

# LEBANON SITUATION REPORT

A monthly situation report aimed at tackling COVID-19 rumors to debunk the "infodemic"

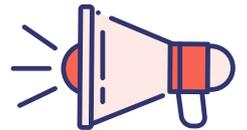
August 2022 | #6

## About RiT

Rooted in Trust is collecting, analyzing and responding to rumors in 10 countries with generous support from USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA). We focus on equipping journalists and humanitarian communicators with the tools they need in the languages they prefer, to combat rumors and misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## How we do it

We identify and analyze rumors to help humanitarian actors and health workers better inform their Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) strategies.



## Situation by the Numbers (WHO)

- Covid-19 cases reported during August 2022: **31,982**
- Total number of deaths: **10,622**
- Latest reported cases per day: **372**
- Number of quarantined: **8,192**
- Vaccine doses during August: **40,633**
- First dose: **10,988**
- Second dose: **6,767**
- Third dose: **15,887**
- Fourth dose: **6,991**

## Introduction

**According to the WHO, Lebanon is at a Level 3 of community transmission.**

The number of cases in August per day is half the number reported in July, which is likely due to people using rapid tests if they suspect any mild symptoms, rather than taking a PCR test in labs due to result speed and price, which would then be reported to the government. Awareness activities should take place again especially about rapid tests that are not always accurate and the government should take measures again in order to limit transmission and manage cases so as to avoid overwhelming the health services. High vigilance continues to be recommended with a focus on social distancing measures and increased vaccine coverage, particularly among already vulnerable population groups as well as children.



## Data Overview

In the month of August 2022, misinformation continued to spread through social media platforms in Lebanon with 102 online rumors collected by Social Media Monitors. As previously noted, rumors continue to revolve around the top sub-theme of “Long-COVID”, but this time the focus is on general long covid symptoms rather than predominantly mental health. The majority of these rumors contain notions of fear (54%).

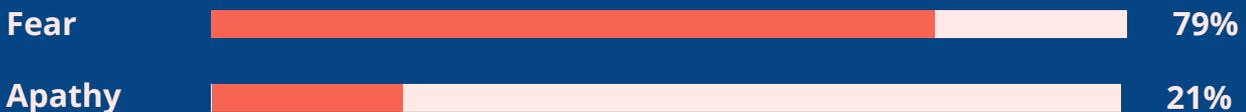
48 out of 102 rumors were related to the theme “Other Health Topics”. As a whole, the majority of the other-health related rumors revolve around the sub-theme of “Communicable diseases” and were found on either Twitter or Facebook.

Many rumors associated with “Communicable diseases” focused on the Monkeypox virus, escalating rumors about the ways of transmission, possible treatments and cures. Rumors targeting and blaming the LGBTQ+ community as being the main culprits in spreading the Monkeypox virus and newly emerging viruses are still circulating as well.

In August, a total of 130 offline rumors were collected in the Bekaa region predominantly through community meetings (77%) and focus group discussions (17%). Notably, vaccine-related offline rumors (55%) continue to be trending as observed in previous months, with 35% of the rumors mentioning that the virus kills and that the vaccine causes death two years after inoculation, and 13% mentioning that the vaccine cause miscarriages and fertility problems for both genders. Some rumors also focus on possible COVID-19 treatments such as eating herbs, flowers, lemons, and oranges, as well as gargling salt water.

The offline rumors focused on “Other Health Topics” (21%), with all of them making reference to Monkeypox and Hepatitis or what is commonly referred to as “Abu Saffar”, which can lead to death and harm the liver. Many rumors suggested drinking herbs to help reduce symptoms, while others made references to Monkeypox being only bumps on the skin like Chickenpox.

### Long-COVID Sub-theme

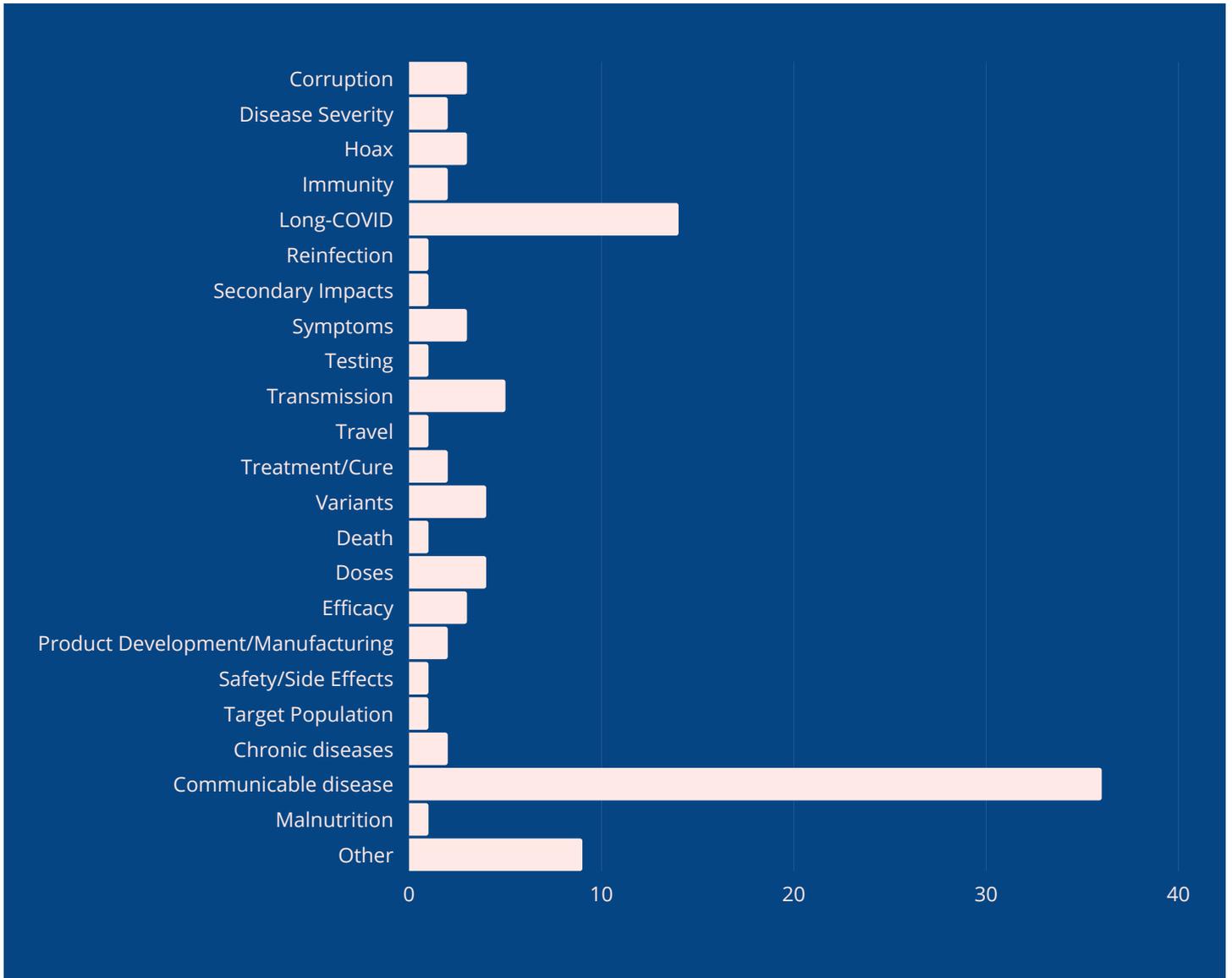


### Offline Rumors

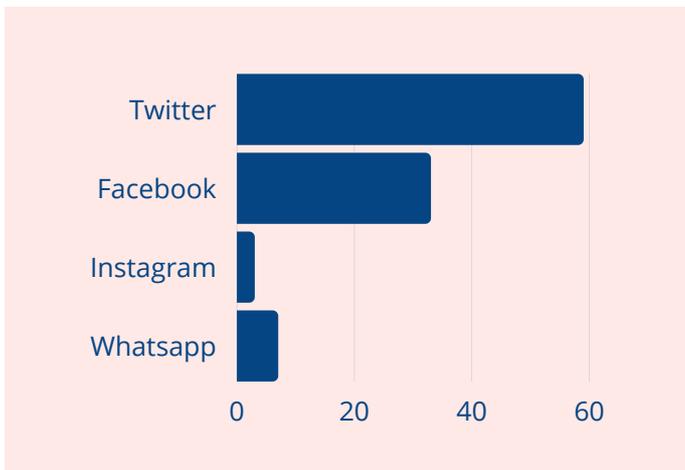


# KEY THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Total Number of Rumors Online for August 2022: **102**



## Channels



## Risk Levels



## Analysis

Compared to last month, August saw an increase in the total number of rumors (from 160 July to 232 August), with a significant increase in rumors collected offline (56 July to 130 August). While there was an increase in the total number of rumors, the types of rumors collected were less diverse than previous months'. There was less political turmoil in Lebanon this month, especially compared to August of last year, which may result in social media platforms becoming more active, allowing for more online health rumors to circulate.

We noticed a decrease in vaccine doses especially in 2nd, 3rd and 4th doses. Vaccine awareness is highly recommended in order to change attitudes and acceptance, especially within the most vulnerable communities who continually believe they will die after two years post-inoculation, and now we found some new answers in community surveys like the vaccine was created to kill the Syrian people. Lebanon's COVID-19 vaccine coverage currently stands at only 44%. Vaccine hesitancy remains a major barrier to controlling the epidemic in Lebanon.

According to the WHO, the Monkeypox outbreak has been declared a public health emergency of international concern. In August, 22 a total of 7 Monkeypox cases (5 males and 2 females) were confirmed in the country with no associated deaths. Four of those cases had recently traveled outside of Lebanon and were treated as independent cases. There is strong evidence that the Monkeypox virus may be circulating locally without cases being formally reported.

August saw an increase in the number of rumors from the sub-theme of "Communicable diseases", especially rumors about new viruses, such as the Langya and Tomato virus. This marks a clear information gap and need for further awareness on the symptoms and treatments of each virus in order to stop the confusion that is being expressed and detected in both online and offline rumors.

## Contact

### Project Manager

Evita Mouawad  
([emouawad@internews.org](mailto:emouawad@internews.org))

### For more information on the project, visit

- <https://internews.org/resource/rooted-trust-rumor-bulletins-lebanon/>  
- <https://rootedintrust.org/countries/lebanon/>