



Latino Misinformation: Exposure & Risk

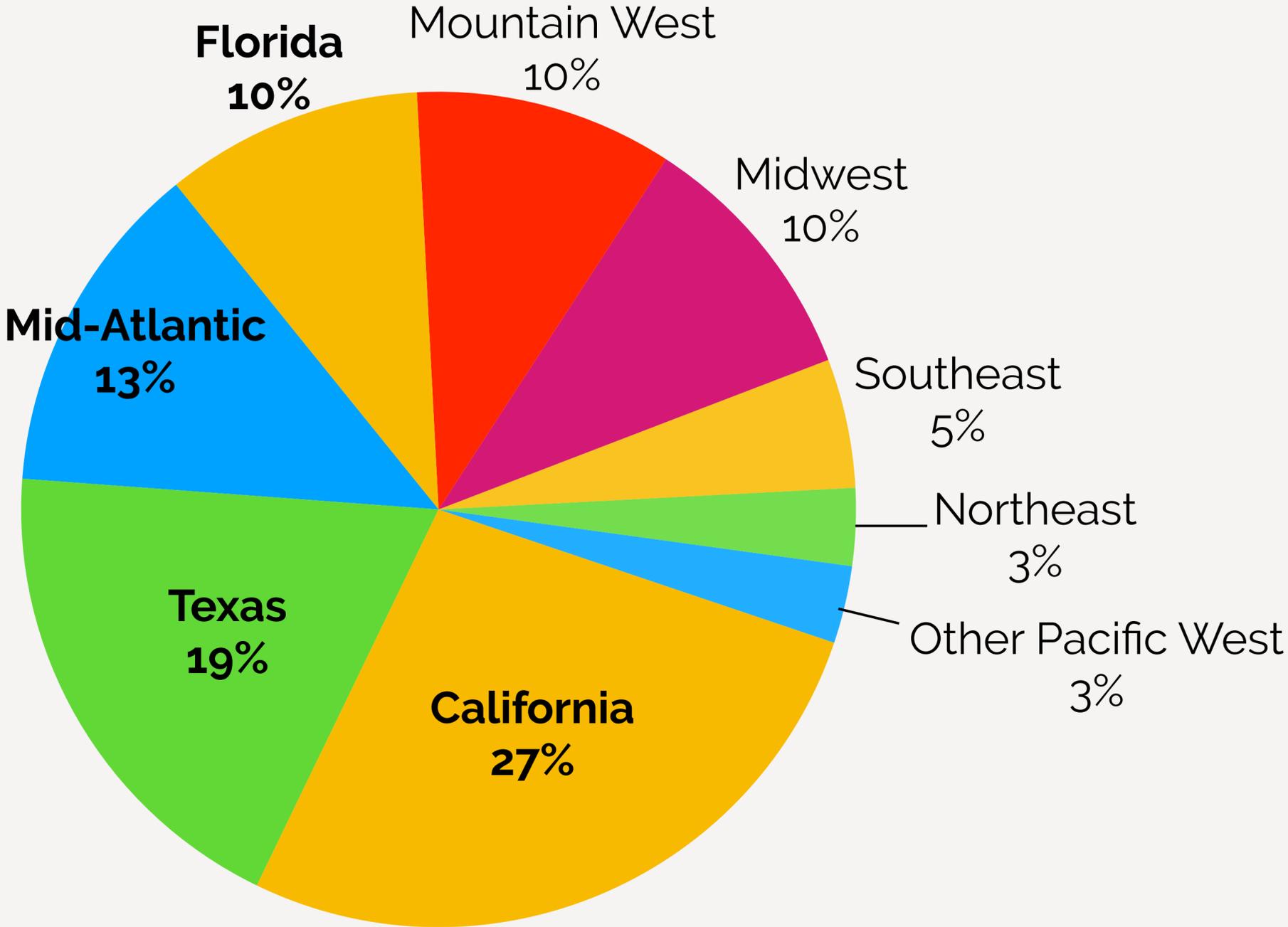
*Jan 24-Feb 2, 2022 national survey of
Hispanic adults*



Methodology

- Online survey of **2400 Hispanic adults**, conducted January 25-February 2 by Equis Research, in conjunction with Searchlight Research
- The survey was made available in both English and Spanish, and 19% of respondents chose to complete the survey in Spanish.
- Quotas were assigned to reflect the adult Hispanic population nationwide. The data were weighted by education, geography, gender, country of origin, country of birth, age, and party identification to ensure an accurate reflection of the population.
- Each respondent **randomly received 8 misinformation narratives** (2 each from sections on COVID, right-wing, left-wing, non-partisan false), plus 4 non-partisan true statements and 1 placebo.

% of Current Sample (Weighted)





Glossary

Misinformation: False, inaccurate or misleading information, regardless of intent. For this survey, we focused on narratives that were explicitly false.

Various terms to capture answers to whether respondents have HEARD a narrative and whether they believe it to be TRUE.

- **Familiarity:** whether individuals have HEARD a narrative
- **Exposure:** number of narratives that an individual is familiar with, out of 8 possible narratives.
- **Belief:** whether individuals believe a narrative is TRUE OR FALSE, regardless of if they've heard of it
- **Penetration:** percentage of individuals who have both heard a narrative AND are pretty/extremely sure it's true
- **Uncertainty:** an individual is uncertain if they believe a narrative could be true, could be false, or they are unsure about it

High-Priority: those who have both high exposure and moderate/high level of uncertainty, who we recommend for increased attention based on this study



Narratives Tested - COVID

[Some people say that...]

1. The Covid-19 **vaccine is more dangerous** than the Covid-19 virus itself.
2. **Kids can't get sick** from Covid-19.
3. Those who have received the Covid-19 vaccine are at **risk of death if given anesthesia** for a surgery.
4. The Covid-19 vaccine has a **microchip** in it to track those who have been vaccinated.



Narratives Tested - Right-Wing

[Some people say that...]

1. Joe **Biden is a socialist** who is friendly with Latin American leftists like Nicolas Maduro.
2. President **Trump won the 2020 election** and Democrats stole it for Joe Biden.
3. Kamala Harris **refused to be sworn into the Senate on the Bible.**
4. **Antifa, a left-wing group, was secretly responsible** for the disruption at the US Capitol on January 6th, 2021.



Narratives Tested - Left-Wing

[Some people say that...]

1. The US is trying to **overthrow the government of Nicaragua**.
2. **Police pretended to be protestors/Antifa** and were the ones that actually caused damage during the Black Lives Matters protests in the summer of 2020.
3. President **Trump faked his Covid-19 diagnosis** in order to help his chances at reelection.
4. Donald **Trump worked with the Russians** to steal the presidency in 2016.



Narratives Tested - Non-Partisan (False)

[Some people say that...]

1. **Genetically modified foods** cause disease and can increase your risk of cancer.
2. Giving kids **vaccines can cause autism**.
3. The **moon landing was faked**.
4. NASA and other government agencies are hiding from the public the fact that **the Earth is flat**.



Narratives Tested - Non-Partisan (True)

[Some people say that...]

1. The National Security Agency **(NSA) has the authority to spy** on Americans' phone calls, text messages, and emails.
2. **Parents can go to jail** if their kids miss too much school
3. The US government **experimented on African American men** who had syphilis.
4. Jeffrey **Epstein**, a wealthy businessman accused of sex trafficking minors, died in prison under suspicious circumstances.



Narratives Tested - Placebo (Invented)

[Some people say that...]

1. The government is planning on **selling Alaska back to Russia** to pay off the national debt.
2. Amazon **delivery drones** will be supplied by the US Military.

Takeaways



Top Takeaways - 1

The landscape of misinformation as captured in this survey is characterized by:

1. **a high level of familiarity** with many of the narratives we tested
2. **a great deal of uncertainty**; many Latinos don't know what to think about this information if/when they encounter it.



Top Takeaways - 2

Widespread uncertainty represents both a threat and an opportunity: it signals a healthy skepticism and an openness to persuasion

- Those who are both exposed and uncertain are not fringe news consumers: they are most likely to be getting their news and information on mainstream platforms.
- These Latinos tend to be women under the age of 50 who are less politically engaged.

It is politically engaged Hispanics who appear to be more exposed AND more believing.

- The findings suggest that hard partisans are quite willing to believe falsehoods about the opposing party (but Reps more so than Dems.)



Top Takeaways - 3

The most widespread narratives are often the most likely to be rejected, perhaps, we suspect, because these narratives have been publicly vetted — fact-checked multiple times and debunked by multiple outlets. We need platforms and media companies to continue to fact-check disinformation, especially in Spanish.



Top Takeaways - 4

Be careful about how we talk about “susceptibility” to disinformation. This isn’t just about education or engagement: in fact, those most likely to believe false narratives tend to be more politically engaged, college-educated and affluent.

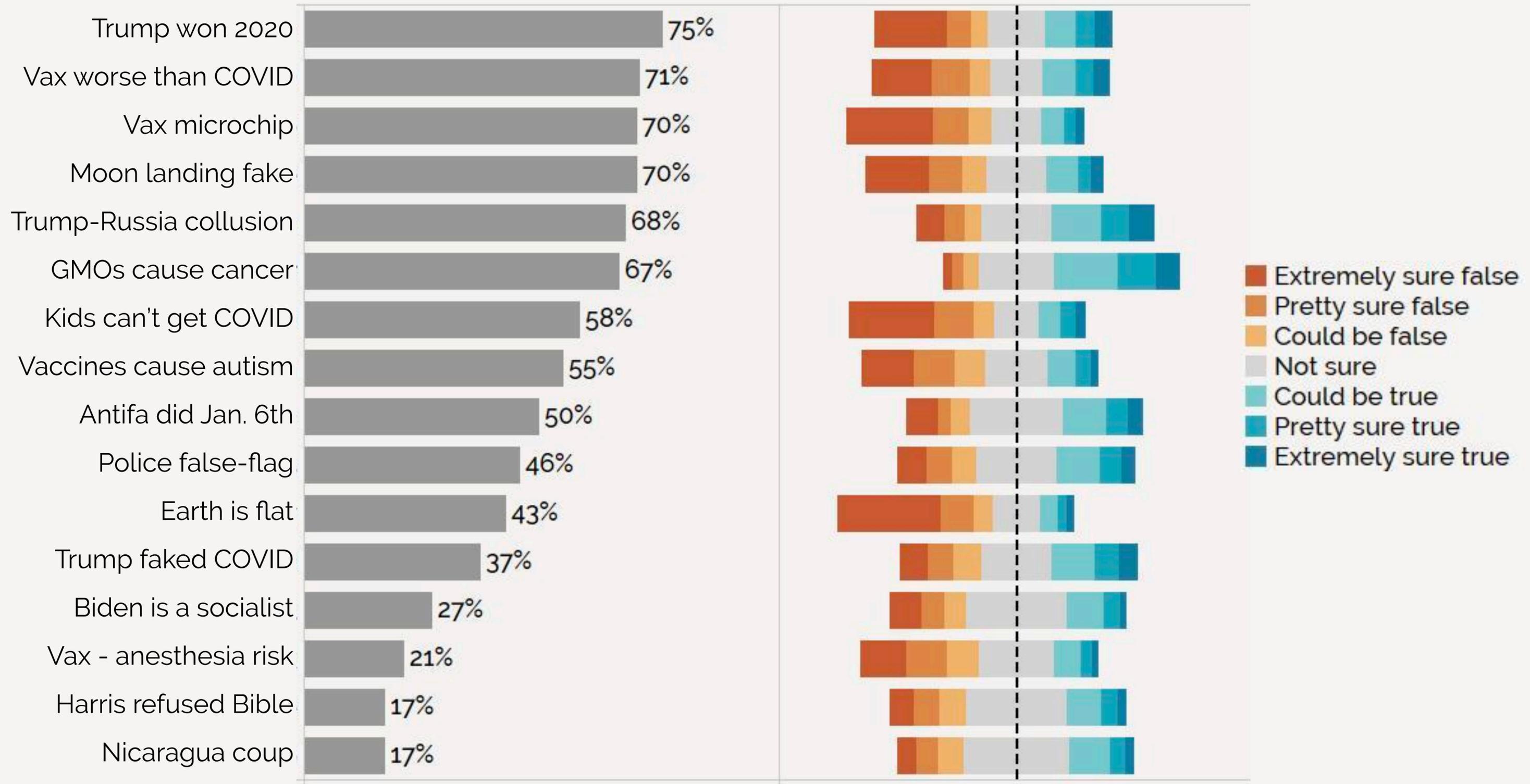
Those who are unsure what to believe are not being fooled, they are reacting skeptically to new, strange or contradictory information presented as fact.

Narrative Familiarity & Reach



There is a **high level of familiarity** with the misinformation and, at the same time, a great deal of **uncertainty** about whether these narratives are true or false.

All Respondents: Familiarity & Believability of Misinformation Narratives



% who have heard the narrative

how likely they think it's true / false

- Extremely sure false
- Pretty sure false
- Could be false
- Not sure
- Could be true
- Pretty sure true
- Extremely sure true

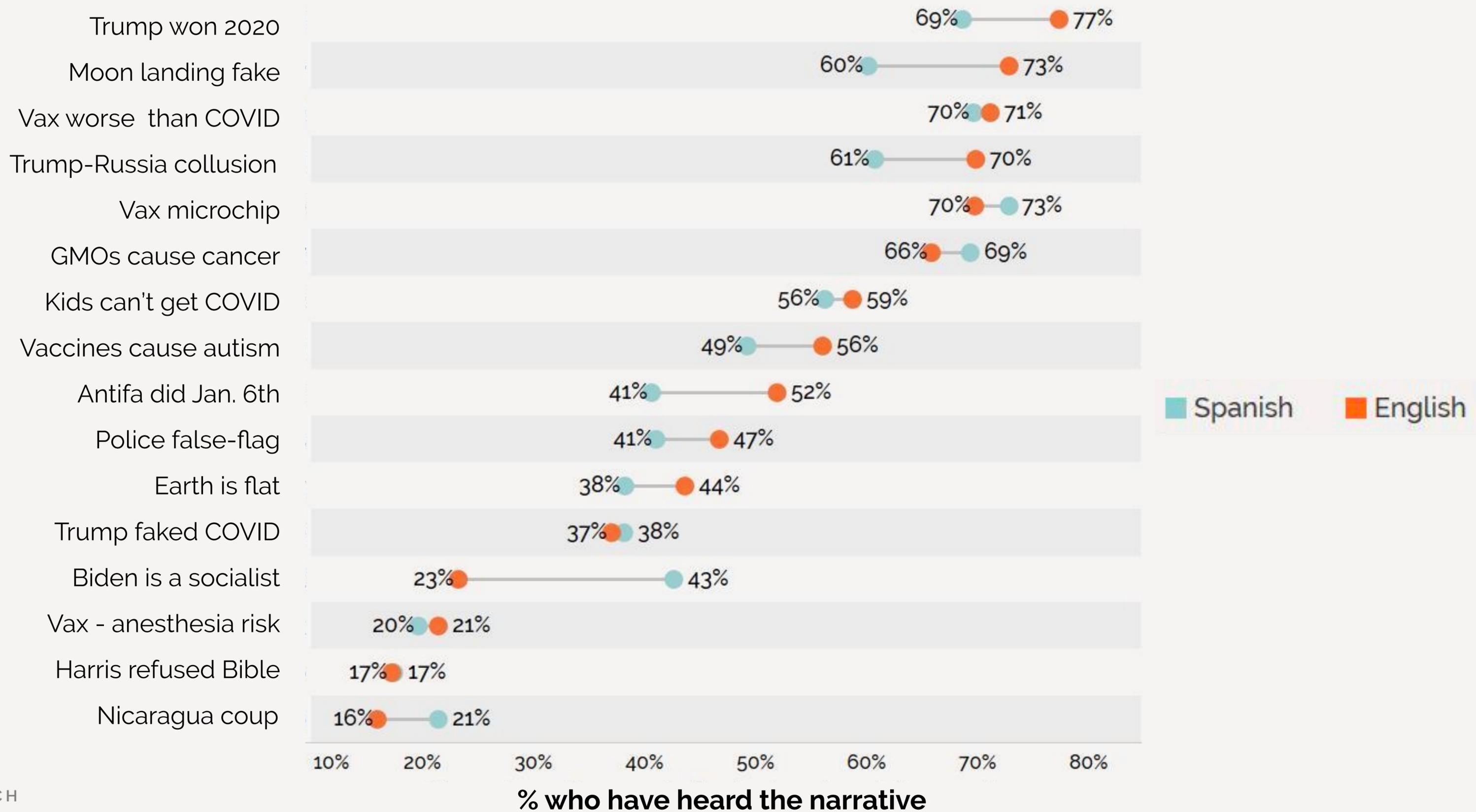


There are **differences between English and Spanish-dominant Latinos** in terms of their familiarity with misinformation narratives.

English-dominant much more likely to be familiar with both Trump-Russia collusion and Trump's Big Lie.

Among Spanish-dominant, one narrative sticks out as better-known: Biden as a socialist close to Latin American leftists.

Narrative Familiarity: Spanish vs. English interviews



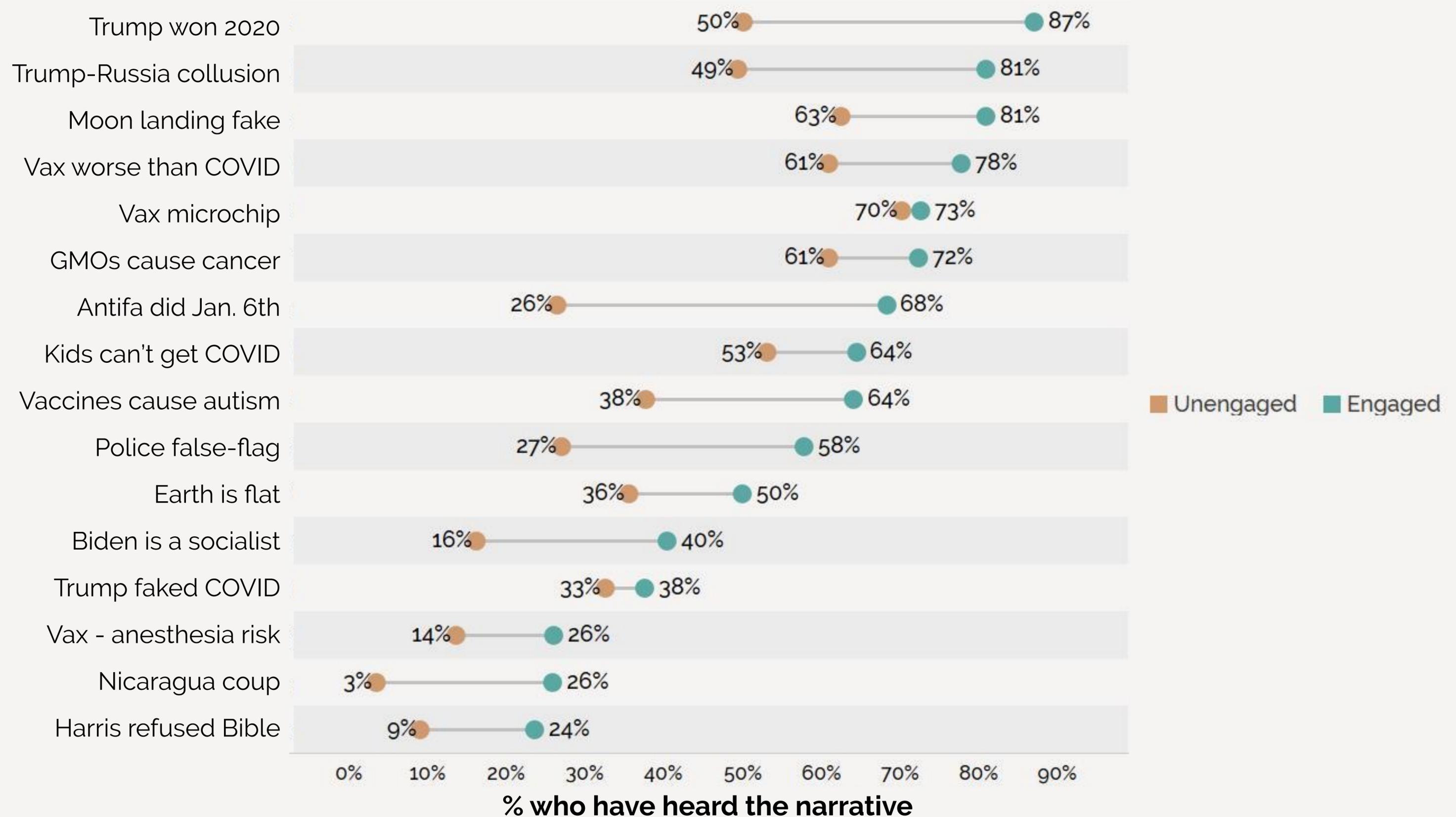


Those who are **politically-engaged**— who both say they are interested in politics and are registered to vote— are more familiar with every single narrative, some by a large margin.

The biggest differences are on **some of the most overtly political narratives**.

Narrative Familiarity: Engaged vs. Less-Engaged

Engagement defined by interest in politics + voter registration status



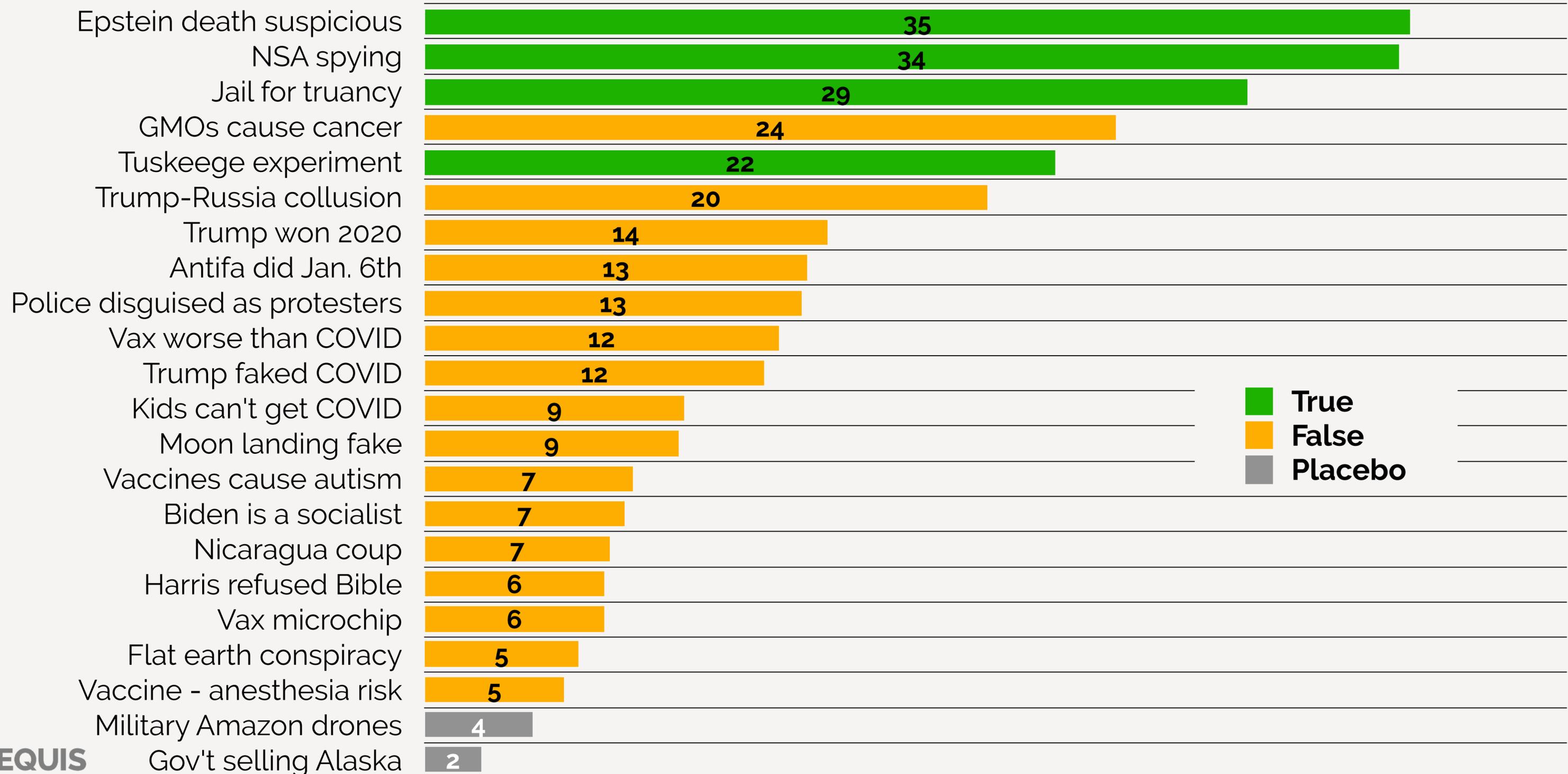


The world is not quite upside down yet. Generally speaking, false statements tended to penetrate less than true ones.

The crisis, as always, is on the margins, where dangerous narratives can do big damage among small segments; and it's in partisan circles, where false narratives seem to have more lift.

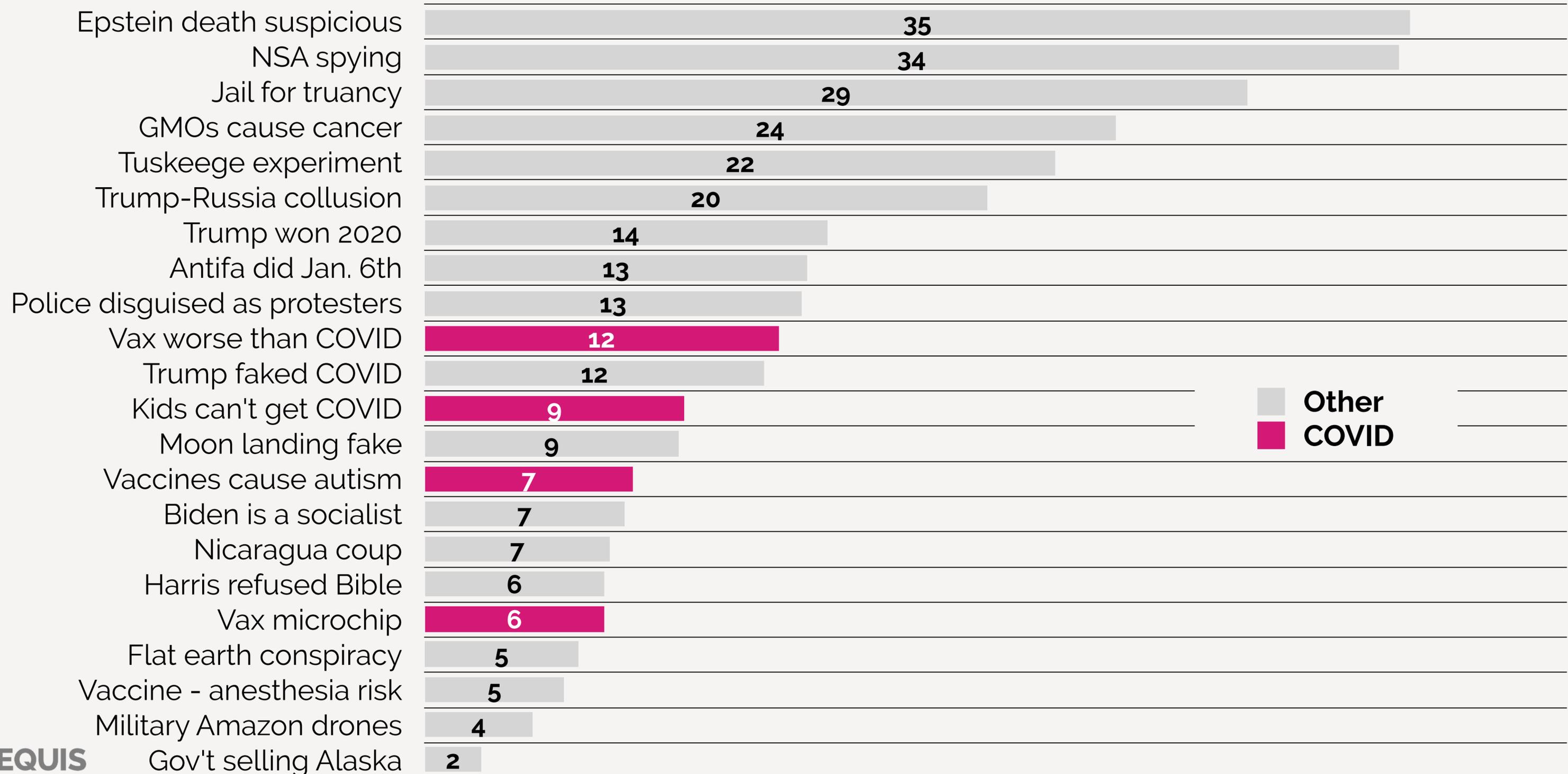
Narrative Penetration

% who've heard narrative + pretty/extremely sure it's true



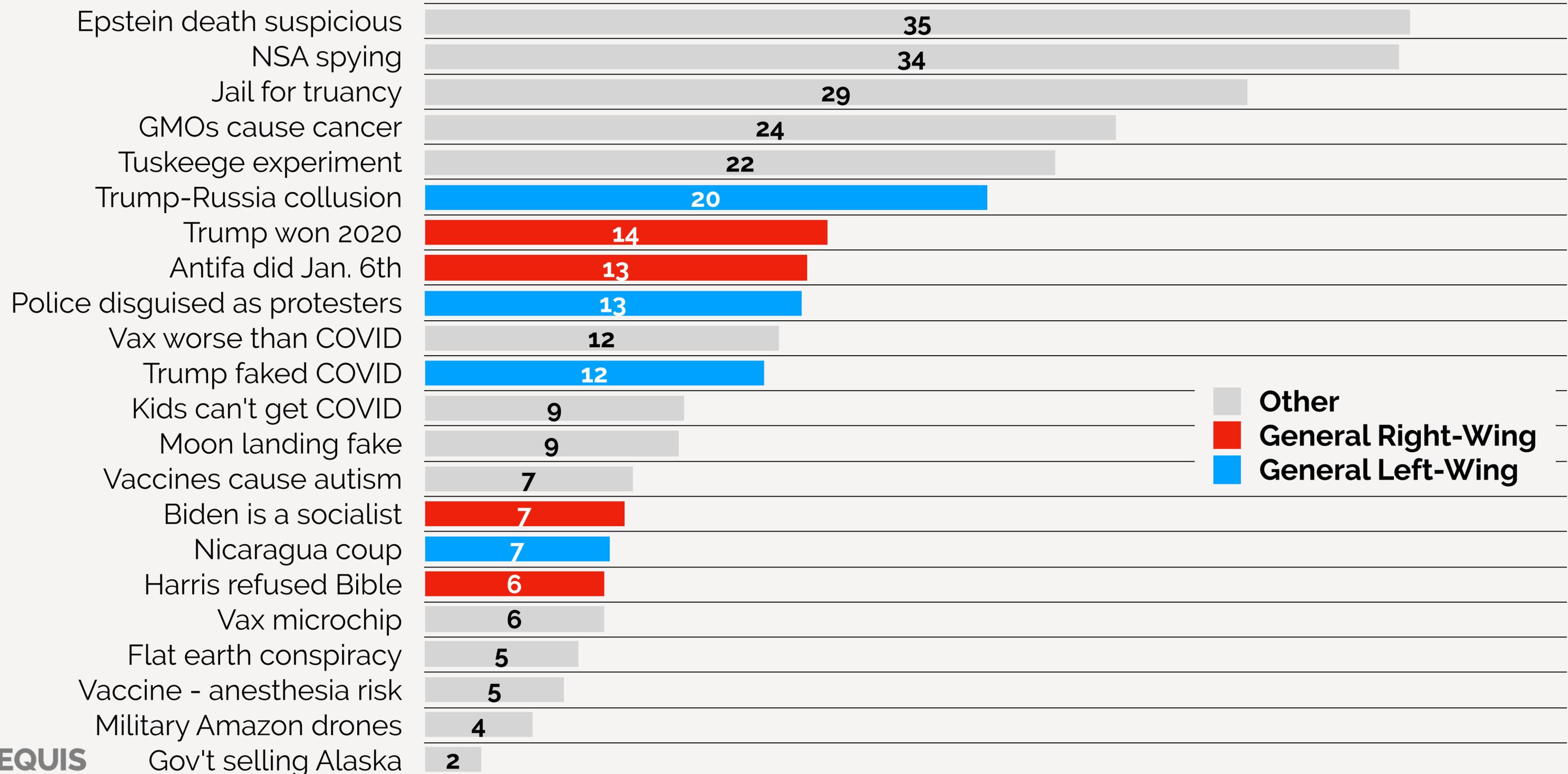
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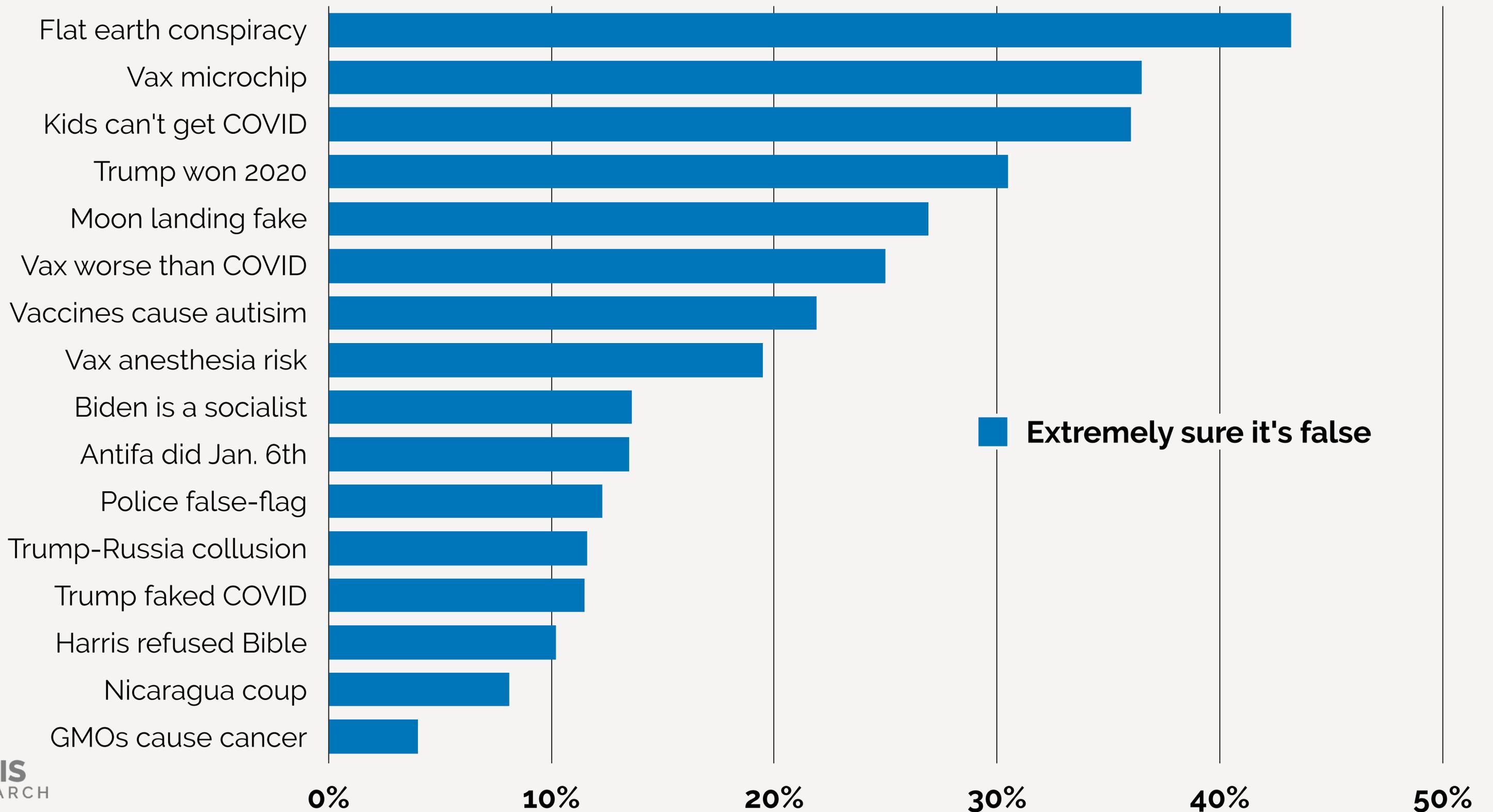


Narrative Penetration

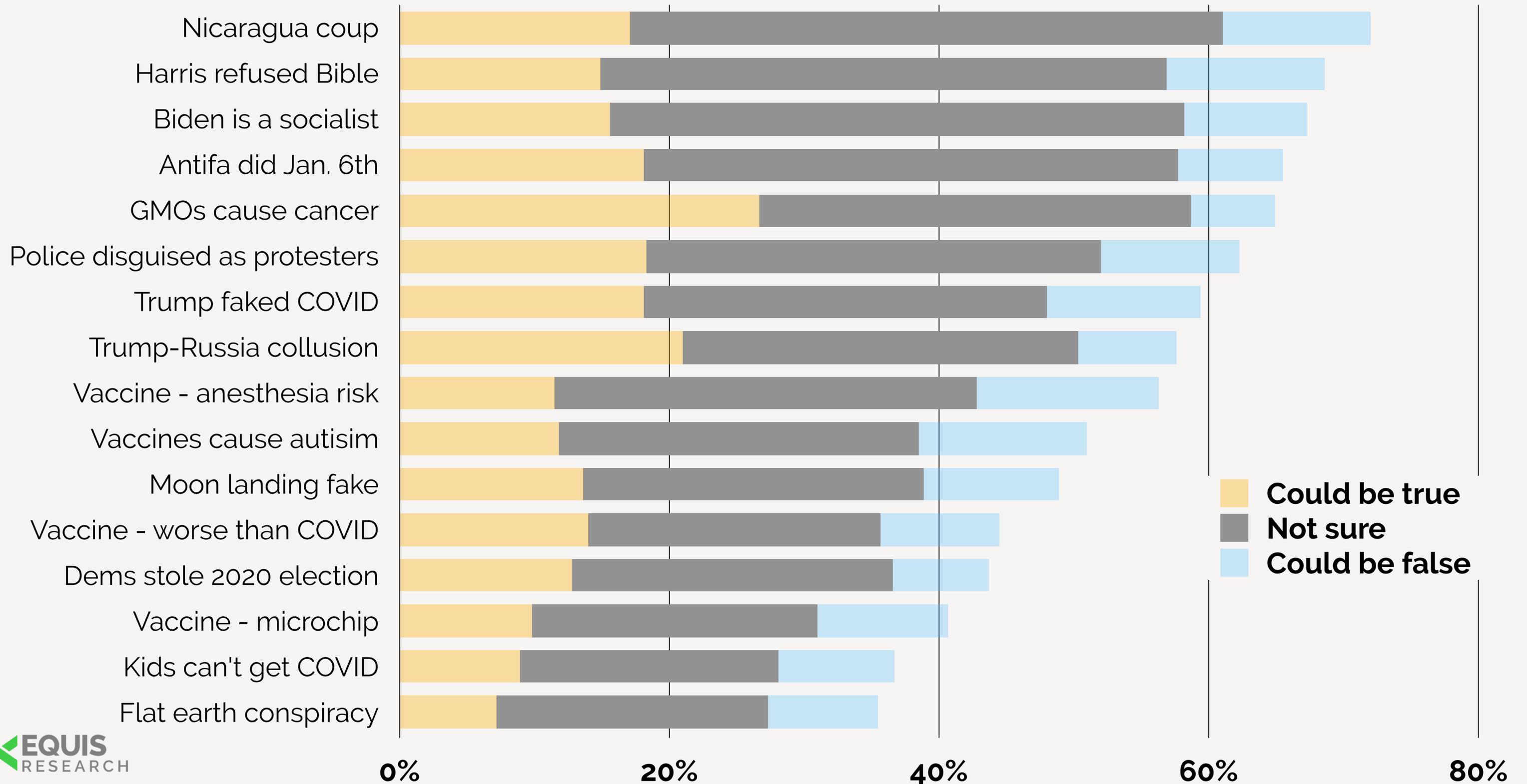
% who've heard narrative + pretty/extremely sure it's true



Significant variation in outright rejection of narratives



Significant variation in **uncertainty** about whether narratives are true or false



Individuals

Politically engaged Latino voters report high exposure to misinformation

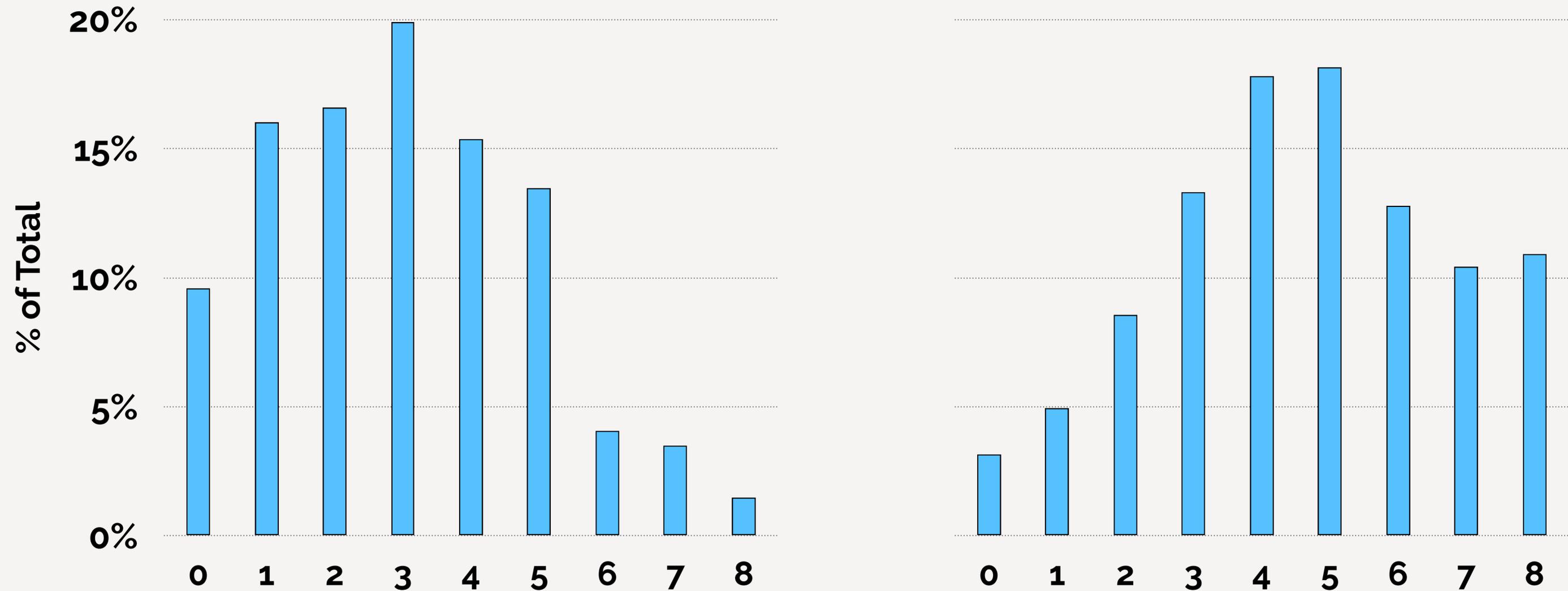
Low-engagement group less likely to say they've heard false narratives; mixed levels of exposure

Distribution of misinformation exposure

By Level of Engagement (Voter Registration/Interest in Politics)

Low Engagement

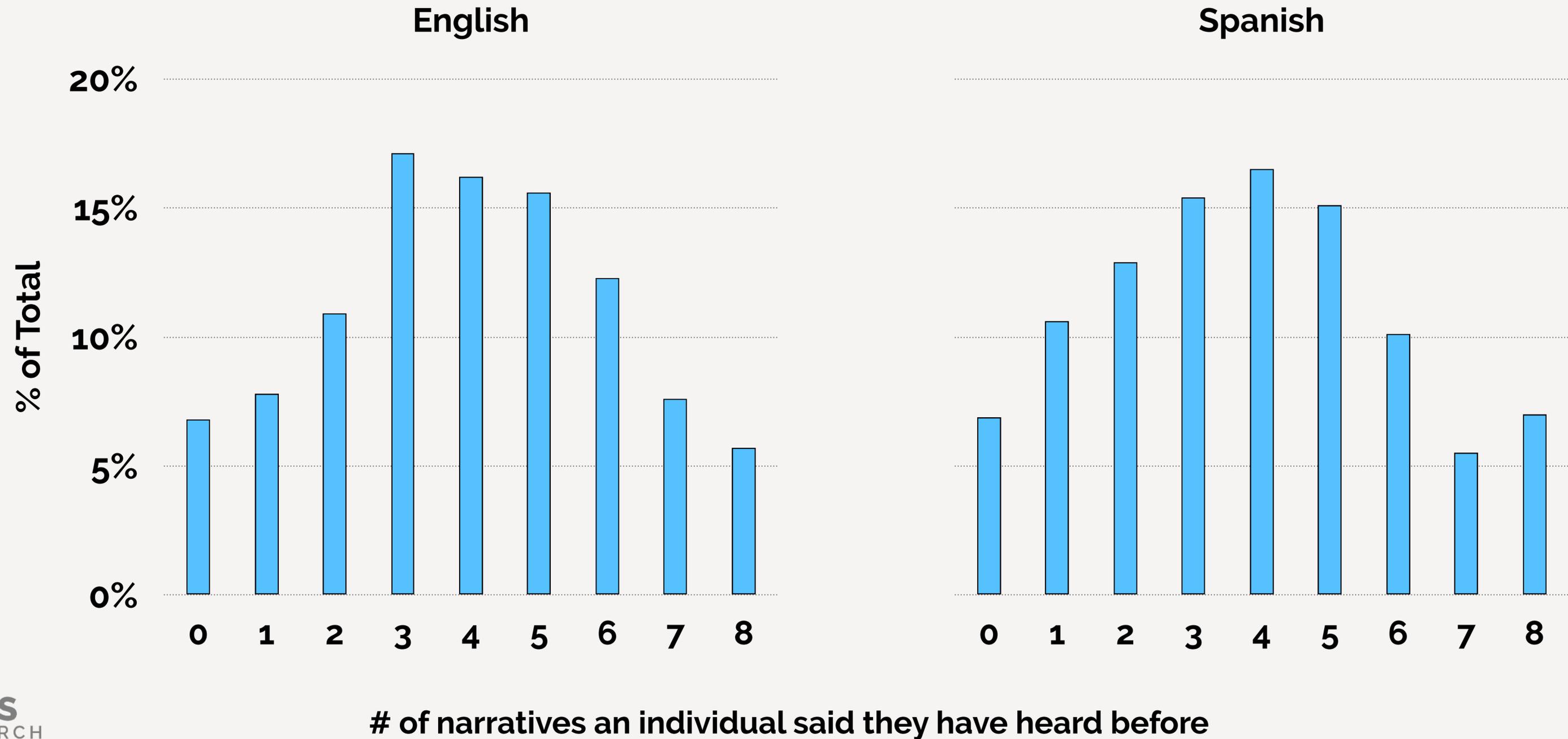
High Engagement



of narratives an individual said they have heard before

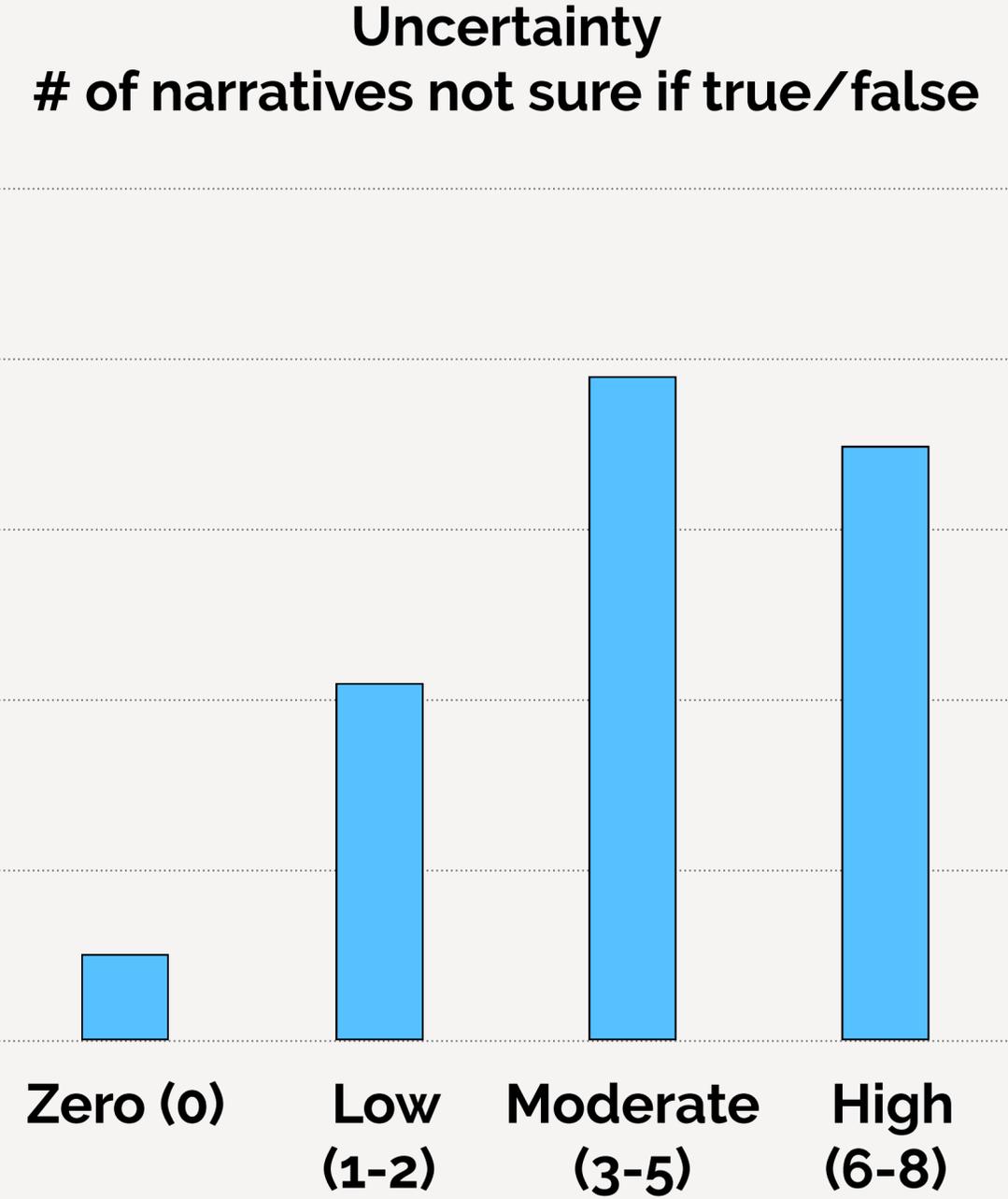
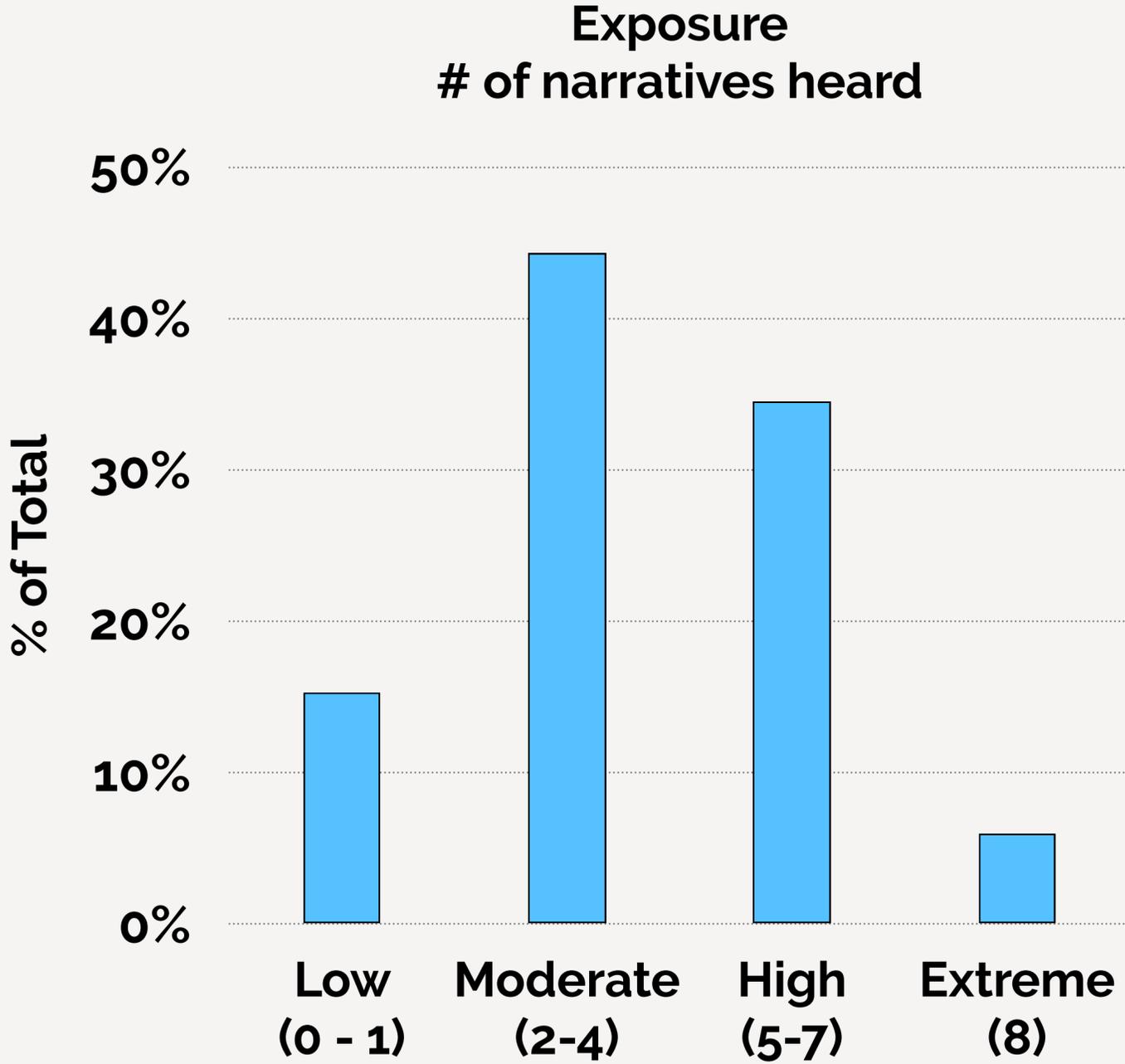
Marginally lower exposure to misinformation among Spanish-dominant but a mix of levels

Distribution of misinformation exposure By Language of Interview



Majority of Latino adults have been exposed to few narratives

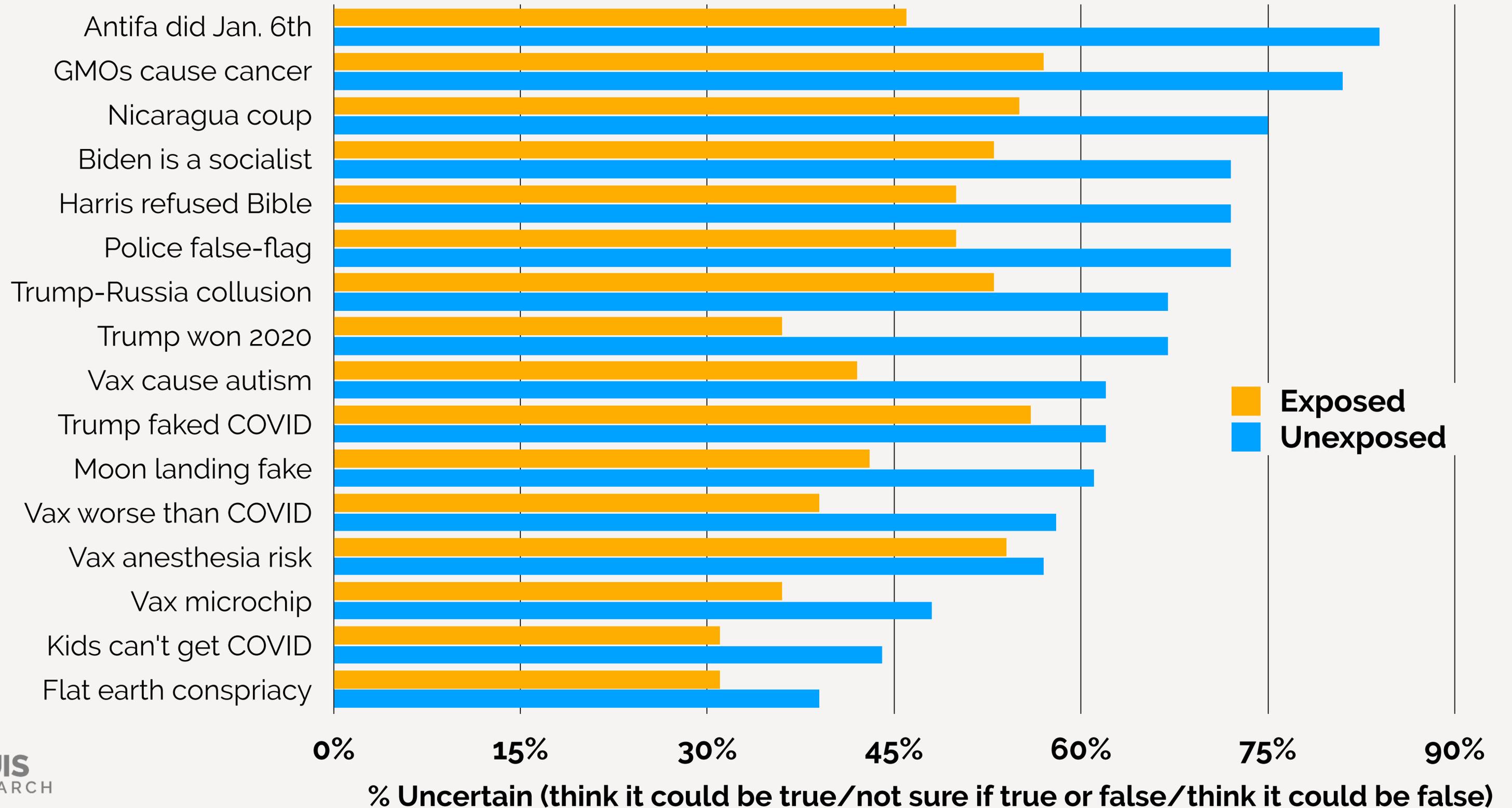
A super-majority not sure what to believe



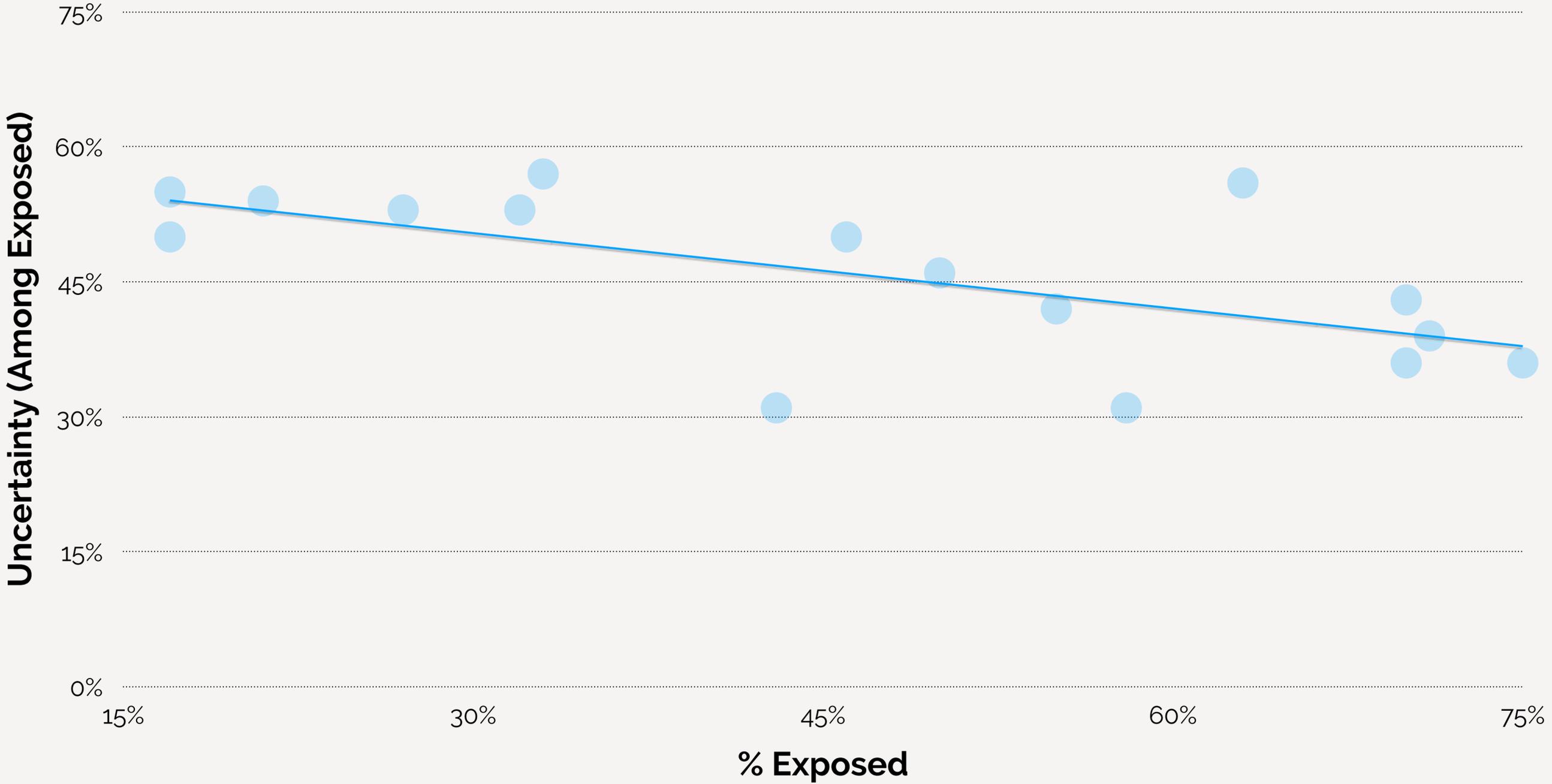
Exposure x Uncertainty

Uncertainty is greater among those who have not been exposed to a narrative before

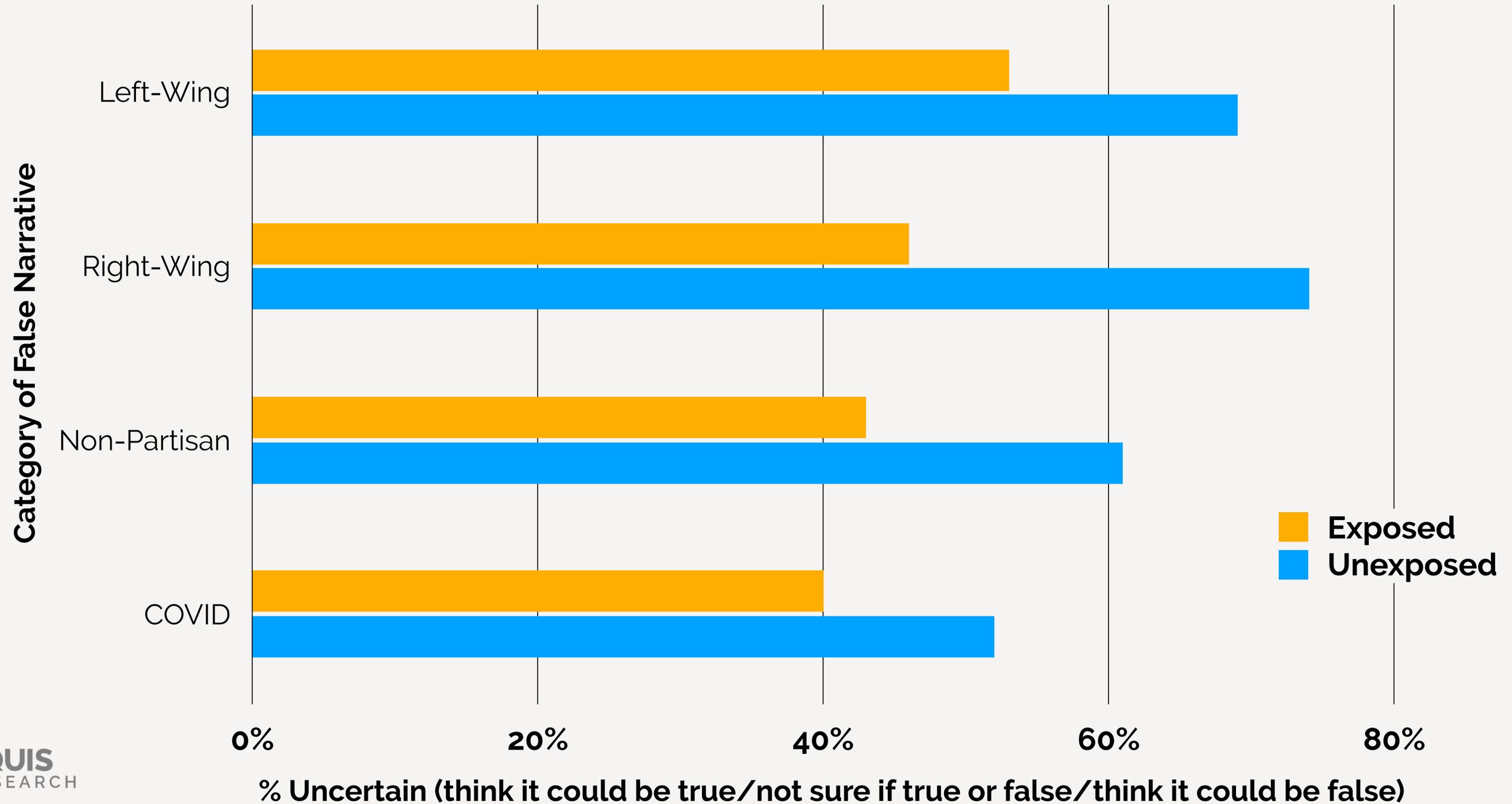
But significant uncertainty remains among the exposed



Among exposed, uncertainty declines as the narrative becomes more widespread



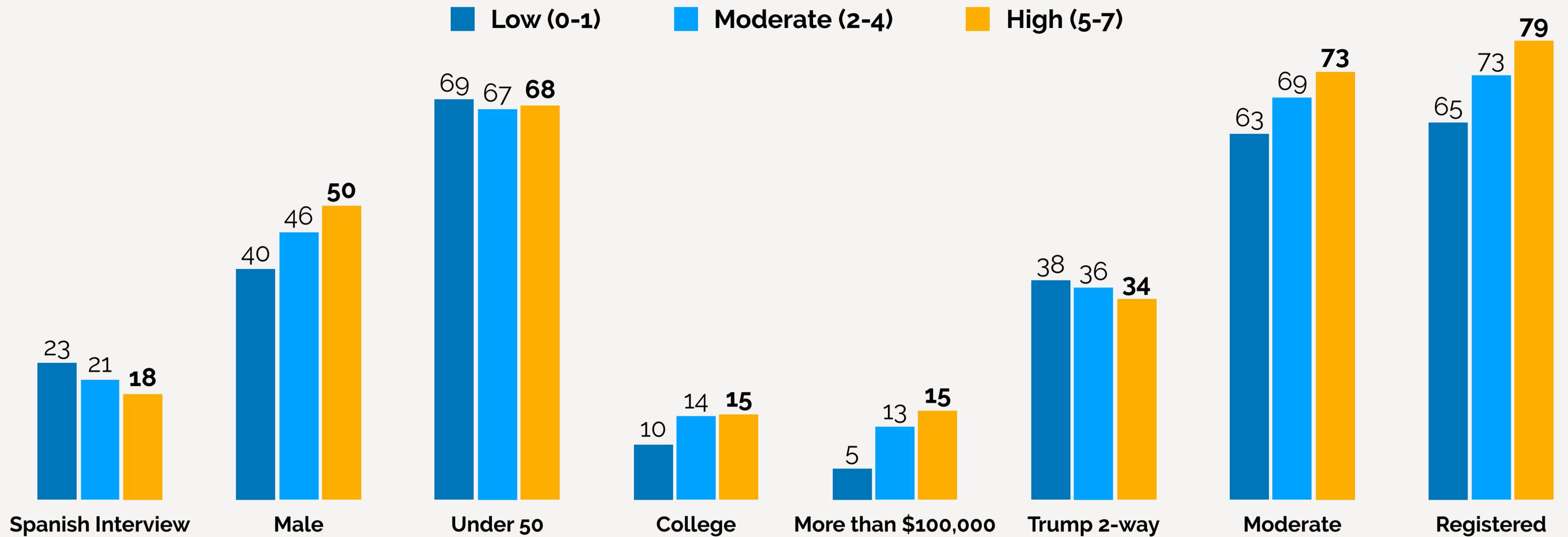
Unexposed seem particularly uncertain about partisan narratives (both left and right)



Demographics

High exposure Latinos are slightly more male, affluent, moderate & politically engaged

Demographics by Level of Exposure to Disinfo Narratives

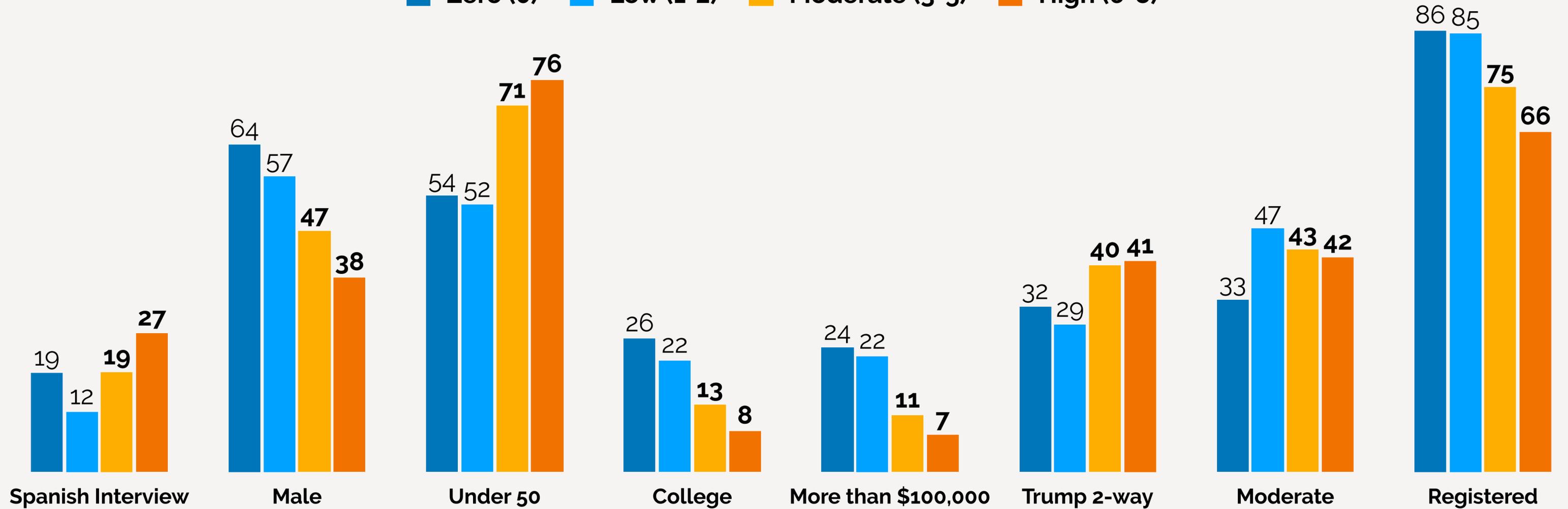


Clear profile emerges of those Hispanics most likely to say they don't know what to believe

The most uncertain are heavily female, non-college, less engaged... and more Trump-supporting

Demographics by **Level of Uncertainty** About Misinfo Narratives

■ Zero (0) ■ Low (1-2) ■ Moderate (3-5) ■ High (6-8)

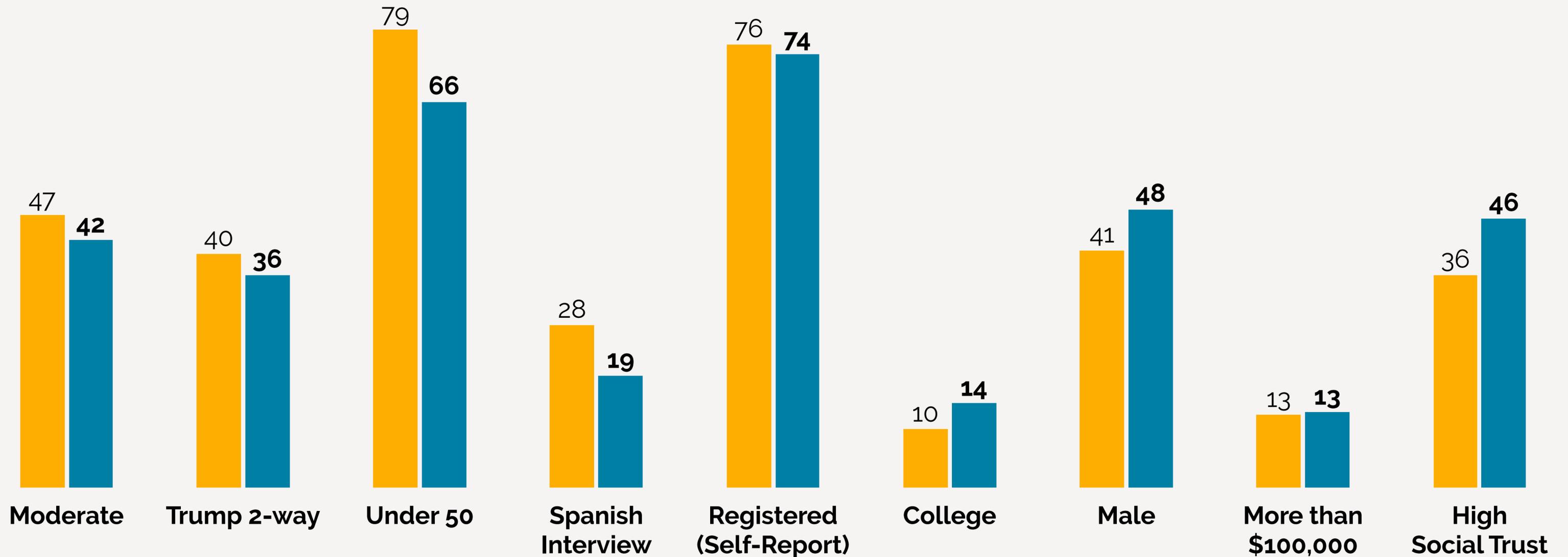


Who are the Latinos who are both heavily exposed and heavily uncertain, compared to all Hispanics?

In addition to being younger, Spanish-dominant and non-college, they are relatively low in social trust

Demographics of Latinos in “High-Priority” Group

■ High Priority ■ Full Sample

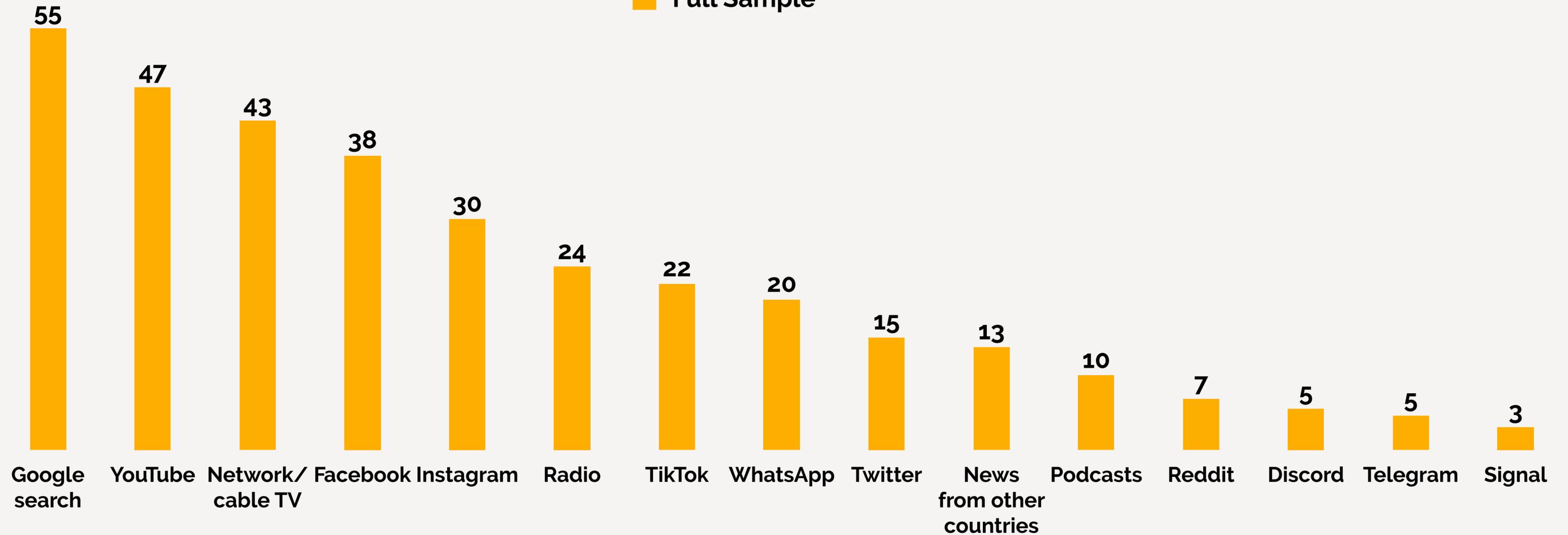


Media Consumption

Media Consumption of Latinos

% using news source "often" in a typical week

■ Full Sample



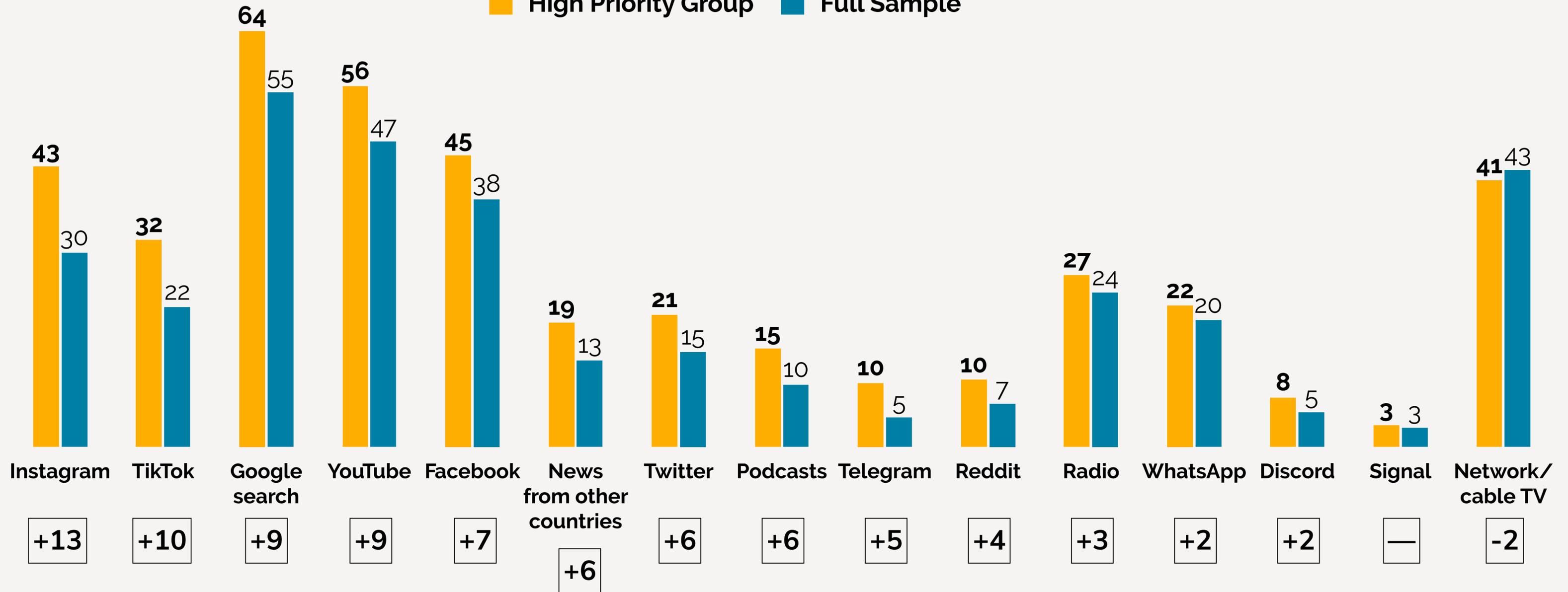
What media are the “high-priority” Hispanics most likely to consume?

Over-index on most non-TV media, and especially Instagram/Youtube/Google/TikTok

Media Consumption of Latinos in High Priority Group

% using news source “often” in a typical week

High Priority Group Full Sample

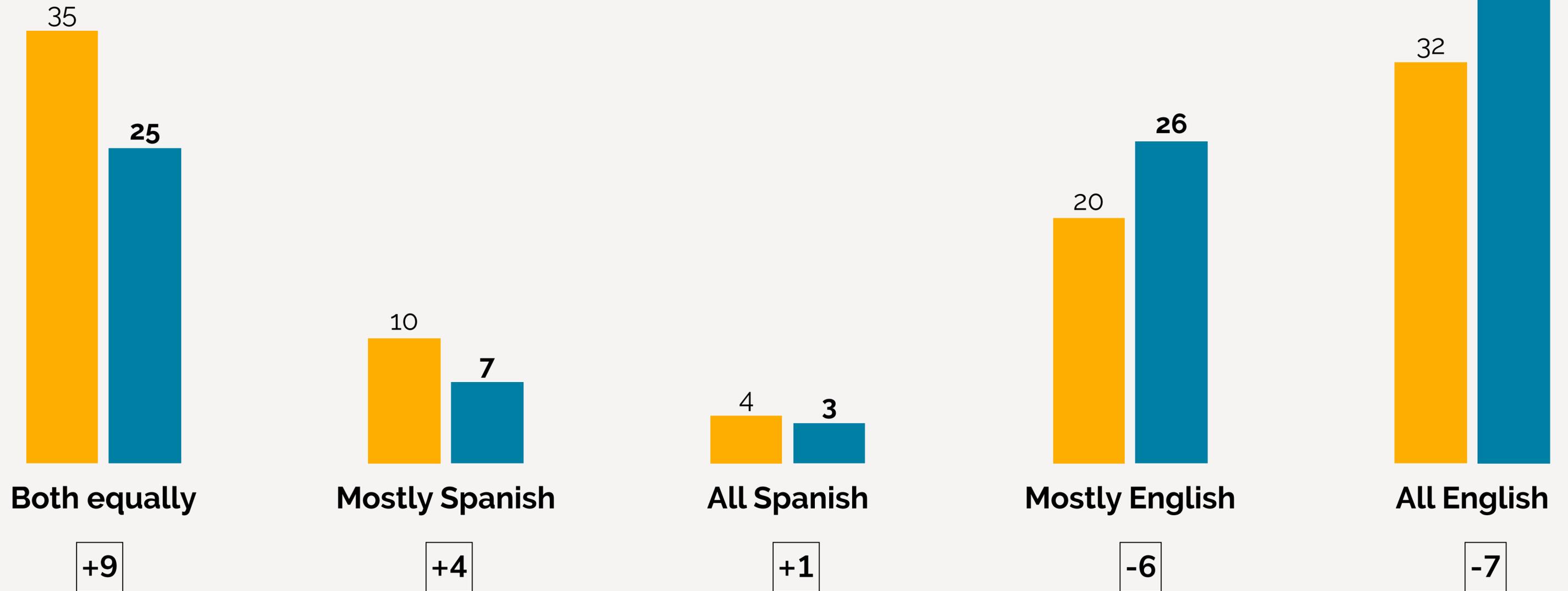


High-priority group more likely to consume news in Spanish or in a mix of English/Spanish

Media Consumption of Latinos in High Priority Group

Language of news sources

High Priority Group Full Sample



We divided media sources into five categories, based on factor analysis

Fox News doesn't cluster with other sources, suggesting it cuts across them

Traditional News Media

CNN
MSNBC
Network or Cable TV News
News from Other Countries
Radio

US Spanish-Language TV

Telemundo
Univision

Fringe

Discord
NewsMax
OANN
Reddit
Signal
Telegram

Mainstream Social Media

Facebook
Google Search
Instagram
TikTok
YouTube

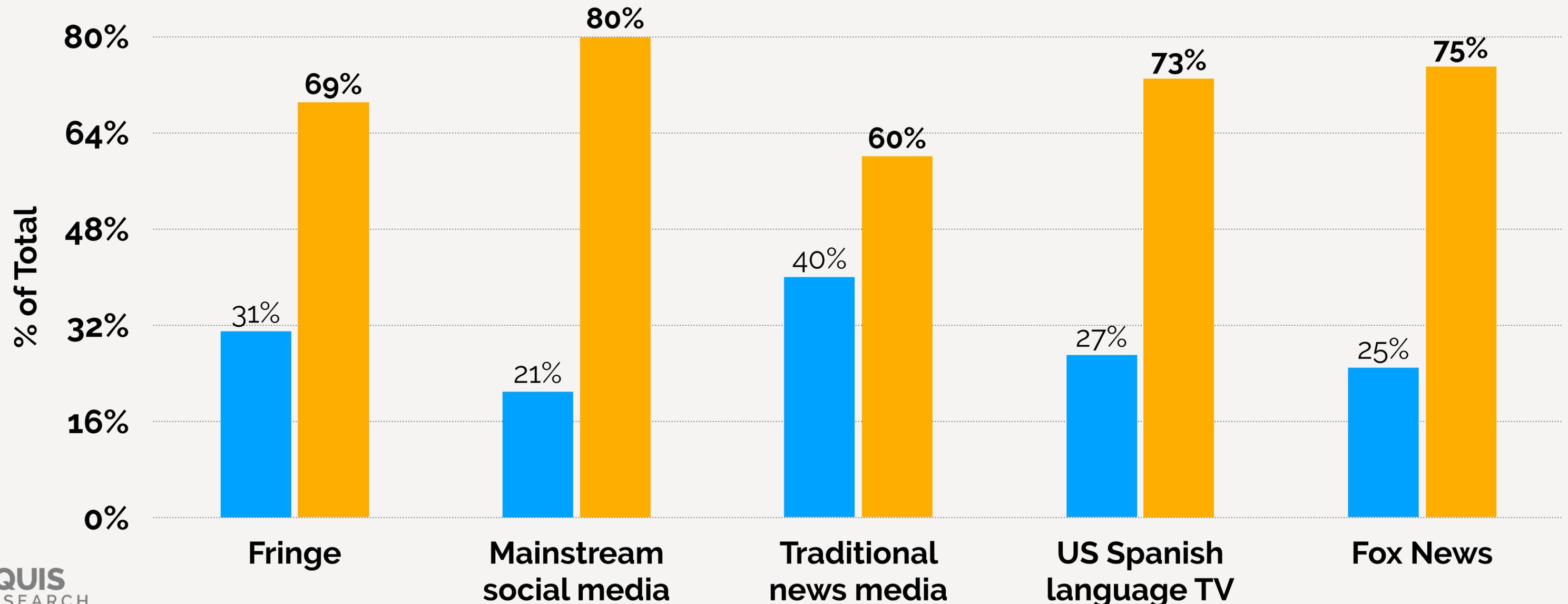
Fox News*

Fox News on TV
Fox News on YouTube

Uncertainty highest with social media cluster, lowest among those who watch traditional news

Uncertainty by Media Segment

■ Zero/Low ■ Moderate/High



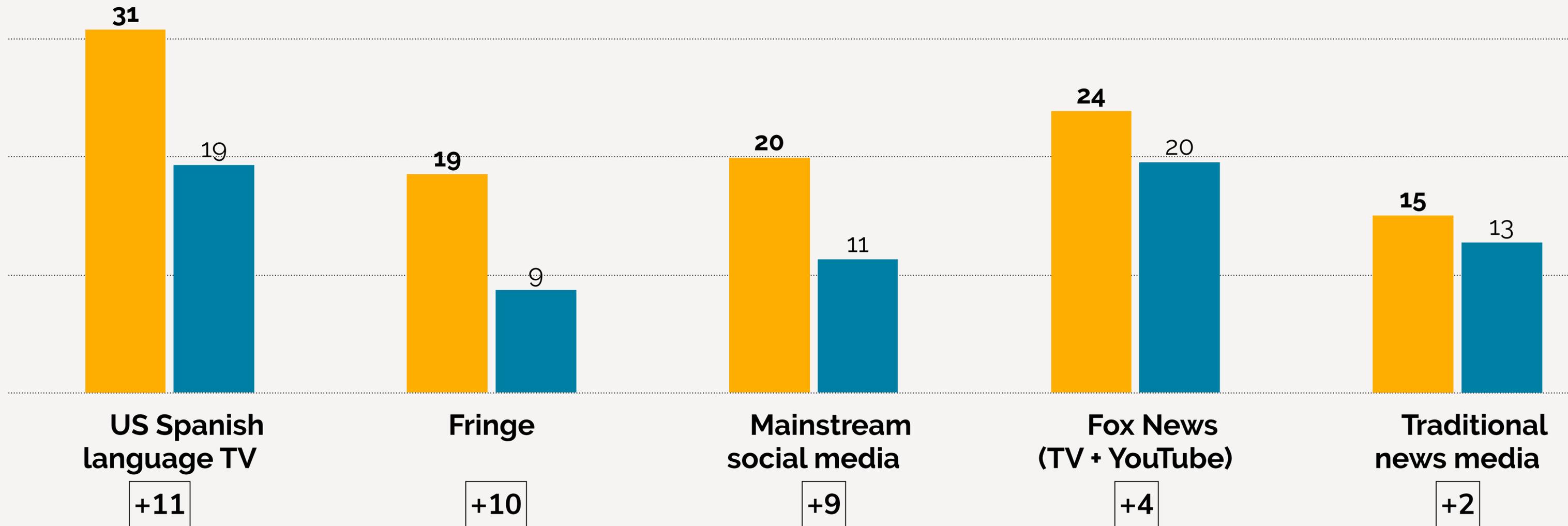
High-priority group more likely to fall in Spanish-lang/fringe/social media clusters

Plurality in Spanish TV segment and nearly 1-in-4 do Fox

Media Segments of Latinos in High Priority Group

% using news source "often" in a typical week

High Priority Group Full Sample





“If everybody always lies to you, **the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer** [...] A people that no longer can believe anything cannot make up its mind...And with such a people you can then do what you please.”

- Hannah Arendt (1974)



Thank you!

