

## Participant Information Form

<b>Title</b>	Rapid fact-checking of news
<b>Principal Investigator/Senior Supervisor</b>	Dr. Lauren Saling
<b>Associate Investigator(s)/Associate Supervisor(s)</b>	Dr. Damiano Spina
<b>Principal Research Student(s)</b>	Fletcher Scott

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### What does my participation involve?

#### 1 Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is called Rapid fact-checking of news.

This Participant Information Form tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research.

Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative or friend.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you may continue onwards to the task after reading this Participant Information sheet.

By completing the task you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Consent to take part in the research project

You may download a copy of this to keep.

#### 2 What is the purpose of this research?

In today's news media landscape, people are exposed to an ever-increasing volume of content within very short timeframes. This rapid influx of information on social media means that individuals often encounter political claims and news updates almost instantaneously. In such an environment, it is crucial for news consumers to quickly assess the reliability of statements to prevent the formation of beliefs based on misinformation.

The aim of the study is to investigate the speed and efficiency at which people evaluate political claims.

This research has been initiated by the researcher, Dr. Lauren Saling, Dr. Damiano Spina and PhD Candidate Fletcher Scott. Study results will be used by Fletcher Scott to obtain a PhD in Psychology.

This research is funded by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society.

### **3 What does participation in this research involve?**

If you decide to take part in this research project, you will begin by completing a short screening questionnaire (about 1 minute) to determine your eligibility. If you meet the requirements and choose to continue, you will see 40 statements. Some statements are true and some are false.

You will first complete a reaction-time task: for each statement, you have up to 10 seconds to decide if you believe it is true or false, pressing "1" for True and "0" for False. You are asked to respond as quickly as possible.

After this task, you will answer a brief questionnaire about your perception of each statement. Finally, you will be asked some non-identifying demographic questions.

The entire study is expected to last about 15 minutes. There are no costs for participating, and you will receive a payment of \$7 AUD for your time. If the screening questionnaire shows you do not meet the requirements, you will not be able to participate in the study.

### **4 Other relevant information about the research project**

Approximately 200 participants will take part in the study.

### **5 Do I have to take part in this research project?**

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the researchers or with RMIT University.

Submitting your completed questionnaire is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw your responses any time before you have submitted the questionnaire. Once you have submitted it, your responses cannot be withdrawn because they are non-identifiable and therefore, we will not be able to tell which one is yours.

### **6 What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, you may appreciate contributing to knowledge. Possible benefits may include gaining new knowledge about world events and current news. The community may also benefit from your participation in the research. News consumers must constantly assess the reliability of news content and change their beliefs based on this feedback. Your data may aid in the creation of targeted interventions that help users engage with this process.

### **7 What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

Psychological distress

You may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed because of your participation in the research project, please contact your GP or use the following resource

for country specific mental health support: Let's talk about mental health (<https://letstalkaboutmentalhealth.com.au/resources/>).

#### Privacy Concerns

This project will use an external site to create, collect and analyse data collected in a survey format. The site we are using is Qualtrics. If you agree to participate in this survey, the responses you provide will be stored on their host server. No personal information will be collected in the survey so none will be stored as data. Once we have completed our data collection and analysis, we will import the data to the RMIT server where it will be stored securely for five years. The data on the host server will then be deleted and expunged.

#### **8 What if I withdraw from this research project?**

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. However, given that your responses are anonymous, once submitted your responses cannot be withdrawn.

#### **9 What happens when the research project ends?**

Please email Fletcher Scott (s3954401@student.rmit.edu.au) or Lauren Saling (lauren.saling@rmit.edu.au) after December 2025 if you would like to receive a results summary.

### **How is the research project being conducted?**

#### **10 What will happen to information about me?**

By continuing to the survey, you are consenting to the research team collecting and using information from you for the research project. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. No personal data will be collected, and none will be stored.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified. In the event of publication, anonymous data will be stored indefinitely in a data repository so that other researchers can verify study results if they so choose.

Anonymised data collected from your choices in the experimental task will be included in a published dataset. This dataset will help researchers evaluate new ideas about how people make decisions when reading news items. For example, a study might explore whether true news is recognized more quickly when it is left-wing compared to when it is right-wing.

#### **11 Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being conducted by Dr. Lauren Saling, Dr. Damiano Spina and Fletcher Scott. The research is funded by the RMIT HDR student fund.

#### **12 Who has reviewed the research project?**

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent Ethics review body. This research project has been approved by one of the RMIT University review bodies. This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2023). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

#### **13 Further information and who to contact**

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact Fletcher Scott at s3954401@student.rmit.edu.au or any of the following people:

#### Research contact person

Name	Lauren Saling
Position	Principal investigator / Senior supervisor
Telephone	+61399253801
Email	lauren.saling@rmit.edu.au

Name	Damiano Spina
Position	Senior supervisor
Telephone	+61399250941
Email	damiano.spina@rmit.edu.au

## 14 Complaints

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

Reviewing HREC name	RMIT University
HREC Secretary	Pascal Bernard
Telephone	03 9925 1985
Email	<a href="mailto:humanethics@rmit.edu.au">humanethics@rmit.edu.au</a>
Mailing address	Manager, Research Governance and Ethics RMIT University GPO Box 2476 MELBOURNE VIC 3001

## 15 Acknowledgement by Participant – by continuing on to the survey:

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research described in the project.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the project without affecting my relationship with RMIT.

I understand that I can print or download a copy of this document to keep.'