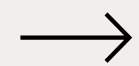
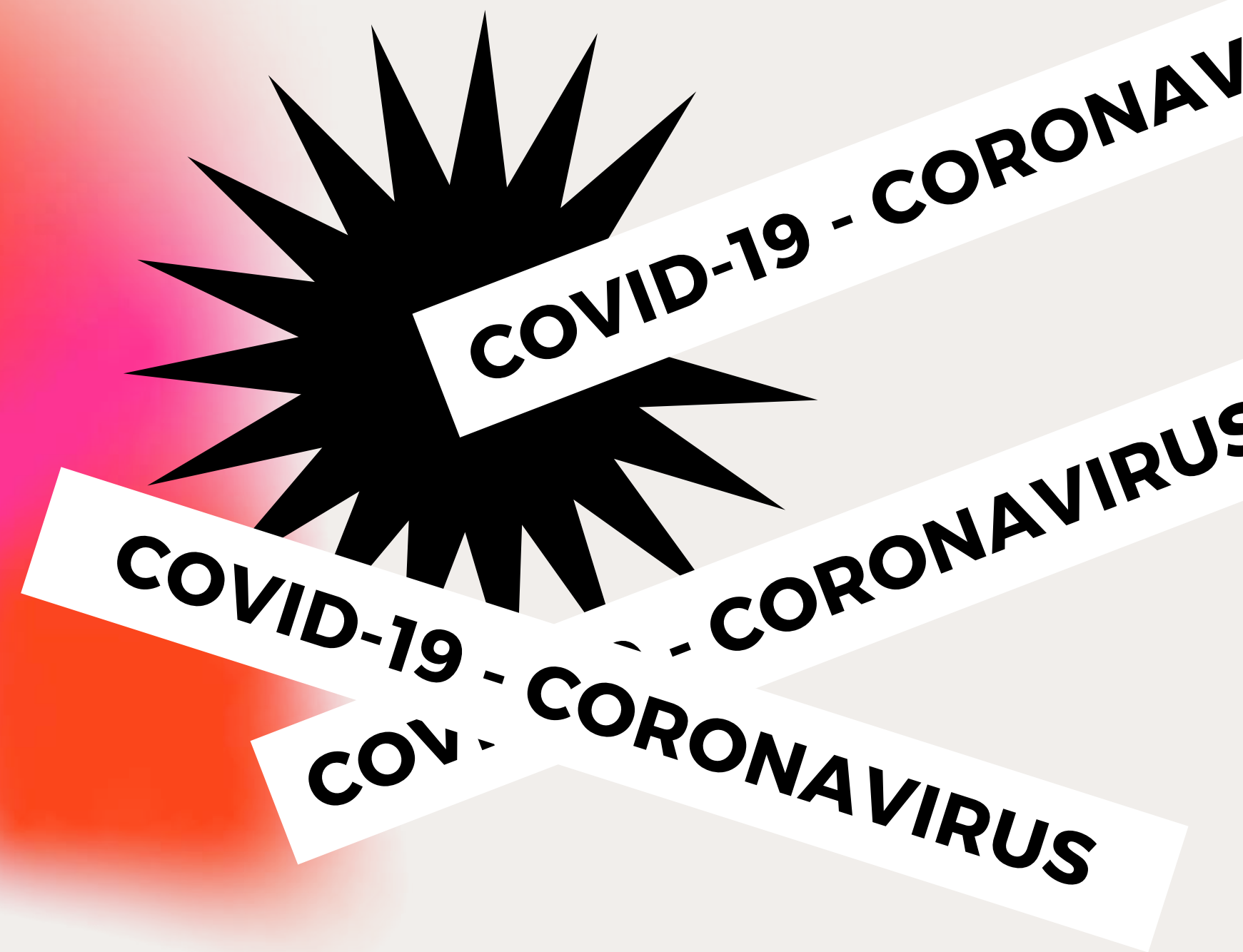




Media and the COVID-19 infodemic



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[PLAY THE CROSSWORD](#)

China Grapples With Mystery Pneumonia-Like Illness

Beijing is racing to identify a new illness that has sickened 59 people as it tries to calm a nervous public.



Health surveillance officers checked temperatures of passengers upon arrival at Hong Kong, on Saturday. *Andy Wong/Associated Press*

 **ABC News** 

January 21, 2020 · 

BREAKING: First confirmed case of the new coronavirus has been reported in Washington state, [CDC](#) says.



[ABCNEWS.GO.COM](#) 

1st confirmed case of new coronavirus reported in Washington state: CDC

 1.5K

337 Comments 6.2K Shares

Managing the COVID-19 infodemic: Promoting healthy behaviours and mitigating the harm from misinformation and disinformation

Joint statement by WHO, UN, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNAIDS, ITU, UN Global Pulse, and IFRC

23 September 2020 | Statement | Reading time: 2 min (572 words)

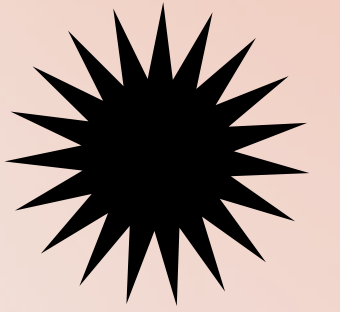
W.H.O. Fights a Pandemic Besides Coronavirus: An 'Infodemic'

Why COVID-19 conspiracy theories persist, and how to prevent the next 'infodemic'

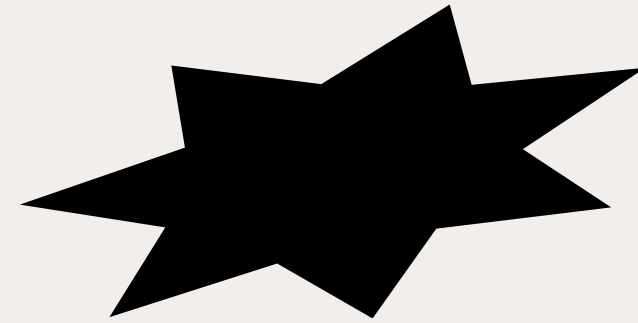
By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

Posted: April 6, 2021 6:30 PM

Updated: April 7, 2021 9:57 PM



What role does media play in the COVID–19 infodemic?



News–Finds–Me Perception



What is it?

The news-finds-me perception is the idea that **"one no longer needs to actively seek news in order to stay informed"** (Lee, 2020).

How does it affect people?

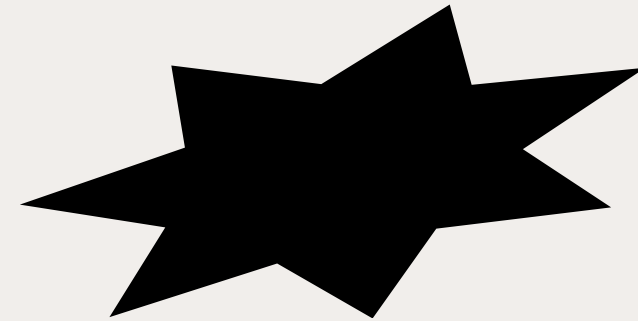
Studies have found that those with a news-finds-me perception are **less knowledgeable about political topics** (Zúñiga et al., 2017).

Hypothesis

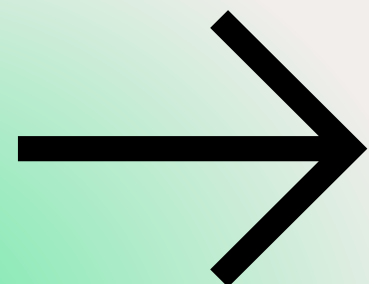
Those with a strong news-finds-me perception will be less knowledgeable about COVID-19 and, therefore, believe in misinformation more.

Coronavirus Doctors Battle Another Scourge: Misinformation

Physicians say they regularly treat people more inclined to believe what they read on Facebook than what a medical professional tells them.



Social Media

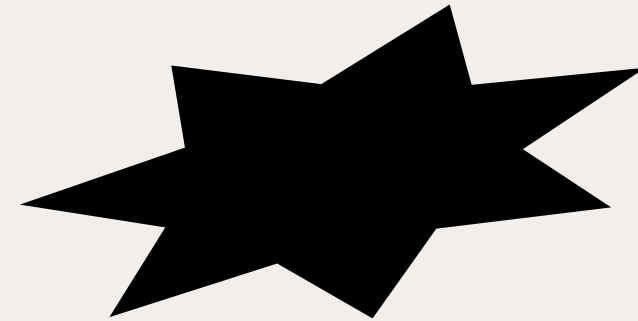


How does it relate to COVID-19?

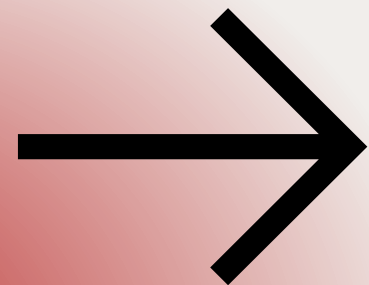
COVID-19 misinformation and disinformation ran rampant on social media. **Facebook removed nearly 7 million COVID-19-related posts in the second quarter of 2020 alone** (Paul & Vengattil, 2020).

Hypothesis

Those who use social media will be more likely to believe in misinformation.



Politics



How does it relate to COVID-19?

Partisanship has played a role in COVID-19 beliefs. For example, the Pew Research Center found that **Republicans viewed the pandemic as less of a threat when compared to Democrats** (Tyson, 2020).

In addition, a survey conducted in March 2020 showed that **those who viewed conservative media were more likely to believe in non-factual conspiracy theories about the virus** (Jamieson & Albarracin, 2020).

Hypothesis

Those who are conservative/Republican will be more likely to believe in COVID-19 misinformation due to greater spread on conservative news sources and social media.

Survey

- ADMINISTERED IN JUNE 2020 VIA AMAZON MECHANICAL TURK
- 504 PARTICIPANTS

UtahState
University

About how often do you read/watch/hear about scientific and health news?

☐ Every day

☐ 2-3 times a week

☐ Once a week

☐ 2-3 times a month

☐ Once a month

☐ Hardly ever

☐ Never

Where do you receive scientific and health news? (Select all that apply)

☐ From family/friends

☐ Social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.)

☐ Mainstream news websites

☐ YouTube or other video-sharing websites

☐ Newspapers

☐ Local TV stations (Including NBC, ABC, CBS, and Fox affiliates)

☐ Cable news stations (Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, etc.)

☐ Public health organization websites (CDC, WHO, NIH, your state's public health website)

☐ Research journals

☐ Radio or podcasts

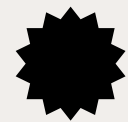
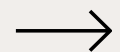
News–Finds–Me Perception

Participants were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with each of the following statements:



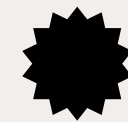
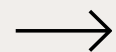
Statement 1

I can be well informed about the COVID-19 pandemic even when I don't actively follow the news.



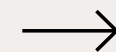
Statement 2

I rely on my friends or family for information about COVID-19 based on what they like or follow through social media.



Statement 3

I don't worry about keeping up with COVID-19 news because I know the news will find me.

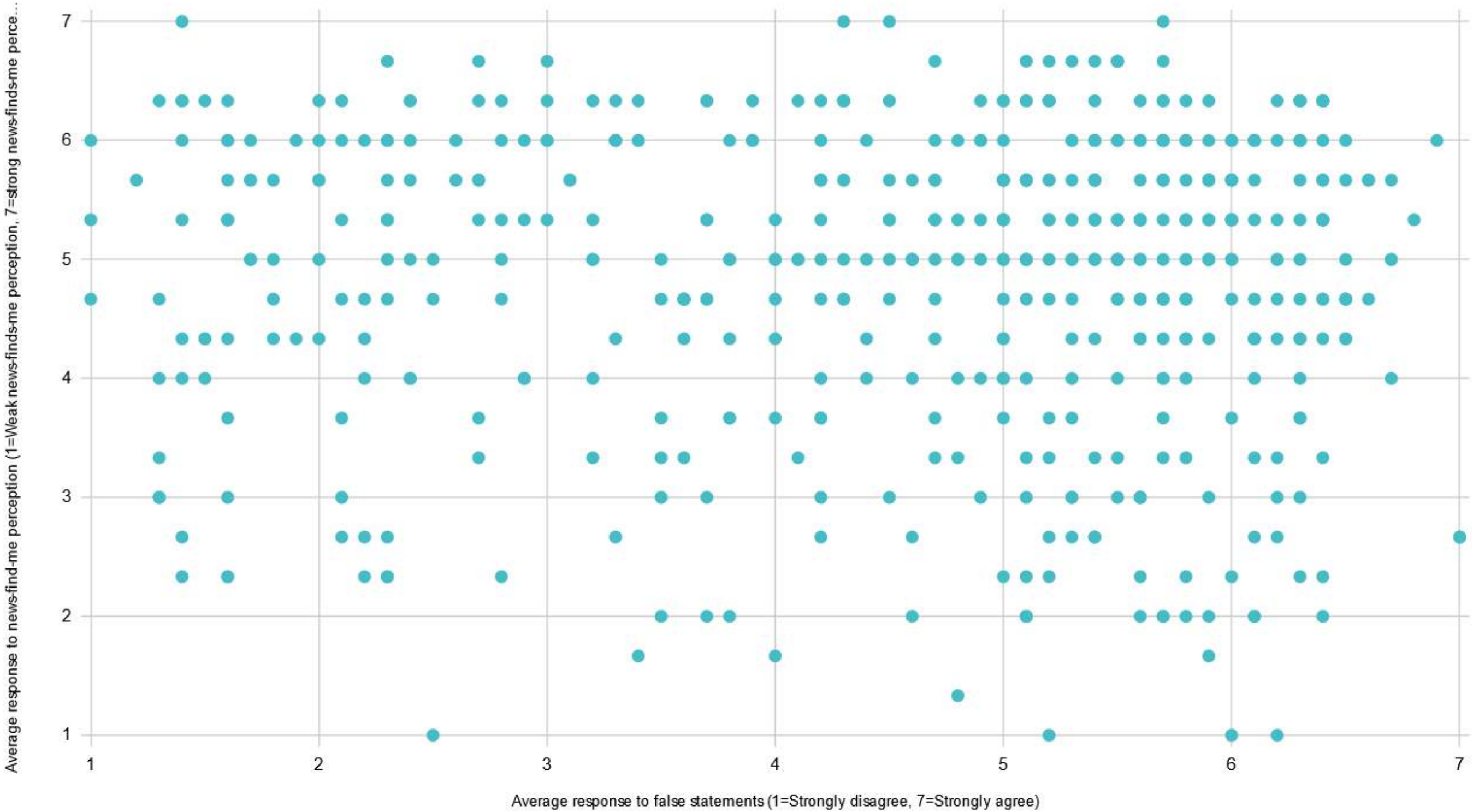


Statements

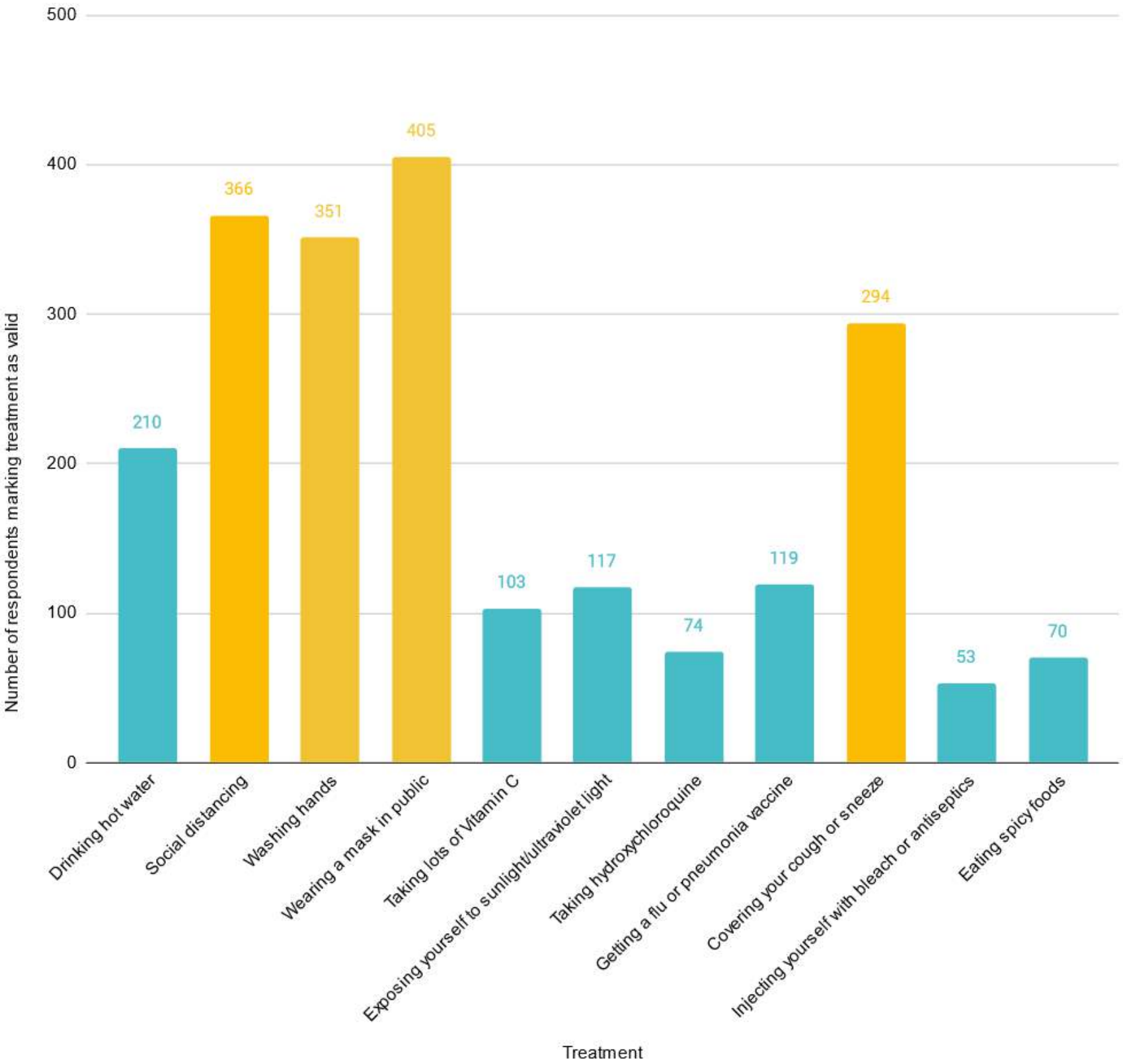
Participants were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- A group of elites is using the COVID-19 crisis to gain power.
- The COVID-19 virus is no more contagious than the common flu.
- The spread of COVID-19 is connected to 5G networks and technology.
- Only elderly people and those with weakened immune systems can become infected with COVID-19.
- The virus behind COVID-19 was produced in a lab in Wuhan, China.
- The COVID-19 virus was spread from bats to humans in Wuhan, China.
- Quarantine restrictions to slow the spread of a pandemic such as COVID-19 are an infringement of an individual's constitutional rights.
- Masks do not slow the spread of COVID-19 and are, therefore, unnecessary.
- Hydroxychloroquine prevents and/or cures COVID-19.
- Ingesting bleach or antiseptics prevents and/or cures COVID-19.
- COVID-19 will go away as the weather gets warmer.
- There will be another, larger spike of COVID-19 sometime in the near future.
- American news media is accurately portraying the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Scientists are generally trustworthy, and we should follow their guidance.

Average response to news-finds-me perception vs. Average response to false statements



Number of responses to treatments

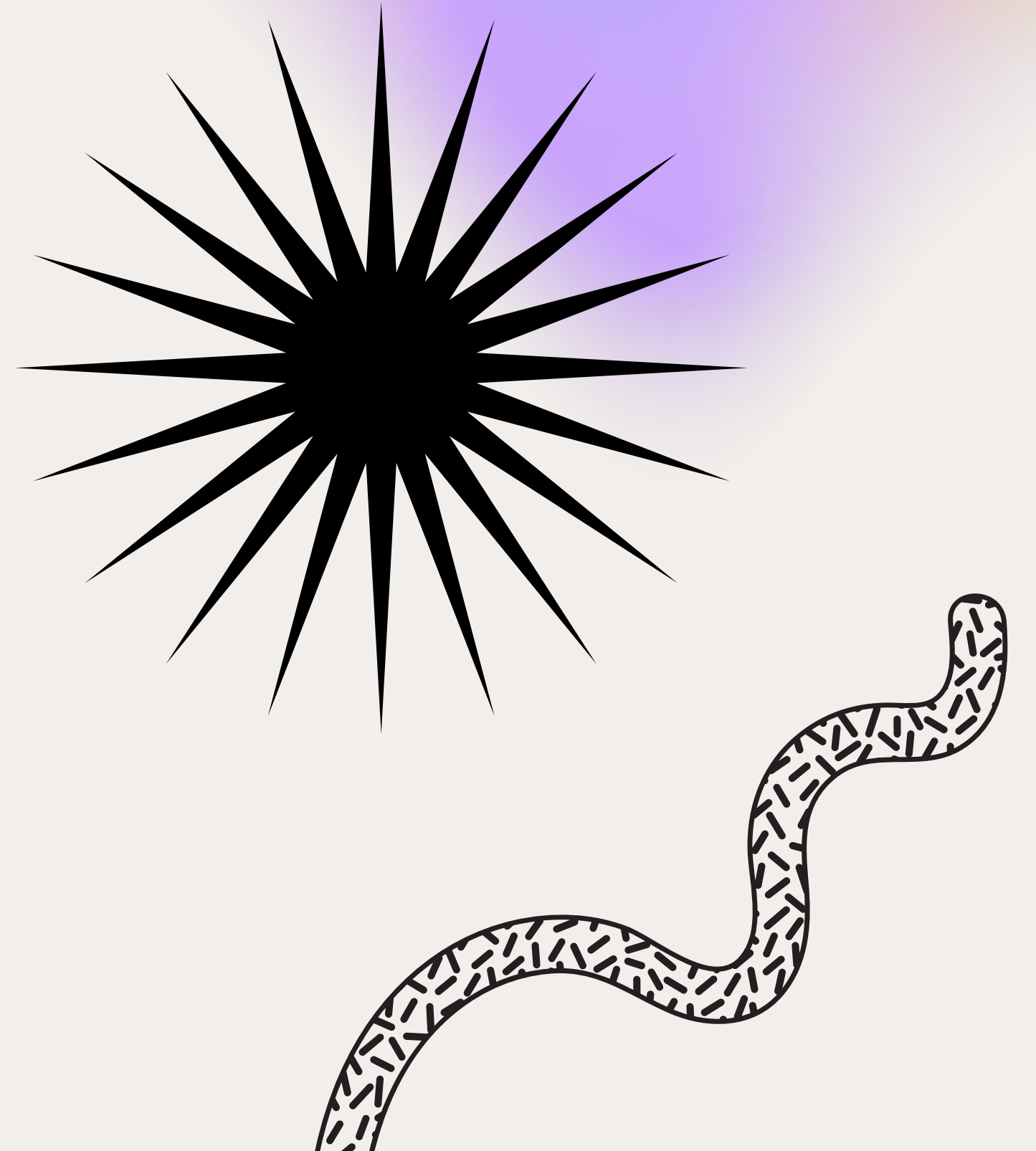


Our data set does not suggest correlation between a news-finds-me perception and belief in COVID-19 misinformation.

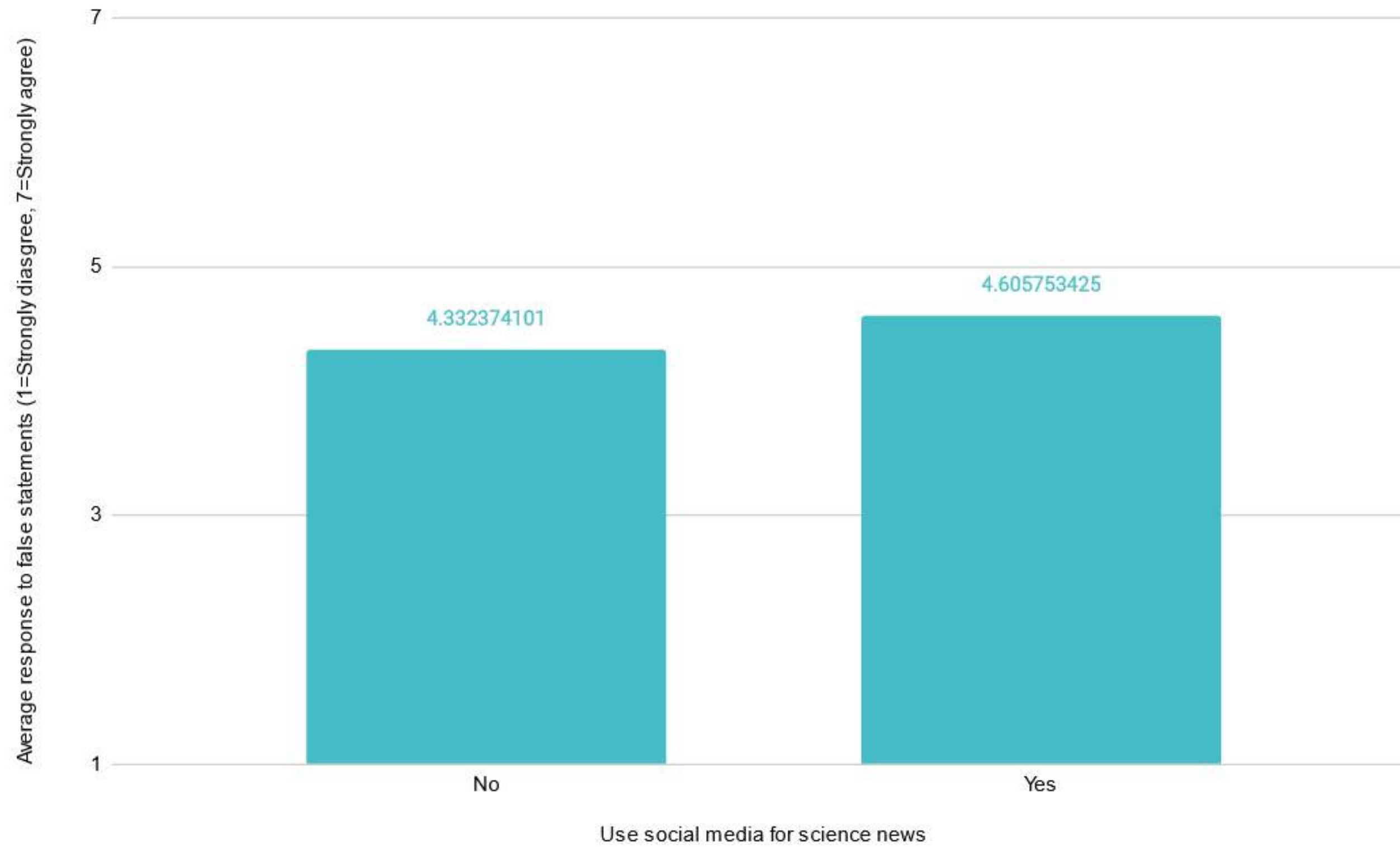
This could be because

- 1) people were using bad news sources,**
- 2) mainstream news was reiterating disinformation, and/or that**
- 3) information was changing so fast that people were generally confused about COVID-19 facts.**

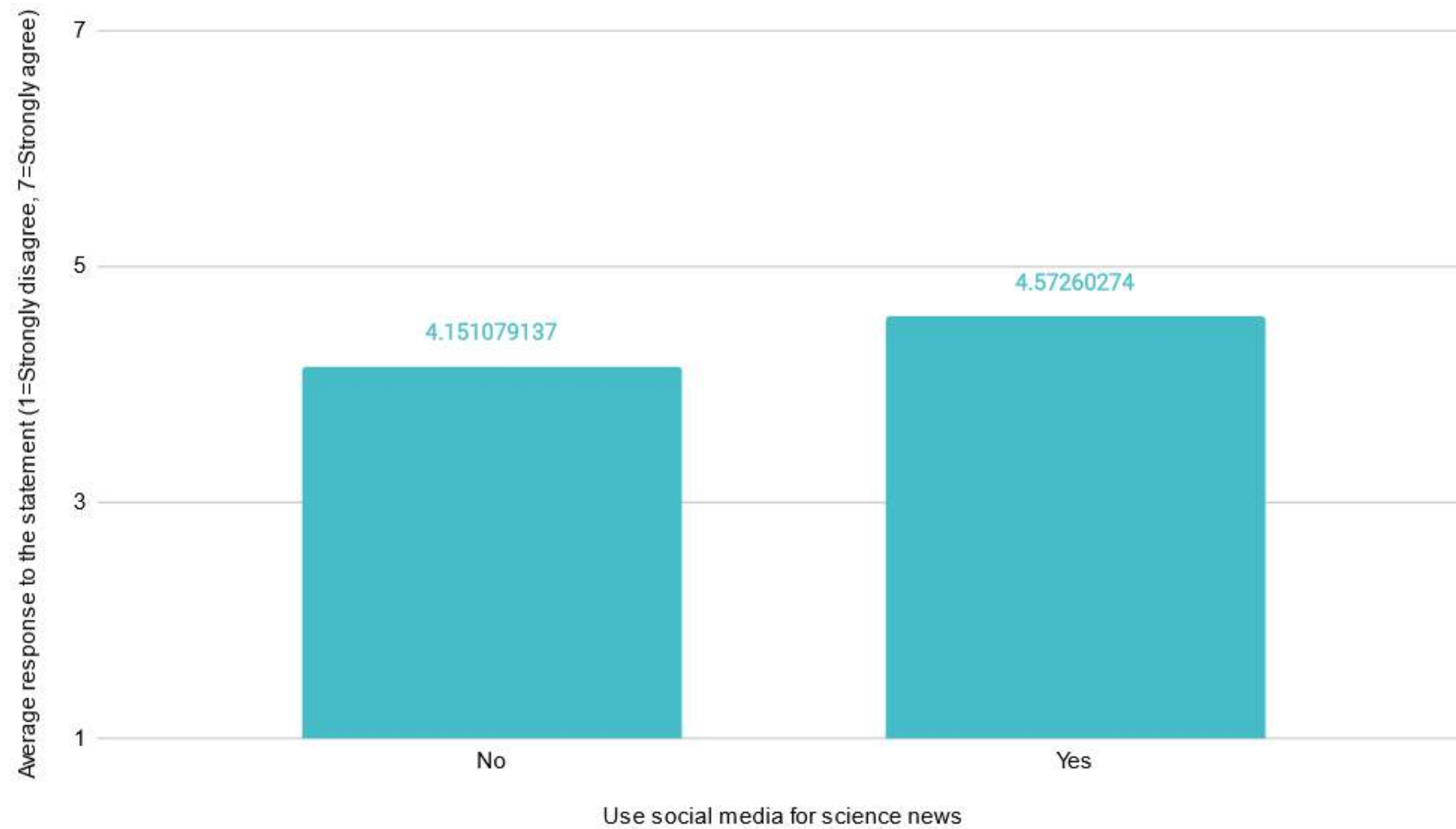
Social Media



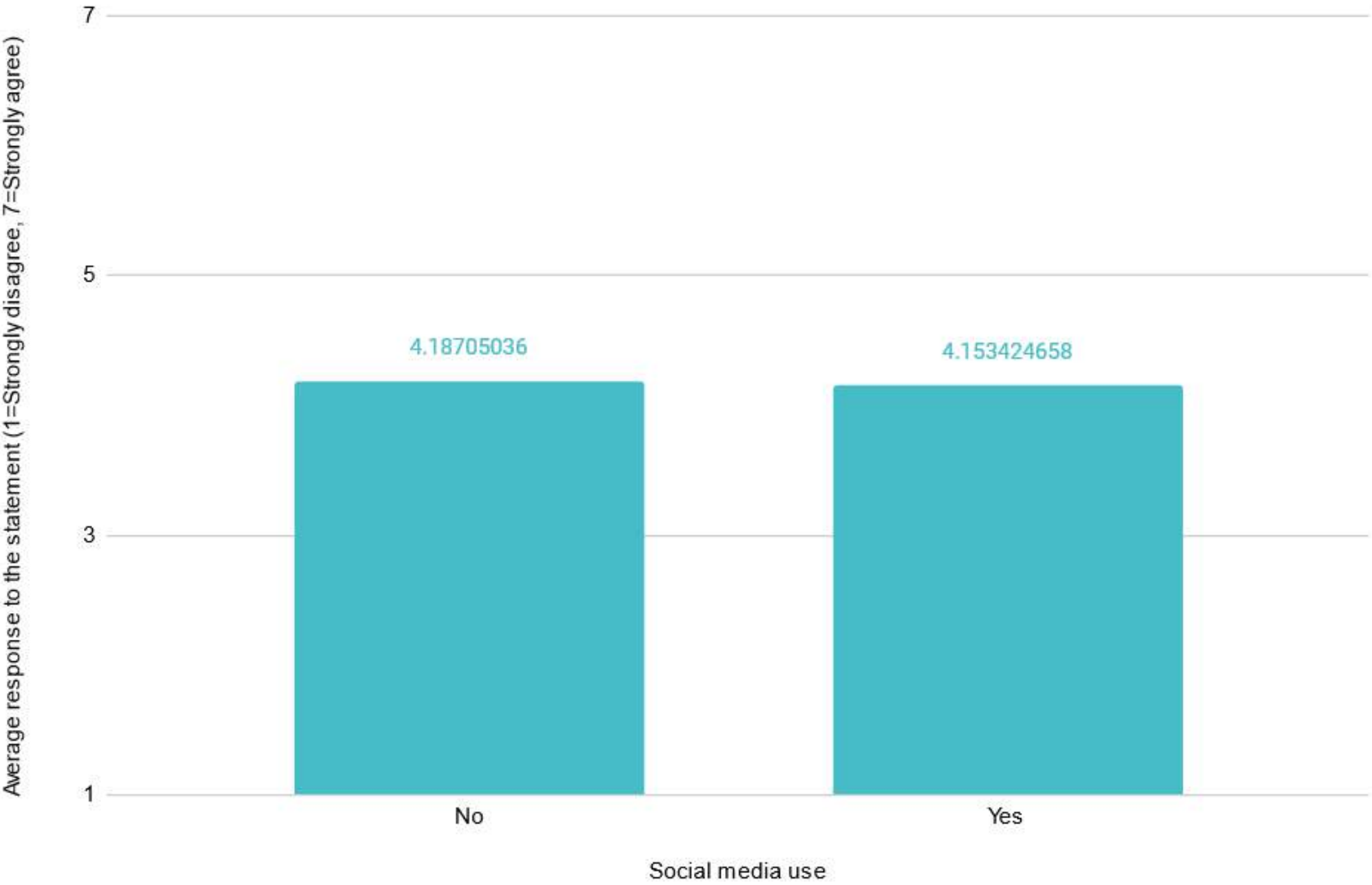
Average response to false statements vs. use of social media for science news



Average response: Only elderly people and those with weakened immune systems can become infected with COVID-19. vs. Use Social Media

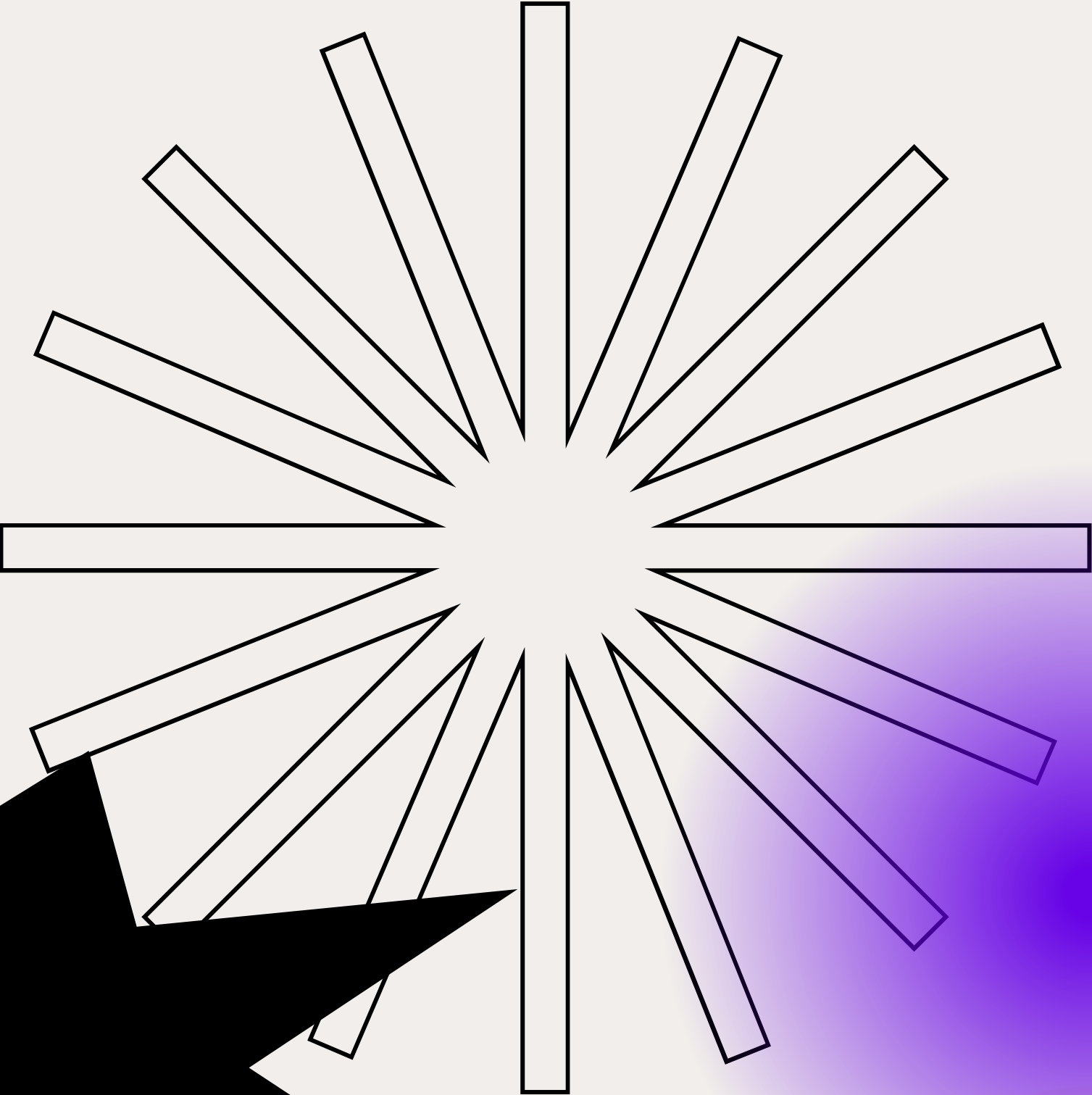
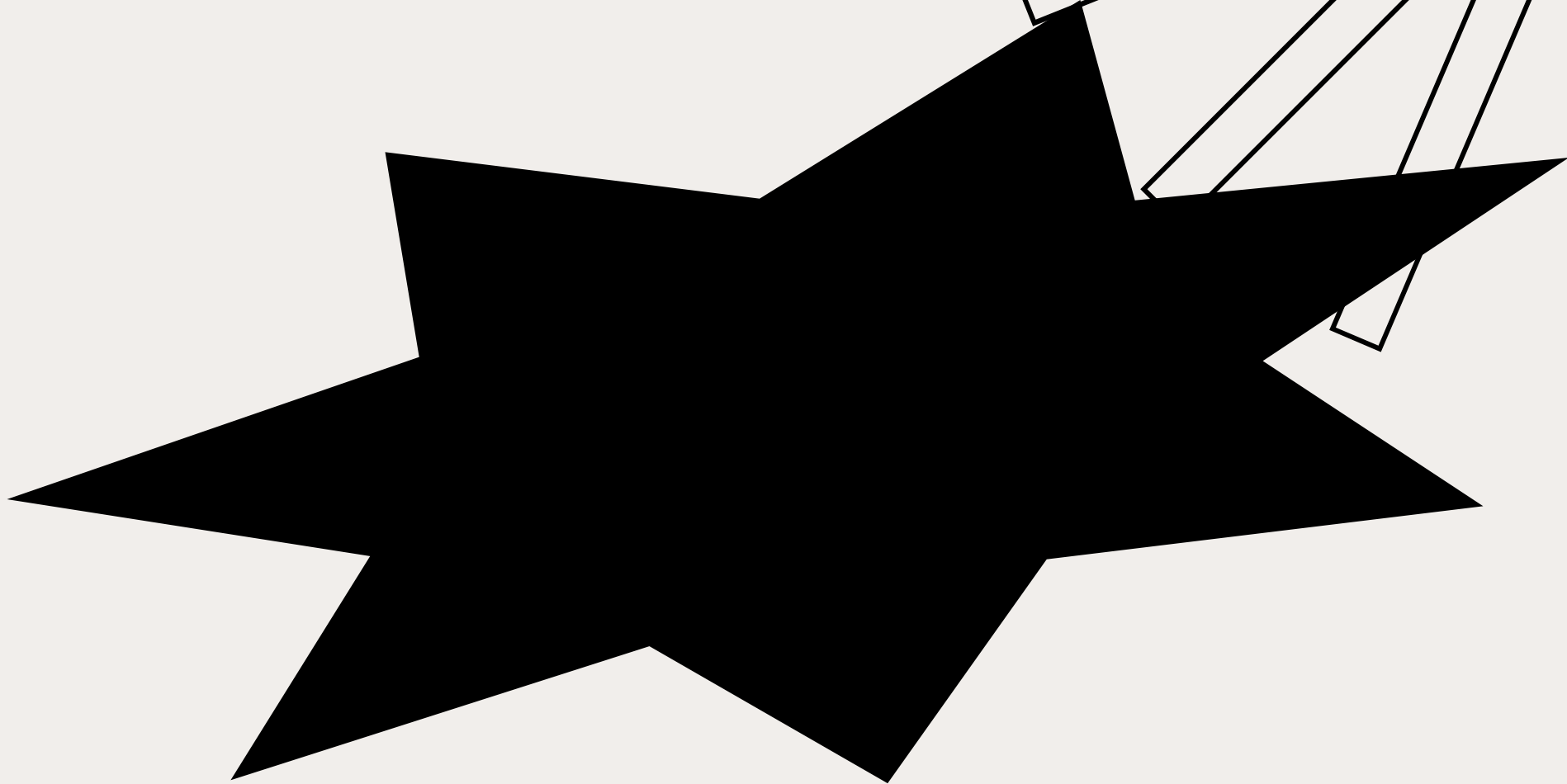


Average response: Masks do not slow the spread of COVID-19 and are, therefore, unnecessary. vs. Social media use



The data tells us that social media use correlates with belief in misinformation as a whole, but the effect varies based on the statement.

Politics

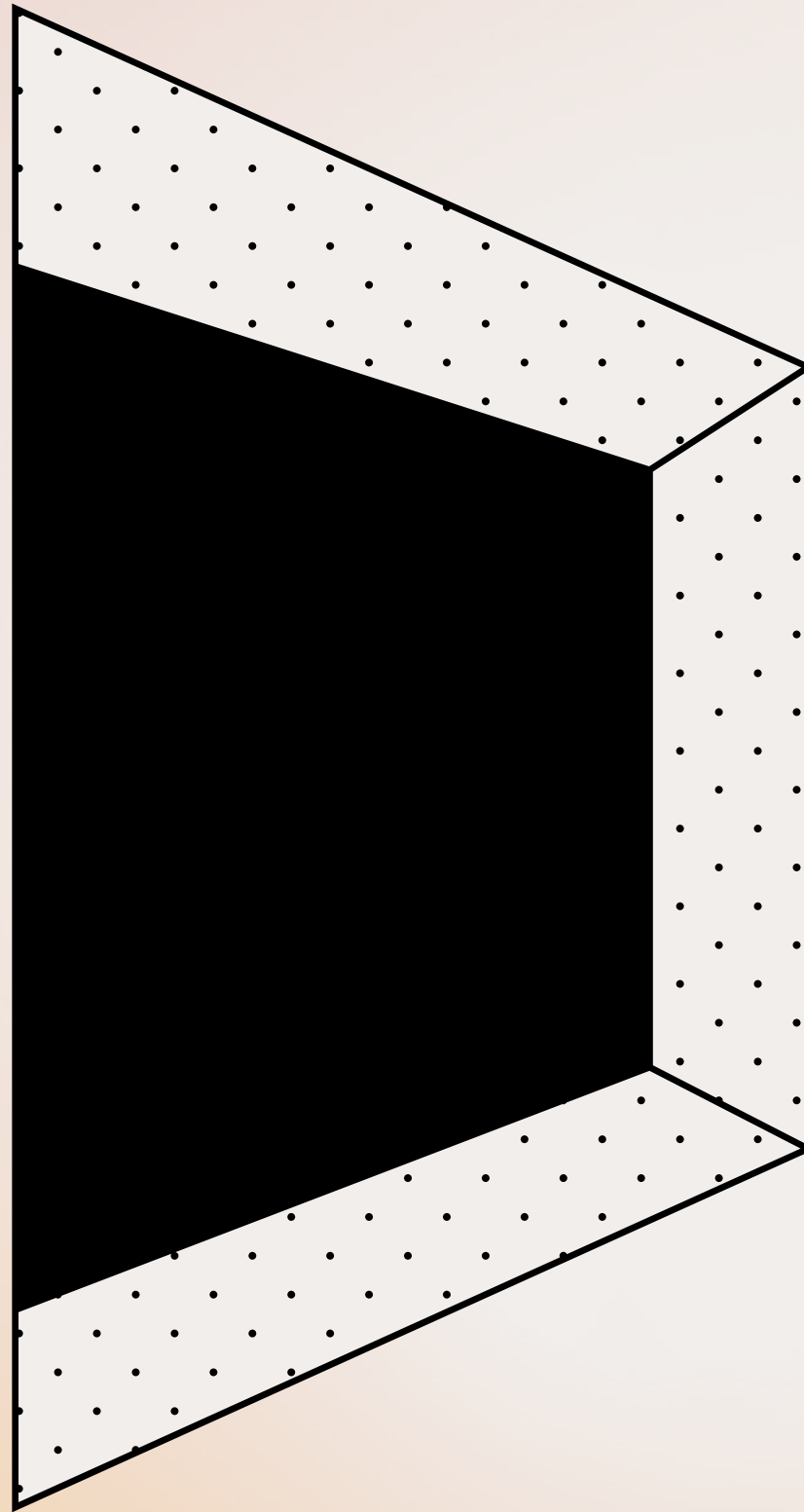
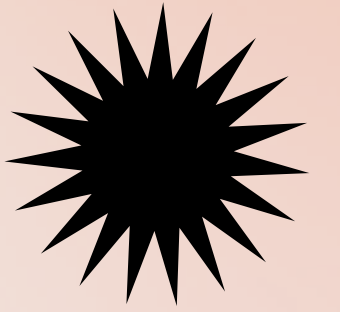


	Average response to false statements
Democratic Party	4.320618557
Does not use cable news	4.326277372
Uses cable news	4.307017544
Independent	4.278125
Does not use cable news	4.337837838
Uses cable news	4.077272727
Other (Please describe)	2.7
Does not use cable news	2.7
Uses cable news	--
Republican Party	4.86047619
Does not use cable news	4.85704698
Uses cable news	4.868852459
Grand Total	4.528230616

Conclusion

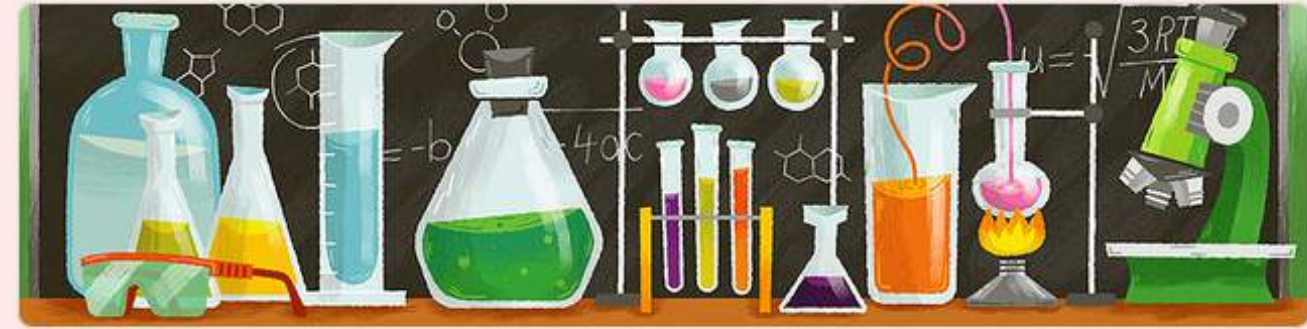
False beliefs about COVID-19 were prevalent in June 2020, when this survey was administered. While a news-finds-me perception did not have much effect on COVID-19 beliefs, those who identified as Republican or used social media for COVID-19 news were more likely to believe misinformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed rapidly over the past year. Further research about other moments of time during the pandemic may yield different results and bring more understanding on the topic.



**These findings
also show us
that media
literacy is as
important as
ever.**

Do you think you have what it takes?



COVID-19 Infodemic Quiz

Test your fact-checking skills! Check out the content and do your research. Good luck!

* Required

Question 1



Is this video a trustworthy source for information about COVID-19? *

1 point

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Next



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**For more information
and sources:**

