

Conspiracy Theories, Radicalisation and Digital Media

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The purpose of this report is to explore the role that conspiracy theories, especially as disseminated through social media, may play in the process of radicalisation, and to make recommendations about how to minimise their occurrence.

That conspiracy theories are disseminated through social networking and media sharing platforms

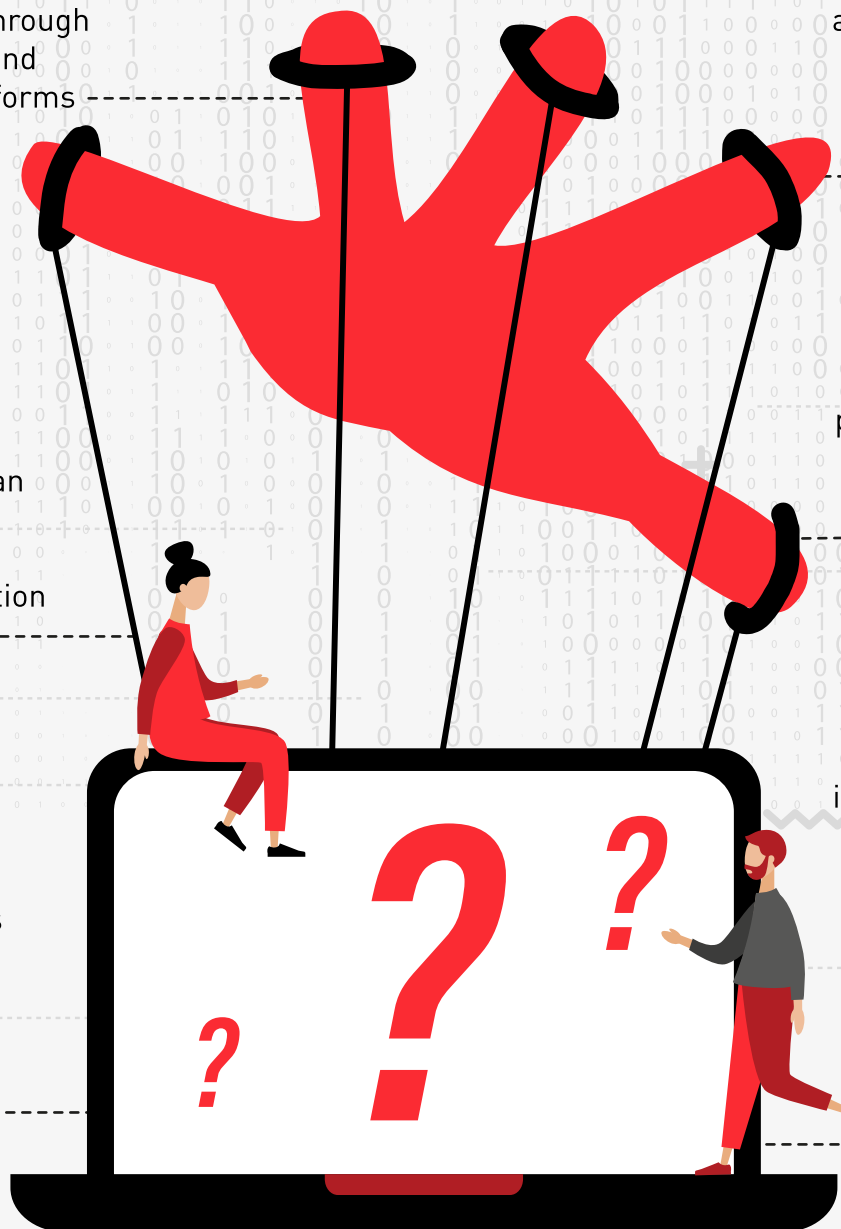
That the perpetrators and alleged perpetrators of many recent mass shooting events were motivated by belief in conspiracy theories

That conspiracy theories have historically played an important role in radicalisation, terrorism, persecution and genocide

That conspiracy theories have played a key role in recent political violence in the USA, including the insurrection of 6 January 2021

That belief in conspiracy theories is psychologically associated with bigotry, extremism and willingness to break the law

That actions taken by social networking and media sharing platforms are inadequate to solve the problems associated with conspiracy theories, in part because the platforms themselves are designed in a way that serves to nurture and protect conspiracy beliefs



In the internet of today, value is increasingly attached not to platforms that facilitate an undifferentiated free-for-all but to platforms that provide high quality content, whether on a commercial basis (e.g. Disney+) or on a non-commercial basis (e.g. Wikipedia). Partnering with reputable content providers in order to promote high quality content at the expense of misinformation and conspiracy theories would in no way violate the principle of freedom of speech, and would indeed be likely to lead typical platform users to attach higher value to the platforms in question.