

ONE DIVIDE OR MANY DIVIDES?

Underprivileged **ASEAN Communities'**
Meaningful Digital Literacy and Response
to Disinformation



ASEAN
DIGITAL LITERACY
PROGRAMME

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The findings, interpretations, and conclusions from the 10 ASEAN Member States as contained in this report, are all the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the ASEAN Foundation, Google.org, and other partners consulted and engaged in whole or in part of the research process.

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

AMS	- ASEAN Member States
ASN/PNS	- Aparatur Sipil Negara/Pegawai Negeri Sipil (Civil Servant)
BBC	- British Broadcasting Corporation
CCA	- Computer-related Crimes Act
CSO	- Civil Society Organization
DISKOMINFO	- Local Government Office of Communication and Information
E-banking	- Electronic banking
E-commerce	- Electronic commerce
E-gov	- Electronic government applications
E-health	- Electronic health services
E-hospital	- Electronic hospital services
E-social security	- Electronic social security services
FGD	- Focus Group Discussion
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
HLS	- Harapan Lama Sekolah (Schooling Expectation Years)
ICT	- Information and Communication Technology
IMDA	- Infocomm Media Development Authority
ISP	- Internet Service Provider
ITE	- Information and Electronic Transactions
JAKOA	- Orang Aseli Development Department
KII	- Key Informant Interview
KUHP	- Criminal Code
LGBT+	- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and other identities
MCMC	- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MDES	- Ministry of Digital Economy and Society
MOE	- Ministry of Education
MIDL	- Media and Information Literacy
MCMC	- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MOE	- Ministry of Education
MCMC	- Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
NUG	- National Unity Government
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
NLB	- National Library Board
NBTC	- National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission
NEU PC Plus program	- New Emerging Unified Personal Computer Plus program
NSO	- National Statistical Office
ODC	- Open Development Cambodia
POFMA	- Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act
PRD	- Public Relations Department
STEM	- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TV	- Television
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
USO	- Universal Service Obligation
VOA	- Voice of America
VPN	- Virtual Private Network
WHO	- World Health Organization

STUDY OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The future of ASEAN Member States (AMS) brims with boundless possibilities, encompassing all facets of life - social, economic, and political. This uncharted territory, marked by an unprecedented pace of technological evolution, will demand innovative approaches and agile adaptation. Technology's pervasive influence on human experience makes it an indispensable force in navigating this new landscape and seizing the opportunities it presents. However, amid the torrent of information in the digital age, AMS is facing a massive risk of global damaging and harming consequences of the dissemination of mis/disinformation.

A number of previous reports, master plan and policy briefs outline a vision for the ASEAN region to transition into a leading digital community and economy. The e-ASEAN Framework Agreement (2000), is committed to harness the potential of information and communications technology (ICT) and electronic commerce for the benefit of the ASEAN people. The framework is in line with the ASEAN Digital Transformation Report (2022) that emphasizes the importance of digital integration and the need for coordinated efforts across AMS to address the challenges and maximize the benefits of digitalization. Other report, the Platform Economy: Southeast Asia's Digital Growth Catalyst (2021), follows by providing insight that underscores the crucial role of digital platforms in Southeast Asia's digital growth, particularly in creating new opportunities for livelihood and income. Accordingly, AMS also introduce the importance of the policy risks and commercial concerns in digitalizing ASEAN amid the will of the region's digital transformation, such as cross-border data flows, fragmented data protection frameworks, patchy infrastructure development, and geopolitical and supply chain risks.

This report tackles the urgent issue of digital inequality, intricately weaving together its impact on the digital divide, digital literacy, and the harmful consequences of disinformation. Although the digital divide is not a new phenomenon, however, this study follows the recent scholarship argue that the concept is not only about access to digital technology but a social problem, impacting participation in various domains of society thus encompasses inequality,

inclusion, and security implications (van Dijk, 2019). While digital divide research and programs usually focus on the underprivileged, people with low education and income, and digital skills, there is also research that are more addressing the privileged people with higher education such as students and lecturers. As follows, this report, will first take off from the belief of the multifaceted nature of the digital divide, encompassing dimensions of access, skills, usage, inequality, and societal participation. Second, this report highlights the complexities of digital inclusion in ASEAN, emphasizing the intersecting dimensions of both disadvantage experienced and lesson learned by underprivileged communities across AMS. Considering that each unit in the underprivileged community can sustainably combat mis/disinformation and build collective resilience to their ecosystem.

RATIONALE & OBJECTIVE

This report aims to deliver a baseline report of the interlink between digital divide and digital literacy, and how both factors relate to susceptibility and response to mis/disinformation within the underprivileged communities in ASEAN context. Firstly, it assesses the existing digital literacy level of underprivileged community members, especially youth (18-35 years old) and elderly (above 55 years old) in 10 AMS. Secondly, the report examines how the underprivileged community members, especially youth and elderly and additionally socialisation agents, namely educators and head of schools, government officials, and underprivileged community leaders respond to mis/disinformation. To address these objectives, the report examine the inquiries into: (1) the existing digital literacy condition of underprivileged communities where youths and elderly reside, (2) the role of digital literacy skill of people, youths and elderly living in underprivileged communities in identifying and responding to mis/disinformation, (3) the trending issues on mis/disinformation within AMS according to target underprivileged community groups, and (4) the identification and response mechanisms of target underprivileged community groups to mis/disinformation.

The report critically discusses the lack of attention towards underprivileged communities in digital

inclusion initiatives in ASEAN. This report will provide recommendations in program and curricula of digital literacy by addressing this gap. It emphasises underprivileged communities' challenges, needs, and participation in the digital world, by introducing the notion of 'digital divide determinants', to portray significant barriers in developing digital literacy skills due to inequality. This report consider it is important to emphasise the linkage between digital divide and digital literacy, and examine how digital divide determinant expose their vulnerabilities to potential harm of mis/disinformation (UNDP and UNESCO, 2022; Mostagir, 2022; Njenga, 2018). Along this line, the report believes community plays an important role in examining a two-way link exists between digital divide and digital literacy, and how both factors relate to mis/disinformation. It aims to provide a basis for understanding the current state of underprivileged community members digital literacy level, primarily youth and elderly.

Through the underprivileged communities' perceptions, this report provides valuable insights of mis/disinformation trending topics in AMS for further studies on early detection and mitigation. Furthermore, this report will contribute to the policy-making process for digital inclusion and transformation in AMS, aimed at strengthening the resilience of underprivileged communities in combating mis/disinformation. It offers recommendation to equip underprivileged communities with innovation in digital literacy programs and curricula and challenge the underlying social structures that perpetuate digital access and misinformation.

KEY CONCEPTS

Digital Divide

The report challenges the simplistic view of the digital divide, highlighting that individual circumstances significantly impact access to digital information and technology. It echoes scholarly views that disparities in economic status, education, societal structures, and culture can exacerbate inequality and hinder digital engagement. The digital divide is complex, intertwining personal societal positions with resources (van Dijk, 2003). The study also posits that the divide goes beyond just infrastructure and device availability, encompassing differences in confidence, skills, knowledge, social connections, beliefs, and experiences with digital technology (van Dijk, 2020).

Digital Divide Determinants and Underprivileged Community

Recent research on the digital divide has identified various factors, termed digital divide determinants, that contribute to unequal access and utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), especially the internet. These determinants include sociodemographic, economic, social, cultural, and motivational elements that affect internet skills, use, and outcomes (Scheerder, van Deursen, & van Dijk, 2017). Moving beyond earlier studies that focused mainly on internet usage and not enough on skills and outcomes, this study aims to shed light on the less-examined social and cultural determinants that influence disparities in internet skills and usage. Additionally, the report recognizes Nguyen et al.'s (2021) view that individuals' digital media interactions are shaped by their internet access, living conditions, and various political, cultural, economic, and environmental factors. It also highlights the particular vulnerability of disadvantaged groups, including women, the elderly, LGBTQ+ communities, low-income families, rural and remote dwellers, slum residents, ethnic minorities, disabled individuals, solo parents with low income, marginalized religious groups, people in deprived areas, and refugees.

Digital Literacy

The report redefines digital literacy as a multifaceted skillset, encompassing the use of digital tools for finding, managing, and creating digital content, critical thinking, and engaging in social action. It identifies digital literacy as technical, communicative, collaborative, creative, curative, critical, and safety-related competencies. Operational skills are the foundation for advanced digital functions (Helsper, 2016), while communication skills facilitate digital interaction (Vodă et al., 2022). Creativity involves making new content, curation refers to organizing and maintaining digital information, and safety skills encompass personal online protection (Tzafilkou, 2022). The report also acknowledges the unique challenges faced by underprivileged communities in developing these competencies (Ali, Raza, & Qazi, 2023). It further examines news and media literacy, focusing on the consumption of news, the ability to discern credible information, and attitudes towards misinformation (Nagel, 2022).

Inclusive Approach

This report addresses an inclusive approach and gender-sensitive approach as mainstream studies on

digital literacy and digital divide are developed without considering the deeply rooted cultural and practical biases especially against women. This ignorance marginalises women and girls across various sectors (Hafkin and Huyer, 2007). This approach gives women opportunities to share voice, experience, knowledge and insights for the study, policy and curricula.

Data Collection Methods

Data collections in this study are under the ethic clearance Ref No.: 499/KE.01/SK/07/2023. All data collections in this study provide Research Consent Form (Appendix 8) and Participant Information Form (Appendix 9). This report employs mix-methods data collection, namely survey, FGD and interviews. Firstly, the mix-methods data collection aims to achieve a holistic portrayal on how digital divide and digital literacy are intertwined within the context of underprivileged community. Second, the mix-data collections importantly provide more insights from and in a specific context, especially how underprivileged community members respond to misinformation. The mix-methods data collection in this report involve survey, Focus Groups Discussion (FGD) and Key Informants Interviews (KII).

We delivered a survey from 10 ASEAN member states for both youth and elderly living with underprivileged communities. Surveys are delivered from September to November 2023. The survey uses the instruments we have developed, drawn from previous scholarly scales and instruments (Appendix 2). The surveys collect demographic data to provide underprivileged community members' profile in order to enrich and to understand the vulnerable contexts they live in, which we define as the digital divide determinants.

This study delivered FGD from August to October 2023 and invites four different groups from every

country, namely elderly, teachers, youth and community leaders. Each session of FGD invites 6 to 12 people according to the group. It aims to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes by using group processes to stimulate responses and gain insights through participants exchanging views and questioning and challenging each other. This study provides the discussion questions guide, listed by drawing from previous scholarly studies (Appendix 3) and Focus Group Discussion Guide (Appendix 2).

Each country in this study invites government officials and community leaders (can also be CSO and religious leaders) and head of schools to attend Key Informant Interviews. There are three different question lists for each group of Key Informant interviews. In total, there are 6 people attended the interviews from each ASEAN member states from August to October 2023. This study provides the Interview Guide (Appendix 4), Government Official Interview Questions (Appendix 5), Head of School Interview Questions (Appendix 6) and Community Leaders Interviews Questions (Appendix 7).

GENERAL FINDINGS: ASEAN

Critical thinking skills vary across ASEAN, with Thailand at the lowest (25%) and Cambodia at the highest (62.2%) (Figure 5). Privacy protection competence also fluctuates, with the Philippines lowest (17.42%) and Singapore highest (54.37%) (Figure 6). For information competence, Thailand is again lowest (42.58%), while Lao is highest (52.17%) (Figure 7). Confidence in news sharing is least in the Philippines (24.68%) and most in Myanmar (61.2%) (Figure 8). Trust in social media is lowest in Thailand (42.97%) and highest in Brunei (60.4%) (Figure 9). Generally, ASEAN countries show a broad range of proficiency in these areas.

Figure 5. Critical Thinking

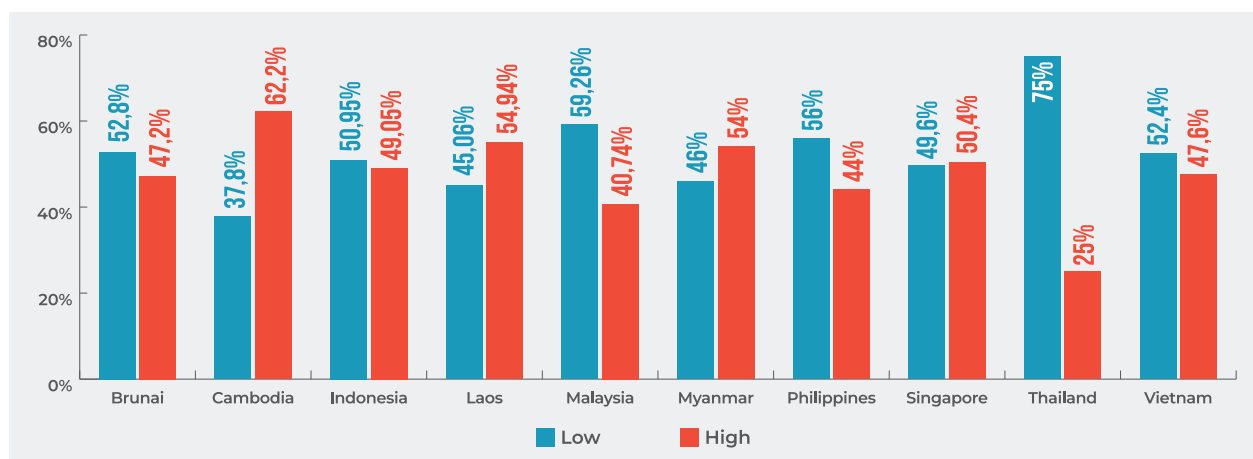


Figure 6. Privacy Protection Competence

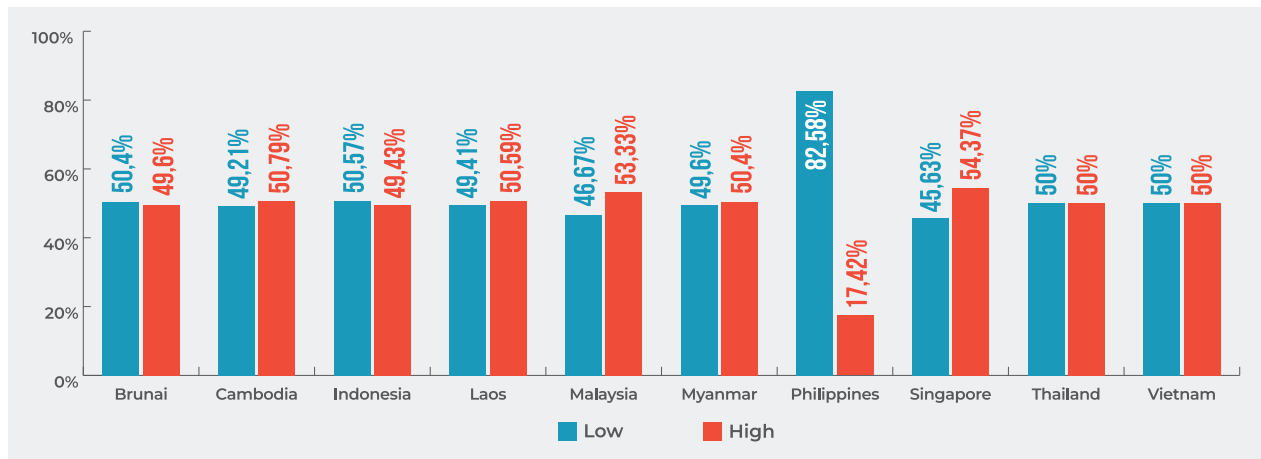


Figure 7. Information Competence

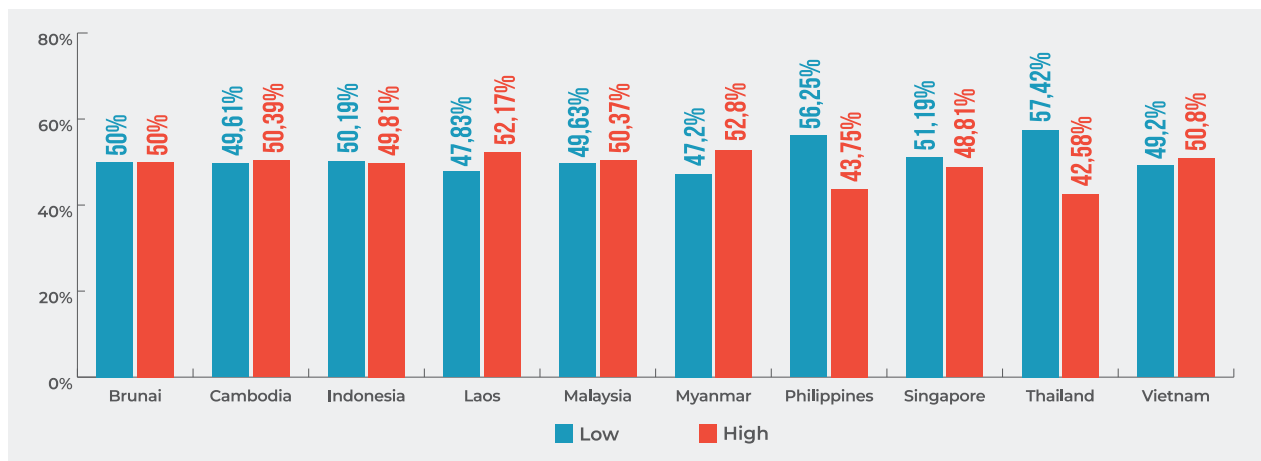


Figure 8. Confidence in News Sharing

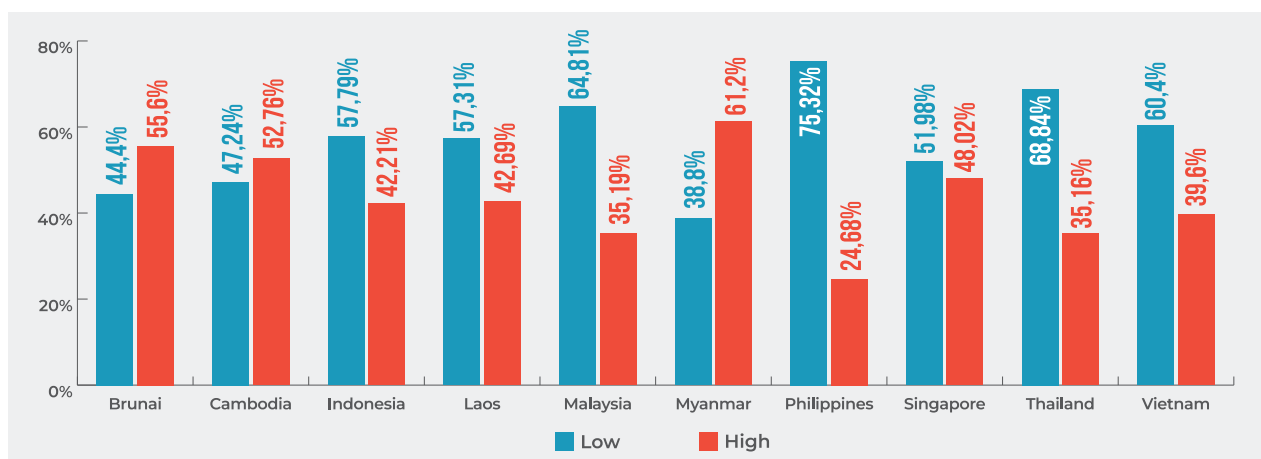
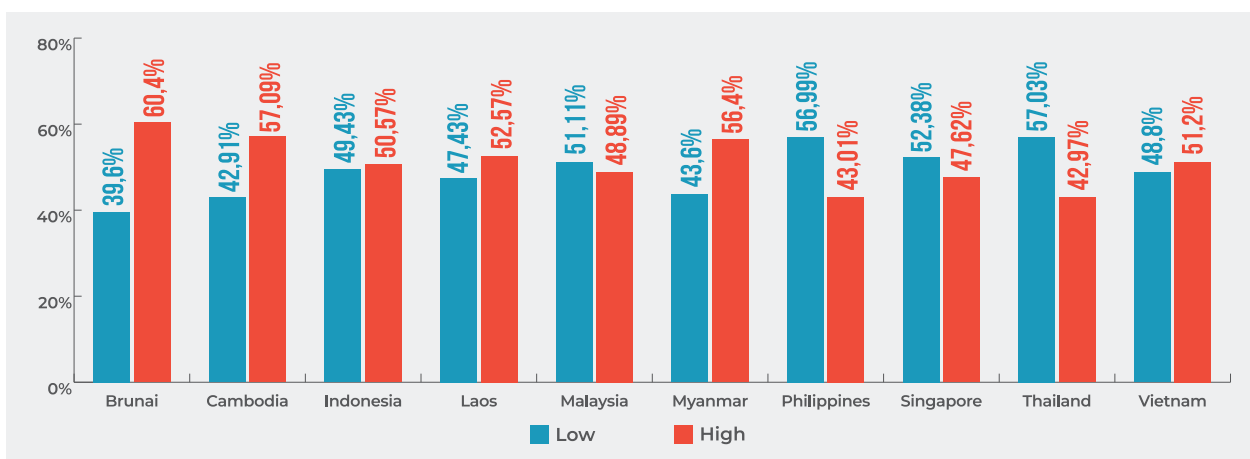


Figure 9. Trust in Social Media



DIGITAL DIVIDE ACROSS ASEAN COUNTRIES

Limited digital literacy skills exacerbate the digital divide in AMS, hindering full participation in the digital realm and restricting access to economic and public services. While individual countries face unique issues, recognizing these similarities and differences can inform collaborative solutions and promote digital inclusion for all, namely:

1. technology and infrastructure, including lack of internet access and uneven distribution of digital infrastructure
2. language barrier that is rooted in gap in education
3. social and cultural factors: gender, age, disability, and other social factors can also contribute to unequal access and participation in the digital world
4. government policies and initiatives: the effectiveness of government interventions in promoting digital inclusion and addressing the digital divide varies across countries

There are also the differing conditions contributing to the digital divide across the 10 ASEAN countries. The first differing factors of digital divide in ASEAN are **socio-economic factors** such as poverty, education, and marginalized groups. Financial constraints can hinder technology access and digital literacy, notably in Brunei, Myanmar (refugees), and the Philippines. Low education levels, seen in Lao, Malaysia's Orang Aseli, and rural ASEAN, are linked to poor digital skills. Marginalization, through social exclusion, language issues, and scarce resources, affects refugees in Myanmar, the Orang Aseli in Malaysia, and the urban poor region-wide.

The second differing factors of digital divide across ASEAN countries is **technological infrastructure and**

access. Access to electricity, internet, and devices is uneven in ASEAN, with Vietnam's and the Philippines' disadvantaged areas facing cost barriers. Digital literacy efforts vary, with Thailand and Singapore having strong government initiatives, unlike Lao and Malaysia's Orang Aseli communities.

The third differing factor of digital divide in ASEAN is **political and cultural factors** such as **government policies, media freedom and censorship and cultural acceptance of technology.** Government efforts to address the digital divide vary; Thailand and Singapore are proactive, while Myanmar shows limited action. Censorship can limit information access, affecting critical thinking and digital literacy, particularly in Myanmar and Lao. Additionally, traditional perspectives and low technology awareness can slow digital adoption in rural ASEAN areas.

MIS/DISINFORMATION LANDSCAPE IN ASEAN'S UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY

Definition of Misinformation and Disinformation

According to this study misinformation refers to the accidental sharing of false information, often due to errors or outdated knowledge, without intent to deceive. This contrasts with disinformation, which is the deliberate spread of false information. The report emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the two, especially given the vast flow of global information and the potential for misinformation to evolve into intentional disinformation. The underprivileged communities articulate disinformation is intentionally created and spread to mislead and manipulate public opinion or benefit specific interests. It involves deliberate

falsehoods and can blend with true information, complicating perceptions of reality. Its purpose is often to distort facts for personal or ideological gain. Underprivileged community members recognize disinformation as fake news with untrue content and sources, used to mislead and manipulate public perception. This includes exaggerated stories from media, industry, and government aimed at grabbing attention, as well as biased ads, errors, conspiracies, and edited content. Fake news can lead to societal division, particularly in politics.

Trending Issues of Disinformation

This report highlights the trending issues of disinformation in 10 AMS in the underprivileged communities. These trends are subsequently discussed in the country chapters, where the responses of national governments are discussed as mitigations against the known risks of mis/disinformation in each AMS. It's important to acknowledge that the selected trending topic is contingent upon community members' definition of disinformation.

Impact on Society

It is evident in this study that misinformation, disinformation, and false news has pervasive and detrimental effects on society. Underprivileged community members across AMS acknowledge their capability to undermine mental health, relationships, economic stability, and societal trust across global, national, and community levels. These consequences manifest as heightened anxiety, insecurity, erosion of trust, and threats to national and personal security, as well as economic repercussions and interference with family and societal dynamics.

The vulnerability of underprivileged communities exposes them to disinformation, making them potential victims of various risks such as human trafficking and economic exploitation. Furthermore, the document emphasizes that the dissemination of false information can lead to fear, panic, and chaos within these communities, affecting their mental and physical well-being.

Particularly within the context of ASEAN society, the unregulated nature of social media platforms exacerbates these issues, as a lack of discernment in evaluating legitimate versus false information leads to a culture steeped in misinformation, with widespread influence on sentiments and behaviors.

This study outlines specific impacts, such as endangering social order and national security by fostering misunderstandings and divisions, reducing trust in government, psychologically and emotionally affecting individuals, causing economic and personal harm, and influencing political perceptions, especially during election periods. Furthermore, findings in this study highlight how misinformation and disinformation can amplify pre-existing biases, polarize society, and even lead to real-world violence, emphasizing the far-reaching implications on mentalities, behaviors, and societal welfare at all societal levels.

Factors in Responding to Misinformation/Disinformation/Fake News

There are key factors contributing to the way underprivileged communities across ASEAN Member States (AMS) identify and respond to mis/disinformation are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the unique contexts of these communities. These factors include:

- 1. Cultural Variation:** Each country and its underprivileged communities have their own distinct cultural context, values, and norms that shape their perceptions of mis/disinformation.
- 2. Language Diversity:** Varied languages and communication styles impact how specific underprivileged community groups access, understand, and share information, influencing the spread of mis/disinformation.
- 3. Socioeconomic Disparities:** Differences in socioeconomic status and access to resources among underprivileged communities affect their ability to critically analyse information as well as their vulnerability to mis/disinformation.
- 4. Government Policies & Media Landscape:** Diverse government policies, media regulations, and overall media environment influence the prevalence of mis/disinformation within specific underprivileged community groups.
- 5. Underprivileged Community Dynamics:** Dynamics within underprivileged community groups, including social structures, leadership roles, and decision-making processes, differ from one to another and impact the way mis/disinformation is disseminated and responded.
- 6. Historical & Political Influences:** The historical and socio-political backdrop in each AMS and underprivileged community influences the level of trust in information sources and response to mis/disinformation.

Credibility Assessment and Mis/Disinformation Identification

Across 10 ASEAN Member States, this report finds how underprivileged communities identify mis/disinformation thus assess message's credibility. This report identifies four main indicators that contribute to the process of assessment, namely:

- 1. Source of Information:** The origin or provider of the information, which can greatly impact its reliability.
- 2. Content Presentation:** How the information is presented, including language, structure, and any supporting evidence, which can influence its perceived trustworthiness.
- 3. Distribution Channels:** The mediums through which the information is disseminated, such as news outlets, social media, or official reports, which can affect its reach and authenticity.

- 4. Community Influence:** The impact of social or community networks on the information, which can involve endorsement, sharing, or commentary that may either bolster or undermine its credibility.

These four indicators feed into the central process called *credibility assessment*. This evaluation determines whether the information is considered *credible information* or *misinformation*. *Credible* information is trustworthy and accurate, while *misinformation* is false or misleading.

Barriers to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Fake News

Underprivileged communities face challenges in identifying fake news. Marginalized groups, such as the elderly, individuals with special needs, indigenous groups and people living in rural areas may struggle to access and understand information in the digital space.

Tabel 1. Barriers in Identifying Misinformation

Cognitive barriers	Content complexities	Limited access to social media and limited exposure to digital platforms	General
	Language barriers		
	Dominant language proficiency		
Limited technological knowledge and skill	Limited fact-checking knowledge		General
	Limited access to technology		
	Limited digital literacy		
Emotional manipulation	Negative emotion		Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia
	Fear-based information		
Complexity of information	Language barriers		Cambodia, Laos,
	Lack of dominant language proficiency		
	Barriers within multilingual society		
Vulnerabilities	Poverty	Resource availability Access to technology	General
	Elderly		
	Special needs individuals		
	Rural residents		
	Refugees		
Emotional biases	Cultural sensitivities		Myanmar, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Indonesia
	Religious sensitivities		

ASEAN COUNTRIES RESPONSE TO REGULATE MISINFORMATION

The study reveals that ASEAN countries employ varied strategies and governance structures to combat misinformation and disinformation, with no

uniform approach across the region. Some countries use centralized bodies, others prefer collaborative or local initiatives. Recognizing this diversity is key to understanding how each nation addresses the issue. Thailand's Anti-Fake News Center, for

example, represents a centralized approach to managing misinformation, focusing on verification and awareness. Meanwhile, Vietnam and Singapore employ collaborative methods, with multiple agencies involved in identifying false content, education, regulation, and cyberspace monitoring. Despite of focusing the governing body at the national level the Philippines employs local efforts, such as Quezon City's Public Affairs and Information Services Department, address misinformation, showcasing a decentralized approach to the issue. However, AMS vary in addressing misinformation:

- 1. Lao is developing its approach with existing cyber laws but needs a stronger strategy.
- 2. Cambodia relies on government and NGO efforts without a centralized body, indicating a potential need for consolidation.
- 3. Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology tackles the issue alongside other agencies, suggesting a spread-out responsibility.
- 4. Brunei's absence of a central authority points to a systemic gap, with calls for a focused digital literacy department.

DIGITAL LITERACY IN ASEAN
Gap in Digital Literacy Programs Across ASEAN

The report identifies a significant lack of targeted and structured digital literacy education across ASEAN, particularly for vulnerable and underprivileged groups. It emphasizes the need for inclusive and comprehensive programs to address the digital divide exacerbated by poverty and misinformation challenges. The report calls for government action

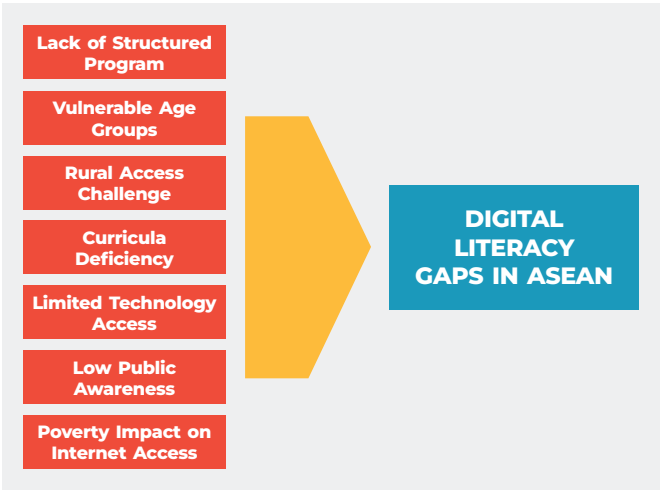
and community support to enhance digital literacy, particularly in marginalized communities, such as Malaysia's Orang Aseli and Myanmar's refugees, to empower them with the skills needed to discern accurate information online. Figure 10 portrays the similar factors across ASEAN that create gaps in digital literacy programs, as indicated in the texts.

Digital Literacy Governing Bodies in ASEAN

In ASEAN, digital literacy progress varies. Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam have formal programs. Malaysia's MCMC regulates digital literacy. Singapore's IMDA runs "Digital for Life" to boost digital skills. Vietnam entrusts digital literacy to its Information and Communications ministries. Other ASEAN members are yet to catch up.

In Lao, Philippines, and Thailand, digital literacy efforts are coordinated by multiple agencies rather than a single governing body. Lao operates through its Department of Cyber, Cyber Security, and Division of Technology, potentially with future collaboration from the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Technology. The Philippines integrates digital literacy via the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Thailand advances media literacy nationally through the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society and the Anti-Fake News Center. Unfortunately, government from other ASEAN countries namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar do not provide the governing body to deliver structured digital literacy program at the national level. However, regardless of independent efforts by NGOs to provide training in digital literacy, there is a lack of comprehensive national strategies or regulatory bodies specifically focused on structured digital literacy programs.

Figure 10. Factors Creating Gaps in Digital Literacy in ASEAN



BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
- BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE
- LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Brunei Innovation and Economic Growth

Brunei is the second most prosperous country in Southeast Asia with GDP per capita US\$ 34,383 (IMF, 2023), and located on the northern coast of Borneo Island. The Brunei government prioritizes digitalization and digital economy as the future to replace oil and gas revenue as the main income. Several initiatives have been launched, including Digital Economy Masterplan 2016-2025. This plan focuses on the adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) in every aspect of citizens' daily lives, such as government, business, healthcare, education, research innovation, and human development.

Telecommunications infrastructure in the country is considered advanced with the internet uptake of 98% of the population. ICT is intended to foster the efficiency of government services and the advancement of innovation and technology-driven entrepreneurship. These will lead to economic growth and Brunei's competitiveness at regional and global levels.

However, in recent years Brunei has struggled in containing misinformation, disinformation, and fake news and these can create challenges to the government's digital economy initiatives. The digital-based sectors, mainly in the food and beverage have grown a 43.3% and it has become a cornerstone of Brunei's non-oil and gas sectors. But it is highly susceptible to the risks of misinformation and disinformation. This risk is mainly due to the country's small population of roughly 450,000 and their sales volume can vary significantly based on their reputation.

Inequality and Exclusion

Brunei's high internet penetration rate of 98% and 576 thousand cellular connections (Digital 2023: Brunei Darussalam, 2023) suggest that the country is ready to be a key player in the digital economy. Bruneians can adopt and use information and communication technology because the proper internet connections are constantly available for them. However, inequality comes from the social and cultural aspects of the population. Particularly the elderly and the underaged, along with possibly the use of the English language.

Overview of Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

As Brunei is an absolute monarchy, political disinformation is non-existent. Misinformation runs rampant, however, due to the current lack of a reputable local fact-checker, dedicated legislation, and central governing body. Several events in the preceding years have exposed some of the risks misinformation and disinformation have on the country's stability. The COVID-19 pandemic and disinformation regarding the vaccine, quarantine procedures, and number of cases have hampered the Ministry of Health's efforts to contain the spread of the virus. In response to this, the Ministry increased its transparency by providing daily press conferences to reduce the spread of misinformation and become a reliable source of fact-checking.

More recently (Borneo Bulletin, 2022), large parts of the country underwent an almost 24 hours power outage due to an undisclosed cause. During this period, there was an abundance of misinformation flowing through social media and WhatsApp, including rumors of an explosion at the nation's LNG plant and the Gadong power station. Worryingly, unlike the Ministry of Health, the official statement of the Department of Electrical Services was only made once the situation was resolved; there was also little transparency on the causes of the power disruption up to this day.

In response to these events, the country's Content Advisory Council has been saddled with the task of advising government agencies on their response procedures to misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. They are not a central governing body to tackle the issue however, as they are primarily created to regulate content, and Brunei is currently opting for a decentralized approach to managing misinformation. Notably, the Content Advisory Council has stated that it does not intend to clamp further on freedom of opinion but advises online content creators to self-regulate. Brunei has no issues with access and adoption of information and communication technology. However, we discovered that the level of digital literacy and information competence in underprivileged communities is notably low, which contributes to the continued sharing of misinformation and disinformation.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Profile of the Underprivileged Community: Who are They?

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption in Brunei is varied across demographics. Age, gender, marital status, and other demographic measures are associated with the underprivileged community. The following describes the descriptive characteristics of the underprivileged community.

The underprivileged community consists of 60% of the youth and the rest are the elderly (Fig. 1.1); 64.4%

of them identify as female, while 33.6% identify as male (Fig. 1.2); and related to marital status 46.4% of the participants are single, 45.6% are married, and the remaining 8% are either divorced or widowed (Fig. 1.3). Moreover, 53.2% of the underprivileged do not have children, while the remaining 46.8% have (Fig. 1.4). Among them, 64.4% are unemployed while the remaining 35.6% are employed (Fig. 1.5) and only 1.6% of the participants in the survey have a disability (Fig. 1.6).

Figure 1.1. Age

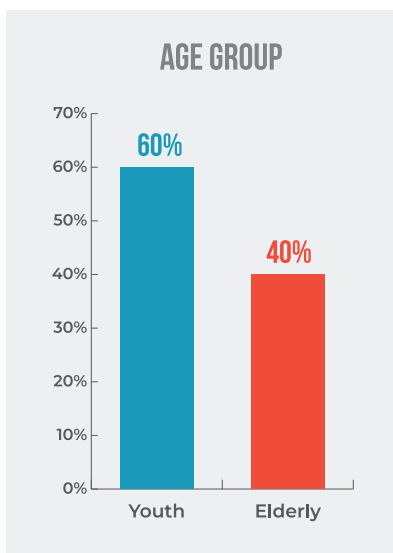


Figure 1.2. Gender

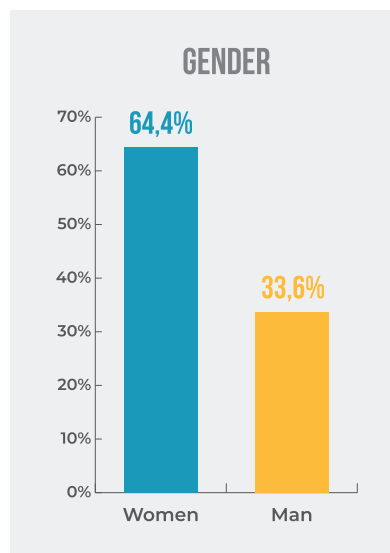


Figure 1.3. Marital

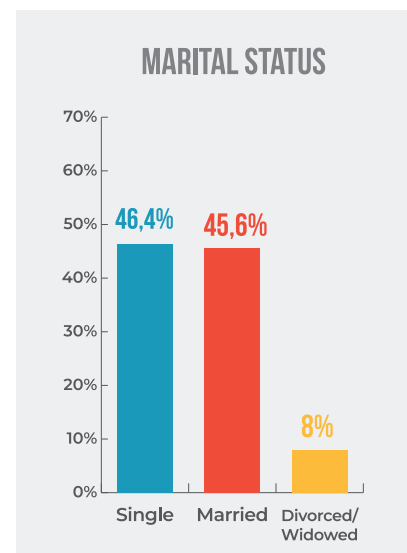


Figure 1.4. Children

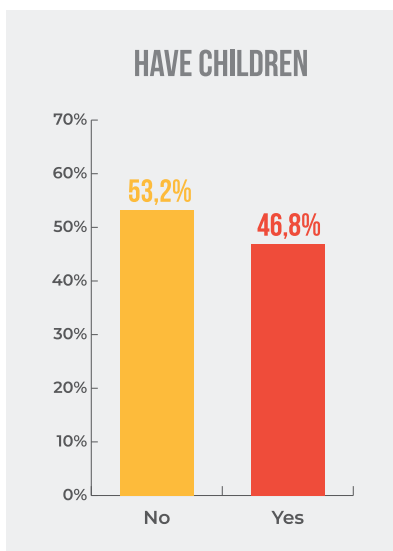


Figure 1.5. Employment

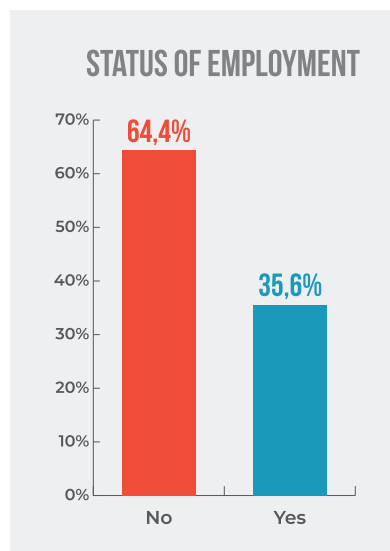
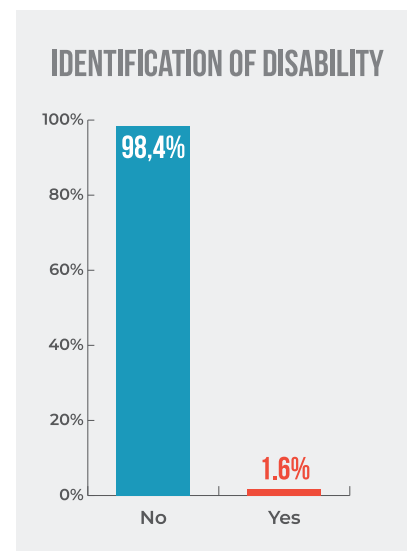


Figure 1.6. Disability



Regarding education: 62.4% graduated from upper secondary school education, 19.2% hold a university degree or higher, 11.6% accomplished a lower secondary school education, 4.8% finished primary

school education, and only 2% with no formal education. Lastly, the survey indicates that 30% of those underprivileged are members of an Indigenous community.

Figure 1.7. Educational Background

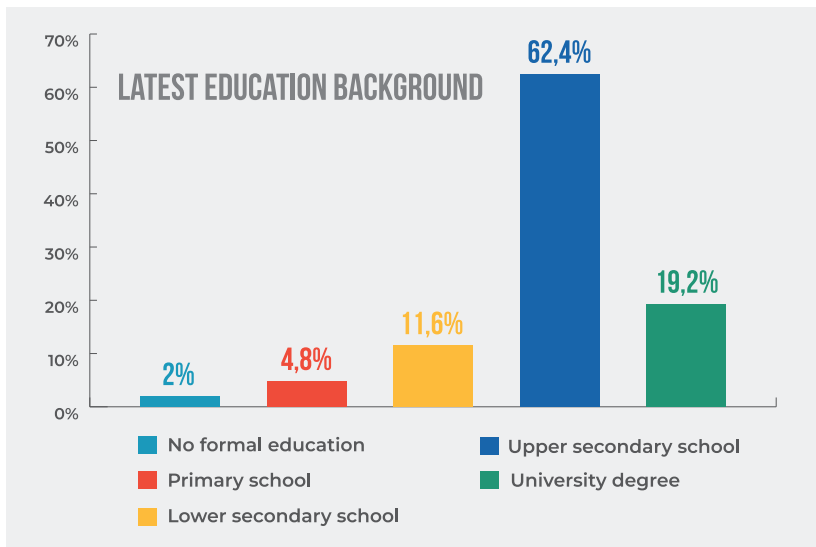
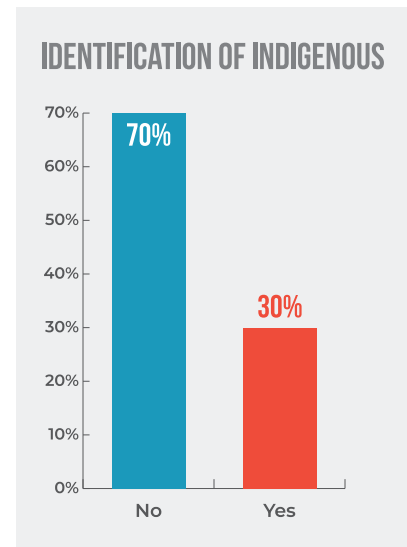


Figure 1.8. Indigenous



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Main Devices Ownership

Computer laptops are the primary digital tool in economically disadvantaged areas, outpacing mobile telecommunications and tablets (Fig. 1.9). The ownership of a computer laptop as the main device to access the internet is not unexpected as the GDP per capita of the country is the second highest in the region. Therefore, Bruneians have the buying power to afford the best devices to surf in the online world. Mobile telecommunications come in second and only a quarter of individuals utilize it for communication purposes. Tablet and other devices are used only by minority Bruneians, and this barrier can be a factor of familiarity and usability.

Moreover, the ownership of these main devices is not contingent upon demographic factors (Fig. 1.10). Across main devices, only mobile telecommunications are predicted by marital status. The findings suggest that differences between those who are married, single, and widowed/divorced can significantly predict mobile telecommunications ownership.

Those widowed/divorced are less likely to own mobile phones than those married or single.

Figure 1.9. Main Devices Ownership

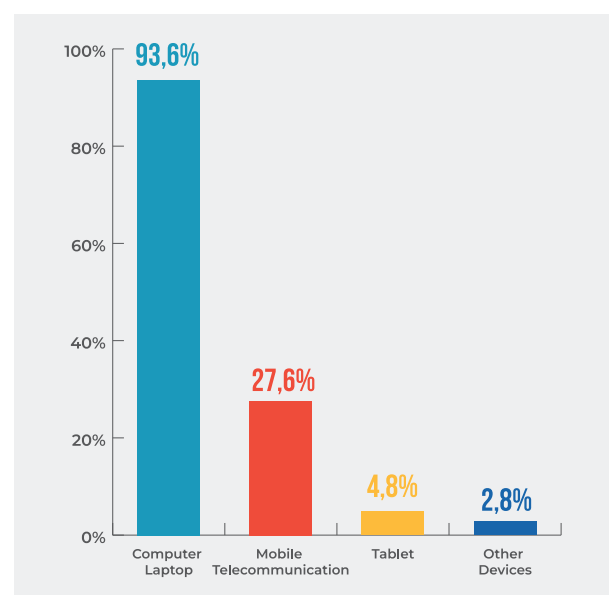


Figure 1.10. Main Devices Ownership Determinants

	Computer Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age				
Marital Status				
Having children				
Employment				
Gender				
Disability				
Education				
Indigenous				

Using News Platforms

The preference for print media (specifically newspapers) and TV to obtain news is consistent with the public of Brunei (Fig. 1.11). Even though, the internet uptake in Brunei is the highest in Southeast Asia and more than 98% can go online, the use of internet media in accessing news is considerably lower than the expectation. The availability of the internet is important to close digital gaps, yet the

use of the internet requires knowledge and skill to optimize digital technology.

The utilization of diverse media platforms to source news varies across demographics factors (Fig. 1.12) and the findings identify that education is a significant contributor in using mass media and digital media to find news. But the use of mass media as information sources depends on marital status.

Figure 1.11. News Platforms

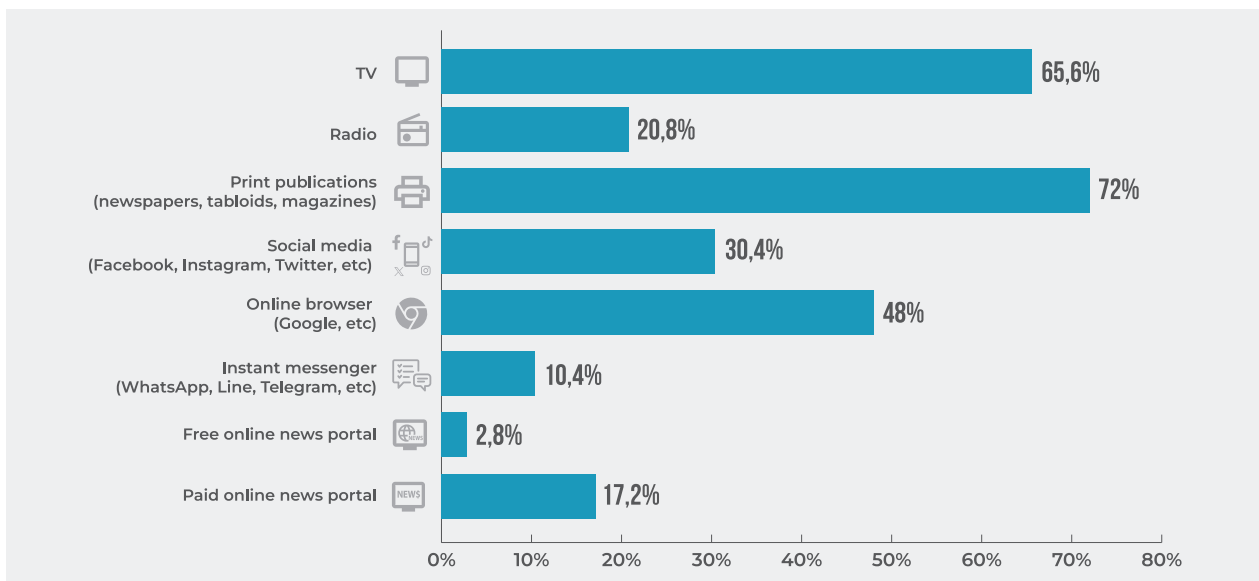


Figure 1.12. News Platforms Determinants

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Application related to health and banking are two most used for Bruneians and followed by online commerce change to e-commerce (Fig. 1.13). In addition, more than half of those who use mobile applications for hospital and social security activities are being helped by other people. This suggests that additional help from others is an important factor in ensuring the use of various mobile applications. Therefore, this insight can be useful for government and policy makers to create stimuli or intervention programs such as a companionship program to

propel the use of mobile applications for diverse public services.

The adoption and use of mobile applications should consider demographics that can be enablers or constraint factors. Employment is the main factor predicting mobile applications for various activities (Fig. 1.14). Gender and education are also contributing factors for most mobile applications usage. The findings inform that intersectionality of employment, gender, and education can create a gap to the uptake of mobile applications, mainly for public services (e.g., health, government, hospital, and social security).

Figure 1.13. Mobile Application Usage

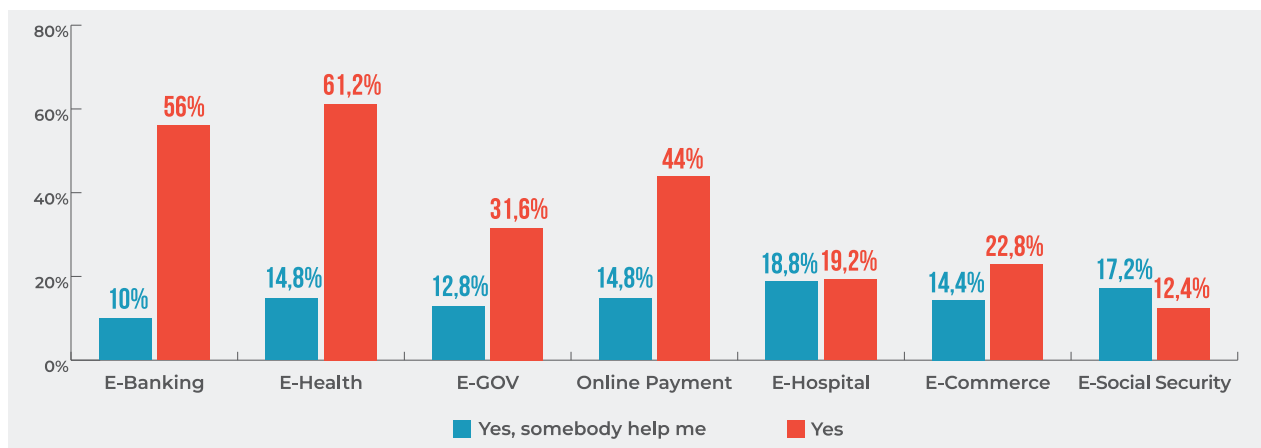


Figure 1.14. Mobile Application Usage

	E-Banking	E-Health	E-Gov	Online Payment	E-Hospital	E-Commerce	E-Social Security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

Digital skills related to creating, commenting, and reposting content on social media are quite high, with over 80% respondents have claimed to be active in doing these activities (Fig. 1.15). Commenting posts on social media yield the highest percentage and followed by reposting and creating content, respectively. Moreover, their community building activities are predicted by age, education, and indigenous status (Fig. 1.16). Age and indigenous status are given factors (i.e., biological) that ingrained by a user and hard to change, while educational level can be improved by intervention programs.

Figure 1.15. Community Building Activities

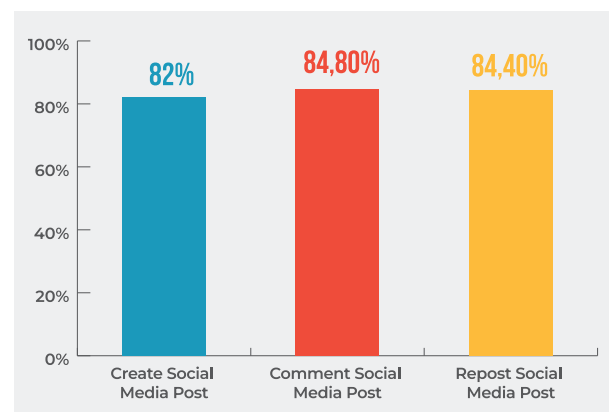


Figure 1.16. Community Building Determinants

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy is measured using five dimensions of information competence, privacy protection, critical thinking, social media trust, and confidence in news sharing. The findings indicate that age and education are consistent predictors of dimensions of digital literacy (Fig. 1.17). Employment is only significantly

associated with privacy protection skills. Age and education continue playing as important factors in worsening both conditions of digital divides and social inequalities. One striking finding is that no demographic factors are predictive to social media trust skills.

Figure 1.17. Digital Literacy Determinants

	Information Competence	Privacy Protection	Critical Thinking	Trust Social Media	News Sharing
Age					
Marital Status					
Having children					
Employment					
Gender					
Disability					
Education					
Indigenous					

Critical Thinking

Age and education sustain as predictors of critical thinking skills (Fig. 1.18) in which youth and (omit those) and those who earned higher degrees acquired better skills than those unfortunate counterparts. Holding upper secondary education and university degrees are more likely to build skills that can be used to critically utilizing the internet. A similar trend also occurred for the younger generation who were born and raised with digital technology.

Educational and generational divisions in digital milieu need to be resolved by the government and policy makers in the country. If the critical thinking gap is sustained, it can create deeper socio-economic inequalities that will hinder the country's vision to be one of the competitive nations in digital society.

Privacy Protection

There are three demographic predictors associated with privacy protection skills: employment status, age and education (Fig. 1.19). 65% of those who have a job have higher privacy protection skills in comparison with only 41% of jobless respondents who acquire a similar skills level. Well-educated respondents who hold upper secondary school diplomas and university degrees are most likely to gain higher privacy protection skills. The youth are also benefitting from digital media and the proportion of those with high skills is seven times larger than the elderly.

Information Competence

The level of information competence is assessed based on community feedback regarding actions

taken to assess the source and content veracity and credibility. Those who generate a high score are expected to manage and protect personal information in an online setting. Two demographic factors of age and education are significant predictors of information competence skills (Fig. 1.20). The patterns are similar to other dimensions in digital literacy in which the youth and those who

hold higher degrees acquired a better competency to handle private information in the digital world. A high percentage of elderly individuals have a low level of information competence (71%). Individuals with no formal education also predominantly have a low level of information competence (80%). The highest level of high information competence is observed in individuals with a university degree (72.9%).

Figure 1.18. Critical Thinking Determinants

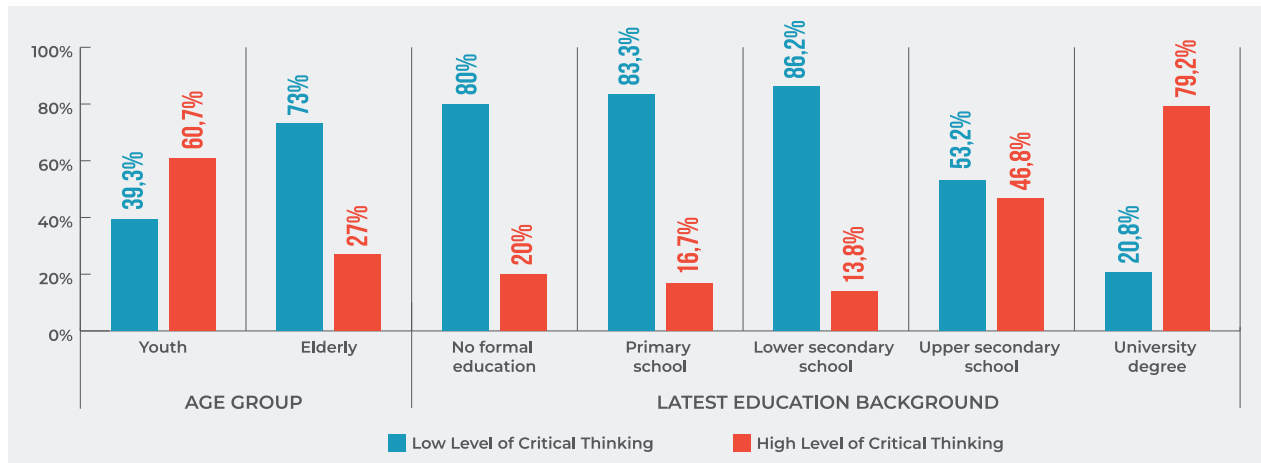


Figure 1.19. Privacy Protection

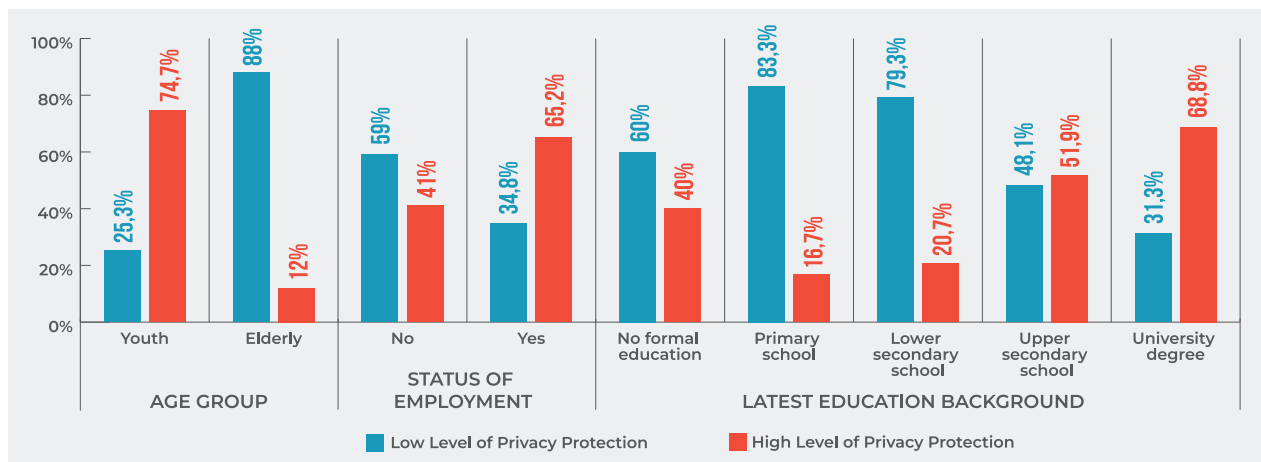
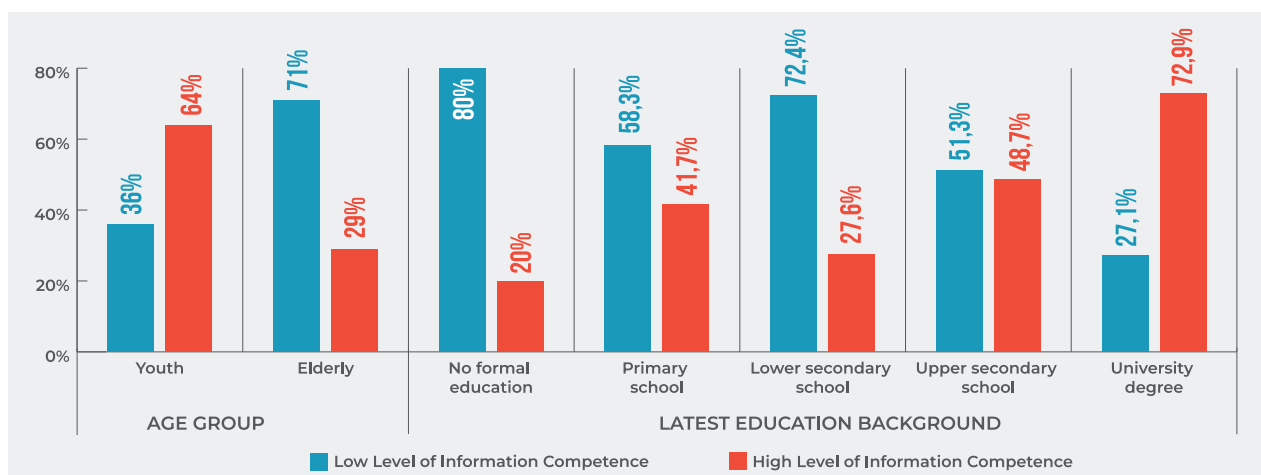


Figure 1.20. Information Competence Determinants



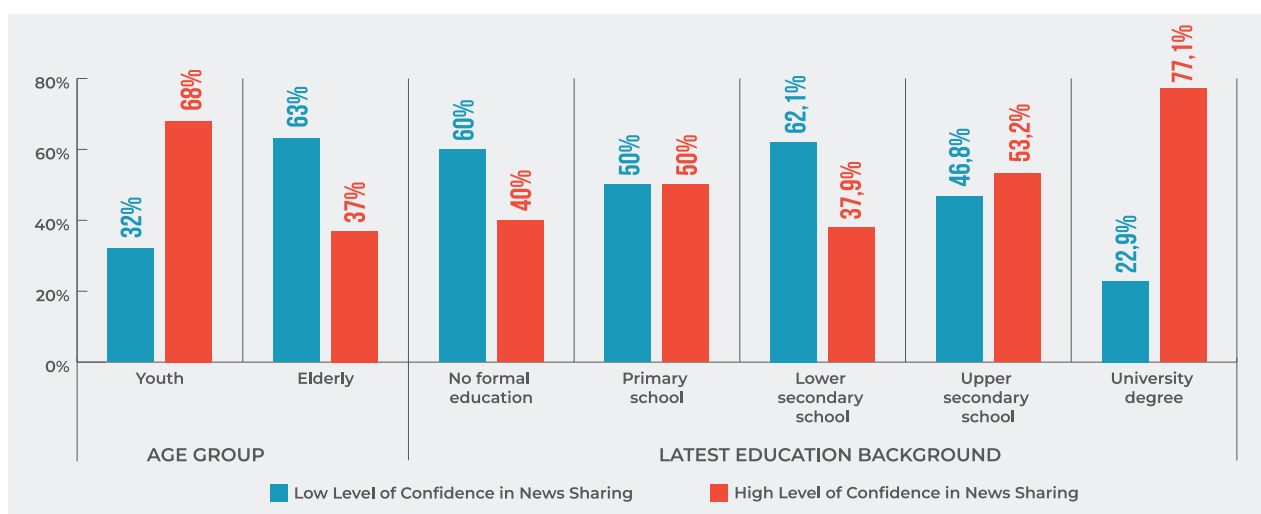
Trust in Social Media

Skills related to trust in social media reflect a competency to curb disinformation and malicious content. Community members are expected to have the ability to identify and react accordingly when they encounter misinformation, disinformation, and other untrustworthy information. Hence, the research findings show no demographic factors contributing to this specific skill (Fig. 1.17).

Confidence In Engaging with News

Those who yield a high competency in engaging with news are most likely younger and well-educated (Fig. 1.21). Youth shows a high level of confidence in news sharing at 68%, while elderly shows a high level of confidence in news sharing only at 37%. This study also shows the significance of higher education degree in shaping confidence in news sharing. Those with a University Degree show the highest level of high confidence in news sharing at 77.1% and only 22.9% shows low confidence in news sharing.

Figure 1.21. Confidence in Engaging with News



LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

Pulling from FGDs and survey responses, Bruneians in general are not aware of the concept of disinformation. Youths and the elderly both understand the concept of misinformation and fake news but are initially unaware of the intentional nature of disinformation. This trend was seen in FGDs with youth, elderlies, and underprivileged communities. There was no noticeable difference between the genders in understanding disinformation.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

Only about 30% of the participants in the survey were able to provide examples of disinformation or misinformation that they have experienced. FGDs found that there were more examples of

misinformation discussed, but they are still confused between misinformation and disinformation and are likely to believe that they are the same.

Risk of Disinformation Against the Underprivileged

Disinformation production, consumption, and circulation have been a concern for the country and these problems have affected the government's digital economy initiatives, mainly in enhancing the business ecosystem that can promote economic growth. In our FGD with the underprivileged youth and elderly, we found that they commonly receive misinformation through WhatsApp. Scams and phishing attempts are the most common disinformation that these underprivileged receive. It was also noted in these FGDs that they are likely

to share this information as a method to find the facts due to the lack of reputable fact-checkers in Brunei, but this perpetuates the circulation of misinformation and disinformation among the community members.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

It was noted in FGDs with the youth, educators, elderly, and underprivileged that critical thinking and information competence is an important aspect in combatting disinformation. Interestingly, the elderly and underprivileged also believe that the ability to navigate the digital world such as the ability to use devices is not important to this end.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The most noticeable divide in digital literacy in Brunei is age and education. The elderly are more likely in all aspects to have less digital literacy. As they grew up in a pre-digital world, they faced a greater challenge in adapting to the digital age. Currently, there are a limited number of programs to engage the elderly in learning to navigate the digital world. Similarly, there are not many resources for those with lower education to learn further.

There is also a cultural aspect brought up during FGD, where there is no motivation to learn to adapt to the digital age from the elderly. Particularly a sense of entitlement among the elderly, to relinquish their responsibility to navigate the digital world to their children or grandchildren. Another aspect brought about during FGD was clear communication and trust between the age groups and laymen. The efforts to engage the elderly and laymen have been hampered by poor social relations and trust between youth changemakers, and the elderly and underprivileged. There are several programs run by government agencies to connect with these vulnerable groups, however, the awareness of these programs among the public, let alone the target groups is limited at best.

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

An interesting observation noted during this research was the community-based fact-checking, consistent among various demographics. Due to a lack of information resources, communities become precious social resources to navigate the digital world. Several participants are noted to have higher social credentials due to their high-level employment within the government, particularly a youth senior

officer within the information department. Access to better resources or higher levels of digital literacy would diminish their social credentials.

Similarly, within the context of smaller communities such as family groups and workspaces, the responsibility to parse information, especially regarding the digital world is handed over to the youth. It is a norm for the senior members of these small communities to exploit their social status to achieve this. These were observed among both youth and elderly. However, this data finds that parents within the underprivileged communities are responsible for digital literacy. They pass down the skill and knowledge to children still in primary schools too. Some notable findings from this study, educators agree about the importance of cultivating a lifestyle of critical thinking and being well-informed.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

To further understand the digital divide present among the vulnerable, these factors are currently causing the issue: the lack of a reliable source of information, the lack of a fact-checker, the lack of public awareness of existing efforts to educate, and the average education level. It has been noted through interviews with government officials and focus groups with educators that the current system of decentralized and lack of coordination and leadership creates gaps in which misinformation thrives.

As mentioned previously, the lack of reliable information and fact-checking has increased the need for community-based regulation. While the

decentralized system diminishes any efforts made by individual ministries and agencies to combat misinformation and disinformation, such as the lack of a coordinated media awareness campaign for programs such as the “Informed Society Program”.

As seen in the figures prior, the average education of Bruneians is upper secondary schools. However, what

should be noted is that there has been no retention system since its abolishment in 2007 (Hj Abu Bakar, 2021) and this may be the reason for the lack of critical thinking and information competence amongst the public. It was noted in the FGD with youth and educators that teachers in Brunei do not receive enough support from their Ministry which may affect the quality of the education received by the youth.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

Despite shortcomings in digital literacy amongst the public and underprivileged communities, several NGOs have worked among the communities to hold and support campaigns against misinformation. Many of those in underprivileged communities are self-employed or run small businesses, and they are aware of the importance of their reputation and how it can be quickly destroyed by misinformation. Considering this, these communities have strengthened their relations to protect each other from harmful misinformation and disinformation by regulating their sharing of information.

Elevating Underprivileged Youth

As it currently stands, underprivileged youth do not suffer from a lack of access to digital devices. However,

the quality of education received is both the barrier and enabler to elevating them. As noted in interviews with the Head of Schools and FGD with educators, the Ministry of Education is seeking to integrate a digital citizenship program into the curriculum. One school (Pengiran Anak Puteri Masna Secondary School) was the pilot school for this integration program and the results have been promising.

Quality education does not stop at formal education, and current public discourse and FGDs with Educators has suggested that a large section of Bruneian parents do not supplement their children's formal education by supporting their learning efforts. The government controls the dissemination of religious sermons through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and through the Community Leaders in the form of Imams, there have been several sermons in 2023 that focus on the parental support of education.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Digital Literacy Regional & National Policies

Equipping the Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

As noted previously, increased participation from family units in the education of these youth is required

on top of exercises in identifying past misinformation. Recommendations to improve digital literacy skills are already acted on by the Ministry, such as information literacy and critical thinking lessons. However, the strained resources educators are working with will also need to be addressed moving forward.

CONCLUSION

The citizens of Brunei, both the public and underprivileged require a clear flow of information and resources for fact-checking, preferably from the government due to low trust in third-party fact-checkers. Current government efforts are scattered

and will need to be centralized to achieve success in combatting misinformation and disinformation, along with increasing the digital literacy of currently vulnerable and underprivileged communities.

CAMBODIA



- **OVERVIEW**
- **YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW**
- **BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
- **DIGITAL LITERACY**
- **LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION**
- **BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE**
- **LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS**
- **RECOMMENDATION**
- **CONCLUSION**

OVERVIEW

Cambodia Innovation and Economic Growth

Cambodia is a country that has rapidly transformed in recent years from a war-torn country to a peaceful developing country. One of the main drivers of this change is the adoption and use of digital technology, which has opened new opportunities and challenges for the Cambodian people. According to the latest data from DataReportal, there were 11.37 million internet users in Cambodia at the beginning of 2023, with an internet penetration rate of 67.5%. As of January 2023, there were 10.95 million social media users in Cambodia, accounting for 65% of the total population. Furthermore, as of January 2023, the country had 22 million mobile phone connections, which means there were more mobile phone connections than there were residents in Cambodia. Developments in digital technology have enabled Cambodians to access information, education, health, entertainment and other services online.

Cambodia Inequality and Exclusion

Social exclusion highlights the fact that people (individuals or groups) can be socially excluded and face discrimination due to diverse factors. Social exclusion covers social, political, cultural and economic dimensions and is characterised by unequal power relations. This leads to groups being marginalised and pushed outside of mainstream society. According to a report from Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) 2021, in Cambodia there are some factors that can undermine the realisation of inclusivity especially experienced in Cambodian social system namely disability, indigenous groups, gender equity, sexual orientation, and HIV status.

Cambodia Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

A report by data aggregator [DataReportal](#) shows that Cambodia has more than 22 million mobile phone users and more than 12 million social media users as of January 2022, primarily on Facebook and TikTok. Nearly 18 million people are registered as internet users as of September 2022, according to the Kingdom's telecommunication regulator. However, despite improved connectivity, only 30% of Cambodians have basic knowledge of media and digital literacy. The situation is especially difficult for indigenous peoples. The Open Development Cambodia (ODC) estimates indigenous peoples comprise around 200,000 or 1.2% of Cambodia's population spread across 24 groups speaking 19 languages, mostly located in northeastern Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri and Kratie provinces.

The indigenous people facing difficulties to receive digital literacy education. Digital rights experts say there are three main factors putting indigenous peoples susceptible to online misinformation: a lack of social media and digital skills, lack of reliable and accessible sources of information, and ongoing marginalization due to their ethnic identities, such as lack of Khmer language literacy.

In 2023, EngageMedia's Greater Internet Freedom project highlighted issues of online expression, notably online gender-based violence (OGBV) and disinformation. In Cambodia, 20% of female netizens face online harassment, with the LGBT+ community, youth, and activists at even higher risk, and Facebook is the most common venue for such harassment. Additionally, Facebook's algorithms and insufficient content moderation contribute to the spread of disinformation, with notable individuals like human rights activist Luon Sovath suffering from coordinated attacks on the platform.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Profile of the Underprivileged Community: Who are They?

The study sample comprised of 250 individuals from multiple geographical areas within Cambodia with a profile that was defined as 'underprivileged.' A key age division within the sample were those who identified as youth (61%) or elderly (39%)(Fig. 2.1).

Sample members tended to reflect a larger proportion of females (60%) than males (38%) while a very small number of individuals (less than 1%) identified themselves a non-binary (Fig. 2.2).

In terms of marital status and number of children, a majority of the sample indicated that they were single (61%) while about a third (34%) said they were married, and a small number (4%) said they were divorced or widowed (Fig. 2.3). With such a large sample of single persons, most respondents indicated that they did not have children (63%); nevertheless, 37% indicated that they did have children (Fig. 2.4).

Given the simultaneously youthful and elderly composition of the sample, it was not surprising that most of respondents indicated that they were not working (67%) (Fig. 2.5).

Figure 2.1. Age

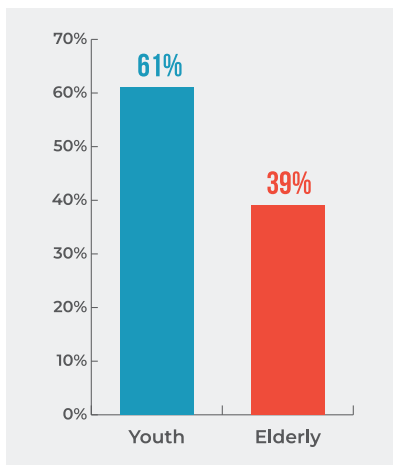


Figure 2.2. Gender

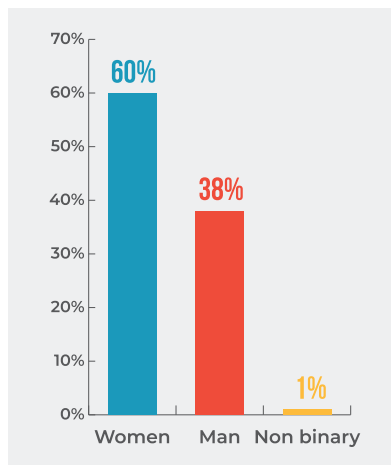


Figure 2.3. Marital Status

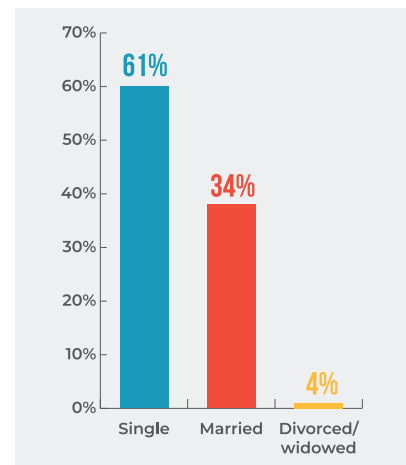


Figure 2.4. Number of Children

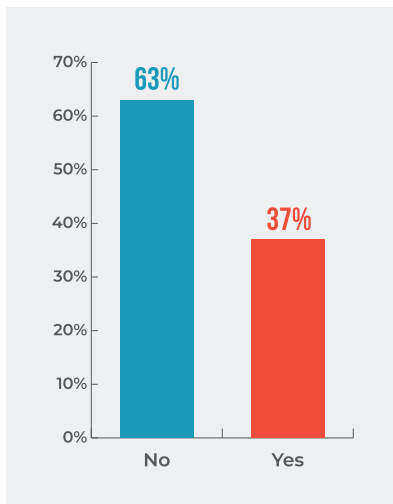


Figure 2.5. Employment of Status

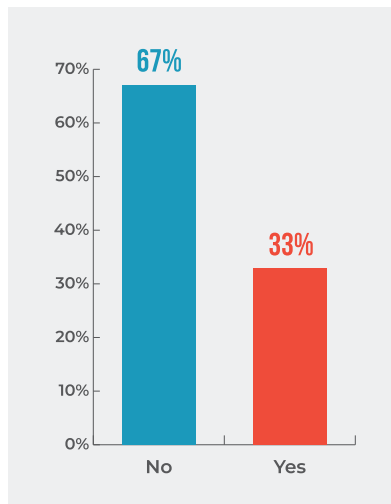
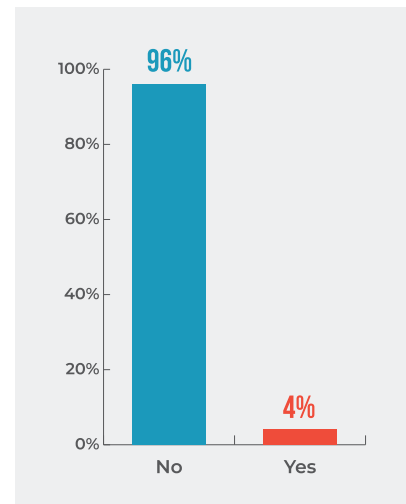


Figure 2.6. Identification of Disability



A surprisingly large proportion of the sample indicated that they had some sort of disability (4%), which compares with the general population proportion of about 5% (Fig. 2.6).

A large proportion of the sample reported having an upper secondary level education (63%) while only about 4% of sample members reported having no formal education at all (Fig. 2.7). Those only completing

primary school numbered about 20% of the sample while about 1% reported having a university degree.

Regarding indigenous identity, the findings show 2% identified as being a member of an indigenous group (e.g., Tampuan, Kreung, Phnong, etc.) (Fig. 2.8). Such indigenous groups tend to be most concentrated in the remote northeastern provinces of Cambodia.

Figure 2.7. Education Background

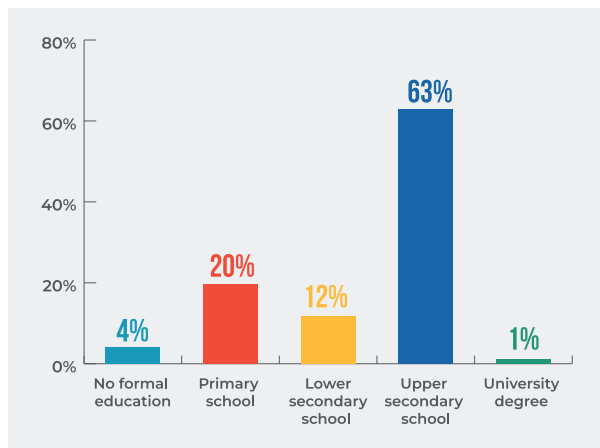
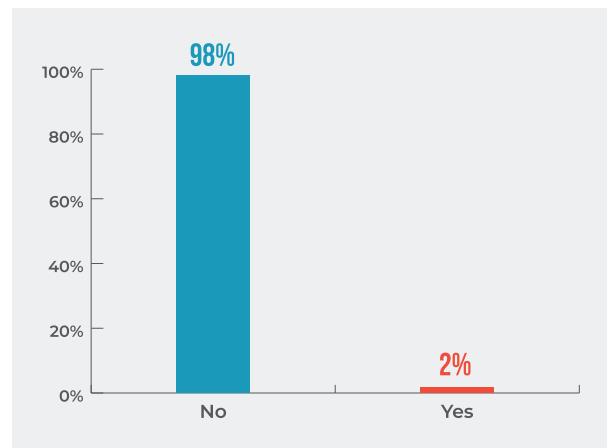


Figure 2.8. Identification as Indigenous



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Main Devices Ownership

Mobile telecommunications are the primary digital tool in economically disadvantaged areas, outpacing computer laptops and tablets (Fig. 2.9). The ownership of mobile communication as the main device to access the internet is not unexpected as the GDP per capita of the country is quite low in comparison with other nations in Southeast Asia. Mobile telecommunications are the cheapest digital gadgets that can be attained by most of the community members, especially affordable mobile phones from Chinese brands.

Moreover, the ownership of these main devices, mainly computer laptop and tablet are contingent upon demographic factors (Fig. 2.10). Having children, employment status, gender and indigenous identity associates with computer laptop ownership, and regarding tablet ownership, the findings only identify one significant factor of having children.

Figure 2.9. Main Devices Ownership

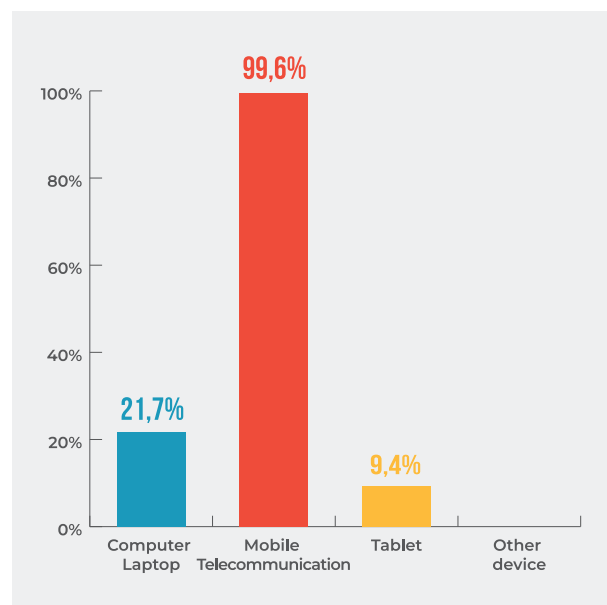


Figure 2.10. Main Devices Ownership Determinants

	Computer Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age				
Marital Status				
Having children				
Employment				
Gender				
Disability				
Education				
Indigenous				

Using News Platforms

The preference for social media and TV to obtain news is consistent with socio-economic conditions in Cambodia (Fig. 2.11). It is argued that there are three main reasons that propel television and social media ownership: “free subscription” media, their ubiquity, and easy to use. Media that need higher literacy such as print publications, news portals, and instant messengers are only owned by a small fraction of community members.

The utilization of diverse media platforms to source news varies across demographic factors (Fig. 2.12). It suggests that owning digital media is a factor of education (i.e., online browser and instant messenger) and gender (i.e., social media). In addition, in having mass media, such as television, the data identifies two significant determinants of marital status and gender. One interesting result is that gender is associated with the ownership of mass and digital media.

Figure 2.11. Main Devices Ownership

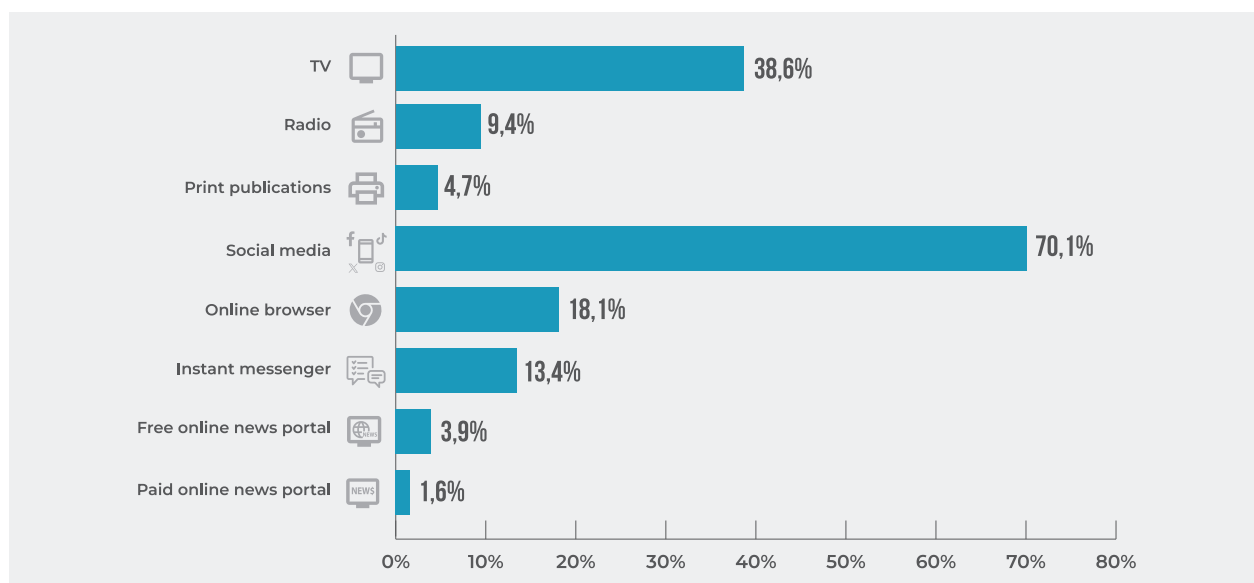


Figure 2.12. Main Devices Ownership Determinants

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Members of the underprivileged community have used mobile applications to cater to diverse needs (Fig. 2.13), hence they mostly access public services such as e-government (20.5%) and e-social security (52.6%). On the other hand, the use for daily activities, such as e-commerce (20.9%), e-banking (16.5%), and online payment (16.6%), are considered infrequent. Utilizing e-health (12.2%) is less prevalent for those who live in the lower socio-economic hierarchy.

Education has a big impact on the use of mobile applications for the underprivileged community (Fig. 1.14). The use of e-banking, online payment, e-commerce, e-government, and e-social security are dependent on one's level of education. In accessing public services, such as e-health, e-government, and e-social security, other factors of age and indigenous status can also influence community members to use or not use mobile applications.

Figure 2.13. Mobile Application Usage

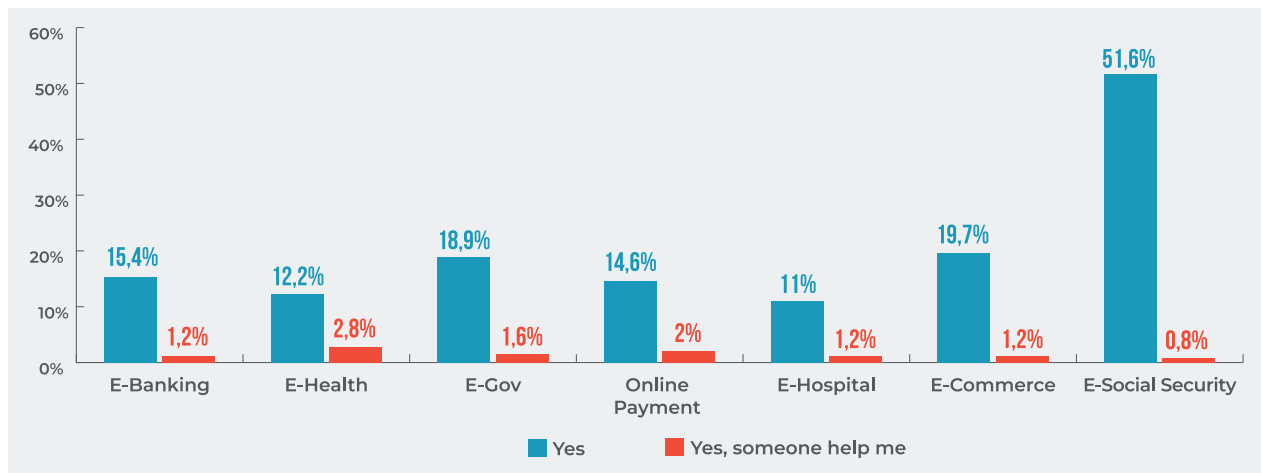


Figure 2.14. Mobile Application Usage

	E-Banking	E-Health	E-Gov	Online Payment	E-Hospital	E-Commerce	E-Social Security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

The use of social media as a means of community building is at a moderate level below 70% (Fig. 2.15). The highest activity is creating social media content followed by commenting and reposting posts, respectively. These results indicate that even though most members are not actively engaged with social media when they use the platform, they are considered productive users by generating content.

Two demographic determinants of age and education significantly predicted community-building activities on social media (Fig. 2.16). Community members' ability to create, comment and repost social media content can be explained by their age and level of education. Those who are younger and well-educated

may perform better in creating, commenting, and reposting social media content.

Figure 2.15. Community Building Activities

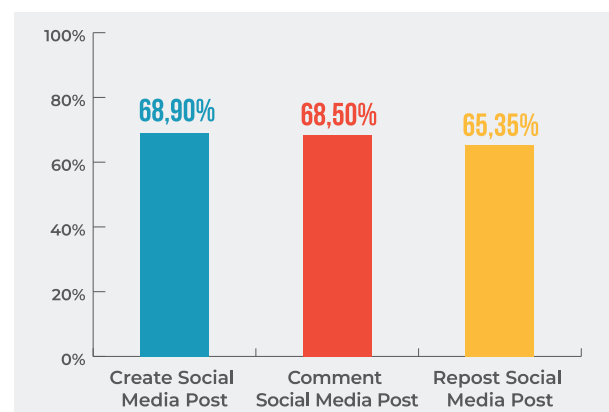


Figure 2.16. Community Building Determinants

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy is measured through five dimensions of information competence, privacy protection, critical thinking, social media trust, and confidence in news sharing. The findings indicate various demographics are associated with five dimensions of digital literacy (Fig. 2.17). Employment and educational attainment

can contribute to the acquirement of information competency and confidence in news sharing, and on the other hand, age can explain the possession of privacy protection literacy. Moreover, capability to think critically and in trusting social media cannot be predicted by any demographic factors.

Figure 2.17. Digital Literacy Determinants

	Information Competence	Privacy Protection	Critical Thinking	Trust Social Media	News Sharing
Age					
Marital Status					
Having children					
Employment					
Gender					
Disability					
Education					
Indigenous					

Critical Thinking

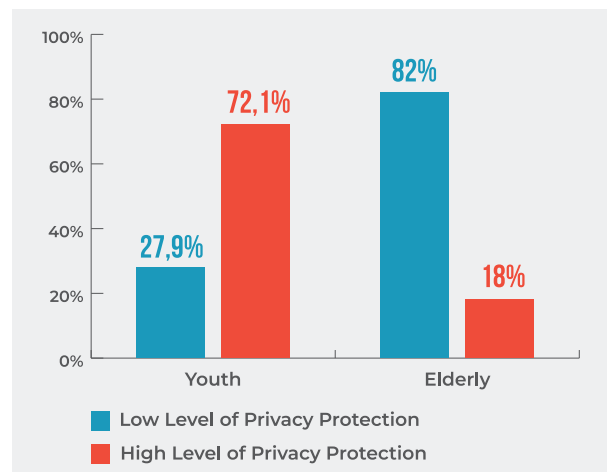
The research findings suggest that no demographics are associated with the attainment of critical thinking. It is likely those who yield high or low levels of critical thinking literacy are not dependent on their biological and socio-economic conditions. Further research is needed to understand better how critical thinking literacy is gained by community members.

Privacy Protection

Age is the sole demographic factor that contributes to the acquisition of privacy protection skills (Fig. 2.18). The proportion of younger generation who has high levels of privacy determinant are four times bigger than the elderly (72.1%), and at the low-level privacy literacy, the number of the older cohort is almost three times that of youth (82%). This suggests

a big gap between youth and elderly exists and the government should create intervention programs that can close the generational rift.

Figure 2.18. Privacy Protection



Information Competence

The level of information competence is evaluated using feedback from community that measure the capability of community members to assess the veracity of digital media content and the credibility of the source. Those who generate a high score are expected to manage and protect personal information in an online setting. Two demographic factors of employment status and education are significant predictors of information competence skills (Fig. 2.19). Those who hold higher degrees of upper secondary diplomas and university degrees yield high level of information competence (62.7% and 66.7%), and those who earned lesser degrees are disadvantaged. In addition, a high level of information competence is also associated with community members who don't have a permanent occupation. Interestingly, more members who are not employed possess higher level of information competence (58.2%) compared with members who are employed (34.5%).

Trust in Social Media

Literacy related to trust in social media reflects an ability to curb disinformation and hoax content.

Community members are expected to have the competency to detect and act accordingly when they encounter misinformation, disinformation, and other untrustworthy information. Hence, the research findings show no demographic factors contributing to this specific skill (Fig. 2.17).

Confidence in Engaging with News

Those who yield a high competency in engaging with news are well-educated and have no fixed-term jobs (Fig. 2.20). Someone who has higher degrees or holds diplomas at the lowest from upper secondary schools is advantaged and their competency to engage with news is high. Having higher education can help community members to actively interact with news that makes them well-informed to avoid misinformation and disinformation. There is a notable increase in high confidence as education level rises, with lower secondary school respondents at 33.3% high confidence, upper secondary school at 64% high confidence, and university degree holders at 100% high confidence. Another group of members who benefit are those who don't have a job and it may be a factor of time availability in

Figure 2.19. Information Competence

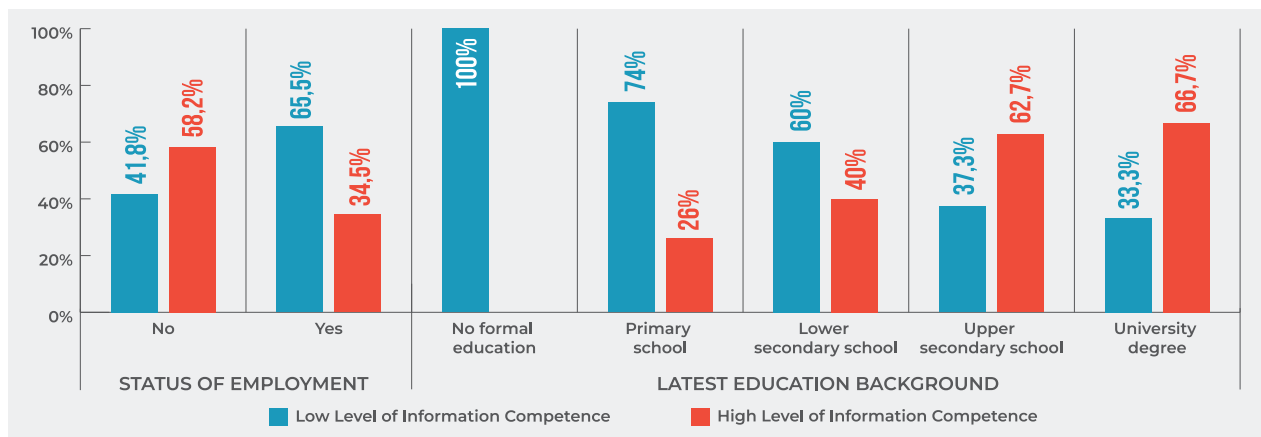
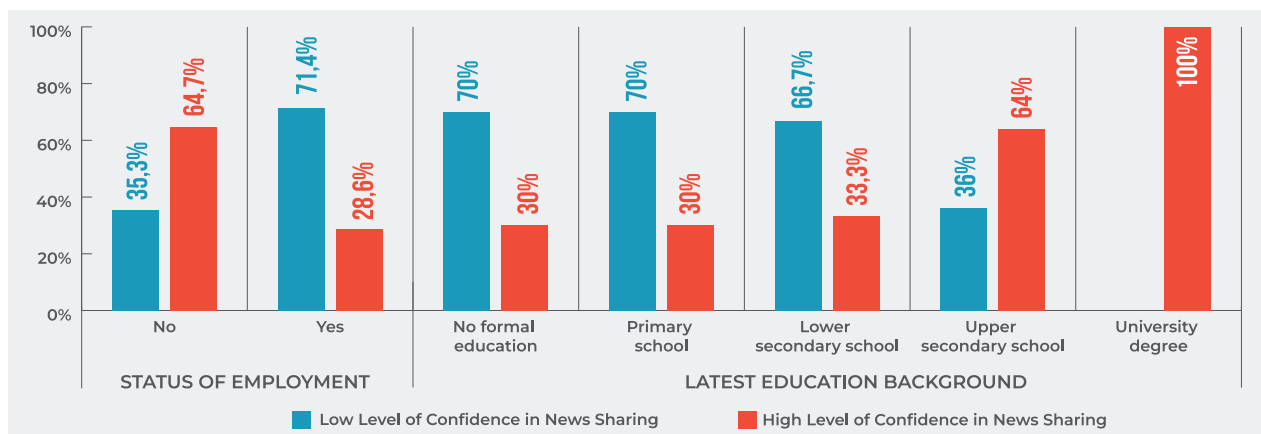


Figure 2.20. Confidence in Engaging with News



which they can read more news than those who are busy at work and have less time to consume news. Individuals not employed show a higher percentage of low confidence in news sharing (64.7%) compared

to those employed with a lower percentage of low confidence (28.6%). Conversely, employed individuals have a higher percentage of low confidence in news sharing (71.4%) than those not employed (35.3%).

LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

The results show that most underprivileged community members in Cambodia are not familiar with the term "disinformation" and "misinformation," often considering disinformation as fake news. However, the youth demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding, defining misinformation as the spread of wrong information with the aim to cheat and take advantage of others, and disinformation as news with unknown sources, no date, and created with the intention to confuse people between fact and fake news. In contrast, the elderly have limited knowledge of these terms, with some stating that they do not know the meaning of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. The community members and local authorities also exhibit limited knowledge and understanding of the side effects of disinformation and fake news, with basic digital skills and vulnerability to becoming victims of disinformation on social media platforms. This result reflects varying levels of knowledge and comprehension across different demographic groups, with the youth demonstrating a more comprehensive understanding compared to the elderly and community members.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

Identifying recent disinformation and trends involves gathering insights from diverse demographic groups, including youths, communities, and the elderly. The underprivileged community expressed concerns about the proliferation of fake news and false information on social media platforms like Facebook and Telegram, emphasizing the lack of credibility verification leading to individuals falling prey to disinformation. Account hacking and financial extortion resulting from fake news were also noted. Within the underprivileged community in Cambodia, common forms of deception were repeatedly mentioned. These include false messages enticing recipients with promises of large sums of

money, job opportunities abroad with unrealistic salaries, fraudulent widowers seeking bank cooperation, and fake romantic gestures requiring a tax fee for supposed gifts. These tactics highlight how scammers exploit disinformation to defraud individuals in Cambodia.

Risk of Disinformation against the Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

The research underscores the grave risk of disinformation targeting underprivileged individuals, particularly in its production, consumption, and spread. Insufficient support at sub-national and national levels hampers effective disinformation combat, leaving these individuals susceptible to its harmful effects such as financial losses and the inability to recover. Disinformation, often crafted with deceitful motives, exploits vulnerable groups economically and romantically. Fake news is designed to mimic reality or offer enticing deals to lure engagement on fraudulent platforms. Vulnerable communities report exploitation on social media, where deceptive practices align with digital behaviors. Misinformation widely circulates online, tricking individuals into making online purchases or believing in false promises of monetary gains. Limited digital literacy compounds the issue, as individuals may not critically assess information before trusting or sharing it.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

The research highlights the challenges faced by various demographic groups, particularly underprivileged communities, in understanding and addressing issues related to digital literacy and disinformation. It reveals a lack of comprehensive training and education on digital literacy and disinformation, particularly in public schools and communities. While some youth groups have gained knowledge about these terms through informal channels such as friends, relatives,

and social media, the overall understanding remains limited, especially among the elderly and community leaders. Government officials acknowledge the existence of digital literacy training but note that it is insufficient and lacks effective dissemination, particularly at the sub-national or community level. It underscores the need for comprehensive and accessible digital literacy and disinformation training,

particularly in underprivileged communities, and highlights the current gaps in education and training programs at both the public school and community levels. The challenges in understanding these terms are attributed to the lack of comprehensive training, limited knowledge among teachers, and inadequate dissemination of training programs, particularly at the sub-national or community level.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The research underscores the vulnerability of underprivileged communities to disinformation due to limited digital literacy and resources. It points out the risks this poses to their safety, economic stability, and trust in information. The document stresses the importance of government and community leader support, as well as the need for policies to fight disinformation and strengthen digital literacy among vulnerable groups, including youth and the elderly. The findings call for targeted measures to enhance digital resilience and protect these communities in Cambodia.

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

The study finds that digital literacy, education, and community interactions significantly affect how individuals respond to disinformation. People with lower digital literacy and education are more prone to trust and spread false information. Personal beliefs and community belonging also shape reactions to disinformation, leading to emotions like anger or disappointment, or prompting a learning response. Community reactions, which can include criticism, further influence how those deceived by disinformation recover from their experiences.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

Although the result shows there is a general lack of digital literacy and familiarity with digital platforms among the underprivileged communities, certain groups within the community can access digital media. Children with higher education play a role in informing their parents about misinformation and fake news, indicating that younger generations may be a conduit for digital access and education within the communities. Contrariwise, community members, especially elderly, are at risk of disinformation because of their basic digital skills and limited education. They trust local agencies but need more support to enhance their digital literacy. This study believes the underprivileged community can rely on educators. With their education and experience, teachers are better equipped to discern and avoid disinformation. They rely on credible sources and guide their circles in navigating social media information.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

The resilience of underprivileged communities in Cambodia in the digital era is influenced by their levels of digital literacy and access to information. Local

authorities and community leaders acknowledge the vulnerability of their communities to disinformation and online scams due to a lack of formal training in digital literacy. However, proactive measures are being taken to combat technological crimes and misinformation.

Underprivileged ecosystem against mis/disinformation

The underprivileged individuals in Cambodia have shown resilience by learning from their experiences with misinformation and disinformation. They have become more cautious in sharing news, verifying information, and increasing their digital literacy. Particularly, youths have developed a skeptical attitude towards online information, actively countering misinformation and demonstrating critical thinking skills. The study emphasizes the need for enhanced physical and financial support from sub-national and national levels to combat misinformation and disinformation, highlighting the importance of reliable resources and implementing regulations to empower underprivileged communities in Cambodia.

Prevention from damaging consequence of dis/misinformation

Local communities in Cambodia are actively spreading awareness about fake news and disinformation through online and offline channels, focusing on educating vulnerable students. NGOs offer short training courses to combat misinformation and technology crimes, while schools caution students about online information without a formal curriculum. The study highlights the need for more comprehensive national strategies to tackle misinformation, suggesting government oversight on news releases and digital literacy training for civil servants and the public. Despite the absence of a formal national strategy, local and NGO initiatives are empowering underprivileged

communities in Cambodia to combat misinformation effectively.

Underprivileged communities in Cambodia have bolstered digital resilience by adopting cautious news-sharing practices, verifying information, and enhancing digital literacy to combat misinformation and disinformation. They now prioritize personal data protection and educate others on the risks of spreading false information. Community leaders play a vital role in fighting misinformation, safeguarding vulnerable groups, and promoting digital literacy through various initiatives like addressing online issues and collaborating with local authorities. These collective efforts underline the resilience of underprivileged communities in Cambodia against the adverse impacts of misinformation and disinformation.

Elevating Underprivileged Youth

The research offers recommendations to enhance the digital literacy and resilience of underprivileged youth in Cambodia. It emphasizes the need for improved digital literacy at regional and national levels, integrating digital literacy skills into education, and developing pedagogies to enhance critical thinking. Additionally, it suggests activating the role of libraries, establishing a specialized agency to address fake news, increasing cyber police participation, and enforcing strict laws to deter misinformation. These recommendations aim to empower underprivileged youth and bridge the digital divide in Cambodia.

RECOMMENDATION

Equipping the Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

Pedagogies recommendation

The underprivileged communities in Cambodia have gained insights into personal data protection and the harmful effects of sharing false information. They are actively alerting and informing their social circles about preventing the spread of misleading information. However, the lack of support from higher levels has hindered efforts to combat misinformation, leading to damaging consequences such as property and financial losses. To address these challenges, enhancing digital skills and implementing regulations and

policies to combat misinformation and disinformation are essential.

Programme recommendation

The elevation of underprivileged youth requires the development of media, information, and digital literacy courses for youth and students, integrated into the national school curriculum. Additionally, awareness campaigns on the impact of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news should be conducted in communities and through social media networks. Training on media and information literacy

(MIL) should be provided to youth and students, both offline and online, with support from the government and developing partners. Furthermore, a sharing session or panel discussion on MIL is also recommended to enhance digital literacy among underprivileged youth. Government efforts should focus on initiating and developing proper regulations, policies, and programs to combat misinformation and disinformation across the country. Reliable resources and support, both technical and financial, should be provided to national and sub-national levels to effectively implement these regulations, policies, and programs. Collaboration with local and international developing partners is crucial, and national strategies to combat misinformation and disinformation should be developed. Community leaders play a vital role in raising awareness of the impacts of misinformation and disinformation in their communities. They should actively support community members and coordinate efforts to address misinformation and disinformation. Building relationships with local and international developing partners is essential, and seeking more financial support for related activities is crucial.

Curricula recommendation

Education institutions should take the initiative to develop media, information, and digital literacy (MIDL) courses or curriculum for students and integrate them into the national curriculum. Training workshops on MIDL for both teachers and students in underprivileged communities should be proposed and developed. Raising awareness on MIDL in schools and through social media platforms is essential, and collaboration with local and international developing partners is recommended to enhance digital literacy among underprivileged youth. Addressing misinformation and disinformation in underprivileged communities requires a multi-faceted approach, including government efforts, community leadership, and initiatives within education institutions. By implementing proper regulations, policies, and programs, and enhancing digital literacy, underprivileged communities can better combat the damaging consequences of misinformation and disinformation.

CONCLUSION

The research provides insights into the digital landscape in Cambodia, highlighting the increasing internet usage and the challenges related to digital security and literacy. It also delves into the responses of underprivileged communities, including youth, teachers, parents, and the elderly, to misinformation and disinformation. The research findings reveal the proactive approach of these groups in dealing with false information and the efforts of community leaders and educators to combat misinformation and promote digital literacy. Additionally, the research emphasizes the need for regulations, policies, and programs to address misinformation and disinformation effectively.

The initiatives are crucial for addressing the challenges related to misinformation and disinformation in Cambodia. Establishing a specialized agency to combat fake news, cooperating with social organizations and academics for anti-hoax campaigns, increasing the participation of cyber police in monitoring online media, and enforcing strict laws against perpetrators of misinformation

and disinformation are essential steps to safeguard digital security and combat false information. Furthermore, equipping underprivileged youth with digital literacy skills, incorporating education on the importance of misinformation in the school curriculum, and providing scholarships for youth to learn about the impact of hoaxes are vital for enhancing digital literacy and critical thinking among the younger population. Additionally, the active involvement of community leaders and educators in raising awareness, conducting discussions, and implementing strategies to combat misinformation and disinformation is crucial for promoting digital literacy and countering false information in communities. Overall, the research underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between government agencies, community leaders, educators, and other stakeholders to address the challenges of misinformation and disinformation effectively. By implementing these initiatives, Cambodia can work towards improving digital literacy, combating false information, and promoting a safer digital environment for its citizens.



INDONESIA

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 - DIGITAL LITERACY
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 - LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
 - RECOMMENDATION
 - CONCLUSION
- 

OVERVIEW

Indonesia Innovation and Economic Growth

Indonesia's digital economy has skyrocketed, boasting a 414% growth from 2017 to 2021 and projected to surge by 62% from 2021 to 2025. This expansion has propelled Indonesia as the leading digital economy in Southeast Asia, representing 42% of the region's digital economy. Notably, the country attracted substantial investments, with inflows reaching \$4.5 billion in 2020 and \$9.1 billion in 2021. Spearheaded by widespread internet access and a youthful demographic, the digital sector has revolutionized various industries, notably e-commerce and fintech. Despite remarkable progress, challenges persist, including a 'tech winter' impacting startups and concerns over employment inequality. In East Belitung, an area traditionally reliant on sectors like agriculture and mining, efforts towards digitalization are underway, with infrastructure development and regulatory support geared towards enhancing digital services and governance, alongside promoting non-cash transactions facilitated by partnerships with financial institutions.

Indonesia Inequality and Exclusion

The digital inequality in Indonesia is complex and pervasive, stemming from geographic challenges and disparities in gender, disability, and socioeconomic status. Despite initiatives like the Palapa Ring project, remote regions like Lanny Jaya and Paniai in Papua still struggle with internet access. Urban-rural gaps persist, with over 12,000 villages lacking infrastructure. Women face a substantial digital gap, influenced by cultural norms and economic constraints, leading to fewer opportunities for access. Similarly, individuals with disabilities encounter significant barriers, with

limited access to technology and online content that accommodates their needs. In East Belitung, despite infrastructure development efforts, cellular coverage gaps persist, affecting internet access in rural areas. To address these disparities, initiatives include expanding public internet hotspots and incentivizing ISPs to extend coverage, yet challenges like sparse banking infrastructure and discrepancies in device ownership across education levels remain significant hurdles to overcome.

Indonesia Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

The digital divide in Indonesia is complex, influenced by geographic challenges, urban-rural internet access differences, limited digital literacy, misinformation driven by social media usage, generational disparities, cultural barriers for women, and vulnerabilities among elderly individuals to cyber threats. Despite many efforts to bridge the gap, challenges persist, including the need for comprehensive evaluation, national coordination, and improved implementation strategies to address uneven internet access and digital literacy gaps. Disinformation poses a significant challenge in Indonesia, fueled by social media use and high internet penetration rates. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram facilitate the rapid spread of hoaxes, especially during politically sensitive periods like elections, leading to confusion and division. The government has taken measures like content removal and forming special teams to address disinformation, but challenges persist. Collaborative efforts involving various organizations are essential in combating misinformation, highlighting the need for media literacy and fact-checking initiatives.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Profile of the Underprivileged Community: Who are They?

We have gathered data from 263 participants, comprising 158 individuals aged between 18 and 35, and 105 respondents who are 55 years old or older. Here are (Fig. 3.1) the specifics regarding the characteristics of our survey participants:

Figure 3.1. Age

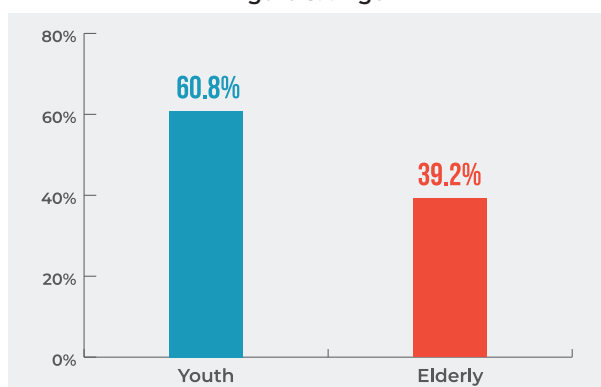


Figure 3.2. Gender

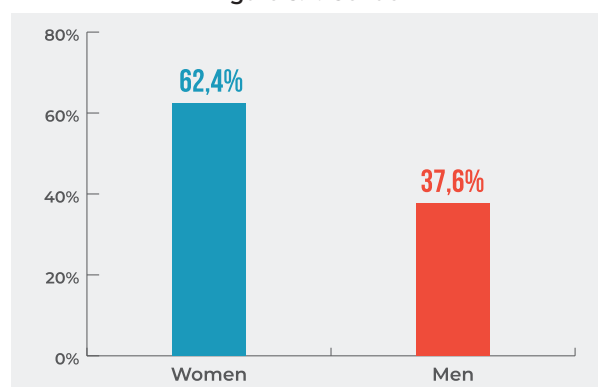


Figure 3.3. Marital Status

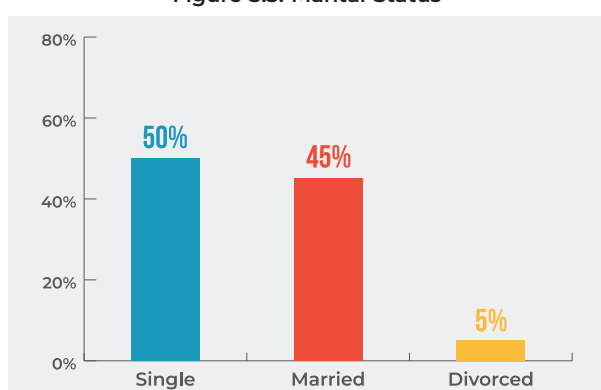
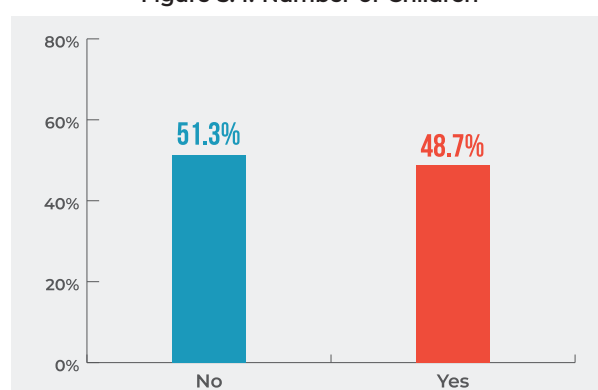


Figure 3.4. Number of Children



Most respondents in our survey are female, reflecting the challenges our enumerators encounter in reaching out to males and boys for participation (Fig. 3.2). In East Belitung, a significant number of males are primarily engaged in farming and mining, leading them to dedicate extensive hours to these activities during our timestamped data collection. Males typically embark on early morning commutes to farming or mining sites and return home late at night. This demanding schedule poses logistical difficulties in connecting with them during our survey efforts. Similarly, school-aged boys, despite attending school, contribute significantly to their families' farming or mining responsibilities. Consequently, they often need to promptly return home after school, limiting their availability for survey participation.

Almost half of the community members that were surveyed are single followed by 45% of married couples and 5% of divorcees or widows (Fig. 3.3). Given that most of our survey respondents are single, it is assumed that this community has fewer responsibilities for children (Fig. 3.4) and has more time to experiment with digital technology.

Based on data, nearly 60% of our survey respondents are unemployed (Fig. 3.5). This is largely influenced by over 100 respondents being youth enrolled in senior

high school. Notably, the absence of a 'student' option in the employment status question led them to choose 'no' in response to 'Are you currently employed?' Furthermore, it's worth highlighting that a significant portion of our survey samples comprises of women, who face a higher risk of unemployment due to their roles as housewives and associated domestic work responsibilities.

Aligned with the age group finding, a significant majority of our survey participants are young individuals, with over 25.1% currently pursuing education at the upper secondary school level (Fig. 3.6). Consequently, when asked about their highest level of completed education in the questionnaire, a considerable number indicated completion at the lower secondary school level. This stands in contrast to the elderly group, where the majority (39%) have completed their education in life, primarily at the upper secondary school (SMA) level.

According to the '*Belitung Dalam Angka*' Statistical Report, as of 2022, the *Harapan Lama Sekolah (HLS)* was reported to be 11.65 years. This suggests that children as young as 7 years old can complete their education up to the equivalent of senior high school. Furthermore, the report also mentions that the completion rate of education among adults in East Belitung is 42.17% for Senior High School (SMA).

Figure 3.5. Employment Status

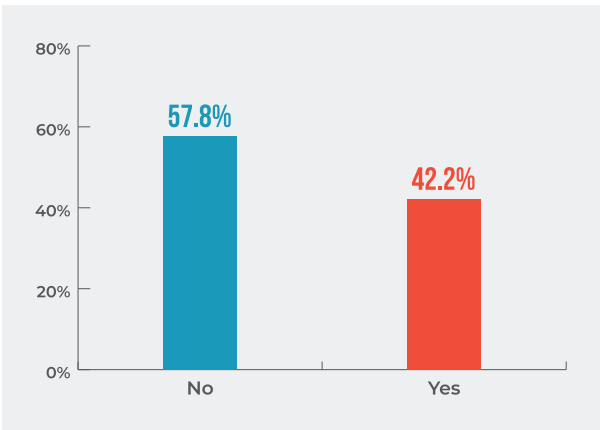
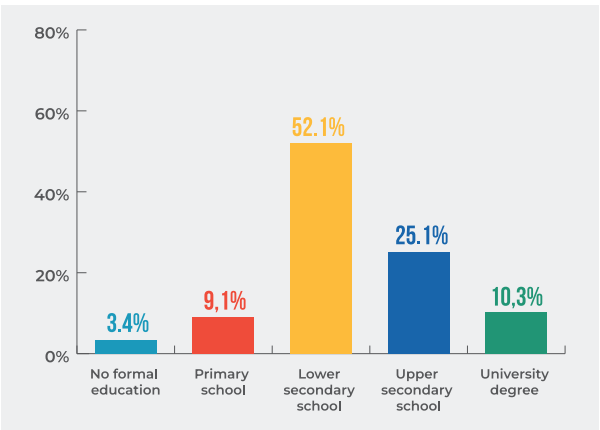


Figure 3.6. Educational Background



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Main Devices Ownership

Mobile telecommunications are the primary digital tool in economically disadvantaged areas in Indonesia, outpacing computer laptops and tablets (Fig. 3.7). The ownership of mobile communication as the main device to access the internet in Indonesia is desirable as the country experienced a 'leapfrog' phase in which Indonesians first encountered with the internet was through mobile technology rather than computer laptop. This stage can be associated with the GDP per capita of the country that sits in the middle of other Southeast Asia countries. Mobile telecommunications are affordable internet technology that can be acquired.

Among the main devices that are used by community members, only the possession of a computer laptop is associated with demographic factors (Fig. 3.8). Employment status and education can predict computer laptop ownership, and this implies the

attainment of computer laptop is a condition of personal needs and financial availability. Those who graduated from higher education need computer laptops as part of their profession and employment provides financial means to buy computer laptops.

Figure 3.7. Main Devices Ownership

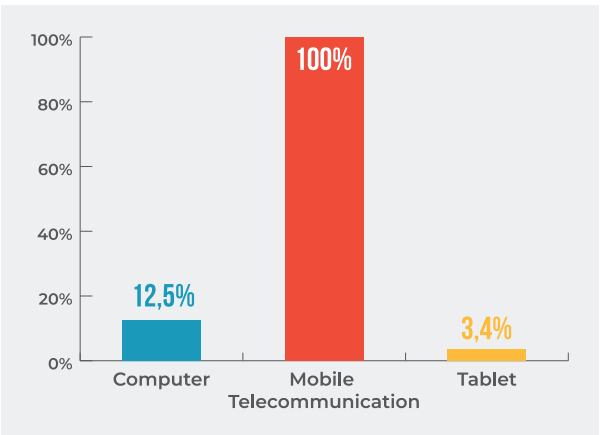


Figure 3.8. Main Devices Ownership Determinants

	Computer Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age				
Marital Status				
Having children				
Employment				
Gender				
Disability				
Education				
Indigenous				

Using News Platforms

The preference for social media, TV, and instant messenger to obtain news is consistent with media consumption practices in Indonesia (Fig. 3.9). The consumption of news through mixed channels of mass and digital media is expected since socio-economic and geographical conditions are the enabling factors. Indonesia is an archipelago nation and internet connections are intermittent in the small islands and remote areas where telecommunication infrastructure is relatively underdeveloped.

The utilization of diverse media platforms to source news varies across three demographic factors: education, age, and employment (Fig. 3.10). Education is the consistent determinant to predict six out of eight news platform sources followed by the age of four media sources, and employment for two media platforms. In accessing TV, age and employment are two significant determinants; while for other digital media, education is the important factor, and this relates to the need for basic digital literacy to consume news on internet platforms.

Figure 3.9. News Platforms

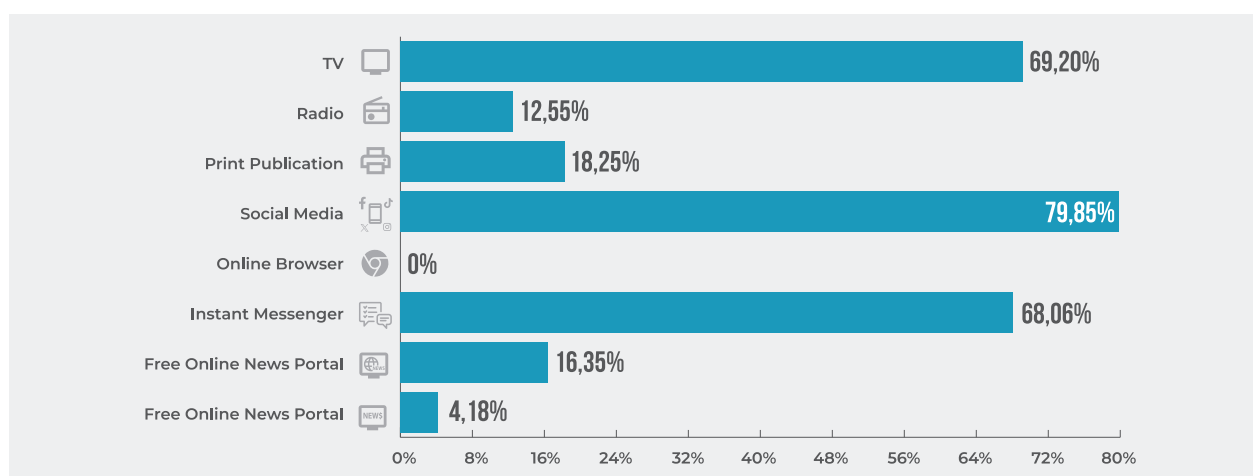


Figure 3.10. News Platforms Determinants

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Members of the underprivileged community have used mobile applications to cater to diverse needs (Fig. 3.11), yet the most used applications are related to personal and commercial services, such as e-commerce, online payment, and e-banking, respectively. Applications related to public services such as e-social security, e-health, e-hospital, and e-government are secondary use for community members and their usage of public services dependent on the help of someone else.

Age and education are two dominant factors predicting the use of mobile applications for the underprivileged community (Fig. 3.12). Other contributing factors are employment status associated with online payment, e-health, e-commerce, and e-social security; and gender on e-commerce. In general, those who graduated from higher education and younger cohorts can optimize their use of mobile applications because they are able to use all the available applications.

Figure 3.11. Mobile Application Usage

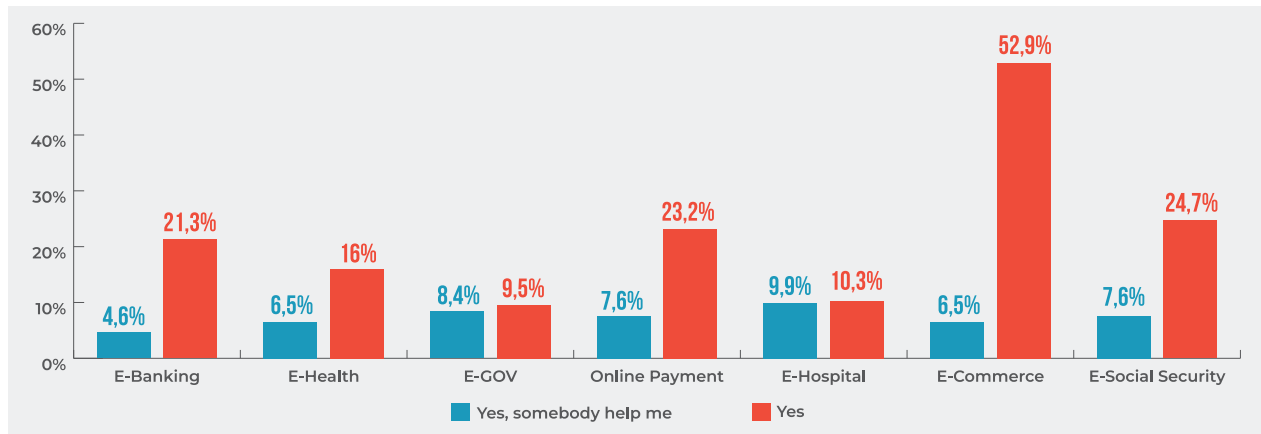


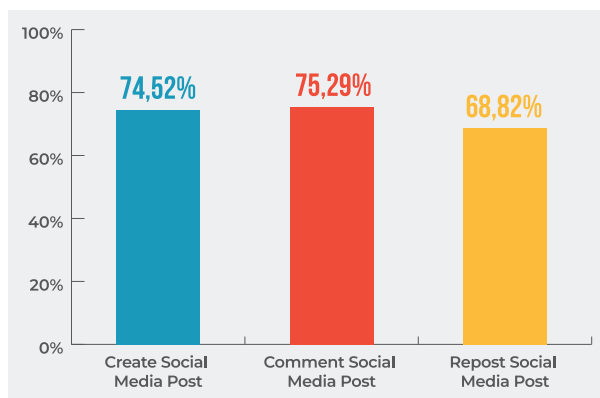
Figure 3.12. Mobile Application Usage

	E-Banking	E-Health	E-Gov	Online Payment	E-Hospital	E-Commerce	E-Social Security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

The use of social media as a means of community building is at a high level of over 65% (Fig. 3.13). The highest activity is commenting social media content

Figure 3.13. Community Building Activities



followed by creating and reposting posts, respectively. These results show that the underprivileged are actively engaged with social media content in that they consume and provide feedback or comment to the posts. In addition, they also productively generate content on social media. These suggest that community members are active social media users that can produce and comment on content.

Age, employment status, and education are three prominent factors relating to community building activities on social media (Fig. 3.14).. Community members' capability to create, comment and repost social media content are associated with those who are younger generation, have jobs, and well-educated. Other contributors such as being women and have no children can also predicted social media activities to build community.

Figure 3.14. Community Building Determinants

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital literacy is measured using five constructs of information competence, privacy protection, critical thinking, social media trust, and confidence in news sharing. The findings indicate various demographics are associated with four out of five dimensions of digital literacy (Fig. 3.15). Education

and the presence of children in the house are two dominant determinants of digital literacy. However, other demographics of age, employment status, and gender are also associated with elements of digital literacy on information competence and privacy protection.

Figure 3.15. Digital Literacy Determinants

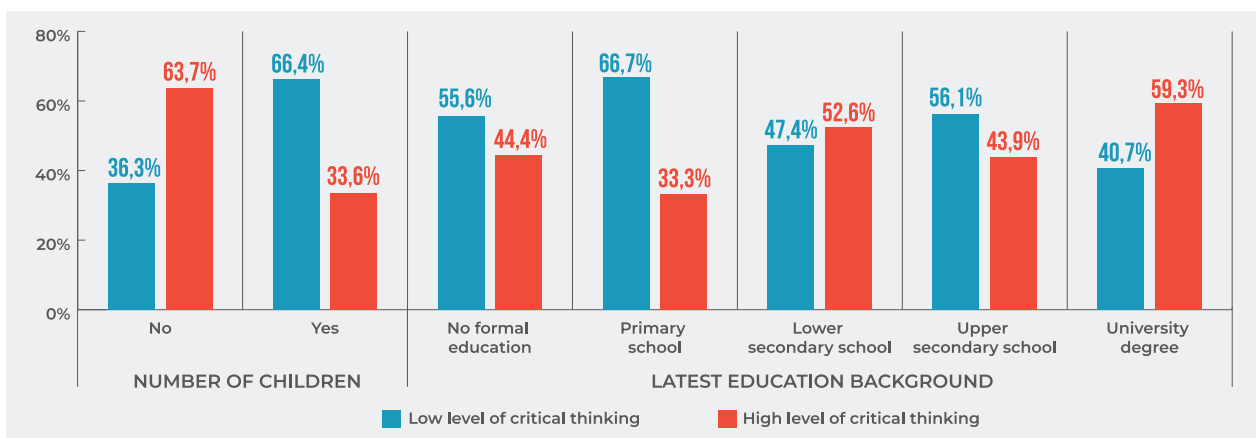
	Information Competence	Privacy Protection	Critical Thinking	Trust Social Media	News Sharing
Age					
Marital Status					
Having children					
Employment					
Gender					
Disability					
Education					
Indigenous					

Critical Thinking

Educational attainment and owning children in the household can influence critical thinking literacy levels (Fig. 3.16). Figure 3.16 reveals that those without children tend to have higher percentage of high critical thinking (63.7%), while those with children are more likely to have lower percentage of high critical thinking (33.6%). At the same time, individuals with lower secondary school education demonstrate a

higher level of critical thinking compared to those with an upper secondary school background. Additionally, university degree holders, regardless of age, tend to exhibit high critical thinking abilities regarding digital information. This is often due to many university graduates being employed in government services and the implementation of programs aimed at enhancing digital proficiency among government employees in East Belitung.

Figure 3.16. Critical Thinking



Privacy Protection

Privacy protection literacy is related to four demographic factors: age, children's possession, gender, and education (Fig. 3.17). Figure 3.17 shows that women in East Belitung show a more balanced

perception of privacy protection, with a slight leaning towards a higher level of privacy protection. In contrast, men have a higher tendency to perceive a low level of privacy protection. This may indicate that women are either more informed or more cautious

about privacy protection, or it could reflect their different patterns of digital platform usage compared to men. It also indicates that youth and elderly have contrasting perceptions of privacy protection; 73.4% of youth feel their privacy is highly protected, while only 13.7% of elderly share this view. Conversely, 86.3% of elderly perceive a low level of privacy protection, compared to 26.6% of youth. The figure also indicates that individuals with no formal education (66.7%) and upper secondary school (66.7%) largely perceive low privacy protection, while primary school (83.3%) and university graduates (55.6%) feel more secure. Lower secondary education holders are divided (high: 62.8%, low: 37.2%) in their perceptions of privacy protection. In East Belitung, individuals with lower secondary school education and those not currently employed show higher levels of privacy protection compared to those with upper secondary school education. This is influenced by advanced digital literacy skills among youth. Additionally, individuals with university degrees demonstrate remarkable proficiency in digital privacy protection, likely due to their employment

in government services and frequent use of digital platforms in professional tasks, intensifying their awareness and vigilance in protecting their privacy online.

Information Competence

The level of information competence is a measure of community members' capability to assess the veracity of digital media content and the source's credibility. Those who generate a high score can effectively manage and protect personal information in the internet milieu. Two demographic factors of education and employment status are important predictors of information competence skills (Fig. 3.19). Those who hold higher degrees of upper secondary diplomas and university degrees yield high level of information competence, and those who earned lesser degrees are deprived of digital benefits. Furthermore, a high level of information competence is also associated with community members who don't have a fixed occupation.

Figure 3.17. Privacy Protection

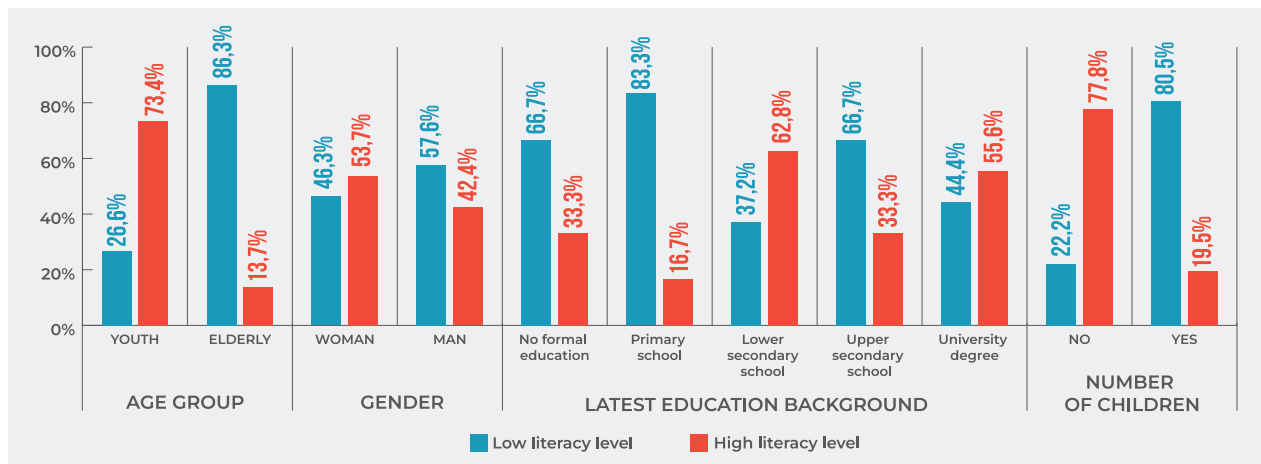


Figure 3.18. Information Competence Determinants

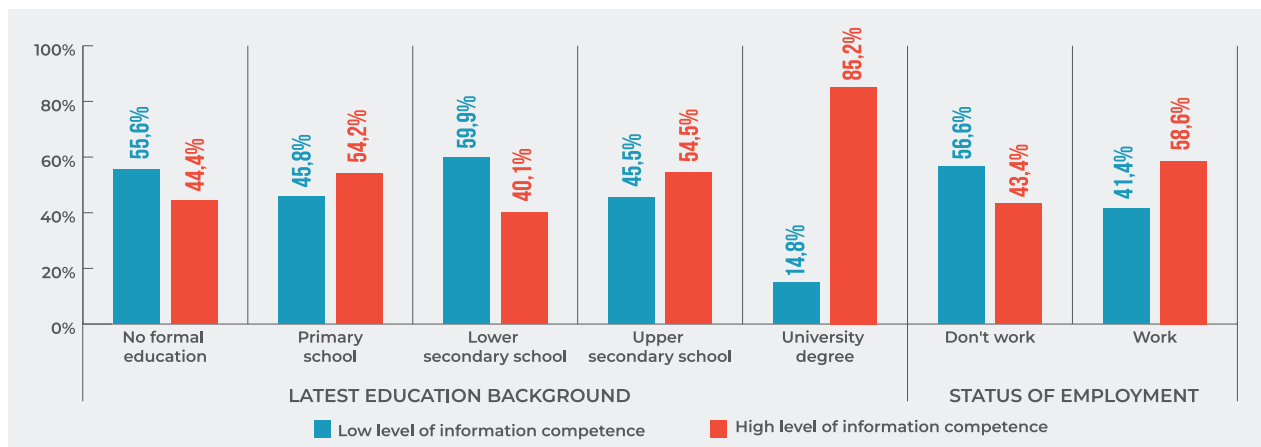
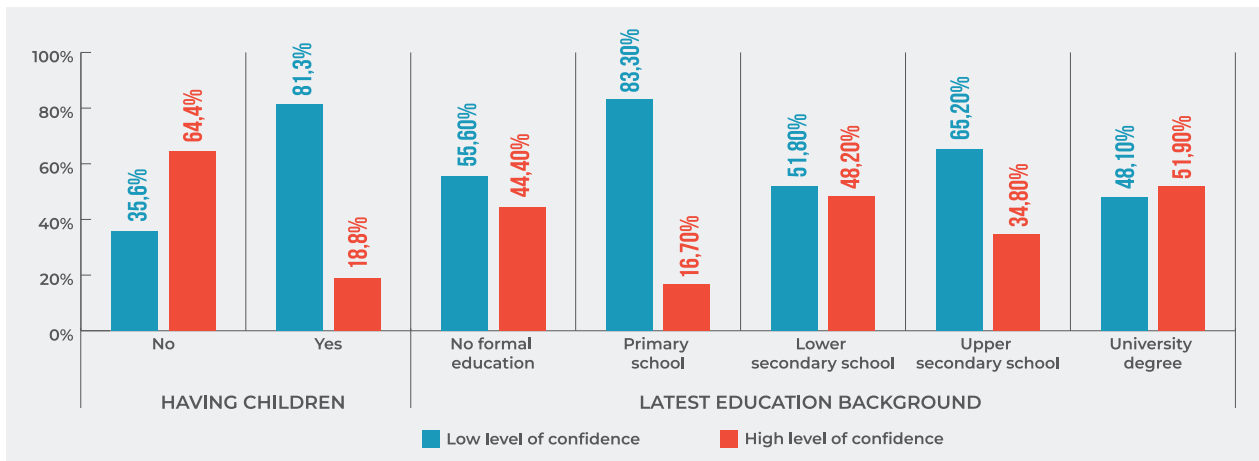


Figure 3.19. Confidence in Engaging with News



Trust in Social Media

Literacy related to trust in social media reflects an ability to mitigate misinformation, disinformation and other unverifiable information on social media. Community members are expected to have the capability to notice and respond accordingly when they see misinformation, disinformation, and other untrustworthy information. Hence, the research findings show no demographic factors contributing to this specific skill (Fig. 3.15).

Confidence in Engaging with News

Those who yield a better competency in engaging with news are well-educated and have no children (Fig. 3.19). It indicates a significant contrast in confidence levels

based on having children. Individuals without children tend to have a higher percentage of high confidence levels (64.4%), while those with children predominately exhibit lower percentage of high confidence levels (18.8%). Similar figure reveals that confidence levels in engaging with digital news are influenced by educational attainment but are not solely determined by it. Among the elderly, personal experiences with digital threats contribute significantly to their empowerment in combatting hoaxes, scams, and frauds, highlighting the value of experiential learning. Both young people and the elderly emphasize that increased frequency in using and interacting with digital platforms enhances their confidence in accessing, assessing, and utilizing digital content, cultivating familiarity and comfort with the online environment.

LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

There is a widespread lack of clarity among stakeholders, including teachers and community leaders, regarding the distinctions between misinformation, disinformation, and hoaxes. Many equate misinformation with miscommunication, perceiving it as a discrepancy between the intended message and its reception. Participants often interchange the terms hoax and misinformation, struggling to differentiate them, with some considering misinformation as news containing partial truths. Disinformation, meanwhile, is interpreted variably; while some view it as information of doubtful truthfulness, others mistakenly equate it with fake news. Teachers particularly see disinformation as unequivocally false information. Overall, there is a pervasive sense of confusion and overlap in the

understanding of these concepts, highlighting the need for clearer definitions and education on media literacy.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

Lottery fraud and scams, prevalent in the digital era, especially target vulnerable populations like the elderly, who may be less familiar with digital communication nuances. These scams often deceive individuals with promises of substantial rewards, exploiting their trust. Younger, tech-savvy family members play a vital role in educating and protecting older relatives from such schemes. In East Belitung, disinformation surrounding COVID-19 exacerbates community frustration,

highlighting the importance of reliable sources like government health agencies. Despite facing online health-related rumors, community members generally dismiss them, emphasizing the need for accurate information. Meanwhile, the misrepresentation of widowhood and unfounded security concerns on social media demonstrate the potential for misinformation to cause alarm and require careful investigation. Additionally, the rise of online gambling poses significant risks to youth, demanding a balanced approach to understanding its impact in the digital landscape.

Risk of Disinformation against the Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

The susceptibility of the underprivileged in Belitung Timur to disinformation is a pressing concern, exacerbated by the absence of a clear digital literacy definition from DISKOMINFO (Local Government Office of Communication and Information), suggesting oversight in fostering community literacy. Moreover, the lack of evidence for a strategic roadmap raises doubts about the readiness to shield against internet-related harms. The dearth of systematic teacher training programs underscores a critical deficiency,

leaving both educators and students vulnerable to misinformation. DISKOMINFO must proactively define digital literacy, develop strategic initiatives, and implement systematic training to fortify against misinformation and ensure a digitally resilient community. Additionally, the discontinuation of the hoax-checking team post-COVID-19 and the absence of reporting protocols contribute to misinformation spread, necessitating clear policies to manage disinformation effectively.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

Digital literacy challenges in Belitung Timur stem from a lack of interest in thorough reading and difficulty discerning reliable sources, exacerbating the community's vulnerability to hoaxes and misinformation. Despite the expectation for young individuals to navigate the internet responsibly, the local government, led by DISKOMINFO, lacks targeted strategies to protect those most at risk. While some digital literacy education exists in schools, high rates of school attrition leave many youths without essential skills to navigate the digital world safely. This leaves them vulnerable to various digital hazards, including online gambling and cyber-prostitution, highlighting the need for proactive measures to address these challenges.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The research underscores the vulnerability of underprivileged communities to disinformation due to limited digital literacy and resources. It points out the risks this poses to their safety, economic stability, and trust in information. The document stresses the importance of government and community leader support, as well as the need for policies to fight disinformation and strengthen digital literacy among vulnerable groups, including youth and the elderly. The findings call for targeted measures to enhance digital resilience and protect these communities in Indonesia.

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

In Belitung Timur, tin mining plays a pivotal role in the local economy, providing many residents in East Belitung with their livelihood. The income from mining varies, typically ranging from IDR 400,000 to 500,000 per day, depending on the quantity of tin mined and market conditions. With this income, miners invest in mobile phones and data plans, often using platforms

like Facebook to stay updated on tin prices. However, despite their online presence, many miners lack digital literacy, making them susceptible to misinformation, especially regarding market rumors. Moreover, their reliance on digital media exposes them to online risks, including illicit applications and gambling sites, which could impact their primary income source.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

After the official end of the pandemic, there has been a lack of sustained efforts to bolster digital literacy and capacity across various sectors in Belitung. The current approach tends to be reactive, responding to specific cases rather than proactively addressing broader digital literacy needs. DISKOMINFO must identify local strategic patterns and issues to strengthen the digital skills of diverse community members, including youth, the elderly, and women. However, there's a noticeable absence of urgency from the government

in addressing technical or strategic challenges in digital life. Additionally, there's a lack of clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for digital literacy governance at both government and community levels, indicating a need for more robust oversight. Efforts to modernize schools through the acquisition of Chromebook devices funded by the Local Budget Allocation signal

a step forward, but challenges such as high dropout rates, teacher skill deficiencies, and parental supervision issues persist. Collaboration with stakeholders is crucial to address juvenile delinquency problems, including exposure to adult content, while the Health Service plays a vital role in combating misinformation, particularly targeting vulnerable groups like the elderly.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Family, relatives, and neighbors play a crucial role in supporting the digital life of local rural communities. In Belitung Timur, parents and elders often lack digital skills, making them vulnerable. Different social environments and livelihoods lead to varied digital lifestyles across regions. In Manggar District, people's consumption pattern impacts their digital life, especially because they have limited access to technology gadgets, thus less exposed to information. This study reveals how the underprivileged community in Manggar learn the importance of local government engagement in combating disinformation. They find local government becomes a backbone especially to provide data-based policies and teams to counter disinformation and hoax. Local community in Manggar also recognize that local government should pay attention to parents and elderly who are vulnerable to disinformation and hoax.

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

This study finds that the local government plays an important role in digital resilience within the context of underprivileged community. The local government assigns a social media team that responsible in managing not only information but also various activities relating to information. It includes creating and sourcing content for various platforms. They adjust content themes based on government directives, especially for important events and information.

The regional government initiated a digital literacy program for young people to combat the spread of fake news. Despite this, there was no subsequent effort to extend digital literacy outreach to rural communities. However, it is important to highlight that community should be independently responsible for digital resilience. It is important for community members to have ability to examine information and confirm them with the village government or access information from official announcements on social media or village WhatsApp. These practices would be effective when referring to available legal regulations governing hoaxes in Indonesia, namely Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE) as amended by Law Number 19 of 2016, Criminal Code (KUHP) and Law Number 1 of 1946 concerning Criminal Law Regulations.

Elevating Underprivileged Youth

Younger generation in East Belitung play the significant role in bridging the digital literacy gap with older individuals, particularly their parents. Their advanced digital skills help protect against online threats and educate older generations on digital security. Along this line, SMA Negeri 1 Manggar enhances education by providing internet access, organizing digital contests to foster creativity in digital media, and empowering youth to combat misinformation and educate older individuals, thereby promoting intergenerational learning and a more informed community.

RECOMMENDATION

Adaptation of the Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in Regional Education Governance

It is important to harmonize national digital literacy program with Indonesia's educational vision in the

Merdeka Curriculum. The adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum will empower school-aged children and students in East Belitung to acquire digital literacy skills. By actively engaging with digital media and information students can develop crucial 21st-

century skills, including creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. This innovative approach to learning leverages digital tools like reels, TikTok videos, and reportage videos, enabling students to not only acquire knowledge but also practice essential skills while making the learning process engaging and effective.

Promoting Collaborative Efforts Across Regional Sectors

It is important to enhance digital literacy in Belitung Timur through community-level initiatives involving youth health care programs. Collaboration across various sectors of the regional government is crucial to ensure a broad impact. The Belitung Timur Regency Communication, Informatics, Statistics, and Encryption Service plays a key role in promoting digital literacy by fostering involvement from sectors like education, health, security, economics, and tourism. Local governments can employ tools and activities to promote digital literacy, address hoaxes, and educate individuals on navigating online threats. It is recommended to utilize village funds for digital literacy programs and collaborate with regional apparatuses to provide training and outreach. Periodic outreach efforts related to the Information

and Electronic Transactions (ITE) Law are essential to address community vulnerabilities, such as online gambling addiction.

Supporting Resources

The Regent of East Belitung's support for developing digital literacy programs in schools, with SMAN 1 Manggar serving as a model institution. Efforts focus on enhancing student and teacher competencies in utilizing digital tools for academic purposes and aligning educational content with digital literacy goals. The Regent is dedicated to providing educational opportunities for young individuals who have discontinued their schooling, ensuring they can complete their education through support programs. The East Belitung Education Service and the formation of Pokjaling aim to address dropouts up to the high school level, emphasizing digital literacy skills. However, there is a need for stronger regulatory support and prioritization of education programs to ensure equal access to education and increase community knowledge and skill capacity, particularly in combating online dangers like gambling. Regional governments must work together to enforce laws against online gambling and engage with communities, especially children and youth, to address these risks effectively.

CONCLUSION

Our study indicates that digital literacy is more prevalent among the youth in East Belitung compared to the elderly. This underscores the necessity of intensifying programs aimed at enhancing digital literacy skills among the elderly. Such initiatives are critical to safeguard them from fraud and scams, and to boost their efficiency in professional and daily activities. It is also observed that regular interaction with digital platforms enhances digital literacy, bolstering confidence and proficiency in privacy protection, information assessment, and other competencies.

The expansion of digital infrastructure, coupled with efforts to improve digital literacy, is essential. Therefore, prioritizing community-based digital literacy education programs in East Belitung is imperative. Given that lower levels of digital literacy are predominantly found among males and the elderly, who often spend their time in farming and mining, community-based initiatives tailored to their

schedules would be beneficial. Collaborations with local coffee shops, frequented for daily gatherings, could serve as effective venues for these initiatives.

The residents of East Belitung are particularly vulnerable and concerned about issues that directly impact their life and well-being, demonstrating a heightened responsiveness to local developments and health information. However, following the disbandment of the COVID-19 special agency team in Diskominfo, there lacks a targeted approach to combat health-related hoaxes.

Strengthening coordination and collaboration across programs and organizations in East Belitung is crucial as the region undergoes digitalization. This includes the active involvement of village administrative offices, enabling them to share resources with other government bodies to effectively implement digital literacy programs in their localities.

LAO PDR



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW
- BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE
- LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Lao PDR Innovation and Economic Growth

In 2023, Lao PDR's digital progress 2023 (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-laos>) is marked by strong mobile usage at 85% and an internet penetration of 62%, but it faces a stark urban-rural divide and trails the ASEAN average with a modest 28.33 Mbps internet speed. While 44% of the population uses social media, the country's digital development, especially in rural areas where only 37% have access, lags, highlighting a significant portion of the digital gap. This disparity limits access to information and economic opportunities for rural residents.

The year-on-year growth of mobile connections by 7.8% and internet users by 1.4% from 2022 to 2023 reflects rising digital connectivity demands that outstrip the current infrastructure and policy efforts. With 14.2% of web traffic coming from mobile phones versus 32.3% from laptops and desktops, Lao PDR digital scene is increasingly mobile-first, suggesting that mobile-based solutions could help bridge the digital divide. However, a missing page error on DataReportal's website underscores the challenges of data access and the broader context of digital navigation in the country.

Lao PDR Inequality and Exclusion

There are significant challenges and gaps exist in accessing and using information and communication technology (ICT) in Lao PDR, reflecting broader issues of economic, social, and cultural inequality. The digital divide is not just technological but also socio-economic. Rural and underprivileged communities face barriers due to limited infrastructure, affordability issues, and a lack of digital literacy. This digital exclusion mirrors and exacerbates existing societal inequalities, where marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities and those in remote areas, have lesser opportunities for economic advancement and social participation. Culturally, there's a divide in technology usage patterns and benefits, often influenced by education levels and economic status, leading to a cycle of exclusion that affects societal integration and empowerment.

Lao PDR Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation

In Lao PDR, the battle against disinformation is tied to digital inequality, affecting those with low digital literacy the most. Misinformation spreads faster in areas where reliable information is scarce, often impacting vulnerable communities. Key disinformation topics concern politics, health, and social issues, influencing those dependent on informal online networks. Government actions to regulate online content aim to address misinformation but face scrutiny over free speech implications. Ensuring open digital spaces while fighting disinformation is a delicate task, particularly vital for disadvantaged groups, underscoring the need for ongoing, inclusive digital strategy efforts.

Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

In Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), a transformation in the media from government-run outlets to digital platforms has led to increased disinformation, affecting public perception and policy. This shift has democratized information access but also facilitated the spread of false narratives, posing new challenges for information management. The internet and social media have introduced a variety of information sources, disrupting the traditional media's monopoly and inviting scrutiny over incidents that shape public opinion, from COVID-19 misinformation to political controversies.

The impact of disinformation in Lao PDR has been profound, undermining trust in official channels and contributing to social fragmentation and public health challenges. The government's response includes enforcing new regulations and establishing oversight teams to monitor and counteract misleading content online. These actions aim to safeguard free speech while mitigating the harmful effects of misinformation. Nevertheless, the government's strategy is contentious, with concerns about censorship and the suppression of alternative viewpoints. The effectiveness of these policies is continually under review, particularly as the digital domain evolves rapidly, testing the resilience of traditional information governance models in the face of pervasive online disinformation.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW

The Profile of Underprivileged Community: Who are They?

This section of the report provides general demographic information on the underprivileged community members' profile. It includes age, status of having children, status of employment, and educational background.

Figure 4.1 shows that in Luang Prabang, a city situated in the Northern region of Lao PDR, a comprehensive survey involving 152 participants from underprivileged communities, comprising 60.1% youths (aged between 18 to 35 years old) and

39.9% elderly individuals (aged 55 and above). This Figure highlights a predominantly young population.

Figure 4.2 indicates that among the respondents, 38.7% reported that they were living with children, while 61.3% were not. This Figure 4.2. represents the number of children in participants' households that reflected more respondents who do not have any children.

Figure 4.3 shows that 66.8% of participants were unemployed, while 33.2% were employed. Figure 4.3. relates to economic status and its role as a determinant of the digital divide..

Figure 4.1. Age Group

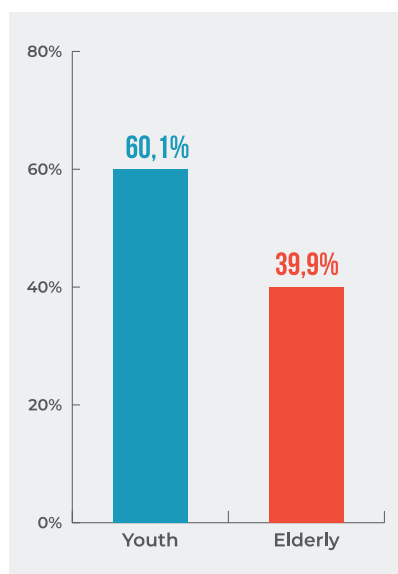


Figure 4.2. Number of Children

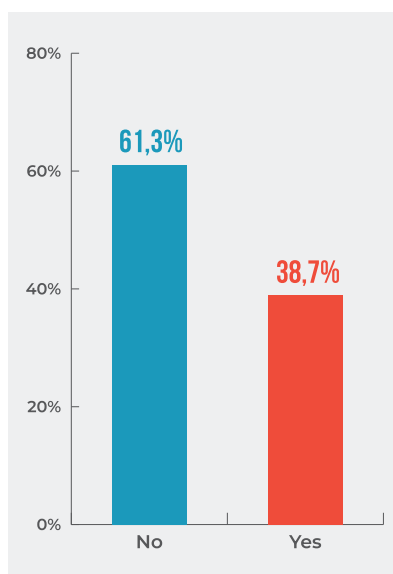


Figure 4.3. Status of Employment

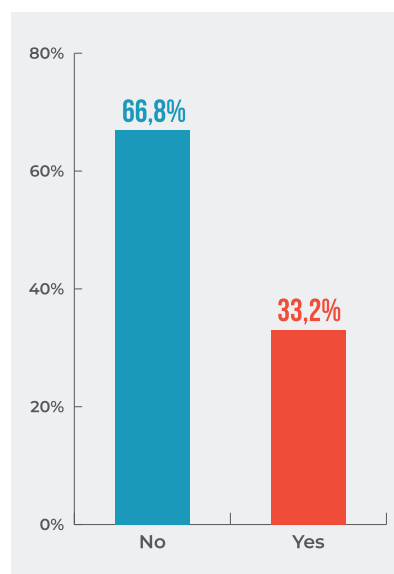


Figure 4.4. Education Background

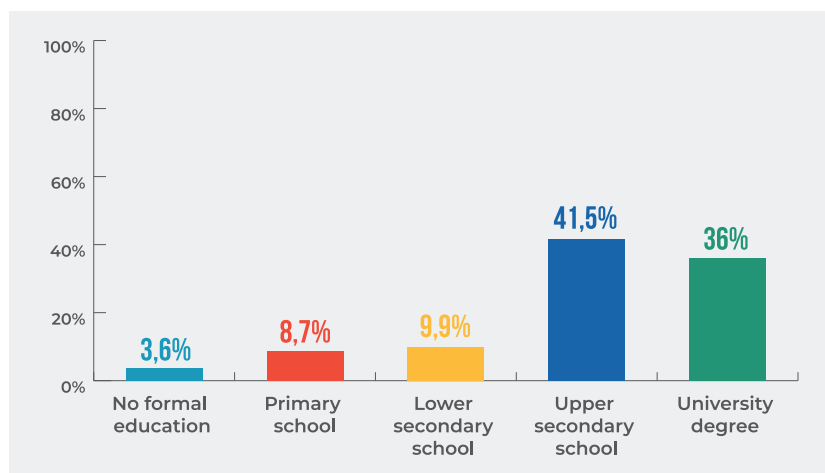


Figure 4.4 reveals the educational backgrounds of majority of participants (41.5%) held an upper secondary school diploma, followed by 36% who were university graduates, and 9.9% who had completed lower secondary school. A smaller percentage, approximately 12.3%, had either no formal education or had only completed primary school.

BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

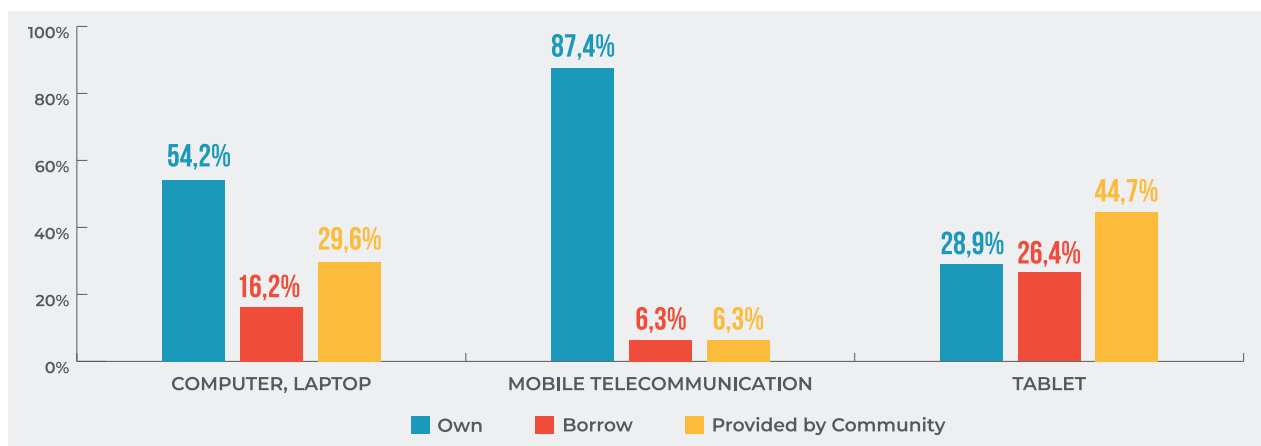
Diversity of Use

This section outlines the usage of communication devices, preferred platforms, and news sources, along with an analysis of the digital divide influenced by age, employment, and other conditions. It also highlights key features identified from interviews and focus group discussions on the field.

Main Device Ownership

Most people own their mobile phones (87.4%) (Figure 4.5.), while computers/laptops and tablets are more commonly provided by the community or borrowed. Computers/laptops are still mostly owned (54.2%), but tablets have the highest rate of community provision (44.7%) and the lowest ownership (28.9%). However, there are no distinction of determinants for main device ownership.

Figure 4.5 Main Device Ownership



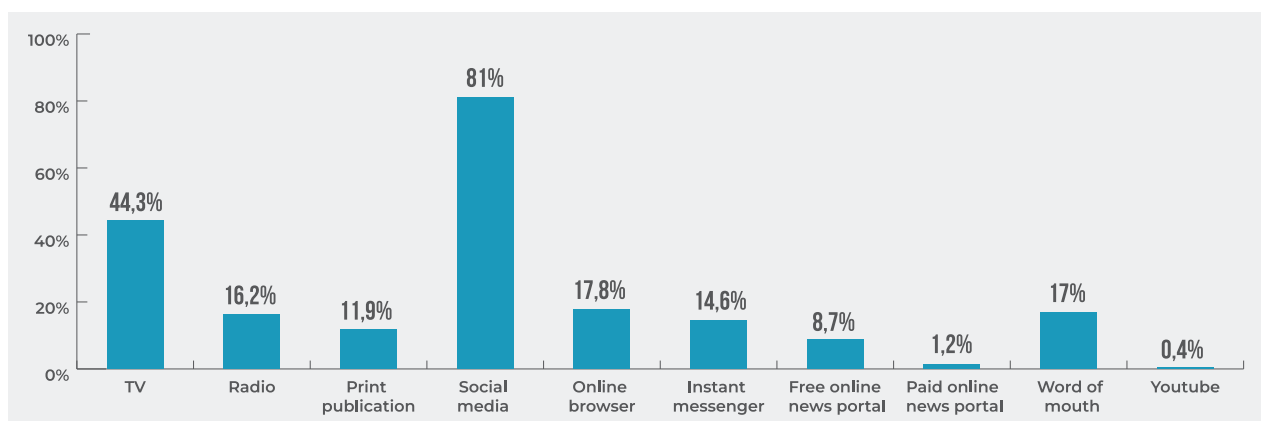
Using News Platform

Figure 4.6 indicates a dominant preference for digital and social media platforms for news consumption among respondents in Lao PDR, with social media leading at 81%. Media such as TV (44.3%), radio (16.2%), and word of mouth (17%) are less utilized, while print publications are at a low 11.9%. Online browsers (17.8%) and instant messengers (14.6%) are moderately

popular. Lesser-used sources include podcasts and newsletters via email (both combined in the paid online news portal at 1.2%) and YouTube (0.4%). This trend mirrors a global shift towards digital news sources, particularly among younger demographics.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (figure 4.7). The figure indicates determinants that

Figure 4.6 Platform Used to Get News



distinguish platforms used to get news, namely age, marital status, status of employment, and gender. The more comprehensive examination

for digital divide determinants for the Use of News Platform is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 4.7 Digital Divide Determinant for Platforms Used to Get News

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Figure 4.8 describes that the digital service is low among Laotian society. 77.5% cannot use e-hospital and e-social service, 71.1% cannot use the e-government service and 64.8% are not e-health service's users. Meanwhile, 64.8% can use e-banking, 54.9% familiar with the online payment use and 36% can use the e-commerce. 16.6% can use the e-health service with the assistance of others. It is slightly slower than the percentage of the user e-government

(12.3%) and 11.9% for e-hospital's users.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (figure 4.9). The figure indicates determinates that distinguish different mobile application, namely age, having children, status of employment, education, and indigenous identification. A more comprehensive examination of digital divide determinants for the different mobile applications is provided in the extended report version..

Figure 4.8 Different Usage for Different Mobile Applications

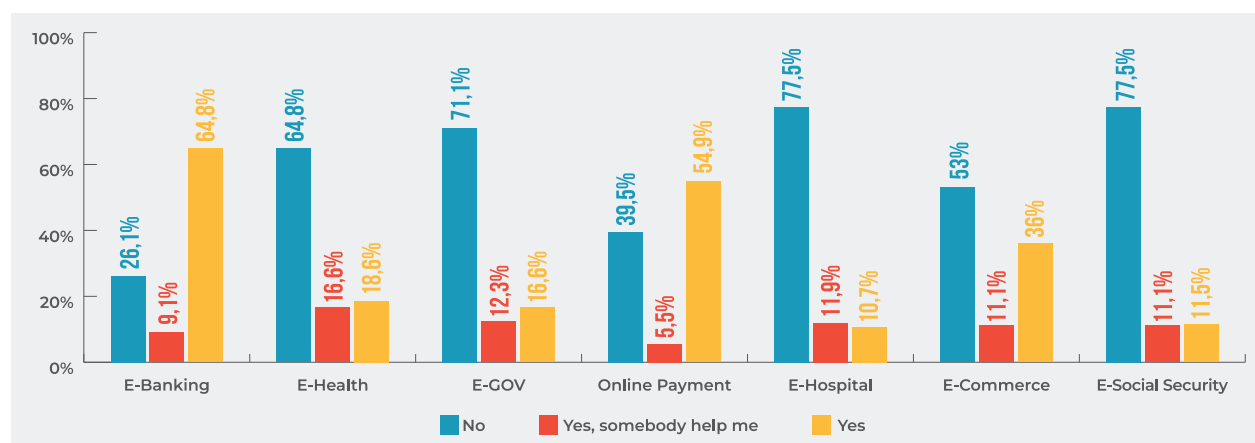


Figure 4.9 Digital Divide Determinant for Different Mobile Applications

	E-Banking	E-Health	E-Gov	Online Payment	E-Hospital	E-Commerce	E-Social Security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

Figure 4.10 shows that most people can comment on posts (81.8%), repost content (71.1%), and create new posts (76.3%) without help. A smaller portion cannot perform them at all, and an even smaller percentage needs help for these activities.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (figure 4.11). The figure indicates determinants that distinguish social media and community building, namely age and status of employment. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for social media and community building is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 4.10 Social Media and Community Building

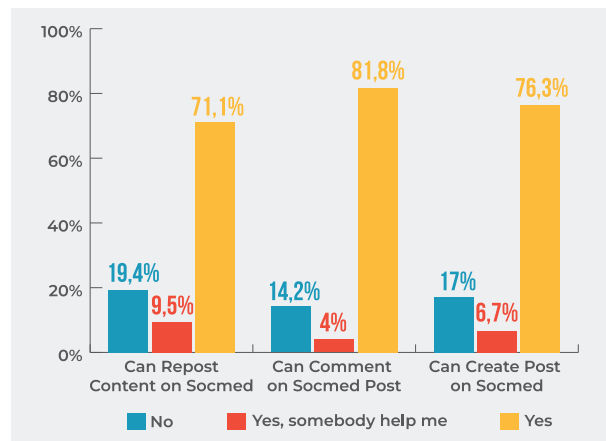


Figure 4.11 Digital Divide Determinant for Social Media and Community Building

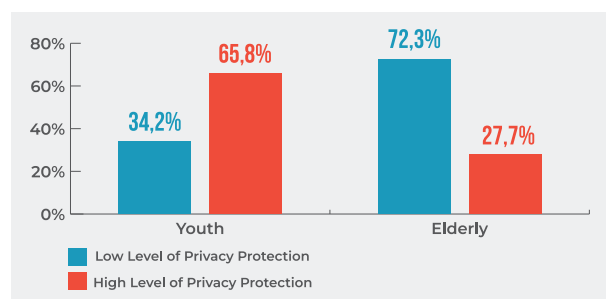
	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

DIGITAL LITERACY

Privacy Protection

Figure 4.12 shows that digital literacy for privacy protection varies by age in the Laotian society, with 65.8% of the youth having a high privacy protection. Compared with the elderly, the number is lower than the youth (27.7%). The elderly showed a higher number in low sense of privacy protection with 72.3%, relatively higher than 34.2% of the youth.

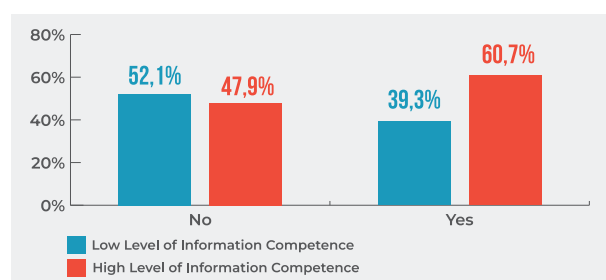
Figure 4.12 Digital Literacy for Privacy Protection by Age Group



Information Competence

Figure 4.13 reflects the correlation between economic welfare through status of employment and information competence. In this survey, it was found that working people have very strong learning competence (60.7%), while those with low levels of learning competence are as many as 39.3%. In this scheme, the number of unemployed people who have a relatively low level of information competence is greater than those who have a relatively high (52.1% vs 47.9%).

Figure 4.13 Information Competence Level by Status of Employment

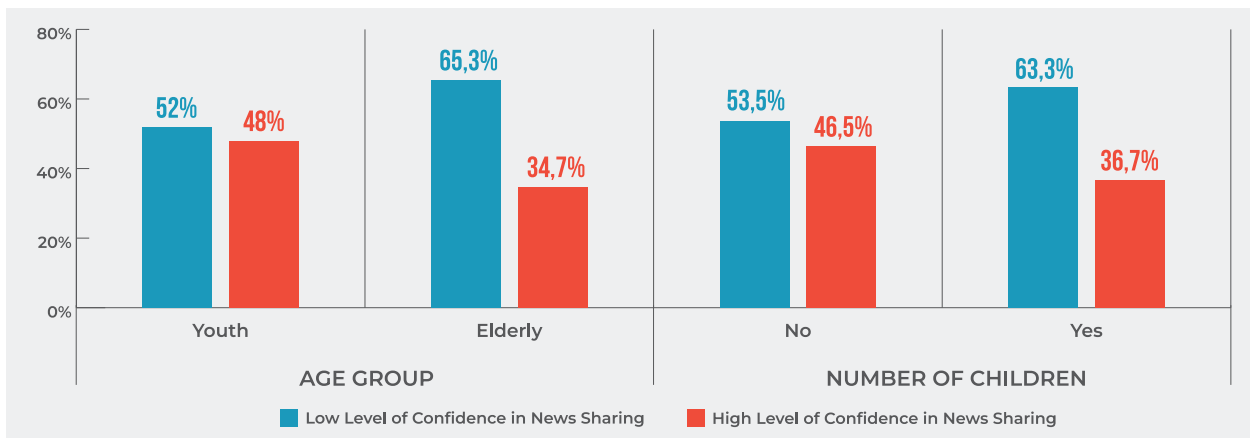


Confidence in Engaging with News

Figure 4.14 illustrates that the elderly population exhibits a lower confidence in sharing news (65.3%) compared to the youth (52%). Conversely, the youth are more confident in sharing news (48%) than the

elderly (34.7%). Individuals without children show a more balanced confidence level in news sharing, with a slight leaning toward low confidence (53.5%). Those with children demonstrate a higher tendency towards low confidence in news sharing (63.3%).

Figure 4.14 Confidence Level in Engaging with News



LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

Disinformation's impact and the approach to counter it differs across society's strata in Lao PDR, as interviews with various demographics indicate. Community leaders call for grassroots education to help people identify false information, suggesting localized efforts are crucial. Government officials highlight the need for clear policy and regulation to ensure trustworthy communication. Educators advocate for incorporating digital literacy in curricula, preparing students to interact critically with online content. The youth seek tools to better discern credible information, showing an active stance against disinformation. Conversely, the elderly tend to trust established news sources, pointing to a generational divide in information trust. Overall, there's a consensus on the necessity of improved digital literacy and critical thinking for all age groups. Targeted educational programs and informed policies are key to fostering a society that can effectively confront disinformation challenges in the digital era.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

In Lao PDR, the divide in media trust and consumption between generations significantly influences the

spread of disinformation. The elderly often rely on government communications, while the youth, though utilizing a variety of sources including social media, still face challenges in discerning credible information. Both demographics struggle to distinguish sensationalism from fact, revealing a need for improved critical thinking and digital literacy.

The push for media literacy in educational curricula aims to equip students to critically analyze online content. Recognizing the risks of online disinformation, government officials are advocating for regulatory measures and educational campaigns to combat its spread. Despite varying trust in information sources, there's a notable dependence on government narratives across all age groups.

To address these issues, there is a consensus on the importance of enhancing digital literacy for all, particularly targeting the youth and vulnerable populations. Education and community engagement are key to empowering these groups, enabling them to critically evaluate information and navigate the complexities of the digital information landscape. This comprehensive approach seeks to protect against the dangers of disinformation and strengthen societal resilience.

Risk of Disinformation against the Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

The research underscores the heightened vulnerability of underprivileged communities in Lao PDR to disinformation, which often exploits limited access to varied information sources and educational deficits. These groups tend to rely on traditional media and are increasingly exposed to social media, yet they lack the resources to verify the information they receive. Disinformation can spread swiftly within these communities, where trust in familiar sources overrides skepticism, potentially reinforcing negative stereotypes and exacerbating disparities.

The study advocates for a comprehensive strategy to protect these communities, combining educational initiatives that enhance critical thinking and media literacy, community engagement to encourage scrutiny of information, and the development of trustworthy information channels that are sensitive to the communities' specific needs. It also calls for community-led efforts to foster a culture of information verification. Such multifaceted approaches are crucial for empowering the underprivileged in Lao PDR to make informed decisions and resist the detrimental effects of disinformation. The analysis concludes that addressing disinformation's risks necessitates targeted

and varied interventions to bolster the resilience of vulnerable populations in the face of disinformation.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

The study highlights that underprivileged and youthful demographics in Lao PDR face a heightened risk of disinformation, owing to restricted access to varied sources, lower education, and reliance on traditional media. It emphasizes the critical role of educators and community leaders in fostering critical thinking and media literacy to tackle this issue. The research calls for improved digital literacy and critical thinking skills for all to better navigate the information landscape and identify trustworthy content. The pervasive influence of digital platforms, particularly social media, in spreading disinformation is noted, along with the rapid amplification of falsehoods. There's a call for targeted educational programs to enhance critical thinking and media literacy, and to establish more reliable information channels. The digital divide is shown to be multifaceted, involving not just technology access, but also digital literacy, socio-economic gaps, and misinformation vulnerability. The research stresses the urgency of comprehensive digital literacy programs that empower communities to detect and counter misinformation and underlines the importance of interventions aimed at vulnerable groups to mitigate disinformation's spread and effects.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The study uncovers a rising concern regarding susceptibility to misinformation and disinformation in Lao PDR, notably among populations with limited technological access and education. Vulnerability factors include digital literacy deficiencies, socioeconomic status, emotional influences, and difficulties with digital navigation. Inadequate digital literacy, particularly among technology novices, heightens the risk of falling prey to misinformation. Lower educational levels and limited skill sets further expose communities to the risks of disinformation and potential exploitation. Emotions such as fear and dissatisfaction are significant motivators for the spread and acceptance of misinformation, especially among students who may struggle with discerning credible sources. Challenges in navigating

digital platforms, such as recognizing false content and the rapid spread of misinformation, have been emphasized in focus group discussions across diverse demographics.

The government's active role in countering misinformation through the dissemination of accurate information and outreach in rural areas is crucial. Community concerns center on the youth's susceptibility to online misinformation, questioning the trustworthiness of digital media compared to traditional outlets like radio and TV. In conclusion, the dialogue surrounding misinformation in Lao PDR is complex, highlighting the need for improved digital literacy, awareness of socioeconomic and emotional factors, and better navigation of digital

spaces. Government intervention and community engagement are key to addressing misinformation, ensuring that all members have access to reliable information and are equipped to challenge false narratives.

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

The research on Lao PDR digital divide reveals a significant disparity between the elderly, reliant on traditional media, and the youth, who prefer digital platforms like social media. Economic barriers impede digital access and literacy, leaving some, particularly the less educated and older individuals, vulnerable to misinformation. Despite government efforts to boost digital infrastructure, measures to counter misinformation remain inadequate, especially in marginalized areas. The youth are stepping up, educating the elderly in a community-led response. Programs to raise digital awareness are in place but face financial and infrastructural challenges, reflecting a gradual move towards digital adoption. A holistic strategy is needed to address this divide, focusing on increasing digital literacy, developing infrastructure, reducing socioeconomic gaps, implementing effective policies, and strengthening community relations. Such a comprehensive approach aims to equip communities with the necessary skills to critically assess information, build

resilience against misinformation, and promote fair digital engagement.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

The study reveals a digital divide in Lao PDR, where the elderly and the less educated are less digitally literate. Inadequate infrastructure, such as limited internet access and costly digital devices, especially in rural areas, exacerbates misinformation risks. Wealthier families have better access to digital media due to higher socioeconomic status. Diverse cultural attitudes towards technology also influence its uptake across different age groups and traditions. Although the government has implemented initiatives to improve digital infrastructure and literacy, these efforts have not uniformly benefited marginalized groups. Community networks play a pivotal role in digital engagement, often hindered by language barriers, health concerns, and urban-rural disparities. To bridge this digital divide, a comprehensive strategy is necessary. It must enhance digital literacy and infrastructure while considering socioeconomic factors and cultural nuances. Responsive government policies and strengthened community support are vital. Such an inclusive approach aims to ensure equitable digital media access and utilization across all sectors of Laotian society, prioritizing the disadvantaged.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

Misinformation affects different age groups in Lao PDR. Tech-savvy youth combat it on social media with fact-checking, guiding elders. Community leaders run educational campaigns to enhance discernment, especially on health matters. The elderly, more vulnerable due to reliance on traditional media, receive support from digitally literate youth for clarification. Addressing misinformation involves a joint effort: youth bring digital literacy, leaders drive education, and elders rely on trusted sources, showing Lao PDR adaptable response to the issue.

The document outlines the impact of misinformation on different community demographics. The youth,

with their digital literacy, face it on social media, while the elderly and others are more vulnerable due to traditional information reliance. Misinformation causes confusion, mistrust, and poor decisions, particularly in health and social matters. Solutions involve youth using online resources, leaders organizing educational sessions, and the elderly relying on trusted community sources for accurate information. These strategies show how the community addresses misinformation based on each group's technology and information access.

In Lao PDR, combating misinformation involves educational workshops, policy actions, and community involvement targeting vulnerable youth and the elderly. Schools are integrating digital literacy into

curricula to enhance critical thinking skills. Government campaigns aim to restrict misinformation, yet face challenges in rural areas. Collaboration among educators, leaders, and policymakers is key to tackling misinformation through education, regulations, and awareness, empowering communities to discern reliable information and counter its negative impact.

Elevating Underprivileged Youth

The research underscores a shift in how youth engage with information on social media, becoming more vigilant against misinformation. This change is partly due to their connections with peers, family, and teachers, who sometimes unknowingly share false information. In response, young people are

honing their ability to identify credible sources, often checking the accuracy of information and the validity of comments before sharing. While they have the skills to discern trustworthy news, the role of educators in fostering critical thinking remains crucial. Social media serves as both a battleground and a training ground, prompting youth to scrutinize sources diligently. This proactive stance among the young demonstrates their commitment to countering misinformation and contributing to a more informed online community. It's a trend that reflects the growing awareness of the importance of media literacy and the critical evaluation of content among the younger generation, who are at the forefront of shaping the digital information landscape.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Digital Literacy Regional and National Policies

Equipping the Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

■ Pedagogies recommendation

To improve digital literacy among Lao PDR's underprivileged youth, a multipronged educational approach is advised. Blended learning can circumvent internet access issues by integrating online resources with traditional methods. Gamification and interactive techniques engage young learners, enhancing the enjoyment and retention of digital skills. Peer-to-peer education encourages collaborative learning and knowledge sharing, while a focus on lifelong learning promotes ongoing development through varied formats like workshops and webinars. Introducing digital literacy courses across educational tiers—from secondary schools to universities—is essential for providing foundational digital competencies. These strategies collectively aim to deliver a dynamic and sustainable model of digital education, addressing both immediate and long-term barriers to digital proficiency and resilience against misinformation.

■ Programme recommendation

To enhance digital literacy among underprivileged youth in Lao PDR, a multifaceted strategy is vital:

- ▶ Accessible Infrastructure: Prioritize extending

affordable internet and digital devices to rural areas by partnering with telecom companies, reducing the digital divide and enabling digital education.

- ▶ Targeted Outreach: Focus on identifying and enrolling marginalized communities and underprivileged youth through awareness campaigns that underscore digital literacy's benefits.
- ▶ Mentorship and Support: Establish mentorship schemes with seasoned individuals or volunteers aiding young learners, giving personalized help and nurturing a conducive learning atmosphere.
- ▶ Certification and Recognition: Develop a certification system for digital literacy proficiency and acknowledge achievements to boost employability and morale, offering concrete incentives for digital learning engagement.
- ▶ Skill Development: Offering training from basic digital functions to advanced analysis and social media skills, preparing youth to critically assess online content and maneuver the digital world adeptly.

This comprehensive method ensures infrastructure development, specific community targeting, supportive learning environments, recognition of digital competencies, and a curriculum that spans basic to advanced digital skills. Such initiatives aim to close the digital literacy gap, empower youth

with essential skills, and unlock avenues for their future development.

■ **Curricula recommendation**

To empower underprivileged youth with digital literacy, a curriculum catering to diverse needs is proposed. It begins with foundational skills: computer basics, internet navigation, email use, and online safety—tailored for clarity to assist learners of all ages, including the elderly. Incorporating digital citizenship, it educates

on responsible online behavior, cyberbullying prevention, and proper netiquette. Practical skills are also integrated, like word processing and spreadsheets, stressing their application in daily life. Additionally, the curriculum includes digital entrepreneurship, encouraging youth to explore digital markets and business opportunities. This comprehensive curriculum aims to bridge digital gaps and foster digital proficiency, enabling young individuals to thrive in the digital world.

CONCLUSION

The research offers an in-depth view of the digital divide in Lao PDR, identifying that the gap is not just about technology access but also encompasses digital literacy, socio-economic divisions, and a heightened risk of falling prey to misinformation. Particularly in rural underprivileged areas, the lack of technological infrastructure, the high cost of digital tools, and insufficient digital know-how mirror wider social inequities. The study points out the alarming link between low digital literacy and a susceptibility to disinformation, especially in important areas such as politics, social issues, and health. It draws attention to vulnerable groups like the youth and elderly, who, due to limited educational opportunities and reliance on traditional media, are more likely to encounter and believe misinformation.

The research stresses the crucial roles of educators and community leaders in fostering critical thinking and media literacy, and it highlights the government's responsibility in creating effective policies and regulations to counter disinformation. The suggested interventions include educational improvements, community initiatives, and the provision of reliable information channels. This comprehensive approach, involving government, education sectors, and community figures, is advocated to guarantee fair digital access and to develop a society that is informed, resistant to misinformation, and equipped to deal with the complexities of the digital era.

MALAYSIA



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN ORANG ASELI COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW
- BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE
- LESSON LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Malaysia's Economic and Innovation Growth

Introduction on Orang Aseli in Malaysia

The Orang Aseli, or 'original peoples' of Malay, comprise of approximately 18 ethnic groups with a total population under 150,000, recognized as the indigenous people of peninsular Malaysia. These groups are divided into Negrito, Senoi, and Proto-Malay categories. According to the 2020 Census, the Orang Aseli make up about 11% of Malaysia's 32.4 million population, also known as Orang Asal. Coordination with the Orang Aseli Development Department (JAKOA) is essential for engagement with Orang Aseli communities. JAKOA promotes their societal integration through inclusive development plans, focusing on socio-economic advancement, education, health, and human capital development.

Since gaining independence in 1957, Malaysia has transitioned from a primarily agrarian and commodity-based economy to one with robust manufacturing and service sectors, becoming a significant exporter of electrical appliances, parts, and components. The economy has outstripped forecasts in the past decade, with a remarkable expansion rate in 2022, marking the most rapid growth in 22 years despite global economic challenges.¹ In the first quarter of 2023, the Malaysian economy maintained this momentum with a strong 5.6% growth year-on-year.² This consistent economic strength and resilience are hallmarks of Malaysia's recent economic performance.

Malaysia's commitment to technological innovation has been evident since the mid-1990s, with a strategic focus on shifting from an input-driven to a knowledge-based economy. Emphasis on research and development, technology adoption, and entrepreneurship is designed to improve Malaysia's global competitiveness and leadership in key sectors such as technology, biotechnology, and green energy.³ The National Transformation Policy 2050 envisions fostering a dynamic innovation ecosystem to drive sustainable economic growth and enhance the quality

of life for Malaysians, reflecting the nation's long-term economic and social aspirations.

Malaysia's Inequality and Exclusion

In Malaysia, issues of inequality and exclusion have significant impacts on society and the economy. Some concerns include ongoing income inequality, especially among ethnic groups, where a notable portion of the Bottom 40% (B40) faces economic challenges. Ethnic divisions persist, revealing inequalities within the ethnic hierarchy. Income inequality is associated with the quality of life in rural areas, triggering negative emotions like envy, shame, and guilt. Political polarization, rooted in historical ethnic divisions, has led to societal fragmentation and exclusion. Despite efforts to reduce inequality, gender disparities persist in economic opportunities and political representation. Overall, Malaysia faces various forms of inequality and exclusion, calling for efforts to promote a more inclusive and equitable society. For the Orang Aseli community that experienced those inequality and exclusion, accentuating their marginalized status vis-à-vis the broader national demographic.

Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

Disinformation remains a pressing issue in Malaysia, manifesting in various ways. A study highlighted the prevalence of fake news, encompassing both misinformation and disinformation, with social media being a common platform for the unverified sharing of information. The COVID-19 pandemic has notably spotlighted this challenge, raising concerns about the erosion of public trust in institutions and the government.⁴ Despite the wide reach of online health-related news, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) reported that a staggering 83% of Malaysians trust such content, regardless of its source.⁵

1 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/benjaminlaker/2023/03/06/malaysian-economy-sees-best-growth-in-two-decades-but-why/>

2 <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/mi/research-analysis/malaysian-economy-shows-sustained-expansion-in-early-2023-may23.html>

3 Bekhet, Hussain Ali & Latif, Nurul Wahilah Abdul. 2018. The impact of technological innovation and governance institution quality on Malaysia's sustainable growth: Evidence from a dynamic relationship. *Technology in Society*. 54, 27-40.

4 Yatid, M. M. (2019). Truth tampering through social media: Malaysia's approach in fighting disinformation & misinformation. *IKAT: The Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2(2), 203-230.

5 Isa, A. M., Samsudin, A. Z. H., & Hendrawan, M. R. (2022). Dissemination of Fake News and Information Disorder in Malaysia: A Descriptive Analysis. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 7(S110), 53-58.

To address the proliferation of fake news, Malaysia has implemented a comprehensive legal framework. The government enacted the Anti-Fake News Act 2018 in response to the growing problem, criminalizing the dissemination of fake news, whether online or in print. Additionally, the MCMC maintains [Sebenarnya.my](https://sebenarnya.my), an online fact-checking portal that verifies information related to government agencies. The MCMC also advises WhatsApp group administrators to be vigilant against fake news within their groups. Furthering its commitment to combating misinformation, Malaysia has launched initiatives to improve digital literacy, notably among students.

The Digital Education Policy aims to imbue students with vital digital skills through the integration of digital technology in education, preparing them for the digital age.⁶

Despite these measures, the challenge remains formidable, particularly as many young Malaysians struggle to discern between authentic and fake news, underscoring the need for enhanced digital literacy education. The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation is amplified by social media's capacity to spread false information rapidly and widely, outpacing the truth across all types of information.⁷

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN ORANG ASELI COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW

The Profile of Orang Aseli Community: Who are They?

Due to differences in income, various groups adopt and use information and communication technology (ICT) in different ways, which causes differences

in technology access and opportunities for digital skill education. This section of the report provides general demographic information on the Orang Aseli community members' profile. It includes age, gender, marital status, having children and education level.

Figure 5.1 Age Group

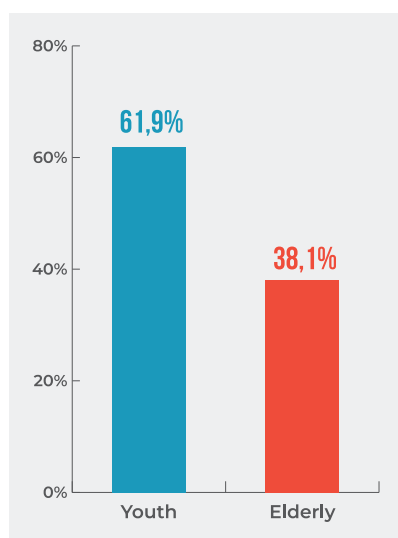


Figure 5.2 Gender

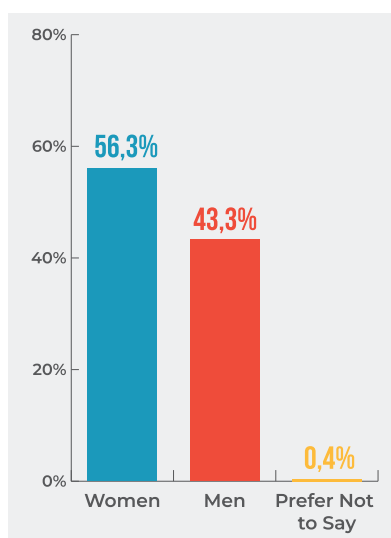
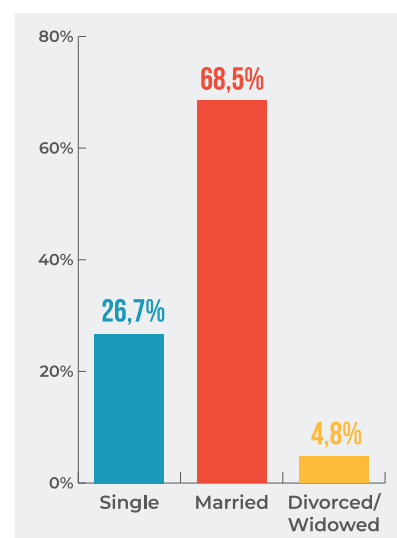


Figure 5.3 Marital Status



This study shows that 61.9% of participants are young people aged 18-35 years and 38.1% are parents aged over 50 years (Figure 5.1). The majority of the participants are female at 56.3% while males only amount to 43.3% (Figure 5.2). As for the marital status, 68.5% are married, 26.7% are not married and 4.8%

are divorced or widowed (Figure 5.3) and about 71.5% have children, while 28.5% do not have children (Figure 5.4). Among all respondents, 46.67% have completed an upper secondary school educational, 26.3% finished primary school, 15.93% have no formal education and 11.1% graduated from university (Figure 5.5).

6 <https://dig.watch/updates/malaysia-launches-digital-education-policy-to-foster-digital-literacy-in-students>

7 Isa, A. M., Samsudin, A. Z. H., & Hendrawan, M. R. (2022). Dissemination of Fake News and Information Disorder in Malaysia: A Descriptive Analysis. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 7(S110), 53-58.

Figure 5.4 Having Children

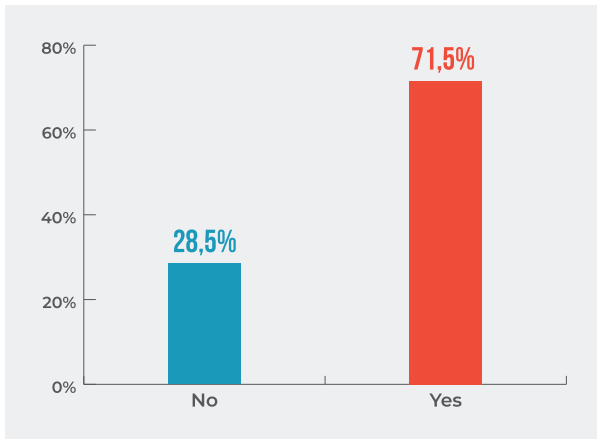
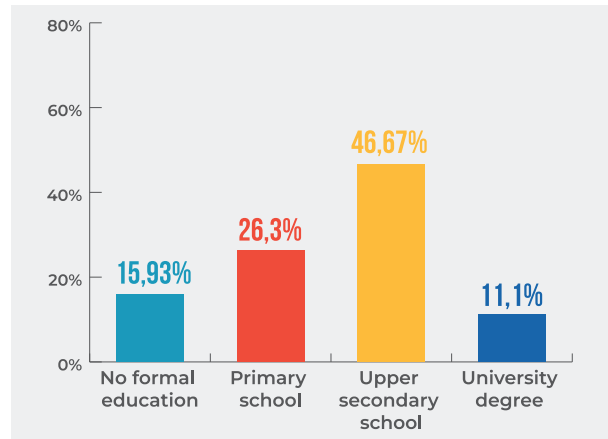


Figure 5.5 Latest Education Background



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Main Device Ownership

This study shows that 99.3% of the underprivileged in Malaysia owned a smartphone, while 13.7% owned a laptop and 7.4% owned a tablet (Figure 5.6). This explains that smartphones are the most essential electronic device for communication, followed by laptops and tablets.

There are still any differences in the main device ownership as described in Figure 5.7. The key factors that make the most difference is the educational background of laptop and tablet owners. This requires further research to get a detailed picture.

Figure 5.6 Main Device Ownership

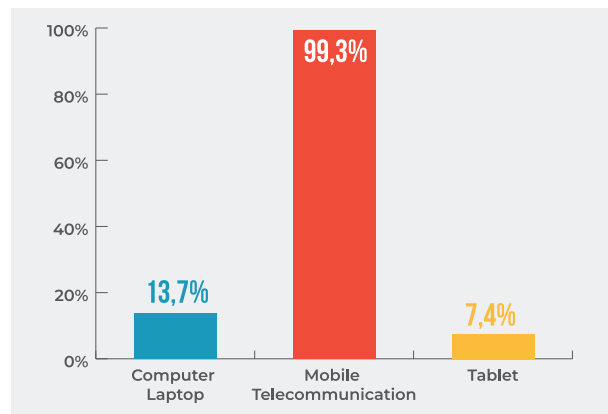


Figure 5.7 Digital Divide Determinant for Main Device Ownership

	Computer/Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age				
Marital Status				
Having children				
Employment				
Gender				
Disability				
Education				
Indigenous				

Using News Platforms

Figure 5.8 depicts the news platform preferences among Malaysia's underprivileged community, highlighting TV as the predominant source with 71.85% utilization. Despite TV's dominance, 48.89% of people favor instant messengers, and 44.07% turn to social media for information. Radio (17.04%) and online browsers (14.07%)

are less popular, while free online news portals (6.67%) and print publications (5.19%) attract minimal interest. Paid online news portals rank lowest in popularity, with only 0.74% usage as an information source.

Although there are different preferences in the choice of information sources from respondents, it can

be concluded that there are several factors that are the main considerations for Malaysians in choosing information sources namely age, employment, gender

and education (Figure 5.9). The detailed explanation for digital divide determinants for the Use of News Source is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 5.8 News Source

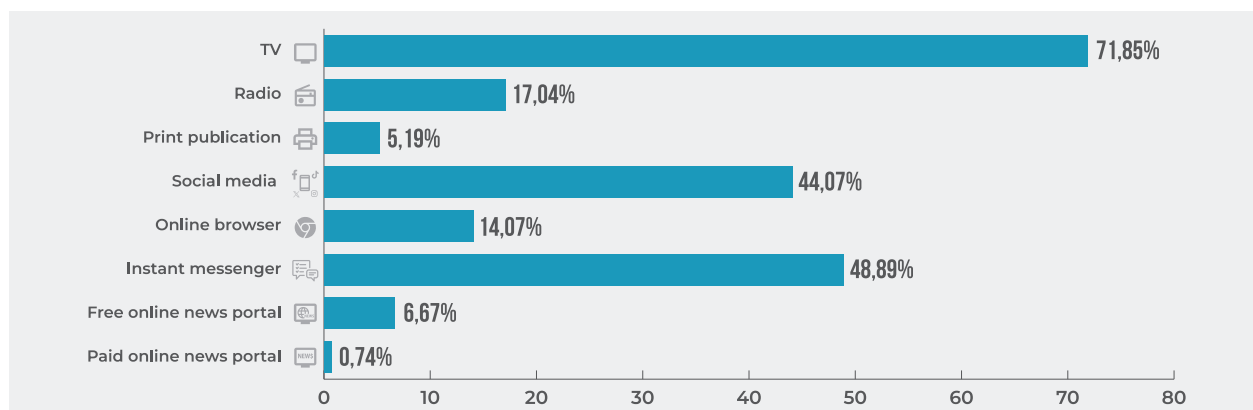


Figure 5.9 Use of News Source

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Figure 5.10 presents mobile app usage in Malaysia, contrasting independent users with those requiring assistance. Online payment is prevalent among the underprivileged, with 16.7% operating it solo, though 2.2% need help. E-banking sees full independent use by 14.4% of Malaysians, while E-commerce is used alone by 12.59%, despite 0.74% needing support. E-hospital and E-health services are independently utilized by 9.26% and 4.4%, respectively. E-social security services are managed solo by 3.7%. E-gov applications are self-operated by 5.2%, but 0.37%

heavily rely on others. This data indicates the Orang Aseli's strong engagement with digital platforms in various sectors.

Although there are different preferences in the choice of mobile applications used, it can be concluded that there are several factors that are the main considerations for Malaysians in using mobile applications namely marital status, employment and education (Figure 5.11). The detailed explanation for digital divide determinants for Mobile Applications is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 5.10 Mobile Application Usage

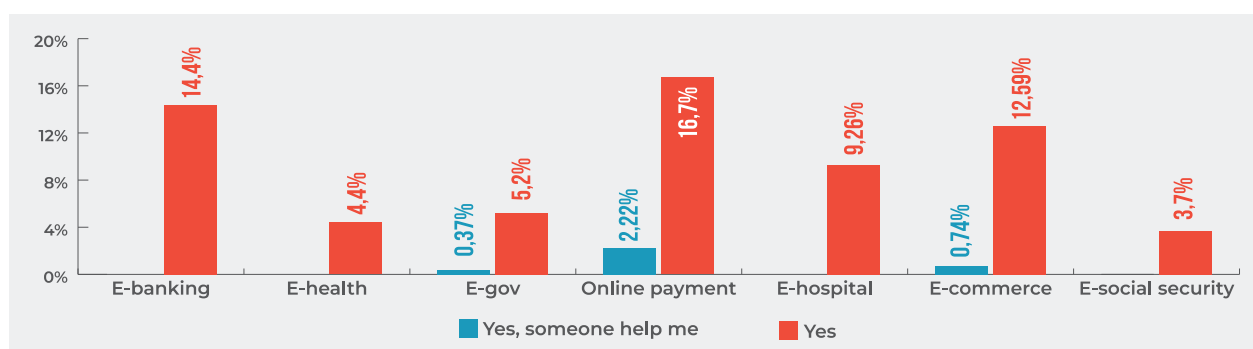


Figure 5.11 Determinant of Mobile Applications

Determinants	E-banking	E-health	E-gov	Online Payment	E-hospital	E-commerce	E-social security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

Figure 5.12 indicates moderate social media engagement among Malaysians, with 35.2% independently creating content, 33% commenting, and 37.4% re-uploading content. However, a small percentage requires assistance in these activities. Notably, a significant number cannot engage in creating (63.3%), commenting (65.9%), or re-uploading (62.2%) content. This suggests low overall social media participation, influenced by factors like age, parental status, and education, which are elaborated in the extended report.

Although there are different preferences in the choice of social media and community building, it can be concluded that there are several factors that are the main considerations for Malaysians in using social media and community building namely age, having children, and education (Figure 5.13). The detailed

explanation for digital divide determinants for Social Media and Community Building is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 5.12 Social Media and Community Building

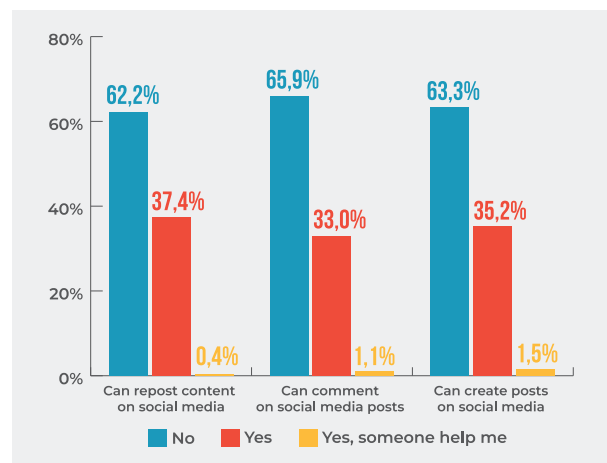


Figure 5.13 Disparities in Social Media and Community Building

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

DIGITAL LITERACY

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is assessed by one's ability to reflect and make evidence-based decisions regarding information. It is evaluated by responses to the credibility, issue identification, and reaction to social media/email content. Notably, skills like creativity and community engagement are higher in employed, male, non-

disabled, non-indigenous groups, but these traits don't necessarily correlate with greater critical thinking.

Figure 5.14 reveals that age and education significantly influence critical thinking in Malaysia. Both the youth and the elderly show similar levels of critical thinking, with only 40.7% of young people and 40.8% of the

Figure 5.14 Critical Thinking by Demographics

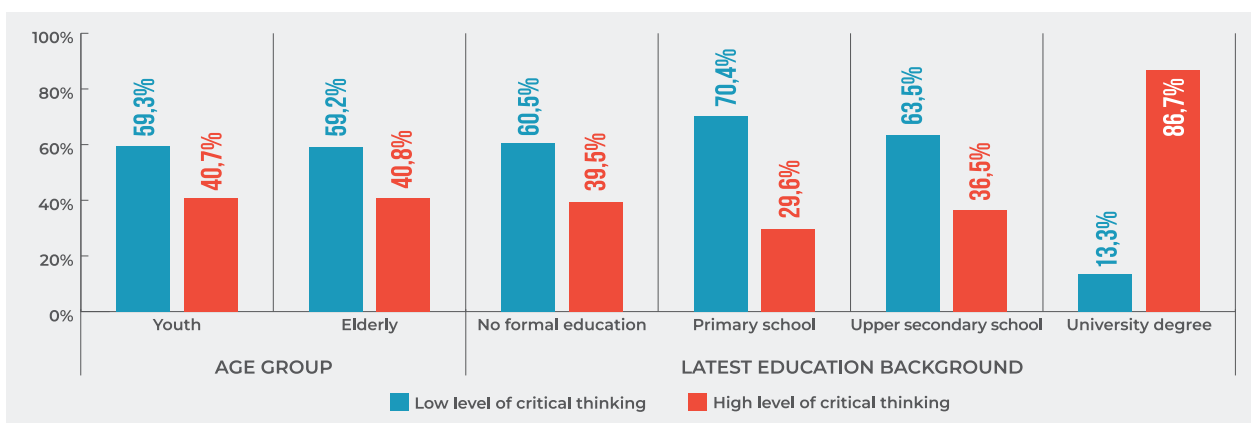
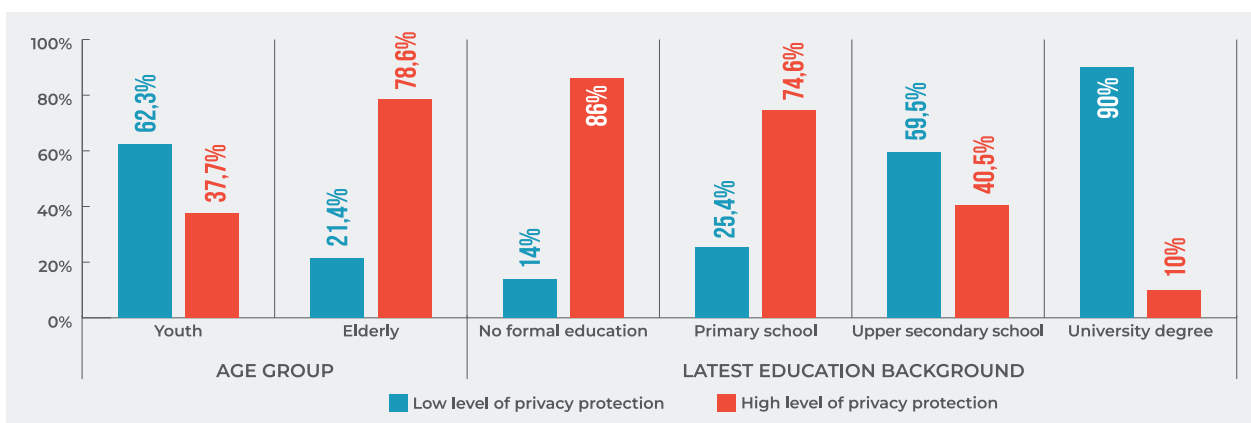


Figure 5.15 Privacy Protection by Demographics



elderly exhibiting high critical thinking. A larger proportion, 59.2% of elders and 59.3% of the youth, have low critical thinking skills. University graduates fare better at 86.7% high critical thinking, yet 13.3% struggle. Intriguingly, individuals without formal education outperform those with secondary education in critical thinking abilities.

Privacy Protection

Community feedback on privacy protection actions, like setting up privacy settings, controlling profile picture and post visibility, personal information access, old post viewership, and tagging permissions in posts, is assessed. The inquiry also covers account security measures, such as password creation and routine changes. Trends in privacy protection levels are notably influenced by the respondents' age groups and educational backgrounds.

Figure 5.15 reveals that the elderly exhibit higher privacy protection levels (78.6%) than the youth (37.7%). Interestingly, individuals without formal education display a high awareness of privacy protection (86%), surpassing primary (74.6%) and upper secondary (40.5%) school graduates. Contrarily, university graduates show

a mere 10% awareness of internet privacy importance, suggesting that higher education does not necessarily equate to better online privacy protection.

Information Competence

Figure 5.16 indicates that the number of children and the latest education background are significant factors affecting Information Competence levels. Childless couples show higher information competence (80.5%) than those with children, who exhibit lower competence (38.3%). Education-wise, university degree holders possess the highest information competence (96.7%), outperforming upper secondary (65.1%), primary school graduates (25.4%), and individuals without formal education (16.3%).

Trust in Social Media

Figure 5.17 describes that there are 2 factors that play important role in developing trust in social media, namely age group and status of employment (Figure 5.17). The youth shows the less trust in social media (62.3%) compared to the elderly who have higher trust (67%). Among employee and unemployed, there are a higher level of social media trust from the working people (59%)

than those unworking people (39%). On the contrary, there are less unworking people who trust social media (61%) compared to the working people (41%).

Confidence in Engaging with News

Figure 5.18 illustrates the impact of formal education on confidence in news engagement. It shows that

individuals with higher education, specifically university degrees, exhibit greater confidence in sharing news at 76.7%, as opposed to those with an upper secondary school background at 35.7%. Interestingly, the low confidence level in sharing news among primary school graduates is closely matched by those without formal education, with both groups showing low confidence at 76.1% and 76.7%, respectively.

Figure 5.16 Information Competence by Demographics

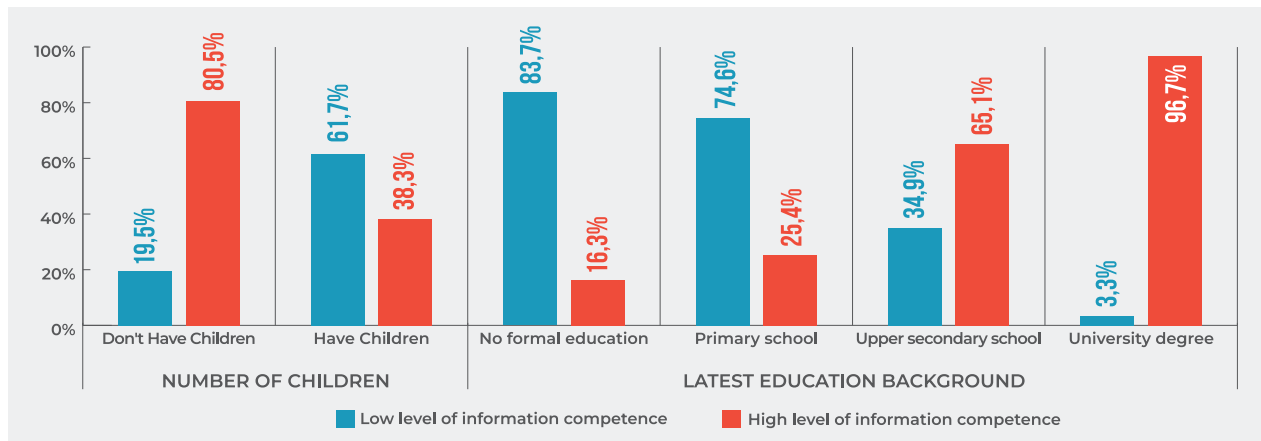


Figure 5.17 Trust in Social Media by Demographics

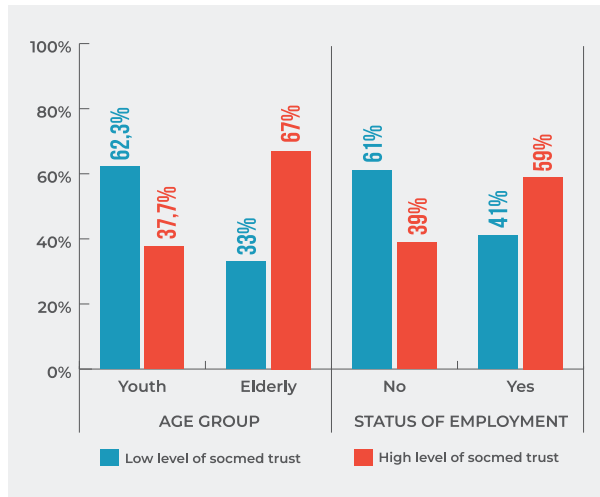
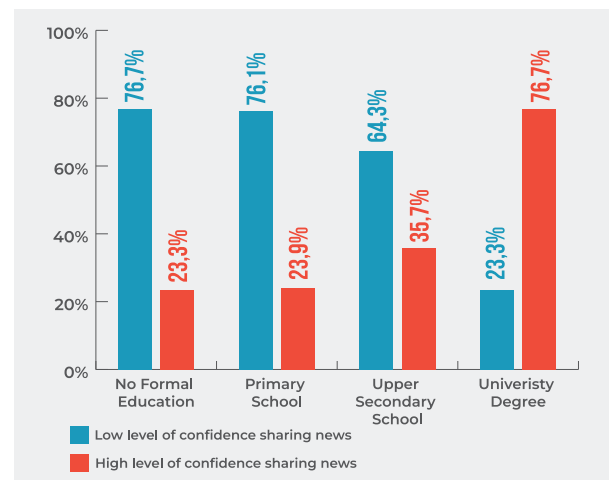


Figure 5.18 Confidence in Engaging with News by Demographics



LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

Orang Aseli in Malaysia define disinformation as incorrect or misleading information that cannot be confirmed for its truthfulness. This underprivileged group define misinformation as information that cannot be confirmed for its truthfulness, regardless of whether it originates from a reliable or unreliable source. However, for Orang Aseli in Malaysia the

difference between misinformation and fake news can be seen from the intention. They acknowledge that misinformation may involve errors in details or figures, while fake news is deliberately created to cause harm or damage. They believe false news or fake news as information deliberately created or designed to cause harm, damage, or spread rumors.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trend

In Malaysia, disinformation trends differ between the elderly and youth of the Orang Aseli community. Elderly individuals often encounter misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine, with false claims about paralysis, side effects, and diseases. Youth disinformation falls into five categories: 'Fraud,' 'Fake News,' 'Health,' 'Cybercrime,' and 'Crime.' Most youth-related misinformation pertains to 'Fake News,' including non-existent programs and fabricated government-related information, and 'Cybercrime,' with scams like fake giveaways and fraudulent government assistance offers. Health-related disinformation among the youth involves vaccine risks and misleading COVID-19 news. 'Fraud' is mostly about debit card scams, while 'Crime' includes child abduction and kidnapping rumors. These trends highlight the necessity for tailored campaigns to foster critical thinking and media literacy among Orang Aseli youth to combat misinformation effectively.

Risk of Disinformation Against the Orang Aseli: Disinformation Production, Consumption, and Circulation

The Orang Aseli community receives and shares misinformation and fake news through various channels and sources. Unfortunately, the community's access to accurate information is limited. To a large extent, majority of members of Orang Aseli live in remote areas with minimal telecommunication infrastructure, which create challenge for them to access alternative information sources. However, the community has gradually gained access to technology, including the internet and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. Misinformation and fake news are often

disseminated through these digital channels, and the community members, including the elderly and youth, are exposed to such content. Additionally, misinformation is sometimes spread through word of mouth within the community, and it is noted that NGOs and mass media also play a role in the circulation of misinformation, particularly concerning land issues and government actions.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

The Orang Aseli community in Malaysia is particularly susceptible to the perils of fake news, facing risks that can profoundly affect their social and cultural fabric. Misinformation can foster misunderstandings and misconceptions, especially regarding sensitive issues like land rights, education, and healthcare, potentially leading to distrust and conflict within the community. The community's dependence on information from familiar sources, combined with influences from NGOs and mass media, increases their vulnerability to external manipulation and acceptance of misleading narratives. Given their remote locations and limited telecommunication access, the Orang Aseli are often predisposed to receive and believe false narratives, exacerbating their susceptibility. The community's restricted access to digital literacy programs further heightens their exposure to misinformation disseminated via social media and other digital channels. Additionally, the proliferation of fake news can have detrimental effects on the relationship between the Orang Aseli and the government, causing misunderstandings about policies and fostering negative perceptions of governmental actions. These factors underscore the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance the community's access to accurate information and bolster their media literacy, ensuring they are better equipped to navigate the challenges posed by disinformation.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

The Orang Aseli in Malaysia live within the multilayered vulnerability that contributes to inequality. There are several factors that expose the Orang Aseli to vulnerability and perpetuate inequality, including: 1) Land Issues: Lack of land rights and unclear legal status from the government leave the Orang Aseli susceptible

to manipulation and inequality; 2) Educational Inequality: Poor-quality education in Orang Aseli schools including inadequate resources and inconsistent teacher commitment, create hurdles for Orang Aseli students, pushing them behind in basic literacy even by Year 6. This systemic disadvantage fuels concerns about their academic progress and contributes to educational inequality within the community; 3) Digital

Literacy and Misinformation: The Orang Aseli's limited access to digital technology and internet connectivity, as well as their reliance on traditional communication methods, make them susceptible to misinformation and fake news; and 4) Lack of Government Support: government provides limited support, particularly in addressing land issues and fulfilling promises related to land rights and facilities that contributes to vulnerability and inequality within the community.

Mitigating Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fake News

The study reveals that Orang Aseli elders trust news from personal connections and have some faith in government news, but approach social media with caution due to concerns about reliability. Conversely, the youth and other community members prioritize validating news sources, often seeking confirmation from village heads or JAKOA officials. This demographic demonstrates robust digital literacy, discerning credible news by cross-referencing with Google or online news outlets and consulting with friends and family.

Guidance from village leaders or Tok Batin is commonly sought by Orang Aseli for news verification, while JAKOA or land offices are approached for official information. The elderly exercise caution and verify news against known facts or consult trusted individuals before accepting it. The youth and other community members actively seek accurate information, using reliable websites or discussion within their circles, and occasionally further verification through Google or news platforms. Sharing news within the community usually stems from a desire to protect and inform family members about potential dangers or to raise awareness.

National TV news emerges as the most trusted source of information for the Orang Aseli, with TikTok viewed as the least trustworthy. The community places high reliability on family, friends, and community leaders for news, while exhibiting skepticism towards some

radio and TV news. Social media outlets like TikTok and WhatsApp are broadly distrusted. This portrayal of information trust underscores the significant role of personal connections and verified sources in the community's news-sharing practices.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

The study emphasizes the significance of information sources for the Orang Aseli community's perception of credibility. Elders predominantly trust news from personal connections, while the educated, including teachers, rely on social media friends for credible information, especially on Facebook. The community is diligent in verifying news through government websites and remains skeptical about sharing unconfirmed information from WhatsApp and other platforms.

Community leaders are pivotal in dispelling misinformation, enjoying high trust due to their status and the community's close bonds. Despite obstacles, they are key to validating information, with a need for enhanced communication between them and the community members.

There's an awareness of government initiatives against fake news, such as TV ads, but the community suggests that awareness campaigns should be expanded to social media, aligning with the shift towards streaming services and smartphones.

The Orang Aseli view government measures against fake news as inadequate, despite efforts by departments like JAKOA. They call for more government interaction with local leaders and community clusters, considering the limited number of prominent Orang Aseli organizations. JAKOA officials, however, assert that numerous educational programs have been launched to address fake news within the community, indicating a disconnect between the community's experiences and the officials' claims.

LESSON LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

The elderly emphasize the need to promptly address disinformation to protect the community, particularly those who may struggle to identify fake news, fearing potential negative outcomes. In contrast,

young people underestimate the seriousness of disinformation, citing their wide media access and ability to handle such content. They actively verify information before sharing it due to internet access and discuss and validate information in social groups, particularly on platforms like WhatsApp.

Learning Modalities

Universities and JAKOA can work together on awareness programs for the Orang Aseli to recognize fake news. Schools are educating students and teachers about misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. Increasing awareness campaigns and including ways to combat misinformation in curriculum updates would be beneficial.

Barriers

Limited formal education, typically ending at primary school, hinders elders' understanding of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news, especially when received through platforms like WhatsApp or word of mouth.

Enablers

Schools have made efforts to educate students and teachers about misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. More awareness campaigns and events should be conducted to educate families indirectly about misinformation, disinformation, and fake news at home. Integrating methods to combat these issues into curriculum updates would also be helpful.

Government Efforts

Cybersecurity Malaysia, supported by the government, has rolled out multiple initiatives to combat fake news, with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) overseeing regulations. Despite their efforts, including the news verification site *Sebenarnya.my*, there's a consensus within the Orang Aseli community that these measures require more frequent updates and broader reach. The community advocates for the government to intensify efforts against misinformation, recommending targeted awareness campaigns in villages to address the issue effectively.

Elevating Orang Aseli Youth

As the guardian of the Orang Aseli community, JAKOA must be watchful of fake news within the community. Addressing widespread misinformation becomes challenging, and JAKOA officers, as revealed in interviews, promptly respond to Orang Aseli concerns by visiting villages to clarify the actual situation. As per the interview, the officer mentioned they will intervene to resolve any confusion caused by misinformation.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Digital Literacy Regional and National Policies

Incorporate Media Literacy into Education: Incorporate media literacy into school curricula early on and create programs teaching critical thinking, source evaluation, and media analysis.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Initiate campaigns to raise awareness about misinformation nationwide or within communities. Offer resources for identifying and combating fake news.

Community Workshops and Training: Arrange community workshops and training sessions to educate people about digital literacy, including practical exercises on fact-checking and evaluating online information.

Online Courses and Webinars: Create online courses or webinars covering different digital literacy aspects, and ensure accessibility to a broad audience, including schools, community centers, and online platforms.

Collaboration with Tech Companies: Partner with tech firms to boost digital literacy features on their

platforms and support the creation of tools aiding users in recognizing and reporting fake news.

Promote Fact-Checking Websites: Promote reputable fact-checking sites and educate people on cross-referencing information from various sources to verify accuracy.

Engage Social Media Platforms: Work with social media platforms to introduce features that flag or contextualize potentially misleading information. Advocate for prioritizing content from trustworthy sources in users' feeds.

Government Initiatives: Governments can promote digital literacy through public campaigns and endorse policies that tackle fake news while respecting freedom of expression.

Partnerships with NGOs and Media Organizations: Partner with NGOs and media organizations to enhance digital literacy initiatives and utilize established networks to reach diverse audiences.

Equipping the Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

Continuous Learning Programs: Create continuous programs to keep individuals informed about digital trends and misinformation tactics. Collaborate with universities to offer courses that enhance digital literacy skills for groups in the community.

Parental and Family Education: Teach parents to guide children safely in the digital world and

encourage open family communication about online activities and risks.

Interactive Games and Simulations: Create interactive games and simulations to replicate real-world misinformation scenarios, offering hands-on learning. This comprehensive approach enhances digital literacy, enabling individuals to navigate the digital world more critically and resiliently.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we will examine the factors affecting youth and elderly communities. Several elements contribute to why the elderly may be more susceptible to disinformation and fake news.

1. *Limited digital literacy:* older individuals may struggle due to less exposure to digital technology, affecting their ability to discern reliable sources.
2. *Lack of familiarity with social media:* elderly individuals may not be familiar with social media, making them more vulnerable to misinformation spread through these platforms.
3. *Cultural and social isolation:* elders may rely on close-knit circles for information, which, if exposed to misinformation, can quickly spread within these networks.
4. *Cognitive decline:* age-related cognitive decline may impact their ability to critically evaluate information, making it challenging to discern accurate information from misinformation.
5. *Targeting vulnerabilities:* some disinformation campaigns target older demographics due to generational differences in trust and fact-checking.
6. *Political and social context:* economic instability, political polarization, and specific events can contribute to the spread of misinformation, especially during elections.
7. *Limited access to diverse information sources:* the elderly have limited access to varied information sources, relying mainly on WhatsApp and smartphones.

While amongst the youth, there are several factors leading to youth's susceptibility to disinformation and fake news, namely:

1. *Digital native generation:* while digitally savvy, youth may overestimate their ability to discern credible information from misinformation.
2. *Social media influence:* they heavily rely on social media, which, through algorithmic filtering, can create echo chambers and contribute to the spread of misinformation.
3. *Limited media literacy education:* the formal education system may not adequately address media literacy, leading to difficulties in differentiating between credible and unreliable content.
4. *Peer influence:* misinformation shared within their social circles may be accepted without question, influenced by peer relationships.
5. *Impulsivity and sensationalism:* driven by curiosity, they may share content without critically evaluating its credibility.
6. *Political and social activism:* engagement in social causes may make them susceptible to information that aligns with their ideological views, without proper fact-checking.
7. *Influence of celebrities and influencers:* they look up to celebrities and influencers for guidance and information, impacting their beliefs.
8. *Technological and information overload:* the volume of online information can be overwhelming, leading to the acceptance of false information.
9. To address these challenges, integrating media literacy into formal education, promoting critical thinking, fostering open dialogue, and enhancing digital literacy among the youth are crucial steps.

MYANMAR



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES' OVERVIEW
- BEYOND DIGITAL DIVIDE: REFRAMING
- INEQUALITIES IN ENGAGING WITH DIGITAL MEDIA
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN DIGITAL AGE
- LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Myanmar Innovation and Economic Growth

Myanmar is located in the western portion of mainland Southeast Asia and is bordered by China to the north and northeast, Lao to the east, Thailand to the southeast, the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal to the south and southwest, Bangladesh to the west, and India to the northwest. Myanmar's development journey has faced challenges, including political transitions, economic growth, and poverty reduction from 2011 to 2019. Despite initial progress, the country experienced setbacks like violence in Rakhine State in 2017 and a political takeover in 2021, disrupting democratic reforms and leading to increased conflict. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, and natural disasters like Cyclone Mocha in May 2023 have further compounded these challenges, reversing many development gains made over the past decade.

Myanmar's economy has significantly contracted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the coup, with economic activity remaining constrained. By 2023, the economy is projected to be 30% smaller than without these challenges, and real GDP per capita is around 13% below 2019 levels. Economic recovery has been slow and uneven, with disruptions persisting from high input prices, electricity outages, conflict, trade restrictions, and regulatory changes. Labor market conditions are precarious, household inequalities have deepened, and a significant portion of households have experienced income declines according to the Myanmar Subnational Phone Survey conducted at the end of 2022 and early 2023.

Myanmar Inequality and Exclusion

The internal political conflict has worsened digital challenges, particularly for marginalized groups. Outdated 3G networks and limited global connectivity have created disparities in internet quality and speed, with rural areas bearing the brunt due to inadequate ICT investment and educational resources. Deficiencies in STEM education, an informal economy, weak regulations, and limited data for policymakers further hinder the development of a robust digital ecosystem and widen the digital divide.

Post-coup, Myanmar faces restricted digital freedoms, impacting communication and increasing surveillance, especially affecting marginalized groups. Internet shutdowns, expensive data, and mandatory

SIM registrations exacerbate the situation. Media limitations and telecom disruptions impede safe reporting and contact with vulnerable communities, widening the communication gap and reinforcing inequalities for groups like LGBTQI+ individuals, those with disabilities, and stateless persons.

Marginalized communities in Myanmar are particularly hard-hit by the regime's internet censorship, facing challenges in reporting, reduced online access, and elevated risks of gender-based violence and child marriage. The exacerbated digital divide is disrupting children's education, resulting in increased dropout rates and child marriages. Pre-conflict, ethnic minorities were already struggling with information access, affecting their involvement in governance and decision-making. These information deficits are part of wider issues of inequality and discrimination, which further sideline minority groups and amplify their vulnerabilities.

Myanmar Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

In Myanmar, the intricate media landscape heavily relies on social media such as Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook for organizing movements and spreading messages across various groups, including the government, activists, non-state actors, and ethnic militias. However, the digital information sphere is tightly controlled, with the nation ranking as one of the worst for internet freedom globally. The repercussions for online activities post-2021 coup is severe, with pro-democracy expressions or grief for violence leading to potential tracking and punishment via platforms like Telegram.

The regime's stringent measures against internet freedom obstruct the flow of trustworthy information, cultivating an environment ripe for misinformation. Social media's role is paradoxical; while it empowers civic engagement and the spread of information, it also amplifies hate speech, misinformation, and radicalization, occasionally triggering communal strife and humanitarian emergencies.

Despite the oppressive digital climate, citizens exhibit resilience, strategically using VPNs and secure communication methods to circumvent censorship. The general populace has adapted through alternative

platforms, Bluetooth messaging apps, and mesh networks to dodge internet shutdowns and retain connectivity. Hacktivists, both local and international, have also attacked government websites to support resistance efforts.

The ramifications of misinformation and fake news in Myanmar are profound, inciting hate speech, conflict,

and distrust, obstructing economic progress, and deepening social divides. Misinformation limits the exposure to varied viewpoints, potentially misguiding critical decisions. This scenario underscores an urgent need for strategies that reinforce information accuracy and digital resilience, ensuring public access to factual content and fostering informed debate, vital for Myanmar's socio-political stability and advancement.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES' OVERVIEW

The Profile of Underprivileged Communities: Who are They?

Figure 6.1 compares two age groups, youth and elderly, with the youth bar reaching 60% and the elderly bar at 40%.

Figure 6.2 indicates the majority of individuals are

single (51.2%), followed closely by those who are married (45.6%), and a small percentage are divorced/widowed (3.2%).

Figure 6.3 describes the population almost evenly split between those without children (51.2%) and those with children (48.8%).

Figure 6.1. Age

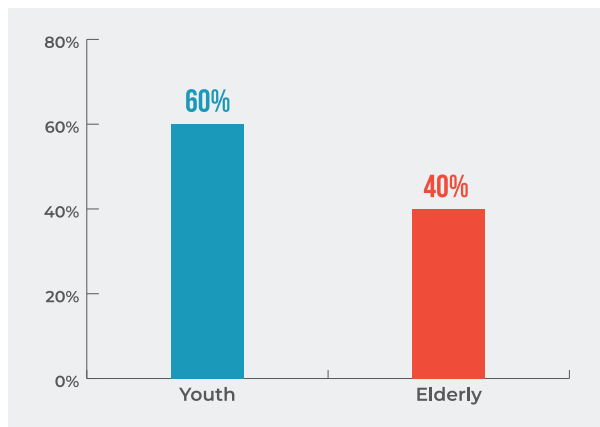


Figure 6.2. Marital Status

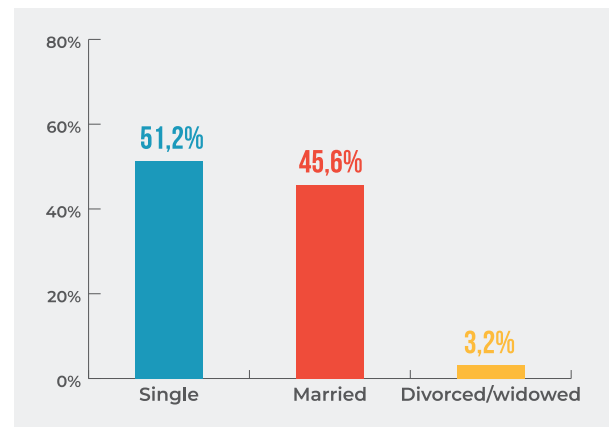


Figure 6.3. Having Children

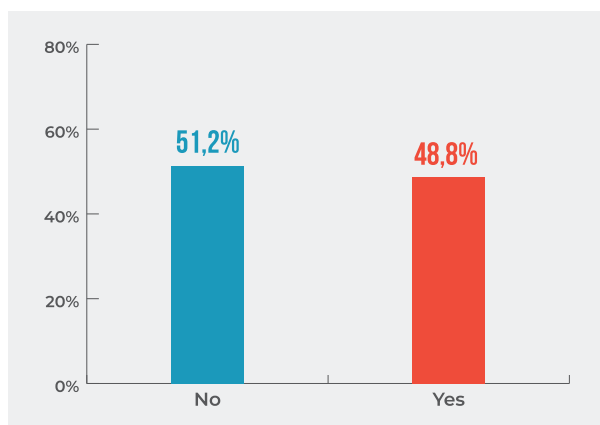


Figure 6.4. Status of Employment

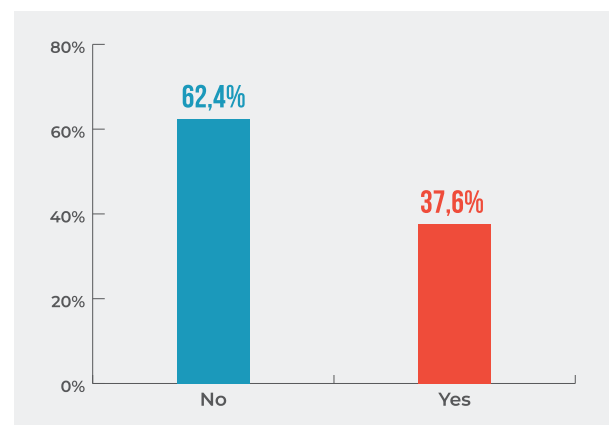


Figure 6.4 shows a larger portion of the group is not employed (62.4%) compared to those who are employed (37.6%).

Figure 6.5 shows the upper secondary has the highest percentage at 50%, followed by primary and lower secondary both at 15.2%. University level is at 13.6%, and no formal education has the lowest percentage at 5.6%.

Figure 6.5. Education Background

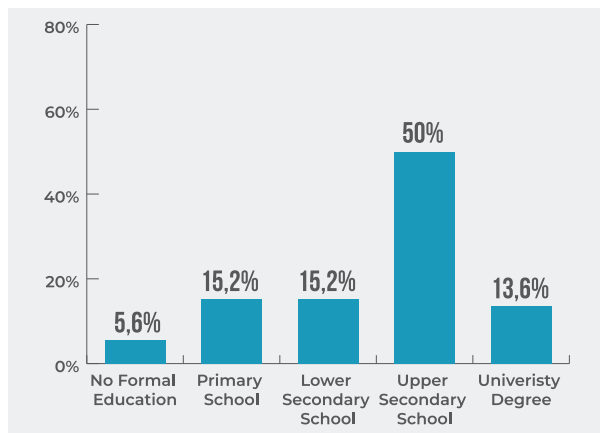


Figure 6.6 shows the percentage of individuals identified with a disability: 92% with no disability and 8% with a disability.

Figure 6.9 presents the percentage of various indigenous groups. The percentages range from 0.4% to 9.2%, with the highest represented by the Karen group at 9.2%.

Figure 6.6. Disability Identification

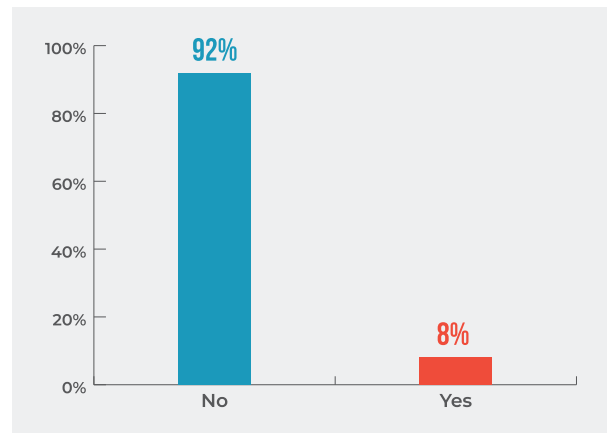
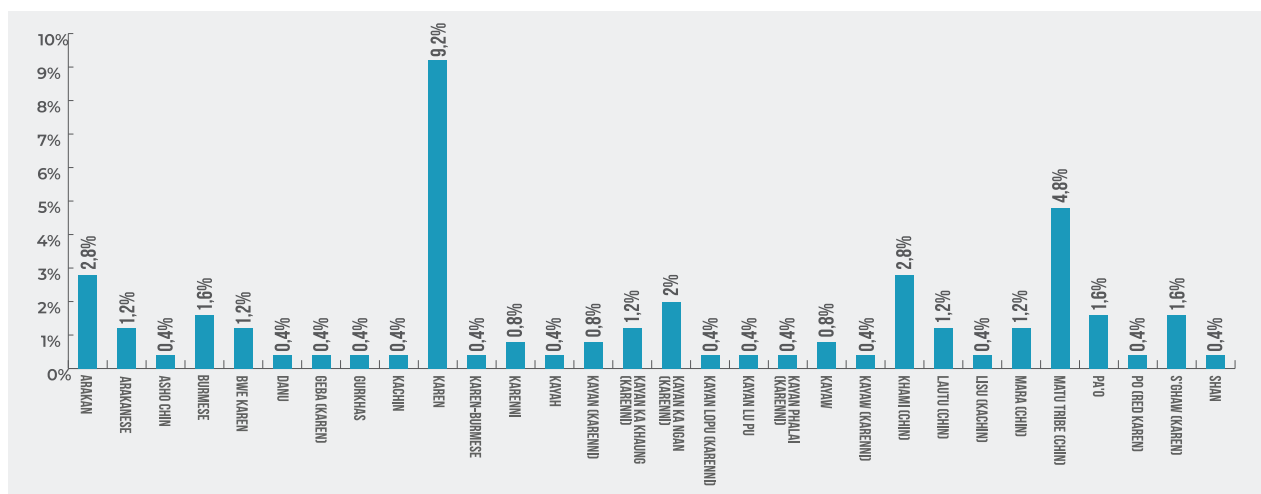


Figure 6.7 Indigenous Community



BEYOND DIGITAL DIVIDE: REFRAMING INEQUALITIES IN ENGAGING WITH DIGITAL MEDIA

Living Digital as Underprivileged Community Members

Diversity Of Use

Main Device Ownership

Figure 6.8 reveals a strong ownership of mobile telecommunication device at 93.2% among respondents,

contrasting sharply with the low usage or ownership of computers/laptops (84.0% don't use), tablets (99.6% don't use), and "others" (98.8% don't use). Very few own or borrow tablets and other tech, highlighting a predominant preference for, or dependency on, mobile telecommunication devices over other technology forms within the surveyed demographic.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 6.9). The Figure indicates determinants that distinguish main device ownership, namely disability.

The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for the main device ownership is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 6.8 Main Device Ownership

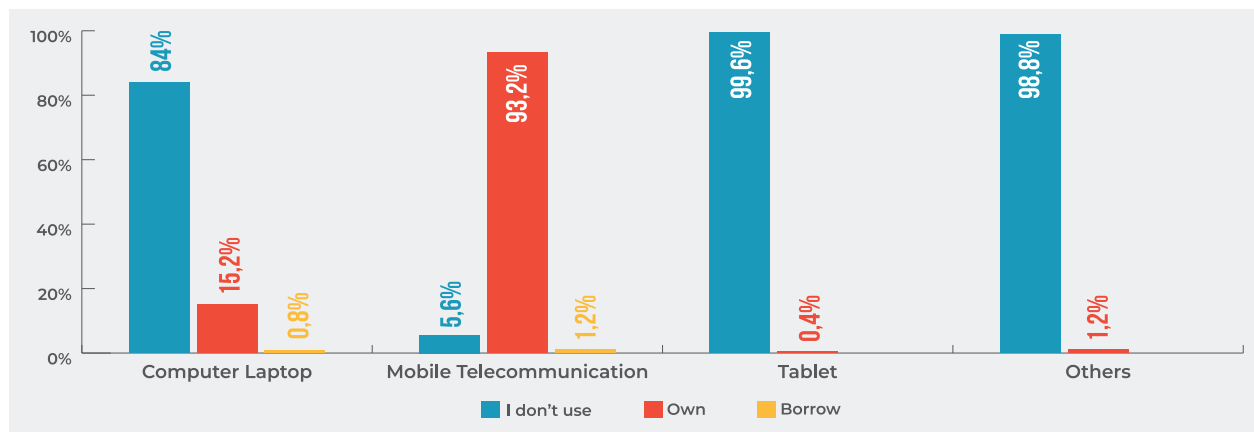


Figure 6.9 Digital Divide Determinant for Main Device Ownership

	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

Using News Platform

Figure 6.10 shows that social media is the most popular platform for getting news among respondents, with 82.8% using it. TV and instant messenger are also common at 31.6% and 31.2%, respectively, while radio and online browsers are used by around a fifth to a quarter of the participants. Print publications, free online news, paid online news, and other unspecified platforms have notably lower usage rates, indicating

a clear trend towards digital and social media sources for news consumption.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 6.11). The Figure indicates determinants that distinguish news sources, namely age, marital status, having children, status of employment, gender, disability, education, and indigenous. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for news sources is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 6.10 News Source

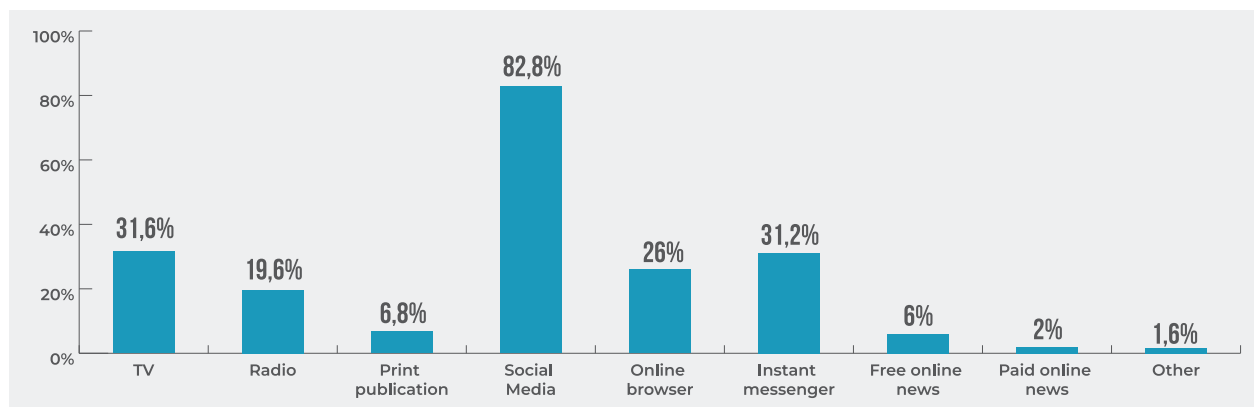


Figure 6.11 Digital Divide Determinant for News Source

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Figure 6.12 shows the highest percentage of respondents are unable to use these digital services, with the highest percentages of inability seen in E-Hospital (93.2%) followed by E-Gov (92.8%). Few can perform these tasks independently, and an even smaller percentage can use these services with help, with the lowest usage in E-Health (1.6%) and E-Commerce (1.6%).

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 6.13). The Figure indicates determinates that distinguish the different usage based activity, namely age, having children, status of employment, education, and indigenous. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for news sources is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 6.12 Different Usage Based Activities

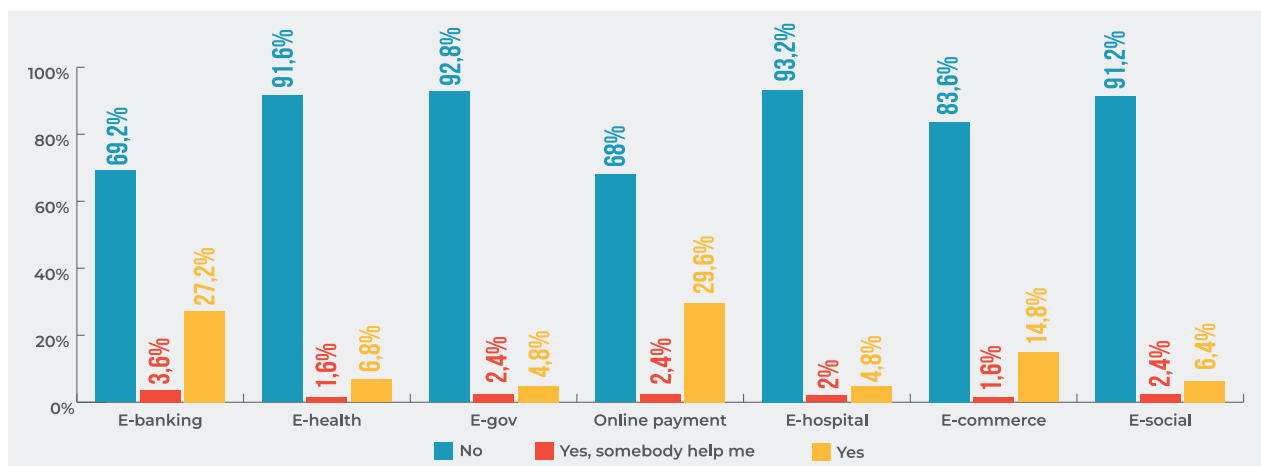


Figure 6.13 Digital Divide Determinant for Different Usage Based Activity

	Ebanking	Ehealth	Egov	Online Payment	Ehospital	Ecommerce	Esocial security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

Figure 6.14 shows that a majority of respondents can independently create posts (56.8%) and comment on posts (68.8%). In contrast, most respondents

are unable to repost content on their own (60.4%). A small portion of respondents require assistance to create posts (4.8%) and comment (2%), while an even smaller percentage needs help to repost

content (2.8%). The data suggests that while most respondents are comfortable with basic social media interactions, a significant number find reposting content challenging.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 6.15). The Figure indicates determinates that distinguish social media and community building, namely age, marital status, having children, status of employment, disability, and education. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for social media and community building is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 6.14 Social Media and Community Building

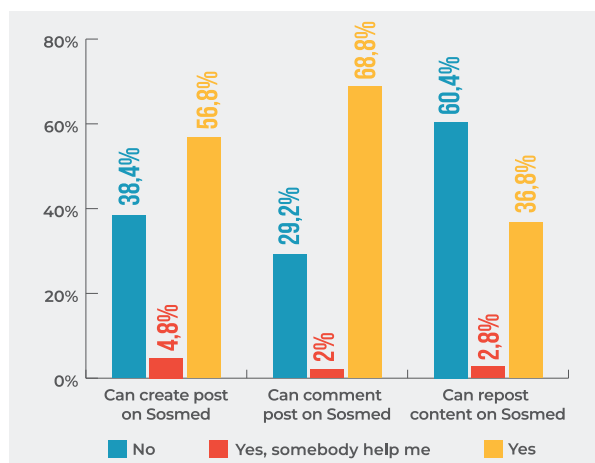


Figure 6.15 Digital Divide Determinant for Social Media And Community Building

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

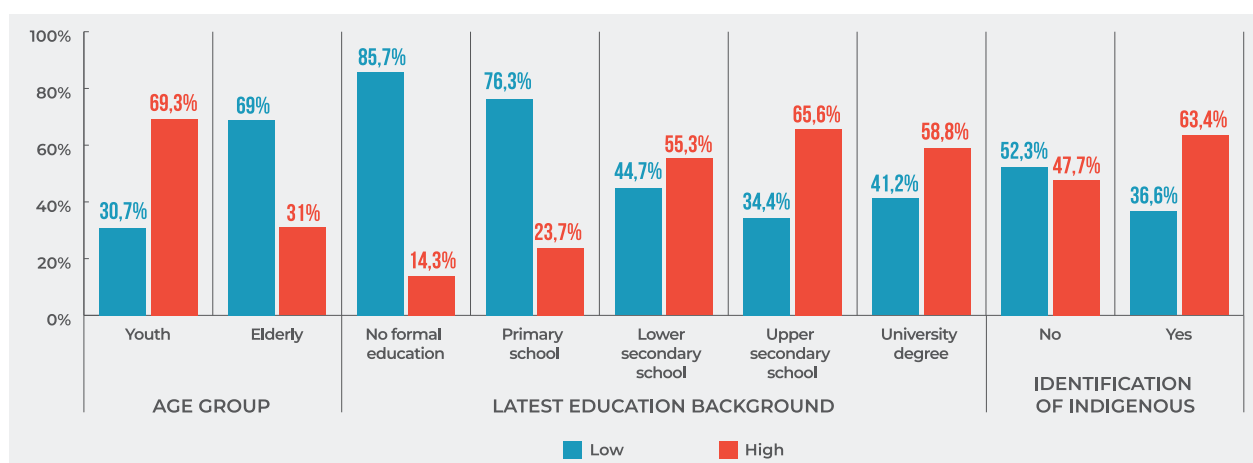
DIGITAL LITERACY

Critical Thinking

Figure 6.16 shows that 69.3% of youth possess high critical thinking skills compared to only 31% of the elderly. Critical thinking also correlates with education level, as 85.7% of uneducated individuals have low critical thinking, while those with upper secondary

education or higher show increased levels, although university graduates have slightly lower rates (58.8%). Indigenous individuals tend to have higher critical thinking (63.4%) than non-indigenous (47.7%), suggesting indigenous status may be associated with better critical thinking abilities.

Figure 6.16 Critical Thinking



Privacy Protection

Figure 6.17 shows that youth exhibit higher privacy protection (80%) than elderly (6%). Childless individuals show significantly higher privacy protection (85.2%) than parents (13.9%). Employment

correlates with privacy practices; employed individuals (55.3%) have higher protection than the unemployed (47.4%). Indigenous individuals are more likely to protect their privacy (59.4%) compared to non-indigenous (44.3%).

Figure 6.17 Privacy Protection

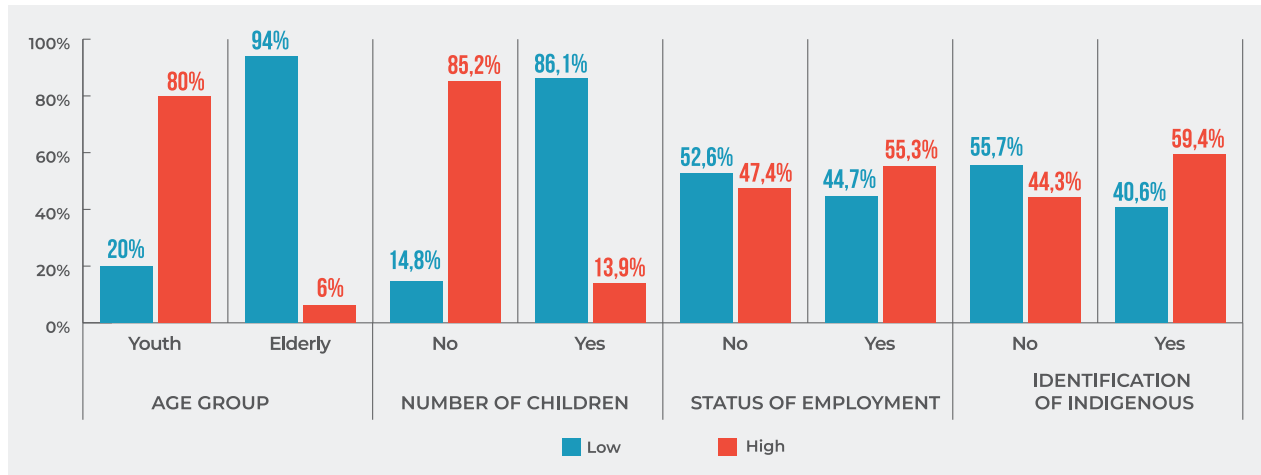
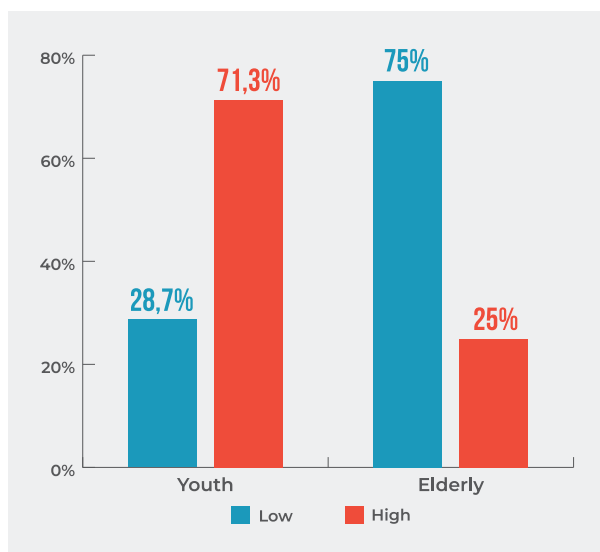


Figure 6.18 Information Competence By Age



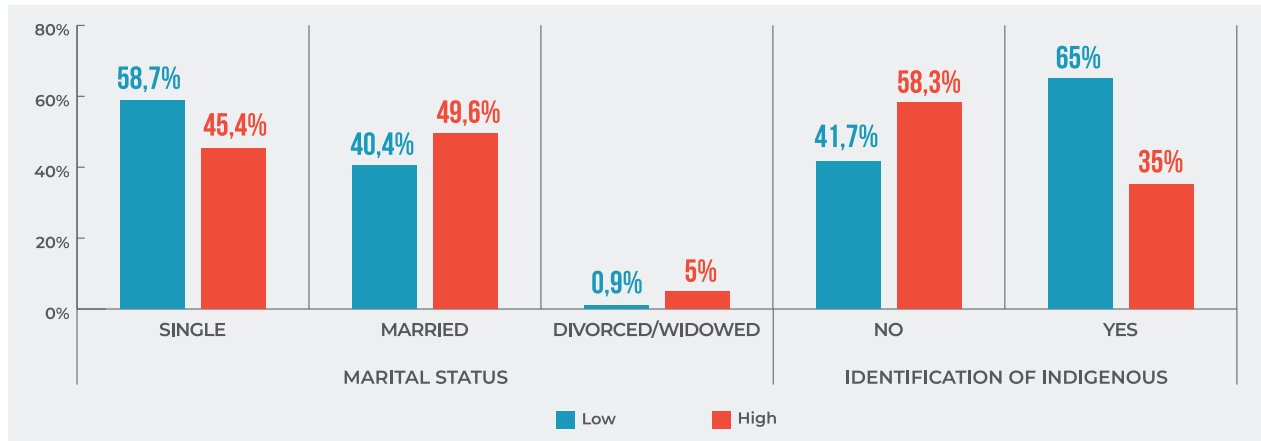
Information Competence

Figure 6.18 indicates that youth have a significantly higher level of information competence (71.3%), compared to the elderly (25%). The elderly have a higher percentage of low information competence (75%) compared to the youth (28.7%).

Trust in Social Media

Figure 6.19 reveals single individuals have lower trust (58.7%) than high (45.4%) in social media. Married people have less low trust (40.4%) and higher trust (49.6%). Divorced/widowed have the lowest trust overall. Disabled individuals have lower trust in social media (65%) than non-disabled (41.7%), while non-disabled show more high trust (58.3%) compared to disabled (35%).

Figure 6.19 Trust in Social Media

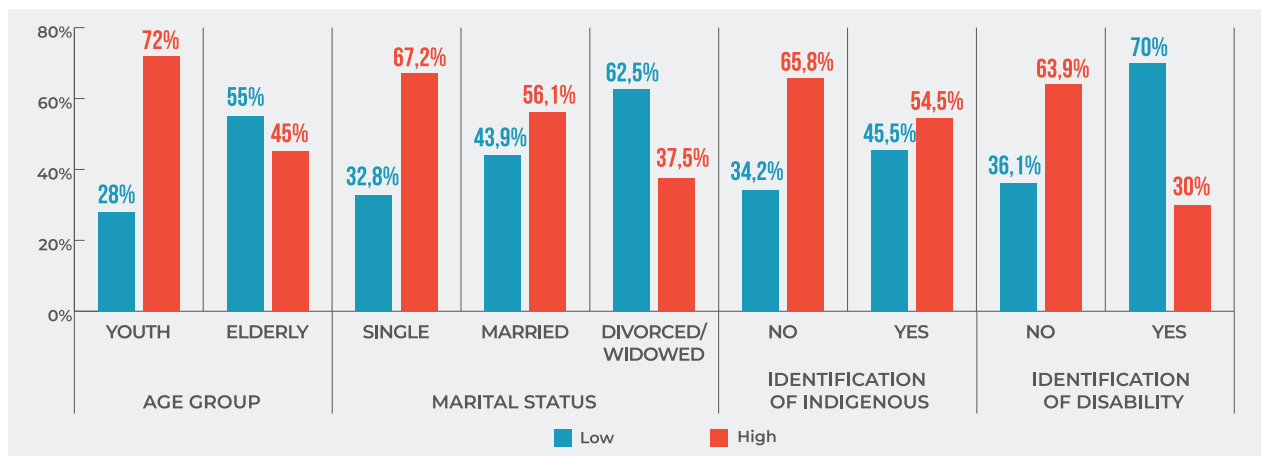


Confidence in Engaging with News

Figure 6.20 indicates a generational divide in news engagement confidence, with 72% of youth confident compared to only 55% of the elderly. Single individuals are the most confident (67.2%) while divorced or widowed are the least (37.5%).

Disabled individuals exhibit lower confidence (70% low confidence) versus the non-disabled (36.1% low confidence), highlighting the impact of disability. Additionally, non-indigenous communities (65.8% confident) have higher engagement than indigenous individuals (54.5%).

Figure 6.20 Confidence Level in Engaging With News



LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fake News

Within the context of Myanmar, the underprivileged understand disinformation as intentional falsehoods spread to sway public opinion for certain groups' gain, often involving fabricated stories or deliberately misleading information. It's seen as a form of psychological warfare designed to manipulate emotions and beliefs, used to fuel societal rifts along religious and racial lines, promoting hate speech and division. The distinction between disinformation and misinformation is blurred for these communities; both are perceived as deceitful, whether through complete fabrications, false claims, or inaccuracies. False news is particularly insidious, exploiting vulnerabilities to mislead people into accepting lies as truth, and often targeting cultural and religious sensitivities to exacerbate exploitation of societal norms and beliefs.

Risk of Disinformation against the Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

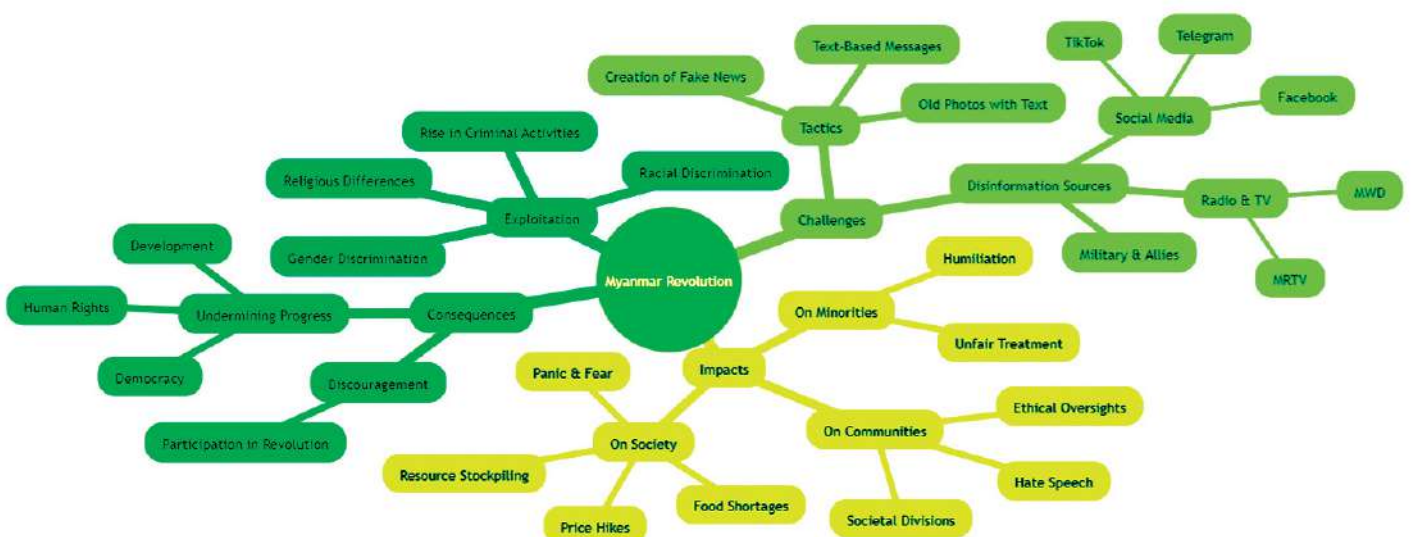
In Myanmar, disinformation campaigns led by the dominant power holder and their affiliates target vulnerable communities, leveraging social media platforms and traditional media to spread fear and discord. These campaigns utilize misleading visuals, texts, and fake news to demean minorities and incite hate speech, deepening societal divisions and

animosity. Disinformation is strategically crafted to fuel religious and racial tensions, undermining ethical standards and fostering hatred.

The consequences of such targeted misinformation are extensive, promoting social fragmentation, hostility, and even criminal behavior, all harmful to communal harmony. The ripple effects extend to the social, economic, and health realms, inducing public panic, hoarding of essentials, food shortages, and inflation. The manipulation of information not only sows despair among the population but also hampers their engagement in crucial endeavors, such as the revolution for democracy, thereby impeding Myanmar's progress in democracy, development, and human rights.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trend in Myanmar

In Myanmar, the digital divide is not just about access to technology but is also influenced by psychological, material, skills, and usage gaps, exacerbated by socioeconomic conditions and an authoritarian regime using media for manipulation. The dominant power holder's influence extends to education, distorting historical narratives and restricting internet freedom. Disinformation particularly impacts refugees and the underprivileged, misleading them with false promises, such as "pink cards" for migration, leading to financial and legal troubles. Misinformation is also



used as psychological warfare to weaken resistance movements and destabilize communities through fake reports of violence. Brokers and photographers exploit migrant workers by spreading harmful misinformation for personal benefit, causing distress

and confusion about migrants' rights and overseas conditions. The study highlights the widespread damage caused by misinformation, emphasizing the critical need for reliable information dissemination in Myanmar.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN DIGITAL AGE

In Myanmar, the digital divide extends beyond technology access and is intensified by socioeconomic disparities, affecting refugees and migrant workers the most. These vulnerable groups, prioritizing survival, often forego critical evaluation of information, making them susceptible to misinformation, especially during crises. Their limited education and the immediate need for information compound their risk, leading to the spread of unverified news. Emotional stress further impairs judgment, emphasizing the necessity for targeted interventions to support and educate these communities, ensuring they can navigate and verify information accurately.

The report identifies several key aspects that illustrate how urgent needs heighten vulnerability to misinformation:

1. **Panic and Anxiety:** Fear and insecurity in conflict situations create fertile ground for disinformation to thrive.
2. **Desire for Immediate Information:** In crisis, the urgent need for information may lead to accepting and sharing unverified news.
3. **Safety Concerns:** The need to protect villagers, especially vulnerable groups like children and women, can lead to the dissemination of inaccurate news.
4. **Socioeconomic Pressures:** Economic hardship increases susceptibility to believing and spreading disinformation.

Emotions are a crucial factor in how individuals respond to information, particularly among the underprivileged communities in Myanmar. Emotional reactions often drive the spread of misinformation, leading to misunderstandings and skewed perceptions that can negatively impact these communities. The study highlights various emotional responses that significantly increase susceptibility to disinformation:

1. **Panic and Anxiety:** Heightened emotions can result in the impulsive spread of information that aligns with personal fears.
2. **Fear:** The fear of threats, such as armed force's movements, can catalyze the rapid spread of misinformation.
3. **Existing Beliefs and Interests:** A tendency to share news that confirms pre-existing beliefs, regardless of its truthfulness.
4. **Care:** Sharing unverified information with good intentions, like during health crises, can inadvertently contribute to misinformation.
5. **Stress:** Disinformation can cause significant stress among communities, affecting sleep and peace of mind.
6. **Social Cohesiveness:** Trust in personal networks can lead to the sharing of misinformation, as personal connections often trump skepticism.

Despite awareness of disinformation risks, underprivileged communities in Myanmar face significant barriers to combating misinformation, including:

1. **Government Reluctance:** A hesitancy to establish comprehensive measures against fake news, with limited enforcement of existing laws like Section 66(d).
2. **Government Misinformation:** Active dissemination of misinformation by the regime.
3. **National Conflict:** Ongoing conflict hampers the development of digital literacy education needed for critical information evaluation.
4. **Limited NGO Reach:** Training on fake news and hate speech by NGOs tends to only reach those nearby.
5. **Community Initiatives:** A shortage of community-led initiatives to empower members against the spread of misinformation.
6. **Outdated Education:** The education system and lifestyle have not evolved to meet modern needs, leaving a gap in technical and general knowledge.

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

In Myanmar, marginalized communities assess the credibility of information by relying on recognized social media figures, authoritative news outlets like VOA and BBC, and fact-checking organizations. With limited online verification resources, they often seek confirmation from trusted personal circles, with the elderly using landline phones for this purpose.

Post-2021, there's widespread distrust in controlled media, now regarded as propaganda, especially with the exploitation of social networks. In regions lacking internet access, radio and state TV, controlled by the government, remain the sole information channels and are used to spread misinformation. Social media is approached cautiously, with an awareness of the dominant power holder and Chinese media influence perceived as a risk for anti-regime voices.

To combat misinformation, individuals verify information through connections in conflict areas and turn to international Burmese outlets and local pro-democracy channels, which help distinguish fake news. The study emphasizes the profound effects of misinformation: its capacity to sway public opinion, incite violence, undermine democratic trust, provoke fear and unrest, and impair the public's ability to make informed decisions.

Positional categories determining resources and digital literacy

In Myanmar, laws such as Section 66(d) exist to combat misinformation, but their enforcement is often inconsistent, with government agencies hesitant to implement effective policies that could hinder their operations or because of varying views on the importance of digital literacy. Furthermore, there is widespread distrust among underprivileged communities towards the government's involvement in propagating misinformation, a practice observed across different political systems, from authoritarian to democratic. This skepticism extends to the government's capacity to impartially address the issue of misinformation due to their own participation in its creation and spread.

There are efforts to tackle disinformation, but these have been insufficient in the face of its proliferation on social media. The government's control over policy and legal frameworks to limit media and social media is seen as an attempt to tighten security, which leads to government-controlled media promoting their own narratives. This control raises concerns about media impartiality and the potential for misuse in shaping public opinion, illustrating the precarious nature of government involvement in media regulation among the underprivileged in Myanmar.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

The study reveals that digital resilience in Myanmar is severely compromised by an antiquated education system and insufficient technical knowledge, rendering the population unprepared for the evolving digital age. Political turmoil and the lack of democratic structures further inhibit innovation. The Telecommunication Law and control over digital rights create significant barriers, as does the government's manipulation of information for propaganda. The report advocates for a comprehensive strategy to enhance digital resilience through robust education, digital literacy, adherence to the rule of law, and the cultivation of ethical and critical thinking skills. Addressing the digital literacy deficit and government-

imposed constraints on digital rights is crucial. The report urges for educational reform and stresses the role of social media companies in promoting resilience, emphasizing the need for legal frameworks that protect digital rights and counter disinformation to empower Myanmar's citizens digitally.

Elevating Underprivileged Community and Youth

In Myanmar, communication leaders, NGOs, and civil society organizations play a pivotal role in uplifting underprivileged communities, particularly the youth. These entities actively provide training on fake news, hate speech, and digital security, create forums for dialogue, and conduct educational

workshops to empower individuals in the fight against misinformation and disinformation. Refugees and migrant workers have recognized the value of these initiatives and acknowledge the necessity of developing strategies to counteract the spread of disinformation. Key enablers identified include:

1. **Experience and Knowledge Sharing:** Sharing experiences and knowledge shields the community from misinformation and aids in the identification of disinformation.
2. **Collaborative Efforts:** A lack of trust in major institutions, has led underprivileged communities to collaborate with civil society organizations, INGOs, NGOs, and international news agencies to deliver digital literacy programs.
3. **International Engagement:** Prioritizing connections with the international community, including ASEAN, India, and Thailand, to advance digital literacy programs.
4. **Trusted News Organizations:** Using reputable news organizations as a fact-checking strategy.

5. **Community-led Initiatives:** Recognizing the strong social cohesion among refugees and migrant workers, the importance of community-led efforts to enhance critical thinking, establish fact-check mechanisms, and provide necessary support to effectively combat disinformation is emphasized.
6. **Education and Awareness:** The community sees the importance of developing school curricula that include strategies to combat disinformation, recognize misinformation risks, and use social media safely.

The report uncovers significant findings that, despite Myanmar's democratic deficits, the online realm has become a fertile ground for cultivating a sense of freedom and liberation. Online schools, run by volunteer teachers, offer opportunities to debunk disinformation through controlled curricula and simultaneously promote academic freedom, creating a sphere free from political influence.

RECOMMENDATION

Curriculum

The report calls for embedding digital literacy into Myanmar's educational system, targeting early education to foster critical thinking skills through lectures and activities. Digital literacy could be incorporated into extracurricular programs, focusing on combating misinformation and promoting responsible tech use. Additionally, there is a need for increased education on digital security, privacy, and human rights to bolster individuals' digital resilience.

Pedagogy

The recommendation calls for Myanmar's educational institutions to modernize and align with contemporary lifestyles, learning methods, and access to information. Current pedagogic programs must broaden to equip children with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate an era marked by disinformation. There's

a crucial need for education to incorporate lifestyle changes into its core curriculum, and for a systematic information-sharing system that can robustly address the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict.

Policy

The influence of lifestyle and cultural factors on the perception of information necessitates the development of cultural policies by the government and civil society organizations in Myanmar. These policies should promote the appreciation and adoption of technology, address poverty reduction, and prioritize education access to enhance critical thinking and global participation. Additionally, there is a call for establishing policies that support robust fact-checking mechanisms, providing the necessary tools and backing to empower communities to effectively counter misinformation and disinformation.

CONCLUSION

Myanmar's oppressive political climate, where the power holder uses media to further its aims and stifle dissent, worsens the digital divide. The education system doesn't provide the technical know-how needed, widening the digital gap, especially in utilizing services like E-Hospital and E-Gov. There's a critical need for systemic educational reform, grassroots efforts, and international aid to enhance digital literacy and safe digital media use. This report calls for a comprehensive strategy to boost education,

uphold ethical standards, and develop critical thinking to counter misinformation. Emphasizing community-led and globally supported interventions, it aims to empower those hindered by the digital divide, especially during crises requiring trustworthy information. The report also sheds light on how economic, social, and geographic factors contribute to the heightened risk of disinformation among vulnerable groups, underscoring the complexity and urgency of bridging Myanmar's digital divide.

PHILIPPINES



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
- BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE
- LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING
- MISINFORMATION/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Innovation and Economic Growth

In 2020, the Philippines entered a recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing a 9.6% annual GDP decline. This downturn contrasted with previous years of rapid economic growth. Two key factors contributing to the country's economic decline include its model relying heavily on mobility, making it more susceptible to disease outbreaks, and the government's challenges in managing the outbreak and strengthening the healthcare system through extended lockdowns. However, there's hope for recovery in 2022. According to a World Bank report from December 2022, the Philippines' economy is expected to grow by 7.2% in 2022, stabilizing at an average growth rate of 5.7% in 2023. Additionally, the World Bank has approved funding for the Philippines' policy financing recovery to further bolster the country's economic resilience and sustainability.

To boost resilience in the Philippines, focus on developing inclusive financial tools that target: 1) Ensuring stability, integrity, and resilience in the financial sector; 2) Enhancing financial inclusion for individuals and businesses, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises; and 3) Providing climate and disaster risk finance to safeguard Filipino families from climate change and natural disasters. Key aspects entail integrating climate risks into financial institutions' risk management, encouraging green investments from private sectors, and promoting innovative financial services through digital technologies. The Philippines achieved a notable GDP growth rate of 7.6% in 2022, comparable to rapidly growing economies like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Vietnam, and India.

Inequality and Exclusion

The Philippines grapples with rising wealth inequality and limited social mobility due to persistent structural poverty and social exclusion, stemming from political and economic circumstances since the 1980s. Challenges include unequal power distribution among politicians, economic shifts favoring family-linked conglomerates, high Gini coefficients, and increasing rural income inequality. Wealth concentration, particularly in the financial sector, worsens disparities for vulnerable groups. The middle class growth is slow compared to other Asian

countries, hindering poverty reduction and social mobility progress.

Income inequality and disparities in education contribute to unequal access to digital devices and the internet. Data shows higher internet usage among college-educated individuals compared to those with lower educational qualifications. Internet usage facilitates social connections and employment opportunities, widening the wealth gap between those with and without access to digital resources. Limited access to online platforms can hinder financial gains, as seen in the example of farmers unable to reach digital marketplaces, impacting their earnings.

Overview of Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

The Philippines struggles with economic recovery, structural poverty, and social exclusion leading to increased wealth inequality and limited social and economic mobility. Political and economic challenges since the 1980s have concentrated power among politicians, influenced economic policies, and led to high inequality in wealth and income, with growing disparities in rural areas. Wealth concentration, especially in the financial sector, poses challenges for vulnerable groups. The middle class growth lags behind other Asian nations, and advancements in poverty reduction and social mobility are slow.

What are the best solutions to improve the lives of Filipinos? Technological and political-economic factors that contribute to poverty and inequality, such as unfavourable economic structures, job creation trends, and challenges of economic change. By addressing the factors, it is important to emphasize the importance of the need for new frameworks to address evolving socio-economic challenges and calls for the development of positive socio-economic mobility and inclusive policies to address deep-seated poverty and inequality issues in the Philippines. Technology and information are also growing rapidly in the Philippines. This is characterized by the high level of mobile phone and social media usage among Filipinos. In 2021, We Are Social and Hootsuite claimed that Philippines tops the world for time spent using social media this year. It was the 6th straight year it has done so. According to the report, Filipinos spend an average of 4 hours and 15 minutes each day on social media.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Profile of the Underprivileged Community: Who are They?

The adoption and utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) vary among different groups due to their background factors. In the Philippines, we have identified several categories such as age group, gender, marital status, educational background, having children, and status of employment. These digital divide determinants result in discrepancies in technology access and possibilities for digital skill education. In this section, we provide readers with the result of our survey in the Philippines which is derived from our 250 respondents who fulfill our questionnaire.

Figure 7.1 provides us with the data about the age group our respondents belong to. From the figure, we can see a disproportion in the age of our participants where 60% of them are considered young

people (aged 15–35 years old) and the rest (40%) are considered elderly people (above 55 years old).

Figure 7.2 gives us information about the gender proportion of our Philippine respondents. A large proportion of our respondents are female (71.3% of respondents). Males accounted for 27.5% of the total respondents. There also a small number who state themselves as non-binary (1.2% or 3 persons).

Figure 7.3 depicts the marital status of our 250 respondents. Among the entire sample, 57.3% state themselves as currently married. This data is followed by 34.7% who state themselves as single and the rest (8.1%) state themselves as divorced or widowed.

From Figure 7.4, we can see that a large proportion of our survey respondents have children (63.6%) compared to the rest (36.4%) who say that they don't

Figure 7.1 Age Group

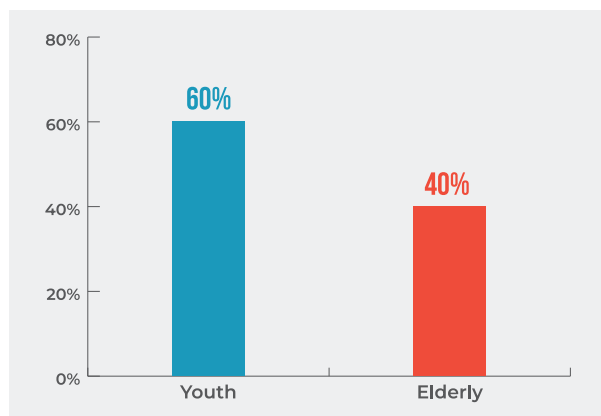


Figure 7.2 Gender

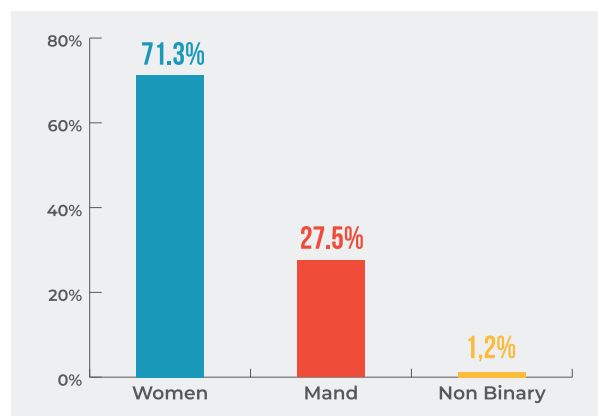


Figure 7.3 Marital Status

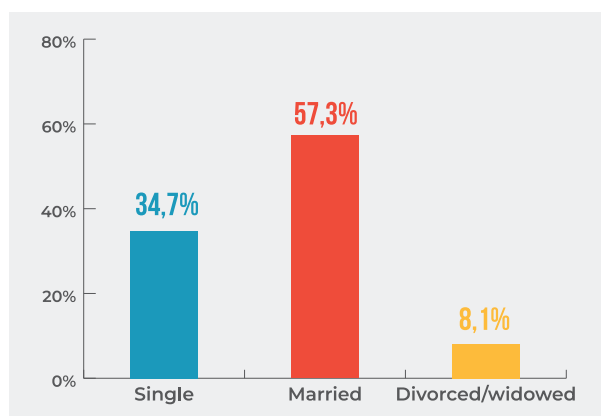
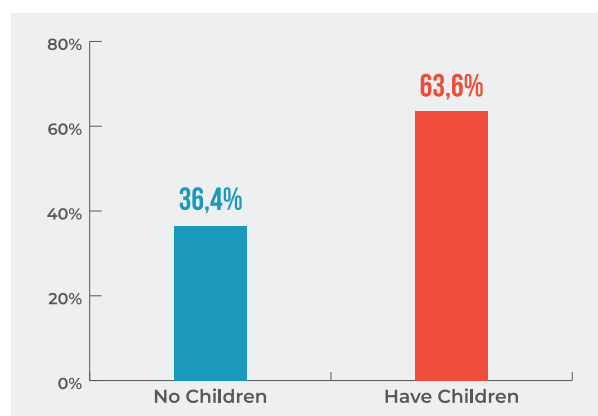


Figure 7.4 Having Children



have children. One can make an assumption that this figure is related to the respondents' marital status in Figure 7.3.

The status of employment is another determinant that could influence people's ability to access digital technology. From our survey data, we can see that 53% of our respondents are unemployed. Those who are stating that they are currently employed account for 47% of our respondents. There is a probability that this data is also related to the age group who have a similar proportion. One can say that those who are

unemployed are still in their adolescent age.

The educational background of our respondents is classified into four levels; primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, and finally, university degree. We can see that participants who have a university degree are of considerable size, 44.7% or 112 persons. This proportion is followed by those who finished their upper secondary school with 29.8% of respondents. The rest of the respondents finished their lower secondary school (12.8%) and finished primary school (12.8%).

Figure 7.5 Status of Employment

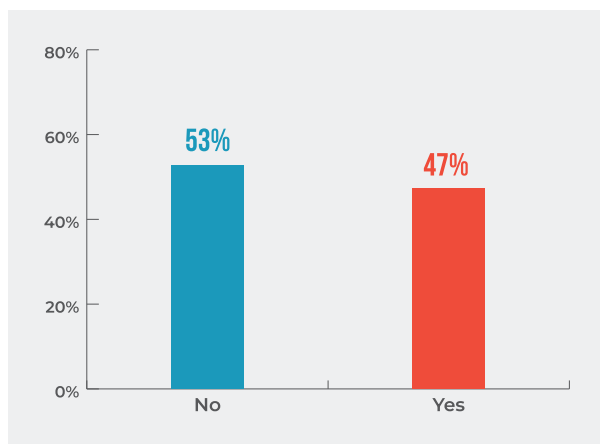
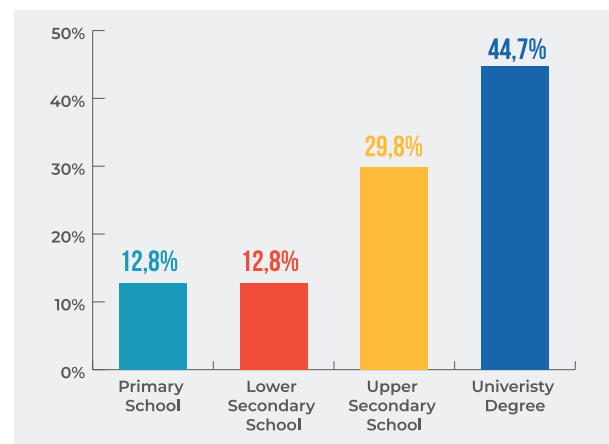


Figure 7.6 Latest Education Background



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

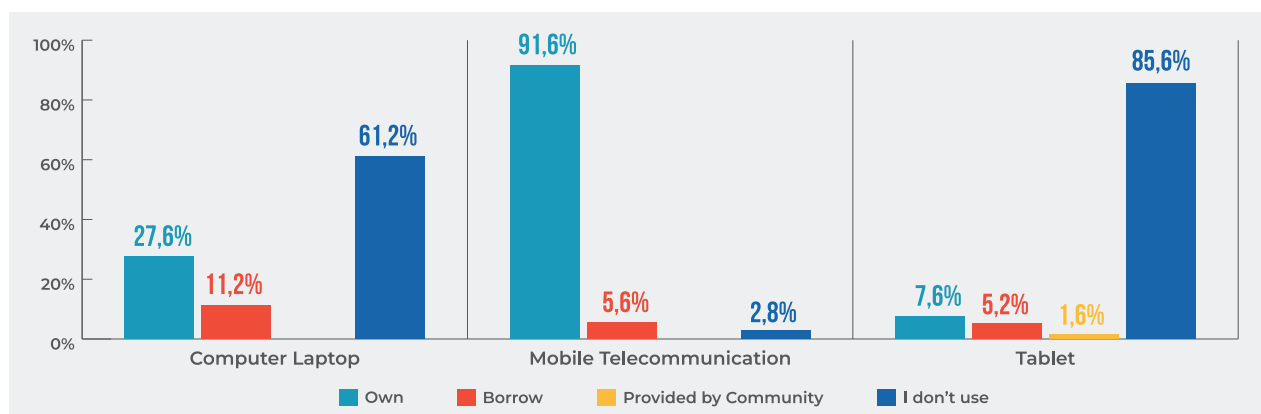
Diversity Of Use

Main Devices Ownership

Figure 7.7 shows a significant majority do not use computers or laptops (61.2%), while the majority own

mobile devices (91.6%). Tablet usage is low, with 85.6% not using them. The data suggests high mobile adoption, moderate computer and laptop usage, and minimal tablet usage, with ownership being the primary means of access for those who use these

Figure 7.7 Main Device Ownership



devices. Additional context, such as sample size, demographics, or a visual graph, would enhance the analysis.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings in (Figure 7.8). The figure indicates determinants that

distinguish main device ownership, namely age, marital status, education, and indigenous identification. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for main device ownership is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 7.8 Digital Divide Determinant for Main Device Ownership

	Computer Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

Using News Platforms

Figure 7.9 shows that Social Media has the highest engagement at 83.2%, closely followed by TV at 81.2%. The least engaged platform is Paid Online News Portals, at just 1.2%. Traditional Print Publications and the 'Others' category have relatively low engagement rates of 15.6% and 2.0%, respectively. Instant Messenger and Radio hold moderate positions.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 7.8). The figure indicates determinants that distinguish platforms used to get news, namely age, having children, gender, disability, education, and indigenous identification. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for platforms used to get news is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 7.9 News Platform

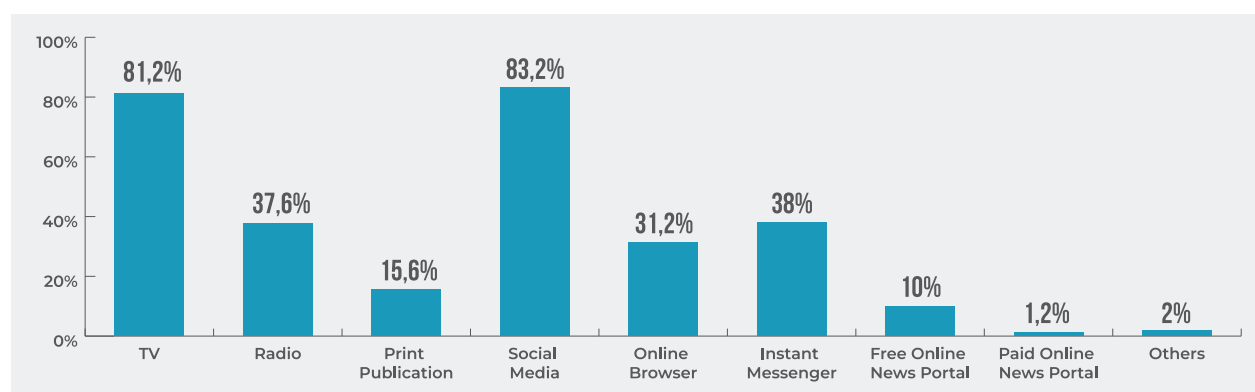


Figure 7.8 Digital Divide Determinant for Platforms Used to Get News

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having Children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Figure 7.9 E-hospital (62.8%) and E-banking (58%) services are predominantly used independently, indicating user-friendliness. E-health (67.2%) and E-commerce (56.4%) services have a higher percentage of non-users. Those who are in need of assistance hold a small percentage over all services.

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 7.10). The Figure indicates determinants that distinguish mobile application use, namely marital status, status of employment, and education. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide determinants for mobile application use is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 7.9 Mobile Application Use

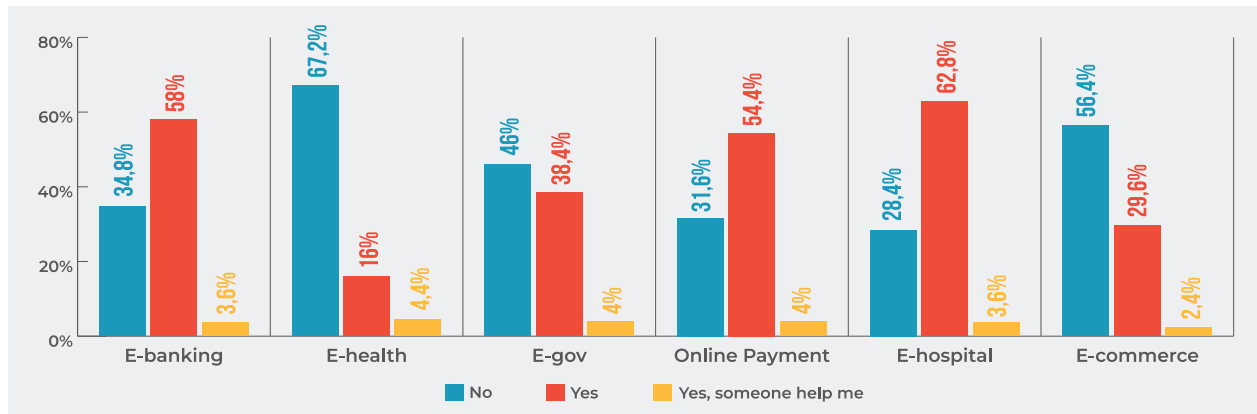


Figure 7.10 Digital Divide Determinant for Mobile Application Use

	Ebanking	Ehealth	Egov	Online Payment	Ehospital	Ecommerce	Esocial security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

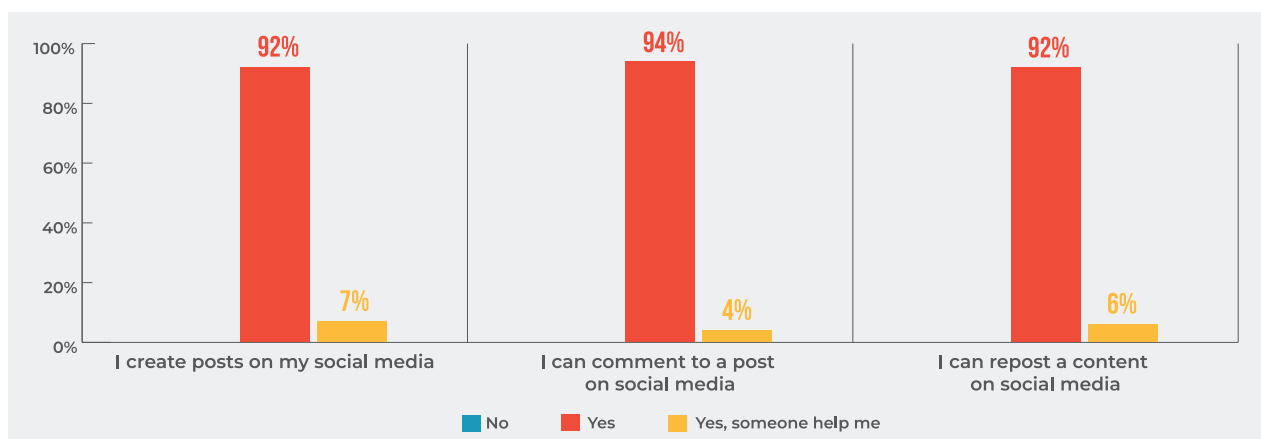
Social Media and Community Building

Figure 7.11 indicates that a majority of survey respondents are able to engage in various social media activities without assistance. Specifically, over 90% can create posts, comment on posts, and repost content on their own. A small percentage, ranging

from 4.4% to 6.8%, require help to perform these tasks. No respondents reported being unable to do these activities

There are still discrepancies among distinct groupings (Figure 7.12). The Figure indicates determinants that

Figure 7.11 Social Media Use and Community Building



distinguish social media and community building, namely age, gender, and disability identification. The more comprehensive examination for digital divide

determinants for social media and community building is provided in the extended report version.

Figure 7.12 Digital Divide Determinant for Social Media and Community Building

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

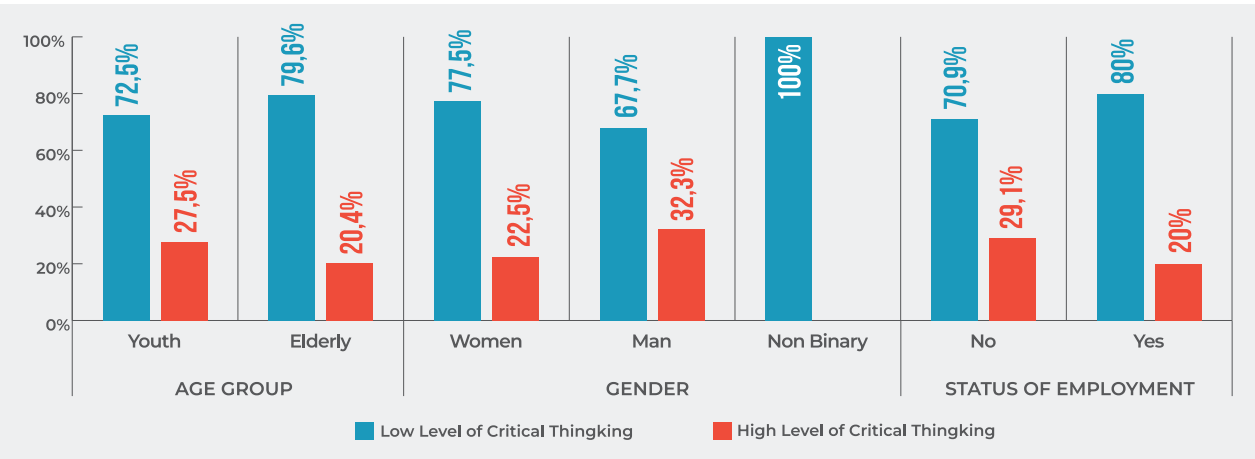
DIGITAL LITERACY

Level of Critical Thinking

Marginal groups in society are less likely to acquire critical thinking through the internet. The elderly, women, and unemployed groups are disadvantaged and they fall in the low-level cluster (Figure 7.13). Furthermore, lacking critical thinking can be detrimental to them

in the long run. These marginals engender a low level of competency in critical thinking and support from others can reduce the gap to the high-level group. The critical thinking divide replicates existing social inequality in which those who are socially advantaged get more benefits in the digital environment.

Figure 7.13 Digital Literacy Critical Thinking



Privacy Protection

Youth (58.8%), singles (62.5%), and those with lower education levels (primary school having 70.8% and lower secondary school having 60%) exhibit lower privacy protection skills, as shown in Figure 7.14. This may be due to their more relaxed view of privacy, as they've grown up with technology and tend to share information freely, perceiving the internet as inherently safe. However, these findings

require further investigation to confirm and prevent premature conclusions (type I errors).

Information Competence

Figure 7.15 reveals that young individuals and married people exhibit lower information competence in digital literacy. This competence is less tied to socio-economic status and more to

user maturity and experience. Mature users, having accumulated wisdom and tacit knowledge over time, are better at discerning misinformation and disinformation. Their past experiences contribute to

a cautious approach, enabling them to effectively screen and evaluate the credibility of information. Therefore, information competence grows with time and experience.

Figure 7.14 Digital Literacy Privacy Protection

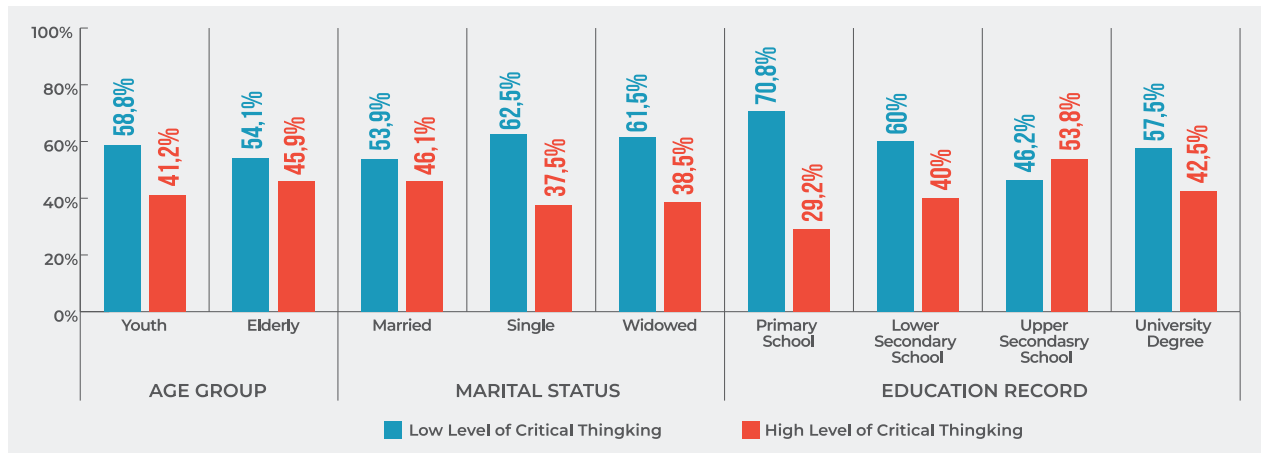
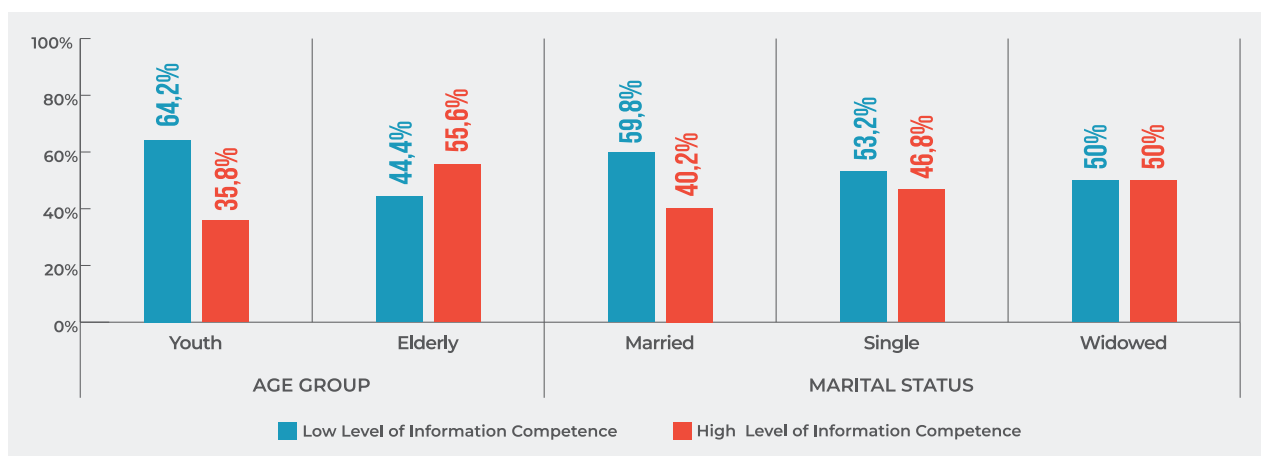


Figure 7.15 Digital Literacy Information Competence



Level of Trust in Social Media

Figure 7.16 shows that young people, parents, and university graduates tend to have low trust in social media, which reflects their awareness of its potential negative impacts. This skepticism is a positive sign of competence, contrasting with those who have high trust and may be more vulnerable to the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Enhancing critical thinking could help reduce misplaced trust in social media, thereby mitigating the issues associated with the spread of false information.

Level of Confidence in Engaging with News

Those with higher degrees generate a low level of confidence engaging with news (Figure 7.17). One of the possible reasons is news and information are confounded in the digital milieu. Those who have a low level of confidence in news sharing may have a negative attitude toward information in general. Therefore, rather than consume news, they build habits to aggregate information from diverse sources. The surplus in critical thinking enables them to parse out various information and get valuable and trustable information.

Figure 7.16 Digital Literacy Trust in Social Media

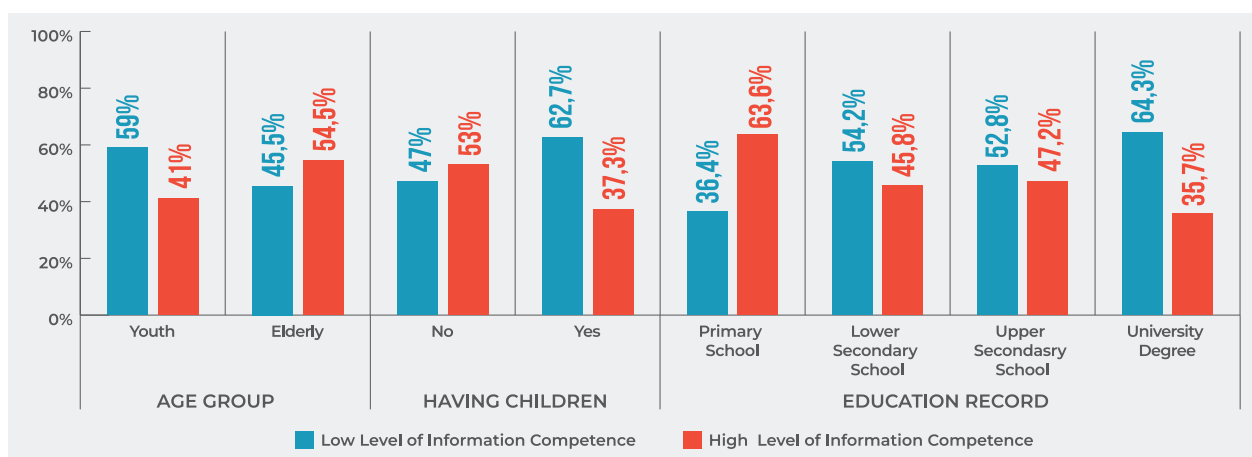
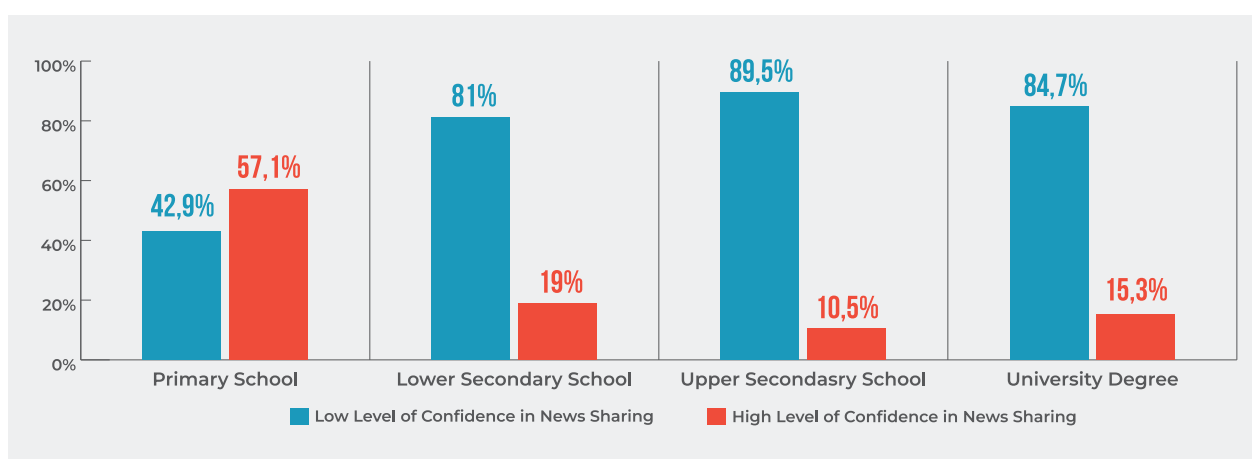


Figure 7.17 Digital Literacy for Confidence in Engaging with News by Education Background



LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

The research provides a comprehensive understanding of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news, particularly in the context of underprivileged communities in the Philippines. It highlights the vulnerability of these communities to false information due to their reliance on informal communication channels, limited access to reliable sources, and lack of digital literacy. The deliberate spread of false or misleading information, known as disinformation, is emphasized as having significant consequences, including misunderstandings, distrust, and potential harm. The document also underscores the importance of addressing disinformation through education, critical thinking, and fact-checking, as well as the role of formal communication channels and reliable sources of information in combating its spread.

Misinformation, on the other hand, refers to the unintentional dissemination of incorrect information, often leading to the spread of false narratives and confusion. The document emphasizes the need for educating individuals, particularly students, on critical thinking and fact-checking to discern accurate information from misinformation, as well as the importance of reliable sources of information and developing digital literacy skills to combat its spread. Fake news, as depicted in the document, refers to the dissemination of fabricated or misleading information presented as legitimate news, often designed to attract attention, generate controversy, or serve specific agendas. The stakeholders emphasize the impact of fake news on public perception, trust in media, and the potential for confusion and misinformation, highlighting the importance of critical thinking and media literacy to address and counteract fake news. This research provides insights into the multifaceted nature of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news, emphasizing the need for education, critical thinking, and reliable information sources to combat their spread and mitigate their impact on individuals and communities.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

The Philippines has a significant digital presence, with many internet and social media users. According

to the "Digital 2023: The Philippines" report, there were 85.16 million internet users in the country at the beginning of 2023, with an internet penetration rate of 73.1%. Additionally, the country had 84.45 million social media users in January 2023, accounting for 72.5% of the total population. The report also highlighted the extensive use of social media in the Philippines, with Filipinos spending an average of 4 hours and 15 minutes each day on social media, making it the top country for time spent on social media for the 6th consecutive year. Facebook and YouTube are the dominant social media platforms in the country, with over 90 percent of Filipinos with internet access using social media. The widespread use of social media has made it a significant force in Philippines society, influencing public opinion and attracting the attention of political actors.

The high level of social media usage in the Philippines has also led to the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. The document highlights the challenges posed by false information in social media, including the spread of scams, false rumors, and the erosion of trust in government services and social media sources. Factors contributing to the prevalence of false information include the lack of critical thinking, digital literacy, and education, particularly among the elderly population, as well as poverty and social factors. The government is urged to take proactive measures, such as imposing fines on those who spread fake news and enhancing digital literacy among the youth, to address these challenges effectively. It may be said that the extensive use of social media in the Philippines has significant implications for the spread of false information, emphasizing the need for improved media literacy, education systems, and targeted campaigns to combat the adverse effects of misinformation.

Risk of Disinformation against The Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

The Philippines has been identified as having the highest level of digital illiteracy in the world, according to the United Nations in ICT literacy skills. This has led to the proliferation of a disinformation ecosystem, particularly during significant events

such as the 2022 General Elections. The presence of disinformation producers and individuals responsible for boosting support for their clients, even if it means spreading falsehoods, has been observed. Additionally, there have been instances of disinformation related to the 'family rebranding' of the Marcos family, as reported by BBC. The involvement of Cambridge Analytica whistleblower Brittany Kaiser and the denial of these claims by Bong Bong Marcos have further contributed to the disinformation landscape in the country.

The consequences of spreading disinformation have been recognized by Filipinos, including misunderstandings, distrust in information sources, potential harm to individuals and communities, and the influence on public perception and security. To combat disinformation, strategies such as education, critical thinking, fact-checking, and reliance on reliable sources have been emphasized. These efforts aim to promote awareness, understanding, and the ability to question and analyze information accurately. This research can explain that the Philippines is grappling with the impact of digital illiteracy and disinformation, particularly in the context of major events such as elections. The recognition of the consequences of disinformation and the emphasis on strategies to combat it reflect the ongoing efforts to address these challenges in the country.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

In the Philippines, the proliferation of fake news is widely recognized as a grave issue, with many Filipinos finding it difficult to discern authentic information from falsehoods on various media platforms. Initiatives to tackle this challenge have been launched, notably

fact-checking and digital literacy campaigns by civil society groups, journalists, and donors. However, effectively combating disinformation goes beyond just fact dissemination and digital skills improvement; emotional resonance also plays a significant role in shaping beliefs.

The power of narrative is evident in how the Marcos family has redefined their public image through revisionist storytelling, influencing political outcomes. Recognizing this, it is proposed that counter-disinformation efforts employ creative storytelling to encourage critical thinking, dialogue, and empathy among Filipinos. The creative industry, with its artists, filmmakers, and content creators, is key to undermining entrenched disinformation narratives by making emotional connections with the public.

Counter-disinformation strategies should enlist a coalition of creatives, including influencers, artists, comedians, and filmmakers, aiming to craft emotionally appealing campaigns that employ humor and creativity. These campaigns should strike a chord with the general public, making facts more than just information—transforming them into stories that touch the soul. By placing artists in a central role, such programs encourage a more nuanced approach to fighting disinformation.

This research underscores that the battle against disinformation in the Philippines necessitates a comprehensive strategy that extends beyond conventional methods. It highlights the importance of using storytelling and creative endeavors to captivate the public's emotions and counteract misinformation, aiming to engage the hearts and minds of Filipinos with relatable and emotive content.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

This research identifies the main causes of inequality, namely social and cultural resources, the underlying motivations (needs), and associated mindsets in the form of attitudes or beliefs when choosing a particular use of digital media. We also see that personality and intelligence (cognitive and technical skills) influence digital media use. This section shows how an individual's skills, knowledge, attitudes, and

physical capital (financial and physical assets) are related to social relationships and trust in the context of digital media. Continuing from the previous section, this section draws on scientific evidence showing that social resources, including communities and institutions, play an important role in people's lives and can promote or reduce engagement with digital media.

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

The research presents an in-depth analysis of how social, cultural, and material resources, as well as time, influence digital media usage. It underscores the importance of social relations and networks in fostering the motivation to utilize digital media and shaping positive attitudes towards it. The social context, especially for older individuals and those with fewer social connections, plays a pivotal role in encouraging digital engagement.

In developing countries, social resources are vital for accessing digital media, helping to bridge the digital divide and promote inclusion. The study emphasizes that motivation and attitudes are key determinants at every stage of digital media engagement, from initial access to regular use. Various factors, including age, gender, personality, employment, social networks, and a country's technological progress, contribute to differing motivations. Access to digital media is categorized into physical, material, and conditional types. There is a shift from shared to individual digital media use, with subscriptions and entitlements becoming increasingly relevant. Ownership is not enough; the ability to maintain and effectively use digital media is equally important.

The role of social relationships and networks in digital inequality is significant, with social support and motivation being critical for engaging certain groups in digital media use. The research also explores

network effects, which can exacerbate inequalities by promoting the adoption of beneficial practices among those already advantaged. Overall, the study provides a nuanced view of the complex interplay between social resources and digital media use, highlighting how social relationships and networks are instrumental in addressing digital inequality and improving access to digital media.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

The vulnerability of Filipinos to misinformation is due to unregulated media channels. This is because there are no specific regulations governing the use and dissemination of information on social media and no concrete policies or curricula to combat misinformation, as well as the vulnerability of marginalized communities, especially the urban poor and youth, to misinformation. It is therefore important to strengthen Media Literacy in the Philippines society through education, by incorporating it into the education curriculum. In addition, there is a need for an executive agency that deals with misinformation issues in collaboration with the Department of Public Affairs and Information Services. There is also a need for the government to play a role in managing misinformation, through publishing correct information through social media as the main approach as well as regulating misinformation at the local level.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MISINFORMATION/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

The research spotlights the urgency of tackling misinformation, particularly in underserved communities, through multifaceted strategies that educate and empower individuals to discern and challenge false information. The proposed approach encompasses educational enhancement, community leader engagement, government mobilization, media literacy promotion, and the enforcement of misinformation regulations.

A cornerstone of the strategy is the integration of media literacy and cyberbullying awareness into

educational curricula. This aims to arm students, educators, and parents with the tools to detect and counteract misinformation. Supplemental workshops can further bolster the digital resilience of at-risk communities. The government's role is underscored as critical, with recommendations for policy development and targeted programs oriented towards misinformation and digital literacy. These might include specialized training and awareness campaigns to help the public identify and resist the spread of false information.

Collaboration emerges as a third essential strategy, uniting government agencies, non-profits, and community figures to launch local initiatives such

as workshops and proactive information sharing to strengthen defenses against misinformation. Promoting media literacy constitutes the fourth strategy, emphasizing the need for education that incites critical thinking and responsible sharing practices on social media and other digital platforms, with a particular focus on youth engagement. The final strategy involves stringent monitoring and regulation of online misinformation, which could entail imposing fines or other penalties on those spreading fake news, and implementing measures to curtail the reach of such content.

In essence, the research calls for a holistic approach that combines educational programs, governmental interventions, community participation, and regulatory actions. This comprehensive method seeks to cultivate the capabilities necessary for individuals in vulnerable communities to recognize, confront, and safeguard against the harmful impacts of misinformation and disinformation.

Elevating Underprivileged Youths

The study presents a holistic strategy for combating misinformation within disadvantaged communities, focusing on digital literacy, proactive government roles, and community empowerment. The central aim is to enable individuals to discern and counter false information effectively. Initially, the research

underscores the need for digital literacy education in schools, advocating for its inclusion in curricula and the provision of teacher and student training. Upgrading technology is also deemed essential for developing relevant digital skills. Community leaders are encouraged to receive training to boost their digital literacy and critical thinking abilities, thus becoming catalysts for educating others.

Government agencies are called upon to integrate digital and media literacy into educational programs and formulate anti-misinformation policies. Collaboration among governments, NGOs, and community leaders is vital for organizing community initiatives and workshops that raise awareness and resilience against misinformation. Regular training sessions are recommended for teachers and community members to foster a culture of digital literacy and responsible information sharing. These sessions serve as platforms for exchanging knowledge and best practices.

In essence, the approach encompasses updating educational content, nurturing community leadership, enacting supportive policies, fostering collaborative efforts, and conducting awareness programs. This multifaceted strategy aims to strengthen underprivileged communities, ensuring they have the resources and knowledge to identify, confront, and protect themselves from the influence of misinformation and disinformation.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Digital Literacy Regional & National Policies

1. Increasing the monitoring and control over the posts on social media platforms.
2. Allowing false information to proliferate unchecked.
3. Paying attention to the engagement to such content.
4. Educate and empower community members to critically evaluate the information they encounter and verify its accuracy before believing or sharing it.
5. Addressing the spread of false information by actively intervening in conversations, and providing accurate information.
6. Mitigate the impact of false information and prevent its further dissemination within the community.

Equipping the Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

1. Developing the curriculum for increasing the critical evaluation for students and teachers.
2. Providing guidelines to students through orientation sessions, so that they are given tips on discerning trustworthy information, especially when online.
3. Stressing the need for constant reminders to students, parents, and teachers to be cautious and critical of the information they encounter.
4. Highlights the significant impact of teachers on students and the need for accurate and truthful information to be imparted in education.
5. Approaching the division office to ensure that such initiatives are integrated into the education system.

CONCLUSION

The research emphasizes the critical need to tackle the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news through educational and communal efforts. It acknowledges the complexities of these issues and advocates for an increase in digital and media literacy. The significant roles of various stakeholders, including government entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders, are highlighted as essential in fostering informed decision-making and fighting against the tide of false information.

The study points to the necessity of policy support and educational framework development to aid educators in addressing misinformation within school programs. It draws attention to the severe impact of misinformation on societal well-being, particularly affecting the youth, and stresses the importance of developing critical thinking and discernment skills.

Community leaders are marked as crucial agents in mitigating misinformation at the local level, necessitating a vigilant and proactive approach to community involvement. The research also notes the particular vulnerability of marginalized groups, such as the urban poor and young people, to misinformation, despite their familiarity with technology, indicating a need for targeted educational interventions to enhance critical analysis of information among these populations.

In sum, the study calls for a collaborative strategy to equip students and educators with the tools to effectively challenge misinformation. It highlights the unique issues faced in The Philippines due to the absence of extensive regulatory frameworks. The conclusion serves as a rallying cry for joint, knowledgeable efforts to maintain the integrity of information, particularly within the educational sector, to counter misinformation's broad and potentially harmful reach.

SINGAPORE



- OVERVIEW
- INTRODUCTION
- BEYOND DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
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OVERVIEW

Singapore Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation

According to the Household Expenditure Survey in 2019, a significant digital divide exists in Singapore. Only 45% of households living in 1-room and 2-room public housing flats have internet access, compared to the significantly higher 96% in private housing. This discrepancy reflects a wider global trend outlined in the World Economic Forum Report, where approximately 30% of the population in lower-income economies possess basic digital skills, compared to 60% in higher-income economies. Unfortunately, participation gaps exacerbate social and economic inequality, hindering individuals from fully utilizing technology for learning, networking, and work.

Furthermore, the very technology connecting people can contribute to what the World Health Organization terms an 'infodemic.' Online misinformation and disinformation, as evidenced by the activities of groups like QAnon, undermine global efforts to control the pandemic. These issues perpetuate distrust and hate among governments, people, and nations.

However, Singapore has implemented various initiatives to address digital inequality. For instance, the NEU PC Plus program by the Infocom Media Development Authority offered affordable brand-new computers to low-income households ceased on 31st March 2023 and was replaced with the Digital Access @Home scheme ([IMDA, 2023](#)).

Additionally, the Mobile Access for Seniors Program, a collaboration between the Singapore government and telecommunication service providers, heavily subsidizes mobile phones and plans for the elderly ([IMDA, 2024](#)). These efforts by the public, private, and

people sectors aim to alleviate the challenges posed by digital inequality and promote a more inclusive and connected society.

Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

Notable instances include, SPH Magazine's online post on 27th January 2020 where it claimed that a man in Singapore had died from the Wuhan virus infection, misleading information garnered widespread attention which led to societal divisions and erosion of trust. The consequences of these disinformation trends underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive understanding of their implications for Singapore and its citizens. Concurrently, government responses have taken the form of stringent regulations, targeted policies, and the establishment of specialized task forces. For example, POFMA (Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act) aims to prevent misinformation, and safeguards have managed to ensure correct information is being sent out. As of 30th June 2022, 69 Correction Directions, 13 Targeted Correction Directions, five General Correction Directions, one Access Blocking Order, four Declared Online Locations, and three Access Disabling Orders had been issued or declared ([The Straits Times, 2020](#)). Delving into those who are excluded from society, it becomes evident that digital literacy and disinformation risks are exacerbated. For example, more than two-thirds of Singaporeans are unable to discern between real and fake news, especially seniors and those living in smaller public flats. This is one of the findings from a study released by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) ([TODAY, 2020](#)). This demonstrates how the heightened vulnerability of these communities to misinformation due to the lack of education.

INTRODUCTION

Singapore Underprivileged Communities Overview

In Singapore, underprivileged communities refer to social, economic, and educationally disadvantaged groups relative to the general population. Based on

our survey data, three digital divide determinants are gaining prominence in Singapore's context, namely age groups, education level, and people who have children in which we provide each determinant composition in Figure 2.1. to 2.3. Among eight

determinants, these three are chosen due to their high significance level ($p \leq 0,05$) meaning that they are the most probable reason for the digital divide among other determinants. The youth demographic is a noteworthy subset in this context, as they are especially susceptible to risks of disinformation. Their vulnerability highlights a lack of financial awareness and exposure to possible abuse online. In addition, when we expand this viewpoint to include people with disabilities and the elderly, it becomes clear that these populations also face difficulties when interacting with the digital world. Because they are not accustomed to technology, the elderly may confront challenges navigating the online space, and people with impairments may experience digital and cognitive accessibility problems. The digital divide is widened by this intricate web of interrelated causes, underscoring the necessity of inclusive measures.

Demographic roles such as age, educational background, and having children play pivotal roles in shaping the experiences of underprivileged communities. Understanding the specific challenges faced by youth, the elderly, and also individuals with varied marital statuses or disabilities is crucial for crafting targeted interventions. As a result, complete

demographic information becomes an invaluable resource for decision-makers in the community and legislators. Having this information makes it possible to create thoughtful programs that close the digital divide and give voice to marginalized youth, the elderly, people who have/don't have children, and those with various backgrounds in education, all of which contribute to the general well-being of society.

The Profile of Underprivileged Community in Singapore: Who Are They?

According to Figure 8.1., a total of 152 (60.30%) youths aged 15-34 and 100 (39.70%) elderly aged 55 and above have done a survey of Understanding Digital Literacy for Youth and Elderly in Singapore in 2023. According to Figure 8.2., there are 146 (57.90%) respondents who have children and 106 (42.10%) respondents who have no children. According to Figure 8.3., most of the respondents have a university degree (54.40%), 27.40% of them have upper secondary education, 14.70% of them have lower secondary education, 2.80% of them have primary education, and 0.80% of them have no formal education.

Figure 8.1. Age Groups

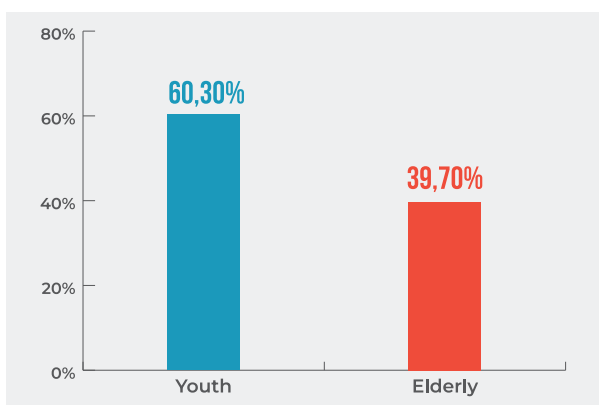


Figure 8.2. Have Children

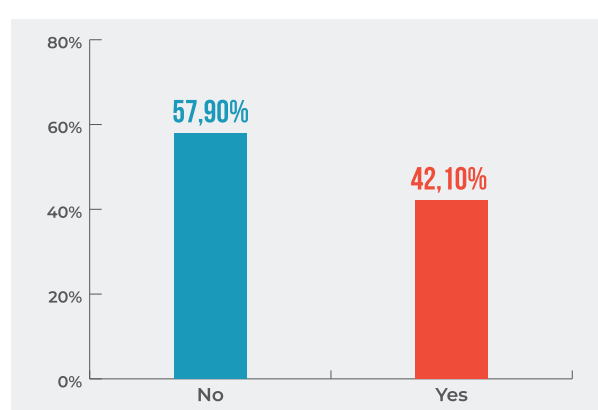
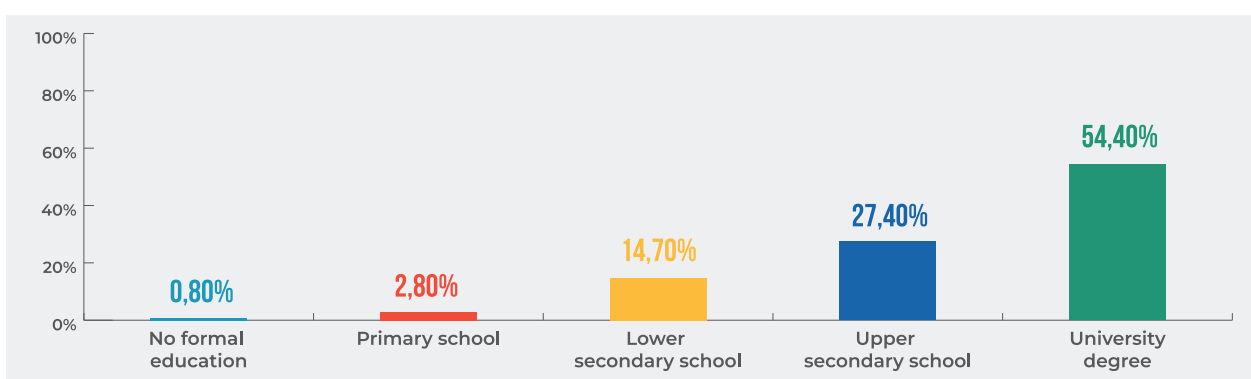


Figure 8.3 Latest Education Background



BEYOND DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Living digitally as an underprivileged community member involves a comprehensive examination of communication devices, online access, preferred communication platforms, and news sources. This report seeks to illuminate key aspects of their digital engagement while emphasizing the nuanced intersectionality of determinants contributing to the digital divide.

Main Device Ownership

In connection with the main device used for online access, three main devices are listed: Computer

laptop, mobile telecommunication, and tablet. In the survey, each main device that the respondents use fall under either one of the following categories: Own, borrow, or provided by community. Figure 8.4. shows the main devices used for online access. For computer laptop, 216 (85.70%) of the respondents own a laptop, 13 (5.20%) of the respondents' laptop is borrowed, and 23 (9.10%) of the respondents' laptop is provided by community. For mobile telecommunication, 247 (98%) of the respondents own a mobile phone, 3 (1.20%) of the respondents' mobile phone is borrowed, and 2 (0.80%) of the respondents' mobile phone is provided by community. For tablet, 151 (59.90%) of the respondents own a tablet, 19 (7.50%) of the respondents' tablet is borrowed, and 82 (32.50%) of the respondents' tablet is provided by community.

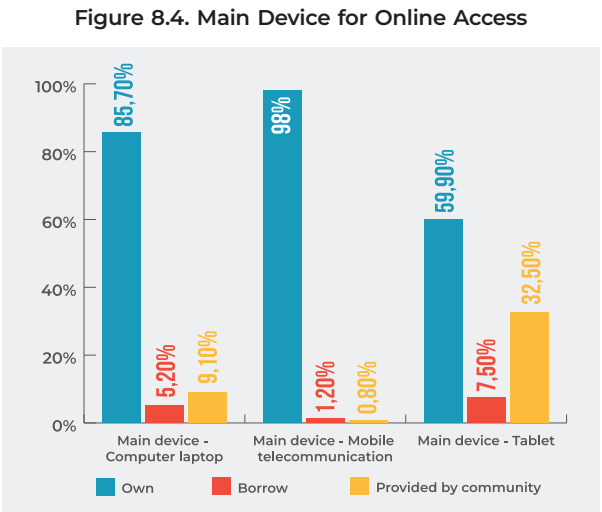


Figure 8.5. below lists several digital divide determinants that play a role in Singaporean respondents' possession or choice of particular digital devices. Data shows that the most significant determinants in relation to device ownership are age group (tablet), having or not having children (computer laptop), employment status (tablet), and education (computer and mobile telecommunication device ownership). Readers will be provided with more detailed exposition in the extended report version.

Figure 8.5. Digital Divide Determinant for Main Device Ownership

Determinants	Computer Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age				
Marital Status				
Having children				
Employment				
Gender				
Disability				
Education				
Indigenous				

Using News Platform

According to Figure 8.6, 105 (41.70%) respondents say they use TV to get their source of news, 39 (15.50%) of them say they use radio to get their source of news, 55 (21.80%) of them say they rely on print publications to get their source of news, 190 (75.40%) of them say

they watch/read news from social media, 136 (54.00%) of them say they browse online to get their source of news, 86 (34.10%) of them say they get their source of news from instant messaging, 75 (29.80%) of them say they get their source of news from free online news portal, while only 17 (6.70%) of them say they use paid online news portal to get their source of news.

Figure 8.7. below lists several digital divide determinants that influence respondents' choice of news sources. Data shows that the most significant determinants are age group (determines most choice of news outlet), gender (social media and online

browser as ways to obtain news), and education (influence choice on social media, online browser, instant messenger, and free news portal). Readers will be provided with more detailed exposition in the extended report version.

Figure 8.6. Respondents' News sources

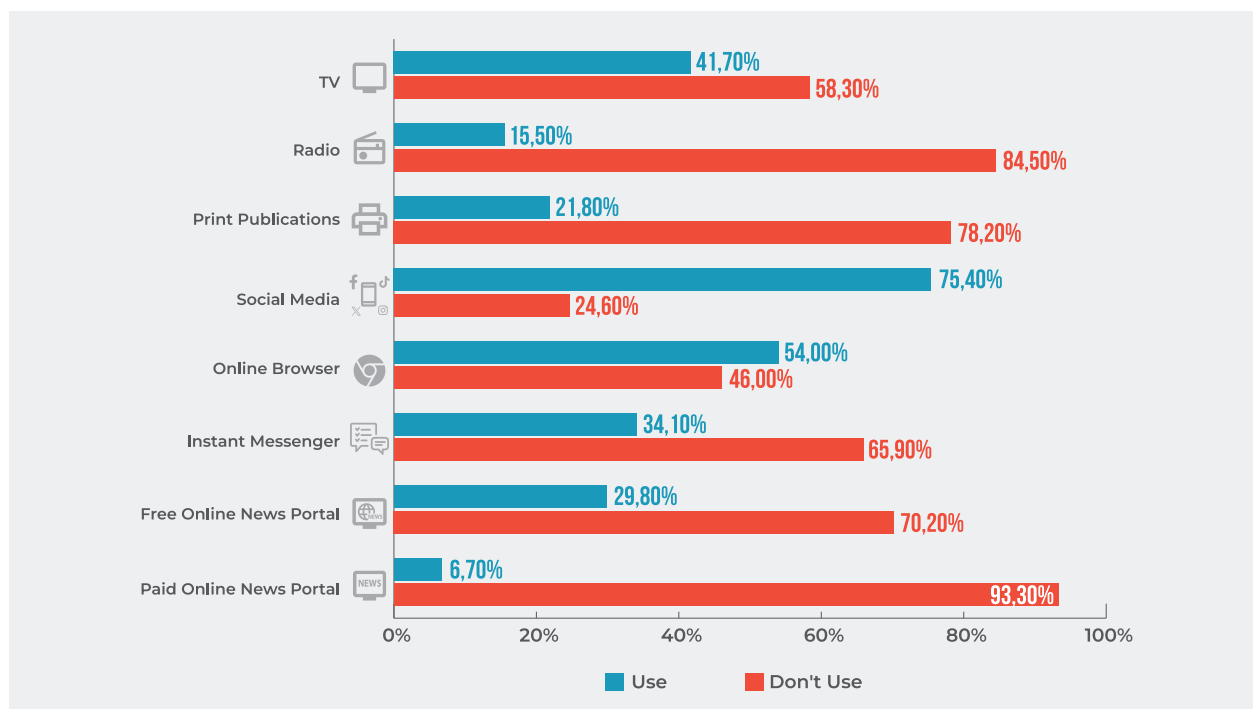


Figure 8.7. Digital Divide Determinant for News Source

Determinants	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications Usage

The survey also asks the respondents about their mobile phone usage activities, as depicted in Figure 8.8. Several of the activities along with their responses include: 211 (83.70%) respondents know how to use e-banking on mobile phone, 179 (71 %) respondents know how to use e-health system on mobile phone, 195 (77.40%) respondents know how to use e-government services on mobile phone, 221 (87.70%) respondents know how to do online payment on mobile phone, 140 (55.60%) respondents know how to use e-hospital applications on mobile phone, 189 (75 %) respondents know how to use e-commerce on

mobile phone, and 134 (53.20%) respondents know how to use e-social security on mobile phone.

Figure 8.9. lists a couple of determinants that influence respondents' choice of news sources. From the research survey, we find that the most significant determinants for mobile application usage are gender (determining a wide use of e-banking, online payment, and e-commerce), and education (influence usage on e-banking, e-health, e-government, online payment, and e-commerce applications). Readers will be provided with more detailed exposition in the extended report version.

Figure 8.8. Different Usage of Mobile Phone Based Activities

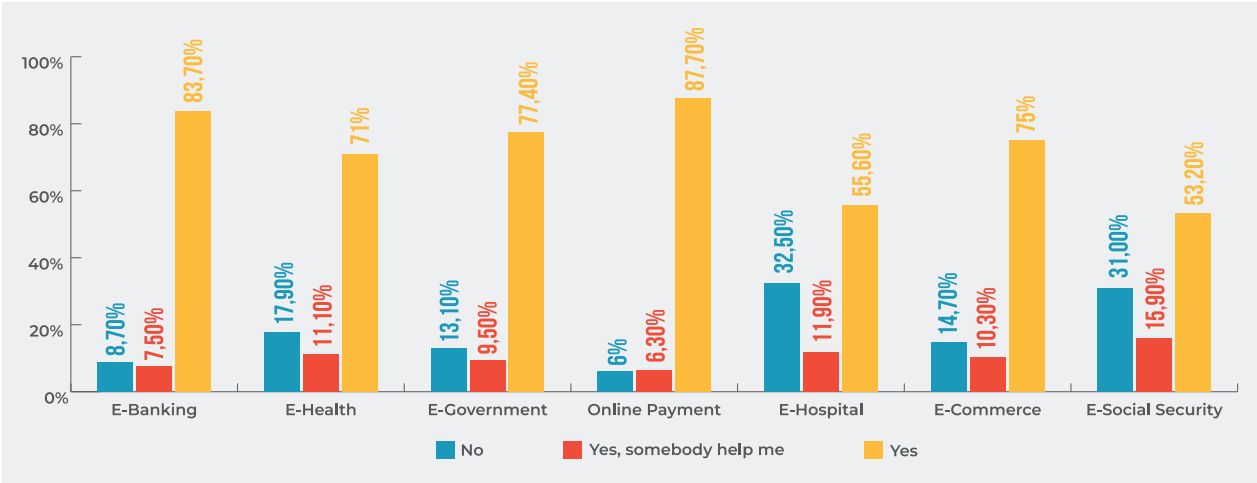


Figure 8.9. Digital Divide Determinant for Mobile Applications Usage

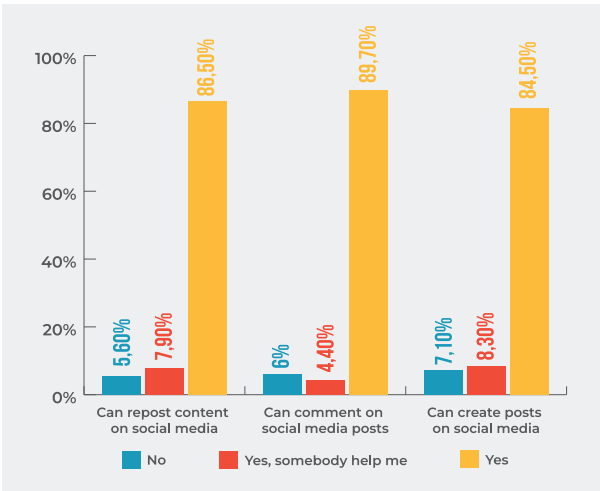
Determinants	E-banking	E-health	E-gov	Online Payment	E-hospital	E-commerce	E-social security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

Figure 8.10. give us a glimpse into the networking and community-building competence of underprivileged community members who take part in our survey. In general, the majority of our respondents (above 80%) are participating in weaving networks and building

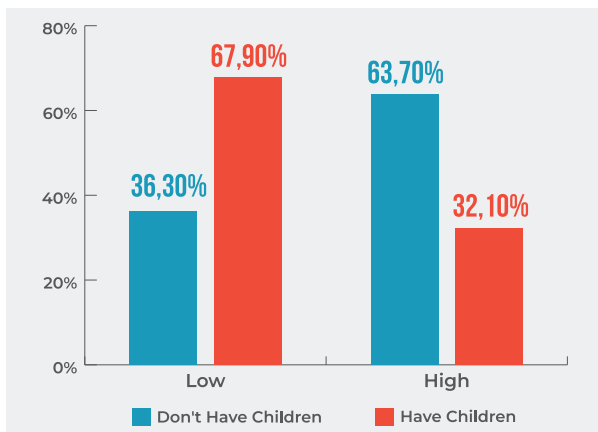
their respective communities through using social media. In terms of reposting other content creators' works on social media, 86.50% of respondents state that they can repost materials. Moreover, 89.70% of respondents can or ever make comments on social media posts. Finally, although it has the lowest proportion among other community-building activities, 84.50% of respondents can create original posts by themselves.

Figure 8.10. Networking and Community Building



The next section will discuss the critical role that interpersonal relationships play in families and communities as important factors that impact the digital divide. Addressing gaps in digital involvement requires an understanding of these processes. Social resource-related factors, such as interpersonal connections, are crucial in closing the digital gap, and digital literacy is a major driver of knowledge sharing, influence, social validation, and reinforcement. As a result, this analysis highlights the significance of addressing social variables to build a more inclusive digital environment and offers insightful information about the relationship between gender and digital involvement.

Figure 8.11. Level of Critical Thinking by Number of Children

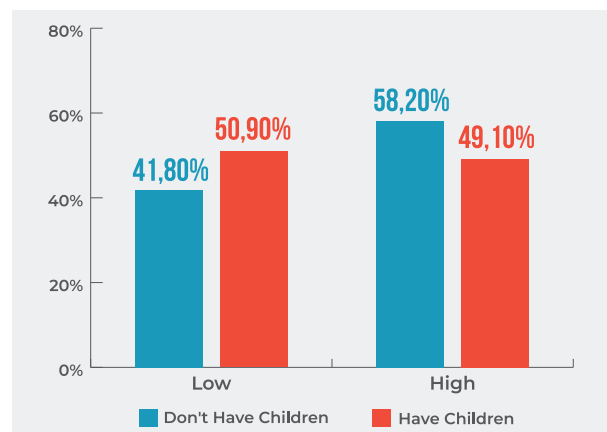


Digital Literacy: Critical Thinking

The level of overall digital literacy of the respondents is analysed by whether they have children or not. From this research, having or not having children is found to be the most significant digital divide determinant among Singaporean society. The level of digital literacy is divided into 5 types: critical thinking, privacy protection, information competence, trust in social media, and confidence in engaging with news. We will provide several crosstabulation charts which illustrate respondents composition in relation to their level of digital literacy.

The difference in the number of people who have and don't have a high level of critical thinking in relation to their status as having and not having children is quite stark, as shown in Figure 8.11. Many respondents who have children also have a low level of critical thinking (67.9% of cases), compared to those who don't have children and low level of critical thinking (36.3% of cases). When it comes to the number of participants who scored high in critical thinking, the figure is reversed. We still have yet to find the probable cause of low-level critical thinking among people who have children, especially in the Singapore context. However, we need to reconsider that, among all respondents, people who participated in the study consisted of youth and elders who also displayed approximately the same figure when we cross-tabulate the level of critical thinking and age. Subsequent studies can address this finding by further determining which digital divide determinant/predictor (age and having children) has the most influence on the digital divide.

Figure 8.12. Level of Privacy Protection by Number of Children



Digital Literacy: Privacy Protection

Figure 8.12. provide us with data about who is among participants who have low and high levels of privacy protection online with their background of having and not having children. Among respondents who have children, the proportion between those who have low or high levels of privacy protection is almost equal. The condition is different among respondents who don't have children where there is a bigger percentage of those who have a high level of privacy protection (58.2% to 41.8%). We have to take into account that the majority of respondents who don't have children are youth (87% or 133 of the total 152 youth respondents), therefore we need to address once more the age group determinant in assessing this level of privacy protection. A report by UNESCO (Culvert & Grizzle, 2017) about youth and their perspective on online privacy also resonates with this finding; youth in general value privacy, and 74% of their respondents strongly agree that personal privacy is important.

Digital Literacy: Information Competence

Figure 8.13. give the same outlook as Figure 5.9 where the respondents' level of information competence can be influenced by the number of children they have. About 60% of participants who have children have a low level of information competence whereas 44% of the respondents who don't have children have a low level of information competence. Again, one must look for which determinant (between age and number of children) plays the most role in information competence as one facet of digital literacy skills.

Figure 8.13. Level of Information Competence by Number of Children

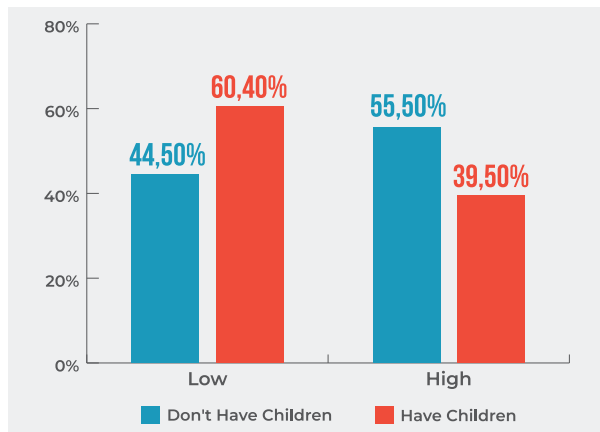
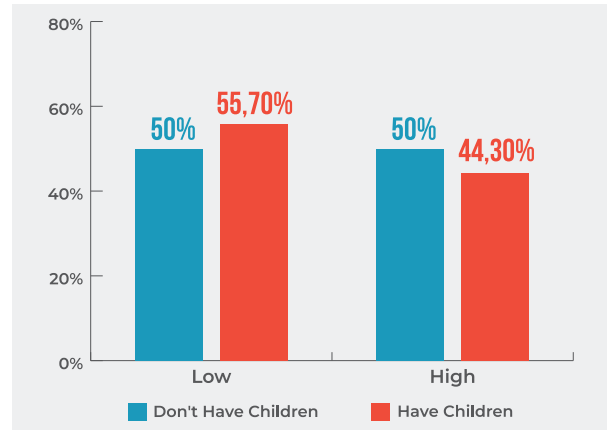


Figure 8.14. Level of Trust in Social Media by Number of Children



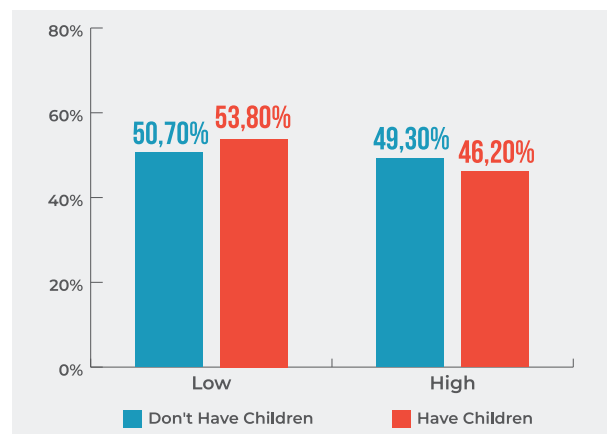
Digital Literacy: Trust in Social Media

The number of respondents who have children and a high level of trust in social media is shown to be fewer than those who have a low level of trust and have children, as depicted in Figure 8.14. The number of respondents who don't have children and have a low level of trust in social media seems to be equal to people who also don't have children but have a high level of trust. A study which was carried out by Xie, He, Burnett, & Cheng (2021) pointed out many factors in how mothers exchange parenting-related information online. It is believed that parents who are concerned about security on the internet, especially in non-anonymous social media like Facebook, can inhibit their activity of sharing information online.

Digital Literacy: Confidence in Engaging with News

The level of confidence in news sharing by the determinant number of children can be seen in Figure 8.15. We can discover that the proportion of people who have a high level of confidence in sharing news and have children is lesser than their counterparts who don't have children. Whether they

Figure 8.15. Level of Confidence in News Sharing by Number of Children



have children or not, people who have a low level of confidence in news sharing are proportionally larger in this case. This low level of confidence sharing can be attributed to various factors where anonymity, privacy, and security are considered to be important facets surrounding internet/online activities. Furthermore, Xie et. al. (Ibid.) also mentioned controversy, inaccuracy, and trustworthiness as causes that inhibit parents from sharing due to the dangers of spreading misinformation through the internet.

LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

Our focus group discussion (FGD) informants describe disinformation as false information that is purposely shared so that people will be misled. People who spread disinformation may have an intention to commit a crime, such as a scam. Disinformation is not only the fact that it is fake, but it is also a fact that it is pushing society to go down a path that is not beneficial for society. While governing disinformation, it is crucial to take note of the source. One way to know whether a source is trustworthy is to check who wrote the information and who was the publisher of the information.

Our government officials who participated in Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) equally understand disinformation as the transmission of inaccurate or misleading information, which can have malicious or ill intent. This misinformation can affect various government processes and policies, particularly within the civil service. The government also recognizes the importance of engaging with different stakeholders, such as the Attorney General's Division, the Ministry of Finance, and other relevant organizations, to verify the accuracy of information. Additionally, the government emphasizes the need for community members to take ownership and responsibility in combating disinformation, promoting a sense of security and trust within the society. The government's efforts primarily focus on education, awareness, and empowering individuals to combat disinformation within their communities.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

Disinformation happens when some kind of news gets everyone interested to pursue, to read, and to know about it. In Singapore, the presidential election was held recently in 2023. If the voters listened and believed everything a presidential candidate was saying without verifying the facts, it spread online rapidly. This kind of misinformation might happen.

Social media account hacking is also a trend in Singapore. A lot of victims have been tricked into clicking or responding to something through a chat, then the account is hacked, and the hacker will use the account and disguise as the person to communicate

with the contacts so that the other contacts might get tricked as well.

Recent disinformation appeared as a scam to deceive people into believing that there is an error in their online payment system so that their data will be given, and their system security has been breached.

Another example is the disputes over claims by full-time national servicemen, where individuals provide false information to receive more financial benefits. Additionally, the interviews highlight the impact of misinformation within the government's operations, particularly in the Ministry of Home Affairs, where lapses in policies or processes can lead to internal misinformation.

Risk of Disinformation against The Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

Informants from both FGD and KII address the production, reception, consumption, and circulation of disinformation. They discuss the impact of disinformation on society, expressing concerns about the consequences of spreading false information and the potential harm it can cause. Additionally, the participants emphasize the need for critical thinking and fact-checking to counter disinformation, highlighting the importance of cross-checking information from multiple sources and being vigilant about the validity of online content. The FGDs also address the factors that influence the reception and circulation of false information, such as social biases, the need to fit in, and the impact of sensational or humorous content on the spread of disinformation.

The interview informants provide context into how disinformation is produced, particularly in the case of the Singaporean presidential election. It highlights instances where political candidates convey opinions that border on disinformation, influencing public perception and decision-making. The interviews also delve into the reception and consumption of disinformation, with examples of individuals encountering and sharing misinformation through platforms like WhatsApp and TikTok. Additionally, the interviews touch on the circulation of disinformation, emphasizing the need for critical thinking skills

and fact-checking to combat the spread of false information, especially among students and the community at large. The discussions also address the impact of disinformation on society, highlighting the potential consequences and the importance of educating individuals to discern and respond to misinformation effectively.

Believing and spreading disinformation will always discredit some people, including the underprivileged. Scamming is a popular act happening in Singapore, and a lot of people have experienced it or are being scammed. The risk of being scammed is losing hard-earned money. A simple click or information given could cost their whole savings.

Social media and online resources inundate the society with a lot of information. Absorbing too much information that is untrue will slowly lead to belief and eventually, the believers will live further away from what is true. People who live without the truth will make decisions and live their lives inaccurately. The more disinformation is spread, the more people will find it difficult to distinguish between true and false information, leading to a breakdown of trust.

More youth and elderly people have fallen into scams. Youth and elderly people are more impulsive towards messages they receive so they are easier to fall into scams. They may be less mature or have a lesser understanding of the danger behind digital use, and as such they would just download and install certain files or click certain things then somebody could access their device remotely and take control of it.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

Elderly people might be vulnerable when it comes to disinformation. They are easily moved by messages that are close to their hearts. For example, an online news report about a house was burned down, the family had eight children and the breadwinner was hurt, so the family needed help in financial support. However, who was the person? If elderly people knew how to do transfers, then what would happen when they are too anxious about it without thinking twice?

Some people think that spreading inaccuracy is something that is fun. When they do not check and verify whether the information is true, they will just share it around and make everyone believe it. They don't think of the consequences or risk in this kind of issue, that it might cause societal issues such as scaring people or lead people down the wrong path.

It may be the mindset that people have in their life. Many people prefer to do shortcuts, to buy cheap items, to earn more money by having an easy way, and so on. These habits are vulnerable to victims of disinformation, regardless of age. When they are in a hurry, just want to get things done quickly, they would not mind quick and easy resolution. When for instance a scam is happening, they would not be more careful and objective in making decisions so in this case scammers get a chance to deceive them.

Our FGD participants provide insights into the connection between disinformation and digital literacy programs. They discussed the importance of educating youth on digital literacy, including topics such as scams, as mentioned in previous sections. The participants emphasized the need for cross-checking information from multiple sources to verify its reliability, as well as the significance of understanding the differences between misinformation and disinformation. Additionally, they highlighted the role of digital defense in the national total defense framework, demonstrating an awareness of the government's efforts to combat cyber threats, including disinformation.

We gain a more specific effort to combat disinformation from our KIIs. A community leader mentions the Digital for Life (DFL) program by Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), which is an annual festival open to the public. They emphasize the need for effective measures to evaluate the success of such programs beyond just attendance numbers. Additionally, they highlight the importance of public-private-community partnerships in addressing digital literacy and combating misinformation. They also mention their collaboration with the library to develop a curriculum, indicating efforts to create educational resources for the community.

Furthermore, the informants discuss strategies to manage and mitigate risks related to misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. They share their approach of proposing roadmaps and emphasize the importance of education, particularly through intergenerational collaboration. Another informant discusses the challenges faced by schools in implementing digital literacy programs, including access to resources and the evaluation of their effectiveness.

Overall, the participants' discussions reflected a recognition of the importance of integrating awareness of disinformation into digital literacy programs to equip youth with the skills to navigate and critically evaluate online information.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

We explore the fundamental causes of digital inequality, illuminating the complex interactions between social, cultural, and mental resources that influence people's usage of digital media. This section includes basic demands, attitudes, motivations, and beliefs that impact the choice of using certain digital applications. We also investigate how different patterns of digital media use are influenced by intelligence, which includes both cognitive and technical skills, and personality factors.

Cultural and Social Resources

We investigate the function of social and cultural resources as we dissect the differences in digital engagement. These variables include social and cultural circumstances, as well as technological accessibility, that affect an individual's digital experience.

Mental Sources

Digital media usage patterns are significantly influenced by fundamental demands and motives. Comprehending the ways in which these psychological elements influence decisions made in the digital sphere offers a sophisticated viewpoint on vulnerabilities in the digital era.

Cognitive Ability and Personality

How a person interacts with digital media is greatly influenced by their personality and cognitive skills. This section examines how individual traits affect how people use technology and what it means for digital inclusion.

A suggestion to educate people with digital literacy is by offering easily accessible support systems. To ensure inclusivity in the digital sphere, efforts to improve digital literacy should not only concentrate on developing individual abilities but also on establishing a friendly environment where people can ask for and receive help.

Material Capital

One of the most important factors influencing access to digital resources is material and financial assets.

Analyzing the similarities between digital engagement and physical capital reveals the differences in resource allocation that occur in the digital era.

Referencing to Figure 3.9., it highlights how widely used mobile phones are in both age groups and highlights how important they are for internet access. Ownership of PCs and laptops is widespread, but differences in equipment provided by the community highlight inequalities, particularly with older people. The prevalence of tablet ownership among younger people suggests that there may be room for focused measures to improve older adults' digital access.

Social Bonds and Confidence

Expanding upon the preceding segment, we utilize academic perspectives emphasizing the crucial function of social resources, such as institutions and communities, in shaping the use of digital media. Experts like Selwyn, van Dijk, and Warschau offer insightful viewpoints on the social processes influencing digital inclusion.

Ultimately, the goal of this report is to present a comprehensive picture of the complex relationship between social, cultural, and mental aspects of digital inequality. By being aware of these weaknesses, we can create focused plans to close the digital divide and foster a more inclusive digital society.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

The social contexts in which people live can significantly impact their media activities, including national obligations, the level of support received, and the influence of personal relationships and social networks. Participants in the focus group discussions and key informant interviews emphasized the importance of reliable sources such as government-certified news portals and the need for cross-referencing information from multiple sources. They also highlighted the impact of social influence from friends, family, and school on individuals' perception of credibility. Additionally, the discussions emphasized the significance of promoting critical thinking abilities via education to enhance people's capacity for information analysis and their

handling of digital platforms. Furthermore, the data indicated that social credentials play a significant role in engaging in online interactions and that positive reinforcement from teachers and peers can inspire individuals to advance their digital literacy. The impact of social factors on how people respond to information was also discussed, highlighting the influence of humor, sensationalism, social biases, and the instinctive need to fit in. The discussions emphasized the importance of critical thinking and verification, particularly when encountering news on social media, to counteract the influence of social factors on processing information and to combat the spread of misinformation effectively.

Lessons Learned: Countering Mis/Disinformation/Fake News

The spread of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news has become prevalent in Singapore, with many individuals encountering such cases through

scams, often leading to financial loss. These scams are commonly facilitated through digital platforms like social media and email, where scammers send deceptive links to lure victims into clicking. As a result, personal data may be breached or devices may be hacked. The importance of digital literacy education is emphasized, as it not only equips individuals with the knowledge to discern false information but also fosters community support and vigilance. Educating youths in digital literacy is particularly crucial, as it should be integrated into school curriculums to ensure students can differentiate between real and fake information. Collaboration between the government, community leaders, and educators is essential to promote digital literacy education and empower individuals to develop critical thinking, privacy protection, and information competence.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Regional & National Digital Literacy Policies

The Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) seeks to empower and skillfully equip Singaporeans to take advantage of possibilities and profit from digital advancements in a secure and welcoming society. In collaboration with its organizations, the National Library Board (NLB) and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), MCI manages and directs programs and activities to guarantee that Singaporeans, particularly those in vulnerable categories, have access to.

Additionally, MCI acknowledges that to guarantee that no one is left behind and that everyone can engage in the increasingly digital society, a "digital first, but not digital only" strategy is crucial.

Furthermore, Singapore has created "Digital Readiness Blueprint" ([Digital Society](#), 2024). Four strategic thrusts serve as the foundation for the 2018 publication of the Digital Readiness Blueprint, which outlines suggestions for fostering digital readiness in Singaporeans:

1. Increase and Improve Digital Accessibility for All
2. Bring Digital Literacy into the National Mind
3. Encourage the Community and Businesses to Promote Broad Technology Adoption
4. Encourage Design-Based Digital Inclusion

For the elderly, Silver Infocomm Junctions is a groundbreaking program that IMDA created in partnership with community partners. Its purpose is to encourage seniors to start their digital literacy journey. These educational centers, which are positioned all across the island, act as hubs where elders can start and improve their digital health.

These Silver Infocomm Junctions are evidence of a cooperative endeavor to develop an informed and technologically engaged older citizenry. Participants are given the tools they need to confidently navigate the digital world by providing a wide range of courses that are specifically designed to meet the needs of senior people in Singapore. The curriculum covers all of the necessary abilities, such as sending emails on computers and smartphones, making video calls to relatives who live abroad, and keeping up with current events by reading news and online searches.

This program guarantees that the older population is not left behind in the age of digital developments and demonstrates a dedication to diversity. Seniors who participate in the Silver Infocomm Junctions receive more than just an introduction to digital tools; they also receive a nurturing atmosphere in which to develop valuable digital skills, which enhances their lives and improves their general well-being ([IMDA](#), 2023).

Educating people about digital literacy is important. One strategy is mass education, teaching them what to do and what not to do. To encourage the public to sign up and attend a digital literacy course organized by the national government agencies, one must not work alone in upholding this. Besides government agencies, we could have brought every stakeholder to be involved, whether it be the public, the private, or the community centers. These stakeholders should complement each other and work together to be successful. For example, the private sector would be helpful in boosting and marketing the course along with the community members such as the volunteers. In Singapore, there is one program called the Digital for Life program organized by IMDA annually.

Continuous education is also important. Empower the community members to build smaller communities like little watch groups. A group of five to six people watching each other, checking on each other. So, when one of them receives some news, he/she has at least four to five other people to ask, *“Is this news real or fake?”*

Equipping the Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

The government of Singapore is making a deliberate effort to improve digital literacy, as demonstrated by the strategic initiatives of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The introduction of personal learning devices (PLDs) into the classroom emphasizes the dedication to raising the standard of instruction and learning opportunities. The selected curricula and continuing program recommendations demonstrate a forward thinking strategy that is in line with the rapidly changing digital ecosystem.

In addition, the government is taking proactive measures to improve device accessibility, guaranteeing that every student has access to these necessary resources. This dedication to affordability shows a deep awareness of the role that equitable access to technology resources plays in creating a society that is digitally competent.

Simultaneously, there is a clear emphasis on literacy skills in the educational system. Education institutions are welcoming the addition of computer science as a subject, not just as a part of the curriculum but also as a means of fostering a more critical understanding of digital literacy. This all-encompassing strategy guarantees that students not only use digital

technologies but also have a deep comprehension of the guiding ideas, producing a generation with extensive digital literacy abilities.

The DBS Foundation, in a groundbreaking collaboration with SG Enable, has inaugurated a pioneering strategic partnership aimed at empowering persons with disabilities through the acquisition of essential financial and digital literacy skills. This first-of-its-kind initiative underscores a shared commitment to fostering inclusivity and ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to the tools and knowledge necessary for navigating the digital financial landscape (DBS, 2023).

Education starts in the family. When parents love their children, they should take up the responsibility to teach them what is right or wrong. Same thing about digital literacy skills, comprehensive guidance and resources must be given to the parents so that they will learn how to explain things to their children and know how to teach them without complicating them. So, when the parents are educated with digital literacy skills, they can pass it on to their children. A parent-child activity about digital literacy is also interactive to have.

The target audience for digital literacy is of course everyone. It is best to start learning from a young age. Teach the young ones and the children who are still in school. The teachers can teach them how to find reliable sources of information and how to verify whether a source is a reliable one or not. Usually, it is not recommended to rely just on a single source. Doing cross-referencing and multiple sourcing can help in identifying whether a certain piece of information is credible. Assigning a school project to the students for them to learn about digital literacy is also good. They will access the internet to gain information, and this is an opportunity to teach them how to verify reliable and non-reliable resources.

Modules about identifying disinformation, real case studies about disinformation experience, and applied digital literacy can be delivered in various forms, such as through videos, animations, comics, activity sheets for family, and games. For more, MOE (Ministry of Education) published a press release on information about strengthening digital literacy in which students will be trained to **Find** reliable resources, **Think** analyse the data found to solve problems, **Apply** up-to-date software applications and platforms, and **Create** meaningful content and artefacts digitally (MOE, 2020).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the lesson about digital literacy has probably been a new subject knowledge to be taught. Singaporean governments, community leaders, and educational institutions have started working hard to promote the importance of learning

digital literacy. At the same time, disinformation is everywhere in the digital world. Without tackling the problems of disinformation, surely it will only affect a lot of aspects in the country, such as economy, security, health, and social.

THAILAND



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW
- BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE
- LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Thailand Innovation and Economic Growth

Thailand is a middle-income country of 70 million people that is undergoing a rapid demographic change with one of the fastest ageing populations in Asia. With 56.7 million internet users, younger generations, particularly in urban areas, are familiar with ICT use and internet access (The National Statistical Office 2022). However, youth and elderly people concentrated in rural areas are still struggling with the challenges posed by the digital divide. The 2018 Household Survey on the use of Information and Communication Technology conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO), the 2018 Establishment Survey on the Use of Information and Communication Technology by NSO and the Ministry of the Digital Economy and Society (MDES), and the International Telecommunications Union (2022) suggest there is still a lack of digital literacy skills particularly among marginalized and disadvantaged youth and elderly people residing in remote rural communities. With a considerably high volume of investment in the ICT sector as a share of its GDP, Thailand has taken several steps to transition into a knowledge-driven economy fuelled by innovation. A key aspect of this transformation involves ensuring equitable internet access for all citizens, narrowing societal disparities, and providing equal access to services across remote regions. This is being achieved through the “Thailand 4.0 Policy”, implemented in line with the 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037), the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027), and the Digital Economy and Society Development Plan.

Thailand Inequality and Exclusion

According to data from the Office of the National Digital Economy and Society Commission (2022), in Thailand there are 86.90% men and 85.90% women internet users. In the formal education setting, analysis of data from schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission revealed that 97.47% of schools are connected to the internet, with only 0.8% of schools situated in less urbanized regions lacking internet access (ITU, 2022). Since 2017, efforts by the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), responsible for broadcasting policy and regulation, and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES), have been invested in

extending broadband internet access to rural non-commercial areas. Through initiatives like the village broadband project Net Pracharat and the universal service obligation (USO), 74,987 Thai villages have gained connectivity according to the National Digital Economy and Society Commission in 2022. As of 2020, approximately 9 millions of Thailand's 71 million population access the internet through free programs. Moreover, in 2021, the National Telecom announced plans to provide 300,000 free public Wi-Fi hotspots across the country in 2023 (in Freedom House 2023). Accelerating the acquisition of digital literacy skills among this target group has, therefore, become an imperative for the Thai government as reflected in ongoing programs to build and develop the capacities of the elderly population to be active players in the “Silver Economy.”

Thailand Overview on Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

In Thailand, recent surveys conducted by the Phol-Samutthi Research Institute and Development (in March 2023) and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (in May 2023) have shown that fake news, disinformation, and misinformation are a prominent phenomenon, presenting a multifaceted challenge that intersects with politics, society, commercial crimes, and health-related frauds. Among the marginalized and disadvantaged youths and elderly people that took part in this research, financial and health-related frauds, followed by political rumors, rank as the most popular, harming poor people and making them more vulnerable to fraud.

The Thai government has put in place a range of policies and regulations to tackle the issue of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news, and regulate online content since 2002 when the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) was established. The 2007 Computer-related Crimes Act (CCA) was later created with the aim to curtail online swindles and pornography and was used in subsequent years to punish those importing “distorted”, “forged”, and “false” information into a computer system (Sombatpoonsiri, 2022). In 2010, the police subsequently created the “Cyber Scouts” program to monitor anti-monarchy content online; and, in 2011, the Yingluck Shinawatra-led government

established the Cyber Operation Centre and the Technology Crime Suppression Division. In 2020, the police's Technology Crime Suppression Division set up the cyber police bureau to monitor cybercrimes and threats, including "fake news". In February 2022, the cabinet approved a regulation that would establish centers to combat disinformation on social media at the national, ministerial, and provincial levels. The latest anti-fake news measures have stirred criticisms from activists reporting that the definition of what constitutes true and false information is too vague and expressing concerns about the government acting as the only arbiter of truth. Another issue is the potential

use of these regulations as an additional tool to censor and suppress dissent. Freedom House (2023) further reported in its latest report that the blocking of content considered critical of the monarchy is widespread in Thailand, where websites have been blocked on the grounds of national security, for gambling contents, for alleged violations of intellectual property rights, and for hosting unauthorized virtual private network (VPN) services. Content targeted for removal or blocking by social media platforms includes speech on political, cultural, historical, and social topics. In addition, self-censorship is common among journalists, social media users and content creators in Thailand.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW

The Profile of Underprivileged Communities: Who are They?

This report presents a demographic description based on significant determinants of the digital divide from each ASEAN Member State (AMS). In the context of Thailand, the study identifies five key determinants of the digital divide: age, gender, educational background, employment status, and identification with indigenous communities.

Figure 9.1. Age Group

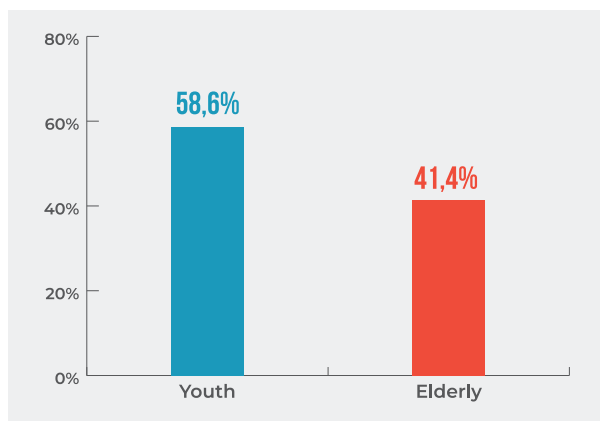


Figure 9.2. Gender

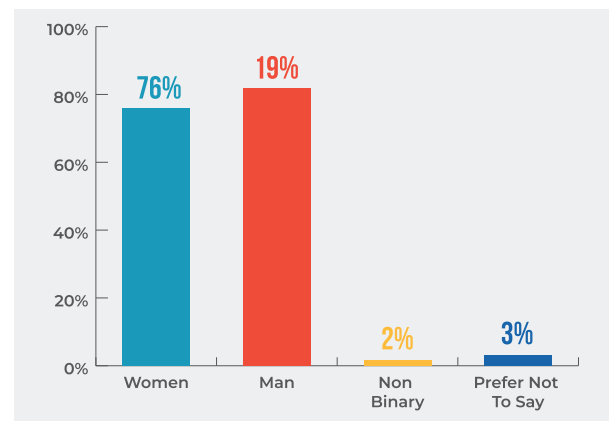


Figure 9.3. Latest Education Background

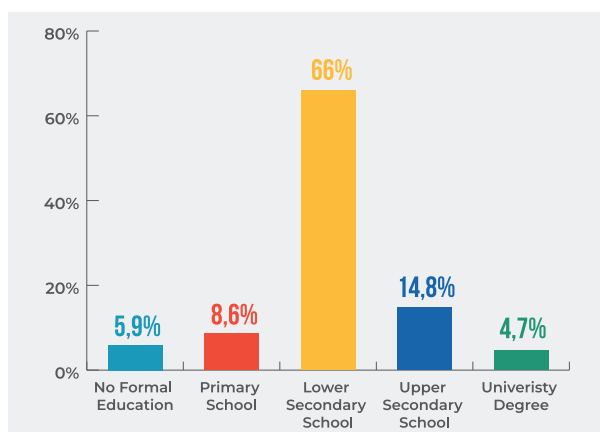
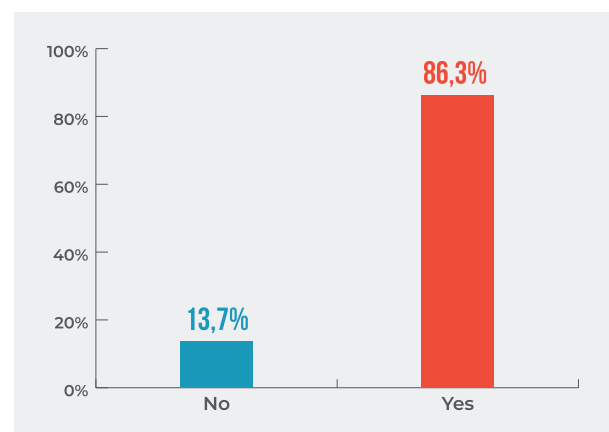
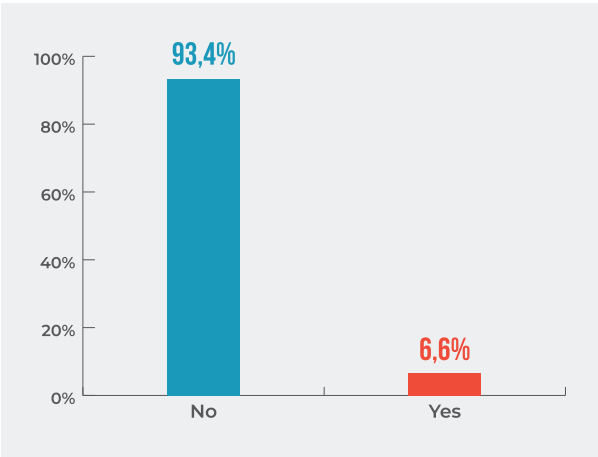


Figure 9.4. Employment



These charts reveal the profile of the participants of this research. As Figure 9.1 illustrates, the participants in this study consist of youths (58.6%) and the elderly (41.4%). The majority are female (76%), followed by male (19%), non-binary (2%), and 3% of respondents who prefer not to disclose their gender (as shown in Figure 9.2). Figure 9.3 shows that the highest percentage of participants have completed lower secondary school (66%), suggesting that this is the most prevalent level of education among the sample. Among the participating underprivileged communities, a sizable portion is employed (86.3%), with the remainder being unemployed (Figure 9.4). Figure 9.5 highlights a substantial disparity between two groups, with a vast majority of respondents (93.4%) not identifying as indigenous, compared to a smaller fraction (6.6%) who do identify as such.

Figure 9.5. Identification of Indigenous Group



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Main Device Ownership

This study shows that 86.3% Thai's underprivileged community have mobile telecommunication, while 58.6% owned computer or laptops and the rest 45.7% have tablets (Figure 9.6). This explains that smartphone is the most favourable electronic device for communication, followed by laptops and tablets.

There are some different aspects in main device ownership of Thai society. From the table above, it can be seen that those who prefer to own and use laptops, are based on age. Meanwhile those who choose tablets as their communication tool, the aspects that are the main considerations are age, gender and education (Figure 9.7). This requires further research to get a detailed picture.

Figure 9.6 Main Device Ownership

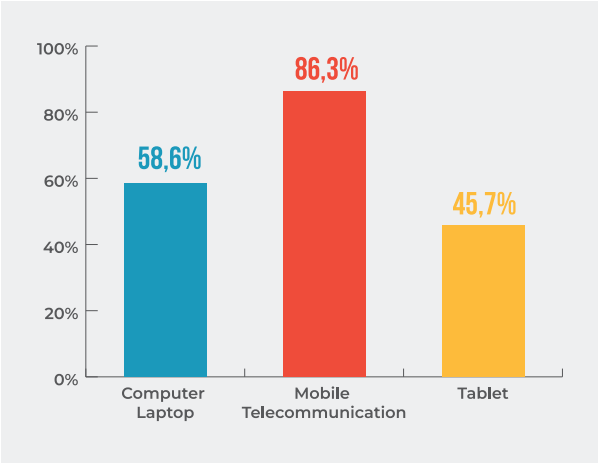


Figure 9.7. Digital Divide Determinant for Main Device Ownership

	Computer/Laptop	Mobile Telecommunication	Tablet	Other Devices
Age				
Marital Status				
Having children				
Employment				
Gender				
Disability				
Education				
Indigenous				

Using News Platforms

Figure 9.8 shows the news platform usage preferences in Thailand. The chart above shows that TV is still the most favorite source of information for underprivileged people in Thailand (80.1%). A close second is social media (75%). Interestingly, traditional sources of information such as radio and print publications are still the next favorite in Thailand. Radio enthusiasts are 59.4% and print publication enthusiasts are 50.4%. These two conventional media have far more enthusiasts than new media such as online browsers (30.1%), free online news portals (27%), instant messengers (16.4%) and paid online news portals. This shows that not all Thai

underprivileged people favour the latest technology based media.

Nevertheless, various considerations in choosing a preferred news source were also assessed in this research. From Figure 9.9, it can be seen that the main consideration for underprivileged citizens in Thailand in choosing to use radio, print publications, social media and free news portals is the age factor. In addition, those who choose online browsers usually look at gender and education. Interestingly, the underlying factor why underprivileged citizens in Thailand choose print media publications is because they have children. More detailed information will be elaborated in a more complete report.

Figure 9.8. News Source

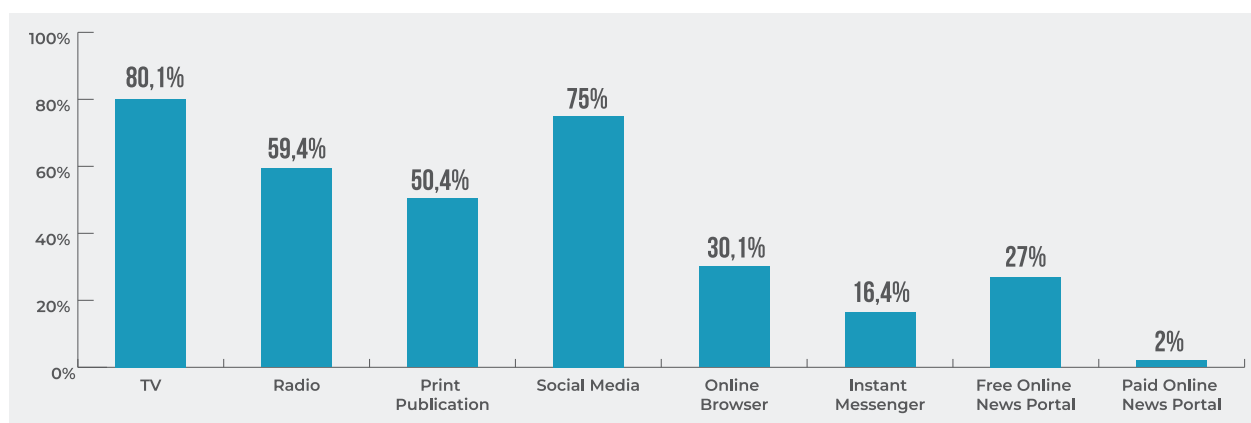


Figure 9.9. Use of News Source

	TV	Radio	Print Publications	Social Media	Online Browser	Instant Messenger	Free News Portal	Paid News Portal
Age								
Marital Status								
Having children								
Employment								
Gender								
Disability								
Education								
Indigenous								

Mobile Applications

Figure 9.10 illustrates the favoured mobile application by underprivileged communities in Thailand. From the picture above, the E-banking is the most widely used application with 87.5% users are familiar and able to use the app on their own, only 8.2% need someone else's help. Subsequently, the E-hospital app is also a favourite in Thailand. Evidently its use alone reached 66.4%, and only 14.8% helped by others. A little below it is E-commerce with 65.2% independent users and 12.9% needed assistance from others. It is followed

by E-health with 64.8%, and E-gov and E-social security with the same score of 62.1%. This explains that underprivileged communities in Thailand have already learned technology in operating applications independently.

Nevertheless, Figure 9.11 describes the factors that influence the selection and use of mobile applications among the underprivileged society in Thailand. For the use of E-banking, E-health, E-commerce and E-social security applications, use only one influential aspect.

Educational aspects are determinants of the choice of E-banking applications, as well as age aspects for the E-health users. E-commerce and E-social security are also equally influenced by the age aspect. Whereas

gender and education are defining aspects of the successful use of the E-govt application. It gives an idea that living alongside technology is becoming a daily life in Thailand.

Figure 9.10. Mobile Applications Usage

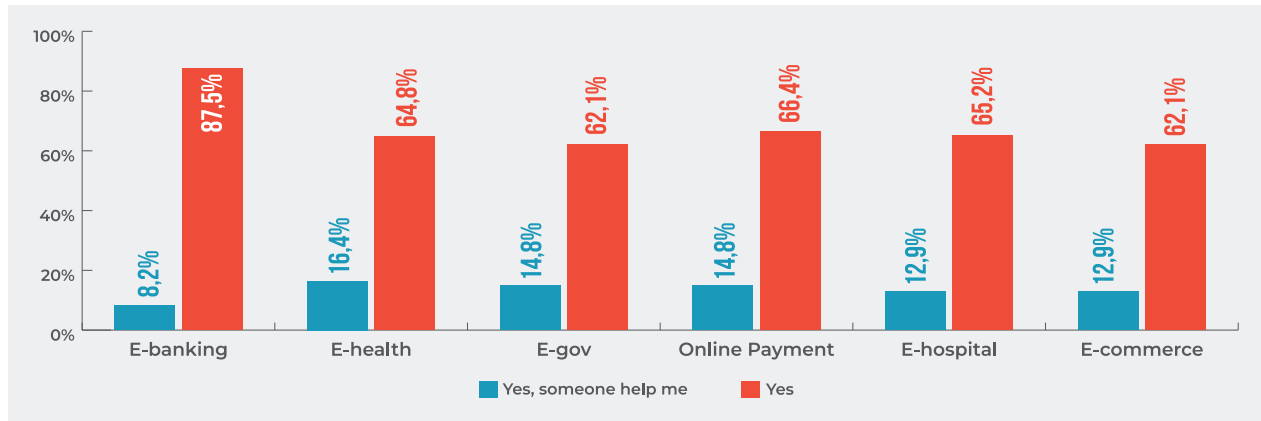


Figure 9.11. Determinants of Mobile Applications

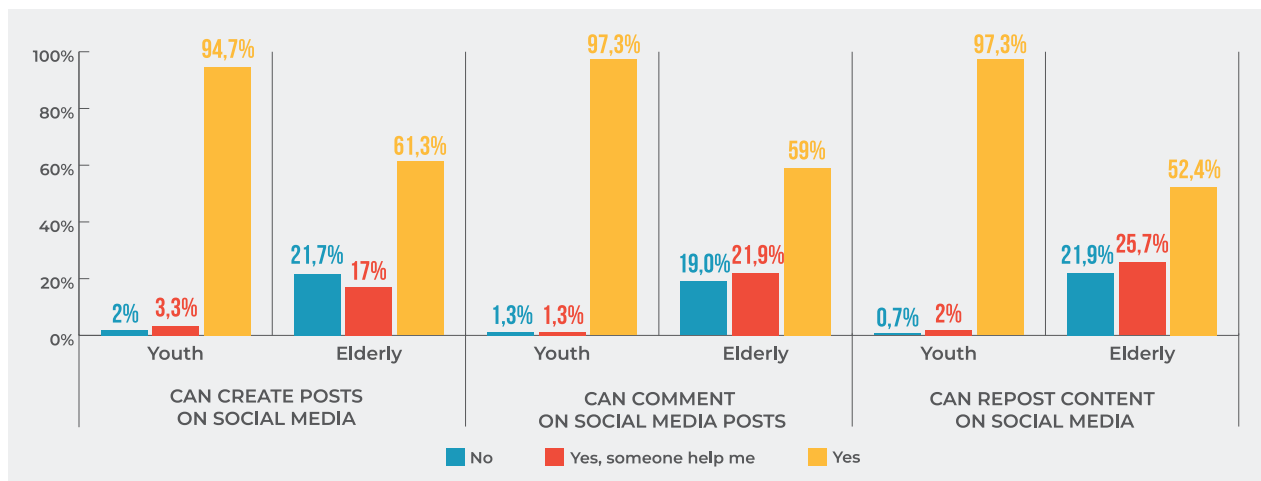
Determinants	E-banking	E-health	E-gov	Online Payment	E-hospital	E-commerce	E-social security
Age							
Marital Status							
Having children							
Employment							
Gender							
Disability							
Education							
Indigenous							

Social Media and Community Building

From the Figure 9.12 above, it can be seen that there is a huge gap between the young and the elderly in carrying out serious activities on social media among underprivileged society in Thailand. 97.3% of youth

stated that they could comment, 97.3% were followed by those who could comment and 94.7% were able to create the media social content. Unlike the elderly, only 61% of them can create the content, 59% commented, and 52.4% reposted content on social

Figure 9.12 Social Media and Community Building



media. They do it all of these activity independently. However, there are 17% of elderly who still need some help to create posts in social media, 21.9% to post comment and 25.7% to repost the content. In summary, it shows that the age factor plays a key role in community building using social media among the underprivileged people in Thailand (Figure 9.13). For comment post activity, the education also matters.

Figure 9.13. Disparities in SocialMedia and Community Building

	Create Posts	Comment Posts	Repost
Age			
Marital Status			
Having children			
Employment			
Gender			
Disability			
Education			
Indigenous			

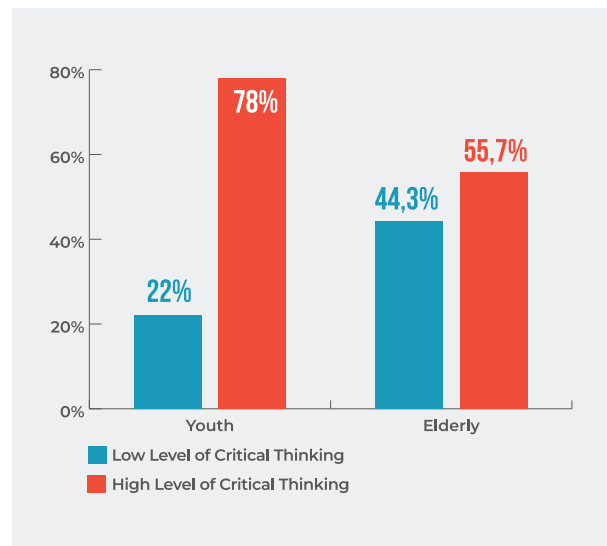
DIGITAL LITERACY

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking involves evaluating information credibility, issue identification, and social media reactions. While creativity and community engagement are higher in employed, male, non-disabled, non-indigenous groups, these traits don't necessarily correlate with greater critical thinking.

Figure 9.14 illustrates the vast composition of underprivileged society in Thailand that has a critical mindset. There are 78% of young people who have complex thinking and 22% who have low critical thinking. This composition is similar to the condition of the elderly, where 55% have critical ideas while 44.3% have less. This data shows that the digital literacy capabilities that they have are fairly balanced with the ability to think critically for the people in Thailand.

Figure 9. 14. Critical Thinking by Demographics



Privacy Protection

The study evaluates privacy protection by analyzing community feedback on privacy settings, password

creation, and regular password changes. Factors such as age group and educational background influence the trend towards low or high levels of privacy protection.

Figure 9.15. Privacy Protection by Demographics

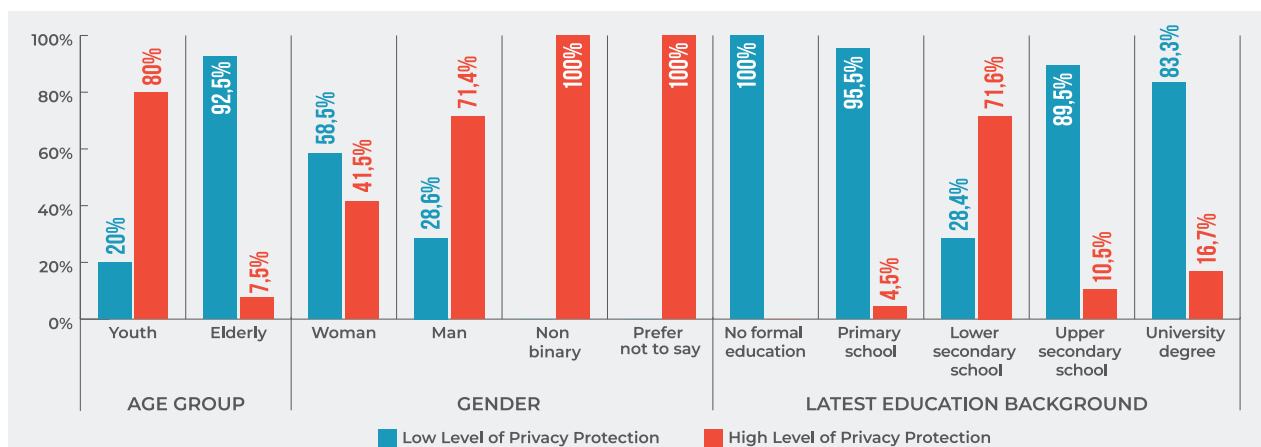


Figure 9.15 describes about three aspects that are major considerations in terms of privacy protection on underprivileged in Thailand. The first aspect, the age factor, where the gap between young and old is very distant. 80% of young people have the ability and desire to do privacy protection, but only about 7.5% of elders have the same desire. The second aspect, gender, where those who belong to non-binary and prefer not to say the blackest type, actually have a high level of awareness to do privacy protection that is 100%. Just followed by men (71.4%) and women (41.5%). The third aspect, the background of education, where precisely those who graduate from lower secondary school have a higher level of privacy protection awareness (71.6%) than graduates above it, namely upper secondary schools (10.5%) and university degrees (16.7%). It shows that having a higher education does not guarantee one has a high awareness of privacy protection on the internet.

Information Competence

The research evaluates the information competence which is related to assessing their capacity to effectively understand and utilize information in a digital environment. Factors like age group, education background and identification of indigenous influence the high or low level of information competence.

In information competence, there are three main considerations (Figure 9.16). The first aspect is gender, where non-binary citizens have the highest level of information competence (75%) compared to women (56.9%), men (36.7%) and those who prefer

not to say (0%). The second aspect is education background, where university graduates have the highest level of information competence (83.3%) than other graduates, while the third aspect is the identification of indigenous people, which can be interpreted as different cultural backgrounds. Those who come from diverse cultures have a higher level of information competence (88.2%) than those who do not (49%).

Trust in Social Media

The table reveals that an important factor that plays a role in the formation of trust in social media is the status of being employed or unemployed (Figure 9.17). From the graphs above, it can be explained that the majority of people who do not have a job have a high level of trust in social media (88.6%) compared to those who have a job (52%).

Figure 9.17 Trust in Social Media by Demographics

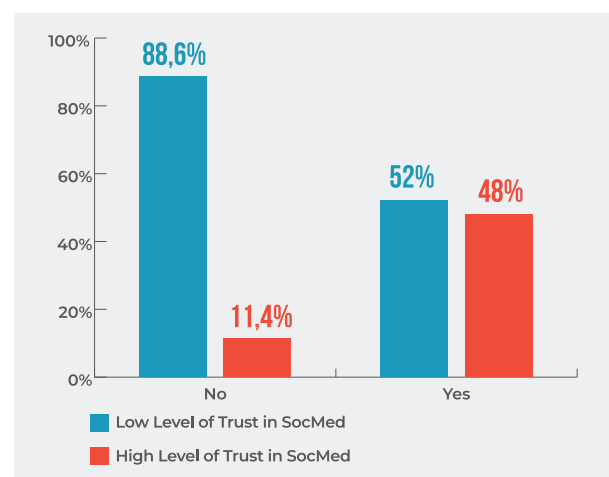


Figure 9.16 Information Competence by Demographics

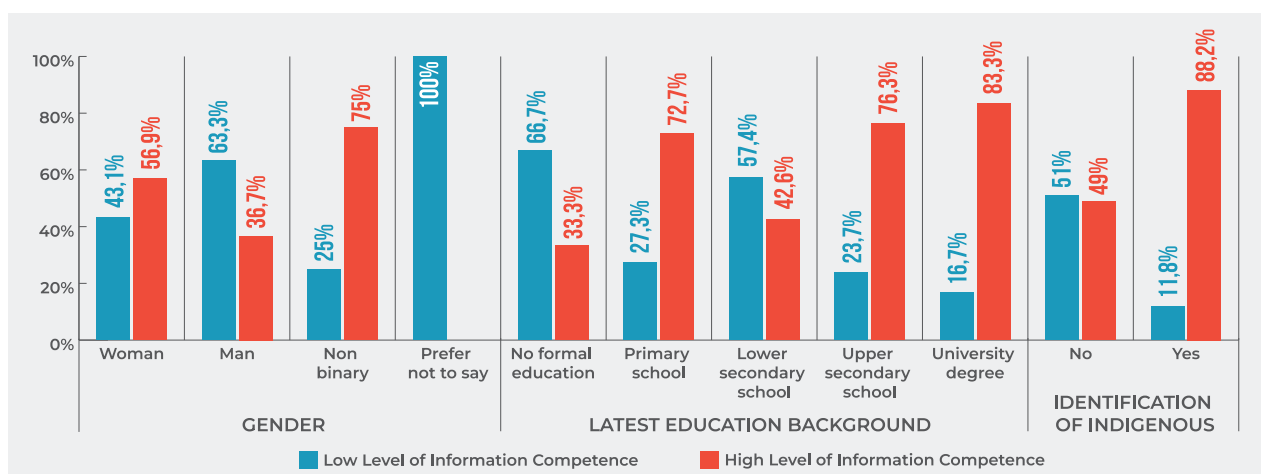
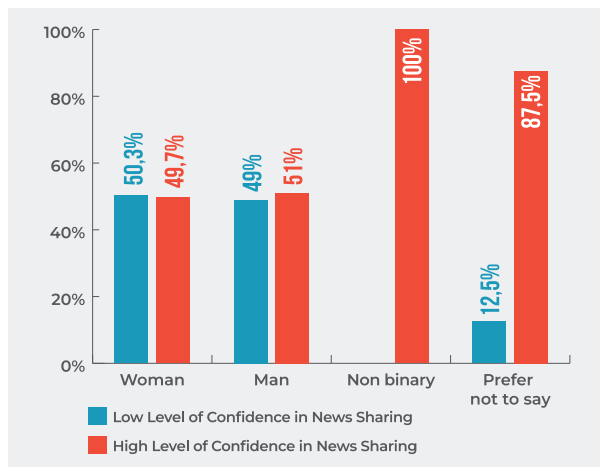


Figure 9.18 Confidence in Engaging with News by Demographics



Confidence in Engaging with News

Figure 9.18 shows the confidence level in engaging with news based on gender. From the chart, it is known that the non-binary society in Thailand has a high number of confidence in engaging with news (100%). This number is followed by those who do not want to disclose their gender (87.5%) and men who get 51% and women (49%). It can be said that non-binary people have a high level of confidence in engaging with news.

LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

The concepts of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news have attracted significant attention among various societal groups in Thailand, including the elderly, youth, educators, and community leaders. The elderly typically perceive misinformation as unintentional inaccuracies, often stemming from outdated knowledge or misunderstandings. In contrast, youth exhibit a more digitally focused understanding. They consider misinformation to be the unintentional sharing of false information, often through social media channels. The educators offer a more structured understanding of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news. They define misinformation as the unintentional spread of incorrect information, often resulting from misunderstandings or outdated knowledge, which misleads without malicious intent. Community leaders understanding misinformation as particularly harmful due to its potential to mislead vulnerable groups, such as low-income individuals and youths who lack media literacy skills. Disinformation and fake news are seen as threats to community harmony and trust.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

The majority of forms of disinformation received by underprivileged communities in Thailand include issues such as health, business, product reviews and financial scam. For the elderly, the disinformation

related to health-related misinformation, online shopping frauds, financial scams, and attempts at identity theft, anxiety, societal disruption, wasted time, damage to reputation, harm to businesses, and adverse future consequences. The youth navigate a digital-dominated landscape where they frequently encounter various forms of disinformation. Their experiences primarily include financial scams (such as digital money awards, emergency loans, investment opportunities), misleading health information (like offers for free health check-ups), and false announcements of government services, typically encountered through SMS and social media.

The educators are particularly worried about the impact of misinformation on vulnerable groups and stress the importance of education and awareness. They often encounter instances of unintentionally sharing misinformation in Line groups or on other social media platforms, leading to fears of legal consequences, financial loss, loss of trust, and reputational damage. Misleading product reviews, where misinformation is spread intentionally, are cited as particularly harmful examples. For the community leaders frequently deal with disinformation themes related to financial scams, such as digital money distribution, government welfare schemes, and dubious job offers. These scams often involve requests for personal information or upfront payments, leading to financial losses. Health misinformation and political rumours are also significant concerns, potentially leading to panic and harmful health decisions.

Risk of Disinformation against the Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption and Circulation

In the underprivileged communities of Thailand, the production, consumption, and circulation of disinformation were particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating economic downturns. The pandemics led to job losses and income reductions, severely impacting household welfare and pushing individuals towards despair and increased vulnerability. Emotional reactions play a crucial role in the dissemination of disinformation, as individuals are prone to sharing content that resonates with their beliefs or triggers intense emotions such as anger or affection. This is also true in marginalized communities. The findings of this study highlight how fake news exploits the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups by aligning with their emotional needs and desires. In Thailand, the virality of disinformation is fuelled by a process in which individuals may spread partial information by reacting to headlines without going deeper into the full content, subsequently overlaying their interpretations and contributing to the spread of fake news.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

For the purposes of this research, representatives from three key government agencies in Thailand tasked with addressing disinformation issues—the Public Relations Department (PRD), the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES) and its Anti-Fake News Center, and the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC)—have

shared their perspectives on how they are combating disinformation and bridging the digital divide. These insights offer a view into the government's approach to managing these complex issues, balancing regulatory measures with the need to maintain freedom of information and expression.

The Government Public Relations Department (PRD) of Thailand, serving as the government's primary communication agency, has implemented a comprehensive five-year operational plan for 2023-2027. This plan aligns with the National Strategy, encompassing facets of economic and social development, and national security policies. The PRD's mission is to provide reliable and beneficial information to the population nationwide, utilizing various formats and channels to cater to the diverse needs and media habits of its audience. The Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES) and the Anti-Fake News Center in Thailand have adopted a proactive approach in tackling the escalating issue of fake news. Acknowledging the complex nature of fake news, the Ministry has categorized the primary concerns into four key areas based on 49,725 complaints received from the public: government policies, health, economics, and disasters. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) of Thailand oversees the use of licensed frequencies across broadcasting, television, telecommunications, satellite, and radio operations. While the NBTC does not directly oversee issues related to fake news, its regulations and consumer protection protocols become relevant in situations like excessive false advertising on television stations.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

The elderly, youth, educators, and community leaders hold diverse opinions and perspectives regarding government efforts to regulate and combat misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. While acknowledging the existence of regulations aimed at protecting society from misinformation and governing journalism and social media, the elderly highlighted a significant lack of public awareness and clarity regarding these policies. They are calling

for more systematic, transparent, and continuous government efforts, emphasizing the need for clear penalties, improved public relations, and a dedicated agency to manage misinformation issues. This indicates their desire for a more proactive and visible approach from the government in combating false information. Across all groups—the elderly, youth, educators and community leaders—there is a common theme of uncertainty and perceived ineffectiveness regarding government efforts. While

there is recognition of existing measures, there is a consensus on the need for more transparent, continuous, and comprehensive strategies. The elderly and community leaders emphasize the importance of systematic government action and clearer penalties, whereas the youth and educators focus on education, public relations, and community engagement. All groups agree on the necessity for more effective public awareness campaigns and the involvement of citizens in combating misinformation. These findings clearly show that there is a discrepancy between existing government efforts and the population's perception of how the government is tackling issues of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

The underprivileged communities in Thailand highlights the critical role of school leadership in promoting digital media literacy, noting a lack of effective collaboration with related agencies and a need for open communication channels and professional advice. Misinformation and fake news are recognized as long-term challenges requiring a cooperative approach from all societal sectors. Community involvement in teaching media literacy is

seen as critical, with community leaders and members working together to introduce concepts of media literacy, helping identify and counter fake news and misinformation. Providing warnings and encouraging vigilance are part of this communal approach. Lastly, family involvement is also recognized as crucial, with parents and guardians tasked with educating children and youth about the impacts of fake news and false information, emphasizing the importance of understanding these effects to foster a well-informed and media-literate youth population.

The elderly proposes fostering collaborative communication and engagement, where schools, teachers, parents, community leaders, and members engage closely with students, establishing open channels of communication and creating spaces for youth to express ideas, stay informed, and access trustworthy sources. Youth suggests extending training to include not only students and teachers but also parents, community leaders, and relevant agencies to develop a comprehensive knowledge base that helps students navigate online activities safely and creatively. Community leaders place significant emphasis on the importance of media literacy training in schools and advocating for programs that teach students how to safely and creatively navigate the internet.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

The need for addressing and counteracting disinformation, misinformation, and fake news has attracted significant attention across various community groups, including the elderly, youth, educators, and community leaders. All groups agree that the latter may cause widespread societal harm. The youth addressing disinformation is not just a matter of information management but a crucial aspect of maintaining societal health and harmony. The elderly members of the community acknowledge existing efforts to combat misinformation but also highlight several shortcomings. Lastly, there is a pressing need for affordable access to digital devices and acquiring digital literacy skills. This demand is particularly strong among marginalized groups, who would benefit from training courses (with a preference

for e-training or self-training), marketing guidance, marketing channels, and e-service channels. These services could include health services, loan services, educational services for children, and weather services for the local fishing industry. Such resources are especially beneficial for underprivileged women who, due to religious and social norms or family responsibilities, cannot leave their homes. Accessible community digital service centers could provide a viable solution for those unable to afford internet costs or who lack digital skills.

Elevating Underprivileged Youth

The youth stress the importance of community knowledge, verification, and critical assessment as key tools in countering the societal division and personal frustration caused by disinformation. The community

leaders are tasked with organizing training sessions and learning opportunities, activities crucial for equipping community members with the skills to discern and tackle misinformation effectively. Their proactive involvement in these educational initiatives is key to fostering a well-informed community. Public relations and awareness campaigns led by the government are also considered important in the fight against disinformation and misinformation. These efforts should focus on informing the community about existing laws and initiatives to demystify and

report false information. There is a particular emphasis on the role of education in combating misinformation, with schools being identified as key sites for raising awareness and improving media literacy. Furthermore, educators have noted that relevant organizations within communities are also involved in conducting training activities, not only in educational institutions like schools but also across broader community networks. These initiatives are crucial in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to discern factual information from falsehoods.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Digital Literacy Regional & National Policies

There are several ways to improve digital learning, from government section and community leaders point of view. First from government section namely: 1) A systematically collect disaggregated data to inform responsive policymaking and programming in areas like connectivity, digital skills, employment, social protection in the digital age, disinformation and violence against marginalized groups; 2) To address the current lack of a centralized body for digital literacy, it is recommended that the government establish a dedicated national agency. This agency would holistically focus on digital literacy, serving as the primary contact point for related matters in the country; 3) Promote and support the participation and leadership of marginalized groups in inclusive digital transformation and innovation efforts, including through nation-wide public relations awareness campaigns and events; and 4) Regularly share good practices and innovative approaches for digital inclusion and sustainable development at local, national, and regional levels.

Second from the community leaders namely: 1) Facilitate community-driven digital media literacy initiatives tailored to specific community needs and challenges, emphasizing the potential of digital innovation for community development; 2) Advocate for digital inclusion locally, highlighting the importance of internet access and digital skills for all community members, especially marginalized groups; 3) Establish community programs for mentorship and support, assisting members, particularly youth and the elderly, in developing digital skills and navigating online spaces safely; and

4) Partner with local schools, educational institutions, NGOs, the Government and other groups to create comprehensive digital media literacy programs, encouraging community-led media projects that educate and engage members in producing accurate and meaningful digital content.

Equipping Underprivileged Youth with Digital Literacy Skills

There are several ways to improve digital learning, from the point of view of educational institution and industry to develop the digital literacy skills of the youths namely: 1) First from educational institution: Integrate digital media literacy into curricula and develop initiatives for out-of-school youth and marginalized communities; 2) Develop people-centered and culturally sensitive digital media literacy programs tailored to the needs of marginalized groups, including the youth and the elderly; 3) Implement accessible skilling, upskilling, and reskilling programs, including intergenerational mentorship, to enhance the employability and career advancement of marginalized community members, both youth and the elderly, and ensuring acquired digital skills equip them for current and future job markets; and 4) Support marginalized groups in STEM education through mentoring, teacher training, and accessible learning environments. Address stereotypes and social norms hindering the engagement of marginalized people in STEM fields, including through public awareness campaigns.

From the side of private sector namely: 1) Enhance digital infrastructure for marginalized communities to enable high-speed and affordable connections;

2) Apply universal design principles in developing digital products and services to ensure accessibility; 3) Engage marginalized and underprivileged individuals in co-designing digital products and services

to address their diverse needs; and 4) Facilitate dialogues among workers, employers, and digital labor platforms to address challenges in securing decent work for marginalized groups.

CONCLUSION

In Thailand, the prevalence of fake news, disinformation, and misinformation poses a multifaceted challenge that intersects with politics, society, commercial crimes, and health-related scams. There is a general consensus across various groups that took part in this research on the definitions of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. However, the depth of understanding and counter-strategy implementation varies. The elderly tend to rely on traditional learning methods and express concerns about personal vulnerability, while the youth proactively use digital tools for verification. Educators and community leaders emphasize the broader societal impact and the importance of collective educational and awareness efforts. These differences in understanding and approach sprout from varying levels of digital literacy and exposure to digital media. The concerns of the elderly highlight a digital literacy gap, in contrast to the youth's familiarity with digital platforms. Educators and community leaders advocate for a balanced approach that combines traditional and digital literacy skills. Such diversity highlights the need for customized approaches to address disinformation, misinformation, and fake news, integrating traditional

knowledge dissemination with digital literacy and critical thinking skills.

This research, conducted under the ASEAN Foundation project “Meaningful Digital Literacy Among Youths Living in/with Underprivileged Communities and Their Response to Disinformation,” aims to fill existing data gaps by analyzing the skills, competencies, and experiences of marginalized and underprivileged Thai youth (aged 18-35) on the outskirts of Bangkok and the elderly (primarily women in their mid-50s to late 70s) in Thailand's Deep South. One standpoint of this research is that building an inclusive digital nation involves leveraging the social and economic benefits of digitalization to ensure no individual, community, or business is left behind. While digital technology and innovation can enhance access to information, education, skill development, business opportunities, social protection, health, and financial services for marginalized communities, bridging the digital divide requires a comprehensive understanding of the barriers faced by diverse underprivileged groups.

VIET NAM



- OVERVIEW
- YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW
- BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- DIGITAL ACTIVITY
- DIGITAL LITERACY
- LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION
- BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE
- LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS
- RECOMMENDATION
- CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

Viet Nam Innovation and Economic Growth

Viet Nam has progressed from extreme poverty to lower-middle-income status since 1986 and is now the world's 15th most populous country. While its ICT infrastructure has improved, ranking it seventh among low-middle-income nations and ahead of several Southeast Asian countries, it still trails behind regional leaders like Singapore. The country's ITU ranking rose from 108th to 78th between 2017 and 2023. However, this ranking doesn't account for digital skills or cybersecurity. As of 2023, 79.1% of Viet Nam's population uses the internet, a 6% increase from the previous year, placing it fourth in ASEAN for internet usage.

Viet Nam's government has been pivotal in ICT development, with strategic policy shifts since 1993 recognizing ICT as vital for national goals, economic growth, and industrial modernization. The country's digital economy is the fastest-growing in Southeast Asia, expected to constitute 30% of GDP by 2030, bolstered by a 26% increase in e-commerce. The 2021 National Digital Transformation Programme seeks to digitize essential industries, further accelerating this growth.

Viet Nam Inequality and Exclusion

In Viet Nam, income disparity impacts ICT access; nearly 80% of the wealthiest households have computers, while only 2.4% of the poorest do (General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, 2021). Urban areas show higher computer ownership (48%) compared to rural areas (19%), with internet access almost universal among the rich but limited to one-third of the poor (Phuc, 2023). High costs create barriers for low-income people, underlining the necessity for device affordability and internet subsidies (Nguyen, Nguyen, & Grote, 2023). Despite strides in reducing poverty, rural and ethnic minority communities continue

to face challenges due to skill gaps and limited resources (World Bank, 2018).

In addition, educational disparities in Viet Nam contribute to digital divide, with nearly all college-educated individuals using the internet compared to around 16-17% of those without higher education. Regular internet users benefit from online networking, leading to better job and financial opportunities than those with limited or no access. The digital divide risks widening the wealth gap, as exemplified by farmers who can't sell online potentially earning less due to the rise in digital consumerism.

Viet Nam Overview of Digital Literacy and Disinformation Landscape: Known Risk and Available Mitigation

Viet Nam is greatly concerned about the widespread dissemination of false information on popular social media platforms. The Viet Nam Anti-Fake News Center categorizes disinformation into four separate kinds, each serving certain aims and resulting in different effects namely commercial, political, social, and satirical disinformation. Each form of disinformation has specific motives, yet lead to similar consequences. It damages reputations, or subverts governance. The spread of COVID-19 disinformation on social media has led to sanctions against over 1,000 individuals for circulating false information.

Low digital literacy, with less than 30% of 15-49 year-olds having basic ICT skills, contributes to the susceptibility to disinformation in Viet Nam. Income, education, and ethnicity create significant skill gaps, with the Mông ethnic group having the lowest proficiency. Misinformation, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, threatens economic, political, and societal stability, highlighting the urgent need to address digital literacy disparities among vulnerable groups.

YOUTH AND ELDERLY IN UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Profile of Underprivileged Community: Who are They?

The adoption and utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) vary among different groups due to income disparity, resulting in discrepancies in technology access and possibilities for digital skill education. This study identifies the following determinants of the digital divide within the context of Viet Nam's underprivileged communities, namely: age, marital status, having children, employment, identification of disability, latest education background and identification of indigenous group.

This study involves participant who 60.2% of the population is categorized as youth, while 39.8% are

elderly who live with the underprivileged community in Viet Nam (Figure 10.1). In this community, women represent the majority at 62.4%, while men make up a smaller proportion at 36.4%, and 1.2% of population preferring not to say (Figure 10.2). Within this underprivileged community, 60.4% of them is married, 34.8% is single, and 4.8% is divorced or widowed (Figure 10.3). Among the underprivileged community who are married, 61.6% of them have children, while 38.4% do not (Figure 10.4). 53% of the population has a university degree, indicating a high value on higher education (Figure 10.5). Only 2% have no formal education, 3% completed primary school, 18% finished lower secondary school, and 24% completed upper secondary school.

Figure 10.1. Age Group

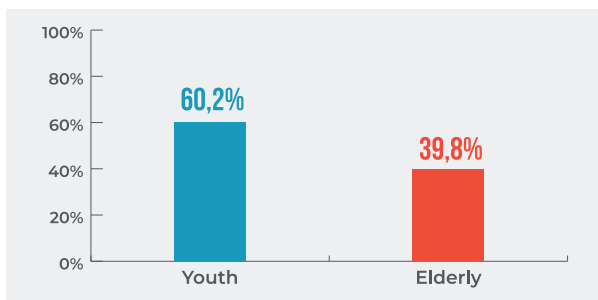


Figure 10.2. Gender

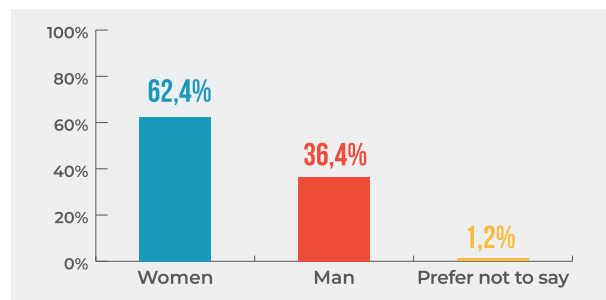


Figure 10.3. Marital Status

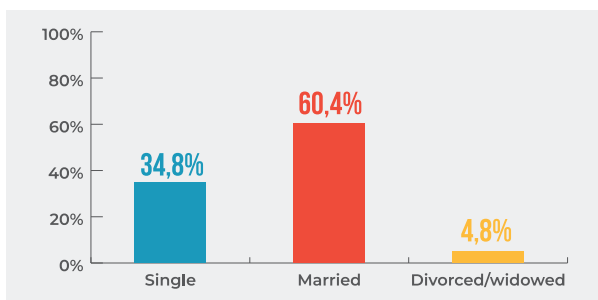


Figure 10.4. Do You Have Children?

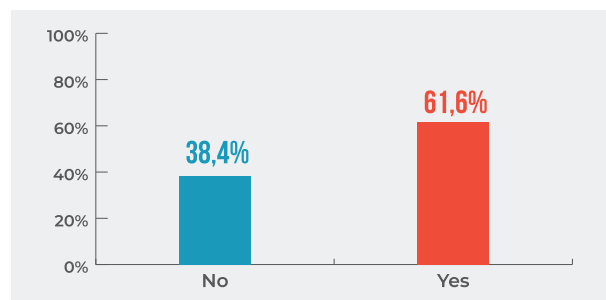
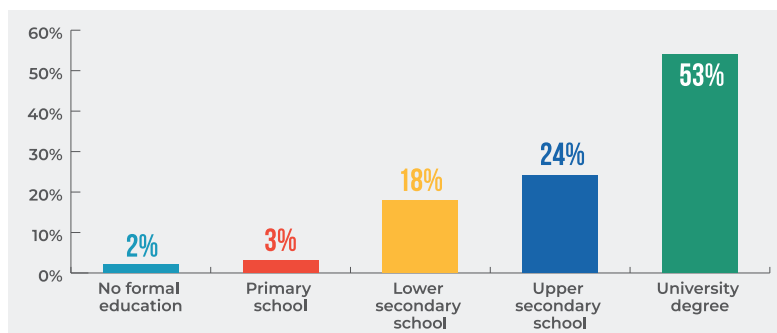


Figure 10.5. Latest Education Background



BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LIVING DIGITAL AS UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

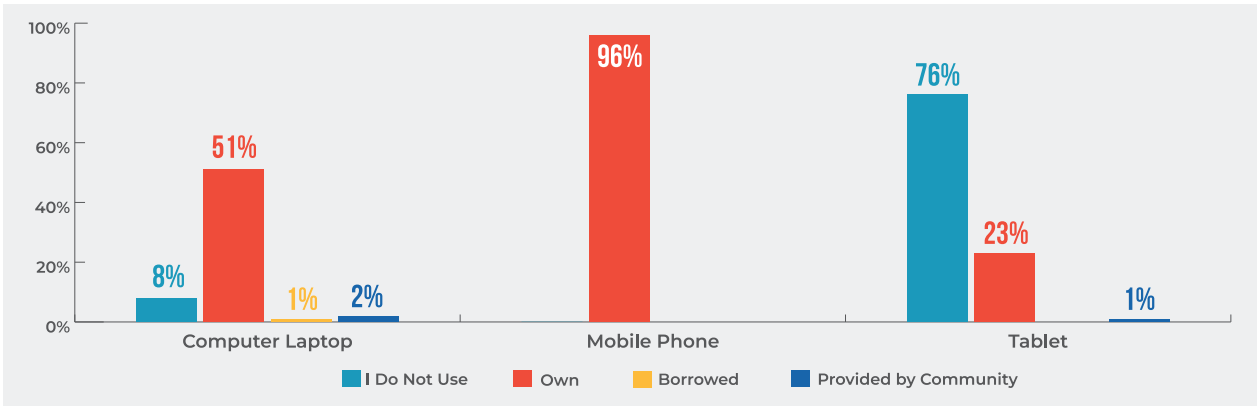
Main Devices Ownership

In this study, 96% of people living with the underprivileged community own mobile phones, the most owned device (Figure 10.6). Computers/laptops are owned by 51%, while tablets are less commonly used with only 23% ownership. Almost no one borrows or uses community-provided devices, indicating that mobile phones are considered essential, tablets are less necessary, and computers have a moderate but significant presence.

However, disparities in main digital device ownership exist, leading to what is known as the digital divide.

This report has explored the factors contributing to the digital divide in Viet Nam, with a specific focus on age group, gender, parental guardianship, and educational background. This report finds that both elderly and youth have significant preference for mobile phone. However, the ownership of computers is notably lower among the elderly in comparison to the younger generation. For individuals who identify as single, married and divorced/widowed, mobile phones continue to dominate as the preferred digital access. However, more individual who identify as single own computer/laptop compared with individual who identify as married and divorced.

Figure 10.6 Main Device Ownership

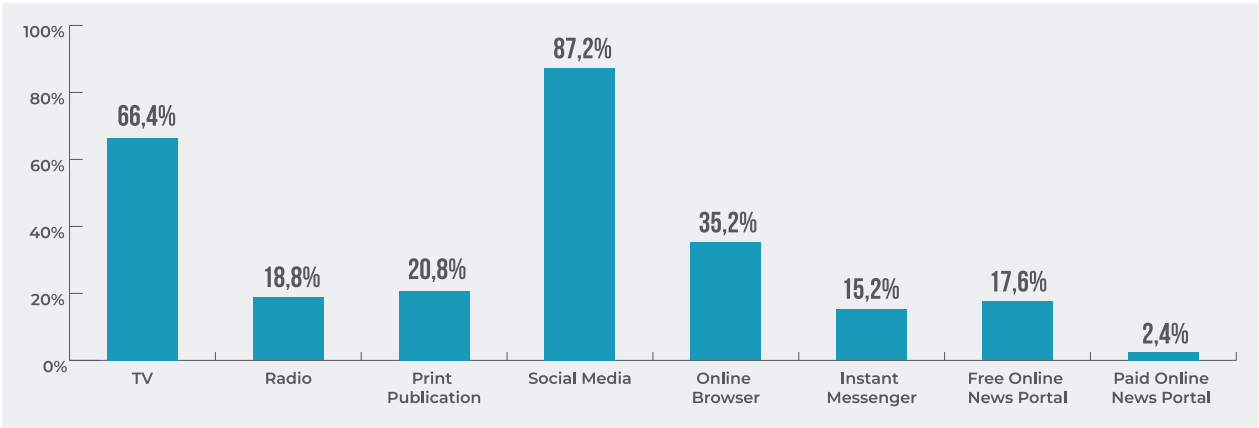


Using News Platforms

Figure 10.7 shows the news platform preferences in Vietnam. It reveals social media is the leading news source. 87.2% of the underprivileged community

members used them. Traditional media like TV (66.4%) and print (20.8%) maintain importance, suggesting a continued trust in these sources for news. However, they also rely on online browser as news source (35.2%). Radio (18.8%) and instant messengers (15.2%) are less

Figure 10.7. News Source



popular news sources. However, the underprivileged community members prefer to seek for news from free online news portal (17.8%) compared with paid online news portals that have minimal usage at 2.4%.

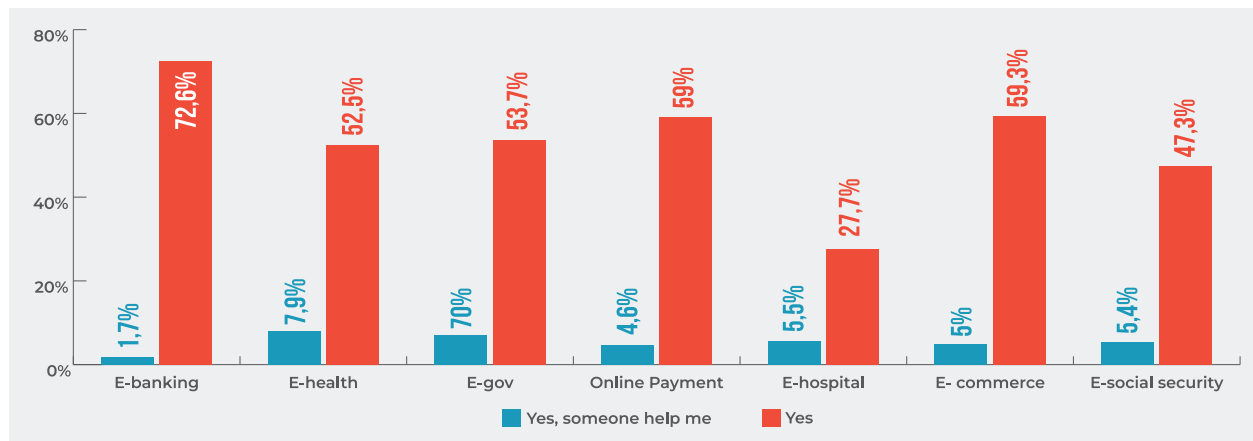
In Viet Nam, media consumption patterns vary by demographic. Less educated individuals prefer traditional media, with TV being the most common across all groups. The elderly watch more TV than the young, who favor social media. Young people often learn about news from their parents' TV watching. Employees, typically younger, use diverse media, with a tilt towards digital, while traditional media like radio and print are less popular, especially among the unemployed. Non-indigenous people use all news platforms more than indigenous people.

Mobile Applications

Figure 10.8 illustrates the usage of different mobile applications in Viet Nam. It shows the proportion of people who use each service independently and those who require assistance to use the service. The most

widely used mobile service is e-banking, with 72.6% of members from the underprivileged community using it independently. Only 1.7% who need assistance to operate e-banking. This suggests that mobile banking is well-established and widely accessible to users in Vietnam. It is in line with the fact that a high number of community members (59%) use online payment services on their own, and 4.6% with help, reflecting a strong trend towards mobile transactions for payments. Mobile health services are used by 52.5% of respondents independently, and 7.9% with assistance, indicating that a significant portion of members from the underprivileged community engage with health-related services on their mobile devices. Data also shows that government services accessed via mobile are used by 53.7% of people without assistance and 7% with help, showing good engagement with digital government services. Vietnamese users widely adopt mobile banking, payment, and shopping services, indicating comfort with mobile financial transactions. While government and health services are also popular, some users require assistance, highlighting the potential for user experience and educational enhancements.

Figure 10.8 Mobile Applications Usage



Social Media and Community Building

Social media skills are fairly uniform across groups, with the notable exception of email use. The most common skill is replying to messages, likely due to the widespread use of platforms like Facebook and Zalo. Younger individuals outperform older ones in more complex tasks like forwarding messages, with 96% of the youth proficient compared to less than half of the elderly.

Individuals with a university degree display higher proficiency levels compared to those with lower levels of education, as seen in Figure 10.10. The percentage

of individuals with a university education background or higher who can perform social media usage skills is high (around 90% for all skills) and decreases gradually for lower education levels. The difference is more pronounced for more complex skills. While 89.6% of individuals with a university education can send documents via instant messages, only about 25% of those without formal education can achieve this.

Employed individuals exhibit stronger capabilities than the jobless, as depicted in Figure 10.11. While responding to chat messages appears to be widespread among both working and jobless people (more than 88% in both groups), a disparity arises

when it comes to sophisticated capabilities such as document sharing and information forwarding. Individuals who are currently employed report higher rates of information sharing via instant messages (81.7%) than those who are currently unemployed (58.6%).

Remarkably, individuals with disabilities have markedly diminished aptitude, even in uncomplicated tasks such as replying to messages. Figure 10.12 illustrates that individuals with impairments have a response rate of only 50% to messages, but individuals without disabilities have a response rate of over 90%.

FIGURE 10.9. Ability to Use Social Media by Age

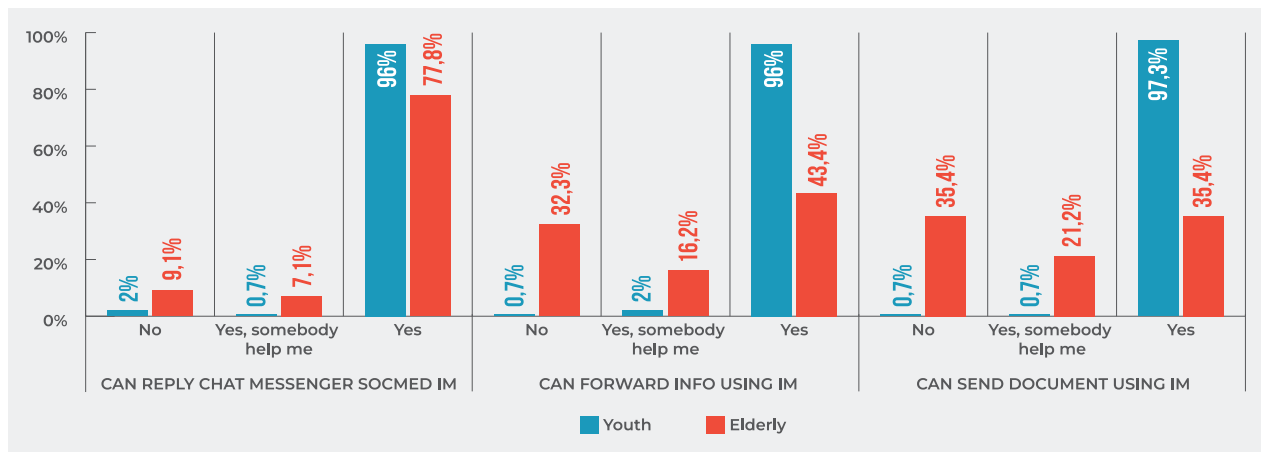


Figure 10.10. Ability to Use Social Media by Educational Background

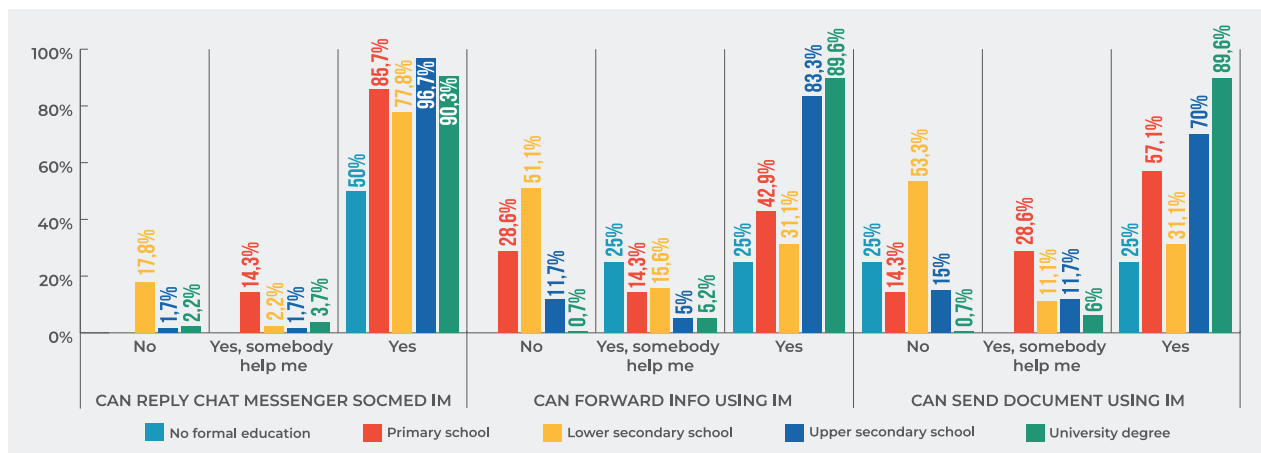


Figure 10.11. Ability to Use Social Media by Employment

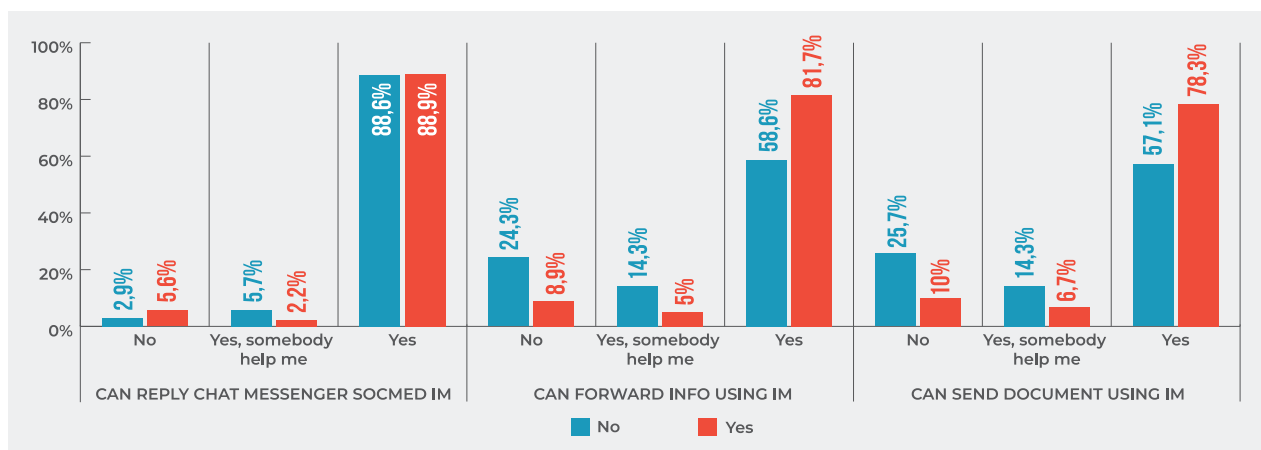
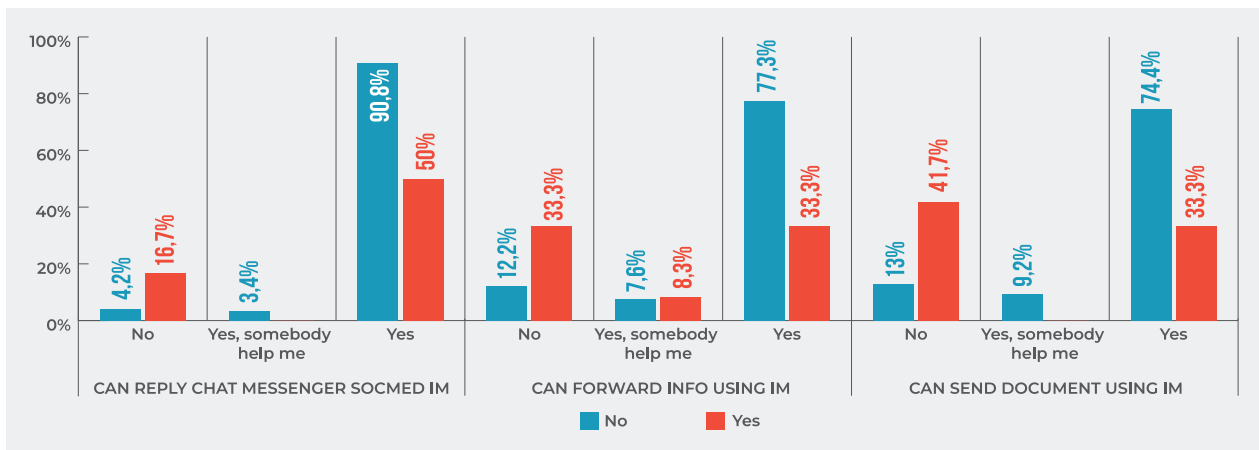


Figure 10.12. Ability to Use Social Media by Disability



DIGITAL ACTIVITY

Building Community

The underprivileged show good engagement in online community activities like posting and discussing on social media. However, skill levels vary, with youth, employed, formally employed, non-disabled, and educated individuals being more adept. Age is the key differentiator: 95% of the young can post independently, in contrast to 32.3% of the elderly, of whom 18.2% need assistance (Figure 10.29).

People without disabilities report higher proficiency in using social media for community-building than those with disabilities. While the gap is smaller for simple tasks like commenting (without disabilities: 77.3%, with disabilities: 58.3%) (Figure 10.30), it

widens for creating and reposting content. Those with disabilities more often require help with these activities. However, this data is context-specific and warrants deeper analysis before generalizing.

In general, the overall trend is that individuals with a higher educational background have higher reported rates of performing community-building tasks on social media, gradually decreasing for groups with lower education levels (Figure 10.31). For all tasks, over 85% of individuals in the university-level group report being able to perform them. In contrast, the group without formal education reports needing help for tasks such as commenting on social media posts, creating posts, or reposting content, and the need for assistance in this group is much higher than in other groups.

Figure 10.29. Building Community by Age

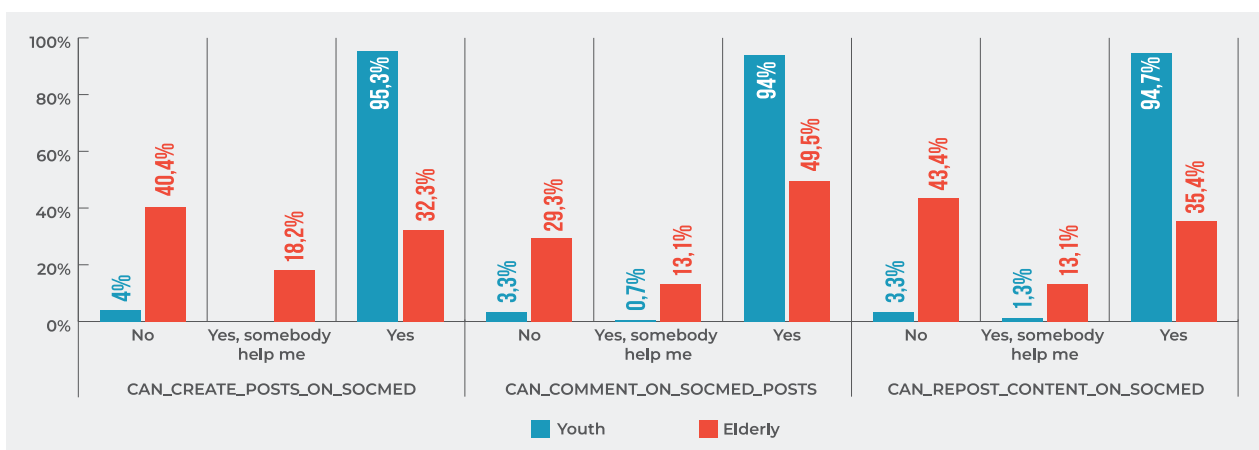


Figure 10.30. Building Community by Disability

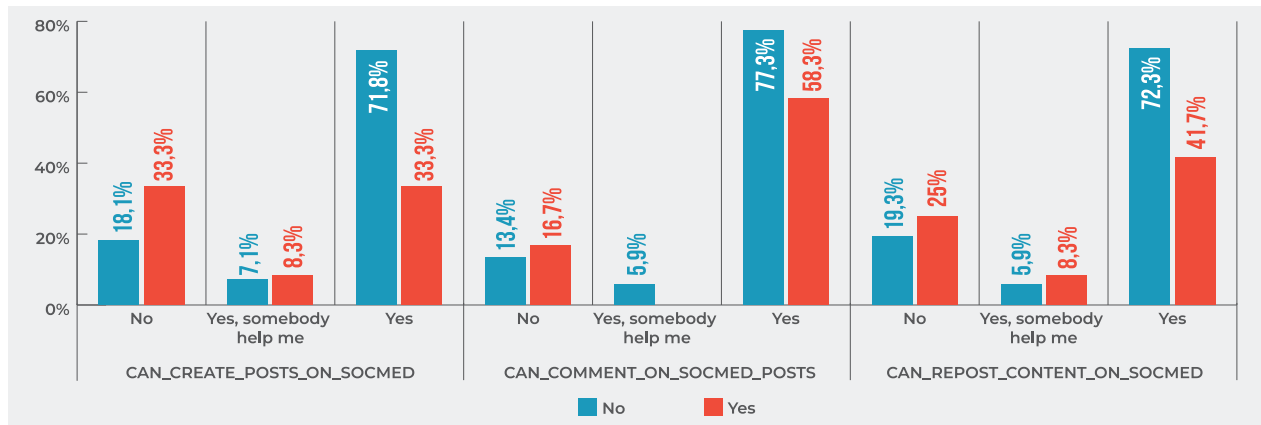
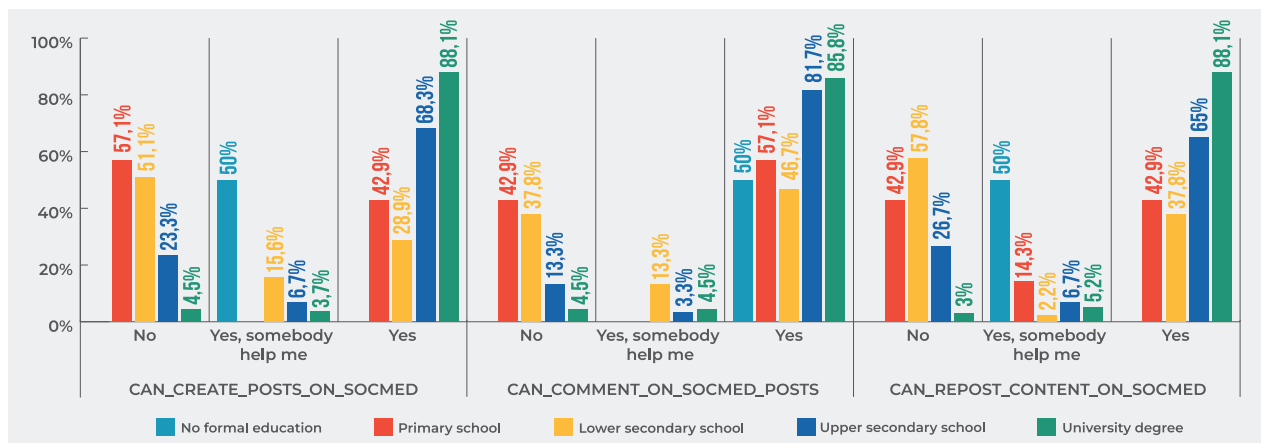


Figure 10.31. Building Community by Education Background



DIGITAL LITERACY

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is assessed by one's ability to reflect and make evidence-based decisions regarding information. It is evaluated by responses to the credibility, issue identification, and reaction to social media/email content. Notably, skills like creativity and community engagement are higher in employed, male, non-disabled, non-indigenous groups, but these traits don't necessarily correlate with greater critical thinking.

Among people with formal education, high level of education background (university degree) tends to have high level of critical thinking, or in other words, their percentage among those with a high level (69.7%) is much higher than their percentage among those with a high level (38.9%). On the other hand, low level of education background tends to have low level of critical thinking (Figure 10.32). People with no

formal education tend to have a high level of critical thinking, meaning their percentage among those with a high level (1.7%) is slightly higher than their percentage among those with a low level (1.5%). The data also reveals a distinction based on indigenous status. Non-indigenous individuals are slightly more prone to lower levels of critical thinking, with a higher percentage in the low-level category (98.5%) compared to the high-level category (96.6%). Indigenous individuals, however, are more likely to exhibit high levels of critical thinking, with their representation in the high-level group (3.4%) marginally exceeding their share in the low-level category (1.5%).

Privacy Protection

Privacy protection levels are gauged by how individuals manage their social media settings and

password practices. Trends in privacy measures are influenced by age and education, with better-educated, employed individuals typically having stricter privacy controls. Digital skill programs should target not just those in educational settings but also those in informal or freelance work to improve privacy practices across the board.

Based on the table, youth have a higher level of privacy protection (69.3%) compared to the elderly,

who mostly have a low level of privacy protection (78.8%). Among people with formal education, people with high level of education background (university degree) tend to exhibit a high level of privacy protection, meaning their percentage among those with a high level (67.9%) is almost double compared to their percentage among those with a low level (32.1%). On the other hand, the low level of education background tends to have a low level of privacy protection (Figure 10.33).

Figure 10.32. Critical Thinking by Demographics

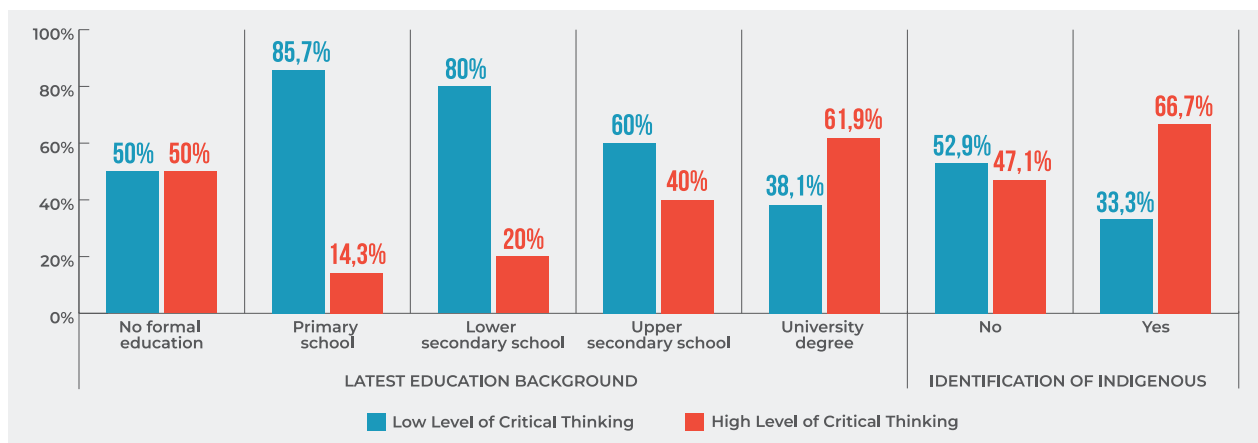
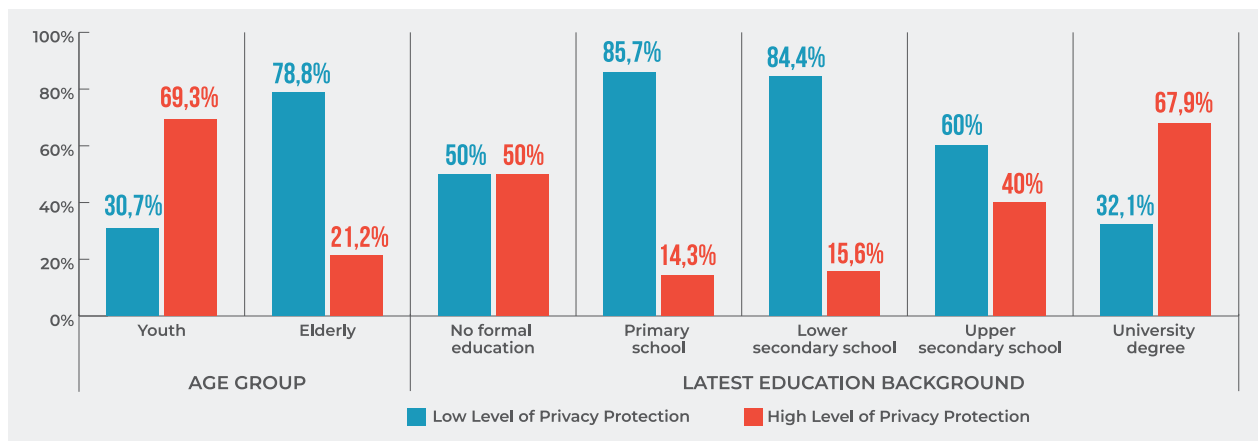


Figure 10.33. Privacy Protection by Demographics



Information Competence

There are two factors significantly influencing the level of Information Competence, namely age group, and employment status (Figure 10.34). Youth evidently have a higher level of high information competence (61.3%) compared to the elderly, who show a higher incidence of low information competence (64.6%). Additionally, individuals who are employed exhibit a higher level of high information competence (56.7%) than those who are unemployed, with the latter having a larger percentage of low information competence (64.3%).

Trust In Social Media

The table reveals that Individuals with no children show less trust in social media (59.4% low trust) than those with children, who have higher trust (57.8% high trust).

Figure 10.35 shows that individuals with university degrees show slightly more trust in social media (55.5%) than those with lower education levels (51.6%). Conversely, those with no formal education surprisingly have higher trust in social media (3.1%)

than those with some education but lower trust levels (0%). Non-disabled persons are generally more skeptical about social media, while disabled persons display higher trust, with 7% having high trust versus 2.5% with low trust.

Confidence In Engaging with News

Based on marital status, singles have a nearly even split between low and high confidence in news sharing (49.4% low, 50.6% high). Married individuals predominantly exhibit low confidence (64.9%) and

FIGURE 10.34. Information Competence by Demographics

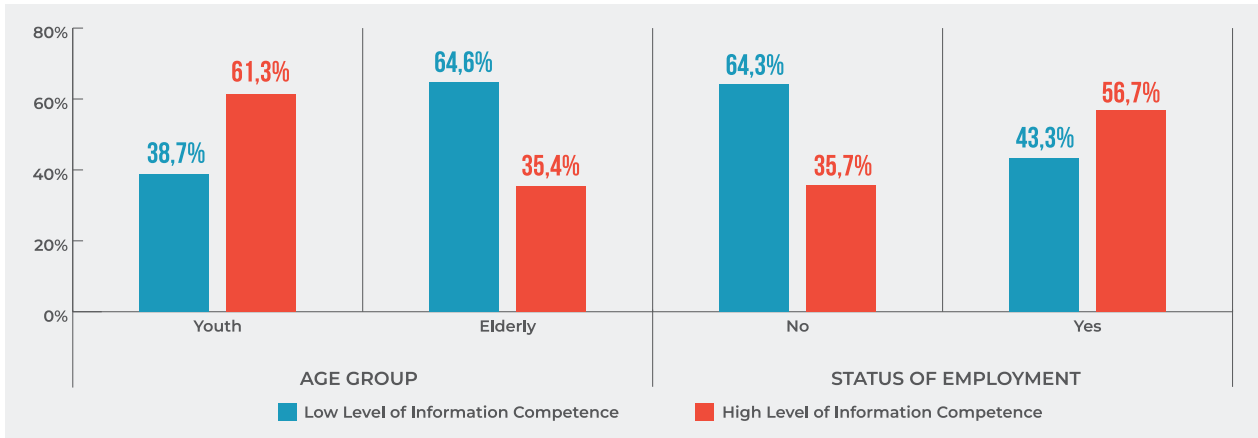


FIGURE 10.35. Trust in Social Media by Demographics

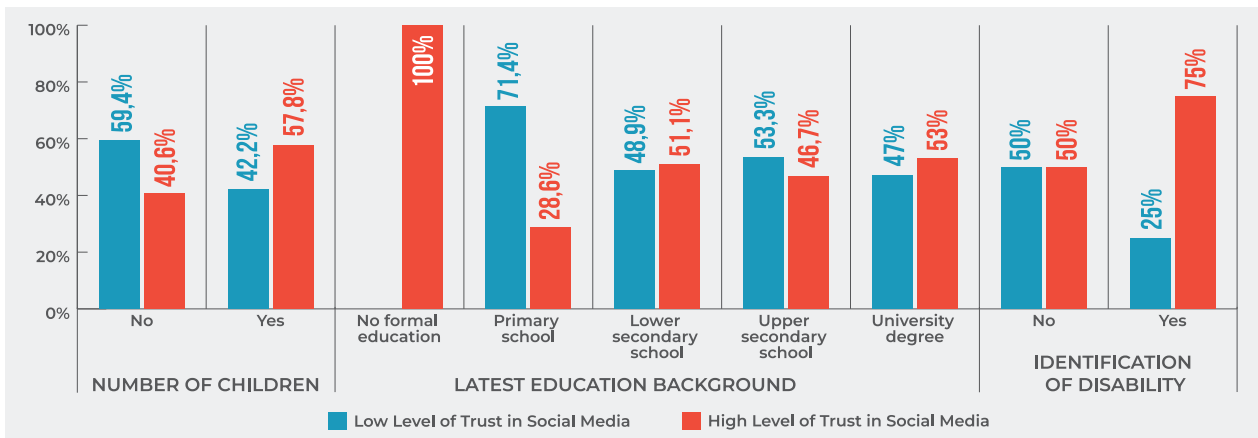
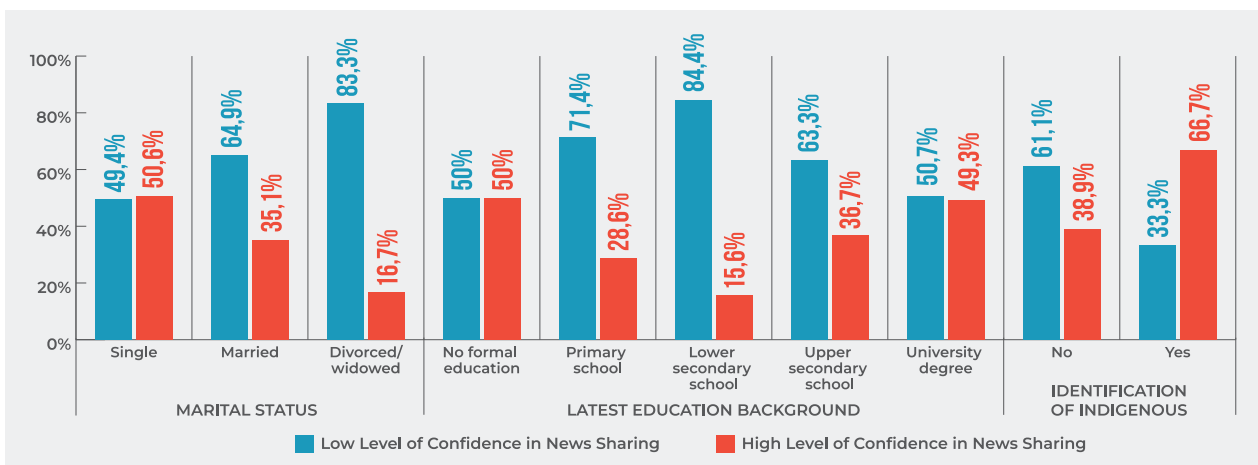


FIGURE 10.36. Confidence in Engaging with News by Demographics



divorced/widowed individuals show the highest level of low confidence (83.3%).

People with a university education are more confident in news sharing (66.7%) than those with less education (45%). Those without formal

education also show higher confidence in news sharing (1.6%). Indigenous people display more trust in news sharing (4% with high confidence) compared to non-indigenous people, who are more skeptical (98.7% with low confidence) (Figure 10.36).

LIVING WITH DISINFORMATION

Understanding Disinformation

The underprivileged community members find it is challenging to differentiate between disinformation, misinformation, and fake news. However, they believe disinformation comes from unreliable sources that is misleading, fabricated, or inaccurate. There are also idea that disinformation is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization, or country.

Identifying Recent Disinformation and Trends

The majority of disinformation issues and trends identified by the underprivileged community members in Viet Nam are primarily related to politics, financial online scams, health, Covid-19, and celebrities. It corresponds entirely to the opinions of community leaders, who believe that most of the fake news spread in their community is related to distorting the state's policies and financial fraud online.

Risk of Disinformation against the Underprivileged: Disinformation Production, Consumption, and Circulation

The underprivileged community members in Viet Nam agree that false information is most frequently found on social media platforms and online news. National television channels, newspapers, and official government agency websites are considered the most trustworthy. This study finds that elderly people become an easy target of fake news on social media, especially on Facebook and YouTube. All their concerns about disinformation relate to health issues, such as fraudulent advertisements for bone and joint medications, cancer treatment, and hair dye. Elderly usually become victims of fake news because malicious actors exploit age and trustworthiness to deceive them.

Over 50% of young people feel confident in spotting disinformation online, yet are concerned about their relatives' susceptibility to fake news, especially financial scams. All age groups exercise caution in sharing information. Young people typically talk about fake news only within family circles, while older individuals prefer warning others through private messages. Trust is generally placed in family and experienced community members. Some educators avoid sharing or discussing information online due to mistrust in the public's discernment. Despite cautious attitudes, fake news remains prevalent, attributed to low digital literacy and manipulative tactics affecting reader psychology.

Disinformation and Digital Literacy

Both older and younger individuals are aware of the motives for spreading fake news and are alert to potential disinformation, especially when it involves government defamation, evokes sympathy, or appears sensational. Yet, both groups show a lack of skills in confirming news accuracy, primarily relying on questioning the source's authenticity. Elders often cross-verify by consulting recognized authorities or personal contacts, while youth typically lack thorough methods for fact-checking. Only few practices cross-referenced sources, and considered legal consultation. Elderly within the context of the underprivileged community tend to trust national TV or official agencies, with some also turning to friends and family for validation. In addition to limited skills in verifying news, the underprivileged community members also demonstrate a limited understanding of legal regulations related to managing misleading information. Only a few elderly and young individuals are aware that there are legal standards governing the management of misleading information, but they are unsure of the specific regulations or their scope.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: UNDERSTANDING THE VULNERABILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Social Resources and Digital Media Use

The study reveals that ignorance of disinformation, misinformation, and fake news stems from a lack of formal education on these topics. Limited school curricula address them, and the underprivileged often learn about these concepts through TV, social media, and warnings from family or during local authority sessions. Community leaders and officials cite a shortfall in training and resources for this issue in disadvantaged areas. People typically become aware of misinformation's impact only after encountering real-life consequences. School heads and leaders offer insights on the issue based on personal experience rather than authoritative sources, leading to varied and potentially inaccurate understanding.

Viet Nam's digital shift has broadened access to news via social media, online papers, websites, and TV. Interviewees across demographics use these channels for updates, but trust levels vary. Government and national media, including TV and official publications, are deemed most reliable by nearly all stakeholders, while social media and private online outlets are considered less trustworthy due to sensationalism.

Trust in online news is shaped by family, friends, and neighbors for both young and old. Efforts to combat fake news by community members and educators are ongoing, with government and schools introducing misinformation education post-Covid-19, but further development is needed. Stakeholders recommend stricter penalties for misinformation spreaders and collaboration with media platforms. School teachings are criticized for being brief and theoretical, lacking practicality and engagement due to resource constraints. Community members feel informed about misinformation by local authorities, with increased efforts post-Covid-19 focusing on awareness. Personal experiences influence perceptions of misinformation, with some becoming more cautious after falling victim to online fraud, while others, especially the elderly, feel their tech limitations leave them vulnerable to false information.

Positional Categories Determining Resources and Digital Literacy

Efforts to protect people, including marginalized communities, through laws, policies, and educational

programs are acknowledged as recent and needing improvement for effectiveness by state officials and community leaders. Viet Nam's Cybersecurity Law of 2018 entrusts the Ministry of Information and Communications with addressing misinformation. Online safety and fake news prevention were integrated into the 2018 education program, effective in 2020. However, young and elderly community members may not fully grasp these initiatives due to limited awareness and understanding, exacerbated by intensified government efforts post-COVID-19.

Tailoring information for marginalized communities in awareness and misinformation-prevention programs is challenging due to diverse needs. Low income individuals with limited literacy require simple, easily understandable information. People with disabilities and ethnic minorities encounter barriers in information reception and language comprehension. Infrastructure limitations hinder communication sessions in low-income areas. While the government plans to standardize education programs for special groups by 2030, the effectiveness of these efforts remains to be evaluated due to limited time. Challenging regions require human and financial resources for poverty reduction and hunger eradication, limiting resources for ICT capacity development. This scarcity hinders general awareness programs and training initiatives in schools. While teachers have received training on fake news prevention, challenges persist in implementing content due to limited teacher capacity, heavy workloads, and inadequate facilities.

Underprivileged community in Viet Nam heavily relies on educator in combating disinformation. However, teachers have received training on preventing fake news, but implementing teaching content faces challenges due to:

1. Limited and uneven teacher capacity: Insufficient teachers and varying ability to absorb information.
2. Overburdened teachers: Multiple school tasks hinder prioritizing this content.
3. Inadequate facilities: Lack of facilities, including rooms with information connections and transmission lines for events.

LESSONS LEARNED: COUNTERING MIS/ DISINFORMATION/FAKE NEWS

Underprivileged Communities and Digital Resilience

False information has detrimental effects on psychological, economic, political, and social aspects, causing division and distrust in society. Younger individuals worry about economic losses, while older individuals focus on psychological impacts and loss of confidence. Community leaders stress that misinformation acceptance can breed misunderstanding and diminish trust in the government. Both young and older individuals exhibit decreased trust in online information, often disregarding irrelevant content. A significant percentage of both age groups dismiss suspected fake posts based on personal experience, with few verifying information from other sources. They rely on national TV channels and state press to identify fake news. Despite efforts involving local authorities, social groups for the elderly, and schools for the youth, some perceive these actions as passive. Events like COVID-19 drive increased activity in combating fake news due to its harmful impact. Youth and community leaders advocate for stricter regulations to combat fake news due to the lack of effective control over misinformation. They criticize existing sanctions for being ineffective and punishing both unintentional and intentional dissemination of false information, causing fear and lacking community reassurance.

Elevating Underprivileged Youth

Currently, there is no official mainstream digital literacy education program in Viet Nam's K-12 education system that has been evaluated as suitable in terms of content and teaching methods for preventing and dealing with online misinformation. The content related to online safety has been integrated into the new general education program and taught to students since 2020 under Computer Science. However, this program is still new, and a specific assessment has not yet been conducted.

The majority of educators currently rely on programs from community projects involving non-profit organizations to teach this topic in schools. However, the implementation of these projects largely depends on the initiative and enthusiasm of the teachers, as well as the support and permission of school leadership, which is not always guaranteed.

Another barrier is the time and resource constraints for teachers to organize classes for students on coping with misinformation. Teachers often feel they lack the time to organize small-scale and interactive classes, and they instead conduct sharing sessions on a school-wide scale with limited interactive activities. This aligns with the observation of young people who do not highly value the quality of school-wide training sessions as they involve one-way sharing from teachers, leading to suboptimal knowledge absorption. Teachers, older individuals, and young people also emphasize the need for regular organization of classes on this topic to deepen students' understanding, which further increases the time pressure on teachers and is often impractical.

Teachers and school leaders also highlight another barrier, which is teachers' confidence in their knowledge and skills in this field. Given that this is a relatively new topic and teachers lack comprehensive reference materials, many teachers feel less confident in organizing sharing sessions for students.

Additionally, there are specific barriers for disadvantaged areas and young people from ethnic minorities or other diverse backgrounds. Firstly, support resources for these disadvantaged areas are limited. Secondly, these groups have unique access characteristics related to disabilities and language, requiring customized educational materials and programs, which are seldom provided.

RECOMMENDATION

Improving the Digital Literacy Regional & National Policies

To enhance the situation in Viet Nam, policymakers must revamp regulations on inaccurate information dissemination by strengthening penalties to deter individuals from spreading false information. It is vital to distinguish between intentional and unintentional spreaders to ensure appropriate consequences, fostering a fair regulatory environment.

Secondly, an integral component of the strategy for improvement lies in disseminating information about policies designed to counteract misinformation. Ensuring that the public is well-informed about these policies is pivotal in empowering individuals to navigate the complex landscape of information. Simultaneously, an informed populace is less likely to inadvertently violate regulations, contributing to a more compliant society. Community-level education and awareness campaigns become essential tools in this regard, promoting responsible information consumption and discouraging the propagation of misleading content within the community.

Thirdly, Creating a streamlined protocol for managing misinformation between government bodies and international social media platforms is crucial for efficient detection and response to false information. Collaboration ensures timely action to curb the spread of misinformation, addressing its transnational nature and safeguarding public perception and social harmony.

Equipping the Underprivileged Youths with Digital Literacy Skills

First and foremost, there is a pressing need to develop a formal training program within educational institutions focusing on digital literacy

skills, specifically geared towards combating online misinformation. This initiative not only ensures the provision of necessary materials for teachers but also creates conducive conditions for them to seamlessly integrate anti-misinformation education into their curricula without encountering any time-related constraints. Teachers must be provided with opportunities to organize instructional content addressing misinformation for students, and they should receive support from administrative levels.

Secondly, it is essential to enhance teachers' capabilities, not only in terms of knowledge but also by equipping them with innovative teaching and communication organization skills. This effort helps improve the quality of teaching sessions, increases student engagement, and overall enhances the training's effectiveness. Empowering teachers with creative pedagogical skills ensure they can adapt to the ever-evolving nature of information dissemination and effectively impart critical digital literacy skills to their students.

Thirdly, there is a need for a specialized educational program targeting vulnerable groups such as youth in disadvantaged areas, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities. Special emphasis should be placed on those outside the formal education system, individuals without employment, those engaged in informal employment, and those with low incomes. These groups possess weaker digital skills compared to other demographics, and they have different approaches to learning along with varying levels of accessibility. Therefore, there is a necessity to design specialized programs tailored to the specific needs of each demographic. This approach ensures that individuals within these groups can easily access and comprehend the information presented, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for acquiring essential digital literacy skills.

CONCLUSION

In low-income areas, the digital divide is evident in information consumption habits. This third level of digital divide, to some extent, relates to educational

background, employment status, and work sectors impact critical thinking levels, Creativity, community building, and self-protection activities. This study

shows that information competence in Viet Nam is shaped by educational background, employment status, work sectors, and nature of work. Trust in social media differs based on employment status, with employed individuals showing lower trust levels compared to unemployed individuals. Confidence in engaging with news is influenced by comprehension and critical engagement. Individuals with formal jobs and higher education levels exhibit greater confidence in news sharing.

False information is most frequently found on social media platforms and online news, with national television channels, newspapers, and official government agency websites being the most trustworthy sources. The most fake news is on Facebook, Zalo, Messenger, and YouTube. Elderly people fear being targeted by fake news due to health issues, while young people express confidence in not falling victim to disinformation online. However, they worry about their relatives becoming victims of fake news. Fake news spreads due to low digital literacy and manipulation tactics despite caution in online information sharing. The elderly and young people understand fake news motives but lack skills to verify news accuracy. Digital transformation in Viet Nam enhances media access, but channel reliability varies. Government and schools aim to combat misinformation but require improvement. Deterrent measures and collaboration with media platforms are suggested, along with practical digital skills education in schools. Addressing personal

experiences, infrastructure limitations, and allocating resources for poverty reduction are crucial.

Fake news has detrimental effects on psychological, economic, political, and social levels, causing social division and eroding trust. Viet Nam requires policy reforms to combat misinformation, emphasizing penalties, public education, and international cooperation. Efforts include educating the public, establishing a protocol for managing misinformation, and evaluating digital literacy training programs. Standardizing and customizing programs for diverse demographic groups, particularly those with socio-economic challenges, is crucial. Equipping teachers to conduct awareness sessions and educate students is essential for preparing the younger generation to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

Moreover, there is an additional emphasis on prioritizing and enhancing communication and capacity-building for older individuals, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and those facing unemployment or precarious employment situations. By implementing these recommendations, there is a potential to cultivate a more resilient society equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to combat misinformation, foster critical thinking, and promote responsible digital citizenship. The collective efforts from policymakers, educators, and the broader community are vital to creating a sustainable and inclusive approach to address the multifaceted challenges posed by misinformation in the digital era.

