

Understanding vulnerability to online misinformation | The Alan Turing Institute

By Bertie Vidgen, Harry Taylor, Myrto Pantazi, Zoe Anastasiou, Becky Inkster, and Helen Margetts

March 10, 2021

Health-related misinformation risks exacerbating the COVID-19 public health crisis if it leads the public to refuse treatment when needed, not follow official guidance, such as policies on social distancing and mask-wearing, or even to use harmful 'miracle' cures. If left unchecked, misinformation could seriously undermine the vaccine rollout and heighten people's anxiety and mistrust during this time of national stress.

Several large-scale research projects have started during the crisis with the aim of understanding the nature, prevalence and spread of health-related misinformation online. However, relatively little is known about who is vulnerable to believing false information and why. This is crucial for developing more targeted and effective interventions which tackle the root causes of misinformation rather than just its symptoms. To address this gap, researchers from The Alan Turing Institute's public policy programme have conducted original research using a survey and assessments to understand (1) which individuals are most vulnerable to believing health-related falsities and (2) the role played by the content that individuals are exposed to.

[...]

Source: [Understanding vulnerability to online misinformation | The Alan Turing Institute](#)