



Internews

COMMUNITY BULLETIN #3  
MAY 2022

The Sudan Rooted in Trust Project aims to address COVID-19 rumors, misconceptions, and misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media. This bulletin is based on an analysis of 309 posts collected in Arabic between 3 April and 11 May 2022, from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

In this week's bulletin we shed light on a variety of rumors, such as vaccines cause HIV Aids and miscarriages, Johnson & Johnson affects libido, Americans refused the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and Pfizer employees are exempt from taking the vaccine. This regular collection of community insights aims to address questions and common misperceptions about COVID-19 found across Sudan. It is meant to help volunteers and field staff provide trustworthy information, and resources to help respond to their communities' concerns and information needs around COVID-19 and the vaccines.

### COVID-19 in Sudan

As of 25 May 2022, the official COVID-19 statistics rose to 62,251. A total of 7,096,087 vaccine doses have been administered, with about 16% of Sudan's population vaccinated with at least one dose. In March 2022, the WHO announced that only 15% of Africa's population has been vaccinated and has set a target of 70% by June 2022. So far, only two countries have met this target. Sudan aims to vaccinate 20% of its population by June 2022, and 70% by the end of 2022.

### How are rumors collected?

Misconceptions, questions, and comments about COVID-19 were collected by Internews' analysts, who compiled and assessed feedback gathered from Sudanese social media. The rumors, perceptions and misinformation identified have been assessed to be the most prevalent or damaging to the health response. Selection was based on the level of engagement and potential harm to the community.



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

COVID-19 HOTLINE - SERVING ALL  
AREAS OF SUDAN: 9090



MINISTRY OF HEALTH FACEBOOK  
PAGE

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FMOH.SUDAN](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FMOH.SUDAN)



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

[WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR](http://WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR)



COVID-19 IS REAL AND THERE ARE NEW CASES DIAGNOSED ALL THE TIME!  
BE SAFE: MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCE, WASH YOUR HANDS, WEAR A MASK

### WHAT ARE RUMORS?

Rumors are currently circulating stories or UNVERIFIED content of uncertain or doubtful information collected from first-hand sources within the community which could take the shape of a question, criticism, or general comments on a situation or topic. Rumors can be tricky because they might have some element of truth in them!

RUMOR RISK LEVEL



HIGH



MEDIUM



LOW

RUMOUR  
ANSWER

## RUMOUR #1

“As soon as we took the third dose, we got Corona. Beware everyone, they are deceiving you 🤖 🙅🏻 🙅🏻 This is meant to lure you” Woman -Facebook

The COVID-19 vaccines can help prevent severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19, and COVID-related death. However, even after getting vaccinated you can still contract COVID-19, but the vaccine can greatly reduce your chances of developing a serious illness from the virus. It is worth noting that some people may experience some side-effects after getting vaccinated that are often described as COVID-like symptoms, such as fever and muscle ache, but these symptoms will only last for a few days.

ANSWER

The WHO clarifies that the COVID-19 vaccines cannot infect people with the Coronavirus, since they do not contain a live virus. Many vaccines such as the ones given to infants at birth have many doses. Generally, two or three-dosing vaccines, are meant to enhance our immunity by keeping our defense system (antibodies) at an alert state for any foreign body that might enter our system, such as the COVID-19 virus. For example, COVID-19 booster shots have been proven effective in preventing severe illness from the Omicron variant.

Currently, booster shots are offered to healthcare workers, those with chronic disease ages 45 and above, people travelling abroad, and those ages 18 and above. For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, you can speak to a healthcare worker by calling the national pandemic hotline at 9090, or by visiting the Ministry of Health Facebook page to stay up to date on the available vaccines and their dosing schedule.

HIGH RISK

## RUMOUR #2

## VACCINE SAFETY

“No, I am begging you, no one should get vaccinated, the vaccine’s harmfulness outweighs the benefits, that’s if it has any benefits in the first place. It causes abortion and AIDS..”  
Woman -Facebook

Vaccines have been around for hundreds of years. Immunizations are an important source of defense against numerous diseases, and millions of lives have been saved due to vaccinations. The COVID-19 vaccines help our immune systems develop antibodies that recognize the virus when it enters our bodies and destroy it.

ANSWER

COVID-19 vaccines have been authorized for use on pregnant women in Sudan. According to Dr Yagoub Mohamed Abdelmagid, Consultant of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Fertility at the Nile Center for Fertility in Khartoum 2, COVID-19 vaccines are safe for the fetus and women during pregnancy. They play an important role in protecting pregnant women from developing severe illness due to a COVID-19 infection and the complications that could occur from contracting the virus.

AIDS is a chronic condition, that can be life-threatening as it can weaken your immune system, and the human body’s ability to fight infections or diseases. AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, authorized COVID-19 vaccines do not contain nor cause HIV or AIDS.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, please visit the Ministry of Health’s Facebook page. For more information on HIV AIDS, please visit UNAIDS Sudan page. Also, if you would like to learn more about the available vaccines in Sudan or to report any adverse events after taking the COVID-19 vaccine, please call the Ministry of Health hotline number at 9090.

HIGH RISK

**RUMOUR #3**

**TREATMENT/CURE**

“Donald Trump: Drink disinfectants to kill the Coronavirus..” Unknown -Twitter

Disinfectants such as bleach can be used to kill viruses on surfaces. However, under no circumstances should you take any type of disinfectants, as drinking them can lead to disability and even death. Disinfectants will not kill the virus in your body, as COVID-19 targets your respiratory system, so consuming disinfectants will only harm your internal organs.

We should refrain from sharing rumors and disinformation, as this could have negative effects on our community. These types of rumors are dangerous, and people should not resort to drinking disinfectants, as they can cause permanent damage and lead to death.

Make sure to get the information you need about COVID-19 and ways to protect yourself from contracting the virus from trusted sources, such as the Ministry of Health website.

The best way to protect ourselves and others from contracting the virus is by seeking a COVID-19 vaccination and diligently practicing the recommended measures, such as wearing a mask or face covering, and maintaining a physical distance of 1 meter from others.

**HIGH RISK**

ANSWER

**POST-VACCINATION BEHAVIOR**

**RUMOUR #4**

“They said so (Johnson & Johnson affects libido)” Man -Facebook

According to the World Health Organization, there are no studies that suggest COVID-19 vaccines affect libido or fertility in men and women. It is important to note that COVID-19 vaccines, like any vaccine, can cause mostly mild side effects, such as pain on the injection site, fever, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills and diarrhea.

Dr Muna Abdel Aziz, UK-based Sudanese Public Health Director, explains that several factors can impact sexual drive, such as fatigue or stress, or pre-existing health conditions, like diabetes and high blood pressure. A recent scientific study shows that vaccines are safe for use on both men and women, and do not impact sexual drive or fertility. The researchers encourage people to get vaccinated to protect themselves from contracting a COVID-19 infection.

COVID-19 vaccines have been developed and they have proven to be effective in fighting the severe symptoms that can be caused by a COVID-19 infection. In extremely rare case, some people have experienced adverse events following a COVID-19 vaccination. Doctors continue to recommend vaccinations against COVID-19 as the benefits outweigh the potential risks. To report adverse events following a COVID-19 vaccination, please call: 9090.

Please visit the Ministry of Health’s Facebook page for the updated list of vaccination centers in Sudan.

**HIGH RISK**

ANSWER

## RUMOUR #5

## VACCINE AGENDA

“How would you feel if you found out that Pfizer employees are exempt from the vaccine”  
Woman -Twitter (Healthcare Professional)

ANSWER

According to [VERIFY](#), US-based fact checking website tackling misinformation, Pfizer Inc. requires COVID-19 vaccinations for their employees or their participation in “[regular weekly COVID-19 testing](#)”. There are other institutions in the US that have vaccine mandates, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and The White House. These procedures were put in place to protect employees at their workplace and the communities they work with.

In some countries, proof of COVID-19 vaccinations or routine negative PCR results are mandatory at the workplace, in order to keep these spaces safe and COVID-free, while increasing vaccination rates and achieving public health goals. While in most countries, like Sudan, vaccines are not mandatory but recommended and encouraged by health authorities. However, many countries have imposed restrictions in accessing certain spaces, such as restaurants, malls, mosques, and workplaces, to ensure these spaces are safe for all community members. In Sudan, at the early stages of the pandemic in 2020, a three-month lockdown was imposed, however since COVID protective measures and restrictions have been left to the discretion of employers.

As a prevention method, vaccinations remain the primary and most effective way to keep our communities and ourselves safe. To find the nearest vaccination center to you, please visit the [Ministry of Health’s Facebook page](#) for the latest updates.

HIGH RISK

## RUMOUR #6

## VACCINE SAFETY

“They put a nanotechnology device in the vaccine” Man -Facebook

ANSWER

According to the [World Health Organization](#), there are no microchips inside COVID-19 vaccines, and injected vaccines cannot gather information about people or track their movement. The COVID-19 vaccines are considered one of the most important ways to reduce and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. [The Ministry of Health](#) explains that after receiving the vaccine, our immune system is able to recognize the virus as soon as it enters our body, and immunity against it will begin to form to fight and eliminate the virus from our body.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and free. To schedule an appointment to get vaccinated please check the [Ministry of Health’s Facebook page](#) or call the pandemic hotline number at 9090, for any inquiries about COVID-19 vaccines.

MEDIUM RISK

## RUMOUR #7

## EXPIRATION

“A long time ago, we warned you against vaccinations because most of the doses arriving in Africa are corrupted and dangerous. May God heal you and improve the situation”  
Man -Facebook

Since COVID-19 is a relatively new virus, studies are still being conducted to learn more about the virus, and every day scientists discover new aspects of the disease. However, the WHO highlights that there is one fixed rule: “No one is safe until everybody is safe”.

Distribution of the vaccines to low-income and middle-income countries, such as Sudan, are carried out by COVAX facility and in close coordination with the health authorities. Vaccine distribution is carried out under rigorous regulations and safety standards. The COVAX initiative aims to ensure fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across the globe, so countries like Sudan can get an equitable share of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Rumors about expired or corrupted vaccines are dangerous and may increase vaccine hesitancy, as people may avoid accessing a COVID-19 vaccination based on these unfounded reports, which can only prolong the COVID-19 pandemic and increase COVID-related deaths. The Ministry of Health and global partners, like COVAX Facility, WHO and UNICEF, are working closely to ensure vaccines are properly handled and stored, which is essential for effective and safe immunization.

The administration of vaccines is carried out according to globally agreed upon standards and procedures from the factory until it reaches the beneficiary at the recommended temperatures that guarantee the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine. To learn more about how the Ministry of Health is handling the COVID-19 vaccines in Sudan, please visit their Facebook page.

## MEDIUM RISK

## RUMOUR #8

## FASTING

“Good morning, I am asking about the Corona vaccination. Do I have to be fasting, or can I drink tea and water before I receive the vaccine and thank you”  
Woman -Facebook

According to Dr Mohamed AlQurashi, Sudanese Dermatologist actively debunking COVID-19 rumors on social media, fasting does not impact the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine. You do not need to be fasting when getting a COVID-19 vaccination, and you can drink and eat as normal before and after getting vaccinated. However, it is recommended that you stay hydrated after taking the vaccine and monitor any side effects.

While some people will feel fine after receiving the vaccine, some may experience mild to severe side effects. If you experience any adverse side effects (which are extremely rare) after taking the vaccine, please visit the nearest healthcare facility or call the Ministry of Health hotline number at 9090.

## LOW RISK



## RUMOUR #9

## VACCINE SAFETY

“Don’t take the vaccine, the Americans themselves didn’t take the vaccine, this is just a game, I’m warning you” Man -Facebook

ANSWER

COVID-19 is a global pandemic, and so far, it has caused 6,266,324 confirmed deaths worldwide. However, the WHO says the global death toll is much higher and estimates that so far COVID-19 may have killed more than double the officially reported deaths.

Vaccines have been developed to teach our bodies how to recognize the virus and fight it so that we do not develop severe illness that requires hospitalization. The vaccines have also been extremely effective in preventing death due to a COVID-19 illness. Vaccine hesitancy refers to the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite availability. There is a degree of vaccine hesitancy in every country, including the United States. However, according to the WHO, as of 5 May 2022, a total of 570,102,931 vaccine doses have been administered in the US, with over 82 % of the population receiving one vaccination dose.

COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be effective and reliable in combatting severe illness and death even, including from the current dominant Omicron variant. Therefore, vaccines are the best way to protect ourselves and others from developing severe COVID-19 symptoms.

LOW RISK

## RUMOUR #10

## IMMUNITY

“We don’t have covid-19 because of our hot sun” Man -Facebook

ANSWER

Since the beginning of the pandemic, countries that have warmer weather than Sudan reported a higher load of COVID-19 cases and continue to report new COVID-19 infections. For example, in Saudi Arabia, 757,802 confirmed cases have been registered, and 901,440 confirmed cases in the United Arab Emirates in comparison to 62,251 cases in Sudan. Although Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates may experience warmer summers than Sudan, this does not prevent the transmission of COVID-19. It is likely that Sudan’s lower COVID-19 statistics are a result of limitations in testing.

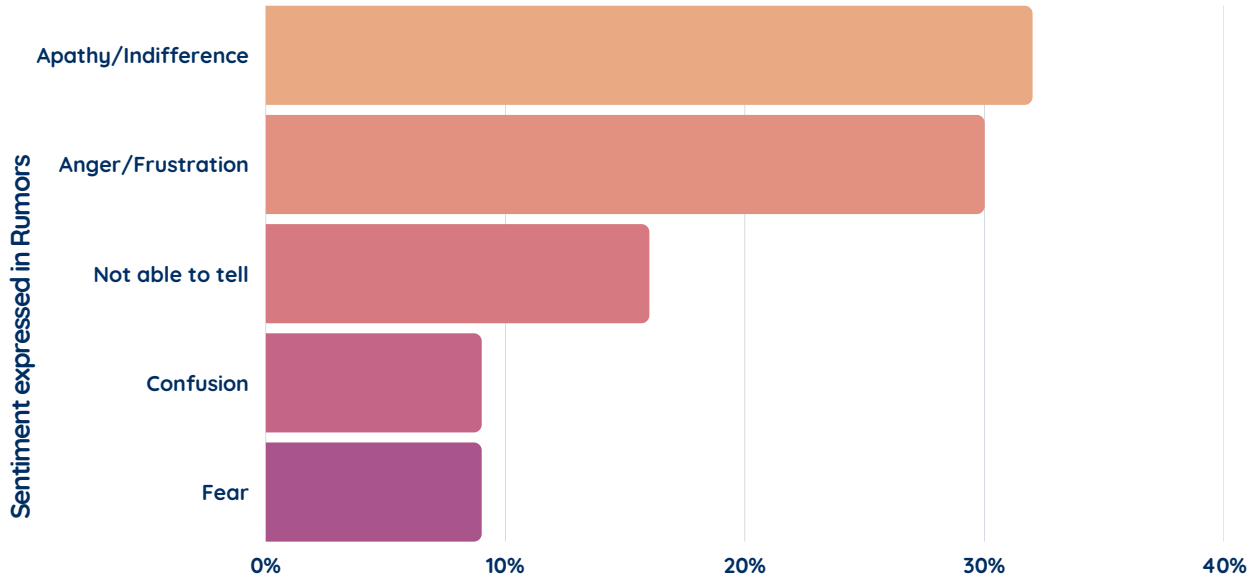
Recent studies show that the virus can survive for up to 20 minutes at temperatures between 60°C and 65°C, which is not only higher than peak temperatures in Sudan, but in any part of the world. According to the WHO, the COVID-19 virus can spread in any climate, including hot and humid weather. The best way to protect ourselves and our communities is by practicing the protective measures set by the Ministry of Health, such as wearing a mask in public or using a face covering, physical distancing, and washing our hands with soap and water.

Wearing a mask or covering your mouth and nose when it’s hot can be uncomfortable, but it is necessary if you’re going to be around people. A cotton fabric is a good choice in hot weather, you can also carry a spare mask or face covering, drink a lot of water to stay hydrated, take breaks by taking off your mask every now and then after stepping away from people, and also make sure to keep the rest of your body cool by wearing lightweight, loose-fitting clothing.

We should refrain from spreading unverified information in our communities, such as downplaying the pandemic, which can discourage people from following the preventative measures, which are necessary as they can help protect us and others from contracting a COVID-19 infection.

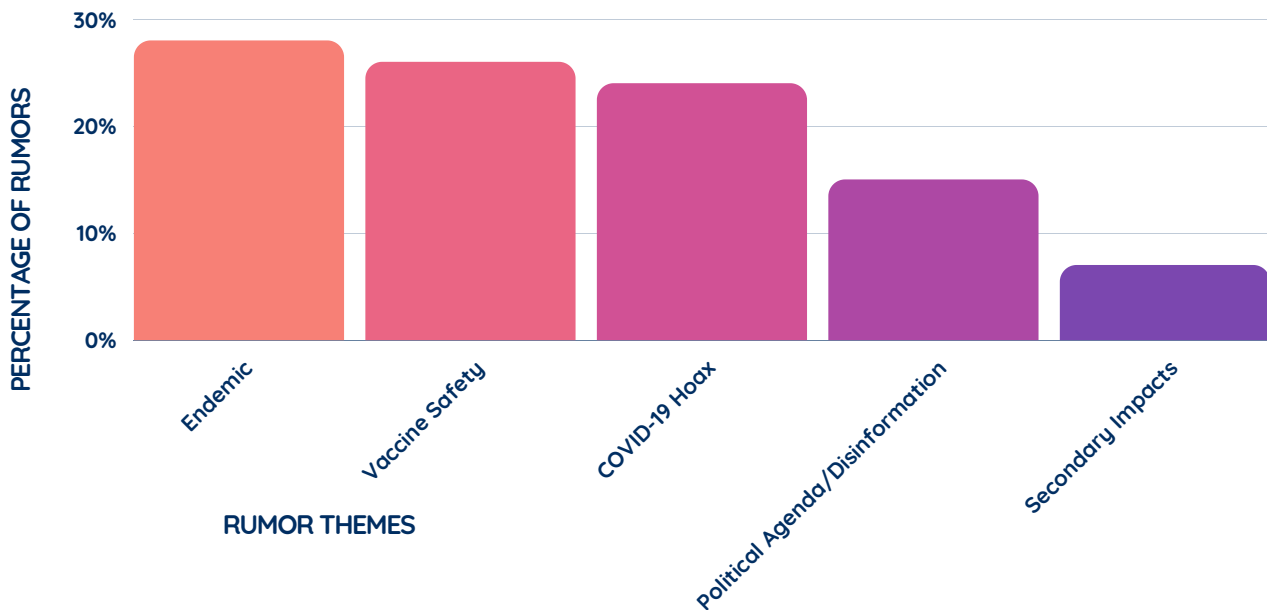
LOW RISK

## Sentiment Analysis of COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumors



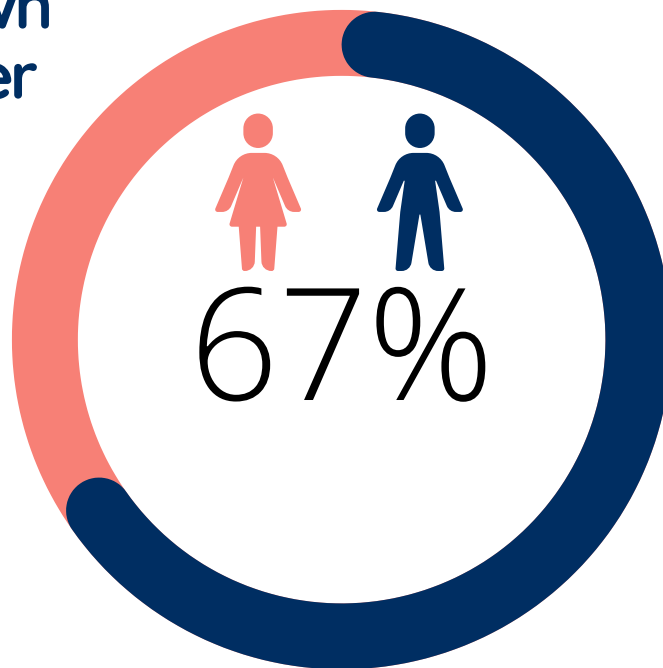
This is an analysis of the emotions expressed in 309 rumors collected in Arabic, between 3 April and 11 May 2022.

## Top COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumor Themes



These are the top 5 rumor themes based on the analysis of 309 posts collected in Arabic, between 3 April and 11 May 2022.

## Rumor Breakdown by Gender



Gender breakdown based on the analysis of 309 rumors collected in Arabic, between 3 April and 11 May 2022

## COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumors on Social Media

Platform breakdown based on the analysis of 309 rumors collected in Arabic, between 3 April and 11 May 2022

