

# 45 SECONDS TO PROTECT THE ELECTION?

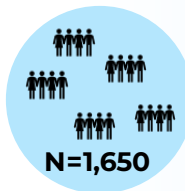
Thinks  
— Insight & Strategy —

THINKS PIECE

JANUARY 2024

## A behavioural approach to addressing online mis and disinformation ahead of the UK general election

### Online Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT)



#### Regular users of social media

- Drawn from large nationwide panel
- Cross section of UK demographics
- Random allocation to the control & two treatment arms

#### Interactive social media simulation

- Intuitive, familiar, responsive
- Capturing actual online behaviour
- Full range of reactions, sharing, comments and reporting



#### Mix of legitimate and mis/disinformation content

- Range of formats – text; image; video; audio
- 15 legitimate posts;
- 15 mis/disinformation posts

#### Designed two interventions to test

Subject  
flagging

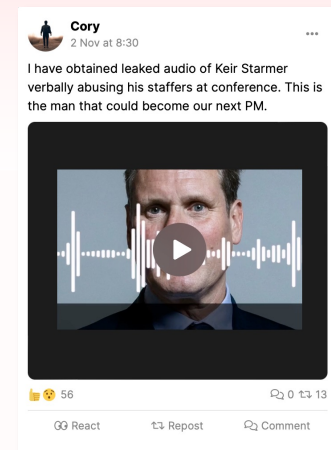
Inoculation  
game

Drawing on the expertise of our team as well as efforts from tech and academia

### Focus Groups & Nat Rep Surveys

- Two 75 min online focus groups with 6 participants in each.
- Two nationally representative online surveys with min. 2,000 participants in each.

### Fully interactive simulation:



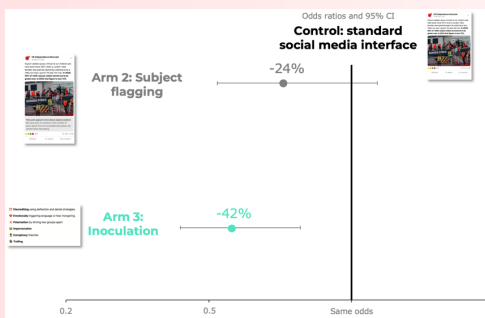
## 1 Election disinformation poses a threat to the UK.

- Large minorities in the UK are open to the idea that our election results can be questioned (38%) and our democracy might be rigged (30%).
- In our experiment, electoral disinformation was as likely to be amplified as other types of disinformation (brands and national statistics) we tested.

## 2 Deepfake content of politicians appears particularly powerful.

- An audio deepfake of Keir Starmer was the most amplified example of electoral disinformation tested. Over 4 out of 10 participants 'reacted' to the post.

## 3 Playing a 45-second inoculation game significantly reduces amplification of disinformation.



- Compared to the control arm, inoculation reduced the odds that a participant would 'react' to disinformation by 42%.
- Inoculation appears particularly powerful against deepfake content, reducing 'reactions' by over 10 percentage points.
- We found no backfire effect – engagement with and reporting of legitimate information was unaffected.

*As long as I can win at the end then I'd do it.*  
Focus group participant

## 4 An optimised inoculation game could have real impact ahead of the 2024 Election.

- The public are open to the idea of playing a game like the one we tested, and had lots of ideas about how to make it more powerful and shareable.

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