

Americans View Misinformation and Disinformation as Greater Threats than Terrorism, Climate Change, and Border Security

Institute for Public Relations and Leger release results of an annual survey of 2,002 Americans in "2023 Disinformation in Society Report"

NEW YORK - Most Americans now consider misinformation (61%) and disinformation (60%) to be more significant threats to society than other societal concerns like terrorism, border security, the budget deficit, and climate change, according to [a new study by the Institute for Public Relations and Leger](#). The 4th annual survey of 2,002 Americans was conducted from July 21 to Aug. 3, 2023.

"These findings underscore the urgent need for companies and communicators to develop effective strategies and tools to combat misinformation and disinformation, especially with the increasingly technologically sophisticated political and social environment, said Dr. Tina McCorkindale, president and CEO of the Institute for Public Relations. "Each and every one of us has a responsibility to create and promote transparent and trustworthy communication."

Some key findings include:

Impact on Trust and Democracy: The study highlights that 75% of Americans believe disinformation undermines the election process, with 74% seeing it as a threat to democracy. This concern has broader societal implications, influencing trust in various sources of information and political leaders.

Shift in Trust: Trust in family, friends, and like-minded individuals remains high for reliable news, with social media trust declining. The political divide affects perceptions of trustworthiness in leaders, with trust in Republican and Democratic leaders falling since 2021.

Local News as a Common Ground: Local news, especially broadcast news, emerges as a unifying source of trusted information across political divides, although the decline of local news sources presents new challenges.

Disinformation Negatively Impacts Society: Most Americans believe disinformation undermines our election process (75%), is a threat to our democracy (74%), increases the polarization of political parties (73%), and infringes on human rights (61%). Additionally, more than half (55%) said artificial intelligence platforms will create more disinformation in society.

Perceived Sources of Disinformation: Top perceived offenders for spreading disinformation include social media platforms, opposing political parties, and foreign governments. Facebook, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) are seen as the key social media platforms for spreading disinformation.

Responsibility and Performance in Combating Disinformation: Americans primarily view the U.S. government, President Biden, and cable news as responsible for combating disinformation. However, there's a noticeable gap between the expected and perceived performance of these entities in tackling the issue.

Impact on Media Consumption: Disinformation has led to a notable segment of Americans avoiding news or seeking non-U.S. sources, reflecting a crisis of confidence in domestic information sources.

“This research serves as a crucial benchmark for understanding public perceptions and their evolution over time with disinformation,” said Dave Scholz, Chief Strategy Officer of Leger. “We hope these studies can help guide professionals to developing informed strategies for internal and external stakeholders, to enhance public discourse and trust in society and institutions.”

This is the first year Leger has partnered with IPR and their annual disinformation study that examines and tracks how disinformation — defined as deliberately misleading or biased information — is spread in the U.S. with some comparisons to prior research conducted in November 2021. The Institute for Public Relations created this survey and first published results in 2019. This study has also been replicated in Canada with Leger in 2022.

To read the full report, visit <https://instituteforpr.org/2023-ipr-leger-disinformation/> .

Media Contact:

Brittany Higginbotham
Communications and Digital Specialist
brittany@instituteforpr.org
352-392-0280

About the Institute for Public Relations

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