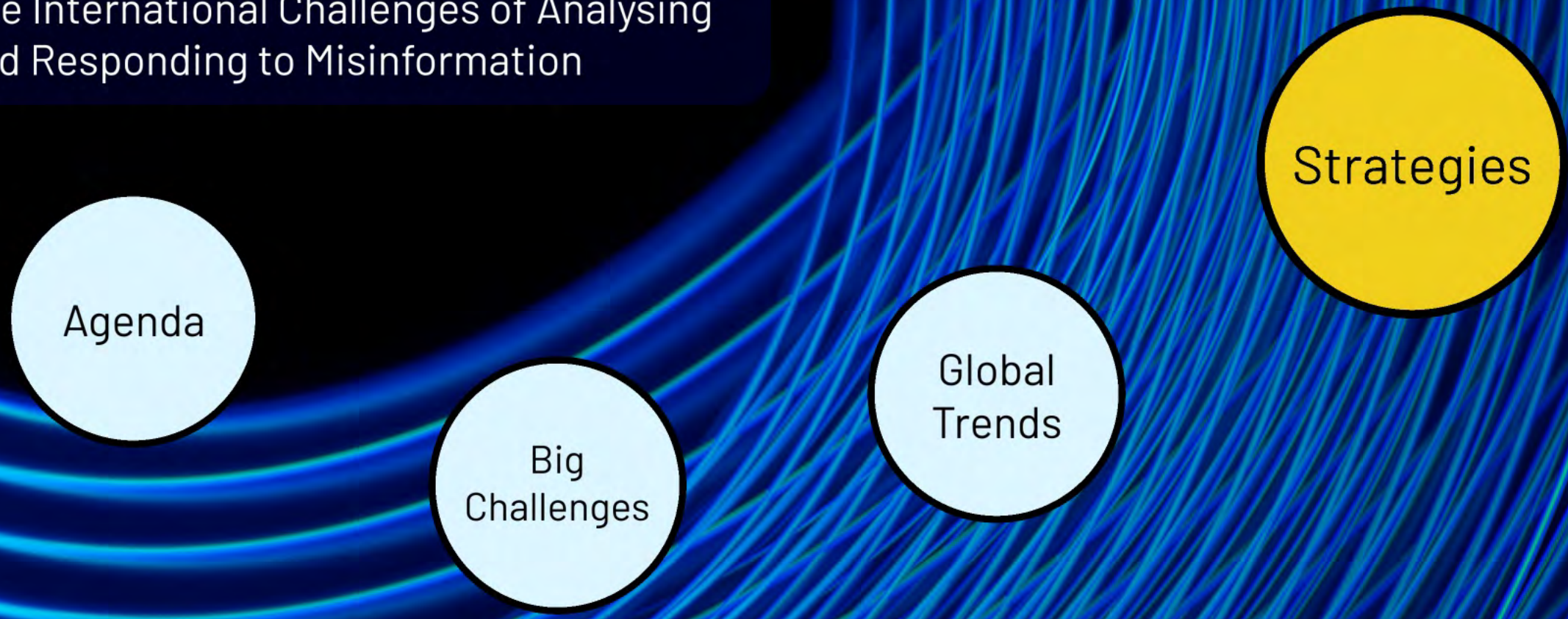
Scientific Collaboration Across Borders

The International Challenges of Analysing and Responding to Misinformation



GRCP International Workshop

Professor Phil Howard, Director
philip.howard@oii.ox.ac.uk

PROGRAMME ON DEMOCRACY & TECHNOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Agenda

1. About

2. Big Challenges

3. Global Trends

    Users
    Experts
    Firms
    Solutions

4. What the IPIE Could Do

Mission

Partners

PROGRAMME ON
DEMOCRACY
& TECHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD
Our mission is to increase civic engagement and solve public problems through social data science.

PROGRAMME ON
DEMOCRACY
& TECHNOLOGY

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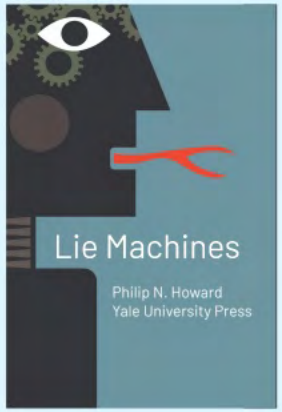
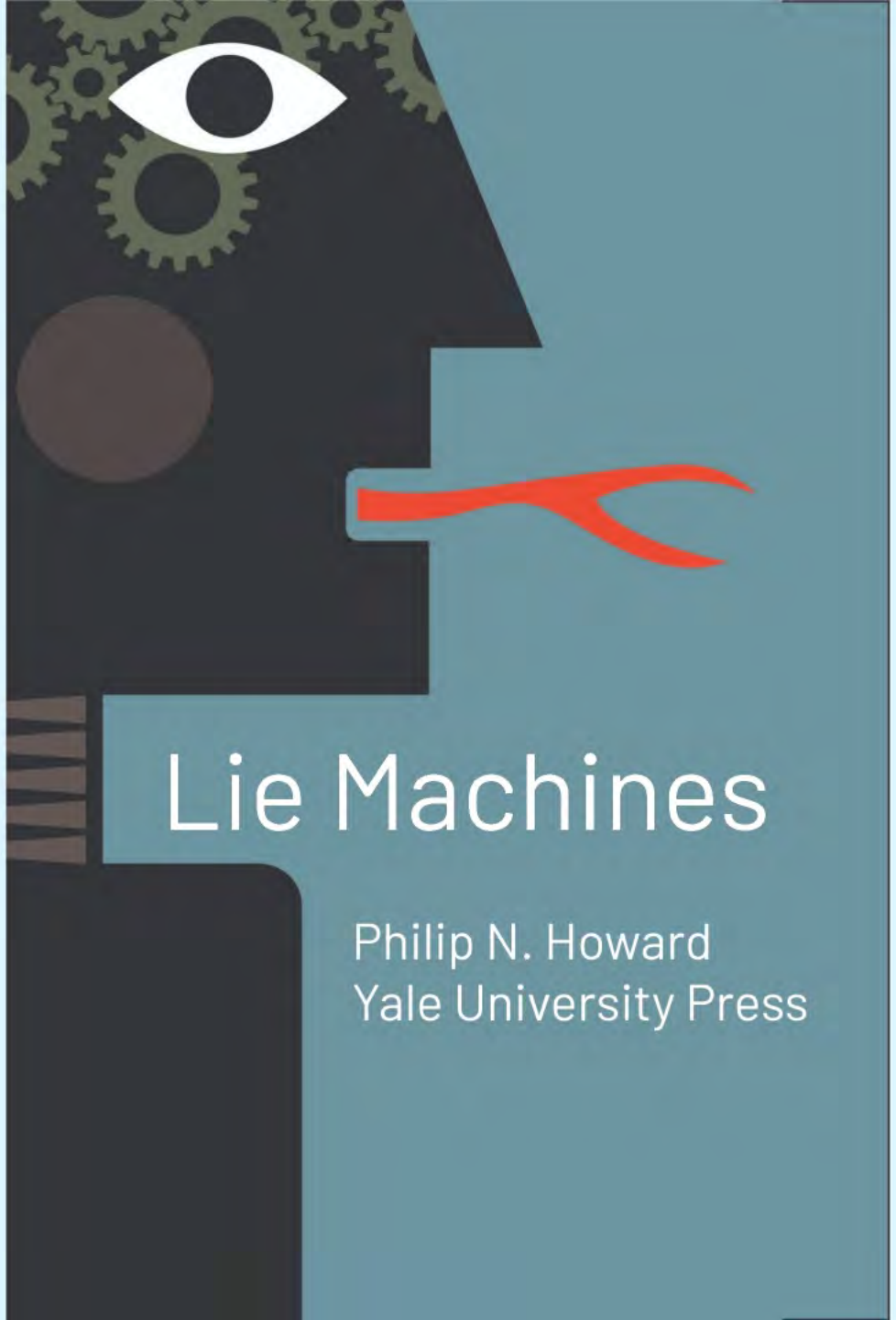
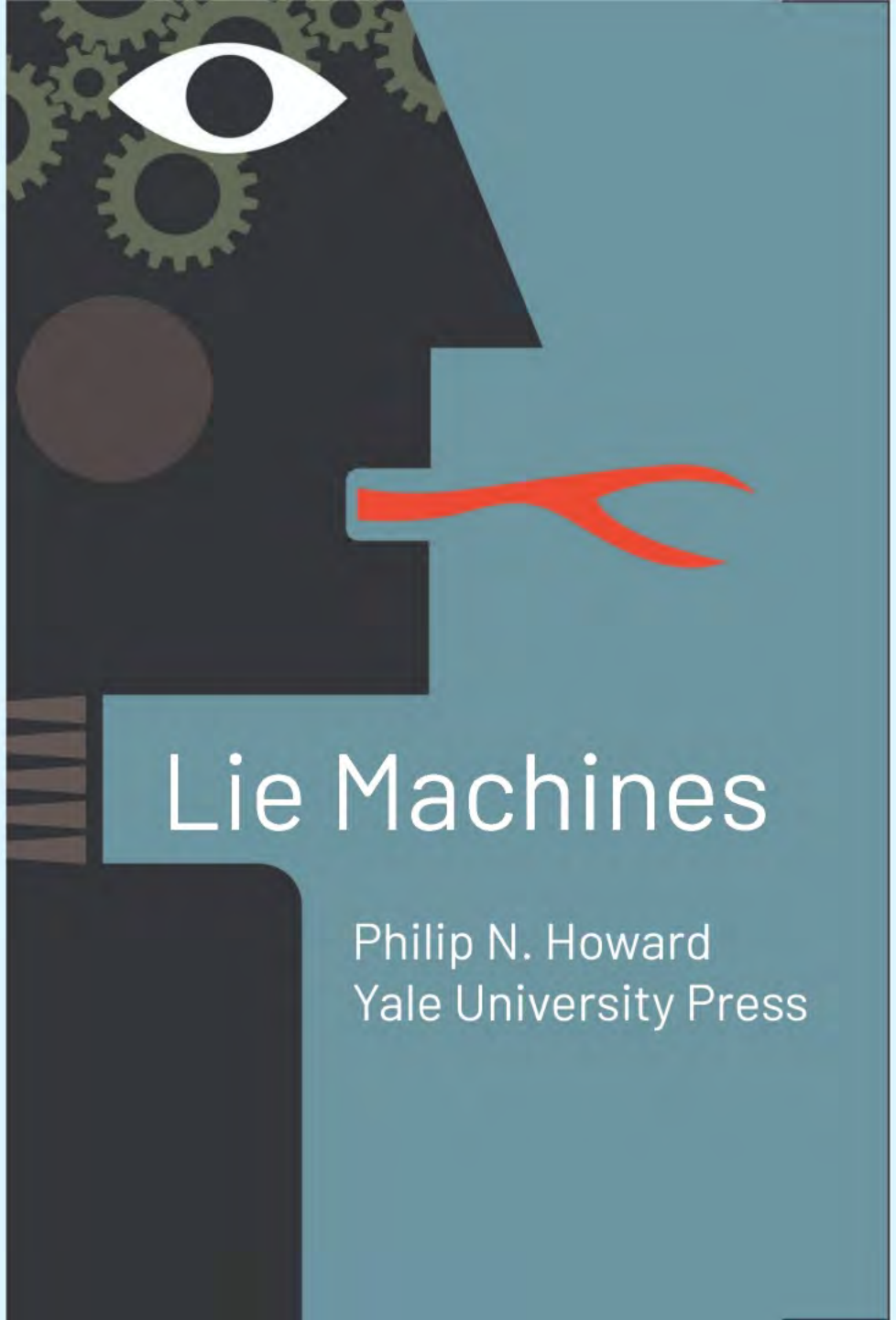
NSF
FORD
FOUNDATION



Method


Lie Machines
Philip N. Howard
Yale University Press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Journal of Communication, 2022, **00**, 1–12
https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac043
Original Article

International Communication Association

OXFORD

The political economy of digital profiteering: communication resource mobilization by anti-vaccination actors

Aliaksandr Herasimenka [1]*, Yung Au[1], Anna George[1], Kate Joynes-Burgess[1], Aleksi Knuutila[1], Jonathan Bright [1,2], Philip N. Howard[1]

[1]University of Oxford, UK
[2]The Alan Turing Institute, UK

*Corresponding author: Aliaksandr Herasimenka. Email: aliaksandr.herasimenka@oii.ox.ac.uk

Abstract

Contemporary communication requires both a supply of content and a digital information infrastructure. Modern campaigns of misinformation are especially dependent on that back-end infrastructure for tracking and targeting a sympathetic audience and generating revenue that can sustain the campaign financially—if not enable profiteering. However, little is known about the political economy of misinformation, particularly those campaigns spreading misleading or harmful content about public health guidelines and vaccination programs. To understand the political economy of health misinformation, we analyze the content and infrastructure networks of 59 groups involved in communicating misinformation about vaccination programs. With a unique collection of tracker and communication infrastructure data, we demonstrate how the political economy of misinformation depends on platform monetization infrastructures. We offer a theory of communication resource mobilization that advances understanding of the communicative context, organizational interactions, and political outcomes of misinformation production.

Keywords: hybrid media, vaccines, COVID-19, misinformation, communication resource mobilization

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Misinformation and professional news on largely unmoderated platforms: the case of telegram

Aliaksandr Herasimenka, Jonathan Bright, Aleksi Knuutila, and Philip N. Howard

Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

To date, there is little research to measure the scale of misinformation and understand how it spreads on largely unmoderated platforms. Our analysis of 200,000 Telegram posts demonstrates that links to known sources of misleading information are shared more often than links to professional news content, but the former stays confined to relatively few channels. We conclude that, contrary to popular received wisdom, the audience for misinformation is not a general one, but a small and active community of users. Our study strengthens an empirical consensus regarding the spread of misinformation and expands it for the case of Telegram.

KEYWORDS

Misinformation; news consumption; Telegram; digital platforms; platform governance; news; content moderation

Introduction

The quality of news and information that individuals encounter online remains a source of critical contemporary concern. It is by now well documented efforts to regulate and moderate users' content. Moderation of user content such as posts and comments, whether on the websites of news organizations or on social media platforms, has become one

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Authors: Aleksi Knuutila (1), Lisa-Maria Neudert (1), Philip N. Howard (1)

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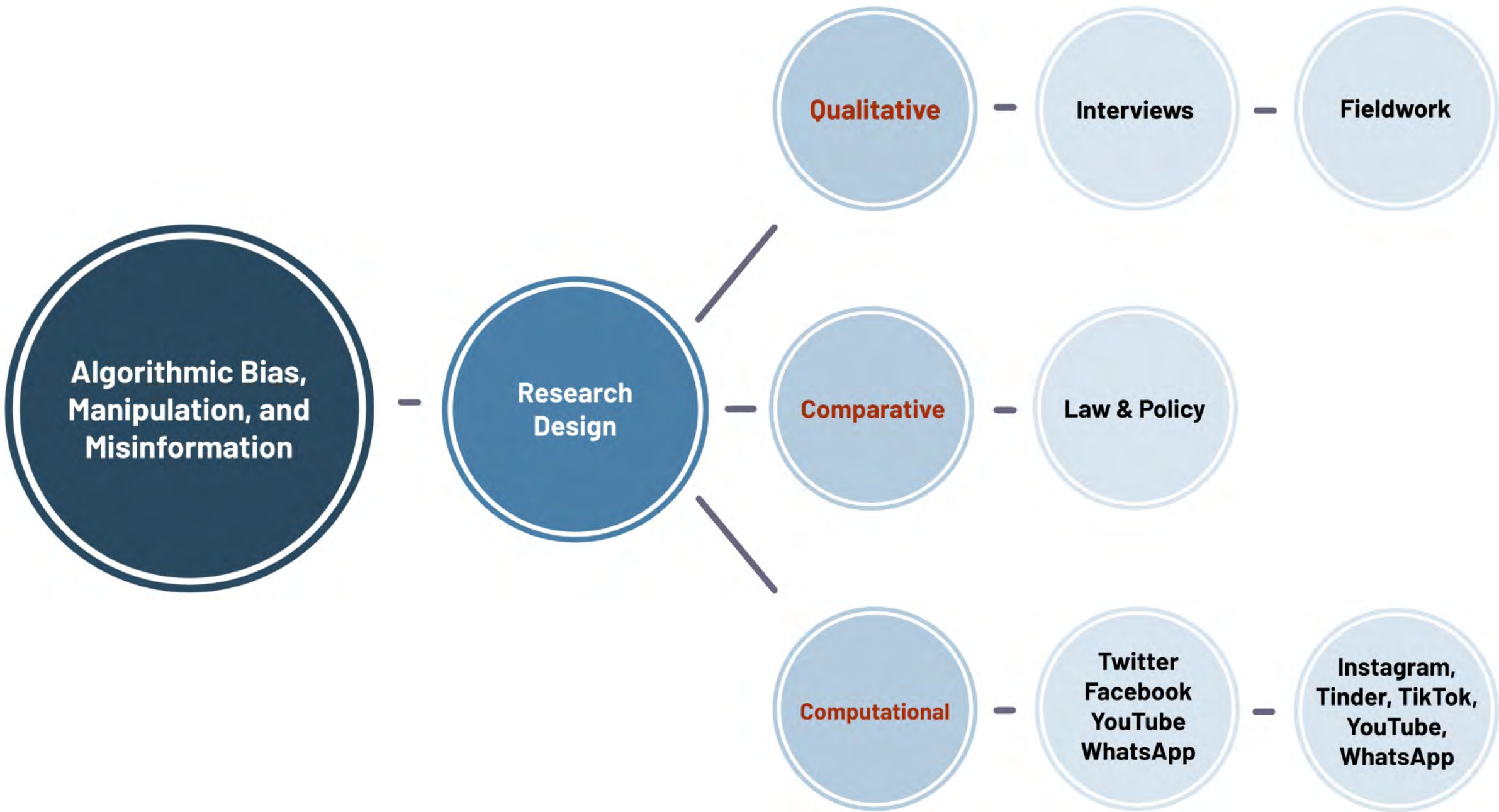
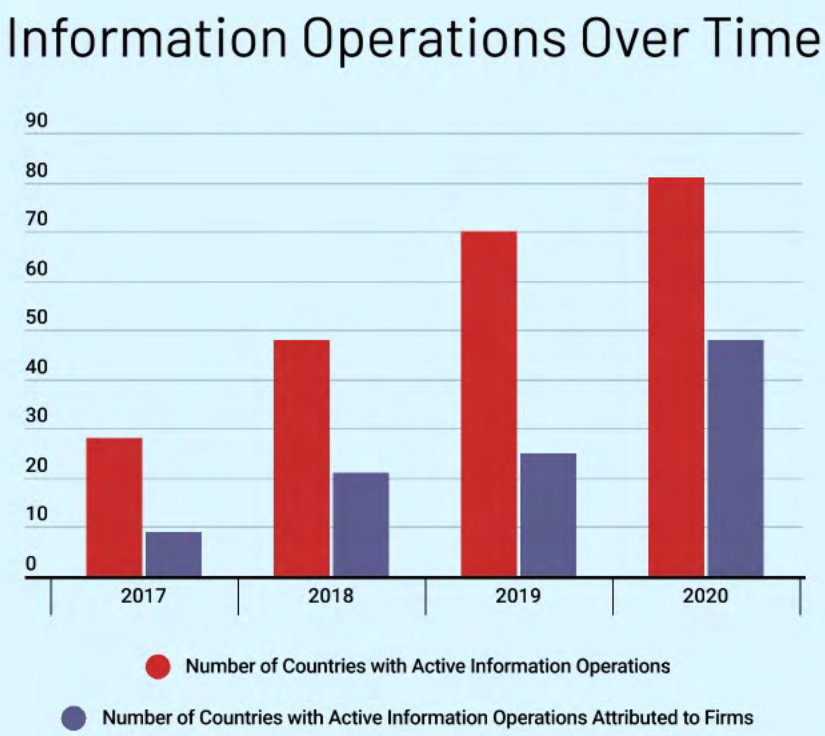
Bramhall'21
NYDN
WAR
FAMINE
PESTILENCE
DEATH
AND YOU ARE...?
MISINFORMATION


Algorithmic Bias, Manipulation, and Misinformation
Research Design
Qualitative
Interviews
Fieldwork
Comparative
Law & Policy
Computational
Twitter
Facebook
YouTube
WhatsApp
Instagram, Tinder, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp

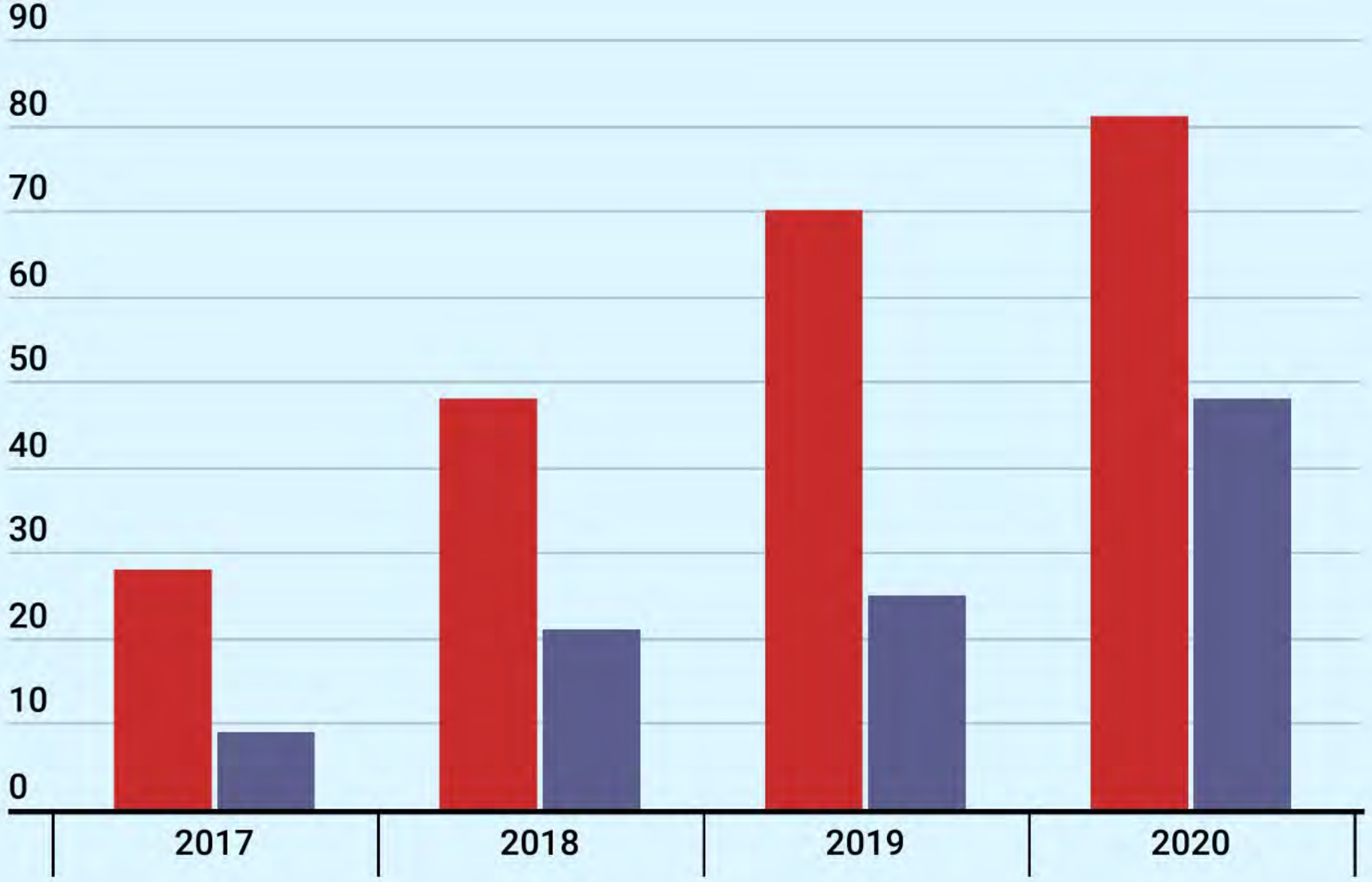


Users

Experts

Firms

Solutions


90
80
70
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30
20
10
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2017
2018
2019
2020
Number of Countries with Active Information Operations
Number of Countries with Active Information Operations Attributed to Firms

Globally Perceived Risk
154,195 participants living in 142 countries

1. Disinformation is the single most important fear of internet and social media use. More than half (53%) of regular internet users are concerned about disinformation.

2. Almost three quarters (71%) of internet users are worried about a mixture of threats, including online disinformation, fraud and harassment.

3. Concerns about disinformation vary by region—highest in North America and Europe, and lowest in East and South Asia. Concern about online harassment is higher among women, especially in Latin America.

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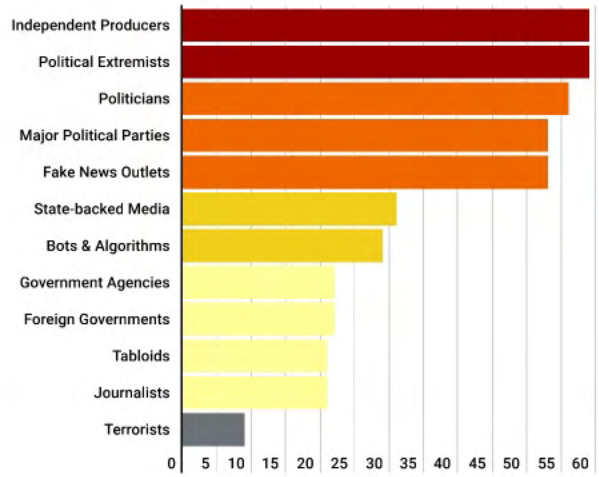
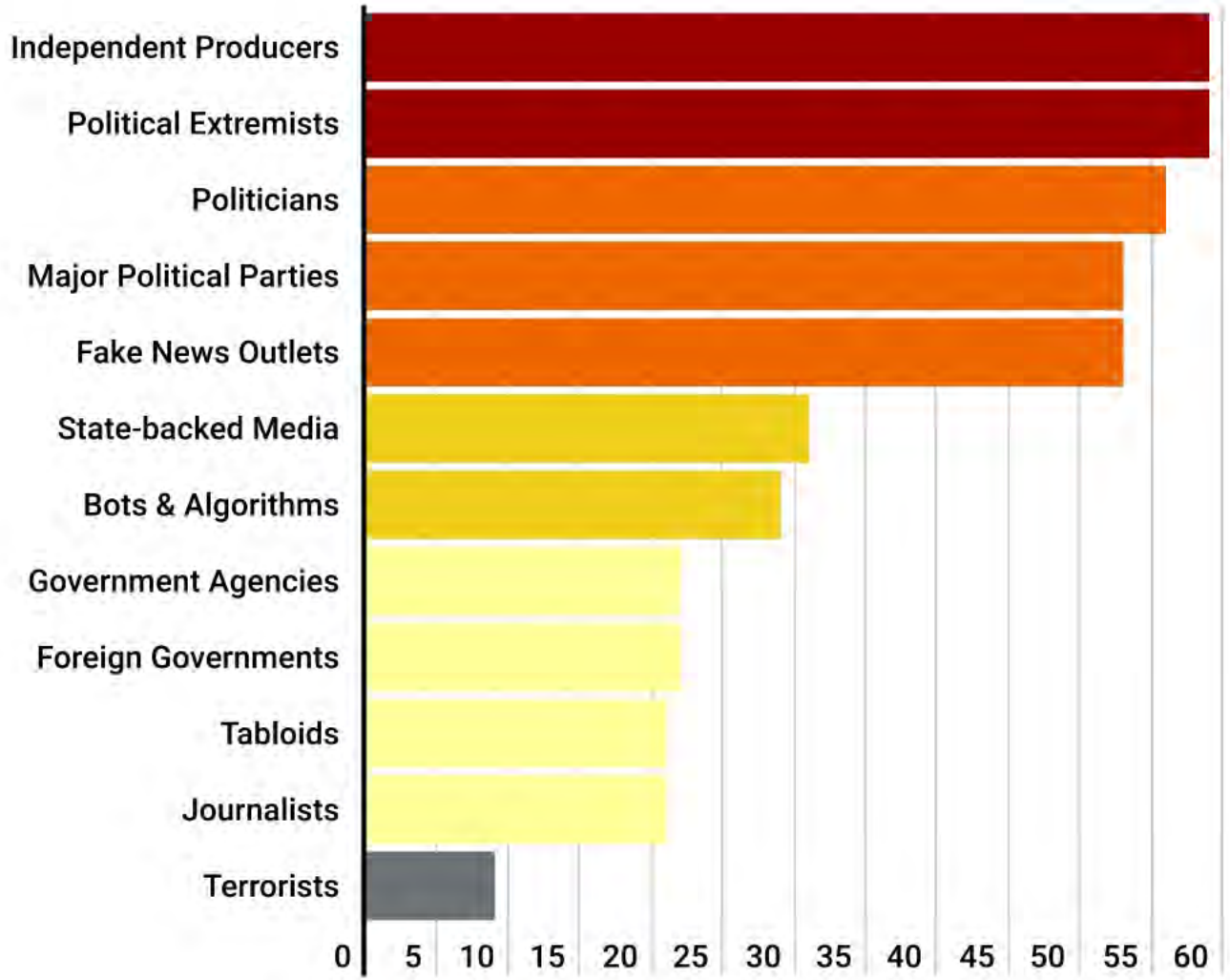
Expert Consensus

Sources



- Technology companies are not doing enough to curb the spread of misinformation on their platforms, and Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the most problematic.
- Globally, experts agree that local politics, Covid-19, and regional immigration crises are the most common topics of misinformation.
- Foreign information operations are the biggest threat to the public life in the Global North, while local governments are the worst source of misinformation in the Global South.

Sources


Independent Producers
Political Extremists
Politicians
Major Political Parties
Fake News Outlets
State-backed Media
Bots & Algorithms
Government Agencies
Foreign Governments
Tabloids
Journalists
Terrorists
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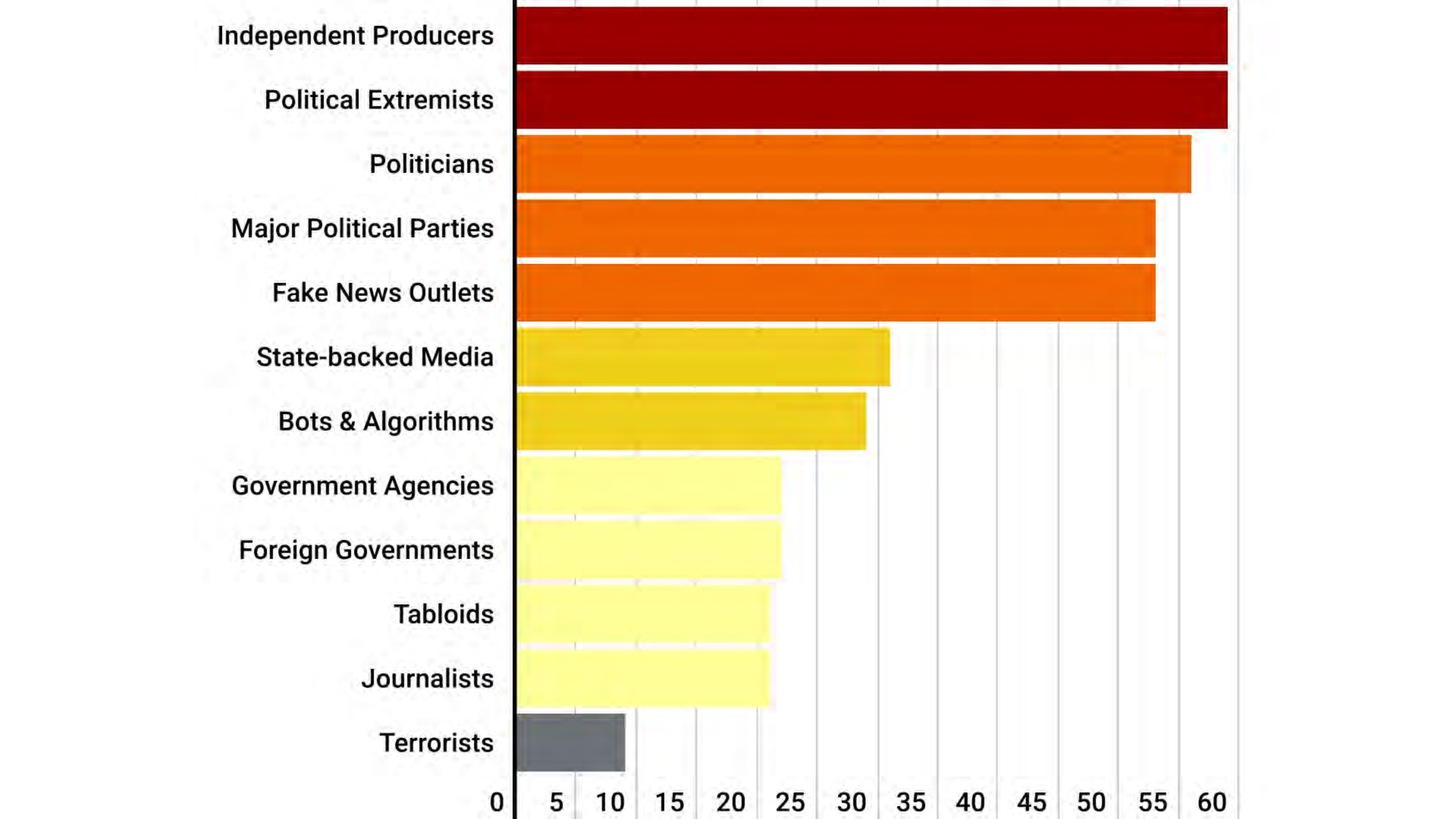
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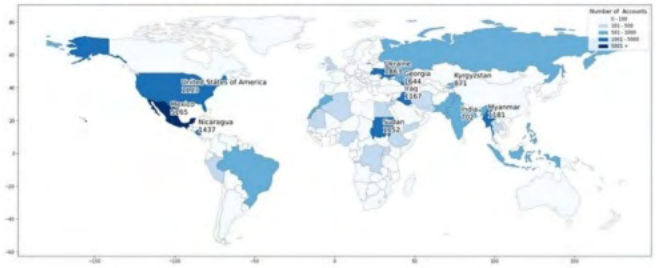
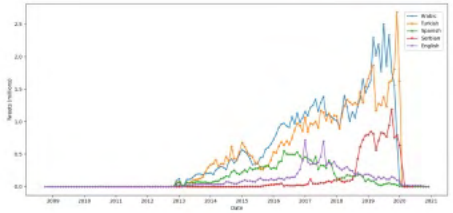
Firm Data

Information Operations on Facebook and Instagram, Heatmap of Domestic Audience Targets, 2017-2022



Information Operations on Twitter, by Language



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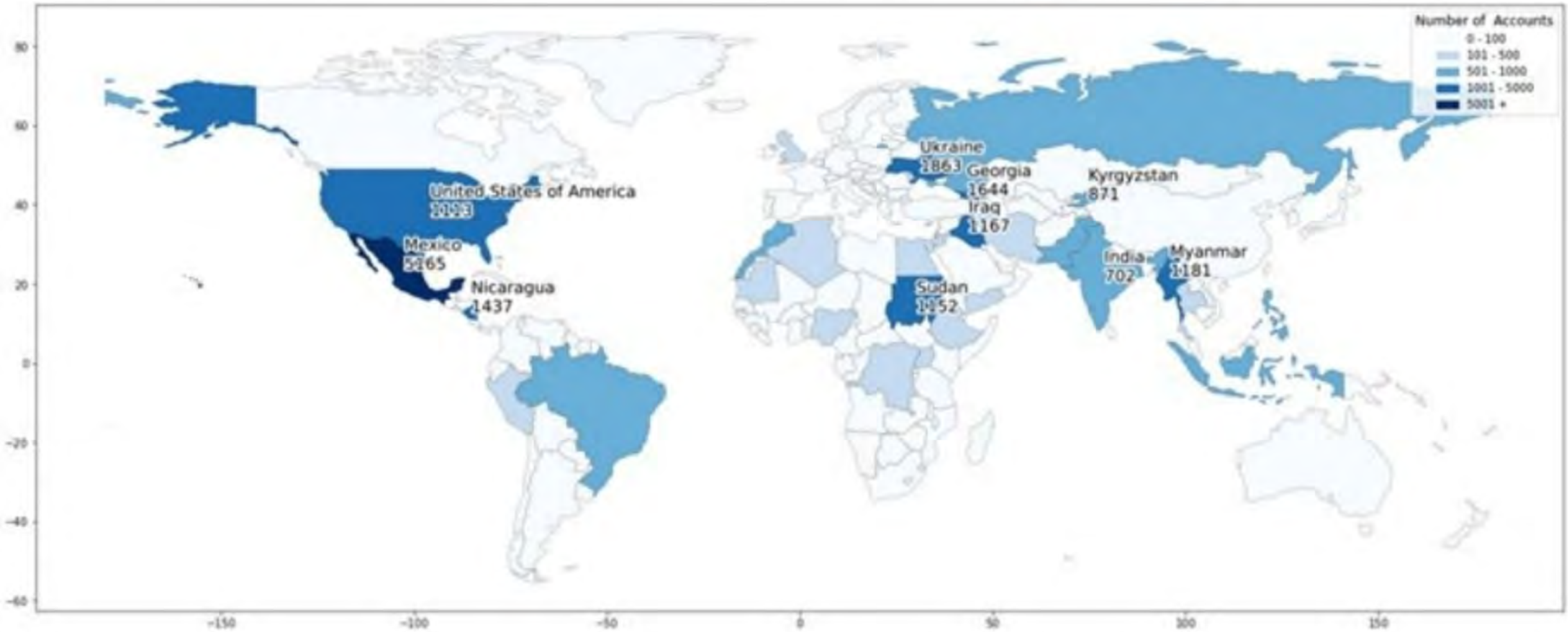

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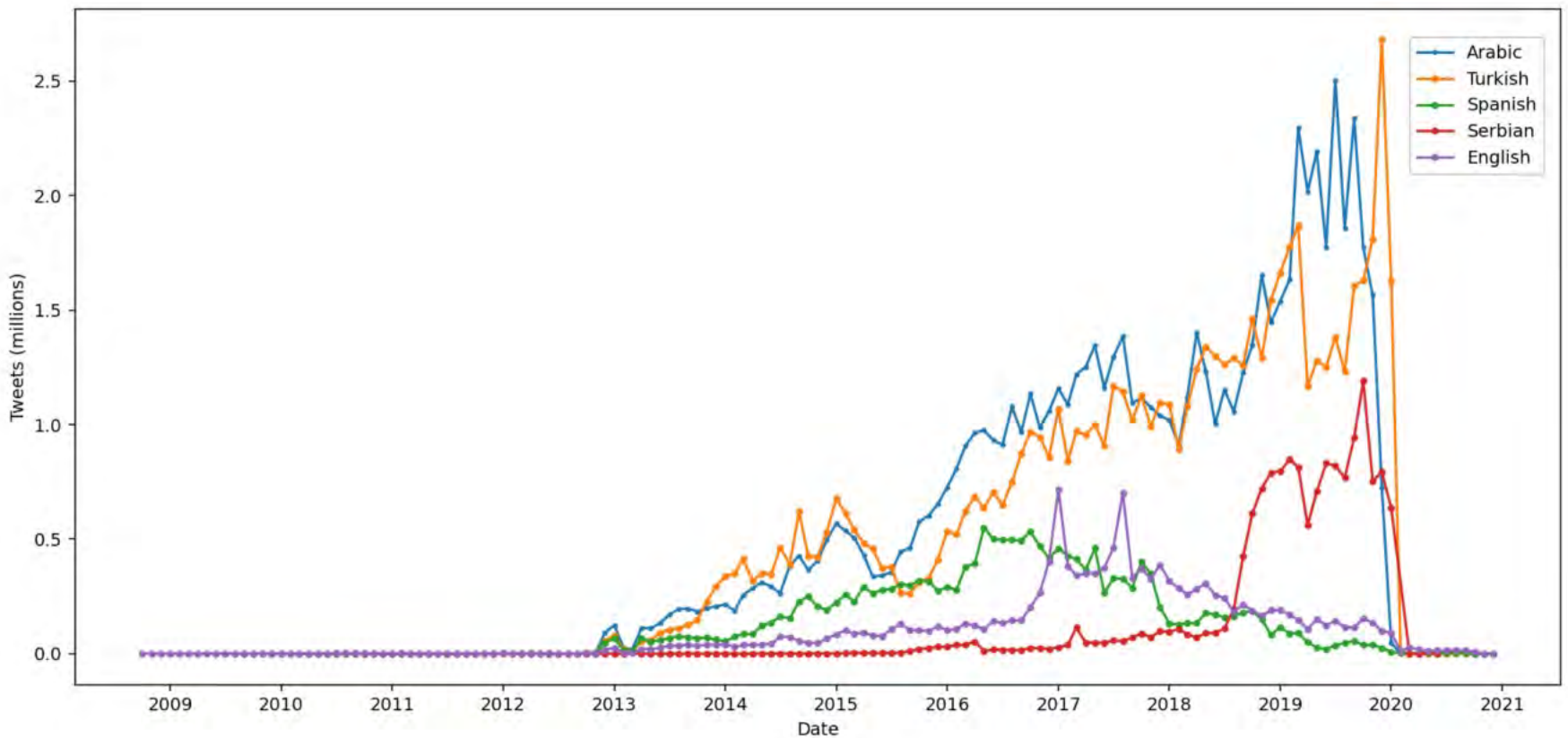
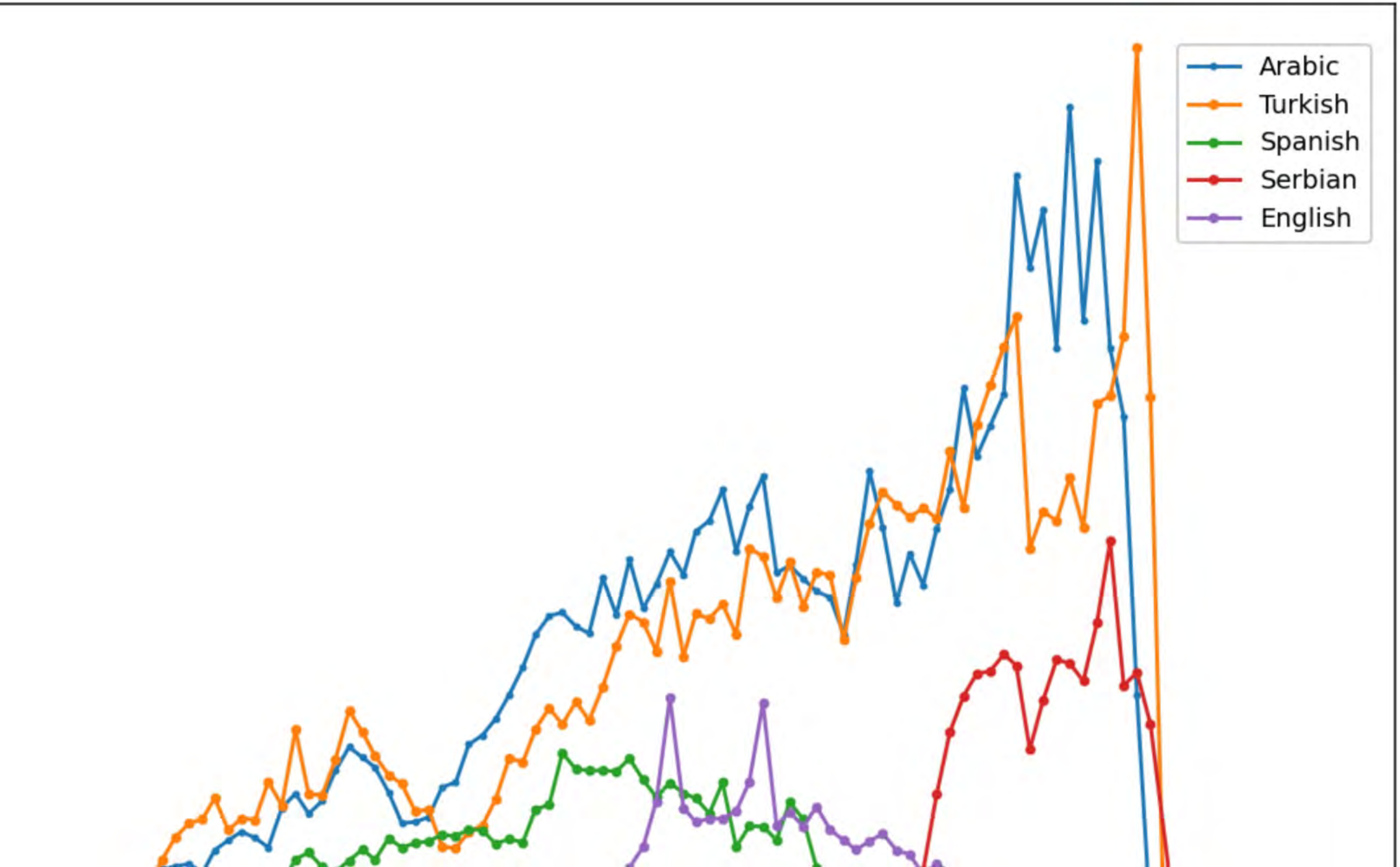
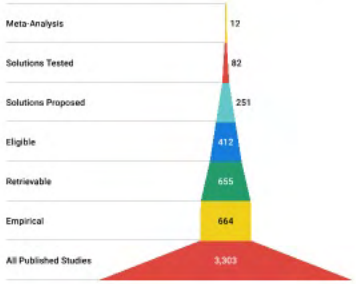



Arabic
Turkish
Spanish
Serbian
English

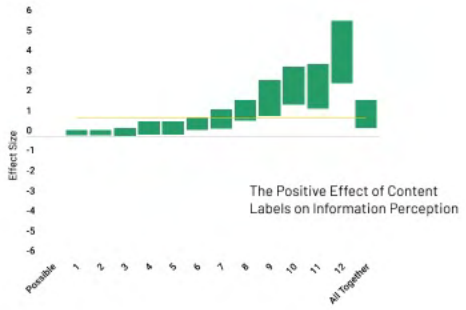
Solutions

Research Into Solutions



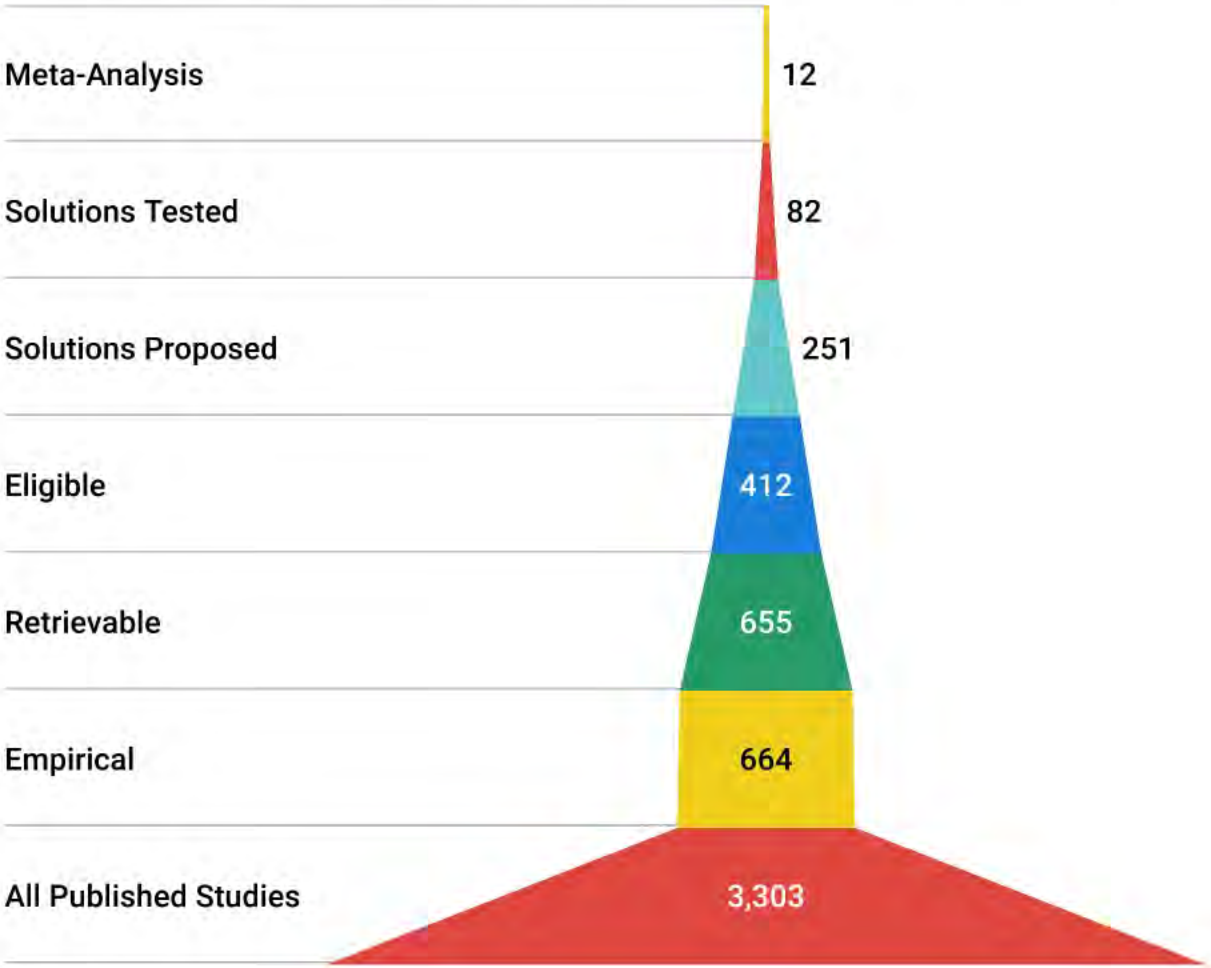
Corrective information materials
Information literacy & education
Content & account moderation
Content labeling
Content distribution
Redirection
Security & verification
Content reporting
Disinformation disclosure
Advertising policy

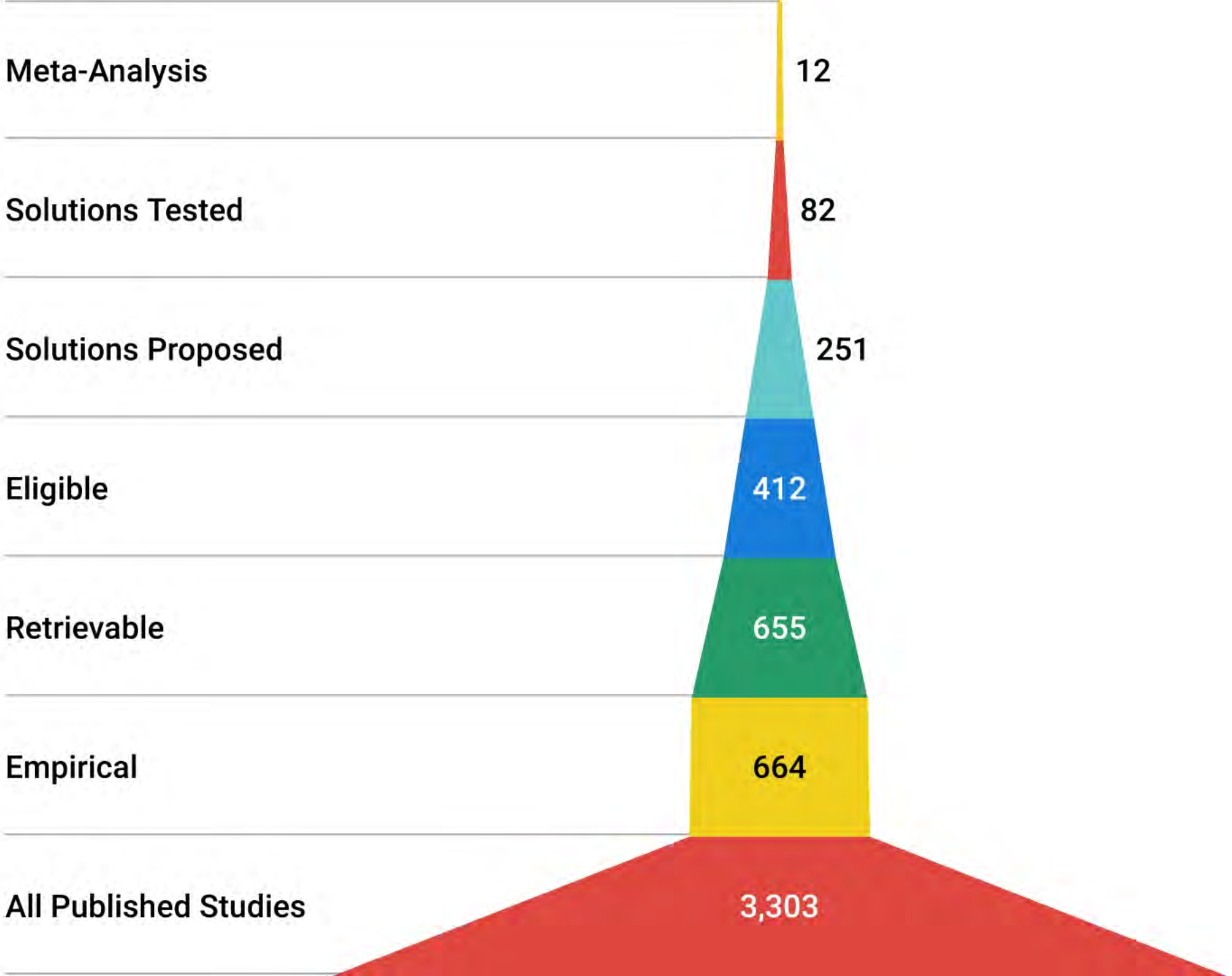
Does content labelling have an effect on information perception (accuracy, believability, credibility, and trustworthiness)?



The Positive Effect of Content Labels on Information Perception

Research Into Solutions




Meta-Analysis
12
Solutions Tested
82
Solutions Proposed
251
Eligible
412
Retrievable
655
Empirical
664
All Published Studies
3,303

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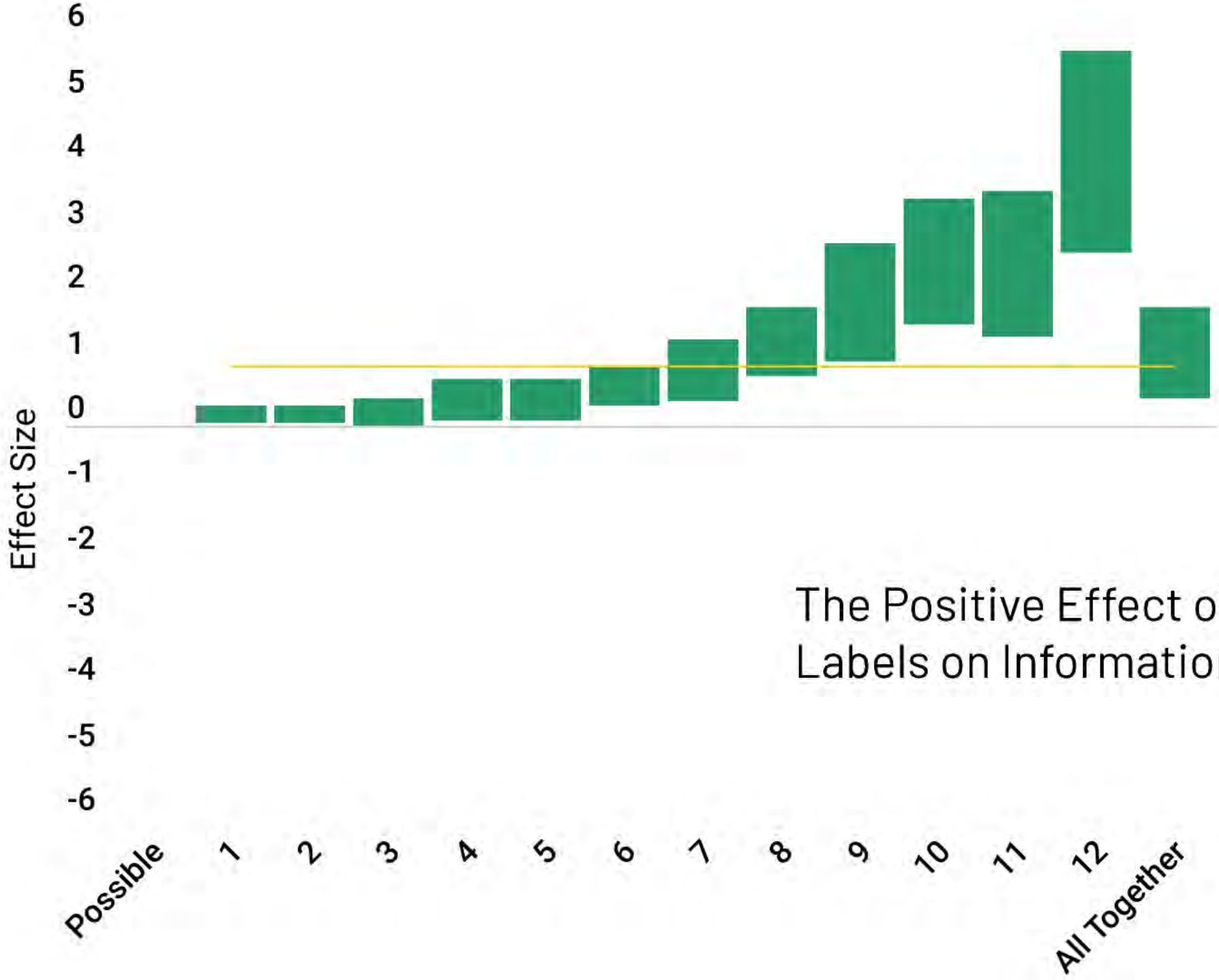


The Positive Effect of Content Labels on Information Perception

IPIE

International Panel on the Information Environment

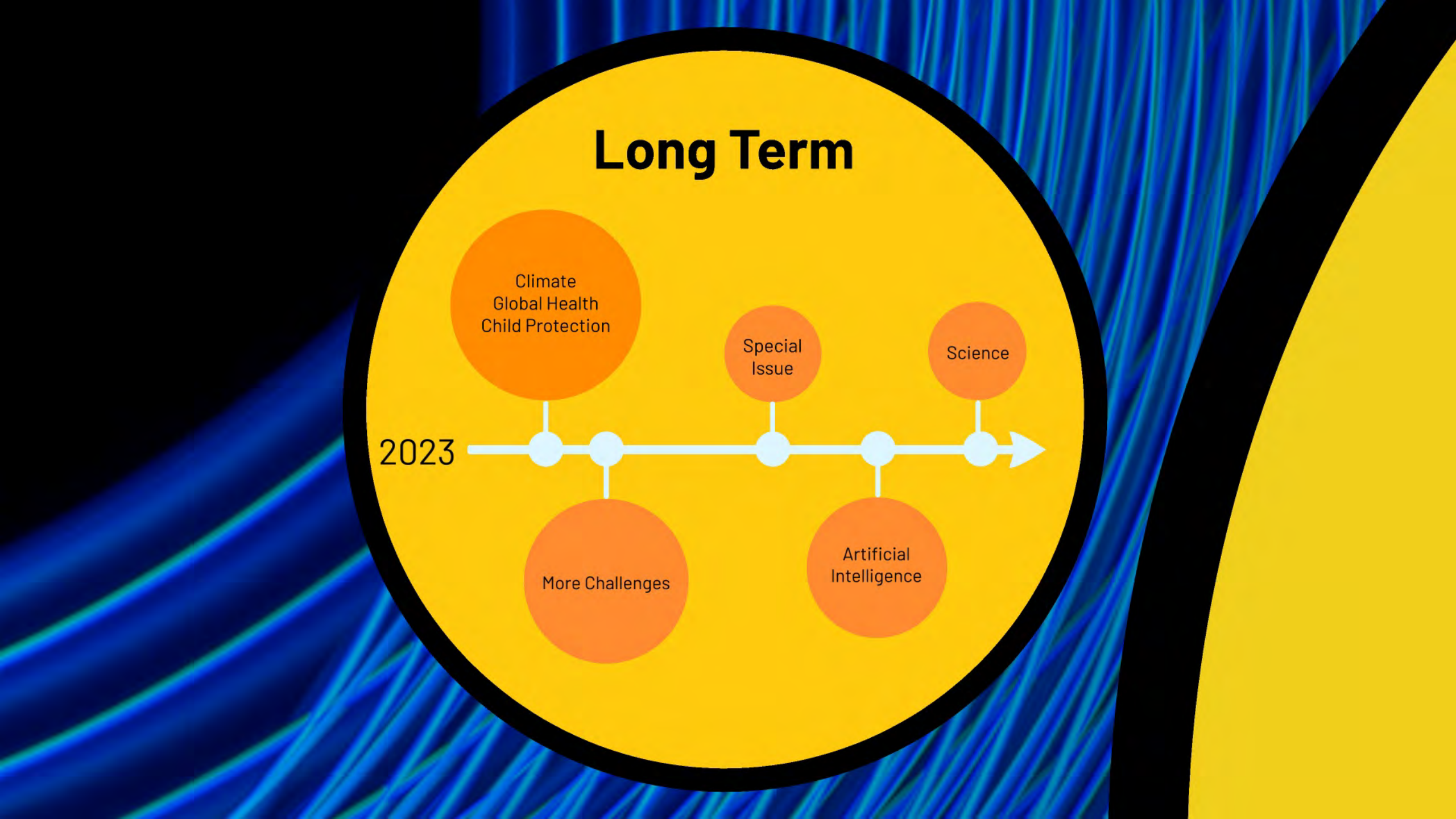
Long Term

Mission

Roadmap

Health

The International Panel on the Information Environment will provide an independent, scientific basis for evaluating global trends in algorithmic bias, manipulation, and misinformation, with the aim of improving public life and the rule of law.


Long Term
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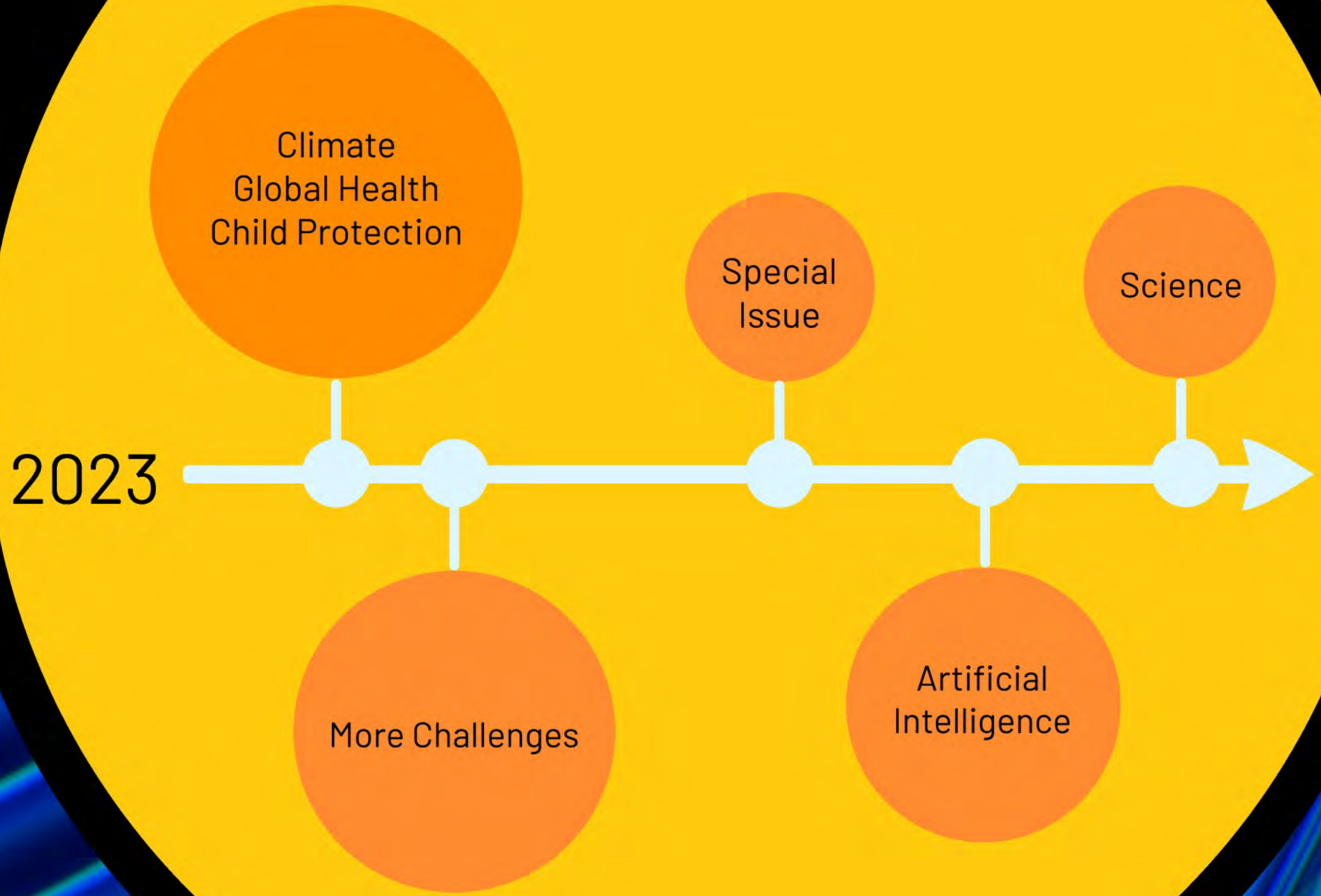
Science
2023
More Challenges
Artificial
Intelligence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industry
and civil society

with regular scientific assessments on the global information environment by

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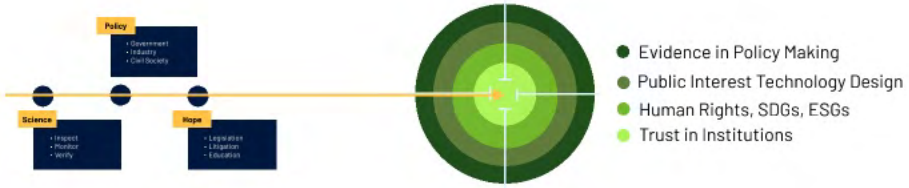
evaluating
elevating
and supporting research

with the broad aim of improving the global information environment.



- Evidence in Policy Making
- Public Interest Technology Design
- Human Rights, SDGs, ESGs
- Trust in Institutions

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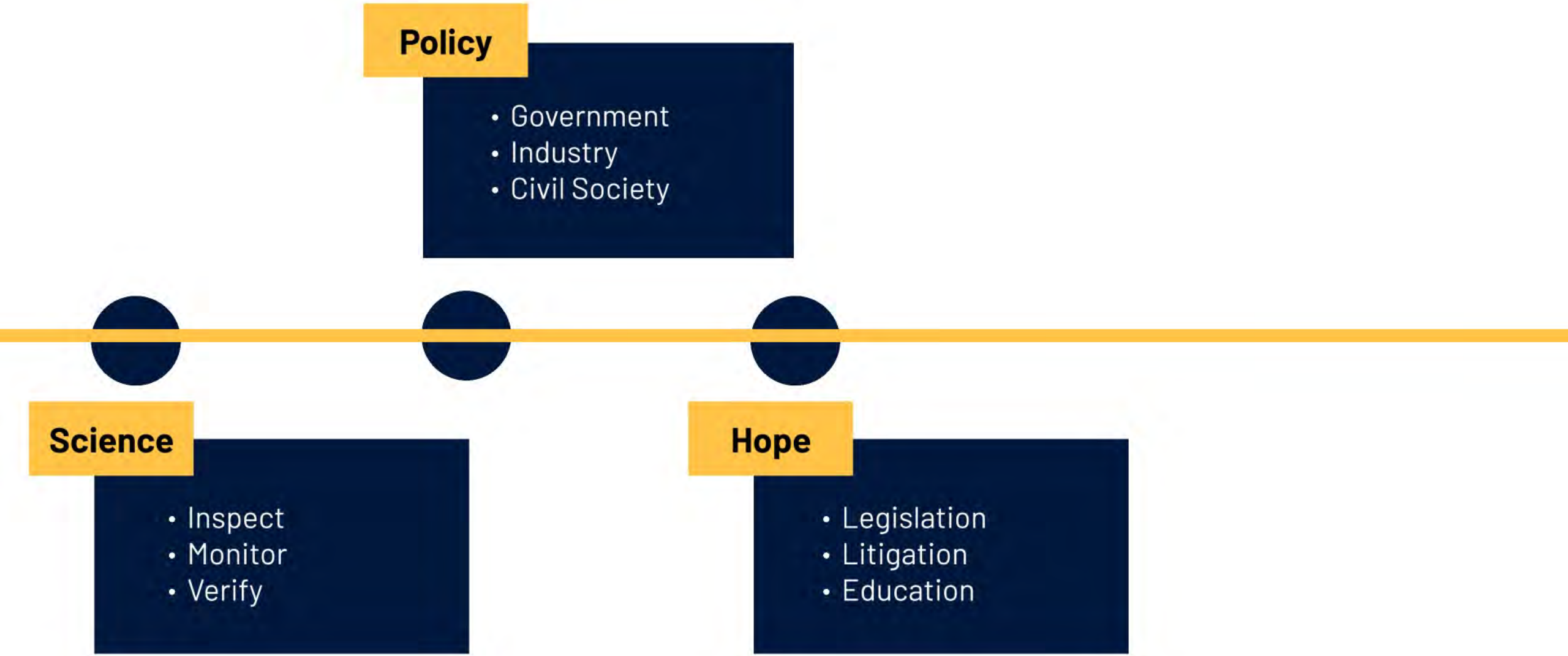
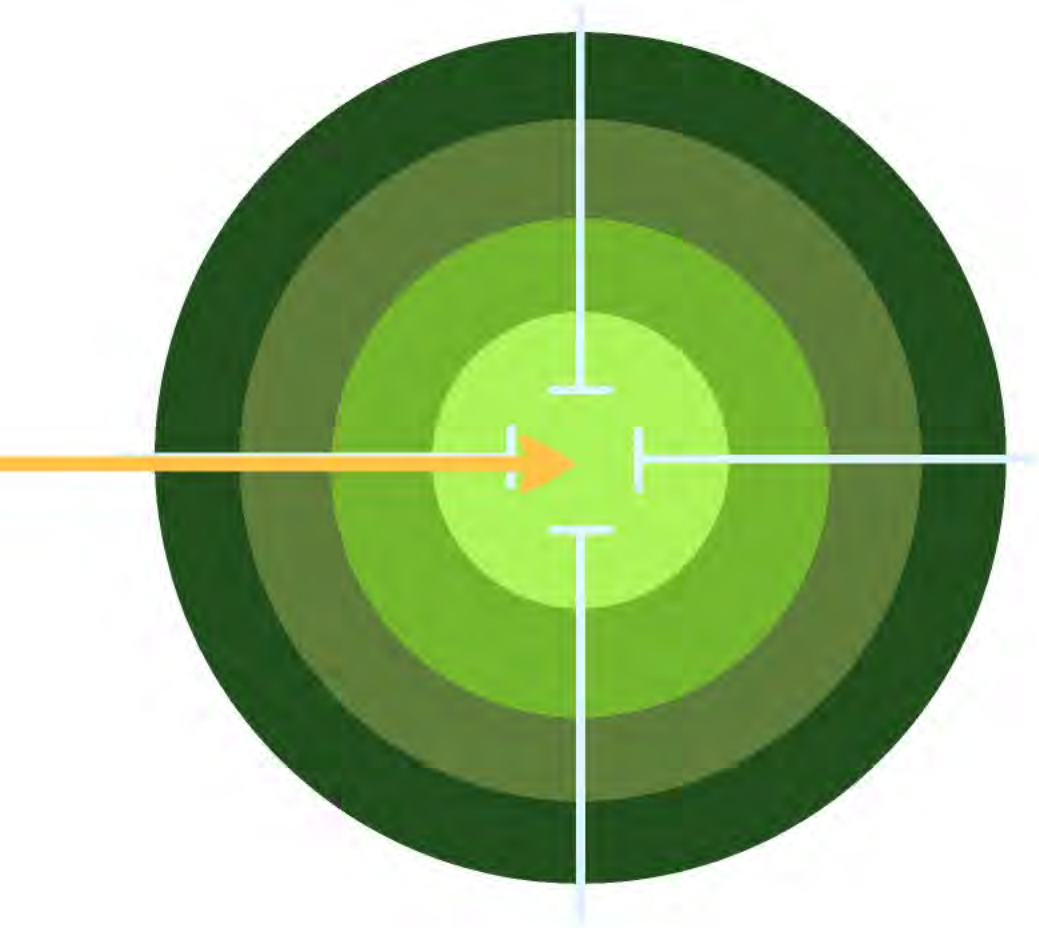

Policy
• Government
• Industry
• Civil Society
Science
• Inspect
• Monitor
• Verify
Hope
• Legislation
• Litigation
• Education



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- Public Interest Technology Design
- Human Rights, SDGs, ESGs
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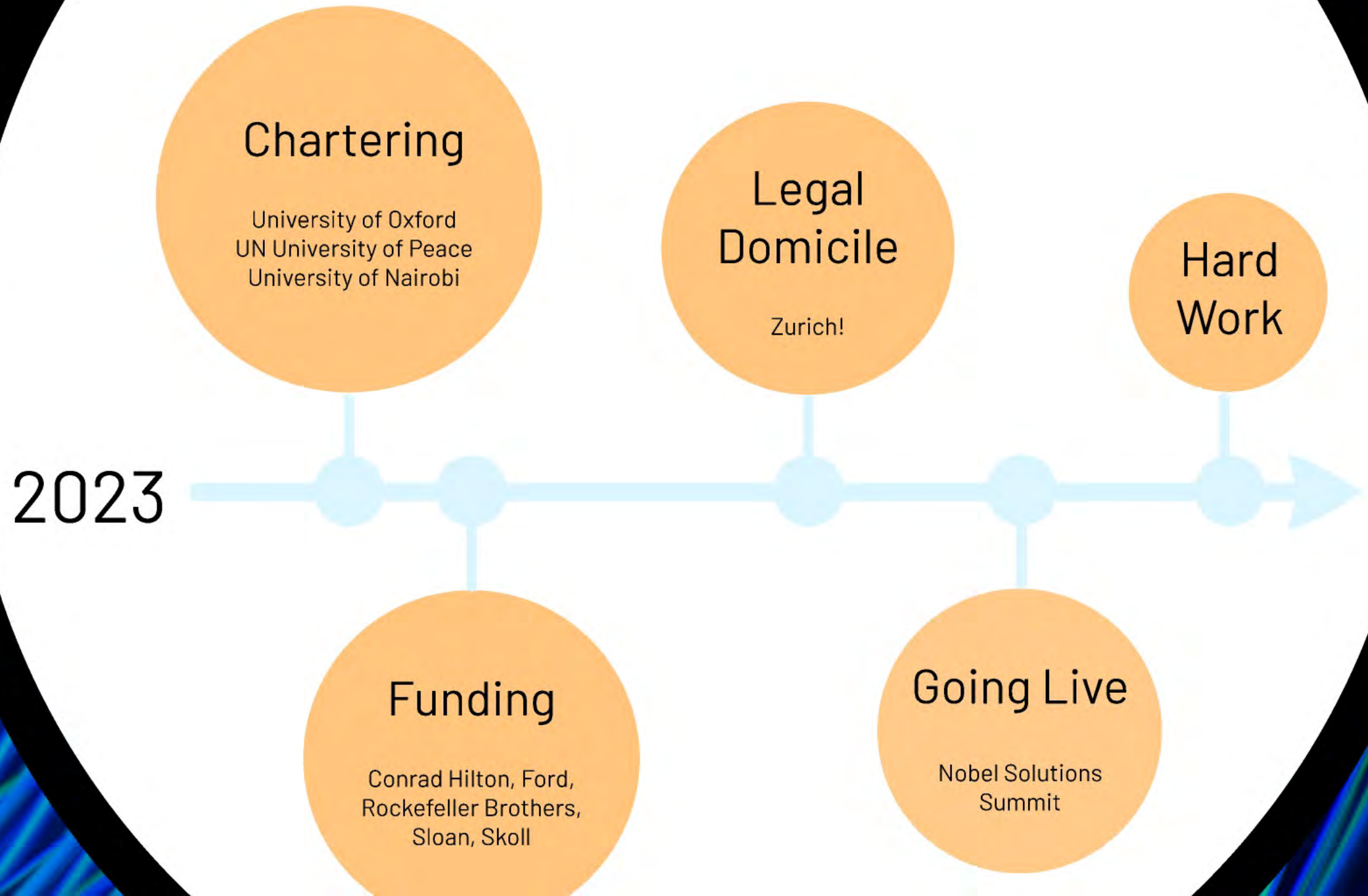
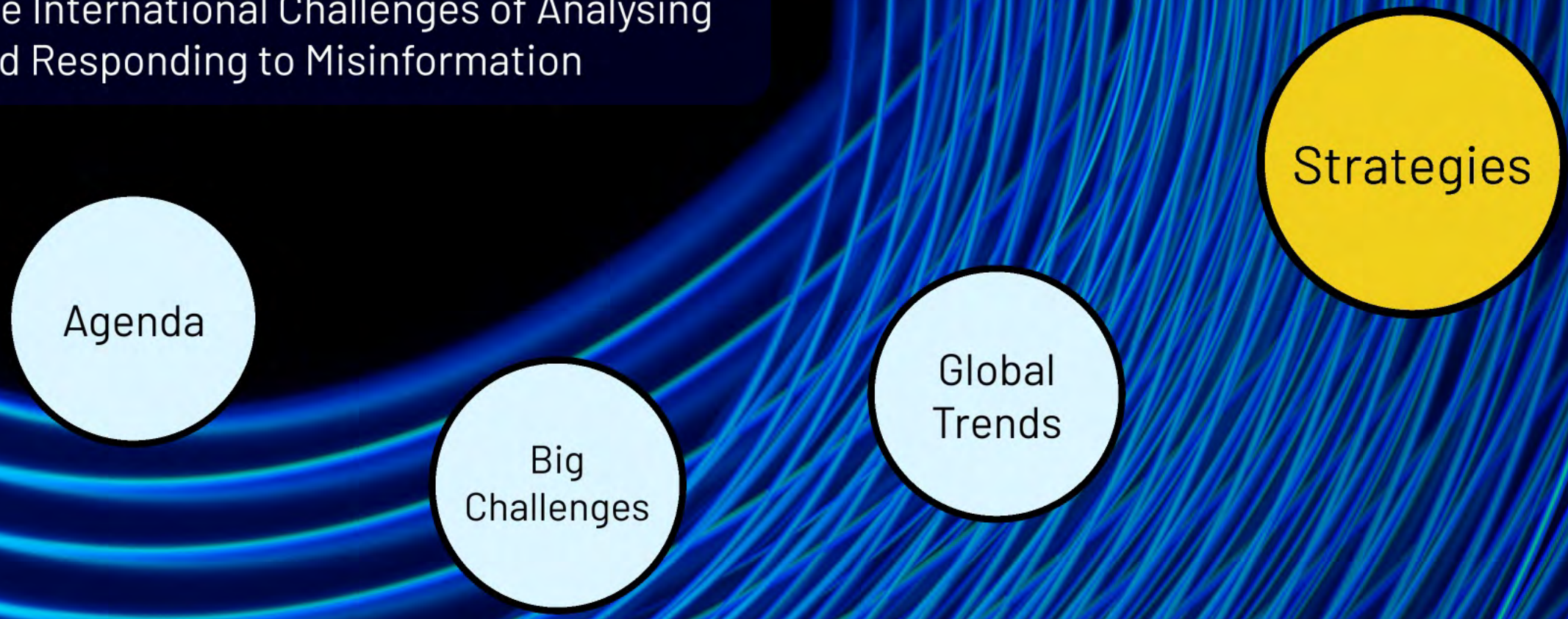
Next 6 Months


Chartering
University of Oxford
UN University of Peace
University of Nairobi
Legal Domicile
Zurich!
Hard Work
2023
Funding
Conrad Hilton, Ford, Rockefeller Brothers, Sloan, Skoll
Going Live
Nobel Solutions Summit

"I'm sorry, Jeannie, your answer was correct, but Kevin shouted his incorrect answer over yours, so he gets the points."

Scientific Collaboration Across Borders

The International Challenges of Analysing and Responding to Misinformation



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