



DISINFORMATION AS COLLABORATIVE WORK: SURFACING THE PARTICIPATORY NATURE OF STRATEGIC INFORMATION OPERATIONS



Kate Starbird, Ahmer Arif, Tom Wilson





SUMMARY

Authors review three examples such as the 2016 US Presidential election, White Helmet Campaigns in Syria, and Conspiracy Theorizing of Crisis events to indicate the variances in disinformation campaigns.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- **Misinformation vs. Disinformation:** Misinformation is spreading false or inaccurate information without malicious intent. Disinformation is false information which is deliberately intended to mislead
- **Strategic Information Operation:** Is the encompassing term used to describe all actors (state, non state, individuals, and/or groups) who seek to intentionally disseminate information that is false or misleading for a specific purpose.

Background

Disinformation Origins & Contemporary Examples

Dates back to the cold war era in the soviet union where they transitioned from passive to active measures of influence to strengthen geopolitical power. (Brazil, China, Philippines)



Perspectives & Interpretations

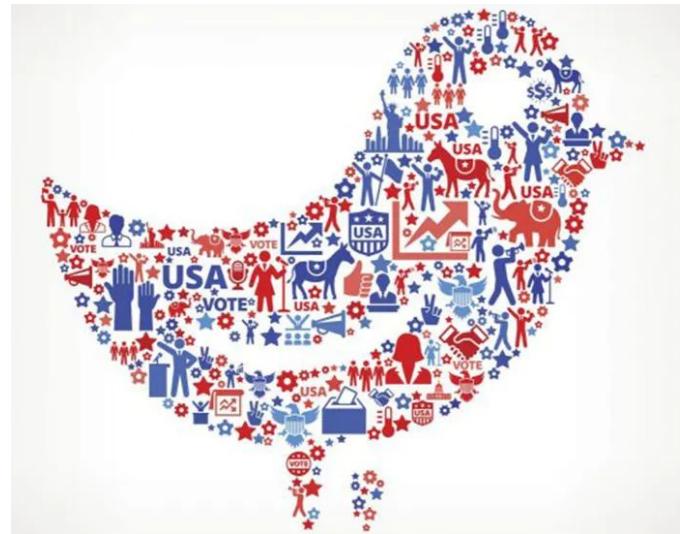
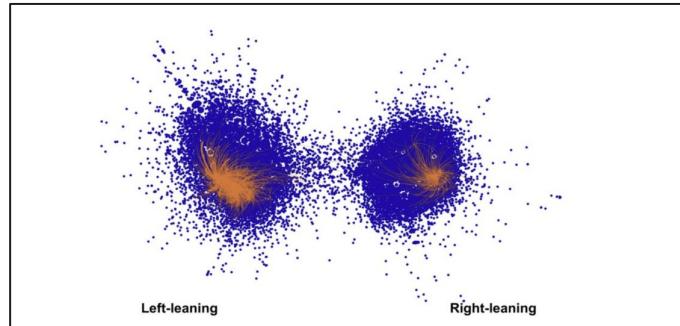
Although it was difficult to parse authors do acknowledge their own perspectives and political ideologies had some weight while discussing/analyzing the case studies



CASE STUDIES: #1

2016 US Presidential Election

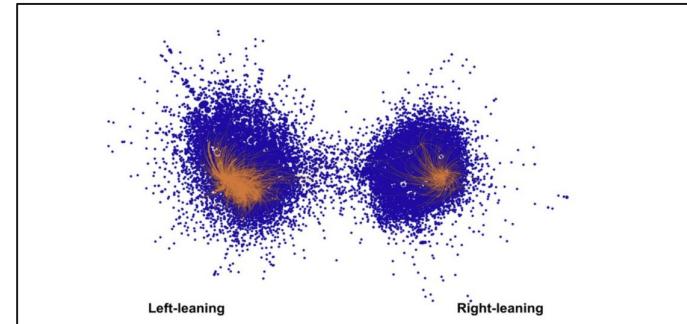
- Originally research goal was to understand #BLM discourse on twitter where authors published their paper in early 2017.
- November 2017, the Intelligence Committee publishes dataset on all known twitter accounts belong to the Russian Internet Research Agency (RU-IRA) and accompanying posts
- Researchers sought to reazmine their data given this new information and found that many of the accounts examined in their earlier study had already been accounted for (see figure on the right.)



CASE STUDIES: #1

2016 US Presidential Election

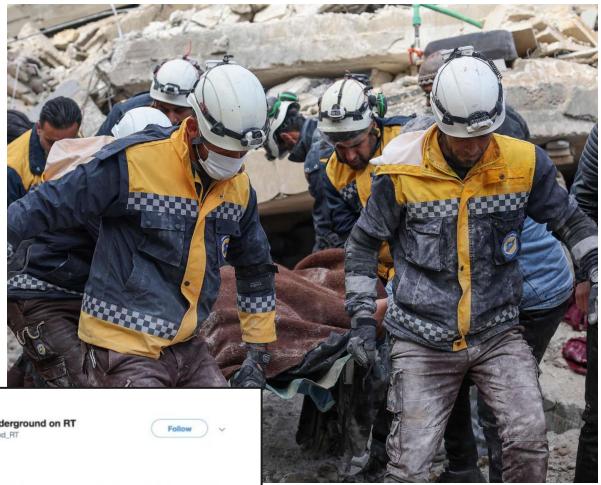
- Around 3000 accounts engaging in BLM discourse half of which were in English. Accounts posed themselves as organizations or individuals.
- Small subset of RU-IRA accounts (African-American left and White Conservative Right) generated an incredible (1M) amount of tweets. This only accounts for 1/3 of all English language tweets made by the agency



CASE STUDIES: #2

White Helmets

- Volunteer search and rescue group in Syria who provide medical aid to those affected by the bombings.
- Anti white-helmet sentiment is more pervasive than pro white helmet content online.
- Authors acknowledge that there were some bad actors who sought to influence this perspective (Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, Syrian government).
- Yet they describe this phenomenon as something different than US presidential election. Orchestrated vs. Cultivated. (Sure there are bad people but journalists and ordinary activists perpetuate such information organically and for individual agenda)



Going Underground on RT
@Underground_RT

#Syria

"The White Helmets would take children with light injuries to the Turkish border and then the children's bodies are returned and the organs have clearly been REMOVED" 😱

@VanessaBeeley discusses the White Helmets' alleged organ trafficking operations

WEDNESDAY ON RT!

The screenshot shows a tweet from the account @Underground_RT. The tweet contains a link to a video on RT, which has 63.6K views and was posted at 9:56 AM - 19 Feb 2019. The video thumbnail shows two men in a studio setting. The caption of the tweet reads: "The White Helmets would take children with light injuries to the Turkish border and then the children's bodies are returned and the organs have clearly been REMOVED" followed by a shocked face emoji. Below the video thumbnail, it says "are part of dying civilians because of the Assad regime, this is why that may have appeared to seem like organ trafficking?"

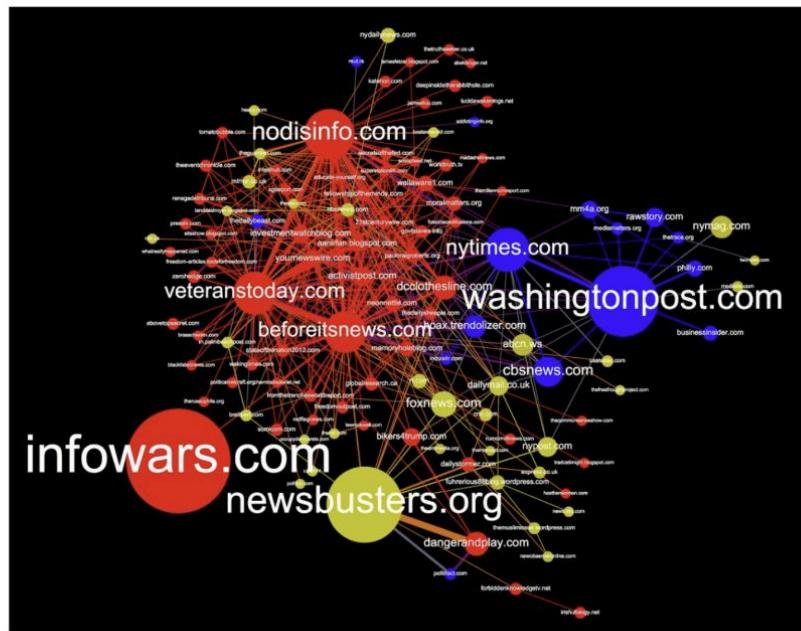
663 Retweets 462 Likes



CASE STUDIES: #3

Crises Events & Conspiracy Theories

- Examined conspiracy theories coming out of people making sense of tragic events such as school shootings and terrorist attacks
- Conspiracy theories came out organically across all the platforms. People specifically pushing theories in certain directions. (Hoax vs. False Flag)
- Many of these conspiracy websites host theories that question science, journalism, and/or political integrity
- Conspiracy theories are sociotechnical systems that form organically without the push from state actors. They consist of underlying social norms and a set of epistemological assumptions





DISCUSSION SECTION

- 1) HCI and CSCW community should do more to quantify and make sense of the lasting impact of disinformation has on the public
- 2) It can be sometimes difficult to discern orchestrated and organically formed disinformation. (Bigger picture)
- 3) Social media is just an extension of our behavior... Strategic Information Operations maintains a collaborative framework



Discussion Question

What role do social media platforms play in facilitating these information operations according to the paper? What about according to your thoughts?





Discussion Question

The authors use case studies to illustrate the collaborative nature of disinformation. Do you think case studies are an effective way to understand this issue? Why or why not?





Discussion Question

Considering the advancements in technology, how do you think the nature of disinformation campaigns will evolve in the next few years? What new challenges might arise?





Discussion Question

What potential solutions or interventions might you suggest to mitigate the impact of disinformation/misinformation whether it be policy, technological or other? Discuss the tradeoffs of this intervention/solution accordingly.





Discussion Question

In what ways do you think this paper falls short? In what ways do you think this paper measures up to your expectations? Compare and contrast things you think the authors did well and ways you think they could improve.





REMOVE, REDUCE, INFORM: WHAT ACTIONS DO PEOPLE WANT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO TAKE ON POTENTIALLY MISLEADING CONTENT?



Shubahm Atreja, Libby Hemphill, Paul Resnick



SUMMARY

The study examines how lay people perceive different moderation actions such as removing content, reducing its distribution, or adding informational labels, and how these preferences vary by political affiliation

METHOD

Participant Procedure

- 368 News articles which were rated by MTurk workers falling into Liberal, Conservative or other categories
- Participants were asked to take 1 or 2 of 3 binary actions when reading articles. Inform the public that the article was misleading, reduce the visibility of the article/post, and/or remove the post entirely
- Then asked to rate the article using a 7 point likert scale in terms of how misleading it was (1 not at all and 7 a lot) and how harmful it could be if people were misinformed on the topic.

Title	About the article	Action preferences	Judgments ^a
GOP Removes Sole Polling Place From Famous Hispanic Majority City in Kansas	The headline of the article suggests that the polling station was removed from one of the cities in Kansas. The body of the article however expands to state that the polling station was moved outside of the city center, far from any bus stops.	Inform: 45% Reduce: 30% Remove: 9%	Misleading: 2.9 Harm: 3.8
Ginsburg Can't Remember 14th Amendment, Gets Pocket Constitution from the Audience	The article refers to an actual incident where Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was asked a question about the 14th amendment where she referred to a printed copy of the Constitution before answering. The incident is depicted as it happened. Perhaps, it was politicized a bit by adding the following text "some of our Supreme Court justices care more about politics and logical gymnastics than the text of the Constitution."	Inform: 77% Reduce: 48% Remove: 16%	Misleading: 3.5 Harm: 3.1
Bill Clinton: 'Allegations Of Sexual Misconduct Should Disqualify A Man From Public Office'	The headline of the article attributes a quote to Bill Clinton and the article goes on to state that the comment was made during an interview with MSNBC amid Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation process. The source of the article – The Babylon Bee – is a satire website and carries this disclaimer on every page.	Inform: 78% Reduce: 50% Remove: 38%	Misleading: 6.0 Harm: 4.0

Table 1. Four articles from our database, and the aggregate action preferences and judgments for each.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

- RQ1: Is there a hierarchy of perceived severity of actions among informed lay raters?
- RQ2: How much agreement is there, among informed lay raters, about the preferred actions to be taken on potentially misleading articles?
- RQ3: Is there more or less agreement among conservative raters than among liberal raters about their preferred social media platform actions?
- RQ4: Do conservative raters prefer that social media platforms act on fewer particles than liberal raters or vice versa?
- RQ5: Do conservative raters prefer action on articles from different sources than liberal raters prefer?
- RQ6: How well can aggregate judgments of whether Article is misleading and/or harmful predict aggregate preferences for the inform, reduce, and remove actions?



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results



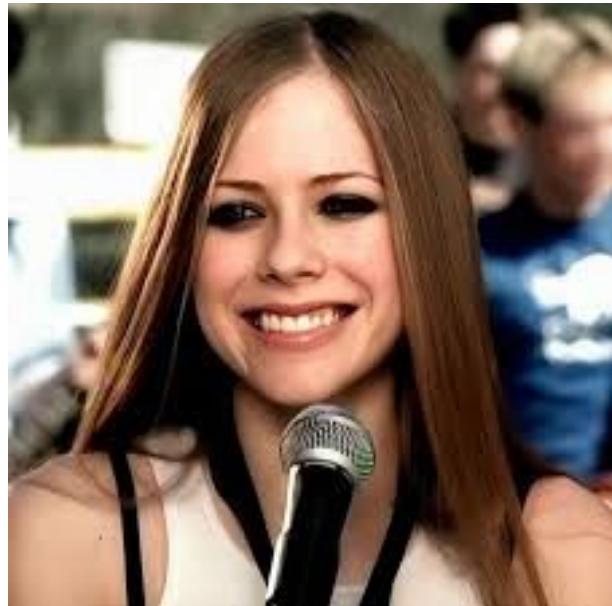
So complicated



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results & Discussion

- Lack of consensus among raters. For 146 articles 30%-70% mentioned that they would inform as opposed to 110 articles where 30%-70% of raters would reduce. There is a lot of variability in the data that can't be accounted for ideological/political affiliation. However it is important to draw attention to complaints of posts on platforms.
- Partisan differences. Each group preferred to have actions taken on the other side of the political spectrum (eg conservatives wanted more action taken on pro liberal media).



So complicated



IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Combining public judgments about misleadingness and harm could help platforms make acceptable moderation decisions.
- Social media platforms need to consider potential partisan biases as well as individual preferences when designing and implementing content moderation policies.
- Improving transparency about moderation processes and involving a diverse set of users in these processes may mitigate some of the challenges in classifying post as misleading.

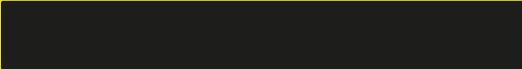




Discussion Question

The authors used Mechanical Turk participants to judge misleading content. How would you feel about participating in such a study? Do you think your judgments would align with those of the general public?





Discussion Question

How do you personally verify the accuracy of the information you come across on social media? Can you share any tips or strategies that you use?





Discussion Question

How do you think social media platforms should handle the balance between free speech and preventing the spread of misinformation?





Discussion Question

What did you think about this paper in terms of argument, content, and/or writing style. Did they make a compelling/interesting argument?





THANKS!

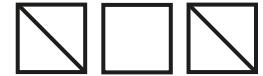
DIS/
MISINFOR
MATION



AN IMPORTANT NOTE

RELEVANT THEORIES	MAIN KEY TERMS	OUR FRAMEWORK
THEORY 1 Misinformation vs. Disinformation	KEY TERM 1 Saturn is a gas giant and was named after the god of wealth and agriculture	 Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest one of them all. This planet's name has nothing to do with the liquid metal, since it was named after the messenger god. Despite being closer to the Sun, its temperatures aren't as terribly hot as that planet's. Its surface is quite similar to that the Moon
THEORY 2 It's full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast	KEY TERM 2 Jupiter is a gas giant and the biggest planet in the Solar System	

References



1. <https://propagandacritic.com/index.php/case-studies/fifty-cent-army/>



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03	OBJECTIVES You can describe the topic of the section here	06	CONCLUSIONS You can describe the topic of the section here





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01

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PURPOSE

STATEMENT

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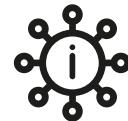
PURPOSE STATEMENT

MERCURY



It's the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest one in the Solar System

VENUS



It's the second-brightest natural object in the night sky after the Moon

JUPITER



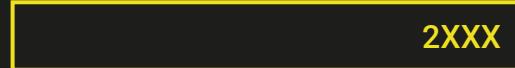
Jupiter is a gas giant and was named after the Roman god of the skies and lightning

MARS



It's full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast





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“

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This is a quote, words full of wisdom
that someone important said and can
make the reader get inspired.”



—SOMEONE FAMOUS

SITUATION & STATEMENT

CURRENT SITUATION

Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest one in the Solar System. This planet's name has nothing to do with the liquid metal, since Mercury was named after the Roman messenger god. Despite being closer to the Sun than Venus, its temperatures aren't as terribly hot as that planet's. Its surface is quite similar to that of Earth's Moon, which means there are a lot of craters and plains

PROBLEMS



PROBLEM 1

Earth is the only planet known to harbor life

PROBLEM 2

Despite being red, Mars is actually a cold place

PROBLEM 3

Neptune is the farthest planet from the Sun





02



HYPOTHESIS

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ESIS
EFENSE



HYPOTHESIS



HYPOTHESIS 1

It's the fourth-brightest object in the night sky. It was named after the Roman god of the skies and lightning



HYPOTHESIS 2

Earth is the third planet from the Sun and the only one that harbors life in the Solar System. This is where we all live



STUDY OBJECTIVES



MERCURY

It's the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest of them all



MARS

It's full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast



JUPITER

Jupiter is a gas giant and the biggest planet in the Solar System



STUDY LOCATIONS



LOCATION 1

Venus is the second planet from the Sun



LOCATION 2

Jupiter is the biggest planet of them all

LOCATION 3

Saturn is a gas giant and has several rings





AWESOME WORDS



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SIS
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FAKENNEWS



A PICTURE IS
WORTH A

THOUSAND WORDS

Nonradioactive items. Unnatural
mould can digest asbestos. Sh
it to radioactive tailings. Sh
re visits. Major
corruption.

RADIATION & TECHNOLOGY

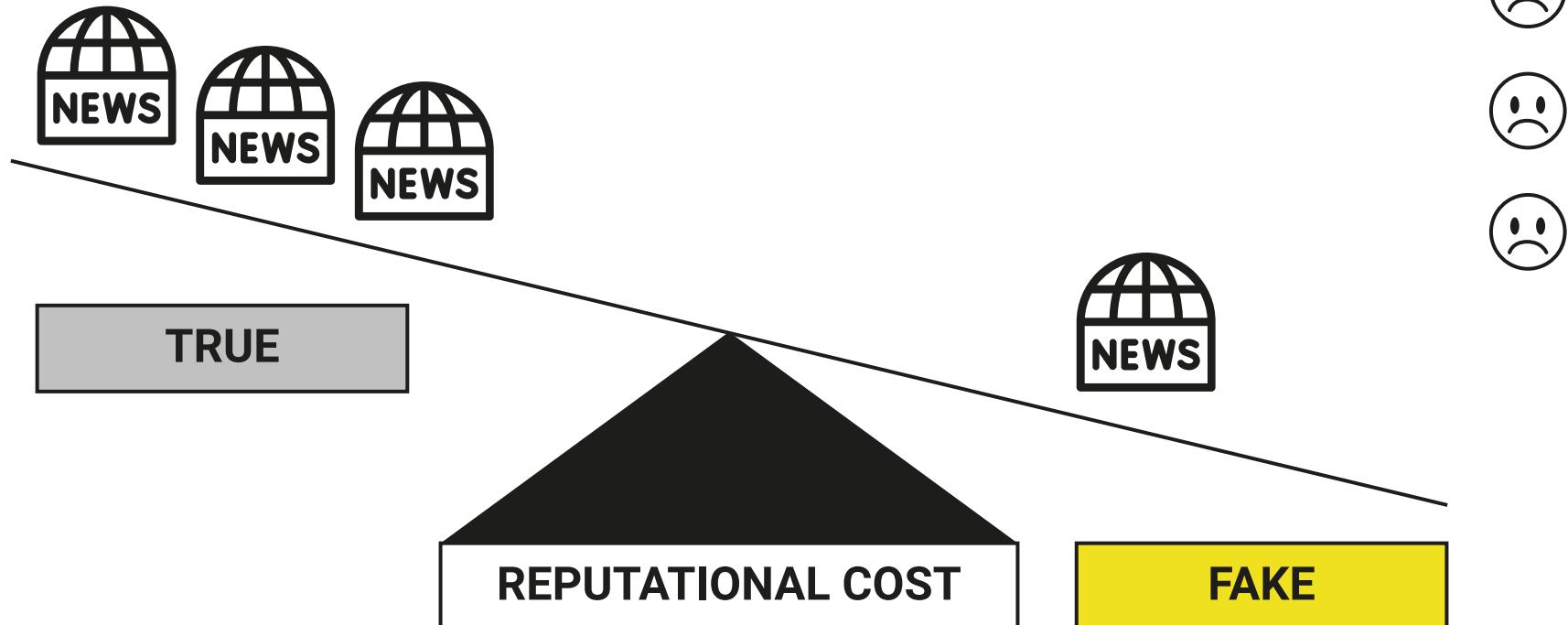
RADIATION & ECONOMY

77-80.
-99%

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY
Fertilizers and
radioactivity.



THE TRUST ASYMMETRY



SCHEDULE



Task 1



Task 2

Task 3

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
TASK	DESCRIPTION		DATE		STATUS
Task 1	Mercury is very small		Jan 1 - Mar 15		Completed
Task 2	Mars is made of basalt		Feb 15 - May 15		In progress
Task 3	We all live on Earth		May 15 - Jun 30		Delayed



METHODOLOGY



THESIS METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF DATA

Saturn is a gas giant and has several rings



DATA COLLECTION

Jupiter is the biggest planet in the Solar System



MOTIVES

Despite being red, Mars is actually a cold place



SAMPLING

Venus has a beautiful name, but also high temperatures



ANALYSIS & DEVELOPMENT

PHASE 1

- Venus is terribly hot, even hotter than Mercury, and its atmosphere is poisonous
- Earth is the third planet from the Sun and the only one that harbors life in the Solar System
- Mars is full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast



PHASE 2

- Neptune is also the fourth-largest planet by diameter in the Solar System
- Saturn is a gas giant and was named after the Roman god of wealth and agriculture
- Earth is the only planet that harbors life in the Solar System. Also known as the blue planet

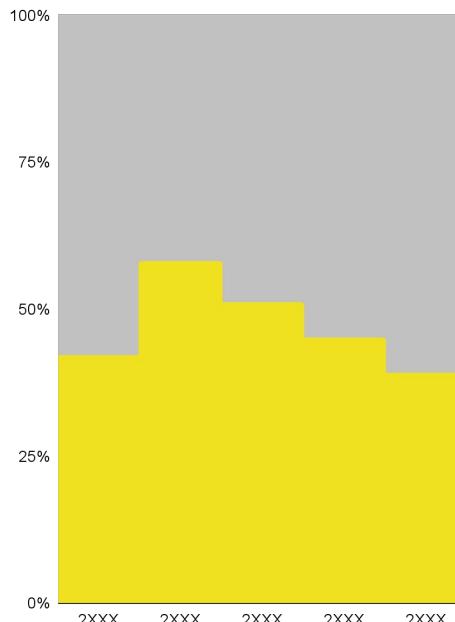
ANALYSIS & DEVELOPMENT

TRUE NEWS

Saturn is the second-largest planet in the Solar System

FALSE NEWS

Venus has a beautiful name and is the second planet from the Sun



Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest of them all

- Pluto is considered a dwarf planet
- Jupiter is the biggest planet in the entire Solar System
- Neptune is the fourth-largest planet in the Solar System



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9H 55M 23S



333,000



The Sun's mass compared to Earth's

ESIS
EFENSE

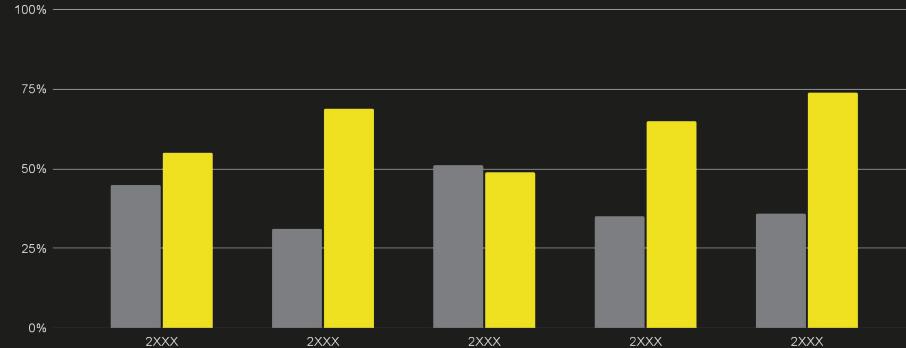
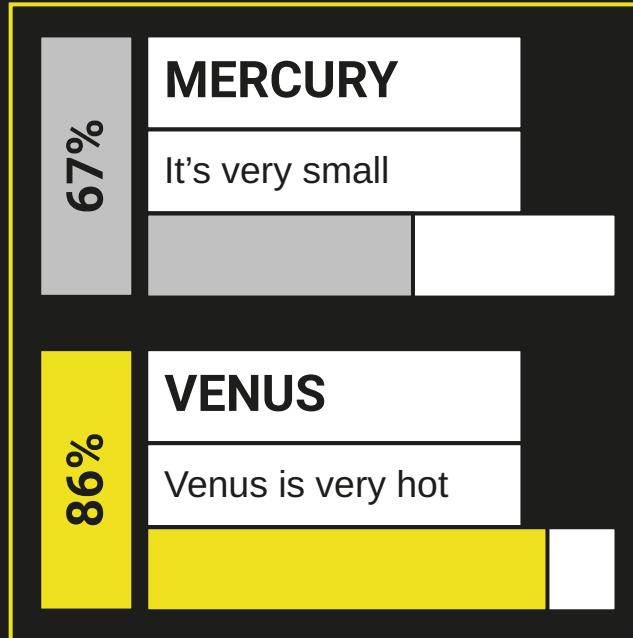
386,000 KM



Distance between Earth and the Moon



ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS



SATURN

Saturn is the second-largest planet in the Solar System

MARS

It's full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast

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DISCUSSION



SATURN

Saturn is a gas giant and has several rings. It's composed mostly of hydrogen and helium

- Jupiter is the biggest planet in the Solar System
- Despite being red, Mars is actually a cold place
- Earth is the only planet known to harbor life

01

DISCUSSION

Venus has a beautiful name and is the second planet from the Sun

02

DISCUSSION

Neptune is also the fourth-largest planet by diameter in the Solar System



CONCLUSIONS



EARTH

Earth is the only planet that harbors life in the Solar System



MARS

It's full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast

SATURN

Saturn was named after the Roman god of wealth and agriculture

JUPITER

Jupiter is a gas giant and the biggest planet in the Solar System

NEPTUNE

It's the fourth-largest object by diameter in the Solar System

MERCURY

It's the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest of them all

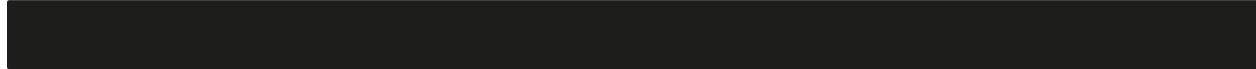
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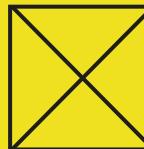
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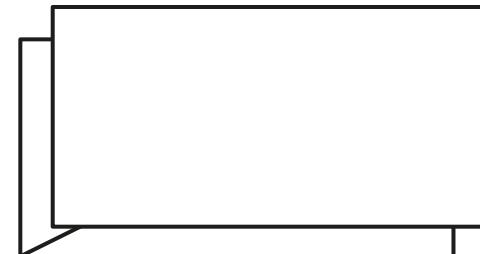
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PHOTOS

- Concept of fake news
- Newspaper background concept
- Laptop with fake news webpage and microphone

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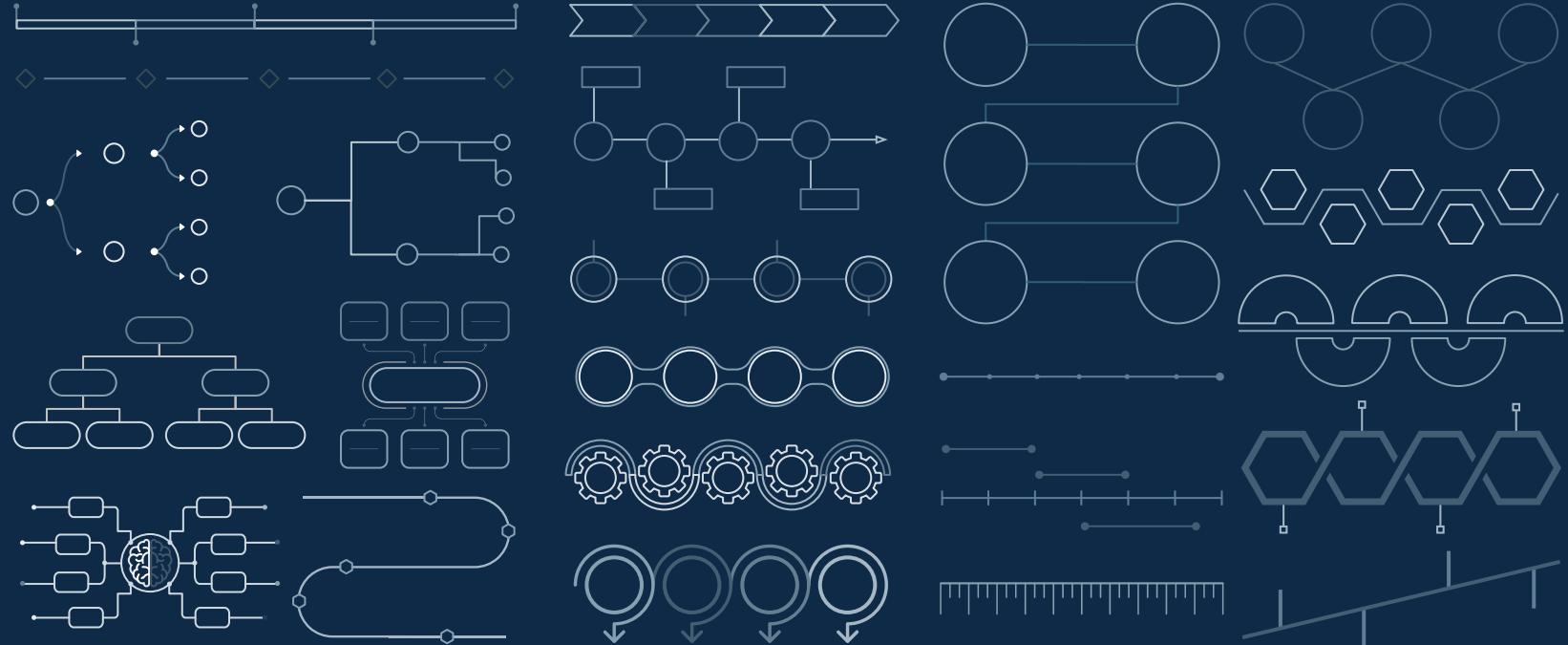
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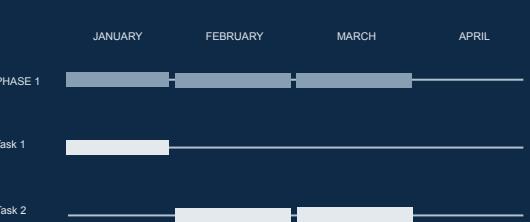
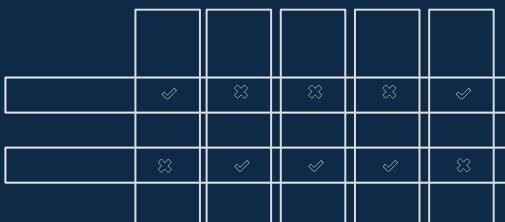
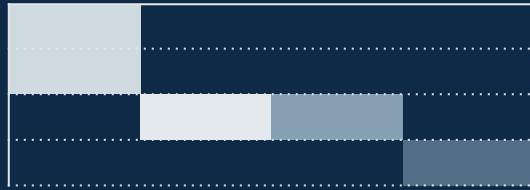
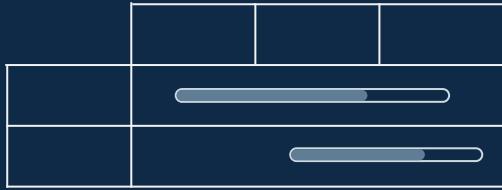
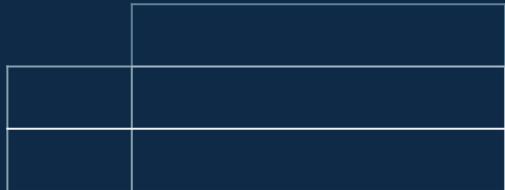
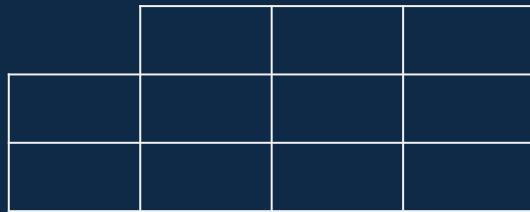
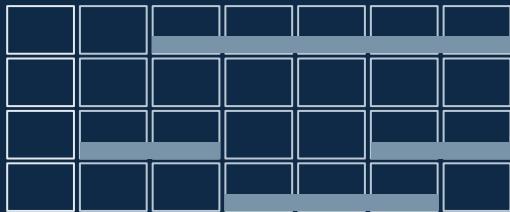
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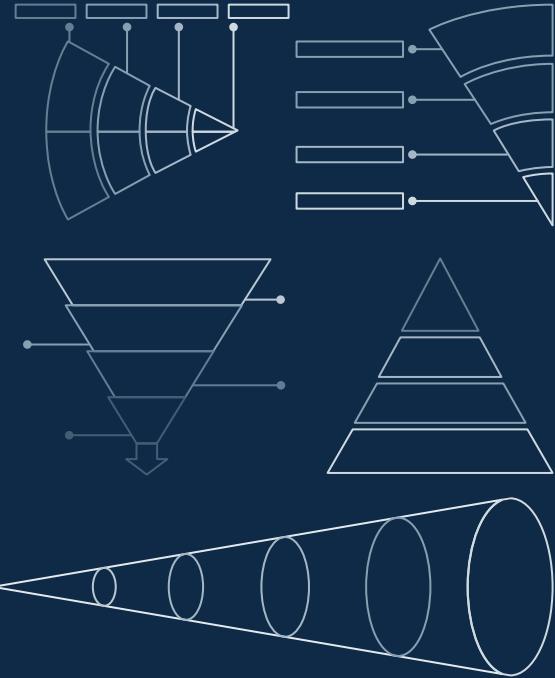
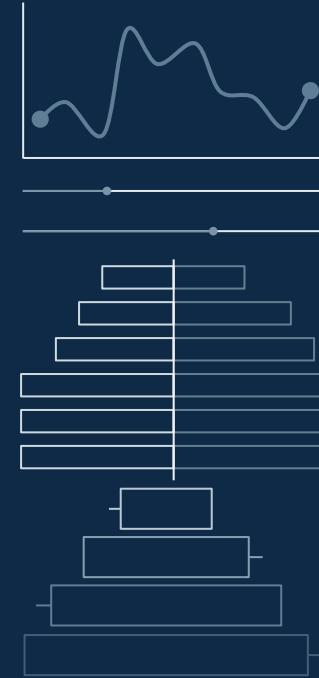
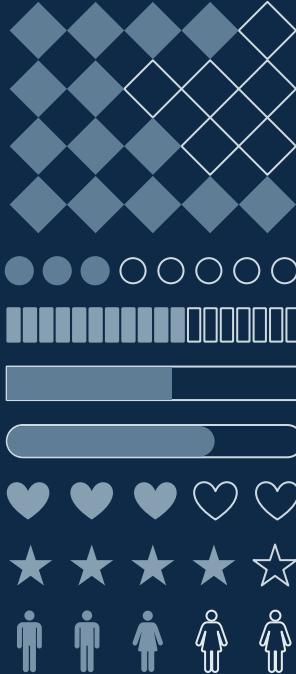
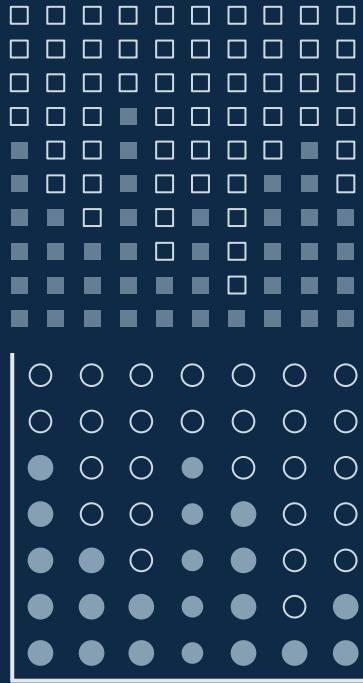












...and our sets of editable icons

You can **resize** these icons without losing quality.

You can **change the stroke and fill color**; just select the icon and click on the **paint bucket/pen**.

In Google Slides, you can also use **Flaticon's extension**, allowing you to customize and add even more icons.



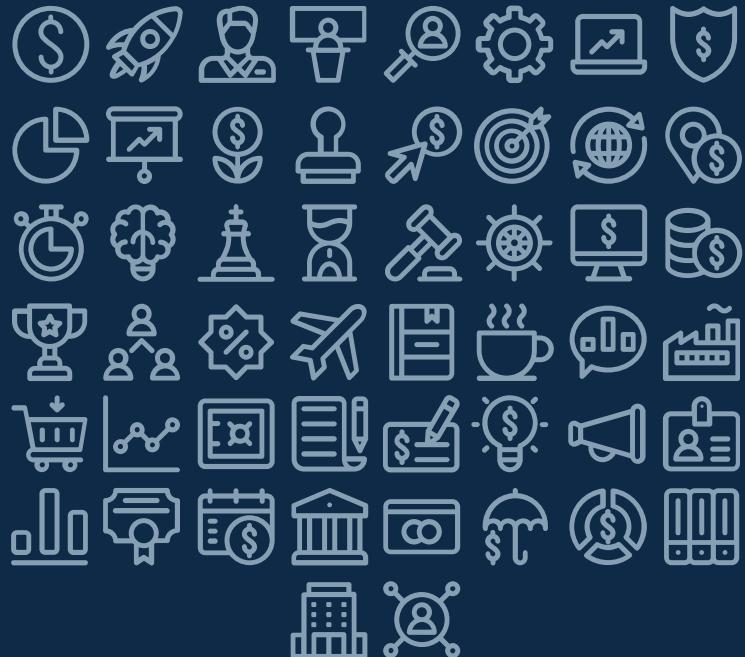
Educational Icons



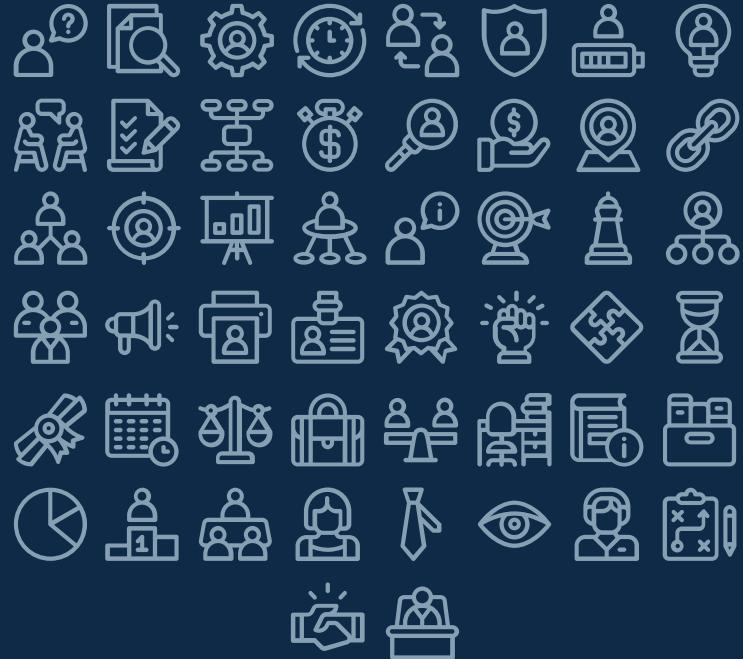
Medical Icons



Business Icons



Teamwork Icons



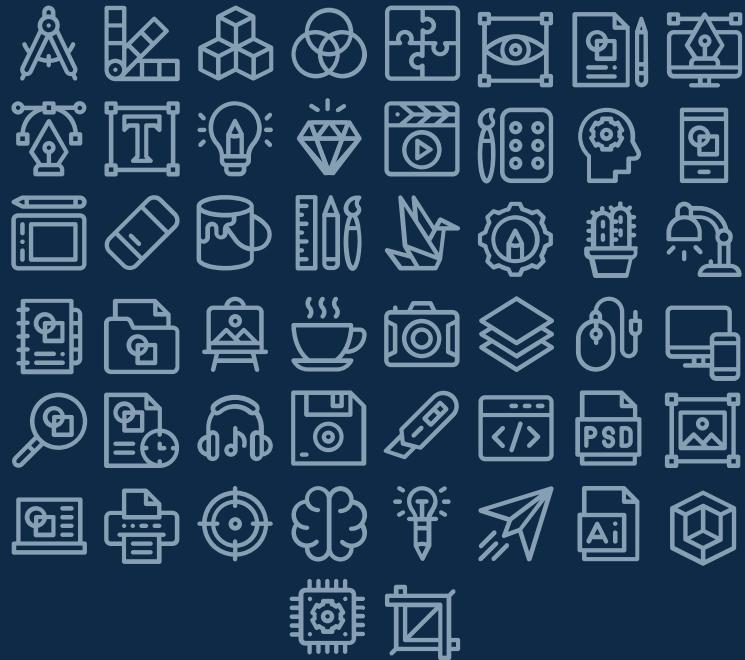
Help & Support Icons



Avatar Icons



Creative Process Icons



Performing Arts Icons



Nature Icons



SEO & Marketing Icons



