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Who participates in harsh online debates? (p.3)

The tech elite: a class for itself? (p.4)

No, social media does not suppress conservatives (p.5)

Timing matters when correcting fake news (p.6)

51 percent have seen fake news about covid-19 (p.7)

Gaming-boom among children during the pandemic (p.8)

Four causes for Zoom fatigue (p.9)

Parents worried about extended screen time (p.10)

The subscription economy is growing (p.11)

Who participates in harsh online debates?

The Norwegian Institute for Social Research (Institutt for samfunnsforskning) has published a report about the harshest online debate participants. The report is commissioned by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir).

[Download the report](#) (in Norwegian).

Three main findings:

1. Not common

About 5 percent of Norwegians regularly participate in harsh online debates. Between 1 and 2 percent admits they publish comments that are provocative, racist or hate speech.

2. Mostly men

Men are predominant both among those who participate in harsh debates online and those who say they are provoking. There is also a predominance of people with low education and conservative attitudes to immigration and homosexuality.

3. Debaters – not haters

A common theme among the participants is that they believe they strive for a better world and are frustrated by the debates' harsh nature. None of them see themselves as 'haters' or 'trolls', but some find the discussions to be good entertainment and a good pastime.

The tech elite: a class for itself?

What do the new tech elite think about the world and our common future? Researchers have analyzed articles and tweets written by the 100 wealthiest people in the tech world to find the answers.

[Download the article.](#)

Three main findings:

1. Positive and motivational

In their writings, the tech elite is much more positive than the general population. They try to motivate people to share their goals – and frequently promise to 'make the world a better place'.

2. Meritocratic worldview

The elite share a meritocratic worldview, where intelligence, competence and performance provide the basis for the distribution of power and social status. As they perceive their power and social status as legitimate and deserved, they also perceive their goals as fair. Thus, they can defend statements such as 'We make the world better' and 'We do not affect democracy'.

3. Not self-critical

Common to the elite is an inability to look critically at their own position of power – both through their platforms and through their economic strength. This creates a mismatch between their worldview and the view of politicians and ordinary citizens.

No, social media does not suppress conservatives

Conservatives commonly accuse the major social media companies of censoring the political right. This is simply not true, concludes a report from the Stern Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University.

[Download the report.](#)

Four main findings:

1. No evidence

No trustworthy studies have determined that conservative content is removed for ideological reasons or that searches are manipulated to favor liberal interests. On the contrary, right-leaning Facebook pages, on average, get more engagement than other pages. On YouTube, the engagement numbers are more balanced.

2. Disinformation

The report states: 'The claim of anti-conservative animus on the part of social media companies is itself a form of disinformation: a falsehood with no reliable evidence to support it'.

3. Encourages transparency

The report outlines various suggestions on how social media should change practices to counter allegations of a conservative bias. Greater transparency, optional algorithms and more vigorous, targeted human moderation of influential accounts are three of them.

4. Calls for regulations

One of the political consequences of the widespread distrust should be the creation of a new digital regulatory agency in the US.

Timing matters when correcting fake news

A recent study finds that the timing of fact-checks is essential for optimizing the longer-term impact of fake news and disinformation.

[Download the study.](#)

Four main findings:

1. Labeling works

Regardless of timing: labeling fake news and disinformation affects people's perception and is of great value for debunking fake news. But there is a catch: tagging some stories as 'false' might also lead readers to assume that unlabeled stories are accurate (implied truth effect).

2. Debunking more effective

Debunking fake news after reading headlines in social media posts is more effective than labeling the post itself. The study shows that debunking fake news (after they are read) reduced misclassification of headlines by over 25 percent – compared to an 8,6 percent reduction when tags appeared during exposure (labeling) and 5,7 percent reduction when tags appeared beforehand (prebunking).

3. Timing affects memory

Presenting fact-checks before headlines might confer psychological resistance, but providing fact-checks after people process fake news seems to act as feedback, improving subsequent memory and boosting the labeling's long-term retention.

4. But... it's complicated

The researchers conclude that delayed feedback may be more effective than immediate feedback in a controlled environment. But mindlessly scrolling, rather than actively assessing accuracy at exposure, may lead to weaker initial impressions to provide feedback on, thereby reducing the advantage of debunking over labeling.

51 percent have seen fake news about covid-19

A new report from the Norwegian Media Authority shows that misinformation and false news about covid-19 is widespread in Norway.

[Download the report](#) (in Norwegian).

Four findings:

1. Disinformation on Facebook

51 percent of Norwegians claim to have seen disinformation or fake news about covid-19. 35 percent of them observed the information on Facebook, followed by non-editorial websites (17%), other social media (14%) and online newspapers (12%).

2. Age differentiation

The oldest (over 59 years) and the youngest (16–24 years) find it more challenging to separate disinformation from facts than the rest of the population. But: in the survey, 77 percent managed to reveal a fake news item from Twitter.

3. Less fake news

68 percent of the population has 'seen information they doubted was true' over the past year. But the proportion who are sure they have seen 'fake or untrue news online' is somewhat lower in 2021 (44%) than in 2020 (47%).

4. One fascinating observation...

Norwegians claim to see fake news and misinformation about the coronavirus more often in legit online newspapers (14%) than through content on YouTube (9%), in Google searches (5%) and blogs (3%).

Gaming-boom among children during the pandemic

The pandemic has led to a significant increase in gaming among Norwegian children and youths, according to a survey from Ipsos commissioned by the Blue Cross.

[Download the report](#) (in Norwegian).

Three main findings:

1. Two hours a day

42 percent of children and youths (age 0-18) on average spend more than two hours gaming on weekdays. 14 percent gaming for over four hours. During weekends the numbers increase to 61 percent (2+ hours) and 33 percent (4+ hours).

2. More than usual

44 percent of the parents say their child is allowed more gaming during the pandemic than usual.

3. Social interactions

Among parents with children who have spent more time gaming during the corona crisis, 28 percent believe gaming positively affects their child (i.e. social interactions with friends). 21 percent believe it has a negative effect.

Four causes for Zoom fatigue

Video chat platforms have design flaws that exhaust the human mind and body, finds a study from Stanford University.

[Download the research article.](#)

The four reasons:

1. Intense eye contact

Excessive amounts of close-up eye contact are highly intense. Both the amount of eye contact we engage in on video chats and the size of faces on screens is unnatural. A solution is to stop using the full-screen option and reduce the window's size on the screen.

2. The mirror-effect

Seeing yourself during video chats constantly in real-time is fatiguing. When you see a reflection of yourself, you are more self-critical. The researchers recommend using the 'hide self-view'-button (in Zoom found by right-clicking their mirror view).

3. Lack of mobility

Video chats dramatically reduce our normal mobility. At the same time, research shows that people increase their cognitive performance when moving. Therefore, it's crucial to think about the camera position.

4. Cognitive overload

The cognitive load is much higher in video chats. In regular face-to-face interactions, nonverbal communication is an essential part of the conversation. In video chats, users have to work harder to send and receive signals. A solution is to periodically turn one's video off during meetings 'for a brief nonverbal rest' – and turning your body away from the screen.

Parents worried about extended screen time

Parents of young children (age 4-6) are concerned about their children's screen usage's unknown consequences, shows a survey conducted by NLA Høgskolen for Barnevakten, an independent foundation focusing on children's digital wellbeing.

[Download the report](#) (in Norwegian).

Five main findings:

1. 4 out of 10 expresses concern

40.5 percent of parents are concerned that screen time can have harmful physical consequences for their children.

2. Time – not content

In the survey parents emphasize screen time to a greater extent than the actual content consumed. Focus on time over content is also reflected in a significant skepticism about screen usage in kindergartens. Parents over the age of 30 are more skeptical to screen usage than younger parents.

3. Want more knowledge

Even though most parents (66%) believe that they essentially have enough competence to follow up their own child's screen use, more than 70 percent request more information and guidance.

4. 93.4 percent limit screen time

The most common reasons why the rest (6.6%) do not limit the child's screen use are: 'This regulates itself' (71.5%), 'it is difficult to know how to regulate their screen time' (13.2 %) and: 'screen time is not problematic' (10.4%).

5. Cultural differences

Children of parents with minority backgrounds have less access to screen-based devices, and their use is to a greater extent regulated than the rest of their peers.

The subscription economy is growing

Norwegians have on average 18 subscriptions, show a survey published by consulting firm Subscribe.

[Download the report.](#)

Five main findings:

1. More and more subscriptions

The average Norwegian household has 18 subscriptions and spends NOK3,797 on the subscriptions every month. 31 percent think they will have more subscriptions in the future.

2. TV and streaming popular

The most popular subscription categories is TV and movie streaming (77%), followed by music services (73%), employee union (68%) and associations (52%).

3. News popular among millennials

39 percent of millennials subscribe to digital news (49 percent among the general population). 38 percent of millennials say they are likely to subscribe more to digital news in the future.

4. Netflix and Spotify dominates

Netflix (63%) and Spotify (62%) are the most popular subscription services in Norway. The following subscription on the list is TV2 Sumo with 28 percent.

5. Amazon Prime is already here

51 percent of Norwegians know Amazon Prime – even though it isn't even available in Norway yet. And of the people that know about Amazon Prime, more than half think the service seems appealing.