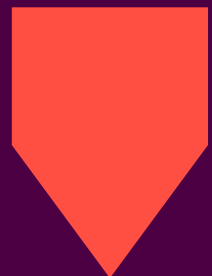


First Draft Impact Report

Q4. 2020



Q1

Q2

Q3

Q4

The story

A historic election

In November, we experienced the culmination of several years' worth of planning, preparation, training, reporting and community building, in our work to protect the integrity of the historic 2020 US presidential election.

For over a year, we have been delivering pioneering live simulations of disinformation scenarios focused on elections, preparing everyone from up-and-coming journalists to seasoned editors, as well as researchers and platform teams, on what — and what not — to do when faced with an unfolding information crisis. Over 1,000 influential people have learned from our 25 simulations.

We have also trained many more people in how to disrupt disinformation this year, with a combination of remote learning, panels, original reporting and direct collaboration with journalists on thousands of stories.

The year of the vaccine

As our election preparation was reaching its apex, we launched a new program for the organization, focused on a threat that we are only just waking up to: the delivery of a vaccine against Covid-19, and the potential for disinformation to thwart it.

Building on our two widely circulated vaccine research papers in January, we published a landmark piece of research, *Under The Surface*, which examined the most prominent vaccine narratives circulating on social media this summer. We also made use of our team's multilingual fluency to compare narratives across multiple languages — English, French and Spanish — in order to understand the differences across cultures. Not only was this an important landscape review in itself, but it also provided a unique methodology for monitoring vaccine misinformation in 2021.

Since then, we have published two further pieces of research around vaccine misinformation, and launched the Vaccine Misinformation Sessions: three expert panel discussions in English, French and Spanish.

Data deficits have been at the heart of this work, as a new vulnerability identified by First Draft. These exist where there is a high demand for information about a topic, but a low supply of quality information. We have worked to build awareness and understanding of these threats, and shown how they can be identified before disinformation takes hold. We will continue to build guidance around how to spot data deficits and respond to them.

Since September, First Draft has also been working with Unicef to monitor misinformation around the rollout of nOpv2 (Oral Polio Vaccine). This is informing decisions on how Unicef responds to and develops information campaigns around the vaccination program. First Draft is also providing Unicef with training around information disorder as well as skills-based masterclasses on the tools the agency needs to undertake its own local monitoring.

In addition to our work with Unicef, we have also provided our expertise to support the World Health Organization's inaugural Infodemic Management Training program.

20/20

Finally, we have taken time to capture insights from the year from our highly active editorial team, which has been on the front lines of monitoring, verifying and reporting on misinformation in 2020.

Vision



In our year-end editorial series “[20/20 Vision](#),” we wrap up ten articles that each share an important lesson learned about the challenges of disrupting misinformation in 2020. We cover everything from the important fight against health misinformation to the role of influencers and the evolution of conspiracy theories.

2020 has also been the year where we have had to truly reflect on the way information can help or harm people, especially in crisis moments. The final quarter has given us an opportunity not just to prepare for what’s next, but to take stock of what we have learned, and must carry forward in the challenges to come.

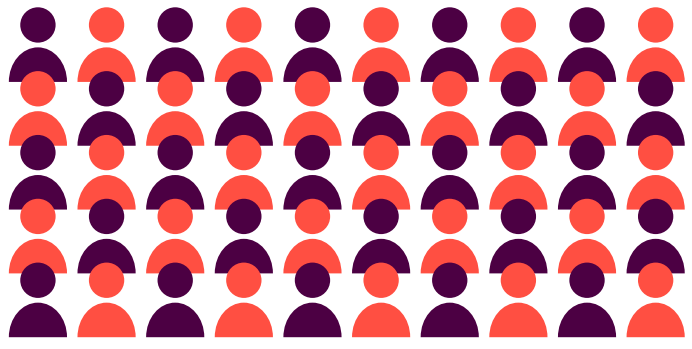


“
701 news stories directly quote First Draft insight
”

700 reporters in our private Twitter community 

225,000 readers of our publications 

50 students
in our student network



3 publications around vaccine misinformation

3 panels on vaccine misinformation

10 lessons learned from 2020 for the disinformation field

22 training events 

The numbers

The projects

- US election
- Vaccines
- Trusted Media Summit
- Comprova

US election

Our preparation for the US election stretches back a long way. In the past three months, our attention turned to providing the most value in the moment, as events unfolded. We focused our efforts on two fronts: informing reporters with insights and alerts in real time, and inoculating the public against likely disinformation tactics.

On Election Day, our support intensified with our global editorial team working with ProPublica's Electionland, and included support from our Student Network, Local News Fellows and interns.

Live insights

Given the propensity for disinformation to emerge suddenly and to require a rapid response, we launched three innovative methods for providing communities with real-time insights.

The first was a dashboard, updated daily, with insights from our monitoring team and live widgets drawing data from various monitoring APIs. This was one of our most popular products for reporters, visited over 10,000 times.

The second was a new private account (@fd_update) that provided insights to over 700 vetted journalists in the place they spend so much of their time: Twitter. Finally, we launched a text message service delivering alerts to reporters, allowing for two-way conversation. These were all experiments in seamlessly channeling insights to reporters.

We also continued our regular support via Slack, providing insight into 701 news stories and with publications such as The New York Times, The Washington Post and BuzzFeed News.

Our Disinformation Defense League (DDL) researchers also began hosting our simulation training, in addition to sharing daily top lines and weekly insights to DDL and news outlets such as the Guardian, FiveThirtyEight, El Tecolote, South Florida Sun Sentinel, NBC News and PolitiFact.

Public inoculation

Inoculation is a technique designed to alert people to the techniques and forms of mis- and disinformation *before* they are exposed, so they can spot them in the real world. We've explored two methods for this. The first was our pioneering SMS course, which prepared members of the public for the election disinformation they were likely to see. The second was a public newsletter with "prebunks," which prepares subscribers for nascent misinformation tactics.

Roundtables

We also convened a meeting every two weeks with the following election-related partners: American Press Institute, ProPublica/Electionland, Trusting News, Hearken, Data & Society, PEN America and Protect Democracy. We met to share resources and ensure there was no overlap of work around the election.

To wrap the year, we held a joint roundtable event titled "Politics and public health: How lessons from the 2020 election can prepare journalists for what's coming." The event brought together our collective audiences of journalists, editors and community leaders to consider the lessons learned when covering the election. The event, featuring breakout rooms hosted by each partner, reviewed takeaways from this election season and considered how to apply those lessons in 2021 when covering the Biden administration, the pandemic and vaccines.

Vaccines

Building on our work in January on the Dengvaxia and Polio vaccine misinformation, we published our *Under The Surface* research into the key frames, narratives and data deficits surrounding vaccines in the summer of 2020. We also shared recommendations for civil society, academics and policymakers in their efforts to combat misinformation. The research was covered globally, including by NPR and the BBC.

- [The Covid-19 and other vaccines: Where we're failing to provide the right information](#)
- [Under the surface: Covid-19 vaccine narratives, misinformation and data deficits on social media](#)
- [Searching for the misinformation 'twilight zone'](#)
- [Vaccine trials are leaving misinformation in their wake](#)

We have since followed up with a rapid response on the role vaccine trials have played in allowing misinformation to flourish, and recommendations on how to identify the kinds of data deficits that we discovered in our research.

Finally, we hosted a series of roundtables on the challenges of reporting on vaccine misinformation in the coming year. These were hosted in English, French and Spanish.

Find all our vaccine projects in our hub, "[Vaccines and misinformation: get the support you need.](#)"

Unicef

First Draft has been working with Unicef, in partnership with the Yale Institute for Global Health and Common Thread, on a global initiative to identify, track and respond to vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. Work initially commenced on a project for the imminent rollout of the nOpv2 (Oral Polio Vaccine) and is continuing into 2021 with a global response to misinformation around Covid-19 vaccines.

To date, First Draft has analyzed over 120,000 social posts across all of the major platforms and conducted “deep dives” around dominant narratives, producing fortnightly monitoring reports of misleading content identified in regions of focus (Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Ghana and Liberia). We have also provided guidance on the level of potential harm caused by the content, conducted training in French and in English to 157 Unicef ground workers and local ministry of health offices, and reviewed and contributed to a “field misinformation guide” to support Unicef communication teams (this is due for release in Q1 2021).

The process developed by the partnership will inform misinformation management and apprise vaccine hesitancy and new vaccine introduction moving forward.

WHO

As part of our renewed focus on health misinformation, we provided expertise to support the World Health Organization’s inaugural Infodemic Management Training program, which brings together 270 participants selected from over 650 applicants from 83 countries.

We provided practical training on tools for monitoring rumors, fact checking and verification, guidance on how to respond effectively, and interventions to slow the spread of misinformation.

270
participants

650
applicants

83
countries

Trusted Media Summit

From October 1-2, First Draft, the International Fact-Checking Network at Poynter, and the Google News Initiative co-hosted the APAC Trusted Media Summit 2020. This virtual event brought together journalists, academics and NGOs involved in fact checking and fighting misinformation across Asia-Pacific, and kicked off a year of ongoing virtual activities for the fact-checking community in the region. Approximately 700 people registered for the event, and there were 460 people consistently online in the main sessions.

~700
people
registered

460
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First Draft was involved in planning and brainstorming the event session topics, and in choosing experts. Claire Wardle delivered a keynote address, and moderated a panel with policy leads from the major platforms.

Anne Kruger delivered a five-minute lightning talk on First Draft's work in APAC and previewed the new CrossCheck platform. Anne Kruger and Ali Abbas Ahmadi co-presented an open-ended breakout session on how to help family and friends avoid spreading misinformation, and Jack Berkefeld delivered a three-minute summary on Australia for the "since we last met" sessions. On November 2, Esther Chan and Anne Kruger delivered training on fact checking and responsible reporting for journalists and fact checkers ahead of the Myanmar election.

Elsewhere, First Draft conducted monitoring and simulation training sessions for the Center for Independent Journalism, based in Romania. Here, First Draft helped prepare journalists ahead of the December 2020 local elections. In the same quarter, the First Draft APAC team hosted "Fighting misinformation pre-election," a coaching session for Myanmar newsrooms ahead of that country's 2020 national election.

Comprova

Q4 wraps up another year of continued collaboration with Comprova, a reporting network of media and civil society organizations set up by First Draft in advance of the Brazilian general election in 2018. In March this year, we provided Comprova with a grant to tackle disinformation related to coronavirus in Brazil, along with specialized technical assistance and two open training sessions for journalists. The network is now in its fourth iteration since 2018, and has published more than 240 reports in 2020. First Draft also provided technical support for the project's WhatsApp and web tiplines, which received more than 100,000 tips in 2020. In the next year we plan to keep providing expert insight and support on how to manage and analyze the information sent to Comprova by the public.

240+

reports published in 2020

100,000+

tips received in 2020

Thank you.