

# What factors and dynamics foster – and build resilience to – the proliferation of disinformation, misinformation, and/or malinformation?



The Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance's (DRG) 2021-2023 learning agenda seeks to answer five learning questions, including this question on misinformation. More on the DRG Learning Agenda can be found [here](#). In this case, a team of researchers, including Robert A. Blair, Jessica Gottlieb, Brendan Nyhan, Laura Palar, Pablo Argote, and Charlene J. Stainfield, conducted an extensive literature review and synthesized evidence from 176 interventions in 155 unique studies conducted in both the Global North and the Global South.

## Information Ecosystem

This evidence review focuses on the factors that contribute to the spread of misinformation and how to build resilience against it. While there is extensive research on misinformation in the Global North, the literature on the Global South is still in its early stages. The review identified interventions targeting consumers and producers of misinformation and to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of these interventions. The interventions were categorized into four main groups: informational, educational, socio-psychological, and institutional.

## Key Findings



**Debunking and inoculation work.** These information interventions have the strongest evidence base — more than 110 studies — and are **frequently effective** at, e.g., reducing false beliefs immediately after exposure. However, 98 of these studies **focus on the Global North**.














Evidence on **media literacy**, the leading educational intervention, is **mixed** in the Global North and South.



**Social norms interventions** appear **most effective** among the sociopsychological interventions.



Institutional interventions have the greatest **potential impact** but the **least evidence** from either the Global North or South.

Category	Intervention	Global North Finding	Global South Finding
Informational	Inoculation 	Generally effective in the short term, although evidence is mixed regarding technique inoculation. Inoculation games may be less effective than first thought.	Tends to be most successful when implemented over long stretches of time in partnership with local news entities.
Informational	Debunking 	Generally effective at reducing misinformed beliefs but effects may vary depending on credibility of or trust in the correction source.	More effective when delivered or endorsed by a trusted or in-group source; potential variation by local fact-checker capacity.
Informational	Credibility labels/tags 	Most effective when labels/tags provide justification for their presence, provide clear true or false ratings, and reference expert fact-checkers.	One study shows the potential for labels to decrease individual sharing of misinformation; more evidence needed.
Informational	Contextual labels/tags 	Mixed effects on belief and sharing intentions; more evidence needed.	One study shows reduced perceived credibility of misinformation; more evidence needed.
Educational	Media literacy 	Somewhat effective, but substantial variation in durability.	Mixed evidence of effectiveness despite intensive nature of some interventions.
Socio-psychological	Accuracy prompts 	Generally effective at increasing discernment, though effects small.	Sometimes effective in increasing discernment and reducing sharing, but effects small.
Socio-psychological	Frictions/Reflection 	Sometimes increase truth discernment and reduce sharing intentions for false news.	One study shows potential of friction; more evidence needed.
Socio-psychological	Social norms 	Generally effective, although effects may vary by ideology.	Broadly effective; more evidence needed to determine contextual variation.
Institutional	Platform alterations 	Generally positive, though most evidence gathered from simulating platforms as opposed to actual platform change.	Experimental evidence needed.
Institutional	Politician messaging 	Politician messaging shows initial promise at reducing misinformation supply; more evidence needed.	No evidence; studies needed.
Institutional	Journalist training 	Journalist training shows initial promise; more evidence needed.	No evidence; studies needed.



## Key Takeaways



Interventions to combat misinformation need to be **adapted based on the context**, as factors like platform usage, literacy levels, reliance on social institutions, and the availability of independent media can **vary significantly** between the Global North and South.



Practitioners should consider not only the impact of interventions but also their **feasibility, scalability, and durability**. While interventions that excel in all four dimensions are rare, understanding the **trade-offs** can lead to more informed decisions on where to focus efforts and resources.



The **table below** provides a **summary** of the eleven interventions based on these dimensions. The evidence is most **extensive** for **impact** and **durability**, as they are directly studied, while **feasibility** and **scalability** are often **inferred** from research project design and implementation.



Among the interventions reviewed, frictions and reflection prompts **show promise** in scoring high on all four dimensions, as they encourage users to **reflect** and **consider** different perspectives, and they are easily scalable. Read the report for more details.

Intervention	Impact	Feasibility	Scalability	Durability
Inoculation	High	Medium	Low	Low
Debunking	High	Medium	Low	High
Credibility labels/tags	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Contextual labels/tags	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Media literacy	Low	Medium	High	Low
Accuracy prompts	Medium	High	High	Low
Frictions/reflection	Medium	High	High	Medium
Social norms	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Platform alterations	High	Low	High	Medium
Politician messaging	High	Low	Medium	High
Journalist training	High	Medium	Low	Medium



## Key Resource

[An accompanying searchable database](#) that complements the evidence review on countering misinformation. The database allows users to filter studies based on various contextual variables, such as regime type, media freedom, literacy rates, GDP per capita, and internet penetration.