

SUDAN COMMUNITY RUMOR BULLETIN

The Sudan Rooted in Trust Project aims to address COVID-19 rumors and misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media, and through listening groups with communities impacted by conflict. This bulletin is based on an analysis of **385 posts and community feedback collected in Arabic between 9 June and 17 July 2022, from Facebook and Twitter, and through face-to-face listening groups with communities affected by conflict in South Kordofan State.** This regular collection of community insights aims to address questions and common misperceptions about COVID-19 found across Sudan. It is meant to help volunteers and field staff provide trustworthy information, and resources to help respond to their communities' concerns and information needs around COVID-19 and the vaccines.



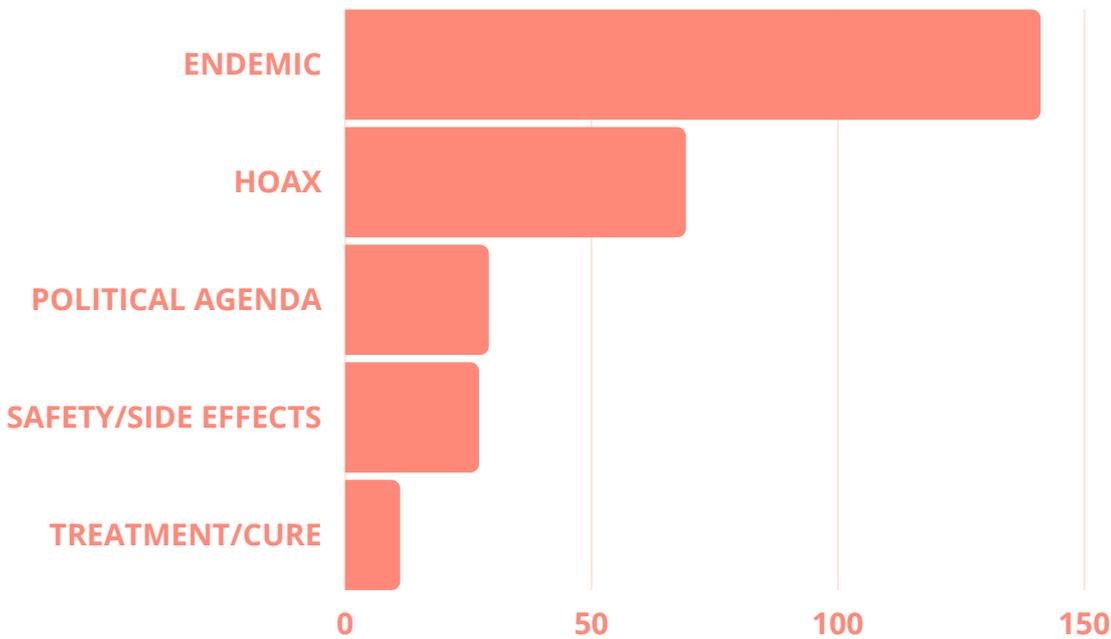
18.5%

As of 20 July 2022, Sudan has vaccinated [18.5% of its population against COVID-19, including 6,811,067 people.](#) The Ministry of Health aims to vaccinate 52% of the population by the end of 2022.



As of 20 July 2022, the Sudan's COVID-19 infection rates rose to [62,914 confirmed cases.](#)

Top COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumor Themes



38

RUMORS WERE COLLECTED FROM PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CONFLICT IN SOUTH KORDOFAN

347

RUMORS WERE COLLECTED FROM SUDANESE SOCIAL MEDIA SPACES

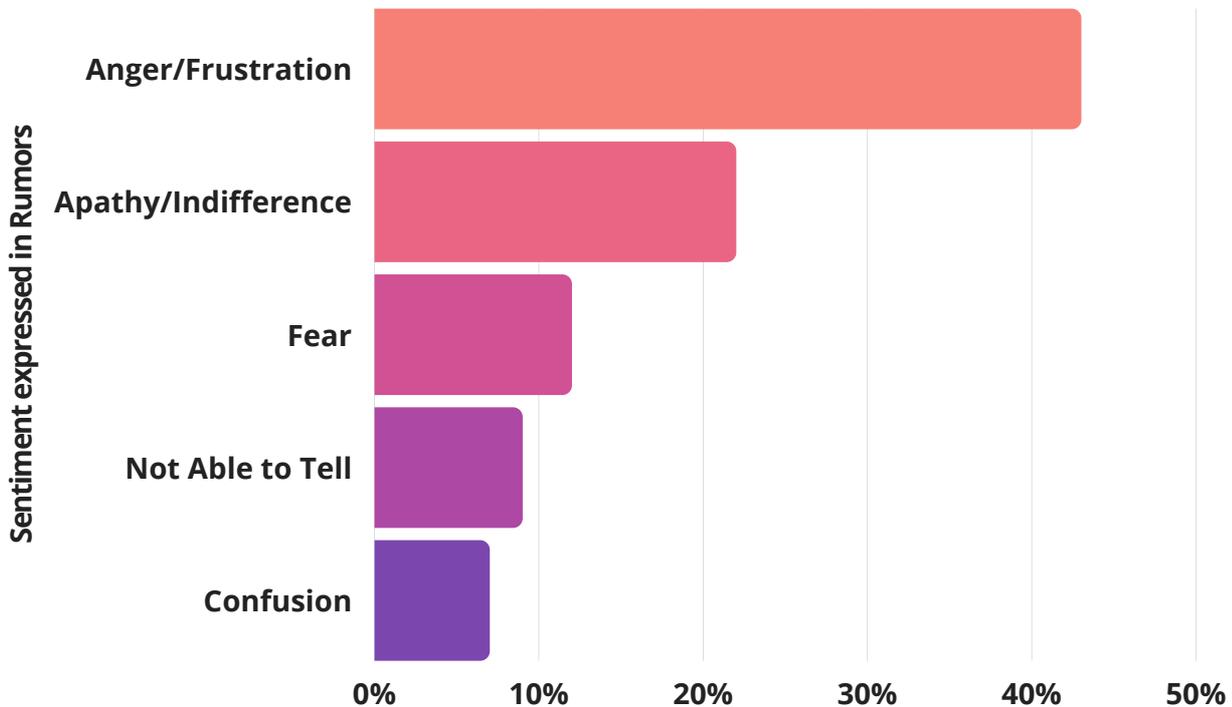
This is the thematic breakdown of 385 rumors collected in Arabic between 9 June and 17 July 2022, from Facebook and Twitter, and from communities affected by conflict in South Kordofan State.



66%

COVID-19 and Vaccine rumors shared by men on social media and listening groups in South Kordofan

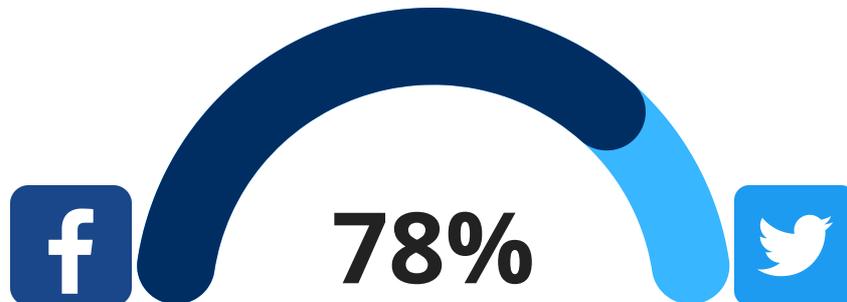
Sentiment Analysis of COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumors



This is an analysis of the emotions expressed in 385 rumors collected in Arabic, between 9 June and 17 July 2022. Internews found that 43% of the rumor data expressed feelings of anger and frustration. This was prevalent among rumors minimizing the effects of COVID-19 saying it's over and that we should move on to other important issues, and also rumors calling COVID-19 a hoax and a means for population control, and political and financial gain.

COVID-19 and Vaccine Rumors on Social Media

Platform breakdown based on the analysis of 347 rumors collected in Arabic, between 9 June and 17 July 2022



RUMOR #1

“There are people with diabetes who took the vaccine and died”

Woman - Age: 26-35 - South Kordofan



Dr Tasneem Tajelsir, COVAX National Consultant for Adverse Events Following Immunization at the Ministry of Health, refutes this rumor, saying: “There is no evidence or cases confirming that people with diabetes have died due to the COVID-19 vaccine.” She explains that people with diabetes are at a higher risk of experiencing severe illness and even death due to a COVID-19 infection.

Dr Tajelsir reveals: “In fact, COVID-related deaths are higher for those with diabetes, in comparison to those without co-morbidities, such as diabetes.” The Ministry of Health continues to prioritize and recommend that people with chronic disease, such as diabetes and blood pressure, seek a COVID-19 vaccination for maximum protection. In Sudan, 7.7% of adults are diagnosed with diabetes, and the number is expected to reach 10.8% by 2035 as reported by the World Health Organization.

According to the WHO’s Dr Gojka Roglic, COVID-19 vaccinations are recommended for diabetic people as they are a priority group because of the health risks that come with a COVID-19 infection as they are at a higher risk of developing severe illness that could lead to death. In addition, Dr Roglic stresses that the COVID-19 vaccines are both safe and effective.

According to the International Diabetes Federation, people with diabetes can protect themselves against the COVID-19 virus by following general preventative measures, such as washing your hands with water and soap (when available), physical distancing when in public places, and maintaining blood sugar control along with a healthy lifestyle, including a healthy diet and regular exercise.

RUMOR #2

“There are pregnant women who took the vaccine and had miscarriages”

Woman - Age: 36-45 - South Kordofan



Dr Tasneem Tajelsir, COVAX National Consultant for Adverse Events Following Immunization at the Ministry of Health, confirms: “There are no reported cases of pregnant women having a miscarriage because of the COVID-19 vaccine.” She stresses that the vaccines are safe and necessary for pregnant women, as “pregnancy increases the risk of developing severe illness and death due to a COVID-19 infection.”

According to Dr Mena Nabil, Sudanese Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Fertility Specialist, pregnant women who contract the COVID-19 virus are more likely to experience severe symptoms than non-pregnant women.

Getting infected with the COVID-19 virus while pregnant can cause health problems such as premature births. Hence, it is recommended that pregnant women take the COVID-19 vaccine, especially if they live in crowded settings or attend social gatherings in poorly ventilated spaces where they are at a higher risk of catching the virus.

The World Health Organization recommends pregnant women take the COVID-19 vaccine as it provides strong protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. It also states that many pregnant women around the world have taken the vaccine and no evidence of health deterioration has been recorded.



RUMOR #3

“Vaccination for pregnant women can cause birth defects”

Man - Age: 36-45 - South Kordofan

Dr Tasneem Tajelsir, COVAX National Consultant for Adverse Events Following Immunization at the Ministry of Health, concludes: “There are no reported cases of babies being born with birth defects because of the vaccine.”

Dr Yaqoub Mohamed Abdelmagid, Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Fertility Consultant, also says that there is no evidence to suggest that taking the COVID-19 vaccine, before, and during pregnancy leads to an increase in miscarriages or birth deformities or defects. He recommends taking the COVID-19 vaccines and emphasizes that this is especially important for women during pregnancy, post-pregnancy, postpartum and lactating periods.

According to Dr Ozge Tuncalp, World Health Organization expert on maternal and perinatal health, pregnant women are at a higher risk of getting very sick if they contract the COVID-19 virus, and of delivering the baby prematurely. Therefore, getting vaccinated can help reduce the dangers that may face women or their babies during pregnancy.

If you are planning on getting pregnant or are pregnant with your baby or have just had a baby and you have some concerns about getting a COVID-19 vaccination, please contact your doctor or [call the Ministry of Health pandemic hotline at: 9090](#). Healthcare workers can help address your questions and concerns about COVID-19 vaccinations.



RUMOR #4

“Corona disease is made by the vaccination industry, to prevent people from having children”

Man - Age: 46-60 - South Kordofan

COVID-19 is caused by a virus called Sars-CoV-2 which is part of the Coronaviruses family. According to the World Health Organization, Coronaviruses, including COVID-19, are zoonotic. Meaning the virus is transmitted between humans and animals. Hence, it is not a man-made virus.

Dr Mena Nabil, Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Fertility Specialist, states that it is not correct that the COVID-19 vaccines can cause infertility. He explains that the vaccines have no effect on fertility, and this is backed by countless studies conducted around the vaccine. In addition, Dr Nabil reveals that getting infected with the COVID-19 virus can temporarily affect fertility.

Therefore, being vaccinated protect us from the harmful symptoms and side effects that the virus can cause.

In addition, Dr Muna Abdelaziz, UK-based Sudanese Public Health Director, says that fertility can be affected by other health factors such as stress, malnutrition, diabetes, and urinary tract infections. Pregnant and lactating women, and those looking to get pregnant, can learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines by referring to Dr Mena Nabil’s interview where he tackles common COVID-19 misconceptions around the vaccine. You can also refer to Dr Yaqoub Mohamed Abdelmagid’s interview where he speaks about the importance of taking the vaccine while pregnant.

RUMOR #5

"Vaccines are made for non-Muslims and we are Muslims"

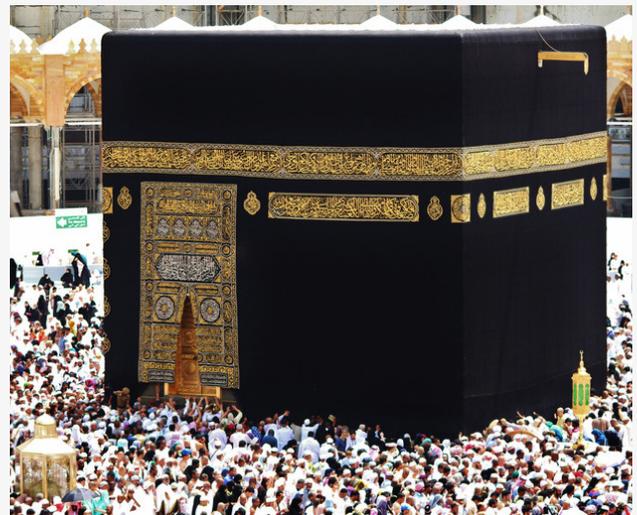
Man - Age: 46-60 - South Kordofan

According to Sheikh Eltayeb Abdelaziz Elzain, Imam of Sheikh Dafallah Furgan Mosque in Alrimela, Khartoum, Islamic teachings advise that we should take all the necessary steps to protect ourselves from harm while placing our trust in God. This is considered an act of worship, to take all the necessary measures to persevere in life, such as doing your best to provide food and shelter for your family or seeking medical treatment to help in your recovery from an illness. Sheikh Eltayeb emphasizes that we should not put ourselves in risky situations that are preventable. He explains that we should take the necessary steps to maintain good health, like following the preventative measures during the pandemic. He also recommends that we seek a COVID-19 vaccination to protect ourselves and our community from getting sick with the virus.

In addition, Sheikh Hashim Elriyah Elsanhuri, Imam of Eltantawi Mosque in Almulazmeen, Omdurman, emphasizes the importance of preserving oneself from illness and harm in accordance to Islamic teachings. He also explains that it is permissible to take the vaccine even if you are fasting as it does not break your fast.

Like Sheikh Eltayeb, Sheikh Hashim underscores the important of taking the COVID-19 vaccine to help keep our communities safe and healthy. People all over the world have received COVID-19 vaccinations, including people practicing different religions, as the disease can infect anyone regardless of religion, race or nationality. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, which is the center for the annual sacred Islamic pilgrimage of Hajj, over 26 million people have received a COVID-19 vaccination.

We all have a part in keeping our communities safe by practicing the precautions set out to protect us from getting an infection, such as wearing a face mask or covering, practicing physical distancing in public and crowded places, and washing our hands with soap and water.



RUMOR #6

“How’s the hair? .. I suddenly had my hair plucked, became short, falling and breaking, I went to the doctor and he asked me if I had Corona in the past 6 months, and I said yes. He told me it could be because of it (COVID-19)”

Woman - Age Unknown - Facebook

“Did it affect your nails, girls? My nails has been cracking for a couple of days now, I cut one and the other one breaks. I am typing this with dents in my nails now. I do not know if I’m being delusional or if COVID does affect it. Please advise me”

Woman - Age Unknown - Facebook

Dr Mohamed Qurashi, Sudanese Dermatologist, explains that COVID-19 may cause hair fall. He says, “This can happen months after recovery, and it may last for 6-9 months, after which the hair will be back to normal”. Dr Qurashi also adds that there are several other factors that can lead to hair loss, such as psychological trauma, stress, anxiety, and severe illness.

The American Academy of Dermatology Association reports that some people have noticed substantial hair loss after recovering from COVID-19. Hair loss can occur after a fever or illness, and one of the common symptoms of COVID-19 is high fever. However, doctors describe this hair loss as “shedding”, this is when too many hairs enter the telogen. Merriam-Webster Dictionary website, defines telogen as: “the resting phase of the hair growth cycle”. Shedding can be caused by fever and other factors such as stress.

Hair shedding can last from 6 to 9 months before it stops. Then, your hair will grow back to normal.

According to Cleveland Clinic, a COVID-19 infection can affect your nails as a sign that the infection stressed your body or as a symptom. “COVID-19 nails” can appear in three forms, it can show as white lines running horizontally on your nails (Beau’s lines) and it feels like a dent, as a red half-moon shape, or as white stripes that run across your nails (Mee’s lines) but unlike Beau’s lines, they’re smooth.

It is worth noting that these symptoms are not permanent, and they go away as your nails regrow, so it can take up to 6 months. Furthermore, Dr Qurashi also adds that there are many skin diseases that may affect your nails and cause them to break, such as eczema and psoriasis.

RUMOR #7

“The Corona vaccine has been stopped in most Arab countries and there is no vaccine or whatever”

Man - Age Unknown - Twitter

“Anyone who is not traveling, there is no need to take the vaccine”

Woman - Age Unknown - Facebook

COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed across the globe and in Arab countries as well. According to the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Health, the vaccine is available for people to take and they can register for it online. As well in Qatar, you can book an appointment to get a COVID-19 vaccination. Furthermore, the vaccine is also available in all Arab countries, for example, people continue to get vaccinated in Saudi Arabia. As of 18 July 2022, globally over 5 billion people have received at least one vaccination dose; 4 percent of these people live in the Middle East.

Getting infected with COVID-19 can have serious complications, which can lead to hospitalization, and even death. Some people may develop long-COVID as some of the symptoms may persist or return - even after recovery - for at least 2 months, such as fatigue, shortness of breath, and cognitive problems. One of the most effective and reliable ways that we can protect ourselves, in addition to following recommended health measures, is to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Since COVID-19 is a global pandemic, and cases are being reported daily all over the world, including in Sudan, the risk of contracting the virus remains whether we travel or remain in Sudan.

Vaccinations are not and should not be limited to travelers, as they are our best defense against the virus, and provide ample protection against COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be safe for use on adults and children, serious side effects from taking the vaccine are very rare and the benefits outweigh the risks. Therefore, doctors around the world continue to recommend that we take the vaccine to protect ourselves and our communities.

It is our social responsibility to keep our communities safe and protect each other against serious viruses, such as COVID-19, and not just when it is required for us to do so.





RUMOR #8

“Corona is over. People in Northern state, don’t get vaccinated”

Woman - Age Unknown - Facebook

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over. So far, there are more than 570 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 6 million deaths reported globally. Cases are being reported daily, both globally and in Sudan. So far, 62,914 COVID-19 cases have been reported from all parts of Sudan, including Northern State. According to the Ministry of Health reports, so far 187,000 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Northern State.

To fight this global pandemic and protect ourselves, we should follow the preventative measures set by the Ministry of Health. This includes

wearing a face mask or face covering when in public and practicing physical distancing when in public and crowded places. Public health responders also recommend that we get vaccinated against COVID-19, which is both safe and effective in protecting us from severe illness caused by the virus, as well as preventing COVID-related death.

If you have any concerns or questions about COVID-19 or the vaccines, [please call the Ministry of Health COVID-19 pandemic hotline at: 9090.](#)

What are Rumors?

Rumors are currently circulating stories or reports of uncertain truth collected from first-hand sources within the community which could take the shape of a question, criticism, or general comments on a situation or topic. We should also note that rumors can be tricky to tackle because they might carry some element of truth.

RESOURCES

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT COVID-19 AND THE VACCINES

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WWW.EMRO.WHO.INT/AR

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
FACEBOOK PAGE
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FMOH.SUDAN

SUDAN HEALTH OBSERVATORY
SHO - SUDAN HEALTH OBSERVATORY | HOME



COVID-19 Hotline - Serving all areas of Sudan: 9090

How Are Rumors Collected?

Questions, comments, and misconceptions about COVID-19 were collected by Internews' analysts, who compiled and assessed feedback gathered from Sudanese social media and through face-to-face listening groups in South Kordofan state. The rumors, perceptions, and misinformation identified have been assessed to be the most prevalent or damaging to the health response. The selection was based on the level of engagement and its potential impact on the community.



We welcome your feedback, questions, and suggestions.
Please contact:

Mustafa Omer - Data Analyst - momer@internews.org