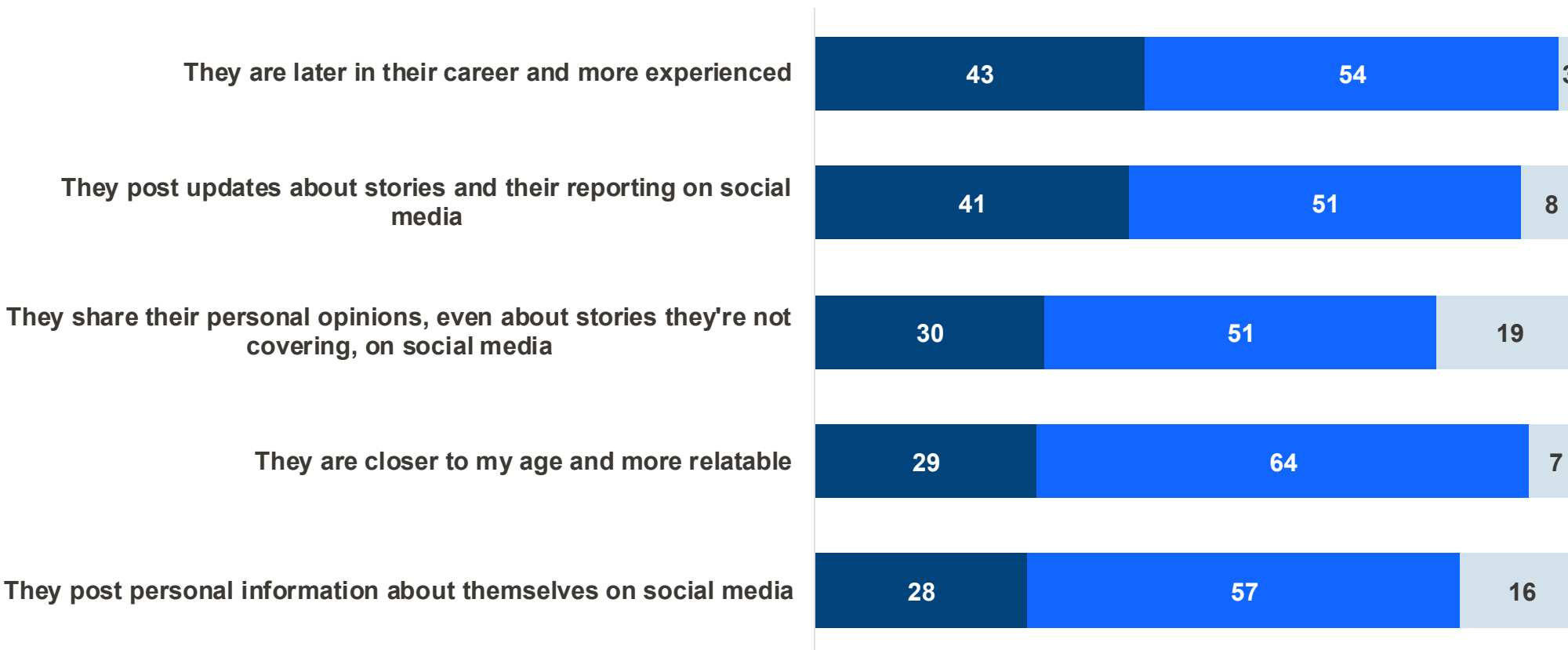
They are in touch with current trends and culture



- 8-10 scores above 50% considered to have strong impact.
- 8-10 scores above 65% considered to have extremely strong impact.

Elements that drive trust in JOURNALISTS

■ (8-10) ■ (4-7) ■ (1-3)



- 8-10 scores above 50% considered to have strong impact.
- 8-10 scores above 65% considered to have extremely strong impact.

Elements that drive trust in JOURNALISTS

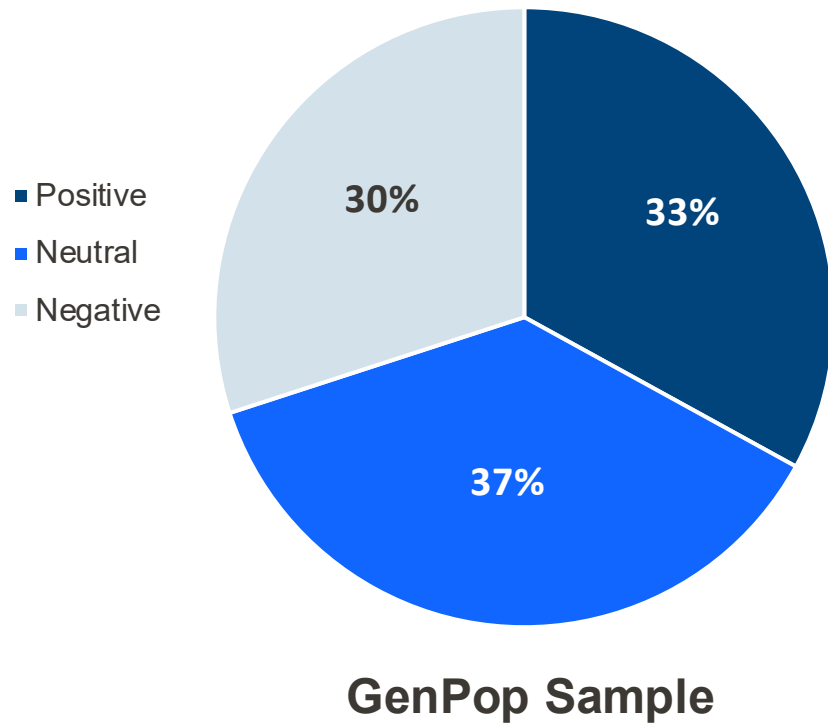
	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	8-10 Scores		Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)
		18-24 (N=232)	25-34 N=654	
They ask tough questions of government officials and politicians	67%	58%	64%	61%
They are open and transparent about how they get their stories and information	66	66	66	61
They are authentic and genuine	65	62	65	60
They are balanced in their coverage of local news stories, explaining all sides to important local stories	64	55	60	56
They are knowledgeable about the local community and what issues are important to local news consumers	62	56	58	55
They include “experts” in their news stories who are credible and knowledgeable	61	61	59	56
They have local stories that focus on what is being done to solve or work towards solutions to local issues/problems	59	54	58	51
They do not take any specific “position” on important or controversial local news stories	58	53	52	50
They do not make mistakes or errors in their local news coverage	56	49	53	49
They are involved with local community organizations	53	56	56	48
For TV and radio journalists specifically, they sound like they are competent and don't stumble and have difficulty communicating	51	47	48	43

Elements that drive trust in JOURNALISTS

	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	8-10 Scores		Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)
		18-24 (N=232)	25-34 N=654	
They explain why they choose to cover the stories they cover	48	46	49	42
They are in touch with current trends and culture	46	45	46	39
They are later in their career and more experienced	43	46	42	36
They post updates about stories and their reporting on social media	41	43	44	35
They share their personal opinions, even about stories they're not covering, on social media	30	31	36	27
They are closer to my age and more relatable	29	27	31	24
They post personal information about themselves on social media	28	30	29	23

AI: Perceptions & Trust

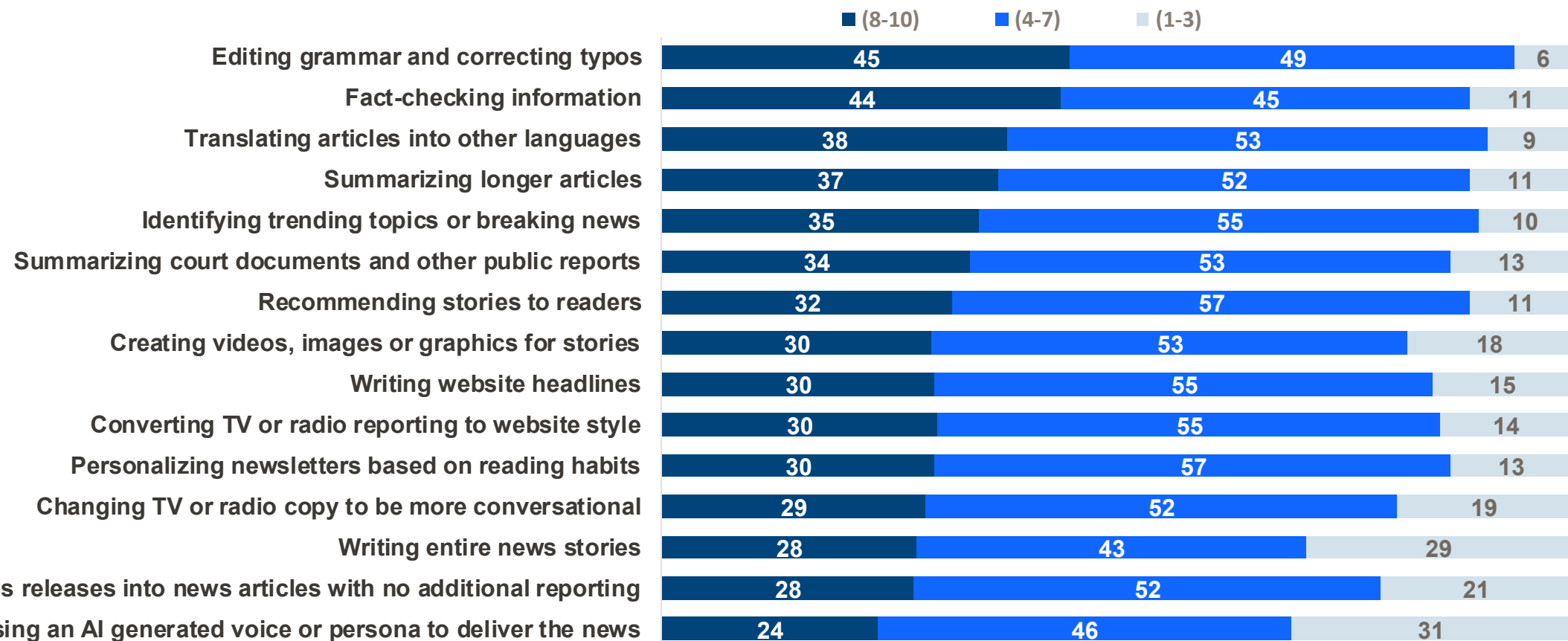
Overall opinion of AI Tools & Technology



	GenPop Sample (N=2,000)	18-24 (N=232)	25-34 (N=654)	35+ (N=1,489)	Casual News Consumer (N=1,139)	Frequent News Consumer (N=1,236)
Positive	33%	29%	34%	34%	26%	41%
Neutral	37	37	37	37	42	33
Negative	30	34	29	29	32	26

Impact of AI tools on trust

GenPop Sample – Positive/Neutral on AI
(N=1,405)



10= Trust much more. 1= Trust much less.

F2: If you found out a local news source was using artificial intelligence (AI) in the following ways, how would it affect your level of trust in that source?

Impact of AI tools on trust

1-3 (Trust Less) Scores
Among Those With Positive/Neutral View of AI

	GenPop Sample (N=1,405)	18-24 (N=153)	25-34 N=465
Using an AI generated voice or persona to deliver the news	31%	34%	27%
Writing entire news stories	29	32	28
Converting press releases into news articles with no additional reporting	21	20	19
Changing TV or radio copy to be more conversational	19	22	17
Creating videos, images or graphics for stories	18	25	19
Writing website headlines	15	14	15
Converting TV or radio reporting to website style	14	15	13
Personalizing newsletters based on reading habits	13	12	13
Summarizing court documents and other public reports	13	16	12
Recommending stories to readers	11	8	9
Fact-checking information	11	14	11
Summarizing longer articles	11	14	10
Identifying trending topics or breaking news	10	15	10
Translating articles into other languages	9	12	9
Editing grammar and correcting typos	6	5	7

10= Trust much more. 1= Trust much less.

F2: If you found out a local news source was using artificial intelligence (AI) in the following ways, how would it affect your level of trust in that source?

Transparency about the use of AI tools & technology

8-10 (Greatly Increases Trust) Scores
Among Those With Positive/Neutral View of AI

42%

GenPop Sample
(N=1,405)

	GenPop Sample (N=1,405)	18-24 (N=153)	25-34 (N=465)
Greatly increases my trust	42%	42%	40%

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