

SEPTEMBER 2021

# Public Opinion on the Online Safety Bill

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# Background

Compassion in Politics, FairVote UK, Glitch, and Clean Up The Internet, have conducted research into public opinion on the government's proposed Online Safety Bill. The research, delivered by Opinium through a representative poll of 2,000 UK adults, aimed at assessing the public's view on both the broad principles of the Bill and specific clauses and proposals.

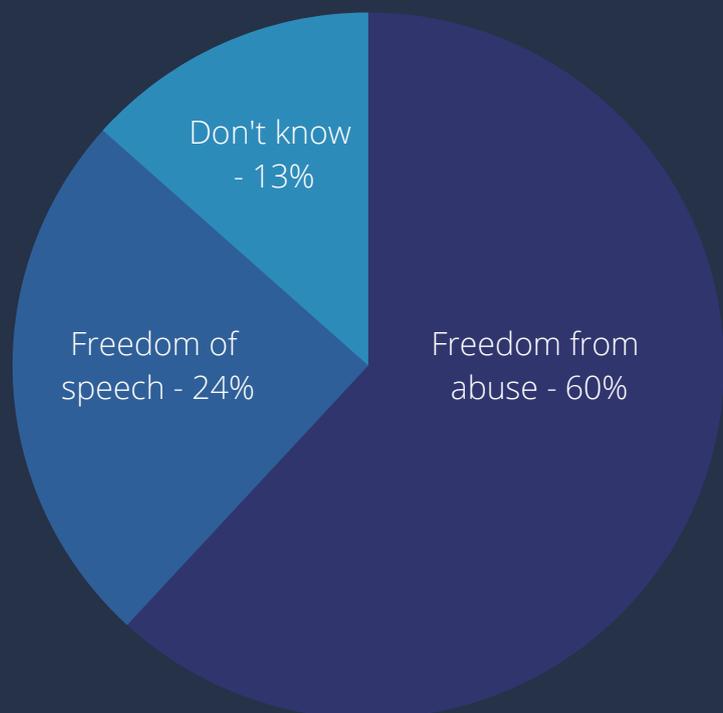
## Summary

Overall the polling showed very strong public support for government action to stop abuse and misinformation online. In general the public believe the draft Online Safety Bill needs to go further in requiring action from social media companies and in penalising noncompliance. The public are particularly animated by the need to stop abuse online - especially racist abuse - and believe that the Bill should go just as far in protecting adults as it intends to do for children.

# Freedom from abuse is more important than freedom of speech

60% believe freedom from abuse is more important than freedom of speech. There is a slight gender difference - 54% of men believe this compared to 66% of women. 57% of Conservatives agree with this statement as did 68% Labour.

Just 24% think freedom of speech is more important than freedom from abuse. Again there is a gender division: 31% of men believe this to be true compared to 17% of women. 27% of Conservative voters agree with the statement; 17% Labour.



# Stopping abuse should be the government's top concern

44% believe the government's priority for the Bill should be to stop the spread of abuse online. There is broad agreement on this along party lines: 41% of Conservative voters and 50% of Labour voters shared this opinion.

22% think the priority for the Bill should be tackling the spread of misinformation. Again the figures were similar for Conservative and Labour voters: 22% and 25% hold this view respectively.

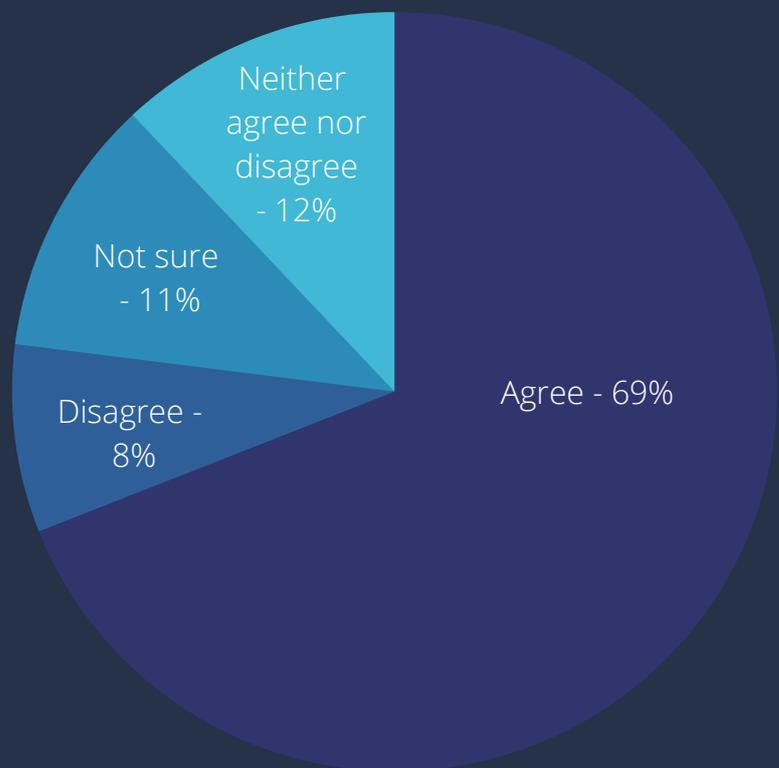
Just 12% feel the ambition of the Online Safety Bill should be to protect freedom of speech.

4% want the Bill to aim at eliminating the presence of "social media bubbles" online (whereby individuals become isolated from other viewpoints).

# The Bill should do as much for adults as it proposes for children

69% agree the Bill should require social media platforms prevent the circulation of content that is harmful to adults as well as to children (under the current draft, platforms will have to publish terms and conditions which make it clear to users that content which is harmful to adults may be removed but not act proactively to stop the circulation of harmful content.)

Just 8% oppose extending the requirement to prevent the circulation of harmful content to include content harmful to adults.



# An independent regulator should be in charge of deciding if social media companies are meeting the duties of the Online Safety Act

63% believe an independent regulator should be charged with overseeing compliance by social media companies with the terms of the Online Safety Act. On this there is broad agreement between Conservative and Labour voters: 60% of the former and 65% of the latter agree that authority should lie with an independent regulator.

Just 21% think that responsibility should lie with the government.

Even fewer, just 13%, think social media companies should be allowed to self-regulate.

# Racism, hate, and misinformation should be amongst top priorities for action by social media companies

64% agree that social media companies should act to prevent the circulation of racist material

62% believe they should be preventing the spread of hate on their platforms. The same proportion want to see social media platforms act to prevent the circulation of misinformation and fake news.

57% want action to stop the posting of personal insults. 56% think social media companies need to prevent the spread of homophobic content, 54% xenophobic, 50% ableist, 50% sexist, 49% transphobic, and 42% ageist.

Just 13% think no such content should be removed or prevented from circulation.

# Sharing intimate images (without consent) and false information or being intimidating or threatening widely seen as constituting “harmful” behaviour

Asked what constitutes a “harm”, 65% believe that sharing intimate images without someone’s approval meets the threshold.

65% also think that intimidating or threatening someone should be seen as a “harm”

63% agree that spreading false information about an individual is harmful and 61% say it is harmful to post information that could lead to someone else committing a harm (for example to commit suicide or inflict physical harm on another person).

58% say being transphobic, ageist, ableist, racist, and/or homophobic is harmful.

53% believe spreading false information about an issue is harmful.

Using aggressive language is seen harmful by 50% of people

Insulting someone's appearance is considered harmful by 42%

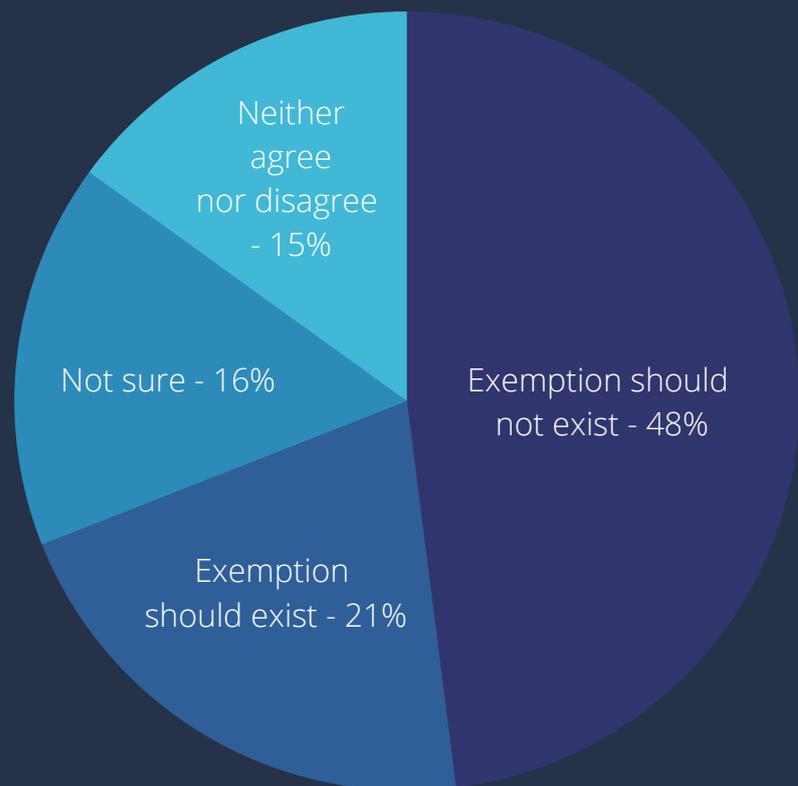
38% say a harm is committed if someone uses derogatory language to describe someone else's views.

Sharing non-intimate images without consent is considered harmful by 30%.

# Journalists should not be given any kind of exemption in the Online Safety Bill

48% believe it would be unfair to create exemptions in the Online Safety Bill for journalists. This includes 48% of Conservative voters and 43% of Labour voters.

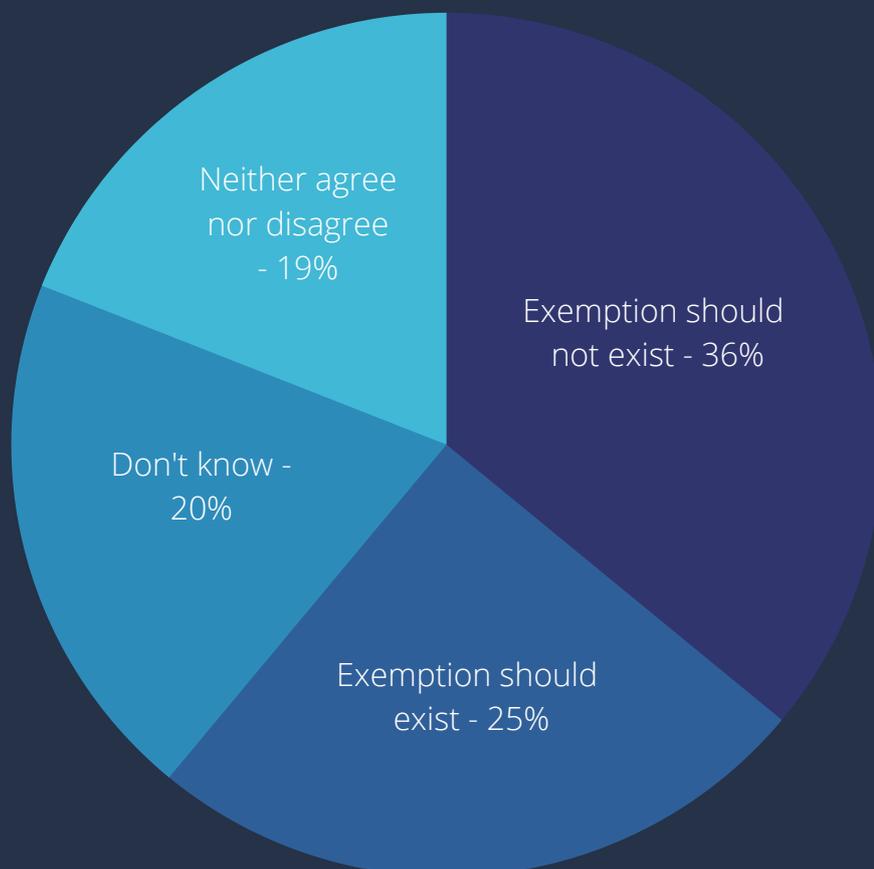
Just 21% think the exemption should exist for journalists - 21% of Conservative voters and 25% of Labour voters.



# Public are sceptical about the “democratic content” exemption

Overall 36% think there should be no exceptions made for “democratically important speech” while 25% think there should be. Conservative and Labour voters believe this equally - 35% for both.

20% don't know and 19% neither agree nor disagree.



# Contact

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