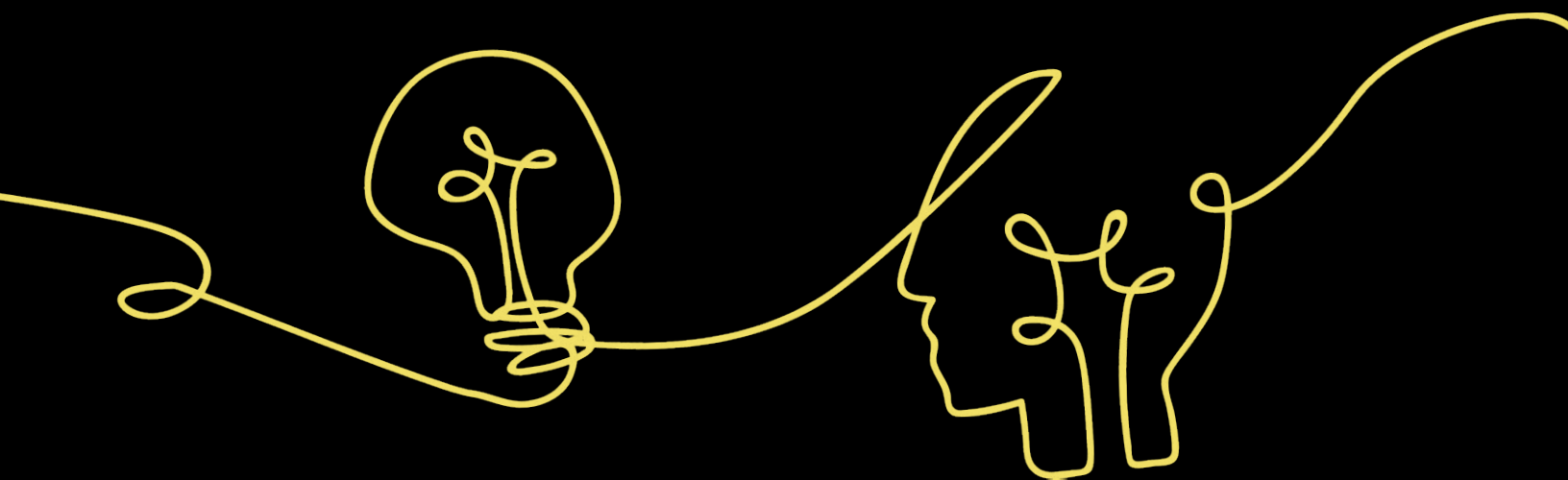


**civic
alliance**

an employer guide to AI and democracy

artificial intelligence and business



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MAKING THE CASE



As one of the most trusted institutions, according to the [2024 Edelman Trust Barometer](#), businesses have a unique opportunity – and responsibility – to amplify the importance of civic engagement. In cycles past, this might have meant equipping audiences with accurate election information and messages that inspire engagement, but with the rise of AI, the production and spread of information includes more mis- and disinformation than ever before.

A Statista survey conducted in December 2020 assessing if news consumers in the United States had ever unknowingly shared fake news or information on social media found that [38.2%](#) had done so and 7% were unsure if they had unintentionally distributed false information. Following the rise of OpenAI's ChatGPT circa the 2022 midterm elections, we expect that the group that shared mis- and disinformation to be larger. In today's hyper-connected, content-overloaded world, civic engagement means not only sharing accurate, authentic information, but also offering education on how individuals can evaluate the information that they may be exposed to inside and outside of the workplace.

The 2024 results of the American Psychiatric Association's annual mental health [poll](#) show that U.S. adults are feeling increasingly anxious, with 73% of surveyed adults saying that they feel particularly anxious about the 2024 U.S. election, [including](#) anxiety related to how AI may be positioned to shape it. Beyond the proven [statistical effect](#) of anxiety on productivity, it ultimately has the potential to decrease trust in elections overall.

The most meaningful case to be made for a business preparing itself and its audiences with information verification practices: business is not isolated from the trends of democracy. We cannot have a thriving marketplace without a thriving democracy. Companies can and must build on the momentum from the historic voter turnout in the last election cycles and scale their efforts to encourage civic participation in ways that are grounded in accuracy and building voter confidence.

“Democracy is widely believed to be necessary for the sustainability of markets that encourage investment and innovation to achieve private and social objectives.”

Columbia Business School's Center for
Business, AI, and Democracy (BAID)

WHAT'S AT STAKE: ELECTIONS LANDSCAPE

There's more at stake in 2024 than just the presidential election.

At the state level:

- 11 states will elect a governor.
- 9 states will vote for a lieutenant governor.
- 10 elections will be held for attorney general seats.
- 7 secretary of state seats are up for election.
- 164 state executive seats across 29 states will be elected.
- 85 out of the 99 legislative chambers in 44 states are holding regular legislative elections.
- 305 appellate court seats are up for election, which include:
 - 83 of the 344 seats on state supreme courts across 33 states.
 - 222 intermediate appellate court seats across 30 states.
- 156 statewide ballot measures will be on 41 states.

Civic engagement is important every year, but the stakes are particularly high in 2024 and it's not just about who is on the top of the ticket. This year there are offices on the ballot of all levels of government – offices that have a tangible impact on people's day-to-day lives.

Source: [Ballotpedia](#)

» 2024 ELECTIONS CALENDAR

We recommend referencing [Democracy Works'](#) list of [key dates and deadlines](#) that may impact your employees or customers, and confirm key election dates and deadlines as you build your communications plan.

BEST PRACTICE: Remember that in order to help voters take part, you'll want to share not just the election date, but deadlines for registering, voting by mail, and voting early. You can find this information at [TurboVote.org](#).

generative AI and elections

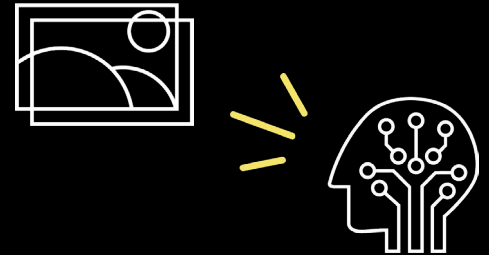
When OpenAI released ChatGPT following the 2022 midterm elections, it became clear that U.S. democracy had entered a new phase: one where generative artificial intelligence would unprecedentedly impact voters' access to voting information and their vulnerability to inauthenticity.

AI tools can be used to create and distribute convincingly **false messages**, or to discourage voters.

Other **fabricated messages from trusted voices** will likely be used to undermine voting.

AI technologies can easily be used to manufacture **fake images and false evidence of misconduct**.

Source: Shanto Iyengar, Yphtach Lelkes and Sean Westwood. (2024). [America's Political Pulse](#).



the challenge:

Artificial intelligence technology is not new, but advances in generative AI are rapidly transforming the information landscape.

With AI, production and the spread of information will include more misinformation and disinformation than ever before. Exposure to such content is already present, inside of the workplace and beyond.



Misinformation is false, or inaccurate information.



Disinformation is *deliberate* and includes *intentionally* erroneous content.

Mis- and disinformation have the power to negatively influence any voter's ballot.

the opportunity:

While there is real cause for concern in relation to the impact of AI (and resultantly mis- and disinformation) on elections, there is also a significant opportunity that employers can leverage.

As [one of the most trusted institutions](#), companies have a responsibility to make sure the information exchanged in the workplace and across its communication channels is accurate and authentic.

By educating and equipping a workforce with the skills to evaluate and verify information, companies not only ensure integrity of communication in their workplace, but create a lasting impact for employees within their greater communities.

the solution:



Promote the importance of combating mis- and disinformation in the 2024 elections.



Equip your workplace to comprehend the significance of generative AI, as well as best practices for information verification.



generative AI taxonomy and best practices

Synthetic Content Types and Examples

Generative AI uses statistical models that generalize patterns and structures of existing data to create new content. This content can range from computer code to authoring new text, to developing “synthetic content” (content that is partially or fully altered, changed) by way of video, image, audio, and text. This disinformation – intentionally false information – is most often created by bad actors.



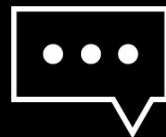
- Text-to-Video
- Deep Fake Video



- Text-to-Image
- AI-Altered Image



- Text-to-Speech
- Voice Cloning



- Text-to-Text
(Large Language Models)

verification best practices



consider the source

who’s the author? Is the author biased? Does the author cite sources? Is this a legitimate website? Is this account/website devoted to satire/parody?



read beyond the headline

many people don’t read beyond the headline on articles they share online; this matters because people sharing fake or misleading information often use clickbait headlines that distort the truth



analyze the content

analyze the content for details that seem overblown, dramatic, or lacking specific evidence; dates should be recent and primary sources should always be cited



conduct a reverse image search

if you suspect a photo is fake, reverse image searches can be a helpful way to find its original source and when it first appeared online; our partners recommend tools like [Google](#), [RevEye](#), and [TinEye](#)

AI tools and resources

test your AI detection skills



 **Microsoft** [Take the quiz](#)

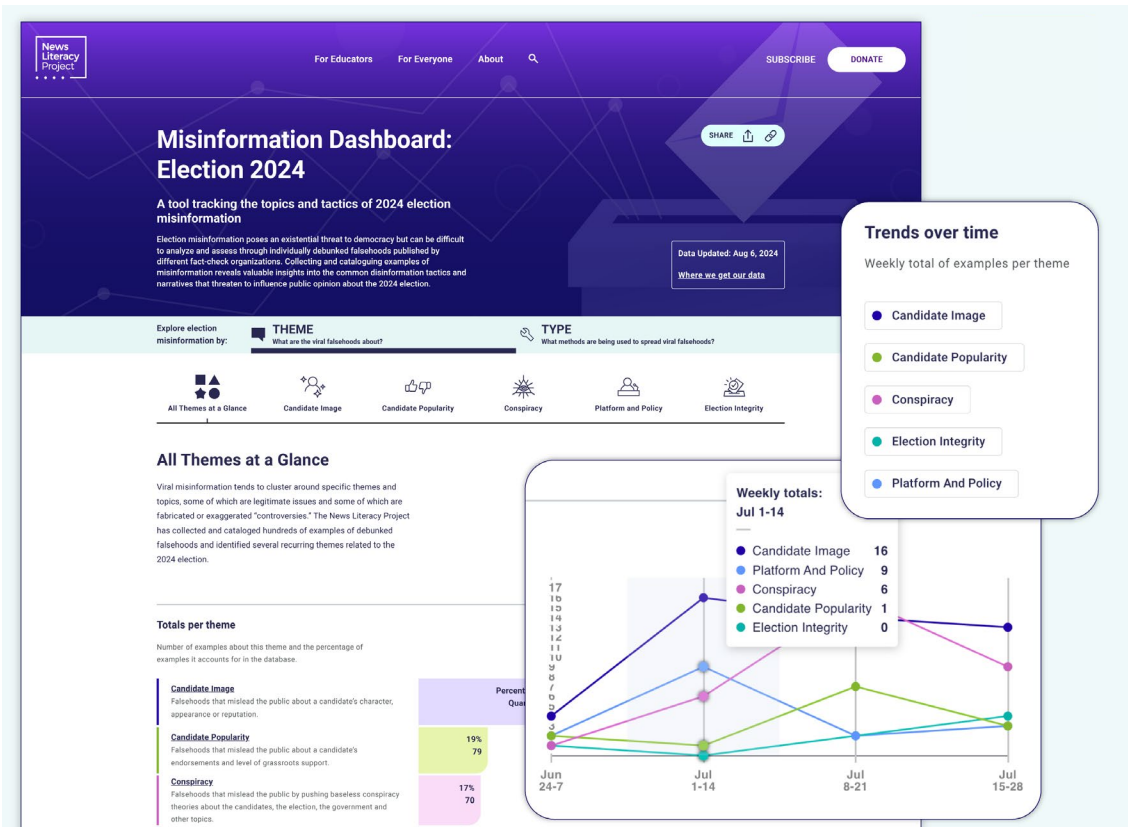
Test your AI detection skills with Microsoft’s interactive quiz

Civic Alliance member company Microsoft has designed an AI detection quiz accessible to all.

Spotting AI-manipulated images can be difficult, even for the most skilled AI experts. Try our Real or Not quiz to see just how hard it is to distinguish AI-generated images from real ones.

misinformation dashboard

Civic Alliance partner, The News Literacy Project’s (NLP) [Misinformation Dashboard: Election 2024](#) collects examples of viral election-related rumors, revealing trends and empowering people to identify and resist falsehoods.



» UNDERSTANDING MISINFORMATION

According to [American Psychological Association](#) (APA), [misinformation](#) disseminates quickly across social media and other online platforms, posing risks to individual health and threats to societal well-being.

What psychological factors make people susceptible to believe and act on misinformation? [According](#) to the APA:

People are more likely to believe misinformation if it comes from in-group sources rather than out-group ones, or if they judge the source as credible. The emotional content of misinformation plays a role as well; people are more likely to believe false statements that appeal to emotions such as fear and outrage. They are also [more likely to believe misinformation](#) that paints opponents in a negative light than they are to believe misinformation that is negative about their own in-group. Finally, people are more likely to believe repeated information, even when it contradicts their prior knowledge. These findings suggest that it is important to [stop misinformation early](#).

mis- and disinformation: what companies can do

“My employer” is the [most trusted institution](#) in the U.S., according to the Edelman Trust Barometer. What’s more, communications from employers are the most trusted form of information, more than news reports or social media feeds.

Companies can – and should – uphold this trust by being a source of truth: fact-based, accurate, nonpartisan communication about voting and democracy.

Here are 4 steps companies can take, and resources to support you:

STEP 1:

Share civic information across channels, to employees and external audiences, and on a regular basis.

- **Pro-tip:** Get accurate information into circulation early and often. The American Psychological Association [confirms](#) that repeated statements are more likely to be believed than new ones. Repetition not only reinforces the truth, but communicating across channels such as employee emails, intranet, digital signage, etc., will also help ensure no one is left out.

- **Resource:** Share [TurboVote](#), a Democracy Works tool, to help employees check their registration status and access state-by-state guidance on how to vote by mail, in person, and early. Content originates from official government sources and is reviewed by state election offices for elections at the state level and above.
- **Support:** The [Civic Alliance](#) provides companies with updated voting information, trusted partner resources and the support companies need to take civic action. [Join us](#).

STEP 2:

Teach your employees and community how to spot and debunk mis- and disinformation.

- **Resources:** The [News Literacy Project \(NLP\)](#) hosts an [archive](#) of free webinars related to the 2024 election and news literacy, as well as customizes corporate webinars on a case-by-case basis. NLP has also created public service announcements in [English and Spanish](#) designed to be easily shared on company social media channels.
 - Want to go deeper? NLP has a trove of election related resources you can share with employees or include alongside voter education materials. Some of our favorites: infographics [“6 things to know about AI”](#) and [“Is it legit? Five steps for vetting a news source”](#) well as [RumorGuard](#), their website tracking viral rumors and the truth behind them.

Case Study:

Target



During the midterm elections, Target worked with its civic-focused employee resource group, Citizens@Target, and nonpartisan nonprofit News Literacy Project to help employees understand bias, spot misinformation, and more.

Together, Target and News Literacy Project hosted an event on creating informed and engaged participants in a healthy democracy, and provided follow-up resources on Target's intranet. Focusing on news literacy as a civic engagement skill allowed Target to build its civic programming while importantly maintaining its nonpartisan stance.

STEP 3:

Partner with organizations protecting vulnerable communities from mis- and disinformation

- **Resource:** [Defiende la Verdad](#) (“Defend the Truth”) is a new campaign from the NALEO Educational Fund to monitor and report mis- and disinformation that targets Latino voters. Join their social media monitoring program or host a briefing for your community, staff, or constituents by filling out this [form](#).
- **Resource:** [APIA Vote](#) publishes a biweekly disinformation report on issues related to democracy and the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. The organization also catalogs narratives that originate from AAPI spaces and shares with national partners in order to promote factual information for AAPI voters. Email media@apiavote.org for more information.
- **Organization:** [Black Girls Vote](#) is a nonpartisan organization designed to represent the concerns and interests of Black women. They are invested in ensuring that Black women are empowered to advance education, economic development, quality health care, and improve outcomes. Sign up for their newsletter or reach out to contact them for one of your events by using this [link](#).

STEP 4:

Support civic education to strengthen democracy in the next generation.

- **Resource:** The [Civics at Work](#) initiative of the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) organizes business leaders to advocate for reinvigorating civics education to strengthen democracy and enhance [national security](#).



The equivalent of taking 20 seconds and washing your hands is very much the same in the information space. If everyone can **take 20 seconds, investigate the source, do a quick Google search, stay skeptical**, we can eliminate a great deal of the confusion and misinformation out there.



Peter Adams
Senior Vice President of Research and Design

sample email for employees about AI awareness and resources



Subject: Combatting mis- and disinformation at {{ COMPANY }}

Dear Colleagues,

With the election coming up we want to remind you of our {{ COMPANY CIVIC POLICY, PROGRAMMING }}. Civic engagement is crucial every year, but the stakes are especially high in 2024. It's not just about who is at the top of the ticket. This year, there are offices on the ballot of all levels of government – offices that have a tangible impact on people's day-to-day lives. Mis- and disinformation can impact the information people receive, how they consume it, and talk about it with others. This impacts everything and right now, could impact voting. Misinformation is false, or inaccurate information. Disinformation is deliberate and includes intentionally erroneous content. We all have the responsibility to continually evaluate information for accuracy and authenticity.

Levels of mis- and disinformation will be higher this year than ever before; as you're getting ready to vote, we advise these best practices for you and via {{ COMPANY }} channels.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important initiative.

Best,

[NAME]

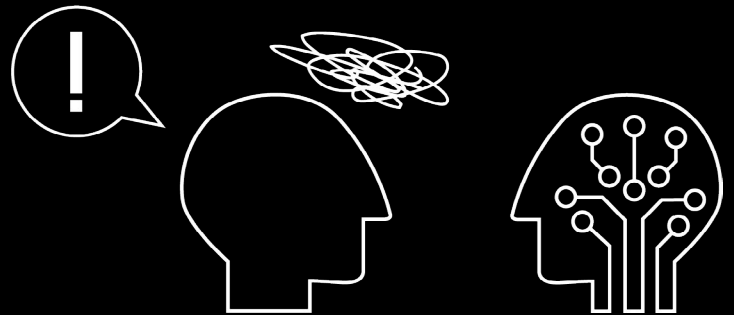
- **Consider the source.** Who is the author? Is there a possibility the author or media outlet is biased? Does the author cite sources and if so, do those links track as valid, to other valid, unbiased sources? Is the account/website based on satire or parody?
- **Analyze the content.** Evaluate any details that may seem overblown, dramatic, or lacking specific, cited evidence.
- **Read beyond the headline.** 70% of people don't read beyond the headline on articles they share, according to Emily Bell, founding director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University.. This matters because bad actors are often relying on clickbait headlines that distort the truth, or don't tell the whole story.
- **Conduct a reverse image search.** Reverse image searches can be used to find an image's original source and when it first appeared online. We recommend Google Images, the browser extension RevEye, or the website TinEye.
- **Play a game.** According to the American Psychological Association, while people can still handwave away fact-checking that doesn't match their worldview, psychologists have found that it's possible to inoculate yourself against misinformation with gamification.
 - Diagnoses your fact-checking skills with quizzes like the News Literacy Project's [news literacy quiz](#) and Microsoft's [AI detection quiz](#)
 - The online game [Bad News](#) puts players in the role of a fake-news tycoon, teaching the tricks of the disinformation trade along the way. Research has shown that players become [more adept at spotting and resisting misinformation](#) after completing the game.

AI anxiety and elections

The current presidential election is having an effect on the mental health of Americans and that's according to recent surveys conducted before the attempt on one candidate's life and widespread calls for another to drop out of the race.

In a poll by the [American Psychiatric Association](#), nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents said they're feeling anxious about the election. [Another poll by Myriad Genetics](#) found that nearly 40% said they are feeling anxious and/or depressed about the election season. [Research conducted by North Carolina State University](#) even finds that simply anticipating stress related to an election causes negative side effects.

Along with the more typical anxiety related to elections, AI panic is a term used to describe the feelings of fear, concern, and worry that some people experience when thinking about artificial intelligence and its impact on society, jobs, and personal privacy. Negative feelings about how the result of the election will affect lives and society, can even lead to symptoms that some mental health professionals have [termed](#) **"election stress disorder."**





the challenge:

Employee stress can [lead](#) to a toxic work culture, plagued by low morale, lack of motivation, increased absenteeism, and higher healthcare costs. Beyond the environmental effects, it affects a company's bottom line. Research [indicates](#) a direct correlation between stress levels and financial losses.

the opportunity:

There's no avoiding the possible mental health impacts that the election can have on employees, but methods and strategies do exist for organizations to mitigate the stressors that usually accompany election cycles.

the solution:

-  Enhance your audience's understanding of AI panic and how to resultantly navigate election anxiety.
-  Equip and support your workplace with key resources to bolster mental health related to the 2024 elections.

resources for how companies can alleviate anxiety

The period leading up to election day can evoke a range of emotions, as nonstop media coverage at home, in the workplace, or on social media can adversely affect our mental health. Employers cannot ignore the mental health implications elections may have on their employees. Organizations can take crucial steps to foster psychologically safe environments.

Civic Alliance member, [Headspace](#), shares five actionable strategies employers can adopt to help employees alleviate election anxiety. Along with these strategies, Headspace's "[Election Season Survival Guide](#)" provides a litany of resources designed to help keep employees present and productive during this time.



Headspace's "five ways that employers can combat election anxiety":

1. Encourage your employees to vote.

An election can make us feel like we have little control and minimal say in our future. Encourage your employees to take what control they do have in the election by helping them to make a plan to vote. Advise your employees to get registered to vote and help them identify their polling location. You can find this information at [TurboVote.org](#).

2. Enable your employees to get involved.

Involvement in the political process can help employees feel like they have more control over the outcome. A [study](#) found that "participation is a resource that alleviates psychological distress." The bottom line: action can reduce your anxiety. Consider giving your employees time off, or flexibility in hours, to vote on or before Election Day. We also recommend encouraging your employees to volunteer to be a poll worker, or to help others to register to vote. *Civic Alliance can support you in these efforts and/or in finding partner organizations to team with.*

3. Advise your employees to unplug when they can.

As we approach election day, media coverage and discussions about politics will intensify. Understand that you and your employees do not have to constantly tune into the conversation and political commentary. Acknowledge that employees can unplug occasionally from the platforms where discussion of the election will be loudest: social media, email, television, and radio.

4. Provide access to mental health support

The lead-up to the election can be really stressful for many. It's important that employees have the resources to navigate these emotions and feel supported. Employers that provide mental health support – from therapy and psychiatry to on-demand mindfulness and self-care content – can help their employees process difficult feelings. Mindfulness and meditation are proven ways to minimize the impact of stressors, physically and mentally. Explore Headspace's free [Election Survival Season Toolkit](#), which includes election stress persona quizzes, a series of meditations, and video exercises.

If you find that employees are continuing to feel the effects of the upcoming election, advise them to reach out to a mental health professional or counseling service. Meeting with a mental health coach or clinician can help remind your employees that they're not alone in their anxiety over the election and help them map out a plan to lessen anxiety.



5. Foster a psychologically safe work environment

In a workplace, difficult conversations can occur in the employee base. Employees and their managers should feel psychological safety in the workplace and should be able to participate in respectful discourse about business strategy and tactics. The Civic Alliance resource [Politics + Polarization in the Workplace: An Employer Guide to Bridge Building](#) was put out for exactly such mediation, should you like a deeper dive.

Leaders should also create a workplace culture that promotes safety and trust – encouraging difficult conversations to take place respectfully. A proven way to promote this kind of environment is to model this kind of behavior from leadership.

sample email for employees about election anxiety

Subject: Resources from {{COMPANY}} to navigate the 2024 elections

Dear Colleagues,

Voting is one of our fundamental rights to make our voices known. Though it may seem like having this opportunity would inspire positivity, empowerment, and confidence, that's not always the result.

Election anxiety can be managed, with the right resources.

We are advising the following best practices for coping with any challenging feelings related to the election or political conversations as we approach Election Day.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important initiative.

Best,

[NAME]

- **VOTE.** There's a lot we can't predict or control related to the election, but everyone can develop a voting plan ahead of time. Visit [TurboVote](#) to learn how, when, and where you can vote, before or on Election Day.
- **GET INVOLVED.** Involvement in the political process can help you feel like you have confidence in the democratic process. [Volunteer to be a poll worker](#) or speak with our HR team about other ways you can volunteer to help get out the vote.
- **GIVE YOURSELF SPACE FOR SELF-CARE AND MEDITATION.** The lead-up to the election can be stressful for many. Mindfulness and meditation are proven ways to minimize the impact of stressors, physically and mentally. Explore Headspace's free [Election Survival Season Toolkit](#), which includes election stress persona quizzes, targeted meditations, and video exercises.
- **UNPLUG WHEN YOU CAN.** As we approach Election Day, media coverage and discussions about politics will intensify. Understand that you do not have to constantly tune into the conversation and political commentary. Unplug occasionally from the platforms where discussion of the election will be loudest: social media, email, television, and radio. Complimentary apps like Freedom, AppBlock, and Flipd can help you set fixed windows to disconnect.
- **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.** Reach out to a mental health professional or counseling service, [\[OUR MENTAL HEALTH OFFERINGS ARE OUTLINED HERE\]](#). Meeting with a mental health coach or clinician can help remind you that you're not alone in your anxiety over the election, and they can help you build a plan to manage anxiety moving forward.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



AI panic

is anxiety about how we and others evaluate, or don't evaluate at all, information for accuracy and authenticity



artificial intelligence (AI)

is a branch of computer science that uses algorithms, data, and computational power to create machines that can perform tasks that usually require human intelligence



deepfakes

are fraudulent content—typically audio or video—that have been manipulated or created using artificial intelligence; this content replaces a real person's voice, image, or both with similar looking and sounding artificial likenesses



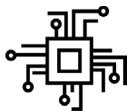
disinformation

is information which includes intentionally erroneous content



election stress disorder, or election anxiety,

is a variation of negative, or stressful, feelings about how the result of the election will affect lives and society



generative AI

uses statistical models that generalize patterns and structures of existing data to create new content



large language models (LLMs)

are machine learning models that can comprehend and generate human language text



machine learning models

are programs that can use a previously unseen dataset to make decisions or find patterns



misinformation

is false, or inaccurate information



synthetic content

is AI-generated content that is partially or fully altered or changed

acknowledgements and key contributors

This guide was made in partnership with The News Literacy Project, Microsoft, and Headspace. For a direct introduction to any of the our partners or member companies below, please reach out to concierge@civicalliance.com.



The News Literacy Project is a nonpartisan education nonprofit that provides educators with training and resources to help students develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to critically evaluate the credibility of news and other information in their daily lives.

The News Literacy Project provides corporate training sessions on a case-by-case basis to educate employees on core topics of news literacy, such as understanding news media bias and avoiding election misinformation.



Microsoft is a multinational technology company that provides a wide range of products and services, including software, hardware, and online services. Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.



Headspace's mission is to provide every person access to lifelong mental health support. Through evidence-based meditation and mindfulness tools, mental health coaching, therapy, psychiatry, Headspace helps you create life-changing habits to support your mental health and find a healthier, happier you.

civic alliance

The Civic Alliance is America's premier nonpartisan coalition of businesses united by a commitment to our democracy, which we believe depends upon active participation in safe, accessible, and trusted elections. Founded by Democracy Works and the CAA Foundation, the Civic Alliance supports its member companies as they inspire their employees and consumers to engage in civic life and their communities.

Companies join the Civic Alliance by making a nonpartisan pledge to encourage their employees and/or consumers to vote and be civically active. There is no financial requirement to become a member. In exchange for your commitment to civic engagement, we provide member companies with research-backed toolkits and programming to help you develop effective civic initiatives.

The Civic Alliance
was founded by:



**Take the pledge and become a
member at civicalliance.com**

