

LVA

En vous appuyant uniquement sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

From misinformation to disinformation, what is at stake with today's politics ?

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots rédigés (titre inclus) devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

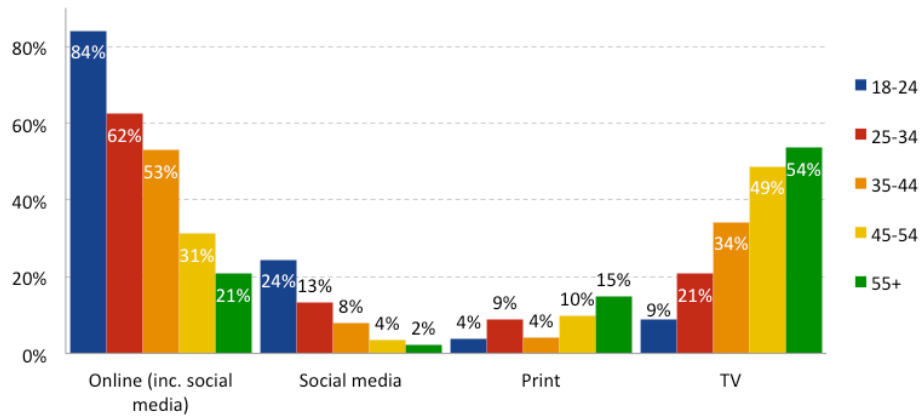
Liste des documents :

1. Poll by *The Reuters Institute*, 2022
2. How worried should you be about AI disrupting elections?, *The Economist*, September 2023
3. These students are learning about fake news and how to spot it, by Alina Tugend, *The New York Times*, February 2020
4. Politicians and misinformation go hand in hand, but it's a dangerous game, by Sheldon Jacobson, *The Hill*, August 2024
5. Cartoon published in *The Week*, 2019

Document 1



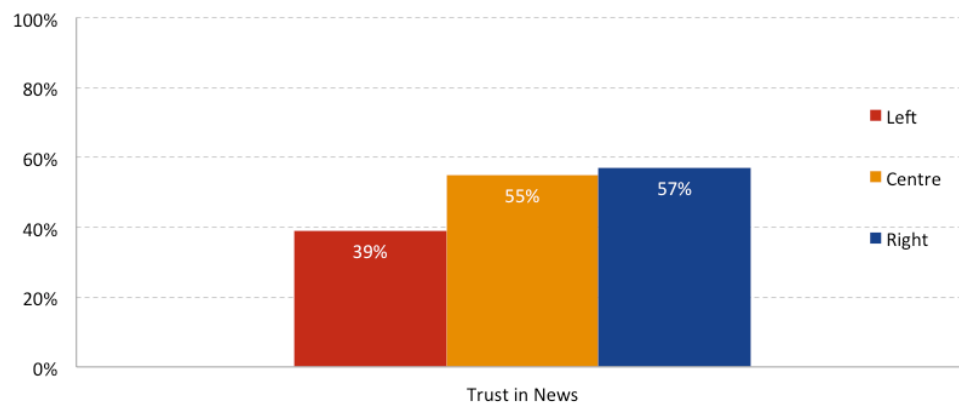
MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (by age group)



Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?
Base: Base: All 18-24s/25-34s/35-44s/45-54s/55+ who have used a news source in the last week: UK= 220/271/353/392/714



TRUST IN NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION



Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?: I think you can trust most news most of the time.
Q1F. Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale?
Base: Left/Centre/Right: UK = 468/1009/292

Document 2 – How worried should you be about AI disrupting elections?

Politics is supposed to be about persuasion; but it has always been stalked by propaganda. Campaigners dissemble, exaggerate [...]. They transmit lies, ranging from bald-faced to white, through whatever means are available. Anti-vaccine conspiracies were once propagated through pamphlets instead of podcasts. A century before covid-19, anti-maskers in the era of Spanish flu waged a disinformation campaign. Because people are not angels, elections have never been free from falsehoods and mistaken beliefs.

But as the world contemplates a series of votes in 2024, something new is causing a lot of worry. In the past, disinformation has always been created by humans. Advances in generative artificial intelligence (AI) – with models that can spit out sophisticated essays and create realistic images from text prompts – make synthetic propaganda possible. The fear is that disinformation campaigns may be supercharged in 2024, just as countries with a collective population of some 4bn – including America, Britain, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Taiwan – prepare to vote. How worried should their citizens be?

It is important to be precise about what generative-AI tools like ChatGPT do and do not change. Before they came along, disinformation was already a problem in democracies. The corrosive idea that America's presidential election in 2020 was rigged brought rioters to the Capitol on January 6th – but it was spread by Donald Trump, Republican elites and conservative mass-media outlets using conventional means.

What could large-language models change in 2024? One thing is the quantity of disinformation: if the volume of nonsense were multiplied by 1,000 or 100,000, it might persuade people to vote differently. A second concerns quality. Hyper-realistic deepfakes could sway voters before false audio, photos and videos could be debunked. A third is microtargeting. With AI, voters may be inundated with highly personalised propaganda at scale. Networks of propaganda bots could be made harder to detect than existing disinformation efforts are. Voters' trust in their fellow citizens, which in America has been declining for decades, may well suffer as people begin to doubt everything.

This is worrying, but there are reasons to believe AI is not about to wreck humanity's 2,500-year-old experiment with democracy. Many people think that others are more gullible than they themselves are. In fact, voters are hard to persuade [...]. The multi-billion-dollar campaign industry in America that uses humans to persuade voters can generate only minute changes in their behaviour.

Tools to produce believable fake images and text have existed for decades. Although generative AI might be a labour-saving technology for internet troll farms, it is not clear that effort was the binding constraint in the production of disinformation. New image-generation algorithms are impressive, but without tuning and human judgment they are still prone to produce pictures of people with six fingers on each hand, making the possibility of personalised deepfakes remote for the time being. [...]

Social-media platforms, where misinformation spreads, and AI firms say they are focused on the risks. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, says it will monitor usage to try to detect political-influence operations. Big-tech platforms, criticised both for propagating disinformation in the 2016 election and taking down too much in 2020, have become better at identifying suspicious accounts [...].

Although it is important to be mindful of the potential of generative AI to disrupt democracies, panic is unwarranted. Before the technological advances of the past two years, people were quite capable of transmitting all manner of destructive and terrible ideas to one another. The American presidential campaign of 2024 will be marred by disinformation about the rule of law and the integrity of elections. But its progenitor will not be something newfangled like ChatGPT. It will be Mr Trump.

The Economist, September 2023

Document 3 – These students are learning about fake news and how to spot it

The students sit at desks in groups of four, watching videos about the recent bush fires in Australia. One shows an apocalyptic landscape in flames, the other a tourist paradise, with assurances that much of the continent is safe. Instead of dismissing both as fake news, the eighth graders know what questions to ask to tease out the nuances: Who put out the videos? What does each source have to gain? How big is Australia? Could both videos be true?

It is no wonder these students at Herbert S. Eisenberg Intermediate School 303 in [...] Brooklyn approach their task with such sophistication. They have been studying news literacy since sixth grade in one of the only schools in the country to make the subject part of an English language arts curriculum that all students must take for an hour a week for three years. News, or media, literacy – how to critically understand, analyze and evaluate online content, images and stories – is not new. But it has taken on urgency in the last few years as accusations of fake news and the reality of disinformation permeate the internet and people – especially young ones – spend hours and hours a day looking at screens. [...]

Research has shown that an inability to judge content leads to two equally unfortunate outcomes: People believe everything that suits their preconceived notions, or they cynically disbelieve everything. Either way leads to a polarized and disengaged citizenry. Other recent research suggests that while so-called digital natives – preteens and teenagers – are technically savvy, most of them fail when it comes to assessing the veracity of news articles and images. [...] The issue is being attacked by dozens of organizations offering information and curriculums on the subject. According to Media Literacy Now, 14 states require some sort of media literacy education in elementary and secondary schools. [...]

In addition, several universities are working with middle and high schools and providing news literacy curriculums to them at no charge. College is too late to begin the lessons [...]. Increasingly, students are arriving at college with bad digital citizenship habits: They are outsourcing their judgement to their peers and to technology. Young people are not alone in their online illiteracy. A study last year found that those 65 and older shared more fake news during the 2016 election than younger adults. [...]

Stanford developed the curriculum, Civic Online Reasoning for middle and high school students. [...] Researchers focused on two major skills. The first is lateral reading. It encourages readers who come to an unfamiliar website to refrain from exploring the site more deeply until they have opened other tabs and found other websites to help them determine the authenticity or reliability of the newly discovered site. The other skill is click restraint. Ideally, users would resist the impulse to click on the first results that appear in say, a Google search, until they have scanned the full list for credibility and then click selectively. [...]

Robert White, a [...] teacher at a high school in Lincoln, Neb., [...] says it works. "Most students believed what they saw on a news site, any news site," Mr. White said. "By the end of the semester, I could see a lot of change – they questioned any media source and did fact-checking. I now have students fact-checking me." [...] Students are taught to know the "neighborhood" they're reading in: is it journalism, entertainment, promotion, raw information or advertising? [...] Are sources independent, are there multiple sources, do they verify evidence, and are they authoritative, informed and named sources? "This generation is very disillusioned by news – everything is fake news," said White. "News literacy is really empowering for young people." [...] Students at I.S. 303, who are fast becoming more proficient than some adults in evaluating online content, now see a need to teach their peers and parents. "My mom doesn't watch the news all that much, but sometimes she'll read something, and she'll automatically believe it and tell me about it," said Nafisa Patwary, a seventh grader. "And I'll help her fact check."

Document 4 - Politicians and misinformation go hand in hand, but it's a dangerous game

Election Day is now just 70 days away. [...] If there is one theme that is common to politicians in both parties, it is how they misrepresent information to spin a positive view of themselves — and a negative view of their opponents.

Using data to make a point is common in today's digital society. Given the plethora of data available, it is often straightforward to find evidence that makes just about any point a politician wishes to make. Even if perception is not reality, voters must wade through all such information to make their own assessments and conclusions.

Consider the economy as an example that impacts almost everyone. Is the economy healthy or struggling? The question sounds simple, but the answer depends on what data you use.

The major indices of the stock market are near all-time highs. Inflation has stabilized at around 3 percent, moderating price increases. [...] The unemployment rate now sits at around 4.3 percent, with job creation slowing. Much depends on what area a person works in, with some sectors struggling to find skilled workers and other sectors showing a surfeit of people seeking work.

All such data is factually true. What differs is how data is cherry-picked to make a desired point — one that shines a dark shadow on your opponent and a bright light on yourself. [...]

When data and information are misused, fact-checkers quickly jump in to assess what is being stated and its veracity. Often, fact-checking debunks politicians' misinformation but has little to no effect. In today's political environment, there is no accountability when a politician makes blatantly wrong statements or (conveniently) fails to provide a complete picture of a situation.

Both Republicans and Democrats are guilty of such distortions. And the voters in each party are primed to believe them, and to discount anything offered by the other side.

For example, when Donald Trump stated on Aug. 15 in a news conference that "California law lets you 'rob a store as long as it's not more than \$950' and not get charged," blaming Kamala Harris, Politifact rated the claim as false. Similarly, Politifact rated as mostly false Harris's July 30 statement in a rally in Atlanta that "Donald Trump intends to cut Medicare."

Though there is no direct way to stop such misrepresentations, voters should welcome them: they actually serve as valuable pieces of information. When a candidate makes outrageous statements that misrepresent data, it permits voters to access the character and platform of the candidate.

Of course, voters are prone to believe what they want rather than what is true.

What candidates appear to forget in their campaigning strategy is this simple truth. Given the polarized status of the nation and electorate, a small number of voters will ultimately determine who will win the White House. In [2020], it came down to around [...] 50,000 votes, in three states (Georgia, Wisconsin and Arizona). [...]

Data misrepresentations, including deepfakes, provide valuable information for voters, such as when Trump posted a fake Taylor Swift endorsement, prompting backlash. With social media effectively communicating information at the speed of light, politicians today would be wise to keep their statements about their opponents as close to true as possible. Given that it will likely take just a few thousand votes to move the Electoral College outcome and determine who will win the White House, the risk of being exposed can be a candidate's undoing. [...]

Document 5

