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**Public Opinion Research on Mis/Disinformation & the  
Role of Big Tech in Kenya**

Presented by TIFA  
Press Conference  
26 January 2023



## Section 1: Introduction

- Study Objectives
- Approach & Methodology

The study's main objective was to understand public opinion on mis/disinformation and hate speech the impact of social/digital media communications platforms in Kenya, and identify possible remedies:

- General **harms around disinformation**
- To understand the **attitudes toward digital platforms/Big Tech** and also the roles they play in disinformation
- To assess the **salience of false and misleading messages**, aligned with mis/disinformation
- To use the **insights generated** from the study to inform strategies that could effectively counter disinformation for multiple stakeholders - policymakers, regulators, civil society and through citizen action





## Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research conducted between 23 March - 14 May 2022. The findings of the FGDs were used to inform the questionnaire design.

## Quantitative Research

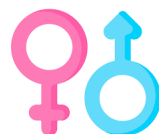
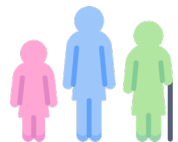
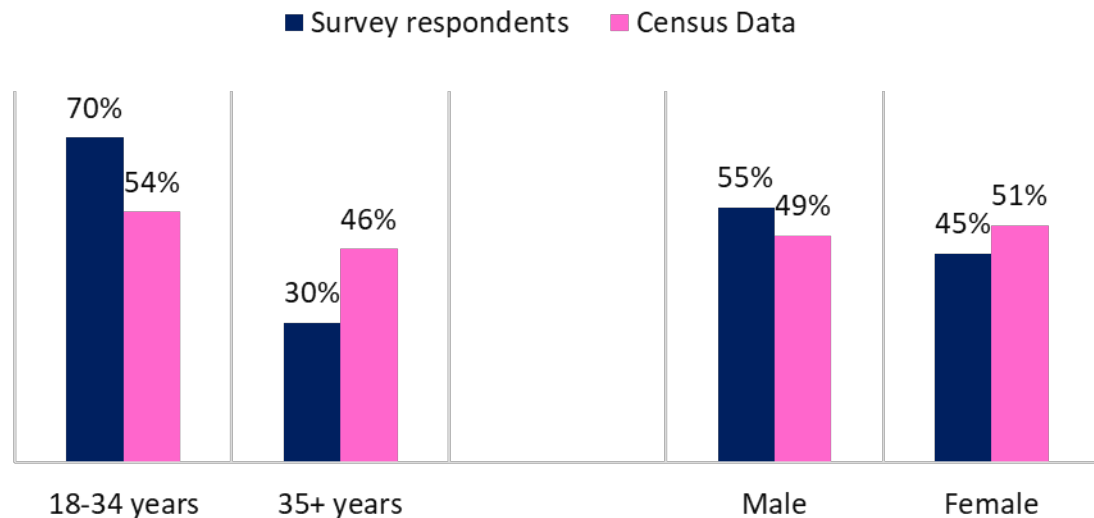
- A national household sampling methodology targeting internet users. This report presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Item	Survey details
Data collection methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative</li> </ul>
Target respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Internet users:</b> past 2 weeks users</li> <li><b>Age:</b> 18+ years</li> <li><b>Gender:</b> Both male and female</li> <li><b>Religious ideology:</b> progressives, moderates and conservatives</li> </ul>
Duration of study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28<sup>th</sup> May to 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2022</li> </ul>
Geographical coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National coverage</li> </ul>
Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieved: n = 1,992</li> <li>Random household sampling</li> </ul>

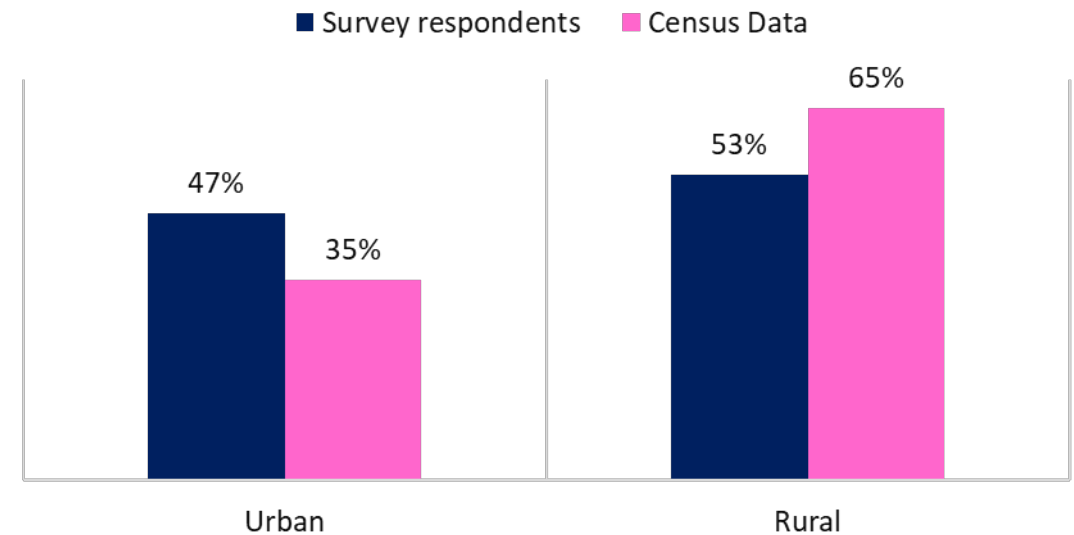
- There were more respondents aged 18 to 24 years in this survey's sample as compared to the census population. This skew could be because the sampling targeted internet users who are more likely to be youthful.

- The sample had a higher proportion of urban users than the proportion in the census data. This is because access to the internet is higher in urban areas.

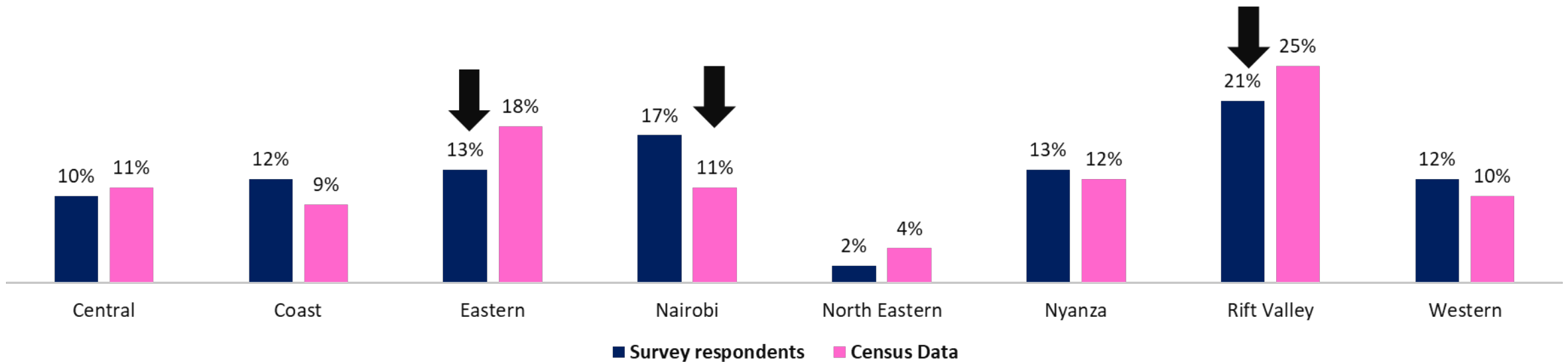
### Gender & age



### Setting



- The random sampling resulted to lower incidence of internet users vis a vis the census population in Nairobi. On the contrary the number of internet users in the sample is higher than the population in Eastern and Rift Valley regions.



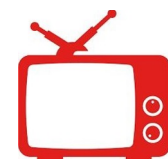


## Section 2: Summary Findings

- Television was mentioned to be the main source of general news followed by social media. The main social media platforms used by the respondents is Facebook and WhatsApp.



- Kenyans report that the top social media platforms they utilize are the predominant platforms where they experience mis/disinformation.



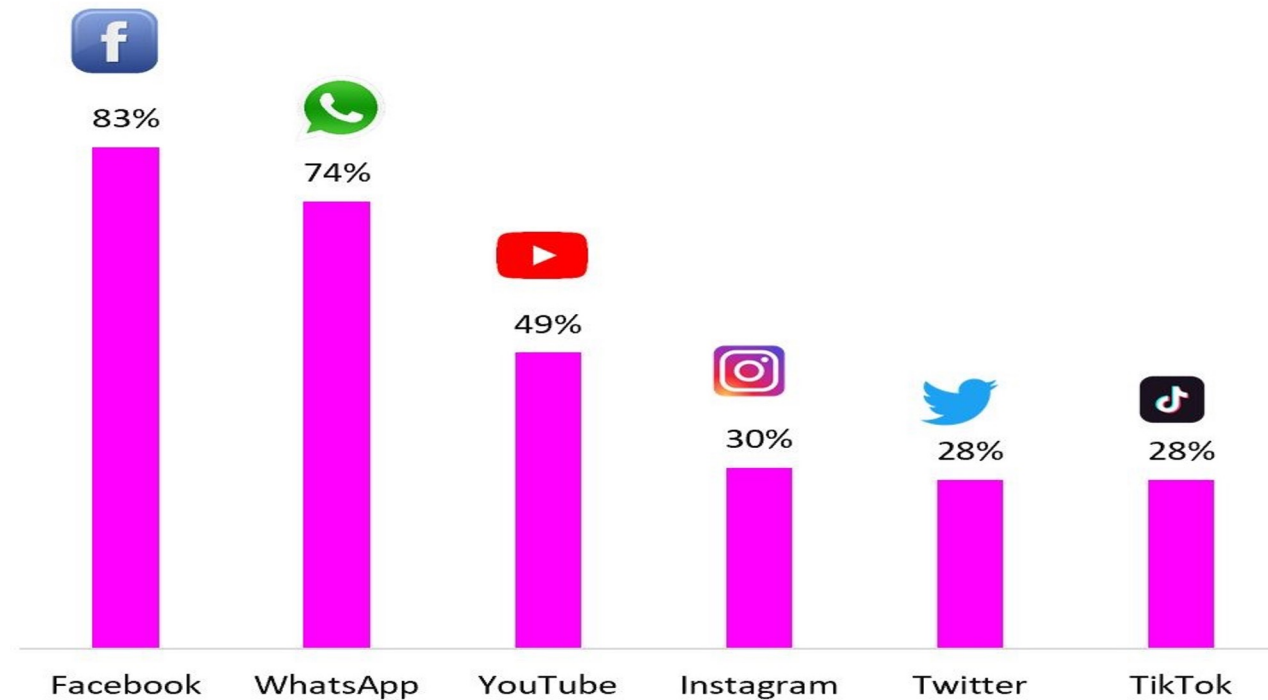
71%  
Television



64%  
Social Media



50%  
Radio

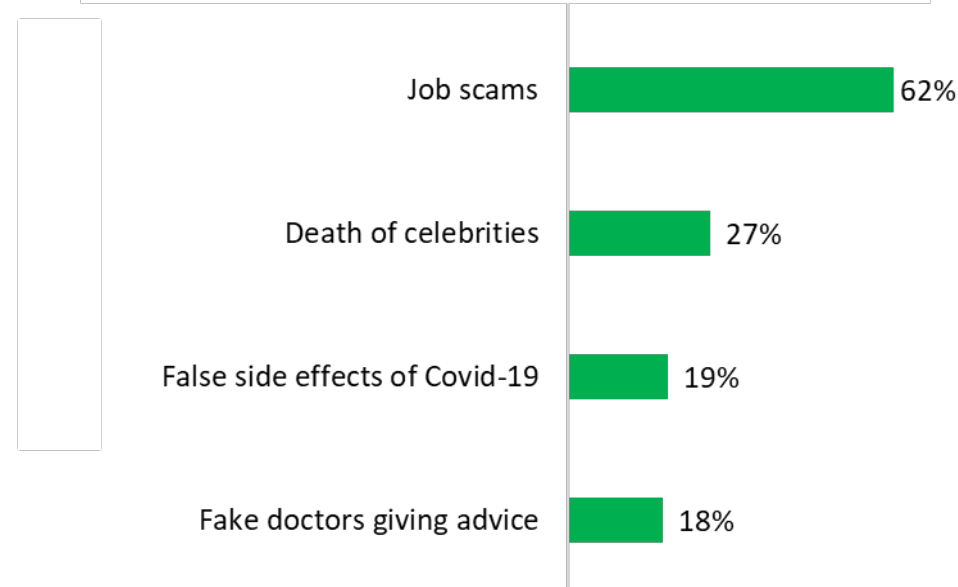




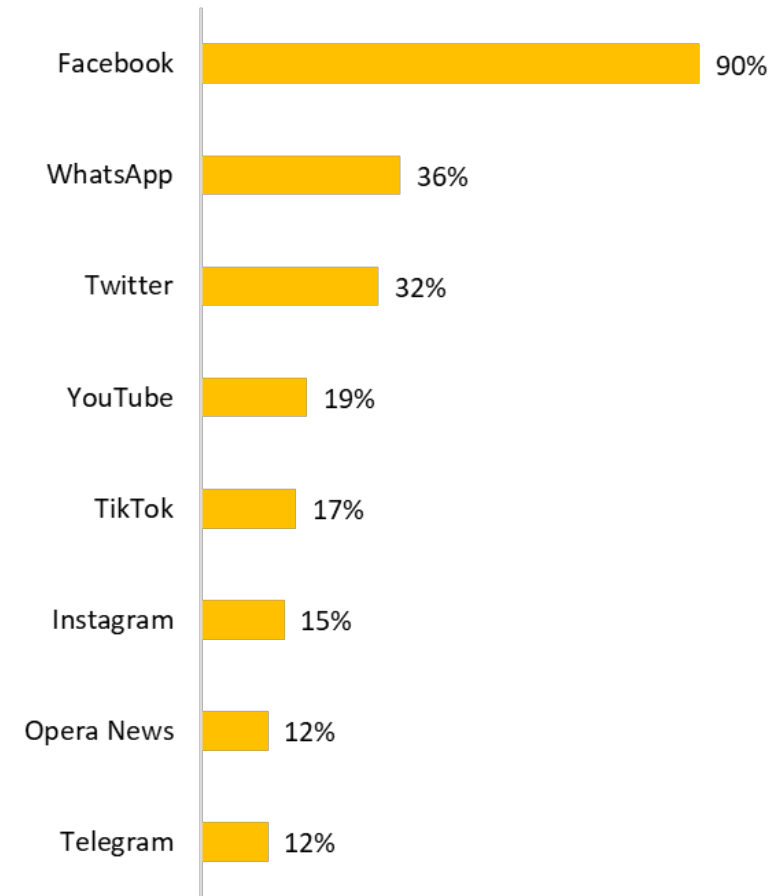
## Key indicators on disinformation



## Common forms of disinformation in Kenya



## Social media sites used to spread disinformation



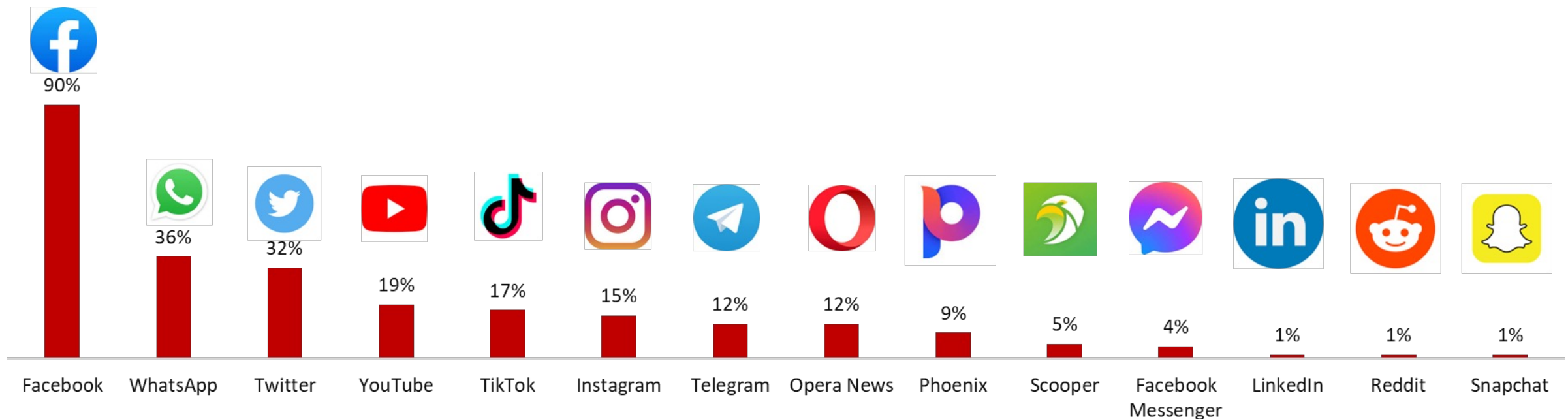
Almost half the sample has seen disinformation on social media whilst half indicate that they can confidently identify it.

Most common forms of disinformation on social media are job scams.

Kenyans feel Facebook is the platform used mostly to spread disinformation.

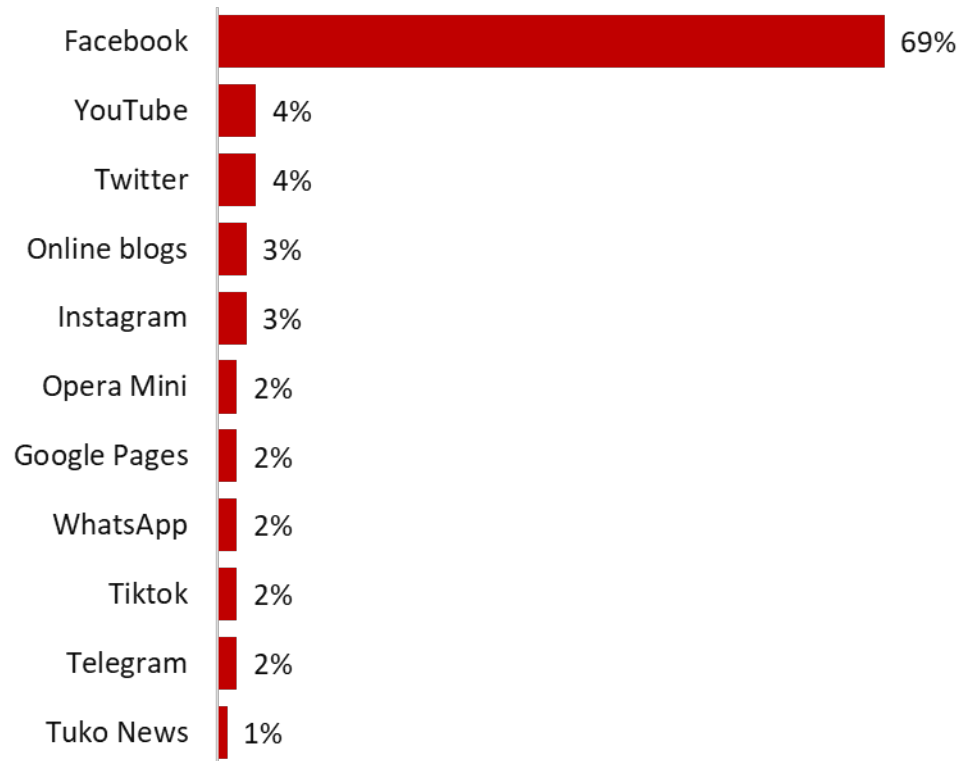
- The top social media platforms known for the spread of disinformation, according to respondents, in order are: Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok, this order cuts across the gender and age demographics. There were no major differences in the mentions by age and gender.

**Social media sites used to spread disinformation in Kenya**



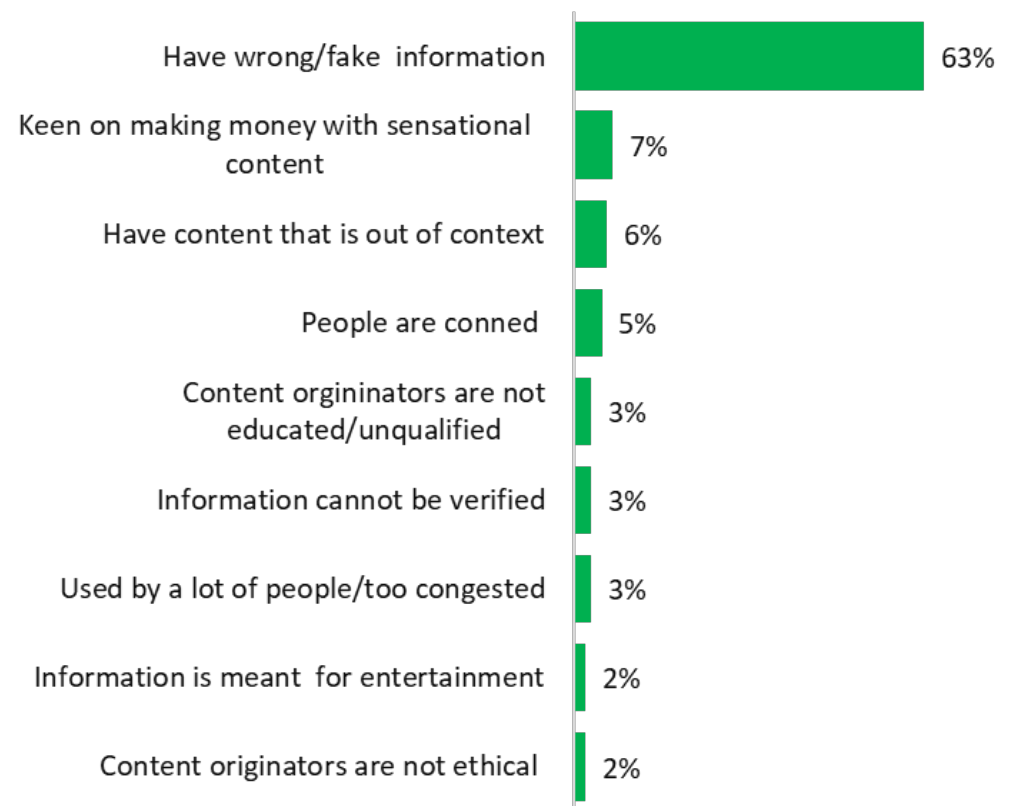
- ❑ The least trusted social media platform by a majority of respondents is Facebook. The main reason for not trusting some social media platforms was because the respondents are exposed to false information.

**Specific social media platforms that are not trusted**



Q: Which specific social media sites/platforms do you not trust?

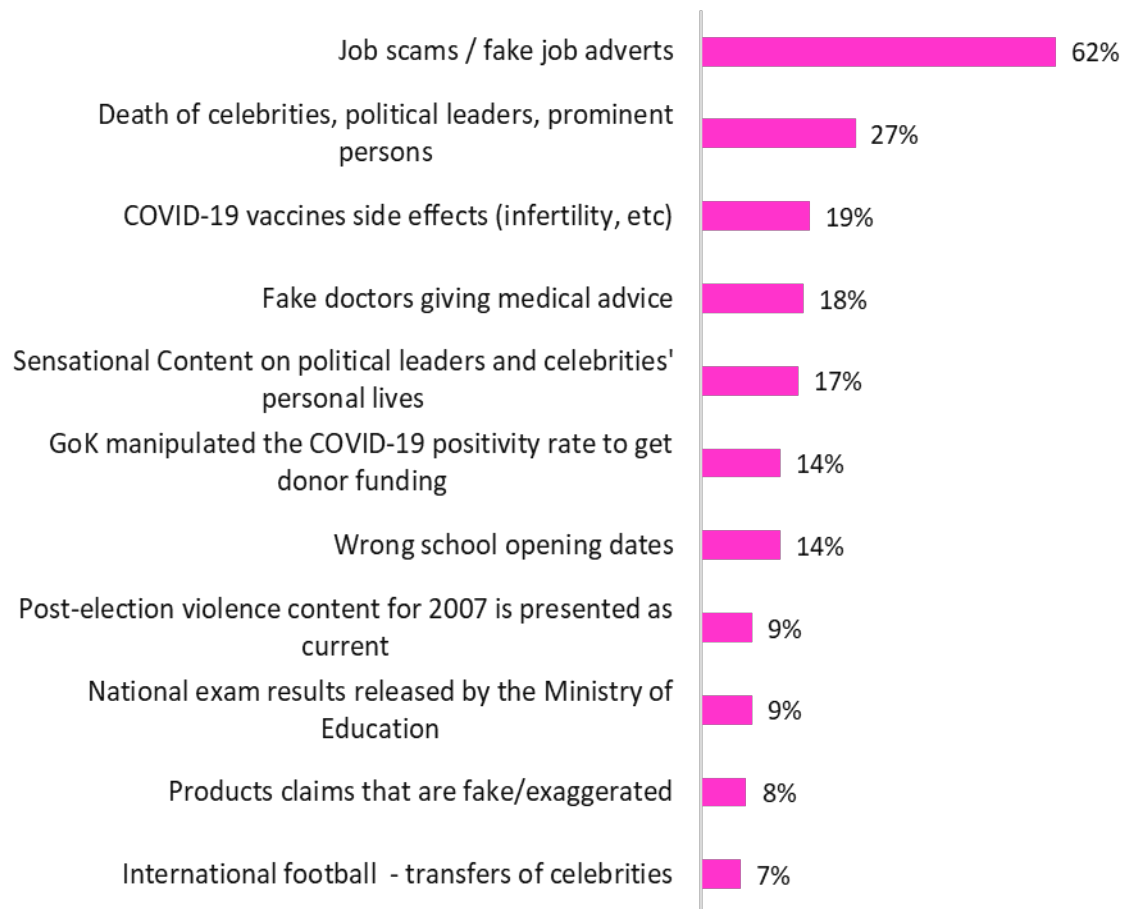
**Reasons for not trusting social media platforms**



Q: Why don't you trust the sources mentioned above?

Base = 820 (Those who do not trust)

Common forms of disinformation – by total



**Disinformation on job opportunities**

They tell you there is an opportunity to make money online with your phone and then you end up getting nothing. To know that it is a scam they will send you a message stating their name and then when you answer they auto reply in paragraphs.

18 to 24 years, Male, Garissa

**Misinformation on death of prominent persons** If you would go to social media, you'll find out that the Nigerians are saying that Mrs. Johnson is dead but in real sense she is still alive. There is this information that concerned Rose Muhando, they had said that she was dead on social media but she wasn't.

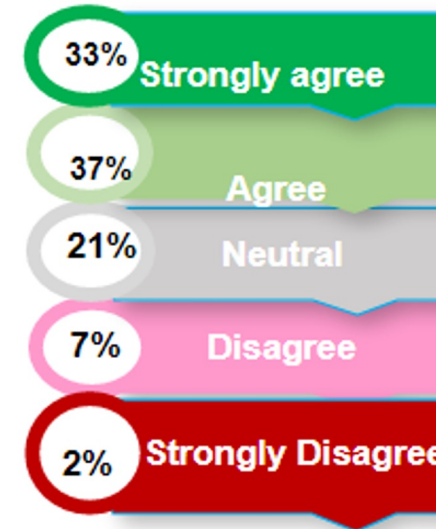
30 to 45 years, Female, Kisumu

- For most regions, job scams is the most common form of disinformation followed by death of prominent people.
- In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was been disinformation about vaccine efficacy and safety.

## Impact of social media on society



## Agreement that social media companies are responsible for causing harm in Kenya through disinformation



Internet users in Kenya feel that social media has led to more good than bad and therefore more beneficial. Regardless of these benefits, most of the respondents agree that social media companies are responsible for causing harm in Kenya through disinformation.

- Half of the sample feel that social media has had a positive impact on society. Major benefits mentioned were entertainment, employment opportunities and connecting with family and friends.
- One-third of the sample feel that social media has had a negative impact on society. There is generally concern for all the harms mentioned with harm to children having the highest levels of concern followed by access to graphical content.

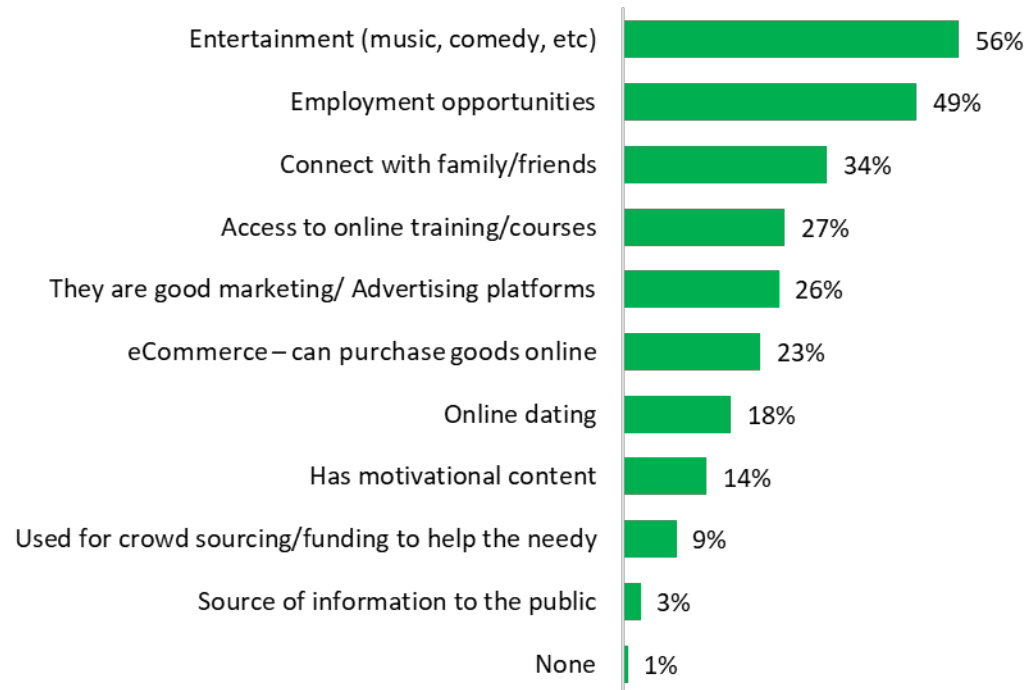
### Social media impact on society



Base = 1992

Q: What has been the impact of social media on society, would you say that it has had?

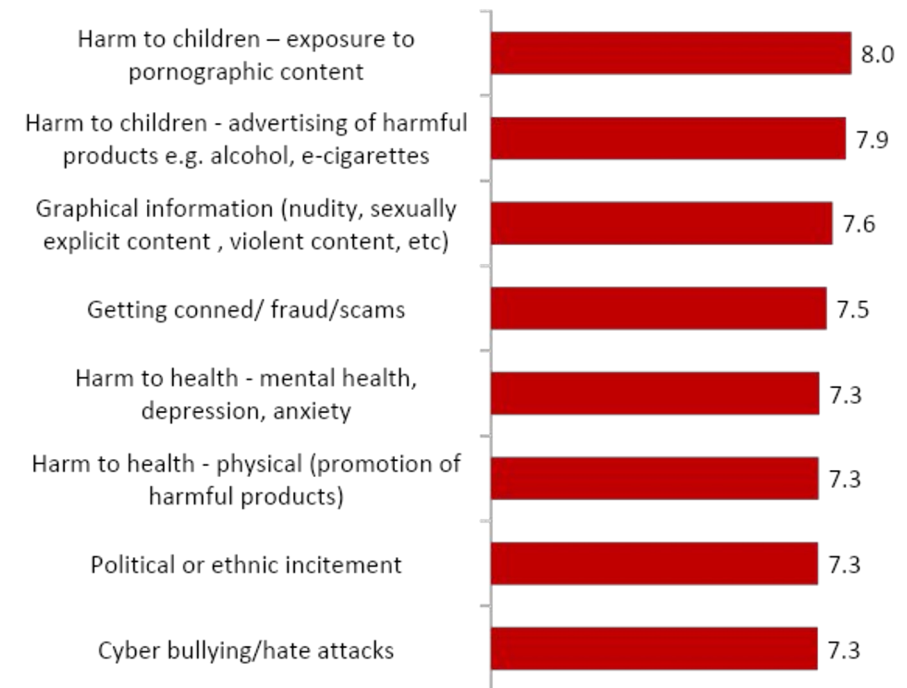
### Social media benefits



Base = 1975 (Those who mentioned benefits of social media)

Q: What benefits can you associate with social media?

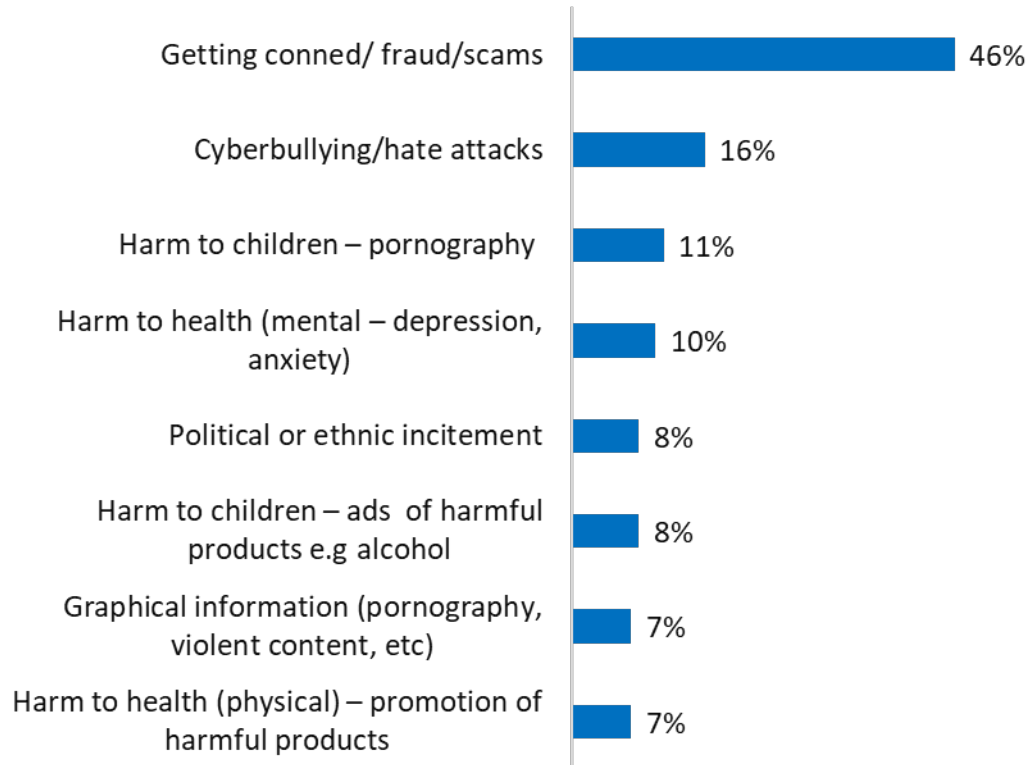
### Social media harms most concerned about 1=not concerned; 10=very concerned Prompted mentions



Base = 1992

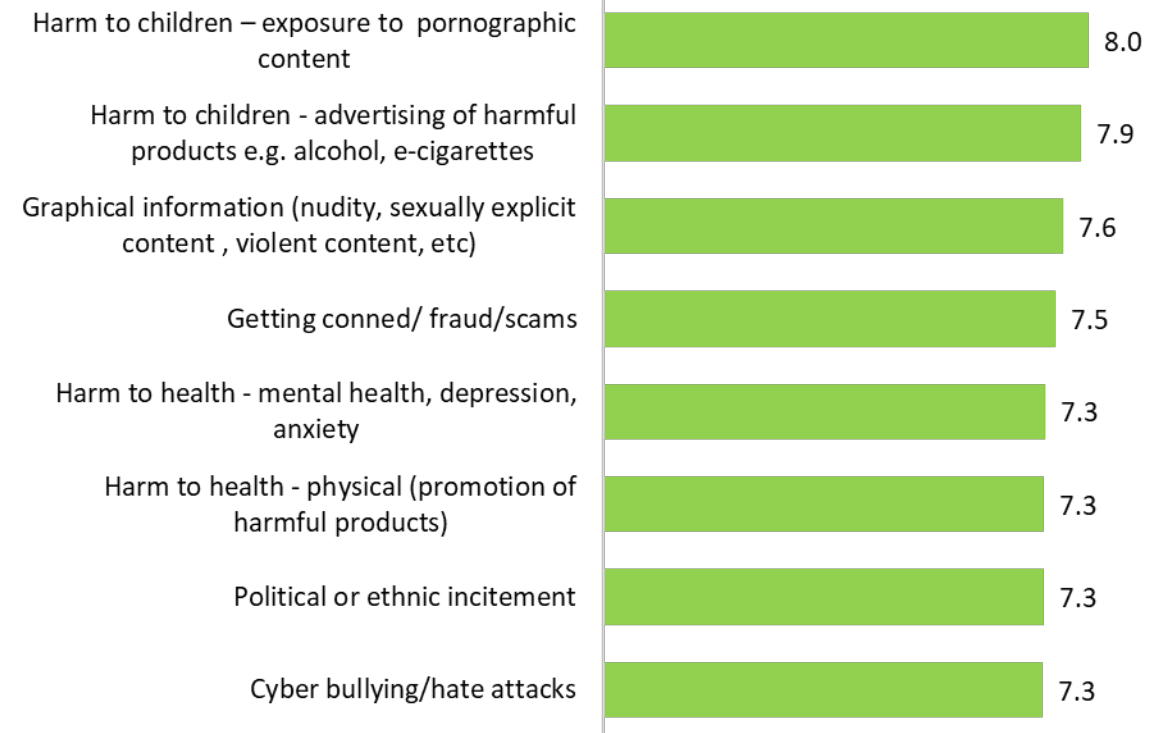
Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is a not concerned and 10 is a very concerned about them?

## Nature of social media harms experienced



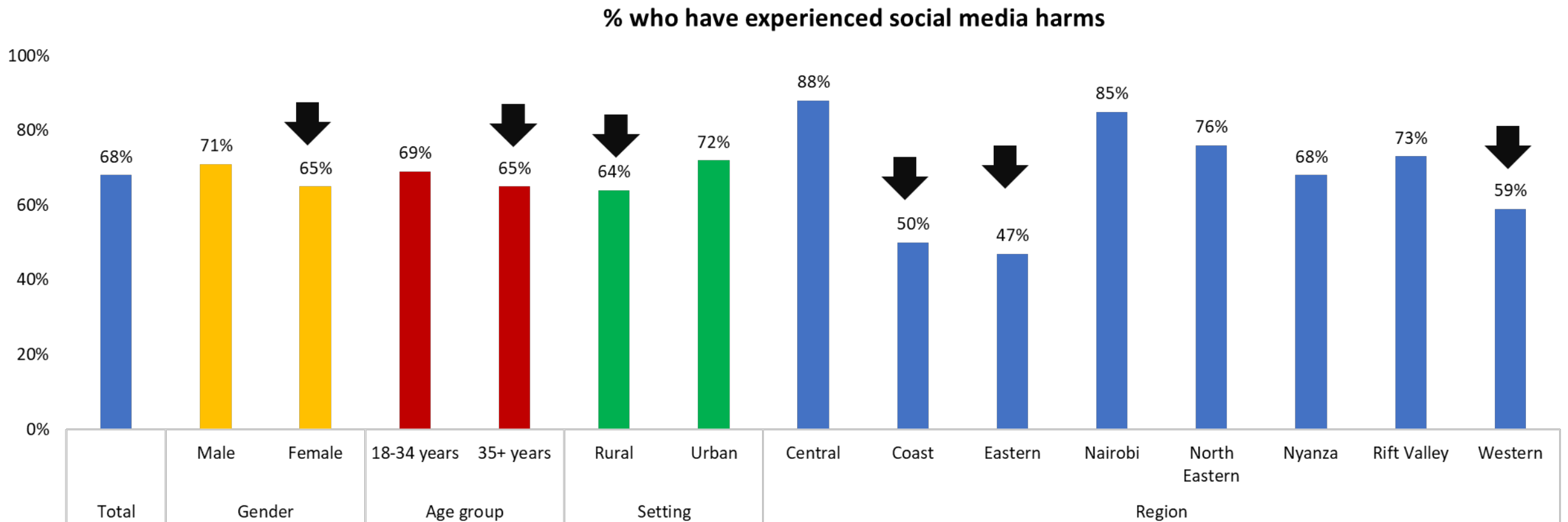
**68%**  
exposed to social media harms

## Social media harms most concerned about 1=not concerned; 10=very concerned



Majority of internet users has been exposed to harm on social media with the most common one being a victim of a scam or fraud. Harm to children raises the highest concerns followed by exposure to graphical content.

- A majority of Kenyans have experienced social media harms. The incidence of this is higher amongst males, urban respondents and predominantly those living in Central and Nairobi Regions.



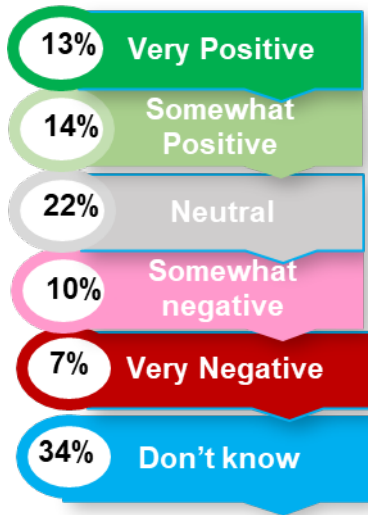
Base = All Respondents

\*Base of North Eastern is very low and subject to high margins of error

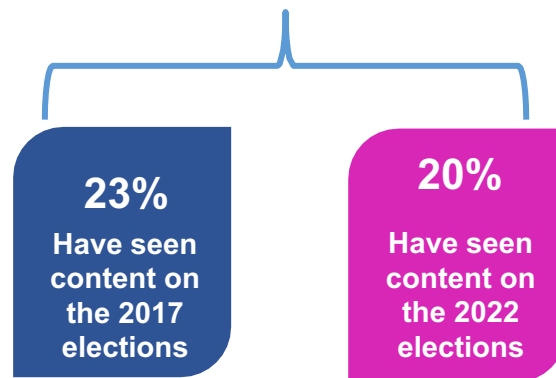
Q: Out of these harms, which ones have you or a family member experienced of in the last year?



## Effect of social media on Kenya's political climate



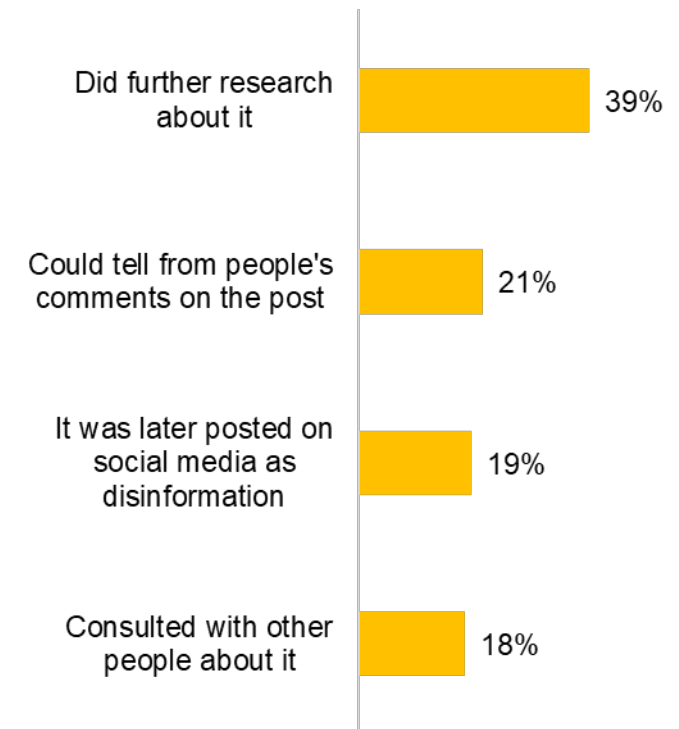
## Seen disinformation about the elections



## Discerning disinformation

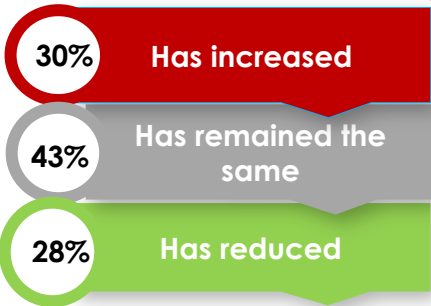


## How disinformation is discerned



- ❑ Almost one-third of the respondents have a positive view of the effect of social media on Kenya's political climate whilst the same proportion are not knowledgeable. The exposure to disinformation on the elections, the incidence is low for both the 2017 and 2022 elections.
- ❑ Majority of respondents rate their ability to identify disinformation quite highly. They also indicate that this is mainly achieved by researching more on the content or reviewing other internet users comments on the post.

## Trends in online attacks on women in politics



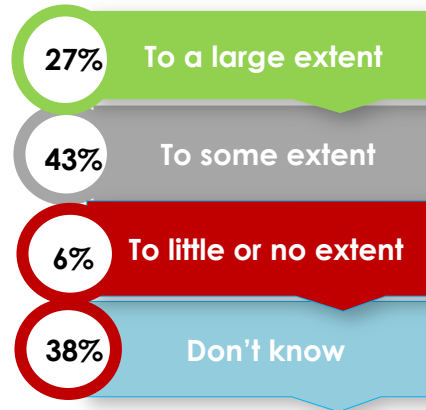
### Reasons for indicating there has been an increase

- 16% no regulations in place
- 16% gender inequalities
- 11% increased visibility of women in leadership that attracts attacks

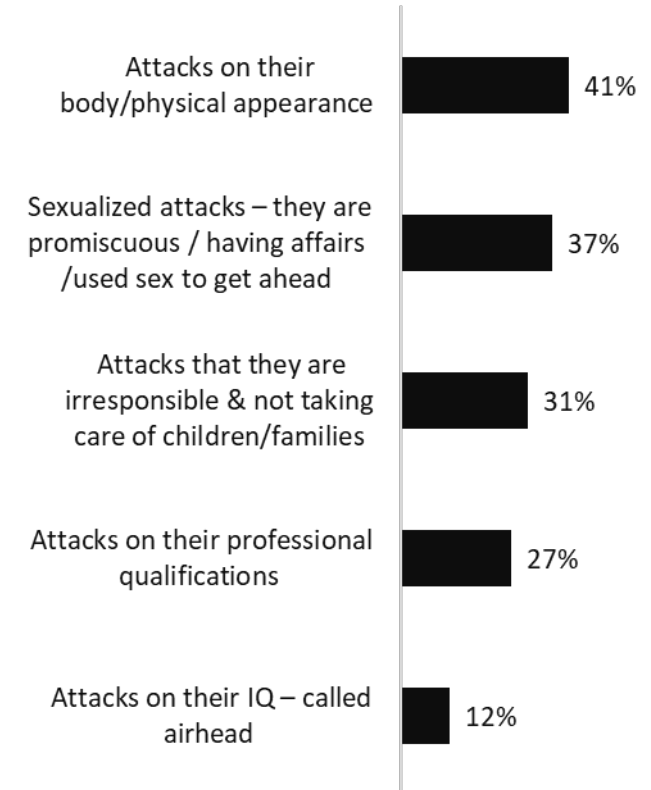
### Reasons for indicating there has been a decrease

- 27% regulations in place
- 13% public sensitization on the vice
- 13% more gender equality

## Agreement that social media creates an environment for spreading rumors or harmful content about women



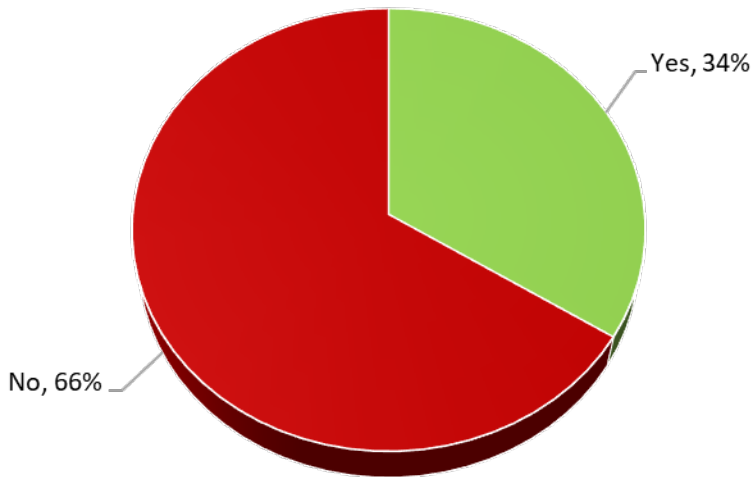
## Forms of attack against women in political leadership on social media



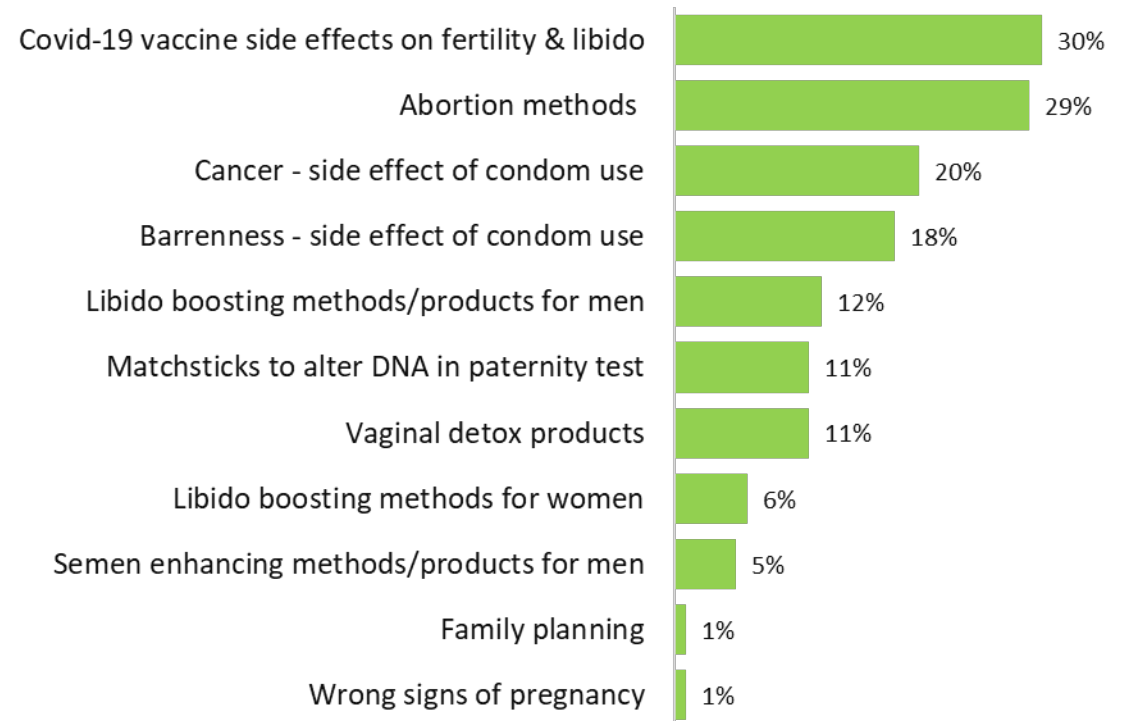
- 70% of Kenyans believes that social media creates an environment for spreading rumors or harmful content about women (27% believe this to a large extent)
- About one-third of respondents feel that the online attacks on women are on the increase.
- Attacks on body/appearance and sexualized attacks are most notable online compared to attacks on intelligence and qualifications.

- At least one third of respondents have come across SRH disinformation on social media. There were no differences in the exposure of disinformation across men and women. Covid-19 impact on fertility and libido tops the list of what respondents have been exposed to. This is followed closely by disinformation on abortion methods.

% who have come across fake SRH information on social media

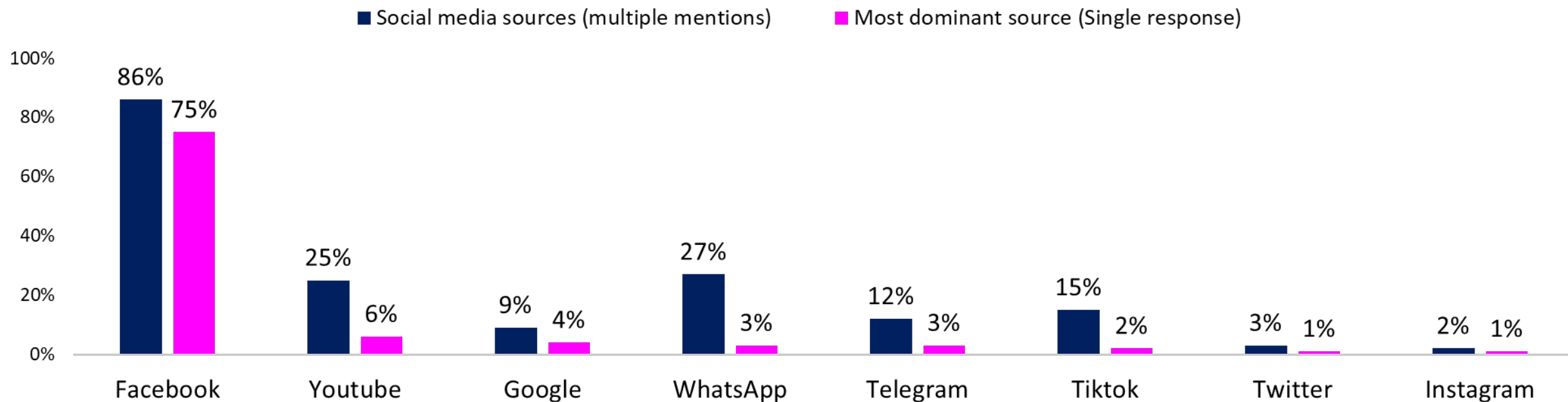


SRH disinformation personally viewed on social media sites



- Facebook tops the list in terms of which platform Kenyans report being exposed to SRH disinformation, followed by WhatsApp and then YouTube.

### Social media platforms associated with SRH disinformation

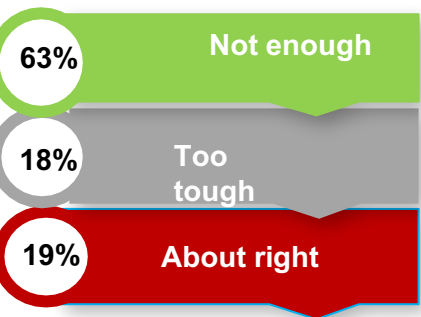


Base = 681 (Those who have viewed SRH information on social media)

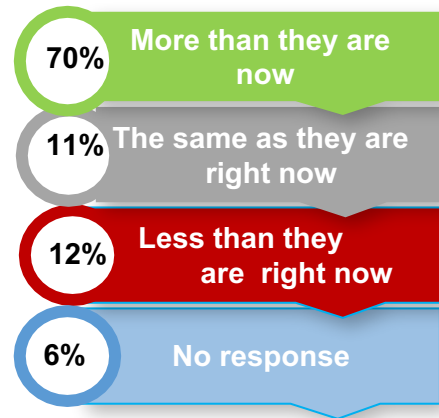
Q: Which social media platforms are commonly used to spread disinformation on sexual reproductive health?

Q: Out of those mentioned, which one would you say is the MOST dominant?

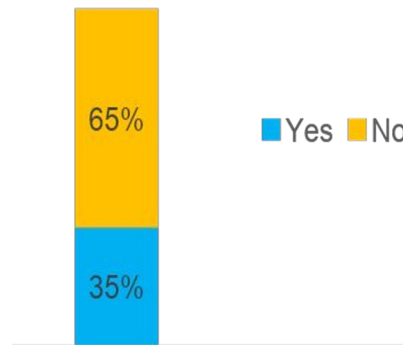
Sentiments toward actions taken by social media companies to remove harmful content



Support for regulation on social media

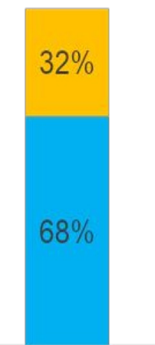


Social media platforms self regulation



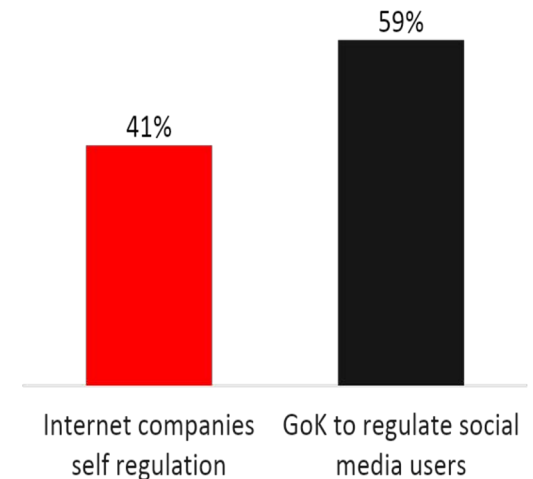
Can social media platforms can protect users from harm without GoK intervention?

Concerned about GoK control



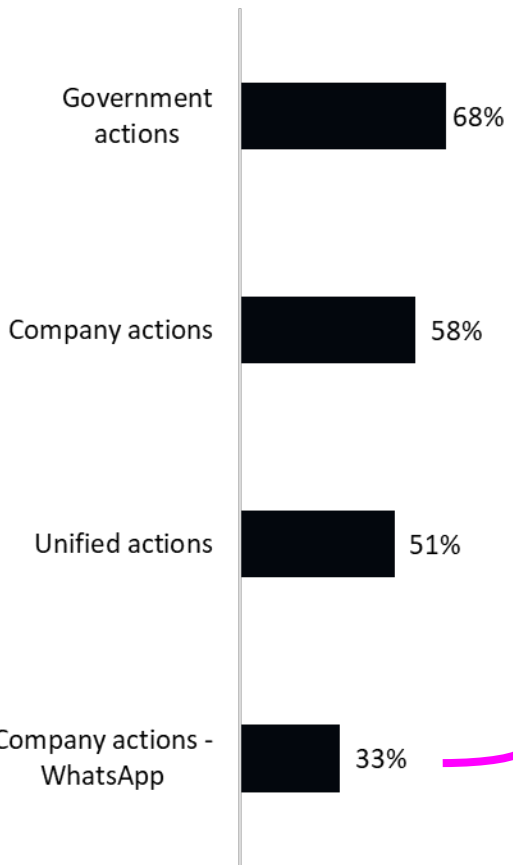
Are you concerned that GoK is going too far in terms of control of the internet/social media?

Preferred approach for social media content regulation

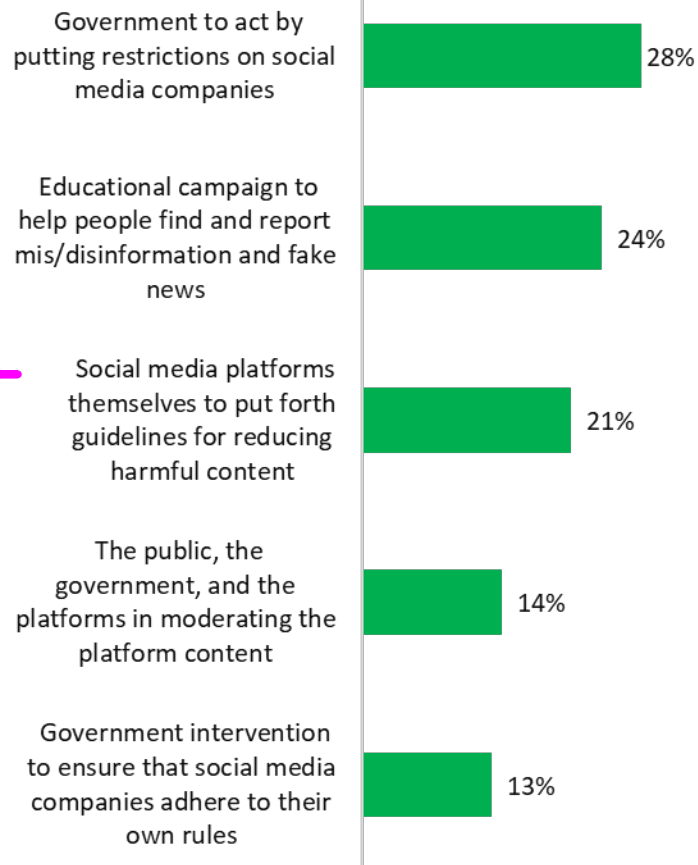


- ❑ A majority of internet users feel that the actions taken by social media companies to remove harmful content are not enough.
- ❑ A majority feel that social media companies should be regulated more that they are currently.
- ❑ Preference is for the Government of Kenya (GoK) to regulate social media content, but without overreach.

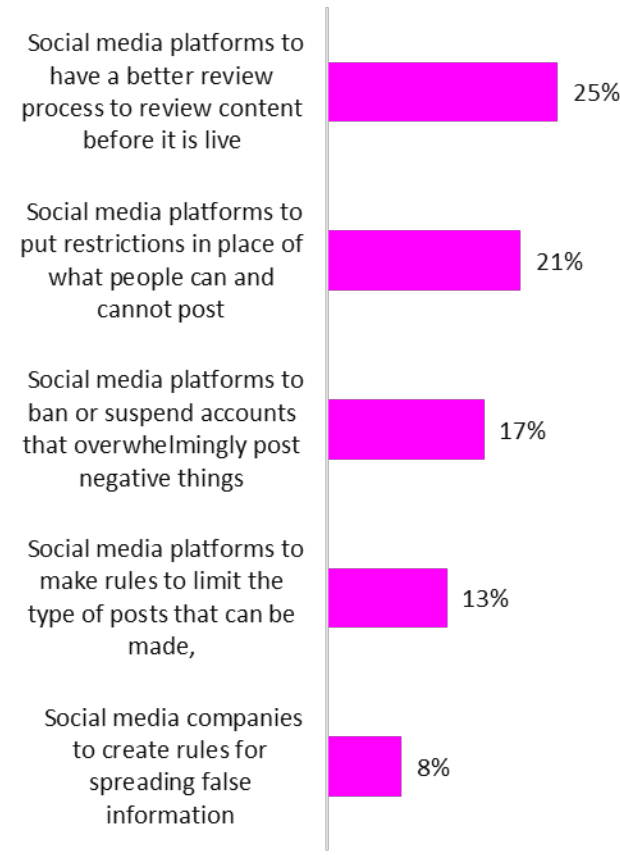
### Preferred actions



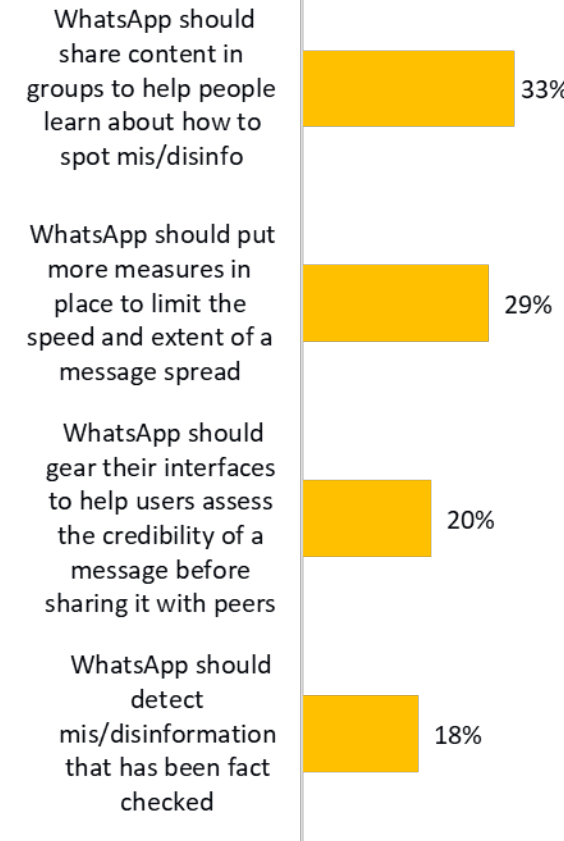
### Preferred government & unified actions (prompted)



### Social Media Company Actions (prompted)



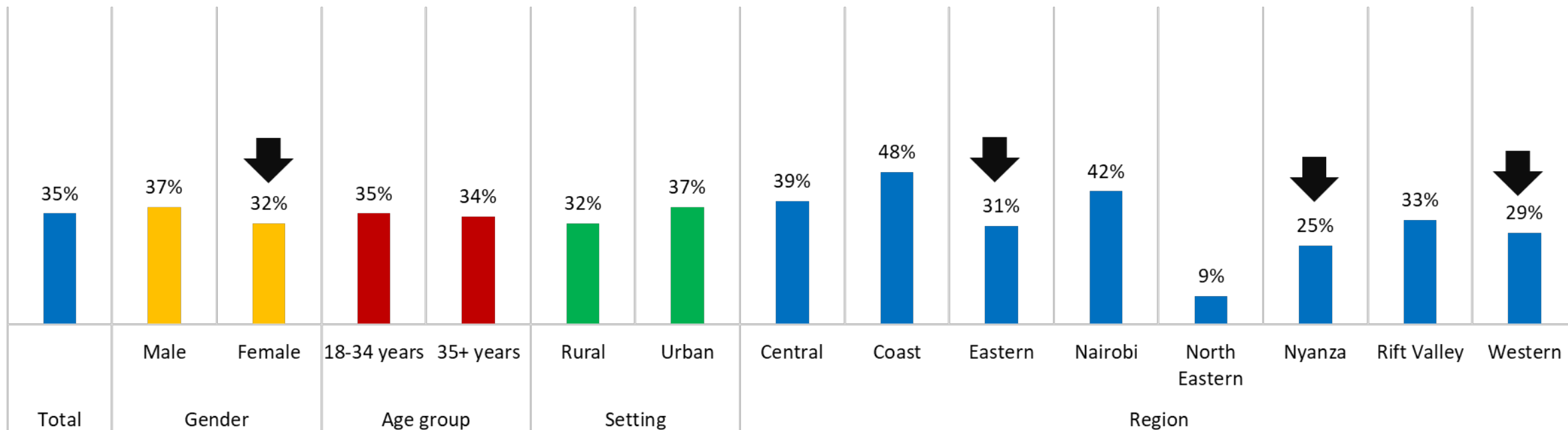
### Company Actions – WhatsApp (prompted)



□ The most preferred action to make the internet safer is for the Government of Kenya to regulate social media companies within reason.

- A majority of Kenyans feel that social media platforms self-regulation cannot protect users from harm without government intervention. Female respondents and those living in the urban have high mentions of not believing social media platforms can protect users from harm without government intervention. Across the regions, those living in North Eastern (91%) region had the highest number of respondents who felt that social media platforms alone cannot protect users.

**% who do feel that social media self regulation can protect internet users**

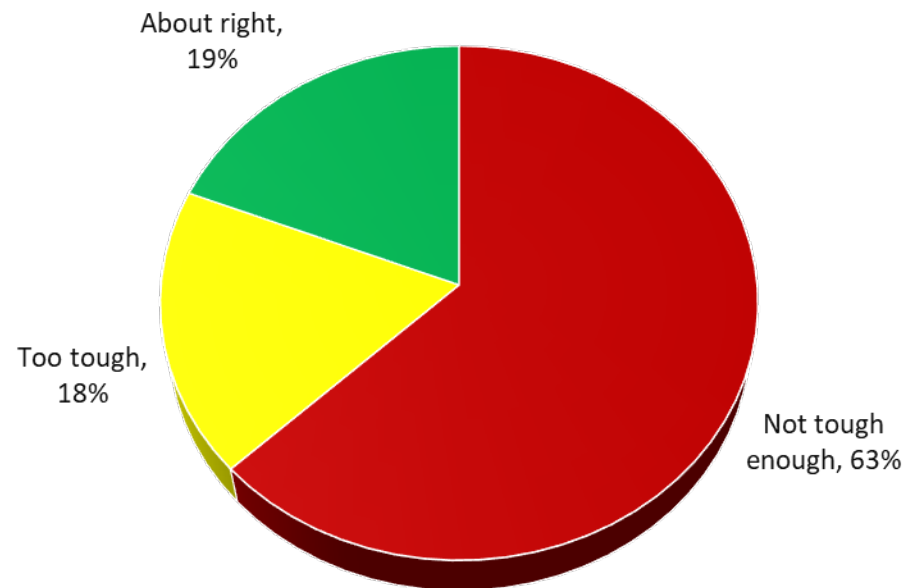


Q: Do you believe that the social media platforms alone can protect users from harm without government intervention?

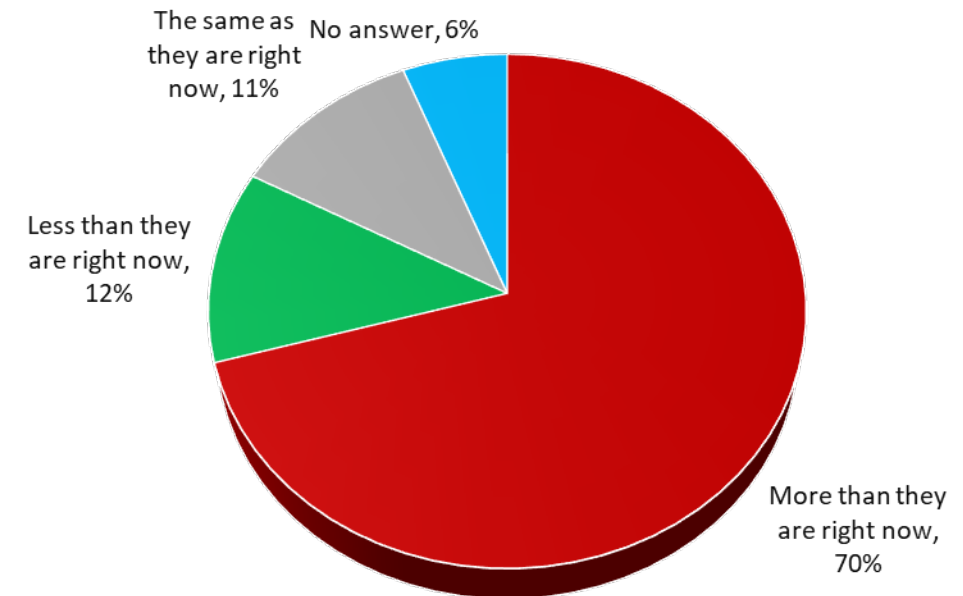
Base = 1992

- A large majority feel that there is poor content regulation by social media companies. As a result, a majority have low support for self regulation by social media companies.

Content moderation by social media companies



Support for regulation on social media companies



Q: When it comes to removing content from websites, social media platforms and apps that people consider to be harmful, do you think that the actions taken by social media companies are?

Base = 1992

Q: To what extent do you think that social media companies should be regulated?



### Poor content regulation by social media companies

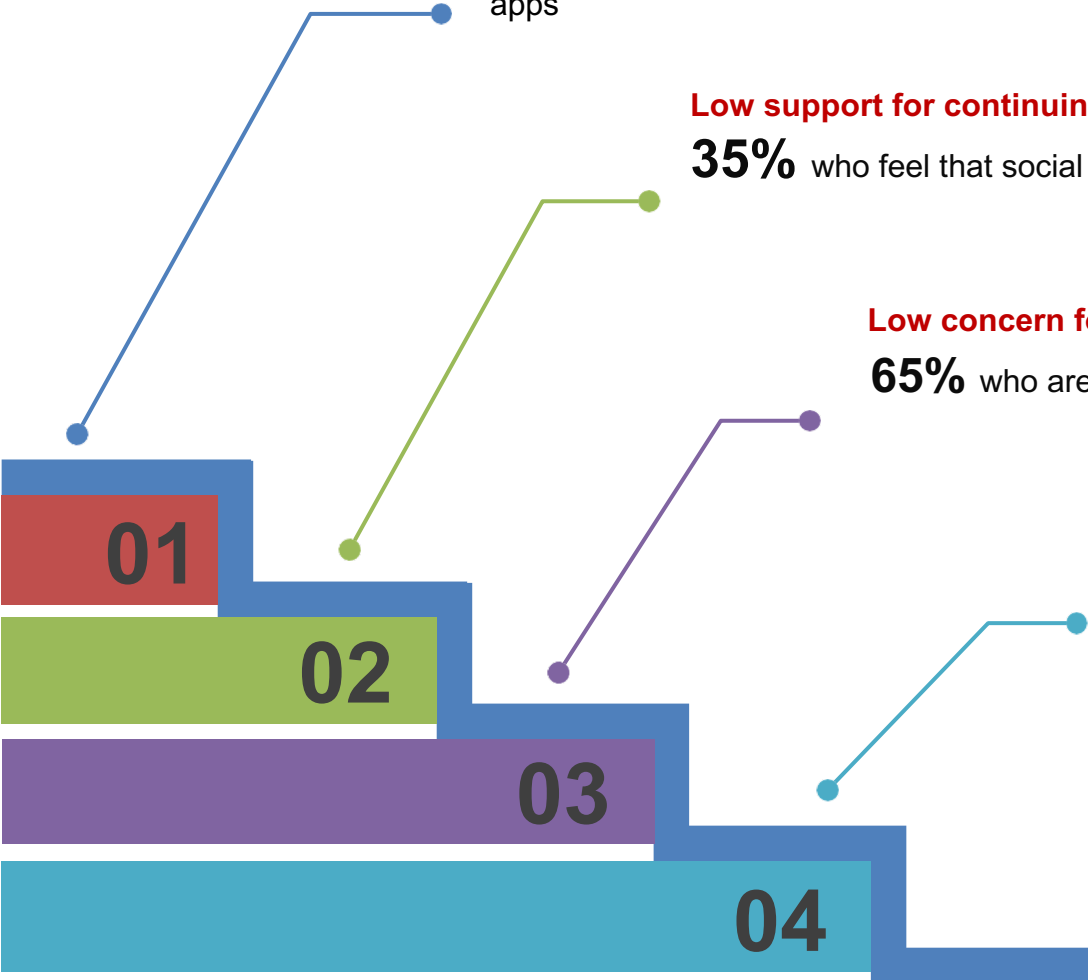
**63%** who feel that social media companies not doing enough to remove harmful content from websites, social media platforms and apps

### Low support for continuing self regulation by social media companies

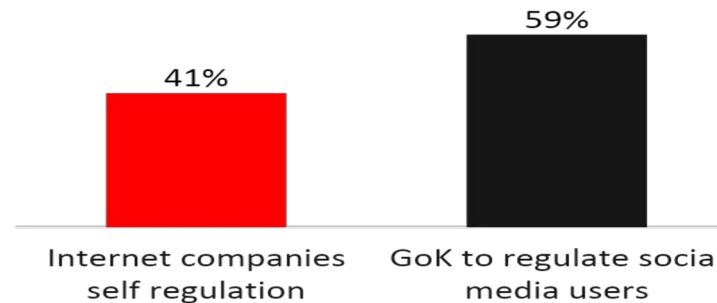
**35%** who feel that social media platforms alone can protect users from harm without government intervention

### Low concern for Govt regulation of social media

**65%** who are NOT concerned on GoK's control of the internet and social media platforms



### Preferred approach for social media content regulation



- In the public opinion research process, Kenyans start out as positive about social media, believing that users are more responsible for reducing exposure to online harm. However, over the course of the discussion, the public expresses serious concern about the way social media contributes to creating harm for Kenyans. There is a strong appetite for more information about how the system works, and solutions from a variety of stakeholders (government, social media companies, citizens).
- Kenyans have experienced and are sensitive to certain online harms - getting conned online, job scams, graphic content circulating, the impact on children, damage to health and gender-based attacks. Women identify social media harms with respect to reproductive health issues and report being exposed to more disinformation on this topic.
- **Overwhelmingly, Kenyans do not believe that the social media platforms are doing enough to protect consumers and citizens from harm. They do not think the platforms alone will protect them without reasonable government intervention because intervention will cut their profits. But they do not want government overreach.**

## Kenyans overwhelmingly want several actions:

- Kenyans report wanting the government to act by putting reasonable restrictions on social media companies
- They want the platforms themselves to put forth guidelines for reducing harmful content
- They want educational campaigns to help people find and report mis/disinformation and fake news
- They see a role for themselves, the government, and the platforms in moderating the platform content
- They believe there should be government intervention to ensure that social media companies adhere to their own rules (but not government overreach)
- They want platforms to put reasonable restrictions in place on what people can and cannot post, as well as have a better review process to review content before it is live
- They want social media companies to make rules to limit the type of posts that can be made, ban or suspend accounts that overwhelmingly post negative things, create rules for spreading false information and have a stronger review process before videos go live



**Thank you**