2022 Piyaoba Quarter 1 Chinese language Disinformaiton Report

(2022/01/01 - 3/31)

PiYaoBa is the first Chinese language fact-check website to counter the spread of right-wing disinformation, systematically monitor and document disinformation, and track key actors and narratives across multiple platforms. These include YouTube, Twitter, and WeChat, a Chinese mobile app with 3.8 million users in the United States. since its launch, CAA has identified more than 80 disinformation channels mostly on WeChat and YouTube, mainly run by first-generation Chinese immigrants.

CAA launched our pioneering Chinese Digital Engagement (CDE) program in 2019 to engage Chinese speakers in the United States on progressive issues like affirmative action, immigration reform, and racial justice. PiYaoBa builds on Justice Patch and three WeChat channels.

The quarterly Piyaoba report aims to systematically sort out the scale, topics, platforms and latest features and trends of Chinese right-wing disinformation. We hope to provide insight and guidance for our subsequent combating disinformation efforts, as well as give a reference for Chinese ethnic media, community leaders and researchers who are concerned about the issues.

Executive Summary

From January 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022. Piyaoba team has monitored a total of 54 pieces of disinformation on Chinese digital platforms, including WeChat, Twitter, and YouTube. These disinformation mainly cover topics including the Russian-Ukrain war, the COVID-19 vaccine, racial justice, gender equality, homeless and immigrants. It should be noted that these 54 pieces of disinformation are not the entire number, on the same topic, we only included the most representative and widely spread ones for analysis.

Of the 54 major disinformation we recorded in the first quarter of 2022, more than 80% were spread through WeChat. The "centrality" of WeChat is related to the distribution of active right-wing Chinese language disinformation sites: 51% of the active accounts we monitored so far came from WeChat, 21% from Twitter, and 18% from YouTube. In terms of content, 36.5% of these disinformation in the first quarter were focused on COVID-19 and vaccines, 19.2% on the Russian-Ukrain war.The other top topics including immigration (especially undocumented immigrants), homeless and crime.

We use the following methods to identify and document Chinese language disinformation:

1) Document active Chinese language mis/disinformation sites and influencers and indentify key disseminators on a daily basic, especially the ones related to social justice issues on WeChat, YouTube, Twitter, Weibo, and Chinese websites.

2)Collecting and building our disinformation keywords.

3)Conduct regular manual searches across active mis/disinformation sites and influencers with our key words.

Our disinformation monitoring keywords covers issues that Chinese American community members cares most, such as COVID-19, the immigration, education,discrimination against Asian Americans, gun control, crime, community safety etc, with a particular focus on the information related to social justice.

4) Analysis the impact of disinformation, mainly the number of reads, comments, if spread across multiple platforms to decide the need for fact-checking.

5) Using an English social media listening tool, Critical Mention, to monitor English right-wing disinformation and compare it with the Chinese language disinformation to observe and document the dissemination paths of disinformation in Chinese and English.

In terms of the characteristics of the spread of disinformation in Chinese-American community, we found that in addition to some "original" mid/disinformation from overseas Chinese ethnic media or social media, a large portion of disinformation actually came from the English media. And these disinformation came from English media has formed a typical dissemination path: from English right-wing media or tabloids to Chinese tweets (translated) or screenshots to WeChat or telegraph groups,

then become WeChat public articles or Chinese website articles, in the end, these articles go back to the WeChat group or telegraph group again. In addition, we noticed that in the first quarter of 2022, information from the Chinese community also began to actively spread to the English side, typified by the Great Translation Movement.

In terms of trends in Chinese mins/ disinformation, we found that: first, the China state media interventions and political propaganda on major international political topics are rapidly increasing and are dramatically affecting overseas Chinese communities, such as the COVID-19 and vaccines and the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Secondly, the advanced video editing technolies, AI "deep fake" technology are making Chinese language disinformation more and more sophisticated and difficult to identify.

CAA's Chinese Digital Engagement (CDE) team has debunked 30 of these 54 major disinformation in the first quarter on Piyaoba and our WeChat public accounts in the form of "Disinformation alters" and "In-depth fact-checking".

## The scale, source, and key content areas of Chinese langugae disinformation

In the first quarter of 2022, active sites spreading Chinese language disinformation and fake news continued to be concentrated on WeChat, followed by Chinese Twitter and YouTube channels.

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假新闻账号各平台分布 Fake News Accounts by Platform (S12022)

电报群 Telegram
6.0%

中文网站 Website
4.0%

推特 Twitter
21.0%

Youtube
18.0%
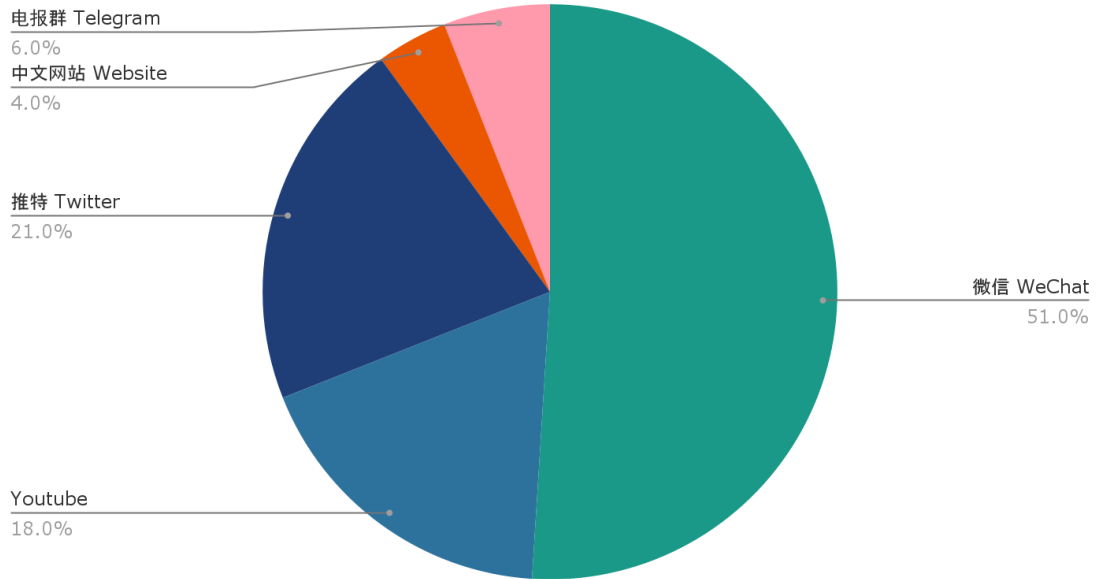
微信 WeChat
51.0%

Of the 54 pieces of disinformation we monitored in the first quarter, 81% came from WeChat and 13% from Twitter.

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假新闻分布平台 Fake News Distribution Platform (S1 2022)

微博 Weibo
1.9%
YouTube
3.7%
推特 Twitter
13.0%

微信
81.5%
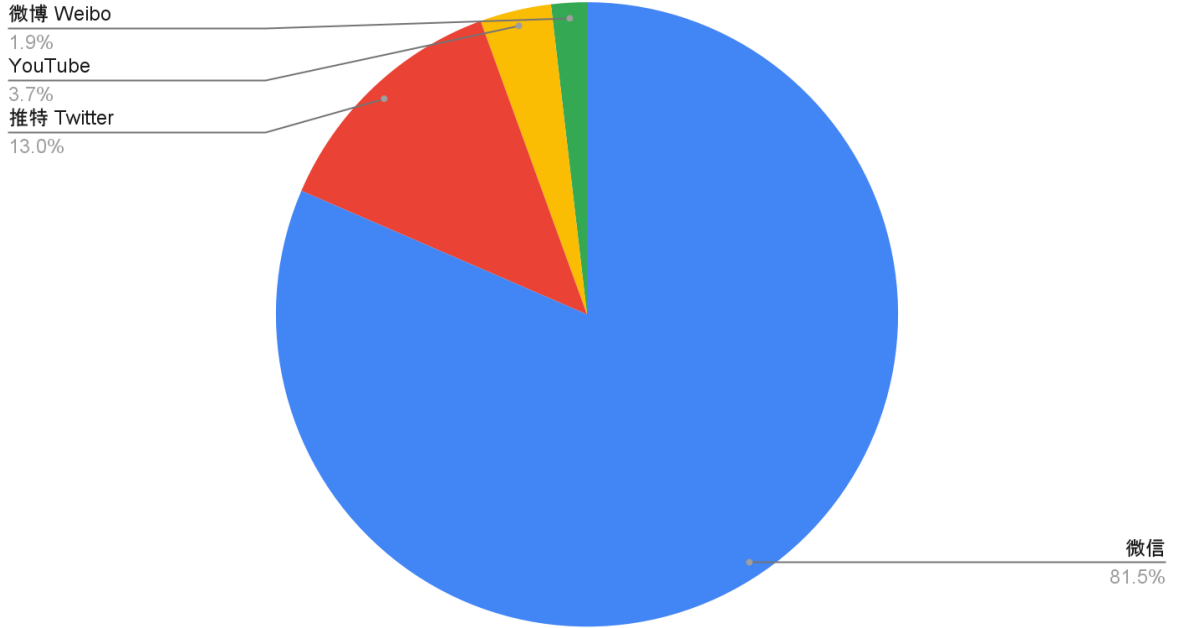
The 54 pieces of Chinese language disinformation in the first quarter focused on the COVID-19 and the Russian-Ukrain war, while the rest focused most on immigration (especially undocumented immigrants), homeless people (and people who has mental health issues), and crime.

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假新闻分布领域 Fake News Distribution Area (S1 2022)

性别 Gender
5.8%

种族 Race
3.8%

移民 Immigrant
9.6%

川普 Trump
3.8%

游民 Homeless
7.7%

拜登 Biden
5.8%

立法 Legislation
1.9%

犯罪 Crime
5.8%

新冠 Covid-19
36.5%

俄乌 Russia Ukraine War
19.2%
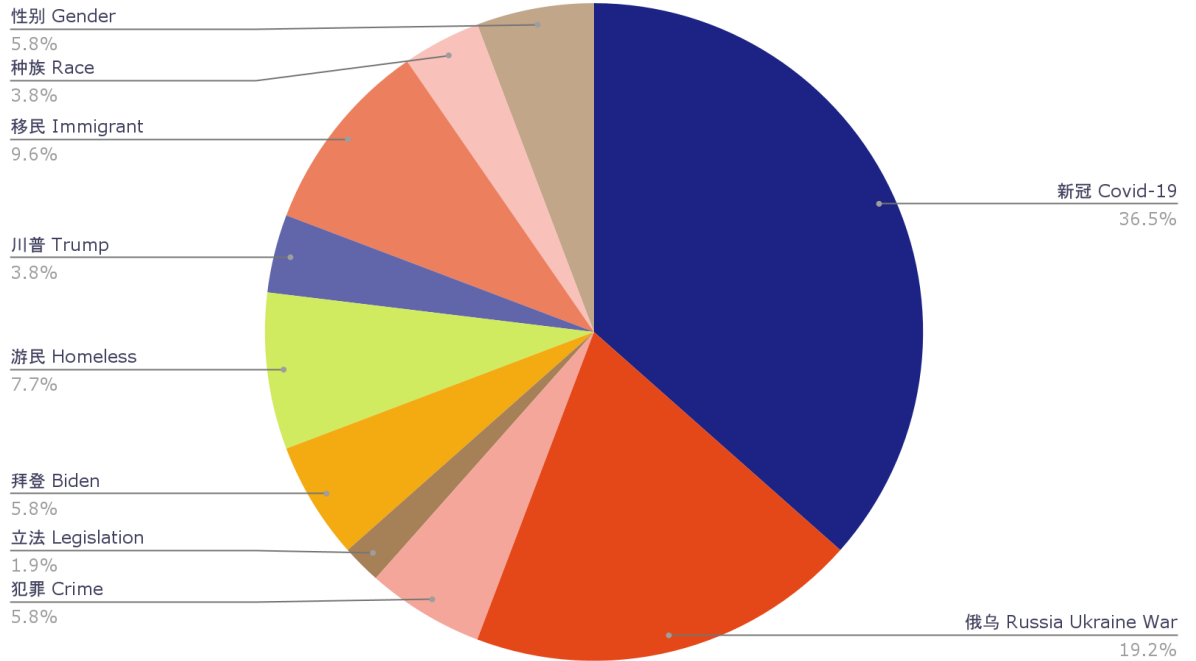
Since much of the Chinese language disinformation about the Russian-Ukrain war were influenced by Chinese mainland state media, we excluded the war related disinformation, and list the rest of top 10 most widely spread disinformation in the Chinese American community in the first quarter of 2022, these disinformation related to immigration, homelessness, crime, vaccine and drug addiction issues.

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Fake News Top 10 (S1 2022)

100000	
75000	
50000	
25000	
0	

UN Funds Illegal Immigration | San Francisco asks residents to take in homeless | Texas addict moves to California | California SB57 legal drug room | Covid was made by Moderna | Chinese are the biggest victims of math reform | Pfizer vaccine causes 1000+ side effects | Pfizer vaccine only 12% effective in children | "Zero dollar purchase" into "free grab"