

SUDAN COVID-19 VACCINE RUMORS

The Rooted in Trust Sudan Project aims to address COVID-19 rumors, perceptions, and misinformation by collecting and analyzing rumors found on Sudanese social media and through face-to-face listening groups. This bulletin is based on an analysis of **205 COVID-19 vaccine rumors** collected in **Arabic and Angasna** between **18 July and 9 August 2022**, from **Facebook and Twitter**, and through **listening groups with communities affected by conflict and displacement in Al-Gedaref State, Blue Nile, Central Darfur, East Darfur, Kassala, North Darfur, Red Sea, South Darfur, South Kordofan, and West Darfur States.**



77 Vaccine rumors were shared by displaced people living in Abu-Shouk, Alneim, Alsalam, Ardamata, Dabanga, Dairang, El-Azazah, El-Shaheed Afandi, Kalma, Khamsa Dagaig, Morny, Shaq Tabaldi and Sharg Elniel Camps

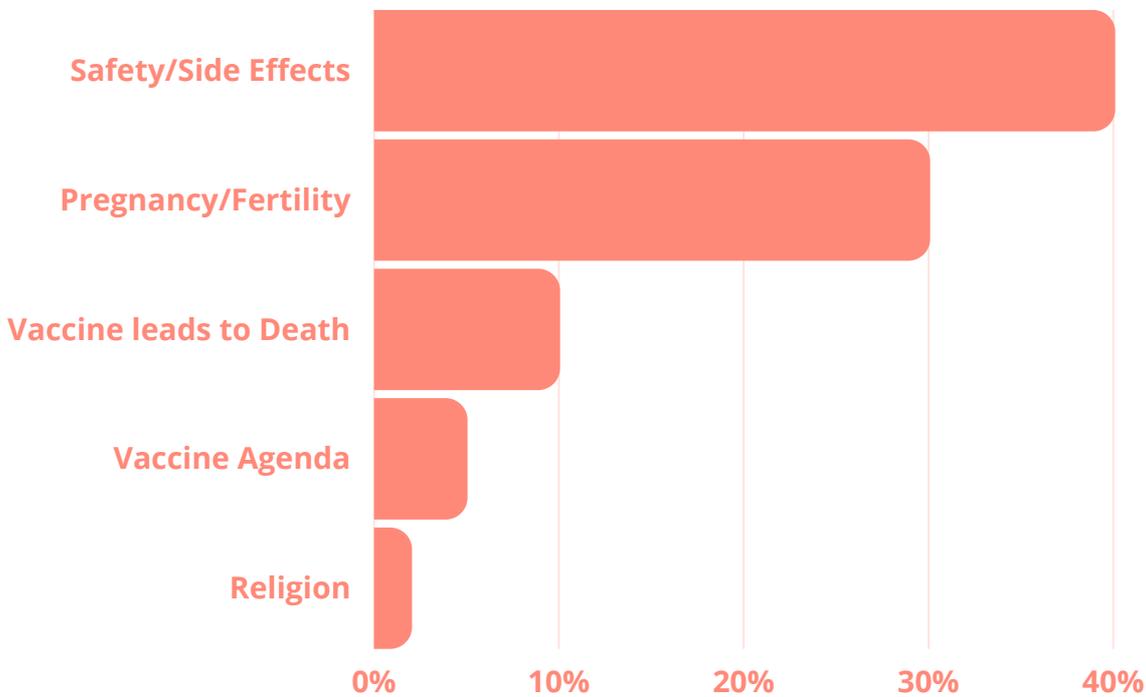


So far in Sudan, as of 30 May 2022, **4,536,964 people** are fully vaccinated, and **6,651,268 people** have received one vaccination dose.



As of 26 August 2022, the Sudan's COVID-19 infection rates rose to **63,173 confirmed cases** and **4,961 deaths.**

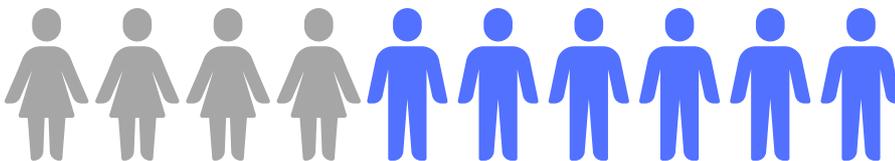
Top COVID-19 Vaccine Rumor Themes



189
RUMORS
WERE
COLLECTED
THROUGH
LISTENING
GROUPS

16
RUMORS
WERE
COLLECTED
FROM
SUDANESE
SOCIAL
MEDIA
SPACES

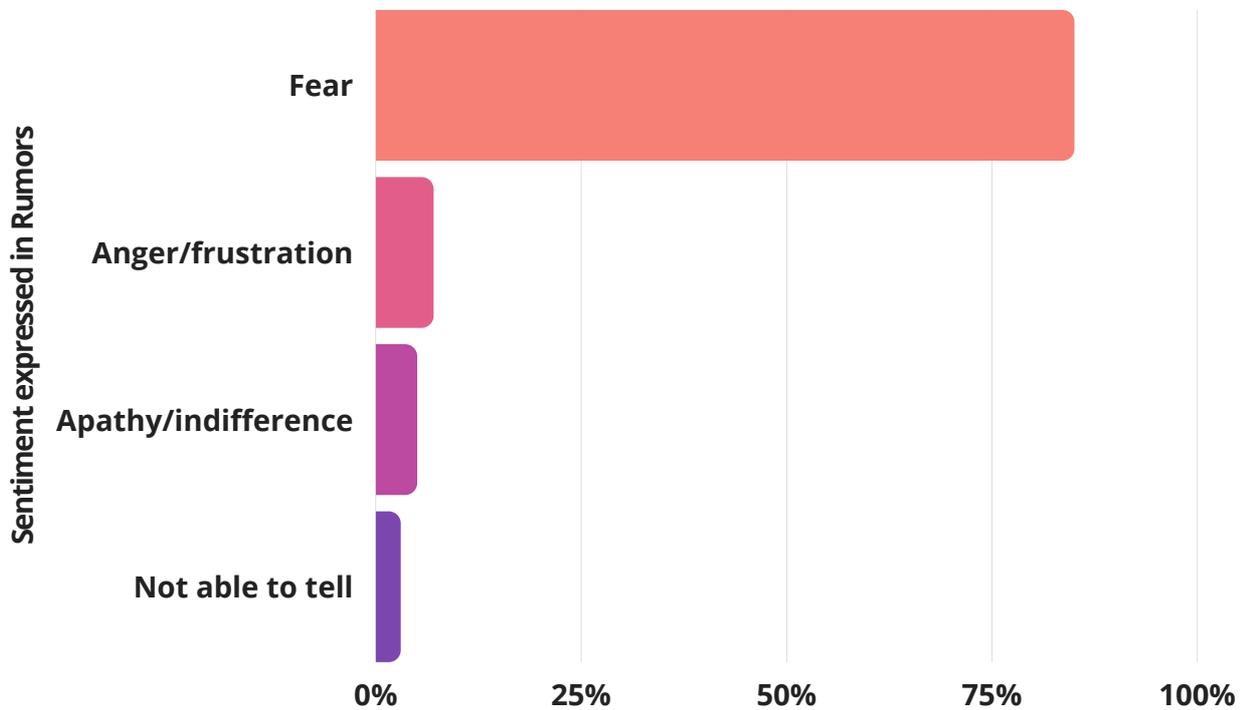
This is the thematic breakdown of 205 rumors collected between 18 July and 9 August 2022, from Facebook and Twitter, and from communities affected by conflict and displacement in 10 states. Vaccine safety and effectiveness continue to be a community concern.



57%

COVID-19 Vaccine rumors shared by men on social media and during listening groups

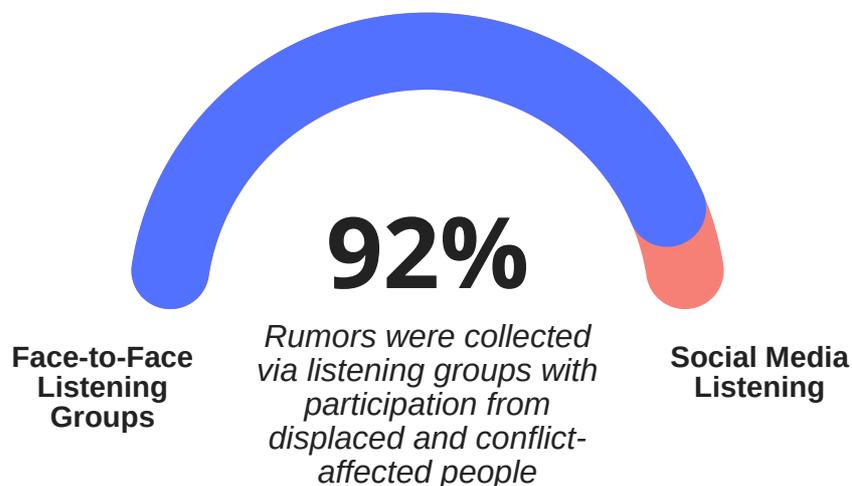
Sentiment Analysis of COVID-19 Vaccine Rumors



This is an analysis of the emotions expressed in 205 rumors collected in Arabic and Angasna, between 18 July and 9 August 2022. Internews found that 85% of the COVID-19 vaccine rumors expressed fear. People expressed fear of the vaccines side effects, vaccines impact on fertility and pregnancy, vaccines being harmful to Muslims, and vaccines resulting in death.

COVID-19 Vaccine Rumor Sources

Rumor source breakdown based on the analysis of 205 rumors collected in Arabic and Angasna, between 18 July to 9 August 2022



RUMOR #1

“The Corona injection is intended to kill the residents of the camps”

Woman - Age: 26-35 - East Darfur - Alneem Camp



Listening Group in Alneem IDP Camp in East Darfur

The COVID-19 vaccine has been proven to be a safe and effective way of protecting ourselves against infection. The COVID-19 vaccines go through rigorous testing before being approved for public use. The vaccine has been distributed to countries all over the world. According to the World Health Organization, more than six billion people have at least received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, such as people living in the Africa, Gulf region, Europe and the US.

Dr Layla Hamad Elnile, Head of the Response Department at Health Emergency and Epidemic Control at the Ministry of Health, says: “The same COVID-19 vaccines used in East Darfur, are used in all other Darfur states and all over Sudan, there is no difference. All the standards and procedures in managing the vaccines are the same whether in Darfur, or other parts of the country.

These vaccines have been used in other countries before coming to Sudan and are assessed daily to ensure they are safe and effective for public use. Anyone that experiences any side effect following vaccination should report it to the nearest vaccination center or call the national pandemic hotline at 9090.”

In Sudan, COVAX facility—which is a worldwide initiative aimed at providing equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines along with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF—is responsible for vaccine safety and making sure that COVID-19 immunization is available for anyone who would want to get vaccinated. Displaced communities are some of the priority groups for the Ministry of Health, as they are more vulnerable to an infection due to congested living conditions.

RUMOR #2

*"Corona injection weakens ova"
Man - Age: 36-45 - East Darfur - Shaq Tabaldi Camp*



The World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Sudanese Ministry of Health state that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe for both men and women and are effective in protecting us against the COVID-19 virus. The vaccines are especially important for women who are pregnant or want to get pregnant, as they are at a higher risk of developing severe symptoms from COVID-19.

Mohamed Salah Eldeen Hamid, Director General of Quality Development and Accreditation Directorate at the Ministry of Health says: "Billions of people have been vaccinated from around the world, and of those, many are having children and expanding their families. Childbearing has not

stopped even with COVID-19 vaccinations. These types of statements linking the vaccine with fertility are unfounded and irresponsible, they create fear and push people from getting vaccinated. The vaccines are meant to protect the people we love, and preserve life."

There are no studies that suggest the vaccine can weaken the ova, or cause infertility, or lead to miscarriages or birth defects. In fact, having a COVID-19 infection can put you at a higher risk if you are pregnant. Doctors strongly recommend that pregnant women seek a COVID-19 vaccination to reduce the risk of developing severe illness or complications during pregnancy, which could lead to miscarriages and even death for both the mother and baby.



RUMOR #3

"The vaccine is a tool and a means to instill infertility in Muslims"

Woman - Age: 46-60 - Blue Nile

According to UNICEF, COVID-19 vaccines are safe for use in both men and women, and they have proven to be effective and safe. So far, over 5 billion people have been vaccinated against COVID-19, including Muslims, Christians, Jews, and many more. COVID-19 vaccines do not cause infertility or sterility among men nor women. However, a COVID-19 infection can have a temporary negative effect on fertility.

The American National Institute of Health conducted a study looking at fertility amongst men and women who took the COVID-19 vaccine and are trying to conceive, and men and women who did not take the COVID-19 vaccine. There was no evidence to suggest that the men and women who took the COVID-19 vaccine are any less fertile than their counterparts. However, recent infection with COVID-19 has **temporarily** caused lower fertility.

According to Cleveland Clinic, being infected with COVID-19 while pregnant can result in preterm births, low birth weight, and still births. For men, a study conducted in 2022 found that "conception was down by 18% in the three months after the male partner was infected with COVID-19". It is important to note that this effect is **temporary** and within a few months it goes back to normal.

The Ministry of Health continues to recommend COVID-19 vaccinations because they can protect us from developing severe illness from the virus and prevent COVID-related death. COVID-19 vaccinations are highly recommended for those who are thinking about conceiving. You can learn more about the COVID-19 vaccines by visiting the World Health Organization's website.

RUMOR #4

“After awhile the vaccine causes you to go blind”

Man - Age: 26-35 - Blue Nile

There are no studies suggesting that the COVID-19 vaccine can cause blindness. Temporary common side effects following COVID-19 vaccination reported by the World Health Organization include headache, fatigue, fever, pain at the injection site, chills, and diarrhea.

Mohamed Salah Eeldin Hamid, Director General of Quality Development and Accreditation Directorate at the Ministry of Health says, “I was amongst the first people to take the COVID-19 vaccine in Sudan, and I still have perfect vision. The COVID-19 vaccine does not have any impacts on a vaccinated person’s vision.”

The vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective in protecting us against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

Since the development of the COVID-19 vaccines, more than 12,409,086,286 vaccine doses have been administered all over the world.

However, you can still catch a COVID-19 infection even if you are vaccinated so it is important to keep practicing preventative measures, such as wearing a face mask or covering when sick or in a crowded space, ensuring your home is well-ventilated by opening doors and windows, maintaining a physical distance of at least one meter from others, and washing your hands with water and soap (if available).

If you are considering getting vaccinated against COVID-19 but have fears or questions about side effects, you can contact the Ministry of Health national hotline at: 9090.





Listening Group in Ullu, Blue Nile State

RUMOR #5

“The vaccine leads to kidney failure”

Man - Age: 19-25 - Blue Nile

There are no studies that state that the COVID-19 vaccine can cause kidney failure. Dr Muna Abdelaziz, Sudanese UK-based Public Health Director, states that there are many reasons for renal failure, such as long-term conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Also, stress, malnutrition and dehydration can worsen your health. Hence, keeping a healthy diet throughout the pandemic, while practicing the preventative measures and seeking a COVID-19 vaccination when available, can help protect you against the virus.

Dr Tasneem Tajelsir, COVAX National Consultant for Adverse Events Following Immunization, clarifies: “Renal impairment and failure are normally caused by irrational use of medication, like people misusing anesthetics without guidance from a medical doctor. However, there are no reported cases of kidney failure following COVID-19 vaccination in Sudan.”

The American National Kidney Foundation, American Society of Nephrology, and American Society of Transplantation have recommended people with kidney disease or those who have had a kidney transplant take the COVID-19 vaccine as they are at a higher risk of becoming severely ill if they catch a COVID-19 infection.

If you have kidney disease it is important to consider seeking a COVID-19 vaccination. If you have any concerns, you can contact your doctor as they can provide you with the best practices to protect yourself against the virus. It is also important to follow the preventative measures even if you are vaccinated as people with kidney disease “may not have the same level of protection from COVID-19 as other people”. To speak with a healthcare worker, please call the national health hotline at 9090.



RUMOR #6

“Pulmonologists said that there’s no Corona anymore, it ended. In order to travel I need to get vaccinated and do a test, why?”

Woman - Age: Unknown - Facebook

COVID-19 is not over, and cases are being reported all over the world, including in Sudan. As of 26 August 2022, there have been 596,873,121 confirmed cases globally, and 63,173 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Sudan.

According to the Ministry of Health, as of 2 August, 2022, Sudan has lifted all COVID-19 travel restrictions while maintaining globally agreed upon health requirements. This is important to monitor the global pandemic situation and it makes it easier to track mutants or variants of the virus.

It is very important to acknowledge the existence of the ongoing pandemic to protect ourselves and our communities, as such statements could discourage more people from following the recommended preventative measures, which contribute to more people getting infected with the deadly COVID-19 virus. We should refrain from sharing rumors as they can be life-threatening in some situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

RUMOR #7

*“The vaccine works to reduce the immunity of young men and reduce sperm count”
Woman - Age: 19-25 - East Darfur*

A study by JAMA network looked at possible negative effects from the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) on sperm count and found that there was no significant decrease among the 45 men who participated in the study.

It is important to note that one of the factors that could affect sperm count is high fever, and since high fever is one of the symptoms of a COVID-19 infection, getting infected with the virus may affect sperm count **temporarily**.

Also, Dr Tasneem Tajelsir, COVAX National Consultant for Adverse Events Following Immunization, concludes: “In Sudan, there no reports of COVID-19 vaccines impacting sperm count in men, and there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the vaccines decrease fertility in both men and women.”

Dr Paul A. Offit, an American pediatrician specializing in infectious diseases working in the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, notes that none of the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines weaken your immune system, in fact it strengthens your immune system by giving you the antibodies that your body needs to fight off the severe side effects of being infected with the COVID-19 virus which could be fatal.



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 with displaced people and communities impacted by conflict. 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:

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