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## **Pearson Institute/AP-NORC Poll: 95% of Americans say the spread of misinformation is a problem.**

*Most blame social media users, social media companies, and U.S. politicians for the spread of misinformation.*

**CHICAGO, October 8, 2021** – Almost all Americans see the spread of misinformation as a problem, and significant majorities believe social media users, social media companies, and U.S. politicians are responsible for spreading misinformation.

These are among the findings of a new study from the [Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) that is being released in conjunction with the [2021 Pearson Global Forum](#). The virtual event will bring together researchers and policymakers to address these issues and develop strategies to prevent and resolve international conflicts.

Three-quarters of Americans are at least somewhat concerned that they have been exposed to misinformation, but less than half are equally concerned that they've spread misinformation, even unintentionally.

More Americans say that social media users (77%), social media companies (73%), and U.S. politicians (72%) bear quite a bit of responsibility for spreading misinformation than say the same about the U.S. government (48%), Russia (54%), China (53%), Iran (39%), or other foreign governments (41%).

“Americans are more likely to blame U.S. politicians, social media companies, and social media users for the spread of misinformation than foreign governments,” said Sheila Kohanteb, the Executive Director of External Relations at the Pearson Institute. “The results show that the public believes the spread of misinformation is an issue that the American government, companies, and individuals all need to try to address.”

Majorities report that U.S. politicians (70%), social media companies (67%), social media users (62%), and the U.S. government (62%) are all responsible for trying to stop the spread of misinformation.

“There is a significant bipartisan consensus among the American public that the spread of misinformation is a problem,” said Trevor Tompson, director of the AP-NORC Center. “The

study illustrates that many Americans believe the spread of misinformation is an issue that is directly impacting them, their friends, and their families.”

### **About the Study**

This survey was conducted by the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from the Pearson Institute, at Harris Public Policy, and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between September 9 and September 13, 2021, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,071 completed the survey — 986 via the web and 85 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 19.3 percent, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 19.0 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 75.1 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 2.8 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2021 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

### **About the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research**

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world’s population sees AP journalism every day. [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)

- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more.

Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).

### **About the Pearson Institute**

The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago promotes the ongoing discussion, understanding and resolution of global conflicts, and contributes to the advancement of a global society more at peace. Established through a grant from The Thomas L. Pearson and The Pearson Family Members Foundation, and led by Institute Director James Robinson, co-author of *Why Nations Fail* and *The Narrow Corridor*, the Institute achieves this by employing an analytically rigorous, data-driven approach and global perspective to understanding violent conflict. It is global in its scope, activities and footprint. Attracting students and scholars from around the world, its faculty is in the field studying conflicts – and approaches to conflict resolution – in Nigeria, Colombia and Afghanistan, to name just a few.

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