

Discussion guide (1.5 hours)

For interviewers:

Key issues to explore through the discussion are:

- *The psychological, social and behavioural impacts on the interviewee and others of interacting with minority user-to-user content in the broadest sense such as their self-esteem, their relationships, day-to-day life and their life online*
- *The impact of user-generated content which contains misinformation or disinformation on the topic*
- *Detail about platform usage and how this has affected the interviewees*
- *The comfort and confidence participants have in accessing and assessing content and information they see.*

1. Welcome (10 mins)

Aims: Introductions, explain process, obtain consent to record

Please introduce yourself, tell me about your life, your interests and work. We're interested in your online (or digital) life, too so please tell me about some of the activities you do online.

2. General engagement with online content (10 mins)

Aim: Understand how participants engage (or not) with information, such as how they assess it, whether they share it and why. (The focus here is on general content and not specifically the topic of interest, which will be covered later.)

Thinking generally, what kinds of websites and platforms do you visit for content that interests you?

- Are there any particular websites, forums, groups that you check regularly, receive notifications from or you're a part of? Or any you avoid?
- [IF YES] Could you tell me more about those? What do you like/dislike about them? Are they mostly public or closed groups (by which I mean groups that you have to sign up to before you can see what people say in them)
- How about through private messaging (such as WhatsApp, Signal or Telegram) – do you talk a lot with friends, family or others on there? Do you tend to share information there as well?
- What languages are they in? Are there any from outside the UK? Can you tell me about those?
- Have the kinds of places you go to changed over time? If so, what has changed?

If they mention user-generated content (including private messaging) rather than mainstream/journalistic news:

- How does the platform or content make you feel when you use or read it?
- What do your family, friends or colleagues think about you seeing this information?

- Are there websites or platforms or websites where you feel you 'belong' or where you feel welcome? Why is that?
- How about the opposite, anywhere you don't feel like you belong? Why?
- [If identify any challenges with platforms or friends/family] Has this had any impact on you in terms of how you feel about yourself? Or your relationships?
- Tell me about the range of content you look at typically.
- How do you assess the accuracy of the information you come across online and that you're sent? What factors make you think something will be more or less reliable?

3. Observation task (10 mins)

Aim: understand participants' consumption of information and interaction with it online and evaluate how comfortable / media literate the participant appears to be. Secondly, to understand how content on the topics (Ukraine, climate etc) fits in with their overall information consumption (e.g. how prevalent is it on their feed etc).

Could you show me some of these sites and apps you use and the kinds of things you see on there?

Probe if needed: This could be any of the sites or apps you mentioned, and the things you see could be pictures, news or memes you've been sent or seen on your social media feed.

This doesn't have to be related to the topic on Indeemo

Moderator to watch participant visiting, scrolling and interacting with sites and probe based on what is seen/shown:

- **How would you normally interact with this site?**
- Is this a source/s or author/s you frequently look at or hear about?
- Did you find it easy or difficult to find what you were looking for?
- What do you like about this platform/source? What do you dislike?
- How does interacting with this site / this topic make you feel?
- What does interacting with this site / this topic make you think about?
- How important is this topic to you in how you feel about yourself?
- How much of what you look at overall is about [TOPIC/s] and how much is on other things?

4. Specific engagement on [TOPIC] (30 mins)

Aim: explore what has informed their views on the topic in question, what types of content they've seen and how this has impacted their views, especially user-generated content which supports minority views

Moderator to focus on main topic primarily for this section and then contrast with second topic for remainder of time (e.g 20 mins on topic 2, 10 mins to contrast with topic 2)

If they haven't seen much information recently on the topic, moderator to ask about what they remember previously (but not ask them to find or look for any content)

I now want to talk about [TOPIC 1] and [TOPIC 2] in more detail to understand in more detail your views and the information you come across on this topic.

Firstly I wonder if you could tell me a bit more about your views on [TOPIC]?

- What key things would you say have informed your views on this topic?
- Have you seen anything other users have shared on social media that's shaped your views at all?
- Have you seen anything through private messaging (such as Whatsapp or Telegram) that's shaped your views at all?
- Do you come across other people sharing your views and other information on this topic online?
- How long would you say you've had this view? Has it changed over time at all?

MODERATOR NOTE:

If participant focuses specifically on the COVID vaccination, please prompt for views on other vaccines and whether they are the same/ different and why (and whether this changed).

*If participant focusses on not knowing what's happening in Ukraine / only hearing one side, probe for anything they have heard about **specific examples** where Ukraine may have crossed a line or justifications for Russia's behaviour*

How would you describe the information that you have seen about [TOPIC]? I'm interested in all the types of information you might have seen about this topic including things you have been sent as well as things you have come across when you're looking on places like [SITES THEY HAVE SAID THEY VISIT].

Moderator to reference specific things they've shared in pre-task where relevant (especially from non-journalist sources)

- Thinking about the **content**, what sort of things do you see, how would you describe them?
- Where else do you see information about this topic?
- Do you ever get information about this shared with you on WhatsApp or Telegram or other private messaging services? Could you tell me a bit more about that?
- Do you recall ever seeing anything in the past that someone has shared with you about this topic – whether through direct messaging or through social media? Could you tell me a bit more about that?
- Thinking about the **person or people who created** the content or post, or the person who shared it with you:
What do you think about them? How do they come across to you? Do you think they know a lot about the topic?
How do you think they choose what they talk about?
- If you **comment or share content**, how aware are you of how many likes / how much engagement the content has had (if at all)? Does this matter?
- To what extent do you follow others or post yourself about [TOPIC]? How would you characterise other users of these platform/s?
- Do you tend to get information from the same place or do you look around at different sources? Why/Why not?

- How trustworthy are those commenting on this or sending them to you (including media and government)? What makes you say that?

If you find something that interests you in some way [on the topic], what (if anything) might you do with it?

Online response to content

- To what extent do you comment on, 'like' or share content or posts either on the same platform or across other platforms or places?
- Do you share details about the topic with people you know? How does this vary and why?
- What about private messaging apps like WhatsApp or Signal? If you share or discuss this information in this way, can you tell me about that?

Sharing with others

- How do you communicate with others about the topic (e.g. online / f2f; often or occasionally)?
- To what extent do you talk to others of different backgrounds and views to you about this?
- Are there occasions when you decide not to engage in that way with some content? Why/why not?
- *Probe: does it depend on the topic? The content? The place where you came across it? How confident you feel in your online skills?*

Offline response to content

- To what extent do you share or talk about this information with people 'offline'?
- Do you show them the content itself, or do you talk about the content of it?
- [If only share offline] What makes you feel confident to share content in person rather than online?
- Do people ever share with you in person information they have seen online about this topic? What types of information?

Experiences and impact

- Are you ever put off engaging with content? Have you had any bad experiences with commenting or responding to content?
- Are there any new or different things you do online (or offline) because of reading more about this topic?
- Have you had any particularly positive or negative experiences as a result of engaging with content online? Could you tell me a bit about what happened?
- Does your interest in this topic have any effects on your relationships with other people who you know?
- Have you made any changes regarding your decisions, actions and so on with people, such as family or friends. For example changes with how you bring up your children if you have them or the friends you spend time with?
- Do you use the same platforms and sources of information as you have always used since reading more about this topic, or different ones. Tell me more about that.
- How does looking at this type of information make you feel?
 - Does it feel more positive, negative or neutral? In what way?

- Does it vary at all depending on what you're looking at?

5. Perspectives on 'unreliable information' (15 mins)

Aim: Understand how participants think of reliability/unreliability and whether reliability plays a role in the how they respond to the content they consume.

Do you think about information on this topic in terms of whether it is reliable or unreliable? In what way?

- How do you think about 'truth', 'facts' and 'fakes' in relation to this topic?
- Is reliability a factor for you when you choose what to read or share? Why/why not?
 - *Probe: would it matter to you if a piece of information wasn't reliable?*
- When you think about information online, do you think about it more as fact or opinion or a mix?
- Are there any types of content you take more seriously or less seriously (or give more 'weight' to) than others? Does this affect how you feel or what you do with it?
 - *Probe if needed: the examples you showed earlier were [funny/light-hearted/serious], would you feel differently about something that was more [serious/light-hearted]?*
- How do you define unreliable information? What other words do you use for it?
- To what extent do you check with 'mainstream' sources? Why / why not?
- How comfortable or confident are you with working out whether information is reliable or not? How would you check reliability if you wanted to?
- How do you think you would feel if you found out that information you thought was reliable later seemed to be unreliable or even untrue? Has that ever happened?
- Have you ever had any of your content or post removed? Or are you aware of it happening to others? Tell me what happened and how you felt about it?
- How do you respond when you come across views that are different to yours and that might be unpopular (with you or others) or that are only held by a minority of people?

6. Closing remarks (10 mins)

Aims: Check if anything we have missed on impacts

Are there any other ways in which you feel your life has been affected by the types of information we've been talking about today? If so, how?

- Is there anything we not discussed that you would like to share?

7. Close (5 mins)

Thank interviewee.

Check on any possible concerns, queries, adverse impacts from the discussion. Reminder of confidentiality, data privacy and support.