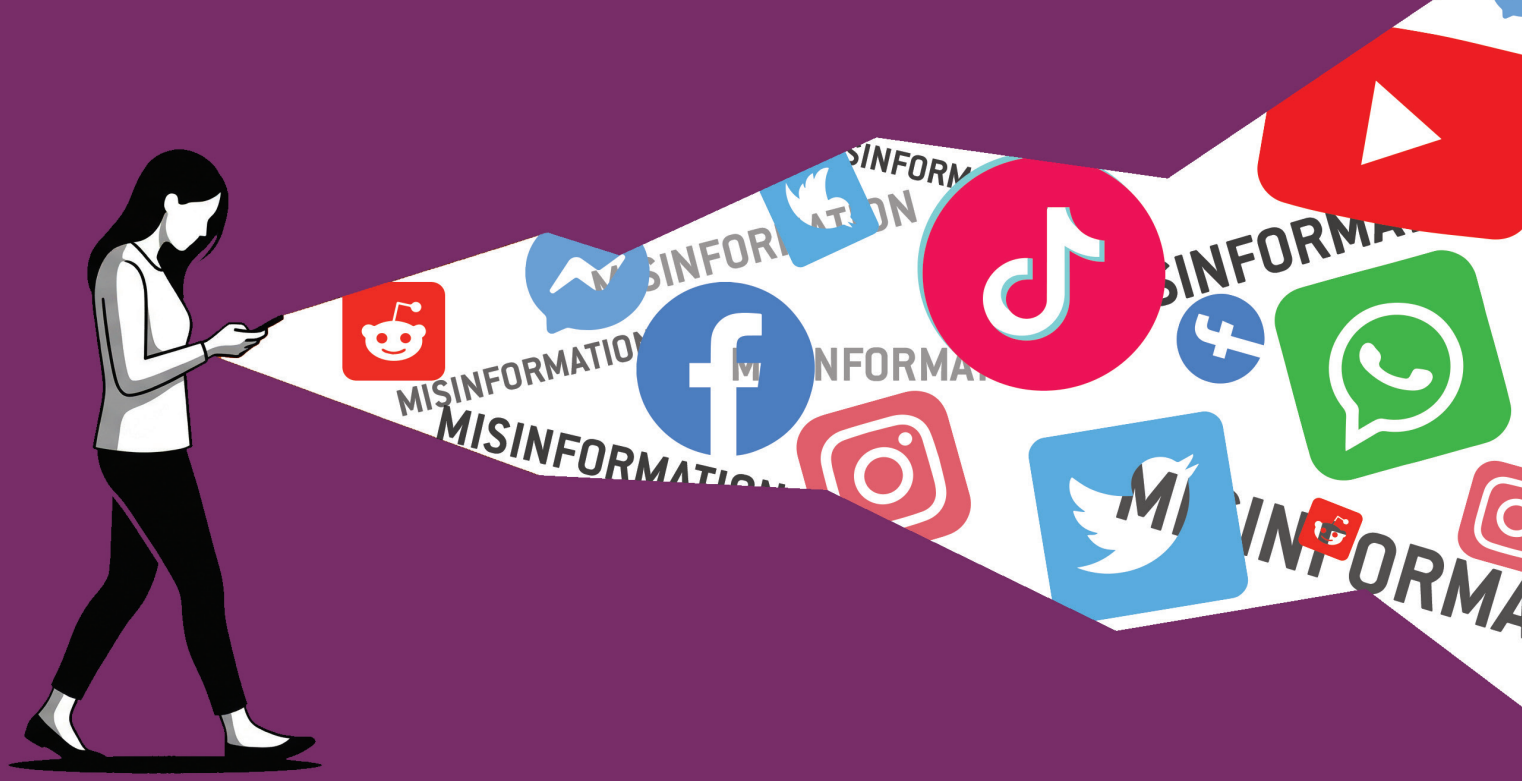

Citizen Survey on Misinformation in Nepal, 2025

Shehnaz Banu and Tilak Pathak

Introduction

Any misleading or incorrect information is referred to as misinformation. According to Ooi et al. (2021), misinformation refers to "false, inaccurate or misleading information, regardless of the intent to deceive," while "the deliberate creation, distribution and/ or amplification of false, inaccurate or misleading information intended to deceive" is called disinformation.[1] Based on the intent of the person sending it, misinformation is categorized in two ways: whether it is spread unintentionally or intentionally; however, in practice, it is often taken as a single concept. Currently, in most cases, misinformation is used as a term to signify all types of incorrect or misleading information. Regardless of the sender's intent, whether spread intentionally or accidentally, the impact of misinformation is the same, leading some to argue that it should not be differentiated based on the sender's motive.[2]

Furthermore, false content created or sent intentionally to gain some advantage or cause harm is called disinformation, while incorrect content created or transmitted for malicious purposes, such as causing physical harm to an individual, social group, institution, or country, or spreading violence, is called mal-information. Although different interpretations exist among experts working in this field in Nepal, the primary focus remains on how such information distorts misleading perceptions and understanding.[3]

In this study, various types of misinformation and different understandings of it have been presented under the collective umbrella of "misinformation" without categorization. This study

1 Ooi, H. H., Arnaudo, D., Bradshaw, S., Schwalbe, K., Studdart, A., Zakem, V., & Zink, A. (2021). *Combating information manipulation: A playbook for elections and beyond.* National Democratic Institute (NDI), Stanford Internet Observatory, and International Republican Institute (IRI). https://www.ndi.org/publications/combating-information-manipulation-playbook-elections-and-beyond.

2 Acharya, Ujjwal; Shrestha, Umesh and Pathak, Tilak (n.d.). Mithya suchana, online utpidan: prakar, pahichan ra pratikar *[Misinformation, Online Harassment: Types, Identification and Countermeasures]*. Center for Media Research–Nepal.

3 Acharya, U. and Banu, S. (2025). *Understanding Misinformation in Nepal: Expert Views on Definitions, Determinants, Solutions and Way Forward.* Purak Asia.

was conducted to understand the current state of its spread, the mediums most used for it, the key actors involved, and the topics on which misinformation spreads most during a time when debates regarding the expansion of misinformation alongside the prevalence of the internet are ongoing. Additionally, the study covers the status and capacity of the general public to identify it, the steps or actions they take after encountering it, and public perceptions regarding the measures that should be adopted to minimize it in the future.

Context

Various studies and surveys on misinformation have concluded that it remains a global problem, particularly affecting politics and election processes, and that it spreads extensively on social media, especially Facebook. According to a global survey conducted by Ipsos in 2023 for UNESCO, among 8,000 internet users across 16 countries, 68 percent of respondents identified social media as a place where misinformation spreads, while 38 percent cited online messaging apps and 20 percent mentioned websites/apps. Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that misinformation is a problem, and 87 percent expressed concern about its impact on elections. Similarly, the number of those stating that misinformation has influenced their country's politics was also 87 percent.[4]

In a survey conducted by Ofcom in 2024 in the United Kingdom, 43 percent of respondents reported encountering misinformation in the past four weeks. Among those who reported encountering misinformation, when asked via multiple-choice questions, 71 percent identified social media and websites, 43 percent identified television and its websites, 21 percent identified newspapers, 13 percent identified radio, another 13 percent identified in-person communication, 2 percent mentioned others, and 4 percent did not know.[5]

In Nepal as well, the findings of surveys conducted by the Centre for Media Research-Nepal (CMR-Nepal) on this subject align with the conclusions of international studies. According to the survey of 542 Nepali citizens who use Twitter conducted by Acharya (2020), 86.5 percent expressed concern about misinformation, while 95.5 percent of respondents reported encountering misinformation online in the previous week, with YouTube (85.6 percent) as the primary source, followed by Facebook (69.2 percent) and Twitter (55.4 percent). In that survey, 96.5 percent of respondents suspected that misinformation would become a problem for Nepali society and politics in the future, while 73.6 percent stated it had already become problematic. Respondents stated that the media (40%), government (38%), users (32%), platforms (30%), and civil society (22.5%) should be responsible for countering misinformation.[6]

Two years later, another similar survey among 403 internet users found similar results. In a survey of social media users conducted by Acharya (2022), 86.8 percent stated they were concerned about misinformation on digital platforms. Similarly, more than 91 percent of respondents reported encountering misinformation in the past week, with 79.8 percent on Facebook, 48.1 percent on YouTube, 36.3 percent on Twitter, and 30.3 percent on other websites. Despite so many users encountering misinformation, only 25.8 percent reported it to the platforms. In the survey, 75.9 percent of respondents stated that misinformation was already a problem for society and politics, while 97.8 percent said it would be a problem in the coming days. To address this problem, 49 percent stated it should be the media's responsibility, followed by the government (47 %), social media users (44 %), social media platforms (44%), fact-checkers (42.1%), and civil society (40%).[7]

4 Ipsos and Unesco (2023, September). *Survey on the impact of Online disinformation and hate speech.* Ipsos and Unesco.
5 Ofcom (2024, November 27). *Understanding misinformation: an exploration of UK adults' behaviour and attitudes.* Ofcom.
6 Acharya, U. (2020, September). *Nepal Twitter Users Survey 2019 Summary of the Findings.* https://research.butmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Nepal-Twitter-Users-Survey-2019.pdf.
7 Acharya, U. (2022, May 3). *Nepal Social Media Users Survey 2021 Summary of the Findings. https://research.butmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SocialMediaSurvey_Nepal_2021_CMR.pdf.*

In a 2023 survey conducted by CMR-Nepal among 140 youths across 7 provinces, 68 percent of respondents reported encountering misinformation in the previous week. While 71.43 percent stated misinformation has already become a problem for society and politics, 23.57 percent said it would become a problem soon. Regarding the responsibility to fight misinformation, 79.29 percent identified the media, 78.57 percent the government, 63.57 percent the users themselves, 51.43 percent social media platforms, and 10.71 percent civil society organizations.[8]

In a survey conducted by Prajapati and Pandey (2023) for CMR-Nepal among 167 individuals from various sectors across all 7 provinces, 94 percent reported encountering misinformation on social media. According to the multiple-choice survey, 67 percent encountered it through in-person communication, 55 percent via online news portals, 38 percent in newspapers, 37 percent on television, and 28 percent on the radio. Among those encountering it on social media, 91 percent identified Facebook, 44 percent YouTube, and 37 percent TikTok. According to the respondents, the topics on which misinformation spreads most are political issues (69.5%), followed by celebrities (54.5%) and political parties (44.3%). The actors responsible for spreading misinformation were social media users (68.3%), social media influencers (37.1%), political parties and sister organizations (23.4%), politicians (18%), journalists (16.8%), the government (6%), civil servants (6%), non-governmental organizations and activists (5.4%), and professionals including doctors/teachers (5.4%).[9]

In a survey conducted by Kunwar and Prajapati in 2024 for CMR-Nepal among 2,925 individuals aged 10 to 19, the majority (36.1%) cited social media as their primary source of news and information, followed by online media (27.6%), television (14.6%), radio (4.9%), newspapers (3.5%), and others (1.3%). In the survey, 67.6 percent identified social media, 38.2 percent online news sites, 24.9 percent in-person communication, 19.1 percent television, 12.6 percent newspapers, 9.8 percent radio, and 9.1 percent other mediums as sources of misinformation. The majority (39.6%) identified social media influencers as the actors responsible for spreading misinformation, followed by social media users (25.1%), journalists (13.8%), politicians (11.3%), friends (3.3%), teachers (1.8%), family members (1.4%), doctors (1.1%), civil servants (1.1%), and others (1.4%).[10]

These five surveys suggest some common conclusions: first, misinformation spreads most on social media, particularly on Facebook. Second, misinformation has already become a problem in Nepali society and politics, and the general public believes its impact will increase even more in the future. Third, users themselves and, more recently, social media influencers are primarily responsible for spreading misinformation. Fourth, misinformation spreads most on political subjects. Fifth, although various stakeholders are responsible for preventing and minimizing misinformation, the primary role lies with mainstream media.

Furthermore, it is found that misinformation spreads heavily regarding political content, especially during elections, including trends such as showing inflated public support or propaganda for one's side and the insult and character assassination of opponents. A study conducted by CMR-Nepal during the 2017 House of Representatives, Provincial Assembly, and Local elections found that misinformation was used to insult and accuse opponents, and such activities were becoming political strategies.[11] During the 2022 elections, CMR-Nepal also conducted a study which found that despite the Election Commission's policy efforts and monitoring by civil society

8 Pathak, T. and KC, B. (2025). Misinformation: Shared Concern, Limited Interventions, in Acharya, U. (ed.). *Nepal's Misinformation Landscape.* Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25a0.

9 Prajapati, U. and Pandey, L. (2025). Public Perceptions of Misinformation: Sources, Impacts, and Societal Implications, in Acharya, U. (ed.). *Nepal's Misinformation Landscape.* Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25ab p.55-57.

10 Kunwar, C. and Prajapati, U. (2025). Media and Information Literacy: Examining the Effectiveness of Educating Youths, in Acharya, U. (ed.). *Nepal's Misinformation Landscape.* Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25ae.

11 Pathak, T and KC, B. (2025). Misinformation: Shared Concern, Limited Interventions, in Acharya, U. (ed.). *Nepal's Misinformation Landscape.* Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25a0.

and mainstream media, misinformation spread extensively. Politicians used manipulated and distorted visual materials ("cheap fakes") in their campaigns, which were easily identifiable. Fake screenshots of established media news, old photos, morphed videos, and out-of-context materials were used to insult opposing candidates.[12]

The conclusions of Pathak and Prajapati (2023) are similar. Trends of spreading misinformation by selectively editing videos to remove context, creating fake sites that look like famous online media, and using mastheads to spread fake information never published by popular media were seen in the 2022 House of Representatives and Provincial Assembly elections.[13] Sapkota and Adhikari (2023) argued that although social media was used in the previous two elections, the 2022 elections saw an unprecedented increase in the use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok; candidates and political parties used social media teams to stir emotions rather than just reach their constituencies, bringing challenges of misinformation and false data to damage candidates' reputations and mislead voters.[14] The study also concluded that the misuse of social media to spread false news and misinformation about candidates increased during the 2022 elections[15]. Similarly, a survey of experts on the understanding of misinformation in Nepal by Acharya and Banu (2025) identified the lack of digital or media literacy (42%), lack of education (33%), and lack of access to credible news (30%) as reasons for sharing misinformation.[16]

In the absence of a nationwide survey on the status, impact, and minimization of misinformation in Nepal, this study will be important for understanding the overall picture of the country on this subject. Especially in the current situation where the House of Representatives election has been announced for the coming 5 March 2026, this survey report will be vital for understanding the general public's perception of the status, identification, impact, and minimization of misinformation in Nepal.

Survey Summary

This study presents viewpoints expressed by the general public based on their experiences regarding the status and spread of misinformation in Nepal, the mediums most used for it, the key actors involved, the subjects most on which it spreads most, the capacity to identify it, the steps taken after encountering it, and the measures to be adopted for its minimization in the future. Among the respondents participating in the survey, 27.5 percent reported being exposed to incorrect or misleading news and information on the communication mediums, internet, online, or social media they use, indicating it remains a problem. However, since only 14.4 percent of respondents were "highly confident" in their ability to identify false news and misleading information, there is a clear need to promote digital literacy and conduct various community-level campaigns to increase civic awareness for developing identification skills and capacity. Even after knowing some information is incorrect, the fact that 56.1 percent answered that they did nothing can be interpreted as an atmosphere where misinformation spreads due to this public apathy.

The spread of misinformation can be reduced, even if slightly, if actions such as reporting to platforms and sharing sources for fact-checking are taken. Meanwhile, 53.2 percent believe that a regulatory framework should be developed to minimize misinformation, while less than half of that (24.8%) support raising awareness. Only 12.4 percent believe it should be included in the

12 Ibid.

13 Pathak, T. P., & Prajapati, U. (2023, August 22). *Online platforms, polling, and misinformation: Electioneering strategies in Nepal. The Influence Industry.*

14 Sapkota, P. D., & Adhikari, S. (2023). *Election and democracy in Nepal: An analysis of elections from 2008 through 2022.* Purak Asia. p.21.

15 Ibid.

16 Acharya, U. and Banu, S. (2025). *Understanding Misinformation in Nepal Expert Views on Definitions, Determinants, Solutions and Way Forward.* Purak Asia. 10.62657/Purak2509.

school curriculum and 4.7 percent believe digital literacy should be promoted. In this context, the best way to prevent misinformation could be increasing civic awareness, for which teaching this subject from the school level, promoting digital literacy, and conducting community-level campaigns can be effective.

Survey Methodology

The survey included 3,883 internet users over the age of 18 from 7 provinces and 3 ecological regions (mountain, hill, and Terai). A multi-stage probability sampling method was used for sample selection, according to which municipalities and rural municipalities within the provinces were selected in the first stage. In the second stage, households/families were selected, and in the third stage, respondents were chosen. The right-hand rule was used for household selection, and the Kish grid method was used for respondent selection. The survey was conducted in the months of April and May 2024.

In the survey, 16.94 percent of respondents were from Koshi, 18.50 percent from Madhesh, 22.69 percent from Bagmati, 8.16 percent from Gandaki, 18.50 percent from Lumbini, 5.73 percent from Karnali, and 9.47 percent from Sudurpashchim. Similarly, 31.91 percent were from rural areas, 51.79 percent from urban areas, and 16.30 percent were city residents. By age group, 19 percent were between 18 and 24, 25.70 percent were between 25 and 34, 22.58 percent were between 35 and 44, 22.75 percent were between 45 and 59, and 9.97 percent were 60 years or older. In terms of gender, 51.12 percent were female and 47.88 percent were male.

Regarding education, 12.77 percent were illiterate, 7.57 percent were literate, 15.63 percent had completed up to grade 5, 29.46 percent up to grade 10, 13 percent had passed SEE/SLC, 15.79 percent had passed 10+2, and 5.64 percent were graduates or above.

In the survey, 15.42 percent were Hill Brahmin, 19.23 percent Hill Chhetri, 18.91 percent Hill Janajati, 9.52 percent Hill Dalit, 6.02 percent Newar, 13.52 percent Tarai Madhesi, 2.66 percent Tarai Dalit, 0.83 percent Madhesi Brahmin, 11 percent Tarai Janajati, 1.03 percent Muslim, and 1.86 percent others. Those stating that a family member had gone abroad were 34.92 percent, while 65.08 percent stated no one had gone abroad.

Additionally, among those participating in the survey, 93.05 percent reported using mobile phones regularly, while 6.95 percent did not use mobile phones regularly. Among the participants, 29.60 percent reported having no income. Slightly less than 15 percent reported a monthly income of less than NPR 10,000, 14.83 percent reported NPR 10,000 to 20,000, 7.88 percent reported NPR 20,000 to 30,000, and 9.76 percent reported an income of more than NPR 30,000. Meanwhile, 23.20 percent answered that they did not know or did not wish to say.

Percentages may or may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Public Perspective on Misinformation

1. Less than one-third encounter misinformation

A total of 27.5 percent of respondents reported seeing false or misleading news and information on the communication media, internet, online, or social media they use, while the number of those who said they have not seen/heard it stands at 59.2 percent. Similarly, 13.3 percent responded that they do not know, and 0.1 percent gave the response that they cannot say.

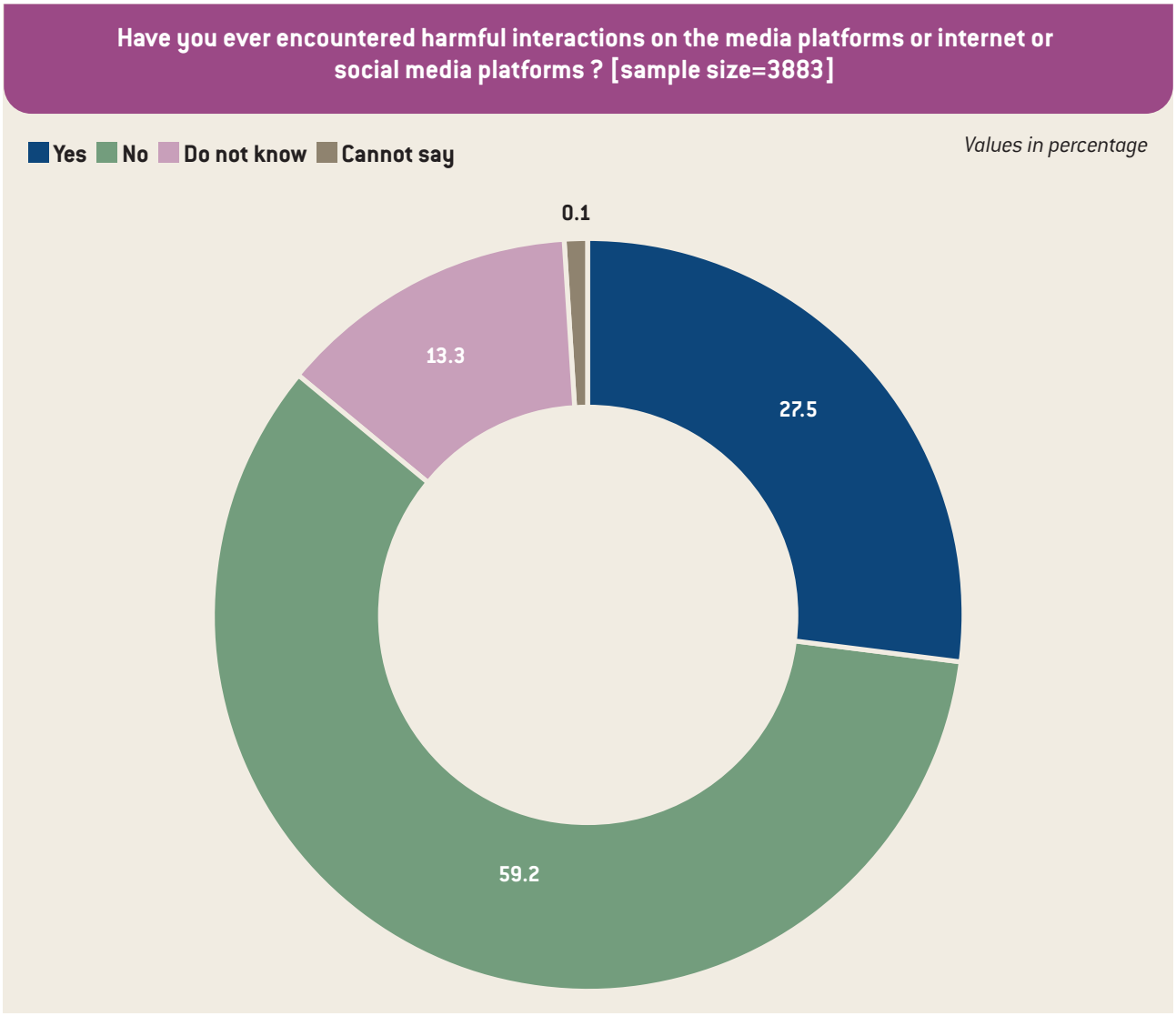

Fig. 1: Proportion of respondents encountering or not encountering misinformation

By province, Madhesh has the lowest percent of respondents encountering misinformation at 18.4 percent, while Bagmati Province has the highest at 33.7 percent, resulting in a difference of 15.3 percent between the provinces reporting the most and least encounters. The proportions in other provinces are: Koshi 32.2%, Sudurpashchim 28.8%, Lumbini 27.6%, Gandaki 24.9%, and Karnali 18.8%.

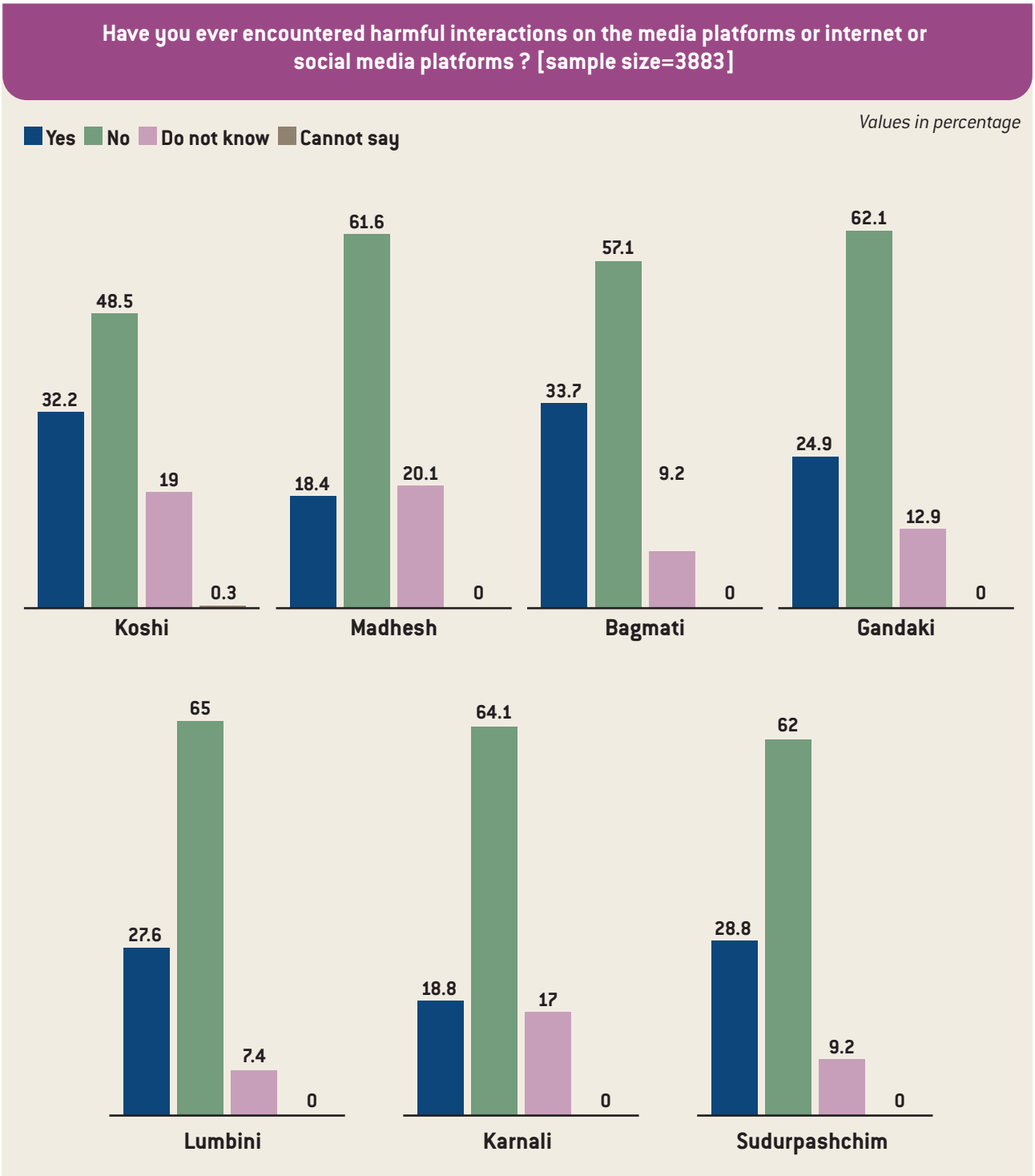

Fig. 2: Distribution of respondents encountering/not encountering false news and misleading information by province

Among the survey participants, 22.9 percent from rural areas stated they have encountered misinformation, while this number is 28.3 percent in urban areas and 33.5 percent in cities. This shows a gradual increase in reported encounters with misinformation from rural areas to urban areas and cities.

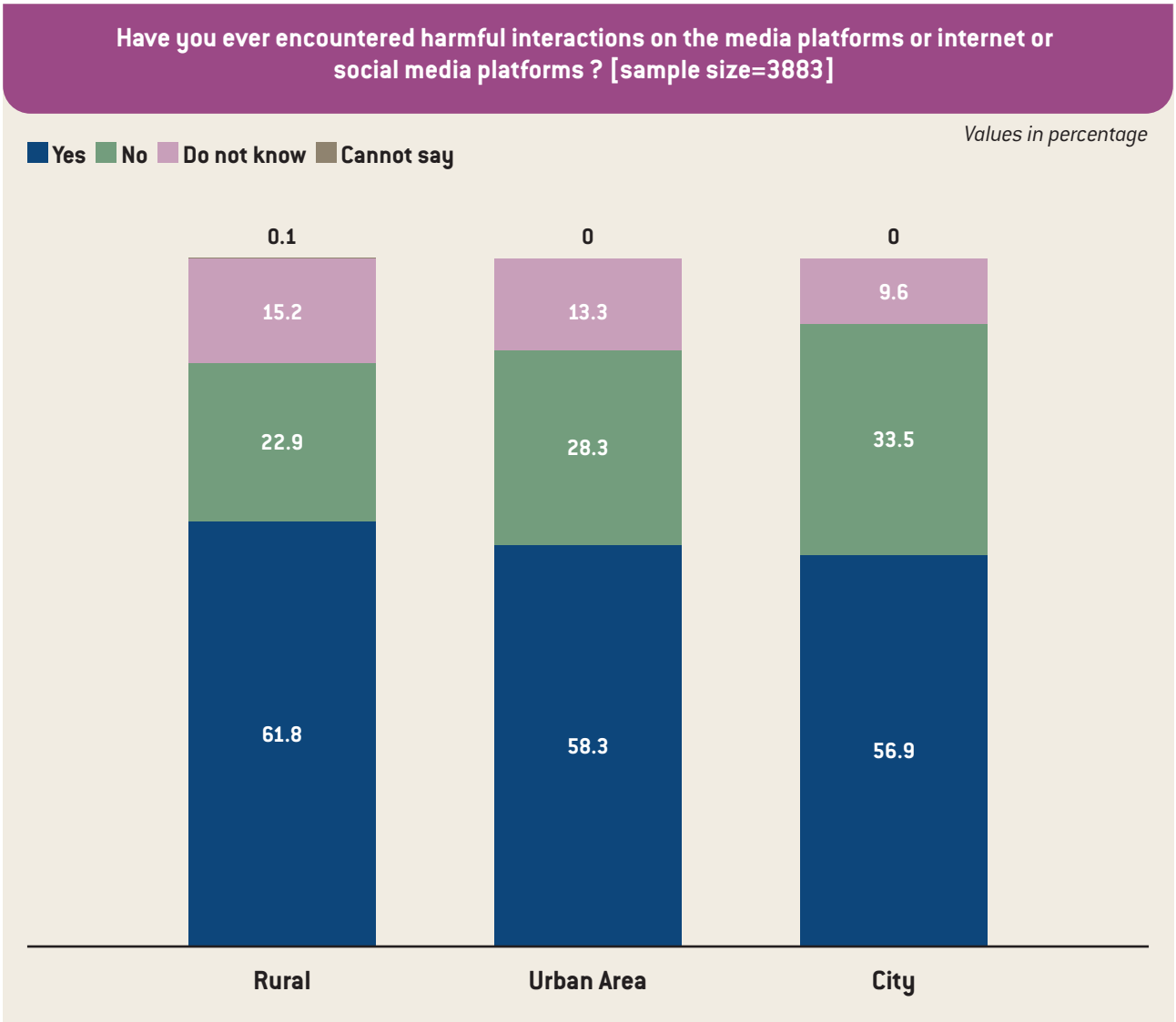

Fig. 3: Distribution of respondents encountering/not encountering false news and misleading information by residence

In the survey, 37.5 percent of the 16 to 24 age group stated they have encountered misinformation, while this number is 32.1 percent in the 25 to 34 age group, 29.5 percent in the 35 to 44 age group, 18.2 percent in the 45 to 59 age group, and 12.7 percent among the age group of 60 or above. An interesting fact has been found when looking at the number of those stating they have encountered misinformation by age. The younger age group reported encountering misinformation more, and the older age group reported encountering it only less. As the age group increases, the number of those encountering misinformation has also decreased, showing a clear inverse relationship.

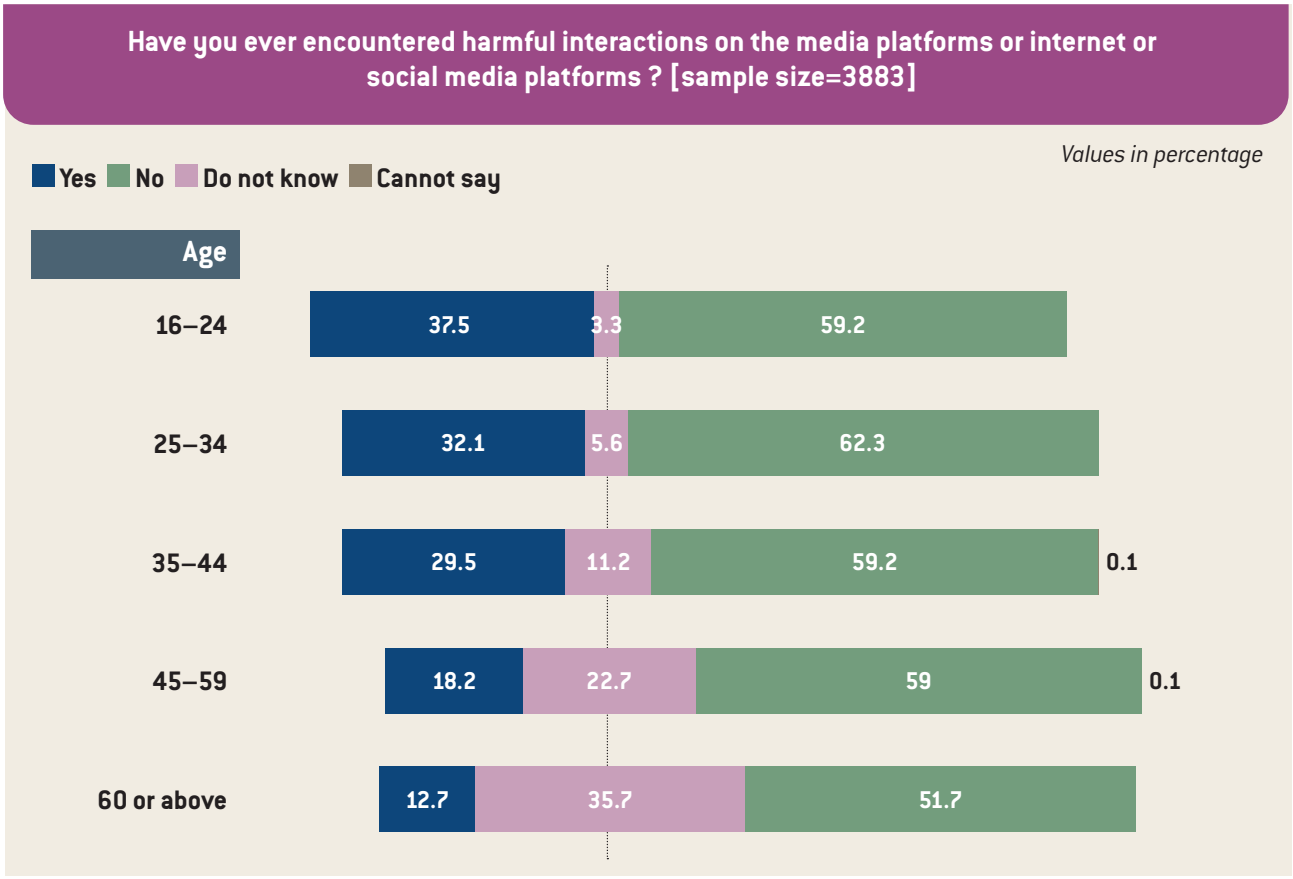

Fig. 4: Distribution of respondents encountering/not encountering false news and misleading information on by age

The survey has shown that males encounter misinformation more compared to females. Twenty-three percent of female and 32.3 percent of male respondents stated they have encountered misinformation.

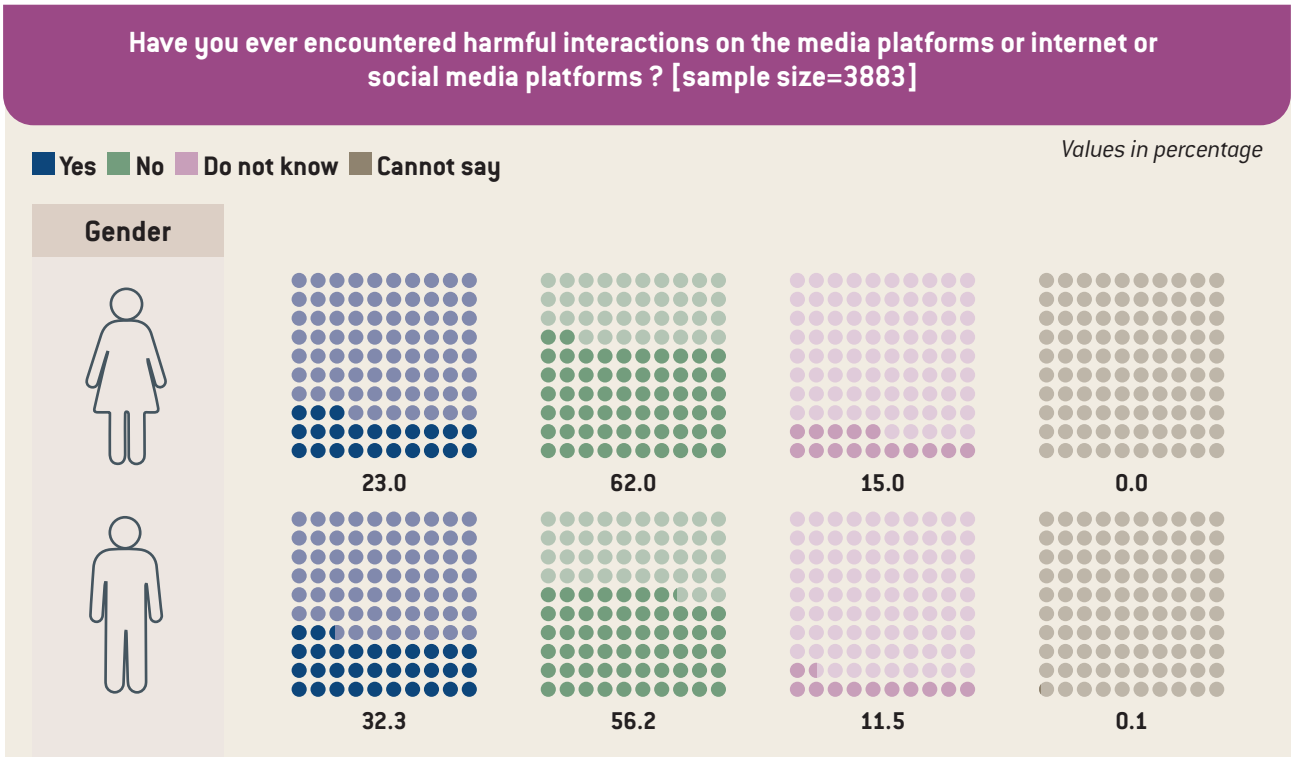

Fig 5. Distribution of respondents encountering/not encountering false news and misleading information by gender

When analyzing encounters with misinformation by educational status, respondents with higher educational qualifications report encountering it more frequently than those with lower qualifications. Among those encountering misinformation, the proportion is lowest for the illiterate group (9.1%) and highest for graduates or above (61.5%), indicating a clear positive correlation between education level and exposure to misinformation.

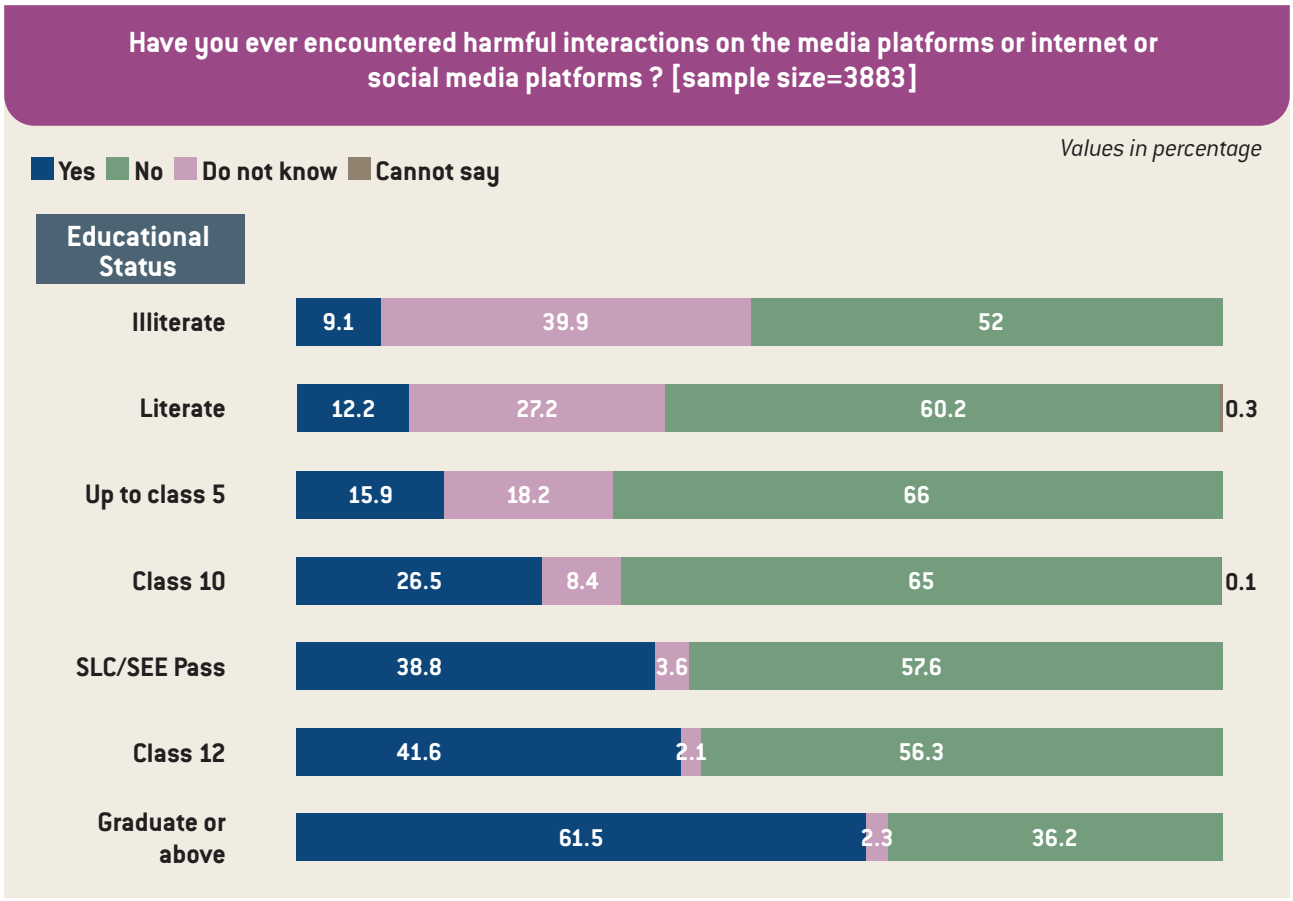

Fig. 6: Status of encountering/not encountering false news and misleading information by educational status

Compared to those who do not use mobile phones regularly, those who do use them stated they encounter misinformation more. Among those who use mobile phones regularly, 28.2 percent stated they encounter it, while among those who do not use mobile phones regularly, this percentage is 17.4 percent.

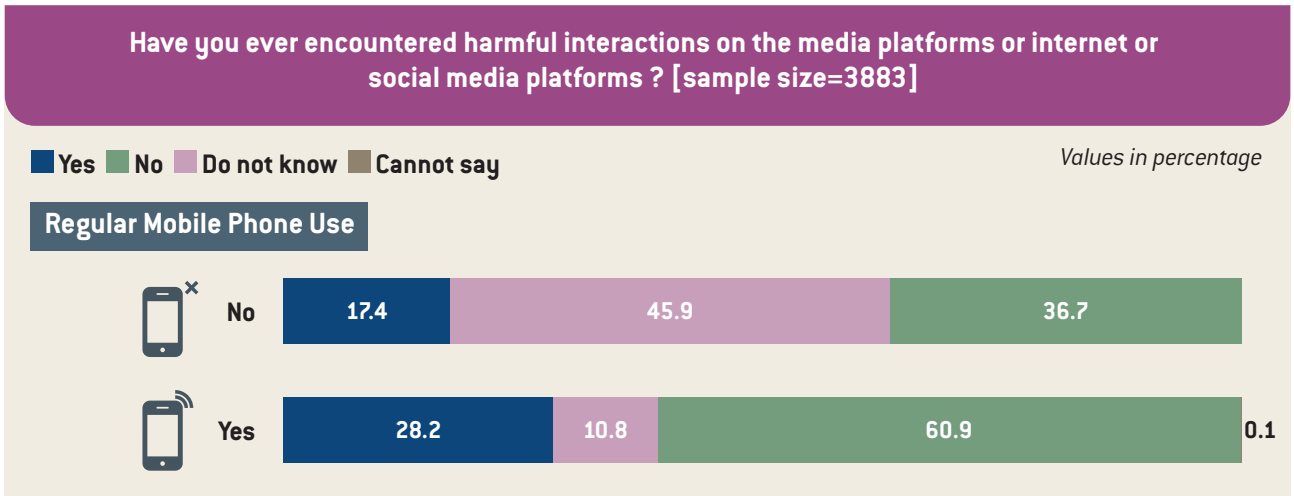

Fig. 7: Distribution of respondents encountering/not encountering false news and information by regular mobile phone use

2. Few "Highly Confident" in Distinguishing Misleading Information

When encountering any news or information, only 14.4 percent are "highly confident" in being able to distinguish what is true, false, or misleading. A total of 57.2 percent stated they were "confident to some extent," bringing the overall proportion of those at least somewhat confident to some extent overall has reached 71.6 percent. Similarly, 8.5 percent reported being "not very confident" and 5.6 percent reported being "not confident at all," making the total of those not confident 14.1 percent. Among the survey participants, 14.2 percent chose "do not want to say" and 0.1 percent responded "do not know."

When you come across news or information, how confident are you in determining whether it is accurate or false or misleading ? [sample size=3883]

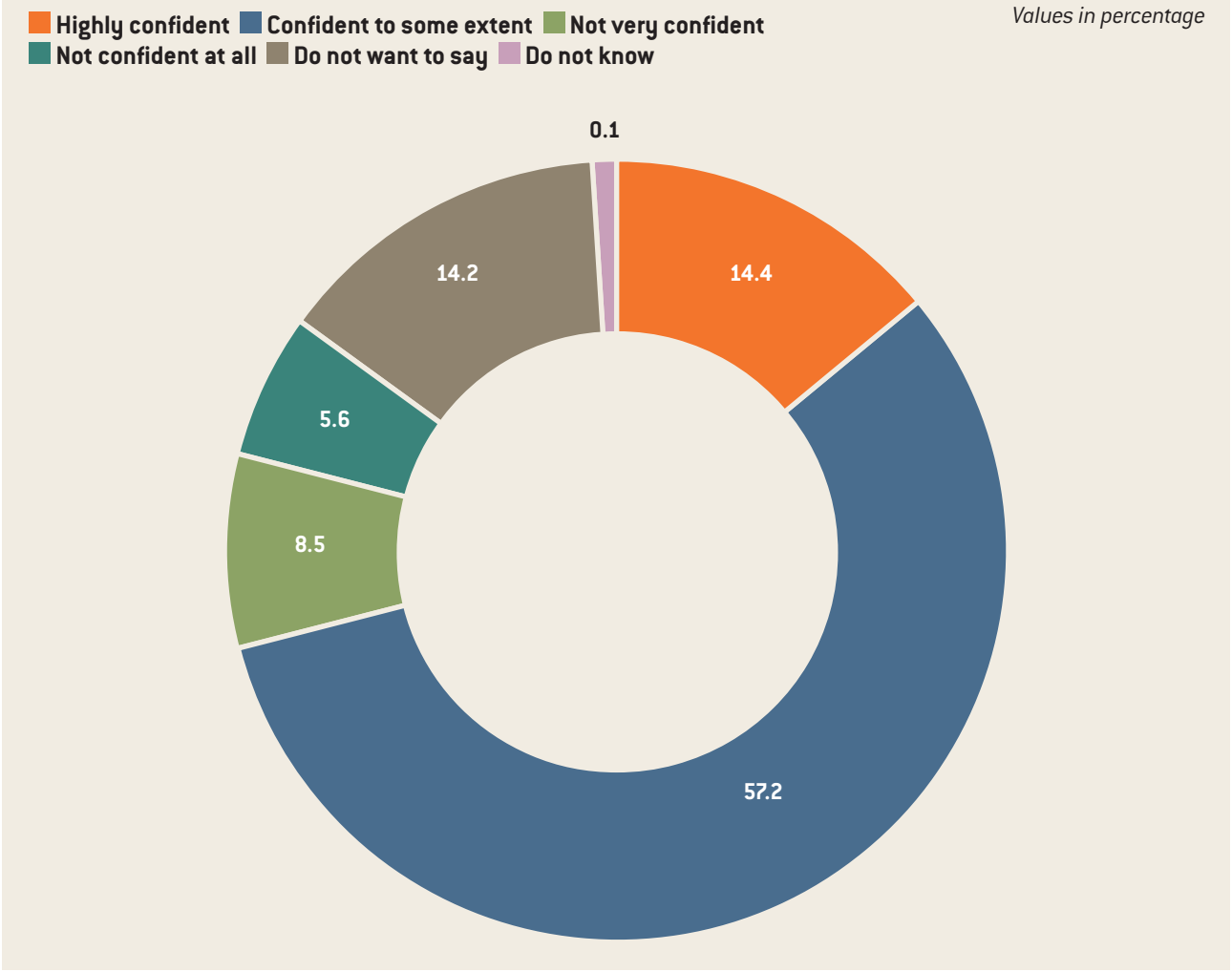

Fig. 8: Confidence regarding the ability to distinguish whether any news or information is true, false, or misleading

Among respondents reporting they are "highly confident" in distinguishing what is true, false, or misleading when encountering any news or information, the percentages by province are: Madhesh 16.6 percent, Lumbini 16.3 percent, Bagmati 16.2 percent, Gandaki 14.8 percent, Karnali 13.9 percent, Koshi 11.2 percent, and Sudurpashchim 7.3 percent. For those "confident to some extent," Lumbini has the highest proportion (66.4%), while Madhesh has the lowest (37.3%). Combining both confidence levels, the overall proportion of confident respondents is: Lumbini 82.7 percent, Bagmati 81.5 percent, Gandaki 74.1 percent, Sudurpashchim 71.4 percent, Koshi 66.7 percent, Karnali 63.7 percent, and Madhesh 53.9 percent.

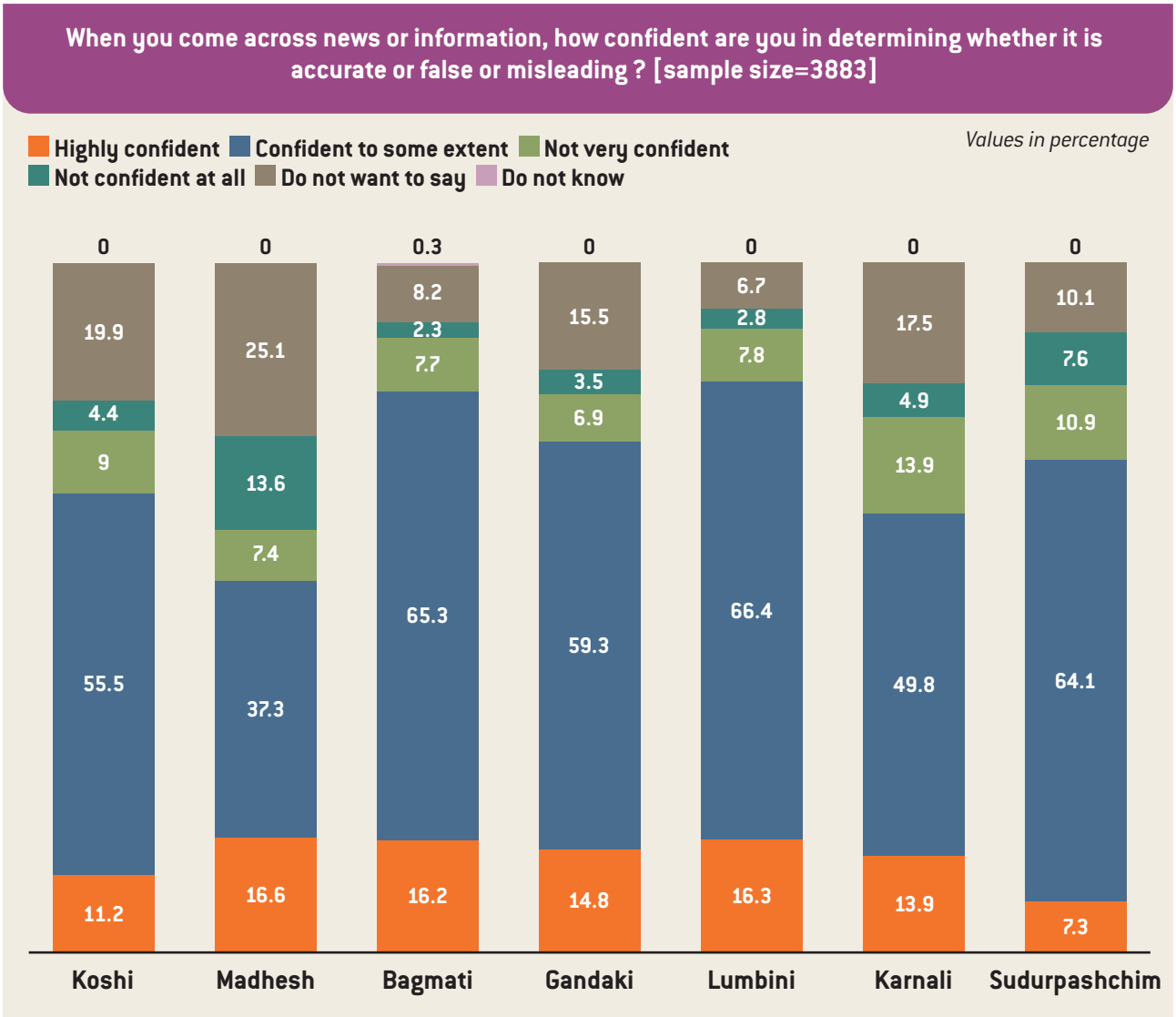

Fig. 9: Confidence regarding the ability to distinguish whether any news or information is true, false, or misleading by province

Based on residence, respondents from urban areas, and especially those from cities, appear more confident than those from rural areas in distinguishing what is true, false, or misleading when encountering news or information. There is a clear correlation between place of residence and the proportion of respondents who are "highly confident" or "confident to some extent" in identifying misleading information.

When analyzed by age, the survey shows that younger age groups are more confident, while older age groups are less confident, in their ability to distinguish whether news or information is true, false, or misleading, indicating a clear correlation between age and confidence.

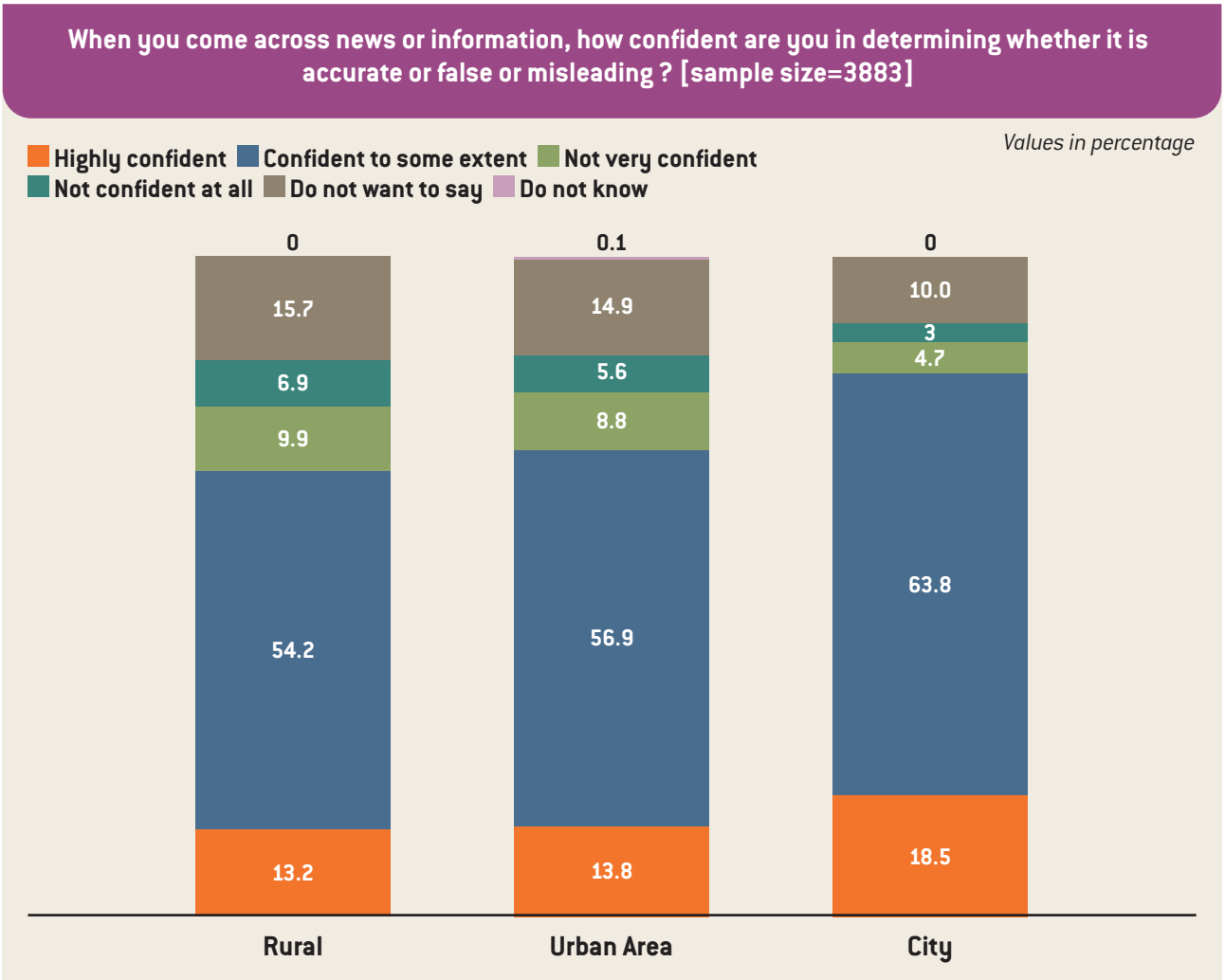

Fig. 10: Confidence regarding the ability to distinguish whether any news or information is true, false, or misleading by residence

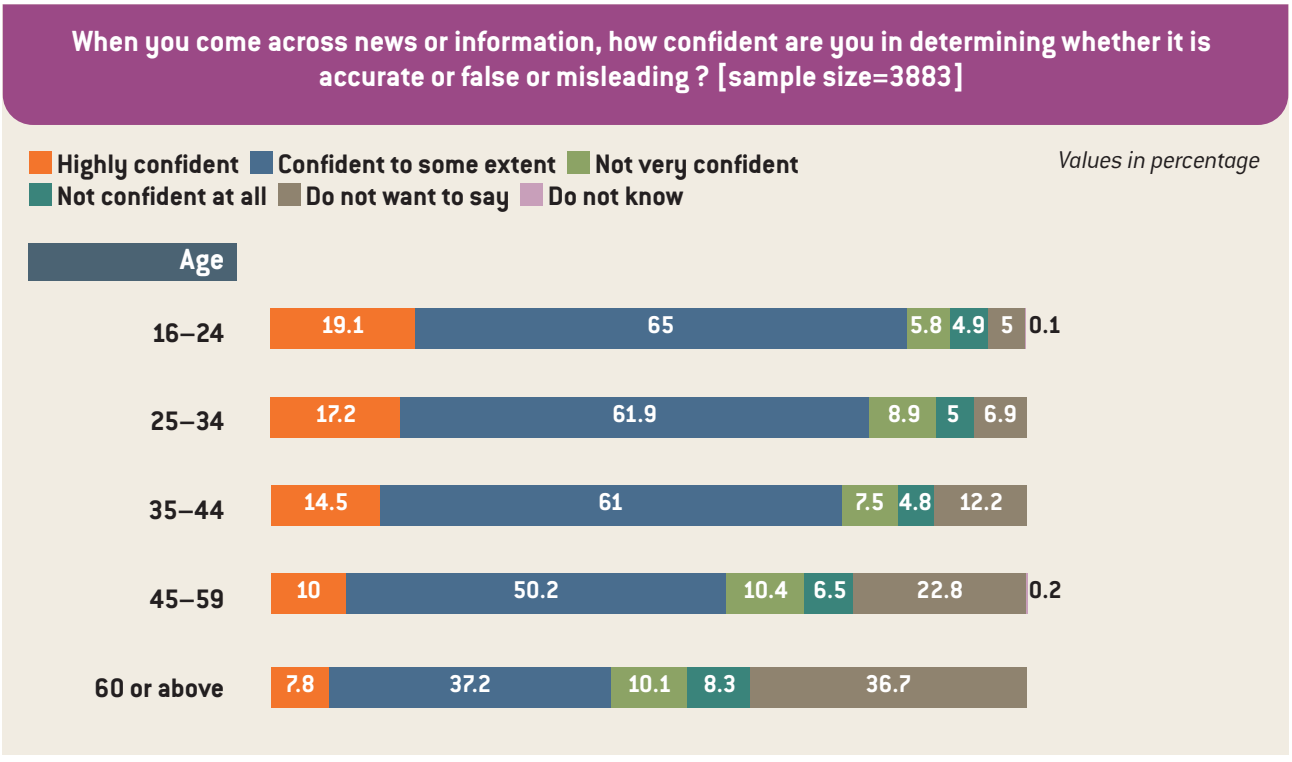

Fig. 11: Confidence regarding the ability to distinguish whether any news or information is true, false, or misleading by age

When analyzed by gender, the survey shows that males are more likely than females to be "highly confident" in their ability to distinguish whether news or information is true, false, or misleading.

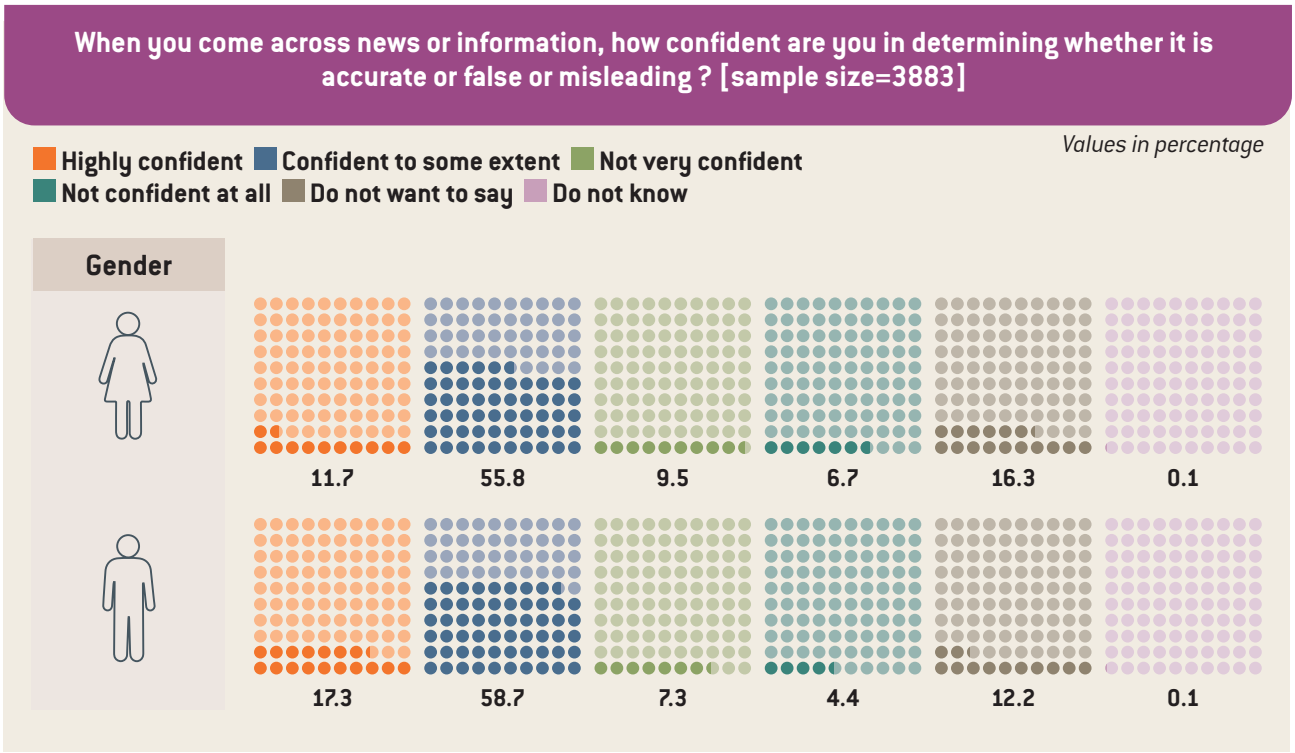

Fig. 12: Confidence regarding the ability to distinguish whether any news or information is true, false, or misleading by gender

When analyzed by educational status, the survey shows that respondents with higher educational qualifications are more confident, while those with lower qualifications are less confident in their ability to distinguish whether news or information is true, false, or misleading.

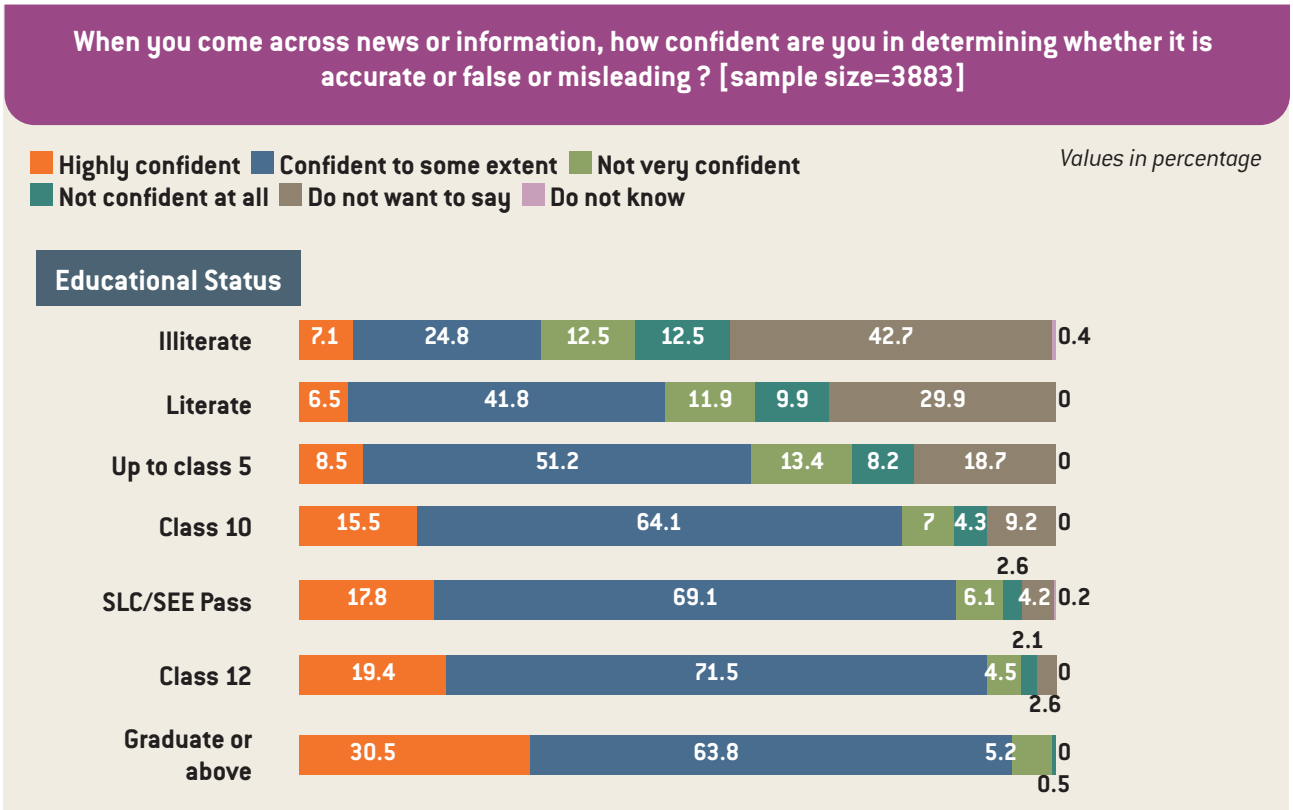

Fig. 13: Confidence regarding the ability to distinguish whether any news or information is true, false, or misleading by educational status

3. Very Few Identify Misinformation

Only 19.6 percent stated that they have found out, after some time, that any information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally.

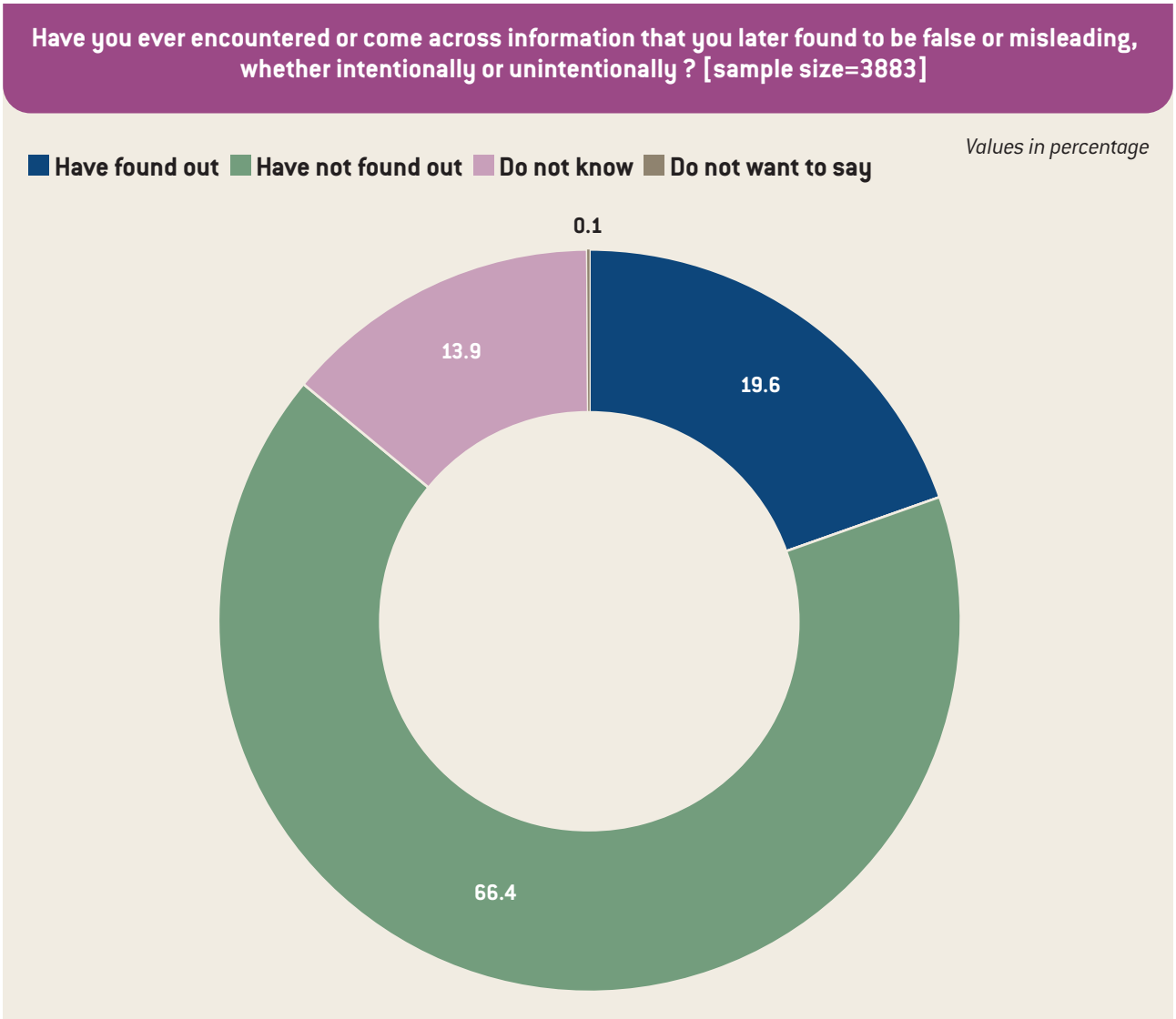

Fig. 14: Awareness regarding whether received information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally

Among those stating they have found out after some time that any information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally, Gandaki has the most (26.5%) and Karnali the least (10.3%).

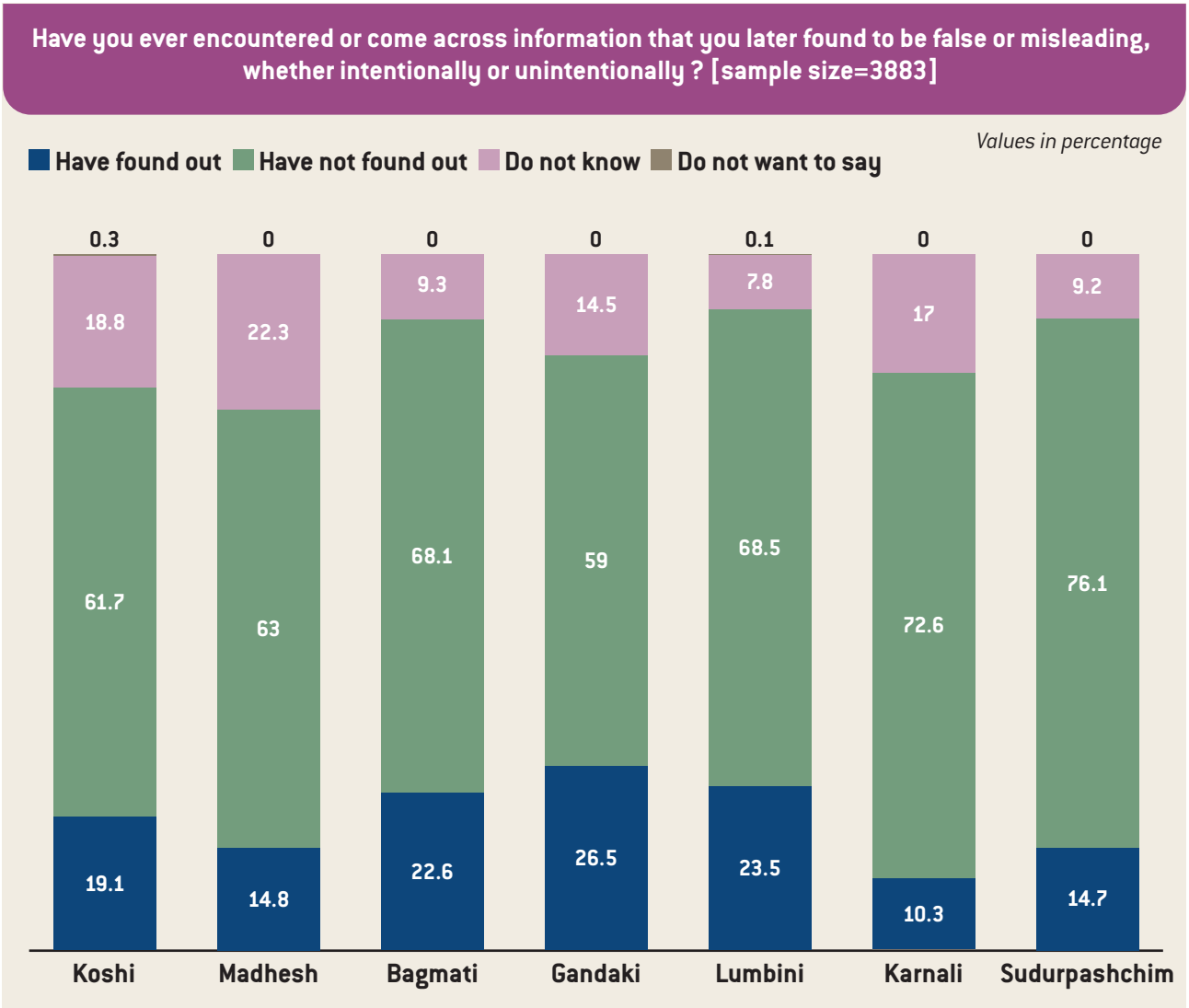

Fig. 15: Awareness regarding whether received information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally by province

Based on residence, respondents who realized after some time that information or news was false or misleading, whether spread intentionally or unintentionally, are more numerous in urban areas than in rural areas, and even higher in cities compared to other urban areas.

Based on age, regarding realizing after some time that information or news was false or misleading, whether spread intentionally or unintentionally, the 16–24 age group has the highest percentage (25.6%), while the 60 and above age group has the lowest (12.9%). More respondents in younger age groups report having realized this, and fewer in older groups. As age increases, the proportion of respondents stating "have found out" decreases, indicating a clear negative correlation with age.

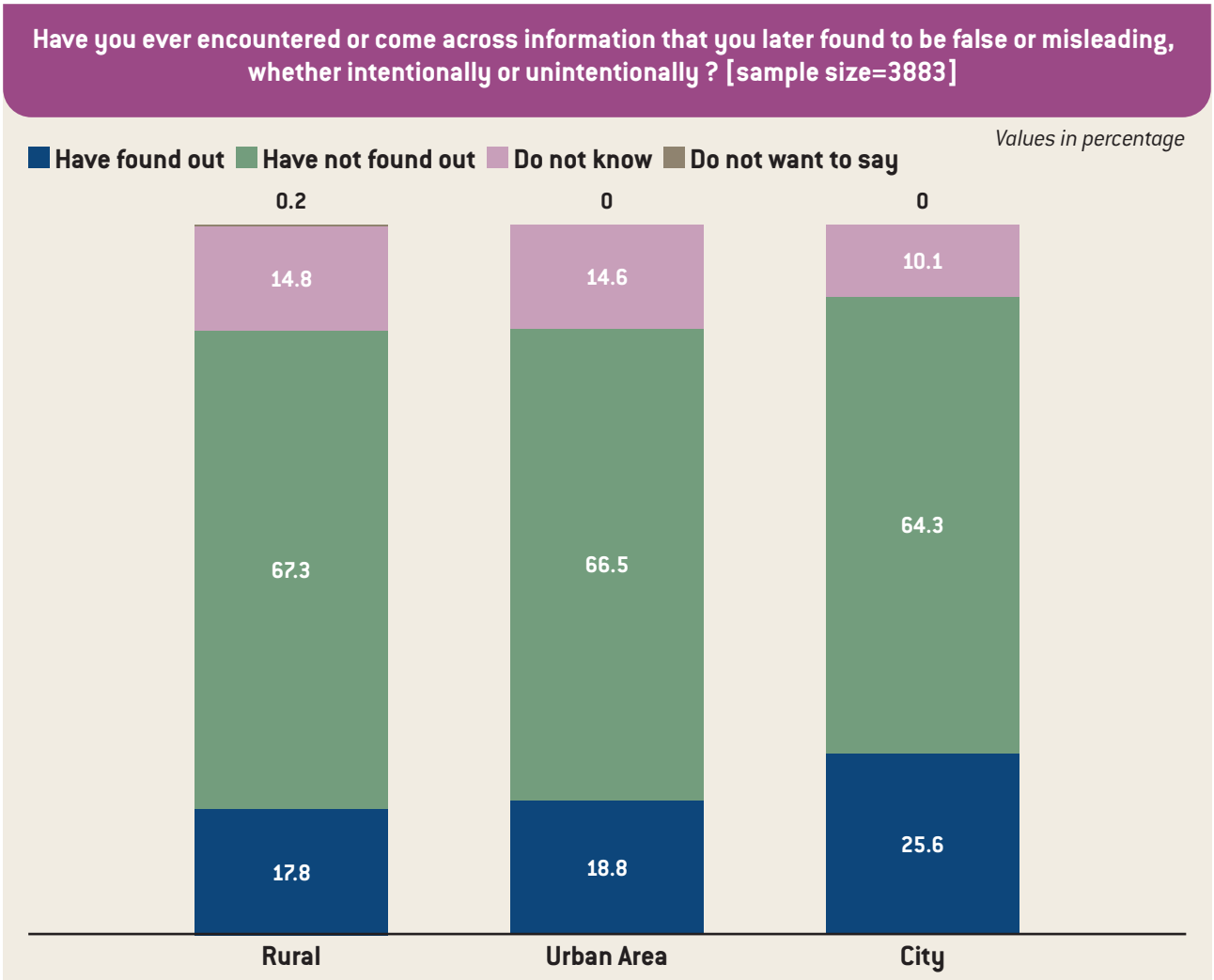

Fig. 16: Awareness regarding whether received information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally by residence

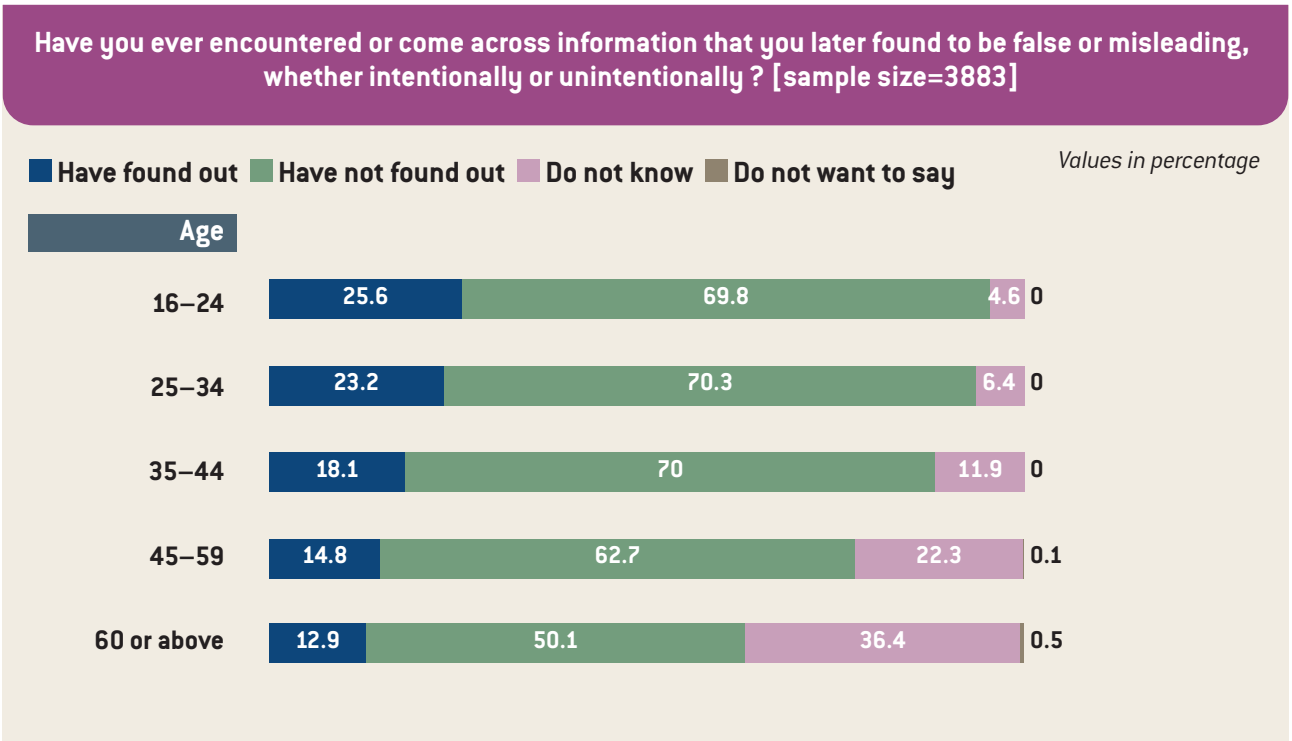

Fig 17. Awareness regarding whether received information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally by age

Based on gender, regarding realizing after some time that information or news was false or misleading, whether spread intentionally or unintentionally, females (16.4%) are fewer than males (23.1%).

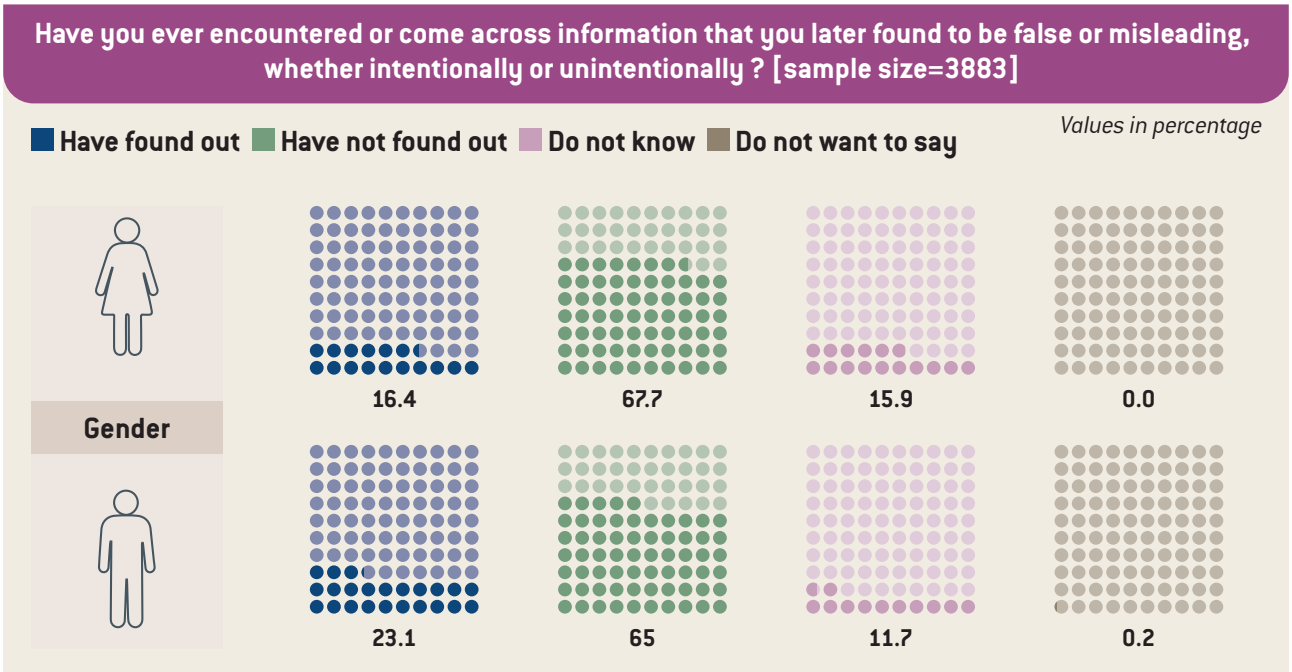

Fig. 18: Awareness regarding whether received information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally by gender

By educational status, regarding realizing after some time that information or news was false or misleading, whether spread intentionally or unintentionally, the proportion is highest among respondents with a graduate degree or above (36.6%) and lowest among those who are illiterate (3.2%). Overall, among respondents who reported having found out such information to be misleading, the proportion increases with higher educational attainment, indicating a positive association between educational level and the likelihood of recognizing misinformation.

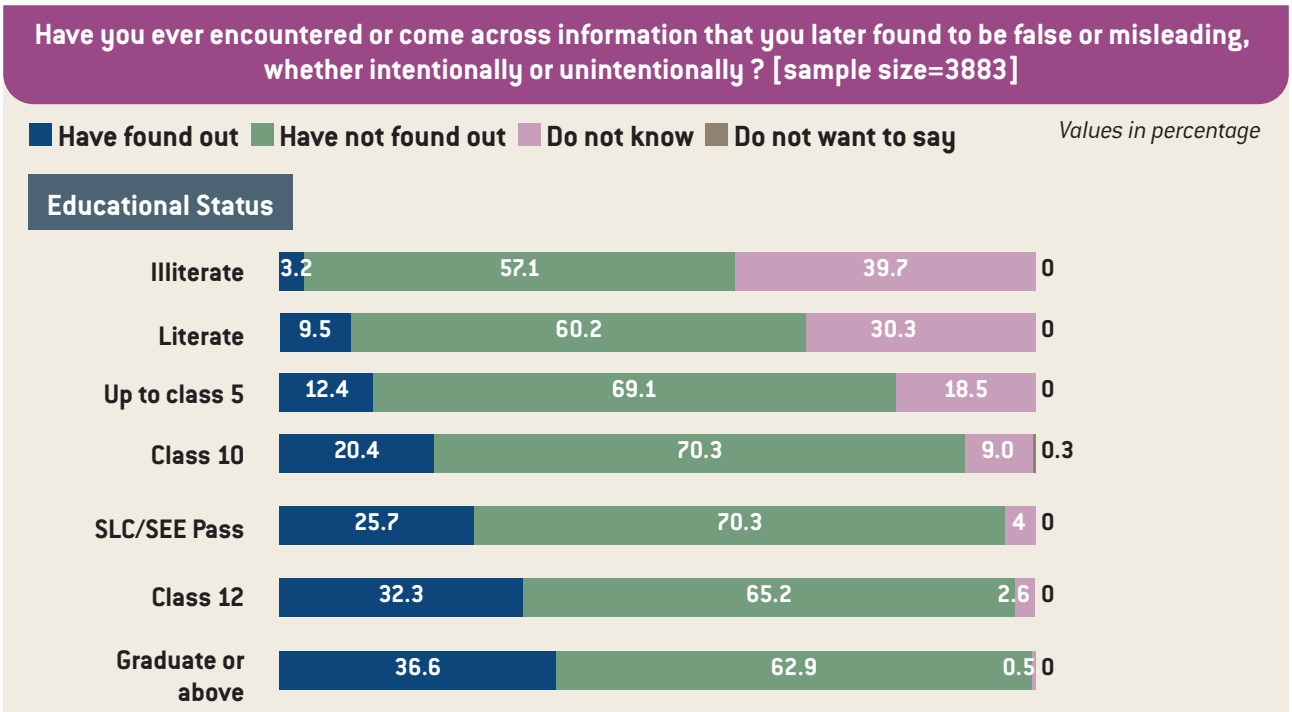

Fig. 19: Awareness regarding whether received information or news was false or misleading information spread intentionally or unintentionally on the basis of educational status

4. Many Encounter Misinformation on Facebook

A large share of respondents reported encountering false or misleading news, information, or posts on Facebook (72%), followed by YouTube (29%) and TikTok (8.4%). Smaller shares reported encountering misinformation on Nepali news websites (4.7%), Instagram (1.8%), Reddit (1.1%), Facebook Messenger (0.9%), Twitter (X) (0.8%), and WhatsApp (0.5%). Additionally, 1.2% selected "Other," and 3% responded "Do not know."

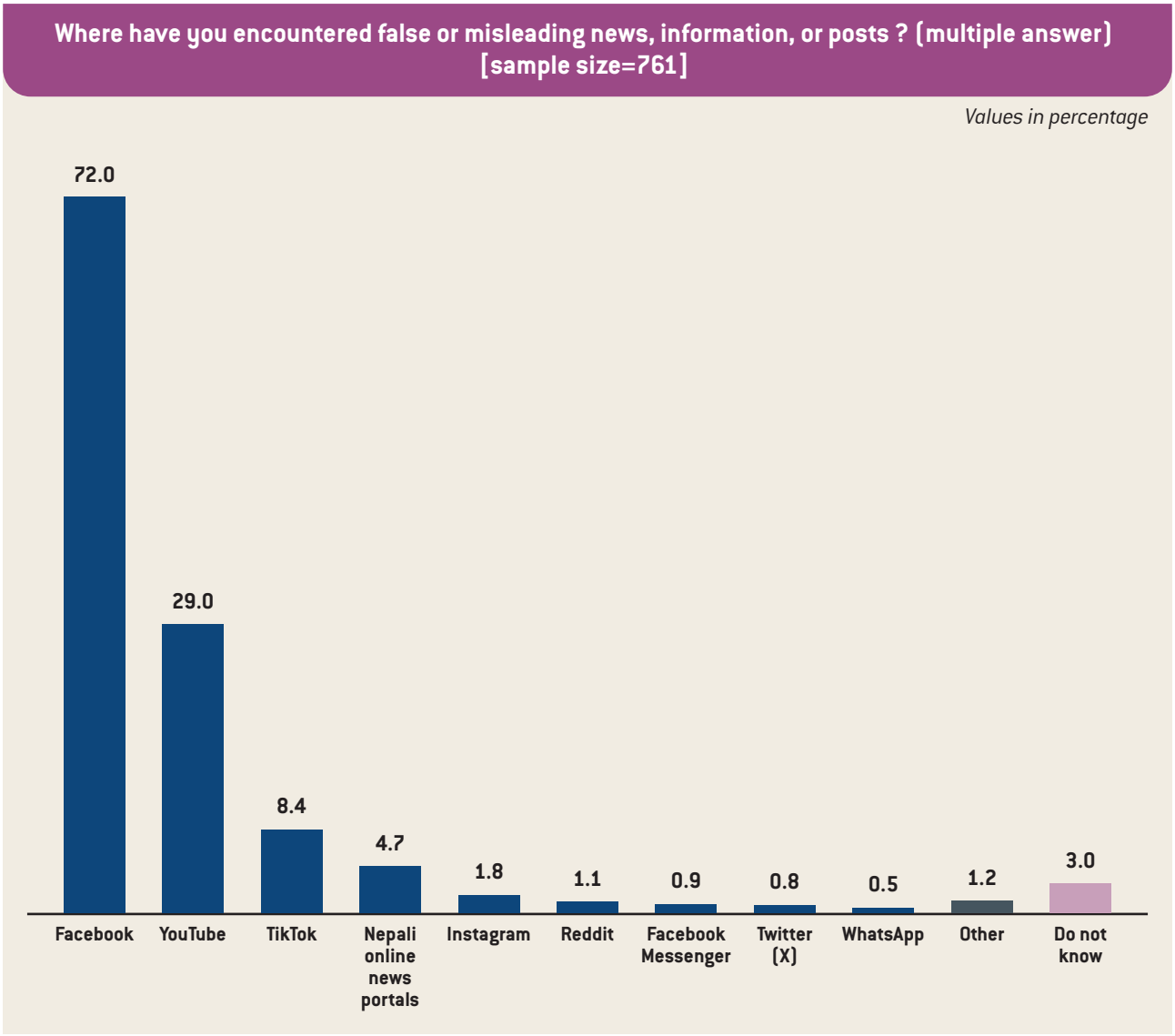

Fig. 20: Proportions of respondents regarding the platforms where false or misleading news/information or posts were encountered

By province, Sudurpashchim has the highest proportion of respondents reporting exposure to false or misleading news, information, or posts on Facebook (79.6%), while Madhesh has the lowest (61.3%). In all provinces except Madhesh, more than 70 percent of respondents reported encountering misinformation on Facebook. Among other platforms, the highest proportions of respondents reporting exposure to misinformation are observed in Karnali for Facebook Messenger, Madhesh for Instagram, Bagmati for Nepali news websites, Madhesh for Reddit, Lumbini for TikTok, Madhesh for Twitter (X), Karnali for WhatsApp, and Lumbini for YouTube.

Where have you encountered false or misleading news, information, or posts ? [multiple answer] [sample size=761]

Values in percentage

Province	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Karnali	Sudurpashchim
Facebook	73.8	61.3	71.9	70.2	75.7	73.9	79.6
Facebook Messenger	0	0.9	0.5	1.2	1.2	4.3	1.9
Instagram	0.8	2.8	2	0	1.2	0	1.9
Nepali Online	5.6	1.9	10.1	3.6	1.2	0	3.7
Reddit	0.8	6.6	0	0	0	0	0
TikTok	7.1	9.4	3	13.1	13.6	4.3	3.7
Twitter (X)	0.8	2.8	0.5	0	0.6	0	0
WhatsApp	0	0	0	0	0.6	8.7	1.9
YouTube	26.2	19.8	30.7	31	37.9	26.1	18.5
Other	7.1	5.7	4.5	4.8	4.7	8.7	16.7
Do not know	0.8	11.3	0.5	4.8	3	0	0

Fig. 21: Respondents regarding the platforms where false or misleading news/information or posts were encountered by province

By residence, the proportion of respondents reporting that they encounter false or misleading news, information, or posts on Facebook are highest in cities (74.1%). Among those reporting encountering misinformation on Facebook Messenger, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube, the highest proportions are from rural areas, while for Twitter (X) the highest proportion is from urban areas. Similarly, among those reporting Instagram, Nepali news websites, and Reddit, the highest proportions are from cities.

Where have you encountered false or misleading news, information, or posts ? (multiple answer) [sample size=761]

Values in percentage

Residence	Facebook	Facebook Messenger	Instagram	Nepali Online	Reddit	TikTok	Twitter (X)	WhatsApp	YouTube	Other	Do not know
Rural	70.9	1.4	0.5	3.2	0.9	12.7	0	0.9	32.3	5.5	2.3
Urban Area	71.8	1.1	1.8	5.3	0.8	7.4	1.3	0.5	28.2	4.7	4
City	74.1	0	1.9	5.6	1.9	3.7	0.6	0	26.5	10.5	1.9

Fig. 22: Proportion of Respondents regarding the platforms where false or misleading news/information or posts were encountered by residence

5. Most Misinformation is Political

Among the false or misleading information encountered on various platforms, the highest proportion relates to politics (35.7%). This is followed by entertainment (19.8%), subjects related to social and cultural harmony (17.2%), trade and economic issues (10.4%), caste and ethnicity–related subjects (10.2%), religion-related subjects (9.1%), social events (6%), missing persons/abduction/crime (3%), personal information (1.7%), employment-related subjects (0.5%), gifts (0.4%), studies/exam schedules (0.4%), health (0.4%), sports (0.4%), and other subjects (3.5%). Similarly, 7.4 percent responded "cannot say," and 2.1 percent responded "do not know."

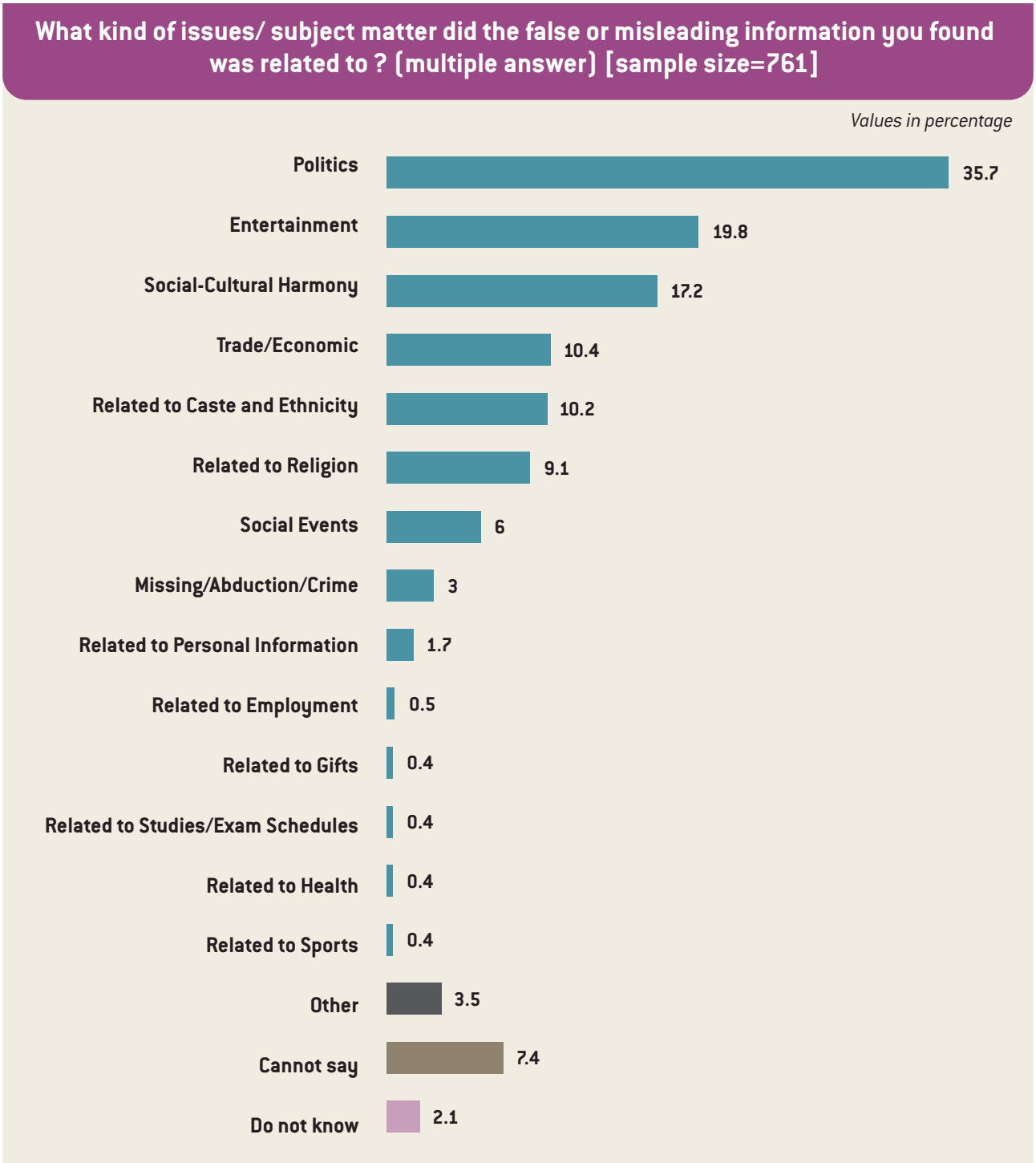

Fig. 23: Types of false or misleading information found on different platforms

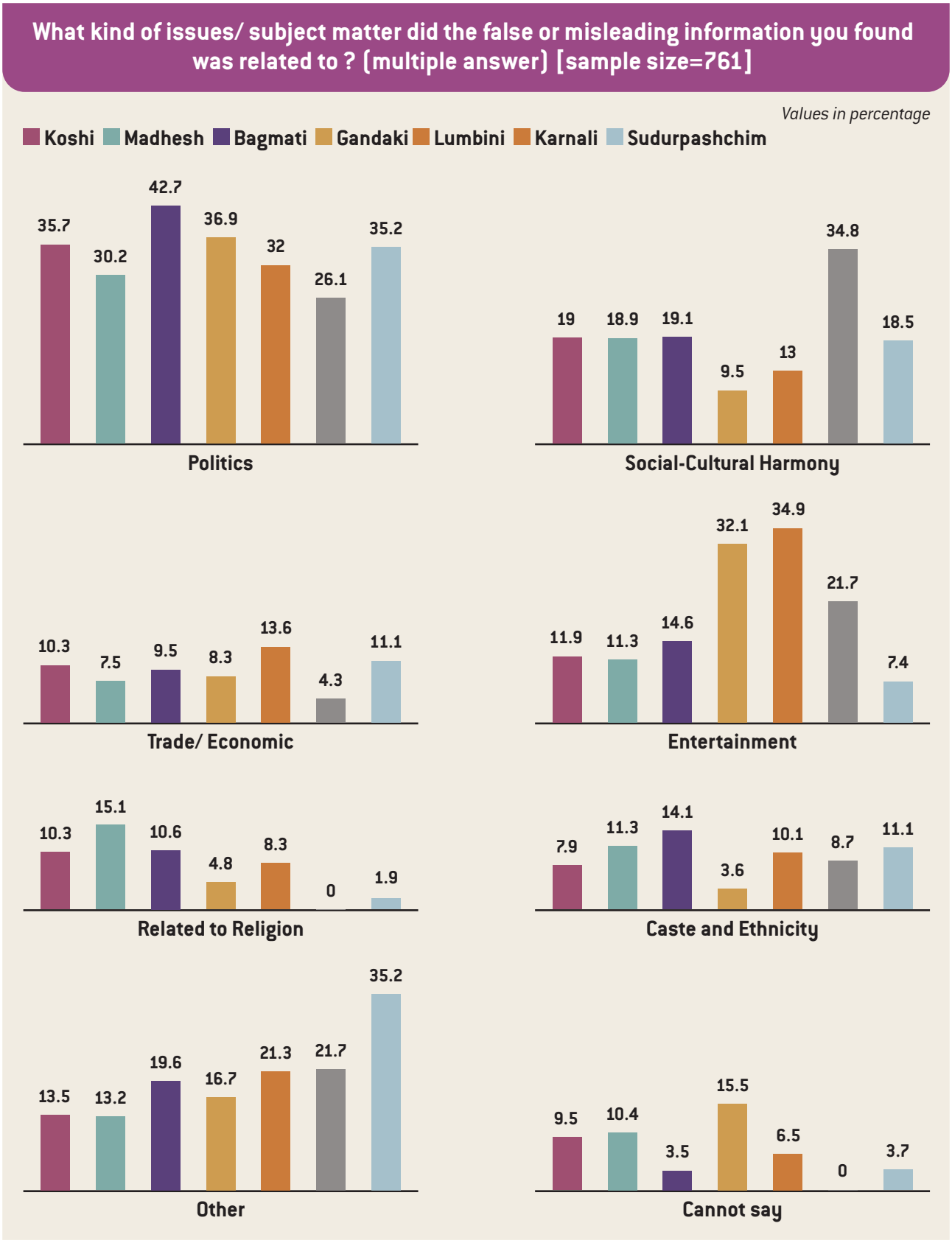

Fig. 24: Subjects of false or misleading information found on various platforms by province

Overall, the types of false or misleading information found on different platforms include political or governance-related content, social and cultural content, health or medical content, entertainment- or sports-related content, religion-related content, and other types of information, as reported by respondents.

6. Actors Responsible for Spreading Misinformation

Among the actors responsible for spreading false or misleading information, the highest number of respondents (23.1%) identified anonymous accounts or profiles. Similarly, among the survey respondents, 13.9 percent identified journalists and 12.9 percent identified individual social media users as actors who spread misinformation. This public perception might stem from a tendency to view everyone writing online as a journalist, failing to distinguish between traditional media and social media. The fact that only 0.7 percent of respondents identified media houses as responsible actors suggests a public perception that mainstream journalism spreads very little misinformation.

Political activists and followers (10.5%), politicians and political figures (5.9%), and political parties (3.4%) were also significantly identified as responsible actors. When combined, the total for political activists, politicians, and parties amounts to 19.8 percent. Among other survey respondents, 8.5 percent identified blogs, 3.9 percent identified celebrities/influencers, and 1.7 percent identified specific online forums, groups, and communities as responsible for spreading misinformation. Furthermore, less than 1 percent of respondents identified advocacy groups/think tanks, media houses, or foreign governments and state-sponsored institutions as responsible. Additionally, 2.6 percent responded "Other," while 10.5 percent said "Do not know" and 1.0 percent said "Cannot say."

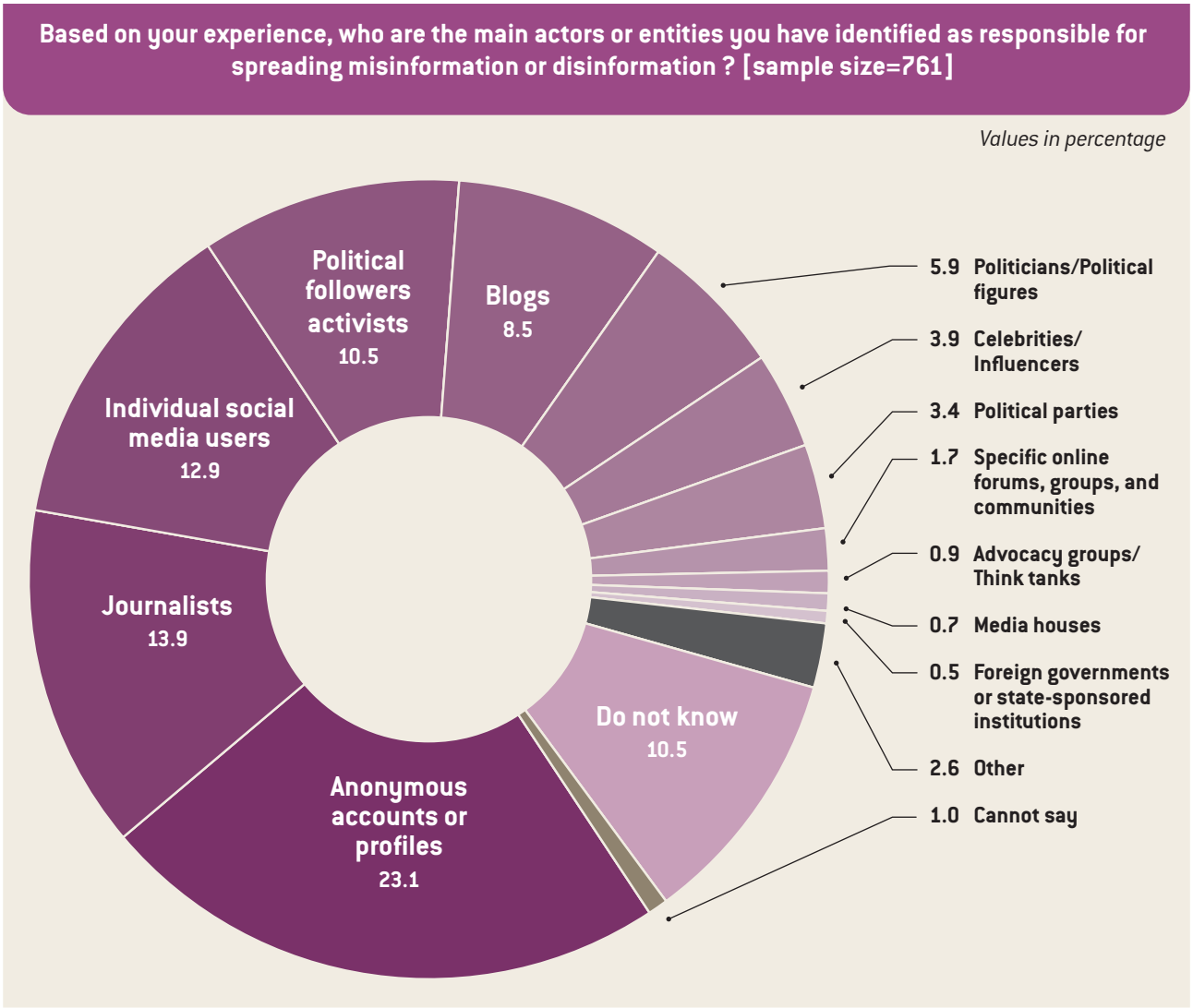

Fig. 25: Perception of actors responsible for spreading false or misleading information

7. Majority Indifferent Toward Misinformation

Even when they realize information is false, a majority of respondents (56.1%) stated that they do nothing. About 14.1 percent said they discuss it with friends or family to clarify the misinformation, while 9.6 percent said they report it to the platform. Similarly, 5.5 percent stated they unfollow or unfriend the account sharing false information, and 5.4 percent said they feel angry or frustrated. Those who stop sharing information or delete their posts account for 4.1 percent, while 3.9 percent said they feel more cautious. Additionally, 2.4 percent write comments, 2 percent share fact-checking sources or corrections to counter misinformation, 0.9 percent attempt to verify with other sources, and 0.8 percent block accounts that share such information. "Other" account for 3 percent, and 1.4 percent said they "cannot say."

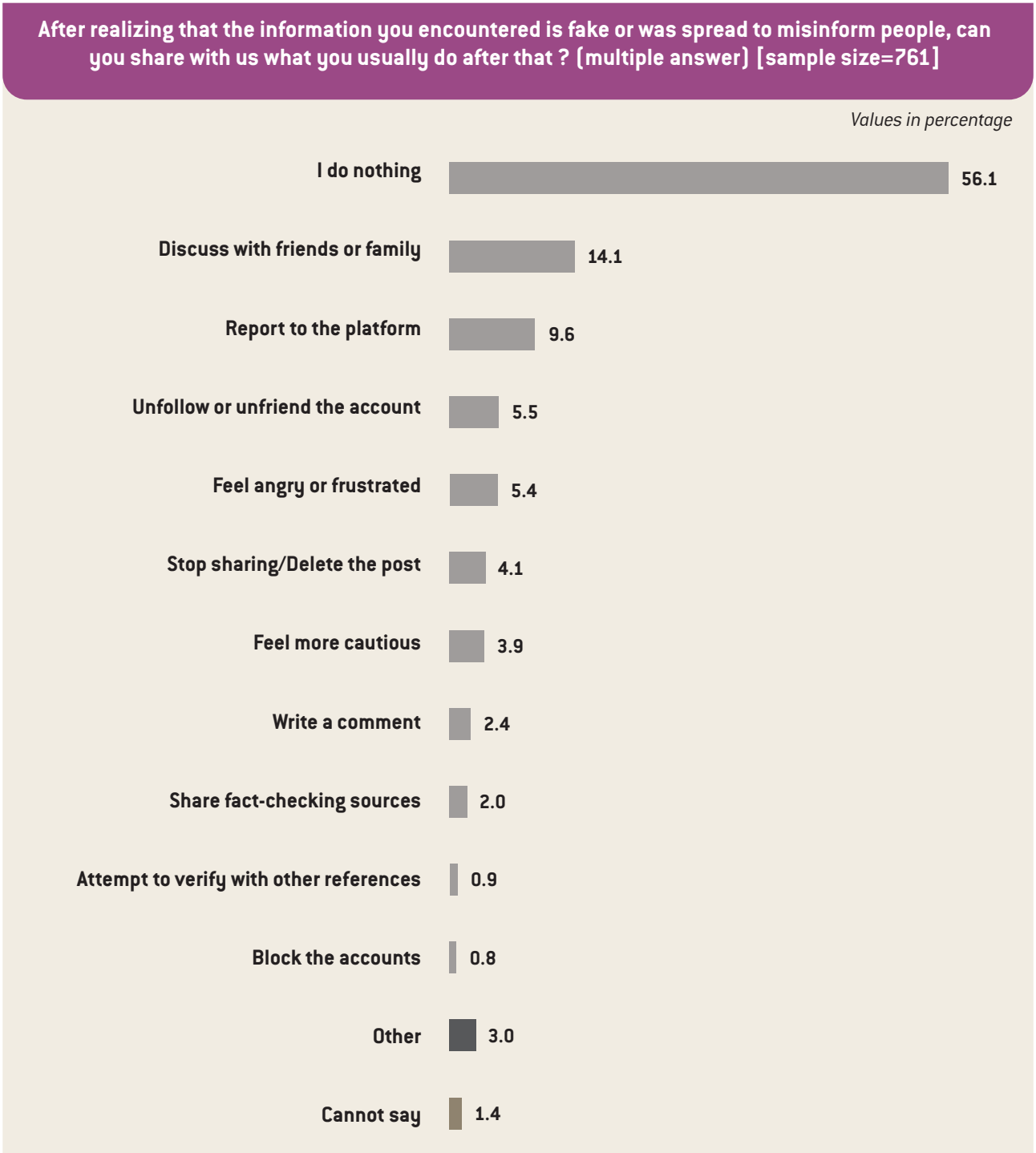

Fig. 26: Reaction after finding false information

Among those who do nothing after finding false information, the highest number is in Gandaki. Those who stop sharing information or delete posts are highest in Bagmati Province, as are those who unfollow or unfriend accounts. Meanwhile, those who report to the platform and those who discuss it with friends or family are highest in Lumbini. Those who share sources for fact-checking and those who feel more cautious are highest in Karnali.

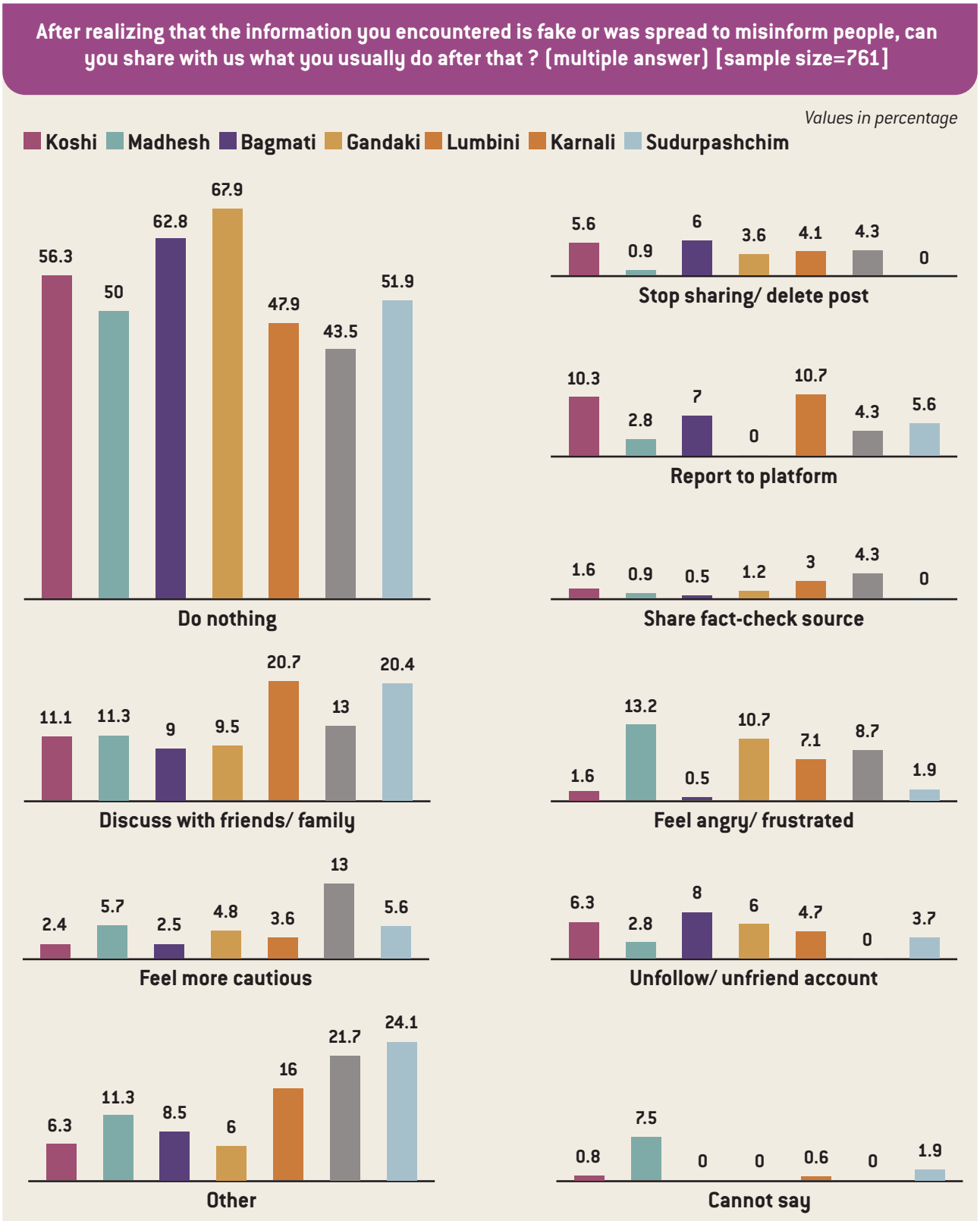

Fig. 27: Reaction after finding false information by province

8. Solution to the Problem of Misinformation

The highest number of respondents, at 53.2 percent, believe that a regulatory framework should be developed to solve the problem of false or misleading information. Similarly, 24.8 percent stated that awareness should be raised, 12.4 percent said it should be included in the school curriculum, and 4.7 percent suggested that digital literacy should be promoted. Additionally, 0.8 percent gave other responses, while 4.1 percent said they do not know.

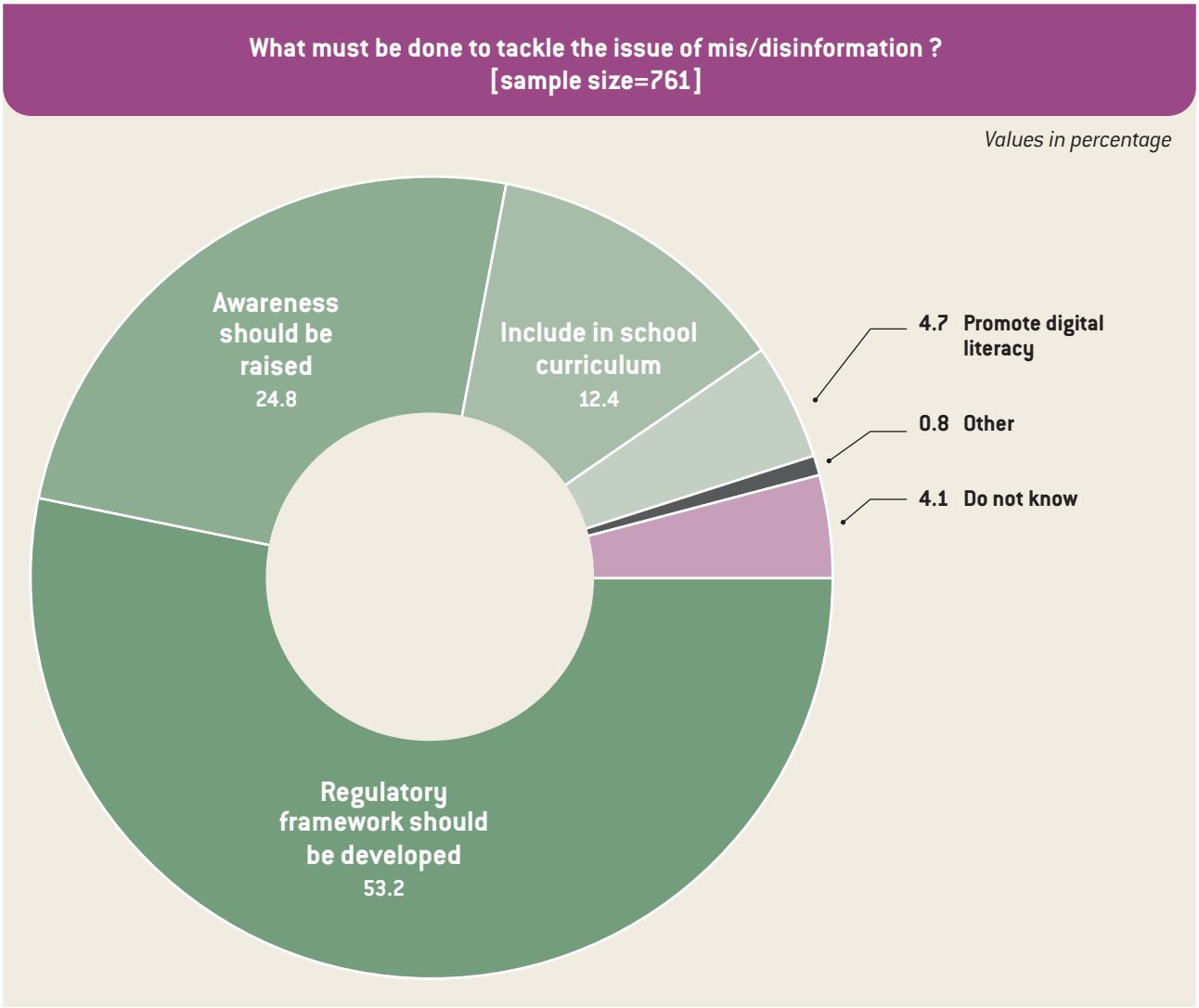

Fig. 28: Measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information

When asked for measures to address false or misleading information by province, the highest proportion of respondents advocating the promotion of digital literacy is in Sudurpashchim (13%). Those supporting the development of a regulatory framework are highest in Karnali Province (60.9%). The largest share of respondents favoring inclusion in the school curriculum is in Madhesh (17.9%), which also records the highest proportion calling for awareness-raising (30.2%).

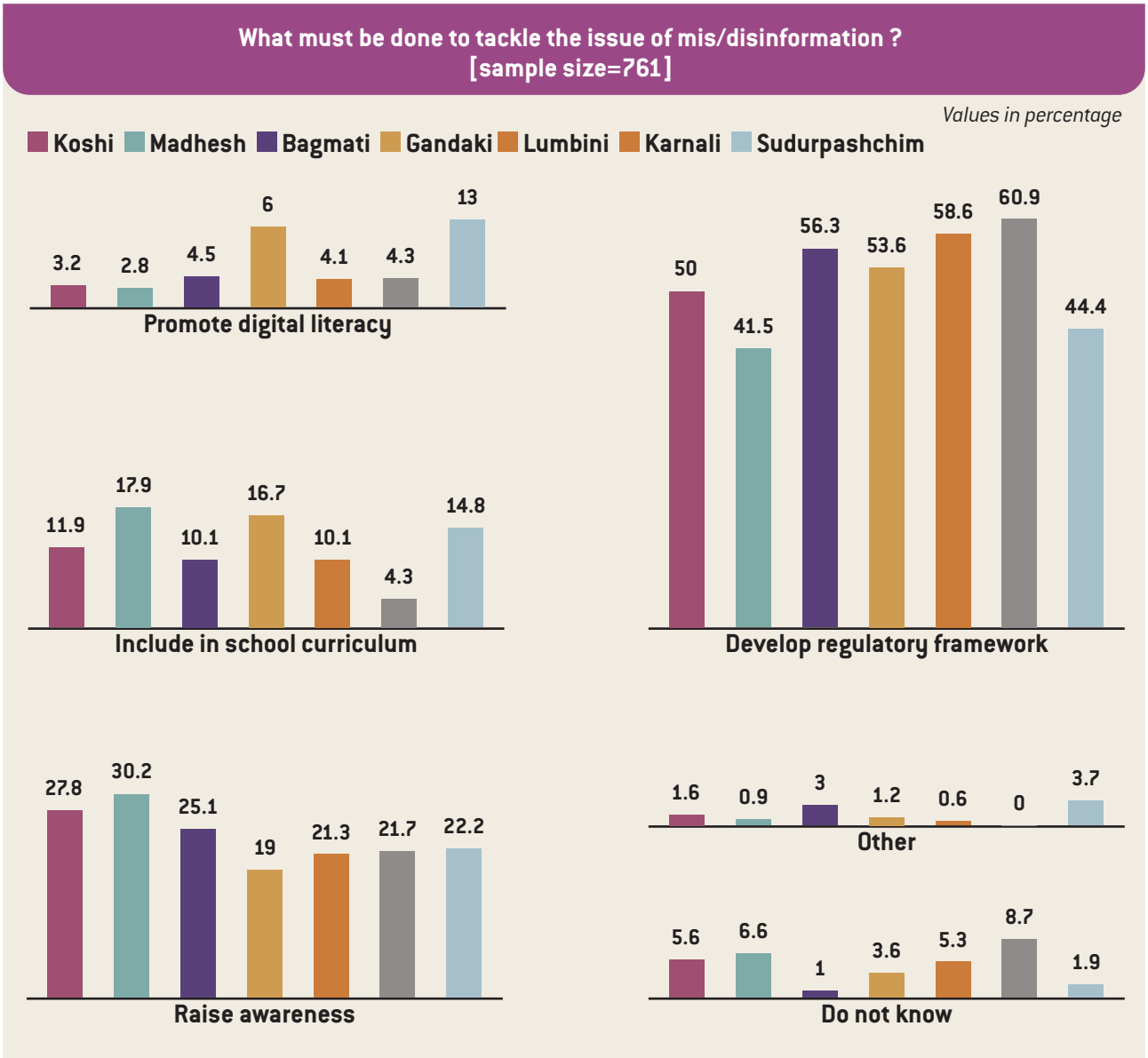

Fig. 29: Measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information by province

When analyzing the solutions to the problem of false or misleading information by residence, city dwellers comprise the highest percentage of those who believe digital literacy should be promoted (7.4%) and that it should be included in the school curriculum (14.8%). Those who believe a regulatory framework should be developed are highest in rural areas (57.3%), as are those who believe awareness should be raised (25.9%).

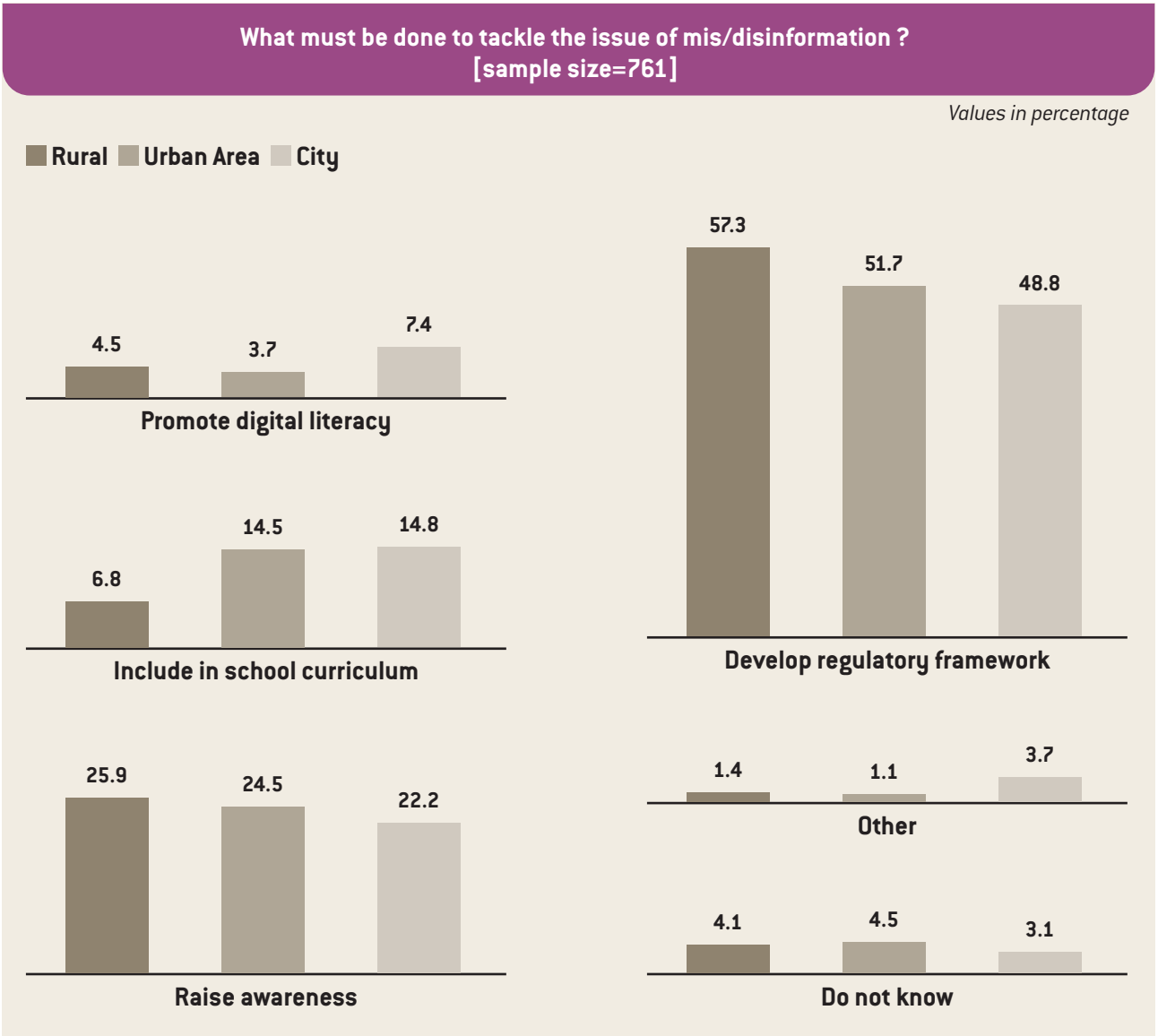

Fig. 30: Measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information by residence

When analyzing suggested solutions for false or misleading information by age group, the highest percentage of those who believe digital literacy should be promoted belongs to the 16–24 (8.5%). Support for a regulatory framework is highest in the 25–34 age group (58.2%). Similarly, support for raising awareness is highest in the 45–59 age group (34.4%), while support for including the subject in the school curriculum are highest among the group aged 60 or above (16%).

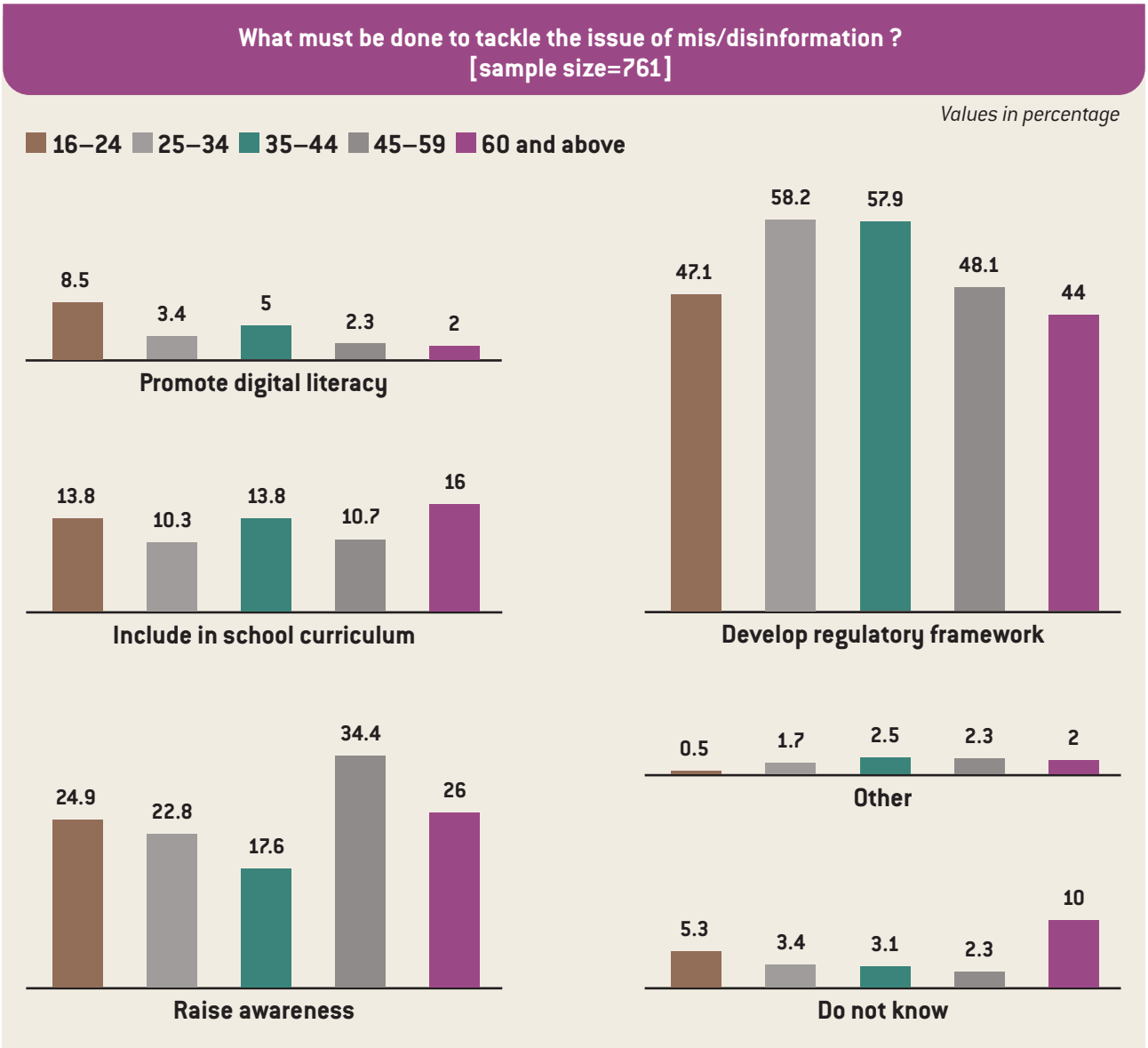

Fig 31: Measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information by age

When analyzing the measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information based on gender, a higher percentage of men (6%) than women (3%) believe that digital literacy should be promoted. Men (13.7%) also outnumber women (10.6%) in believing that it should be included in the school curriculum. Similarly, slightly more men (24.9%) believe that awareness should be raised. However, regarding the development of a regulatory framework, women (55%) outnumber men (50.9%).

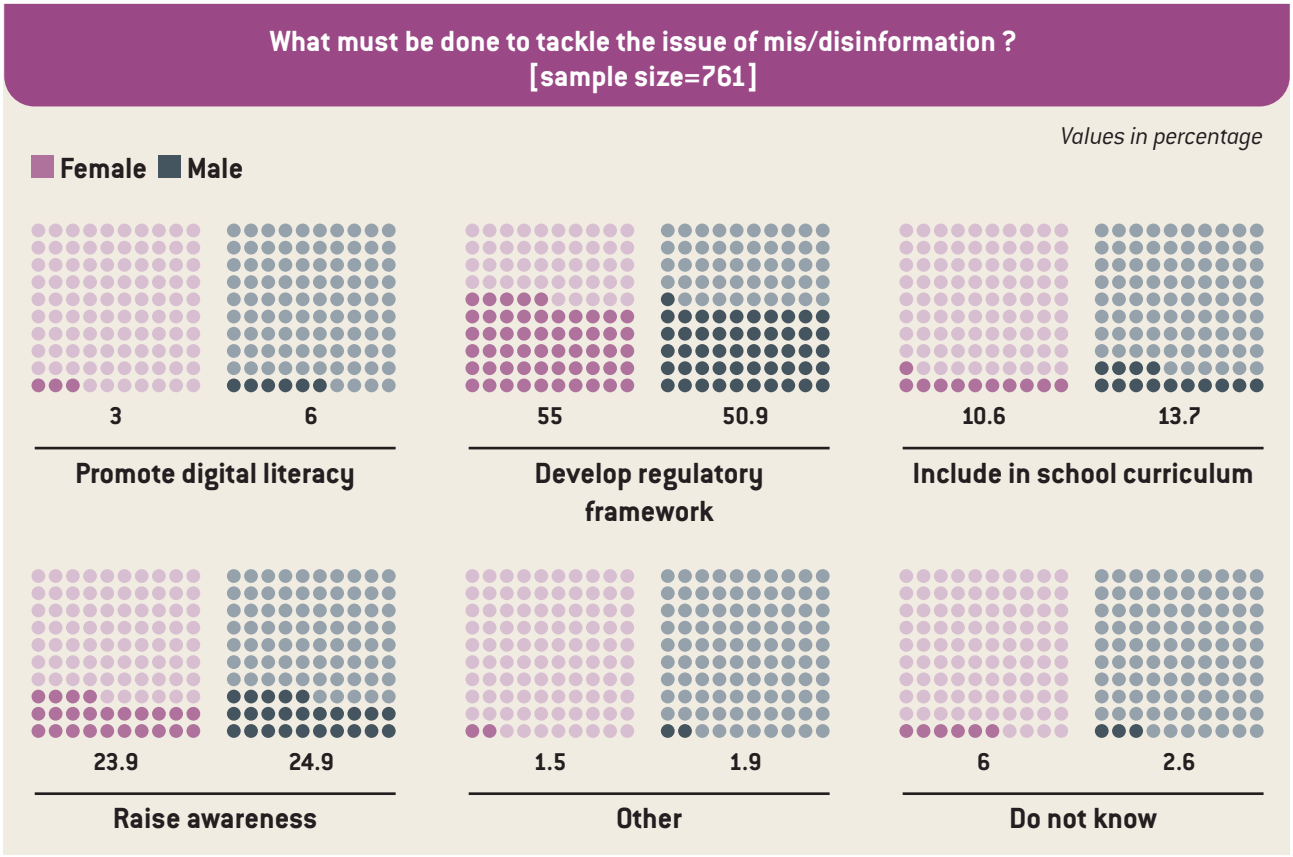

Fig. 32: Measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information by gender

Based on educational status, the literate group (7.1%) is the most likely to believe digital literacy should be increased, and they are also the most likely to believe awareness should be raised (32.1%). Among those who believe a regulatory framework should be developed, the highest percentage (63.8%) is among the SLC/SEE graduates. Meanwhile, the group with a Bachelor's degree or higher (19.2%) is the most likely to believe that the subject should be included in the school curriculum.

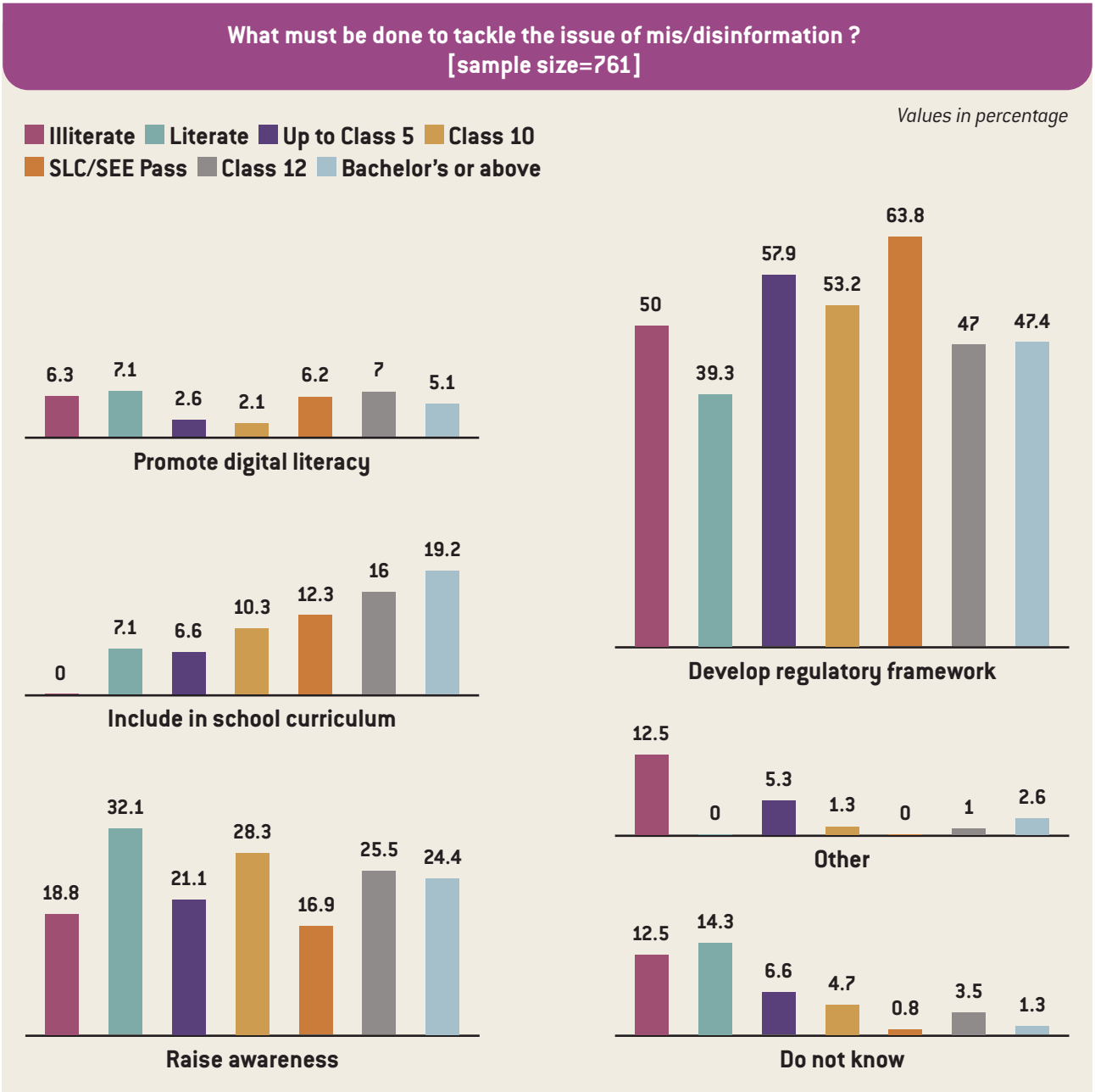

Fig. 33: Measures to solve the problem of false or misleading information by educational status

Conclusion

The fact that two-thirds of respondents reported encountering misleading news and information in the media and social networks they use suggests that this has become a significant problem. Compared to rural areas, residents of urban areas and cities encounter more misinformation. This may be because internet access is higher in urban areas, leading to a greater spread of misinformation; on the other hand, since education levels are higher in urban areas, respondents there may also be better at identifying it.

As age increases, the number of respondents reporting exposure to misinformation decreases, indicating that younger individuals are more frequently exposed. In other words, younger people tend to be more tech-savvy, and their digital knowledge and skills give them a greater capacity to scrutinize and recognize false information. The survey also shows that men report encountering more misinformation than women. Among those identifying misinformation, the smallest group is the illiterate, while the largest group consists of respondents with a Bachelor's degree or higher. The proportion of people recognizing misinformation rises with educational attainment, showing a consistent positive association. Furthermore, respondents who use mobile phones regularly report encountering more misinformation than those who do not.

More than two-thirds of respondents believe they can distinguish whether a piece of news or information is correct, false, or misleading. In this regard, respondents in cities and urban areas appear more confident than those in rural areas, likely due to higher access to education. Regarding age, confidence decreases as age increases, showing a consistent downward trend. Younger people, being generally more familiar with technology and possessing stronger digital skills, display higher self-confidence. By gender, men appear more confident than women. Similarly, respondents with lower education report less confidence, while those with higher education report greater confidence, indicating that educational attainment is associated with increased confidence in identifying misinformation.

Those who stated they realized after some time that some information or news they had encountered was false or misleading, either intentionally or unintentionally, account for 19.6 percent. Among those reporting this, urban residents outnumber rural residents, while city dwellers are even more numerous. Similarly, there are more such individuals in younger age groups and fewer in older age groups. As the age group increases, the number of those saying they have made such a realization decreases, indicating a clear downward trend. In terms of those stating this, women are fewer than men, and those with lower educational qualifications are fewer than those with higher qualifications. As educational levels increase, the number of those stating they realized the information was false also increases, showing a consistent upward trend. Compared to rural areas and older age groups, residents of urban areas and younger individuals may be more aware of misinformation due to their greater access to technology and related knowledge and skills. Furthermore, an individual's skills and knowledge also may play a significant role in the context of identifying misinformation.

Approximately 72 percent of respondents stated they encounter false or misleading news, information, or posts on Facebook. Since Facebook is the most widely used platform in Nepal, this high frequency is expected. Global studies by Ipsos (2023) and Ofcom (2024), and Nepali studies by Acharya (2020, 2022), Prajapati and Pandey (2023), and Kunwar and Prajapati (2024) also show that misinformation spreads most on social media. Among the various topics found on different platforms, politics is the most common, accounting for 35.7 percent. The survey by Prajapati and Pandey (2023) also concluded that the highest amount of misinformation (69.5%) spreads regarding political subjects.

Regarding the actors responsible for spreading false information, 23.1 percent of respondents pointed to anonymous accounts or profiles, followed by political leaders and activists. When the figures for political activists (10.5%), politicians (5.9%), and political parties (3.4%) are combined, they total 19.8 percent, which is significant in itself. This finding differs from previous data by Prajapati and Pandey (2023) and Kunwar and Prajapati (2024). According to Prajapati and Pandey (2023), social media users (68.3%) and social media influencers (37.1%) were the primary responsible actors, while Kunwar and Prajapati (2024) found social media influencers to be the most responsible (39.6%).

A survey conducted among experts by Acharya and Banu (2025) has revealed a clear hierarchy of perceived contributors to misinformation in Nepal, with social media platforms and political actors emerging as the most significant sources. Social media was ranked first by 34.7 percent respondents while Political actors were ranked second by 30.5 percent. This suggested the high influence online platforms and political rhetoric have in shaping misinformation narratives.

Even after realizing information is false, 56.1 percent of respondents stated they do nothing, which aligns with Acharya's (2022) study where only 25.8 percent reported the misinformation to platforms. This public indifference creates an environment where misinformation can flourish. The spread could be reduced, at least slightly, if actions like reporting to the platform or sharing fact-checking sources were taken. However, a majority (53.2%) believe that a regulatory framework must be developed to solve the problem. Additionally, 24.8 percent emphasized raising awareness, 12.4 percent suggested inclusion in the school curriculum, and 4.7 percent emphasized promoting digital literacy. Global surveys by Ipsos (2023) and Nepali surveys by Prajapati and Pandey (2023) also found that respondents favor developing a regulatory framework. In contrast, a survey of experts by Acharya and Banu (2025) emphasized increasing digital and information literacy (60%) and fact-checking (58%) as primary solutions.

Diverse perspectives on how to combat misleading news and information, or how to solve this problem, appear to be influenced by indicators such as an individual's place of residence, age, gender, and educational qualification. In particular, there is a significant divergence of opinion between the general public and experts on this matter. While the general public favors the development of a regulatory framework—advocating for control and prosecution through legislation—experts argue that such an alternative does not provide a solution. Instead, they emphasize practices and campaigns such as fact-checking and the enhancement of digital and information literacy. It appears that the general public tends to be more reactive to the immediate situation, whereas experts are concerned about the potential for restrictions on freedom of expression. Furthermore, a growing tendency to seek solutions to any problem through legal control not only shrinks the space for freedom of expression but can also cause serious harm to democracy and its core values. Therefore, efforts to find solutions through campaigns that increase civic awareness, rather than control-oriented approaches, are likely to be more sustainable.

In this survey, the demand for promoting digital literacy was highest in Sudurpashchim (13%), while the demand for a regulatory framework was highest in Karnali Province (60.9%). Respondents in Madhesh emphasized inclusion in the school curriculum and raising awareness. Ultimately, the most effective way to prevent misinformation is through citizen awareness. If all citizens become vigilant, the spread of misinformation will naturally decrease. Various programs can be effective for citizen awareness, such as making it a subject of study at the school level. Furthermore, misinformation can be prevented by promoting digital literacy and conducting various campaigns at the community level.

References

Acharya, U. (2020, September). Nepal Twitter Users Survey 2019 Summary of the Findings. https://research.butmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Nepal-Twitter-Users-Survey-2019.pdf

Acharya, U. (2022, May 3). Nepal Social Media Users Survey 2021 Summary of the Findings. https://research.butmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SocialMediaSurvey_Nepal_2021_CMR.pdf

Acharya, U. and Banu, S. (2025). Understanding Misinformation in Nepal Expert Views on Definations, Determinants, Solutions and Way Forward. Purak Asia. 10.62657/Purak2509

Ipsos and Unesco (2023, September). Survey on the impact of Online disinformation and hate speech. Ipsos and Unesco.

Kunwar, C. and Prajapati, U. (2025). Media and Information Literacy: Examining the Effectiveness of Educating Youths, in Acharya, U. (ed.). Nepal's Misinformation Landscape. Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25ae

Ofcom (2024, November 27). Understanding misinformation: an exploration of UK adults' behaviour and attitudes. Ofcom.

Ooi, H. H., Arnaudo, D., Bradshaw, S., Schwalbe, K., Studdart, A., Zakem, V., & Zink, A. (2021). Combating information manipulation: A playbook for elections and beyond. National Democratic Institute (NDI), Stanford Internet Observatory, and International Republican Institute (IRI). https://www.ndi.org/publications/combating-information-manipulation-playbook-elections-and-beyond

Pathak, T and KC, B. (2025). Misinformation: Shared Concern, Limited Interventions, in Acharya, U. (ed.). Nepal's Misinformation Landscape. Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25a0

Pathak, T. P., & Prajapati, U. (2023, August 22). Online platforms, polling, and misinformation: Electioneering strategies in Nepal. The Influence Industry. https://influenceindustry.org/en/explorer/case-studies/nepal-electioneering-strategies/ Para 23

Prajapati, U. and Pandey, L. (2025). Public Perceptions of Misinformation: Sources, Impacts, and Societal Implications, in Acharya, U. (ed.). Nepal's Misinformation Landscape. Center for Media Research-Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr25ab p.55-57

Sapkota, P. D., & Adhikari, S. (2023). Election and democracy in Nepal: An analysis of elections from 2008 through 2022. Purak Asia. p.21

In Nepali

Acharya, Ujjwal; Shrestha, Umesh and Pathak, Tilak (n.d.). Mithya suchana, online utpidan: prakar, pahichan ra pratikar *Misinformation, Online Harassment: Types, Identification and Countermeasures*. Center for Media Research–Nepal.

This study captures firsthand perspectives from the general public on the growing challenge of misinformation in Nepal, examining how it spreads, which mediums carry it furthest, who the key actors are, and which subjects it targets most. It also explores how well people can identify it, how they respond upon encountering it, and what measures they believe could curb it in the future.

One finding stands out as particularly telling: 56.1 percent of respondents admitted to doing nothing after recognizing information as false. This widespread inaction points to a culture of passive acceptance, an environment where misinformation is allowed to thrive not just through active deception, but through public apathy. Even small, individual actions such as reporting false content to platforms or sharing verified, fact-checked sources could meaningfully slow its spread.

Ultimately, to effectively mitigate misinformation, the report suggests having a more informed citizenry. Integrating media literacy into school curricula, strengthening digital literacy programs, and running community-level awareness campaigns- a step toward building a public that is not only better at identifying misinformation, but more motivated to act against it.

PURAK ASIA
Kunwar Marg, Kathmandu-31, Nepal
☎ 977-1-4564599
✉ info@purakasia.org
🌐 www.purakasia.org

Published Year : 2025

Acknowledgments:

The team led by Chief Executive Officer **Madhu Acharya** and Program Director **Bhumiraj Chapagain** of Sharecast Initiative Nepal for survey data collection.

Prem Darshan Sapkota for ideation; **Srishti Adhikari** and **Ujjwal Acharya** for suggestions on the draft; and **Bikram Chandra Majumdar** for the design.