

MODERN MASCULINITIES

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Gender Equality: An old debate writ new

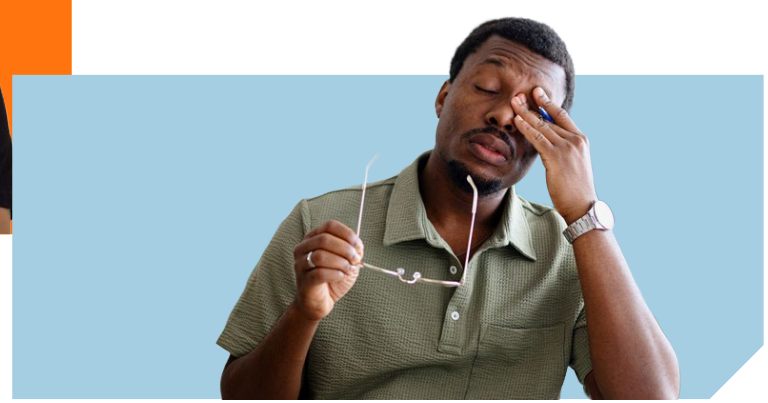
Masculinity is more contested than ever with public debate increasingly driven by speculation and bad-faith voices. The question of whether gender equality has gone too far is becoming a mainstream view.

Among Gen Z men:



57%

agree that we have gone so far in promoting women's equality that we are discriminating against men



60%

agree men are expected to do too much to support equality

Base: Total study sample 23,765 online adults aged 18-74 in Canada, Republic of Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, Turkey and the United States, 20-74 in Thailand, 21-74 in Indonesia and Singapore, and 16-74 in all other countries, 20 December 2024-3 January 2025

The manosphere, mythical past and marketing



Nostalgia for a ‘mythical past’:

Over half of people across **40 global markets** say they’d like their country to be the way it used to be.

Source: Ipsos Global Trends 2025, A New World Disorder.
Base: 33,083 adults; fieldwork conducted 23 May – 6 June 2025.



Rising gender essentialism:

45% agree that *“Men and women are born with very different qualities that mean they should occupy different roles in society”.*

Source: Ipsos Global Trends 2025, A New World Disorder.
Base: 33,083 adults; fieldwork conducted 23 May – 6 June 2025.



Leading to diverging digital experiences:

Platforms like **X** are becoming more closely associated with manosphere beliefs — prompting **faster female exit rates** and growing gender divides in online behaviours, interests, and priorities (e.g. career vs caring roles).

Source: Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Aug 23 – Jul 24, All aged 18+ using PC/laptop, smartphone or tablet device(s).

MEN AND WOMEN HAVE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES AND PRESSURES...

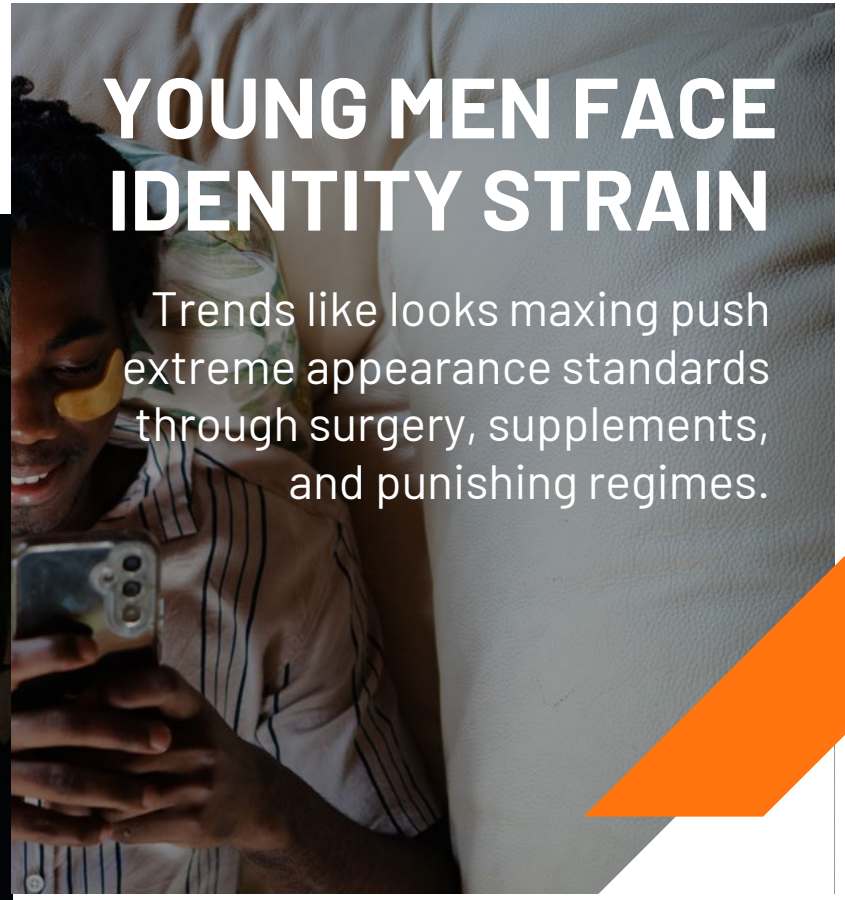
This is not equivalence.

The impacts are highly unequal –
but the pressure is real for both.



WOMEN FACE A SAFETY CRISIS

Met Police Chief: “Millions of men are a danger to women and girls”.



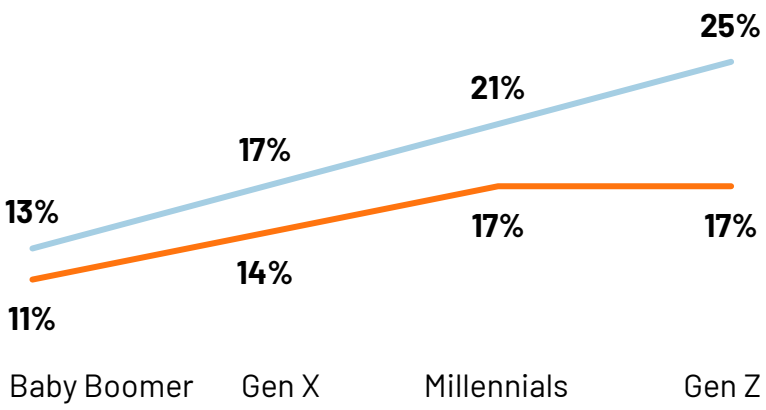
YOUNG MEN FACE IDENTITY STRAIN

Trends like looks maxing push extreme appearance standards through surgery, supplements, and punishing regimes.

...leading to a splintering of beliefs and a deepening gender divide

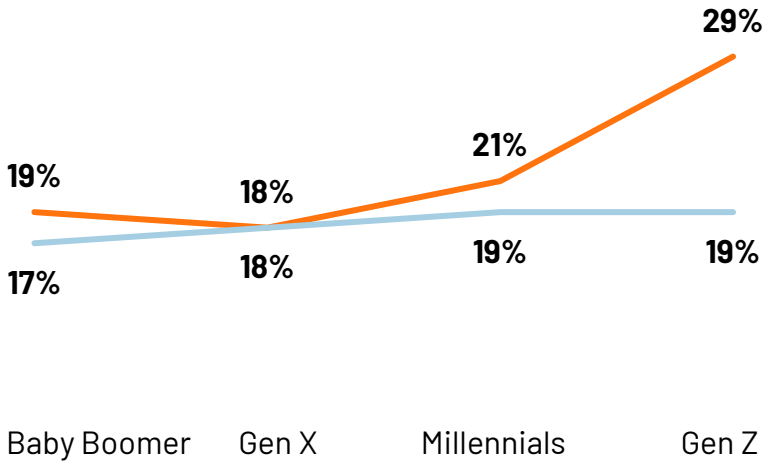
Men Women

The impact of 1.5 degrees of global warming isn't a big deal
(% agree)



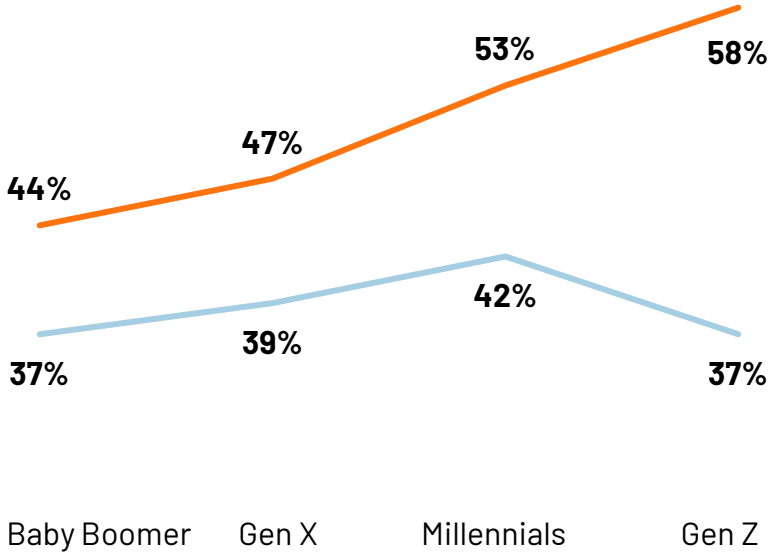
Source: Ipsos | People and Climate Change. **Base:** 23,745 online adults under the age of 75 across 32 countries, interviewed 24 Jan – 7 Feb 2025

Which group experiences unequal or unfair treatment in your country?
(% selecting "transgender and/or non-binary people")



Source: Ipsos Equalities Index 2025. **Base:** 23,228 online adults under the age of 75 across 31 countries, interviewed 21 Feb – 7 Mar 2025

Support for companies and brands promoting equality for LGBT people
(% support)



Source: Ipsos Pride Survey 2024. **Base:** 18,515 online adults under the age of 75 across 26 countries, interviewed 23 Feb – 8 Mar 2024.

But what happened to the progress on equality?

"...any gains that women have had since has been presented as a backlash against men, and men are losing out because women have gained certain aspects of equality.

Journalist Sian Norris speaking on our 'Reimagining Masculinity' documentary



37%

Agree the main role of women in society is to be good mothers and wives – but agreement varies from 43% of men to just 31% of women.

Source: Ipsos Global Trends**. Base:** 33,083 people across 43 countries polled between May 3–June 6, 2025.

Take care not to overstate manosphere

#Alienation starts offline. Digital platforms exploit it but real-world disconnection fuels it.

While a minority encountered "extremely misogynistic content", many users of the manosphere were critically engaged, selective and capable of discarding messages that did not resonate with their values.



Source: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/13/study-manosphere-ofcom

We’re living through a taboo collapse

Beliefs once “beyond the pale” now go viral.

This isn’t just a return of old ideas — it’s their **reinvention for the algorithm age**.

Among Gen Z men:



28%

believe stay-at-home dads are “less of a man” vs. 19% of women



57%

say women’s equality has discriminated against men

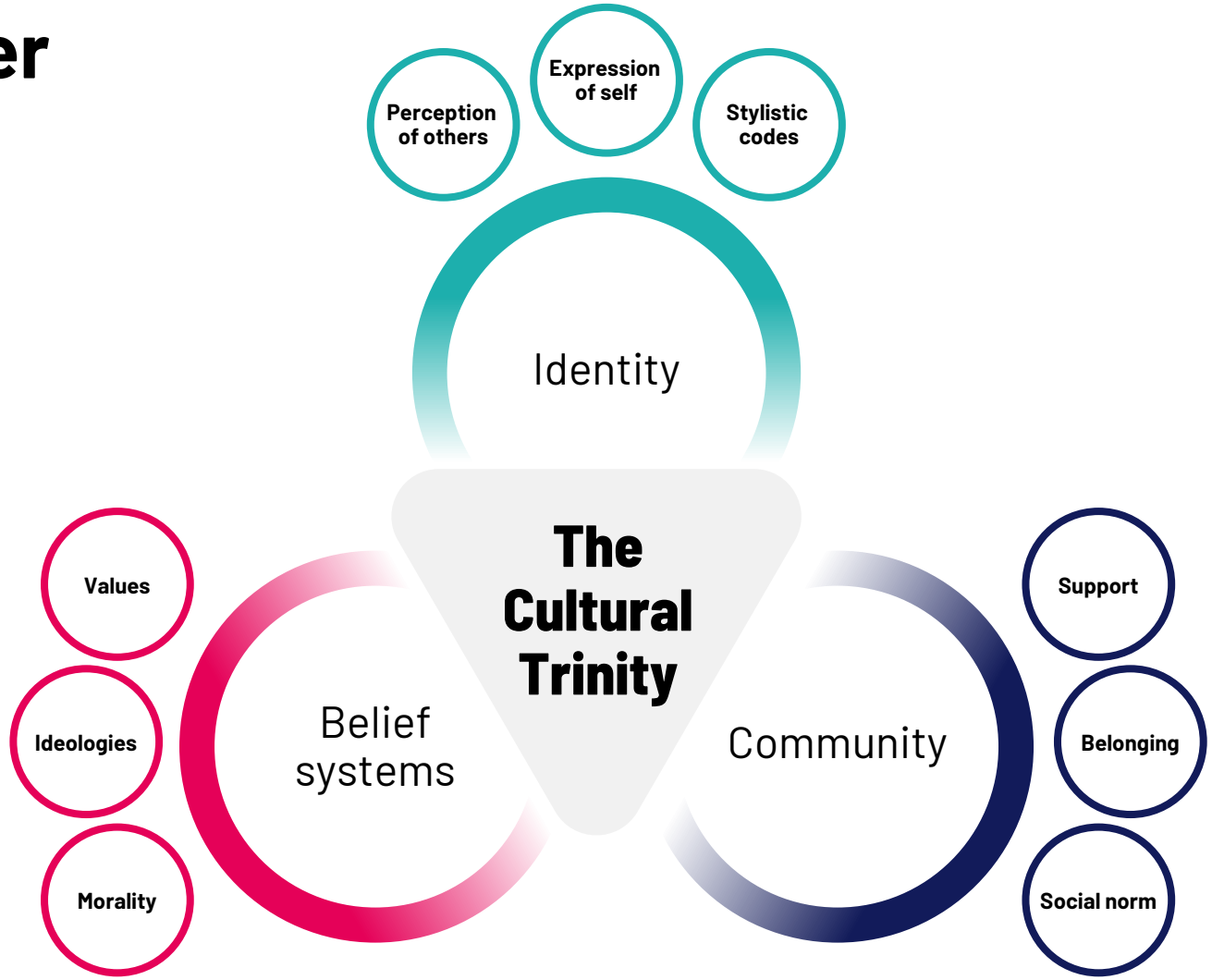
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This is a cultural issue, rather than about individuals

Masculinity isn't just personal, it's cultural.

Too often we focus on individual attitudes, but we miss the systems beneath them.

This isn't about fixing men. It's about changing the culture that defines them — the spaces they inhabit and the stories they inherit.



The Cultural Trinity shows us that cultural change is possible



WHO GETS TO BE A MAN?

What we're seeing:
- Narrow expectations: stoicism, control, success at all costs
- Silence around fear, failure, and doubt
- Pressure to live up to "alpha" ideals or be seen as weak

What to do:
- Redefine strength to include vulnerability, care, and emotional honesty
- Support men to express emotional literacy without shame
- Encourage male leaders to speak on "non-traditional" issues (e.g. mental health, caregiving)
- Create cultural content that shows masculinity as plural, not prescriptive



WHERE DO I BELONG?

What we're seeing:
- Grievance-based communities filling a belonging gap
- Algorithm-driven social media reinforcing exclusion
- Offline spaces for healthy male connection are limited

What to do:
- Build inclusive, non-judgemental spaces for male connection and conversation
- Use peer-led, pro-social communities as positive alternatives to manosphere spaces
- Design with women and gender-diverse people — masculinity is relational
- Don't overstate the role of online platforms, but be platform-literate in interventions



WHAT'S THE STORY I LIVE BY?

What we're seeing:
- Equality framed as threat or loss
- Structural insecurity misattributed to feminism or women's gains
- Victimhood becoming a cultural identity for some young men

What to do:
- Challenge zero-sum narratives with emotionally resonant stories of shared progress
- Show that equality benefits everyone, not just women
- Connect male disaffection to real drivers (e.g. precarity, status loss), not scapegoats
- Combine narrative work with structural analysis, don't treat belief in isolation

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MEDIA



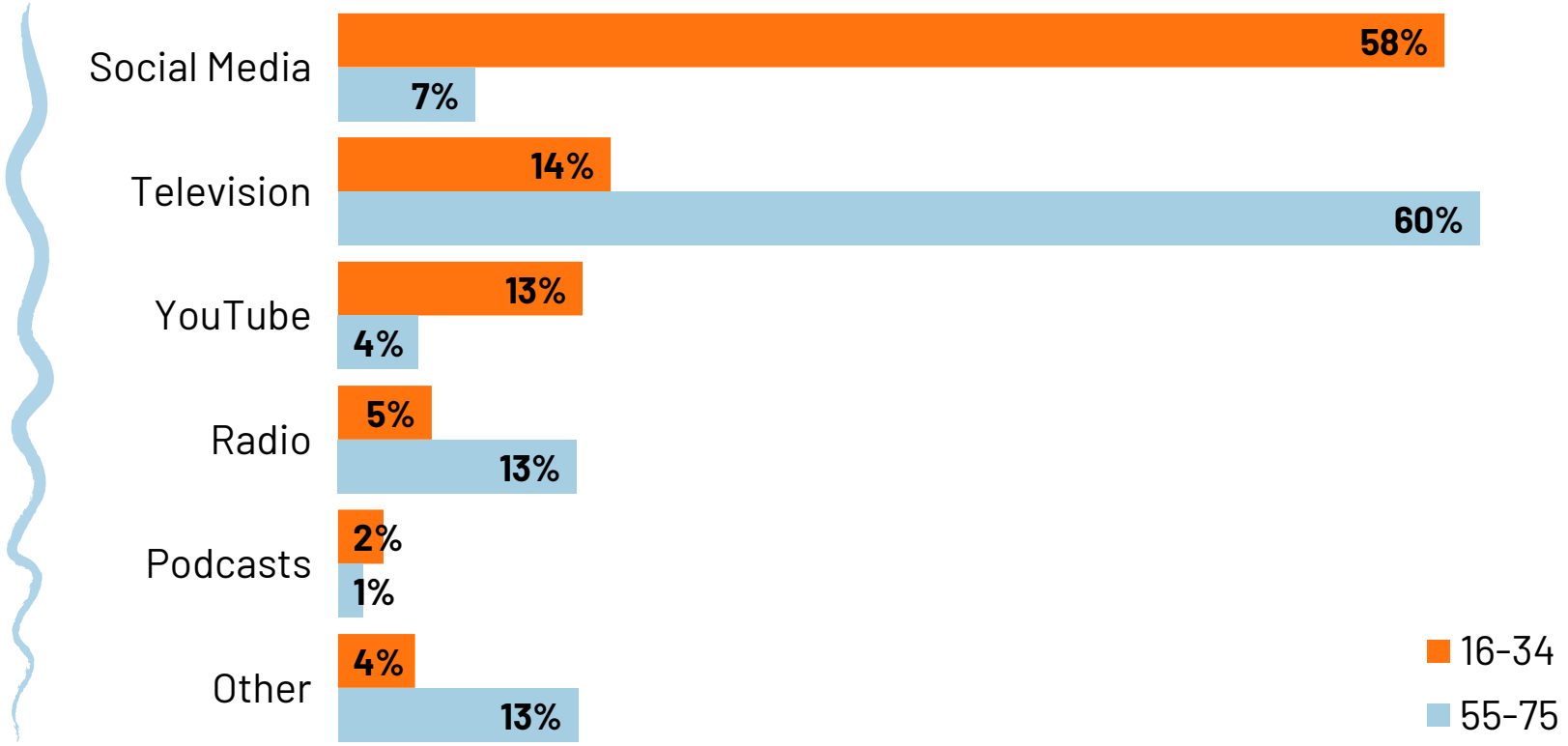
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Shifts in the media landscape cannot be ignored if we want to connect with young men

We need to meet young people where they are and where they get value, whilst recognising that divergent online spaces are contributing to splintering beliefs.

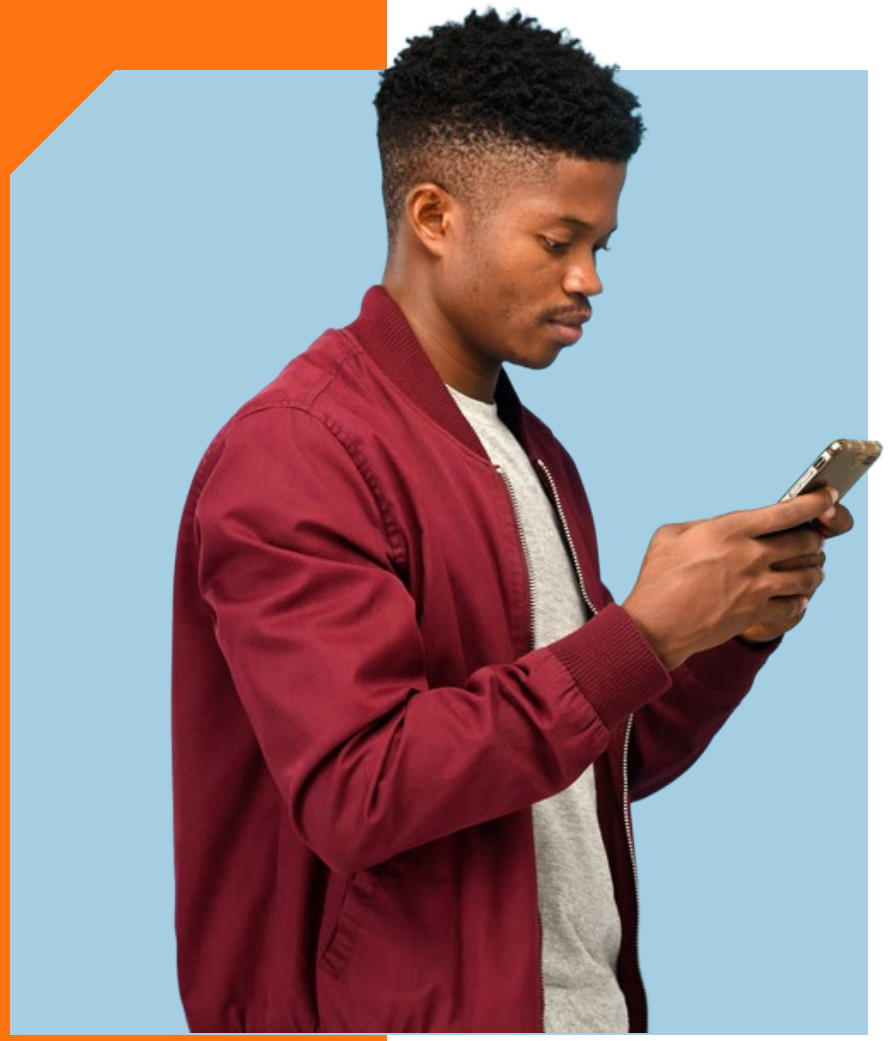
75%

Think social media is replacing traditional media.



Base: n=2474
Q1. Where would you say that you get the majority of your information about current events ?

Young men recognise the ‘double edged sword’, but are unsure about whether to cut back or lean in more...

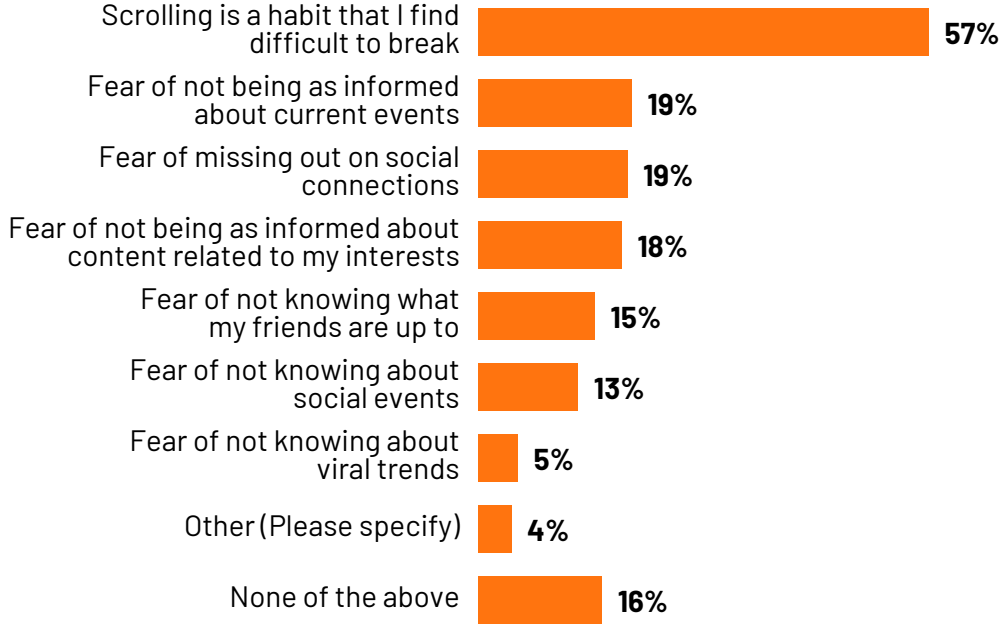


45% think they are ‘addicted’ to social media

Breaking the scrolling habit is the most common barrier stopping people from spending less time on social media

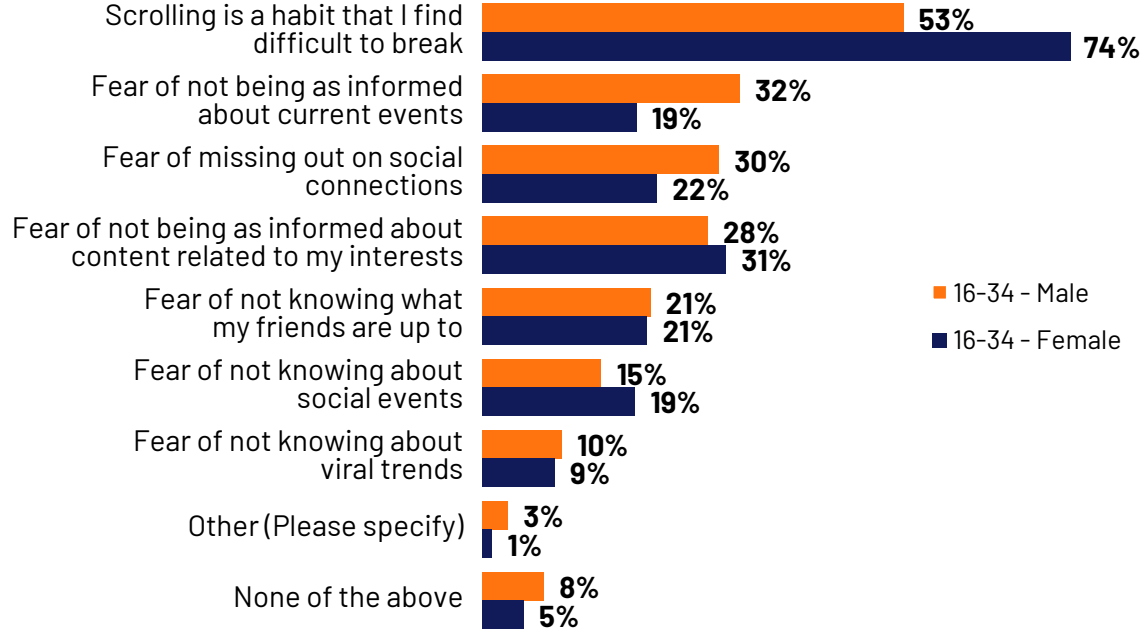
What are the barriers stopping you from spending less time on social media?

Total Sample, 16-75



Base: n=861
Q9. What are the barriers stopping you from spending less time on social media?

Age x Gender, Age, Gender



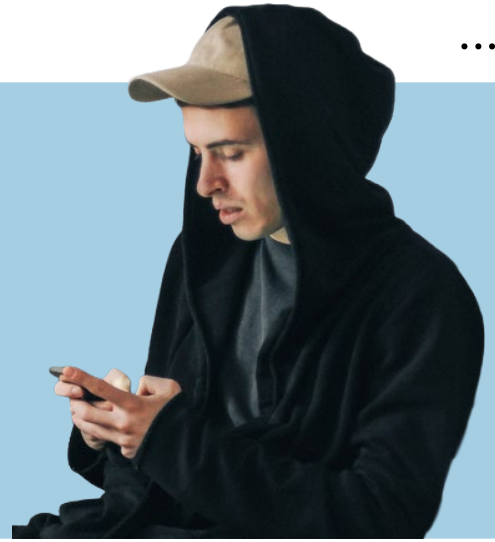
Base: n=861
Q9. What are the barriers stopping you from spending less time on social media?

Whilst concern for misinformation is high, young men are most likely to trust what they see on Social Media



71% trust Social Media as a reliable source of news (vs. 53% young women)

...Despite

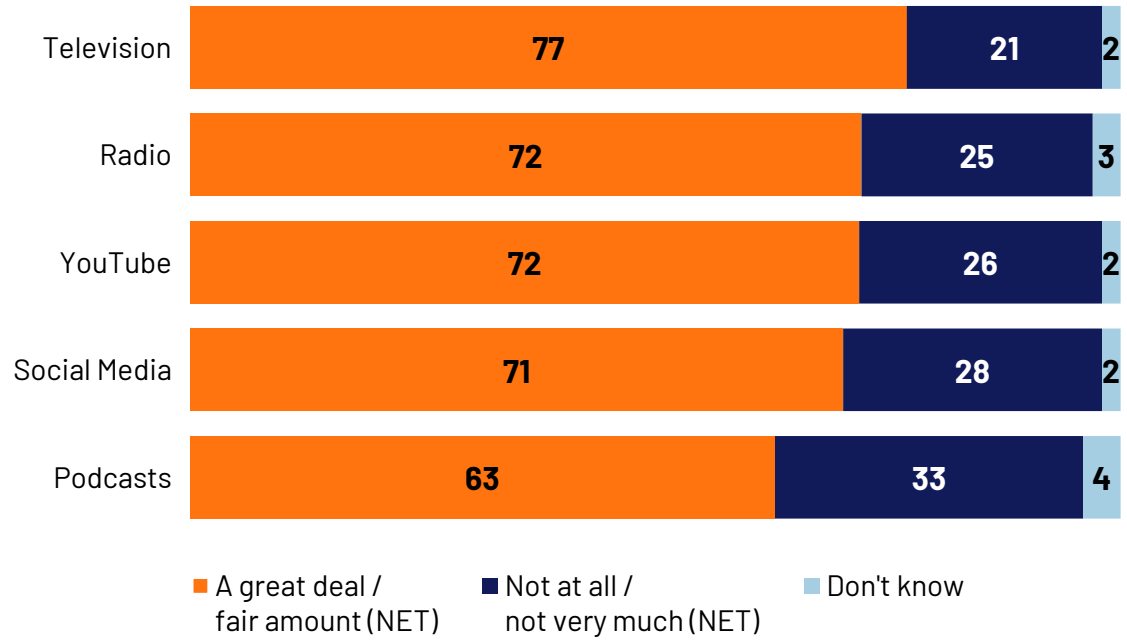


73% being concerned about misinformation online

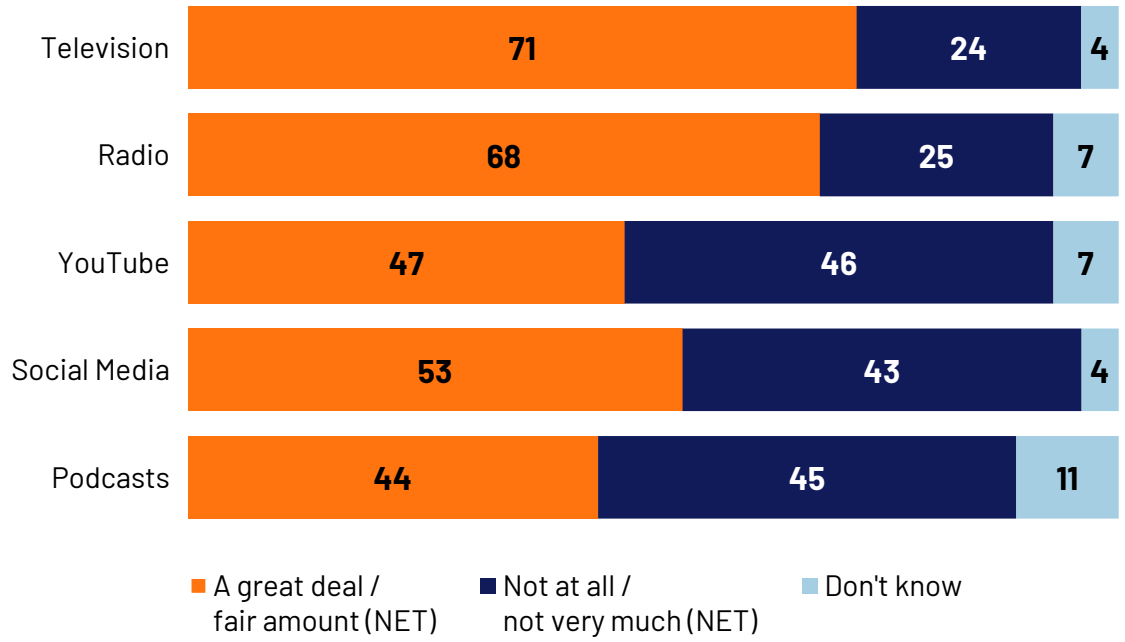
Young Men are also more trusting overall about a range of sources, particularly YouTube and Podcasts

To what extent, if at all, do you trust each of the following to be a reliable source of news information?

Males aged 16-34, % trust



Females aged 16-34, % trust



Base: n=2474
Q2. To what extent, if at all, do you trust each of the following to be a reliable source of news information?

Base: n=2474
Q2. To what extent, if at all, do you trust each of the following to be a reliable source of news information?

The lure of certainty…

Platforms reward visible, immediate content laced with confidence

Young men see people they aspire to be more often on Social Media (59%) than traditional media (53%)



...Leads to the danger of a credibility crisis

In a system which is thought to privilege masculine coded comms

The impact of the (on-going) Overton Window-shift

Filter bubbles online reflect broader social and structural problems.



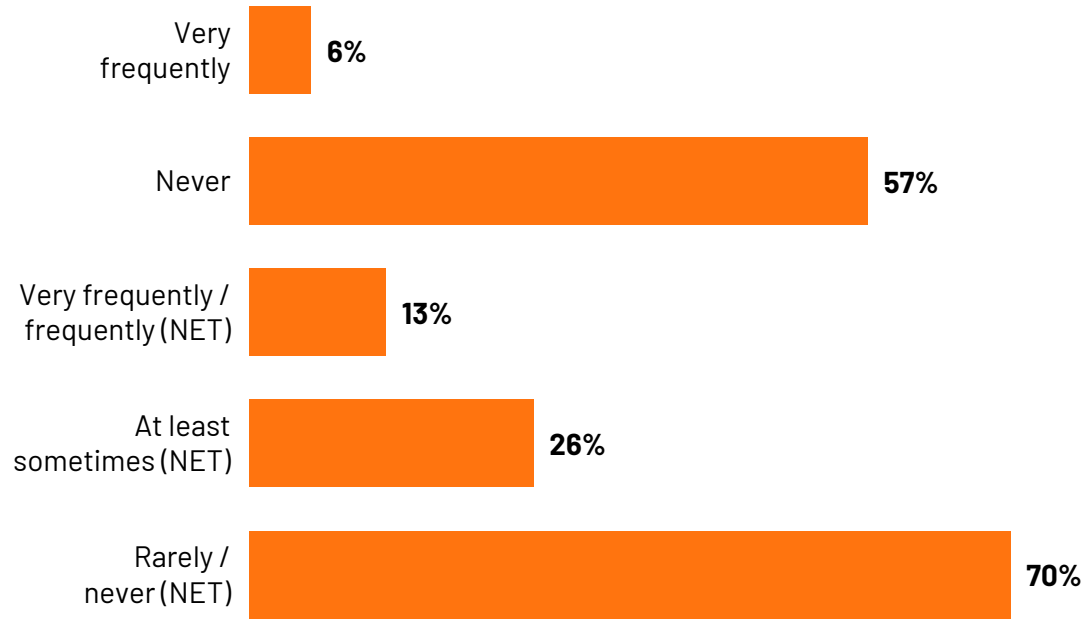
Young women are being left behind

Occupying divergent online spaces and are more trusting of spaces where framing and context offer a measure of safety.

AI is also offering certainty in an uncertain world

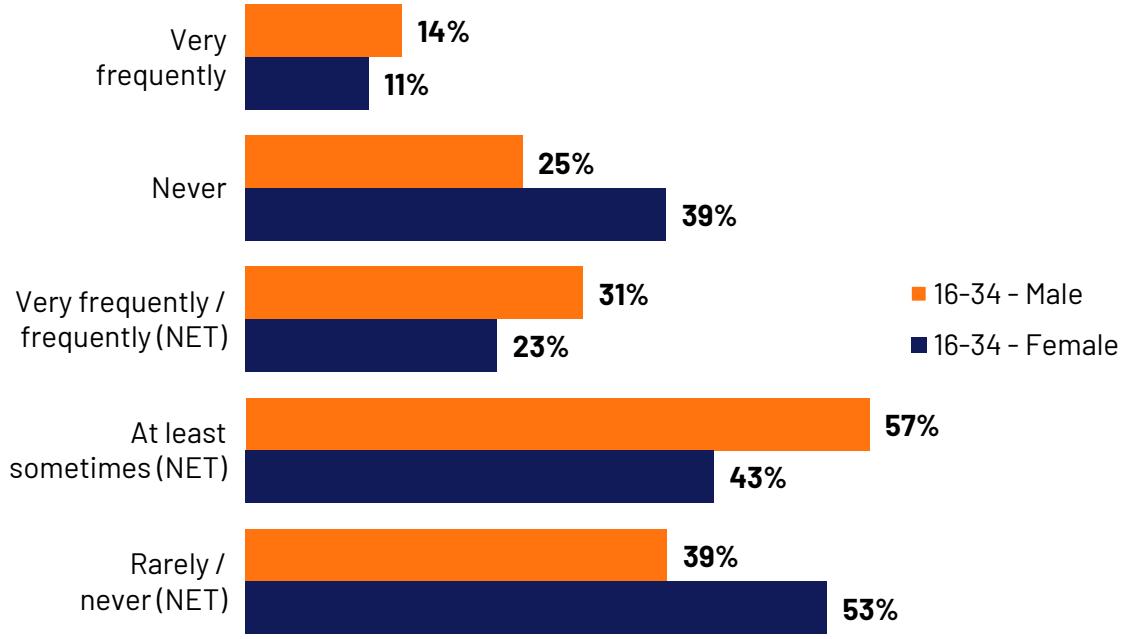
Young men are more likely than young women to use AI for personal advice

All 16+



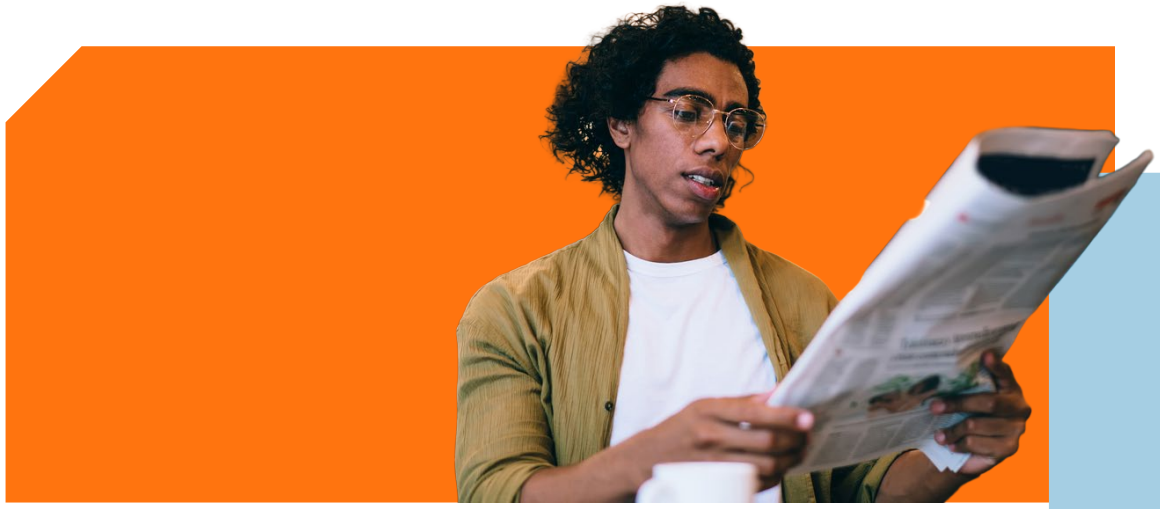
Base: n=2485
Q10. How often, if at all, do you use an AI tool, such as Chat GPT, as a source of advice on personal issues in your life?

Age x Gender, Age, Gender



Base: n=2485
Q10. How often, if at all, do you use an AI tool, such as Chat GPT, as a source of advice on personal issues in your life?

Media has a clear role to play in offering young men trust and guidance...



50% of young men want media providers to be a **trusted** source of information

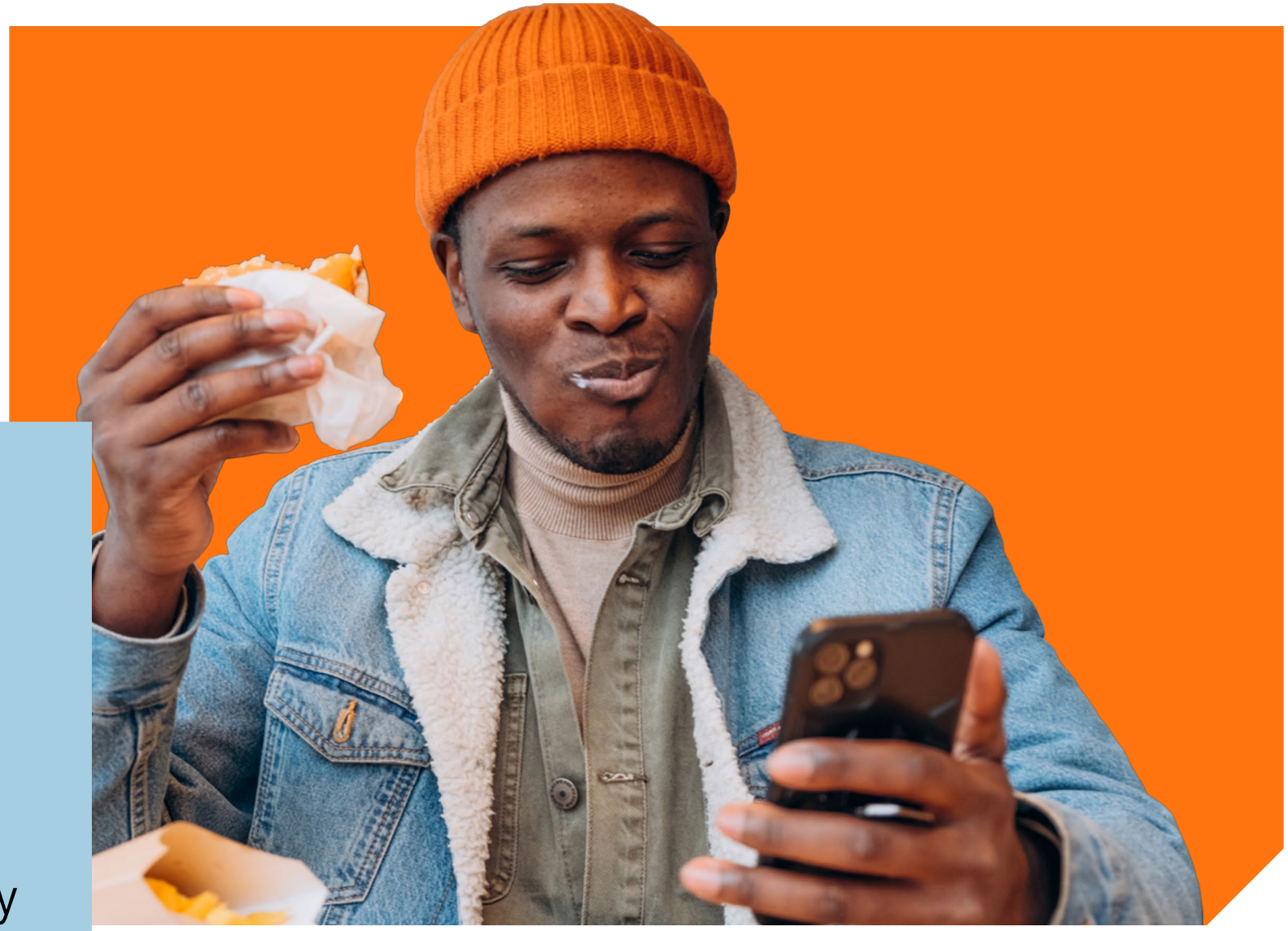


1 in **4** want them to help them make **better decisions**

...and in better serving substance

Young men are looking for meatier, more substantial content that they can sink their teeth into

There is an opportunity for brands to position themselves as **safe havens** in a chaotic attention economy

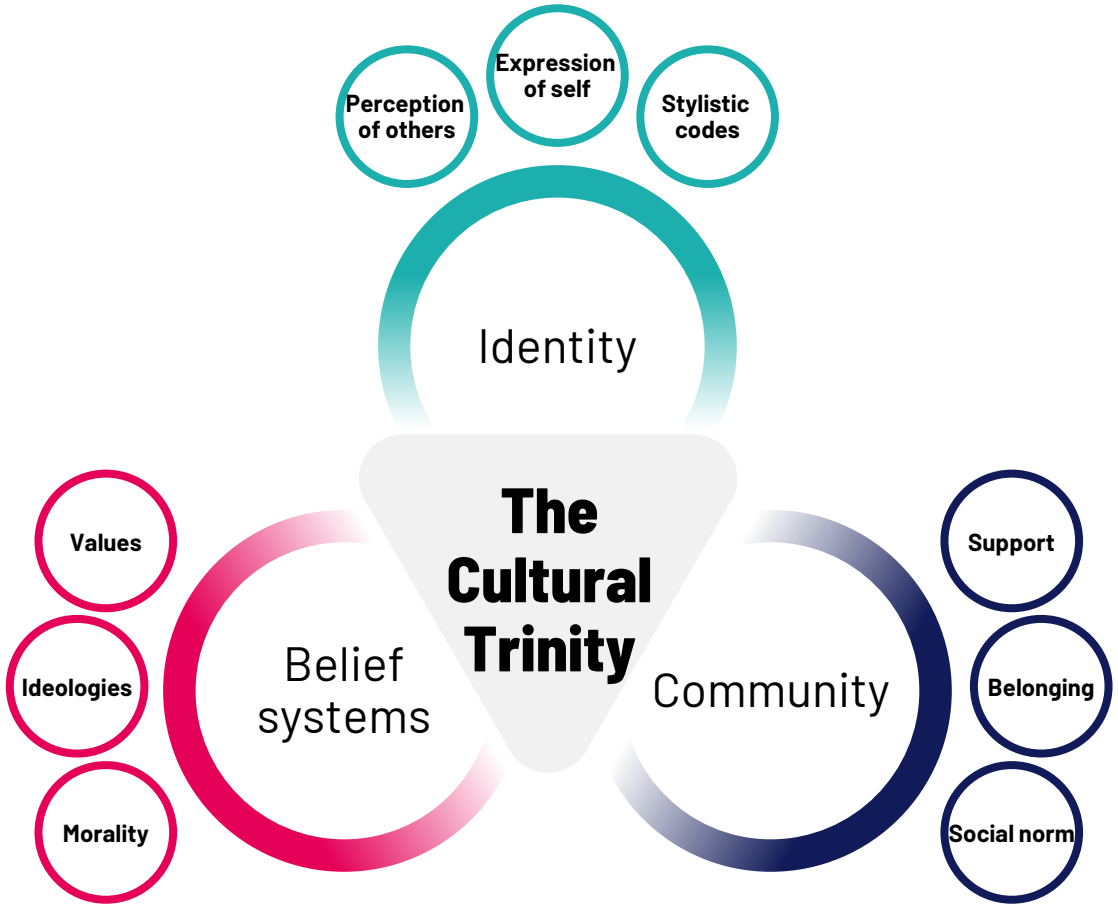


Media and tech are not the only answer here, but they can play a role in reshaping culture by…

‘Micro nudges’

Creating the right narratives

Connecting with young men effectively



‘Micro nudges’

1

A challenge of this size and magnitude doesn’t have to mean existential disruption. There can be “modest shifts”, such as:



Better on platform curation



Slowing amplification



More context in content

Creating the right narratives

2

Show nuance, complexity and depicting plural identities.



Highlight the source of alienation

Challenge zero-sum narratives and being transparent and representing the struggles accurately and in all their complexity.



Bridge the gap

Narratives about dating, hardships, misunderstandings have space conflict and resolution. There is also an opportunity to show there is more in common.



Redefine the hero, using real-life aspirations

Representing pluralities of masculinities, strength in vulnerability etc. Using peer-led sources and examples, grounded in experiences of people like them.

The ‘how’ is as important as ‘what’ you do

3



Humour cuts through

Humour and joy cuts through - as it ever did!



Be in the moments that forge strong connections

Side by side gaming and sport as important social connectors.



Learn from creators

Tone, style and format that engages young male audiences.

CONTACT US

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About Ipsos

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