

DECODING MISINFORMATION

Why we fall for fake news



Misinformation is a global issue that threatens public health, democracy, and social cohesion.

At Ipsos, we conducted a comprehensive research study, in collaboration with LaPsyDÉ, Université Paris Cité, to understand the psychological and societal factors that make people prone to believing fake news.

To assess how well participants could distinguish between real and fabricated information, we selected real and fake news headlines spanning diverse themes such as health, culture, and social issues.

Findings reveal that individuals possess a baseline capacity to identify truth but are susceptible to various factors, including:



Emotional responses: The emotions induced by news headlines can influence judgement - positive emotions tend to make individuals more likely to perceive the news as true, while negative emotions can promote a more critical evaluation.



Analytical thinking skills: Individuals with strong analytical thinking skills demonstrate greater accuracy in identifying misinformation.



Cultural context: Significant cross-country differences were observed in terms of both the ability to discriminate between real and fake news and the tendency to believe news by default.



Trust in media: Individuals who report greater trust in traditional media outlets, such as newspapers and television, show higher accuracy in discerning misinformation, compared to those who place more trust in online media sources.

Tackling misinformation requires a continuous and collaborative effort across sectors, including:

- Encouraging emotional awareness.
- Supporting initiatives that improve analytical thinking.
- Tailoring strategies to specific cultural contexts rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach.



FIND OUT MORE

To explore the research findings in detail, download **Decoding Misinformation: Why we fall for fake news**

