



# Cyber-Propaganda

In recent years, we've seen Social Media networks being used to spread extremism, erode social trust, and influence elections. By changing people's perception of the world, cyber-propaganda can manipulate the choices of people.

Read on to learn how you can resist cyber-propaganda.

## Fake News

Fake news is being used to spread distrust, as well as change public opinion through manipulation. Fake news is hard to spot right away because the world changes at a rapid pace. That means we need to read everything with a critical eye.

Don't just browse the headlines. When reading articles online, take a moment to ask some questions before sharing:

- Who wrote it?
- Is the site credible?
- Does the evidence support what the author is claiming?
- Is it supported by other articles?
- Does the article serve a different purpose?

## False Accounts

Not every user account online is who they claim to be. Foreign governments and cybercriminals have been creating fake accounts to generate conflict on the internet. Many of these accounts will pretend to have an extreme version of an existing opinion in order to break trust and cause further divisions between different political leanings. By creating more conflict, this allows groups to influence public decisions.

Before responding to an online post, check these things first:

- How long has this user been in existence? Fake accounts are usually only used for short periods of time.
- Does this user have a lot of "likes" but not a lot of followers? They could be artificially boosting their popularity.
- Does this user often post links using URL shorteners like bit.ly or tinyurl?





## Online Radicalization

Extremist groups use the internet to radicalize and recruit new members into violent and dangerous movements. You might know someone who is at risk of online radicalization.

Watch for these signs:

- Is the person reposting or linking to radical content? (hate groups, extremist groups)
- Are they withdrawing from their usual social networks?
- Are they exhibiting black-and-white thinking around social topics?
- Is the person expressing extreme anger when faced with disagreement?

What you can do:

- If you feel safe doing so, talk to someone if you're worried they're at risk of radicalization
- Report online material promoting terrorism or extremism  
<https://www.canadiancrimestoppers.org/tips>
- If you suspect a crime has occurred, report it to your local police force

## How to Protect Against Cyber Propaganda

The propaganda in our social networks can be scary, but we aren't alone.

Here are some general tips to help resist cyber-propaganda:

- Don't just debunk, support media that is honest and reliable
- Practice good information security to prevent your accounts from being breached and misused
- Pay attention to those who benefit from the information that you see online
- Use social media responsibly and think critically before you share anything

## Resources

Fake News and Cyber Propaganda: The Use and Abuse of Social Media

<https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/us/security/news/cybercrime-and-digital-threats/fake-news-cyber-propaganda-the-abuse-of-social-media>

Keeping safe: how to spot and prevent online grooming and radicalisation

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/anyone-anywhere/explore/dark-side-web/online-grooming-radicalisation>

