Full Fact Audience Research

With warmest thanks to

Our audience members who participated in the research.

First Draft News who generously supported this work and Claire Wardle for feedback and guidance throughout the project.

Zoe Robinson, who provided freelance support for the research and conducted the interviews.

YouGov and Anthony Wells for generously gathering name recognition data for us.

All our funders and supporters, listed at fullfact.org/funding, and the trustees and other volunteers of Full Fact.

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Summary

A note of caution: The survey and interview findings in this report refer to a self-selecting sample and should not be described as representative of Full Fact's existing audience. The findings should only be reported as relating to the views of participants.

- This report features the findings of audience research carried out by Full Fact in autumn 2017. It includes data from Full Fact's website Google Analytics data (from 1 November 2016 to 31 October 2017), representative survey data of name recognition of Full Fact, the findings of a (**self-selecting**) survey completed by 2,053 individuals and subsequent interviews with nine respondents.
- Around 3% of the British public say they have heard of Full Fact.
- Full Fact's audience is probably more male than female, and younger people seem to be more likely to be aware of and use Full Fact—according to Google Analytics and the name recognition data.
- Search is a major driver of traffic to Full Fact's website, driving 57% of all traffic in the period. The majority of Full Fact's website users (73%) are new users.
- The most common reasons (self-selecting) survey respondents said they used Full Fact were for factchecks on what has been in the news (65%), and information on a specific topic (50%). 41% used Full Fact to check their own beliefs. Just over a quarter (27%) used Full Fact to prove a point.
- We asked survey respondents to select up to three most important reasons for Full Fact to exist, out of a list of nine. Factchecking things politicians say (78%), providing impartial factual information to the public (70%), and factchecking things journalists say (44%) were the three most commonly selected.
- Out of survey respondents who were concerned about inaccurate or misleading information, the most commonly selected sources of concern were political campaigns (84%), newspapers (81%), MPs (79%), and social media (78%).
- Overall, respondents were very positive about our work. Asked how likely they would be to recommend Full Fact to a friend on a scale of 0-10, the mean was nine. When asked which descriptive words they associated with Full Fact, more positive words such as "helpful" (78%), "honest" (73%) and "unbiased" (73%) were selected far more than more negative words such as "biased" (2%) and "confusing" (1%).
- Full Fact has rigorous safeguards in place at every level of our organisation to ensure our neutrality, including our cross-party board, fundraising safeguards, restrictions on staff political activity, and more. Ultimately, it is for our audience to judge for themselves whether we succeed. The survey responses are positive in this regard, with 72% of Conservative supporters and 74% of Labour supporters selecting "unbiased", and 3% and 2% of each respectively selecting "biased".
- There appears to be slightly lower name recognition of Full Fact among Conservative voters compared to Labour voters (based on the representative data), and respondents to the self-selecting survey were more likely to lean towards the Labour party. We need to do further research into this to see how the balance compares to the wider internet behaviour of voters among supporters of different parties, to see if this is a skew specific to Full Fact or reflects broader trends.

Introduction

Who follows the work of factcheckers, and why? And what do our audiences think about what we are doing well and what we can be doing better? This report features the initial findings of the UK's independent factchecking charity Full Fact's first large-scale audience research. We promoted a survey to our website users, newsletter subscribers, donors, and social media followers between October and November 2017, receiving 2,459 responses—2,053 complete, of which nine took part in individual telephone interviews.

The findings **cannot be said to be representative** of Full Fact's whole audience (being a self-selecting sample) but provide the first insights we have into how we can be better meeting our existing audience's interests and needs—and highlight important areas for further exploration.

Factchecking is a diverse field—factcheckers range from entities based in or linked to media outlets, those tied to universities, through to independent organisations and charities. Our aims are diverse: some focus on publishing and promoting individual factchecks, others use factchecking as one of multiple tools to campaign for more accurate public debate. Full Fact falls into the latter category, along with organisations like Africa Check working across Africa and Chequeado in Argentina. In the UK, there are also media organisations doing factchecking including the longstanding Channel 4 FactCheck blog and the BBC Reality Check project, and The Conversation UK which is funded by and sources its work from the academic community.

Full Fact is distinctive among factchecking projects. We observe that factchecks alone are not enough to halt the spread of misinformation. We push for systemic changes to improve the quality of public debate, pushing for corrections where necessary, and for example working with government departments and research institutions to improve the quality and communication of information at source. This means we have a range of professional audiences for our work. This research is focused on our online audience for our factchecks and overall editorial content.

This research is the first step in developing a greater understanding of our audience's interest in our work, and we hope will help other factcheckers with their own audience research so we can build up a better picture of factchecking audiences worldwide that reflects the diversity of factchecking organisations globally.

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What does existing data tell us about who uses and follows Full Fact?

What we know about the UK general population

When asked, 86% of people in Great Britain said in 2016 that they think it is 'very' or 'quite' important for an organisation to exist that checks if claims made by politicians and journalists are factually correct.[1]

In a more recent poll, 72% of UK internet users said they agreed 'strongly' or 'somewhat' that "I worry about what is real and what is fake on the internet"—placing the UK a little below the average of 78% for the 17 countries surveyed.[2]

But how many of us actually seek out information to verify what we see and hear?

In its annual research on adults' media use and attitudes, the UK's communications regulator Ofcom found two in three UK internet users in 2016 said they validated the accuracy of the factual information they find online by making at least one of the six checks they were prompted with.[3] The most popular check, selected by 45% of respondents, was to "check different websites to see if the same information appears on them all".

While this doesn't distinguish between someone checking, for example, the accuracy of a football transfer rumour compared to checking information on a political issue, it does provide some evidence that there is a significantly large audience for factchecking to reach in the UK.

What we know about Full Fact's audience

Two polls of YouGov's internet panel in March 2016[4] and July 2017[5] suggested name recognition of Full Fact was 2% in 2016 and 3% in 2017—so around 2 million people in the UK.

Based on the latest survey, this compares to 65% for the UK's national statistics provider the Office for National Statistics, 77% for the British consumer finance website MoneySavingExpert, and 58% for leading research institute the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

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[1] Simpson, I. (2016). The need for factchecking in Britain: What people think about factchecking services. https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/full_fact_report_final.pdf
[2] Figures from GlobeScan, conducted for BBC World Service. Total sample size was 16,542 adult citizens across 18 countries. Fieldwork was undertaken between 13th January – 27 April 2017. https://globescan.com/fake-internet-content-a-high-concern-but-appetite-for-regulation-weakens-global-survey/
[3] Ofcom. (2017). Adults' media use and attitudes: Report 2017. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/102755/adults-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf
[4] Simpson, I. (2016).
[5] Figures from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,700 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th - 11th July 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/c5a8gcyqte/FullFactResults_170711_Awareness_w.pdf

Visits to Full Fact's website are higher than the name recognition survey would suggest, according to Google Analytics data. Over the year to 31st October 2017, Full Fact had 6.6 million page views, 5.7 million unique page views (which avoids double counting an individual visiting the same page more than once), and 4.4 million sessions[6]. All data in this section refers to this period.

Full Fact has an engaged newsletter audience with 18,000 subscribers and on average around 6,000 opens every week.

The majority (73%) of traffic to Full Fact's website comes from new users, with organic search a major driver of this (61% of traffic for new users and 57% for all users). For comparison, Reuters Institute research into news consumption by computer users suggested direct traffic is the most common path to BBC news stories, while outlets like the Sun and Independent generate the majority of traffic via search and social media.[7]

Users to Full Fact's website see on average one page per session.

How users come to Full Fact's website

Sessions on Full Fact's website in the period 1 November 2016 to 31 October 2017, by referral route
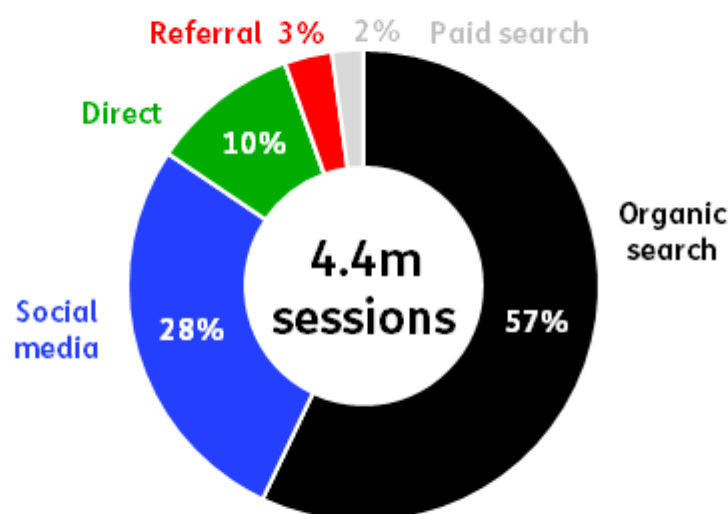
Source: Google Analytics data for fullfact.org (1 November 2016–31 October 2017)

Both the name recognition and Google Analytics data suggest Full Fact's audience is more male than female. Name recognition among males was 4% and females 1% in the latest YouGov survey (name recognition was also higher among males for three of the five other

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[6] Google Analytics defines a session as "the period time a user is actively engaged with your website".
[7] Newman, N., Kalogeropoulos, A. (2017). Mapping online news discovery for computer users in the UK. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. http://media.digitalnewsreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mapping-Online-News-for-Computer-Users-in-the-UK.pdf

organisations asked about). 64% of sessions in the past year were categorised by Google as being male, and 36% female. This poses a question as to why this is.

The most common age of Full Fact's audience, according to Google Analytics' estimates, is the 25-34 age group, making up 26% of sessions in the year. The proportion of sessions gradually decreases for older age groups, down to 9% among the over 65s. This trajectory broadly reflects the results from the YouGov survey, although that has 18-24 year olds as having the highest name recognition (5%) and then gradually decreases from there.

There appears to be slightly lower name recognition among Conservative voters (1% of Conservative voters in 2015 and 2017) compared to Labour voters (3% of Labour voters in 2015, 5% of Labour voters in 2017). We need to do further research into this to see how it compares to things like the wider internet behaviour of voters to find out if this is indeed a skew in our audience— for example, we know that internet use in the UK is skewed towards younger people[8], while those aged 35 and over are more likely than younger people to rate themselves as politically interested and knowledgeable[9].

Methodology and sample

We ran an online survey of 24 questions, derived where possible from pre-existing questions in national UK surveys to aid comparisons. The full set of questions and comparable sources can be found in the Appendix.

The findings should not be taken to be an accurate reflection of Full Fact's audience as the participants were self-selected. The survey was open between 17th October and 17th November and promoted to Full Fact's newsletter subscribers, monthly donors, on our website, and on our social media profiles. Participants were offered to enter a prize draw to win one of two £50 high street vouchers for taking part.

We received 2,053 complete responses, and a further 406 incomplete responses. We have excluded the incomplete responses here to ensure that we are not including duplicate responses (although respondents could go back and edit their responses, if they did so with a different browser or device it will have started a new survey).

The highest response rate was among our monthly donors (20%), and our newsletter subscribers (7%).

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[8] Ofcom. (2017). Internet use and attitudes: 2017 Metrics Bulletin.
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/105507/internet-use-attitudes-bulletin-2017.pdf
[9] Hansard Society. (2017). Audit of Political Engagement 2017 Report.
https://assets.contentful.com/xkbace0jm9pp/1vNBTsOEiYciKEAqWAmEKi/c9cc36b98f60328c0327e313ab37ae0
c/Audit_of_political_Engagement_14__2017_.pdf

	Self-selecting survey respondents (N= 2053)	Total audience for this medium*
Newsletter	1,273	18,000 subscribers
Facebook	402	125,000 likes and followers
Website	212	282,000 users in period
Donor	114	570 donors
Twitter	52	60,700 followers

* For period (17 October to 17 November 2017)

We carried out nine individual interviews with people who had completed the survey, who were offered a £10 high street voucher for taking part. The interviews were semi-structured to avoid individual interviews being skewed by the path of questioning, and were conducted by a freelance researcher. We asked participants to fill out a short interview diary in the week before their interview, covering names or topics of Full Fact articles/social media posts they had come across in the week (if any); where they saw the article/post; what they were doing when they saw it (e.g. on the train); what they thought of it (no more than one sentence). We did this to inform the interviews and to help with specific examples of Full Fact's work to discuss in the interview.

The interviews lasted about 30 minutes and covered three areas: participants' first experience of Full Fact and use of Full Fact since then; participants' views on Full Fact's articles and other sources of information they use; and participants' interest in the public debate around inaccurate information and so-called "fake news"[10] and Full Fact's work beyond individual factchecks. The questions can be found in the Appendix.

The interviews were recorded and analysed thematically.

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[10] We agree with others that this term is unhelpful (see https://fullfact.org/blog/2018/jan/fake-news/) but reluctantly decided to use the term in the interview question since it is the main way this topic has been talked about in the news.

Respondent profiles

Survey respondents

The full demographic characteristics of respondents can be found in the Appendix.

The ages of respondents were very different to the estimated ages of Full Fact's website users. Older users were over-represented, and younger users under-represented.

	Self-selecting survey respondents (N= 2053)	Google Analytics estimates for Full Fact's web audience
18-24	4%	14%
25-34	12%	26%
35-44	13%	22%
45-54	18%	17%
55-64	24%	12%
65+	28%	9%
Other	1%	-

Source: Full Fact unrepresentative survey data (October-November 2017) and Google data for fullfact.org (1 November 2016 to 31 October 2017)

In contrast, the gender balance was very similar to the estimates for Full Fact's website users: 66% of respondents were male, and 33% female.

Most of Full Fact's website traffic comes from search traffic, but we have no equivalent data for how our website users first came across us. Survey respondents were more likely to have first come across Full Fact via social media (38%) rather than Google or another search engine (17%). Some respondents had come across us recently and others had known us for a few years. The largest group had first come across us in 2016 (36%), followed by 26% in 2017, and 19% in 2015. The rest came across us before then (8%) or couldn't remember (12%).

For the following characteristics, we do not have comparable figures to say how these compare to our overall audience. They might give us some indication to the characteristics of our newsletter subscribers given the higher numbers of subscribers that completed the survey, but we cannot say for sure.

The vast majority of respondents either worked full time (41%, defined as working 30 or more hours a week), or were retired (34%). A further 14% worked part time. There are many possible explanations for the high proportion of respondents who were retired

(which compares to around 21-22% of adults in Great Britain[11]), including perhaps the appeal of Full Fact to those with more time; the higher political interest of older people, or simply that retirees were more likely to fill out the survey.

Respondents were very politically active—the vast majority had voted in the past 12 months, and identified themselves as having substantial political knowledge. They also had higher educational qualifications than the general public, with 36% having completed a Bachelor's degree or similar, and 29% having completed a Master's or Doctoral degree, compared to roughly 27% of UK adults who have a Bachelor's or higher degree.[12] Just 3% claim not to have undertaken any of the 13 political activities listed, compared to 31% of the British public in the 2017 Audit of Political Engagement.[13]

When it came to strength of party support, respondents were fairly mixed with half identifying themselves as very strong or fairly strong party supporters (compared to 31% of the British public), and the remainder identifying themselves as not very strong supporters, or not a supporter of any political party. However, when it came to parties respondents leant towards, respondents were more likely to lean towards the Labour party (35%) than the Conservative party (18%)—possibly reflecting the name recognition data.

Interview participants

Interviewees were randomly selected out of the 783 respondents to the survey who said they would be willing to take part in further research or interviews. 10 were initially selected and then we randomly selected further respondents to get a range of ages, gender, political knowledge, strength of party support and a balance of left-wing and right-wing parties. In the end we invited 18 people, and interviewed nine.

Out of the nine we interviewed, five were male and four female. There was at least one person in each age range reported above, with two respondents aged 25-34 and three aged 55-65. One had a Master's or Doctoral degree as their highest level of education, and the rest had Bachelor's degrees. Knowledge of politics was split between those who said they knew a great deal (5) and those who said they knew a fair amount (4). Five were either fairly or very strong supporters of parties, three not very strong supporters and one not a supporter. A third were Conservative supporters, another third Labour supporters, and two were supporters of other parties.

Findings

Why individuals use Full Fact

The most common reasons respondents used Full Fact (based on this self-selecting sample) were for factchecks on what has been in the news (65%), and for information on a

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[11] British Election Study, Panel study data 2015 (N=30,013); ONS 2011 Census estimates [accessed from Nomis on 5 February 2018]

[12] British Election Study, Panel study data 2015 (N=30,013); ONS 2011 Census Analysis, 'Local area analysis of qualifications across England and Wales' (the latter includes professional qualifications so is not directly comparable as these were listed separately in our survey).

[13] Hansard Society. (2017).

specific topic (50%). Far fewer respondents indicated that they would look at Full Fact's content when generally browsing the internet for the latest content (20%) or to find out about what Full Fact is up to (16%). 44% engaged with Full Fact when they saw a social media post about a Full Fact article, and 41% when they read our newsletter.

41% used Full Fact to check their own beliefs. This was also mentioned by five of the nine interviewees, who indicated that they value Full Fact because it allows them to cross-reference what they believe to be true, or to challenge their own political views. One interviewee commented, "Sometimes it will conclude things which I didn't expect it to, and that's quite useful"; another said that Full Fact "does seem to be unbiased because I have gone there to check information only to find that I've been wrong and I quite like that".

Just over a quarter (27%) used Full Fact to prove a point. Three out of nine interviewees also talked about using Full Fact links in debates with others. For example, one talked about being in a debate on Twitter and "I will often go to Full Fact and give them a link to say this is what the facts are." But they weren't all to end an argument, one commented: "I think it's to be able to point to Full Fact as not a way of putting an end to a debate by saying this is right and this is wrong but actually by informing and structuring a debate is more interesting".

Three of the interviewees showed a lot of trust in Full Fact. When asked if they used the source links in Full Fact's articles, one commented that they didn't use them because "I trust their source links. I think if they've put it in there then they would have looked at it". Another commented that Full Fact is "the one thing I know I usually can trust", and another that "since what I've read from Full Fact so far has been very accurate I believe that what they say is the truth".

Audience attitudes towards factchecking and information sources in general

All of the telephone interviewees reported an interest in being up to date with issues such as politics, economics and current affairs, aside from factchecking purposes. When it comes to factchecking, some were primarily interested in staying informed and would factcheck when it is particularly relevant or when prompted. One commented that "factchecking has always been part of my mental landscape", but they didn't "tend to go around looking for facts, I just tend to wallow in what's around". Others would seek out factchecks more or do their own research, with Full Fact as either their primary or only source in order to do this or as one of many sources of information in this pursuit.

To get a sense of what types of information sources survey respondents generally appreciated and found useful, we asked which of a list of sources respondents felt provided them with the most useful information when deciding how to vote in the 2017 General Election. Experts (e.g. academics, economists and think tanks) were the most popular answer, selected by 56% of respondents. This compares to 20% of the British public who named experts as one of the most useful sources of information about the EU referendum in the 2017 Audit of Political Engagement (and 21% who named them as

having the most trustworthy information).[14] Although this is much lower than in our sample, experts were rated second only to TV and radio news programmes in the Audit (34% trusted and 37% useful). The higher ratings for experts in our sample may well reflect the higher levels of education of respondents, as the Audit also found trust in experts to be much higher among people with graduate level education.

We then asked respondents if they agreed with the statement "I worry that much of the information I come across is inaccurate or misleading", and asked those who agreed which of a similar list of sources of information they worried about.

93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and every source on the list was selected by at least 13% of these respondents as one they worried about. The most commonly selected sources of concern were political campaigns (84%), newspapers (81%), MPs (79%), and social media (78%).

Despite the high levels of people who found experts useful for their general election vote, 26% of all respondents still selected experts as one of the sources of information they worried about.

Sources of concern about inaccurate or misleading information

Responses to the question "You said you agreed with the statement 'I worry that much of the information I come across is inaccurate or misleading'. Which of the following people or sources of information, if any, do you worry about? Please tick all that apply.'*
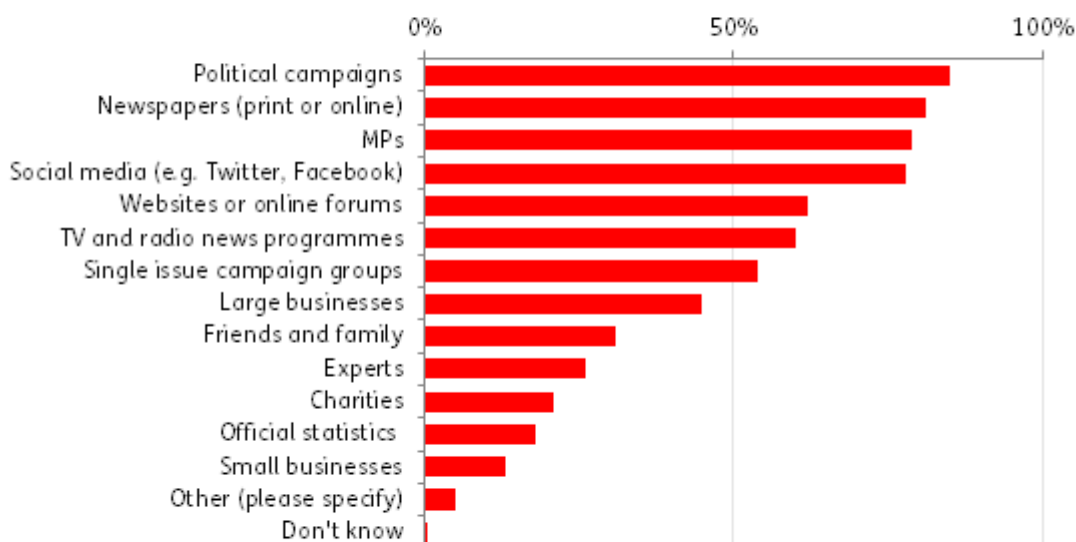
* 93% of 2053 respondents answered 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' to the statement.

Source: Full Fact unrepresentative audience survey November 2017

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[14] Hansard Society, 2017. Our survey question was modelled on the Audit's question, but adapted to ask about the 2017 general election.

What the findings tell us about what Full Fact does

We asked respondents to select up to three most important reasons for Full Fact to exist, out of a list of nine. Factchecking things politicians say (78%), providing impartial factual information to the public (70%), and factchecking things journalists say (44%) were the three most commonly selected. The fourth most common reason was to "campaign and lobby for the accuracy of public debate" (34%).

Full Fact tweets along with Prime Minister's Question Time and the current affairs debate show BBC Question Time every week with live factchecks of what people have said—both to serve audiences watching these, and to hold politicians and other public figures to account for what is said. Although 60% of respondents said they were aware of this work, only 18% said they used Full Fact's website or social media feed when watching a live event.

Our automated factchecking work—part of which is about developing and making available the technology to live factcheck these types of events at scale—was relatively well known about, with 35% of respondents aware of this work.

Full Fact deliberately does not comment on whether individuals are honest and instead focuses on whether claims are accurate, both because we think this is better in its own right, and because we think this approach is more likely to be trusted. To see how audiences might respond to a more individual antagonistic approach, we listed "to publicly scold people misusing information" as a possible reason for Full Fact to exist. Only 5% selected this option, at least when forced to choose up to three reasons for Full Fact to exist, which suggests there is little enthusiasm among these respondents for Full Fact to be more critical of individuals.

Full Fact's performance on political impartiality

Full Fact has rigorous safeguards in place at every level of our organisation to ensure our neutrality. These have been carefully constructed based on advice from our board and examples ranging from Amnesty International to the BBC. They include the cross-party board, fundraising safeguards, a conflict of interests policy, restrictions on staff political activity, feedback processes, operating guidelines, external reviews, and more.

Ultimately, it is for our audience to judge for themselves whether we succeed. We provide links to all sources so that readers can check what we've said for themselves.

The survey responses suggest overall we are succeeding at this. When asked which out of a list of descriptive words they associate with Full Fact, 73% of respondents selected "unbiased". Only 2% selected "biased". The results are similar comparing by support for the two main parties, with 72% of Conservative supporters and 74% of Labour supporters selecting "unbiased", and 3% of Conservative supporters and 2% of Labour supporters selecting "biased".

In the open-ended responses, many respondents thanked Full Fact for producing unbiased content, but some felt there were clear biases. In particular, some comments referred to

Facebook posts as being biased and misrepresenting the article they were linking to, and some referred to biased headlines. Others asked for a declaration of interests of Full Fact staff; suggested that we need a wider range of staff; or perceived that Full Fact as an organisation leans towards the left or right. These points require further attention.

What we need to be doing better

On the whole, respondents (in this self-selecting sample) were very positive about our work. Asked how likely they would be to recommend Full Fact to a friend on a scale of 0 to 10, the mean was nine. When asked which descriptive words they associated with Full Fact, the more positive words were selected far more than more negative words.

Respondents could pick as many of the listed words as they wanted. The following were most popular: helpful (78%), honest (73%), unbiased (73%), clear (69%), serious (56%), effective (47%), worthy (41%), and respectful (35%). Fun, feisty, complicated, pedantic, biased, confusing, boring, patronising and "none of these" were selected by less than 5% of respondents.

That said, there are some clear areas for improvement there (such as the lower selection for "effective", for example), and both the open-ended responses in the survey and the interviews suggested a number of areas for improvement:

Communicating more about what we do

- **Communicating more about our funding and impartiality**. In the open-ended responses to the surveys, some individuals—including some who did trust us and were concerned about the views of others—asked for us to communicate our funding sources more clearly. We have a page on our website about our funding, and this is signposted to at the bottom of every page, but one option might be to promote this information more prominently and frequently on social media and other places aside from our website.

- **Communicating more about how we factcheck, and what sources we use**. A number of survey respondents wanted to know how priority setting is determined, and what methodology we use to factcheck. One commented, "It does not always make clear what it[s] sources of information are, for instance if those may have some bias."

- **Communicating more about our impact work.** 34% selected that "to campaign and lobby for the accuracy of public debate" was one of the (three) most important reasons for Full Fact to exist, but less than 15% were aware of key elements of this work: 15% said they were aware Full Fact works with government departments to improve the way they communicate information, and 12% were aware Full Fact lobbied for system change e.g. improvements to the process for press complaints. Awareness of our corrections work was slightly higher at 26% for press corrections and 30% for corrections from politicians, but awareness could be greater for this too. This is especially important considering the lower selection of "effective" as a descriptive word for Full Fact.

Developing and segmenting our output

- **Treating our platforms separately.** The most popular interaction with Full Fact among survey respondents was via our website (71% of respondents), followed by our newsletter/email (60%), Facebook (39%), and Twitter (25%). 72% of respondents followed us via either one (34%) or two (38%) of these platforms. Only 9% indicated that they interacted with us on all four. The interviews also highlighted how individuals may just see Full Fact through one medium, for example only seeing Facebook posts or only reading the email (with some clicking through to the website, and others not). This highlights a research need to understand the different ways that these platforms are used and whether differences mean we should plan our overall output on each platform as an individual entity. It is notable that transparency on one may not translate to transparency on another. We will be looking into some of this as part of our Third Generation Factchecking project.

- **Considering different products for different users.** Some said we gave too much information, some said we gave too little. Articles were described as "wordy", and several respondents asked for a clear, short summary at the top of each article (which we try to do, but this suggests not obviously enough or consistently enough). The interviews also highlighted the different contexts individuals use us— for example, some come across our work when scrolling through social media on their phone while doing other things, while some will spend time reading through our whole newsletter section by section, clicking through the links as they go.

- **Consider how best to provide overviews and context.** There was a clear demand for getting an overall picture from our factchecks. Some suggested a points-based, or traffic light, system for determining the accuracy of claims, some requested a list of factchecks or score sheet for individuals or organisations, and others also talked about wanting the overall picture behind a claim. For example, one requested Full Fact should "Build more context into a fact - not just whether it is true or not, but also whether it is relevant to the discussion it was a part of." Others also called for Full Fact to provide "knowledge summaries of issues" or "informing more general positions". One approach that Full Fact is doing that may help with this is thinking about and organising our work around debates not individual claims, looking at how individual claims on a particular topic build up to form a picture about the world. There is a question of how best to present these debates and whether these could or should include more debate around them. On the points-based systems or score sheets, ratings can be too reductive and we have not found any rating system that we are satisfied safeguards our standards of objectivity and consistency. Full Fact has steered clear from providing summaries per individual too as we do not factcheck a representative sample of claims. That said, this raises the question of whether there is a middle ground—or if we should be better communicating why we do not provide these things.

What next?

This project was a springboard for us to have a baseline level of knowledge about our existing audience from which we could build and explore. The findings reported here are just the initial findings and we'll be continuing to digest the results. From these initial findings, and our other experience, the following research needs emerge:

Quick wins

- We need to develop and test editorial formats, informed by this and other research. Our Third Generation Factchecking project will be doing just this: it aims to develop, test, and implement effective reusable editorial formats that could appear anywhere from our website to search results. We will be testing these packages in 2018.
- There is a clear need for a literature review of existing research in factchecking and other fields such as advertising with the explicit focus of drawing out which areas have clear and robust findings that we can (relatively) easily apply to our work, and how we can apply them—and which areas need further exploration. This should feed into our Third Generation Factchecking project.
- Comparing factchecking audiences. We know there are others already looking at gathering similar information on their audiences and look forward to discussing the findings to see if they might tell us anything about what methods might work well to reach different people.

Developing a better understanding of audiences

- Exploring who we are not reaching, and what it would take to secure trust from those we are not reaching. For example, what might be causing fewer females to be interested in our work? Are there disproportionately fewer Conservative supporters engaged in our work and if so, why? Existing research from the Reuters Institute suggests, in contrast with America, it is left-wing voters in the UK who tend to be less trusting in news media, which could be one explanation.[15]
- Conducting a segmentation analysis of representative data to develop a detailed picture of the audiences impartial organisations are seeking to reach. One question for this work is whether there some people who are too disengaged and too cynical of information providers for our work to reach?

Evaluating the educational value of our work

- Initial qualitative research on the CrossCheck project found evidence of audience members learning critical reading skills.[16] We need a better understanding of our

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[15] Newman, N., Fletcher, R. 2017. Bias, bullshit and lies: Audience perspectives on low trust in the media. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-11/Nic%20Newman%20and%20Richard%20Fletcher%20-%20Bias%2C%20Bullshit%20and%20Lies%20-%20Report.pdf and data from the Digital News Report 2017.
[16] Smyrnaios, N., Chauvet, S., Marty, E. 2017. The impact of CrossCheck on journalists and the audience. https://firstdraftnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Crosscheck_rapport_EN_1129.pdf/

effect on our audiences, including whether we make them more cynical, or help them to be sceptical and place trust where trust is deserved?

Other needs

We have previously identified the following research questions:

- What works to stop misinformation and disinformation spreading online and offline? Are corrections worth the effort, especially when information spreads so quickly and easily online?
- How do citizen's beliefs form over time and what role does factchecking have in this context? Political campaigns take place over months, and beliefs form over years. We need to explore how we can understand more about the role of factchecking in this broader context.
- What works to increase the cost of lying and the rewards for accuracy? When the vast majority of the public says that they distrust politicians, is there any reason for politicians not to lie?

Appendix 1: Survey results

Q1. Thinking back to the first time you came across Full Fact, was it…

Base		**2053**
2017	*26%*	538
2016	*36%*	735
2015	*19%*	387
2014	*4%*	74
Before 2014	*4%*	74
Can't remember	*12%*	245

Q2. And can you remember how you first came across Full Fact?
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		**2053**
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	38%	774
Recommended by a friend or family member	7%	135
TV	3%	53
Radio	2%	37
Newspaper (online or in print)	6%	128
Google	13%	267
Another search engine	4%	72
Can't remember	20%	418
Other (please specify)	8%	169

Q3. How much, if anything, do you feel you know about politics?

Base		**2051**
A great deal	16%	333
A fair amount	73%	1492
Not very much	11%	218
Nothing at all	*	6
Don't know	*	2

Q3 is based on the same question in the Hansard Society's Audit of Political Engagement.

Q4. Would you call yourself a very strong, fairly strong, not very strong, or not a supporter at all of any political party?

Base		**2052**
Very strong	13%	269
Fairly strong	37%	752
Not very strong	26%	536
I am not a supporter of any political party	24%	488
Don't know	*	7

Q4 is based on the same question in the Hansard Society's Audit of Political Engagement.

Q5. Which party are you most inclined to support?

Base		**2052**
Conservative	18%	359
Labour	35%	723
Liberal Democrat	18%	363
Scottish National Party	3%	58

UK Independence Party	2%	44
Green	9%	182
I would rather not say	4%	73
No party	8%	154
Other (please specify)	5%	96

Q5 is based on a similar question in the Hansard Society's Audit of Political Engagement. (Our list is slightly different as it is based on the 2017 General Election results for parties with a vote share of more than 1%).

Q6. In the last 12 months have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies? Please select all that apply.
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		**2052**
Voted in an election	88%	1804
Created or signed an e-petition	77%	1579
Donated money or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaigning organisation	52%	1062
Created or signed a paper petition	21%	436
Contacted a local councillor or MP/MSP/WAM	47%	972
Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	48%	993
Contributed to a discussion or campaign online or on social media	49%	1004
Taken part in a public consultation	31%	632
Taken an active part in a campaign	19%	382
Donated money or paid a membership fee to a political party	32%	647
Contacted the media	17%	356
Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	16%	321
Attended political meetings	18%	366
None of these	3%	57

Q6 is based on the same question in the Hansard Society's Audit of Political Engagement.

Q7. How do you most frequently interact with Full Fact?

	Every day		Every week		At least once a month		Less often than once a month		Never		Don't know		**Base**
Website	3%	51	27%	455	31%	532	25%	426	12%	206	3%	57	1703
Twitter	8%	117	12%	177	7%	106	9%	122	61%	870	3%	39	1422
Facebook	11%	166	21%	326	12%	187	8%	130	45%	693	3%	43	1538
Email or newsletter	8%	131	35%	598	22%	379	8%	132	24%	412	5%	80	1720

Q8. In what situations do you use Full Fact's website or social media feed? Please select all that apply.
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		**2053**
When I want to know if something in the news is correct	65%	1340
When I am looking for information on a specific topic I care about	50%	1021
When I am generally browsing the internet to look for the latest content	20%	412
When I want to prove a point to a friend / someone I know	27%	545
When I want to check if I'm right about something	41%	849
When I want to find out about what Full Fact is up to	16%	335
When I see a social media post about a Full Fact article, e.g. on Facebook or Twitter	44%	905
When I read the newsletter	41%	851
When I am watching a live event e.g. BBC Question Time	18%	365

When I am deciding how to vote	16%	332
When I come across a Full Fact article on Google or another search engine	23%	478
Other (please specify)	4%	90

Q9. Is there anything Full Fact does not do that you think it should?
Free answer

Q10. Which of the following, if any, do you see as the most important reasons for Full Fact to exist? Please select up to three.
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		**2053**
To provide impartial factual information to the public	70%	1446
To help me decide how to vote	3%	62
To factcheck things politicians say	78%	1597
To factcheck things journalists say	44%	909
To factcheck things other public figures say	31%	632
To factcheck things on social media	20%	405
To campaign and lobby for the accuracy of public debate	34%	688
Entertainment	*	8
To publicly scold people misusing information	5%	96
Other (please specify)	3%	53

Q11. Which of the following activities, if any, are you aware that Full Fact does? Please select all that apply.

Base		**2053**
Publishing factchecks on statements made by politicians, journalists and other public figures	96%	1979

Live factchecking on Twitter e.g. of BBC Question Time and Prime Minister's Questions	60%	1222
Seeking corrections from journalists	26%	530
Seeking corrections from politicians	30%	617
Working with government departments to improve the way they communicate information	15%	305
Working with expert research organisations to communicate their work	18%	378
Lobbying for system change e.g. improvements to the process for press complaints	12%	253
Developing technology to instantly factcheck claims made by politicians, journalists, and others	35%	720
Training school pupils and journalists	9%	178

Q12. Which of the following words, if any, do you associate with Full Fact? Please select all that apply.
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		**2053**
Complicated	3%	64
Clear	69%	1426
Unbiased	73%	1492
Confusing	1%	30
Helpful	78%	1605
Fun	5%	98
Serious	56%	1158
Boring	1%	29
Biased	2%	48
Honest	73%	1493
Worthy	41%	832
Effective	47%	970
Pedantic	3%	62
Patronising	1%	25

Feisty	3%	66
Respectful	35%	714
None of these	1%	28

Q13. How likely are you to recommend Full Fact to a friend, on a scale of 0 to 10 (with 0 being very unlikely and 10 being very likely)?

	(Base=2053)
Average	8.7

Q14. Thinking back to the General Election earlier this year, which of the following, if any, did you feel provided you with the most useful information when deciding or confirming your vote choice? Please select all that apply.
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		2053
Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	22%	451
Experts (e.g. academics, economists and think tanks)	56%	1156
TV and radio news programmes	44%	893
Newspapers (printed or online)	41%	850
Websites or online forums	30%	607
Large businesses	2%	36
Small businesses	2%	37
Political campaigns	23%	481
MPs	12%	252
Foreign politicians	4%	86
Single issue campaign groups	13%	274
Friends and family	12%	242
Did not vote	4%	79
Other (please specify)	13%	276

*Q14 is an adapted version of the following question from the 2017 Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement: "Thinking back to the Referendum, which of the following, if any, did you feel provided you with the **most useful** information about the issue? Please select all that apply.*

Q15. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I worry that much of the information I come across is inaccurate or misleading"? By information we mean things you see on the internet, or that politicians or journalists say.

Base		2053
Strongly agree	50%	1032
Agree	43%	879
Disagree	5%	104
Strongly disagree	*	5
Don't know	2%	33

Q16. You said you agreed with the statement "I worry that much of the information I come across is inaccurate or misleading". Which of the following people or sources of information, if any, do you worry about? Please tick all that apply.

Asked to those who selected "agree" or "strongly agree" to the previous question
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		1911
Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	78%	1499
Experts (e.g. academics, economists and think tanks)	26%	489
Official statistics (statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics, central government departments and by the devolved administrations)	18%	336
TV and radio news programmes	60%	1141
Newspapers (print or online)	81%	1550
Websites or online forums	62%	1188
Large businesses	45%	851

Small businesses	13%	254
Political campaigns	85%	1620
MPs	79%	1508
Charities	21%	399
Single issue campaign groups	54%	1037
Friends and family	31%	587
Don't know	*	1
Other (please specify)	5%	96

Q17. Which of the following sites or apps, if any, have you used in the last week? Please select all that apply.
(Choices were randomised for each respondent)

Base		**2049**
Facebook	70%	1437
Instagram	22%	442
LinkedIn	33%	674
Pinterest	17%	348
SnapChat	5%	112
Tumblr	4%	89
Twitter	47%	953
WhatsApp	51%	1053
YouTube	69%	1404
None of the above	7%	150
Other (please specify)	3%	60

Q18. What is your age?

Free answer (aggregate results reported on p. 6)

Q19. What is your gender?

Base		**2043**
Female	33%	672
Male	66%	1342
Unspecified	1%	29

Q20. Where do you live?

Base		**2053**
England	83%	1711
Scotland	7%	140
Wales	4%	75
Northern Ireland	1%	11
Outside of the UK	6%	116

Q21. To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

Base		**2053**
White British	85%	1735
Any other white background	8%	168
White and Black Caribbean	*	3
White and Black African	*	1
White and Asian	1%	12
Any other mixed background	1%	17
Indian	1%	11
Pakistani	*	5

Bangladeshi	*	1
Any other Asian background	*	6
Black Caribbean	*	1
Black African	*	2
Any other black background	*	1
Chinese	*	5
Other ethnic group	1%	12
I would rather not say	4%	73

Q21 is based on the same question in the British Election Study.

Q22. What is your highest level of education?

Base		**2053**
I am currently in school/full-time education	1%	25
I did not complete secondary/high school	1%	30
Secondary school, high school, baccalaureate or A-Levels	14%	292
Professional qualification	17%	357
Bachelor's degree or similar	36%	734
Masters or Doctoral degree	29%	599
Don't know	1%	16

Q22 is based on the same question in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report.

Q23. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

Base		**2053**
Working full time (30 or more hours per week)	41%	847
Working part time (8-29 hours per week)	11%	229
Working part time (less than 8 hours a week)	2%	50
Unemployed and looking for work	2%	41
Full time university student	3%	60
Other full time student	*	8
Retired	34%	691
Not in paid work for any other reason	6%	127

Q23 is based on a similar question in the British Election Study.

Q24. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of Full Fact?
Free answer

An asterisk (*) indicates a finding of less than 0.5% but greater than zero.

Appendix 2: Additional analysis

Cross-platform use

This is an analysis of responses to Q7: How do you most frequently interact with Full Fact? Responses of "every day", "every week", "at least once a month", "less often than once a month" were counted as one use of a platform. 18 invalid responses were excluded.

Platform used	Proportion of total respondents (N=2035)	
Website	1436	71%
Twitter	513	25%
Facebook	798	39%
Email/newsletter	1223	60%
Never	13	1%
Don't know	31	2%
Did not respond	10	*

Number of platforms used (Website/Twitter/Facebook/Email)	Proportion of total respondents (N=2035)	
1	690	34%
2	770	38%
3	344	17%
4	177	9%
Never	13	1%
Don't know	31	2%
Did not respond	10	*

Political impartiality analysis

This is a comparison of responses to Q12: Which of the following words, if any, do you associate with Full Fact? Please select all that apply with responses to Q5: Which party are you most inclined to support?

Descriptive words associated with Full Fact	Q5. Which party are you most inclined to support?									
	Total (N=2053)	Cons. (N=359)	Lab. (N=723)	Lib. Dem. (N=363)	SNP (N=58)	UKIP (N=44)	Green (N=182)	No party (N=154)	I would rather not say (N=73)	Other (N=96)
Un-biased	1423 73%	260 72%	536 74%	285 79%	41 71%	22 50%	134 74%	106 69%	39 53%	68 71%
Biased	48 2%	12 3%	15 2%	3 1%	1 2%	3 7%	4 2%	5 3%	5 7%	0 0%

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Introduction

Introduce purpose of research (to find out more about who follows Full Fact and what their thoughts are about Full Fact's work, so Full Fact can improve what it does) and format for interview (semi-structured, encouraged to give full answers).

Interest in Full Fact and factchecking

1. Can you tell me about when you first noticed or became interested in Full Fact?
2. Was that the first time you had come across a "factcheck"?
   a. [Optional] What about the idea of "factchecking" something? (If asked to define – the process of checking the accuracy of a statement, by anyone)
   b. [If not mentioned] Can you remember when you were first aware of the idea of factchecking?
3. Can you tell me about how you usually come across or use Full Fact now?
   a. [If social media or email] Do you click through to articles?
   b. What topics do you tend to be interested in or catch your eye?
   c. [If not mentioned] Do you normally seek out Full Fact's articles?
   d. [If not mentioned] Can you briefly paint the scene of what you might be doing when you read Full Fact's articles? For example, is there a particular time of day – like when you're eating breakfast – when you might read them?
   e. [If come across Full Fact only recently] How do you think you might use Full Fact in the future?
4. Do you look much at the work of media factcheckers, like BBC Reality Check or Channel 4 Factcheck?
   a. [If no] Have you ever looked at their work?

Full Fact articles

The next few questions are about Full Fact's articles.

5. Thinking about all the articles and information you have read by Full Fact, before the ones you may have read this week, do you usually feel satisfied by the information Full Fact gives?
   a. What do you think about their conclusions?
   b. What about the amount of information they give?
   c. [If time] What about when you think of the articles you read this week?
6. How often do you read an entire Full Fact article?
   d. [If relevant] What is most likely to stop you reading an entire article?
7. Thinking about when you're looking at a Full Fact article on a certain topic, can you tell me about whether you might look at any other sources on the topic?
   a. Ask for examples.
   b. [If not covered] Can you tell me a bit about what sources you might use and how much time you might spend looking into it?

      e. Have you ever looked at the source links in Full Fact's articles? [If clarification needed: The ones linking to the sources behind each factual statement Full Fact makes]

           i. [If yes] Are you likely to do this regularly, or just if something has caught your eye?

8. Can you tell me a bit about what news or information sources you look at more generally?

      a. What do you look at them for?

      b. Where do you look if you want impartial information?

Campaigning

Moving on to the final section now...

9. What do you think about all the discussion in the news about inaccurate information and so-called "fake news"? [Follow up, if relevant] Is it something you've been following much?

      a. General probing questions: Can you tell me a bit more about that... Can you give me an example? Do you think there is a big problem of inaccurate information?

      b. Probing if yes: What type of inaccurate information are you most bothered by? Do you think things need to change? Do you think things can be changed?

      c. If mention USA/other countries: Do you think it's a problem in the UK?

10. If yes to above. What would you like to see Full Fact do about this, if anything?
If no to above. How do you see Full Fact's role in this debate?

11. Are you aware of any campaigning work that Full Fact does or has done?

      a. If they're not sure: By that I mean work they have done to influence information systems and policy that affect public debate.

      b. If yes and hasn't said much: What things are you aware of?

12. Full Fact takes what it describes as carrot and stick approach: for the carrot, it has worked to improve the quality and availability of information that is available. For the stick, it has worked to improve the accountability systems for the use of inaccurate information.

      a. Further information?: for the carrot, Full Fact has been working with national information providers such as the House of Commons Library to predict what factual debates will be coming up in the future and for making sure there is a plan for getting that information – be it data or funding analysis of data. For the stick, Full Fact has worked with the BBC to improve its guidelines so that they now explicitly emphasise the importance of paying attention to criticisms of factual claims made by the UK Statistics Authority.

      b. Do you think those are important things for Full Fact to spend their time on?

      c. If you had to prioritise one over the other, what would it be?

      d. Is there anything else you would like to see Full Fact doing?

13. Is there anything else you want to mention that we haven't covered?

Full Fact

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