Socioeconomic, informational, and attitudinal predictors of fake news belief: Survey evidence from four countries

We explore the individual-level predictors of fake news belief using surveys covering 30 stories in four countries (Spain, Portugal, United States, India). In all countries, greater reliance on social media is strongly associated with fake news belief. Further analyses reveal that this relationship is driven by different subsets of individuals across countries. For instance, in a hyper-polarized country (United States), we find that this relationship is strongest among respondents with high levels of political interest. Overall, our results uncover several consistent predictors of fake news belief while also highlighting the need for targeted interventions (e.g., around social media use).

Research questions

- What are the predictors of fake news belief? Are they consistent across countries with different political systems and information environments?
- Does reliance on social media for political news relate to fake news belief?
- Does the relationship between social media use and fake news belief vary across countries or types of people?

Essay summary

- This study explored the individual-level predictors of fake news belief using online surveys in Spain (N=8714), Portugal (N=3210), the United States (N=3025) and India (N=2817). These surveys measured respondents' average belief in several randomly selected fake news stories circulating in their country.
- We examine the extent to which the predictors of fake news belief differ across these four countries with diverse socioeconomic characteristics, political systems, and information environments.
- We find that the predictors of fake news belief are largely (though not entirely) consistent across countries, with younger, less educated, less politically knowledgeable respondents, as well as heavy social media users, more susceptible to fake news.
- Controlling for other important factors, we find that increased reliance on social media is consistently associated with greater belief in fake news across all four countries. However, the relationship between social media use and fake news belief is driven by different subsets of people across countries.
- Our findings indicate that the drivers of fake news belief are largely consistent across countries. However, our social media use findings suggest the need for targeted interventions suitable to

specific subgroups of the population in different countries.

Implications

Which citizens are most vulnerable to fake news and other forms of misinformation? We investigate the predictors of fake news belief using surveys covering 30 stories in four countries: Spain, Portugal, the United States, and India. Understanding the predictors of misperceptions is especially important.[1] While much scholarly and public attention has been paid to fact-checking, consumption of fact checks in the real world is low and uneven across ideological groups (Guess et al. 2018, Robertson et al. 2020). Most misinformation therefore goes uncorrected in the eyes of most citizens. Developing policy solutions to the misinformation problem requires us to first understand who is at greatest risk.

Our analysis builds on past research exploring the predictors of misinformation, most of which tends to focus on single issues or countries (see Jerit and Zhao 2020 for a review).[2] Our comparative study of Spain, Portugal, the United States, and India --- countries with different socioeconomic characteristics, political systems, and information environments --- offers a more holistic understanding of the correlates of fake news belief. Existing research focuses on variables linked to people's motivation, ability, and opportunity to decipher political news.[3] For instance, past studies point to the importance of political interest, political knowledge, education, and information sources. However, findings are far from consistent and may vary significantly depending on patterns of media use (Del Vicario et al., 2016), elite rhetoric (Nyhan 2020), and other factors. Humprecht et al. (2020) document cross-national differences in self-reported exposure to misinformation, with countries with high news media distrust, populist rhetoric, polarized political conflict, and high social media news consumption having higher overall levels of perceived exposure. Whether these differences extend to the predictors of misperceptions, however, remains unclear.

To address this question, we conducted online surveys that measured respondents' average belief in several randomly selected fake news stories that were circulating in their country. These stories, which were taken from the websites of professional fact-checking organizations, covered politics, economics, health, and other issues (see Appendix A for a full list). We created short (one- or two-paragraph) versions of each story. Respondents were presented with a randomly selected and ordered subset of stories and asked to evaluate the accuracy of the central claim from each story (see Appendix A). While no set of stories can perfectly represent the universe of fake news in a given country, our stories are diverse and resemble the type of misinformation respondents are likely to encounter.

We concentrate on respondents' *average belief in fake news* across all stories they evaluated --- the outcome of interest in our analyses below. When it comes to predictors, we include several variables related to motivation, ability, and opportunity (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). In our discussion, we focus primarily on social media use, as several studies have documented a positive relationship between social media use and belief in certain false claims (e.g., Jamieson and Albarracin 2020, Stecula et al. 2020). We operationalize social media use as a share of respondents' overall political information diet and treat the resulting variable as a proxy for likely exposure to misinformation. Of course, the persuasiveness of misinformation will also depend on individuals' *motivation* and *ability* to scrutinize the news they

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[1] Throughout, we use the terms "fake news belief" and "misperceptions" interchangeably.

[2] One exception is recent multi-country studies of corrections (e.g., Porter et al. 2023). However, as discussed, our focus here is on the factors associated with fake news belief, not the effectiveness of corrections.

[3] This approach is based on Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) seminal study of political knowledge.

encounter. We consider several related variables – including educational attainment, political knowledge, and political interest – which are often correlated and used interchangeably as proxies for "political sophistication." Yet, evidence of the relationship between these variables and factual beliefs is mixed. One the one hand, higher cognitive abilities could enable biased evaluation of information through a process of motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2006, Kahan, 2013). On the other hand, cognitive resources (e.g., education) and domain-specific knowledge (e.g., about political institutions) could better equip citizens to scrutinize dubious factual claims they encounter (Pennycook & Rand, 2019; Vegetti & Mancosu, 2020). As mentioned, we examine the relationship between these variables and fake news belief across a wide range of stories in four countries.

Our results reveal that greater reliance on social media is consistently associated with higher average belief in fake news. In all four countries, marginal increases in social media use are associated with significant jumps in overall fake news belief. Our results, however, point to cross-country differences in characteristics of misinformed individuals when it comes to educational attainment and political interest. Most notably, the United States stands out as the single case in which university degree holders and those higher in political interest demonstrate higher overall belief in fake news. In additional analyses, we find that in the United States, the relationship between social media use and fake news belief increases with levels of political interest. By contrast, the findings on political knowledge are consistent across countries, with more knowledgeable citizens less likely to be misinformed.

These results offer important lessons for policymakers, educators, and others interested in crafting effective interventions to combat misinformation. Specifically, our results highlight the need to understand which populations are at greatest risk from reliance on social media for political news. At the same time, there is much more to learn about the relationship between media use and fake news susceptibility and whether this relationship varies across countries. To that end, future research should use experimental or panel designs that enable causal conclusions about the impact on social media use on fake news belief.

Before turning to our key findings, we present some evidence that our four samples vary on important dimensions, including predisposition to believe conspiracy theories (measured with a five-item scale from Bruder et al. 2013) and overall levels of fake news belief (measured in our surveys). Figure 1a shows the distribution of conspiratorial predispositions in each country.

Figure 1a. Conspiratorial predispositions by country*.*
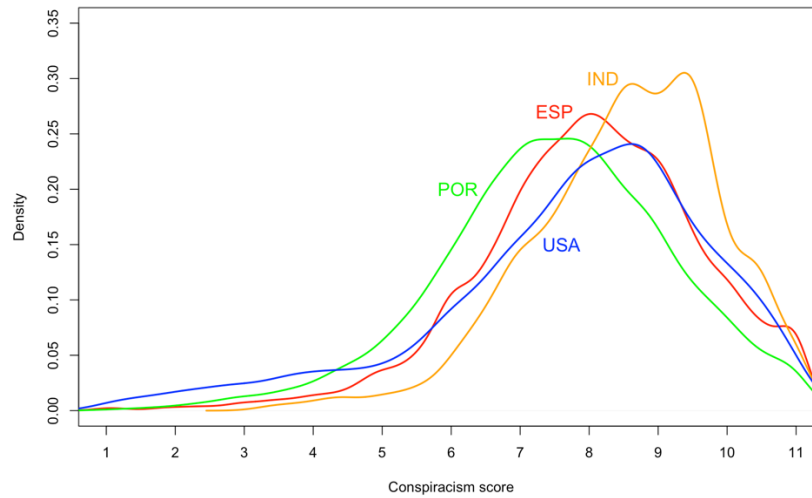
As shown in Figure 1a, conspiratorial predispositions differ significantly across countries, with the highest levels in India (8.52 out of 11) followed by Spain (8.00), the United States (7.75), and Portugal (7.50; all pairwise comparisons significant at p<.001).[4] India stands out not only as the most conspiratorial sample on average, but for a relatively few number of respondents at the low/moderate ends of the conspiratorial scale. The other three countries, by contrast, appear more normally distributed.

Figure 1b. Average fake news belief by country

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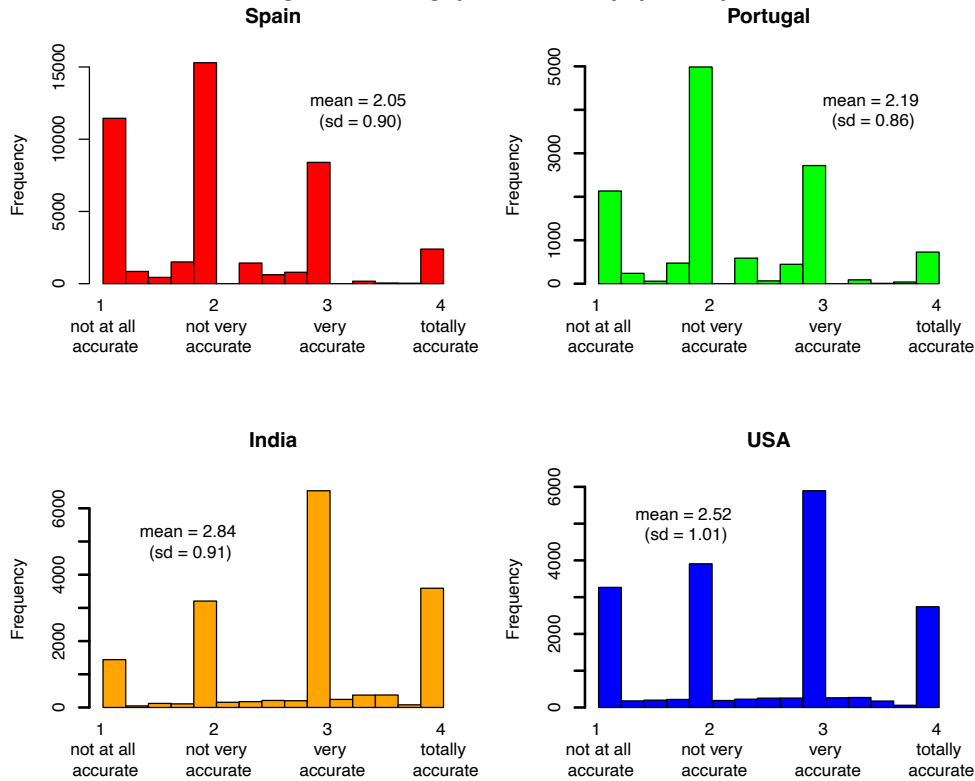
[4] Comparisons are significant at p<.001 using both t-tests and nonparametric Kolmogorv-Smirnov tests.

Turning to average levels of fake news belief in Figure 1b, we again see significant country differences. Fake news belief is highest in India (2.84 out of 4, which comes closest to "very accurate" on our four-point response scale). India is followed by the United States (2.52), Portugal (2.19), and Spain (2.06; all pairwise comparisons significant at p<.001). Overall, then, our four countries differ significantly in terms of both conspiratorial tendencies and average levels of belief in fake news. We now turn to the predictors of fake news belief, examining the extent to which these predictors vary across our diverse set of countries.

Findings

Finding 1: Predictors of fake news belief are largely (though not entirely) consistent across countries. Respondents who are younger, less educated, less politically knowledgeable, and more reliant on social media for political news demonstrate higher levels of belief in fake news.

Table 1. *Regression models predicting average belief in fake news stories*

	Outcome = average belief in false claims			
	Study 1 (Spain)	**Study 2 (Portugal)**	**Study 3 (USA)**	**Study 4 (India)**
News from social media (share)	0.08***	0.07***	0.13***	0.04*
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Undergraduate degree	-0.03**	-0.11***	0.12***	-0.15***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Political knowledge	-0.17***	-0.16***	-0.19***	NA
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)	
Political Interest	-0.05***	-0.05*	0.04**	-0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Trust in media	0.02	0.003	0.19***	0.21***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Conspiratorial predispositions	0.08***	0.20***	0.42***	0.20***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Left-right ideology	0.01	-0.01	0.065***	NA
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	
Age	-0.08***	-0.05*	-0.07***	-0.17***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Female	-0.01	0.01	-0.05***	-0.03
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Constant	0.06***	0.14***	0.01	-0.04*
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Political parties	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Fake news stories included	*7*	*5*	*8*	*9*
N	8278	3027	2989	2579

*Note: Cell entries are standardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. DV is average belief in false claims presented, which is measured 1-4 with higher values indicating more belief in false claims. Significance codes: '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05.*

Table 1 presents a series of models predicting average fake news belief based on socioeconomic, informational, and attitudinal factors.[5] As noted, several variables are consistently associated with fake news belief across countries: reliance on social media for news (all four countries), lower levels of political knowledge (all four), age (all four), and lacking a university degree (three out of four). However, we also observe some interesting cross-national differences. For instance, education and political interest are negatively associated with fake news belief in Spain, Portugal, and India, but *positively* associated with belief in the United States. This may suggest that the drivers of fake news belief are distinct in hyper-polarized countries.

Finding 2: Across countries, greater reliance on social media is consistently associated with higher belief in fake news.

Given the diverse set of countries considered, the consistent relationship between social media use and fake news belief is particularly striking. We explored this relationship further by comparing predicted levels of fake news belief for a "typical" respondent in each country with varying levels of reliance on social media for political news: low (share=0.2), moderate (0.5), and high (0.8).[6] The results are presented in Figure 2. In each country, marginal increases in social media use are associated with significant jumps in average fake news belief (all within-country comparisons significant at p<.05 or less).

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[5] These are standardized regression coefficients. Appendix C presents the full results including party coefficients omitted here. The specification is the same across countries with the exception of India, where political knowledge and left/right ideology were not measured. Research suggests that education is a good proxy for political knowledge (Le and Nguyen 2021); we consulted country experts who suggested that this relationship should be particularly strong in India. Left/right ideology is not frequently measured in India, as it is not a salient dimension of political conflict.

[6] Predicted values were calculated as linear combinations using the regression results in Table 1. We set continuous variables (e.g., left/right ideology) at their medians and categorical variables at their modes; partisan variables are set to 0.

Figure 2. Predicted levels of fake news belief by level of social media use. *Estimates calculated from the models in Table 1. Points are predicted values; error bars contain 95% confidence intervals.*
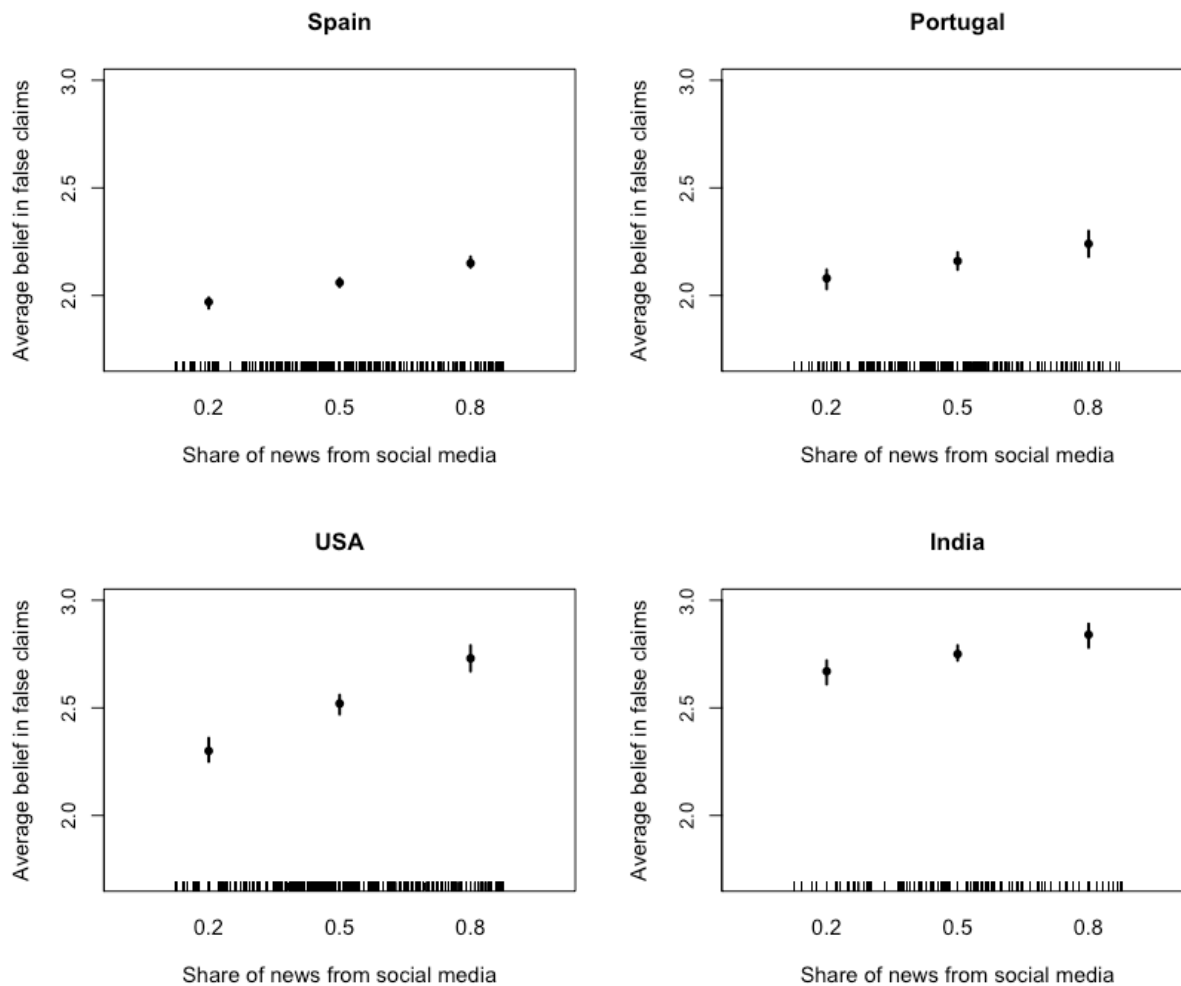
Finding 3: The relationship between social media use and fake news belief is driven by different subsets of people across countries.

We also examined whether the relationship between social media use and fake news belief is stronger for different types of individuals. To do so, we estimated separate models that interact social media use with education, political interest, and conspiratorial predispositions, respectively (see Appendix C). Figure 3a presents results for education. In three countries (Spain, United States, India), the relationship between social media use and fake news belief is stronger for respondents with university degrees.

Figure 3a. Relationship between social media use and fake news belief across levels of education. *Estimates calculated from interaction models in Appendix C. Error bars contain 95% confidence intervals.*
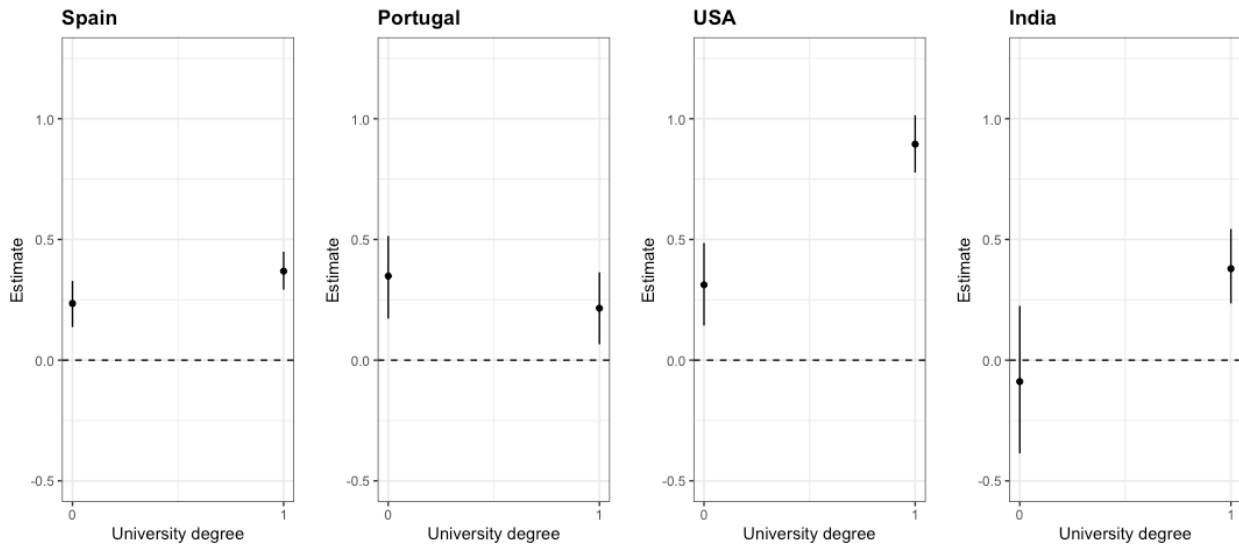

Figure 3b presents the results for levels of political interest. In Spain and Portugal, we see that the relationship between social media use and fake news belief is similar across low and high interest respondents. In the US and India, however, we see substantial variation. In the US (India), this relationship becomes stronger (weaker) with levels of political interest.

Figure 3b. Relationship between social media use and fake news belief across levels of political interest. *Estimates calculated from interaction models in Appendix C. Error bars contain 95% confidence intervals.*
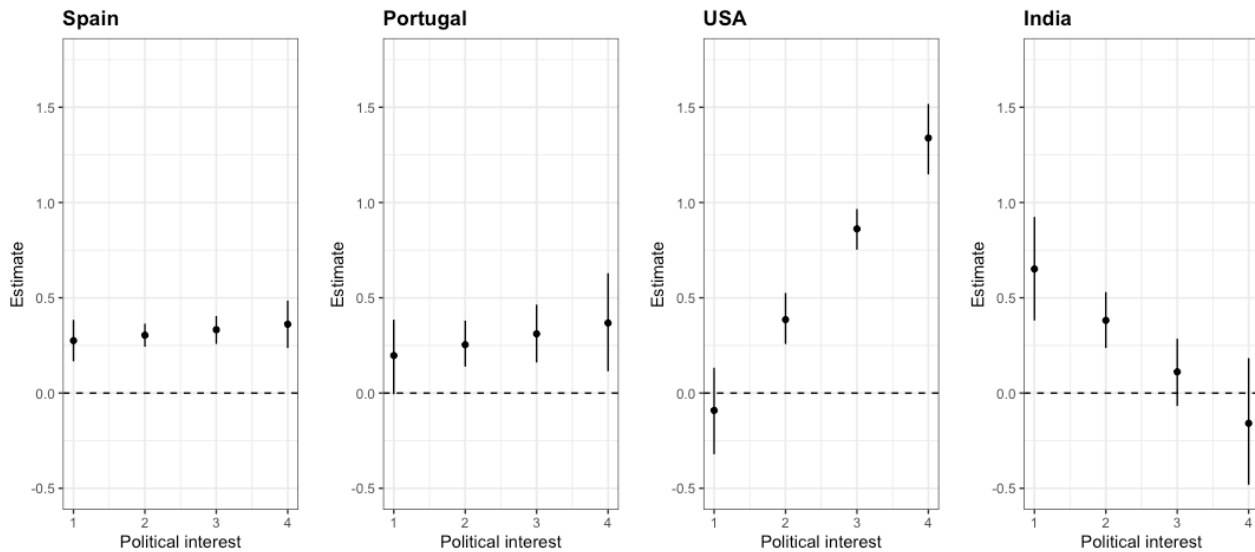
Finally, we examine the relationship between social media use and fake news belief across levels of conspiracism. In all countries, this relationship is driven by respondents with low to moderate levels of underlying conspiracism. This suggests the troubling possibility that social media may increase belief in fake news even among people with low baseline tendency to believe conspiratorial claims.

Figure 3c. Relationship between social media use and fake news belief across levels of conspiracism. *Estimates calculated from interaction models in Appendix C. Shaded area contains 95% confidence intervals.*
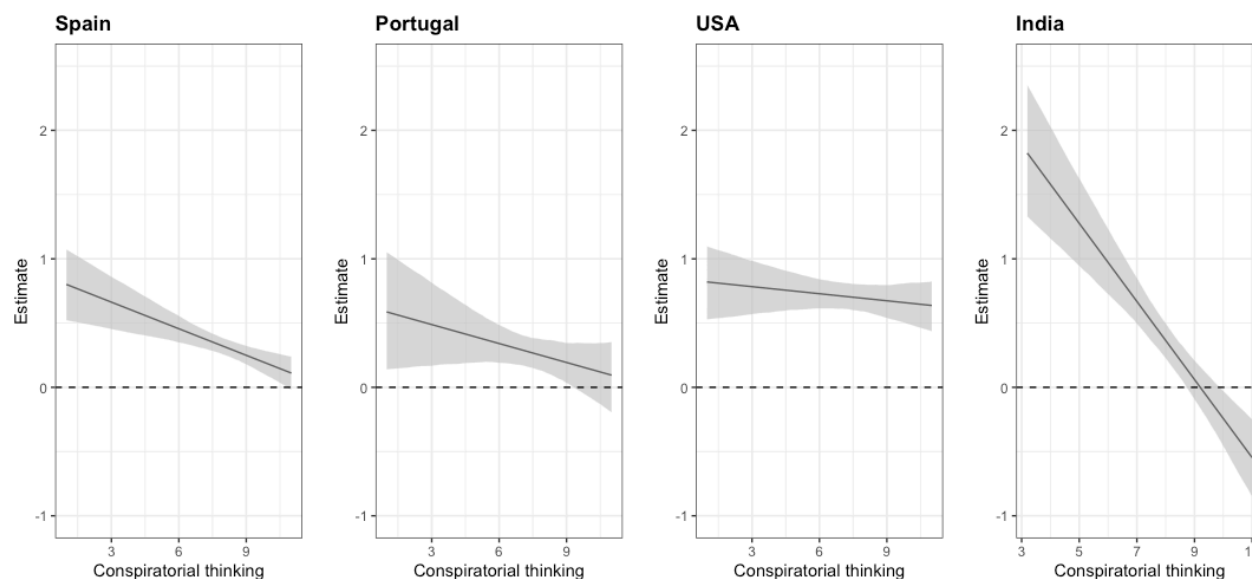
Methods

The survey data analyzed in this article were collected as part of a larger experimental project focused on populism and misinformation (SELF CITE OMITTED). As part of that project, we conducted survey experiments in Spain (2019-20), Portugal (2020-21), the United States (2021), and India (2021). Respondents in Spain and Portugal were recruited from Netquest, an ISO-certified online panel. Respondents in the US and India were recruited from Amazon's Mechnical Turk (Berinsky et al., 2012). For each country, we recruited the maximum number of respondents possible under our budget.

We chose these four countries because they vary in important ways (both for this project and the larger related project), namely elite populism, mass populism, and political institutions. These countries may also differ in their resilience to misinformation. Humprecht et al. 2020 examine structural factors of media systems (e.g., polarization, patterns of trust in news) and place Spain and Portugal in a cluster of countries exhibiting low resilience to online misinformation. The United States emerges as a cluster of its own, underscoring its exceptional position within countries with low resilience. In India, social media use has grown exponentially since 2014 (cf., Akbar et al. 2022, Al-Zaman 2021). Not only have politicians and parties leveraged social media to communicate with voters and shape public opinion; it has also become a main source of news and thus also a channel for misinformation, stirring violent outbreak in the process (Al-Zaman 2021).

More information about our surveys is available in the appendices. Appendix A includes a list of fake news stories used in each country, Appendix B contains question wordings, and Appendix C presents additional

statistical results.

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Data availability
All materials needed to replicate this study are available via the Harvard Dataverse: [insert DOI as URL]."

Appendix A: Fake news stories

This appendix lists the fake news stories used in each country.

In all studies, respondents first saw a true story about climate change, which is not included in our analyses. They were then randomly assigned to read a series of short blurbs based on fake news stories circulating in their country. The full text of each story is available on request. We provide an example blurb and the dependent variable (same format for all stories) below.

Country	Stories
Spain	Story 1: All respondents receive climate change story (true) [Order of stories 2-5 randomized] Story 2: Random assignment to one of the following science-related stories: • Genetically modified foods are unsafe • Vaccines increase risk of autism Story 3: Random assignment to one of the following public policy stories • Language classes being replaced with religion classes • Mandatory Islamic studies in public schools Story 4: Random assignment to one of the following political stories • Secret pact by left-wing parties • Secret pact by right-wing parties Story 5: Random assignment to one of the following conspiracy theories: • Medical patent holders restricting supply • NATO secret aerial fumigations
Portugal	Story 1: All respondents receive climate change story (true) [Order of stories 2-4 randomized] Story 2: Random assignment to one of the following science-related stories: • Genetically modified foods are unsafe • Vaccines increase risk of autism Story 3: Random assignment to one of the following political stories: • Secret pact by left-wing parties • Secret pact by right-wing parties Story 4: All respondents receive medical patent holders story
USA	Story 1: All respondents receive climate change story (true) [Order of stories 2-6 randomized]

	Stories 2 and 3: Random assignment to TWO of the following science-related stories: • Genetically modified foods are unsafe • Vaccines increase risk of autism • COVID vaccines have serious side effects • COVID testing swabs implant substances in the brain Story 4: Random assignment to one of the following political stories: • Democrat-congenial false claim about voting laws • Republican-congenial false claim about voting laws Stories 5 and 6: All respondents received (order randomized): • Medical patent holders restricting supply • International elites releasing COVID variants
India	Story 1: All respondents receive climate change story (true) [Order of stories 2-6 randomized] Stories 2 and 3: Random assignment to TWO of the following science-related stories: • Vaccines increase risk of autism • COVID vaccines have serious side effects • COVID testing swabs implant substances in the brain Story 4: Random assignment to one of the following public policy stories: • New penalties for blocking mosque/madrasa construction • Islamic studies an optional subject on UPSC exam Story 5: Random assignment to one of the following conspiracy theories: • Medical patent holders restricting supply • Hospitals restricting supply of oxygen tanks Story 6: Random assignment to one of the following conspiracy theories: • International elites releasing COVID variants • Government paying rent in MPs' private homes

This is an example fake news story from India:

VOTERS DEMAND ANSWERS AFTER REPORT CLAIMS CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PAYING RENT OF MP'S FLAT

News has transpired that the Central Government is paying a monthly rent of Rs. 2 lakhs for MP Chidambaram's rented flat in Delhi's Jor Bagh area, since 2014. In response, voters in Chidambaram's constituency are demanding answers from his aides and the Central Government. As one voter said in a recent interview, this episode shows how ordinary citizens are betrayed on a daily basis by the ruling class using their power to enrich themselves, not looking after the people, which is what they should work for.

The dependent variable was measured as follows:

As far as you know, how accurate is the statement that the government pays the rent of the private home of Rajya Sabha MP Chidambaram?

-Totally accurate [4]
-Very accurate [3]
-Not very accurate [2]
-Not at all accurate [1]

Appendix B: Measurement

<u>Dependent variable</u>

See Appendix A.

<u>Key predictors</u>

Social media use

How often do you use the following media to find or share news about politics?

[Spain: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Traditional media (newspapers, radio, etc.)]
[Portugal: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Traditional media (newspapers, radio, etc.)]
[India: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Traditional media (newspapers, radio, etc.)]
[USA: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Traditional media (newspapers, radio, etc.)]

-More than once a day [7]
-Once a day [6]
-Once every few days [5]
-Once a week [4]
-Once a month [3]
-Less than once a month [2]
-Never [1]

We calculated our "share of news from social media" variable as:

average response across all social media platforms / (average response across all social media platforms + response to "traditional media").

The result is a variable that ranges from [0,1] with higher values indicating greater reliance on social media for political news.

Political knowledge

Number of correct answers to factual questions about politics (6 in Spain, 5 in Portugal, 5 in USA).

Political interest

How interested are you in politics?

-Not interested [1]
-A little interested [2]
-Quite interested [3]
-Very interested [4]

Conspiratorial predispositions (Bruder et al. 2013)

Next we are interested in your opinion about how things work in [Spain/Portugal/the US/India]. Please read each of the following statements and use the scale to indicate how likely it is that each statement is true. Please remember that there are no "objectively" correct or incorrect answers; we're just interested in your personal opinion.

[Order of statements randomized]

I think a lot of very important things happen in the world that the public is never informed about.

I think politicians generally don't tell us the real reasons for their decisions.

I think government agencies carefully watch over all citizens.

I think events that on the surface seem to be disconnected are often the result of covert activities.

I think there are many secret organizations that influence political decisions.

-0% - not true at all [1]
-10% - extremely unlikely [2]
-20% - very unlikely [3]
-30% - unlikely [4]
-40% - unlikely [5]
-50% - undecided [6]
-60% - somewhat likely [7]
 -70% - probable [8]
-80% - very likely [9]
-90% - extremely likely [10]
-100% - true [11]

Overall "conspiratorial predispositions" score calculated as average response across these five items (NAs omitted).

Left-right ideology

Spain:
When talking about politics, the expressions left and right are normally used. On this scale there are a series of points that go from left to right. At what point would you place yourself?

-1 – LEFT
-2
-3
-4
-5
-6
-7
-8
-9

-10 – RIGHT

Portugal:
When talking about politics, the expressions left and right are normally used. On this scale there are a series of points that go from left to right. At what point would you place yourself?

-1 – LEFT
-2
-3
-4
-5
-6
-7
-8
-9
-10 – RIGHT

USA:
When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself as liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative?

-Very liberal [1]
-Liberal [2]
-Slightly liberal [3]
-Moderate; middle of the road [4]
-Slightly conservative [5]
-Conservative [6]
-Very conservative [7]

Trust in media

Below, we've listed several people and institutions. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents "no confidence" and 10 represents "complete confidence," please tell us how much confidence do you have in…

The press

-0 (no confidence)
-1
-2
-3
-4
-5
-6
-7
-8
-9
-10 (total confidence)

Appendix C: Additional statistical results

Appendix Table A1 shows the full model results for Table 1, including the country-specific party dummies that are omitted in the main text.

Appendix Table A1. *Regression models predicting average belief in fake news stories*

	DV = belief in false claims (pooled)			
	Study 1 (Spain)	Study 2 (Portugal)	Study 3 (USA)	Study 4 (India)
News from social media (share)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)
University degree	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.01)	-0.15*** (0.02)
Political knowledge	-0.17*** (0.02)	-0.16*** (0.04)	-0.19*** (0.02)	NA
Political Interest	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.05* (0.02)	0.04** (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.02)
Conspiratorial thinking	0.08*** (0.01)	0.20*** (0.02)	0.42*** (0.01)	0.20*** (0.02)
Left-right ideology	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.065*** (0.01)	NA
Age	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.01)	-0.17*** (0.02)
Female	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)
Vox voter	0.03** (0.01)	-	-	-
PP voter	0.01 (0.01)	-	-	-
Ciudadanos voter	-0.02* (0.01)	-	-	-
PSOE voter	0.00 (0.01)	-	-	-
Podemos voter	-0.00 (0.01)	-	-	-
PSD voter	-	0.02 (0.02)	-	-
PS voter	-	0.01 (0.02)	-	-
CDU voter	-	0.01 (0.02)	-	-
BE voter	-	-0.01 (0.02)	-	-
CHEGA voter	-	-0.00 (0.02)	-	-
BJP voter	-	-	-	0.09*** (0.02)

INC voter	-	-	-	0.04*
				(0.02)
Dem identifier	-	-	0.11***	-
			(0.02)	
Republican identifier	-	-	0.12***	-
			(0.02)	
Constant	0.06***	0.14***	0.01	-0.04*
	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Fake news stories included	7	5	8	9
N	8278	3027	2989	2579

*Note: Cell entries are standardized OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. DV is average belief in false claims presented, which is measured 1-4 with higher values indicating more belief in false claims. Significance codes: '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05..*

Appendix Table A2. *Regression models with interaction between social media use and education*

	Outcome = average belief in false claims			
	Study 1 (Spain)	**Study 2 (Portugal)**	**Study 3 (USA)**	**Study 4 (India)**
News from social media (share)	0.24***	0.35***	0.31***	-0.09
	(0.04)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.16)
University degree	-0.11***	-0.08	-0.05	-0.50***
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.002)	(0.09)
SM share * university degree	0.14*	-0.14	0.59***	0.47***
	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.17)
Constant	2.19***	1.93***	0.77***	2.38***
	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.10)
Political parties	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Additional controls (same as Table A1)	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Fake news stories included	*7*	*5*	*8*	*9*
N	8278	3027	2989	2579

*Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. DV is average belief in false claims presented, which is measured 1-4 with higher values indicating more belief in false claims. Significance codes: '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05.*

Appendix Table A3. *Regression models with interaction between social media use and political interest*

	Outcome = average belief in false claims			
	Study 1 (Spain)	Study 2 (Portugal)	Study 3 (USA)	Study 4 (India)
News from social media (share)	0.24***	0.14	-0.58***	0.93***
	(0.09)	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.23)
Political interest	-0.05**	-0.06	-0.19***	0.06
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.003)
SM share * political interest	0.03	0.06	0.48***	-0.27***
	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.09)
Constant	2.19***	2.03***	1.21***	1.89***
	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.13)
Political parties	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Additional controls (same as Table A1)	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Fake news stories included	*7*	*5*	*8*	*9*
N	8278	3027	2989	2579

*Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. DV is average belief in false claims presented, which is measured 1-4 with higher values indicating more belief in false claims. Significance codes: '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05.*

Appendix Table A4. *Regression models with interaction between social media use and conspiratorial predispositions*

	Outcome = average belief in false claims			
	Study 1 (Spain)	Study 2 (Portugal)	Study 3 (USA)	Study 4 (India)
News from social media (share)	0.09***	0.64*	0.83***	2.78***
	(0.02)	(0.26)	(0.17)	(0.39)
Conspiratorial predispositions	0.07***	0.10***	0.17***	0.25***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
SM share * predispositions	0.07***	-0.05	-0.02	-0.30***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.05)
Constant	1.89***	1.80***	0.51***	0.98***
	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.09)	(0.21)
Political parties	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Additional controls (same as Table A1)	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Fake news stories included	*7*	*5*	*8*	*9*
N	8278	3027	2989	2579

*Note: Cell entries are OLS coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. DV is average belief in false claims presented, which is measured 1-4 with higher values indicating more belief in false claims. Significance codes: '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05.*