

# Political Radicalism on Social Media

By Jordan Hamrick

# Question

Do people who spend more time on social media and engage more with content develop a more favorable attitude towards politically radical ideas?

# Hypothesis

People who spend more time on social media and engage more with content develop a more favorable attitude towards politically radical ideas. The more people are exposed to radical ideas, they become apathetic to the presence of those ideas and are more likely to support those ideas

# Literature Review

- “The New Netwar: Countering Online Extremism”
  - Public attitudes towards extreme online content, radicalization, and possible interventions
- “Similarities and Differences between Left-Wing and Right-Wing Radicals”
  - Elements of extremism
- “Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction Between Activism and Radicalism”
  - Definition of political violence
- “A Scale Measuring Attitude Towards Terrorism”
  - Attitude towards terrorism and political violence

# Methodology

- Amazon Mechanical Turk
  - Allowed for a larger dissemination of the survey
  - Only reached a limited demographic group
- Participants had to be at least 18 and reside within the United States
- Total of 675 participants
  - Sample population of 620 participants

# Survey Instrument

- Demographics
- Social Media Use
- General Political Opinion
- Political Participation
- Political Social Media Use
- Political Violence Opinion
- Political Extremism

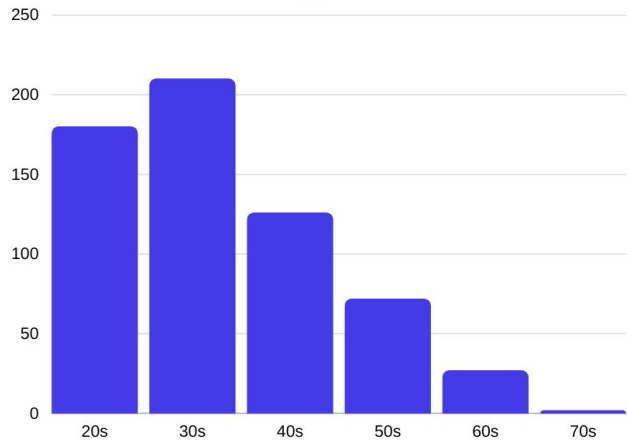
## *Elements of Political Extremism*

- Estrangement from politics
- Political cynicism
- Paranoid tendencies
- Populism
- Intolerance of ambiguity
- Free speech
- Totalitarianism
- Intolerance of human fragility

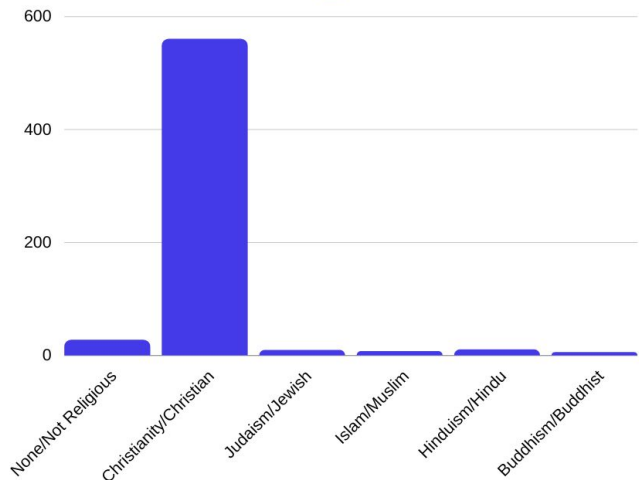
# Preliminary Findings

- Primarily white, Christian, and 20-40 year old
- General apathy towards the presence of extremist content
- High levels of estrangement from politics and political cynicism
- Claims of supporting political violence
- Distrust of both traditional media and social media

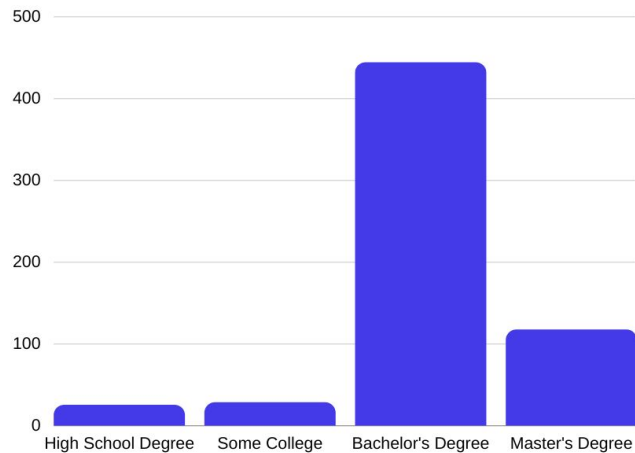
# Age



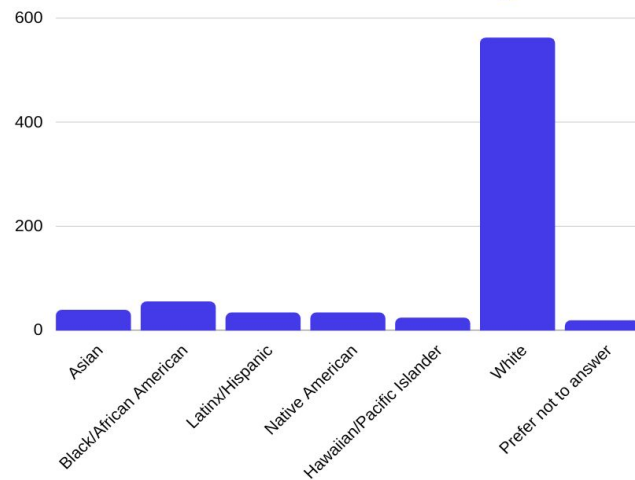
# Religion



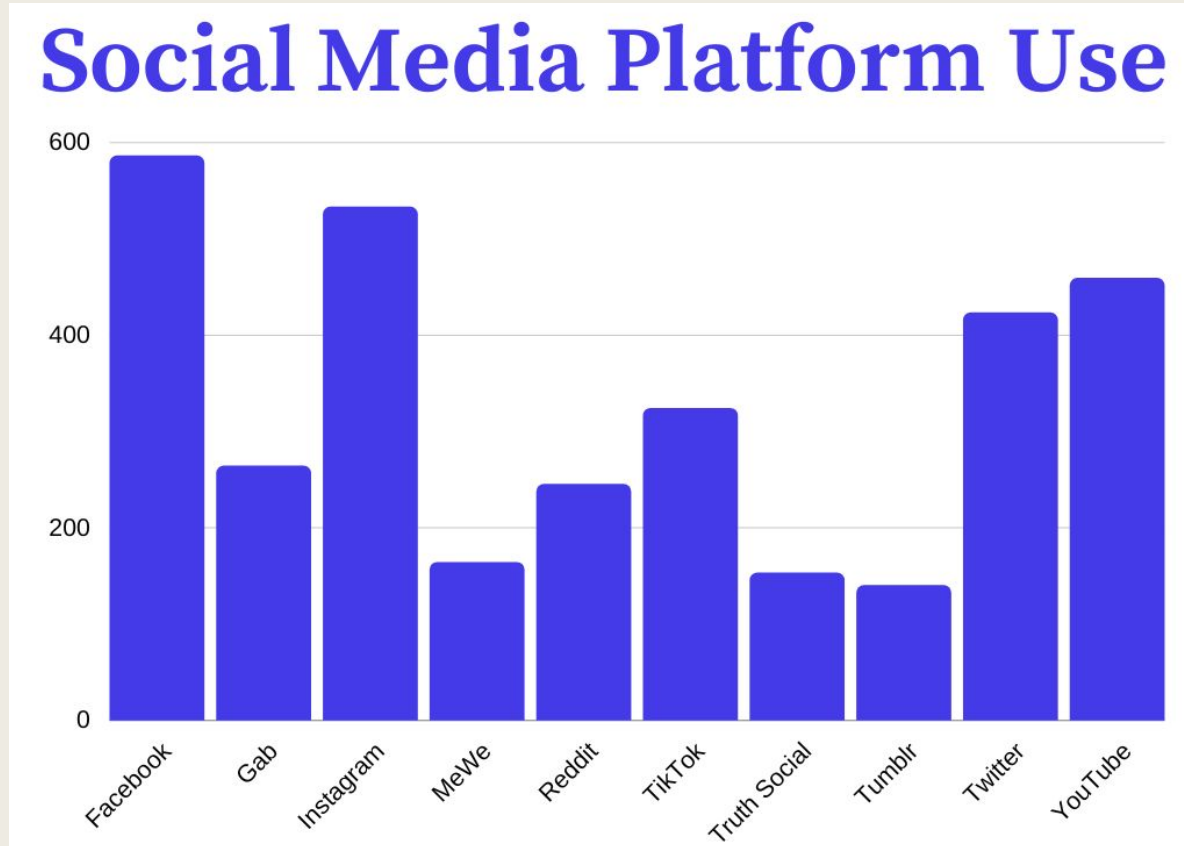
# Education Level



# Race/Ethnicity

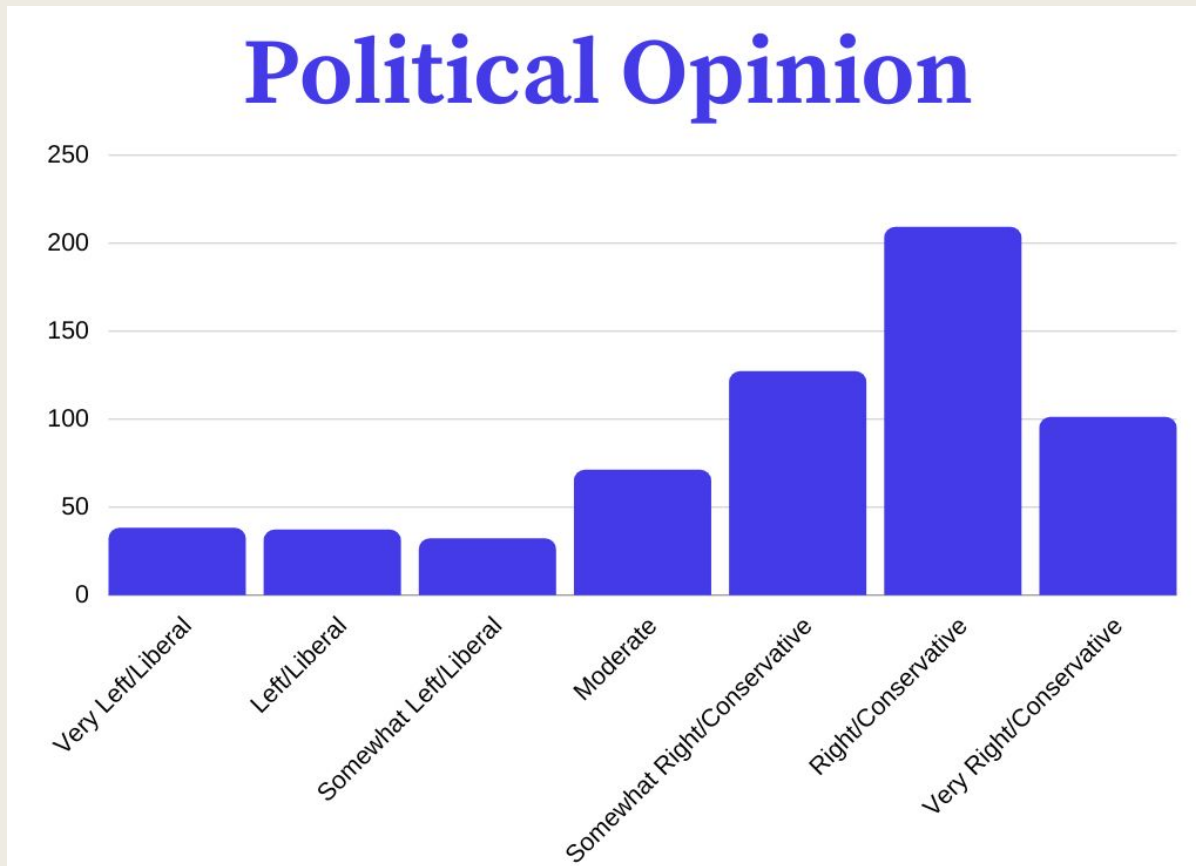


# Most Used Platforms

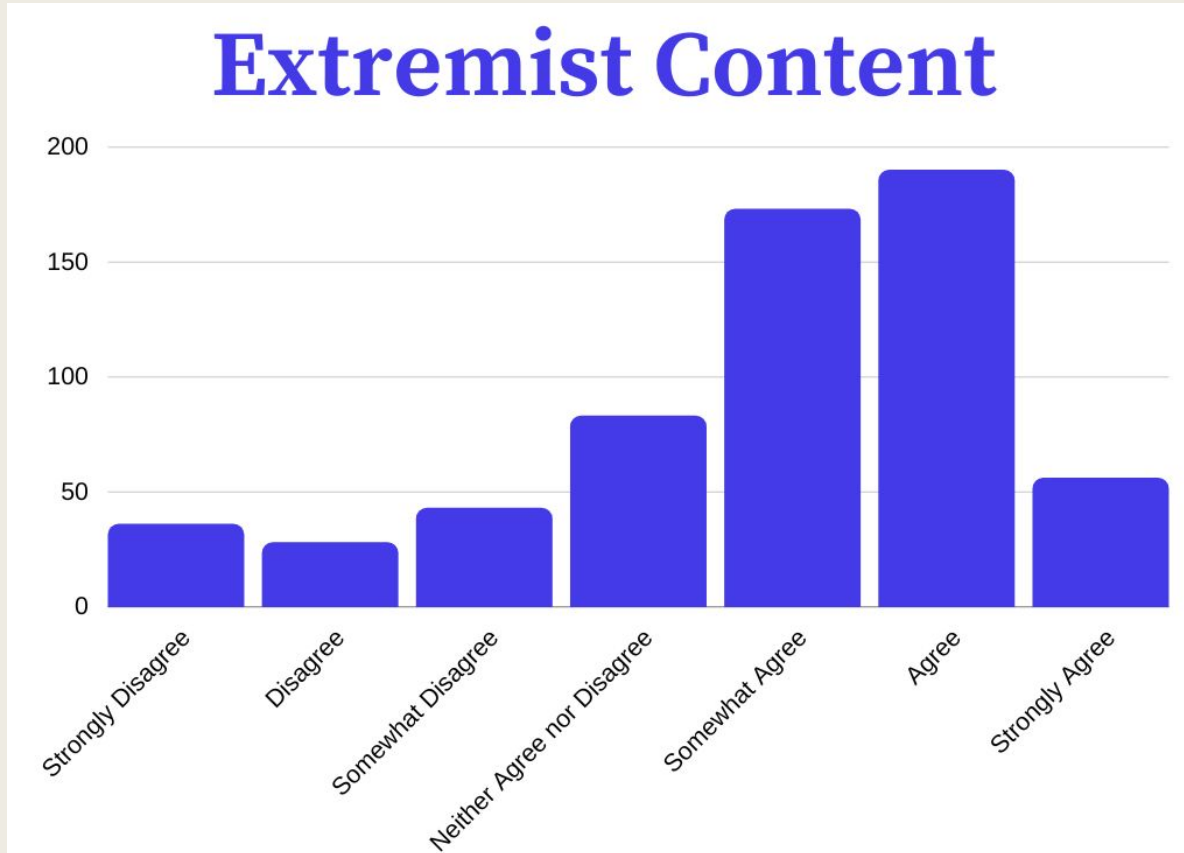




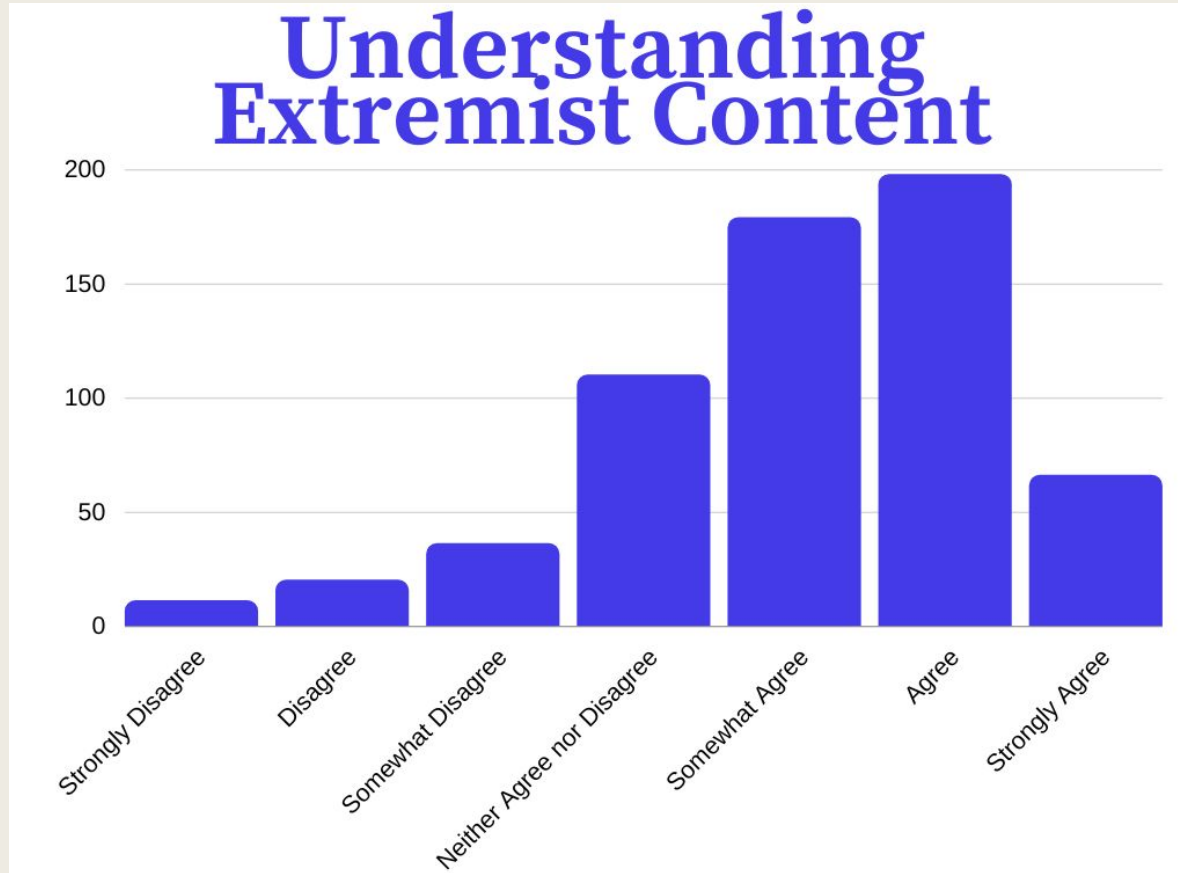
I generally consider my political opinion to be...



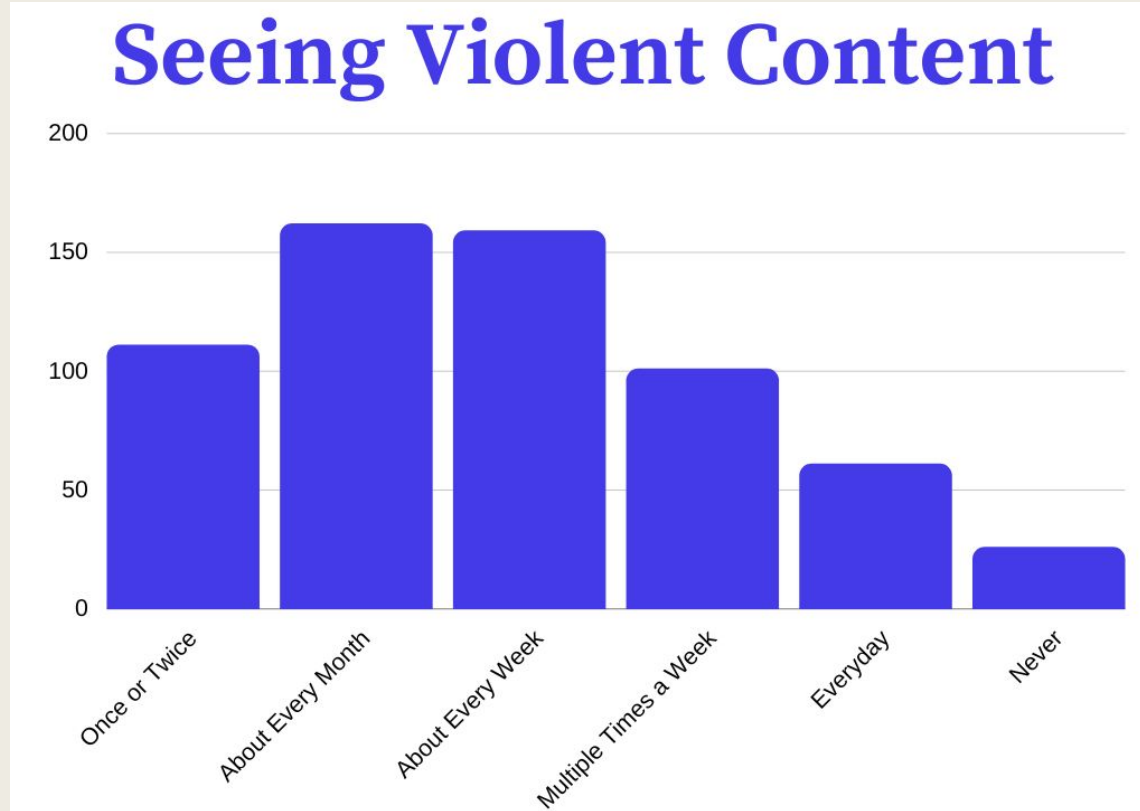
I do not mind radical/extremist content being on social media.



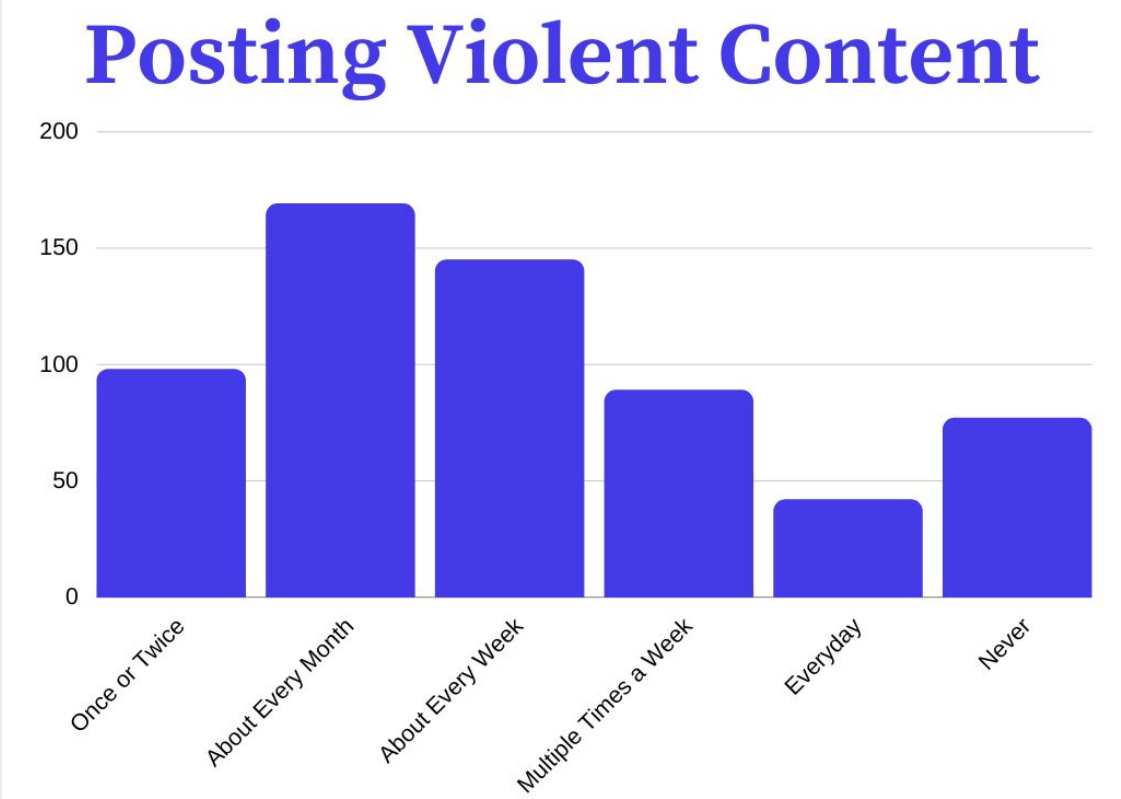
Content I have seen on social media has made me more understanding of why people engage in political violence.



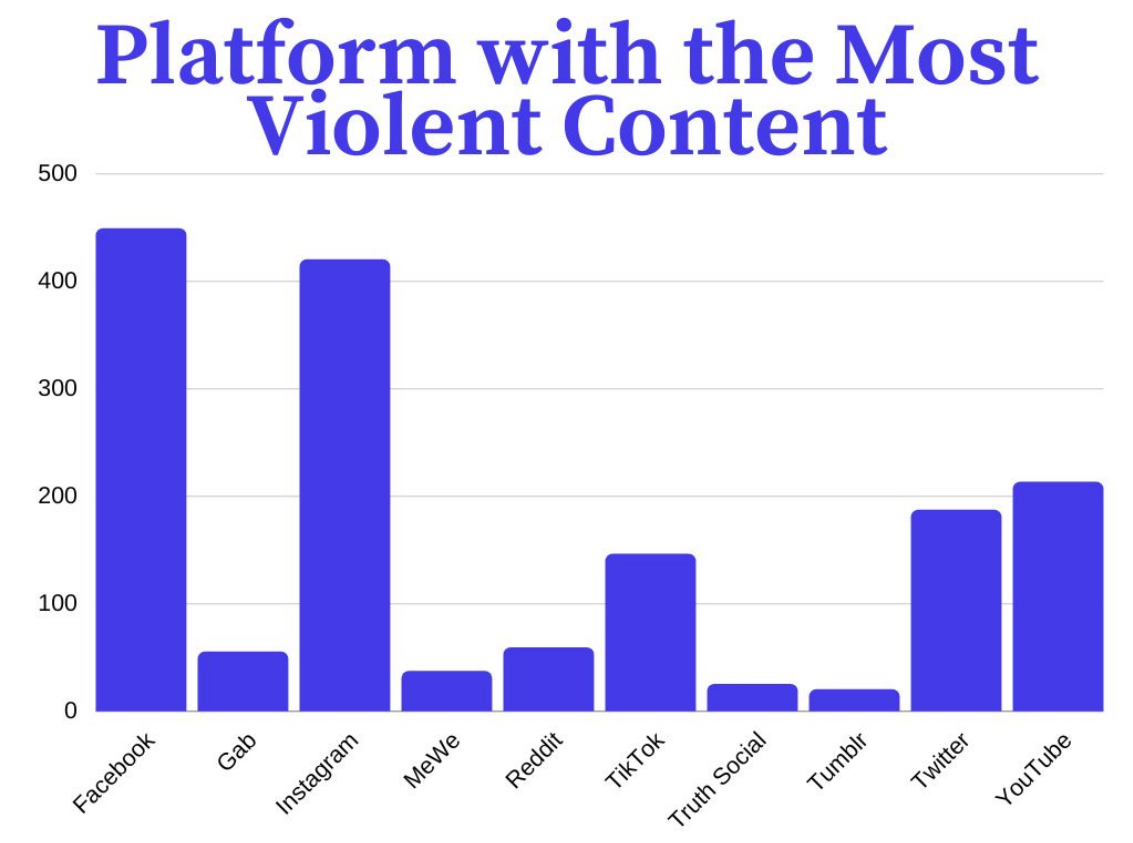
In the past 6 months, how often have you seen content on social media that features violence used to further a political or social goal?



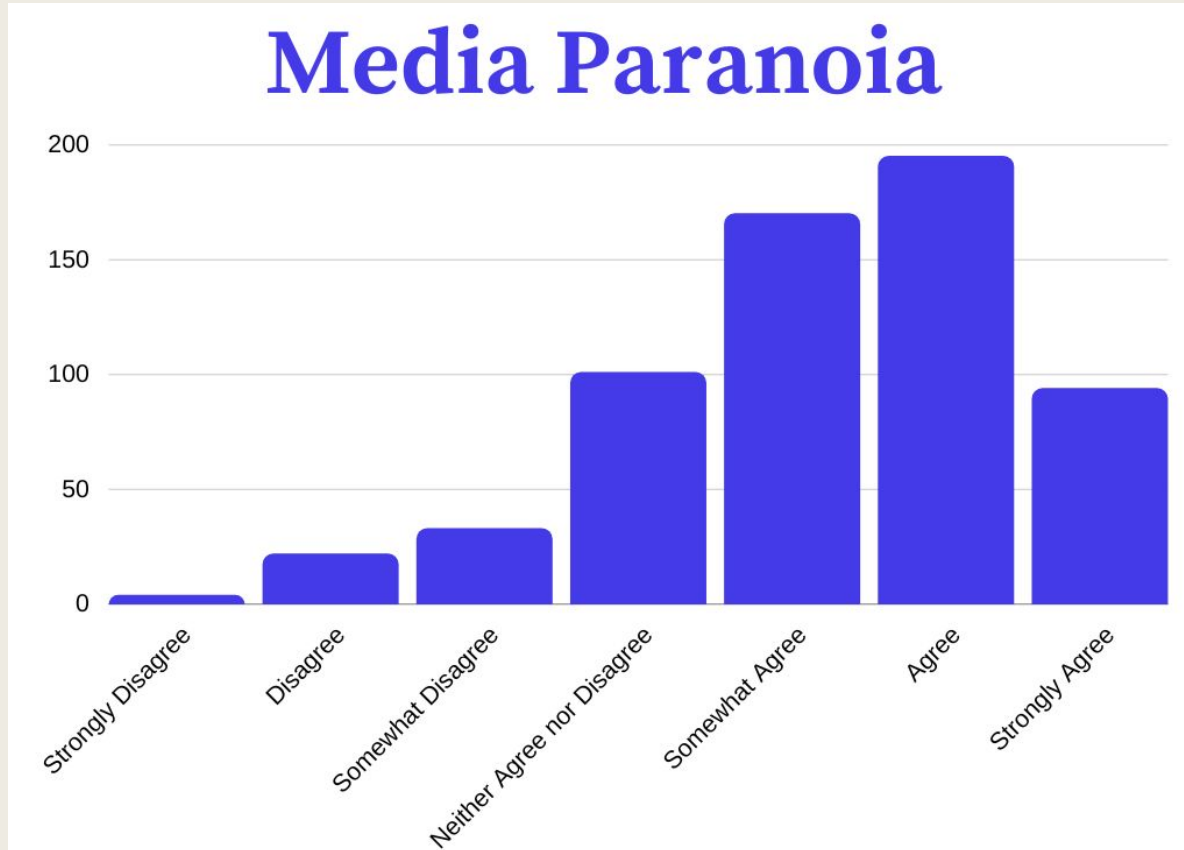
In the past 6 months, how often have you posted content on social media that encourages the use of violence to further a political or social goal?



On which platform do you see the most content that encourages the use of violence to further a political goal?



Most of the news we get from media is deliberately slanted to mislead us.



# Conclusions

- Highest level of engagement with extremist content on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube
- Inconsistencies between attitudes towards the presence of extremist content and the regulation of content
- Concerns over the truthfulness of media
- Correlation between high levels of social media use and political extreme opinions



# Avenues for Future Research

- To determine if a platform or type of use has an impact on attitudes toward extremism
- Relationship between social media use and types of political extremism
- Tracking individual user behavior and attitudes over time
- The effect of other external factors