

# Wirkpotenzial und Reichweite von digitaler Desinformation

Wissenschaftliche Einordnung

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Steuerung innovativer und komplexer technischer Systeme

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Welche Reichweite hat Desinformation?

Was sind mögliche Effekte von Desinformation?

Was ist mit künstlicher Intelligenz? (KI)

Was ist das eigentliche Problem?

Was können wir tun?

**Welche Reichweite hat  
Desinformation?**

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# Wie lässt sich die Reichweite von Desinformation messen?

- Wie viele Menschen glauben an falsche Information/Verschwörungstheorien?
- Wie viele Menschen besuchen Webseiten mit Desinformation?
- Wie viele Menschen teilen Desinformation auf Social Media?
- Und wer sagt eigentlich, welche Information Desinformation ist?

## Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2020 US election

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Research using large-scale data on individuals' internet use has provided vital information about the scope and nature of exposure to misinformation online. However, most prior work relies on data collected during the 2016 US election. Here we examine exposure to untrustworthy websites during the 2020 US election, using over 7.5 million website visits from 1.153 American adults. We find that 26.2% (95% confidence interval 22.5% to 29.8%) of Americans were exposed to untrustworthy websites in 2020, down from 44.3% (95% confidence interval 40.8% to 47.7%) in 2016. Older adults and conservatives continued to be the most exposed in 2020 as in 2016, albeit at lower rates. The role of online platforms in exposing people to untrustworthy websites changed, with Facebook playing a smaller role in 2020 than in 2016. Our findings do not minimize misinformation as a key social problem, but instead highlight important changes in its consumption, suggesting directions for future research and practice.

Both concern over and research on misinformation have exploded in recent years<sup>1</sup>. In an effort to better understand and prevent the spread of misinformation, much recent research documents exposure to misinformation online using large-scale data on individuals' internet use. This work finds that relatively few people consume misinformation online, or at least fewer than many initially expected<sup>2–4</sup>. Exposure is also highly concentrated<sup>5–7</sup>. For example, Goldberg et al.<sup>5</sup> found that 1% of Twitter users were exposed to 80% of the fake news on Twitter during the 2016 election. Notably, certain individuals are more likely to be exposed to misinformation online than other groups. For example, during the 2016 election, people aged 65 years and older were twice as likely to be exposed to fake news on Twitter and seven times more likely to share fake news on Facebook than 18–29 year olds<sup>8</sup>.

Many studies investigating exposure to online misinformation have leveraged data collected during the 2016 US election, perhaps because concern over fake news rose during the 2016 election<sup>9</sup>. However, a consequence of focusing on the 2016 election is that we have little insight into how exposure to misinformation online has changed since then. This limitation is important given the myriad ways the digital misinformation ecosystem has changed (for example, new platforms, new misinformation-generating social events and new modalities to disseminate misinformation<sup>10,11</sup>). Furthermore, in the

wake of 2016, online platforms such as Facebook have taken steps to mitigate their reputation as a purveyor of misinformation<sup>12</sup>.

While most prior research focuses on 2016, some work has examined changes in exposure over time. For example, Geene et al.<sup>13</sup> found a decline in the number of Americans exposed to fake news websites from 2016 to 2018. In contrast, Allen et al.<sup>14</sup> found that exposure to fake news was generally stable<sup>15</sup> from 2016 to the end of 2018. Discrepancies between these two findings may partly be explained by the authors using different lists to identify visits to fake news websites in their data. Allcott et al. also examined changes in exposure over time, finding that engagement with fake news on Facebook declined from 2016 to 2018, while engagement with fake news on Twitter rose over the same period<sup>16</sup>.

Given the changes in world events, the digital media landscape and a considerable evolution in our comprehension, a vital question remains in to how misinformation exposure during the 2020 US presidential election compared to exposure during the 2016 election, which served as the context for much of the existing research. In this Article, we investigate exposure to online misinformation during the 2020 election in a way that allows us to compare exposure in 2020 with 2016 directly. To do this, we collected web browsing data that is, unlike most research on fake news (80% of visits from a nationally representative sample of American adults (N = 1.153) during the lead-up

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Nature Human Behaviour

**Abstract:** [...] we examine exposure to untrustworthy websites during the 2020 US election, using over 7.5 million website visits from 1,151 American adults. We find that 26.2% [...] of Americans were exposed to untrustworthy websites in 2020, down from 44.3% [...] in 2016. Older adults and conservatives continued to be the most exposed in 2020 as in 2016, albeit at lower rates [...].

*“[...] exposure to untrustworthy websites during the 2020 election was substantially lower than [...] during the 2016 election. Not only was the percentage of total individuals exposed to untrustworthy websites lower, but the average number of exposures among the exposed and the average amount of time spent on each site were also lower. While we also found that the groups who were more likely to be exposed to untrustworthy websites in 2016—older adults and conservatives—were still more likely in 2020, levels of exposure for these groups were lower than in 2016. [...] people were less likely to arrive at them via Facebook and webmail in 2020 than in 2016.” (Moore et al., 2023, p. 2)*

International starke Überzeugung, dass Desinformation ein großes Problem darstellt, aber gleichzeitig überraschend geringes Interesse durch Forscher, Förderer und Staaten festzustellen welches Ausmaß Desinformation tatsächlich hat. Dies gilt besonders für die EU.

## **Was sind mögliche Effekte von Desinformation?**

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- Überzeugung
- Verstärkung/Radikalisierung
- Sinkendes Vertrauen in Medien und Institutionen

# Überzeugung

- Generell sind Überzeugungswirkung von Informationen in der Regel kurzfristig: Menschen haben Voreinstellungen, vergessen oder werden in ihrer normalen Informations- und sozialen Umgebung wieder eingeordnet (O'Keefe, 2016)
- Menschen, die Desinformation sehen, sind in der Regel schon der Meinung, die von der Desinformation scheinbar gestützt wird (Moore et al., 2023)
- Desinformation wird in der Regel dann gefährlich, wenn sie von politischen Eliten oder Massenmedien aufgegriffen und verbreitet wird (Bennett & Livingston, 2021). Das erhöht Reichweite und Glaubwürdigkeit. Das liegt dann aber nicht an Desinformation, sondern an Verhalten von Eliten und Medien.
- Überzeugung ist also generell eher unwahrscheinlich.

## Verstärkung/Radikalisierung

- Informationen können Einstellungen verstärken oder dem Austausch unter Gleichgesinnten dienen (Garrett, 2009; Slater, 2015). Desinformation kann in Gruppen bereits Überzeugter zu Verstärkung bestehender Überzeugungen führen.
- Algorithmische Empfehlungen – wie z.B. bei Facebook, TikTok oder YouTube – können (solange nicht von der Plattform unterbunden) Nutzer und Nutzerinnen in einen selbstverstärkenden Strom von Desinformation ziehen und damit in Einzelfällen zu Radikalisierung beitragen (Kaiser & Rauchfleisch, 2019, 2020).
- Dies ist kein gesamtgesellschaftliches Problem, sondern auf spezifische Gruppen und Milieus konzentriert. Es geht weniger um Informationsqualität sondern um die der Formung entsprechender Gruppen zugrunde liegenden sozialen Ursachen.

## Sinkendes Vertrauen

- Desinformationen können zu einem allgemeinen Gefühl der Überforderungen und Desillusionierung mit Medien und politischen Institutionen führen (Jones-Jang et al., 2021).
- Dies gilt auch für Warnungen vor Desinformation, die zu sinkendem Vertrauen in Medien (Van Duyn & Collier, 2019) und den demokratischen Prozess führen können (Jungherr & Rauchfleisch, 2022).
- Desinformationen – und Warnungen vor Desinformationen – können also indirekt zu einem entscheidenden Vertrauensverlust in politische Systeme und Informationsumgebungen führen (Farrell & Schneier, 2018). Damit ist die Überzeugungswirkung einzelner Beiträge nicht entscheidend, sondern das allgemeine Gefühl, dass Medien und Politik hilflos sind.

# Was ist mit künstlicher Intelligenz? (KI)

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- KI erhöht die Möglichkeiten für interessierte Akteure, Falschinformationen zu generieren und zu verbreiten.
- Zusätzlich trägt KI durch ihre Funktionsweise dazu bei, dass plausible aber falsche Informationen generiert und verbreitet werden.
- Gleichzeitig erhöht KI aber auch die Fähigkeit von digitalen Strukturen (z.B. Facebook, TikTok oder YouTube) Falschinformationen zu identifizieren und zu blocken.
- Letztlich wird KI die Nachfrage nach informationsvermittelnden Institutionen stärken. Dies bietet für Medienmarken neue Möglichkeiten, sich zu über Qualitätssicherung zu differenzieren (Jungherr & Schroeder, 2023).

**Was ist das eigentliche Problem?**

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# Warum sind wir so nervös?

Check for updates

Article

## Disinformation and the Structural Transformations of the Public Arena: Addressing the Actual Challenges to Democracy

Andreas Jungheer<sup>1</sup> and Ralph Schroeder<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Current debates is dominated by fears of the threats of digital technology for democracy. One typical example is the perceived threat of malicious actors promoting disinformation through digital channels to sow confusion and exacerbate political divisions. The prominence of the threat of digital disinformation in the public imagination, however, is not supported by empirical findings which instead indicate that disinformation is a limited problem with limited reach among the public. Its prominence in public discourse is instead best understood as a "moral panic." In this article, we argue that we should shift attention from these anxieties but empirically marginal phenomena of disinformation connected with digital media toward the structural transformations that give rise to these fears, namely those that have impacted information flows and attention allocation in the public arena. This article centers on structural transformations of the public arena and associated new challenges, especially in relation to gatekeepers, old and new. How the public arena serves actually existing democracy will not be addressed by focusing on disinformation, but rather by addressing structural transformations and the new challenges that arise from these.

### Keywords

public arena, journalism, gatekeepers, social structures, disinformation


Open a newspaper, check your newsfeed, discuss politics with friends or colleagues, and you will come away with no uncertain feeling that democracy is in crisis. This crisis has been fed to the increasing role of digital technology in politics. Criticisms have focused on the role of malicious actors in promoting disinformation through digital channels to sow confusion and exacerbate political divisions. This prominence of digital disinformation in the public imagination is not, however, supported by empirical findings which instead indicate that disinformation is a limited problem with limited reach among the public (Altmann et al., 2020; Grönbay et al., 2019; Nyhan, 2020). Its prominence in public discourse, we argue, is instead best understood as a "moral panic" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009), suggesting that ill-understood deeper structural shifts are under way that give rise to unfounded fears. These fears about the detrimental impact of digital media on democracy—such as disinformation, filter bubbles, or the rise of hate—have dominated public, academic, and regulatory debates. In this article, we argue that we have to shift attention from these anxieties but empirically marginal phenomena toward the structural transformations that give

rise to these fears, namely those that have impacted information flows and attention allocation in the public arena.

These structural shifts have come about mainly because of digital media (Jungheer et al., 2020), economic pressures on traditional media organizations (Nielsen, 2012), the "balancing" act (Dahl, 2013) of traditional political organizations in Western democracies, and the reconfiguration of attention allocation and information flows (Schroeder, 2018). These shifts have partly been recognized but they are ill understood, and they have not been analyzed systematically. To understand the actually existing problems of the contemporary public arena and the role of digital media in democracy, we need to address the underlying structural changes (see also Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Bennett & Pfetsch,

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Jungheer and Schroeder (2021)

**Abstract:** [...] we should shift attention [...] toward the structural transformations [...] that have impacted information flows and attention allocation in the public arena. [...], especially in relation to gatekeepers, old and new. How the public arena serves actually existing democracy will not be addressed by focusing on disinformation, but rather by addressing structural transformations [...].



**Was können wir tun?**

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Don't panic!



## Gesellschaften können Desinformation bewältigen, solange:

- Desinformation im Zusammenspiel von Medien kontextualisiert und widerlegt werden kann.
- sich Politische Eliten und Gruppen einer gemeinsam geteilten Faktenlage verpflichtet fühlen und ihre Anhänger nicht für kurzfristige Gewinne im politischen Wettbewerb an Falschinformationen gewöhnen.
- sich nicht durch augenblickliche Ängste zu einer übertrieben restriktiven Regulierung von digitalen Informationsumgebungen hinreisen lassen.
- sie stärkere Medienkompetenz bei Bevölkerung und akademischen, journalistischen und politischen Eliten im Umgang mit digitalen Kommunikationsumgebungen entwickeln.

# Wo kann man dies studieren?


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Ob Populismus, Migrationsströme, Brexit oder Covid 19 – Viele Phänomene moderner Gesellschaften sind komplex und vielschichtig. Um diese Phänomene angemessen zu verstehen und zu erklären ist die gemeinsame Betrachtung verschiedener wissenschaftlicher Perspektiven *essentiell*.

**Studiengangsbeauftragter**



Direkt zu...

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<https://www.uni-bamberg.de/ba-cep/>




Herzlichen Dank!

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