



# SENIORS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

*Study on disinformation and media use  
among the golden generation in Albania*

# SUMMARY



This study focuses on older adults in Albania and how they cope with disinformation and media use in their daily lives. It analyzes the main sources of information, their credibility, sensitivity to fake news, and the impact that digital scams have on the personal decisions of the “golden generation.”

The study was conducted in Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër, and Korçë, through a survey of 207 older adults, providing a clear picture of their challenges in the digital era.

## KEY FINDINGS:

- Television remains the most trusted source of information for older Albanians (83.1%).
- WhatsApp (68.6%) and Facebook (59.9%) are the main communication platforms.
- 57% of older adults are very concerned about the spread of fake news.
- Politics (74%) and health (71.6%) are the most affected topics by disinformation.
- Only 6.3% of older adults always verify information before sharing it.
- More than half want to learn how to identify false information.





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*We thank all the survey participants who shared their experiences and contributed with the authentic voice of the golden generation. Without their engagement, this study would not have been possible.*

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# MEDIA HABITS AND DIGITAL LITERACY AMONG SENIORS IN ALBANIA



## INTRODUCTION

According to the 2023 Albanian census, seniors above the age of 55 comprise 845,874 people, or around 35,2% of the country's population. With an aging and rapidly declining population, the share of population of 55+ continues to increase, as does their relevance to the country's political life, not to mention the fact that they can easily become target to political manipulation and propaganda, scams, and other forms of harm. Various studies have shown that Albanians across all age ranges use the internet, and social media is becoming an increasingly relevant presence in the lives of older Albanians as well. Nevertheless, there is a considerable gap between those generations of Albanians who are "native" to the internet, and older Albanians who adopted the digital world later in life. This group is also more likely to receive news and entertainment through traditional media but be less prone to have been exposed to media literacy techniques required to evaluate information and facts. This gap, exacerbated by declining material conditions (such as poverty, isolation, and lack of access to reliable sources of news and information) have made older Albanian particularly vulnerable to disinformation. However, how disinformation affects seniors in Albania remains an understudied area, even as its consequences can already be felt, whether in relation to elections, healthcare, and beyond. The absence of such studies impacts also the ability to respond to the challenge that this issue presents.

This study attempts to fill this gap by surveying how Albanian seniors receive and consume media, how they interact with the information that they receive, and how equipped are they to notice and respond to disinformation and misinformation. The survey that we administered over April and May 2026 aimed to answer the following questions:

- What sources are Albanian adults aged 55 and older using to receive news and information?
- How much have Albanian adults aged 55 and older incorporated social media and the internet in their daily lives?
- What sources of information do Albanian adults aged 55 and older trust?
- Are Albanian adults aged 55 and older capable of verifying information and checking for disinformation?
- What methods of learning would Albanian adults aged 55 and older prefer in order to gain higher media literacy?



# DATA COLLECTION AND ITS LIMITATIONS



A survey of 25 questions was administered in person to a group of 207 Albanian seniors aged between 55 and 75 years old. 25.9% of the people interviewed were between 55-64 years old, 36.6% were between 65-74, and 25.9% were 75 and above. 57.3% of respondents were women, whereas 42.75% were men. The people surveyed came from a variety of backgrounds, with the biggest group (39.6%) having a high school degree, and the second biggest group having received a professional education (27.5%). Only 11.6% of the people surveyed had a university degree, while 17.4% had stopped their education at primary or middle school.

These figures were collected from four major urban areas (which is reflected also in the answer to this question: with almost 94% of respondents describing the area where they live as urban).

Faktoje researchers talked to people in community centers in Tirana, Durrës, Korçë, and a retirement home in Shkodër thus attempting to cover the country's three main geographical areas: north, central, and southern Albania. Although we attempted to tailor the questions to make them accessible to the public we were going to survey, we did encounter difficulties in explaining the concept of the survey and had some questions had to be explained extensively. Furthermore, for the sake of time and resources, we had to limit this survey to urban areas for now and our questions concerned primarily media consumption habits rather than more detailed questions concerning the content they were coming across in their media consumption and more specific cases of encountering disinformation and the impact it may have had on their lives. Further surveys will be required to hone into specific narratives and harms caused by disinformation.



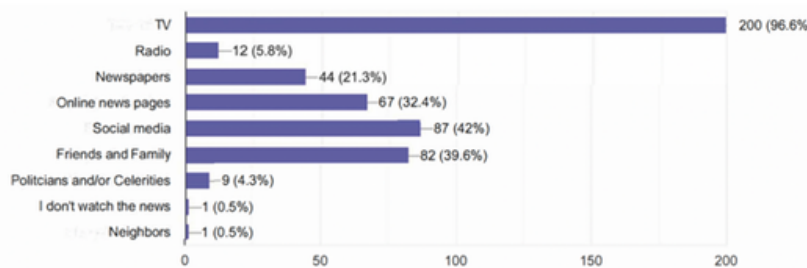
# TELEVISION CONTINUES TO BE THE PREFERRED MEDIA AMONG SENIORS



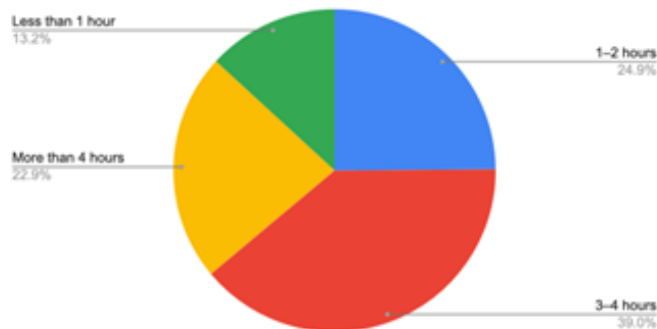
## FINDINGS

99.6% of seniors interviewed said they used television to receive their news, compared to 21.3% who use newspapers. Social media (42%) and friends and family (39.6%) are also important sources of information. This matches previous studies about the prevalence of TV consumption among Albanians, especially older Albanians.

**Question 5: Which of the following sources do you use to receive your daily information (You can choose multiple options)**



**Count of 8. How much time do you spend watching TV every day?**



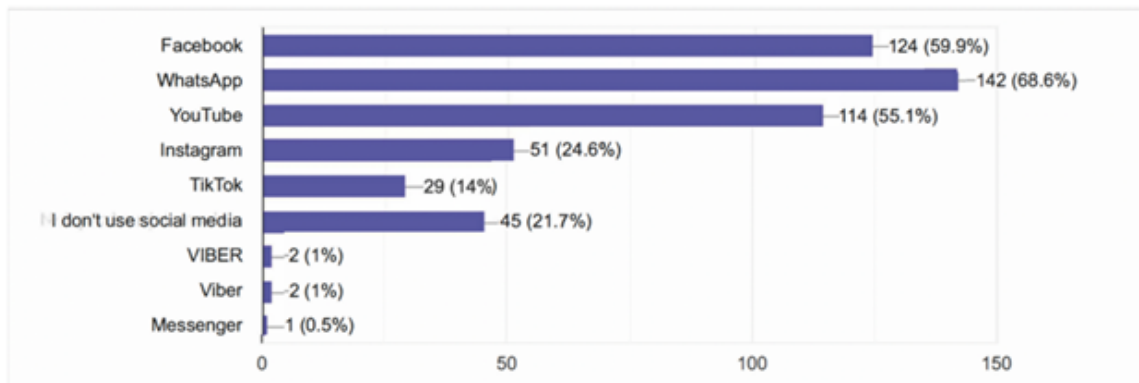
Not only are older Albanians more likely to get their news from TV than social media, but they also spend more time watching TV than they do on social media or doing other activities that provide them information. Nevertheless, a total tally shows that Albanians are cumulatively spending considerable amounts of time either watching TV or on social media. 39% said they spent 3-4 hours a day watching television, while another 24.9% responded they watched TV 1-2 hours a day. Another 22.9% watch TV for more than 4 hours a day. Furthermore, TV and TV shows ranked second only to friends and family as credible sources of information. 83.1% of surveyed Albanians said they found TV to be among the top two most trustworthy source of information.

# SOCIAL MEDIA IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT BUT DISTRUSTED

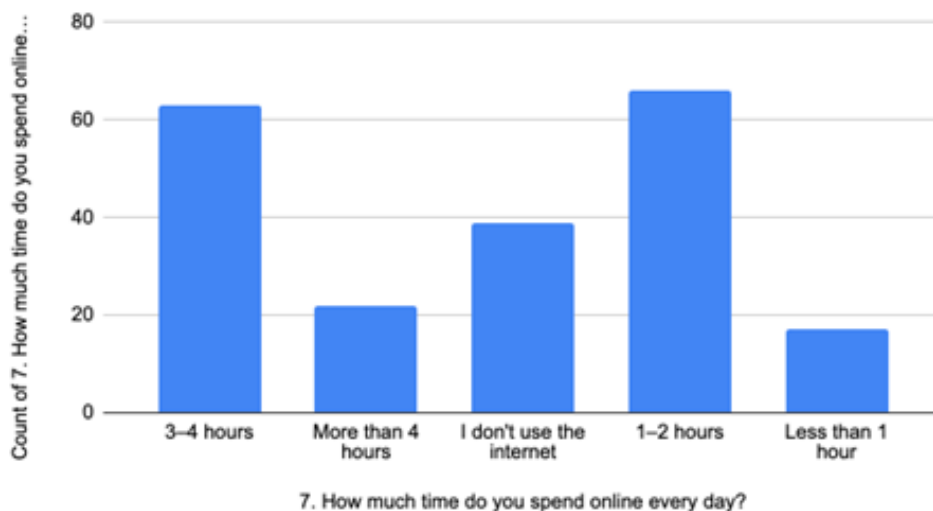


Social media and the internet are taking an increasingly important role in the lives of older Albanian adults. 32.4% said that they got their information from online news pages and 42% mentioned using social media. We counted messaging apps like WhatsApp among social media, and indeed 68.6% of respondents said they used WhatsApp, followed by Facebook (59.9%), YouTube (55.1%) and Instagram (24.6%). A small percentage (14%) mentioned using TikTok which until recently was banned in Albania. 31.9% of respondents said they spend 1-2 hours a day on social media, whereas 30.4% said that number is 3-4 hours. 10.6% responded by saying they spend more than 4 hours a day on social media.

## Question 6: Which social media do you use?



## Count of 7. How much time do you spend online every day?



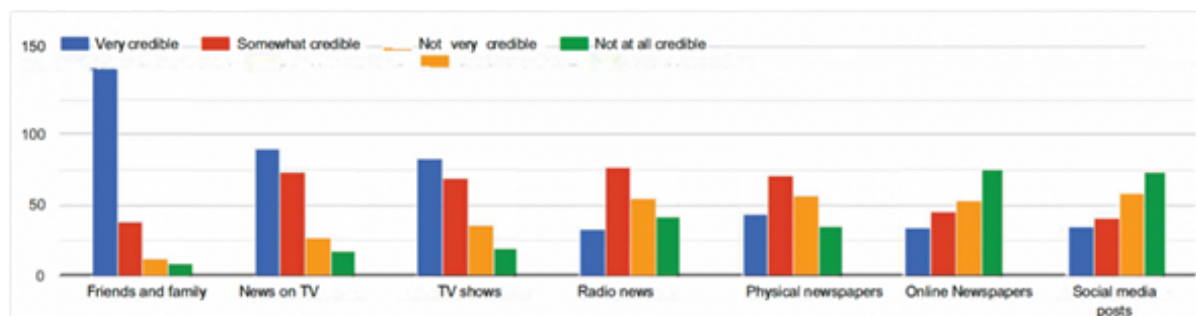
Despite growing social media and internet use, they ranked very low in credibility among older Albanians. Asked about the credibility of online newspapers, 53 respondents considered them not very credible, while 75 found them not credible at all. Likewise for news spread through social media: 58 said they found them not very credible, while 73 said they are not credible at all. This distrust over social media may be a result of an inherited distrust over the internet. Future studies should explore what drives this dynamic, given that news on Albanian TV has also a high instance of both misinformation and disinformation.

# COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO BE VERY IMPORTANT FOR TRUST AND SPREAD OF INFORMATION

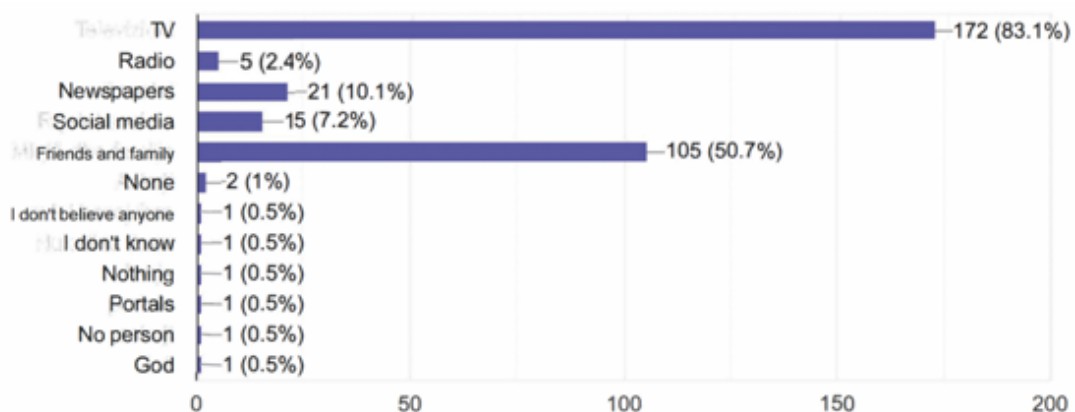


While older Albanians rely on both TV and social media to receive their news, they are also heavily dependent on their community as well. 39.6% said they receive information and news from friends and family. Friends and family also rank highly in credibility for older Albanians. Of the 207 people interviewed, 148 said they found friends and family highly credible sources of information, and 38 said they were very credible. Only 21 ranked them not very credible or lower. 50.7% of those surveyed ranked friends and family among the top two most reliable sources of information, along with TV and TV shows.

## 9. How credible do you find the following news sources (Pick one value for each line)



## Question 10. Which sources do you trust the most (Pick only 2)



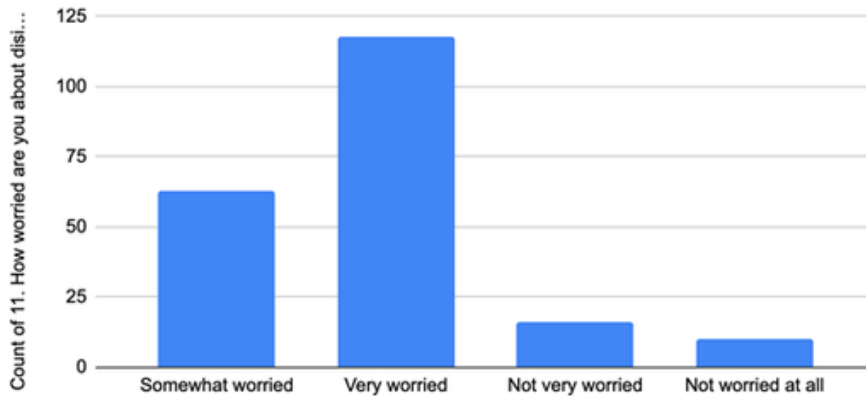
The importance of community among older Albanians has historical roots, nevertheless more research needs to be conducted to understand how this trust is built and maintained, but also why at times it may be dangerous rather than benign, especially when one's community is just as vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation. Nevertheless, the fact that community is an important source of information, and considered a very credible one, should be taken into account when drafting policies and programs that increase the media literacy of Albanians over 55.

# DISINFORMATION CONCERNS MOST SENIORS



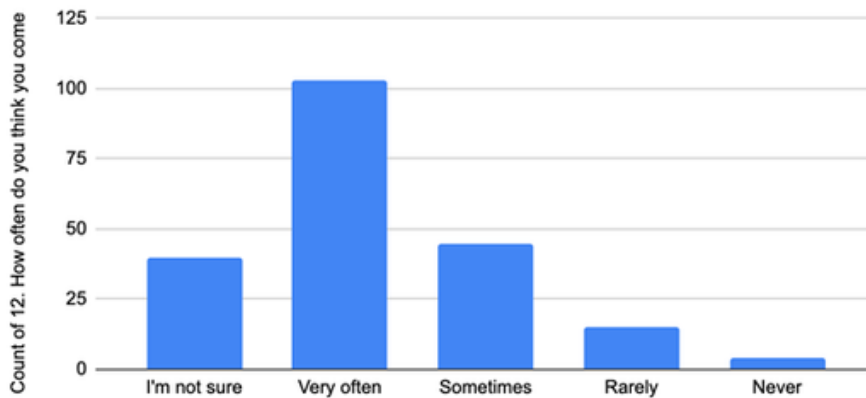
57% of seniors surveyed by Faktoje reported feeling very concerned about disinformation in the media that they consumed. 30.4% described themselves as somewhat concerned. Furthermore 49.8% believed that they encountered disinformation very often, whereas another 21.7% believed they encountered disinformation only sometimes. Further research will be required to understand why seniors are concerned by disinformation and how do they see it affect their lives.

Count of 11. How worried are you about disinformation and fake news?



11. How worried are you about disinformation and fake news?

Count of 12. How often do you think you come across fake news?



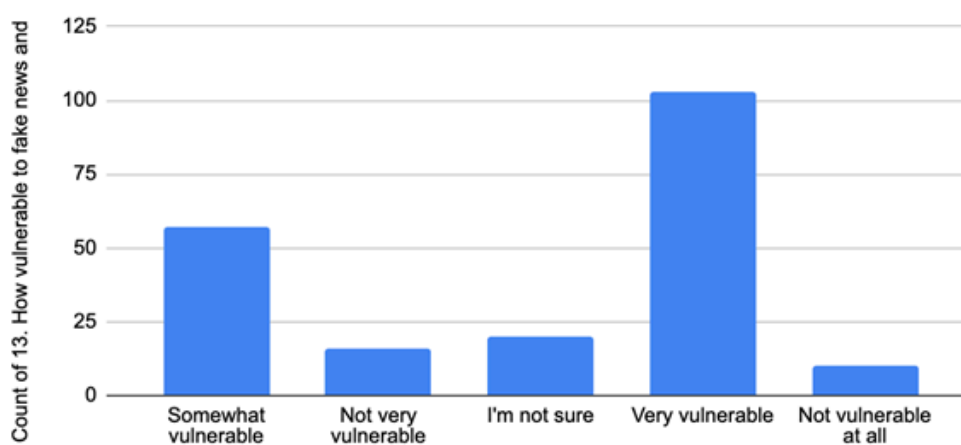
12. How often do you think you come across fake news?



# SENIORS SEE THEMSELVES AS VULNERABLE TO DISINFORMATION, BUT DON'T HAVE THE TOOLS TO IDENTIFY OR DEBUNK IT THEMSELVES

Likewise, 50% of seniors surveyed believed themselves to be very vulnerable to disinformation, while 27.7% think they are somewhat vulnerable to disinformation. When it comes to verifying information or spotting disinformation, 33.3% of seniors said they never attempt to verify the information that they receive, and 26% said they do so only rarely. Only 6.3% reported verifying information almost always, while 19.8% said they do so regularly. Furthermore, 61.5% of respondents said that they are not sure if they have ever shared disinformation, showing that many do not have the tools to spot it or verify it. 15.6% said they had, while 22.9% said no. Of those who responded “yes” to whether they had shared disinformation in the past, they realized it was wrong primarily when someone in their life corrected them. In fact, 63.9% responded having found out after someone told them, and only 13.1% because it had been corrected in the media.

Count of 13. How vulnerable to fake news and disinformation do you think you are?



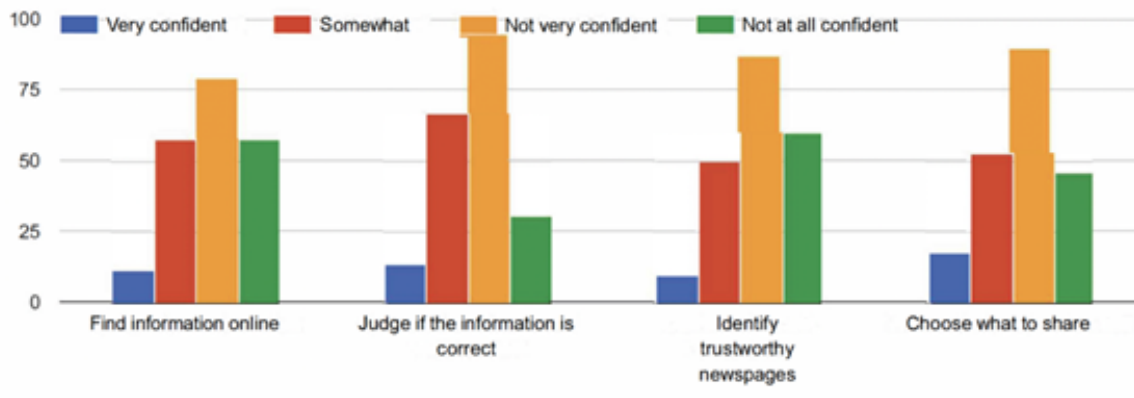
13. How vulnerable to fake news and disinformation do you think you are?



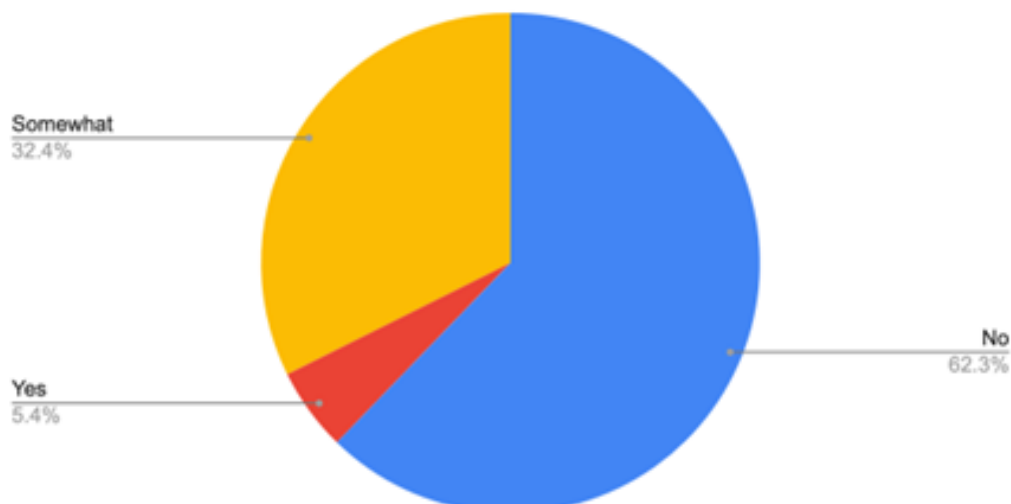
# SENIORS SEE THEMSELVES AS VULNERABLE TO DISINFORMATION, BUT DON'T HAVE THE TOOLS TO IDENTIFY OR DEBUNK IT THEMSELVES

Asked about their ability to deal with disinformation, most seniors seem uncertain of their ability to implement the tools required to do so. The majority said they were not very sure or completely unsure of how to find information online, judge whether that information was true, identify whether a source is credible, or choose what to share whether online or with others. In fact, 62.3% of seniors responded that they did not know how to verify whether an information is true or not. With another 32.4% responding they were somewhat sure of how to do so. 51.2% also reported that they were not sure if disinformation had ever made them change their mind about something. Another 38% reported that they had changed their minds based on information that later proved to be untrue.

## Question 18: How confident do you feel in your ability to: (Circle one answer for each line)



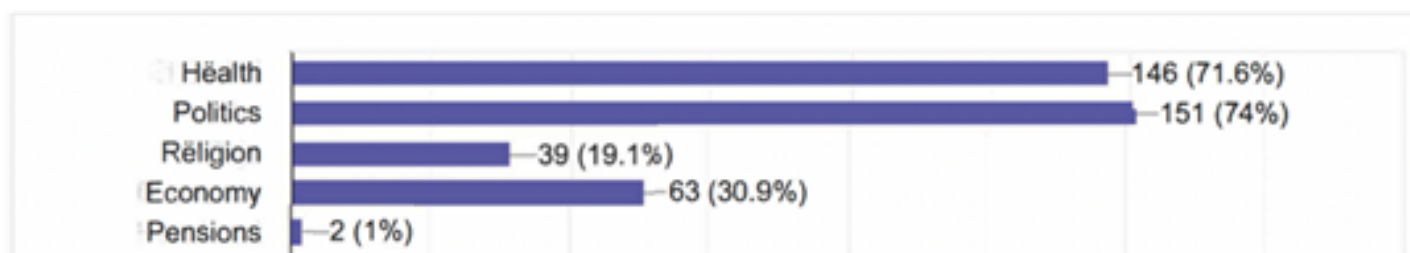
## Count of 19. Do you know how to verify if something is true?



# HEALTH, POLITICS, AND THE ECONOMY ARE AMONG THE TOPICS THAT MOST CONCERN SENIORS

While 46.3% of seniors were not sure whether disinformation had influenced their decision-making in relation to health, voting or their finances, the majority have a sense that disinformation must have impacted them at some point or another without them noticing. Health and politics are among the most feared targets, with 74% responding that they believe politics to be a major hub for disinformation, followed by health (71.6%), the economy (30.9%) and religion (19.1%). Respondents had the opportunity to pick as many options as they saw fit. This is not surprising giving the prevalence of health-related scams among seniors, especially the ability of holistic health companies to advertise on Albanian television without regulatory pressure against the claims they make.

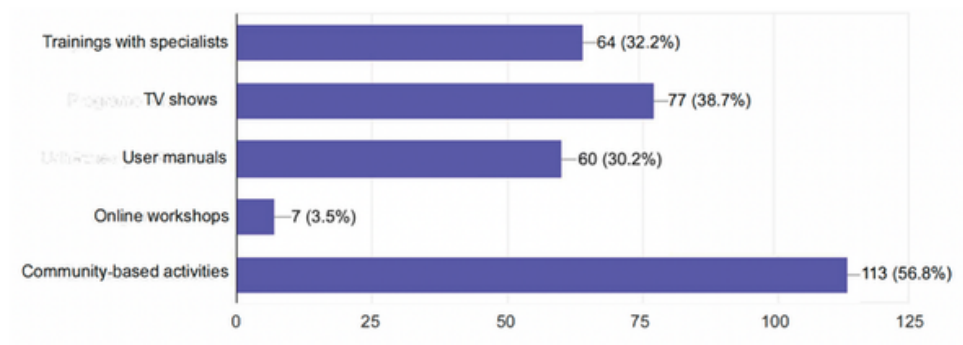
**Question 22: Which topics do you think are most impacted by disinformation (You can pick multiple options)?**



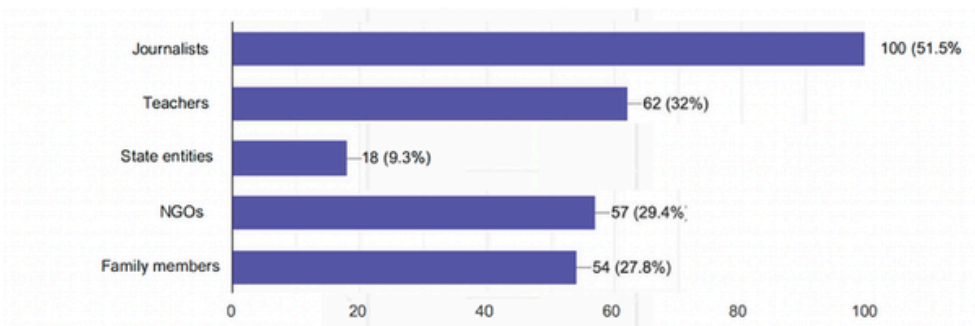
# MOST SENIORS WANT TO LEARN MEDIA LITERACY THROUGH TV OR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

54.1% of seniors said they would be interested in learning more about how to spot disinformation, whereas 38% said they were somewhat interested. When asked which methods they would prefer to learn about this community-based activities were the most popular option, voted by 56.8% of participants. TV programs (38.7%) and trainings with specialists (32.2%) also scored highly. Online programs were not preferred at all (only 3.5% chose it as an option). Seniors also do not trust state institutions to deliver this information, preferring instead journalists (51.5%) and also NGOs (29.4%) and teachers (32%).

**Question 24. Which are your preferred methods of learning?**



**Question 25. If such trainings were to happen, who would you trust to lead them? (Pick as many as relevant)**



# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS



This study is a first step that reveals the need for longer and more wide-reaching research into this topic. Resources will need to be allocated to extend the study into rural Albania, which would require logistical support and a more flexible timeframe given the challenges of collecting data from older populations, particularly those living in isolated areas. Future research should also explore in greater depth the specific types of misinformation and disinformation that seniors encounter, the narratives that resonate most strongly with them, and the tangible effects these may have on their political participation, health decisions, financial wellbeing and social relationships.

Uncertainty emerges as the defining theme of this survey. Many respondents were unsure whether they had encountered disinformation, whether they had shared it, how to verify information, or whether false information had influenced their opinions and decisions. This uncertainty should not be interpreted as indifference. On the contrary, respondents expressed high levels of concern about disinformation and a strong awareness of their own vulnerability to it. The findings suggest that many older Albanians recognize the existence of the problem but lack the confidence and practical skills necessary to address it.

The study also highlights an apparent paradox in the media habits of Albanian seniors. While television remains by far the dominant source of news and information and continues to enjoy high levels of trust, social media platforms and messaging applications have become deeply integrated into the daily lives of many respondents. At the same time, social media and online news sources are widely distrusted. This suggests that seniors may continue to consume information through digital channels despite doubts about its reliability. Such a dynamic creates an environment in which misinformation can circulate widely even among individuals who claim to be skeptical of online content. Distrust alone does not necessarily translate into effective verification practices.

Another important finding concerns the central role of social networks and community relationships. Friends and family are not only among the most common sources of information but are also among the most trusted. This finding is particularly significant because it demonstrates that information-sharing among seniors often occurs through interpersonal relationships rather than exclusively through media channels. While such networks can provide social support and trusted guidance, they can also amplify misinformation when inaccurate information is circulated among people who trust one another. The fact that most respondents who realized they had shared false information did so because someone they knew corrected them further illustrates the importance of interpersonal trust in shaping information behaviour.



# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS



The findings also point to a significant gap between awareness of disinformation and the practical ability to respond to it. Most respondents expressed concern about false information and acknowledged their vulnerability, yet relatively few reported regularly verifying information. Many lacked confidence in their ability to determine whether a source is credible or whether a claim is true. This gap indicates that media literacy interventions should focus not only on raising awareness but also on building practical, everyday skills. Seniors appear to understand that misinformation exists; what many lack are accessible methods for evaluating information independently.

The prominence of health, politics, and economic issues among respondents' concerns deserves particular attention. These topics have direct consequences for quality of life and are areas where inaccurate information can cause significant harm. Health-related misinformation may influence treatment decisions and expose seniors to scams, while political misinformation may affect electoral participation and democratic engagement. Economic misinformation may make older adults vulnerable to fraud, financial scams, and misleading investment opportunities, another prevalent issue in Albania where call centers have proliferated in recent decades, employing many young Albanians and operating with few scruples and regulation. The concentration of concern around these themes suggests that future educational initiatives should use examples drawn from these sectors to make media literacy training more relevant and practical.

The findings also offer valuable guidance for policymakers, journalists, educators, and civil society organizations seeking to strengthen resilience against disinformation. Respondents expressed a clear preference for learning through community-based activities, television programs, and in-person training sessions. Very few preferred online courses or digital learning tools. This suggests that media literacy programs designed for younger audiences may not be effective for older populations. Instead, interventions should be delivered through channels that seniors already use and trust. Community centres, pensioners' associations, local organizations, television broadcasters, and trusted journalists may therefore be more effective partners than purely digital platforms.

Finally, the results challenge assumptions that older adults are either passive consumers of information or unwilling to learn new skills. The strong interest expressed by respondents in receiving media literacy training indicates a significant demand for educational opportunities. Rather than viewing seniors solely as a vulnerable population, future initiatives should recognize them as active participants who are motivated to improve their ability to navigate an increasingly complex information environment. Providing them with accessible tools, trusted sources of guidance, and opportunities for community learning could strengthen not only their resilience to disinformation but also their broader civic participation and social inclusion.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the challenge of disinformation among older Albanians is less a problem of access to information than one of confidence, verification skills and trusted support systems. Addressing these issues will require targeted, age-sensitive approaches that build upon the media habits and social relationships that already shape how seniors receive and evaluate information.





*This study was produced within the framework of the initiative “Empowering the Golden Generation Against Disinformation,” financially supported by the European Union.*



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