Audience perspectives on misinformation and low trust

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Q. “Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.” *Base: All markets 2019*

This has risen **12 percentage points** in the last year in the UK.
Defining ‘fake news’ ....

Associated with misinformation from different sources, including journalists. Seen as distinguished from news primarily by degree. Also recognized as weaponized by critics of news media and platform companies.

**Satire**
- Not seen as news
- Parody
- Funny
- Amusing

**Poor journalism**
- Superficial
- Inaccurate
- Sensationalist

**Propaganda**
- Hyperpartisan content
- Politicians lying
- Extreme spin/PR

**Some advertising**
- Ads and pop-ups
- “Around the web” links
- Sponsored content

**False news**
- Not seen as news
- For-profit fabrication
- Politically motivated fabrication
- Malicious hoaxes

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**News**
Associated with professionally produced information that is accurate, timely, relevant, clearly communicated, and fair. There is often no clear agreement on where to draw the line between fake news and news.
What type of ‘fake news’ are people EXPOSED to?

UK

34% see poor journalism, mistakes and clickbait every week

34% complain about spin and agenda-filled news

Only 15% say they have been exposed to completely made up news

Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the >LAST WEEK> which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply.
‘Fake news’ is much more of a problem in other countries
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Usage for News across 38 countries of Digital News Report (and India*)

WhatsApp for news
WhatsApp Groups used very differently in Brazil, Malaysia, More likely to be big groups with people don’t know

With greater potential for misinformation

Q12B. Which, if any, of the following have you used for news in the last week? Showing WhatsApp code
Base: Total sample in each country.
*India poll conducted Jan 2019 with English-speaking, online news users in India – a small (but important) subset of a larger, more diverse, and very complex Indian media market
Concern about misinformation is changing behaviour

All countries - in the last year ...

26% say they are relying on ‘more reputable’ news sources. (40% in USA)

24% say they’ve stopped using sources with ‘less accurate’ reputation (34% in USA)

“I think I’m much more limited in the news that I access now. The ones that you trust are ones that have been around for a long time, like the BBC, like The Guardian”
Chloe, u35, UK

“It definitely changes my likelihood to click on a news story if I see it’s coming from a source that I’ve never heard before”
Maggie, u25, US
Better educated more likely to changed behaviour

% STARTED RELYING MORE ON ‘REPUTABLE SOURCES’

Q_LIT_2019. Have you ...started relying more on sources of news that are considered more reputable in the last year? Base: 18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55+ and low/medium/high education: UK = 135/278/304/323/983 and 558/626/839, USA = 177/380/320/246/889 and 85/1013/914.
Link with trust in media ....

ALL 38 MARKETS - % THAT TRUST EACH MOST OF THE TIME

- Trust news overall: 42% (-2)
- Trust news I use: 49% (-2)
- Trust news in search: 33%
- Trust news in social: 23%

Mostly this about trust in mainstream media and in the sources that people use.

Uncertainty in distributed environments, information unchecked, hard to distinguish news from rumour...
Trust is falling in most big countries

Mix of reasons including the impact of populist movements and events

- Brexit related trust drop
- Trump elected
- Gilets Jaunes

- Finland
- Germany
- UK
- USA
- France
Left trust has increased in **US news media** right has collapsed

Right trust in the **UK news media** is much stronger

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**Left trust has increased in US news media** right has collapsed

- **2015**: 25%
- **2016**: 23%
- **2017**: 20%
- **2018**: 17%
- **2019**: 9%

**Right trust in the UK news media** is much stronger

- **2015**: 46%
- **2016**: 39%
- **2017**: 37%
- **2018**: 39%
- **2019**: 38%
Recap

- There is a disconnect between audience view of ‘misinformation’ and the debate in the media/political sphere.

- Concern about misinformation mixed up with long standing concerns about the media and new concerns about reliability of information in social media.

- Political polarisation around issues like Brexit or Gilets Jaunes is adding to the mix.

- Increased concern does seem to be changing behavior, but not necessarily with the people we need to reach most.
Reuters Institute
Digital News Report

More information at
digitalnewsreport.org