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Trends in exposure to fringe and radical content and groups online

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Abstract

This report builds on earlier research by the Australian Institute of Criminology and provides an updated national picture of exposure to fringe and radical content and groups among a large sample of online Australians. Results from a survey of 9,951 respondents conducted in late 2024 were compared with the results of a similar survey conducted in late 2022. A significant number of online Australians were exposed to fringe and radical content online in 2024. Results showed that the rate of exposure to fringe and radical content and groups was lower than in 2022, as was the proportion of people who intentionally sought out the content. However, even accounting for methodological changes, respondents were much more likely to say they had seen content depicting, describing or advocating for violence and content calling for violent action. Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content did so more frequently and persistently in 2024 than in 2022. Algorithmic suggestions from social media platforms played an increasingly important role in first time and repeated exposure in 2024. Content that described, depicted and advocated violence was most likely to be viewed on Facebook, YouTube and X, but the likelihood of seeing this content varied depending on the frequency of platform use and intent of the user. Our report shows that fringe and radical content remains readily available on mainstream social media platforms and that Australian internet users are regularly exposed to violent content.

Executive summary

This is the first report from the 2024 survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia, which was conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in November 2024. We recruited 9,951 online Australian adults and asked them a range of questions related to their vulnerability to radicalisation, including their online behaviour. We repeated many of the same questions from the previous survey, which was conducted in November 2022 ($n=13,302$). This report focuses on exposure to fringe and radical content and groups, especially intentional access to violent content and participation in online groups, and compares results from the two surveys to measure changes over time.

Exposure to fringe and radical content online

In 2024, around one-third of respondents—34.6 percent—said they had viewed fringe and radical content online in the 12 months before the survey. Of those respondents, 15.4 percent (5.3% of all respondents) said they had intentionally viewed the content, and almost one in 10 (9.3%) shared the content with another person. The most common type of fringe and radical content viewed online was conspiracy theories, followed by extreme far-right political content promoting hatred and advocating for violence. These were closely followed by religious extremist material, hate speech and extreme far-left political content.

‘Fringe and radical content’ refers to online content that a person describes as being political, ideological or religious in nature that they believe mainstream society and/or the government might describe as fringe, unorthodox or radical.

We then compared responses from the 2022 and 2024 surveys, using a methodology that adjusted for differences between the samples in each year. The prevalence of having viewed fringe and radical content online was 6.5 percentage points lower in 2024 than in 2022. The proportion of respondents who said they had viewed the content and that it was intentional was also lower in 2024.



The rate of exposure to fringe and radical content was lower in 2024 than it was in 2022. The proportion of people who intentionally sought out and viewed the content was also lower.

‘Violent content’ refers to any fringe and radical content that described, depicted or advocated for violence.

Content describing, depicting or advocating violence

The type of fringe and radical content that people see online is important. We made several changes to the 2024 survey, including to the way we measured exposure to violence. This meant that we were more likely to capture exposure to violent content than we were previously.

Among those who had seen fringe and radical content online, four in five respondents to the 2024 survey—27.7 percent of all respondents to the survey—said that it had described, depicted or advocated violence. Three-quarters of respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online—4.1 percent of the entire sample—said that it contained violence. The likelihood of intentionally viewing violent fringe and radical content online was highest among middle-aged male respondents aged 50 to 64 years; however, young adults aged 18 to 24 were the least likely to say that they had not intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content, because a significant minority did not respond to the question.

Respondents were most likely to have seen violent fringe and radical content on Facebook, YouTube or X, followed by Instagram, Reddit and TikTok. (Note that Twitter officially rebranded as X on 23 July 2023. This report refers to X throughout.) However, the likelihood of observing violent fringe and radical content on each platform depended on how frequently it was used and the intent of the user. For those respondents who said they were a frequent (at least weekly) user of a platform, 8kun, X and 4chan were the platforms on which viewing violent content was most common.

Respondents who intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content were much more likely than respondents who did not intentionally view it to view violent content on YouTube and less likely to view it on Facebook and TikTok. This suggests that exposure to violent content was mostly unintended exposure on Facebook and TikTok, whereas respondents viewing the content on YouTube were more likely to be actively seeking it out.

The changes to the way we asked about exposure to violence mean we are cautious when comparing the results from the 2022 and 2024 surveys. However, while respondents were less likely to view fringe and radical content in 2024 than in 2022, the likelihood that the content described, depicted or advocated violence was much higher. Overall, 27.5 percent of respondents in 2024 said they had seen violent fringe and radical content online, compared with 12.0 percent in 2022. More importantly, there were nearly twice as many respondents who said they had intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content online (4.0% vs 2.7%).

Some of this difference can be explained by methodological changes. However, we also observed a twofold increase in the proportion of respondents who said they viewed content that involved a call to violence.



The prevalence of exposure to fringe and radical content depicting, describing or advocating for violence was substantially higher in 2024 than it was in 2022, although some of this can be explained by methodological changes. Mainstream social media platforms—Facebook, YouTube or X—continue to be the most common source of fringe and radical content online.

Sharing fringe and radical content

Consistent with overall trends in exposure to fringe and radical content online, respondents to the 2024 survey who had seen fringe and radical content online were less likely to share it, but there was no difference among those respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content (30.5% in 2024 vs 32.5% in 2022). This might be explained by the fact that, while respondents in 2024 were less likely to say that their immediate family had accessed fringe and radical content online, the prevalence of exposure among friends had not changed.

While we could not directly compare responses from the two surveys in terms of the platforms used to share fringe and radical content, Facebook and Messenger continue to be the platforms that most respondents use to share content with other internet users.

Frequency of and pathway to exposure

There were several important changes in the frequency of exposure to fringe and radical content online, as well as the pathways to exposure. Respondents to the 2024 survey who said they had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online in the 12 months before the survey were more likely than respondents to the 2022 survey to say they were viewing that content on a daily basis (24.9% vs 15.3%). A higher proportion of respondents were persistent consumers of fringe and radical content—respondents who said they had first viewed fringe and radical content online more than a year before the survey (52.0% vs 43.9%). Further analysis revealed that the apparent increase in frequent (daily) viewing of fringe and radical content was largely due to these more persistent users.

Asked how they first encountered fringe and radical content online, a much higher proportion of respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online said that the first time they accessed the content was when it was suggested to them by a social media platform or website (14.7% vs 2.4%). The role of algorithms was also apparent on the most recent occasion, with one in 10 respondents in 2024 saying they accessed the content because it appeared in their social media or news (compared with 6.8% in 2022).

Access to fringe and radical groups

Around one in 10 respondents to the survey had encountered a group online that promoted fringe and radical views, and one in six respondents who encountered a group online went on to join that group. Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content and who joined a fringe and radical group were much more likely to share that content with other internet users, highlighting the important role that these groups play in brokering fringe and radical content online.

Fewer respondents encountered, intentionally accessed or joined a fringe and radical group in 2024 than in 2022. The propensity of respondents to join a fringe and radical group they had encountered online was also lower in 2024; however, this did not apply to respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online, who continued to join fringe and radical groups at a similar rate to 2022.

There was no difference between the surveys in how often respondents were accessing the groups that they had joined or how likely they were to invite other people to join a group. Respondents to the 2024 survey were much more likely to say they had accessed these groups more than a year before the survey.

‘Fringe and radical group’ refers to online groups, communities, servers, clubs or forums that mainstream society or the government might describe as fringe or radical.

‘Joining a group’ includes becoming a member, opening an account, participating in or following these groups.

Introduction

In late 2022, the AIC surveyed more than 13,000 online Australian adults to explore their exposure to fringe and radical content and groups online and their political, ideological and conspiratorial beliefs. The Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia included questions designed to measure radicalised attitudes and intentions. It measured risk and protective factors that are known to be associated with a person's vulnerability to radicalisation (Wolffowicz et al. 2021). This survey has informed research into topics including the vulnerability to radicalisation among anti-authority protesters (Morgan, Cubitt & Voce 2024) and exposure to fringe and radical content online (Cubitt & Morgan 2024).

The Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia was repeated in November 2024. The aim of repeating the survey was to measure the extent of—and any changes to—online behaviours and changes in the ways radical content, groups and misinformation are accessed and shared online. This report provides an overview of the main findings about exposure to fringe and radical content, including any changes that were observed between the 2022 and 2024 surveys.

Box 1: What do we mean by ‘fringe and radical content’?

This report refers to fringe and radical content and groups. We relied on respondents to define whether the content or groups they had viewed were fringe and radical. But we set clear parameters for what we meant by this.

Respondents were asked whether, in the last 12 months, they had seen **political, ideological or religious content** online that **mainstream society or the government might describe as fringe, unorthodox or radical**. This included online messages, posts or discussions; videos they had watched, shared on bulletin boards or attached to text or email messages (excluding fictional films); and books, magazines, articles or other written material, downloaded to print or received attached to a message such as an email. This latter category included fringe and radical content in the form of political or religious content such as speeches, sermons, manifestos, policies, ideas or information designed to influence respondents’ views on world events towards an identifiable ideology or issue.

If they answered yes to this question, they were asked a series of follow-up questions about the type of content they had viewed, whether it described, depicted or advocated violence, whether they had viewed it intentionally and whether they had shared that content with other internet users. We also asked questions about where they had seen the content and where they had shared it.

Finally, the survey included a question about whether they had participated in **online groups, communities, servers, clubs or forums that mainstream society or the government might describe as fringe and radical**.

There are advantages and disadvantages to relying on respondents to assess whether the content they had accessed was fringe, unorthodox or radical. Respondents may have had different ideas about whether certain content or groups were fringe and radical; it is a subjective assessment, probably linked to their own views around what constitutes mainstream content or the behaviour of most people online. Relying on respondents to define the content made it possible to measure self-reported exposure without collecting information about the content and making our own assessment on whether that content met a pre-determined definition of fringe and radical.

Radicalisation and the online environment

We now know that the internet plays an increasingly important role in the radicalisation of at-risk individuals and as a mechanism through which extremists communicate, plan attacks, raise funds and distribute propaganda (Wolbers et al. 2023). Wolbers and colleagues (2023) showed that exposure to extremist content online and engagement with other violent extremists using the internet are associated with violent extremist attitudes and behaviours, citing studies showing that as many as 60 percent of violent extremist offenders either radicalise primarily online or have significant online influences in their radicalisation. According to recent UK data, that figure may be as high as 90 percent (Kenyon, Binder & Baker-Beall 2022).

In 2022, the AIC conducted the first Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia. It showed that 40.6 percent of respondents had been exposed to fringe and radical content. Almost one in four respondents (23.2%) who had viewed the content had done so intentionally, and 29.9 percent said it had depicted violence. The content was often accessed through online posts and messages, with mainstream social media and messaging platforms most frequently used to share the content. Respondents who viewed the content often reported being a member of an online group promoting fringe and radical content, a factor associated with increased sharing behaviours.

There is growing concern about the widespread availability of, and exposure to, this content among Australian internet users. It is reaching members of the community who might otherwise never be exposed to such ideas, messages and influences. While the drivers of extremist violence are complex, material that is shared online and the communities that share it can shape people's ideologies in ways that might lead them not only to hold radical beliefs but to ultimately act violently because of those beliefs. The speed with which this information can spread, and the reach that it has, makes it increasingly difficult for national security agencies to intervene. There have been numerous examples, especially involving young Australians, where the influence of online content has become apparent after a planned, attempted or completed act of violence (Australian Federal Police 2024).

There are several mechanisms through which exposure to fringe and radical content and groups may influence a person who is vulnerable to radicalisation. Exposure to fringe and radical content, especially content promoting hatred and violence, can:

- shape and reinforce the perceived legitimacy of certain ideologies and encourage violence in support of an ideology;
- demonise or dehumanise certain individuals or groups and amplify group polarisation; and
- desensitise people to extreme acts of violence and arouse or activate aggressive cognitive thought processes (Mølmen & Ravndal 2021; Wolbers et al. 2023; Wolfowicz, Hasisi & Weisburd 2022).

Interacting with other online users in groups that promote fringe and radical content can also be influential. These groups can:

- foster connections with other like-minded people by bridging geographical distances;
- build echo chambers, in which group members are repeatedly exposed to information and opinions that align with, and reinforce, their own ideology and where dissenting or opposing opinions are rejected; and
- foster attachment to a larger online community and allow a person to act anonymously and distance themselves from a sense of moral responsibility (Mølmen & Ravndal 2021; Wolbers et al. 2023).

Research has shown that active (intentional) exposure to, and engagement with, extremist actors and extreme content online is associated with an increased risk of radicalisation (Frissen 2021; Gill et al. 2017; Hassan et al. 2018). This includes attitudes that support violent extremism and a higher likelihood of radical behaviours (Wolfowicz et al. 2021; Wolfowicz, Hasisi & Weisburd 2022). The effect is relatively small but forms part of the interaction of individual propensity, situational factors and exposure to extremist ideologies that can shape someone's vulnerability to cognitive or behavioural radicalisation (Bouhana 2019; Clemmow et al. 2023)

New Australian research has shown that, after researchers controlled for the presence of other risk and protective factors for cognitive and behavioural radicalisation, respondents who intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content and who accessed or were members of online groups promoting fringe and radical content were more likely to support extremist violence (Morgan forthcoming). The effect was largest for those respondents who exhibited a higher number of other known risk factors for radicalisation. That study concluded that, while exposure will not inevitably lead to extremist violence, measures that can prevent, reduce or counteract the attraction and effects of fringe and radical content online are an important feature of efforts to counter violent extremism in people who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

The 2022 survey was conducted in the period immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic—a period in which the spread of misinformation, disinformation and conspiratorial narratives was rampant (Waldek, Droogan & Ballsun-Stanton 2021), and there was a rise in anti-government sentiment (Khalil & Roose 2023). Understanding whether exposure to this content has persisted in the years that followed, and whether the online behaviour of people who are engaging with this content and groups has persisted, desisted or evolved in some way, has important implications both for shaping the radicalisation threat environment and for determining how best to deal with the influence of the online environment.

Box 2: What is covered in this report?

The report is divided into two main sections. The first half of the report describes the results from our analysis of exposure to fringe and radical content in 2024. This includes whether respondents had seen fringe and radical content and, if so, had done so intentionally; the type of content that they had viewed; where it was seen; and whether respondents had shared the content with other internet users. We also report on whether respondents had encountered or joined fringe and radical online groups.

The second half of the report compares the results of the 2024 survey with the results from the 2022 survey. This includes overall changes in exposure to fringe and radical content, changes in exposure to violence and changes in participation in fringe and radical groups. We focus on these metrics because research shows the importance of active (intentional) exposure to violent fringe and radical content and participation in online communities promoting extreme content and ideas in shaping a person's vulnerability to radicalisation.

Method

The AIC developed the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia through extensive consultation with national security agencies. It includes questions about respondents' sociodemographic characteristics; online activity; access to, and engagement with, fringe and radical content and groups online; and their political, ideological and conspiratorial beliefs.

Recruitment, sampling and weighting

Roy Morgan Research conducted the survey between 7 October and 7 November 2024, using its Single Source panel and panels managed by PureProfile and Octopus Surveys. The survey was sent to members of these online panels who were aged 18 years and over and who had voluntarily joined the panel to receive incentives in exchange for completing surveys.

Proportional quota sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used to ensure that the sample was broadly reflective of the spread of people living in Australia. Quotas were based on the Australian adult population stratified by age and usual place of residence, derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population data (ABS 2024b). Participants were first recruited from Roy Morgan's Single Source survey panel, which comprises individuals recruited through a rigorous clustersampled, face-to-face survey approach. The raw completion rate for this survey was 6.1 percent, while 62 percent of respondents who started the survey and were eligible to participate in the research went on to complete it.

The survey took an average of 32.4 minutes to complete. The data were subsequently weighted by age, gender and usual place of residence to ensure they were representative of the spread of the Australian population. Additional random iterative method weights (calculated from Roy Morgan's Single Source survey) were applied to account for differences between online panels in education levels and social media use. All results presented in this report are based on weighted data. The final sample size was 9,951 respondents. The characteristics of the sample are presented in *Appendix A*, and concordance between sample characteristics and the general Australian population is in *Appendix B*.

Analysis

There are two major components to our analysis of the survey data. Firstly, we describe the results from the 2024 survey. When we compare groups of respondents, we use chi-square tests of independence unless otherwise stated. Because this research analyses survey data, the Pearson χ^2 statistic is corrected and converted into an F statistic. A statistically significant result means that the observed distribution between categories was not the same as the expected distribution. The threshold for statistical significance was $p < 0.05$, which is the same as saying that there was a less than five percent probability that the observed result occurred by chance. Statistically significant relationships between two variables are marked in tables and charts by an asterisk (*). Occasionally, we refer to differences that fall just below this threshold, where we believe them to be meaningful.

Secondly, we compare the results from the 2022 and 2024 surveys. We used the same online panels and recruitment method in 2024 that we used in 2022; however, we recruited an entirely new sample of respondents (ie nobody in the main sample completed both the 2022 and 2024 surveys). Because we used a non-probability sampling method to compare responses from the 2022 and 2024 surveys, we needed to make some corrections to account for differences between the samples. There were small but (given the sample size) statistically significant differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents in 2022 and 2024, including in respondents' usual place of residence, gender, First Nations status, LGB+ status, highest level of education, whether they most often spoke a language other than English at home, current employment and level of income.

To account for these differences, we approached our analysis in two stages. When we compared the results for the entire sample of respondents in 2022 and 2024, we estimated a logistic regression. The model included covariates for variables that were different between years and which were expected to have an important relationship with the outcome variable. Survey year (2022 or 2024) was also included as an independent variable in the model. If the survey year variable was statistically significant, then we could conclude with some confidence that there was a meaningful difference between respondents in 2022 and 2024 on the outcome variable.

Where we used regression analysis, we also estimated the average predictive margins, adjusted for covariates using marginal standardisation, for the 2022 and 2024 respondents. Predictive margins indicate the average predicted probability of the outcome of interest being observed for each survey year, controlling for the other variables in the regression model. It is not the actual prevalence of the outcome of interest; rather, it provides an estimated probability for the two survey years when everything else is the same between the two groups. This is, in effect, an adjusted estimate of the prevalence of the outcome of interest, and it is presented as such throughout the report.

We did not use regression analysis when we compared subgroups of the larger sample. In this case, we used chi-square tests of independence.

Limitations

Importantly, the sample used in the present research is demographically representative of the spread of the Australian population, particularly in terms of the gender, age and usual place of residence of respondents. Further, there was a high concordance between secondary demographics of the sample and the Australian population—characteristics of the population that were not used in the sampling or weighting procedure (see *Appendix B*).

However, the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia used a non-probability sampling method—namely, proportional quota sampling from an opt-in online research panel. It is important to emphasise this because, although our survey is demographically representative of key population indicators, it is not a probability sample. Because of the sampling method, not everyone in the population had an equal likelihood of being selected to participate in the research, and results cannot be generalised beyond the sample used in this study. This is because it is not possible to determine the extent of non-coverage bias or the extent to which the opt-in panel from which the sample was selected represents the wider population. Similarly, the under-representation of certain groups—including those who speak a language other than English most often—is noted as a limitation. Surveys using non-probability sampling methods have been shown to be less accurate than surveys using probability sampling on substantive measures of interest (Pennay et al. 2018; Yeager et al. 2011). However, there is also recent evidence that the difference in accuracy is relatively small and has improved over time (Pennay et al. 2023).

We are also cognisant of the fact that the subject matter covered by the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia and the fact that it was conducted by an Australian Government agency may have influenced responses. It is possible that individuals more prone to discussing their political or social views—or those with more extreme views—may have been attracted to this survey. The opposite may also be true: respondents may not have been honest about their exposure to certain types of content.

These issues are all relevant to making comparisons over time. The analytical approach we have described accounted for important observed differences between respondents in 2022 and 2024. We have to assume, however, that the probability of being a member of the online panels did not meaningfully vary between these two surveys for certain respondent groups and that the probability of certain groups participating in the survey was also relatively constant. We are confident that the differences we observe are meaningful differences in the main variables of interest between respondents in the two years; however, we cannot entirely rule out other explanations and, as with the results more generally, we cannot say with certainty that these differences would apply to the general population.

Exposure to fringe and radical content online

We started by measuring exposure to fringe and radical content among respondents to the 2024 survey. Table 1 shows that 34.6 percent ($n=3,445$) of respondents said they had seen fringe and radical content in the 12 months before the survey, 57.1 percent ($n=5,677$) said they had not, and 8.3 percent ($n=829$) did not respond to the question. Among those who had seen fringe and radical content, 15.4 percent ($n=531$)—equivalent to 5.3 percent of all survey respondents—intentionally sought out the content.

Overall, 9.3 percent ($n=321$) of respondents who had seen fringe and radical content online, and 3.2 percent of all respondents to the survey, shared the content with other people after they had viewed it. One in three respondents (30.9%, $n=164$) who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content shared it with someone else.

We made several changes to the survey this year, including to the way we measured exposure to violent content. We asked respondents to specify the type of content they had viewed, including types of violent content, before asking whether they had viewed violent fringe and radical content. This meant that we were more likely to capture exposure to violent content than we were previously. Four in five respondents (80.1%; $n=2,761$) who had seen fringe and radical content online said it had described, depicted or advocated violence. This represents more than one-quarter (27.7%) of all respondents to the survey. Among those who intentionally sought out fringe and radical content, 76.3 percent ($n=405$) said it contained violence. This is equivalent to 4.1 percent of the total sample having intentionally sought out violent fringe and radical content online.

Table 1: Exposure to fringe and radical content online (%)	
Exposure to fringe and radical content (n=9,951)	
Had not seen content	57.1
Had seen content	34.6
Did not respond	8.3
Intent during exposure (n=3,445)	
Viewed content intentionally	15.4
Viewed content unintentionally	80.5
Did not respond	4.1
Viewed content that described, depicted or advocated violence (n=3,445)	
Yes	80.1
No	16.5
Did not respond	3.3
Sharing of fringe and radical content (n=3,445)	
Shared content	9.3
Did not share content	86.0
Did not respond	4.7

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Given the significant relationship between intentional viewing of violent fringe and radical content and support for violent extremism (Morgan forthcoming), we then examined the relationship between the age and gender of respondents and the likelihood that they had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content that described, depicted or advocated violence. Table 2 shows that male respondents were consistently more likely than female respondents to say they had intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content ($F=6.8$, $p<0.001$). Males aged 50 to 64 years (7.6%) were the group most likely to say they had intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content online; however, the proportion who did not respond varied significantly by age and gender. In fact, female (83.0%) and male (83.4%) respondents aged 18 to 24 years were the least likely to say they had not intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online, because a significant minority did not respond to the question.

Table 2: Respondents who intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content online, by gender and age (%)

	Yes	No	Did not respond
Male			
18–24	2.7	83.4	13.9
25–34	5.7	85.2	9.1
35–49	4.3	85.4	10.3
50–64	7.6	85.0	7.4
65 and over	5.7	89.0	5.3
Female			
18–24	1.9	83.0	15.1
25–34	3.0	84.2	12.8
35–49	3.1	85.9	11.0
50–64	2.8	87.8	9.5
65 and over	2.5	89.5	8.1

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Relationship between platform use and exposure to fringe and radical content describing, depicting or advocating violence

Respondents who had seen fringe and radical content online that described, depicted or advocated violence were then asked on what platforms they had seen this violent content. Table 3 shows that 12.1 percent of respondents reported having seen violent content on Facebook, closely followed by YouTube (8.2%), X (7.2%), Instagram (6.0%), Reddit (4.1%) and TikTok (4.1%).

We then measured the proportion of respondents who saw violent content on each platform according to how frequently they used the platform. Unsurprisingly, regular usage—defined as weekly use—was associated with a greater likelihood of seeing violent content, especially for more commonly used platforms. Among regular users, those who used 8kun or X at least weekly were the most likely to encounter fringe and radical content featuring violence (35.1% and 32.1% respectively), closely followed by 4chan users (27.8%). Among common social media platforms, regular users of Reddit (20.8%), Facebook (15.9%) and TikTok (15.6%) were the most likely to have seen violent fringe and radical content on the platform.

Table 3: Respondents who saw violent fringe and radical content on each platform, by frequency of platform use (%)			
	All respondents	Infrequent users (less than weekly)	Regular users (daily or weekly)
Facebook	12.1	10.4	15.9***
YouTube	8.2	4.3	13.7***
X	7.2	16.1	32.1***
Instagram	6.0	4.6	11.8***
Reddit	4.1	9.1	20.8***
TikTok	4.1	6.8	15.6***
Messenger	1.5	1.2	2.1*
Discord	1.2	2.6	8.7***
4chan	0.8	16.5	27.8†
Bumble	0.6	5.0	9.8†
Snapchat	0.6	2.1	1.9
Telegram	0.6	3.1	8.7***
WhatsApp	0.6	0.5	1.7***
LinkedIn	0.5	0.7	2.6***
8kun	0.4	12	35.1**
Pinterest	0.3	0.8	1.1
Truth Social	0.3	7.3	15.2
Tumblr	0.3	0.6	11.7
Twitch	0.3	3.6	4.8
Google Hangouts	0.2	4.2	3.3
Grindr	0.2	4.2	3.5
Kiwi Farms	0.2	13.1	14.3
Steam	0.2	0.6	2.1
Tinder	0.2	1	1.5
Signal	0.1	0.9	0.5
Skype	0.1	0.2	0.7
WeChat	0.1	0	1.4
Weibo	0.1	2	8.6

***statistically significant at $p<0.001$, **statistically significant at $p<0.01$, *statistically significant at $p<0.05$,

† statistically significant at $p<0.10$

Statistical significance test applies to comparison between respondents who reported using the platform at least weekly with respondents who used the platform less frequently. Significance tests were not conducted where cell sizes were too small

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

We also compared respondents who said they had or had not viewed the content intentionally. Among those respondents who had seen violent fringe and radical content online but did not say it was intentional, the most common platform on which they had seen violent content was Facebook (45.0%), followed by YouTube (26.7%), X (26.0%) and Instagram (22.3%; Table 4). Among those who had intentionally sought out fringe and radical content, the most common platform for seeing violent content was YouTube (46.1%), followed by Facebook (34.9%) and X (24.6%).

Importantly, respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content were much more likely to view it on YouTube (46.1% vs 26.7%; $F=56.4$, $p<0.001$) and less likely to view it on Facebook (34.9% vs 45.0%; $F=12.9$, $p<0.001$) and TikTok (9.4% vs 15.7%; $F=9.5$, $p<0.01$). This suggests that unintended exposure to violent content more commonly occurs on Facebook and TikTok, whereas respondents viewing the content on YouTube are more likely to be actively seeking it out. There were also small but significant differences in the likelihood that violent fringe and radical content would be intentionally viewed on messaging platforms such as Messenger (8.0% vs 5.1%; $F=5.0$, $p<0.05$) and Telegram (5.3% vs 1.7%; $F=19.6$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that these respondents were actively sharing the content with (or receiving it from) other users.

Table 4: Exposure to fringe and radical content that described, depicted or advocated violence, by platform and intention (%)		
	Had not intentionally viewed fringe and radical content that contained violence (<i>n</i> =2,355)	Had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content that contained violence (<i>n</i> =405)
Facebook	45.0	34.9***
YouTube	26.7	46.1***
X	26.0	24.6
Instagram	22.3	18.6
TikTok	15.7	9.4**
Reddit	14.7	15.3
Messenger	5.1	8.0*
Discord	3.9	5.8
4chan	2.4	4.5*
Snapchat	2.1	2.5
WhatsApp	2.3	2.5
Bumble	2.0	3.0
LinkedIn	1.8	2.1
Telegram	1.7	5.3***
Twitch	1.2	1.3
8kun	1.1	2.6*
Truth Social	1.0	1.6
Tumblr	0.9	1.8
Pinterest	0.9	2.7**
Grindr	0.6	1.2
Steam	0.6	1.2
Google Hangouts	0.6	0.9
Kiwi Farms	0.5	1.1

***statistically significant at $p<0.001$, **statistically significant at $p<0.01$, *statistically significant at $p<0.05$

Note: Excludes platforms where there were insufficient respondents who had intentionally or not intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content ($n<5$) to permit statistical analysis

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Types and aims of fringe and radical content seen online

We asked respondents what type of fringe and radical content they had seen online. This was a new question in the 2024 survey, not asked in 2022. The aim was to better understand the nature of the fringe and radical content that online Australians were viewing, whether intentionally or otherwise.

We used this to work out the overall exposure to different types of content among all respondents, those who had intentionally accessed fringe and radical content and those who had viewed it but did not say that it was intentional. Table 5 shows that the most common type of content that respondents had been exposed to was conspiracy theories (17.3% of all respondents), followed by extreme far-right political content that promotes hatred and advocates violence (15.9% of all respondents) and religious extremist material that promotes hatred and advocates violence (15.7% of all respondents). This represents a significant minority of a large sample of online Australians.

Among respondents who had seen fringe and radical content online, but who did not say it was intentional, the most commonly reported content was conspiracy theories (49.3%). This was followed by hate speech (46.0%) and religious extremist material that promotes hatred and advocates violence (45.0%). Extreme far-right political content that promotes hatred and advocates violence was reported at a similar rate (43.4%).

Among those who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content, conspiracy theories (53.5%) were still the most common, followed by religious extremist material promoting hatred and advocating violence (47.1%) and content promoting anti-government sentiment (44.5%). Extreme far-right and extreme far-left political content promoting hatred and violence were also common (43.4% and 38.4% respectively), as was hate speech (41.4%). Notably, almost one in three respondents who intentionally accessed fringe and radical content had viewed real-life violence, including gore, murder, torture or sexual violence (30.0%), or misogynistic content (30.0%).

There were few differences in content type between those respondents who had intentionally and unintentionally viewed fringe and radical content. Respondents who had intentionally sought out the content were more likely to say they had seen content promoting anti-government sentiment or encouraging resistance to lawful or government authority (44.5% vs 34.4%; $F=18.0$, $p<0.001$) and sermons or speeches promoting violence or action to be taken on behalf of a group or ideology (26.0% vs 20.3%; $F=7.8$, $p<0.01$). There were smaller, near significant differences in the likelihood of having seen conspiracy theories (53.5% vs 43.3%; $F=2.8$, $p=0.09$) and manifestos written by people who have committed, or attempted to commit, violence (8.3% vs 6.0%; $F=3.2$, $p=0.07$). Respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content were less likely to say they had viewed misogynistic content online (30.0% vs 35.3%; $F=4.9$, $p<0.05$) and slightly less likely to say they had seen hate speech (41.4% vs 46.0%; $F=3.4$, $p=0.06$).

	All respondents (n=9,951)	Had not intentionally viewed fringe and radical content (n=2,914)	Had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content (n=531)
Conspiracy theories	17.3	49.3	53.5†
Extreme far-right political content that promotes hatred and advocates violence	15.9	43.4	43.4
Religious extremist material that promotes hatred and advocates violence	15.7	45.0	47.1
Hate speech	15.7	46.0	41.4†
Extreme far-left political content that promotes hatred and advocates violence	13.1	37.9	38.4
Content promoting anti-government sentiment or encouraging resistance to lawful/government authority	12.4	34.4	44.5***
Misogynistic content	11.9	35.3	30.0*
Real-life violence, including gore, murder, torture or sexual violence	10.3	29.7	30.0
Sermons or speeches promoting violence or action to be taken on behalf of a group or ideology	7.3	20.3	26.0**
Content posted on message boards or sites supporting open communication that promoted violence against specific ideological or cultural groups	6.5	18.6	19.8
Animal cruelty	4.5	13.4	11.3
Manifestos written by people who have committed, or attempted to commit, violence	2.2	6.0	8.3†
Content encouraging eating disorders or self-harming behaviours	2.8	8.4	6.9

***statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, **statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, *statistically significant at $p < 0.05$,
† statistically significant at $p < 0.10$

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Respondents who had seen fringe and radical content were then asked what they believed the aim of the content was. Table 6 focuses on those respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content. Almost two-thirds said that the aim of the content was to explain or discuss ideas (61.3%), while 53.9 percent said it was a form of news or current affairs. However, almost half (45.2%) reported the aim was a call to action, and almost one in four (22.1%) said that the content was intended as a call to violence. Related to mobilisation to action, nearly one in five said that the content they had seen was intended to support financing or donations for a cause (18.9%), and 14.0 percent said it was intended to recruit individuals to a cause.

Table 6: Purpose of intentionally viewing fringe and radical content (%) (n=531)	
Explanation, information, discussion and ideas	61.3
News and current affairs	53.9
Call to action	45.2
Entertainment or comedy	22.3
Call to violence	22.1
Financing or donations	18.9
Recruitment to a cause	14.0
Planning or executing actions	10.6
Meeting people, socialising or networking	8.8
Training or instruction	7.6
Other	2.4

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Table 7 shows the activities respondents were engaged in online when they encountered fringe and radical content. Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online were less likely to say they encountered it while browsing, posting or responding to social media (48.4% vs 57.7%; $F=14.2$, $p<0.001$). However, they were more likely to say they encountered it while reading news articles online (56.8% vs 48.4%; $F=11.1$, $p<0.001$); browsing or looking for information online (58.1% vs 38.7%; $F=62.1$, $p<0.001$); browsing, posting or responding to posts on online blogs and forums (26.6% vs 17.9%; $F=19.2$, $p<0.001$); live streaming videos of content creators and influencers online (30.0% vs 13.9%; $F=75.8$, $p<0.001$); via email (14.5% vs 9.1%; $F=13.8$, $p<0.001$); listening to podcasts (20.3% vs 8.9%; $F=54.3$, $p<0.001$); communicating through online messaging apps (16.2% vs 8.6%; $F=25.7$, $p<0.001$); and private video chatting over apps and platforms (7.3% vs 3.3%; $F=17.2$, $p<0.001$). This highlights the various ways in which motivated consumers of fringe and radical content actively seek out the content from public sources, people they follow and people they know online.

Table 7: Online activities before encountering fringe and radical content (%)		
	Respondents who had not intentionally viewed fringe and radical content (n=2,914)	Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content (n=531)
Browsing, posting or responding to posts on social media	57.7	48.4***
Reading news articles online	48.4	56.8***
Browsing or looking for information online	38.7	58.1***
Watching television or streaming platform	25.7	23.8
Browsing, posting or responding to posts on online blogs, forums or interest groups	17.9	26.6***
Livestreaming videos of content creators and influencers online	13.9	30.0***
Reading emails from someone I know in person or online	9.1	14.5***
Listening to a podcast	8.9	20.3***
Communicating through online messaging apps	8.6	16.2***
Gaming or livestreaming videos of gamers online	4.8	4.9
Private video chatting over apps and platforms	3.3	7.3***

***statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Sharing fringe and radical content

Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online were more likely than those who had not viewed it intentionally to say that they shared it with other internet users. One-third of respondents (30.9%, $n=164$) who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online shared that content with other internet users, compared with 5.4 percent of respondents who had viewed fringe and radical content but did not say it was intentional ($F=148.8$, $p < 0.001$).

Respondents who said they had shared fringe and radical content with other internet users were asked why they had shared the content. Table 8 shows that the most common reason given was to raise awareness about the issue (61.2%). Other reasons were shared values, interests or beliefs (52.4%); to spark discussion about an idea or issue (25.7%); or because they wanted to change someone else's mind about an issue (22.3%). Respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content were more likely than those who had not to say they shared it because they thought other people in their network would enjoy it (27.1% vs 17.0%; $F=4.2$, $p<0.05$). While this is not statistically significant, there was also a higher proportion of respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content who shared the content with other users because they had shared values, interests or beliefs (57.7% vs 46.8%; $F=3.4$, $p=0.06$).

Table 8: Reasons for sharing fringe and radical content with other internet users, by whether the respondent had intentionally viewed the content (%)

	Had not intentionally viewed fringe and radical content ($n=156$)	Had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content ($n=164$)	All respondents who had shared content ($n=320$)
To raise awareness about the issue	57.3	64.8	61.2
Shared values, interests or beliefs	46.8	57.7	52.4†
To spark discussion about an idea or issue	22.1	29.2	25.7
Because I wanted to change others' minds on an issue	20.9	23.6	22.3
Because I thought people in my network would enjoy it	17.0	27.1	22.1*
To participate in a conversation	16.7	14.2	15.4
For shock value (ie as a joke, trolling etc)	12.6	11.6	12.1
To see how other people would react	10.1	9.8	9.9
Because someone I know recommended it	2.3	0.8	1.5

*statistically significant at $p<0.05$, † statistically significant at $p<0.10$

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Table 9 shows that the most common platforms used to share fringe and radical content were Facebook (38.1%) and Messenger (37.6%), followed by Instagram (17.5%), YouTube (13.7%) and X (13.1%).

Table 9: Platforms used to share content by respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online (%) (n=164)	
Facebook	38.1
Messenger	37.6
Instagram	17.5
YouTube	13.7
X	13.1
WhatsApp	10.9
Telegram	8.9
Discord	8.9
TikTok	6.5
Signal	5.3
4chan	5.2
Reddit	4.1
Rumble	2.7
Tumblr	2.0
8kun	2.0

Note: Limited to platforms nominated by at least three respondents

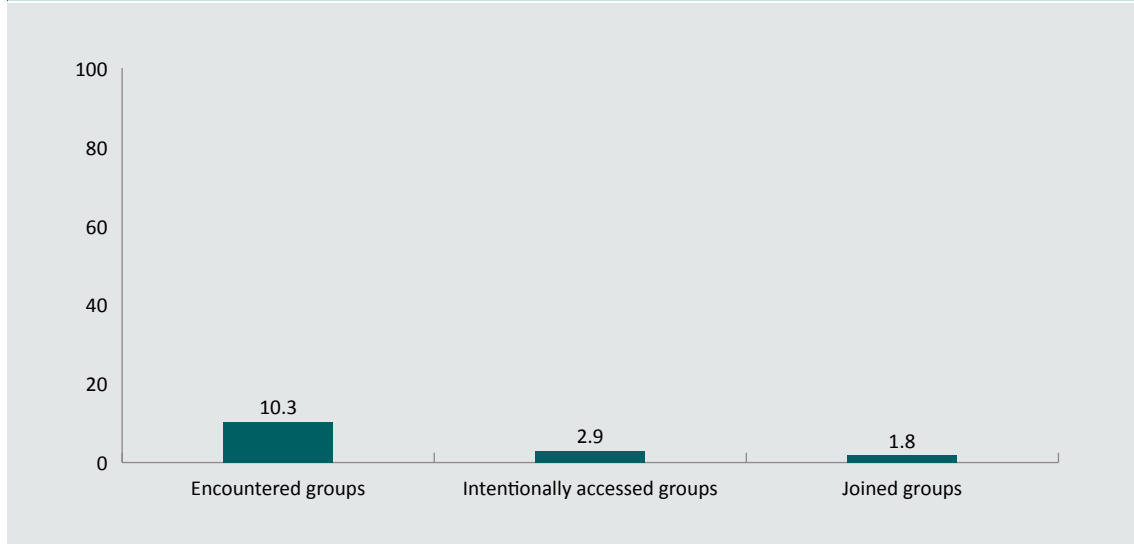
Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Participation in fringe and radical groups

Respondents were asked whether they had encountered and intentionally accessed a fringe or radical group. This included online groups, communities, servers, clubs or forums that mainstream society or the government might describe as fringe or radical.

Figure 1 shows that around one in 10 respondents to the survey (10.3% $n=1,023$) encountered a group online that promoted fringe and radical views, 2.9 percent ($n=287$) intentionally accessed these groups to view the content, and 1.8 percent ($n=176$) reported that they had joined one of these groups—had become a member, opened an account, participated in or followed these groups (Figure 1). One in six respondents who had encountered a group online that promoted fringe and radical views said they went on to join a group (17.2%, $n=176$).

Figure 1: Respondents who encountered, intentionally accessed and joined online fringe and radical groups (%)



Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Among those respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online, 15.6 percent ($n=83$) said they had joined a fringe and radical group. A similar proportion of respondents who had intentionally viewed violent fringe and radical content (15.5%, $n=63$) had joined an online group. Almost one-third of respondents (30.7%, $n=50$) who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content and who shared that content with someone else had joined a fringe and radical group, highlighting the important role that these groups play in sharing this content. Unsurprisingly, respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content and who joined a fringe and radical group were much more likely to share that content with other internet users (61.0 vs 24.5%; $F=19.7$, $p<0.001$), highlighting the important role that these groups play in brokering fringe and radical content online.

Changes between 2022 and 2024

This section examines changes in exposure to fringe and radical content online between November 2022 and November 2024. This includes overall changes in exposure to fringe and radical content, exposure to violence and participation in fringe and radical groups. We focus on these metrics because research shows the importance of active (intentional) exposure to fringe and radical content and participation in online communities promoting extreme content and ideas in shaping a person's vulnerability to radicalisation (Morgan forthcoming).

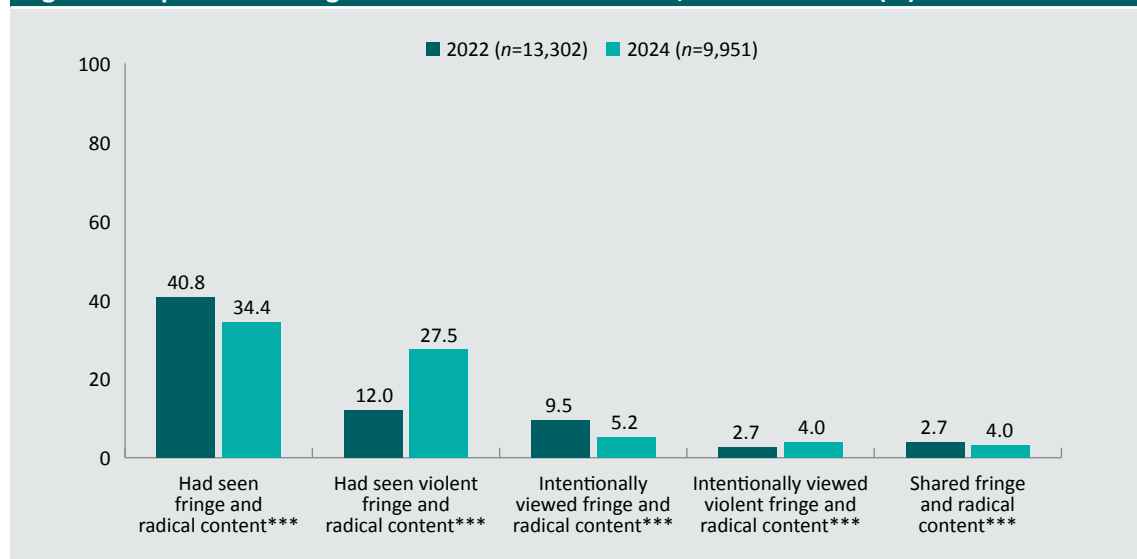
Exposure to fringe and radical content online

Respondents to the 2024 survey were less likely than respondents to the 2022 survey to say that they had seen fringe and radical content in the 12 months before the survey (34.4% vs 40.8%; OR=0.76, 95% CI [0.71, 0.80]), as Figure 2 shows. The proportion of respondents who had seen fringe and radical content and had intentionally viewed the content was also lower in 2024 than in 2022 (5.2% vs 9.5%; OR=0.53, 95% CI [0.47, 0.59]). This was not entirely because of the overall decline in exposure to fringe and radical content; respondents who had seen fringe and radical content online were less likely in 2024 to say they had done so intentionally (15.4% vs 23.2%; $F=71.6$, $p<0.001$). In short, when respondents did see fringe and radical content online, it was more likely in 2024 to be through unintended exposure.

However, respondents in 2024 were substantially more likely to report that they had viewed fringe and radical content that described, depicted or advocated violence (27.5% vs 12.0%; OR=2.85, 95% CI [2.65, 3.06]). This large increase can be explained partly by a change in the survey questions; respondents in 2024 were firstly asked to describe the content they had observed before being asked whether it contained violence; the former question did not appear in the 2022 survey. The changes to the way we asked about exposure to violence mean that we need to be cautious when comparing the results from the 2022 and 2024 surveys.

There was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content that described, depicted or advocated violence (4.0% vs 2.7%; OR=1.51, 95% CI [1.30, 1.76]). Rather than being an actual increase in intentional exposure to violent content, this probably represents a better estimate of the real prevalence in an Australian sample of online internet users.

Figure 2: Exposure to fringe and radical content online, 2022 and 2024 (%)



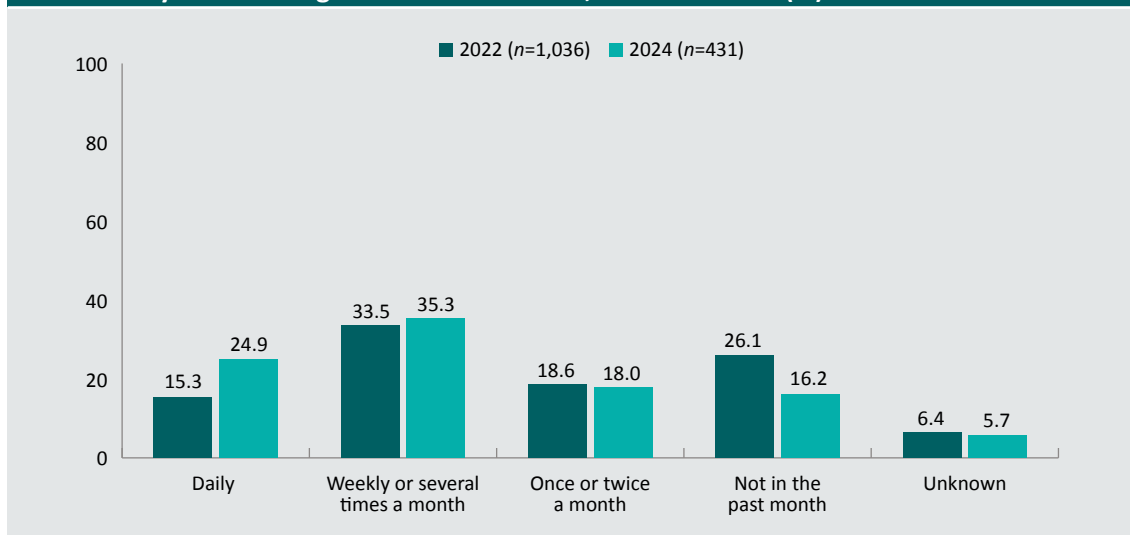
***statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

Note: Predictive margins derived from separate logistic regression model that included controls for key sociodemographic, employment and technology use variables. Respondents who did not know or declined to answer the question were included in the denominator when calculating the prevalence of exposure to fringe and radical content

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

While there was a reduction in the proportion of respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content between 2022 and 2024, the frequency and persistence of access increased among respondents who did view the content. Figure 3 shows that respondents to the 2024 survey who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online in the 12 months before the survey were more likely than respondents to the 2022 survey to say they were viewing that content daily (24.9% vs 15.3%; $F=6.5$, $p < 0.001$). They were less likely to say that they had not intentionally viewed any fringe and radical content in the last month (16.2% vs 26.1%).

Figure 3: Frequency of viewing content in the past month among respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content, 2022 and 2024 (%)



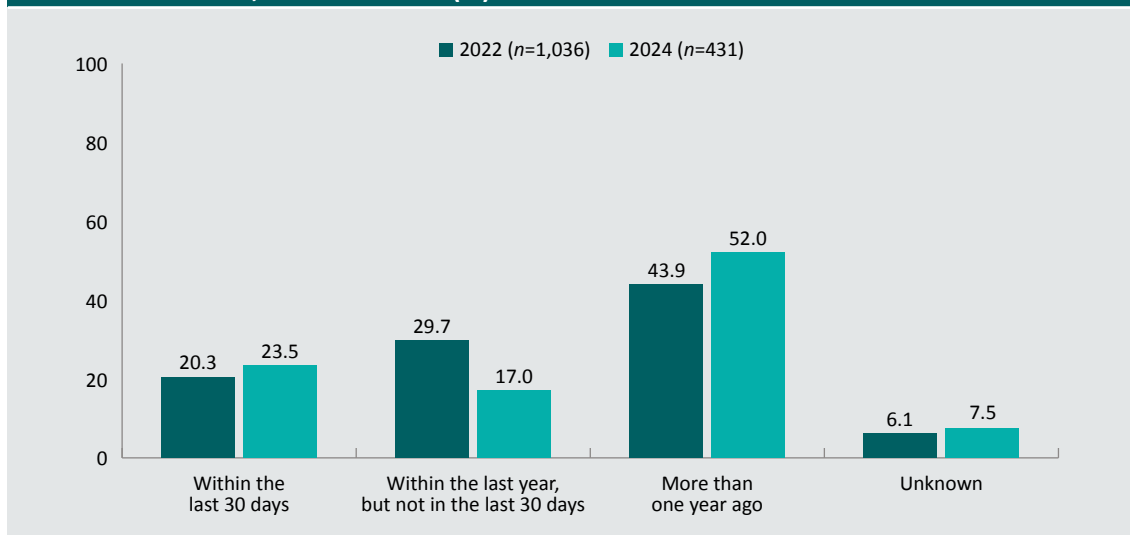
Note: Limited to respondents who said they had first seen fringe and radical content online, to ensure that data were comparable between surveys

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Figure 4 shows that a higher proportion of respondents persistently consumed fringe and radical content in 2024 than in 2022. A similar proportion of ‘new’ users had first seen fringe and radical content in the previous 30 days (23.5% in 2024 vs 20.3% in 2022), but a higher proportion of respondents in 2024 had first viewed fringe and radical content online more than a year before the survey (52.0% vs 43.9%; $F=7.6$, $p<0.001$).

Further analysis revealed that the apparent increase in frequent viewing of fringe and radical content was largely because of these more persistent users. The proportion of respondents who had first viewed fringe and radical content online more than a year before the survey and who were viewing the content daily was higher in 2024 than it was in 2022 (33.6% vs 20.2%; $F=6.9$, $p<0.001$). While there was a slightly higher proportion of daily viewers among those respondents who had first viewed the content less than 12 months before the survey, this difference was not statistically significant (16.6% vs 11.6%; $F=1.2$, $p=0.28$).

Figure 4: Timing of first exposure among respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content, 2022 and 2024 (%)



Note: Limited to respondents who said they had first seen fringe and radical content online, to ensure that data were comparable between surveys

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content were asked about the first time they encountered the content and how they had come across it. Table 10 compares first-time exposure in 2022 and 2024. In 2024, significantly fewer respondents reported first accessing the content by finding it themselves (42.2% vs 51.3%) or having it shared with them by someone they knew or had met in person (14.2% vs 20.4%; $F=16.8$, $p<0.001$). However, a much higher proportion of respondents said that the first time they accessed the content was because it was suggested to them by a social media platform or website (14.7% vs 2.4%).

Table 10: Initial exposure among respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content, 2022 and 2024 (%)

	2022 (n=1,253)	2024 (n=531)
Respondent found the content by themselves	51.3	42.2
Content was shared with respondent by someone they knew or had met in person	20.4	14.2
Content was shared with respondent by someone they met online	4.4	3.6
Content was suggested to respondent by a social media platform or website	2.4	14.7
Content was first viewed offline	9.7	12.3
Other	2.2	2.5
Unknown	9.6	10.5

Note: Weighted percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Reported aim of the content and reasons for access

Respondents to both the 2022 and 2024 surveys who had seen fringe and radical content were asked what they believed was the aim of the content. They could choose multiple aims. We observed some important differences, shown in Table 11. There was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who reported that the aim of the content was to call for violence (22.1% in 2024 vs 10.7% in 2022; $F=36.7$, $p<0.001$). This suggests that the large increase observed in exposure to violent fringe and radical content cannot be attributed only to the methodological change to the survey. Further, respondents to the 2024 survey were slightly more likely to say that the content included a call for action (45.2% vs 40.1%; $F=3.6$, $p=0.06$).

Respondents in 2024 were less likely than in 2022 to say that the aim of the content was to meet people, socialise or network (8.8% vs 14.4%; $F=9.8$, $p<0.01$). This is not surprising, given the links between intentional exposure to fringe and radical content and participation in anti-authority protest observed during the pandemic (Morgan, Cubitt & Voce 2024).

Table 11: Reported aim of content among respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content, 2022 and 2024 (%)

	2022 (<i>n</i> =1,253)	2024 (<i>n</i> =531)	Change (pp)
Explanations, information, discussion and ideas	66.3	61.3	-5.0†
News and current affairs	52.2	53.9	+1.7
Call to action	40.1	45.2	+5.1†
Entertainment or comedy	25.3	22.3	-3.0
Call to violence	10.7	22.1	+11.2***
Financing or donations	22.4	18.9	-3.5
Recruitment to a cause	14.4	14.0	-0.4
Meeting people, socialising or networking	14.4	8.8	-5.6**
Planning or executing actions	11.6	10.6	-1.0
Training or instruction	10.5	7.6	-2.9†

***statistically significant at $p<0.01$, **statistically significant at $p<0.01$, † statistically significant at $p<0.10$

Note: pp=percentage point

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Table 12 shows important differences between the reasons reported in 2022 and 2024 for intentionally viewing fringe and radical content on the most recent occasion. While there was a large increase in the proportion of respondents who intentionally accessed the content because they disagreed with it (13.3% in 2024 vs 5.3% in 2022; $F=31.2$, $p<0.001$), there was also a significant increase in the proportion who said they had a personal interest in the content (13.1% vs 7.5%; $F=13.3$, $p<0.001$). Respondents to the 2024 survey were more likely than 2022 respondents to say that the content had appeared in their social media feed (10.8 vs 6.8%; $F=7.8$, $p<0.01$), reflecting the important role of algorithms, even among those respondents who had intended to view the content. Respondents to the 2024 survey were also more likely to say they had intentionally accessed fringe and radical content because of perceived government manipulation, distrust, propaganda or misinformation (6.6% vs 3.9%; $F=5.6$, $p<0.05$).

Table 12: Reported reasons for accessing content on most recent occasion among respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content, 2022 and 2024 (%)			
	2022 (n=1,253)	2024 (n=531)	Change (pp)
Respondent wanted to learn more about an idea	45.2	42.1	-3.1
Respondent was curious	22.3	21.1	-1.2
Respondent disagreed with the content	5.3	13.3	+8.0***
Personal interest or had been following the topic	7.5	13.1	+5.6***
Appeared in social media or news feed	6.8	10.8	+4.0**
To fact check	11.6	9.3	-2.3
Mainstream media manipulation, dishonesty or distrust	7.2	6.9	-0.3
Government manipulation, distrust, propaganda or misinformation	3.9	6.6	+2.7*
Respondent shared some of the values and goals expressed	6.7	5.8	-0.9
To participate in discussions	2.8	3.9	+1.1
For entertainment purposes	2.9	3.5	+0.6
It was recommended by respondent's friend, family member or colleague	3.6	2.5	-1.1
Respondent wanted an alternative view to mainstream media	2.5	2.5	0.0

***statistically significant at $p<0.001$, **statistically significant at $p<0.01$, *statistically significant at $p<0.05$

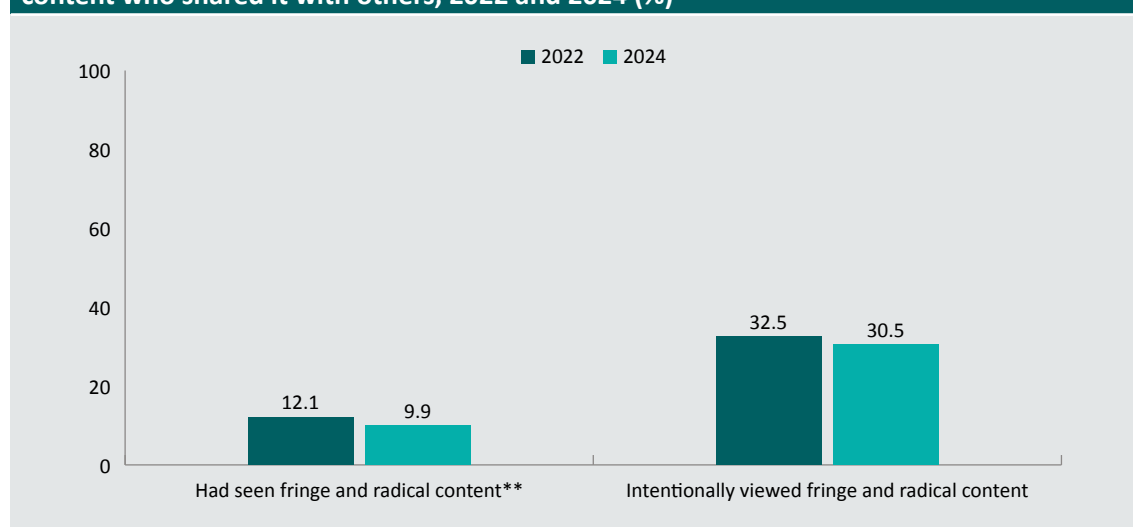
Note: pp=percentage point

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Sharing fringe and radical content

Figure 5 shows whether respondents from the 2024 and 2022 surveys had shared fringe and radical content with other people. When we compared respondents who had seen fringe and radical content online, intentionally or otherwise, the proportion who shared content was lower in 2024 than it was in 2022 (9.9% vs 12.1%; $F=5.1$, $p<0.01$). There was, however, no significant difference among those respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online (30.5% vs 32.5%; $F=0.4$, $p=0.66$).

Figure 5: Respondents who had seen and who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content who shared it with others, 2022 and 2024 (%)



**statistically significant at $p<0.01$

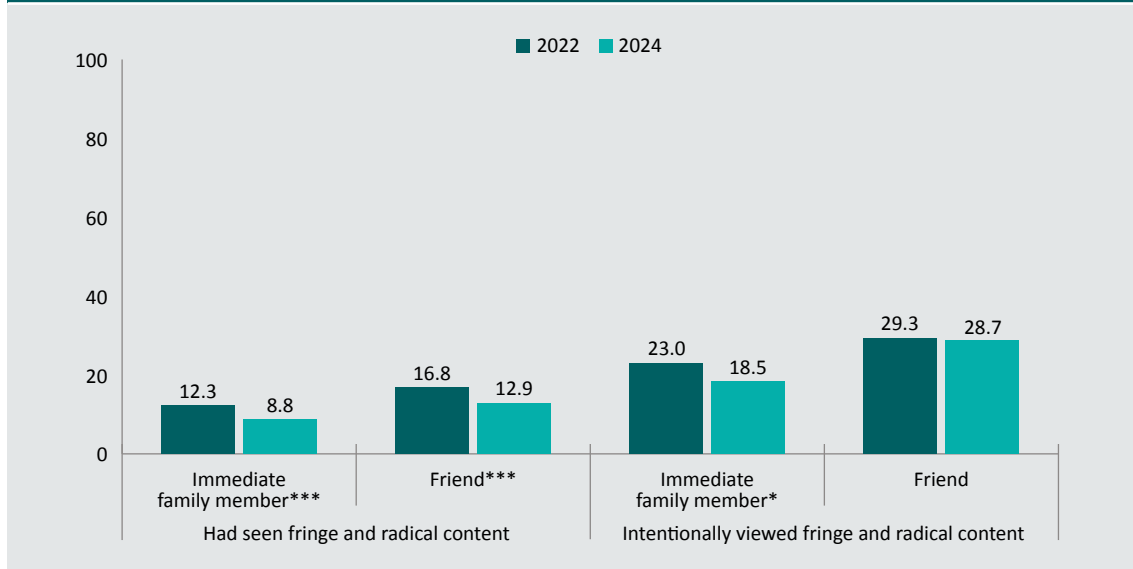
Note: Limited to respondents who said they had first seen fringe and radical content online, to ensure that data were comparable between surveys

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

We asked respondents whether their friends and immediate family members had accessed fringe and radical content in the 12 months before the survey. This is relevant to understanding the networks through which content may be shared, because participants in the 2024 survey who said that their immediate family members (24.1 vs 8.4%; $F=28.5$, $p<0.01$) and friends (24.1% vs 7.5%; $F=46.6$, $p<0.001$) had seen fringe and radical content were significantly more likely to have shared it themselves.

Figure 6 shows that respondents who had seen fringe and radical content online in 2024 were less likely to also say that their friends (12.9% vs 16.8%; $F=21.9$, $p<0.001$) or immediate family members (8.8% vs 12.3%; $F=24.2$, $p<0.001$) had seen fringe and radical content. This finding is in line with lower rates of personal exposure to fringe and radical content and lower rates of sharing. A lower proportion of respondents who had intentionally viewed fringe and radical content in 2024 said their immediate family members had also seen the content (18.5% vs 23.0%; $F=4.0$, $p<0.05$). But there was no difference between surveys in the proportion of respondents who said their friends had also seen fringe and radical content online (28.7% vs 29.3%; $F=0.1$, $p=0.79$), which is consistent with the finding that these respondents were just as likely to share fringe and radical content in 2024 as they were in 2022.

Figure 6: Immediate family member and friend exposure to fringe and radical content among respondents who had seen fringe and radical content, 2022 and 2024 (%)



***statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, *statistically significant at $p < 0.05$

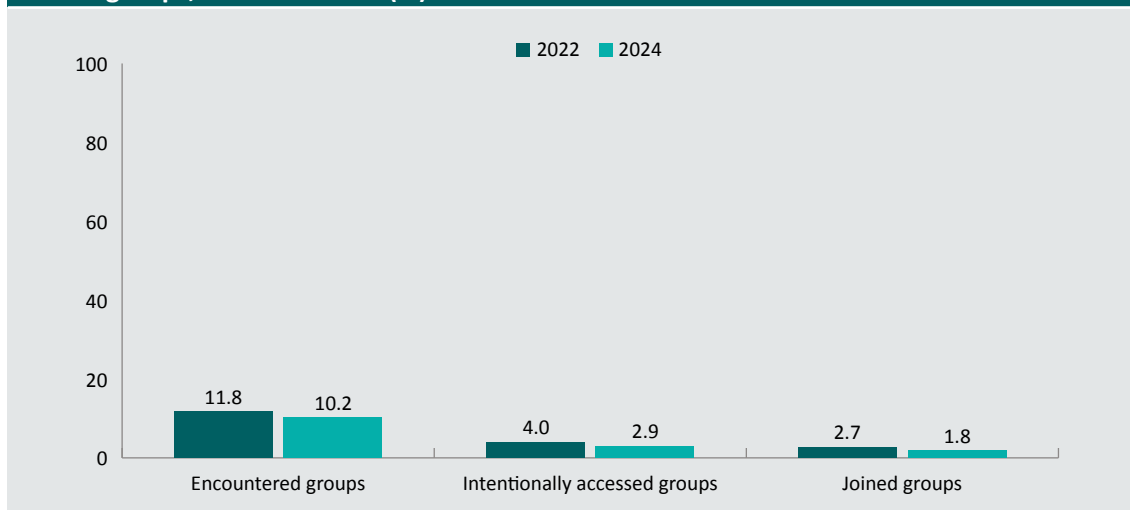
Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Participation in fringe and radical groups

Figure 7 shows whether respondents from the 2024 and 2022 surveys had seen, intentionally accessed or joined a fringe and radical group. Fewer respondents in 2024 had encountered a fringe and radical group online (10.2% vs 11.8%; OR=0.84, 95% CI [0.77, 0.92]). A smaller proportion of respondents had intentionally accessed a fringe and radical group (2.9% vs 4.0%; OR=0.71, 95% CI [0.61, 0.84]) and had joined a fringe and radical group (1.8% vs 2.7%; OR=0.63, 95% CI [0.52, 0.77]).

The last figure can partly be attributed to the lower rates of exposure to fringe and radical groups online. However, the propensity of respondents to join a fringe and radical group after they had encountered it online was also lower in 2024 (17.2% vs 23.1%; $F=11.5$, $p < 0.001$). This did not apply to respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content online, who continued to join fringe and radical groups at a similar rate to 2022 (15.6% vs 16.2%; $F=0.1$, $p=0.78$).

Figure 7: Respondents who encountered, intentionally accessed or joined online fringe and radical groups, 2022 and 2024 (%)



Note: Predictive margins derived from separate logistic regression model that included controls for key sociodemographic, employment and technology use variables. Respondents who did not know or declined to answer the question were included in the denominator when calculating the prevalence of exposure to fringe and radical content

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Table 13 explores differences in the frequency of group participation and the persistence of group membership among those respondents who had joined a group. There was no difference between the surveys in how often respondents were accessing the groups they had joined, with around one-quarter accessing the group daily (24.2% in 2024 vs 23.8% in 2022; $F=0.6$, $p=0.66$). While the proportion of respondents who had joined a group who then invited other people to join was slightly lower in 2024 than in 2022 (37.7% vs 42.0%; $F=1.7$, $p=0.19$), this difference was not statistically significant.

We did, however, observe a significant difference in when respondents had first accessed these online groups. Respondents to the 2024 survey were much more likely to say they had accessed these groups more than a year before the survey (73.2% vs 58.3%; $F=3.3$, $p<0.05$). This means that 2024 respondents who had joined an online group had been a member of that group for a much longer period than their counterparts in the 2022 survey.

Table 13: Participation in fringe and radical groups that respondents joined, 2022 and 2024 (%)

	2022 (n=361)	2024 (n=176)
Frequency of access to group		
Daily	24.2	23.8
Weekly or several times a month	45.5	41.6
Once or twice a month	12.6	12.0
Not in the past month	16.6	20.0
Unknown	1.2	2.7
Timing of initial access to groups*		
Within the last 30 days	10.8	7.4
Within the last year, but not in the last 30 days	26.3	16.8
More than one year ago	58.3	73.2
Unknown	4.6	2.6
Whether invited others to join group		
Yes	42.0	37.7
No	51.8	59.0
Unknown	6.2	3.3

*statistically significant at $p < 0.05$

Note: Weighted percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2022, 2024 [weighted data]

Conclusion

The aim of this report was to provide updated data on exposure to fringe and radical content online, building on the earlier study by Cubitt and Morgan (2024). We were able to compare results from the 2024 survey with the previous survey, conducted in 2022. The latest Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia also included new questions that provide insights into the type of content being viewed online and the viewing platforms. We focused on users intentionally viewing fringe and radical content, especially violent content, and their participation in online fringe and radical groups, because a large body of international research and recent Australian research links these with support for violent extremism (Morgan forthcoming; Wolfowicz, Hasisi & Weisburd 2022).

We can draw several conclusions from the findings presented here. Overall, we again found that exposure to fringe and radical content was common among online Australians. It has declined from the previous survey, which was conducted immediately following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and during a significant increase in misinformation, conspiratorial narratives and anti-government information being shared online. The reasons for the decline—including whether it means that there has been a decline in the availability of this content online or a decline in the appetite for this information among online Australians—are not clear. A significant minority of online Australians were still exposed to content that was political, ideological or religious in nature and that they believed mainstream society or the government might describe as fringe, unorthodox or radical.

One change in the 2024 survey was a question about the type of information that people had been exposed to online. The most common was conspiracy theories, but respondents were exposed to a wide range of fringe and radical content, much of it promoting hatred and violence. At least one in 10 respondents had also seen extreme far-right political content, religious extremist material, hate speech, extreme far-left political content, content promoting anti-government sentiment, misogynistic content and real-life violence. Understanding both the extent and nature of exposure to fringe and radical content is useful in helping to understand the online environment that may be shaping individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation, the importance of efforts to restrict access to this content and the type of messaging that may be required to counteract its effects.

Overall, we found that one in four respondents had seen violent fringe and radical content in the 12 months before the survey. Because of the changes to the survey, we must be cautious about comparing this with the results of the previous survey. Respondents in 2024 were much more likely to say that they had seen violent content and that they had intentionally viewed it. We suspect that this is a better estimate of the real prevalence of exposure to violence, rather than being entirely due to an actual increase in exposure. However, given that respondents were twice as likely in 2024 to say that the aim of the content they had seen was to call for violence (a question that did not change between surveys), it seems likely that there has been a real increase in exposure to violent content during this period.

There were some important shifts in the patterns of exposure to fringe and radical content and groups online. A higher proportion of respondents in 2024 who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content did so daily. A higher proportion of respondents first accessed the content more than a year before the survey. A similar trend was observed with respondents who had joined a fringe and radical group online, with respondents in 2024 much more likely to have participated in these groups for more than one year. The increase in more frequent and persistent viewing of fringe and radical content and groups online is concerning. It suggests that some of the shifts in the online environment during the peak pandemic years have had a lasting effect on people's online behaviour. While there is limited evidence about the effects of the length of exposure to online extremist content and groups on radicalised attitudes, more frequent and persistent exposure would be expected to have a much greater impact on the attitudes and beliefs of the person consuming that content. It may help to further reinforce the perceived legitimacy of certain ideologies or actions, amplify polarisation and desensitise a user to acts of extreme violence (Mølmen & Ravndal 2021; Wolbers et al. 2023; Wolfowicz, Hasisi & Weisburd 2022). Indeed, intense or prolonged exposure to extremist content and actors online has been a feature of recent incidents of planned, attempted or actual violence (Australian Federal Police 2024; Bucci 2023).

Certain platforms are clearly more problematic than others. Respondents were most likely to have seen violent fringe and radical content on Facebook, YouTube, X, Instagram, Reddit and TikTok—unsurprising, because these are all popular and widely used social media platforms. When we controlled for how frequently a platform was used, 8kun, X and 4chan were the platforms on which regular users were most often exposed to violent content.

Further comparison of respondents who intentionally and unintentionally viewed fringe and radical content showed that unintended exposure to violent content was more common on Facebook and TikTok, while respondents who viewed the content on YouTube were more likely to be actively seeking it out. This is consistent with other research showing that the TikTok algorithm amplifies and directs harmful content to users (Regehr et al. 2025) and that YouTube’s algorithms tend not to direct attention to extreme content among users who are not actively engaging with that content already (Chen et al. 2023; Hosseinmardi et al. 2021). Facebook and Messenger continue to be the preferred platforms for sharing the content with other users, mirroring results from the 2022 survey (although findings are not directly comparable); this is probably because of the nature of online communities on the Facebook platform and the ability to interact directly with online peers via Messenger.

Relatedly, algorithms played an increasingly prominent role in 2024 in both first-time and repeated exposure to fringe and radical content online. Respondents who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content were more likely in 2024 to have accessed the content initially because a social media platform or website suggested it to them. They were also more likely to say that they accessed it on the most recent occasion for a similar reason. This reason has not, however, surpassed other mechanisms through which respondents found fringe and radical content online, especially among those who intentionally viewed the content. A much higher proportion of respondents still said that they found it themselves. Indeed, respondents who were motivated consumers of fringe and radical content would actively seek out the content from a range of public sources, people they follow and people they know online—beyond what they are exposed to on social media.

The results from this survey offer an updated national picture of exposure to fringe and radical content and groups online, building on the earlier study by Cubitt and Morgan (2024). The results here suggest three major trends. The first is an overall reduction in exposure and sharing of fringe and radical content and engagement in online groups among online Australians. The second is an increase in frequent and persistent engagement and stable levels of content sharing and participation in online groups among people who intentionally viewed fringe and radical content. The third trend saw higher levels of exposure to violent fringe and radical content, including by people who meant to view it, than we had previously estimated. These findings have important implications for shaping responses to the problem, and highlight the need for responses that can help prevent and counteract both incidental and persistent, intentional exposure to content that may increase someone’s vulnerability to radicalisation.

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URLs correct as at January 2026

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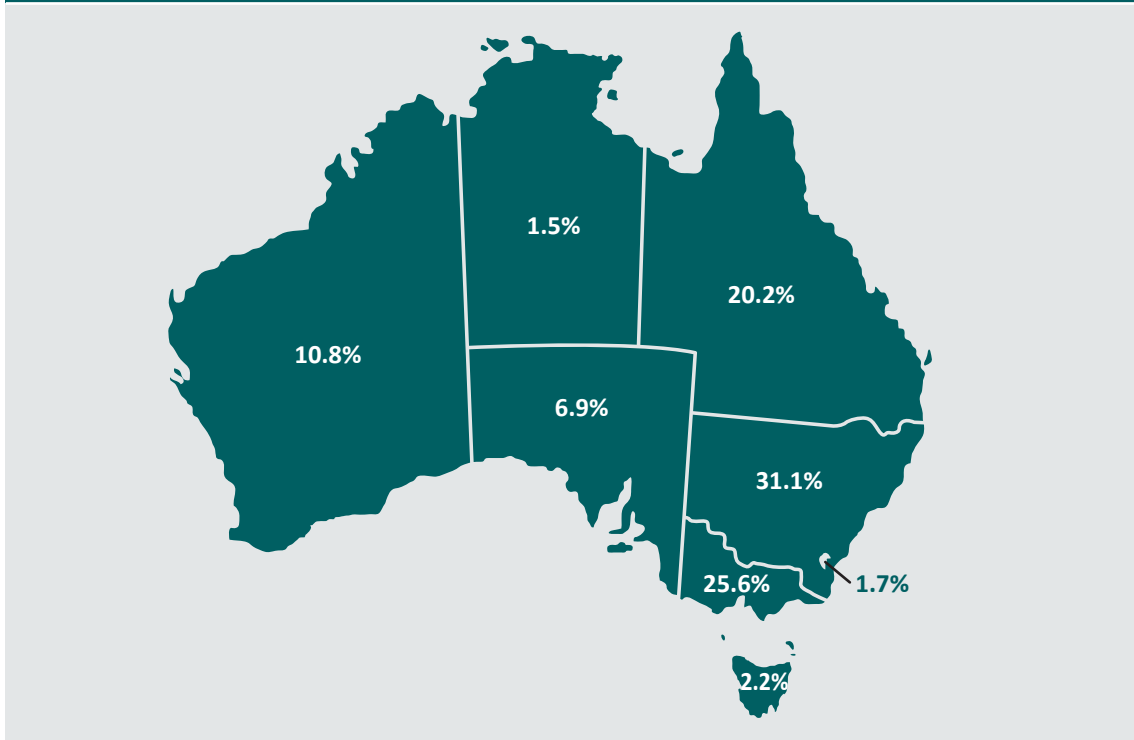
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Appendix A: Sample characteristics

Figure A1 presents the distribution of respondents by their usual place of residence. This was broadly in line with population data for the whole of Australia.

Figure A1: Respondents by usual place of residence (n=9,951)



Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Table A1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents in the 2024 survey. Thirty-one percent of respondents were aged 18 to 34 years, 47.5 percent were aged 35 to 64 years, and 21.9 percent of respondents were aged 65 years and over. Forty-nine percent of the sample were male, and 50.5 percent were female, while 0.7 percent of respondents identified as non-binary. First Nations people accounted for 3.5 percent of respondents, and 9.6 percent of respondents identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or another non-heterosexual sexual identity. One in five respondents was born outside of Australia (21.0%), while 5.5 percent spoke a language other than English most often at home. Eleven percent of respondents reported having a long-term health condition that restricted their everyday activities or meant they required help or supervision. Most respondents lived in metropolitan areas (72.4%), while 24.2 percent lived in regional areas and three percent in remote areas.

Table A1: Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (*n*=9,951)

	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18–24	1,157	11.6
25–34	1,887	19.0
35–49	2,530	25.4
50–64	2,201	22.1
65+	2,176	21.9
Gender		
Female	5,028	50.5
Male	4,847	48.7
Non-binary	66	0.7
First Nations		
Yes	347	3.5
No	9,493	95.4
Unknown	111	1.1
LGB+ respondents		
Yes	952	9.6
No	8,880	89.2
Unknown	119	1.2
Born outside of Australia		
Yes	2,093	21.0
No	7,836	78.7
Unknown	22	0.3

Table A1: Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (n=9,951) (cont.)		
	n	%
Speaks a language other than English most often at home		
Yes	543	5.5
No	9,397	94.4
Unknown	11	0.1
Restrictive long-term health condition		
Yes	1,095	11.0
No	8,389	84.3
Unknown	468	4.7
Currently in a relationship		
Yes	6,205	62.4
No	3,689	37.1
Unknown	56	0.5
Children living at home		
Yes	2,639	26.5
No	6,760	76.5
Unknown	7	0.1
Usual place of residence (remoteness)		
Major city	7,209	72.4
Regional	2,409	24.2
Remote	279	2.8
Unknown	54	0.5

Note: Weighted frequencies and percentages may not add to total because of rounding

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Tables A2 and A3 report respondents' education, employment, income and criminal justice histories. Almost one-third of respondents (30.3%) said their highest level of education was high school; 41.5 percent of respondents had a university qualification. Almost two-thirds (62.7%) were employed, either full or part time; 22.2 percent of respondents were retired; and 4.5 percent were unemployed.

Respondents were asked whether they had been arrested, charged, summonsed, convicted or had any findings of guilt for a criminal offence when under 18 or as an adult (18 years and over). Nearly one in 10 respondents (9.1%) had contact with the criminal justice system since the age of 18, and 3.4 percent before the age of 18.

Table A2: Education, employment, income and criminal justice contacts of respondents (n=9,951)

	<i>n</i>	%
Highest education level		
Year 12 or below	3,020	30.3
Vocational qualification	2,751	27.6
University graduate	4,127	41.5
Unknown	53	0.1
Employment status		
Working full time	4,420	44.4
Working part time, casual or semi-retired	1,826	18.3
Retired	2,209	22.2
Unemployed	460	4.5
Full-time homemaker or carer	418	4.1
Student full time (and not working)	163	1.6
Not working for health reasons	366	3.5
Unknown	134	1.3
Contact with the criminal justice system before the age of 18	342	3.4
Contact with the criminal justice system as an adult	907	9.1

Note: Weighted frequencies and percentages may not add to total because of rounding

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Almost half of respondents (43.9%) reported an income between \$45,001 and \$120,000, while nearly one in three had an income of \$45,000 or less (31.6%). Of those who reported their income, 16.3 percent said that they earned more than \$120,000 in the financial year before undertaking the survey.

Table A3: Annual income of respondents in the previous financial year (n=9,951)

	<i>n</i>	%
\$0–\$18,200	985	9.9
\$18,201–\$45,000	2,157	21.7
\$45,001–\$120,000	4,369	43.9
\$120,001–\$180,000	1,188	11.9
\$180,001 and over	441	4.4
Unknown	812	8.2

Note: Weighted frequencies and percentages may not add to total due to rounding

Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Table A4 shows online behaviour. Respondents spent an average of 3.6 hours per day using the internet for non-work/personal purposes, while those who were working spent an average of 4.1 hours using the internet each day for work. The most used online platforms were Facebook (75.2%), YouTube (69.2%) and Instagram (55.0%), along with communications and content sharing platforms such as Messenger (69.4%) and WhatsApp (44.1%). One in four used forum platforms such as Reddit (24.8%). Gaming related platforms such as Discord (16.7%) and Steam (13.1%) were used by about one in six and one in eight respondents respectively.

Table A4: Online behaviour of respondents		
	<i>n</i>	%
Average hours spent using the internet		
Personal use ^a	9,151	3.6 hours
Work-related ^b	5,764	4.1 hours
Use of online platforms in the last 12 months		
Facebook	7,480	75.2
Messenger	6,884	69.4
YouTube	6,901	69.2
Instagram	5,478	55.0
WhatsApp	4,385	44.1
LinkedIn	2,871	28.9
TikTok	2,631	26.4
Reddit	2,465	24.8
Pinterest	2,460	24.7
Snapchat	2,319	23.3
X	2,165	21.8
Discord	1,665	16.7
Steam	1,303	13.1
Skype	1,118	11.2
Telegram	769	7.7
Signal	626	6.3
Twitch	600	6.0
Tinder	556	5.6
Bumble	552	5.6
Tumblr	411	4.1
WeChat	341	3.4
Google Hangouts	299	3.0
Grindr	255	2.6
4chan	249	2.4

Table A4: Online behaviour of respondents (cont.)		
	<i>n</i>	%
Rumble	184	1.8
8kun	124	1.3
Weibo	101	1.0
Truth Social	83	0.8
Incels.is	74	0.7
Kiwi Farms	64	0.6

a: Excludes 800 respondents who did not know or declined to answer the question
b: Limited to respondents who were currently working (*n*=6,440) and excludes 674 respondents who did not know or declined to answer the question
Note: Weighted frequencies and percentages may not add to total due to rounding
Source: Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [weighted data]

Appendix B: Comparison with population data

Table B1 shows the concordance between the adult population in each state and territory according to the ABS (2024b) and the weighted sample. There was a high degree of concordance overall.

Table B1: Respondents by usual place of residence (weighted data) (%)			
	ABS demographic statistics ^a		Survey respondents (n=9,951)
NSW		31.3	31.1
Vic		25.7	25.6
Qld		20.3	20.2
WA		10.7	10.8
SA		7.1	6.9
Tas		2.2	2.2
ACT		1.8	1.7
NT		0.9	0.9

a: Estimated resident population at December 2023; ABS 2024b
Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding
Source: ABS 2024b; Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [computer file]

Table B2 compares the weighted ages of respondents with those of the estimated resident population. Again, it shows a high degree of concordance between our sample and the age distribution of the general population.

Table B2: Respondents by age (%)		
	ABS demographic statistics ^a	Survey respondents (<i>n</i> =9,951)
18–24	11.3	11.2
25–34	18.7	18.5
35–49	25.5	25.7
50–64	22.6	22.6
65+	21.8	22.1

a: Estimated resident population at December 2023 (ABS 2024b)

Source: ABS 2024b; Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [computer file]

A concern with non-probability sampling methods that use some form of quota sampling and post-hoc weighting is the potential for sampling bias in relation to secondary demographics—characteristics of the population being surveyed that are not used in either the sampling or weighting strategy (Pennay et al. 2018). Table B3 compares survey respondents with benchmarks based on ABS data on the characteristics of the general population, providing a basis to assess the potential consequences of this approach.

This comparison demonstrates a relatively high degree of concordance between survey respondents and ABS demographic data for gender (50.5% female in the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia vs 50.4% in the general population), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (3.5% vs 3.1%) and usual place of residence (72.4% vs 72.6% living in major cities).

Differences in non-English-speaking backgrounds are largely explained by measurement differences. Respondents to the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia were asked to nominate the language they spoke most often at home. ABS Census participants are asked what languages they speak at home, rather than the language spoken most often (ABS 2022a). However, respondents to our survey were less likely than the general population to be born overseas (21.0% vs 27.6%), indicating that there may be some differences between the ethnic and language composition of our survey sample and the wider Australian population.

Relatedly, the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia uses a similar definition to the ABS Short Disability Module; it defines disability as a long-term health condition that is expected to last for longer than six months and which restricts everyday activities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022). The health conditions question is simplified and is not directly comparable to ABS data on long-term or chronic health conditions measured in the National Health Survey (ABS 2022b). This method has limitations in producing reliable data on disability prevalence, compared with the comprehensive set of questions used in the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers to measure disability (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022). The latter serves as the benchmark in Table B3. These issues aside, respondents with a disability appear to be under-represented within the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia (11.0% vs 17.7%).

These differences should be considered in interpreting the results of the survey. The under-representation of respondents from a non-English-speaking background and respondents with a disability, reasons for this and potential implications are discussed in the *Limitations* section.

Table B3: Selected sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (weighted data) (%)		
	ABS statistics	Survey respondents
Female ^a	50.4	50.5
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ^b	3.1	3.5
Non-English-speaking background ^c	22.3	5.5
Born overseas ^d	27.6	21.0
Disability ^e	17.7	11.0
Usual place of residence^f		
Major cities	72.6	72.4
Regional	25.5	24.2
Remote	1.9	2.8

a: Proportion of estimated residential population as at December 2023 who were female based on sex ratio (ABS 2024b)

b: Projected resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population as proportion of persons aged 18 years and over in 2024 (ABS 2024a). Denominator for survey respondents includes 111 respondents who did not know or declined to answer this question

c: Proportion of Australians who speak a language other than English at home, based on data collected in 2021 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2022a). For the Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia, proportion of respondents who speak a language other than English most often at home. Denominator includes 11 respondents who did not know or declined to answer the question

d: Proportion of Australians who were born overseas (ABS 2022a). Denominator for survey respondents includes 22 respondents who did not know or declined to answer the question

e: Proportion of persons with a disability (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2022). Survey estimate is based on Short Form Disability measure and refers to respondents who self-reported at least one current medical condition which has lasted, or is expected to last, for six months or more and which restricts their everyday activities. Denominator includes 468 respondents who did not know or declined to answer this question

f: Estimated resident population, by remoteness areas (ABS 2024c). Denominator for survey respondents includes 54 respondents where this information was unknown

Source: ABS (2024a, 2022a); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022); Survey of Social and Political Beliefs in Australia 2024 [computer file]

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