Key findings

1. The majority of UK adults do not find it easy to identify false information online; they also believe it has a negative effect on democracy in the country.

2. A quarter of UK adults – particularly regular users of social media – are worried their political opinions are based on false information.

3. The majority of UK adults expect misinformation to have at least some impact the next UK general election result and back the regulation of political claims.
Ahead of the general election in 2024, Full Fact commissioned Ipsos to conduct an online survey of 2,000 adults aged 18+ across the United Kingdom to understand attitudes to misinformation and politics.

Much has changed in the UK since the study was previously run in 2021, and therefore a new read on public opinion was required.

Experts have called the current macro context a ‘polycrisis’. In the past three years the UK has been through COVID-19 lockdowns and vaccinations, seen three Prime Ministers in one year, while the war in Ukraine and subsequent inflation and interest rates have risen to levels that, to a new generation, are unknown.

Fieldwork was conducted from the 19th – 21st of December 2023.

15-minute online self-completed survey of UK adults aged 18+ representative by age, gender, and region, conducted across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The data were weighted to the known population of these demographics. Data shown in this report refers to the UK adults 18+ unless otherwise noted.

Sub-sample groups reported on include:

All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), UK adults 18-34 (n= 478), UK adults 55-64 (n=335), Those who have changed their voting preference because of false or misleading claims in politics (n=576), Those who are worried about false or misleading information (n=1,353), Those who have social media in top 5 channels (n=834), Those who strongly agree false information has a negative effect on democracy in the UK (n= 645), Those who agree that when they get involved in politics it is possible to make real changes to how the UK is run (n=706)
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Misinformation & the media
The majority of UK adults are worried about the spread of false or misleading information.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. To what extent, if at all, are you worried about the spread of false or misleading information about the news, current affairs or issues that affect you? (% worried)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Q. What would you say are the most important issues facing Britain today? (Top 20)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

68% are worried about the spread of false or misleading information about the news, current affairs or issues that affect them.

23% Nearly a quarter say the spread of fake news and misinformation is one of the most important issues facing Britain today.
About 3 in 4 think the prevalence of false information online is harming UK democracy, politics and people’s health.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

- 73%...a negative effect on democracy in the UK
- 64%...a negative effect on people’s health
- 71%...a negative effect on UK politics
Less than half find it easy to tell the difference between true and false information online, and one in three has falsely believed a news story.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023
Q. Thinking about all the different types of information in the news and current affairs that you see online, how easy or difficult do you find it to tell the difference between [...] (% difficult / neither easy or difficult / don’t know)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), UK adults 18-34 (n=478)

Half say they do not find it easy to tell which sources are trustworthy and which are not*

*50% ‘not easy’

1/3 have falsely believed a news story was real until they found out it was fake*

*34% agree
While the majority don’t think they live in an ‘internet bubble’, they are much more convinced that others do.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023
Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), UK adults 18-34 (n=478), UK adults 55-64 (n=335)

Perceptions of internet ‘bubbles’

I live in my own bubble on the internet, mostly connecting with people like myself and looking for opinions I already agree with.

29%

The average person in the UK lives in their own ‘bubble’ on the internet, mostly connecting with people like themselves and looking for opinions they already agree with.

61%

Younger people are more likely to agree that they live in an ‘internet bubble’.

Ages 18-34

42%

vs

19%

Ages 55-64
More than half think the average person in the UK is indifferent to facts but they themselves always do further research on the news.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), Those who have changed their voting preference because of false or misleading claims in politics (n=576)

Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

The average person in the UK doesn’t care about facts about politics and society anymore, they just believe what they want.

72%

I always do further research on the news and current affairs information before I believe it.

59%

56%

Those who say they have changed their voting preference because of false or misleading claims in current politics/the previous election campaign are significantly more likely to agree that the average person doesn’t care about facts anymore.
Television remains widely used and highly trusted, in contrast to video sharing websites.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Where, if anywhere, do you typically get your information from about the news, current affairs, and issues that affect you?

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Q. To what extent, if at all, do you trust what you read or hear from each of the following? (% trust)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Note: Usage of media sources was asked about local, regional and national printed newspapers and magazines separately. The figure for “Printed newspapers and magazines” is therefore an average of these three ratings.
Social media is overwhelmingly blamed for false information, and approximately half feel Government should take responsibility.

### Sources most to blame for spreading false information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media and video-sharing platforms</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties and campaigns</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UK Government</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual journalists</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular people acting alone</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media organisations</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private messaging services</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual politicians in the UK</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governments in other countries</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search engines</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassroots political organisations</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians in other countries</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online-only news organisations</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Responsibility for tackling the spreading of false information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media and video-sharing platforms</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UK Government</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulators</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media organisations</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact-checking organisations and websites</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search engines</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members of Parliament in the UK</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual journalists</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties, campaigns, or groups</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular people acting alone</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools, universities, and academic leaders</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Servants</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority do not think the false or misleading information is spread accidentally.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. What do you think are the main reasons, if any, some people or organisations spread false or misleading information in the news, current affairs, or about issues that affect you?

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Q. To what extent, if at all, are you worried about the spread of false or misleading information about the news, current affairs or issues that affect you? (% worried)

Base: Those who are worried about false or misleading information (n=1,353)

Reasons for spreading false information in the news, current affairs, or about issues that affect you

- They want to change people’s opinion on a topic or push their own agenda: 56%
- They want to make money by getting more people to view, read or see their content: 49%
- They want to turn different groups of people against each other: 45%
- They want to encourage people to adopt extreme political views: 43%
- They want to interfere in the democratic process: 41%
- They want to be famous or raise their profile: 36%
- They want to erode trust in institutions: 34%
- They are not aware of what they are doing or they do it by mistake: 15%

Those who are worried about false or misleading information are more likely to state all factors as motivations except for the accidental spread of false information.
Political impact of false information
About 2 in 3 are concerned voters will be misled by false or misleading claims in next UK election campaign.

- 71% of respondents are concerned voters will be misled by false or misleading claims in the election campaign.
- 25% of respondents are worried that their own political opinions are based on false or misleading information.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023
Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)
Q. I am concerned voters will be misled by false or misleading claims in the election campaign.
71% agree

- Those who think false information online has a negative effect on democracy in the UK are more likely to feel that voters will be misled by false or misleading claims.
- 80% of those who strongly agree false information has a negative effect on democracy in the UK (n= 645)

- Those who say social media channels are among their top 5 media sources are more likely to be concerned that their own political opinions are based on false or misleading information.
- 34% of those who say social media channels are among their top 5 media sources (n=834)
The majority think misinformation, generative AI, and deepfakes will have at least some impact on the UK election result.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Thinking further about the upcoming election, what impact, if any, do you think the following will have on the general election result? % At least some impact

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

*Deepfakes refers to manipulated image, audio, or video content

Younger people are more likely to think that generative AI and deepfakes will have at least some impact on the upcoming UK general election result.
Faith in the political system is low – the majority think lying has increased in the last five years, and politicians are the least trusted source of news.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. And finally, do you think there is more, less or about the same amount of lying and misuse of facts in politics and media in the UK than there was five years ago? (% more)

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Q. Below is a list of different ways you might get news about politics and current affairs. To what extent, if at all, do you trust what you read or hear from each of the following? (% not very much / at all)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

61% think there is more lying and misuse of facts in politics and media in the UK than there was five years ago.

41% think traditional parties and politicians act against their interests.

54% tend to ignore what parties and politicians say because they don’t know if they can be trusted.

Politicians are considered the least trustworthy source of news about politics and current affairs.

65% do not trust what they read or hear from politicians.
Manipulating evidence is seen as the most unacceptable behaviour in campaigns; the public strongly back regulation of political adverts.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Below is a list of behaviours politicians and parties may engage in as part of a general election campaign. Which of these, if any, do you consider to be the most unacceptable?

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)

Q. Do you think it should or should not be a legal requirement that factual claims in political adverts must be accurate?

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)
Over a third have been put off voting due to misleading political claims, and more than a quarter have changed their voting preference.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), UK adults 18-34 (n=478), UK adults 55-64 (n=335)

- 38% I have been put off voting by the level of false or misleading claims in current politics / the previous election campaign
- 29% I have changed my voting preference due to false or misleading claims in current politics / the previous election campaign

Impact of false information on voting behaviour

Ages 18-34: 52% vs Ages 55-64: 30%

Younger people are more likely to have been put off voting by misinformation.
4 in 5 want to see politicians held to account on their claims, but only a minority feel empowered to make a difference.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023
Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000)
There is high support for parties adopting honesty standards in manifestos and having spending commitments independently checked.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023

Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. (% agree)

Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), UK adults 18-34 (n=478), UK adults 55-64 (n=335)

- 25% I trust what I read in or hear about political party manifestos
- 71% I support political parties adopting a set of standards for honesty and transparency in manifestos
- 76% The spending commitments political parties make in their manifestos should be checked and costed by an independent body
- 61% The commitments made in political party manifestos are important to me when determining my vote

Ages 18-34 vs Ages 55-64

44% vs 8%

Younger people are significantly more likely to trust what they read in or hear about political party manifestos than older generations.
Nearly a third have been motivated to get more involved due to false claims in politics and the previous election.

Fieldwork: Online 19th – 21st December 2023
Q. Below is a list of statements about the upcoming general election. Please indicate to what extent you agree, or disagree, with each of the following statements. % agree
Base: All UK adults 18+ (n=2,000), UK adults 18-34 (n=478), UK adults 55-64 (n=335)
Q. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (% agree)
Base: Those who agree that when they get involved in politics it is possible to make real changes to how the UK is run (n=706)

False or misleading claims in current politics / the previous election campaign have motivated me to get more involved

Ages 18-34
47%

Ages 55-64
17%

Younger people are more likely to get involved in politics due to false or misleading claims.
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