



UNPACKING ELECTION MISINFORMATION:

Australians' experiences of news and information about the 2025 federal election



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Report design: Zita Leung

DOI: 10.60836/hc77-gn54

ISBN: 978-1-74088-619-2

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Attribution

McGuinness, K., Park, S., Lee, J. Y., Lukamto, W., Fisher, C., Fulton, J., Haw, A. & Holland, K. (2025). *Unpacking election misinformation: Australians' experiences of news and information about the 2025 federal election*. News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

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CONTENTS

- 4 Background
- 5 Executive summary
- 6 Key findings
- 10 Authors
- 11 Methodology

- 16 Chapter 1:**
Accessing and understanding news and information about the election

- 34 Chapter 2:**
Encountering election misinformation

- 48 Chapter 3:**
Identifying and responding to election misinformation

- 66 Chapter 4:**
Concern about misinformation and attitudes towards regulation

BACKGROUND

Political misinformation during elections can deepen polarisation and lead people to vote against their best interests. People may be inclined to avoid or disengage with the democratic process due to the overwhelming information environment. This report documents findings from research exploring Australians' experiences of election misinformation in the lead up to the 2025 federal election.

The News & Media Research Centre conducted this research to respond to a growing concern among Australians about how difficult it is to tell what is true and factual online, and to gain a better understanding of how Australians are impacted by these concerns. Audiences in Australia are frequent social media users and among the most concerned globally about the increase in false and misleading information online¹. As we increasingly get news and information about current events from websites, apps and social media, the quality of this information has come under scrutiny. Information, particularly viral news, flows quickly between digital, such as social media, and traditional media like television, radio, and newspapers. Online misinformation is prevalent and affects how communities learn about and discuss important issues.

Elections are a particular moment of concern. The public rely on news media and other information sources to help them decide how to vote and whether to be more involved in the process such as volunteering to help campaigns or staff the polling booths. On social media, politicians and political parties directly communicate with members of the public alongside influencers, content creators, and

ordinary people. Sorting trustworthy sources of information from untrustworthy ones requires patience and skill. As the difficulty involved in accessing quality information about elections increases, this could deter people from being informed or involving themselves in the political process. It could also result in a decline in trust in the political system and democracy.

Who we are

The News & Media Research Centre is a team of researchers and educators working at the University of Canberra. We are independent and impartial researchers who work together to build public understanding of journalism, media literacy, and media consumption in Australia. We help governments and organisations in the media industry develop policies related to social media platforms, misinformation, and media regulation. Our aim is to develop projects and deliver research publications that help to build social cohesion and trust in media systems.

You can learn more about the work that we do at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/nmrc>

What we did

In this report, we discuss findings from a national survey and interviews with Australian residents aged 18 and over conducted in the weeks following the 2025 federal election. We partnered with YouGov to recruit around 2000 people for the survey and 35 people for the interviews. We recruited people using quotas for age, gender, region, education, and income, so

that we would have a balanced sample that is representative of the Australian population. Interviewees were recruited from marginal electorates and came from a variety of backgrounds, also being balanced for age and gender. Those who participated received a small incentive as part of their existing agreement with YouGov.

In the survey, we asked people about what kind of news and media, including traditional and social, they used to get information about the campaigns of politicians and political parties in the lead up to the election. We asked about their views on politics generally and about how they use social media to engage with political information. Our main questions focused on how often and where people said they encountered election misinformation, as well as what kind of information it was and how they reacted to it.

In the interviews, we wanted to get a deeper understanding of how people made sense of what is trustworthy information about politicians, political parties, and the election. We asked questions about how people decided what was or was not misinformation, how they felt about misinformation and what they thought could help people identify it.

This report primarily focuses on data from the survey; however, quotes from the interviews are used at points to provide added context and understanding.

¹ Park, S., Fisher, C., McGuinness, K., Lee, J., Fujita, M., Haw, A., McCallum, K. & Nardi, G. (2025). Digital News Report: Australia 2025. Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. <http://doi.org/10.60836/md4e-k570>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Misinformation has become a routine part of daily life, shaping public discourse and distorting perceptions. This study investigated the Australian public's experiences of and reactions to election misinformation that they came across throughout the 2025 federal election period.

In the two weeks prior to election day almost two-thirds of adults reported coming across election misinformation and three-quarters said they were worried about the spread of false election information. While politicians and political parties were the most reported source of misinformation, many people also encountered misinformation on mainstream news media.

Mainstream news is the most common source of election information, but people also rely heavily on their friends and family, political ads and social media. There is a big gap between where people get election information and who they trust. Social media is among the least trusted source and yet one-third of Australians get election information

from it. Rather than actively seeking news about the election, people are bumping into it as part of their daily lives, and false or misleading information is mixed in with what they find.

However, when they come across false or misleading election information, very few have the motivation, confidence or skills to verify information. The most common response to misinformation reported was to ignore it and scroll past, rather than taking the steps to check the facts. Many also react to political misinformation with frustration and irritation. The constant presence of questionable content and the difficulty in discerning what is true leads to a general erosion of trust. This puts off people from engaging with news, politics and broader society. These findings highlight the importance of clear and accessible political information to an engaged and motivated citizenry.

Furthermore, we found an important link between having access to quality news and people's ability to verify

information. Those who regularly access news and are informed are much less likely to be vulnerable to misinformation and are empowered to participate in the politics. Those who have received media literacy education are also more likely to be able to discern misinformation and react responsibly to misinformation.

The findings suggest that media literacy education combined with improved access to quality news content can be the most effective way to help people navigate the online environment and discern misinformation.

The Australian public expressed strong views and a clear desire for intervention regarding the regulation of the online environment, particularly concerning election misinformation. The vast majority of respondents support the view that the government should take steps to restrict false information on social media and introduce truth in advertising laws at a national level. They also strongly recognise the need for adult media literacy education.

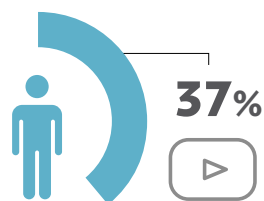
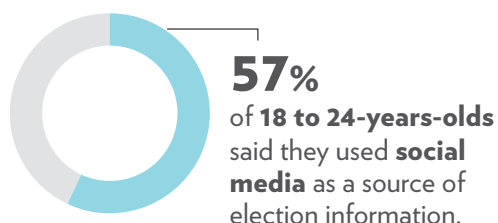
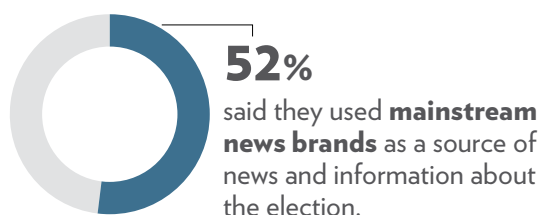
KEY FINDINGS

Accessing information about the election

Mainstream news brands and politicians were the most popular sources of news and information about the election. While influencers, online communities and alternative media are growing sources of information online, respondents were more likely to turn to traditional sources when it came to election information.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and public broadcasters were the most trusted sources of election news and information. Data from the probability-based Life in Australia™ panel (see Methodology) shows that Australians are still much less likely to trust generative AI, social media, political advertising and political websites as sources of election information. Among the most trusted sources, the AEC and public television were rated much higher than newspapers, news websites, commercial television, and radio.

Social media was the main source of election information for people under 35. While traditional media is more popular overall, young people are much more reliant on social media for news and information about the election. In addition, under 35s were much more likely to say they encountered election content from a creator or influencer online.



Among social media users, **37% of men** said they mostly paid attention to alternative voices on **YouTube** for election information on social media.



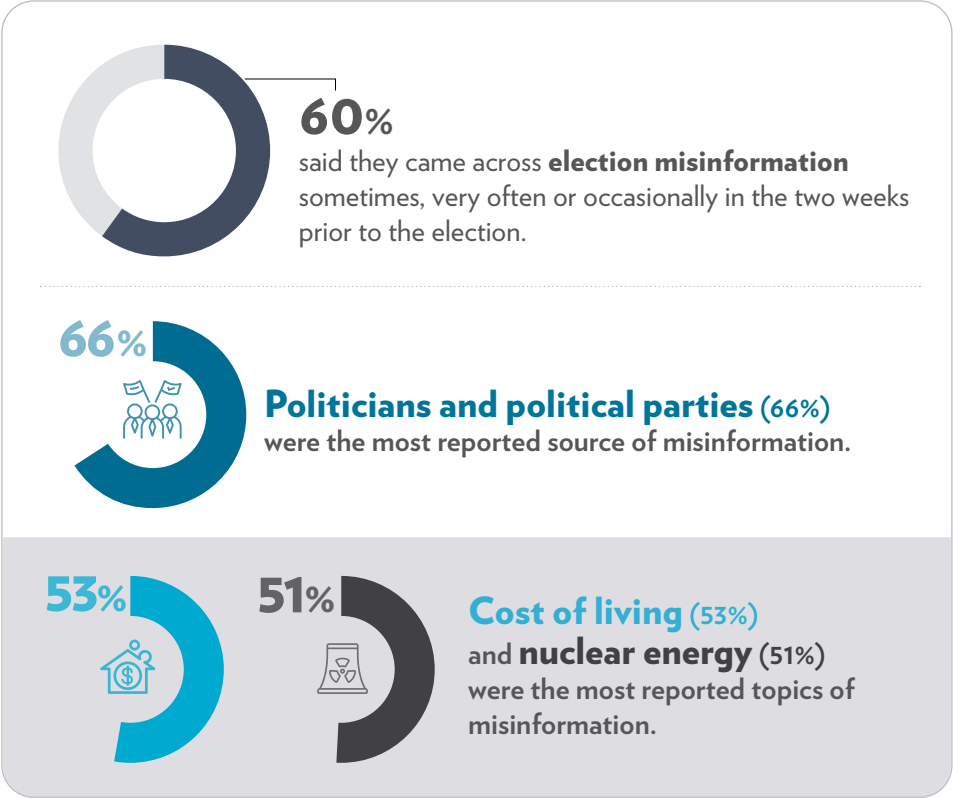
The Australian Electoral Commission (63%) and public television (54%) were the most trusted sources of news and information about the election

Election misinformation

Most respondents encountered false or misleading news or information about the election in the two weeks prior to election day. People who were more active in seeking out news were also more likely to come across election misinformation. Although social media was a point of concern for respondents, people who relied on TV news and online news websites were also very likely to report encountering election misinformation.

Politicians, political parties, and political advertising were the top sources of election misinformation. Younger people were more likely than older people to say they encountered election misinformation from influencers and content creators. Generally, journalists, activists, influencers and other sources were less likely to be reported as sources of misinformation.

Prominent campaign topics such as nuclear energy, cost of living, climate change, and immigration were the most common topics of election misinformation. While there was some variety in reported topics across different age groups and genders, cost of living and nuclear energy were the key misinformation topics. Those who identified as being culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) were more likely to report encountering misinformation about immigration.



Identifying and responding to misinformation

Most respondents were not confident they could tell if online information could be trusted. And when people did come across information they thought was false or misleading, they were more likely to say they ignored it. Only a small proportion said they would fact check or use search or news sources to try and determine the accuracy of information they thought might be false.

Only half of respondents have received media literacy training. Young people, particularly 18 to 24-year-olds, were much more likely to have received media literacy training. These young and educated people were more confident in their ability to check if social media posts could be trusted or if online information was true.

Those with media literacy education were also more likely to attempt to verify information using fact-checking websites, news media, search engines, or people they trusted.

In practice, only half of respondents were able to identify fact-checked misinformation about the election. We asked a professional fact-checker to provide us with examples of false or misleading information about the election they had encountered and asked the respondents to tell us if the examples were misinformation. Across the five examples, only about half of respondents identified these examples as misinformation. Many were not sure or said these weren't examples of misinformation.

Left-wing respondents were more likely to agree with the fact-checker on election misinformation about the Labor party. Right-wing respondents were more likely to agree with the fact-checker on misinformation about the Liberal National Party. These findings support other research showing a partisan bias in the identification of misinformation.

People rarely fact-check, search for, or engage with news media when they encounter misinformation. This suggests that ordinary Australians are less likely to attempt to actively verify whether information is true or not, and they do not process and identify misinformation in the same way as professional fact-checkers.



Half of respondents (51%) have never received **media literacy education**.



The most common response to misinformation was to **ignore it** (44%).



Only two in five (40%) were extremely or quite confident they can **check if a website or social media post can be trusted**.



About half were able to **identify fact-checked misinformation about the election** (ranging from 43% to 58% across 5 examples).

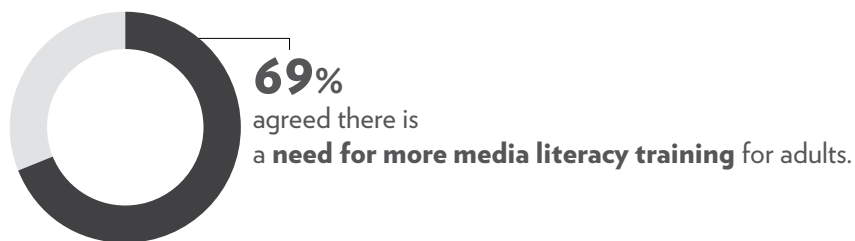
How misinformation should be addressed

Most say more adult media literacy training is needed. There were high levels of support for media literacy training across age, gender, education and income groups. Younger people and those with tertiary education or media literacy training were more likely to agree with the need for more adult media literacy training.

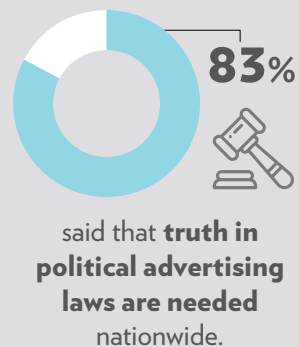
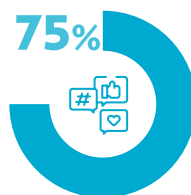
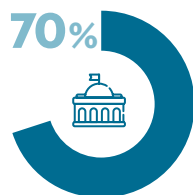
The majority want the government and digital platforms to do more to restrict false information on social media, even if it means limiting freedom to publish or access information. Agreement that the government and platforms needed to do more was relatively high across all demographics, with young people, those with low-income, and right-wing respondents being slightly less likely to agree.

There is very strong appetite for national truth in political advertising laws. Only five percent said no, truth in advertising regulations were not needed nationwide. Support for truth in political advertising laws was slightly lower among young people but was consistently above eighty percent among all other groups.

Right-leaning respondents were more concerned about misinformation but less supportive of adult media literacy training and truth in political advertising laws. This suggests there is some element of political partisanship around the idea of regulating online information, media literacy training and truth in political advertising laws, with right-wing respondents being more likely to support a laissez-faire approach.



The majority agreed that
government (70%)
and **social media companies** (75%)
should take steps to restrict false information
online, even if it limits freedom to publish
and access information.



AUTHORS



Kieran McGuinness is a Postdoctoral research fellow at the News & Media Research Centre. Their work focuses on mixed methods approaches to research on news audiences, news values, journalistic practices, health communication and discourses of social change. They have also led research on diversity in news production and how multilingual audiences engage with news.



Sora Park is a Professor of Communication and Director of the News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. Her research focuses on digital media users, media markets and media policy. Her current Australian Research Council funded projects include; 'The rise of mistrust', 'Heartbeat of Australia', 'Valuing news' and 'Addressing misinformation with media literacy'.



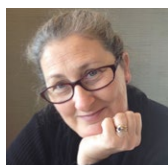
Jee Young Lee is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra. Her research expertise lies in media audience analysis, with a particular focus on news consumption, digital participation, media literacy and digital citizenship. She is a co-investigator on the Australian Research Council Linkage Project 'Heartbeat of Australia: Tracking, Understanding and Engaging News Audiences' and a co-author of the Digital News Report: Australia.



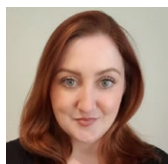
William Lukamto is a quantitative researcher at the University of Canberra's News & Media Research Centre. He analyses large-scale surveys on trust in news and citizenship, using Python, SPSS and Power BI to translate data into insights. A PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, he studies censorship and self-censorship in soft-authoritarian contexts.



Caroline Fisher is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Communication with the News & Media Research Centre. Her research interests include trust in news, regional journalism, Journalist-source relations, and political communication. She is a co-investigator on two ARC-funded projects examining 'The rise of mistrust' and 'Valuing news'.



Janet Fulton is a Research Fellow with the News and Media Research Centre. Janet's research interests include creativity and cultural production, journalism, journalism education, media entrepreneurship and work-integrated learning. She is currently working on ARC projects including Heartbeat of Australia: Tracking, understanding and engaging news audiences and New approaches measuring Australia's creative workforce: Beyond the Census as well as projects on political misinformation in the news and media literacy.



Ashleigh Haw is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media at the University of Canberra and a core member with the News & Media Research Centre. Her research specialises in advancing access and inclusion in mediated communication, with a special interest in understanding how migrants and people with disabilities engage with (and are impacted by) news and digital media representation of their needs and experiences.



Kate Holland is an Adjunct Associate Professor with the News & Media Research Centre. Her research in communication and media studies focuses on representations of and responses to public health issues. She has published on topics such as mental health issues, COVID-19, violence against women and gambling harm.

METHODOLOGY

Survey methodology

The survey was designed by the News & Media Research Centre to investigate the Australian public's use of media and information sources throughout the 2025 election period, as well as their experiences of and reactions to election misinformation that they came across. The survey is part of the 'Political Misinformation and Media Literacy in the 2025 Australian Election' project, funded by the University of Canberra's Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Faculty of Arts and Design.

The design of the research uses a self-report online questionnaire to survey a non-probability sample of respondents recruited through online panels at approximately two-weeks post-election.

This research was approved by the University of Canberra's Human Research Ethics Committee (Review reference number: 2025-11460).

Sample design and data collection

Fieldwork for the survey was conducted by YouGov between 12 May and 2 June 2025. Surveys were completed in English using a web form available on PCs, laptops and mobile devices. Participants were recruited by YouGov from multiple online panels and received incentives to participate as part of their existing agreements with panel operators.

Recruitment quotas for age, gender, region, education, income, vote at the 2025 federal election and vote at the 2023 Indigenous voice to parliament referendum were used with quota proportions being based on Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census data and Australian Electoral Commission Tallyroom data.

An initial pilot test was conducted from 12 May to 14 May which collected data from 207 participants. The full survey was launched from 14 May to 2 June. The total number of participants who completed the survey was 2,234 and 231 responses were removed after post-survey data quality checks. A separate group of 38 respondents completed the survey and were invited to participate in interviews, their survey responses were not included in the final sample. The average completion time for the survey was 15 minutes and 34 seconds.

The final sample comprises 2,003 adults. The data should be considered as a non-probability sample of English-speaking Australian residents with access to the internet who are 18 years and older.

Weighting

Survey data was weighted to targets based on ABS 2021 Census and AEC Tallyroom data to align age, gender, region and 2023 Voice referendum vote with the Australian population.

Instrument design and measures

The survey instrument was designed by the News & Media Research Centre. It included a range of questions adapted from past and concurrent studies of media audiences conducted by the Centre as well as original questions and redesigned versions of questions used in other academic research.

Key measurements

Political efficacy

We asked respondents questions about their political efficacy. We measured this through a series of questions designed to assess internal and external political efficacy.

Internal political efficacy is a measure of people's self-reported ability to comprehend and engage with contemporary politics. External political efficacy is a measure of people's perception of the political environment and whether they see politicians as being confident and responsive to citizens' efforts to engage with politics.

To develop these questions, we modified similar measures of internal and external political efficacy used by Fierro, Aroca & Navia (2023), Hansen & Pedersen (2014), Lee & Jones-Jang (2024) and Gershtenson & Plane (2007). The questions were modified for readability and to ensure they were contextually relevant and applicable to Australian residents. External efficacy ($\alpha = 0.746$); internal efficacy ($\alpha = 0.604$).

Fact-checked misinformation identification task

We gave respondents examples of what an expert fact-checker, Esther Chan, concluded was election misinformation. We asked respondents whether they thought that these examples were misinformation or not, with response options being 'yes', 'no' and 'not sure'.

To source these examples, we engaged an experienced professional fact-checker to collect examples of

false and misleading information they found online between Tuesday the 22nd of April and Friday the 2nd of May 2025. They completed their search of election misinformation using Google advance search, X advanced search and Facebook algorithm tweaking. They searched for election misinformation daily for about one hour. The fact-checker provided a report to the research team that included all the examples of election misinformation they found as well as detailed notes and a verdict on whether each example was misleading, missing context, not supported by evidence, or false.

The research team selected five examples from this dataset and confirmed with the fact-checker that these were what they considered to be election misinformation.

Two of the election misinformation examples selected were about the Liberal National Party (LNP) or LNP politicians, two were about the Labor Party or Labor politicians, and one was topically unrelated to any political party or candidate. The research team has elected not to display these examples in the report, even

in a censored format, and this is to protect the anonymity of individuals or organisations that shared the article or post online.

Analysis and reporting

When data is first reported in each chapter, the question wording used to collect that data is included under tables and figures, as well as the sample or sub-sample size being represented. Subsequent figures and tables do not include the question wording.

Some sub-sample data will not be displayed in tables and figures if a category within that sub-sample is reduced to less than 100 respondents. Additionally, respondents who said that they ‘don’t know’ in response to a question were removed from the analysis unless there was value in reporting that statistic. To make comparative analyses easier to represent visually, some response sub-categories were grouped together in the analysis. These groupings will appear on labels or underneath the figure. Where data is omitted for ease of visual

communication, figure titles will note what category the columns, lines or data points represent.

Some percentages in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding or the exclusion of don’t know responses. Figures have been annotated to indicate where data has been excluded.

Expert fact-checker

Esther Chan is a fact-checking journalist and editor specialising in misinformation, visual verification, and open-source intelligence investigations. Her work focuses on tracking and analysing online misinformation, including emerging forms of AI-generated content, verifying user-generated material during breaking news, and advancing media literacy in the Asia-Pacific region. She has worked with major news agencies covering significant global events, fact-checking and verifying user-generated content related to elections, natural disasters, and conflicts.

Interview methodology

This report includes supplemental qualitative data from interviews conducted with participants in a concurrent diary study. The subject of these interviews was people’s experiences of election misinformation in the lead up to the 2025 federal election.

Thirty-eight participants aged 18 years and older were recruited for this study from market research panels operated by YouGov. Of those recruited, 35 completed their interviews. Interviewees were recruited from electorates the research team evaluated as being marginal or potentially marginal, which included the electorates of Deakin, Dickson, Gilmore and Werriwa. These electorates were chosen because they were held by a sitting candidate by a small margin and included some suburban, outer-metropolitan or regional populations.

Interviews typically lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Five members of the research team conducted interviews between 22 May and 16 June via Zoom Workplace video conferencing software. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Zoom Workplace and researchers conducted a listen-back transcript cleaning process to ensure accuracy in the final transcript.

Trust in sources of news and information about the federal election data

Some data in this report was drawn from data collected by the Social Research Centre's Life in Australia™ probability-based online panel of adult Australian residents. We partnered with the Social Research Centre and designed a question with them to assess trust in sources of news and information about the federal election. This question was included in a survey of 2000 Life in Australia™ participants which was conducted by the Social Research Centre in May of 2025.



Introduction to Life in Australia™

The Social Research Centre established Australia's first and only national probability-based online panel, known as Life in Australia™, in November 2016.

The panel is the most methodologically rigorous online panel in Australia and is one of only a small number worldwide¹. Members of the panel were randomly recruited via their landline or mobile telephones or postal address (rather than being self-selected volunteers) and agreed to provide their contact details to take part in surveys on a regular basis. Unlike other research panels, Life in Australia™ includes people with

and without internet access. Those without internet access, or who are not comfortable completing surveys over the internet, are able to complete surveys by telephone and represent the offline population.

Because Life in Australia™ is recruited using probability-based sampling methods, this means every Australian has a chance of being invited to the panel. The Social Research Centre's statisticians use advanced methods and tools to calculate sampling errors and confidence intervals that truly reflect the precision of estimates generated from the panel. Research conducted by the Social Research Centre shows Life in Australia™ produces survey estimates of

comparable accuracy to other major approaches for conducting probability surveys.²

Further information regarding Life in Australia™, including published reports, is available on the Social Research Centre's website: <https://srcentre.com.au/lifeinaustralia/panel/>

Additional information and detailed methodological notes designed to satisfy AAPOR Transparency Initiative requirements can be found at <https://srcentre.com.au/methodology/>

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¹ Others include the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel, GESIS Panel in Germany, and the NatCen Panel in the U.K.

² <https://polis.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/results-2022-australian-comparative-study-survey-methods-acssm>

Table – Unweighted sample demographics

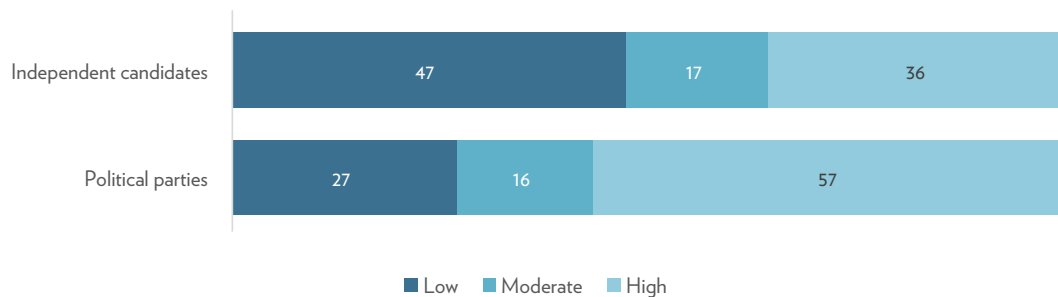
	n	%
Gender		
Male	937	46.8
Female	1047	52.3
Non-binary, third gender or gender diverse	19	0.9
Age		
18 - 24	174	8.7
25 - 34	269	13.4
35 - 44	307	15.3
45 - 54	302	15.1
55 - 64	396	19.8
65+	555	27.7
Level of highest education		
Primary school	8	0.4
Some Secondary School	221	11.0
Completed Secondary School (Year 12 or equivalent)	373	18.6
Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, or other TAFE/ College qualification	609	30.4
Bachelor Degree (including Honours Degree)	486	24.3
Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters Degree or Doctoral Degree	303	15.1
None of these	3	0.1
Household income		
Less than \$40,000	344	17.2
\$40,000 to less than \$60,000	310	15.5
\$60,000 to less than \$100,000	417	20.8
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	356	17.8
\$150,000 or more	358	17.9
Prefer not to say	218	10.9
Married or living with a partner		
No (including in relationship but living apart, widowed, divorced, separated, single)	868	43.3
Yes	1135	56.7
Has a long-term health condition or impairment or disability		
No	1421	70.9
Yes	518	25.9
Country of birth		
Australia	1603	80.0
Another country	397	19.8
Self-identified as culturally and linguistically diverse		
No	1535	76.6
Yes	379	18.9
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		
No	1889	94.3
Yes	93	4.6

ACCESSING AND UNDERSTANDING NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ELECTION

- Mainstream news brands (52%) were the most common source of information about the election among Australians.
- Social media was an important source of election information for those aged under 35 (57% for 18-24s; 52% for 25-34s).
- Among social media users, men (37%) were more than twice as likely as women (16%) to say they mostly paid attention to alternative voices on YouTube for election information on social media.
- Two in five Australians (40%) encountered creator/influencer election content often or very often.
- People have the highest trust in the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) (63%) and the lowest trust in AI chatbots (9%).

Almost three quarters paid moderate to high attention to political campaigns

We asked respondents how much attention they paid to news and information about the campaigns of political parties and independent candidates. More than half (57%) of respondents paid a lot of attention to campaigns of the political parties and 36% paid attention to campaigns of independent candidates. In total, almost three quarters (73%) paid a moderate to high degree of attention to the campaigns of political parties and more than half (53%) paid a moderate to high degree of attention to independent campaigns (see **figure 1.1**).



◀ **Figure 1.1:** Attention paid to news and information about the election campaigns (%)

[Q7] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), how much attention did you pay to news and information about the campaigns of the political parties and independent candidates? 0 to 4 = low, 5=moderate, 6-10 high [Base: n=2,003]

Men paid more attention to the campaigns of political parties (76%) than women (70%). However, there were no differences between men (54%) and women (53%) when it came to paying attention to independent candidates. In contrast, those aged under 35 paid more attention to campaigns of independent candidates (57%) compared to those 35+ (52%). Those with tertiary education and media literacy education (see **Chapter 3**, p.49) tended to pay more attention to both parties and candidates. Right-wing respondents paid more attention to political parties' campaigns (80%) compared to those with a left-wing or centre orientation (74%). In contrast, those

in the political centre paid more attention to independents (57%) compared to either left- (54%) or right-wing (54%) respondents.

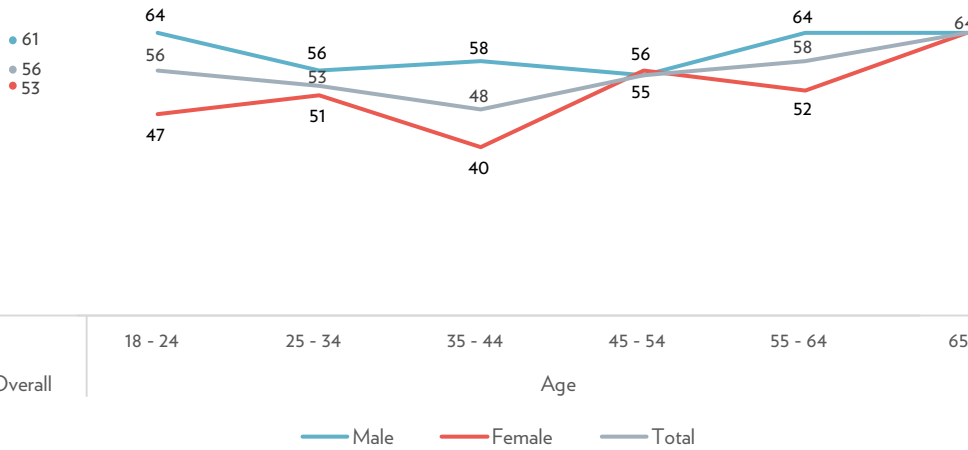
The strongest relationships were for political efficacy. For more information about how we measure external or internal political efficacy see p.11 in the Methodology. Two-thirds (64%) of those with high external political efficacy paid attention to parties whereas only 50% of those with low efficacy did so. Those with high internal political efficacy (70%) also paid more attention to parties than those with low efficacy (39%) (see **table 1.1**).

► **Table 1.1:**
Attention paid to news and information about the election campaigns by demographics

Demographic	High attention to political parties (%)	High attention to independent candidates (%)
Gender		
Male	61	38
Female	53	35
Age		
18-34	54	38
35 and over	57	36
Tertiary education		
Yes	60	38
No	51	34
Media literacy education		
Yes	59	38
No	54	35
Income (annual household)		
< \$40 000	50	34
\$40 000 - \$149 999	57	37
≥ \$150 000	66	41
Location		
Major cities	58	37
Regional area	51	36
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse		
Yes	55	39
No	58	36
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability		
Yes	54	35
No	58	37
Political orientation		
Left	62	39
Centre	53	38
Right	68	40
External political efficacy		
High	64	41
Low	50	33
Internal political efficacy		
High	70	45
Low	39	24

Attention to party campaigns was high across all ages, but the gender gap was most pronounced for young people and those in middle-aged groups. Among 18-24s, 64% of men reported high attention compared with 47% of women (+17 percentage point gap

[pp]). The gap reappears at 35-44 (58% men vs 40% women, +18 pp). The lines converge in 45-54 (roughly 55-56% for both), widen again at 55-64 (64% men vs 52% women), and fully converge for those 65+ (both 64%) (see **figure 1.2**).



◀ **Figure 1.2:** Attention paid to news and information about the election campaigns of political parties by age and gender (% high)

[Q7_1] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), how much attention did you pay to news and information about the campaigns of the political parties? 0 to 4 = low, 5=moderate, 6-10 high [Base: n=2,003]

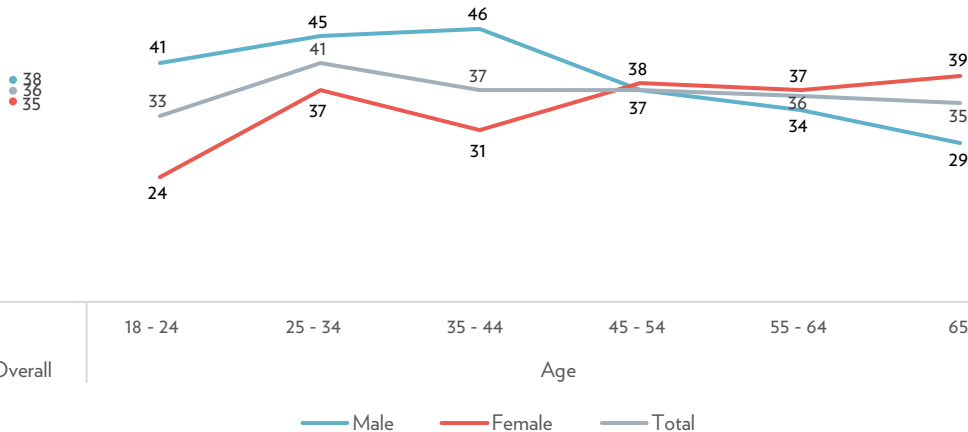
Men under 35 were more likely to pay attention to independent campaigns

For independent campaigns, levels of attention were lower overall, and the pattern reversed with age. Men under 45 were more attentive (41% to 46%) compared with 24% to 37% for women - before the gap closes at 45-54-year-olds (about 37% to 38% for both). From 55+, women were higher in attention (see **figure 1.3**)

(+17 pp, men higher) and 65+ (+10 pp, women higher).

Overall, party campaigns attract broad, high attention, with a clear male skew among younger and mid-career voters before converging at older ages. Independent campaigns are more segmented: men under 45 are the most attentive, while women over 55 were more attentive than men in those age groups.

Put together, the biggest gender differences show up for parties in 18-24s (+17 pp) and 35-44s (+18 pp), and for independents in 18-24s



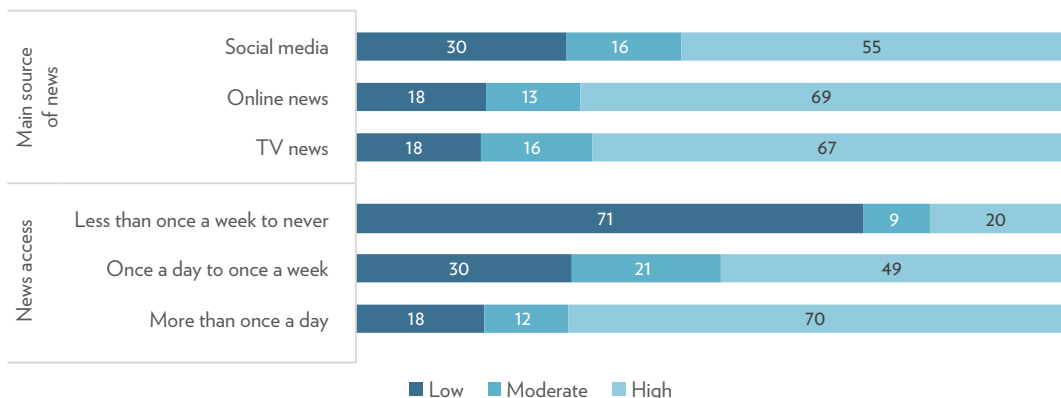
◀ **Figure 1.3:** Attention paid to news and information about the election campaigns of independent candidates by age and gender (% high)

[Q7_2] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), how much attention did you pay to news and information about the campaigns of independent candidates? 0 to 4 = low, 5=moderate, 6-10 high [Base: n=2,003]

Light news consumers and social media users paid less attention to political parties

Heavy news consumers (70%) were far more engaged with election campaigns compared to light users (49%) or extremely low or non-news users (20%). Those whose main source of news is TV (67%) or online news (69%) paid more attention than those who said their main source is social media (55%) (see **figure 1.4**).

► **Figure 1.4:**
Attention paid to news and information about the election campaigns of political parties by news access and main source of news (%)



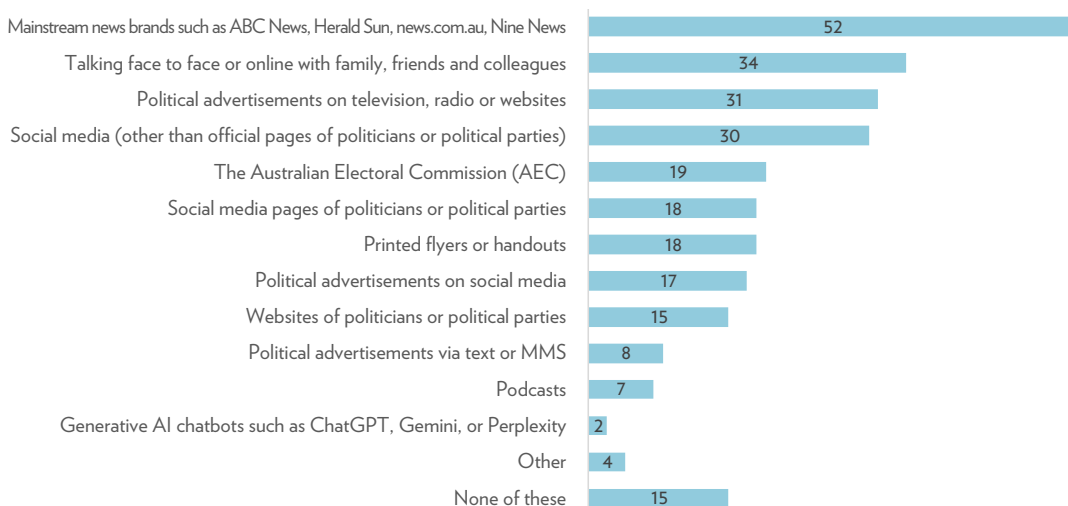
[Q7_1] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), how much attention did you pay to news and information about the campaigns of the political parties? 0 to 4 = low, 5=moderate, 6-10 high [Base: n=2,003]

Mainstream news was the top source of election information

As shown in **figure 1.5**, mainstream news brands were the most common source of election information (52%). This was followed by talking to family, friends and colleagues (34%). Nearly one-third (31%) accessed information via paid political advertisements and one in five (17%) saw paid advertisements on social media. Respondents were more

likely to rely on general social media feeds (30%) than to seek out social media pages of politicians or political parties (18%) or party websites (15%). This means that many people bump into election information passively rather than actively seeking it. Very few respondents said they rely on podcasts (7%) and AI chatbots (2%).

► **Figure 1.5 :**
Sources of news and information about the election (%)



[Q8] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), which, if any, of the following did you access as a source of news or information about the election? Please select all that apply. [Base: n=2,003]

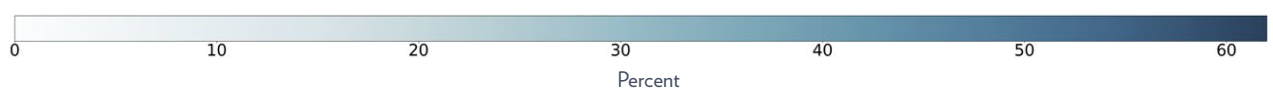
Social media was the top source of election information for under 35s

The top source of election information among respondents was mainstream news, except for those under 35 whose top source was social media (54%). Men were more likely to use mainstream news (57%) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) (22%) as a source of election information compared to women (47% and 16%). Women (37%) were more likely than men (30%) to rely on talking to other people. Respondents who

self-identified as culturally or linguistically diverse (CALD) used social and official digital sources more (including the AEC and politicians' sites/pages) and relied less on TV advertisements. Finally, political efficacy has a strong relationship with access to information. Those who have more confidence in the political system or in their own political abilities or opinions drew more on mainstream news and official sources of information.

► **Table 1.2 :**
Sources of news and information about the election by demographics (%)

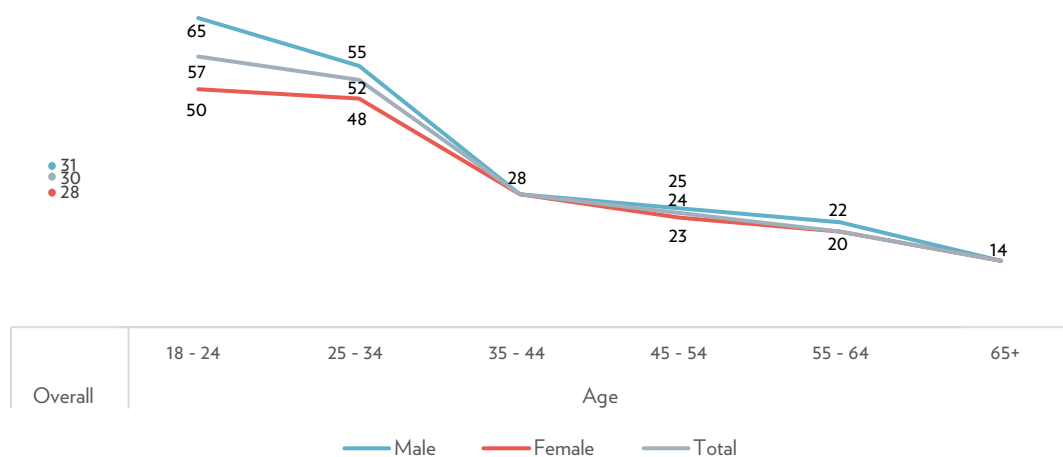
		Mainstream news brands	Websites of politicians or parties	Social media pages of politicians or parties	The Australian Electoral Commission	Political ads on television, radio or websites	Political ads on social media	Social media (excl. politicians or parties)	Talking face to face	Printed flyers or handouts	Podcasts	Generative AI chatbots	Other
Gender	Male	57	15	19	22	30	16	31	30	17	8	2	3
	Female	47	14	18	16	32	17	28	37	20	6	2	4
Age	18 – 34	43	21	32	22	23	27	54	40	16	12	6	2
	35+	55	12	14	18	34	13	21	32	19	6	1	4
Tertiary education	Yes	54	18	20	22	31	16	32	37	19	9	2	4
	No	49	9	16	15	31	17	25	30	17	5	2	3
Media literacy education	Yes	52	20	25	24	31	21	39	38	18	10	4	4
	No	52	9	12	14	31	12	20	30	19	5	0	3
Income	< \$40 000	45	13	14	17	31	12	24	32	16	5	2	5
	\$40 000 – \$149 999	53	16	20	18	31	18	30	34	21	8	3	3
	≥ \$150 000	60	12	18	22	30	18	35	36	17	9	2	4
Location	Major cities	54	14	18	20	31	18	29	35	19	7	3	3
	Regional area	46	15	20	17	31	14	30	32	17	8	1	5
CALD	Yes	46	19	21	23	26	18	34	31	16	7	5	2
	No	55	14	18	18	33	16	29	36	20	7	1	4
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	Yes	54	16	17	23	33	14	28	34	21	6	1	5
	No	52	14	19	17	31	18	30	34	17	7	2	3
Political orientation	Left	61	21	24	29	33	22	41	44	17	12	2	4
	Centre	51	12	14	14	29	15	25	28	21	5	2	2
	Right	57	15	20	19	37	16	29	37	22	7	2	4
External political efficacy	High	55	17	20	21	32	18	30	35	19	9	3	2
	Low	50	13	17	18	30	15	29	34	18	6	2	5
Internal political efficacy*	High	62	19	23	25	32	19	33	41	21	10	2	4
	Low	38	9	13	11	30	13	25	25	16	4	2	3



Young men most likely to use social media for election information

The use of social media as a source of election information is strongly related to age. More than half (57%) of 18-24-year-olds used social media to get information about the federal election, compared to only 14% of those aged 65+. Among younger cohorts (18-34s), there were differences across gender. Men in the 18-24 age group were much more likely (65%) than women (50%) in the same age group to use social media for election information (see **figure 1.6**)

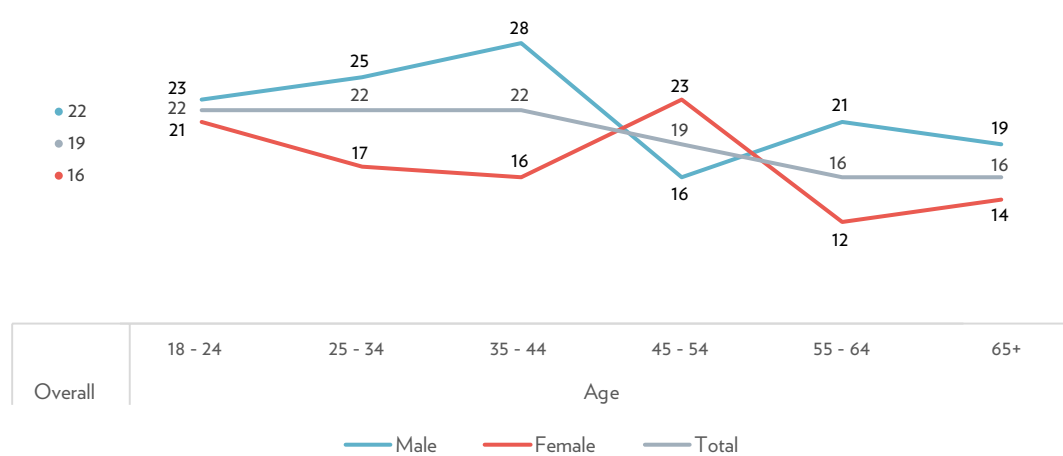
► **Figure 1.6 :**
Social media as a source of news and information about the election by age and gender (%)



[Q8_8] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), which, if any, of the following did you access as a source of news or information about the election? Social media (other than official pages of politicians or political parties). [Base: n=2,005]

Overall, the AEC is a less used but important and highly trusted source. Men (22%) accessed the AEC more than women (16%), but the pattern shifted by age. Men aged 45-54 (16%) were least likely to access the AEC but this increased for those aged 55-64 (21%). Women's use of the AEC peaked among those aged 45-54 (23%), then dropped for those aged 55-64 (12%) and 65+ (14%). In other words, men aged 45-54 and women aged 55-64 appear to be the weakest AEC touchpoints.

► **Figure 1.7 :**
The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) as a source of news and information about the election by age and gender (%)

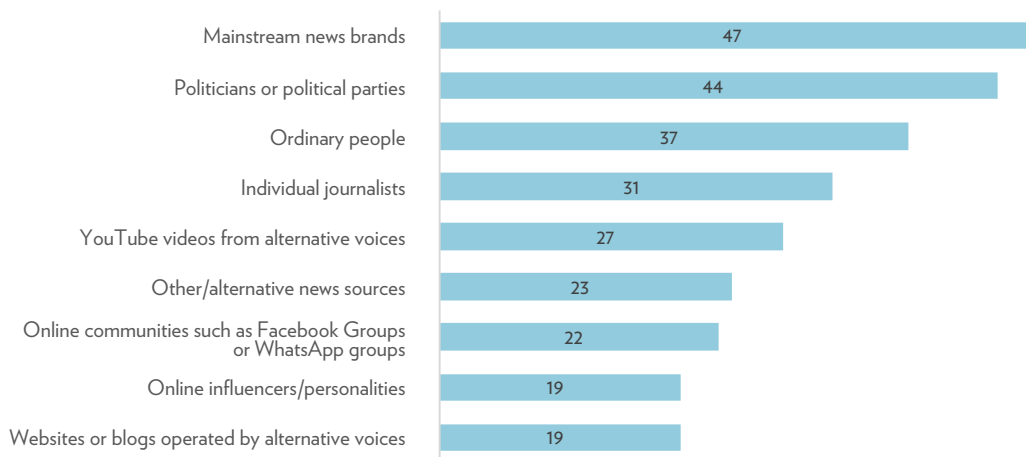


[Q8_4] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), which, if any, of the following did you access as a source of news or information about the election? The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). [Base: n=2,005]

On social media, mainstream news and politicians or political parties were the top sources of election information

We asked respondents who used social media to access news and information about the election what sources they paid the most attention to. Respondents paid the most attention to mainstream news brands (47%), followed by politicians or political parties (44%), and ordinary people (37%).

A much smaller proportion said they paid attention to influencers (19%) or alternative voices (19%). Around one in four said they were paying attention to online communities such as Facebook or WhatsApp groups (22%) (see **figure 1.8**).



◀ **Figure 1.8 :**
Main source of news and information about the election on social media (%)

[Q8b] You say that you accessed news or information about the election on social media. When it came to news and information about the federal election, which sources did you generally pay the most attention to while on social media? Please select all that apply. [Base: n=591]

There were differences in how men and women paid attention to election information on social media. Men tilted toward mainstream news (53%) and YouTube (37%), while women leaned more on ordinary people (38%). Those under 35 paid more attention to politicians (47%), YouTube (31%) and influencers (26%), while those 35+ paid most attention to mainstream news brands (53%) and other/alternative news (26%).

Regional users paid attention to ordinary people (45%) and politicians (46%), compared with major-city users who cited mainstream news (50%) and YouTube (29%).

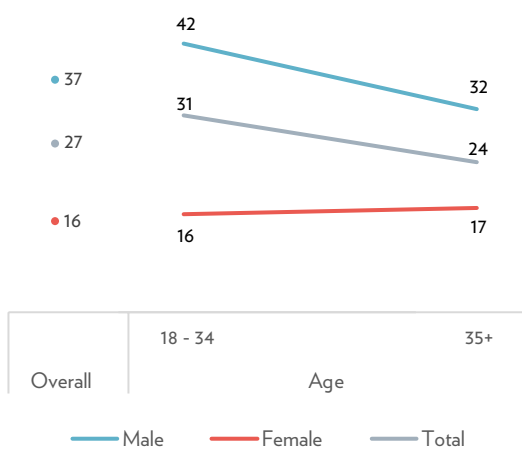
Those with high internal political efficacy were far more likely to attend to mainstream news (52%) and journalists (37%), whereas those who reported low political efficacy gravitated more towards ordinary people (37%) and were much more likely to disengage altogether, with 6% saying 'none of these' (see **table 1.3**).

► **Table 1.3 :**
Main source of news and information about the election on social media by demographics (%)

		Politicians or political parties	Online influencers/Personalities	Mainstream news brands	Other/alternative news sources	Individual journalists	Online communities (FB/WhatsApp groups)	Websites/blogs (alternative voices)	YouTube (alternative voices)	Ordinary people
Gender	Male	45	19	53	25	31	25	22	37	35
	Female	42	19	41	20	30	20	15	16	38
Age	18 – 34	47	26	40	20	31	23	21	31	35
	35+	40	12	53	26	31	21	16	24	38
Tertiary education	Yes	45	20	48	25	32	28	23	30	39
	No	41	17	44	20	30	10	10	21	33
Media literacy education	Yes	45	22	46	24	32	26	20	31	38
	No	40	14	48	20	29	16	16	20	35
Location	Major cities	43	19	50	22	31	22	20	29	34
	Regional area	46	21	37	26	30	24	15	22	45
CALD	Yes	41	26	41	23	33	27	24	34	31
	No	46	17	49	22	31	21	17	25	39
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	Yes	45	19	43	25	35	17	15	25	43
	No	43	19	50	23	30	24	20	28	34
Political orientation	Left	51	23	42	26	40	17	19	29	37
	Centre	31	16	50	20	30	28	13	30	38
	Right	51	16	53	24	25	26	23	29	34
External political efficacy	High	51	22	46	20	33	21	17	32	33
	Low	37	16	48	26	30	23	20	23	40
Internal political efficacy	High	47	22	52	26	37	23	22	32	37
	Low	37	14	38	18	20	20	13	20	37



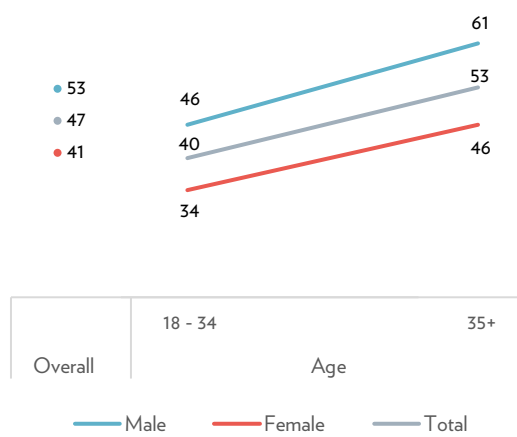
► **Figure 1.9 :**
YouTube videos from alternative voices as main source of news and information on social media about the election by age and gender (%)



YouTube was a particularly popular source of election information among young men. More than two in five men aged 18-34 (42%) and 32% of men aged 35 and older said this was their main source on social media, compared with 16-17% of women in the same age groups (see figure 1.9).

[Q8b_8] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3), how often did you see political or election-related content shared by social media influencers or content creators? YouTube videos from alternative voices. 0=No 1=Yes [Base: n=590]

Within social feeds, mainstream news brands were the most common main source of news and information about the election. This increased with age. Men under 35 (46%) were much less likely than those over 35 (61%) to say that mainstream news brands were their main source of news on social media. A similar pattern existed for women, with younger respondents (34%) being less likely to rely on mainstream news on social media than older (46%) (see **figure 1.10**).

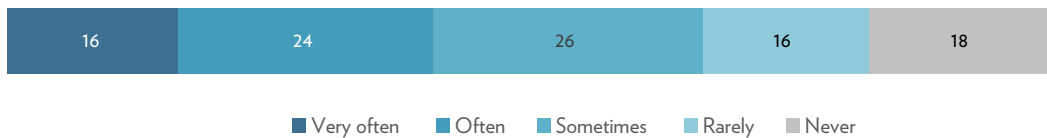


◀ **Figure 1.10 :** Mainstream news brands as main source of news and information about the election on social media by age and gender (%)

[Q8b_3] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3), how often did you see political or election-related content shared by social media influencers or content creators? Mainstream news brands. 0=No 1=Yes [Base: n=590]

Influencers and content creators were a common source of election information

We asked all respondents if they had seen political or election-related content shared by social media influencers or content creators in the weeks leading up to the election. Two in four (40%) said they had seen political content from influencers very often or often, 26% said they had sometimes seen it, 16% rarely, and 18% said they had never seen it (see **figure 1.11**).



◀ **Figure 1.11 :** Came across political or election-related content shared by influencers (%)

[Q9] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3), how often did you see political or election-related content shared by social media influencers or content creators? [Base: n= 2,003]

Young people were highly likely to come across election information from influencers

A striking 81% of those aged 18 to 34 came across content shared by social media influencers or content creators about the election very often, often or sometimes in the two weeks leading up to the federal election, compared to 60% of those aged 35+.

Those who have received media literacy education were more likely to say they

encountered content shared by influencers compared to those who have not received any media literacy education (75% vs 58%). Higher internal political efficacy also aligned with more frequent exposure (45% very often/often vs 34% among low efficacy). Overall, creator content seems to be a routine part of younger Australians' feeds but still reaches a large proportion of older cohorts as well (see **table 1.4**).

► Table 1.4 :

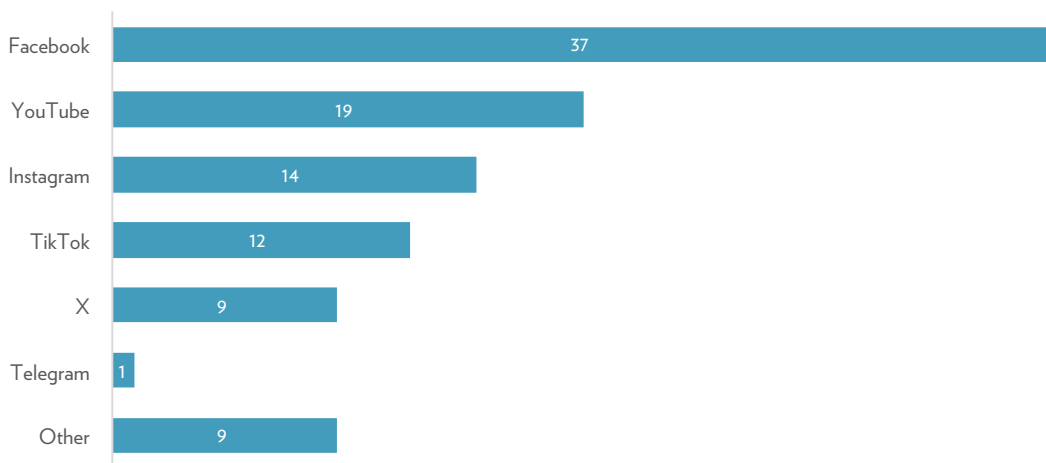
Came across political or election-related content shared by influencers by demographics

Demographic	Very often or often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely or never (%)
Gender			
Male	41	26	33
Female	40	25	35
Age			
18 - 34	49	32	19
35 and over	37	23	39
Tertiary education			
Yes	40	27	33
No	41	24	35
Media literacy education			
Yes	48	27	25
No	34	24	42
Income (annual household)			
< \$40 000	36	25	39
\$40 000 - \$149 999	42	25	32
≥ \$150 000	42	25	33
Location			
Major cities	41	26	33
Regional area	40	23	37
CALD			
Yes	40	31	28
No	41	24	35
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability			
Yes	39	23	39
No	42	26	32
Political orientation			
Left	45	23	31
Centre	38	28	34
Right	43	24	34
External political efficacy			
High	40	28	33
Low	41	24	35
Internal political efficacy			
High	45	23	31
Low	34	29	37

Facebook was the most common platform people saw influencer related election content

We asked those who sometimes, often or very often came across political or election-related content shared by social media influencers on which platform they saw the most content. As shown in **figure 1.12**, Facebook stood out clearly (37%), far ahead of any other single platform. YouTube formed the second major lane (19%), with Instagram (14%) and TikTok (12%) providing additional - but smaller - routes. X and the other category each accounted for 9%, while Telegram (1%) barely featured.

In short, creator political content reached audiences primarily through Facebook, then through video platforms - YouTube (and to a lesser extent TikTok) - with Instagram providing a mid-tier route. Combined shares underline the ecosystem split: half (51%) of mentions are on Meta properties while nearly one-third (31%) are video-led.



◀ **Figure 1.12 :**

Platforms where you came across political or election-related content shared by social media influencers or creators (%)

[Q11] On which platforms did you most often see election-related content by social media influencers or content creators? 1=Instagram 2=TikTok 3=YouTube 4=Facebook 5=X (formerly Twitter) 6=Telegram 7=Other [Base: n=1,325]

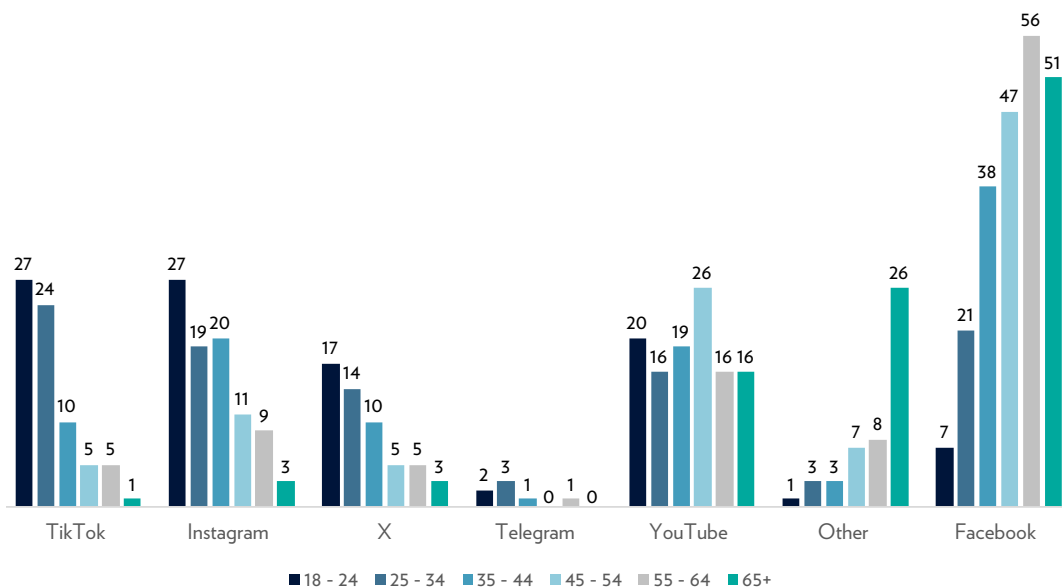
Young people are most likely to see influencer election content on TikTok and Instagram

For those who saw political or election-related content shared by social media influencers sometimes, often or very often, we asked them on what platforms they most often saw this content.

Younger people primarily encountered creator political content on TikTok/Instagram (both 27% among 18-24s) and YouTube (20%), with Facebook playing a minor role (7%). For those in their late 20s and 30s, attention pivots: Facebook rises (21% at 25-34, 38% at 35-44)

while TikTok/Instagram taper (10-20%). From 45+, Facebook is the dominant platform (47-56%), with YouTube the main secondary channel (16-26%). Among 65+, a sizable "other" category (26%) suggests reliance on alternative/community spaces (e.g., forums or messaging groups). In other words, to reach different age cohorts during elections, creator content should emphasise TikTok/Instagram for under-35s, shift toward Facebook (and YouTube) from 35+, and consider community-style channels for seniors (see **figure 1.13**).

► **Figure 1.13 :**
Platforms where you came across political or election-related content shared by influencers or creators by age (%)



[Q11] On which platforms did you most often see election-related content by social media influencers or content creators? 1=Instagram 2=TikTok 3=YouTube 4=Facebook 5=X (formerly Twitter) 6=Telegram 7=Other [Base: n=1,325]

Creator election content lives on different platforms for different audiences. Reaching under 35s requires TikTok and Instagram first, with X as a secondary touchpoint. For 35+, especially 55+, Facebook is the central venue, with YouTube a strong companion channel - particularly in regional areas and among non-CALD audiences (see **table 1.5**).

► **Table 1.5:**
Platforms where you came across political or election-related content shared by influencers or creators by demographics (%)

		Instagram	TikTok	YouTube	Facebook	X	Telegram	Other
Gender	Male	13	9	23	34	13	1	8
	Female	16	15	15	40	5	1	10
Age	18 – 34	23	25	18	15	15	2	2
	35+	10	5	19	48	6	0	12
Tertiary education	Yes	15	11	19	38	11	1	6
	No	13	13	18	36	6	1	13
Media literacy education	Yes	16	14	19	31	12	2	7
	No	12	9	19	44	5	0	11
Income	< \$40 000	10	6	21	46	4	1	13
	\$40 000 – \$149 999	14	13	19	35	11	1	8
	≥ \$150 000	18	15	20	31	9	1	7
Location	Major cities	15	13	18	35	10	1	8
	Regional area	11	7	22	43	5	2	12
CALD	Yes	22	11	26	23	12	1	6
	No	12	12	17	41	8	1	10
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	Yes	15	13	19	36	10	1	7
	No	12	9	21	39	5	0	13
Political orientation	Left	20	19	20	24	8	2	7
	Centre	12	10	17	43	11	1	7
	Right	11	6	20	41	10	0	12
External political efficacy	High	17	12	19	34	10	1	7
	Low	12	11	18	40	8	1	10
Internal political efficacy	High	14	11	19	36	11	1	9
	Low	15	13	18	39	5	1	9

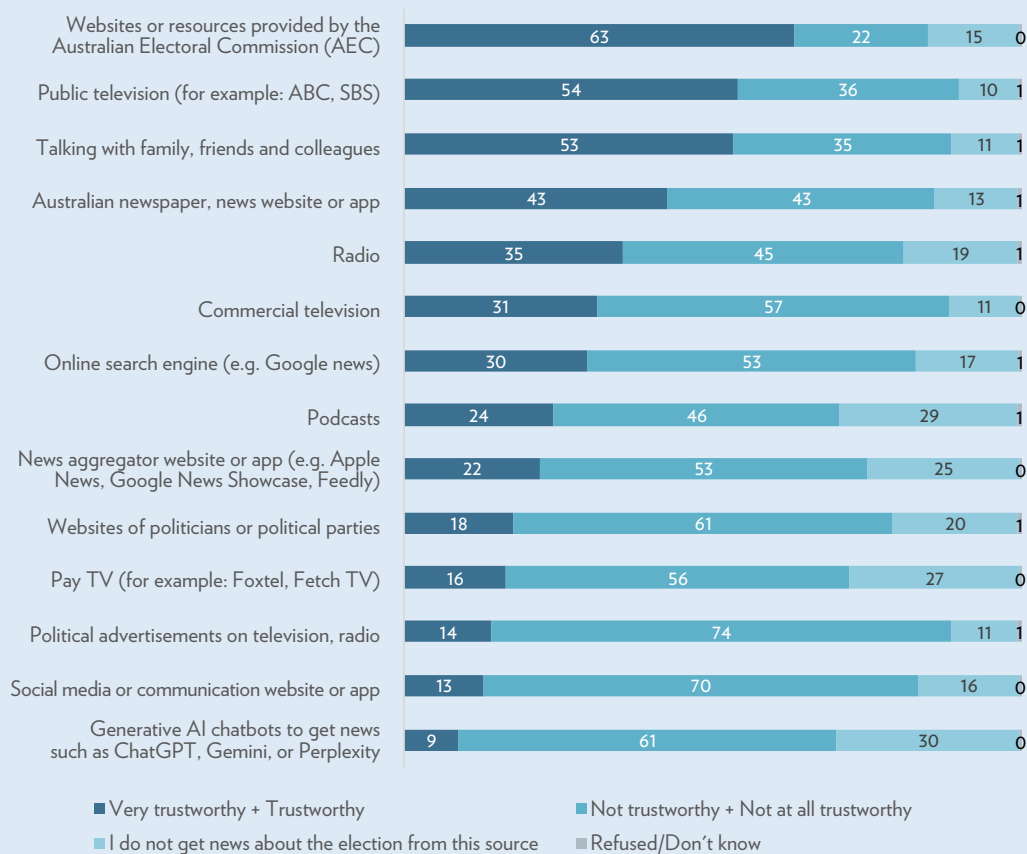


AEC and public broadcasters were most trusted sources of election information

Respondents were more likely to trust official and public-service sources for news and information about the federal election. The AEC (63% trustworthy, +41 pp) is the most credible by a wide margin, followed by public television such as the ABC and SBS (54%, +18 pp) and interpersonal discussion (53%, +18 pp). News brands were split down the middle (43% trustworthy, 43% untrustworthy), signalling audience

polarisation rather than broad confidence. Most other routes - commercial TV, radio, search/aggregators, podcasts, party sites - sit in net-negative territory, and paid political ads (61% untrustworthy), social media (70% untrustworthy), and AI chatbots (61% untrustworthy) are least trusted; notably 30% say they don't use AI chatbots for election news at all (see **figure 1.14**).

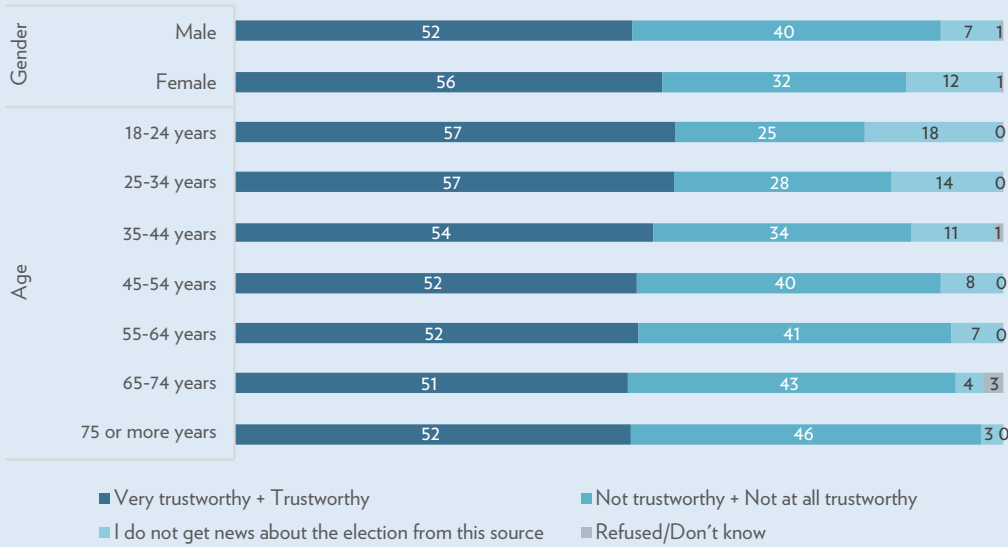
► **Figure 1.14:**
Trust in sources of news and information about the federal election (%)



[Trust 01] Data provided by Social Research Centre from Life in Australia™. To what extent do you think that news and information about the federal election from the following sources is trustworthy or not trustworthy? [Base: n= 1,993]

Public-service TV (ABC/SBS) is consistently trusted, with about one in two Australians in every age group saying it is trustworthy, with only one in ten not using it for election news. Women were more trusting (56%) and less dismissive (32%

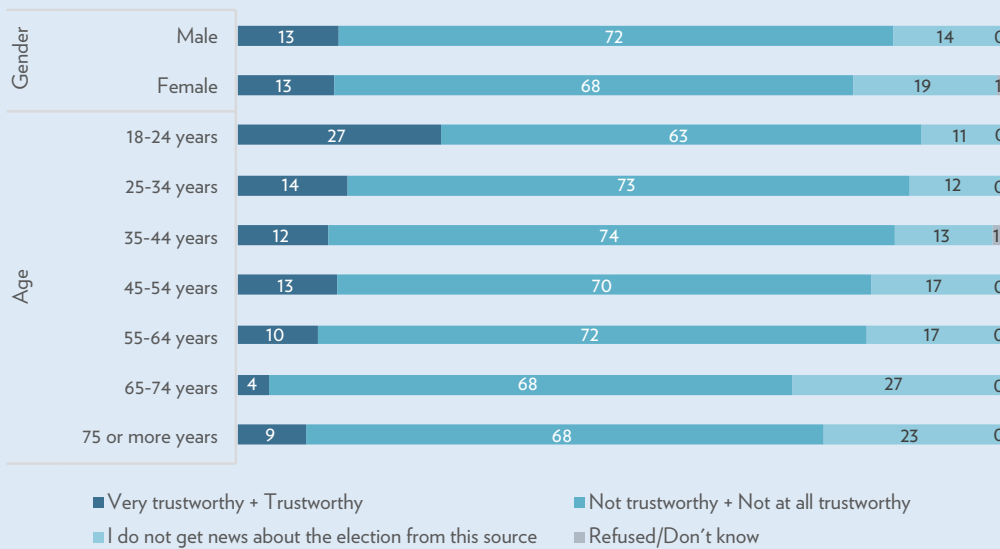
untrustworthy) than men (52% trustworthy vs 40% untrustworthy). Trust edges down very slightly with age but public-service TV remains the most broadly trusted mass-audience source after the AEC (see **figure 1.15**).



◀ **Figure 1.15:** Trust in public TV news and information about the federal election by age and gender (%)

[Trust 01] Data provided by Social Research Centre from Life in Australia™. To what extent do you think that news and information about the federal election from the following sources is trustworthy or not trustworthy? [Base: n=1,993]

Trust in social media as a news source is low across the board and falls with age. While one in four 18-24s (27%) judge it trustworthy, that drops to single digits among 65-74s (4%). Older Australians were much more likely to say they don't use social media for election news at all. Gender differences here were minimal (see **figure 1.16**).



◀ **Figure 1.16:** Trust in social media for news and information about the federal election by age and gender (%)

[Trust 01] Data provided by Social Research Centre from Life in Australia™. To what extent do you think that news and information about the federal election from the following sources is trustworthy or not trustworthy? [Base: n=1,993]

Together with **figure 1.14**, these profiles show a clear trust hierarchy: official and public-service outlets (AEC; public TV) enjoy majority trust (63% and 54%, respectively), while social platforms are viewed sceptically (13% trustworthy; ~70% untrustworthy). Trust in public TV is stable and broad, with women slightly more positive and non-use rare; trust in social media is youth-weighted and erodes with age, with non-use rising in older cohorts.

Interviewees' perceptions of news and information about the election

Many interview participants remarked on the negativity of political communication throughout the campaign period. Some called for a more civil approach to politics and explained that this was what drew them to candidates from outside the major parties.

“ I was surprised at how much time all parties spent mudslinging at the other party rather than actually promoting their policies. That so much of it is what the other person isn't doing, or the problems with the other person rather than what we as a party can offer.

– DK7, Female, 40s ”

“ It should be factual, truthful and not actually pushing on the other side. It should just be campaigns about what you are going to do, kind of thing, as if you are elected, or if you are. You see that a lot more in the independents really. When you see the campaigns of independents it's very much a nicer approach from them, because they're always stating what they're gonna do, what they're gonna change, how they're gonna help their community in that specific area.

– DS9, Male, 20s ”

Other participants noted that political communication had become more widespread on social media.

“ I think [political parties] had a bigger presence on social media this campaign, and I've seen like a lot of Labor try to do like funny things to try I guess, like capture Gen Zs as well, because we're known to like, not have a big attention span and that, so we won't be looking at TV and that. So, I think they've now realised they've got a bigger platform where they can use it and spread the kind of information they want.

– WR9, Female, Late teens ”

Among interviewees overall, the quantity and often negativity of information about politics in the media environment was a frequent concern. Interviewees were particularly frustrated by invasive modes of contact such as repeated text messaging, which many perceived to be pestering and disrespectful.

“ Constantly, every day, they were constantly texting, sending me texts, and I kept trying to block them. And every time, like, it still came through the next day. I don't know how they did it, but anyway, they managed to annoy everybody, everybody that I know was annoyed by this.

– GL8, Male, 60s ”

Summary

While most Australians got their election news from mainstream media (52%), the main source of news for people under 35 was social media (57% of 18–24s; 52% of 25–34s). Men were much more likely than women to use YouTube for election information (37% vs 17%). Two in five Australians (40%), particularly younger Australians, often or very often saw election content from creators or influencers.

Attention was higher for party campaigns than for independents. Men generally paid more attention to party campaigns than women, especially at ages 18–24 and 35–44. For independents, men under 45 paid more attention, while women were more attentive from 55+. People who follow a lot of news, have tertiary or media literacy education, higher incomes, or feel confident about politics paid more attention overall.

When people used social media for election news, they mostly paid attention to mainstream news accounts (47%) and politicians/parties (44%), with ordinary people also important (37%). Influencers and “alternative voices” were smaller but notable (both 19%). Creator content showed up mainly on Facebook (37%), then YouTube (19%), Instagram (14%), and TikTok (12%). Those under 35 saw more on TikTok/Instagram/YouTube; from 35+ it shifted to Facebook (with YouTube second).

Trust was clearest at the top and bottom. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) was most trusted (63%), followed by public-service TV (ABC/SBS) at 54%. Trust in social media was low, and AI chatbots were least trusted (9%).

What this means is that Facebook and YouTube reach older Australians, while TikTok/Instagram (together with YouTube creators and influencers) reach younger people. Key information should leverage highly trusted sources like the AEC and public-service media.

ENCOUNTERING ELECTION MISINFORMATION

- 37% said they came across election misinformation sometimes or very often in the two weeks prior to election day.
- Politicians and political parties (66%) were the most reported source of misinformation.
- 38% of 18- to 34-year-olds reported seeing election misinformation from influencers.
- Cost of living (53%) and nuclear energy (51%) were the most common topics of misinformation encountered.
- More than a third (36%) encountered political deepfakes.

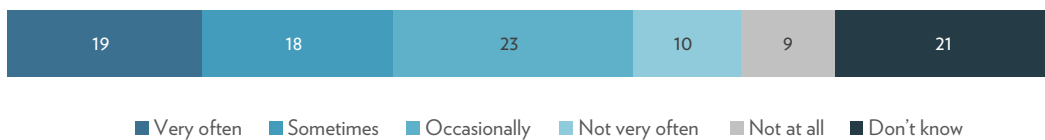
Experience of election misinformation

Men, those with media literacy education, and left- and right-wing respondents are more likely to come across misinformation

Survey respondents reported encountering misinformation from a wide range of sources and with varying frequency. We asked how often they came across false or misleading news or information about the election in the two weeks before May 3, 2025. More than a third (37%) said that they came across election

misinformation sometimes or very often.

Twenty-three percent said they occasionally came across it. Only 9% said they didn't come across election misinformation at all in those two weeks and a further 21% said they did not know if they came across it or not (see **figure 2.1**)



◀ **Figure 2.1:**
Came across election misinformation (%)

[Q13] In the two weeks before the federal election day (May 3, 2025), how often did you come across false or misleading news or information about the election?
[Base: n=2,003]

Men, people with media literacy education and left-wing respondents were more likely to say they often came across election misinformation. The trend is quite pronounced for gender, with men (43%) being much more likely than women (31%) to say they very often or sometimes came across election misinformation. Older respondents, those with tertiary education, and high-income earners were more likely to report encountering misinformation sometimes or very often. Compared to centrist respondents, left-wing respondents were higher in saying that they very often, sometimes (43% vs 29% for centre), or occasionally (24% vs 26% for centre) came across election misinformation. Right-wing

respondents were about the same as left-wing (48% very often/sometimes; 19% occasionally).

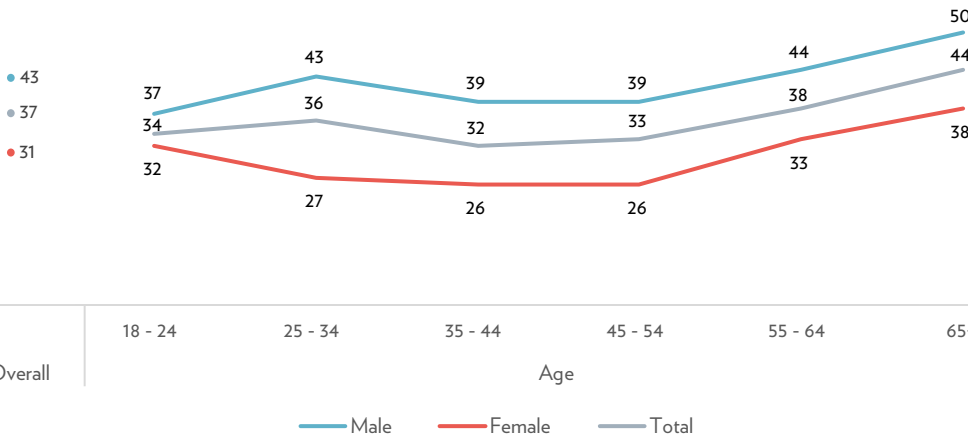
Political efficacy was strongly related to reported exposure to election misinformation. Respondents with high internal political efficacy (47%) were much more likely to say they encountered election misinformation very often or sometimes compared to those with low political efficacy (23%). The inverse was the case for external political efficacy, where individuals with low efficacy (43%) were much more likely to say they encountered election misinformation than individuals with high efficacy (30%) (see **table 2.1**).

► **Table 2.1:**
Came across election
misinformation by
demographics

Demographic	Very often or sometimes (%)	Occasionally (%)	Not often or not at all (%)	Don't know (%)
Gender				
Male	43	23	20	14
Female	31	23	18	28
Age				
18-34	35	29	20	17
35 and over	37	21	19	23
Tertiary education				
Yes	39	24	19	19
No	34	22	20	24
Media literacy education				
Yes	40	25	20	15
No	34	21	18	27
Income (annual household)				
< \$40 000	36	22	22	21
\$40 000 - \$149 999	36	23	20	21
≥ \$150 000	43	22	17	19
Location				
Major cities	35	24	20	21
Regional area	42	21	17	20
CALD				
Yes	32	24	21	23
No	39	23	18	21
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability				
Yes	46	19	16	20
No	34	24	20	22
Political orientation				
Left	43	24	17	16
Centre	29	26	24	21
Right	48	19	17	16
External political efficacy				
High	30	25	26	20
Low	43	21	14	23
Internal political efficacy				
High	47	24	17	12
Low	23	21	22	34

Age was related to exposure to misinformation but more for older age groups than for younger. As **figure 2.2** shows, men were consistently more likely than women to say they very often or sometimes came across election misinformation during the two weeks prior to May 3. People 65 years and

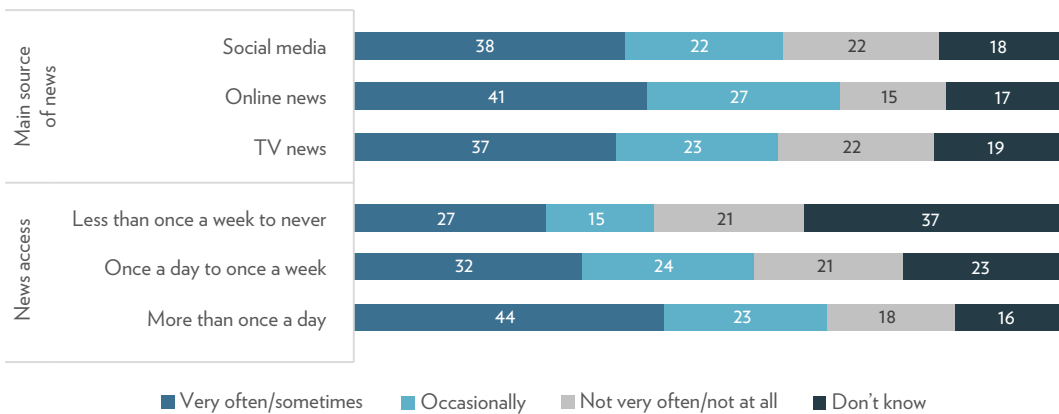
older (44%) were more likely than other age groups to say they encountered election misinformation. However, respondents aged 25 to 34 were also more likely to say they encountered misinformation compared to those in the 35 to 54 age brackets.



◀ **Figure 2.2:** Came across election misinformation by age and gender (% very often/sometimes)

To some extent, exposure to election misinformation can be seen to be a function of more frequent news access in general. Respondents who use news more than once a day (44%) were the most likely to say they very often or sometimes came across election misinformation, compared to those who access news less than once a week to never

(27%). Among those who said their main source of news is TV news, 37% said they very often or sometimes came across election misinformation, and this was roughly the same as those who mainly used social media (38%) but a little less than those who mainly used online news (41%) (see **figure 2.3**).

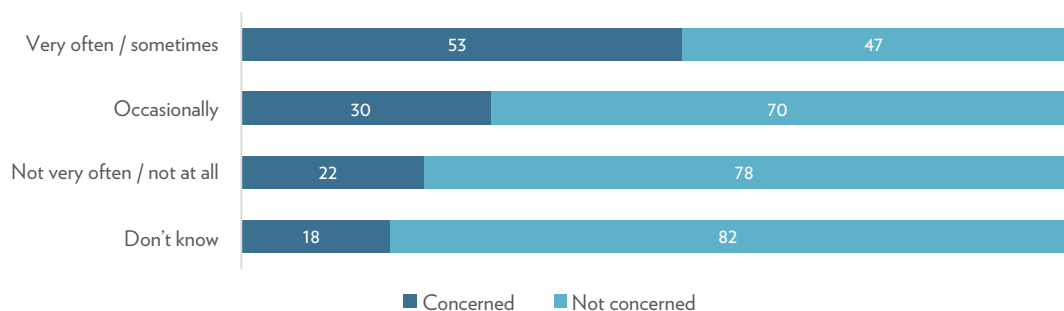


◀ **Figure 2.3:** Came across election misinformation by news access and main source of news (%)

As **figure 2.4** shows, higher exposure to election misinformation was linked to higher levels of concern about the spread of false information during the election. Those who didn't know if they had encountered election misinformation were the least

likely to say they were concerned (18%). By contrast, those who encountered election misinformation sometimes or very often (53%) were more likely to say they were extremely or very concerned about the spread of false information during the election.

► **Figure 2.4:**
Concern about the spread of election misinformation by exposure to election misinformation (%)

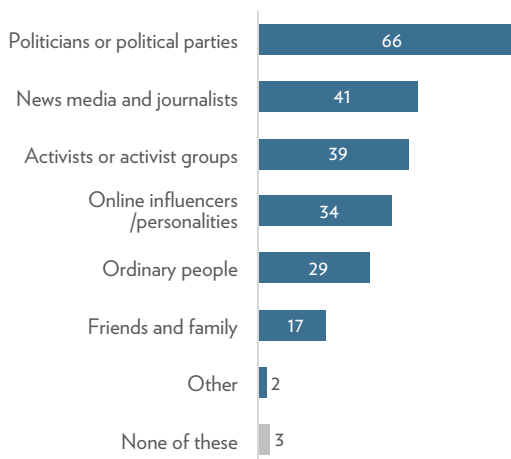


[Q20] How concerned were you about the spread of false information during the election campaign? Concerned = Extremely/very concerned; Not concerned = Somewhat, not very, not at all concerned. [Base: n=1,934]

Sources of election misinformation

Politicians or political parties were the most reported sources of election misinformation

► **Figure 2.5:**
Sources of election misinformation (%)



When we asked respondents who were the source(s) of the election misinformation they encountered, politicians or political parties were the most likely response (66%). Less than half said they encountered election misinformation from news media and journalists (41%) and activists or activist groups (39%). Ordinary people (29%), and friends and family (17%) were the least likely to be nominated as sources of election misinformation (see **figure 2.5**).

[Q14] Who were the source(s) of the false or misleading information? Please select all that apply. [Base: n=1,194, those who say often to occasionally for Q13]

Under 35s much less likely to say they encountered misinformation from politicians

While more respondents said they encountered election misinformation from politicians or political parties, there was some variance across demographics and characteristics. Respondents under 35 (49%) were much less likely than those over 35 (73%) to say they encountered election misinformation from politicians or political parties. In turn, under 35s (38%) were more likely than over 35s (33%) to say they encountered it from online influencers or personalities. Respondents with media literacy education (21%) were more likely than those without (13%) to encounter misinformation from friends and family.

Both right-wing (72%) and left-wing (68%)

respondents were more likely than centrist respondents (59%) to say they saw election misinformation from politicians or political parties. Right-wing respondents (48%) were considerably more likely than both centre (39%) and left-wing (37%) to encounter election misinformation from news media and journalists, with a similar trend existing for activists and activist groups. Left-wing respondents (41%) were more likely than centre (31%) and right-wing (32%) to encounter election misinformation from influencers. Respondents with low external political efficacy (73%) were much more likely than those with high efficacy (57%) to say they encountered election misinformation from politicians (see **table 2.2**).

► **Table 2.2 :**
Sources of election misinformation by demographics (%)

		Politicians or political parties	News media and journalists	Friends and family	Online influencers /personalities	Activists or activist groups	Ordinary people	Other
Gender	Male	67	42	19	38	41	29	2
	Female	65	40	16	29	37	28	3
Age	18 – 34	49	37	27	38	30	30	0
	35+	73	42	13	33	42	28	3
Tertiary education	Yes	65	43	19	40	41	32	2
	No	68	37	14	24	35	22	2
Media literacy education	Yes	62	41	21	39	38	32	2
	No	71	41	13	29	40	25	3
Income	< \$40 000	65	41	19	32	40	25	3
	\$40 000 – \$149 999	65	41	17	33	38	28	2
	≥ \$150 000	70	38	20	41	43	32	2
Location	Major cities	66	40	17	35	40	28	2
	Regional area	67	42	19	31	37	31	3
CALD	Yes	52	41	25	39	33	31	1
	No	70	41	15	34	41	28	3
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	Yes	75	43	17	31	44	30	4
	No	63	40	17	36	37	28	1
Political orientation	Left	68	37	20	41	34	36	3
	Centre	59	39	19	31	37	26	2
	Right	72	48	15	32	47	25	2
External political efficacy	High	57	32	20	34	38	30	2
	Low	73	48	15	34	39	27	2
Internal political efficacy	High	68	41	18	36	41	31	3
	Low	62	40	15	31	34	22	1

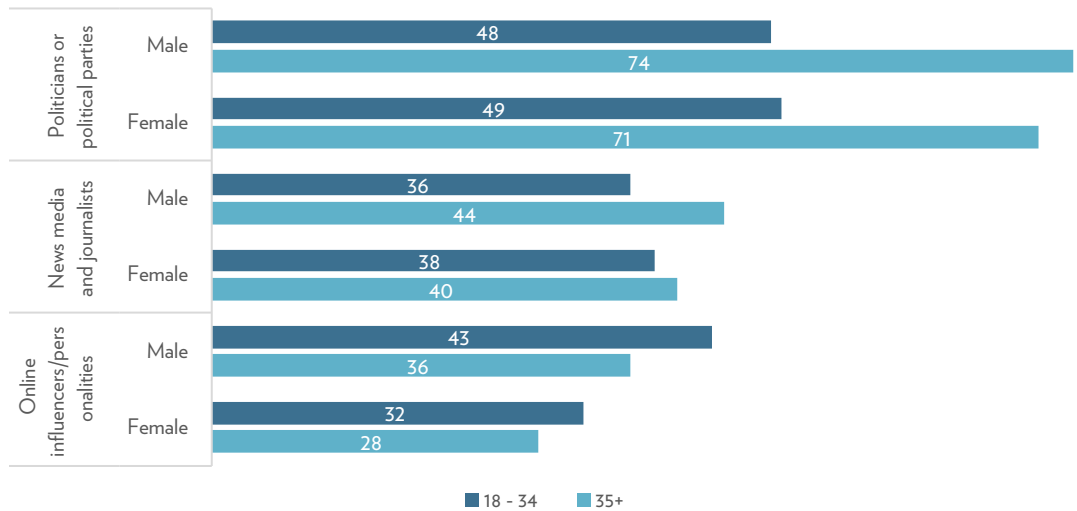


Forty-three percent of 18- to 34-year-old men reported seeing misinformation from influencers

Age and gender were related to exposure to election misinformation from various sources. Reported exposure to election misinformation from news media and journalists was highest among those over 35 (Men 74%, Women 71%) but across other age groups there were mixed findings. While younger men and women

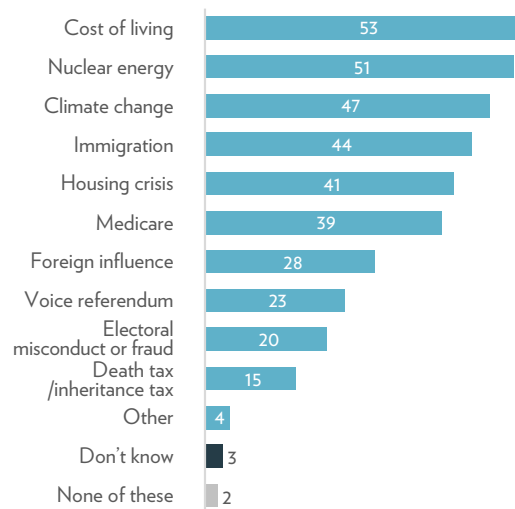
were similar in reporting politicians and news media as sources of election misinformation, men under 35 (43%) were much more likely than women under 35 (32%) to say they encountered election misinformation from influencers (see **figure 2.6**).

► **Figure 2.6:**
Sources of election misinformation by age and gender (%)



Nuclear energy and cost of living were the most common topics of misinformation

► **Figure 2.7:**
Topics of election misinformation (%)



We asked respondents who had often, sometimes or occasionally encountered election misinformation what topics they encountered. Hot-button issues such as cost of living (53%), nuclear energy (51%), climate change (47%) and immigration (44%) were the most common responses overall. Election misinformation about foreign influence (28%) and electoral misconduct or fraud (20%) were less commonly reported. Although the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice referendum was held a year and a half prior, quite a few respondents (23%) said they encountered misinformation about it (see **figure 2.7**).

[Q15] What topics of misinformation did you come across? Select all that apply.
[Base: n= 1,194, those who say often to occasionally for Q15]

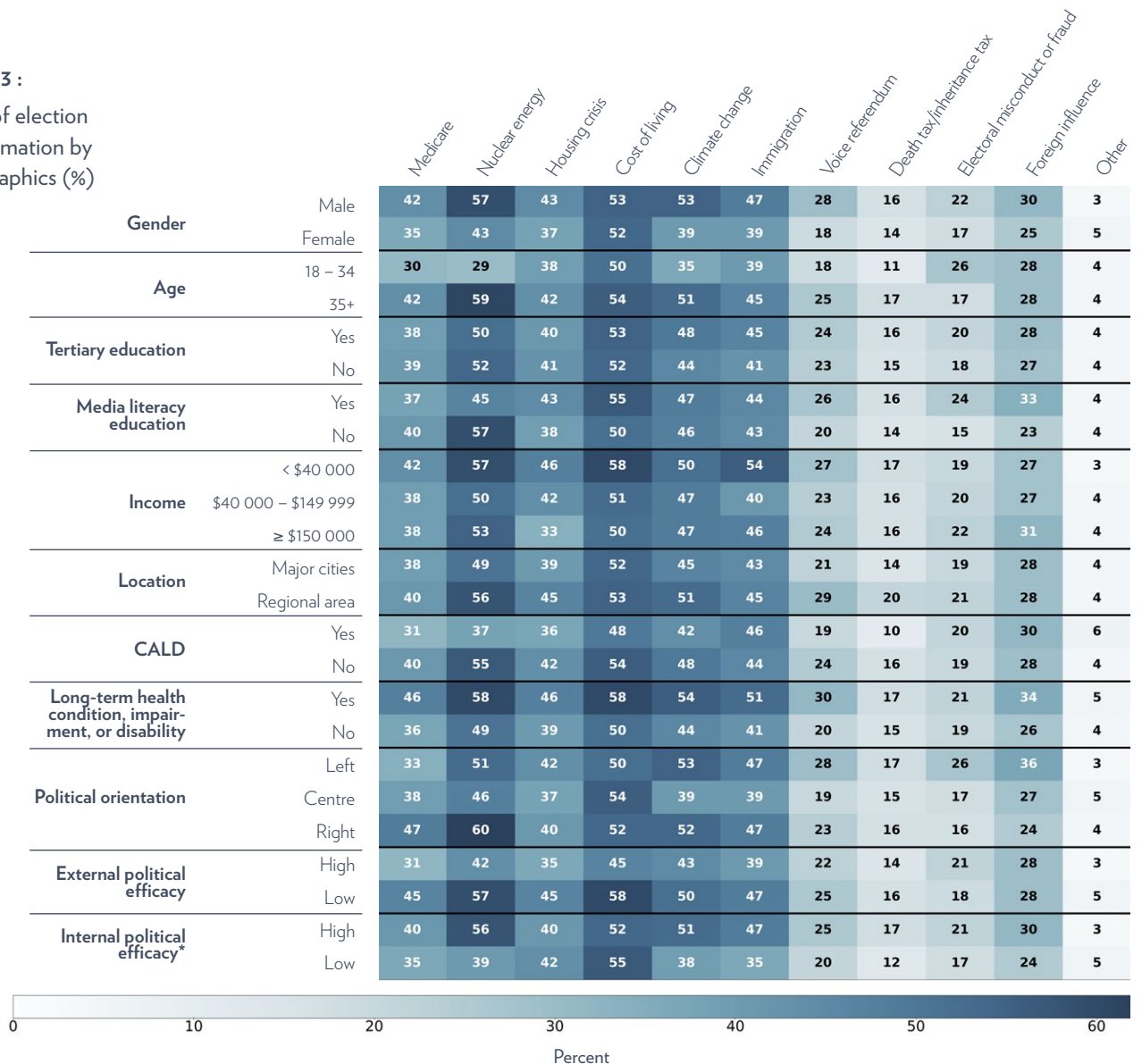
CALD respondents were less likely to encounter most topics of election misinformation

Those who self-identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) were only slightly more likely to say they encountered misinformation about immigration (46%), and foreign influence (30%) compared to non-CALD respondents. Instead, CALD respondents were less likely to say they encountered topics of misinformation over most topics. They were less likely to encounter misinformation about Medicare (31%), nuclear energy (37%), and the housing crisis (36%) than non-CALD respondents.

Men were generally more likely than women to report encountering most of the listed topics of election misinformation. They were particularly more likely to report encountering

election misinformation about nuclear energy (57% vs 43% for women) and climate change (53% vs 39% for women). Topics of election misinformation were reported differently comparing between left- and right-wing respondents. Compared to right-wing respondents, left-wing respondents were more likely to say they encountered election misinformation about foreign influence (36% vs 24% for right-wing), the Voice referendum (28% vs 23% for right-wing) and electoral misconduct or fraud (26% vs 16% for right-wing). In contrast, right-wing respondents were more likely to say nuclear energy (60% vs 51% for left-wing) and Medicare (47% vs 33% for left-wing) were topics they encountered.

► **Table 2.3 :**
Topics of election misinformation by demographics (%)

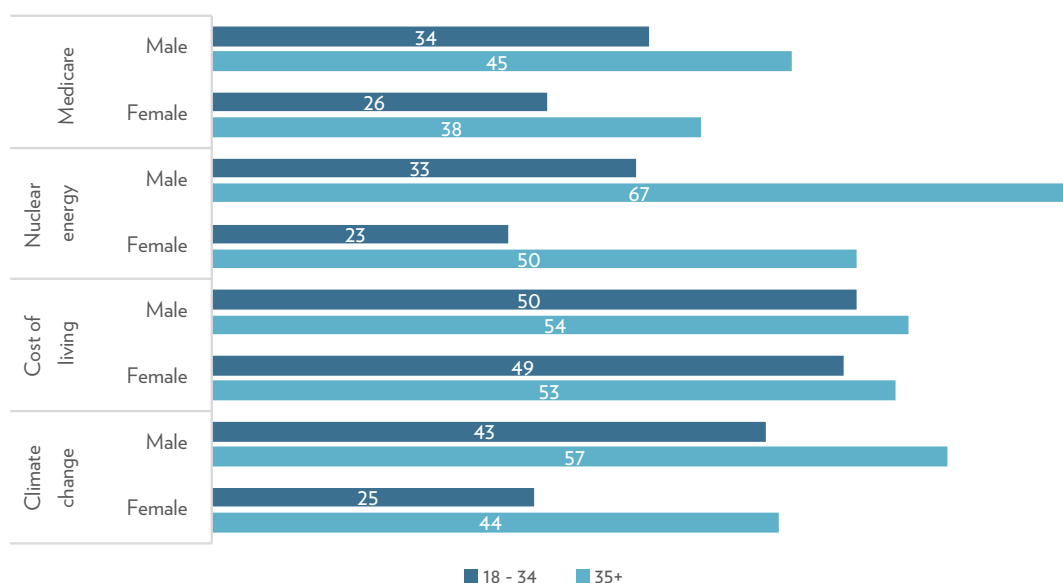


Older respondents were more likely to report almost all topics of misinformation

Older respondents were in general more likely to report encountering all topics of misinformation listed, except for electoral fraud or misconduct. Nuclear energy was a particularly distinct topic, with respondents under 35 (Men 33%, Women 23%) being

much less likely to encounter it than over 35s (Men 67%, Women 50%). For 18- to 34-year-olds, the most common topic of election misinformation they encountered was about cost of living (Men 50%, Women 49%) (see **figure 2.8**).

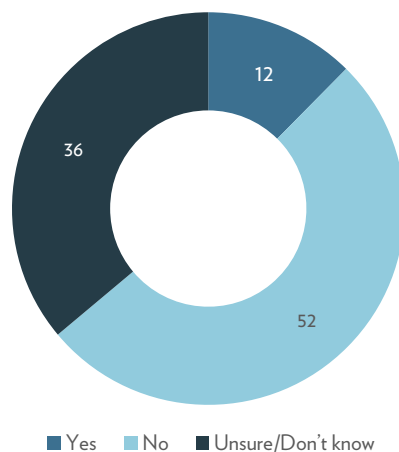
► **Figure 2.8:**
Topics of election misinformation by age and gender (%)



Political deepfakes

One in ten encountered political deepfakes

► **Figure 2.9:**
Came across deepfake images, videos or audio clips related to political parties or candidates (%)



Easily produced deepfake images, video and audio are an emerging area of concern for election misinformation. We asked respondents whether they had come across any deepfakes related to political parties or candidates during the 2025 federal election campaign. More than half (52%) said no, they hadn't, and only 12% said they had. Concerningly, 36% said they were unsure or did not know if they had seen examples of deepfakes (see **figure 2.9**).

[Q17] During the 2025 federal election campaign, have you encountered any deepfake image, videos or audio clips related to political parties or candidates? By deepfakes we mean images, videos, or audio that have been edited or generated using artificial intelligence, AI-based tools or AV editing software. [Base: n= 2,003]

Those with media literacy education were more likely to note deepfakes

Men, young people, those with media literacy education, CALD and high-income respondents were more likely to say they had come across deepfakes about political parties or candidates. High-income respondents (20%) were twice as likely to say they encountered deepfakes compared to low-income (10%). Those without media literacy training (7%) were very unlikely to say they saw deepfakes compared to those with training (18%). CALD respondents (20%) were similarly more likely than non-CALD (11%) to say they encountered election deepfakes. Those with high political efficacy were also more likely to say they had come across election deepfakes (see **table 2.4**).

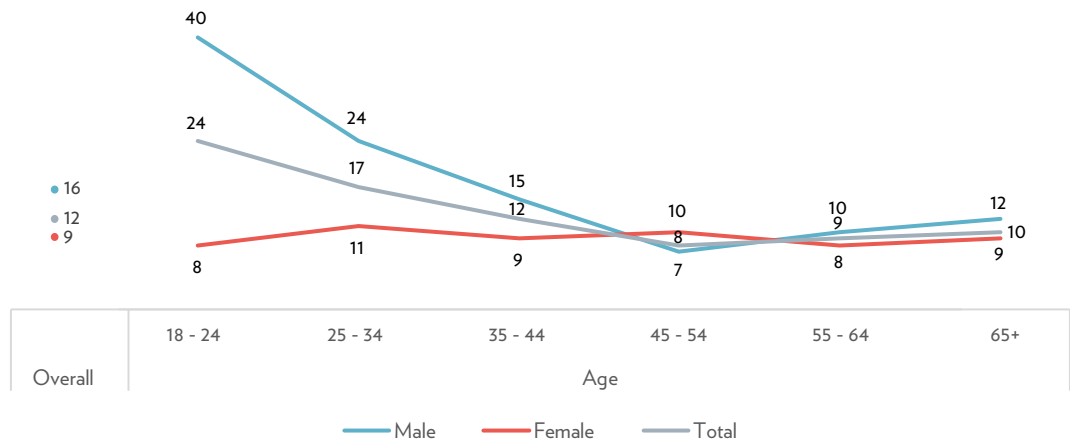
Demographic	Deepfake encountered (%)
Gender	
Male	16
Female	9
Age	
18-34	20
35 and over	10
Tertiary education	
Yes	13
No	12
Media - literacy education	
Yes	18
No	7
Income (annual household)	
< \$40 000	10
\$40 000 - \$149 999	12
≥ \$150 000	20
Location	
Major cities	12
Regional area	14
CALD	
Yes	20
No	11
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	
Yes	14
No	12
Political orientation	
Left	16
Centre	12
Right	13
External political efficacy	
High	14
Low	11
Internal political efficacy	
High	16
Low	8

◀ **Table 2.4 :**

Came across deepfake images, videos or audio clips related to political parties or candidates by demographics (%)

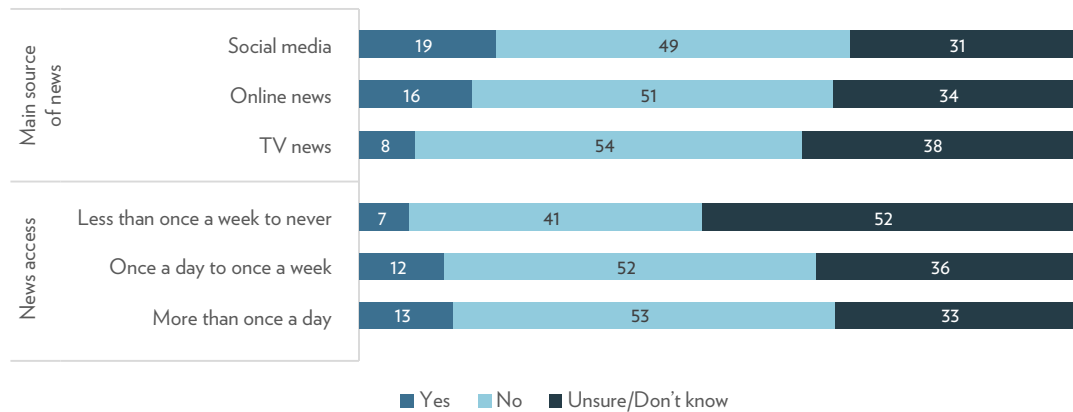
While men were more likely than women to say they encountered deepfakes, as **figure 2.10** shows, this was very skewed by age. Male respondents aged 18 to 24 years old (40%) were much more likely to report encountering election deepfakes compared to women in the same age group (8%). However, men older than 45 were roughly as likely as women over 45 to say they saw deepfake election misinformation.

► **Figure 2.10:**
Came across deepfake images, videos or audio clips related to political parties or candidates by age and gender (%)

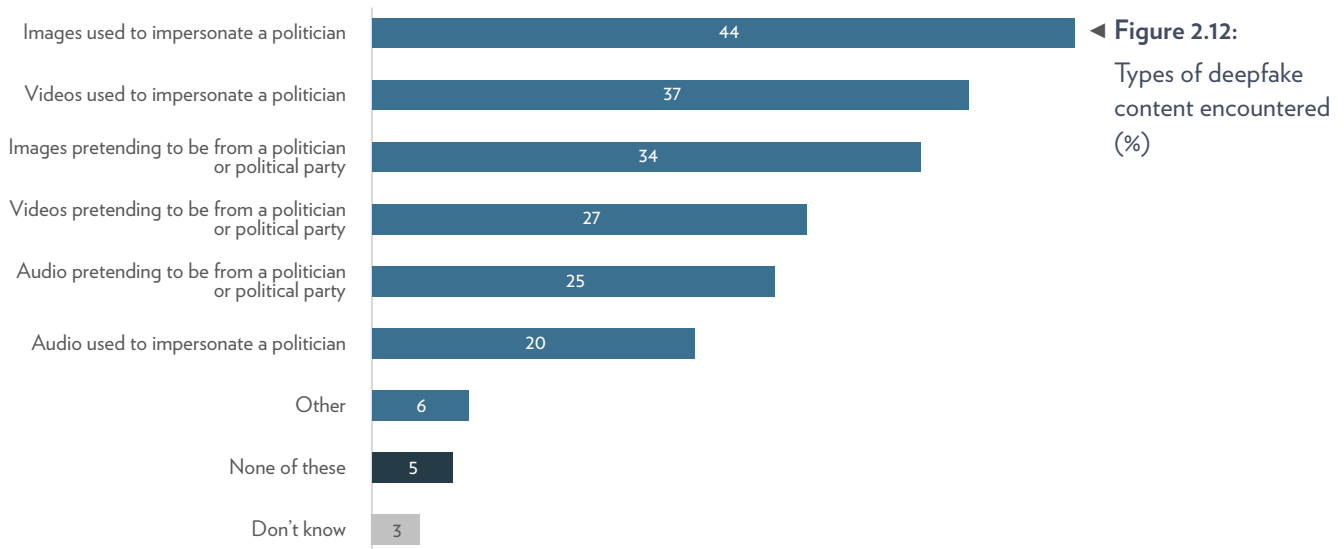


Frequency of news use was not a particularly strong predictor of exposure to deepfakes. Those who use news less than once a week to never (52%) were much more likely to say they were unsure or didn't know if they had encountered deep fakes compared to higher frequency news users. Those who mainly used social media for news (19%) were, however, more likely to report finding deepfakes than those who rely on TV news (8%) and online news (16%) (see **figure 2.11**).

► **Figure 2.11:**
Came across deepfake images, videos or audio clips related to political parties or candidates by news access and main source of news (%)



The top reported types of deepfake content were images (44%) and video (37%) used to impersonate a politician, followed by images (34%), video (27%) and audio (25%) pretending to be from a politician or political party (see **figure 2.12**).



◀ **Figure 2.12:**
Types of deepfake
content encountered
(%)

[Q18] What kind of deepfake content did you see? Select all that apply. [Base: n= 249]

Interviewees' experiences of election misinformation

Almost all interviewees reported having encountered election misinformation. Ordinary people or influencers were not perceived to be a main source of election misinformation in this context. Echoing our survey findings, most interviewees perceived politicians and political parties to be the primary sources of election misinformation.

“ I noticed it on both sides, when you know ads were served or the algorithm popped up a politician’s message, their relationship with the truth was often quite tenuous.

– DK8, Male, 30s ”

Many interviewees associated misinformation with negative or attack advertisements, particularly those that provided little evidence to support accusations made.

“ It was definitely from political parties. I think, you know, like in their main ads, [...] they were saying that if you vote Liberal, they’ll cut Medicare. [...] I think there was a, I think Labor put out things to do with medical centres that they’ve built around the area, particularly in our area. That the funding would be removed from those projects, and that was Labor. Whether or not the Liberals were going to do that or not, I don’t know. I guess that would be what I would call that misinformation from Labor. But look the Liberals would do the same sort of thing.

– GL8, Male, 60s ”

Although many interviewees found misinformation concerning, most reacted to it with frustration and irritation rather than genuine worry.

I thought it was a waste of their time, a waste of my time, really. [...] Talking to [friends and family] they seemed aware of it, for sure, like having been the recipients of some of it as well and they just thought it was stupid. And you know, a bit ridiculous. And yeah, so I don't think anybody really, no one I knew really put any stock in it, you know, or let it influence them.

– GL4, Female, 60s

The perceived presence of election misinformation appeared to put many interviewees off deeper engagement with political communication online. Some indicated a preference to disconnect or ignore not just misinformation but political communication more broadly. Not knowing where information was coming from or who to trust was a common theme.

There's a lot of stuff just going out. And then people are just posting willy-nilly, you know. [...] Like social media, is the worst, [...] because I don't know who to... I'm not sure [who] are they? Are they twisting the lies even more, like, I don't know who I'm trusting. Are they the actual political party putting that post up? Or are they just someone? Another party?

– DK3, Female, 50s

Summary

This chapter focused on data about how respondents encountered and reacted to election misinformation. The findings suggest that closer engagement with politics and news is associated with higher exposure to election misinformation. Those who see more misinformation are also more concerned about the spread of false election information. This has potential implications for public confidence in elections and democratically elected politicians.

More than a third of respondents reported coming across misinformation sometimes or very often, and partisan respondents, as well as those with high internal political efficacy, were more likely to report encountering it. Heavier news users were more likely to come across election misinformation and there was little difference between TV, online news and social media users in their reported experiences.

While there has been growing concern about social media and influencers as major sources of online misinformation, this study finds that politicians and political candidates were much more likely to be reported as sources of misinformation in the context of this election. Younger respondents were more likely to report seeing misinformation from influencers, but this is likely a consequence of them paying more attention to online personalities in general.

The most common reported topics of election misinformation were cost of living, nuclear energy, climate change and immigration. CALD respondents were more slightly more likely to report seeing immigration and foreign interference election misinformation than non-CALD respondents. And in general, partisan respondents differed widely, with left-wing being more likely to report encountering foreign interference and election misconduct misinformation and right-wing more likely to report misinformation about Medicare and nuclear energy.

Media literacy was a related factor to misinformation exposure. Those who had received any media literacy education and training were more likely to report encountering misinformation in general and political deepfakes in particular. Although most respondents did not say they encountered deepfakes during the election period, young people, CALD people and those with media literacy training were more likely to say they did.

Overall, these findings suggest that reported misinformation was not localised to social media and the focus of election misinformation was on topics somewhat related to the major parties' policy platforms. For several questions, low external political efficacy was associated with higher exposure to election misinformation and higher reports of misinformation from politicians. This, combined with findings that suggest concerns about the spread of false information during the election are linked to higher exposure to misinformation, paint a concerning picture.

If election misinformation becomes more commonplace there could be an impact on citizens' trust in democratic processes and elected officials, as well as their ability to identify credible information during election campaigns. This could in turn lead to a decline in civic participation and engagement with deliberative democracy.

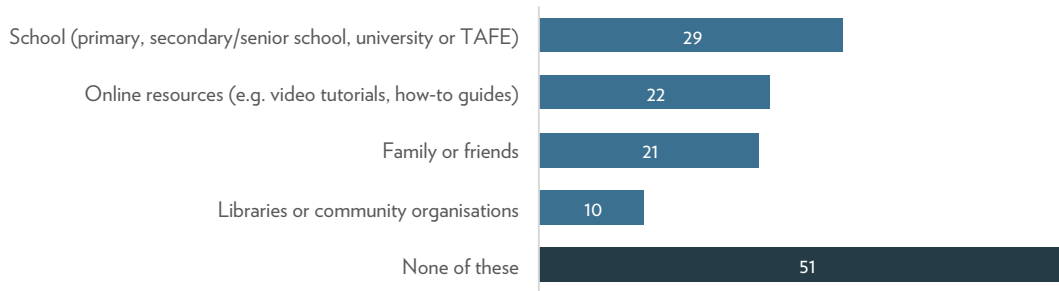
IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO ELECTION MISINFORMATION

- Half of the respondents (51%) have never received media literacy education.
- The most common response to misinformation was to ignore it (44%).
- When presented with misinformation, 16-34% of respondents didn't know if it was true or false.
- Left-wing respondents were much more likely to identify posts about Labor¹ as misinformation and right-wing respondents were more likely to identify posts about the Liberal National Party (LNP) as misinformation.
- Media literacy education and news consumption were strong predictors of the ability to identify political misinformation.

¹ For more information about the major political parties of Australia visit: https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/Powers_practice_and_procedure/00_-_Infosheets/Infosheet_22_-_Political_parties

Half report never having received media literacy education

We asked respondents if they have received any media literacy training or education across their lifetime (for example, support to access, use, understand and/or create media). Half (51%) of respondents report not having received any media literacy education or training. Among those who did receive media literacy education, the top source was from formal education – primary, secondary or tertiary education (29%), followed by online resources (22%). About one in five (21%) learned from family or friends. Only 10% learned from libraries or community organisations (see **figure 3.1**).



◀ **Figure 3.1:**
Media literacy training received (%)

[Q27] Across your lifetime, have you received any media literacy training or education from the following sources? For example, have you had any support to help you access, use, understand and/or create media? Please check all that apply. [Base: n= 2,003]

Women, people aged 35+, and those with low education and income were less likely to have received media literacy education compared to men, under 35s, and those with tertiary education and high income.

Among under 35s, 48% received media literacy education through formal education, compared with only 22% of over 35s.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities were much more likely to report having received media literacy education from libraries and community organisations (16%) compared to the general

population (9%), which implies that they may be seeking support from these organisations during their settlement in Australia (with these organisations providing some support related to media use). CALD respondents were also more likely to seek support online (30%).

There were no differences between those living in regional areas and cities, nor any differences between those with a disability and those without. Those who are left-leaning are more likely to have received media literacy training in school, which is possibly related to the younger age of this cohort (see **table 3.1**).

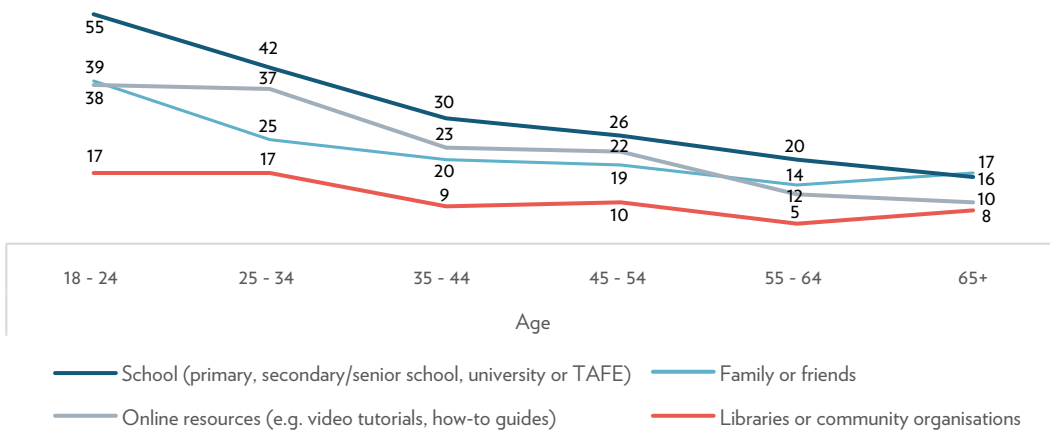
► **Table 3.1:**
Media literacy
training received by
demographics

Demographic	Any type of training (%)	Family / friends (%)	School / university / TAFE (%)	Libraries / community orgs (%)	Online resources (%)
Gender					
Male	51	22	29	12	25
Female	46	20	28	9	18
Age					
18-34	76	31	48	17	38
35 and over	39	17	22	8	16
Tertiary education					
Yes	53	23	32	12	25
No	43	19	23	8	17
Income (annual household)					
< \$40 000	45	21	26	11	19
\$40 000 - \$149 999	48	21	27	11	22
≥ \$150 000	52	22	33	9	25
Location					
Major cities	49	22	29	10	22
Regional area	48	19	28	11	22
CALD					
Yes	59	26	31	16	30
No	46	20	29	9	19
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability					
Yes	48	22	27	12	21
No	49	21	29	10	21
Political orientation					
Left	57	21	37	12	26
Centre	47	22	25	9	22
Right	47	22	27	12	21

Young people more likely to have received formal media literacy training

A distinct trend emerges when we examine the relationship between age and media literacy education. Younger cohorts were much more likely to have had media literacy training throughout their lifetime. More than half (55%) of 18–24-year-olds report having received media literacy training in school compared to only 10% among those aged 65+. There is a

direct negative correlation with learning media literacy online and age. Older respondents were less likely to have engaged with online tutorials, indicating that the capacity to use digital technologies is an important condition of engaging with online media literacy initiatives (see **figure 3.2**).

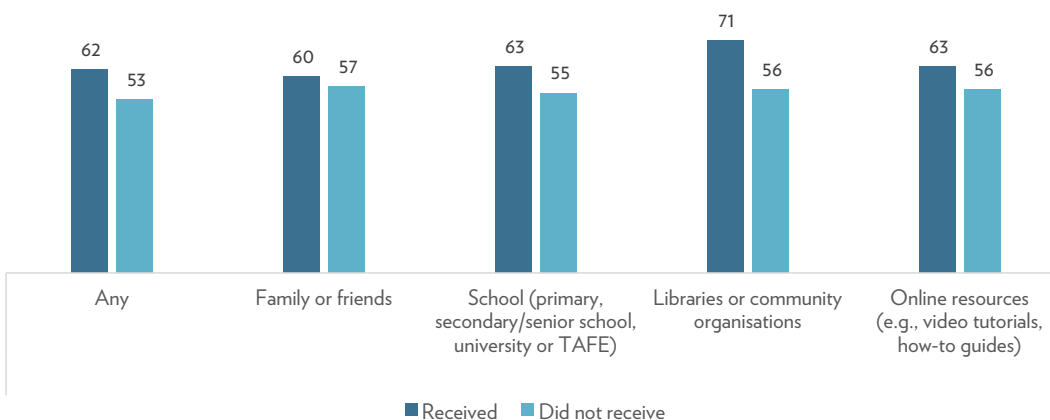


◀ **Figure 3.2:** Media literacy education received by age (%)

Media literacy education is strongly associated with political efficacy

We compared those who have received media literacy training and those who had not in terms of their internal and external political efficacy. Those who have received media literacy training have higher internal political efficacy (62%) than those who have not (53%). The strongest relationship emerged between internal political efficacy and being educated

in libraries and community organisations; 71% of those who received training in libraries have high internal political efficacy compared to only 56% of those who had not received training (see **figure 3.3**).

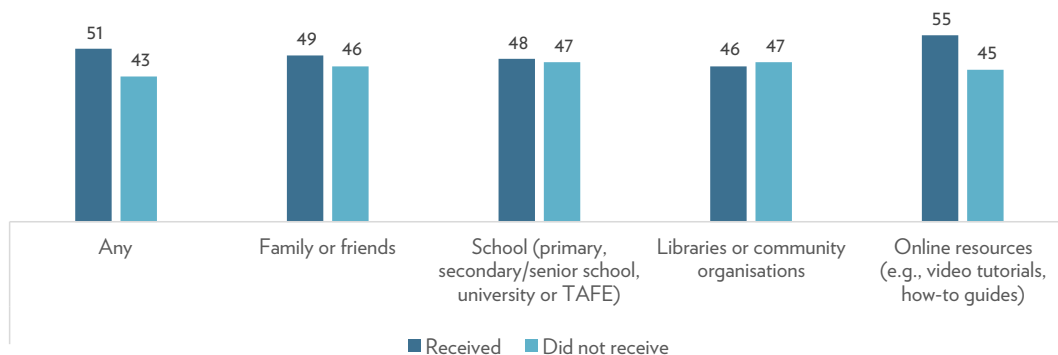


◀ **Figure 3.3:** Internal political efficacy by media literacy education (% high political efficacy)

A similar relationship between media literacy education and external political efficacy was found. Those who had received media literacy education from any source were more likely to have higher external political efficacy (51%) than those who had not (43%). The largest gap was found in media literacy learning from

online resources. External political efficacy is related to the confidence people have in political actors and the political system generally, and tapping into online resources to help improve media literacy is effective in gaining knowledge and confidence about our political environment (see **figure 3.4**).

► **Figure 3.4:**
External political efficacy by media literacy education (% high political efficacy)



Responses to misinformation

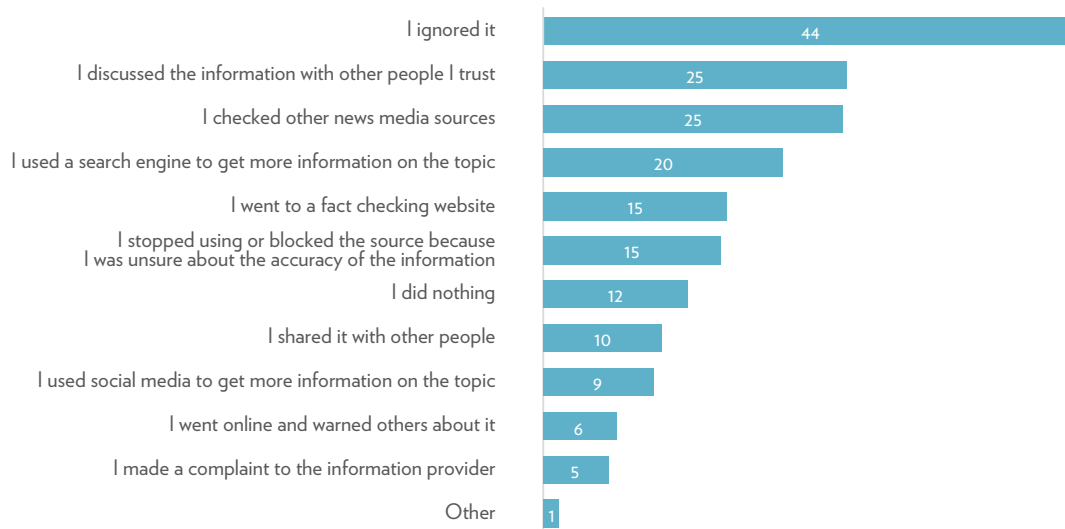
The most common response to misinformation is to ignore it

We asked respondents how often they came across false or misleading news or information about the election in the two weeks before the federal election day. Sixty percent of respondents reported encountering misinformation occasionally, sometimes or very often (see **figure 2.1** in **Chapter 2**).

We asked these respondents what, if anything, they did after seeing election-related misinformation, giving them a list of 12 items, including 'other'. The top response to

encountering misinformation was 'I ignored it' (44%). The second most popular choices were to discuss it with trusted people (25%) and check other media sources (25%). Another method was to search for more information (20%) or go to a fact-checking website (15%). Sharing the misinformation content with others (10%), warning others (6%) and making a complaint to the information provider (5%) were less common ways of responding to misinformation (see **figure 3.5**).

► **Figure 3.5:**
Responses to election misinformation (%)



[Q16] When you came across the false or misleading news and information about the election, what (if anything) did you do after seeing it? Select all that apply.
[Base: n=1,194, those who say very often to occasionally encountered misinformation to Q13]

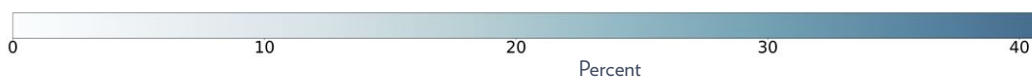
People who received media literacy education are much more likely to fact-check

Under 35s were less likely to ignore misinformation (36%) and more likely to laterally check the information either through checking other media (28%), search engines (24%) and/or social media (17%). On the other hand, people aged 35+ were more likely to discuss it with trusted people (26%) compared to under 35s (23%). Younger people were also more likely to warn others (11%) compared to those aged 35+ (4%). CALD respondents were more likely to engage in all of the aforementioned validating activities, and they were much less likely to say they ignored the content or did nothing.

Media literacy education has the strongest relationship with external validation activities. Those who had media literacy training were much more likely to check other media (29% vs 20%), use fact-checking websites (20% vs 10%), use search engines to verify claims (23% vs 16%), block the source (16% vs 13%), discuss the content with trusted people (30% vs 19%), and share it with others (11% vs 8%). They were twice as likely to report to the provider of the information (7% vs 3%) and three times as likely to warn other people (9% vs 3%). Similarly, having high internal and external political efficacy had a strong relationship with validation behaviour (see **table 3.2**).

► **Table 3.2 :**
Responses to election misinformation by demographics (%)

		Checked other news media sources	Went to a fact-checking website	Used search engine	Used social media	Blocked / stopped using source	Discussed with trusted people	Shared with others	Complained to provider	Ignored it	Warned others online	I did nothing
Gender	Male	23	15	18	10	15	24	9	6	47	6	11
	Female	26	15	21	8	14	26	11	4	41	5	13
Age	18 – 34	28	16	24	17	18	23	10	7	36	11	12
	35+	23	15	18	6	13	26	10	5	47	4	12
Tertiary education	Yes	27	19	24	10	16	27	9	7	43	6	10
	No	20	9	13	9	12	22	12	3	46	6	15
Media literacy education	Yes	29	20	23	11	16	30	11	7	40	9	9
	No	20	10	16	7	13	19	8	3	48	3	16
Income	< \$40 000	20	12	20	9	16	26	12	7	39	2	14
	\$40 000 – \$149 999	27	17	22	10	14	25	10	5	44	6	10
	≥ \$150 000	23	15	17	9	18	27	9	7	46	8	13
Location	Major cities	25	15	19	9	14	25	9	5	43	5	13
	Regional area	25	15	23	10	16	25	11	6	45	8	10
CALD	Yes	29	21	26	18	20	27	11	9	37	9	10
	No	24	14	19	7	13	25	10	5	45	6	12
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	Yes	30	17	25	8	15	28	11	6	45	5	9
	No	23	14	18	9	15	24	10	5	43	6	13
Political orientation	Left	32	20	27	12	20	25	6	8	45	7	7
	Centre	21	13	13	9	14	19	8	4	41	6	16
	Right	24	14	20	6	13	33	16	5	45	6	10
External political efficacy	High	28	17	20	10	17	25	8	5	45	7	11
	Low	22	14	20	8	13	25	11	5	43	5	13
Internal political efficacy	High	26	17	22	10	16	28	9	7	44	7	10
	Low	21	10	15	8	12	18	11	2	43	5	17

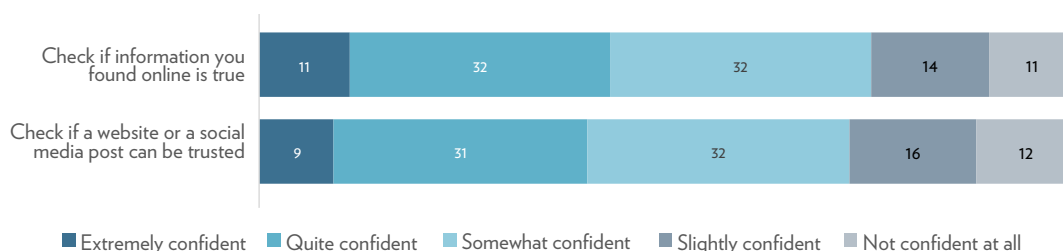


Confidence in verifying information

Confidence assessing the credibility of information is low

Confidence in navigating the online environment is an important factor that shapes people's activities online. We asked respondents how confident they were in performing two different but related tasks; checking if a website or a social media post can be trusted and verifying if online information is true. Only 40% of respondents reported high confidence in checking if a website or social media post can be trusted, and only 43% had high confidence in verifying information online (see **figure 3.6**).

► **Figure 3.6:**
Confidence in
verifying information
(%)



[Q26] How confident are you in your ability to perform the following tasks? [Base: n= 2,003]

Political efficacy is a strong predictor of people's confidence in identifying trustworthy information online

Men, younger people (aged under 35), those with tertiary education, those who have received media literacy education, and those with high income were more likely to have high confidence in their ability to assess the credibility of information they encounter online.

Under 35s were more confident in both tasks compared to over 35s. More than half (54%) of under 35s were either quite or very confident in their ability to check if a website or social media post can be trusted, compared to only 35% of people aged 35+. Similarly, 53% of under 35s could check if online information was true compared to only 39% of over 35s. Media literacy education is an important factor as well, more so than educational attainment. Those who received media literacy training

were much more likely to have the confidence to identify trustworthy content (49%), 17 percentage points higher than those who had not received any such training. Those with media literacy training were also much more confident (52%) in verifying online information compared to those without training (35%).

The most discerning factor, however, was people's confidence in their political efficacy. Those with high internal political efficacy (51%) were much more likely to say they are confident in identifying trustworthy information online compared to those with low political efficacy (26%). It is also the case that those with high political efficacy have the confidence to verify information online (54%) compared to those with low political efficacy (28%) (see **table 3.4**).

Demographic	Check if website/social media post can be trusted (%)	Check if online information is true (%)
Gender		
Male	45	47
Female	35	39
Age		
18-34	54	53
35 and over	35	39
Tertiary education		
Yes	44	47
No	35	37
Media literacy education		
Yes	49	52
No	32	35
Income (annual household)		
< \$40 000	33	35
\$40 000 - \$149 999	39	42
≥ \$150 000	55	58
Location		
Major cities	41	43
Regional area	37	42
CALD		
Yes	46	50
No	40	43
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability		
Yes	36	41
No	42	44
Political orientation		
Left	52	57
Centre	34	36
Right	42	46
External political efficacy		
High	41	44
Low	39	43
Internal political efficacy		
High	51	54
Low	26	28

◀ Table 3.4 :

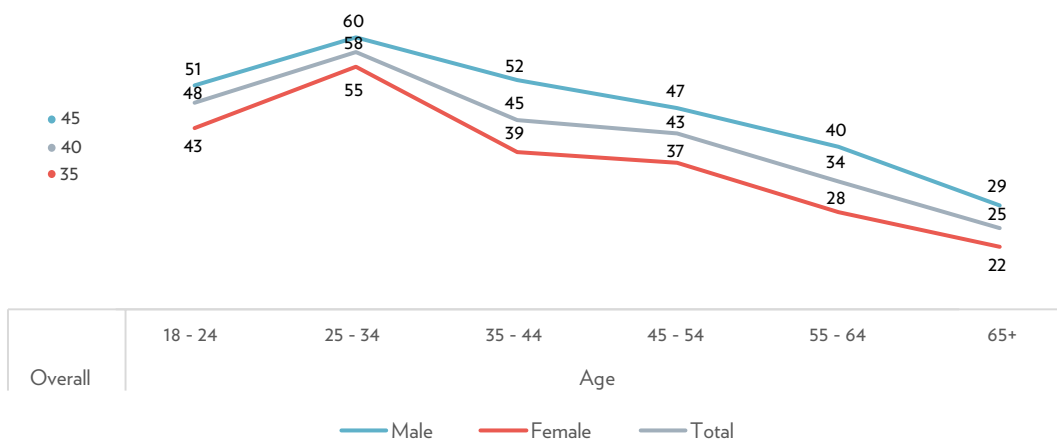
Confidence in media ability by demographics (% extremely/quite confident)

25- to 34-year-olds had the highest confidence in their ability to verify information online

A more detailed analysis by age and gender reveals an interesting pattern. Both men and women in the age group 25-34 reported the highest confidence in checking if a website or social media post can be trusted, with men's confidence slightly higher overall (see **figure 3.7**). This implies that the youngest

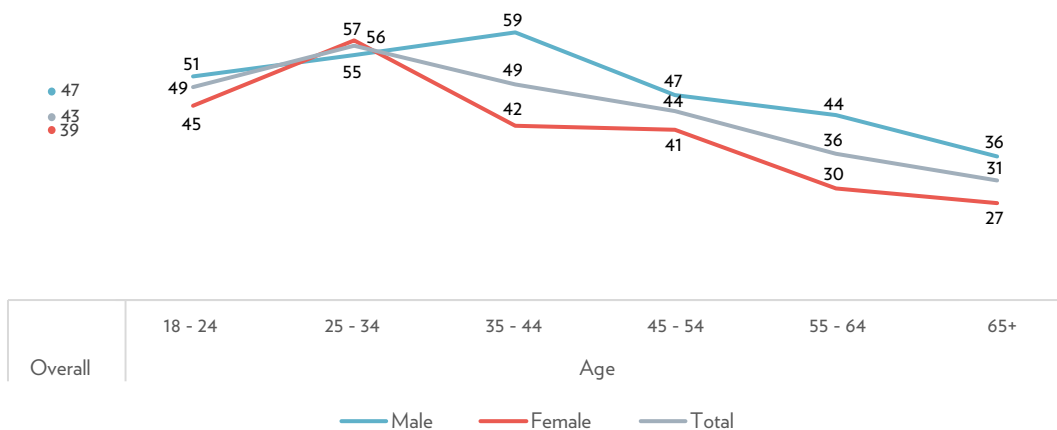
adult cohort (aged 18-24) may have high digital literacy but have not yet acquired the necessary critical thinking skills to navigate the online environment and find trustworthy information. This is possibly linked to the low level of trust younger generations have in the overall information ecosystem.

► **Figure 3.7:** Confidence with checking if a website or social media post can be trusted by age and gender (% extremely/quite confident)



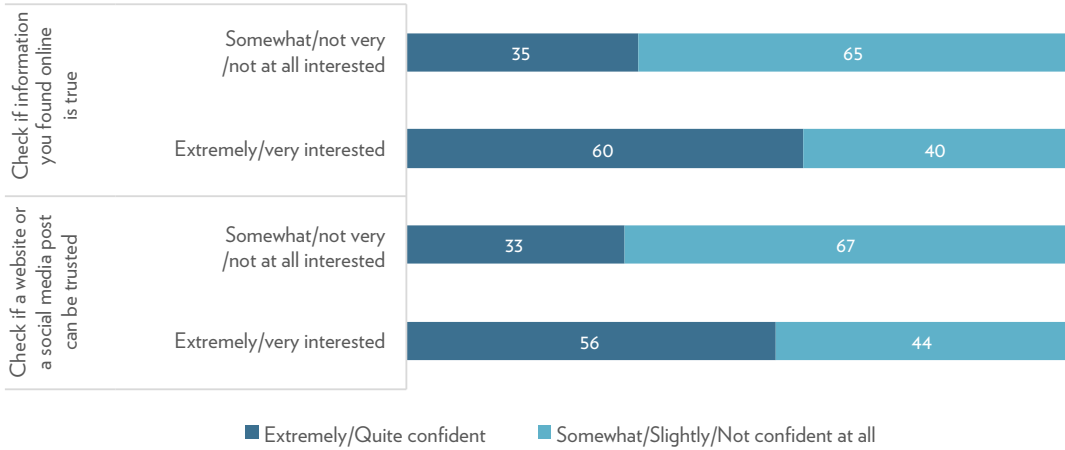
On the other hand, gender differences were found with respect to confidence in verifying online information. Male respondents in the age group 35-44 had the highest confidence (59%); 17 percentage points higher than women in the same age group. Again, overall confidence among 18-24-year-olds was lower than that of 25-34-year-olds (see **figure 3.8**).

► **Figure 3.8:** Confidence with checking if online information you found online is true by age and gender (% extremely/quite confident)



There is a strong relationship between interest in politics and people’s confidence in checking if a website or social media post can be trusted, and whether online information they find online is credible. Those who were

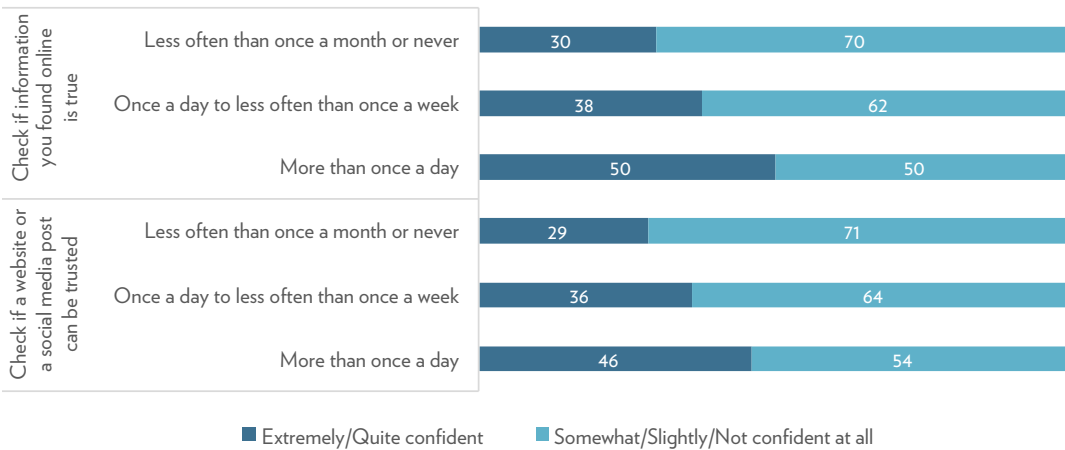
extremely or very interested in politics were much more likely to say they are confident in their ability compared to those who are not interested in politics or those who say they don’t know (see **figure 3.9**).



◀ **Figure 3.9:** Confidence in verifying information by interest in politics (%)

News access is linked to people’s confidence in checking if a website or social media post can be trusted, and whether online information they find online is true. Forty-six percent of heavy news users said they are confident in their ability to check if a website or social

media post can be trusted, compared to only 36% of light news users and 29% of non-users. Similarly, 50% of heavy news users were confident in checking if information online is trustworthy, compared to 38% of light news users and 30% of non-users (see **figure 3.10**).



◀ **Figure 3.10:** Confidence in verifying information by news access (%)

Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation

Only about half of respondents were able to identify fact-checked misinformation about the election

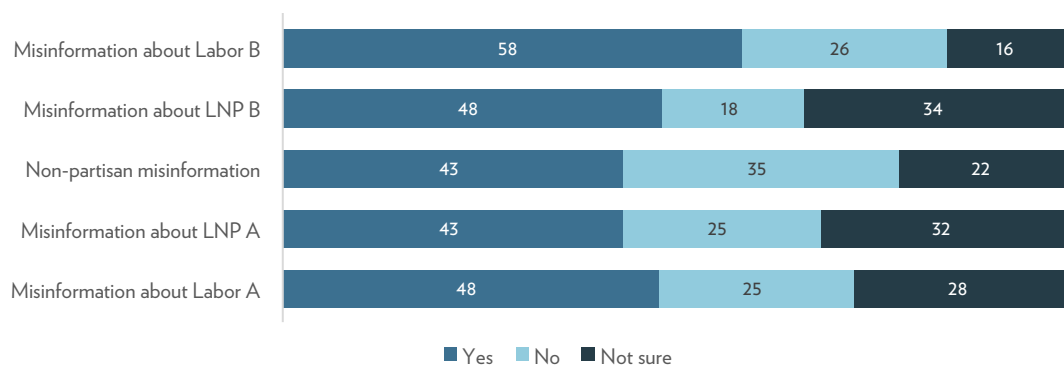
With assistance from an experienced fact-checker, the research team selected five examples of what the fact-checker concluded to be election misinformation (see p.11 in Methodology). Two included examples of misinformation about the Labor Party or Labor politicians and two were examples of misinformation about the Liberal National Party (LNP) or LNP politicians. One was an example of election misinformation that was unrelated to any particular political party or candidate.

Respondents were given the five examples and asked if they thought the post is an

example of misinformation, with an option to reply 'yes', 'no', or 'unsure'. The range of 'yes' responses are in **figure 3.11**.

'Yes' responses range from 43% to 58% across the five examples. The ones targeting Labor have higher percentages of accurate responses (48% and 58%). The non-partisan example had the lowest score, with only 43% of respondents identifying it as misinformation. It is important to note that 16-34% of respondents replied 'unsure'. This suggests that many Australians are not confident in discerning misinformation.

► **Figure 3.11:**
Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation (%)



[Q21] [Q22] [Q23] [Q24] [Q25] Do you think this post is an example of misinformation? Yes, no, not sure. [Base: n= 2,005]

There were mixed results among different groups. Men were generally more likely to identify examples as misinformation than women. Those with media literacy education and those who have high confidence in their ability to verify information online were also more likely to identify misinformation than those without media literacy education or those with low confidence in their ability. However, for some examples there was little difference between those who had and hadn't received media literacy education. People with high internal political efficacy were also much more likely to identify misinformation than those with low efficacy.

People with tertiary education were more likely to identify misinformation for the

examples targeting Labor or the non-partisan example, but they were less likely to identify misinformation in the examples targeting the LNP.

There are differences between left, centre and right-leaning respondents in their responses. Left-wing respondents were much more likely to identify misinformation in the posts that were about Labor (67%, 80%) than the posts about the LNP (30%, 51%) or the non-partisan example (53%). Similarly, right-wing respondents were more likely to identify a post as misinformation if the content was about the LNP (61%, 55%) than when the content was about Labor (39%, 45%) or non-partisan (43%) (see **table 3.5**).

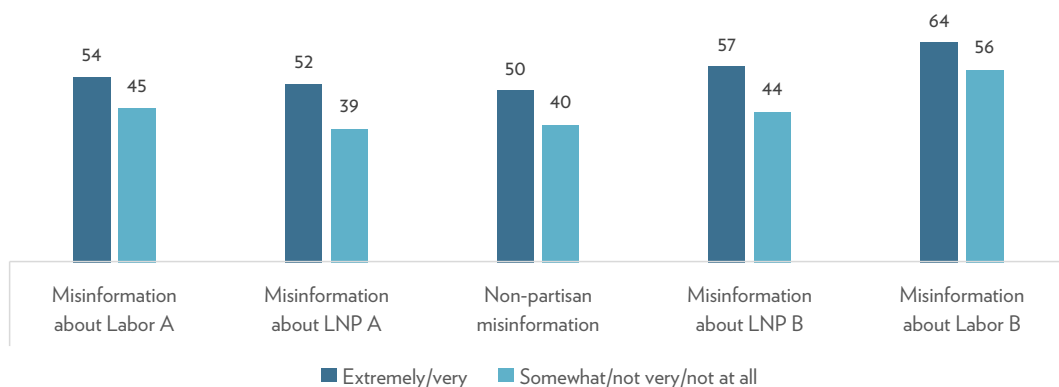
Demographic	Misinformation about Labor A	Misinformation about LNP A	Non-partisan misinformation	Misinformation about LNP B	Misinformation about Labor B
Gender					
Male	49	47	43	51	59
Female	47	40	43	45	57
Age					
18-34	47	35	42	47	65
35 and over	48	46	44	48	56
Tertiary education					
Yes	48	45	42	49	59
No	47	41	45	46	56
Media literacy education					
Yes	48	44	46	52	60
No	48	42	41	44	57
Income (annual household)					
< \$40 000	47	39	47	47	57
\$40 000 - \$149 999	47	46	43	48	59
≥ \$150 000	56	44	43	55	60
Location					
Major cities	49	43	43	48	60
Regional area	46	45	43	48	53
CALD					
Yes	51	47	49	50	61
No	49	43	43	49	58
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability					
Yes	48	45	48	46	58
No	48	43	42	48	59
Political orientation					
Left	67	30	53	51	80
Centre	45	44	38	44	58
Right	39	61	43	55	45
External political efficacy					
High	55	38	44	47	66
Low	42	48	42	48	51
Internal political efficacy					
High	52	47	46	54	61
Low	42	39	39	40	54
Check if a website or social media post can be trusted					
Confident	53	44	48	54	63
Not confident	45	43	40	44	55
Check if online information you found online is true					
Confident	52	44	48	54	63
Not confident	45	43	40	43	55

◀ Table 3.5 :

Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation by demographics (% yes)

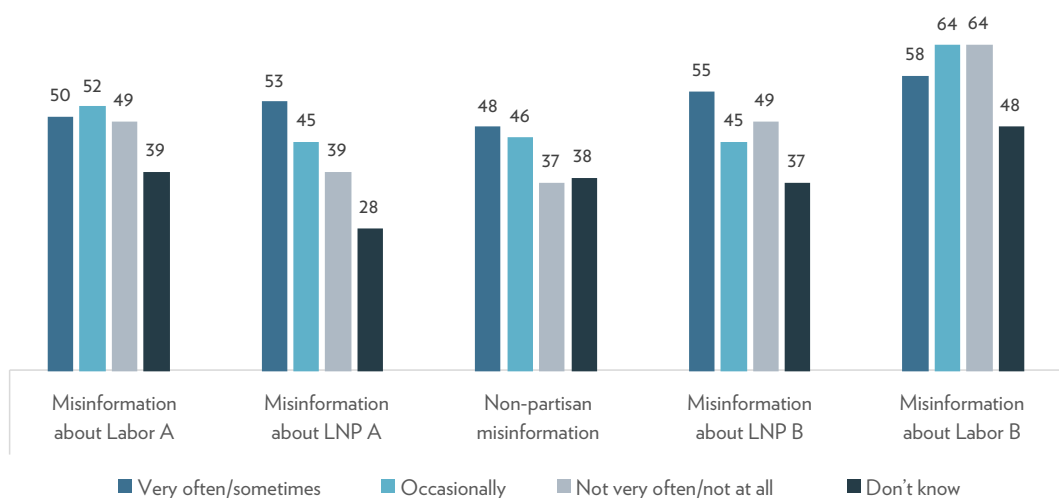
High interest in politics was related to how respondents identified fact-checked misinformation. More than half of those who were highly interested in politics identified the fact-checked examples as misinformation, whereas those with lower political interest were much less likely to (see **figure 3.12**).

► **Figure 3.12:**
Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation by political interest (% yes)

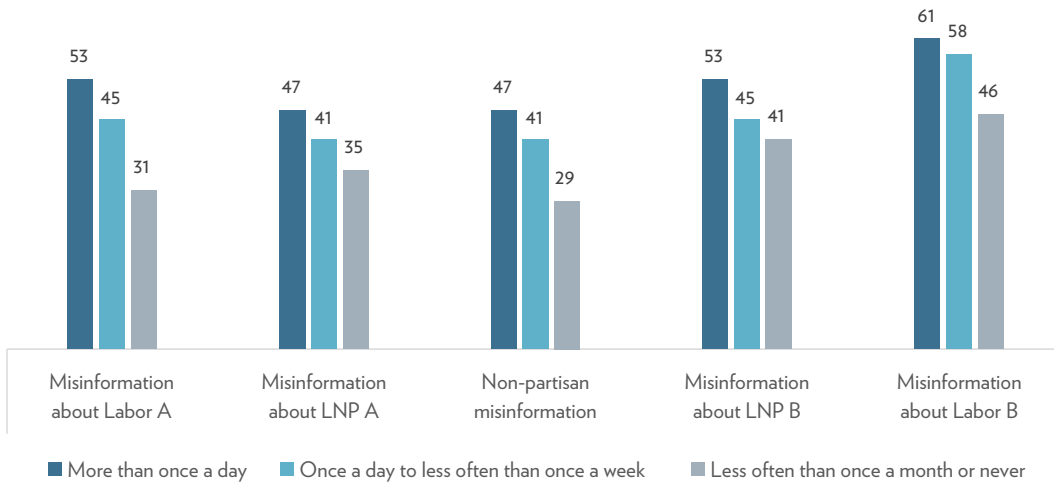


As **figure 3.13** shows, those who reported encountering misinformation more frequently were also more likely to identify the fact-checked misinformation. Conversely, those who reported encountering misinformation less frequently, or did not know how much misinformation they encountered, were less likely to say 'yes' to any of the fact-checked examples of misinformation.

► **Figure 3.13:**
Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation by election misinformation experience (% yes)



Frequency of news access also seems to be related to how people identify misinformation. Those who access news more frequently may be more confident in their belief that something is or isn't misinformation. Heavy news users were much more likely to identify each piece of fact-checked misinformation. Those who use news less often than once a month or never were least likely to identify them as misinformation (see **figure 3.14**).



◀ **Figure 3.14:**
Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation by news access (% yes)

The number of examples identified as misinformation varied across groups. Men, those aged 35+, people with tertiary education, those who have received media literacy education, and individuals in high income brackets were more likely to identify a higher

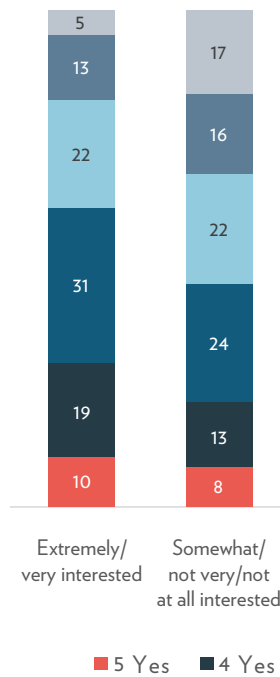
number of examples as misinformation. Those who are politically left or right leaning, those with high internal political efficacy, and those who are confident about their media ability also tended to identify more examples as misinformation (see **table 3.6**).

► **Table 3.6 :**
Identifying fact-checked examples of election misinformation by demographics (% yes)

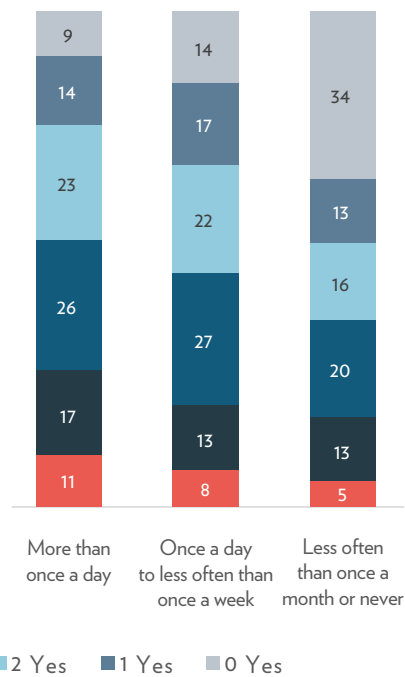
Demographic	5 Yes	4 Yes	3 Yes	2 Yes	1 Yes	0 Yes	3 and above
Gender							
Male	10	15	28	21	14	12	53
Female	8	14	25	23	16	14	47
Age							
18-34	7	13	30	21	15	14	50
35 and over	9	15	25	22	15	13	49
Tertiary education							
Yes	9	16	24	23	15	12	49
No	9	12	29	21	15	15	50
Media literacy education							
Yes	10	16	28	21	14	12	54
No	8	14	25	23	16	15	47
Income (annual household)							
< \$40 000	9	15	26	22	13	16	50
\$40 000 - \$149 999	9	15	25	22	16	13	49
≥ \$150 000	9	15	30	24	15	8	54
Location							
Major cities	9	15	27	22	15	13	51
Regional area	9	15	22	22	16	15	46
CALD							
Yes	10	16	30	22	14	9	56
No	9	15	26	22	15	13	50
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability							
Yes	9	15	29	21	15	12	53
No	9	15	25	22	15	14	49
Political orientation							
Left	10	20	33	22	9	7	63
Centre	9	13	23	23	17	15	45
Right	9	14	26	24	18	9	49
External political efficacy							
High	10	16	28	21	13	13	54
Low	8	14	25	23	17	14	47
Internal political efficacy							
High	10	16	30	22	14	8	56
Low	8	13	20	22	17	20	41
Check if a website or social media post can be trusted							
Confident	10	18	28	22	13	10	56
Not confident	8	13	26	21	14	18	47
Check if online information you found online is true							
Confident	10	16	29	22	14	9	55
Not confident	8	13	25	21	13	20	46

The number of examples identified as misinformation was strongly related to both political interest and news consumption. Heavy news consumers and the highly interested in politics were much more likely to identify more of the examples as misinformation compared to those who have low interest in politics and light or non-users of news. We note that 53% of people who consume news less often than once a month or never identified none of the five examples (see figure 3.15 and 3.16).

► **Figure 3.15:**
Number of examples identified as misinformation by interest in politics (%)



◀ **Figure 3.16:**
Number of examples identified as misinformation by news access (%)



Interviewees' responses to election misinformation

Many interviewees noted that because they had been asked to participate in this research, they had paid more attention to election misinformation about the 2025 federal election than in previous years. Even so, they often noted that it was difficult to tell if something was or wasn't misinformation.

“ I still don't know, though. Sometimes I go, I don't know if that's not true or not. So I feel very not, I was going to say not proficient. Is that the right word? I don't feel I would still know. I'm sure there's plenty of it that I'm seeing, and it's going to the keeper.

– DS3, Female, 40s ”

Not being sure about something was rarely a trigger to investigate further. Instead, interviewees commonly responded to election misinformation by 'scrolling past' or ignoring it.

“ Is anyone else talking about this? Have I heard anything about this in the news? If not, I'll either go look at it, or just keep scrolling, I guess, and see if anyone else talks about it. If they don't, I sort of lean towards it being wrong generally because anything exciting enough that someone would post would be talked about if it's real, and if they're just lying about it, no one would be really following the same lies for the most part.

– **DK6, Female, Late teens** ”

Revealingly, interviewees who did attempt to fact check misinformation often found mixed results.

“ A few times, a couple of times at least, [...] I actually did some Googling. So, I was like, I did not believe that, but you know, but should I? So, you know, I tried to look it up, and sometimes I was successful getting more information and other times I wasn't.

– **GL4, Female, 60s** ”

Several interviewees commented that politics was difficult for them to understand, inaccessible, or not relevant to their day-to-day lives. Consequently, when faced with possible misinformation they would defer to someone in their immediate family who they perceived as being more attentive to or interested in politics.

“ I looked at it and went, oh, that doesn't sound right. And that's when I asked my hubby about it. But yeah, how many people out there have someone who is into politics as much as my husband? They probably wouldn't have the ability to go well, is this right? Does this sound like it's misleading?

– **DS7, Female, 40s** ”

Overall, many interviewees expressed the view that the negativity, complexity and lack of relevance of political communication discouraged them from actively engaging with it. Furthermore, their lack of time combined with the complexity of the broader information environment, particularly the internet, discouraged them from trying to fact check possible misinformation.

Summary

To develop the ability and confidence to verify misinformation, it is important to not be overwhelmed by the volume of information and misinformation circulating online. We found that both ability and confidence to verify information online is very low among respondents. This may be because few people have received media literacy education; only half reported having received any type of media literacy education and less than one-third reported having learned media literacy in school.

There are attitudinal and behavioural differences between those who have received media literacy education and those who have not. Media literacy education is strongly associated with people's confidence in their own political efficacy; defined as the ability to partake in political engagement, and having an influence in the political process. It appears that people who have high political efficacy are those who are best equipped to use media for civic participation.

While younger people are more likely to have received media literacy education and, therefore, have higher confidence in their ability to verify information online, our findings suggest that they are less likely to be able to verify misinformation when presented with political misinformation examples. This is possibly because they are less interested in politics and are lighter news consumers.

Both ability and confidence in verifying information are strongly related to news consumption with heavy news consumers scoring the highest in both their ability to identify misinformation and their confidence in their capacity to do so. This means that media literacy education needs to be combined with improved access to a quality news content. Addressing one of these without the other may be insufficient for helping people navigate the online environment and discern misinformation.

When people come across misinformation, the most common response is to ignore it. Very few people share it with others or warn others about it. This implies that people rarely knowingly share misinformation and, when they do, it is likely that they are not aware that it is misinformation.

Younger people are less likely to ignore misinformation and more likely to externally check information through news or search engines. They are also more likely to have received media literacy education, which is strongly related to external checking activities.

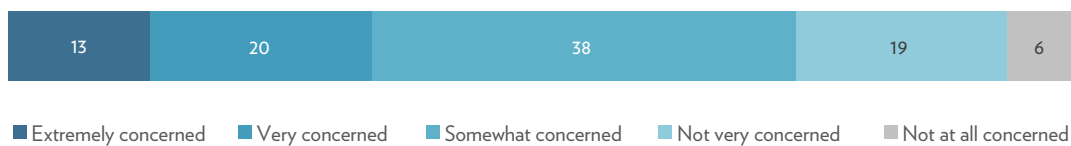
There is evidence that media literacy is a critical factor that can mitigate the spread and impact of misinformation, while giving people increased confidence to respond to misinformation. However, most people – particularly older adults with limited access to (or confidence in using) digital technologies – have rarely had the opportunity to participate in media literacy programs. This highlights a need to prioritise digital inclusion and accessibility in the development of media literacy programs.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS TACKLING MISINFORMATION

- Concern about election misinformation was high. 75% were worried about false information, with one third very or extremely concerned and only 25% not concerned.
- The majority say adult media literacy training is needed (69%). People with media literacy training were more concerned about misinformation (40% vs 29%) and have higher support for adult media literacy training (77% vs 62%).
- Right-leaning respondents are more concerned about election misinformation but less supportive of adult media literacy training and truth in political advertising regulations.
- The public want the government (70%) and digital platforms (75%) to restrict false information on social media, even if it means limiting the freedom to publish or access information.
- There is strong support for national truth in political advertising laws (83%).

Concern about election misinformation is high

We asked respondents how concerned they were about the spread of false information during the 2025 federal election campaign. Three-quarters of respondents said they were worried about it, with one-third (33%) being very or extremely concerned and just a quarter (25%) reporting they were not very or at all worried (see **figure 4.1**).



◀ **Figure 4.1:**
Concern about election misinformation (%)

[Q20] How concerned were you about the spread of false information during the election campaign? [Base: n= 1,934]

Table 4.1 shows the level of concern about false election information based on demographic and other characteristics. Men and women shared a similar level of concern about election misinformation (74% vs 73%) and there was no difference between regional and city respondents; however, men were slightly more likely to say they were very or extremely concerned (37% vs 32%) about it. We found no difference in concern based purely on age, but there are variations when combined with gender (see **figure 4.2** for more).

Higher levels of education and income are linked to higher levels of concern about election misinformation. Respondents with tertiary qualifications (36%) were slightly more likely to report being very or extremely concerned about false election information than those with lower levels of education (32%). Further, a larger proportion (38%) of the highest income earners (\geq \$150,000) reported being very or extremely concerned, compared with lower (34%) and middle-income (35%) earners. Respondents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) reported significantly higher concern about election misinformation, with 41% saying they were very or extremely worried, compared to 33% of respondents from non-CALD

backgrounds. Similarly, people with a long-term health condition, impairment, or disability expressed higher concern than those without (41% vs 33%).

Political orientation had a significant effect on how concerned people were about political misinformation. Respondents who identify with the right (45%) were most likely to say they were very or extremely concerned, followed by those on the left (37%), while only 29% of those in the centre said they were concerned.

More than one-third of respondents with low confidence in the political system and the ability of governments to deliver on their promises (also called low external efficacy) (39%) expressed much higher concern about election misinformation than those who had high confidence in the political system (29%) (for more information about how we measured political efficacy see Methodology). However, the opposite pattern was found in relation to people's sense of their own political confidence (internal political efficacy): 44% of those with high internal efficacy reported being very or extremely concerned about political misinformation compared to only 22% of those with low internal efficacy.

Previous studies have shown that political efficacy has significant impacts on engagement with political issues, including misinformation (Karp & Banducci, 2008¹; Kim, 2015²). Our findings indicate that both external and internal political efficacies had nuanced effects on individuals' attitudes toward political misinformation. Individuals with higher internal

efficacy, who believed they understood and could influence politics, were significantly more concerned about misinformation during the election campaign. At the same time, those with low external efficacy, reflecting low confidence in government, were also more worried about misinformation.

► **Table 4.1 :**
Concern about election misinformation by demographics (%)

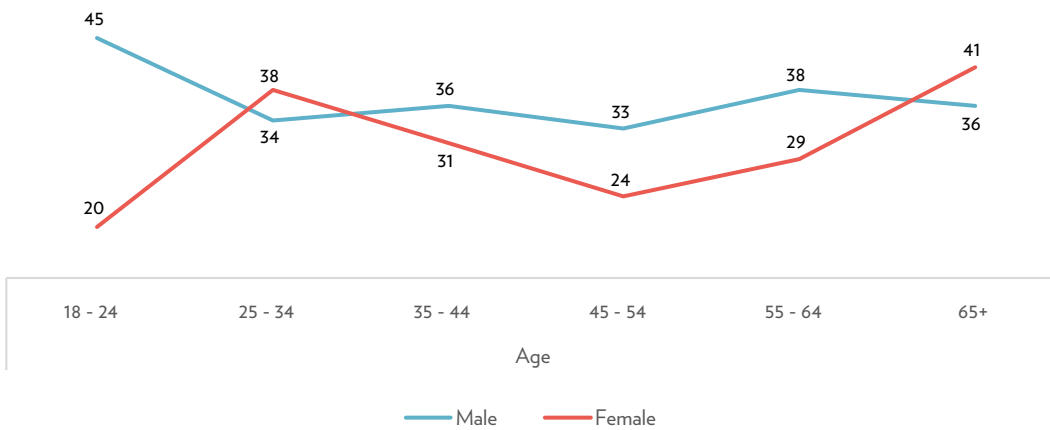
Demographic	Concerned (%)	Somewhat concerned (%)	Not very/not at all (%)
Gender			
Male	37	37	26
Female	32	41	27
Age			
18-34	35	38	27
35 and over	34	40	26
Tertiary education			
Yes	36	39	25
No	32	39	29
Media literacy education			
Yes	40	38	23
No	29	41	30
Income (annual household)			
< \$40 000	34	36	30
\$40 000 - \$149 999	35	38	27
≥ \$150 000	38	40	23
Location			
Major cities	35	39	26
Regional area	34	39	27
CALD			
Yes	41	38	21
No	33	39	28
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability			
Yes	37	36	27
No	33	40	27
Political orientation			
Left	37	43	20
Centre	29	39	32
Right	45	33	22
External political efficacy			
High	29	45	26
Low	39	34	27
Internal political efficacy			
High	44	36	20
Low	22	43	35

¹ Karp, J. A., & Banducci, S. A. (2008). Political Efficacy and Participation in Twenty-Seven Democracies: How Electoral Systems Shape Political Behavior. *British Journal of Political Science*, 38(2), 311–334.

² Kim, B. J. (2015). Political efficacy, community collective efficacy, trust and extroversion in the information society: Differences between online and offline civic/political activities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32(1), 43–51.

As mentioned above, we found age had little impact on levels of concern about election misinformation; however, a more nuanced pattern was observed in the interplay between age and gender. **Figure 4.2** shows that younger men were much more likely than their female counterparts to be concerned about election misinformation: nearly half of men aged 18–24 (45%) reported being very or extremely concerned, compared to only 20% of women in the same age group. This level

of concern was also much higher than that observed in older age groups. This large gap can partly be explained by the fact that young men are more interested in news and politics than young women. The fact that younger men are more concerned about election misinformation than older participants is a likely reflection of young people’s higher use of the internet and social media, and their higher levels of media literacy education.

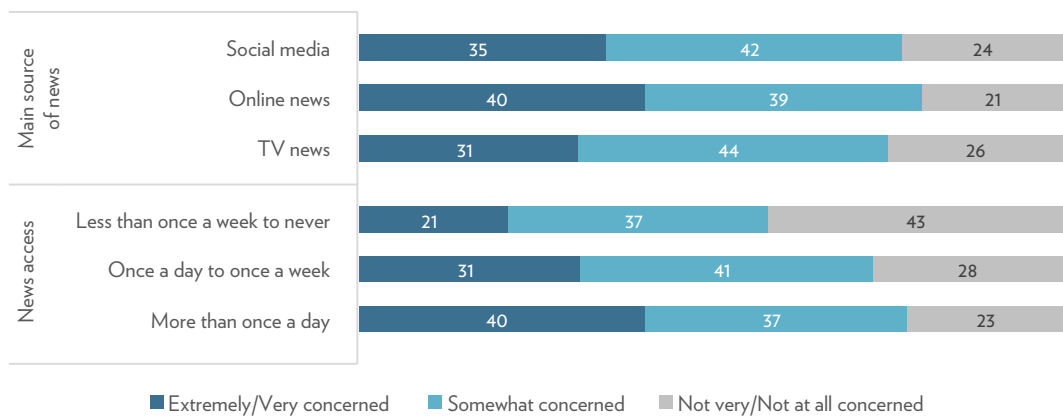


◀ **Figure 4.2:** Concern about election misinformation by age and gender (% extremely/very concerned)

[Q20] How concerned were you about the spread of false information during the election campaign? [Base: n= 1,934]

News access also had an impact on respondents’ level of concern about election misinformation. Heavy news consumers were more likely to express concern, with 40% of respondents accessing news more than once a day saying they were very or extremely concerned, compared with only 21% of those who accessed news less than once a week or never.

Concern about election misinformation is also related to the main source of news used by each respondent: 40% of those who said they relied on online news websites and 35% who used social media reported being very or extremely concerned, compared to those who mainly got their news from TV (31%) (see **figure 4.3**).

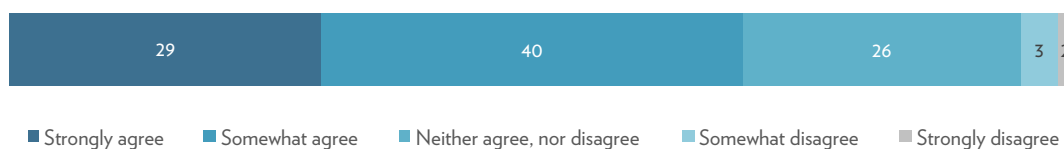


◀ **Figure 4.3:** Concern about election misinformation by news access and main source of news (%)

Media literacy training needs

We asked respondents about the need for media literacy training for adults. Almost seventy percent agreed there was a need to improve adult media literacy, including 29% who strongly agreed and 40% who somewhat agreed. Around one-quarter (26%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposition, while only 5% said there was no need (see **figure 4.4**).

► **Figure 4.4:**
Support for adult
media literacy training
(%)



[Q28] To what extent do you agree or disagree there is a need for media literacy training for adults? Media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of media. This includes the ability to identify misinformation. [Base: n= 2,003]

The survey revealed broad support for adult media literacy training across demographics. Women, younger respondents, those with tertiary qualifications, high-income earners and people living in regional areas were more likely to agree there is a need for adult media literacy training.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, respondents who had already received media literacy education (77%) were also much more likely to feel there is a need for such training than those who had not (62%).

We also found that CALD respondents (74%) were also more likely to support the need for training than those who were not (70%).

One of the biggest differences in attitudes toward adult media literacy was based on the political orientation of the respondents. Left-leaning respondents were far more likely to agree there is a need for adult media literacy training (84%) compared to centre (66%) and right-leaning respondents (68%). This large difference likely reflects that people who identify with left-wing politics tend to be younger, more highly educated, and use more online media.

Political efficacy also influenced perceptions of need. Respondents with high political confidence were more likely to support adult media literacy training (74%) than those with low political efficacy (63%) (see **table 4.2**).

Demographic	Agree (%)	Neither (%)	Disagree (%)
Gender			
Male	67	27	6
Female	71	25	4
Age			
18-34	76	20	4
35 and over	66	28	5
Tertiary education			
Yes	74	22	4
No	62	32	6
Media literacy education			
Yes	77	19	4
No	62	33	5
Income (annual household)			
< \$40 000	64	31	5
\$40 000 - \$149 999	70	26	4
≥ \$150 000	76	18	6
Location			
Major cities	69	26	5
Regional area	70	26	5
CALD			
Yes	74	22	4
No	70	25	5
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability			
Yes	71	23	6
No	70	26	4
Political orientation			
Left	84	13	4
Centre	66	29	6
Right	68	26	6
External political efficacy			
High	70	26	4
Low	68	26	6
Internal political efficacy			
High	74	21	6
Low	63	33	4

◀ Table 4.2 :

Support for adult media literacy training by demographics (%)

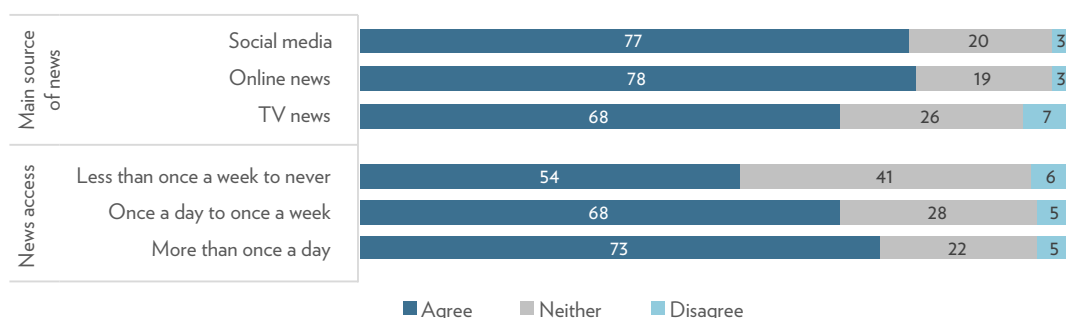
Rates of news consumption reveal stark differences in attitude toward media literacy training

Heavy news users were much more likely than light news users to feel the need for adult media literacy training. As shown in **figure 4.5**, nearly three quarters of those who accessed news more than once a day (73%) agreed that media literacy training was needed for adults, compared to just over half (54%) of those who

accessed news less than once a week or never.

Respondents who mainly access news via news websites (78%) or social media (77%) were also much more likely to say that media literacy training for adults was needed compared to those relying on TV news (68%).

► **Figure 4.5:**
Support for adult media literacy training by news access and main source of news (%)



Attitude towards regulation

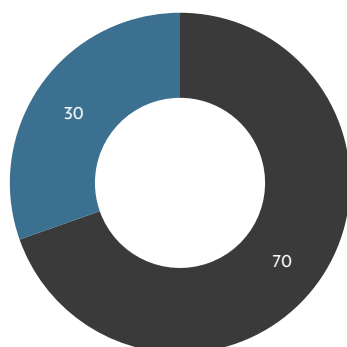
People want the government and digital platforms to restrict false information on social media

Respondents were asked whether governments should restrict false information on social media, as a possible remedy for reducing political misinformation online, even if it limits freedom of publication. Respondents were more likely to prioritise restricting false information on social media over protecting people's freedom to publish and access information. The majority of respondents (70%) supported the view that the government should take steps to restrict false

information, even if this limited people's ability to publish or access content freely, while only 30% felt that freedom of publication should be protected, even if it means false information can be published online (see **figure 4.6**).

Three-quarters of respondents (75%) also supported the view that social media companies should take steps to restrict false information online, while only 25% prioritised protecting freedom of publication (see **figure 4.7**).

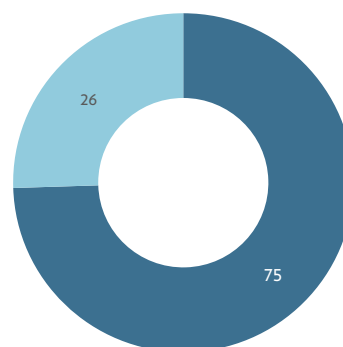
► **Figure 4.6:**
Beliefs about restricting false information on social media (%)



- The government should take steps to restrict false information on social media, even if it limits people from freely publishing or accessing information
- People's freedom to publish and access information should be protected, even if it means false information can also be published on social media

[Q29] Which comes closer to your own view - even if neither is exactly right? [Base: n= 2,003]

◀ **Figure 4.7:**
Beliefs about restricting false information on social media (%)



- Social media companies should take steps to restrict false information online, even if it limits people from freely publishing or accessing information
- People's freedom to publish and access information should be protected, even if it means false information can also be published on social media

[Q30] Which comes closer to your own view - even if neither is exactly right? [Base: n= 2,003]

However, beliefs about restricting false information on social media varied by demographics and other characteristics (see **table 4.3**). Women, older people and regional residents were more likely to believe the government should take steps to restrict false information online. In contrast, those with tertiary qualifications (68%) and prior media literacy education (67%) were less likely to support restrictions if they limited people’s freedom to publish compared to 72% of those without tertiary qualifications and 73% of those without media literacy education. Middle income earners (73%) were more likely to believe the government should take steps to restrict false information than low-income earners (64%) and high-income earners (69%).

Left-leaning (72%) or centrist (71%) respondents were more likely to support restrictions than right-leaning respondents (62%). Support also varied by political efficacy. Those with confidence in the political system (73%) were more likely to support restrictions than those with low confidence (67%). In contrast, respondents with high personal political confidence (69%) were slightly less likely to support restrictions than those with low political confidence (71%).

In other words, the public favours actions to restrict false information by both government (70%) and platforms (75%) (see **figure 4.7**), but support is not uniform – it is lower among right-leaning, tertiary-educated, and media literacy trained respondents.

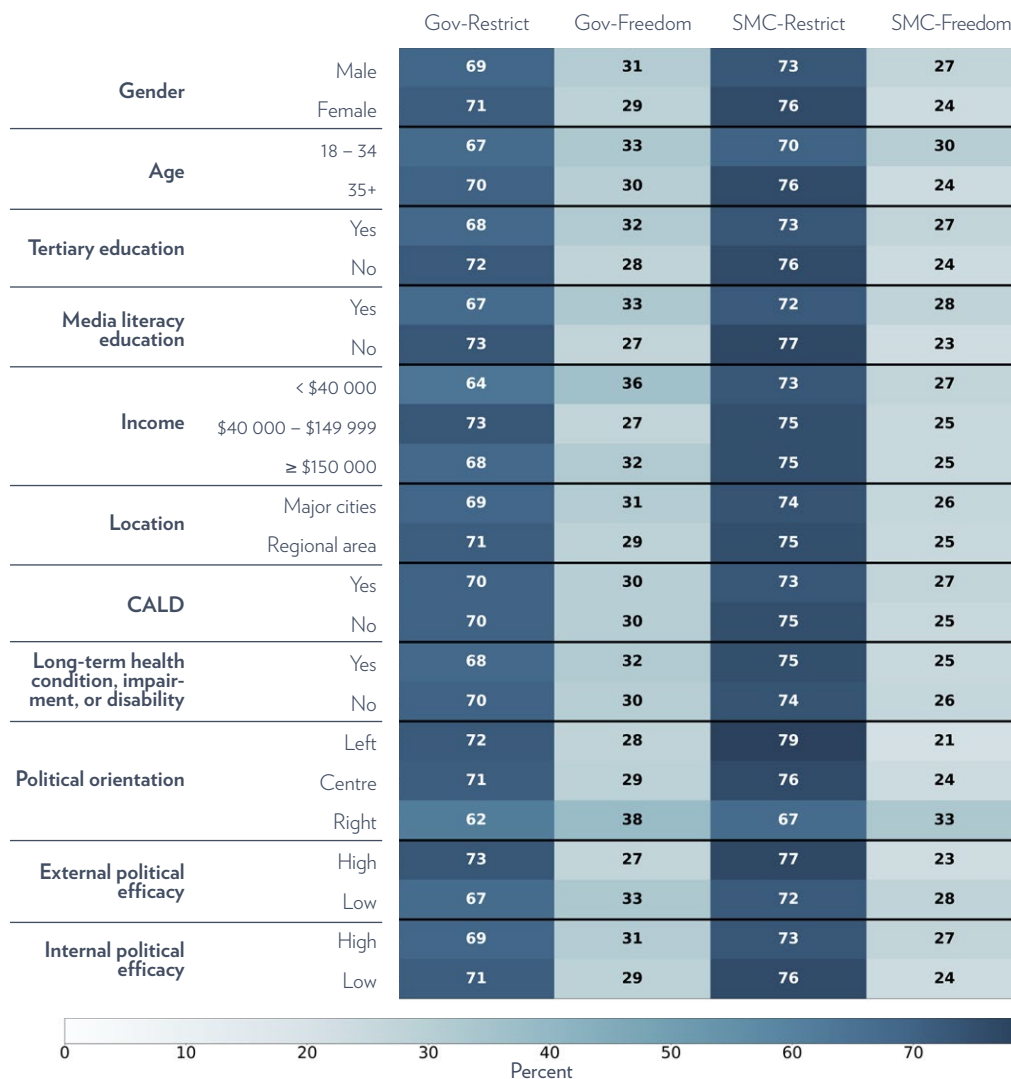
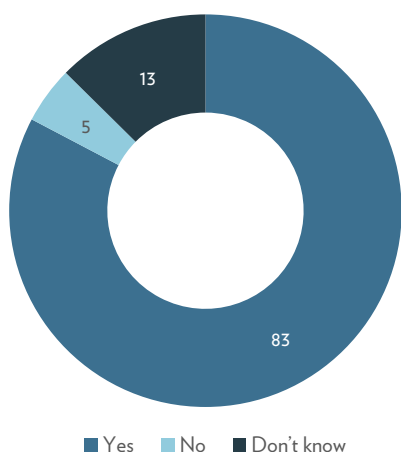


Table 4.3 : Beliefs about restricting false information on social media by demographics (%)

There is a strong appetite for truth in political advertising laws

We asked respondents if they supported introducing truth in political advertising laws nationwide. The vast majority (83%) expressed support for this proposition, while only 5% said such regulations were not needed (see **figure 4.8**).

► **Figure 4.8:**
Support for truth in political advertising laws (%)



[Q31] Some states in Australia have truth in political advertising laws. Do you think similar regulations are needed nationwide? [Base: n = 2,003]

Older respondents, high-income earners and regional residents were more likely to support truth in political advertising laws (see **table 4.4**). Non-CALD respondents were slightly more supportive than CALD respondents, and those with a long-term health condition, impairment or disability were also more likely to say such regulations were needed. By contrast, there was little difference by gender or education.

Left-leaning respondents (90%) were more likely to support such regulations than those with centrist (84%) or right-leaning orientations (82%).

Support also varied slightly by political efficacy. Those with high personal political confidence (86%) were more likely to support such laws than those with low internal political efficacy (78%) whereas respondents with high confidence in government (81%) were slightly less supportive than those with low confidence (84%).

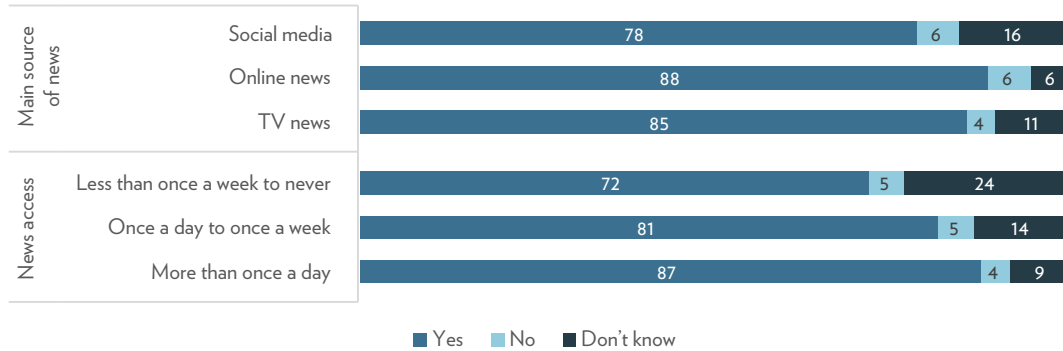
▼ **Table 4.4 :**

Support for truth in political advertising laws by demographics (%)

Demographic	Yes (%)
Gender	
Male	83
Female	83
Age	
18-34	79
35 and over	84
Tertiary education	
Yes	83
No	82
Media - literacy education	
Yes	83
No	83
Income (annual household)	
< \$40 000	82
\$40 000 - \$149 999	83
≥ \$150 000	87
Location	
Major cities	81
Regional area	88
CALD	
Yes	83
No	85
Long-term health condition, impairment, or disability	
Yes	88
No	82
Political orientation	
Left	90
Centre	84
Right	82
External political efficacy	
High	81
Low	84
Internal political efficacy	
High	86
Low	78

Levels of news consumption also played a significant role in shaping respondent's views about the need for truth in political advertising laws. Heavy news users (87%) were much more likely than light or non-users (72%) to support introducing political advertising regulations

nationwide. Support was also higher among those who mainly accessed news through established platforms such as TV (85%) and online news websites (88%) compared to 78% of those who relied on social media.



◀ **Figure 4.9:**

Support for truth in political advertising laws by news access and main source of news (%)

Interviewees' views on misinformation regulation

Some interviewees were concerned that misinformation had the capacity to degrade the overall political and information environment and, as such, it was a high priority to address.

“ Considering it's so easy for foreign interference to happen online, like, we have definitive evidence of Russian and Chinese like, almost like hubs where they just churn out misinformation to try and sow division, especially in the recent US elections. So, I think to see that happen in Australia would be very bad, and where, [...] if we got to an environment such as the UK and the US have right now where [...] it's so polarised and there aren't really swing voters anymore. [...] I think that's when misinformation kind of pushes people towards like radicalisation.

– DK6, Female, Late teens ”

There were a mix of views, but most respondents agreed that individuals, educational institutions, platforms, and governments were all responsible for addressing misinformation.

“ If, as much as possible, we're starting with our younger people, and we're raising the standard of their ability to think critically, then it's perhaps a better long-term solution.

– DK8, Male, 30s ”

“ I think that social media should be a little bit more careful and should monitor more carefully particularly when it comes to young people. They can be swayed very easily because they haven't got the background, usually don't have the background information that they need to make a decision that's right for them.

– DS6, Female, 60s ”

“ It's something that you know should be taught very early in schools. Learning how to disseminate information and be able to have a critical mind.

– GL2, Male, 30s ”

When asked about truth in political advertising laws, most interviewees were in favour.

“ I hope they do something about truth in advertising. I think that would be good. It'd be nice to be able to trust something for a change. God! Even AI. Like you don't know deep fakes like, what's real anymore. So you know, if that can bring some normality to the space, then I think that's fantastic.

– WR6, Female, 50s ”

However, some expressed scepticism that politicians could or would implement such laws. Some of this scepticism appeared to derive from low levels of external political efficacy and the perception that politicians were not acting in the public's best interests.

“ From a personal perspective, they're [politicians] assuming I'm an idiot or the broader reading group is susceptible. And I think it's just frustrating that anybody believes that achieves anything other than distrust.

– DK5, Male, 60s ”

“ Well, technically, the government should take a central stage [in addressing misinformation], but they're the perpetrators of it. So, it's like turning around and saying to the people that actively do it.

– GL2, Male, 30s ”

This lack of trust in those in power meant that many interviewees were not confident regulation could address the situation.

Summary

This chapter reveals three-quarters of respondents shared a high degree of concern about the presence of political misinformation during the 2025 federal election. While there is some variation between demographic groups, key distinctions were found based on gender, age and education. Younger men and the highly educated are much more concerned about it than younger women and people with lower levels of education. Importantly, people who had received media literacy training expressed more concern about misinformation than those who hadn't (40% vs 29%). This group with media literacy education also agreed more strongly that there is a need for adult media literacy training (77% vs 62%).

While the findings reveal that levels of concern about election misinformation are high, it is much more worrying that it is lower among groups in society who are less educated and haven't had any media literacy training. This group has lower interest in politics and does not feel confident in either the government or their own political ability, and that is the worry.

Regardless, seventy percent agreed there was a need to improve adult media literacy. The need was most strongly identified by respondents who had already received some media literacy training. This is good news, because they can see the benefit in it. The challenge is in encouraging people who do not know that they need it to embrace the opportunity when and if it arises.

In the meantime, the study clearly reveals a strong desire from the public for the government and digital platforms to clean up online misinformation. The vast majority say they want to see government and social media companies restrict false information on social media, even if that means limiting freedom of publication and access to information. This is important because legislative attempts in Australia to reduce misinformation online have been thwarted partly due to concerns about potential impacts on free speech. Based on the findings in this report, the Australian public is prepared to wear that cost in exchange for a more reliable online information environment.

In addition, there continues to be a strong appetite for truth in political advertising laws with 83% of respondents supporting their introduction nationally. This reflects falling public trust in politics and politicians not delivering what they promise. With media literacy, misinformation and truth in political advertising laws on the government's agenda, the data in this chapter provides evidence of strong public support for intervention.

UNPACKING ELECTION MISINFORMATION:
Australians' experiences of news and information about
the 2025 federal election

Produced by the News & Media Research Centre at
the University of Canberra. Information in this report
is current as of October 2025.

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