

01

Media and information disorder



Understanding Mis- and Disinformation

A lot of false information is posted and shared online. We use the terms 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' to refer to false content.

What is the difference?

Misinformation occurs when incorrect information is shared, but the person does not realise it is false. Although there is no intent to cause harm, misinformation still causes harm. The good thing is that misinformation can easily be countered and corrected with accurate facts.

An example: You share information about electricity prices doubling soon, because you heard this from a close friend. You failed to verify this information, and it is not true.

Disinformation occurs when someone intentionally shares incorrect information to deceive others. It means that the person posting disinformation intends to mislead and cause harm. Disinformation cannot be fixed by presenting facts because the person already knows they are sharing lies.

An example: You see a post that a politician supports closing a local school, which is a lie. The person sharing this wants you to vote against the politician and so is spreading disinformation to influence your vote.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- Can you, in your own words, describe the difference between misinformation and disinformation?
- Can you give an example of how false information can cause harm to you or your community?
- Who benefits from false content?
- What are some steps we can take to avoid accidentally spreading incorrect information?