

Public discourse fact-checking method

Eight steps for effective fact-checking

- 1- Select a public statement
- 2- Think about its significance
- 3- Check the original source
- 4- Check the official source
- 5- Check alternative sources
- 6- Provide context
- 7- Confirm, downplay or debunk the statement
- 8- Rate

Chequeado selects statements from politicians, economists, business people, trade unionists, journalists, public figures, media, and other opinion-forming institutions, without prejudice of their political and ideological orientation. See our objectivity and fairness policy.

Once the statement has been selected, we ask the person who issued the statement for the original source of the data used. If we have direct access, we reach out to other sources to check their legitimacy and explain their relevance and impact. If this is not possible, we check alternative sources: documents (reports, analyses, or statistical compilations, public and private) and interviews with experts.

If any of them has a known political party affiliation, it is disclosed. See our source transparency policy.

When relevant, we provide the contextual background to understand the data or facts under study better. By contextual knowledge, we mean the local socio-economic, historical and cultural context, and whenever possible, we also provide the regional

and international contexts. In any case, our intention is for fact-checking efforts not to rely exclusively on a literal comparison.

Fact-check ratings follow nine labels (unproven, true, true but..., questionable, rushed, exaggerated, misleading, unsupported, false). In some cases, more than one label could apply.

Finally, most fact-checkers use rating systems that could vary in number and complexity depending on each media outlet. This helps provide an easy and quick conclusion of the findings.

Rating a statement is not always a simple intellectual process because more than one label could fit in many cases (for example, "Exaggerated" or False or True, but... or Misleading), and the decision is finally based on the aspect we want to highlight. This is why it is critical to define the process clearly and who is in charge of decision-making.

This is the rating system we use to fact-check the statements of leaders:

Unproven

This is only used for specifically defined corpus, such as campaign ads or brochures. None of the statements checked were found to be based on facts or data available.

True

The statement proved to be true as it was checked against serious and reliable data and sources.

True, but...

The statement is consistent with available data but fails to mention certain elements or contexts.

Questionable

It is not clear whether the statement is true or not, and the conclusion depends on the variables used to analyze it.

Rushed

The statement could be true, but it shows a prediction and is not based on actual data.

Exaggerated

The statement is not precisely true, but the underlying concept or notion it refers to is.

Misleading

The statement may partially match specific data but—intentionally or not—has been manipulated to convey a particular message.

Unsupported

The statement results from unsupported research or significant methodological mistakes, or it is impossible to prove.

False

The statement proved to be false when it was checked against serious and reliable data and sources.

The "El Explicador" (the explainer) section covers statements or relevant topics not subject to the ratings mentioned above. This section covers topics that help better understand public affairs to broaden the public debate. In the section "Hilando fino" (tread carefully), we analyze how media presents the information and certain statements that deserve special attention about a relevant fact or data. Under "Mitos" (myths), we debunk statements that are mindlessly repeated without even considering if they are based on evidence or not. And on "FalsoEnLasRedes" (fake on social media), we publish fact-checks on fake news and disinformation. Finally, in "Chequeado investigación" (Chequeado research), we publish long-term research.

Chequeado does not check statements of religious or personal nature, sports or show-business, or, for example, corruption allegations for which judicial proceedings are still in place.

Finally, Chequado's mission is to fact-check and enhance public debate, so it is for that purpose that we encourage the active participation of the community in our website's content and knowledge generation by submitting data, experiences, fact-checks, or by letting us know of potential errors in our fact-checks.

Chequeado strives to be rigorous and accurate, but, as we know, nobody is perfect. This is why we are committed to rectifying any inaccuracies we may have disseminated. See our update and correction policy.

Chequeado has been part of the International Fact-checking Network since the beginning and subscribes to its principles, which you can see here.

We thank the following people for their comments on methodology:

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Method against viral disinformation

Eight steps for effective fact-checking:

- 1- Select content you find suspicious from the social media you monitor.
- 2- Think about its significance
- 3- Check, when possible, the original source
- 4- Check, when possible, with the people who are involved or affected by the piece of disinformation
- 5- Check the official source
- 6- Check alternative sources
- 7- Provide context
- 8- Confirm or debunk the content

This is the rating system we use to fact-check viral disinformation:

False

The entire content shared proved false when checked against serious and reliable data and sources and stakeholders involved.

Misleading

Part of the content shared matches certain data but—intentionally or not—it has been manipulated to convey a particular message.

True

The content shared proved true when checked against serious and reliable data and sources and stakeholders involved.

Unsupported

The statement results from unsupported research or significant methodological mistakes, or it is impossible to prove.

Chequeado selects articles, audios, pictures, and videos from the social media it monitors, such as Facebook and Twitter; the private messaging services we monitor and through which we receive material to fact-check, such as WhatsApp; and our own channels, like the fact-check request platform Chequeo Colectivo and Buzón de Lectores (info@chequeado.com). We always reveal in the text the channel where the fact-checked disinformation originated.

Factual contents that can be contrasted are subject to fact-checking. Promises, comments, or opinions are not subject to fact-checking, nor are statements made privately. We select the material to be fact-checked without discriminating based on political, ideological, sexual, or ethnic orientation.

We select the material to be checked based on three criteria: circulation/virality of the content on social media or other media (reach or engagement in different platforms); relevance of the subject or the severity of the consequences of such disinformation on citizens (for example, disinformation that may affect health).

Once the content to be fact-checked has been selected, whenever possible, we reach out to the original source to find out where it came from and the merit of the source data. In the case of sites that identify the person responsible for the contents and publish their contact data (telephone or e-mail), we reach out through those channels. We also do this when information, images, and videos are posted directly on social media (not included in a link) and its origin is cited.

In addition, we contact the actors involved in/affected by the disinformation (who, in some cases, agree to speak and, in others, prefer not to) and other sources that can corroborate the accuracy of the publication to be fact-checked, if they are identifiable.

Just as we do with the public discourse fact-checking method, the relevant consultation should be made with the official source (government sources at the national, provincial, and local levels that are in charge of the subject under analysis).

Whether or not we obtain a response, we may also rely on alternative sources, such as documents (reports, analyses, or statistical compilations) and interviews with experts.

Suppose the content to be fact-checked is an image or video. In that case, we can use the technology available to find out who created it, the date and time of publication, and the location where the content was generated.

If a media outlet published false information and then rectified or eliminated it, we explicitly mention it in the fact-checking report of such a disinformation piece. If this happens after the publication of the fact-check, we publish an update. We recommended this practice to correct information.

We cite the sources and, whenever possible, we include the link to the original document and data to be accessible to all.

When the fact-checked information is false, Chequeado clarifies it in the title so that the reader knows from the beginning what the correct data is, and we explain the main aspects in the first paragraph. In the case of false photos, we reproduce them clearly marked as false (with a watermark, for example) and never link the sites that originate the disinformation to not contribute to its dissemination.

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