

# Library Instruction for Mis/Disinformation: French and U.S. Perspectives

Joumana Boustany  
Gustave Eiffel University  
DICEN-IdF

Laura Saunders  
Simmons University  
School of Library and Information Science



# Background and Motivations

- Rise of mis/disinformation globally
  - an exponential rise in mis/disinformation
  - not limited to social media or political arenas; it also permeates personal life, educational settings, etc.
- Lack of research on specific attention to mis/disinformation in classroom instruction
  - a notable gap in research focusing on classroom instruction designed to combat this issue
  - this is especially critical as libraries often serve as the first point of credible information access for students



# Definitions

- Misinformation: Inaccurate information shared by accident
- Disinformation: Inaccurate information shared on purpose to mislead/deceive
- News literacy: “critical-thinking skills for analyzing and judging the reliability of news and information, differentiating among facts, opinions and assertions in the media we consume, create and distribute.”—[schooljournalism.org](http://schooljournalism.org)

# Research questions

- What are librarians' perspectives on misinformation topics?
  - Are librarians addressing misinformation in their classes? If so, how and if not, why not?
  - What are librarians' perceptions of students' news literacy proficiencies?
- Do librarian perceptions and responses differ by country?



# Methods

- Surveys
  - Perspectives on misinformation
  - Teaching
  - Student proficiencies
- Samples
  - United States and France
    - Call for participation on library listservs

# Results and Comparisons



# Demographic representation of librarian respondents

## USA

189 responses

98% have an MLS

70% work in public universities

30% in private universities

Range of years in the field

48% spend between one-quarter and one-half of their time doing instruction

80% liaise to one or more academic departments

## France

125 responses

94% have degrees ranging from undergraduate to doctorate

82% work in public universities

15% in Grandes écoles

3% in a specialized institutes

Range of years in the field

75% spend less than 25% of their time doing instruction

77% liaise to one or more academic departments







# Librarians Concerned about Impacts

- Especially the spread of mis/disinformation on social media and in news media
- Vast majority believe spread of mis/disinformation is a threat to democracy
- Most strongly agree with news literacy and human-drive fact checkers as important to combatting mis/disinformation
- Half believe AI solutions are important

# Addressing Mis/Disinformation in the Classroom in the US

- More than three-quarters teach about mis/disinformation
- Reasons for not doing so vary:
  - 38% report the faculty have not requested content related to mis/disinformation
  - 30% do not have time to address this content
  - 12.5% say this content should be addressed elsewhere in the curriculum
  - 10% say it is not relevant to their liaison department



# Addressing Mis/Disinformation in the Classroom in France

- Insufficient Data for Conclusive Findings
- Librarian Roles Vary: France vs. USA
- In France, focus often on presenting resources
- Need for Further Study to Validate Observations

# French-U.S. Comparisons

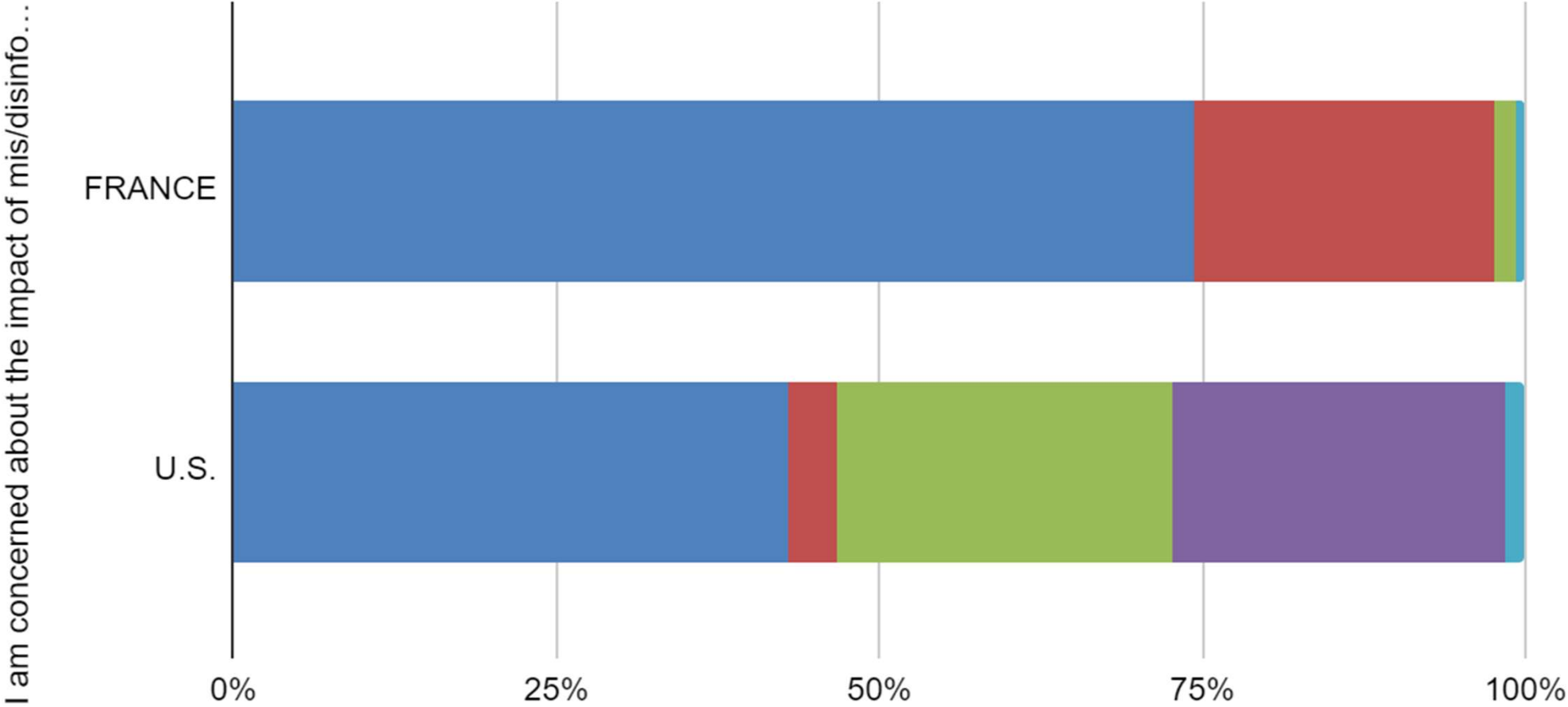


# General Concerns

- Concerned about the spread of mis/disinformation on social media
  - 98% of French librarians agree
  - 96% of U.S. librarians agree
- Concerned about the spread of mis/disinformation in news media
  - 85% of French librarians agree
  - 94% of U.S. librarians agree
- Spread of misinformation is a threat to democracy
  - 92% of French librarians
  - 90% of U.S. librarians agree
- Spread of mis/disinformation on social media should be regulated
  - 69% of French librarians agree
  - 67% of U.S. librarians agree

# Concerned about the impact of mis/dis on social media

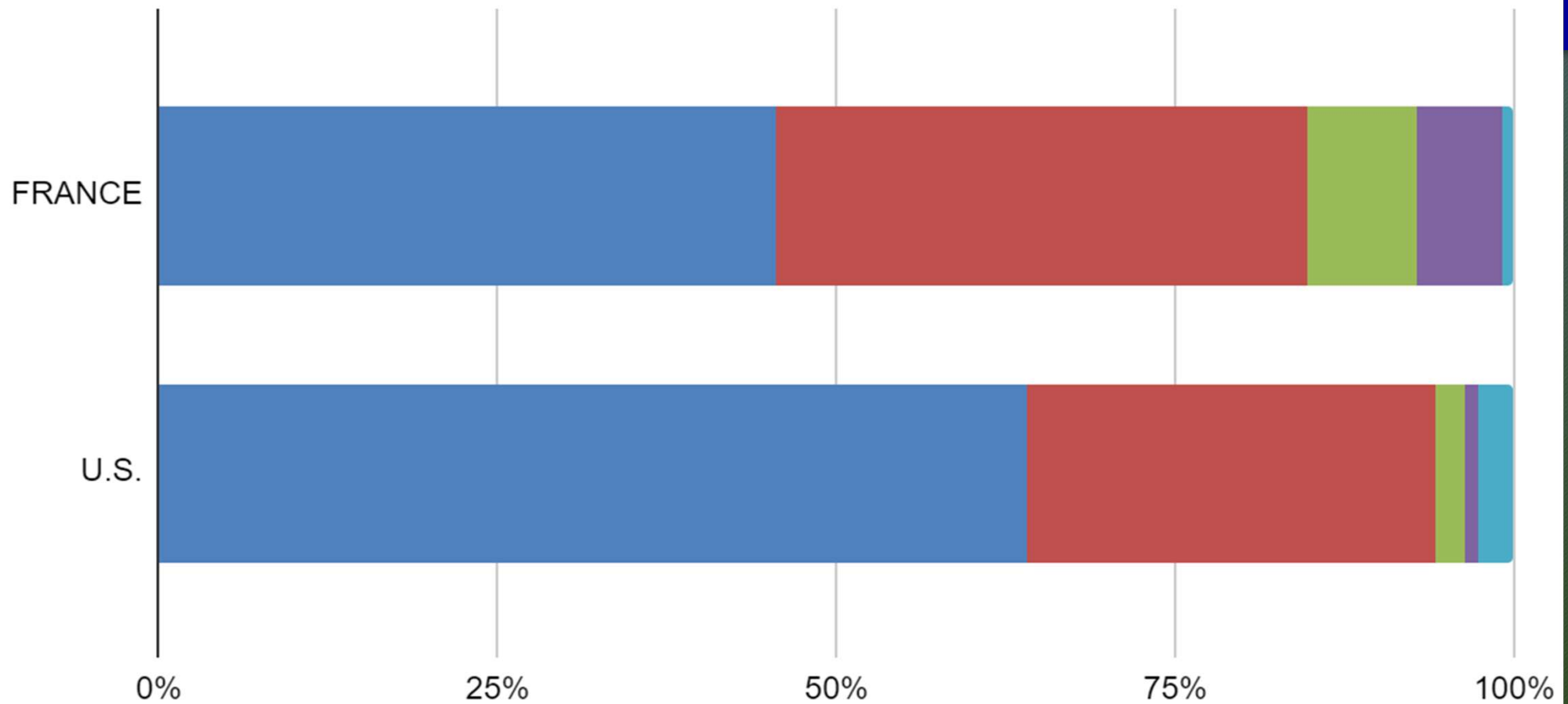
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree





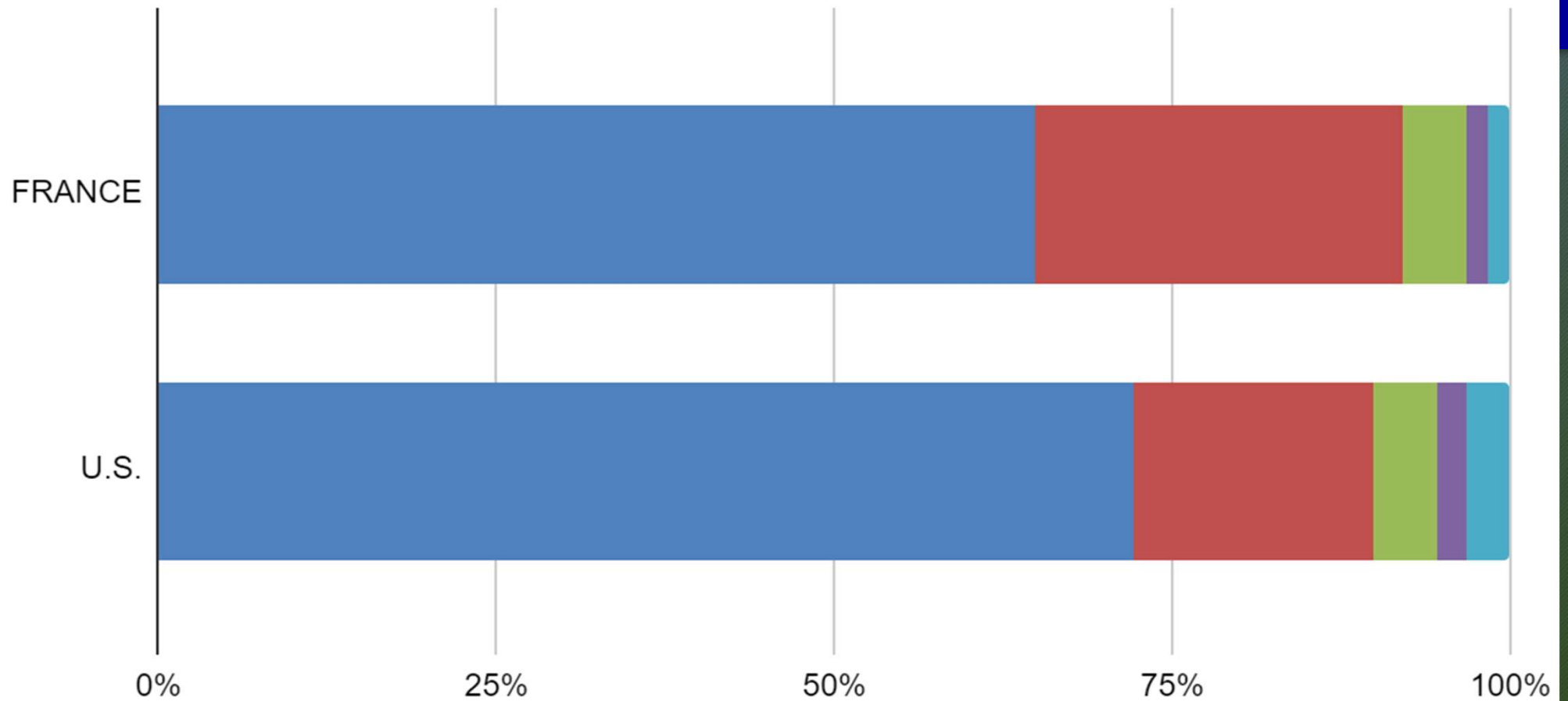
# Concerned about the impact of mis/dis in news media

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



# The spread of mis/disinformation is a threat to democracy

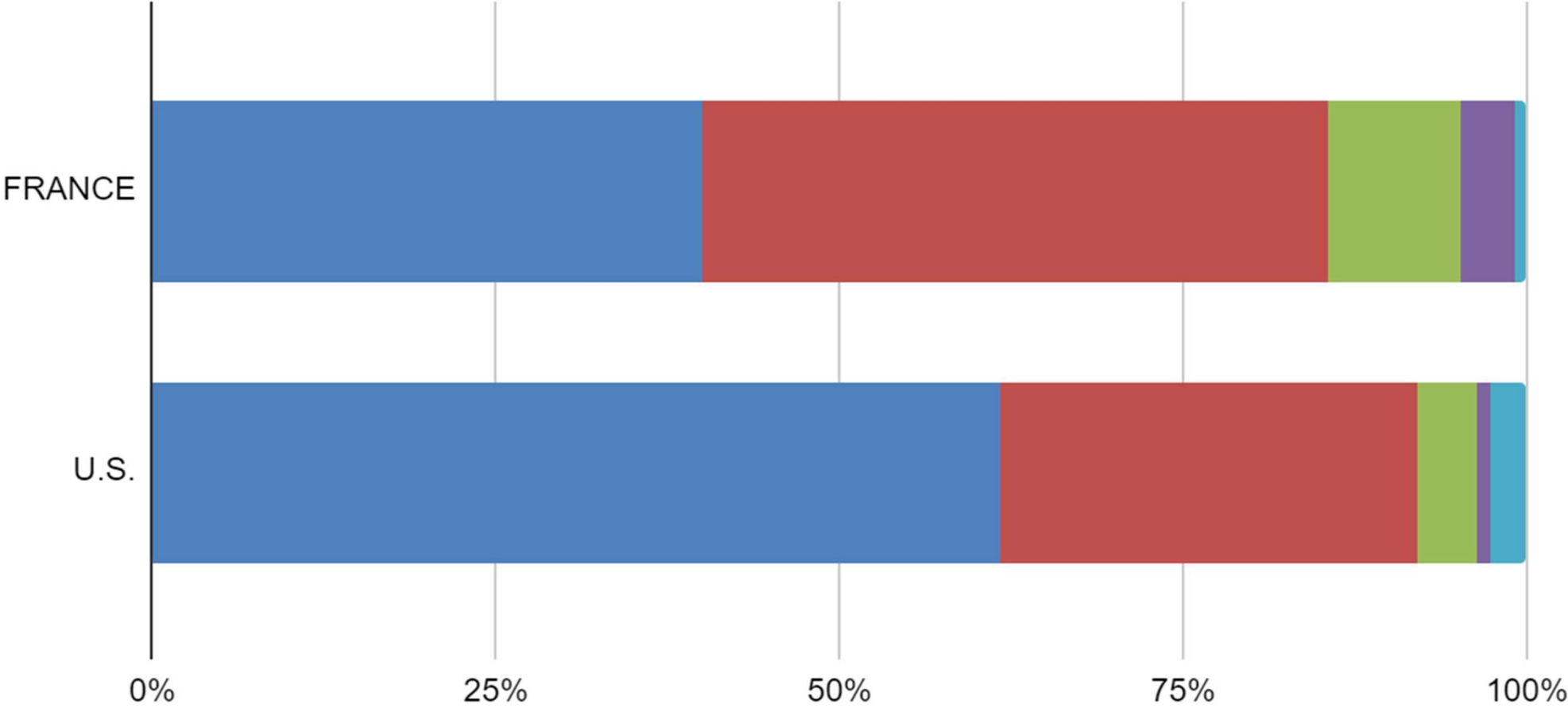
Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Neutral   Somewhat Disagree  
Strongly Disagree





# Instructors have a responsibility to teach news literacy skills

Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Neutral   Somewhat Disagree  
Strongly Disagree



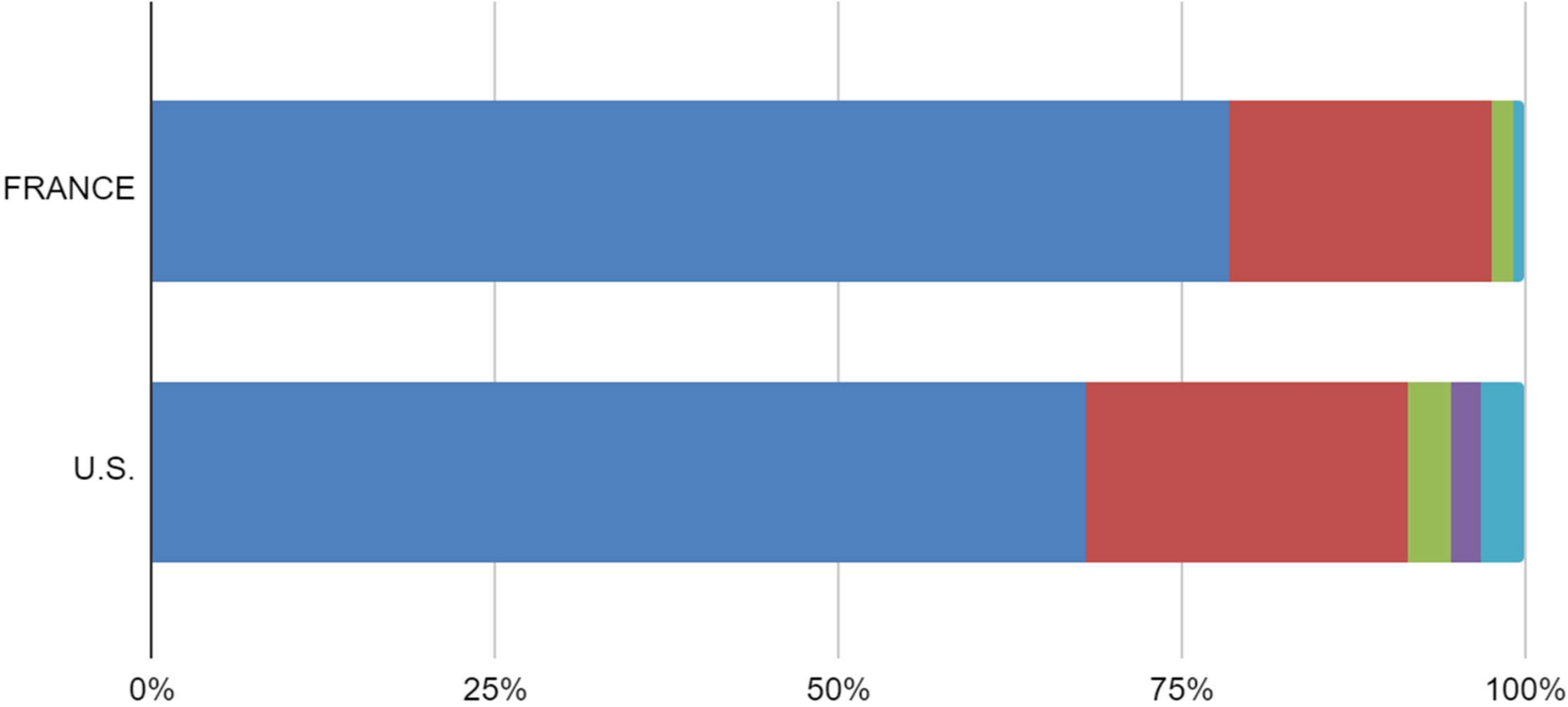
# Perspectives on Solutions I

- Instruction in news literacy competencies is important in combatting mis/disinformation
  - 98% of French librarians agree
  - 92% of U.S. librarians agree
- Instructors in higher education have a responsibility to teach news literacy skills
  - 86% of French librarians agree
  - 92% of U.S. librarians agree



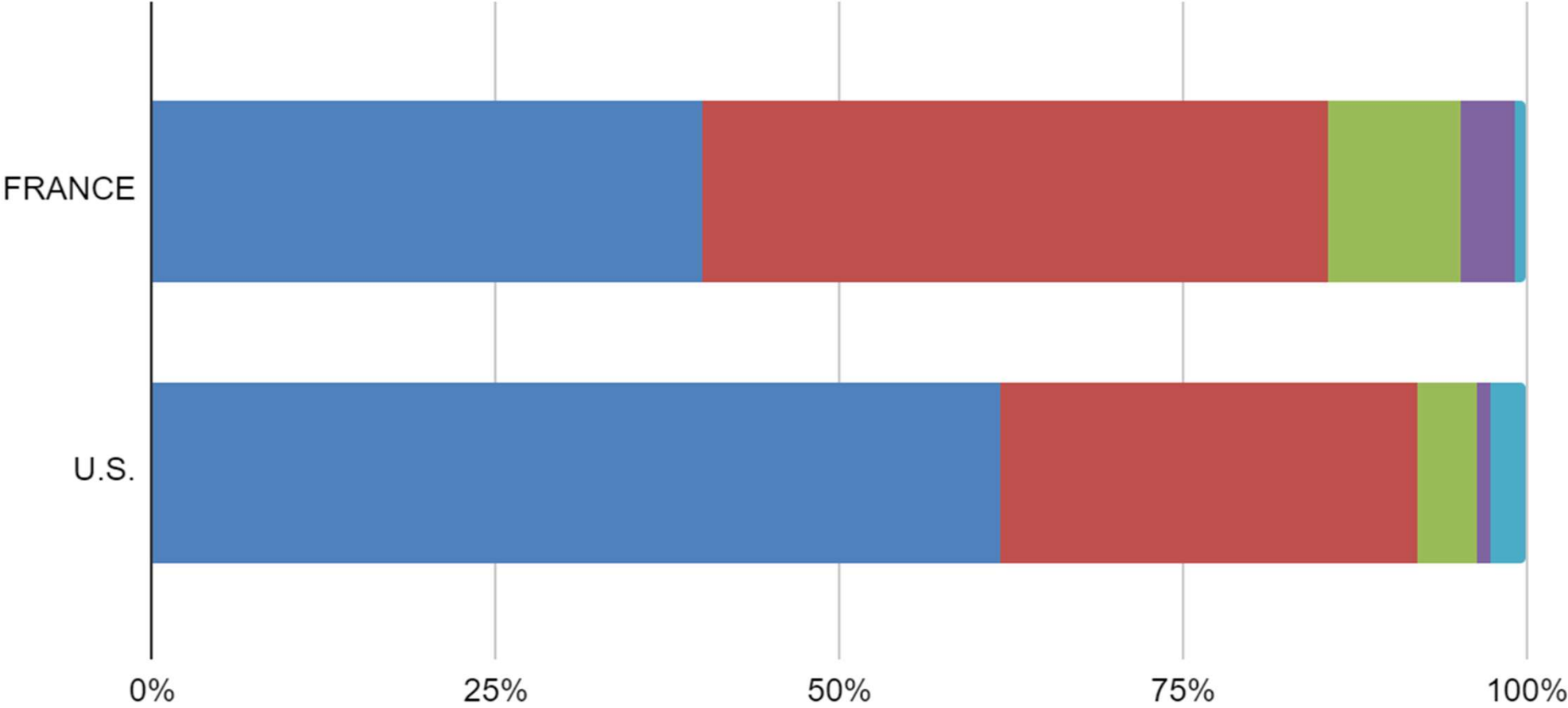
# Instruction in news literacy is important in combatting mis/dis

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



# Instructors have a responsibility to teach news literacy skills

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



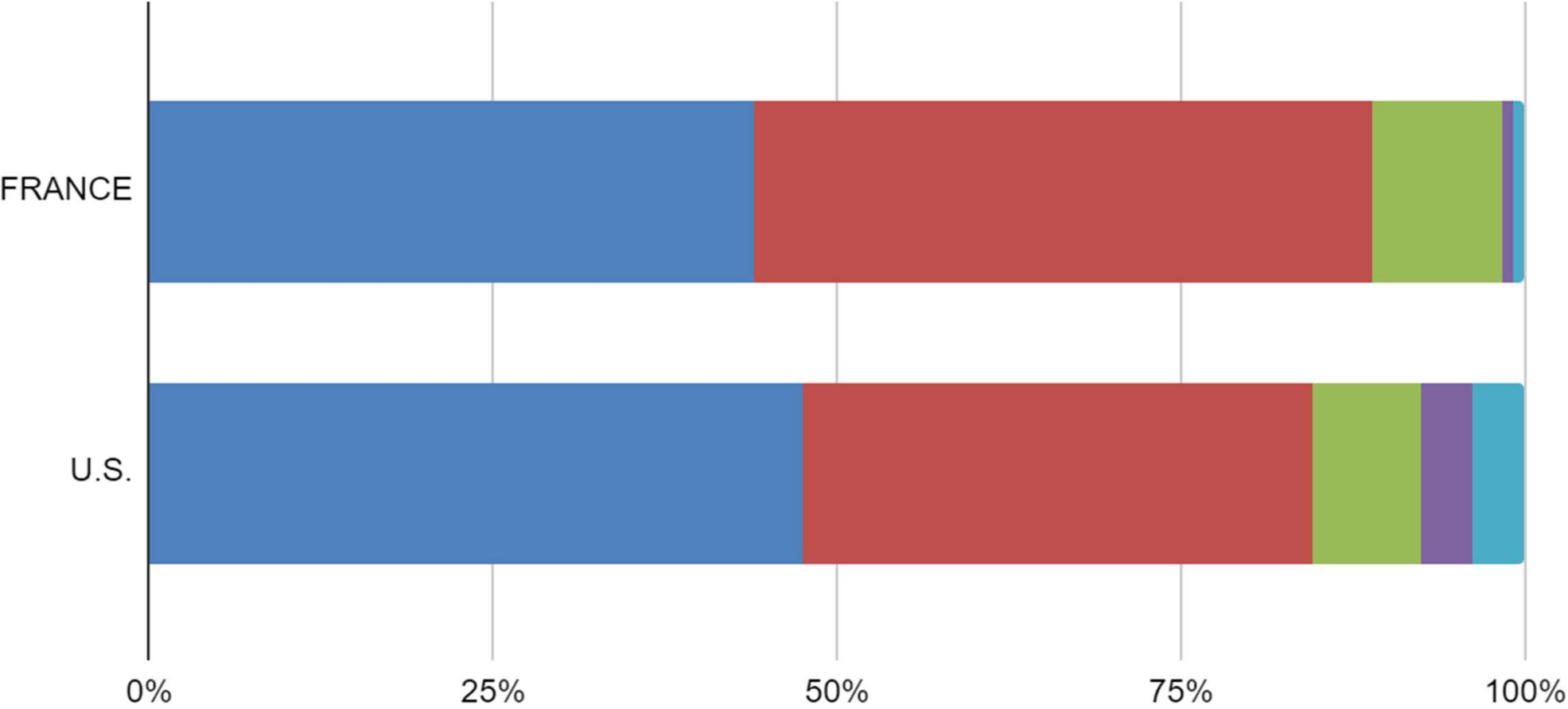


# Perspectives on Solutions II

- Human-driven fact-checking sources are important in combatting mis/disinformation
  - 89% of French librarians agree
  - 85% of U.S. librarians agree
- Artificial intelligence solutions such as better algorithms are important for combatting mis/disinformation
  - 39% of French librarians agree
  - 51% of U.S. librarians agree

# Human-driven fact-checking important in combatting mis/dis

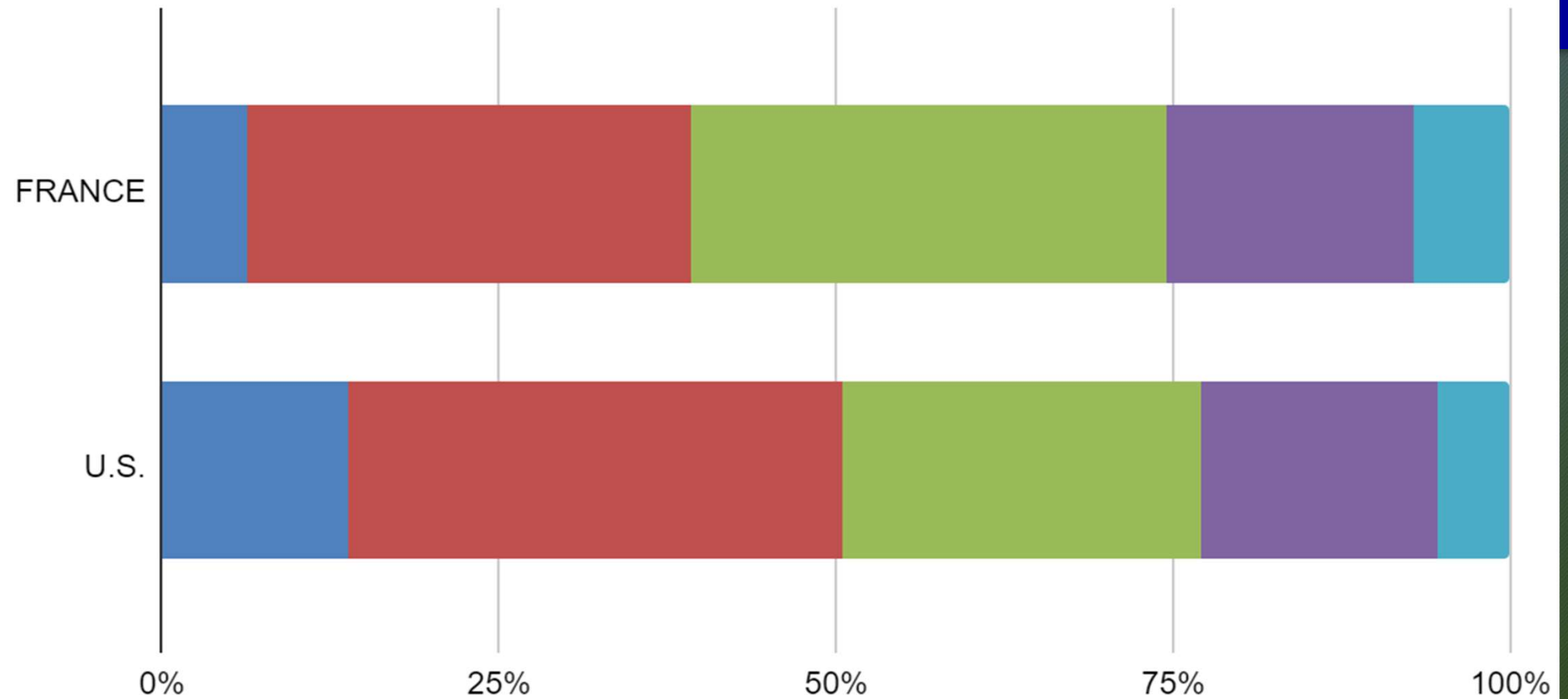
Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Neutral   Somewhat Disagree  
Strongly Disagree





# AI solutions are important in combatting mis/dis

Strongly Agree   Somewhat Agree   Neutral   Somewhat Disagree  
Strongly Disagree



# Teaching about Mis/Disinformation

- 68% of French librarians address mis/disinformation
- 79% of U.S. librarians address mis/disinformation
- Most librarians in both countries incorporate instruction in news literacy into their teaching including:
  - Asking students to find and evaluate information
  - Giving students assignments using trustworthy citations
- Fewer librarians assess students on these skills.



# Not Teaching Mis/Disinformation

- Like U.S. librarians, most French librarians who do not teach mis/disinformation say:
  - The faculty they teach with have not requested this content
  - They do not have time for this content
  - It should be addressed elsewhere
  - It is not relevant to the discipline
- No French librarians said this content is not important

# Discussions & Conclusions



# French & U.S. Librarians Agree

- There were no statistically significant differences across answers
- Librarians in both countries agree mis/disinformation is a concern and that news literacy instruction is important to combat mis/disinformation
- Most librarians in both countries address news literacy and mis/disinformation in their courses
- Some librarians are constrained by a lack of faculty support and lack of time
- Better understanding faculty concerns could help librarians find ways to collaborate

Thank you!