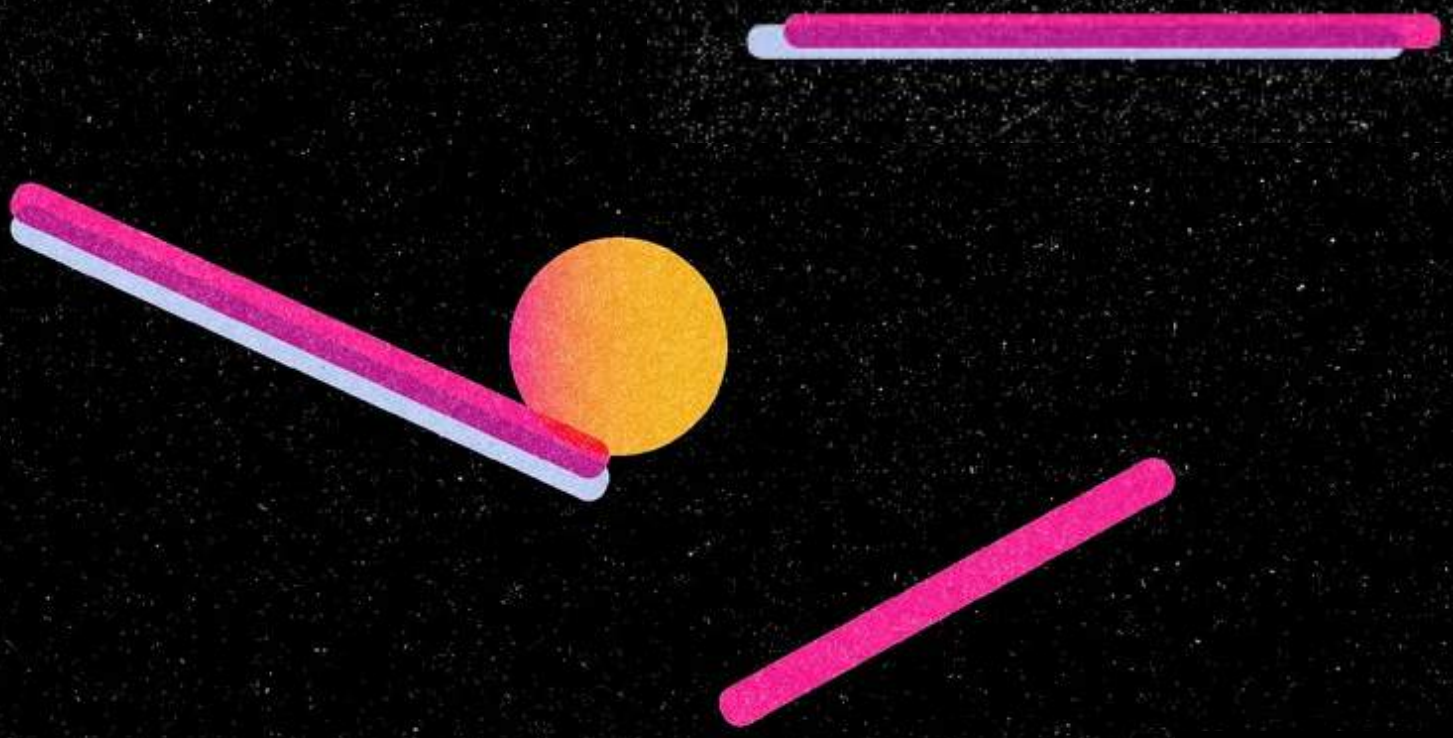
More in Common

Countering disinformation through games

A report by AKO Storytelling Institute in collaboration with More in Common



Part of a wider project ***On Their Terms: Developing innovative media literacy interventions for disengaged and low trust groups***
generously supported by the European Media and Information Fund

European MEDIA AND INFORMATION Fund

About this report

This report shares insights learned from a collaborative project led by More in Common UK and the AKO Storytelling Institute at the University of the Arts London.

Drawing from robust audience research, the project explored the potential for developing video games as tools for fostering media literacy, particularly amongst disengaged groups who are highly susceptible to disinformation* yet resistant to explicit interventions.

Specialthanks to:
Cecilie Steenbuch Traberg, Charles Kriel, David King, John O'Shea, Maddalena Grattarola, Melisa Basol, Richard Sherriff, UAL Game Design and the game designers involved in our lab

*Please note that this report uses the term **disinformation** throughout to refer to false or misleading information, regardless of the intentions of the people sharing it.

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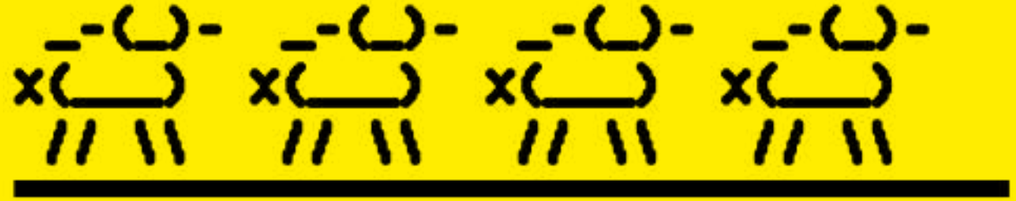


Executive summary

Disinformation, supercharged by digital media and social platforms, is a growing threat to social cohesion and democracy. While traditional media literacy campaigns rooted in fact-checking and direct instruction offer valuable skills, they have struggled to engage the audiences most vulnerable to manipulation. Video games emerge as an untapped resource for building new forms of resilience.

Traditional approaches to media literacy often focus on the ability to spot “fake news,” or “check your sources”, however this can have the unintended consequence of fostering further distrust in the news or being unappealing to people who are already confident in their ability to spot false information. Further, as the concept of “fake news” itself is politicised, many groups may increasingly see such initiatives as biased or a form of indoctrination.

Robust audience research by More in Common has demonstrated that video games appeal to nearly every audience segment, making them a uniquely scaleable vehicle for media literacy. The project by More in Common and UAL’s AKO Storytelling Institute considered the mindsets and behaviours of audiences who play video games the most but who are the most resistant to educational interventions, to explore the potential for developing games that could have wide appeal.

The project introduced new ways of focusing on psychological resilience to disinformation as a more effective way of fostering media literacy. This approach centres on equipping audiences to reflect on how beliefs are formed, how emotions and biases shape interpretation, and how social dynamics drive acceptance or rejection of information.

Game designers were empowered with in-depth audience research and psychological insights, supporting them to craft interventions within games that are subtle, immersive, and respectful of player autonomy.

By embracing nuance, psychological depth, and collaboration, games can become powerful tools for building media resilience—capable of reaching even the most sceptical and disengaged players where existing interventions fall short.

Key findings include:

Games areuniquelypositionedtopromote media literacy especially among those least reached by conventional interventions, and among those most vulnerable to disinformation online.

Explicitlyeducationalordidacticgamesaboutdisinformationhave limited appeal. Players prefer experiences that are subtle, authentic, entertaining, and respect their autonomy.

Psychological literacy fostering self-reflection, emotional awareness, and an understanding of social influence within games can lay the groundwork for resilience to manipulation.

Game designers have a real and vital role to play in combatting disinformation by embedding psychological literacy directly in the fabric of games, they have a possibility of building resilience at scale. Some of the specific cognitive biases exploited by disinformation can also make for entertaining game mechanics and narratives to build this resilience.

Subtle, ethically neutral design choices that remain optional, unobtrusive, and available to those ready to engage, while preserving an enjoyable experience for others, could maximise reach and inclusiveness, though robust impact measurement will remain a challenge.

Independentdevelopersareespeciallywell-placedtoprototypeandlead these innovations, even as broader industry support and cross-disciplinary collaboration are essential for scaling impact.

Context and challenge

Disinformation has always existed, but digital technologies—especially the internet and social media—have magnified its impact to unprecedented levels. Today, information can be rapidly weaponised to divide, distract, and destabilise, fuelling mistrust and polarisation throughout society. The consequences are wide-reaching and profound: as traditional news sources and trusted authorities are increasingly sidelined, individuals are left to navigate a constantly shifting, often hostile information environment, largely on their own.

While policy and regulation are essential, media literacy interventions that nurture the skills and confidence to critically engage with information and assess its influence on thoughts, feelings and behaviours, also play a central role in building individual resilience to disinformation.

Yet, conventional media literacy campaigns often struggle to reach precisely the audiences most vulnerable to disinformation. Didactic methods and fact-checking tools can fall flat or even trigger backlash among groups who are disengaged or distrustful of traditional institutions, who might see these methods as patronising, unnecessary or biased.

This challenge demands new approaches that are both imaginative and genuinely inclusive—meeting people where they are and respecting their perspectives.

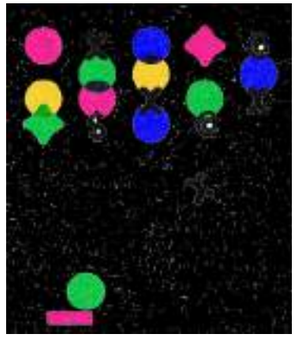
Video games, with their pervasive popularity, especially among those least reached by conventional interventions, represent a powerful but underutilised opportunity.

Recent research by More in Common shows that all segments of the British public play video games, but notably, those who are most disengaged from mainstream media and political life play the most, both in frequency and duration. People who play video games frequently are among the most 'online' groups of society, and many already feel confident in their ability to identify the truth online, making them less likely to actively seek out media literacy training material. Yet, this group's distrust of mainstream and traditional media and savvy use of the internet often leads to them seeking out their 'own truth' which leaves them vulnerable to disinformation.

"The stakes couldn't be higher right now. The situation for Europe couldn't be more important. And I think that the work that we do here in the culture sector around disinformation and counter disinformation will become vital in terms of the politics and survival of our countries and our democratic ideals" — Charles Kriel

Previous attempts to use games for media literacy have struggled to gain mass traction. Games that are overtly educational have typically failed to attract broad audiences and can even alienate the audiences that they do attract. Meanwhile, realities around identity, trust and perspective further complicate the challenge; what feels like disinformation to one person may seem credible to another, shaped in part by social context and personal identity. Many low-trust groups are especially resistant to interventions perceived as imposed by 'elites' or outsiders, which can strengthen their scepticism instead of reducing it.

This complicated landscape presents a question: Can video games, through their mechanics, stories, and worlds, be designed to foster resilience to disinformation in a way that feels authentic, engaging, and accessible to all players—including those hardest to reach?



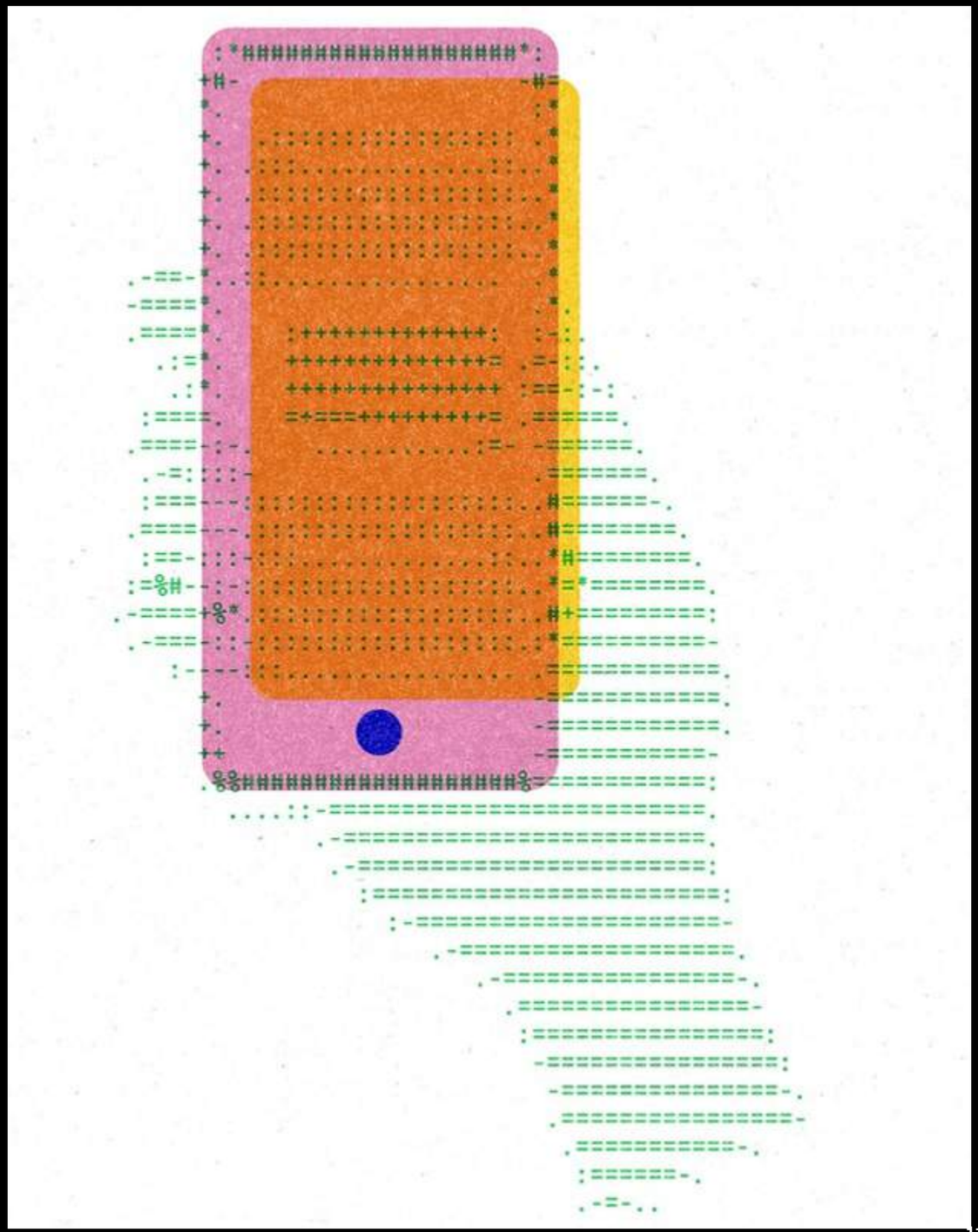
The project

The project **On Their Terms: Developing innovative media literacy interventions for disengaged and low-trust groups**, developed by More in Common in collaboration with UAL's AKO Storytelling Institute, explored this very question. Rather than targeting players directly with explicit messaging, the approach was to explore what could be achieved by tasking game designers to design a new type of media literacy game that could incorporate more appropriate insights and tools that could subtly encourage reflection, and a new type of media literacy approach that respected player agency, could attract broad audiences and build resilience at scale.

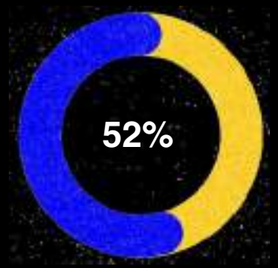
The approach was to empower game designers with both in-depth audience research and psychological insights, encouraging them to experiment with what a new kind of media literacy game could become.

This audience research equipped designers with a nuanced understanding of players—their worldviews, gaming habits, attitudes toward disinformation, and their own perceptions of what skills they needed to identify misleading information in their lives. Alongside this, designers were introduced to an updated set of media literacy skills focused on psychological literacy, and were invited to create interventions that would likely feel more accessible and relevant to diverse audiences.

Audience insights: the Sceptical Scrollers

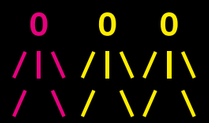


Audience insights: the Sceptical Scrollers

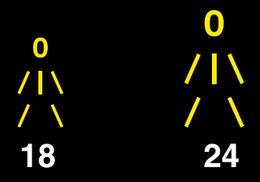


52% of the public aged 16 and over report playing games in the UK (Ofcom, 2024)

30% of the population plays more than four hours weekly (More in Common, 2025)

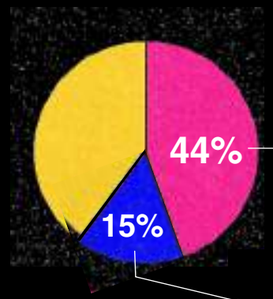


Nearly one in three people play several times each week



Young men aged 18–24 are the most active game players

With nearly half gaming every day



44% of daily game players believe it is certain or probable that “secret groups control global events”

Compared to just 15% of non-game players

50% of men under 25 on YouTube are engaging with gaming related content every day (HarmonyLabs, 2024)

It’s no surprise that games have previously been identified as a vehicle for media literacy. They are ubiquitous.

These figures suggest a substantial and engaged gaming audience, but they do not tell us who within these groups is most vulnerable to disinformation or most resistant to traditional media literacy efforts.

To address this gap, More in Common used their “British Seven” segmentation, a psychographic, values-based framework that categorises people by worldview rather than demographics like age, gender or income. In this segmentation, the “Sceptical Scrollers” stand out as both the most frequent and intensive gamers, and also among the groups most susceptible to disinformation.

As a younger, highly online group, the Sceptical Scrollers rely heavily on social media for information, perceiving it as more authentic, and are more likely to distrust mainstream news sources. This helps drive a general shift toward alternative sources that may lack editorial oversight, increasing exposure to conspiracy theories and misleading narratives.

This vulnerability is compounded by a high degree of confidence in the ability of people who play games more frequently to discern truth from falsehood. Daily game players are significantly more likely to believe in conspiracy theories than those who never play video games.

Paradoxically, this group’s digital fluency reinforces their resistance to traditional media literacy interventions. A third of daily game players report being very confident in their ability to spot disinformation online, more than four times the rate of non-game players. This confidence creates a barrier to engagement with educational content.

While the research conducted focused on the segment of Sceptical Scrollers, game playing is popular within all seven segments, along with an increased susceptibility to disinformation as game playing increases. As such, this research is also relevant to the broader audience of all game players.

These insights underscore the importance of designing interventions that align with the emotional and psychological realities of audiences and the need to meet players where they are, and for designers to foster reflection and media literacy in ways that feel authentic, non-judgmental, and engaging.

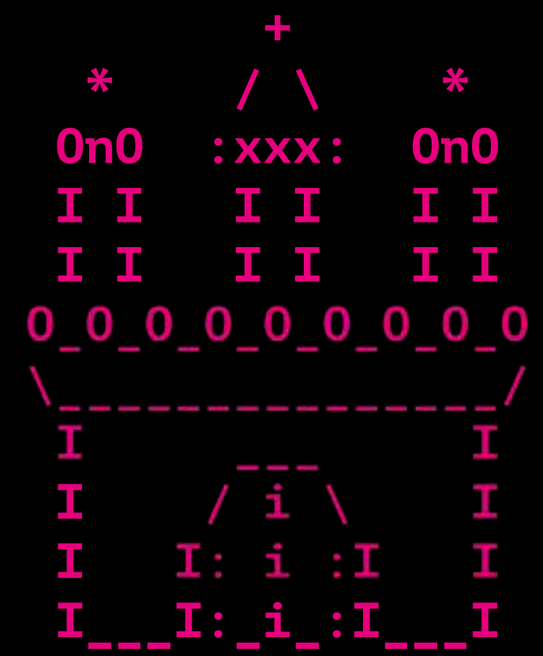
Which games and why?

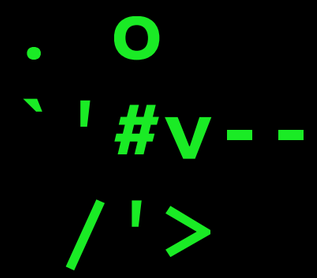
Video games span a vast range of styles and experiences, and there are few preferences that apply universally across all seven audience segments. Players demonstrate remarkable flexibility—embracing both competitive and collaborative formats and showing equal comfort with realistic or stylised aesthetics. This adaptability suggests that neither genre nor visual style is the primary driver of engagement; what matters most is the emotional and cognitive experience the game delivers.

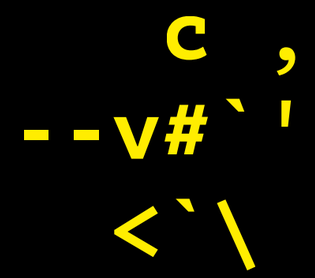
For many, gaming is fundamentally a leisure pursuit—a “safe zone” apart from the pressures of daily life. It is therefore unsurprising that games explicitly focused on education or disinformation are often met with scepticism or disinterest, particularly by those most resistant to institutional or didactic messages. However, when themes of disinformation are woven into familiar and compelling genres—such as a murder mystery centred on deception—they attract far greater interest than games that focus directly on political campaigns or fact-checking. This highlights the significance of subtle genre framing and narrative nuance in sustaining player engagement.

Overall, there is clear resistance to games that overtly address disinformation; players prefer to keep their gaming experiences free from educational or political overtones. People value their leisure time and are wary of anything that might feel intrusive or preachy.

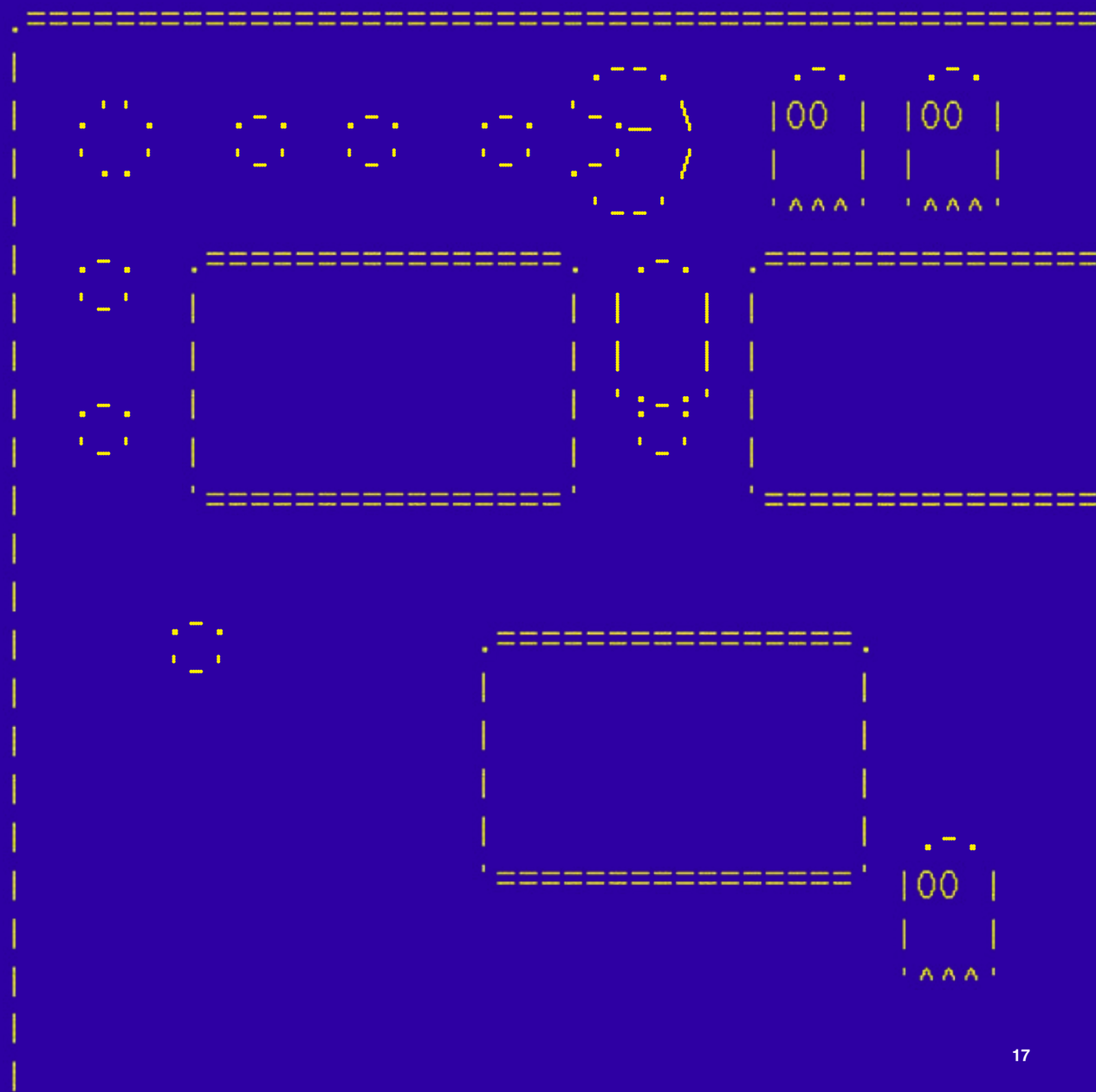
This reinforces the need for interventions that are subtle, optional, and embedded within enjoyable gameplay, rather than being overtly educational. By aligning with the existing motivations and habits of game players, it becomes possible to foster resilience to disinformation without compromising the core appeal of gaming.







Rethinking media literacy: toward psychological literacy



Previous attempts to combat disinformation through video games have largely focused on asking players to evaluate the accuracy of information. However research suggests that these direct approaches can backfire: rather than improving discernment, they risk leaving players more distrustful overall, encouraging a belief that all information is suspect (Modirrousta-Galian & Higham, 2023).

Such overtly educational games have limited appeal, struggling to reach mass audiences or to engage the very groups most vulnerable to disinformation - particularly outside educational contexts where individuals can be made to play these games. For interventions to reach scale, a more implicit, nuanced approach is needed.

Traditional media literacy efforts have primarily aimed to improve people's ability to spot false information but have paid less attention to helping people accept true information—especially when it challenges existing beliefs (Pfänder & Altay, 2025). Moreover, these interventions are most effective when they form part of a regular habit (Kiili, Siuko & Ninaus, 2024), which aligns well with the habitual nature of gameplay. Narrative-driven games are also more likely to keep players coming back (Jeong, Cho & Hwang, 2012), offering a clear opportunity for engaging, habitual games designed with psychological insights in mind.

Games about disinformation

Games have an ability to model real-world systems that respond in real time to interaction. Games are already models of information, thus lending themselves well to explicit depictions of disinformation. A key tool at the designer's disposal is choosing when and to whom to reveal information needed to proceed. Games explicitly about disinformation do not appeal to mass audiences, but this does not mean they should be discounted. Given their appeal to certain designers who include system modelling in their work, games explicitly about disinformation are still a valuable tool in direct intervention or education methods.

Games that model systems can be effective in explicit educational settings, as they promote direct learning and allow students to experiment in a safe environment. By simulating complex, real-world systems, these games help learners develop a level of literacy about the system and make abstract concepts more tangible.

Previous media literacy games

Games that have attempted to address disinformation directly include

Bad News: Gain followers and spread disinformation on a fake social media platform. https://inoculation.science /inoculation-games/

Harmony Square: Act as a "Chief Disinformation Officer" and ferment divisions in a small neighbourhood. https://inoculation.science/inoculation-games/

Fakesy: Inspect the posts on a fake social media platform to spot potential misinformation. https://fakey.osome.iu.edu/about

Disinformation Diaries: Experience the consequences of misinformation through the diary of a politician who has fallen foul of it. https://www.disinformation-diaries.org/

Under Pressure: Create your own disinformation and compete to earn the most followers. https://www.getunderpressure.com/

Cranky Uncle: Learn to spot common logical fallacies by conversing with a mistrustful family member. https://crankyuncle.com/game/

Psychological literacy

As part of this project, we consulted with social psychologists specialising in the intersection of psychology and disinformation to explore what media skills might be considered when engaging with individuals who are resistant to traditional media literacy approaches.

Their advice was to empower players to reflect on how they form beliefs, recognising that information is never received in isolation. By acknowledging personal subjectivity and exploring their own emotional reactions and biases, players could develop greater resilience against manipulation.

The psychologists identified three core skills to be cultivated through games, which might be adaptable into game mechanics and narratives.

1 **Recognising bias in judging sources:** Our beliefs, biases, and backgrounds all shape how we evaluate source credibility, making it difficult to establish universal standards for trustworthiness.

2 **Identifying emotional manipulation:** Strong emotions—such as fear or anger—make individuals more susceptible to believing and sharing disinformation. Becoming aware of these emotional triggers is crucial to countering their effects.

3 **Understanding social bias and influence:** People are more likely to accept anddisseminate information that aligns with their existing biases, allowing false narratives to spread rapidly within like-minded communities.

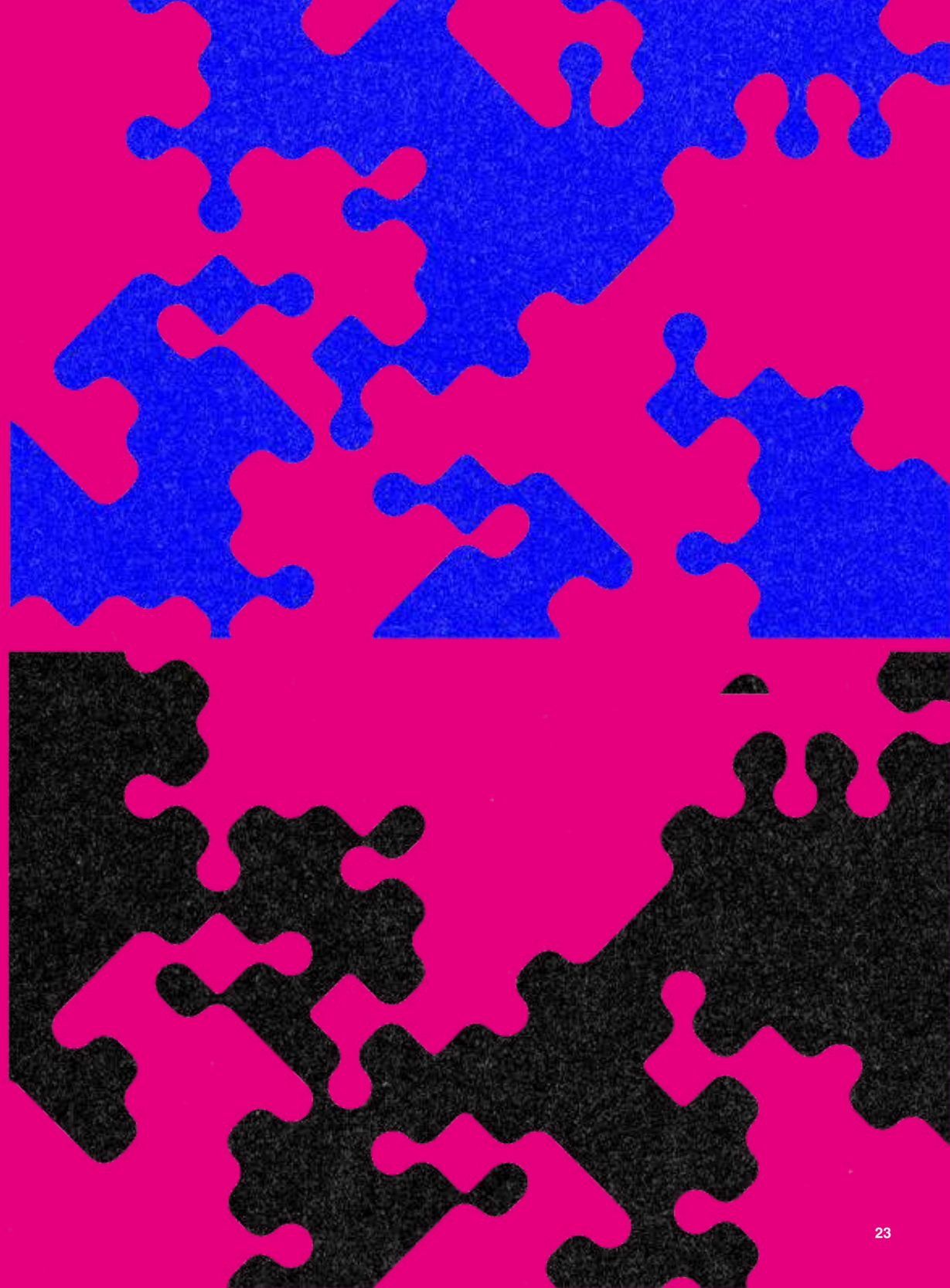
These skills could be translated into potential areas of focus for designers and developers to explore throughout the game ideation process. Below are some potential focal points and design implications which could emerge from exploration of the psychological skills outlined thus far.

These areas could serve as design opportunities rather than constraints, and therefore aim to provide a constructive alternative to previous, didactive interventions.

Games therefore could become tools not just for delivering information, but for fostering self-awareness about how we process information.

Skill	Focus	Design implications
Recognising bias in judging sources	How authority, aesthetics, and trustworthiness are represented in games. Who players believe and why.	Designers can model ambiguity, encourage critical engagement, or subvert expectations around sources of information.
Identifying emotional manipulation	The affective dimension of gameplay—how games provoke emotions like tension, fear, urgency, and how these emotions influence judgement.	Design moments that encourage reflection, emotional regulation, and de-escalation to build awareness in a safe, simulated space.
Understanding social bias and influence	How games function as social systems, shaped by peer influence, in-group dynamics, and collective decision-making.	Designers can explore belief spread through role-play, alliances, or collaboration, and offer players opportunities to observe, reflect on, or disrupt social dynamics.

Incorporating audience insights & psychological literacy into game design



Game designers are already well-versed in leveraging audience and psychological insights in design. Psychological principles underpin many foundational aspects of player engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. Reward systems—such as points, achievements, or loot boxes—draw on behavioural psychology to encourage progression, anticipation, and ongoing play.

A classic example is the concept of "flow"—the deeply focused mental state achieved when a game's challenge is carefully balanced with a player's skill. Designers routinely calibrate difficulty to avoid both frustration and boredom, creating experiences that keep players coming back.

With growing competition in the industry, designers increasingly seek out new psychological insights to deliver unique, memorable experiences. The iterative nature of game development—and the wealth of player feedback—makes the field particularly receptive to experimentation and refinement. As a result, there is a strong appetite for integrating the latest thinking on psychology to enhance engagement, retention, and even monetisation.

Yet, there is increasing scrutiny around the use of these techniques—especially when they serve monetisation at the expense of player well-being. Mechanics like daily login rewards or streak systems, for example, can shift motivation from genuine enjoyment to obligation, exploiting player vulnerabilities and fostering compulsive behaviours.

"The games themselves are often just exploiting physiological signs, not teaching them. We have an opportunity, in fact, to use some of the triggers that we exploit right now in order to do better within game design and to lead people toward a self-recognition by designing mechanics that reward pausing before reacting by introducing friction within bothgames and social media spaces."
— Charles Kriel

Subtlety and neutrality in design

A subtle, player-centred approach offers potential for game design, particularly with the Sceptical Scrollers audience group being resistant to explicit media literacy games and unconcerned about their ability to spot disinformation. Rather than delivering overt educational messages, designers could consider weaving the three key psychological insights—understanding our biases in judging sources, recognising emotional manipulation, and recognising our social biases—naturally into gameplay. This enables players to actively discover and reflect on the social and emotional drivers of disinformation through authentic play, without feeling lectured or judged.

Lessons should be unobtrusive and optional, surfacing for those who seek them while staying in the background for others. By respecting player autonomy, designers can create space for learning to emerge organically, empowering players to draw their own conclusions.

It is crucial that these psychological concepts remain apolitical, ethical, and unopinionated. By not engaging directly with specific ideologies, the design aligns with best practices: effective interventions are non-judgmental and inclusive, avoiding polarisation. This neutrality broadens appeal, builds trust, and ensures game-based interventions support rather than alienate.

Players instinctively recognise that games help them develop new skills—whether it's pattern recognition, deductive reasoning, or navigating social dynamics. Even if players can't always articulate what they've learned, these skills often extend beyond the game itself. By subtly embedding media literacy skills into the gaming experience, designers can foster critical reflection, emotional intelligence, and social awareness without compromising enjoyment or agency.

Examples of this approach in games

There are already compelling examples of these psychological insights embedded in games:

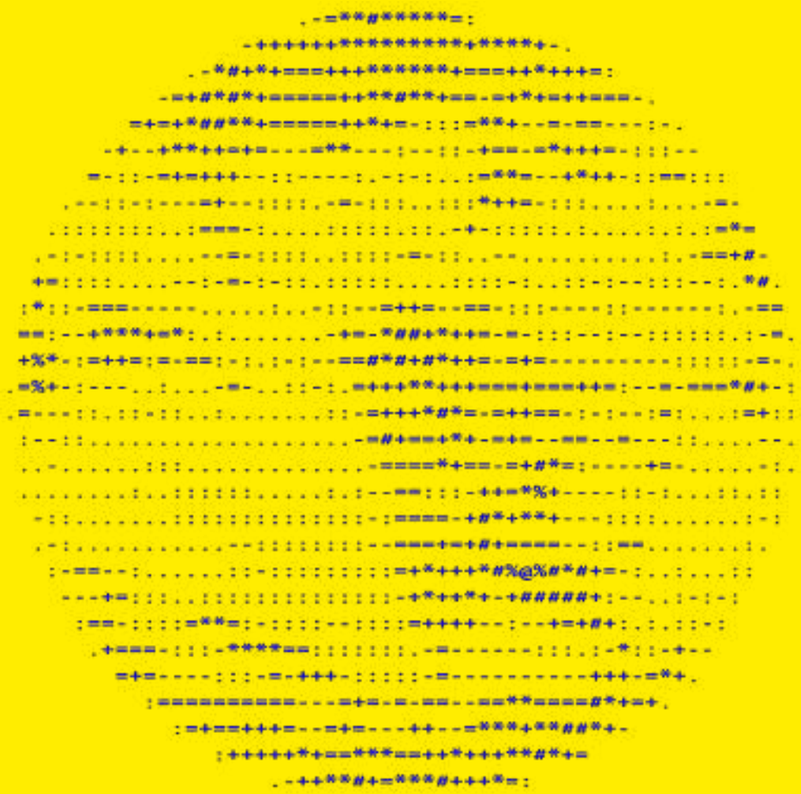
Papers, Please exemplifies the concept of "recognising how we judge sources," challenging players to assess the accuracy and trustworthiness of competing documents and authorities.

Sea of Solitude explores "emotional manipulation," as players guide a protagonist whose feelings of worthlessness and anger manifest as obstacles to be overcome, requiring self-reflection and emotional growth.

Among Us provides a window into "social bias and influence," illustrating how suspicion, group consensus, and conformity shape beliefs. Its gameplay mechanics have even served in research contexts to teach persuasion and critical group reflection (Sackett & Amoroso, 2022).

These examples show how games can embed powerful psychological lessons—empowering players to reflect on their own thinking and behaviour, and ultimately building resilience to the biases and dynamics that fuel disinformation.

Industry practicalities



The role of independent development

Independent (indie) game developers are central to driving experimentation and innovation in the game industry. Unconstrained by the commercial imperatives and risk aversion of large studios, indie teams are able to explore novel ideas—including the subtle integration of media literacy interventions and psychological insights. These studios frequently serve as creative laboratories, piloting concepts that later influence mainstream game design. Titles like Undertale, Braid, Celeste, and Papers, Please have each redefined narrative and player agency, setting new standards later adopted by larger developers. Even global successes like Minecraft and Balatro emerged from indie roots, demonstrating that small-scale experimentation can lead to widespread cultural impact.

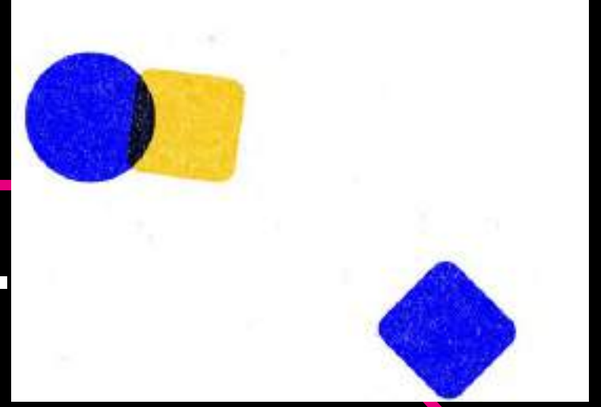
Empowering indie developers to integrate psychological insights—particularly those around (1) Recognising Bias in Judging Sources, (2) Identifying Emotional Manipulation and (3) Understanding Social Bias and Influence—holds strong potential for sector-wide adoption. This support should include targeted funding, increased visibility, and networks for sharing knowledge and best practices. By fostering these conditions, promising concepts can be nurtured and amplified across the wider games ecosystem.

Industry challenges

Game development in 2025 faces significant hurdles: market saturation, recent industry layoffs, and investor wariness following a wave of high-profile failures have all combined to make funding scarce. AAA projects, with their years-long timelines and multimillion-euro budgets, are heavily risk-averse—favouring sequels and established IP over innovative or socially-engaged concepts.

Moreover, publishers seeking commercial security are cautious about projects tackling sensitive social issues, often imposing creative constraints or declining support. Embedding psychological interventions into flagship IPs is particularly challenging without first demonstrating viability in smaller, independent releases. Public and cultural grants, while helpful, are limited and highly competitive.

The social features of many modern games also position them as key nodes in the spread of disinformation. Solutions to this aspect will require strategies akin to those developed for social media, rather than the gameplay-level interventions discussed here. Nonetheless, increasing designers' awareness of their role in the information ecosystem is a valuable step toward systemic change.



Measuring impact

A further challenge is the inherent difficulty in measuring the impact of subtle, neutral interventions. Because this approach necessitates a neutral and subtle approach, the changed awareness and behavioural changes will be hard to quantify. Additionally, the lack of overt educational content means there are few observable metrics or behavioural markers to track. The outcomes are long-term and diffuse, often influenced by external factors beyond the game. The seeking of ethical neutrality and avoidance of ideological framing, while inclusive, further complicate measurement by not aiming for specific, measurable shifts in behaviour.

That said, this design choice reflects a necessary trade-off. A more direct and explicitly educational intervention about disinformation might generate clearer and more measurable impact, but it would likely appeal to fewer players.

Conversely, a more engaging, entertaining experience that embeds these insights subtly within play may reach a broader audience, even if its effects are less pronounced or harder to measure. The On their Terms project revealed the need to find a balance between these extremes.

This can be visualised as a spectrum: at one end, games like Bad News deliver focused interventions with measurable outcomes; at the other, popular titles like Among Us model key social dynamics relevant to disinformation, but without any explicit educational framing. The learnings from this project have revealed the potential for exploring a middle ground — designing experiences that are both widely accessible and capable of fostering meaningful reflection.

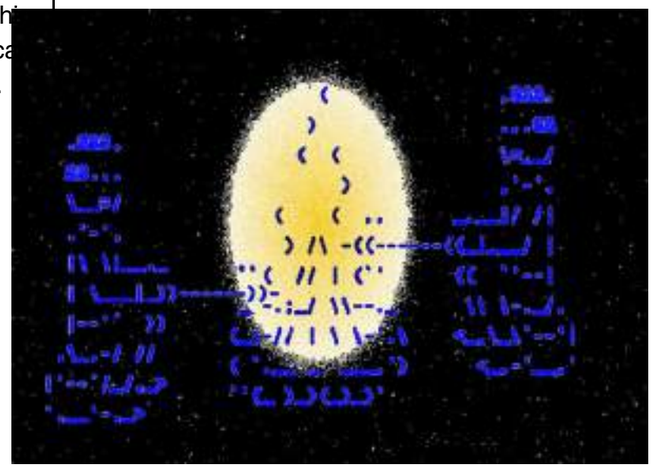
Fostering collaboration and reaching the wider ecosystem

Effective communication and collaboration remain key challenges across the sector. Early dialogue between researchers, facilitators, and developers is vital to align terminology, expectations, and objectives. Many developers express uncertainty about which approaches will resonate with broad audiences, highlighting the need for clearer guidance and practical tools. Addressing these gaps through consistent, productive dialogue will help bridge the divide between research and design—making future game-based interventions both more relevant and impactful.

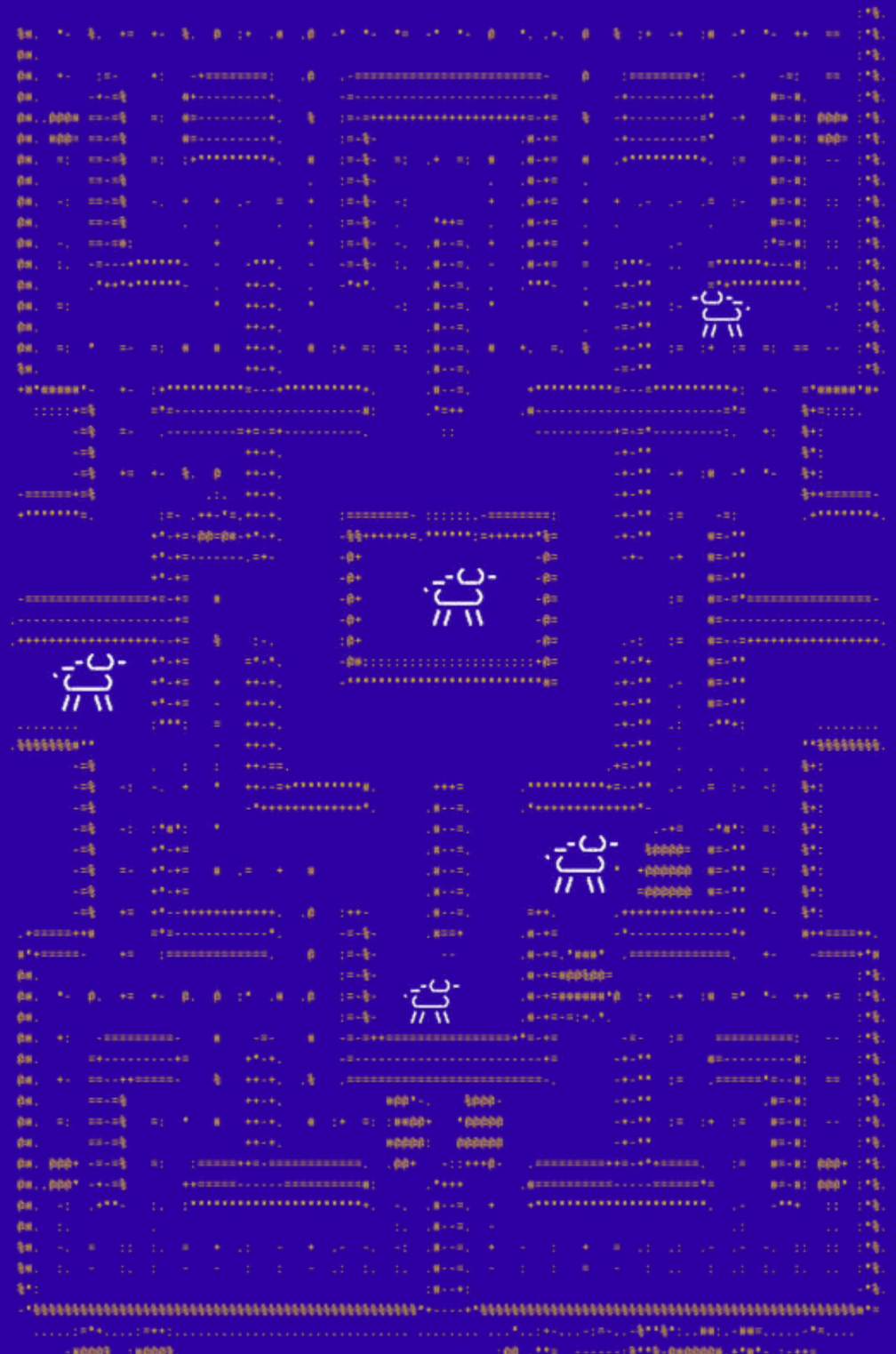
Finally, meaningful change requires situating games within their broader cultural context. Games are most effective as part of an ecosystem of engagement: not only as individual products, but as focal points for vibrant player communities and wider cultural conversations. Collaboration with industry bodies, investment in community moderation, influencer partnerships, and supporting informed discourse through streaming and exhibitions all help extend the reach of interventions. By embedding these efforts within the broader gaming culture, stakeholders can maximize both reach and real-world resonance.

“Currently, there’s a range of toxic behaviours and actions taking place within online spaces that we simply wouldn’t accept anywhere else. And this can be very disheartening, but there are a generation of games makers and players that are pushing against these trends and demanding better, and I do see parts of the games industry starting to pay attention to this. So who is responsible? Who can act? Is it the industry, the games makers, the regulators, the players?”

John O’Shea, Creative Director,
The National Videogame Museum



Conclusion and recommendations



Key recommendations

For media literacy and disinformation experts

1 Understand your audiences: Media literacy interventions are unlikely to have significant take-up unless they resonate with the audiences they are trying to reach. Equip game designers with in-depth, nuanced research about player segments—their worldviews, gaming habits, attitudes toward dis information,andperceive d needs. This ensures interventions are relevant, respectful, and resonant.

2 Promote psychological resilience as media literacy: Move beyond traditional source-checking. Support 'inoculation' or 'pre-bunking' interventions that encourage players to reflect on how beliefs, emotions, and social bias shape their understanding of information.

3 Empower independent game developers: Recognise indie developers as creative pioneers who can take risks and prototype new engagement models. Provide them with funding, visibility, and structured opportunities for knowledge-sharing, so successful innovations can spread across the industry.

4 Accept measurement challenges: Acknowledge that subtle, player-driven interventions are difficult to measure using standard metrics. Embrace the trade-off between measurable impactand broad engagement, aiming for accessible interventions that foster meaningful reflection—even if effects are diffuse.

5 Foster early and continuous collaboration: Encourage regular dialogueamong researchers, designers, funders, and industry partners from the outset. This ensures interventions are evidence-led, audience-centred, and practical for real-world implementation.

For game designers and developers

6 Ground design in robust audience research: Use evidence-based insights toshape game design choices, ensuring alignment with players' motivations, preferences, and vulnerabilities to disinformation.

7 Incorporate nuanced media literacy skills (e.g.psychological resilience): Go beyond fact-checking by embedding skills related to self-awareness, emotional regulation, and critical thinking about group dynamics. These will help inoculate players against disinformation, and lend themselves to engaging game mechanics and narratives.

8 Integrate skills directly into game design and gameplay: Thoughtfully embed the targeted skills within the core mechanics, narrative choices, and interactive systems of the game. Allow players to practice and develop these skills as an organic part of the play experience, rather than be the topic of the game. Organically weave media literacy and psychological cues into gameplay, allowing players to encounter and reflect on these lessons naturally.

9 Prioritise subtlety and player agency: Avoiddidactic orexplicit messaging, especially for audiences sceptical of traditional authority. Few people are likely to want to play a game that is explicitly about disinformation.

10 Maintain neutrality and avoid ideological framing: Ensure interventions areapolitical andethically neutral—eschewing explicit targeting of specific worldviews, and instead focusing on universal psychological processes of belief and emotions.

11 Design for broad appeal: Develop experiences accessible to all player segments by favouring familiar genres, flexible play styles, and narrative subtlety. Preserve the core appeal of gaming—fun, relaxation, and creativity.

12 Engage the wider games ecosystem: Extend the impact of interventions through collaboration with streamers, influencers, player communities, and industry bodies. Leverage social spaces and channels around games to amplify reach and foster ongoing, informed discussion.

As societies grapple with the divisive influence of disinformation, it is clear that conventional media literacy approaches are no longer sufficient—particularly for those groups least likely to trust or engage with mainstream messaging. Video games, with their wide and diverse reach, offer an underexplored avenue for building psychological literacy and critical reflection at scale.

This project has shown that game-based interventions, when grounded in audience insight and shaped by psychological principles, can avoid the pitfalls of overt didacticism while fostering genuine engagement and introspection. By focusing on how players judge sources, manage emotional responses, and relate within groups, games designers can craft experiences that naturally build resilience to manipulation, all without undermining the enjoyment and autonomy at the heart of gameplay.

By integrating these recommendations into both research and practice, games can become powerful tools for strengthening psychological resilience to disinformation. As designers and experts collaborate more closely, the sector can move beyond surface-level fixes and unlock new, creative ways to foster critical thinking and media awareness—meeting players where they are, and empowering them for the challenges of the digital age.

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Glossary

AAA games
High-budget, high-profile games produced by major studios, typically with long development cycles and large teams.

Accuracy nudge
A design intervention that prompts users to consider the truthfulness of information before accepting or sharing it.

British seven segments
A values-based segmentation of the UK population developed by More in Common, used to understand attitudes and behaviours beyond traditional demographics.

Digital ecosystem
The interconnected digital platforms, communities, and content that shape how individuals consume and share information.

Disinformation
False, inaccurate or misleading information that is deliberately created and shared to confuse or deceive and manipulate opinions.

Emotional resilience
The ability to recognize and manage emotional responses, particularly in the context of persuasive or manipulative content.

Embedded interventions
Subtle, non-intrusive educational elements integrated into gameplay rather than presented overtly.

Flow state
A mental state of deep focus and immersion, often achieved when a person's skill level is well-matched to a challenge.

Game-based interventions
The use of video games as tools to influence knowledge, attitudes, or behaviours, particularly in educational or social contexts.

Game lenses
Games can be regarded through several "lenses" when considering where to embed media literacy techniques:

Mechanics - The interactions and representational systems a game is made up of.

Aesthetics - The visual and audio components of a game.

Narrative - The story that the game is telling.

Technology - The affordances of the hardware and/or software systems that a game is running on.

Indie games
Games developed by individuals or small teams without the financial support of large publishers, often more experimental.

Inoculation theory
A psychological theory that explains how exposure to weakened counter-arguments can build resistance to persuasion, much like a medical inoculation builds resistance to disease. This theory is the inspiring force behind many existing media literacy interventions involving video games.

Lateral reading
A media literacy technique involving cross-checking information across multiple sources to verify credibility.

Manipulation tactics
Methods of influencing people's thoughts or actions in deceptive ways by exploiting emotions or biases instead of using facts. A manipulator might use emotional appeals (triggering feelings like fear or sympathy instead of evidence), present a false dilemma (pretending there are only two extreme choices when there are more options), or make an ad hominem attack (attacking someone's character instead of addressing their argument) to mislead others.

Misinformation
False or inaccurate information that is shared without intent to mislead.

Media literacy
The ability to critically engage with online information and the skills and confidence to assess its influence on thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Narrative-driven games
Games that emphasize storytelling and character development as central to the gameplay experience.

Social bias and influence
The tendency to accept information that aligns with one's social group or pre-existing beliefs.