

Information disorder around the world

BBC Media Action has conducted research into information disorder across the regions we work – from Nigeria to Afghanistan to Indonesia – aiming to understand how audiences perceive mis- and disinformation and how it affects their lives.

Context

Advances in technology, increasing access to both traditional and social media, and changes in how people interact with information (e.g. declining levels of trust in news and people

information sharing) are propelling the spread of false information at a speed and scale not seen before. This has resulted in information ecosystems that are dangerously affected by

of survey respondents in Tunisia (particularly men and respondents in rural areas) that information is shared quickly than that

discussions in Libya and Algeria reflected a similar trend. In Cambodia, 34% of survey respondents reported sharing posts or links to content without reading it first – a trend that was particularly salient among young respondents. And in Sierra Leone, some focus group participants indicated that they were comfortable knowingly sharing disinformation as long as they perceived that it supported a cause they cared about. This reflects focus group discussions in Tunisia where participants said they would trust information if it aligns with their existing beliefs.

- o Media literacy: The research also highlights that audiences do not necessarily feel equipped to effectively respond to information disorder. Participants in Ethiopia and Zambia, for example, highlighted a lack of digital media literacy and education among the general population.

This is coupled with overall lower levels of education in some countries, as highlighted by participants in Ethiopia, Zambia, Somalia, and Solomon Islands. Some people in these environments also indicated that they felt they lacked a sufficient variety of sources that would allow them to cross-check information effectively, as was the case in Zambia and Somalia.



Key implications

These findings show that audiences across countries where BBC Media Action works are aware of information disorder and its risks. However, they do not always feel equipped to effectively mitigate those

risks by providing media literacy programming and supporting public interest media.

There remain gaps in understanding how widespread belief in mis- and disinformation is. Our ongoing projects that ask audiences about specific narratives will help fill this gap, and this should be replicated in more contexts.

Our research has identified a variety of vulnerable groups across the countries where we work. These include individuals with lower educational attainment, who also lack key digital literacy education and skills, as well as hyper-engaged users, who are motivated to share information quickly before checking their facts. All of the vulnerable groups we identified should be priority groups for future interventions in their respective countries.

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