

LEBANON SITUATION REPORT

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

September 2022 | #7

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 September 2022: **5,839**
- Total number of deaths: **10,674**
- Number of quarantined: **1,717**
- Vaccine doses during August: **26,047**
- First dose: **7,710**
- Second dose: **5,691**
- Third dose: **9,903**
- Fourth dose: **2,743**

Introduction

According to the WHO, Lebanon remains at a Level 3 of community transmission. The number of daily reported cases in September decreased to zero cases per day, which is likely due to people perceiving COVID-19 testing to be less of a priority amidst Lebanon's many crises or only using rapid tests, which are cheaper and faster than PCR tests that are reported to the government. The government should continue to take measures 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.



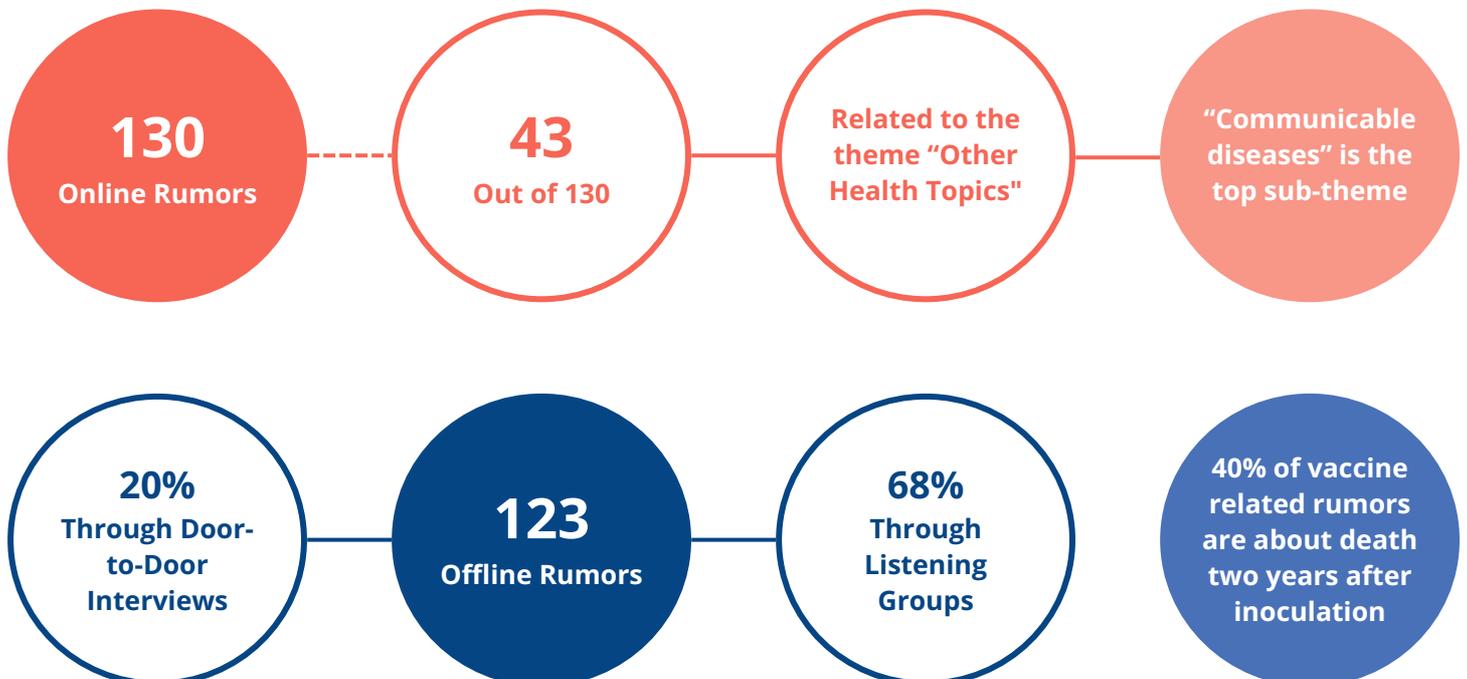
Data Overview

In the month of September 2022, misinformation continued to spread through social media platforms in Lebanon with **130 online rumors** collected by Social Media Monitors. Unlike previous months that only saw “Long-COVID” as the top sub-theme, September saw an equal number of rumors in relation to the sub-themes of “Long-COVID”, “Treatment/Cure”, as well as “Variants”. COVID-19’s long-term effects on the brain were regularly referenced in rumors. Vitamin D and regular rinsing of the nasal cavities were frequently mentioned in rumors for treating COVID-19. 43 out of 130 online rumors were related to the theme “Other Health Topics” where the top-sub theme continues to be “Communicable diseases”.

These 27 rumors were found on Twitter (14 rumors) and Facebook (11 rumors). The majority of these rumors continue to revolve around the Monkeypox virus, but with a specific focus on the Monkeypox virus targeting the heart. Other rumors around newly emerging viruses continue to be captured as well, especially from Russia.

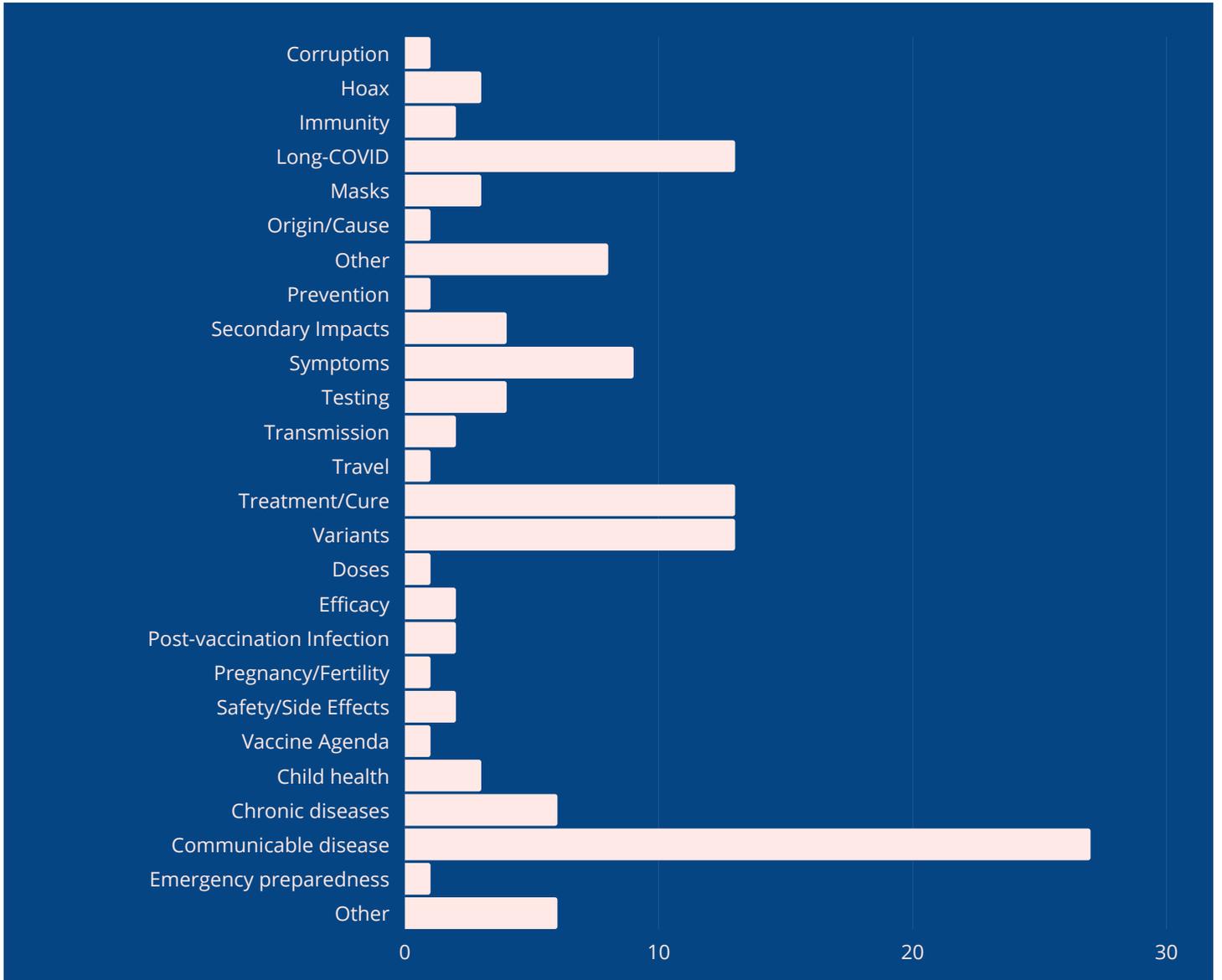
In September, a total of **123 offline rumors** were collected in the Bekaa region, most of which were through Listening Groups (68%) and Door-to-Door Interviews (20%). Notably, vaccine-related offline rumors (71%) continue to be trending as observed in previous months, with (40%) of these **rumors still mentioning that the vaccine causes death two years after inoculation**. Some rumors also focus on the sub-theme of “Safety/Side Effects” (21%) of taking the vaccine if a person has a pre-existing health condition.

There was a significant decrease in rumors related to “Other Health Topics” (10%) in September. Many rumors continue to make reference to Monkeypox ,while others suggest that children should play with dirt when growing up in order to build a better immune system.

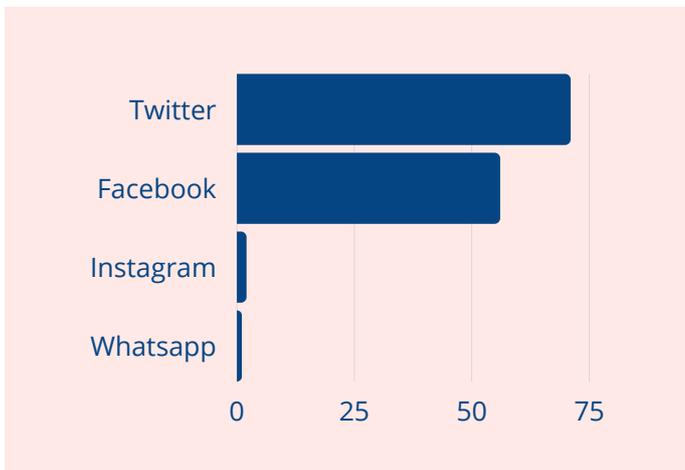


KEY THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Total Number of Rumors Online for September 2022: 130



Channels



Risk Levels



Analysis

Compared to last month, September saw an increase in the total number of online rumors (from 102 August to 130 September) and a decrease in offline rumors collected (130 August to 123 September).

The types of rumors collected continue to be less diverse than those observed in previous months. This in large part may be attributed to the WHO's announcement on 14 September 2022 that the end of the COVID-19 pandemic is in sight. We noticed a decrease in total vaccine doses especially in 1st, 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. Lebanon's COVID-19 vaccine coverage currently stands at only 44.1%. Vaccine hesitancy continues to remain a major barrier to controlling the health crisis.

Despite the continued prevalence of Monkeypox-related rumors, no new Monkeypox cases were reported in September with only a total of 11 confirmed Monkeypox cases across Lebanon, none of which have resulted in death. September saw an increase in the number of rumors from the sub-theme of "Communicable diseases", which may potentially increase even further in October. Many Syrian refugees regularly travel across the border to visit Syria, especially now that Lebanon's COVID-19 travel restrictions have been lifted.

However, with the regular cross-border movement of people and Syria's current cholera outbreak (spread across 11 governorates with over 3,500 suspected cases and 29 associated deaths), users on social media are concerned that cholera will become prevalent in Lebanon and are wondering how the government will address their concerns. Further action and awareness is needed on COVID-19, Monkeypox, and potentially Cholera in the coming months.

Contact

Project Manager

Rawan Ajami
(rajami@internews.org)

For more information on the project, visit

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