



# **Believability of News**

## **Understanding users perceptions of fake news and fact checking badges**

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# Fake News - Definition

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- What exactly are fake news?
- They are **not**:
  - Poor politics
  - Poor journalism
  - Click-Baiting
  - Accidental Falsehoods
  - ...

## NEWS TICKER

Friday, March 9, 2018

### Scientists solve puzzles: The egg was there first



Tübingen (dpo) - What came first: the hen or the egg? This possibly biggest puzzle of evolutionary history is finally solved. Researchers at the University of Tübingen

# Fake News - Definition

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**What politicians and  
the MSM refuse to tell you**

**In past 12 months  
13,000 knife attacks were  
committed in London.**

**11,000 of those  
attacks we're done  
by muslim immigrants**

- What exactly are fake news?
- They **are:**
  - Desinformation
  - Purposefully harmful
- Forms:
  - Misinterpreted Content
    - Decontextualized
  - Manipulated Content
  - Fabricated Content
  - As news or memes

# What is the problem?

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- **Fake news spread further and faster than real news**

Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151.

- They are (un-)intentionally used by people, organizations, institutions

Lazer, D. M., Baum, M. A., Benkler, Y., Berinsky, A. J., Greenhill, K. M., Menczer, F., ... & Schudson, M. (2018). The science of fake news. *Science*, 359(6380), 1094-1096.

- **Bots are often utilized to further spread fake news**

Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G. L., Varol, O., Yang, K., Flammini, A., & Menczer, F. (2017). The spread of low-credibility content by social bots. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1707.07592*.

# Are the users to blame?

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- Fake news often cater to the users strongly held beliefs
  - Confirmation Bias
  - Filter-Bubbles, Echo Chamber, Cyber-Balkanization
  - Users share news *without* reading them
- Fake news target extremist perspectives
  - Far left, far right
  - Increased perceptions of polarization  
=> Decrease in political discourse
- **Research Questions:**
  - But who believes fake news?
  - Can users be assisted in detecting fake news?

# Method

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## Survey study (n=143)

- Rate believability of news items from the headline
  - Scale of 0 – 100
  - Before and after
- Set of 13 news items
  - All related to refugees
  - **7 fake, 6 correct**
- On the left:  
***Lesbos: Refugees set asylum camp on fire***

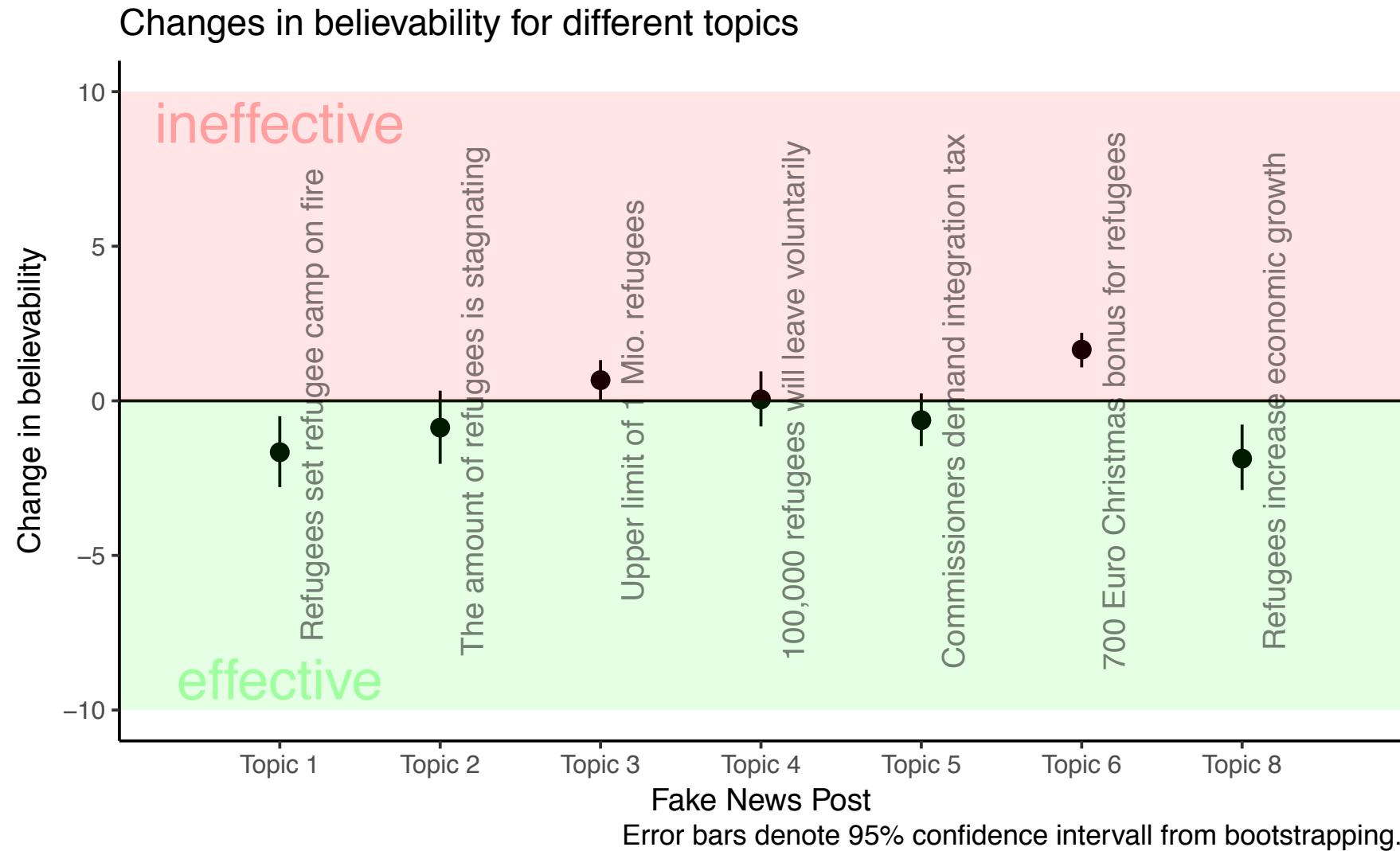
# Method

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## Measures Variables

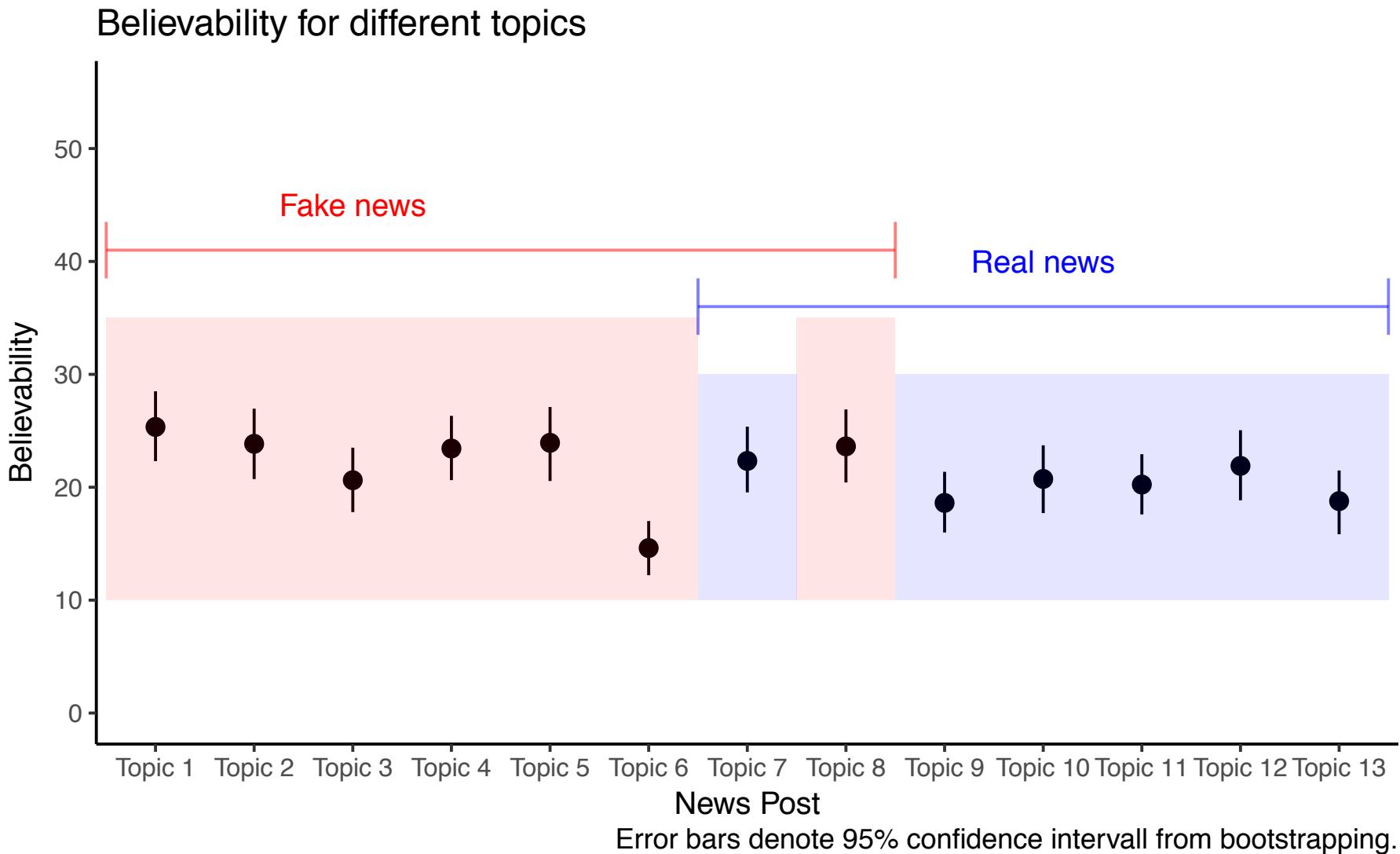
- Age, Gender, Income
- Big-Five Personality Items
  - Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism
- Social Media and Classical Media Usage Frequency
- Moral Value Judgments about Refugees
  - Nationalistic, Consequentialist
- Political Interest Scale
- Social Desirability Scale
- Did users “fact-check” during the study

# Results: Are fact checking badges effective



# Results: Are our news believable?

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# Conclusion and Limitations

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- Users are bad at discerning fake and real news from headlines
  - Only **little influence** of user diversity overall
  - **But**, topic dependent influence
    - E.g., nationalistic judgments on Topic 1
- Users did not fact check
- Limitations and future work:
  - Skewed sample (young, highly educated)
  - We looked at headlines only
  - Effects of topic order
  - No pre-post for real news
  - No real-life setting, study setting

**Thank you for  
your Attention!**

**Questions?**