

First Draft Impact Report

Q2. 2020

Executive summary

First Draft works to protect communities from harmful information in the moments that matter. In the second quarter of 2020, there have been many of those moments.

The pandemic continued to present reporting and research challenges, with local interventions such as city-based lockdowns introducing complex dynamics of misinformation, and the mainstreaming of conspiracy theories requiring daily decisions about when and how to raise awareness without amplification. As newsrooms and specialists contend with these ever-evolving issues, First Draft provides training and support.

In May, global protests following George Floyd's death prompted misinformation, confusion and division online. With dedicated monitoring support, First Draft was able to equip local and international reporters with data, insights and stories to support their communities.

With platforms taking radical action to tackle misinformation, widespread concern over vaccine hesitancy, and a fast-approaching election in the United States, the need for expertise and collaboration has never been greater. In this report we take stock of what we have been able to achieve in exceptional times, and look forward to expanding our value for the remainder of the year.

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Black lives matter

In June, First Draft publicly recognized that Black lives matter, issuing the following statement:

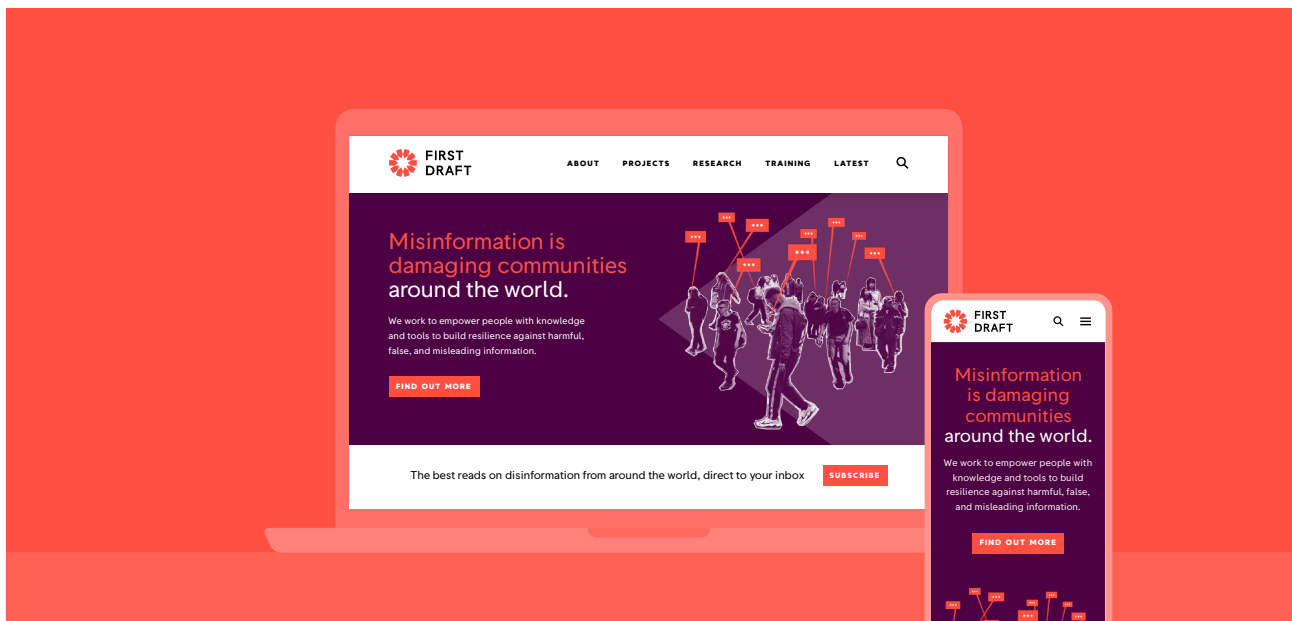
“As an organization that supports the work of newsrooms globally, First Draft recognizes that Black lives matter, and that journalism is not a crime. In this moment, we want to acknowledge the particular experiences of Black journalists who have to live daily with the impact of systemic racism and now must also contend with the degradation of their profession. The events of the past two weeks underline the critical importance of eyewitness media, and the damage that can be done when harmful misinformation flourishes and feeds narratives that stoke division. Rigorous verification has never been more important and so we are committed to offering as much training as possible, so that every journalist feels equipped to identify, verify and effectively report on misinformation.”

Like many organizations around the world, including some of the world’s most influential newsrooms, we have looked inward as well as outward. We’ve had many difficult discussions as we’ve reckoned with some of journalism’s core values, such as neutrality, objectivity and impartiality, in an effort to confront structural racism with renewed commitment. As we find ways to embed racial justice into our working practices, we have created an Equality and Inclusion Committee in order to provide dedicated resources and space to improve our policies, partnerships and priorities.

What we've done

- A new identity
- Monitoring the online landscape
- Webinars, webinars, webinars
- Designing resilient platforms
- The UN's anti-misinformation campaign
- Inoculating the public with misinformation education
- Getting attribution right
- WHO infodemiology conference
- Original reporting on the First Draft site

A new identity



Over the past 18 months, First Draft has grown from a team of five to an agile organization of over 50 people, then evolved once again to be a fully remote team across multiple time zones. A strong, coherent and bold identity has never been more important. In Q1, we established our five values: Our work is **pioneering**, and conducted with **rigor, empowerment, empathy** and **integrity**. In Q2, we used these values to develop and launch a fresh new look.

Our new logo is inspired by an asterisk — a symbol of self-correction and clarification — which is created by multiple arrows coming together. These principles — collaboration, navigation and accurate information — remind us of First Draft’s foundation and its future.

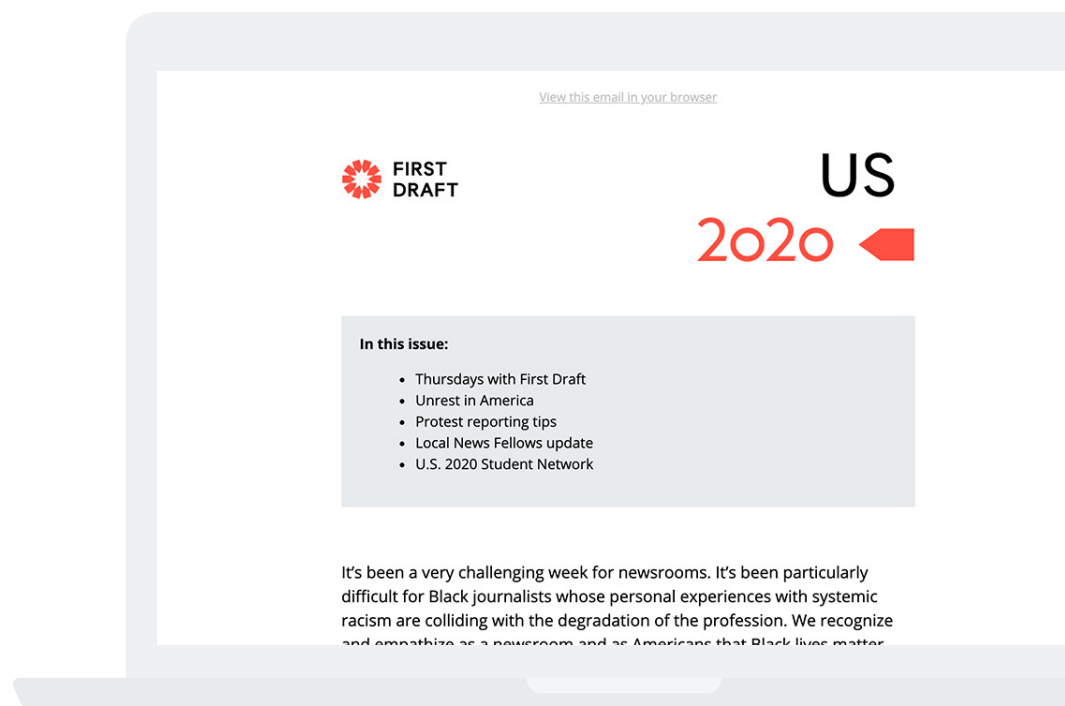
We’ve rolled out a new website, social media and newsletter designs, and new language to explain our work. A revitalised sense of coherence and clarity will help us keep focused on our task: protecting communities from harmful information in the moments that matter.

Monitoring the online landscape

First Draft has provided monitoring insights, data and analysis to journalists covering some of the most challenging stories of recent times. We have helped newsrooms around the world, including *ABC News*, *Al Jazeera*, *Business Insider*, *Buzzfeed News*, *CNN*, *Detroit Free Press*, *the Guardian*, *HuffPost*, *The New York Times*, *ProPublica*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* navigate a complex, manipulated online landscape.

In total, we contributed substantial insight, research findings or data to 71 news stories.

Our US Local News Fellows have also provided daily, state-level insights to our CrossCheck community and state-specific narratives with key reporting takeaways to our [US 2020 Newsletter](#).



**Webinars****Webinars****Webinars**

As we pivoted to training exclusively online, we have reached more than 3,000 people across our 45 webinars and courses during this period. We've covered everything from computational methods to mental wellness to TikTok, and provided sessions in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. We also successfully deployed French, German, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish translations of our "Covering Coronavirus" course, expanding these resources to an extensive international community of reporters.

Designing resilient platforms

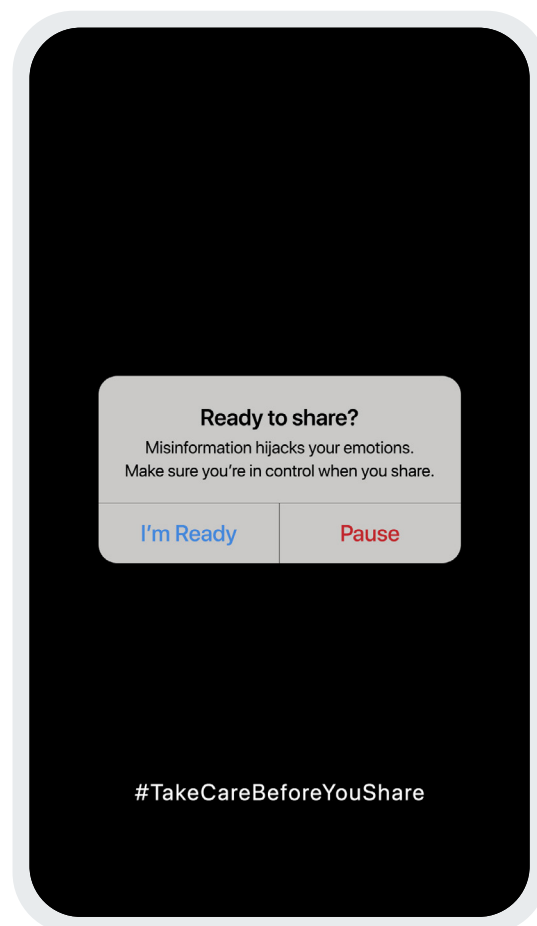
In Q2, we saw platforms intervene in misinformation in unprecedented ways, accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic.

This was a moment that truly mattered. On the front end, platforms were creating and using labels to warn people about manipulated media like never before. On the back end, quiet decisions were being made on the automated categorization of manipulated media that will have long-lasting (and to some extent unforeseeable) effects on our social infrastructure.

In our collaboration with Partnership on AI, we published two pieces to guide platforms' decisions on this issue. The first was "12 design principles for labeling manipulated media," a widely circulated article that resulted in discussion with platforms' internal teams. We followed this with "5 Urgent Considerations for the Automated Categorization of Manipulated Media," providing guidance on the development of initiatives such as MediaReview that seek to categorize visual misinformation.

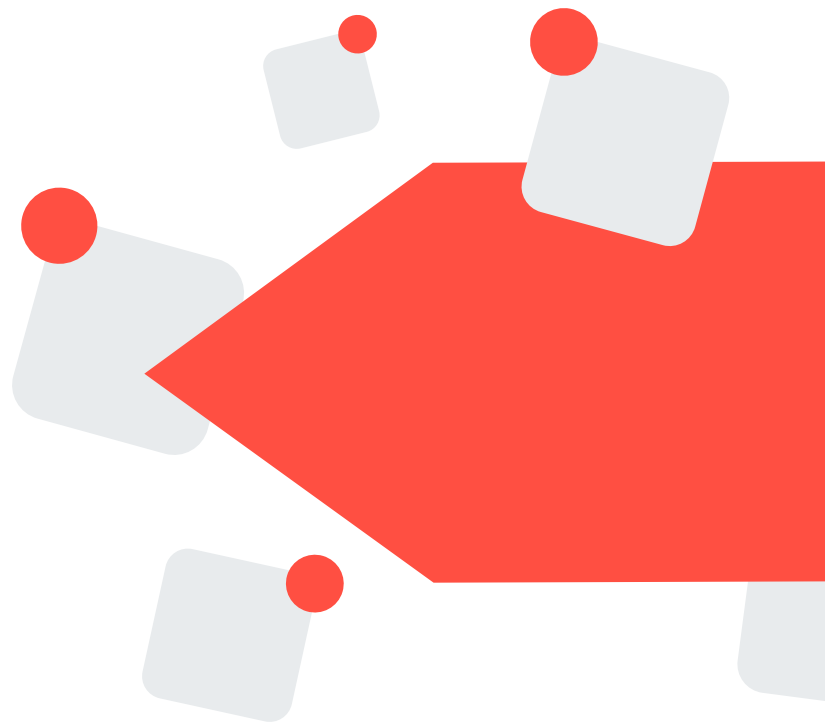
The UN's anti-misinformation campaign

As the UN sought to put its significant influence behind an anti-misinformation campaign, First Draft provided early-phase and ongoing consultancy for its initiative Verified. Along with weekly monitoring reports and creative consultancy, we helped to develop its flagship “Pause” campaign, based on insights from psychological literature.

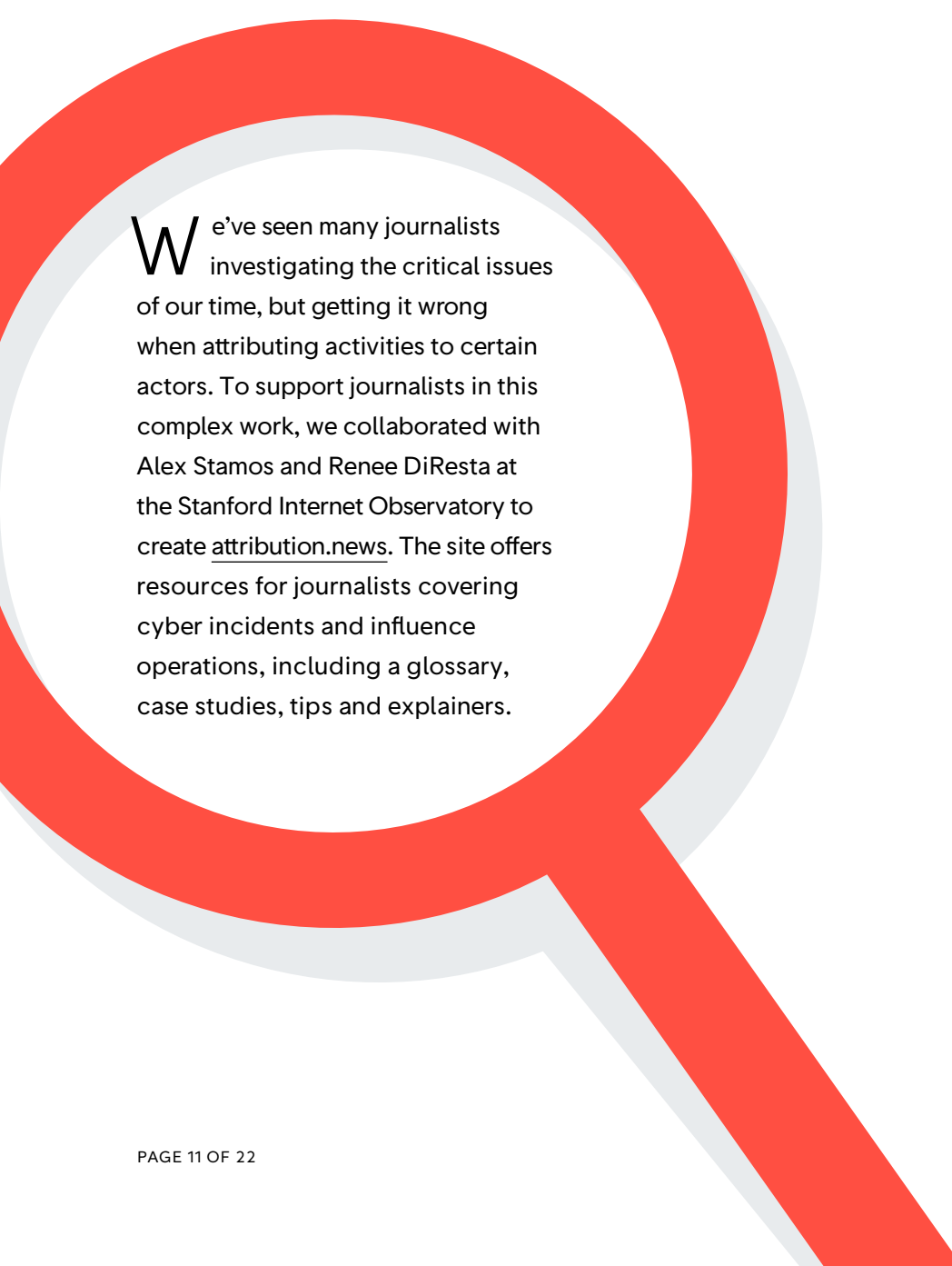


Inoculating the public with misinformation education

We followed up our course for journalists with Too Much Information: A Public Guide to Navigating the Infodemic, designed to help the public understand and respond to coronavirus-related misinformation. We're looking to expand the ways we're educating global audiences and investigating new delivery mechanisms that we'll be rolling out in Q3.



Getting attribution right



We've seen many journalists investigating the critical issues of our time, but getting it wrong when attributing activities to certain actors. To support journalists in this complex work, we collaborated with Alex Stamos and Renee DiResta at the Stanford Internet Observatory to create attribution.news. The site offers resources for journalists covering cyber incidents and influence operations, including a glossary, case studies, tips and explainers.

WHO infodemiology conference

The World Health Organization recognizes that the “infodemic” phenomenon resulting from Covid-19 requires a coordinated response and is here to stay.

The 1st WHO Infodemiology pre-conference event on June 29 allowed for a day of talks on management of the infodemic, including our presentation, “Conspiracies, Rumors and Falsehoods: The truth about why the Infodemic is so dangerous and what we can do about it.” The event had a live viewership of over 9,000 Zoom views, 1,600 YouTube views, and over 1,500 Slido engagements.

9,000

Zoom views

1,600

YouTube views

1,500

Slide engagements

Original reporting on the First Draft website

While the First Draft team provides insights to professional journalists to enrich their reporting, they also write for the First Draft website. In Q2 the following articles were published:

- [How to talk to family and friends about that misleading WhatsApp message](#)
- [How to analyze Facebook data for misinformation trends and narratives](#)
- [The psychology of misinformation: Why we're vulnerable](#)
- [The importance of local context in taking on misinformation: Lessons from AfricaCheck](#)
- [George Floyd protests: Resources for online newsgathering, verification, protecting sources and colleagues](#)
- [How to use Facebook's Ad Library to find coronavirus stories](#)
- [Covering coronavirus: Privacy and security tips for journalists](#)
- [Lessons on covering coronavirus misinformation from the fallout of 'Plandemic'](#)
- [Ethical questions for covering coronavirus online: Key takeaways for journalists](#)
- [When it comes to scientific information, WhatsApp users in Argentina are not fools](#)

Who we've reached

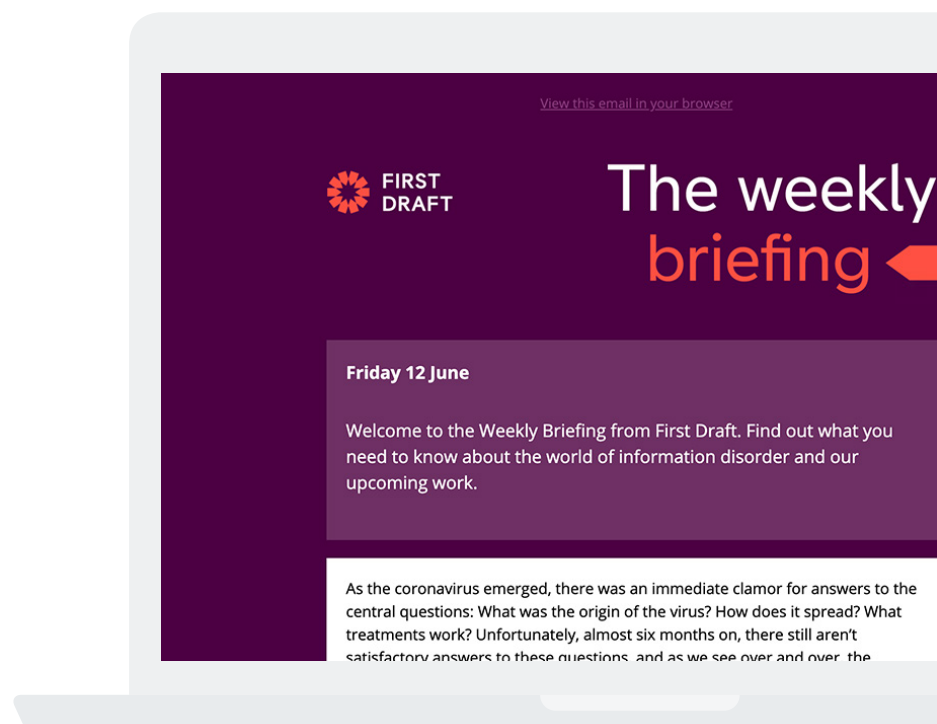
In Q2, we saw consistency and progress
in engaging our readers and learners,
and a major increase in news coverage
mentioning or consulting First Draft.

The Daily and Weekly Briefings

Two of our core editorial products, the Daily and Weekly Briefings, have been making more of an impact these past few months with a 65 per cent collective increase in the number of readers during this quarter alone. With a consistently high daily open rate, we're pleased to see our Briefings embedded into the daily routines of many influential figures in the misinformation space.

+65%

collective increase
in the number of
readers this quarter



Social

Engaging with reporters, researchers and educators on social media has always been a priority for First Draft.

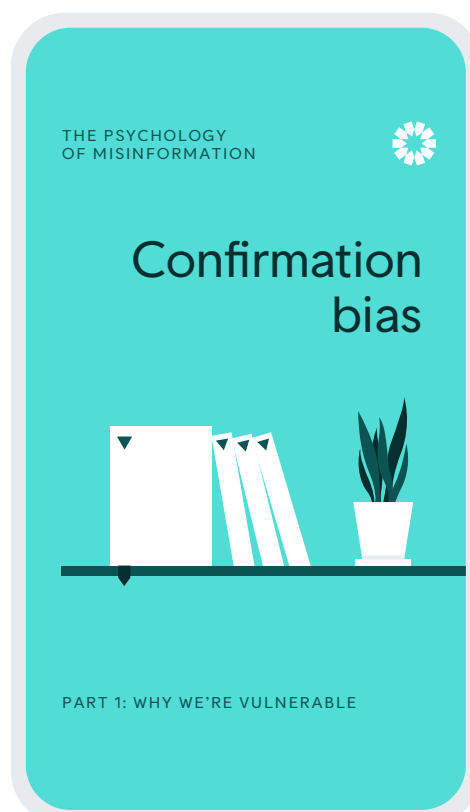
This quarter, we doubled down on our strategy, focusing on Twitter, where we welcomed thousands of new followers, resulting in a 10 per cent increase in our following, and Instagram, where our community has grown by 35 per cent.

+10%

increase in
Twitter following

+35%

increase in
Instagram following

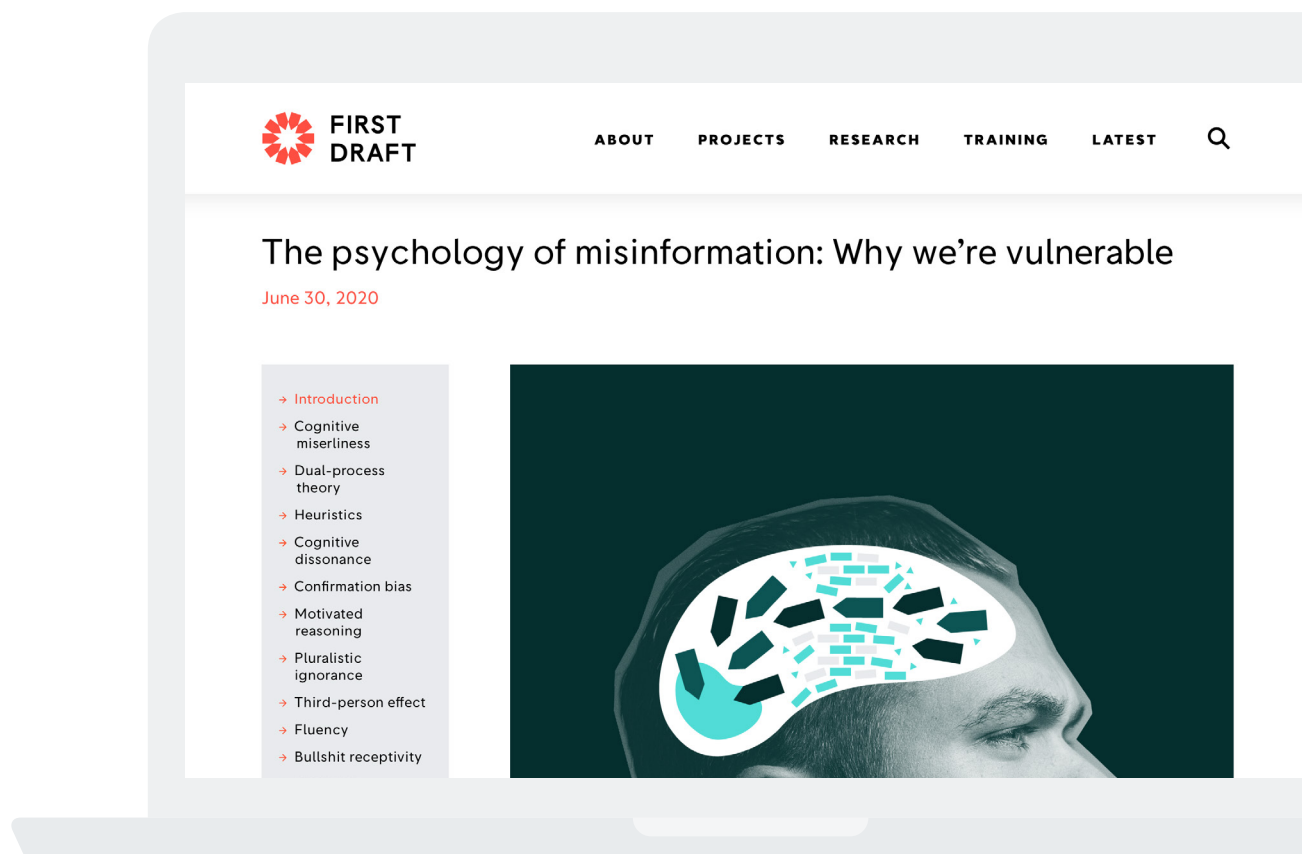


Website

Overall, we've seen a 27.5 per cent increase in our readers from around the world, with particularly large increases in readers from India (+97 per cent), Brazil (+126 per cent) and Mexico (+103 per cent).

+27.5%

increase in
website visitors



Coverage

We were mentioned 1,993 times by news outlets in Q2, double the number of Q1.

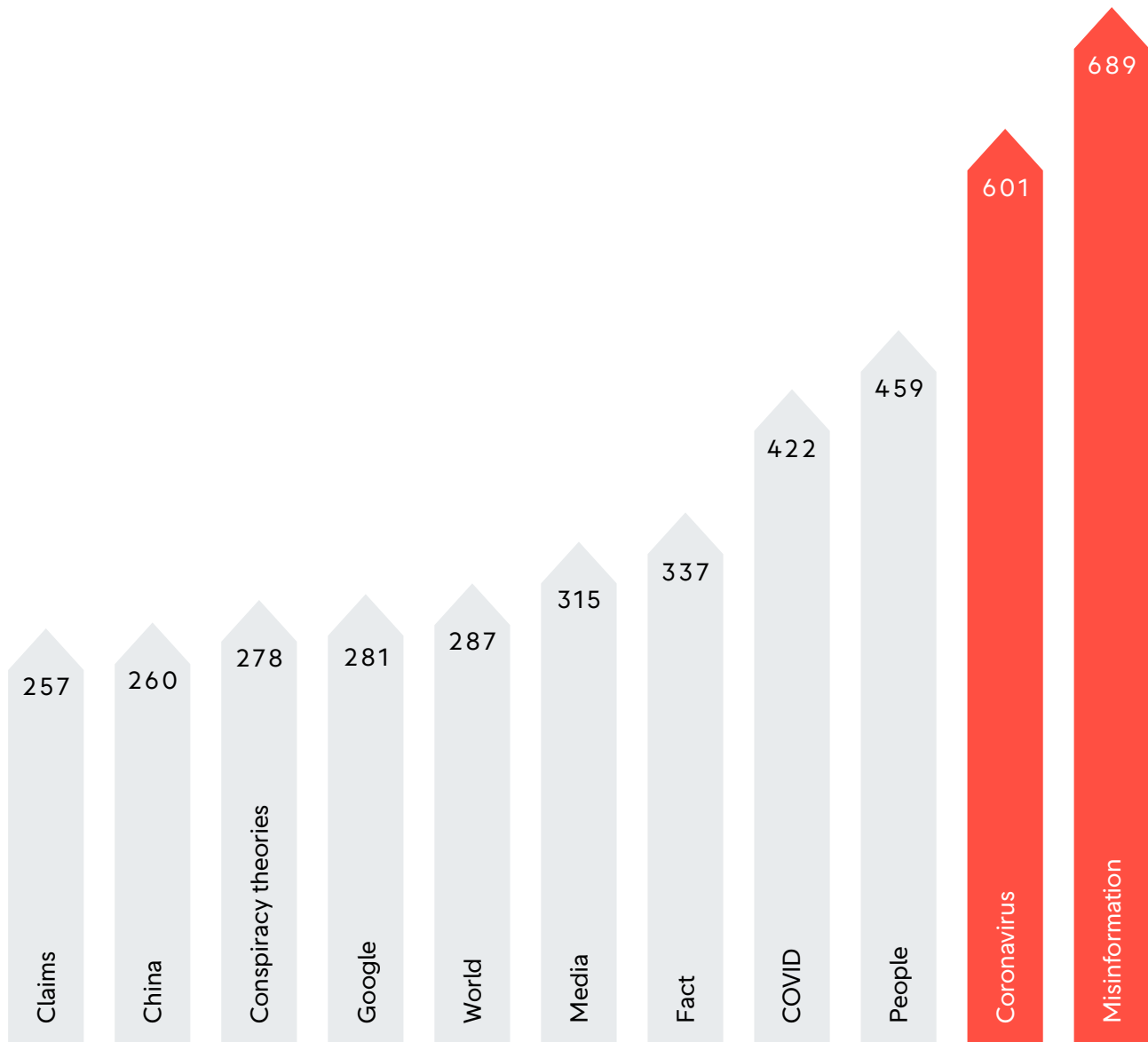
FIRST DRAFT'S COVERAGE IN THE NEWS AROUND THE WORLD
(SOURCE: MELTWATER)



Coverage

The key themes in our coverage were misinformation and coronavirus.

FIRST DRAFT'S KEY THEMES IN COVERAGE
(SOURCE: MELTWATER)

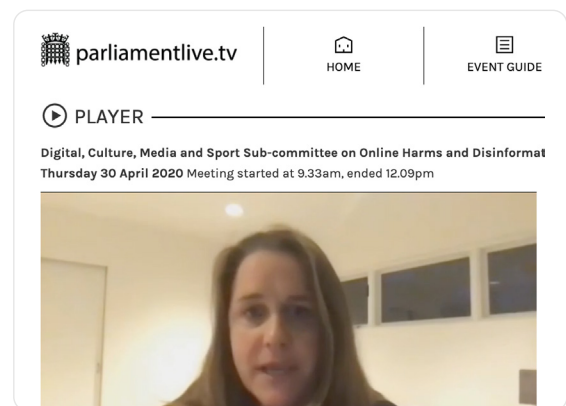


Where we're providing insight

Where we're providing insight

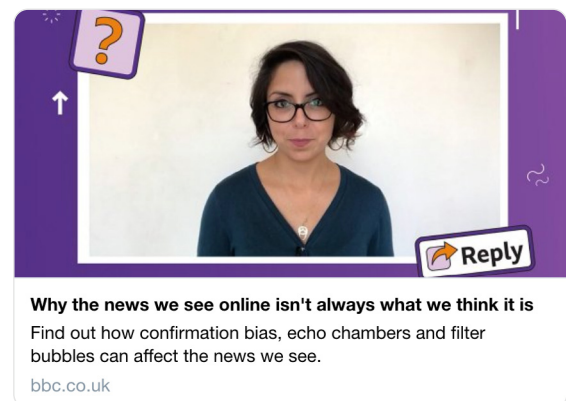
UK DCMS Select Committee

Oral evidence to committee on coronavirus misinformation.

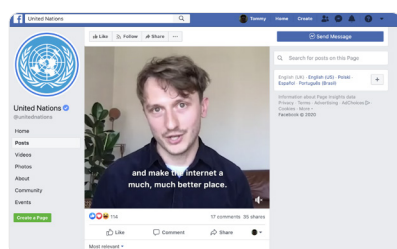


BBC Bitesize

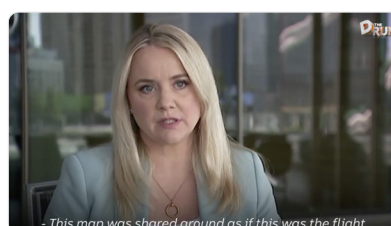
Fact or Fake module on confirmation bias, filter bubbles and related issues



UN Verified Campaign



ABC The Drum



NBC News



Thank you.