

VANUATU: UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION



Context

Vanuatu's diverse cultures are sustained through local languages and unique regional practices. More than 100 local Melanesian languages and dialects are spoken. Bislama, an English-based Melanesian pidgin, is the language in which most national discourse takes place and, along with English and French, is one of three official languages. There are strong links between local language, place, and identity, but many people are multilingual.

Vanuatu is a Pacific island nation with a population of around 330,000¹ scattered across an archipelago of over eighty islands, sixty-five of which are inhabited. Formerly the jointly administered Anglo-French condominium of the New Hebrides, Vanuatu achieved independence in 1980. Since gaining independence, the country has navigated a complex path shaped by both its colonial legacy and unique cultural dynamics. Vanuatu culture is a vibrant Melanesian heritage rooted in ancient traditions, spiritualism, and a strong connection to the land - the name Vanuatu means "Our Land Forever" in many of the locally used languages. The majority of the population live in small rural villages, where activities revolve around the land. Subsistence agriculture has traditionally been the economic base of Vanuatu, with kava, beef, copra, timber, and cocoa the most important exports. However, the urban centres of Luganville and Port-Vila have increasingly drawn more people attracted by better opportunities, and tourism and offshore financial service sectors are increasingly important pillars of the country's economy. Vanuatu has a growing diaspora, as many Ni-Vanuatu participate in Australia's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme. The media sector in Vanuatu is relatively small, but active. And like other Pacific nations, the sector has evolved significantly over the last decade as access to broadband internet has expanded across the country via satellite technology, motivating audiences to increasingly transition from broadcast and print to digital media.



The two main media organisations are the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) and the Trading Post Ltd. VBTC is the national broadcaster and is state-owned. It operates three radio stations and a TV station dedicated to fulfilling its mandate to disseminate information, educate, and entertain the public. The Trading Post Ltd is the largest independent media organisation in the country. The Vanuatu Daily Post, which it owns and operates, publishes daily and has an online news platform called the Daily Post Digital Network. It has recently acquired Capitol FM 107, a popular radio station.

Radio is the most widely accessible broadcast medium throughout the country, including in underserved remote areas, primarily through VBTC's Radio Vanuatu via shortwave (SW) transmission. Access to television signal in Vanuatu is provided through a national digital TV service, with TVL being a key provider of telecommunications and broadcast services. While digital TV service has improved access to signal in some areas, reaching every person in Vanuatu, especially those in remote locations, remains an ongoing effort.

¹According to the Worldometers website: worldometers.info/world-population/vanuatu-population/ [Accessed 23 September 2025]

Via the Universal Access Policy, the Vanuatu government has committed to extending mobile voice and data services country-wide, with reports stating the campaign had achieved 98.8 per cent coverage by 2019.² Furthermore, Starlink was granted a 15-year telecommunications licence to operate in Vanuatu from August 2024, with Starlink's satellite technology seeking to provide internet access to areas previously cut off due to remoteness, physical topology, and cost. The approval of Starlink's licence is expected to have a profound impact on internet connectivity in rural and remote communities such as Ureparapara, Torres, Futuna, and Aneityum.³

While the Vanuatu constitution guarantees freedom of expression, there is no specific protection for media freedom, and recent changes to the Right to Information Law have further undermined journalists' ability to monitor and report on government decision making.⁴ Vanuatu's media landscape also faces capacity issues, including the need for training and equipment upgrades to reach all provinces.

Research Methodology

Data in this briefing is based on a mixed method research study designed by BBC Media Action. It looks to understand the lives of communities in Vanuatu, their media access, usage and preferences, how information is shared and perceived, and how key national and local issues affect people's lives.

A nationwide mobile phone survey⁵ of 1,073 people in Vanuatu aged 18+ was conducted in March 2025 by Tebbutt Research. Respondents were sampled via a randomly generated list of mobile phone numbers. Survey quotas were overlaid to ensure accurate representation by sex and age within each province in alignment with most recent population data. At the end of fieldwork, weights were applied to fit with survey quotas where needed. Based on this research methodology, all survey participants had access to a phone, either at home or elsewhere. Therefore, the percentage findings presented in this briefing represent the media habits and preferences of a subset of the Vanuatu population – that is adults who have access to a mobile phone. As such, the findings presented in this briefing should not be considered representative of the total adult population of Vanuatu.

Qualitative research was used to complement the nationwide survey. Eleven focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted across three provinces, Torba, Sanma and Shefa. In each location, the FGDs included men and women from marginalised communities, those with lower media access, and persons with disabilities.

²ABC International Development (ABCID) (2025) State of the Media: Vanuatu. <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/state-of-the-media-vanuatu-2025/105005760> [Accessed 24/09/2025]

³Doddy Morris, Vanuatu Daily Post, Social Media Influencer's 2-year Advocacy Helps Bring Starlink to Vanuatu, August 23, 2024. <https://www.dailypost.vu/news/social-media-influencer-s-2-year-advocacy-helps-bring-starlink-to-vanuatu/article> [Accessed 24/09/2025]

⁴An amendment to the Right to Information (RTI) Law was passed in May 2025, which now gives the Council of Ministers the power to mark certain documents and decisions as confidential - meaning they don't have to be shared with the public. The government says this is to protect national interests; however, it has raised concerns among journalists about the government's right to hide public information. [see VBTC, New RTI Law change raises concerns over hiding public information (27 June 2025) <https://vbtv.vu/new-rti-law-change-raises-concern-over-hiding-public-information/> [Accessed 13/10/25]

⁵Although other data collection methods were considered for this research, the costs and logistics of face-to-face interviewing were not feasible in the scope of this study and were unlikely to be able to reach significantly more people in such geographic contexts due to the travel required.

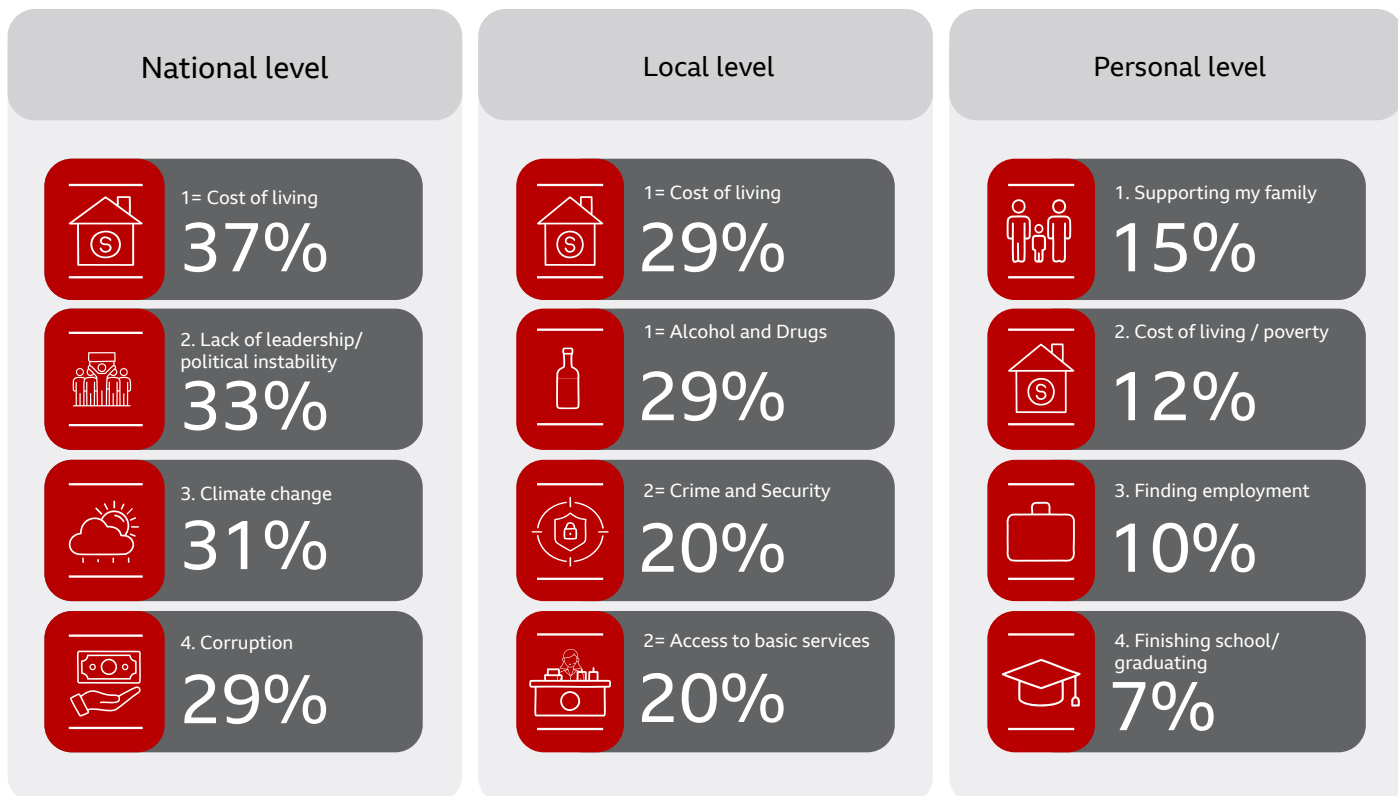


Findings

1. What are the key concerns and issues affecting Ni-Vanuatu?

People were asked in the survey what issues were most affecting them. Financial worries around the cost of living and supporting families were at the forefront. Concerns around political leadership and instability, as well as the environment were also frequently cited national-level concerns, while anti-social behaviour was considered a key issue at the community level.

Top 4 Challenges:



Most issues were cited consistently among respondents across all demographic groups; however male respondents were significantly more likely than females to cite political concerns and climate change as national level issues of concern.

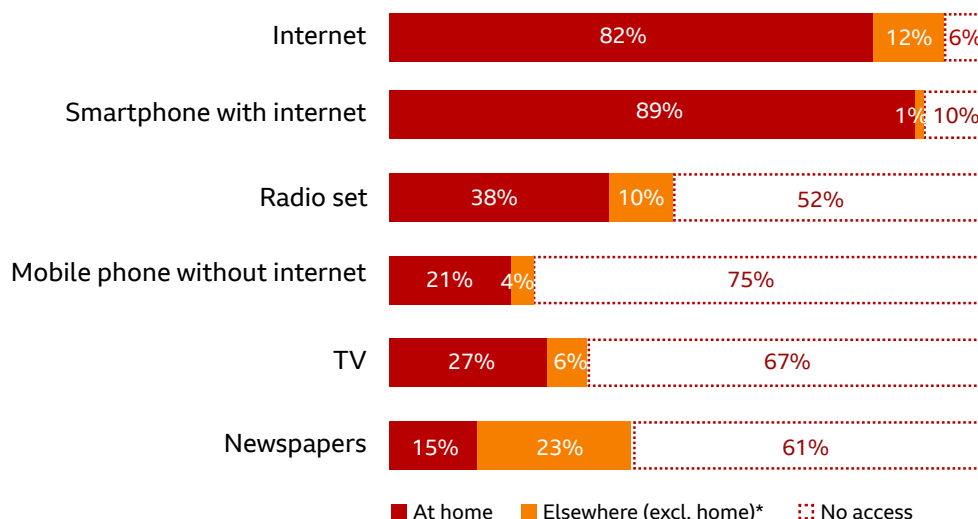


2. How do people in Vanuatu access and use media?

DataReportal estimates that 95% of the total Vanuatu population have access to a mobile phone in 2025, based on 315,000 cellular mobile connections.⁶ Most of these mobile connections (estimated at 96%) are broadband enabled, which means that they can connect via 3G, 4G, or 5G mobile networks. However, some subscription plans only include access to voice and SMS services, and limitations of network coverage and the cost of cellular data remains a barrier to access. As such, the share of broadband enabled mobile connections is not an accurate proxy for estimated mobile internet use. In fact, DataReportal estimates internet penetration in Vanuatu accounts for just 46% of the total population in 2025.⁷

This survey shows that there is a high level of access to the internet and smartphones in Vanuatu, but less frequent use. Furthermore, access to, and use of, traditional media (radio, television, and newspapers) is very limited.

Overall media access and use among mobile phone users in Vanuatu⁸



*While multiple responses were permitted for the question (i.e. access both at home and elsewhere), this chart presents responses as a single response – i.e. access at home, elsewhere only, or no access.

Q. And do you have access to these media devices in your home or elsewhere? Base n=1,073

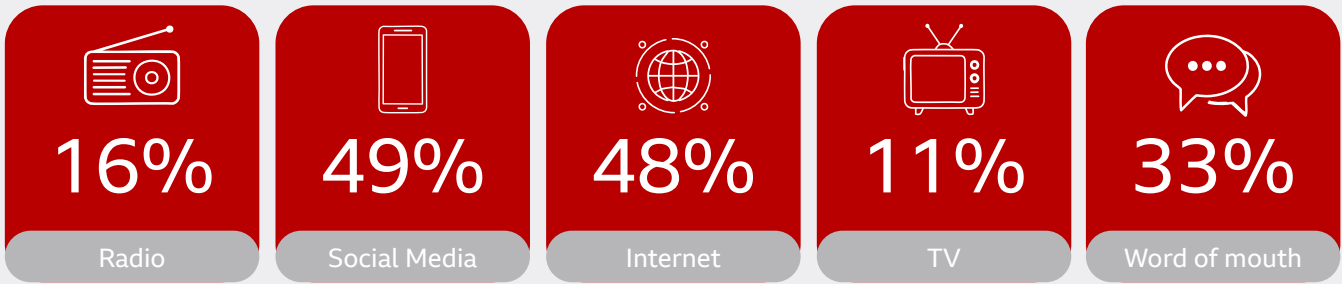
⁶According to Data Reportal's Digital 2025 - Vanuatu report. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-vanuatu?rq=vanuatu%202025>. [Accessed 23/09/2025]. Data on mobile phone ownership and Internet connections may overcount coverage among some groups while undercounting coverage among others – statistics refer to the number of connections without considering multiple device ownership amongst individual users. Incidence is also calculated amongst the entire population, rather than just the population of young adults and adults. This is important to consider in the Vanuatu context, as an estimated 33.4% of the population is aged under 12 years and are not likely to own a mobile phone.

⁷DataReportal (2025). Digital 2025 – Vanuatu. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-vanuatu?rq=vanuatu%202025>. [Accessed 23/09/2025].

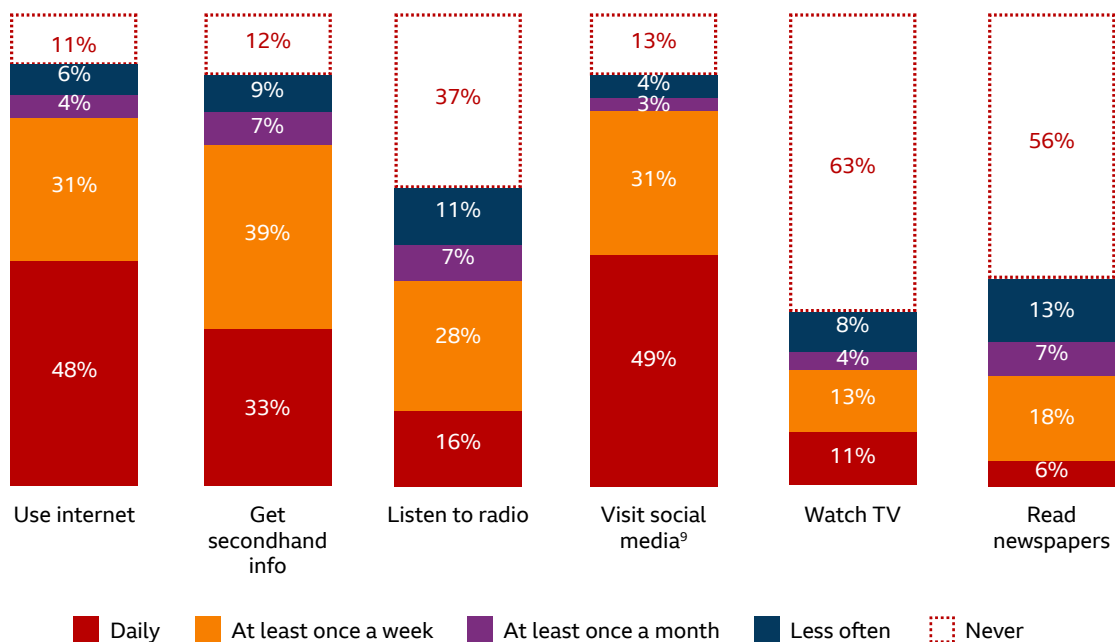
⁸Findings are representative of a sub-set of the Vanuatu population – those who have access to a mobile phone

Daily media use

Q: How frequently do you do the following, if at all? Base: n=1013



Frequency of media use among mobile phone users in Vanuatu



Base: n=1,073

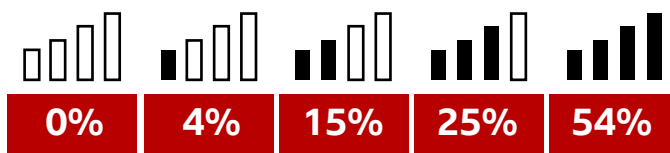
Smartphone ownership is widespread in Vanuatu, despite some disparity in internet connectivity

Most people have access to a smartphone at home (89%), either owning it personally or sharing it within the household. However, connectivity is lower, with just 82% reporting internet access at home. This discrepancy is a reflection of high levels of smartphone ownership even in remote locations with limited or unreliable network connectivity. Just 54% of respondents reported having strong network coverage at home (four bars), while 19% reported having two bars or less. Audiences report accessing the internet via their phone when they go to town or travel to areas with better coverage, and that signal is regularly disrupted by bad weather.

⁹Notably, more people report visiting social media daily, than report using the internet daily, despite use of the internet being a prerequisite for visiting social media. It is likely some respondents interpreted the question around use of the internet as being activities other than visiting social media, while others, particularly those with limited online experience, may consider the two activities to be separate.

Network coverage at home

Urban dwellers and those living in Shefa are significantly more likely to have a strong (4 bar) mobile connection



Q. How many network bars do you have on your phone where you live? Base: n=1,062 (respondents who have access to a mobile phone or smartphone)



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Both Digicel and Vodafone have inconsistent network connectivity, so I have to walk long distances to find secure network to receive and read news/information.

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– Female, 18-35, Bengaren Gaua, Torba

Age and education are the biggest determinants of access to internet, with younger (aged 18-24 years) and higher educated audiences significantly more likely to have access. Conversely, those aged over 45 years are significantly less likely to have internet access.

Limited frequency of internet use highlights inequities in accessibility of digital media

Despite widespread access to enabled devices, less than half of survey respondents reported using the internet (48%) and/or visiting social media (49%) daily, while for around a third (31%), use was on a weekly basis. Inequity in use of internet and social media is evident across demographic groups, with daily access significantly higher among younger (aged 18–24), urban, highly educated, employed audiences, as well as students. Conversely, audiences who are older (aged over 45 years), rural, less educated, living in Malampa province, who are householders, retired, or work as a farmer or fisherman, are significantly less likely to be frequent users of the internet.

Audiences across all locations report the cost of credit being a barrier to frequent use of the internet. In addition to affordability barriers, those who live far from main centres like Port Vila and Luganville, also face practical challenges such as unstable or limited network connectivity (particularly in poor weather) and difficulties in accessing mobile credit. For example, audiences noted that local shops run out of stock and/or that they need to travel outside the community to purchase phone credit. Bad weather can also limit access to power for those reliant on solar sources to charge phones.

“ My challenge in regard to [using my] phone is the same. Credit cost is not going down, credit is expensive. I save up to be able to buy credit to be able to go online to get information.

– Male, 18-35 years, Port Vila, Shefa

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Despite barriers to access, digital media has eclipsed the use of traditional media, especially among those living in remote areas

Despite challenges to consistent access to digital media, it has nonetheless eclipsed the use of traditional media in Vanuatu. Just less than one in four respondents (24%) report watching TV or reading newspapers at least weekly, with just 11% and 6% (respectively) reporting daily use of each. In fact, well over half of survey respondents report having no access to a television (67%) or newspapers (61%) at all. Furthermore, access and use of television and newspapers is limited to more educated, urban populations. Newspapers are predominantly urban-centric, with practical limitations on distribution outside of major towns. Newspaper use is also significantly higher among those with a university level of education and those who are employed. Males often report accessing newspapers outside of the home, likely at places of work or nakamais (meeting houses). Similarly, regular television viewership is significantly higher among male, urban, highly educated, employed audiences, and students. Conversely, people least likely to have access to television include women, those living in rural areas and remote provinces, those who have no higher than a primary education, those who are unemployed, householders, or farmers/fishermen.

Radio listenership is slightly higher, with 16% reporting daily use, and a further 28% listening weekly. However, just less than half of respondents either rarely (11%) or never (37%) listen to the radio (either via radio set or on their phone). Notably, just 38% of respondents have a radio set at home and 52% report having no access to a radio set at all.

Reliance on radio in Vanuatu has evolved, rather than disappeared

Once the most relied upon medium in Vanuatu, radio's dominance is being eroded by expanding mobile and internet access. However, radio still retains the broadest reach among traditional media and remains an important and trusted element of the media landscape in Vanuatu. Especially in rural areas of Torba, Meriq Island and Lembot, radio is highly trusted and sometimes the only accessible formal source of news and information. Radio Vanuatu is consistently cited by audiences as the station they listen to and trust.

“ We listen to Radio Vanuatu through the phone when we have credit, if not we can only wait to receive news from family members or relatives when they call us from the mainland (Gaua) or other islands.

– Female, 55+, Rural, Meriq, Torba

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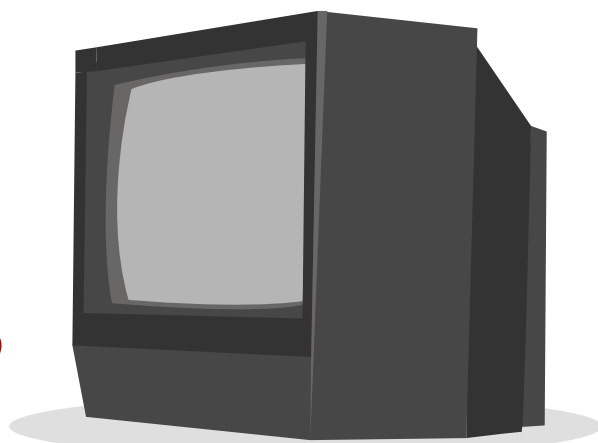
Smartphones are a more affordable ‘all in one’ option for Ni-Vanuatu

A major factor in the prevalence of digital media and the inequity of access to traditional media, is affordability. Compared to a television set, mobile phones are generally more accessible and affordable for a wider segment of the population. Furthermore, the lines between traditional and digital media are blurring, with audiences increasingly accessing television, newspaper, and radio content online. While they may not have a television or radio set in their home, Ni-Vanuatu still turn to trusted and familiar media outlets, whether by watching digital TV channels or streaming radio via their smartphone, as well as accessing news online via the Daily Post and other international news websites. Listening to the radio via a mobile phone was commonly mentioned among audiences (even those living in urban areas).

“ I go on Facebook [...] at lunch to access the VBTC page to get the latest news update and also at 7pm. Otherwise we just scroll on Facebook and YouTube and follow any link that pops up and is interesting. I go on VBTC news on my phone. I now have both TV and radio on my phone.

– Male, 36-54, Urban, Port Vila, Shefa

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Many people remain effectively ‘media dark’ and rely on word-of-mouth news and information

Among audiences living in remote areas of Vanuatu, some remain either wholly or intermittently reliant on family, friends and community networks for news and information. Even those with access to a radio or a smartphone describe often being unable to use these devices for long periods of time, due to poor network coverage, being unable to afford or access credit, inability to charge batteries, or damage to devices.



“ The challenge I have with my radio is when I don’t go to [Port] Vila and my radio is flat - I will be in the dark. I only access radio and when the battery is flat, I will need to go to Vila to get the battery. Sometimes I can be without the radio for 1 month.

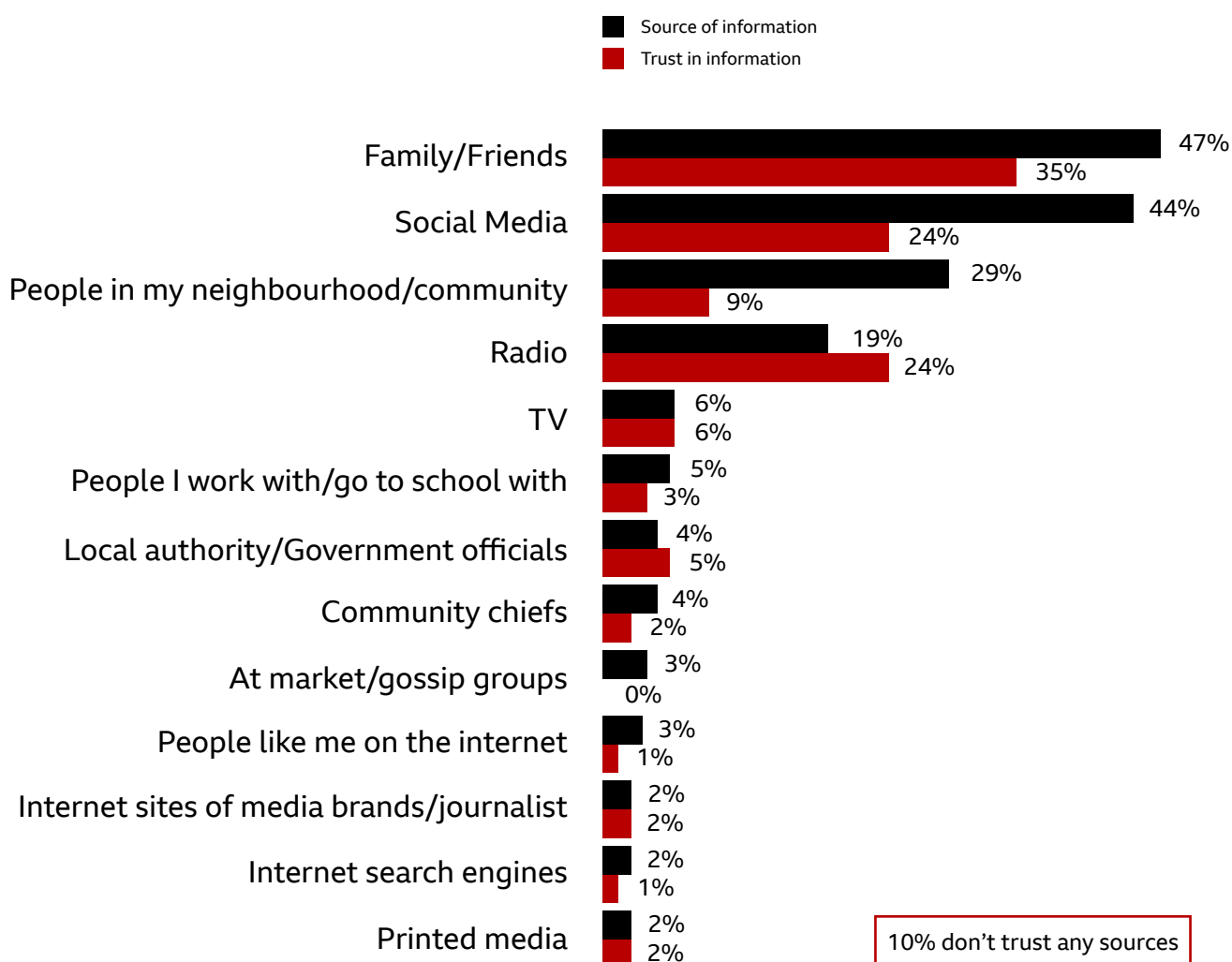
– Male, 55+, Rural, Emau

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3. How are Ni-Vanuatu consuming and sharing news and information?

Accessibility to media sources is the primary influencing factor in the way people consume news and information in Vanuatu. With the widespread adoption of smartphones, digital media is now the primary 'formal' source of news and information, albeit with inconsistencies and inequities in accessibility across the country. Word of mouth networks are a fundamental aspect of news consumption for all Ni-Vanuatu, across the spectrum of media users. Radio, television and newspapers are less utilised in their traditional form but retain a role as the bedrock of trusted news, particularly in urban areas, and content is increasingly accessed online.

Sources of trusted information



Q. Where or who do you usually go to find information about the issues? Base: n=1,073

Q. Among the sources you have mentioned, which ones do you trust? Base: n=970
(respondents who mention a source)

The way people consume news and information varies significantly depending on where they live

For inhabitants of major towns like Port Vila and Luganville, consumption of news and information is integrated into the daily routine, particularly via digital media on personal smartphones, as well as (though to a lesser extent) through television, radio and print newspapers. Media savvy audiences mention layering their news content by listening to Radio Vanuatu, reading the Daily Post online, accessing the VBTC Facebook page, and visiting ABC and BBC websites for international news. Among audiences who watched television, viewership was often part of a regular routine, for example tuning in to watch the 6am and/or 7pm news broadcast. Those living outside of urban areas also report heavy reliance on digital media (especially social media) as their source of news and information, however access is less routine and inconsistent, dependent on (often unreliable) network availability and access to and affordability of phone credit, and is prone to disruption by weather and power outages.

Informal interpersonal sharing of news and information is key, even among those with high levels of media consumption

Consistent for all respondents, no matter where they live or their level of media access, people share information with others. Friends and family are the most frequently cited (47%), and most trusted (35%), source of news and information. Neighbours and people in the community, as well as community leaders, such as community chiefs or church pastors, are also used to fill gaps, clarify, or confirm information. In outer provinces, where access to TV and newspapers is almost non-existent and network coverage is limited, people often depend on visitors from other towns or boat captains to stay informed about events outside of their community.

“ Sometimes when the network is down for a long time, we can go to the community chief or church pastor because they have their own ways of receiving current information and news. ”

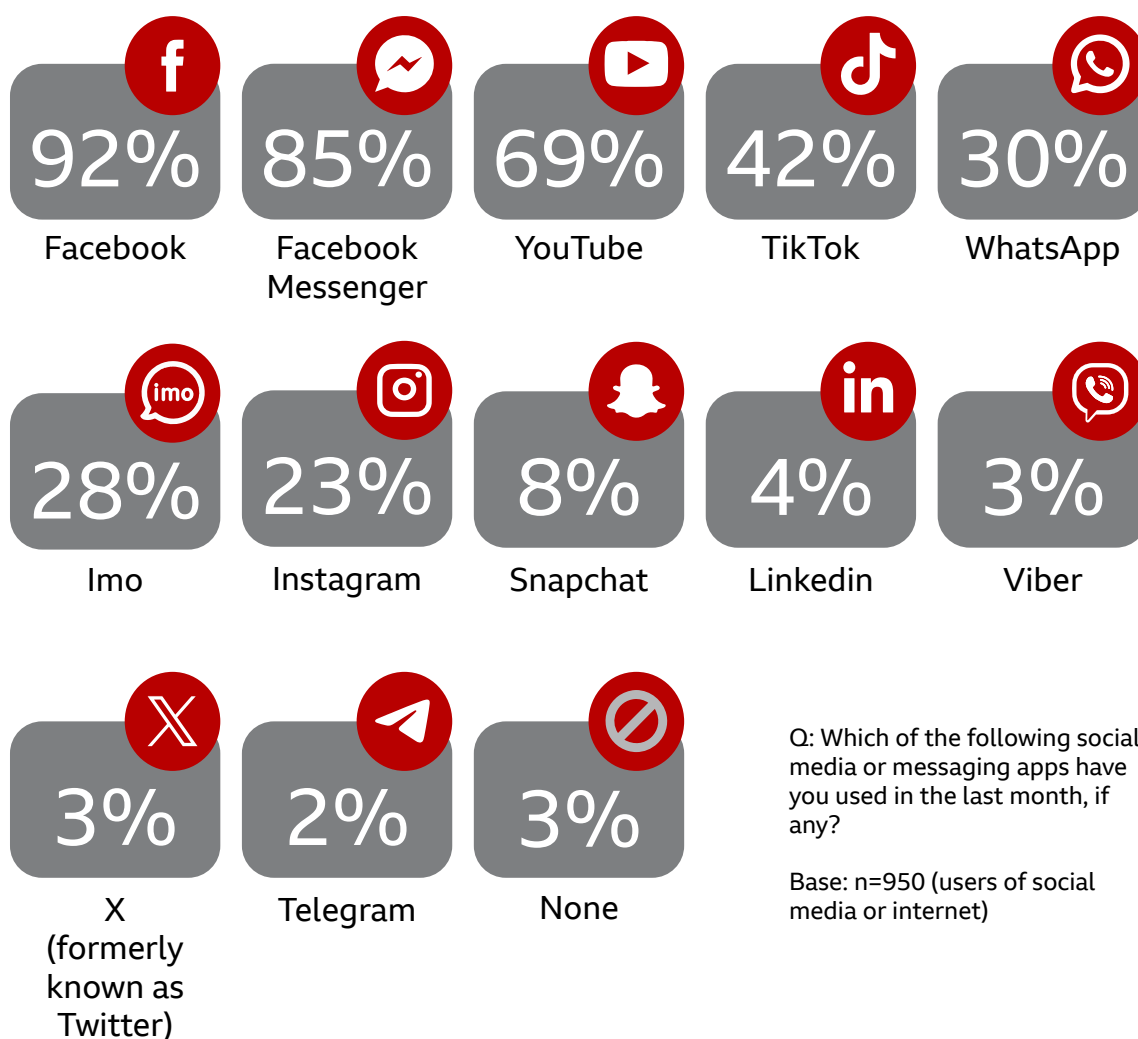
– Female, 36-54, Rural, Lembot Gaua, Torba



Social media is a highly utilised, but not well trusted, source of news and information

Accessing social media is the most cited reason for going online among Ni-Vanuatu, with 77% of respondents who use the internet reporting this. Facebook is the most used social media platform, visited by 92% of respondents who used the internet, followed by Facebook Messenger (85%) and YouTube (69%). While older audiences predominantly use Facebook as their main (often, only) social media platform, younger audiences reported using a range of other social media platforms as well, most notably including TikTok and Instagram.

Use of platforms in last month:



Beyond connecting and communicating with others, audiences described Facebook as providing easy to access, “instant”, up-to-date news and information across a broad range of subjects. While some audiences specifically sought out Facebook pages of known and trusted media outlets (most commonly VBTC, TBV and Daily Post), others were less cognisant of who or what the original source of the news or information was, other than generally referring to ‘Facebook’ as the source.

“ I get my information and news on Facebook because it is accessible and easy to go into it and available at any time in the places where I am. And every time [there is] a lot of information, up to date. I get [this] from Facebook, and it comes from registered organisations that I know are recognised under the Republic of Vanuatu. ”

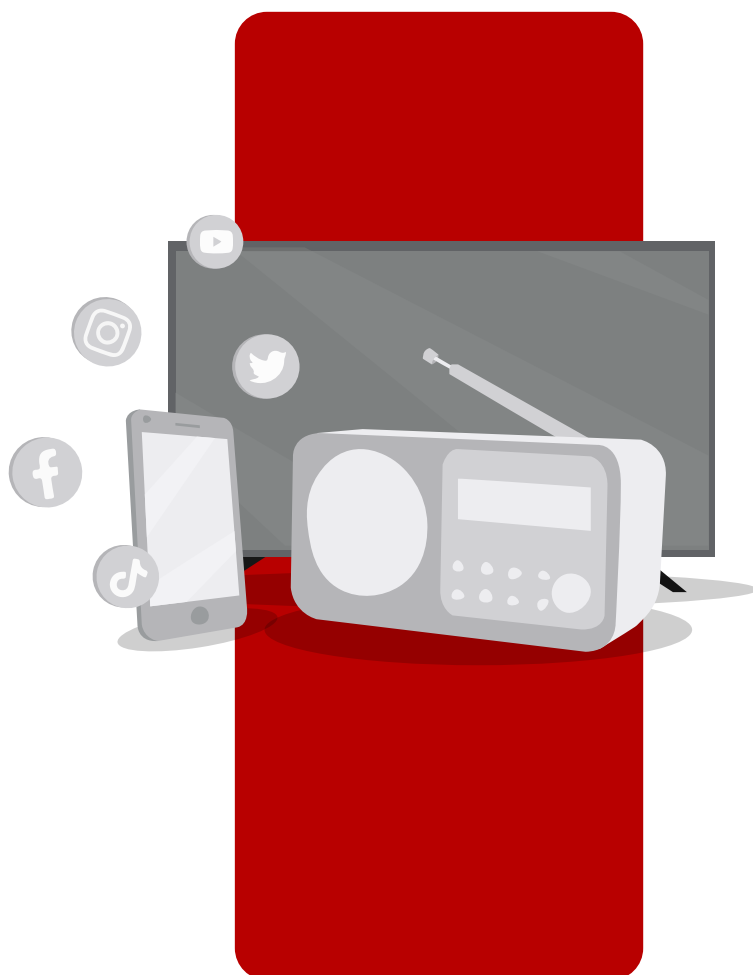
– Male, 18-35, Rural Sanma



While respondents are highly reliant on social media as a source of news and information, many are aware of the prevalence of fake or inaccurate news disseminated on social media and, as such, are much less inclined to trust it. While 44% of respondents spontaneously cited social media as a key source of news and information, just 24% felt it was trustworthy.

Trust in news and media sources is primarily shaped by perceptions of institutional credibility, accessibility, and clarity

National media outlets like VBTC, Radio Vanuatu, and the Daily Post are the most trusted sources among audiences, due to their perceived accuracy, long-standing presence, and (for VBTC and Radio Vanuatu) affiliation with the government. In areas such as Meriq Island, Bengaren, and Lembot, radio is the most trusted and often the only accessible source, supplemented with sporadic access to digital media, while community leaders and word of mouth play a crucial role. Among the more media savvy audiences, trust is linked to journalistic standards, timely updates, and use of international sources, like the BBC and ABC. For some, trust in information is also influenced by the use of simple and understandable language.



4. What do Ni-Vanuatu think of the media?

There is high demand for news and information among Ni-Vanuatu. Two in three survey respondents (67%) say they are 'very interested' in news, while just 5% expressed disinterest. News and current affairs was the most cited content consumed in the past week (reported by 48% of respondents), followed by politics and governance (31%), entertainment (16%), and sports (14%).

Interest in News

Very interested



Not interested



Q. How interested are you in news? Base: n=1,073

Demand for news is not well met, with widespread dissatisfaction around repetition and lack of fresh, inclusive content

Audiences report disengaging with news when it is repetitive, too long, uses complicated language, or lacks visual appeal. Repetition of news was a particular frustration among audiences, who stated that the same news stories were often reported over many days. Audiences felt there is insufficient variety and depth in local reporting, with only brief local updates and more focus on international news and sports, often leaving stories incomplete. The need for journalists to visit and report from remote areas in Vanuatu was consistently cited by audiences. They also note a lack of investigative journalism in Vanuatu, saying that journalists needed training to provide robust coverage of important issues. Audiences cited distrust in coverage of certain news topics, such as war and (at the time) COVID 19, and felt there is a lack of balance or full context in news stories.

VBTC is a respected and trusted source of information among respondents, due to its position as a long-established institution. However, audiences note that news is often repeated, can be slow – particularly compared to alternative sources online – and lacks freshness, variety and adequate audience representation. In contrast, audiences rely on VBTC social media pages for the most up-to-date information, including live coverage.

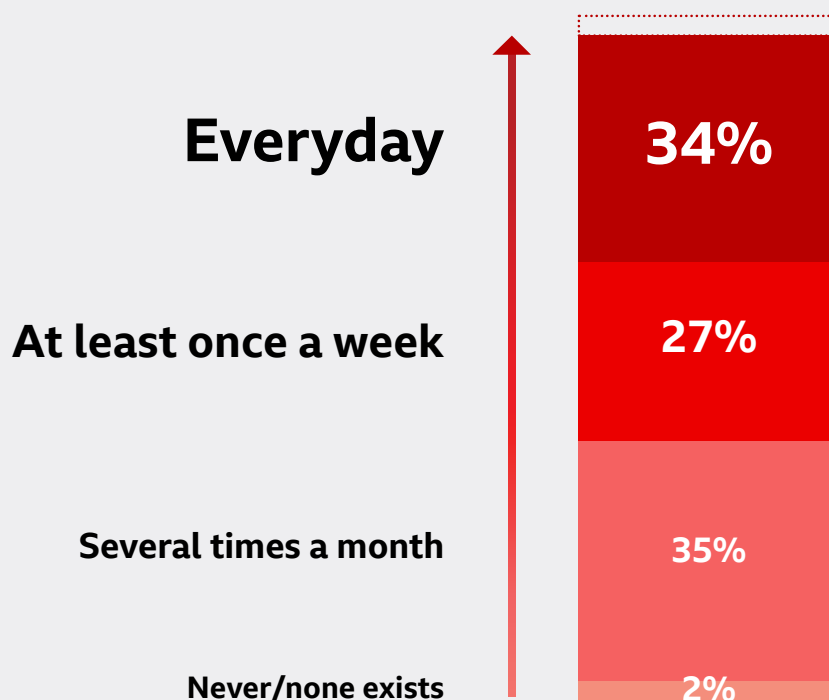


“ When I listen to the radio, it gives out information slow, or sometimes TV too is slow - but when we go to Facebook, it is fast. And sometimes information from Facebook [...] is accurate. We hear sometimes it gives false information, but from Facebook it is accurate and fast on what is happening. ”

– Male, 36-54, Urban, Seaside Paama

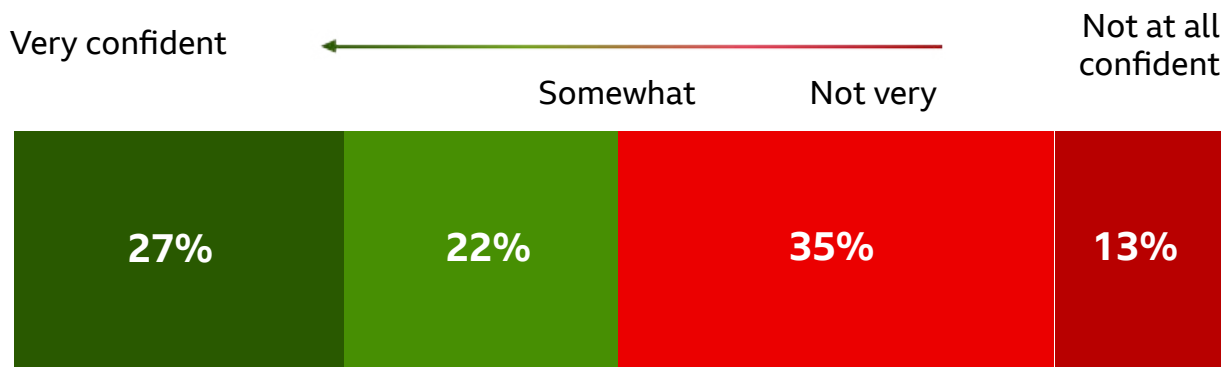
Ni-Vanuatu recognize that false information exists but many lack the skills or resources to verify what is true. Almost all survey respondents claimed to have experienced false or misleading information to some degree, with 34% reporting exposure every day. Respondents who live in Shefa, are highly educated, and/or are employed are significantly more likely to believe they are exposed to false information daily. Just less than half of respondents (49%) expressed some level of confidence that they can identify false or misleading information when they see it, with around one in four respondents (27%) saying they are very confident. Confidence is highest among males, those living in urban areas and/or Shefa province, those who are employed, and students. Notably, women, those who live rurally, and those are unemployed or are householders, are the most prone to false information, citing low confidence in their ability to identify it.

Perceived Frequency of Exposure to False and Misleading Information



Q. How frequently do you come across information that you think is false or misleading? Base: n=1,073

Claimed Confidence in Own Ability to Identify False Information



Q. How confident are you in your ability to identify false or misleading information? Base: n=1,073

Those who believed they encountered false or misleading information say they primarily experience this via social media platforms, often attributing it to Facebook (the most commonly used platform), as well as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook Reels. Others cite friends and community networks as common sources of misinformation. False information was generally described by respondents as harmful targeted gossip or rumour that circulated online or in the community, damaging reputations and relationships, and causing stress. False or unrealised emergency warnings, for example around cyclones, tsunamis, and earthquakes, were also cited as examples of false information that disrupted public safety.

“

Facebook is the platform where this happens a lot. Many people, when they are not happy about something, will go on Facebook to post about it.

— Woman, 35-54, Rural Shefaln

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In urban areas, like Port Vila and Luganville, audiences report cross-checking information across multiple sources (predominantly online) such as social media, VBTC Facebook pages, and international news websites, reflecting a growing digital literacy and awareness of, and scepticism around, misinformation. However, outside of these areas, audiences displayed limited awareness of ways in which information can be cross-checked or verified. The most commonly cited way to verify information was to check with community leaders, like chiefs or pastors. For audiences in remote areas with limited media options, the concept of ‘trust’ in media and dealing with false information engendered limited discussion. As they are reliant on the limited sources available to them, they don’t have the capacity or inclination to cross-check or verify information.

“

I trust the radio because I don’t receive the Daily Post or access television.

— Male, 55+, Lembot Gaua, Torba

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5. What are the barriers to people being informed?

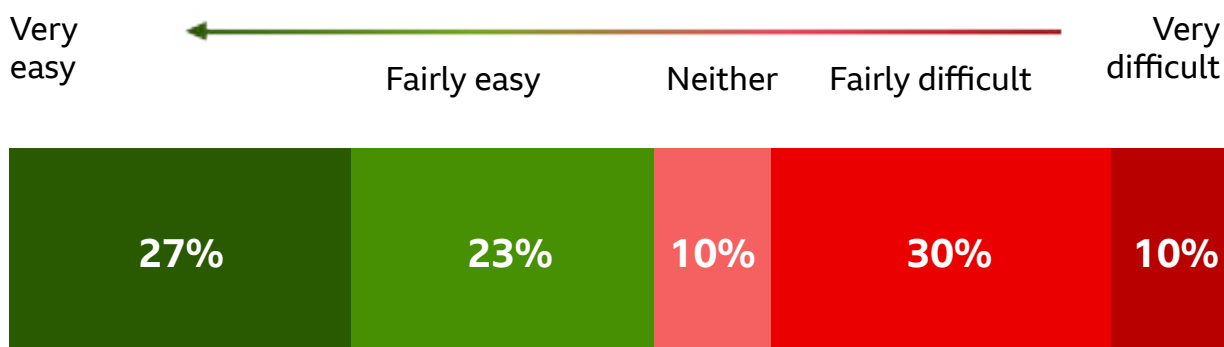
Inequitable access to media and limited localised content leaves some of the most vulnerable Ni-Vanuatu lacking relevant news and information. Two in five Ni-Vanuatu find it either fairly difficult (30%) or very difficult (10%) to find information – a challenge that disproportionately impacts rural, less educated, unemployed audiences, and those who are farmers or fisherman. This reflects both inequitable access to media and the perceived lack of coverage of local issues outside of main centres.

“...to get news from the islands, there is nothing. Yes, they should put radio people in Torba, Malampa... to report news to us, so we know what is happening around Vanuatu.”

– Male, 36-54, Urban, Seaside Paama



Perceived Ease of Finding Information



Q. How easy or difficult is it for you to find information about issues that matter to you? Base: n=1,073

Language is not a barrier to accessing information, but more local languages would be welcomed

Most respondents (96%) say that they receive news and information in their preferred language. However, qualitative discussions highlighted preferences to have localised news delivered via radio in their own local language, and the use of clearer, more accessible language in the media overall, to ensure more equal access to news and information. Audiences also suggested that news should be available in all three national languages (Bislama, English, and French).

**Availability of News and Information
in Preferred Language**



Q. Do you get news and information from the media in your preferred language? n=1056



6. What do people want to see from the media?

Audiences want to see more local issues discussed in the media, highlighting community development

Audiences consistently voiced the need for more inclusive, timely, and relevant media coverage. There was a strong demand for greater coverage of issues related to community development, agriculture (including farming and gardening), climate change, entrepreneurship, and youth, as well as stories that reflect everyday challenges such as inflation, inadequate infrastructure, and gaps in service delivery. Audiences also underlined the vital role of media in preserving traditional knowledge, promoting education, and fostering moral and religious values within communities.

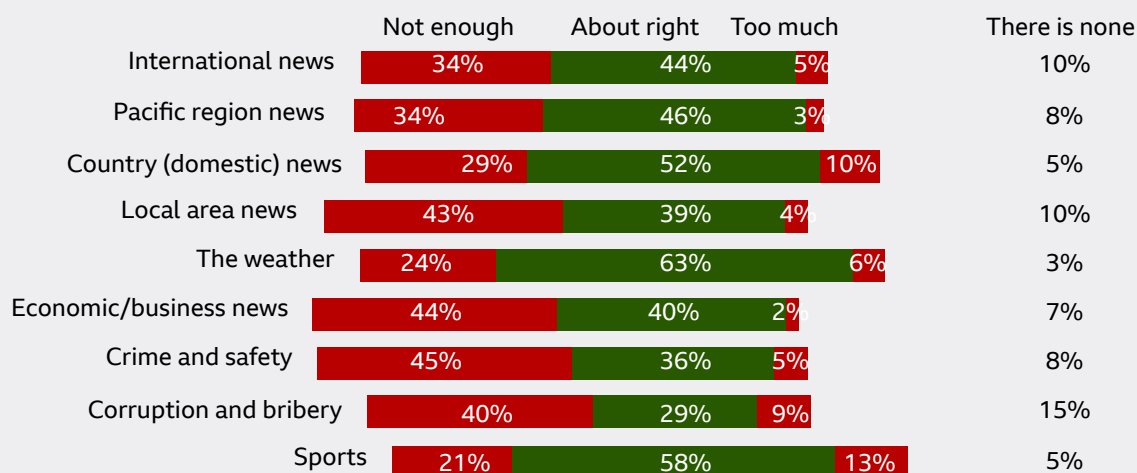
“ I would like the media to focus more on inflation and poor infrastructure - high prices on transport for people who produce copra and need to deliver this to seaports to be collected by interisland boats, bad roads, transport costs are too high.

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- Female, 36-54, Lembot Gaua, Torba



Perception of the Adequacy of News and Current Affairs Content



Q. Thinking generally about the news and current affairs available in the country, do you think that there is too much, about the right amount, not enough, or no media coverage about...? Base: n=1056 (media users)

Gaps in news and current affairs content identified by survey participants most notably included coverage of local area news, crime and safety, economic and business news, and corruption and bribery.

Audiences described how they would design radio shows based on their community's unique priorities, shaped by gender, location, and lived experiences. Female participants emphasised content that highlighted empowerment, inclusion, and resilience, focusing on leadership, healthcare, disability, violence prevention, and sustainable livelihoods. Male participants highlighted youth development, employment, and local economic growth, particularly in urban areas like Port Vila. Climate change and disaster preparedness were common concerns across all groups, while rural participants, especially in places like Hog Harbour and Ngurua Village, prioritised practical content on farming, fishing, markets, and governance. Overall, there was a strong demand for informative, educational, and inclusive media that amplifies underserved voices and supports community development.

Calls for greater innovation in how news is broadcast

Overall, audiences want engaging, interactive, visually supported, and easy-to-understand content. Calls for better quality journalism and more in-depth, investigative reporting, as well as content representative of, and relevant to, all Ni-Vanuatu, including those living in remote areas. Audiences also called for more opportunities for people to voice their concerns in the media.

“ I don't see the media outlets do investigative journalism. The news today is repeated tomorrow and even the day after tomorrow. ”

- Man, 55+, Urban Shefa

Underpinning this, audiences called for greater investment in infrastructure that will ensure equitable access to media, news and information for all Ni-Vanuatu.

“ 45 years of independence means that we should be mature in areas of our development, including communications. This will ensure that we have the same access to everything, receive the same information regardless of where we are...we should be in the same boat. ”

- Male, 18-34, Urban Shefa

7. Recommendations

Further investment in digital infrastructure to enable equitable access to information. A concerted effort is needed to close the digital divide that disproportionately affects remote, rural communities. Expanding reliable access to the internet and supporting infrastructure is essential to bring affordable and reliable digital connectivity to underserved areas. To overcome significant barriers like the high cost of credit and inconsistent network coverage, partnerships with mobile providers should be explored to reduce data costs and improve mobile network accessibility. A resilient and inclusive internet strategy that combines technologies like fiber cables, satellites, and cellular networks is also essential, especially to connect remote islands and provide a backup during natural disasters.

Targeted training to prioritise quality content and engender public trust and engagement. There is a clear need for greater journalistic professionalism, particularly in investigative reporting. Providing targeted training to help journalists produce in-depth, high-quality reports will go beyond surface-level information and help build public trust. There is a clear need for content strategies that address audience need both on traditional as well as digital media. This involves diversifying content based on audience needs and feedback, building a more vibrant and responsive media ecosystem.

Media literacy education to help audiences discern fact from misinformation is critical. With the rise of social media, it is critical to equip the population with the skills to identify and combat information disorder (mis/disinformation). Public awareness campaigns and workshops in communities involving village chiefs, religious leaders and schools should focus on providing practical tools to help people critically evaluate information and use social media responsibly. This can also be supported by developing educational videos that model best practices in digital skills and can be shared widely.

Increase availability of localised news and information. To address the demand for more relevant news, media outlets should prioritise content that reflects the lives of Ni-Vanuatu. This includes creating or placing journalists and reporters in different provinces to ensure comprehensive coverage of local issues like community development, economic challenges, crime, and corruption. By featuring inspiring stories and positive content on topics such as agriculture, fisheries, climate change, and entrepreneurship, media can better serve community interests and needs.

Support for indigenous content creators: Support the scale up of local media specialising in indigenous content to help preserve traditional storytelling values, which are a central part of Vanuatu's culture and history. Include content in local languages.

Seek opportunities to reach underserved populations and those with limited or no formal media access. While digital media is growing, a multi-faceted approach is needed to ensure equitable access to information. Radio remains a highly trusted and often the only accessible formal source of news for many in remote areas. Therefore, it is crucial to leverage both traditional broadcasts and digital streaming of radio content to reach these underserved communities. Media and communication initiatives, including outreach activities, to reach and engage groups with limited media access. Partnerships with trusted community leaders, such as chiefs and pastors, should be established to serve as information hubs.

Acknowledgement

This research briefing was prepared thanks to funding from the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).



Supported by

