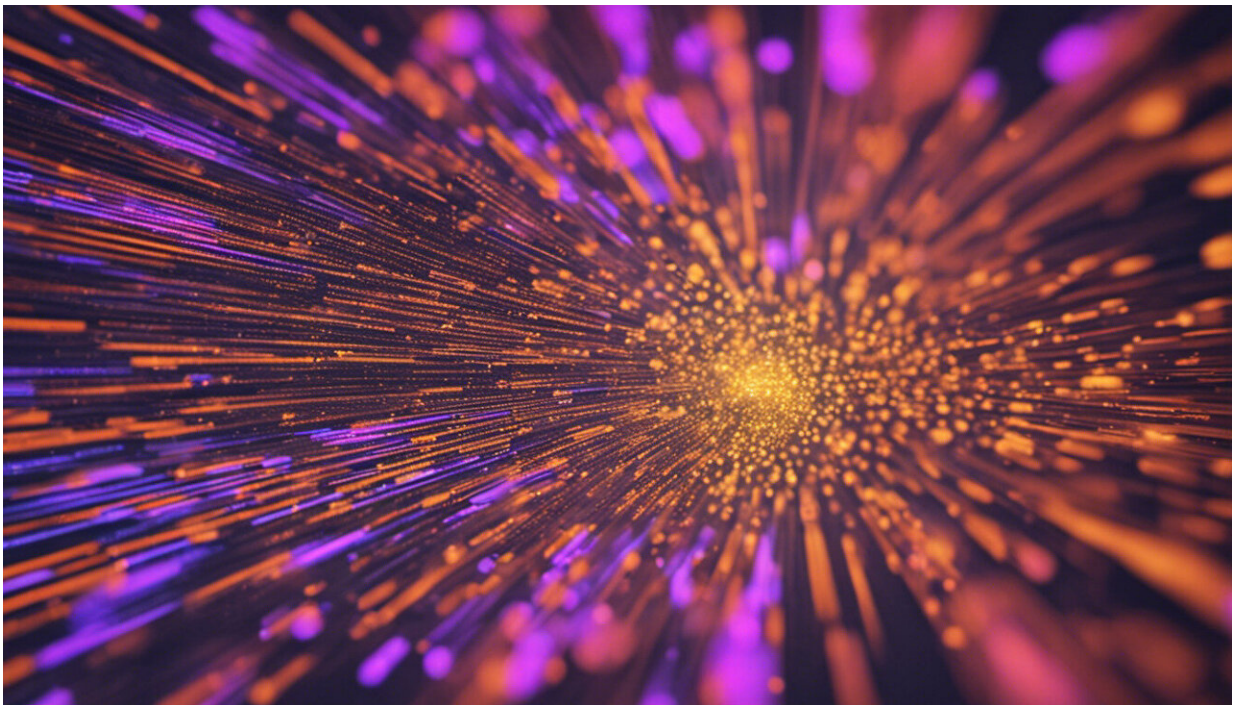


# In Indonesia, young and old share fake news on social media

February 18 2019, by Kunto Adi Wibowo, Detta Rahmawan And Eni Maryani

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Recent research from the US shows that [baby boomers or people over 65 years old with conservative political views](#) are more likely than other age groups to share fake news through social media.

Not in Indonesia. Our research, which we presented at the [Asian Network for Public Opinion Research \(ANPOR\) annual conference](#) in November 2018, proves otherwise.

We surveyed 480 respondents from all cities and districts in West Java, Indonesia's most populated province, to examine factors triggering people's tendency to share [fake news](#).

We found that around 30% of our respondents have a high tendency to share fake news. We also found that people's age, education levels and gender do not determine their likelihood of sharing fake news.

Those who tend to spread fake news are people who spend a lot of time online, shown by their high internet spending.

## **Internet spending drives people to share more fake news**

Our survey results come at a time when the issue of fake news and misinformation dominates the media in Indonesia as the country prepares for general and presidential elections in April.

The most interesting finding in our survey is that demographic factors, like age, sex and education level, have no effect whatsoever on an individual's intention to share fake news.

The only demographic factor that encourages a person to share fake news is their spending on the internet. The more an individual spends on the internet, the higher the tendency of this person to share fake news.

Our data demonstrate that every increase of Rp 50,000 (around US\$4) in internet spending will drive people to share fake news more.

## Other factors

In addition to demographic factors, people's belief in a conspiracy also determines their high tendency to share fake news. [This belief](#) is defined as "an unnecessary assumption of the existence of a conspiracy when other simpler explanations exist". An example is a belief that incumbent presidential candidate Joko "Jokowi" Widodo is a Chinese puppet who wants to invade Indonesia by [bringing in more than 10 million Chinese foreign workers](#).

People who perceive themselves as an opinion leader in their group also have a high tendency to share fake news.

Religious factors play a role, too. Our survey shows that people with weak religious belief tend to share fake news more. However, this data can be biased – Indonesians tend to answer positively to questions about their religion.

Apart from that, our survey also shows that people who are not confident with their social media skills have a higher tendency to share fake news. We define those who are skilled in social media as people who can not only consume media content on social media but also produce it. [Such expertise](#) does not correlate to one's spending on the internet.

## Other important findings

Almost 70% of our respondents in West Java have a low tendency to share fake news.

This finding supports [previous research in the US](#) showing the rate of sharing fake news is often low, and people's intention to share misinformation is even lower. The spread of fake news is more

accidental than intentional, influenced by people with political and economic motives who manipulate individuals' emotions.

Our research also reveals that the majority of people from West Java can identify fake news. At least 60.8% of the respondents can identify 25-50% of fake news. And 7.7% of them can identify 75-100% of fake news, with 4% being able to identify all fake news. Only 31.5% of the respondents cannot identify fake news.

In an advanced analysis, we found that the medium to send misinformation partly determines one's ability to identify it.

During the research, we asked our respondents to identify two fake news items on social media like Facebook and Twitter, and two other fake news items in the form of WhatsApp messages. These fake news examples were taken from Indonesia's official anti-hoax Facebook group, "[Turn Back Hoax](#)", to ensure the contents are misinformation and have been verified by fact-checkers as such.

In both formats, we use fake contents that both attack and defend each presidential candidates to avoid bias from both sides of supporters. The analysis itself shows that people's political preference doesn't determine their tendency to share this misinformation.

Our survey's methodology is different from the one [used in the US](#), where they focused on the distribution of fake news on Facebook only.

Our survey shows it is easier to identify fake news on social media than on WhatsApp. The success rate for identifying fake news on social media reaches 9.3% while on WhatsApp it's 6.3%.

Though the tendency to share fake news in West Java is relatively low, the bad news is that even though some people can identify fake news, it

doesn't mean they don't share it with their circles.

This conclusion challenges the popular notion of the need for media literacy to educate people on understanding [media content](#) to counter the distribution of misinformation. Our survey indicates that these people can identify misinformation well enough. But they still share it.

## What can we do?

The survey's result is not entirely discouraging. We still have the chance to limit the distribution of misinformation.

First, we can tackle belief in conspiracy theories by [improving people's analytical ability](#), so they are not gullible enough to accept the simplistic solutions usually offered in conspiracy theories.

Second, we should introduce a better formula for [media literacy](#). Media literacy programs should not only focus on the use of social media but also include improving an individual's ability to both produce and consume information on social media.

In our era of social [media](#), everyone should know how multimedia contents are produced. With this knowledge, they will have a better understanding of how to interpret texts. When people can create content, they no longer simply depend on others' content, which can be fake news.

We still need more advanced research to understand why people, from any background, still tend to share misinformation. Exploring [fake news as a philosophical problem against the truth](#) could be an issue for follow-up research.

We believe research on how and why people [share](#) information is very

important for Indonesia as it approaches general and presidential elections, during which hoaxes and fake news often spread rapidly.

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