Swedish teenagers’ difficulties and abilities to determine digital news credibility

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.2478/nor-2019-0002

## Issued

2019

## Language

English

## Volume

40

## Issue

1

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Nordicom Review

## Topics

Literacy and skills

## Implications For Educators About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

How education may support a reflective, humble and curious approach to news

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

In this study we investigate the abilities to determine the credibility of digital news among 483 teenagers. Using an online survey with a performance test we assess to what extent teenagers are able to determine the credibility of different sources, evaluate credible and biased uses of evidence, and corroborate information. Many respondents fail to identify the credibility of false, biased and vetted news. Respondents who value the importance of credible news seem to hold a mindset helping them to determine credibility better than other respondents. In contrast, respondents self-reporting to be good at searching information online and who find information online trustworthy are not very good at civic online reasoning. Our findings, which may be linked to theories of disciplinary literacy, science curiosity and overconfidence, provide a basis for further research of how to better understand and support civic online reasoning in classrooms and society.

# Outcome

"[F]irst, the performance on all items was relatively poor − most pupils got less than half of the items correct; second, the credibility ratings on three articles, one credible, one false news and one reader’s comment were relatively high and did not differ much; and, last, but not least, regressions showed that self-rated importance of credibility of news and being in the aesthetics programme were associated with better performance, whereas higher self-reported ratings on fact-checking ability and reliability of news on the internet were associated with a worse performance." (Authors, 31-32)