

# Combating Misinformation: Preserving Our Public Health and Our Civic Life

East-West Center

Fighting Disinformation on the Frontlines

Alan C. Miller, Founder and CEO, News Literacy Project

June 15, 2020



**“One of the most urgent challenges of our times”**

“The pandemic ... brings into focus one of the most urgent challenges of our times. We (most of us) will survive the virus, but it is far from clear that democracies can survive the longer-term destabilization of objective truth.

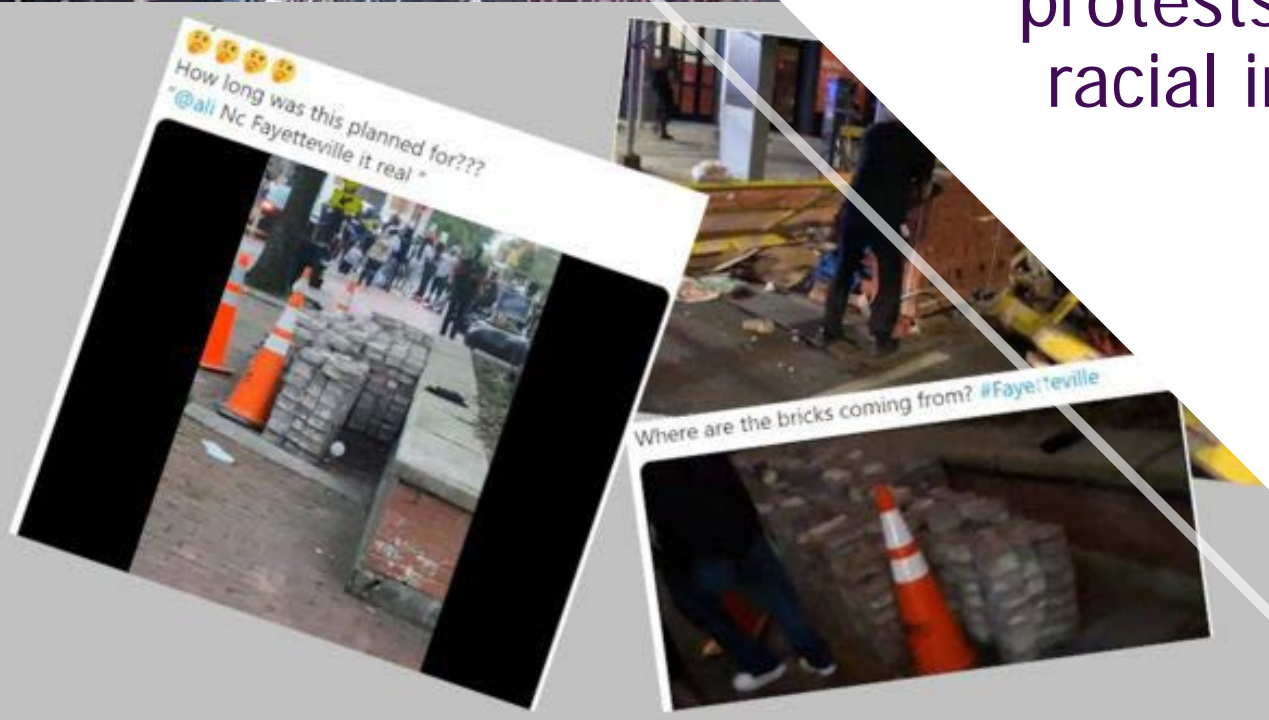
If we want a world where major events can be discussed and debated on the basis of agreed and reliable facts, then we have no choice but to grapple with the epidemiology of misinformation.”

— Phillip Ball, Prospect, May 19, 2020

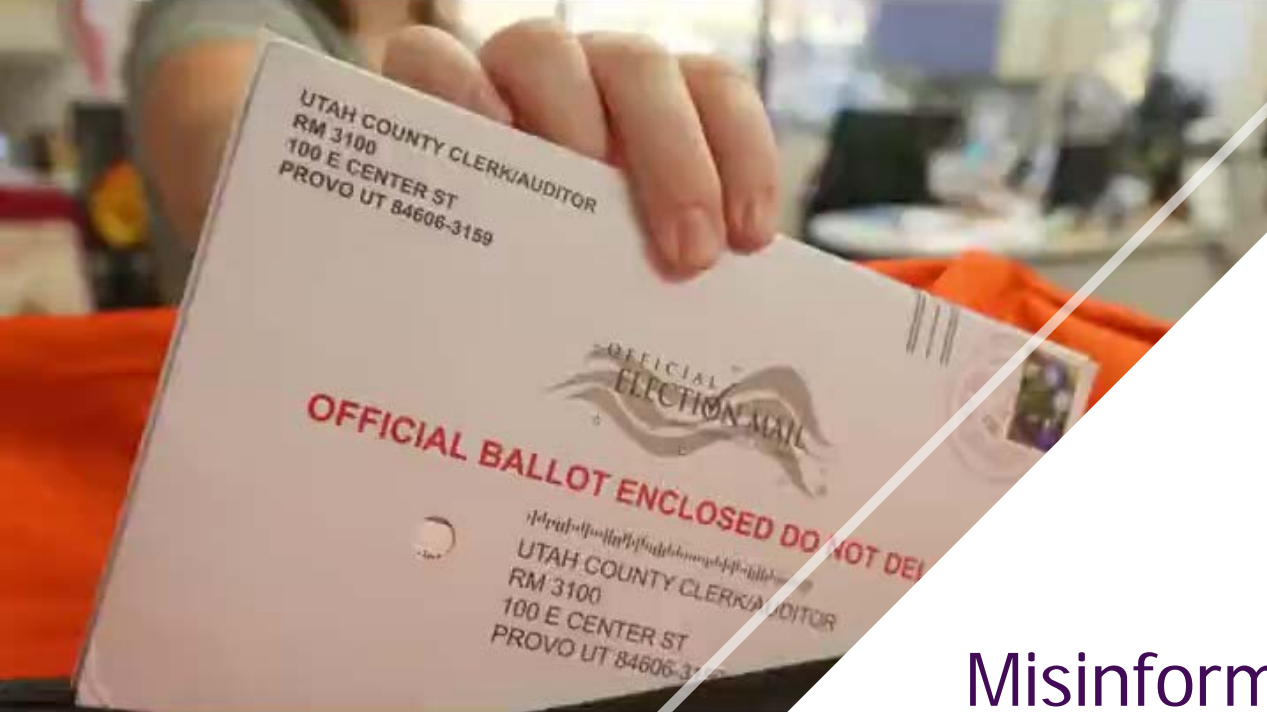




## Misinformation and protests against racial injustice





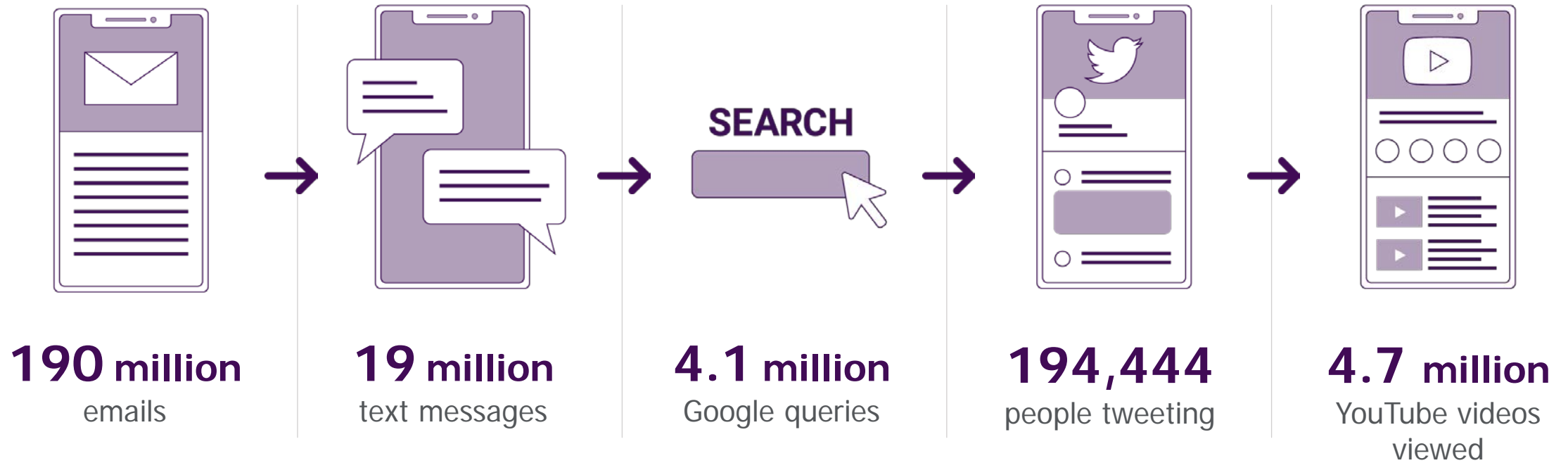


## Misinformation and the 2020 Election



# The current landscape

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# Motivations for misinformation

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**To make  
money**

**To create  
mischief**

**To gain a  
partisan  
political  
advantage**

**To divide  
Americans  
and  
undermine  
trust in  
democracy**

# Why else do people spread misinformation?

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## Emotional reaction

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- Anger
- Curiosity
- Hope
- Fear

## Propagation goal

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- Self-interest
- Group interest
- Altruism
- Malice

# Misinformation is much more than “fake news”

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## **“Fake news”:**

A type of misinformation that has become politicized. Often applied to anything a person disagrees with, regardless of credibility.

## **Misinformation comes in many forms:**

Satire, false context, imposter content, manipulated content, fabricated content.

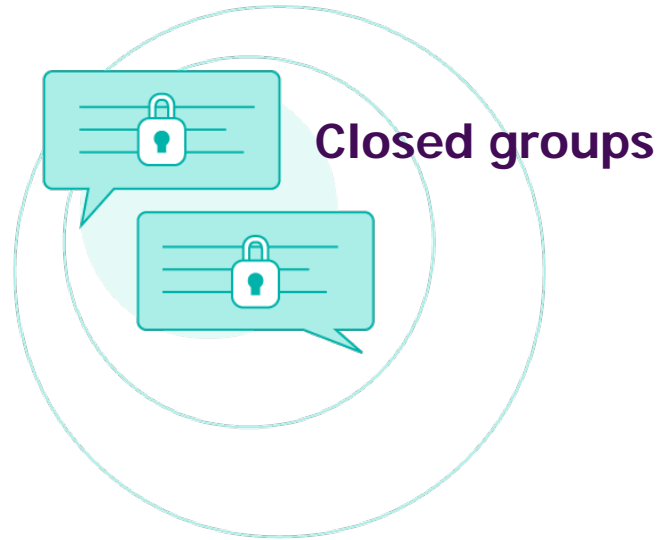
## **Regardless of form,**

all misinformation can confuse and overwhelm us as we search for credible information.



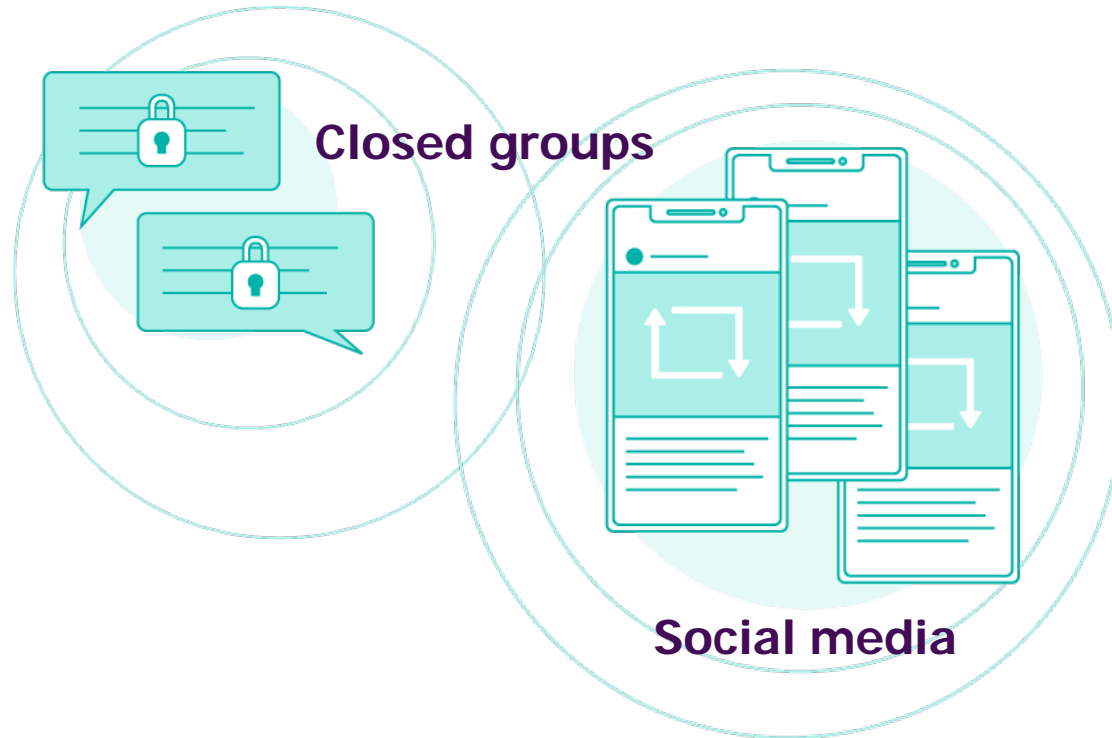
# How misinformation spreads

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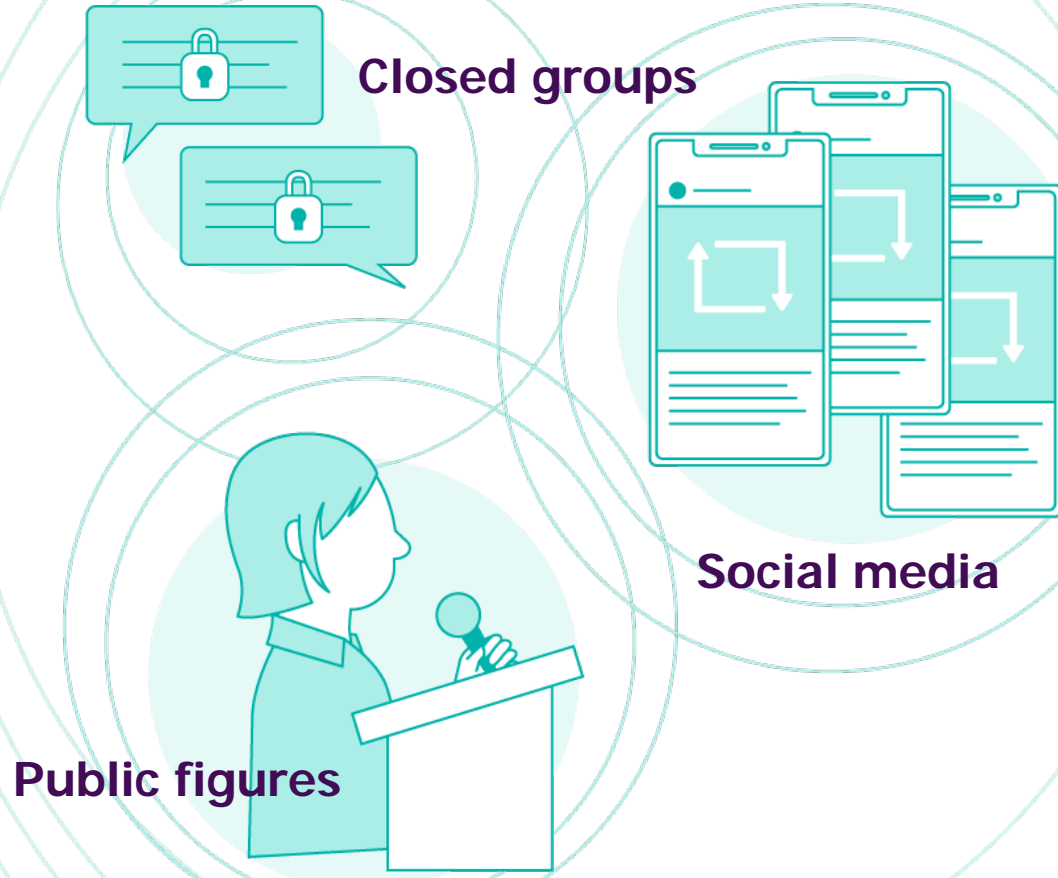
# How misinformation spreads

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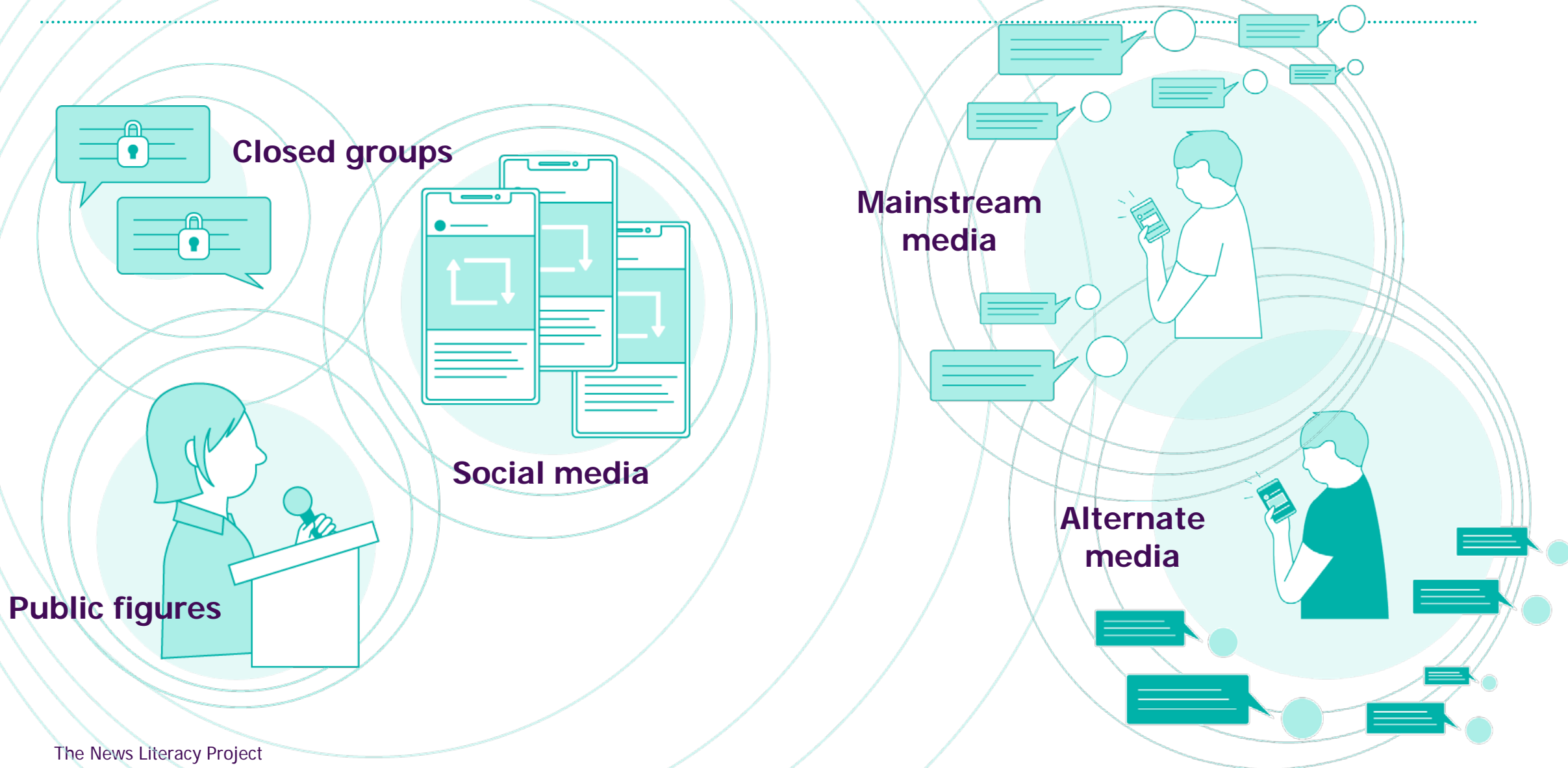


# How misinformation spreads

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# How misinformation spreads





# Case Study: Buffalo Protest



# Case Study: Buffalo Protest



[www.theconservativetreehouse.com](http://www.theconservativetreehouse.com) blog

# Case Study: Buffalo Protest



**Donald J. Trump** ✓  
@realDonaldTrump



Buffalo protester shoved by Police could be an ANTIFA provocateur. 75 year old Martin Gugino was pushed away after appearing to scan police communications in order to black out the equipment. @OANN I watched, he fell harder than was pushed. Was aiming scanner. Could be a set up?

♥ 193K 8:34 AM - Jun 9, 2020



💬 244K people are talking about this



**POLITICO**

WHITE HOUSE

## Trump's conspiracy theory on 75-year-old protester draws sharp backlash

The president's tweet comes after a video of the encounter between Martin Gugino and two Buffalo police officers went viral online.

**The New York Times**

## One America News, the Network That Spreads Conspiracies to the West Wing

President Trump amplified OANN's false claim about Martin Gugino, 75, who was hospitalized after being shoved to the ground by the police.

# The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories: A Growing Threat

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**Provide simple answer  
to a complex challenge**

**Legitimize fears  
and feelings**

**Create a sense of  
belonging (often  
"us" vs. "them")**

**Identify a target  
to direct anger  
towards**



# Bad Actors

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- **Trolls** deliberately post offensive, inflammatory, highly partisan content to provoke people.
- **Sockpuppets** are false online identities, often used to influence opinion about a person or organization with the intention of making it seem like the account is not affiliated in any way with that person or organization.
- **Bots** are “automated user accounts that interact with Twitter using an application programming interface (API).”

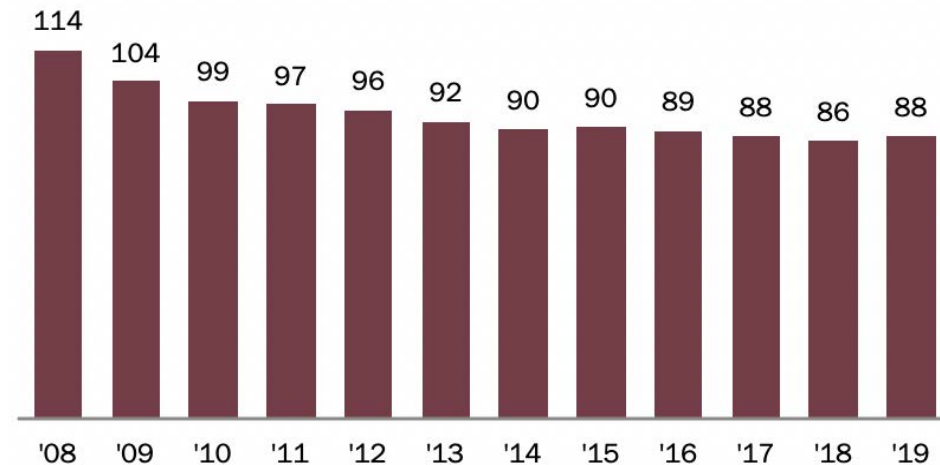
# Challenge for Journalists: Decline in Ranks

- 1,800 newspapers closed since 2004
- 37% of counties with COVID-19 cases have lost newspapers
- 27,000 journalism jobs (23%) lost since 2008



**Newsroom employment in the United States declined 23% between 2008 and 2019** Source: PEW Research, April 2020

*Number of U.S. newsroom employees in news industries, in thousands*



# Challenge for Journalists: Press Freedoms Under Fire

## Linda Tirado



Linda Tirado  
@KillerMartinis

Hey folks, took a tracer found to the face (I think, given my backpack) and am headed into surgery to see if we can save my left eye

Am wisely not gonna be on Twitter while I'm on morphine

Stay safe folks



2:32 AM · May 30, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

## Maria Ressa



### Maria Ressa found guilty in blow to Philippines' press freedom

*Ressa, who runs Rappler, sentenced to at least six months in jail for 'cyber libel', will appeal controversial ruling.*

by Ted Regencia



9 hours ago

# In the Eye of the Beholder: Filter Bubbles, Confirmation Bias and Algorithms

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“The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.”

— Robertson Davies

**Filter bubbles**

**Confirmation bias**

**Algorithms**

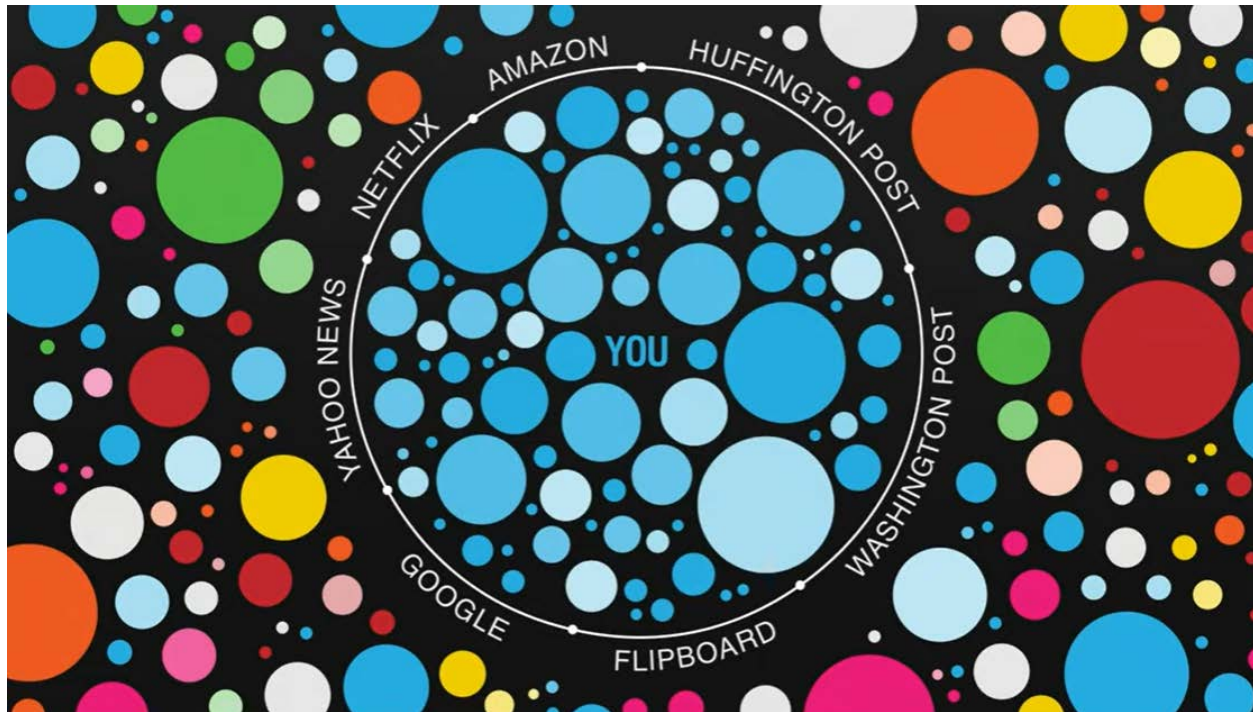


Photo source: Eli Pariser, 2012



# Seeing News Through Prisms of Red and Blue

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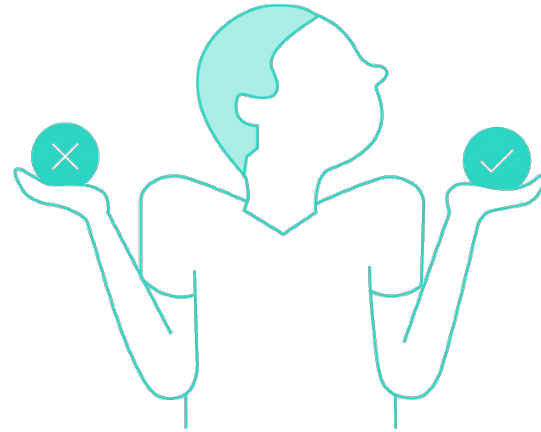
# The Misinformation Threat

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**59%**

**of Americans**

say it is hard to identify false information — intentionally misleading and inaccurate stories portrayed as truth — on social media.



**63%**

**of people worldwide**

agree that the average person can't tell good journalism from rumors or falsehoods.



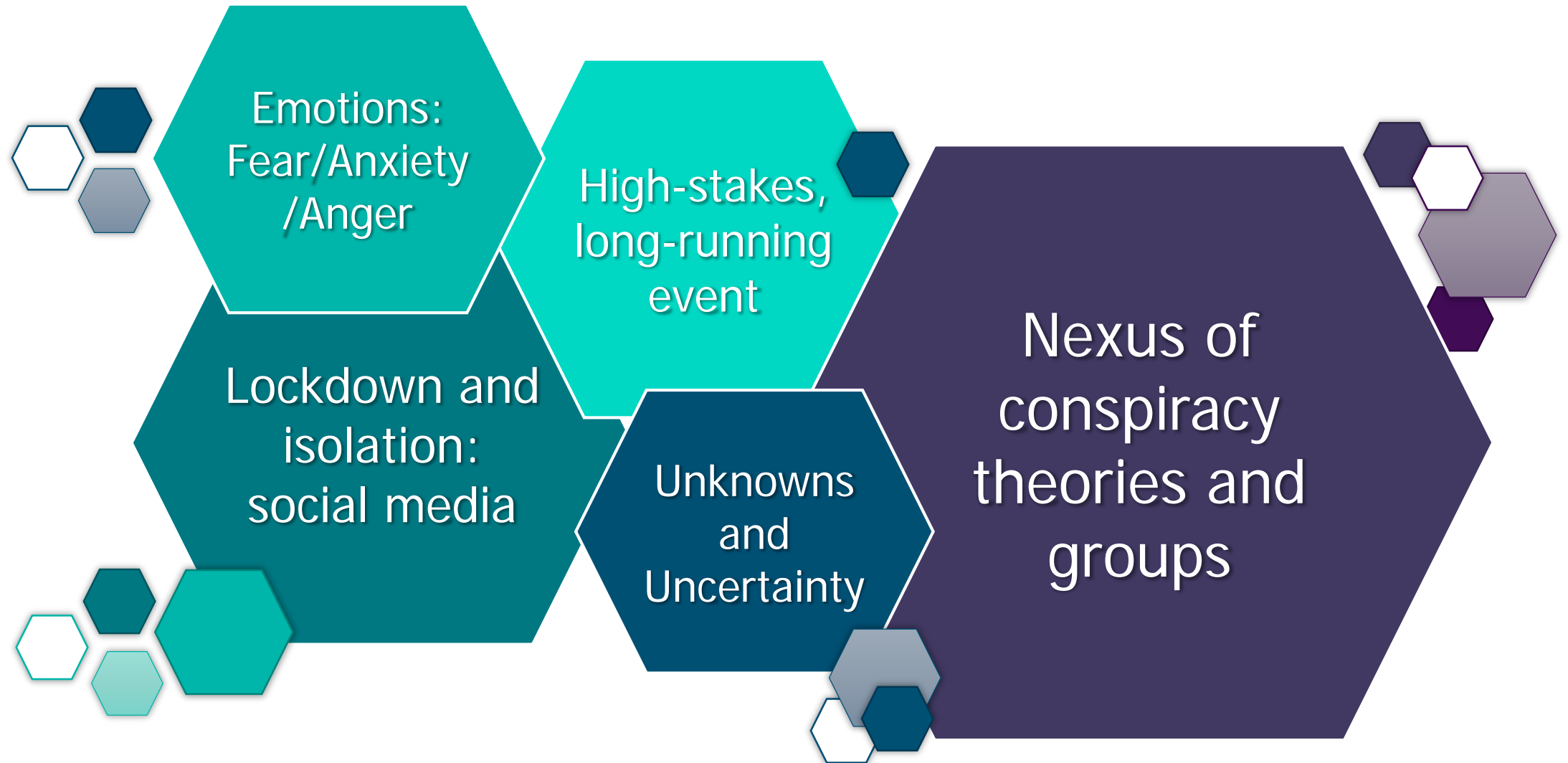


# Breaking News: Consumer Beware!



# The Pandemic: A Perfect Storm

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# The “Infodemic:” From the Source to the Scale



# Misinformation About Origins

Nation

## PROOF: The "Novel Coronavirus" Infecting the World is a MILITARY BIO-WEAPON Developed by China's Army

NATION | NEWS DESK | 01 FEBRUARY 2020 | HITS: 106503



41 Comments

The "novel Coronavirus" outbreak affecting China and many other countries right



Doc Bear  
@DocBear5

Bill Gates has made \$\$\$ creating computer Viruses and Anti-Virus Software! Now Makes Virus's for Humans then sells Meds! Guess Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation & Others Predicted Up To 65 Million Deaths Via Coronavirus – In Simulation Ran 3 Months Ago!



Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation & Others Predicted Up To ...  
Foundation also funded group who owns virus patent and is funding research for a vaccine to stop it from spreading  
[infowars.com](http://infowars.com)

11:48 AM · Jan 27, 2020 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

133 Retweets 72 Likes

# Misinformation About Prevention & Treatment



Film Your Hospital #filmyourhospitals  
@smartpower4all

Nicole Anderson @fallcabal · Apr 5  
Tri-Cities in Vista, California, ghost town #filmyourhospital

#FilmYo  
where th  
cases ar



Scout @scherer\_conrad · Apr 5  
Apparently they're all waiting for "the rush" of sick people. Stay tuned!  
#FilmYourHospital



2

20

28



113

From Jim

6:04 PM · Apr 5

586 Retweets

2

37

57



86 Retweets 109 Likes

hospitals another close  
PARK, NY, MT SINAI  
s, no ambulances, no  
s, no MORGUE TRUCKS  
ate media reported





# Pandemic

- Thrives on unsuspecting people
- Moves across borders
- Overwhelming medical infrastructure
- 20 seconds goes a long way
- Stop the spread (social distancing)
- Flatten the curve (your choices affect others)
- No vaccine yet available



# "Infodemic"

- Thrives on unsuspecting people
- Moves across platforms/mediums
- Overwhelming information infrastructure
- 20 seconds goes a long way
- Stop the spread (detect, debunk and correct)
- Flatten the curve (your choices affect others)
- Vaccine available!





# Saving Democracy

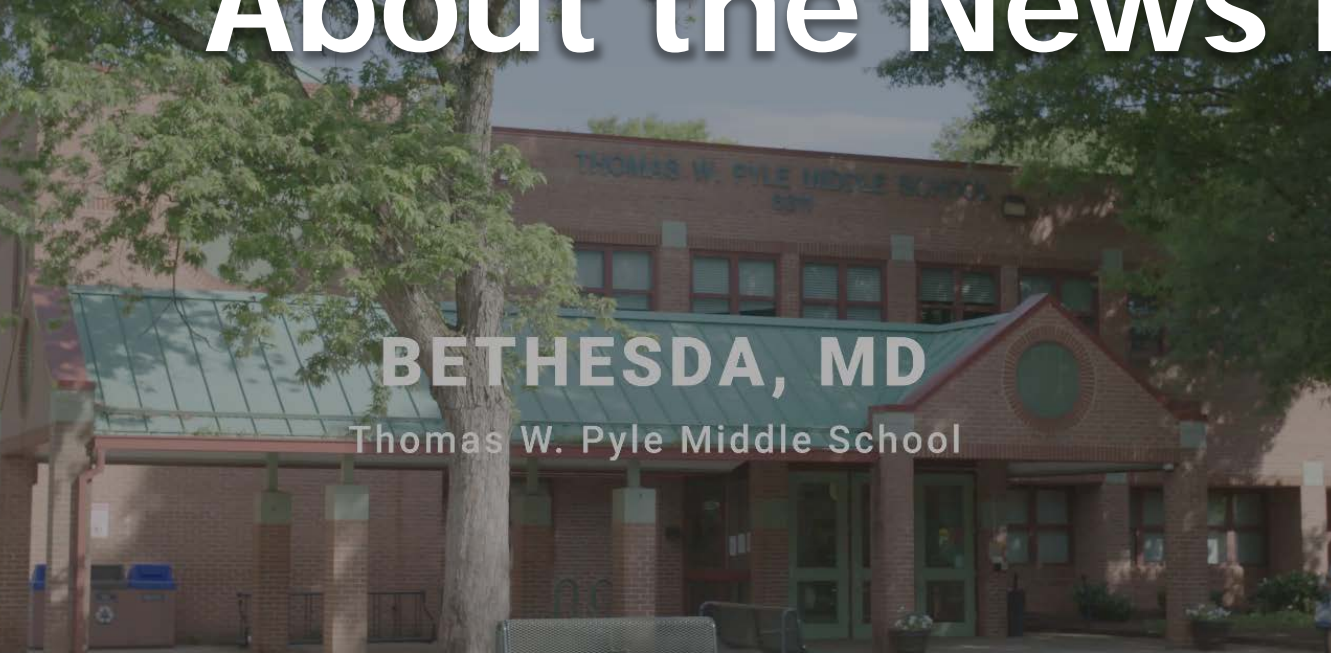




**JULIA**  
Alan's daughter



# About the News Literacy Project



**BETHESDA, MD**  
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School



# The News Literacy Project: Giving Facts a Fighting Chance

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## Our Mission

The News Literacy Project, a nonpartisan national education nonprofit, **empowers educators** to teach students the skills they need to be **smart, active consumers** of news and other information and **engaged, informed participants in civic life**. It also provides people of all ages with tools and resources that enable them to identify credible information and **know what to trust, share and act on**.

## Our Vision

News literacy is **embedded in the American education experience**. Both students and the public know how to **identify credible news** and other information, enabling them to **take an active role in the civic life of their communities and the country**.



# Our Resources and Programs

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checkology®

- ✓ E-learning platform used in classrooms



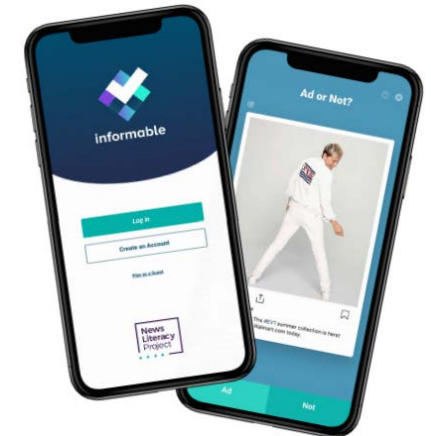
- ✓ NewsLitCamp®



- ✓ Real-time teachable moments



- ✓ Website posts and #NewsLitTips



- ✓ Informable mobile app

# Checkology's 13 Lessons



## **InfoZones**

**Host:** Tracie Potts NBC News Channel



## **Democracy's Watchdog**

**Host:** Wesley Lowery 60 in 6



## **Misinformation**

**Host:** Claire Wardle First Draft



## **Practicing Quality Journalism**

**Host:** Enrique Acevedo Univision



## **Understanding Bias**

**Host:** Indira Lakshmanan National Geographic



## **What is News?**

**Host:** Paul Saltzman the Chicago Sun-Times



## **Be the Editor**

Self-guided interactive lesson



## **The First Amendment**

**Host:** Sam Chaltain First Amendment expert



## **Citizen Watchdogs**

**Host:** Tamerra Griffin BuzzFeed News



## **Press Freedoms Around the World**

**Host:** Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson NPR



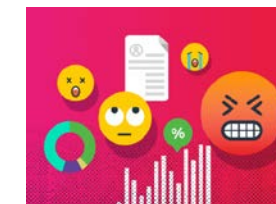
## **Introduction to Algorithms**

**Host:** Nicco Mele Harvard Kennedy School



## **Branded Content**

**Host:** Emily Withrow the Quartz Bot Studio



## **Arguments & Evidence**

**Host:** Kimberley Strassel The Wall Street Journal

# Reach of NLP Resources



**17,000+**  
subscribers

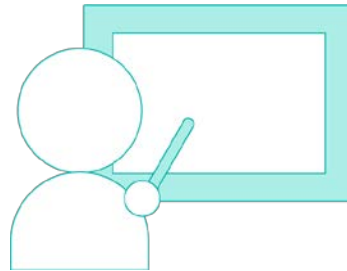


informable

**14,500+**  
app downloads

checkology®  
Since May 2016

**More than 161,000**  
student users in  
116 countries  
and all 50 states



**24,000+**  
educators registered

NewsLitCamp®

**21 hosted in  
10 states**

with

**177**  
journalists

and

**1,271**  
educators

# Misinformation: A Global Pandemic

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The growing contagion of online misinformation should serve as a national wake-up call.

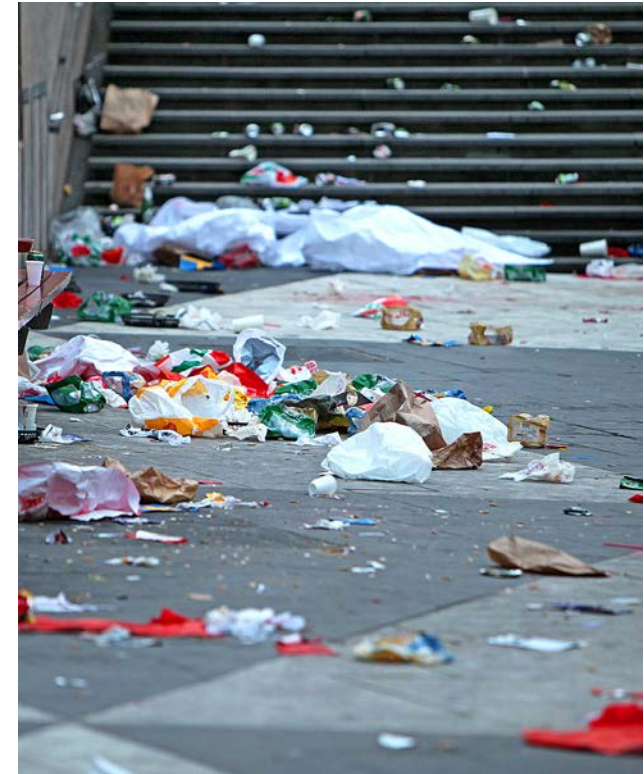
We need a new ethos of personal responsibility about the news and other information that we trust — and share.





# Combating Misinformation: Seeking a new ethos of personal responsibility

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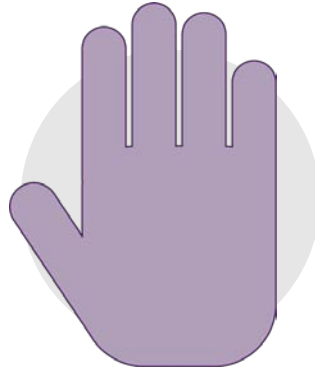


# Practice news literacy skills

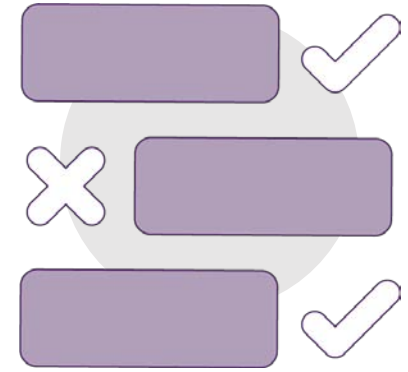
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**Check your sources  
before you share**



**Be mindful of what  
you share**



**Push back against  
misinformation**

**Stand up for facts!**

# Keep up with news literacy topics

## Follow us on social media and share



/TheNewsLiteracyProject



@NewsLitProject



@NewsLitProject



@NewsLitProject



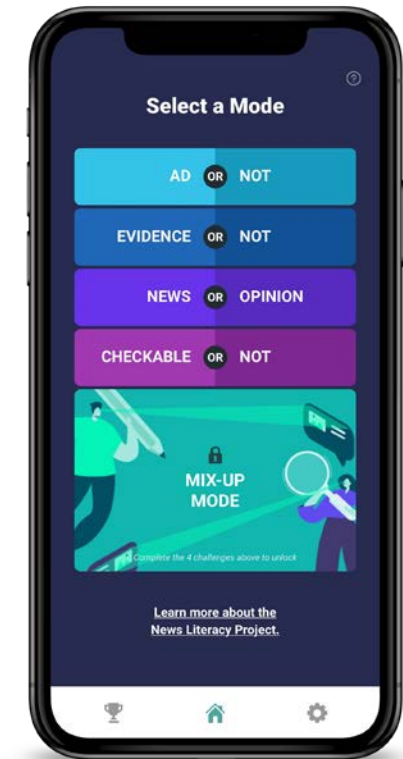
@NewsLitProject



LinkedIn.com/company/  
the-news-literacy-project



informable



# Individual Sources for debunking misinformation

Note: All logos are hyperlinked.

**FIRST DRAFT**

Claire Wardle

**DATA &  
SOCIETY**

Joan Donovan

**BuzzFeed News**

Craig Silverman  
& Jane Lytvnenko



**NBC NEWS**

Brandy Zadrozny  
& Ben Collins

**The New York Times**

Charlie Warzel, Kevin Roose  
and Davey Alba



Janne Ahlberg  
[@Hoaxeye](#) on Twitter

**Stanford** | Internet Observatory  
Cyber Policy Center

Renee DiResta

**W**

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Kate Starbird

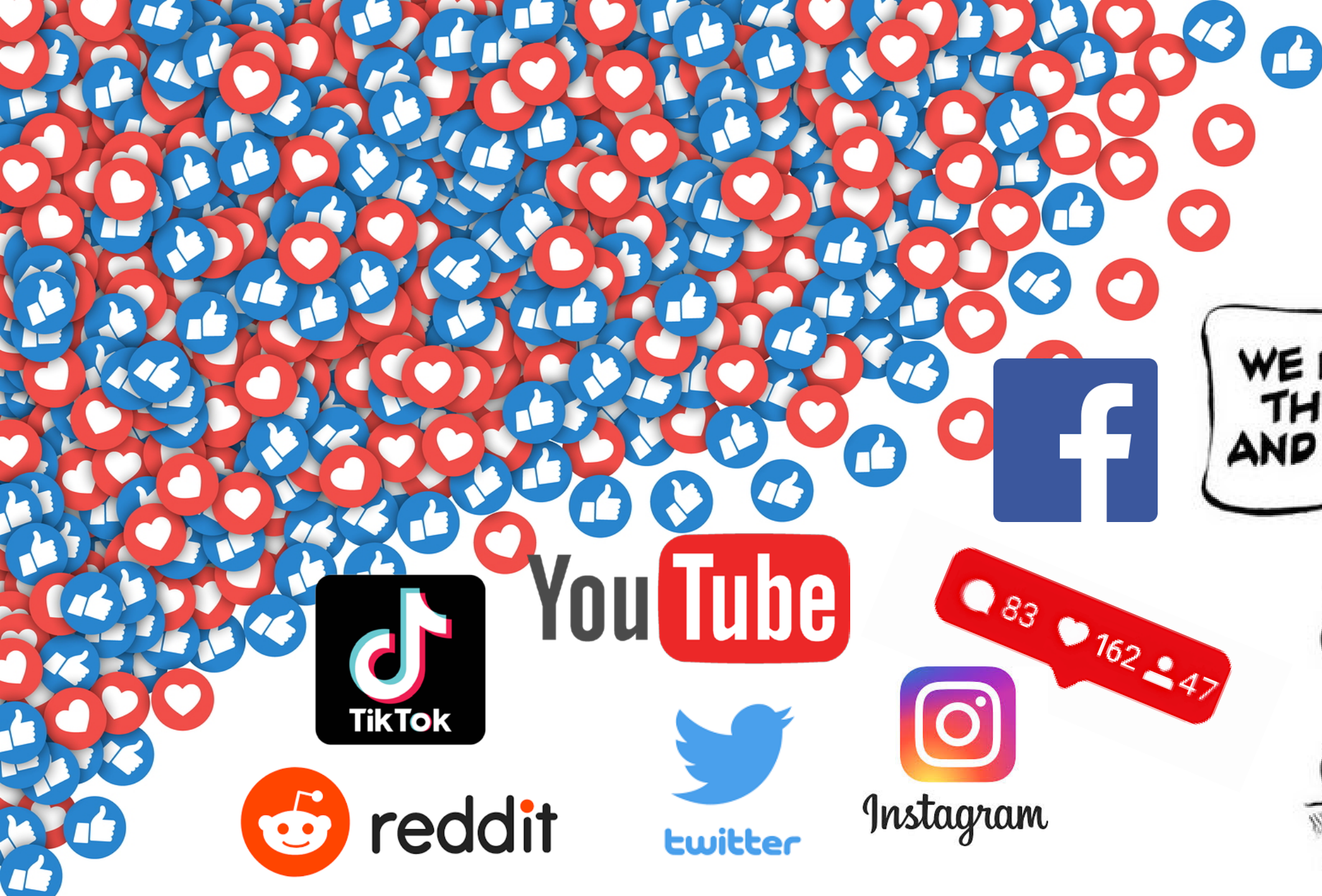


# A sample of reputable fact-checking organizations

Note: All logos are hyperlinked.

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WE HAVE MET  
THE ENEMY  
AND HE IS US.

You Tube





## Short history of IFCN's Code of Principles

- Launched in September 15, 2016. Signed up by 35 organizations from 27 countries
- Facebook announced it will rely on IFCN's Code of Principles for Third Party Fact -Checking Program in December 2016
- Introduced a new system of independent external assessors reviewing adherence to the code in January 2017
- Launched the application portal in 2018 to streamline the process
- Reached to 60+ organizations from 40 countries in January 2019
- Reached to 89 organizations from 48 countries in April 2020



## International distribution of fact -checking organizations

**210**

fact -checking  
projects

**68**

countries

*Duke Reporters'  
Lab, October 2019*



92

IFCN's  
verified  
signatories

48

countries



## The Commitments of the Code of Principles

- *Eligibility to be a signatory*
- A commitment to Non-partisanship and Fairness
- A commitment to Standards and Transparency of Sources
- A commitment to Transparency of Funding & Organization
- A commitment to Standards and Transparency of Methodology
- A commitment to an Open & Honest Corrections Policy

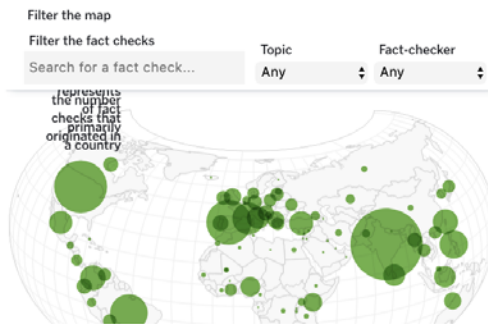


## IFCN and the pandemic

- Launched # [CoronavirusFacts](#) Alliance in January 2020
- Introduced database of 6,000+ Covid - 19 falsehoods and the first ever global fact -checking chatbot on WhatsApp
- Generated \$3,2m since the WHO called the misinformation problem as 'infodemic'

## Fighting the Infodemic: The #CoronaVirusFacts Alliance

Led by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) at the Poynter Institute, the #CoronaVirusFacts / #DatosCoronaVirus Alliance unites more than 100 fact-checkers around the world in publishing, sharing and translating facts surrounding the new coronavirus. The Alliance was launched in January when the spread of the virus was restricted to China but already causing rampant misinformation globally. The World Health Organization now classifies this issue as an **infodemic** — and the Alliance is on the front lines in the fight against it.



This map illustrates the volume of fact-checks in the global database today. It reflects the number of fact-checks we have published from our contributors across the world. It is not an indication of the volume of misinformation seen or shared in each country. Please use the filters to refine your view.



## Fact -Checking at Internet Scale

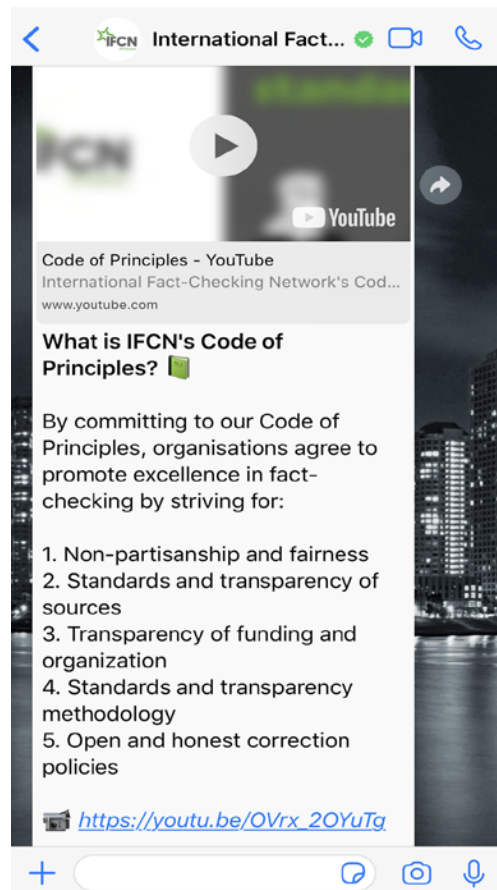
- Surfacing authoritative fact checks on Google Search and News
  - Fact checks appear more than 11 million times a day in search and news (Brazil, India, France, UK, US)
  - 4 billion impressions a year
- ClaimReview & [Media Review](#)
  - Building a depository of fact checks
  - Google Fact Check Explorer
  - Automation & Surfacing authoritative sources
- FactTrack
  - Depository of trusted & reliable sources
- Third -Party Fact -Checking Program at Facebook
  - 7,500 fact checks labeling 50 million pieces of content related to COVID

-19 (April)

## Automated fact -checking on your smart phones

- Chatbot on WhatsApp
  - Depository of 6,000+ fact checks
  - Directory for fact -checkers
  - Currently in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Hindi are coming soon!

<http://poy.nu/ifcnbot>



## Resources for the application & assessment process

- The commitments of the code of principles
  - [poy.nu/code](https://poy.nu/code)
- Guidelines for applicants
  - [poy.nu/applicants](https://poy.nu/applicants)
- Guidelines for assessors
  - [poy.nu/assessors](https://poy.nu/assessors)
- Checklist for applicants & assessors
  - [poy.nu/checklistcop](https://poy.nu/checklistcop)
- Application for Code of Principles
  - [poy.nu/apply](https://poy.nu/apply)
- Complaints policy and form for violations
  - [poy.nu/complaints](https://poy.nu/complaints)





# Infodemic at the time of Pandemic

Harry Sufehmi, MSc  
MAFINDO



# About MAFINDO



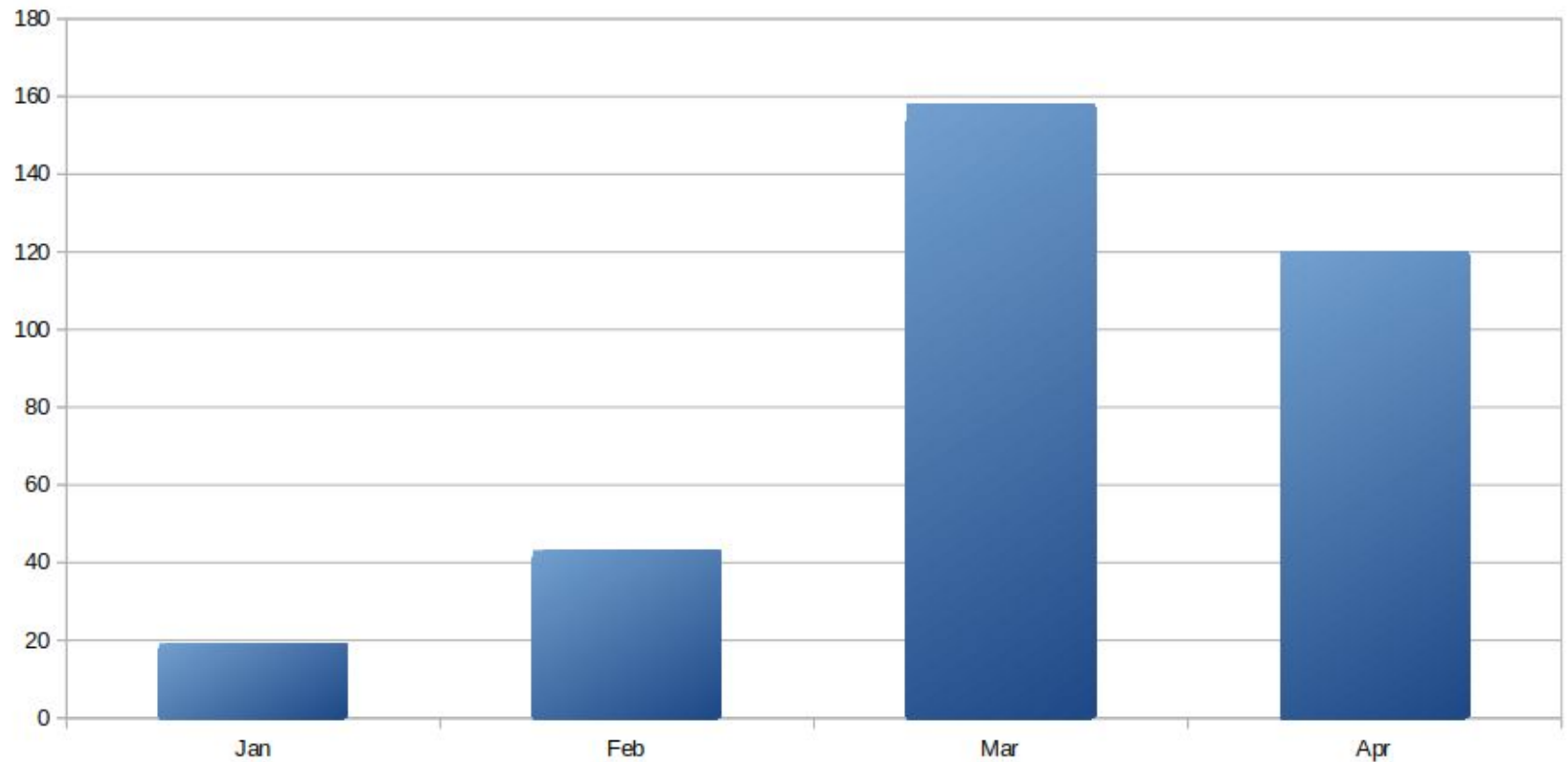
- A grassroots community started as a Facebook forum on 2015 at <https://facebook.com/groups/FAFHH/>, now 80.000+ members strong
- Institutionalized as MAFINDO on November 2016
- Now there are 17 chapters in various cities all over Indonesia
- Powered by the spirit of “gotong royong”, a culture of collaboration.
- Rallied all members of society to combat hoaxes : while we confront hoaxes & educate the public, The Government rose to the challenge, developing the massive Siberkreasi community all over Indonesia, organizing huge events and festivals, and so on. The Police scaled up their Cybercrime division significantly in a very short time. Many academics got involved into researching this issue. Companies are lending their support as well. And media are eagerly jumping on the issue, raising awareness on the public.

# Our Achievements so far



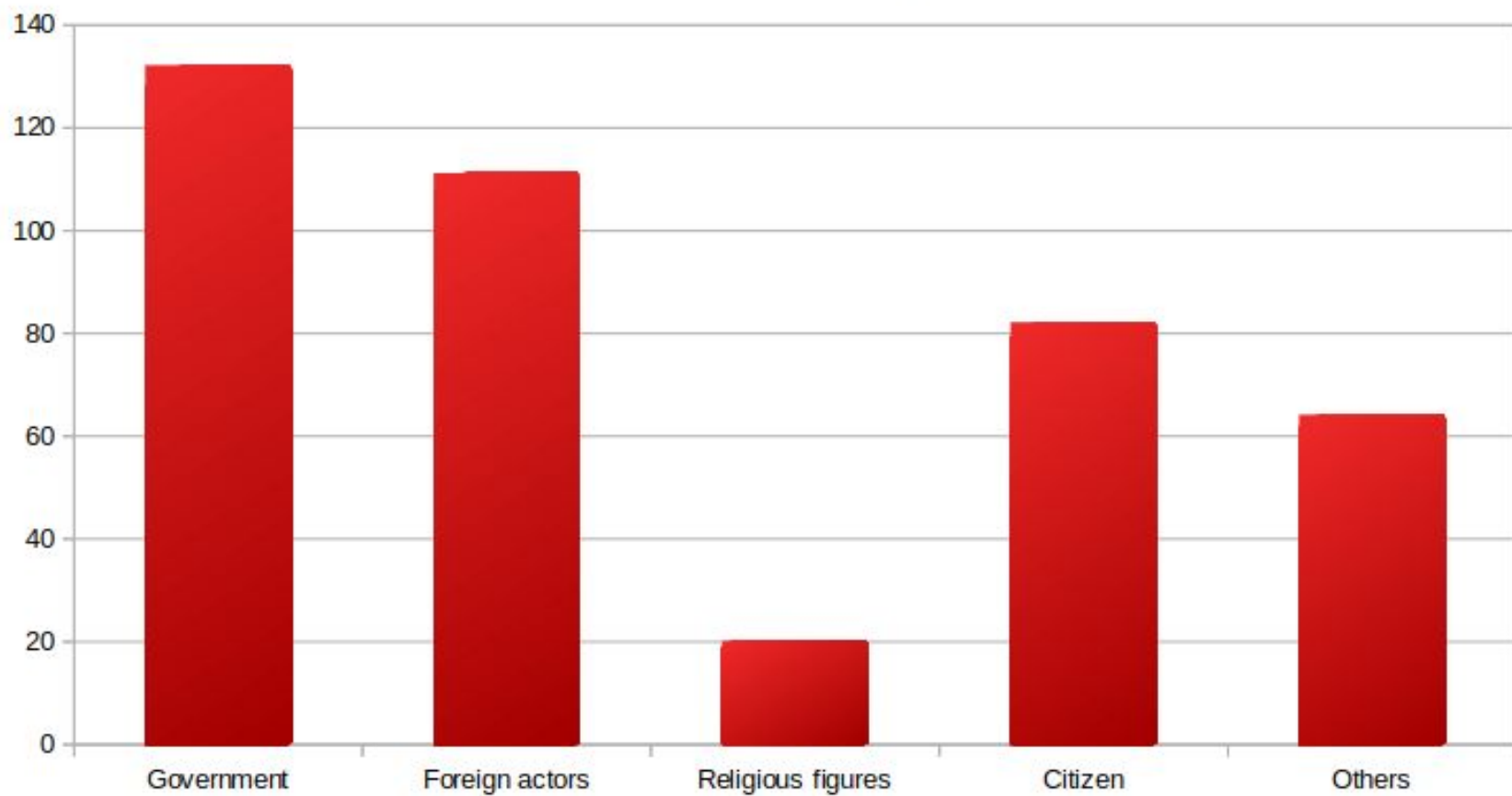
- Successfully promoted the term “hoax” to represent the whole spectrum of mis/disinformation. Making it much easier to raise awareness & educate the public.
- HCC (Hoax Crisis Center) set up by MAFINDO credited by IPAC as the leader of peace keeping efforts during Local election. Potential riots were successfully averted.
- And according to Pressland, our 2019 Presidential Election was saved from the hoax propaganda.
  - And then came the Pandemic

Rise of the COVID-19 Hoaxes



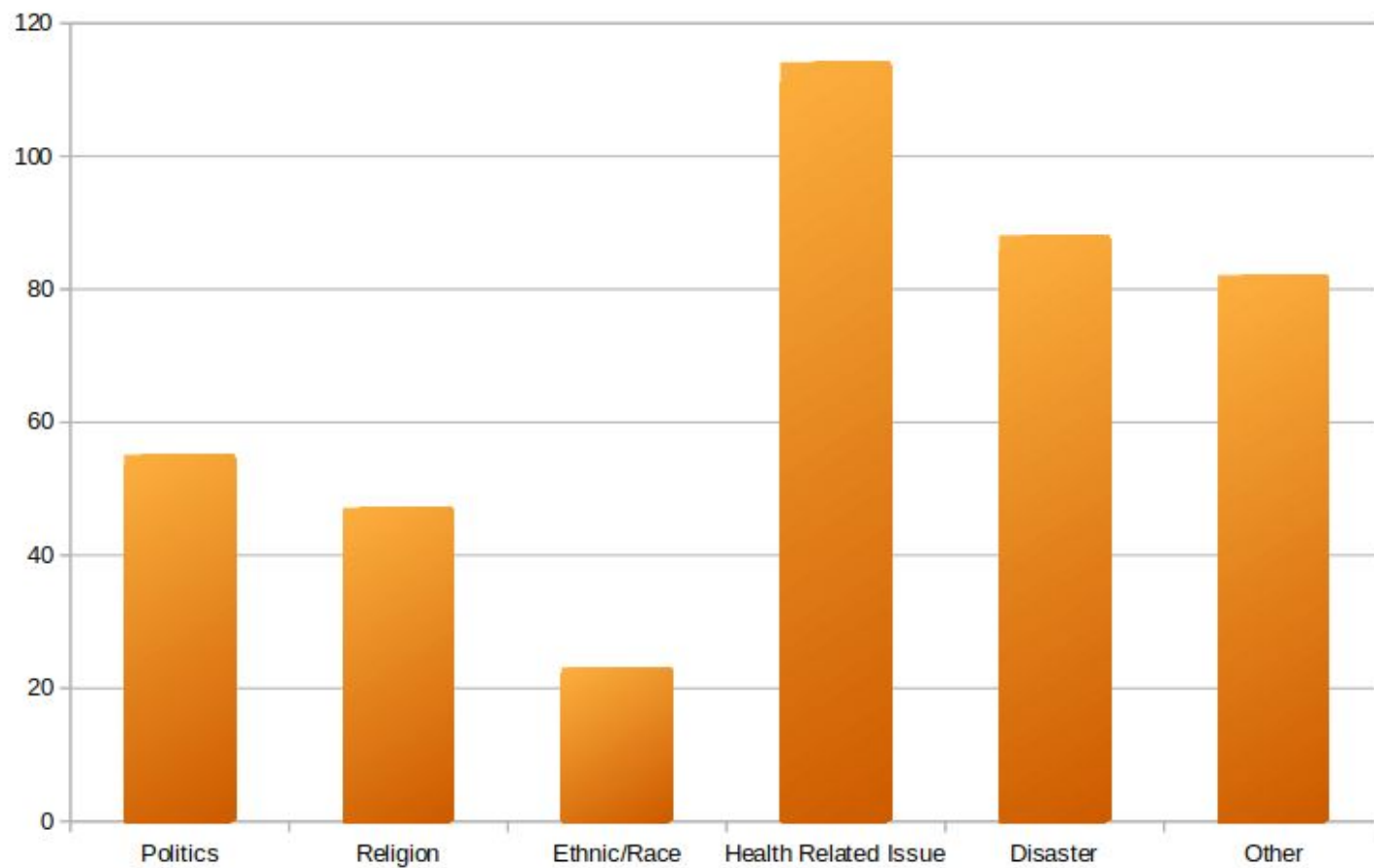
(source: Mafindo)

COVID-19 Hoaxes : Targets





COVID-19 Hoaxes : Topics





## What can we do ?

1. Pre-Bunking
2. Detection
3. Debunking
4. Counter



## Pre-bunking

1. Dissemination of the facts
2. Giving effect of “infodemic vaccination”, making society more resistant to hoaxes.
3. Example: <https://www.covid19.go.id>



# Detection

1. MAFINDO counts on public reports, via :
  - a. Facebook Forum : <https://facebook.com/groups/fafhh>
  - b. Website : <https://turnbackhoax.id/lapor-hoax/>
2. And other channels





## Debunking

1. Crowdsourcing : 80.000+ anggota FAFHH
2. Hoax Buster teams in 3 cities
3. Volunteers



# Counter

1. Social media channels : Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Website, etc
2. CekFakta alliance : collaboration of 24 online media to combat hoaxes, the platform developed & supported by Mafindo
3. Partners : National TV & Radio, Government's "Siberkreasi" community, other related NGOs, grassroot communities, academics, etc
4. Researches : to enable better response, in collaboration with WHO, CDC, and Unicef.

# The gory details : our programmes



- Crowdsourced Fact-checking
- Public literacy education
- Public digital-literacy education
- Public campaign
- Government advocacy
- Media campaign & advocacy
- Multi-channels counter propaganda
- Anti-hoax education materials
- Anti-hoax technologies
- Research on Literacy & Digital literacy
- Academic Research on Misinformation
- International collaborations
- Training & Workshops
- Training for Trainers
- Training for Journalists
- Public forum speakers
- Social media advocacy
- And many more



**Thank You**





# Third-Party Fact-Checking at Facebook

MAY 2020

FACEBOOK

# Today's Agenda

- 1 How News Feed works
- 2 Integrity at Facebook
- 3 Third Party Fact Checking Program
- 4 Fighting misinformation during COVID-19

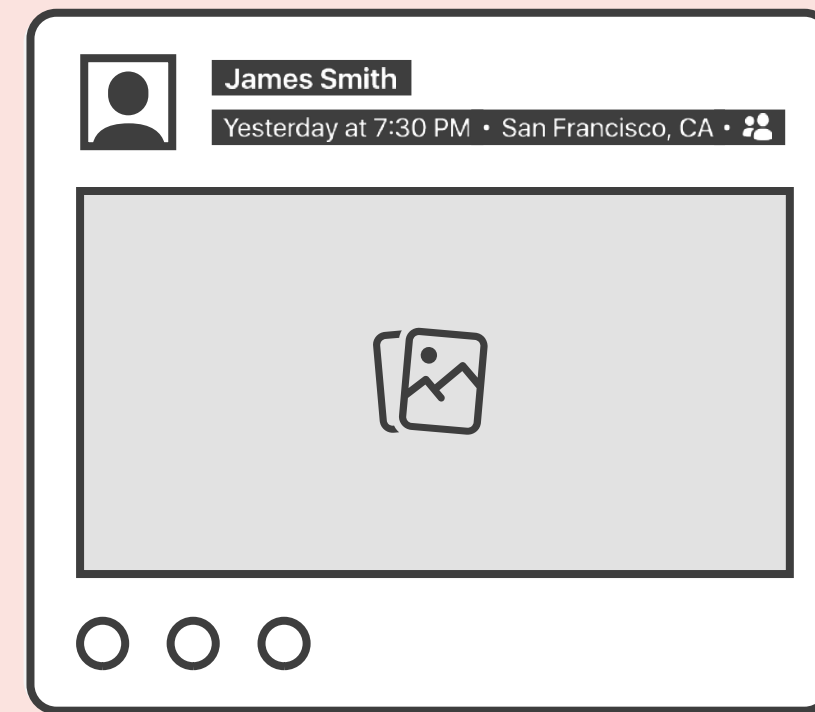


# HOW NEWS FEED WORKS



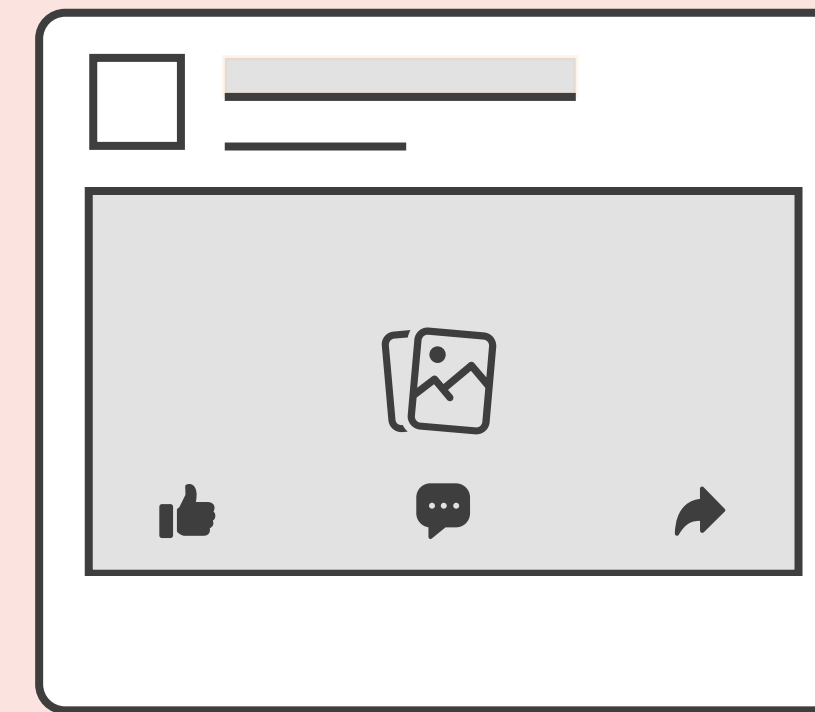
## INVENTORY

Stories posted by  
friends and Pages



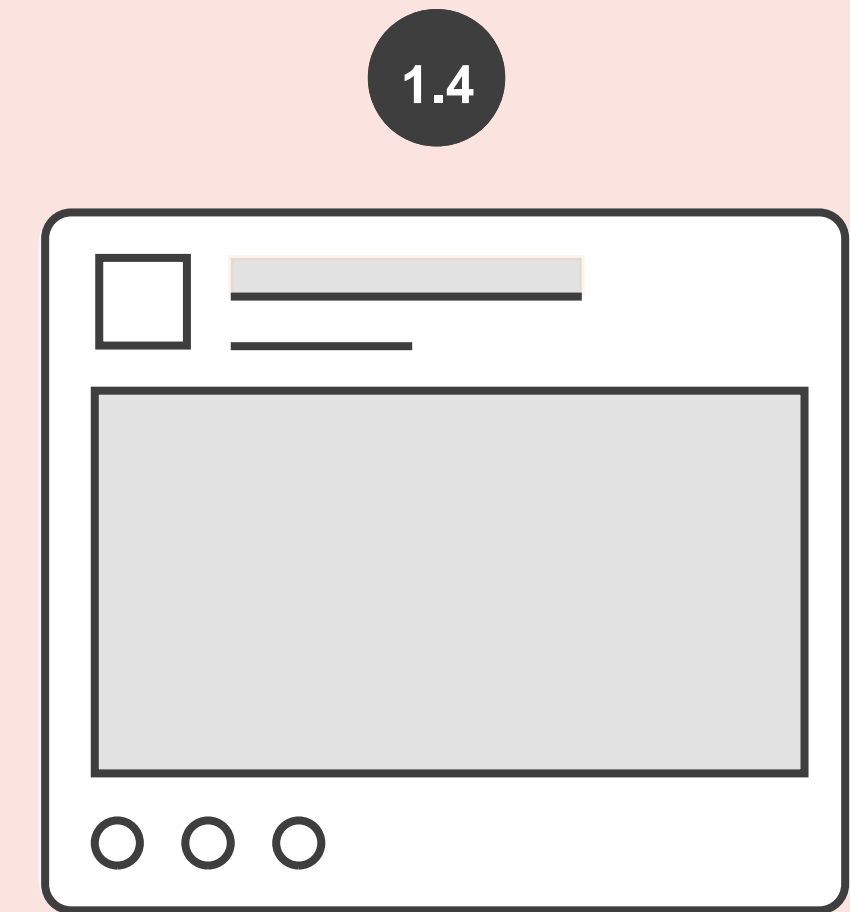
## SIGNALS

Who posted the story?  
When was it posted?



## PREDICTIONS

How likely are you  
to comment?

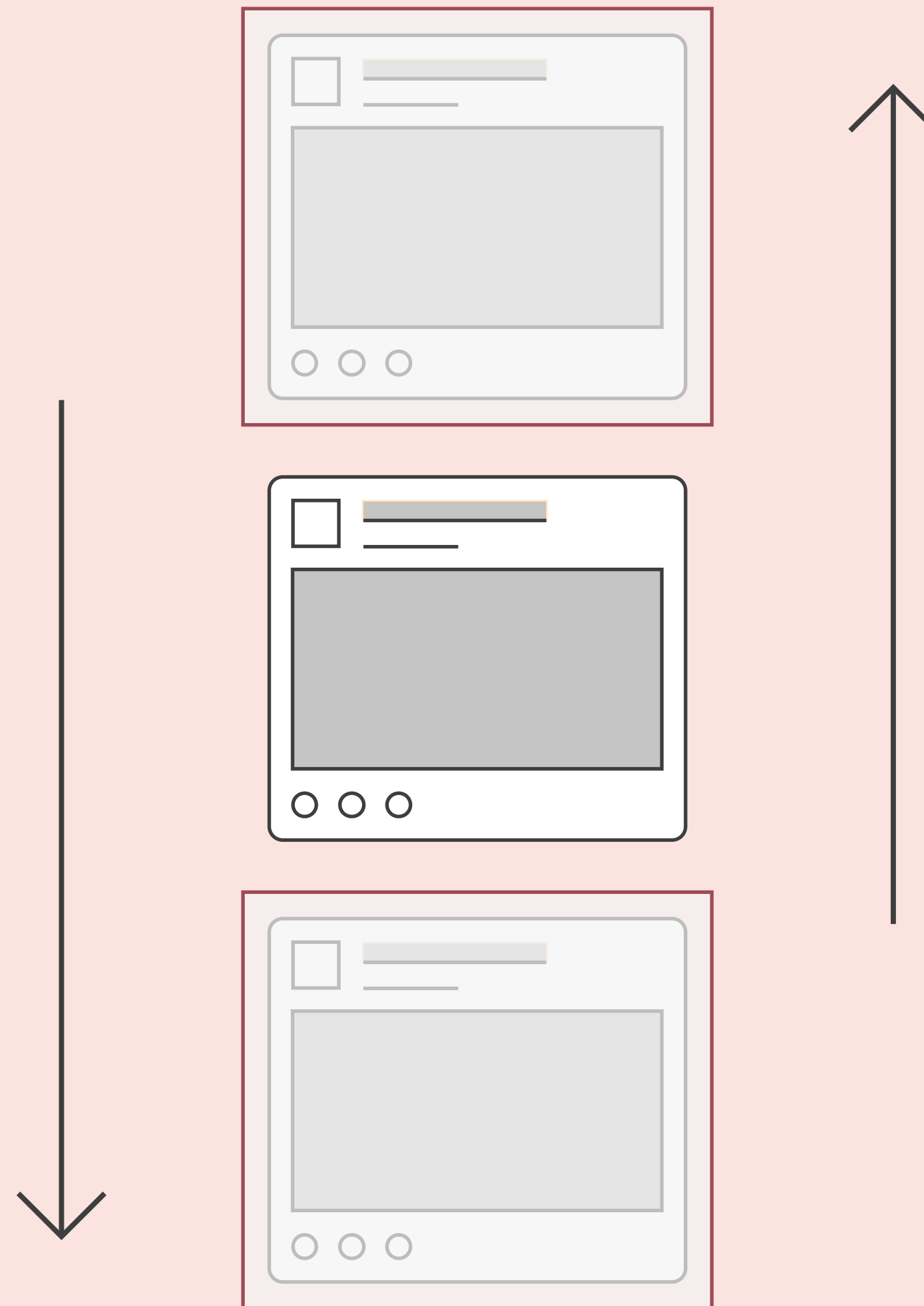


## SCORE

Calculate a  
relevance score



# News Feed Ranking



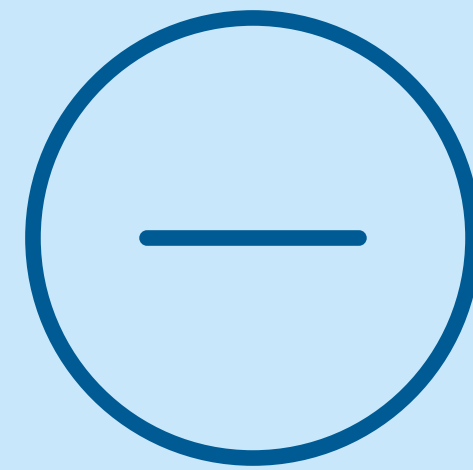
# Integrity at Facebook

# Improving News Feed



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Remove



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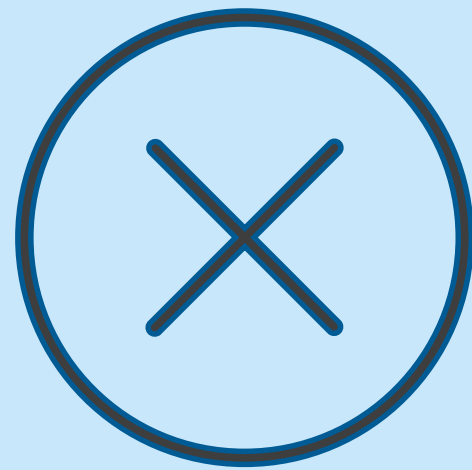
Reduce



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Inform

# Improving News Feed



Remove



Reduce



Inform

# facebook Community Standards



Helping to keep you safe



Encouraging respectful behavior

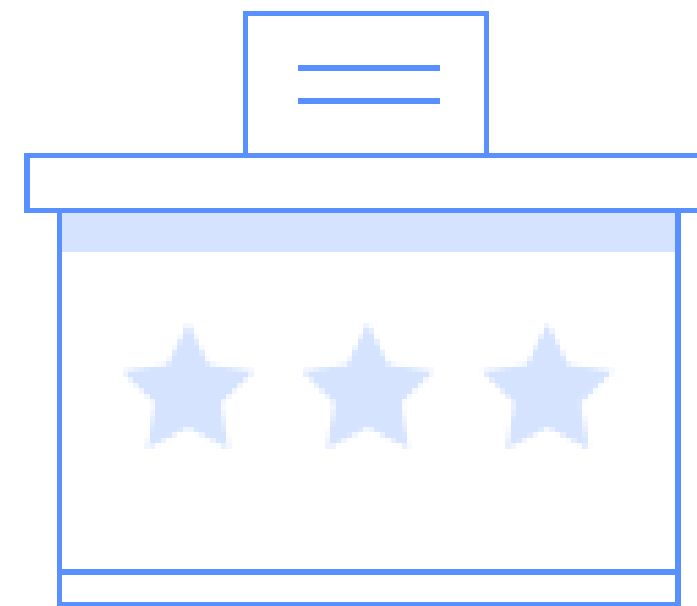


Keeping your information secure



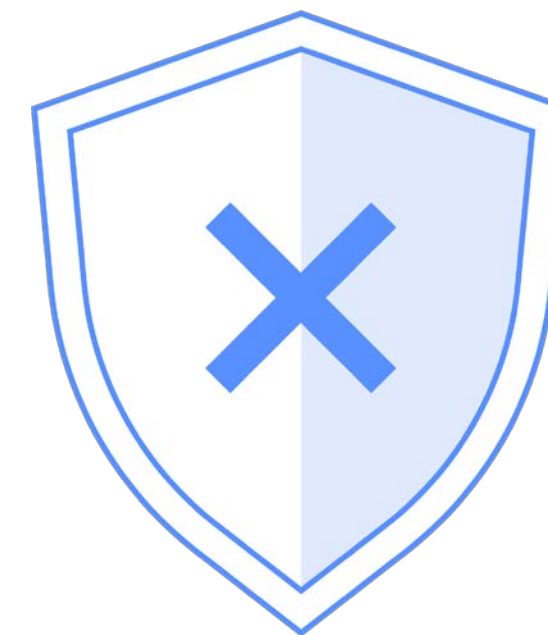
Protecting your intellectual property





REMOVE

Misinformation designed to deter or  
prevent people from voting



REMOVE

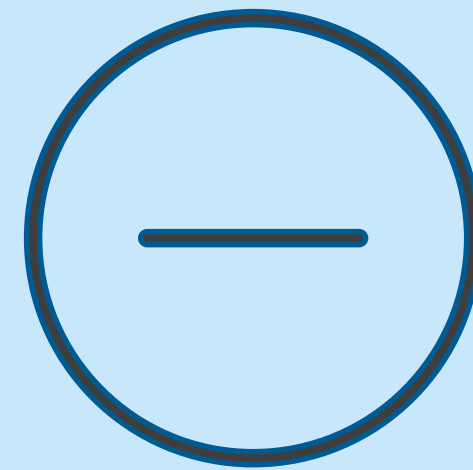
Misinformation that incites imminent,  
offline harm

# Improving News Feed



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Remove



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Reduce



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Inform

# Third Party Fact-Checking on Facebook

Facebook works with more than **60 fact-checking partners** in 50 languages globally to identify, review & rate viral misinformation on our platform.

# Fact-Checking + Facebook



## Identify

potential false news  
using various signals



## Review

the accuracy of stories



## Act

by showing false news  
lower in News Feed



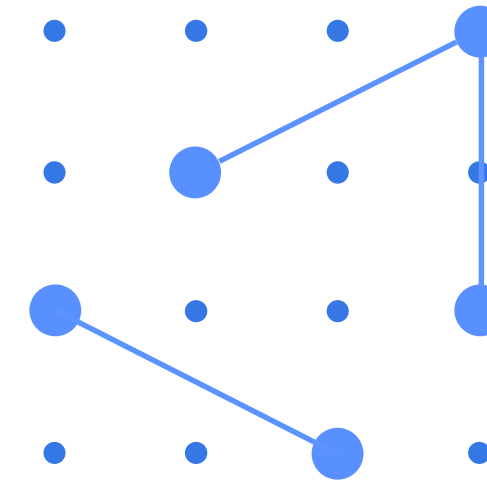
# How We Detect Misinformation



**Feedback from  
community**



**Disbelief  
comments**



**Machine  
Learning**

# Enforceable Fact- Checking Ratings

## **False**

The primary claim(s) of the content are factually inaccurate.

## **Partly False**

The claim(s) of the content are a mix of accurate and inaccurate, or the primary claim is misleading or incomplete.

## **False Headline**

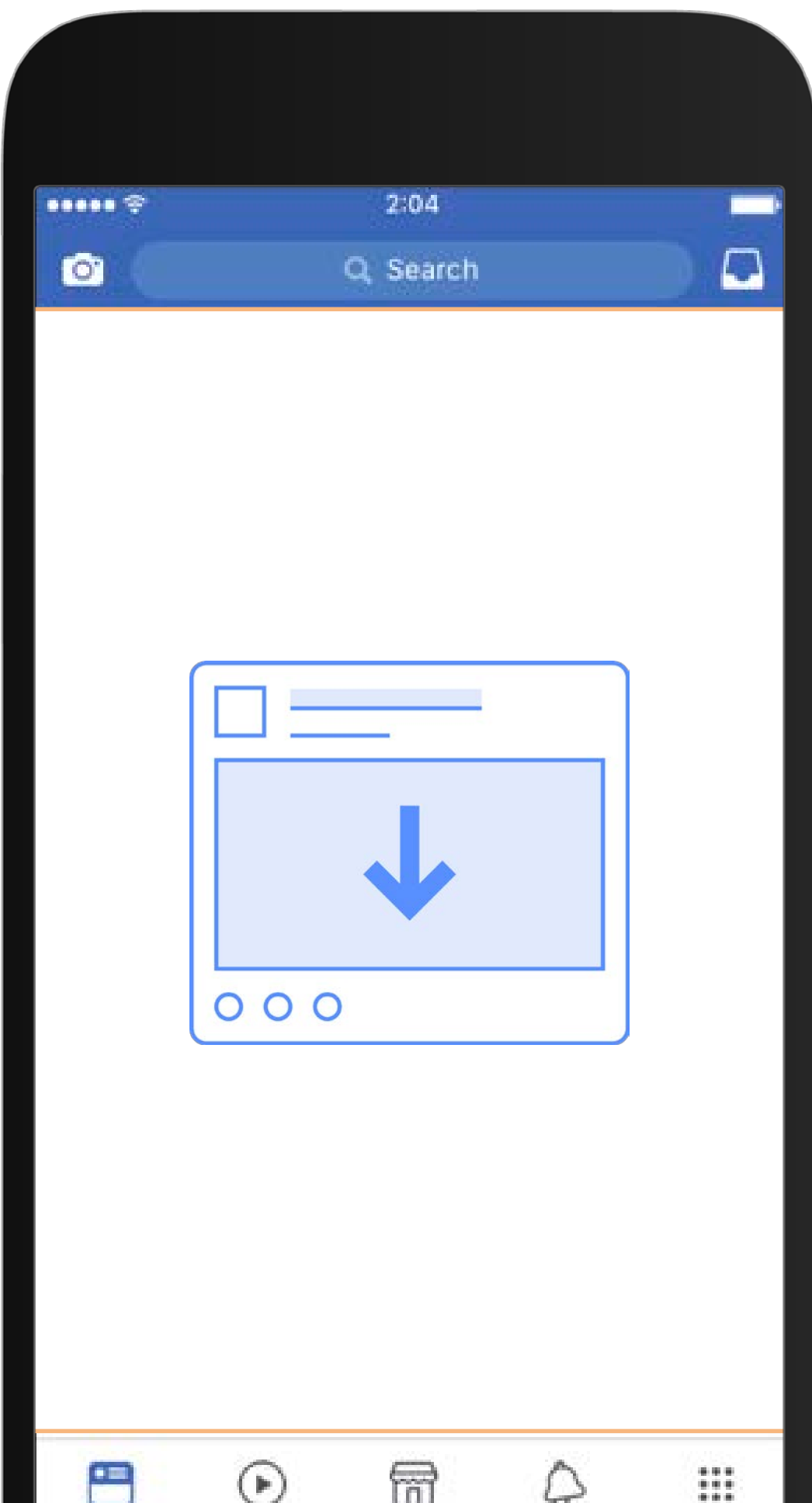
The primary claim(s) of the article body content are true, but the primary claim within the headline is factually inaccurate.

# The Focus of Our Program

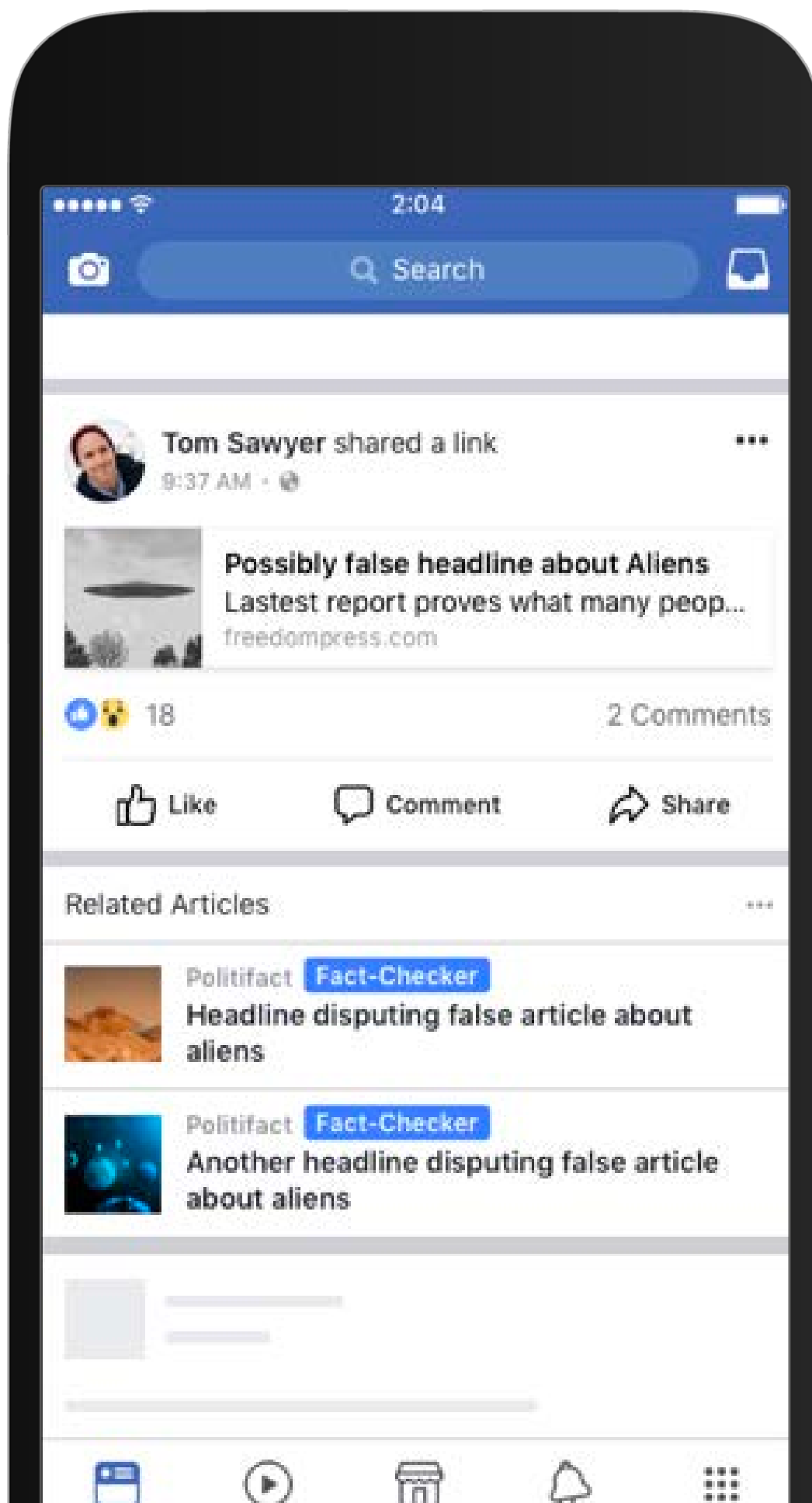
- The focus of Facebook's fact-checking program is **identifying and addressing viral misinformation** — provably false claims that can mislead or harm users, in addition to financially motivated misinformation.
- It is not meant to police speech, interfere in political debates, or address minor inaccuracies in reporting.
- We are particularly concerned with the type of misinformation that spreads uniquely on social platforms (e.g. memes, out-of-context images).

# Impact on Story

STORY DEMOTED



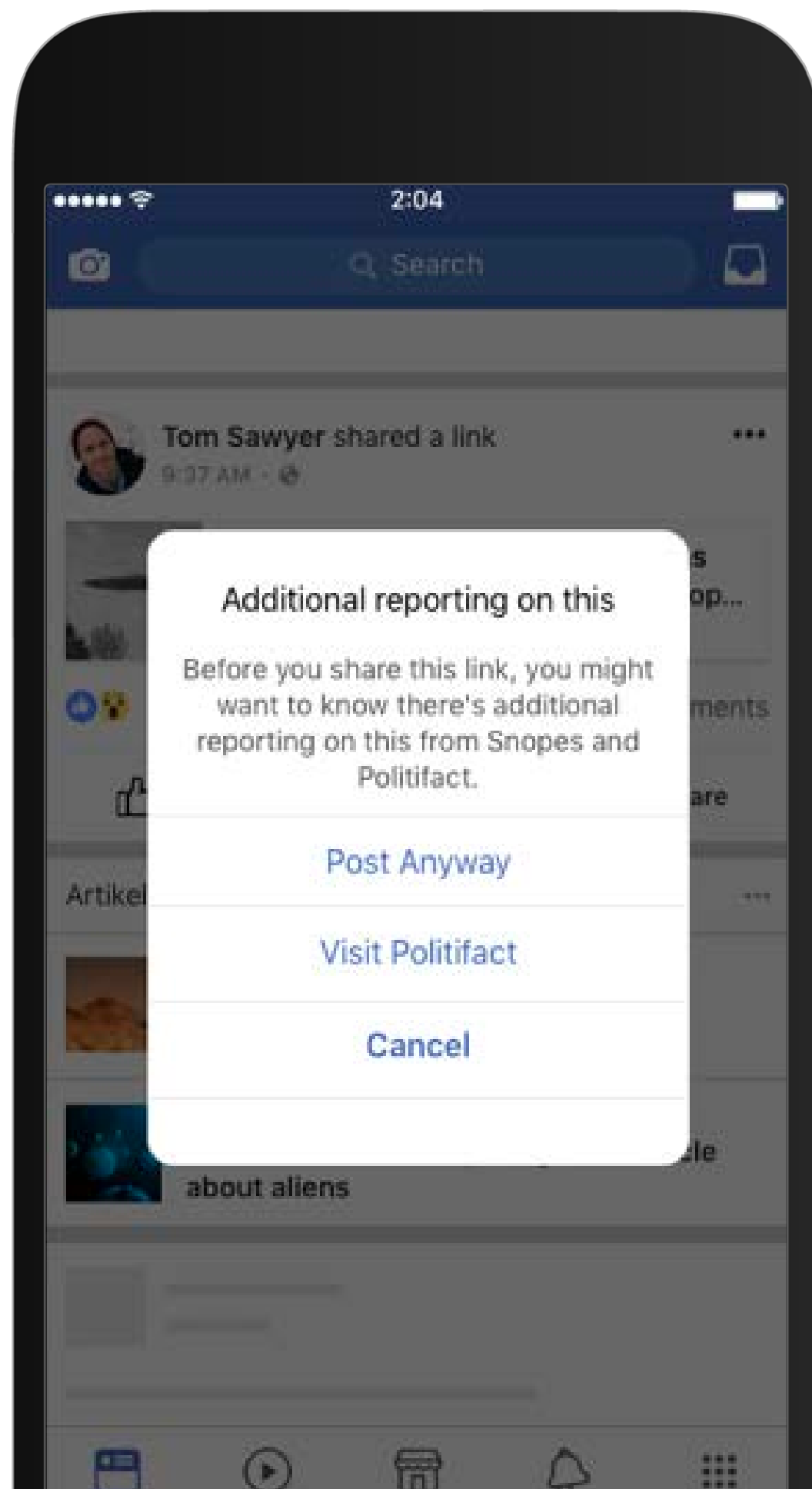
SHARING INTERSTITIAL



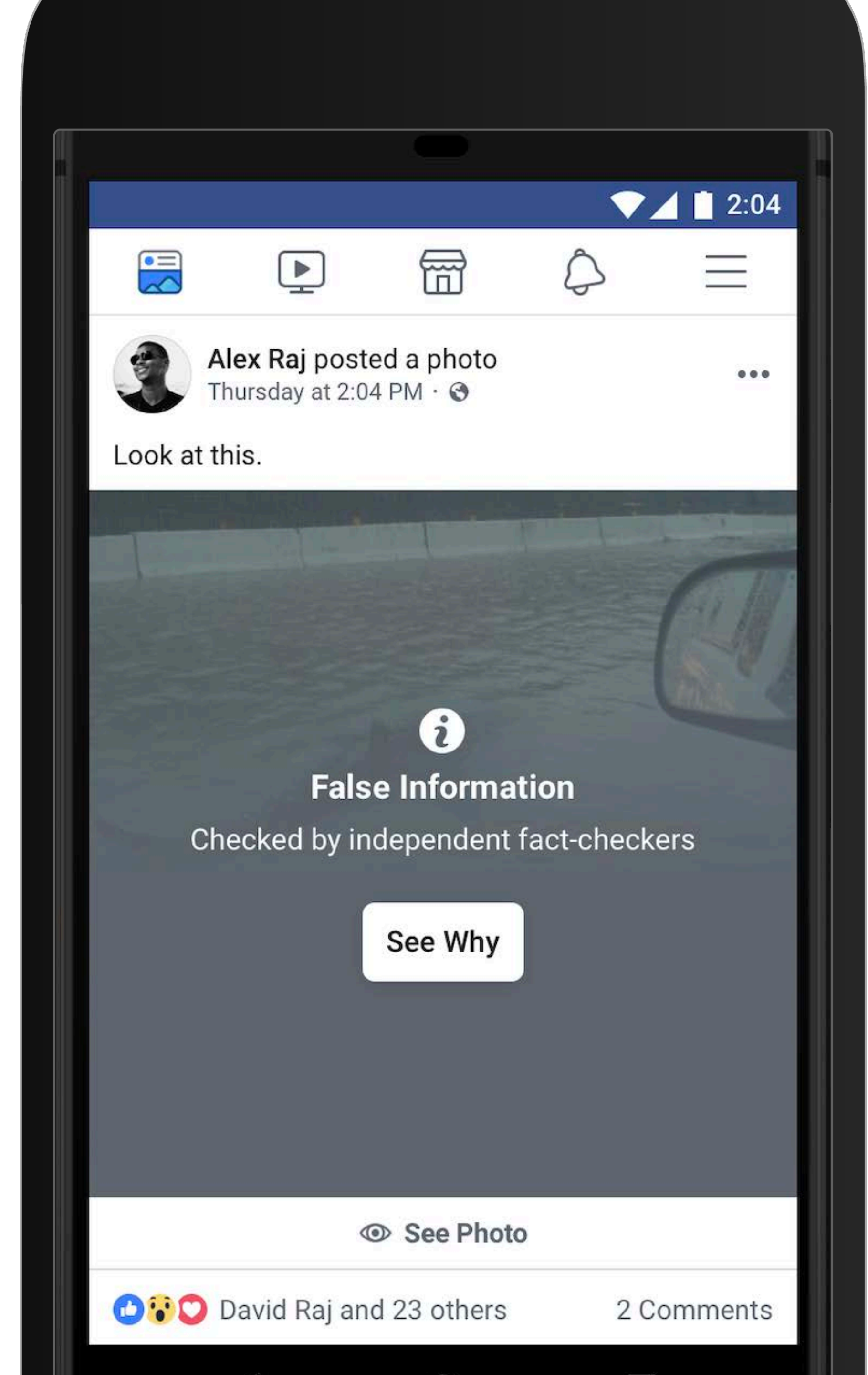
USER NOTIFICATIONS



RELATED ARTICLES

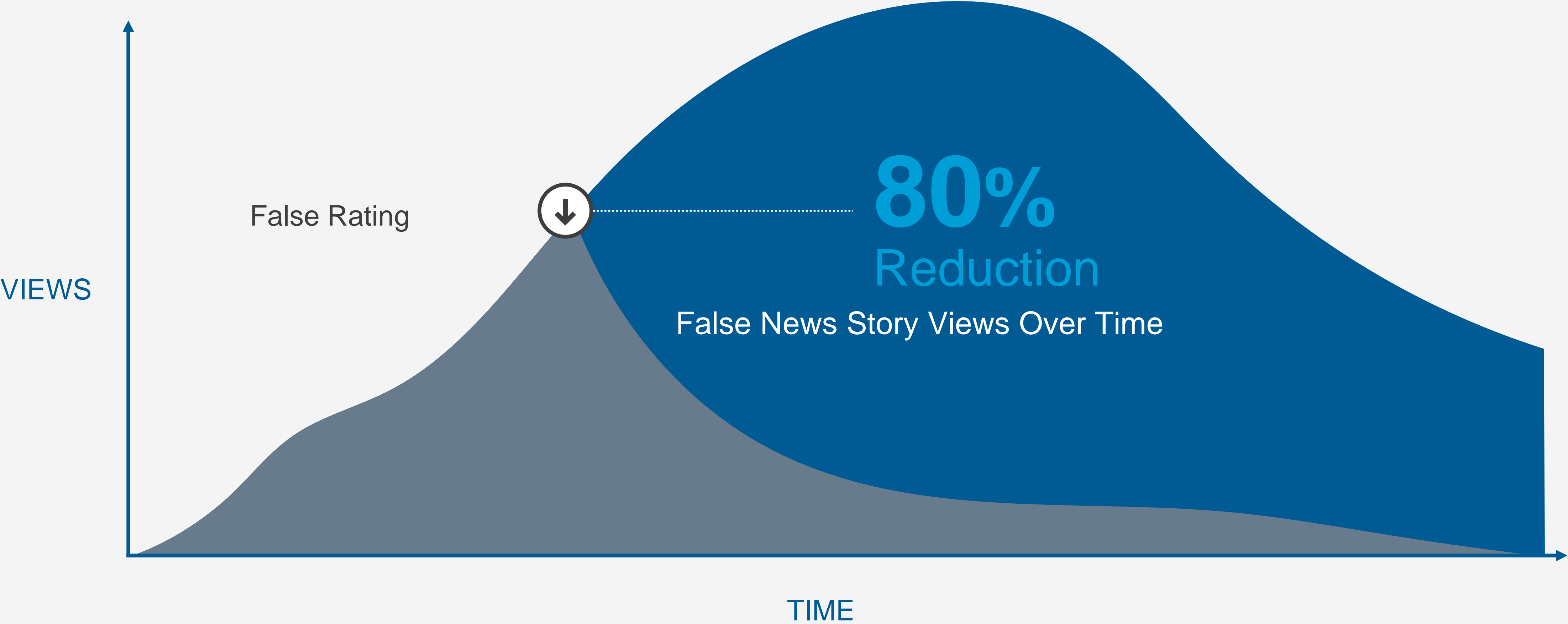


# Introducing More Visual Labels for Misinformation



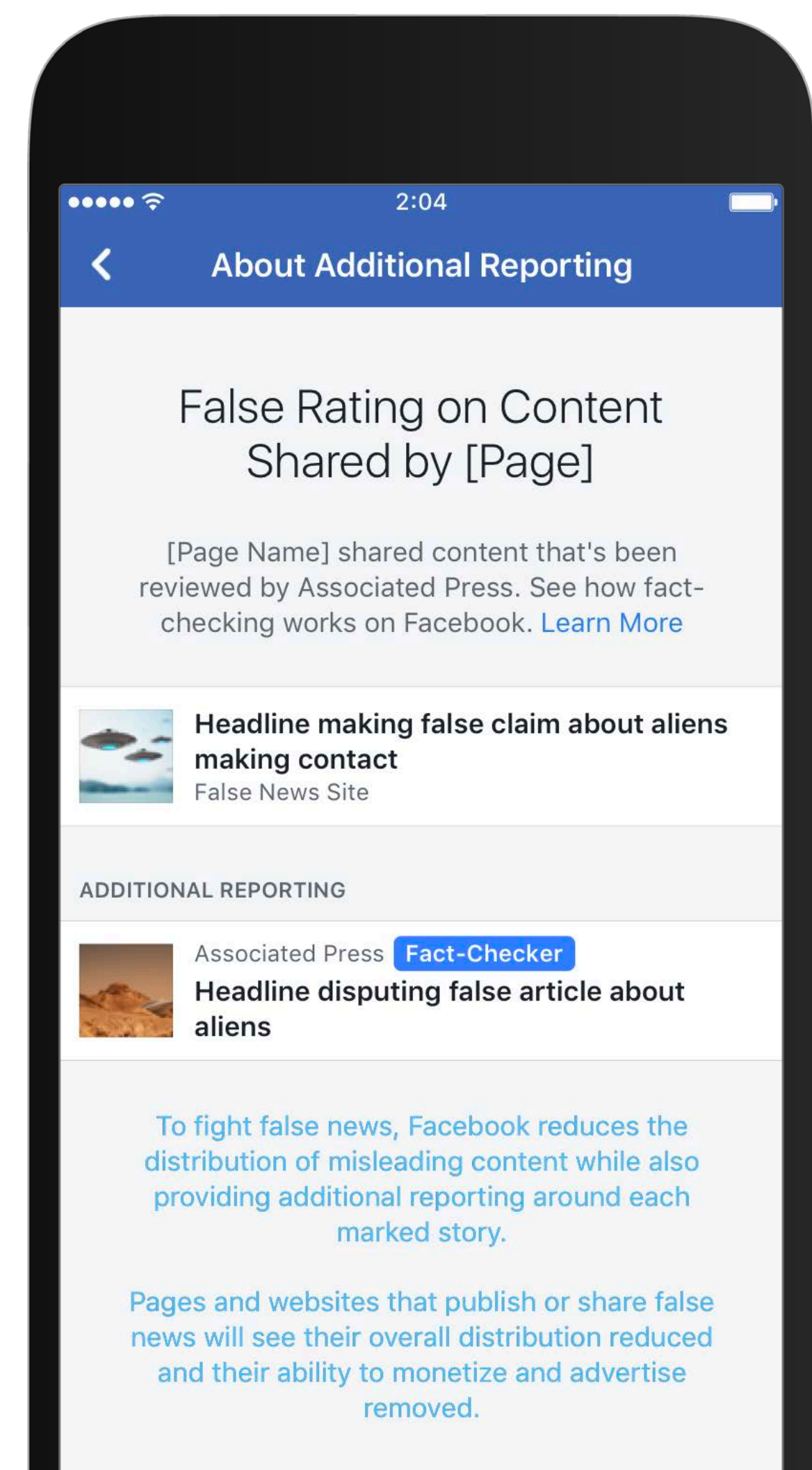


# Impact on Story

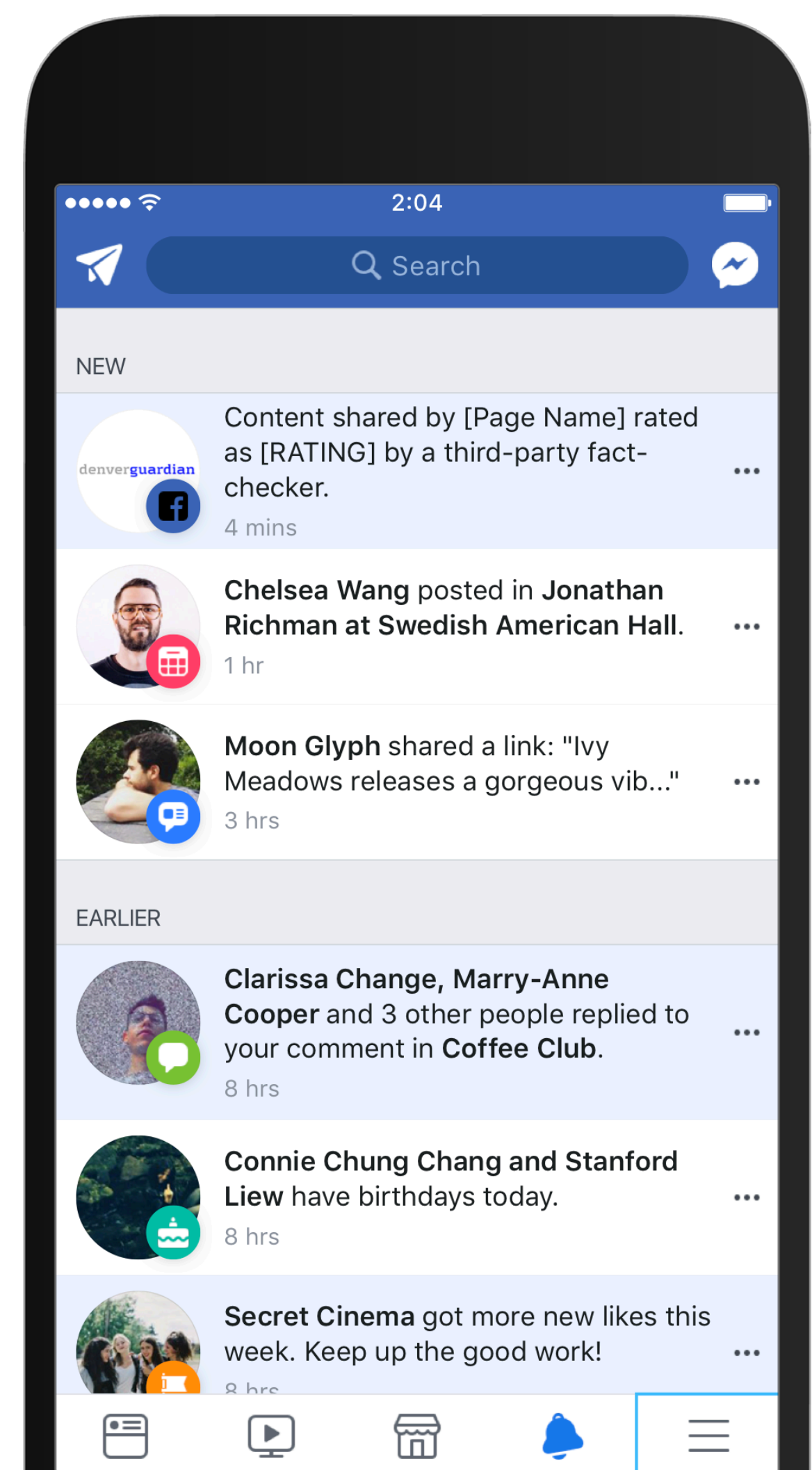


# Impact on Page or Domain

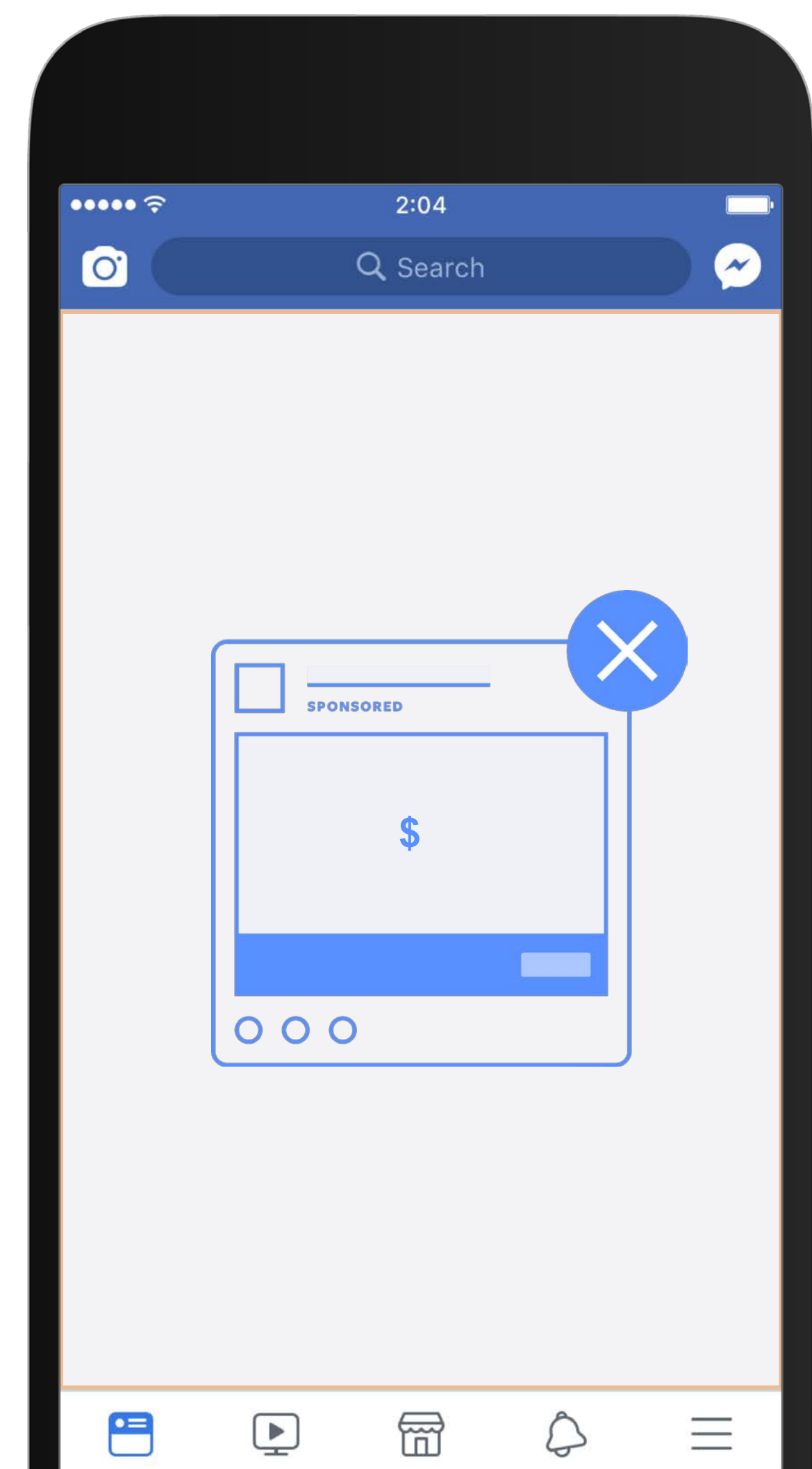
## PAGE OR DOMAIN DEMOTION



## PUBLISHER NOTIFICATIONS

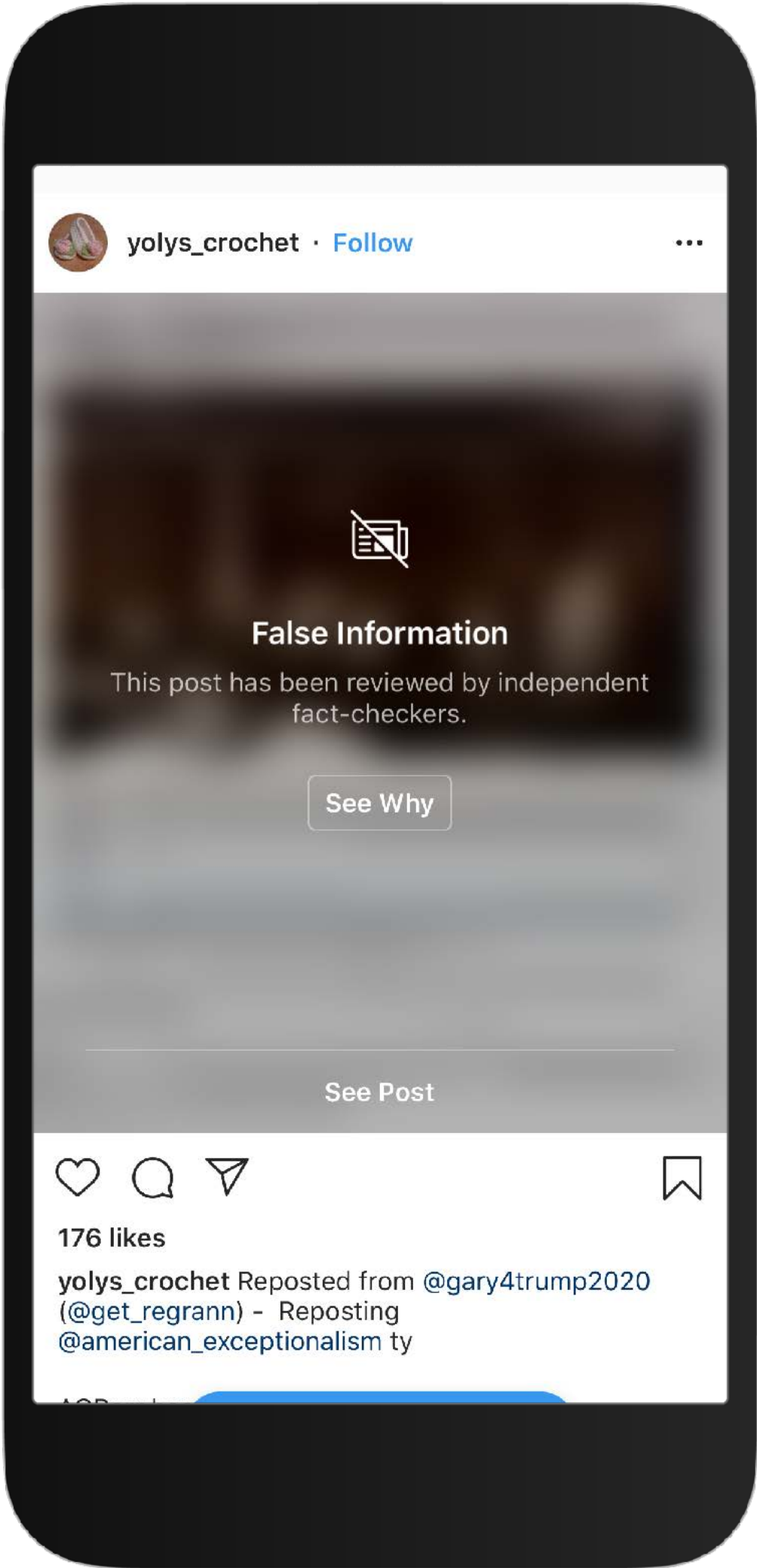


## REMOVE AD + MONETIZATION RIGHTS

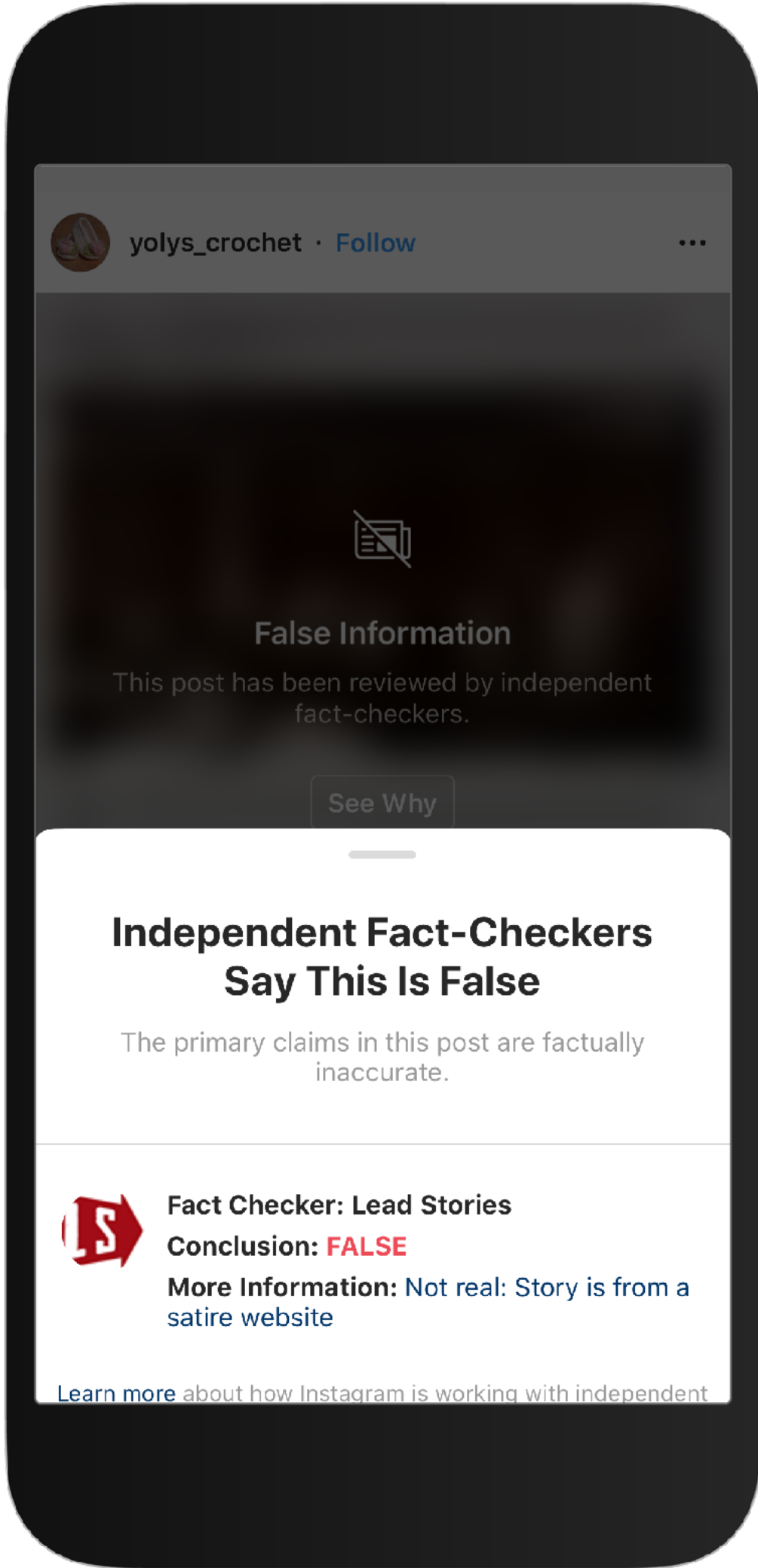


# Labelling Misinformation on Instagram

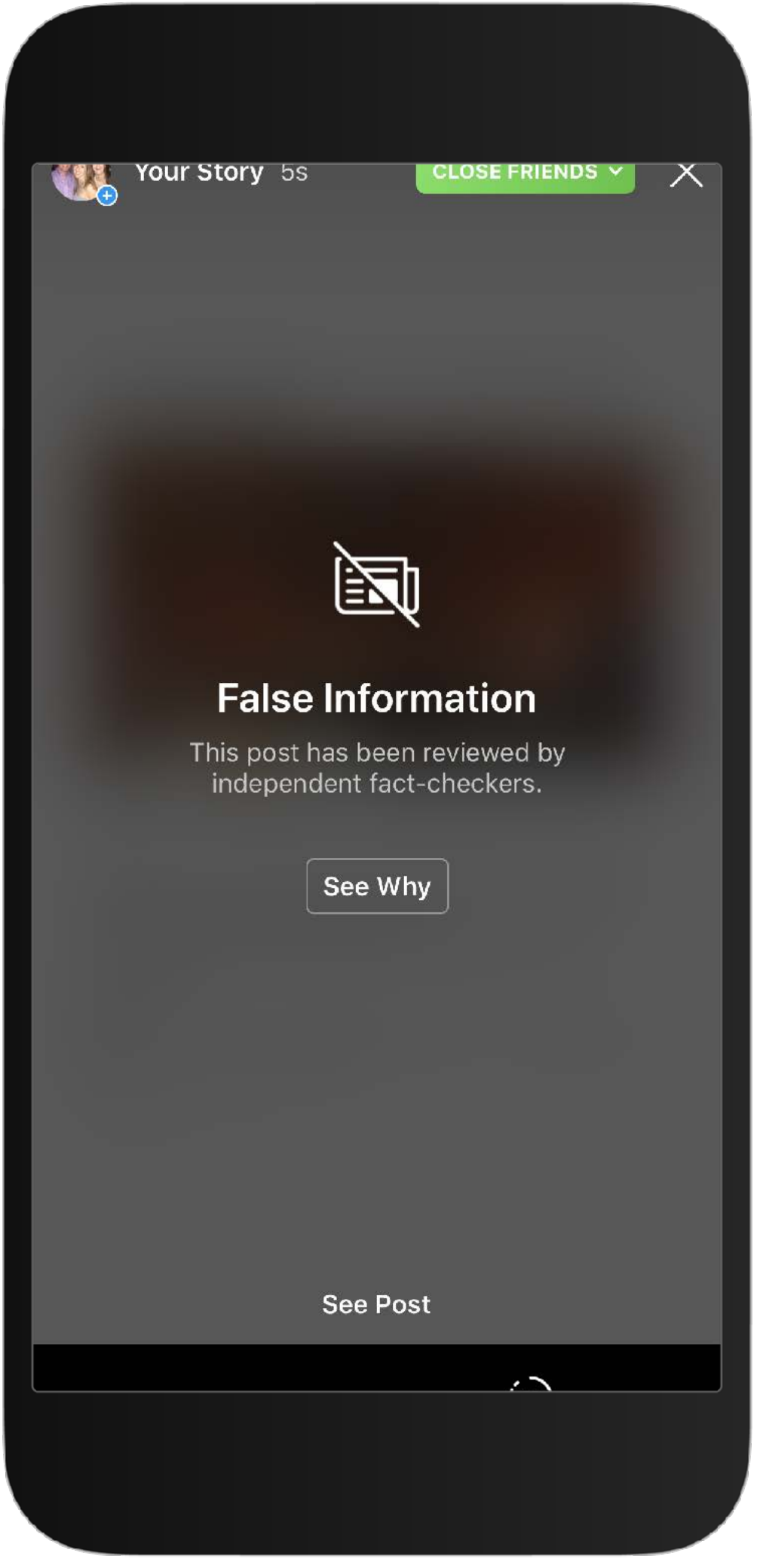
FEED



BOTTOMSHEET



STORIES



# Fighting misinformation during COVID-19

# 50M

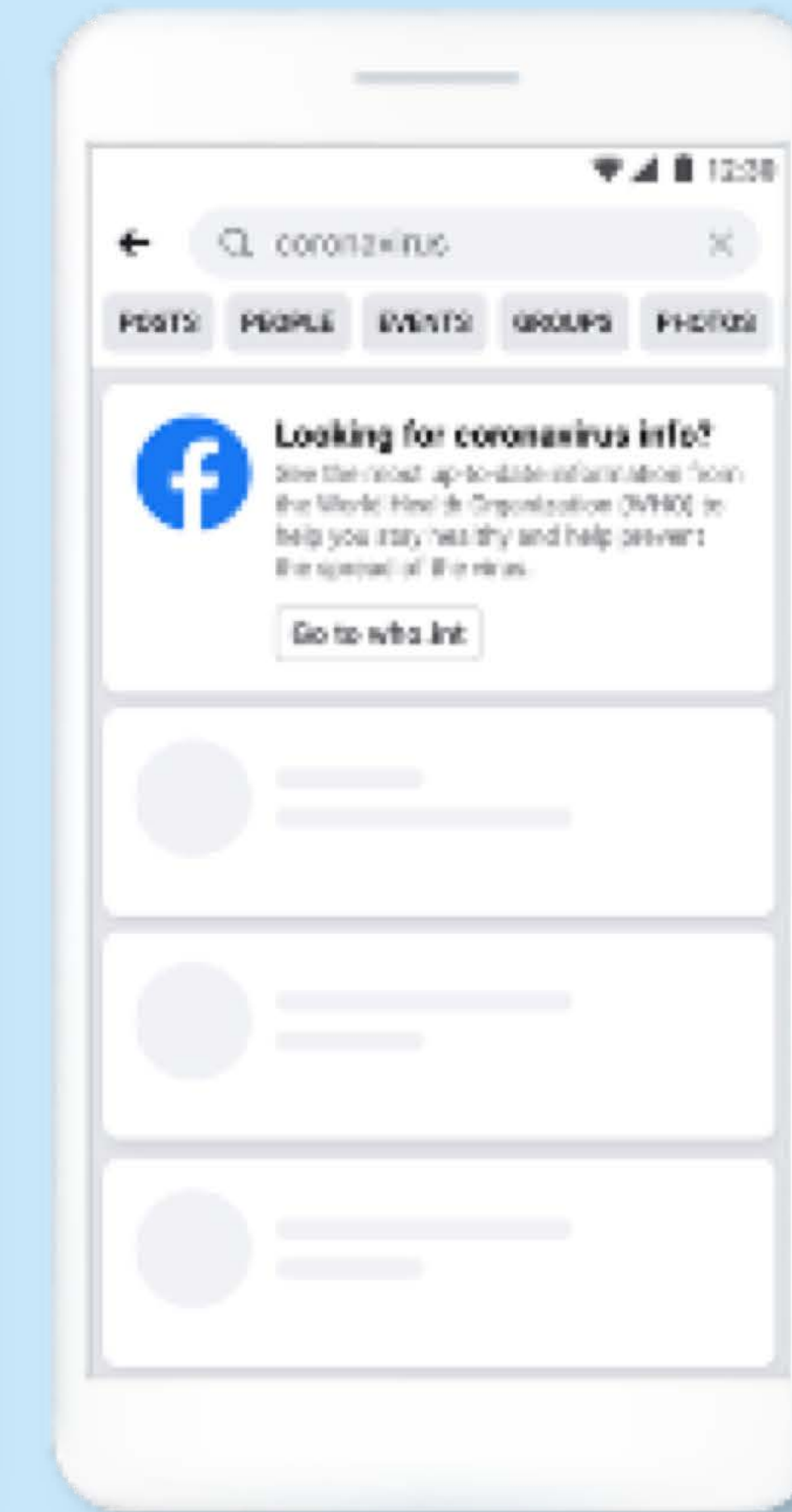
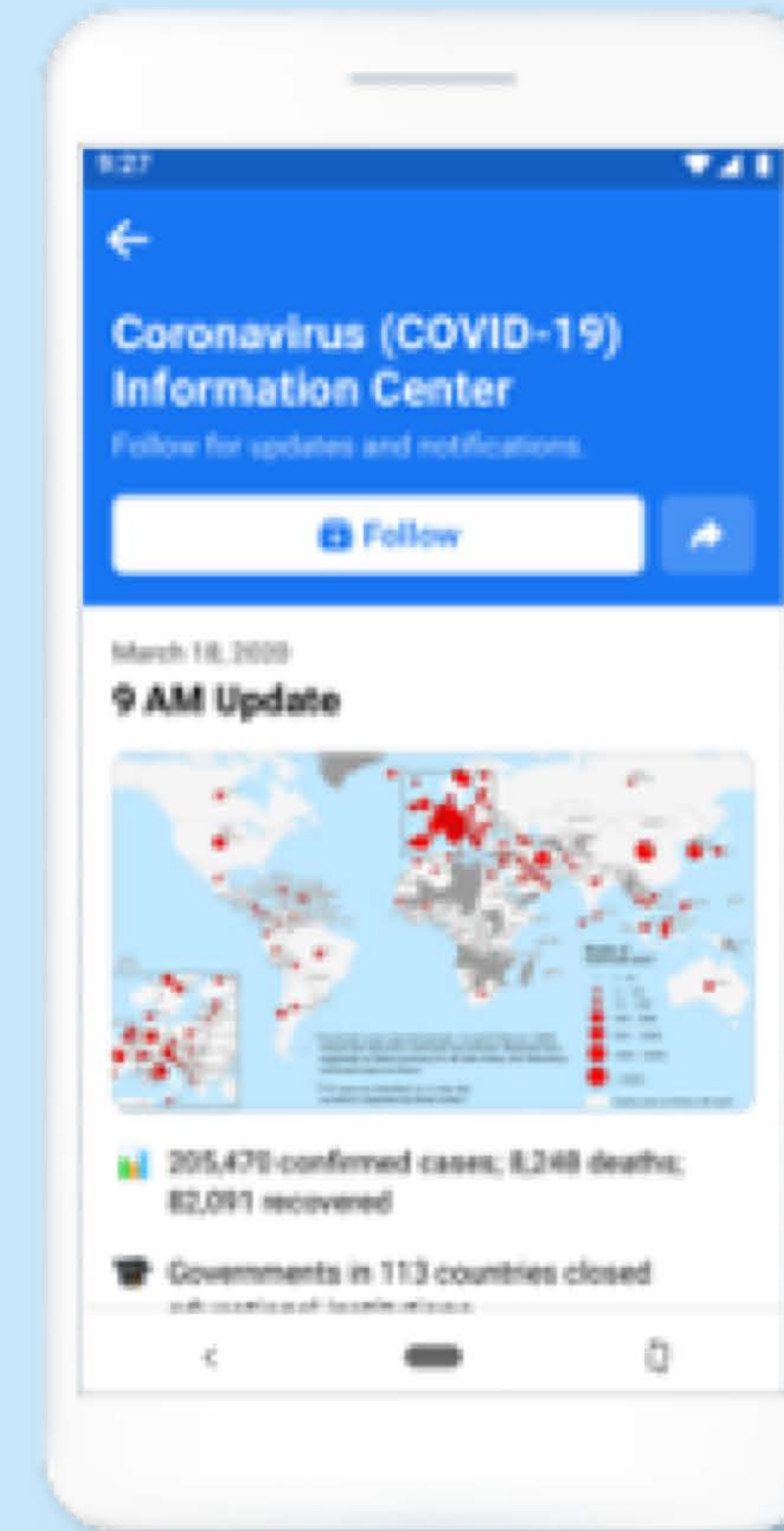
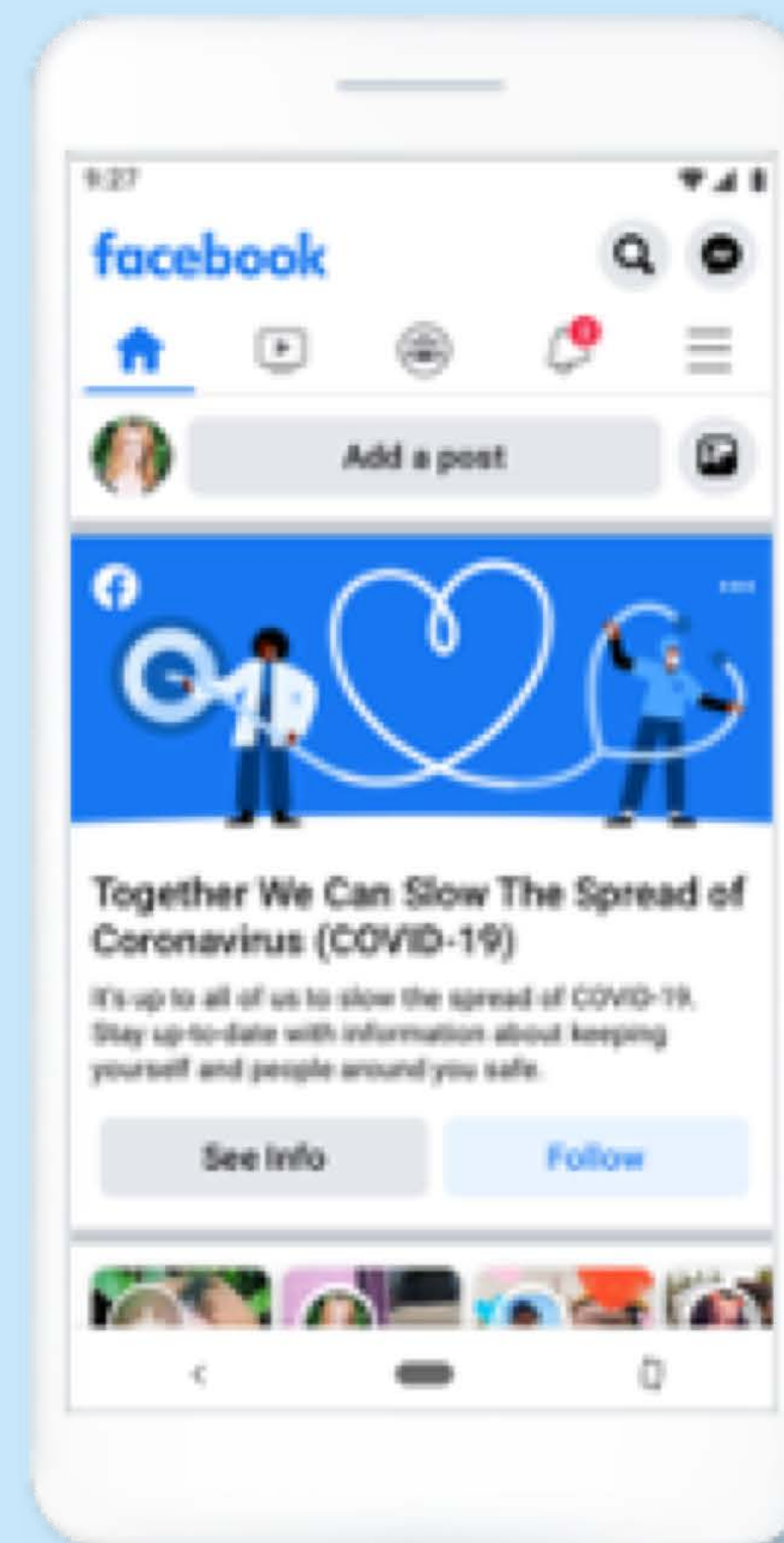
posts displayed warnings in  
relation to COVID-19  
misinformation in April

# 95%

of people did not go on  
to view the content,  
once they saw the  
warning



- Facebook COVID-19 Information Centre
- WhatsApp and Messenger Partnerships with governments
- Quick promotions and search resources on Facebook and Instagram
- Training sessions with local governments and emergency health organizations





- Provided [\\$1M to IFCN](#) to distribute grants to fact-checking organizations to amplify their editorial work around COVID-19.
- Worked with WhatsApp to launch a new collaboration with IFCN supported by a \$1 million grant
- Provided at least \$5K in ad credits to 100% of our 3PFC partners to go toward boosting COVID-19 related fact-checks
- Showed messages in News Feed to people who have liked, reacted or commented on harmful misinformation about COVID-19 that we have since removed. These messages connected people to COVID-19 myths [debunked by the WHO](#).

# Questions

Thank You