Key Insights of Integrity Research Indonesia

INTEGRITY INITIATIVE

Fighting Misinformation: A Critical Look at Disinformation in Indonesia



September 2025

BBC MEDIA ACTION

> “I think people need to check information for accuracy, but I feel that I can make up my own mind”



The problem

Indonesia has experienced rapid digital disruption, significantly increasing the spread of information disorder across politics, health, the environment and interfaith issues. Established traditional media organisations are now investing in digital platforms to reach younger audiences, but they compete with a growing number of influencers and citizen journalists who may not adhere to the same journalistic standards. This presents a serious challenge to democracy, as media outlets and journalists struggle to maintain public trust while delivering accurate information. Disinformation campaigns have increasingly targeted key political events and social discourse, previously during COVID-19 and the 2024 election cycle. Without the tools to critically assess information online, many individuals are susceptible to the influence of disinformation campaigns.

What this research did

This project, a pilot of the Integrity Initiative, is established to support the media development sector with effective and evidence-based strategies to tackle the mis- and disinformation issue. It is a collaborative research project designed to map the disinformation landscape, assess public perceptions, and identify prevalent disinformation narratives within Indonesia’s media ecosystem. It was developed as a partnership between BBC Media Action and BBC Monitoring, and delivered in collaboration with CASM Technology, from April 2024 to March 2025. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining social listening, semantic mapping, broadcast monitoring, a nationally representative survey, and in-depth interviews.

Methodology

Social listening of Instagram, YouTube, X and Telegram to understand how social media users are discussing relevant topics on social media and potential vectors of mis- and disinformation. The data was analysed to cover the period from June 2023 to June 2024.

Advanced social media analysis, conducted by CASM Technology to better understand how various narratives were being discussed on social media. This included a semantic mapping of all messages produced by accounts in the digital ecosystem. The data was analysed to cover the period from May to August 2024.

Broadcast monitoring, conducted by BBC Monitoring, to understand the extent to which mis- and disinformation and/or various narratives were being spread on Indonesian broadcast channels. It was conducted through August and September 2024.

A nationally representative survey of 5,036 respondents across Indonesia to assess media and information consumption habits, trust in different sources of information, digital and media literacy. The survey was conducted from October to November 2024.

Qualitative research, including a short audience panel of 60 participants and 24 in-depth interviews with selected demographic profiles and/or 'at-risk' groups identified in the quantitative research. This was carried out from November to December 2024.

What we found

Indonesia's media and digital landscape

The media landscape in Indonesia is dominated by television and digital platforms, reflecting the shifting digital behaviours of the population. Approximately 56% of Indonesians watch television, with women especially likely to do so (61%), and 69% engage with social media daily – particularly popular with women (74%). When asked about which news topics they are interested in, 58% expressed interest in political news, with a stronger preference for domestic over international issues.

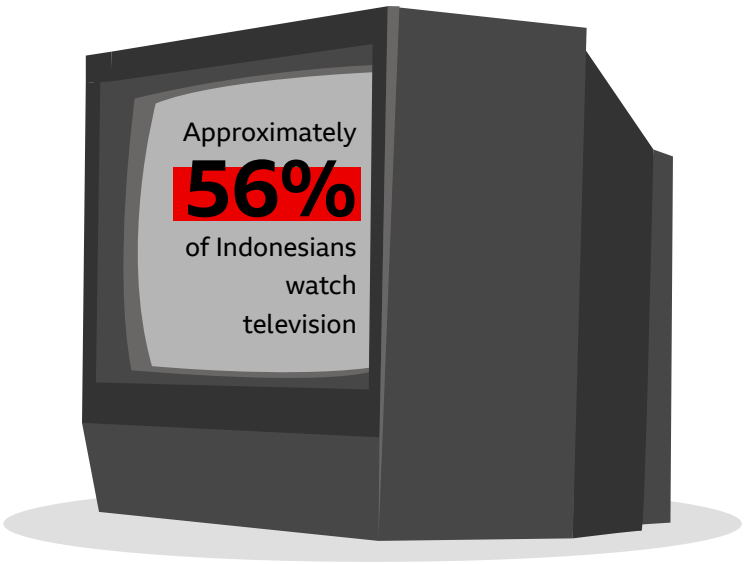
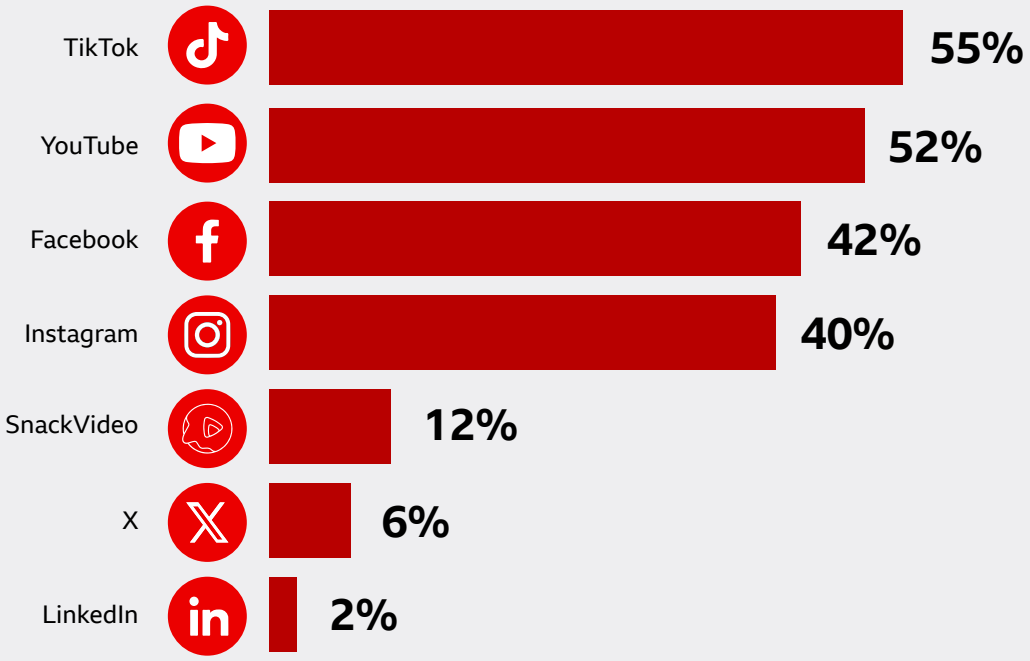


Figure 1: Daily use of social media



Question: How frequently do you use the following platform?
Base: All respondents (n=5,036)

Among social media platforms, TikTok is now the most frequently visited (55%), followed by YouTube (52%), Facebook (42%), and Instagram (40%). The user base of TikTok spans across regions and is predominantly urban (58%) and female (64%). Similarly, Facebook is dominated by urban audiences (45%) and women (44%). Snack Video, a new alternative to TikTok, is particularly popular with those living in Papua and those in the upper-middle socio-economic segment. Instagram is mainly used by the younger generation, 16-34 year olds (67%). YouTube is particularly popular in Bali Nusra, Papua and the highest socio-economic group.

What are the digital literacy levels of different populations?

When looking at how digitally literate[1] people are, urban and younger age groups have higher literacy, and older age groups have a lower level. Interestingly, there is little gender difference in digital literacy, with equal proportions of men and women in the high literacy group and men slightly more likely to show lower levels of digital literacy than women.



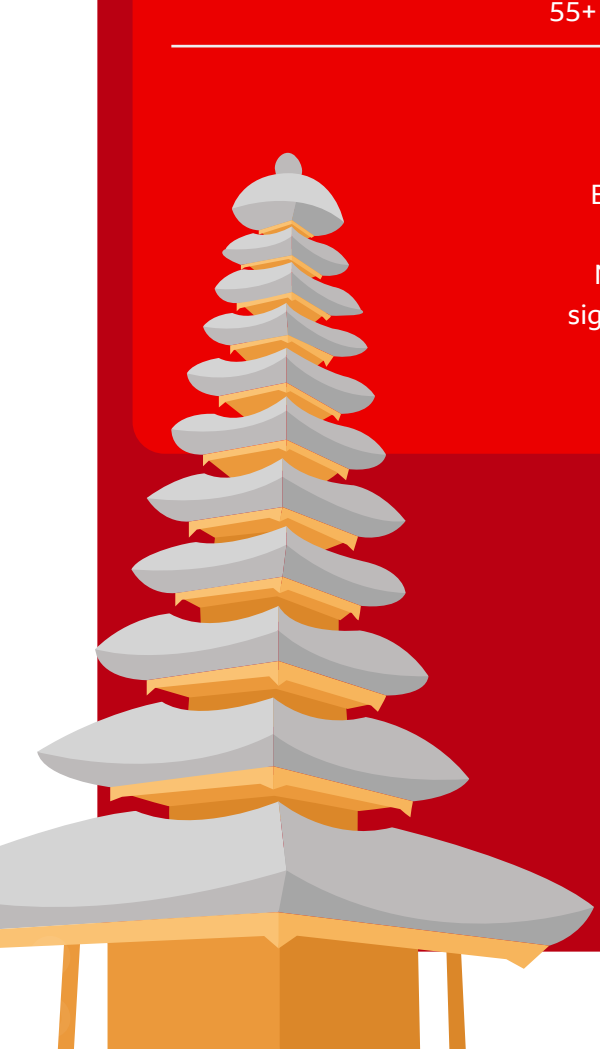
[1]At BBC Media Action, we use the overarching term Digital and Media Literacy (DML) to describe the literacy we need to access, understand, navigate and engage critically with media, information and technology, and the skills we need to use media and digital technologies to communicate with others.

Table 1. Digital Literacy Level

		Low	Medium	High
Total in survey sample		19%	54%	27%
By location				
	Urban	50%	58%	74%
	Rural	50%	42%	26%
By gender		Low	Medium	High
	Female	45%	51%	49%
	Male	55%	49%	51%
By age				
	16-24	6%	21%	33%
	25-24	9%	24%	32%
	35-44	18%	28%	22%
	45-55	35%	22%	11%
	55+	32%	5%	2%

Base: All respondents (n=5,036)

Note: Blue highlight indicates a significant difference from the total





What are their trusted sources of information?

People tend to place greater trust in Indonesian sources of information compared to foreign sources. Religious leaders and experts, such as scientists, doctors, and academics, play a significant role in providing credible information that the audience finds convincing.

Table 2. Top 5 trusted sources for information

Trusted Sources	Total	Urban	Rural
Ordinary citizens	44%	40%	49%
Religious leaders/groups	37%	34%	43%
Experts (scientists, doctors, academia)	30%	34%	24%
Indonesian journalists/bloggers	22%	26%	16%
Local or national politicians/political parties	10%	11%	8%

Base: All respondents (n=5,036)

Note: Blue highlight indicates a significant difference from the total



How do Indonesians perceive the trustworthiness of news outlets?

The majority trust Indonesian media for fact-based reporting and feel that Indonesian media disseminates accurate information and holds power to account. In addition, while the majority perceive the media as providing reliable information, trust is higher in media coverage of climate and environmental issues compared to media's reporting of government policies related to foreign affairs. Moreover, social listening indicated that political parties and foreign influence are the key factors perceived to negatively impact the credibility of the media – these areas were among the most discussed online during the period analysed. In the qualitative interviews, respondents argued that the media is more heavily influenced by the interests of the government and political parties than foreign countries.

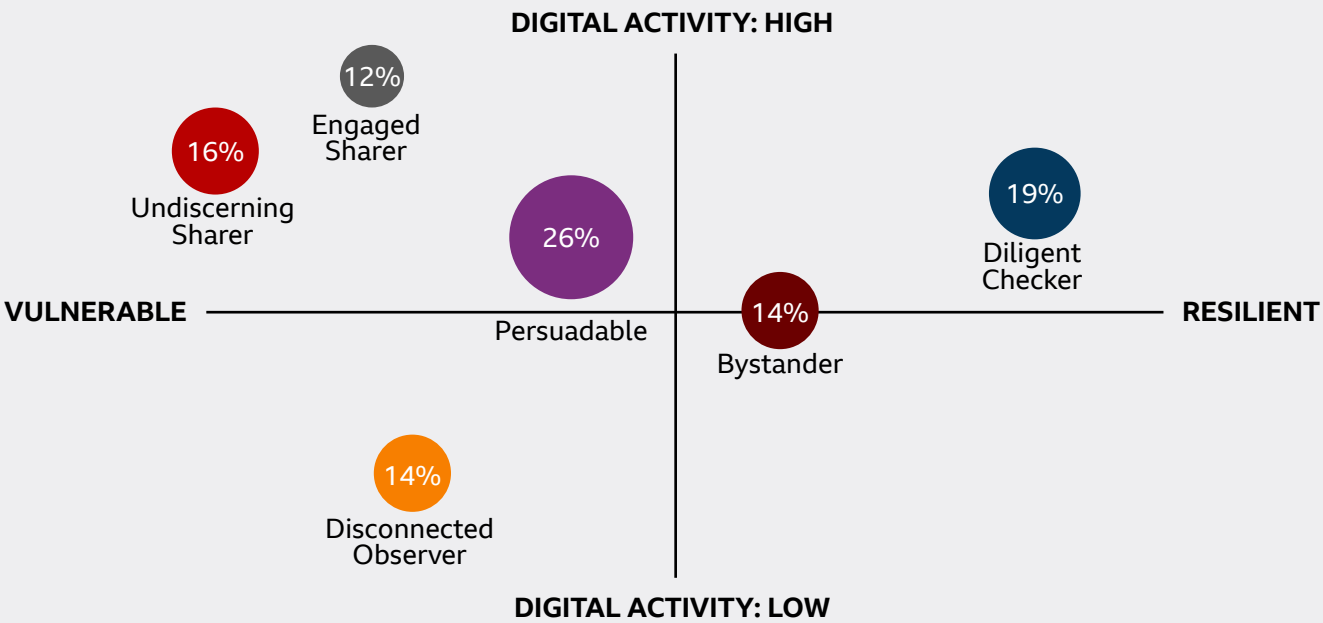
How does disinformation spread in the digital environment?

Our analysis focused on the topics of international and domestic politics, climate issues and governance. Top posts and accounts discussing these topics were analysed to understand general trends and aimed to identify examples of mis- and disinformation. Substantial online discussions focused on international politics and conflict, with a particular focus on the conflict in Gaza. More than any other topic assessed, this clearly resonated with Indonesian audiences and led to massive online engagement, a trend that also played out in other countries around the world. While domestic issues were discussed less prominently online, alleged corruption of political figures was one of the key areas of discussion, though instances of social unrest also drove some discussion.

How do people with different profiles engage with information?

The survey data was analysed to understand the ways in which people in Indonesia engage with information, what drives their potential vulnerability to information disorder and opportunities to communicate with them effectively. Using cluster analysis, the data was segmented into six discrete segments.

Chart 1. Clusters of audience segments by digital activity and resilience



The chart above shows how the segments vary in their digital activity (derived from scores on digital literacy and online engagement) and how resilient they are to information disorder (derived from scores on personal beliefs, content sharing behaviour and their perceived risk to mis/disinformation). The profiles of each segment below outline their characteristics; any significant demographic differences to those observed in the overall population; their needs from interventions aimed at shifting their behaviour and how to reach them effectively.

Audience Segmentation: Profile



Undiscerning Sharer (16%)

I share quickly, I don't see the need to check.

This group prioritises sharing information quickly over verifying its accuracy. While they are moderately concerned about misinformation, they are confident in their ability to spot it and show little interest in learning how to handle it. They are one of the least educated groups and more likely to live in Java and Sumatra than the smaller islands.



Engaged sharer (12%)

I use social media a lot and I share things quickly. I believe a lot of what I see and am confident that I know what is accurate.

This group is highly digitally literate, engaging actively with content on social media. They are somewhat open to conspiracy theories, not very concerned about mis- and disinformation and prioritise speed over accuracy when sharing information. As one of the more educated groups, they typically over-index among the higher SEG. They are somewhat more urban, with a higher-than-average proportion hailing from Sumatra and Kalimantan, otherwise they are evenly split by gender and age.



Disconnected Observers (14%)

I don't spend much time online, I am wary of content online, I don't share things and don't trust myself to know what is accurate or not.

This group is the least active online, with low digital skills and limited access to internet and social media. They are somewhat concerned about misinformation and value checking for accuracy but lack confidence in identifying false information and aren't interested in learning how to handle it. This group watch TV a lot, with two-thirds watching it on a daily basis. They are more likely to be older, male, many living in rural areas of Java, with lower education, and greater financial vulnerability.



Persuadables (26%)

I think people need to check information for accuracy, but I feel that I can make up my mind.

Although the most conspiracy-minded, this group is highly concerned about the risks of misinformation and values accuracy over speed when sharing information. However, they are not very interested in learning how to spot misinformation, as they feel confident in their ability to recognise it. They have strong digital skills and engage with content on social media at average levels. They are slightly younger, marginally more urban, and notably more highly educated.



Bystanders (14%)

I am not concerned with mis and disinformation; I am not confident about checking data.

This group shows the least concern about misinformation, has little interest in leaming how to address it, and do not hold any strong feelings about the importance of checking the accuracy of information rather than sharing it quickly. They have average digital skills and social media engagement. Their demographic make-up matches most closely with a nationally representative profile. One of their notable characteristics is that they have less faith in Indonesian media, experts and politicians.



Diligent Checkers (19%)

I think it is important to check things for accuracy.

This group is least likely to believe in conspiracy theories and prioritises accuracy over speed when sharing information. They are concerned about misinformation but confident in their own ability to spot it, showing limited interest in learning more about it. They have average digital skills and are moderately active on social media. This group are typically more urban, more commonly from Java and better educated. This group are also more likely to trust experts, as well as Indonesian media and bloggers.

Implications

The research reveals that while digital platforms dominate Indonesia's information environment, TV remains highly popular and more trusted than social media or the internet as a source of information. Trust in international media is notably low, while trust is higher in local outlets.

Audience segmentation further revealed vulnerabilities, with key factors including low concern about mis- and disinformation, a tendency to believe in conspiracies, limited digital literacy, and a low likelihood of verifying information before sharing. These valuable insights can be used to target different segments of the Indonesian audience with contents that will bolster their resilience to information disorder, as well as to inform media and educational interventions to improve digital and media literacy.

The diligent checkers can serve as influential figures and role models for others. Meanwhile, approximately 68% of the population falls into vulnerable categories that should be the primary focus of intervention efforts. These groups include undiscerning sharers, engaged sharers, disconnected observers, and persuadables. Although the undiscerning sharers, engaged sharers, and persuadable segments are considered vulnerable, they tend to possess strong digital literacy skills. Therefore, improving access to fact-checking tools and debunking resources is a key component of necessary interventions for them. For broader vulnerable groups, a comprehensive and systemic approach is essential to strengthen societal resilience. This can be achieved through enhanced digital and media literacy initiatives aimed at empowering people to develop critical thinking abilities and to spot mis- and disinformation.

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