

## **Concerns with WhatsApp Fake News**

### **What is the issue?**

\n\n

During fragile situations in India WhatsApp is being used as a tool to spread fake news.

\n\n

### **What are the reliable features of WhatsApp?**

\n\n

\n

- WhatsApp messages are encrypted end-to-end, a feature that is great from the perspective of privacy of users.

\n

- It ensures only sender and receiver can read and see what is sent, and nobody in between.

\n

- This feature helps messages, photos, videos, voice messages, documents, status updates etc. from falling into the wrong hands.

\n

- In India number of monthly active WhatsApp users in February 2017 was 200 million which was exponentially greater from August 2013, when it was just 20 million.

\n

- The messaging application is being used more and more by rural and older populations, who are often new to the internet and less tech-savvy.

\n

\n\n

### **How WhatsApp is being misused in India?**

\n\n

\n

- The problem of fake news and misinformation being spread via WhatsApp is not exclusive to India, It has become a trend across the globe.

\n

- During emergency situations like protests, communal violence, disasters

etc. WhatsApp is most widely used as a medium to spread rumours about the incident.

\n

\n\n

\n

- It is also being used by political parties in favour of them and for spreading anti-religious sentiments.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the challenges in containing WhatsApp fake news?**

\n\n

\n

- WhatsApp works in a way that is fundamentally different from Facebook and Twitter.

\n

- In the latter, it is comparatively easier to check fake news and prevent the spread of misinformation.

\n

- Posts on Facebook can be viewed by the friends of a user, since WhatsApp messages are encrypted end-to-end it is impossible to locate the origin of the message source.

\n

- Fake news messages are mostly shared on groups, where one might not have the contact of the person who has shared the message saved on phone.

\n

\n\n

### **What measures can be taken?**

\n\n

\n

- As of now there is no apparent solution or even a proper diagnosis of the problem which WhatsApp poses for law enforcement agencies, and society at large.

\n

- The spread of fake news through WhatsApp is something that cannot be controlled directly, this puts the responsibility of stopping the spread of misinformation on citizens and the media.

\n

- People need to be told that messages on WhatsApp can be dangerous and false information can be spread by people looking to create trouble.

\n

- Public figures and authorities need to stop sharing messages they receive on WhatsApp.

\n

- From its part the messaging app should also issue disclaimers stating that messages can be false.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Indian Express**

\n

