

Combating disinformation with statistics

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Expert Meeting on Dissemination and Communication of
Statistics



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Statistics Finland – provider of effective social information



Influencing through information

- **The effort to influence public opinion, people's behaviour and society's decision-making by spreading information or disinformation.**
- Disinformation: Deliberately disseminated incorrect "information"
- Misinformation: Unintentionally disseminated incorrect "information"
- Mal-information: Truthful information that is used to harm an individual, community or state (for example leaks).

- Disinformation is an old phenomenon. Throughout history, people have told lies to achieve their goals.
- The era of the social media has started a new wave of information influence.
- Disinformation is usually directed against official information and the conventional political system. Its aim is to break trust and increase instability.
- The amount of disinformation typically increases when something unusual happens in society and the economy.
- The recent events have fuelled the spread of disinformation: covid pandemic with restrictions, Russian attack on Ukraine, inflation, energy crisis...

Motivators of disinformatics

- Personal life disappointments
- Impartiality and lack of appreciation - the experience of not being listened to
- Anti-authoritarianism
- Criticisms of free market economics
- Criticisms of globalisation
- Political extremism
- Radicalisation

The triad of disinformatics

- 1. State and institutional bodies
- 2. Trolls: paid or otherwise motivated spreaders of disinformation
- 3. Useful idiots: People who believe the disinformation they spread – the level where disinformation turns into misinformation. Trolls deliberately use useful idiots to escalate information campaigns.

Statistics Finland's roles in society

- We have the best information in society. Therefore, it is our duty to ensure that the social debate is based on correct information and not assumptions.
- We value ourselves and our own expertise. We dare to dispute, challenge and put things into perspective.
- Our goal is that by 2030 we will live in a society where activities are increasingly based on correct information.

Defender of reliable information		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We help to develop the quality of data in society.• We back up the information we produce, including gaps in information.• We fight against misinformation.
The best expert in society's information sources		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The status of the statistical authority.• A superior amount of data in use.• The widest possibility to combine data Research Services.
Unique competence in the field of data science		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More than 150 years of experience in information.• The broadest expertise in modern information production.• Responsibility at all stages.
Producer of timely and useful information		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We bring information to the background of current phenomena.• We know Finland's data reserves and what we can achieve by combining them.

How can you hear the tone of voice?

Open

Analytic

Bold

- We inspire trust and our activities are transparent. We experiment boldly and develop new things in cooperation with customers and stakeholders.
- We bring depth to the discussion by creating wider meanings for data.
- We rely on statistical facts and dare take a stand and open new debates based on statistics.

What we can do against disinformation?

1. Reactive means:

- Media and social media monitoring
 - Participation in discussions
 - Correcting false claims and misunderstandings
 - Requesting corrections (from journalistic media)

2. Proactive means:

- Active presence and information sharing
- Versatile communication in different channels
- Training and encouragement of experts (to communicate)
- Strategy support and the example of the management
- Communication concepts that support the goals (introduced on the following slides)

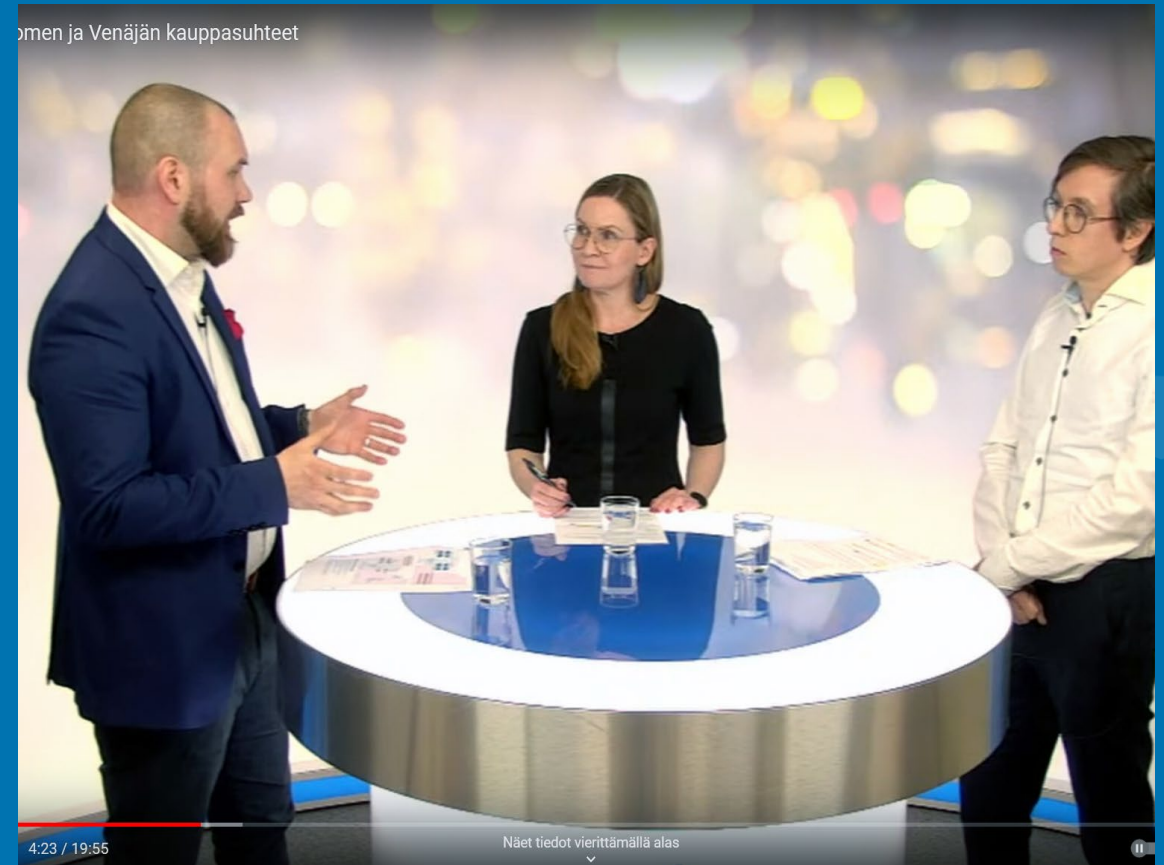
Podcast: Fact guard

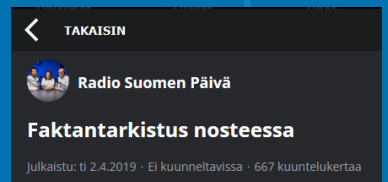
- Fact guard is a podcast that boldly tackles topics that appear in public debate and examines them analytically and with the help of statistical data.
- The podcast honours the facts and creates a foundation for informed opinion formation.
- The podcast takes a critical look at media sensationalism and corrects misinterpretations.



Statistics Live broadcasts

- Statistics Live is a news talk show that focuses on current topics and brings out the latest statistics.
- In addition to numbers, the programme offers background information, interpretations and analysis.
- The live programme is produced in Statistics Finland's own studio and broadcast via YouTube.
- The broadcasts feature not only our own experts, but also experts from other organisations.





Case: Help for evaluating election debates

- In the last parliamentary elections and European Parliament elections, we actively brought out facts to evaluate the election debates.
- We organised Twitter chats during the television election debates. In the tweets, we highlighted facts about the topics of the debates.



14 phenomena experts on different topics



Transport and
communications

Situation picture of the
economy

Equality and justice

Accessibility of data and
open data

Situational picture of society

Enterprises, innovations and
enterprises' life cycle

Machine learning and data
science

Regional differences

Housing and the built
environment

Globalisation

People, education and
free time

People's livelihood and
consumption

Climate change and
sustainable development

Data Collections

The objective is to have an expert who is participating and is visible in society

- Thought leader of a particular topic
- Active social debater
- Known and reliable contact for the media
- Introduction of phenomenon-based experts on web pages (in Finnish)



The image shows a screenshot of a web page with a dark blue background. On the left, there is a white box with the text "Ilmiö-asiiantuntija". Below this, the title "Liikenne ja viestintä" is displayed. The main text discusses climate change challenges and the use of statistics. At the bottom left, the name "Matti Kokkonen" and title "yliaktuaari" are listed. The logo for "Tilastokeskus" is at the bottom right. On the right side of the screenshot is a portrait of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue sweater over a light blue collared shirt.

Ilmiö-asiiantuntija

Liikenne ja viestintä

Ilmaston lämpeneminen haastaa totut tavat liikkua, ja pandemia pisti uusiksi sekä liikkumisen että viestintärutiinit. Tilastojen avulla voidaan seurata asetettujen tavoitteiden toteutumista sekä pandemian jälkeistä paluuta normaaliin.

Matti Kokkonen
yliaktuaari

Tilastokeskus

Results: one of the best organisations in social media influencing and reputation survey



Growth in number of television and radio appearances



Stealing authority: Statistics Finland as a “source” of fake news



“According to Statistics Finland, the number of people earning more than €100,000...”

Those are not our numbers...



Nyt tarkkana interwebsin jaa-nappulan painelijat. Tällaista jännää tilastoa jaetaan Facebookissa huoletta ilman lähteitä. Kyseistä tilastoa ei Tilastokeskuksen sivuilta tietenkään löydy ja pakolaistatuksella maahan tulleilla ei ole syytä valehdella ikäänsä. Tässä on siis oikeaoppisen härski valeutuinen, jossa käytetään Tilastokeskuksen logoa. Tämän luovan tilastotieteilijän motiiveja tuskin tarvii arvailla. En tiedä pitäisikö tästä nyt olla yllättynyt, mutta tässä sitä nyt ollaan ja mun veri kiehahti.



“The self-reported age of refugees who arrived in Finland...”



Tilastokeskus
@Tilastokeskus

Varoitus: Somessa liikkuu väärää tietoa. Graafi ”Suomeen saapuneiden pakolaisten itse ilmoitettu ikä 2015” ei ole Tilastokeskuksen tilasto.

12.56 ip. · 29. elok. 2017 · TweetDeck

Näytä twiitin tilastot

83 uudelleentwiittausta 4 Twiitin lainaukset 91 tykkäystä

Warning: Incorrect information circulates on social media. The statistical graph “Self-reported age of refugees who arrived in Finland” is not based on Statistics Finland’s data...

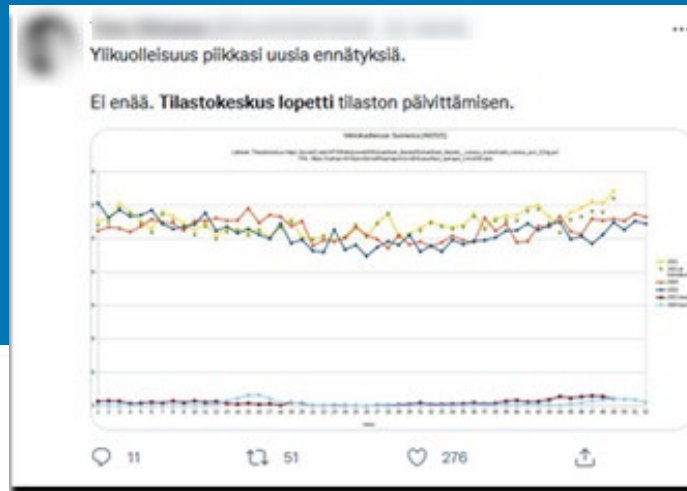
Statistics Finland as the subject of fake news

“Statistics Finland hides the number of deaths...”

“A disgusting observation: The authorities are trying to hide the figures that have been published for decades...”

“Excess mortality in record numbers. Statistics Finland stopped collecting statistics...”

Reactions



Vastauksena käyttäjille @lasleh ja @hsfi

Mutta miksi Tilastokeskus on 2 kk sitten lopettanut 30 vuotta olemassa olleen kuolleiden tilastoinnin viikkotasolla?

Professor Fate @SirTeit - 17. helmik.
Vastauksena käyttäjille [redacted]

Näin! Ja tilastokeskus lopettanut kuolleiden viikkotilastoinnit, jotka ovat aivan pilvissä sitten 2 kierroksen ja nousu jatkuu... On alkanut systemaattinen pimittäminen.

InjektioPiikki @IPiikki

Vastauksena käyttäjille [redacted]

Valitettavasti THL alkoi raporttoimaan kuolleista loppuvuodesta hyvin pitkällä viiveellä. Tilastokeskus lopetti viikolla 52. Tieto ei tule enää ajallaan.

11.19 ap. · 10. helmik. 2022 · Twitter Web App

Siru @Siru88735515 - 10. helmik.
Vastauksena käyttäjälle [redacted]

Tilastokeskus on myös lopettanut viikoittaisten kuolemien raportoinnin vuoteen 2021.

Paha sanoa, Tilastokeskus lopetti 1990 aloitetun viikoittaisen kuolintilaston julkaisun 2021 loppuun. Herättää kyllä epäilyksiä

pxnet2.stat.fi
Kuolleet muuttujina Alue, Viikko, Ikä, Sukupuoli ja Tiedot-Tilastokeskuksen PxWeb-tietokannat

@krp_poliisi nyt ois paljon hommia, myös terveysturvallisuuteen liittyen, sillä viranomaistoiminta ei nauti enää kansan luottamusta. Huolikäyriä muokattu uudelle esitystavalle. THL muutteli Avohilmo-tilastonsa. Kun ylikuolemista kyseltiin, tilastokeskus lopetti tiedon tuottamisen.

Tilastokeskus lopetti viikko seurannan. Hyvä sillä 30 vuotta ovat tehneet turhaa työtä. Ketään ei oikeastaan edes kiinnosta mihin ihmiset ylikuolee. Piikki on poissuljettu aiheuttamasta ylikuolleisuutta yhden Lancetin \$ sponsatun tutkimuksen perusteella. Lisää piikkiä

“Why are people being cheated?”

Vastauksena käyttäjille [redacted]

@Tilastokeskus @niinisto @THLorg @MarinSanna

Miksi kansaa huijataan? Miksi totuutta ei kerrota niin kuin se on???

How to deal with trolls (and those who believe in their cause)?

- Trolls try to get you to act on their terms – do not give up, trust your own way to act and communicate.
- Do not be cynical - silence will not solve the problem.
- Be patient and consistent - answer when asked (if the question is appropriate).
- Be clear – dumb down if necessary.
- Keep calm – do not get provoked.
- Avoid increasing the visibility of fake news and misinterpretations by your own actions.
- Do not share tweets containing disinformation - rather make your own tweet with correct information.
- Ask for help sharing correct information - put your network to work.