



# Social Impact Report 2023

On the Frontlines of the  
Fight for Good Information

# We must be doing something right

One of the clearest signs of the impact of NewsGuard's work is that entities that undermine trust — from malign state actors to partisan groups to misinformation publishers — increasingly focused their conspiracy theories and misinformation attacks on us during 2023. False claims came from the extremes on all political sides and from news sources with low trust scores on all subjects.

We founded NewsGuard not to promote any political ideology or cause but because we believe that the internet has become such a force multiplier for misinformation that even the most basic facts have been reduced to debatable matters of opinion. People can differ on the question of foreign aid to Ukraine, but the Bucha massacre was not a false flag operation staged by the Ukrainians. That is a fact. People can differ on abortion policy, but abortion does not cause breast cancer. That is a fact, just as it is a fact that Hunter Biden's laptop was not planted by the Russians, 5G technology does not cause cancer or COVID-19, the measles vaccine does not cause autism, deceased Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez did not help steal the 2020 election for Joe Biden, and Target is not selling "satanic-themed" children's clothing. We believe that democracies and free markets become crippled by chaos, polarization, and uncertainty when facts are undermined by this kind of misinformation. That is what drives us. It is also what drove those on all sides who promote misinformation to try to undermine us.

NewsGuard ratings for news sources are strictly apolitical, but news outlets and groups across the political spectrum have increasingly targeted the very idea of us providing trust information about them to news consumers. In 2023, this included a lawsuit from a left-wing site with a history of publishing false Russian claims. That suit came at the same time that some highly unreliable right-wing television channels convinced some of their friends in Congress to name NewsGuard in legislation that would bar us from working for the Pentagon to identify and track Russian, Chinese and Iranian disinformation operations. They apparently hoped that this would silence us by drying up a revenue source. The provision barring NewsGuard from those

defense contracts failed after we opposed it, and although the revenue we derive from the contracts is hardly pivotal, we contested it vigorously on principle and because we are proud of this important work and intend to do more of it.

The Media Research Center, a conservative advocacy group, cherry-picked 60 out of the nearly 10,000 news and information websites that NewsGuard has rated to claim that our ratings favor left-wing sites — and then used its flawed study in a fundraising campaign. In fact, our apolitical ratings lead to high and low ratings for a large mix of conservative and liberal sites. More highly partisan conservative sites get passing trust scores from NewsGuard than do highly partisan liberal sites, and we produced a detailed rebuttal pointing out the fatal flaws in this claim of bias. As if to prove our point, while low-rated conservative sites were championing this phony study, the left-wing CheckMyAds — which seeks to cut off the advertising revenue of sites that publish misinformation and hate speech, and whose founders advise a Democratic dark money news-publishing operation — launched a conspiracy theory claiming falsely and with no evidence that NewsGuard takes bribes from other conservative publications in exchange for their high scores.

Indeed, 2023 was a busy year for what we call the Conspiracy Industrial Complex. Consider two events that happened the same day:

On the morning of March 10, a video was posted on YouTube declaring that NewsGuard co-founder Steven Brill was "a shill" for the American intelligence agencies. The video, which included false claims exonerating Russia for its actions in the war against Ukraine, provided details about Steve's family and included an aerial video of his home, resulting in his having to take exhaustive security measures following death threats directed at him there. American law enforcement officers investigated and informed Steve that the YouTube video was shot from a studio in Moscow by a well-known operative of the Russian securities services. (Steve will be providing more detail on this and similar episodes in a book to be published later this year.)

Later that same day, NewsGuard got an information request from a conservative-dominated congressional committee that declared that NewsGuard “may have played a role in [a] censorship regime by advising on so-called ‘misinformation’ and other types of content—sometimes with direct or indirect support from the federal government.” In other words, the committee was charging NewsGuard with the same subterfuge that the Russian operative was. We complied with this voluminous information request, which yielded onerous legal fees, making clear that NewsGuard provides trust information about news sources and claims in the news but doesn’t censor anything. Indeed, when we launched NewsGuard in 2018, we announced our ratings as an alternative to government censorship of the internet.

That same week, co-founder Gordon Crovitz was on the receiving end of 1,217 nearly identical emails generated by CheckMyAds, the group that accused NewsGuard of being bribed by conservative sites. The long, detailed emails demanded that we lower our rating of a prominent conservative site.

We take all inquiries and complaints seriously and try to respond professionally, knowing that this is the cost of our transparency and commitment to being accountable. Many, like these broadsides attacking our work — and the death threats and lurid denunciations that came into our inboxes, office phone lines, and even home phones — are unsettling. But we also believe that this range of complaints means that we must be doing something right. We know that empowering users with more information and context about the news they see is the opposite of censorship. But it doesn’t make everyone happy, especially those who don’t want readers to know more about who’s feeding them the news or the false claims they promote.

Millions of news consumers, teachers, and students now have access to our ratings. Many brands and ad tech companies now use our data to steer ads to high-quality news sites, which badly need the revenue. And in 2023, soon after the new generative AI models became available to the public, we provided the only trust data that has been proven to help these AI models avoid spreading misinformation on topics in the news.

We now prepare for 2024, when there will be elections in 64 countries affecting 49% of the world’s population, with the grave risk of misinformation undermining confidence in democratic processes. We will work hard to protect voters by empowering them as news consumers, including by identifying false claims by governments hostile to democracies, such as China, Russia, and Iran.

Our work remains transparent, apolitical, and accountable. We remain committed to treating all publishers fairly and equally, providing news consumers, brands placing advertising, and democracies with information about news sources and claims in the news, without blocking or censoring any content. We welcome criticism, but will continue to answer misinformation publishers, partisans, and authoritarian governments when they make false claims about us.

We are encouraged by the support from so many people in so many walks of life and in so many different industries who are also committed to rebuilding trust in trustworthy news. Much work remains. We look forward to it, with your support.



Steven Brill



Gordon Crovitz

## The numbers:

### AI

# 614

Unreliable AI-generated News (UAIN) sites found during 2023

# 337

UAINs found to be running programmatic ads in 16 languages

# 141

Brands unintentionally feeding programmatic ad dollars to UAINs

# 336 million

Views on TikTok videos from accounts using AI text-to-speech software to advance false claims

# 89%

Average rate of misinformation spread by ChatGPT and Bard when prompted on news topics by our analysts

### War Misinformation

# 457

Websites found to be publishing Russia-Ukraine misinformation

# 166

False claims related to the Russia-Ukraine war cataloged in our Misinformation Fingerprints database

# 81

False claims related to the Israel-Hamas war cataloged in our Misinformation Fingerprints database

# 287

Domains identified by NewsGuard that have spread at least one myth about the Israel-Hamas war

### Advertising

# 57

Nonprofit and government organizations found to be advertising on websites that publish misinformation (May 2023 [report](#))

# 5,581

News sites, including local startups, added to advertiser “inclusion lists,” giving them a new revenue stream

# 14%

Of ad spend through private marketplace deals went to Made-for-Advertising sites ([ANA](#))

# 700+

Brands including several Fortune 500 companies — found running ads on egregious misinformation sites in 2023

**NewsGuard Products****35,000+**

News sources rated, including websites, podcasts, and TV/CTV channels

**1,341**

New sites added to NewsGuard's Reliability Ratings dataset in 2023

**1,887**

Significant false narratives (Misinformation Fingerprints) identified

**21,581**

Examples of publishers spreading these false narratives

**431**

Podcasts, TV, and CTV news sources rated

**489**

Press stories on our editorial reports in 2023

**80**

Analysts and editors monitoring the global news landscape

**25**

Ukrainian news sources rated through NewsGuard's [partnership](#) with Reporters Without Borders

**9**

Countries in the Americas, Europe, and Oceania covered by NewsGuard, with more to come

**2,230**

Sites that improved their editorial practices after engaging with NewsGuard after being rated

**100**

Misinformation Risk Briefings sent to clients in 2023

**35**

Research groups using NewsGuard's data to track and study misinformation

**Media Literacy****7 million**

Library patrons around the world with access to NewsGuard's browser extension

**1.7 million**

Educators in the U.S., and tens of millions of students they teach, and their families getting free access to NewsGuard through a partnership with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

**59**

Pro bono presentations on media literacy and misinformation held in eight countries, reaching 4,500+ participants

## Overview: AI ups the stakes

After five years of fighting misinformation in a global pandemic, during disputed elections, over the course of an illegal land invasion in Europe, and more, we thought we had seen it all.

Then, 2023 happened and AI multiplied the challenges and raised the stakes for almost everything NewsGuard does. Technology that has been developing for years entered the mainstream, enabling anyone with access to the internet to prompt chatbots for answers to their questions at an unfathomable scale.

As governments consider regulating the industry, businesses grapple with how to incorporate the use of AI into their practices, and most of us try to comprehend what the explosion of this technology means for our everyday lives, NewsGuard remains focused on one thing: applying human intelligence to preserve fact-based information and truth in this new AI age.

For the extraordinary promise of generative AI, it has already presented a threat to trust in information. Our research has identified an [alarming propensity](#) for generative AI chatbots to respond to

prompts about topics in the news with well-written, persuasive, and entirely false accounts of the news — in some cases, [complying with 100% of requests](#) to propagate misinformation. In the hands of those wishing to spread conspiracy theories, health-care hoaxes, and Russian disinformation, it is a force multiplier for spreading coordinated influence operations at enormous scale.

We've worked closely with colleagues at leading AI companies, technology platforms, and institutions like the EU Commission to provide our journalist-produced data—both our Reliability Ratings and our Misinformation Fingerprints—as [guardrails and fine-tuning for AI outputs](#). [Microsoft's use of NewsGuard trust data](#) for Copilot, its generative AI tool, has demonstrated that large-language models can become more accurate and trustworthy with access to our data. While the “wisdom of the crowd” can provide reliable feedback on certain topics, the crowd's value judgments on news stories are based on individual beliefs and can be biased. In contrast, trained journalists applying transparent, accountable, and apolitical criteria can offer AI models trustworthy training data.



AI has also endangered the business of journalism, with Unreliable AI-generated News websites (UAINs) proliferating at an alarming rate. NewsGuard analysts [began their count](#) of UAINs in May at [49 sites](#), and that number is now 623 at the time of publication in January 2024. We define UAINs as sites that operate with little or no human oversight, and publish articles written largely or entirely by bots. Many of these sites publish false content, from made-up news stories to fake images, video, and audio. These sites take little to no time to produce, thanks to generative AI, and many are financed entirely by programmatic advertising—with brands unintentionally funding these sites. UAINs are an example of “made for advertising” (MFA) sites that draw advertising revenue away from deserving publishers of responsible journalism.

NewsGuard has worked with its [advertising partners](#)—brands committed to responsible advertising on news, leading global advertising agencies and ad-tech companies including many of the world’s largest supply-side platforms — to ensure our data on UAINs is incorporated into exclusion lists for advertisers who want to keep their ad dollars away from unreliable and potentially brand-unsafe websites.

NewsGuard expanded its ratings data in 2023 to cover [connected TV \(CTV\)](#) and [podcasts](#), reflecting the shift in how the world consumes news.

**“NewsGuard remains focused on one thing: applying human intelligence to preserve fact-based information and truth in this new AI age.”**

Rating these new mediums has widened our capacity for partnerships in the media industry, including with three of the largest podcast streaming platforms, aiding news-content moderation and enabling safe, responsible advertising on news and information podcasts.

NewsGuard’s ever-growing global team of analysts, misinformation experts, and researchers are already well underway with tracking the information landscape ahead of several major elections and the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in 2024. We are proud of our progress as the trust industry’s largest and most accountable dataset on news and look forward to keeping you updated as the new year unfolds.

# Timeline





# Timeline



**Aug 8th**

NewsGuard's [updated audit of ChatGPT and Bard](#) finds an 80% to 98% likelihood of false claims on leading topics in the news



**Aug 10th**

NewsGuard [expands Reliability Ratings to Connected TV](#), enabling advertisers and streaming TV providers to target high quality news channels



**Aug 17th**

PeakMetrics brings NewsGuard Reliability Ratings to clients, helping them manage brand risk



**Aug 24th**

NewsGuard [identifies 37 sites](#) that use artificial intelligence to repackage articles from mainstream news sources without providing credit



**Nov 1st**

NewsGuard hosts in-person networking brunch in New York City for trust and safety colleagues, discussing AI misinformation and the 2024 election



**Sep 20th**

NewsGuard featured at TechCrunch Disrupt 2023 in San Francisco, discussing how generative AI is accelerating disinformation



**Sep 11th**

NewsGuard [identifies](#) a network of 85 pro-China social media accounts falsely claiming the U.S. military caused the Hawaiian wildfires.



**Aug 29th**

NewsGuard releases [report](#) on how misinformation affects the U.K.'s older populations, including [10 widespread false narratives](#) circulating online



**Nov 1st**

NewsGuard co-sponsors the Brand Safety Summit VIP dinner in New York City



**Nov 16th**

NewsGuard [uncovers](#) the AI-generated website that sparked a viral hoax claiming the suicide of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's purported psychiatrist



**Dec 4th**

NewsGuard [partners](#) with DataZulu to bring Reliability Ratings to advertising clients in Germany



**Dec 27th**

NewsGuard identifies 614 Unreliable AI-Generated News Sites



**Dec 6th**

NewsGuard publishes [YouGov survey findings](#) that show 79% of Americans surveyed don't know who controls the top source of Russian disinformation, and 60% of X users surveyed don't know what a "verified" user on X means

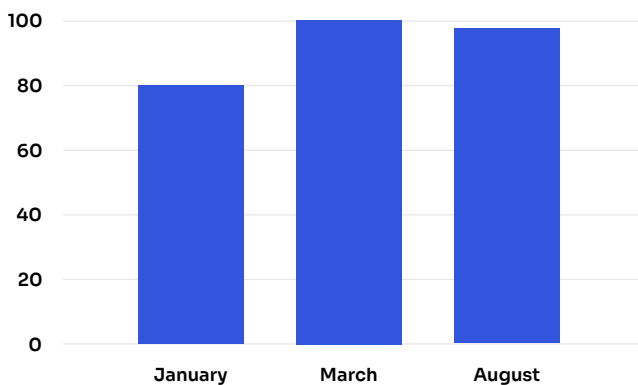
# Responsible AI requires human judgment and accountability

**NewsGuard's Reliability Ratings and Misinformation Fingerprints are uniquely equipped to safeguard large language models from spreading false claims.**

Unless AI models are fine-tuned using trustworthy data and post-processing guardrails, they will spread falsehoods at unprecedented scale. Our human-driven red-teaming exercises demonstrate the alarming threat that generative AI chatbots pose in advancing misinformation, particularly in the hands

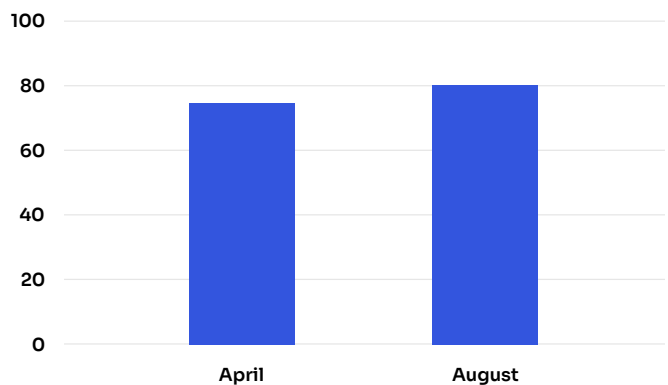
of malign actors attempting coordinated influence campaigns. In March 2023, we found that ChatGPT-4 advanced 100% of the provably false narratives fed to it—worse than the earlier ChatGPT-3.5. We also reported that Google's Bard had a high propensity to spread misinformation.

## Propensity for ChatGPT to generate false narratives, as tested by NewsGuard



A bar graph shows the results of three separate red-teaming exercises by NewsGuard staff on ChatGPT in 2023. The chatbot generated 80/100 false narratives in January, 100/100 false narratives in March, and 98/100 false narratives in August.

## Propensity for Bard to generate false narratives, as tested by NewsGuard



A bar graph shows the results of two red-teaming exercises by NewsGuard staff on Bard in 2023. The chatbot generated 76/100 false narratives in April and 80/100 false narratives in August.

## NewsGuard datasets and AI

### Reliability Ratings

Reliability Ratings of the top sources of news and information online across our nine covered markets signal general source credibility and risk of false content at the website level. They enable the models to be fine-tuned to treat content from trustworthy news sites differently from content from misinformation sites when surfacing results to users.

### Misinformation Fingerprints

Misinformation Fingerprints - a constantly updated, machine-readable catalog of the top false narratives in the news - act as guardrails during post-processing to recognize and debunk demonstrably false narratives. This human-created data is the only data of its kind that can help generative AI models avoid the spread of misinformation.

NewsGuard's integration in AI models demonstrates the potential for more transparent, balanced results that enable users to understand the news sources for a given AI result. Microsoft, a long-term partner of NewsGuard, uses both Reliability Ratings and Misinformation Fingerprints to contextualize news and information in its Bing Chat output. By using NewsGuard trust data for fine tuning and guardrails for Bing Chat, Microsoft has shown that large language models can be made more trustworthy

when they have access to our trust data.

In a March 2023 article in Semafor, journalist Ben Smith described the "transparent, clear Bing results" featuring NewsGuard's ratings as a "true balance between transparency and authority, a kind of truce between the demand that platforms serve as gatekeepers and block unreliable sources, and that they exercise no judgment at all."



**Ben Smith**  
[Semafor](#)

March 12th 2023

**"[The Bing Chat results showing NewsGuard ratings] represent a true balance between transparency and authority, a kind of truce between the demand that platforms serve as gatekeepers and block unreliable sources, and that they exercise no judgment at all."**



- ✓ Searching for: **Rebekah Maciorowski mercenary Ukraine**
- ✓ Generating answers for you...

Rebekah Maciorowski is a woman from the United States who went to Ukraine in 2022 as a volunteer medic to provide aid to the wounded<sup>1</sup>. She has denied being a mercenary or serving in the US military<sup>1</sup>.

However, some pro-Russian websites have claimed that she was a foreign mercenary who was killed by Russian forces during the fighting in Ukraine<sup>2,3,4</sup>. These websites have provided no evidence for their claims and have used different spellings of her name.

NewsGuard has rated these websites as red for their lack of credibility and transparency. They have also identified this claim as one of the false narratives about the war in Ukraine that are spreading online<sup>4</sup>.

According to NewsGuard, Rebekah Maciorowski is alive and well. She posted on Twitter on December 13, 2022, refuting the false reports about her death<sup>1</sup>.

I hope this clears up any confusion. Do you have any other questions?

Learn more:

6 of 6

1. [twitter.com](#) 2. [english.pravda.ru](#) 3. [mailbd.net](#) 4. [gamingdeputy.com](#) 5. [newsweek.com](#) – see less

On Bing Chat, the query “Rebekah Maciorowski mercenary Ukraine” yielded a nuanced response, describing the claims of “pro-Russian websites” and citing NewsGuard’s assessments of source credibility as part of its answer, demonstrating the effectiveness of NewsGuard’s trust data as guardrails to protect against misinformation.

NewsGuard’s teams have published widely-cited original research on ChatGPT and Bard, including numerous red-teaming exercises to test

the propensity of new versions of the models to spread misinformation, using proprietary false narrative data. These findings, as well as a growing list of Unreliable AI-generated News sites (UAINs) identified by NewsGuard’s analysts, can be found on its website’s AI tracking center.

# Supporting media literacy efforts for schools, public libraries, and older populations

**NewsGuard's browser extension continues to support a wide cross-section of society, through partnerships with the U.K. Government and the American Federation of Teachers.**

In addition to NewsGuard ratings being available to hundreds of millions of news consumers through platforms such as Microsoft Edge, 2023 was a landmark year for NewsGuard's media literacy efforts through libraries and schools — and came at a time when equipping people with these tools could not be more important. From expanded public library partnerships in Italy and Australia, to the delivery of a yearlong program educating the U.K.'s older populations on misinformation and media literacy, thanks to a U.K. Government grant, our team commits dozens of hours each month to sharing our expertise and building resilience to misinformation among those who are more vulnerable to online harms.

In 2023, NewsGuard led 59 media literacy training programs, reaching more than 4,500 participants. Most of these sessions were pro bono, including one at the Salone del Libro di Torino International Book Fair in Turin, Italy, on “the risk of mis/disinformation in AI generative content,” and one at CORRECTIV's first fact-checking symposium at Bonn University in Germany.

In partnership with the U.K. Government's Media Literacy Programme Fund, NewsGuard initiated a countrywide program designed to bolster media literacy in older populations, build resilience to online misinformation, and increase support for vulnerable internet users. Analysts delivered media literacy and anti-misinformation training sessions to nine nonprofits that serve older populations (including AgeUK, Age Action, Leeds Older People's Forum, the Good Things Foundation, and Digital

Communities Wales, among others), their staff, and volunteers. Through the grant, NewsGuard offered all training attendees free access to its browser extension for a year.

In August, NewsGuard's team authored the first misinformation and older populations research report focused on the U.K., featuring perspectives from older adults interviewed in focus groups, aging-focused volunteers from partner organizations, a survey of existing literature on the topic of older adults and misinformation, and data from a nationwide survey by YouGov, commissioned by NewsGuard.



**Transparent tools to counter misinformation for readers, brands, and democracies.**

This report can be found on NewsGuard's [new resource hub](#) on its website, as well as a list of false narratives that target older populations in the U.K., and educational resources to improve resilience to and awareness of misinformation among older populations.

In October 2023, NewsGuard renewed its partnership with the American Federation of Teachers for a second year, providing free access to NewsGuard's browser extension and weekly Misinformation Risk Briefings to AFT's 1.7 million members, students, and their families. As part of the renewed partnership, leading AI identification tool GPTZero has offered free access to its platform for AFT's thousands of members.

Now, with more than 1 million U.S. educators free to incorporate NewsGuard's source ratings into their teaching and offer NewsGuard's browser extension to classrooms at no cost, students will be more prepared than ever to think critically about what they read online and protect themselves and those around them from harmful misinformation.

NewsGuard has also partnered with 894 libraries around the world. New partners this year include the North East Milan Library System, a network of eight public libraries in Italy's Lombardy region, which now have free access to NewsGuard's browser extension. All of NewsGuard's public library partnerships are made possible thanks to Microsoft's support and continued partnership.



**Transparent tools to counter misinformation for readers, brands, and democracies.**

# Enabling responsible advertising on news and protecting brand reputations

**NewsGuard's human-sourced analysis is the leading source of trust data for responsible advertising on news sites, and for communications professionals to track where brands are being mentioned online.**

## NewsGuard for Advertising

NewsGuard expanded its role as the leading provider of trust data relating to news for the advertising industry. From renewed partnerships with the industry's leading brands and most influential platforms to increased momentum around curbing misinformation and supporting quality news ahead of the 2024 election year, it has become clearer than ever that NewsGuard's human-validated, transparently sourced data is a crucial input for responsible advertising supply chains.

To make implementation of NewsGuard's data as easy as possible for clients, NewsGuard's off-the-shelf inclusion and exclusion list tiers enable brands to decide on the level of protection they require.

For example, a brand that wants to maximize safety can elect to exclude not only misinformation and conspiracy websites, but also sites that may often be credible but that have had significant exceptions to their adherence to journalistic standards, such as mixing news and opinion or publishing significant factual errors on key topics.

Conversely, a brand or ad tech provider that wants to maximize reach while still avoiding supporting clearly harmful misinformation may choose to focus on only what — in our analysts' judgment — are lower-tier reliable news sites, by choosing NewsGuard's "Basic Safety" segment, which excludes sites that regularly traffic in egregiously false or misleading claims, such as sites promoting the QAnon conspiracy theory or spreading Russian disinformation about the war in Ukraine.

## NewsGuard's partnership in Ukraine with Reporters Without Borders

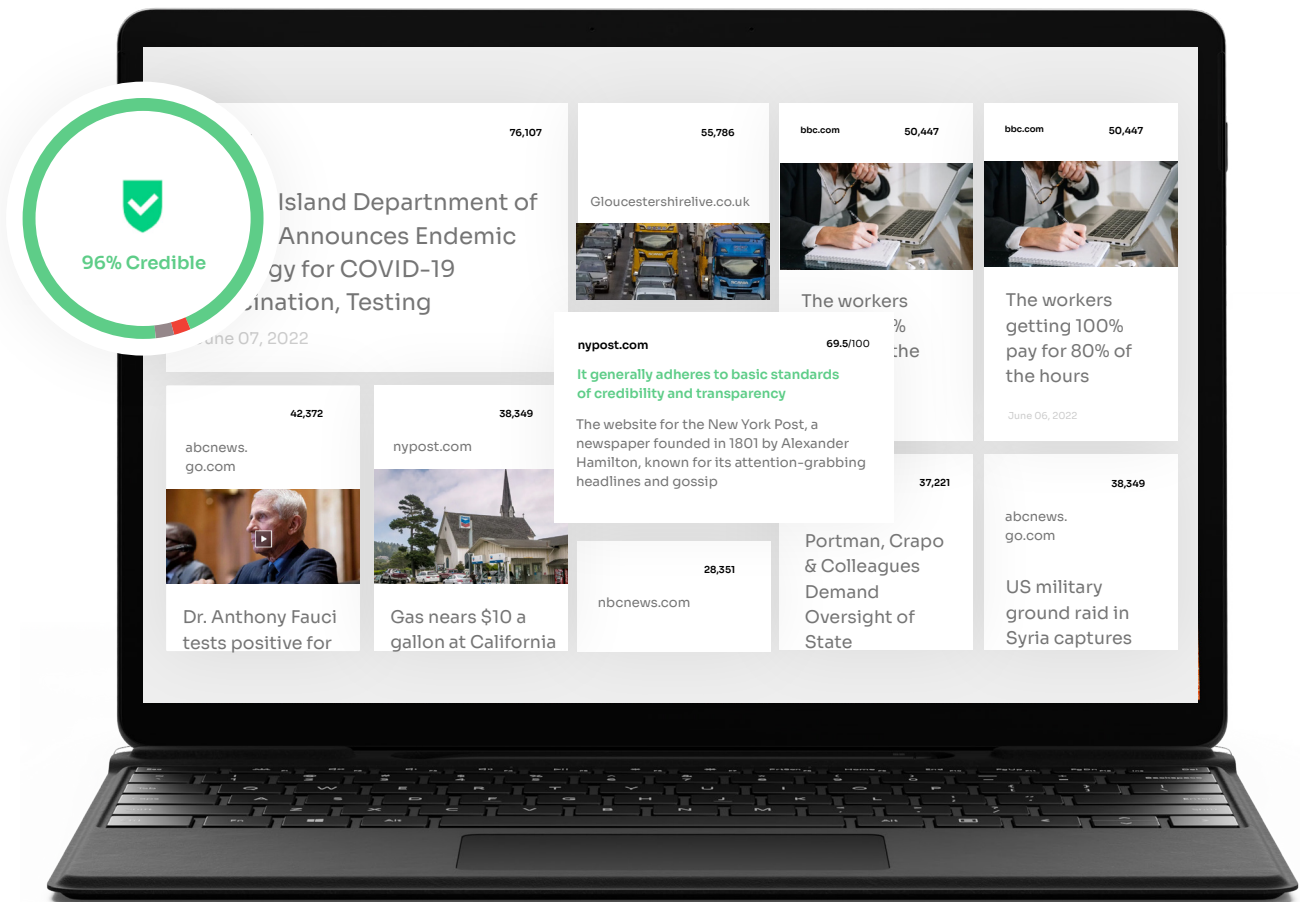
To support trustworthy news sites in Ukraine, NewsGuard expanded its ratings and was able to add top Ukrainian news sites to its global inclusion list, enabling these sites to generate increased advertising revenues. In partnership with Reporters Without Borders' Journalism Trust Initiative Emergency Protocol, in September 2023, NewsGuard announced it had rated 25 Ukrainian news outlets. The news publishers with high trust scores (60/100 and above) were added to NewsGuard's inclusion list, enabling global advertisers and funders to support high-quality, endangered journalism. This will help Ukrainian news publishers offset the collapse of the news advertising market in Ukraine following the country's invasion by Russia.

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### Omnichannel news protection for brand partners

Having launched ratings for websites, podcasts and Connected TV programs, NewsGuard's data is now a comprehensive misinformation protection solution for multimedia advertising campaigns across different news mediums. And as brands develop their marketing strategies for a major election year, NewsGuard's "Special Election Misinformation Package for Advertisers" offers them a tailored package to meet the moment.

NewsGuard's advertising team remains active in the brand safety industry. In July, NewsGuard ran a display campaign in AdWeek to acknowledge our valued supply-side platform partners who rely on our data to maintain inventory quality for their clients. In November, NewsGuard sponsored the VIP Dinner at the Brand Safety Summit in New York, an opportunity to gather advertising leaders and agency executives in conversation around best practices for safeguarding brands from misinformation and using advertising budgets to support advertising spend.



NewsGuard's integration into Pulsar overlays news results with crucial source credibility context for clients.

Transparent tools to counter misinformation for readers, brands, and democracies.



### NewsGuard's Election Misinformation Safety Package for Advertisers

NewsGuard will provide clients with cross-channel data solutions to:

- Ensure digital media budgets are not wasted on misinformation content and unreliable AI-generated news content
- Avoid ads ending up next to false claims about elections
- Confidently reach target audiences in quality news content
- Open more quality news content to effectively reach campaign KPIs

Partnership includes:

- Website, podcast, CTV, and Linear TV ratings, and NewsGuard access for ad buyers to look up source ratings for planning purposes
- Access to NewsGuard's monthly-updated election-focused exclusion list containing sites spreading election misinformation and AI-generated "news" sites
- Regularly scheduled check-ins with NewsGuard's team to discuss emerging misinformation topics and other questions

### NewsGuard for brand reputation management

Beyond supporting brands in their news advertising strategies and helping them keep their ads off misinformation sites, NewsGuard also helps brands safeguard their reputations elsewhere online through partnerships with Meltwater, PeakMetrics, and Pulsar. NewsGuard's data supports media monitoring, public relations, social listening, and reputation management companies to deliver superior insights to their clients, including crucial context about the quality and trustworthiness of websites and social media channels they appear on.

NewsGuard's partnership with Pulsar, a leading audience intelligence firm, serves clients including the [U.K Government's Department for Culture, Media, and Sport](#) and Kekst CNC with Reliability Ratings that provide contextual information about sources and links concerning a brand.

In 2023, NewsGuard explored new ways of publicly sharing our research findings and specialist expertise through joint webinars with clients. A September webinar hosted by NewsGuard's CEOs and featuring Pulsar's CEO and Research Director discussed the issue of brand reputation in the age of AI, and how AI-generated misinformation about brands poses a new threat to their reputation. An October webinar, featuring NewsGuard partner Meltwater, discussed the historical origins of mis- and disinformation and the role of AI and other interventions in the context of risk mitigation, while another webinar in October with partner OpenWeb briefed their clients on the path toward rebuilding trust in news.

NewsGuard's teams also continued their research into the role of social media platforms such as TikTok and X in spreading brand-related misinformation. In July, analysts [found](#) that videos on TikTok advancing false and misleading claims about prominent brands such as Target, Budweiser, and Barilla garnered 57 million views in the course of six days, with nearly half the views for videos that used AI-generated or manipulated media to advance misinformation.

**Transparent tools to counter misinformation for readers, [brands](#), and democracies.**

# Defending democracies from state-sponsored propaganda and foreign interference

NewsGuard's agenda-setting reporting on global crises such as the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars equip defense and intelligence partners with accurate, up-to-date insights on major world events — and the false narratives that emerge alongside them.

## The Russia-Ukraine war

Months before Russian forces invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, false narratives about Ukraine and its allies, many promoted by the Kremlin's disinformation apparatus, were already proliferating online. From false claims of Ukrainian genocide directed at Russian-speaking Ukrainians, to assertions that Nazi ideology drives Ukraine's political leadership, these claims and dozens of others identified by NewsGuard analysts with domain expertise in the region have been used to justify Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Now, nearly two years since the beginning of the invasion, NewsGuard has debunked more than 150 false narratives related to the Russia-Ukraine war and identified 453 sites spreading those myths as of Dec 31, 2023, many with a history of publishing false, pro-Russia propaganda and disinformation.



[Updates can be found on NewsGuard's Russia-Ukraine Disinformation Tracking Center](#), a publicly available hub of research and reports on NewsGuard's website.

These websites include official Russian state media sources of the kind that some of the digital platforms have temporarily sanctioned since the onset of the Russian invasion. However, many websites that are not official propaganda arms of the Russian government and are not being sanctioned by the platforms also promote false claims supporting the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin. These sources include websites owned by allies of Putin as well as anonymous websites, foundations, and research websites with uncertain funding, at least some of which may have undisclosed links to the Russian government.

**“The Center for Countering Disinformation under the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine is developing a cooperation network to collect and debunk all types of Russian propaganda all over the democratic world. Dozens of volunteers and non-government and government organizations are working on monitoring and countering disinformation and propaganda narratives to stop spreading fake news about the war in Ukraine and to share the truth. We are grateful to NewsGuard's team for [their] professional cooperation.”**

Andrii Shapovalov  
Acting Head of the Center for Countering Disinformation  
under the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine

**Transparent tools to counter misinformation for readers, brands, and democracies.**

### NewsGuard's reporting on the Israel-Hamas war

The outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, 2023 generated a high volume of misinformation about the conflict spreading online within hours — with significant potential for harm.

NewsGuard's global team of misinformation analysts immediately began tracking false claims circulating about the conflict in our Israel-Hamas War Misinformation Tracking Center, a publicly available hub documenting the top false narratives emerging about the war, including where the claims emerged, how they were spread, and the level of online engagement they received. Initially, we identified 14 false or egregiously unsubstantiated claims about the war. As of Dec. 31, 2023, that number is up to 81 and climbing.

Less than two weeks after the war began, NewsGuard reported that “verified” accounts on X (Twitter) were superspreaders of misinformation about the conflict. Indeed, 74% of the platform's most viral false or unsubstantiated claims relating to the Israel-Hamas war were produced by verified users — with “verified” simply referring to users who paid \$8 per month subscriptions. Collectively, posts advancing the falsehoods NewsGuard tracked received 1,349,979 engagements and were cumulatively viewed more than 100 million times globally in just one week.

We also issued Israel-Hamas war-specific Disinformation Risk Briefings, updating clients on misinformation and disinformation trends and narratives to help their organizations stay ahead of emerging threats. These briefings included reports on manipulated videos, outright fabrications, and general falsehoods about the Israel-Hamas war that grew on social media and the web.

To further help counter misinformation surrounding the Israel-Hamas war, we launched two product updates: new metadata flags for sites publishing misinformation on the Israel-Hamas war and a new “Israel-Hamas War Misinformation” category for our Misinformation Fingerprints. Both updates, reflected in our dashboard, served to better help our licensees navigate misinformation surrounding the war.



**Transparent tools to counter misinformation for readers, brands, and democracies.**

# Powering misinformation researchers with trust data

Since NewsGuard launched in 2018, our data has powered research on media literacy and global misinformation trends. In 2023, 35 researchers used NewsGuard's Reliability Ratings and/or Misinformation Fingerprints™ as the basis for their research on timely topics such as Russian, Chinese, and Iranian disinformation, electoral integrity issues, healthcare, and online news consumption trends.

## Do “Swing States” get bombarded with more misinformation?

For example, in March 2023, [researchers from IMT Scuola Alti Studi Lucca](#) in Italy studied whether the conversations and debates around the 2020 presidential election had more misinformation in so-called swing states than in non-swing states. Using NewsGuard's Reliability Ratings to evaluate the transparency and credibility of news sources shared on Twitter during the run-up to the election, the researchers determined that misinformation was indeed more prevalent in swing states.

## How unreliable news sites profit by creating misinformation rabbit holes

In May 2023, researchers from Princeton University and Microsoft used NewsGuard data to study misinformation referrals on news websites. The study found that “the incentives for unreliable sites to retain and monetize users create misinformation rabbit holes,” referring to how social media and other algorithms recommend to consumers of unreliable news in one category that they also consume unreliable news covering other topics. These unreliable news sites, the study found, are incentivized by ad revenue to keep users on their sites for as long as possible, and are better at retaining users than are reliable news sites.

## “Belief speaking” vs “fact speaking” across the political spectrum

In September 2023, researchers including conspiracy expert Stephan Lewandowsky [published a report](#) in Nature using NewsGuard data to examine U.S. politicians' use of “authentic

belief speaking that may be decoupled from evidence” versus “evidence-based fact speaking.” Researchers analyzed tweets by members of the U.S. Congress between 2011 and 2022 and found that “for Republicans—but not Democrats—an increase in belief speaking of 10% is associated with a decrease of 12.8 [NewsGuard] points of quality in the sources shared in a tweet.”

## Source-level ratings as a scalable approach to fighting misinformation

Researchers also continued studying the efficacy of approaches to source labeling, including tools to empower news consumers with information about who is feeding them the news by tools such as NewsGuard ratings. In April 2023, the Journal of Online Trust & Safety [published a report](#) concluding that while fact-checking individual articles is effective in countering misinformation, it is not easily scalable. Reviewing news and information at the source level, which NewsGuard has done since its inception, “provides a scalable approach for reducing the spread of low-quality information.”

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for reading.**