

LEBANON SITUATION REPORT

A monthly situation report aimed at tackling COVID-19 rumors to debunk the "infodemic"

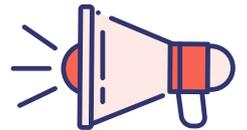
May 2022 | #3

About RiT

Rooted in Trust is collecting, analyzing and responding to rumors in 10 countries with generous support from USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). We focus on equipping journalists and humanitarian communicators with the tools they need in the languages they prefer, to combat rumors and misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How we do it

We identify and analyze rumors to help humanitarian actors and health workers better inform their Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) strategies.



Situation by the Numbers (WHO)

- Covid-19 cases reported during May 2022: **2007**
- Latest reported cases per day: **77**
- Number of Quarantined: **798**
- Vaccine doses during May: **22853**
- First dose: **7625**
- Second dose: **5732**
- Third dose: **193**

Introduction

According to WHO, Lebanon is now at Level 2 of community transmission. Meanwhile, the general public's concerns have been drawn away from the COVID-19 situation due to the parliamentary elections and ongoing economic crisis. However, high vigilance continues to be recommended with a focus on social distancing measures and increased vaccine coverage particularly among already vulnerable population groups.



Data Overview

With a total of 51 unique rumors collected for the month of May 2022, we have noticed that misinformation trends continue to revolve around the top sub-theme of "Long-COVID" including the risk of blood clots after having contracted the disease in addition to vaccine-related rumors speculating that getting vaccinated may cause death.

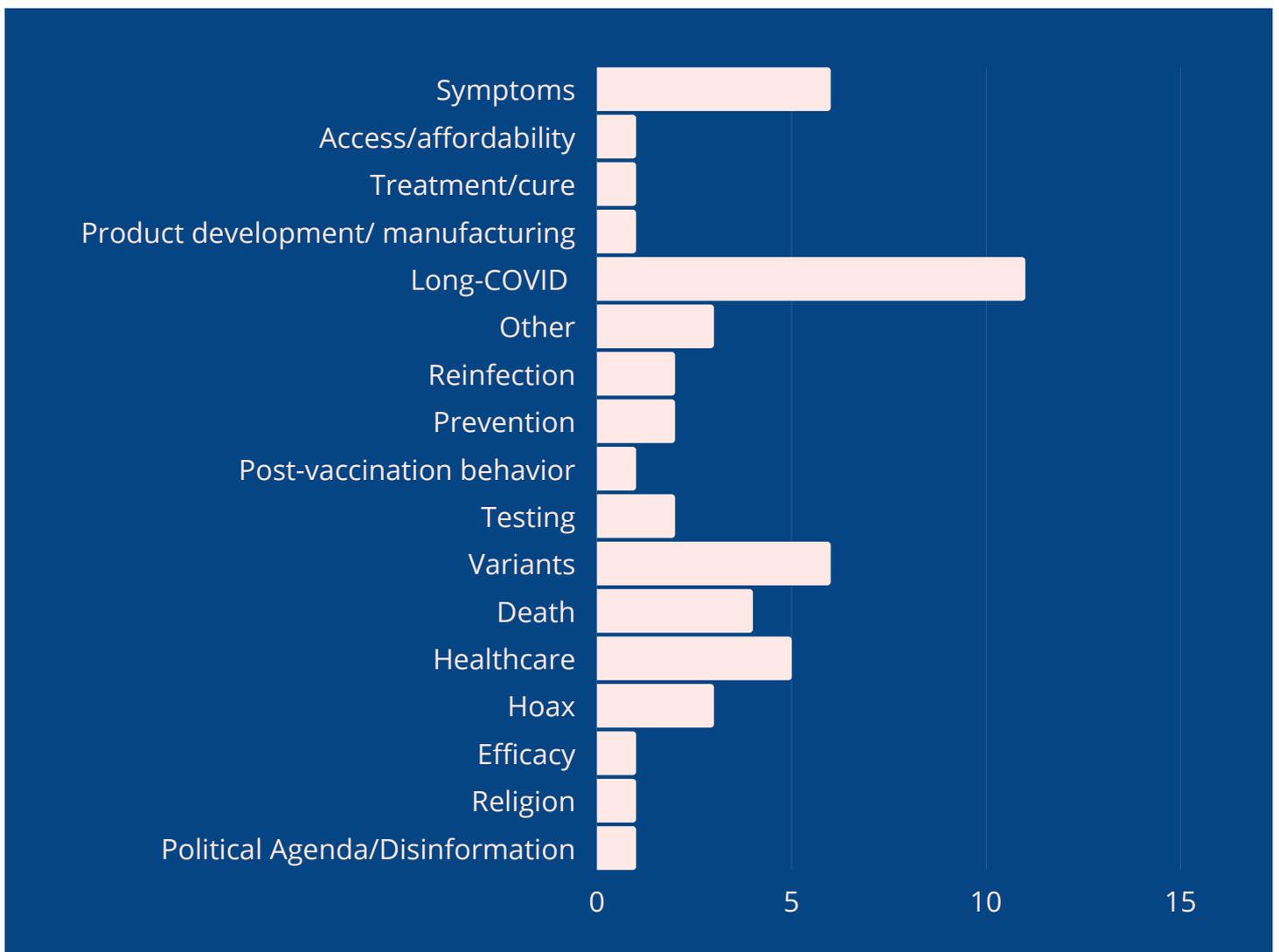
Offline rumors collected by partners among the Syrian refugee community stated that the second vaccine dose in particular could result in death within a year (down from two years in previous rumor trends). Many other rumors also focused on the vaccine's impact on fertility which is particularly worrying considering the spike in maternal mortality risks in the country, specifically among COVID-19 positive pregnant Syrian refugee women.

Around end of May, we also noticed a new trend of rumors linked to the Monkeypox disease. Much of the misinformation directly links Monkeypox to the COVID-19 pandemic claiming both are closely intertwined even though they are scientifically different from one another. Many of these rumors also focused on the LGBTQ community claiming that Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) were spreading the virus, thus resulting in further stigma.

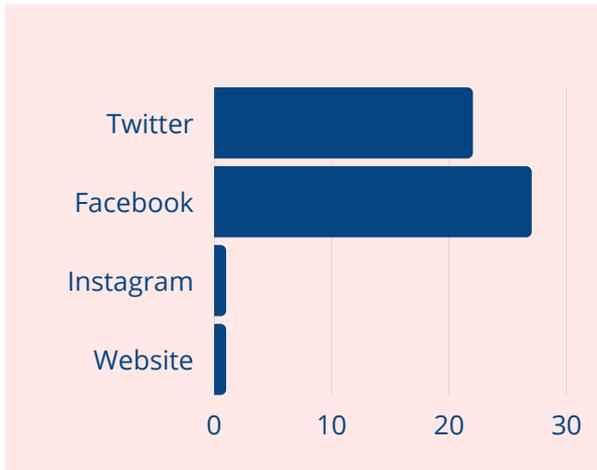
Meanwhile, news headlines continue to be dominated by political and economic debates in this post-election period, while the general population is neglecting to continue protecting itself from COVID-19 and other emerging health risks.

KEY THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

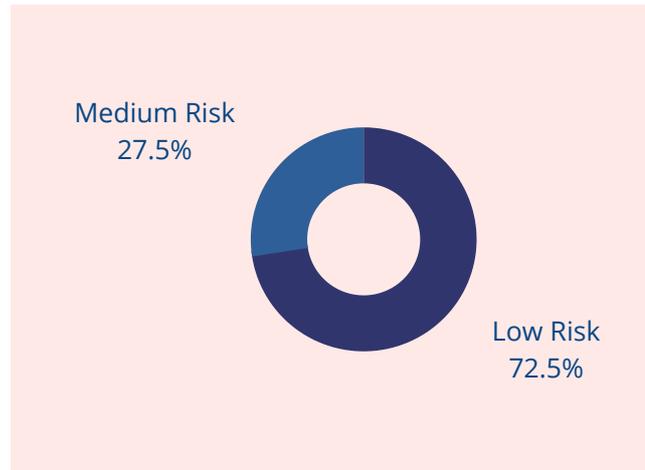
Total Number of Rumors Online for May 2022: 51



Channels



Risk Levels



Total Number of Rumors Offline for May 2022: 160

Analysis

The month of May 2022 has seen a significant decrease in COVID-19 rumors both offline and online. This might be linked to the parliamentary elections which took place in mid-May and dominated headlines in the country where social cohesion remains extremely fragile while corruption at the highest political levels also persists.

The COVID-19 misinformation trends we were able to gather were primarily linked to studies about vaccine behavior and testing. People seemed to be particularly concerned with long-term vaccine effects and conspiracy theories linked to potential death after receiving the vaccine, its second dose in particular. This could be linked to a growing lack of trust in public health institutions' response and awareness efforts, as they are operating at very limited capacity due to ongoing economic challenges lack of resources in the country...

As for offline rumors collected by partners in the field, only 29 out of 160 survey participants believed in the effectiveness of the vaccine while others feared vaccine symptoms, particularly death and infertility.

Many survey participants also admitted to getting vaccinated for work or travel purposes only, and despite not being entirely convinced about getting vaccinated. Again this highlights a lasting lack of trust in the public health response while vulnerable population groups - Syrian refugees in particular - only comply with health measures for mobility and work purposes directly linked to livelihood or income.

Lastly, new rumor trends are also linking the Monkeypox to COVID-19 and its vaccine, claiming it was a direct consequence of the pandemic. This highlights the need for further awareness on Monkeypox which is a viral disease. Another worrying trend is the circulation of hate speech and increased stigma around the LGBTQ population - men who have sex with men (MSM) in particular - claiming they are to blame for the spread of Monkeypox which can be sexually transmitted. This highlights the need for further awareness on the issue, in addition to increased health and protection services for members of the LGBTQ community in case of further outbreaks.

Contact

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For more information on the project, visit
<https://internews.org/resource/rooted-trust-rumor-bulletins-lebanon/>