

# Digital Discourse Initiative

Strategies to Counter Online Hate

Handout for Educators (2025)



# Digital Discourse Initiative

**Digital Discourse Initiative**  
Strategies to Counter Online Hate

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## Tools and strategies for schools to counter the effects of online hate

Children and young people are increasingly exposed to online hate and disinformation.

'Digital Discourse Initiative' provides teachers and educators in Scotland with tools to counter the effects of this and teach core critical and digital media literacy skills.

This is an international collaborative project developed by **TIE** and **ISD**, respective experts in anti-prejudice education and counter-extremism strategies.

A bespoke professional learning course is now available for school teachers and education staff in Scotland. Classroom resources and research reports are included.

**tie** **ISD** Institute for Strategic Dialogue

### Professional Learning

Access the bespoke online professional learning course designed to provide tools and strategies to respond to disinformation and online hate, and equip learners with key critical and digital media literacy skills.

[Begin CPD Course](#)

### Research and Resources

Access research and resources exploring disinformation, online prejudice, and counter-strategies from expert sources including tools to support teaching and learning, curriculum delivery and data insights.

[Access the Platform](#)

# Professional Learning Course

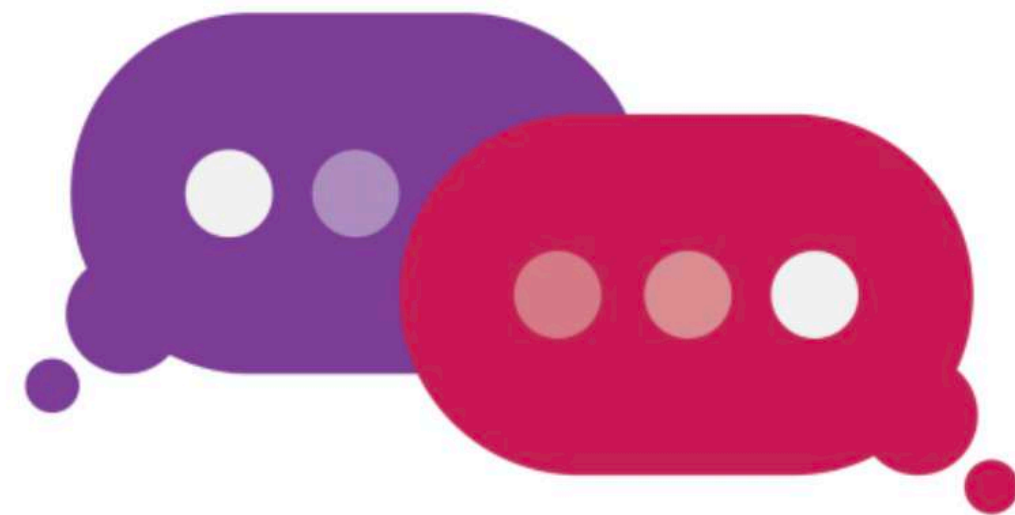


- Developed with experts and ISD Germany action workstream lead to provide teachers and school staff with key information
- Free for teachers and school staff in Scotland to complete collaboratively or independently in their own time
- Combines expertise in curriculum instruction for anti-prejudice education with evidence-based counter-extremism strategies to effectively address the effects of online hate
- Includes learning tools, advice, and curriculum frameworks

[Learn More and Register](#)

# Access the Course

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## Access the Course

This E-Learning module provides teachers and school staff with an improved knowledge and understanding of how modern social media platforms work and their role in facilitating online disinformation and prejudicial content.

The content in this module will also be relevant for Community Learning and Development (CLD) staff across Scotland.

The module will provide you with tools, strategies, and considerations to respond to behaviours influenced by prejudicial content online and equip learners to become critical digital citizens.

**This course is suitable for all teachers and school staff in Scotland.**

You will receive a CPD certificate upon completion.

**Duration: Approx. 4 hours**

Begin E-Learning

- Visit [digitaldiscourse.scot](https://digitaldiscourse.scot)
- Select 'Log In'
- Select 'Register' and complete the form using your school or setting email
- Complete the course

# Module Contents

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# Young People's Experiences

"As soon as you pull them out of a situation when they're with their pals then that's when you'll see what they're **really like** and how they really feel."

*S3 Boys' Focus Group (2024)*



**What did young people want teachers and school staff to know about social media?**

Broadly, the young people wanted teachers to know that while there are negatives to social media, there are also positives. They are aware that lies and false information can spread easily online and that there is a lot of hateful content that affects other young people's behaviour. They felt that they would benefit from learning about this at school.

## How are children using social media?

Ofcom published a report in 2023 exploring children and young people's online behaviour and attitudes, based on data collected from a sample of 6,795 participants (both children and their parents or carers) in the UK.



"There is **huge variation by age** in the way children engage with media, especially when we consider how children go online, what they do while online, and the types of apps, sites, or platforms they use for different activities."

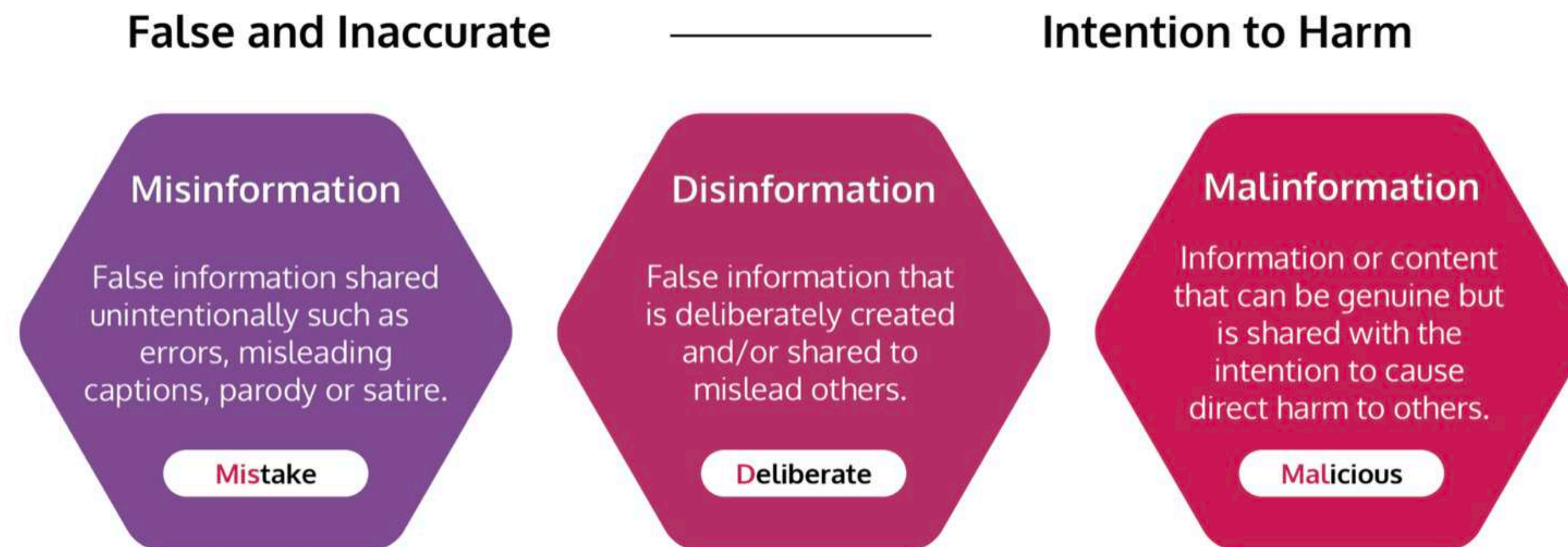
*Ofcom (2023:19)*

# Online Disinformation

## False and Harmful Information Online

The circulation of false and harmful information online has been described as a “critical threat to democracy” by researchers at **Oxford University**, and it can impact everyone who uses the internet.

Experts identify three different forms of false or harmful information online: misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. They are distinguished by the intention to cause harm.

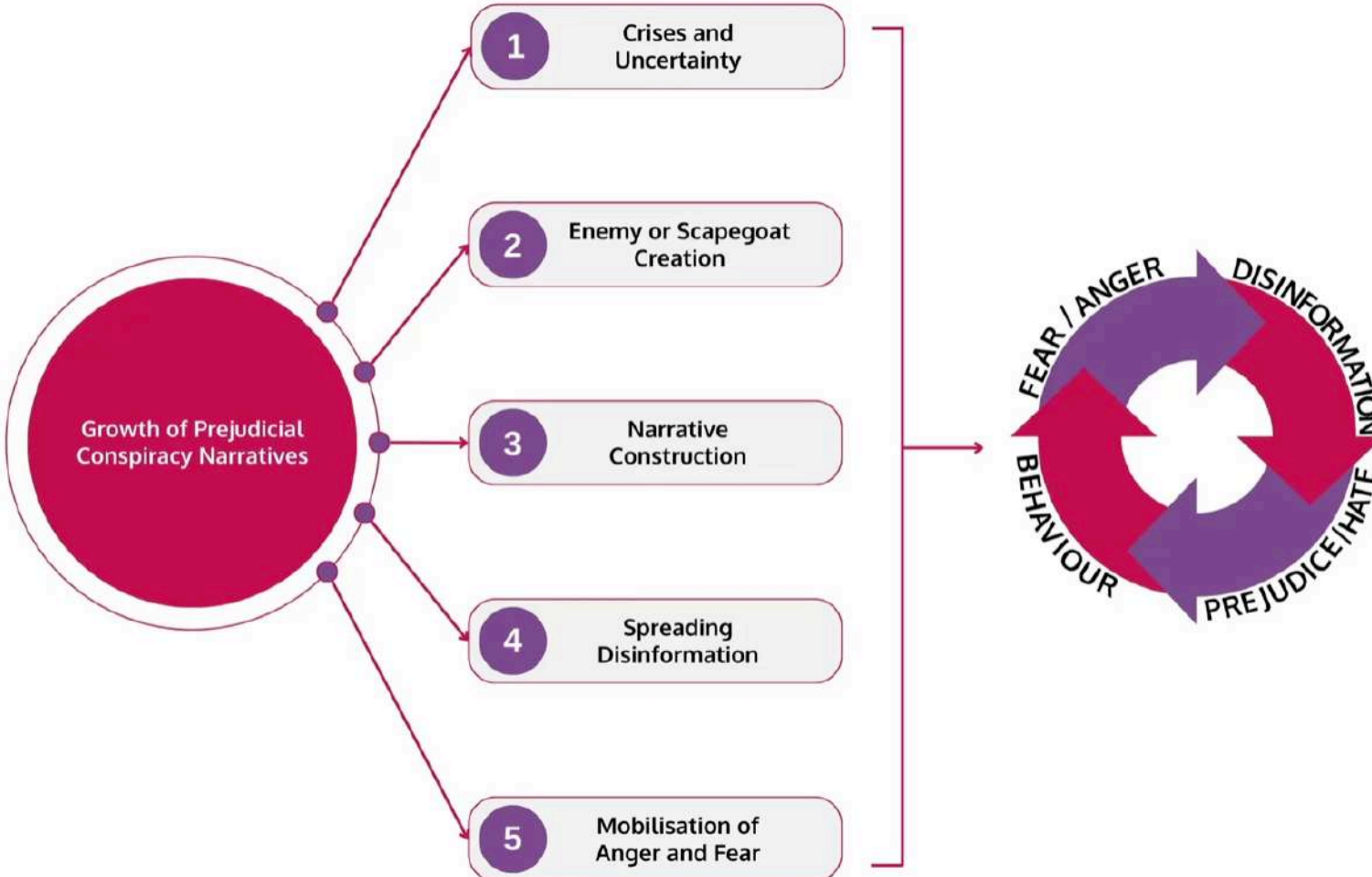


# Prejudicial Conspiracy Narratives

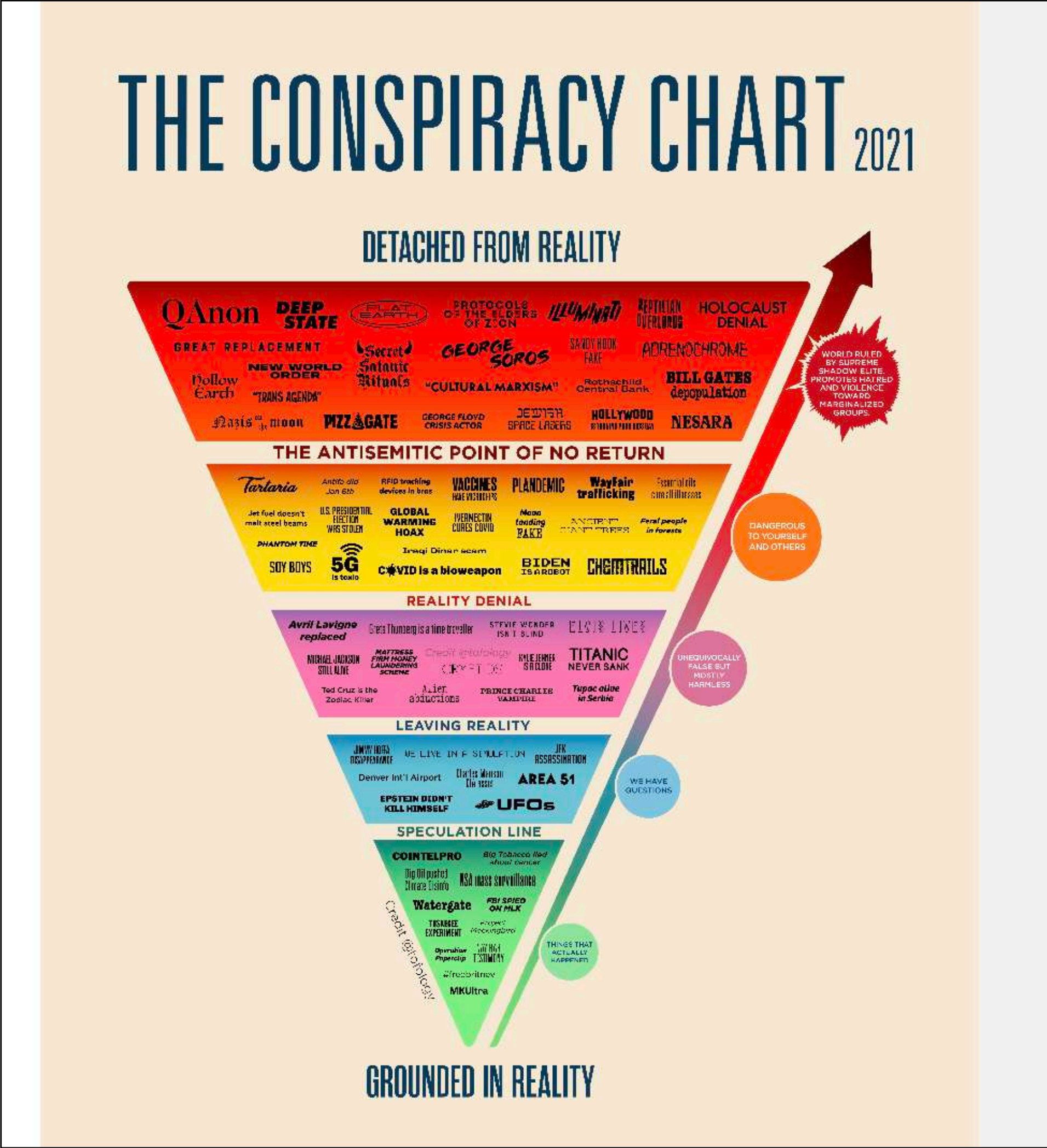
## A Model for Prejudicial Conspiracy Narratives

The formula for prejudicial conspiracy narratives is unchanged: they are particularly popular in times of crisis, a group perceived as 'different' by majority society is scapegoated and 'Othered', evil or sinister intentions are assigned to this group, and prejudice-based behaviours towards this group can be caused or incited.

Click each step to learn more about how prejudicial conspiracy narratives are constructed.



A standard goal of extremists who see themselves as victimised is to understand their situation. Among the possible explanations they focus on are conspiratorial explanations, that is, ones that blame their victimisation on conspiracies by 'the Other'. Confirmation bias then leads to a positive evaluation of evidence of conspiracy and a negative evaluation of contrary evidence. As a result, the extremist's method of choosing among possibilities results in the endorsing of a conspiracy theory to explain their situation.



# Online Hate, Extremism and Radicalisation

## Identifying Vulnerability Factors

Anyone can be radicalised but the NSPCC have highlighted key factors which can make a young person vulnerable. They will not always lead to radicalisation, but they can contribute to a young person being more vulnerable to radicalisation influences.

The following activity will help you to identify the factors that can lead to radicalisation, and consider what responses can look like. Susceptibility to radicalisation is complex and unique to a person's circumstances.

Remember that anyone can be radicalised. It is important to approach all young people with fairness and empathy, taking care to avoid making assumptions based on a young person's background, race or ethnicity, religion, or identity. Young people from minoritised groups that have historically been scapegoated are often at greater risk of experiencing discrimination or bias. No one should be singled out or presumed to be at higher risk of radicalisation simply because of identity characteristics.

For best accessibility, we recommend making the activity full screen and returning to this page upon completion.

### 3. Isolation from Peers

Young people may begin to distance themselves from their previous friend groups and social circles, instead associating with individuals who share their extremist views either online or offline. This isolation can further reinforce their extremist beliefs and make them more susceptible to manipulation. They may sound like they are "talking from someone else's script" when articulating ideas or beliefs, or show disrespect to particular groups of people.

ISD's analysis highlighted that extremist content creators were gaming TikTok's algorithm to increase visibility of their content. They would use popular hashtags to promote their content, and attempt to appear in the "For You" page (a user's main recommended video feed when they open the app).

Collectively, the content reviewed in ISD's research had amassed millions of views.



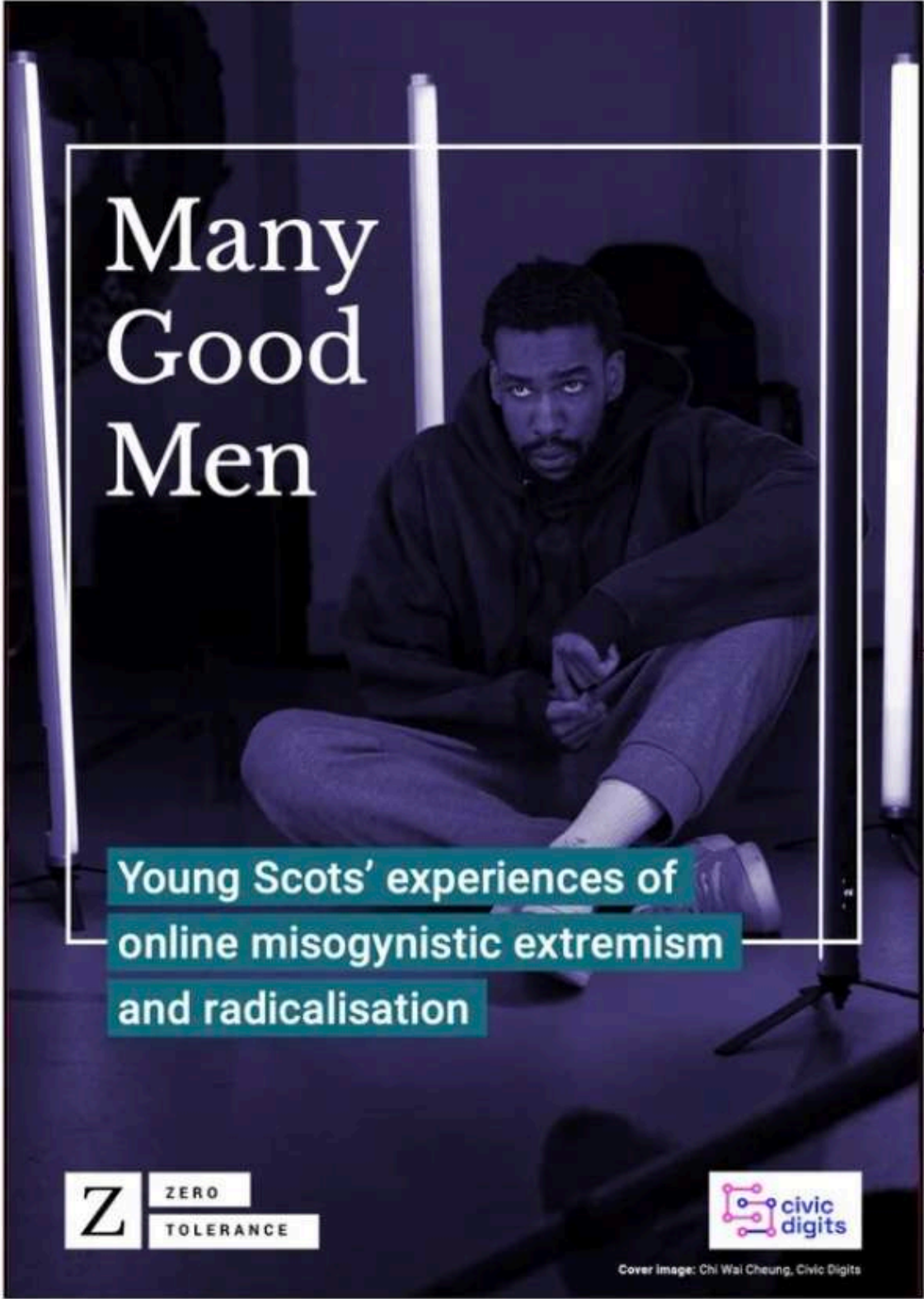
"It's clear that TikTok is popular, but interest in the app also extends to those interested in using the platform to promote, support or encourage **hatred and extremism.**"

ISD (2021)

# Case Analysis: the 'Manosphere'

In 2024, Zero Tolerance commissioned Civic Digits to complete **participatory research** with young Scots about their experiences of 'incel culture.'

Click each tab to learn more about the key findings.



Young men consume misogyny without knowing the content creators are incels



The young men had a positive view of Andrew Tate



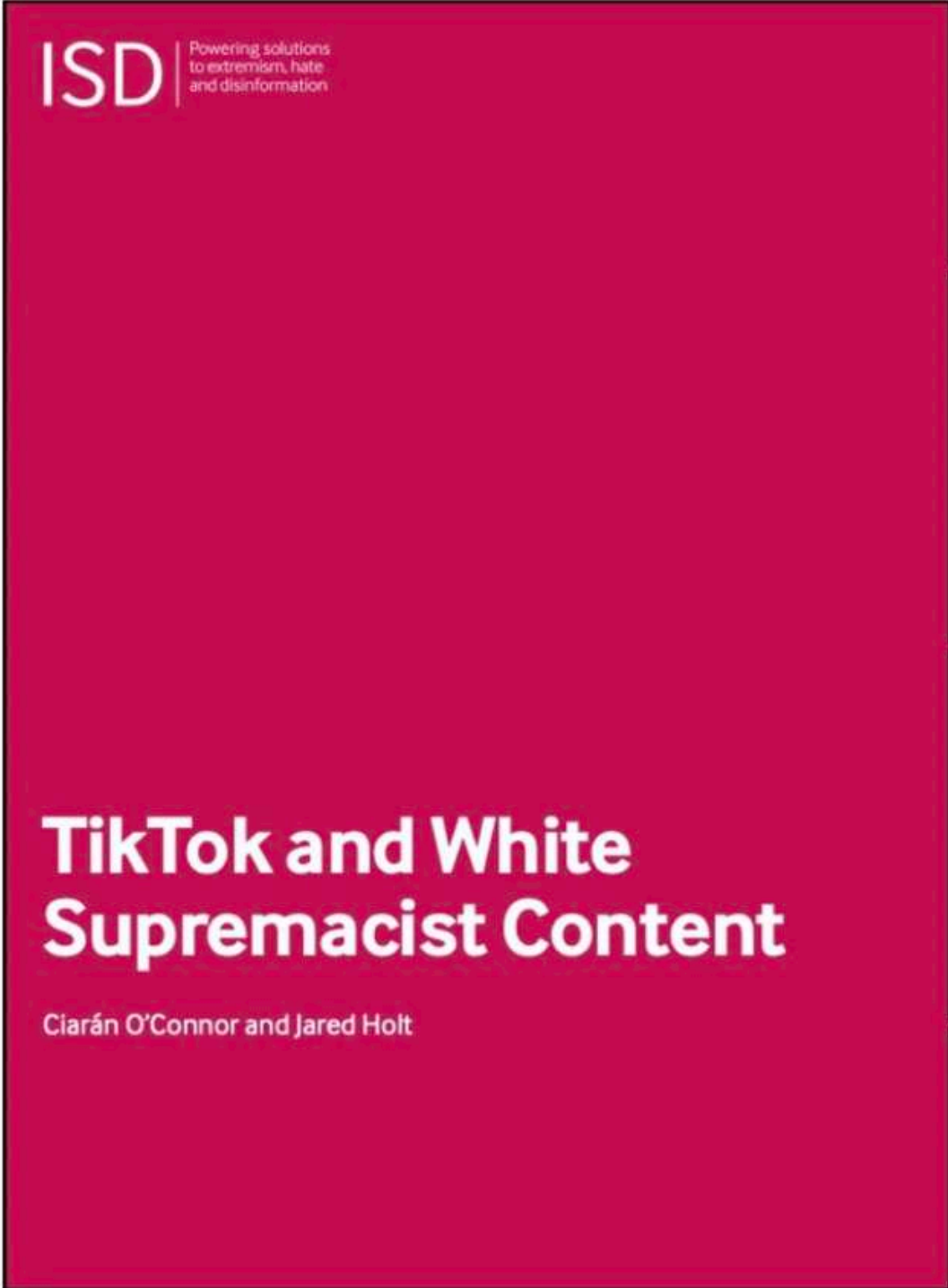
Young men are targeted with content pressuring them to be 'successful men'



# Case Analysis: Far-Right Extremism

ISD (2024) researchers conducted an analysis of white supremacist content on TikTok. Data collection was conducted using different built-in features accessible to any TikTok user, like the search bar and hashtags, and this process resulted in an available sample of 108 distinct videos uploaded by 75 unique users.

Click each tab to learn more about the key findings.



White supremacist content remains incredibly easy to find on TikTok



TikTok promotes search terms that help users evade content moderation

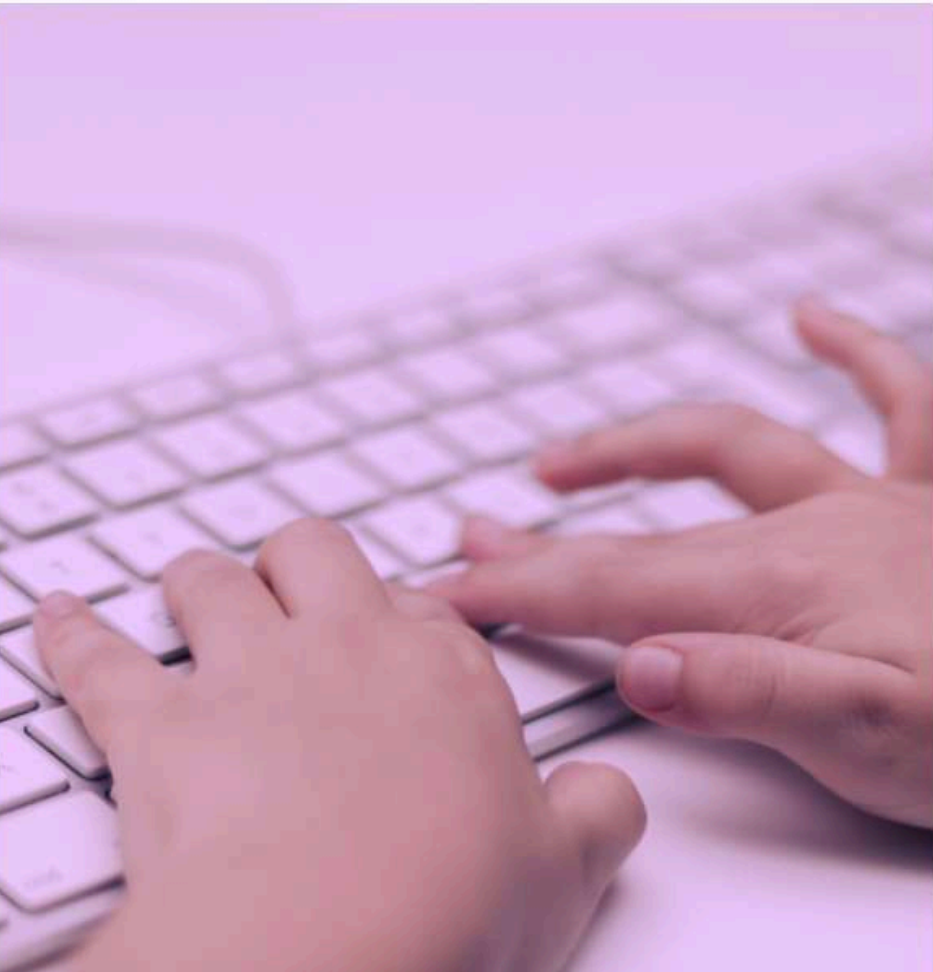


TikTok appears to be algorithmically amplifying and recommending white supremacist content to users



# Resources and Curriculum Tools

I can keep myself safe and secure in online environments and I am aware of the importance and consequences of doing this for myself and others. <b>TCH 3-03a</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applies appropriate online safety features when becoming involved with online communities such as online gaming, chat rooms, forums and social media.</li><li>• Demonstrate an understanding of different cyber threats, for example, viruses, phishing, identity theft, extortion and sextortion.</li></ul>
<a href="#">+ Health and Wellbeing</a>	
<a href="#">+ Religious and Moral Education</a>	
<a href="#">+ Complementary Resource: Learner Digital Skills Toolkit</a>	



"In this rapidly evolving digital world, literacy **means more** than knowing how to use digital tools."

*Carnegie Corporation of New York (2024)*

## Skills: the SIFT and VERIFY Methods

The **SIFT** and **VERIFY** methods are helpful tools that include key critical and digital media literacy skills that children and young people need to identify disinformation online.

**SIFT** is an easier to remember acronym and can be helpful when introducing these skills to learners, while **VERIFY** may be more suitable at an advanced learning stage.

Click the icons to learn more.



[Access Resources](#)

# Keep Updated

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- Scan this QR code to join our mailing list and receive updates about our work
- You can also join the mailing list at [tie.scot](https://tie.scot)
- You will receive updates on new resources, professional learning, guidance, and school services