

Unraveling our internet-mediated lives

Juhi Kulshrestha

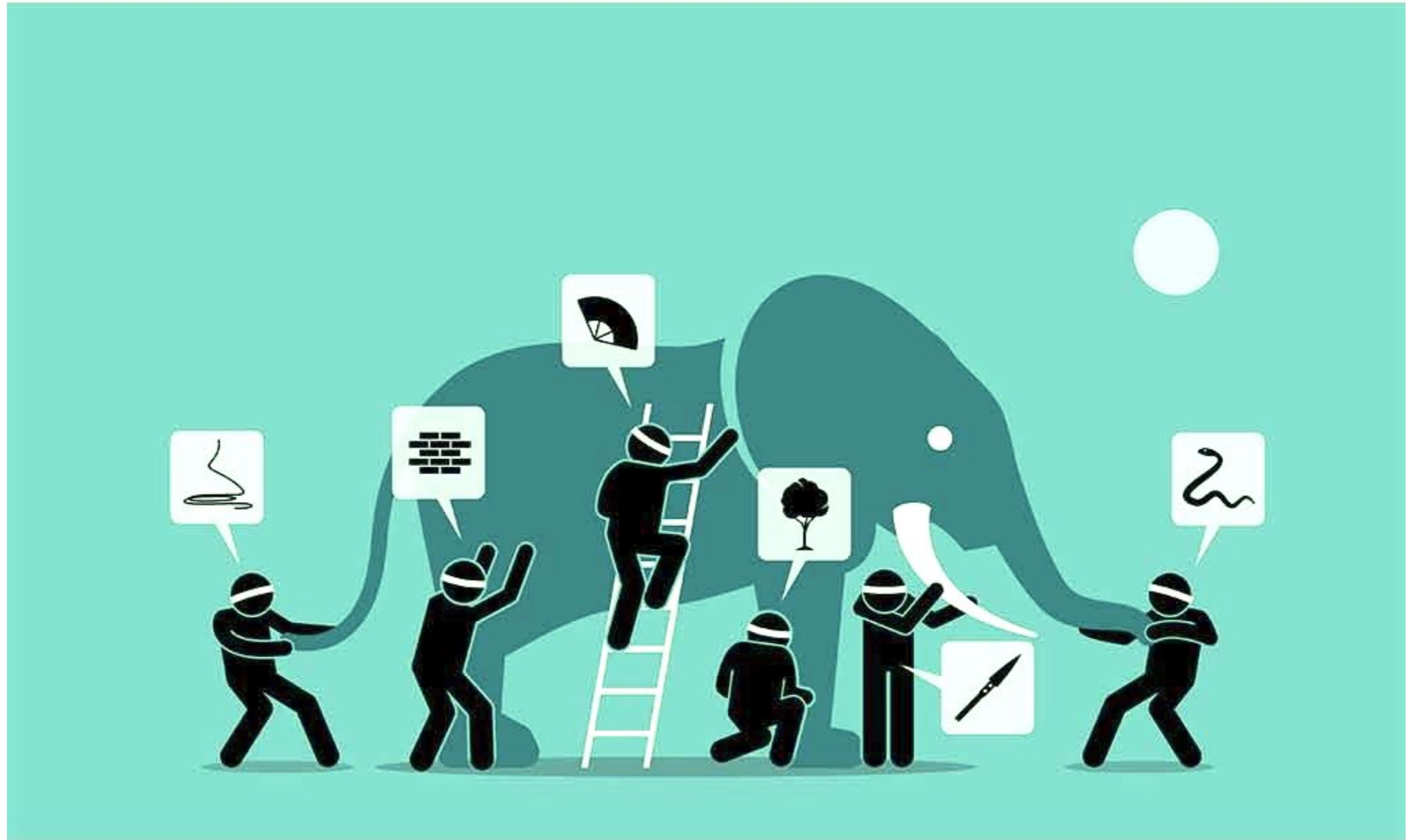
Assistant Professor,
Department of Computer Science
Aalto University, Finland

Keynote @ SICSS Amsterdam

10th June 2024

What is CSS?

What is CSS?



[Image credit: firstcry.com]

What is CSS (to me)?



[Image credit: cambridgeblog.org/]

Combining varied forms of digital behavioural data with diverse research methods to study and solve societally relevant problems.

My journey to CSS



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR SOFTWARE SYSTEMS

Ph.D. in Computer Science



LEIBNIZ INSTITUTE
FOR MEDIA RESEARCH
HANS-BREDOW-INSTITUT

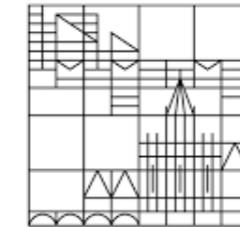
Visiting postdoctoral fellow
“Algorithmmed Public Spheres”

gesis

Leibniz Institute
for the Social Sciences

Postdoctoral researcher
Computational Social Science (CSS) Dept.

Universität
Konstanz



Assistant Professor for CSS
Dept. of Politics & Public Administration

A?

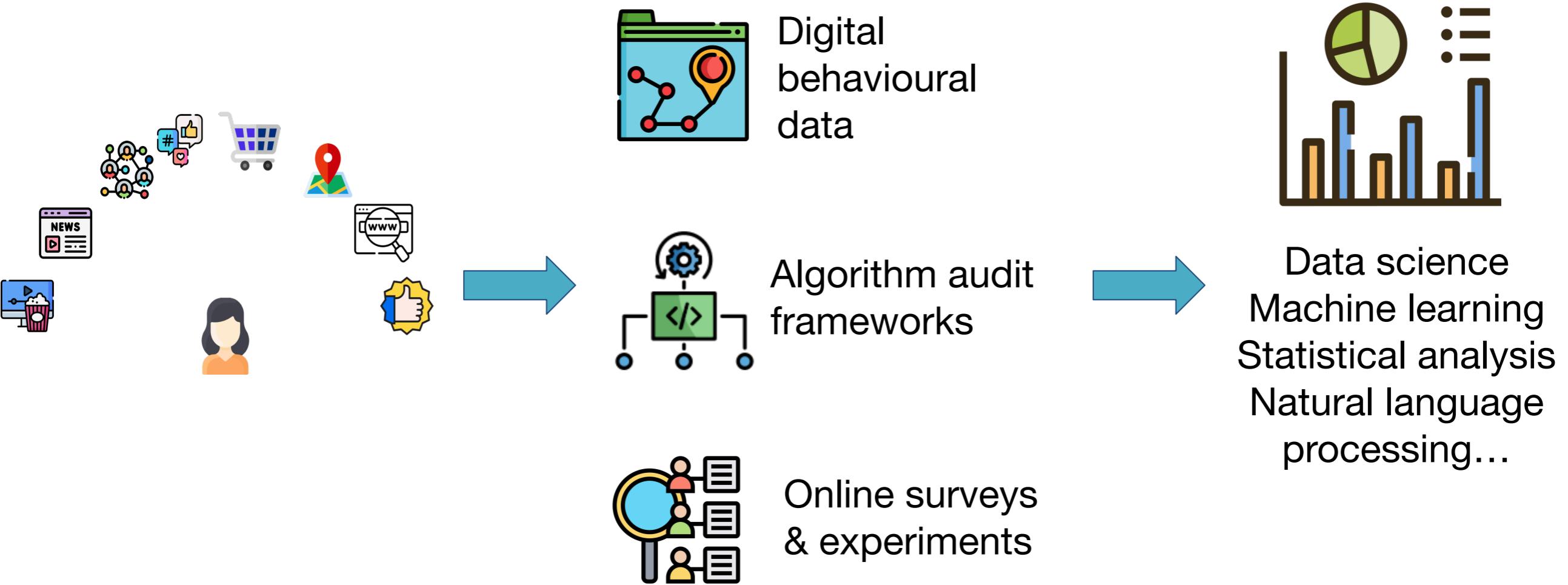
Aalto University

Assistant Professor
Computer Science Dept.

Studying our internet mediated lives



Studying our internet mediated lives



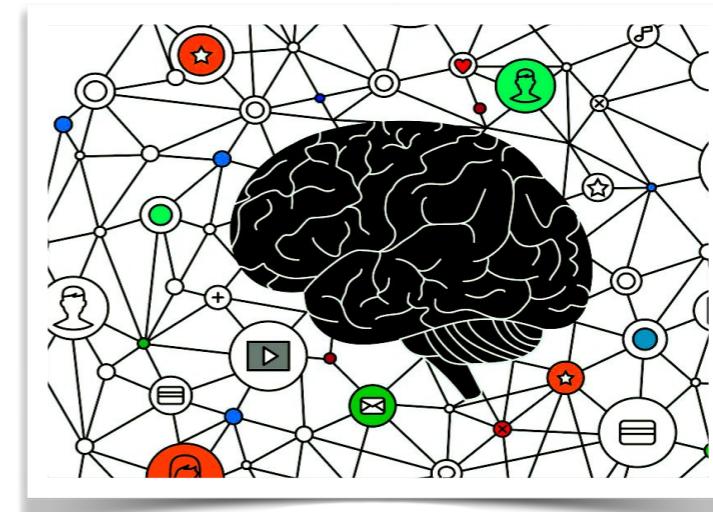
Study human behaviour on the web and the impact it has on individuals' opinions, attitudes and behaviours both online and offline

Human behaviour on the web



[Image credit: cyberbullying.org]

Influence of online behaviour



[Image credit: VectorStock.com/26073249]



[Image credit: nbjournal.ru/media-literacy]

Bias & inaccuracies in online news use



[Image credit: digicol.de/news]

Impact of online info retrieval systems

Human behaviour on the web

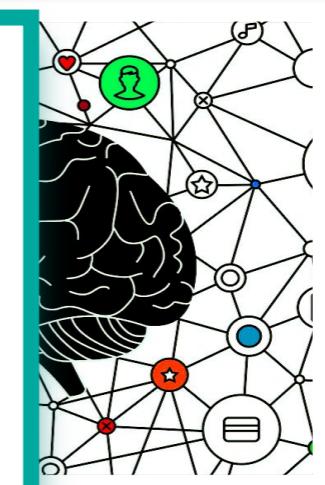


[Image credit: nbjournal.ru/media-literacy]

Bias & inaccuracies in online news use



Influence of online behaviour



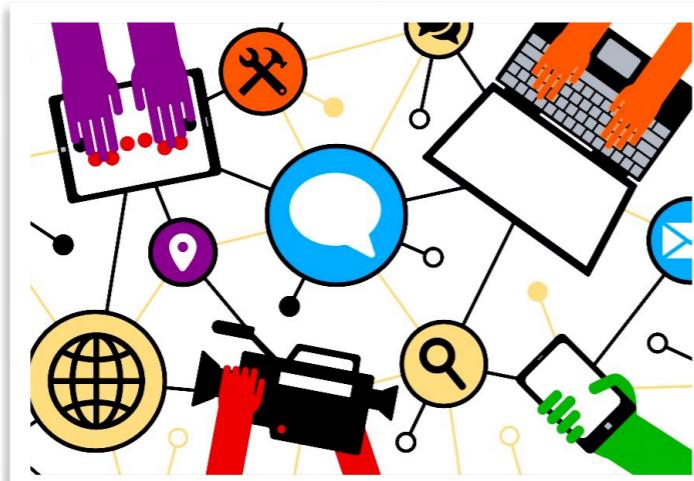
[Image credit: VectorStock.com/26073249]



[Image credit: digicol.de/news]

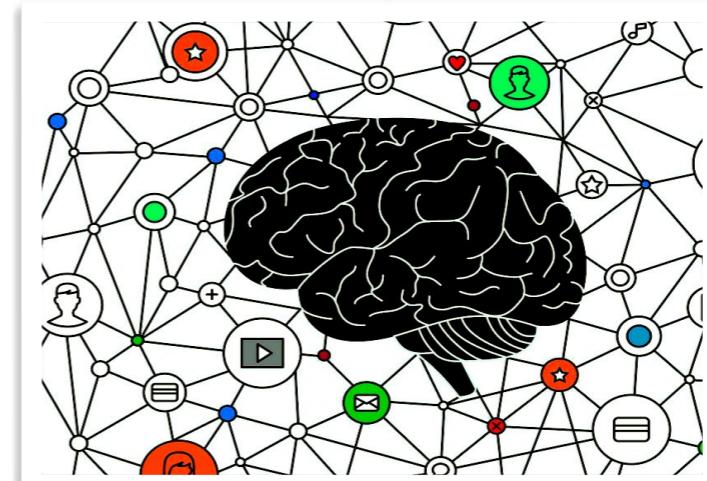
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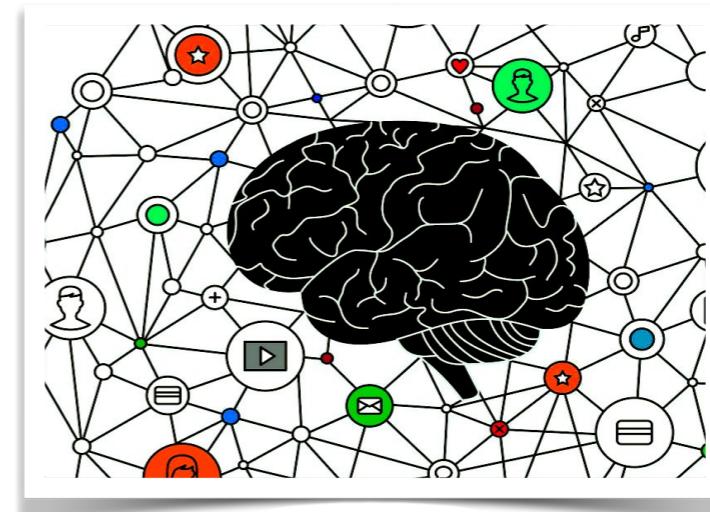
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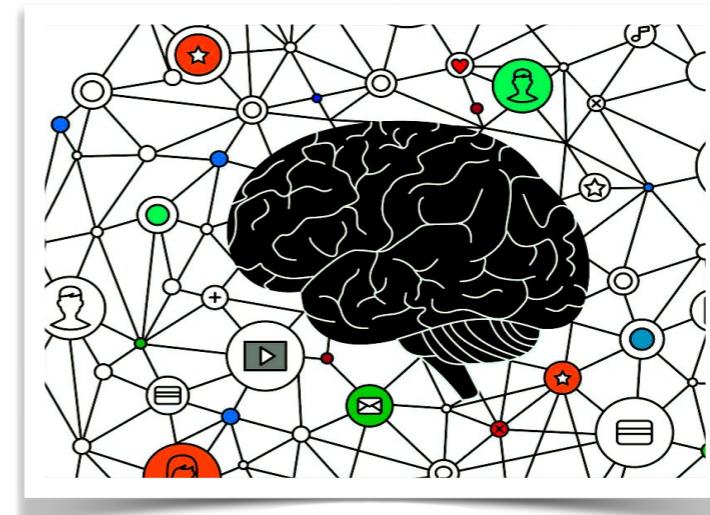
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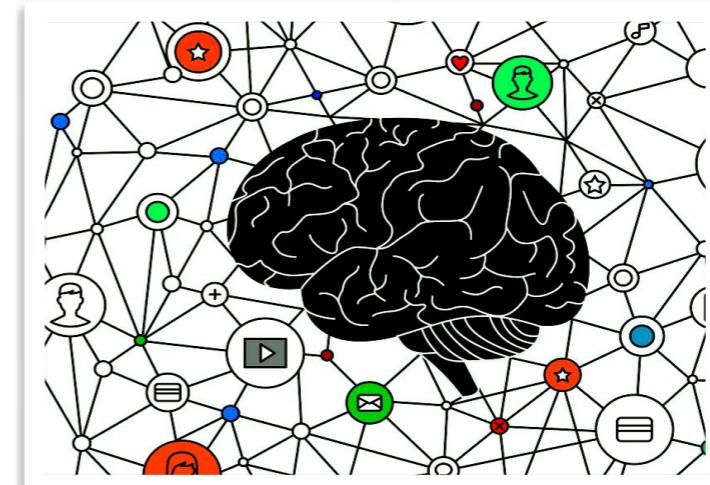
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[AAAI /CWSM 2021]

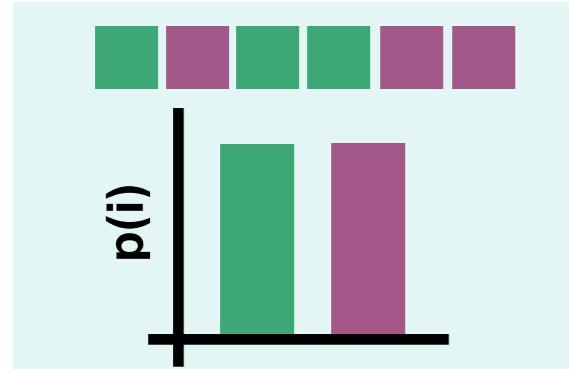
Web Routineness and Limits of Predictability

Investigating Demographic and Behavioral Differences Using
Web Tracking Data

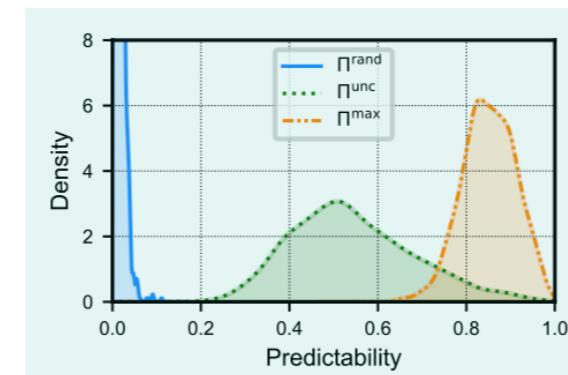
Juhi Kulshrestha, Marcos Oliveira, Orkut Karaçalik, Denis Bonnay, Claudia Wagner



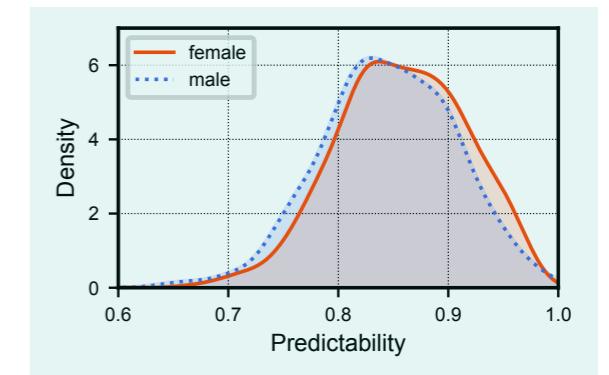
Web routineness & limits of predictability



**Predictability
measurement
framework**

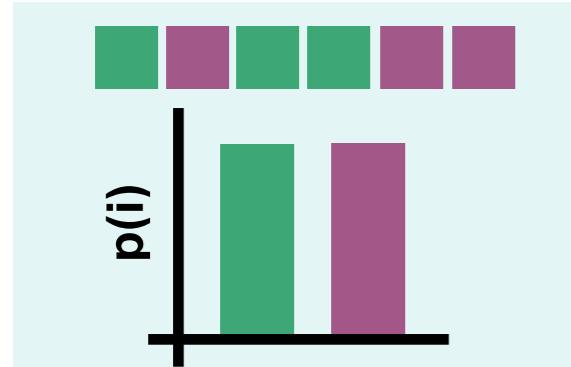


**Web routineness
and predictability**

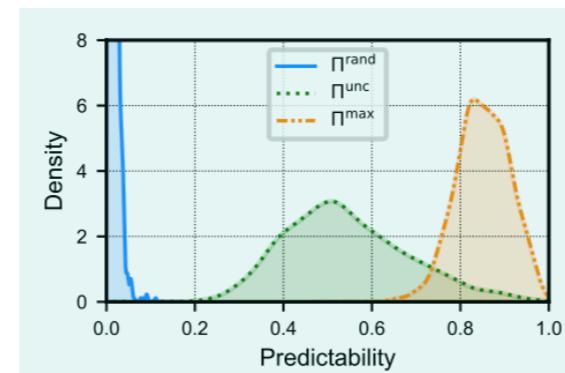


**Demographic &
behavioral differences**

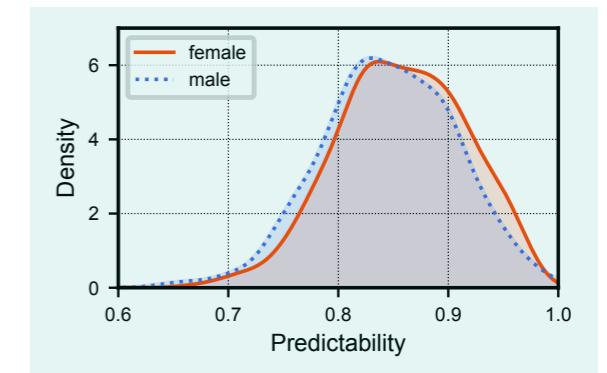
Web routineness & limits of predictability



Predictability measurement framework



Web routineness and predictability



Demographic & behavioral differences

Creating trajectories

- From Web tracking data to trajectories

Time	Duration (s)	URL
2013-05-24 08:19:06	70	https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/#inbox
2013-05-24 09:15:02	30	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l33IGc8Vqy4
2013-05-24 08:35:26	26	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ6UvCkInRk
2013-05-24 09:15:56	186	https://twitter.com/home
⋮		

Creating trajectories

- From Web tracking data to trajectories

Time	Duration (s)	URL
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		⋮

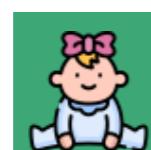
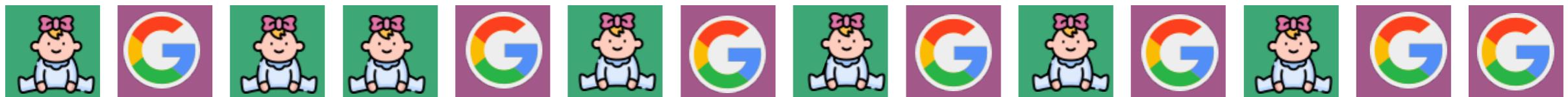
A trajectory is a discrete sequence of locations visited by a user, where a location can be a website, a domain, or a category.

Studying web trajectories

- We would like to learn about:
 - Website preferences
 - Visitation routines

Studying web trajectories

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= **whattoexpect.com/milestones/**



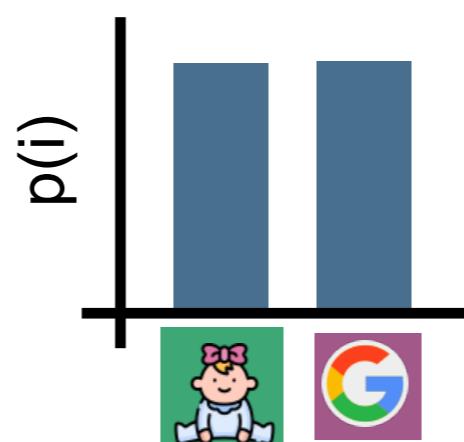
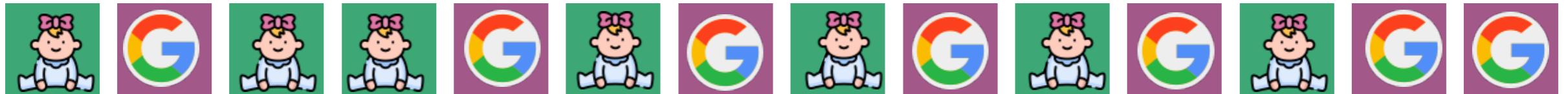
= **google.com**

Uncertainty (website preferences)

- Measuring the uncertainty of a random variable.

X

Analyzing the probability distribution of a variable.

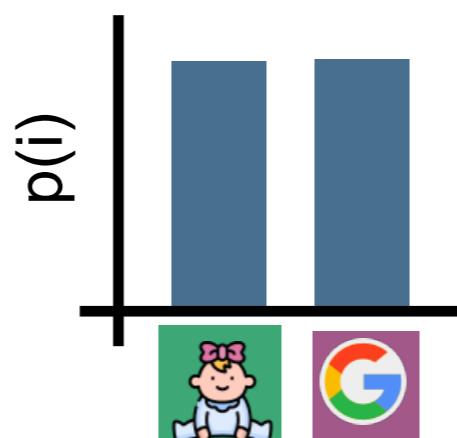
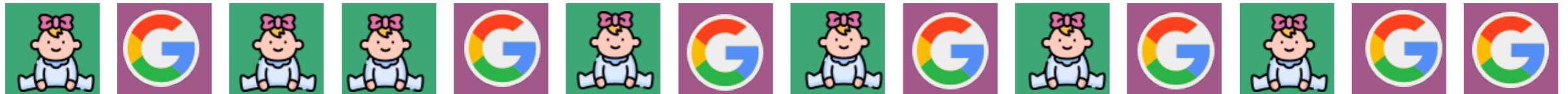


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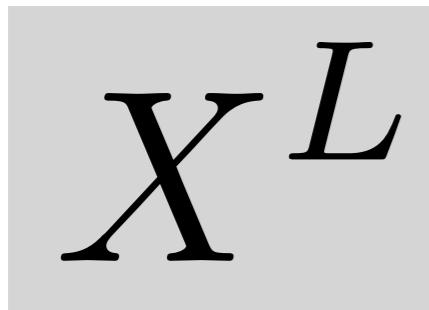
Analyzing the probability distribution of a variable.



Time-uncorrelated entropy (Shannon entropy)

Uncertainty (visitation routines)

- Examining a trajectory as a result of a process



Analyzing the probability distribution of joint variables.

$$X^2 = X_1 X_2$$

$$X^3 = X_1 X_2 X_3$$

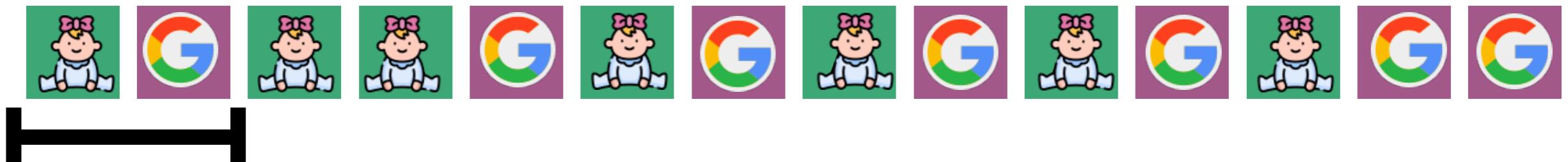
$$X^L = X_1 \dots X_L$$

Uncertainty (visitation routines)

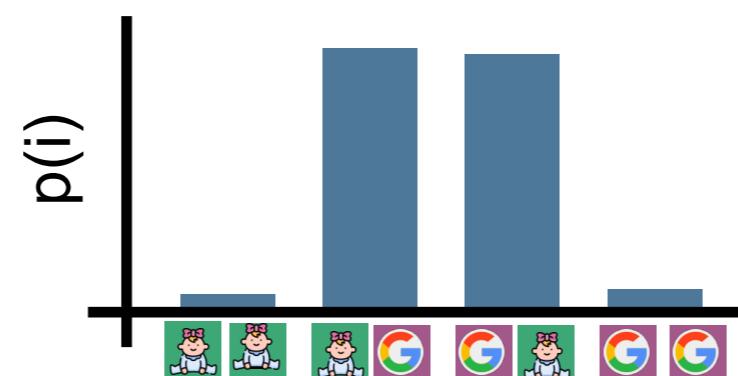
- Examining a trajectory as a result of a process

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Analyzing the probability distribution of joint variables.



For $L = 2$

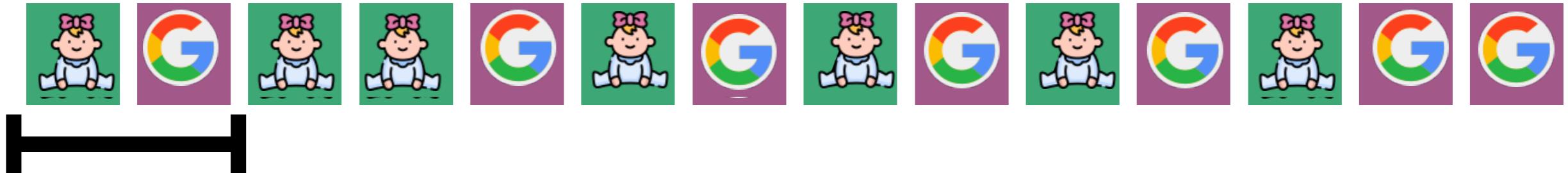


Uncertainty (visitation routines)

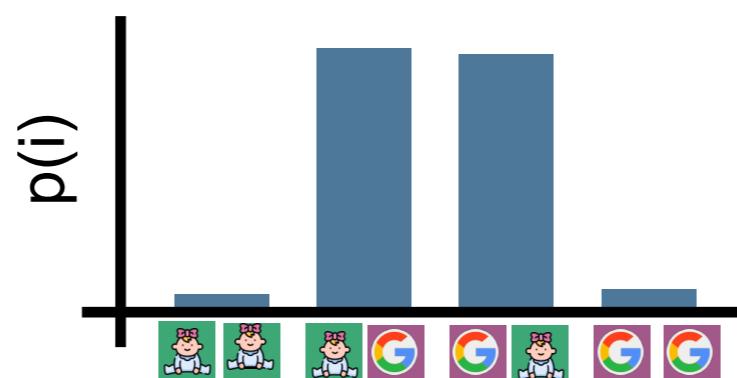
- Examining a trajectory as a result of a process

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Analyzing the probability distribution of joint variables.



For $L = 2$

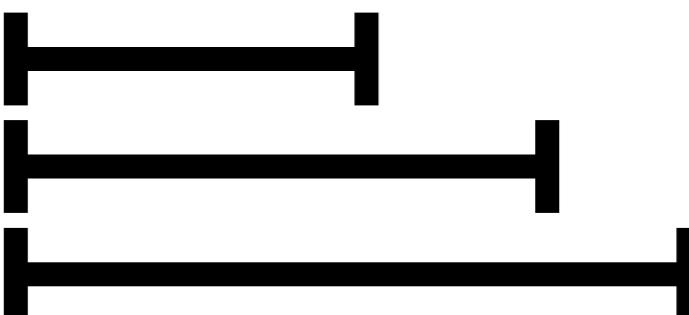
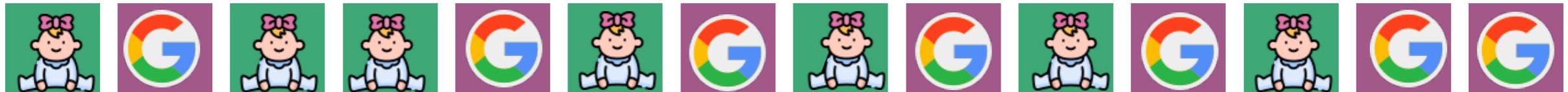


Uncertainty (visitation routines)

- Examining a trajectory as a result of a process

$$X^L$$

Analyzing the probability distribution of joint variables.



The rate at which the uncertainty increases with L is the **time-correlated entropy**.

From uncertainty to (un)predictability

- What is the probability \prod of correctly predicting future locations given a past series of observation?

From uncertainty to (un)predictability

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Limits of Predictability in Human Mobility

Chaoming Song,^{1,2} Zehui Qu,^{1,2,3} Nicholas Blumm,^{1,2} Albert-László Barabási^{1,2,*}

A range of applications, from predicting the spread of human and electronic viruses to city planning and resource management in mobile communications, depend on our ability to foresee the whereabouts and mobility of individuals, raising a fundamental question: **To what degree is human behavior predictable?** Here we explore the limits of predictability in human dynamics by studying the mobility patterns of anonymized mobile phone users. By measuring the entropy of each individual's trajectory, we find a 93% potential predictability in user mobility across the whole user base. Despite the significant differences in the travel patterns, we find a remarkable lack of variability in predictability, which is largely independent of the distance users cover on a regular basis.

When it comes to the emerging field of human dynamics, there is a fundamental gap between our intuition and the current modeling paradigms. Indeed, al-

though we rarely perceive any of our actions to be random, from the perspective of an outside observer who is unaware of our motivations and schedule, our activity pattern can easily appear

random and unpredictable. Therefore, current models of human activity are fundamentally stochastic (1) from Erlang's formula (2) used in telephony to Lévy-walk models describing human mobility (3–7) and their applications in viral dynamics (8–10), queuing models capturing human communication patterns (11–13), and models capturing body balancing (14) or panic (15).

Yet the probability of predictability is not the only modeling framework. What is the role of predictability in human behavior and to what extent can we use it to predict our actions predictably?

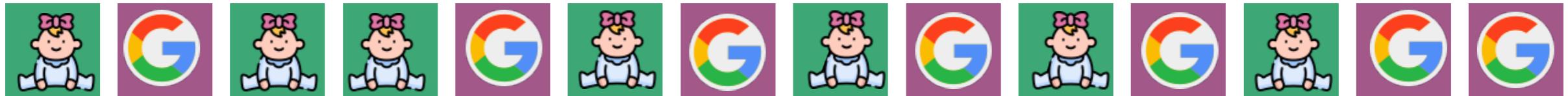
¹Center for Complex Biological Systems, Boston University, Boston, MA 02115; Department of Biomedical Engineering, Boston University School of Medicine, and Department of Radiation Oncology, Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, MA 02115; Department of Computer Science and Technology, University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, Anhui 230026, China.

*To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: alb@neu.edu

They derived an explicit relationship of the upper-limit with the time-correlated entropy.

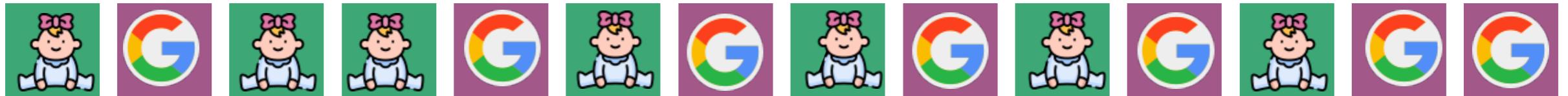
Contextualizing predictability

- Predictability limit which accounts for routines Π^{\max}



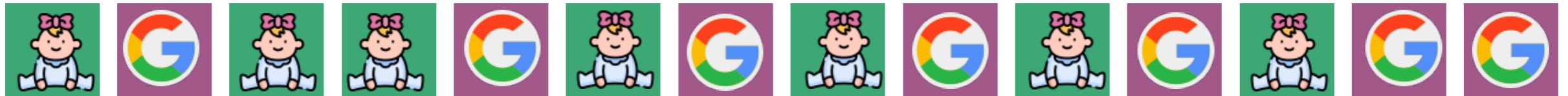
Contextualizing predictability

- Predictability limit which accounts for routines Π^{\max}
- To understand this value, we create theoretical predictability limits (null models)



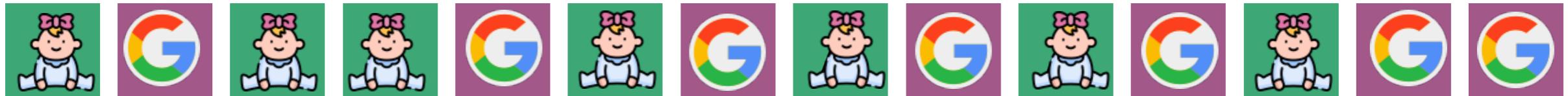
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 - No preferences: remove all repetition Π^{rand}

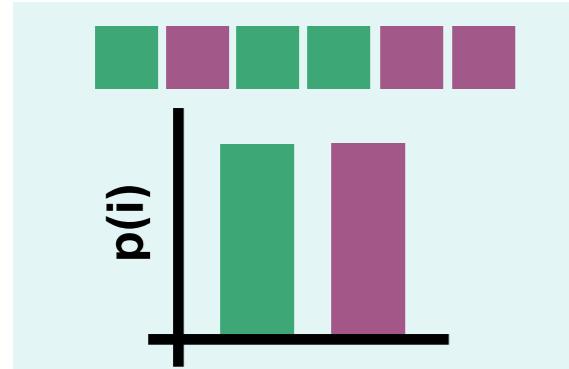


Contextualizing predictability

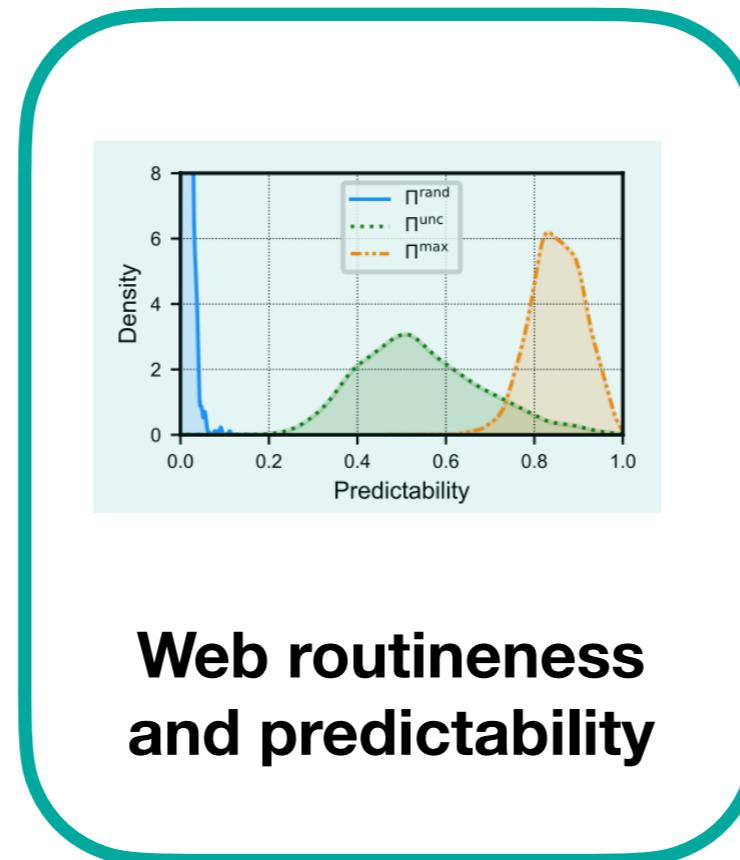
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 - No routines: shuffle it Π^{unc}



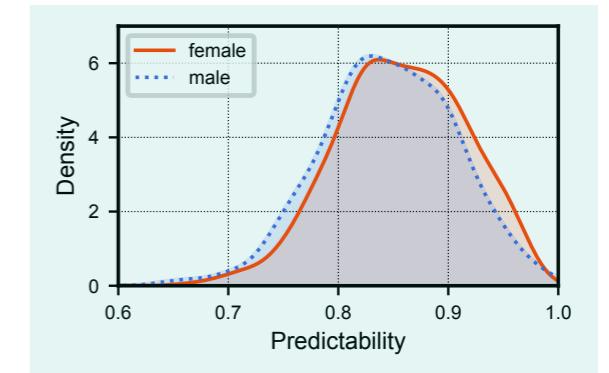
Web routineness & limits of predictability



Predictability measurement framework



**Web routineness
and predictability**



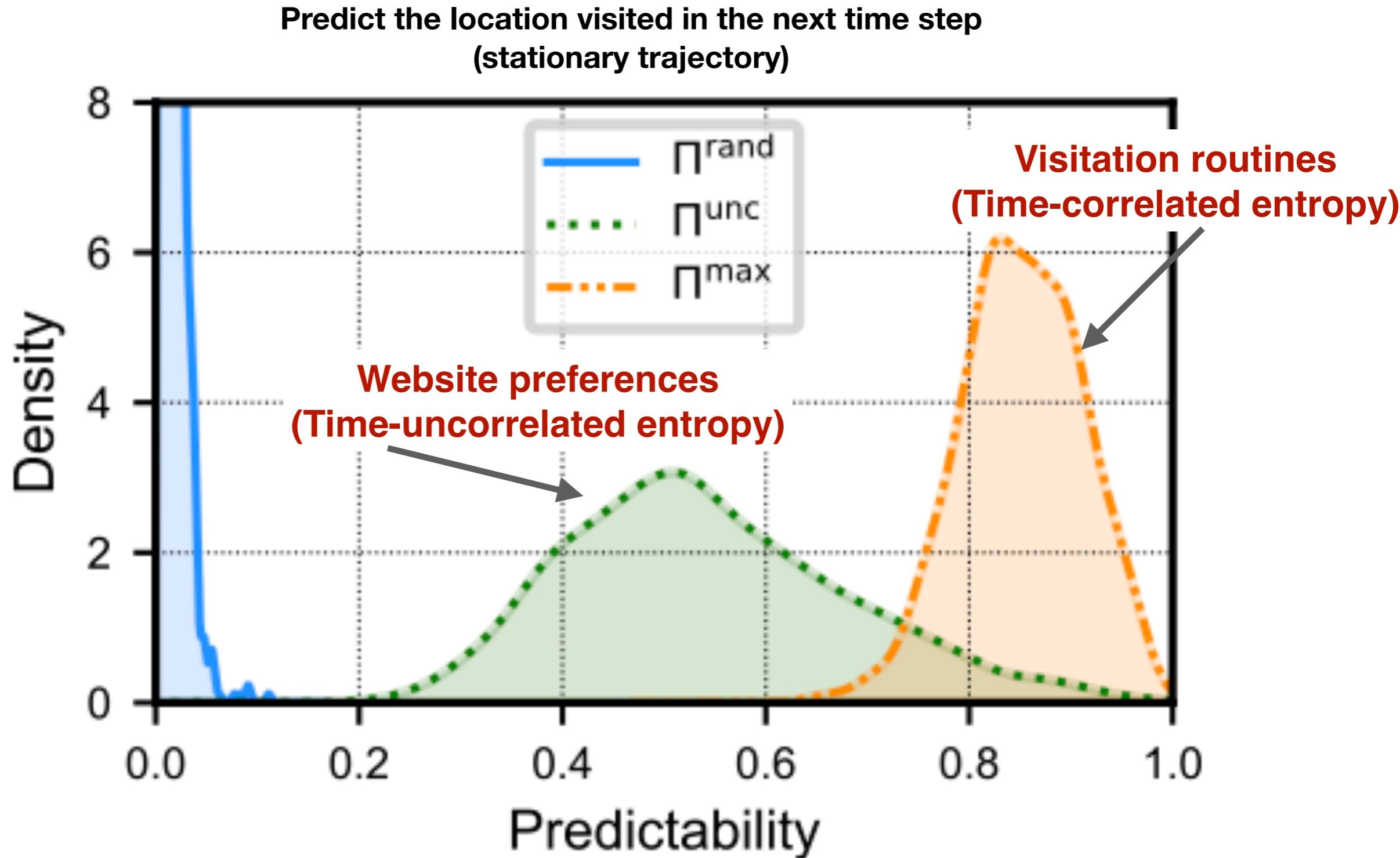
**Demographic &
behavioral differences**

Data

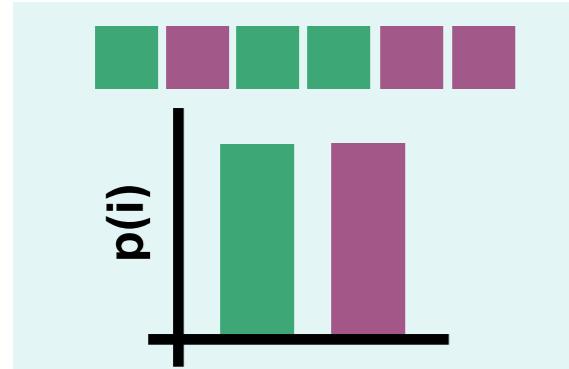
- Sample of German online population:
 - 2,148 individuals.
 - 9,151,243 web visits.
 - 49,918 unique domains.
- Self-reported gender and age.
- Data from a GDPR-compliant digital panel company in Europe.

respondi

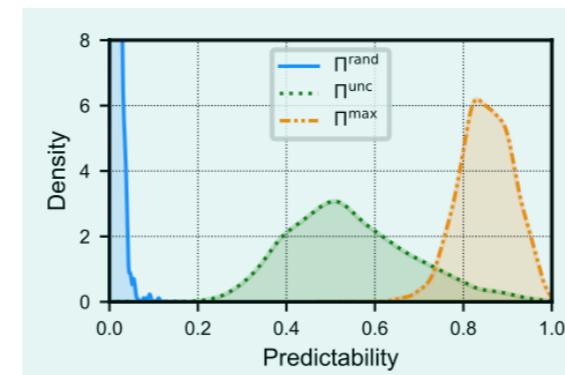
Predictability of web mobility



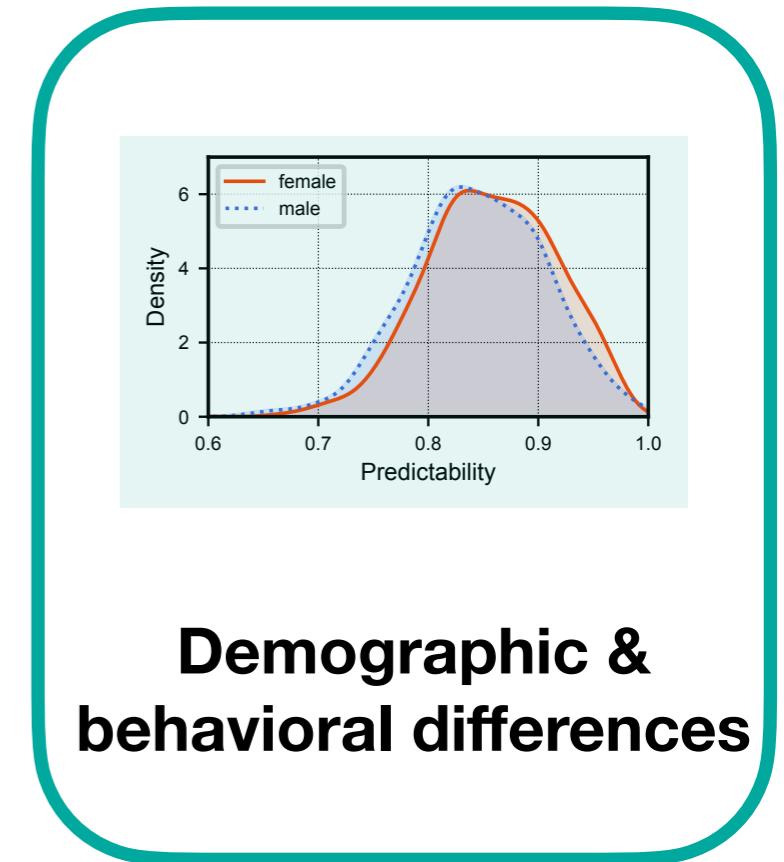
Web routineness & limits of predictability



**Predictability
measurement
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**Web routineness
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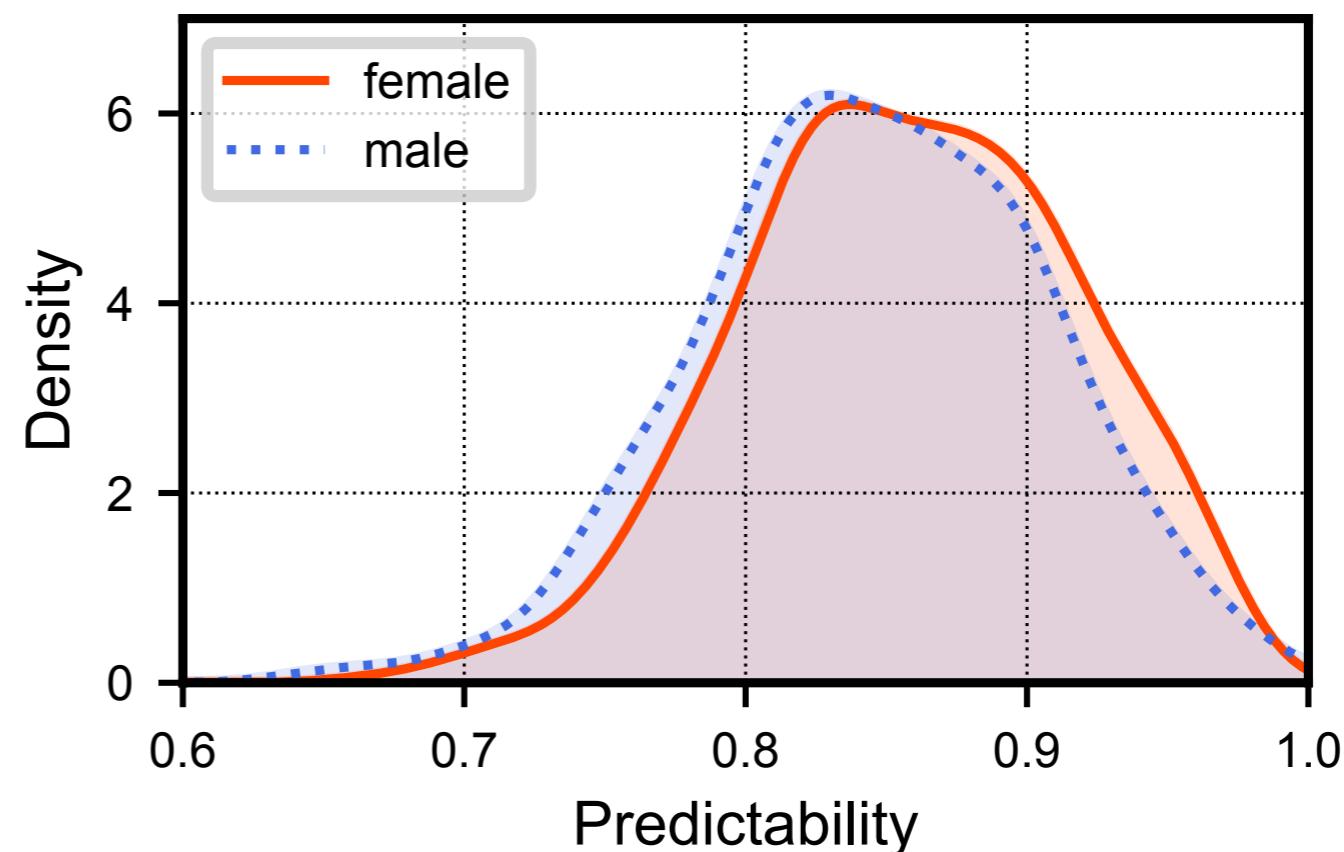
**Demographic &
behavioral differences**

Demographic differences - Gender

- Gender: Male (51.5%) & Female (48.5%)
- Two sample KS test (Hyp: “Two dist are not different”)

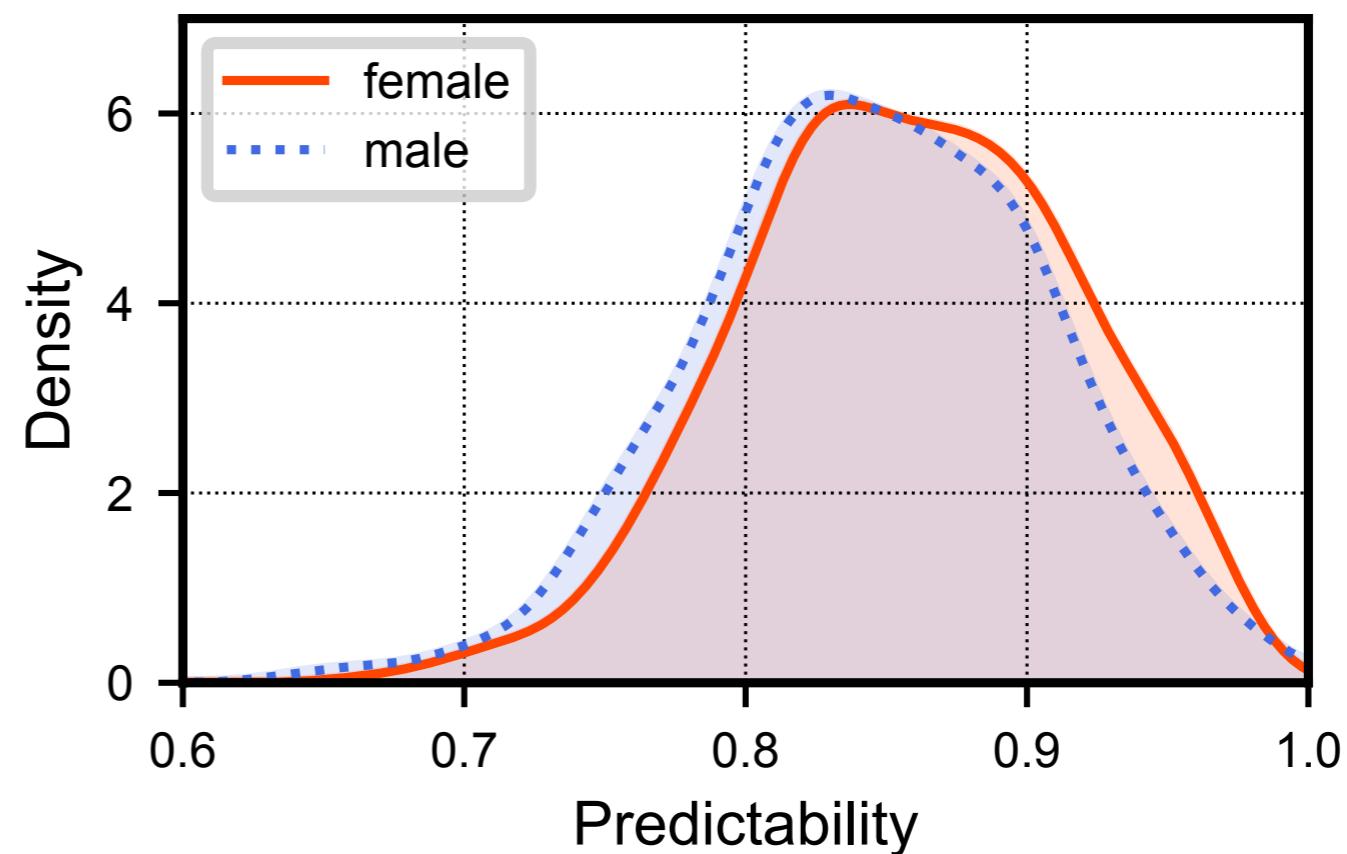
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 - Rejected hyp. KS Score: 0.086, p-value: 0.008
 - Cliff's d: 0.11



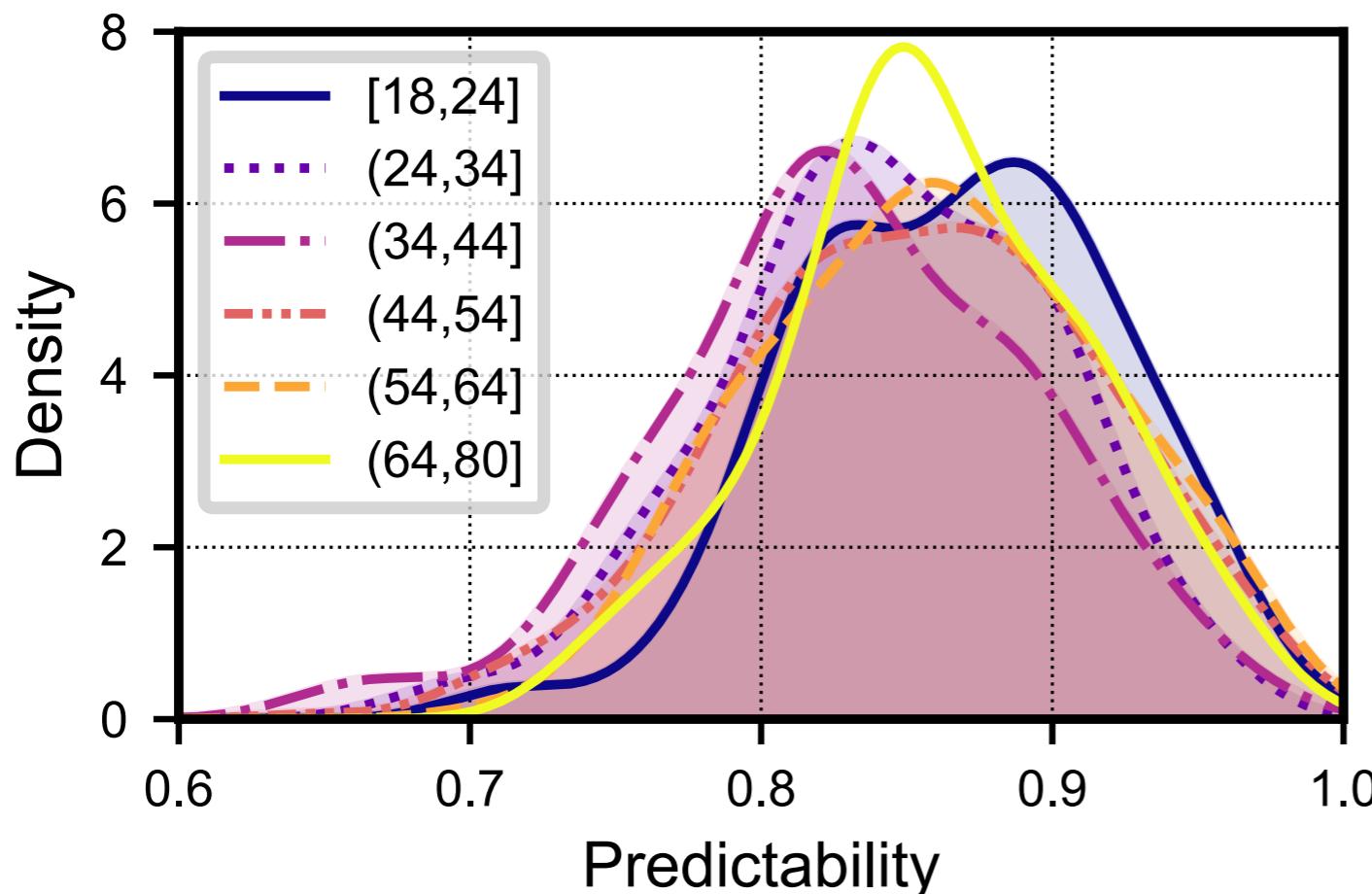
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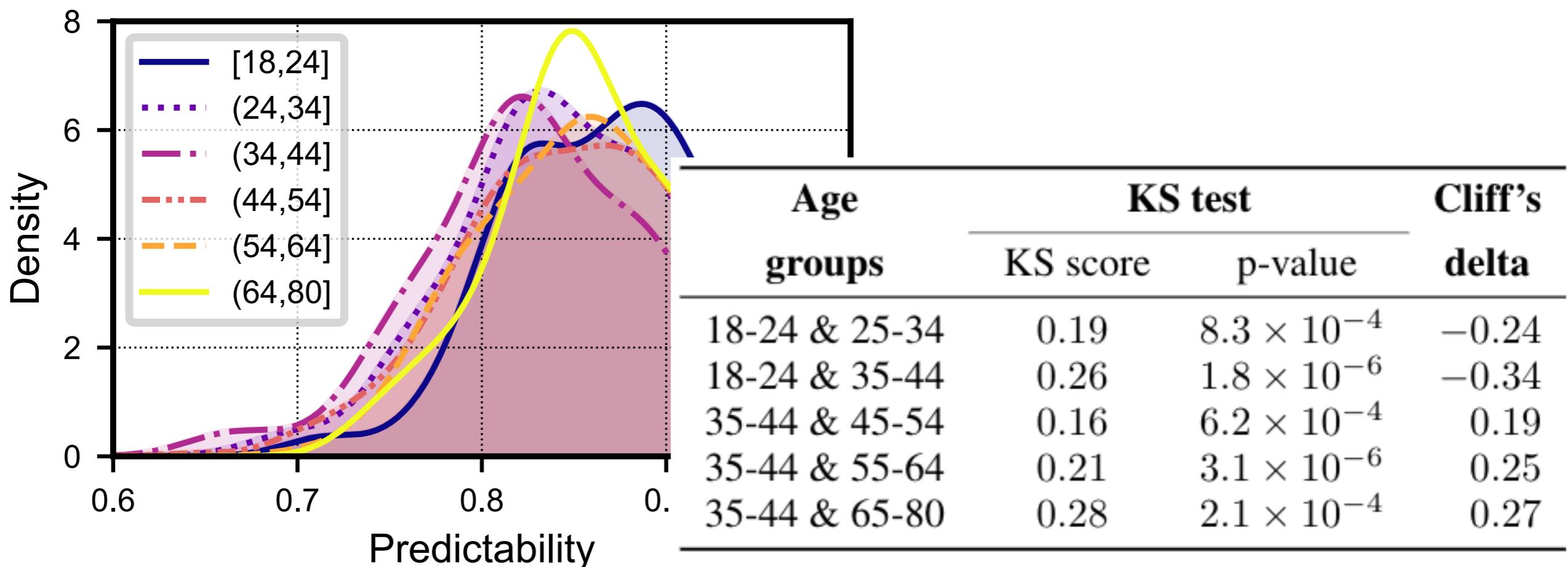
Demographic differences - Age

- Age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 64-80)
- Two sample KS tests applied pairwise



Demographic differences - Age

- Age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 64-80)
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Behavioral differences

- User activity
 - total time spent browsing
 - total visits
- Diversity of user interests
 - Number of unique domains visited
 - Number of unique categories visited
- User stationarity
 - Mean seconds spent per visit
 - Median seconds spent per visit

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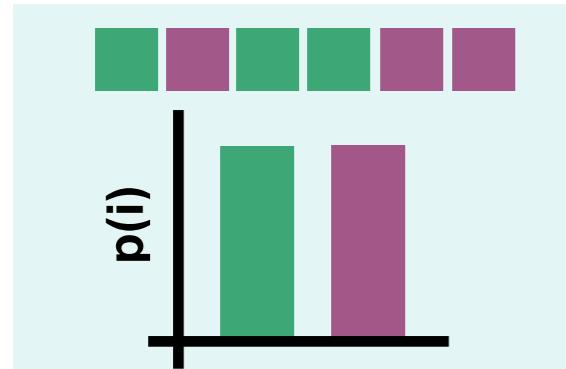


Web Routineness and Limits of Predictability

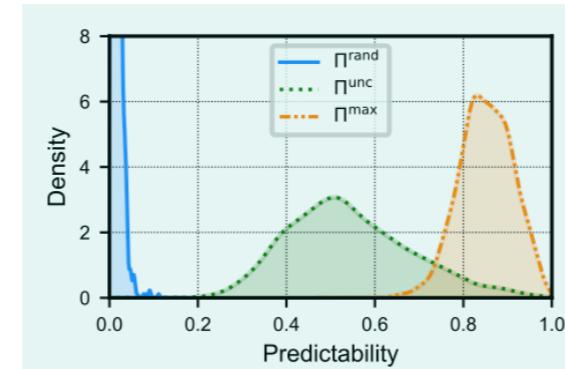
Investigating Demographic and Behavioral Differences Using Web

Juhi Kulshrestha, Marcos Oliveira, Orkut Karaçalik, Denis Bonnay, Claudia Wagner

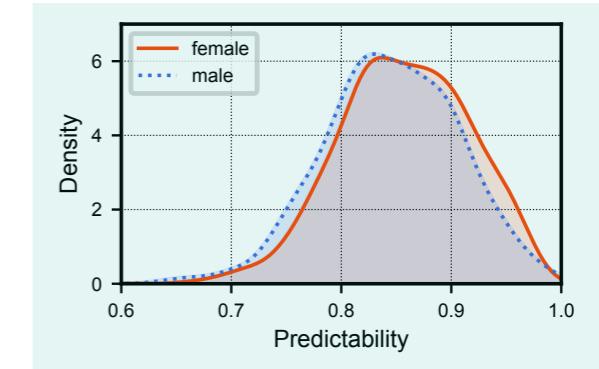
[AAAI ICWSM 2021]



Predictability measurement framework



Web routineness and predictability



Demographic & behavioral differences

Code: <https://tinyurl.com/web-tracking-library>

Data: <https://tinyurl.com/web-tracking-dataset>

Human behaviour on the web



[Image credit: cyberbullying.org]

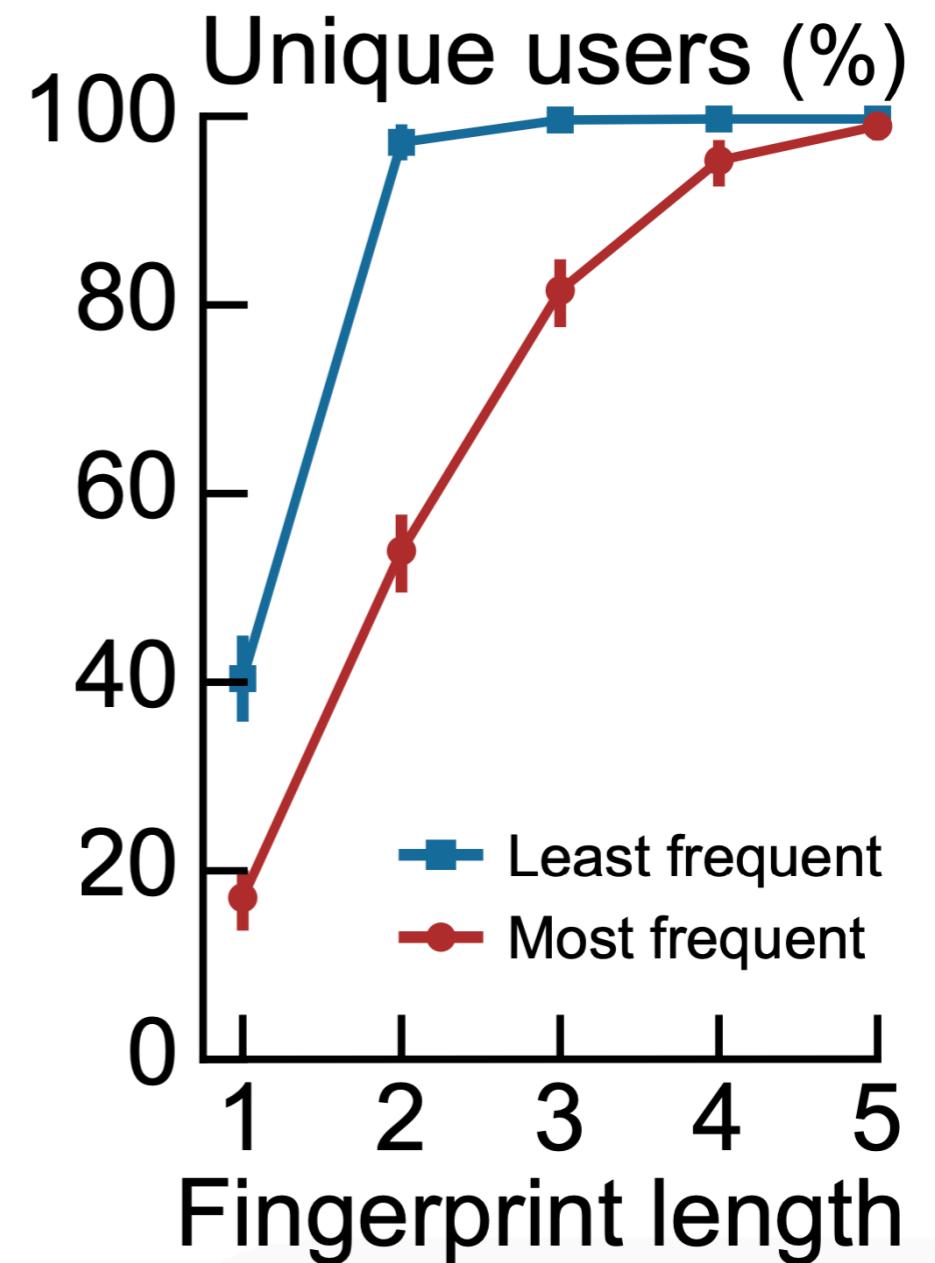
[Under review at PNAS]

Browsing behavior exposes identities on the Web

Marcos Oliveira, Junran Yang, Daniel Griffiths, Denis Bonnay, Juhi Kulshrestha

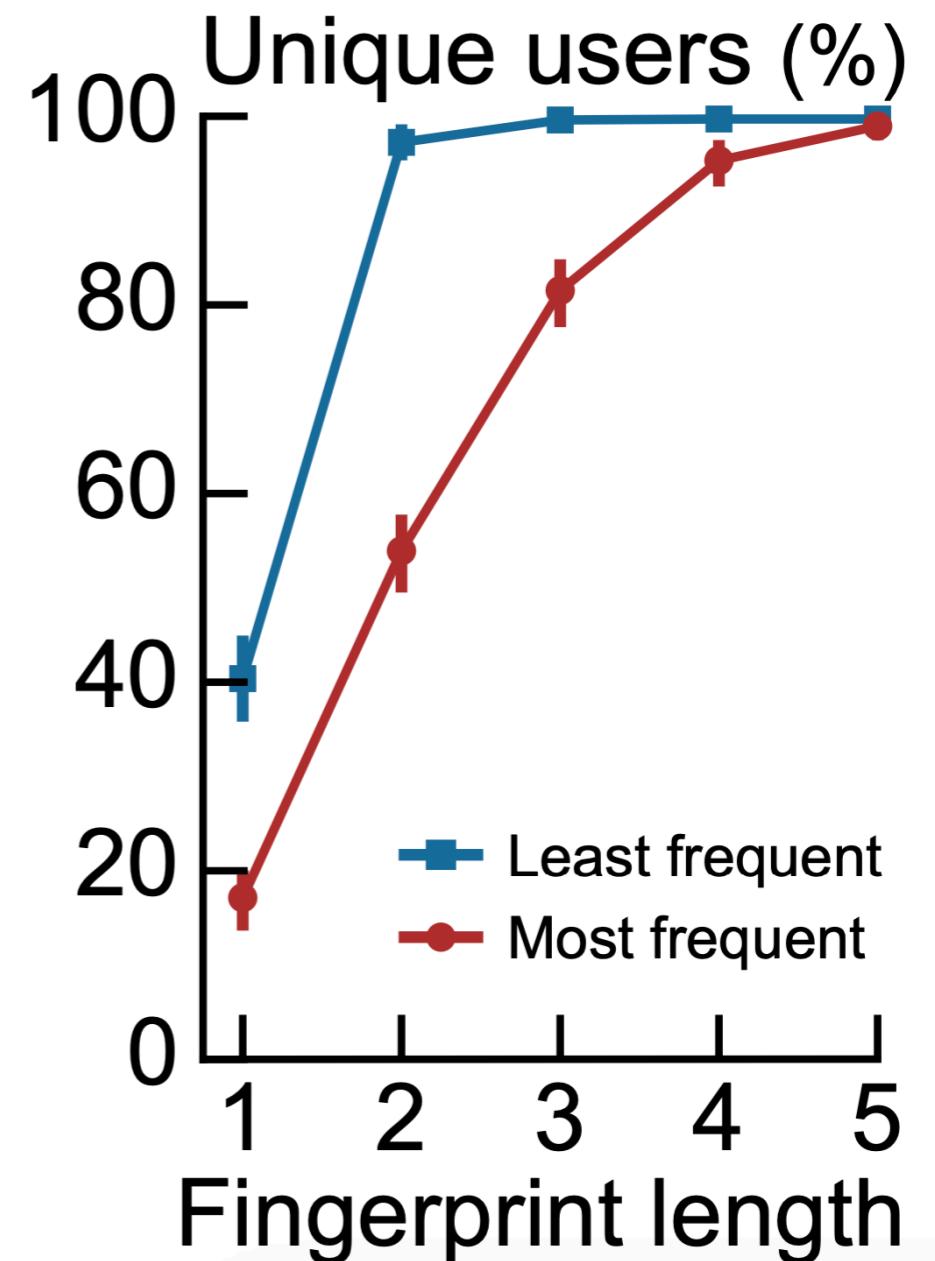
From browsing traces to fingerprints

- Fingerprints: n-tuple comprising their n most visited domains
- Unique users: count non-duplicate n-tuples
- Merely four most visited domains enough to identify 95% of users



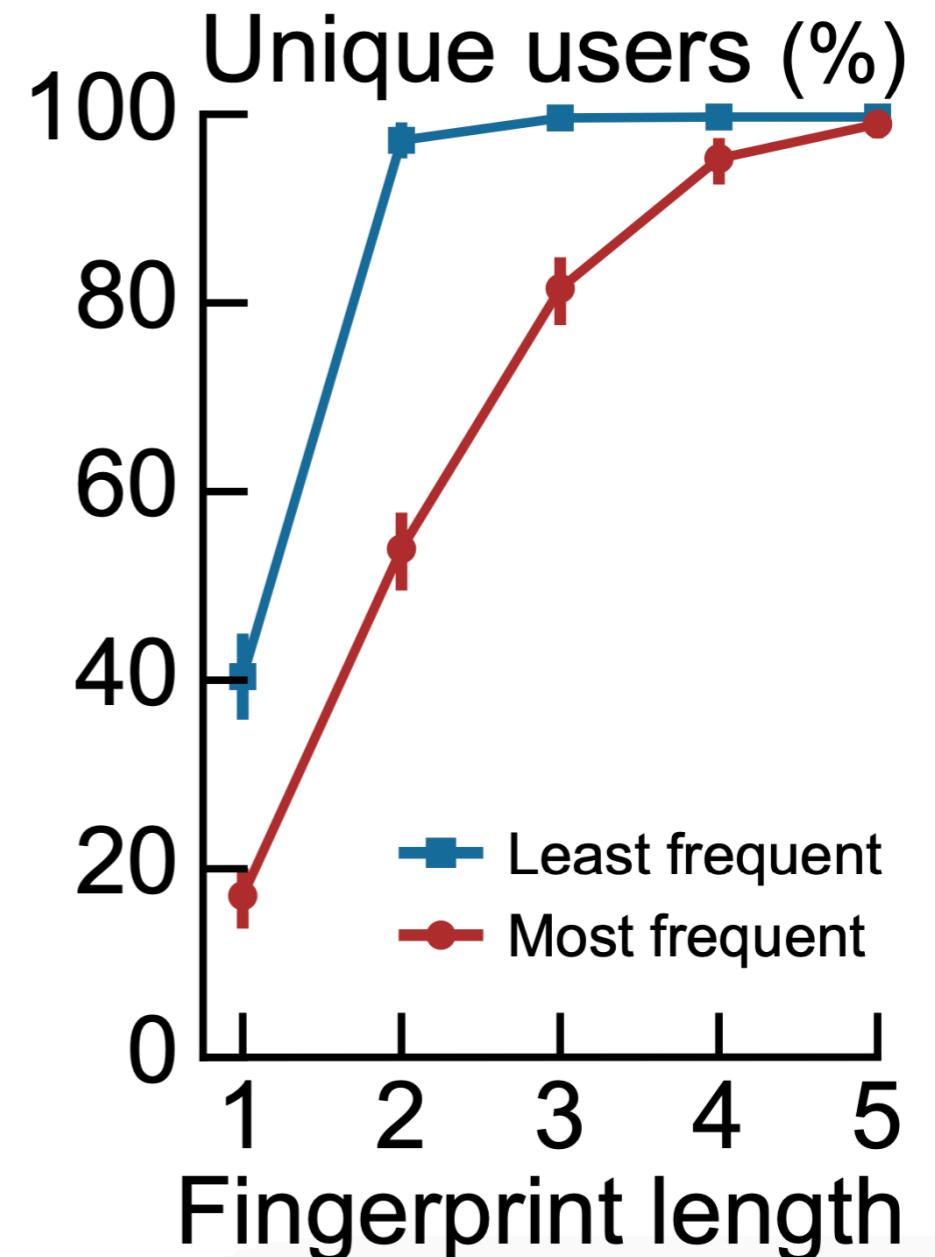
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- Fingerprints are stable and can be used to re-identify 80% of users in separate time slices of data.



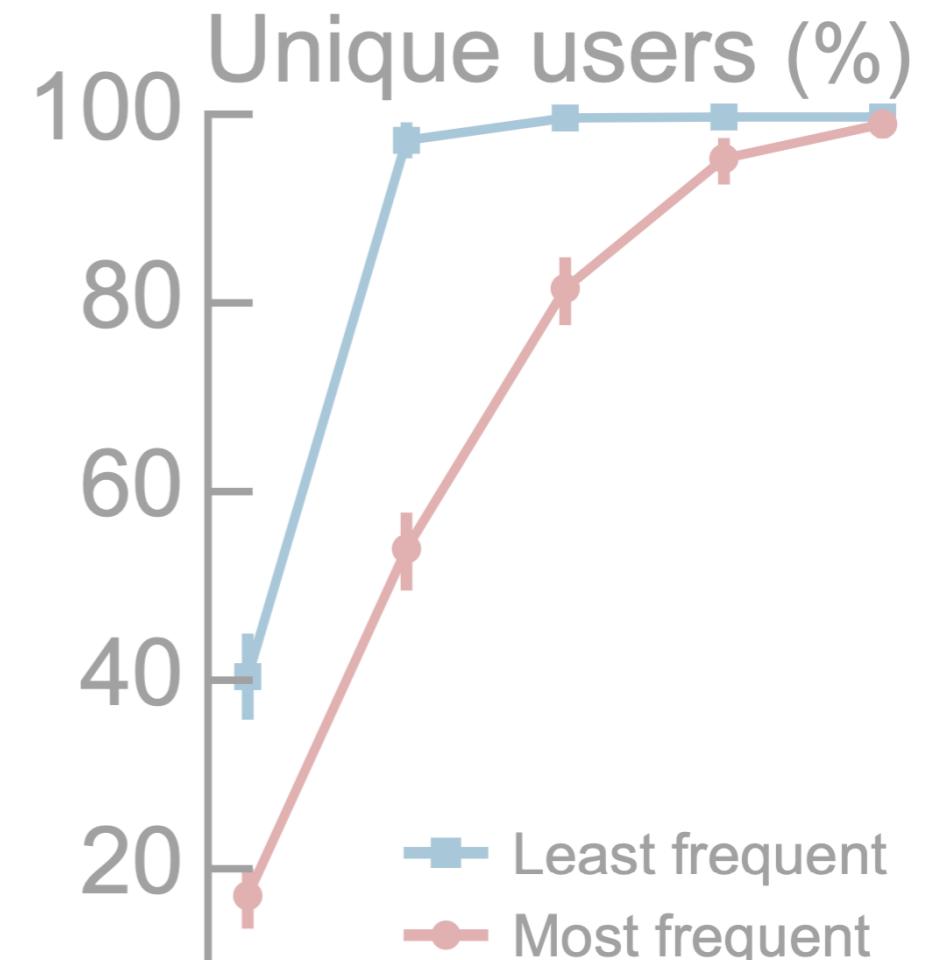
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- Privacy threat persists with limited browsing info too



From browsing traces to fingerprints

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Fundamental aspect of privacy on the web — even mundane browsing data leads to (re-)identifiability of individuals.

Human behaviour on the web



[Image credit: cyberbullying.org]

Political polarisation & individualised online info environments

A?
Aalto University

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

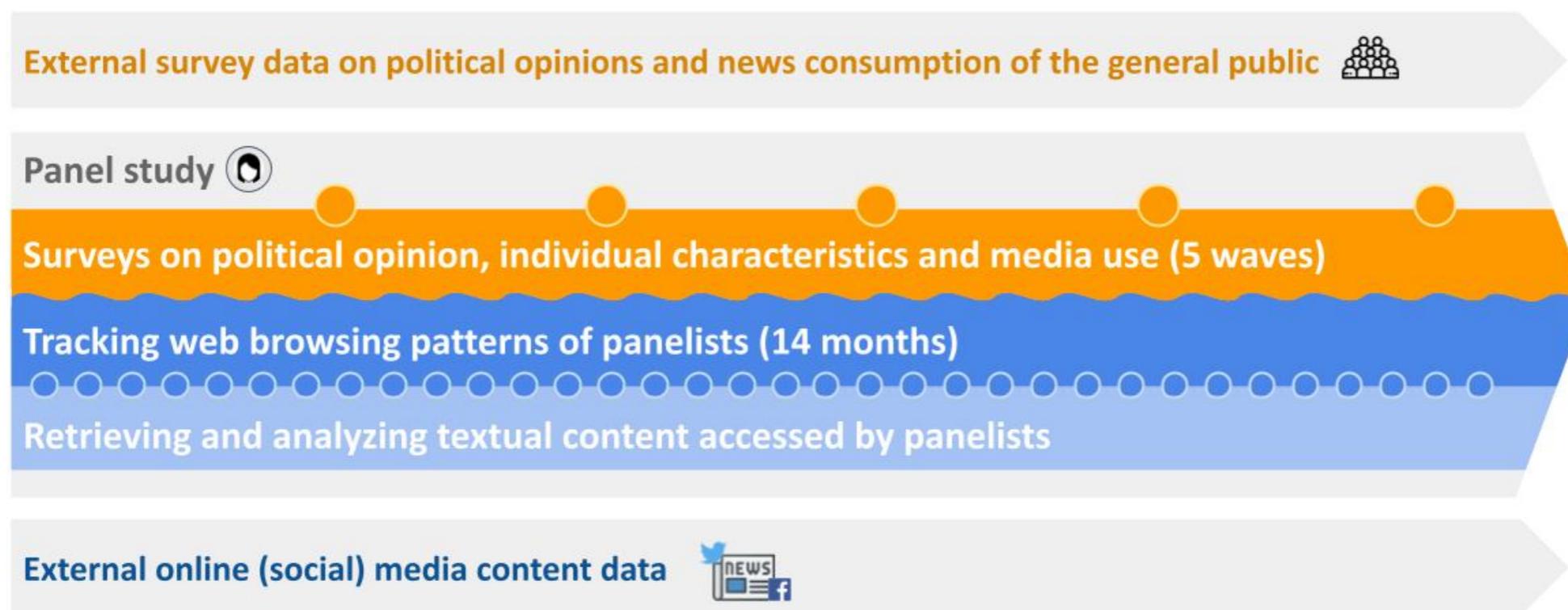
 LEIBNIZ-INSTITUT
FÜR MEDIENFORSCHUNG
HANS-BREDOW-INSTITUT

 Universität
Bremen

Funded by


POLTRACK project

- Panel of a nationally representative sample of German internet users (n = 3,745)
- **Data:** 14 months mobile and desktop tracking + 5 survey waves + automated content analysis
- **Goal:** Study the interplay of information exposure online (diversity) and political opinion formation (polarization)





[Image credit: nbjournal.ru/media-literacy]

Bias & inaccuracies in online news use



[Image credit: nbjournal.ru/media-literacy]

Bias & inaccuracies in online news use

[ACM FAccT 2019]

[IEEE Trans. on Computational Social Systems Journal 2021]

Analyzing biases in perception of truth in news stories and their implications for fact checking

Mahmoudreza Babaei, Juhi Kulshrestha, Abhijnan Chakraborty, Elissa M Redmiles,
Meeyoung Cha, Krishna P Gummadi

Proliferation of mis/dis-information online

*How Fake News on Facebook Helped Fuel
a Border Crisis in Europe*

**Facebook, Twitter face
congressional hearings on political
bias, fake news**

Misinformation as an infection: Fighting the spread of disease

Revealed: Facebook hate speech
exploded in Myanmar during Rohingya
crisis

**Capitol riot misinformation
persists: False claims continue to
circulate on Facebook**

Detecting “fake news”

- Experts
 - expert human fact checkers
 - highly resource-constrained process
- Algorithms
 - use content and crowd signals
 - hard to apply in dynamic news contexts without human supervision

Detecting “fake news”

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 - ask users to report news they perceive to be fake
 - stories reported by many users prioritized for expert fact checking

Detecting “fake news”

- Experts
 - expert human fact checkers
 - highly resource-constrained process

Ask yourself:

Is this the best strategy?

- Crowds + Experts
 - ask users to report news they perceive to be fake
 - stories reported by many users prioritized for expert fact checking

Most prevalent approach

Gathering users' truth perceptions

- rapidly assess of how users implicitly perceive truth in news stories

Claim:

Sen. John McCain's vote against a 'skinny repeal' health care proposal stopped attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act for FY '17.

Please give your rating for this claim.

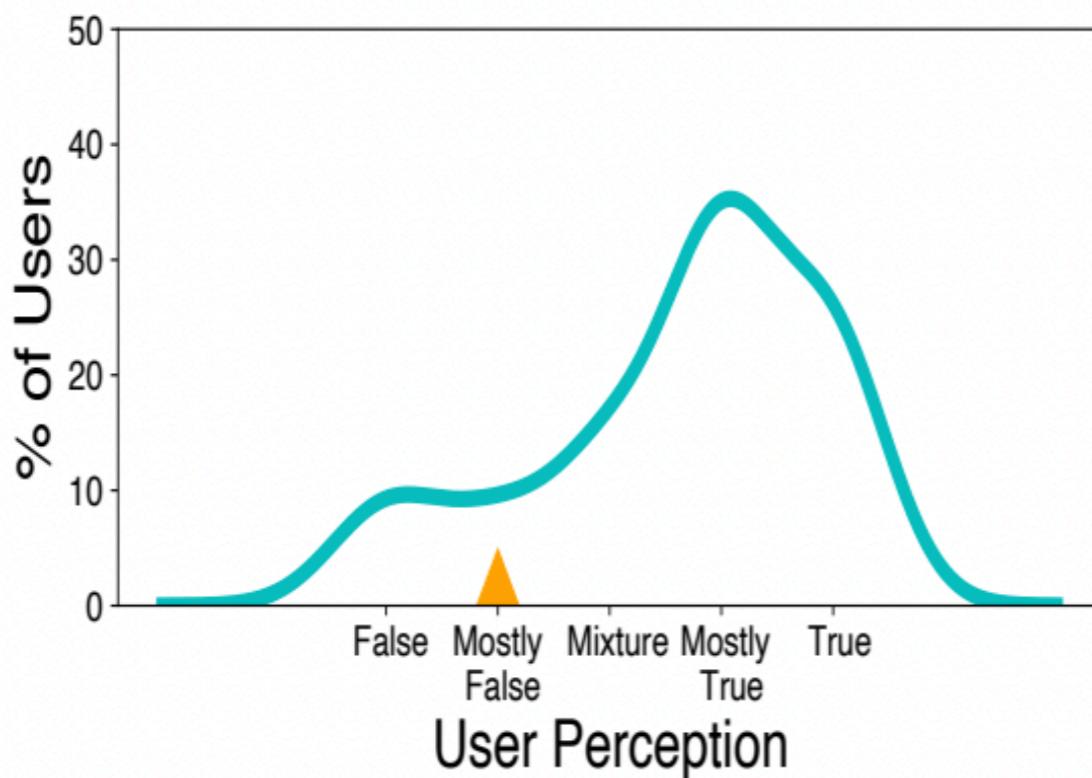
- True
- Mostly True
- Mixture
- Mostly False
- False

[Continue to next Claim](#)

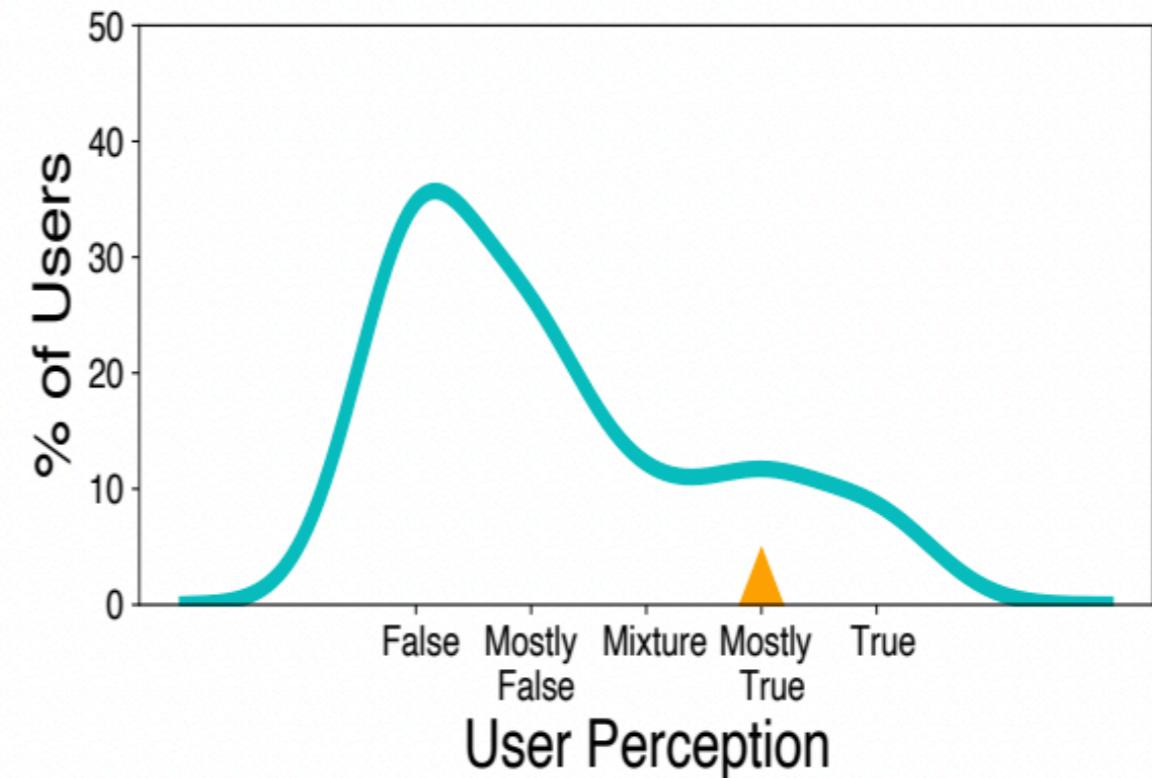
Analyzing perception biases (1)

- For many stories, perceived truth level differs significantly from ground truth level

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has investments in the private prison industry.

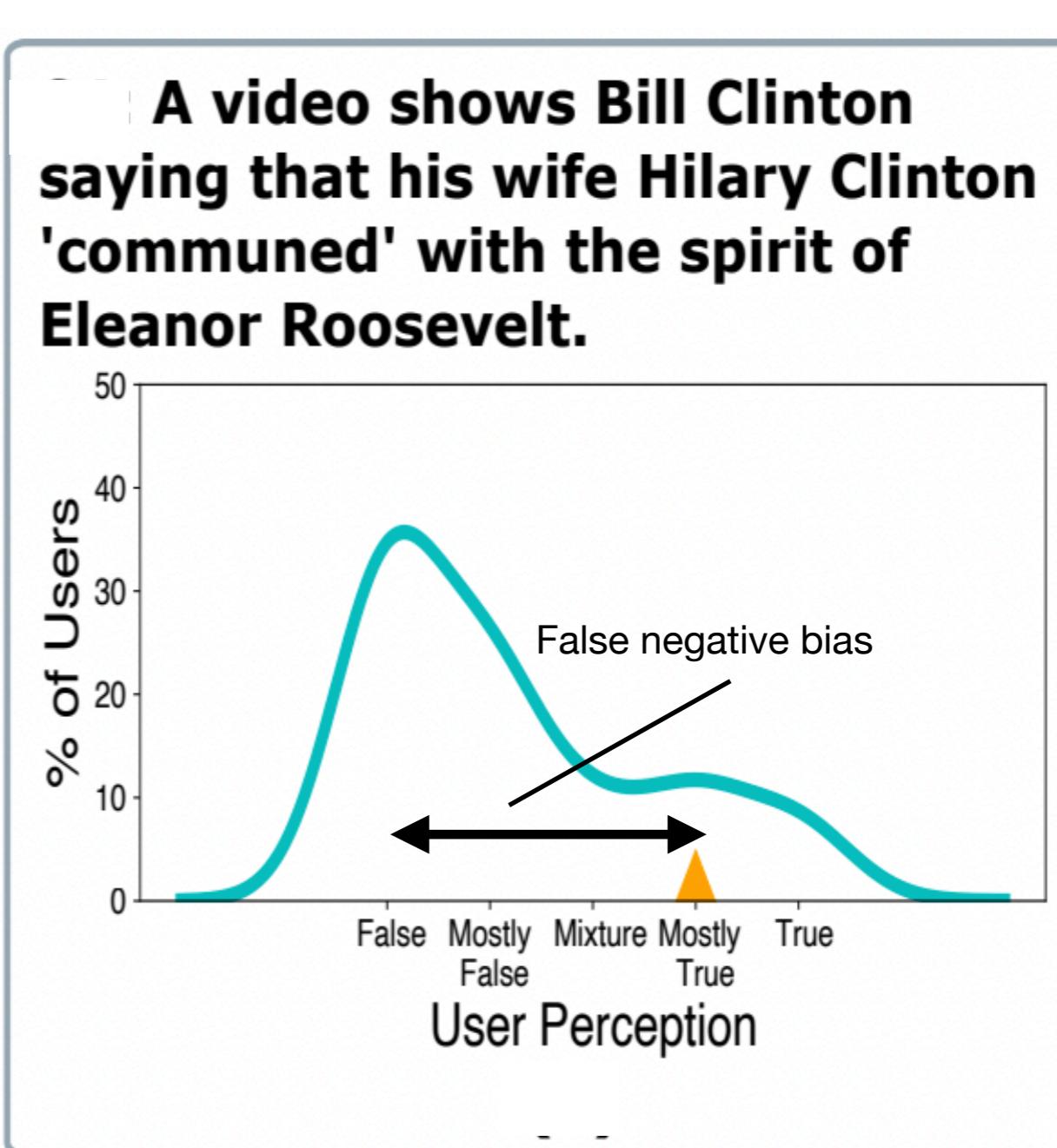
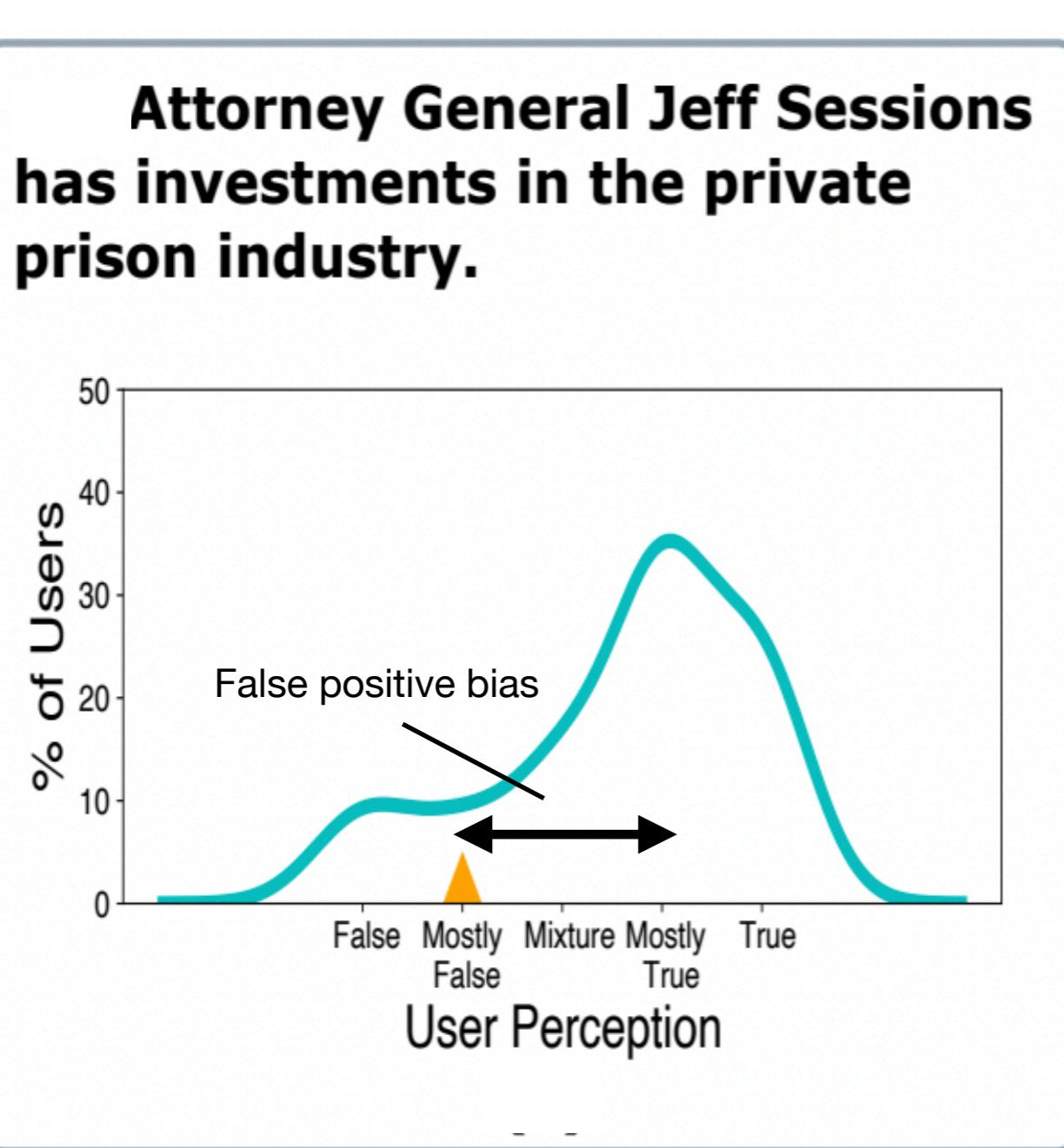


A video shows Bill Clinton saying that his wife Hilary Clinton 'communed' with the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt.



Analyzing perception biases (2)

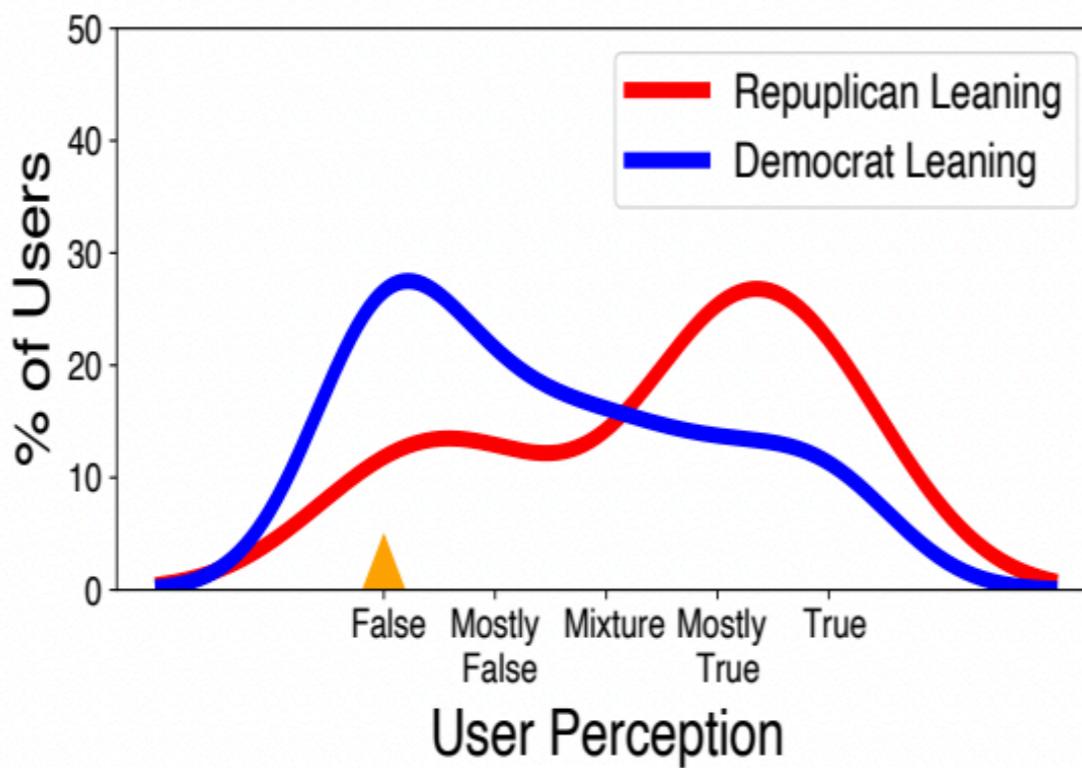
- False-positive and false negative perception bias



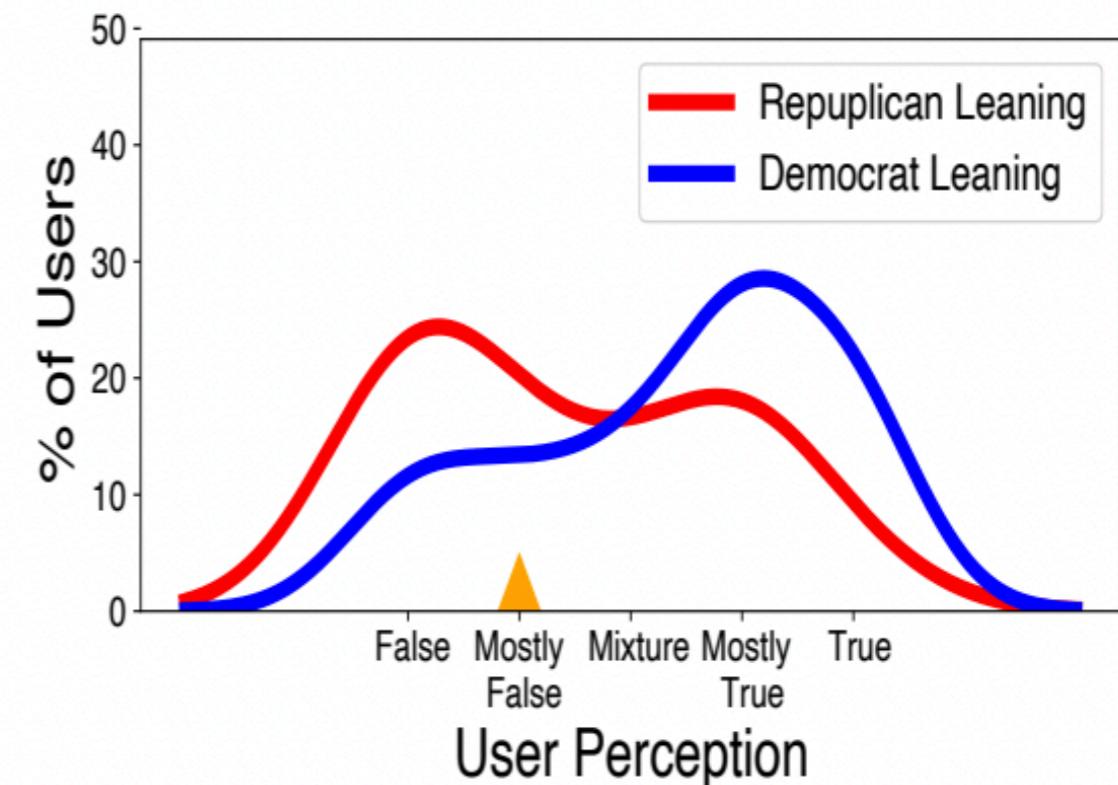
Analyzing perception biases (3)

- Users' political ideologies influence their truth perceptions for the most controversial stories

A U.S. surgeon who exposed "Clinton Foundation corruption in Haiti" was found dead in his home under suspicious circumstances.



President Trump's administration shut down the White House phone comment line.



Operationalizing prioritization objectives

- Remove false news stories from circulation
 - Fact check false stories with higher probability than true stories

Operationalizing prioritization objectives

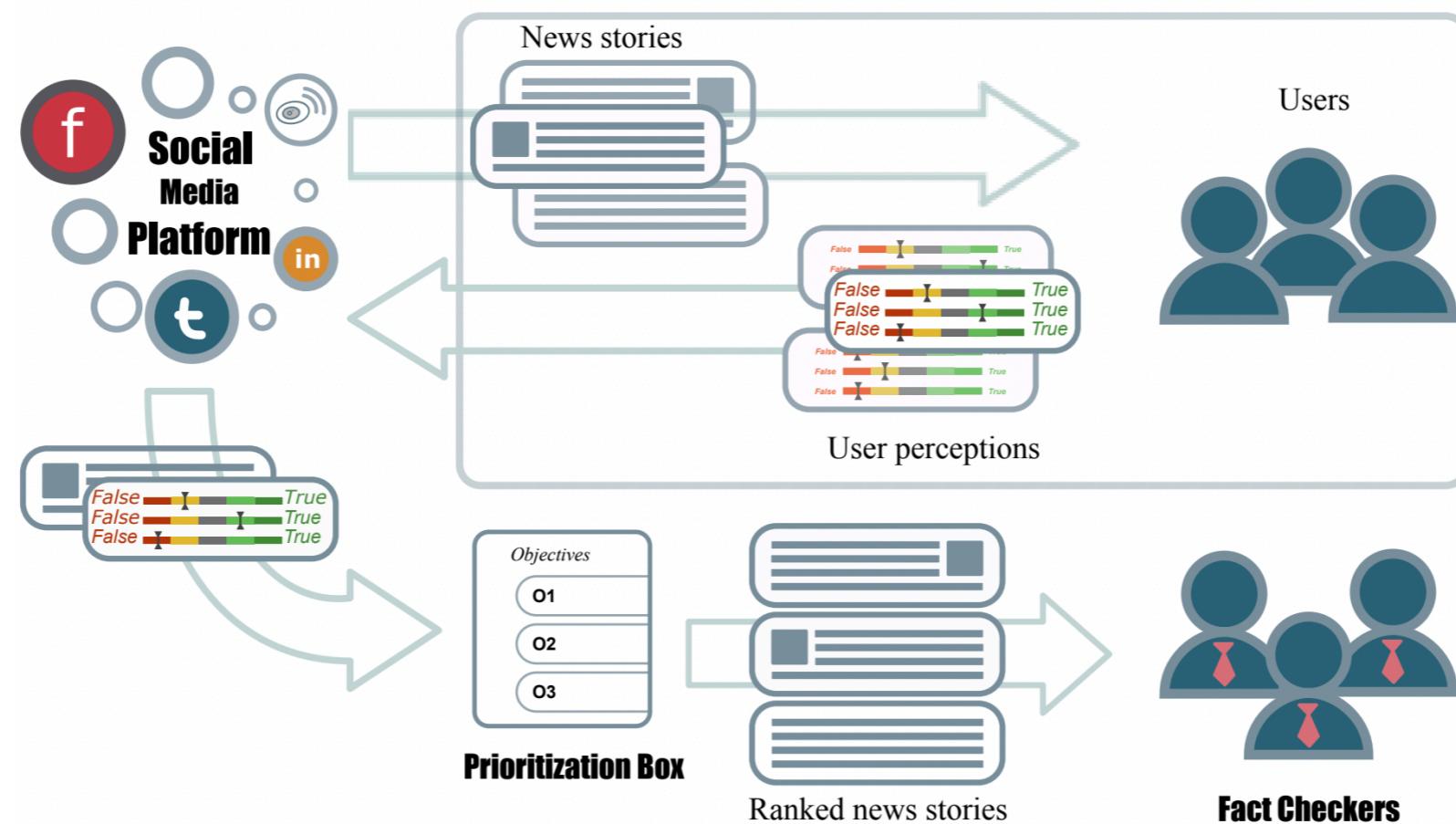
- Remove false news stories from circulation
 - Fact check false stories with higher probability than true stories
- Correct the misperception of users
 - Fact check stories where users' perceived truth levels differ a lot from ground truth levels

Operationalizing prioritization objectives

- Remove false news stories from circulation
 - Fact check false stories with higher probability than true stories
- Correct the misperception of users
 - Fact check stories where users' perceived truth levels differ a lot from ground truth levels
- Decrease the disagreement among the users
 - Fact check news stories where people disagree most about the truth value of the stories

Analyzing Biases in Perception of Truth in News Stories and Their Implications for Fact Checking

Mahmoudreza Babaei, Juhi Kulshrestha, Abhijnan Chakraborty,
Elissa M. Redmiles, Meeyoung Cha, and Krishna P. Gummadi





[Image credit: nbjournal.ru/media-literacy]

Bias & inaccuracies in online news use

[AAAI / ICWSM 2018]

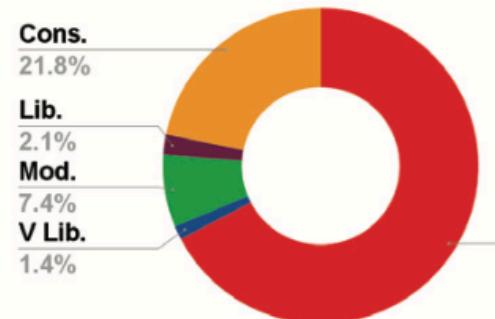
Media Bias Monitor: Quantifying Biases of Social Media News Outlets at Large-Scale

Filipe N. Ribeiro, Lucas Henrique, Fabricio Benevenuto, Abhijnan Chakraborty, Juhi Kulshrestha,
Mahmoudreza Babaei, Krishna P. Gummadi

Using FB Ads platform to assess media bias at scale

- Social media ad interfaces offer detailed insights into demographics of news sources' audiences
- Ideological leaning accurately estimated by the over-/under-representation of liberals or conservatives in audience
- Biases in sources' audience demographics (race, gender, age, national identity, income) indicative of fine-grained biases such as social vs. economic vs. nationalistic conservatism

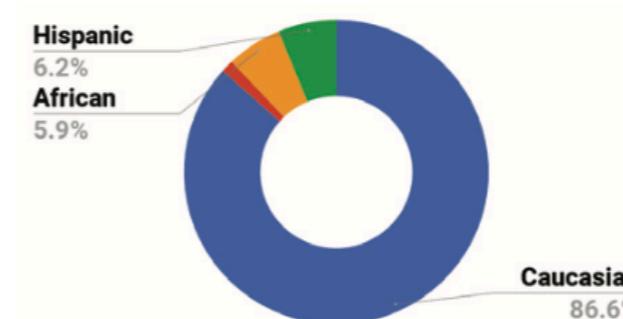
Using FB Ads platform to assess media bias at scale



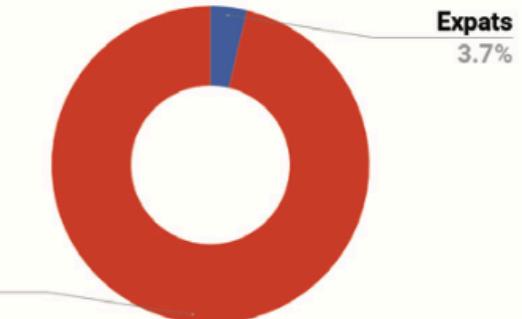
(a) Political Leaning



(b) Age Groups



(c) Racial Affinities

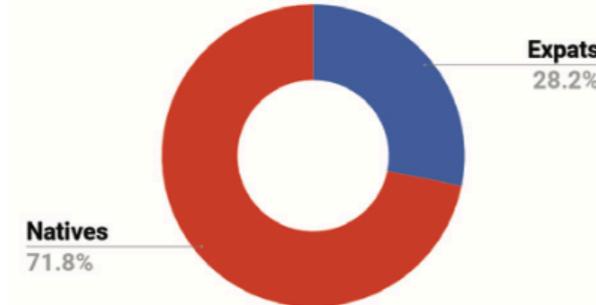


(d) National Identity

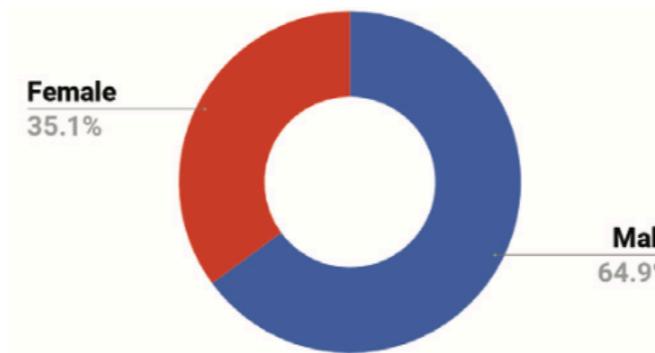
Breitbart – Mostly conservative, older, caucasian, non-immigrant folks



(a) Political Leaning



(b) National Identity



(c) Gender



(d) Income Level

Economist – Mostly liberal, high-earning, mostly men, who are natives and expats



[Image credit: nbjournal.ru/media-literacy]

Bias & inaccuracies in online news use

[PLOS ONE 2022]

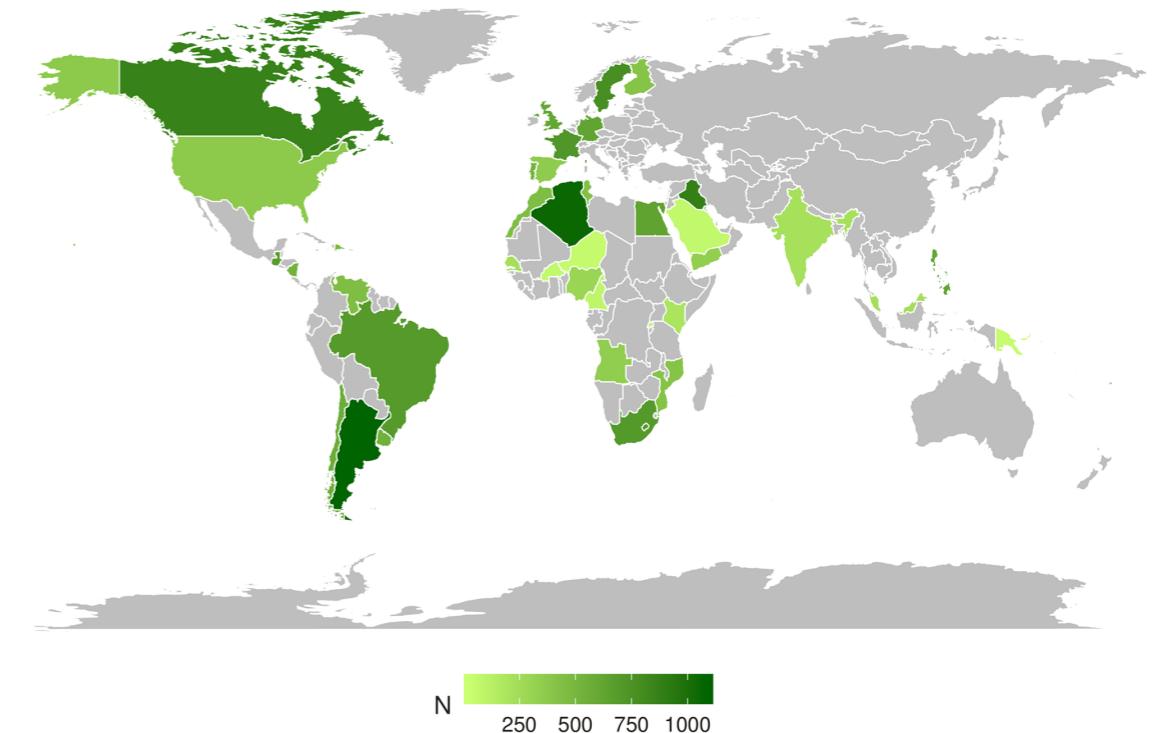
[JMIR Human Factors 2021]

Misinformation, fact checks, believability, and vaccine acceptance over 40 countries during COVID-19

Karandeep Singh, Gabriel Lima, Meeyoung Cha, Chiyoung Cha, Juhi Kulshrestha, Yong-Yeol Ahn, Onur Varol

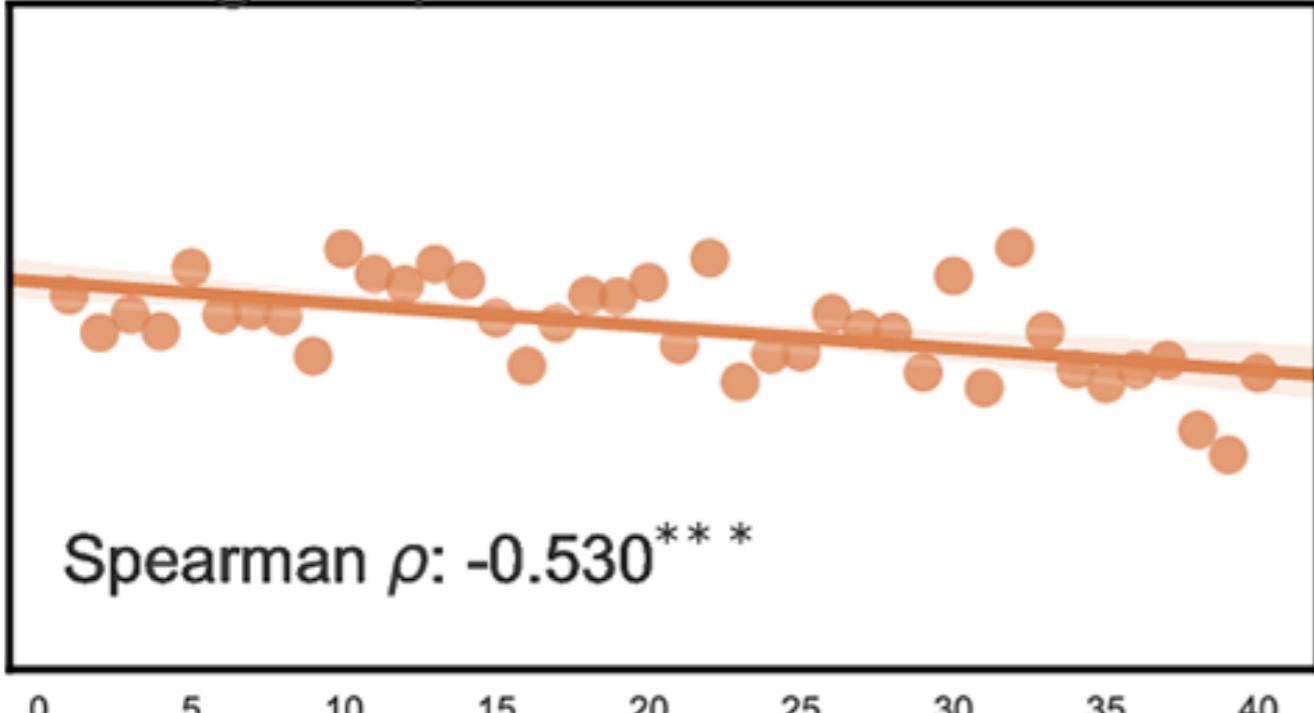
FB Ads platform for recruiting survey respondents

- 18,000 respondents from 40 countries, recruited via FB ads platform
 - About five times cheaper than alternatives (e.g., Prolific, MTurk)
 - Wider demographic reach
 - Whether respondents have been exposed to a broad set of false claims and fact-checked information on the disease, whether they believe the false claims, and if they think their community will benefit from the fact checked information

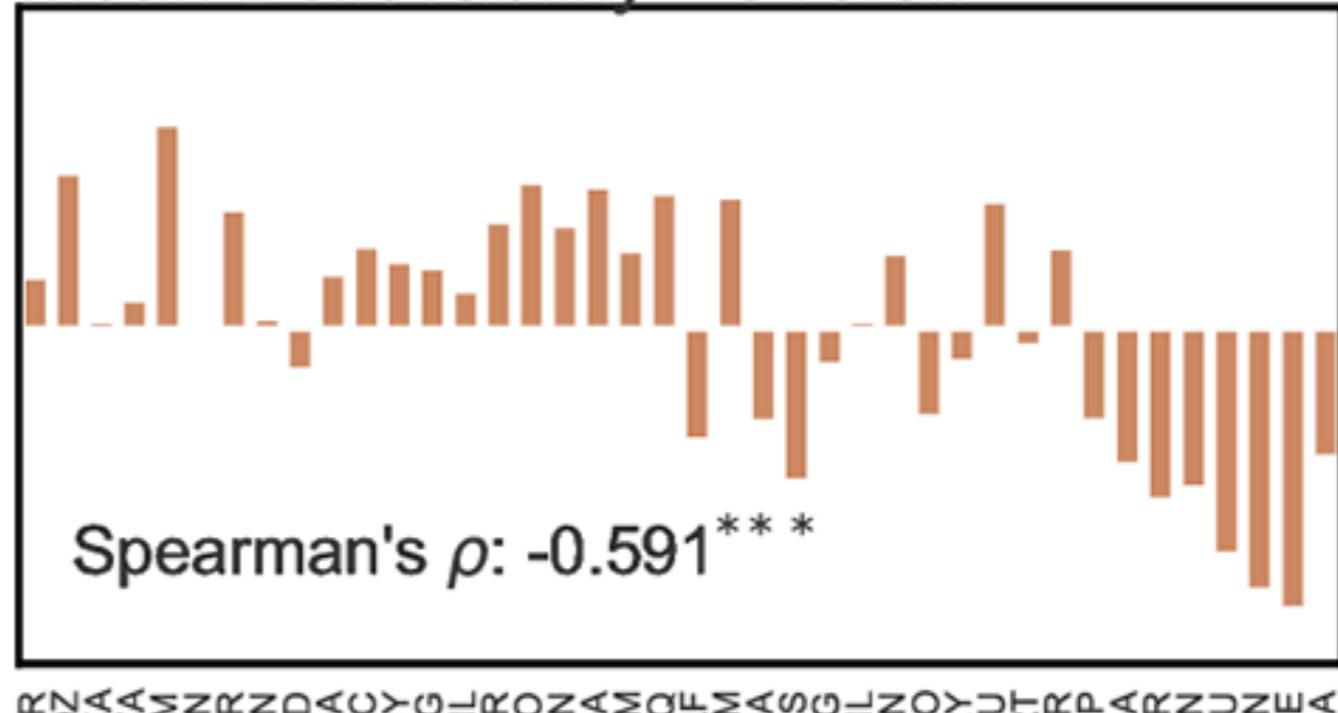


Underdeveloped countries more susceptible to infodemic

Average Exposure



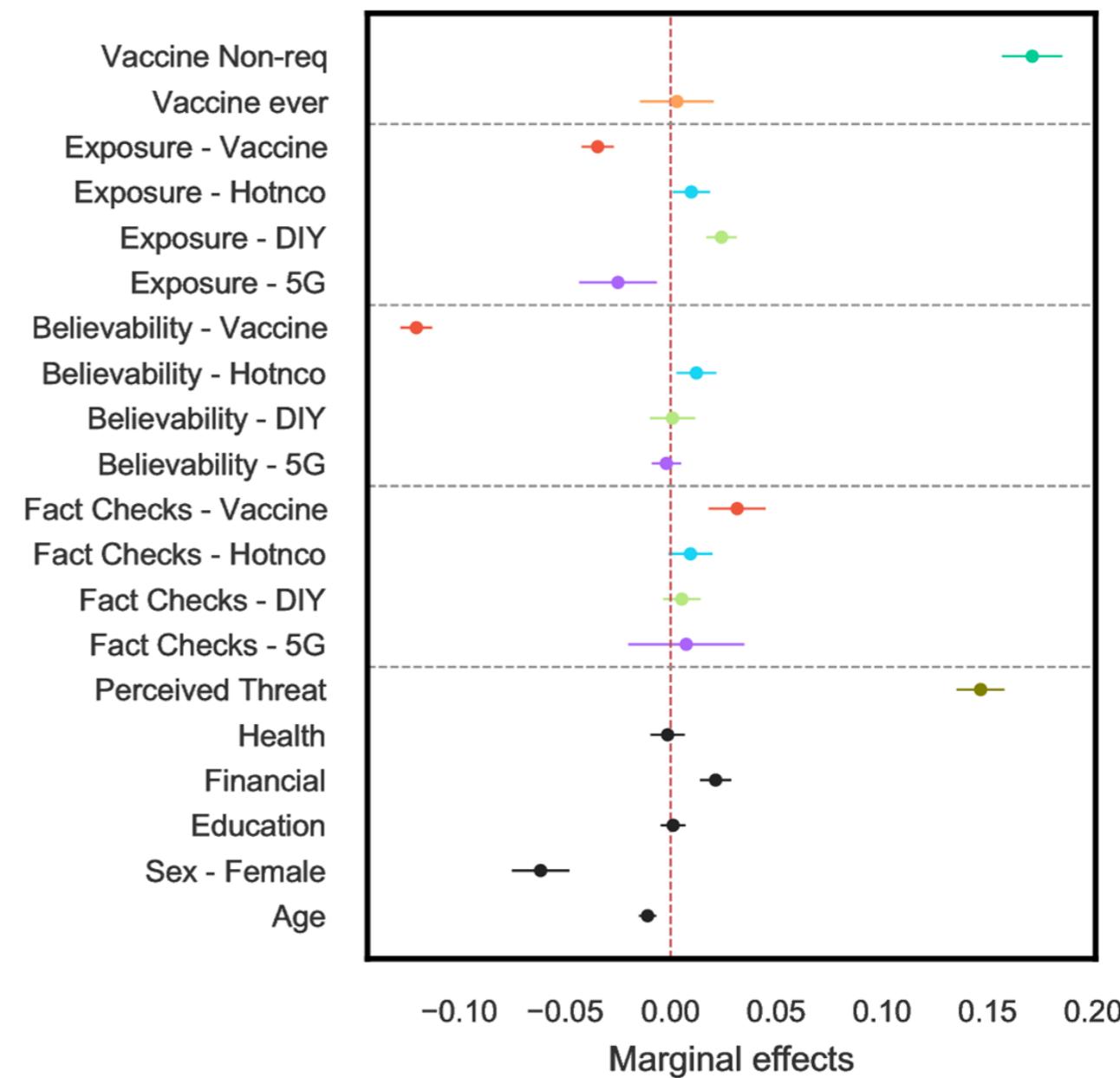
Mean Believability - Overall



- Countries ranked by GDP per capita on x-axis
- Poorer countries exposed to more false claims than richer countries
- Respondents from lower GDP per capita countries more susceptible to believing in misinformation upon exposure

Infodemic and vaccine acceptance

- Logistic regression model for vaccine acceptance as the outcome variable
- Increased exposure to vaccine-related misinformation is associated with increased vaccine hesitancy
- Believability of vaccination-related claims even more substantially associated with increased vaccine hesitancy
- Increased exposure to fact-checked vaccine-related info is correlated with increased vaccine acceptance





[Image credit: digicol.de/news]

Impact of online info retrieval systems



[Image credit: digicol.de/news]

Impact of online info retrieval systems

[ACM CSCW 2017]

[Information Retrieval Journal 2019]

Quantifying Search Bias

Investigating Political Bias in Social Media and Web Search

Juhi Kulshrestha, Motahhare Eslami, Johnnatan Messias, Muhammad Bilal Zafar,
Saptarshi Ghosh, Krishna Gummadi, Karrie Karahalios

Growing concerns about social media

Scandal, outrage and politics

Do social media threaten democracy?

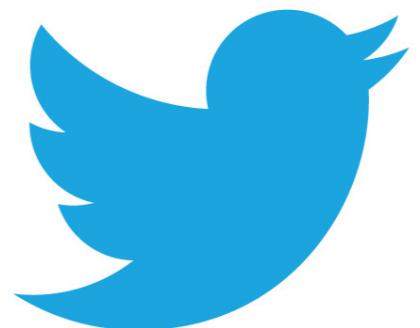
Donald Trump Accuses Google of Bias in Search Engine Results

Search engine bias: What search results are telling you (and what they're not)

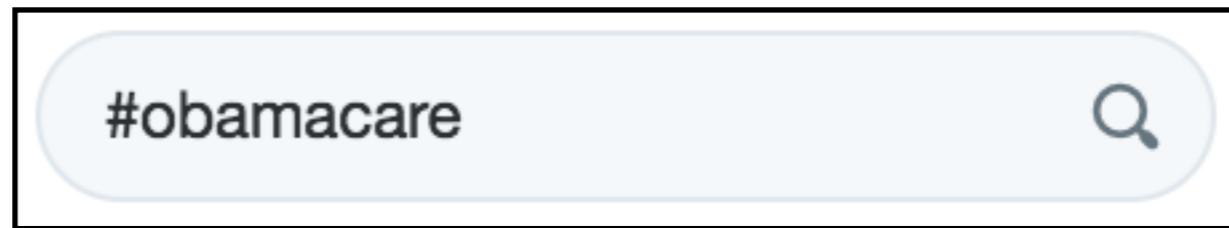
Trump accuses Facebook, Twitter, Google of Democrat bias

Social media as a "search" platform

- Used to find information about on-going events & public figures [Teevan et al., 2011]



Social media as "search" platform



Social media as "search" platform

#obamacare

· Feb 23
I support @RandPaul and @RepSanfordSC's #Obamacare replacement plan -- a plan that will lower costs and put the focus back on the patient.

117 290 971

· Feb 23
Whoa. Arkansas is pissed. Woman says her husband will die without #ObamaCare. Asks @SenTomCotton "What kind of insurance do YOU have?" #CNN

27 25

Feb 22
Support for Obamacare growing! We do not need to #RepealAndReplace #Obamacare, fix it as is or keep it for the sake of the people's welfare.

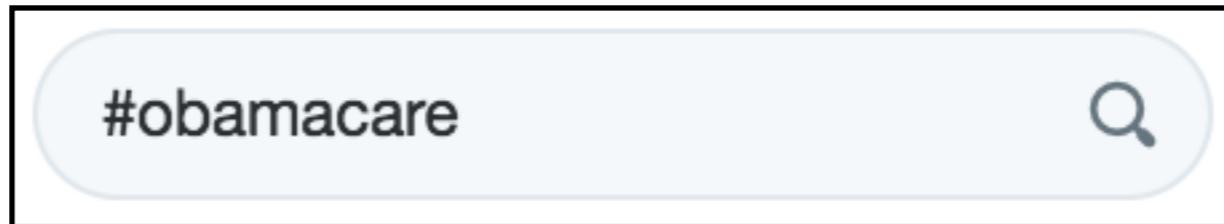
6 24 56

· Feb 22
...but not everyone has to buy a Lamborghini, as Ted Cruz falsely claimed was the case under #Obamacare.

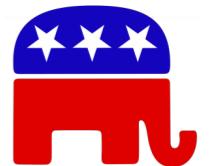
3 128 932

Ranked list
(according to
importance)

Potential bias in search results

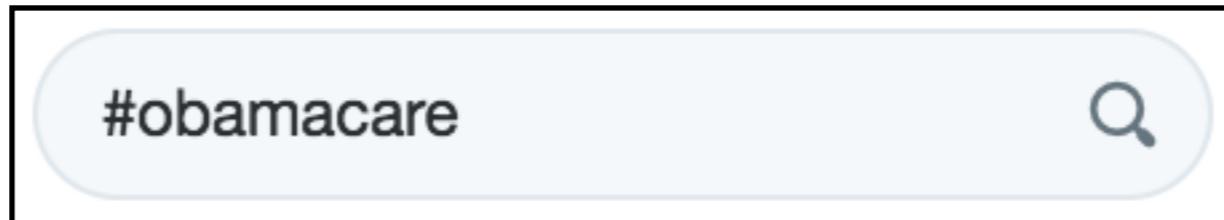


I support @RandPaul and @RepSanfordSC's #Obamacare replacement plan -- a plan that will lower costs and put the focus back on the patient.

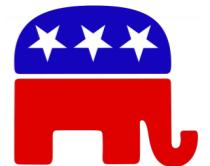
A screenshot of a tweet. The profile picture and name of the user are redacted. In the top right corner of the tweet card, there is a "Follow" button with a person icon and the word "Follow". Below the "Follow" button is a dropdown arrow. The tweet text reads: "I support @RandPaul and @RepSanfordSC's #Obamacare replacement plan -- a plan that will lower costs and put the focus back on the patient."

Republican

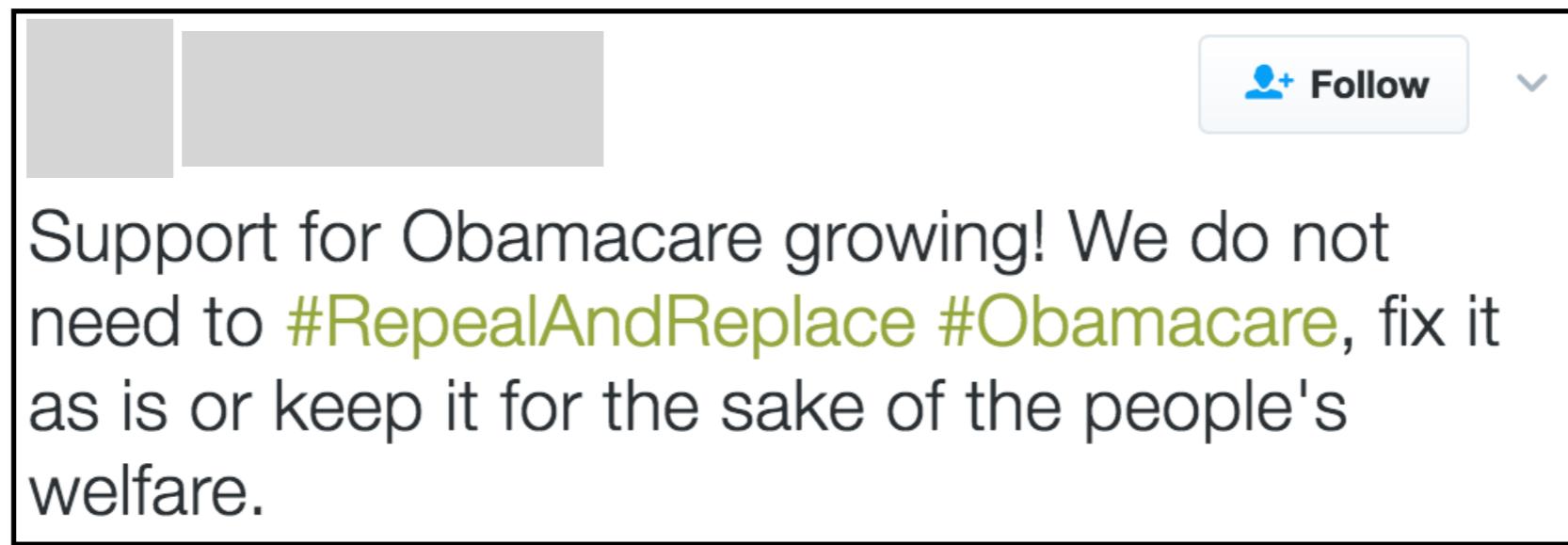
Potential bias in search results



A screenshot of a Twitter post. The profile picture and name are blurred. The post text reads: "I support @RandPaul and @RepSanfordSC's #Obamacare replacement plan -- a plan that will lower costs and put the focus back on the patient." A "Follow" button is visible in the top right corner of the card.



Republican



A screenshot of a Twitter post. The profile picture and name are blurred. The post text reads: "Support for Obamacare growing! We do not need to #RepealAndReplace #Obamacare, fix it as is or keep it for the sake of the people's welfare." A "Follow" button is visible in the top right corner of the card.

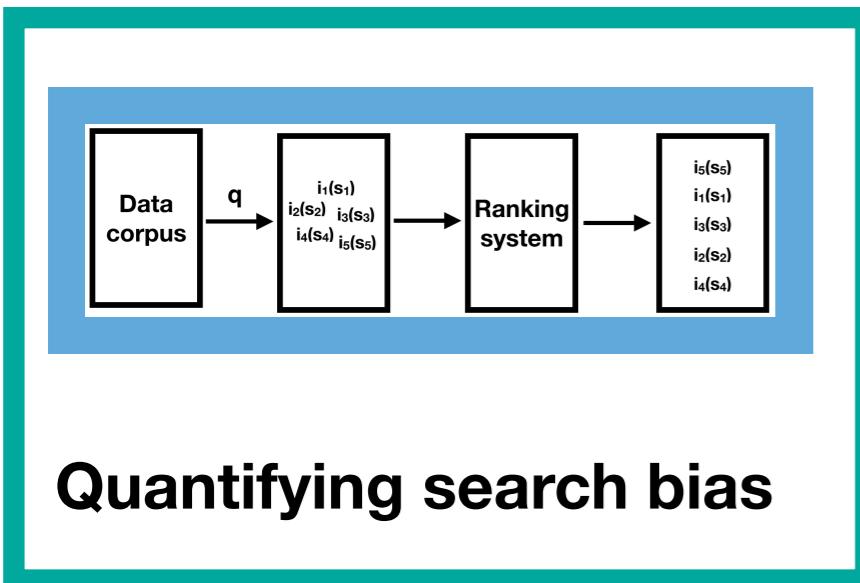


Democratic

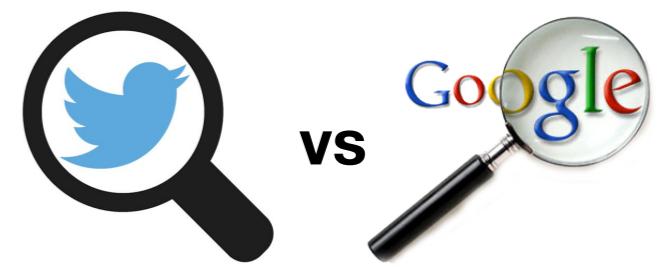
Search can shape user opinion

- Search rankings are **perceived as unbiased, accurate and fair** *[Purcell et al., 2012]*
- Biased search results can **influence voting** patterns *[Epstein & Robertson, 2015; Epstein et al., 2017]*

Quantifying search bias



**Sources of bias
in Twitter search**



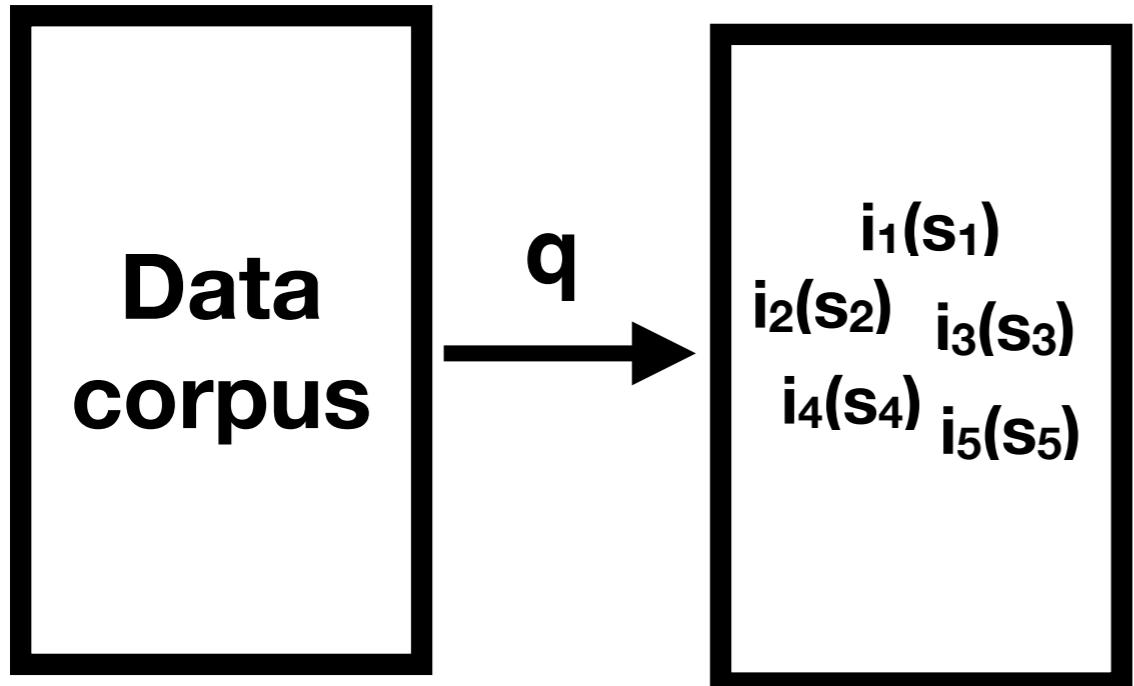
**Relative bias of Twitter
and Google search**

Search bias quantification framework

Data
corpus

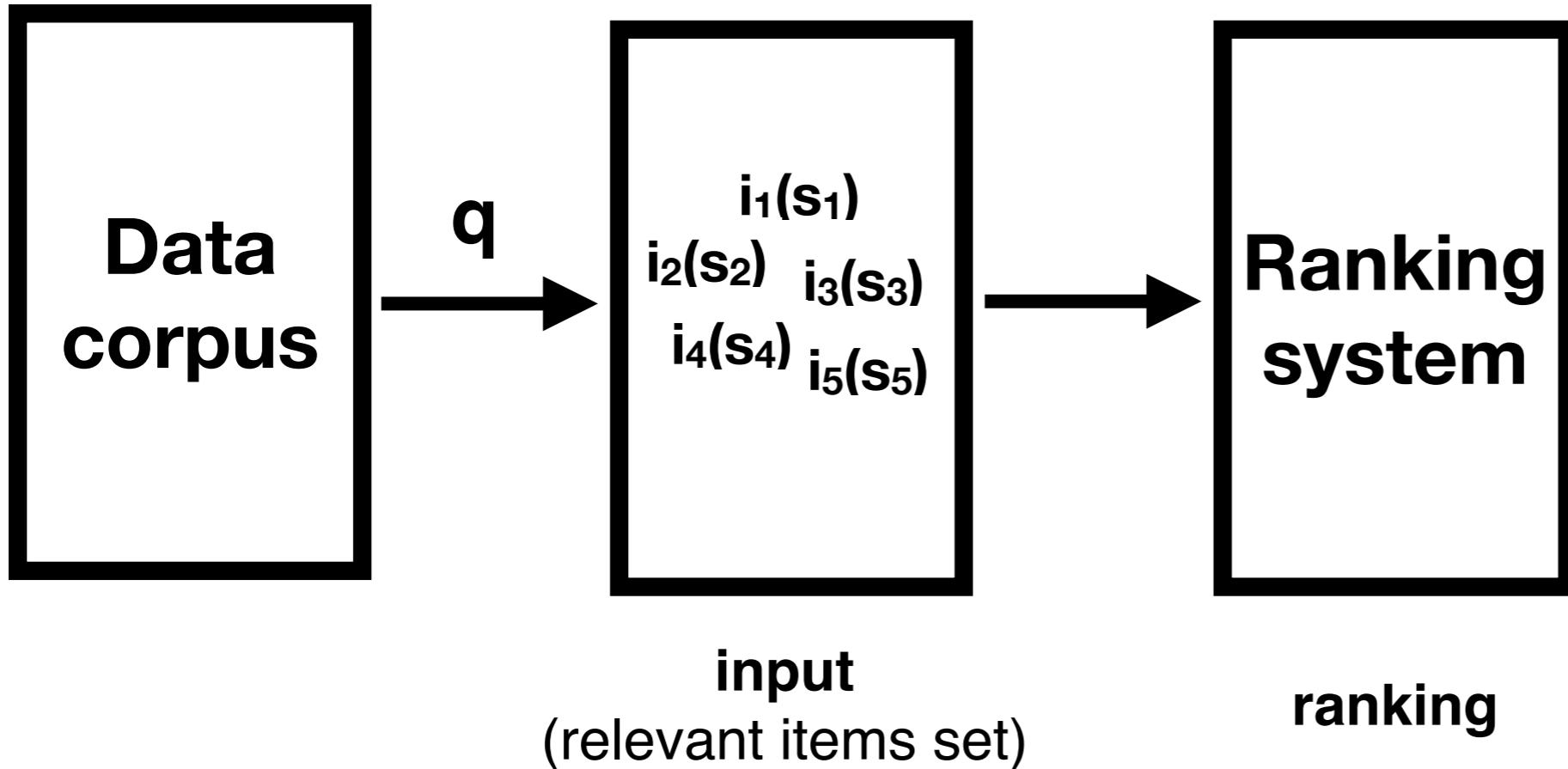
Each data **item** (e.g., i_1) has an associated **bias score** (e.g., s_1)

Search bias quantification framework

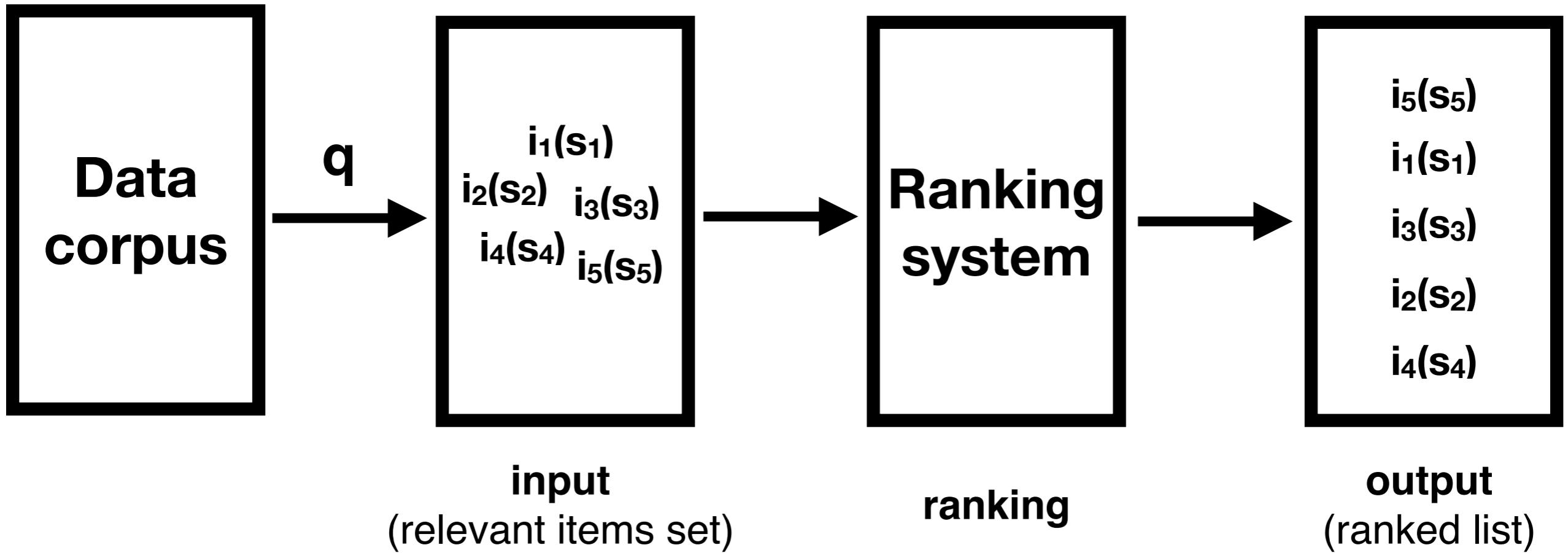


input
(relevant items set)

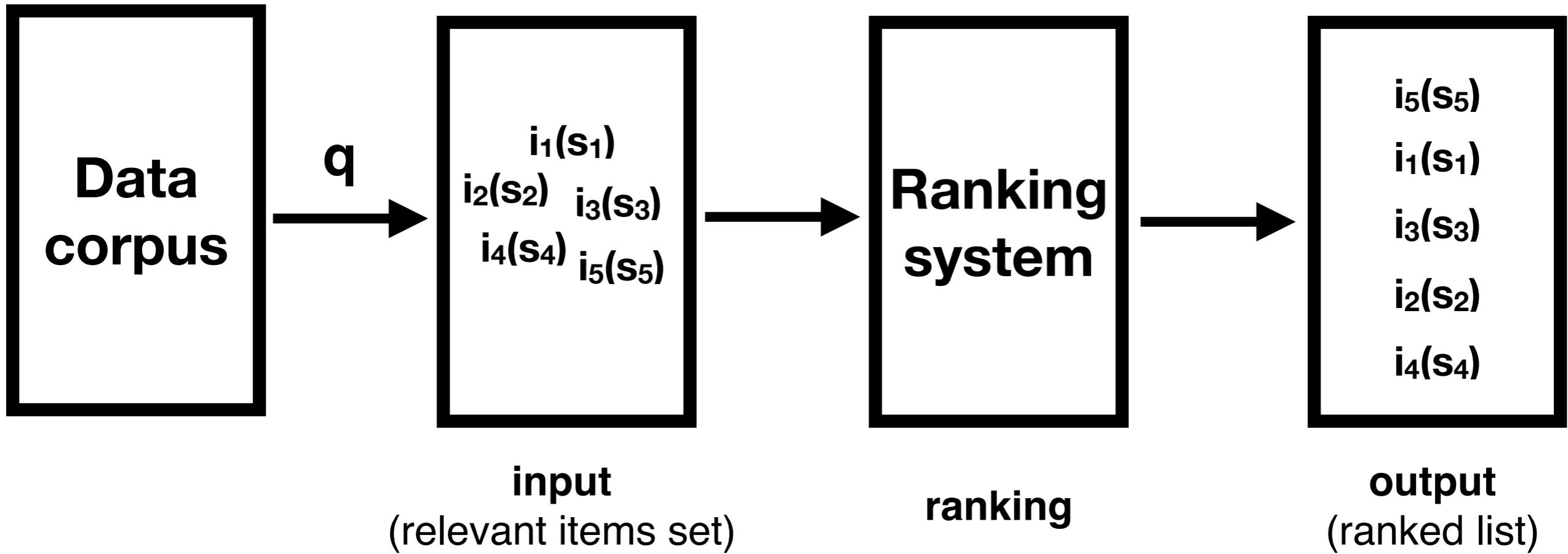
Search bias quantification framework



Search bias quantification framework



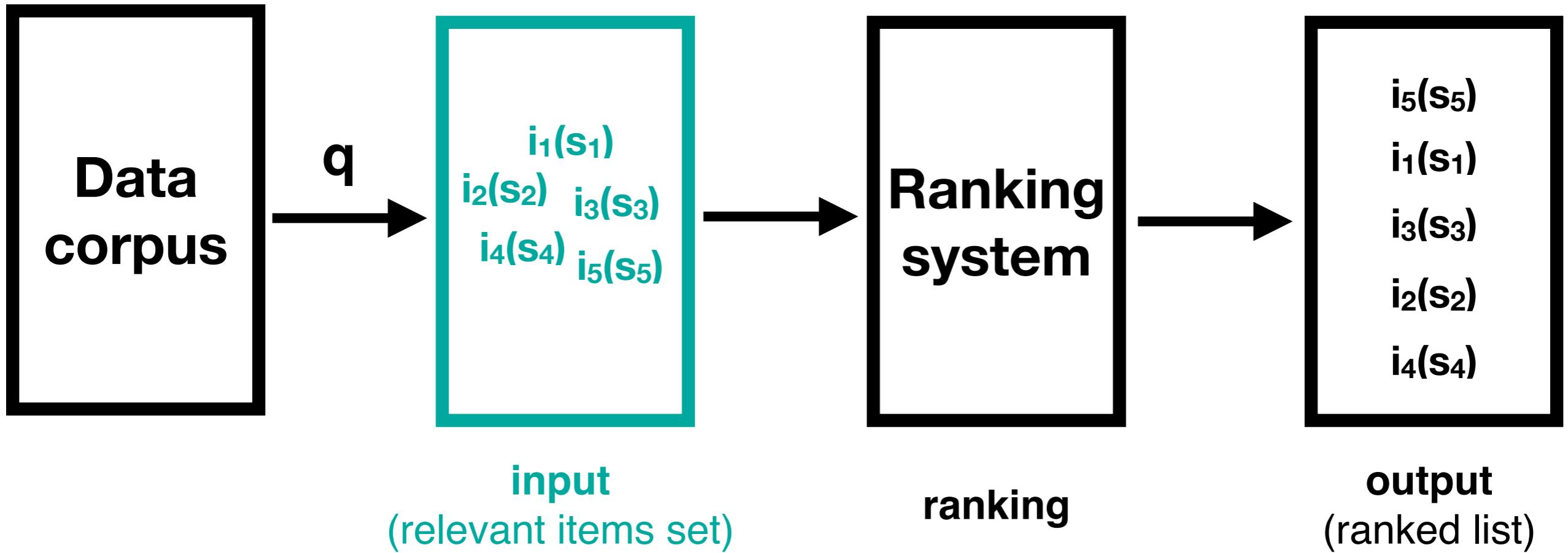
Search bias quantification framework



Output bias may stem from

- Bias introduced by the **ranking** system
- Bias in the **input** relevant item set

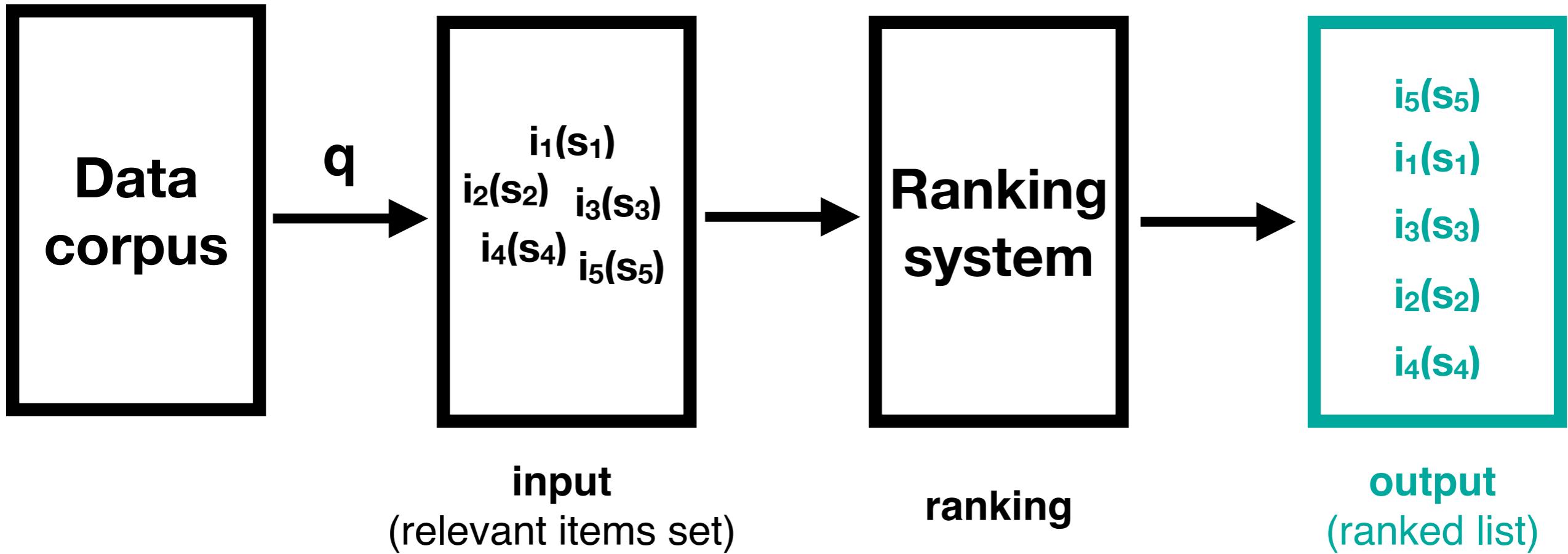
Input Bias



Bias that would be seen in random sample of tweets containing your query

$$IB(q) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n s_i}{n}$$

Output Bias



Users place **greater trust in higher ranked** items [Pan et al., 2007; Hargittai et al., 2010]

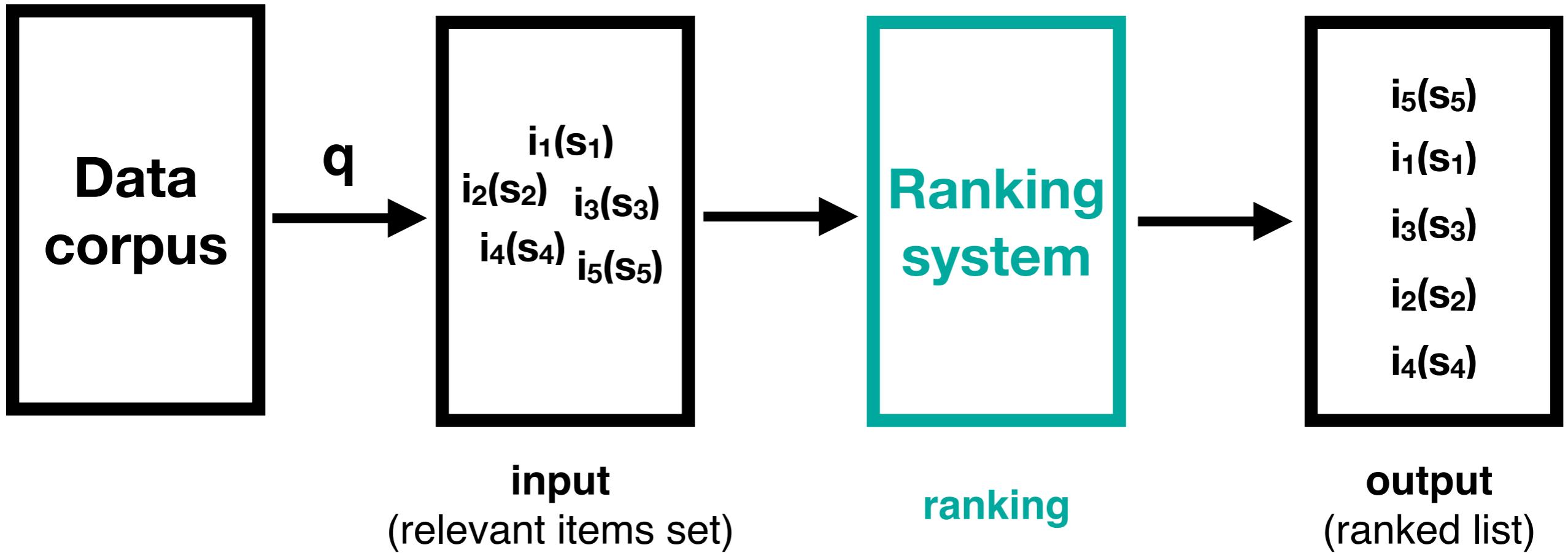
Bias till rank r

$$B(q, r) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^r s_i}{r}$$

Output bias

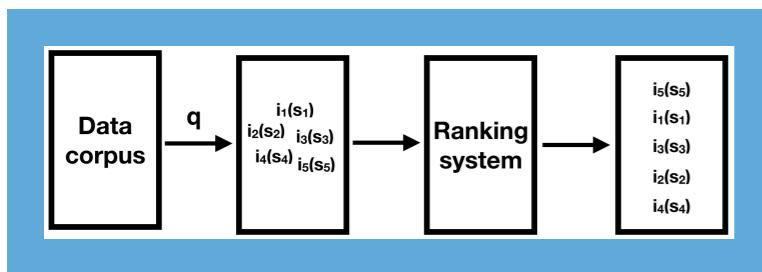
$$OB(q, r) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^r B(q, i)}{r}$$

Ranking Bias



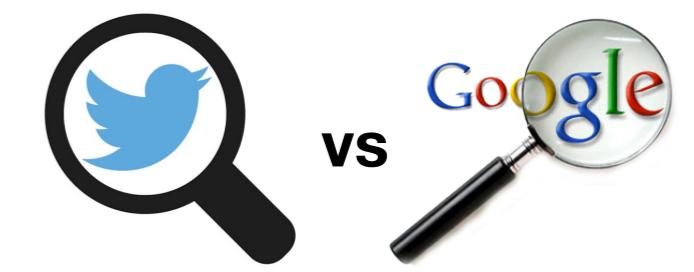
Ranking bias = Output bias - Input bias

Quantifying search bias



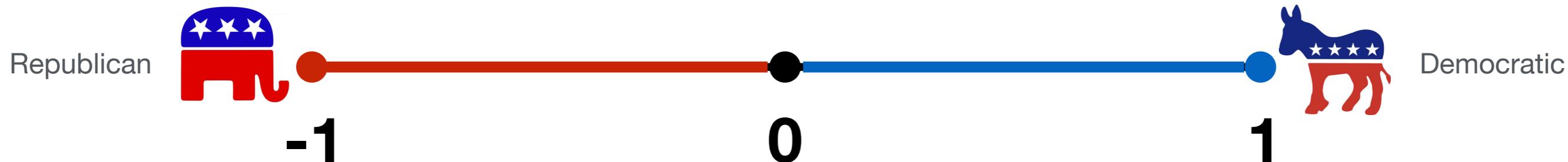
Quantifying search bias

Proposed search bias
quantification framework



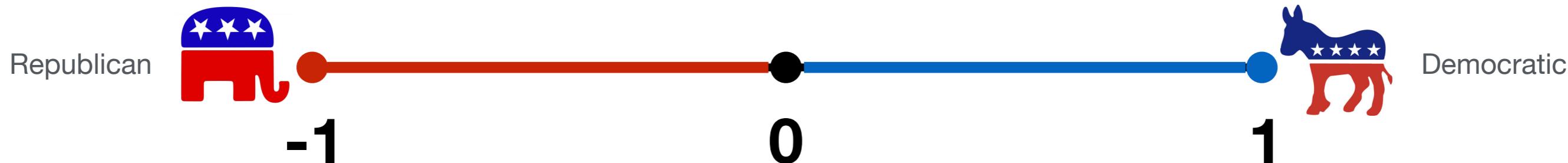
**Relative bias of Twitter
and Google search**

Quantifying bias of a single item



- Operationalize bias of a tweet as bias of its author
- Scalable crowdsourced methodology for inferring political bias of user u based on u 's interests

Quantifying bias of a single item



- Operationalize bias of a tweet as bias of its author
- Scalable crowdsourced methodology for inferring political bias of user u based on u 's interests
 - Inferring interests of u based on who u follows
 - Examining how closely u 's interests match interests of a set of democrats & republicans

Evaluation

- Do we infer the bias of a user correctly?
 - Use 3 test sets (Elites, Self identified, Politically interested) [*Cohen & Ruths, 2013; Liu and Weber, 2014*]
 - High coverage and accuracy



Details in [Kulshrestha et al., 2017]

Evaluation

- Do we infer the bias of a user correctly?
 - Use 3 test sets (Elites, Self identified, Politically interested) [*Cohen & Ruths, 2013; Liu and Weber, 2014*]
 - High coverage and accuracy
- How closely do author bias and tweet bias reflect each other?
 - High match (70% or more) between the two



Details in [Kulshrestha et al., 2017]

Studying bias for political searches in Twitter



- 2016 US Presidential Primaries
- Presidential primary debates (**#demdebate, rep debate, ...**)
- Presidential candidates (**Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, ...**)

Studying bias for political searches in Twitter



- 2016 US Presidential Primaries
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- Presidential candidates (**Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, ...**)



- **Output:** Scraped Twitter top search snapshots
- **Input:** All tweets with the query, using streaming api

Studying bias for political searches in Twitter



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Non-personalized search data

Studying bias for political searches in Twitter

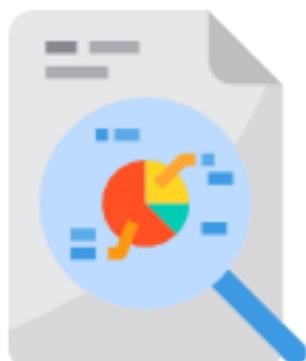


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- **Output:** Scraped Twitter top search snapshots
- **Input:** All tweets with the query, using streaming api

Non-personalized search data



- **Computed input, ranking, and output bias** for each query

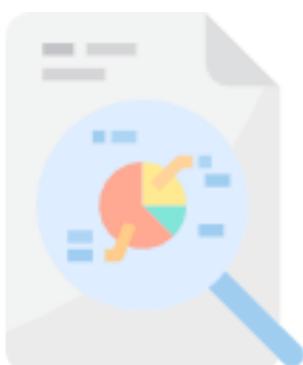
Studying bias for political searches in Twitter



- Presidential primary debates (**#demdebate, rep debate, ...**)
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What are the sources of bias for political searches on Twitter?

Non-personalized search data



- **Computed input, ranking, and output bias** for each query

Sources of bias on Twitter



Both input bias and ranking bias matter

Sources of bias on Twitter



Both input bias and ranking bias matter



Even for the same event, query phrasing can greatly effect the bias

Sources of bias on Twitter



Both input bias and ranking bias matter

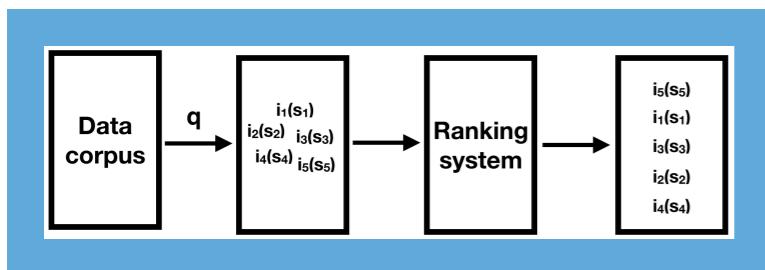


Even for the same event, query phrasing can greatly effect the bias



No evidence of systemic bias for Twitter's ranking system

Quantifying search bias



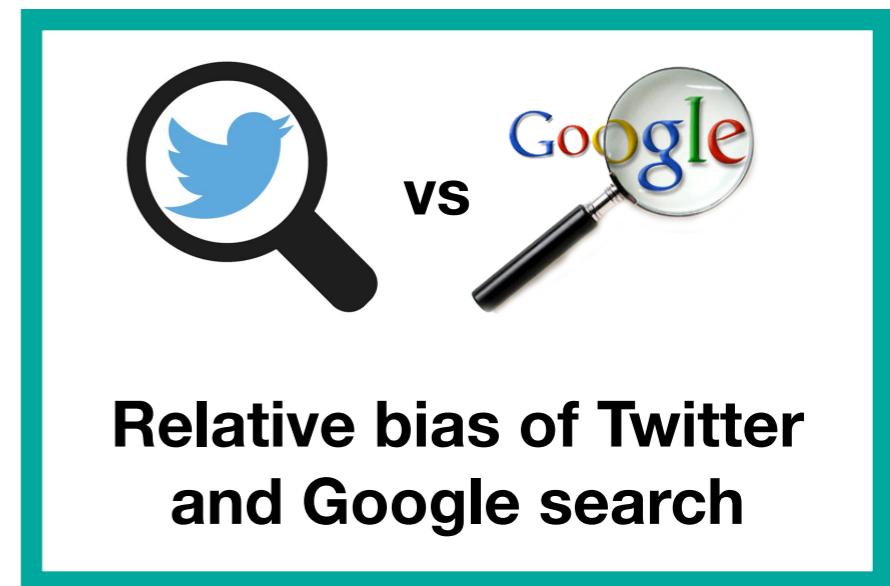
Quantifying search bias

Proposed search bias quantification framework



Sources of bias in Twitter search

Both input and ranking bias matter
Even for the same event, query phrasing can greatly effect the bias
No evidence of systemic bias for Twitter's ranking system



Relative bias of Twitter and Google search

Inferring bias of Google & Twitter “news” results

- Compare Google search results with Twitter “news” search results
- Contain a large fraction of links from news media websites
- Semi-manual mapping to Balance scores

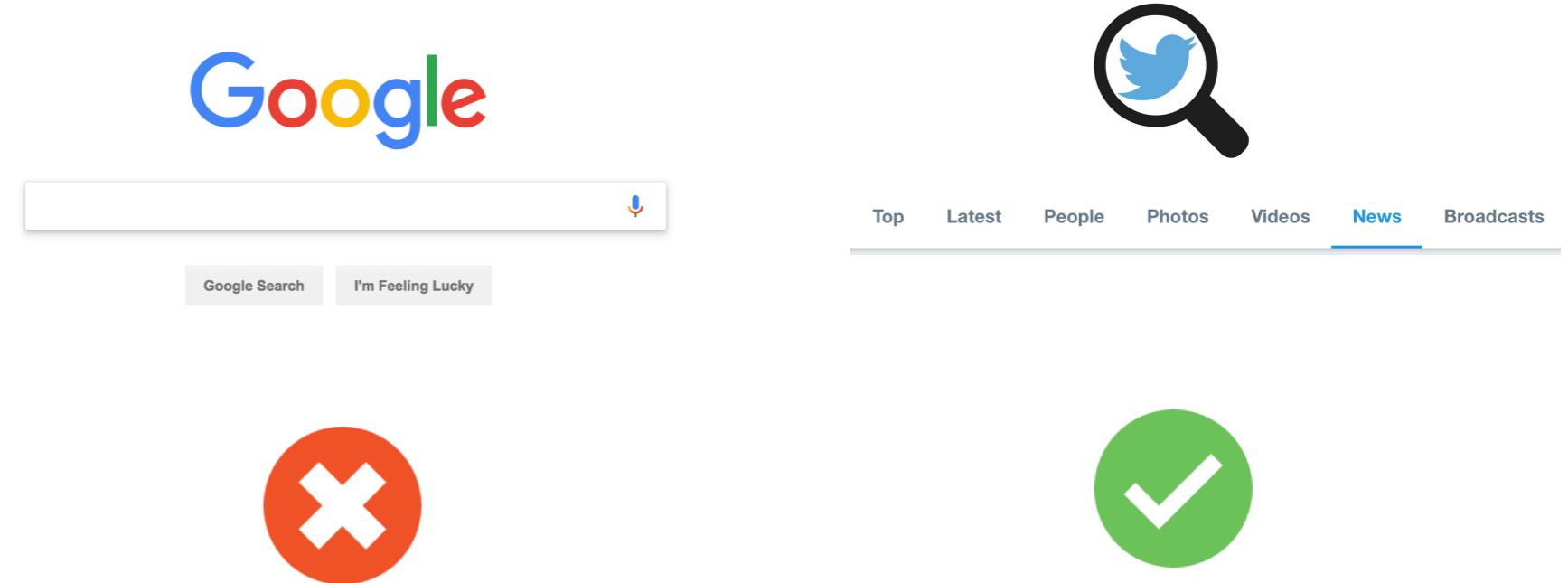
[Munson, Lee & Resnick, 2013]



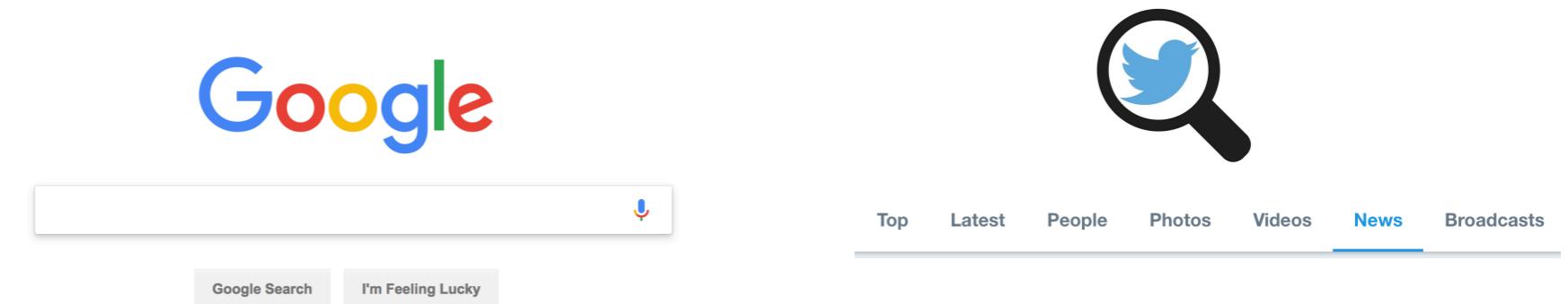
[Kulshrestha et al., 2019]

Comparing Relative bias of Google & Twitter

Dynamic over time



Comparing Relative bias of Google & Twitter



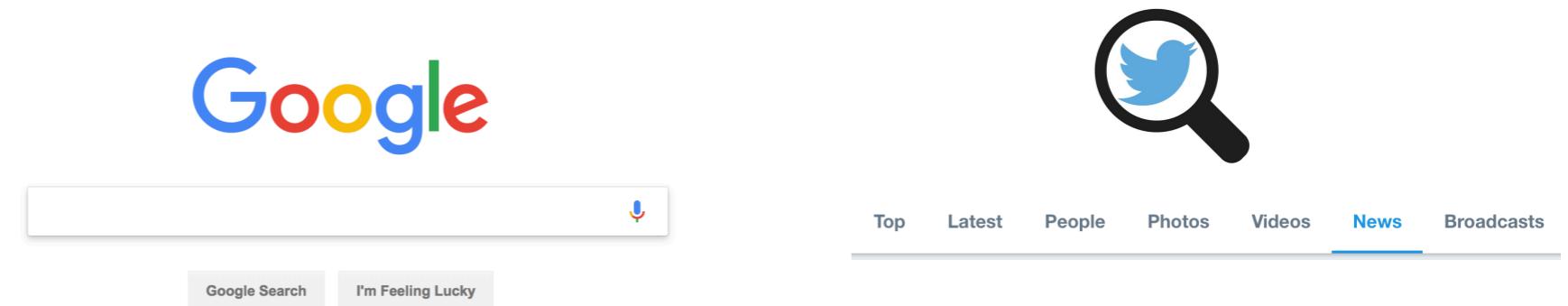
Dynamic over time



**Matches leaning of
searched person/event**



Comparing Relative bias of Google & Twitter



Dynamic over time



**Matches leaning of
searched person/event**

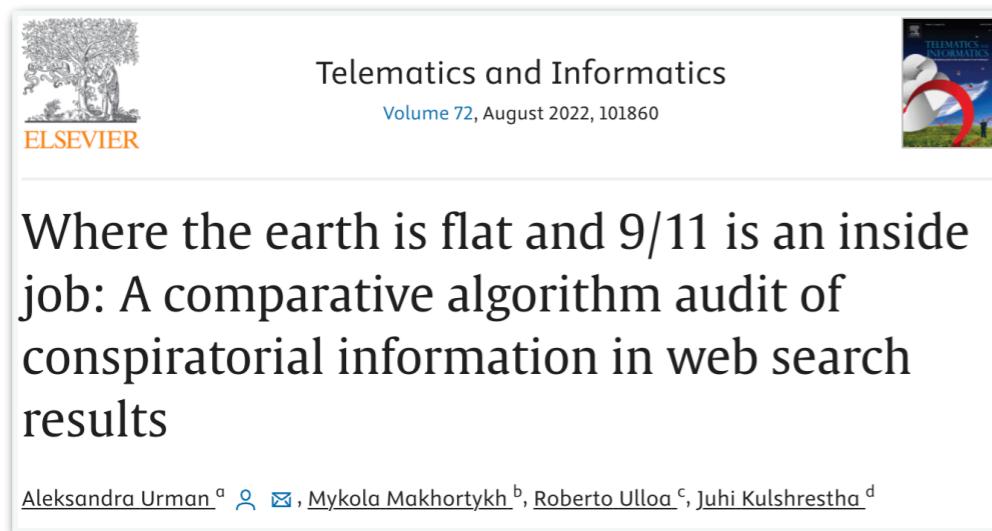


**High fraction of
candidate-controlled
sources**



Search engine audit projects

- Five search engines: Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo, Yahoo and Yandex.
- A virtual agent-based infrastructure running multiple queries, from multiple locations and across different time periods



Telematics and Informatics
Volume 72, August 2022, 101860

Where the earth is flat and 9/11 is an inside job: A comparative algorithm audit of conspiratorial information in web search results

Aleksandra Urman ^a   , Mykola Makhortykh ^b, Roberto Ulloa ^c, Juhi Kulshrestha ^d



Social Science Computer Review
2024, Vol. 42(3) 700–718
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S Sage

Novelty in News Search: A Longitudinal Study of the 2020 US Elections

Roberto Ulloa^{1,2} , Mykola Makhortykh³, Aleksandra Urman⁴, and Juhi Kulshrestha⁵

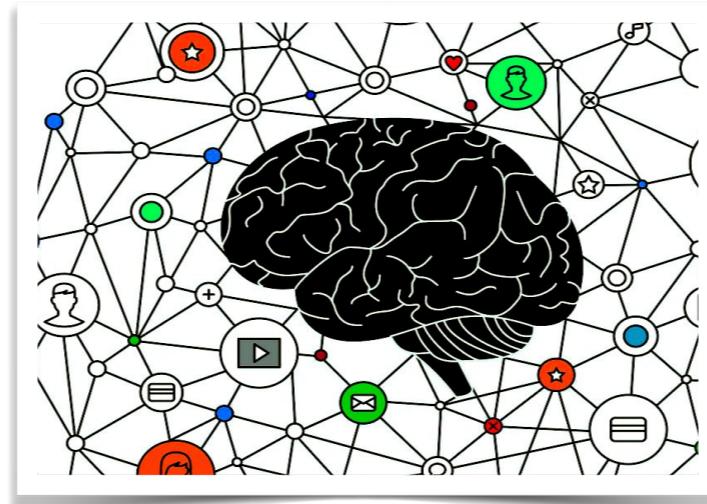
Constants and Variables: How Does the Visual Representation of the Holocaust by AI Change Over Time

Aleksandra Urman , Mykola Makhortykh , Roberto Ulloa , Maryna Sydorova and Juhi Kulshrestha

From the journal [Eastern European Holocaust Studies](#)

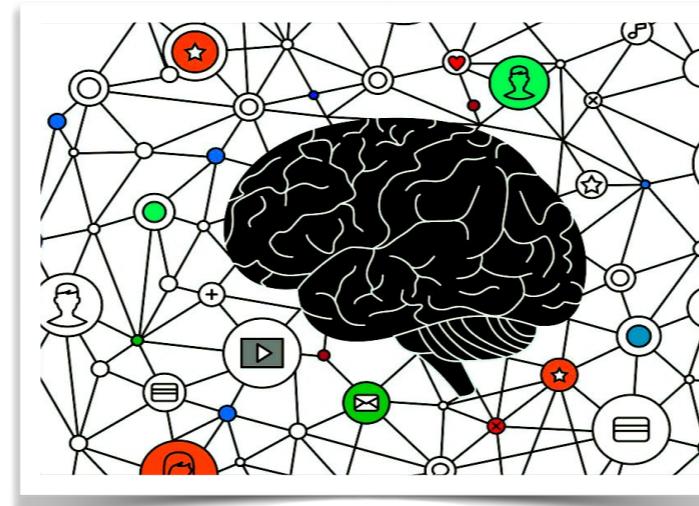
<https://doi.org/10.1515/eehs-2023-0055>

Influence of online behaviour



[Image credit: VectorStock.com/26073249]

Influence of online behaviour



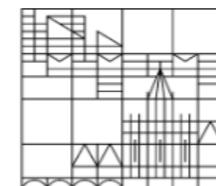
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An experimental study of online information seeking & policy judgments

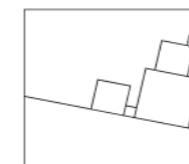
Celina Kacperski, Roberto Ulloa, Denis Bonnay, Andreas Spitz, Peter Selb, Juhi Kulshrestha



Universität
Konstanz

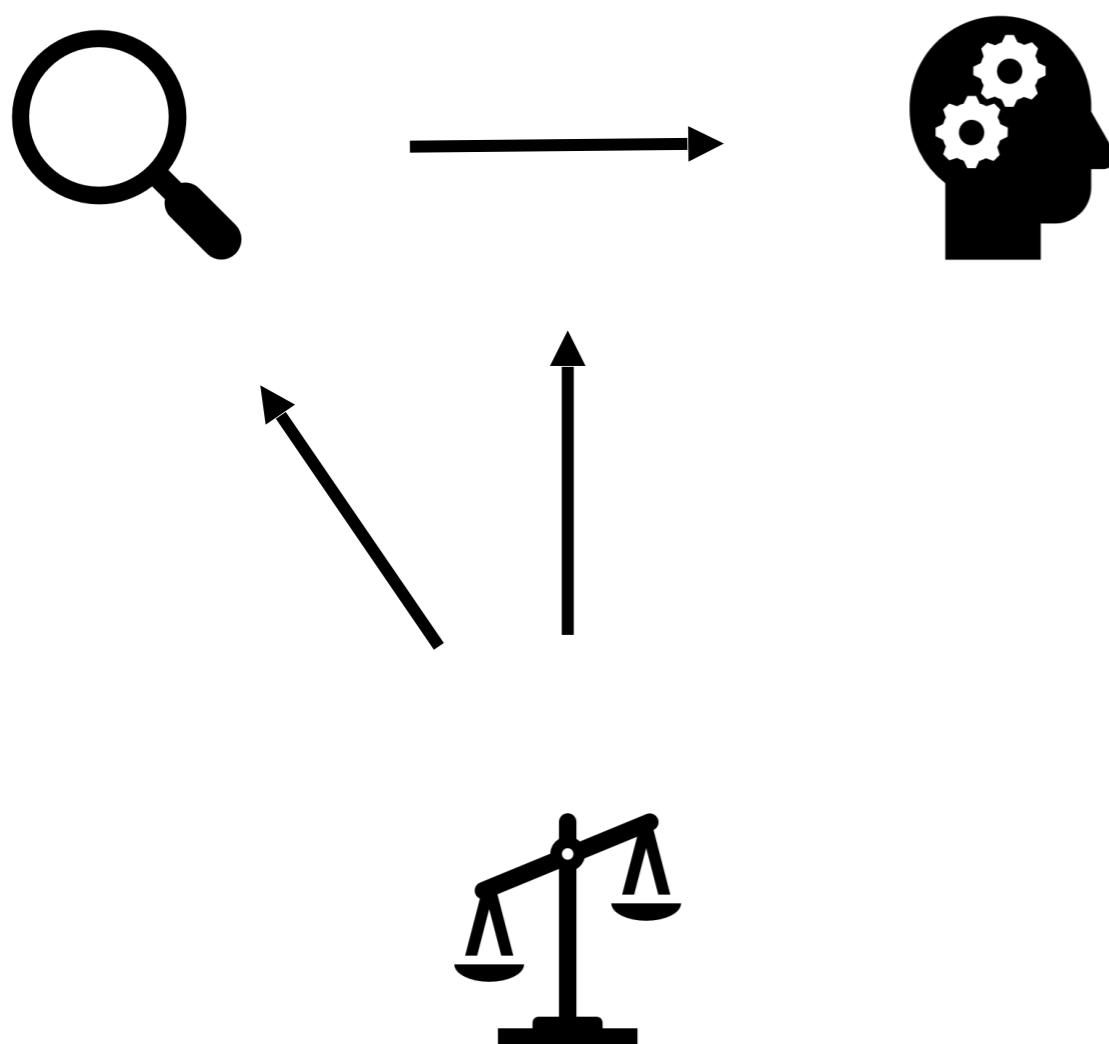


Cluster of Excellence
The Politics of Inequality



Funded by
DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

Goals



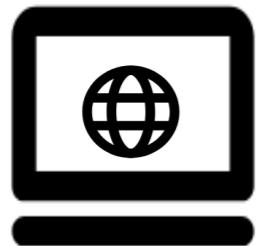
Examine individuals' online information seeking strategies and understand how they affect their political knowledge and judgements of policy proposals

Examine whether inequality barriers (e.g., capability, opportunity, motivation) shape online information seeking strategies and therefore political knowledge and judgements of policy proposals

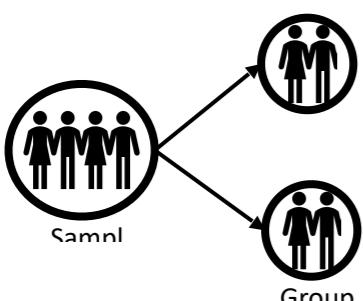
Motivation



Uninformed political reasoning may entail choices against one's own interest

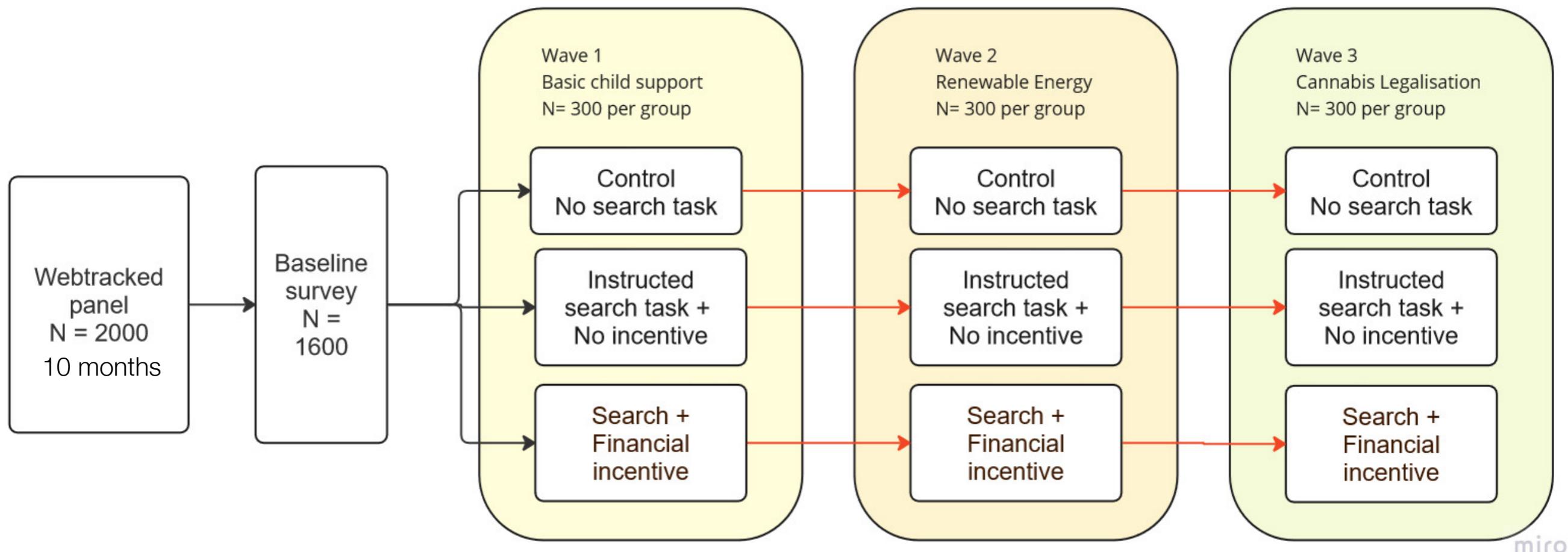


Role of internet: motivating selective exposure and heuristic searches or democratizing access to information (or both)?



Causal evidence around online behaviour is lacking

Data collection



Discrete choice task

Für welchen der folgenden zwei Gesetzesvorschläge zur Kindergrundsicherung würden Sie bei einer Wahl stimmen?

	Vorschlag 1	Vorschlag 2
Empfangsberechtigung neben deutschen Staatsbürgern	mindestens gemeldet (z.B. als Asylsuchende/r)	mindestens Niederlassungserlaubnis
Fixer Kindergeld Grundbetrag	250 Euro, Erhöhung alle 2 Jahre	sofort weniger als 250 Euro
Maximalbetrag des Zusatzgeldes (je nach Einkommen)	150 Euro	150 Euro
zusätzliche Kosten für den Staat	mehr als 12 Milliarden	weniger als 12 Milliarden

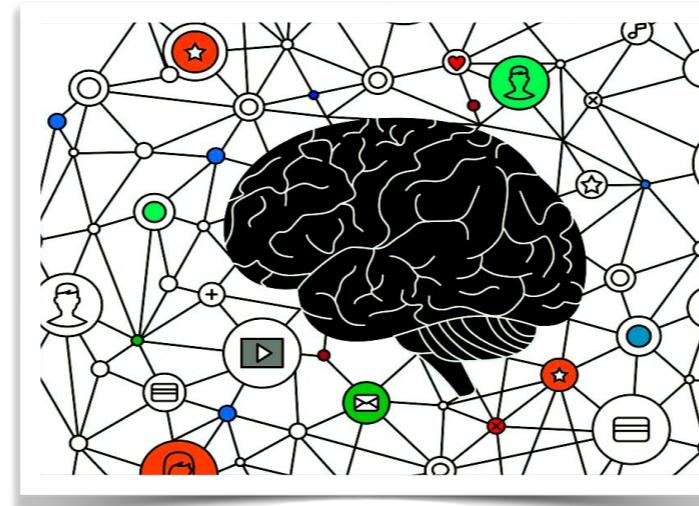
Preliminary results

- Interventions worked, individuals searched more (seen via browsing traces) and provided more links in tasks
- Searching for information increased knowledge
- Searching for information lead to change in attitudes
- Although no change in discrete choice tasks

Items about policy
attitudes
(7 point likert)

Discrete choice task

Influence of online behaviour



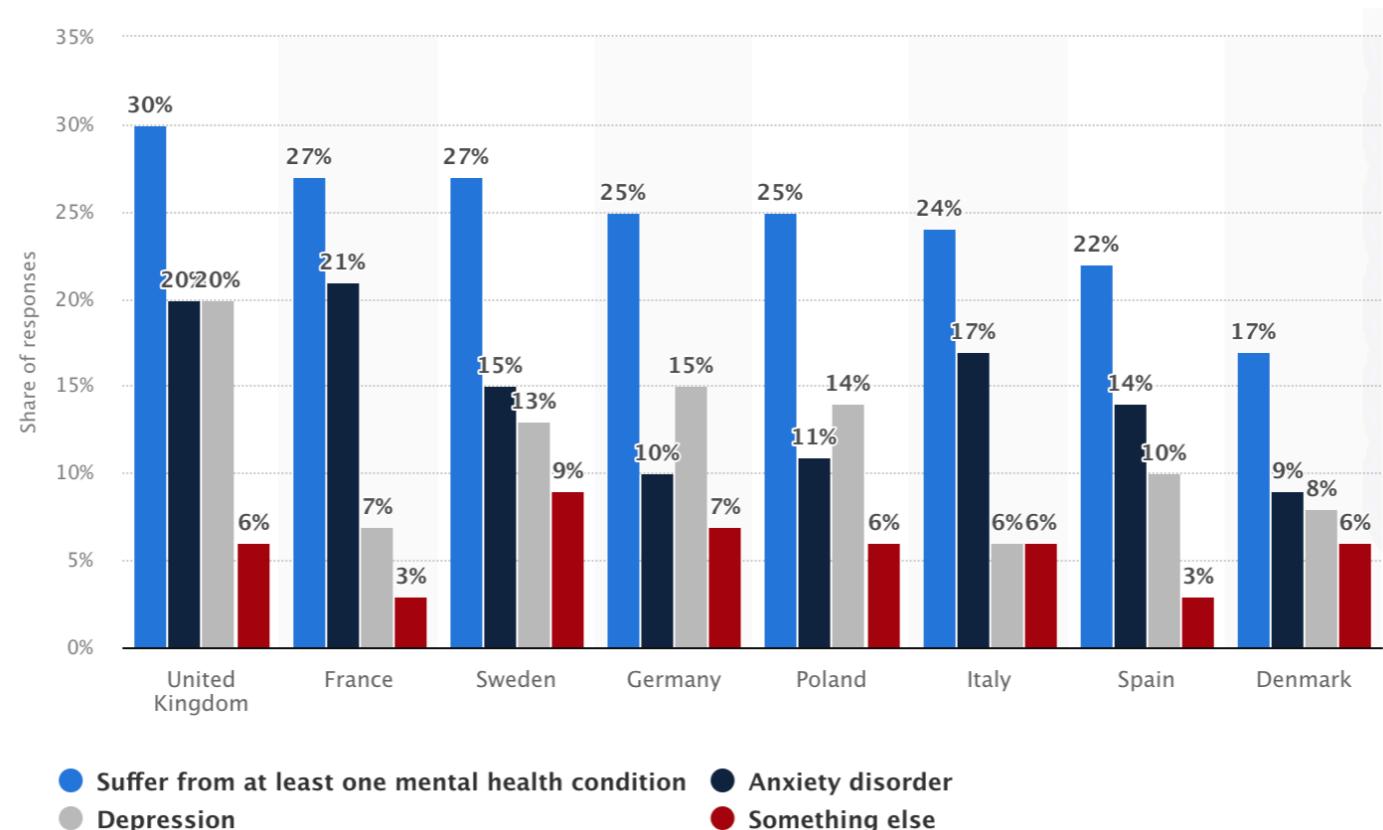
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Internet Use & Psychological well-being A longitudinal multimodal study

Mohammad Belal, Emilia Marchese, Nguyen Luong, Talayeh Aledavood, Juhi Kulshrestha

Global mental health crisis

- 970M people globally that suffer from mental health or substance abuse disorders
- As of 2021, >150 million European residents lived with mental health conditions



- Not enough mental health workers – Europe 45 per 100K population, worldwide 13 per 100K population

Internet use & mental health

- Psych studies traditionally focus on our offline lives
=> critical gap in understanding complete picture of our life experiences
- Study of 99 commonly used psych assessment scales identified 196 dimensions – none directly related to online activities or behaviour



Internet use & mental health

- Psych studies traditionally focus on our offline lives
=> critical gap in understanding complete picture of our life experiences
- Study of 99 commonly used psych assessment scales identified 196 dimensions – none directly related to online activities or behaviour
- Research gap:
 - Focus on single platform - miss full spectrum of online engagement that shape individuals' experiences
 - Rely on self reported assessments and cross-sectional design



Research goals

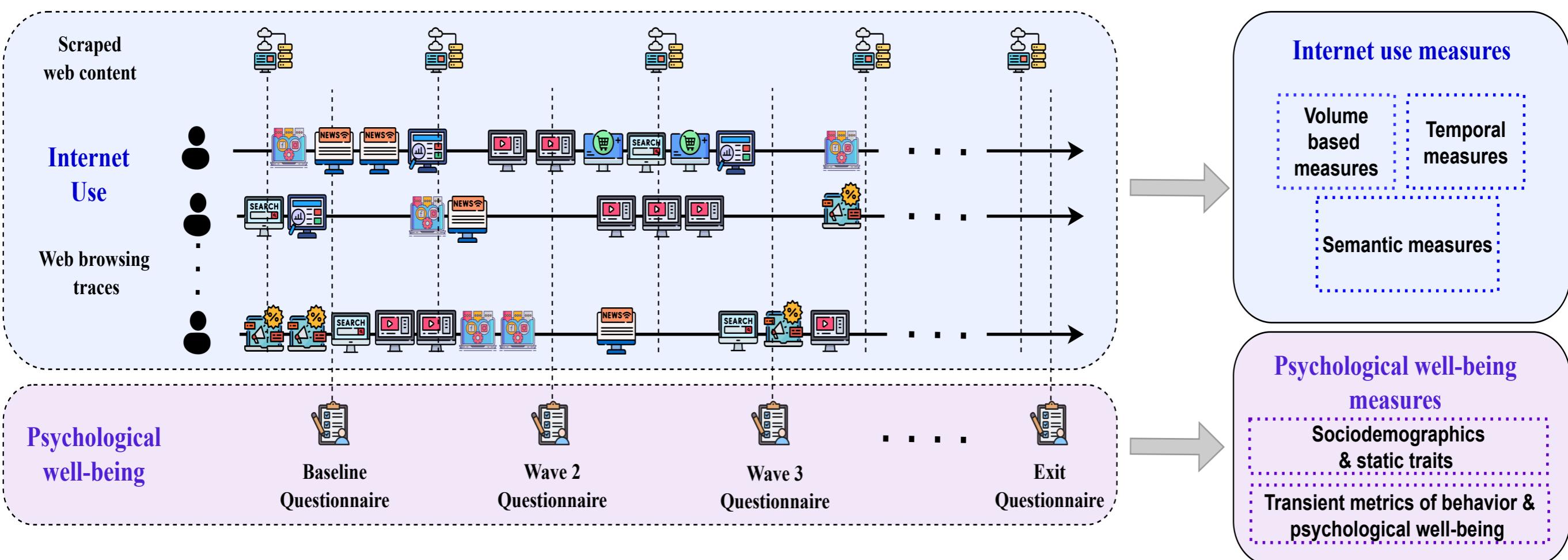


Uncover behavioural markers in internet use associated with individuals' psychological wellbeing



Design personalized tools for self-monitoring and self-moderation of online activity for improved mental health

Study design



Preliminary results

- Depression and stress
- Associations between volume of internet use and time of use
- More pronounced for certain categories of web browsing (e.g., adult content, gaming, news)



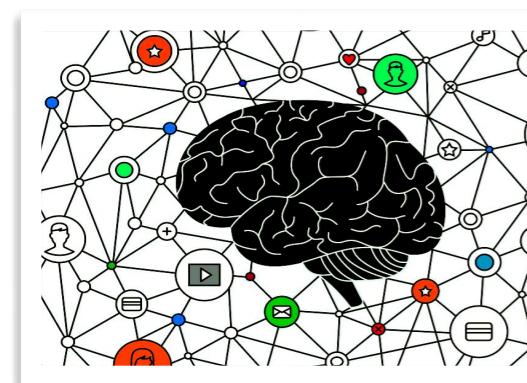
[Image credit:



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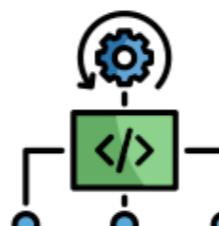
[Image credit:



[Image credit: VectorStock.com/



Digital
behavioural
data



Algorithm audit
frameworks



Online surveys
& experiments



Data science
Machine learning
Statistical analysis
Natural language
processing...



Doing good CSS research

- Computational social science ≠ computer science + social data
[Hannah Wallach 2018]
- Become knowledgeable in different social science disciplines (or at least the ones that you are most interested in!)
 - Get acquainted with the main theories, familiarise yourself with the vocabulary
- Be open to different forms of data (or even better combinations of data)
- Be willing to learn new research methods constantly
- Spend time in different disciplinary settings – conferences/workshops, internships, research stays
- Form multidisciplinary connections
- Ask for help!