



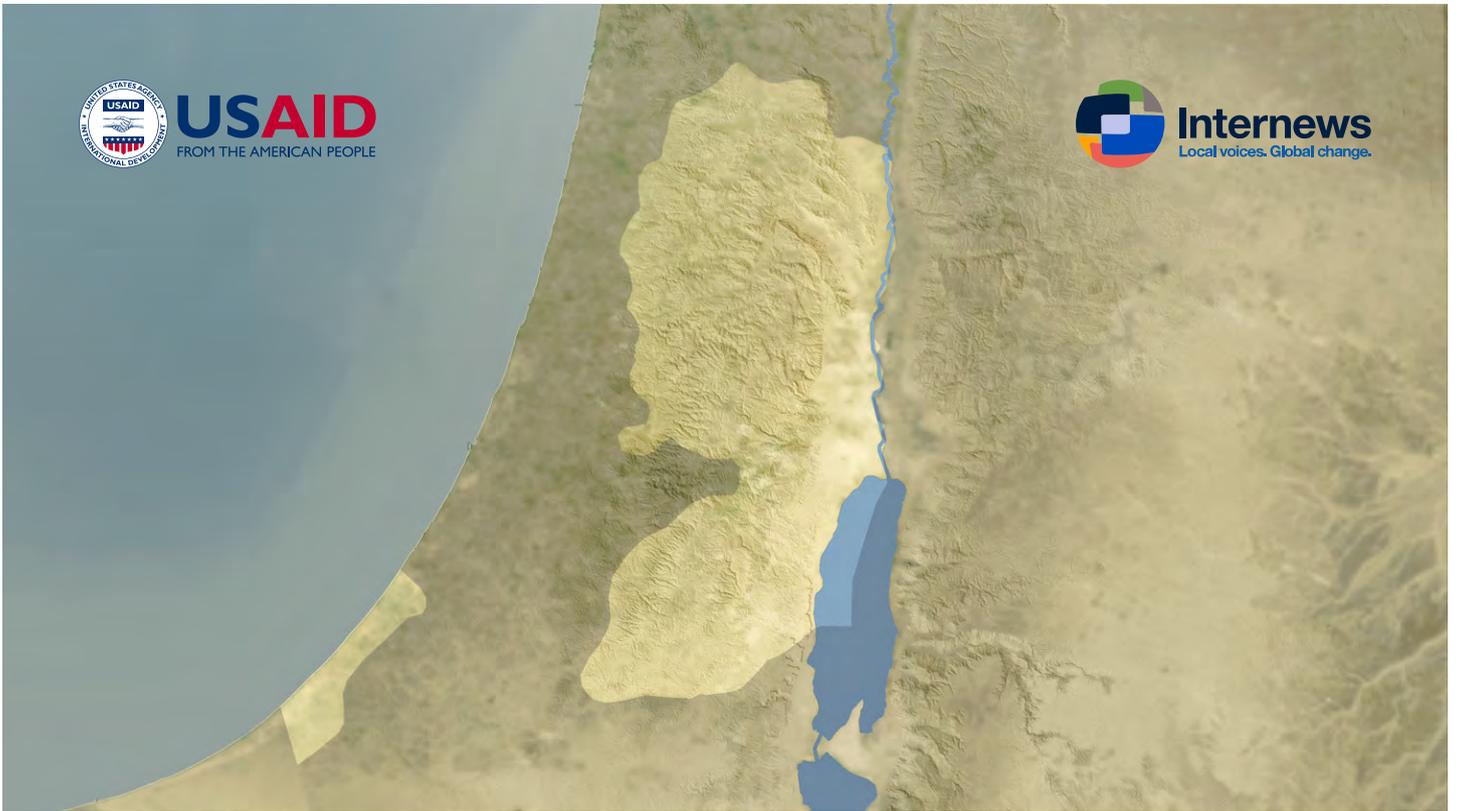
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MEDIA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT **WEST BANK & GAZA**





This Media Landscape Assessment was conducted by Internews as part of the USAID-funded Democratic Leadership Activity.

Assessment period: December 2023 - February 2024

Internews wishes to acknowledge USAID and the Democratic Leadership Activity implementing partners (IFES and NDI) for their commitment to this assessment. Internews would also like to extend its gratitude to all the organizations, journalists and individuals who participated in the research and whose invaluable input contributed to a better understanding of our target communities and their information landscapes.

INTERNEWS RESEARCH TEAM

Jalaa A. – Researcher

Taghreed ElKhodary – Researcher

Hazm Al-Mazouni – Research Assistant

Charif S. – Media Advisor

INTERNEWS SUPPORT TEAM

Sara Qudah (Program Manager MENA)

Isabelle Schlapfer (Research Manager)

Anis Boufahja (Research and Evaluation Coordinator)

Susanne Nasr Fischer (Regional Director MENA)

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INTRODUCTION

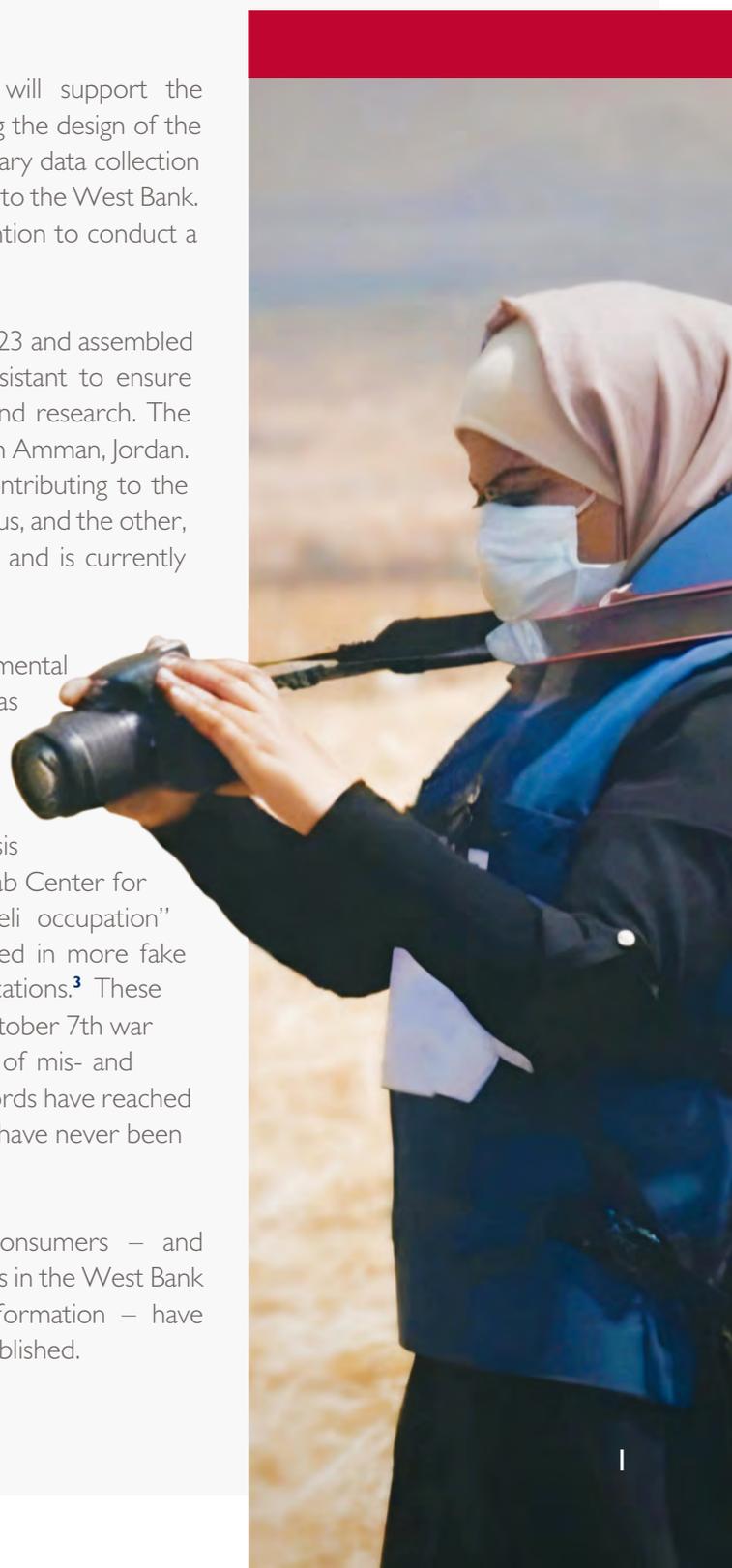
This Media Landscape Assessment (MLA) was conducted by Internews as part of a USAID-funded project in the West Bank and Gaza, namely the Democratic Leadership Activity. Research activities were carried out during the height of conflict between Hamas and Israel, following the October 7th attacks. The overarching objective of the MLA is to develop a thorough understanding of the media consumption habits among information consumers (i.e., local citizens) and assess the capacities, needs and gaps of information producers, including media outlets, independent journalists, and relevant stakeholders (e.g., civil society and women's rights organizations). This MLA was conducted with a particular focus on marginalized groups – namely women and young information consumers, and independent female journalists.

The key findings and recommendations of the MLA will support the implementation of highly flexible programming by informing the design of the program activities. Given the current situation in Gaza, primary data collection (i.e., surveys, interviews, focus group discussions) was limited to the West Bank. Gaza was only included in the desk research, with the intention to conduct a full MLA with primary data collection in Gaza in Year 2.

This MLA was commissioned by Internews in December 2023 and assembled by a team of three consultants along with a research assistant to ensure effective localization and support in MLA data collection and research. The lead researcher and the research assistant are both located in Amman, Jordan. Furthermore, two Palestinian researchers were actively contributing to the project: one, a media specialist and researcher based in Nablus, and the other, a journalist who was born and previously worked in Gaza and is currently residing in the Netherlands.

Access to impartial and reliable information is a fundamental human right. The current information revolution has profoundly changed the way people in the West Bank and Gaza access, communicate, and share information.¹ Yet, this transformative revolution has brought with it risks that continue to multiply exponentially, especially in times of crisis and conflict.² According to 7amleh – also known as The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media – the “ongoing Israeli occupation” coupled with the regional Arab-Israeli conflict have resulted in more fake news being created about “Palestine” compared to other locations.³ These risks have been particularly evident since the start of the October 7th war between Hamas and Israel, wherein the scale and volume of mis- and disinformation, hate speech, dehumanization, and war of words have reached full boil.^{4,5} In this context, reliable and unbiased information have never been more important.

Therefore, understanding the needs of information consumers – and capacitating information producers and relevant stakeholders in the West Bank and Gaza to securely deliver impartial and accurate information – have become an even more urgent necessity than previously established.



MEDIA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

To develop a thorough understanding of media consumption habits of the public, and to assess and measure the capacities, needs, and gaps of information producers, a holistic approach is necessary to capture all aspects of the information ecosystem. This includes capturing and analyzing the complex interplay between information consumers and information producers, along with the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern these interactions. In addition, understanding the business environment and funding mechanisms provides invaluable insights regarding the information producers' ability to operate independently and effectively. Put together, these insights that cover all dimensions and relationships within the information ecosystem will provide a mechanism through which impactful programming can be designed and implemented in the West Bank and Gaza.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

The West Bank and Gaza have the least developed media legislation framework in the Southern Mediterranean region.⁶ Media is governed by the Press and Publications Law of 1995 and the Palestinian Basic Law, which guarantee freedom of expression.⁷ However, in practice, the caveats included in the Palestinian Basic Law weaken the protection of freedom of expression. Journalists' sources protection is guaranteed. However, in practice this is not always respected. Broadcasting lacks independent regulation, with governing bodies of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and the de-facto authority in Gaza granting licenses in their respective areas of control.⁸ There are currently no laws in force on the right to information access.⁹ A 2005 draft law intending to address this gap was put on hold following the political division that occurred in 2007.¹⁰ A 2023 revision of this law raised transparency concerns, prompting the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate to reject it.¹¹ Lastly, the 2017 Cybercrime Law – introduced without proper consultation with civic actors and other stakeholders – faced backlash for threatening freedom of expression and press, prompting amendments in 2018.¹² While the amendment did address some of the concerns raised by the civil society, most notably by removing the articles that directly violated freedom of expression, it failed to address other serious concerns. These include the provisions under article no 39 which allows the blocking of websites within 24 hours, as well as article 4 that threatens to criminalize users who attempt to access blocked websites.¹³





MEDIA FINANCING

The business environment for media outlets, independent journalists, and relevant stakeholders (e.g., CSOs, WROs) in the West Bank is best described as unstable, unpredictable, and unsustainable. This is due to a multitude of reasons, including an overreliance on international donors, a small yet monopolized advertising market, and politicized local and regional funding. The small advertising market, controlled by social and commercial elites, limits the media impartiality with advertisers avoiding critical outlets. Uneven funding hampers the diversity of ideas, rendering independent media outlets vulnerable. Disparities exist in job and financial security. For instance, independent journalists and freelancers working for international and regional media outlets have a considerable job security advantage over those working for local organizations.

MEDIA CONSUMPTION

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

In terms of traditional media, television (TV) is still the most preferred and consumed information source among survey respondents, with over 50% watching TV every day or almost every day. The three most watched TV channels among survey respondents are the Qatar-owned Al-Jazeera, The PA-run Palestine TV, and the private Maan TV, respectively.

Although no primary data were collected in Gaza, desk research and insights provided by interviewed media outlets and organizations that operate across both the West Bank and Gaza, indicate that radio has become the most popular source of traditional media information in Gaza, post-October 7th. This is reportedly due to electricity cuts and internet blackouts. Some of the interviewed outlets and organizations in the West Bank claimed that Al-Jazeera has been proactively promoting its radio station/Audio Hub to meet the information needs of Gazans who are unable to watch TV.

INFORMATION SOURCES (LOCAL VS. NATIONAL NEWS)

Telegram channels and groups are the most popular primary source of both local and national news among survey respondents in the West Bank. Telegram is known for having more lenient content moderation policies compared to other, bigger social media platforms (e.g., Meta, X, etc.) which have been accused of censoring Palestinian content, repeatedly and systematically. Among the most popular Telegram groups and channels followed by survey respondents are Al-Jazeera, Quds News Network (allegedly Hamas-affiliated), and the independent Dooz digital media outlet.

This finding is unsurprising yet worrying. Telegram is rife with mis- and disinformation, most of which go undetected and/or unchallenged. To ensure tailored programming that meets the information needs of citizens in the West Bank, media outlets and independent journalists should be equipped and trained to operate Telegram channels that provide impartial and accurate information to local citizens.

INFORMATION SOURCES

LOCAL NEWS	NATIONAL NEWS
Telegram channels and groups	Telegram channels and groups
Facebook pages for local news	National television
Local television	Facebook pages for national news
Friends, family, and community members	Electronic news website

CREDIBILITY OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Telegram is ranked as the most credible information source among West Bank-based survey respondents for both local and national news. Official government representatives were seen as the least credible source of information for both local and national news. This is indicative of evident dissatisfaction and a widening trust gap between citizens and government (i.e., PA) representatives on the local and national levels.

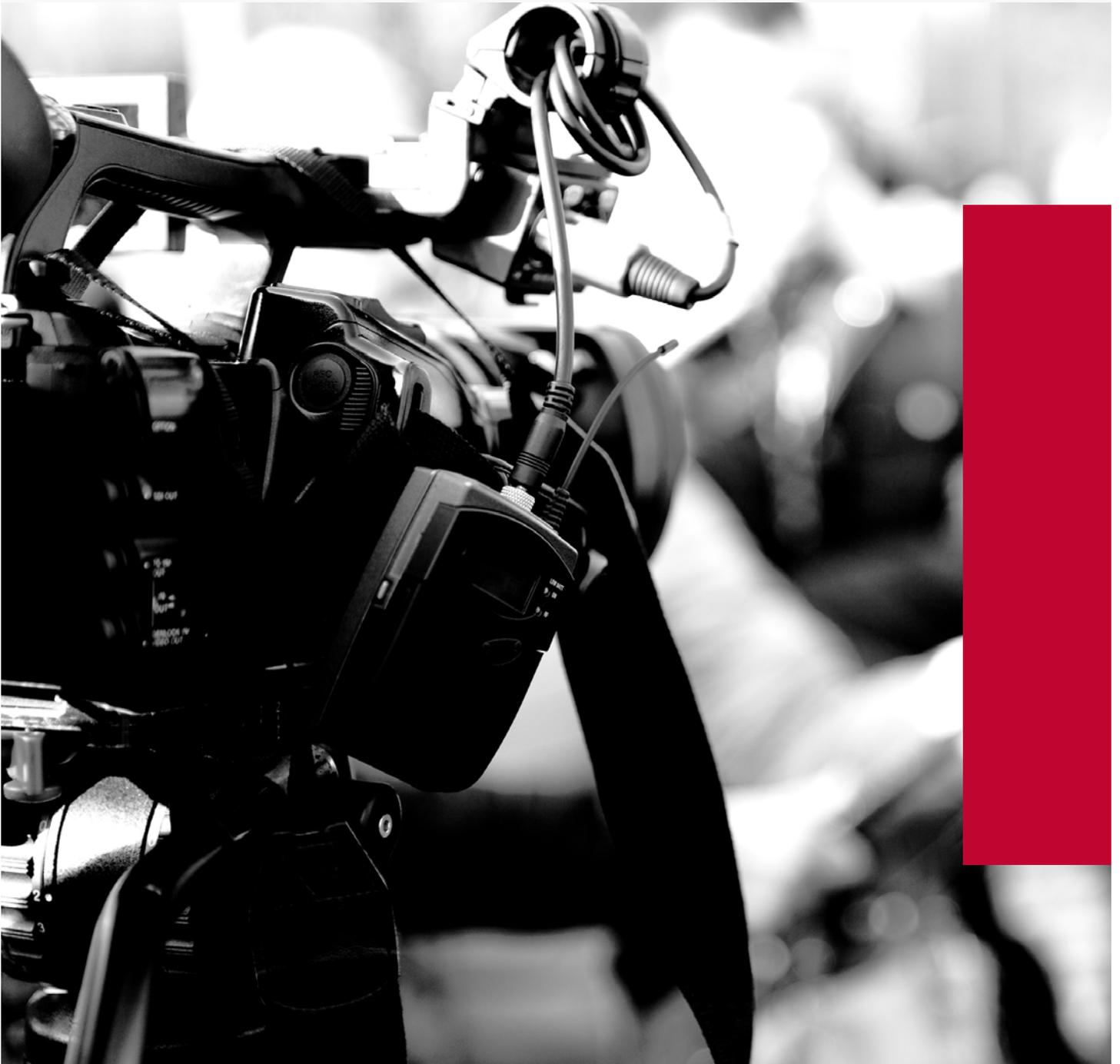
SPECTRUM OF INFORMATION SOURCE CREDIBILITY

HIGH CREDIBILITY	MODERATE CREDIBILITY	LOW CREDIBILITY
Telegram channels and groups	WhatsApp groups	Government representatives
Friends, family, and community	Regional and community radios	Religious leaders
Electronic news websites	Facebook news pages	Local television
National television	National radio	Local newspapers

INFORMATION NEEDS

When asked about the type of information citizens need more of to make informed decisions regarding voting and political participation, over 40% of survey respondents who participated in the current study expressed their interest in more information about political parties' manifestos and programs. Over 30% of respondents said they would like more information about the political parties' candidates. Further, 35% of respondents said they would like more information on the role of civil society and observers in electoral processes. A few respondents commented on the reality and lack of opportunities for political and electoral participation due to internal divisions and "absence of elections", as there have been no elections for president since 2005 or legislature since 2006.

Therefore, the main information gaps are related to political parties and their candidates, their manifestos and programs, and the role civic actors can play in any future political and electoral processes.



MEDIA CAPACITY

Financial sustainability and job security are among the most significant challenges for media outlets and independent journalists in the West Bank. Some media outlets claimed to have been unable to pay their employees for over three months, whilst others claimed to have had to reduce their workforce by over 50% due to financial difficulties. Local independent journalists cited security and safety concerns and lack of appropriate equipment as major challenges when carrying out their field work.

In general, inclusivity and representation are high among staff of local media outlets, with most interviewed outlets and organizations reporting either equal gender balance or more female than male staff in their workforce. There was no reported pay gap between male and female employees among most interviewed media outlets and CSOs. Despite this, some jobs and work shifts (e.g., field work at night) are exclusively given to male employees due to safety concerns and societal stereotypes (e.g., female journalists cannot be sent to the field at night).

Digital security policies and best practices are absent or not adhered to among most of the interviewed outlets, independent journalists, and CSOs/WROs. There is an evident lack of knowledge and adequate training on digital security among the majority of those interviewed and their staff. As for digital content production, independent media outlets lack the means and adequate training to produce tailored digital content that would resonate with their target audiences. Financial challenges and the absence of tailored, practical capacity building programs were cited as the main reasons for these incapacities. In addition, several media outlets and organizations have attempted to produce English-language content but failed thus far to maintain these platforms and channels and deliver high quality content to foreign audiences. Financial difficulties and lack of language fluency among local media workers were again cited as the main causes of failure.

The negative psychological impact of the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel is best described as severe. Over 80% of those interviewed expressed their need for, and willingness to, participate in counselling sessions and psychosocial support initiatives.



ROOT CAUSES FOR THE WIDESPREAD MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

The widespread mis- and disinformation in the Palestinian media landscape is well documented in the literature.¹⁴ However, the scale of mis- and disinformation has reached unprecedented levels post-October 7th.¹⁵ Based on desk research and the primary data collected in this research study, the main root causes of mis- and disinformation can be summarized as follows:

-
- Absence of right to access information law in the West Bank and Gaza Political and
 - social polarization
 - Partisanship and media control
 - Lack of transparency and timely information sharing from government Volatile security
 - landscape
 - Level of media and information literacy
 - Varying levels of compliance with best practices of media ethics
 - Lack of adequate training and fact-checking skills among citizen journalists Scarce
 - resources and lack of necessary technical capacities
 - Recurrent conflicts with multiple dimensions (e.g., religious, political, etc.) The role of
 - regional and international backers in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict



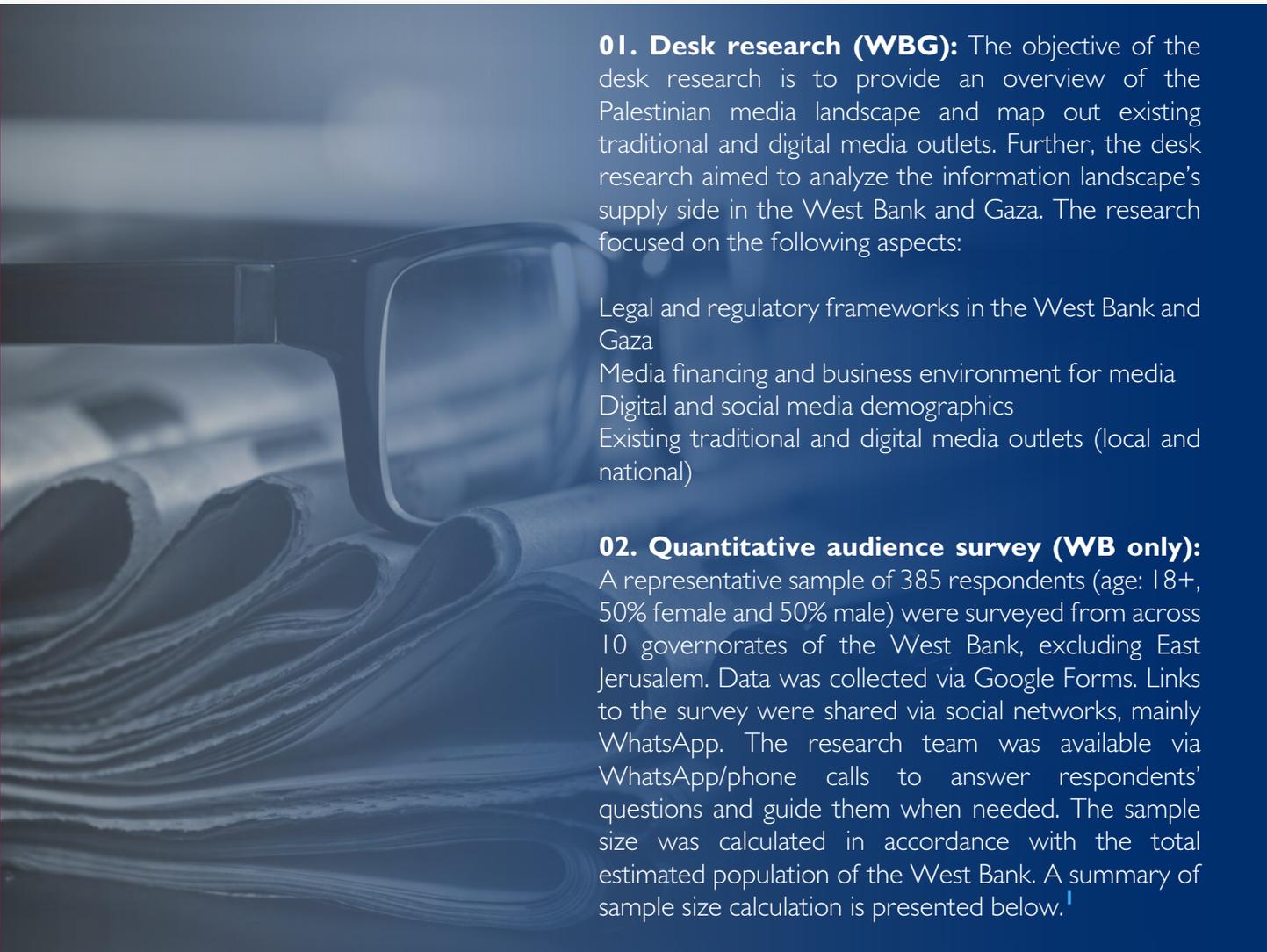
RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

TARGET GROUPS

The Media Landscape Assessment (MLA) was conducted with a particular focus on marginalized groups, including youth and women (information consumers) and independent women journalists (information producers) in the West Bank. One aim of the MLA is to inform the design of tailored programming that would enhance the active participation of target groups in electoral and political processes. The MLA also focused on assessing the capacities, needs, and gaps of information producers (e.g., media outlets, independent journalists, and relevant stakeholders (e.g., CSOs, WROs), and the needs of information consumers (i.e., local citizens).

RESEARCH METHODS & SAMPLE

Internews employed a mixed method, pragmatic research approach to data collection for the MLA. Quantitative (i.e., audience surveys) and qualitative (i.e., in-depth interviews and focus groups) research methods, as well as desk research, were used to collect primary and secondary data from the West Bank, and secondary data from Gaza. These methods included:



01. Desk research (WBG): The objective of the desk research is to provide an overview of the Palestinian media landscape and map out existing traditional and digital media outlets. Further, the desk research aimed to analyze the information landscape's supply side in the West Bank and Gaza. The research focused on the following aspects:

- Legal and regulatory frameworks in the West Bank and Gaza
- Media financing and business environment for media
- Digital and social media demographics
- Existing traditional and digital media outlets (local and national)

02. Quantitative audience survey (WB only): A representative sample of 385 respondents (age: 18+, 50% female and 50% male) were surveyed from across 10 governorates of the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. Data was collected via Google Forms. Links to the survey were shared via social networks, mainly WhatsApp. The research team was available via WhatsApp/phone calls to answer respondents' questions and guide them when needed. The sample size was calculated in accordance with the total estimated population of the West Bank. A summary of sample size calculation is presented below.¹

¹ Data used to calculate the sample were published in December 2022 by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). PCBS published updated estimates in December 2023 (after data collection had begun).

THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS THE POPULATION OF WESTBANK SEGMENTED BY GOVERNORATE

GOVERNORATE	POPULATION (1000s)	% OF TOTAL PALESTINIAN POPULATION (~ 5.4M)	% OF WEST BANK POPULATION (~ 3.2M)
Hebron	810,000	15.0	25.2
Jerusalem (excluded)	486,000	9.0	15.1
Nablus	426,600	7.9	13.3
Ramallah & Al-Bireh	367,200	6.8	11.4
Jenin	345,600	6.4	10.7
Bethlehem	243,000	4.5	7.6
Tulkarm	205,200	3.8	6.4
Qalqiliya	124,200	2.3	3.9
Salfit	86,400	1.6	2.7
Tubas & Northern Valleys	70,200	1.3	2.2
Jericho & Al-Aghwar	54,000	1.0	1.7

SAMPLE SIZE CALCULATION (EXCL. EAST JERUSALEM)

WB POPULATION (MILLIONS)	CONFIDENCE LEVEL (%)	MARGIN OF ERROR (%)	SAMPLE SIZE (N)
2,732,400	95	5	385

SAMPLE SIZE (N = 385) ADJUSTED TO POPULATION OF EACH GOVERNORATE (EXCL. EAST JERUSALEM)

GOVERNORATE	% OF WEST BANK POPULATION (EXCL. JERUSALEM)	SAMPLE/GOVERNORATE
Hebron	29.6	114
Nablus	15.6	60
Ramallah & Al-Bireh	13.4	52
Jenin	12.6	49
Bethlehem	8.9	34
Tulkarm	7.5	29
Qalqiliya	4.5	17
Salfit	3.2	12
Tubas & Northern Valleys	2.6	10
Jericho & Al-Aghwar	2.0	8

03. Virtual focus-group discussions (FGDs) with women (35+) and youth (mixed: 18-34): Six FGDs were carried out with women and youth. Participants were recruited from the three administrative Areas of the West Bank: Area A,² Area B,³ and Area C.¹⁶ One of the aims of the FGDs is to understand how relevant target audiences think about the role media outlets play in the West Bank information landscape, as well as the role of media with regards to electoral and political process.

Internews collaborated with the [Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation \(Pyalara\)](#) to identify and select 36 individuals who participated in six FGDs. Pyalara is a local, youth-focused organization whose mission is to empower young female and male Palestinians, with a particular focus on enhancing active participation in political and electoral processes. Three FGDs (N = 18) were conducted with youth (female and male, aged 18-34), and three FGDs (N = 18) were conducted with women only (aged 35+). Participants were selected collaboratively to ensure diversity and representation.

REPRESENTATION OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

AREA	WOMEN (35+ Y.O.)	YOUTH (18-34 Y.O.)
A	2	2
B	2	2
C	2	2

04. Qualitative in-depth interviews with information producers and relevant stakeholders (WB only): The research team identified and selected 28 interviewees for participation in this study. The selection process involved identifying and contacting a diverse sample through a pre-existing network and database of contacts. During the selection process, the research team ensured representation and varied levels of seniority and experience. Each potential interviewee was provided with an Arabic-language consent form and encouraged to seek further clarification if needed. All participating interviewees signed and shared the consent form prior to attending the interviews.

Twelve in-depth interviews with WB-based media outlets (e.g., TV, radio, digital media), and seven interviews with independent journalists were conducted to assess their capacities and needs as well as the impact of the ongoing conflict on their ability to perform their work safely. These interviews explored various challenges, needs and gaps as well as potential opportunities for partnership and collaboration in future programming. In addition, nine interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders, including CSOs, women’s rights organizations and others, to assess their organizational capacities and explore potential partnerships. The interviews (each was about an hour long) were conducted online (via Microsoft Teams) due to the volatile security situation and severe movement restrictions in the West Bank.



² Area A: Administered by Palestinian Authority.

³ Area B: Administered by Palestinian Authority – shared security control with Israel.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLE SIZE FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

DATA SOURCES	TARGET AUDIENCE/SPECIFICS	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	SAMPLE SIZE	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
General (West Bank & Gaza)	Articles, studies, surveys, reports	Desk research	40 sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of Palestinian media landscape - Mapping of digital and traditional media outlets
Citizens (West Bank only)	Citizens from across the 10 governorates of the West Bank, segmented by region (age: 18+)	Online survey	385	Media consumption habits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News sources (local, national) - Credibility and influence of information sources - Information gaps and needs - Information access/barriers - Platforms used to communicate and engage - Media and information literacy - Role of media with regards to electoral and political processes
Women and youth (West Bank only)	Groups of youth (male and female aged 18-34) and groups of women (aged 35+)	Focus-group discussions	6	Comprehensive assessment of media consumption habits
Information producers (West Bank only)	Journalists, influencers, radios, tv, newspapers, media experts	In-depth interviews	19	Information producer assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of ongoing conflict - Technical capacities - Challenges and opportunities - Training and support needs - Potential partnerships
Stakeholders (West Bank only)	CSOs, WROs, government communications dept.	In-depth interviews	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of current capacities, needs and gaps, and operational landscape - Potential partnerships

LIMITATIONS

- Short time frame: This affected the expansiveness of the desk research. To account for this limitation, we reviewed a pre-determined sample of relevant articles/surveys/studies (40 sources) found through the literature search.
- Sampling: Time frame and operational limitations hindered our ability to recruit a bigger sample. These limitations impact the generalizability of the research findings. The sample size was calculated according to the total population of the West Bank, rather than the total population of each governorate which would have required a much bigger sample. Time constraints and the sensitive nature of the research in the current context were a major limitation.

- Online audience survey: As all survey data was collected via Google Forms/online, this reduces the diversity of the sample as these surveys were completed by individuals who are digitally literate and have access to the internet. Additionally, the number of open-ended questions had to be reduced and/or simplified to account for response rate in the current context. This may affect the validity of the data.
- Gaza data collection: No primary data collection was conducted in Gaza. This limits the generalizability of the research findings. Any future versions of the current MLA must include Gaza to allow for comparisons with the West Bank and increase the generalizability of the research findings, and to ensure that future programming responds effectively to the information needs and gaps in Gaza.
- Inclusion of participants with disabilities: Internews' research team had initially planned to include individuals with disabilities (e.g., those with hearing and visual impairments) in the in-depth interviews. However, the team was unable to make the necessary arrangements to be able to conduct these interviews. This was due to movement restrictions, logistical challenges, and time constraints. It is imperative to include individuals with disabilities in any future versions of the current MLA.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Recognizing the sensitivity of the research themes and the volatile security environment, the duty of care principles were integrally incorporated into and throughout the research design. All research participants were provided with a description summarizing the purpose of the research and conditions for their participation (e.g., duration, voluntarily participation, right to withdraw, etc.), as well as a consent form. All collected data were fully anonymized to guarantee the safety and security of all participants.
- It is imperative to recognize that the media consumption habits of local citizens have been significantly impacted by the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel, which erupted following the October 7th attacks. Therefore, it is advisable to treat the data and findings presented below as a baseline assessment of media consumption during a time of major crisis in the West Bank that is a knock-on effect of the war in Gaza. A comparative analysis of media consumption habits in the West Bank will be conducted in the future to analyze relevant changes that may occur once the current hostilities subside.

Other ethical considerations included the need for research design and execution to be locally informed. To that end, the Internews team recruited a local media specialist based in Nablus, and a Gaza-born, Netherlands-based journalist.



COUNTRY PROFILE

Over the past five decades, the West Bank and Gaza have been subjected to protracted political crises. These crises have been exacerbated by the military occupation, a significant increase of settlements in the West Bank, a land, sea, and air blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip since 2007, as well as internal divisions among Palestinian factions.¹⁷ In addition, a series of wars and armed conflicts between Palestinian actors and Israel, with the latest being the war that broke out between Israel and Hamas following the October 7th attacks.

Whilst internal political divisions among Palestinian actors have existed since the pursuit of an independent state began in the 1960s, the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council Elections, which Hamas won, resulted in a schism in the national movement.¹⁸ This schism divided the national movement politically, strategically, and geographically, leading to the division of Palestinian territory into two polities: Hamas ruled Gaza, and Fatah led the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank.¹⁹ According to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2023 the size of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza was estimated at 5.6 million. Approximately 60% (~3.4 million) of the Palestinian population reside in the West Bank, and around 40% (~2.3 million) live in Gaza.²⁰ The Palestinian territory has undergone rapid demographic growth and urbanization²¹ which, coupled with the restricted access to livelihood opportunities, has confined the population in a cycle of aid-dependency.



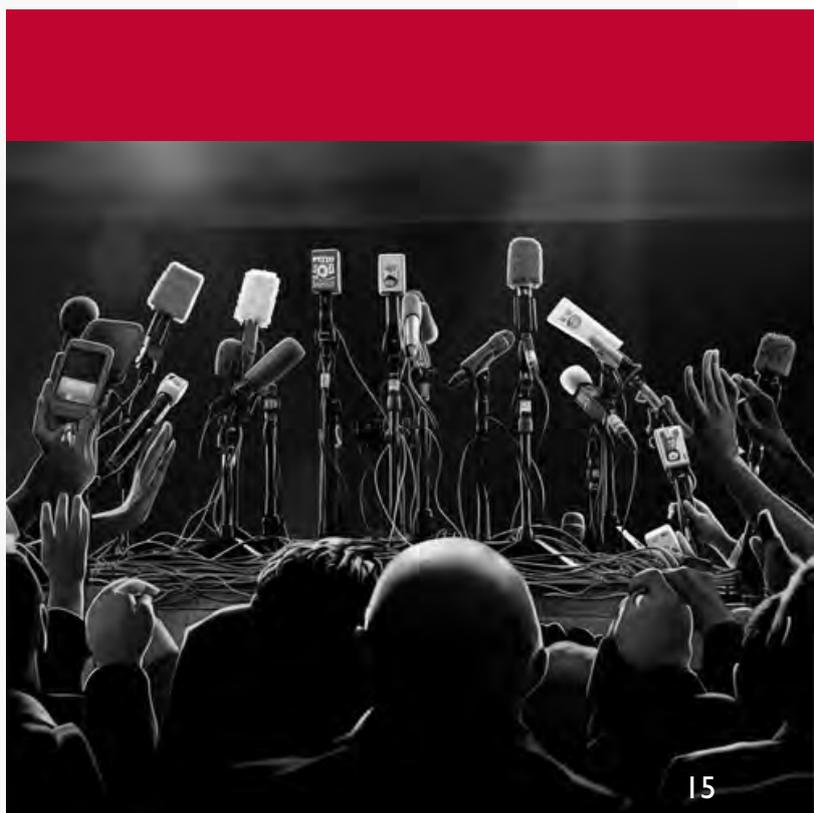
MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE POLITICAL AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The media landscape in the Palestinian territories reflects the abovementioned characteristics, with the political divisions, the geographical and administrative fragmentation, as well as the lack of economic growth and aid-dependency defining the media dynamics in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian media landscape is characterized by partisanship, with content designed around political leanings often reflecting the rivalry between Fatah and Hamas.²²

In terms of operational security, media professionals in the West Bank and Gaza face numerous challenges and risks. Palestinian journalists are often subjected to threats, arrest, interrogation, persecution, and administrative detention without grounds.²³ Journalists face security risks pertaining to the domestic political tension, and documented harassment by the Israeli authorities. This includes bans on the coverage of certain events. These factors and experiences often force Palestinian journalists to self-censor their work.²⁴ According to Reporters without Borders, journalists in Gaza who are suspected of collaborating with Israel are often harassed by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. In the West Bank, media outlets critical of the PA are often harassed and suspended, and their journalists are arrested and interrogated.²⁵ According to the Palestinian MADA Center, between 2011 and 2021, the Israeli authorities arrested at least 248 journalists.²⁶ In 2022, two female journalists were reportedly killed by Israeli forces, including Al Jazeera's correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh.²⁷ Between October 7th and end of December 2023, a reported 61 Palestinian journalists were killed in Gaza,²⁸ making this year the deadliest year on record for journalists according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).²⁹

Other obstacles facing Palestinian journalists relate to movement restrictions, which inhibit direct communication with the outside world and participation in international fora and training opportunities.³⁰ Internet connectivity issues and blackouts are frequently experienced by civilians and journalists in Gaza, with reports of two communications blackouts in November 2023.³¹ Restrictions on the free movement of goods also pose challenges to the operational landscape from a logistical perspective. These restrictions often limit the ability to purchase new equipment, such as cameras and other necessary equipment.³²

Nonetheless, when it comes to existing media outlets, the Palestinian media landscape can be described as saturated. The number of media sources available relative to the West Bank and Gaza population is high compared to neighboring countries. However, opinion polls indicate that there is a crisis of trust in the Palestinian media among its consumers.³³ Further, regional media outlets (e.g., Al-Jazeera) play a more significant role in influencing Palestinian public opinion.



OVERVIEW OF MEDIA IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA



LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Compared to all other locations in the Southern Mediterranean region, the West Bank and Gaza has the fewest provisions for media legislation.³⁴ The legal media framework in West Bank and Gaza is governed by two key laws, the Press and Publications Law of 1995 and the Palestinian Basic Law.³⁵ The latter serves as the foundational legal document, acting in lieu of a constitution. Article 19 of the Basic Law guarantees the right to freedom of opinion, expression, and media. However, the wording of the article includes caveats serving to weaken the protection of freedom of expression the article provides for, effectively accepting that any law may override free speech. Article 19 states:

“Freedom of opinion may not be prejudiced. Every person shall have the right to express his opinion and to circulate it orally, in writing or in any form of expression or art, with due consideration to the provisions of the law.”

The last sentence of the article, which references consideration to the provisions of the law, essentially serves to make freedom of speech conditional. Additionally, the Palestinian Press and Publications Law includes a clear guarantee of journalists' right to protect their sources, although in practice this is not always respected.

There is currently no independent system for regulating broadcasting in the West Bank and Gaza. Contrary to international standards that emphasize the need for independent bodies, the authority to grant TV and radio licenses lies with governmental bodies, with the criteria for licensing remaining ambiguous.³⁶ Specifically, media are regulated by the Palestinian Authorities' Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology.³⁷

There are currently no laws in force on the right to information access.³⁸ While a draft law was developed in 2005 and approved in a first reading, its adoption was held up due to the disruption of the Palestinian Legislative Council, following the political division that occurred in 2007.³⁹ A new process of revising the draft law commenced in 2023. However, it raised concern over its lack of transparency and the potential it granted the government to expand its control over the media, prompting the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate to reject the revision.⁴⁰ Lastly, another relevant law which has come under scrutiny, is the cybercrime law. Introduced in 2017 without proper consultation with the civil society, the law drew backlash for the risks it posed on freedom of expression, access to information and particularly press freedoms, as well as the harsh penalties it imposed.⁴¹ Following pressure from civil society it was amended a year later.

In the international context, between 2014 and 2021, the PA has acceded to over 100 international conventions,⁴² including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UNESCO Charter, and the Second Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These agreements open the door for legal development when political will is present and fueled by public and civil society.

MEDIA FINANCING

Media in the West Bank and Gaza face several challenges pertaining to their financial viability. With a small advertising market, lack of funding and investment - all reflective of the weak economy - media revenue has been in decline, limiting their performance and the media professionals' salaries.⁴³ In terms of the regulatory media financing framework, there is a lack of comprehensive legislative guidance for financing and advertising that applies to private media.⁴⁴

The business environment for media outlets, independent journalists, and relevant stakeholders such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the West Bank is best described as unstable, unpredictable, and unsustainable. This is due to a multitude of reasons, including an overreliance on international donors, a small yet monopolized advertising market, and politicized local and regional funding. With regards to international donors, independent and private media outlets and civic actors are critical of what they describe as the "politicization of foreign grant funding". Examples include reported funding cuts by some Western donors due to the stances taken by independent Palestinian outlets and local CSOs with regards to the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. Further, the size of the Palestinian advertising market is small. Yet, this small market is often monopolized by social and commercial elites (e.g., Al Masri Family). These advertising dynamics limit the impartiality of media outlets as commercial advertisers often refuse to place advertisements with outlets that are critical of them. Local (e.g., PA/Fatah, Hamas) and regional (e.g., Qatar or UAE-affiliated) media funding is expectedly tied to political and ideological affiliations and allegiances, with a few major players (e.g., Azmi Bishara for Qatar, Mohammed Dahlan for the UAE) having significant control over the more financially sustainable media outlets.

These dynamics and uneven funding limit the plurality of ideas and independent voices in the Palestinian media landscape. This unevenness also makes impartial media outlets the weakest link in the media chain, relying, as they say, on "defiance and steadfastness" instead of long-term, sustainable business plans and strategies. In terms of job and financial security, there is a discrepancy between independent West Bank-based journalists and freelancers working for regional and international media outlets (e.g., Al-Jazeera, BBC, etc.) and those working for local media outlets. The former group has a considerable advantage in terms of job and financial security over those working for local outlets.

Over the past decade, external and international support to media outlets has flowed in restricted forms, limited to capacity building, and providing logistical needs. This has put dozens of media outlets out of service due to the need for more funding for journalists and running costs. As for funders interested in the sustainability of media institutions, their efforts focused on consultations, which led to drafting plans for fundraising, paywalls, and digitization (that are not realistic in a Palestinian context), leaving the pillars that journalism stands on without funding (content, dissemination, etc.).

PRIVATE TV	OWNERSHIP
Wattan Media Network	<p>Wattan Media Network is an award-winning, independent, and secular media organization based in Ramallah. It was established by three civil society organizations in 1996. Over the past 20 years, Wattan has established itself as a voice for Palestinian citizens, civil society, and marginalized groups. Wattan is funded by international partners and donors, as well as the revenue generated from its commercial activities. Muamar Orabi, the general director of Wattan Media Network.</p>
Maan News Agency	<p>Maan News Agency is one of the largest local/private TV, radio and online media groups in the West Bank and Gaza. It was founded in 2005 by Raed Othman, who acts as the general director of the network. Major funders include Denmark, the Netherlands. And the UK.</p>
Al-Ghad TV	<p>Al-Ghad TV channel is owned by Mohammed Dahlan – a prominent Palestinian political figure and former Fatah leader in Gaza. Dahlan is allegedly supported and funded by the UAE. The channel's headquarters are in Egypt, but it broadcasts regionally with a focus on Palestinian news.</p>
Al Fajr TV	<p>Al-Fajr is a private TV channel operating since 1996. Based in Tulkarem, this channel offers daily news coverage of the city and other Palestinian areas. Al-Fajr is popular among the youth, largely due to the broadcasting of major sporting events, with a focus on global soccer leagues. Al Fajr TV channel is a family-owned business, founded by the Al-Sarghali family.</p>



MAPPING OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

TELEVISION

The table below lists all registered TV channels in the West Bank Gaza. It includes information about the current operational status of these channels. The list also includes examples of channels that are no longer operational, as well as examples of channels that had to switch to online presence only or close permanently, pointing to the challenges related to the viability of media operations in the West Bank and Gaza.



PUBLIC TV⁴

CHANNEL	HEADQUARTERS	SUMMARY
Al-Aqsa TV	Gaza	Launched in 2006 in Gaza, Al-Aqsa TV is affiliated with Hamas and features news, entertainment, and religious programming that reflects a Hamas political perspective. The station's operations have been significantly impacted by regional conflict, including airstrikes on its headquarters in 2008 and 2014 and the deaths of two employees in 2012. In 2008, Hamas launched a second satellite channel, al-Quds TV.
Palestine TV	Ramallah	The Ramallah-based Public Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) also known as Palestine TV, was launched in 1996. It offers news and entertainment programming. Despite the destruction of PBC headquarters in 2002 by Israeli air strikes, the channel has operated uninterrupted. Known for its pro-Palestinian Authority stance, also runs the Palestinian Satellite Channel, targeting the diaspora since 1999.

PRIVATE TV

CHANNEL	HEADQUARTERS	AVAILABLE DATA
Amway TV	Ramallah	Founded in 1998. Current status: closed
Al-Fajer Al-Jadid TV	Tulkarm	Founded in 1993. Current status: online only
Al-Quds Educational TV	Ramallah	Current status: online only
Al-Mahed TV	Bethlehem	Current status: online only
Al-Salam TV	Tulkarm	Founded in 1992. Current status: online only
Bethlehem TV	Bethlehem	Current status: closed
Gama TV	Nablus	Current status: closed
Farah TV	Jenin	Founded in 1994. Current status: closed
Jenin Al Markazi TV	Jenin	Founded in 1995. Current status: closed
Nablus TV	Nablus	Current status: closed
Maan TV	Bethlehem	Current status: Operating TV station and online
PNN TV	Bethlehem	Founded in 2015. Current status: online only
Shepherd TV	Bethlehem	Current status: closed
Wattan TV	Ramallah	Founded in 1996. Current status: online only
Afaq TV	Nablus	Current status: closed
Asia TV	Nablus	Current status: closed
Alru'at TV	Bethlehem	Current status: closed
Alamal TV	Bethlehem	Current status: closed
Anawras TV	Bethlehem	Current status: closed
Adaw' TV	Nablus	Current status: closed
Albilad TV	Nablus	Current status: closed
Qalqelya TV	Qalqelya	Current status: closed
Al Sharq TV	Ramallah	Current status: closed

⁴No current or reliable data on Palestinian TV viewership. The latest survey, conducted in 2010 by Near East Consulting for Internews, remains the most recent and credible source.

RADIO

There are 54 radio stations in the West Bank. In Gaza, there are 24 radio stations that the Hamas-affiliated Government Media Office has licensed. However, the number of operational radio stations in Gaza is 16. The table below presents a sample of some of the popular radios across various governorates of the West Bank and in Gaza.



PUBLIC RADIO⁵

CHANNEL	HEADQUARTERS	SUMMARY
Voice of Palestine	Ramallah	Founded in 1995, it is a subsidiary radio station of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation.
Voice of Al-Aqsa	Gaza	Established in 2003, Voice of Al-Aqsa Radio is a subsidiary of the Hamas-affiliated Al-Aqsa TV channel.

RADIO STATIONS

CHANNEL	HEADQUARTERS	AVAILABLE DATA
Ajyal Radio	Ramallah	Founded in 1999. Licensed by the Palestinian Authority
Nissa FM	Ramallah	Founded in 2010. Specialized in women-related topics
Al-Rabea FM	Hebron	Founded in 2009
Gaza FM	Gaza	Founded in 2004
Radio Bethlehem 2000	Bethlehem	Founded in 1996
Sawat Al-Huryia	Ramallah	Founded in 2002 in Gaza then moved to Ramallah after in 2007
Sawat Al-Najah	Nablus	Founded in 2003
24FM	Ramallah	Founded in 2014. Licensed by the Palestinian Authority
Alam	Hebron	Founded in 2008. Licensed by the Palestinian Authority
Zaytona	Salfit	Founded in 2014. Licensed by the Palestinian Authority
Shabab FM	Nablus	Founded in 2020. Licensed by the Palestinian Authority

⁵ Information on audience size for public and private radios is unavailable.

PRINTED NEWSPAPER

The number of newspapers and magazines currently in circulation in the West Bank is 15. Of those, only two are distributed as printed copies (Al-Ayyam, Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda). In Gaza, there are 12 newspapers and magazines; two of them are daily newspapers, namely the Palestine newspaper and the Istiqlal newspaper. In contrast, the Al-Resala newspaper stopped issuing its paper version in March 2019, relying only on its online version since.



The decline of print newspapers in the face of online journalism is evident in the case of the West Bank and Gaza. In recent years, several print newspapers have closed, maintaining only their online versions. Costing challenges associated with print media production, such as high prices of paper, inks and raw materials, coupled with distribution costs, lack of points of sale, and a decreased demand, have caused traditional print media huge losses, amounting to millions of US dollars. In order to survive, print media have had to downsize and reduce the number of their pages to bring production costs down.

MAPPING OF DIGITAL MEDIA

There were 3.96 million internet users in the West Bank and Gaza at the start of 2023 when internet penetration stood at 75%.⁴⁵ The area was home to 2.95 million active social media users in January 2023, or around 56% of the total population, although these numbers do not necessarily represent unique individuals (e.g. one individual may have multiple accounts on the same platform).

A total of 4.38 million cellular mobile connections were active in the West Bank and Gaza in early 2023, equivalent to 82.5% of the total population. Kepios analysis indicates that internet users in the West Bank and Gaza increased by 90 thousand (+2.3 percent) between 2022 and 2023. For comparison, the table below shows the number of active social media users relative to the population of neighboring countries.

	WEST BANK AND GAZA	JORDAN ⁴⁶	LEBANON ⁴⁷
Internet penetration	75%	88%	87%
Social media users	2.95 million (56%)	6.61 million (58%)	4.91 million (91%)

Internet connection speed is unstable but relatively effective. Fixed internet connection speeds in the Palestinian territories increased by 35.82 Mbps (+245 per cent) in the twelve months leading up to the start of 2023. Internet infrastructural deficiencies pose challenges to equitable access to the internet for Palestinians across the West Bank and Gaza. For millions of users in Gaza and the West Bank, the lack of 4G makes it difficult to access online spaces, whilst the digital gap can also leave out many inhabitants of rural areas who have reduced access to technologies.⁴⁸



86.87%



6.97%



2.87%



2.43%



0.71%

WEB-TRAFFIC REFERRALS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA, AS OF JANUARY 2023¹

The increased access to social media and online media sources has revolutionized the ways that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza access information. Similar to regional trends, post-Arab Spring, the phenomenon of citizen journalism has grown significantly in the West Bank and Gaza over the past decade. A recent study/survey examining this phenomenon investigated the rise in prominence of activists and citizen journalists Mohammad and Muna El-Kurd during the 2021 Sheikh Jarrah protests and clashes. The survey concluded that Palestinian youth rely largely on social media to access information.⁴⁹ Most recently in the Gaza war, the reliance of local, regional, and international audiences on Gaza-based citizen journalists has been evident, with some activists and journalists having reached over 15 million followers on platforms such as Instagram (e.g., [Motaz Azaiza](#)).

DIGITAL MAPPING OF MUNICIPALITIES' ONLINE PRESENCE⁶

MUNICIPALITY FACEBOOK PAGE	MUNICIPALITY POPULATION ⁷	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS ON FACEBOOK	FOLLOWERS AS % OF POPULATION ⁸
Hebron	201,063	134,000	67%
Nablus	156,906	117,000	75%
Ramallah	38,998	142,000	364%
Jenin	49,908	38,000	76%
Bethlehem	28,591	59,000	206%
Tulkarem	64,532	58,000	90%
Qalqilya	51,683	39,000	76%
Salfit	10,911	16,000	145%
Tubas	21,431	13,000	61%
Jericho	20,907	14,000	67%

⁶ The table demonstrates the number of followers and the % of followers in relation to the population of a sample of large municipalities in the West Bank.

⁷ Based on municipality population data from 2017.

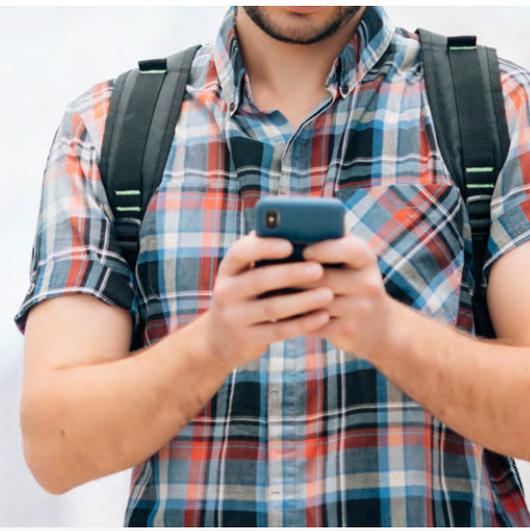
⁸ In some cases (e.g. Ramallah, Bethlehem, Salfit), the number of Facebook page followers far exceeds the size of the municipality population. This is due to a number of reasons. For example, the Facebook pages of these municipalities tend to be more regularly updated than the respective governorates' official Facebook pages. In the case of Ramallah, the municipality has a specialized media unit, and its content tends to be diverse and more focused on solutions for local issues, which may make their page more appealing to local audiences within and outside the municipality.



DIGITAL MEDIA OUTLETS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS

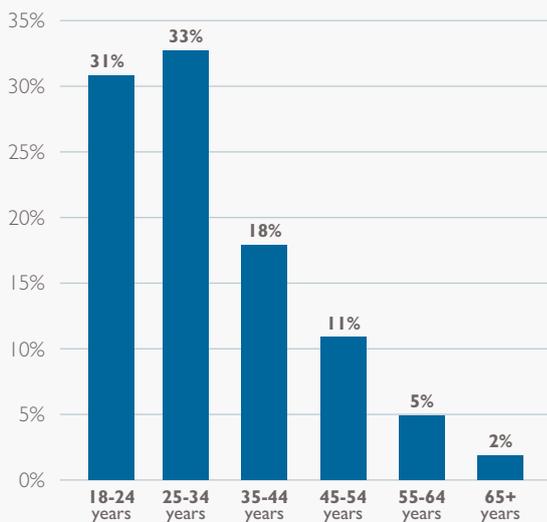
The media consumption habits of West Bank-based citizens were assessed using a quantitative and qualitative mixed-method approach, namely an online survey and focus group discussions with key target groups (i.e., youth and women).



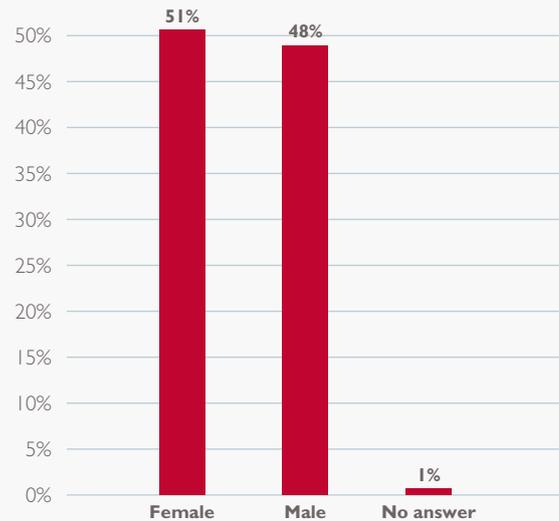
DEMOGRAPHICS OF TARGET GROUPS

Survey: The research encompasses a sample size of 385 participants distributed across 10 governorates in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. Demographics are presented below.

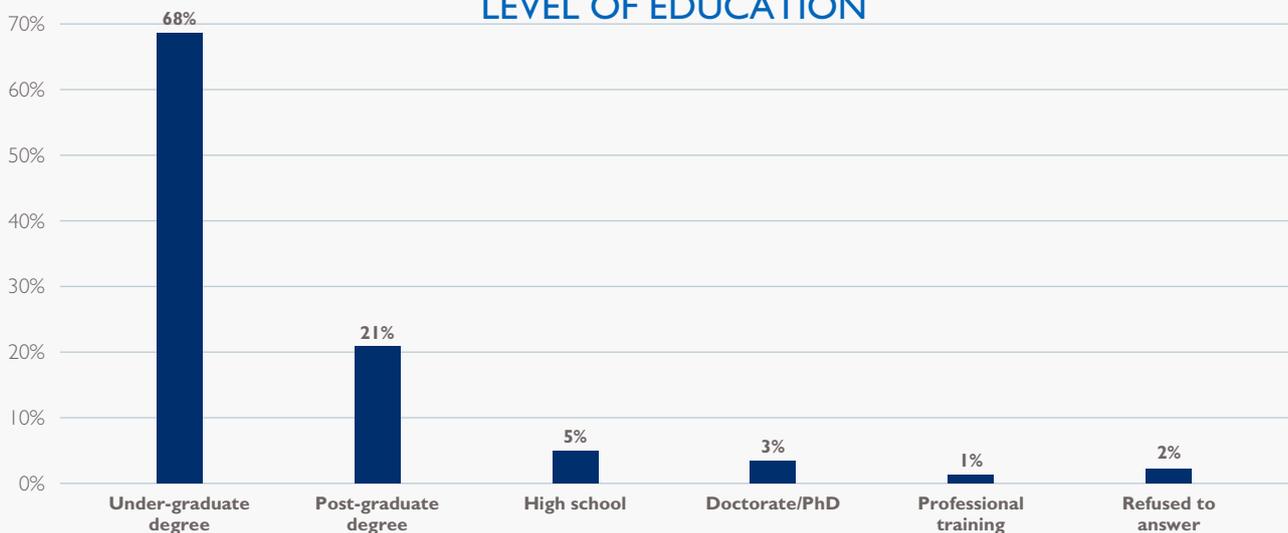
AGE



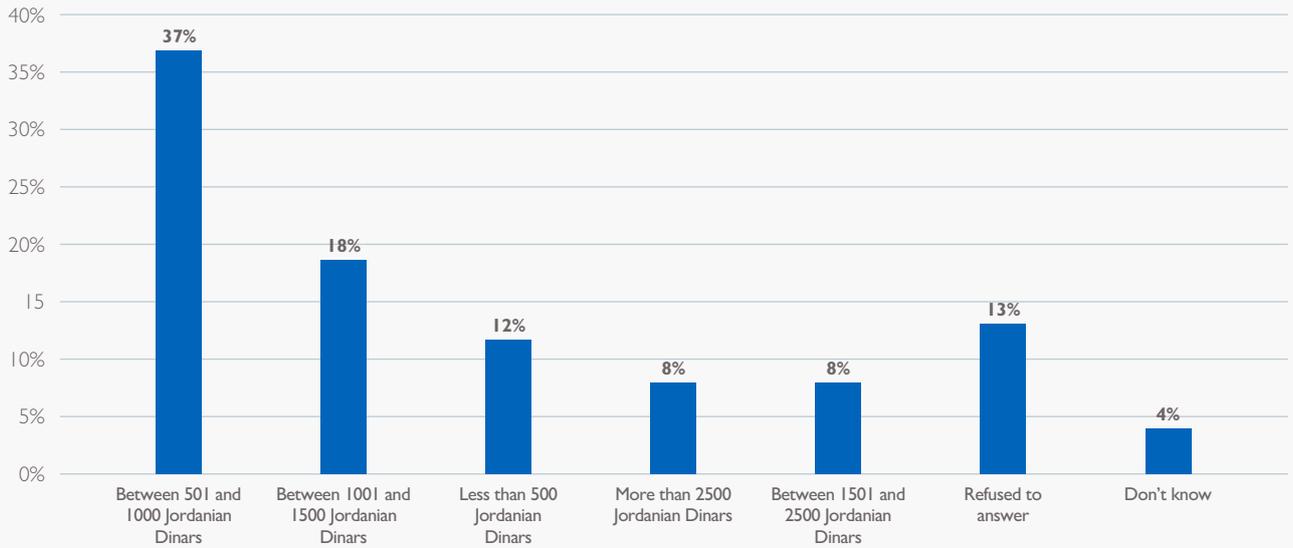
GENDER



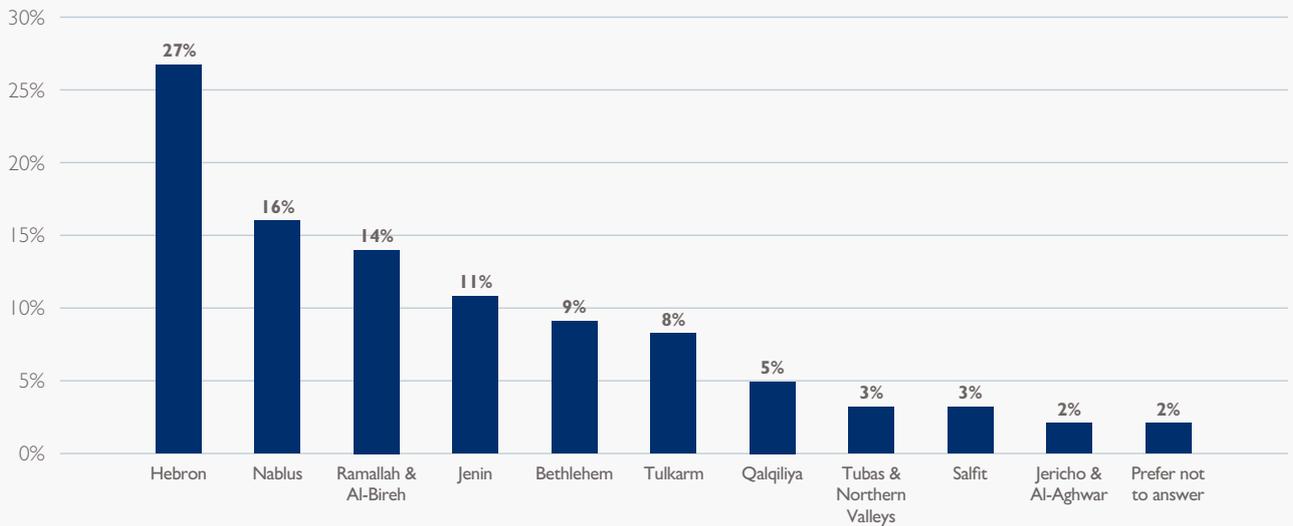
LEVEL OF EDUCATION



MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

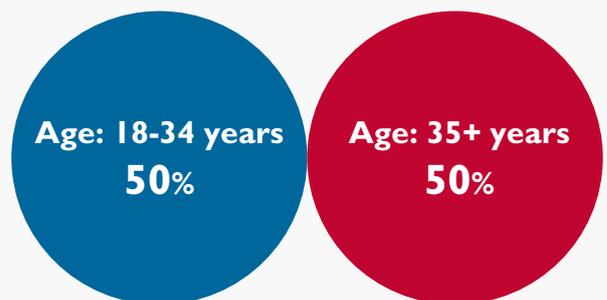
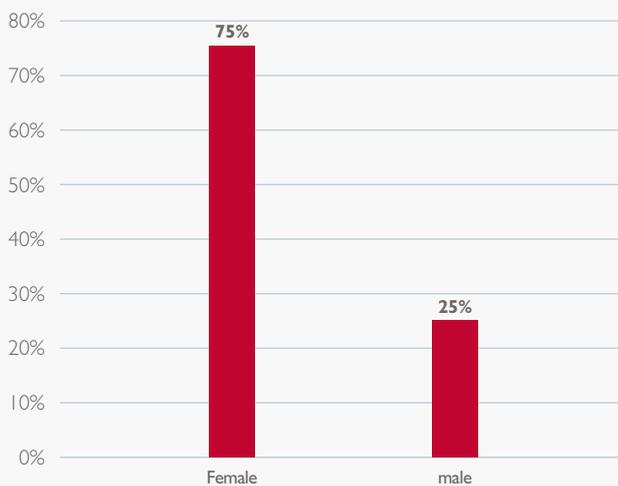


RESPONDENTS PER GOVERNORATE



Focus Groups (three with youth and three with women): The study recruited a sample size of 36 participants from Area A, Area B, and Area C of the West Bank.

GENDER

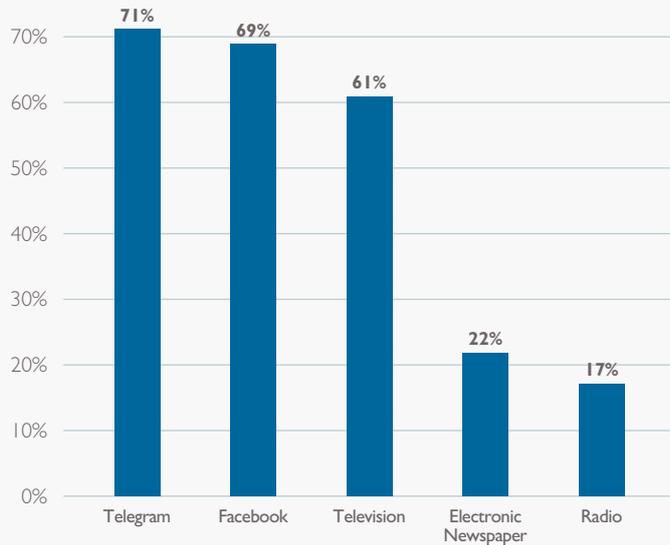


CONSUMPTION HABITS

When asked about the media outlets and digital platforms most frequently used on a weekly basis, 71% of survey participants said they use Telegram every day or almost every day, with 69% using Facebook, and 60% watching TV every day or almost every day. Electronic newspapers and radio were ranked as the least frequently followed media type.

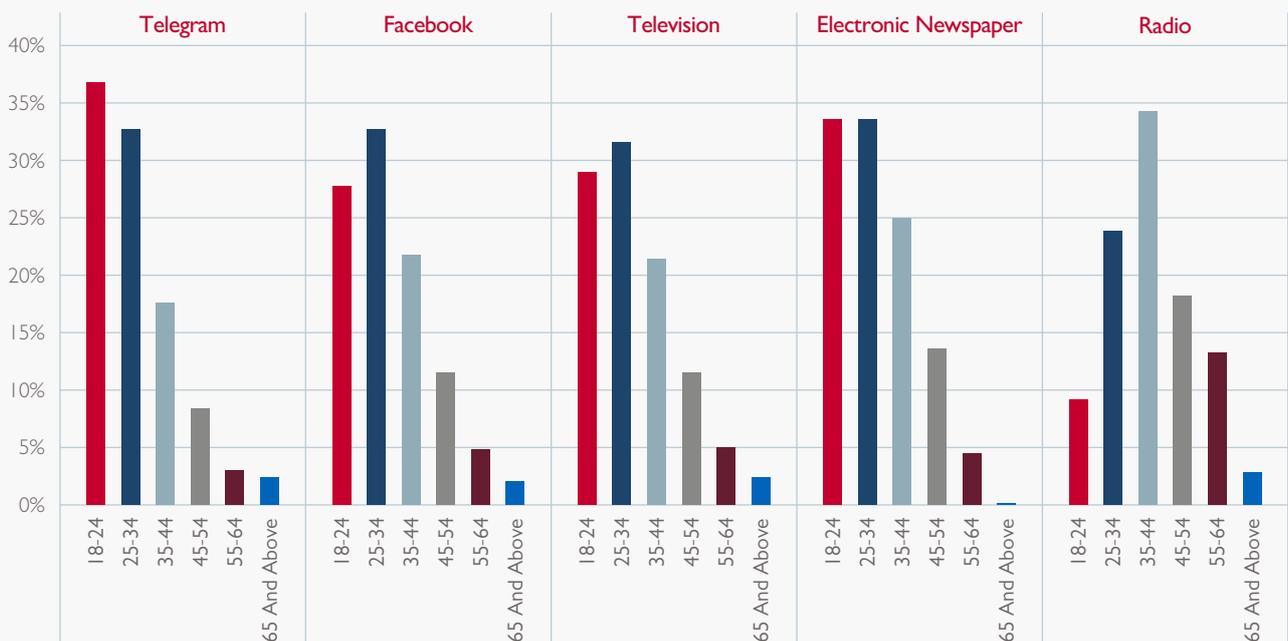
How often do you usually keep up with the following media channel types during the week?⁹
 (Frequency: every day or almost every day)

MEDIA TYPE



It is worth noting that the survey respondents were predominately young (18-34 years old). Thus, their preference for and frequent usage of digital media outlets/platforms is unsurprising.

MEDIA TYPE PER AGE GROUP



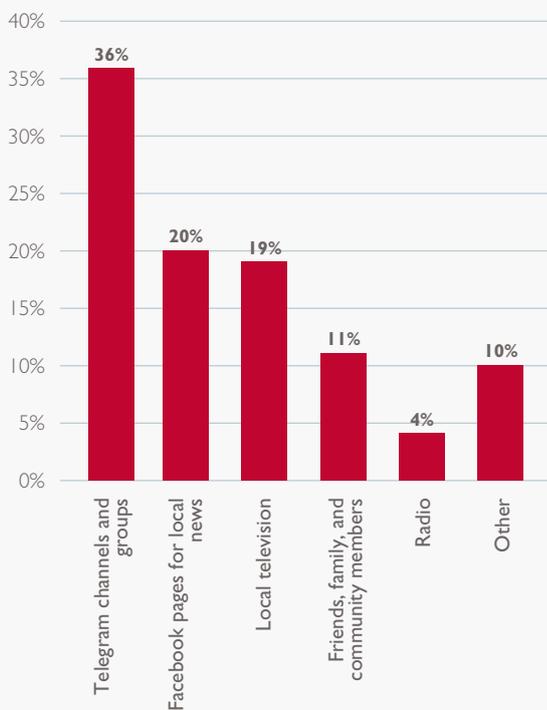
⁹Source: Internews Media Consumption Habits Survey 2023

INFORMATION SOURCES

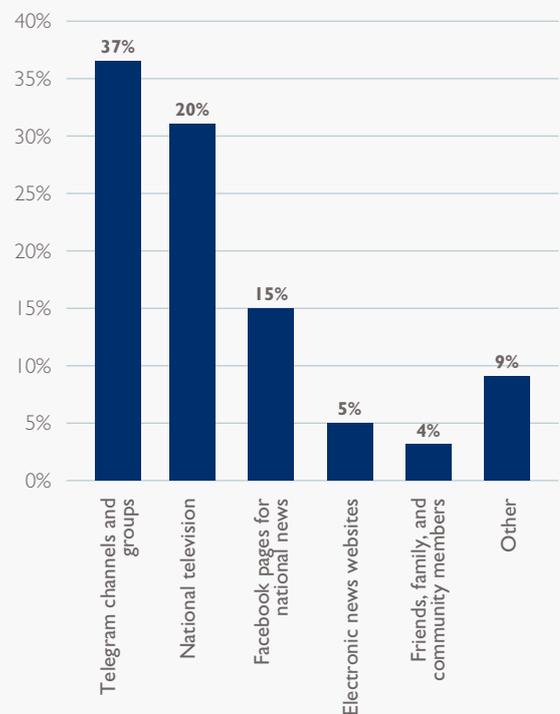
(Consumption and credibility of information sources)

Telegram channels and groups are the most popular primary source of both local and national news among survey respondents in the West Bank. This finding was corroborated by FGD participants, with the majority also relying on Telegram channels and groups for both local and national news. There was no distinct difference between the sources of local and national news among survey respondents, with Telegram ranking highest in terms of consumption frequency and information credibility. As for FGD participants, local media outlets as well as friends, family, and community members were highlighted among the primary sources of local news due to the timely availability and geographic relevance of news provided by these sources (e.g., information on roadblocks, checkpoints, etc.).

PRIMARY SOURCE OF LOCAL NEWS



PRIMARY SOURCE OF NATIONAL NEWS



Whilst 31% of survey respondents relied on national television as the first source of national news, most women FGD participants were critical of national television, particularly the PA-run Palestine TV. These participants noted that Palestine TV lacks credibility due to political allegiances, and its coverage of key events and relevant local news is slow.

Instagram and Telegram channels provide timely coverage of local and national news, especially news on Gaza

Male FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank

Palestine TV is the least credible TV channel. It distorts reality and misinforms the audience

Female FGD Participant
35+ years old
West Bank

TELEVISION

The Qatar-based Al-Jazeera Arabic is by far the most frequently watched TV channel among both survey respondents and FGDs participants. Al-Jazeera ranked highest in terms of viewership, with over 70% of survey respondents citing it as their primary source of television news. Approximately 15% of survey respondents watch the PA-run Palestine TV, and 3% follow local/private Maan TV as their primary source of television news. The remaining respondents prefer the pro-Iran, Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen and the Hamas-run Al-Aqsa TV.

Throughout all six FGDs, Al-Jazeera was repeatedly cited as the most credible TV channel among participants. Al-Jazeera was described as the “voice of Palestinians”, especially since October 7th. Al-Jazeera’s Gazan correspondent Wael Al-Dahdouh is seen as an exemplary figure who is best-placed to represent the Palestinian media most FGD participants dream of. Al-Dahdouh has lost several family members whilst reporting from Gaza and has recently become an idolized figure in Arab media – an observation also corroborated during FGDs. Shireen Abu Akleh – a Palestinian-American journalist who worked for Al-Jazeera prior to her killing in 2022 – was also described as a “role model” and a great representative of female Palestinian journalists, regionally and globally.



I recommend following Al-Jazeera channel as it accurately reports on the reality and struggle in Palestine

Female FGD Participant
35+ years old
West Bank



Wael Al-Dahdouh is the best representative of Palestine Media

Female FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank



Shireen Abu Akleh is my role model. She was a true representative of the media I dream of seeing across Palestine

Male FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank



CREDIBILITY OF INFORMATION SOURCES

When asked about the sources of information citizens trust the most with regards to national news on political parties and representatives, electoral and political processes, 23% of survey respondents said Telegram channels were the most trusted source. This was followed by friends, family, and community members (18%), national television (12%), and local electronic news websites (9%). When examining why these channels and mediums are among the most trusted sources, 46% of survey respondents said they trust their journalists, and 38% commended their timely coverage of relevant news.

As for the least trusted source of information regarding political and electoral processes, 31% of survey respondents deemed government official and representatives as the least trusted source. Reasons for citizens' lack of trust include "inaccurate information" provided by these official and representatives, and their political affiliations and ideologies.

SPECTRUM OF INFORMATION SOURCE CREDIBILITY

HIGH CREDIBILITY	MODERATE CREDIBILITY	LOW CREDIBILITY
Telegram channels and groups	WhatsApp groups	Government representatives
Friends, family, and community	Regional and community radios	Religious leaders
National television	Facebook news pages	Local television
Electronic news websites	National radio	Local newspapers

Nepotism and political affiliation among government officials are among the major diseases we suffer from in Palestine

Male FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank

I recommend following social media pages since they accurately and quickly report relevant news

Female FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank

RADIO

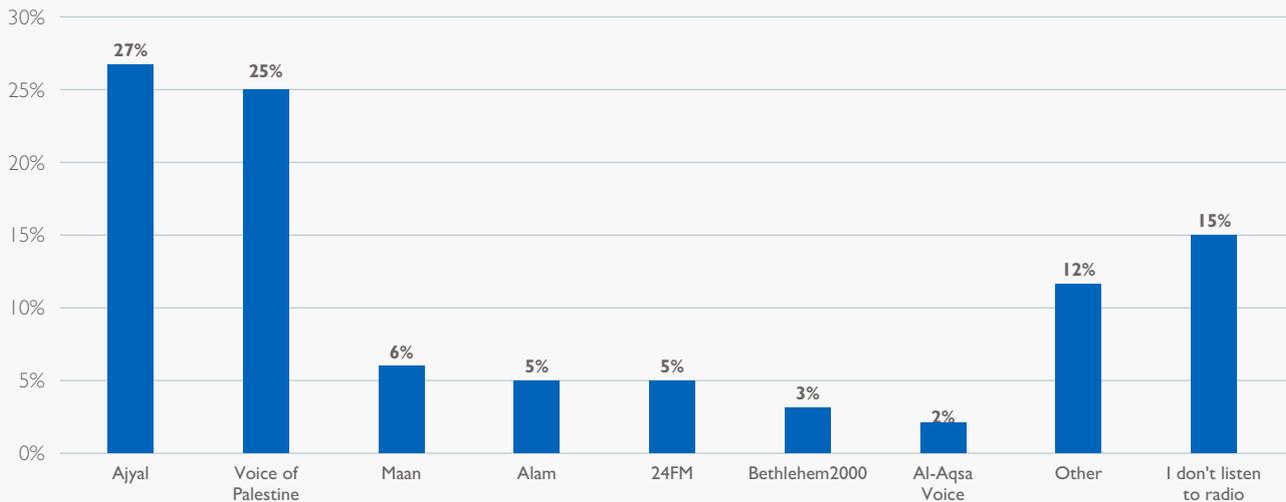
According to the PA-affiliated Ministry of Information,¹⁰ there are over 50 radio stations in the West Bank. In general, radio stations in the West Bank face numerous challenges, including radio frequency disturbances (allegedly by Israel), a small yet monopolized advertising market, and an evident lack of sustainable funding. Despite these challenges, local radio stations have been adapting.

Of the 385 respondents, 326 or 85% of the sample said they listen to radio and the remaining 15% said they do not listen to the radio. The most followed stations among participants who listen to radio and answered this question were the private Ajyal radio (27%), the PA-run Voice of Palestine (25%), the private Maan radio (6%), 24FM radio (5% each), and the Hebron University-affiliated Radio Alam (5%). Ajyal offers a variety content and thematic programs, including podcasts and televised radio content. It also caters for the interests and needs of diverse audiences, including young and older listeners.

A limited number of radio stations (e.g., Nissa FM) focus on marginalized communities such as women. However, less than 1% of survey participants listed Nissa FM as a secondary source of radio information.

¹⁰ Data obtained through direct contact with the PA's Ministry of Information

RADIO



FGD participants noted that they mostly listen to radio whilst driving or commuting, with older participants tending to listen radio more often than younger partakers.



I only listen to radio when I am driving

Female FGD Participant
35+ years old
West Bank



I do not listen to radio at all

Male FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank



Al-Jazeera and Radio Ajyal are the best sources for me. Ajyal provides diverse and interesting content, I listen to them often.

Female FGD Participant
35+ years old
West Bank

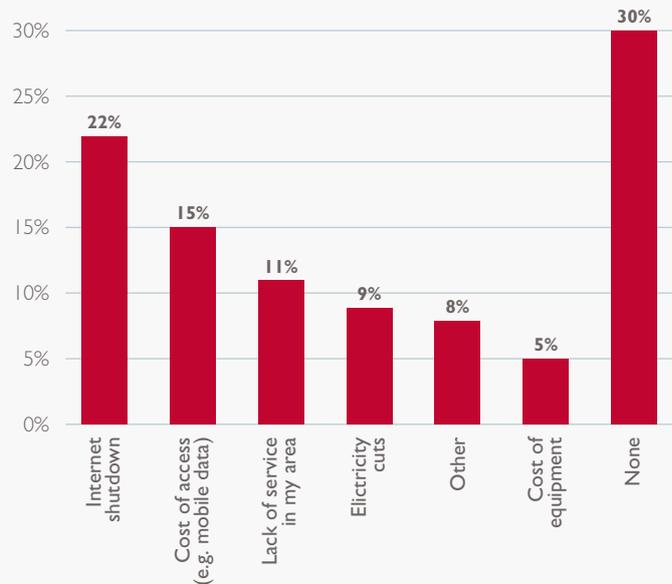
DIGITAL MEDIA

Telegram is the most popular platform among survey respondents and FGD participants for both local and national news. Among the most followed Telegram channels by survey respondents are Al-Jazeera, the independent/local digital outlet Dooz, and the Hamas-affiliated Quds News Network.

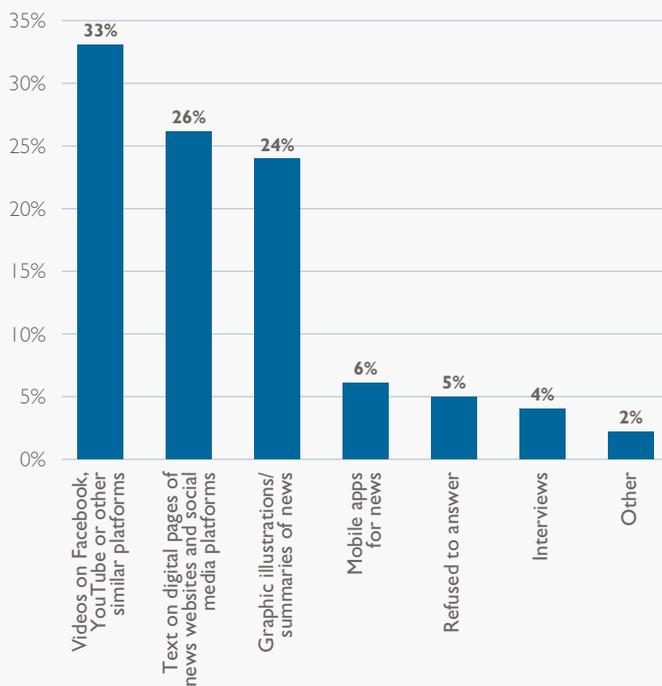
Facebook remains a popular platform among survey respondents and FGD participants. However, its moderation policies were often criticized by FGD participants for “censoring” Palestinian content. Telegram was highlighted as the digital platform with little to no censorship of Palestinian content, with numerous local media outlets opting to migrate to Telegram due to page closures and reported censorship on Facebook. Consistent with findings on Telegram, Al-Jazeera and Dooz are also among the most followed Facebook pages by survey respondents. Most participating citizens (80%) in this research study access the internet using their own mobile phones, with 9% using a desktop or laptop, and 5% using a mobile device shared with their household.

What barriers prevent you from accessing information on various media outlets/platforms?

(Up to 3 responses permitted)¹¹



In terms of digital content preference for news and current events, 33% of survey respondents prefer videos on Facebook, YouTube, or other similar platforms. 26% said they prefer text format on news websites or social media platforms, whereas 24% favor graphic illustrations/news summaries.



What is your preferred form of digital content/information for news and current events?¹²

With regards to engagement on social media platforms, 38% of survey respondents always share their views and engage on social media platforms, whereas 21% rarely or never engage or share views on social media platforms. These findings were corroborated during FGDs, with around a quarter of participants opting for little to no engagement on social media platforms due to fear of repercussions and potential imprisonment. Some FGDs participants indicated that the risks of imprisonment by Israeli forces for social media posts has significantly increased post-October 7th. However, according to FGD participants, arrests by the PA for social media posts appear to have decreased over the past three months. Participation in radio or TV programs, as well as attending or speaking at community events is not common among survey and FGD participants. Consistent with the reasons cited above, most participants fear potential consequences and imprisonment, which is indicative of considerable threats and restrictions to the legal rights concerning freedom of expression.

¹¹ Source: Internews Media Consumption Habits Survey 2023

¹² Source: Internews Media Consumption Habits Survey 2023



How often do you actively communicate your opinions and views on any of the channels listed below?¹³

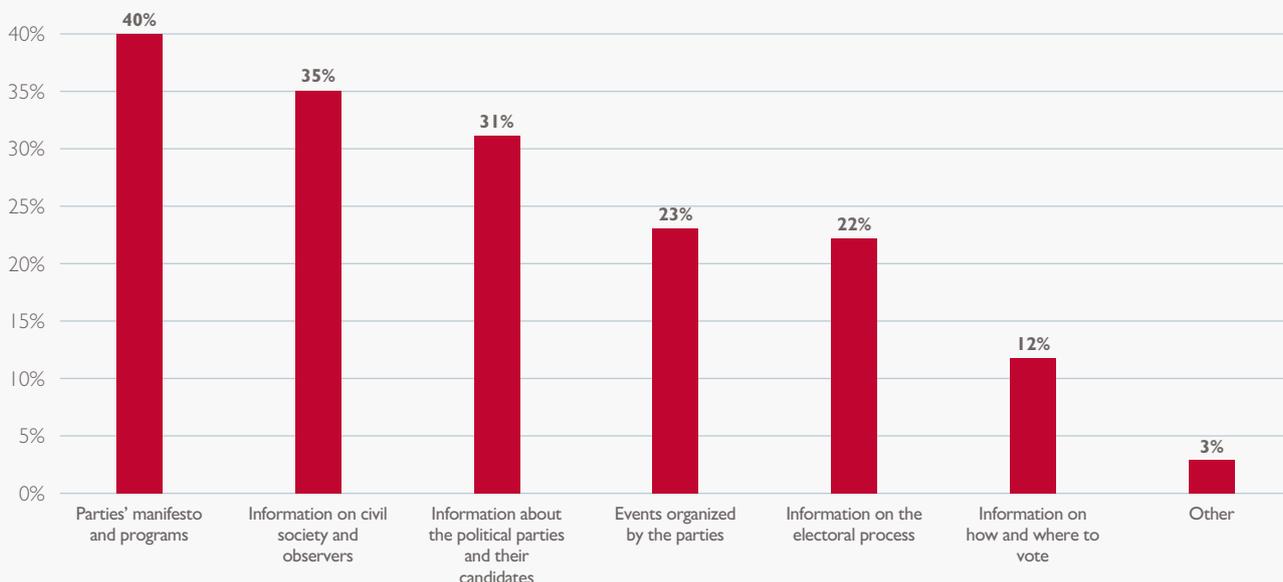
	ALWAYS	OFTEN	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
Social media engagement/reaction	38%	18%	17%	11%	10%
Radio/TV Call-ins	4%	6%	10%	21%	33%
Community Event Participation	10%	12%	18%	18%	17%

INFORMATION NEEDS

When asked about the type of information citizens need more of to make informed decisions regarding voting and political participation, over 40% of respondents expressed their interest in more information about political parties' manifestos and programs. Over 30% of respondents said they would like more information about the political parties' candidates. Further, 35% of respondents said they would like more information on the role of civil society and observers in electoral processes. A few respondents commented on the reality and lack of opportunities for political and electoral participation due to internal divisions and "absence of elections", as there have been no elections for president or legislature since 2006. Therefore, the main information gaps are related to political parties and their candidates, their manifestos and programs, and the role civic actors can play in any future political and electoral processes.



What type of information do you need more of but are not getting through the media, in order to make an informed decision with regards to voting and political participation? (Up to 3 answers permitted)¹⁴



¹³ Source: Internews Media Consumption Habits Survey 2023

¹⁴ Source: Internews Media Consumption Habits Survey 2023

FGDs participants, mostly women above the age of 35, highlighted the need for more transparency and less nepotism in the Palestinian media landscape, particularly during political and electoral processes. Further, youth FGD participants criticized the lack of content diversity and information depth in Palestinian media, especially the public media. Youth FGD participants highlighted the need for information that goes beyond the “surface level” and accounts for the various interests and needs of different audience, including marginalized groups such as people with disabilities (e.g., the need for presenters with sign language skills, and tailored content for those with visual impairments).



Transparency and integrity are lacking in Palestinian politics, especially in public media. There is so much nepotism. We should ban relatives of politicians from working in public media

Male FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank



Our media lacks depth and diversity. The information they provide are often superficial and unbalanced

Female FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank



The public media does not cover all issues in depth. They also neglect marginalized groups, such as people with special needs. For example, we have never seen sign language presenters

Female FGD Participant
18-34 years old
West Bank

On the topic of information needs of target audiences, upon further analysis and discussion with relevant stakeholders, especially those working directly with youth, it became clear that information on electoral and political processes is in principle available but disseminated through mediums that are not tailored to the needs and preferences of the target audiences. For example, some of the interviewed media outlets and stakeholders highlighted that the website of the Palestinian [Central Elections Committee \(CEC\)](#) has plenty of relevant information on previous elections and the electoral process more generally. However, interviewed media outlets and stakeholders stated that younger audiences prefer concise and short information and text that are presented in an engaging manner, one that resembles what younger audiences are exposed to on social media and other platforms (e.g., tailored digital campaigns, mobile games, apps, etc.). The CEC website lacks these engaging formats. According to some interviewees, the level of activity, frequency and quality of content produced, especially digital content, on CEC's social media pages is sporadic and does not match the expectations and preferences of young audiences. This may in turn lead to a reduced interest in and engagement with CEC's content.



MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

ROOT CAUSES

In line with global trends, new technologies have transformed the way that media is produced, delivered, and accessed in the West Bank and Gaza. Along with this media revolution have come risks, with mis- and disinformation and fake news posing a serious threat to regional stability and trust in institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. Several of the global root causes of mis- and disinformation, such as the prominence of social media as news sources and the introduction of Artificial Intelligence, are also applicable in the West Bank and Gaza.

Root causes that are specific to the local context are numerous. According to a report by Tamleh on fake news, 72% of Palestinian respondents replied positively to the question: *“Have you ever been exposed to fake news?”*⁵⁰ The report argues that the very nature of the local and regional conflicts with Israel create a fertile ground for fake stories to be produced and widely disseminated. Within the context of proxy regional powers, the role of foreign actors in fueling disinformation has also been documented. Due to the importance that the Palestinian cause holds for millions of Arabs and Muslims around the world, media narratives around it have often fallen prey to foreign actors looking to weaponize the cause’s resonance in their fight for influence. For example, in recent years, Facebook has taken down a number of disinformation campaigns by Iran aimed at stoking tensions among Israelis and Palestinians.⁵¹

Other root causes for the widespread mis- and disinformation in the West Bank and Gaza include the lack of specialized training and specialist skills needed by Palestinian journalists. According to Palestinian media expert Walid Batrawi, Palestinian journalists often lack the needed tools to verify information, while in an era of speed, technology and *“what is cool”*, they do not follow the rule that *“being second right, while right, is better than being first, while wrong”*.⁵² In the case of citizen-journalists, the need for such specialized training appears to be more imperative. In recent years, the phenomenon of citizen-journalism has taken prominence in the Palestinian media landscape, largely due to the operational context which makes the demand for access to hyper-localized information imminent, but also the accessibility of social media in sharing such information. This has lifted some barriers to media production. However, it has also lowered the bar with regards to editorial and best practices concerning information verification. According to Dr. Nawaf Al-Tamimi, professor of journalism at the Doha Institute, *“citizen journalists fall under the illusion of possessing tools of journalism, thus publishing false or unverified news frequently”*.⁵³

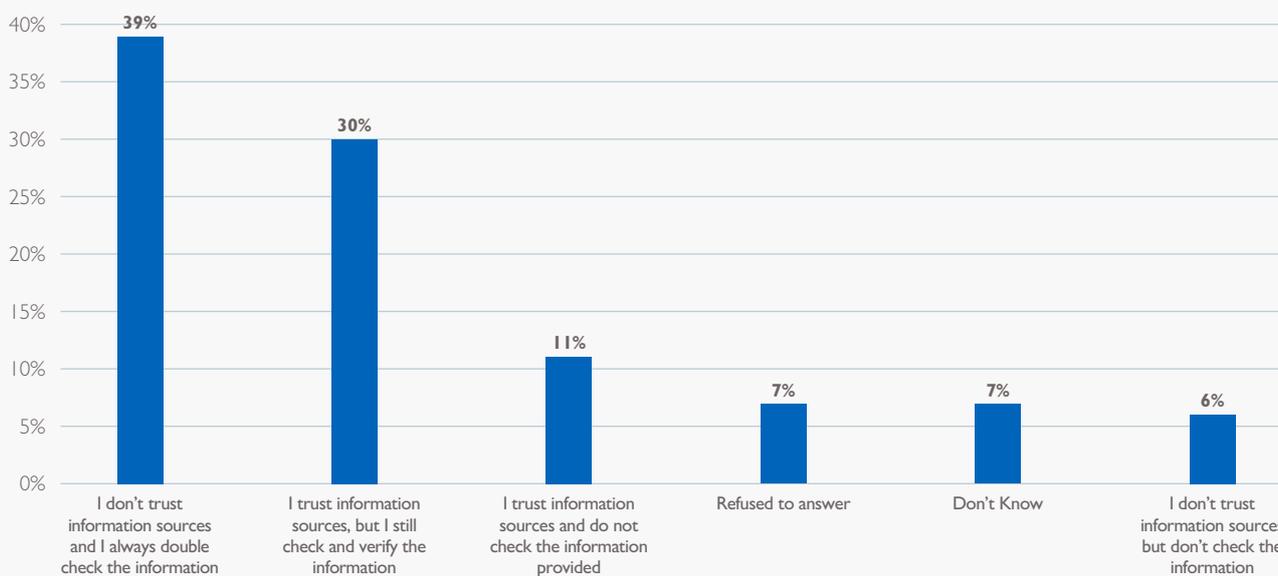
Lastly, other local factors that fuel the spread of unverified, fabricated, or fake news relate to the operational and legal frameworks. The lack of the right to information access law and regulatory framework restricts direct access to official sources. At the same time, partisanship and internal divisions also contribute to a volatile media landscape. According to Batrawi, in the Palestinian context, the line separating a “journalist, politician and activist” is thin. These dynamics, coupled with the internal divisions between Fateh and Hamas, create rife conditions for citizens to fall prey to fake news, depending on their allegiances. With no independent media regulatory bodies, and with the respective authorities in the West Bank and Gaza regulating the media, all of these dynamics and realities add further barriers to journalists and reduce their ability to verify information and report independently.

CITIZENS' BEHAVIOR AROUND MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

In the current study, survey respondents in the West Bank were asked to select a statement they agree with the most with regards to fact-checking behavior and news about political parties and representatives during electoral and political processes. Of the 385 survey respondents, 39% said they do not trust local information sources, and they always double check other sources of information, with 30% stating that they do trust the information provided, but they still check other sources of information.



Regarding the local and national news concerning political parties and representatives, as well as electoral and political processes, which of the following statements would you agree with the most?¹⁵



When asked for their suggestions to counter the widespread mis- and disinformation in the Palestinian media landscape, survey respondents selected for the following strategies (multiple answers were permitted):

Raise awareness about the harms of misinformation	62%
Increase media literacy among citizens	47%
Stricter legal and regulatory frameworks imposed by government	42%
Create more and better-equipped fact checking services	36%

¹⁵ Source: Internews Media Consumption Habits Survey 2023

MEDIA CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

METHODOLOGY

Internews mapped out public, private, and independent media outlets, and other relevant information producers, independent journalists, and stakeholders in the West Bank, with the aim of identifying and selecting beneficiaries who will be engaged, trained, and supported to securely deliver accurate and impartial information throughout the project.

Internews conducted 28 in-depth interviews with information producers and other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society and women's rights organizations. Twelve interviews were conducted with public (e.g., Palestine TV, WAFA News Agency), private (e.g., Maan Network, Al-Fajr TV), and independent (e.g., Dooz, Palestine News Network) media outlets, and seven interviews were conducted with independent journalists (4 females and 3 males). An additional nine in-depth interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders, including 7amleh, Filastiniyat, Women's Studies Center, the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), and Kashif (fact-checking service, part of Shahed NGO).

The mapping exercise enabled Internews to identify and select a diverse sample of relevant information producers and stakeholders that are likely to contribute to positive and sustainable impact in the future. Internews' Media Capacity Assessment (MCA) focused on eight criteria:

1. Capacity to create accurate and reliable information;
2. Technical capacity to package and disseminate accurate and reliable information;
3. Capacity to offer safe access (e.g., digital security);
4. Sustainability;
5. Inclusivity;
6. Capacity to reach target communities with specific themes;
7. Capacity to generate trust;
8. Capacity for audience engagement

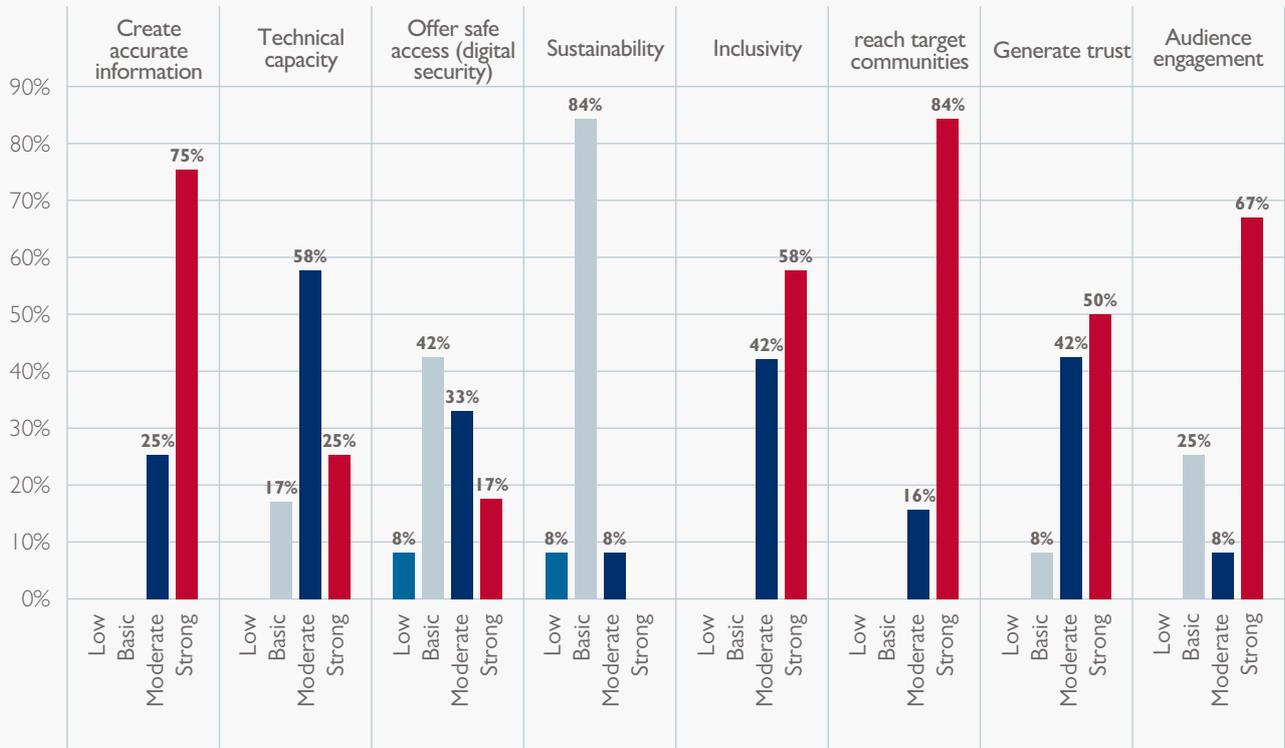
The interviews were on conducted and recorded on Microsoft Teams. The Data collected (i.e., answers to the questions asked) through these interviews were cleaned and coded by the research team. Two Internews reviewers independently assessed the above-mentioned capacities and assigned a score. The scores were based on the primary data obtained during the interviews as well as secondary data available through desk research. The scoring criteria for each of the above-mentioned capacities were:

- Low capacity (score = 1)
- Basic capacity (score = 2)
- Moderate capacity (score = 3)
- Strong capacity (score = 4)

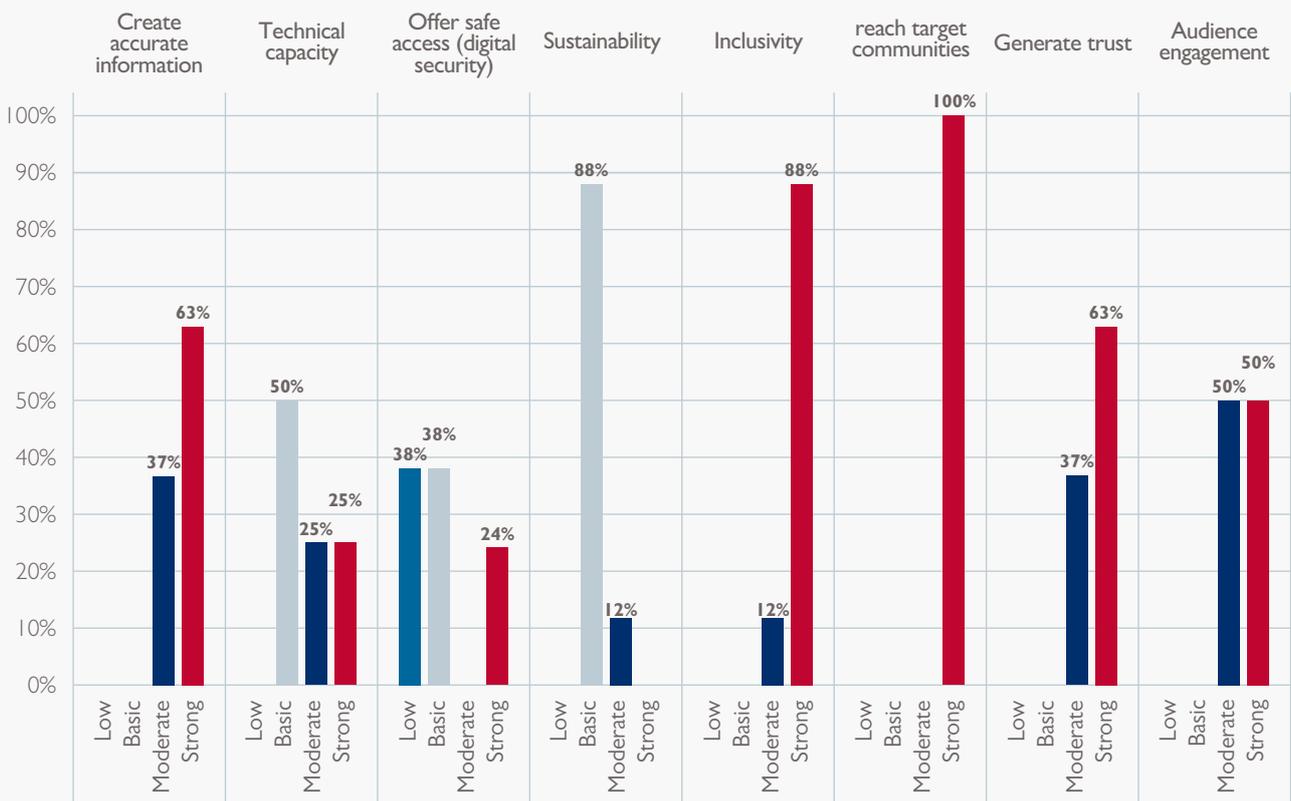
In addition, the impact of the current war in Gaza was also assessed during the in-depth interviews. This included operational and security challenges, as well as gauging the psychological impact on media workers and relevant stakeholders.

The charts below offer an overview of the results and capacities of the assessed media outlets and stakeholders in the West Bank.

OVERVIEW OF MEDIA CAPACITIES (N=12 MEDIA OUTLETS IN THE WEST BANK)



OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER CAPACITIES (N=9 STAKEHOLDERS IN THE WEST BANK)



SNAPSHOT OF MEDIA CAPACITY ASSESSMENT¹⁶



Organization's Name: Maan News Agency

Region: Bethlehem-based – operates across the West Bank and Gaza

Email: news@maannews.net

Website: <https://www.maannews.net/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MaanNews> (followed by 820,930 people)

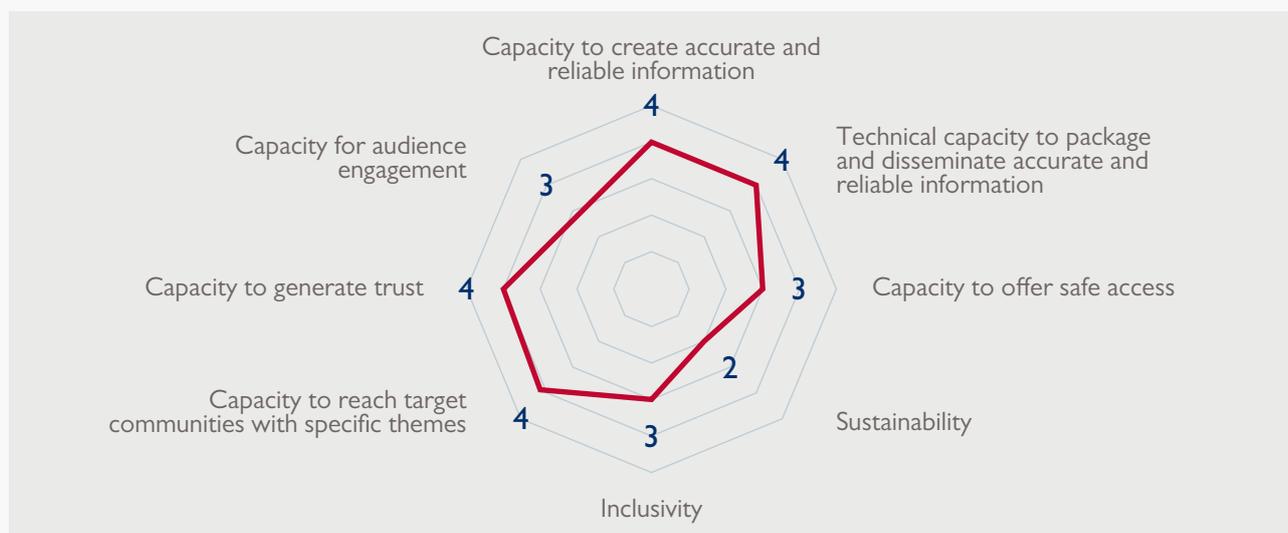
Telegram: <https://t.me/maannews> (followed by 44,680 people)

Language: Arabic (plus translation of Hebrew media)

Description

One of the largest local/private TV, radio and online media groups in the West Bank and Gaza. Maan operates across multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X. The network had a large following on social media. Maan used to operate English-language website and pages, but these services have been halted due to financial challenges. Maan has had to significantly downsize since 2019, due to financial challenges.

Capacity Assessment¹⁷



Impact of Gaza war: **Severe**

- Maan's offices in Gaza were bombed, and its entire workforce has been displaced, with some reportedly missing.

Development/Training Priorities (based on MCA conducted by Internews)

PRIORITIES	PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3
Maan News Agency	Sustainability	Digital security training	Audience engagement

¹⁶ Additional assessments can be found in Annex 5

¹⁷ Source: Internews Media Capacity Assessment



Organization’s Name: Ajyal Network

Region: Ramallah-based – operates across the West Bank

Email: prog@arn.ps

Website: <https://arn.ps/>

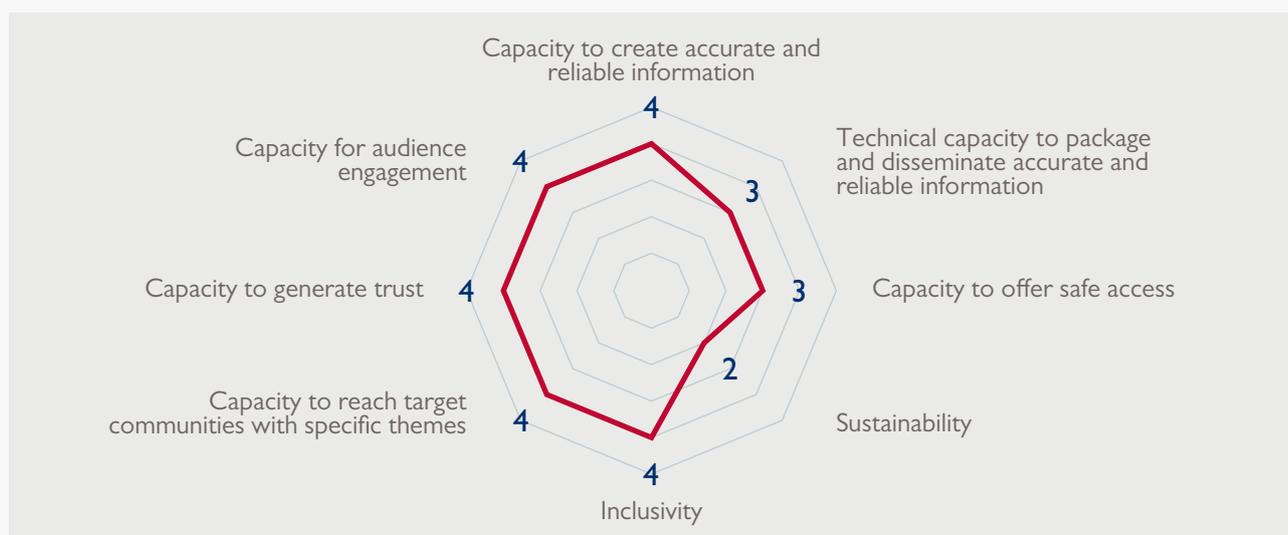
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AJYALFM> (followed by 3,062,294 people)

Language: Arabic

Description

A prominent, independent FM radio station that also offers televised radio content and podcasts across several platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, X and YouTube. Ajyal has a significantly large following on social media, especially amongst the youth.

Capacity Assessment¹⁸



Impact of Gaza war: **Moderate**

- Ajyal does not directly operate in Gaza. Whilst the volatile security environment in the West Bank has impacted this outlet, operational and other adjustments have been made to mitigate risks and minimize the impact of the ongoing war.

Development/Training Priorities (based on MCA conducted by Internews)

PRIORITIES	DEV PRIORITY 1	DEV PRIORITY 2	DEV PRIORITY 3
Ajyal Network	Sustainability	Digital security training	Technical capacity

¹⁸Source: Internews Media Capacity Assessment

KEY FINDINGS

MEDIA OUTLETS

Sustainability

Funding and sustainability are among the most significant challenges encountered by media outlets in the West Bank, with 84% of interviewed outlets having a basic capacity for sustainability. These outlets predominately rely on international donors, and a small yet monopolized advertising market. Most of interviewed outlets were critical of what they term as “politicization of grant funding” as well as supposed interferences by some donors in their editorial policies (e.g., terminology used by media outlets to describe the war in Gaza and Palestinian casualties). There is a pressing need for exploring alternative business and sustainability models.



Funding is our biggest challenge

Director of Media Outlet
West Bank



Foreign funding is conditional and comes with demands. Advertisers have stopped placing ads since the start of the war, and we have been accumulating debt, mostly employees' salaries which we cannot afford anymore

General Manager of Media Outlet
West Bank

Digital Security

Digital security policies and best practices are absent or not adhered to. Several organizations reported having to deal with increasing digital security threats, including attempts to hack their social media pages. Whilst some organizations reported attending and offering digital security training, there remains a clear need for adopting digital security best practices, with over 50% of interviewed outlets having low to basic digital security capacity.

Inclusivity

There is generally a high representation of women and youth among interviewed media outlets, with nearly 60% of interviewed outlets having a strong capacity for inclusivity.

Technical Capacity

The capacity to create tailored digital content that would resonate with specific target audience is moderate. There is a need for tailored training on digital content production and targeted dissemination of accurate and reliable information and content.

Mis- and Disinformation

Media outlets are aware of significant challenges relating to mis- and disinformation in the Palestinian information ecosystem. The PA's lack of transparency and the absence of a legal framework regarding the right to information access are often described among the root causes for the widespread mis- and disinformation.

Audience Engagement

In general, the capacity for audience engagement is strong, with over 60% of interviewed outlets having dedicated channels and, in some cases, teams to respond to and engage with target audiences, both online and offline, with reported success and high audience engagement.

Perception of International Donors

The perception of international donors among interviewed media outlets was negative. The stances taken by major international donors on the war in Gaza were often highlighted by interviewed outlets. In particular, Germany and the US were criticized by interviewed outlets for their funding cuts and alleged politicization of aid to Palestinian organizations. The mood among interviewed outlets was somber, with evident anger towards major international donors due to their “unconditional support” for Israel’s war in Gaza. Despite this, over 60% of interviewees reiterated their pragmatism and willingness to continue working with international donors, especially as sources of funding are admittedly scarce.

We do not want to be dependent on foreign funding, because if we want to be independent, we must liberate ourselves from the agenda of foreign funding. Foreign funding is conditional, and we do not want to be part of this system anymore.

Director of Media Outlet
West Bank

We cannot survive without foreign funding, especially after we have lost all of our advertisement revenue

General Manager of Media Outlet
West Bank

Censorship

Censorship of Palestinian content on social media platforms is a significant challenge for media outlets, with the majority of interviews reporting repeated closure and restrictions on content dissemination across social media platforms, such as Meta, X and TikTok. Several outlets have recently migrated to Telegram as they perceived the platform to have more lenient content moderation policies with regards to Palestinian content.

Psychological Impact of Gaza War

The overall psychological impact of the Gaza war on media outlets in the West Bank is severe, with most interviewees reporting the loss of Gaza-based colleagues. Most interviewees highlighted the importance of psychosocial support and confirmed their willingness to participate in counselling sessions.

Development/Training Priorities for Interviewed Media Outlets

DEV PRIORITY 1	DEV PRIORITY 2	DEV PRIORITY 3	DEV PRIORITY 4
Sustainability	Digital security training	Digital content production	Fact-checking training

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS

Internews interviewed seven independent journalists in the West Bank to assess their capacities, and needs, as well as the challenges they face. The key findings are presented below:

Protection and occupational safety are significant challenges for independent journalists in the West Bank, with most of the seven interviewees reporting harassment by Israeli security forces at checkpoints and in the field.

Harassment by the occupation forces is a major challenge for us whilst working in the field

Independent Male Journalist
West Bank

- Movement restrictions and fear of imprisonment also pose major obstacles for independent journalists. These factors severely impact independent voices and freedom of speech.
- Independent journalists highlighted that they mostly rely on peer-to-peer learning in the field and emphasized the need for tailored training on mobile journalism, fact-checking and digital content production. Training provided to independent journalists should be distinguished from that provided to media outlets and tailored to their individual needs and capacities.
- Independent journalists and freelancers are more likely to be targeted as individuals as they do not officially represent any outlets or organizations.
- Understanding of digital security best practices is severely lacking among independent journalists, with the majority reporting no adherence to any best practices.

Job security is another major challenge for independent journalists, with a significant discrepancy between those working as freelancers for regional and international media and independent journalists working for local media outlets, with the former group having a considerable job and financial security advantage.

There is a massive wage discrepancy between journalists working for Western media and those working for local outlets

Independent Female Journalist
West Bank

- Certain media jobs (e.g., Camerawoman in the field) and shifts (e.g., night shifts in the field) are predominantly given to male journalists due to societal stereotypes and fear of arrest and harassment. These factors further limit job opportunities for independent female journalists.

Training Priorities for Independent Journalists

PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	PRIORITY 4
Physical security/occupational safety	Job and financial security	Mobile journalism and digital content production	Fact-checking and digital security training

STAKEHOLDERS

- The civic space in relation to media work in the West Bank is among the most developed in the Southern Mediterranean region. However, challenges relating to funding and sustainability are evidently present.

Stakeholders such as CSOs, WROs, and advocacy organizations lack sustainable sources of fundings. This impacts their ability to operate independently, with most interviewed stakeholders reporting conflicts with and funding cuts by international donors. Some of the interviewed stakeholders stated that international donors do not wish to see Palestinian organizations become independent and operate without foreign funding and the agenda it comes with.



The biggest problem is that donors are not interested in providing support that ensures independence. They want Palestinian organizations to always be dependent on them

Director of Local NGO
West Bank

- Despite the above finding, most stakeholders remain open and willing to partner with regional and international donors. However, according to those interviewed, these partnerships should not come at the expense of their independence and integrity in the eyes of their audiences.
- Similar to media outlets and independent journalists, stakeholders such as CSOs and WROs lack adequate digital security training.
- Most of the interviewed have evidence-based, data-driven ideas for digital content production. However, the vast majority lack experience or capacities to produce digital content, with majority opting to outsource production or reduce the volume of content produced.
- The psychosocial impact of the Gaza war is severe among interviewed CSOs and WROs. Some of those interviewed operate across both the West Bank and Gaza. Data collected and verified during this research study indicate that several female journalists were killed or severely impacted by the war in Gaza. Most interviewees expressed their need for and willing to participate in counselling sessions. Stakeholders such as Filastiniyat - an NGO that works to empower, equip, and protect female journalists in the West Bank and Gaza, highlighted the urgent need for a rapid humanitarian response for all media workers in the West Bank and Gaza, with a particular focus on female journalists.

Development/Training Priorities for Interviewed Stakeholders

DEV PRIORITY 1	DEV PRIORITY 2	DEV PRIORITY 3	DEV PRIORITY 4
Sustainability	Digital security policy and training	Digital content production	Digital marketing

TIME SERIES ANALYSIS

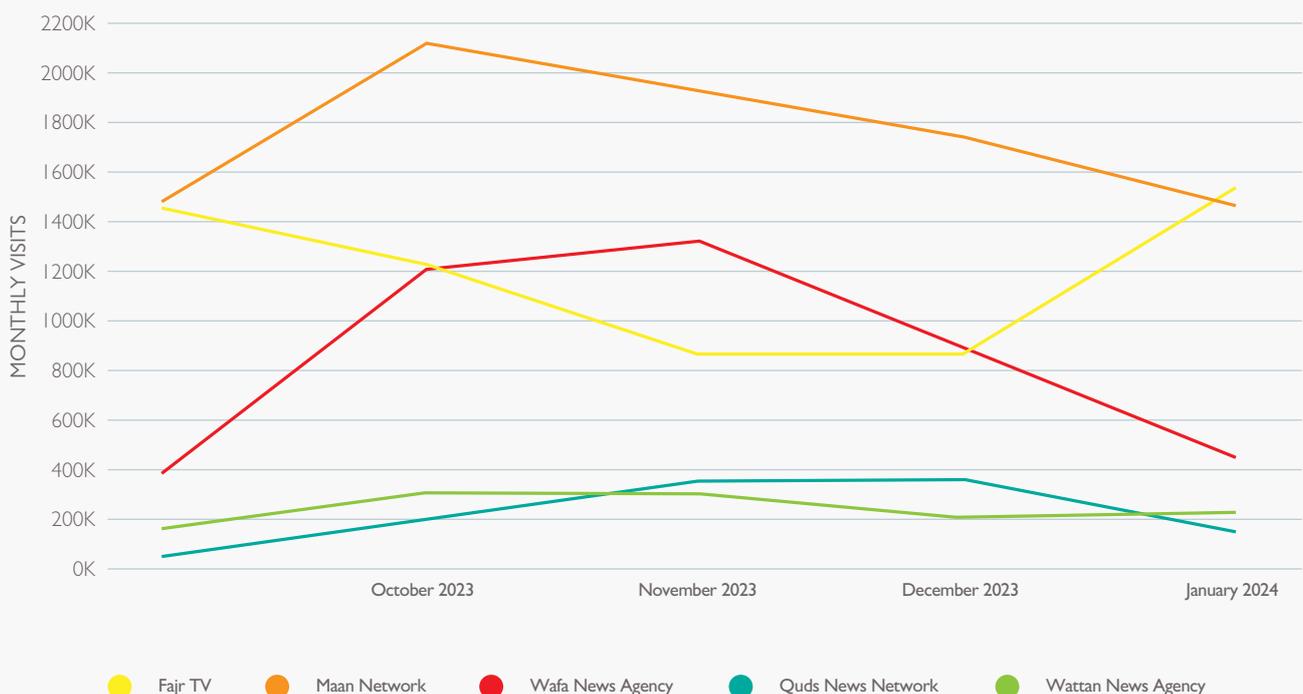
This time series analysis focuses on the trends observed on the websites and YouTube channels of some of the biggest traditional and digital media outlets in the West Bank and Gaza. The majority of these outlets were interviewed as part of this study. However, additional outlets, such as the allegedly Hamas-affiliated Quds News Network (QNN), were added to the analysis for comparison purposes. QNN were not interviewed for this study. Most, if not all, of the Hamas-run pages/outlets (e.g., [Shehab News Agency](#), [Al-Aqsa TV](#)) were suspended on social media platforms at the time of conducting this analysis.

To conduct this analysis, open-source intelligence (OSINT) tools and techniques were employed to collect and cross check the data. In other words, the data was obtained and analyzed independently, and not through interviews conducted with the media outlets.

WEBSITE VISITS

This analysis includes five websites of some of the biggest media outlets in the West Bank and Gaza. The analysis focuses on monthly website visits and demographics of audiences. It is worth noting that this analysis was limited by the availability of historic data which was collected using free versions of OSINT tools, such as [Similarweb](#). The analysis period was September to December 2023. The five websites included in the analysis were: [Al-Fajr TV](#) (private), [Maan Network](#) (private), [Quds News Network](#) (allegedly Hamas-affiliated), [Wafa News Agency](#) (PA), and [Wattan News Agency](#) (independent). The chart below shows the number of monthly website visits for the above-mentioned media outlets between September 2023 and January 2024.

MONTHLY WEBSITE VISITS



Between September 2023 and January 2024, Maan Network had the highest number of website visits among the analyzed outlets, with over 5 million total website visits during the analysis period. In October 2023, Maan had over 2 million website visits, the highest number visits among all analyzed outlets in any single month. Maan has been providing detailed and timely analysis and reporting on the war in Gaza since October 2023. Maan is also known for translating and analyzing Israeli/Hebrew [media outputs](#), which may have contributed to the high number of website visits in the context of the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. This is especially evident at the onset of the war in October 2023 (see chart above).

Al-Fajr TV – a popular local media outlet– provides coverage of daily news and a wide array of entertainment programs but is more known for covering major sporting events. Al-Fajr is particularly popular among the youth due to its consistent and timely coverage of regional and global sporting events, mainly soccer.⁵⁴ Between October and December 2023, Al-Fajr website saw a significant decrease in the number of monthly visitors, likely due to the prominence of other regional (e.g., Al-Jazeera) and local (e.g., Palestine TV) channels in covering the war in Gaza, and a declining interest in sports news among local audiences during a time of major crisis in the West Bank and Gaza. However, in January 2024, Al-Fajr saw a significant increase in monthly website visitors to the levels observed before October 2023 (around 1.5 million). This is likely caused by the Asian Cup which kicked off in Qatar on January 12th, 2024. The Palestinian soccer team played in the tournament and qualified to the knock-out stages for the first time ever.⁵⁵

The PA-run Wafa News Agency saw a significant increase in the number of monthly visits between October to November 2023, with a peak of around 1.3 million visitors in November compared to approximately 400,000 visitors in September 2023. This increase was likely due to the daily coverage of the war in Gaza and relevant events in the West Bank. This period was also marked by sustained regional and international efforts to mitigate the ever-growing risks of the war in Gaza, as well as various visits made by US⁵⁶ and other officials⁵⁷ to the West Bank and the Middle East, which Wafa covered in a timely manner.⁵⁸ By January 2024, the number of Wafa's monthly website visitors decreased significantly compared to numbers observed in October-November 2023. The January 2024 numbers were similar to those observed in pre-October 7th (i.e., around 400K). This may be due to a reduced level of interest in political news or “news fatigue” among audiences as the war in Gaza had entered its fourth month in January 2024.

The number of monthly website visits for the allegedly Hamas-affiliated QNN saw a significant increase between September (~ 60K) and December (~ 368K) 2023. It is not unreasonable to assume that QNN's daily coverage of the war in Gaza was the trigger behind this increase. However, it is worth noting that QNN mostly relies on its social media pages, rather than website, to disseminate its content and reports.

Finally, Wattan News Agency had a somewhat linear pattern to its number of monthly website visitors with a noticeable increase in October (~314K) compared to September (~172K) 2023. This increase coincided with the onset of the war between Hamas and Israel.



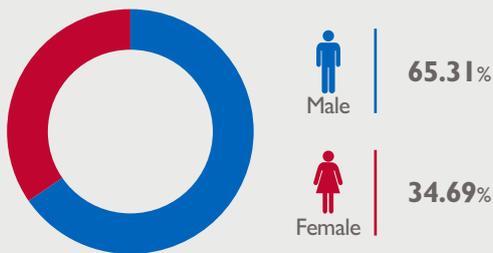
AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRAFFIC SHARE

MAAN NEWS AGENCY WEBSITE

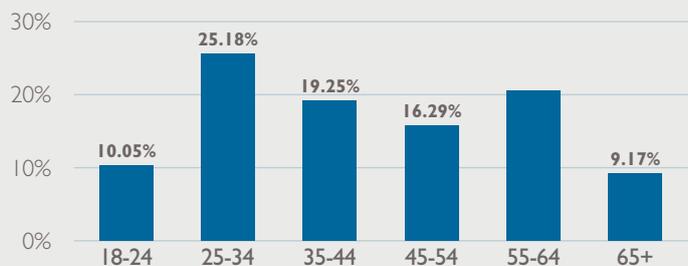
(October – December 2023)



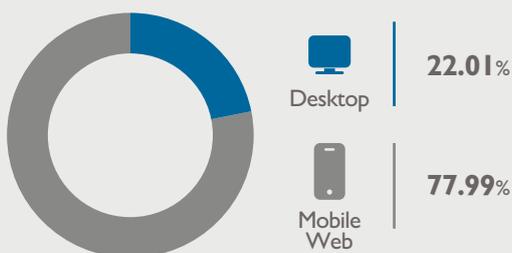
GENDER DISTRIBUTION



AGE DISTRIBUTION



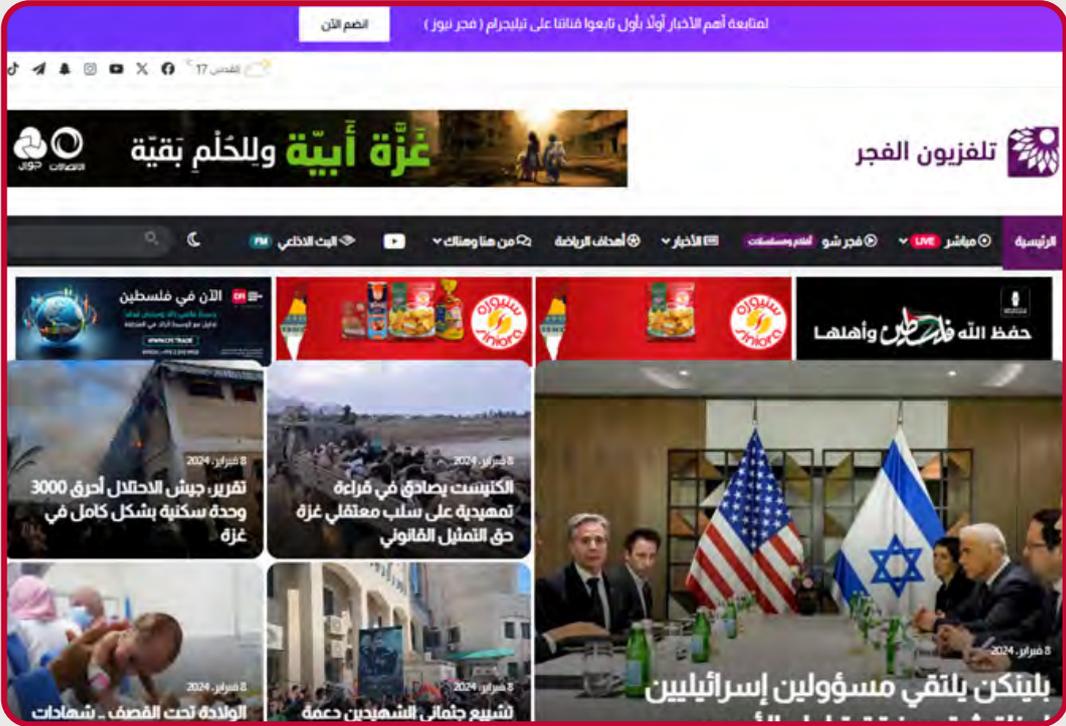
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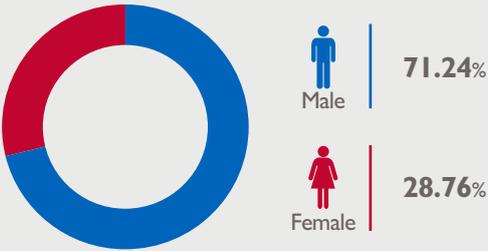
Country	Traffic Share
Palestine	56.38%
Israel	13.75%
Russia	4.47%
Jordan	3.91%
Oman	3.47%

AL-FAJR TV WEBSITE

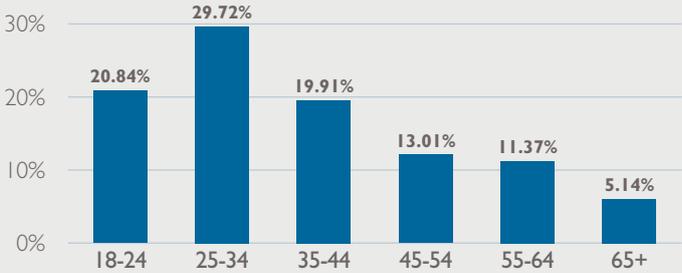
(October – December 2023)



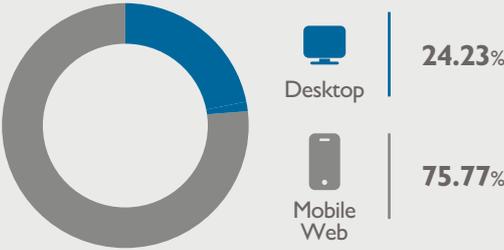
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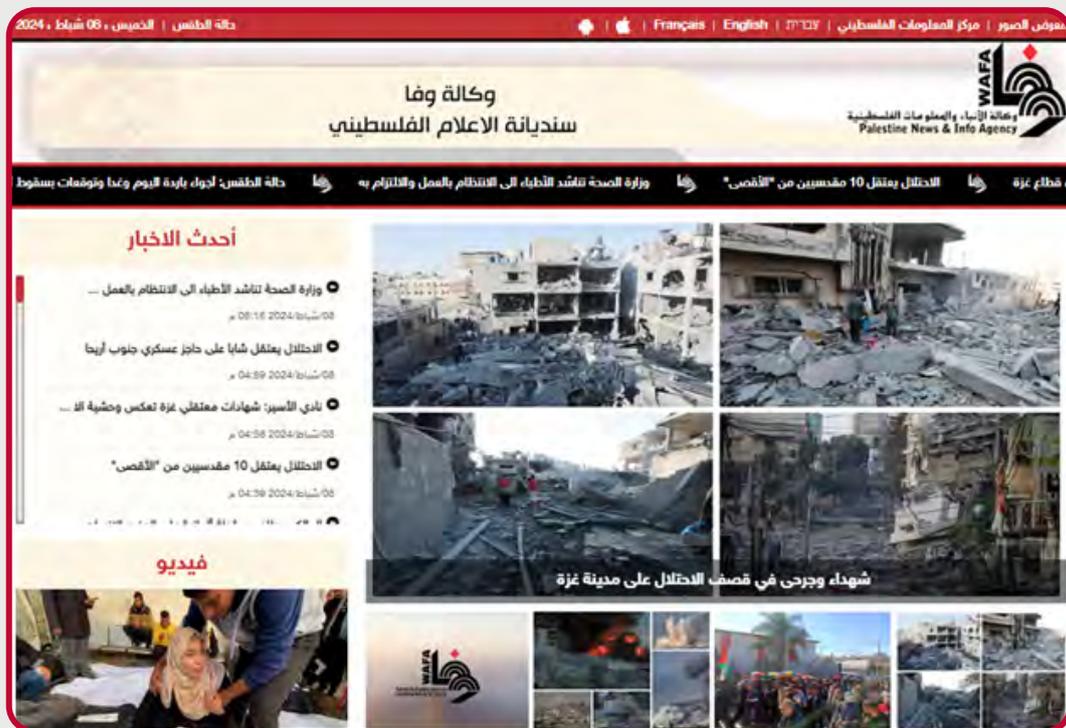
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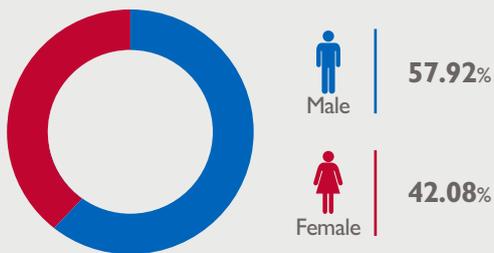
Country (48)	Traffic Share
Palestine	46.34%
Israel	25.17%
Turkey	3.98%
Egypt	3.08%
Russia	2.88%

WAFA NEWS AGENCY WEBSITE

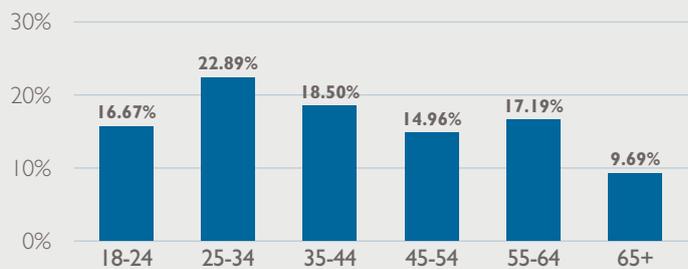
(October – December 2023)



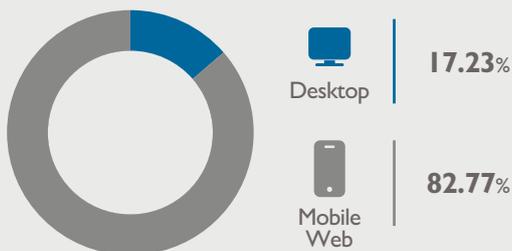
GENDER DISTRIBUTION



AGE DISTRIBUTION



DEVICE DISTRIBUTION



19

Country (92)	Traffic Share
1 Philippines	10.12%
2 United States	8.37%
3 Oman	8.19%
4 Israel	7.74%
5 Palestine	7.00%

¹⁹ The use of VPN by website visitors may affect the accuracy of traffic share/geolocation data (e.g., Philippines).

AL-QUDS NEWS NETWORK WEBSITE

(October – December 2023)

English مباشر اتصل بنا من نحن ترجمات طوفان الأقصى مدونات تقارير توثيق متابعات أخبار

الأسرى
نادي الأسير: الاحتلال يخفي معتقلي غزة قسريا ويرسخ جريمته بمشاريع قوانين



الأسرى
بينهم أطفال ونساء.. زيادة غير مسبوقة في عدد المعتقلين الإداريين في سجون الاحتلال



ترجمات عبرية
الأولى من نوعها.. ضابط في شعبة الاستخبارات يعترف بفشله في منع الطوفان ويستقيل



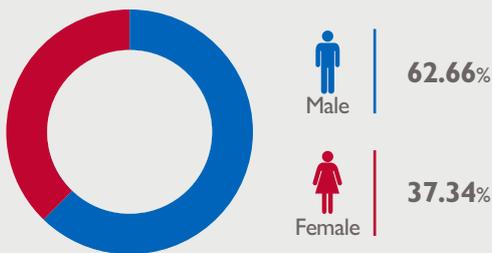
أخبار
الشرطة الأمريكية تحقق في طعن أمريكي من فلسطيني في تكساس



أخبار
بسبب جرائم الحرب في غزة.. دعوات لتعليق عضوية الاحتلال الإسرائيلي في "فيفا"



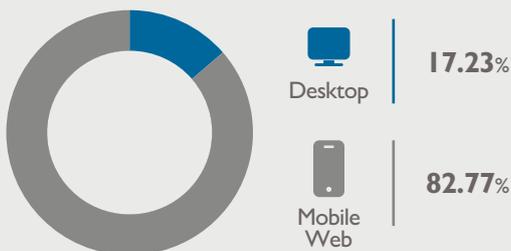
GENDER DISTRIBUTION



AGE DISTRIBUTION



DEVICE DISTRIBUTION



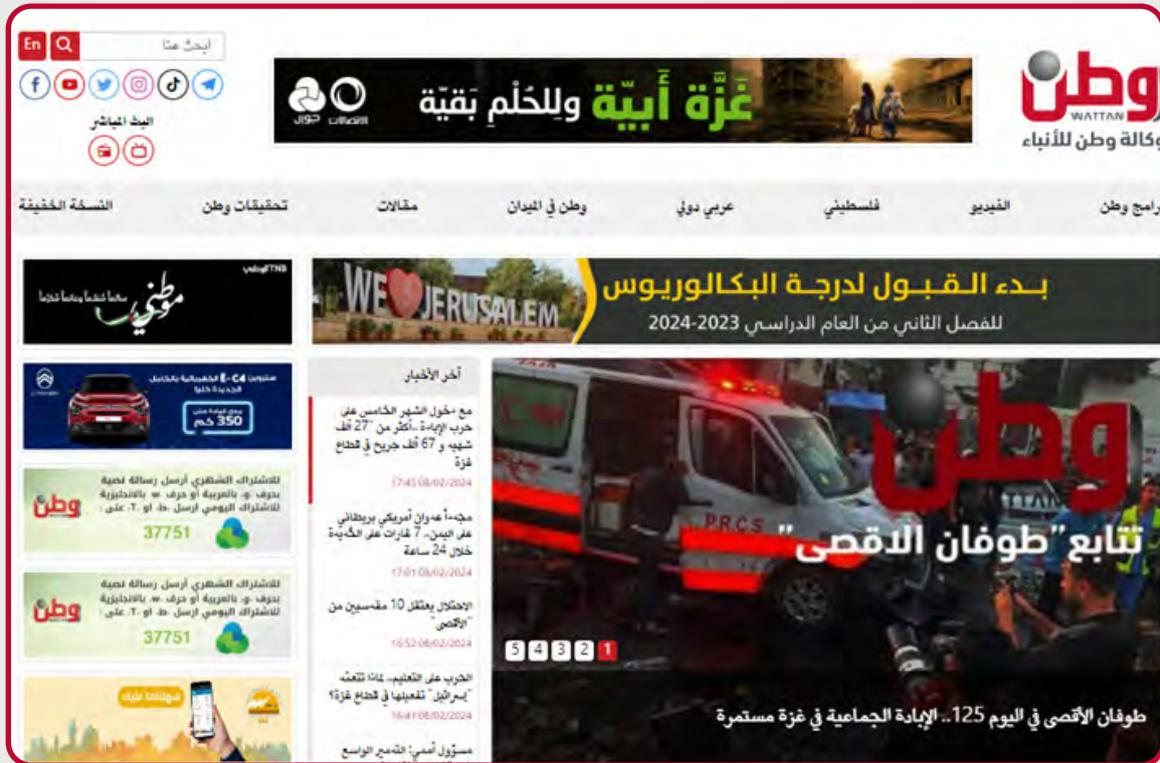
20

Country (42)	Traffic Share
1 Japan	17.08%
2 France	12.65%
3 Jordan	12.32%
4 Saudi Arabia	8.69%
5 Egypt	5.99%

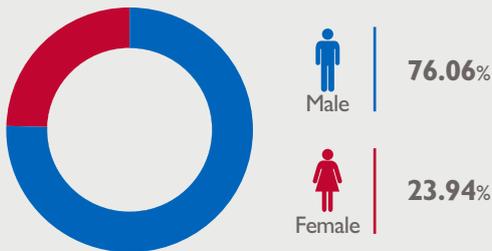
²⁰ The use of VPN by website visitors may affect the accuracy of traffic share/geolocation data (e.g., Japan).

WATTAN NEWS AGENCY WEBSITE

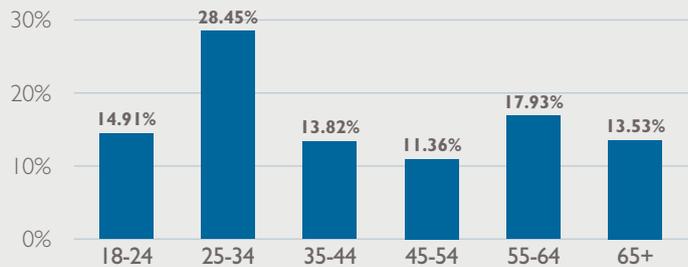
(October – December 2023)



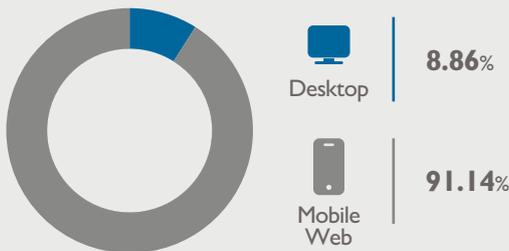
GENDER DISTRIBUTION



AGE DISTRIBUTION



DEVICE DISTRIBUTION



Country (33)	Traffic Share
1 Palestine	26.57%
2 Israel	13.69%
3 Jordan	11.17%
4 Iraq	7.92%
5 Morocco	5.65%

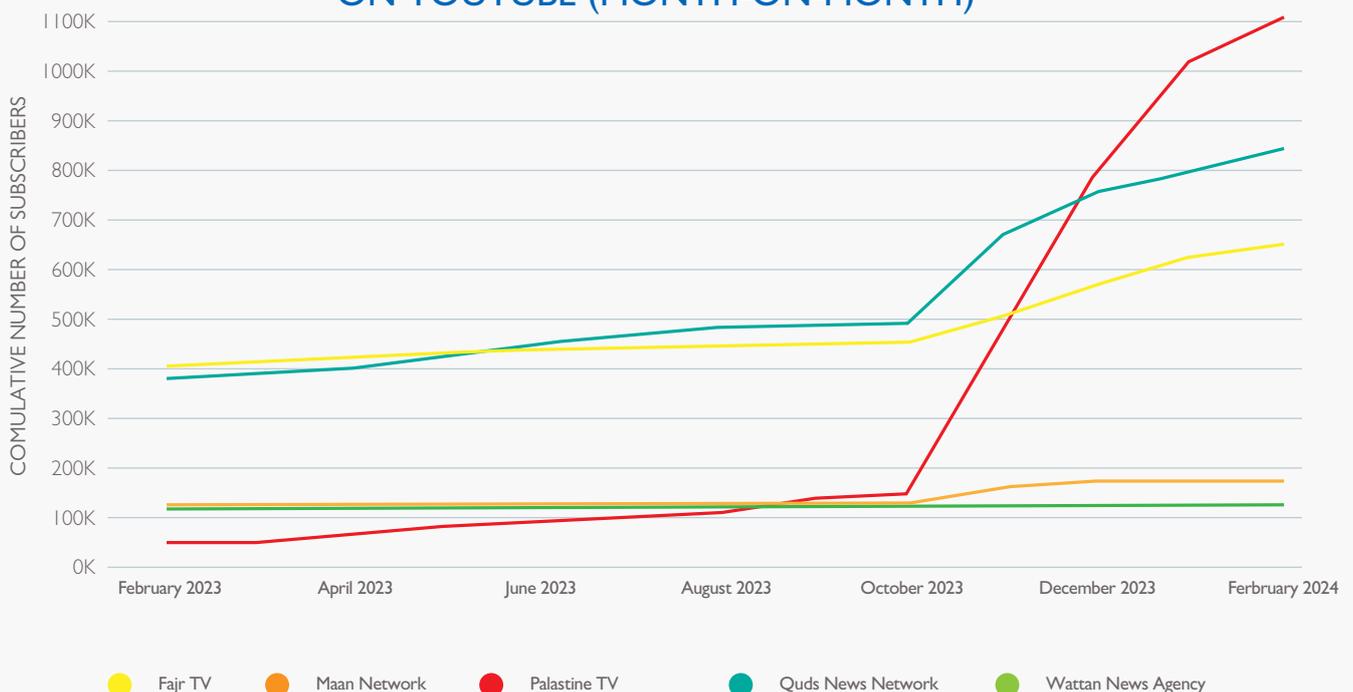
YOUTUBE CHANNELS

This analysis focuses on the cumulative number of YouTube subscribers and views of five of the biggest local media outlets in the West Bank and Gaza. The data was collected and analyzed independently using OSINT tools, namely [vidIQ](#). The five YouTube channels included in the analysis were: [Al-Fajr TV](#) (private), [Maan Network](#) (private), [Palestine TV](#) (PA), [Quds News Network](#) (allegedly Hamas-affiliated), and [Wattan News Agency](#) (independent). Historic data on vidIQ was available for the past 12 months only, hence the analysis period was between early February 2023 and early February 2024.

With regards to the cumulative number of subscribers over the past year, four of the five analyzed outlets saw a significant increase in the number of subscribers post-October 7th, with the exception of Wattan News Agency. In February 2023, the PA-run Palestine TV had the lowest number of subscribers (~45K) compared to the rest of the analyzed outlets. By February 2024, Palestine TV accumulated over 1.1 million subscribers on YouTube, an astonishing 2,328% increase in a single year. In February 2024, Palestine TV surpassed Al-Fajr TV and Quds News Network (QNN), both of which had around 400,000 subscribers in February 2023. In early February 2024, Al-Fajr TV had around 650,000 subscribers, whereas QNN had around 840,000 subscribers, with most of the new subscribers for both outlets joining between early October 2023 and early February 2024.

Maan Network saw a significant increase in their YouTube channel subscribers between October (126K) and December (171K) 2023, before reaching a plateau in January-February 2024. Wattan was the only exception with a linear pattern, starting at 115,000 subscribers in February 2023, and around 124,000 subscribers in early February 2024. The chart below shows the trends observed on the channels of the above-mentioned outlets in terms of the month-on-month cumulative number of YouTube subscribers.

COMULATIVE NUMBER OF SUBSCRIBERS ON YOUTUBE (MONTH-ON-MONTH)

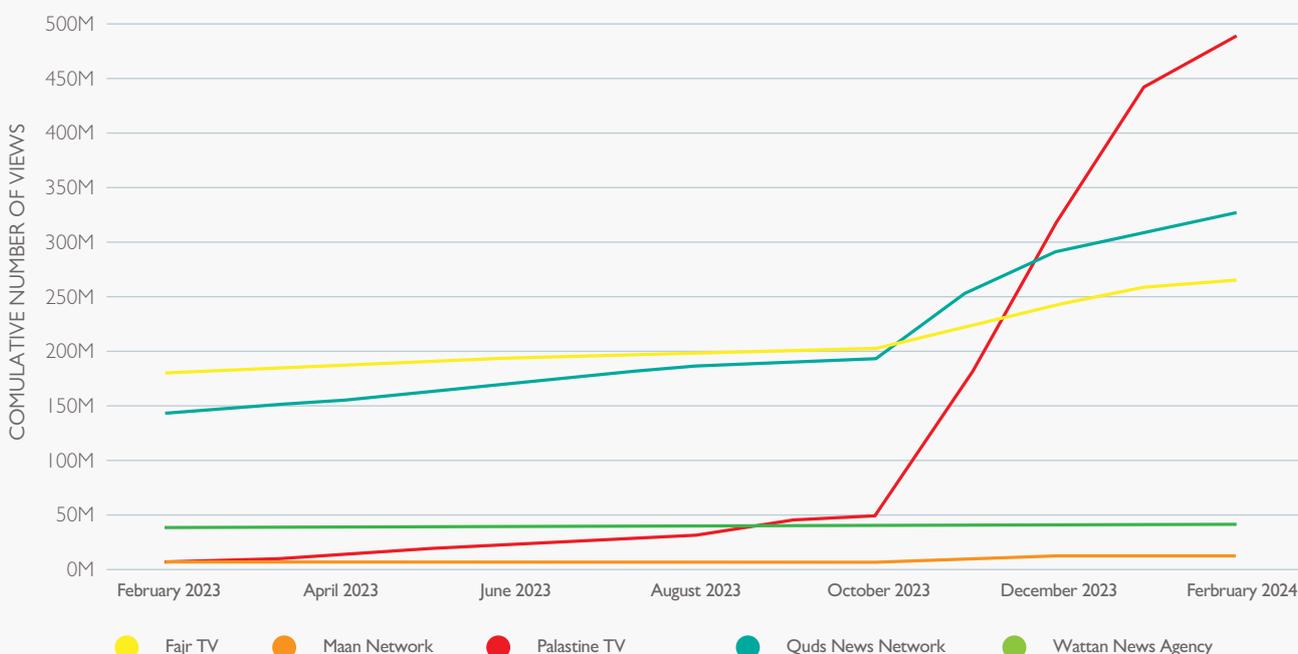


The month-on-month cumulative number of views on YouTube saw a similar pattern to that observed for subscribers. In February 2023, Maan Network and Palestine TV had a similar number of cumulative views on YouTube, both standing at approximately 14 million views. By early February 2024, Maan Network had around 20 million cumulative views, whereas Palestine TV had around 489 million cumulative views. Palestine TV's YouTube channel had a staggering 3,368% increase in its cumulative number of views between February 2023 and February 2024, surpassing both Al-Fajr TV and QNN. The single biggest increase in terms of YouTube cumulative viewership for Palestine TV occurred between early November 2023 (~177 million) and early December (~318 million) 2023.

In February 2023, Al-Fajr TV had around 185 million cumulative views, whereas the Hamas-affiliated QNN had around 149 million cumulative views. In early February 2024, Al-Fajr had approximately 269 million cumulative views (45% increase from February 2023), and QNN had around 330 million cumulative views (122% increase from February 2023). The significant increase in YouTube channel viewership for Palestine TV, Al-Fajr TV, and QNN started in October 2023, following the eruption of war between Hamas and Israel.

Wattan News Agency showed a linear pattern with no significant increase in the number of views on YouTube between February 2023 and February 2024. Over the past year, Wattan's cumulative viewership on YouTube increased by 5% (from ~45.5M to ~48M), whereas Maan's viewership increased by approximately 41%. The chart below shows the month-on-month cumulative number of views for the above-mentioned YouTube channels.

COMULATIVE NUMBER OF VIEWS ON YOUTUBE (MONTH-ON-MONTH)



One reason for Wattan's lower cumulative number of subscribers and views compared to other analyzed outlets could be their average video length on YouTube. In early February 2024, the average duration for Wattan's last 15 YouTube videos, excluding shorts, was 10.21 minutes,⁵⁹ whereas Maan's

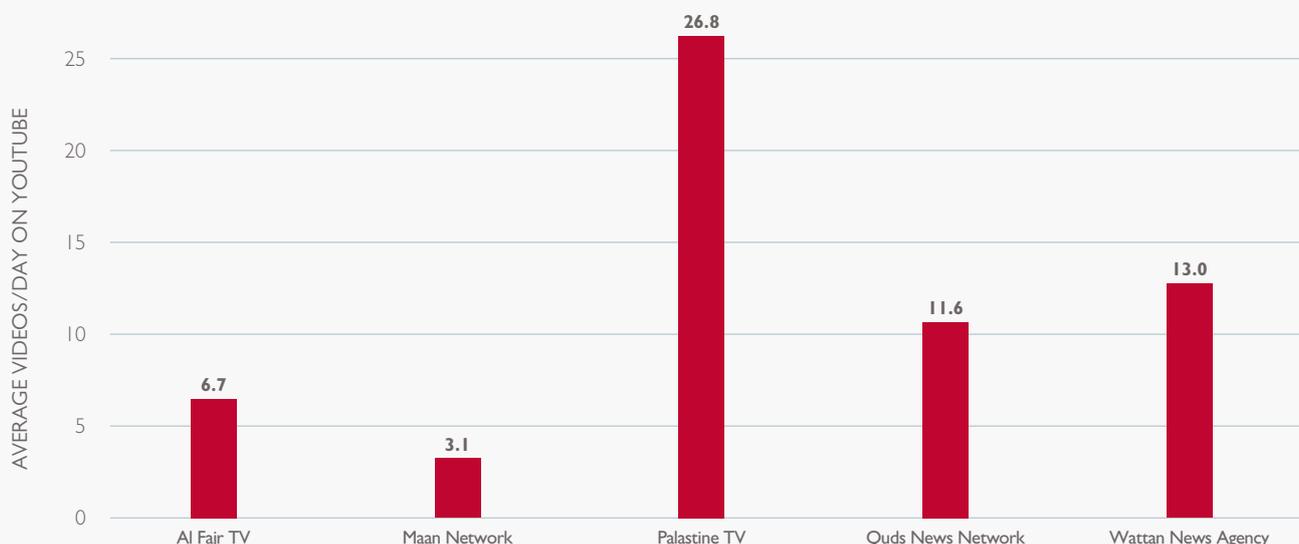
average video length was 9.03 minutes. Palestine TV's last 15 YouTube videos had an average length of 5.2 minutes.⁶⁰ The last 15 public videos published by QNN had the shortest average length standing at 1.93 minutes, whereas Al-Fajr TV had an average length of 6.54 minutes. Therefore, Wattan's YouTube channel has the highest average video length which may have impacted their cumulative number of subscribers and views.

It is evident that the ongoing war in Gaza is the single biggest contributing factor to the patterns observed above. Between December 2019 (the month in which Palestine TV's YouTube channel was created) and February 2023, Palestine TV had approximately 14 million cumulative views on YouTube. By September 2023, Palestine TV had around 51 million cumulative views. However, by early February 2024, Palestine TV had a staggering 489 million cumulative views on YouTube. That is over 800% increase in the space of four months.

A number of factors may have contributed to this significant increase. Firstly, the eyes of the entire Arabic-speaking world are primarily on Gaza, but also the West Bank, due to the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel and potential regional escalation. This has undoubtedly contributed to the significant increase in viewership on the YouTube channels of Palestine TV, Al-Fajr TV, and QNN. Secondly, and more specifically for the PA-run Palestine TV's YouTube channel, official media outlets tend to be more followed and watched in times of crisis, perhaps because the risks of mis- and disinformation, as well as polarization, increase significantly.^{61 62 63} This is true for Palestine TV. Although certain segments of society in the West Bank and Gaza may be very critical of the PA and its media outlets, Palestine TV remains an official and credible source in the eyes of many, especially in the current context of war. Finally, the frequency of publishing and the nature of content published on the above-mentioned YouTube channels may have also contributed to the viewership increase. For example, on average, Palestine TV had published 26.8 YouTube videos per day over the past year, which is more than double the number of daily videos published by the rest of the analyzed outlets. Although Al-Fajr TV only had published an average of 6.7 videos per day over the past year, the emotional nature of its videos (e.g., [funeral of "Palestinian martyrs" in Tulkarem](#)) may have contributed to the high viewership levels.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF VIDEOS PUBLISHED PER DAY

(February 2023 – February 2024)



RECOMMENDATIONS



This Media Landscape Assessment (MLA) was conducted to inform future targeted programming in the West Bank and Gaza. The MLA employed various research methods, such as desk research, surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews with media outlets, independent journalists, and other relevant stakeholders.

Based on the MLA findings, which were obtained through primary and secondary data collection, Internews proposes the following key recommendations to enhance the media ecosystem in the West Bank and Gaza. The recommendations aim to improve trust among information producers and consumers, as well as support local media outlets in their pursuit of financial viability and sustainability.

MEDIA OUTLETS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- **Diversification of funding sources:** In the context of a small advertising market, it is crucial to support local media outlets and relevant stakeholders in diversifying their revenue sources. This is especially important due to the increasing funding cuts by major donors and the declining revenue generated by legacy media. Activities should include: defining organizational strategies that set a path towards: diversified business activities that can support media outlets in the long term; commercial revenue strategies, including advertising and philanthropy; consumer revenue strategies, including subscriptions, memberships and donations.
- **Fundraising:** Addressing the need to diversify income sources within media outlets and stakeholder organizations such as CSOs and WROs is important. To achieve this, it is recommended to implement a targeted fundraising training program. This program should emphasize techniques for identifying Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and developing persuasive proposals. By equipping stakeholders with these skills, they can effectively enhance their fundraising capabilities and sustain their operations.
- **Collaboration to raise visibility** of the importance of independent media, and the existential threats facing it, can improve the effectiveness of individual revenue generation and fundraising efforts. As experienced by Internews in its [Ads for News](#) initiative, it is possible to achieve systemic engagement from the private sector in support of independent media. Such engagement requires long-term efforts, tuned to the needs of companies and the resources and capabilities they can bring to this work.
- **Digital security (policy and practice):** For media outlets and stakeholders without digital security policies, capacity building programs will help them create such organizational policies based on latest global best practices suitable for their contexts and abilities. For those with existing policies needing to be updated, support should be provided to ensure they are fit for purpose, adoptable and cover all necessary areas. Additionally, media outlets and stakeholders should receive assistance in reviewing and adopting their existing digital security policies to ensure that all staff members are familiar with them and are able to adhere to them. Apart from policy creation and implementation, a series of digital security training sessions and/or workshops are strongly recommended for media outlets, CSOs and WROs.
- **Digital content production:** Media outlets and stakeholders require capacity building programs focusing on improving production skills and content production strategies to include new topics and digital formats that will increase engagement among different audiences, particularly youth and women. There is a pressing need for tailored training on digital content production among those included in this study.

- **Audience analytics and digital marketing:** Media outlets and stakeholders require capacity building programs that focus on improving their ability to drive user engagement. This goal can be achieved by gaining a better understanding of target audiences and the type of content these audiences desire and engage with. These programs should include capacity building workshops on audience analysis, segmentation, and tailored engagement strategies, as well as training on digital marketing tools and techniques.
- **Content production in English and Hebrew:** Media outlets and stakeholders need to be equipped and capacitated to translate, produce, and disseminate tailored digital content and reports in English and Hebrew. This will enable local outlets and stakeholders to expand their audiences and increase engagement rates as well as improve their ability to monetize on social media platforms.

MEDIA OUTLETS AND INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS

- **Fact-checking:** Media outlets and independent journalists need support to improve their fact-checking abilities by adopting advanced technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT). Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the potential risks associated with the implementation of these novel methods, train them on these risks, while also recognizing their inherent limitations.
- **Citizen journalism:** Given the importance of citizen journalism in the Palestinian media and the increasing demand for localized information, as well as the abundance of misinformation and disinformation, it is recommended to offer tailored training to citizen journalists in fact-checking and mobile journalism. A specific group of local citizen journalism "champions" can be identified and trained in the best practices of fact-checking and mobile journalism.
- **Disinformation hygiene for media actors:** To ensure journalists can recognize and navigate digital disinformation tactics in their working environments.
- **Disinformation literacy for media actors:** Ensure that journalists have a clear understanding of specific disinformation narratives, strategies, actors, and trends so that they can excel in the field of 'disinformation journalism'. This will also equip media and other content providers with the necessary resources to inform their work and enable them to create high-quality content that meets the information needs of their audience. It is crucial that this content does not amplify disinformation, but rather helps consumers comprehend their information environment. Moreover, this will promote transparency and hold malign actors and influential stakeholders accountable in the public sphere.

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS

- **Physical and occupational safety training:** Journalists operating in the highly volatile security environments of the West Bank and Gaza require the necessary skills to plan for and handle the physical risks they may encounter. A capacity building program that focuses on key aspects of physical safety, including the importance of risk assessment and management techniques, first aid, and situational awareness, is recommended.
- **Occupational safety in the field:** It is recommended to establish "cooperatives" for journalists to increase collective safety when facing harassment and intimidation by the Israeli and local authorities while working in the field.

- **Mobile journalism:** Independent journalists require tailored training in mobile journalism to assist them in effectively utilizing the tools at their disposal. This will ultimately improve the accuracy of the information they disseminate and the quality of the content they produce.
- **Digital production:** Independent journalists need to be trained to possess the necessary skills and techniques to improve their digital content production.
- **Digital security:** A digital security training tailored to the independent journalists emerged as a necessity throughout the MLA, taking into account the age, gender, and level of digital security literacy among independent journalists.

MEDIA OUTLETS, INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS, AND STAKEHOLDERS

- **Mental health support:** The need for provision of trauma-sensitive mental health support for all media stakeholders was consistently discussed during this research. Identifying relevant resources, creating peer-to-peer support channels, destigmatizing seeking mental health support and normalizing discussions around trauma is of paramount importance. This can be done through targeted programming aimed at creating safe community spaces for media professionals to seek support.

INFORMATION CONSUMERS

- **Awareness-raising on political and electoral processes:** Enhancing local citizens' knowledge and awareness of political and electoral process, particularly with regards to relevant information on political parties and their programs, the role of electoral observers, the importance of participation, and the risks of absenteeism. Tailored public campaigns can play a vital role in enhancing knowledge and political and electoral participation. In parallel media outlets and relevant stakeholders should adapt their reporting during electoral periods to cater for audience needs. This can be achieved through several approaches, one of which is publicizing political manifestos and programs of various actors in a non-partisan way.
- **Tailored information formats and mediums for specific audiences:** Given that information on elections/electoral processes are, in principle, available on certain websites (e.g., Central Elections Committee), there is a need to tailor and disseminate this relevant information in a manner that accounts for the expectations and preferences of certain audiences (e.g., youth). This can be achieved by using specific formats (e.g., short/concise videos, tailored digital campaigns) and mediums that are known to be popular among younger audiences in the West Bank and Gaza.
- **Trust-building between information producer and consumer:** Foster a culture of interactivity and participation between information producers and consumers, by creating opportunities for direct engagement and community-driven, media accountability initiatives. This is relevant for all information producers, but more so for official media outlets such as Palestine TV and Wafa News Agency, and is especially important during reforms, electoral and political processes.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- **Sustained advocacy for access to information law:** Support civil society in its quest to secure legislation that permits and guarantees the right to information access in a transparent and participatory manner.

ANNEXES

Annex 1	Online Survey
Annex 2	Focus-Group Discussions – Moderation Guide
Annex 3	Media Capacity Assessment (In-depth Interviews)
Annex 4	List of Interviewees
Annex 5	Additional Capacity Assessments

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