

“Decode and Discern: Understanding How Young People Navigate AI, Misinformation, and Their Online World”

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Our names are Dr. Sinan Aşçı, Prof. James O’Higgins Norman, Dr. Sandra Sanmartín Feijóo, Darran Heaney, Dr. Carol O’Toole, Dr. Maryam Esfandiari, Dr. Megan Reynolds, Dr. Catherine Baker, and Beatrice Sciacca, and we work in the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre and collaborate with Jane McGarrigle from Webwise in the present study.

You are invited to take part in a study about your smartphone and Internet use, as well as things you may enjoy doing or have seen while online. We are conducting this study at DCU Anti-Bullying Centre in collaboration with Webwise to understand the online behaviour of children and young people in Ireland as part of Safer Internet Day 2024.

WHAT IS INVOLVED AND WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

If you consent to take part in the present study, we are asking you to fill in a survey that should take about 30 minutes to complete. We will be asking you several questions on various topics that will help us understand your online behaviour but no identifiable data, like your name, email address, media profiles or anything like that. The surveys will be fully anonymous, so please always answer honestly. This is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers. What we are interested in is your point of view, and your opinion will be of great help to us in understanding the experiences of other young people.

You don’t have to answer any question you don’t wish to answer and can leave the survey at any moment without submitting your data. Since the survey is anonymous, when you submit it we will not be able to identify it and remove it from our database. You can have your parent(s) present if you want them to help you complete the survey.

HOW AM I PROTECTED IN THIS RESEARCH?

We will not ask for your full name or require any personal information from you. You can leave the survey at any time you want with no consequences for you, but you must know that once you submit the survey we will not be able to remove your data from the study, as we will not be able to identify it.

All of the information will be stored in a secure shared Drive to which only the research team has access to. The information will be deleted when the project is finished.

We will also follow the GDPR data protection rules (<https://gdpr.eu/>) and follow the rules from Dublin City University’s Data Protection Unit (<https://www.dcu.ie/ocoo/data-protection-unit>). The Data Protection Officer in DCU is Mr. Martin Ward (Deputy Chief Operations Officer) and he may be contacted at this address (data.protection@dcu.ie), or by phone at 01 700 7476.

You can also visit the Data Protection Commission website (<https://www.dataprotection.ie/>) for more information on data protection and your rights.

You are allowed to ask your parent/guardian to help you fill out the survey if you wish to.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?

We think that taking part in this study will have benefits not only for you but for other young people because the information you provide will help us know how to better study misinformation online and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). You do not have to take part in the study, and it is entirely up to you, you should not feel like you have to take part. No one will hold anything against you if you choose not to take part.

You are free to share anything you feel comfortable with. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can let us know anytime using the contact details below if you have any questions. We will not ask you to provide any personal details that could identify you, so please always answer honestly. This is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers. What we are interested in is your experiences and thoughts, as these will be of great help to us in understanding the experiences of other young people.

We have to let you know that because your answers will not be linked to your name, we may not be able to identify which data (answer) is yours if you wish to withdraw it. So it may not be possible to have your data destroyed if requested later on.

HOW WILL YOU FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS WITH THIS PROJECT?

We will be sharing the main results of the whole study in a report which we will publish and can be found in <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/publications/scientific-reports/> by the end of the year.

The data might also be used for academic publications in peer-reviewed journals, for conference presentations and reports to government departments. Your will not be identified in any publication and/or report, as your data will be anonymous and merged with other children and young people in Ireland.

IF ANYTHING IS UNCLEAR...

You can ask us any questions about this research anytime. The lead researcher's email address is: sinan.asci@dcu.ie

Or if you want to contact the people who checked if our research is safe and okay to do, you can contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

Thank you for thinking about taking part in this study.

Assent Form for Participants (Quantitative Phase)

Before taking part, we need to check that you understand what it is about and if you are okay with it...

Please answer the following questions by clicking "Yes" or "No".

	Yes	No
I know what the study is about.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what is being asked of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know that I can leave the study at any time with no issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know that my answers will not have my name.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know that I will not be able to remove my answers once I start the survey as they will be anonymous and not be identifiable to me.		
I am okay with my answers being used to help the researchers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I agree to take part in the study titled "Decode and Discern: Understanding How Young People Navigate AI, Misinformation, and Their Online World"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey

Are you:

<input type="radio"/>	Boy
<input type="radio"/>	Girl
<input type="radio"/>	Other. Please specify
<input type="radio"/>	Prefer not to say

How old are you?

<input type="radio"/>	11 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	12 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	13 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	14 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	15 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	16 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	17 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	18 years-old
<input type="radio"/>	19 years-old

Do you have access to a mobile device with Internet access (smartphone, tablet, etc.)?

<input type="radio"/>	No
<input type="radio"/>	Yes

(If YES in previous question...)

At what age did you get your first mobile device (smartphone, tablet, Nintendo Switch, etc.)? _____

How often do you use a mobile device to go online or on social media?

<input type="radio"/>	Several times a day
<input type="radio"/>	A few times a day
<input type="radio"/>	Once a day
<input type="radio"/>	Less often

Which of the following social networks and apps have you regularly used over the last few months? (Tick all that apply.)

<input type="radio"/>	WhatsApp	<input type="radio"/>	Telegram
<input type="radio"/>	Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	Facebook
<input type="radio"/>	TikTok	<input type="radio"/>	YouTube
<input type="radio"/>	Snapchat	<input type="radio"/>	X (previously Twitter)
<input type="radio"/>	BeReal	<input type="radio"/>	Twitch
<input type="radio"/>	Duolingo	<input type="radio"/>	Tozi
<input type="radio"/>	Reddit	<input type="radio"/>	Alexa
<input type="radio"/>	Peoople	<input type="radio"/>	Tumblr
<input type="radio"/>	ChatGPT	<input type="radio"/>	FaceApp
<input type="radio"/>	VSCO	<input type="radio"/>	Threads
<input type="radio"/>	Yubo	<input type="radio"/>	Pinterest
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	Other(s). Please specify

(If marked Tozi...)

Where did you learn about Tozi? _____

Can you tell us why you use it or don't use it anymore? _____

Do you have a public profile on any of them (open to anyone to view)?

<input type="radio"/>	No
<input type="radio"/>	Yes

Have you ever used any of the following?

	I don't know what this is	No, but I know what this is	Yes, I have used it for myself	Yes, I have used it to help someone else
Blocking button	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Report button	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help centre or link to a helpline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Privacy settings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Great job on getting through the first part! 🌟

Your opinions and experiences are valuable to us, and they really make a difference.

As you move into the main questions, remember that your voice is powerful and can lead to positive changes. Let's dive in!

For the following statements, please select the answer which best describes how appropriate you feel it is. (Appropriateness Rate by Williams-Ceci et al., 2021)

	Absolutely inappropriate	Inappropriate	Slightly inappropriate	Neutral	Slightly appropriate	Appropriate	Absolutely appropriate
A parent posts a picture of their child doing something embarrassing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent posts a picture of their child doing something embarrassing – but it is really funny!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent posts a picture of their child celebrating a happy moment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent makes a post about their child being difficult/misbehaving in some way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent posts a picture of their child undressed in some manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent posts a picture of their child in their pyjamas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent posts a professional picture of their child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent makes a post about their child's crush.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent makes a post detailing where their child is going for a playdate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent makes a post about their child winning a sports game.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent makes a post about their child's hobbies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A parent posts a picture of their child in their underwear.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the following items, please select the answer which best describes how you feel about yourself in the online world. (POSS by Fullwood et al., 2016)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Being online allows me to express myself.					
I can't really be myself online.					
I am always my true self online.					
The way I am online is very different from my real life.					
Communicating online allows me to say the things I can't say offline.					
I feel my personality online is the real me.					
I like going online because it allows me to be different.					
I find it easier to communicate in face-to-face contexts.					
I find it difficult to be myself in the real world.					
I feel I am the same person in the online world that I am in the real world.					
I prefer being online than offline.					
I regularly use different personas (roles / characters) online.					
I can escape from myself online.					
I very often act out different personas in certain online spaces.					
Being online allows me to create a new identity.					
I can show my best qualities online.					
I can talk to people who wouldn't usually talk to me in the real world.					
I am a different person depending on which online space I'm in.					
I feel more comfortable behaving how I want to online.					
I enjoy acting out different identities online.					
I feel I can be my ideal self-online.					

For the following statements, please select the answer which best describes how often any of these things have happened to you in the past year. (Sharenting Practices by Garmendia et al., 2022)

	Never	Sometimes	At least once a month	At least once a week	Daily or almost daily
My father/mother/caregiver posted content about me on the Internet (messages, pictures, or movies) without first asking if I agreed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have received negative or hurtful comments from someone because of something my father/mother/caregiver posted online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I asked my father/mother/caregiver to remove things about me that they had posted on the Internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was upset about the information my parents posted online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Adapted Students' Self-Efficacy in Online Safety (by O'Higgins Norman et al., 2022)

For the following statements, please select the answer which best describes how confident you feel in your ability to know. (0 = Not at all, 5 = Very)

Not at all	1	2	3	4	Very 5	
I know ...						
	0	1	2	3	4	5
...what videos I should not post online.						
...when I am seeing content created by a bot.						
...when an online profile is fake.						
...how to distinguish between real news and fake news.						
...what pictures I should not post online.						
...when a real story is manipulated to trick me/clickbait me.						
...how to respect others online.						
...how to keep my password safe.						
...who not to share my password with.						
...when real content is manipulated/photoshopped.						
...who not to trust online.						
...who to tell when something bothers me online.						
...when a story is made up.						
...what information (e.g. my password, picture, video, or location) about me I should not share online.						
...how to use my social media safely.						
...who I have to talk to when I feel uncomfortable online.						
...when I am seeing a deepfake/AI generated content.						
...it is dangerous to meet in person someone I met online.						
...when someone pretends to be someone else online.						
...when someone is being impersonated.						
...when sharing an online post can negatively affect others.						
...what upsets me online.						
...who I am following online.						
...I should not harm others online.						
...who to ask for help to use my social media profile.						
...when someone does not want his/her picture to be posted online.						
...how to distinguish a joke or parody from a real story.						

In your own words, please briefly describe your understanding of the term “misinformation”.

Can you list as many examples of misinformation you may encounter when using social media as you can think of?

In your own words, describe your understanding of the term “Artificial Intelligence (AI)”.

List as many examples as you can of Artificial Intelligence (AI) you may encounter when using social media.

Please select the best answers to rate the statements about artificial intelligence-related (AI) risks on a scale from very low to very high. (AI Perceived Severity and Susceptibility Scale developed based on Chen & Zahedi, 2016)

When it comes to the changes of things going wrong with AI, I think that...

For me, the risks of experiencing AI-related attacks are...	1 2 3 4 5 Very low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Very high
For me, the chances of facing any AI-related risks are...	1 2 3 4 5 Very low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Very high
My weakness about AI-related risks is...	1 2 3 4 5 Very low <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Very high

Please select the best answers to rate the statements about artificial intelligence-related (AI) risks on a scale from not serious at all to very serious.

When thinking about how serious AI-related risks are, I think that...

...the result of AI-related risks for me is	1 2 3 4 5 Not serious at all <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Very serious
...in general, the seriousness of AI-related risks for me is	1 2 3 4 5 Not serious at all <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Very serious

You're beyond halfway there, and you're doing fantastic! 🚀
Every question you answer helps us understand more about what matters to you.
We appreciate the time you're taking to share it with us.

When using digital media, which of the following features have you come across? (Tick all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Filters (photo or video)	<input type="checkbox"/> Chatbots
<input type="checkbox"/> Spam filters	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart/Virtual assistants (Alexa, Cortana, Siri)
<input type="checkbox"/> Facial recognition	<input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation systems (music, series etc. "recommended for you" or "you may like")
<input type="checkbox"/> Automatic spell check	<input type="checkbox"/> Real-time captioning
<input type="checkbox"/> Writing aids/Word suggester	<input type="checkbox"/> Navigation/Mapping (real-time store information and weather conditions)
<input type="checkbox"/> Image generators/Deepfakes	<input type="checkbox"/> Algorithms
<input type="checkbox"/> Speech recognition (microphone, voice notes)	<input type="checkbox"/> Personalised feeds in social media

Could you please tell us the ways that you have learned how to use digital media / be online? (Tick all that apply.)			
<input type="radio"/>	From my parents/guardians	<input type="radio"/>	From my classmates
<input type="radio"/>	From an older sibling	<input type="radio"/>	From older friends
<input type="radio"/>	From a younger sibling	<input type="radio"/>	From friends of the same age
<input type="radio"/>	From my cousins	<input type="radio"/>	From younger friends
<input type="radio"/>	From someone else in my family	<input type="radio"/>	Through community programs or workshops
<input type="radio"/>	At a specific course in my school (e.g. Digital Literacy)	<input type="radio"/>	Mostly self-taught / personal experiences
<input type="radio"/>	From teachers in my school but in non-specific courses	<input type="radio"/>	Other. Please specify

Are you happy with this learning or would you have liked for someone else to have helped/taught/guided you? (Tick all that apply.)			
<input type="radio"/>	I am happy with how I learnt.	<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from my classmates.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from my parents/guardians.	<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from older friends.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from an older sibling.	<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from friends of the same age.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from a younger sibling.	<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from younger friends.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from my cousins.	<input type="radio"/>	I do not have siblings, but I would have liked to have their support.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from someone else in my family.	<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help through community programs or workshops.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked to have a specific course in my school.	<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more access to online resources or tutorials.
<input type="radio"/>	I would have liked more help from my teachers in general.	<input type="radio"/>	Other. Please specify

Adapted Scale of Influencer Engagement on Social Media (IESM by Levesque and Pons, 2023)

We want to ask you about your opinion on influencers now. Influencers are very active individuals on social media, where they post content about themselves, their expertise, their areas of interest and/or their daily life with their community. Influencers can have less than 10,000 followers or more than a million.

Please select the answer which best describes your thoughts on and experiences with influencers.

		Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
Self-concept	By interacting publicly with influencers, I can make a good impression on others.					
	Part of me is defined by my interactions with the influencers I follow.					
	Interacting publicly with influencers allows me to convey who I am to others.					
	By interacting publicly with influencers, I can improve how others see me.					
	Interacting publicly with influencers allows me to portray the image of who I want to be to others.					
Attachment	I am excited when I interact with an influencer.					
	If an influencer I follow doesn't post for some time, I get worried.					
	I miss the influencers I follow when they are not posting.					
	My days wouldn't be the same without the influencers I follow.					
	I often feel happy about the influencers I follow when I think of them.					
Consumption	I look at influencers' photos.					
	I read influencers' posts.					
	I watch influencers' videos.					
Contribution	I comment on influencers' posts.					
	I comment on influencers' lives.					
Creation	I create stories about influencers.					
	I create visual publications (photos or videos) about the influencers I follow.					
	I create text-based publications about some influencers.					
	I tag influencers in my publications (text, images, or stories).					
	I create posts about influencers and hope they will share them.					
	I create posts about influencers and hope they will like them.					

Could you tell us the Name/Username/Handle of your top 5 favourite influencers?

Short Version of Misinformation Susceptibility Test (Developed for the Irish context based on the MIST by Maertens et al., 2023)

Misinformation is information that is inaccurate or misleading, which can take various forms, and not all of it is necessarily intentional. “Fake news” is a term used to describe when a news piece is created with the intention of deceiving readers.

Please spot the misleading / fake headlines.

	Real	Fake
Instagram Launches 'Restrict' Feature to Help Stop Bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Popular Social Media App Secretly Tracks Users' Locations for Irish Government Surveillance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irish Influencers Paid to Promote Harmful Diet Products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Young people urged to join global climate strike	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Gaming Console Linked to Increased Risk of Addiction and Violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Media-Linked Depression More Common in Teenage Girls	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wi-Fi Found to Cause Brain Damage in Irish Teens, Experts Warn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General Election 2020: Youngest Candidates across Ireland Vying for Your Vote in Each Party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Debrief Form

Thank you for helping us with this research. The data you have given us will be anonymous and will be used only for research purposes, and your information will be protected at all times.

We hope that taking part in the project was interesting and that it was what you expected. If there is anything you are unsure or unhappy about, please contact the lead researcher by the email below.

Dr. Sinan Aşçı: sinan.asci@dcu.ie

If you want more information or feel that you require support, please take a look at some of the services which are out there for you:

Childline: Listening service W: https://www.childline.ie T: @ISPCCChildline P: 1800 902 707	
BeLonG To: LGBT+ support W: https://www.belongto.org/ T: @BeLonG_To P: 01 670 6223	
Take This!: Gamer mental health W: https://www.takethis.org/ T: @TakeThisOrg	
TackleBullying.ie: Cyberbullying support W: https://tacklebullying.ie/ Additional: https://tacklebullying.ie/additional-support/	
Webwise: Online safety and digital support W: https://www.webwise.ie/thefullpicture/ T: @Webwise_Ireland Insta: /webwiseireland/	
SpunOut: Teenager wellbeing/ mental health W: https://spunout.ie/ T: @SpunOut Insta: /spunout.ie/	
Tozi: Safe, positive online space W: https://www.to-zi.com/ App Store: https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/tozi/id6444163877 Google Play: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.toziapp	