

Annex – Summary of misinformation and disinformation mapping and risk analysis

Supporting annex – April 2026

This annex summarises analysis for the Greater London Authority (GLA) on London's online misinformation and disinformation environment.¹

The research was based on large-scale analysis of anonymised data across online platforms. Its findings indicate that:

- London is increasingly the target of online narratives portraying the city as unsafe or in decline. Topics such as knife crime, violence against women and girls, migration and policing are frequently incorporated into this framing.
- Online activity relating to these narratives has increased over the past two years. For example, analysis of X API data using keyword-based Boolean searches between March 2024 and March 2026 suggests that:
 - overall London-related posting activity increased by around 7%, while
 - 'London in decline' narratives increased by around 150–200%, and
 - migration-related narratives referencing London increased by over 350%.
- There are clear signs of coordinated and inauthentic activity. These include high-volume, repetitive posting and the use of AI-generated content to produce and amplify misleading, emotive or unverified claims.
- A range of platforms and actors appear to be involved, both within the UK and internationally. This includes extreme right-wing groups in the UK, as well as accounts aligned with Russian or Chinese state interests and US-related political movements.

Methodology

The research collected and analysed open-source online communications from a range of sources, channels and chatrooms linked to state and non-state actors.

- It combined analysis of online media using proprietary communications and mapping tools with X (formerly Twitter) API data to validate trends and patterns of diffusion. It was also informed by semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders affected by online misinformation and disinformation in London.
- Data were drawn from mainstream platforms – including X, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit and YouTube – and fringe platforms such as Telegram, VK and Weibo. The period of analysis was 1 March 2024 to 31 March 2026.
- Sensitive metadata and personal data were removed prior to analysis. Data were analysed using proprietary, machine-led and AI-enabled tools, with findings validated by experts in open-source intelligence (OSINT) analysis.

¹ This annex supports a rapid GLA City Intelligence [review of recent research and policy literature](#).

Most of the research was based on a structured sample of data and networks. Access to platform data is uneven and has become more restricted, with API changes, paid access and limits on scraping reducing coverage. There is also limited transparency over moderation and algorithmic systems. Findings should therefore be treated as indicative rather than comprehensive.

More consistent access to platform data would improve the evidence base and support stronger independent analysis.²

Headline trends

The research found that key London-focused narratives used within misleading or coordinated online activity increased between 2024 and 2026 – with increases in overall volume and a shift towards more persistent, less purely event-driven patterns of activity.

For example, analysis of X API data using keyword-based Boolean searches supported this pattern. Between March 2024 and March 2026, the research found that:

- ‘London in decline’ narratives increased by approximately 150–200%
- migration-related narratives referencing London increased by over 350%

Over the same period, overall posting on X referencing London increased by only 7%, indicating that activity relating to these narratives grew disproportionately.³ Similar trends were evident in a structured sample of data across wider platforms.⁴

Key narrative areas

Within this broader trend, the research identified and analysed a number of recurring narrative topics.⁵ While distinct, these were increasingly used and combined within a shared framing of London as unsafe or in decline. Topics highlighted included:

- Public order and ‘London in decline’ narratives, including: violence against women and girls; phone snatching and knife crime
- Migration, Islamisation and demographic replacement narratives, including: ‘no-go zones’ and sharia law; migrant accommodation and local opposition
- lower-volume but persistent narratives relating to public health, climate and LGBTQ+ issues.

Across the period of analysis, activity typically peaked in response to specific incidents or events (eg, public disorder, protests or high-profile cases). However, over the past

² Visibility is also limited in private or encrypted online spaces.

³ Estimates are based on keyword-defined samples of X posts over two time periods and should be interpreted as indicative, as results are sensitive to query design, time windows and event-related activity.

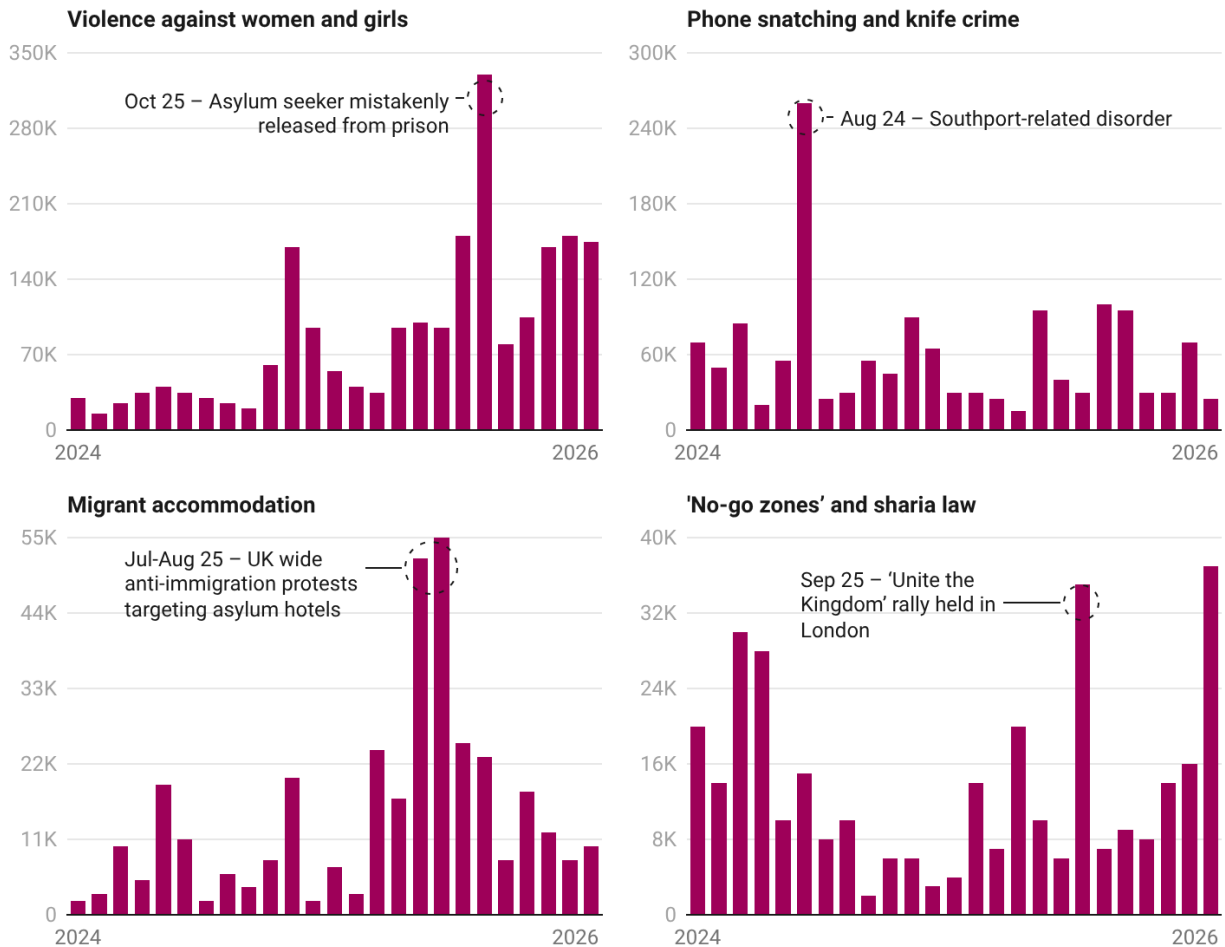
⁴ These findings are also consistent with wider evidence of increasing narratives describing London as ‘dangerous’ or ‘lawless’. See: Evening Standard (2026) [‘London is not what it was’: How social media accounts are changing the narrative of the capital](#).

⁵ Identified through keyword-based searches, including language commonly used within these narratives. They do not capture the full range of online discussion and trends should be interpreted as indicative.

two years, these spikes also occurred alongside higher underlying baseline levels in several narratives. Figure 1 illustrates these patterns across selected narratives.

Figure 1: Trends in selected London-related narratives on X, 2024–2026

Monthly volume of selected London-related narratives on X, based on keyword searches, March 2024 – March 2026



Note: vertical axes use different scales; charts show trends and relative change, not direct comparisons of volume between topics

Source: GLA City Intelligence analysis of research based on X API data • Created with Datawrapper

Tactics and procedures

In analysing how these narratives are produced and shared, the research found evidence of high-volume, repetitive online communication activity showing clear signs of coordination and inauthenticity. This included the use of AI-generated or scripted content and behaviours designed to maximise visibility and, in some cases, revenue generation on platforms such as Facebook and X.

It also identified a set of common tactics and procedures used to shape, or which affected the spread of, misleading online content.

Tactics and procedures for content manipulation and misattribution

- **Time and place distortion** – real events recast as taking place in London or as recent, including the use of generic footage with local cues or by reframing older incidents as current developments. For example, a US-based X account reshared footage from Bolton in 2024, falsely presenting it as a current incident of Muslim violence in London in January 2026.
- **Context stripping** – genuine content edited or presented without key background (time, location, circumstances), including through selective editing or omission, altering interpretation without necessarily involving fabrication. For example, a UK-based X account shared a video claiming to show ‘Somalis’ filming an execution in London (January 2026), omitting that the footage was staged by a TikTok streamer as shock content.
- **Emotional or viral framing** – sensational language and ‘breaking’ framing used to increase urgency and engagement, often presenting content as immediate or credible and reinforcing crisis narratives. In a sample dataset, use of ‘breaking’ alongside London rose by 19% between March 2024 and March 2026, indicating increased use of urgency-based framing.

Tactics and procedures for spreading mis/disinformation at scale

- **Content production at scale** – coordinated networks post identical or near-identical content across accounts, often simultaneously, including AI-generated or lightly-edited recycled material. For example, three monetised X accounts repeated the same false claim about London New Year’s Eve celebrations within four hours on 1 January 2026, generating over 155,000 views.
- **Network amplification** – platform features and incentives support rapid spread. On X, monetisation drives coordinated, high-volume posting of near-identical content, while on Facebook users are directed from large groups into newly created or repurposed groups aligned to current narratives. For example, a network of 32 Facebook pages (one per London borough) was repurposed on 17 May 2024 from ULEZ-focused pages to appear as local activist groups.
- **Cross-platform seeding** – content often originates in Telegram channels with more explicit framing, before being adapted for X or Facebook using softer language. Links between platforms create feedback loops, moving narratives from fringe spaces into wider audiences.

Networks and actors

Key actors seeding and amplifying this type of content were identified using consistent analytical criteria – including analysis of network patterns, narrative behaviour and location information – with validation by OSINT experts.

It is important to note that not all content analysed through the research showed a clear or consistent affiliation. However, the following actors were assessed as active in promoting or amplifying misleading content related to London:

- Extreme-Right Wing (ERW) and UK ERW groups
- Russian-aligned or 'Pro-Kremlin' groups
- Beijing-aligned groups
- MAGA-aligned groups.

The relative prominence of actors varied across narratives. For example, within the structured sample over the two-year period from March 2024 to March 2026, UK ERW ecosystems appeared to be among the most prominent contributors to several clusters, particularly those relating to crime and violence against women and girls. They accounted for around 39% of phone snatching and knife crime-related content and 25% of violence against women and girls content.

Additional networks were also identified across multiple geographies. This included a Vietnam-based Facebook network of at least 42 pages, with a combined following of around 1.25 million. It used repeated, AI-generated imagery and coordinated high-volume posting, including impersonation of local media outlets, to produce emotive content at scale. The network targeted London and the Mayor, framing the city as a site of governance failure and housing injustices.

Further networks included a Sri Lanka-based content farm producing monetised AI-generated posts and a Nigeria-based cluster impersonating UK media outlets. Common tactics across these networks included impersonation of credible sources, use of sensationalist headlines, and AI-generated imagery to maximise engagement.