

HATE
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FROM THEORY TO ACTION

**INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE AND HATE IN UK
CONSPIRACY THEORY ONLINE SPACES**

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HOPE not hate uses research, education and public engagement to challenge mistrust and racism, and helps to build communities that are inclusive, celebrate shared identities and are resilient to hate.

We monitor far-right extremism and produce in-depth analysis of the threat of the politics of hate in the UK and abroad.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Key Findings	5
Introduction	6
Methodology	9
Violence In Conspiracy Theory Chats	10
Themes in Violent Messages	12
Hate in Conspiracy Theory Groups	13
Primary ‘Enemies’ Identified by the Conspiracy Theory Scene	15
Drivers of Conspiracy Theories	17
The Most Common Hateful Conspiracy Theories	19
Conclusion	25
Endnotes	26

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Telegram’s minimal moderation has allowed the platform to become a haven for far-right groups, fostering hatred in various forms. In the following report, we will delve into and explore the concealed hate within conspiracy theory chats from multiple perspectives. Utilising our advanced deep learning classifier, we have analysed over 1.7 million conspiracy theory chats in the United Kingdom, spanning a period of just under three years, from 11th November 2020 to 4th October 2023.

We categorised these messages into 8 distinct categories of hate, 3 categories of hostility and one unique category being ‘No hate’ which comprised over 66% of the messages. This prevalence of ‘No hate’ messages in such spaces is not uncommon, as often conversations may not explicitly contain hate speech or may discuss neutral topics. However, this does not diminish the significance of the hate that is present. The remaining messages, though fewer in number, still represent a substantial volume of hate speech. This indicates that while the majority of the content might appear benign, the presence of hate is intense and concerning, emphasising the severity and impact of the hateful messages that do exist within these chats.

In our study, we detected various sentiments like antisemitism, anti-Muslim, anti-LGBTQ, and misogynistic content among the messages. Although only 1% of the total messages (about 16,500) were violent, this is significant. We further developed a deep learning classifier to distinguish between “reference to violence” and “threat of violence.” Notably, 14.4% of these were direct threats. This finding is alarming, especially considering recent examples of violence and terrorism, illustrating the real-world consequences of such online threats and the importance of closely monitoring these communications.

In conclusion, our analysis reveals that prominent far-right conspiracy theorists and politicians, including figures like Donald Trump, play a significant role in catering to and fueling their audience’s beliefs in various conspiracies. These conspiracy-oriented chats, as examined in our report, act as gateways to fostering distrust in institutions and propagating various forms of hate. Our findings underscore the profound impact such discussions can have in shaping public opinion and exacerbating societal divisions, highlighting the urgent need for awareness and intervention in these digital spaces. The executive summary emphasises the critical nature of understanding and addressing the content and implications of these online conversations.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Conspiracy theory chats are a gateway to other forms of hate. Our analysis of conspiracy theory chats shows 33% of messages involve hate speech and hostility, indicating widespread prejudice against minorities.**
- **We identified 16,555 (1%) messages endorsing or promoting violence in conspiracy theorist chats. Our newly developed deep learning classifier found that 14.4% of these contained explicitly threats made by the users.**
- **Migrants are the most frequently targeted minority group in the conspiracy theory chats we have investigated. Migrants are blamed for a range of societal issues and users promote far-right conspiracy theories.**
- **We find a large number of messages indicating a belief that governments and elites are intentionally using violence towards the general population. This belief can be used to justify retaliatory action.**
- **COVID-19 remains a dominant topic in UK conspiracy theory circles, reflecting ongoing misinformation and the pandemic's lasting influence in shaping current societal narratives.**

INTRODUCTION

Polling in the United Kingdom in 2019 found that a quarter of the country's population, to a certain degree, believes that the threat of climate change is exaggerated. Additionally, 20% of Britons subscribe to the belief that vaccinations have harmful effects, and their true purpose and side effects are not being fully disclosed to the public.¹ The anti-vaccine conspiracy theories have, unsurprisingly, seen a dramatic increase following the coronavirus outbreak. Even though it has been over three years since the pandemic began, these theories continue to be one of the more frequently discussed topics among conspiracy theorist groups in the UK.

A survey commissioned by the BBC in June 2023 found that 61.5% of people who expressed an interest in attending rallies linked to common conspiracy theories, such as anti-vaccine beliefs, think violence could be justified at these protests. This viewpoint is particularly prevalent among those who consume conspiracy theory media, including *The Light*, a publication notorious for propagating such theories. The survey further indicates that this belief is more common among individuals who heavily rely on social media and messaging platforms for news. This trend of increasing scepticism towards official narratives of events has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.²

A recent extensive study of 125 Telegram channels published by Terrorism Research Initiative, showed a greater and growing presence of far-right extremist content compared to the far left, particularly as these groups migrate from mainstream social media.³ This research also highlights the alarming prevalence of disinformation campaigns, conspiracy theories, and accelerationism on such platforms, underlining the critical intersection of hate speech and conspiracy in digital spaces.

Conspiracy theorists have been known to engage in violence and hate influenced by their convictions. One of the most extreme cases was the 2017 Las Vegas shooter, Stephen Paddock, who, from his hotel room window, tragically took the lives of 61 individuals and injured hundreds at a well-known hotel. Individuals who interacted with Paddock prior to his shooting reported that he shared conspiratorial and anti-government views, traits commonly associated with the far-right ideology.⁴

Another case is that of Matthew Philip Wright, who blocked traffic on the Mike O'Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge near the Hoover Dam with an armoured truck in early 2020. He was a believer of the QAnon conspiracy theory and demanded the release of a report about the FBI's conduct,

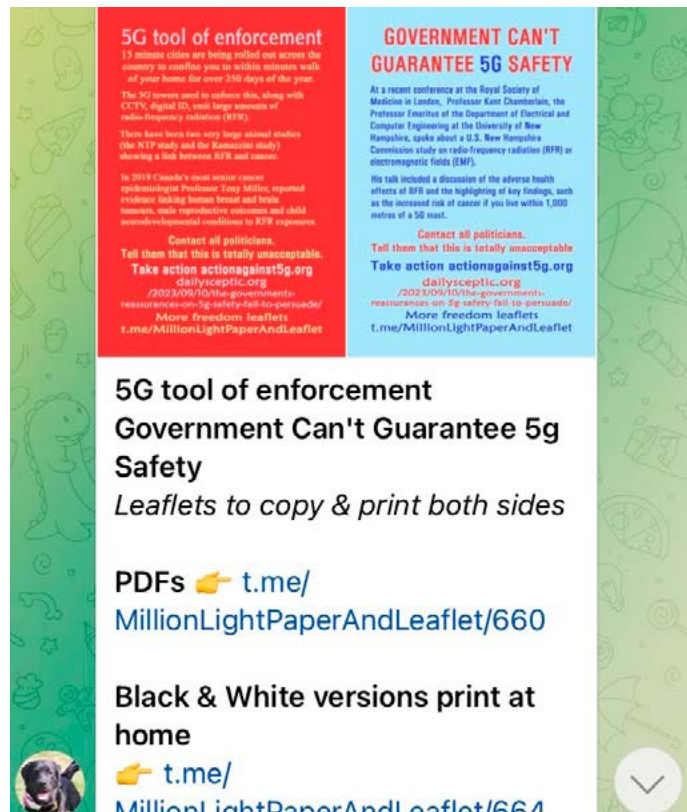
which he believed was being covered up by high-ranking individuals.⁵ A study published by the Cambridge University Press used survey data to observe attitudes toward political violence, finding that people who scored higher on a scale of generic conspiracy belief were also more likely to endorse violent political actions.⁶

While these incidents may seem distant from the UK, it is crucial to recognise that the UK has also experienced its share of violence and division fueled by conspiracy theorists. For instance, Oliver Lewin was a notorious figure among UK conspiracy theorists. He was actively engaged in spreading extremist views and used Telegram as a platform to recruit others who shared his ideologies. His activities culminated in a significant criminal act, as he was convicted in January 2023 for planning a terrorist attack aimed at the nation's infrastructure.⁷ Similarly, at the start of COVID-19, a conspiracy theory claiming 5G networks are hazardous, which was later confirmed to be false, led to attacks on telecoms workers, with Openreach reporting close to 50 incidents in April 2020 alone.⁸

Similarly, the newspaper publication, *The Light* has played a significant role in spreading such ideologies, both online and offline. It has openly called for trials and executions of politicians and doctors, aligning with the British far-right movement. This publication not only propagates anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown sentiments, but also shares violent rhetoric towards journalists, doctors, and Members of Parliament, suggesting they be punished for alleged “crimes against humanity.” Accompanied by disturbing imagery like gallows and personal addresses of those labelled as perpetrators, it directly incites action against them. Journalists covering COVID-19 vaccines and lockdowns, like Jeremy Vine who received hundreds of complaints and faced protests at his home after discussing special lockdown measures for the unvaccinated, were often targeted.

However, the impact and paranoia of these conspiracy theories extends beyond public figures and political ideologies, infiltrating personal relationships and fostering a deeply rooted sense of distrust within communities. Users within these chat groups often express conflict not just with political elites but also with people in their immediate social circles, including neighbours, friends, and family members. This shift signifies a dangerous trend where the distrust fostered by conspiracy theories begins to infiltrate personal relationships.

Under the influence of such narratives, individuals may start silently questioning the intentions and beliefs of those



Screenshot from one of the chats discussing 5G conspiracies and disinformation

closest to them, breeding an atmosphere of paranoia and suspicion. This growing scepticism within personal circles is a critical indicator of the potential for radicalisation.⁹ It shows how conspiracy theories can transform perceptions and relationships, escalating beyond political disagreements to personal distrust. This trend of radicalisation is not only concerning but also indicative of the profound impact these chats have on individuals' worldviews and their interactions with others.

Our analysis shows that conspiracy theory communities not just spread falsehoods and decrease trust but actively propagate hate and in many cases also violence. Conspiracy theories construct an image of the world where certain groups and individuals are framed as enemies. These groups, which include minority communities as well as journalists and politicians, are frequently described as morally bankrupt and harmful. This can lead to physical harm.

The goal of this report is to utilise Natural Language Processing (NLP) and other data analytic techniques to thoroughly investigate various aspects of the online discourse. This approach has enabled us to identify influential figures who shape conspiracy theory narratives, potential victims targeted by these conspiracies, and the range of topics prevalent in these discussions. A key focus of our investigation is the identification of 'conspiratorial forms of hate and racism' – a nuanced blend of racism and hate embedded within these conspiracy narratives.

METHODOLOGY

The dataset for this report consists of 1,720,655 messages from 10 public British-based conspiracy theory chats on Telegram. The dataset comprises messages collected over a span of just under 3 years, from 11th November 2020 to 4th October 2023. These messages were classified using our existing deep learning model trained on 12,000 manually labelled documents in 8 distinct categories of hate, 3 categories of hostility and one unique category being 'No hate'. This classifier boasts an F-1 score of 0.85. To gain deeper insights into the nature of violence depicted in these messages, we developed an additional classifier specifically designed to differentiate between references to violence and threats of violence. This classifier, with an F-1 score of 0.82, effectively dissects the various types of violence present in the chats, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics.

For our analysis, we utilised Named Entity Recognition (NER) to accurately identify prominent individuals who act as key influencers in propagating these conspiracy theories. Additionally, this approach helped us to surface potential victims in the chats who are subjected to hate, threats, and other forms of hostility. Meanwhile, we also used the algorithms of LDA and Bertopic to extract different topics discussed over time.

VIOLENCE IN CONSPIRACY THEORY CHATS

Out of the 1.7 million messages analysed, approximately 1% or 16,555 messages contained reference or threats of violence. After collecting all messages on this topic from our initial classifier, we developed a separate classifier which labelled the messages into two categories: “Reference to Violence” and “Threat of Violence”.

The “**Reference to Violence**” category encompasses messages that mention or discuss acts of violence, such as referring to past violent events or discussing violence in news stories, without expressing a personal intention to engage in violence.

The “**Threat of Violence**” category includes messages with explicit threats or declarations of intent to commit violence, where the sender indicates a desire or plan to engage in violent actions, often directed towards specific individuals or groups. Essentially, the latter represents a direct and personal endorsement of violence.

Below are a few examples for each of the two categories we divided violent messages into:

In analysing the different categories of violence-related messages, it becomes evident that both “References to Violence” and “Threats of Violence” present significant concerns in distinct ways. The analysis shows that among the violent messages, 85.6% include mentions or references to violence, whereas 14.4% constitute direct threats of violence. Out of the 16,555 messages classified as violent in some form by our classifier, 2,383 were identified as explicitly threatening violence.

Our analysis uncovered a significant number of messages containing threats of violence.

Category	Examples
Reference to Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ “He damn right killed her, and she warned everyone that he was preparing to do that, so sad.”■ “Look at what laws Green passed a few weeks ago! It confirms even more that this mass murder is premeditated by our OWN GOVERNMENT”■ “London looks nice these days! This is in Greenwich, stabbings and people being run over!”
Threat of Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ “Burn them down to the ground!! “■ “Let’s blow up Parliament today”■ “I’d love to punch him in the face!”

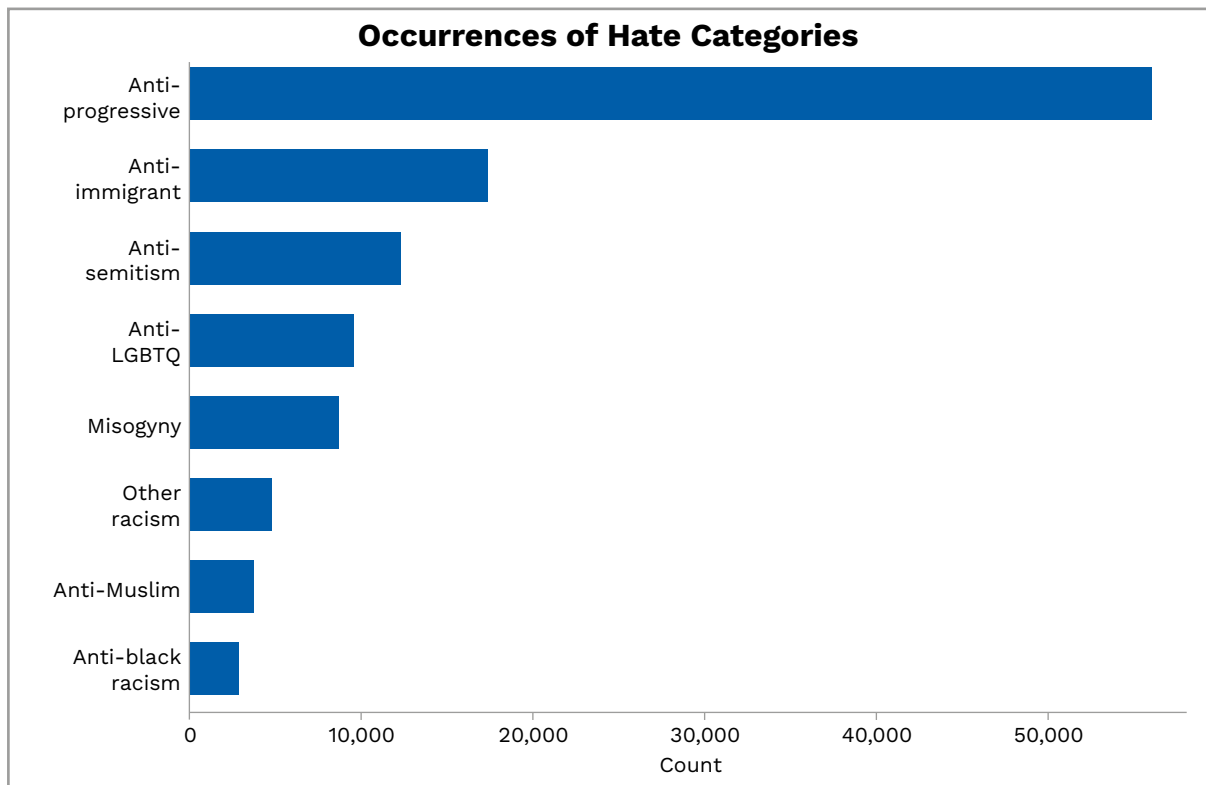
instance, some messages propagated the idea that murders are tactics used by the government to spread chaos and fear. These narratives, although baseless, have a profound impact on how individuals perceive real-world events and authorities. They contribute to an environment where mistrust and paranoia are rampant, potentially leading to real-world consequences as individuals may act on these unfounded beliefs.

THEMES IN VIOLENT MESSAGES

Using Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) we identified common topics in the violent messages.

Topic	Keywords	Summary	Example
Government control and anti-police sentiments	people, government, need, just, evidence, know, like, burn, police, war	Discussions surrounding potential government overreach, distrust in the police force, and calls for acts of resistance or defiance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “FIND THEM AND BURN THEM!” ■ “We need a war”
Violence, weapons and death	weapon, weapons, people, just, die, coming, good, need, death, think	Conversations centred on weapons and the need for violent struggle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “We need to start and defend ourselves with weapons, we are in Ww3.” ■ “Die is what we’ll do in that case.”
Crimes against humanity and calls for justice	crimes, need, humanity, people, time, kill, hang, children, evil, criminals	Discussions on perceived crimes against humanity, calls for public justice and a sense of urgency to address these perceived wrongdoings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “We need gallows pulled through the streets of London to be delivered outside 10 Downing Street and another delivered to Parliament. A stark reminder of the genocide and crimes against humanity that we now face. They now got nowhere to hide now there are live criminal investigations underway both in the UK and the Hague.”
Influential figures	murder, video, kill, mass, news	Conversations focused on specific influential figures, often involving threats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “Kill Gates”

HATE IN CONSPIRACY THEORY GROUPS



Our classifier identified that 105,931 messages (6.16%) contained at least one of the 8 forms of hate. The hate categories directed towards communities and minorities include anti-immigrant, antisemitic, anti-LGBTQ, misogyny, other forms of racism, anti-Muslim hate, and anti-black racism. These are represented in a bar graph depicted in the table above, each category representing a specific target of bigotry and prejudice, contributing to the broader narrative of societal division and intolerance.

Conspiracy theories that frame minority groups as perpetrators or participants pose significant risks, potentially paving the way to radicalisation through racism, misogyny, violence, and other far-right ideologies. The high prevalence of hate in these groups, whether directly related to conspiracy theories or not, also poses the risk of exposing individuals to hate who may have joined the chats based on their belief in conspiracy theories.

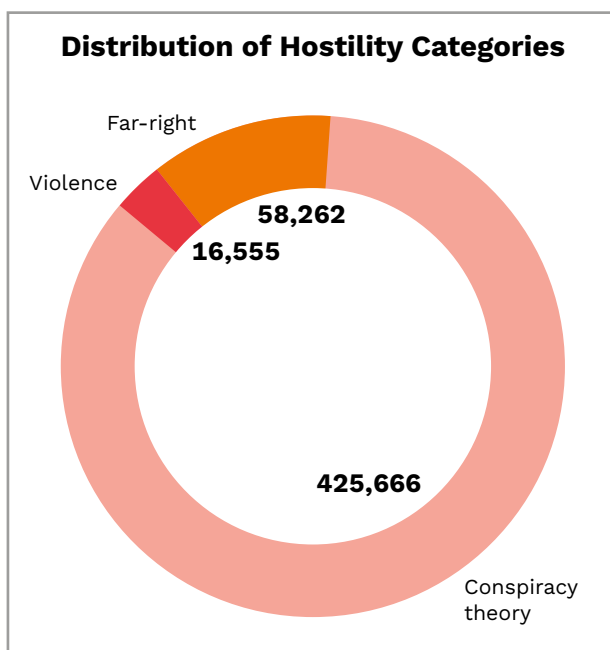
We find that minority groups are often blamed for a wide range of issues in society, and these ideas are woven into existing conspiracy theories and form the basis of new ones. This

behaviour is particularly noticeable in the case of immigrants and refugees, who are frequently labelled as “parasites” or “ISIS members.”

An example of the dangers faced by asylum seekers and migrants is the violent riot outside the Suites Hotel in Kirkby.¹⁰ Such incidents underscore the risks asylum seekers and migrants continue to face and how conspiracy theories exacerbate these problems. Prominent among these theories are notions like the “Great Replacement Theory,” a far-right conspiracy alleging a plot to replace native populations with immigrants, often tied to racist and xenophobic sentiments, various misleading COVID-19 conspiracies blaming migrants for the outbreak, and baseless accusations of corruption against political figures for their immigration policies. Slurs against Muslims, Jews, and women are also common in the chats. Progressivism and the left is also frequently a target of hate with phrases like “leftist jihad”. Users, when expressing these sentiments, often mention media outlets like the BBC, accusing them of unfounded allegations, while criticising the government for endorsing 5G plans, which they claim could cause deaths. This conspiracy theory has been widely debunked by experts in the field of telecommunications, health, and physics, yet it persists in these discussions. Alongside these narratives, there is a noticeable trend where users also spread hate towards the police with misinformation and fabricated allegations like corruption.

These discussions sometimes veer into the realm of ‘wokism’, a term used pejoratively by some to describe progressive policies and attitudes, particularly those associated with a left-leaning government or policies. This often includes derision and hostility towards initiatives perceived as overly politically correct or inclusive. In this environment, hate against the left, or those perceived to be supportive of leftist policies, becomes more pronounced.

Pie chart visualising different hostility categories



Users in these chats have also called for the destruction of ULEZ cameras, signalling a deeper discontent with environmental policies often associated with left-leaning ideologies. All of these aspects highlight the complex interplay of misinformation, political bias, and social unrest, as detailed in our report.

Additionally, the chart illustrates three primary forms of hostility: violence, support for far-right ideologies, and conspiracy theories. These categories frequently overlap with various forms of hate, highlighting the interplay between extremist ideologies and disinformation. This toxic mix not only fosters radicalisation but also significantly erodes trust among network users, particularly in governmental bodies, institutions, and towards other individuals. This diminished trust is a direct consequence of the pervasive influence of these extremist views and conspiracies within the network.

Classes	Frequency
No hate	1,114,237
Conspiracy theory	425,666
Far-right	58,266
Anti-progressive	56,150
Anti-immigrant	17,548
Violence	16,555
Anti-Semitism	12,459
Anti-LGBTQ	8,389
Other racism	4,832
Anti-Muslim	3,800
Anti-black racism	2,753

THEIR ENEMIES

Many chat users we analysed display marked far-right tendencies, frequently targeting prominent individuals who disagree with their views. These users actively spread disinformation and unfounded accusations, primarily against figures they perceive as ‘enemies’. Their goal extends beyond mere defamation; they seek to incite hatred and panic, perpetuating a cycle of misinformation that fragments society. This behaviour is particularly insidious, as it not only undermines public trust in these targeted individuals but also erodes societal cohesion. By manipulating narratives, these users significantly impact the community, fostering division and distrust.



PRIMARY ‘ENEMIES’ IDENTIFIED BY THE CONSPIRACY THEORY SCENE

George Soros, a renowned financier and philanthropist, known for his significant contributions to global financial markets and substantial philanthropic efforts is a figure who frequently attracts attention in public discourse. Soros is targeted with extensive antisemitic abuse. He is often derogatorily referred to as a “troublemaker” or “dirty marxist” in these discussions. Conspiracy theories relating to Soros relate to the funding of his NGO of progressive causes which chimes well with common antisemitic tropes of undue influence.

This exemplifies the way users disseminate misinformation among themselves. The extent of these baseless theories reaches absurd levels, with users asserting that Soros

possesses lizard DNA and accusing him of seizing Jewish property and contributing to political instability, such as the situation in Ukraine in 2014.

Rupert Soames, the CEO of SERCO and the grandson of Winston Churchill, attracts significant attention. Soames emerges as a prominent figure who is often discussed by the chat users. SERCO, known for operating immigration accommodation and removal centres in the UK, New Zealand, Australia, and other countries, is often at the centre of these discussions. Users frequently critique Soames, viewing his influential position and ‘elite’ lineage as emblematic of broader issues in immigration policies. Among chat users, SERCO has been termed as the “epitome of evil” and a “public enemy” due to the extremely unfounded allegations made against him including constant abuse of immigrants and their trafficking for use in prostitution rings. Politicians in these messages are called “globalists” and seen as the enemies. Users then also advance absurd claims like SERCO using boats to pick up immigrants from the sea and transport drugs into the UK. Owing to its presence in conspiracy theory chats, users discuss mentions of SERCO satellites which is another unfounded conspiracy alleging that Italian satellites were used to manipulate the outcome of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election.¹¹

Muslim politicians in the UK such as Sajid Javid and Mayor for London, Sadiq Khan, receive a lot of hatred from these users and are accused of being involved in numerous conspiracies. Users have called these politicians “Jihadists” and claim that they are in the process of introducing Sharia law in the UK. Moreover, their supposed support for movements like Black Lives Matter often becomes a point of contention, used to further fuel hostility against them. This pattern of criticism aligns with the negative reaction figures like George Soros have faced for supporting similar social justice initiatives, where the primary aim is to advocate for equitable treatment of the black community.

Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft and a prominent philanthropist, is often the subject of unfounded conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theorists accuse him of being behind mass abortions, having invested 100s of millions, if not billions of dollars, into such projects. These accusations, which lack any credible evidence, are part of a broader pattern of disinformation targeting public figures. One user revealed how they should now find a woman to seduce Gates and reveal all his secret plans. Politicians like Tony Blair have been named alongside Bill Gates and said to be obeying the billionaire’s commands while some called him a “woman” and used derogatory terms like “his bitch”.

DRIVERS OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Andrew Bridgen is a former Conservative Party MP who defected to Reclaim UK before recently sitting as an independent. His controversial statements on matters such as COVID-19 have sparked debates both online and offline. He has called the use of COVID-19 vaccines “the biggest crime against humanity since the Holocaust.”¹² Due to this, he was expelled from the Conservative Party but sadly, this narrative got picked up by the users on these chats who then called this “doubling down lies,” implying that the Holocaust and the COVID-19 vaccines have both been used as mediums to mislead the population.

Alex Jones, a prominent US based far-right conspiracy theorist, has significant influence on these chat groups. He is known for his controversial views and has been accused of serious offenses, including sexual harassment and racism.¹³ Jones has notably made baseless claims against George Soros, labelling him as a “leftist Jew” and falsely accusing him of impersonating “Neo-Nazis” in Virginia to discredit white supremacists. Many users in these chats credit Jones for awakening them to various conspiracy theories and frequently echo his so-called “Truth bombs,” which include outlandish claims such as 9/11 being an inside job orchestrated by the Bush administration in collusion with Israel.¹⁴ A segment of these users align with Jones’s belief in a “Globalist new world order,” viewing it as a significant threat to public welfare and advocating for the protection of broad and ambiguous concepts of individual freedom. This claimed awakening is deeply problematic, as it is rooted in the dissemination of misinformation and unfounded conspiracy theories propagated by Jones. This scenario underscores a concerning trend where the spread of false narratives is mistaken for genuine awareness, leading to a distorted understanding of reality and critical issues.

However, consensus on Jones is not unanimous within the user community. Some harbour suspicions about his motives and affiliations, speculating that he might be secretly controlled by Mossad or the CIA. Others point to the fact his ex-wife has Jewish ancestry as a reason for distrust. Additionally, Jones’s contentious remarks extend to institutions like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which he has controversially compared to Hitler, further polarising opinions among the chat users.

Donald Trump, the former President of the United States, is a frequent subject of discussion in conspiracy theory chats. Within these discussions, Trump’s mention is often associated with various forms of hate, including anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and misogynistic sentiments. Allegations of electoral fraud robbing Trump of his victory in 2020 are a common theme in these chats. Among these discussions, there are messages purporting to originate from Trump’s office, particularly during his recent legal troubles. These communications appear to seek assistance and support from chat users. Considering the significant influence Trump has wielded and may continue to hold in the future, this

convergence of factors potentially creates a highly volatile situation.

Andrew Tate, the influencer notorious for his misogynistic views, is facing charges of human trafficking among other crimes. In the chat discussions, some individuals criticised his offensive remarks, particularly his tendency to blame women for sexual assaults. On the other hand, there were those who not only admired his lavish lifestyle but also adopted his derogatory speech, using terms like “bitches” to refer to women. The ‘Cobratate’ moniker, frequently used by Tate, appeared to promote these perspectives. This content seemingly targets insecure men, enticing them with the allure of affluence and success, while perpetuating misogynist ideologies. This trend underscores the worrying appeal of such narratives, drawing vulnerable individuals into a mindset marked by sexism and objectification.

THE MOST COMMON HATEFUL CONSPIRACY THEORIES

When delving into the most prevalent hateful conspiracy theories we find that they contain a range of topics such as anti-Muslim, antisemitism, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ sentiments and views.

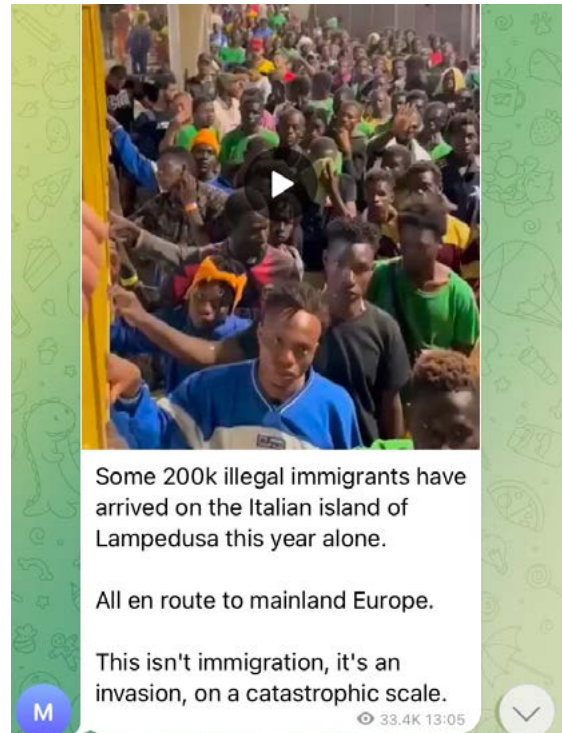
Anti-Muslim theories typically involve associations of Muslims with extremist ideologies or terror activities. Antisemitic conspiracies frequently involve age-old stereotypes and myths about Jewish control and influence, which are baseless and harmful. The anti-immigrant rhetoric often paints refugees and migrants, particularly from Muslim-majority countries, as threats or burdens, ignoring their individual circumstances and contributions. Meanwhile, anti-LGBTQ conspiracies manifest in various forms, from denying the legitimacy of LGBTQ identities to promoting false narratives about the community's intentions and actions.

These conspiracy theories, steeped in prejudice and misinformation, not only distort public discourse but also fuel discrimination, hatred, and division in society.

We will discuss each of these forms of hate in relation to conspiracy theories in greater detail in this section.

ANTISEMITIC CONSPIRACY THEORIES

In these online discussions, a disturbing pattern of antisemitism is evident, marked by historical distortions, conspiracy theories, and targeted harassment. One prominent theme is the inappropriate comparison of the Holocaust to current events. Users often draw parallels between the Holocaust and COVID-19 health measures, trivialising the atrocity, which reflects a broader issue of using tragic historical events to rationalise current prejudices. This includes the downplaying of the Holocaust and equating Israel's COVID-19 measures with Nazi Germany's authoritarianism. Additionally, terms like 'holohoax' are used in outright Holocaust



Screenshot from one of the chats discussing migrant conspiracy with unverified video attached

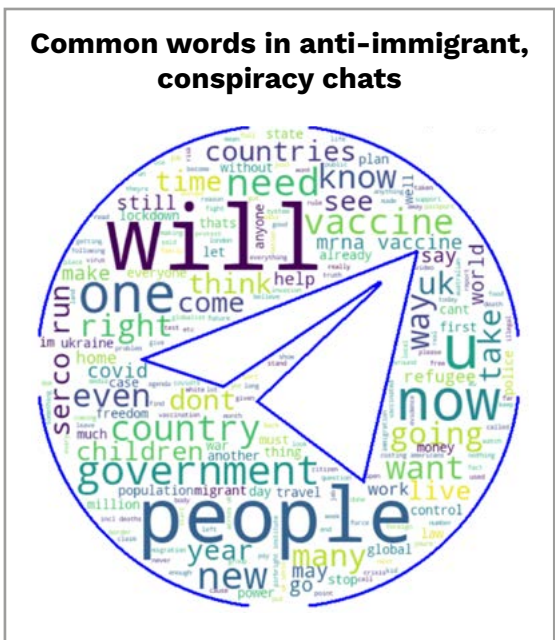


denial. Supporters of minority communities or refugees are derogatorily equated with Holocaust believers, often labelled as ‘woke lefties,’ showcasing a manipulative use of historical events to foster animosity.

Conspiracy theories are rampant in these dialogues, particularly those suggesting Jewish dominance in various sectors like Hollywood, societal control, and political manipulation. Notably, the far-right “white genocide” conspiracy theory is mobilised, positing an ongoing genocide against white people orchestrated by a supposed Jewish cabal, linked to the pandemic. Users also frequently allege that the Rothschild family has orchestrated significant historical events, ranging from Hitler’s actions to the establishment of Israel and the United Nations, and cite the influence of secret societies in eroding personal freedoms.

Historical distortions are alarmingly common. Some participants claim Western media, especially America and its allies, manipulated photographs of Hitler’s atrocities. Others make historically inaccurate comparisons, likening COVID-19 policies to the actions of the SS in concentration camps, suggesting an impending significant event.

Misogynistic language and harassment, especially targeting the Jewish community, often intertwine with antisemitic undertones. Such language typically includes derogatory terms rooted in misogyny and anti-LGBTQ sentiment, meant to demean and marginalise Jewish individuals. A troubling aspect is that some users, while expressing frustration over perceived censorship in discussions about antisemitism, seem oblivious to the fact that the content they spread is inherently hateful. This lack of self-awareness, coupled with a propensity for targeting an entire community based on unfounded conspiracies, underlines a deep-seated bias that colours their viewpoints. Moreover, antisemitism also surfaces in these contexts. Users blame Israel and Jewish influence for the European immigration crisis that an influx of immigrants that UK must be prepared to house.



ANTI-IMMIGRANT CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Anti-immigrant sentiment is also prevalent in these chats. Users discuss various conspiracy theories, accusing governments of exacerbating immigration issues and not addressing the supposed COVID-19 risks posed by immigrants. The analysis indicates a nuanced view among chat group users regarding COVID-19. While many deny the pandemic’s legitimacy, referring to it as a “plandemic,” there’s also a contradictory stance where they blame immigrants for spreading the virus. This contradiction arises from a blend of anti-immigrant sentiment and COVID-19 denial. Users condemn governments for failing to address perceived health risks from immigrants, yet simultaneously express scepticism about the pandemic’s severity and oppose vaccination passports. This highlights

Derogatory terms such as “fag”, “faggot”, and “tranny” were frequently used in these discussions, reflecting a concerning trend of intolerance and discrimination towards the LGBTQ community. It is distressing to observe these chat users employing such language offensively and propagating extremist views, including baseless accusations labelling transgender individuals as paedophiles. Moreover, the discussions often reference conspiracy theories, notably those by David Icke, and exhibit anti-LGBTQ sentiments. They also extend to questioning the safety of pride events for children, further highlighting the prevalent resistance and prejudice



OTHER FORMS OF RACISM

Racism is prominently featured in these chats. This encompasses a wide range of racial groups, including but not limited to Black, Chinese, Indian, and South American communities. The narratives prevalent among the users are particularly concerning given the absurd conspiracy theories they concoct. A notable example is the tragic case of George Floyd’s killing, which some users baselessly claimed to be a setup, indicative of anti-black racism.

Moreover, the removal of the statue of Edward Colston, a slave trader, during Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol, is a source of anger among many users in the dataset. The frequent use of derogatory terms and stereotypes against ethnic minorities, including Black, Asian, and Latino communities, is a serious

issue. Such baseless conspiracies foster a hostile environment towards people of colour. This is further evidenced when users weaponise COVID-19 to sow distrust against minorities, portraying them as health threats by labelling virus variants with specific ethnic or national identifiers, thus stigmatising these communities.

Additionally, there are narratives that attempt to foster a victimhood mentality among these users, predominantly white, who feel they are the primary targets, while they simultaneously make racist remarks and insensitive jokes regarding people of colour.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our extensive analysis of conspiracy theory chats has revealed a worrying prevalence of conspiratorial forms of hate and racism, specifically targeting various religions and minorities, alongside widespread misogyny and misinformation. These forms of racism are not only prevalent but are intertwined with the propagation of false narratives designed to incite panic and distrust among users. This investigation underscores the critical need for continuous monitoring of such discussions across different platforms, recognising the persistent and evolving nature of these topics and conspiracy theories.

A key aspect of our study involved the identification and categorisation of violent content within these chats. Using a newly developed violence classifier, we differentiated between general references to violence and explicit threats. This distinction is crucial, allowing us to understand not only the prevalence but also the intensity and seriousness of the violent discourse present. Our findings show that 14.4% of the messages with violent content explicitly threaten violence, highlighting a disturbing undercurrent of aggression and potential for real-world harm in these online spaces. This nuanced approach provides critical insights and is a vital tool in efforts to detect, assess, and counteract potential threats emerging from such forums.

Our findings emphasise the importance of critical engagement with online content, especially in the context of conspiracy theories laden with covert forms of racism. Exercising caution in verifying sources and approaching these discussions with scepticism is vital in tracking and understanding the adaptive strategies of the far right and their impact on public discourse and societal harmony. Keeping a well-informed and constant watch over these digital spaces is essential, not only for combating misinformation, distrust, hate, and most importantly, violence but also as a key step in protecting communal well-being and upholding democratic values.

ENDNOTES

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