

## Social Research Call

**Title:**

**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DIMINISH FAKE NEWS SPREAD AND SUSCEPTIBILITY**



**Acronym:** FACTCHECK

**Project leader:** Inês Sousa Guedes

**Host organisation:** University of Porto

**Main purpose of the project:** To investigate the factors influencing the accuracy and the dissemination of fake news. Key research questions include: 1) How do sociodemographic factors, individual variables, and the digital context impact the accuracy and the willingness to share fake news? 2) What is the effect of manipulated online news characteristics (e.g., category, likes/shares) on the accuracy and willingness to share news?

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative survey will be administered to a representative Portuguese sample (N=2500). The survey includes 50 online fake and real news items, along with individual and contextual dimensions. This will provide quantitative data and create an accessible online news database for researchers to conduct experimental studies on fake news.

**Potential results:** We anticipate: a) Identifying how sociodemographic factors, personality traits, cognitive biases, political orientation, and conspiracy mentality affect the ability to discern and share fake news; b) Revealing how manipulated online features, like likes and shares, impact sharing behaviour; c) Clarifying the relationship between online habits, news consumption, and the tendency to share fake news and its accuracy.

**Social relevance of the research:** Fake news erodes trust in media, polarizes communities, and undermines democracy. Understanding its accuracy and spread is crucial. This project identifies individuals most susceptible to fake news and conditions for its dissemination, providing tools for policymakers, journalists, and media organizations to enhance media literacy, critical thinking, and counter misinformation.

**Originality/value of the project:** This is Portugal's first study to: i) Use a large-scale survey to explore factors affecting fake news accuracy and dissemination; ii) Integrate individual and contextual factors into one framework; iii) Use manipulated online news characteristics for better ecological validity. It will also create a publicly accessible database of evaluated online news. Additionally, it involves multidisciplinary collaboration from criminology, psychology, sociology, and biology.