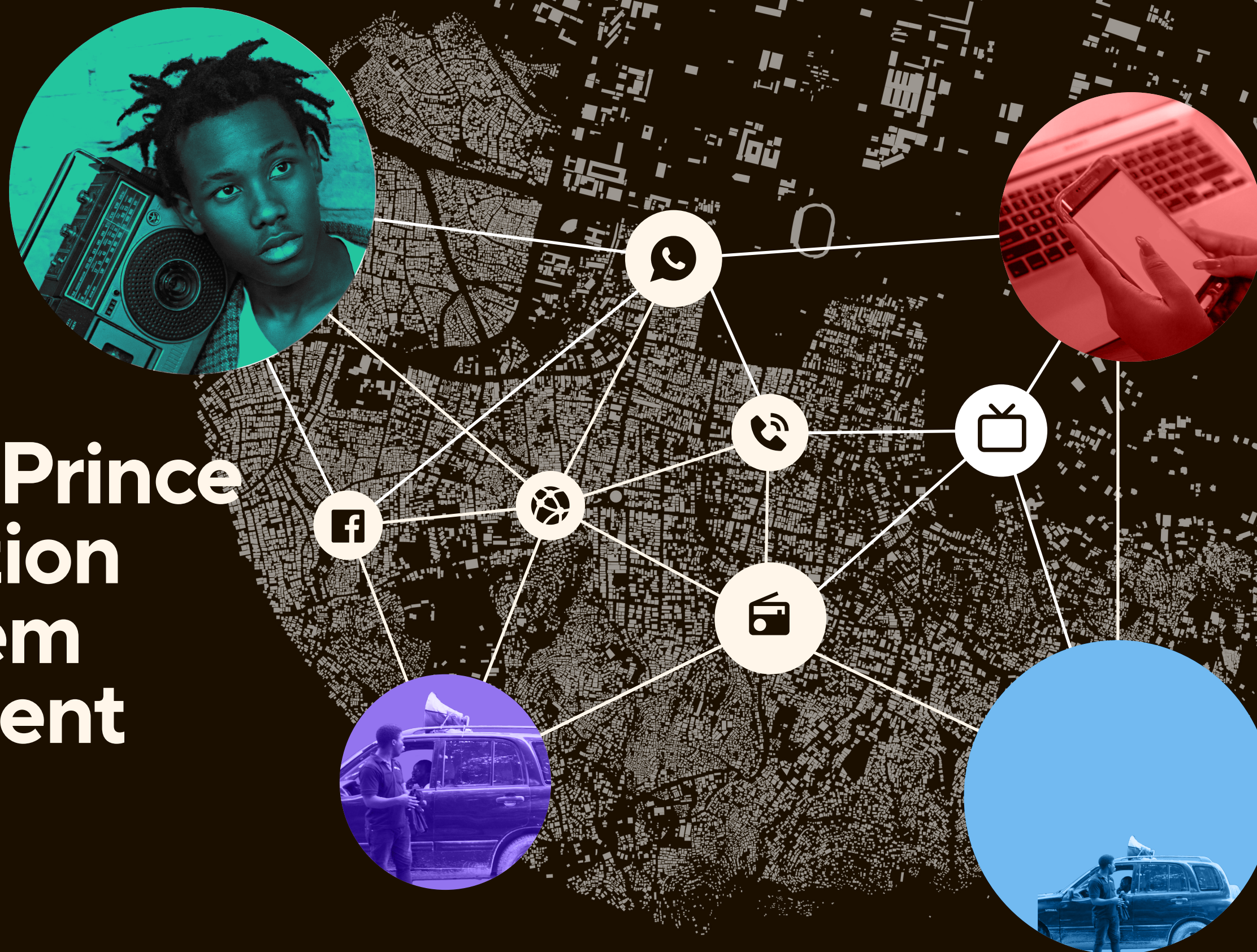


# Port-au-Prince Information Ecosystem Assessment



May-August  
2020

# Thwarting Disinformation and Promoting Quality Information in Haiti

- I. Executive Summary———— 1
- II. Summary of Key Findings———— 3
- III. Background———— 23
- IV. Research Methodology———— 26
- V. Media Landscape———— 34
  - Haiti Media Landscape———— 34
  - Port-au-Prince Media Landscape———— 37
- VI. Key Findings - Information Ecosystem Assessment —— 43
  - 1. Information Sources———— 43
  - 2. Information Needs———— 48
  - 3. Access to Information———— 56
  - 4. Disinformation———— 65
- VII. Suggestions and Next Steps———— 69
- VIII. Acknowledgments———— 69



# Executive Summary

The Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) is a study designed to understand the dynamics of transmission, production, and consumption of information in a given environment. Understanding the flow of information, its sources, channels, and the factors that affect it – intentionally or unintentionally – can help to empower citizens to make better-informed decisions, bridge divides, participate more fully in their communities, and hold power to account. This study attempts to answer questions of access to information, the tools used, how information is shared, what information is trusted and used, and what type of information is needed by the selected communities and sub-groups. In an environment with a difficult political, economic, and social context such as Haiti, it is vital to understand these issues in order to protect life, and societal functioning. To that end, Internews, in collaboration with the independent non-governmental organization (NGO) Panos Caribbean, assessed the information ecosystem in the Port-au-Prince area of Haiti. The Port-au-Prince metropolitan area includes six communes with an estimated 2020 population of 2.78 million people. This study also included residents of Croix-des-Bouquets, totaling an estimated population of 3.2 million people.

The Port-au-Prince IEA was conducted during the global COVID-19 pandemic, a critical period of the world's history. Faced with this challenge, Internews and Panos Caribbean adapted the IEA methodology – which in normal circumstances relies heavily on field

visits and building relationships in the community – to follow the World Health Organization's recommendations of social distancing, as well as restrictions imposed by the state of emergency decreed by the government of Haiti. Data was collected using a mix of methodologies including thorough online and telephone surveys and interviews, and small, in-person focus groups that followed strict safety measures and were conducted after restrictions were lifted. The IEA is not an exhaustive study; therefore, the results should not be treated as such. Nevertheless, Internews and Panos Caribbean ensured representative sampling by targeting key groups relevant for this study. The IEA provides an overview of information and disinformation flows, consumption trends and needs, as well as issues/topics that are most important to the residents of Port-au-Prince. It is based on quantitative data obtained through two distinct surveys, and qualitative data collected through focus groups and *key informant* interviews with residents in the metropolitan area. 288 people responded to the surveys, 37 participated in the focus groups and five *key informants* were interviewed.

Please note that the “Suggestions and Next Steps” chapter of this report (see page 69), will be finalized based on community feedback. Internews and its local partners will collect and document this input during different events where the report findings will be distributed and socialized with local communities in the Port-au-Prince area.

# Summary of Key Findings

## Information Sources

Key Findings 1-3

## Information Needs

Key Findings 4,5

## Access to Information

Key Findings 6-8

## Disinformation

Key Finding 9



## KEY FINDING 1

**A trusted third-person is the most important information provider**

**89%**

When asked for their main source of information, family, friends, and religious leaders accounted for **89%** of the response choices combined. Additionally, **97%** stated they trust their family and friends

## KEY FINDING 2

# Social media, the new player in the game?

Even though radio remains the main channel of information used by the population (**76%**) – followed by television (**48%**) – WhatsApp (**29%**) and Facebook (**28%**) combined total **57%** of respondents' choice. Moreover, among participants who have Internet access, the leading applications to receive news are WhatsApp (**82%**) and Facebook (**70%**).



Overall, **92%** of participants with Internet access declared using **WhatsApp**, followed by **Facebook (76%)**.

### KEY FINDING 3

# News on current events and sports are the most preferred content in traditional media channels

Participants mostly responded they like to see “*news on current events*” and “*sports news*” in traditional media channels. Radio listeners mostly enjoy “*news on current events*” (**61%**), newspapers readers like to read about “*news on current events*” (**65%**) and “*sports*” (**33%**), and television consumers mostly favor “*news on current events*” (**49%**) and “*sports*” (**37%**). Sports are ahead of educational and/or health programs in all types of media.

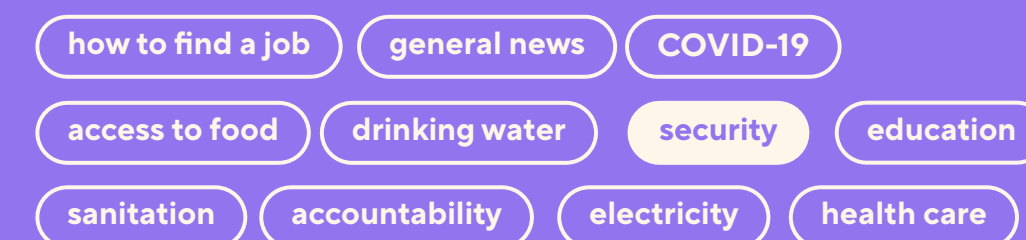


## KEY FINDING 4

# Residents in Port-au-Prince have unmet information needs

When asked about the information they need the most – at the time –, **52%** of participants selected “how to find a job”, followed closely by “general news about what is happening in the country including COVID-19” (**51%**).

Respondents also mentioned the need for information on “access to food and drinking water” (**48%**), as well as information about the “security situation in Port-au-Prince” (**47%**).



Finally, security is the main topic participants want to communicate with their leaders about, followed by sanitation, accountability, electricity, healthcare, education and drinking water.

## KEY FINDING 5:

# Information Consumers are not passive actors: trust and relevance are key points

Content and source are the two main factors affecting the information ecosystem in Port-au-Prince. Even among their preferred source of information – family and friends – or their preferred channel – radio –, trust is not blindly granted. In the focus groups, **participants point out the lack of training of journalists**, the fact that many **confuse facts with opinions** or place greater value in sensationalism, often leading to **unsubstantiated claims and misinformation**.

KEY FINDING 6:

# Barriers to access to information: electricity and disinterest

1. On local leaders (magistrates, police chiefs, religious leaders, businessmen, other influential people): 25% respondents said they do not know them; 24% that they do not contribute to the community; 19% that they cannot communicate with them; and 15% that they do not have leadership.

# BLAC KOUT

In both the focus groups and survey responses, **electricity remains the main barrier to access the channels of information.** The picture looks different when it comes to newspapers. While only **6.3%** of participants said they cannot read or write, **53%** of participants say they do not read mainstream newspapers and magazines. Regarding public information from the leaders, **50%** of respondents said they do not receive information from local leaders<sup>1</sup>.



## KEY FINDING 7

# Seven-in-ten participants use the internet and have a personal account on social media

2&3. The generation cutoff points are based on Pew Research Center's working definitions: Zoomers or Gen Z (born between 1997-2012, 7-22 years old); Millennials or Gen Y, (1981-1996, ages 23-38); Generation X (1965-1980, ages 39-54) and Baby Boomers (1946-1964, ages 55-73).

According to the survey data, **seven-in-ten** participants use the Internet for multiple purposes, with **98%** of them accessing it via their mobile phones. Millennials<sup>2</sup> living in Port-au-Prince are the most active on social networks. They are ahead of Generation Z, Generation X, and baby boomers<sup>3</sup> across all platforms, except in Instagram where Generation Z is one point ahead of them. On the other hand, **women are relatively more active on social networks than men – 55% versus 45%** –, with the exception of Twitter and Telegram, where men have a small lead.

## KEY FINDING 8

# Mobile News consumption on the rise

98%

access the Internet via a mobile phone

The data indicates that **98%** of participants access the Internet via a mobile phone. Their news consumption habits are consistent with their ability to access to the Internet : most of them have a mobile phone (**89%**) or use one (**98%**), most of them would prefer to add credit to their phone to access the Internet (**82%**) than buying a newspaper, and **82%** use WhatsApp to get news.

KEY FINDING 9

# Disinformation: great concern and distrust factor in local leaders and the media

62%

When asked why information from channels and sources such as radio, social media, mobile phones, and local leaders would not be relevant, important, or useful to them, **62%** of respondents cited issues of “lies and misinformation,” (**19%**) “trust issues” (**15%**), and “unreliability” (**13%**), all of which are corollaries of misinformation.

**LIES**  
**MISSINFORMATION**



### III. Background

The dynamics of access to information are constantly evolving throughout the world. The introduction of new forms of media (websites, blogs, news aggregators, and social media) and new forms of communication (smartphones, laptops, and tablets) are influencing how people react to events or make decisions. These platforms are becoming privileged places for the unbridled dissemination of misinformation and disinformation, not to mention reinforced defamation. This is a trend that has not been foreign to Haiti. On the contrary, the prevailing laxity, lack of self-regulation and lack of legal framework on the distortion of the truth makes the ground more fertile.

Traditional channels, such as radio, television, and print, must now compete with technological platforms and new forms of communication to stay alive and have an audience. There is no doubt that traditional media play an important role in the daily lives of many people in Haiti and elsewhere. However, developing countries, such as Haiti, not only face delays in accessing both quality information and the means of production, but they also face enormous difficulties in investing in them.

Needs and consumption patterns are not the same everywhere. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the specific elements that come into play in the dynamics of access, use, and sharing of information. Understanding the flow, sources, channels, and factors that affect information can help empower citizens to make better-informed decisions and hold power to account.

In this report, Internews, in collaboration with local partners, presents its findings on a study of the information ecosystem in Haiti's Port-au-Prince area. This work includes an analysis of the flow, production, consumption, sharing, sources, and channels of information in the Haitian capital, where the landscape of media and tools continues to evolve. As detailed later in the document, the number of radio and television stations has increased in the country, as well as the number of mobile phone owners. WhatsApp, which has been in existence for only 11 years, is thriving in Port-au-Prince, while its oldest print media outlet, Le Nouvelliste, is considering shifting exclusively online as other

outlets have done in Canada, France and the USA. Print newspapers, such as Le Phare, Le Nouveau Monde, Le Républicain, Le Télégraphe<sup>4</sup> are long gone. Recent outlets that survived the dictatorship, such as Le Matin, and Haiti Journal, and magazines founded before the 2010 earthquake, such as Raj and Spotlight, are no longer in circulation either. Radio and TV stations, such as Radio Haiti Inter, MBC, PVS-16, and Telemax have closed indefinitely, while others have appeared in the last fifteen years. There is change in the dynamics of access to information in Port-au-Prince. These changes have undoubtedly influenced aspects of information production, movement, and consumption.

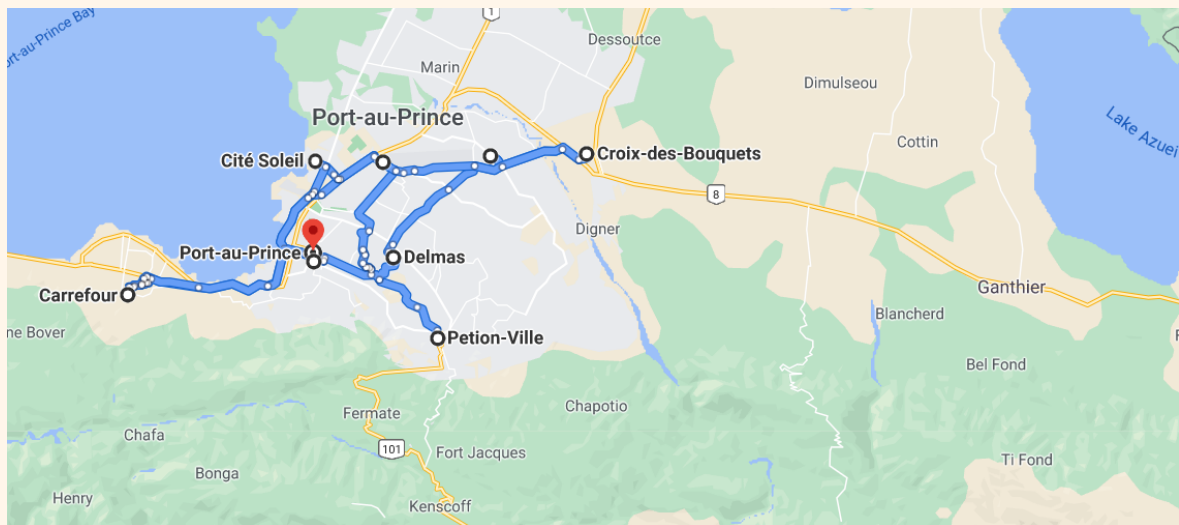
The Information Ecosystem Assessment focuses on information and communication through the lens of the community and its members. A variety of methodologies (interviews, surveys, review of government documents and private sector data, and analysis of demographic data) are used to obtain a picture of this ecosystem.

While providing access to information saves lives, having access to information that has been intentionally manipulated puts the positive benefits of that access at risk. Therefore, in order to understand the mechanisms of production and dissemination of disinformation, it is essential for actors to understand the information ecosystem in a given environment. As a result, stakeholders will be able to take appropriate measures to not only improve access to information, but also to thwart disinformation.

4. Bibliothèque Nationale de France (France National Library, BNF). Archives Presse Haïtienne. Retrieved from <https://gallica.bnf.fr/html/und/presse-et-revues/haiti?mode=desktop>

## About Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Area

Administratively, the city of Port-au-Prince is part of the municipality of Port-au-Prince. This commune is home to more than 1.2 million inhabitants. Seven other bordering communes are part of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area according to the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics (IHSI)<sup>5</sup>: Pétion-Ville, Delmas, Tabarre, Cité Soleil, Carrefour, Kenscoff, and Gressier. The Port-au-Prince region contains both densely urban and rural areas.



Source: Screenshot Google Map for the Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Area”

Together, the urban and rural agglomeration of Port-au-Prince is home to approximately 2.78 million people out of a population of 11.4 million (UN estimates, 2020). The study includes Croix-des-Bouquets, that has borders with Cité Soleil and Tabarre, totaling a population of over 3.2 million people<sup>6</sup>. With its 11.4 million people, and an average age of 24 years, Haiti is the most populous state in the Caribbean, ahead of Cuba and the Dominican Republic. While the Port-au-Prince area is the center of executive, legislative and judicial powers, it is also where the great majority of economic activities are concentrated, making it an attractive environment for interurban migration.

5. Institut Haïtien de Statistiques et d’Informatique (IHSI). Population totale, de 18 ans et plus. Ménages et densités estimés en 2015.

6. Estimate based on a population growth rate of 1.31% per year.

## IV. Research Methodology

### Information Ecosystem Approach

The Information Ecosystem Assessment of Port-au-Prince was conducted based on an approach designed and developed by Internews. The approach uses an analytical framework to capture different dimensions of the relationship between information demand and information supply. It seeks a human centered understanding of how people and communities find, access, and share, information in their local contexts, as well as the value and trust placed in this information. The IEA provides an understanding of the unique, localized information needs, gaps, sources, uses, and patterns of access in a specific community.

### IEA components

The approach consists of two overarching frames of analysis: the supply side (media landscape) and the demand side (human element). The Port-au-Prince IEA focuses on various components mentioned in Figure 1.

The forthcoming analysis hinges upon six specific dimensions of the Information Ecosystem: the information landscape, the information needs, the dynamics of access, the movement of information, the use of information, and the trust conferred in it. For instance, when examining the information landscape, the study considers the physical and institutional infrastructure that supports information production and flow. When investigating the dynamics of access, the IEA delves into the factors that affect information access as well as the environment in which information flows. On the demand side, data collected evaluates information needs from different segments of the population, as well as the type of information people have access to.

Scope

This study was designed to provide a snapshot of how information moves, what are the trusted channels and sources used by the community and why, and what issues/topics are most important to them. This overview will strengthen media stakeholders’ ability to understand and effectively respond to Port-au-Prince’s information ecosystem challenges.

Figure 1

THE EIGHT CRITICAL DIMENSIONS OF INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS



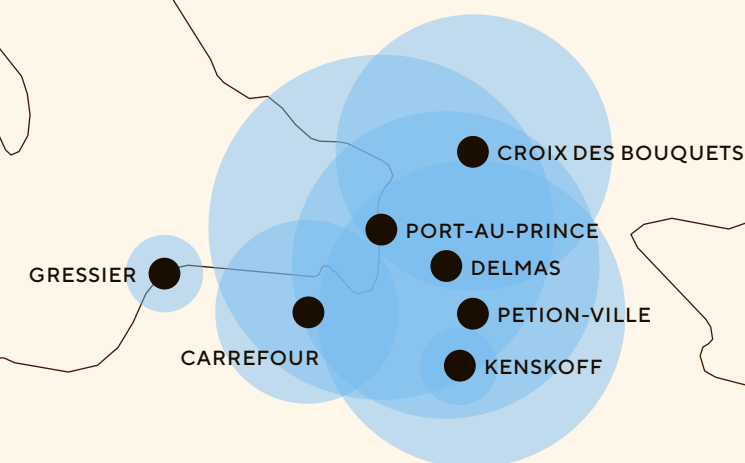


# Data Collection

Table I

## Summary of Data Collection Methods for Port-au-Prince Information Ecosystem Assessment

	.LOCATION	.RESPONDENTS	.QTY	.MAIN TOPICS
<b>Quantitative Survey</b>  *Quantitative data collection was done remotely by phone and other communication platforms due to Covid-19 pandemic	<b>Port-au-Prince metropolitan area</b>  Carrefour, Cité Soleil, Delmas, Gressier, Pétion-Ville, Port-au-Prince, Tabarre	<b>Residents</b>	<b>207</b>	Demographic information; language, education and literacy rates; communication channels and sources of information; access to and consumption habits of radio, television, telephone, written press, and internet; information needs; communication with local leaders.
<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>Port-au-Prince metropolitan area</b>  Delmas Carrefour Pétion-Ville Musseau Croix-des-Bouquets Thomassin, Soissons Bicentenaire	<b>Residents and/or workers</b>	<b>5 Focus Groups</b>  <b>37 participants</b>	Social media usage; Information and dis-information flows; information needs.
<b>Key Informant Interviews</b>	<b>Port-au-Prince metropolitan area</b>	<b>Residents</b>	<b>5 Key informants</b>	Media overview; Civil Society and Media; Information and Communication trends and needs; News consumption trends on social media.
<b>Online Survey</b>  Google Form Survey shared through WhatsApp	<b>Port-au-Prince metropolitan area</b>  Carrefour, Cité Soleil, Delmas, Gressier, Pétion-Ville, Port-au-Prince, Tabarre	<b>Residents</b>  Port-au-Prince metropolitan area (58); outside Port-au-Prince (5); diaspora (3)	<b>66</b>	Social Media Usage (platforms, frequency of use, news consumption and sharing habits, trust).
<b>Desk Analysis of Digital Media</b>	<b>Port-au-Prince metropolitan area</b>	<b>Popular digital media</b>	<b>30</b>	Engagements and followers on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



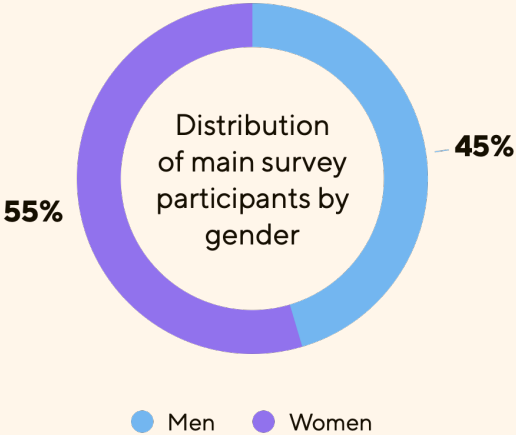
# 1. Surveys

## Main survey

From June through July 2020, Panos Caribbean, in collaboration with Internews, trained 22 researchers to conduct an in-depth survey of around 100 questions to 222 people. Surveyed individuals were selected from the researchers’ network and from the various communes conforming the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, with the exception of Cité Soleil. Each researcher interviewed ten people, who were selected based on the pre-determined demographic criteria: at least four women, at least one person with a disability, at least one person with no access to a smartphone, at least one person above 55 years old, one person with a university degree, at least one teenager, at least one street vendor, at least one small shopkeeper, at least one person from the LGBTI community, and at least one housekeeper. 207 valid responses were recorded – **113 women and 94 men–, including 24 people living with a disability. More than 64% of the participants were Millennials and Generation Z**<sup>7</sup>.

The survey included sections related to demography, language, literacy and education rates, channels of communication and information sources, radio, television, telephone, and Internet access and consumption habits, information needs, and communication with local leaders. The survey contained both questions with pre-determined options and open-ended questions. Unless explicitly mentioned, all figures and graphs display information from questions with pre-determined options.

All participants agreed to respond to the two surveys – more details on the second one below – and gave their consent to the use of their data. The questions, written in French, were also translated by researchers into Haitian Creole to guarantee responders understood clearly. More than 99% reported speaking Haitian Creole and 66.2%, French. 18.8% of participants also speak English while 5.3%



7. The generation cutoff points are based on Pew Research Center’s working definitions: Zoomers or Gen Z (born between 1997-2012); Millennials or Gen Y, (1981-1996); Generation X (1965-1980) and Baby Boomers (1946-1964). No participant from the Silent Generation (1928-1945) was interviewed.

speak Spanish. Over 93% of participants reported completing some level of education, while 6.3% reported not being able to read or write. **The vast majority (77%) completed elementary school while 27% completed university.**

## WhatsApp survey

A short survey, consisting of 11 questions, was circulated through WhatsApp. The survey specifically asked about social media usage and disinformation flows. 66 people – 31 women, 33 men, and two who preferred not to identify their gender – responded. Three participants were excluded because they were not based in Port-au-Prince nor in Haiti. 78.8 % of these participants were Millennials and Generation Z.

# 2. Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews (KII)

Panos Caribbean conducted five focus group discussions<sup>8</sup> with local citizens in five municipalities. In total, 37 individuals – 19 women and 18 men – participated in the focus groups, representing various fields: medicine, academia, manufacturing and construction, service industry, security, university and school students, sales, and others. The discussions addressed topics such as news consumption, social media usage, information and misinformation flows and trends, and information needs. In addition to the focus groups, Panos Caribbean interviewed five *key informants* – two women and three men –in August 2020. These individuals came from various fields including journalism, telecommunications, media business, and civil society.

Table II	Number	Age	Sex
Focus groups	37	15-45	19 women – 18 men
Key Informant Interviews	5	30-60	2 women – 3 men

8. For the purpose of this study, focus group is a small set of five to eight people who shared the common characteristic of being residents of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. The groups came together to discuss a predetermined topic around: Social media usage; Information and disinformation flows; information needs.

## Data Analysis

Researchers recorded the answers to the main survey questionnaire using KoboToolbox, a platform available on mobile phones. All questions relating to each of the six dimensions of the Information Ecosystem approach were grouped together for statistical analysis. To provide clear, systematized results, the data analyst identified and categorized responses to short answer questions. Categories were created by main topic or idea. For instance, for the question “If you could make comments or ask questions to local leaders, what topics would you like to discuss with them?”, a response such as “I would like to talk about security and electricity with them” was categorized under security and electricity. The data analyst organized focus group and interview reports by themes covered, allowing for clear identification of prevalent ideas and topics. The data analyst examined each paragraph of the reports to identify main ideas and connect them to the relevant themes of the questionnaire. Challenges

The IEA was implemented during the onset of a global pandemic. Internews and Panos Caribbean adapted a methodology that heavily relied on face-to-face interaction and implemented a system of remote data collection using mobile phones and other devices. Overall, researchers evaluated the telephone interviews favorably. However, they also indicated some technical difficulties relating to the phone network and participants’ impatience due to the length of the questionnaire. Panos Caribbean’ on-site team was able to overcome challenges and completed all data collection steps for this study. Moreover, finding additional up-to-date data on the media – supply side – to enrich the media landscape dimension of the Information Ecosystem Assessment proved to be another challenge. Systematic production of media data in Haiti would help strengthen the understanding of the challenges facing Haiti’s information environment.

### Disclaimer on the Approach

This assessment is not part of an academic research in the field nor is it an exhaustive study. We acknowledge that many important Port-au-Prince voices and communities

were not included in this project. Due to movement restrictions and for the safety of both researchers and participants, face-to-face surveys were not feasible. Most of the data collection and subsequent analysis took place remotely, using online tools.

Other types of data sources, such as updated demographic and community data, government documents, books on communication and media in Haiti, social networking platforms and specialized database about countries’ indicators, were also used to inform the dimensions of media landscape and the presence of online media in Haiti.

## V. Media Landscape

### Haiti Media Landscape Review

Since the end of the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti in 1986, the Haitian media landscape has expanded from a handful of media outlets to hundreds. This expansion has certainly led to greater freedom of speech, but also to a proliferation of media that do not always have the means to operate, cannot produce original content, do not always respect the rules of ethics, and are not always aware of the information needs of their audience.

#### Radio

According to a study commissioned by the UNESCO office in Port-au-Prince in 2017 and carried out by the Department of Communication of the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Haiti State University, **there were 697<sup>9</sup> radio stations on the FM band in 2016 of which 320 are legal and 350 operate illegally. Community radio stations (over a 100)<sup>10</sup>** are not considered in the existing legal system. Eight radio stations are also transmitting on the AM band, in addition to their transmission on FM.

9. Lambert, R. (November 23, 2017). Une étude qui décortique l'environnement des médias en Haïti. Retrieved from <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/179167/une-etude-qui-decortique-lenvironnement-des-medias-en-haiti%20>

10. Central Intelligence Agency. (August 11, 2020). The World Factbook. Central America: Haiti. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

## Television

**Until 1990, there were nine TV stations in the country**<sup>11</sup>. From these pioneers, only a few are still operating. In 2008, there were 42 TV stations, almost half of those (20) were in the capital<sup>12</sup>. In 2016, the National Telecommunications Council (**CONATEL**) **reported there were approximately 116 TV stations across the country**, including 107 authorized to broadcast on clear waves in the different geographical areas of the country and whose access is free, three digital scrambled wave television broadcasting networks covering Port-au-Prince for the moment, three cable television networks based respectively in Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien and Jacmel, and one satellite television network serving the different geographical areas of the country. Since July 9, 2013, a decree was adopted to create an Inter-ministerial Committee on Migration to Digital Television (CIMTN) composed of six ministers and chaired by the Prime Minister. To date, television stations are broadcast in analog and have not yet succeeded in the digital transition due to a lack of private resources and the misallocation of public resources. The American ATSC (Advanced Television System Committee) standard has been adopted for clear wave Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) in Haiti, and not for encrypted wave, cable or satellite pay TV. **CONATEL also reported that there were approximately 1.2 million television sets across the country in 2016**, almost all of which came from the United States<sup>13</sup>.

## Telecommunications

Haiti has two telecommunication companies, **Digicel and Natcom, with 7,300,964 subscribers** (estimate 2016). The Jamaican-based Digicel company of Digicel Group was launched in 2006. It holds the largest market share with 64.25% of subscribers. Digicel acquired the company Communication Cellulaire d'Haïti (Comcel-Voilà) in March 2012. Natcom, a consortium created in 2010 between the Viettel Telecommunication Group of the Vietnamese army (60% of shares) and the Bank of the Republic of Haiti (40% of shares), replaced the Haitian public telephony company Télécommunications S.A (Teleco) launched in 1968.

11. Télé-Haïti, Télévision Nationale d'Haïti, PVS-Antenne 16 (in Port-au-Prince), Télévision Artibonite (TVA) and TransAmerica (in Gonaïves), Canal 7 and Super Canal (in Cap-Haïtien), Radio Télévision Métropole du Sud and Radio Télévision Cayenne (in Les Cayes).

12. Dumas, Pierre-Raymond (2016). Retour sur les communications en Haïti. Essai. Port-au-Prince : Imprimeur S.A.

13. Conseil National des Télécommunications (National Telecommunications Council, CONATEL). (2016). Projet de plan stratégique et feuille de route pour la transition de la télévision analogique à la télévision numérique. Retrieved from [http://www.conatel.gouv.ht/sites/default/files/Transition%20tnt\\_plan%20strate-](http://www.conatel.gouv.ht/sites/default/files/Transition%20tnt_plan%20strate-)

**The mobile phone penetration rate in Haiti was 70% in 2016.** The country has **14 landing points for the BDSNi (Bahamas Domestic Submarine Network International), Fibralink fiber optic submarine cables** in the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, and a satellite connection, Intelsat. In addition to Digicel and Natcom, which also provide Internet services, **there are four<sup>14</sup> other Internet service providers**: Access Haïti, ACN, Haïnet and Multilink. In 2018, 32.47% of the Haitian population had access to the Internet according to the World Bank<sup>15</sup>. Unreliable access to electricity and low bandwidth are Haiti's main challenges in the ICT sector<sup>16</sup>.

## Freedom of Expression – Freedom of Information

The country dropped eight places in 2020 in the World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders. It moved from 62nd place in 2019 to 80th place in 2020, stagnating in the list of countries with noticeable problems. Journalists work in a precarious work environment, not receiving the salaries they deserve and practicing self-censorship on matters of national interest<sup>17</sup>. In 2017, the Haitian Senate passed a defamation bill that would impose severe penalties on journalists. According to several journalists' testimonies, they are harassed by demonstrators, they receive death threats and are subjected to defamation campaigns on social media. The Columbia Journalism Review<sup>18</sup> notes that many journalists are working in dangerous and life-threatening conditions and that the public perception of journalism has deteriorated.

**In 2019, the Haitian Press Federation announced that 50 Haitian journalists have been victims of acts of violence, assassinations and death threats**<sup>19</sup>. Among them, one journalist was wounded by bullets in the Haitian Parliament, three journalists were assassinated (Néhémie Joseph, Rospide Pétion, Bernard Belle-Fleur) and another has been reported missing since March 14, 2018 (Vladimir Legagneur). That same year, Télé Zénith and Radio Télé Ginen were attacked by armed groups<sup>20</sup> during violent demon-

14. As of September 30th, 2020, this was the official number Internews had access to. If needed, it will be updated for the report final version.

15. World Bank. (2018). Individuals using the Internet (% of population). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>

16. Mayne, T., Yi, E.S. (Eds.). (2015). Haiti Now. California: The Now Institute.

17. Céliné, S. (Ayibopost, December 16, 2019). La précarité des journalistes fragilise la démocratie en Haïti. Retrieved from [https://ayibopost.com/la-precarite-des-journalistes-fragilise-la-democratie-en-haiti/?fbclid=IwAR10BHcTxYvJyS0win13D-ZhqBVXZdMQ7Tqz7\\_q9UrbGEjAKgIgeSauGfo](https://ayibopost.com/la-precarite-des-journalistes-fragilise-la-democratie-en-haiti/?fbclid=IwAR10BHcTxYvJyS0win13D-ZhqBVXZdMQ7Tqz7_q9UrbGEjAKgIgeSauGfo)

18. Flores, C. (January 17, 2020). In Haiti's uprising, journalists are caught in the middle. Retrieved from <https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/haiti-uprising-jovenel-moise.php>

19. Alterpresse. (2019). Médias : 50 journalistes victimes de violences, d'assassinats et de menaces de mort en Haïti, selon la Fédération de la presse haïtienne. Retrieved from [https://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article24905#.X1\\_qB2hKhPY](https://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article24905#.X1_qB2hKhPY)



strations in Port-au-Prince against the government. In 2020, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that **eight journalists were attacked while covering the coronavirus pandemic in Port-au-Prince**.

The web 2.0 has also changed the Haitian media landscape. The liberalization of the airwaves born at the end of the dictatorship was followed by an online liberalization with the creation of a multitude of online media. An Online Media Haitian Association (AHML) was launched in 2016. Since then, it launched its own fact-checker, T-Check, to combat disinformation. News websites and social media news pages are in direct competition with the traditional media.

As everywhere else, new information and communication technologies have changed the Haitian media landscape. Although the transition from analog to digital has been slow, the advent of social networks has turned the popularity and presence of traditional media upside down, making it more difficult to verify information. Another fact-checker, Toma.ht, has been created by the Haiti's Bloggers Network.

## Port-au-Prince Media Landscape Review

Port-au-Prince, the political, cultural, and economic hub of the country, is home to the largest and most important media groups. Due to the centralization of economic, political, and cultural activities, the city it is better served in terms of access to information and telecommunications services.

### Radio

In 1985, on the eve of the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier, there were about ten radio stations in Port-au-Prince. Twelve years later, the number grew to 26 radio stations. Today, among the 697 radio stations identified in the country, **56 of them are in Port-au-Prince including the public radio, Radio Nationale d'Haiti (RNH)**. To cope with the saturation of the FM band in the capital, CONATEL has placed a moratorium on operating concessions on the FM band since June 30, 2017. Despite this apparent flourishing

20. Reporter Sans Frontières (RSF, 2019). Nouvel assassinat de journalistes en Haïti. Retrieved from <https://rsf.org/fr/actualites/nouvel-assassinat-de-journaliste-en-haiti>

radio environment, the stations have had their setbacks: notably Radio Nationale d'Haïti, has relocated twice from downtown Port-au-Prince due to violence, while others<sup>21</sup> have closed their doors. Apart from the large media groups, almost all media complain about unprofitability and the difficulties of operating (energy, adequate salaries for staff and press correspondents from the provinces and the diaspora). This undermines their autonomy and independence in the dissemination of news. The radios have bilingual programming; however, Haitian Creole is now predominant in broadcasting.

### Television

In 1985, Port-au-Prince had two TV stations. This number grew to five in 1997 (Télé Éclair, Télé Haïti, Telemax, TNH and Tele (Kay) Timoun). By 2015<sup>22</sup>, Port-au-Prince had **36 TV stations**<sup>23</sup>. The first cabled one, Télé Haiti, was inaugurated in Port-au-Prince in December 1959. It would be followed two decades later by the state media, the National Television of Haiti (TNH), inaugurated in December 1979. The third, PVS-Antenne 16, would follow in March 1990. The area also has three digital scrambled wave television broadcasting networks covering Port-au-Prince: one cable television network, and one satellite television network. It is common for radio owners to also have an associated TV station: Radio (Tele) Caraïbes, Radio (Tele) Ginen, Radio (Tele) Métropole, Radio (Tele) Vision 2000 all opened their television channels before the 2010 earthquake. The same goes for the newspapers: Le Nouvelliste has Tele 20, Radio Magik 9 and Visa FM, and Le National have Radio and Tele Pacific. However, the TV stations mainly broadcast films and programs pirated from abroad<sup>24</sup>.

21. Radio MBC, Radio Carillon, Radio J.J. Dessalines, Radio Union, Radio Port-au-Prince, Radio Liberté, Radio Nouveau-Monde, Radio SPL, Radio Cacique, Radio Pétion-Ville, and Radio Haïti Inter (with the assassination of its director, the journalist Jean Léopold Dominique and his guardian, Jean-Claude Louissaint in April 3, 2000).

22. Dumas, Pierre-Raymond (2016). Retour sur les communications en Haïti. Essai. Port-au-Prince : Imprimeur S.A.

23. As of September 30th, 2020, this was the official number Internews had access to. If needed, it will be updated for the report final version.

24. Haiti Media Telecoms Landscape Guide. (2012). Infoasaid.



Print Media

Paradoxically, as the population of Port-au-Prince increases, printed newspapers and magazines decrease: Haiti Journal, La Presse, Le Nouveau Monde, La Phalange, Le Petit Samedi Soir, Panorama, Le Matin, the weekly magazine Challenges, are no longer in circulation. Only three newspapers operate in Port-au-Prince: Le Nouvelliste (founded in 1898), Le National (launched in 2015) and the state newspaper, l'Union (1986). For the latter, operation depends on the circumstances and political interests of the government. Despite its importance, the official gazette of the Republic, Le Moniteur, is not accessible everywhere. Port-au-Prince also has a few weekly newspapers from the Haitian diaspora, but these are not in wide circulation, and some are sold exclusively in the United States, Canada, and France (Haiti En Marche (1987), Haiti Observateur (1971), Haiti Progrès (1983) and Haiti Liberté (2007) Local newspapers publish exclusively in French, with a few rare texts in Haitian Creole. Diaspora newspapers publish in English, Haitian Creole and French. Like the State papers, local newspapers do not have a proactive language policy in the dissemination of ideas and news.

Telecommunications, Mobile Phone and Internet Providers

The metropolitan area is home to Digicel and Natcom, as well as the four other Internet providers. As of 2018, 31.10% of Haitians had fixed broadband subscriptions and 32% were using the Internet<sup>25</sup>. There is no updated data available on the distribution of subscribers by city and the number of Internet connections at home.

Online Media and Social Media

With respect to online media in Port-au-Prince, comprehensive data on their numbers is not yet available. In the Internews Survey conducted between June and July 2020, participants named more than 20 pages of online media that they follow on social networks. The Haitian Association of Online Media, constituted in Port-au-Prince, had

12 members in 2016. By online media, we mean those that exist exclusively on the Internet. Even if pioneers such as Alterpresse and the Haiti Press Network persevere, the emergence of dozens of others is fragmenting their audience. The radio and television stations try to maintain an online presence on their websites and social media pages, a strategy that has been successful for some, but not for others. Without a real social media strategy, some media outlets find themselves with several dormant accounts that encourage the rise of new sites with atypical names. For one of our *key informants*, these “new online media represent a media wave that embraces political entertainment, disin-

Table III  
SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE OF MOST-CITED MEDIA BY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Radios	Facebook		Twitter	Instagram	YouTube
As of Sept. 16, 2020	Followers	Likes	Followers	Followers	Subscribers
Caraïbes	636 581	427 475	206 300	172 000	87 000
Zenith	3 666	2 435	1022	183	3530
Kiskeya	36 609	35 595	140 700	—	45 700
Mega	83 700	53 486	—	—	—
Lumière	21 388	19 823	—	1425	—
Métropole	19 631	13 840	23 900	4302	46 200
Shalom	96 290	52 570	338	—	141 000
Vision 2000	42 880	41 443	2785	—	—
France internationale* (worldwide)	4 486 907	4 242 971	2 500 000	482 000	321 000
Éclair	23 730	22 165	2616	8347	48 900
Ibo	48 294	31 823	6175*	—	—
Alléluia	113 376	102 363	389	1371	—
Ginen	77 836	59 985	39 700	615	139 000
Magik9	39 272	20 546	8 298	1134	—
RCH 2000	8 310	7778	16	95	1140

25.World Bank. (2018). Individuals using the Internet (% of population). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS>

Table IV  
SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE OF MOST-CITED NEWSPAPERS, ONLINE MEDIA, AND POPULAR  
CURRENT EVENT NEWS PAGES BY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Online Media and Newspapers	Facebook		Twitter	Instagram	YouTube
As of Sept. 16, 2020	Followers	Likes			
Le Nouvelliste	468 013	443 768	306 700	38 200	74 700
Ayibopost	104 335	73 146	47 900	19 400	23 800
Ticket Magazine	320 373	274 703	312 900	772 000	51 900
Juno 7	210 318	166 949	819 400	60 800	19 800
Chokarella	369 741	266 102	217 800	317 000	117 000
Port-au-Prince Post	28 567	27 574	10 800	1160	—
Loop Haiti	161 409	125 626	48 100	20 700	293
Ted’Actu	121 188	68 047	2274	17 600	6840
Alterpresse	68 861	68 422	91 300	—	1590
Le National	55 821	54 061	32 800	46	849
Haiti Press Network	20 043	19 877	31 200	—	7
RezoNòdwès	27 061	25 186	38 600	1 015	1 380
VantBèfInfo	22 537	20 920	11 300	—	374
Haïti Libre	217 306	217 069	61 000	—	—
Tripotay Lakay	710 587	501 912	4 933	81 800	285 000
Trip Foumi Enfo	30 974	17 692	2410	610	626
Jounal Lakay	85 315	51 348	277	8349	1590

Source: Social Media Pages of the most-cited Newspapers, Online media and Pages in the Internews IEA Survey, June-July 2020

formation, gossip and other real or simulated altercations. Even if the public does not necessarily believe in it, but something remains of it all the same”. Nevertheless, a few of these online media are trying to make a difference and distance themselves from the click bait ones. This study does not establish such difference.

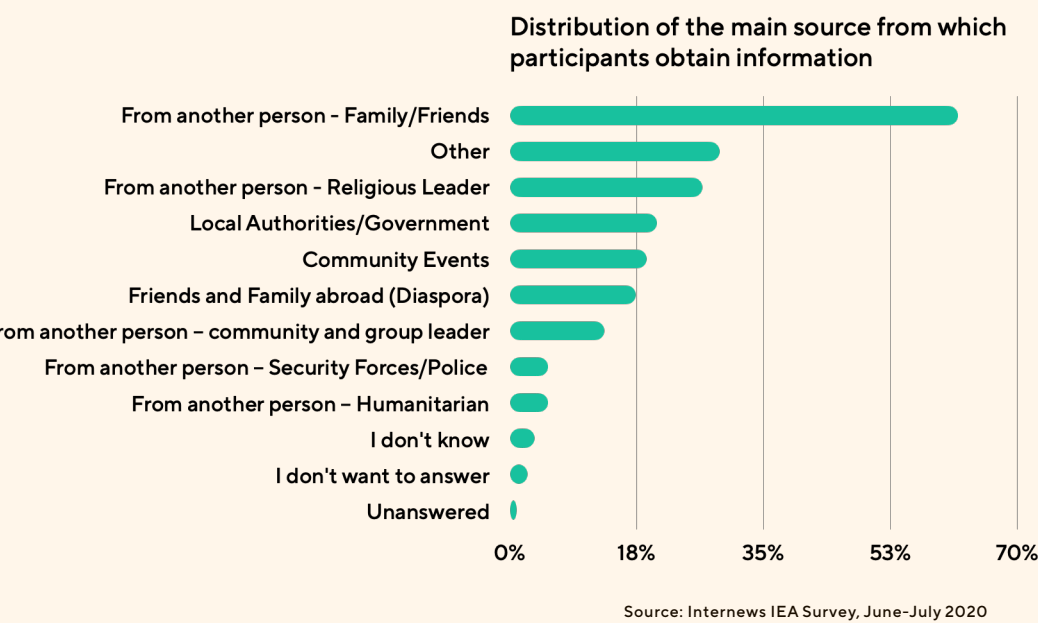
Table III presents the 15 radios that participants cited as the ones they listen to the most. Table IV shows the 15 newspapers, online media, and pages they consult most often for information. It should be noted that the number of network subscribers does not necessarily indicate their audience rating or the number of people who use them in Port-au-Prince. For instance, Caraïbes at the top is the most cited in the survey for Port-au-Prince, but its social media followers are an indication of its online popularity. They are included to demonstrate how *current event news pages and online media* are competing with traditional media in captivating an online audience both in Haiti and in the diaspora.

# VI. Key Findings - Information Ecosystem Assessment

## 1. Information Sources

### 1.1 A trusted third-person is the most important information provider

For residents of Haiti’s metropolitan area, **a third person is by far the main source from which information is obtained**. In fact, among several choices of information sources, **family, friends, and religious leaders occupy a predominant place, accounting for 89% of the response choices combined**. In order the family and friends’ category came first (62%), followed by the media or other sources (29%), religious leaders (27%), and the government (20%) in fourth place. 81% of respondents said they receive help to understand information they receive. In 80% of cases, their family members (in Haiti or in the diaspora) step in for that matter. Family and friends are also who

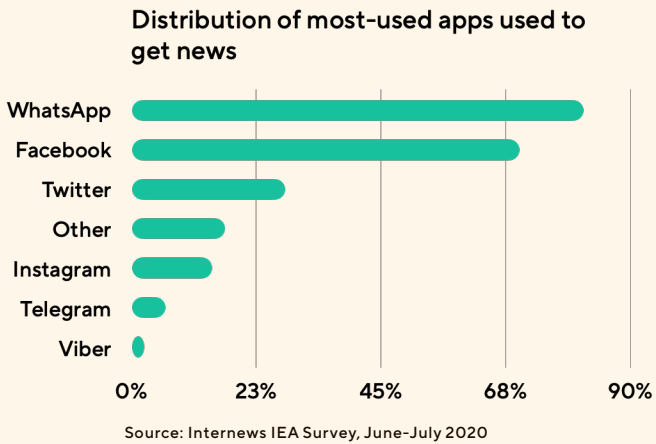


participants call most on their phones (91%) and from who they receive calls regularly. **Family and friends are therefore at the center of the process of receiving, disseminating, and understanding information among people in the region**. In the survey on living conditions in Haiti conducted in 2012 by the Haitian Institute of Statistics (IHSI), family was the most important form of socialization for respondents. That explains the continuous presence of family in that chain.

However, since the third person is not only a primary source but also someone who intervenes in the understanding and consumption of information, they can have positive or negative impacts on the information received. The effect of the third person has not been investigated in this research but seems to be important in understanding the different levels of the spread of misinformation in the metropolitan area.

### 1.2 Social media, the new player in the game?

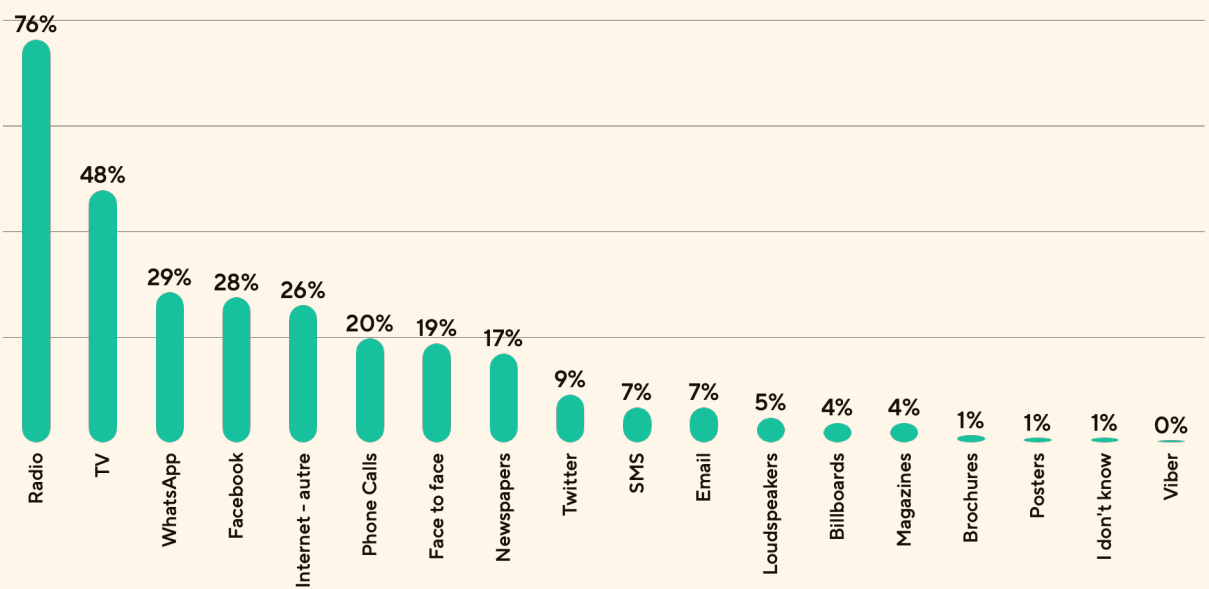
In all recent surveys on media consumption, radio emerged as the preferred, most accessible and useful channel for participants. The 2010 Dagmar survey indicated that radio was the preferred channel of information for 83.7% of participants, while only 6.2% of Haitians read news and other information online. Internews surveys between 2010



and 2012 on the post-earthquake radio program *Enfòmasyon Nou Dwe Konnen* confirmed this radio trend. However, in this new survey, even though radio remains the main source of information used by the population (76%), followed by television (48%), WhatsApp appeared as the third most popular channel on the list. Radio remains the most

Distribution of channels used to receive information

Source: Internews IEA Survey, June-July 2020



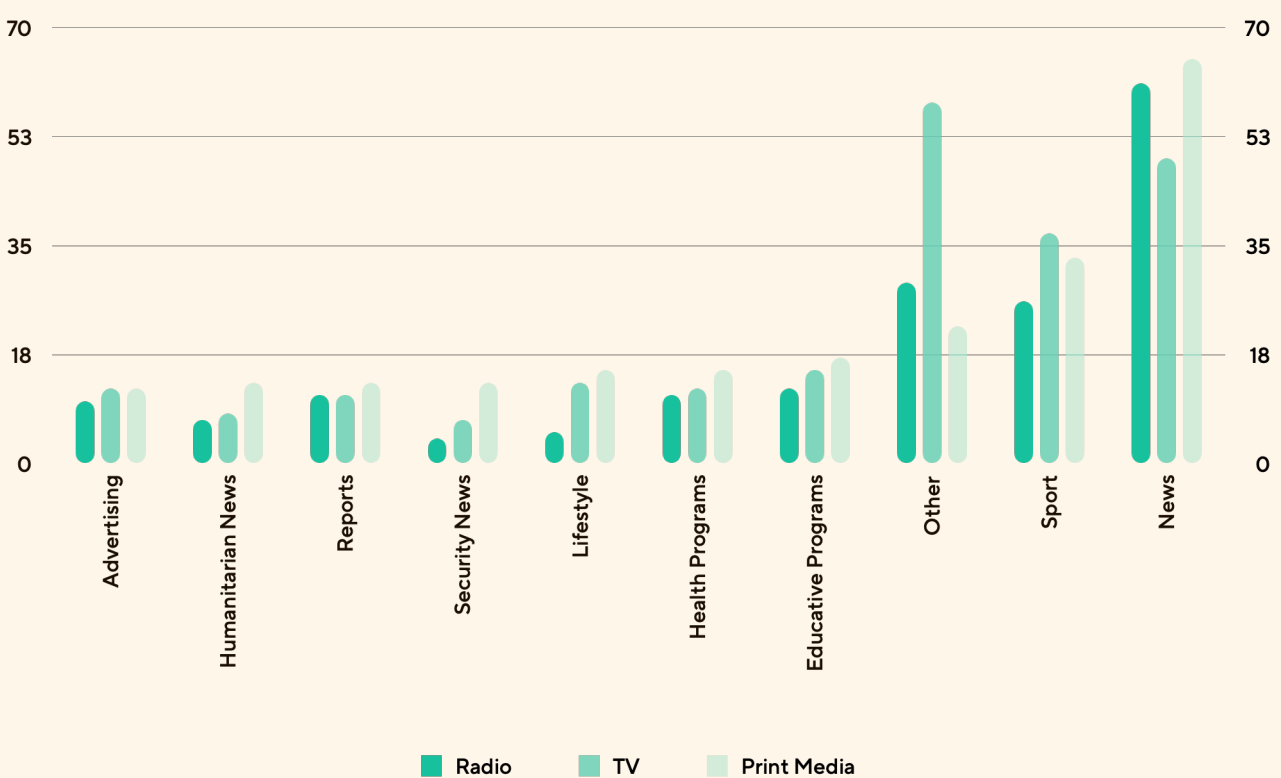
useful information channel for participants (48%), followed by newspapers (17%) and television (16%). However, with the considerable increase in the number of subscribers to the country's two cell phone companies, citizens increasingly use their phones to get information. Indeed, 98% of the survey participants use a mobile phone. **In 76% of cases, they have access to the Internet and have a radio on their phone.** One of the most popular mobile phone applications is the social contact networking app WhatsApp. More details to come in the “use of social media” section.

1.3: News on current events and Sport are the most preferred content in traditional media channels

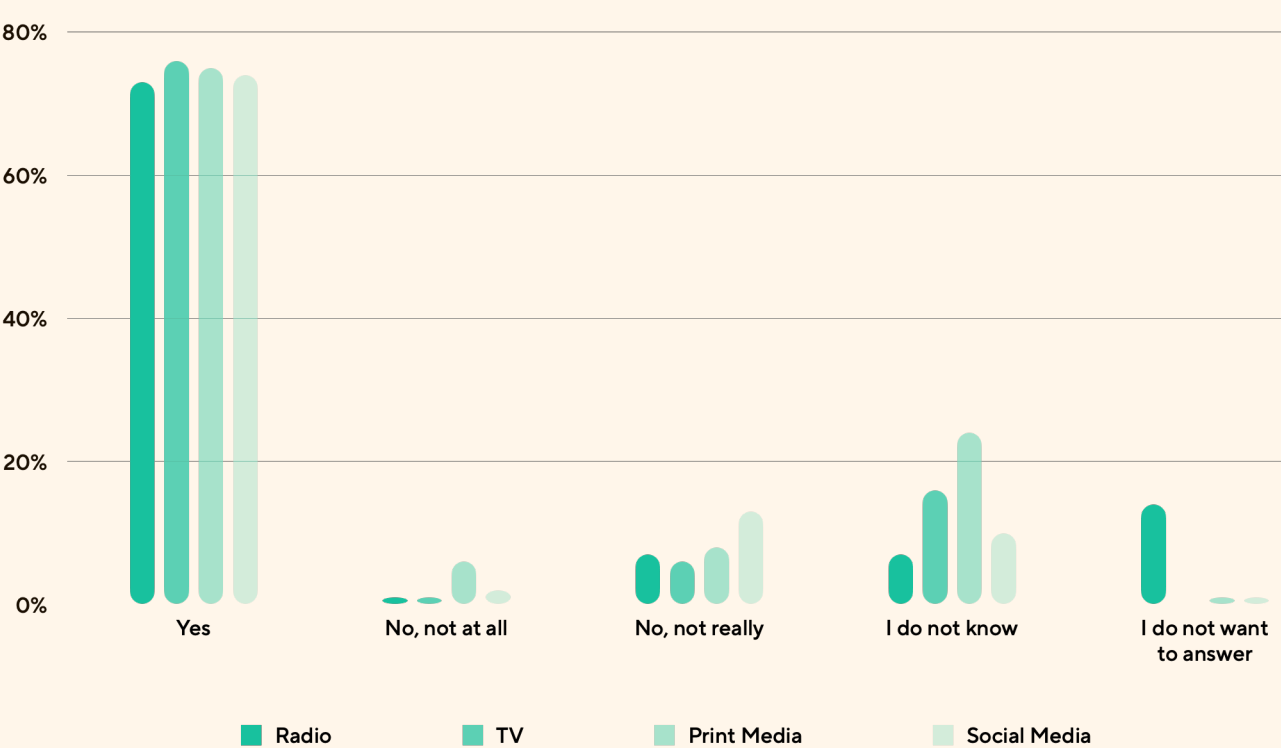
In traditional media, "News on current events" (Actualités) are the preferred choice. However, in television, films, videos and other types of programming are ahead of news editions. Sports are ahead of educational and/or health programs in all types of media. In one of the focus groups, participants justified their choice of sports programming by saying that it is impossible for journalists to “lie about sports news” and claiming that these are “also entertainment”. A *key informant* – religious leader Edzaire Paul – said “Political broadcasts predominate in the Haitian media. After that, there is sports and music”.

Distribution of preferred content on traditional media

Source: Internews IEA Survey, June-July 2020



Do you think the information received via these channels is important and useful?

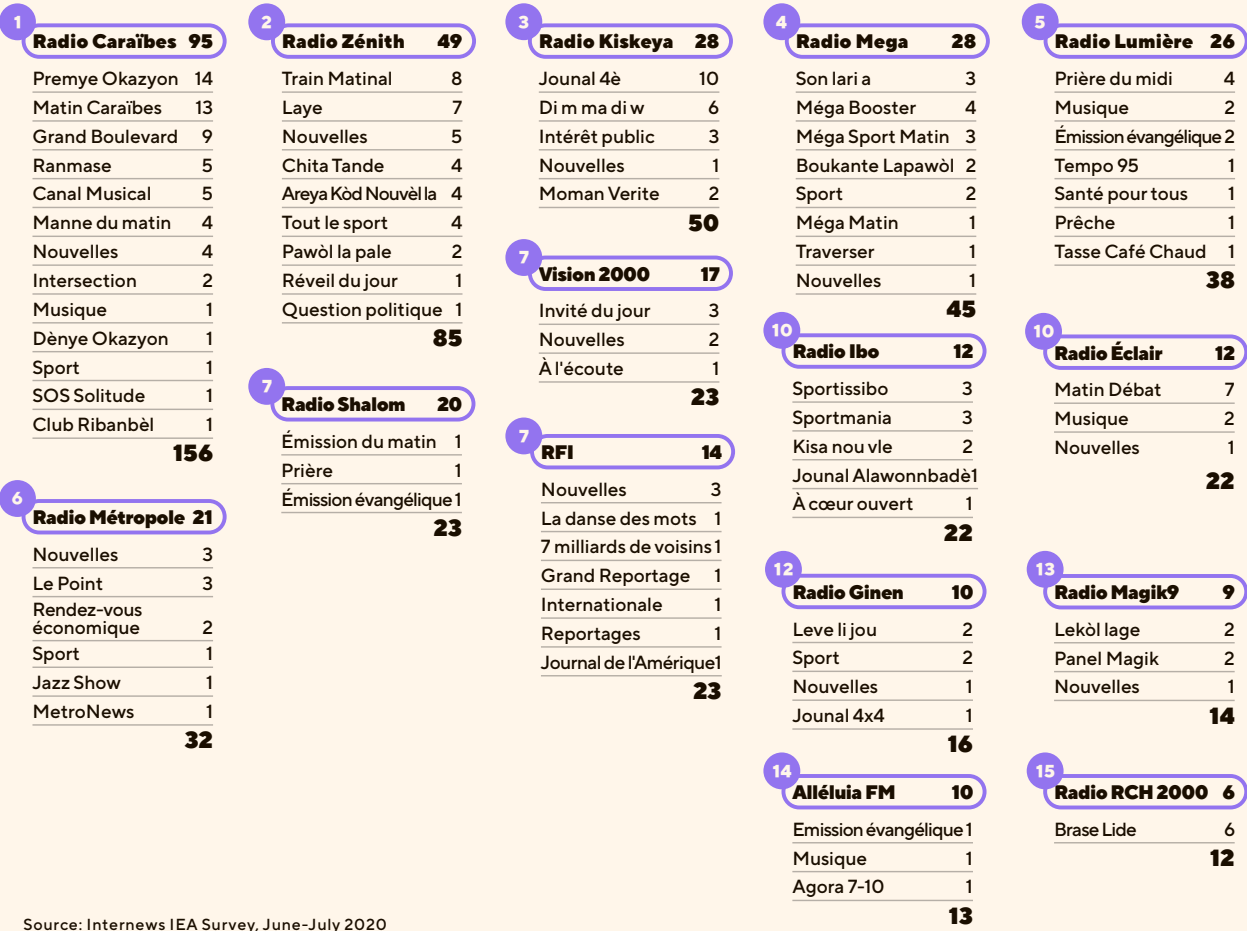


Source: Internews IEA Survey, June-July 2020

On average, 74% of respondents indicate they receive important and useful information through the news media: radio, television, print, and online or social media. Nevertheless, 30% of them said they do not have enough information to make good decisions.

Even though information needs vary depending on the individual and the sector of activity, participants consume the available information and establish their hierarchy (of preferences) of themes and programs. The majority of the media outlets only cover political news in news editions. That may be reflected in the listening preferences, according to the media offer. For instance, as shown in Fig.2 around 53% of the radio programs that participants listen to the most are political broadcasts, news editions and sports news edition.

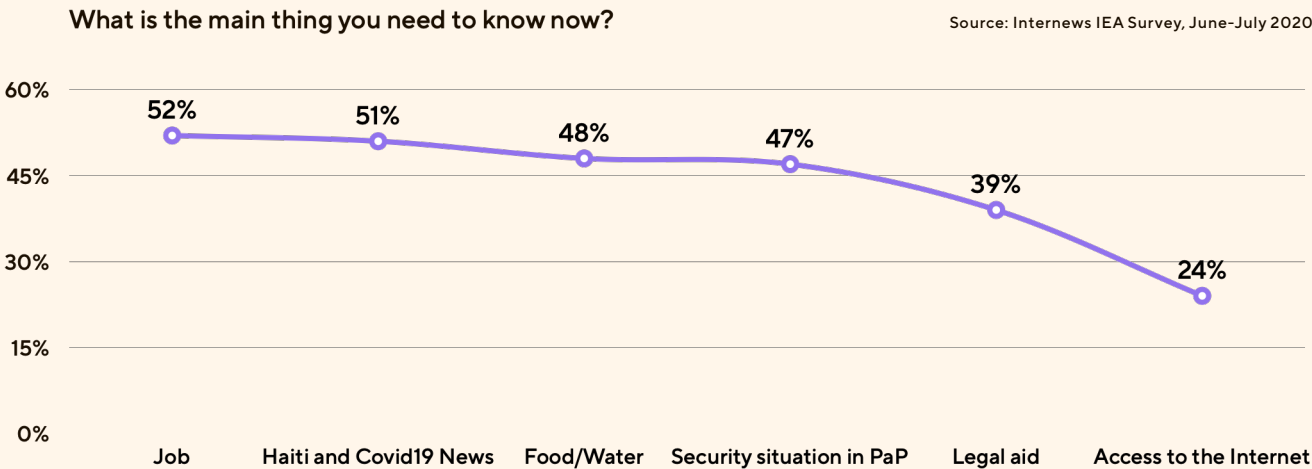
Figure 2  
MOST CITED-RADIO PROGRAMS BY SURVEY



## 2. Information Needs

### 2.1: Residents in Port-au-Prince have unmet information needs

Despite the strong media presence in the metropolitan area and the multiplication of online media, the information needs of Port-au-Prince residents are not always met. The predominance of political news coverage relegates other subjects and themes likely to interest the population. In addition, IEA participants' responses and evaluations of the quality of information providers show criticisms of different types of media.

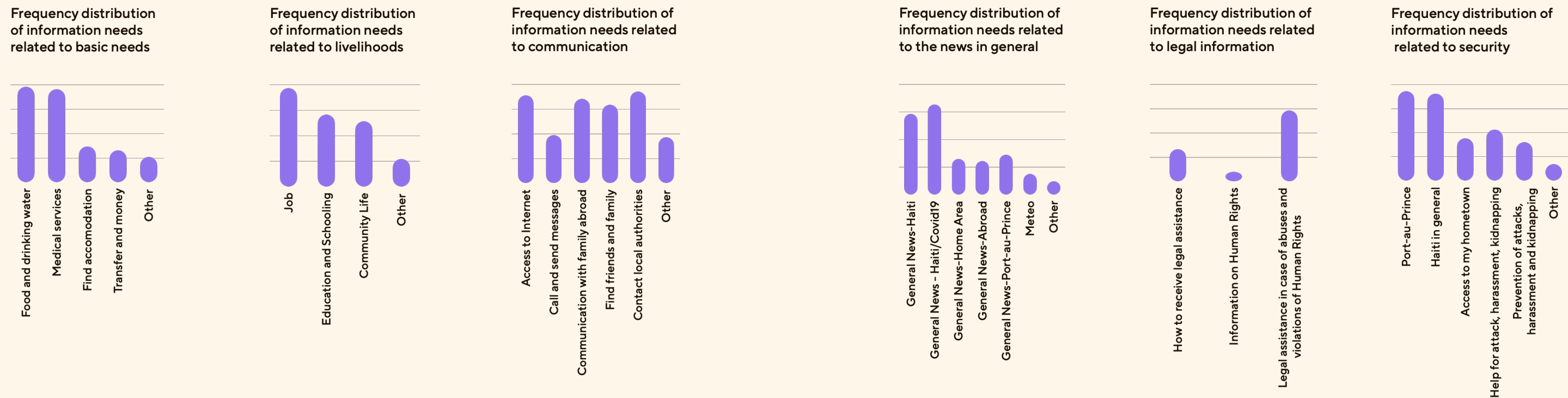


In terms of information that might be of interest to them, “how to find a job” remains one of the major concerns. This answer dominated the results, with 52% of participants ranking it first, followed closely by information on Haiti, including the COVID-19 pandemic (51%). Uncertainty about the development of the virus and the first protective measures against it, both locally and internationally, contributed to this demand for information on the virus. Similarly, in the focus groups, participants said they were interested in health news, in order to better protect themselves, and in news about the state of the economy, especially the exchange rate. The country has seen the value of its local currency depreciate consistently in two and a half years, from \$67.79 gourdes for one US dollar in 2017 to \$120 gourdes for one US dollar in August 2020. On



The following graphs show the information needs of participants in order of priority:

Source: Internews IEA Survey, June-July 2020



the other hand, due to the **socio-political context of the country, citizens feel more interested in finding practical information on water and food (48%), the security situation in Port-au-Prince (47%), legal assistance (39%) and Internet access (24%)**. The Internet is therefore not a concern in the same way as the other issues, since the majority of participants have access to it via their mobile phone. **In general, the participants are very interested in news related to Haiti.**

*Key informant* interviews and focus group discussions corroborate the need to better address people’s information needs. In one interview, a media expert stated, “there is no doubt that the media disseminates useful information, however people are not sufficiently informed about their daily lives. People need to be informed about what is happening in their community, their city.” Journalist Frantz Duval agrees, “the media are too far removed from the real life of the population. The communities of Port-au-Prince need information that concerns daily life”. University professor Patricia Camilien believes that the communities need information about “the reasons for the problems observed and possible solutions rather than a list of them”.

## 2.2: Residents of Port-au-Prince lack trust in, and connection with local leaders

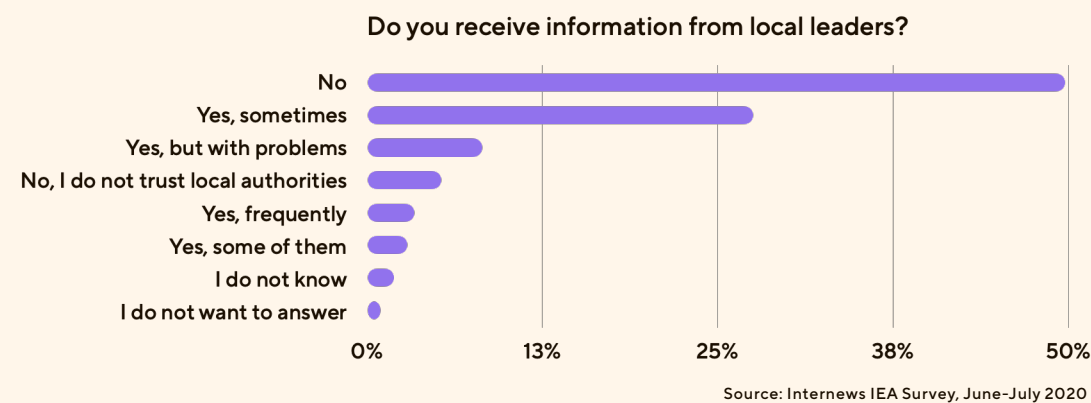
Criticism from participants was particularly acute regarding communication with local leaders. **50% of participants indicated that they had never received information from local leaders, compared to only 3% who said that they receive it regularly.**

When asked if they could make comments or ask questions to local leaders<sup>26</sup>, 90% of participants shared topics they would like to discuss with them. Most repeated topic was **problems of insecurity (50 occurrences out of 328 of topics mentioned)**. It is no coincidence that this topic is at the top of the list of concerns. The security climate in the capital has deteriorated in recent years. Human rights organizations and the media have reported massacres orchestrated by armed gangs in popular neighborhoods, the number of people killed by bullets or knives is on the rise, violent demonstrations have resulted in break-ins and looting, and gangs are ransoming passengers on national and interdepartmental roads. Information on these issues circulating on social networks

26. Question addresses to survey respondents was: If you could make comments or ask questions to local leaders, what topics would you like to discuss with them? / Si vous pouviez faire des commentaires ou posez des questions aux leaders locaux, sur quels sujets souhaiteriez-vous discuter avec eux?



such as WhatsApp increases people's perception of the security climate. For *key informant* Patricia Camilien, safety-related information is a priority, “hence the multiplication of WhatsApp groups for this purpose”. A young man from Carrefour said: “We have people in charge who don't know our real problems, they are there to get rich, while the problems remain and persist. I would have liked to discuss with them about an important subject which is the issue of insecurity in our community”.



After the security topic, residents indicated they want to talk about the following issues: **health, education and access to drinking water (9%), accountability (8%), sanitation (5%), and electricity (5%).**

Topics of urban sanitation and accountability also top the list. Haitian media have reported how the streets of Port-au-Prince are littered with garbage <sup>27 28</sup>.

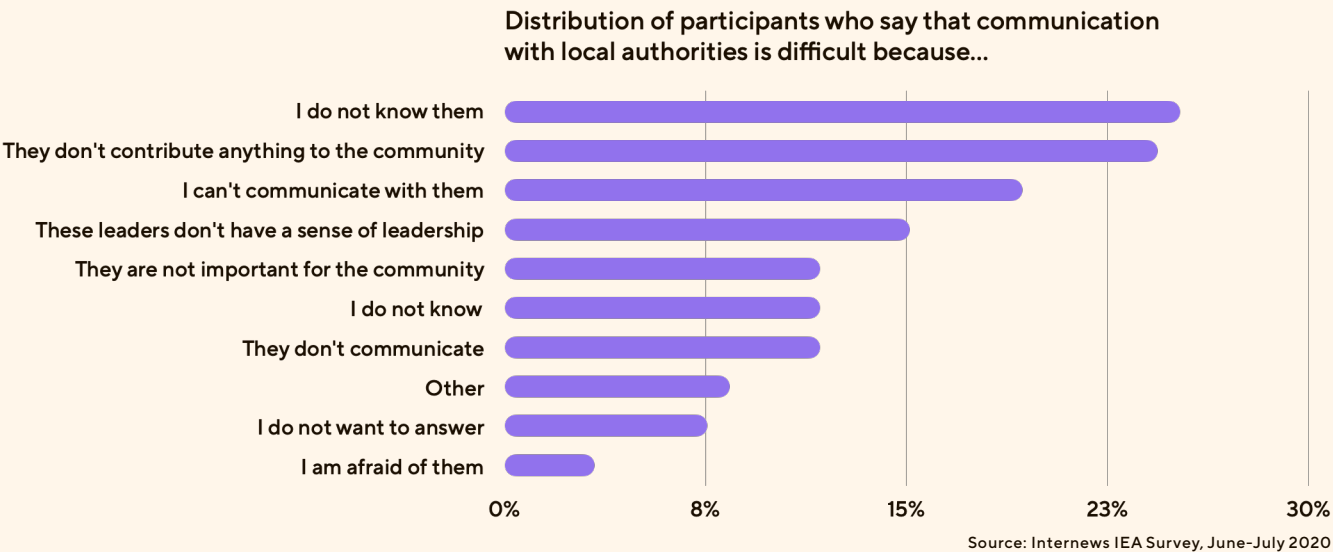
On the issue of accountability, there have been several demonstrations demanding accountability, including on the Petro Caribe fund. The audit reports of this fund, conducted by the Superior Court of Accounts and Administrative Litigation (CSCCA), citizen campaigns showing unfinished work with pictures and videos, and their own observations strengthen the demand for accountability.

Lastly, electricity is an important topic, as a young girl under 18 years of age living in Delmas commented: “I want to have electricity so that I can take online courses, I want an improvement in the security situation, I want to see my country clean.”

27. Duval, F. (Le Nouvelliste, May 24th, 2018). Port-au-Prince a besoin de moyens techniques pour sortir du piège du fatras. Retrieved from <https://lenouvelliste.com/public/article/187951/port-au-prince-a-besoin-de-moyens-et-de-techniques-pour-sortir-du-piege-des-fatras>

28. Roc, N. (Alterpresse, May 30, 2018). Haiti-Insalubrité : Les citoyens et les fatras, quelle responsabilité? Retrieved from <https://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article23141#.X3NSamhKhPY>

One particular topic – 3% of the comments – worth noting was the disinterest in even communicating with local leaders. In their comments, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the management of the country, and a lack of confidence in the ability of leaders to listen. As shown in the graph, **25% of respondents said they do not know the leaders; 24% said that local leaders do not contribute to the community; 19% stated they cannot communicate with these leaders, and 15% said that local leaders do not have leadership. Additionally, only 25% of participants who receive information from local leaders think that information is relevant.**



IEA survey respondents who expressed disinterest stated:

“Nothing to say because no matter what I would have said to them, it would mean nothing.”  
(Woman, 25-29 years old, Port-au-Prince)

“I have no questions for the local leaders because they do not know whether we exist as human beings. I will always be there, the goal is to help those who need it, the neediest indeed. Thank you for choosing me, I'm delighted.”  
(Man, 40-49 years old, Tabarre)



**"I'm not going to waste my time asking questions. But in terms of comments, our community hasn't benefited from anything so we have irresponsible leaders who don't want to see the advancement of their community."**

*(Woman, 40-49 years old, Delmas)*

**"Never in my life will I dare to speak with these men, they are all incompetent and thugs, they don't help the community in anything."**

*(Man, 50-59 years old, Carrefour)*

Other less frequent topics mentioned by survey participants were related to human rights issues, particularly the rights of LGBTI people, and people living with disabilities.

## 2.3: Information Consumers are not passive actors: trust and relevance are key points

In general, when asked if information received was important and useful, participants reported being quite satisfied with traditional media: radio (73%), television (76%), newspapers and magazines (61%), as well their mobile phones (87%). Most *key informants* believe that the public has some confidence in the media. For Frantz Duval, Le Nouvelliste's editor-in-chief, "One can doubt for a few minutes certain information broadcast on a media. However, one can verify the information on another medium. The fact that you are looking at another medium is a sign of trust in the media." In addition, "people often use the media to express their grievances", said another *key informant*.



Among participants who expressed dissatisfaction with the relevance of information received via traditional media, trust in the content is the most mentioned issue. For instance, the issue of trust is recurrent in all the focus groups. Participants pointed out the lack of training of journalists, the fact that many of them confuse facts with opinions, or place greater value in sensationalism, often leading to unsubstantiated claims and misinformation for political gain. Others note the lack of credibility of some media outlets, especially online media, "which are not professional and many of them do not have the vocation to inform and educate the population". Another participant in a focus group said, "Today I see that the microphones are in the hands of poorly trained people. And the flow of information that I receive

does not serve the public but rather the interest of private company bosses who place their advertisements on them”.

In another focus group, participants reported having more confidence in gang leaders as information providers for security issues. According to them, when gang members announce an act, it happens, contrary to what the authorities claim in the media. This lack of confidence is probably not obvious for the media or for the authorities, but the fact that both authorities and bandits go through the same media channels, whether it be radio or social networks, impacts confidence in the channel itself. People’s trust in gang leaders stems from reliance on information about insecurity in the cities, but this is not necessarily the type of information they most need, as mentioned in key finding 2.1.

From comments about factors that affect the relevance of the information received, it can be inferred that information consumers are not passive actors, hence their criticism of the level of training of journalists and the channels that provide misinformation. Some complain about the treatment of information in the media, or the dissemination of false information on social networks:

**“Because it is the same information every day and often this information is oriented. We listen, but the information is not important because many of these radios do not reflect the reality in the way the information is processed.”**

(Man, between 30-39 years old, Port-au-Prince, comment about the radio)

**“Because people share a lot of fake news.”**

(Man, 40-49 years old, Port-au-Prince, comment about news received via cellphone)

**“That's right, it's for public consumption. But that's not usually what happens in the corridors of politics and business.”**

(Woman, 40-49 years old, Croix-des-Bouquets, comment about newspapers)

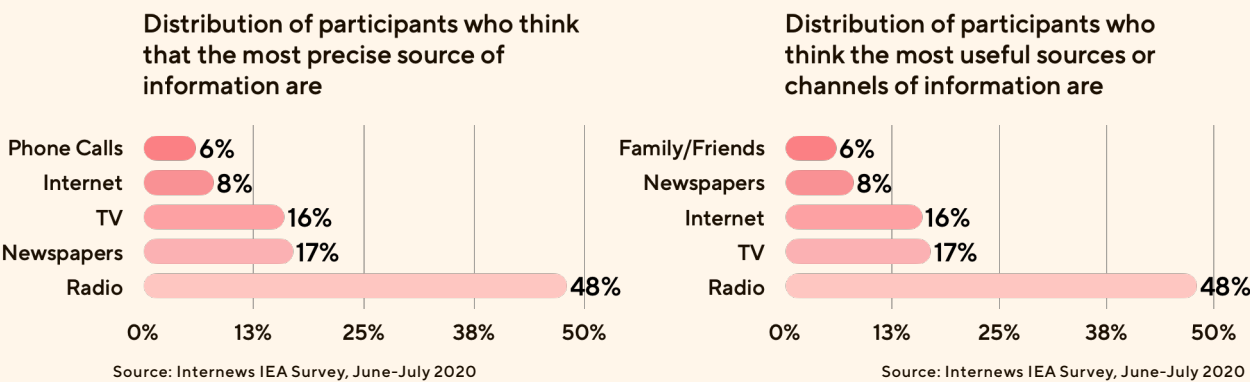
**“Because there is often misinformation. It is not well elaborated.”**

(Man, 50-59 years old, Croix-des-Bouquets).

3. Access to Information

3.1: Opportunity to bolster relationship between info consumers and the supply side

Even though family and friends are key information sources, they are not necessarily mentioned as the most accurate (6%) or useful (6%) ones. This is a paradox of the ecosystem that deserves special attention. Participants acknowledge getting information from someone else, but in terms of ranking sources according to their usefulness, family and friends come in fifth place (6%) after radio (48%), television (17%), the Internet (16%) and newspapers (8%). Yet when they need help understanding information, they turn to their family and friends and trust them greatly. When asked “Do you trust the person that helps you understand information?”, 80% said “yes”, and 18% said “pretty much, yes.” When asked whether or not they trust their main information provider (family and friends), 82% said yes.



It should be noted that this information ecosystem assessment was conducted after several important events in Haiti which may have had an impact on Port-au-Prince residents’ perception of the media. The political unrests in 2018 and 2019, the coverage of the PetroCaribe Fund scandal, the subsequent 'peyi lòk' (country in lockdown) in 2019, the government’s denunciation of the media coverage, and the circulation of false treatments of COVID-19 during the pandemic through social media. Radio stations and online media were deliberately broadcasting misinformation and inciting violence as other journalists have reported<sup>29 30</sup>. Although not all media in Port-au-Prince take the

29. Noel, W. (Le Nouvelliste, November 11, 2019). *Radio Télé Zénith : le gouvernement accuse et condamne, Rony Colin évoque un danger planant sur la vie des journalistes*. Retrieved from <https://lenouvelliste.com/article/208965/radio-tele-zenith-le-gouvernement-accuse-et-condamne-rony-colin-evoque-un-dan-ger-planant-sur-la-vie-des-journalistes>

30. Ayibopost. (2019). *Eske fonksyonman Radio Zénith se yon pwoblèm?* Retrieved from <https://ayibopost.com/eske-fonksyonman-radyo-zenith-se-yon-pwoblèm/>

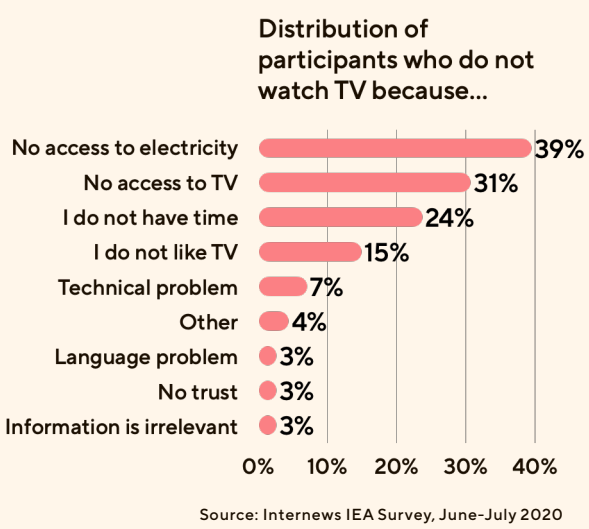
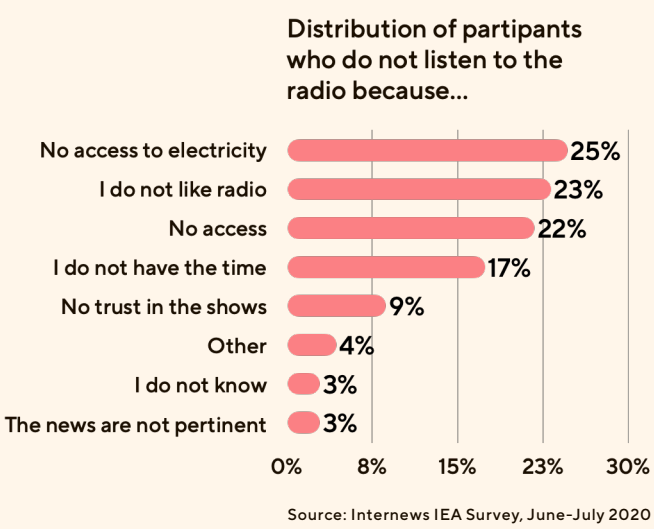
This may compromise media consumers’ confidence both in the media and their actors. To cope with that negative perception, residents transfer trust or rely heavily on their close contacts such as family members and friends. As a result, the interrelated media perceptions, media trust and credibility, may underpin the transmission of information and disinformation.



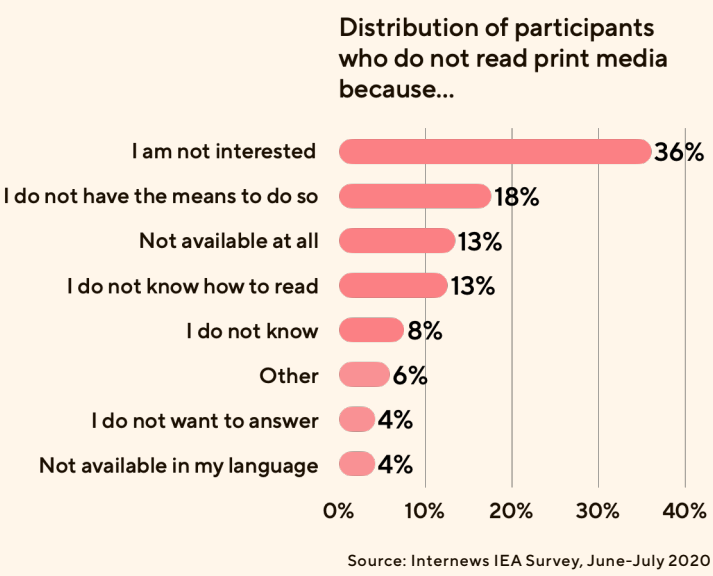
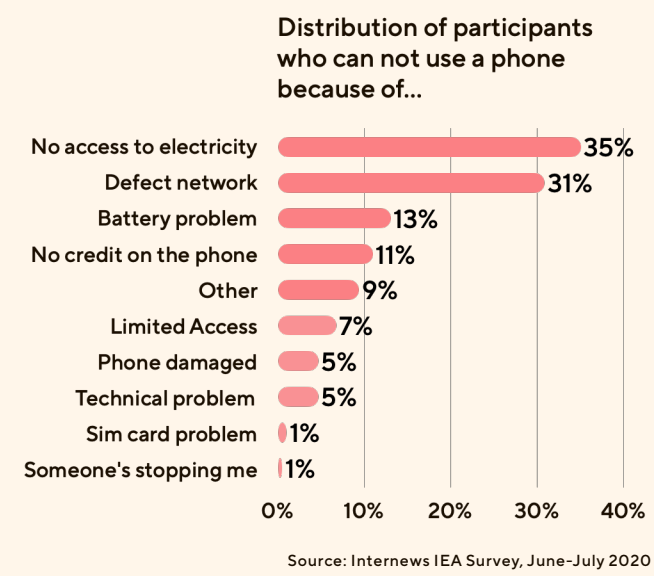
### 3.2: Barriers to access to information: electricity and disinterest

The dynamics of access to information in the metropolitan region are affected by several economic, political, and social factors across different demographic groups. In the focus groups and in the survey responses, electricity remains the main barrier to traditional media (radio and television) and new channels, such as the telephone and the Internet.

- 33% of participants said they could not listen to the radio at the time of the survey. 21% do not have access to electricity to do so, 19% have no access to a radio at all, and 15% say they do not have the time. The latter are part of the work force.
- As for television, 55% of the participants do not have access to it for multiple reasons. The percentage is higher because a television set costs more than a radio. 39% of them say they do not have access to electricity and 31% have no access at all to a television set. 24% of them say they do not have time.



- As for the telephone, only 7% of participants do not have access to it. However, of the 93% who have a telephone, 39% complain of lack of access to electricity, 31% complain of network connectivity and 13% complain of problems with the batteries in their phones.
- As for Internet access, 30% of the participants do not have access to it, either because they cannot afford it (37%), have a problem with electricity (21%) or a poor connection (21%).

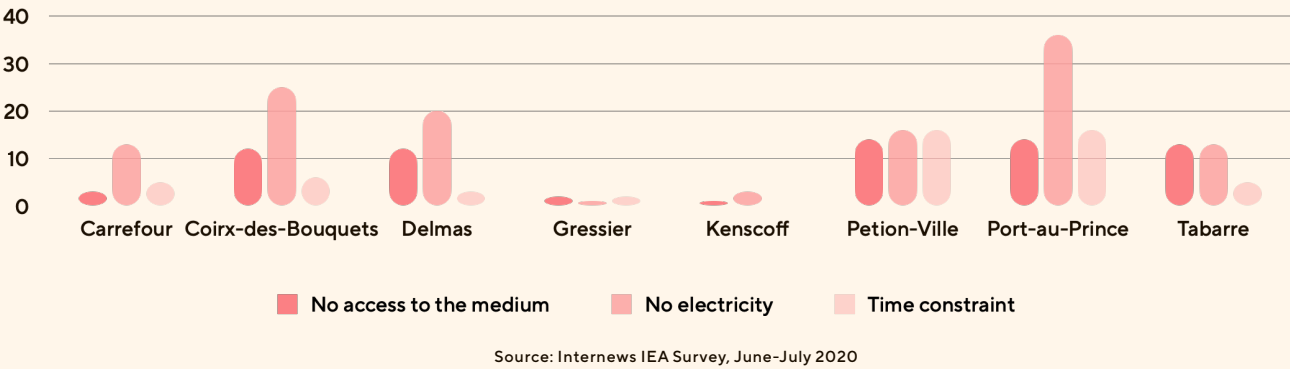




When it comes to newspapers, while only 6.3% of survey participants cannot read or write, 53% of participants say they do not read mainstream newspapers (Le Nouvelliste, Le National) and magazines. **When participants were asked to choose between crediting their phones or buying a newspaper, 82% chose crediting their phones and only 6% said they would buy the minutes to read the newspapers.** The data is not sufficient to further explore the different methods of access to newspapers, because even if people do not have physical access to newspapers, perhaps they read them on the Internet. However, 36% say they are not at all interested in newspapers and magazines, 18% cannot afford them and 13% have no access at all.

These access issues affect residents of some municipalities more than others. Depending on the geographic area, residents suffer more from lack of access to electricity. For example, residents of Port-au-Prince complained more about the electricity problem than those in Delmas. This may be explained by the sample size of survey participants residing in each municipality. However, it also reflects the serious electricity challenge of the Haitian capital and its residents who constantly suffer power outages<sup>31</sup>. In 2018, only 45.27% of the Haitian population had access to electricity<sup>32</sup>.

Frequency distribution of participants' three main barriers to access information per location



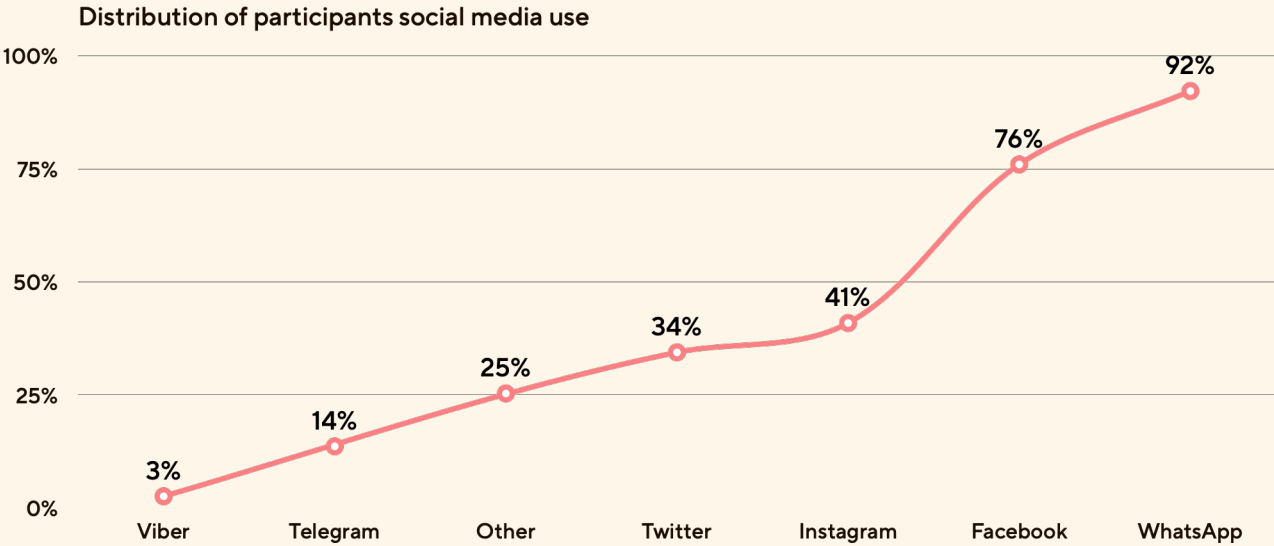
Lastly, as previously mentioned, lack of communication and barriers to accessing information from local leaders, may result in greater inaccessibility of public information than that of the media.

31. USAID. (2020). Haiti Energy. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/haiti/energy>

32. World Bank. (2018). Access to electricity - Haiti (% of population). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS?end=2018&locations=HT&start=1995&view=chart>

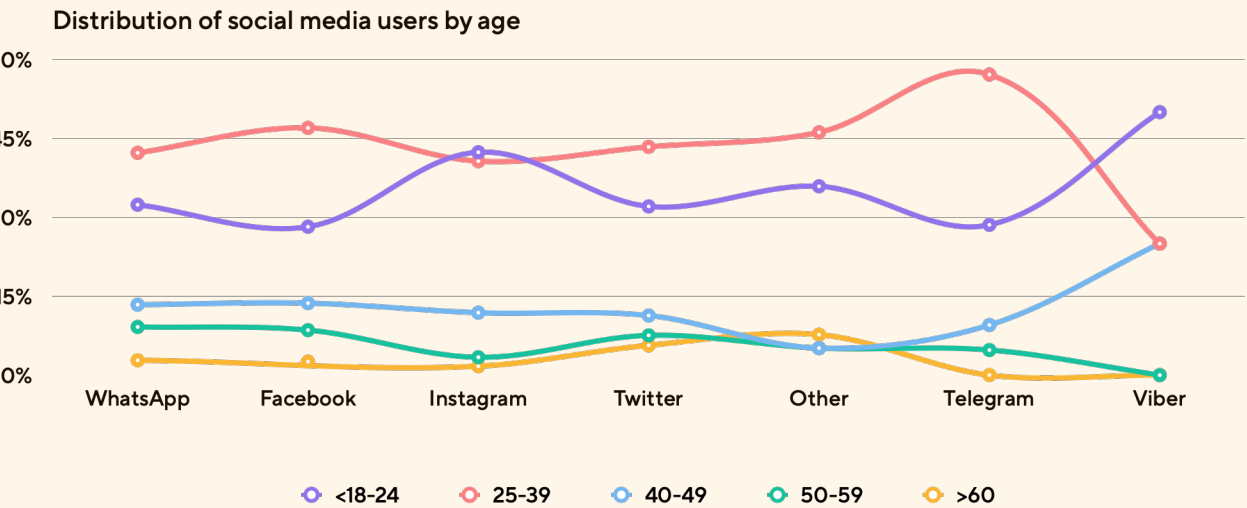
### 3.3: Seven-in-ten participants use the Internet and have a personal account on social media

According to the main survey, **seven-in-ten participants in Port-au-Prince use some form of social media.** Social media is among the most popular activities participants enjoy when using their phones, after calling family and friends, accessing the Internet and sending messages. **74% of people with access to a mobile phone indicated that they use some form of social media, including WhatsApp.** Social media platforms are designed for broadcasting to a large audience, while messaging apps are used more for communication. Although WhatsApp follows the messaging app criteria, new creation features make it a cross-platform app that also can be seen as a social media platform. For this study, WhatsApp is categorized as social media platform. Participants stated they use social media for entertainment, to connect with friends and family, and to consume and share information. However, this use is not consistent across demographic groups and locations. WhatsApp is unquestionably participants' favorite application (92%), followed by Facebook (76%), Instagram (41%), Twitter (34%), and other applications (25%) (among them Tiktok, Youtube, Linkedin or Pinterest).

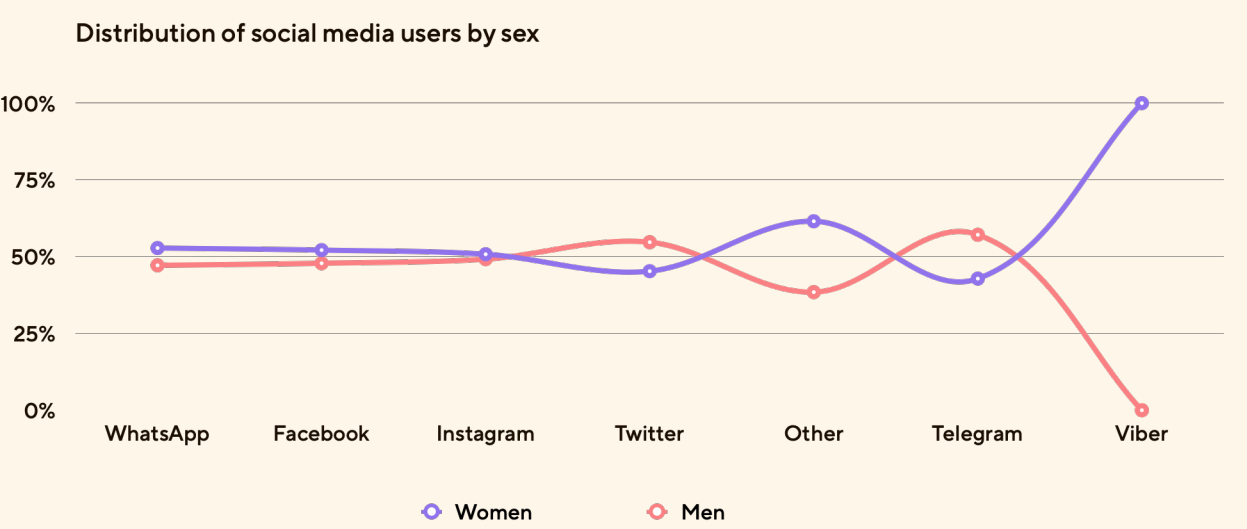


### 3.3.1: Who are the Social Media Users?

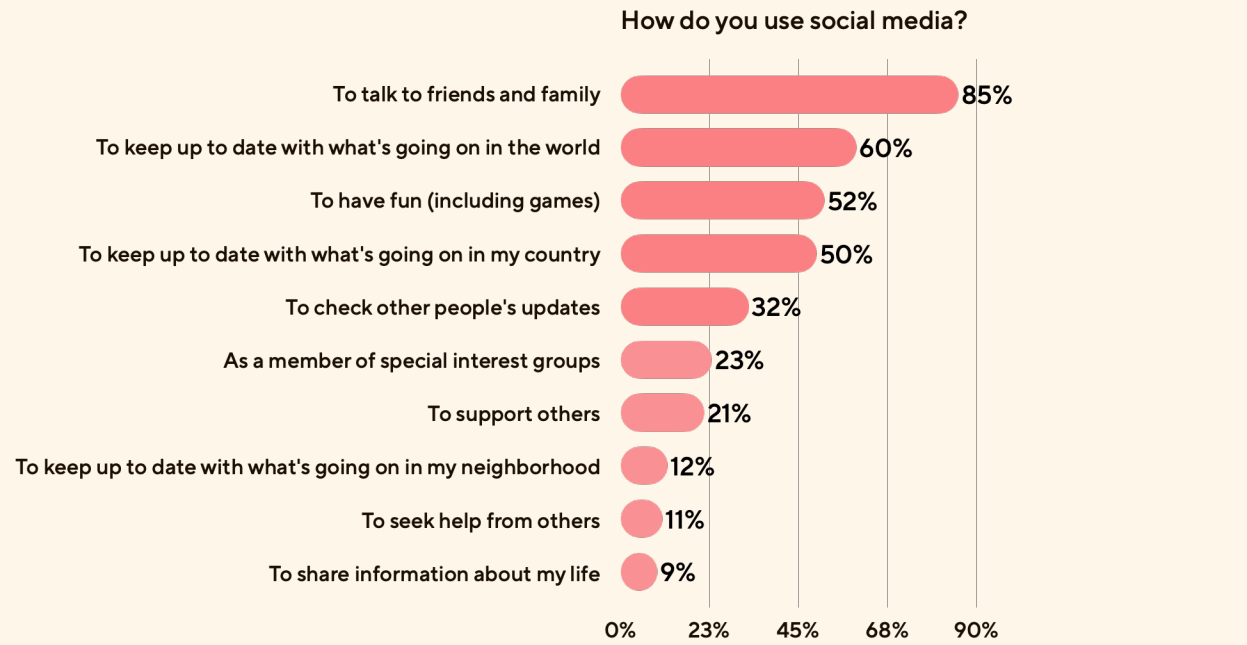
Following the global trend of large urban cities, **Millennials living in Port-au-Prince are the most active on social media.** They are ahead of Generation Z, Generation X and baby boomers across all platforms, except in Instagram where Generation Z is one point ahead of them. This demographic group has grown up with these platforms and is therefore among their most avid users.



**Women are relatively more active on social media than men (55% versus 45%), with the exception of Twitter and Telegram, where men have a small lead.** However, the men are the most active in WhatsApp groups or on the pages they follow on other social media platforms (58% versus 42%), even if they do not get the information they want in these groups (61% versus 39%).



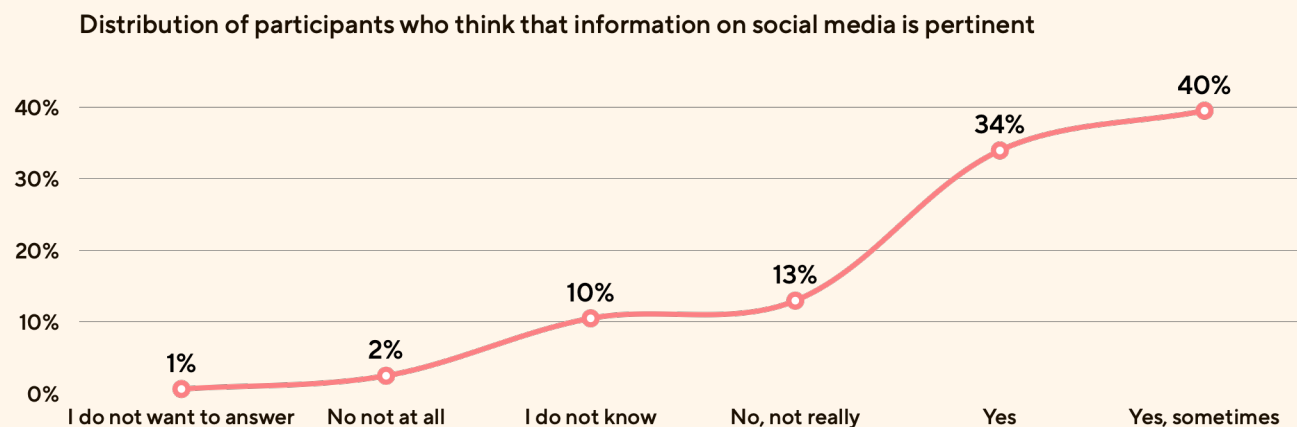
This data confirms that Port-au-Prince residents with Internet and social media access consume information from these sources. **60% stated they use social media to stay up to date on world news and events, and 50% stated they use it to obtain similar information about Haiti. 50% of the respondents also think that the information they receive from the social media is relevant to their needs.** Although there are no specifics about the types of information they are referring to, social media is becoming more established in people’s information consumption habits.



To support the understanding of the trend in the use of social media in Port-au-Prince, a short survey was conducted on Google Forms using WhatsApp as the mean of diffusion. 63 valid responses – 29 women, 32 men, and two who preferred not to identify their gender – were submitted in seven days: 46% of them were Millennials, 35% Generation Z and 19% Generation X. **Results from this small survey show that WhatsApp is the leading social network (67%)<sup>33</sup> in Port-au-Prince, confirming the previous finding,** followed by Facebook (10%), Instagram (10%), Twitter (3%), YouTube (3%) and Tik Tok (3%). Additionally, **87%vof participants** in that survey **use social media to get news on a daily basis, and only 6%** consult the applications specifically **to obtain news 3-4 times a week.**

33. Difference in sample size may respond to the differences in percentage in use of social media platforms between Main Survey and WhatsApp survey participants.





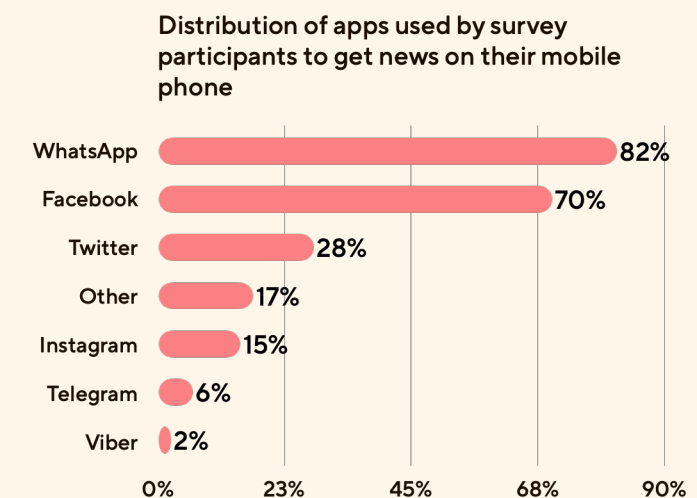
This small survey also indicates that people receive more information than they share on social media. While 76% receive news about the situation in Haiti, only 51% share them. The data reports similar behavior regarding COVID-19 news. **While 46% read COVID-19 related news on social media, only 33% share it.** While the relative discrepancy in these trends can be beneficial in fighting the spread of disinformation, it is still unclear if the consumers evaluate that information before sharing it. However, **participants were asked to rate their level of trust in the information received** on social networks on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being “very bad” and 10 “being the best.” The **average rating was “4.6”**, with only 6% of participants giving an “8” to the information seen on social media, and 3% giving a “10”.

### 3.4: Mobile News consumption on the rise

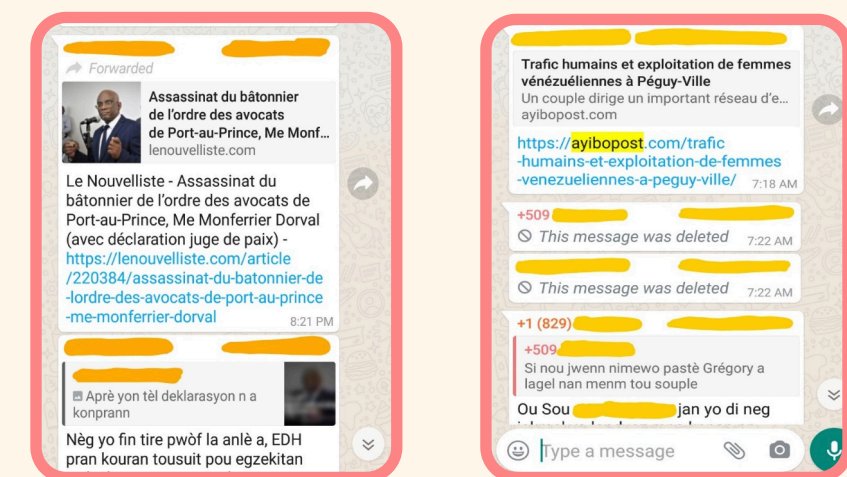
The survey data indicates that 98% of participants who were Internet users accessed it via mobile phone. This form of Internet access in the Port-au-Prince area is well above the national threshold from 10 years ago. In 2010, the Dagmar media audience survey revealed that 84.6% of all Internet users in Haiti accessed the Internet at an Internet café and only 12.3% had access at home or at work. The Port-au-Prince IEA survey shows that only 3% go online at an Internet café and 7% on a computer at home or at work.

Additionally, fewer people use radio (29%) and TV (4%) on their mobile phones, but their news consumption habits are consistent with their ability to access the Internet: most of

them own a mobile phone (89%) or have access to one (98%), with 82% preferring to add credit to their phone to access the Internet than buying a newspaper (6%), and 82% using WhatsApp to get news.



With the “forward option,” the news item is shared instantly, but the consumers will be directed to the online media/newspapers’ website, as can be seen in the following screenshots:



- Screenshot 1 (News about the assassination of the prominent lawyer Monferrier Dorval forwarded in a WhatsApp Group) *From a local newspaper.*
- Screenshot 2 (News about Human trafficking and exploitation of Venezuelan women in Péguyville, Petion-Ville). *From an online media.*

Access to the Internet has a huge impact on habits of access to and consumption of online information. WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter, which were not among the major channels for receiving information twelve years ago, are surpassing direct access to the newspapers. At the national level, in 2010, only 5.3% of participants in the Dagmar survey used social media. Participants want to use social media to stay up to date with the news in their neighborhood, Haiti and the world. For them, in the face of the recurring electricity problem, social media platforms are becoming the most accessible communication channels for getting information.

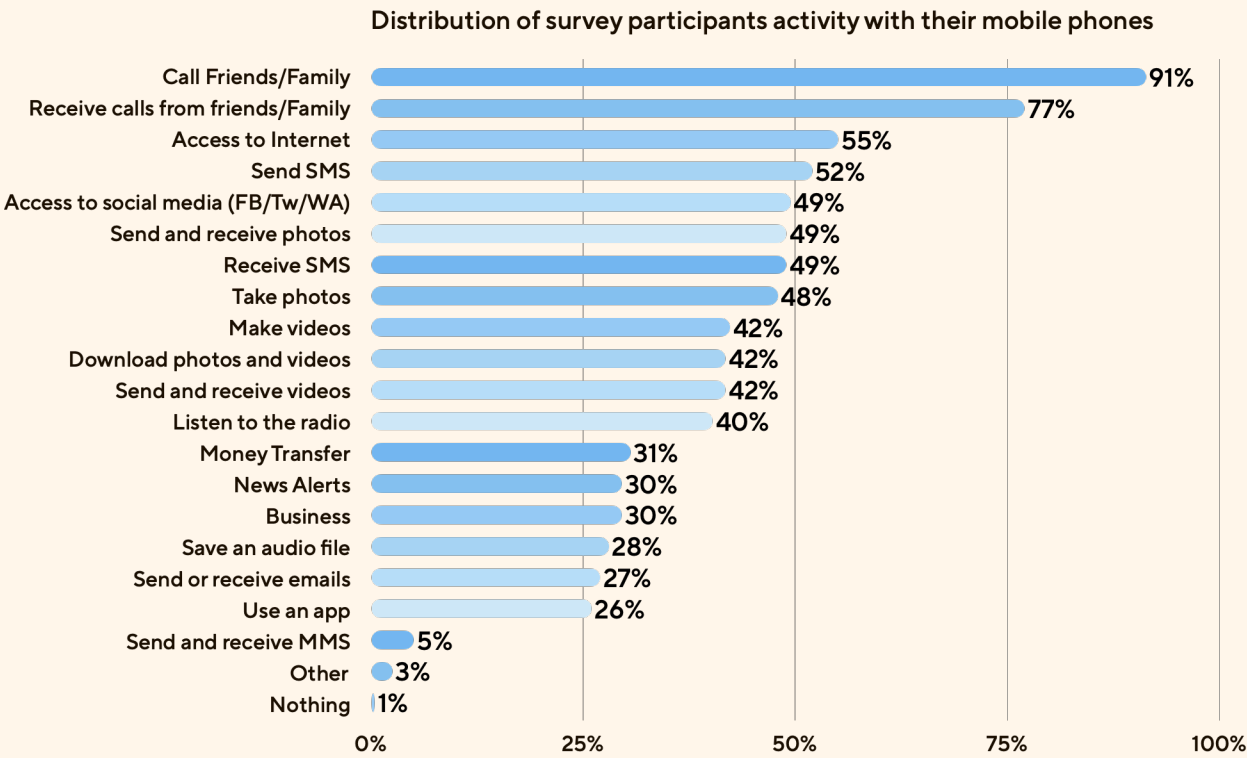
Therefore, as access to the Internet and mobile phones becomes more widespread, more people will consume information through those channels. This is a global trend, with younger people in particular consuming information on social networks and on their phone. However, the arrival of social media as a source of information opens the

4. Disinformation

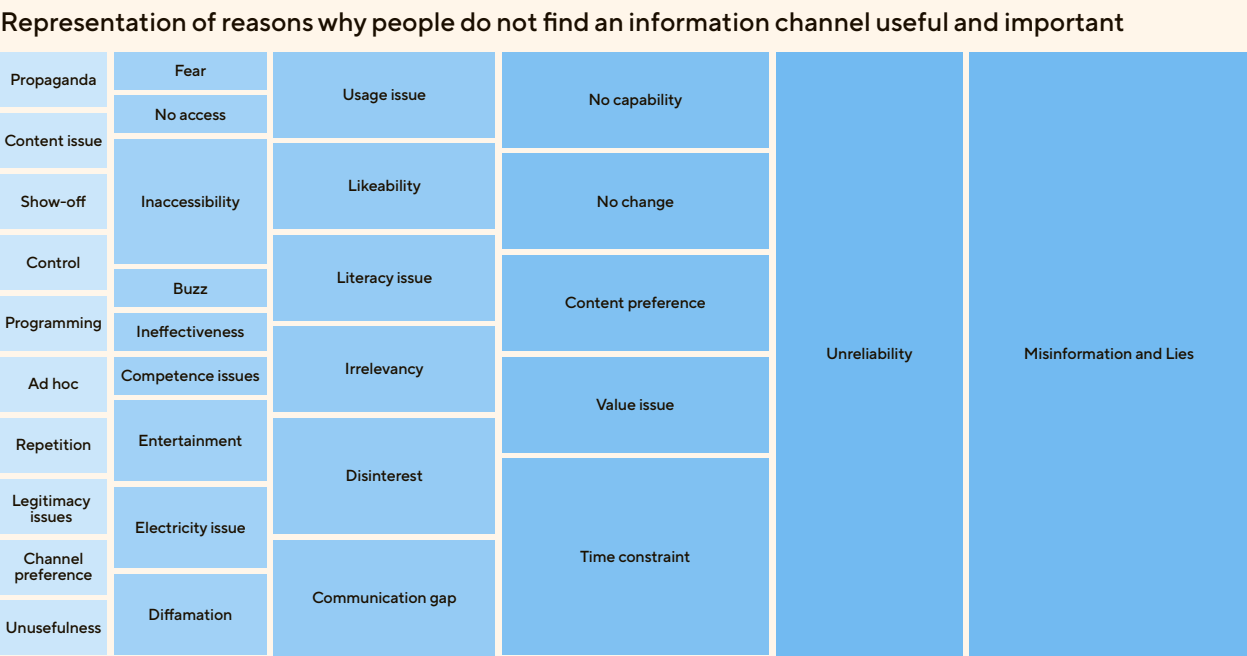
4.1: Disinformation: great concern and distrust factor in local leaders and the media

When asked why information from sources such as radio, social media, mobile phones, and local leaders would not be relevant, important, or useful to them, respondents openly shared over 130 comments. 19% of those comments cited issues of “lies and misinformation,” 15% cited trust issues, and 13% cited unreliability, all of which are corollaries of misinformation. Participants were particularly critical of the local leaders, who they consider to be deceiving. “They do not always tell the whole truth about the facts,” commented a 20-year-old woman living in Croix-des-Bouquets; “They are liars,” wrote a 25-year-old man living in Port-au-Prince.

**Even if participants cite misinformation by name, they do not differentiate between misinformation and disinformation.** This level of understanding of the issue is not explicit in the available data. While misinformation can be a mistake in good faith or



not, disinformation is deliberately designed to mislead people for the purposes of causing harm, or for political, personal, or financial gain. There were no specific examples in the data collection process where respondents differentiated between misinformation and disinformation. However, in focus groups and key informant interviews, participants flagged social networks and media (online or traditional) in the production and dissemination of both misinformation and disinformation. They both contribute to undermining people's trust in the media or information channels.



Although social media is gaining ground in terms of access to and consumption of information, it is also a fertile breeding ground for the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation. Facebook and WhatsApp are the most cited channels for the transmission of fake images and unfounded information by participants in the focus groups. In addition, several focus group participants stated that some media outlets broadcast false news for political reasons or produce clickbait headlines to gain readers, which affects participants' level of trust in the media in general. A Facebook and WhatsApp user explained that the flow of false information he is seeing is alarming. "Some of the content is obviously fake. But the complexity of the issue is that our only recourse should be radio stations or TV channels through actual broadcasts or newspapers, as some journalists take the malicious pleasure of relaying false information either out of ignorance or intentionally"<sup>34</sup>.

Feedback on the ways participants verify the veracity of news was mixed. Focus group participants said they do fact-checking before sharing certain news stories or "just checking" to see if they are being reported by mainstream media, such as Radio Télé Caraïbes, Vision 2000, or RFI. For fact-checkers, mainstream media "cannot spread false news". Other strategies used by participants include looking at an author's research, sense of objectivity and balance, or researching the medium's editorial line, political affiliation and the credibility of the media owner. **Other participants argue that it is impossible to believe and verify the information shared by some media because they do not have "access to the primary source"**. For one participant, "believing in information will depend on the time, the moment, the context and the personalities who intervene in the media to comment on it". Others are completely unaware of the tools available to fight against fake photos. **They believe that the more a content is shared, the more credible it seems to them.**

*Key informants* all identified misinformation on social networks, even affecting them personally. University professor Patricia Camilien, for example, said that "some of it is about me attending meetings at this or that place while I was at home". For the former Director of CONATEL, Jean Marie Altéma, and Reverend Edzaire Paul, false news are common in social networks. Frantz Duval believes that the media does not deal specifically with misinformation, however, he acknowledges, "many media are trying to take

34. Sanon, R. (2020). Réseaux sociaux et propagation de fausses informations. Panos Caribbean

stock of the false news that is circulating. The media may not be chasing fake news but are trying to give the information that is true. I would say that the life span of fake news is very short."

The population of Port-au-Prince undoubtedly felt the effects of misinformation and disinformation at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Haiti. In March 2020, journalist Robenson Geffrard tweeted that a State University professor "who went into quarantine nearly lost his life when people armed with machetes tried to intercept the ambulance in which he was travelling". On March 11, residents of the municipality of Tabarre staged a demonstration in front of a hotel where health authorities had taken bus passengers from the Dominican Republic to quarantine them<sup>35</sup>. Neither the professor nor the quarantined passengers had the coronavirus. Incorrect information about the virus was circulating on the networks or was simply displayed. It was the same case during the cholera epidemic of 2010: misinformed citizens attacked ambulances and voodoo priests, and stigmatized patients, threatening to burn down cholera treatment centers.

Aware of the problem of misinformation during the pandemic, an online debate was organized between various sectors of society including representatives of the Office of the Secretary of State for Communication, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (Binuh), the branch of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Association of Haitian Journalists (Ajh), the National Association of Haitian Media (Anmh), the Independent Media Association, the Groupe Médialternatif, Wacc-Caraibes and the Ministry of Culture and Communication<sup>36</sup>.

Mistrust in the media and in local leaders, blind trust in close sources such as friends and family, and confirmation bias can also contribute to a proliferation of false news. With WhatsApp, for example, where group chats are increasing and information can be shared easily, "shared as received" is often an excuse to avoid the responsibility of verifying information.

Based on feedback collected from the focus groups it can be inferred that a lack of care in processing information, the lack of consistency in research, the predominance of

35. Rumbold, Y. (March 20, 2020). L'épidémie de fausses informations sur le coronavirus représente un danger pour Haïti. Retrieved from <https://ayibopost.com/les-fausses-informations-peuvent-faire-autant-de-victimes-que-le-coronavirus-en-haiti/>

36. Alterpresse. (May 8, 2020). Médias : Des membres de la presse en Haïti préoccupés par la problématique de désinformation au temps du Covid-19. Retrieved from <https://www.alterpresse.org/spip.php?article25605-.X2i4-WKhPY>

opinion over facts, and the absence of a common front for the respect of the right to information contribute to diminishing the confidence of the inhabitants in the quality of the information produced, and to confusing misinformation with disinformation. In general, when news media fell short of public expectations, this situation lowers their level of trust and credibility in the media, negatively affecting their media perception.

and local partners ACLEDD, Ayibopost, FOKAL, and Radio Magik 9.

## VII. Suggestions and Next Steps

Together with local partners, Internews will coordinate a number of events, such as panels and community discussions to socialize the key findings presented on this report. These opportunities will inform the “Suggestions and Next Steps” chapter of the IEA report by taking into account comments and suggestions made by participants and relevant local stakeholders. Internews emphasizes the value of integrating the local community’s knowledge and experience in the creation of suggestions and next steps that can serve to find solutions to the challenges facing Port-au-Prince’s information environment and equip local CSOs and members of the media sector with the tools and skills to promote reliable, trusted and relevant information .

Internews will share a final version of this report including this chapter on the ***Forum of Media Organization Partners and Journalists*** to be held in January 2021.

## VIII. Acknowledgements

Internews and Panos Caribbean would like to express special thanks to all researchers, survey participants; focus group participants, moderators and note takers; *key informant* interviewers; and Panos Caribbean journalists.

Additionally, we want to acknowledge and thank the valuable information and context provided by *key informants* Jean Marie Altéma, Patricia Camilien, Frantz Duval, and Pastor Edzaire Paul, and to a fifth *key informant* who requested anonymity.

Last but not least, we want to thank our collaborators Yvens Rumbold and Ralph Dupoux,