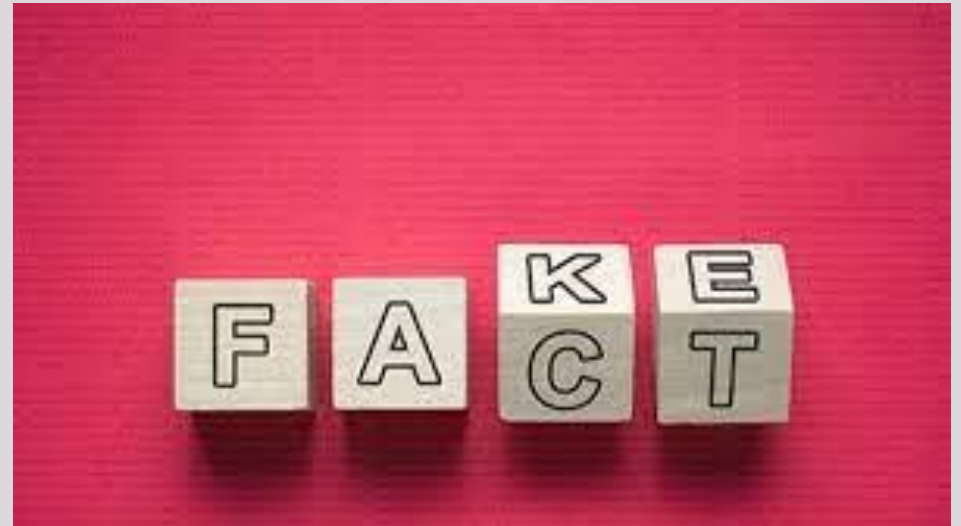


How has the concept of 'Fake News' has altered public discourse on inequality?



Fake News

“False stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views, or as a joke” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

Fake news or misinformation can be seen to work through a variety of mechanisms:

- **Through repetition. Repetition increases perceived belief in a statement, known as the illusory truth effect** (Fazio et al, 2019).
- **Through use of emotive language which then triggers a response to share** (Prollochs et al, 2021).
- **False information is then shared up to six times faster than factual information** (Vosoughi et al, 2018).
- **Algorithms tailor content to users' interests which then reinforces belief creating “echo chambers”** (Matakos et al, 2017).

Why do people believe misinformation?

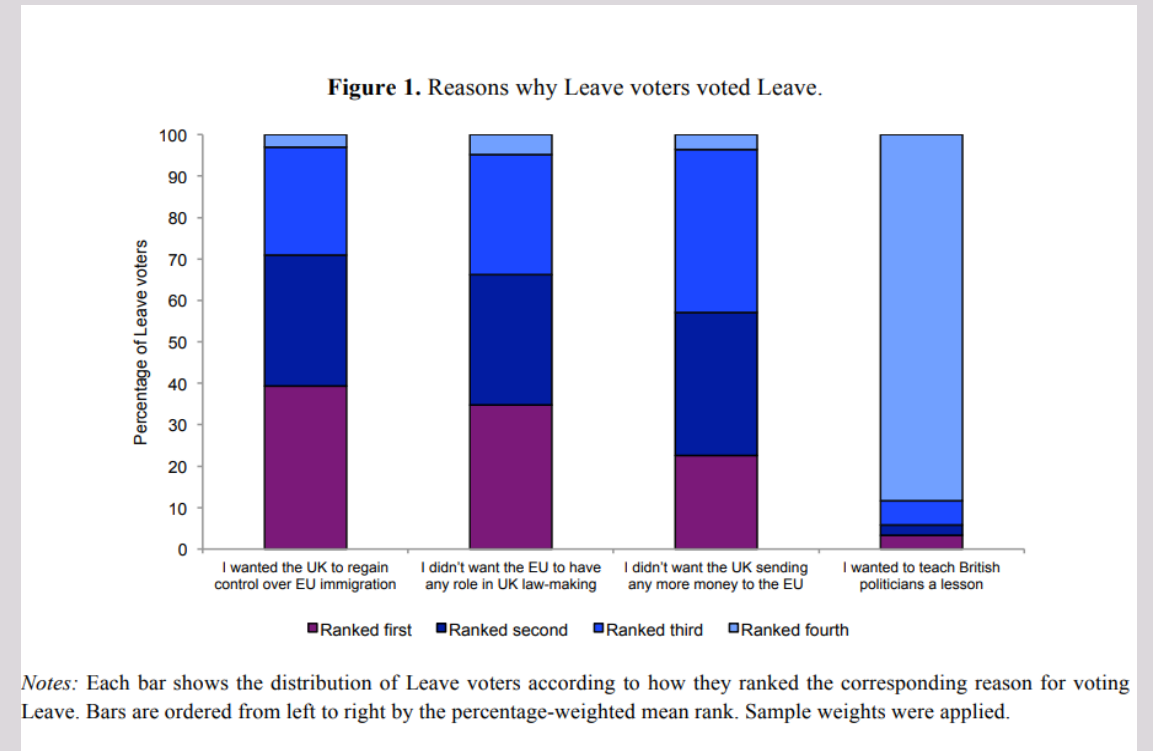
- **Individuals tend to believe information that reinforces their existing beliefs** (Michaels et al, 2021).
- **Political affiliation may play a part. It is suggested that individuals who are right leaning are more heavily influenced by misinformation** (Nam et al, 2013).
- **Individuals avoid sources of information that opposes or challenges their own viewpoint, regardless of where they place on the political spectrum** (Collins et al, 2017).

Impact of misinformation

Fake news can be seen to impact upon all areas of society with implications being felt in the arenas of Health, Environment, Politics and Human Rights.

The focus of this presentation will be the impact of misinformation surrounding the topic of immigration and the impact of fake news during the Brexit campaign and its continuing implications.

(WHO, 2021) (Drummond et al, 2020).



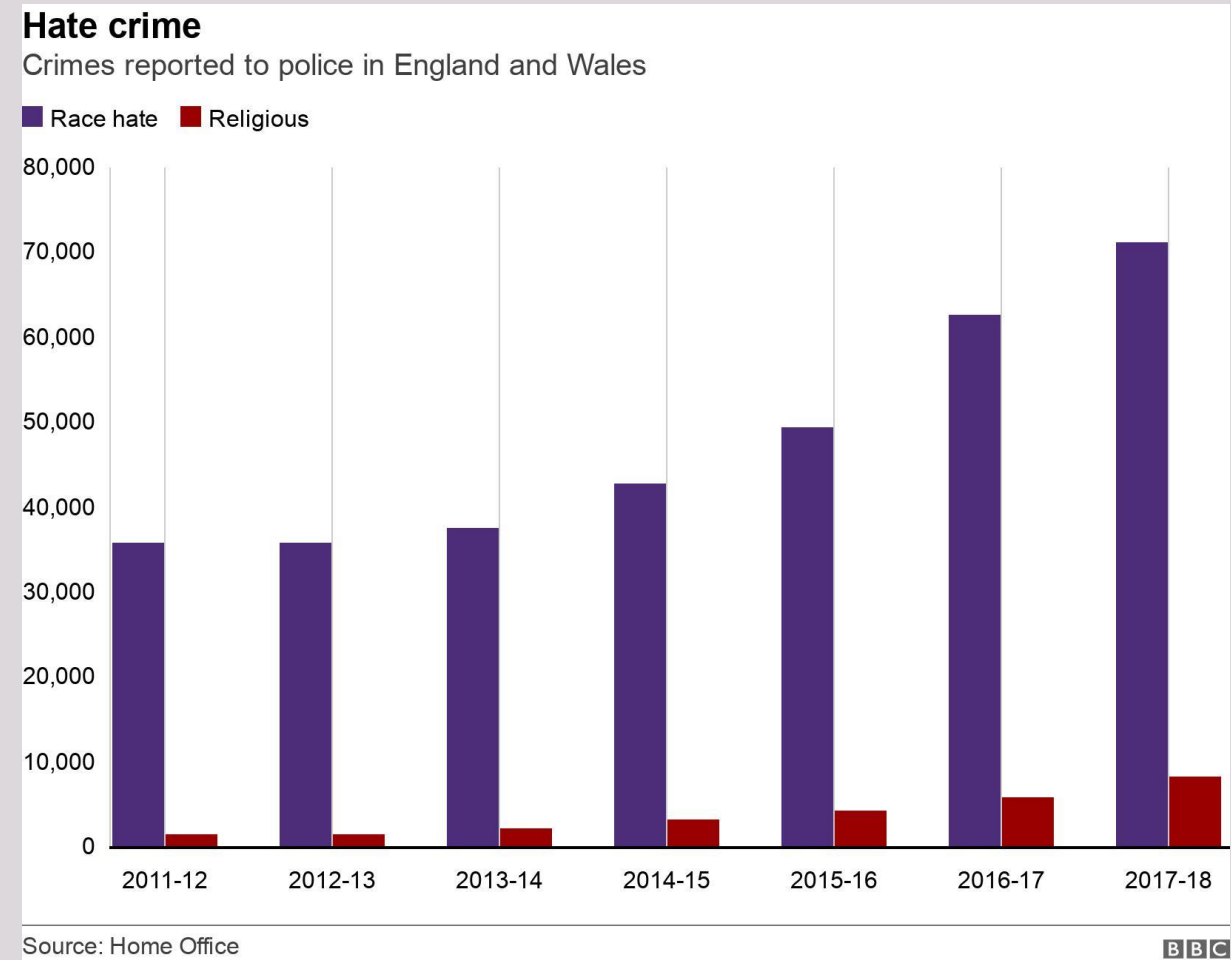
Immigration was cited as the main reason for voting leave in the EU Referendum in 2016 (Carl, 2018).

Nigel Farage led the unofficial campaign for vote leave which was criticised for its anti-immigrant rhetoric (Stewart, Mason. 2016).

Voter Manipulation?

- **Both the Leave and Remain campaigns found to have used user targeted content. The Vote Leave campaign relied on use of emotive issues such as immigration and border control. Vote Remain campaign shared factual data and was found to be more accurate. This led to concerns over voter manipulation** (Sebastio et al, 2021).
- **A study found that false accounts on social media platforms responsible for both using generated content and content affiliated with vote leave officials were deactivated after the referendum. These accounts shared mainly nationalistic and xenophobic content** (Bastos, Mercea, 2019).

- Home office figures show that racial/ethnic/religious hate crimes saw an increase of 29% in 2016/17. This is thought to be due to the results of the Brexit referendum (O'Neill, 2017)
- Racially aggravated hate crime have continued to rise since 2016 (BBC News, 2019).
- A study has shown that areas that had a majority vote leave have seen a greater increase in hate crimes than those with a majority vote remain (Williams et al, 2022).



Facts about immigration into the United Kingdom.

- **Immigration figures actually peaked in 2002 and have been falling since** (HOC Library, 2022).
- **Despite this, immigration remains a heavily reported topic. Often with the deliberate conflation of illegal immigrants, economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.**
- **It is a legal right to claim asylum in a country of your choice under international law** (OHCHR, 2022).
- **Ironically, since leaving the European Union, Britain is longer able to return asylum seekers to the first safe country for processing as they are no longer part of the Dublin Regulation** (European Commission, 2022).

- **On October 30th 2022 an immigration detention centre in Dover was firebombed by an individual who then killed himself. Terror police stated that the attack was fuelled by hate and far right ideology** (BBC, 2022).
- **The following day Home Secretary Suella Braverman used the term “an invasion of illegal immigrants” to falsely describe asylum seekers arriving by small boat crossings. She had been advised by government lawyers that such language could incite hatred and anti immigration sentiment** (Townsend, 2022).
- **Amnesty International have raised concerns that the current government’s treatment of immigrants and their policies is discriminatory towards migrants, adding to their marginalisation in society** (Amnesty International, 2022).

Conclusion.

Fake news is not a new issue, however, new solutions are needed in order to address misinformation in the age of social media.

Misinformation from user generated content, media sources and politicians can be seen to impact on the beliefs of their audience and so greater accountability is needed to lessen this impact on marginalised and vulnerable groups.

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