

## Topic Page: [Fake News](#)

Summary Article: **fake news**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Deliberate misinformation or a hoax spread via the print, broadcast, or social media, with the intent to mislead readers for financial or political gain. The term came into prominence in 2016 during the US presidential election. In 2017 the new US president, Donald Trump, tweeted repeatedly that CNN and the *New York Times*, leading media organizations critical of his candidacy, were perpetrators of fake news. In August 2017 the social media and networking service Facebook decided to use the term 'false news' instead of fake news, because Trump and his right-wing supporters were labelling information with which they disagreed, such as opinion poll findings, as fake news when it was not factually false.

In the 2016 US presidential election campaign, fake news stories shared widely on the Internet included false claims that 'Pope Francis backs Trump', 'Hillary Clinton sold weapons to the Islamic State', and 'Donald Trump was born in Pakistan'. Some of the pro-Trump fake news stories were produced by teenagers working at fake news factories in Macedonia. The influence of fake news on the outcome of the 2016 US election remains uncertain. While over three-fifths of Americans used social media networks as a source of news, the filter bubbles used on social media sites show users stories they like or tend to agree with, which means that fake news may only reinforce rather than change opinion.

Fake news, particularly involving anti-immigration messages, has also been an issue in referenda and elections in France, Germany, the UK, and Catalonia from 2016. Mounting pressure has been placed on Facebook and Internet tech giant Google to partner with independent fact-checkers, and begin to label and warn of inaccurate news. There have been claims that Russia used fake news, disseminated through Kremlin-backed accounts and troll farms (organizations that seek to create conflict and disruption in an online community by posting deliberately inflammatory or provocative comments), to destabilize and divide Western democracies.

Fake news involves bending truth for personal or political gain, and is a form of propaganda with ancient roots. In the 1st century BC, Octavian used a campaign of disinformation to aid his victory over rival Marc Anthony in the final war of the Roman Republic. In the 1930s and World War II the Nazis spread propaganda through a ministry headed by Joseph Goebbels. Such propaganda was state-generated and disseminated.

In recent years the Internet, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and publishing platforms such as WordPress have made it possible for individuals to produce at low cost, and publicize quickly and widely, fake news that can fool readers and influence political debates. False stories that go viral (widely shared through social media) can generate large advertising revenues from Web pages accessed and shared. Many of the messages originate from bots (automated accounts set up to post hundreds of tweets and postings a day) or cyborg accounts (heavily automated accounts with some human involvement to personalize messages).

**APA**

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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