

Facts and Impact of False Information

**All the lies we  
*want* to believe**

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League of Women Voters

# Social media are making us more extreme

Americans from across the political spectrum say **misinformation** is increasing political extremism and hate crimes, according to a new poll that reflects broad and significant concerns about false and misleading claims ahead of next month's midterm elections.

Big majorities of both parties — 80% of Democrats and 70% of Republicans — say misinformation increases extreme political views, according to the survey. Similarly, 85% of Democrats and 72% of Republicans say misinformation increases hate crimes, including violence motivated by gender, religion or race.

All the lies we want to believe

# Definitions

## **Misinformation**

Misinformation is incorrect or misleading. The publisher either failed to check their facts or showed a disregard for whether what they were sharing was true or not.

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## **Disinformation**

Deliberate falsehoods. The publisher knew the information was false and communicated it with the intent to deceive .

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## **The difference**

It's all about intent. Disinformation is intended to mislead. It's intentionally false. Misinformation is careless.

# Old trick

## Disinformation

Deliberate falsehoods. The publisher knew the information was false and communicated it with the intent to deceive .

## Misinformation

Misinformation is incorrect or misleading. The publisher either failed to check their facts or showed a disregard for whether what they were sharing was true or not.



**CLAIM:** An image of grocery store shelves fully stocked with soup cans is from former President Donald Trump's America, while an image of nearly empty grocery store shelves is from President Joe Biden's America.

**AP'S ASSESSMENT:** Missing context. The photo described as Trump's America was captured in 2012 in Australia, while the photo described as Biden's America was taken after a hurricane in South Carolina in 2018, when Trump was president. It's true that some grocery stores have temporarily struggled to keep shelves stocked during the pandemic, but these images are misrepresented.



# Old tricks, new tools

## Then

- Publishing was expensive and time consuming.
- False information had to get through gatekeepers.
- Audiences were difficult to reach.
- Broadcasters had to have a license.
- Few people had access to media.
- Journalists have norms and practices that favor accuracy.
- Messages limited in range.

## Now

- Publishing is inexpensive and easy.
- Very little is edited before it is published. No gatekeepers.
- Audiences are easy to build and reach.
- People can start channels on YouTube or TikTok and reach millions.
- Anyone with access to the internet can publish.
- No professional norms or practices.
- Messages global.



# And the bots...

AI change the game. They can overwhelm the marketplace of ideas.



**principled conservative** 🐘  
@genzgopawg

I've been a Democrat my whole life. I joined the BLM protests months ago when they began. They opened my eyes wide! I didn't realize I became a Marxist. It happened without me even knowing it. I'm done with this trash. I will be registering Republican. Giving Twitter a shot!



**I Went Democrat to Republican** 🌟 @WentDemtoRep · 19h

I've been a Democrat my whole life. I joined the BLM protests months ago when they began. They opened my eyes wide! I didn't realize I became a Marxist. It happened without me even knowing it. I'm done with this trash. I will be registering Republican. Giving Twitter a shot!

3.6K 11K 39K



**Basketball American** 🇺🇸 @whitenicker · 7m  
Replying to @TrickDaddy116 and @LutherGroyper

I've been a Democrat my whole life. I joined the BLM protests months ago when they began. They opened my eyes wide! I didn't realize I became a Marxist. It happened without me even knowing it. I'm done with this trash. I will be registering Republican. Giving Twitter a shot!

1 1



**Atomic\_Flounder** @Atomic\_Flounder · 7m  
Replying to @JoshuaPotash

I've been a Democrat my whole life. I joined the BLM protests months ago when they began. They opened my eyes wide! I didn't realize I became a Marxist. It happened without me even knowing it. I'm done with this trash. I will be registering Republican. Giving Twitter a shot!

1 1



**Baptist Groyper** @baptist\_groyper · 7m

I've been a Democrat my whole life. I joined the BLM protests months ago when they began. They opened my eyes wide! I didn't realize I became a Marxist. It happened without me even knowing it. I'm done with this trash. I will be registering Republican. Giving Twitter a shot!

# Deepfakes and cheapfakes

## A deepfake

Video or audio that portrays a person saying or doing something they never said or did.



## A cheapfake

Easy to make and affordable manipulated content meant to deceive.



# Our information worlds

## **Algorithms**

Google. Instagram. Facebook. YouTube. They all sort the information we see based on data they have collected about us. They show us what we *want* to see.

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## **The Daily Me**

Then we sort ourselves. Research shows people generally choose to connect online with those who are like them. This narrows the ideas we encounter even more.

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## **Priming**

The algorithms and our choices prime us to believe the information we see. It comes from friends and those we trust. It confirms our beliefs. This system primes us to accept false and misleading information - and to share it.

# What are we divided about?

## These divisions encourage

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- Extremism - solidarity for extreme views
- Homogenous networks. Others become - others. Strangers.
- Loneliness - We are lonelier than ever.
- Fear - A constant stream of upsetting information makes people fearful.

## These divisions discourage

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- Open-mindedness
- Understanding and empathy.
- Pluralism.
- Personal growth.

**This is all baked into the system, though not intentionally.**

“Social groups and individuals become alienated from each other, and see the other as a stranger, eventually as a threat. In this process, social fragmentation spreads, as identities become more specific and increasingly difficult to share.” -  
Manuel Castells

If we only encounter ideas that reinforce our beliefs, we can only become more extreme. We'll never become more open-minded. False information makes us more extreme.



# False information is just sexier

"A lie is halfway round the world before the truth has got its boots on."

False information travels six times faster than truth on the Internet. Truth never stands a chance.

- Falsity is written to confirm biases (priming)
- It's what people *want* to hear.
- It's more likely to be shared.
- It's often salacious.

Trump is getting support from every leader, and that's the support that will make him grow great and strong. These elections will bring an immense change in our country.



**BREAKING: Pope Francis Just Backed Trump, Released Incredible Statement Why- SPREAD THIS EVERYWHERE**

WWW.DAILYPRESSER.COM | BY THE AMERICAN PATRIOT

Like

Comment

Share

Embed



# But the government...

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## No.

**The government cannot criminalize false information.**

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The First Amendment generally keeps the government from deciding which ideas are good or bad.

The government generally cannot make social media firms take down content or leave content up. We're on our own.

## Yes.

**Social media firms could do a better job - but they have little motivation to do so.**

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Social media firms make money from engagement. So, they don't want to limit content - unless it's hurting their business model. They are moderating more. They are taking more down. But we can't trust them to do the whole job.



# What can you do?

## **Don't share. Don't spread.**

Read content carefully before sharing it on social media. Check the source. Look for respected sources that share the same information.

## **Use reputable sources of information**

Choose sources that follow traditional journalistic guidelines. Sources that are accurate. That use sources. That have people reporting from where the news is happening. Bylines.

## **Create a well-balanced diet - of news**

A diet of all garbage will make you sick.

## **Be skeptical of news that finds you**

Go to the news. Go to sources and read. Have a news habit. Read a broad selection of topics. News that finds you has a motive.

## **Be aware of your biases**

Misinformation and disinformation are meant to make you say "that's what I thought!" They play on your biases.

## **Create a well-rounded network**

Engage with respectable information sources online. Follow, friend, like - a good mix of information. Not all one-sided.

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