# Full Fact warns UK faces misinformation crisis fueled by US political shifts and social media changes



The UK is increasingly grappling with a crisis in misinformation, a challenge exacerbated by recent political developments in the United States. Full Fact, a prominent fact-checking charity, has sounded the alarm, warning that the tumultuous shifts in US politics under Donald Trump's administration are having far-reaching implications for public discourse in Britain and across Europe.

Historically, Trump's tenure was marked by a series of executive orders aimed at promoting what he termed “freedom of speech.” His actions, notably the abandonment of independent fact-checking by major social media platforms like Meta, have resulted in what Full Fact describes as a “chaotic impact” on the online information landscape. Following Trump’s re-election, Meta further distanced itself from traditional fact-checking practices, favouring a model reminiscent of X-style community notes. This shift raised fears not only about misinformation proliferating unchecked in the US but also potentially spreading globally.

Full Fact’s annual report for 2025 highlights a worrying trend in misinformation dissemination, underscored by a rise in far-right narratives that can easily spark unrest. A notable example is the violent riots in the UK last summer, ignited by a false narrative surrounding a triple murder at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport. This incident encapsulated the dangers posed by unchecked misinformation, as it spiralled into nationwide riots fueled by hostility towards perceived minority groups. The report noted that insufficient police preparedness and limited regulation of social media platforms contributed to the rapid spread of these falsehoods, a sentiment echoed by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, which called for improved strategies in handling online misinformation.

As the volume of false information has surged, the UK government has accordingly ramped up its regulations. Under the Online Safety Act, which began enforcement recently, Ofcom has mandated stringent measures for tech companies to combat harmful content. These measures require platforms to appoint dedicated executives to oversee compliance, carry out risk assessments, and enhance their content moderation strategies. Such regulatory frameworks are crucial, but there remain concerns regarding their efficacy, particularly with instances of misinformation motivated by malicious intent being notoriously difficult to prove.

Moreover, the challenge of misinformation is compounded by the influence of high-profile figures on social media. Elon Musk, for instance, has been described as ‘obsessively active’ in UK politics, often amplifying unfounded conspiracy theories and hateful rhetoric. This has not gone unnoticed; Full Fact has highlighted instances where such influential individuals misuse their platforms, posing a greater risk to societal cohesion. In a particularly troubling episode, Labour’s safeguarding minister Jess Phillips found herself the target of a vitriolic social media barrage, underscoring the need for accountability in the dissemination of information.

In light of these challenges, Full Fact has called for a renewed commitment from both the Labour government and regulatory bodies like Ofcom to address the pitfalls of misinformation robustly. The charity advocates for the swift introduction of promised artificial intelligence legislation, acknowledging the emerging threats posed by AI-generated content, which can fabricate convincing deepfakes and false narratives. This call to action resonates with the wider societal imperative for fostering greater media literacy, especially among vulnerable demographics, as highlighted by Ofcom's research indicating that a significant portion of the public finds it challenging to differentiate between true and false information.

Ultimately, Full Fact’s warning about the current state of misinformation — characterised as a 'hybrid war' — encapsulates a growing urgency to combat false narratives that not only undermine political discourse but also pose risks to societal stability. The integrity of information is not merely an academic concern; it is foundational to the functioning of democracy itself. As the report concludes, ensuring access to accurate information is paramount, necessitating concerted efforts across all sectors of society to safeguard the truth.

As the regulatory landscape evolves, it remains essential for social media platforms, government entities, and the public to engage in a collaborative effort to uphold the value of accurate information, ensuring that democracy can flourish amid the challenges posed by disinformation.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
2. Paragraph 4, 6
3. Paragraph 3
4. Paragraph 2
5. Paragraph 8
6. Paragraph 8
7. Paragraph 9

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/trump-misinformation-uk-labour-full-fact-ofcom-b2747207.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-watchdog-says-police-must-not-be-caught-off-guard-again-after-violent-summer-2025-05-06/> - A report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) warns that British police must better address the spread of misinformation online to prevent a recurrence of last summer’s violent riots. The unrest, sparked by a false narrative that a triple murder at a Taylor Swift-themed event in Southport was committed by an Islamist migrant, led to nationwide riots fueled by far-right supporters. HMICFRS found that police were unprepared for the rapid spread of online misinformation and had not adequately prioritized intelligence gathering. Chief Inspector Andy Cooke emphasized that police must not be caught off-guard again. The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) acknowledged the report but criticized it for placing undue responsibility on law enforcement, highlighting the need for stronger regulation and moderation by social media platforms to curb the spread of misinformation.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/91414488-7146-4b9c-9ac4-15767be4ec9f> - Starting next week, the UK media regulator Ofcom will begin enforcing new stringent rules aimed at reducing illegal and harmful content on social media platforms, search engines, and messaging apps under the Online Safety Act (OSA). The OSA mandates tech companies to carry out risk assessments and implement rigorous content moderation strategies to mitigate exposure to 17 types of illegal content, including terrorism, child sexual abuse, suicide encouragement, and fraud. Platforms must designate a senior executive to ensure compliance, improve reporting procedures, enhance moderation, and upgrade algorithmic safety measures. Non-compliance may result in enforcement actions, including fines of up to £18 million or 10% of a company's global revenue. Ofcom will first target major platforms with high user volumes in the UK or those posing significant risks. Legal experts caution that beyond financial penalties, regulatory interventions could deeply impact companies' operations. The law firm Linklaters described this compliance deadline as a critical milestone, warning that some companies might not have adhered sufficiently to the requirements, risking serious regulatory consequences.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/6c1761fb-6143-4b55-8f93-ad302fc85317> - In a letter dated January 17, 2025, Sarmad Anwar criticizes Mark Zuckerberg's recent decision to remove fact-checkers from Meta platforms, viewing it as an act of ruthless opportunism rather than a championing of free expression. Anwar argues that this move will lead to an increase in unchecked misinformation, as engagement-driven algorithms are prone to amplifying sensational content regardless of its accuracy. This may erode public trust and leave users vulnerable to false narratives. Additionally, Anwar highlights the potential rise in hate speech and its harmful effects on marginalized communities, specifically citing the impact on young British Muslims amid growing Islamophobia on social media. Anwar calls on Meta to reverse this policy and reinstate rigorous fact-checking to mitigate the risk of spreading hate.
* <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/attitudes-to-news/four-in-10-uk-adults-encounter-misinformation/> - According to Ofcom research published on November 27, 2024, four in ten UK adults reported encountering misinformation or deepfake content in the previous four weeks. Among those who have seen false or misleading information, 71% encountered it online, 43% on TV, and 21% via print newspapers or their associated websites/apps. The research also found that men, young adults, people from higher socio-economic backgrounds, minority ethnic and LGB+ groups, as well as those with mental health conditions, are more likely to come across misinformation. The study highlights the prevalence of misinformation in the UK and the need for effective measures to address it.
* <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/attitudes-to-news/understanding-misinformation-an-exploration-of-uk-adults-behaviour-and-attitudes/> - Ofcom's research, published on November 27, 2024, explores UK adults' behavior and attitudes towards misinformation. The study reveals that two in five adults reported encountering misinformation online, with political or electoral content being the most common type. The research also indicates that one in four UK adults find it difficult to distinguish true information from false information, and one in three adults had falsely believed a news story was real until they found out it was fake. The findings underscore the challenges in combating misinformation and the importance of media literacy.
* <https://fullfact.org/policy/reports/full-fact-report-2024/> - Full Fact's 2024 report discusses the impact of generative AI on the information environment. It highlights concerns about the creation and dissemination of misinformation and disinformation through AI tools. The report emphasizes the need for government, regulators, technology companies, and civil society to collaborate to protect the information environment. It also critiques the Online Safety Act for not adequately addressing harmful health misinformation and calls for amendments to better protect UK citizens from the harmful effects of misinformation and disinformation, especially those generated by AI.