

Big Tech, Social Media & Society

Audience survey measuring beliefs, exposure,
and preferences

PREPARED FOR:

Luminate

PREPARED BY:

The Media Impact Project

This presentation is based on research funded by Luminate. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of Luminate.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Overview

Objectives:

- To investigate news and entertainment consumption, preferences, and viewing motives in the three countries: the US, the UK, France.
- To gauge public awareness of the potential harms of social media, actions that could reduce harms, and appetite for depictions of these topics in news and entertainment.

Research questions:

1. Do people believe social media is more of a benefit or a threat, and what are the specific harms?
2. What media content are audiences consuming, and how much?
3. Does media cover the potential harms of social media and changes that could reduce harm?
4. What are audiences' appetites for content that addresses these issues and concerns?

To address these research questions, the USC Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project (MIP) — with support from Luminate Strategic Initiatives — conducted a multi-regional online survey of 1500 adults about news, entertainment, and social media.

Methods

We developed and conducted an audience attitudes survey to gauge public awareness of the potential harms of social media, actions that could reduce harms, and appetite for depictions of these topics in news and entertainment.

Sample: The Media Impact Project worked with GeoPoll to recruit a representative sample of adults 18+ in France, the UK, and the US to participate in an online survey.

- Data were collected from February 1st to 17th, 2025.
- Reported findings are based on responses from 500 respondents in each country.
- Respondents were matched to each country's population proportions for gender, age, and region.

NOTE: Media "consumption" refers to the types of media consumed; "habits" includes the amount of time or frequency engaging with media.



KEY FINDINGS

Beliefs about Social Media

Most people believe social media platforms to be beneficial or equally a benefit and a threat.

Although, across countries a substantial number of respondents believe social media poses more of a threat:

- For civil society (40%)
- For marginalized groups (38%)
- For social cohesion (33%)
- For their country's governance (24%)
- For their local community (22%)
- For their loved ones (22%)
- For themselves (19%)

Overall, perception of social media as a threat is greater in France than in the US or the UK.

Harms Associated with Social Media

Overall, a majority of respondents across countries believe social media contributes at least a little to:

- Youths' mental health problems (94%)
- Adults' mental health problems (92%)
- Division in society (93%)
- Dangerous fads (93%)
- A breakdown in our shared sense of reality (92%)
- Self-harming behaviors (91%)
- Anger (91%)
- Discrimination (90%)
- Loneliness (88%)
- The silencing of individuals (87%)
- The silencing of ideas (85%)

Respondents in France and the UK feel more strongly that social media contributes to discrimination than respondents from the US.

More people in the US and France believe that it contributes to loneliness than in the UK.

Media Consumption and Exposure

Each day, a majority of respondents across countries spend an hour or more watching scripted/fictional TV shows (71%) and/or movies (73%)

A minority of respondents across countries spend an hour or more reading fiction (33%) and/or non-fiction (33%)

A majority have heard about potential harms of social media from:

- TV news / talk shows (88%)
- Fictional TV shows/films (81%)
- Newspapers / news magazines (81%)

Most respondents across countries (87%) have discussed the potential harms of social media (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, X/Twitter) in conversations with friends, family, and/or colleagues or heard about it via social media within the past year.

Exposure to Media Coverage of Harms

Most respondents have seen or heard news coverage of the potential harms of social media to children (60%) and young adults (57%), as well as harms to:

- society (45%)
- women (37%)
- marginalized groups (29%)
- Only 19% of respondents have seen or heard no news coverage of potential harms to any groups.

Less than half have seen or heard news coverage of harm-reduction actions that could be taken by:

- the government (43%)
- individuals (42%)
- technology companies (36%)
- Only 27% had seen or heard no news coverage of harm reduction actions.

Media Coverage of Harms

A majority have seen fictional TV shows dramatize these topics at least occasionally within the past year. Potential harms of social media were:

- on individuals (69%)
- on society (67%)
- to elections (57%)

Actions that can be taken to reduce the potential harms of social media usage by:

- individuals (58%)
- technology corporations (54%)
- the government (53%)

Respondents provide examples of the types of fictional depictions of social media harms they found informative, memorable, or inspiring. Examples varied by country, but most fell into a few overarching themes.

Their storyline ideas focused on:

- Manipulation, Data Exploitation & Surveillance
- Mental Health, Teen Vulnerability & Struggles, Suicide
- Dangers of Online Deception, Harassment, Cyberbullying
- Reality TV, Toxicity, Celebrity Culture, & Obsession
- Dystopian Futures, Algorithmic Control, Intrusion
- Disinformation, Negative Media Influence

Media Coverage of Harms: Demographic Differences

A majority of respondents would be somewhat to extremely interested in seeing or hearing news coverage about potential harms of social media on:

- Children and young adults (71%)
- Women and girls (67%)
- Society (67%)
- Elections (57%)
- Marginalized groups (53%)

Respondents expressed the most interest in watching stories about the potential harms of social media in dramatic TV shows and films, including legal dramas/police procedurals, and mysteries/thrillers.

Respondents described stories related to social media/ technology corporations that they would like to see told in a scripted/fictional TV show or film, suggestions focused on:

- Corporate Manipulation & Government Influence
- Futuristic Digital Worlds and Social Connectivity
- Dangers (e.g., Addiction, Harassment, Bullying, Suicide)
- Corporate and Government Influence on Social Media

Media Coverage of Harms: Demographic Differences

Storylines showcasing harms associated with social media and characters fighting some of the causes were developed to see what might appeal to potential audiences.

The highest overall number of respondents were very or extremely interested in the whistleblower storyline, followed closely by the young female politician and the grieving father.

Across countries, interest in all of the proposed storylines was greater for:

- Younger respondents
- More politically liberal respondents

Content Creators, such as producers and screenwriters could appeal to audiences by:

- Balancing dark themes with human connections
- Featuring compelling characters at social media companies
- Creating cautionary tales showing negative impacts of social media and other technologies (e.g., A.I.)
- Spotlighting vulnerable populations or underrepresented voices



DETAILED FINDINGS:

What did we learn about France, the UK, and the US regarding their:

- Beliefs about benefits and/or threats of social media, and specific harms
- Media consumption and habits
- Media exposure of potential harms and changes to reduce them
- Appetite for content addressing these issues



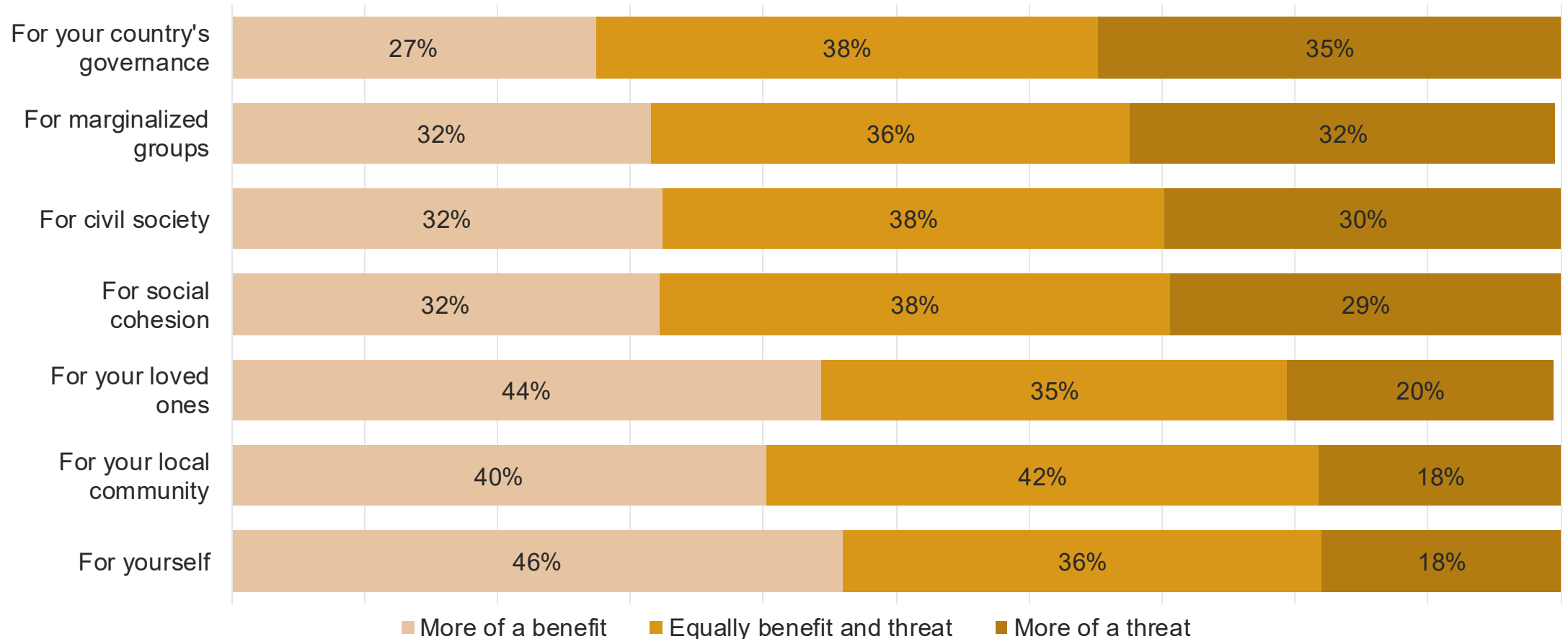
DETAILED FINDINGS

RQ1: DO PEOPLE BELIEVE SOCIAL MEDIA IS MORE OF A BENEFIT OR A THREAT & WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC HARMS?

US BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

A majority of US respondents believe social media platforms are more of a benefit or equally a benefit and threat. The greatest perceived threat is to US government by over one-third of respondents. Over thirty percent see it more as a threat to marginalized groups and for civil society.

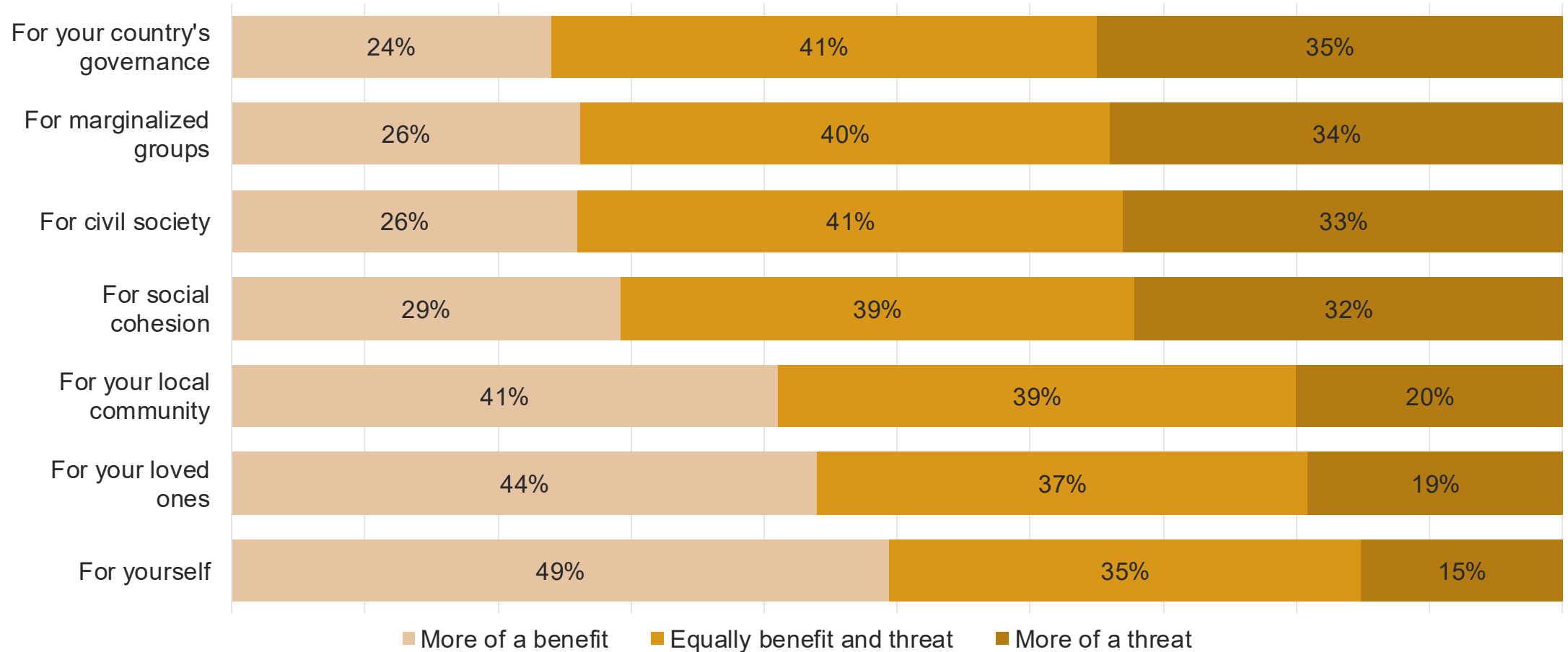
The US



UK BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

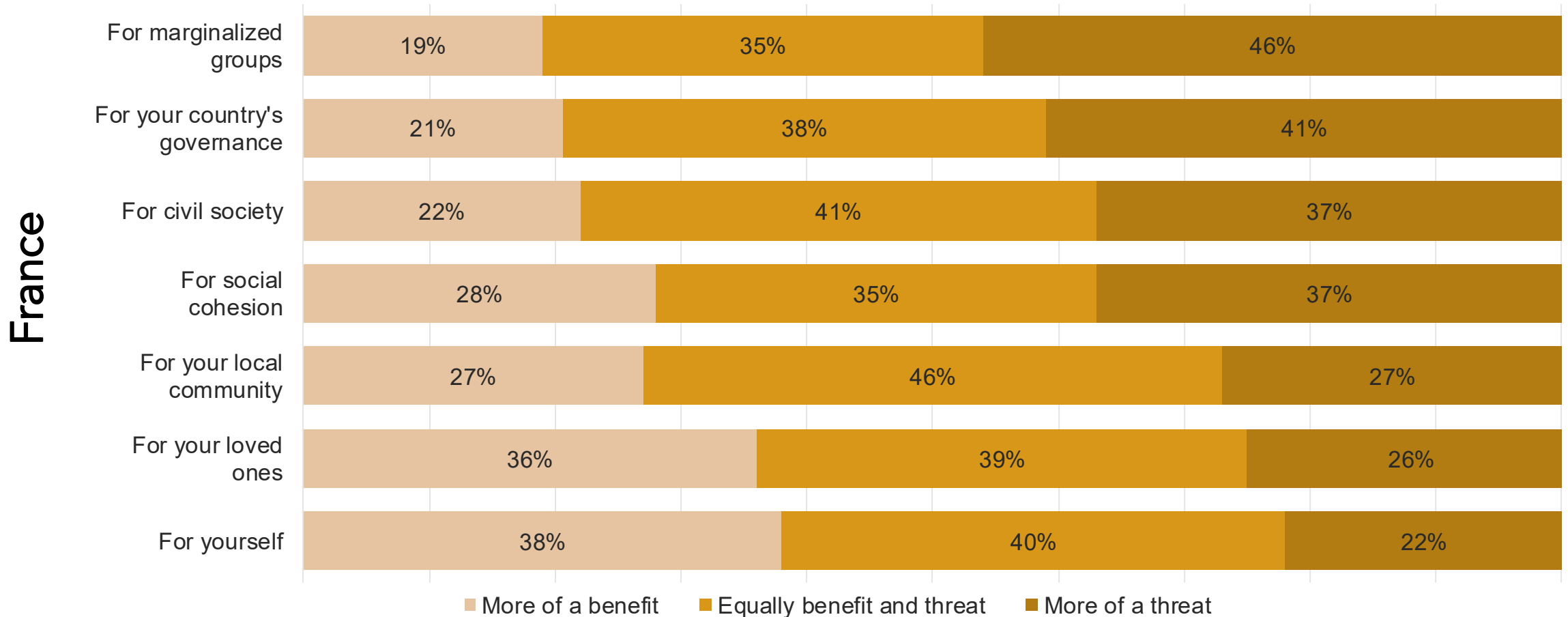
A majority of UK respondents believe social media platforms are more of a benefit or equally benefit and threat. One-third or more perceive it as a threat to UK governance, marginalized groups, and for civil society. Twenty percent or less see it more as a threat to their local communities, their loved ones, and for themselves.

The UK



FRENCH BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

A majority of French respondents believe social media platforms are more of a benefit or equally benefit and threat. Over forty percent perceive it as a threat to marginalized groups, and to French governance; over one-third see it as a threat for civil society and social cohesion. Less than thirty percent see social media as a threat to their local communities, their loved ones, and for themselves.



SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS

A majority of respondents in all countries believe social media contributes at least somewhat to division in society, discrimination, and anger. Respondents in France and the UK feel more strongly that social media contributes to discrimination than respondents from the US.

The US

Division in society

9% 10% 23% 25% 33%

Discrimination

13% 17% 24% 24% 24%

Anger

11% 13% 24% 23% 29%

The UK

Division in society

6% 15% 27% 25% 27%

Discrimination

8% 15% 24% 29% 25%

Anger

7% 15% 29% 23% 26%

France

Division in society

7% 9% 33% 25% 26%

Discrimination

8% 10% 26% 25% 31%

Anger

10% 14% 29% 26% 22%

Not at all A little Somewhat A moderate amount A great deal

SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS

A majority of respondents in all countries believe social media contributes somewhat to a great deal toward mental health problems, especially for youths.

The US

Youths' mental health problems

8%

11%

23%

27%

31%

Adults' mental health problems

9%

14%

27%

25%

25%

The UK

Youths' mental health problems

5%

9%

23%

26%

36%

Adults' mental health problems

6%

16%

25%

26%

27%

France

Youths' mental health problems

6%

9%

30%

25%

30%

Adults' mental health problems

8%

14%

35%

23%

19%

Not at all A little Somewhat A moderate amount A great deal

SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS

A majority of respondents in all countries believe social media contributes somewhat to a great deal toward loneliness and a breakdown in our shared sense of reality. More people in the US and France believe that it contributes to loneliness than in the UK.

The US

Loneliness

15%

14%

28%

20%

23%

A breakdown in our
shared sense of
reality

10%

11%

30%

23%

26%

The UK

Loneliness

13%

24%

27%

17%

19%

A breakdown in our
shared sense of
reality

7%

15%

27%

27%

25%

France

Loneliness

8%

11%

29%

27%

25%

A breakdown in our
shared sense of
reality

6%

11%

31%

25%

27%

Not at all A little Somewhat A moderate amount A great deal

SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS

A majority of respondents in all countries believe social media contributes somewhat to a great deal toward silencing individuals and ideas. More people believe this in France than in the US or the UK.

The US

The silencing of individuals

16%

15%

25%

23%

22%

The silencing of ideas

17%

13%

31%

20%

18%

The UK

The silencing of individuals

16%

19%

24%

24%

17%

The silencing of ideas

16%

21%

28%

20%

16%

France

The silencing of individuals

8%

16%

35%

23%

17%

The silencing of ideas

12%

15%

42%

19%

13%

Not at all A little Somewhat A moderate amount A great deal

SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS

A majority of respondents in all countries believe social media contributes somewhat to a great deal toward dangerous fads and self-harming behaviors, such as eating disorders and dangerous challenges.

The US

Dangerous fads

10% 12% 25% 22% 32%

Self-harming behaviors

12% 16% 26% 21% 24%

The UK

Dangerous fads

6% 12% 22% 26% 34%

Self-harming behaviors

7% 15% 25% 25% 27%

France

Dangerous fads

6% 12% 28% 23% 31%

Self-harming behaviors

8% 12% 29% 26% 25%

Not at all A little Somewhat A moderate amount A great deal



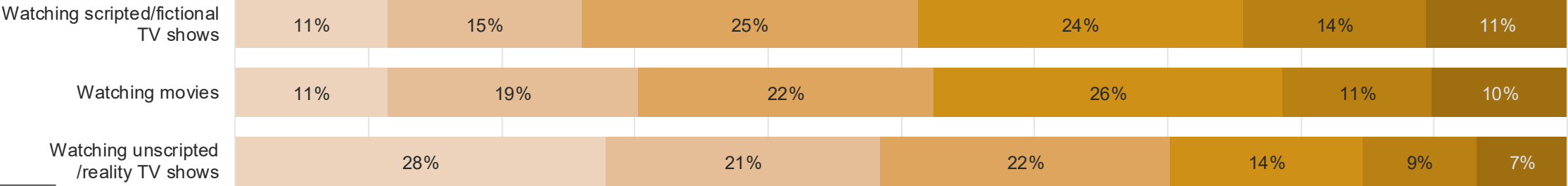
DETAILED FINDINGS

RQ2: WHAT MEDIA CONTENT ARE AUDIENCES CONSUMING AND HOW MUCH?

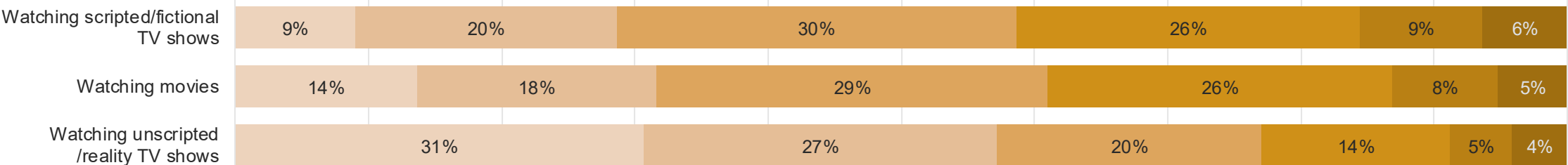
MEDIA HABITS

A majority of respondents across countries spend an hour or more watching fictional TV shows and/or movies each day. Many spend an hour or more watching unscripted TV.

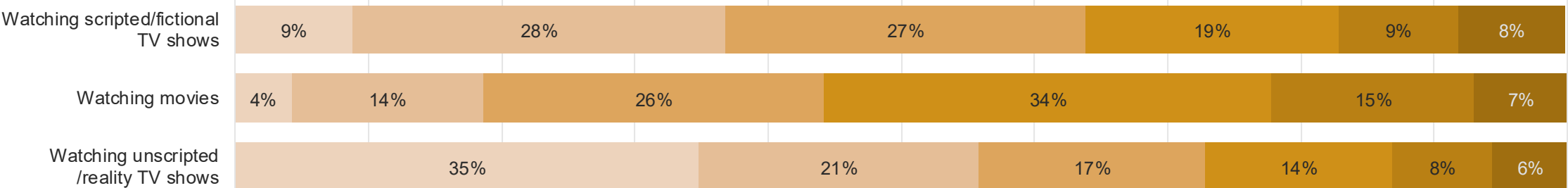
The US



The UK



France

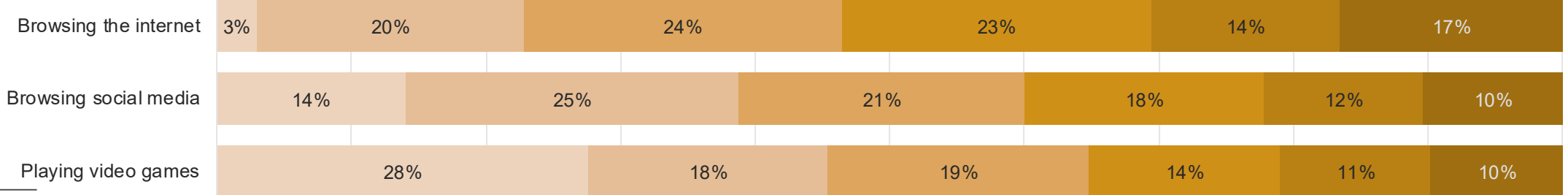


None Less than an hour 1 hour daily 2 hours daily 3 hours daily 4+ hours daily

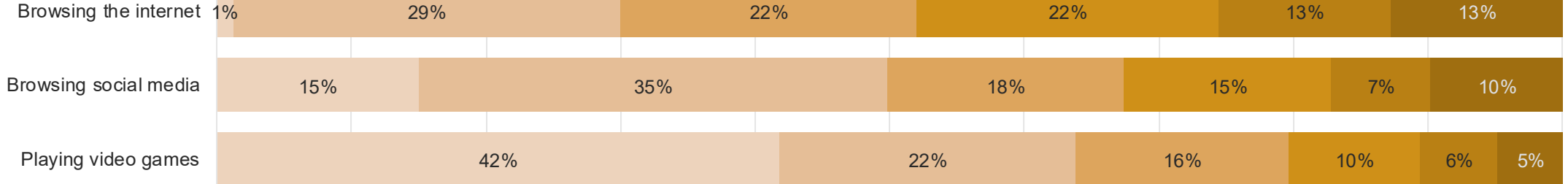
MEDIA HABITS

A majority of respondents across countries spend one hour or more browsing the internet and/or social media each day. A majority of US respondents spend an hour or more playing video games daily. French and US respondents spend more time playing video games than UK respondents.

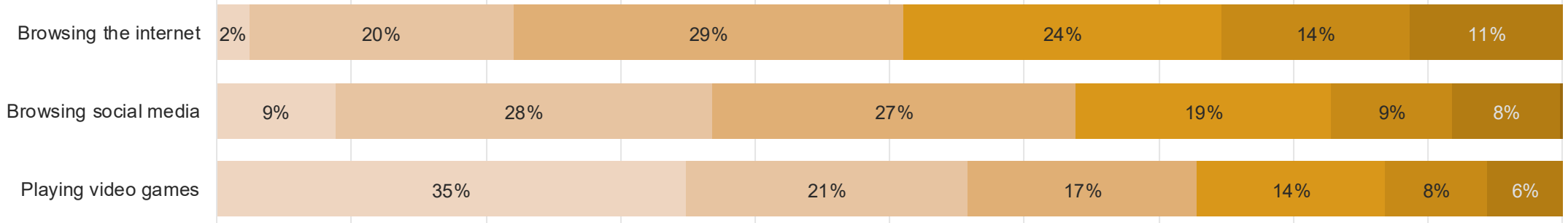
The US



The UK



France



None Less than an hour 1 hour daily 2 hours daily 3 hours daily 4+ hours daily

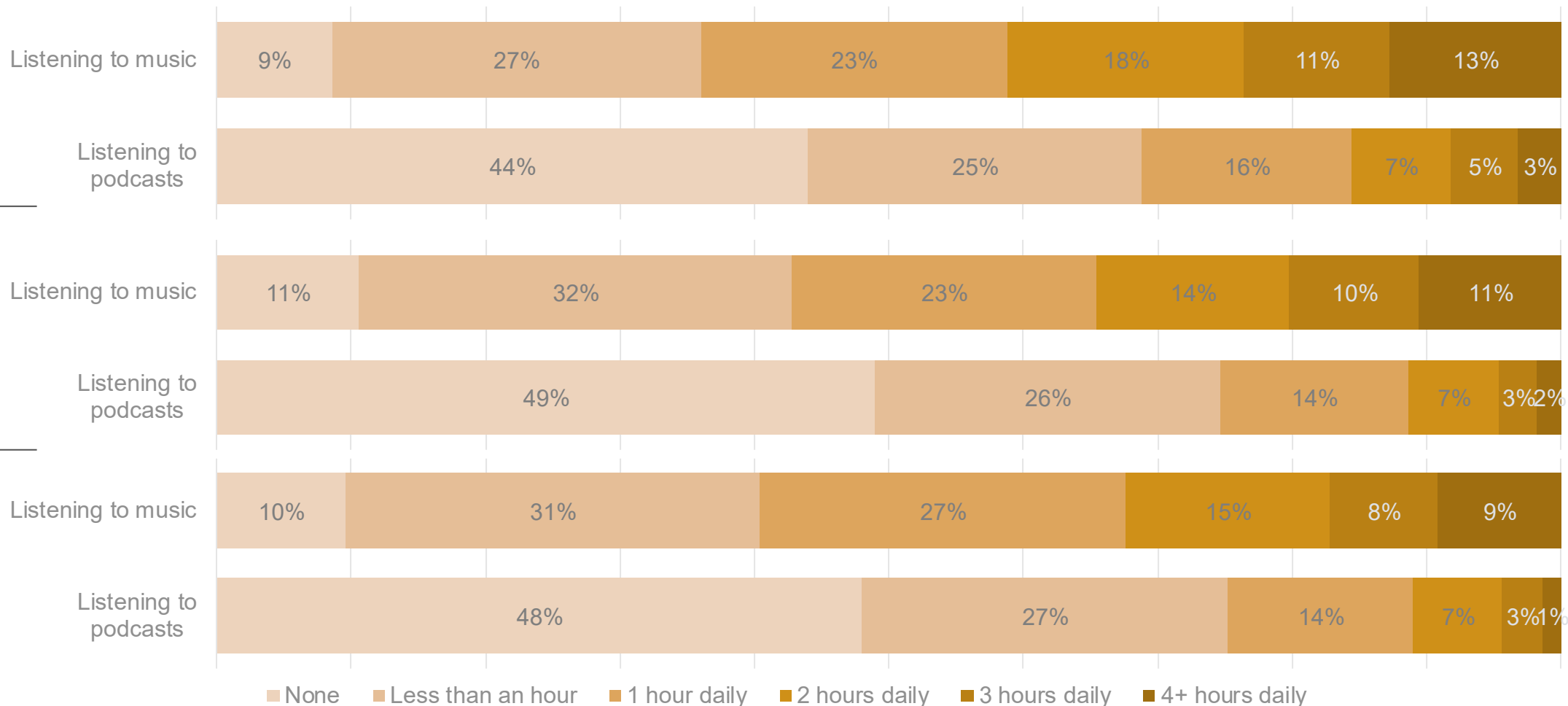
MEDIA HABITS

Many respondents across countries spend an hour or more listening to music each day.
A minority spend an hour or more listening to podcasts.

The US

The UK

France



MEDIA HABITS

A minority of respondents across countries spend an hour or more reading fiction and/or non-fiction daily.

The US

Reading non-fiction books/articles

35%

29%

18%

10%

4%

3%

Reading fictional books/stories

36%

30%

16%

10%

5%

4%

The UK

Reading non-fiction books/articles

35%

35%

18%

7%

3%

2%

Reading fictional books/articles

33%

35%

17%

9%

4%

2%

France

Reading non-fiction books/articles

34%

35%

17%

9%

3%

1%

Reading fictional books/stories

34%

35%

18%

9%

3%

2%

None

Less than an hour

1 hour daily

2 hours daily

3 hours daily

4+ hours daily



DETAILED FINDINGS

RQ3: DOES MEDIA EXPOSE THE POTENTIAL HARMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

What is the current level of exposure to information about potential harms of social media and changes to mitigate these dangers:

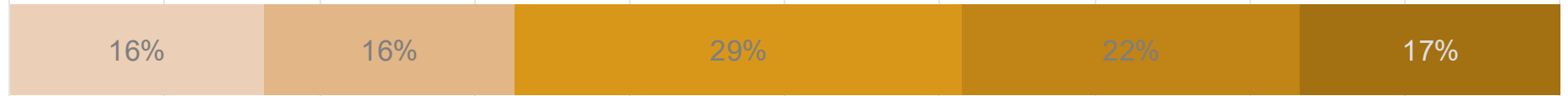
- General topic exposure
- From news media
- From fictional TV shows

TOPIC EXPOSURE

Over 80% of respondents across countries have heard about the potential harms of social media in conversations with friends, family, colleagues or via social media.

The US

Conversations with friends/ family/ and/or colleagues

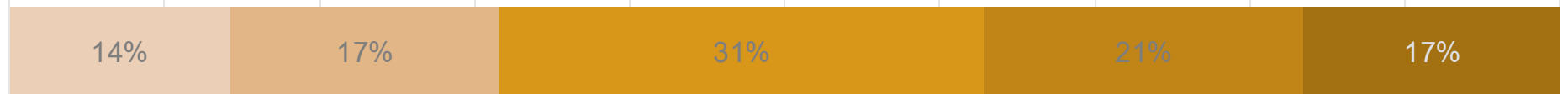


Social media



The UK

Conversations with friends/ family/ and/or colleagues



Social media



France

Conversations with friends/ family/ and/or colleagues



Social media

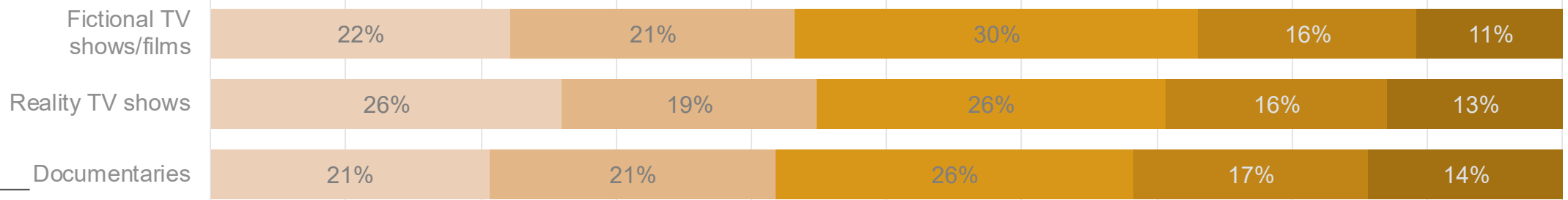


1=Never 2 3 4 5=Very frequently

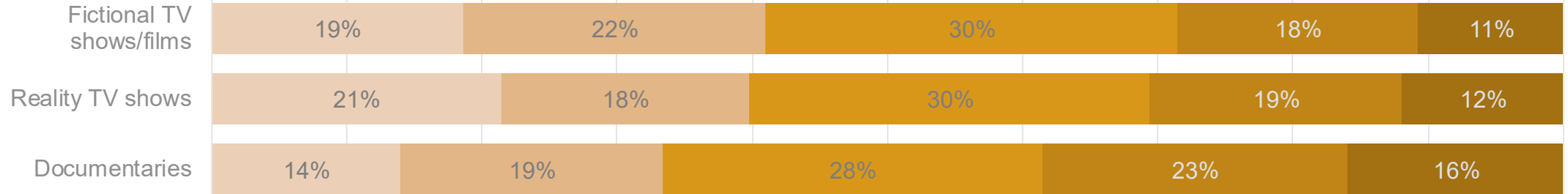
TOPIC EXPOSURE

A majority of respondents across countries have heard about potential harms of social media occasionally to very frequently from fictional and reality TV shows, and documentaries.

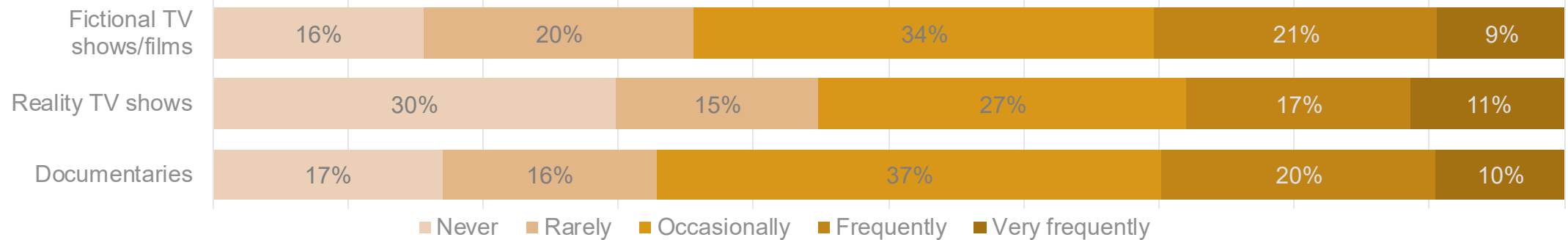
The US



The UK



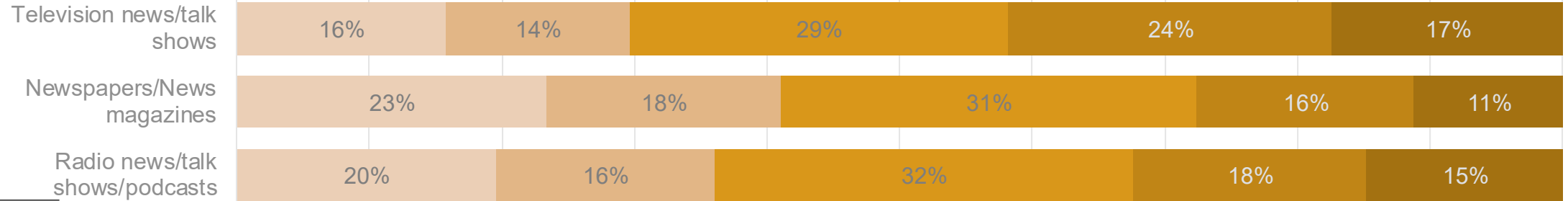
France



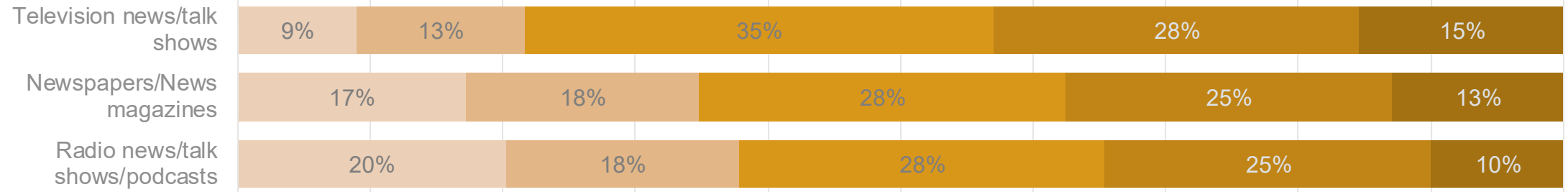
TOPIC EXPOSURE

A majority of respondents across countries have heard about potential harms of social media from newspaper, radio, and TV news sources. Responses indicate the frequency of coverage by TV news and talk shows may be higher in the UK and France than in the US.

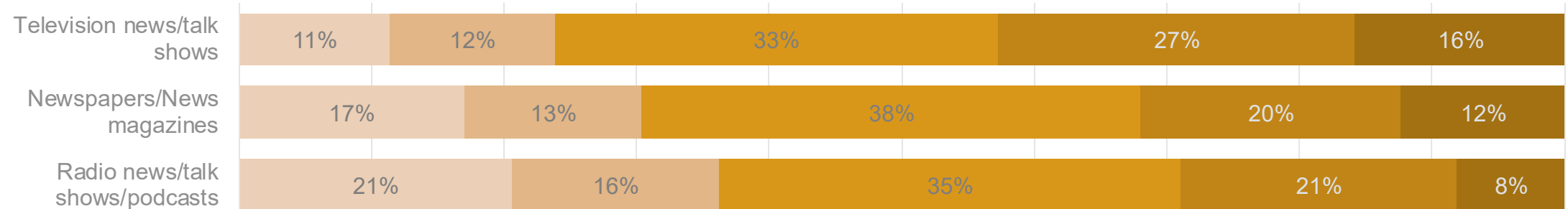
The US



The UK



France

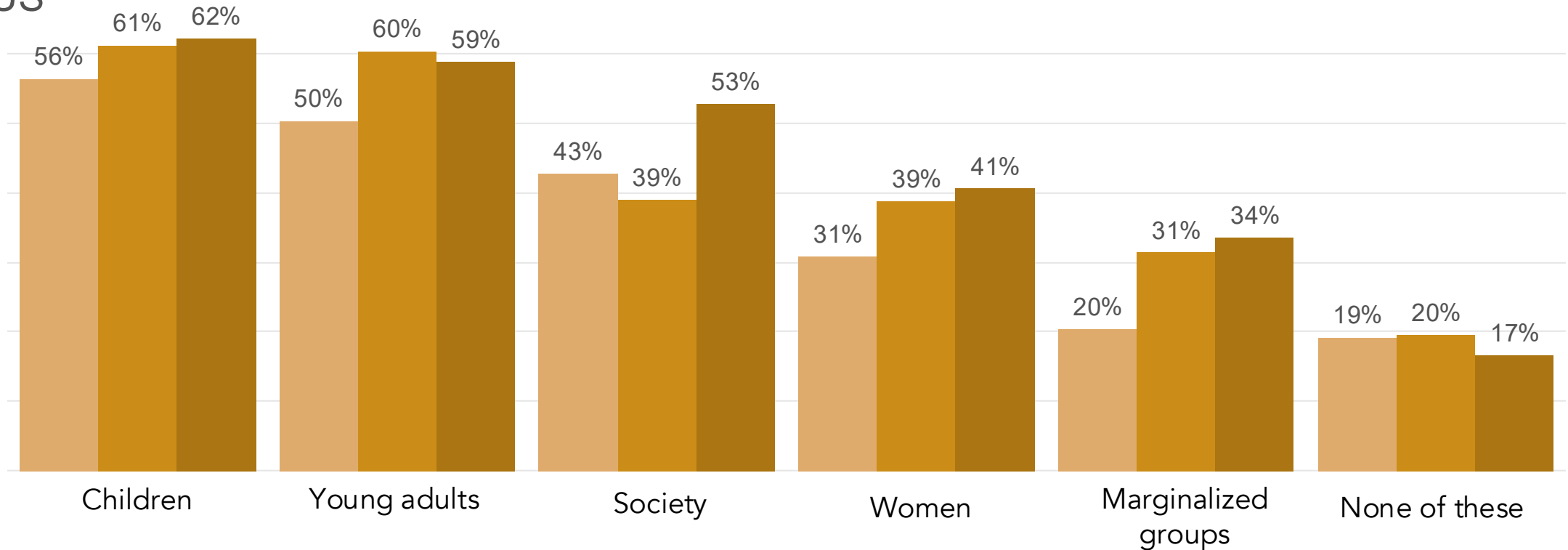


1=Never 2 3 4 5=Very frequently

TOPIC COVERAGE BY NEWS MEDIA

Most respondents have seen or heard coverage of the potential harms of social media to children and young adults. Twenty percent or fewer have seen no coverage of potential harms to any of these groups.

■ France
■ The UK
■ The US



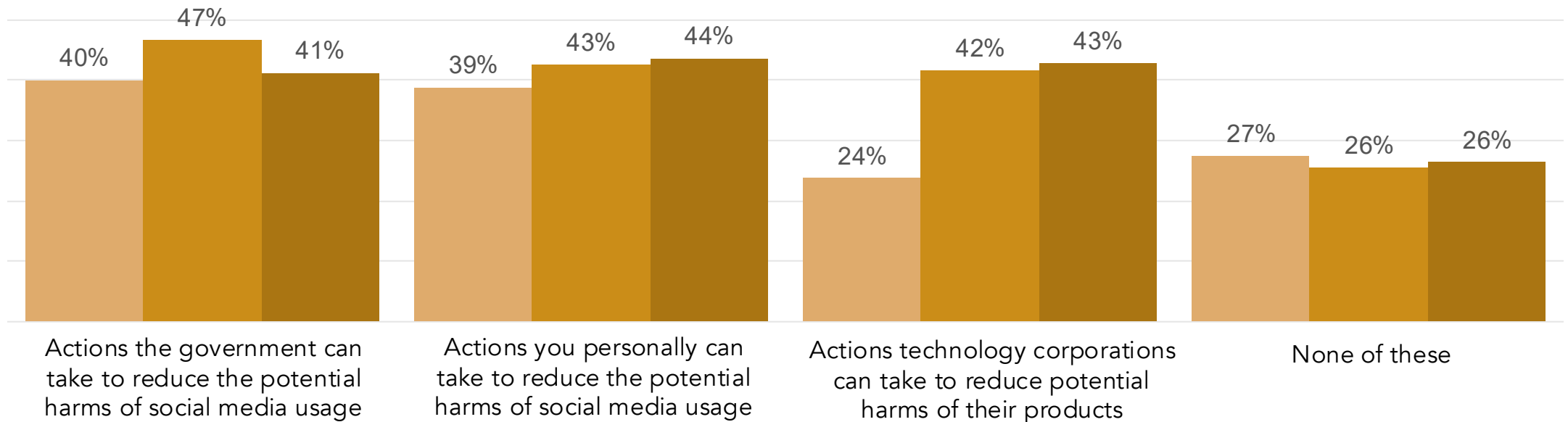
TOPIC COVERAGE BY NEWS MEDIA

Less than half of the respondents have seen or heard coverage of actions that can be taken by government, individuals, or technology corporation to reduce the potential harms of social media. However, just over one-quarter have seen none of these covered.

■ France

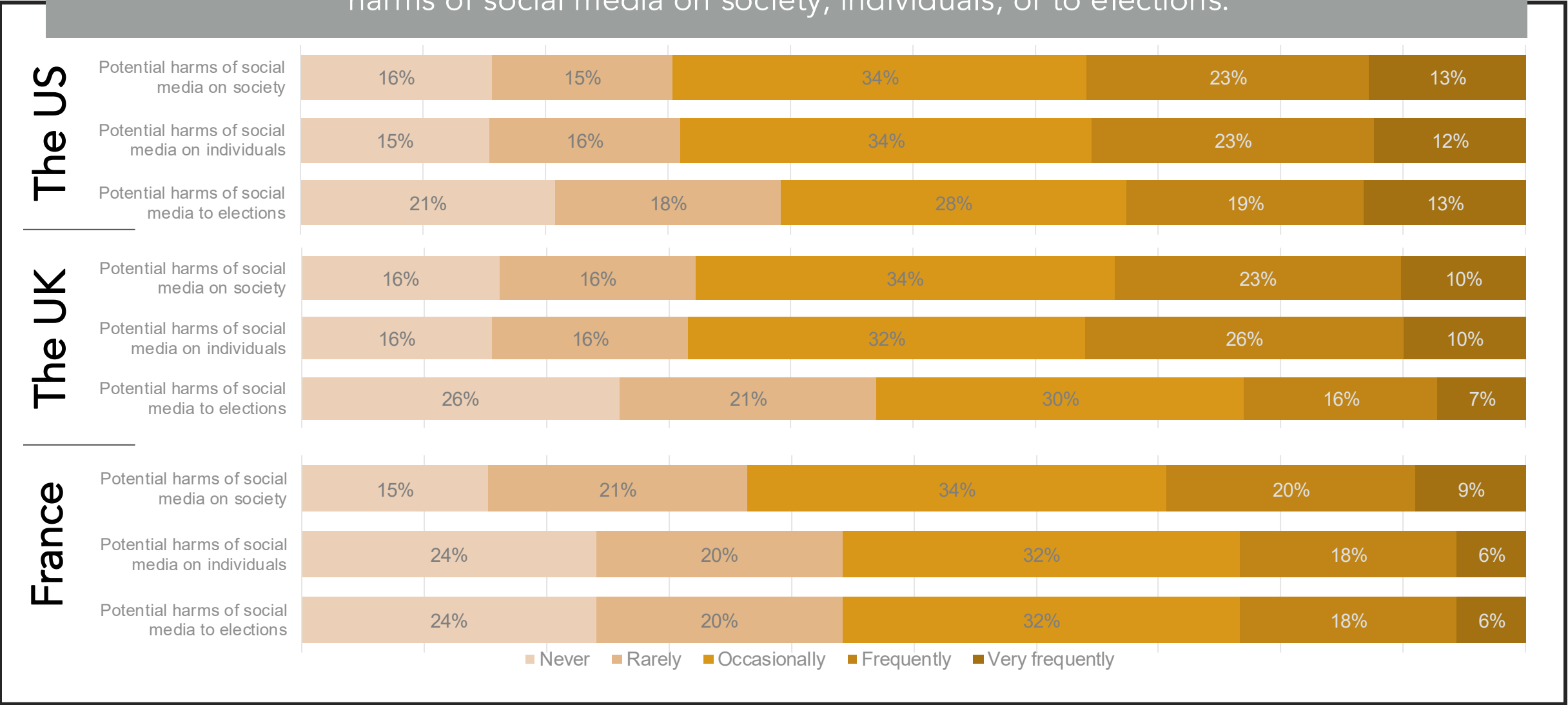
■ The UK

■ The US



TOPIC EXPOSURE FROM FICTIONAL TV SHOWS

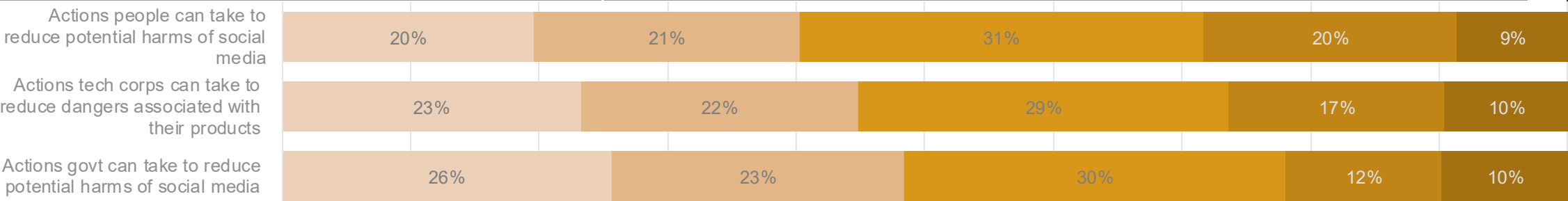
A majority of respondents across countries have seen fictional TV shows dramatize the potential harms of social media on society, individuals, or to elections.



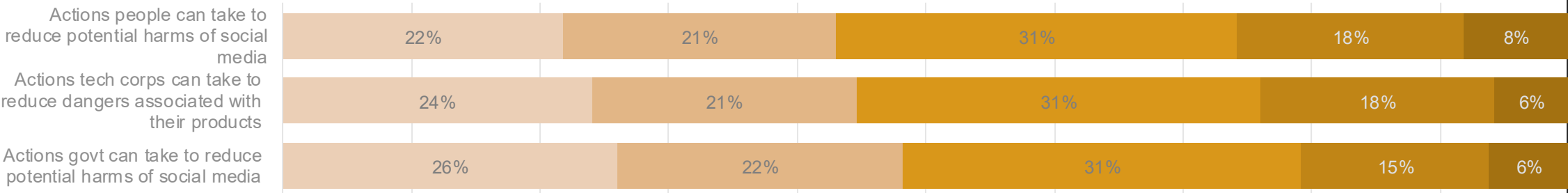
TOPIC EXPOSURE FROM FICTIONAL TV SHOWS

A majority of respondents across countries have at least occasionally seen fictional TV shows dramatize actions technology corporations, individuals, or government can take to reduce potential harms.

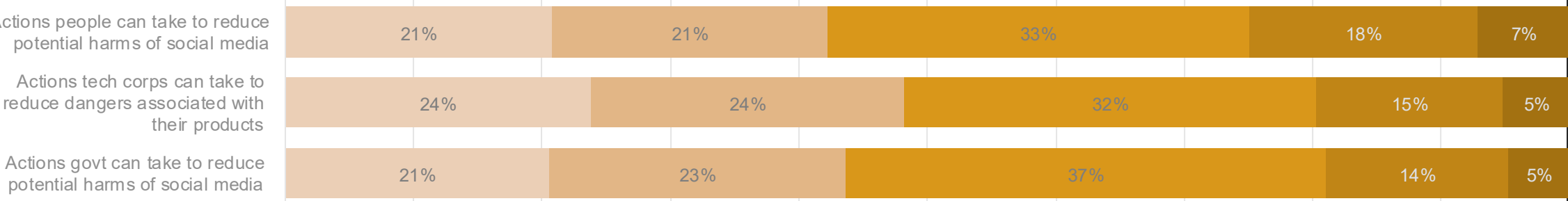
The US



The UK



France



Never Rarely Occasionally Frequently Very frequently



DETAILED FINDINGS

RQ4: WHAT ARE AUDIENCES' APPETITES FOR CONTENT THAT ADDRESSES ISSUES AND CONCERNS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA HARMS?

- What do they like about their favorite TV shows and movies?
- What aspects of these issues would they like to see portrayed?

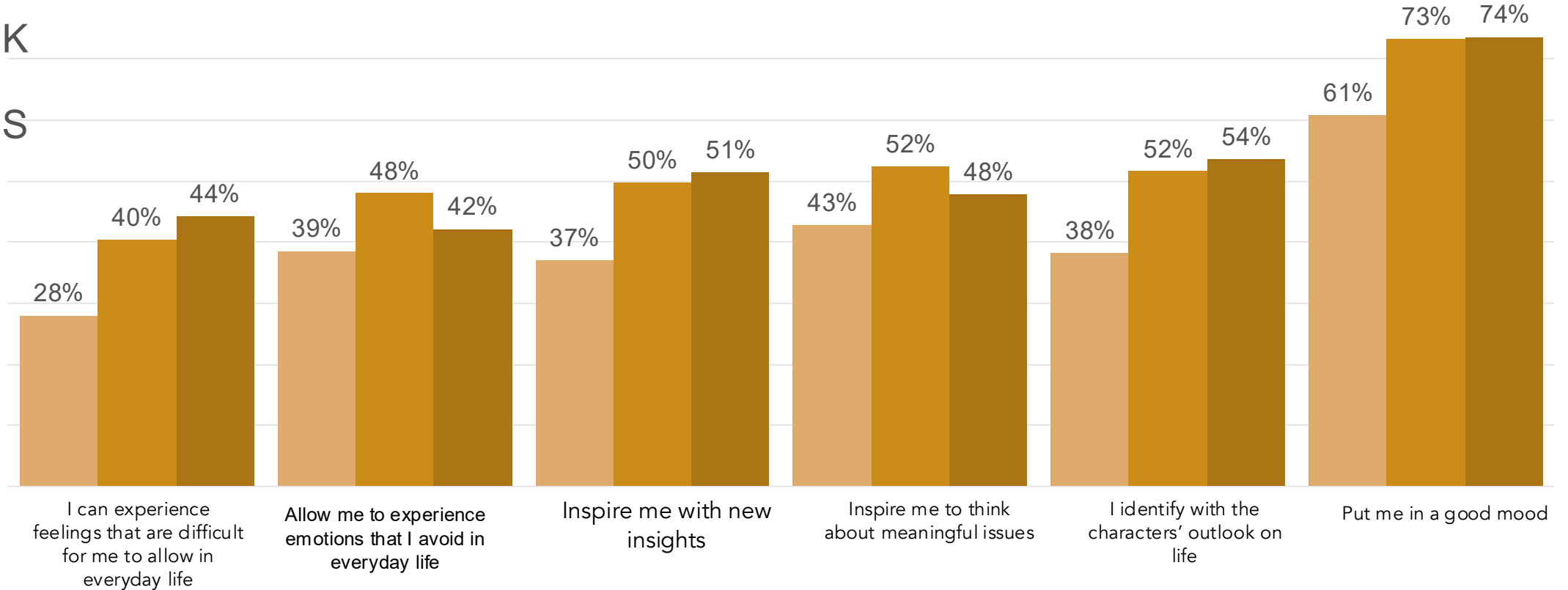
VIEWING MOTIVATIONS

A majority of respondents across countries indicated that watching their favorite TV shows and films puts them in a good mood. Many also like to identify with the characters, and that it inspires them to think about meaningful issues.

■ France

■ The UK

■ The US



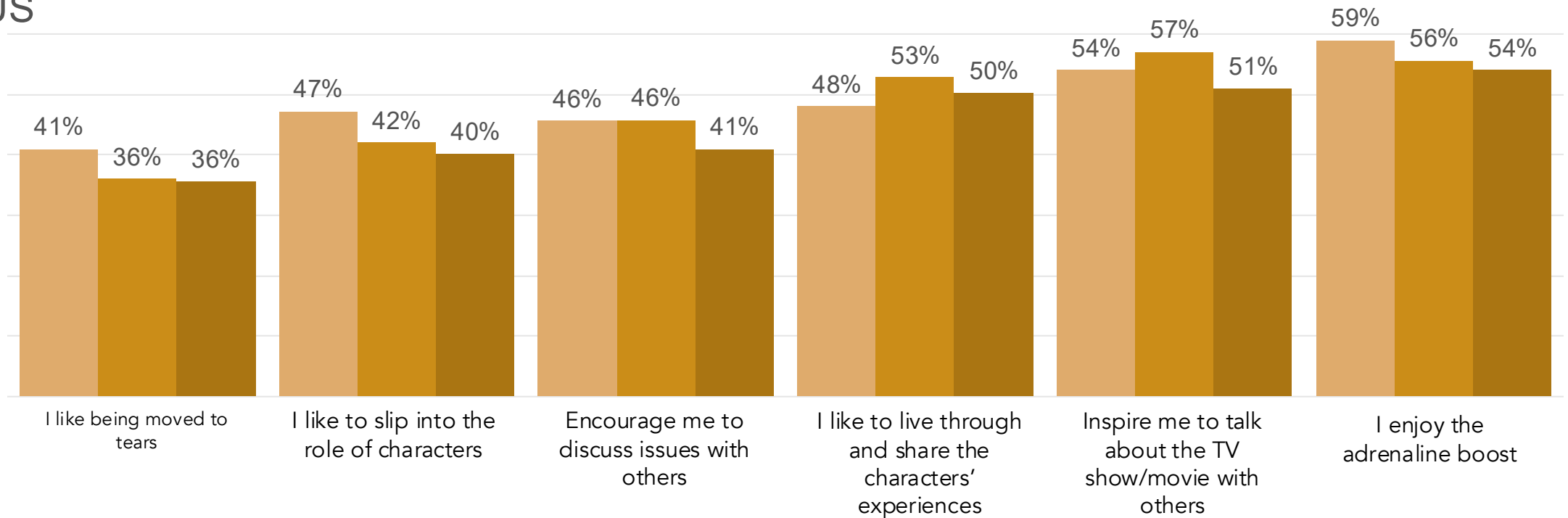
VIEWING MOTIVATIONS

A majority of respondents across countries felt inspired to talk about these programs with others and enjoyed getting an adrenaline boost from watching their favorite TV shows and films.

■ France

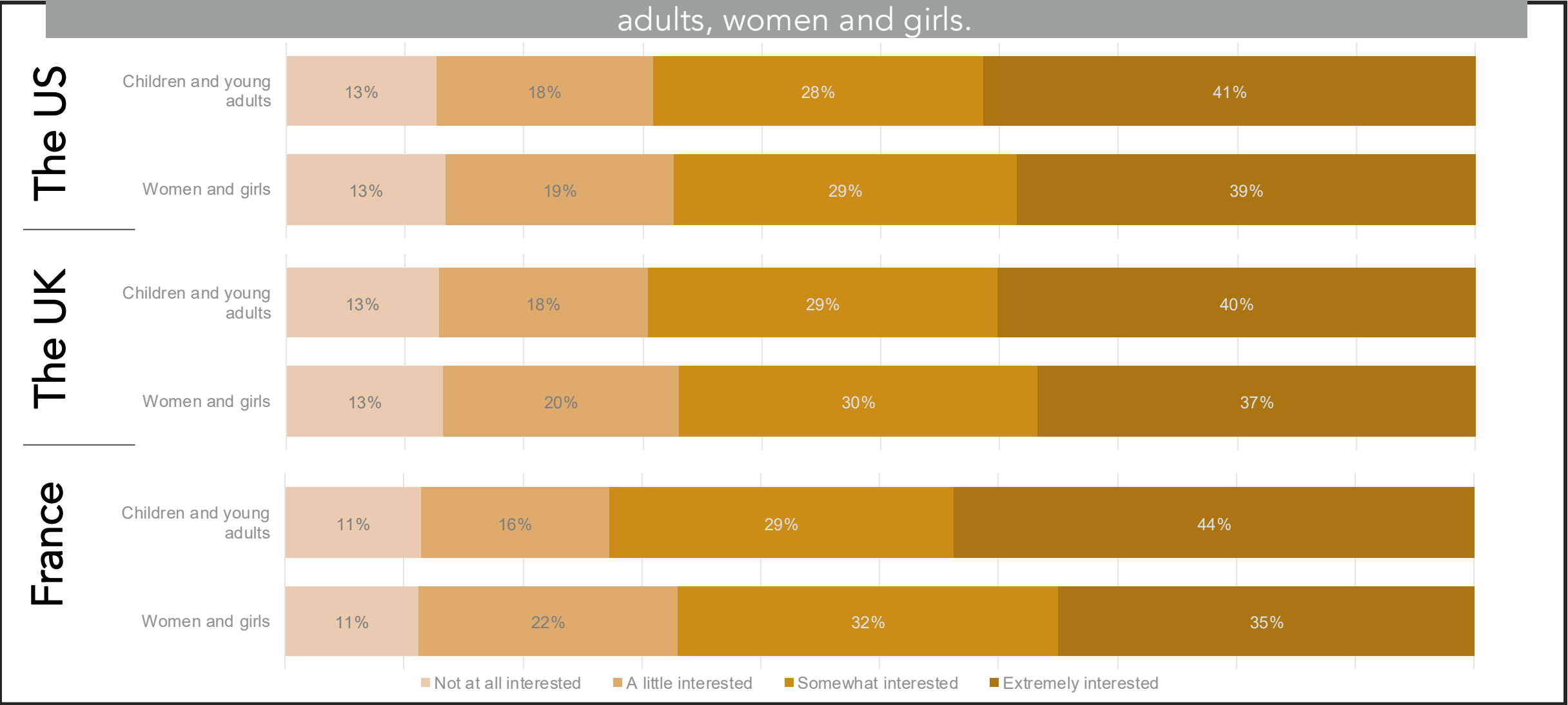
■ The UK

■ The US



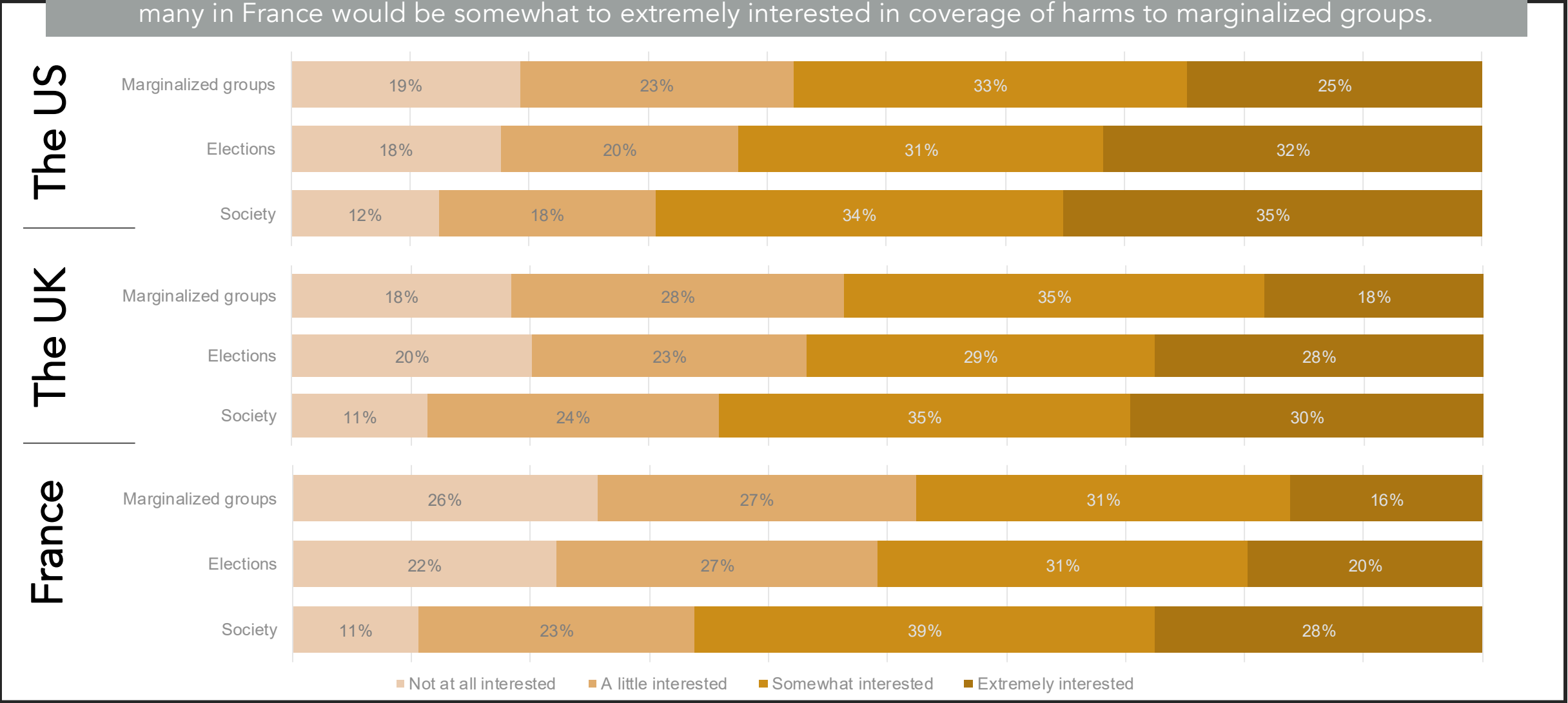
INTEREST IN TOPICAL NEWS COVERAGE

A majority of respondents across countries would be somewhat to extremely interested in seeing or hearing news coverage about potential harms of social media on children, young adults, women and girls.



INTEREST IN TOPICAL NEWS COVERAGE

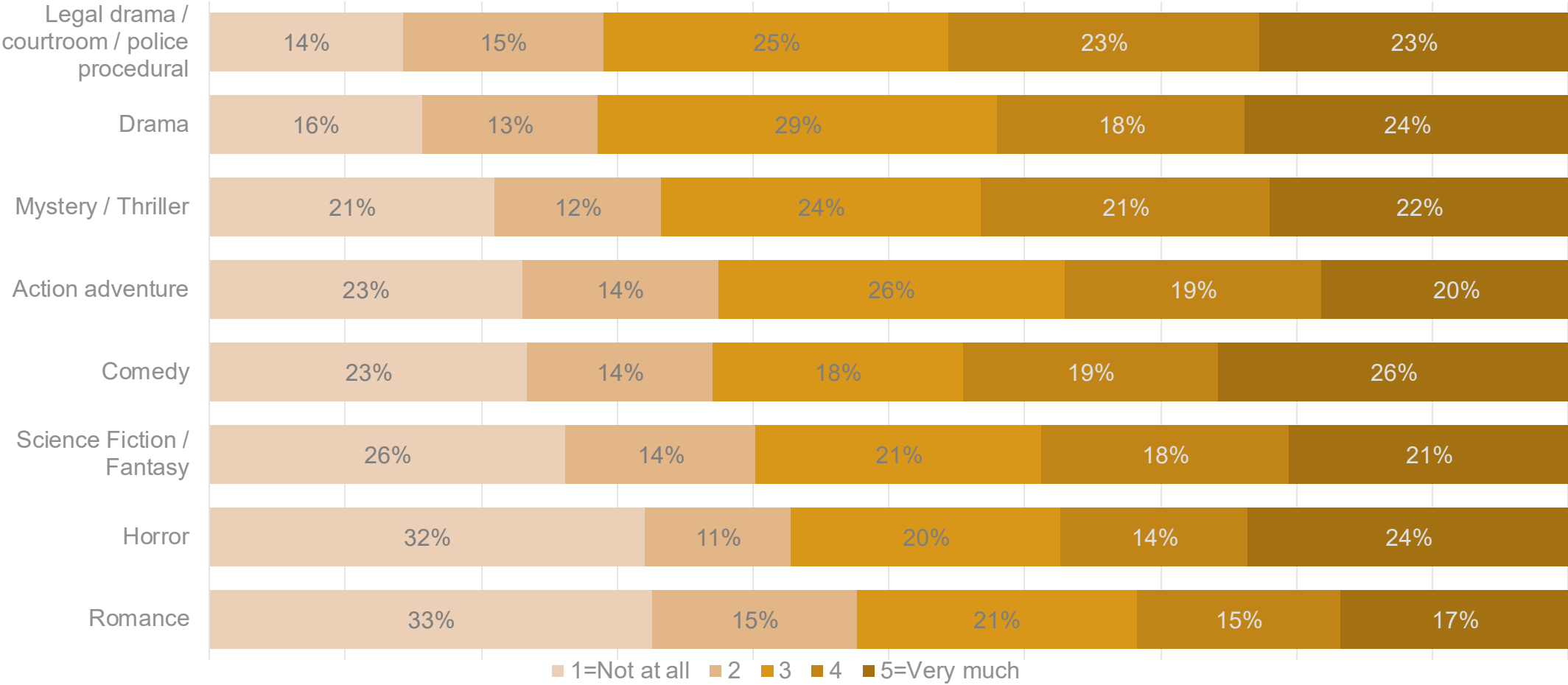
A majority of respondents across countries would be somewhat to extremely interested in seeing or hearing news coverage about potential harms of social media on society and elections. A majority in the US and the UK, and many in France would be somewhat to extremely interested in coverage of harms to marginalized groups.



US INTEREST IN TOPICAL CONTENT BY GENRE

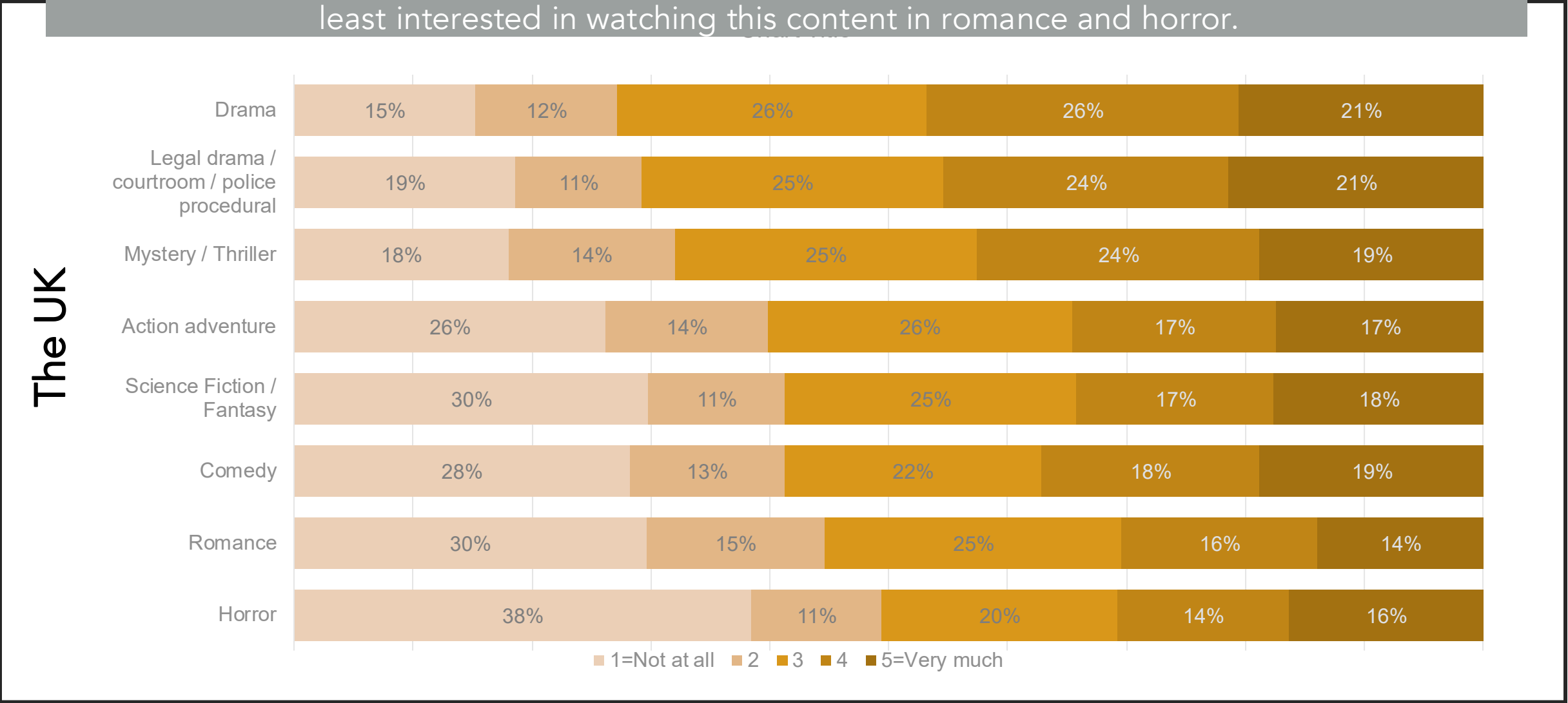
US respondents expressed the most interest in watching stories about the potential harms of social media in legal dramas/police procedurals, and general dramas, followed by mysteries/thrillers. They were least interested in watching this content in horror and romance.

The US



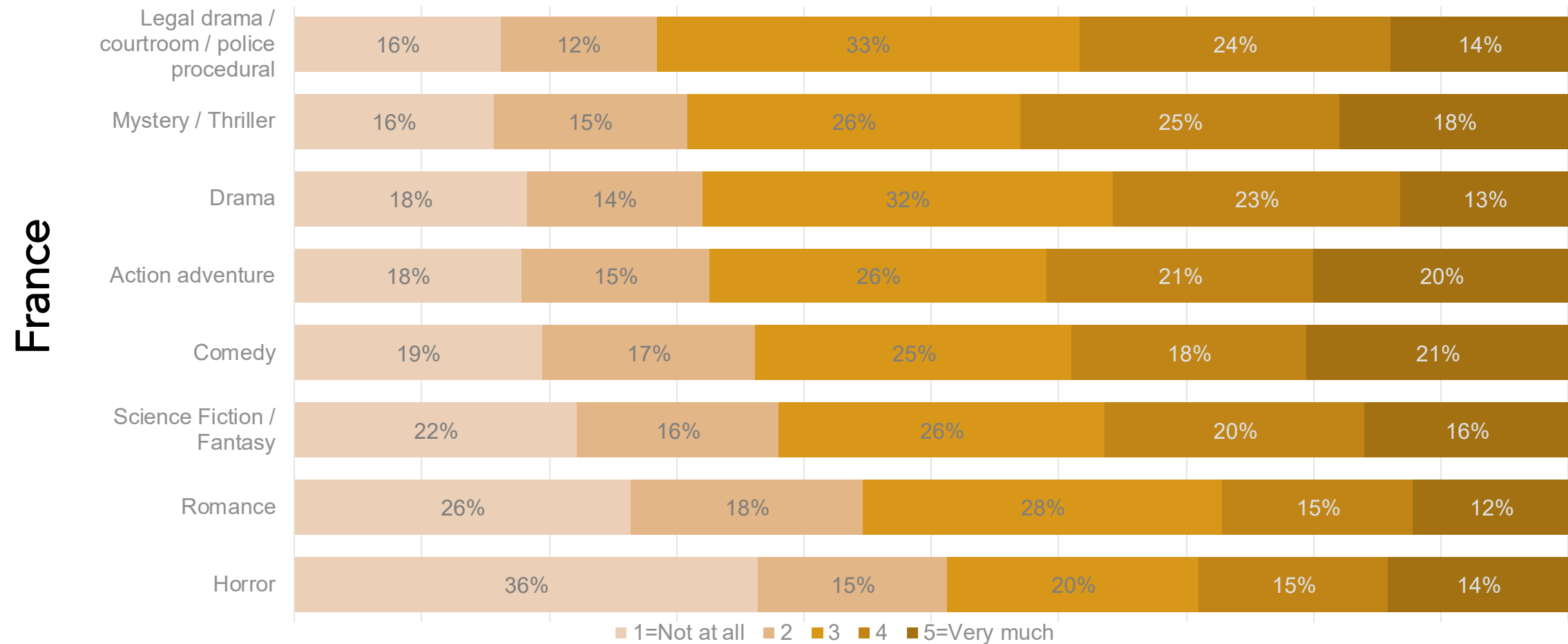
UK INTEREST IN TOPICAL CONTENT BY GENRE

UK respondents expressed the most interest in watching stories about the potential harms of social media in general dramas and legal dramas, followed by mysteries/thrillers. They were least interested in watching this content in romance and horror.



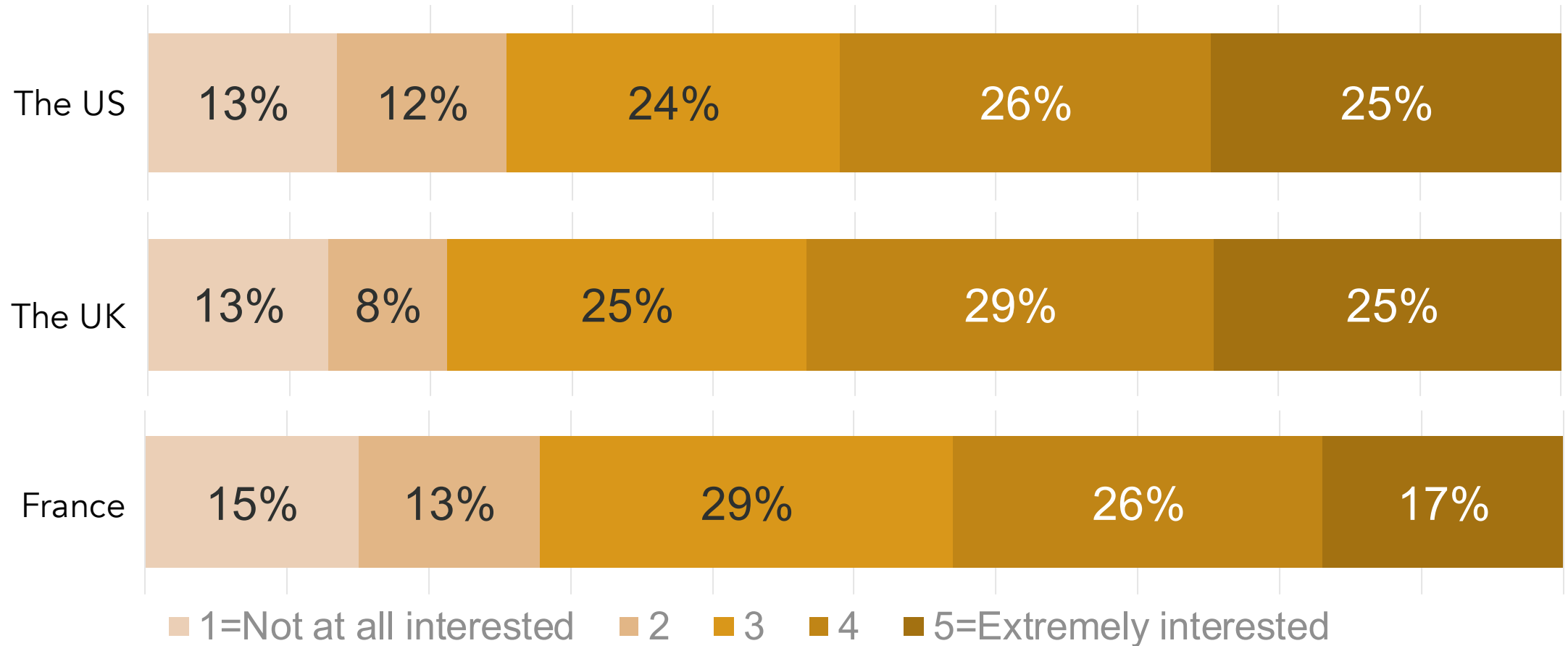
FRENCH INTEREST IN TOPICAL CONTENT BY GENRE

French respondents expressed the most interest in watching stories about the potential harms of social media in legal dramas/police procedurals, and mysteries/thrillers, followed by general dramas. They were least interested in watching this content in romance and horror.



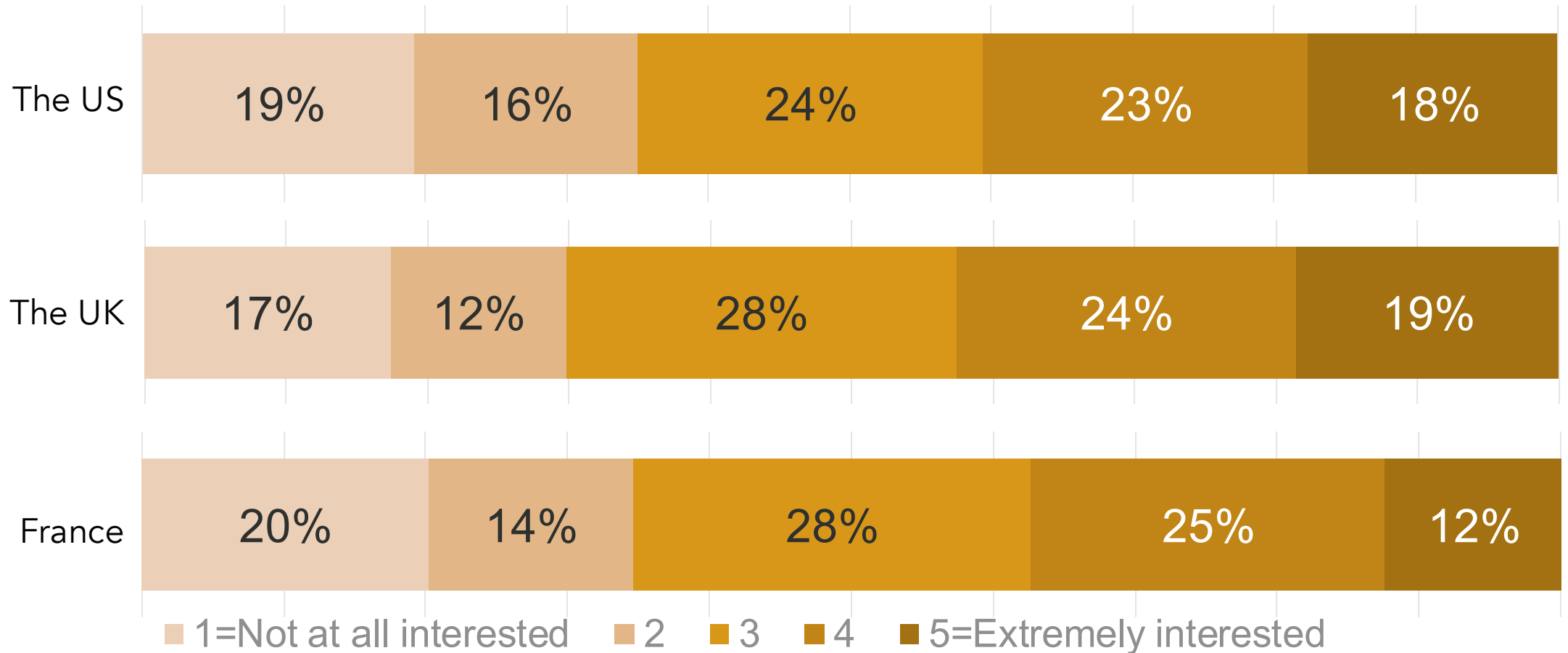
INTEREST IN PROPOSED STORYLINES

A whistleblower risks it all to expose a social media giant's dark secret: features designed to fuel addiction, anger, and extremism.



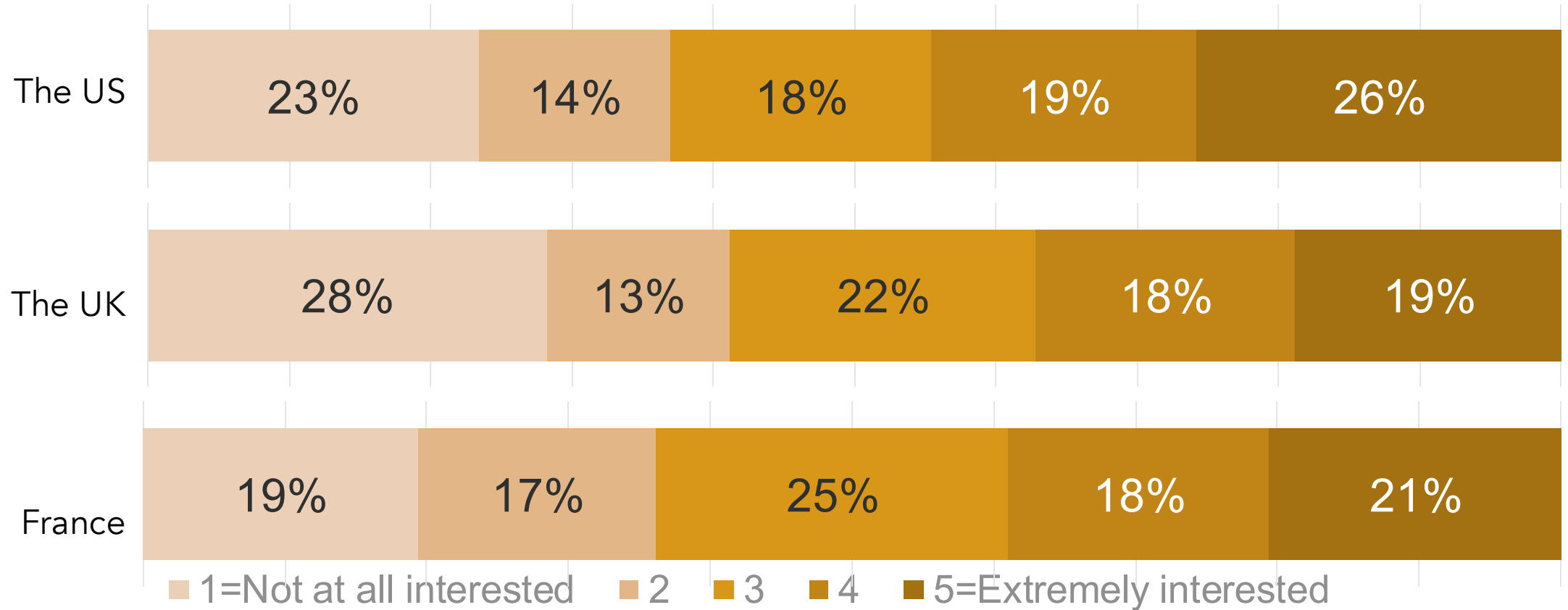
INTEREST IN PROPOSED STORYLINES

A young female politician, battling online harassment and deepfake attacks, decides to fight to pass bold laws that stop tech giants from profiting off her pain.



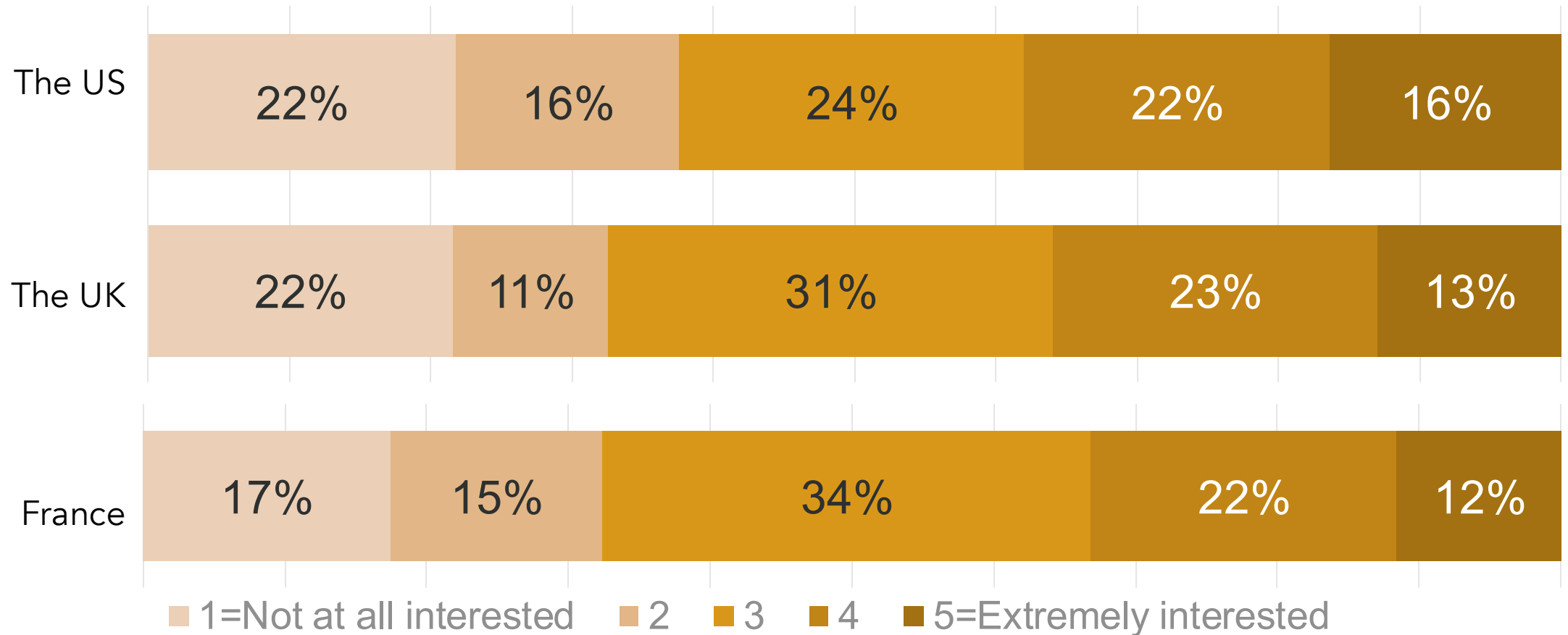
INTEREST IN PROPOSED STORYLINES

A grieving father takes on a tech giant in court, seeking justice after social media algorithms pushed self-harm content to his teenage daughter, leading to her tragic suicide.



INTEREST IN PROPOSED STORYLINES

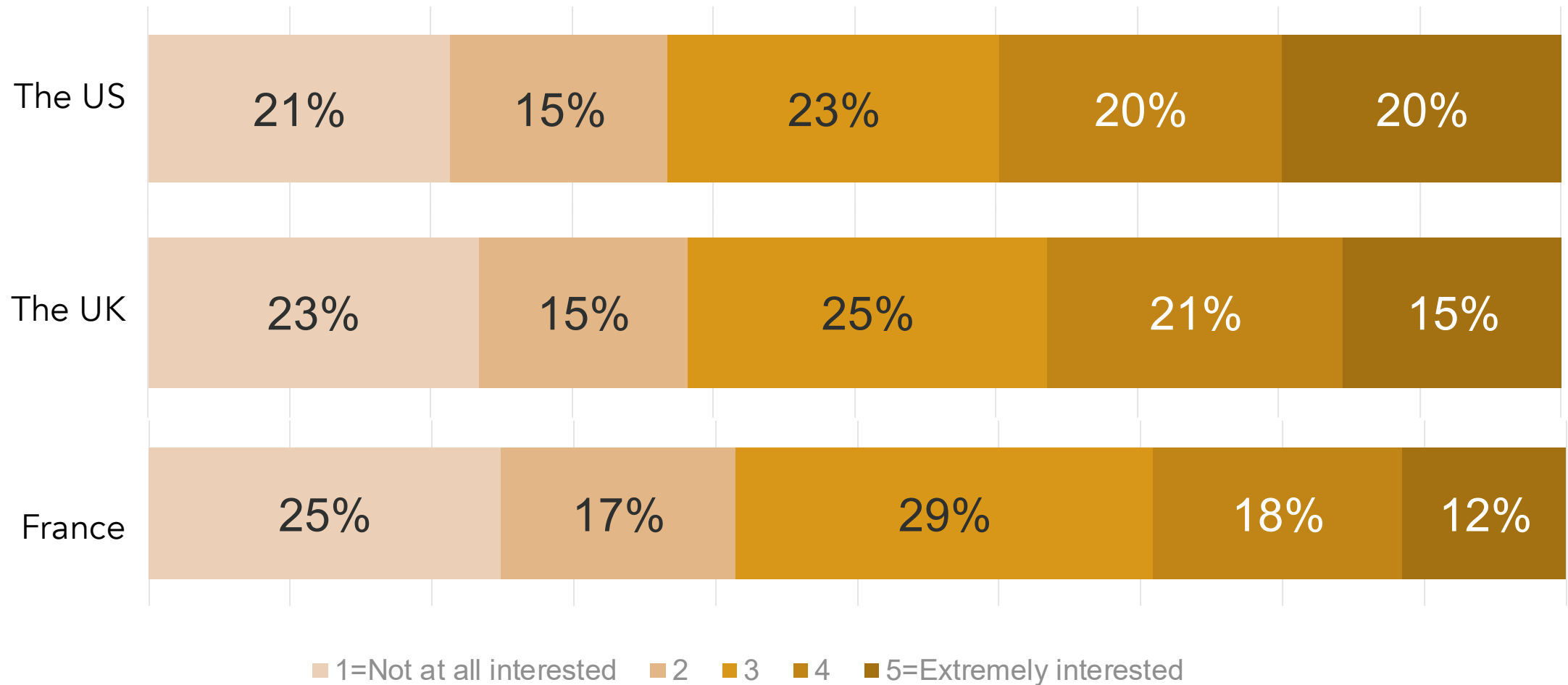
A team of misfit coders, hired to create social media algorithms that subtly control consumer behavior, accidentally turn their office into a hilarious experiment in digital manipulation gone wrong.



INTEREST IN PROPOSED STORYLINES

The president/prime minister takes on powerful tech giants in a daring fight to rein in social media's grip on elections before it unravels democracy.

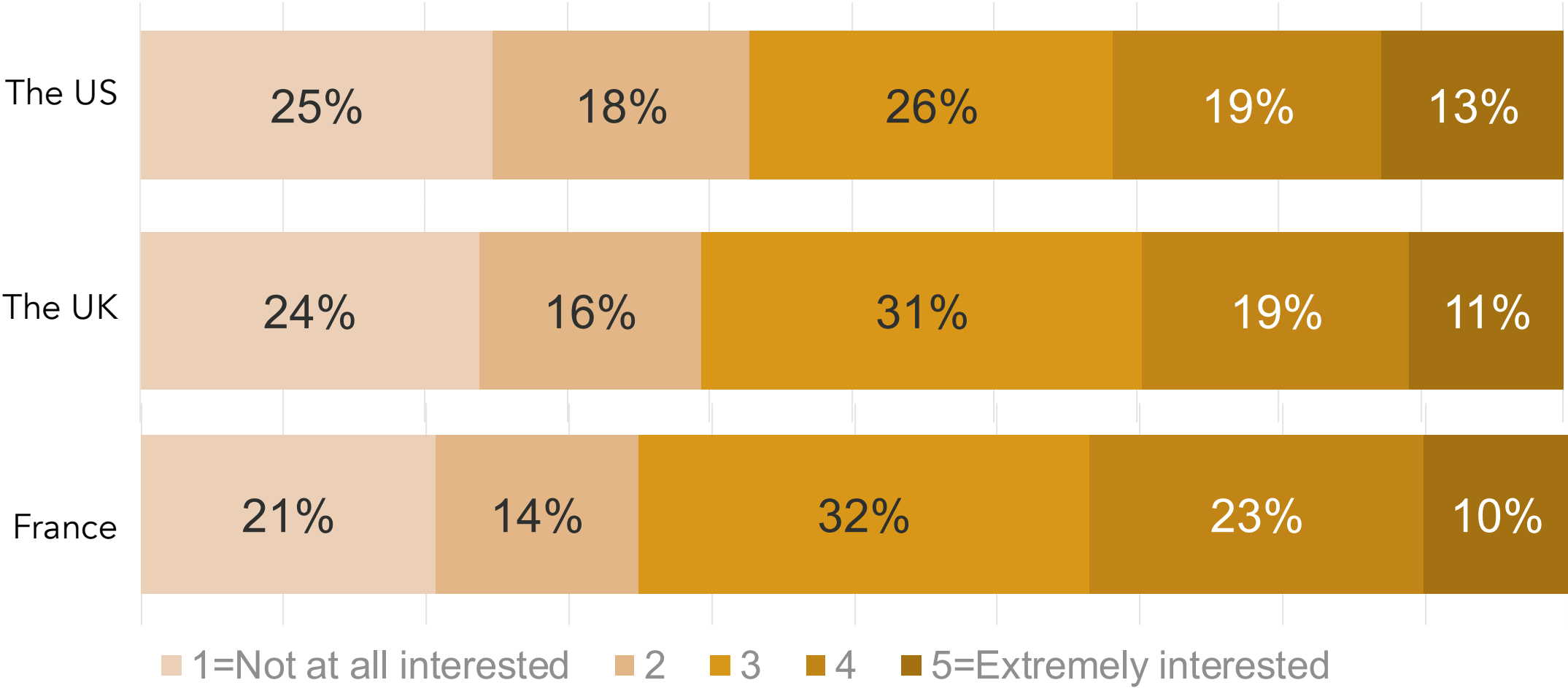
Chart Title



INTEREST IN PROPOSED STORYLINES

The “Top 400” AI program profiles marginalized youth as future criminals, sparking a coalition's fight to expose its dark biases and protect innocent lives.

Chart Title





DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

What other audience characteristics underlie appetite for content that addresses these issues and concerns?

- Age (in Years)
- Political Ideology (Very Liberal to Very Conservative)

Correlations: Age

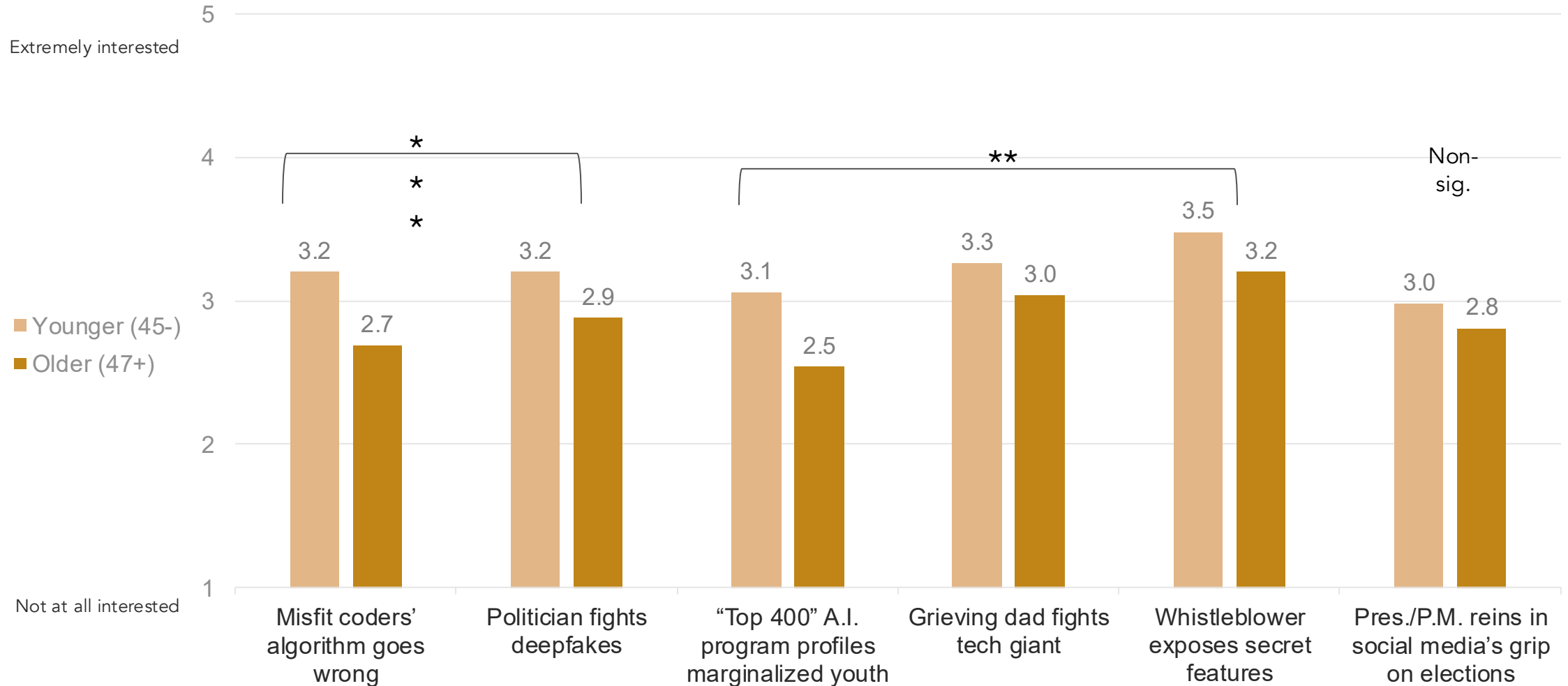
Age was significantly inversely correlated with each of the proposed storylines, indicating these had greater appeal to younger audiences:

- A grieving father takes on a tech giant in court seeking justice after social media algorithms pushed self-harm content to his teenage daughter leading to her tragic suicide.***
- A young female politician battling online harassment and deepfake attacks decides to fight to pass bold laws that stop tech giants from profiting off her pain.***
- A whistleblower risks it all to expose a social media giant's dark secret features designed to fuel addiction/ anger and extremism.***
- The president takes on powerful tech giants in a daring fight to rein in social media's grip on elections before it unravels democracy. †
- A team of misfit coders hired to create social media algorithms that subtly control consumer behavior accidentally turn their office into a hilarious experiment in digital manipulation gone wrong.***
- The "Top 400" AI program profiles marginalized youth as future criminals sparking a coalition's fight to expose its dark biases and protect innocent lives.***

†Marginally significant ($p < .01$); *Significant ($p < .05$); **Highly significant ($p < .01$); ***Very highly significant ($p < .001$)

STORYLINE INTEREST BY YOUNGER VS. OLDER

The sample was divided to compare storyline interest between “Younger” and “Older” respondents:
Youngest to 45 years old VS. 47 years old to oldest.
The 46-year-olds (n=110) at the midpoint were omitted from analyses.



*Significant (p<.05); **Highly significant (p<.01); ***Very highly significant (p<.001)

Correlations: Political Ideology

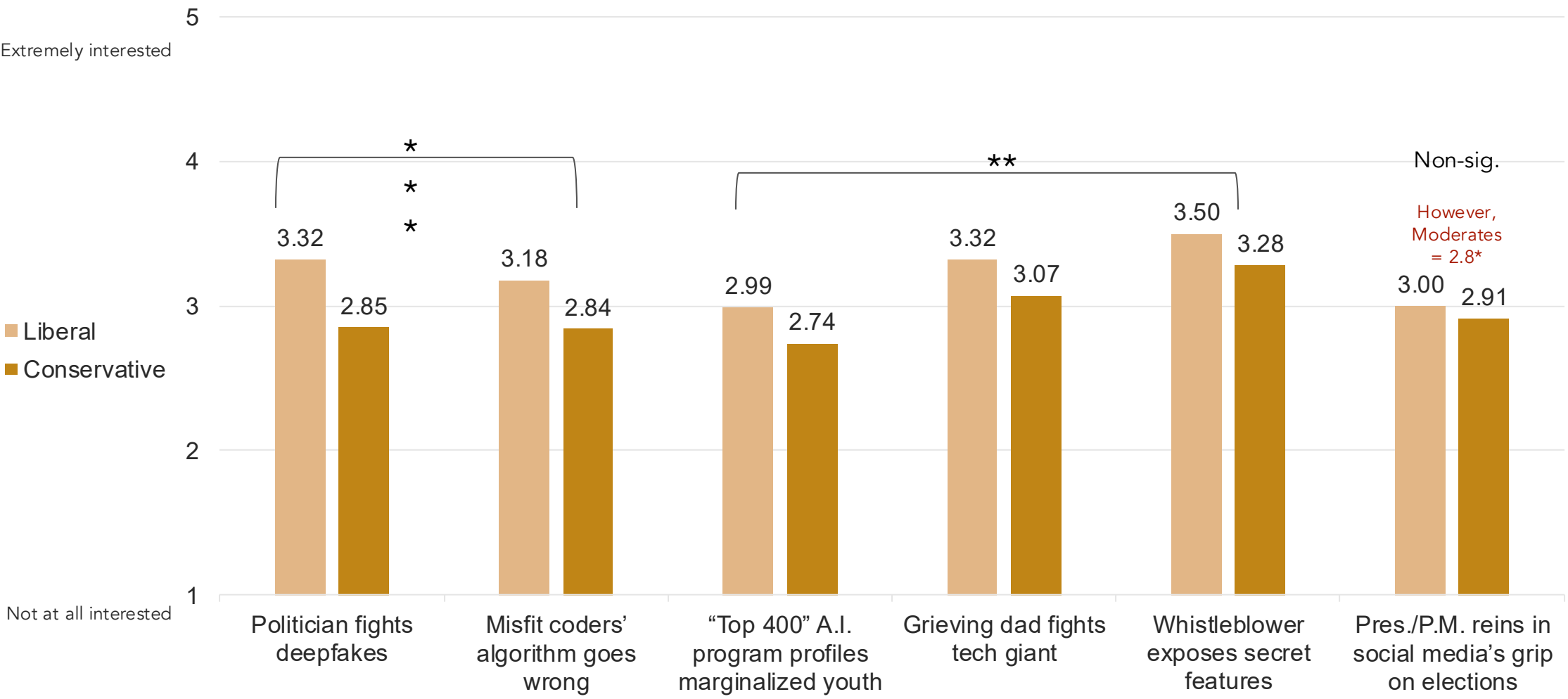
Political ideology was significantly correlated with most of the proposed storylines, indicating greater appeal to more politically liberal audiences:

- A grieving father takes on a tech giant in court seeking justice after social media algorithms pushed self-harm content to his teenage daughter leading to her tragic suicide.**
- A young female politician battling online harassment and deepfake attacks decides to fight to pass bold laws that stop tech giants from profiting off her pain.***
- A whistleblower risks it all to expose a social media giant's dark secret features designed to fuel addiction/ anger and extremism.**
- A team of misfit coders hired to create social media algorithms that subtly control consumer behavior accidentally turn their office into a hilarious experiment in digital manipulation gone wrong.***
- The "Top 400" AI program profiles marginalized youth as future criminals sparking a coalition's fight to expose its dark biases and protect innocent lives.***

†Marginally significant ($p < .01$); *Significant ($p < .05$); **Highly significant ($p < .01$); ***Very highly significant ($p < .001$)

STORYLINE INTEREST BY LIBERALS VS. CONSERVATIVES

The sample was divided to compare storyline interest between "Liberal" and "Conservative" respondents:
Self-described as: "Very liberal" or "Liberal" VS. "Conservative" or "Very conservative"
Those who self-described as "Moderates" were omitted from comparisons. Their ratings were closer to conservatives.



*Significant (p<.05); **Highly significant (p<.01); ***Very highly significant (p<.001)



QUALITATIVE DATA: RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- Could you please list one example of a fictional TV show or film with a strong depiction of the harm of social media that you found particularly informative, memorable, or inspiring?
- Is there a story related to social media/technology corporations that you would like to see told in a scripted/fictional TV show or film?

Qualitative Insights: Examples

Informative, memorable, or inspiring fictional TV shows and films that respondents felt had strong depictions of the harm of social media varied by country, but most fell into a few overarching themes:

- Manipulation, Data Exploitation & Surveillance
- Mental Health, Teen Vulnerability & Struggles, Suicide
- Dangers of Online Deception, Harassment, Cyberbullying
- Reality TV, Toxicity, Celebrity Culture, & Obsession
- Dystopian Futures, Algorithmic Control, Intrusion
- Disinformation, Negative Media Influence

Prominent themes and specific examples for each country follow. See sortable spreadsheets with full text of responses [here](#).

NOTE: Few respondents provided detailed explanations for what made the depiction strong.

Qualitative Insights: US Examples (n=201)

US respondents' examples:

- Manipulation, Data Exploitation, Surveillance: The Social Dilemma, Black Mirror, & Ready Player One
- Mental Health, Teen Struggles: 13 Reasons Why, Euphoria, & Cyberbully – a movie about a teenage girl who experiences harassment on social media and how it affects her life and friendships
- Dangers of Online Deception, Harassment: Unfriended: Dark Web, First 48, Pretty Little Liars, & Law and Order SVU – showed how online activity affects child sexual abuse and trafficking.
- Reality TV, Celebrity Culture, Obsession: The Kardashians - inspires and highlights the consequences of social obsessions; Ingrid Goes West - she lost her identity pursuing another's

Qualitative Insights:

UK Examples (n=166)

UK respondents' examples:

- Dystopian Futures & Algorithmic Control: Black Mirror, Idiocracy, & Orphan Black - combined cloning with a [social media] surveillance subplot.
- Mental Health, Suicide, & Youth Vulnerability: 13 Reasons Why - Social media plays a big part in the main character's death, Our Four Lives - showed the dangers and effects in an emotional manner; & [I Am Ruth] - Kate Winslet and her real-life daughter [shows] the effect social media had on the daughter's self-esteem and mental health
- Cyberbullying, Deception & Fake Identities: Hollyoaks, Eastenders, Catfish - I recall the acting was very good and it showed how people can easily get fooled on social media; & Prison Break – very realistic,
- Reality TV & Toxic Online Culture: Love Island, Reality High, & Out There

Qualitative Insights: French Examples (n=152)

French respondents' examples:

- Dystopian Futures & Intrusive Technology: Black Mirror, 1984, & I.A. métaphore du contrôle des humains par le numérique [Translation: A.I. Metaphor for Digital Control of Humans]
- Impact on Youth & Mental Health: 13 Reasons Why, Plus Belle La Vie [Translation: Life is More Beautiful] – "the death of an actor who was in love on social media and it was fake."
- Cyberbullying & Online Dangers: Les Réseaux Sociaux Tuent, & La Pampa - (film) sur le cyber harcèlement [Translation: Social Media Kills, & The Pampas (Movie) about cyber bullying]
- Manipulation, Disinformation & Media Influence: The Social Network; TikTok campagne près Roumanie manipulation par la Russie; & Méfait des réseaux sur les jeunes et leur influence [Translation: TikTok campaign - Romania manipulation by Russia; & Mischief of networks on young people and their influence.]
- Journalism & Documentary-Style Fiction: Cash Investigation; & Zone Interdite [Translation: Forbidden Zone]

Qualitative Insights: Suggested Stories

Respondents also suggested story ideas related to social media/technology corporations that they would like to see told in a scripted/fictional TV show or film. Some storylines were similar to those already praised, but others focused on:

- Corporate Manipulation & Government Influence
- Whistleblower/Corporate Takedown Angle
- Futuristic Digital Worlds and Social Connectivity
- Dangers (e.g., Addiction, Harassment, Bullying, Suicide)
- Corporate and Government Influence on Social Media
- A.I. and Technology Ethics (e.g., Promise and Perils)
- Digital Crime, Safety, and Security Risks
- Social-political Issues & Radicalization

Prominent themes and specific examples for each country follow.

Qualitative Insights: US Story Suggestions

US respondents suggested:

Corporate Manipulation and Data Exploitation:

- “A fictional show about someone who works for a social media company and struggles with their job/duty of manipulating people into using their platform”
- “A powerhouse company that manipulates user behavior, controls public narratives, and even exploits personal data to stay ahead of competitors.”

Whistleblower/Corporate Takedown Angle:

- “Yes, I would like to see a scripted fictional show about the takedown of big tech corporations for manipulation of data and algorithms.”

Futuristic Digital Worlds and Social Connectivity

- “A story about a potential future in the metaverse. How will people adapt to a more virtualized reality”
- “I like shows that depict people using internet resources to locate family history or to reconnect with lost relatives.”
- “A story related to social media technology is to more conversation with family and friends.”

Qualitative Insights: UK Story Suggestions

UK respondents suggested:

Dangers of Social Media and Online Harms (e.g., Harassment):

- "A proper catfish film or about the young girl that ended her life due to online bullying"
- "The damage trolling does to a young child"

Corporate and Government Influence on Social Media

- "Government strongarms social media companies to show its actions as favourable at risk of losing license."
- "Would like to see Facebook and USA elections shown in a scripted/fictional TV show or film."

Artificial Intelligence and Technology Ethics (e.g., Promise and Perils):

- "AI, IO It's interesting and has a lot of practical use in this era."
- "Yes about the harm AI technology has on humanity. I think it's going to show how how the AI can make mistakes"

Digital Crime, Safety, and Security Risks in the Digital Age

- "Connection to organised crime"
- "How children get sucked into gang related crime and start dealing drugs"

Qualitative Insights: French Story Suggestions

French respondents suggested:

Bullying & Suicide of Young People:

- "Teenagers who commit suicide because of TikTok videos"
- "Harassment leading to suicide and then revenge on the harassers via the same networks"

Manipulation and Evolution of Digital Platforms:

- "How Twitter became X by putting the hidden faces forward"
- "Elon Musk and the US elections"
- "Censorship on Twitter before its takeover by Elon Musk"
- "Social networks or digital giants that manipulate the results of a presidential election."

Social Network Addiction & Isolation:

- "A person's addiction to social networks and the fact that this person lies on social networks to make themselves look good, which isolates them from the world."
- "How TikTok makes everyone addicted"

Social-political Issues & Radicalization:

- "Political manipulation to increase extremes"
- "Radicalization of Islamists"



INFERENCES FOR CONTENT CREATORS

- Based on respondents' examples and explanations of the fictional TV shows and films they found informative, memorable, or inspiring with strong depiction of the harm of social media
- Based on stories related to social media/technology corporations that respondents would like to see told in a scripted/fictional TV show or film

Qualitative Insights: Inferences for Content Creators

Based on respondents' informative, memorable, and inspiring examples of fictional TV shows and films depicting the harms of social media, and explanations of stories they would like to see told, the following suggestions emerged for incorporating storylines related to social media and technology:

- Balance dark themes with human connections
- Feature compelling characters at social media companies
- Create cautionary tales showing negative impacts of social media and other technologies (e.g., A.I.)
- Spotlight vulnerable populations or underrepresented voices

Inferences: Content Creators

US suggestions: Balance Dark Themes with Human Connections

- While exploring themes such as bullying, depression, and manipulation, integrate narratives that also show social media's potential for positive social connections, such as reuniting families or mobilizing youth for social causes, creating a more nuanced story that resonates with audiences.
- Craft fictional stories that dramatize the inner workings of social media companies, such as power struggles and characters discussing ethical positions. This could include both realistic portrayals and futuristic scenarios showing different effects on society, like the metaverse: utopian versus dystopian visions.
- Feature whistleblowers as characters to show what happens to them, and what changes they can inspire.

Inferences: Content Creators

UK suggestions:

Craft Engaging, Cautionary Narratives:

- Develop fictional storylines that dramatize the dangers of social media and digital culture. Creators could draw inspiration from ideas like: “The damage trolling does to a young child” and “The introduction of mind-controlling the masses via corporations such as social media and for the purposes of making money and controlling them.”

Blend Genres for Impact:

- Combine elements of horror, drama, and thriller to address complex topics—ranging from online bullying to the manipulation of public opinion. For instance, a narrative could mix dystopian themes with the realistic portrayal of political and social influence, similar to: “Donald Trump's use of social media to propagate his victory” and “The story of X and Elon Musk - similar to the Facebook film”
- Use speculative fiction or biopic-style storytelling to explore the ethical dilemmas posed by AI and tech corporations.

Raise Awareness Through Character-Driven Stories:

- Focus on narratives that follow young protagonists or communities affected by the darker sides of social media—capturing the emotional and psychological dimensions highlighted in responses like: “How social media impacts our decisions & every day lives”

Inferences: Content Creators

French suggestions:

Develop Fictional Narratives with Social Relevance:

- Dramatize the tragic consequences of online harassment and social media addiction. Storylines could mirror themes like "Suicide de collégien (ne) après harcèlement en ligne" or "L'addiction d'une personne aux réseaux sociaux... qui l'isole du monde," offering a human face to these issues. [Translation: "Suicide of a middle school student after online harassment" or "A person's addiction to social networks... which isolates him from the world"]
- Showcase the perils of rapid technological advancement (e.g., concerns over AI and the control exerted by digital giants) with intimate, character-driven plots. This could include exploring themes of isolation and identity struggles linked to social media use.

Focus on Underrepresented Perspectives:

- Spotlight vulnerable or less-heard voices, such as stories from older generations adapting to new media realities, or family dynamics affected by digital manipulation, like "comment les reseaux peuvent detruire notre image de nous meme et notre couples" [Translation: "How networks can destroy our image of ourselves and our relationships."] This adds diversity and depth to the portrayal of the digital age.



APPENDICES

- Survey development and implementation
- Survey questions and response options

Appendix: Survey Development

In collaboration with Luminate Strategic Initiatives the Norman Lear Center's Media Impact Project team developed an audience attitudes survey to investigate news and entertainment consumption, preferences, and viewing motives in the three countries: the US, the UK, France.

Questions were developed to gather baseline data about public awareness of the potential harms of social media, actions that could reduce harms, and appetite for depictions of these topics in news and entertainment.

GeoPoll's French translation was approved after minor corrections by Luminate. From February 1st to 17th, 2025, GeoPoll recruited a representative sample of adults 18+ in France, the UK, and the US to participate in an online survey.

- Respondents were proportionally matched to each country's census data for gender, age, and region.
- Reported findings are based on responses from 500 respondents in each country.

Appendix: Survey Questions

Survey Questions	Response Options
Please confirm your age:	I am 18 or older. I am under 18 years old. [SCREENED OUT]
In general, the fictional TV shows and films I most enjoy: - inspire me to think about meaningful issues - inspire me with new insights - put me in a good mood - inspire me to talk about the TV show/movie with others - encourage me to discuss issues with others - allow me to experience emotions that I avoid in everyday life	1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree
What do you like about watching your favorite fictional TV shows and films? - I like being moved to tears. - I enjoy the adrenaline boost. - I can experience feelings that are difficult for me to allow in everyday life. - I identify with the characters' outlook on life. - I like to live through and share the characters' experiences. - I like to slip into the role of characters.	1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree
On an average day, how much time do you spend on the following activities? - Browsing the internet - Browsing posts on social media platforms (like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok etc.) - Playing video games - Reading non-fiction books/articles - Reading fictional books/stories - Listening to music - Listening to podcasts - Watching movies - Watching scripted/fictional television shows via broadcast, cable, or streaming - Watching unscripted/reality television shows via broadcast, cable, or streaming	0=None; 1=Less than an hour; 2=1 hour daily; 3=2 hours daily; 4=3 hours daily; 5=4+ hours daily
Q5. To what extent do you believe social media contributes to the following? - Division in society - Discrimination - Anger - Adults' mental health problems - Youths' mental health problems - A breakdown in our shared sense of reality - Loneliness - The silencing of individuals - The silencing of ideas - Dangerous fads - Self-harming behaviors (e.g., eating disorders, dangerous challenges, etc.)	1=Not at all; 2=A little; 3=Somewhat; 4=A moderate amount; 5=A great deal

Appendix: Survey Questions

Survey Questions	Response Options
Q6. How often have you heard about the potential harms of social media in any of the following? • Conversations with friends, family, and/or colleagues • Social media • Newspapers/News magazines • Radio news/talk shows/podcasts • Television news/talk shows • Fictional TV shows/films • Reality TV shows • Documentaries	1=Never to 5=Very frequently
Have you seen or heard coverage of the potential harms of social media (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, X/Twitter) to any of the following? • Children • Young adults • Marginalized groups • Women • Society • None of the above	(Select all that apply)
Which of the following topics have you seen or heard covered: • Actions you personally can take to reduce the potential harms of social media usage • Actions the government can take to reduce the potential harms of social media usage • Actions technology corporations can take to reduce the potential harms of their products • None of these	(Select all that apply)
How interested would you be in seeing or hearing news coverage about potential harms of social media on each of the following? • Elections • Children and young adults • Women and girls • Marginalized groups • Society	0= Not at all interested; 1= a little interested; 2= somewhat interested; 3= extremely interested
The next question is about topics you have seen dramatized in any fictional TV shows (e.g., broadcast, cable, or streaming) within the past year. How often have you seen the following topics covered? • Potential harms of social media on individuals • Potential harms of social media on society • Potential harms of social media to elections • Actions the government can take to reduce the potential harms of social media usage • Actions people can personally take to reduce the potential harms of social media usage • Actions technology corporations can take to reduce dangers associated with their products	0=Never; 1=Rarely; 2=Occasionally; 3=Frequently; 4=Very frequently

Appendix: Survey Questions

Survey Questions	Response Options
How interested would you be in watching stories about potential harms of social media in each of the following TV and/or film genres? • Action Adventure • Comedy • Drama • Horror • Legal drama/courtroom/police procedural • Mystery / Thriller • Science Fiction / Fantasy • Romance	1=Not at all to 5=Very much
How interested would you be in watching fictional broadcast, cable, or streaming TV shows featuring the following storylines? • A grieving father takes on a tech giant in court, seeking justice after social media algorithms pushed selfharm content to his teenage daughter, leading to her tragic suicide. • A young female politician, battling online harassment and deepfake attacks, decides to fight to pass bold laws that stop tech giants from profiting off her pain. • A whistleblower risks it all to expose a social media giant's dark secret: features designed to fuel addiction, anger, and extremism. • The president/prime minister takes on powerful tech giants in a daring fight to rein in social media's grip on elections before it unravels democracy. • A team of misfit coders, hired to create social media algorithms that subtly control consumer behavior, accidentally turn their office into a hilarious experiment in digital manipulation gone wrong. • The "Top 400" AI program profiles marginalized youth as future criminals, sparking a coalition's fight to expose its dark biases and protect innocent lives.	1=Not at all interested to 5=Extremely interested
Could you please list one example of a fictional TV show or film with a strong depiction of the harm of social media that you found particularly informative, memorable, or inspiring?	Briefly explain what made this depiction strong. If none, please write-in "none" below. [open-ended response]
Is there a story related to social media/technology corporations that you would like to see told in a scripted/fictional TV show or film?	Please describe in detail. If none, please write-in "none" below. [open-ended response]
Overall, which description best represents your political ideology?	Very liberal Liberal Moderate Conservative Very conservative

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