

# First Draft Impact Report

Q3. 2020

# The story

The first half of 2020 was dominated by a simple question: How do we get the right information to the right people as quickly as possible? For First Draft, this meant providing timely, relevant and clear guidance for influential voices during an unprecedented situation — a global pandemic in the age of social media. Our guidance on responding to the infodemic has been read over 100,000 times.

The second half of 2020 has been marked by two priorities: understanding the evolution of the infodemic and what it holds for 2021, especially as a vaccine is rolled out amid widespread suspicion; and a globally significant election mired in disinformation during the 2020 presidential race between Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

We have responded to the infodemic with analysis, commentary, guidance, coordination and technology. Our “Tracking the infodemic” series has gathered a range of analysis and commentary on how misinformation is compounding the pandemic, uncovering that pro-mask tweets were amplifying the anti-mask movement, showing how we need analytics on search on social media platforms, and much more.

Our response to the US election, which we expect to continue in the months after polling day, has combined daily insights, the coordination of hundreds of journalists in our CrossCheck community, guidance on reporting, daily briefings on election-related disinformation, local insights on five battleground states from our fellows, and a pioneering, free text message course for the public.

We have also continued with our core work: training journalists through a course on covering coronavirus, webinars, live simulations and a conference, which has trained 13,309 people across seven languages so far during 2020.

Learn more about our range of projects — including a growing body of work on vaccine hesitancy, and support for anyone looking to understand the psychology of misinformation — in our Q3 2020 impact report.

# The numbers

## US ELECTION:

**1,150**subscribers to our  
US 2020 briefings**522**members of  
CrossCheck Slack**+100,000**

messages in CrossCheck Slack

## THE INFODEMIC:

**100,000**readers of our coronavirus resources  
including**10 reports**

on the infodemic

## SMS COURSE:

**1,200**users in the first phase of our “Protection from  
deception” two-week text message course

## WEBINARS AND TRAINING:

**28**training sessions  
and webinars, with**6,861**participants  
in total

## TWITTER:

**2.4 million impressions**

## WEBSITE:

**236,000 readers**

## NEWS:

Provided  
insight to **314** news  
stories

# Partnerships & projects

- Preparing for US election misinformation
- Misinformation in your backyard: Local News Fellowship
- Infotheque 2020
- ‘Protection from deception’: A free two-week SMS course
- Disinformation Defense League
- Electionland
- Tracking the infodemic
- Data deficits
- Unicef
- Spotify x First Draft
- Webinars and training
- The psychology of misinformation
- Website refresh

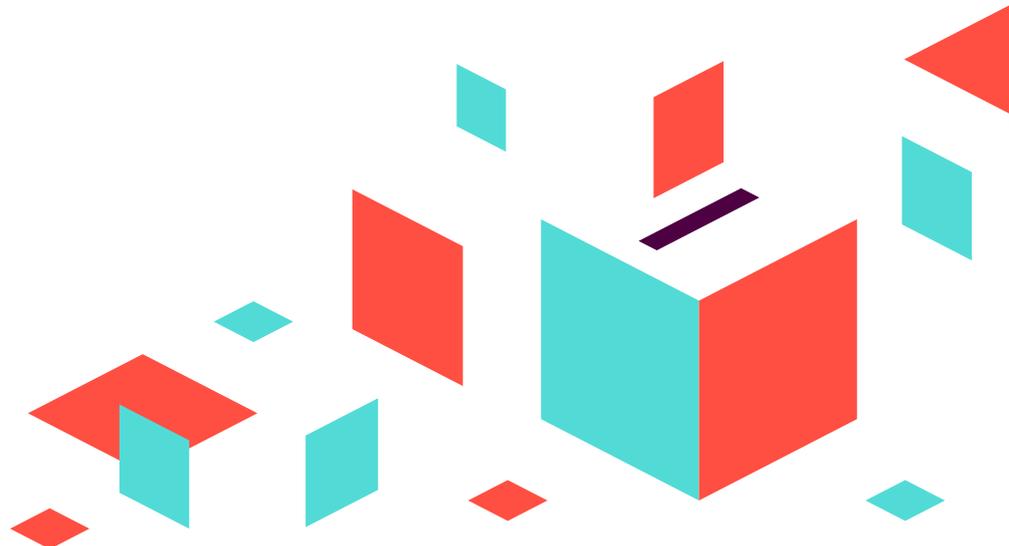
US 2020

# Preparing for US election misinformation

**W**e have onboarded and cultivated a collaborative community of 380 journalists, researchers, technologists, community groups and students to our CrossCheck Slack, with representation from 32 US states. Between July 1 and September 1, our investigative researchers posted 195 updates and investigations to our community, averaging 20 per week.

We also have over 1,000 subscribers to our weekly US 2020 disinformation briefing, which includes “webi-bars,” an hour-long weekly event series where members of the CrossCheck community and subscribers to the US 2020 newsletter can informally discuss that week’s misinformation trends and reporting concerns with First Draft researchers.

Reporters and editors are also invited to request bespoke remote training for their newsrooms.



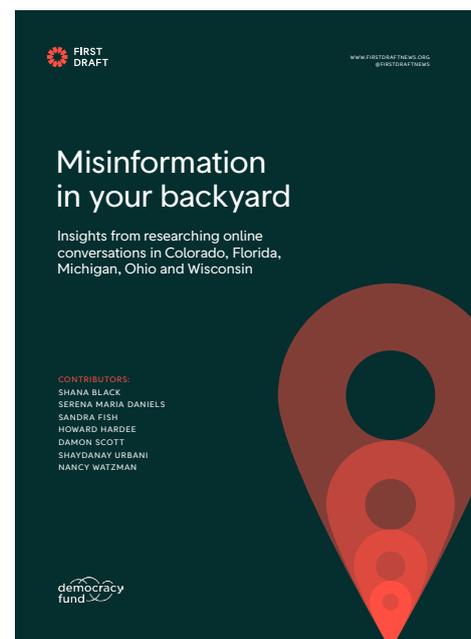
US 2020

# Misinformation in your backyard: Local News Fellowship

We recruited five local news fellows in January to monitor local misinformation in key states: Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. Our fellows monitor information disorder and liaise daily with the First Draft editorial team. Their findings are sent to their state-specific CrossCheck channel partners and to our community at large, with two to three updates shared daily.

All fellows have a newsletter and have also provided 21 trainings and events to newsrooms in their areas, with more to come before the election. They have collected dozens of examples of information disorder playing out via private Facebook Groups, text messages and other platforms. We have also developed monitoring dashboards in Spike, CrowdTangle and Tweetdeck to give to local newsrooms based on keywords, topics and actors.

Our local news fellow in Wisconsin, Howard Hardee, created two election toolkits in collaboration with the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism and the Center for Journalism Ethics at UW-Madison as part of the Election Integrity Project. The first is geared towards reporters covering election mis- and disinformation online. The second is a news consumers toolkit for navigating the facts-optional world of social media.



US 2020

# Infotheque 2020

Infotheque 2020 was First Draft's inaugural virtual event to prepare journalists for covering election misinformation. We kicked off with a keynote and conversation between civil rights attorney Vanita Gupta and First Draft's US Director, Claire Wardle. This was followed by our interactive Election Crisis Simulation. The two days of sessions covered digital investigation skills, how to think about local and 'elite' misinformation, Facebook political advertising, election protection, and reporting on misinformation that targets Black and Latinx communities.

Our opening and closing keynotes had almost 350 viewers combined, with the other eight sessions averaging 55 attendees and some bringing in more than 70 people. Post event, we gained a further 1,030 viewers.



US 2020

# ‘Protection from deception’: A free two-week SMS course

Over 1,000 people have signed up to our free two-week text message course, ‘Protection from deception,’ which covers the basics of how to understand and spot misinformation, and how to talk to family and friends about it. We have had unanimous positive feedback from the course, which has featured prominently on social media and features in an HBO documentary. It is available in English and Spanish.



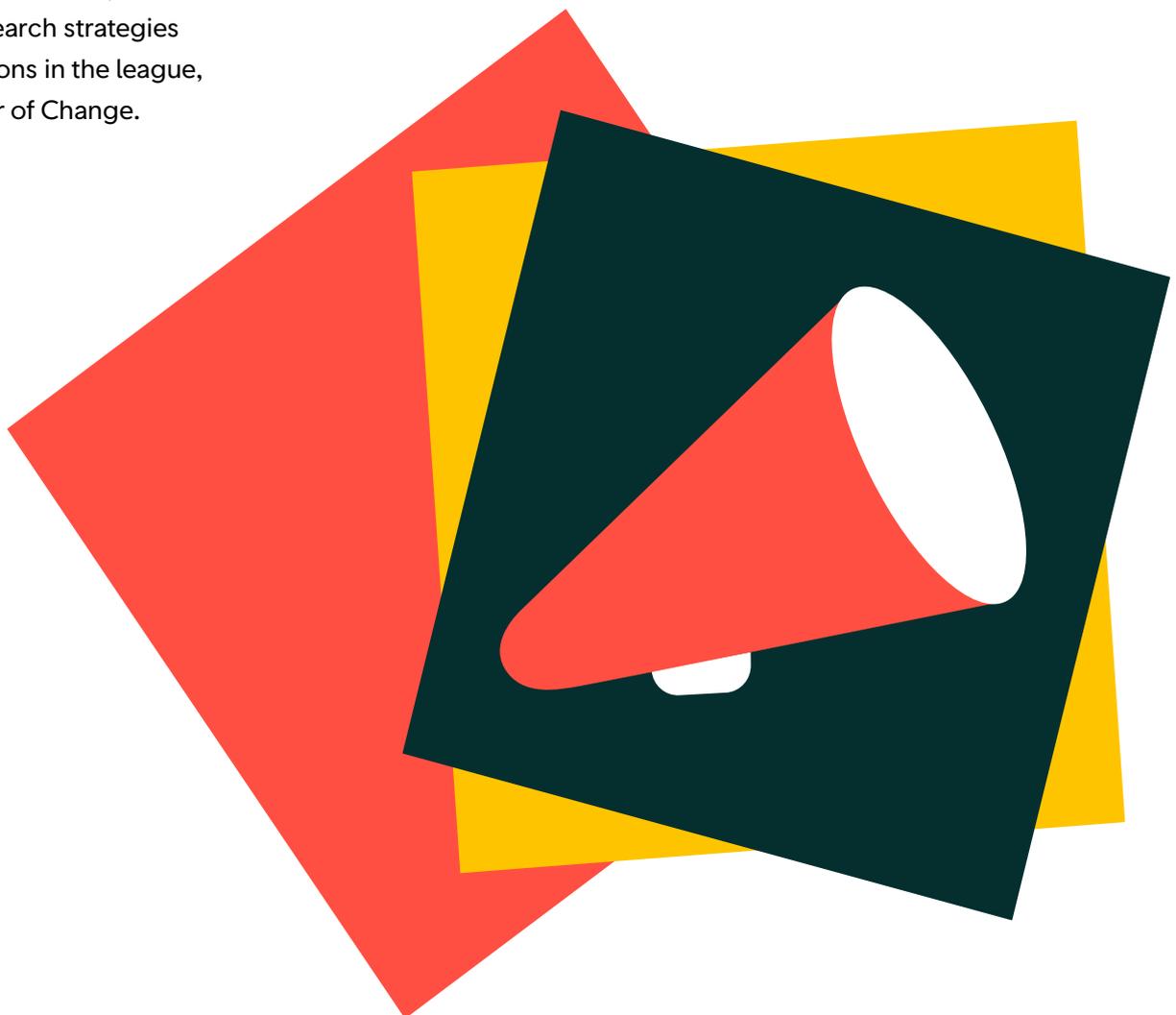
¿Porqué hay tanta desinformación sobre las elecciones en EUA?

Entérate con nuestro curso gratis - que no te cuenten.

US 2020

# Disinformation Defense League

Our team of three investigative researchers from the Black and Latinx communities provides training and research insights on disinformation online, and exchanges research strategies with organizations in the league, including Color of Change.



US 2020

# Electionland

The 2020 election will see First Draft join forces with ProPublica's Electionland for a third election cycle. As full partners in the project, we are providing insights on election-related disinformation to ProPublica and its partners, and verifying claims and content.

As in previous years, the project will look at irregularities in voting and aim to address them in real time. Our student network (100 have registered to join, with 30 currently trained and active from 12 different schools) will provide monitoring and verification support. ProPublica will lead one of the sessions in our summit on covering mail-in ballots and in-person voting.



THE INFODEMIC

# Tracking the infodemic

Our coverage of coronavirus has involved hosting 38 webinars, producing 25 reports, launching two courses, and building one dashboard. In total, we have had over 100,000 readers of these resources, 3,525 webinar participants and 1,815 course takers.

We also launched a dedicated series called 'Tracking the infodemic' to reflect on 2020 so far and look to the future. We examined how some governments are adopting 'fake news laws' that threaten human rights, how geopolitics is influencing online communities' responses to coronavirus treatments, and the impact of religious misinformation in Latin America. We also investigated how Twitter's algorithm resulted in anti-mask sentiment boosting

pro-mask content, as well as how the concepts of 'the facts' and 'the truth' are creating different ways of knowing during the crisis.

Finally, we launched a report on 'data deficits' (high levels of demand for credible information but low levels of supply), and a prototype dashboard for monitoring them. This led to a separate analysis of 9,722 fact checks that the dashboard tracked. We rounded off this series with questions for reporters, fact checkers and platforms to help us get the right information to the right people at the right time when we next face an infodemic.

## THE INFODEMIC

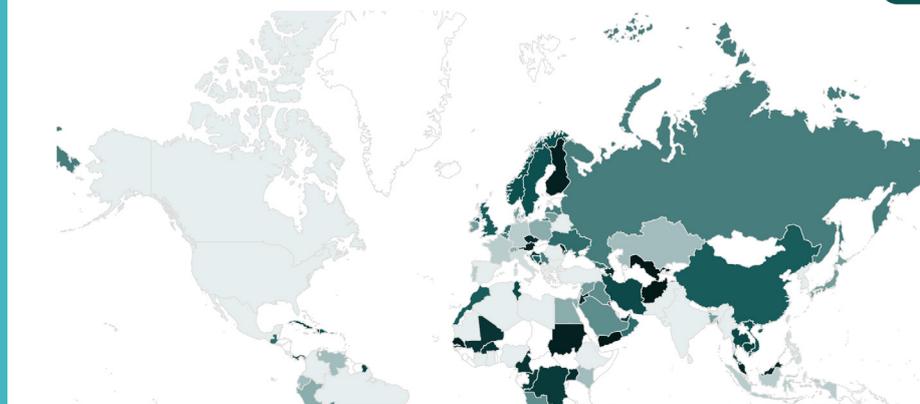
# Data deficits

To help us respond to the infodemic in real time, we developed a conceptual approach to monitoring based on demand and supply. In an unfolding crisis, new, unexpected demand arises suddenly and must be addressed. The challenge is to identify situations where there are high levels of demand for credible information, but low levels of supply — a situation we call a 'data deficit.'

These are the result of a mismanaged information supply chain, not a malicious actor. To develop this conceptual framework and a methodology for monitoring, we wrote [a research report](#) and delivered [a prototype dashboard](#) to explore the challenges of monitoring them in real time.

## Section 1: Where are data deficits?

This section provides indicators which can alert users to data deficits. The map shows an international comparison of six metrics: data deficits (search interest divided by available fact checks); engagement deficits (search interest divided by engagements on available fact checks); search interest (Google search interest); total engagements (the total number of interactions); average engagement (the average number of engagements per debunk); and number of debunks (the number of debunks accessed by that country based on website traffic). You can filter by topic.



## THE INFODEMIC

# Unicef

First Draft is working with Unicef, in partnership with Yale Institute for Global Health, Common Thread and Public Goods Project, on a global initiative to identify, track and respond to vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. This process will actively assist demand generation, inform misinformation management and apprise vaccine hesitancy and new vaccine introduction. Work has begun on a project for the imminent rollout of the nOpv2 (oral polio vaccine) in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Congo (Brazzaville) and will continue into Q1 of 2021.

## CORE DELIVERY

# Spotify x First Draft

First Draft is collaborating with Spotify on a pioneering new toolkit, aimed at helping podcasters avoid the pitfalls of disinformation around the US election.

Podcasters have large audiences and hugely influential voices, and are frequently targeted by those trying to spread disinformation. Like any other information source, podcasters can unwittingly add fuel to the fire of emerging rumors, so it's important they understand how to dodge disinformation, particularly concerning the US election.

We have worked with Spotify to produce a toolkit to help podcasters understand the different types of disinformation, how and why it gets shared, and how to talk about and debunk it. Full of useful resources and instructive guides, this toolkit will be yet another vital asset to help us counter and disrupt disinformation during election season.



## CORE DELIVERY

# Webinars & training

In Q3, we hosted 28 training sessions and webinars, with 6,861 participants in total, across English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. We have hosted seven live election crisis simulation events with TEGNA, DDL and NBC. Each week, we also host webinars for communities around the world, in different time zones and in multiple languages.

## 6,861

Participants

## 28

Training sessions  
and webinars

## CORE DELIVERY

# The psychology of misinformation

As part of a broader strategy to make research on information disorder more accessible to practitioners, we launched a series synthesizing three decades of research on the psychology behind misinformation vulnerability, correction and prevention. The series has had **15,000 readers** so far. We also produced a webinar with leaders in the field, joined by 110 attendees and 105 viewers after the event.

**15,000**

Readers so far

**110**

Attendees

**105**

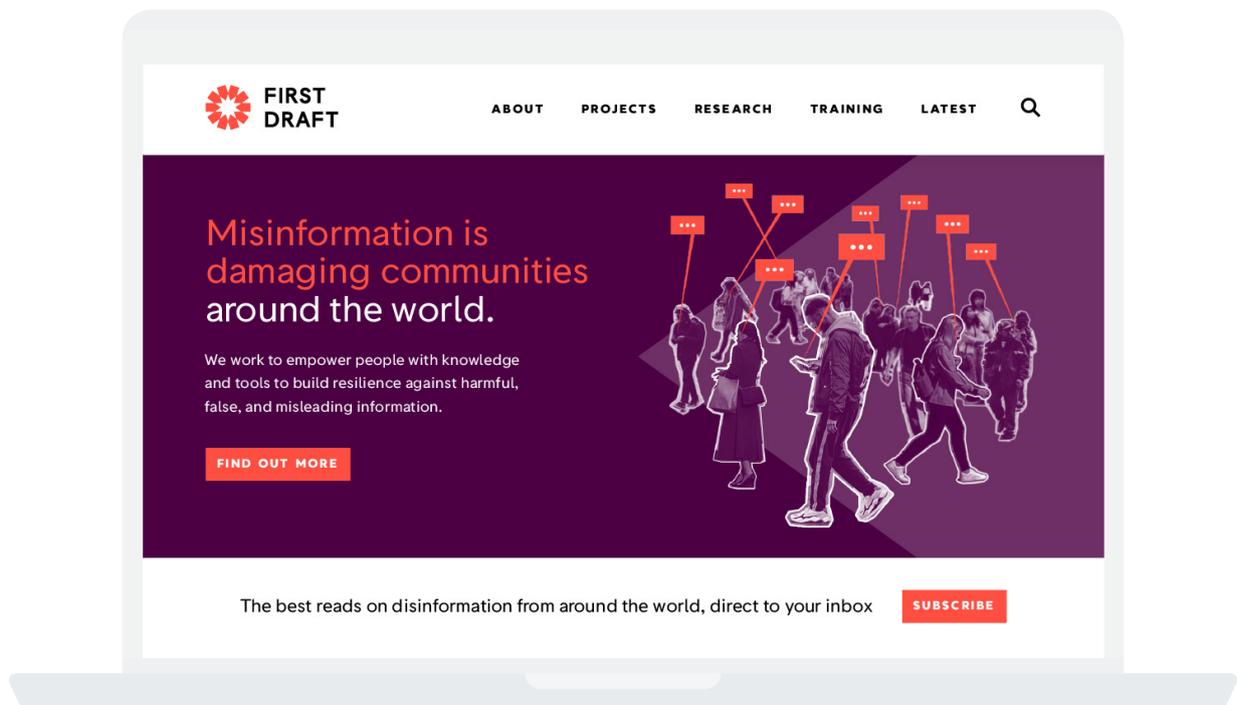
Viewers after the event



## CORE DELIVERY

# Website refresh

We launched a refresh to firstdraftnews.org, updating it with our new visual identity for a coherent experience across social, web and printed outputs, and adding clearer direction to our core resources.



# Coming up in Q4

- CrossCheck
- Vaccines
- Managing mental wellness  
when monitoring misinformation
- Self-driven simulation

COMING UP IN Q4

# CrossCheck

**W**e will be launching the CrossCheck web platform and mobile app, bringing in the 500 reporters currently in CrossCheck Slack, the 418 newsrooms that have nominated themselves to join, and many others with whom we are otherwise engaged.



COMING UP IN Q4

# Vaccines

We are already turning our focus to vaccines as we head into Q4, with a new hub of resources and research findings to be launched in the coming weeks. This hub will include:

- A report on vaccine narratives on Facebook Pages, Facebook Groups, Instagram and Twitter, across English, Spanish and French posts during the past three months
- A synthesis of two decades of research on vaccine misinformation
- An explanation of our methodological approach to social media vaccine 'twilight zone'
- Claire Wardle and Renée Diresta's review of vaccine misinformation for Aspen Institute
- Two analyses of case studies from the Philippines and Pakistan, from January

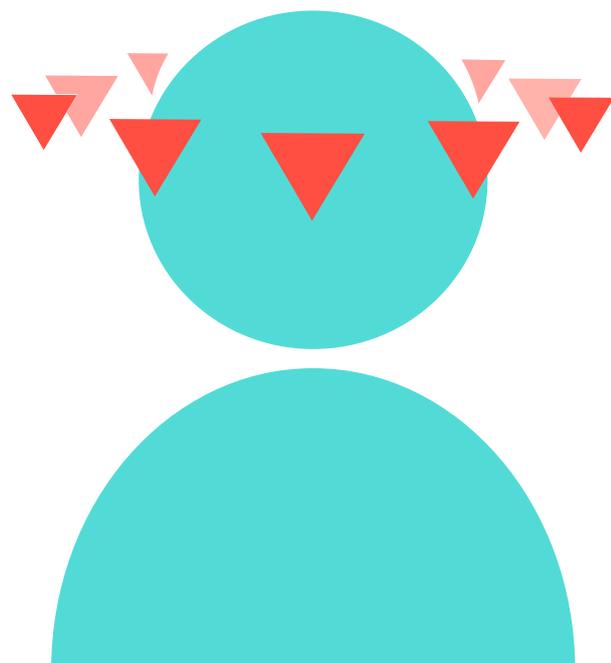
We then plan to build a dashboard to inform fortnightly reports on the development of vaccine narratives on social media, tracking changes across platforms and languages every two weeks and working to predict data deficits.

COMING UP IN Q4

# Managing mental wellness when monitoring misinformation

First Draft has identified an urgent need to research the psychological impact of monitoring, verifying and mitigating misinformation every day. First Draft first provided pioneering guidance for coping with eyewitness imagery, but while imagery is still prominent, repeated exposure to carefully edited videos created to shock and provoke an emotional response can be equally harrowing. Isolated working exacerbates the impact of hateful and sinister language, and the risk of targeted harassment and persistent fueling of division can lead to feelings of despair, anger and increased alienation from family and support networks.

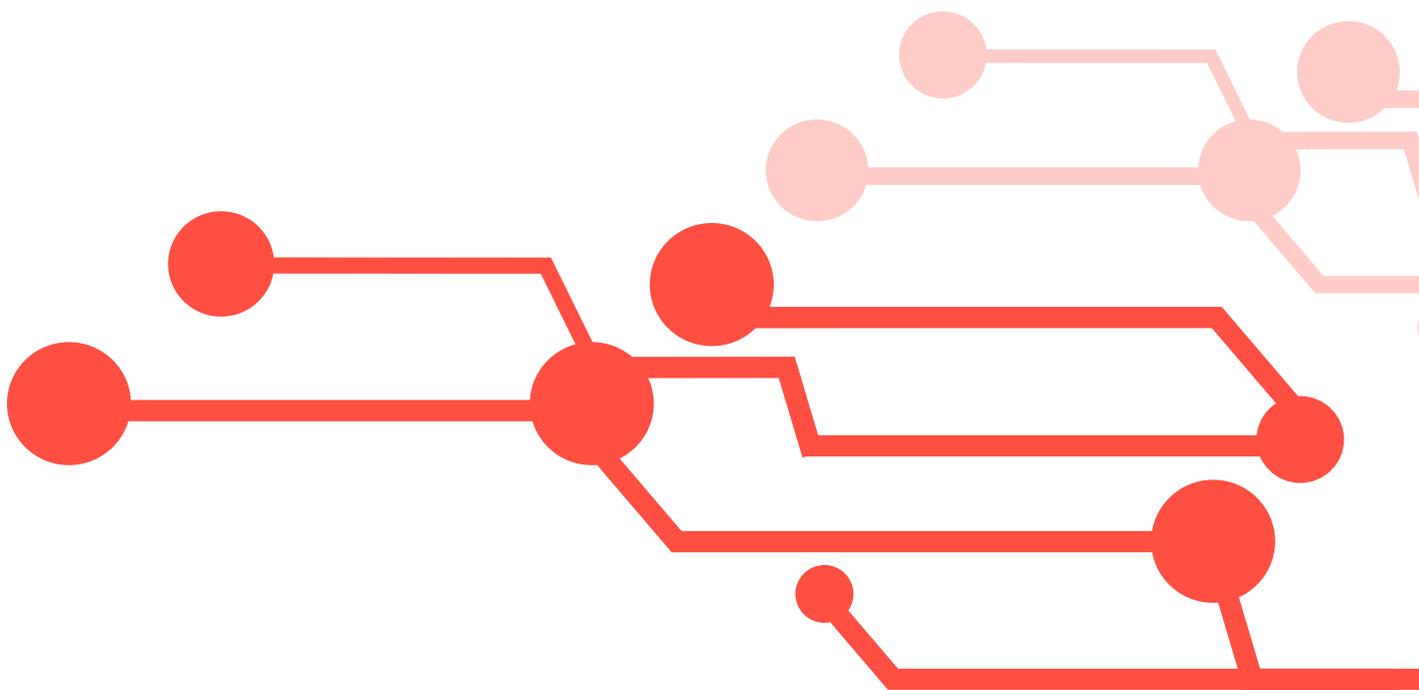
We are in the process of carrying out 25 hour-long interviews with five different types of professionals who monitor conspiracy content, hate speech and misinformation as part of their work: journalists, researchers, platform content moderators, platform curators (e.g., Twitter Moments team) and trust and safety teams.



COMING UP IN Q4

# Self-driven simulation

As more organizations follow First Draft's pioneering model of live simulations, we are looking to innovate once again by creating a mechanism for any individual to self-direct through their own personal misinformation scenario, removing the logistical barriers of multi-participant events to allow even more people to learn how to respond to disinformation through this immersive experience.



# Thank you.