The Dominica Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA):
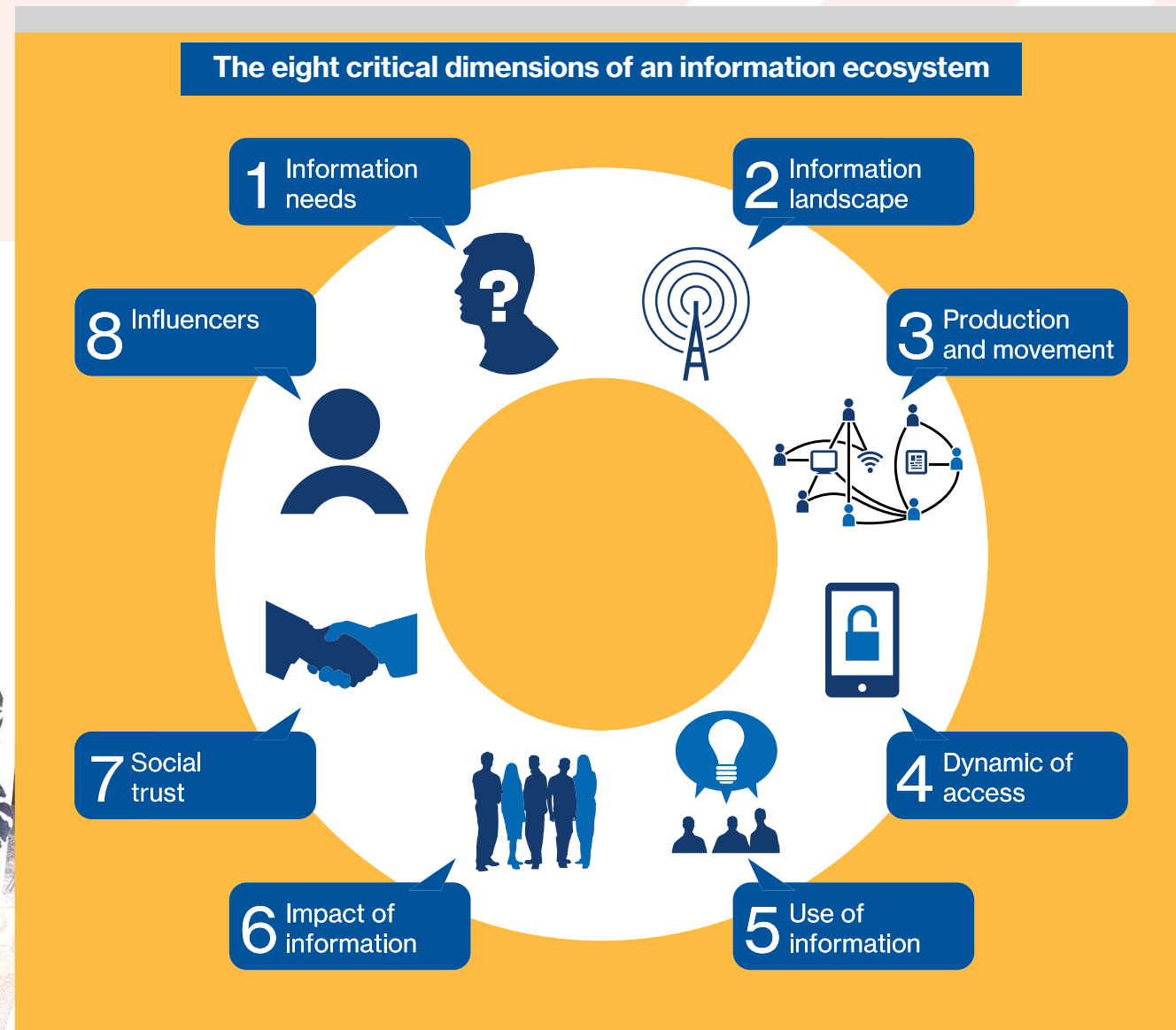
How the flow of information impacts disaster preparedness and response

Internews

clara lionel foundation

RESEARCH MATTERS

Improving Lives through Research that Matters
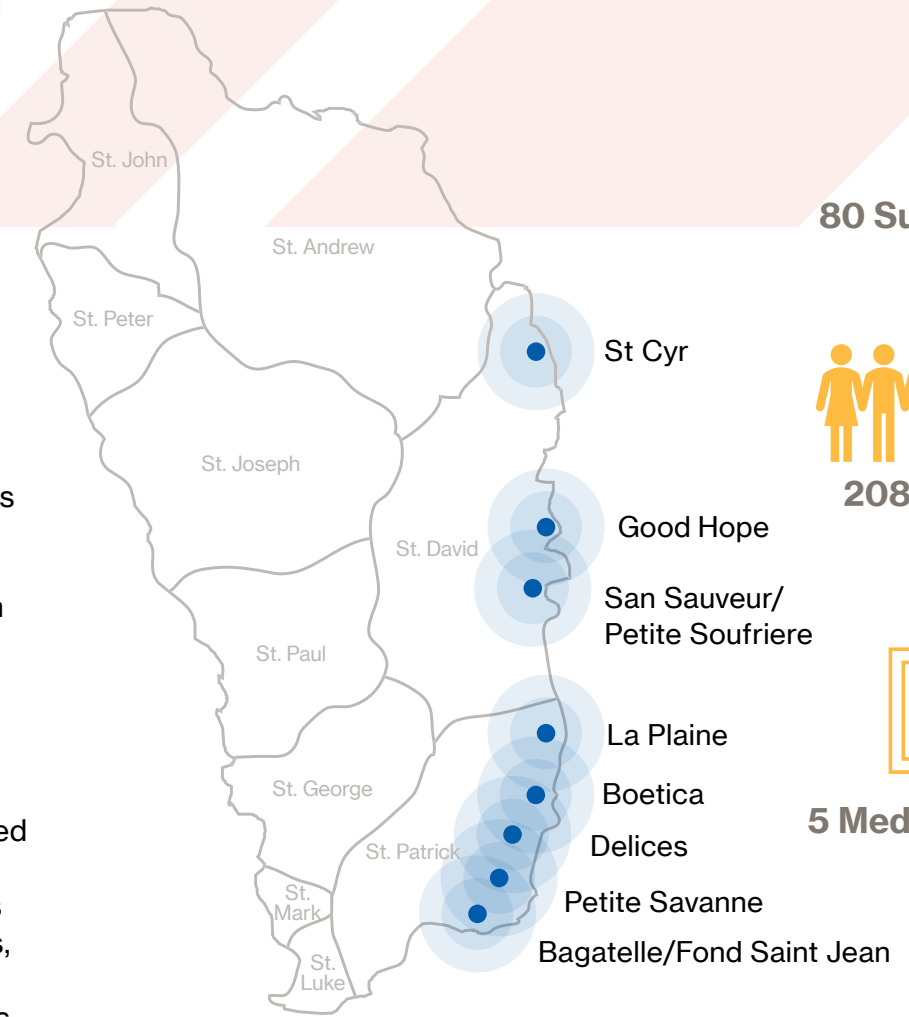
ABOUT THIS REPORT

An Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) captures all dimensions of the relationship between information supply and information demand.
It uses a human centered research exercise aimed at understanding how people and communities find, share, value, and trust information in their own local contexts, whether it comes from the media or not.

The eight critical dimensions of an information ecosystem

1 Information needs
2 Information landscape
3 Production and movement
4 Dynamic of access
5 Use of information
6 Impact of information
7 Social trust
8 Influencers

INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean region is vulnerable to many types of natural hazards, including floods and droughts, tropical storms and hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic events. The threat of hurricanes has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and *getting the right information can literally mean the difference between life and death*. Affected communities need information about the nature of the disaster, level of risk, what services are available, connecting with family and friends etc. *Without access to accurate, trusted information, rumors and misinformation can exacerbate a crisis*, leading people to make poor decisions and making them more vulnerable.

As part of the Information Saves Lives Pilot in Dominica, Internews commissioned an IEA to investigate *how the flow of information in vulnerable communities affects residents' response and readiness to disaster preparedness and the COVID19 pandemic*. The methodology used a mix of remotely implemented, quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methodologies including broad information-related questions, focus group discussions and key informant interviews which generated important insights into the socio-cultural dynamics, trends, and nuances of information flow.

St. John
St. Andrew
St. Peter
St. Joseph
St. David
St. Paul
St. George
St. Patrick
St. Mark
St. Luke

St Cyr
Good Hope
San Sauveur/ Petite Soufriere
La Plaine
Boetica
Delices
Petite Savanne
Bagatelle/Fond Saint Jean
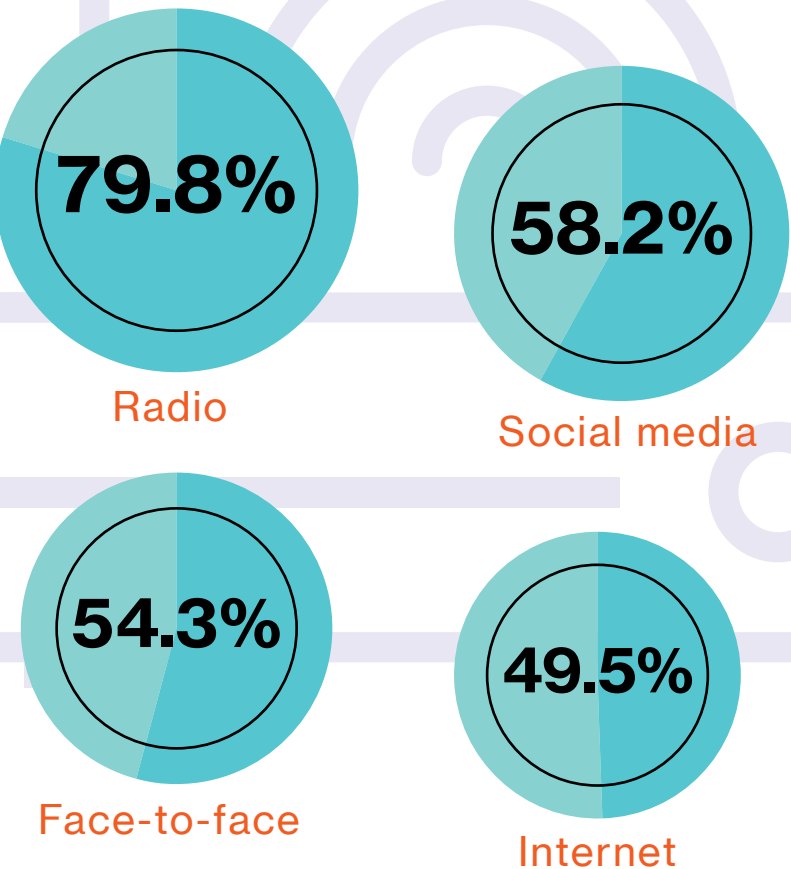
12 Interviewers

80 Survey Questions

208 Respondents

5 Media Professionals

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS
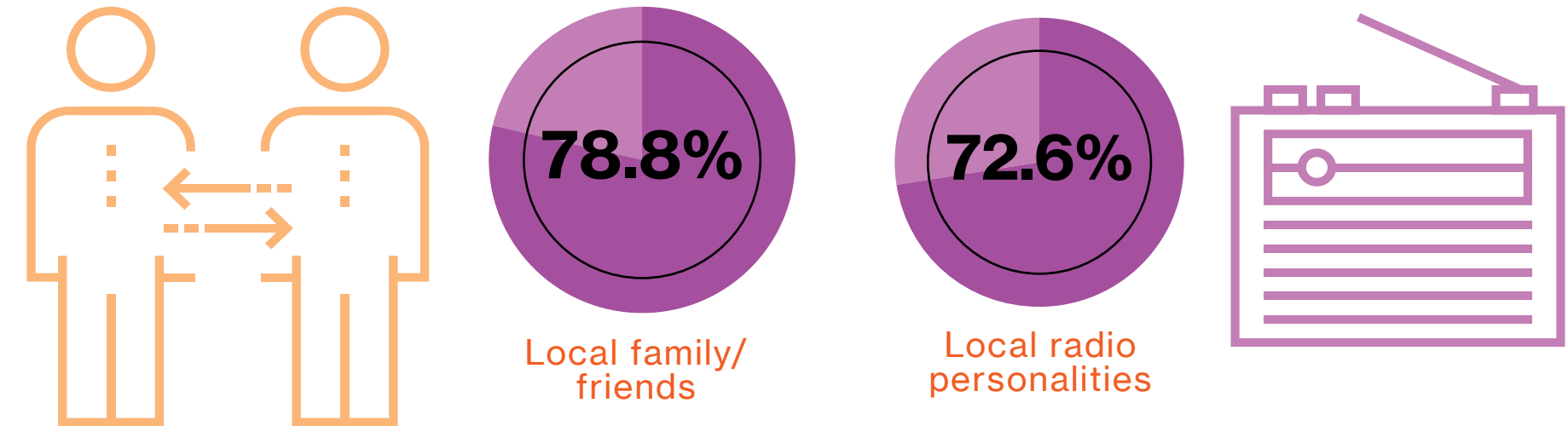
Dynamics of information landscape

Information channels most frequently used:

79.8%
Radio

58.2%
Social media

54.3%
Face-to-face

49.5%
Internet

Most frequently used social media platforms:

53.8%
WhatsApp

47.6%
Facebook
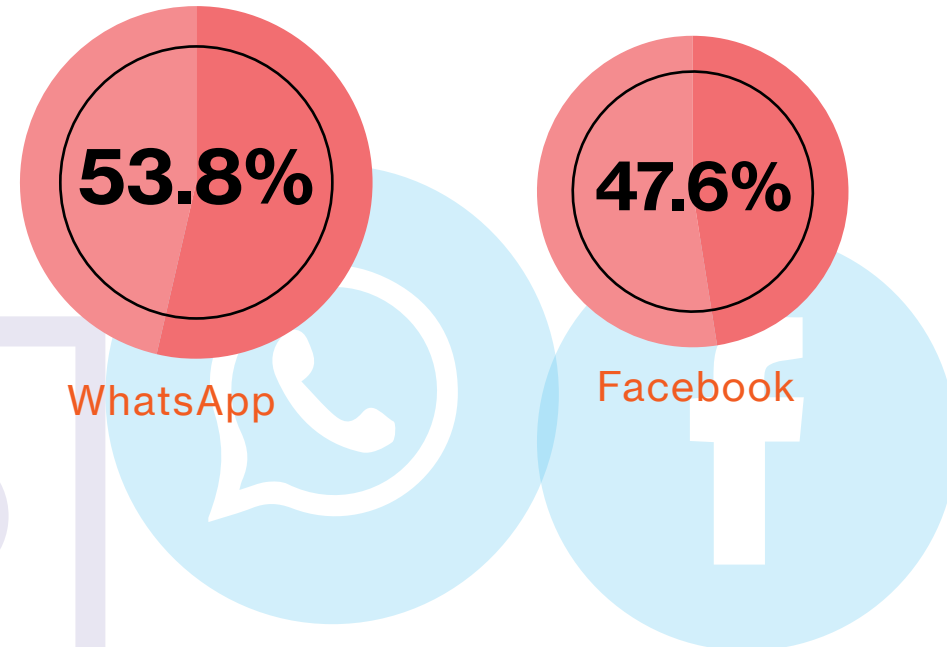
Main sources of information:

78.8%
Local family/friends

72.6%
Local radio personalities

Dominicans' selection of information channel is dependent on location since phone, radio, TV, and internet services are only accessible in some areas of the island.

The government was identified as the most influential source of information.

Top five issues on which respondents reported needing more information:

- Covid-19
- National/Country Affairs
- Community/parish matters
- Preparing for disasters
- The weather

At least **30%** of the respondents from six (6) of the targeted communities complained that poor mobile network coverage sometimes prevents them from obtaining the information they need.

Lack of access to internet is a major challenge for some communities.

At least **40%** of the respondents in all the targeted locations reported that they do not have internet at home.

Dynamics of disaster and emergency communication

Local radio personalities were identified as **the most trusted source for accurate information about COVID-19, disasters, and emergencies.**
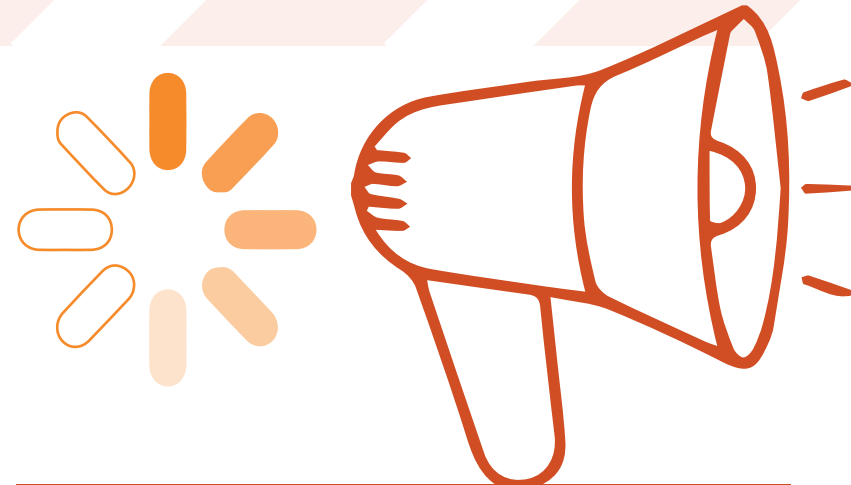
Access to timely disaster and crisis related information from government authorities is challenging for media.
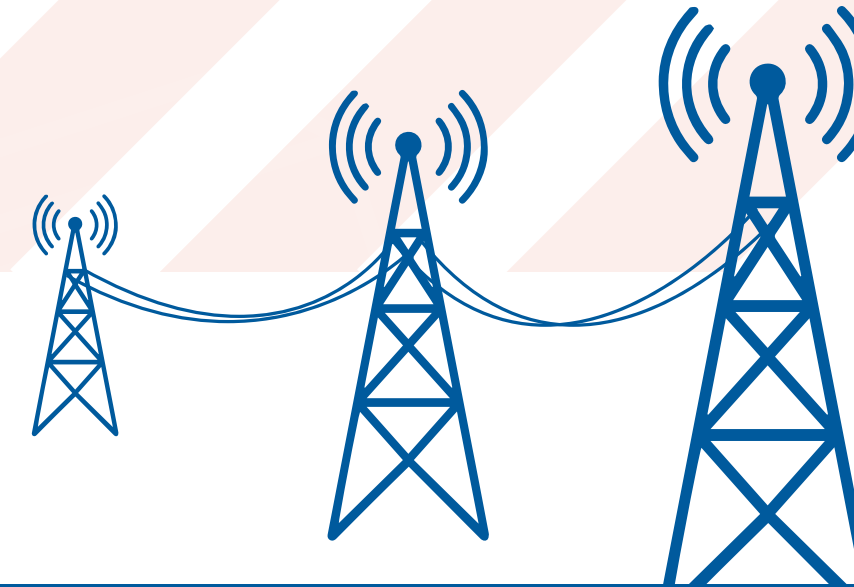
Disruption to communications infrastructure since the passage of Hurricane Maria in 2017 limits **access to critical disaster and emergency information** in Dominica.

Respondents believe **Dominicans remain ill prepared for future disasters** due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, lack of emergency shelters in some communities, & infrastructural issues across the island.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dominica has committed to become the world's first climate-resilient nation. Strengthening the information ecosystem for citizens to access the information they need to make informed decisions in emergency and non-emergency situations is key for resilience building. Recommendations for key stakeholders in the ecosystem include:
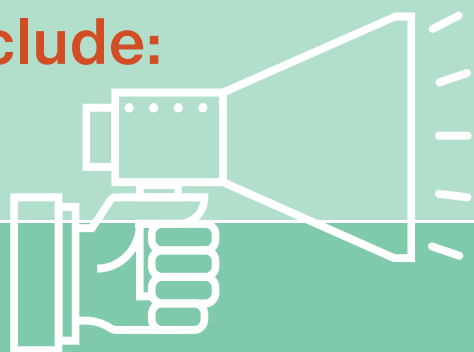
Government and its stakeholders:

– Promote the free flow of information between government authorities and public to maintain an informed and proactive citizenry during emergency and non-emergency;

– Invest in more disaster resilient radio systems, such as amateur radio, and facilitate training in their usage to improve information access during times of disaster;

– Tailor disaster risk reduction framework and information for key populations (e.g. Indigenous Kalinago people, elderly, children, and persons with disabilities);

– Facilitate infrastructure deployment across affected communities for fixed and broadband service.

The Media:

– Develop disability-inclusive emergency information and access for that target group;

– Commit to strengthening the quality of their journalism.

Do you want to learn more about our assessment findings and ideas for improving community news and information flow in the IEA? Read our full research report here:

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