Mistakes and Overconfidence in Detecting Lies

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates mistakes and overconfidence in detecting lies in the context of news events. Individuals display a limited ability to evaluate the truthfulness of short video clips containing either true or false news. They are however overconfident in their absolute ability, believing to correctly identify more videos than they actually do. They are also overconfident in relative terms, with the majority believing they are better at the task than the median person. Men are more overconfident than women. We connect these findings with the literature on fake news, showing that even absent motivated beliefs, individuals think they are much better at detecting lies than they actually are. Individuals were more likely to share false videos with others, and videos that were shared more often were more likely to be believed by others. These results suggest that, even without motivation to be biased, false news may spread and wrongly shape other individuals’ beliefs.