# Boost community resilience

This signal is part of Civic Signals, a larger framework to help create better digital public spaces. We believe it's a platform's responsibility to design the conditions that promote ideal digital public spaces. Such spaces should be designed to help people feel Welcome, to Connect, to Understand and to Act. These four categories encompass the 14 Civic Signals.

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At a glance

Community resilience is the ability of a geographic community to recover from significant stress or adversity, such as natural disasters, public health emergencies, or acts of terror and violence.

Why It Matters

Building community resilience is incredibly valuable to creating and maintaining healthy and sustainable communities. Communities that have the foundation for resilience before a crisis will tend to fare better when the tragedy hits. At the individual level, resilience can increase life satisfaction and promote mental health by making people less vulnerable to stress.

> *The way I see that is if they have an opportunity or they have I think social responsibility to highlight something. Not necessarily do something but just highlight the fact that there is this thing: Do you want to get involved?"*
> *– Shaun, South African focus group participant*

Putting the Signal Into Practice

- In the Rockaway region of New York, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, local residents created the Facebook page Rockaway Help. The page connected residents who needed aid with those who could help, through a daily list of high-priority donation requests. https://www.rockawave.com/articles/remembering-sandy-2/

- During 2011's Cyclone Yasi in Australia, community members started Facebook page Cyclone Yasi Update to act as an information hub, combining reports from residents on the ground with releases from official sources and verifying information continually.

- Also in Australia, during the 2010-2011 floods, the Queensland Police were able to combat misinformation using the #Mythbuster hashtag. The two Australian case studies demonstrate the importance of both peer-to-peer but also official communication on social media during a crisis. https://research-management.mq.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/62427034/Publisher+version+%28open+access%29.pdf

- Google's "SOS alerts" show a summary of the disaster or crisis that's occurring together with emergency phone numbers and websites, relevant news articles, tweets from local authorities, and tips to help people stay safe. These results turn up when someone searches for the crisis on Google, and can even pop up as notifications on mobile phones for those close to the affected area. https://support.google.com/sosalerts/?hl=en

Literature review
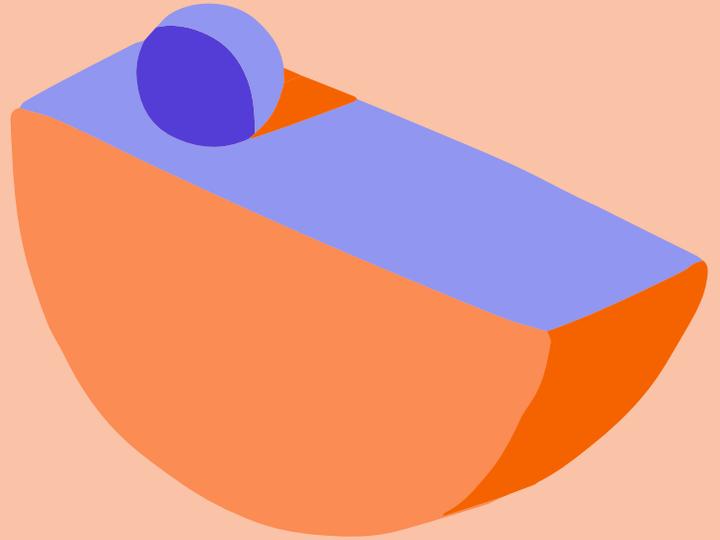
By Kelsey Whipple,
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, and **Taeyoung Lee,**
Center for Media Engagement
With thanks to Michael Ungar,
Dalhousie University and Jack Saul,
International Trauma Studies Program

What the Signal Is

According to social sustainability researcher Kristen Magis, community resilience "is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise." In community resilience research, communities are usually defined geographically, with common examples being neighborhoods, cities or other areas where people's lives are bound together by their proximity to each other. The resilience of these geographic communities, according to neuropsychiatrist Judith Landau and psychologist Jack Saul, is measured by their "capacity, hope and faith to withstand major trauma and loss, overcome adversity, and to prevail, usually with increased resources, competence and connectedness." For Landau and Saul, community resilience is the ability of a community to recover from significant stress or adversity, which comes mostly from natural disasters or acts of terror and violence. In a broad sense, community resilience refers

to a community's capacity to rebound from various adversities, including political and ecological threats.

Examples of community resilience studied by scholars include the 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, and the 2010 tsunami in Chile. In response to all of these examples, communities banded together against various social, physical and economic challenges to adapt to a way of life that had been grievously threatened by major disasters ranging from domestic terrorism to natural disasters to outside attack.

Related Concepts

Resilience is not the same as positive development, happiness, or self-actualization. Resilience refers to a process of positive growth under conditions of stress or adversity. According to child development scholar Ann Masten, resilience is demonstrated by a positive outcome in response to significant hazards to our development or adaptation. In many cases, as psychiatrists Kathryn Connor and Jonathan Davidson put it, "Resilience embodies the personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity." It is also important to distinguish individual coping or personal capacity from resilience. As social work scholar Michael Ungar and educational psychologist Linda Theron pointed out, the concept of resilience should be "understood as the process of multiple biological, psychological, social, and ecological systems interacting in ways that help individuals to regain, sustain, or improve their mental wellbeing when challenged by one or more risk factors." Community resilience depends on social,

ecological, and cultural factors as well as individual characteristics.

Why It's Important

Building community resilience is valuable to creating and maintaining healthy and sustainable communities. These communities, according to geographer Graham A. Tobin, are intentionally structured in a way that reduces the potential threats of disasters while simultaneously making it possible for communities to heal and restore themselves quickly when needed by renewing their socio-economic strength.

According to community/social psychologist Fran Norris and fellow scholars, community resilience is especially valuable when it comes to creating strategies to prepare for disasters. This is because, unlike smaller threats, disasters pose a significant risk to the larger community, rather than just a few individuals. Norris and colleagues describe the range of disasters as including natural (e.g. hurricanes, earthquakes), technological (e.g. nuclear accidents), and human causes (e.g. mass shootings). In the first category we can place pandemics such as the current coronavirus outbreak. Here, community resilience is not just about recovering from disaster-related problems, but also about a community's disaster readiness or management. As such, communities equipped with the foundation for resilience such as trust in institutions, access to health care, government support, and social cohesion before a disaster are more likely to cope with the adversity and to recover from it readily.

Community resilience helps communities to adapt to unanticipated risks and large-scale, systemic cultural changes, allowing them to thrive long-term while supporting the growth and resilience of the individuals who belong to them. Community resilience also affects the individuals who belong to a community. According to Ungar, the success of individuals depends heavily on the success and resources of the communities to which they belong. At the individual level, resilience can increase life satisfaction and promote mental health by making people less vulnerable to stress. Having a population full of resilient individuals does not necessarily make a community resilient, though community resilience can increase the odds that individuals will show resilience under stress.

How We Can Move the Needle

Landau and Saul identified four themes that are key to generating and sustaining community resilience: 1) building community and enhancing social connectedness as a foundation for recovery, 2) collectively telling the story of the community's experience and response, 3) re-establishing the rhythms and routines of life and engaging in collective healing rituals and 4) arriving at a positive vision of the future with renewed hope. In order to understand how to promote or increase community resilience, it's also helpful to make use of Ungar's understanding of the term: "Resilience is best understood not as an individual's capacity to withstand adversity, but instead as the capacity of individuals to access the resources they need to sustain well-being *and* the capacity of their communities and governments to

provide them with what they need in ways that are meaningful." This definition points to the clear need for promoting a systemic understanding of resilience above and beyond reliance as rugged individualism. In this sense, as Ungar and Theron point out, it is important to address socioecological factors that make communities more resilient.

According to Norris and her colleague's community resilience model, four sets of adaptive capacities make communities resilient: economic development, community competence, information and communication, and social capital. Based on these criteria, forging relationships between civic and political groups, creating a network of socio-economic resources and services within the community, and creating a structure of feedback between community actors can improve resilience. Research from applied ecologist Fikret Berkes and environmental psychologist and anthropologist Helen Ross emphasized the need for communities to be proactive about building resilience, taking the time to become organized, building their infrastructure, diversifying their economic resources, and creating lasting social networks. By invoking community agency and adopting self-governance, communities can reduce the risks they face from external threats. On a related note, there is an example that shows how institutional intervention helps vulnerable populations get economic resources to cope with life-threatening events. Geoff O'Brien and Alex Hope at Northumbria University examined a case of energy resilience in Northern England. According to their study, seniors vulnerable to fuel poverty and extreme weather events (e.g. heat waves or cold weather) faced challenges such as power outages. These challenges could be solved by decentralized power grids in the

form of local energy generation, as well as diversification of power sources through the use of renewable energy.

Media outlets and social media platforms have an especially valuable role to play when it comes to maintaining information and communication during challenging times. Communication scholar J. Brian Houston and his co-authors, in a literature review, found 15 ways social media was used in disaster communication. These included sending and receiving requests for help, providing mental health support, and reconnecting loved ones. One example of how social media has been utilized comes from the Rockaway region of New York, where in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, local residents created the Facebook page Rockaway Help. The page connected residents who needed aid with those who could provide help, by posting a daily list of high-priority donation requests. Meanwhile, in an ongoing initiative, Google's "SOS alerts" show a summary of the disaster or crisis that's occurring together with emergency phone numbers and websites, relevant news articles, tweets from local authorities, and tips to help people stay safe. These results turn up when someone searches for the crisis on Google, and can even pop up as notifications on mobile phones for those close to the affected area. However, it should be noted that community resilience goes far beyond emergency assistance, and it is likely platforms could do more to help structure communications and community relations for optimal resilience.

Social capital (including recovery and development services) and sustainable social structures also have the potential to help communities develop resilience over time. As Ungar has pointed out, communities must have easy access to resources, rang-

ing from material resources (e.g. healthcare, housing, education, and employment) to social justice, in order to be resilient when disaster strikes. Because it takes time to develop community resilience, early intervention on these fronts is recommended. According to Ungar, interventions are most successful when they are organized and navigated locally, when they last across time and when they are culturally relevant to the communities they support.

Overall, Norris and colleagues say that to improve community resilience, "communities must reduce risk and resource inequities, engage local people in mitigation, create organizational linkages, boost and protect social supports, and plan for not having a plan, which requires flexibility, decision-making skills, and trusted sources of information that function in the face of unknowns." When a community is resilient, individuals are also more likely to be resilient because the community allows them to find the resources to cope with adversity and to bounce back from it.

How to Measure

The notion of community resilience should be assessed by multiple socioecological factors. In this sense, public health scholar Sonny Patel, psychologist M. Brooke Rogers, public health researcher Richard Amlôt and psychologist G. James Rubin identified nine core elements of community resilience: local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance and leadership, resources, economic investment, preparedness, and mental outlook. All of these factors are important to consider when assessing a communi-

ty's resilience. Other researchers define community resilience in terms of individual resilience, and thus use individual scales – such as the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale – to attempt to approximate resilience on the community level. Other measures are specific to community resilience. One such scale, by geography professor Susan Cutter and colleagues, uses 36 variables in five categories. These are social resilience (including the age of the population, transportation access and health coverage), economic resilience (including employment and percent homeownership), institutional resilience (including flood mitigation policies and political fragmentation), infrastructure resilience (including housing age and shelter capacity) and community capital (including religiosity, civic involvement, and number of social advocacy organizations).

One important measure of community resilience was developed by social epidemiologist Kathleen Sherrieb, Norris and epidemiologist Sandro Galea. Of the aforementioned four sets of adaptive capacities that Norris and colleagues proposed, Sherrieb, Norris and Galea focused on economic development and social capital. By taking multiple steps – creating an extensive list of measures, identifying secondary data sources with which to examine those measures, testing the correlations of indicators – these authors created a community resilience index as well as economic development and social capital index. Included on their list of indicators of community resilience are variables including resource and income equity, occupational diversity, migration rate, crime rate and the percentage of a community that votes, among other community factors. Although this study did not include the other two adaptive capacities, community competence and information and communication,

it is also important to measure community resilience from these two perspectives.

Political science professor Daniel Aldrich and sociologist Michelle Meyer measured neighborhood resilience in terms of community competence. They assessed neighborhood resilience according to the presence of fundamental features, including whether neighbors trust each other and interact, whether they own their houses and how long they stay in the neighborhood, whether neighbors have a sense of community, whether they work toward a shared common good and whether they have a variety of places to gather together.

From the information and communication standpoint, studies have also examined social media's ability to help communities bounce back from disaster. Information systems researcher Nick LaLone and colleagues showed that electricity discussions on Twitter during Hurricane Sandy correlated highly with actual electrical grid outages. This indicates that social media metrics could be used in real time to track the effects of a disaster on a population, which can be viewed as the opposite of resilience. The authors note, however, that several barriers must be surmounted before such social media measures can be more widely developed, much less employed. These include the privatized nature of electricity data in countries such as the U.S., the difficulty in defining an appropriate geographical scale for social media data, concerns over transparency and privacy, and social media's inability to represent those who cannot or choose not to use it.
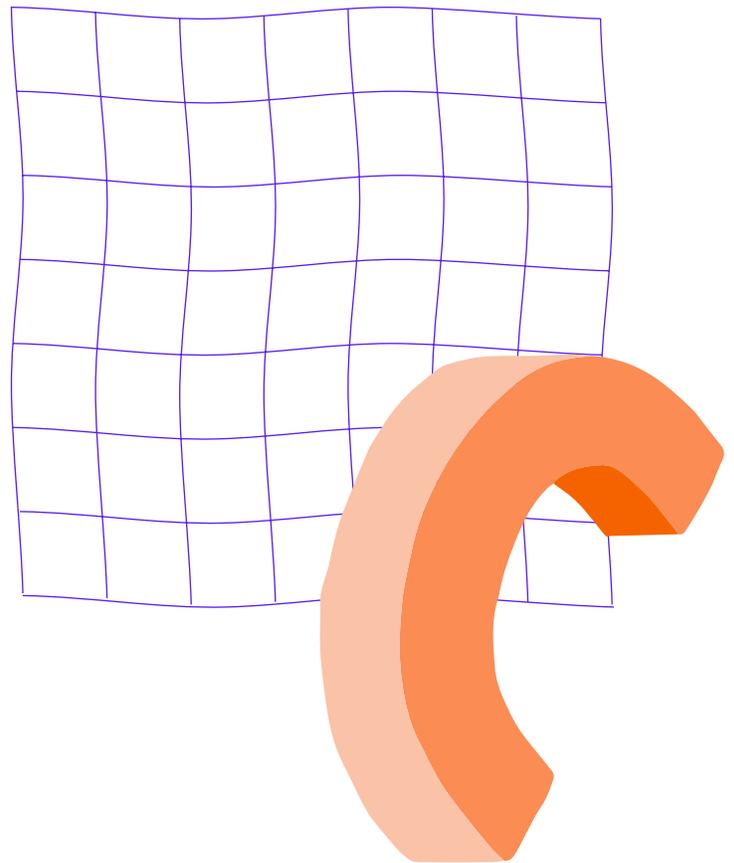
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Expert Q&A
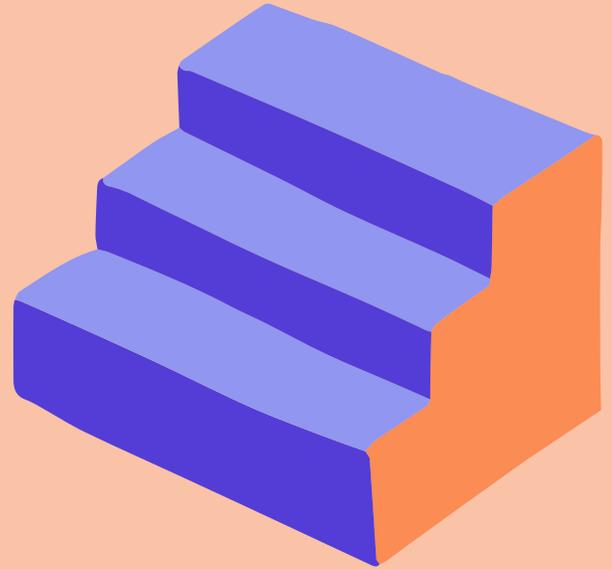
Three key questions with
Michael Ungar, Dalhousie University;
Daniel P. Aldrich, Northeastern
University; and **Caitlin Chase**,
independent creative strategy consultant,
and Founding Member and Digital Lead
for The Resilience Collective

How does this principle help create a world we'd all want to live in?

Ungar: The concept of community resilience shifts our focus from community breakdown and disorder to the capacity of communities to grow and heal during and after a crisis. Communities that have come through adversity become our best teachers about what is possible. Not only is that inspiring, but from a research point of view, these communities provide rich information about "promising practices" that can return communities to their former functioning or make them even better after a crisis. At a time when the world is reeling from the pandemic, community resilience is more important than ever as individual qualities associated with resilience are not enough on their own.

Aldrich: Communities around the world face a variety of ongoing, long-term stressors along with short-term shocks. These include police brutality, natural hazards, climate change, structural racism, terrorism, and economic recessions. The most common responses to shocks and stressors revolve around individual-level preparedness and response or around top-down, government-led efforts. We're told to have a kit with water, food, and batteries, or perhaps we're told that the government will take care of us through regulation, sea walls and building requirements.

But a growing body of efforts underscores that bottom-up, community-led social infrastructure provides the most effective and efficient way to mitigate shocks and to help recover after them. Creating a social media platform that boosts community resilience indicates that we are putting effort into the system to help strengthen trust, connections, collaboration, and communication. These ties are critical in helping people survive and thrive during and after shocks.

Without trusted information and without connections, individuals who are already vulnerable face double jeopardy – their initial conditions make them more likely to be harmed by a shock or stressor. Then, without updates about how to prepare, or receive aid, or find shelter, they will be more likely to miss out on the benefits accruing to others with that information. Providing a platform where a diverse body of people can communicate without fear of being attacked or trolled and receive trusted information would help move us closer to where we need to be.

Chase: The effects of disasters and other crises are often multisystemic, causing simultaneous disruption across environmental, physical, social, cultural, economic, and institutional systems. By their very nature, traumatic events tend to fragment communities and relationships. They can also exacerbate existing social inequalities and traumas. A digital world that boosts community resilience would help resist these disruptions – promoting physical and psychological health, economic well being, social connections, effective communication about risk and safety, resource diversification and mobilization, and coordinated responses from governmental and community organizations. As one can imagine, the benefits of this could be profound and far-reaching.

Resilient communities benefit from greater connection, social cohesion, and trust. They are capable of self-organizing in service of collective problem-solving, action, and meaning-making. Before, during, and after disasters, this capacity empowers families and communities to care for one another and sustain hope in their ability to transcend hardship. This social capital also helps communities process grief, heal from loss and trauma, and find meaning in adversity. This may emerge through collective creative processes like rituals and storytelling.

Community resilience is built on foundations of equity and inclusion. Currently, disasters disproportionately affect marginalized populations—for example, consider the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Maria, or the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and Latinx communities in the United States. Building community resilience through inclusive decision-making and equitable access to resources and information would help protect and uplift more vulnerable members of society.

Resilient communities are fundamentally better able to evolve, rebuild, and grow in response to adversity. Beyond just "bouncing back," social networks and other digital platforms that encourage resilience could help us "bounce forward" into post-traumatic growth. In this sense, boosting community resilience can help catalyze regeneration and positive evolution in an unpredictable and increasingly fragile world.

If you were to envisage the perfect social media, messaging or web search platform in terms of maximizing this principle, what would it look like?

Ungar: I'd love to see small stories of community resilience being shared. We all admire the most famous of cases, and they inspire, but to have a place to capture the everyday heroics of communities would perhaps show people that they don't need to save the world, just their small corner of it.

Other than this suggestion, I'd defer, as I do in my regular work, to experts in social media to think about the right campaign. My one condition would be to ensure the message about community resilience matches the various risk profiles of different communities if the content is to be relevant and helpful.

Aldrich: An ideal platform would be transparent, self-correcting, and trust-building. Many existing social media platforms face challenges because of anonymity which allows for antisocial behavior like misogyny, racism, and trolling. Further, rules about language on platforms like Twitter and Facebook have to be inferred from user bans or long silences from regular posters. A platform that would avoid these challenges would make it clear to participants

exactly what kinds of speech are allowed, the conditions under which bad actors are sanctioned, and the costs of such bad actions. For example, if I post hate speech on a social media platform, I should receive a clear negative response from the site and those who follow me or interact with me should also see that I've been sanctioned and for what.

Chase: Building true community resilience is a long-term, multisystemic process and requires a multifaceted approach. To maximize community resilience, a digital or social platform would ideally:

Be designed and managed through an iterative and co-constructive process with the communities that it serves.

Advance equity, accessibility, and inclusion.

Build social capital by nurturing trust, solidarity, and connectedness through social networks and relationships.

Reinforce and reward norms of collaboration and care, instead of division and antipathy.

Support self-organization and civic engagement.

Encourage reliable, accurate communication and guard against misinformation.

Facilitate equitable access to resources.

Create space for collective storytelling in service of hope, meaning making, and healing.

(Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of overlap in the attributes of a digital platform that would boost community resilience, and the principles espoused by Civic Signals.)

In a perfect world, this digital platform would also be resilient to the infrastructure disruptions that are common in crises, such as outages in power, mobile, or internet networks. This would likely require innovative pairings of digital and physical solutions to provide access during moments of adversity.

Of note, there are many real-world instances of digital community resilience that we can learn from and build upon to envision this future. For example, in the shadow of another recession and growing wealth disparity, Millennials and Gen Zers are using Cash App and Venmo to crowdsource funds for medical bills, housing, food, and other vital needs—with an emphasis on redistributing wealth to marginalized communities. The app Citizen has engaged local communities in information gathering, distribution, and validation to provide real-time alerts about public safety. In recent months, Citizen introduced a feature to enable contract tracing to help limit the spread of COVID-19. And people fleeing wildfires in California have found emergency housing through Airbnb OpenHomes, an initiative that encourages people to donate space to shelter people who are refugees, displaced by disasters, or traveling for medical care. These are just a few examples among many of digital platforms that have been designed or adapted to boost community resilience.

How would you measure a messaging, social media, or web search platform's progress against this principle?

Aldrich: I would look at a number of metrics, including the diversity of those posting, the prevalence of responses to new topics, how long trolling and misogyny are allowed to be visible after being posted, and the degree to which people say that they trust the information that they're receiving.

Chase: There are many possible strategies for measuring community resilience due to its multisystemic nature and the diverse ways that adversity can be experienced. Numerous evaluation models have been developed, including the Resilience Capacity Index, Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (BRIC), the COPEWELL model, and the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI); however, a standard set of metrics is yet to be defined. (This is in part due to the fact that there is no universal definition of community resilience.) Generally, models assess community resilience across multiple dimensions and include environmental, physical, social, cultural, economic, and institutional measures.

Because a community's resilience would articulate both online and offline, it would be useful to establish a set of measurements that analyzed both spaces before, during, and after disasters. Digitally, a mixed-methods approach might be appropriate, combining quantitative (rates of engagement, reach, scale and composition of networks, etc.) and qualitative measurements (analyses of social sentiment and other social listening data, etc.) to assess progress. Elements of existing models could also be utilized to evaluate the offline impacts of a digital platform.

There are many variables that influence community resilience, which can make it challenging to measure the impact of a singular intervention in the messy reality of the real world (particularly in the midst of disasters). Regardless, digital platforms present a unique opportunity to amplify community resilience, measure progress towards it, and reflect that transformation back to communities.

Survey results
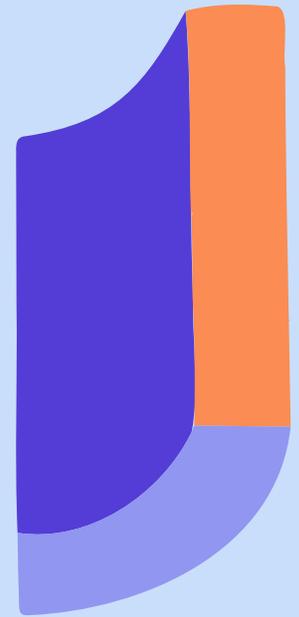
By Jay Jennings, Taeyoung Lee, Tamar Wilner, and Talia Stroud, Center for Media Engagement

We conducted a survey with participants in 20 countries to understand more deeply how the signals resonated with people globally. Please find more about the methodology here.

The survey asked people to evaluate whether it was important for platforms to "help communities recover after crisis," and asked people to assess how well the platforms perform with respect to this signal. People were only asked about the platforms for which they are "superusers," by which we mean people who identify the platform as their most used social media, messaging, or search platform.

We analyzed how different demographic and political groups rate the importance of this signal, as well as the platforms' performance. In particular, we looked at age, gender, education, ideology, and country.

We did this analysis for five platforms: Google, Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp.[1] Only statistically significant results are shown and discussed.

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1   The analyses include only countries where at least 200 people responded that the social/ message/ search platform was the one that they use most frequently, and then only those platforms where we had data for at least 1,000 people. For Google, this includes all 20 countries. For Facebook, this includes 18 countries and excludes Japan and South Korea. For YouTube, this includes Brazil, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States. For Facebook Messenger, this includes Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the U.K., and the United States. For WhatsApp, this includes all countries except Canada, Japan, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Sweden, and the United States. Note that the total number of respondents varies by platform: Google = 19,554; Facebook = 10,268; YouTube = 2,937; Facebook Messenger = 4,729; and WhatsApp = 10,181. The larger the sample size, the smaller the effect that we are able to detect.

Importance of the Signal

We first examined whether platform superusers thought that the signal was important. Although the signal was not rated as among the most important for the countries and platforms we analyzed, it ranked as the ninth most important signal for Google superusers in Italy and Japan. It is notable that this survey was conducted before the current coronavirus pandemic. Also, it is possible that the lower importance accorded to this signal is because people cannot imagine its value yet and future products and platforms can increase the importance rankings of this signal.

Importance ranking: Boost community resilience

A ranking of "1" means that the signal was seen as the most important of the 14 signals for superusers of a given platform in a given country based on a survey of over 20,000 people across 20 countries.
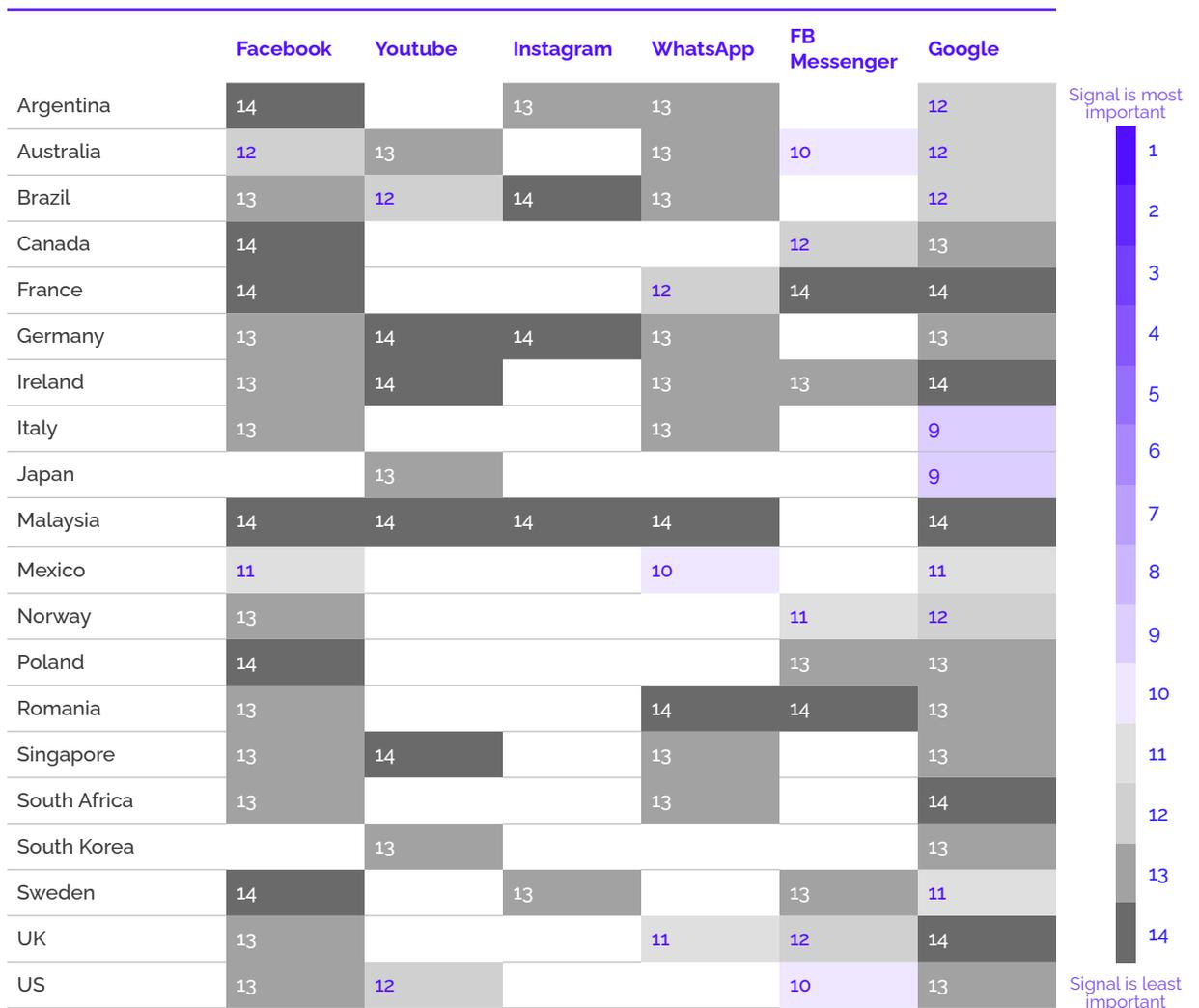
	Facebook	Youtube	Instagram	WhatsApp	FB Messenger	Google
Argentina	14		13	13		12
Australia	12	13		13	10	12
Brazil	13	12	14	13		12
Canada	14				12	13
France	14			12	14	14
Germany	13	14	14	13		13
Ireland	13	14		13	13	14
Italy	13			13		9
Japan		13				9
Malaysia	14	14	14	14		14
Mexico	11			10		11
Norway	13				11	12
Poland	14				13	13
Romania	13			14	14	13
Singapore	13	14		13		13
South Africa	13			13		14
South Korea		13				13
Sweden	14		13		13	11
UK	13			11	12	14
US	13	12			10	13

Legend — Signal is most important: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 — Signal is least important

Data from the Center for Media Engagement. Weighted data. Asked of those who indicated that a given social media, messaging or search platform was their most used. Question wording: Which of the following do you think it is important for [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] to do? Please select all that apply. Data only shown for those countries where at least 200 survey respondents said that the platform was their most used social media, messaging, or search platform.

Importance of the Signal by Age[2]

Age predicted whether superusers thought that "helping communities recover after crisis" was important for two of the five platforms: Google and WhatsApp. For Google, those who were younger (18-24) were more likely to think that the signal was important than the other age groups. For WhatsApp, those who were older were more likely to value the importance of the signal than those who were younger or middle-aged.

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2   Results shown are predicted probabilities, calculated from a logistic regression analysis predicting that the signal is important based on age, gender, education, ideology, and country, each treated as a categorical variable. The baseline (based on the excluded categories) is a 55+ year old male with high education and middle ideology from the United States (except for WhatsApp, where the baseline is South Africa).

Probability of saying signal is important

Legend:
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+
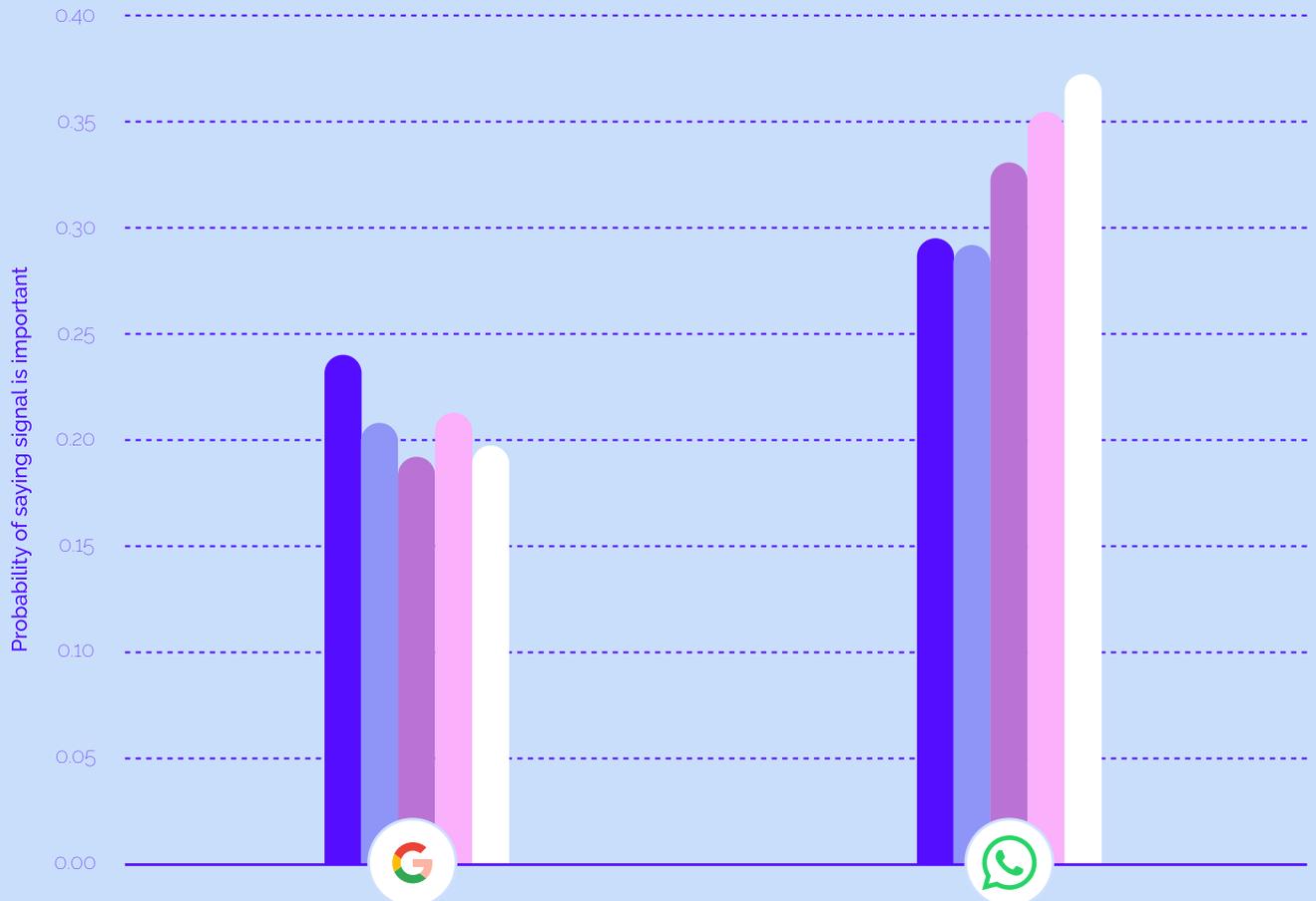
Importance of the Signal by Gender

Men and women differed in the importance they ascribed to "helping communities recover after crisis" only for Facebook and WhatsApp. For Facebook, women were more likely than men to say that the signal was important. For WhatsApp, men were more likely than women to report that the signal was important.
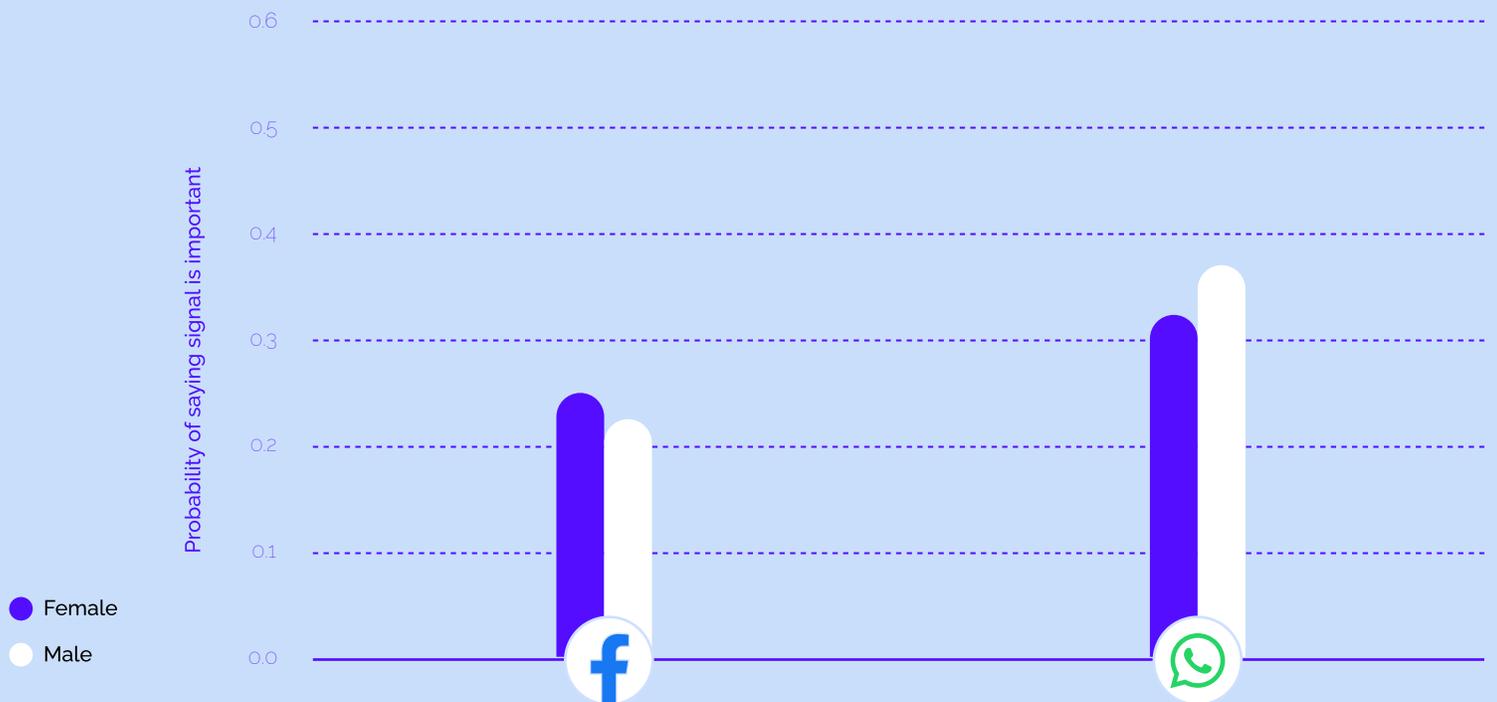
Importance of the Signal by Ideology[3]

Except for Facebook Messenger, those who didn't know their political ideology were less likely to say that it was important for platforms to "help communities recover after crisis," than those with defined ideological views. For Facebook and Facebook Messenger, those on the left were more likely to say that this signal was important compared to those with other ideologies. For WhatsApp, those on the right were more likely to state that the signal was important compared to those with other ideologies.

3   Ideology was asked on a 10-point scale and people were given the option of saying "don't know." This was recoded into 4 categories (1 through 3, 4 through 7, 8 through 10, and "don't know").
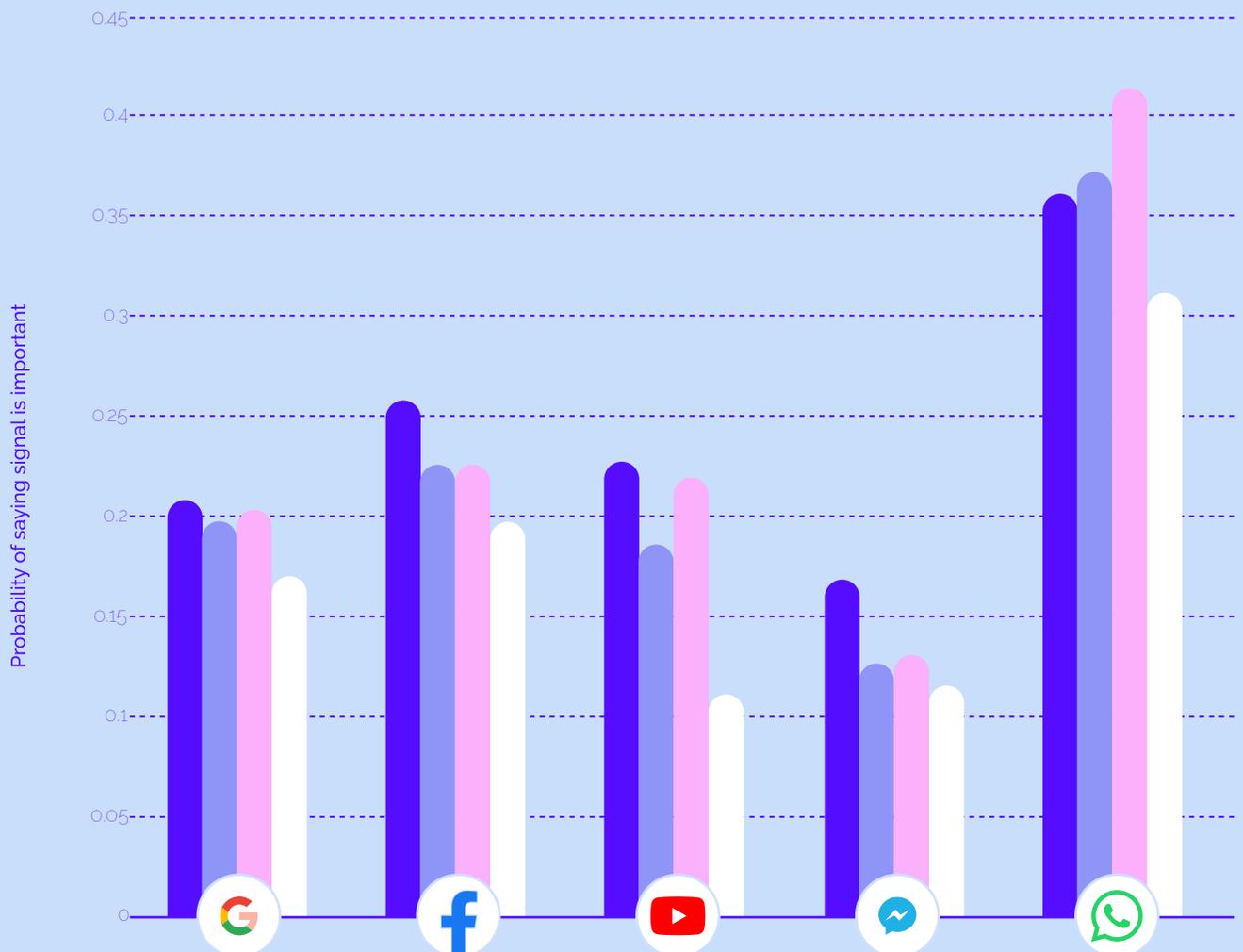
Importance of the Signal by Country

There was a significant variation by country for all five of the platforms we examined based on how important superusers thought that "helping communities recover after crisis" was. The chart below shows the probability of saying that the signal is important by platform and by country. Overall, superusers in South Africa and Mexico were more likely to endorse this signal as important across platforms. Fewer superusers endorsed the signal as important across platforms in South Korea, Germany, Sweden and France.

Act: Boost community resilience
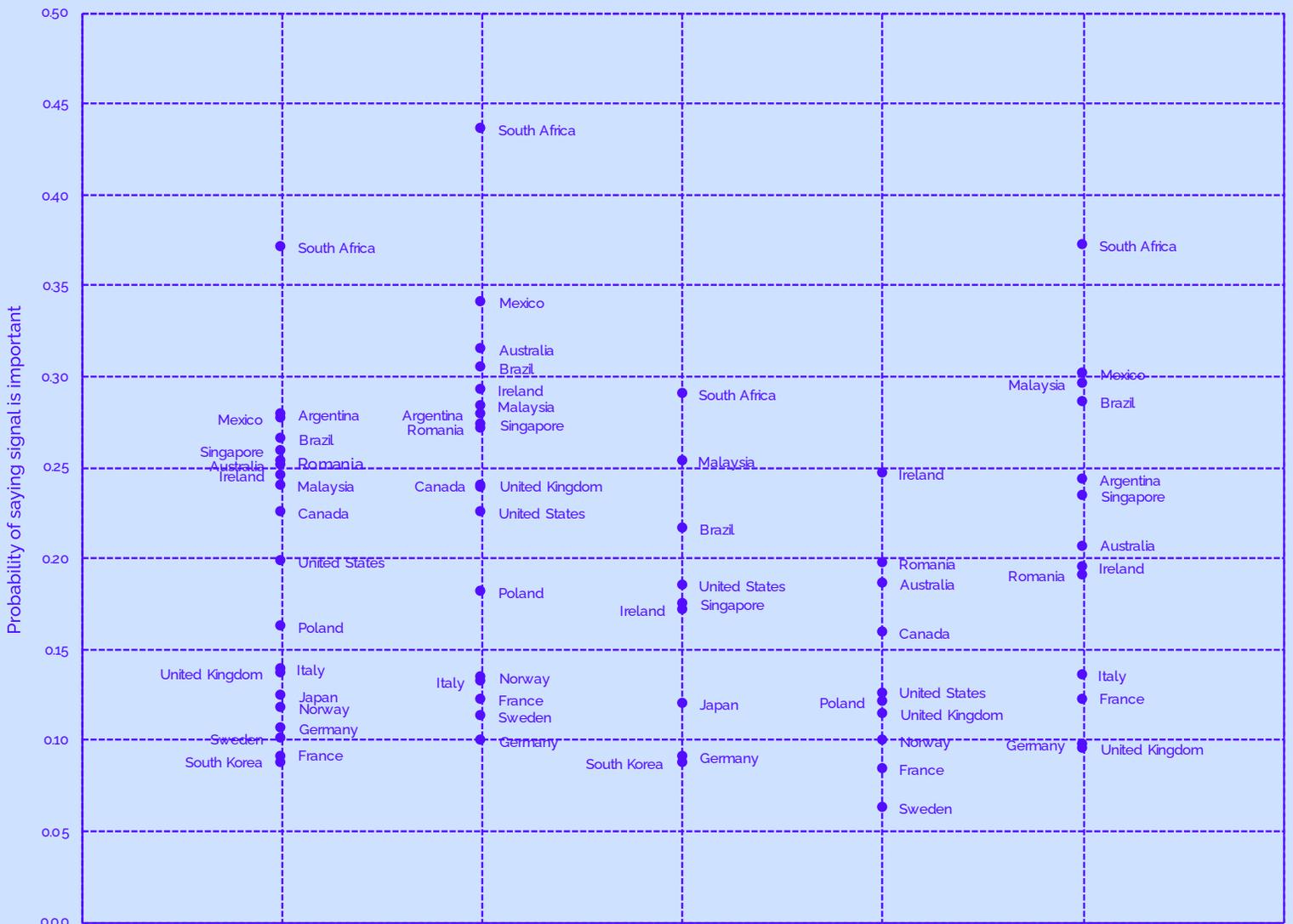
Platform Performance on the Signal

For specific platforms, superusers were first asked to say on which of the signals they thought that the platform was doing well, and then on which of the signals they thought that the platform was doing poorly. We then categorized people's responses as (0) believe that the platform is doing poorly, (1) believe that the platform is doing neither well nor poorly, or (2) believe that the platform is doing well. Superusers tended to rate the platforms as performing neither well nor poorly on this signal. Performance was largely consistent across platforms and countries.

Performance index: Boost community resilience

Responses of "2" indicate that everyone in a particular country thought that the platform was performing well on a signal; responses of "0" indicate that no one in a particular country thought that the platform was performing well on a signal based on a survey of over 20,000 people across 20 countries.
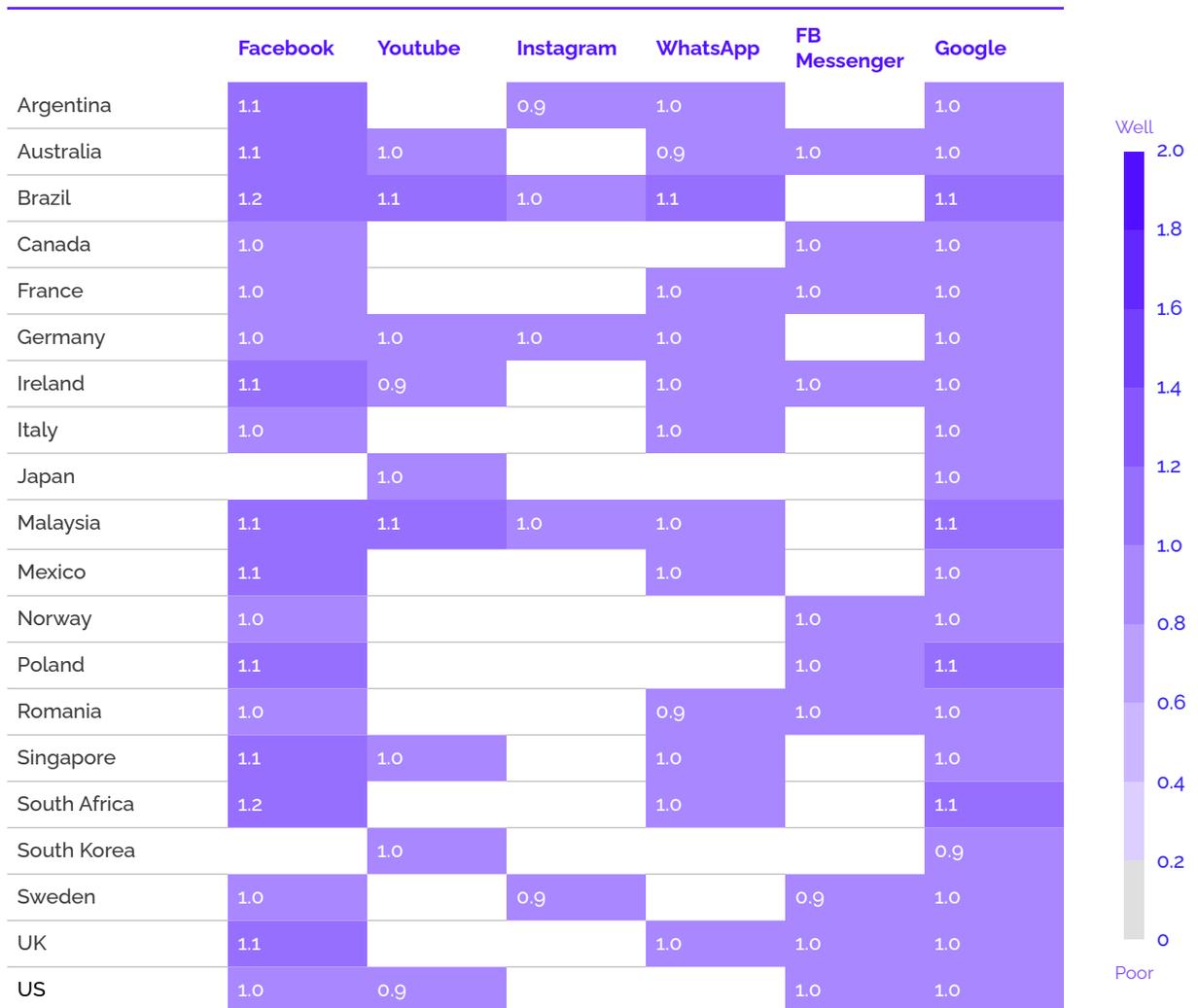
	Facebook	Youtube	Instagram	WhatsApp	FB Messenger	Google
Argentina	1.1		0.9	1.0		1.0
Australia	1.1	1.0		0.9	1.0	1.0
Brazil	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1		1.1
Canada	1.0				1.0	1.0
France	1.0			1.0	1.0	1.0
Germany	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0		1.0
Ireland	1.1	0.9		1.0	1.0	1.0
Italy	1.0			1.0		1.0
Japan		1.0				1.0
Malaysia	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0		1.1
Mexico	1.1			1.0		1.0
Norway	1.0				1.0	1.0
Poland	1.1				1.0	1.1
Romania	1.0			0.9	1.0	1.0
Singapore	1.1	1.0		1.0		1.0
South Africa	1.2			1.0		1.1
South Korea		1.0				0.9
Sweden	1.0		0.9		0.9	1.0
UK	1.1			1.0	1.0	1.0
US	1.0	0.9			1.0	1.0

Well
2.0

1.8

1.6

1.4

1.2

1.0

0.8

0.6

0.4

0.2

0

Poor

Data from the Center for Media Engagement. Weighted data. Asked of those who indicated that a given social media, messaging or search platform was their most used. Question wording - Which of the following do you think [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] does well at? Please select all that apply. And which of the following do you think [INSERT SOCIAL, MESSAGING OR SEARCH PLATFORM] does poorly at? Please select all that apply. Data only shown for those countries where at least 200 survey respondents said that the platform was their most used social media, messaging, or search platform.

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Platform Performance on the Signal by Age[4]

For Google and WhatsApp, how superusers tended to rate the platforms as performing neither well nor poorly on this signal. Performance was largely consistent across platforms and countries. evaluated the platforms' performance on "helping communities recover after crisis" differed by age. For Google, those who were in the second-youngest group (25-34) rated the platform's performance for this signal more positively compared to those who were younger (18-24) and those who were older (55+). Those 45-54 also rated the platform's performance on the signal more positively than those 55+. For WhatsApp, older superusers evaluated the platform's performance more positively than did the younger age groups.

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4   Results shown are predicted responses, calculated from a regression analysis predicting that the signal is important based on age, gender, education, ideology, and country, each treated as a categorical variable. The baseline (based on the excluded categories) is a 55+ year old male with high education and middle ideology from the United States (except for WhatsApp, where the baseline is Germany).

Legend:
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

Y-axis: Evaluation of platform on signal (from doing poorly=0, to doing well=2)
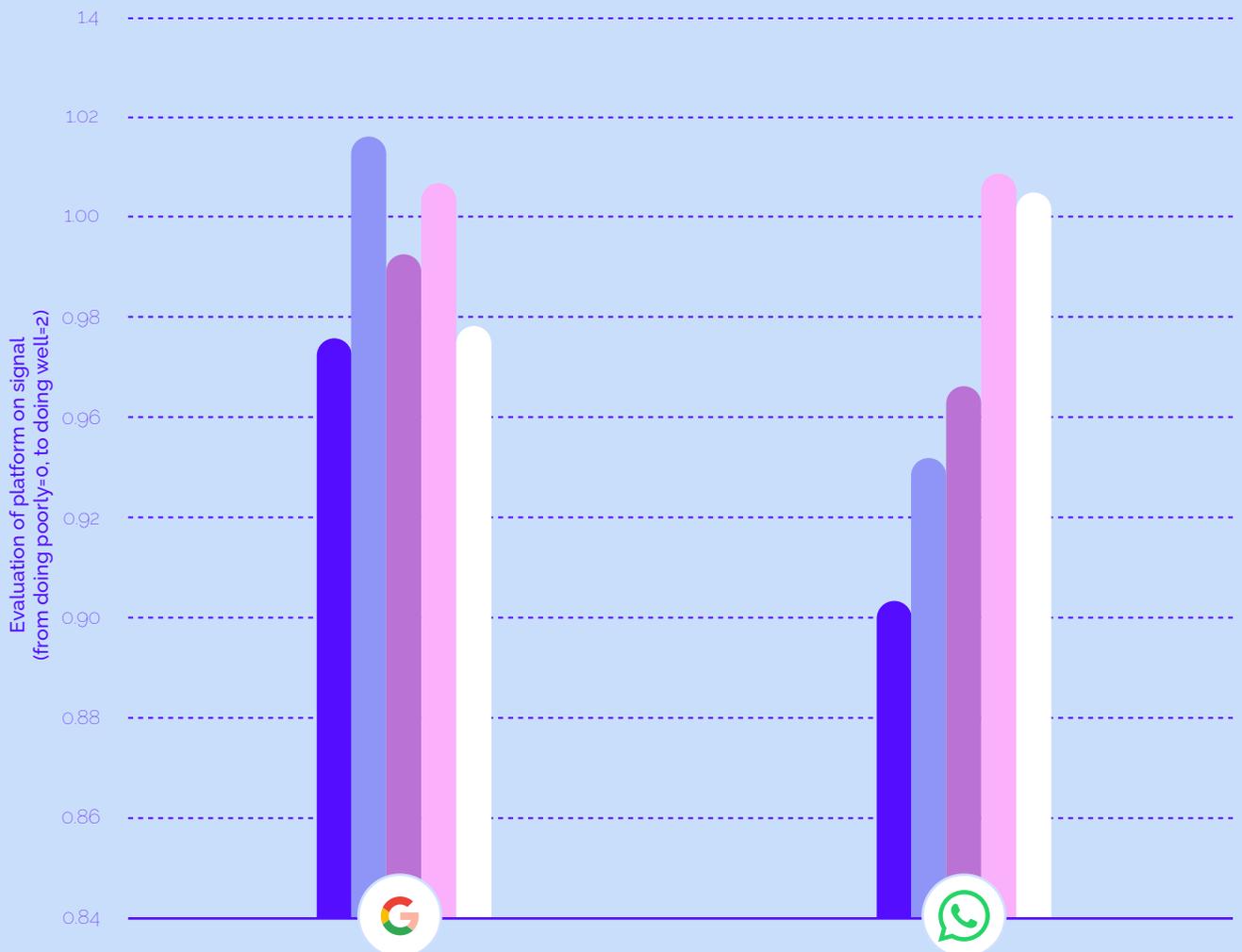
Platform Performance on the Signal by Gender

For Google and Facebook, women rated the platforms' performance on "helping communities recover after crisis" better than did men.

Evaluation of platform on signal
(from doing poorly=0, to doing well=2)

- ● Female
- ○ Male
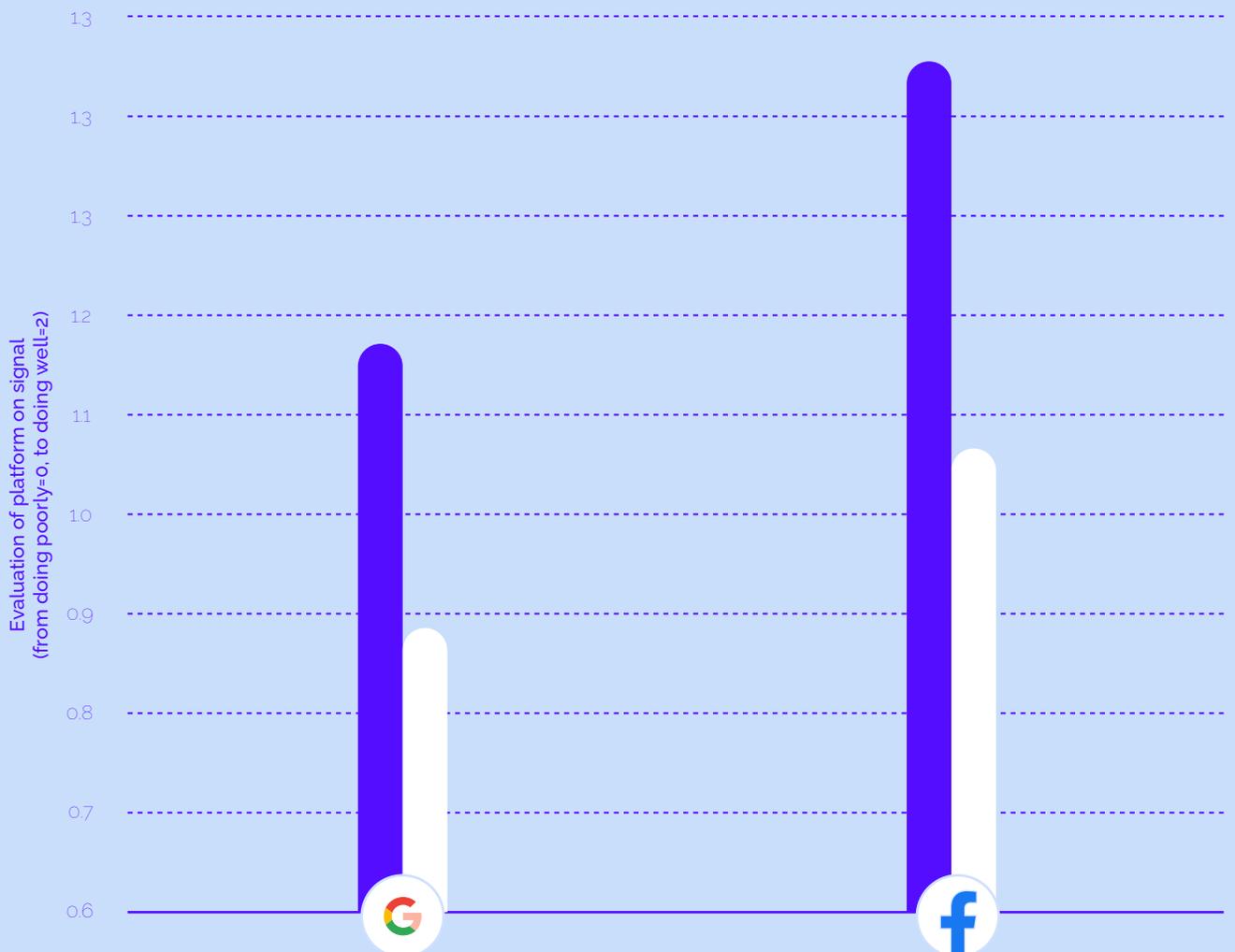
Platform Performance on the Signal by Education

For four platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp), education significantly predicted what superusers thought about how well the platform was doing at "helping communities recover after crisis." For all four of the platforms, the less educated respondents were, the more positively they rated the platforms' performance for this signal.

- Low
- Medium
- High

Evaluation of platform on signal
(from doing poorly=0, to doing well=2)

1.05
1.00
0.95
0.90
0.85
0.80
0.75
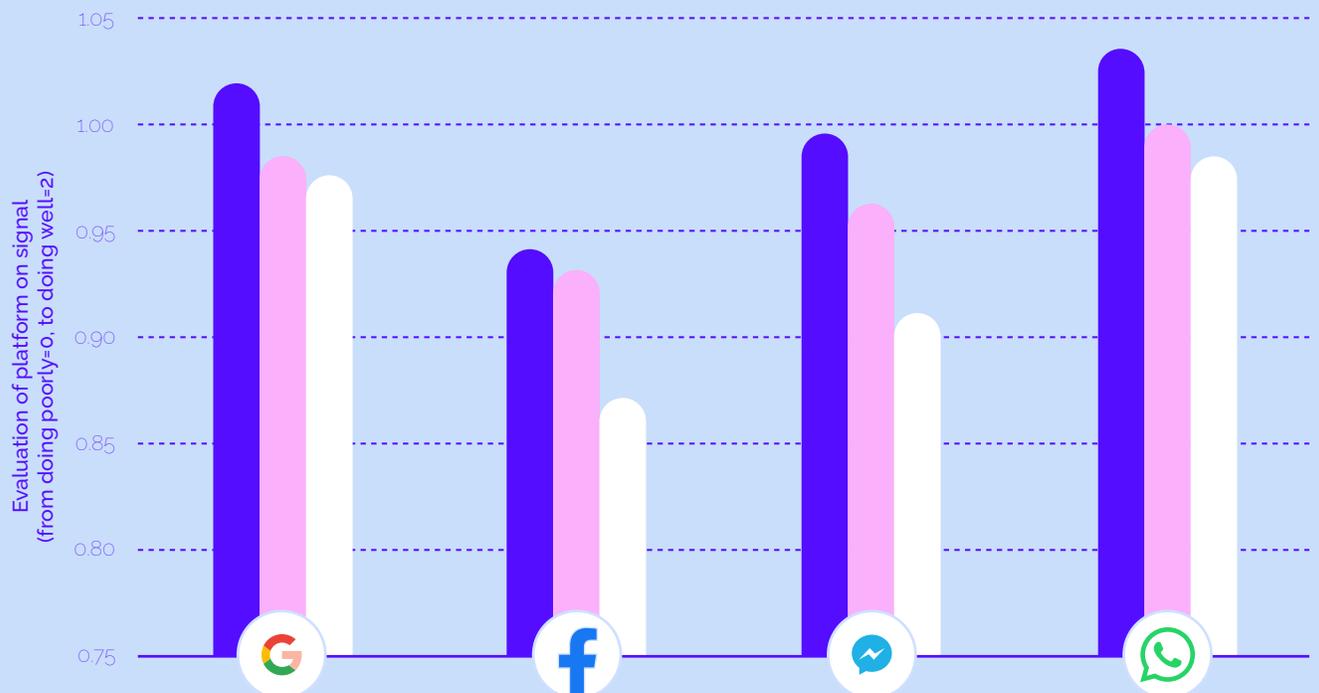
Platform Performance on the Signal by Ideology

Ideology predicted how well superusers thought the platform was doing on "helping communities recover after crisis." For Google, those on the right and in the middle both thought that the platform did better than those on the left. For Facebook and YouTube, those on the right rated the platforms' performance better than all other ideologies. For Facebook Messenger, those on the right found that the platform performed better than did those on the left and those in the middle. Those who didn't know their ideology also thought that Facebook Messenger performed better on this signal than those in the middle. For WhatsApp, those on the right rated the platform's performance as better than those on the left and those in the middle.

Legend:
- Left
- Middle
- Right
- Don't know

Y-axis: Evaluation of platform on signal (from doing poorly=0, to doing well=2)
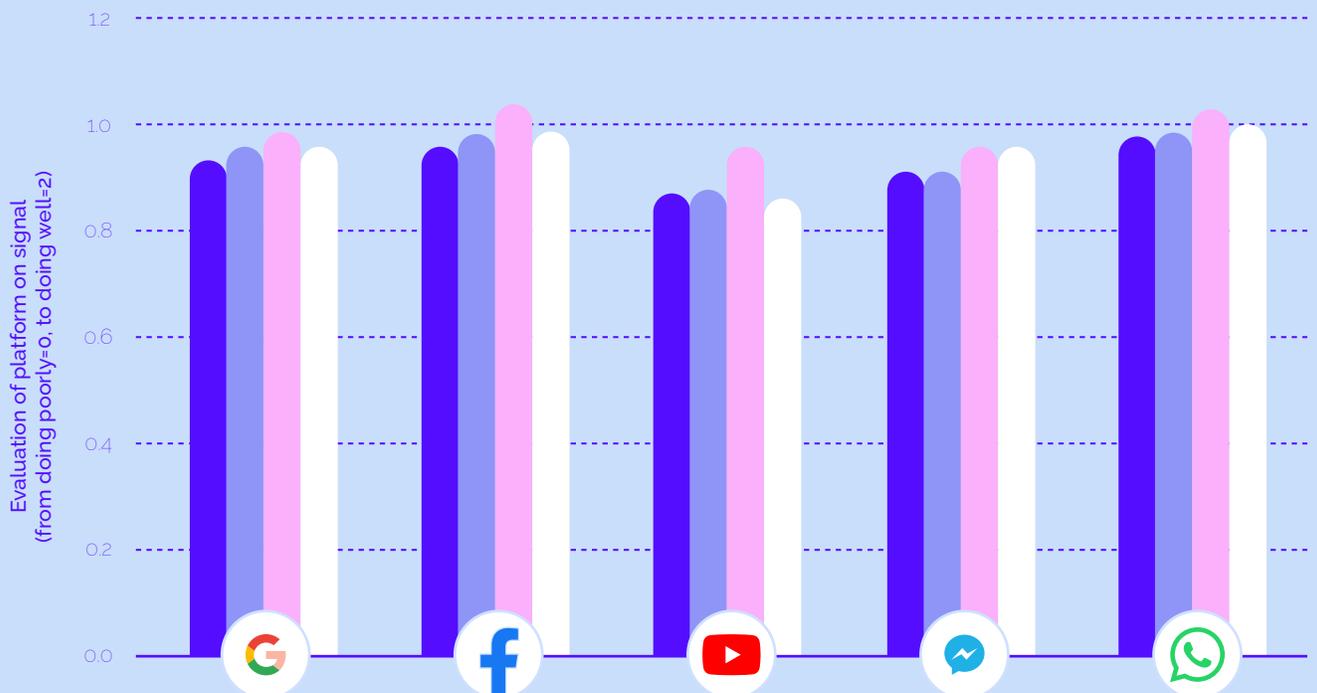
Platform Performance on the Signal by Country

There was a variation by country in evaluations of platform performance. The chart below shows how superusers rated the platforms' performance in each country, controlling for age, gender, education, and ideology from "doing poorly" (0) to "doing well" (2). In general, those in South Africa, Brazil, and Malaysia tended to say that the platforms performed better with respect to this signal than those in Sweden, Romania, the United States, and Norway.

Act: Boost community resilience
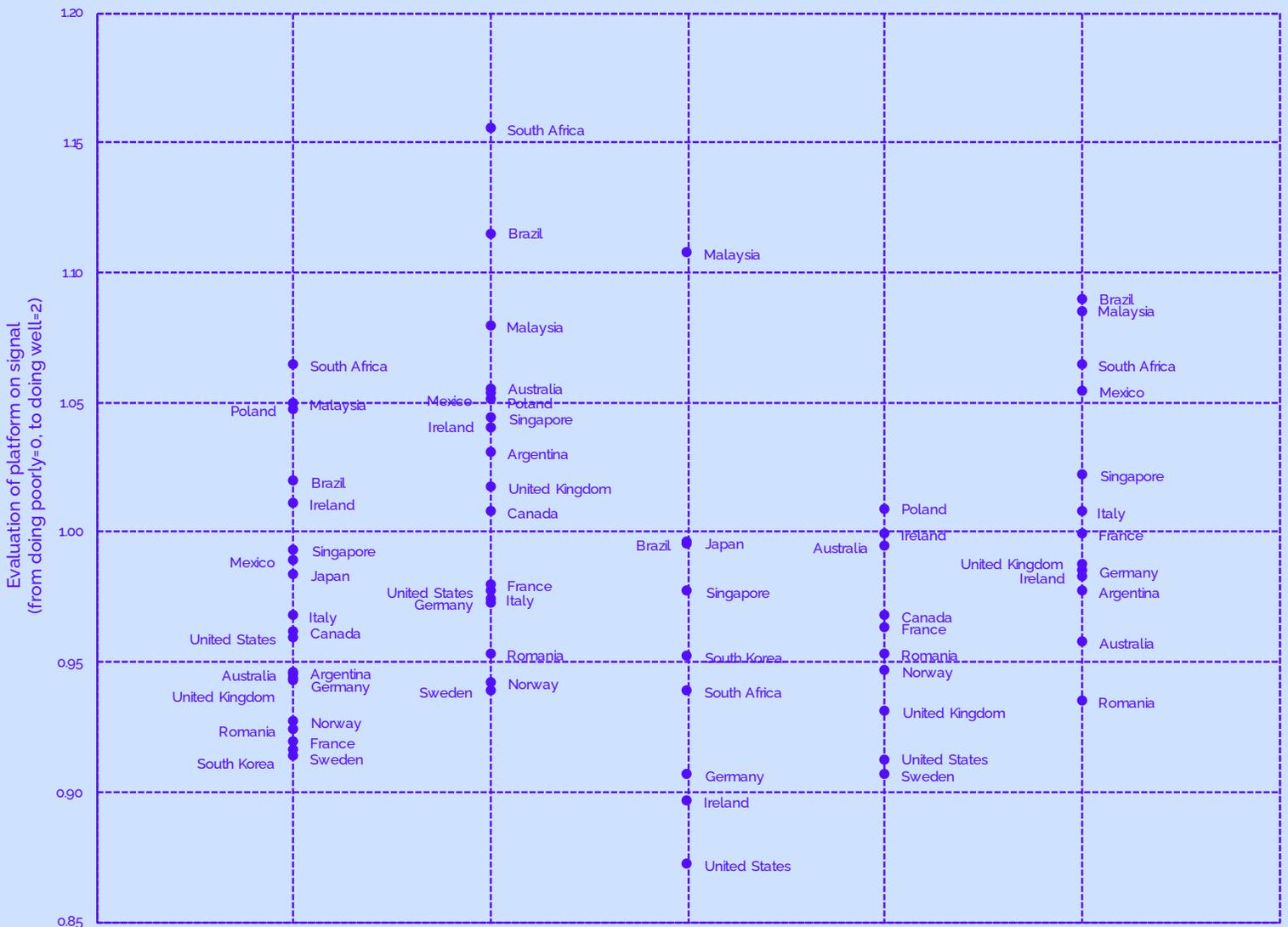
Focus group report
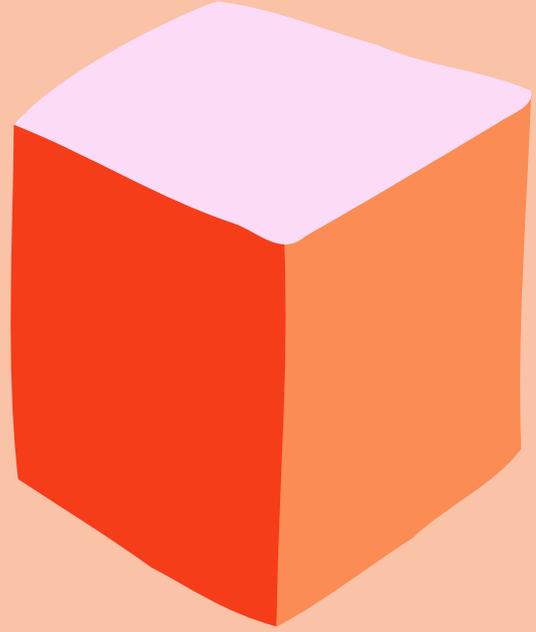
By Gina Masullo, Ori Tenenboim, and Martin Riedl, Center for Media Engagement

We conducted two focus groups in each of five countries (Brazil, Germany, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United States). Please find more about the methodology here. Participants were asked to reflect on their social media experiences and the proposed signals. With respect to this signal, participants made several observations. Please note that all names included are pseudonyms.

Participants noted that social media can foster resilience after a crisis by giving people information about difficult or dangerous situations in their communities and making it easier for people to raise money, show sympathy, or organize activities to rebuild.

> *I saw a lot of stories of people spreading information about the fires happening in the Amazon. And a friend of mine posted the option to donate to this specific organization that was helping within the Amazon indigenous community there. So I posted that to my story and raised $65… When people donate, I think that's awesome." – Brad, U.S. focus group participant*

> **"** *The reality is that we find that certain crises are prioritized over others and then the question becomes … according to whom should social media increase this awareness?… You see it with the Cape Town fires, the amount of support they get vis-à-vis the floods in the Jukskei River… You can almost always see the differentiation there and the support that they get." – Phumzile, South African focus group participant*

Participants mentioned specific crises in which social media played an important role. Brad, of the U.S., noted that social media played this role during the fires in the Amazon rainforests that captured international attention during the summer of 2019. "I saw a lot of stories of people spreading information about the fires happening in the Amazon," he said. "And a friend of mine posted the option to donate to this specific organization that was helping within the Amazon indigenous community there. So I posted that to my story and raised $65. … When people donate, I think that's awesome."

Shaun, of South Africa, pointed out that the majority of content on social media is created by users, but the platforms can still foster resilience after a crisis by drawing attention to certain content. "The way I see that is if they have an opportunity or they have I think social responsibility to highlight something," he said. "Not necessarily do something but just highlight the fact that there is this thing: Do you want to get involved?"

Getting involved can even be as simple as sharing content with other users. According to Affiqah, of Malaysia, sharing content may help lift people's spirits. "When people pray for something, probably get more share[s]. People who are affected can bounce back," he said.

One worry some participants raised, however, was that social media platforms might prioritize certain crises over others. Phumzile, of South Africa, explained: "The reality is that we find that certain crises are prioritized over others and then the question becomes … according to whom should social media increase this awareness? … You see it with the Cape Town fires, the amount of support they get vis-à-vis the floods in the Jukskei River… You can almost always see the differentiation there and the support that they get."

User demographics from survey

Based on the survey respondents across all 20 countries, we looked at the demographics of superusers. For example, of those naming Facebook as their most used social media platform, 45% are male and 55% are female.

		Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Pinterest	Reddit
Gender	Male	45%	34%	76%	30%	74%
	Female	55%	66%	24%	70%	26%
Age	18 – 24	6%	31%	5%	6%	32%
	25 – 34	17%	32%	18%	16%	38%
	35 – 44	19%	17%	21%	20%	20%
	45 – 54	19%	9%	23%	19%	6%
	55+	39%	12%	33%	39%	3%
Education	Low	10%	7%	6%	13%	9%
	Medium	41%	38%	24%	45%	41%
	High	49%	55%	70%	42%	50%
Ideology	Left	15%	15%	11%	13%	38%
	Middle	45%	47%	60%	50%	49%
	Right	21%	16%	21%	19%	7%
	Don't know	18%	23%	9%	19%	6%

		Twitter	YouTube	Messenger	KakaoTalk	Snapchat
Gender	Male	59%	59%	45%	50%	44%
	Female	41%	41%	55%	50%	56%
Age	18 – 24	19%	15%	9%	12%	39%
	25 – 34	20%	19%	18%	17%	25%
	35 – 44	20%	20%	18%	18%	15%
	45 – 54	18%	17%	18%	17%	8%
	55+	24%	29%	37%	35%	13%
Education	Low	7%	9%	9%	2%	12%
	Medium	33%	38%	50%	34%	53%
	High	60%	53%	46%	64%	35%
Ideology	Left	20%	14%	19%	10%	18%
	Middle	49%	52%	42%	67%	46%
	Right	18%	17%	22%	13%	17%
	Don't know	14%	17%	17%	10%	19%

Act: Boost community resilience

	Telegram	WhatsApp	Bing	Google	Yahoo
Gender					
Male	60%	47%	64%	48%	44%
Female	40%	53%	36%	52%	58%
Age					
18 – 24	21%	13%	10%	13%	5%
25 – 34	33%	21%	19%	19%	11%
35 – 44	18%	20%	14%	19%	15%
45 – 54	15%	17%	16%	17%	17%
55+	13%	29%	41%	32%	52%
Education					
Low	11%	10%	12%	10%	8%
Medium	31%	35%	38%	39%	36%
High	58%	55%	39%	51%	56%
Ideology					
Left	14%	14%	14%	16%	9%
Middle	53%	49%	51%	48%	50%
Right	18%	18%	38%	18%	19%
Don't know	14%	19%	7%	18%	22%

Logo glossary

Social media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- Reddit
- Twitter
- YouTube

Messaging

- Facebook Messenger
- KakaoTalk
- Snapchat
- Telegram
- WhatsApp

Search engines

- Bing
- Google
- Yahoo