



TRUTH DECAY

Fighting for facts and analysis





**Increasing
disagreement** about
facts and data



The increasing **relative
volume, and resulting
influence, of opinion**
over fact



A **blurring of the
line** between
opinion and fact



Declining trust in
formerly respected
sources of factual
information

TRUTH DECAY

CONSEQUENCES OF TRUTH DECAY

Erosion of Civil Discourse

Without a shared set of facts, it becomes difficult to have meaningful discussions across identity group lines

- Increasing unwillingness or inability to discuss disagreements with an open mind
- Communication often occurs “virtually” where anonymity facilitates bullying and nastiness
- Dialogue and debate should serve as a cornerstone for healthy democracy



Political Paralysis

Without this set of commonly agreed upon facts, it is difficult to debate available policy options and reach the compromises necessary for policy decisions

- Political stalemate results in:
 - Government shutdowns and lapses in appropriations
 - Delayed judicial and executive appointments
 - Neglect of oversight and regulatory tasks
 - Rapid policy reversals with change in administration
- Real economic costs
 - Estimated cost of 2013 shutdown ~\$15-20 billion in lost GDP
 - Delays in judicial appointments can lead to annual reduction of ~\$3.3 billion in U.S. GDP
- Impacts on individuals lives (e.g., immigration)



Uncertainty in National Policy

When individuals, businesses, policymakers, and other nations cannot be sure what is a fact and what is fiction, it affects their decisionmaking—often with negative consequences

- Businesses may delay investment decisions if they cannot trust government information with economic costs
- Policymakers lack necessary objective benchmarks to make decisions
- Individuals cannot make financial, healthcare, employment, etc. decisions without facts or when they don't know where to look for facts
- Diplomatic consequences occur when other countries cannot trust or accurately assess U.S. intentions and priorities



Reduced Civic Engagement

Individuals in an environment infected by Truth Decay may choose to opt out of the political system

- When people cannot trust key institutions to provide facts, they may opt out of the political system entirely
- Survey data reveal declining sense of political efficacy, low participation among certain demographic groups
- Civic engagement has increasingly shifted online, which may be good and bad
- Engagement that does occur is often within identity groups
- Participation must be the foundation of democracy





