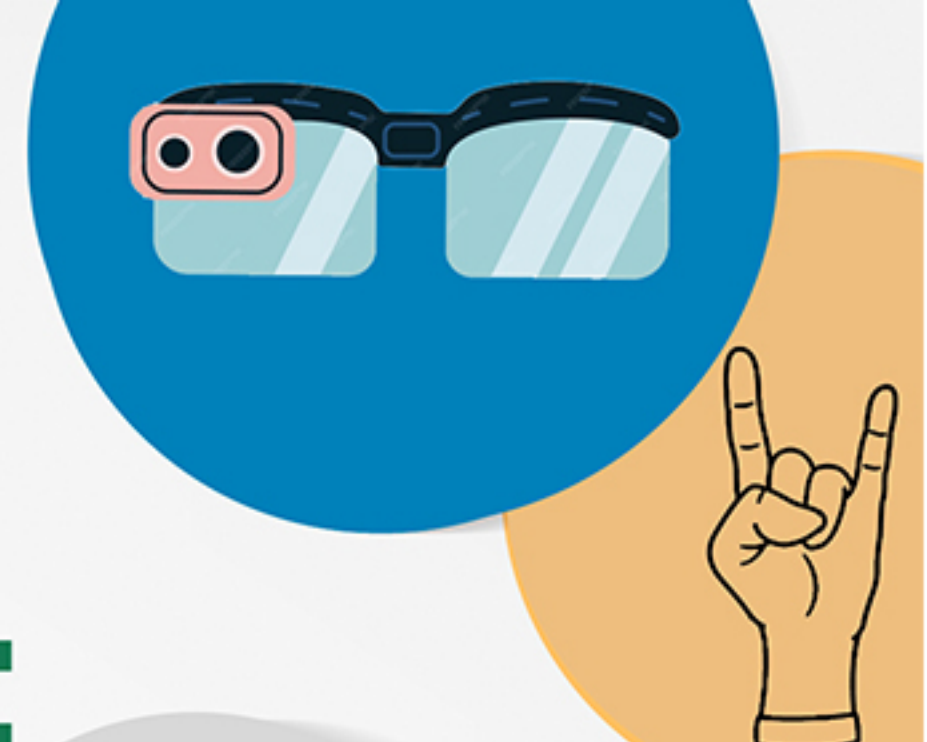
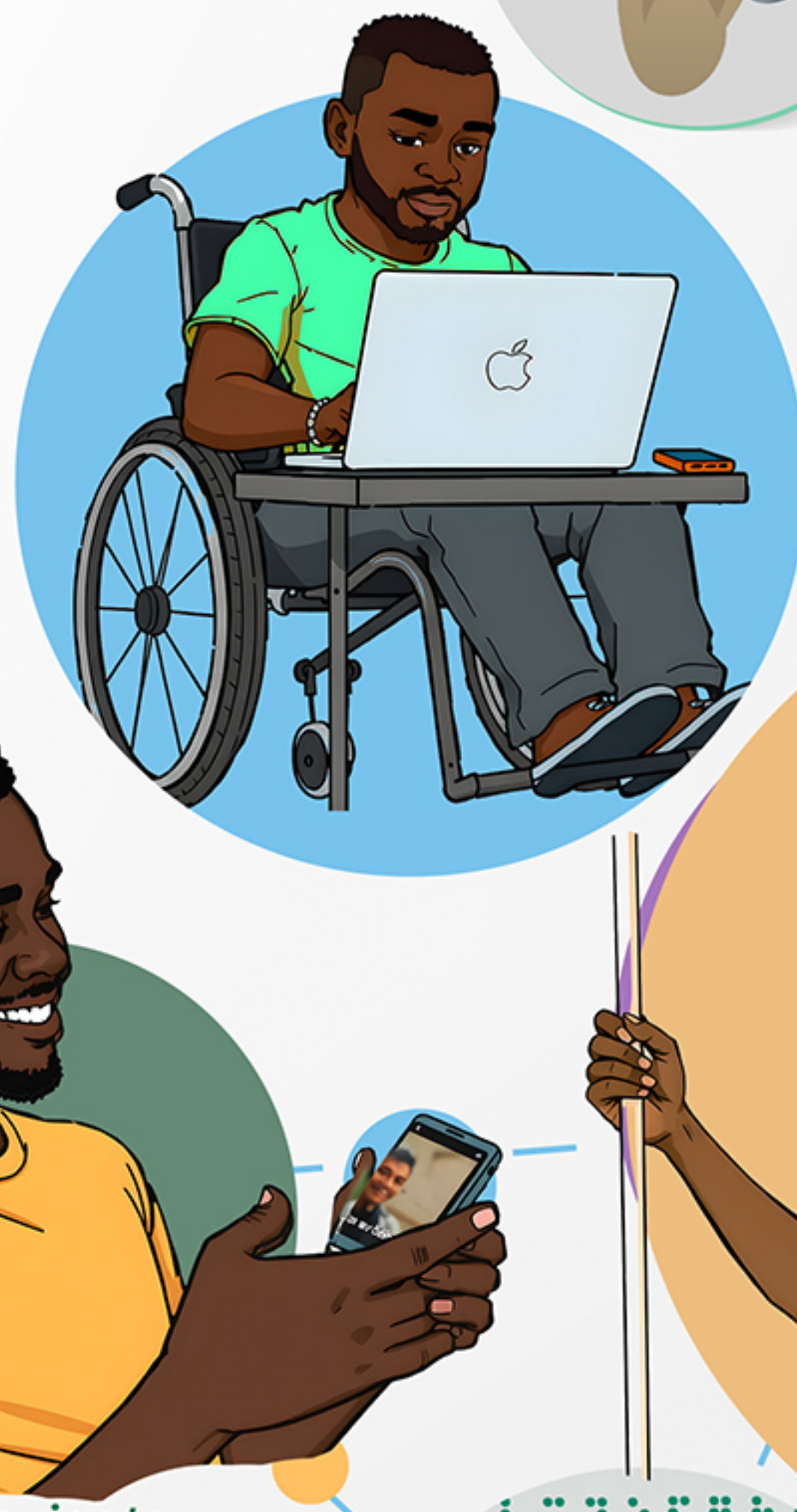
NEWS VERIFIER AFRICA

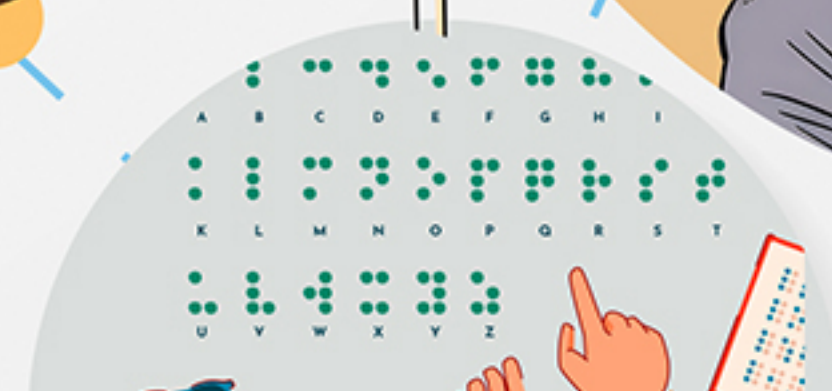
DIGITAL EXCLUSION AND MISINFORMATION: THE DOUBLE BURDEN ON PWDs

AUGUST, 2025





A Look at How PWDs Navigate Online Spaces Amidst Worsening Information Disorders



Media InnoTech Africa (MIT Africa)
MIT Africa is a social enterprise advancing inclusive and accessible media through technology. It addresses misinformation and information gaps that hinder civic participation, especially in vulnerable communities. By innovating tools and resources, it empowers local media, supports independent journalism, and promotes democratic engagement.

News Verifier Africa (NVA)
NVA is a fact-checking and media literacy platform combating misinformation across Africa. It verifies viral claims, debunks fake news, and educates the public to promote truth, accountability, and a well-informed society.

This brief is produced by Media InnoTech and the News Verifier Africa team

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Executive Summary

Misinformation is rampant and its effect on society is horrendous. But, for people living with disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria, who typically deal with falsehoods about the causes or consequences of their disability, misinformation is particularly harmful.

Information disorder around PWDs is a significant yet often overlooked issue. It takes many forms, from stereotypes and myths to deliberately false information shared online or through mainstream media. Navigating online spaces as a PWD layers another burden onto already complex everyday experiences. To understand the extent of information disorder effects on PWDs, Media InnoTech conducted a 2025 survey. The survey aims at identifying if PWDs are prone to misinformation and disinformation as they navigate online spaces and whether it impacts their everyday lives.

The survey was conducted online with a Google form between April 17 and June 17, 2025 and resulted in a total of 91 responses from 4 countries, 87 Nigerians and the rest were Zambians, Togolese and Beninese. 90 percent of the 91 respondents who took the survey said that they usually encountered misinformation on social media platforms while 41.8 percent said they have come across information that they later found to be false. The results show that PWDs are mildly prone to misinformation while navigating online spaces and require further media literacy to help them in identifying misinformation online.

Information disorder in society affects how PWDs are perceived, how they view themselves, and the support they receive. Tackling this issue requires urgent action through inclusive digital literacy programs and stronger, targeted policy responses that ensure no one is left behind.

Key Findings:

23% (Approximately 21 out of 91 respondents) reported encountering misleading or false information online or offline.

41.8% (38 respondents) said they encountered false or misleading information on a daily basis.

23.1% (21 respondents) use assistive tools or technologies to access or read information.

11.1% (10 respondents) feel confident in identifying false or misleading information.

14.3% (13 respondents) said misinformation has negatively affected their decisions or actions.

37.1% (33 respondents) indicated misinformation has damaged their relationships or trust in others.

27% (24 respondents) expressed interest in attending training on digital literacy and misinformation.

Introduction

No one is born perfect. Each of us has overt or covert imperfections that make us unique. However, 1 in 6 people worldwide[1] have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that substantially hinder them from active participation in society—some of these impairments are not even obvious at a glance. PWDs are impeded by a wide range of conditions, such as mobility limitations, visual or hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and mental health conditions.[2] Disability history reveals a legacy of institutional segregation and "ugly laws"[3,4] which has culminated into transformative legislation acknowledging inclusive rights across the globe.

A further look through history exposes how misinformation adds a dangerous layer to the marginalisation of PWDs, especially in African countries. From superstitions that label disability as a curse or punishment[5] to misleading content about the capabilities of PWDs, false narratives continue to fuel stigma and exclusion.[6] These misconceptions not only distort public understanding but also influence policy decisions, media portrayal, and everyday social interactions.[7] Access to accurate information remains a serious challenge for many PWDs. Physical accessibility issues[8]—such as the lack of sign language interpretation, screen-reader-unfriendly websites, or uncaptioned videos—mean vital health, education, or civic information is often out of reach. Hence, many PWDs have to rely on family or caregivers as their primary source of news, which increases the risk of second-hand misinformation.

To better understand the pervasiveness of the issue, Media Inno Tech conducted a survey targeting Nigerian PWDs across various digital platforms. The survey sought to uncover how often misinformation is encountered, the types of misinformation most prevalent, and how PWDs respond to or verify the content they see. The survey results not only provide first-hand insight into the digital information landscape for PWDs but also point toward the urgent need for inclusive strategies.

An Overview of PWDs and Misinformation in Africa

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) reported that PWDs make up approximately 1.3 billion of the world's population, with 80 percent living in the Global South.[9] Recent disability data from regular household surveys conducted in Botswana, Gabon, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe indicate that disability prevalence ranges from 7% to 15% of each country's population, with slightly higher rates observed in rural areas and among women.[10] In Nigeria, estimates vary between 25-35.1 million PWDs,[11] reflecting major challenges in measurement and under-reporting. Equally pressing is the wide range of disability types—physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental health impairments.[12]

The World Health Organisation Africa Region, WHO/AFRO, states that PWDs who are women, older adults, and individuals living in poverty are more likely to experience overlapping forms of disadvantage, including limited access to education, substandard housing, food insecurity, and inadequate water and sanitation.These structural inequalities not only deepen exclusion but also increase the risk of both infectious and non-communicable diseases among PWDs. Despite having greater health needs, many PWDs are systematically excluded from essential health services. Nearly half are unable to afford the care they require, and even when services are available, access remains limited. Data from four countries in the region reveal that only 26–55 percent of those in need receive medical rehabilitation while access to assistive technologies is even more constrained, with just 17–37 percent able to obtain devices such as wheelchairs, prostheses, and hearing aids.[13]

In 2018, the African Union and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights adopted a charter protecting the rights of PWDs in Africa but actual implementation remains uneven.[14] Across the continent, superstitious beliefs about curses, witchcraft, or demonic possession of PWDs still persist,[15] fuelling the stigmatisation, exclusion, discrimination and concealment of disabled people. In Togo, for instance, children with disabilities may be chained in prayer camps due to entrenched myths.[16]

Meanwhile, misinformation and disinformation have flourished alongside digital expansion in Africa. According to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, disinformation campaigns have nearly quadrupled since 2022, with 189 documented operations spanning elections, public health, and social issues. The continent has over 600 million internet users and 400 million active social media accounts, and countries like Nigeria and Kenya rank among the highest per capita for social media engagement.[17] Alarmingly, 84 percent of Africans now rely on social media as their primary news source,[18] increasing their exposure to misleading or manipulated content on a daily basis.

This information disorder also extends to content specifically about disability. Online, PWDs are frequently framed through traditional stigmatising tropes as punishment, curse, moral failings,[19] or a communicable condition.[20] These narratives don't just circulate in abstract; they directly fuel stigma,

shape policy blind spots, and reinforce exclusion in daily life. For PWDs navigating these digital spaces, misinformation becomes a lived barrier, compounding existing social and economic disadvantages.

As digital platforms increasingly shape how people consume news and interact with the world, PWDs are left to navigate an internet landscape riddled with harmful narratives and inaccessible content. Many rely on caregivers or family members to access information, individuals are not fallible and may themselves fall prey to misinformation. Understanding how PWDs experience and respond to misinformation is therefore crucial. The next section outlines the methodology adopted in the survey, designed to capture these experiences and guide actionable, inclusive policy responses.

Methodology of the survey

Study Aims

The survey was designed to explore how persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria experience, interact with, and are affected by misinformation. It seeks to understand the frequency, nature, and platforms through which PWDs encounter misinformation, the barriers they face in identifying or verifying false content, and the tools or support systems they use. The ultimate goal is to generate evidence-based insights that can inform inclusive policy recommendations and intervention strategies.

Study Approach

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach. A structured survey was distributed through online platforms and disability support networks, targeting individuals across various age groups, educational backgrounds, and disability types. The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions designed to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative experiences. Additionally, arrangements were made for key informant interviews and focus group discussions, facilitated through partnerships with national disability organisations, to further contextualise the survey results but this was never achieved due to time constraints.

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations and assumptions informed some of the findings and recommendations presented in the study.

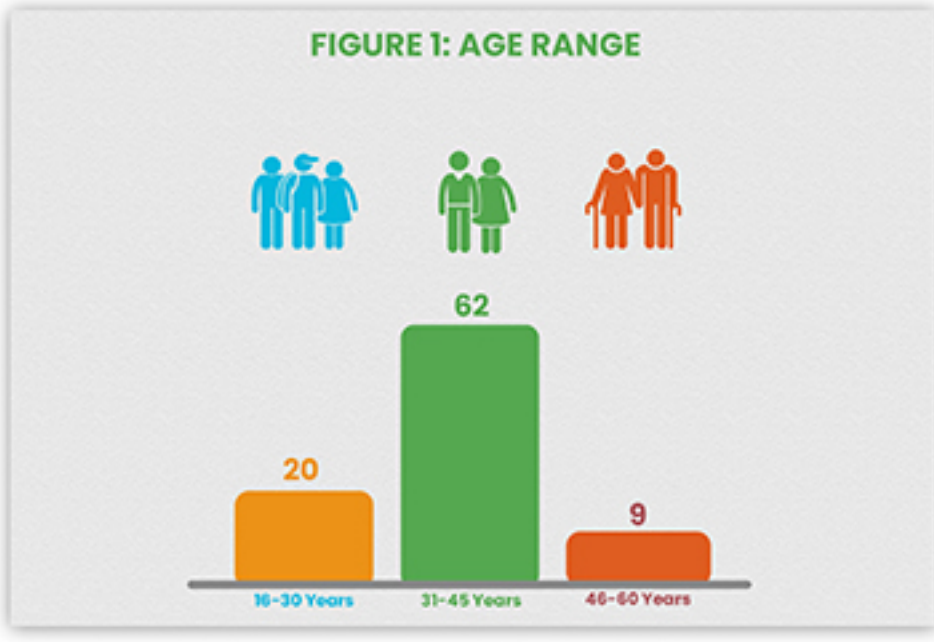
- The sample was limited to individuals with internet access and digital literacy, potentially excluding PWDs who are digitally marginalised.
- Most responses relied on self-reported perceptions and experiences, which may be influenced by recall bias or individual interpretation of misinformation.
- While efforts were made to reach a diverse demographic, the sample size and representation may not fully capture regional, gender, or socio-economic variations across Nigeria.
- The assumption was made that respondents understood key terms like "misinformation", "disinformation," and "assistive technologies," although their interpretations vary as seen in our findings.
- Due to time constraints, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with national disability organisations to further contextualise the study never happened, this would have added more depth and perception to the study.

Findings

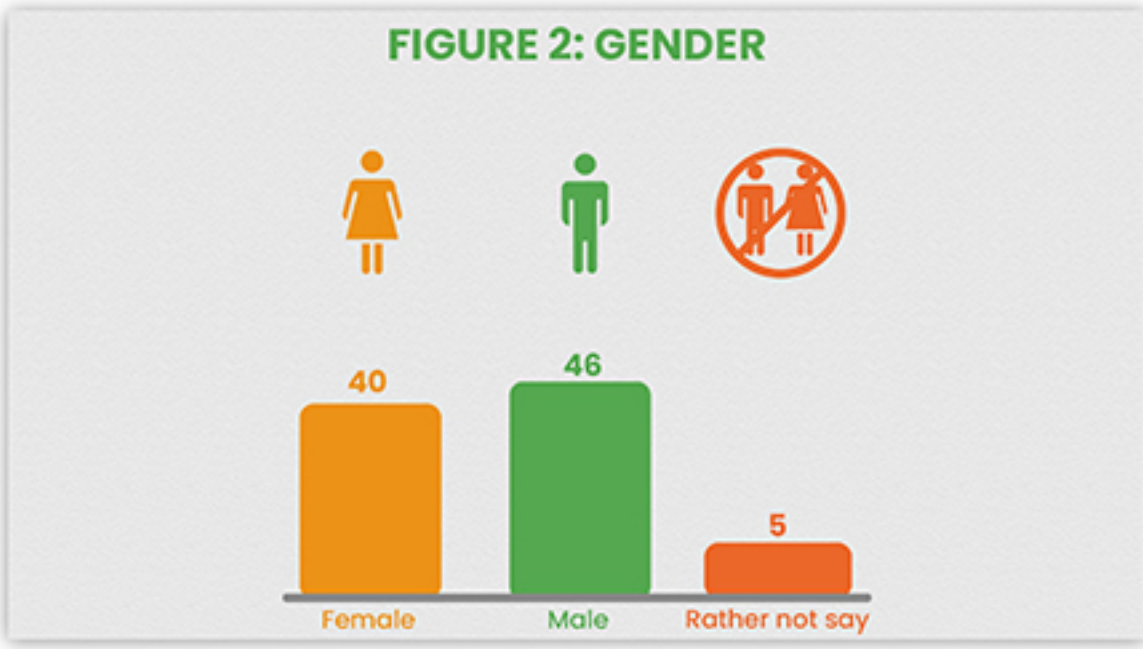
The 2025 survey was based on 28 responses from 91 respondents. Findings are presented based on six sections: respondent profile, access to information, exposure to misinformation, verification skill, impact of misinformation, solutions, support and feedback.

Respondents' Profile

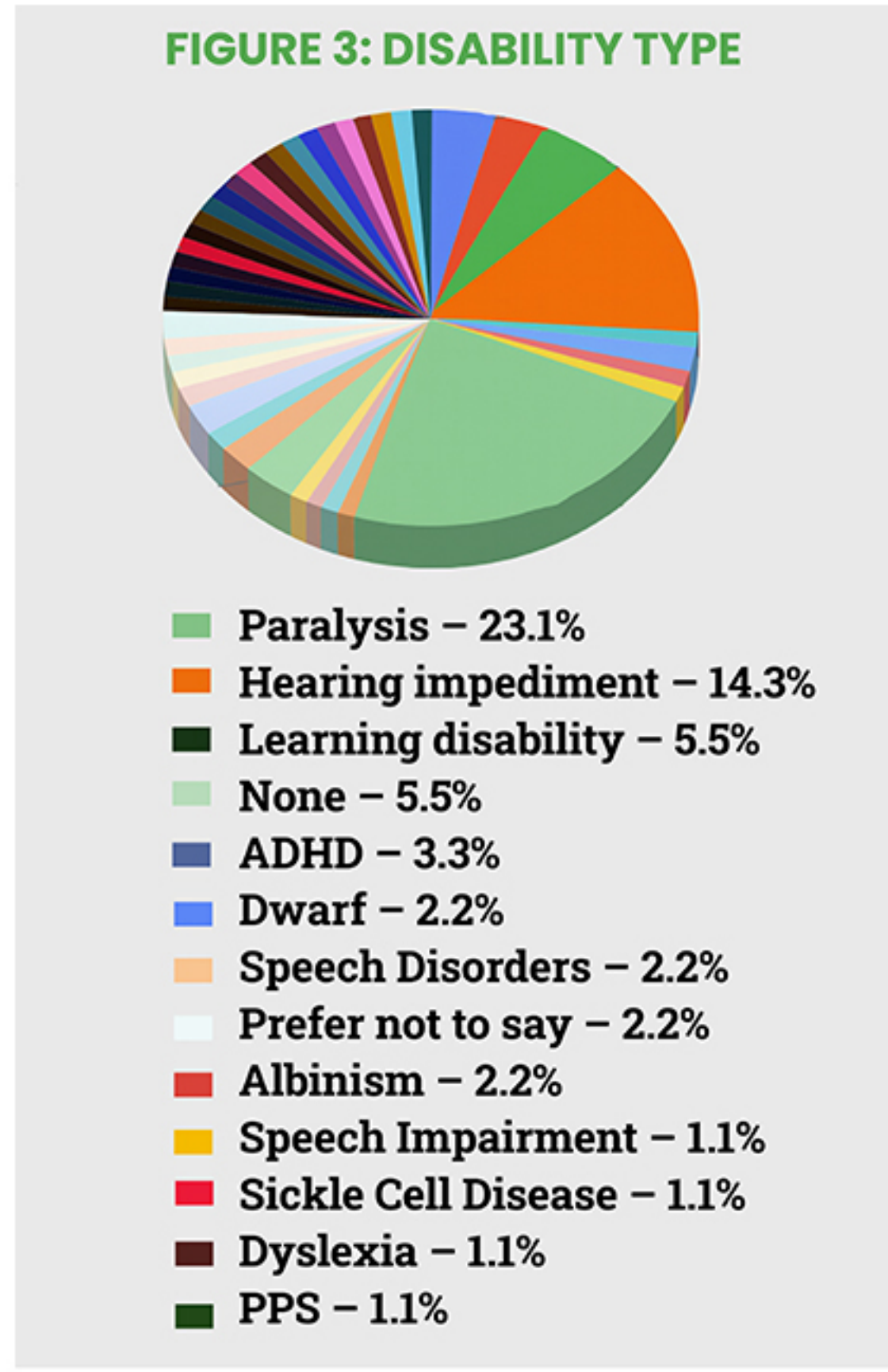
The 2025 survey gathered data on respondents' age, gender, disability type, level of education, employment status, and country of residence. These are summarised below.



A majority of respondents, 68.1 percent fall within the 31–45 age group, suggesting that middle-aged adults form the core of the sampled population. This is followed by 22 percent aged 16–30 years, indicating notable representation among younger PWDs. The 46–60 age group accounts for 9.9 percent of responses.

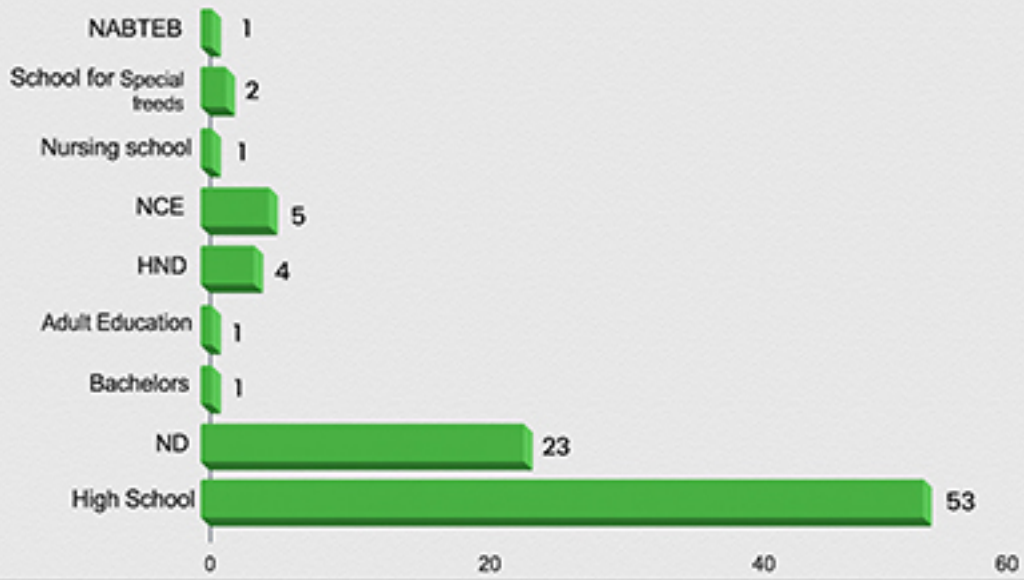


The survey shows a near-equal gender distribution, with 50.5 percent identifying as male and 44.0 percent as female. Additionally, 5.5 percent chose not to disclose their gender identity, indicating some preference for privacy or other considerations. For disability type, the most frequently reported disability is paralysis, cited by 23.1 percent of respondents, followed by hearing impediment at 14.3 percent. Other responses were highly varied, with small percentages across a wide range of conditions including learning disabilities (5.5 percent), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) [3.3 percent], albinism, speech disorders, dwarfism, and various chronic illnesses. This diversity points to a broad spectrum of physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychological disabilities among respondents.



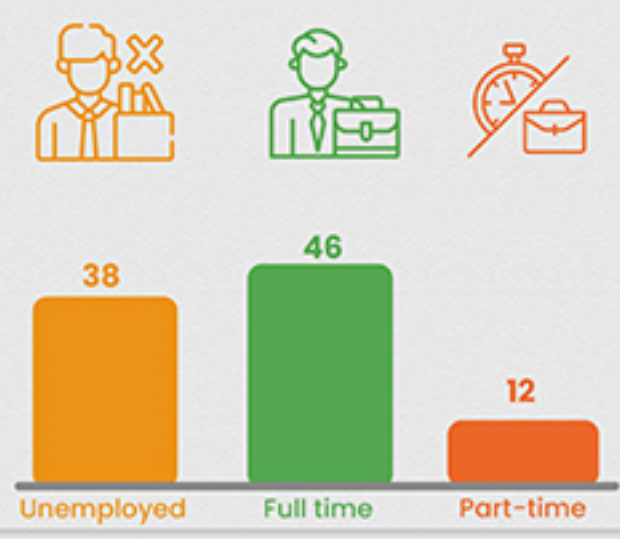
Educational attainment among respondents is relatively high, with 58.2 percent having completed high school. Around 25.3 percent hold a bachelor's degree, while smaller segments completed the Nigeria Certificate in Education, NCE (5.5 percent), Higher National Diploma, HND (4.4 percent), or other forms of specialised education such as special needs schools and adult education programmes.

FIGURE 4: LEVEL OF EDUCATION



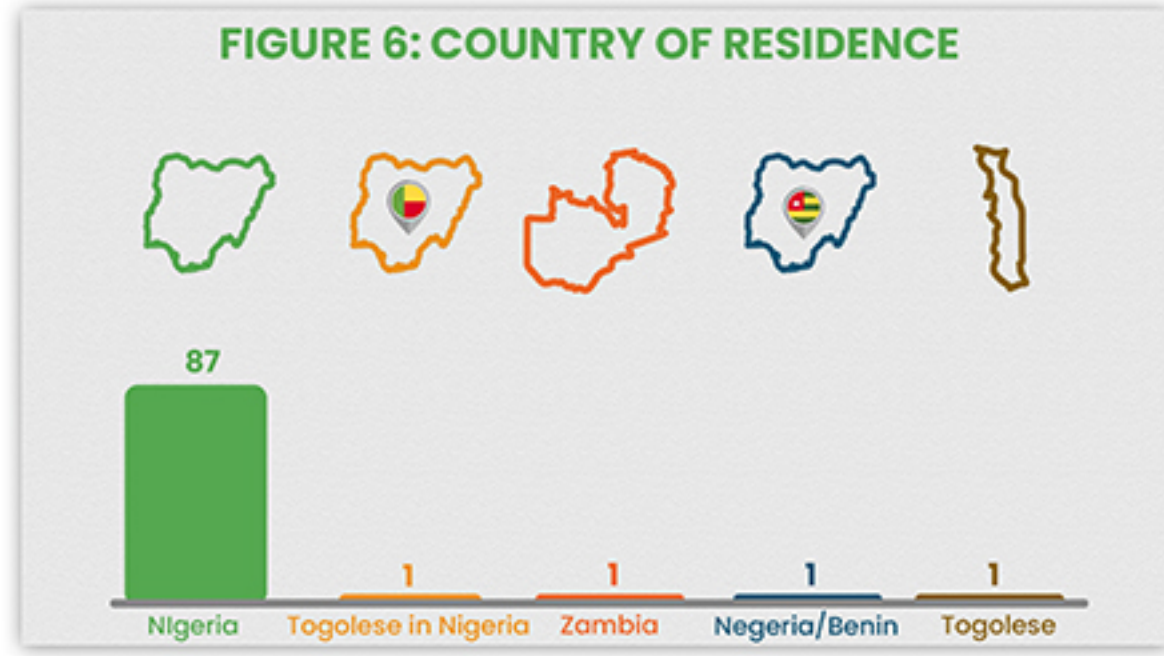
A plurality of respondents, 45.1 percent reported being employed full-time. However, a close 41.8 percent are unemployed, highlighting significant employment barriers among PWDs. A further 13.2 percent work part-time, suggesting underemployment is also a concern within this demographic.

FIGURE 5: CURENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS



The vast majority of respondents, 95.6 percent reside in Nigeria, other countries represented include Zambia, Benin, and individuals identifying as Togolese, either residing in Lagos or elsewhere, collectively making up just 4.4 percent of responses. This geographic distribution underlines the Nigeria-centric nature of the survey data.

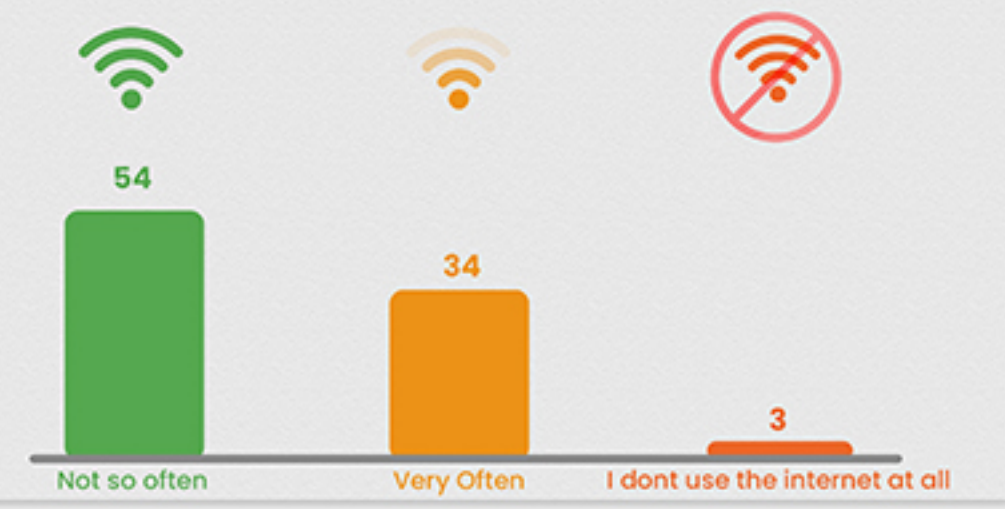
FIGURE 6: COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE



Access to information

59.3 percent of respondents said they use the internet "Not so often," while 37.4 percent reported using it "Very often" and 3.3 percent indicated "I don't use the internet at all." This suggests that while a significant portion of PWDs have some level of internet access, frequent usage is still relatively limited, and complete digital exclusion, though low, persists.

FIGURE 7: FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE TO ACCESS INFORMATION

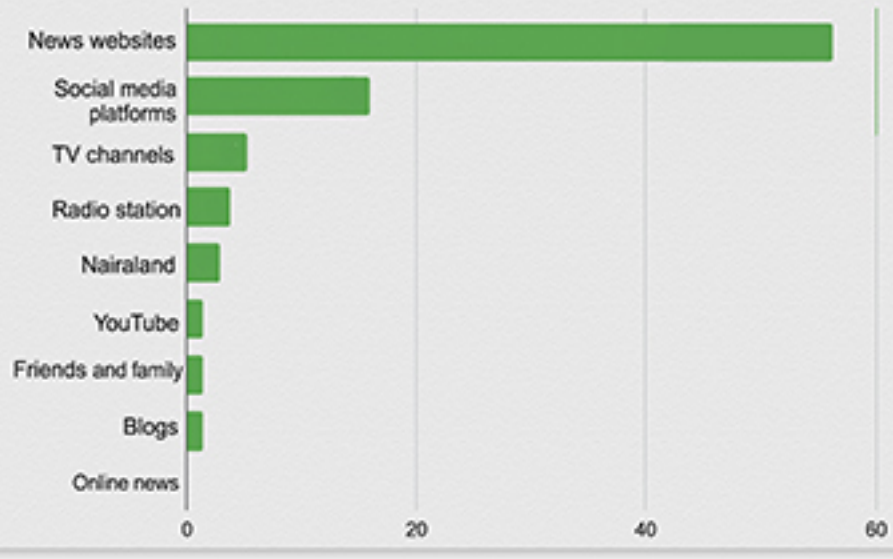


The respondents' response to the question, "What sources do you rely on the most for news and information?" showed that 61.1 percent rely on social media platforms while 22.2 percent preferred to use news websites, 5.5 percent chose TV channels, 4.4 percent rely

on radio stations. Then, 2.2 percent mentioned Nairaland while 1.1 percent preferred online news which is a combination of news from social media platforms and news websites. The remaining 3.3 percent listed various sources such as YouTube, friends and family, and blogs.

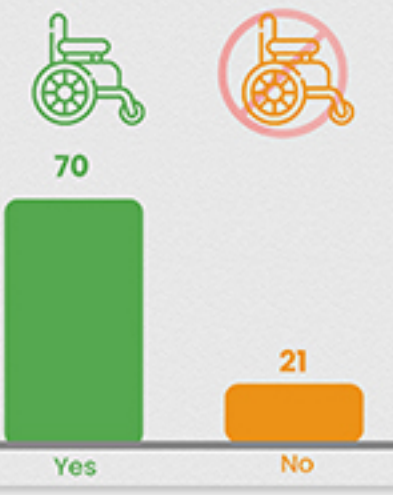
This data shows a heavy dependence on social media for news among respondents, which has implications for their exposure to both information and misinformation.

FIGURE 8: RELIABLE SOURCE FOR NEWS AND INFORMATION



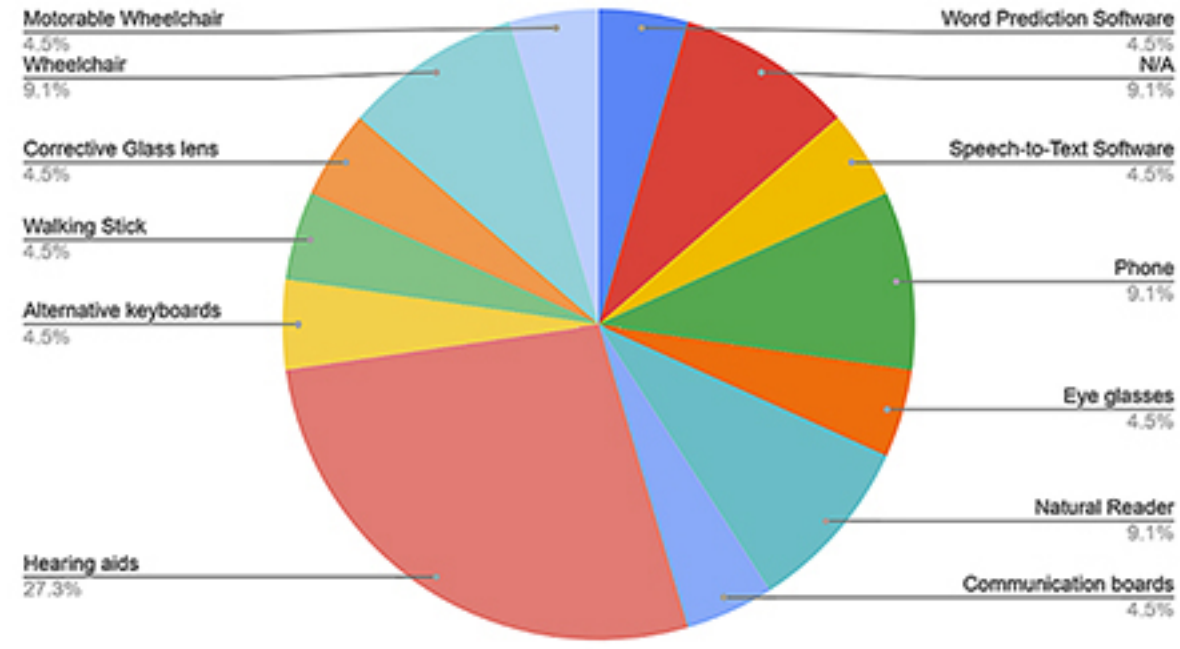
A significant majority of respondents (76.9 percent) reported not using any assistive tools or technologies to help them access or read information. Only 23.1 percent indicated that they have such tools at their disposal. This points to a critical accessibility gap in the digital information environment for people with disabilities. Given the diverse needs among PWDs ranging from screen readers for the visually impaired to captioning or sign language interpretation for those with hearing impairments, the low adoption of assistive technologies suggests systemic barriers such as cost, availability, digital literacy, or lack of awareness. It is also important to note that some respondents do not have vision-based or hearing-based disabilities and therefore do not require this type of assistive technology.

FIGURE 9: ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TOOLS OR TECHNOLOGIES USED TO READ OR ACCESS INFORMATION



Among the 23.1 percent of respondents who indicated they use assistive tools or technologies, the most commonly mentioned were hearing aids, appearing in multiple responses, reflecting a strong representation of individuals with hearing impairments in the sample. Other notable tools included Natural Reader and speech-to-text software, which support those with visual or cognitive challenges in reading and comprehension. A few respondents mentioned alternative keyboards, word prediction software, and communication boards, tools typically used by individuals with motor or speech impairments to facilitate interaction and communication.

FIGURE 10: TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES USED



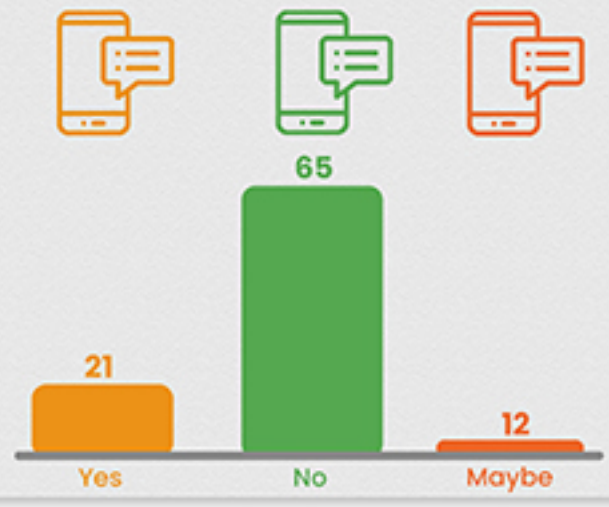
Interestingly, several respondents listed wheelchairs or walking sticks, while these are essential mobility aids, their mention in the context of accessing or reading information may

reflect either a broader understanding of assistive technology among participants or the lack of familiarity with digital-specific assistive tools. Smartphones were also cited, suggesting that for many, mobile devices serve as multifunctional tools to bridge accessibility gaps, even if not specifically designed for disability support.

Exposure to misinformation

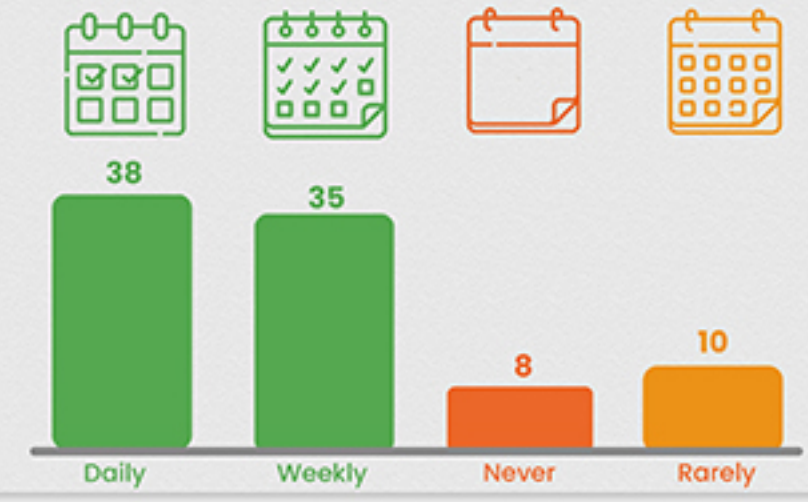
PWDs exposure to misinformation varies among these respondents, with 23 percent acknowledging that they have encountered misleading or false information online or offline and about 4 percent expressing uncertainty in recognising such information. Meanwhile, around 73 percent of respondents reported not encountering misinformation, which may indicate limited exposure, effective critical evaluation, or difficulty in identifying falsehoods.

FIGURE 11: CAME ACROSS INFORMATION ONLINE/OFFLINE LATER FOUND TO BE MISLEADING OR FALSE



In a follow-up question about how frequently they encountered information later identified to be false, 41.8 percent said daily while 38.5 percent encountered it weekly. 11 percent said they rarely come across it and 8.8 percent reported they never encounter false information. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents regularly face misinformation, with over 80 percent experiencing it at least once a week. Among the 23.1 percent of respondents who indicated they use assistive tools or technologies, the most commonly mentioned were hearing aids, appearing in multiple responses, reflecting a strong representation of individuals with hearing impairments in the sample. Other notable tools included Natural Reader and speech-to-text software, which support those with visual or cognitive challenges in reading and comprehension. A few respondents mentioned alternative keyboards, word prediction software, and communication boards, tools typically used by individuals with motor or speech impairments to facilitate interaction and communication.

FIGURE 12: FREQUENCY OF ENCOUNTERING INFORMATION LATER IDENTIFIED AS FALSE

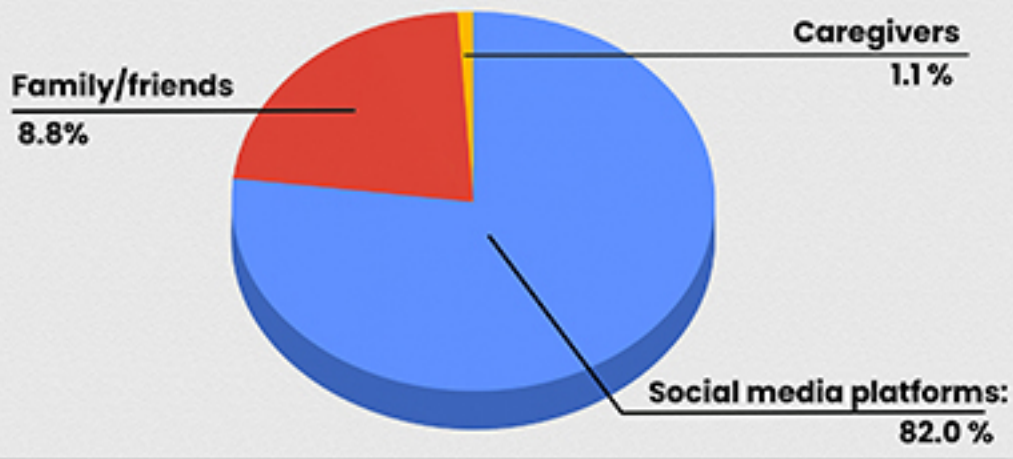


In their response to the open-ended question on the type of misinformation they encountered the most, respondents identified a wide range of false information types, with political misinformation emerging as the most frequently mentioned category. Numerous entries cited fake election results, manipulated statistics, propaganda from political actors, and general misinformation about politicians or political events. This aligns with broader concerns in Nigeria and across Africa, where politically motivated disinformation is often used to influence public opinion and incite division, particularly around election cycles.

Health-related misinformation also featured prominently, including fake cures, vaccine myths, and misleading medical claims echoing trends observed globally during health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Fake job adverts and financial scams were also commonly reported, highlighting the economic vulnerability of many individuals with disabilities, who may be targeted by such schemes.

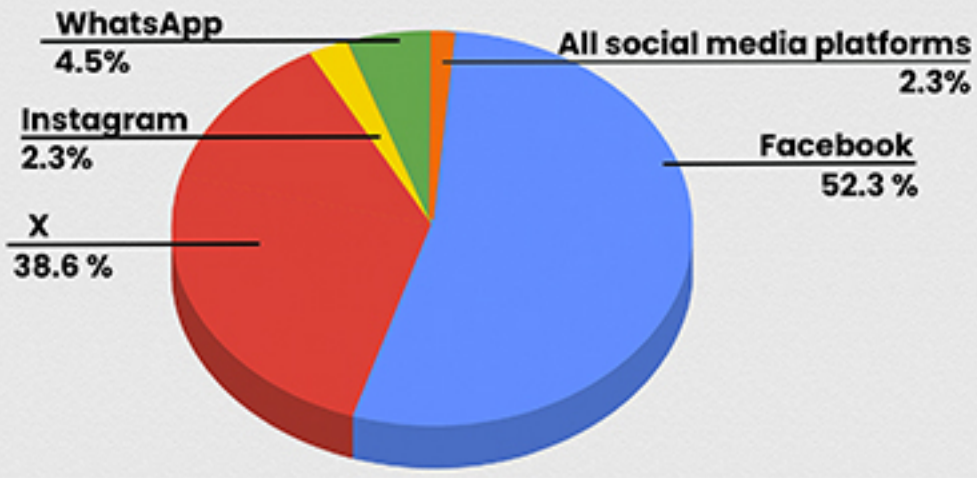
Respondents further noted celebrity gossip, death hoaxes, and deep fakes, suggesting that entertainment-related misinformation also plays a visible role in their digital experience. Notably, several mentioned doctored images or videos, rumours, and misleading headlines, which reflect the broader issue of content manipulation and lack of media verification. The data here paints a picture of an information landscape where PWDs are frequently exposed to multiple forms of misinformation, with political and economic themes dominating their daily encounters online.

FIGURE 13: WHERE AND HOW MISINFORMATION ARE ENCOUNTERED MOSTLY



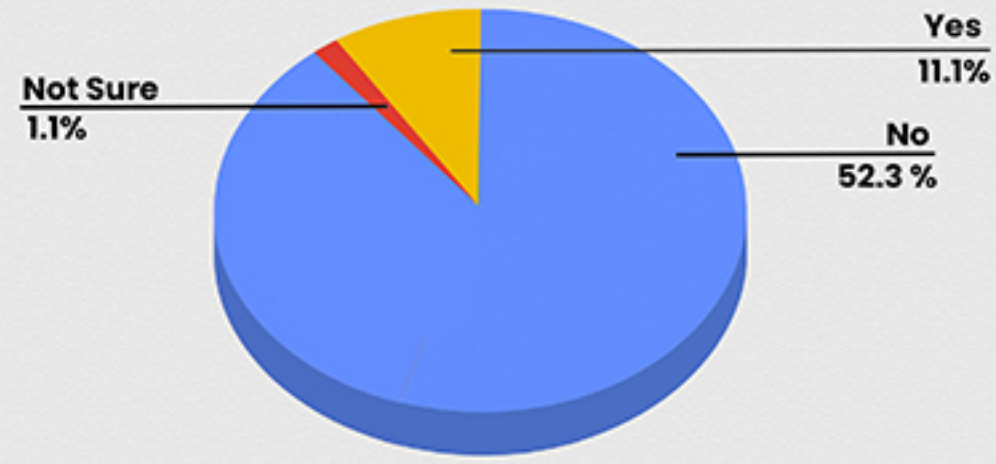
Ninety percent of respondents overwhelmingly reported that social media platforms are the primary source of misinformation, as this medium is where they most often encountered misleading or false information. A smaller but notable number (8.9 percent) identified family and friends as secondary sources, while caregivers (1.1 percent) appeared rarely. This pattern highlights social media's dominant role in the spread of misinformation and the influence of close social networks in shaping perceptions.

FIGURE 14: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS WHERE YOU ENCOUNTER MORE MISINFORMATION



Among respondents who reported encountering misinformation on social media, Facebook clearly stands out as the most frequently cited platform with 52.3 percent. It is followed by X (formerly Twitter) with 38.6 percent, WhatsApp has 4.5 percent and 2.3 percent for Instagram, while several respondents indicated encountering misinformation across multiple or all social media platforms. The frequent mention of Facebook reflects its widespread use and role as a major channel for misinformation dissemination. The presence of WhatsApp and Instagram also points to the importance of private messaging and visual content platforms in spreading misleading information.

FIGURE 15: CONFIDENT IN IDENTIFYING FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION

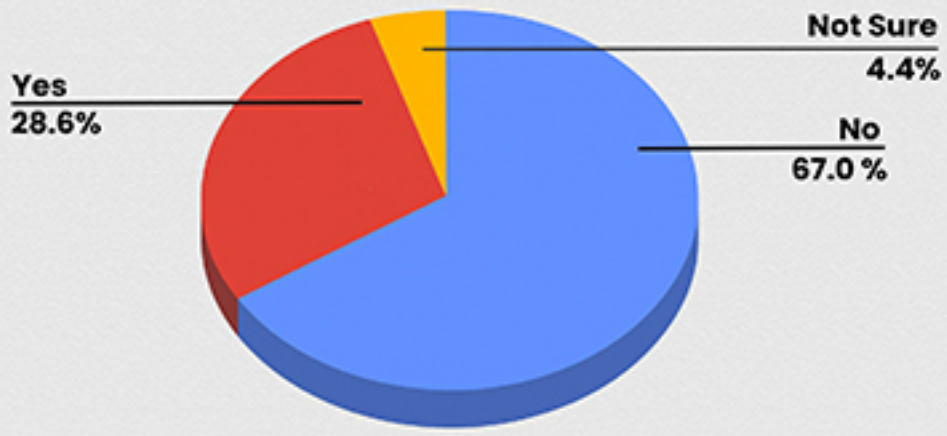


The majority of PWDs expressed a lack of confidence in identifying false or misleading information, with over 80 percent indicating "No" with 1.1 percent expressing uncertainty. Only a small fraction, approximately 11.1 percent, felt confident in their ability to recognise misinformation. This widespread self-reported lack of confidence highlights a significant gap in media literacy and critical evaluation skills for the PWD community. This is a huge gap that reflects an urgent need for targeted interventions such as digital literacy training and fact-checking awareness to help them better assess the credibility of information they consume.

Verification

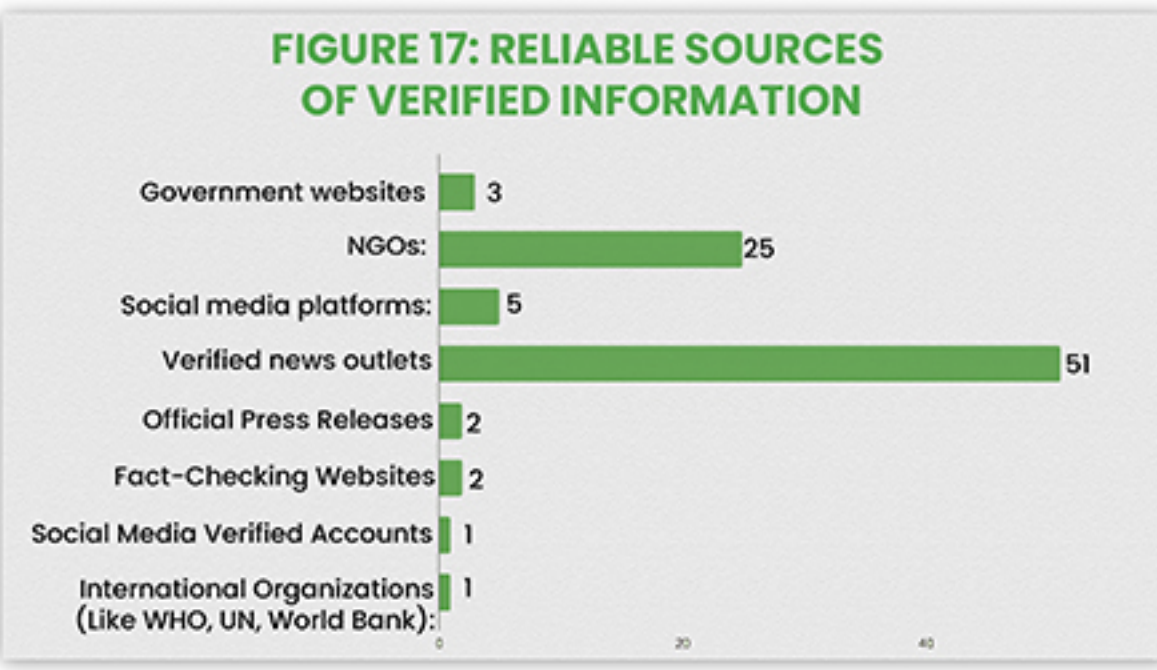
A majority of respondents responded that they do not fact-check information before sharing, with 67 percent indicating "No" and 4.4 percent unsure. Only around 30 percent answered "Yes", showing that while some individuals are mindful about verifying content, most either skip this step or are uncertain about their fact-checking habits. This pattern points to a critical gap in information-sharing practices and highlights the importance of promoting responsible digital behaviour and equipping PWDs with practical fact-checking skills that are inclusive and accessible.

FIGURE 16: FACT-CHECKING BEFORE SHARING INFORMATION ONLINE



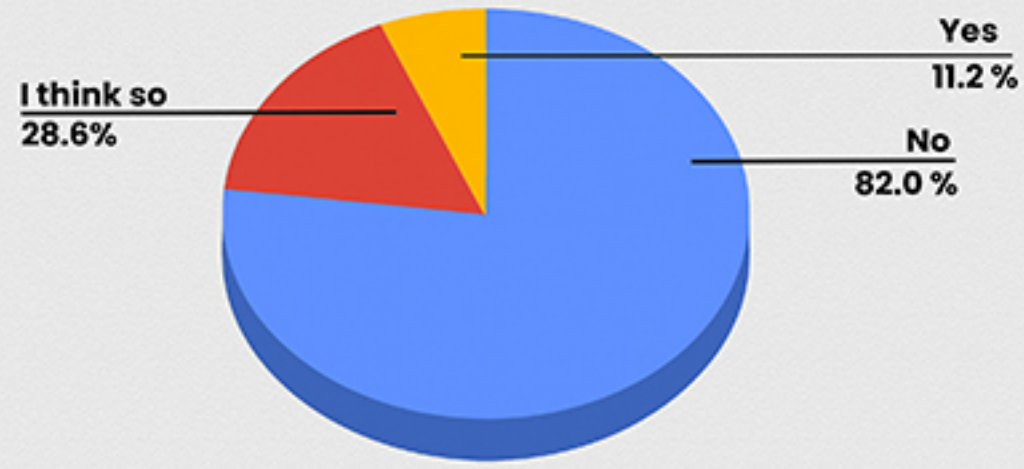
Verified news outlets emerged as the most trusted source for verifying information, consistently cited by 56.67 percent of respondents. NGOs (27.8 percent) followed as the second most frequently trusted source, reflecting confidence in civil society organisations (CSOs). Other sources such as government websites (3.3 percent), fact-checking websites (2.2 percent), official press releases (2.2 percent), and international organisations (1.1 percent) appeared less frequently but still held relevance. Social media platforms were cited by a few (5.55 percent), indicating limited but present trust in content from verified accounts (1.1 percent). This distribution of response shows that while traditional and institutional sources remain dominant for information verification, there's a growing role for civil society and selective use of digital platforms in building trust. Though the fact that not many respondents cited fact-checking websites is a call towards fact-checking organisations to enhance their visibility within the PWDs communities by making their news inclusive and accessible, in essence, widening their audience and readership.

FIGURE 17: RELIABLE SOURCES OF VERIFIED INFORMATION



Most respondents indicated that they do not have access to tools that assist in verifying information, with 82 percent responding "No." A smaller number answered "I think so," reflecting uncertainty or lack of awareness about available verification tools. Only a few confidently responded "Yes," suggesting limited exposure to or use of fact-checking technologies such as google reverse image search, browser extensions, and multimedia verification apps. This highlights a significant access and awareness gap, emphasising the need for greater visibility and promotion of accessible verification tools, especially among PWDs.

FIGURE 18: ACCESSIBLE TOOLS THAT AID YOUR VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION



In an open-ended question about 'barriers PWDs when they want to verify information,' respondents identified a range of barriers hindering their ability to verify information effectively. Limited or poor internet access and costly data emerged as the most frequently mentioned obstacles, restricting connectivity and consistent access to credible sources. Many highlighted lack of digital literacy and unfamiliarity with fact-checking tools or processes, reflecting knowledge gaps on how to identify misinformation. Others pointed to time constraints as a significant challenge, making it difficult to invest effort in verification.

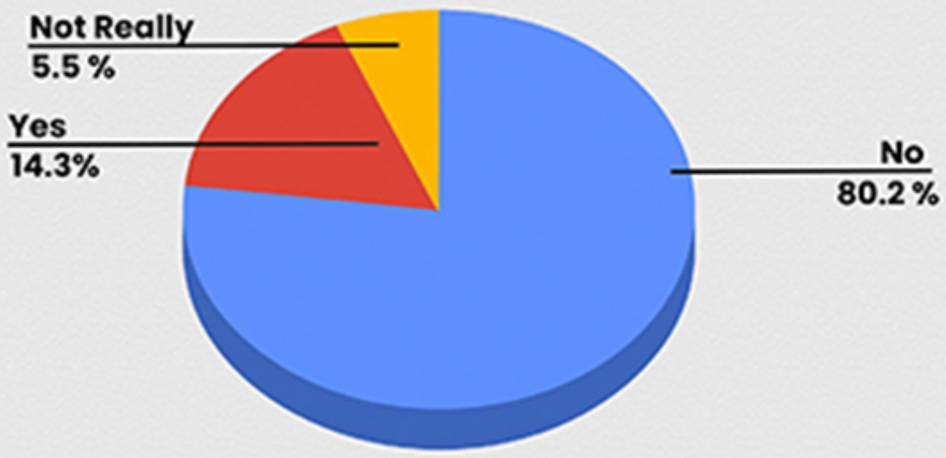
Several respondents noted technological limitations, such as lack of smartphones or computers, and difficulties distinguishing fake content like videos, images, or websites designed to appear legitimate. The overwhelming volume of conflicting information and poor transparency of sources on social media further complicate the verification process. Additional barriers included low literacy levels, emotional attachment to content, language barriers, and accessibility issues, especially for PWDs like the deaf, who struggle with the absence of accessible formats such as sign language interpretation.

Misinformation spread by influencers and celebrities also undermines trust and adds to confusion. Paywalls blocking reliable news and an unclear system for reporting false information were raised as institutional challenges. These barriers highlighted by respondents reveal a complex intersection of infrastructural, educational, technological, and social factors that adds to their double burden as PWDs navigating online spaces and need diverse support.

Impact of misinformation

The majority of respondents indicated that misinformation has not negatively affected their actions or decisions, with 80.2 percent responding "No" while 5.5 percent said "Not really." However, 14.3 percent acknowledged that misinformation did influence them negatively, highlighting a significant minority experiencing real-world consequences. This suggests that while many may recognise misinformation without it directly impacting their behaviour, a considerable portion remains vulnerable to its effects.

FIGURE 19: MISINFORMATION HAS NEGATIVELY AFFECTED YOUR ACTIONS OR DECISIONS

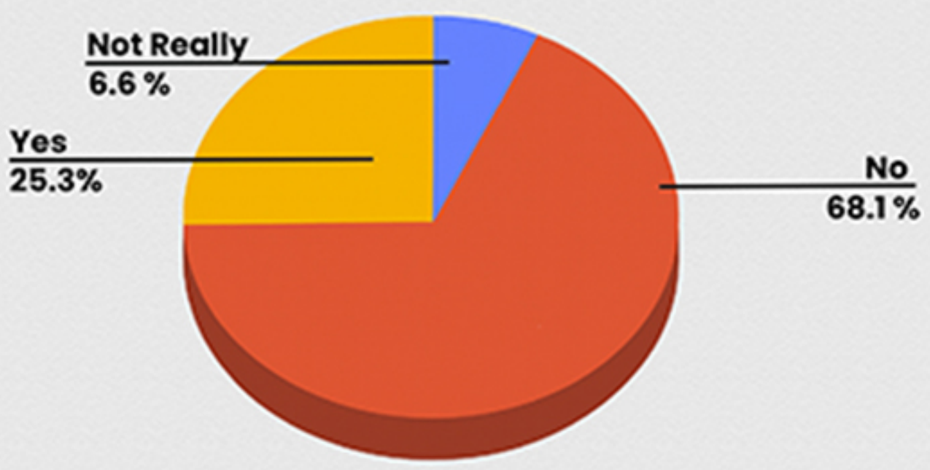


In a follow up question, respondents who reported negative effects of misinformation shared a variety of personal experiences illustrating its impact. Several mentioned changing important decisions, such as altering voting choices based on false political information. Others described missed opportunities, including losing out on jobs due to fake job adverts circulating on social media. Some recounted ceasing use of apps after being misled about safety concerns.

Misinformation also led to damaged relationships, with respondents noting arguments with family or colleagues sparked by false or misleading news. Several admitted to spreading false rumours, highlighting how misinformation can perpetuate harm within social and professional circles. Trust in public institutions was also eroded, with individuals expressing lost confidence in government initiatives after encountering inaccurate portrayals of their effectiveness. These lived experiences

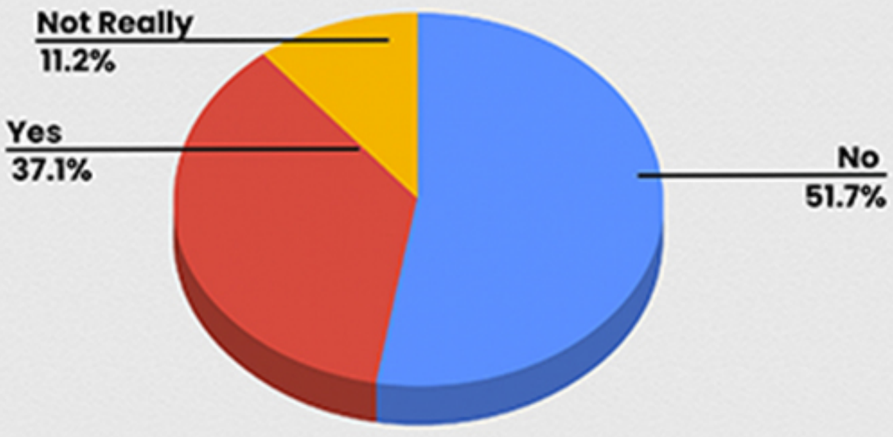
portray succinctly how misinformation can influence both personal and societal outcomes, reinforcing the urgent need for improved media literacy, fact-checking resources, and interventions to limit misinformation's reach and impact.

FIGURE 20: PWDS ARE MORE IMPACTED BY MISINFORMATION THAN NON-DISABLED PERSONS



PWDs were asked if they are more impacted by misinformation than non-disabled people, the responses were mixed but tended toward scepticism. 68.1 percent said "No" while 6.6 percent responded, "Not really." However, a significant portion, 25.3 percent, affirmed that PWDs are more impacted by misinformation. This division may reflect differing perceptions of the unique challenges PWDs face, such as accessibility barriers, reliance on intermediaries for information, or social stigma, which can intensify misinformation's effects.

FIGURE 21: MISINFORMATION HAS AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP OR TRUST IN OTHERS



The responses above indicate that misinformation has had a noticeable impact on relationships and trust for a substantial number of respondents. 37.1 percent of respondents said that misinformation has affected their interpersonal relationships or their trust in others. An additional 11.2 percent answered "Not really," suggesting some mild or uncertain effects, while 51.7 percent said "No." These results highlight the social consequences of misinformation, showing that beyond factual errors, misinformation can erode social bonds and foster distrust, especially trust in social media platforms and personal relationships with family, friends and caregivers.

Solutions, support and feedback

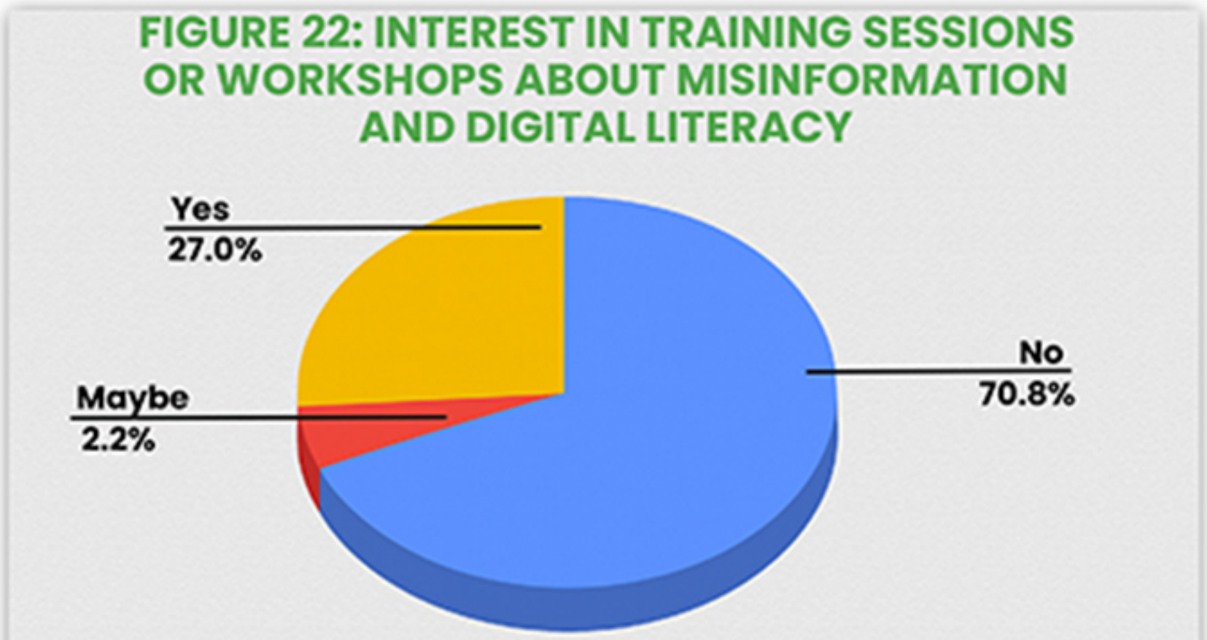
The survey asked respondents what measures or resources they believe would help them better identify or deal with misinformation. In the 71 responses filled, respondents suggested a wide range of practical solutions to improve their ability to verify information and counter falsehoods. Media literacy education and digital literacy training were repeatedly emphasised as foundational, highlighting the need to build critical thinking and verification skills across all age groups. Many called for online tutorials, awareness campaigns, and orientation programs, especially in local languages and accessible formats, to reach diverse audiences including PWDs and those with low literacy.

Technology-based tools such as mobile apps for misinformation alerts, AI-driven verification tools, and platforms that flag false content such as Facebook's "false" label were popular suggestions. Respondents also recommended greater collaboration between governments, NGOs, telecom providers, and social media platforms to run consistent campaigns and regulate content more effectively.

The role of trusted community figures like religious and community leaders was noted as important in spreading fact-checks and building trust. Several respondents highlighted the value of trusted WhatsApp groups and promoting reputable sources to counter misinformation within social media networks

.Additionally, calls for social media regulation, cross-referencing information, and better access to reliable fact-checking websites were prominent. Special attention to accessible formats and aids for PWDs such as sign language interpretation, and visual support was also emphasised as they would ensure inclusivity in misinformation interventions. These responses illustrate how PWDs understand the problem and have chartered a comprehensive approach combining education, technology, community engagement, and policy regulation to effectively tackle misinformation and empower individuals within the PWD communities to verify information confidently.

FIGURE 22: INTEREST IN TRAINING SESSIONS OR WORKSHOPS ABOUT MISINFORMATION AND DIGITAL LITERACY



Building on these suggestions, respondents were asked about their interest in training sessions or workshops on misinformation and digital literacy. While a significant number expressed little (2.2 percent) or no interest (70.8 percent), around 27 percent showed willingness to participate in such programs. Among those interested, preferences varied between in-person and online training, with a significant number (83.1 percent) leaning towards online formats due to convenience and accessibility. This indicates that while not everyone may immediately seek out formal training, there is a notable demand by PWDs for flexible, accessible learning opportunities to enhance their skills in identifying and combating misinformation.

Conclusion

The findings from this survey reinforce what many disability rights advocates maintain; that PWDs are not just disproportionately affected by physical barriers, but by the intangible yet equally damaging effects of digital exclusion and misinformation. Though this survey pointed out that PWDs are not necessarily more exposed to misinformation than others, the consequences for them tend to be more severe due to systemic accessibility gaps, limited digital literacy opportunities, and reliance on others for information. This "double burden" means that PWDs often face greater challenges in discerning truth from falsehood online, a reality that further marginalises them in an already unequal digital ecosystem.

The evidence presented through the survey highlights the urgent need for multi-layered interventions that combine inclusive technology design, targeted education, and systemic policy reform. There is a clear demand among PWDs for accessible fact-checking resources, better regulatory oversight of social media platforms, and education in formats and languages that reflect the diversity within the disability community. Equally critical is the need to embed disability inclusion into media, governance, and digital infrastructure planning. From training journalists and platform designers to engaging inclusively and co-developing verification tools with disabled users, showing them that every actor has a role to play.

What emerges most powerfully from this study is the call for representation, not just in content creation but in the creation and dissemination of inclusive content. PWDs must not be passive recipients of digital interventions but active participants shaping the systems that inform and affect their lives.

Governments, tech companies, fact-checking organisations, and CSOs must prioritise collaboration with PWDs to ensure interventions are relevant, empowering, and rooted in lived experiences.

Addressing information disorder among PWDs is not simply about correcting falsehoods, it is about creating a society where information is a tool of empowerment for all, regardless of ability and disability. As this study unravelled, achieving that vision requires political will, inclusive design, and a commitment to equity in the digital age.

Recommendations

Based on the final survey question, respondents offered a wide range of thoughtful suggestions for improving access to accurate and reliable information for PWDs. A central theme across responses was the urgent need for inclusive information formats. Many emphasised integrating sign language interpreters in TV and online videos, providing subtitled and audio-described content, and ensuring the availability of Braille, large print, and screen reader–compatible formats for blind and visually impaired individuals.

Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which affirms that States must ensure PWDs have access to information and communications on an equal basis with others including through accessible technologies and formats of their choice.[23] The WHO's World Report on Disability further reinforces this, identifying access to information and assistive technology as essential to overcoming exclusion.[24] Kenya passed the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 passed in May this year, mandating accessibility across sectors such as education, employment, healthcare and public services, requiring reasonable accommodations (such as tax relief for caregivers) and prohibiting discrimination.[25] Nigerian lawmakers and government can do the same with its laws and policies on disability. This would include prioritising the effective implementation of the 2019 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act and reenacting new ones driven by a duty of care , with a focus on addressing the digital exclusion of people with disabilities.

Moreso, policymakers need to enact laws that promote media and information literacy for all. The 2023 National Digital Literacy Framework, NDLF projects a diverse participation in the digital economy to bridge gender and socioeconomic digital divide,[26] but the reality is not what is obtained. Media and information literacy is missing in Nigeria's junior and secondary school curriculum except for when fact-checking or media organisations come in as outside speakers.[27] Respondents also corroborated this, emphasizing the role of digital and media literacy education tailored to PWDs. Their suggestions include peer-to-peer learning, community-led town halls, and formal training programs to build the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate online misinformation. Also, the National Policy on Inclusive Education for PWDs in Nigeria,[28] mandates that disability-sensitive educational content and digital up-skill must be made available to PWDs to drive inclusive education.

23.1 percent of respondents specifically called for the development of AI-based tools and mobile applications to verify digital content and support accessible information. We recommend that tech companies prioritize inclusive design and co-creation with PWDs in building such solutions. Government and policymakers need to support and incentivize these innovations through targeted digital inclusion strategies, ensuring they are adaptable, multilingual, and locally relevant.

Financial subsidies and government-backed support for assistive technologies such as screen readers, tablets, and hearing aids were also widely mentioned, with over 30 percent of responses referencing the need for direct institutional or infrastructural interventions. This suggests that many PWDs remain excluded from digital spaces due to the high cost or unavailability of essential tools. To address this, lawmakers should implement subsidy schemes and public procurement policies that increase access to assistive technologies for low-income PWDs. This aligns with Article 4 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, which compels states to support access to information and communication technologies, particularly through publicly funded initiatives. [29]

Some respondents pointed out the high cost of data, inaccessible school libraries, and the need for disability-inclusive outreach by both government and civil society. As previously highlighted that representation and direct engagement with the disability community in designing communication strategies is important, we recommend regular feedback loops, involving PWDs in tech development, and providing platforms where their voices and perspectives are centered. Such participatory approaches are not only affirmed by the UNCRPD and the African Union Disability Protocol but also emphasised in academic work on inclusive governance, which argues that empowering PWDs as co-creators of policy and technology leads to more sustainable, context-sensitive interventions.[30]

Spotlighting Kudi

Media InnoTech's News Verifier Africa, NV-A piloted Facts Inclusive in 2023, a compelling model that fact-checkers can build upon to enhance PWD inclusivity. The initiative launched Kudi, an animated figure that uses sign language interpretation to present fact-check verdicts, ensuring deaf audiences can directly access verified information[31]. Fact-checking videos and reports were incorporated into Kudi, along with subtitle-enabled animations and captions which significantly increased audience engagement. The initiative drove social media engagement with NV-A's fact-checks up by over 6,000 percent and website visits by 300 percent. This demonstrates not only the need but also the clear impact of accessible presentation formats. [32]

A subsequent testing of the approach, in partnership with the Abuja Association of Deaf Persons, exposed a widespread lack of civic awareness and information literacy amongst people with hearing disability in Nigeria, representative of the African context. It further highlighted an urgent need to create more media literacy and digital resources in sign language. This informed the launch of NV-A's basic fact-check course in sign language-Fact-Check 101, which has now been taken by over 1,500 people.

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