



GDI

**Global
Disinformation
Index**

**Disinformation
Risk Assessment:
The Online News
Market in Bangladesh**

www.disinformationindex.org



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The Global Disinformation Index is a not-for-profit organisation that operates on the three principles of neutrality, independence and transparency. Our vision is a world free from disinformation and its harms. Our mission is to catalyse industry and government to defund disinformation. We provide disinformation risk ratings of the world's news media sites. For more information, visit www.disinformationindex.org.

Digitally Right Limited supports media, civil society, and businesses in Bangladesh with critical knowledge and solutions to adapt to a rapidly changing information ecosystem. It works at the intersection of media, technology, and rights and carries out research and policy analysis, and conducts training and workshops on technology policies, media transformation, best journalistic practices, and tackling misinformation.

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Executive summary

Since the news business has expanded to the online world, transformations in news production and distribution have exposed the industry to new disinformation risks.

News websites have financial incentives to spread disinformation, which can increase their online traffic and, ultimately, their advertising revenue. Meanwhile, the dissemination of disinformation has disruptive and impactful consequences. The disinformative narratives surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic are a recent – and deadly – example. By disrupting society’s shared sense of accepted facts, these narratives undermine public health, safety and government responses.

GDI defines disinformation in terms of “adversarial narratives that create real world harm,” and the GDI risk rating is based on a range of indicators related to the risk that a given news website will disinform its readers by spreading these adversarial narratives. These indicators are grouped under the index’s **Content** and **Operations pillars**, which measure the quality and reliability of a site’s content and its operational and editorial integrity, respectively.¹ A site’s overall risk rating is based on its aggregated score across all the indicators and ranges from zero (maximum risk level) to 100 (minimum risk level).

The GDI risk rating methodology is not an attempt to identify and label disinformation sites or trustworthy news sites. Rather, GDI’s approach is based on the idea that a combined set of indicators can reflect a site’s

overall risk of carrying disinformation. The ratings should be seen as offering initial insights into the Bangladesh media market and its overall levels of disinformation risk, along with the strengths and challenges the sites face in mitigating disinformation risks.

The following report presents the findings pertaining to disinformation risks for the media market in Bangladesh, based on a study of 33 news domains. These findings are the result of research led by GDI with Digitally Right Limited from July through December of 2022. All sites included in the study were informed of their individual scores and risk ratings to allow for engagement, feedback and improvement. The goal of this report is to present an overview of the media market as a whole and its strengths and vulnerabilities. Individual site ratings contribute to GDI’s various aggregate data products and, in most cases, are not released publicly to avoid naming and shaming media outlets facing high levels of risk.

The need for a trustworthy, independent rating of disinformation risk is pressing. This risk-rating framework for Bangladesh will provide crucial information to policymakers, news websites and civil society, enabling key decision-makers to stem the tide of money that incentivises and sustains disinformation. Moreover, the results of the current study will contribute to GDI’s mission to disrupt the business model of disinformation, by being earmarked for sharing with ad tech industry stakeholders and other parties acting to defund disinformation.

Key findings: Bangladesh

In reviewing the media landscape for Bangladesh, GDI's assessment found that:

All 33 domains in the sample had a medium to high risk of disinforming their online users – even sites widely respected for their independent news coverage.

- Sixteen sites presented a high disinformation risk rating, including both Bengali and English sites. Around half of the websites in our sample had a 'medium' risk rating.
- No sites performed exceptionally well on all fronts, resulting in no sites having a minimum risk rating. On the other hand, no site performed so poorly as to earn a maximum risk rating.

The main source of disinformation risk in Bangladesh stems from the lack of transparent operational checks and balances.

- All 33 sites scored strongly or perfectly in presenting unbiased, neutral and accurate articles, tended to avoid sensationalising stories and often provided bylines about the authors.
- However, the sites lacked operational checks and balances with almost no sites publishing accuracy and sourcing policies on their websites. Most also published little information about their funding and ownership structures.

Sourcing and attribution remain areas of concern, as even top sites tended to score imperfectly in sourcing stories.

- Most of the sites did not source visual content properly, often presenting their images as "collected," rather than identifying the individual or media service that the visual content came from. Most also scored below average in terms of how they sourced a story.
- Twenty-eight sites did not have any form of accuracy policy on their websites.

Association with traditional media did not play a significant factor in determining risk of disinformation.

- On average, websites associated with TV or print media did not perform any differently when compared to websites that solely served digital content.
- There was also no regional divide in disinformation risk. Sites based in the capital Dhaka tended to pose similar risks when compared to the sites based in smaller regional cities.

The Bangladeshi media market: Key features and scope

Bangladesh has a large media market with more than 1,200 newspapers, 45 television channels, 60 FM and community radio stations² and thousands of online portals serving a population of nearly 170 million.

The appetite for new media launches remains strong in the country. According to media reports, more than 5,000 online news portals are waiting for government permission to hit the market,³ a number that continues to grow.

Despite the expansion of media outlets, press freedom is rapidly deteriorating in Bangladesh. Most of mainstream media outlets are owned by corporations and connected to powerful political and corporate figures.⁴ Critics argue that this causes the media to support their funders' political and commercial agendas.⁵ The country fares poorly in the global freedom indices, regularly grabbing global headlines due to arrests and prosecution of journalists over trumped-up charges.⁶

Television dominates media consumption in Bangladesh, followed by the internet, which places a distant second. According to a 2020 media literacy survey by UNICEF and local media watchdog Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), television is the main source of news for 75% of the audience, and females use television more than males; only about 15% of those surveyed prefer social media and websites as news-sources.⁷

The number of television viewers soared after the government deregulated the television industry, allowing the country's first private news television station to start operation in 1998. But in recent years, private television stations, including ten exclusively 24/7 news outlets, have been witnessing a steady fall in viewership.⁸

Digital advertising in the country is growing. According to data available on Statista, spending in the digital advertising market of Bangladesh is projected to reach US\$330.8 million in 2023.⁹ Two-thirds of this is from search advertising, a method of placing online advertisements on web pages that show results from search engine queries.¹⁰ Entravision MediaDonuts has published even more optimistic projections of digital ad spending (which covers marketing through a more expansive array of online channels including websites, social platforms, apps, and streaming and is not limited only to news media) in Bangladesh, estimating a market value of US\$400 million in 2022 and an annual growth rate of more than 10 percent.¹¹

Estimates are not available for the size of the news advertising market specifically. A media viability study from MRDI estimated the media advertisement market in Bangladesh — including print, online and broadcast — to be approximately one billion US dollars in 2019.¹² The country's advertising agencies, however, put the annual media ad spending figure between US\$250 and \$350 million dollars. The MRDI report identifies news as the largest recipient of advertising money, with telecom companies, consumer goods and financial institutions as the major advertisers.

Two combined demographic factors drive digital media growth in Bangladesh: a large youth population and a growing urban population.¹³ Youth, aged 15 to 29 years, compose about 28% of Bangladesh's total population and are the main consumers of online news.¹⁴ The urban population, with better internet access and education, is projected to grow by up to 50 percent by 2030.¹⁵ The private statistics firm DataReportal suggests an internet penetration rate of 31.5% and about 50 million social media users, with the leading platforms of choice being Facebook and YouTube.¹⁶

These drivers have forced the media industry to transition faster to digital, with all major news outlets increasing investments in video content to tap online revenue opportunities. The establishment of digital platforms by existing TV stations, radio stations, and newspapers has been a primary trend over the past decade.¹⁷

However, the proliferation of the digital sphere, including the rise of online portals and the click-based model of generating online ad revenue, has unfortunately exposed Bangladeshi media to widespread disinformation risks with offline consequences. Boom Bangladesh, a fact-checking platform, listed 40 mainstream media¹⁸ which published false or misleading content in 2022.¹⁹

A recent study by LIRNEasia, a Sri Lanka based think tank, identified the patterns of misinformation in Bangladesh, which included defaming and discrediting political and ideological opponents, celebrity hoaxes, glorifying topics related to religious sentiment, sharing unverified news on social media to intensify a protest, false or misleading success stories, foreign influence operations, and unfounded scientific claims.²⁰ The study also found that many online news media in Bangladesh “use misinformation, misleading and clickbait content as part of their promotional and business strategy.”

Combatting disinformation is a critical challenge in Bangladesh, with only four fact-checking organisations and a handful of fact-checkers supporting a robust and growing media market. Mainstream newsrooms lack the capacity to tackle online misinformation.²¹ Typical government responses to disinformation²² often lead to the arrest of people for posting content on social media under the Digital Security Act (DSA)²³ that makes “negative propaganda” punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

The DSA has emerged as a threat to press freedom²⁴ since it was enacted in 2018. The Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), a local think tank, tracked 890 cases under the DSA from January 2020 to February 2022 and found that politicians and journalists are the most likely to be prosecuted.²⁵ Bangladesh now ranks 162nd — near the bottom of the list — in Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) 2022 World Press Freedom Index. “The DSA is often used to keep journalists and bloggers in prison, in appalling conditions,” writes RSF in its country summary.²⁶

The DSA, however, is not the only setback in the media industry. Newsrooms seriously lack diversity, and despite recent improvements in women's empowerment and recent electoral changes to include gender-expansive categories on voter rolls in the Muslim majority nation, media outlets are still predominantly male-dominated. The few women journalists the country has “are exposed to a deeply rooted culture of harassment and are subjected to online hate campaigns when they try to defend their rights,” according to RSF.

Disinformation risk ratings

This study looks specifically at a sample of 33 news websites in Bangla and English languages.

Market overview

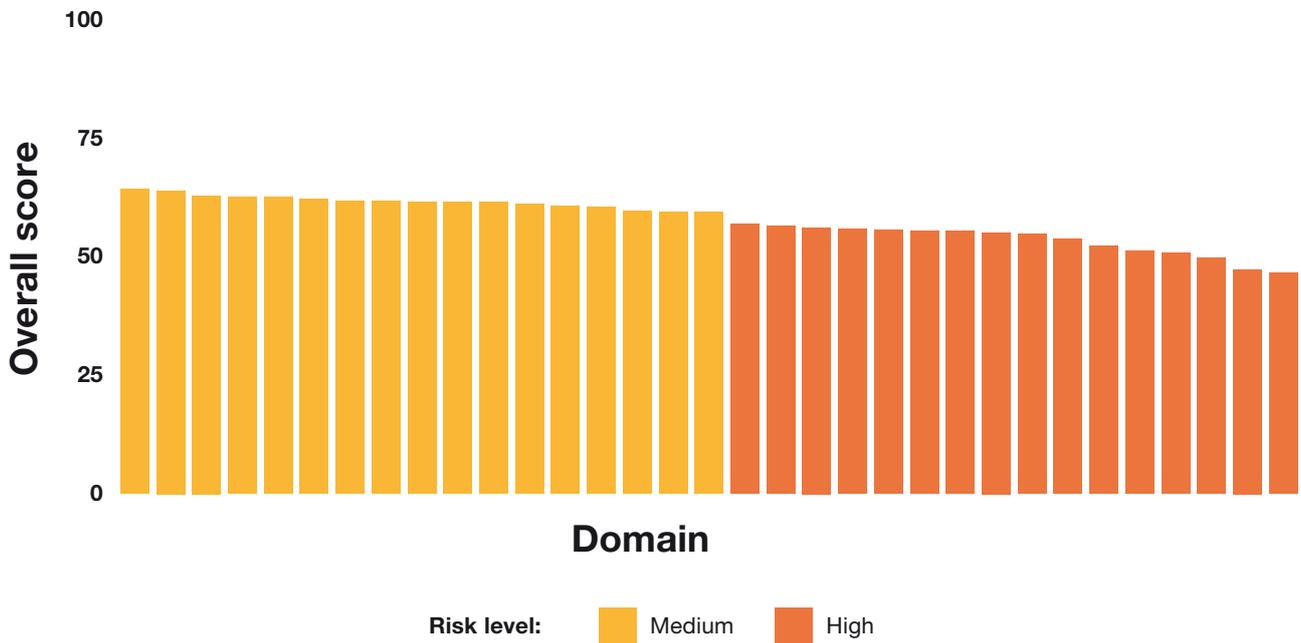
The sample was defined based on the sites' reach (using each site's Alexa rankings, Facebook followers, and Twitter followers), relevance, and the ability to gather complete data for the site.

Table 1. Media sites assessed in Bangladesh (in alphabetical order)

News outlet	Domain	News outlet	Domain
Ajker Patrika	www.ajkerpatrika.com	Kaler Kantho	www.kalerkantho.com
Bangla Tribune	www.banglatribune.com	Naya Diganta	www.dailynayadiganta.com
Bangladesh Pratidin	www.bd-pratidin.com	New Age	www.newagebd.net
Banglanews24	www.banglanews24.com	Newsbangla24	www.newsbangla24.com
Bdnews24	www.bdnews24.com	NTV Online	www.ntvbd.com
Bonik Barta	www.bonikbarta.net	Prothom Alo	www.prothomalo.com
Channel-I Online	www.channelionline.com	Purbanchal	www.purbanchal.com
Chattogram Pratidin	www.ctgpratidin.com	Purbokone	www.dainikpurbokone.net
Desh Rupantor	www.deshrupantor.com	Risingbd	www.risingbd.com
Dhaka Post	www.dhakapost.com	RTV Online	www.rtvonline.com
Dhaka Tribune	www.dhakatribune.com	Samakal	www.samakal.com
Gramer Kagoj	www.gramerkagoj.com	Sarabangla	www.sarabangla.net
Ittefaq	www.ittefaq.com.bd	Somoy Television	www.somoynews.tv
Jagonews24	www.jagonews24.com	Sylheter Dak	www.sylheterdak.com.bd
Jamuna Television	www.jamuna.tv	The Business Standard	www.tbsnews.net
Janakantha	www.dailyjanakantha.com	The Daily Star	www.thedailystar.net
Jugantor	www.jugantor.com		

Source: Global Disinformation Index

Figure 1. Disinformation risk ratings by site

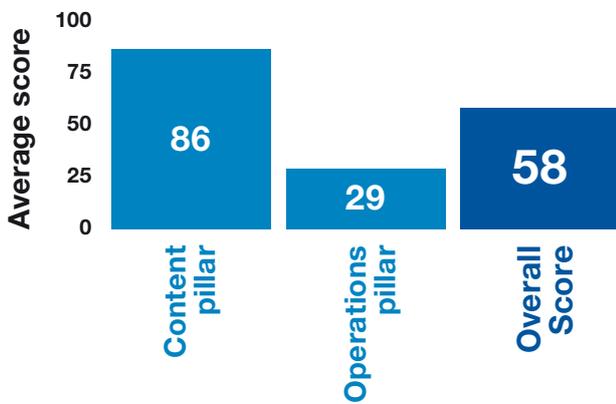


Source: Global Disinformation Index

The findings for Bangladesh's media sites show a concentrated distribution regarding disinformation risks. The average overall score for the assessed sites was 58 out of 100, with 0 indicating maximum risk and 100 indicating no risk, and scores only ranged from 64 to 46.7. None of the sites scored high enough to

fit in the low-risk category, nor did any score too low to be rated as maximum-risk. While 17 domains were rated as medium-risk and 16 as high-risk, many of the risk factors came from weak journalistic and editorial checks and balances rather than disinforming content.

Figure 2. Overall market scores, by pillar



Source: Global Disinformation Index

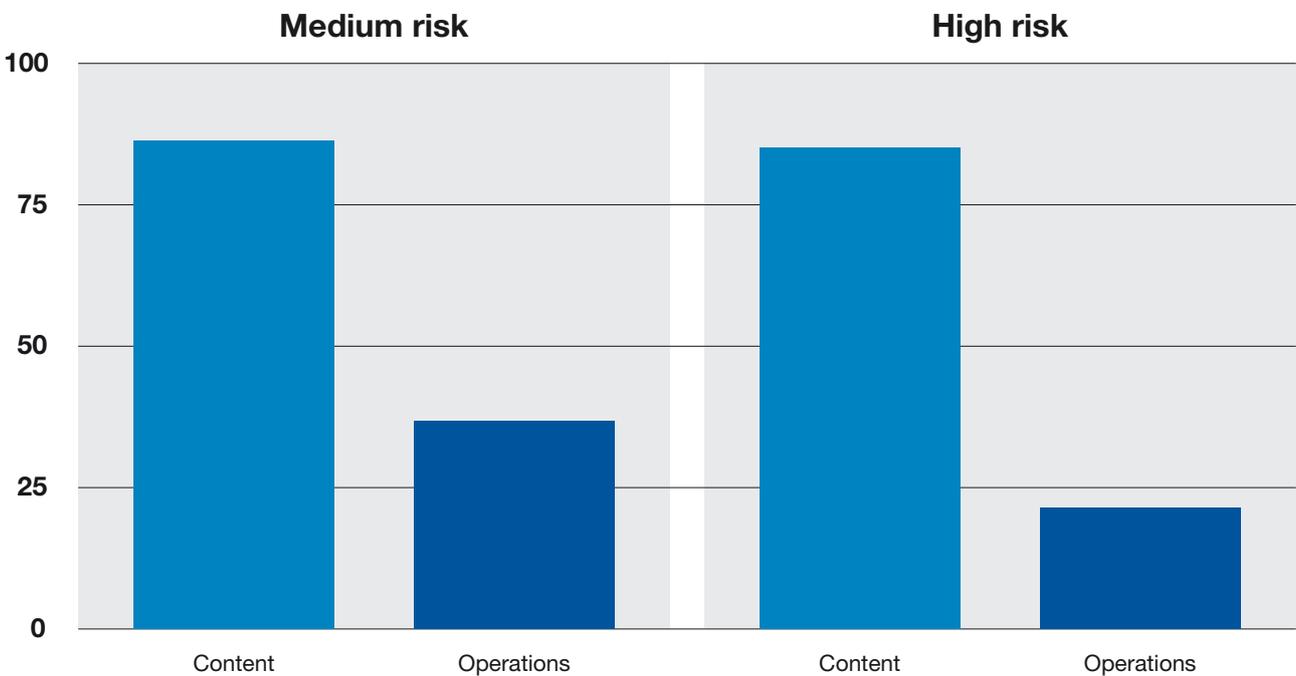
A very poor score in the **Operations Pillar** indicators offset the reasonably strong performance in the **Content Pillar**. Domains achieved an average score of 86 on the Content pillar and an average score of 29 on the Operations pillar. This means that these

sites generally performed well in providing reliable and unbiased content and most improvements in the Bangladesh media system can be achieved by improving transparency and proactive disclosure of beneficial ownership, funding, editorial guidelines and other enhanced operational policies.

The sites in the medium risk group scored below 40 in the **Operations Pillar**. Sites in both risk segments could move into a lower-risk group by improving their operational transparency, including disclosure of funding sources, editorial guidelines, and operational policies such as their correction, byline, sourcing, and comments policies — practices which are part and parcel of universal journalistic standards.

The high score in the **Content Pillar** implies that the content assessed were generally unbiased, avoided targeting individuals, groups, or institutions, used minimal sensational language in the article and headlines and in general consistently included fact-based ledes. However, most of the sites received poor scores in sourcing and attribution.

Figure 3. Average pillar scores by site risk rating level



Source: Global Disinformation Index

Pillar overview

Content pillar

The **Content pillar** focuses on the reliability of the content provided on the site. Analysis for this pillar was based on an assessment of twenty anonymised articles for each domain. These articles were drawn from the most frequently shared pieces of content during the data collection period and a sample of content pertaining to topics which present a disinformation risk, such as politics and health. All article scores were based on a scale of zero (worst) to 100 (best).

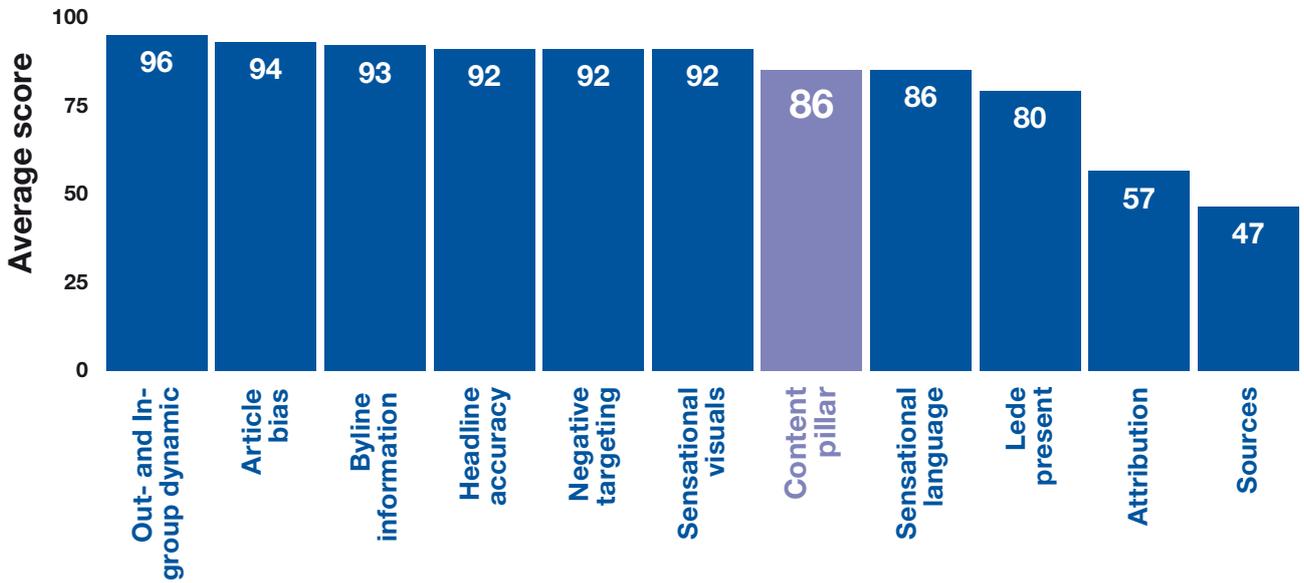
Bangladeshi media outlets performed strongly in the **Content Pillar**. All the sites scored above 80, a relatively higher score, and 15 sites scored higher than the sample average. According to this analysis, articles on the assessed sites were fairly unbiased. In addition, Bangladeshi newspapers generally avoided negative targeting of subjects including minorities, migrants and political groups. The inferior or superior portrayal of specific groups in stories was also extremely rare. The byline information in content reflected authorship transparency. Headlines were mostly accurate and gave a clear indication of the kind of content within the article. This means that the content posed fewer risks of clickbait journalism or spreading disinformation. The use of clickbait elements, such as sensational

headlines, exclamation marks in headline text and sensationalism in visual presentation, were also rare. On average, the assessed news sites scored more than 90 in all these indicators.

In writing fact-based ledes, Bangladesh websites had an average score of 80, and about half of the sites in the study scored above this average. This indicates that most of the domains started their articles with fact-based ledes that help readers understand and verify the main facts of a story. However, four sites scored less than 70 in this indicator.

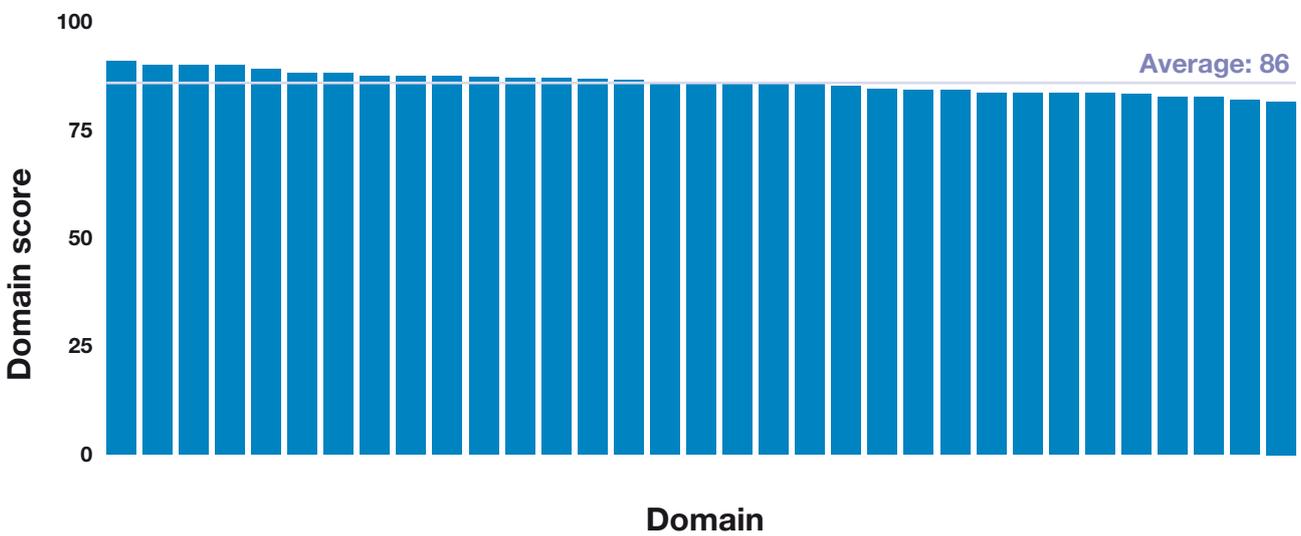
For Bangladeshi sites, sources and attribution are relatively low-performing areas in the **Content pillar**, with average scores of 47 and 57, respectively. Nineteen out of the 33 sites scored below the sample average in sourcing, and 22 sites scored below average in attribution. This means that the assessed content lacked diversity in the use of sources or simply relied on a single source. The source of quotes, statistics and information were not well identified and comments were often paraphrased. Many sites vaguely identified sources of photos and external contents as “collected” or “from the internet;” even photos from archives were used in articles without identifying them as archives. This reflected a tendency to use photos from social media and the internet without proper attribution, raising disinformation and ethics-related concerns.

Figure 4. Average Content pillar scores by indicator



Source: Global Disinformation Index

Figure 5. Content pillar scores by site



Source: Global Disinformation Index

Operations pillar

The **Operations Pillar** assesses the operational and editorial integrity of a news site, in terms of both its published policies and adherence to those policies. All scores were based on a scale of zero (worst) to 100 (best), as scored by the country reviewers according to the information available on the site and elsewhere online at the time of the study.

The low average score of 29 in the **Operations Pillar** reflected the lack of operational transparency in Bangladeshi news domains. Out of 33 sites, only five sites managed to score 40, while five sites scored below 20. Of the six indicators in the **Operations Pillar**, media sites scored better in disclosing ownership (69), comment policies (55), and editorial guidelines (32) while the average scores in funding structure (10), sourcing and byline policies (7) and accuracy policies (3) were extremely poor.

There were visible disclosures of publishers and ownership in almost all sites in some form. While many provided the name of parent companies, neither the news domains nor the websites disclosed the beneficial ownership. Sites received scores between 25 and 100 in the ownership indicator, reflecting a wide range of disclosure practices. Disclosing information on the ownership and funding structure provides the reader an opportunity to evaluate the existence of conflicts of interest and of editorial independence. However, Bangladeshi media sites received an average score of only 10 in funding transparency indicators, including information on operational funds, revenue sources and financial disclosure.

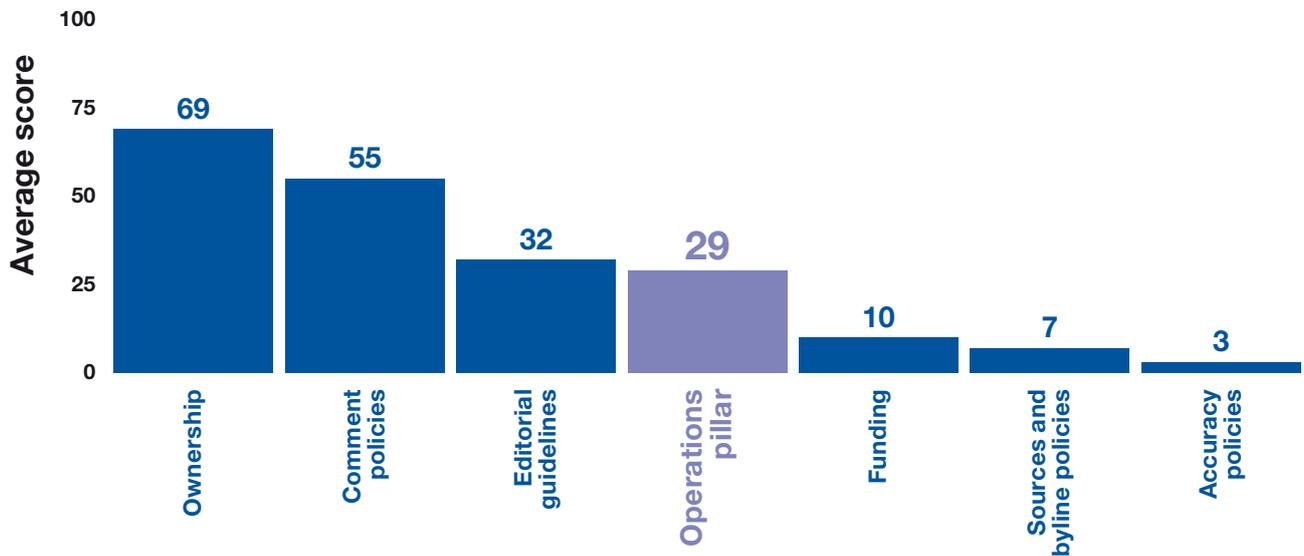
Most of the sites did not disclose major operational policies on comments, accuracy, and sourcing. Among the sites that allowed readers to comment on their posts, nine did not provide any guidelines or policies

for reader comments or moderation. Unregulated and uncontrolled comments create risks for disinformation, as a comment section allows any actor to create and share potential disinformation at will. Only five sites scored above thirty in the comment policy indicator. During the assessment, 15 sites were found to have disabled comment options. This contributed to the relatively higher scores for this indicator, as not having a comment section precludes the risks of comment-related disinformation.

Assessed media sites scored the lowest in disclosing policies that allow the audience to understand the process and practices of content production (i.e. pre-publication fact-checking, post-publication corrections, sourcing and use of bylines). Twenty-eight news sites scored zero in accuracy policy disclosures. None of the assessed sites provided a policy for fact-checking or disclosed any staff responsible for fact-checking. The relatively higher scores in the editorial guidelines indicator came from sites disclosing the name of their editor-in-chief, a statement of editorial independence in some form, and their separation of editorial leadership and ownership. However, most media sites did not publish their own guidelines or Code of Ethics for the production and distribution of journalistic content.

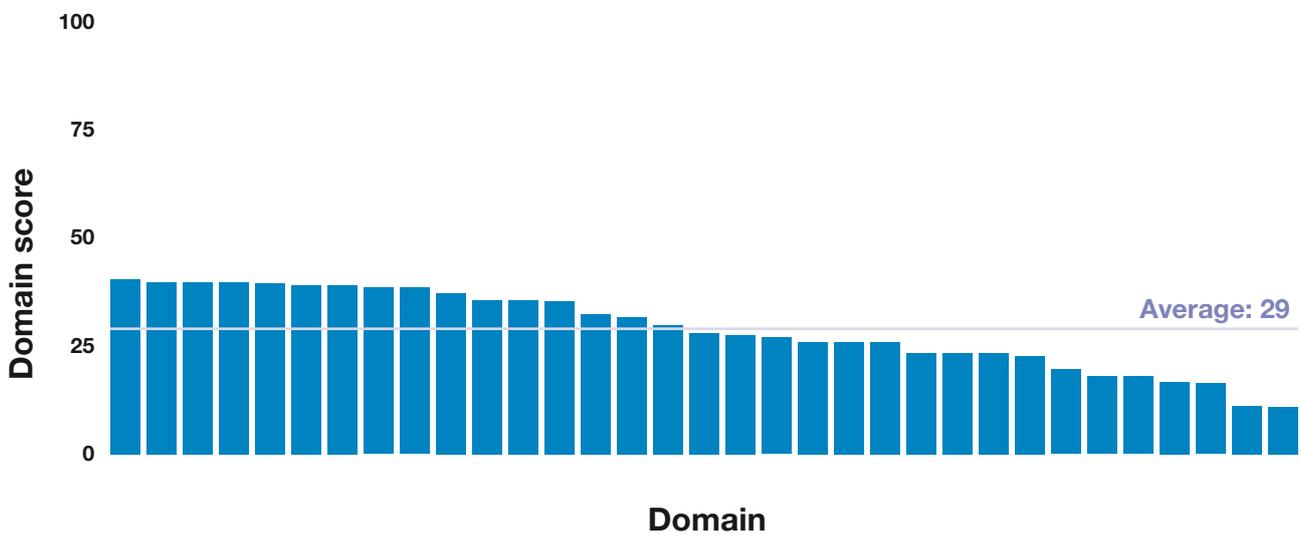
Almost all sites clearly separated opinions and editorials from the news articles, but none provided a byline policy. They also frequently did not disclose guidelines defining how information is sourced, anonymous sourcing is handled and user-generated content is used. This resulted in a single-digit score in sourcing and byline policies contributing to the poor performance in the **Operations Pillar**.

Figure 6. Average Operations pillar scores by indicator



Source: Global Disinformation Index

Figure 7. Operations pillar scores by site



Source: Global Disinformation Index

Conclusion

Overall, the Bangladesh media scene is vibrant and has been thriving in recent years, but combating disinformation by building trust in operations and content remains a major challenge.

Bangladeshi media sites in this study produced fairly credible content and broadly adhered to universal standards of journalistic production. However, they lacked transparency in disclosing funding information and operational policies that would enable their audience to assess their reliability and trustworthiness. This operational opacity was the main source of disinformation risk in the market.

The findings showed many of the issues afflicting the Bangladeshi websites are operational and can easily be fixed by adopting and making transparent universal standards of good journalistic practices as agreed upon by the Journalism Trust Initiative. For example, most websites consistently fared poorly when it came to declaring their editorial and accuracy guidelines and funding. Following the tradition of “print line” in a newspaper, the websites – at the footer – are found to disclose ownership information to some extent. However, best practices of publishing funding sources and accuracy policies were widely absent. Yet, addressing these shortfalls can have a wide-ranging impact in boosting trustworthiness in these domains’ content. Sites should also have clear policies on how they address errors in their reporting and how they source a story, as poor and opaque sourcing remains a major challenge to increasing trust in their stories. Some of the deficiencies also stemmed from poor sourcing and attribution practices, including vague attribution for sources of photos and frequent usage of photos from social media and global agencies seemingly without permission, affecting the reliability of their news content.

For this study, all assessed sites fell in the medium and high-risk categories, which are among the middle range of disinformation risk ratings. However, the

sites in both segments can graduate to a lower level of disinformation risk by being more transparent and accountable to their readers and further improving the quality of content. To address these shortcomings, news sites could take action to:

- Publish beneficial ownership and funding information on the site and make it easily accessible to the audience so they have a clear idea of editorial independence and any potential conflicts of interest.
- Publish a corrections policy that guarantees publication of the correction for any inaccuracies or errors and states the circumstances under which content is corrected or removed. Similarly, they can ensure that corrected articles are found on a specific “Corrections” page and potential errors are communicated to the media.
- Publish and maintain a bylines policy that guarantees that the identity of the author is featured in articles and outlines the circumstances under which sites choose not to do so. Byline information and transparent byline policies increases credibility of the articles and accountability to the readers.
- Publish statements of editorial independence and guidelines for pre-publication fact-checking and inform the audience that a rigorous journalistic process is maintained to verify each fact and ensure the accuracy of the published content.
- Publish sourcing guidelines that clearly state how the outlets identify and source elements used in the published content and that clearly mention the circumstances when anonymous sources are used. Outlets should ensure that these guidelines are maintained and sources are adequately attributed in the published content.
- Use direct quotes instead of relying on paraphrases and properly attribute photos and videos taken from social media and the internet. These are potential sources of disinformation and have, in the past, been blamed for triggering violence and race riots.²⁷

Appendix: Methodology

The Global Disinformation Index evaluates the level of disinformation risk of a country's online media market. The country's online media market is represented by a sample of 30-35 news domains, selected on the basis of online traffic and social media followers, as well as geographical coverage and racial, ethnic and religious community representation.

The index was composed of the **Content** and **Operations pillars**. The pillars were, in turn, composed of 16 indicators. The **Content pillar** included indicators that assess elements and characteristics of each domain's content to capture its level of adversariality, credibility, sensationalism, and impartiality. The **Operations pillar's** indicators evaluated the transparency and enforcement of policies and rules that a specific domain followed to ensure the reliability and quality of the news being published.

Site selection

The market sample for the study was developed based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative criteria. GDI created a list of the 50 news websites with the greatest traffic in the media market. This list was internally vetted to gauge relevance and reach. Then the list was reduced to 35 sites, ensuring that the sample provided adequate geographical coverage and racial, ethnic and religious community representation. The final media market sample reflected the set of sites for which complete data could be collected throughout the review process. International news outlets are generally excluded, because their risk ratings are assessed in the market from which they originate.²⁸ News aggregators are also excluded, so that all included sites are assessed on their original content. The final media market sample reflects the complete set of between 30 to 35 sites for which complete data could be collected throughout the review process.

Data collection

The **Content pillar** indicators were based on the review of a sample of 20 articles published by each domain. Ten of these articles were randomly selected among a domain's most frequently shared articles on Facebook, typically within a two-month period. The remaining ten articles were randomly selected from a group of the domain's articles covering topics that are likely to carry disinformation narratives.

The sampled articles were anonymised by removing any information that allowed the analysts to identify the publisher or the author of the articles. Each anonymised article was reviewed by three country analysts who were trained on the GDI **Content pillar** codebook. For each anonymised article, the country analysts answered a set of 13 questions designed to evaluate the elements and characteristics of the article text and its headline. After the information was recorded based on the anonymised text, the analysts subsequently reviewed how the article was presented on the domain.

The **Operations pillar** was based on the information gathered during the manual assessment of each domain performed by the country analysts. The country analysts answered a set of 72 questions designed to evaluate each domain's ownership, management, and funding structure, editorial independence, principles and guidelines, attribution policies, error-correction and fact-checking policies, and rules and policies for the comments section. The reviewers answered a set of seven additional questions to capture documented incidents of editorial and ethical violations of the site's stated guidelines. The analysts gathered evidence to support their assessments as they performed each Operations and Enforcement review.

Data analysis and indicator construction

The data gathered by the country analysts for the **Content pillar** were used to compute ten indicators. The **Content pillar** indicators included in the final risk rating were: *Article bias*, *Attribution*, *Byline information*, *Headline accuracy*, *Out-group and in-group dynamic*, *Lede present*, *Negative targeting*, *Sensational language*, *Sensational visuals*, and *Sources*. For each indicator, values were normalised to a scale of 0 to 100. The pillar score for each domain was the weighted average of all the scores for all of the pillar's indicators, and ranged from 0 to 100. Table 4 gives the weights.

Table 2. Content pillar indicator weights

Indicator	Weight
Article bias	1
Negative targeting	1
Out-group and in-group dynamic	1
Sensational language	1
Sensational visuals	1
Sources	0.5
Attribution	0.5
Headline accuracy	0.5
Lede present	0.25
Byline information	0.25

Source: Global Disinformation Index

For the **Operations pillar**, the answers gathered during the Operations and Enforcement reviews by the country analysts were translated into a set of sub-indicators. The six indicators were calculated as the averages of these sub-indicator scores. The resulting **Operations pillar** indicators were: *Accuracy policies*, *Comment policies*, *Editorial guidelines*, *Funding*, *Ownership*, and *Sources and byline policies*. For each indicator, values were normalised to a scale of 0 to 100. The domain score for the **Operations pillar** was the average score across indicators. The complete list of sub-indicators and indicators for both pillars is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Global Disinformation Index pillars and indicators

Pillar	Indicator	Sub-indicators	Unit of analysis	Definition	Rationale
Content	Article bias	None	Article	Rating for the degree of bias in the article. Biased writing misrepresents facts, is based on faulty logic, and/or fails to include or unfairly engages with different views on the story.	Indicative of neutral fact-based reporting or well-rounded analysis
	Negative targeting			Rating for whether and to what degree the story negatively targets a specific individual or group	Indicative of hate speech, bias or an adversarial narrative
	Out-group and in-group dynamic			Rating for whether and to what degree the story builds upon or establish that one group is inferior and/or that one group is superior based on identity and to what degree	Indicative of hate speech, bias or an adversarial narrative
	Sensational language			Rating for the degree of sensationalism in the article text	Indicative of neutral fact-based reporting or well-rounded analysis
	Sensational visuals			Rating for the degree of sensationalism in the visual presentation of the article	Indicative of neutral fact-based reporting or well-rounded analysis
	Sources			Rating for the quantity and quality of the story's sources	Indicative of fact-based reporting and high journalistic standards
	Attribution			Rating for whether the story's statistics, quotations, and external media are clearly attributed to a source	Indicative of fact-based reporting and high journalistic standards
	Headline accuracy			Rating for how accurately the story's headline describes the content of the story	Indicative of clickbait
	Lede present			Rating for whether the article begins with a fact-based lede	Indicative of fact-based reporting and high journalistic standards
	Byline information			Rating for how much information is provided in the article's byline	Attribution of stories creates accountability for their veracity
Operations	Editorial guidelines	Editorial independence	Site	Rating for the number of policies identified on the site (adjusted if there are episodes of editorial interference or conflict of interest)	Assesses the degree of editorial independence and the policies in place to mitigate conflicts of interest
		Adherence to narrative		Rating for the degree to which the site is likely to adhere to an ideological affiliation, based on its published editorial positions	Indicative of politicised or ideological editorial decision making
		Content guidelines		Rating for the number of policies identified on the site (adjusted if the site violates guidelines)	Assesses the policies in place to ensure that factual information is reported without bias
		News vs. analysis		Rating for the number of policies and practices identified on the site (adjusted if the site violates guidelines)	Assesses the policies in place to ensure that readers can distinguish between news and opinion content
	Accuracy policies	Pre-publication fact-checking		Rating for the number of policies and practices identified on the site (adjusted if the site violates guidelines)	Assesses policies to ensure that only accurate information is reported
		Post-publication corrections		Rating for the number of policies and practices identified on the site (adjusted if the site practices stealth editing)	Assesses policies to ensure that needed corrections are adequately and transparently disseminated
	Sources and byline policies	None		Rating for the number of policies and practices identified on the site (adjusted if the site violates guidelines)	Assesses policies regarding the attribution of stories, facts, and media (either publicly or anonymously); indicative of policies that ensure accurate facts, authentic media and accountability for stories
	Funding	Diversified incentive structure		Rating for the number of revenue sources identified on the site (adjusted if there are episodes of editorial interference or conflict of interests)	Indicative of possible conflicts of interest stemming for over-reliance on one or few sources of revenue
		Accountability to readership		Rating based on whether reader subscriptions or donations are identified as a revenue source	Indicative of accountability for high-quality information over content that drives ad revenue
		Transparent funding		Rating based on the degree of transparency the site provides regarding its sources of funding	Indicative of the transparency that is required to monitor the incentives and conflicts of interest that can arise from opaque revenue sources
	Ownership	Owner-operator division		Rating based on the number of distinct executive or board level financial and editorial decision makers listed on the site (adjusted if there are episodes of editorial interference or conflict of interest)	Indicative of a separation between financial and editorial decision making, to avoid conflicts of interest
		Transparent ownership		Rating based on the degree of transparency the site provides regarding its ownership structure	Indicative of the transparency that is required to monitor the incentives and conflicts of interest that can arise from opaque ownership structures
	Comment policies	Policies		Rating for the number of policies identified on the site	Assesses policies to reduce disinformation in user-generated content
		Moderation		Rating for the mechanisms to enforce comment policies identified on the site	Assesses the mechanism to enforce policies to reduce disinformation in user-generated content

Source: Global Disinformation Index

Risk ratings

The overall index score for each domain was the average of the pillar scores. The domains were then classified on the basis of a five-category risk scale based on the overall index score. The risk categories were defined based on a reference dataset that was

standardised to fit a normal distribution with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The standardised scores and their distance from the mean were used to determine the bands for each risk level, given in Table 4.

Table 4. Disinformation risk levels

Risk level	Lower bound	Upper bound	Standard deviation from mean
Minimum risk	80.28	100	> 1.5
Low risk	68.84	80.27	> 0.5 and ≤ 1.5
Medium risk	57.41	68.83	> -0.5 and ≤ 0.5
High risk	45.97	57.40	> -1.5 and ≤ -0.5
Maximum risk	0	45.96	≤ -1.5

Source: Global Disinformation Index

Endnotes

- 1 The GDI assessment framework is outlined in the annex of this report.
- 2 USAID: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z9T6.pdf.
- 3 Dhaka Times 24: <https://www.dhakatimes24.com/2022/10/26/284669>.
- 4 Centre for Governance Studies: <https://cgs-bd.com/article/2328/Media-Ownership-in-Bangladesh--Why-More-Media-Outlets-Does-Not-Mean-More-Media-Freedom>.
- 5 The Business Standard: <https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/given-our-pace-development-its-time-improve-press-freedoms-434550>.
- 6 The Daily Star: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/cases-under-dsa-almost-all-accused-kept-hanging-3221031>.
- 7 Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI): <https://mrdibd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/News-Literacy-in-Bangladesh-National-Survey.pdf>.
- 8 The Daily Star: <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/bangladeshi-tv-channels-lose-20pc-viewers-1849969>.
- 9 Statista: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/dmo/digital-advertising/bangladesh>.
- 10 Jansen, B. & Mullen, T. (2008). Sponsored search: an overview of the concept, history, and technology. International Journal of Electronic Business. Retrieved 12 January 2023, from https://faculty.ist.psu.edu/jjansen/academic/pubs/jansen_overview_sponsored_search.pdf.
- 11 Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2022/04/27/entravision-mediadonuts-enters-the-bangladesh-market>.
- 12 Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI): https://mrdibd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Media_Viability_Study.pdf.
- 13 International Media Support: <https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/BD-Media-Mapping-Report-Short.pdf>.
- 14 Prothom Alo English: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/o9i009reqj>.
- 15 Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/2022/07/27/ifc-50-of-the-population-will-move-to-urban-areas-by-2050>.
- 16 DataReportal: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-bangladesh>.
- 17 USAID: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z9T6.pdf.
- 18 The list excluded unreliable news sites and considered only those articles that BOOM Bangladesh itself fact-checked.
- 19 BOOM Bangladesh: <https://www.boombd.com/fact-file/fake-news-in-the-mainstream-media-2022-somoy-tv-is-at-the-top-again-20675>.
- 20 LIRNEasia: <https://lirneasia.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Misinformation-in-Bangladesh-A-Brief-Primer.pdf>.
- 21 The Business Standard: <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/fact-check-must-tackling-disinformation-experts-535094>.
- 22 LIRNEasia: <https://lirneasia.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Misinformation-in-Bangladesh-A-Brief-Primer.pdf>.
- 23 Reporters Without Borders: <https://rsf.org/en/country/bangladesh>.
- 24 New Age Bangladesh: <https://www.newagebd.net/article/169577/dsa-threatens-freedom-of-press-editors-council>.
- 25 The Business Standard: <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/most-dsa-cases-filed-ruling-party-people-study-408398>.
- 26 Reporters Without Borders: <https://rsf.org/en/country/bangladesh>.
- 27 Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUK237688882620120930>.
- 28 In select cases, international news outlets may be included in a study if the domestic market is small, the sites are considered highly relevant, the content on the site is specific to the market assessed, and GDI has not developed a risk rating for that site elsewhere.



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