

How to Fight India's Fake-News Epidemic | The New York Times

By Samir Patil

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Disinformation can be defeated by treating the crisis as we responded to infectious diseases in the past.

This contagion of a staggering amount of morphed images, doctored videos and text messages is spreading largely through messaging services and influencing what India's voters watch and read on their smartphones. A recent [study by Microsoft](#) found that over 64 percent Indians encountered fake news online, the highest reported among the 22 countries surveyed.

India has the most social media users, with 300 million users on Facebook, 200 million on WhatsApp and 250 million using YouTube. TikTok, the video messaging service owned by a Chinese company, has [more than 88 million users](#) in India. And there are Indian messaging applications such as ShareChat, which claims to have 40 million users and allows them to communicate in 14 Indian languages.

These platforms are filled with fake news and disinformation aimed at influencing political choices during the Indian elections. Some of the egregious instances are [a made-up BBC survey](#) predicting victory for the governing Bharatiya Janata Party and a fake video of the opposition Congress Party president, Rahul Gandhi, saying a machine can convert [potatoes into gold](#).

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