



British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

Misinformation: Can you **STOP** it?

Mini bite 2

How does misinformation work?



Learning goals

Examine how misinformation works by:

- reflecting on how difficult it is to distinguish misinformation from real information
- investigating strategies used by creators of misinformation

Reflect and record

How easy is it for you to identify misinformation?

Can you think of an example of something that you initially believed to be true, but later discovered was misinformation?



We can all be misled by misinformation

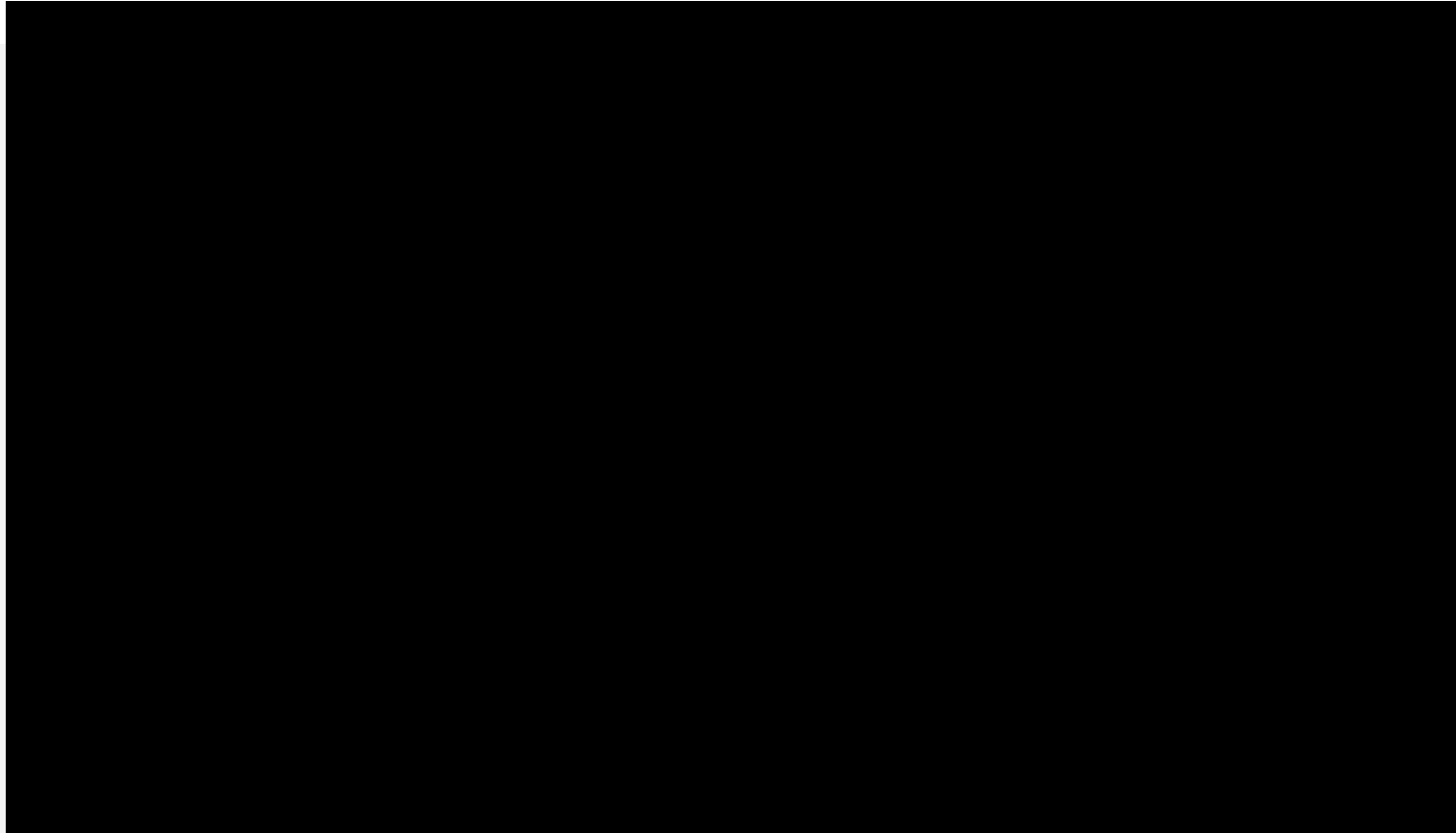
Results of Misinformation: Can You STOP It? quiz

- 43% answered all four questions correctly
- 34% answered three quarters of the questions correctly
- 24% answered half or fewer of the questions correctly

Statistics Canada 2023 survey results

- 59% were very concerned or extremely concerned about misinformation online
- 43% noted identifying misinformation is more difficult than in 2020

What the public had to say



Video link: <https://youtu.be/98jD6a4rNxg>

How does disinformation work?

Think about an example of disinformation that you or someone you know believed to be true.

Why do you think it was successful at misleading you?

How did you feel when you learned you had been misled?



Some thoughts from community members

“When you get too much information ... it’s hard to discern what information is actually relevant. And I think a lot of times that’s on purpose.”

“It’s an attention economy. We’re going to be given whatever information that whoever is posting thinks will capture our attention. So, it’s not really about truth. It’s more about what will hold the viewer’s attention and what someone will share.”

More thoughts from community members

“We all think our sources are right—like that sort of belief that your bubble is “correct”, as opposed to looking at things critically, no matter where they’re coming from. And I guess that stems from our own biases.”

“I hear so much misinformation at my school, especially in political discussions, and like really dangerous misinformation! And I find it comes most often from a group that considers themselves not to be susceptible ... who think they know a lot.”

How disinformation misleads us

- modifies information and creates content that looks real
- benefits from social media site processes to reach people with shared values and fears
- builds on shared values and fears to capture our attention
- provokes strong emotions that make it feel urgent to share
- overwhelms us

Modifying and creating content that looks real

- using AI-generated or altered video and images
- misrepresenting or omitting the context
- misidentifying the source of the problem

Using AI-generated or altered video and images

- developing AI generated images and videos
- modifying existing images to change content and goals
- increasingly difficult to distinguish from real content
- AI tools increasingly accessible and more widely available
- increased occurrence of AI generated misinformation

Example of AI-generated disinformation



MISINFORMATION:
**CAN YOU
STOP IT?**

Evidence using fact checking website Snopes

- no evidence that Tupac ever appeared on Sesame Street
- evidence suggesting the image was created by AI
- accounts page of social media site posting video requests donations



**Outsmart the
outrage**



**Poke at the
point of view**

Misrepresenting the context

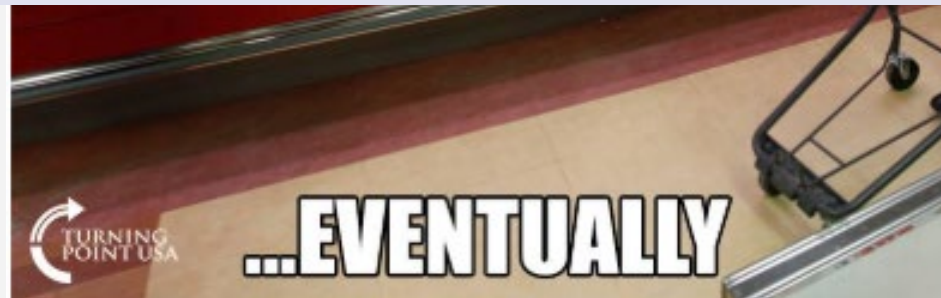
- selecting disconnected parts from a video or quote
- omitting the context and other clarifying information
- portraying the point of view of a single member of a group as representative of the entire group
- using the selected information as evidence to support the message that disinformation is attempting to convey

Example of misrepresenting the context



Evidence disproving post

- photo taken after earthquake and tsunami in Japan
- resulted in food shortages



Misrepresenting the source of a problem

- misleading connection between an issue and an unrelated event that occurs at the same time
- unrelated event appears to be the source of the problem
- based on faulty logic that two events occurring at the same time must be related
- benefits from misunderstanding of the difference between correlation and causation
- takes advantage of limited time to confirm relationship

Example of misrepresenting the source of a problem

MISINFORMATION:

Temporary Foreign Worker program policies

- hiring of temporary foreign workers if qualified Canadian residents are not available.
- similar wages to those paid to Canadians and permanent residents hired for the same job, in same work location and with similar skills and experience

Factors contributing to limited jobs and low wages for young workers

- cuts to public sector jobs
- artificial intelligence
- economic uncertainty due to Canada – U.S.A. trade war

Benefitting from social media processes

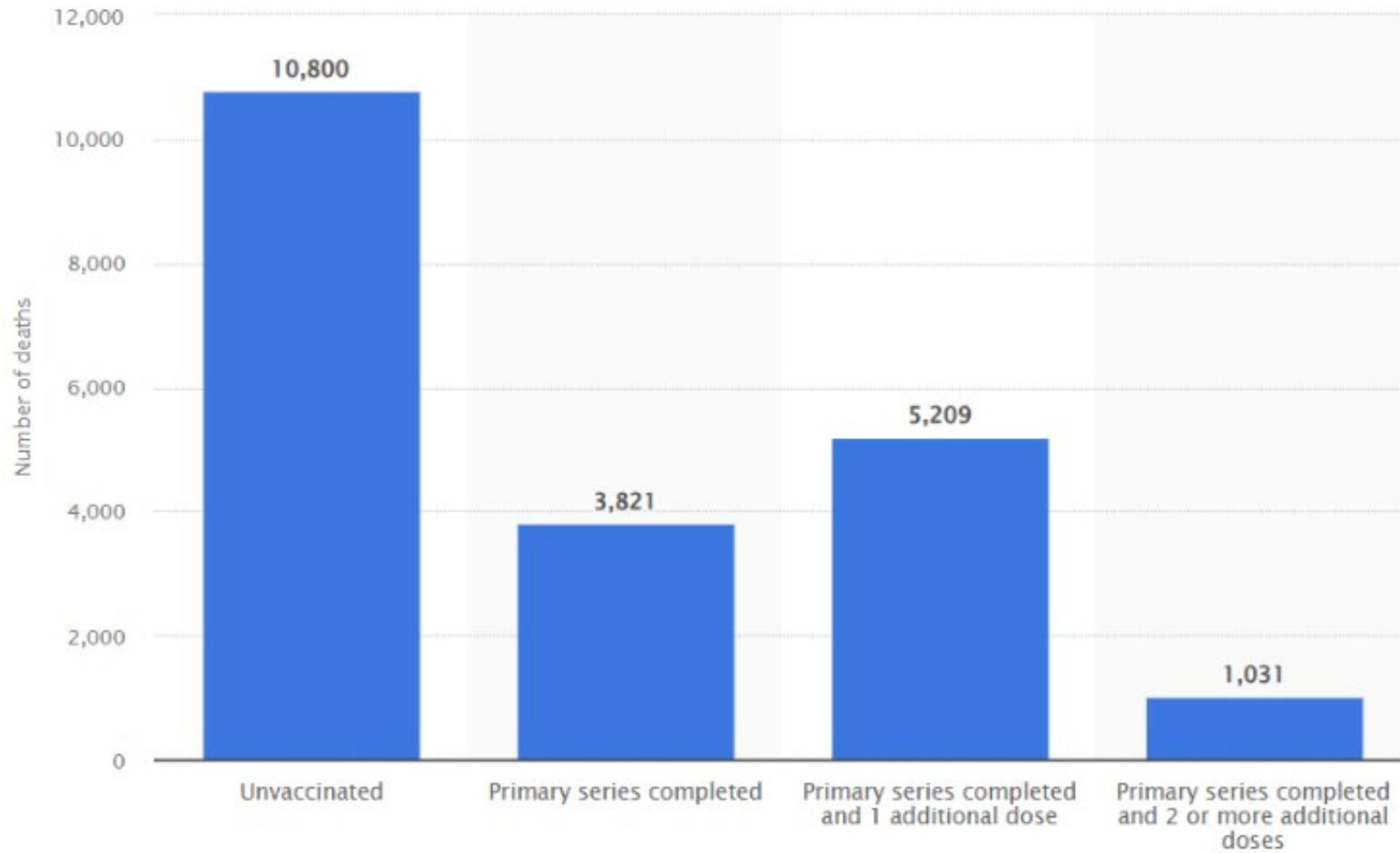
Removal of protective measures

- independent fact checking
- policies to limit hate speech

Use of algorithms to prioritize content that appears in social media feeds

- based on individual behaviours and interactions online
- used by platforms to increase profits through advertising revenue
- increases use of platform by posting content we tend to engage with
- disinformation appears in feeds of people interested in a related topic
- focus of topic is shifted to meet goals of disinformation

Example of benefitting from social media processes



Building on shared values and fears

- using algorithms to reach people with shared interests
- capturing attention by echoing similar values and fears
- posts that resonate with our values and appear real tend to be believable

Example of building on shared values and fears

What is SOGI 123?

- not a curriculum
- education initiative developed by a non-profit organization, ARC BC, in collaboration with B.C. teachers and the Ministry of Education
- goal to help teachers make schools safer, more welcoming, respectful and inclusive

What are the outcomes of SOGI 123?

- benefits inclusion and support of **all** students
- SOGI 123 staff training reduces bullying and discrimination of LGBTQ2SAI+ students
- reduces bullying and discrimination of heterosexual students
- positive impacts increase with time SOGI 123 has been delivered

Provoking strong emotions

- content provokes strong emotions and makes it feel urgent to act
- evolved to react quickly to perceived dangers
- we react quickly and automatically to emotions like fear, anger and outrage to protect ourselves and those we care about
- feels urgent to act immediately to inform others about the issue
- actions may include sharing a post, video or article
- strong emotions can prevent us from taking the time to verify whether the information is true

Example of provoking strong emotions

MISINFORMATION: **CAN YOU**

- original post created by someone who confirmed they had no evidence
- mayor and Springfield police confirmed that there was no evidence
- Haitians have temporary protected status in the United States and can legally live and work there
- Haitians came to Springfield because of unfilled positions
- videos posted as evidence did not involve Haitians and were not filmed in Springfield



**Poke at the
point of view**

Disinformation overwhelms us

Overwhelm based on number of posts

- multiple social media posts with conflicting messages
- time needed to investigate which posts are true
- 37% of people living in British Columbia surveyed identified that lack of time contributed to not verifying news stories

Emotional overwhelm

- targeting people with shared values and posting messages that provoke anger or fear

Impacts of overwhelm

- mistrust of all types of information, both true and false
- limits access to information needed to make informed decisions and keep us safe

Reflect and record in Handout 3

Can you think of examples of disinformation that used any of these strategies?

- modifying information and creating content that looks real
- benefitting from social media site processes
- building on shared values and associated fears
- provoking strong emotions that make it feel urgent to act
- overwhelming us

Can you think of any additional disinformation strategies?

How can an increased awareness of these strategies help us to identify disinformation?



Next Mini Bite

Why is misinformation a human rights issue?





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Thank you

STOP



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