

Combating Disinformation Online

Lisa Cutler

Director of Communications and Digital Strategy

July 28, 2022

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Housekeeping

We must officially close our meeting.

At the end of this session, Michelle will put a link to get back to the plenary session.

The same process – two clicks – will apply.

Overview

- What is Disinformation (aka Fake News)
- Why Does It Matter?
- How Did We Get Here?
- Seniors Are Particularly Susceptible to Disinformation Online
- The All-Powerful Algorithm
- What to Do – and NOT do – when you see Fake News



False information that is intentionally presented as factual news with an intent to deceive, make money, or get attention.

It is NOT news or information you disagree with or don't like.

Instant Poll

Q1: How serious a problem is fake news/disinformation?

Q2: Which social media sites do you use?

Q3: Have You Ever Been Tricked by a Fake News Story?

Disinformation Harms Political Discourse

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Misinformation on Facebook got six times more clicks than factual news during the 2020 election, study says

Right-leaning pages also produce more misinformation, the forthcoming study found.



By [Elizabeth Dwoskin](#)

September 4, 2021 at 12:01 p.m. EDT

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Disinformation Harms Our Health

Article | [Open Access](#) | [Published: 26 April 2022](#)

Online misinformation is linked to early COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy and refusal

[Francesco Pierri](#) , [Brea L. Perry](#), [Matthew R. DeVerna](#), [Kai-Cheng Yang](#), [Alessandro Flammini](#), [Filippo Menczer](#) & [John Bryden](#)

[Scientific Reports](#) **12**, Article number: 5966 (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Disinformation Harms Our Relationships



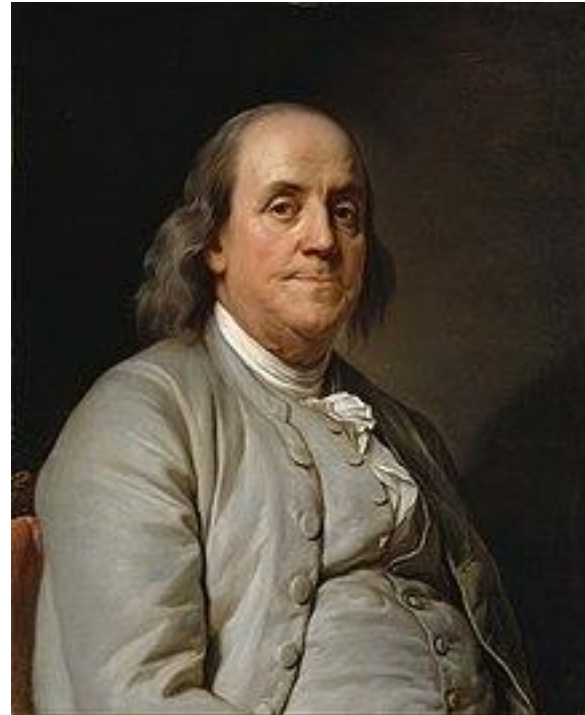
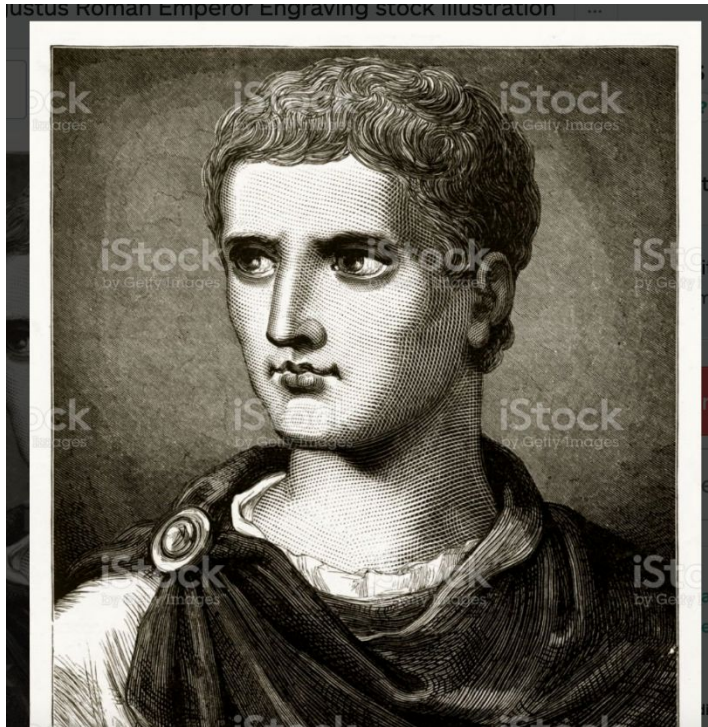
**Their loved ones are
'obsessed' with QAnon
conspiracies. It's
tearing their families
apart**

May 28, 2021 6:30 PM EDT

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned

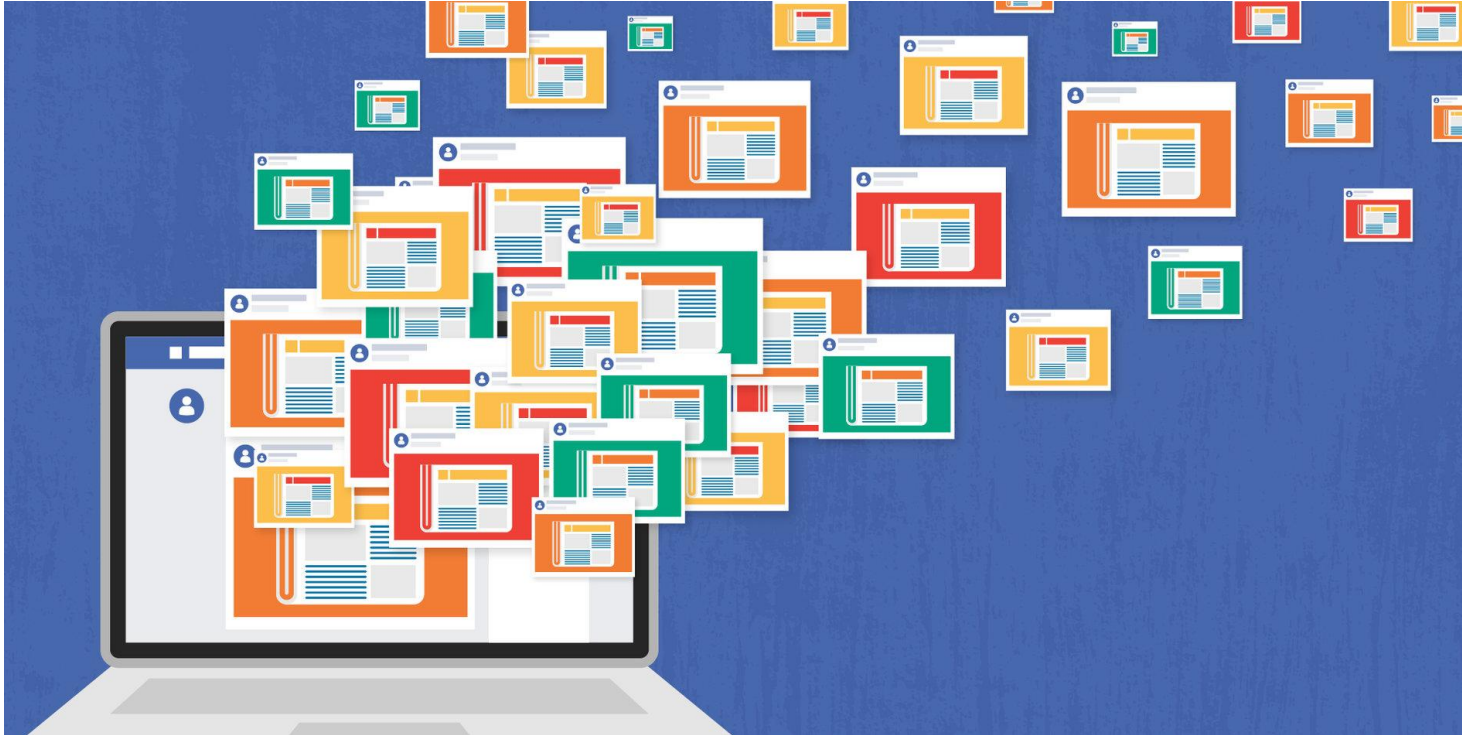


Disinformation Is NOT new



Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned

How Did We Get Here?



Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned

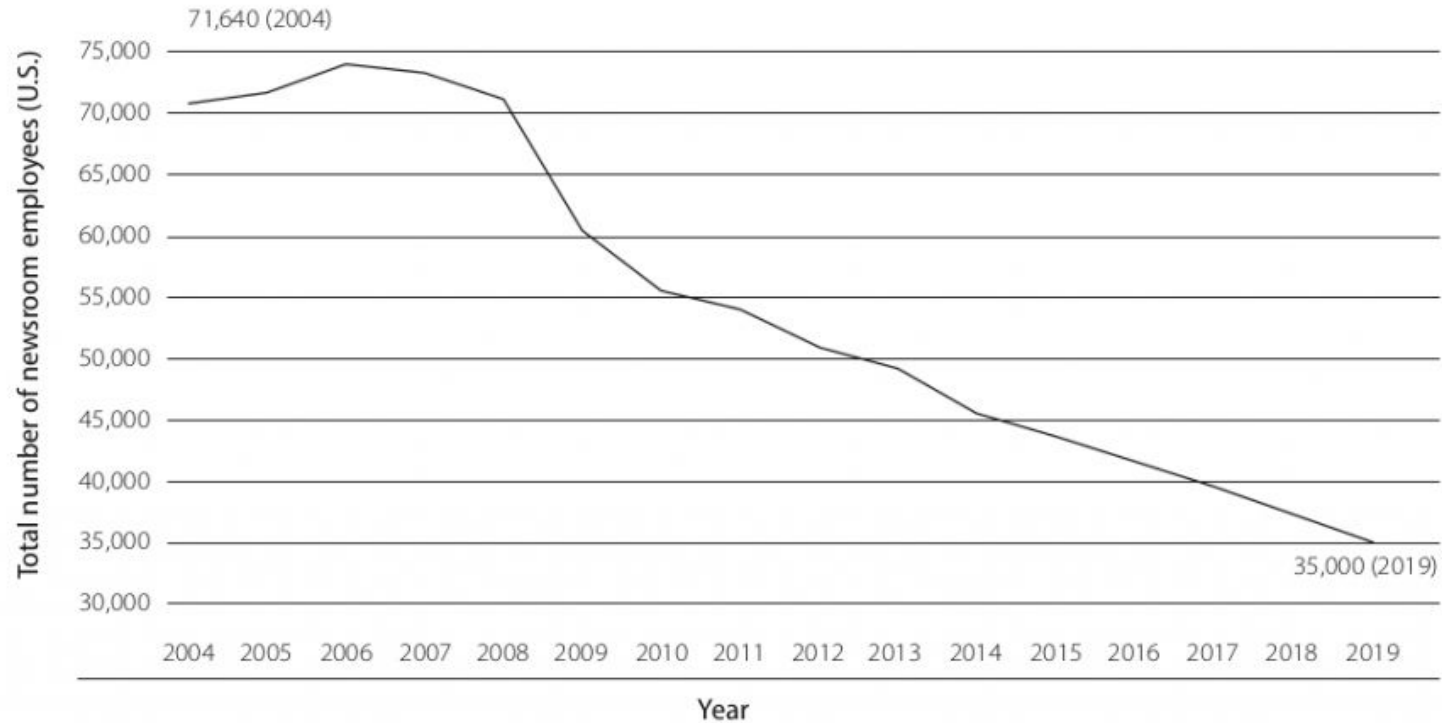


Three Factors

- Decline of Traditional News Media
- Rise of Social Media AND
- Political Polarization

Shrinking Newsrooms

DECLINE OF TOTAL U.S. NEWSROOM EMPLOYMENT: 2004-2019



Overall newsroom employment has declined 50 percent since 2004.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, PEW Research Center

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Social Media



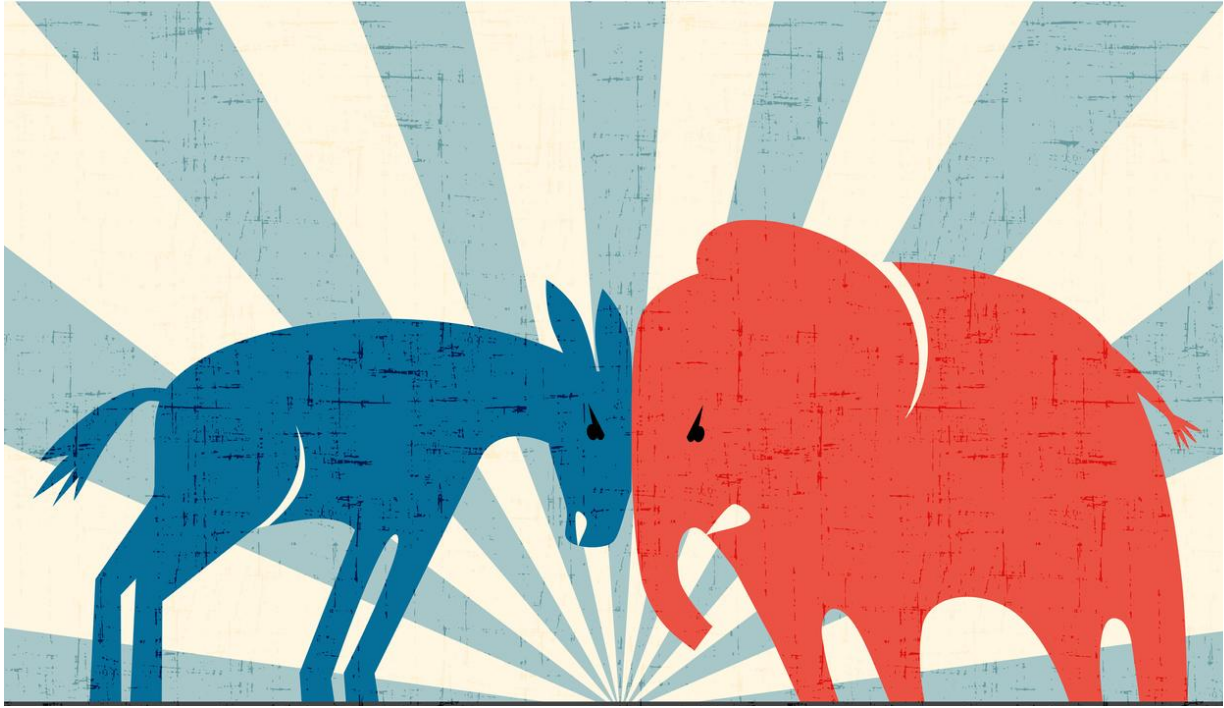
8 in 10 Americans Use
Facebook

Including 50% of all
Seniors with Internet
Access

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Polarization ws



In 2020, almost HALF of ALL fake news online was shared by just 20% of social media users at the far ideological extremes.

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



What About Bots?



Real people spread fake news much faster than bots or fake accounts.

People are most likely to trust and share information they receive from someone they know.

MIT, 2021

But ...

WHY SHOULD
WE CARE?

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned

 Alliance *for* Retired Americans®

The Senior Vote

- Seniors also vote at the highest rate
- We want them to have real facts, not fake news



Seniors Share the Most Fake News

Harvard Psychologists:

- Less likely to check or notice sources
- Less experienced online and more likely to click on advertisements leading to fake news sites
- Older people trust their friends and families not to share false information
- More likely to fall for doctored or manipulated images



Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



The Algorithm Loves Controversy



Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned

Tip 1: Don't Engage With Fake Content



Posts with “engagement”  shown to more users

If your “friend” engages with a post – you are more likely to see it

If someone of the same age, interests, or gender engages with a post – you are more likely to see it

Tip 2: Check Your Sources



“Pelosi Diverts \$2.4 Billion From Social Security to Cover Impeachment Costs”

Source: “Potatriotsunite.com”

Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Tip 3: Pay Attention Your Emotions

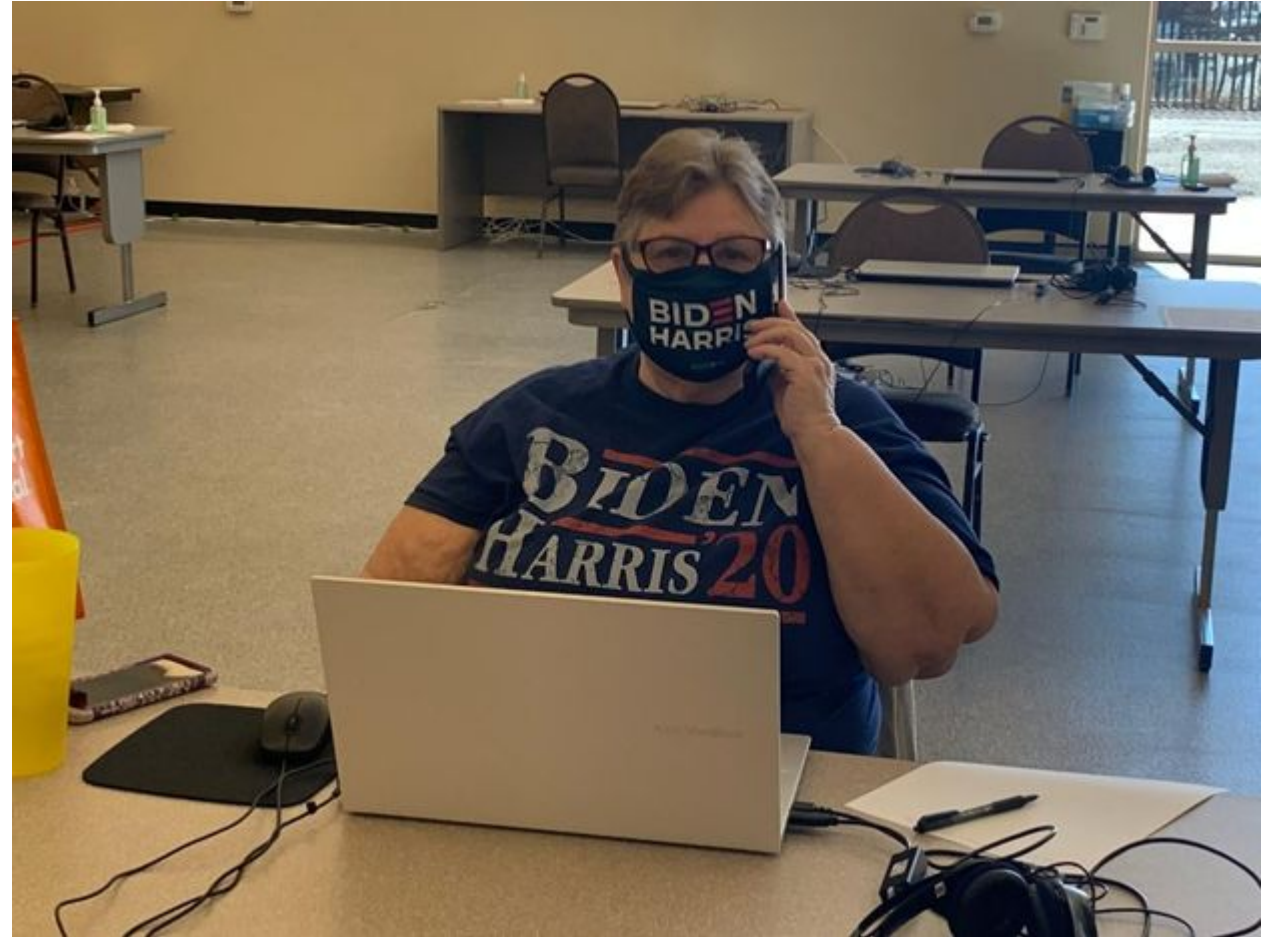


- Fake News Relies on **Emotional Reactions**
- If a social media headline or image makes you angry or outraged or thrilled ... be cautious before sharing
- Check snopes.com or search for confirmation of the story from a legitimate news source

Tip 4: Share Your Advocacy

“Had a great day phone banking with other Biden Supporters today. We must make sure everyone knows that Joe wants to increase our Social Security.

Let me know if you want to join me next time.”



Tip 4: Share Your Advocacy

“Our Representative Kathleen Rice is one of just 5 Democrats who is voting against lowering drug prices.

That’s why I was proud to go to this protest today and urge her to change her mind.”



Tip 5: Step Away From Your Computer

- In-person conversations are generally more productive.
- Good for our mental health.
- A call from a phone banker is much more likely to get someone to vote our way.



Questions?



Fighting for
the Retirement
We Earned



Housekeeping

We must officially close our meeting.

At the end of this session, Michelle will put a link to get back to the plenary session.

The same process – two clicks – will apply.