

# Moving the Needle on Uncertainty:



The Role of Trusted Messengers  
in Countering Disinformation

# Context





## Key Question

“Which messengers can be most successful in disseminating good messaging that helps counter disinformation, misinformation and propaganda among Latinos?”



# Defining “Successful”

- Success for the test is defined as the effectiveness of the messenger in:
  - Reducing uncertainty
  - Increasing belief that the false claim is false
  - Lowering belief that the false claim is true

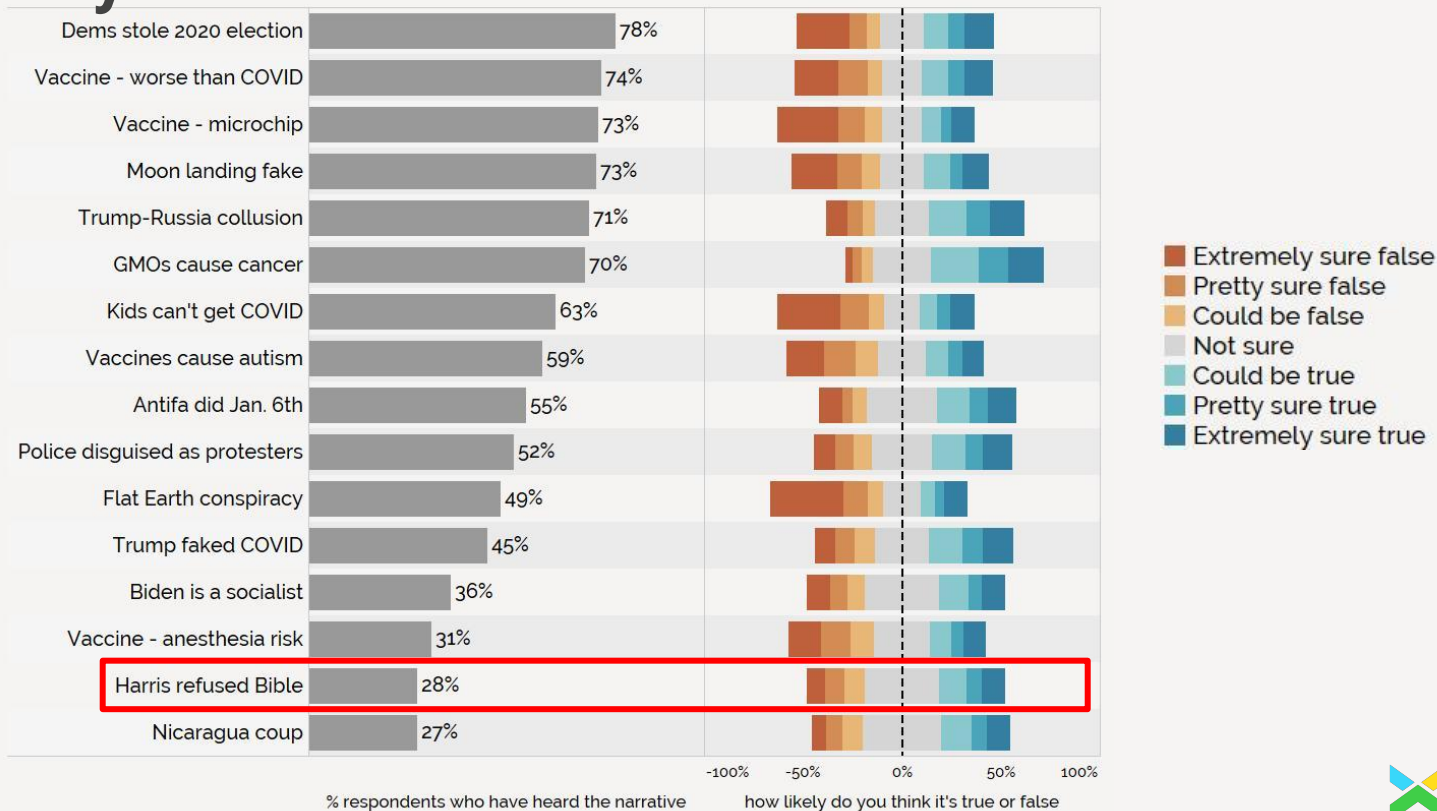


## A Note About Uncertainty (Equis Poll 2022)

- Latinos have a **high level of familiarity** with widespread disinformation narratives ... but also **a great deal of uncertainty** - most Latinos we surveyed didn't know what to think about the false information if/when they encounter it.
- **Those who are unsure what to believe are not being fooled**, they are reacting skeptically to new, strange or contradictory information presented as fact.
- Focusing on uncertainty may be more effective than focusing on belief.
- So - We conducted this test to determine which type of messenger was most likely to move a person from uncertainty in what to believe, toward certainty that a narrative was false.



# We tested a narrative with low familiarity and high uncertainty





# Digital Testing Methods & Approach

- Panel test with Civis Analytics
- Audience
  - Tested 5,516 Latinos nationwide
- Creative
  - 6 videos: 3 messenger personas for English and Spanish
  - Panel respondents were randomly assigned to watch any (one) of the videos we developed - regardless of language preference



# Messengers



Journalist

**Camilo Rivera**



**Camilo Rivera**



Activist

**Camilo Rivera**







# Message

## English

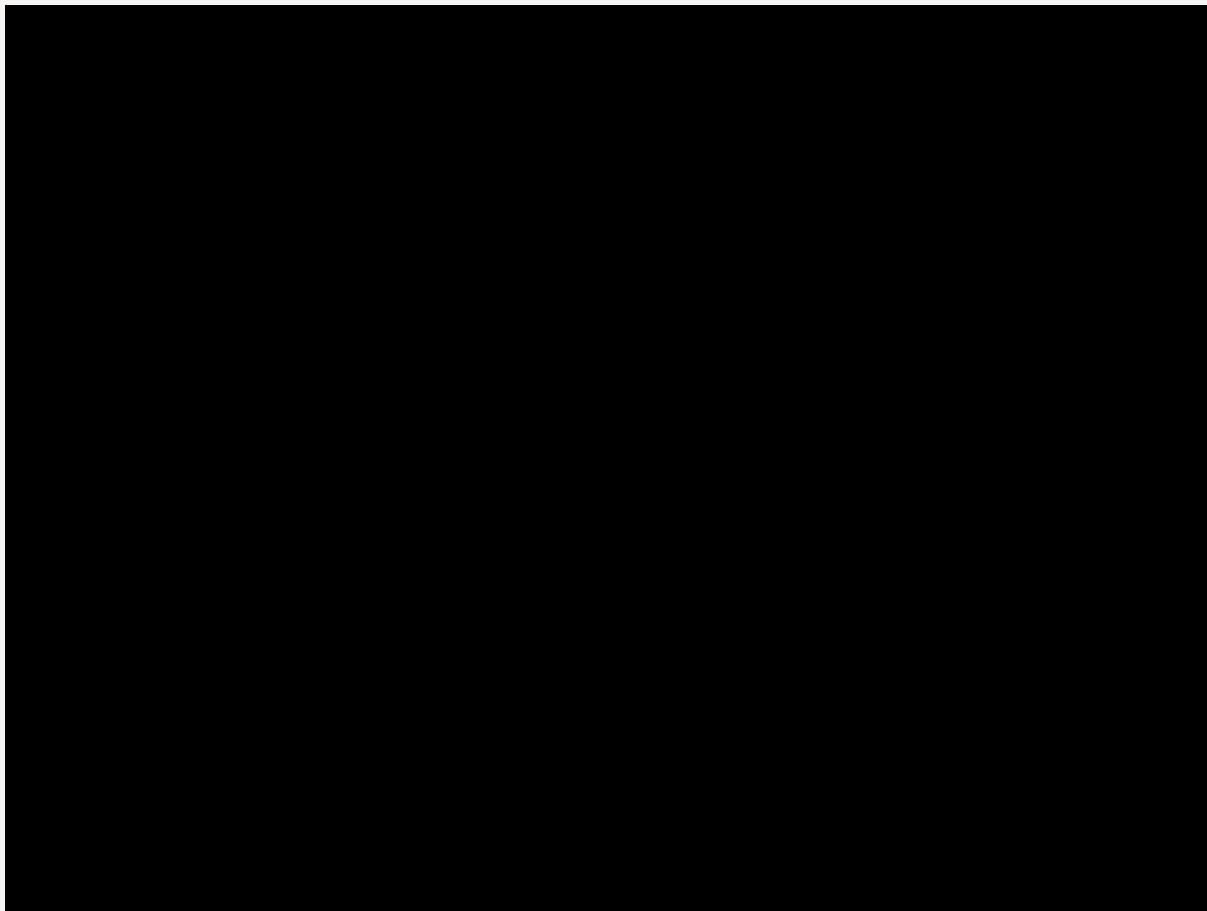
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"Did you know that Vice President Kamala Harris was sworn into office using the Bible of a family friend that used to take care of her when she was younger? She used the same Bible when she was sworn in as California attorney general in 2011 and as US senator in 2017 as a way to honor someone special in her life who helped her get to where she is today."

## Spanish

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"¿Sabías que la vicepresidenta Kamala Harris fue juramentada a su cargo usando la Biblia de una amiga de su familia, quien cuidaba de ella cuando era niña? Es la misma Biblia que usó cuando tomó el juramento como fiscal general de California en el 2011 y como senadora de California en el 2017 como forma de honrar a alguien especial en su vida que la ayudó a llegar a donde está ahora."



*Journalist - English*



## Before & After Exposure and Belief Questions

Some people say that Kamala Harris refused to be sworn in to the Senate on the Bible. Have you personally heard or read anything about that?

- Yes
- No

Even if you haven't heard about it, how sure are you that the following statement is either true or false: Kamala Harris refused to be sworn in to the Senate on the Bible.

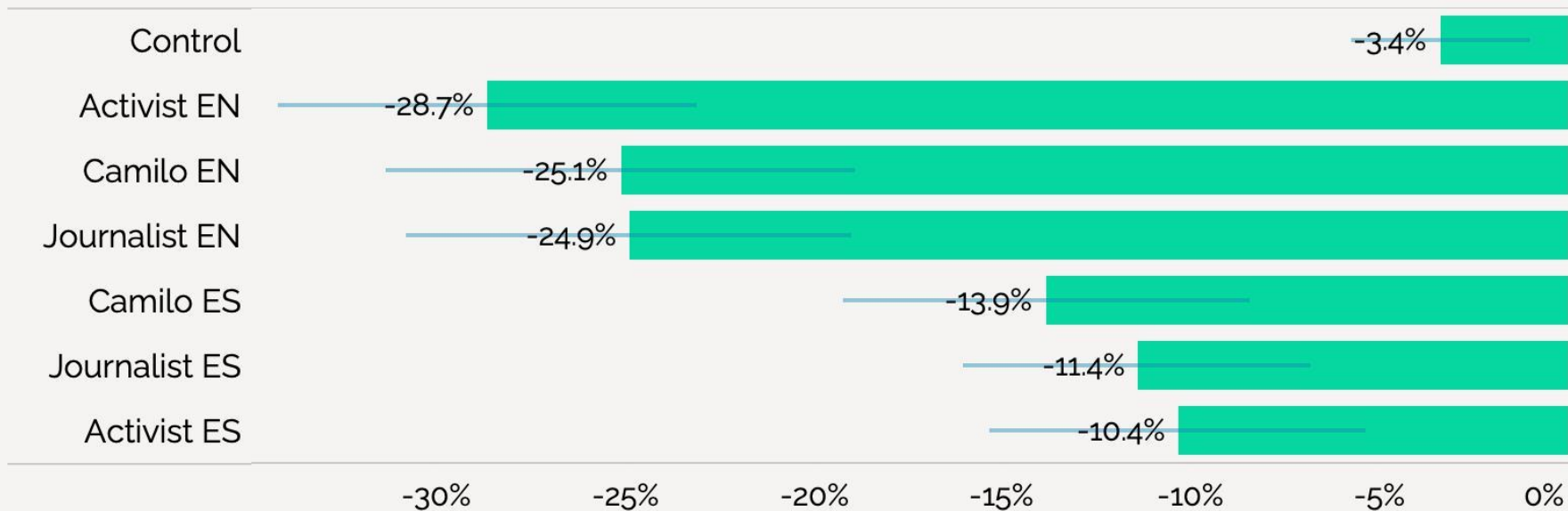
- Extremely sure it's true
- Pretty sure it's true
- I think it could be true
- I'm not sure if it's true or false
- I think it could be false
- Pretty sure it's false
- Extremely sure it's false

# Panel Test Results





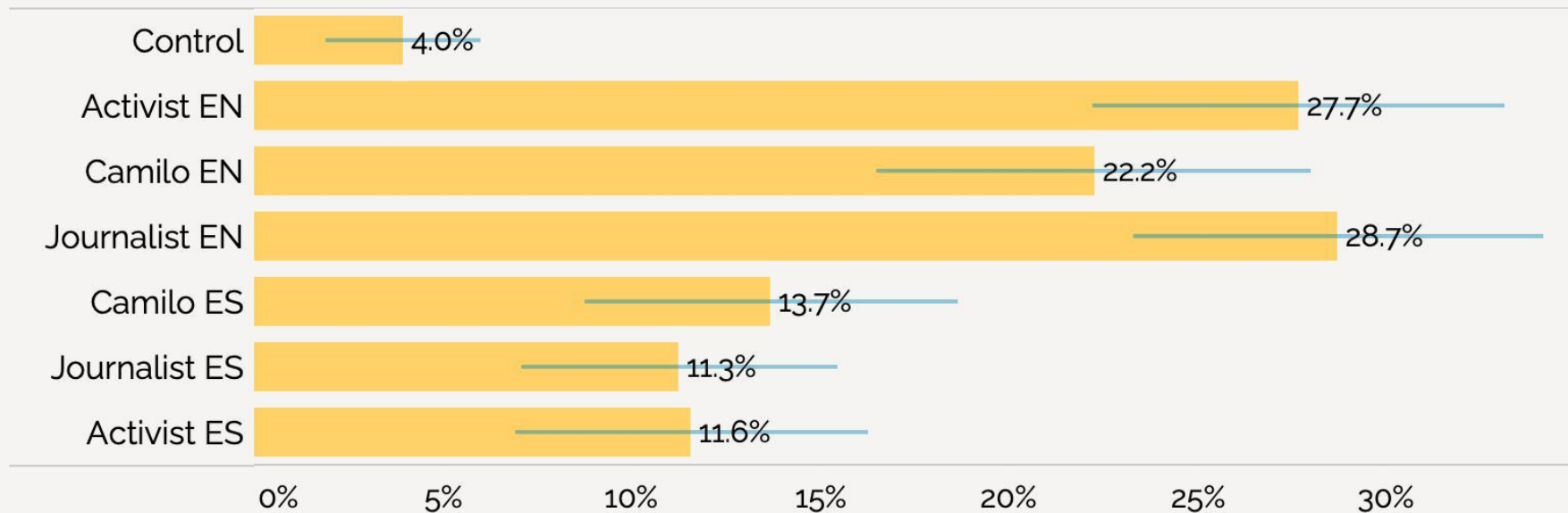
## Effects of each video on reducing uncertainty



Horizontal lines show 95% confidence interval



## Effects of each video on increasing belief that narrative is false



Horizontal lines show 95% confidence interval



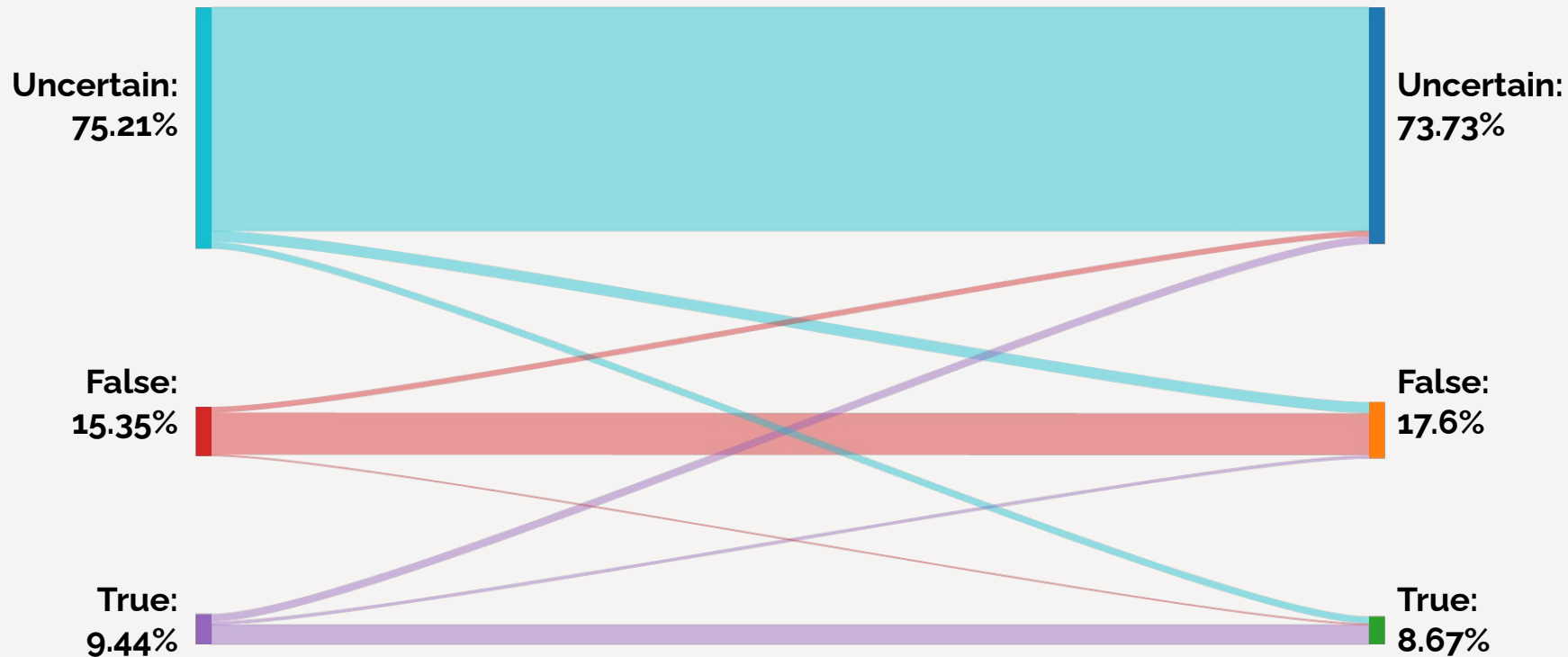
## Summary - Change in Belief

	Extremely/pretty sure it's false	Uncertain	Extremely/pretty sure it's true
Control	<b>4%*</b>	<b>-3%*</b>	-1%
Activist EN	<b>28%</b>	<b>-29%*</b>	1%
Activist ES	<b>12%*</b>	<b>-10%*</b>	-1%
Camilo EN	<b>22%*</b>	<b>-25%*</b>	3%
Camilo ES	<b>14%*</b>	<b>-14%*</b>	0%
Journalist EN	<b>29%*</b>	<b>-25%*</b>	<b>-4%*</b>
Journalist ES	<b>11%*</b>	<b>-11%*</b>	0%

*Bold = statistically significant at 95% CI*



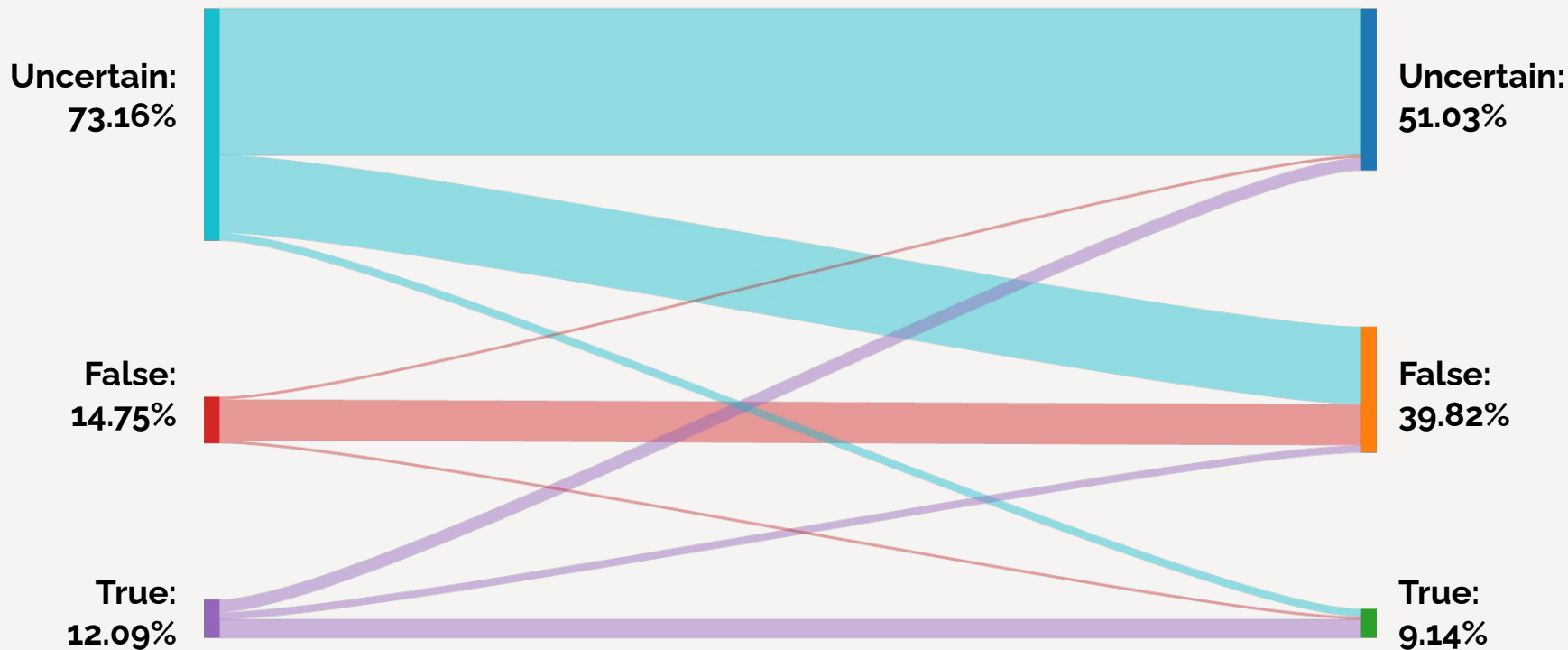
## Control Group





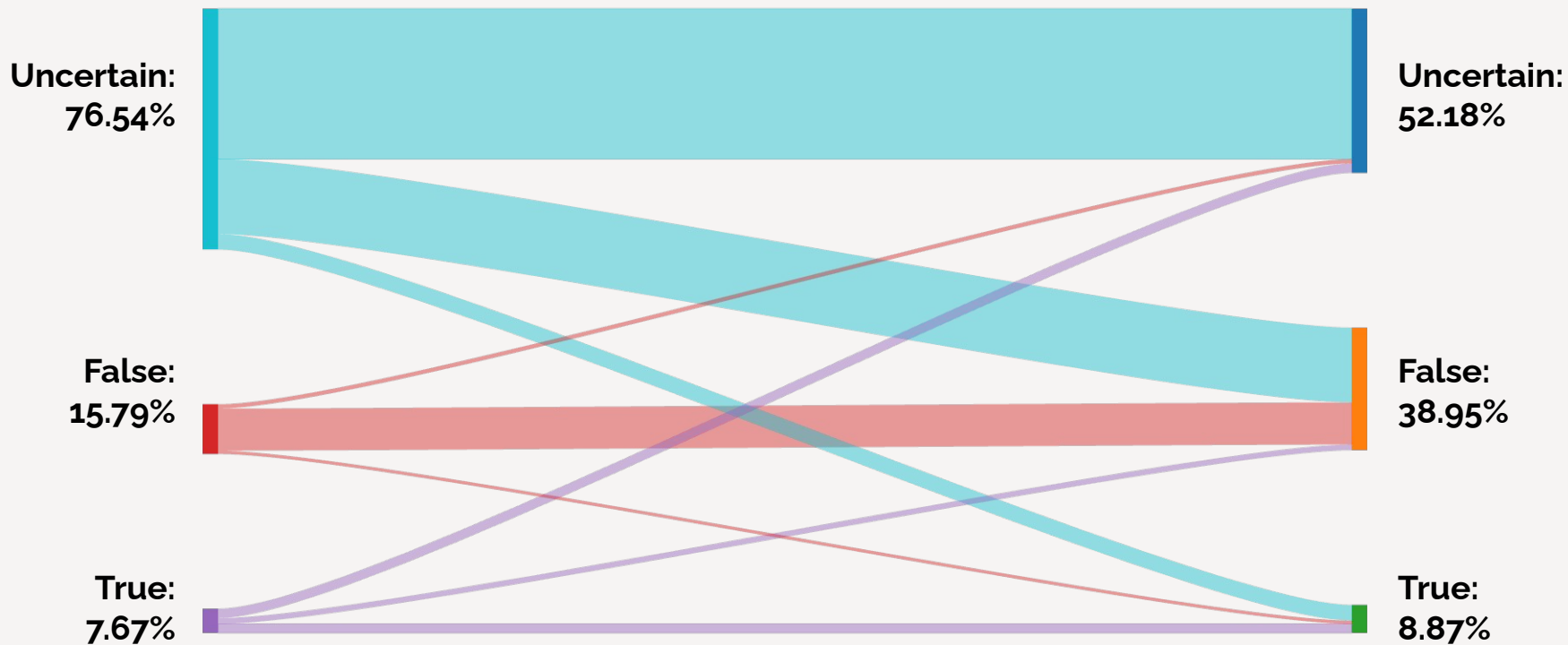


## Journalist - English





## Activist - English

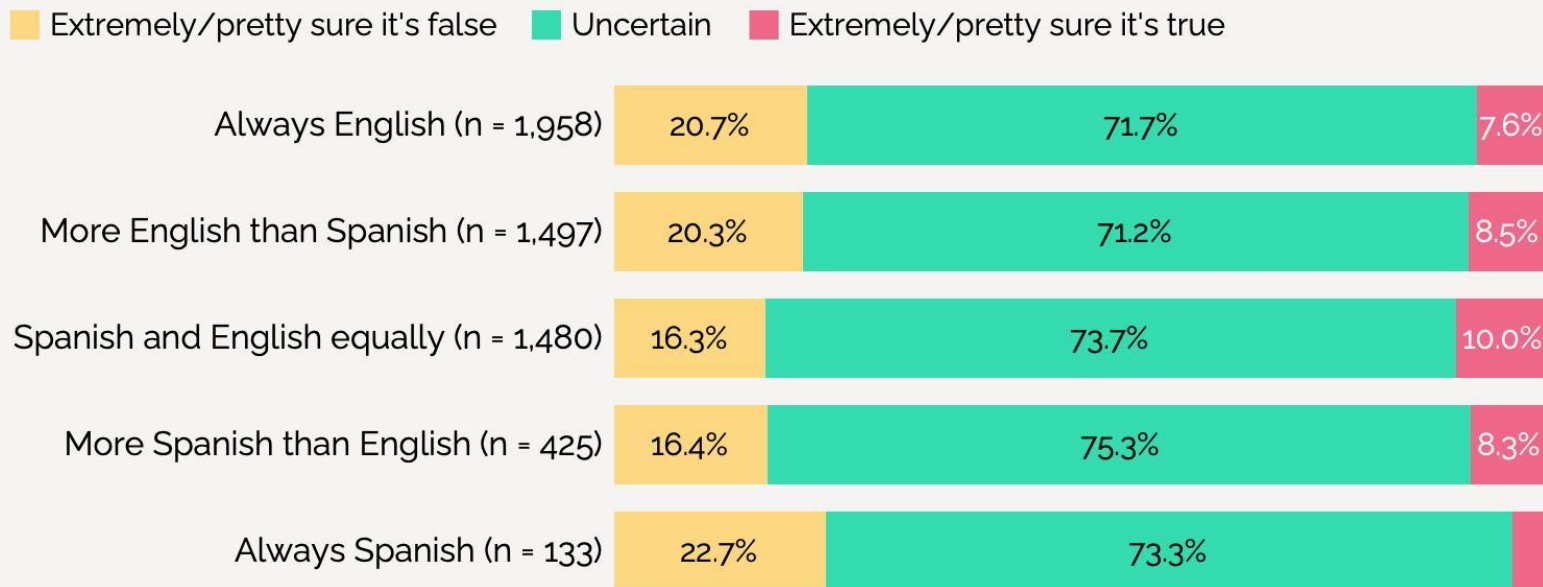


# Subgroup Findings



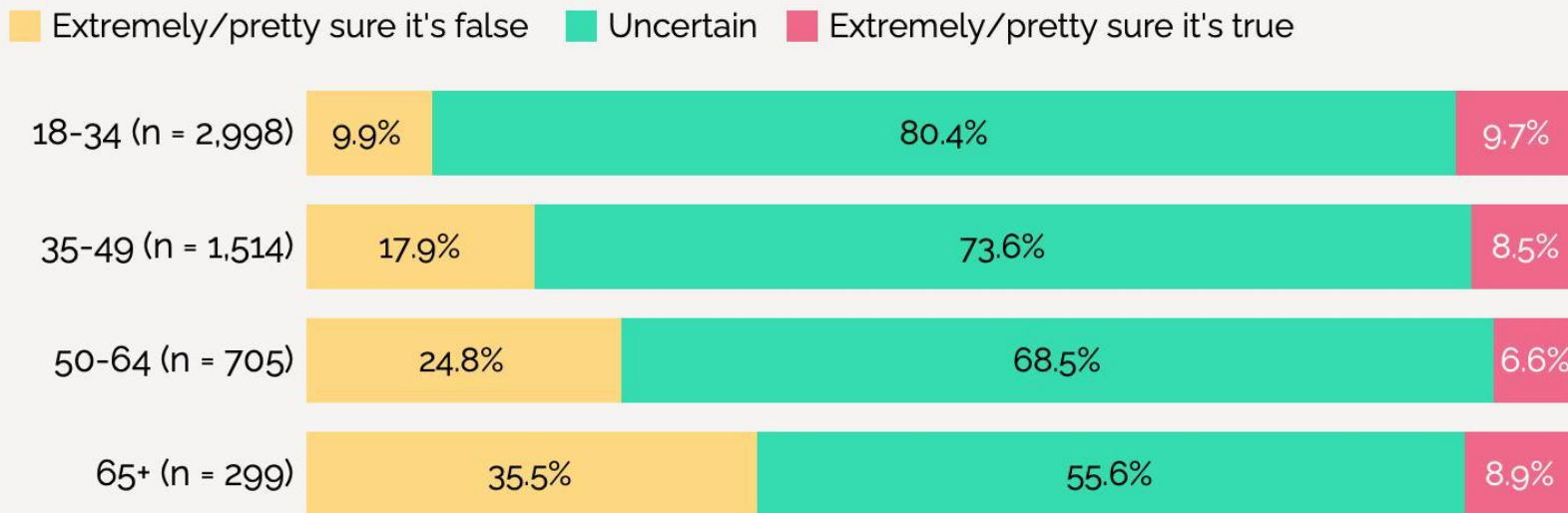


## Baseline Uncertainty by Language Subgroup



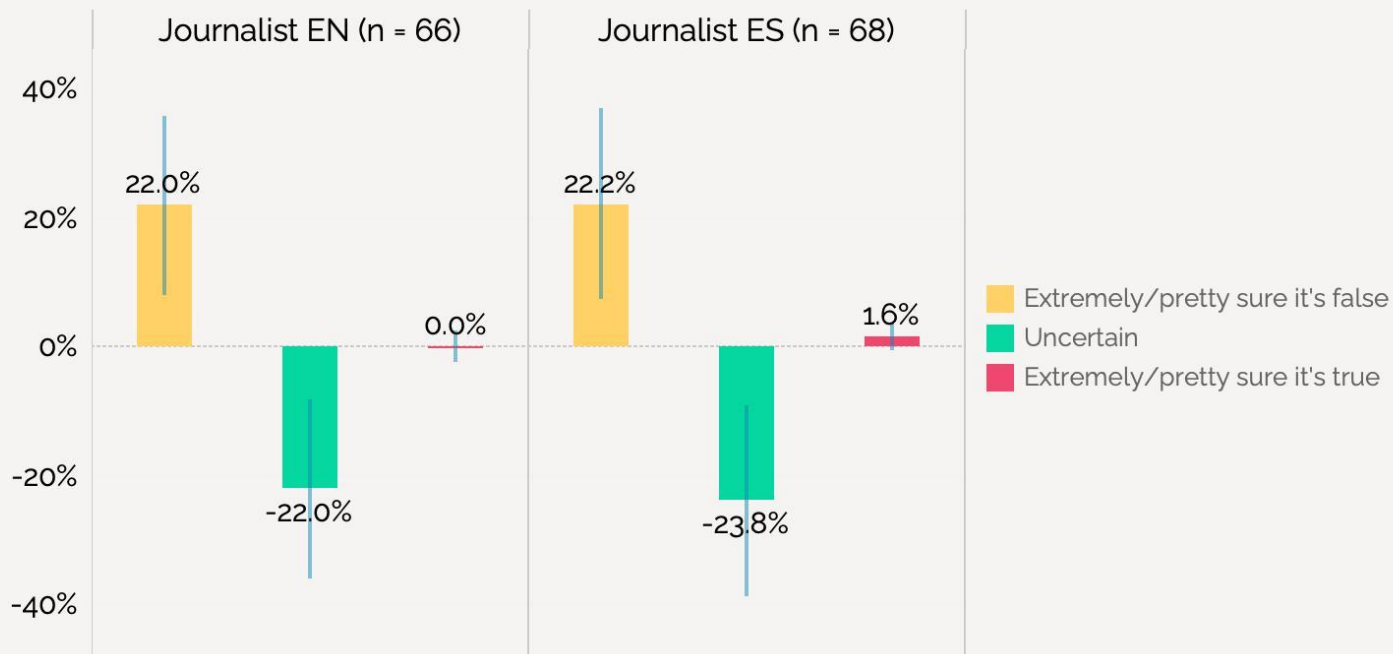


## Baseline Uncertainty by Age





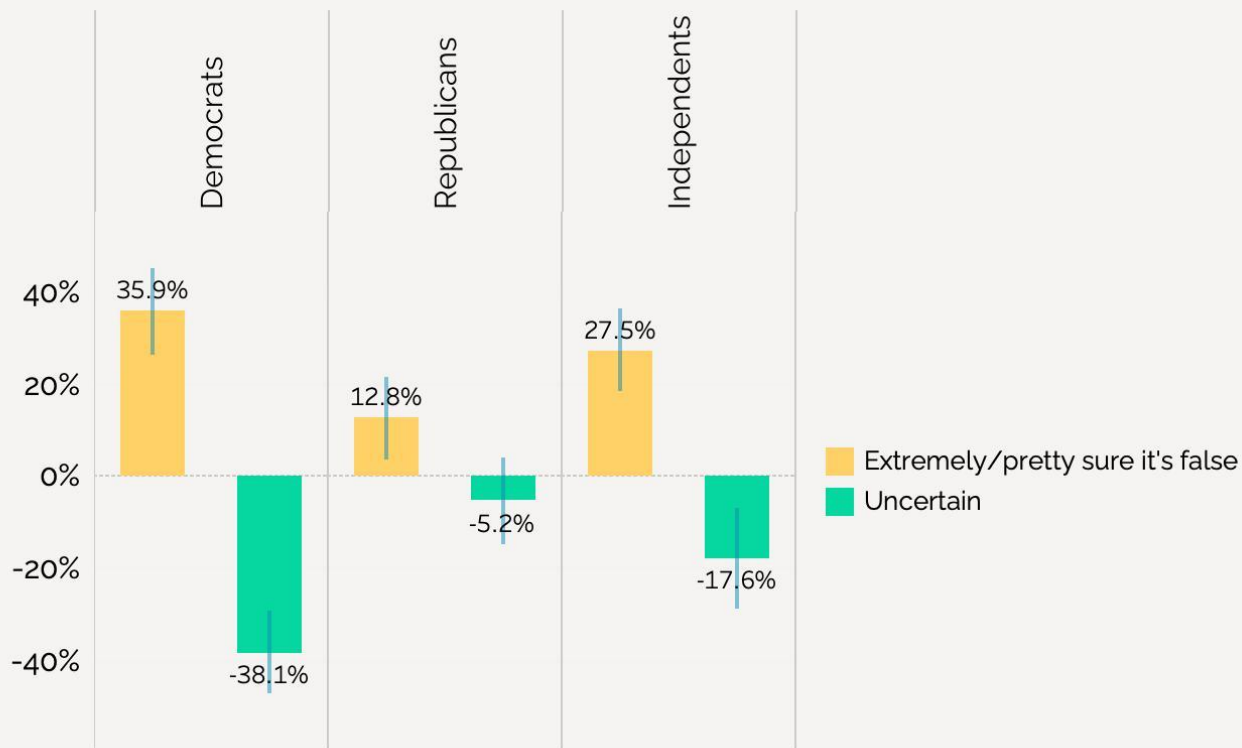
## Effects of Journalists on the Spanish Dominant



*Vertical lines show 95% confidence interval*



## Effects of Journalist EN by Partisanship

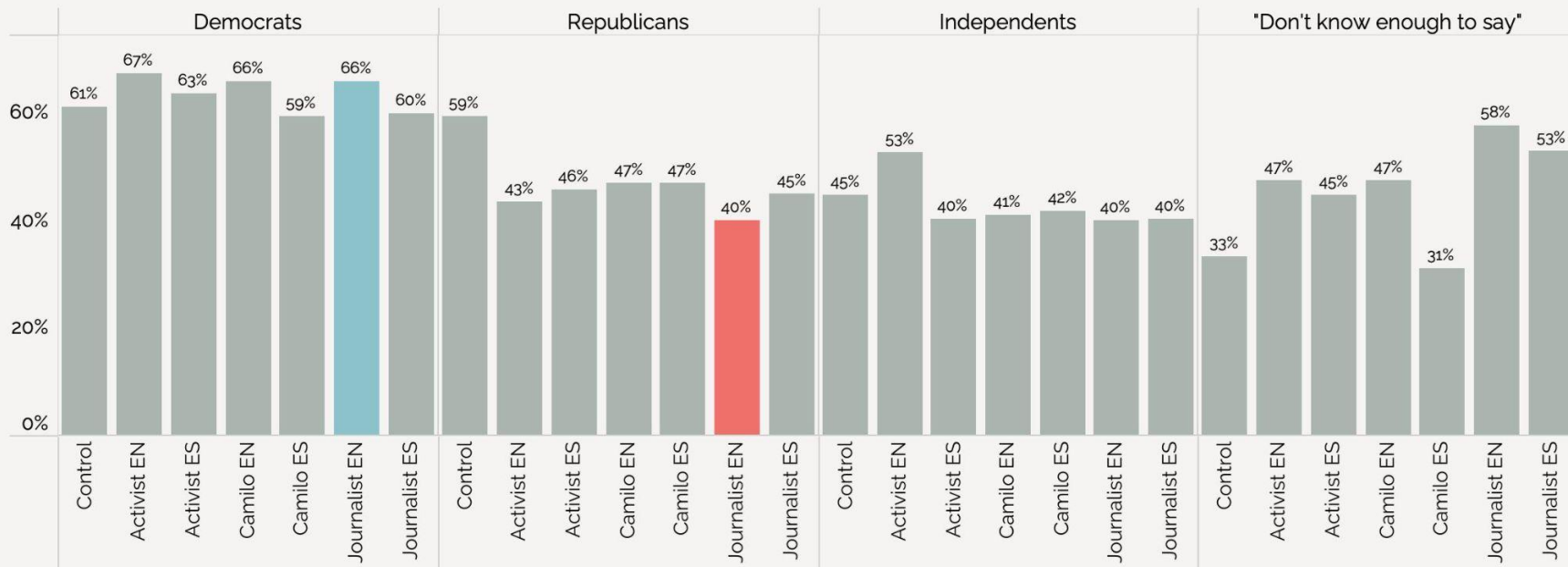


Vertical lines show 95% confidence interval



# Trustworthiness and Likability

Percentage who find the messenger somewhat or very likable

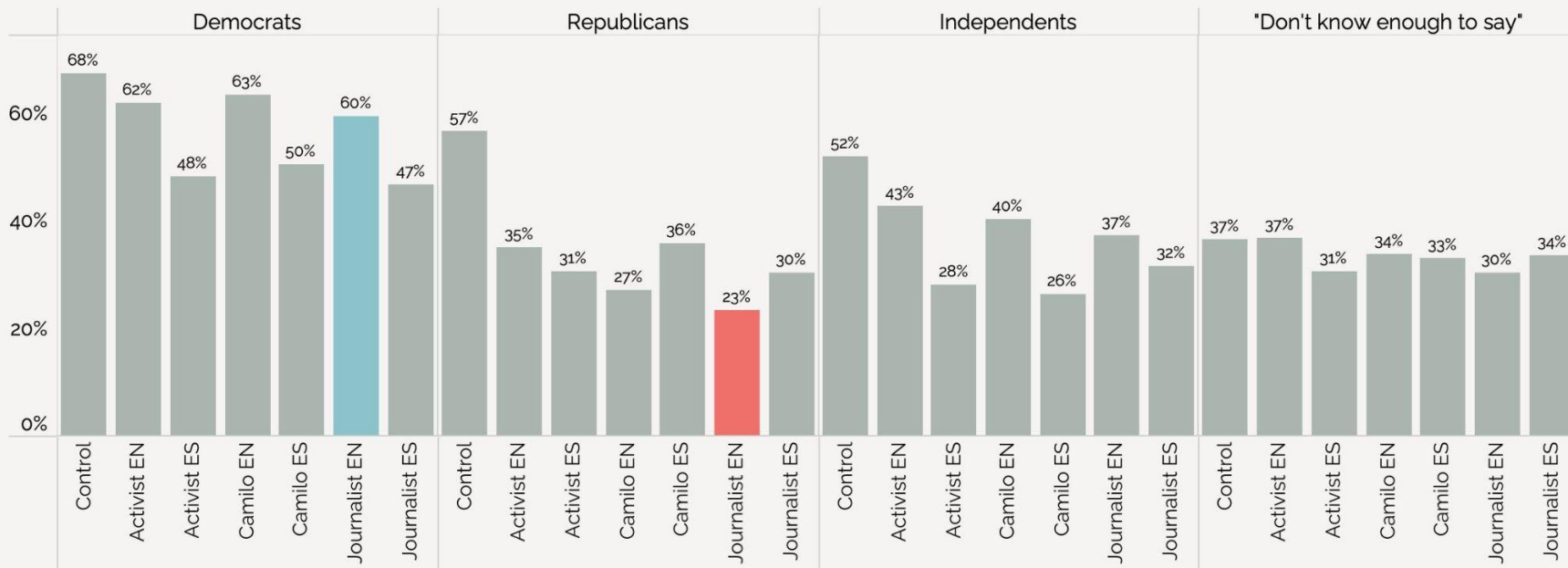






# Trustworthiness and Likability

Percentage who find the messenger somewhat or very trustworthy



# Wrapping Up





## Summary of Test Results

1. All messengers significantly lowered uncertainty and increased certainty that the narrative was false
2. The Journalist in English is the most effective messenger
3. All language groups start off at about the same level of uncertainty on this particular narrative
4. Young people are much more uncertain about the Kamala narrative. Older people are actually better at saying it's false
5. For Spanish dominants, the Journalist in Spanish was just as effective as the Journalist in English
6. Republicans find the Journalist in English the least trustworthy and least likable; they are also least moved by them, but still moved

# Implementing these Findings





# Recommendations

- In your communications, include positive news stories from professional regional or local journalists - amplify coverage done by trusted reporters in your communities
- Help journalists that you trust approach their coverage in ways that emphasize “prebunking” disinformation narratives or “explaining” tough issues relevant to Latino voters



## Recommendations, continued

- Use messengers from your organizations and/or people from the community as a way to supplement the news promotion strategy
- Find and stick to your lane - continue to focus on filling information voids with “good messaging;” assure you and your fact-based, contextualized messaging are present where Latinos consume information (YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram)

# Looking to the Future





## Further Testing Opportunities

A lot more testing is needed to understand the impacts of different messengers on countering disinformation and provide key guidance to campaigns and organizations.

- Replicating this approach, particularly with other narratives
- Testing Latino vs non-Latino reporters
- Testing messengers that have name recognition (journalists or activists)



# Questions?

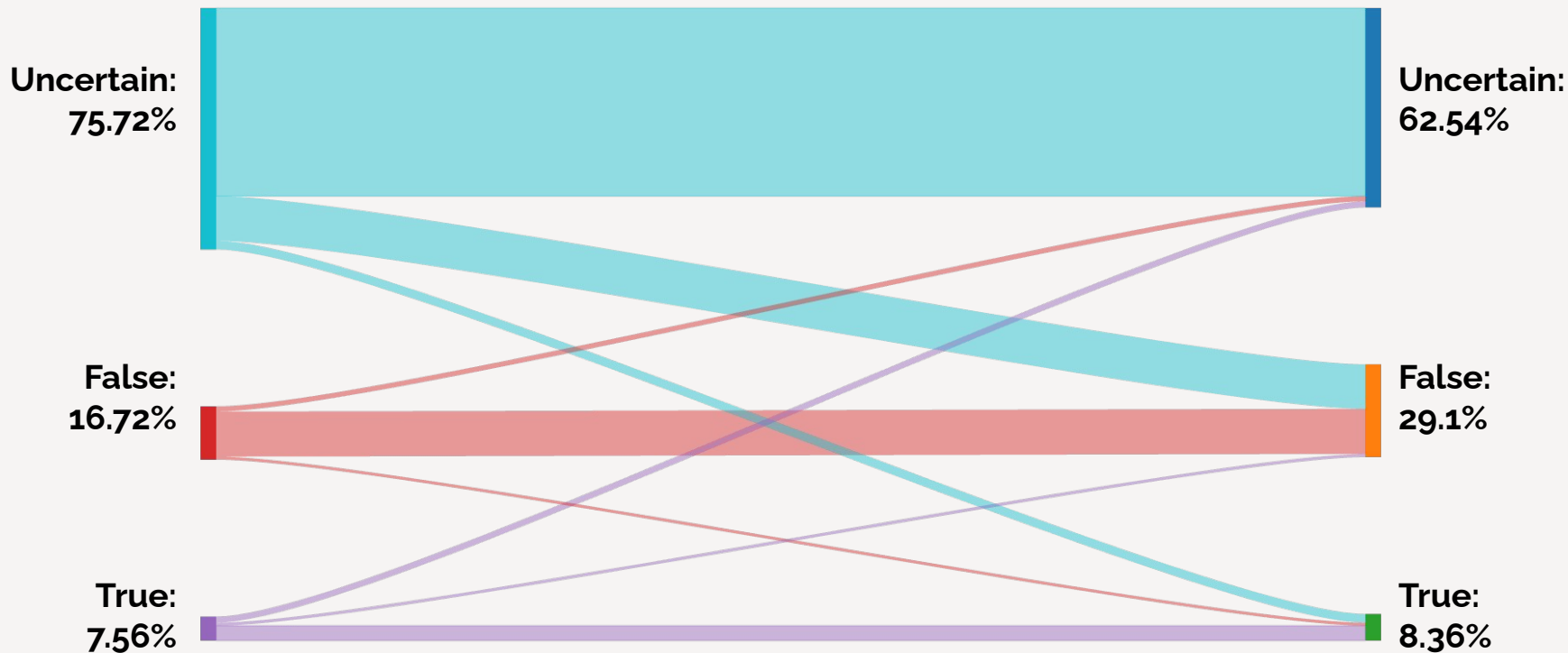


# Appendix



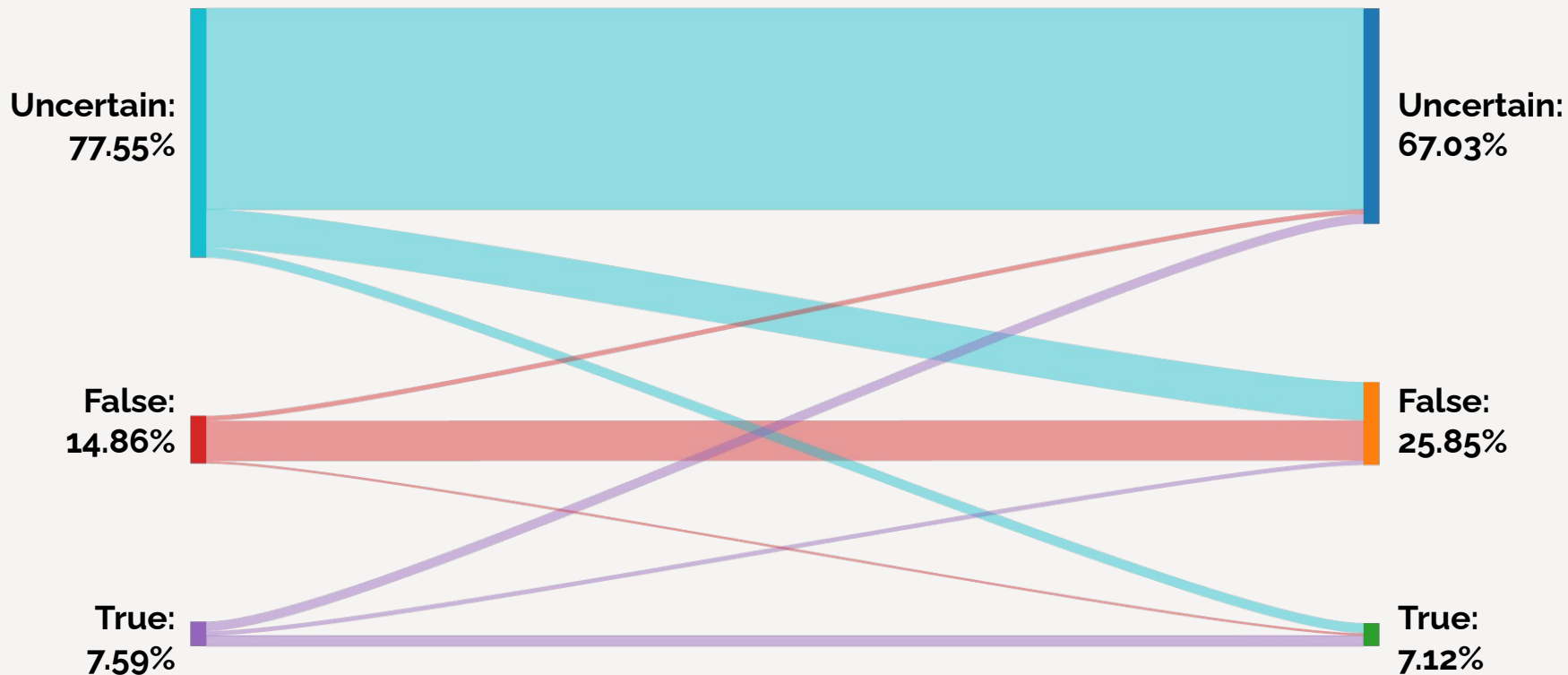


## Journalist ES



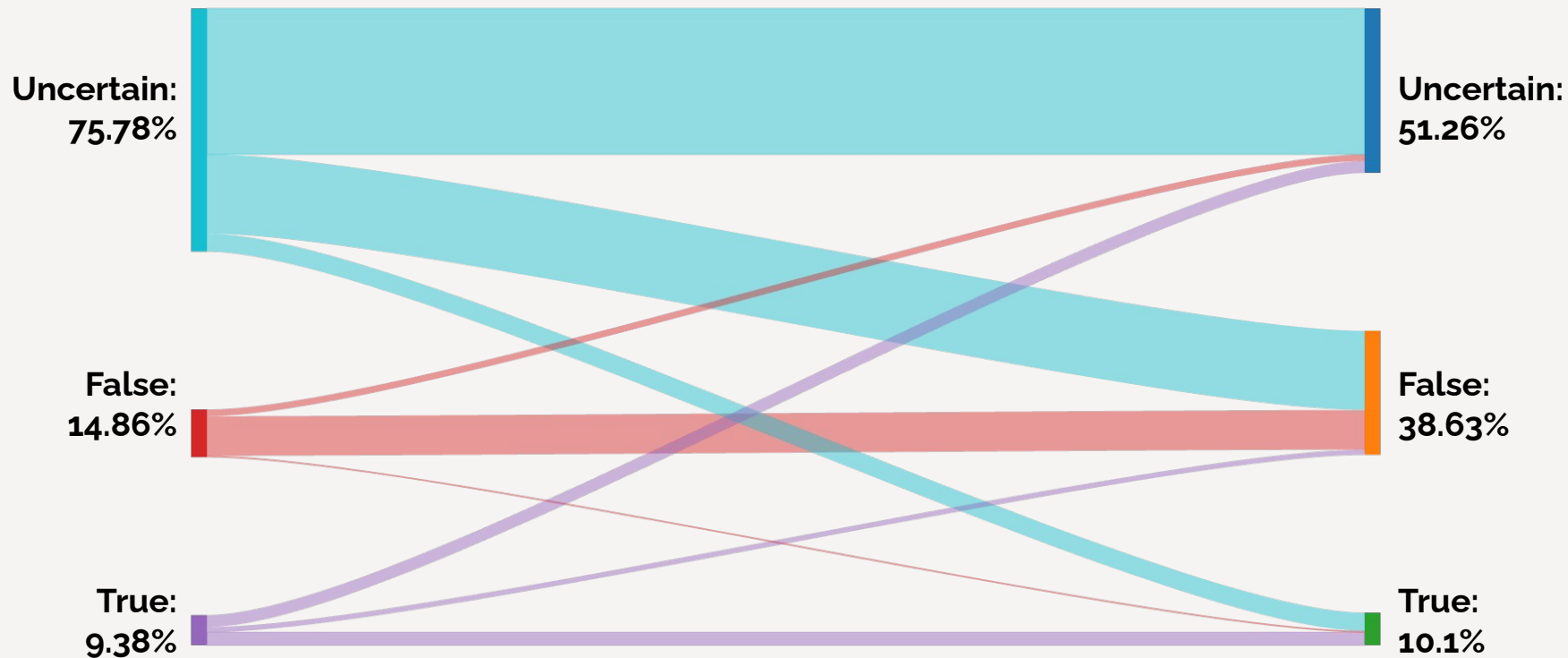


## Activist ES



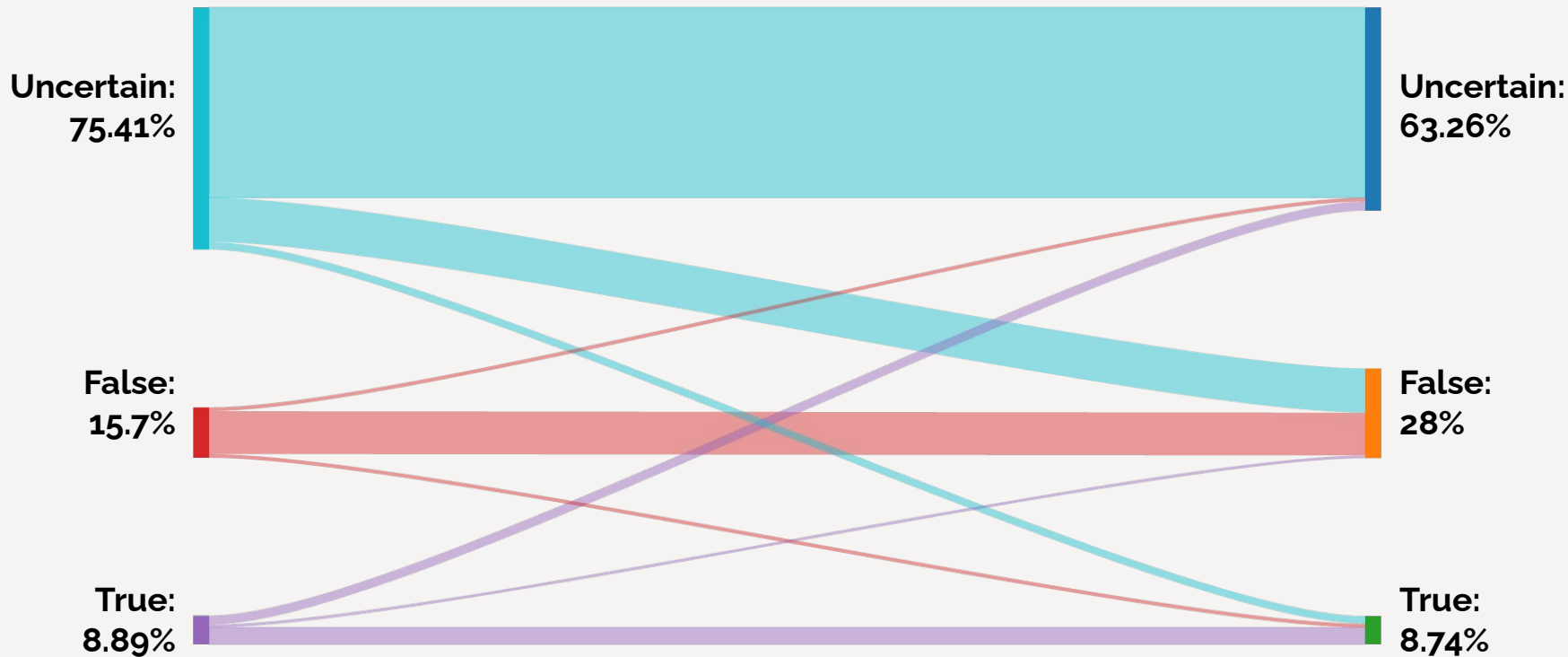


## Camilo EN



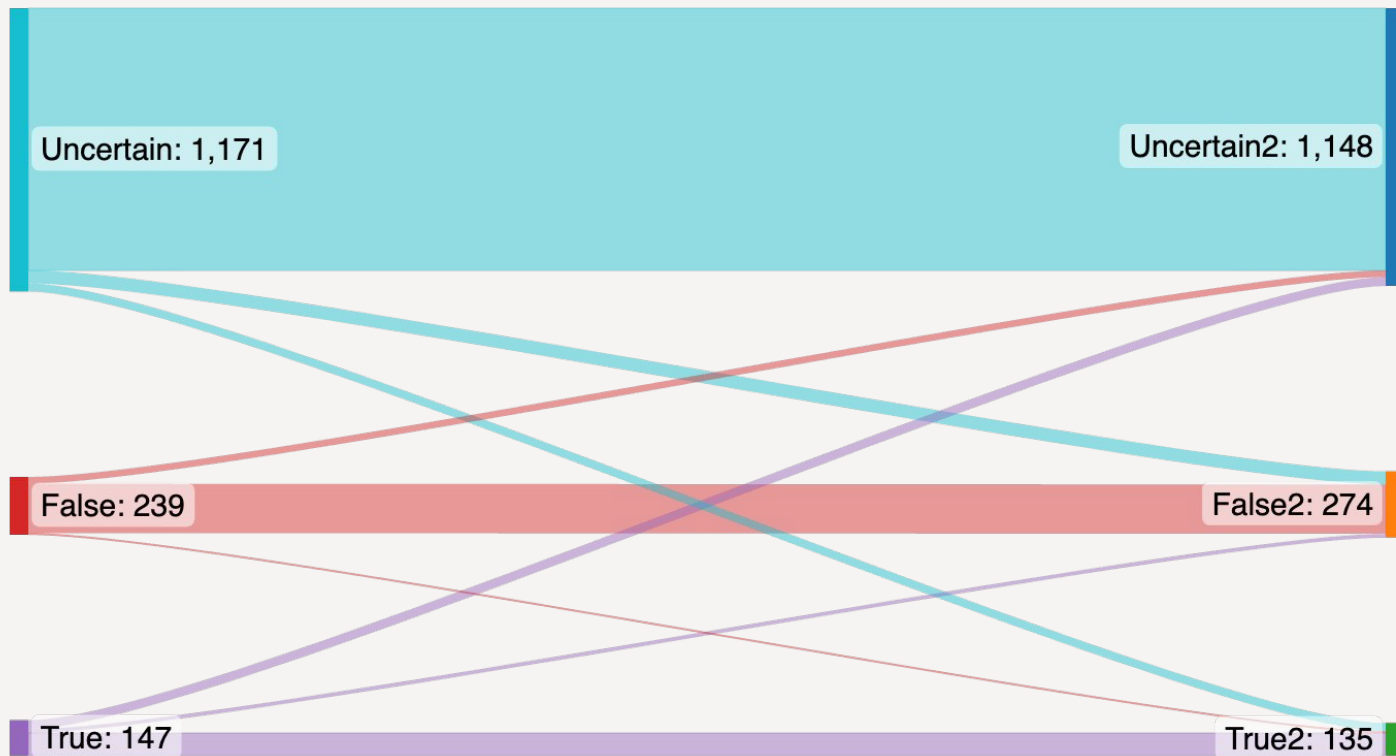


## Camilo ES



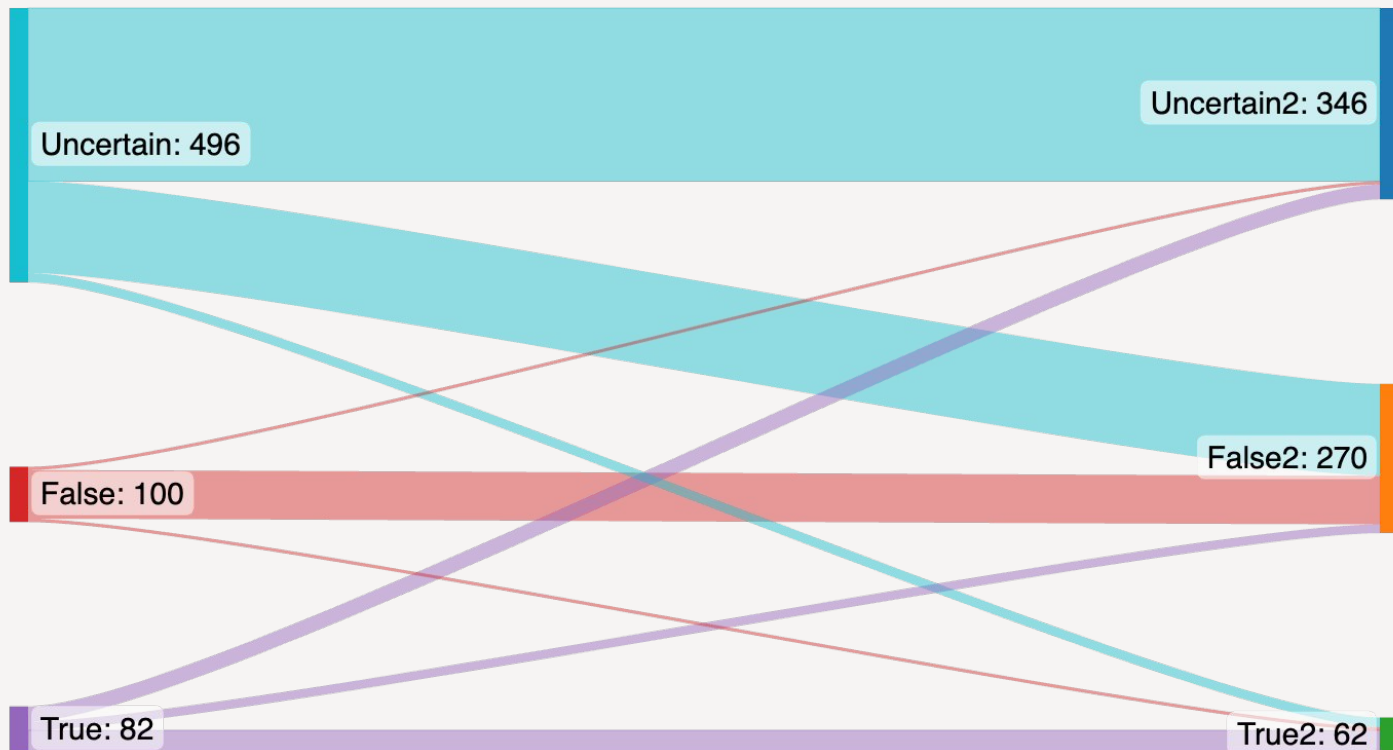


# Control





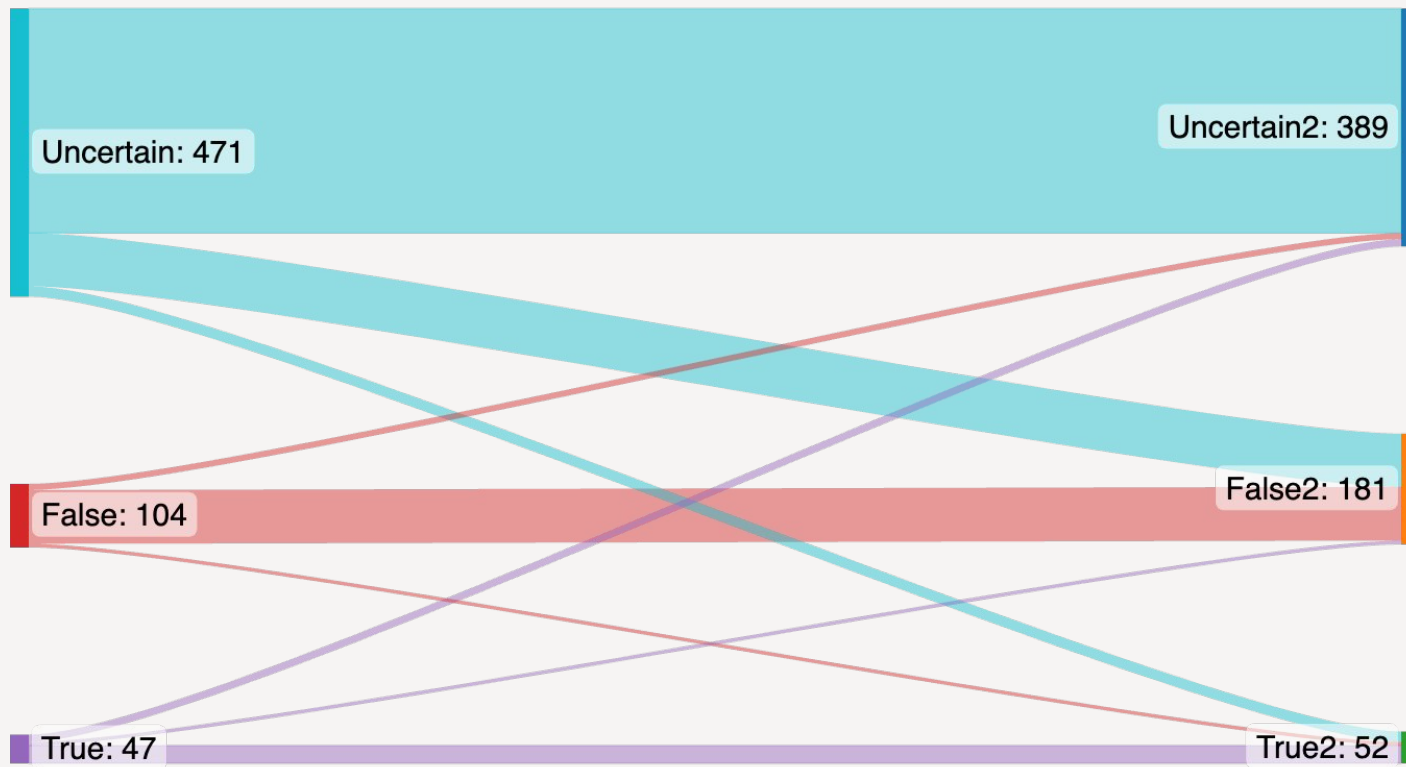
# Journalist EN





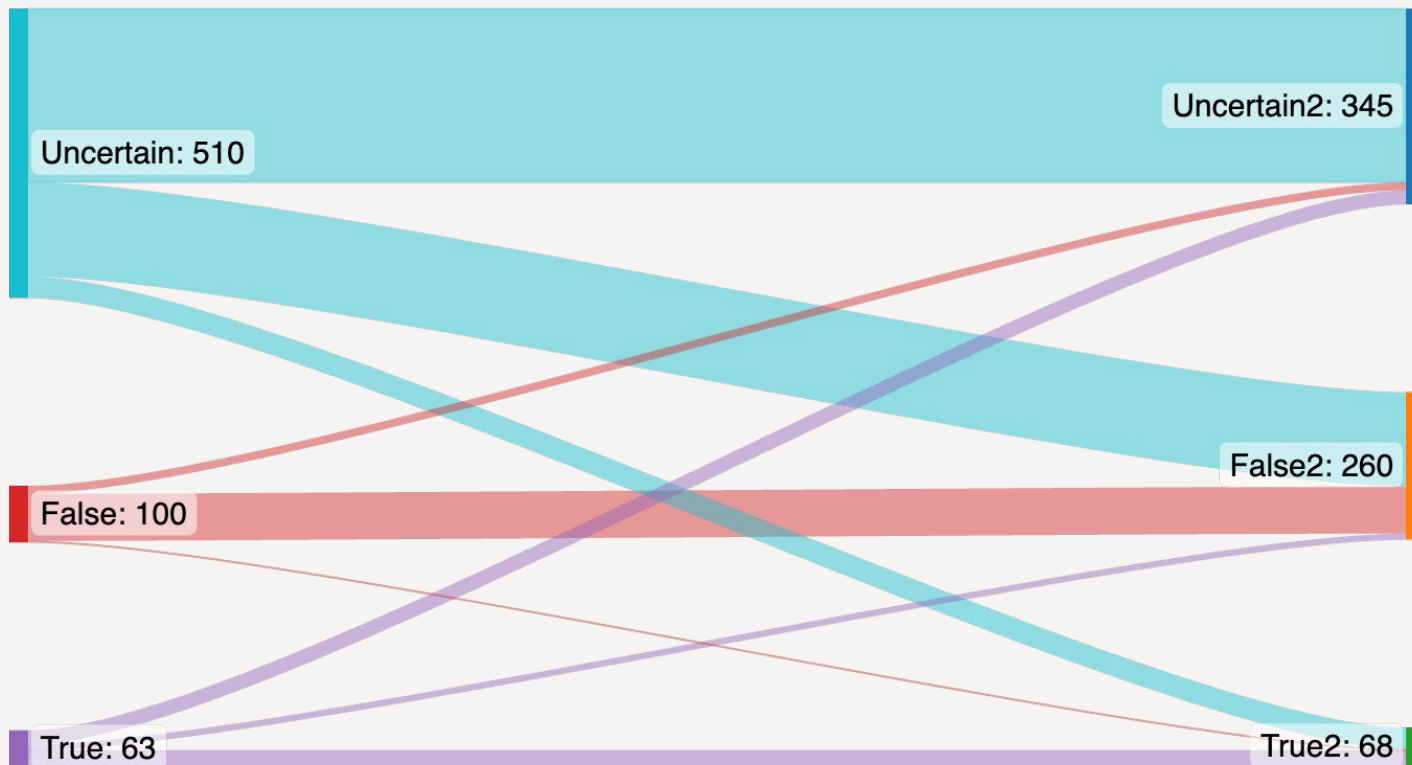


# Journalist ES



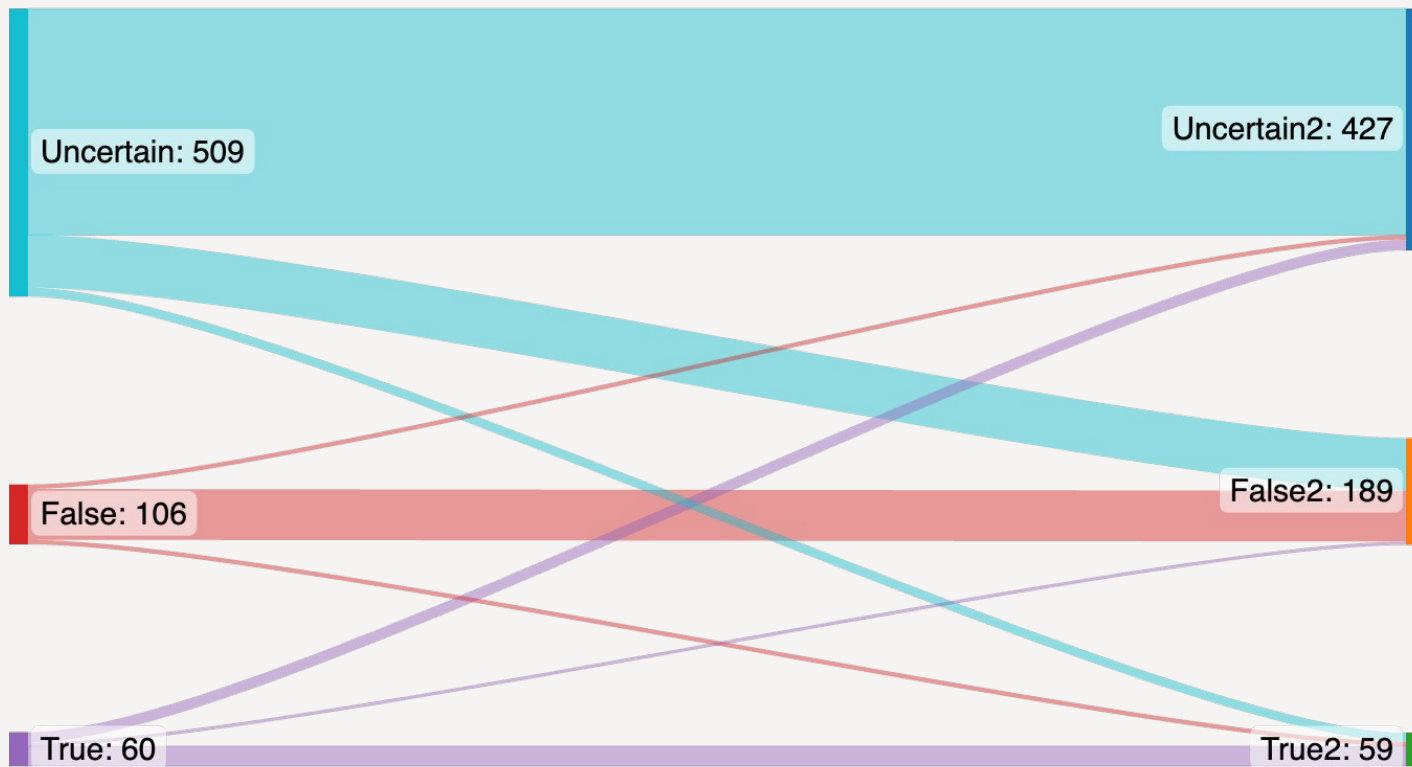


# Camilo EN



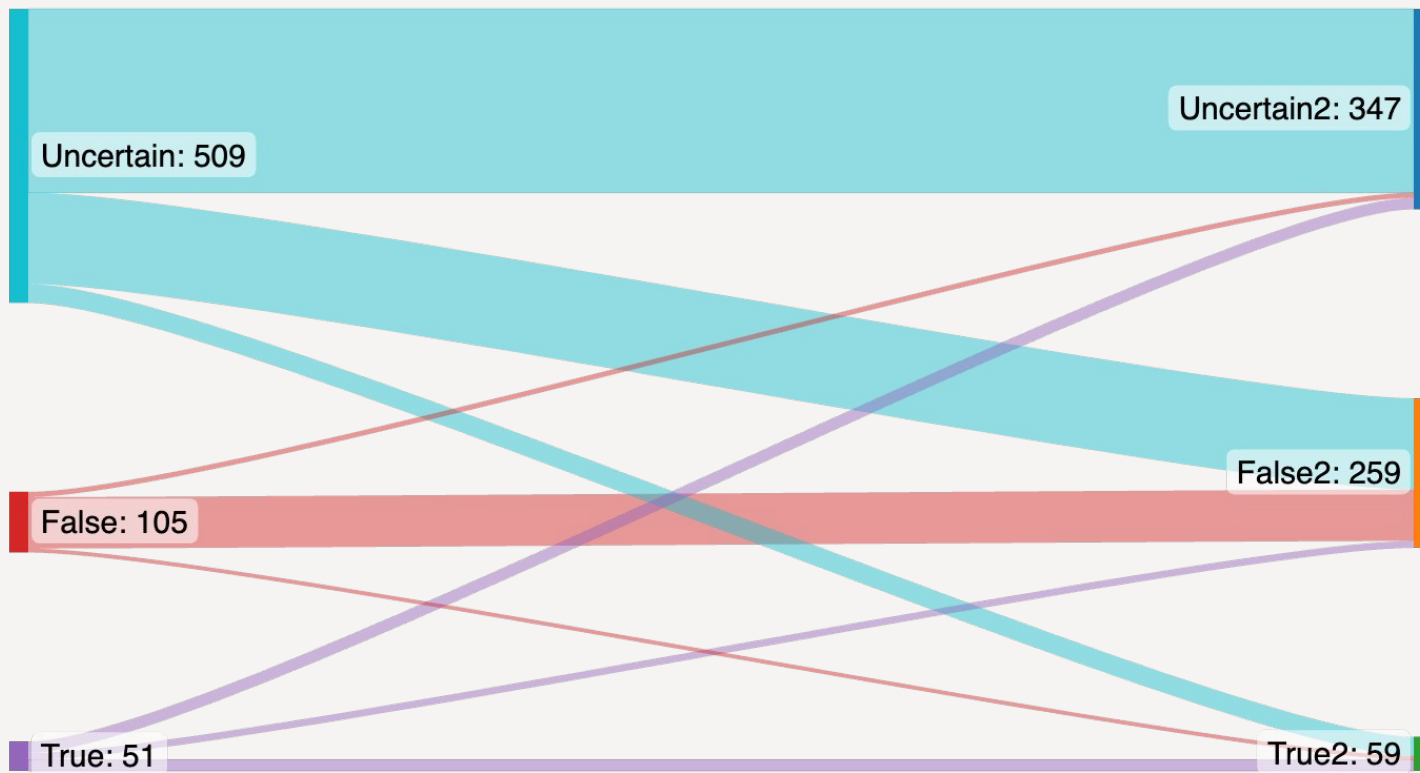


# Camilo ES



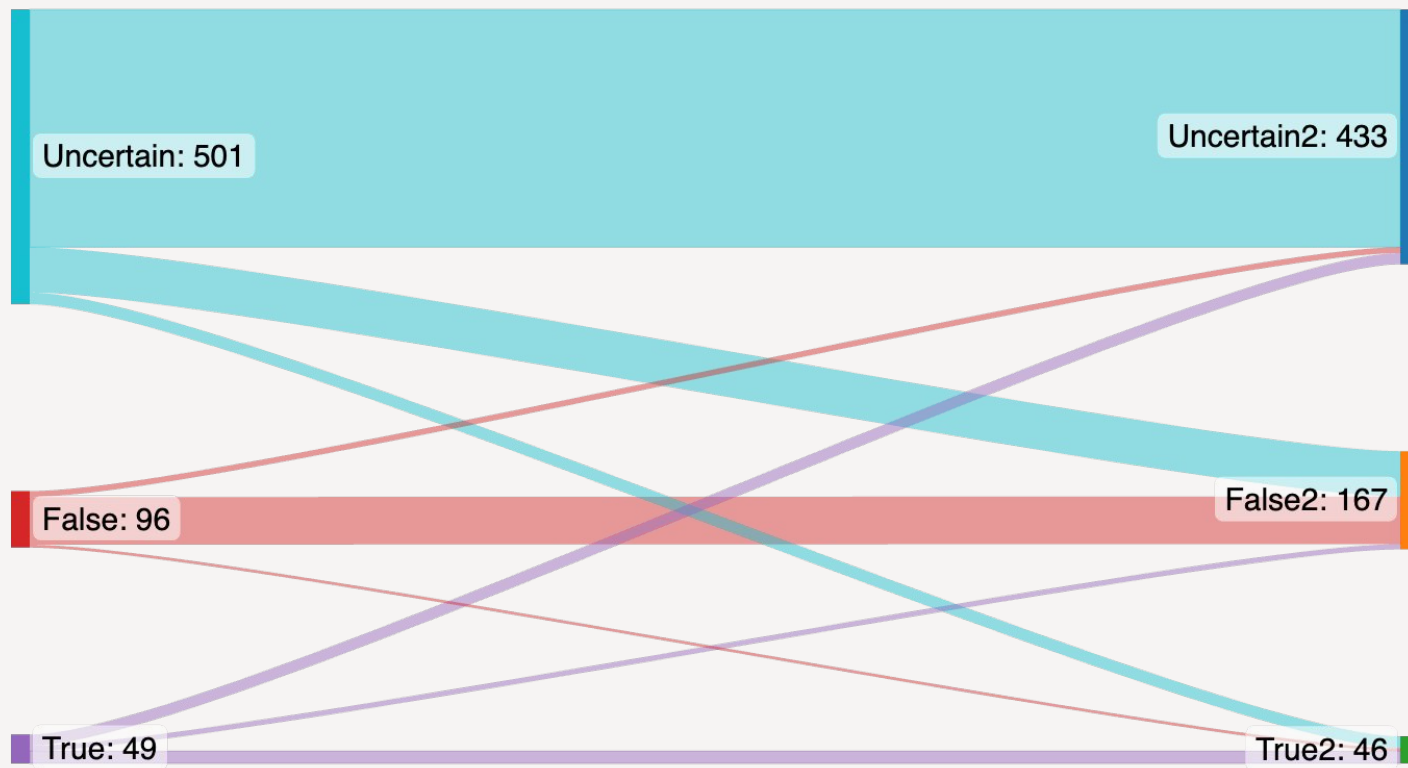


# Activist EN





# Activist ES





## Link to all videos

Access all videos [here](#).