



# Uisce Faoi Thalamh

## An Investigation Into the Online Mis- and Disinformation Ecosystem in Ireland

**Report 2 of 3** Platform analysis

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## About the research

This report is part of Uisce Faoi Thalamh, ISD's investigation into the online mis- and disinformation ecosystem in Ireland and is part of a broader research project that analyses the most prominent actors, topics and online platforms central to this ecosystem.

The research project contains three reports. The first is the Summary Report which includes an introduction, key findings and recommendations arising from the research project, as well as a literature review, glossary and methodology. The second is this report, Platforms, which examines how online platforms are used to produce, promote and contribute to the circulation of mis- and disinformation in Ireland. The third is Topics, which presents in-depth narrative analysis of the leading topics of discussions within this mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

## About ISD

ISD is a fiercely independent 'think and action tank' dedicated to safeguarding democracy and reversing the rising global tide of hate, extremism and disinformation in all its forms. We combine 18 years of sector-leading expertise in weaponised hate, disinformation and extremism with state-of-the art digital research methods and bespoke technologies, keeping ISD consistently ahead of the curve in understanding and responding to the fast evolving, hybridised threat landscape, on- and offline. We use the threat intelligence and insights derived from our research to innovate and deliver proven models for action, and to provide agenda-setting evidence and support to policy makers. ISD's cross-harms focus on a range of 'hybridised' online threats, means it has unique insights on the intersection of disinformation, conspiracy movements and extremism.

Since 2020, ISD has researched and analysed extremism, disinformation and hate online in Ireland. This has resulted in the publication of a number of reports and engagement by ISD with civil society organisations, academia and governmental departments. Most recently, in early 2023, ISD was invited by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to be a member of a multi-stakeholder working group to help develop Ireland's National Counter Disinformation Strategy. <sup>1</sup>

## Funding and partners

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## Overview of Platforms

To produce this research, ISD analysed 12 social media platforms that were used by actors within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023, namely: Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok, Gab, Gettr, BitChute, Odysee, Rumble and DLive. This report contains separate analysis of each as well as fundraising platforms/online monetisation mechanisms used by actors within the ecosystem.

As noted in the methodology section in the Summary Report, social media platforms have different levels of access through Application Programming Interface (APIs) to analyse public data at scale while some platforms offer little to no such access. Because of this, this research project employed a mixed methods approach that included both quantitative and qualitative research.

Quantitative analysis was possible on Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and YouTube via an analytical tool. Qualitative analysis was used for the remaining platforms due to a lack of effective or accessible APIs.

ISD identified a total of 13,180,820 posts (13,140,950 posts through quantitative analysis and 39,870 posts through qualitative analysis) and 1,640 accounts across all 12 online platforms.

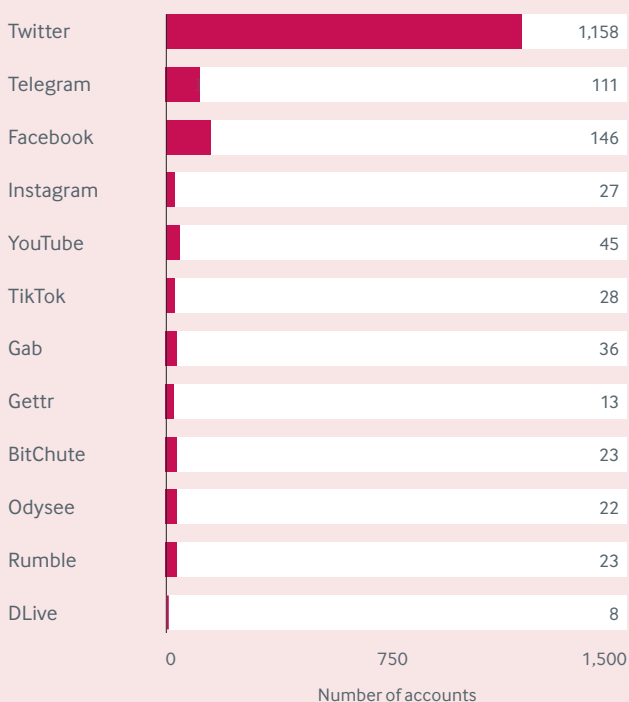
ISD identified 13,140,950 pieces of content (videos and posts) through quantitative analysis that consisted of 11,775,141 tweets on Twitter (X); 961,108 posts on Telegram; 382,111 posts on Facebook; 18,845 posts on Instagram; and 3,745 videos on YouTube.

Each platform report contains analysis of trends within account creation dates, profile metrics related to the number of followers or rate of engagement on posts, and content analysis related to the topics analysed and use of platform features within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

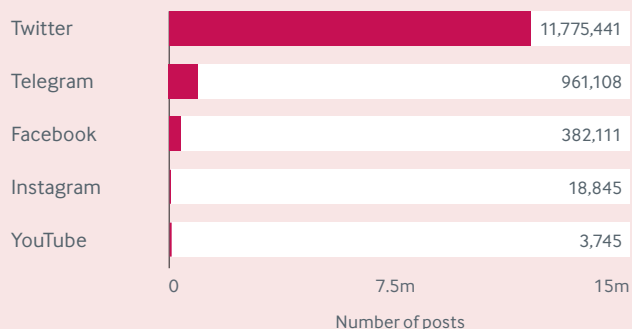
Twitter (X) was by far the most popular platform within this ecosystem. Analysis of Twitter (X) revealed that the majority of accounts researched were created since 2020 and, within this data subset, a small subset of accounts was responsible for a significant portion of the activity over time. Of the accounts analysed, the top 50 most prolific accounts were responsible for over 35% of the total content, and the top 10 for over 14% of the activity.

Virtually all the most prominent actors in the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem were highly active on Twitter (X). For eight of the nine topics analysed as part of this research, Twitter (X) was the platform where most of the conversation took place and was crucial to the spread of numerous false, misleading or potentially harmful claims. In short, users of Twitter (X) were central to the

**Figure 1:** Chart shows the number of accounts analysed on each platform in this research



**Figure 2:** Chart shows the total number of posts published on platforms captured through quantitative analysis in this research project



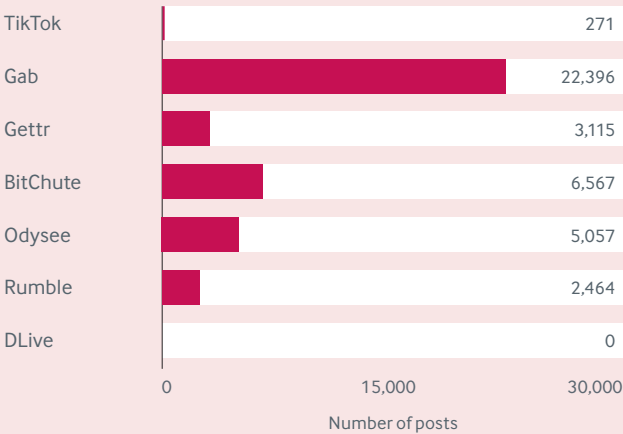
production and promotion of mis- and disinformation in Ireland.

ISD collected 39,870 pieces of content through qualitative analysis that consisted of 271 videos on TikTok; 22,396 posts on Gab; 3,115 posts on Gettr; 6,567 videos on BitChute accounts; 5,057 videos on Odysee; 2,464 videos on Rumble and zero videos on DLive.

Apart from TikTok, these are all regarded as alternative platforms that are generally promoted as free speech substitutes to older and/or more established mainstream platforms that have comprehensive community guidelines prohibiting various types of content featuring false and/or misleading information or the promotion of extremist ideologies.

Though content analysed on alternative platforms was smaller in quantity compared to platforms examined through quantitative analyses, in many cases these alternative platforms were home to more explicit forms of hate and harmful conspiracy theories like Holocaust denial. As is evidenced throughout this section, we observed that technology companies that operate with a hands-off approach to content moderation routinely have more harmful content and claims thriving on their platforms.

**Figure 3:** Chart shows the total number of posts published on platforms captured through qualitative analysis in this research project



## Twitter (X) Platform Analysis

Twitter (X) is one of the most widely used social media platforms globally. Initially launched in 2006, the platform allows users to share short 280-character posts, including images, videos, and URLs. As of 2023, Twitter (X) has over 450 million monthly active users worldwide, and by early 2022, the platform had 1.35 million users in Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

Given its popularity and its community guidelines, Twitter (X) is regarded as a mainstream platform and has often been accused of censorship by extremist and disinformation actors.<sup>4</sup> In October 2022, the social media giant was acquired by business magnate Elon Musk, which led to the reinstatement of several prominent accounts that had been previously banned by the platform. This included: former US President Donald Trump; self-proclaimed misogynistic influencer Andrew Tate; media commentator Jordan Peterson; and American rapper Kanye West.<sup>5</sup>

In Ireland, Jim Corr, a musician who has previously shared extremist conspiracy theories, and Keith Woods, who has referenced antisemitic terminology and promoted content featuring prominent Holocaust deniers in online posts, were among those reinstated.<sup>6</sup> Woods was banned from Twitter (X) from December 2021 to April 2023 and since his reinstatement has boasted about his recent success on the platform<sup>7</sup>, including receiving tens of thousands of new followers, receiving a reply from Elon Musk and being retweeted by Donald Trump Jr.

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Twitter (X) and found:

- Twitter (X) has been a consistently popular social media platform within this ecosystem. ISD identified 1,158 relevant accounts that posted a staggering volume of 11.7 million tweets from 1 January 2020 to 3 April 2023;
- Content containing at least one of the nine topics analysed made up 31.95% of all content posted within this ecosystem;
- An analysis of the account creation time revealed that most of the accounts were created since 2020. A spike in account creation, which can sometimes be an indicator of coordinated activity, occurred during the anti-immigration protests in November 2022, with 50 accounts created in that month;
- A small number of accounts were responsible for a significant portion of the activity over time. Of the accounts analysed, the top 50 most prolific accounts were responsible for over 35% of the total content, and the top 10 for over the 14% of the activity;
- Most of the activity analysed consisted of retweets. Original content (tweets and replies) made up 44.3% of the activity, while retweets made up 55.7% of the content;
- The most popular topic discussed by the Twitter (X) accounts analysed was health, followed by Irish politics and immigration.

### Accounts

ISD identified 1,173 Twitter (X) accounts as part of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem. 1,150 were linked to the Republic of Ireland and an additional 23 accounts were based in Northern Ireland. As of June 2023, 1,158 of these accounts were still active on the platform and were found to have posted 11.77 million posts between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023. These posts amassed a total of 6.93 billion retweets.

Of all the content produced within this ecosystem during the analysed period, 31.97% contained references to at least one of the nine topics analysed.

### Account Creation Date

An analysis of the account creation dates over time revealed that most of the accounts were created in the



past three years. In total 607 accounts were created from January 2020 to February 2023, and 566 accounts from January 2007 to December 2019. A particularly significant spike was identified in November 2022, when 50 accounts were created. This spike corresponds with the onset of the anti-immigration protests in Ireland.

Profile Metrics

As shown in the table below, more than half of the Twitter (X) accounts identified had fewer than 500 followers, meaning their audience is limited. Only two accounts in the set had more than 50,000 followers. One was Ivor Cummins (aka FatEmperor), who built a sizeable online following for his health-related videos in the past ten years but, more recently, shared numerous false and misleading claims about COVID-19 online.<sup>8</sup> The other was the account Anti White Watch, which says it is based in Dublin and documents “data on violence, hate, discrimination and bigotry directed at ethnic Europeans.” These accounts have 199,315 and 65,147 followers respectively.

Analysis of actors in the timeframe reviewed found that the top 10 most prolific accounts were responsible for over the 14% of the total activity, while the top 50 accounts were responsible for over 35% of the total content.

Figure 4: Creation of accounts (per month) from January 2007 to February 2023

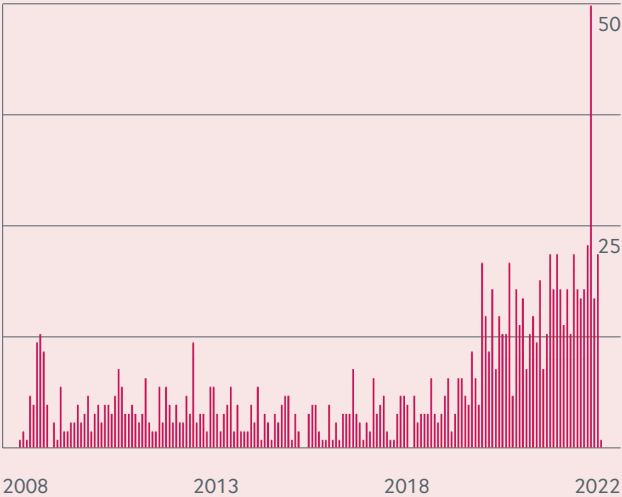


Table 1: The table above shows the number of followers of the 1,173 accounts analysed

Number of followers	Number of accounts
0-100	244
100-500	428
500-1000	182
1000-2000	141
2000-5000	105
5000-10000	37
10,000-50,000	34
50,000-100,000	1
100,000+	1

Table 2: Twitter (X) profile and post metrics associated with the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of profile followers	367	199,315	1
Number of profiles followed	528	37,276	0
Number of profile posts	4,934	985,158	1
Level of interactions posts*	N/A	191,315	0

\* Level of interactions posts refer to the most retweeted tweet in the timeframe of analysis, from 1 January 2020 to 3 April 2023

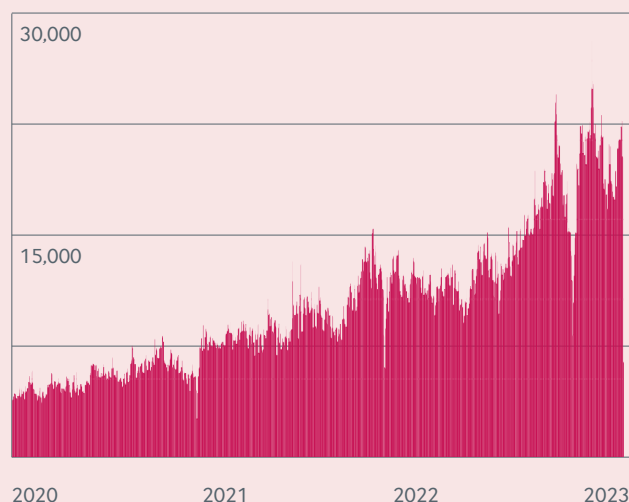
## Content Analysis

ISD analysed the volume of content containing keywords related to nine topics of interest: conspiracy theories, ethnonationalism and hate, 5G, Irish politics, health, immigration, climate, Russia-Ukraine conflict, and LGBTQ+.

The most discussed topic in the period analysed was health, with discussions mostly centred around the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent measures introduced to control the spread of the virus. The second most-popular topic was Irish politics, which was widely discussed throughout the analysed period. The third most-discussed topic was immigration, which was predominantly discussed following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and again at the start of the anti-immigration protests in November 2022.

An analysis of the volume of content over time reveals clear spikes in activity around key moments related to each topic. Discussions around health, and particularly about COVID-19, were dominant in the period between March 2020 and February 2022 and then diminished after all restrictions ended. Despite the decrease in volume, however, health-related discussions have stayed

**Figure 5:** This graph shows volume over time of all content posted by the accounts in the dataset between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023. The totals include original tweets, replies and retweets



**Table 3:** Breakdown of topic totals, percentage figures for each topic in respect of all content, and number of active accounts per topic on Twitter (X)

Topic	Total content	Percentage of total content *	Accounts	Original content	Accounts posting original content
Conspiracy	196.2K	1.67	1,103	75.1K	960
Ethnonationalism	6,059	0.05	693	3,255	479
5G	3,549	0.03	451	1,787	266
Irish politics	1.01M	8.58	1,150	471.2K	1,115
Health	1.67M	14.19	1,148	514.4K	1,107
Immigration	619.9K	5.27	1,155	213.8K	1,097
Climate	122.86K	1	1,099	39.1K	944
RUS/ UKR	396.87K	3.37	1,137	112.7K	1,011
LGBTQ+	154.24K	1.31	1,128	51.2K	981
<b>Total topic content **</b>	<b>3,762,583</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1,157</b>	<b>1,321,910</b>	<b>1,141</b>
<b>Total content ***</b>	<b>11,775,141</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,157</b>	<b>5,221,138</b>	<b>1,141</b>

\* The percentage refers to the percentage of posts containing that specific topic over the total number of posts published by the accounts analysed (i.e. 11.7M)

\*\* Total of posts containing at least one of the nine topics in the timeframe between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

\*\*\* Total of posts published by all Twitter (X) accounts analysed in the timeframe between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

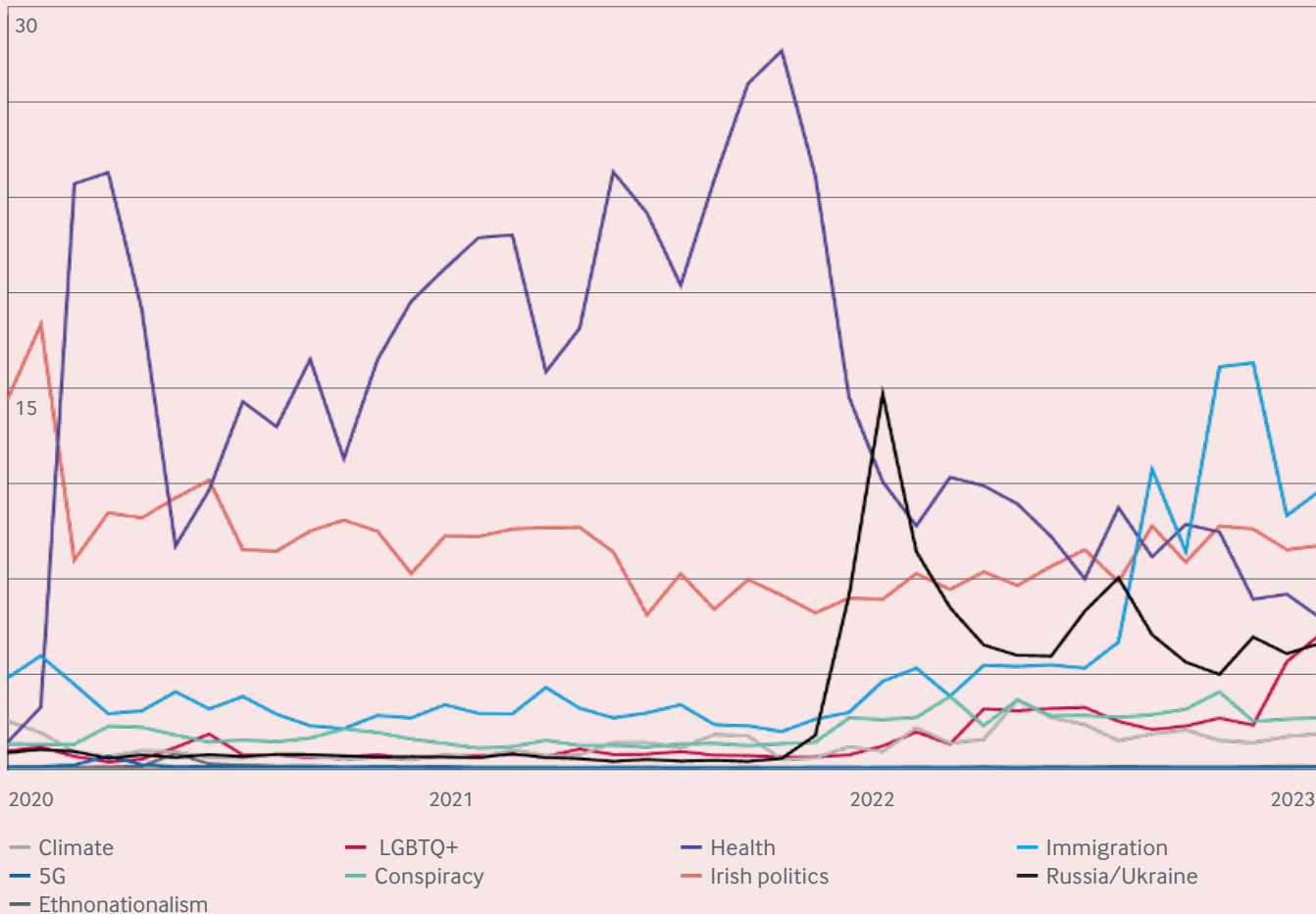


relevant to this community and still represented over 6% of the total volume of content posted by these accounts in 2023.

The topic of immigration spiked in the aftermath of the anti-immigration protests reaching over 12% of the total discussions on Twitter (X) in November 2022, and 16% in January 2023.

Another prominent topic was the invasion of Ukraine. Discussions around the Russia-Ukraine conflict spiked in February 2022 following the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and reached 15% of the total volume of content, but rapidly decreased to less than 5% by July 2022. The topic gained relevance again in October 2022 when a considerable number of discussions included keywords connected to both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the topic of immigration.

**Figure 6:** Percentage of conversations including the nine topics over the total volume of content



# Facebook Platform Analysis

Founded in 2004, Facebook transformed social media in a few short years, making the platform a place for people of all ages as well as businesses and celebrities. To this day, it is still the most popular social media platform in the world and the most visited platform in Ireland.<sup>9 10</sup>

Facebook, and its parent company Meta, have been heavily criticised over the years for their failure to tackle mis- and disinformation, hate speech and conspiracy theories on the platform. Previous research from ISD showed how mis- and disinformation about COVID-19 was allowed to flourish on the platform, despite the content clearly violating its policies.<sup>11</sup>

In Ireland, ISD has previously shown how conspiracy communities on Facebook grew significantly during the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> The following analysis aims to add to this research and explore the activity on the platform between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023.

## Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Facebook and found:

- 146 accounts (64 groups, 82 pages) that posted a total of 382,111 posts between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023;
- Although Facebook is still a popular platform within this ecosystem, trends in numbers of posts and interaction rates indicate this popularity may be waning;
- Most pages and groups were created before the year 2020 but group membership and page likes increased by hundreds of thousands in the years since 2020;
- Discussions about health were the most popular on the platform, discussed in 20% of the total conversation. This was followed by Irish politics (9.5%) and immigration (5.4%); and
- From 2022 onwards, there is a clear trend of users within this ecosystem moving away from discussions about health and leaning into conversations about immigration.

## Accounts

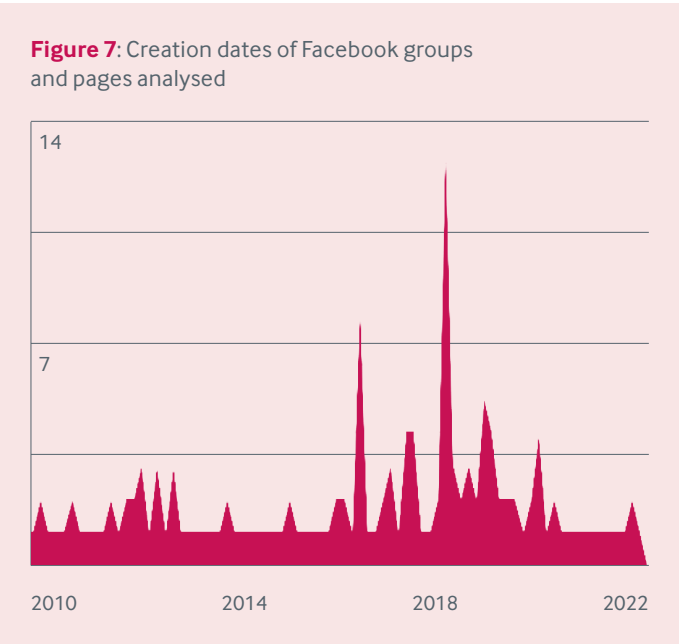
ISD analysed the content of 64 Facebook groups and 82 Facebook pages. All Facebook groups were standalone entities, not connected to other pages, individuals or organisations. 27 of the 82 Facebook pages were standalone entities, while the remainder were pages associated with alternative media organisations, individuals, organisations, cross-platform accounts or political parties (see table 4 below).

**Table 4:** Categories of accounts included in Facebook analysis

Category	Number of pages/groups
Alternative media	11
Cross-platform accounts	4
Facebook group	64
Facebook page	27
Individual	11
Organisation	10
Political party (incl. regional)	19
Grand Total	146

Account Creation Date

Figure 7 below shows the creation dates for the 146 Facebook groups and pages analysed. 35 were created between 2010 and 2015. Between 2016 and 2019, 64 were created, and in the years between 2020 and 2022, a further 47 were created. Two significant peaks can be seen, one in December 2018, when the newly founded Yellow Vest movement created a handful of Facebook pages for regional entities. Another peak, in December 2019, can be explained by the National Party similarly creating pages for its regional offshoots. The National Party is a minor far-right political party that has campaigned for the deportation of non-ethnic Irish people, called for the reinstatement of the death penalty, and frequently promoted anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-immigrant slurs and narratives.<sup>13</sup>



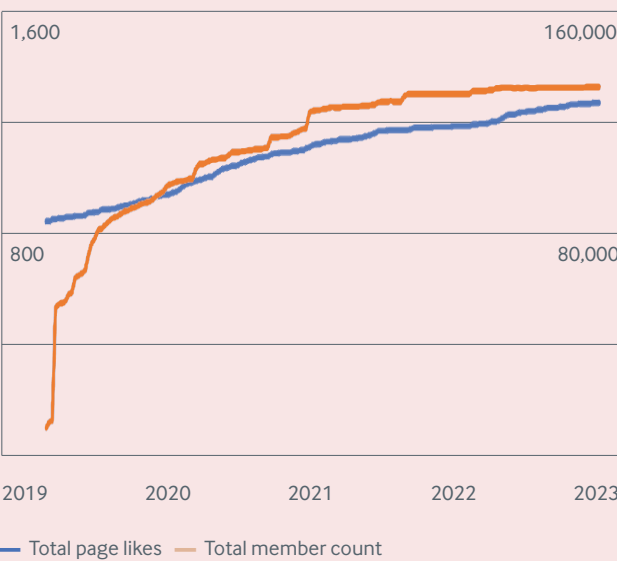
Profile Metrics

Table 5 details the range of page likes, group membership and the activity levels of the pages and groups examined. The page with the highest number of likes, with over 570k, was the alternative media site TheLiberal.ie.<sup>14</sup> TheLiberal.ie was also the page with the most interactions in the dataset, receiving over 4.5 million interactions during the time period. The page with the next highest number of likes was the Facebook page for Yellow Vest Ireland. In third place was a page that describes its aim as raising awareness of corruption, but which was found to regularly

**Table 5:** Metrics related to page likes, group membership and interactions

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of page likes	1,844	575,789	159
Number of group members	1,139	18,974	72
Number of page posts	321	17,183	1
Number of group posts	1,982	17,598	84
Total interactions (groups)	8,587	645,131	180
Total interactions (pages)	6,284	4,502,495	4

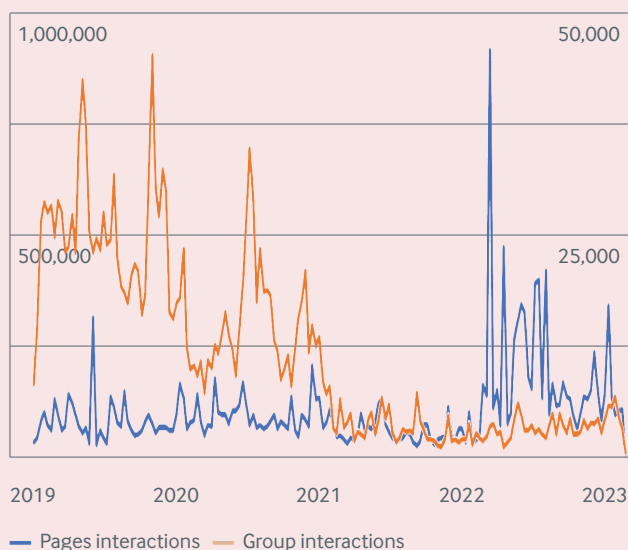
**Figure 8:** The growth of the membership of Facebook Groups (right axis) and likes of Facebook Pages (left axis)



share false and misleading information, while in fourth place was the page for the alternative media outlet Gript.

The Facebook group for Yellow Vest Ireland was the group with the most members, at just under 19k. Following that was a Facebook group that regularly spreads misinformation about climate and agriculture, while the following three groups were all created to discuss 5G and similar topics. The Yellow Vest Ireland group also garnered the highest interactions during the time period.

Figure 8 shows the growth in both page likes and group membership since January 2020. Collectively, the 82 Facebook pages analysed gained 463k likes since January

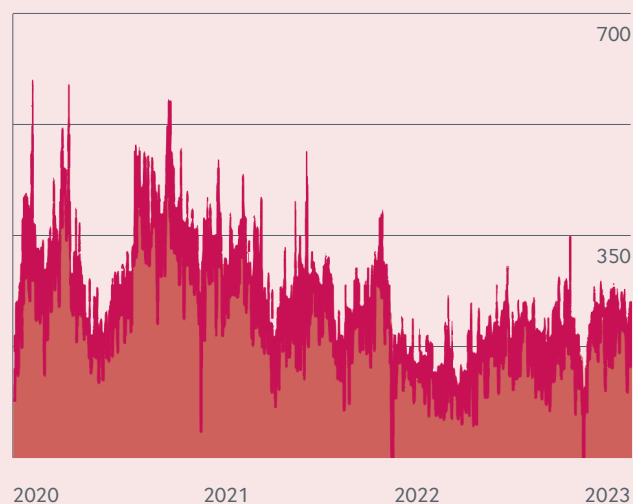
**Figure 9:** Weekly interactions in Facebook groups (right axis) and pages (left axis)

2020. The 64 Facebook groups gained 133k members during the same period.

A clear and swift increase in group membership can be seen in the first months of 2020 and particularly in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend is reflective of previous research undertaken by ISD into Irish conspiracy communities on Facebook, which also noted a significant increase in group membership during 2020.<sup>15</sup> Although difficult to determine a definitive reason for this increase, it could be due to the increased time people spent indoors and online during lockdowns.

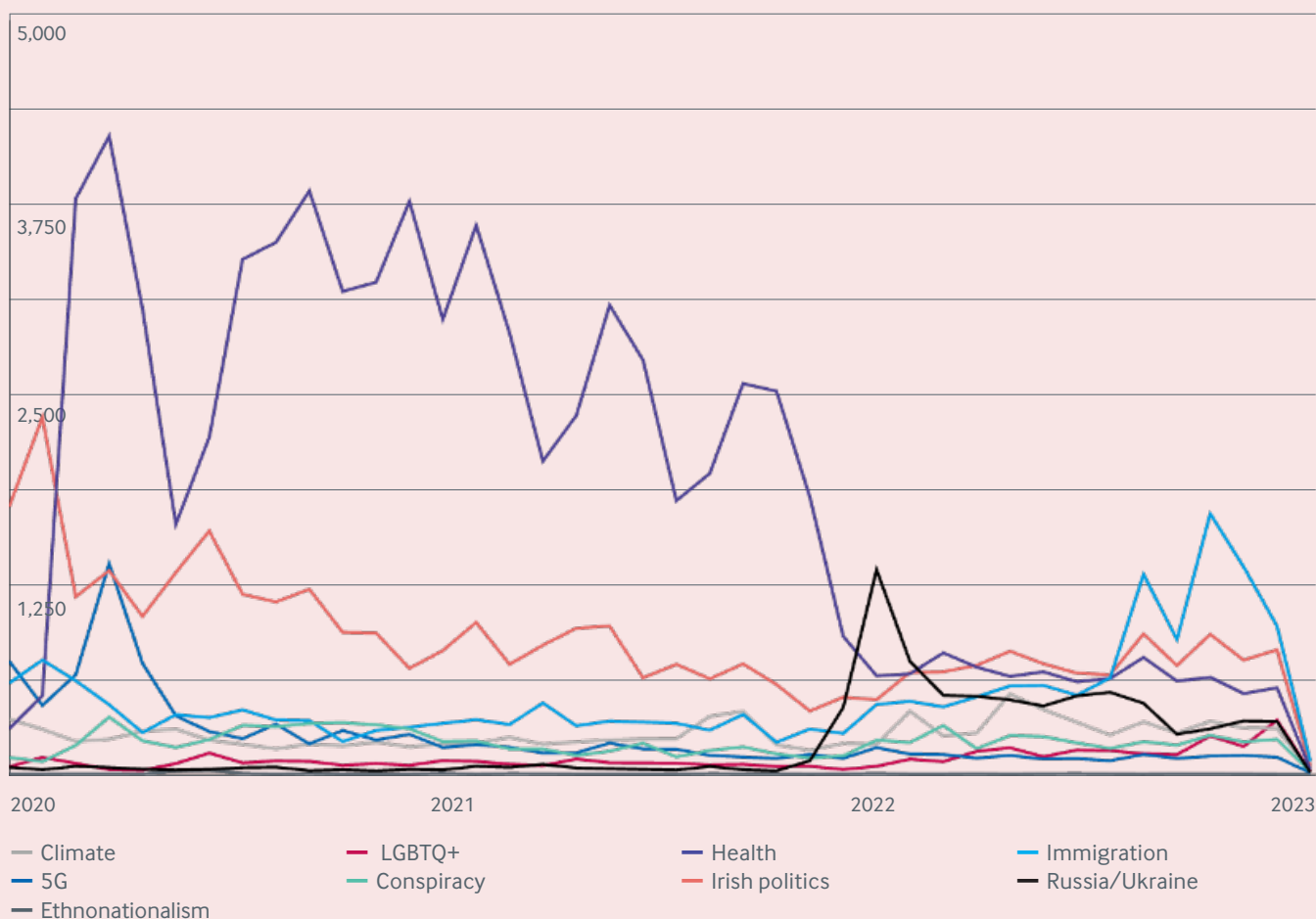
Figure 9 below shows the weekly interaction rates on posts within groups or posted by pages between January 2020 and April 2023. A spike can be seen in interactions in Facebook groups in March 2020, coinciding with COVID-19 lockdowns, again reflective of previous research undertaken by ISD.<sup>16</sup> Interactions within groups remained relatively high throughout 2020, with periodical spikes in engagement. However, this begins to decline significantly from mid-2021. This may be due to the increased role that Telegram began to play within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem at this time.

An increase can also be seen in page interactions at the beginning of the pandemic. Interaction levels remained relatively steady during 2021, decreasing slightly in

**Figure 10:** Volume of Facebook posts over time (by day)**Table 6:** Types of topics seen within Facebook posts

Topic	Posts	Percentage of posts	Accounts
Conspiracy	8,478	2.2	127
Ethnonationalism	145	0.04	50
5G	9,882	2.5	76
Irish politics	36,487	9.5	136
Health	77,900	20	136
Immigration	20,651	5.4	141
Climate	10,643	2.8	128
RUS/UKR	8,458	2.2	120
LGBTQ+	3,978	1	123
<b>Total of topic content</b>	<b>144,876</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Total content</b>	<b>382,111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>146</b>

early 2022 before increasing to their highest level in June 2022. Analysis shows that this spike was associated with one page in particular. This page was set up to accompany a new alternative media outlet, IrishPeople.ie, that disseminates false and conspiratorial content.<sup>17</sup> In between posting content related to conspiracy theories, this page also regularly reposts viral video content. The spike in June 2022 coincides with a video posted by this page going viral and receiving over 12 million views.

**Figure 11:** The volume of topic discussions on Facebook by month

### Content Analysis

In total, ISD collected 382,111 posts from 146 groups and pages. Figure 10 shows the volume of posts per day, with the highest spike reached in the earliest months of the pandemic. A short lull in posts followed in the autumn of 2020 before increasing again during the winter. A steady but slightly declining trend can be seen throughout 2021 and a sharp decrease again from the start of 2022, when all pandemic restrictions were lifted. Since then, posts have increased again slightly but have not reached the volume seen during the height of the pandemic. On average, the number of posts on Facebook from the pages and groups in this set decreased from an average of 381 per day in 2020 to 254 in 2022.

Table 6 below outlines the numbers and proportions of Facebook posts that mentioned a keyword related to

one of the nine topics analysed. In total, 38% of the 382k posts collected referenced one or more of the topics.

Health was the most popular topic on Facebook, mentioned in 20% of all the posts collected. This was followed by Irish politics, with just under 10%, and immigration at 5.4%.

Figure 11 shows the popularity of the topics on Facebook over time. Discussions about health dominated the platform until the beginning of 2022. A clear spike can also be seen in 5G conversations in the early months of the pandemic (see 5G topic analysis for more). From the beginning of 2022, conversations began to focus on the invasion of Ukraine, with climate discussions also increasing. The last few months of 2022 and the start of 2023 show a clear trend towards conversations about immigration.

# Instagram Platform Analysis

Instagram was founded in 2010 as an image-sharing platform. After being acquired by Facebook’s parent company Meta in 2012, the site grew to become one of the most popular in the world.<sup>18</sup> Over the years, Instagram added features originally associated with other apps, such as disappearing “Stories” (a feature previously made popular by Snapchat), or “Reels,” a take on TikTok’s algorithmically-powered feed of short video clips. These features make Instagram fun for users, but challenging for researchers trying to understand how the platform is used for the spread of false information.<sup>19</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Instagram emerged as a platform where mis- and disinformation was being served to its users.<sup>20</sup> The QAnon conspiracy theory movement became so popular on the platform that the term “Pastel Q” was used to describe the way the movement had wound itself around the Instagram aesthetic.<sup>21</sup>

The role of Instagram within the Irish mis- or disinformation ecosystem has been underexplored, a gap ISD is filling with this analysis.

## Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Instagram and found:

- 27 accounts that have posted a total of 18,845 posts between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023;
- Although the number of Instagram accounts active within this ecosystem is quite low, a small number of accounts have an outsized influence and trends regarding the number of posts and interaction rates indicate that Instagram is growing in popularity;
- Most accounts analysed became active on the platform during or after 2020; and
- Health was the most popular topic discussed on the platform, followed by Irish politics and immigration.

## Accounts

A total of 27 public Instagram accounts were included in ISD’s analysis, with the majority of these associated with individuals. Organisations, alternative media, political parties and cross-platform accounts also featured in the dataset (see table 7 below).

**Table 7:** Categories of accounts included in Instagram analysis

Category	Accounts
Alternative media	5
Cross-platform accounts	3
Individual	10
Organisation	7
Political party (incl. regional)	2
Grand Total	27

## Account Creation Date

As it is not possible to view the creation date of accounts on Instagram, analysis was instead conducted on the date of the first post on each of the 27 accounts. Seven accounts started their activity between 2015-2019, 11 during 2020 and the remaining nine accounts during 2021 and 2022 (see figure 12 below).

## Profile Metrics

Table 8 below details the range of account followers, page posts and interactions of the 27 Instagram accounts analysed. The page with the most followers,



with 24,186 was RM.TV (see below for more details about this account). The account for Gript shared the highest number of posts during the timeframe analysed and also gained the most interactions (over 500k).

**Table 8:** Range of account followers, page posts and interactions

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of account followers	1,270	24,186	35
Number of page posts members	144	9,225	6
Total interactions	7,282	502,272	16

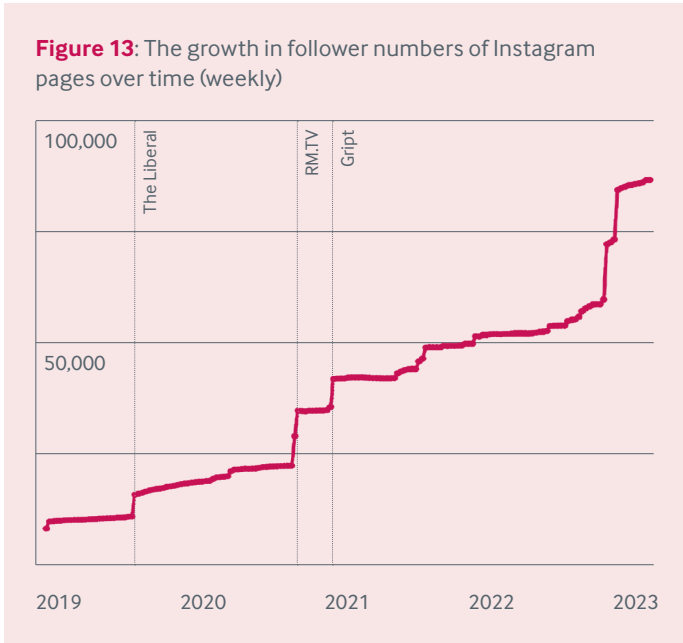
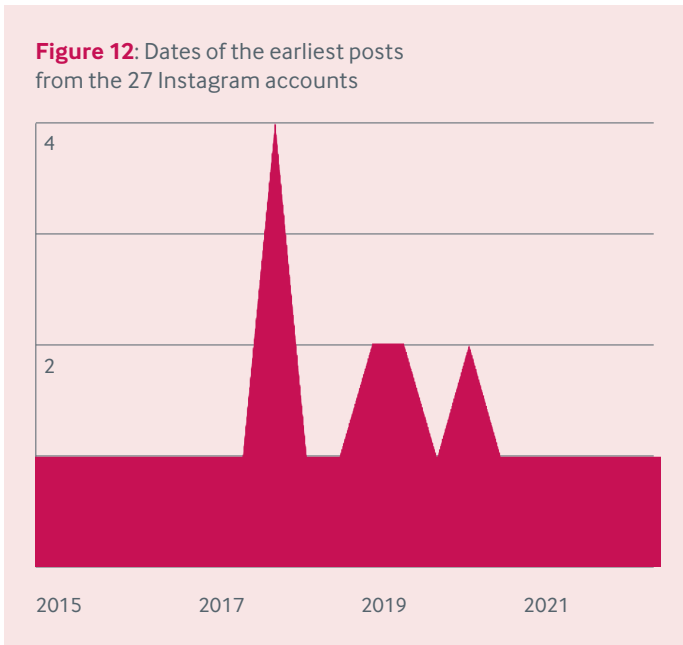
In total, between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023, the 27 Instagram accounts analysed gained more than 82,000 followers. Figure 13 below shows the total growth of followers across the 27 accounts since the beginning of the timeframe. The annotations indicate the first time an account posted on the platform (in the case of RM.TV), or the week in which accounts were absorbed into Crowdtangle’s system.<sup>22</sup>

In the first three months of 2023, the accounts gained a total of 28,000 followers, almost one third of the total followers over the entire timeframe. This period coincides with anti-immigrant mobilisation around the country, with some of the most active Instagram accounts in ISD’s dataset involved in supporting this effort (see immigration topic analysis for more detail).

Interactions on posts (see figure 14 below) have increased, from an average of 4,058 per week in 2020, to 13,500 in 2022. Three significant spikes in interaction rates can be attributed to RM.TV, on the weeks of 9 May and 11 July 2021 and between 2 and 16 January 2022. RM.TV’s mode of operation involves sharing videos and photos from uncredited sources. The content shared regularly shows acts of violence or aggression (such as street fights) and, since 2022, the account has been a central node in spreading false and misleading claims about migrants (see immigration analysis) and promoting protests.

Content Analysis

In total, ISD collected 18,845 posts from the 27 accounts. Figure 15 below displays these posts over the entire timeframe. The number of posts has increased over time,



from an average of 83 per week in 2020, to 123 per week in 2022. This increase is to be expected, as new accounts were also set up within this period. Taken together, this shows a clear trend towards Instagram growing in popularity.

Table 9 below outlines the numbers and proportions of Instagram posts that mentioned a keyword referencing one of the nine topics analysed. In total, 35% of the 18.8k posts collected referenced one or more of the topics.

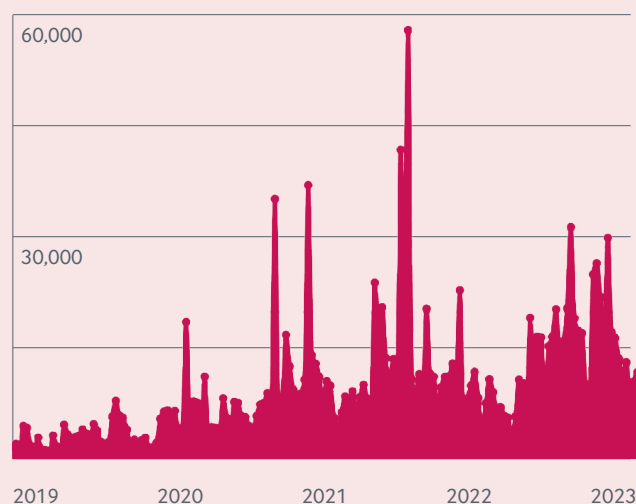
The most prolific Instagram accounts included in the topic analysis were Gript (with over 4,000 posts mentioning one or more topics) followed by the account of the Irish Freedom Party.<sup>23</sup> Also included was the account of Graham Carey who is a supporter and organiser of anti-immigration protests and has a history of expressing antisemitic remarks online, posting content in support of conspiracy theories about COVID-19 and asylum seekers and promoting far-right ideologies.<sup>24</sup> In February 2023 Carey was arrested and charged with incitement to hatred over his social media posts related to migrants and asylum seekers.<sup>25</sup>

The fourth most-prolific account belongs to an individual who ISD are not naming as the individual is likely still under 18. The fifth most prolific account belonged to the National Party.

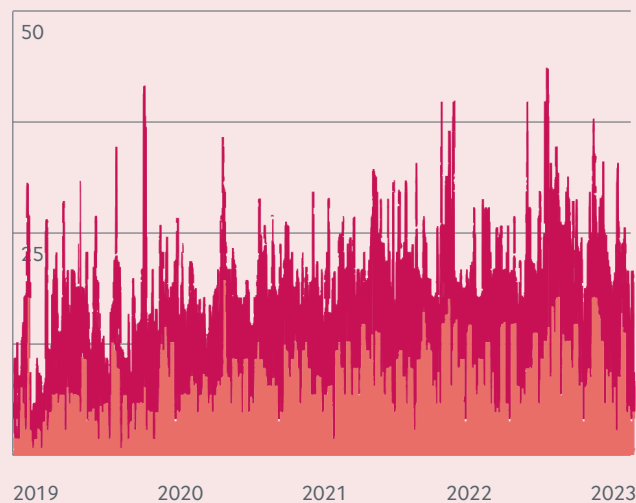
**Table 9:** Types of topics seen within Instagram posts

Topic	Posts	Percentage of posts	Accounts
Conspiracy	255	1.4	17
Ethnonationalism	19	0.1	6
5G	6	0.03	2
Irish politics	1,556	8.3	22
Health	3,175	16.8	23
Immigration	1,314	7	20
Climate	350	1.9	13
RUS/UKR	371	2	16
LGBTQ+	665	3.5	15
<b>Total of topic content</b>	<b>6,651</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Total content</b>	<b>18,845</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>

**Figure 14:** Total interactions over time

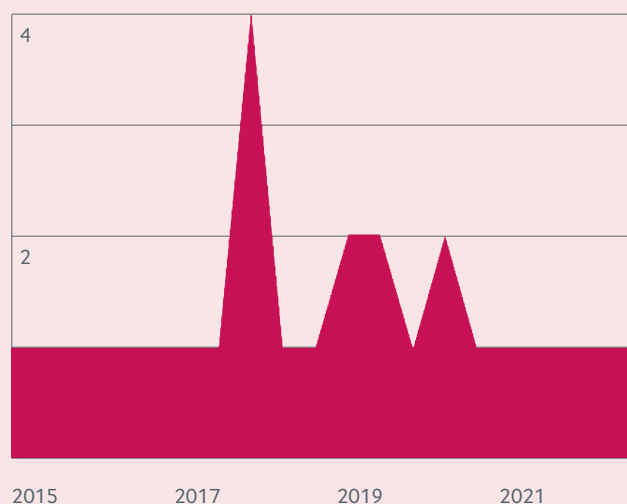


**Figure 15:** Total posts over time (per day)

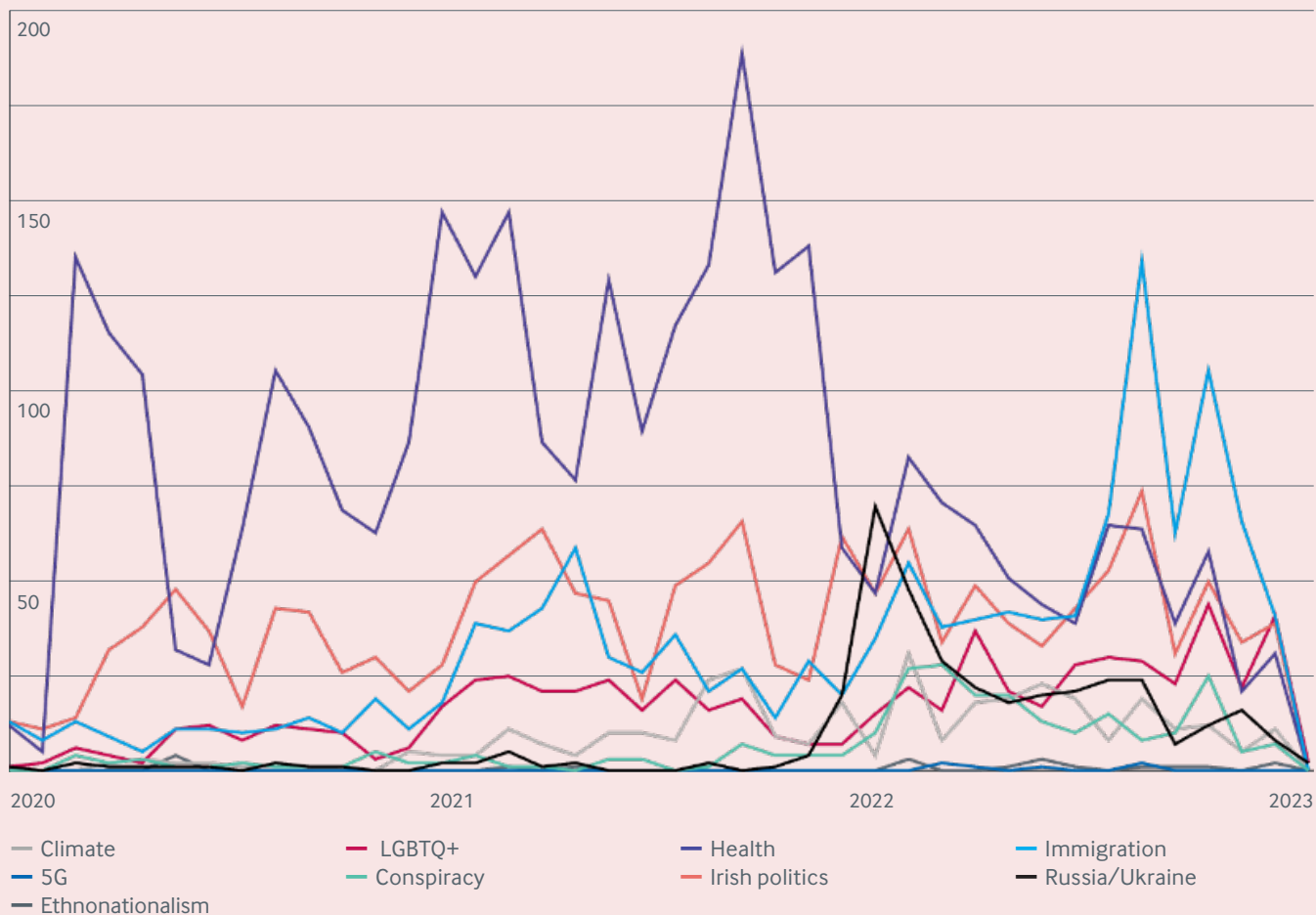


Health emerged as the most popular topic, mentioned in 16.8% of posts, followed by Irish politics (8.3%) and immigration (7%). Similar to trends seen on other platforms, discussions about health dominated on the platform during the pandemic years. Immigration conversations then became the most popular at the end of 2022 and start of 2023. LGBTQ+ narratives also began to increase at this time.

**Figure 16:** The volume of topic discussions on Instagram by month



**Figure 16:** The volume of topic discussions on Instagram by month



## Telegram Platform Analysis

Telegram is a messenger app with platform-like qualities. Released in 2013, Telegram surpassed 500 million users in January 2021 when it experienced a sign-up surge in response due to growing anxieties over privacy concerns and claims of perceived censorship on platforms like Twitter (X), WhatsApp and Facebook.<sup>26</sup> As of 2023, it now has more than 700 million monthly active users.<sup>27</sup>

Telegram's limited content moderation policies and aversion to removing content has garnered it a reputation for being the platform-of-choice for activists, media organisations and dissidents in numerous undemocratic or repressive countries.

In recent years, Telegram has become a key online space for extremists, conspiracy theorists and disinformation actors. The same hands-off approach to content moderation, which only bans content that promotes violence on public channels or distributes illegal pornographic material, has contributed to Telegram now serving as a central communication tool used by various extremist groups and communities across the globe.

Research from ISD in 2020 examined how the platform is used by white supremacists to glorify terrorism and share guides that help individuals prepare for violence.<sup>28</sup> Research from ISD in 2021 focused on Ireland explored how Telegram evolved from a fringe platform used by far-right groups, influencers and supporters to become one of the main online spaces many of these entities use to communicate, promote content, spread mis- and disinformation, organise and mobilise.<sup>29</sup>

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Telegram and found:

- Telegram plays a significant role within this ecosystem. ISD identified 111 Telegram accounts linked to actors in Ireland. Between 1 January 2020, and 3 April 2023, these channels published over 961K posts;
- Telegram usage within this ecosystem has grown exponentially. In 2020, 23 channels published 13,995 posts, averaging 38 posts per day. In 2022, 102 channels published 419,650 posts, averaging 1,150 posts per day. 54% of all accounts within this ecosystem were created in 2021, illustrating how the platform has grown in popularity for mis/ disinformation actors;
- Of the 961K posts, 20% (192K posts) referenced at least one of the nine topics analysed. The most popular topics were health (116,526 posts), followed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict (31,791 posts) and immigration (22,196 posts);
- Engagement is varied but, for many individuals and organisations, Telegram is a highly popular and useful platform. The World Doctors Alliance has over 115K subscribers. The group's channel, as well as the channel for one of its founding members, Dr Dolores Cahill, receives on average over 10,000 views per post;
- Regarding health, Telegram was a key space for the discussion of COVID-19 and production and promotion of false, misleading and conspiratorial claims about the coronavirus and wider pandemic response among high-performing channels like the World Doctor's Alliance and Dr Cahill;
- Telegram accounts within the Irish ecosystem post, on average, about twice as much original content than content they forwarded from other accounts;
- Within this ecosystem, Telegram serves as a conduit for Russian state-backed media. ISD discovered one account that operates primarily for sharing content from RT;
- Telegram is a petri dish for conspiracy theories and misinformation. This section features a case study tracking how one chat group, set up initially to discuss COVID-19, evolved into a space that hosted false and misleading anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ+ discussions; and

- British far-right activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson) is highly popular within the Irish ecosystem, as evidenced by the large quantity of Telegram content posted by Robinson, predominantly featuring anti-immigrant mis- and disinformation, shared within this dataset.

### Accounts

ISD identified 111 Telegram accounts active within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem; 94 channels and 17 chat groups. Between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023, these accounts published a total of 961,108 posts. Of the 961,108 posts, 124,721 were image-only posts.

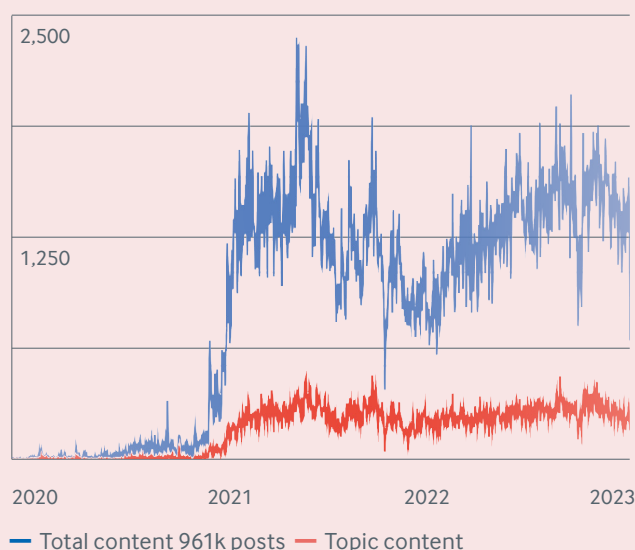
Out of the 961,108 posts, 192,408 (20%) referenced at least one of the nine topics analysed. It's worth noting that, due to technical limitations, some post content, such as image-only posts, were not captured in the topic sample, meaning the 20% figure is likely higher in reality. On Telegram, the most popular topic was, by a large degree, health (116,526 posts), followed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict (31,791 posts) and immigration (22,196 posts).

The volume over time graph below illustrates the spread of these 961K total posts (seen in blue on the graph) and 192K topic posts (seen in red) since 2020. Across both samples, it's immediately obvious that Telegram usage within this ecosystem grew significantly from 2021 onwards. Only 1.5% of the total 961K posts were published in 2020.

Regarding the full sample of 961K posts, in 2020 there were just 23 channels from this dataset active on Telegram and they published 13,995 posts, averaging 38 posts per day. In 2021, the number of active channels grew to 74 and, collectively, they published 399,340 posts, averaging 1,094 posts per day.

In 2022 the number of active channels grew to 102. These channels published 419,670 posts throughout the year, averaging 1,150 per day. Data collection for 2023 ended in early April with 128,103 posts from 98 active channels. Though the number of active channels decreased, collectively, these channels averaged 1,377 posts per day showing how, year on year, Telegram usage has grown within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

**Figure 17:** Volume over time for 961K posts (labelled "Total Content") and 192K posts (labelled "Topic content") published by 111 Telegram accounts between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023. The graph includes all content posted by the accounts i.e. original and forwarded posts from other channels.



This trend was observed within the topic sample of 192K posts too. In 2020 there were only 21 channels from this ecosystem active on Telegram and, collectively, they published 3,146 posts, averaging 9 posts per day. In 2021, the number of active channels grew to 72 and, throughout the year, they published 78,311 messages related to one of the nine analysed topics, averaging 215 posts per day.

In 2022, the number of active channels grew once more to 101 and these channels published 85,577 posts throughout the year, averaging 234 posts per day. In 2023, up to the end of data collection, 94 channels were active and, between them, they published 25,212 posts, averaging a further increase of 271 posts per day.

Telegram channels within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem produce more original content than content forwarded from other channels. Across both the total and topic-matching Telegram samples, original posts on channels and chat groups made up 69% (659,466 posts) of the total activity and 68% (130,257 posts) of the posts that referenced one of

the topics analysed. Interestingly, our Twitter (X) analysis found the opposite. Most of the activity of Twitter (X) accounts analysed consisted of retweets.

**Table 9:** Type of content posted by the 111 accounts analysed between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

	Original posts	Forwarded posts	Total
All content	659,466	301,642	961,108
Content containing topics	130,257	62,151	192,408

Account Metrics

ISD analysed 111 Telegram accounts in total. The breakdown of the types of accounts can be seen in the table below.

**Table 10:** Types of accounts found on Telegram associated with the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Category	Accounts
Individual	30
Cross-platform accounts*	25
Telegram channel**	17
Telegram chat group**	15
Alternative media	11
Organisation	10
Political party	3

\* These are actors who are typically anonymous but operate linked social media accounts across multiple platforms

\*\* These entities were Telegram channels/chat groups only and not linked to any external organisation or named individual elsewhere online or offline

The level of subscribers/members for Telegram channels and chat groups, the number of posts, and the average level of views per post for this cohort of users on Telegram varies considerably. By their nature, channels and chat groups operate differently. Channels tend to have just one or a small core team of administrator users who publish posts versus chat groups where any member can publish posts. This means that, while chat groups may have smaller numbers of members compared to some highly popular channels with large subscriber figures, chat groups often tend to publish larger volumes of posts.

For example, of the 961K total sample of Telegram content, 94 channels were responsible for 43.9% (422,053 posts) versus 17 chat groups that were responsible for 56.1% (539,055 posts).

Five channels have over 10,000 subscribers while five channels have under 100 subscribers. The channel with the largest subscriber base was the World Doctors Alliance, a group founded by Dr Dolores Cahill that has a history of promoting false information and conspiracy theories about COVID-19, with 115,218 subscribers.<sup>30</sup> The median number of subscribers across the sample of channels was 905.

11 channels have published over 10,000 posts since 1 January 2020 (total content, not just topic-matching content) whilst the median level of posts published across all channels was 1,862 posts.

To calculate the average level of views per post for Telegram channels, ISD measured the number of views for the most-recent 1,000 posts for each channel (for channels with fewer than 1,000 posts, their full message sample was analysed). The average level of views on posts varied across channels.

Four channels received on average over 10,000 views per post: Keith Woods, World Doctors Alliance, Dr Dolores Cahill, and Tiger Reborn, an account owned and operated by Ben Gilroy.<sup>31</sup> Five channels received an average of fewer than 100 views per post. The median number of views per post for channels was 755 views.

Regarding Telegram chat groups, while the number of members was generally lower compared to channel subscriber figures, these entities tend to be more active than channels. Three chat groups have over 1,000 subscribers while the chat group with the smallest user base had 229 members.

The chat group with the largest membership was Ireland on Lockdown with 4,970 members, whilst the median number of members across the subset of channels was 471 members.

Four chat groups have published over 30,000 posts since 1 January 2020 (total content, not just topic-matching content), including one chat group that published 244,797 posts. The median level of posts across all chat groups was 11,401 posts.



**Table 11:** Metrics for Telegram channels and chat groups within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of channel subscribers	905	115,218	40
Number of chat group members	471	4,970	229
Number of channel posts	1,862	100,667	4
Number of chat group posts	11,401	244,797	479
Level of views per post*	755	19,401	5

\*These figures are based on average of most-recent 1,000 posts per channel

Lastly, an analysis of the most prolific Telegram channels found that just eight channels were responsible for 210,097 posts, effectively half (49.7%) of total content for channels, while just two chats were responsible for 344,336 posts or 63.8% of total content for chat groups.

Notably, analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Twitter (X) made a similar finding too and, external to this research project, separate research regarding COVID-19 misinformation found that a small

proportion of users were responsible for the majority of false and misleading claims online.<sup>32</sup>

### Account Creation Date

An analysis of the account creation date found that the bulk of the 111 Telegram channels and chat groups included in this dataset were created since 2020. Four accounts were created in 2019, 23 accounts created in 2020, and 60 accounts were created in 2021. Lastly, 24 accounts were created in 2022.

54% of all accounts within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem were created in 2021. Three months in particular saw a surge in account creations - 11 new accounts, the most of any month, were created in January, February and May 2021. There are several potential explanations for this.

In January 2021, privacy concerns arose after WhatsApp amended its terms of service and users feared their data would be shared with WhatsApp's parent company Meta. In response, many users left the app.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, following the violent events in Washington DC on 6 January 2021 - where a mixture of conspiracy theorists, supporters of then-President Trump and extremist groups stormed

**Table 12:** Breakdown of topic totals, percentage figures for each topic in respect of all content, and number of active accounts per topic on Telegram

Topic	Total content	Percentage of total content *	Accounts	Original content	Accounts posting original content
Conspiracy	17,076	1.78	103	9,650	98
Ethnonationalism	601	0.06	60	407	44
5G	1,425	0.15	58	809	44
Irish politics	14,000	1.46	104	9,339	98
Health	116,526	12.12	108	76,247	106
Immigration	22,196	2.31	106	13,736	102
Climate	6,652	0.69	98	3,905	86
RUS/ UKR	31,791	3.31	99	25,165	91
LGBTQ+	8,861	0.92	100	5,394	91
<b>Total topic content **</b>	<b>192,408</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>130,257</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Total content ***</b>	<b>961,108</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>659,466</b>	<b>111</b>

\* The percentage refers to the percentage of posts containing that specific topic over the total number of posts published by the accounts analysed (i.e. 961K)

\*\* Total of posts containing at least one of the nine topics in the timeframe between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

\*\*\* Total of posts published by all Telegram accounts analysed in the timeframe between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

the Capitol and tried to prevent the peaceful transfer of power to Joe Biden - Facebook and Twitter (X) removed thousands of extremist and conspiracy theorist accounts who supported and promoted the insurrection.<sup>34</sup>

As a result, buoyed by fears of 'big tech' censorship, during this period there was a mass migration to platforms like Telegram and Gab.<sup>35</sup> Extremists, supporters of conspiracy theories like QAnon and many prominent far-right figures were among those to flock to Telegram.<sup>36</sup> It is therefore possible that this may have influenced some actors within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem to create accounts on the platform throughout January and February 2021.

The surge in May account creations is linked to a network of county-specific chat groups launched during mid-2021 to discuss COVID-19.

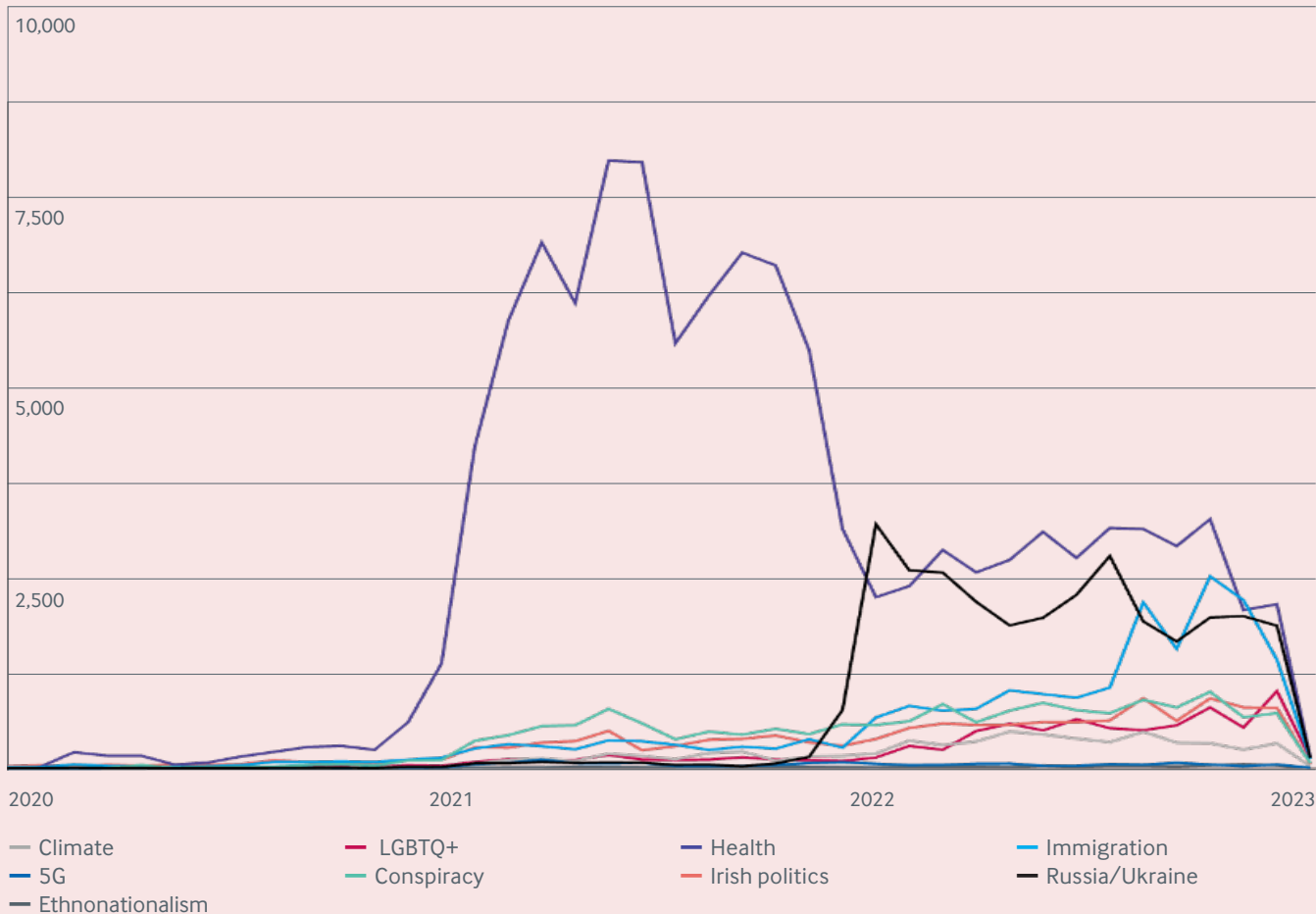
### Content Analysis

ISD analysed the volume of content containing keywords related to nine topics. In total, 192,408 Telegram posts, 20% of the total Telegram content, referenced at least one of these topics.

On Telegram, the most popular topic was, by a large degree, health (116,526 posts), primarily COVID-19. The second and third most-popular topics were the Russia-Ukraine conflict (31,791 posts) and immigration (22,196 posts). Table 12 below shows the full breakdown of Telegram discussions per topic, dissected further to show the volume and percentage of each topic that contained original content (versus forwarded content), as well as the same for accounts active in each topic.

So, for example, ISD identified 17,076 Telegram posts that referenced the topic of conspiracy theories. Of

**Figure 18:** Volume over time of Telegram conversations referencing the nine topics analysed (broken down by month)



those 17,076 posts, 9,650 were original posts published by actors within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem and 7,426 posts were forwarded from other channels. 17,076 posts equate to 1.78% of the total 961K posts in our Telegram dataset.

Of the total 111 Telegram accounts analysed, 103 were active within this conspiracy topic. Of those 103 accounts, 98 published original content about the conspiracy topic whilst five only forwarded content from others regarding this topic.

A volume-over-time graph for topic content on Telegram illustrates numerous spikes in conversations at various points from 1 January 2020, onwards. The health topic (seen on the orange line in Figure 18) dominated discussions throughout 2021 and into early 2022 when the Russia-Ukraine conflict (pink line) was briefly the most discussed topic. Health discussions remained high throughout 2022 and began to drop off from the beginning of 2023. From around October 2022, the immigration topic (blue line) began to rise.

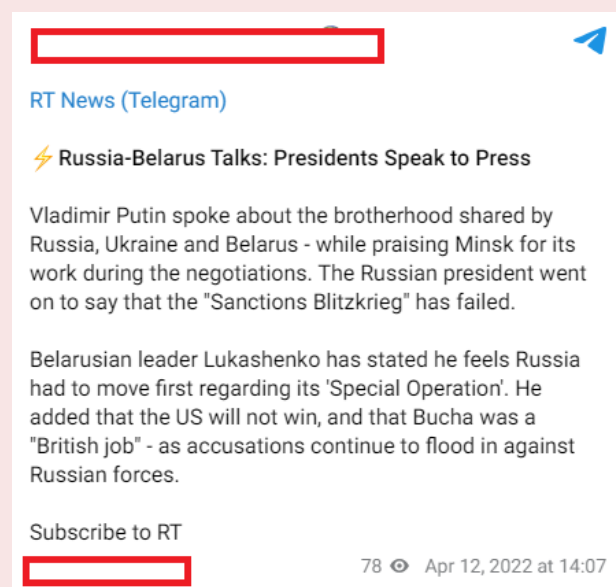
### Telegram Serves as a Conduit for Russian State-backed Media

On Telegram, 31,791 posts referenced the Russia-Ukraine conflict, making it the second most-popular topic discussed among Irish actors on Telegram, though over half of these posts (17,510) were published by just one channel; RIPT News Media Ireland. This channel is part of a network of accounts linked to Off-Grid Ireland which is run by Gavin Lowbridge.<sup>37</sup> RIPT News Media Ireland operates as a feed for sharing content from Russia's state-backed news outlet RT.

RT has a history of routinely promoting false and misleading information about Ukraine.<sup>38</sup> ISD has produced multiple pieces of research that have documented how RT has published content that supports Russia's invasion, denies the role Russia's military played in atrocities such as the massacre in Bucha, and provides ongoing coverage of the conflict.<sup>39</sup>

From barely mentioning Ukraine or Russia prior to the invasion, since 10 February 2022 this Telegram channel has published thousands of posts referencing the invasion, consistently linking to RT content throughout this period.

**Image 1:** RIPT News Media Ireland Telegram post linking to RT news article featuring a false claim that the 2022 Bucha massacre in Ukraine was a "British job"



After the invasion began, numerous mainstream social media companies banned or blocked RT from their platforms following the imposition of sanctions from the European Union. On 4 March, Telegram announced it too would block RT from the platform for users with EU-based phone numbers in line with these sanctions.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, that is the same date this channel started to link to RT Ukraine-related content at scale. Though RT's channels may be blocked for EU Telegram users, the activity of this channel illustrates how RT content about the invasion continues to spread within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem, providing a welcoming environment for pro-Kremlin disinformation.

### Evolution of a Telegram Community: From COVID-19 Conspiracies to Russian Disinformation, Anti-immigrant Slurs and Anti-LGBTQ+ "Groomer" Narratives

Within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem, Telegram experienced a surge in activity between 2020 – 2023. ISD wished to explore how Telegram accounts created during this time evolved throughout the research period. To do so, researchers examined one account in detail and charted its journey from its creation

in May 2021 up to the end of the research period in April 2023.

Rise Up Dublin is a Telegram chat group that was created on 24 May 2021 and eventually grew to 229 users. The chat group was part of a wider network of county-specific 'Rise Up' chat groups created in 2021 and, between 24 May 2021 to 3 April 2023, its members published over 11,000 posts.

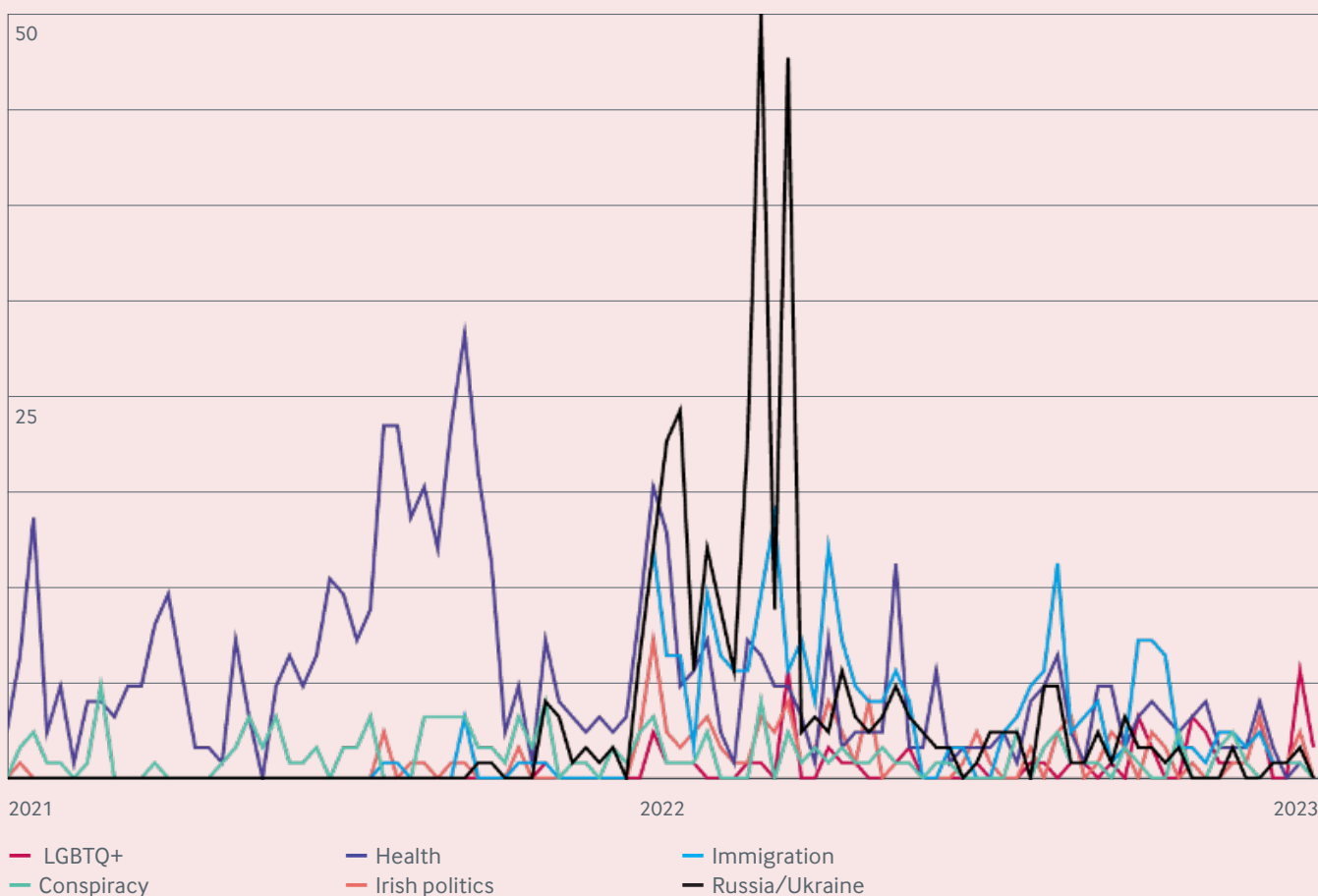
Of these, 1,771 posts referenced at least one of the nine topics analysed with health the most popular topic. Within a day of its launch users were already promoting claims that COVID-19 vaccines were responsible for large numbers of "vax deaths" in Ireland.

Over time, other topics grew in popularity. See the graph on Figure 19 below for the full breakdown of the topic

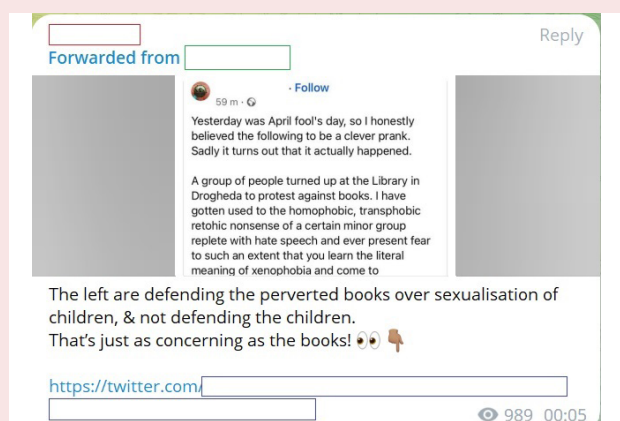
discussion with this chat group. After mostly discussing health during 2021 and the first half of 2022 (seen in the blue line on the graph), in the middle of 2022, the focus of the group shifted towards discussing the Russia-Ukraine conflict (red line). Data from this period shows members discussed the April massacre in the town of Bucha and shared links to blogs and Russian-state media that denied and disputed claims of Russian involvement in the massacre.

The immigration topic (yellow line) was popular during mid-2022 and then became the most popular topic of discussion in late 2022 and early 2023. Discussions about immigration referenced the growing anti-immigration protests seen in Ireland during this time and false and misleading claims were a constant in the chat group. In various posts asylum seekers were described as "fakeugees" and "terrorist migrants."

**Figure 19:** Volume over time graph showing the level of discussion of the most popular topics within the Rise Up Dublin Telegram chat group which referenced different topics



**Image 2:** Telegram post shared by a member of the Rise Up Dublin chat group which claims LGBTQ+ books are responsible for the “sexualisation of children”



As April 2023 approached, the LGBTQ+ topic (light blue line) became the most popular topic for the first time. Within the chat group, members shared different fearmongering claims about “perverted” LGBTQ+ books that contained “groomer porn” that they claimed was responsible for the “indoctrination” and “sexualisation of children” in schools.

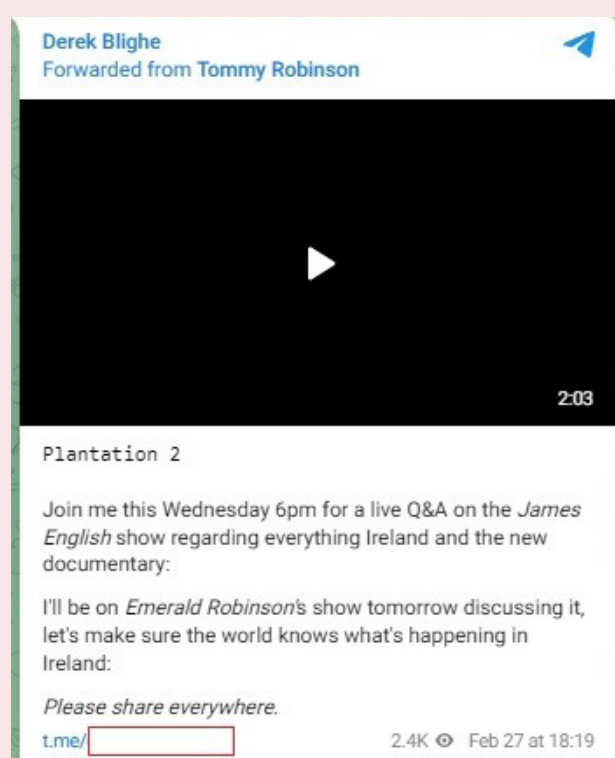
Rise Up Dublin was typical of many online communities analysed as part of this research project. Though initially set up as a chat group to discuss COVID-19, data shows how this Telegram community became a venue for other conspiracy theories and misleading, harmful claims targeting people in Ireland, as well as distorting and disputing reports about international incidents.

### Growing Influence of Tommy Robinson

In its analysis of the most-forwarded posts by Telegram accounts within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem, ISD found that Tommy Robinson (real name Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) ranked fourth on the list of the top ten most-forwarded Telegram accounts. 4,481 posts featured content originally published by Robinson. This is a significant finding.

The other nine accounts are all related to Irish users or entities, which is not surprising, but the presence of the Tommy Robinson account (with 144,000 subscribers), who is based in the UK, illustrates how influential and popular Robinson has become within this Irish ecosystem on Telegram. Other figures from the UK such as Mark Collett and Nick Griffin, both formerly of the far-right British

**Image 3:** Tommy Robinson Telegram post, featuring a documentary promoting his anti-immigrant “plantation” documentary about Ireland, forwarded by Derek Blighe



National Party, were also shared regularly within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Telegram.<sup>41</sup>

Robinson is the former leader of the English Defence League, an extremist group with a history of promoting anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim ideologies, as well as a former member of the British National Party.<sup>42</sup> Robinson is one of the UK's most prominent far-right activists and he became active in promoting false and misleading anti-immigration claims related to Ireland after the surge in protests from November 2022 onwards.<sup>43</sup> Many of these posts ranked among the best-performing Telegram posts observed within this ecosystem.

Robinson travelled to Ireland to produce a documentary about the protests in early 2023 and this too included similar misleading information, highlighting the increased links between British and Irish far-right communities.<sup>44</sup> The growing influence of a figure like Robinson within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem is particularly concerning.

## YouTube Platform Analysis

YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. Launched in 2005, users were initially restricted to uploading videos that were no more than 10 minutes long. Now, users can upload videos that are up to 12 hours long, they can produce short-form videos known as 'YouTube Shorts', and can broadcast live on the platform. Users can also monetise their content, either through advertising content that plays before or during their videos, making use of third-party donation apps or utilising YouTube's own Super Chats feature - a tool that allows creators to monetise comments in their livestream chat feeds.

YouTube plays an influential role in the spread of misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories online.<sup>45</sup> In January 2022, a global coalition of factchecking organisations signed a letter stating YouTube has not done enough to tackle the spread of falsehoods on its platform.<sup>46</sup>

While content hosted on YouTube can mislead or misinform users on that platform, YouTube-hosted videos are also often the most shared links on other platforms too, illustrating how YouTube content can be at the core of a misleading topic or claim. In Ireland, the platform is used by a variety of prominent conspiracy theorists, alternative media outlets, far-right groups and extremists.

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on YouTube and found:

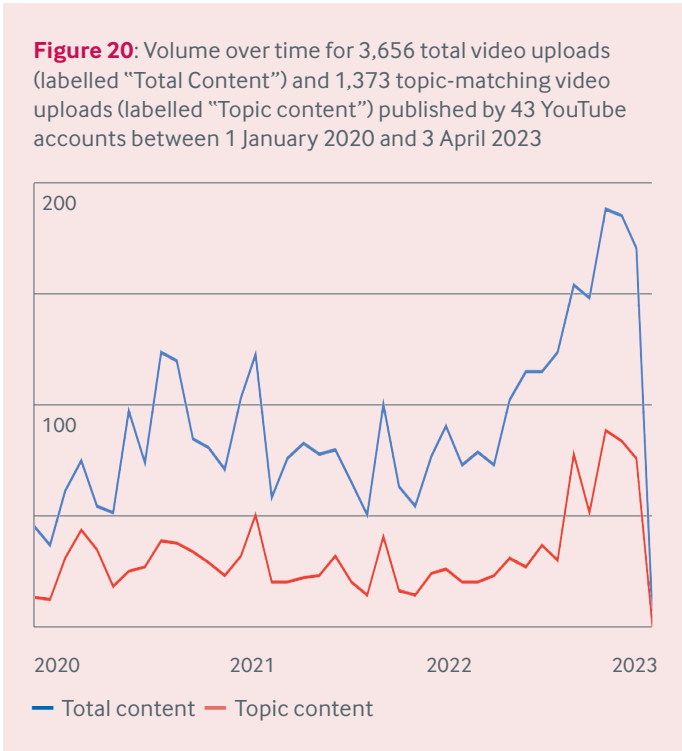
- YouTube plays a small but influential role in this ecosystem. 43 YouTube accounts that, between 1 January 2020 – 3 April 2023, published a total of 3,656 videos;
- Of the 3,656 videos, 1,609 videos (44%) were published by 43 accounts that referenced at least one of the nine topics analysed. The most popular topics were health (594 videos), immigration (345 videos) and Irish politics (304 videos);
- YouTube usage within this ecosystem more than doubled during the research period. In 2020 there were 2.6 videos published per day within this ecosystem and, by 2023, this had increased to 5.7 videos published per day;
- Nine YouTube accounts within this ecosystem have over 10,000 subscribers, demonstrating the popularity of these actors on the platform. YouTube is home to a handful of highly active actors in this ecosystem, with seven channels publishing over 200 videos during the research period;
- Overall, the level of views per video is low; just two channels received, on average, over 10,000 views per video;
- YouTube livestreams are a popular feature within this ecosystem, with 18 channels utilising this feature. Analysis shows that Irish actors have used this feature to produce and monetise false and misleading claims about immigration and health topics; and
- Cross-posting YouTube content onto alternative video platforms is popular among Irish actors. Of the total YouTube sample (3,656 videos), 887 of these (24%) were also posted by the same actors on BitChute, Rumble or Odysee. Cross-posting can be an effective strategy for storing potentially violative content across multiple platforms, ensuring false, misleading or harmful content remains online.

### Accounts

ISD identified 43 YouTube accounts active within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem. Between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023, these accounts published a total of 3,656 videos. Of these videos, 1,373 (37.5%) referenced at least one of the nine topics analysed. On YouTube, the most popular topic was health (524 videos),

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**Table 13:** Table shows year-on-year YouTube activity within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
All Videos	941	983	1,199	533
Avg. Videos Posted per Day	2.6	2.7	3.3	5.7
No. of Accounts Active	26	31	38	28
No. of Topic-matching Videos	369	338	407	259
Avg. Videos Posted per Day	1	0.9	1.1	2.8
No. of Accounts Active	24	27	34	26

\* Data collection ended on 3 April, so 2023 figures based on 93 days between 1 January – 3 April 2023.

followed by immigration (288 videos) and Irish politics (197 videos).

The volume over time graph illustrates how YouTube activity evolved during the 2020 – 2023 research period. For total content (3,656 videos) and topic content (1,373 videos), year on year, YouTube activity within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem has grown. See Table 13 above for a full breakdown of how yearly activity on YouTube has increased.

Using data from the volume over time graph, we can show that the level of YouTube activity with the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem has more than doubled since the beginning of 2020.

As detailed in Table 13, the average number of videos published per day within this ecosystem has increased year-on-year in both the total sample (3,656 videos) and the topic sample (1,373 videos). For example, in 2020, there was an average of one video published per day that referenced one of the nine topics. By 2023, this figure almost tripled with 2.8 videos published per day referencing one of the nine topics.

Channel Metrics

ISD analysed 43 YouTube accounts in total. The breakdown of the types of accounts can be seen in the table below.

**Table 14:** Types of accounts found on YouTube associated with the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Category	Accounts
Individual	19
Alternative media	8
Cross-platform accounts	7
Organisation	6
Political party	3

There is much variation across the sample of YouTube data regarding the level of subscribers, the level of activity per channel, and the number of views received on videos. Nine accounts have over 10,000 subscribers, while 12 accounts have less than 1,000 subscribers. The channel with the largest number of subscribers was Ivor Cummins (with 230,000), followed by the alternative media outlets Gript (19,700 subscribers) and the Irish Inquiry (17,400 subscribers). The median number of subscribers across this subset of YouTube channels was 1,725.

Seven channels have published over 200 videos since 1 January 2020 (total content, not just topic-matching content) with Gript topping the list with 419 videos, while nine accounts have published less than 10 videos.

Analysis of the most prolific channels shows that 10 channels were responsible for 2,613 videos or 71.4% of the total sample of 3,656 videos. The median number of videos published across all channels was 40.

Overall, the level of views per video is low. Just two channels received, on average, over 10,000 views per video: Ivor Cummins and Tracey O'Mahony.<sup>47</sup> Five channels received fewer than 100 views per video on average. The median number of views per video was 831 views. This indicates that while production levels for YouTube content within this ecosystem are relatively high, the audiences are not particularly engaged.

**Table 15:** Metrics for YouTube channels within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of channel subscribers	1,725	230,000	1
Number of videos published	40	481	1
Level of views per video	831	768,855	0

### Account Creation Date and Channel Activity

Analysis of different date-related metrics regarding these 43 YouTube channels highlights some interesting details, namely the dates when these channels were created and when they first published videos. In short, while the majority of these channels were created before 2020, most only became active in publishing content from 2020 onwards.

Of the 43 channels analysed, 23 channels (53%) were created before 2020. However, only 15 channels had published content before 2020, while the remaining 28 channels (65%) published their first video during or after this time.

Looking at 2020 in isolation, where 13 channels published their first video, nine of these channels did so after 27 March when Ireland was placed on full lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 throughout the country.

### Content Analysis

ISD analysed the volume of content containing keywords related to nine topics. In total, 1,609 YouTube videos, or 44% of the total YouTube content, referenced at least

one of the nine topics.

On YouTube, the most popular topic was health (594 videos). The second and third most popular topics were immigration (345 videos) and Irish politics (304 videos). The table below shows the full breakdown of YouTube videos per topic, with percentage figures showing the share of each topic in respect of total YouTube content, as well as the number of YouTube channels active on each topic.

So, for example, ISD identified 67 YouTube videos that referenced the climate topic. Those 67 climate-related videos account for 1.8% of the full sample of YouTube content and were published by 11 YouTube channels active within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

**Table 16:** Breakdown of topic totals, percentage figures for each topic in respect of all content, and number of active channels per topic on YouTube

Topic	Topic content	Percentage of total content*	Channels
Conspiracy	75	2	20
Ethnonationalism	1	0.03	1
5G	4	0.1	4
Irish politics	304	8.3	24
Health	594	16.2	34
Immigration	345	9.4	29
Climate	67	1.8	11
RUS/UKR	105	2.9	16
LGBTQ+	114	3.1	22
<b>Total of topic content**</b>	<b>1,609</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Total content***</b>	<b>3,656</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>43</b>

\* The percentage refers to the percentage of posts containing a specific topic over the total number of posts published by the channels analysed (i.e. 3,656)

\*\* Total of posts containing at least one of the nine topics in the timeframe between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

\*\*\* Total of posts published by all YouTube channels analysed in the timeframe between 1 January 2020 and 3 April 2023

### Going Live on YouTube

Livestreaming has become increasingly popular on YouTube. 'Going live' allows channel owners to produce and broadcast content in real time, interact with viewers through comments, and monetise live content through

**Image 4:** Still taken from Philip Dwyer's January 2023 Ballymun video. In the video, Dwyer said Minister for Children Roderic O'Gorman, whose name can be seen on the banner in the image, should be renamed "Roderic O'Groomer" because, in Dwyer's words, O'Gorman is "a groomer of children."



features like YouTube's in-built Super Chats livestream comment monetisation tool. Previous ISD research has analysed how the Super Chats tool is used by channel owners to profit from content that promotes conspiracy theories, mis- and disinformation, as well as harmful and threatening language.<sup>48</sup>

For platforms, monitoring live content on their sites is an ongoing challenge. Graphic or violent extremist content broadcast in real time is a significant problem for platforms, as evidenced by the number of terrorist attacks that have been broadcast live on social media platforms in recent years.<sup>49</sup> Livestreaming is also commonly used by actors to promote conspiracy theories and spread mis- and disinformation.<sup>50</sup>

Of the 43 YouTube channels analysed within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem, ISD found that 18 channels have used the live function to broadcast live content in varying ways. There is clear evidence that Irish actors have used this feature to produce and promote false and misleading claims.

For example, within the immigration topic, one of most popular YouTube channels belonged to Philip Dwyer, who is a former candidate with the National Party. Three of Dwyer's videos, with collective views of over 184,000, were featured in the top ten most-viewed YouTube videos in that topic. Since the surge in anti-immigration

protests from November 2022 onwards, Dwyer has livestreamed videos at protests in multiple locations throughout Dublin and across the country and used YouTube's livestream feature to regularly share false claims and conspiracy theories.

In one video from an anti-immigration protest in Ballymun in January 2023, Dwyer opened the livestream by stating "they've planted more males into the community" and claimed "hundreds of thousands" of "military-aged males" had been brought into Ireland.

During his livestream, Dwyer linked the increase of asylum seekers in Ireland to a wider conspiracy supposedly engineered by the United Nations. In the video, Dwyer warned increased immigration into Ireland was part of "the UN strategy... Agenda 2030... [to] bring in migrants from Africa and the Middle East and destroy Western civilisation." Dwyer's claim is rooted in a conspiracy theory that purports that governments around the world are implementing a sinister UN plan to depopulate countries and control population growth by replacing indigenous (white) inhabitants with non-native migrants by 2030. This conspiracy theory is frequently the subject of fact checks from sources like Politifact and USA Today.<sup>51</sup>

Dwyer monetised these misleading livestreams, utilising YouTube's Super Chats feature to receive financial support from his viewers as well as including links to third party sites where users could donate to him. The use of YouTube livestreams in broadcasting and monetising content from anti-immigration protests in Ireland was also the subject of an article in the Irish Examiner in January 2023.<sup>52</sup>

Livestreaming was present in the health topic too. In February 2021, the Irish Inquiry broadcast an interview live on YouTube with Dr Dolores Cahill and Ivor Cummins where they discussed the COVID-19 pandemic. The broadcast was the subject of a Reuters fact check, which stated that comments made by Dr Cahill in the interview featured a number of false statements, including the claim that PCR tests are unable to diagnose COVID-19; that data from the US showed significant "severe" reactions among recipients of mRNA vaccines; and that Ireland's 2020 death rate was the lowest in ten years.<sup>53</sup>

For actors within Ireland's mis- and disinformation ecosystem, live YouTube broadcasts appear to be an effective method for disseminating (and in some cases monetising) false, misleading and potential harmful claims.

### **Cross-posting Content**

During the ethnographic monitoring analysis conducted on all video platforms, ISD researchers noted that many videos uploaded on YouTube were also published by the same actors on alternative platforms (BitChute, Odysee and Rumble). To better understand how actors within Ireland's mis- and disinformation ecosystem used the practice of cross-posting content, ISD sought to measure the level of content simultaneously published on YouTube and these three alternative video platforms.

Of the total YouTube sample of 3,656 videos, ISD's analysis found that 887 videos (24.2%) were simultaneously cross-posted onto alternative video platforms. The most active actor in cross-posting content was Gript which simultaneously published 461 videos on YouTube and at least one of the alternative video platforms. Other prominent actors such as Ivor Cummins (100 videos), Philip Dwyer (65 videos) and the National Party (53 videos) also made frequent use of this method.

Cross-posting content to multiple platforms is a method that is not unique to Ireland. Online content creators frequently post the same content on numerous platforms for a variety of reasons, such as developing and building an audience. For actors whose content could potentially be removed from mainstream platforms with stricter community guidelines than alternative platforms, it's likely that alternative platforms are used as storage spaces and play an important role for such actors in ensuring potentially violative content survives online.

The utility of this strategy becomes immediately clear when you consider that, in April 2023 (at some point after the end of data collection), Philip Dwyer's YouTube account was terminated for violating YouTube's Community Guidelines. However, rather than losing his content and its many misleading and explicitly false claims, all of the same videos are still available on accounts he maintains on alternative platforms.

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## TikTok Platform Analysis

TikTok is a social media platform designed for creating, sharing and discovering short videos. Owned by Chinese company ByteDance, they first launched a domestic version of the platform, called Douyin, in 2016. In 2018, TikTok became available worldwide when it merged with another Chinese developed platform, Musical.ly. TikTok has already garnered more than one billion users worldwide and gained significant popularity among younger generations, particularly Gen Z.<sup>54</sup> As of early 2022, TikTok had 1.88 million users aged 18 and above in Ireland.<sup>55</sup>

The app has also become the subject of multiple debates and has repeatedly drawn criticism for its data collection, ownership, and poor transparency.<sup>56 57 58</sup> Previous research by ISD has highlighted the role of TikTok in spreading and amplifying extremism and hate speech, and ISD has called on the company to improve data access for researchers.<sup>59</sup>

TikTok recently announced that it will be granting access to its research API to non-profit academic institutions in the US, pending approval by the company. However, at the time of writing, ISD still does not have access to the platform's data, therefore, the analysis below was carried out manually.<sup>60</sup>

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on TikTok and found:

- TikTok did not appear to be particularly prominent with this ecosystem. ISD identified only 34 relevant accounts, the majority of which were subsequently suspended between February and March 2023;
- Most of the accounts identified belonged to individuals and were created and active during the anti-immigration protests of late 2022 and early 2023;
- The topic of immigration was the main focus for most of the accounts identified, while other prominent topics were: Irish politics, COVID-19 vaccines, global conspiracies, anti-LGBTQ+, and anti-establishment content;
- Anti-immigration content identified in the analysis included the spread of false claims against migrants, harassment, and doxxing of migrants; and
- Despite the accounts analysed having low follower numbers, some of their videos reached more than a million viewers, raising questions about the algorithmic amplification of such content.

### Accounts

TikTok does not appear to be particularly popular within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem. Searches conducted between December 2022 and February 2023 identified only 34 relevant accounts. Of these, 10 were no longer available on the platform by February 2023; seven more accounts also disappeared by 15 March 2023, and two more by 29 March.

Although it is unclear whether the inactive accounts were taken down by TikTok, temporarily suspended, or whether the users deleted their own accounts, analysis of the videos posted by the remaining accounts revealed that TikTok has been actively moderating the content posted by these actors. Based on information posted by the 24 accounts that were still active by February 2023, at least two of them had previously been blocked on the platform and re-joined TikTok by creating a new account. At least one account was temporarily suspended and three more received warnings.

Of the 34 accounts identified, three were found to be connected to relevant mis/disinformation or extremist actors but never published any content, whereas three

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others were blocked or left the platforms before ISD was able to start its analysis. Of the remaining 28 accounts, 27 were found to have posted content that was false, misleading or potentially harmful. One account tied to a far-right Irish figure was found to have posted only one video, though this did not include such content.

The breakdown of the types of accounts can be found in the table below. The majority of the accounts identified belong to individuals, five to alternative media platforms that were found to have spread mis-or disinformation, five to known mis- or disinformation actors who have been found to be active across platforms, and finally one to a political party which was also found to have spread mis-or disinformation.

**Table 17:** Types of accounts found on TikTok

Type	No. of accounts
Alternative media	5
Individual	23
Cross platform accounts	5
Political party	1

Content Analysis

On TikTok, due to the unavailability of API access, all content analysis was carried out manually and qualitatively. Content that was identified as problematic due to containing misinformation or disinformation was manually annotated. Therefore, the identified categories slightly differ from those analysed on other platforms.

The most recurrent topic in the period analysed was anti-migrant content, which was posted by 18 accounts. The second most popular topic was Irish politics, and the third was anti-vaccine content.

Anti-migrant content was particularly prominent among newly created accounts. As shown below, a total of 13 accounts were created between November 2022 and February 2023, during the protests against asylum seekers and refugees. Ten of these accounts were found to be predominantly posting anti-migrant content and half of them were no longer live on the platform by mid-February 2023. Although it is unclear whether their disappearance is linked to TikTok’s moderation efforts,

**Table 18:** This table breaks down the number of accounts that posted about each of the topics in the table

Topic	No. of videos
Anti-migrant	18
Irish politics	9
Anti-vaccine	8
Global conspiracies	7
Anti-LGBTQ+	7
Anti-establishment	7
Russia-Ukraine	6
Disinformation	5
Climate denial	3
Anti-abortion	2

analysis of the content published by these accounts revealed videos that contravene the platform’s guidelines on harassment and hateful behaviour.<sup>61</sup>

Anti-migrant videos posted in this timeframe included videos doxxing and harassing migrants, as well as content spreading unverified claims of crimes allegedly committed by them.<sup>62</sup>

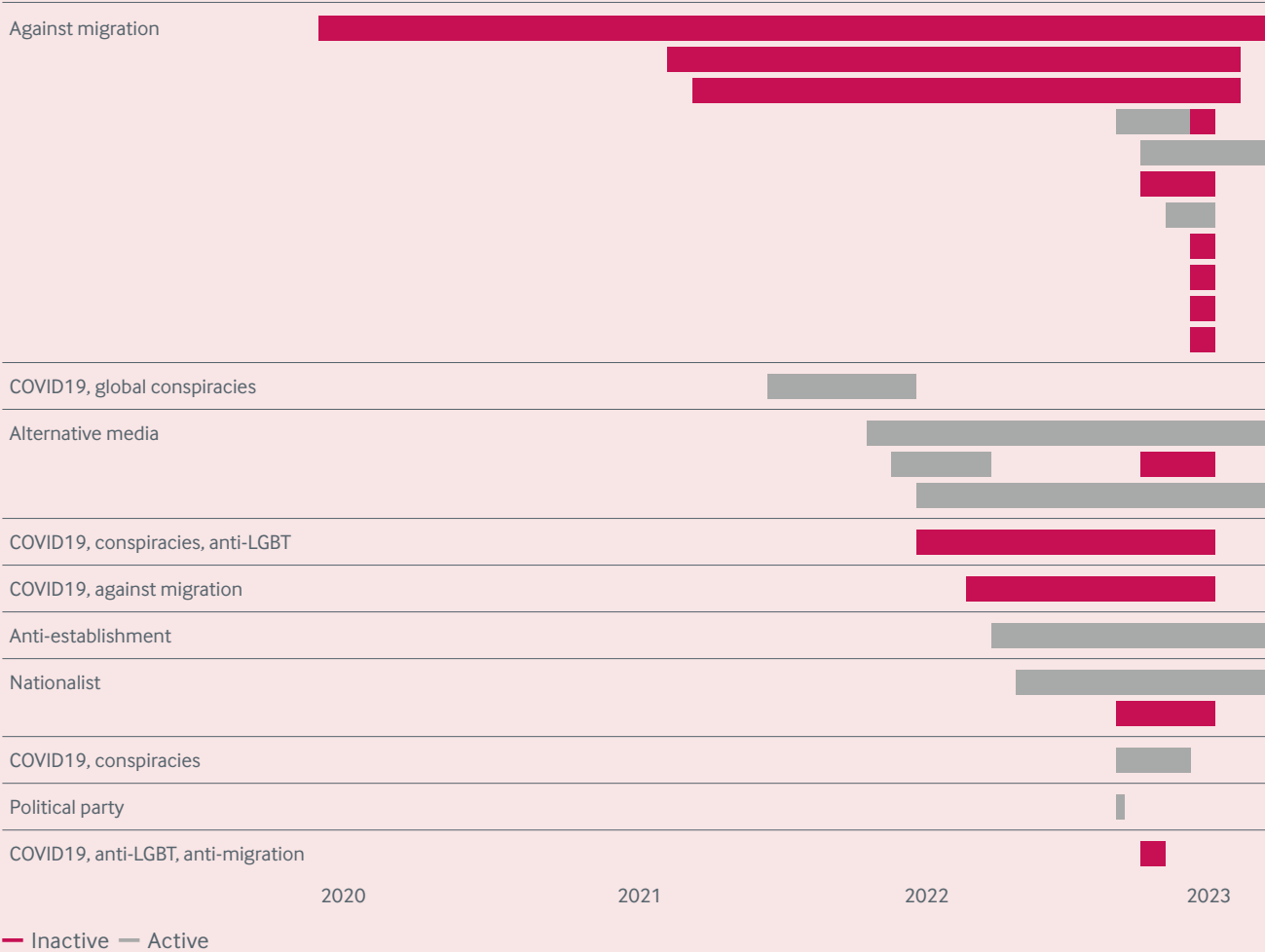
Among the videos identified, ten featured a direct confrontation with migrants where the faces of the people filmed were clearly recognisable. Following a fast-spreading online campaign where a migrant was accused of having entered a children’s hospital to rape children<sup>63</sup>, the person filmed was followed, harassed, and eventually attacked. Videos featuring two different attacks of the same person also quickly spread on TikTok revealing how online harassment can culminate in offline harm.

Videos posted by accounts that have primarily been spreading anti-migrant content generally include the following topics and trends:

1. **“Only men have been arriving in Ireland”.** These videos typically include footage of men getting off buses. The phrases “fighting-age men” or “military aged males” are used to describe them and the text accompanying the videos usually warn of a “plantation” or an invasion and advise women to watch out. In the Irish context, the term plantation,



**Figure 21:** The graph above shows the timeline of creation dates for the 28 accounts that have been posting problematic content, the content posted by them, and their status on TikTok (at the time of writing)



refers to a measure used by the English Crown in the 16th and 17th century when indigenous Irish communities on different parts of the island were systematically removed from their locality and their lands were re-distributed to settlers from Scotland and England.<sup>64</sup> In the context of current immigration discourse, the term plantation is used to imply that migration is intended to replace the Irish population (see immigration topic analysis for more on this);

**2. Refugees, migrants, foreign homeless people and beggars were filmed and accused of crimes or of being undeserving of the status of refugees based on their origin.** They were also accused of not fighting for their country when they were from a war zone or accused of using the money they received

from begging to buy alcohol, or generally exploiting the Irish government's generosity;

**3. Videos specifically against Ukrainian refugees or mentioning Ukraine often included complaints about double standards for Ukrainian refugees (whom they claim "get everything") and Irish citizens (whom they claim are neglected by their government).** Videos including screenshots of newspaper articles accused Ukrainian refugees of being picky and ungrateful, while other videos feature confrontations with Ukrainian refugees and accusations of them not defending their countries. Another video claimed that Ukraine is safe to visit and that Ukrainians have been lying about the war;

4. **Anti-migrant videos were framed as a movement in defence of the vulnerable Irish population, i.e. either women and children or homeless people.** Male migrants were depicted as a danger to women and children and were often accused of sexual harassment, rape, and violent attacks. In the context of homelessness, migrants were accused of being prioritised over Irish citizens and of being responsible for their homelessness in some way.

Profile Metrics

None of the accounts analysed had a particularly significant followership. The most followed account on the platform had 10,900 followers in February 2023, while most of the accounts had follower numbers below 2,000. However, despite their scarce followership, the controversial content posted by these accounts garnered significant views. Two of the accounts analysed obtained more than 1 million views on their most watched videos, eight of them between 100K and 900K and 14 of them more than 10K views.

Of the ten most-watched videos, six were about migration and feature either anti-migrant protests or confrontations with migrants and refugees. The most watched video overall was filmed by Derek Blighe, a supporter and organiser of anti-immigration protests in 2022/23, and featured a group of Ukrainian refugees.<sup>65</sup> The video was taken during a demonstration in solidarity with Ukraine in which refugees are approached and harassed by Blighe and shamed for not fighting for their country.

Two other videos that obtained more than 100K views were posted in March and November 2022 and featured anti-vaccine topics related to COVID-19. Another popular video, posted by a self-proclaimed nationalist account, compared abortion with the Holocaust. The success of these videos (despite the small followership of the authors) raises questions about TikTok’s algorithms and the company’s responsibilities in the context of the amplification of controversial and sensationalistic content. It is worth noting that at the time this research took place, TikTok had still not made its API available to researchers. This means that the platform and the content published on it cannot currently be analysed at scale without breaking their terms of service.

**Table 19:** The table above shows the number of followers of the 31 accounts analysed

Number of followers	Number of accounts
0-100	10
100-500	5
500-1000	1
1000-2000	5
2000-5000	7
5000-10000	2
10,000+	1

**Table 20:** The table above shows the views on the most watched videos posted by the 28 accounts analysed

Views on most popular content	Number of accounts
0-100	2
100-500	1
500-1000	1
1000-2000	1
2000-5000	5
5000-10000	4
10,000-50,000	3
50,000-100,000	1
100,000-900,000	8
1,000,000+	2

## Gab Platform Analysis

Gab was founded in 2016 by Andrew Torba before being launched publicly the following year. The site was marketed as an alternative to Twitter (X), Facebook and Reddit, all platforms that had made efforts to remove content and users that promoted hate speech and the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories. Torba described Gab as a site for “creators who believe in free speech, individual liberty, and the free flow of information online.”<sup>66</sup> Gab has since become a haven for the extreme right, with racism, antisemitism, hate speech, harmful conspiracy theories and even terrorist activity content thriving on the platform.<sup>67</sup>

In a number of cases, this online activity has spilled over into the offline world. In October 2018, 46-year-old Robert Gregory Bowers used Gab to post antisemitic and extremist content, just before shooting 11 people dead at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.<sup>68</sup> Following the 6 January 2021 storming of the US Capitol, Gab received a large influx of new users as mainstream platforms attempted to take action on extremist mobilisation and the spread of conspiracy theories, mis- and disinformation that helped fuel the attack.<sup>69 70</sup>

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Gab and found:

- 36 accounts on Gab either operated by Irish users or posting specifically about Irish issues;
- Currently, Gab does not play a significant role within this ecosystem, with the most popular users being those with an international following;
- Interaction rates on content produced within this ecosystem is generally minimal;
- Although the content shared by Irish Gab users covers a range of conspiratorial and extremist claims, there is a noteworthy presence of the most extreme content, including explicit antisemitism, calls for violence, and support for Nazism; and
- Most accounts analysed were set up in the early months of January 2021, when mainstream social media platforms were cracking down on hate, conspiracy theories and disinformation. However, a small number of influential users have been using the site since its foundation.

### Accounts

In total, ISD researchers found 36 accounts on Gab, including 24 Gab profiles and 12 Gab groups, that were found to be operated by users in Ireland, or were specifically discussing Irish issues. The breakdown of the types of accounts found can be seen in Table 21 below. Please note that the accounts analysed do not represent the entire Irish user base of the platform but do include many of the most influential figures.

**Table 21:** Types of accounts found on Gab associated with the Irish mis- or disinformation ecosystem

Type	No. of accounts
Alternative media	3
Individual	11
Cross platform accounts	5
Political party	1
Other (standalone, anonymous accounts)	4
Groups	12

### Profile Metrics

The followers, number of posts and interactions on posts varies widely within the 24 profiles found (see below for

group metrics), as seen in Table 22 below.<sup>71</sup> The profile with the highest number of followers was Dave Cullen (aka Computing Forever) who built up a large online audience for his technology-related content over the past decade but, in more recent years, has devoted his online channels and content to promoting false and misleading claims about COVID-19, immigration and other topics.<sup>72</sup> Cullen regularly uses Gab to share his most recent videos. Cullen’s profile had the second highest number of posts, with 4,700. Gript had the highest number of posts with 6,400, although the alternative media site shares its posts with a small number of followers – 113 at the time of writing – with an average of zero interactions per post.

Cullen’s posts receive high interactions compared to the vast majority of other Irish Gab accounts which struggle to break double digit interactions on their posts. By comparison, Cullen’s average interactions on his last five posts was 95.2. The highest average interaction overall was on the profile of Gemma O’Doherty (see Content Analysis below for more details), with 145 interactions.

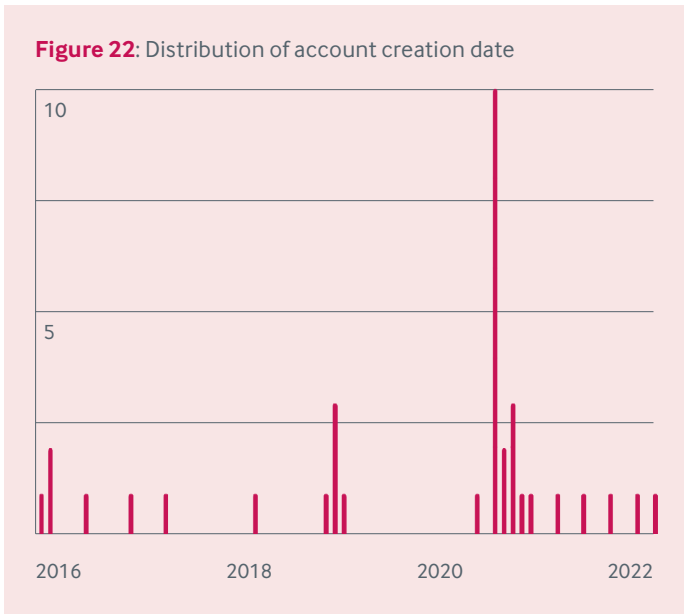
Like the profiles analysed, the Gab groups discovered also varied by membership numbers and interaction rates. The median number of members across the 12 groups was 78, with one group containing 427 members. The highest interaction rate found within groups was 32.4, in a group dedicated to “Irish National Socialism” (see more on this below).

**Table 22:** Metrics for follower/member number, number of posts and engagement on Gab profiles and groups

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of profile followers	131	59,400	8
Number of profile posts	96.5	6,400	0
Average interaction on last five profile posts	1.6	145	0
Number of group members	78	427	11
Average interaction on last five group posts	1.3	32.4	0

Account Creation Date

ISD analysed the dates that Gab profiles and groups were created, in order to assess how long certain accounts have been using the platform. The three earliest profiles to join



the platform, in October and November 2016 (before Gab was rolled out to the public), were Rowan Croft (aka Grand Torino), Dave Cullen and the National Party.

The largest cohort of accounts were all created in the early months of 2021, with 17 accounts (including 8 profiles and 9 groups) set up between January and May. In this period, following widespread dissemination of false information related to the US 2020 election, and subsequently the storming of the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, social media platforms began to crack down on accounts involved in spreading disinformation. Gab, and other alternative social media platforms such as Parler, experienced a surge in new users at this time.<sup>73</sup>

Content Analysis

The content found posted by the profiles and within the groups analysed covered the entire spectrum of mis- or disinformation, conspiracy theories and hate, including anti-LGBTQ+ narratives, anti-immigrant conspiracy theories, false claims about vaccines and COVID-19, and posts expressing support for conspiratorial movements like QAnon.

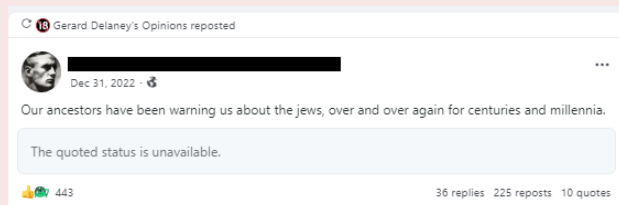
The defining feature of Gab is its lack of content moderation. The platform has no rules against hate speech and, as such, users are free to share hateful and extremist content without the threat of being banned. Therefore, the analysis below outlines some of the most extreme content identified.

### The antisemitic beliefs of some users were on full display on Gab compared to other platforms

One of the most prolific Gab users identified was Gemma O'Doherty. The former journalist has a history of promoting false and misleading claims about COVID-19 and a range of other topics. She has previously been banned from platforms like YouTube and Twitter (X) for community guidelines and hate speech violations.<sup>74</sup> O'Doherty later set up accounts on alternative platforms like Gab and Gettr.

O'Doherty uses Gab to promote explicit antisemitism on the platform, including Holocaust denial (see Image 5). Similarly, the Gab account of Gerard Delaney also contained blatant displays of antisemitism (see Image 6 below). Delaney is a supporter and promoter of anti-immigration and anti-LGBTQ+ protests and has a history of sharing conspiracy theories online and referring to asylum seekers as “fakeugees,” referring to the media as “parasites” and describing politicians as “groomers” and “paedophiles.”<sup>75</sup>

**Image 6:** An antisemitic post shared by Gerard Delaney on Gab



### One of the Most Active Groups Discovered by ISD was Set up for Irish Supporters of Nazism

The group had 134 members at the time of writing and had the highest interaction rate of any of the groups analysed. Although it was not possible to determine how many members of the group are based in Ireland, several prominent users shared content related to Ireland which implied that they likely live in the country.

The content shared in the group consisted of calls for genocide and death, Nazi propaganda films, Hitler speeches, Holocaust denial, antisemitic hate and conspiracy theories about immigration. Antisemitic slurs and references to neo-Nazi memes and phrases were also on prominent display. See the posts in Image 7 for

**Image 5:** Posts from Gemma O'Doherty's Gab account promoting Holocaust denial (top) and antisemitism (bottom)





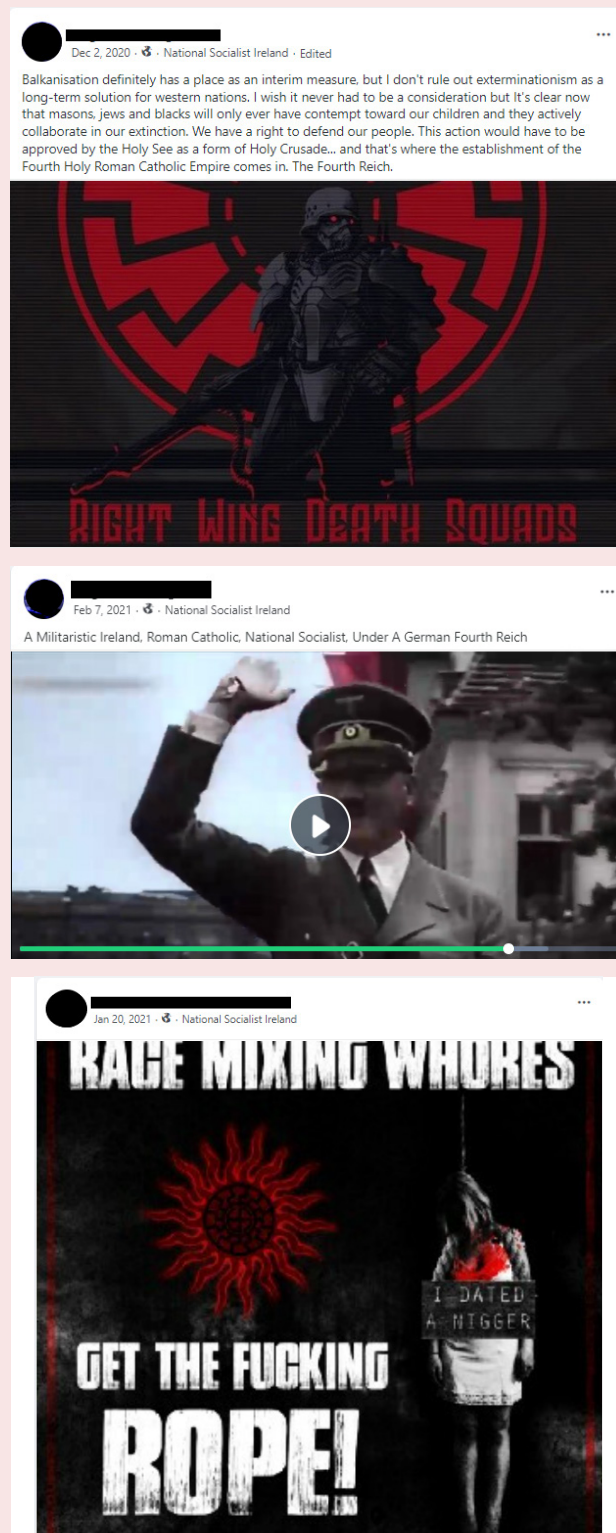
example content found in this group (warning: these examples feature explicit violent content).

### Claims About so-called ‘Irish Slaves’ are a Recurring Theme Among Irish Gab Accounts.

ISD analysts noted that posts claiming that the Irish were “the first slaves brought to the Americas,” and other similar claims, were a common occurrence among both Irish users and users in Gab groups who self-identified as Irish Americans (see image 8). The central claim of the “Irish slaves myth” attempts to conflate European indentured servitude with the chattel slavery forced upon Africans brought to the American colonies. Historians agree that while those brought to the US through indentured servitude certainly suffered in impoverished conditions, it is wholly inaccurate to compare this to the suffering of African slaves, who were often kidnapped, treated like animals and sold into hereditary slavery through which death was the only escape.<sup>76</sup>

The “Irish slaves myth” has been promoted by mainstream news sources and has found support among moderate Irish nationalists and political figures in the past as a means to point to the suffering of the Irish under British rule.<sup>77</sup> This widespread promotion has only furthered its popularity among far-right and white nationalist supporters, who use this revised version of history as a means to diminish the mission of movements such as Black Lives Matter and claim that history is being “covered up” in order to promote a specific agenda.

**Image 7:** Examples of extremist, violent posts shared in a group for Irish Nazis





**Image 8:** Examples of the “Irish slaves” myth spread by Irish user Rowan Croft (aka Grand Torino) and an American user in an Irish Gab group.



# Gettr Platform Analysis

Gettr is a microblogging social media platform that was launched in July 2021 by Jason Miller, a former Donald Trump aide. In 2021, the Daily Beast reported that Guo Wengui, an exiled Chinese billionaire, was an original investor in Gettr.<sup>78</sup> In March 2023, Guo, a prominent Trump supporter and friend to former White House adviser Steve Bannon, was indicted in a billion-dollar fraud case in New York and federal authorities seized \$3 million from Gettr as part of their investigations.<sup>79</sup> The Washington Post later reported that, rather than just investing in the platform, Guo and his associate “called the shots at the company” and used it to promote cryptocurrencies and propaganda.<sup>80</sup>

Like other ‘alternative’ platforms launched in recent years, Gettr was from the outset pushed as a free speech substitute to Twitter (X) and other ‘Big Tech’ mainstream platforms that critics claimed were censoring or silencing online users.<sup>81</sup> Gettr experienced a surge in registrations in January 2022 after US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene was suspended on Twitter (X) and set up an account on Gettr in response.<sup>82</sup> High profile figures such as immunologist Dr. Robert Malone, who has a history of promoting false claims about COVID-19 and vaccines, and podcaster Joe Rogan joined Gettr as part of a perceived backlash against “Twitter censorship.”<sup>83</sup>

Gettr’s Community Guidelines prohibit content related to explicit harassment, promotion of violence and “content that involves the use of racial or religious epithets.”<sup>84</sup> The rules mostly outlaw illegal activities but do not explicitly prohibit content related to the promotion of harmful or threatening conspiracy theories, mis- or disinformation, or denying historically violent incidents or the targeting or mockery of their victims. As this analysis demonstrates, such content is easily discoverable on Gettr.

## Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on Gettr and found:

- Gettr does not play a prominent role within this ecosystem. ISD identified only 13 accounts linked to actors in Ireland. Overall, the level of followers and number of posts for each account, as well as the average level of interactions received, was low;
- There are some exceptions. Gemma O’Doherty operates the most followed (5.2K followers) and most prolific account (499 posts) in this set of 13 and has received the most engagement with an average of 56 interactions (through comments, likes and shares) per post;
- Ten of the 13 accounts were created in January 2022, as part of a wider registration trend on the platform, presumably in response to perceived censorship on Twitter (X) and other mainstream platforms;
- The most popular topics discussed by this sample of Irish Gettr users were health, immigration and global conspiracy theories; and
- The most prolific actor in this sample, Gemma O’Doherty, used Gettr to post content featuring antisemitism and Holocaust denial. ISD found that across 29 livestream broadcasts on Gettr, O’Doherty broadcast 17 videos that featured antisemitism, including six that featured outright Holocaust denial.

## Accounts

In total, ISD researchers analysed 13 accounts on Gettr that were found to be operated by users of interest in Ireland. Please note that the accounts analysed do not represent the entire Irish user base of the platform but do include many of the more influential figures. Since mid-2021, these 13 accounts have published or shared

**Table 23:** Types of accounts found on Gettr associated with users within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Type	No. of accounts
Alternative media	1
Individual	7
Cross-platform accounts	3
Political party	1
Organisation	1

3,115 posts on Gettr; 1,855 of which were published by the user themselves and 1,260 of which were posts or comments from other users that were shared by the user in our cohort. The breakdown of the types of accounts found can be seen in Table 23.

### Profile Metrics

Overall, the level of followers, number of posts and average level of interactions per post for this cohort of users on Gettr is low (see Table 24 for Gettr metrics). The profile with the largest number of followers was Gemma O'Doherty (5.2K followers). O'Doherty has been suspended or banned on most mainstream platforms and uses Gettr as one of her primary social media platforms for daily posts, livestreaming video broadcasts and linking to her activity on other platforms. After O'Doherty, the account with the most followers is Gerard Delaney (3.2K followers) and the user Ireland Watchman (1.2K). These accounts were very much outliers and the majority of accounts had fewer than 1,000 followers.

Of the total Gettr sample of 3,115 posts, O'Doherty was the most prolific user, posting/sharing 499 posts, followed by the accounts belonging to the user Ireland Watchman (498 posts) and Gript (497 posts). It's likely these users have published more posts but these were not accessible due to technical limitations on retrieving Gettr data; the maximum number of posts retrievable appears to be 500 per account.

O'Doherty's average of 56 interactions per post was considerably higher than the majority of other Gettr accounts in this sample who typically receive less than 10 interactions per post.

**Table 24:** Gettr profile and post metrics associated with the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of profile followers	392	5.3k	24
Number of profiles followed	90	4.3k	6
Number of profile posts	98	499	18
Average level of interactions on posts*	8	185	0

\* Interaction figures are based on original posts only, so posts from other users shared by Irish users were excluded

### Account Creation Date

ISD analysed the dates that Gettr accounts were created in order to assess how long these users have been active on the platform. The first profiles to join the platform in July 2021 were the accounts belonging to the users Ireland Watchman and Ninja Knight, though neither of these accounts published their own posts on the platform until January 2022 and instead just shared a handful of posts from other international accounts. The first post published directly by a user in this cohort was in January 2022.

### Content Analysis

ISD analysed the total Gettr sample of 3,115 posts to identify the dominant topics discussed by actors in this cohort (see Table 25 below for the full figures). Of the 3,115 posts, 1,431 posts featured content discussing at least one topic, accounting for 46% of the total sample. The most popular topics discussed by Gettr users were health, which included content about COVID-19 (524 posts or 16.9% of the total sample), immigration (296 posts or 9.5% of the sample) and posts about global conspiracy theories (227 posts or 7.3%).

**Table 25:** Breakdown of topic totals and percentage figures for each topic in respect of all content on Gettr

Topic	Posts	Percentage of total content
Conspiracy	227	7.3
Ethnonationalism	5	0.16
5G	4	0.13
Irish politics	131	4.21
Health	524	16.82
Immigration	296	9.50
Climate	53	1.70
RUS/UKR	90	2.9
LGBTQ+	101	3.24
<b>Total content</b>	<b>3,115</b>	<b>45.96</b>

### COVID-19 Conspiracy Theory Content

The most popular topic discussed by Irish Gettr users in our sample was health (524 posts). This topic included content that promoted or featured conspiracy theories, mis- and disinformation about COVID-19 and, specifically, vaccines (231 posts). Content that claimed that COVID-19

vaccines were not safe, had not been adequately researched or tested, or contained a variety of dangerous or harmful ingredients was common in this topic. There were also numerous posts sharing specific claims about different people who the posts alleged died as a result of taking a vaccine.

Various posts shared by Irish Gettr users promoted comments attributed to Dr. Dolores Cahill (who doesn't have a Gettr account) that claimed mRNA vaccines "bypass your immune system" to weaken it "within two or three weeks", resulting in eventual death through a process referred to as a "cytokine storm," which is an overreaction with the body's immune system.<sup>85</sup> There is no evidence to support this claim, yet Irish Gettr users regularly shared this and other claims by Dr. Cahill.<sup>86</sup> Posts that described vaccines as "bioweapons" were also recorded in this sample.

### Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial

The most prolific Irish Gettr user captured in our sample was Gemma O'Doherty. Much like on Gab, O'Doherty uses Gettr to produce and promote conspiracy theories about a variety of topics. It is clear from this analysis that one of O'Doherty's main uses of her Gettr account is to spread antisemitic slurs and conspiracy theories.

O'Doherty regularly targets and discredits Jewish people on Gettr but her antisemitism extends to promoting claims of an international Jewish conspiracy in which influential Jewish people supposedly control media, political and banking institutions throughout the world. Claims about shadowy, sinister Jewish elites constitute one of the longest-running and pervasive conspiracy theories.<sup>87</sup>

O'Doherty is unique among Irish Gettr users as she uses the platform's livestream function to broadcast videos directly on the platform. O'Doherty uses livestream videos to promote one of the most explicit forms of antisemitism: Holocaust denial. In a review of the 29 livestream videos available on O'Doherty's Gettr account, ISD identified 17 that feature the promotion of antisemitic claims, conspiracy theories or similar comments from guests.

Of these 17 videos, six featured outright denial of the Holocaust, including one video broadcast on 26 January 2023, the day before International Holocaust

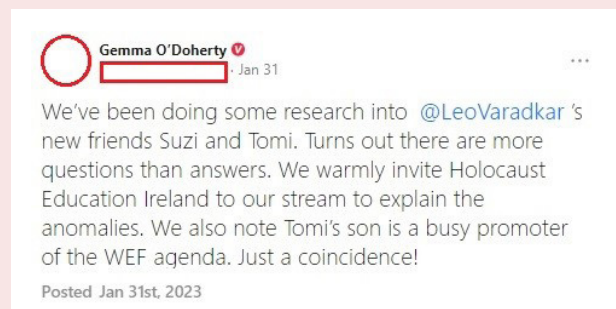
**Image 9:** Gettr post promoting vaccine claim made by Dolores Cahill



**Image 10:** Screenshot of Gemma O'Doherty post featuring an antisemitic graphic



**Image 11:** Gettr post from Gemma O'Doherty in which she mentions two Holocaust survivors living in Ireland



Remembrance Day. In that video, O'Doherty promoted an upcoming broadcast and told viewers she will be "going into controversial territory" in the video, adding "those of you who are regular viewers will know what it is ... there is an event tomorrow commemorating an event that didn't happen. It's the last taboo."

In another video O'Doherty published on her Gettr profile, she spoke with two American Holocaust deniers about the story of Suzi Diamond and Tomi Reichental, two Holocaust survivors living in Ireland.<sup>88</sup> When commenting on Diamond's remarks recalling her time in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, one of O'Doherty's guests described Diamond as a "filthy rotten liar."

Gettr does not explicitly prohibit content that denies well-documented violent incidents of persecution against groups nor does it prohibit conspiratorial content that claims a group of people is inherently malevolent or conspiring to target or control other groups in society. However, its community guidelines do forbid content that "disparages victims of violent tragedies."<sup>89</sup> It appears that O'Doherty's Holocaust denial meets this criteria.



## Alternative Video Platform Analysis

As part of the ethnographic monitoring exercise mapping the online platforms used within Ireland's mis- and disinformation ecosystem, ISD identified actors on a number of alternative video platforms. 'Alternative' in this instance means video platforms that, like their more popular counterparts YouTube or Twitch, allow users to host, post and livestream video content.

Unlike mainstream platforms, alternative video platforms tend to have few or no community guidelines, take a more permissive approach to allowing false or misleading content, and in some cases are ideologically run as free speech absolutist spaces. They typically have much smaller user bases than mainstream platforms.

Alternative platforms are attractive for groups and individuals who believe mainstream social media platforms, such as YouTube, have become overly censorious and inhospitable. Compared to alternative platforms, mainstream platforms operate with more comprehensive community guidelines prohibiting various types of content featuring false and/or misleading information or the promotion of extremist ideologies. As a result, alternative platforms' biggest champions are often those who have been banned, suspended or demonetised on mainstream platforms.

Alternative platforms may fall short of the monthly active user counts circumscribed by regulation such as the Digital Services Act, meaning they are not required to comply with the associated codes of practice designed to improve the health of the information space.

Lower monthly active user counts also mean the reach of alternative video platform content is often considerably lower than its equivalents on more popular mainstream platforms.

Because of this hands-off approach to limiting potentially harmful content and not needing to comply with overarching internet legislation, alternative platforms are perceived as more hospitable to conspiracy theorists, disinformation actors and extremists.

The role of alternative platforms in a mis- or disinformation lifecycle can be significant, as actors use these spaces to post or store content that would be removed from mainstream platforms and then link out to this content elsewhere. This reduces the function of platforms like

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to signposts, directing audiences to a user's content elsewhere.

Within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem, ISD identified actors using the alternative video platforms BitChute, Rumble, Odysee and DLive. Given their many overlapping features and use by such actors, the analysis of these platforms has been combined into one section. This section includes a brief summary about each platform, followed by analysis of their use within this ecosystem.

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on BitChute, Rumble, Odysee and DLive and found:

- Alternative video platforms are popular within this ecosystem. ISD identified 72 accounts from 43 actors that have published a total of 14,088 videos across the four platforms between 2020 and 2023. Of these 43 actors, 28 actors operate accounts on more than one of these platforms;
- Engagement is low across all of these platforms. The median number of subscribers per channel is 191 and median level of views received per video is 91 views, though these low engagement rates - which are common across alternative platforms - do not appear to be dissuading content creators in Ireland;
- Dave Cullen is the most popular actor across alternative platforms, occupying the top spot on two platforms: BitChute (113,000 subscribers) and Odysee (29,000 subscribers). Cullen was also the most prolific actor across the alternative video platforms, publishing 2,647 videos in total during the research period;
- Alternative video platforms experienced a surge in new active users within this ecosystem after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020;
- Of the 14,088 videos, 3,206 videos featured content discussing at least one topic, accounting for 23% of the total sample. The most popular topics were health (9.3% or 1,310 videos), immigration (4% or 568 videos) and Irish politics (3% or 430 videos). Regarding health, videos containing false and misleading claims about COVID-19 were common;
- BitChute, Rumble and Odysee ranked among the ten most shared platforms across all topics within this ecosystem. (See overview of topics section for more details); and



- There is evidence that alternative platforms have more utility simply as storage spaces for content rather than platforms for original content. Analysis found that 25% of all uploads on the three main alternative platforms were cross-posted videos (videos that were uploaded across multiple platforms at once).

## Platforms

**BitChute** is a video platform that was launched in 2017. It is promoted as a free speech absolutist space; in practice this means that the platform accommodates content creators whose videos or accounts were blocked on larger platforms like YouTube. BitChute is known for hosting right-wing extremists, conspiracy theorists and various forms of hate speech.<sup>90</sup>

BitChute has limited community guidelines but moderates content to some extent, implementing local restrictions on illegal content (such as child abuse or terrorist material) and, on occasion, placing geographical restrictions of the availability of content to comply with national laws.<sup>91</sup> In 2021, BitChute updated its community guidelines to include a section prohibiting “incitement to hatred” and in 2022 the platform published its first transparency report outlining how it enforces its content policies.<sup>92</sup>

**Odysee** is a video platform that partially runs on LBRY, a decentralised blockchain-based file sharing network launched in 2015. Odysee similarly promotes itself as a free speech platform and a libertarian alternative to video platforms with more stringent guidelines, though the platform also hosts extremists and conspiracy theorists.<sup>93</sup> In July 2023 LBRY announced it was closing after being fined more than \$111,000 for securities fraud in the US.<sup>94</sup>

The most viewed video on the platform, according to third-party tracking site LBRYnomics, is a video with 1.6 million views featuring Dr. Simone Gold, the founder of the COVID-sceptic anti-vaccination group America’s Frontline Doctors, speaking about the purported dangers of the COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>95</sup> The second most viewed video is a livestream of Russian state-controlled media organisation, RT.

The decentralisation of content on Odysee makes it challenging to combat harmful content as the

technological capability of administrators to fully remove content (or records of content) and restrict violative users may be limited. Per its community guidelines, Odysee moderates content containing pornography, incitement to hatred or violence and the promotion of terrorism.<sup>96</sup>

**Rumble** is a video platform that was launched in 2013 as an alternative to YouTube. Like other alternative platforms such as Telegram or Substack, Rumble did not initially pitch itself as a home for right-wing voices. However, prominent conservatives and far-right media figures in the US have begun using Rumble as one of their primary platforms, attracting hordes of likeminded users as a result.<sup>97</sup>

Rumble now promotes itself as being “immune to cancel culture.”<sup>98</sup> Despite this outlook, the platform does employ some community guidelines. It prohibits racist slurs and suppresses results for some terms associated with hate speech or extremism, according to Reuters, which noted that Rumble offers a “mix of pets and politics, with one foot in the febrile, pro-Trump world where the 2020 election was stolen and climate change doesn’t exist.”<sup>99</sup>

**DLive** is a livestreaming platform created in 2017 and acquired by BitTorrent in 2019 that includes built-in features that allow users to monetise content using a blockchain-based cryptocurrency on the platform.<sup>100</sup> Lax content moderation on DLive has made the platform an attractive space for figures like conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who set up a channel on DLive after he was banned on YouTube, before later being banned by DLive for violating its community guidelines.<sup>101</sup>

The New York Times reported that, in 2020, DLive co-founder Charles Wayn planned to suspend white supremacists from the platform but decided against it to avoid hampering DLive’s growth.<sup>102</sup> In early 2021, at least nine channels are reported to have livestreamed the January 6th insurrection at the US Capitol on the platform.<sup>103</sup> Some of the most popular content on the platform includes anti-vaccination and COVID-19 misinformation content.<sup>104</sup>

## Accounts

In total, across the four alternative platforms studied, ISD researchers analysed 72 accounts operated by 43 unique actors in Ireland. Within this set, ISD identified 28 actors with accounts on more than one such platform.

Of these, 68 accounts published a total of 14,088 videos between 1 January 2020 – 3 February 2023 (the date data was collected for the sample of alternative video platform content).

It was not possible to include content from four DLive accounts in this analysis for reasons explained in full below. A full breakdown of the number of accounts and videos on each platform, as well as the types of actors using them, can be found in the tables below.

BitChute is the most popular alternative video platform within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem. Alongside Rumble, ISD identified 23 accounts on BitChute, but almost four thousand more videos were published on BitChute versus Rumble.

It was not possible to determine the number of videos uploaded or broadcast on DLive due to a feature of the platform. DLive is primarily a livestreaming platform and once a user finishes their live broadcast, replays can then be viewed by users but usually only for a limited period of time.<sup>105</sup>

If the content creator is a verified or global partner, their videos remain viewable up to 25 or 45 days post broadcast. If the content creator is a “non-partner,” as was the case for all four actors identified by ISD during the research period, these videos only remain viewable for 72 hours. Despite this limitation, data indicated that DLive was not a popular platform within this ecosystem.

**Table 26:** The number of accounts on, and videos uploaded to, each of the four alternative video platforms analysed

Platform	Accounts	Uploads
BitChute	23	6,567
Odysee	22	5,057
Rumble	23	2,464
DLive*	4	n/a

\* Due to DLive’s policy of removing livestream replays shortly after broadcast, it was not possible to include DLive content in this analysis

**Table 27:** Types of accounts found on alternative video platforms active within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

Type	Accounts			
	BitChute	Odysee	Rumble	DLive
Alternative media	7	4	7	1
Individuals	11	14	9	3
Cross-platform accounts	2	1	2	0
Political party	2	2	0	0
Organisation	1	1	3	0
Other	0	0	2	0

Channel Metrics

The level of subscribers, number of videos posted and levels of engagement on each video varies considerably (see table below for related metrics). Dave Cullen (aka Computing Forever) had the largest number of subscribers on BitChute (113,000) and Odysee (29,000), while Ivor Cummins had the largest number of subscribers on Rumble (2,070) and Rowan Croft (aka Grand Torino) topped the list for DLive subscribers (1,226). These figures are outliers as, across all four platforms, the median number of subscribers per accounts was 191 subscribers.

Cullen was also the most prolific actor across the alternative video platforms, publishing 2,647 videos in total, followed by Gript (1,966) and Ivor Cummins (1,174). Again, these figures are outliers as the median number of videos published per channel is 91 videos.

In fact, across the full sample of 14,088 alternative video platform uploads, 7,873 videos (56% of the sample) were published by just five actors. ISD randomly selected 100 videos from the five most prolific actors to gain insights into the level of views from this sub-sample.

Whilst Cullen once more topped the list, receiving an average of 16,000 views per video, he received much higher viewing figures compared to other actors, who all received fewer than 1,000 views on average per video. With a few exceptions (indicated in the table below), the level of interest and engagement in content from actors on alternative video platforms is low.

**Table 28:** The profile and video metrics across alternative video platforms

Metric	Median	Highest	Lowest
Number of profile followers	191	113,842	1
Number of videos posted	87	1,647	0
Average level of views	339	225,077	1

### Account Creation Date and Activity

It was not possible to determine the dates on which each account in this dataset was created. Instead, ISD researchers noted the date each account published its first video in order to assess how long these users have been active on these platforms. The earliest videos in our sample were uploaded to BitChute in 2011, Odysee in 2014 and Rumble in 2019.

In the case of BitChute and Odysee, videos featured upload dates that predated the launch of the platform itself. This is a feature afforded to premium or verified users on the platform that allows them to upload content but set the upload date to a point in the past. It appears this feature was primarily used to post content on these platforms that had previously been uploaded in the past by these users on other platforms like YouTube. DLive's policy of removing broadcasts for 'non-partner' content creators made this exercise impossible.

Of the 68 accounts that could be analysed on BitChute, Rumble and Odysee, 45 accounts published their first videos on these platforms during or after 2020. All of the accounts that uploaded their first video in 2020, did so after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March.

### Content Analysis

#### Topic Overview

ISD analysed video titles for the total alternative video platform sample of 14,088 videos to identify what topics were referenced or discussed most by actors (see table 29 for the full figures). Of the 14,088 videos, 3,206 had titles that referenced at least one topic, accounting for 22.7% of the total sample. Broken down by platform, these figures were; BitChute 25.7%, Odysee 19.6% and Rumble 27.5%.

**Table 29:** Table shows the figures for topic-matching and total content across alternative video platforms

Type	BitChute	Odysee	Rumble	DLive*	Total
Conspiracy	204	74	60	-	338
Ethnonationalism	9	1	4	-	14
5G	16	3	6	-	25
Irish Politics	129	162	139	-	430
Health	685	412	213	-	1,310
Immigration	266	219	83	-	568
Climate	107	75	51	-	233
RUS/UKR	41	35	35	-	111
LGBTQ+	75	51	51	-	177
<b>Topic-matching videos</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,206</b>

\* Due to DLive's policy of removing livestream replays shortly after broadcast, it was not possible to include DLive content in this analysis

**Image 12:** Video uploaded to BitChute promoting the anti-vaccine film Died Suddenly

The most popular topic referenced across alternative video platforms was health (1,310 posts or 9.3% of the total sample), followed by immigration (568 posts or 4% of the sample) and then posts about Irish politics (430 posts or 3%).

False and misleading information about COVID-19 vaccines was prevalent throughout the health topic on all alternative video platforms. Of the 1,310 posts about

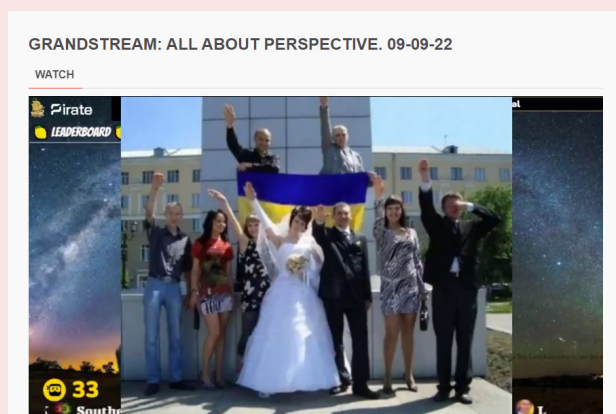
health, over 350 referenced vaccines, making this the primary topic of discussion within this topic. There were numerous instances of videos that referenced supposed injuries or death caused by vaccines, including seven posts promoting *Died Suddenly*, a film replete with anti-vaccine conspiracies and false claims released in 2022.<sup>106</sup> Scaremongering content about vaccines was common throughout this topic. The term “genocide” was used in reference to COVID-19 vaccines in 18 posts.

### Limitations of Keyword Analysis

Of the 14,088 videos, 23% of the video titles featured content referencing at least one topic. This figure is likely higher though as, due to the limitations of using keywords to analyse video titles, some videos were not captured in the topic dataset. Many videos simply did not include keywords related to these topics and many video titles used by actors in this sample are often vague or feature no keywords offering explanatory details about the subject of the video.

For example, two such videos uploaded were titled “who is watching who now?” and “all about perspective.” The videos were uploaded by Rowan Croft (aka Grand Torino) who is a supporter of anti-immigration protests and promoter of conspiracy theories on numerous topics including COVID-19 and vaccines.<sup>107</sup> In the past Croft said politicians who supported COVID-19 vaccines should be “hung by the neck” and has described vaccines as “kill shots.”<sup>108</sup>

**Image 13:** Video in which Rowan Croft claimed Ukraine is governed by neo-Nazis and claimed President Volodymyr Zelensky is not Ukrainian



In the former video, Croft shared a number of false claims about asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland and then accused the Gardai of carrying out “false flag operations” at anti-immigrant protests. Croft claimed Gardai were operating undercover as attendees at such protests and carrying out violence against others, all with the aim of discrediting the credibility of all anti-immigrant protesters.

In the latter video, Croft promoted various false claims about the invasion of Ukraine, parroting a Kremlin topic that the invasion was in fact only a “strategic military operation” to remove the supposed neo-Nazi regime in charge of Ukraine.<sup>109</sup> In this video Croft described Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a “green t-shirt-wearing, cocaine-addled, drug sniffer that’s not even Ukrainian.” Claims that Zelensky is not Ukrainian are often expressed as a veiled antisemitic slur that suggest he can’t be Ukrainian since he is Jewish.

### Cross-posting Content

During the ethnographic monitoring phase of this research, ISD analysts noted that numerous videos were uploaded simultaneously by actors to three of the alternative video platforms: BitChute, Odysee and Rumble. This is not wholly surprising as online content creators often upload the same videos to multiple platforms to develop and build an online audience.

Alternative platforms typically take a hands-off approach to content moderation and do not enforce community guidelines on their platforms, making these spaces highly permissive for spreading false or misleading claims and useful for storing potentially violative content. This is one of the primary reasons that these spaces become attractive for disinformation and extremist actors along with their potential for enabling monetisation and fundraising opportunities.

In an effort to examine this further, ISD conducted analysis to measure the rate of cross-posting across alternative video platforms within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

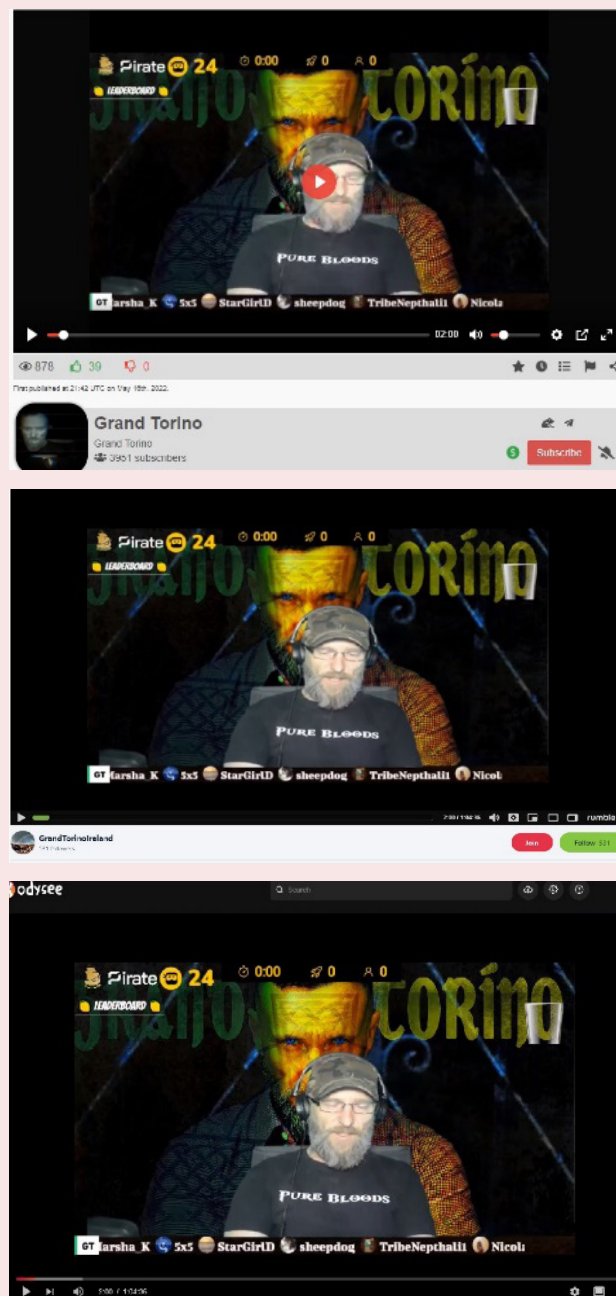
Of the 14,088 videos uploaded on BitChute, Odysee and Rumble, ISD found 25% (3,534) of them were hosted on all three platforms. Of the 3,534 videos almost all of the videos (96%) came from just 10 users, all of whom are prominent actors within the ecosystem. This suggests that, rather than any of these platforms being the

primary space for prominent actors, they are instead part of a multi-platform strategy employed by these actors.

ISD conducted the same cross-posting analysis between the alternative video platform sample and all YouTube videos uploaded by Irish actors within the ecosystem. Of the 3,656 videos uploaded to YouTube, this analysis found that just 887 videos (or 24% of all YouTube content) was also posted on alternative platforms. Many of the same leading actors are active on YouTube and engage in cross-posting.

In assessing the influence and impact of mis- and disinformation, it's important to factor in the reach of such content. As detailed in this analysis, the reach of alternative video platforms is low. So, while alternative video platforms may play an important role for mis- or disinformation actors in preserving their content, it is unclear whether it is useful for them in trying to expand their audience. It's also possible that viewers who do access alternative video platforms are more engaged with content than a broader audience on a space like YouTube. While the reach of alternative video platform content may be low, it might have an outsized impact in helping promote false, misleading or potentially harmful information online.

**Image 14:** Cross-posted video posted by Rowan Croft on BitChute, Rumble and Odysee





## Donation Platform Analysis

The online world has opened up a multitude of possibilities for people to earn money or raise funds to support their work or causes they care about. Fundraising platforms, donation forms or subscription sites allow people to do this with ease. However, these possibilities have also been utilised by individuals, groups and organisations who routinely use social and digital media to produce and promote false, misleading and sometimes harmful claims about a range of topics and, at the same time, use this activity to solicit financial support from others online.

Online monetisation mechanisms also offer groups who might struggle to raise funds domestically the opportunity to seek and solicit funds from ideologically similar communities internationally, as demonstrated in previous ISD research.<sup>110</sup> Like social media platforms, fundraising platforms/mechanisms often have policies in place to stop their services being used for harmful purposes but they also often fail to fully enforce these policies.

ISD set out to investigate what funding mechanisms were being used by entities within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem and whether their use of such services violated the platform's terms of service.

### Key Findings

ISD undertook an analysis of the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem on donation platforms and found:

- ISD found 41 entities within this ecosystem using a total of 27 platforms/mechanisms to raise funds for their activities;
- Some entities use multiple platforms/mechanisms, with the total number of instances of online fundraising coming to 99 between all 41 entities;
- 17 of the platforms used have policies or terms of service that prohibit their use to spread discriminatory, hateful, false or misleading information and there are clear examples of where these policies are being violated by users within the ecosystem; and
- Stripe was the most popular platform/mechanism used within this ecosystem, followed by PayPal. Both of these services have policies that prevent their services being used for the promotion of hate, yet ISD found clear examples of content violating these rules.

### Platform Analysis

In total, 27 different platforms and mechanisms were found to be used by entities within the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem to raise funds or support the creation of content. These fundraising platforms and mechanisms fell into eight different categories:

1. **Content subscription/donation sites:** Multimedia platforms offer content creators the option of accepting payment during livestreamed video, as a virtual tip jar, and/or in exchange for premium content locked behind a paywall. ISD's analysis found eight such platforms being used by Irish actors in this way. BuyMeACoffee was the most popular of these platforms, followed by SubscribeStar and Patreon;
2. **Crowdfunding:** Crowdfunding sites allow users to set up donation 'events' for specific organisations or built around particular purposes. ISD found four such platforms being used in this way, with GoFundMe being the most popular;
3. **Cryptocurrency:** Cryptocurrency has become an increasingly appealing method for raising funds among extremist movements as crypto is notable for



both its privacy protections and a lack of centralised authority policing transfers. Within this ecosystem, entities were found to use cryptocurrency exchange sites, such as Coinbase, or simply listed the details of their cryptocurrency wallets for direct transfers;

4. **Direct requests:** Some websites include direct requests for funding, membership or consultation fees, often solicited through appeals for cheques to be sent via mail, or funds to be sent directly to bank accounts. This includes the sharing of Revolut details;
5. **Flexible fund collection:** These allow users to collect money from anywhere online, including through an embeddable link on a website, remote donations from third-party apps, or direct transfers between different users on the platform. PayPal was the method of choice in this category and also the most popular mechanism within this ecosystem;
6. **Offsite retail:** Platforms that allow users to create and sell apparel, merchandise and other products and act as a marketplace for anyone to sell specific goods;
7. **Onsite donations:** Onsite donation forms provide software to allow users to raise donations through their websites. Donorbox was the most common mechanism used in this category; and
8. **Onsite retail:** These include services that facilitate sales and donations through a person or organisation's website. They are often used in conjunction with another platform. For example, Stripe is used to process payments on BuyMeACoffee.

Out of the 27 platforms/mechanisms, ISD identified 17 that had policies in place that prohibit the service being used to spread discriminatory, hateful, false or misleading information. See table 31 in the appendix for further details on these policies. The platforms without such policies tended to be services where a lack of such regulation is a feature of their usage, such as cryptocurrency sites or donation services set up specifically to counter apparent censorship from similar platforms.

**Table 30:** Types of platforms/mechanisms and the number of uses found in the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem

	Policies against use for hate/extremism /disinformation <sup>111</sup>	Number of uses in the Irish mis- and/or disinformation ecosystem
<b>Content subscription/donation sites</b>		
BuyMeACoffee	Yes	8
DLive	Yes	2
Entropy	No	1
Gumroad	Yes	1
Patreon	Yes	3
Powerchat	Yes	1
SubscribeStar	Yes	6
YouTube Super Chats	Yes	3
<b>Crowdfunding</b>		
GiveSendGo	No	3
GoFundMe	Yes	4
GoGetFunding	Yes	1
iDonate	Yes	1
<b>Cryptocurrency</b>		
Coinbase	No	1
CoinTree	No	1
Various Crypto wallets	No	5
<b>Direct requests</b>		
Bank transfer	N/A	5
Revolut	No	3
<b>Flexible fund collection</b>		
PayPal	Yes	17
<b>Offsite retail</b>		
TeeSpring	Yes	4
<b>Onsite donation form</b>		
Donorbox	Yes	1
Memberful	No	1
Nationbuilder	No	1
Wix Cashier	Yes	1
<b>Onsite retail</b>		
Google Pay	Yes	5
Shopify	Yes	1
Stripe	Yes	18
WooCommerce	No	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>99</b>

## Actor Analysis

ISD identified 41 entities (consisting of six alternative media, 21 individuals, two cross-platform accounts, nine organisations and three political parties) using a total of 99 mechanisms to raise funds. While most entities used an average of two different platforms/mechanisms, there were others who used more. Keith Woods, an individual who has referenced antisemitic terminology and promoted content featuring prominent Holocaust deniers in online posts, was found to use eight of these mechanisms, for example. Following Woods was Gript and the National Party, both using five each. Derek Blighe, Rowan Croft (aka Grand Torino), Philip Dwyer and Sól na hEireann were both found to use four different mechanisms.

## Terms of Service Violations

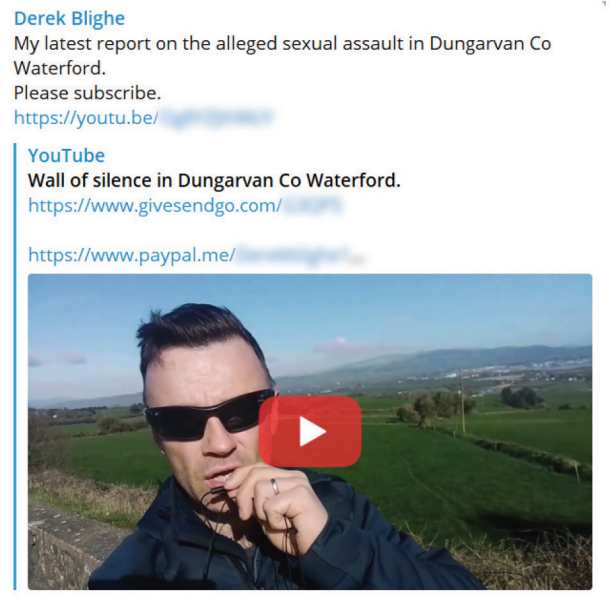
It is clear from ISD's analysis that certain platforms are not upholding their policies by allowing some of the entities identified to use their services. For example, PayPal clearly states that the platform cannot be used in "the promotion of hate, violence, racial or other forms of intolerance that is discriminatory." Despite this, PayPal is one of the most popular mechanisms used by entities in the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem.

Some of the leading figures mobilising people to protest against the housing of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland, including Derek Blighe and Philip Dwyer, are using the platform to raise funds (see the YouTube platform analysis for further information on Dwyer's fundraising).<sup>112,113</sup> Image 15 shows a video published by Derek Blighe on YouTube where he advertises multiple ways followers can send him money, including PayPal.

In the video, Blighe claims there were attempts to "cover up" an alleged sexual assault perpetrated by migrant men in Dungarvan, Co Waterford. The Gardaí later confirmed that a woman had been arrested for making a false statement about the alleged assault and described how there was "a significant volume of misinformation and disinformation in circulation" regarding claims of such sexual assaults.<sup>114</sup>

Stripe was found to be the most popular mechanism used in the Irish mis- and disinformation ecosystem. Stripe's policies state that it cannot be used to support activities which "engages in, encourages, promotes or celebrates

**Image 15:** Derek Blighe promoting a false story about sexual assault while advertising his PayPal and GiveSendGo to raise money



unlawful violence toward any group based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other immutable characteristic." Gemma O'Doherty, a conspiracy theorist who has promoted Holocaust denial and antisemitism (see sections on Gettr and Gab for details on this), uses Stripe to raise funds on her website, where it is used as the underlying financial technology behind the "donate" button.

Often Stripe is not used on its own but in conjunction with other platforms that use Stripe's technology to process payments. BuyMeACoffee, for example, partners with Stripe (and PayPal) and users must agree to both platforms' terms of service. BuyMeACoffee's terms prohibit users "victimis[ing] anyone," posting false information or being "threatening, abusive, harassing [or] defamatory". The platform is being used by eight entities within this ecosystem, including Gavin Lowbridge, the person behind the account Off-Grid Ireland.<sup>115</sup> At the time of writing, Lowbridge was using the platform to advertise t-shirts emblazoned with the words "#FakeugeesUnwelcome." Through BuyMeACoffee, he asks people to support his work, which in the past has included interviews with people such as Mark Collett,

the leader of the British white nationalist group Patriotic Alternative.<sup>116</sup>

A platform similar to BuyMeACoffee is SubscribeStar, which also has clear policies against the kind of content often created and promoted by entities within this ecosystem who use its service. SubscribeStar says users are: “prohibited from using the site or its content ... To harass, abuse, insult, harm, defame, slander, disparage, intimidate, or discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, race, age, national origin, or disability; [or] to submit false or misleading information.” Despite this, the platform is used by six entities within this ecosystem, including individuals who promote extremist rhetoric, such as Keith Woods.

In the case of Woods, many of the videos he posts on SubscribeStar are described as “book club discussions” and seem innocuous on the surface. On Twitter (X), however, Woods consistently posts antisemitic and white nationalist content.<sup>117</sup> This kind of strategy – posting extreme content on one platform and less offensive content on other platforms where they can raise money – is a common tactic among online extremist communities.

## Appendix

### Details of terms of service of payment and fundraising mechanisms

**Table 31:** References to payment mechanism terms of service

Platform	Policies against use for hate/disinformation/extremism
BuyMeACoffee <sup>118</sup>	<p>"Don't lie to people. Don't post information you know is false, misleading, or inaccurate. Don't do anything deceptive or fraudulent."</p> <p>"Don't victimize anyone. Don't do anything threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, libelous, tortious, obscene, profane, or invasive of another person's privacy."</p> <p>"Don't post anything that is - is unlawful, threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, libelous, deceptive, fraudulent, invasive of another's privacy, tortious, obscene, vulgar, pornographic, offensive, profane, contains or depicts nudity, contains or depicts sexual activity, or is otherwise inappropriate as determined by us in our sole discretion."</p>
DLive <sup>119</sup>	<p>"DLive prohibits activities and material (including live streams, videos, and comments) that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are harmful, deceptive, offensive, or illegal...</li> <li>• Encourage or promote harmful, deceptive, offensive, or illegal conduct...</li> <li>• Constitute or encourage hate speech that directly attacks a person or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, medical or mental condition, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity"</li> </ul>
Entropy	No
Gumroad <sup>120</sup>	"You shall not...take action or make available any content...that is unlawful, threatening, abusive, harassing, misleading, false, defamatory, libelous, pornographic, deceptive, fraudulent, invasive of another's privacy, tortious, obscene, offensive, profane or racially, ethnically, or otherwise discriminatory"
Patreon <sup>121</sup>	"Patreon will not help fund creations that engage in medical misinformation related to Covid-19, and disinformation related to propagating QAnon or Pizzagate conspiracy theories... there is no room on Patreon for projects funding hate speech, such as calling for violence, exclusion, or segregation. This includes serious attacks on people based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, serious medical conditions, caste, or immigration status."
Powerchat <sup>122</sup>	"You agree that when using the Services, you will not: - Defame, abuse, harass, stalk, threaten or otherwise violate the legal rights (such as rights of privacy and publicity) of others. Publish, post, upload, distribute or disseminate any inappropriate, profane, defamatory, infringing, obscene, indecent or unlawful topic, name, material or information."
SubscribeStar <sup>123</sup>	"prohibited from using the site or its content... To harass, abuse, insult, harm, defame, slander, disparage, intimidate, or discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, race, age, national origin, or disability; (f) to submit false or misleading information."

YouTube Super Chats <sup>124</sup>	<p>“ Don’t post content on YouTube if it fits any of the descriptions below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suppression of census participation: Content aiming to mislead census participants about the time, place, means, or eligibility requirements of the census, or false claims that could materially discourage census participation.</li> <li>• Manipulated content: Content that has been technically manipulated or doctored in a way that misleads users (beyond clips taken out of context) and may pose a serious risk of egregious harm.</li> <li>• Misattributed content: Content that may pose a serious risk of egregious harm by falsely claiming that old footage from a past event is from a current event.</li> <li>• Promoting dangerous remedies, cures, or substances: Content that promotes harmful substances, treatments, or substances that present an inherent risk of severe bodily harm or death.</li> <li>• Contradicting expert consensus on certain safe medical practices: Content that contradicts local health authorities’ or WHO guidance on certain safe medical practices.”</li> </ul> <p>“Hate speech is not allowed on YouTube. We remove content promoting violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following attributes: Age, Caste, Disability, Ethnicity, Gender Identity and Expression, Nationality, Race, Immigration Status, Religion, Sex/Gender, Sexual Orientation, Victims of a major violent event and their kin, Veteran Status”</p>
GiveSendGo	No
GoFundMe <sup>125</sup>	<p>“ A. not to use the Services to raise funds or establish or contribute to any Fundraiser with the implicit or explicit purpose of promoting or involving:... User Content that reflects, incites or promotes behavior that we deem, in our sole discretion, to be an abuse of power or in support of terrorism, hate, violence, harassment, bullying, discrimination, terrorist financing or intolerance of any kind reflects an abuse of power relating to race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disabilities or diseases;”</p>
GoGetFunding <sup>126</sup>	GoGetFunding does not allow: “Content associated with hate groups or terrorist organizations... Hurtful or hateful language... False, misleading, dishonest statements”
iDonate <sup>127</sup>	<p>“When submitting User Content (or communicating in any other way using Our Site), you must not submit, communicate or otherwise do anything that:... is obscene, deliberately offensive, hateful, or otherwise inflammatory... discriminates against, or is in any way defamatory of, any person, group or class of persons, race, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or age;... is calculated or otherwise likely to deceive”</p>
Coinbase	No
CoinTree	No
Various Crypto wallets	No
Bank transfer	-
Revolut	No
PayPal <sup>128</sup>	<p>“ You may not use the PayPal service for activities that:... the promotion of hate, violence, racial or other forms of intolerance that is discriminatory”</p>

TeeSpring <sup>129</sup>	“We do not allow campaigns that promote or glorify hatred toward people based on their age, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and religion, including people, organizations or symbols dedicated to hatred against these groups. Additionally, we will not allow campaigns including content that bullies, attacks or threatens specific individuals... We do not allow content that promotes harmful misinformation or groups known to spread misinformation, including content known to lead to harassment or violence, impediment of civic engagement, or threats to the health and safety of the public.”
Donorbox <sup>130</sup>	“Donorbox may not be used for activities related to the following:... Engaging in, encouraging, promoting, or celebrating unlawful violence toward any group based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other immutable characteristic... Using dehumanizing rhetoric to refer to another racial group, regardless of whether such characterizations are directly involved in the use of Donorbox services or not.
Memberful	No
Nationbuilder	No
Wix Cashier <sup>131</sup>	“Wix Payments may not be used in relation to any of the following:... Products or services that promote hate, violence, discrimination, terrorism, harassment or abuse in any shape or form”
Google Pay <sup>132</sup>	“Offensive content and activities... Goods, literature, products, materials, services, or activities that... Incite hatred against, promote discrimination of, or disparage an individual or group on the basis of their race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, nationality, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or other characteristic that is associated with systemic discrimination or marginalization... Promote intolerance or hatred”
Shopify <sup>133</sup>	“The following activities are prohibited:... Hateful content: You may not use the Services to promote or condone hate or violence against people based on race, ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, medical condition, veteran status or other forms of discriminatory intolerance. You may not use the Services to promote or support organizations, platforms or people that: (i) promote or condone such hate; or (ii) threaten or condone violence to further a cause.”
Stripe	“You must not use Stripe’s services for the following activities.... Any business or organization that a. engages in, encourages, promotes or celebrates unlawful violence or physical harm to persons or property, or b. engages in, encourages, promotes or celebrates unlawful violence toward any group based on race, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other immutable characteristic”
WooCommerce	No



### **Right to reply responses**

ISD contacted every entity mentioned in this report for a right to reply. We did not receive responses from Keith Woods, the National Party, TheLiberal.ie, Hermann Kelly, Graham Carey, Dr Dolores Cahill, the World Doctors Alliance, Ben Gilroy, Tracey O'Mahony, Philip Dwyer, the Irish Inquiry, Dave Cullen, Rowan Croft, Gemma O'Doherty, Gerard Delaney, James Reynolds, Síol na hEireann, Jim Corr, John Bowler, Mike Connell, Michael Leahy, Gavin Lowbridge or John McGuirk.

The following are the responses we did receive.

#### **Ivor Cummins**

When offered a right of reply to comment on the claim that he has shared numerous false and misleading claims, Ivor Cummins replied: "I have since been proven correct on the overwhelming majority of the data and inferences that I discussed since March 2020. Most of the conceits incorrectly labelled as 'false and misleading' are since acknowledged to have indeed been correct, even in mainstream media - and I can send you all of the relevant published articles."

When contacted to comment on his part in the livestream with Dr Dolores Cahill, Ivor Cummins said: "I did not make any false statements, and simply took part in what was billed and published as a debate; Cahill's comments are hers alone, and I see only a 'guilt by association play' in the above statement."

#### **Irish Freedom Party**

When offered a right of reply to comment on the statements made in the report, the Irish Freedom Party replied: "Fair reporting and globalist-funded propaganda machine ISD go together like a virgin and syphilis. The Irish Freedom Party has opposed carbon tax from the day it was first floated because it is unnecessary and unjust penalisation of young people who drive to work and old people who need to heat their homes. Carbon tax penalises the poor and is extremely unjust. Secondly, why are we closing down peat power stations in the Midlands in order to import more electricity from nuclear-powered France? As well as curbing turf cutting to then import lignite from Lithuania? No joined up thinking from the Government. The Q Anon movement does not exist except in the minds of globalist organisations like ISD which would have to invent it to provide employment

opportunities for Looney Left losers such as themselves. The Irish Freedom Party advocates personal freedom and responsibility as well as national sovereignty in an Ireland which is low tax to encourage work, enterprise and initiative. We want a cleaner, greener Ireland in which a well-educated Irish people use the natural resources we have at hand as well as technology to generate employment for Irish people who are sick of being Paddy Last in our own country. Therefore we advocate controlled borders and oppose the colonisation of Ireland. No country has a future without children therefore we are pro life, pro family and like to help young families have kids to build a bigger, better and stronger Irish society."

#### **Derek Blighe**

When offered a right of reply to comment on ISD's claim that Blighe is a "supporter and organiser of anti-immigration protests", Blighe replied: "You are incorrect, I do not support an anti immigration position, my wife is one, I support a sensible immigration position, Ireland is currently involved in reckless immigration practices that are unsustainable in terms of housing supply and the crime levels it had brought us."

When offered a right to reply on his role as founder of the political party Ireland First, Blighe replied: "I am the founder of Ireland first."

When offered a right to reply on Blighe's previous promotion of "plantation" narratives and his claims in online posts that "third world" migrants are replacing Irish people, he replied: "In respect of Irish people being replaced by third worlders, would you consider with ethnic Irish numbers declining due to low birth rates and high outward migration of our youth, yet our population grows due to inward migration mostly from the third world, would this reflect replacement of Irish population?"

When offered a right to reply on the underlying theme of his videos being the alleged discrimination suffered by the Irish population at the expense of asylum seekers and refugees, Blighe replied: "How many Ukrainians do you see struggling for housing or living in squalor compared to ethnic Irish?" Blighe also referred to this reply when asked to comment on his claim that Ukrainians have "more rights" than the local population.

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When offered a right to reply to a video taken at a demonstration in solidarity with Ukraine in which Blighe approached and harassed refugees and shamed them for not fighting for their country, Blighe replied: “Many thousands of military aged Ukrainian men are in Ireland contrary to the order imposed by the Ukrainian government that they stay and fight the war. Would you consider them war deserters and should they be deported back to Ukraine to face trial?”

When asked to comment on his claim that there was a “cover up” of an alleged sexual assault perpetrated by migrant men in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, Blighe replied: “If it surfaces the Dungarvan woman in question was arrested & detained by Gardai for 12 hours, and coerced into signing a false confession under threat of being detained continuously, will your organisation publish the truth or continue to peddle a lie to reinforce your narrative?”

When asked to comment on Blighe being charged with theft after he entered a donation centre for Ukrainians stole a hat and pair of gloves, allegedly for this children and complained about the centre discriminating against the local population, Blighe replied: “ I entered an open shop, that was giving out items free of charge and picked up a t shirt and stepped outside the entrance, I was subsequently arrested for burglary because I was the wrong nationality, Is that not discrimination?”

Furthermore, Blighe also said: “You claim on your website that ISD is an independent think tank, yet you receive funding from Facebook, Google, Bill Gates and George Soros as well as multiple Western governments including the U.S and the UK, both have funded wars and murdered countless millions of people worldwide, and forced their citizens to pay the cost of such barbarism. I say that your organisation is the disinformation that you claim to fight against and when Ireland first and other nationalists take political power in Ireland, all funding to your crooked heist will be severed!”

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