



# Key Takeaways From *Countering Disinformation Effectively: An Evidence-Based Policy Guide*

JON BATEMAN AND DEAN JACKSON

Disinformation is widely seen as a pressing challenge for democracies worldwide, but it has proven difficult to define, understand, and measure—let alone address. A new Carnegie report offers evidence-based assessments of ten major policy interventions, drawing on hundreds of academic papers and consultations with many leading scholars and practitioners. Each case study describes real-world uses, provides a resource list, and answers three fundamental questions: How much is known about the intervention? How effective does it seem? And how scalable is it?

## OVERALL FINDINGS

***There is no silver bullet or “best” policy option.***

None of the interventions considered were simultaneously well-studied, very effective, and easy to scale.

***Democracies should diversify their policy portfolios.***

Tactical platform-based actions, like fact-checking and takedowns, are worthy. But ambitious societal reforms, like bolstering local journalism and media literacy, deserve more attention.

***Policymakers should set realistic expectations.***

Disinformation is a chronic historical phenomenon with deep social, political, and economic roots. Credible policy options exist, but technocratic solutionism still has serious limits.

***Countering disinformation is not always apolitical.***

Wielding institutional power, resources, or prestige to declare what is true and false implies a claim of authority. This carries political meaning and can lead to overreach or blowback.

***Pervasive research gaps will last for generations.***

Even the most-studied interventions are poorly understood due to inherent complexity and methodological challenges. Progress will take decades and require major research infrastructure.











***Generative AI might not be a disinformation game changer.***

It can make false content more realistic and personalized, but that isn't necessarily what drives people's beliefs. Good AI tools might help scale up counter-disinformation measures.



These findings are drawn from Jon Bateman's and Dean Jackson's report, *Countering Disinformation Effectively: An Evidence-Based Policy Guide*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 31, 2024.

## Assessing Ten Policy Interventions to Counter Disinformation

Type	Intervention	How much is known?	How effective does it seem?	How easily does it scale?
	1. Supporting local journalism	Modest	Significant	Difficult
	2. Media literacy education	Significant	Significant	Difficult
	3. Fact-checking	Significant	Modest	Modest
	4. Labeling social media content	Modest	Modest	Easy
	5. Counter-messaging strategies	Modest	Modest	Difficult
	6. Cybersecurity for elections and campaigns	Modest	Modest	Modest
	7. Statecraft, deterrence, and disruption	Modest	Limited	Modest
	8. Removing inauthentic asset networks	Limited	Modest	Modest
	9. Reducing data collection and targeted ads	Modest	Limited	Difficult
	10. Changing recommendation algorithms	Limited	Significant	Modest



Public information



Government action



Platform action

The cells of this table are color coded: green suggests the most positive assessment for each factor, while red is the least positive and yellow is in between. These overall ratings are a combination of various subfactors, which may be in tension: for example, an intervention can be highly effective but only for a short time or with high risk of second-order consequences.

A green cell means an intervention is well studied, likely to be effective, or easy to implement. For the first column, this means there is a large body of literature on the topic. While it may not conclusively answer every relevant question, it provides strong indicators of effectiveness, cost, and related factors. For the second column, a green cell suggests that an intervention can be highly effective at addressing the problem in a lasting way at a relatively low level of risk. For the third column, a green cell means that the intervention can quickly make a large impact at relatively low cost and without major obstacles to successful implementation.

A yellow cell indicates an intervention is less well studied (there is relevant literature but major questions about efficacy are unanswered or significantly underexplored), less efficacious (its impact is noteworthy but limited in size or duration, or it carries some risk of blowback), or faces nonnegligible hurdles to implementation, such as cost, technical barriers, or political opposition.

A red cell indicates that an intervention is poorly understood, with little literature offering guidance on key questions; that it is low impact, has only narrow use cases, or has significant second-order consequences; or that it requires an especially high investment of resources or political capital to implement or scale.

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