Title: Follow-up discernment study appendix for "Monitoring misinformation, building discernment: A crowdsourcing study during the 2025 Australian federal election"
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Note: The material contained herein is supplementary to the article named in the title and published in the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review.

Appendix F: Follow-up discernment study

The discernment test

Participants in the treatment group were drawn from individuals who had taken part in the monitoring phase and consented to be recontacted for follow-up research; *n* = 56 completed the follow-up assessment. The control group (*n* = 132) was recruited using channels and eligibility criteria mirroring the original cohort, creating a comparison group broadly similar to the original participant pool while ensuring control participants had not taken part in the monitoring exercise.

Both groups completed the same online discernment test of 20 items (10 true, 10 false), administered through an online survey platform, with participants indicating whether they believed each item was "true" or "false." The items covered a range of topics and were not specifically focused on politics or elections, in order to assess general misinformation discernment rather than recall of claims encountered during the monitoring phase.

The items were purpose-built rather than drawn from real social media, because constructed items can be assigned an unambiguous ground truth—a determination that is often not possible for authentic posts, whose veracity may be contested or context-dependent. Each item was therefore designed to be verifiably true or false while resembling the format and style of typical news-sharing posts, including the visual conventions of particular outlets.

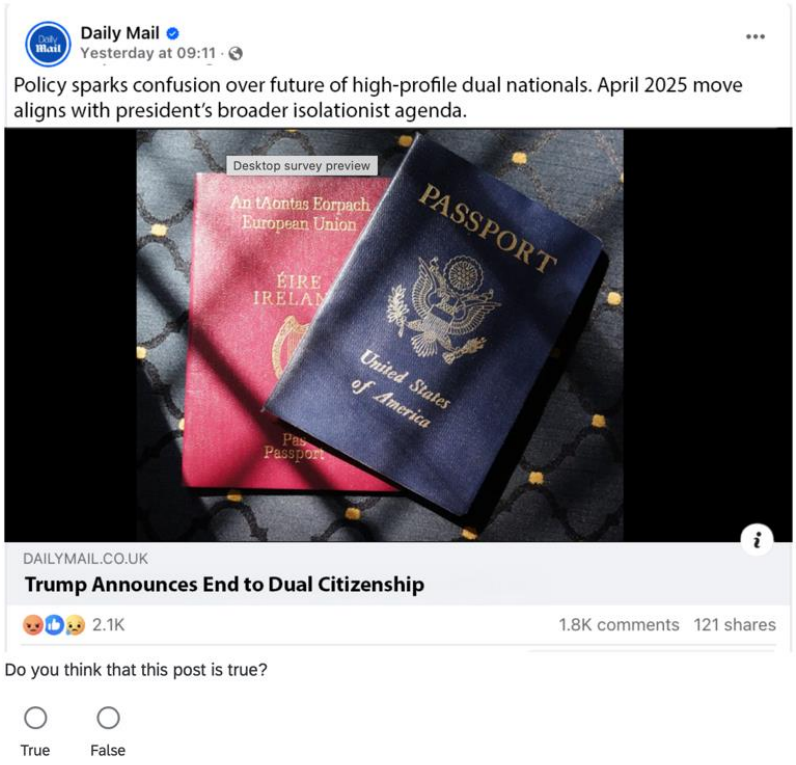

Figure F1. Example simulated Facebook-style news post used in the discernment test.

Group differences and adjusted comparison

The treatment group (n = 56) answered 73.8% of test items correctly (SD = 0.137), compared with 67.5% (SD = 0.128) in the control group (n = 132); a difference equivalent to a moderate effect size (Cohen's d = 0.48, 95% CI [0.16, 0.79]). Because the two groups were unequal in size, we compared mean accuracy using Welch's t-test, which does not assume equal variances or balanced samples. The difference was statistically significant, $t(97.8) = 2.91$, $p = .005$. This indicates that the higher discernment observed in the treatment group is unlikely to reflect sampling variation alone.

The treatment and control groups differed on several demographic characteristics (Table F1). Treatment participants were younger, more likely to be in paid employment, and more highly educated than the control group, which was older and included a high proportion of retirees. The groups were similar in their distribution across Australian states, though the treatment group included somewhat more women. Because age, employment, and education could each plausibly be associated with misinformation discernment, these three characteristics were included as covariates in the adjusted analysis reported below.

Table F1. *Sample characteristics. Percentages are calculated among participants who reported each characteristic. Four treatment participants did not provide demographic information and are excluded from the adjusted analysis below.*

Characteristic	Treatment	Control
Aged 55 or older	38%	73%
In paid employment	67%	43%
Bachelors degree or higher	88%	63%

To examine whether this difference could be explained by the demographic differences between the groups, we fitted a linear mixed-effects model. The model predicted each true/false response from the item's actual veracity, the participant's group (treatment or control), and the interaction between the two, with age, employment, and education included as covariates and random intercepts for each participant and each item. The interaction between veracity and group is the term of interest: it captures whether being in the treatment group was associated with a sharper distinction between true and false items. This interaction was positive and statistically significant (b = 0.12, SE = 0.03, t = 3.96, $p < .001$), indicating that the treatment group discriminated true from false content more effectively than the control group, after adjusting for the demographic variables on which the groups differed. Because participants were not randomly assigned, however, this adjustment accounts only for measured differences and does not establish that participation caused the improvement.