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What is the impact of fact checkers' work

on public figures, institutions and the media?



A JOINT BRIEFING FROM:



About this briefing

Misinformation causes real harm to people's lives, health, finances and to democracy. We need good evidence on how to tackle it. This briefing is part of a research programme set up by Africa Check, Chequeado and Full Fact to find that evidence and make it useful.

In this briefing, Full Fact's Head of Research **Amy Sippitt** explores the evidence on what impact fact checkers' work has on public figures, institutions and the media. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to Prof. Lucas Graves and Prof. Brendan Nyhan for their comments.

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Summary

This briefing explores the impact fact checkers' work can have on public figures, institutions and the media.

There are numerous studies of the effect of fact checking on public figures and the media, and the circumstances under which it is or isn't effective. For this briefing, we identified 15 studies relevant to this topic which provide a mixture of empirical and anecdotal evidence.

These show:

- There are examples worldwide both of politicians responding positively to fact checking (by correcting themselves in public, by no longer using claims shown to be inaccurate, or better still by seeking out reliable evidence first, before making claims) and of politicians continuing to repeat falsehoods.
- The one peer-reviewed experiment on the impact of fact checking on politicians to date found that alerting politicians in the US to the threat of fact checking could encourage them to make fewer inaccurate claims. Other research by a PhD student in the US found evidence of fewer false claims being made after publication of a fact check.
- Fact checking can, according to these studies, have an impact on some politicians' behaviour, but we need to better understand the circumstances that make this most effective and how to make it a durable effect.
- Some media outlets use fact checking content in their work, and journalists have reported changing their practices in terms of the way they question sources on grounds of accuracy. But there is still a long way to go to raise awareness of the practice and more to understand about how fact checking might encourage journalists to take on the principles of the practice in their own work.

We did not come across any research looking at the impact of fact checking on institutions, but we cover some examples of this in case studies.

Africa Check, Chequeado and Full Fact are working together to look at how we can gather more evidence on this topic in the coming years.

Introduction

Fact checkers differ both in the goals they set,¹ and in the activities they carry out that might have an impact. This briefing focuses mainly on evidence of the impact fact checking has on politicians, something that is very hard to measure definitively. It also briefly discusses evidence on the impact the practice has on the media, and to a lesser extent on public institutions.

The incentives on these actors are very different, with politicians being elected by the public and accountable to separate structures from staff working in public institutions or the media. In many places, politicians are criticised by those they serve and by the media if they admit to making mistakes, discouraging them from admitting errors and making corrections even if they are inclined to do so. In many countries, media houses have a policy, at least in theory, of making corrections where they have erred – and face little negative reaction for doing so.

Full Fact has previously talked about how the full spectrum of claims can include genuine misunderstandings as well as careless, reckless and sometimes wilful inaccuracies.² While some politicians do correct false claims, there are inaccurate claims that politicians and other public figures around the world have made and repeated many times over, despite overwhelming contrary evidence. This can be due to a myriad of reasons, ranging from disagreement over evidence, through to repeating inaccurate claims in order to push a message or spur debate, through to a lack of perceived costs from repeating inaccurate claims.

The ways in which fact checking can and does have an impact on these actors varies around the world, depending on the tactics used and the political and societal contexts fact checking organisations operate in. Some fact checkers focus their efforts on correcting public understanding more than on changing the way politicians and the media communicate. Some fact checking organisations such as **Africa Check, Chequeado and Full Fact see accountability as a big part of their mission** and have developed a range of activities which seek to act on the findings of fact checks and **use institutional and societal pressures to ensure fact checks have consequences for those putting out misinformation**. This briefing focuses on the activities of the latter organisations.

Any interventions are unlikely to be the one silver bullet which prevents all public figures from making inaccurate statements. But what impact could fact checking have on the way public figures and institutions communicate? To answer this question, we need first to consider the different activities of these fact checking organisations, and how they may affect public figures' behaviour.

1 Lucas Graves, 'Boundaries Not Drawn: Mapping the Institutional Roots of the Global Fact-Checking Movement', *Journalism Studies* 19, no. 5 (4 April 2018): 613–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1196602>.

2 Amy Sippitt, 'Full Fact', in *Data in Society: Challenging Statistics in an Age of Globalisation*, ed. Jeff Evans, Sally Ruane, and Humphrey Southall (Policy Press, 2019).

How fact checkers' work may have impact

Fact checkers such as Africa Check, Chequeado and Full Fact seek to tackle the causes and consequences of misinformation by publishing fact checks to inform the public. In addition, they also engage with public figures and institutions to seek corrections and stop misinformation at source; train the media in fact checking; engage with authorities who hold data to improve public access to reliable information; and work to cultivate the public's ability to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate information. These activities include those which increase the general accountability of public figures and institutions, as well as those which make intentional efforts to change specific behaviours.

These activities have the following intentions:

- **Contacting the claimant during the research phase of a fact check and asking for the source of a claim.** This makes public figures or staff that work with them aware that they are being fact checked, and in the longer term could encourage more careful use of evidence and a willingness to back up factual claims. This could of course result in little substantive change if the public figures name sources but without any consideration for the source's quality or its accurate use.
- **Contacting the claimant pre-publication of the fact check to ask for correction.** A fact checker might ask for the claim to be corrected before the fact check is published if it is clear the claim is wrong. Whether fact checkers seek to do this depends on the environment they operate in, but this can be effective where speed is the priority, for example where a request is made to correct a news bulletin before a fact check is fully written up and published.
- **Publicly exposing inaccurate claims.** By publishing fact checks on websites and in the media, and live fact checking (for example on social media or in debates), fact checkers theoretically increase the reputational cost of making an inaccurate claim. The threat of this happening could also act as a deterrent.
- **Seeking corrections to inaccuracies after publication.** Although this requires a public figure or media outlet to publicly admit a mistake, this process can be encouraged through the use of established regulatory systems like press or parliamentary complaint systems. This can also reduce the spread of the claim by making the claimant less likely to repeat it, and others less likely to refer to the original inaccuracy by having the record corrected.
- **Systemic interventions.** Fact checkers can use the evidence from fact checks to identify systemic issues with information and accountability systems that are leading to inaccuracies and seek ways to improve those systems. This is a broad category that can include working with public information providers to improve public access to well communicated and accurate information sources.

- **Training and awards.** Fact checkers deliver a range of activities to champion standards, particularly in the media – for example, by training journalists and media students, and through award schemes.

Finally, the impact that fact checking can have on public figures is likely to differ in size and nature, depending on the cultural and political context and information environment of individual countries. In places where accountability and scrutiny of political elites is low, the role of fact checking may be to introduce scrutiny where it is lacking. Where scrutiny is greater, fact checking might aim to make accountability more effective. Fact checkers' impact should be considered in relation to the cultural and political contexts in which they are operating.

Case studies

By Peter Cunliffe-Jones, Ariel Riera and Amy Sippitt

Public corrections

South African police revised official crime figures AFRICA CHECK

Crime statistics are closely followed by the public and politicians in South Africa, due to the high crime rates in the country. In September 2018, the South African Police Service published official crime figures for the year 2017/2018. Using incorrect population data, they presented figures that mis-stated the rate of various crimes per 100,000 of the population. Africa Check ran its own calculations and spotted the error. The mistake had the effect of “making the increases in crime rates look smaller and the decreases look larger,” Anine Kriegler, a researcher in criminology at the University of Cape Town, said. Africa Check engaged with the police, who two days later issued a public revision notice, saying “SAPS regrets the error and reaffirms its commitment to inform the public accurately regarding the methodology used in a fair and objective manner guided by pure statistical considerations”.³

Candidates for Argentina President and Vice President stopped repeating a claim CHEQUEADO

During the 2015 presidential election campaign, the Cambiemos candidate Mauricio Macri claimed that in his eight years as mayor of Buenos Aires, his party had not had a single accusation of corruption. Chequeado live fact checked the debate and rated

³ 'SAPS Admits to Error in Latest Crime Stats', TimesLIVE, accessed 24 January 2020, timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-09-14-saps-admits-to-error-in-latest-crime-stats.

the claim as false.⁴ Though none had been pursued to the end, Mauricio Macri's city administration had received a series of charges. Chequeado reproduced this and other fact checks in different media outlets and TV and radio shows, in order to clarify the information and to stop the spread of incorrect claims. A week after the debate, Gabriela Michetti, who was running for vice-president for Cambiemos, was asked about Macri's claim on a radio station. "I saw Chequeado's article, so we corrected the claim and we never repeated it again", answered Michetti.⁵

Unpublished figures on mental health services in England made public FULL FACT

In November 2017, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Jeremy Hunt and TV actor Ralf Little had a heated debate on Twitter about the state of mental health provision in the UK. Among several other claims, Full Fact looked into comments made by the Health Secretary about the provision of a type of mental health crisis care in Accident and Emergency Departments, known as liaison services. After scrutinising the figures, Full Fact discovered that they had not been published, which meant no-one could check the numbers. Full Fact wrote to the UK statistics regulator asking for their help getting the figures published.⁶ The regulator put pressure on the health department to release the figures, and one week later they were published. As a direct result of this work, the NHS decided to reinstate a survey on mental health crisis care provision in A&E.

Systemic and attitudinal change

Training journalists to reduce the spread of misinformation

AFRICA CHECK, CHEQUEADO AND FULL FACT

Misinformation often reaches its widest audience when picked up and relayed by mainstream media. To counter this, many fact checkers provide training for journalism students, newsroom journalists and specialist fact checking units to raise awareness of the harm done by misinformation and build skills in tackling it. Chequeado trains journalists around the country, coordinates a network of fact checking units across Latin America called Latam Chequea, and in 2019 ran a collaborative project between newsrooms to fact check the presidential elections. By the end of 2019, Africa Check

4 Chequeado, 'Chequeado Facebook Post', 2015, [facebook.com/Chequeado/photos/a.505948792752701/1191124074235166/?type=1&theater](https://www.facebook.com/Chequeado/photos/a.505948792752701/1191124074235166/?type=1&theater).

5 'Michetti Sobre Chequeo a Macri - Chequeado', RadioCut, accessed 24 January 2020, radiocut.fm/audiocut/michetti-sobre-chequeo-a-macri-chequeado.

6 'After the Fact - Jeremy Hunt vs Ralf Little', Full Fact, accessed 24 January 2020, fullfact.org/blog/2018/jan/corrections-jeremy-hunt-vs-ralf-little.

had trained 3,000 journalists in more than a dozen countries and launched the Africa Facts network of fact checking organisations in countries from DR Congo to Zimbabwe. Ferial Hafferjee, then editor of the leading South African news outlet City Press, said in a column in October 2015 that she had called in Africa Check to train its staff in setting up improved accuracy protocols. Full Fact has carried out training for journalism students across the UK, including for Google News Lab events and the National Council for the Training of Journalists.

Engaging with officials to win attitudinal change AFRICA CHECK

Fact checkers also help to bring change in the way that politicians and public officials communicate, both through their presence checking public debate and by engaging with officials.

Ahead of South Africa's May 2019 elections, Africa Check organised a public event to discuss the accuracy of the manifestos of the three main political parties, both to focus attention on the manifestos and raise awareness among political parties that their work would be fact checked – encouraging campaigns to correct inaccuracies. The African National Congress (ANC) agreed to correct mistakes found in its manifesto and other parties engaged with Africa Check over their campaign promises. ANC General Manager Febe Potgeiter-Gqubule said, "Africa Check plays an important role to keep us accountable as political organisations, as public figures, as citizens, to be able to say, as you quote something you should think, is it right or is it not, how do I back this up and has the research been done." In Senegal, Dr Ibrahima Diouf, in charge of the February 2019 manifesto of the opposition Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement agreed that the presence of a fact checking organisation in the country had improved the way politicians make campaign claims. "Those of us writing the manifestos of political parties, are paying more attention to the accuracy of the figures," he told University of Dakar academic Dr. Sahite Gaye.⁷

These changes, reported in more detail in qualitative studies carried out by independent academics, appear to come through the combination of the effect of a fact checking presence and engagement by fact checkers.⁸

7 The original quote was "Dans le cadre de l'écriture des programmes des partis politiques, de plus en plus on fait attention à l'exactitude des chiffres"

8 Theresa Amobi, 'From Reducing Fake News to Validating the Facts: A Triangulated Evaluation of the Awareness and Impact of Africa Check's Work in Nigeria', January 2019, africacheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Dr-T.-Amobie-report-From-reducing-fake-news-to-validating-the-facts-Africa-Check-in-Nigeria-2018.pdf; Alan Finlay, "After the Fact": A Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check', January 2016, africacheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/AC_evaluation_final.pdf; Sahite Gaye, 'Le Poids Du Fact', November 2018, africacheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Le-poids-du-fact-.pdf.

Statistics regulator bans secret briefings FULL FACT

In 2011, certain statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions began to appear in selected parts of the media. The Guardian newspaper referred to some of these figures as “unpublished” and the Mirror even spoke of “secret data”. These numbers could not be traced back to the Department for Work and Pensions website, where routine statistical releases are usually published. The numbers appeared to be what is known as “ad hoc” statistics: one off or experimental releases in addition to regular routine releases.

Full Fact wrote to the statistics regulator, the UK Statistics Authority, asking them to intervene. The Statistics Authority instructed the Department for Work and Pensions to publish ad hoc statistics on their site so that they were publicly accessible. Other departments were instructed to do the same, ensuring transparency across government.

Research findings

There is experimental evidence on the impact of the threat and reality of inaccurate claims being exposed publicly, and anecdotal evidence on the impacts of contacting claimants and publicly exposing claims.

In terms of the impact on journalists specifically, existing research focuses on the publication of fact checks as a source of information for journalists and their audiences, and the media’s adoption of fact checking as a practice. Independent evaluations of Africa Check’s work show evidence of the positive impact that fact checking can have on media standards, through fact checking of claims in the media and training of journalists in misinformation awareness and fact checking techniques.

Experimental research has found promising impacts on politicians

The effect of fact checking on elites: a field experiment on U.S. state legislators

—Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler

The only systematic peer-reviewed study on this topic is by Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, who carried out an experiment in 2012 among state legislators in nine US states.⁹ They were testing the theory that **the known presence of fact checkers in a campaign should increase the perceived risk of making a false claim and therefore decrease the number of inaccurate claims made by these legislators.** They thought

⁹ Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, ‘The Effect of Fact-Checking on Elites: A Field Experiment on US State Legislators’, *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 3 (2015): 628–640.

this might particularly be the case for congressional or state candidates who attract less media coverage and advertise less extensively than presidential candidates.

To test this, they randomised correspondence to state legislators across nine US states where US fact checker PolitiFact was operating, warning about the threat of fact checking coverage. They did this in a two month period before the November 2012 election. Sending letters out to candidates was not a typical fact checking activity outside of this experiment.

There were nearly 1,200 legislators in these states, who were randomly assigned to one of three groups. One group was sent letters about the risks of inaccurate statements being exposed by fact checkers and showing them examples of fact checks. Another group was sent letters stating that the authors were monitoring campaign accuracy, with no mention of fact checking (a placebo group). A control group was not sent any letters.

The researchers wanted to see if there was any difference in fact check ratings between groups after the letters had been received. Only 26 out of 1,200 legislators had been fact checked by PolitiFact in their state (and only 18 had received a rating of half-true or worse), so to supplement the fact check data researchers also included a LexisNexis search of whether the accuracy of specific claims made by a legislator had been questioned in media coverage.

In all they found that 2.8% of legislators in the placebo and control conditions had the accuracy of their claims questioned by PolitiFact or in LexisNexis, compared with 1.3% in the treatment condition. The researchers found this difference to be statistically significant. They also found no evidence that the politicians were making fewer statements in general.

This study was limited, given the small proportion of legislators in each group, but it provides some initial data to suggest that fact checking can have a deterrent effect.

Can fact checking prevent politicians from lying?

—working paper by PhD student Chloe Lim

A study by Stanford University PhD student Chloe Lim  ¹⁰ examined how published fact checks affected the repetition of claims in speeches made by presidential candidates in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential elections in the US. She compared the occurrence of claims in the five days before a fact check of the claim was published to their occurrence in the five days after. **The study found a 9.5 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of a claim being repeated within five days after a fact check.** The study did not capture occurrences of the claims made over the wider campaign.

¹⁰ Chloe Hong Lim, 'Can Fact-Checking Prevent Politicians from Lying?', 2018.

To see if this decrease was simply the case for all types of claims – accurate or otherwise – Lim matched claims with similar accurate claims to see how they spread in the same time frame. She found evidence that inaccurate claims were less likely than accurate claims to be repeated afterwards.

It's not clear from the paper how many claim occurrences there were overall, making it hard to interpret how this difference might have been experienced by voters seeing the speeches or news coverage. Future studies could build on this research by considering the significance of a claim. A single claim can be a prominent part of a campaign and therefore its lack of repetition can make a big difference, or it can be an initially unmemorable point which, repeated often, becomes an influential claim. In a similar and more unpredictable way, political parties may test out claims in a low profile space, and if it gets a positive response it can become a central part of a campaign message.

Qualitative and anecdotal evidence on the impact of fact checking on politicians

Some studies have gathered anecdotal evidence from interviews with fact checkers.

Lucas Graves's book¹¹ on the rise of political fact checking in the US concluded that "...fact checkers can all cite cases in which a public figure seemed to abandon a talking point once it was ruled false – while freely conceding that political lying continues unabated and always will."

These studies feature examples of public figures being more careful before making claims as a result of fact checkers and correcting themselves afterwards. However, there is less evidence on what made some interventions work and not others.

In a more recent report focused on fact checkers in Europe, Lucas Graves and Federica Cherubini found that, "Most organisations interviewed for this report could point to isolated cases in which a politician appeared to abandon a false claim after it was debunked",¹² but there were rare cases of politicians acknowledging errors publicly. In some cases, politicians have gone on the offensive with fact checkers, but for the most part did not publicly respond. The most notable instances of a direct influence on public discourse came from when fact checkers have been a central part of public debates. For example, a fact check by Poland's Demagog led to a public argument between the current and former ministers of justice, which then led to a special debate being scheduled which Demagog was asked to fact check. Italian fact checker Pagella Politica has an arrangement with Italian broadcaster RAI to fact check politicians live

11 Lucas Graves, *Deciding What's True: The Rise of Political Fact-Checking in American Journalism* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

12 Lucas Graves and Federica Cherubini, 'The Rise of Fact-Checking Sites in Europe' (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016), reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/rise-fact-checking-sites-europe.

on air, which forces politicians to acknowledge their work. Institutions in the UK and in Eastern Europe enhance fact checkers' ability to request and correct information, for example by using freedom of information law and press complaints systems, which fact checkers test and use to bolster and uphold these rules.

Michelle Amazeen's report on the impact of fact checking in the US – containing interviews with fact checkers and political operatives – concluded, “**...fact checking may have helped spur some political operatives to make more accurate claims. However, others have resisted fact checking and even pushed back against it** – a reaction that could be interpreted as either reflecting the impact of fact checking or demonstrating its ineffectiveness.”¹³ The report presents some evidence of politicians changing their messages to be more accurate, but also of selectively quoting fact checks when it suits them.

An analysis by Mark Stencel in 2015 commissioned by the American Press Institute adds further flavour to this.¹⁴ Based on 12 interviews with people working in politics and journalism in the US, and a review of fact checks, he identifies how some political teams have devoted time and staff to responding to fact checking. Politicians frequently cite fact checks to validate their arguments, and weaponise fact checks by citing them in TV ads and debates to undermine opponents, while ignoring fact checks that contradict their own strategic messages.

Three independent evaluations of Africa Check's work provide first-hand evidence of how politicians themselves see the impact of fact checking.¹⁵ These include in-depth interviews with politicians in Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa, as well as representatives from political parties, government agencies, journalists and others. There are some examples of individuals taking notice of Africa Check's work, and in some cases responding strongly to it. For example in Alan Finlay's study, Cayley Green, then director of parliamentary operations of major south African party Democratic Alliance, suggested that she and her colleagues felt obliged by Africa Check to search for evidence for claims they wished to make.¹⁶ “They place an over emphasis on us having to prove our facts,” she was quoted as saying. Finlay was interested by the suggestion that “the source of facts quoted in the public domain are not that readily available, and that the organisation interviewed needed to do additional research to substantiate what is stated publicly. [...] in itself suggesting a positive impact of Africa Check's work”.

13 Michelle A Amazeen, 'A Critical Assessment of Fact-Checking in 2012', 2013.

14 Mark Stencel, “Fact Check This”: How U.S. Politics Adapts to Media Scrutiny', *American Press Institute* (blog), 14 May 2015, americanpressinstitute.org/fact-checking-project/fact-checking-research/u-s-politics-adapts-media-scrutiny.

15 Finlay, “After the Fact”: A Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check'; Gaye, 'Le Poids Du Fact'; Amobi, 'From Reducing Fake News to Validating the Facts: A Triangulated Evaluation of the Awareness and Impact of Africa Check's Work in Nigeria'.

16 Cayley Green was identified by Finlay as having made this comment.

In Sahite Gaye's report, Dr Ibrahima Diouf, the official in charge of the February 2019 manifesto of the leading opposition Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement, said that the presence of a fact checking organisation in Senegal has improved the way Senegalese politicians make campaign claims: "Those of us writing the manifestos of political parties, are paying more attention to the accuracy of the figures." And Alassane Cissé, the president of Senegal's network of health journalists, and a broadcaster for state-run RTS said that as a result of Africa Check's work: "Public statements are starting, little by little, to be more measured. In the next few years, it will be hard to manipulate the public with made-up or misleading figures."

Of course, self-reported impacts by politicians and other actors may not reflect their true attitudes or behaviour, but they give us some evidence on attitudes – which can then be compared against fact checkers' evidence of behavioural effects.

Research on the impact of fact checking on the media

Few reports focus on fact checking as a means of holding journalists accountable for the accuracy of their reporting. Evaluations of Africa Check's work are the exception. Other research has focused more on journalists' perceptions and use of fact checking as a means of holding politicians accountable and informing the public, and take-up of the practice by media outlets.

We identified 12 studies on this topic.

Some looked specifically at journalists' perceptions of and use of analysis by fact checking organisations in specific countries.¹⁷ These include content analyses of the use of fact checkers' reports in the media, as well as interviews of journalists about the impact of the practice. These show fact checking content being used by the media, with varied levels of use.

The evaluations of Africa Check's work mentioned above include interviews with journalists who had been fact checked by Africa Check. Alan Finlay reported:

"Responses from interviewees who had been fact checked were mixed, with two suggesting that Africa Check did not take the newsroom context properly into consideration when fact checking news media content. Newsroom challenges included a lack of resources, skills and capacity. It was also felt that because journalists often worked off third-party content such as media releases, they should not be held accountable for inaccuracies in those media releases. It was argued that different news media tries to engage its audience in different ways, and that

17 Graves, *Deciding What's True: The Rise of Political Fact-Checking in American Journalism*; Amazeen, 'A Critical Assessment of Fact-Checking in 2012'; Eugenia Mitchelstein et al., 'Chequeado as a Referee: Analysis of the Impact of Fact-Checking in Argentina during an Election Year', 2015, 32; Bob Wekesa, Blessing Vava, and Hlabangani Mtshali, 'Getting the Story Straight: The Take up of Fact-Checking Journalism in South African Newsrooms over the Past Five Years', State of the Newsroom 2017: Fakers & Makers (Wits Journalism, 2018), journalism.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/WITS-STATE-OF-THE-NEWSROOM_March_2018.pdf.

content is developed to achieve a particular affect in audiences, which needed to be taken into account by Africa Check. It was also felt that Africa Check sometimes “attacked” a position taken on statistics, rather than evaluating the veracity of the underlying statistics. In this regard, it was felt that bias was evident in some of Africa Check’s work.”¹⁸

One interviewee noted:

“Has the fact that a fact-checking organization may scrutinize articles that we publish changed the way we work in any way? It has. My writers now know they have to verify facts before publishing from credible sources. I think the product is better for everyone when people are kept on their toes.”¹⁹

This suggests that fact checkers are focusing their work in the right place, but there is more to consider around how to engage with and support journalists to meet higher standards.

Another experimental study looked at what messages motivate journalists to take up the practice of publishing fact checks.²⁰ This found that **appealing to journalistic standards and values could be most effective in increasing take up of fact checking** by journalists, whereas the tactic of emphasising audience demand had a smaller impact.

The study by Graves and Cherubini mentioned earlier in this briefing also looked at fact checkers’ experiences of working with media outlets as a means of reaching wider audiences.²¹

Other studies have looked more broadly at journalists’ take up of the practice of checking and verifying information. For example, one study looked at journalists’ use of fact checking on Twitter in the US,²² and another interviewed journalists in Norway and Spain on their use of fact checking and verification tools – where perceptions were mixed and journalists had fairly low awareness of the available tools and services²³. One further study looked at the extent to which journalists in Canada fact checked the Canadian government’s framing of its military mission in Afghanistan in 2006-2009.²⁴

18 Finlay, “‘After the Fact’: A Qualitative Evaluation of Africa Check”, 7.

19 Finlay, 20.

20 Lucas Graves, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler, ‘Why Do Journalists Fact-Check?’ (2016), dartmouth.edu/~nyhan/journalist-fact-checking.pdf.

21 Graves and Cherubini, ‘The Rise of Fact-Checking Sites in Europe’.

22 Mark Coddington, Logan Molyneux, and Regina G. Lawrence, ‘Fact Checking the Campaign: How Political Reporters Use Twitter to Set the Record Straight (or Not)’, *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19, no. 4 (1 October 2014): 391–409, doi.org/10.1177/1940161214540942.

23 Petter Bae Brandtzaeg, Asbjørn Følstad, and María Ángeles Chaparro Domínguez, ‘How Journalists and Social Media Users Perceive Online Fact-Checking and Verification Services’, *Journalism Practice* 12, no. 9 (21 October 2018): 1109–29, doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1363657.

24 Brooks DeCillia, “‘But It Is Not Getting Any Safer!’: The Contested Dynamic of Framing Canada’s Military Mission in

How we selected the studies

The evidence which informs this briefing comes from academic and non-partisan research organisations. Sources are selected based on prominence in the field and robustness of methodology, but are also shaped by the authors' expertise and interest.

To ensure no major studies have been missed, a search was conducted on Google Scholar for all articles citing the 2014 study by Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, to see if there were any relevant additional studies to include regarding the impact of fact checking on politicians. We also contacted fact checkers through the International Fact-Checking Network to see if they had conducted any further studies.

As any piece of research, this briefing marks the beginning not the end of a conversation on misinformation. It remains open to adding nuance, and the authors welcome input from researchers and practitioners.

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