

U of I team investigates spread of rural misinformation | Illinois Newsroom

By Emily Hayes

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In some rural Illinois ZIP codes, only [one in five people](#) have gotten the COVID-19 vaccine. A lack of correct information seems to play a major role.

A team at the University of Illinois is investigating how misinformation about COVID-19 spreads in rural areas of the state.

U of I journalism professor Nikki Usher leads the team. She spoke with Illinois Newsroom about her findings so far, as part of our “Who’s In Charge of The News?” week special coverage.

Nikki Usher: It’s not that Breitbart is zooming in to downstate Illinois, and causing people to reject vaccines. That’s just not what’s happening.

It’s these interpersonal networks of really strong trust in a place where people know each other — and that is then enacted online — that’s helping to create the conditions for how people find out about what’s going on. Sometimes, what they find out and discuss isn’t exactly the most scientifically sound, or can be vaccine resistant, for example. We’re talking about COVID, specifically, which is sort of where we intervene.

Source: [U of I team investigates spread of rural misinformation | Illinois Newsroom](#)