

FAKE NEWS POLL



66% of Respondents indicated that **fake news is very prevalent** in Nigeria

Media platforms that propagate fake news the most in Nigeria



52%
Social Media



21%
Word of Mouth



15%
Internet



8%
Radio



3%
Television



1%
Newspaper

Some effects of fake news in our society



35%
Hatred/Violence



25%
Panic/Tension



15%
Misleading



10%
Disunity/Tribalism



5%
Hinder Societal Progress



5%
Insecurity

Some ways to curb the spread of fake news in Nigeria



The New Media; A Major Breeding Ground for Fake News in Nigeria

Abuja, Nigeria. September 11th, 2018 – A new public opinion poll conducted by NOIPolls revealed that new media (social media, blogs, etc.) is a major breeding ground for fake news in the country as indicated by 67 percent of Nigerians. The natural instinct for some Nigerians to scrutinize the authenticity of a news report before sharing has been greatly reduced as some social media users want to be among the first to share a news story, be it on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or WhatsApp etc. This trend of sharing news report without validating its source is capable of triggering mob action, agitation, violence and in extreme cases, national security implications. This finding collaborates reports from a two-day conference organised by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) in Abuja, revealing that the emergence of the new media, particularly social media, has given rise to unrestricted influx of fake news in Nigeria.¹

More findings revealed that radio (39 percent) has remained the primary source of information for most Nigerians despite the emergence of social media. Also, perception on trust across media platforms regarding authentic information dissemination showed that Nigerians are more likely to trust information from traditional media; Television (59 percent), Radio (53 percent) and Newspaper (48 percent)) than other sources such as Facebook, Word of mouth, Instagram, etc.

The poll results also revealed that the issue of fake news is very prevalent in the country as indicated by 93 percent of the respondents interviewed. The effects of fake news cannot be over emphasized as it is capable of upsetting the country's social balance. In line with this, a larger share (35 percent) of Nigerians lamented that fake news is capable of promoting and encouraging hatred and violence whereas, 25 percent believe it can cause panic and tension amongst other negative effects. In an attempt to create awareness on these effects of fake news in the nation, the Federal Government launched a national campaign against fake news, an initiative which 56 percent of the respondents claim to be unaware of, implying that more effort must be made in spreading the campaign especially at grassroots level as mentioned by 30 percent of the respondents that there should be sensitization on the dangers of rumour mongering and the spread of fake news in the country.

These findings corroborate some of the recommendations made during the 2-day conference on fake news propagation in Nigeria organized by CDD. For instance, efforts must be taken to improve digital and media literacy especially among the growing population of young internet users, encouraging them to do a fact-check and corroborate information before they hit the share button. Additionally, it is pertinent to effectively confront the challenge of fake news as 25 percent of the respondents suggested promoting professionalism amongst journalists in both traditional media and social media in Nigeria. These are the key highlights from the Fake News poll conducted in the week commencing **August, 6th 2018**.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

One of the major threats to peace and security in Nigeria today is fake news, defined as “completely false information, photos and videos purposefully created and spread to confuse or misinform” others. Undoubtedly, false news is now the electrified third rail in global politics, Nigerian politics included as its vast reach, scope, and expansiveness retains huge capacity for destructive consequences. Worryingly, there is no generally agreed remedy and fake news is bad news and bad news means trouble. While rhetoric has always been the bedrock of political complication, false news

¹ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/279238-fake-news-threat-to-existence-of-nigerian-media-fg.html>

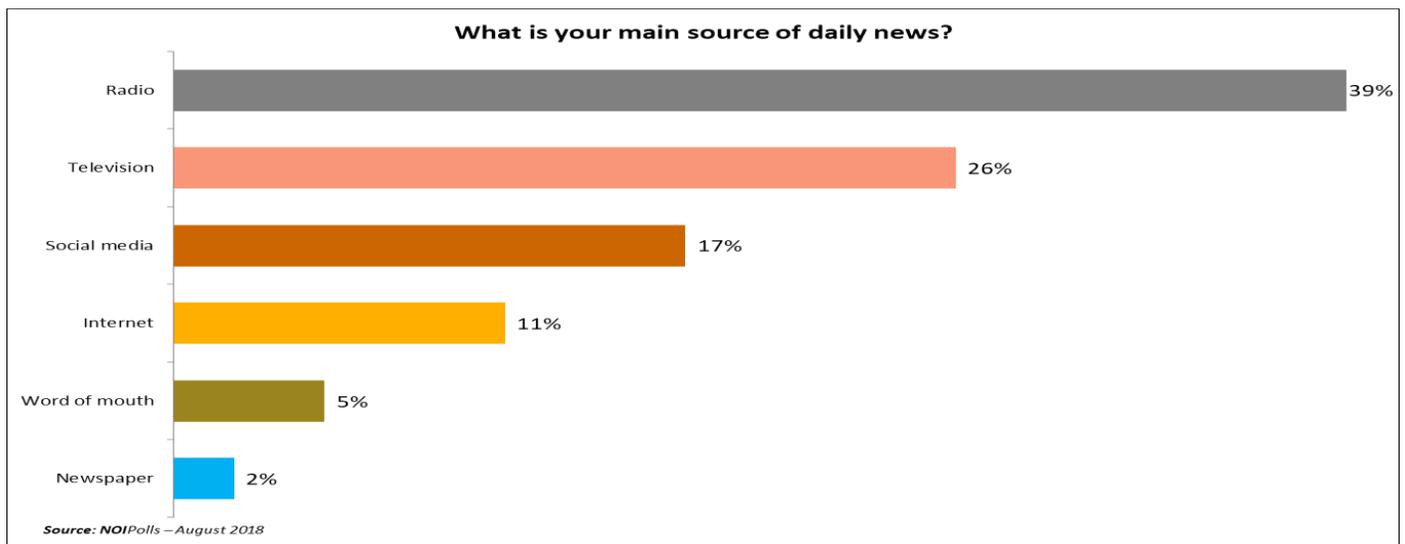
stretches rhetoric beyond the acceptable. Moreover, false news is primarily fuelled by politics and tends to peak during electoral periods.

Recently, the federal government launched a campaign against fake news in Nigeria as the issue of fake news has become a threat in the country. Recently, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) organized a conference where stakeholders discussed ways of solving the spread of fake news especially as it relates to elections. The former Independent National Election Commission (INEC) Chairman Professor Jega, called for the enactment of laws, as well as adherence to subsisting legislations to achieve this goal, noting that the ugly trend couldn't be tackled through mere civic education of critical stakeholders. Also, the current INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, stated that the commission was battling with the issue of fake news and promised to liaise with stakeholders to strengthen existing legislation in the electoral process to tackle problems associated with fake news. In line with this, NOIPolls conducted a survey to gauge the perception of Nigerians regarding the prevalence, effects and possible suggestions to curb fake news in Nigeria.

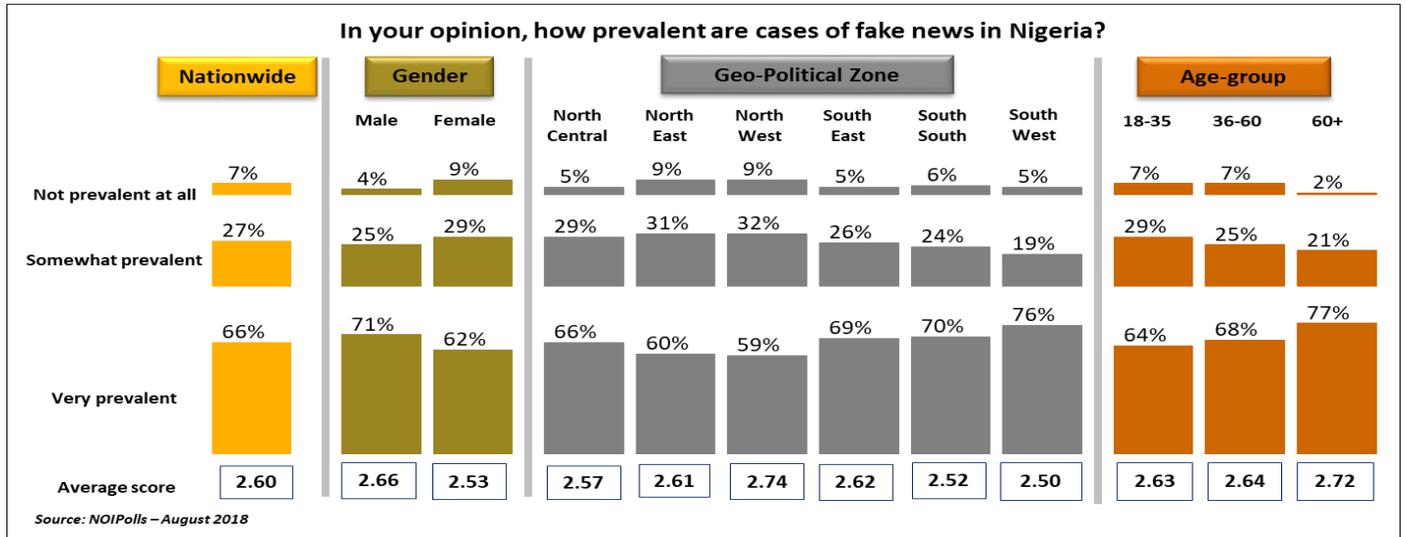
SURVEY FINDINGS

The initial question sought to assess the awareness of Nigerians regarding the campaign against fake news in Nigeria and analysis revealed that 44 percent of the respondents interviewed are aware of the campaign. On the other hand, 56 percent, which formed the majority, claimed that they are not aware of the campaign.

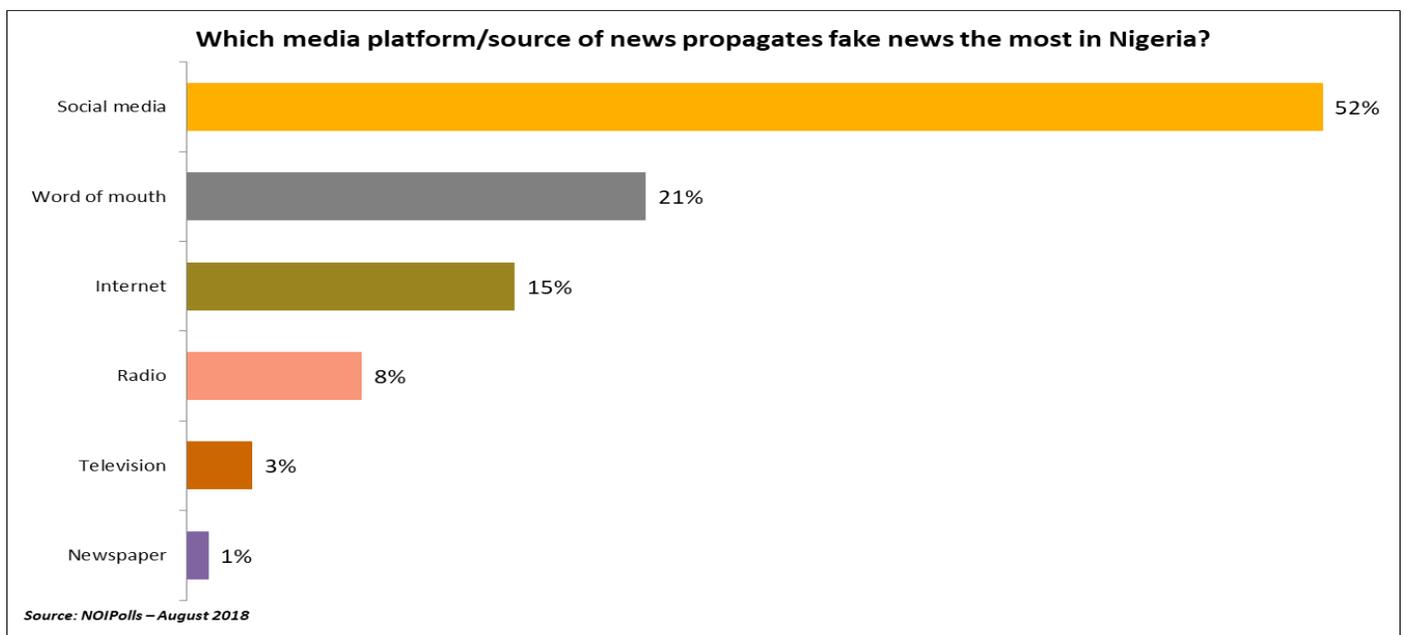
Further findings revealed that the main source of daily news for Nigerians is radio (39 percent). Implying that a larger fraction of Nigerians depends on the news desks of various radio stations within their localities for information on happenings in the country. Other sources of daily news for Nigerians includes; Television (26 percent), Social media (17 percent), Internet (11 percent), Word of mouth (5 percent) and Newspapers (2 percent).



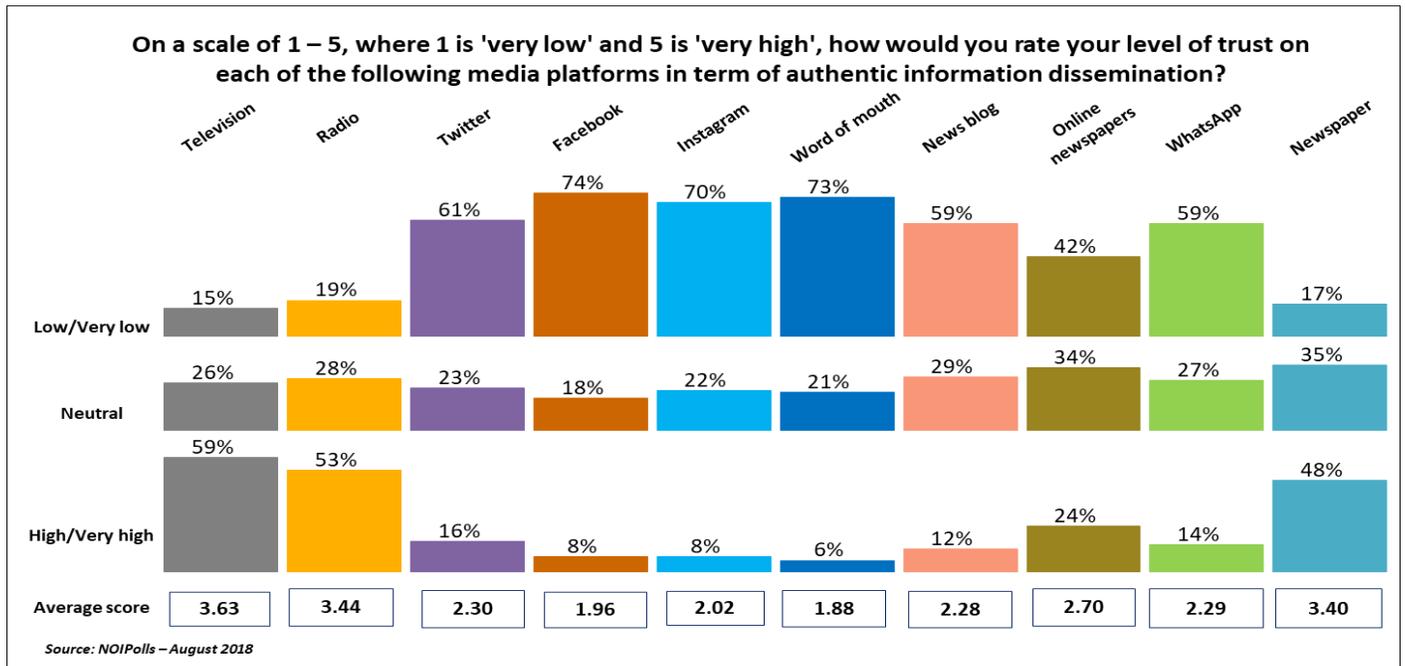
In recent times, access to information may not be much of an issue however, it becomes worrisome if information is not reliable. Thus, discerning truth from untruth has become a herculean task. Citizens, development practitioners and other stakeholders around the world have raised concerns about the prevalence of misinformation in contemporary politics mainly because of its characters and manifestations. With this in mind, the poll result showed that a larger proportion of Nigerians (93 percent) acknowledged that there is a high prevalence of cases of fake news in the country.



Rapidly evolving technology and the changing media landscape have reshaped communication mechanism to be instant, participatory, and global in scale. Modern communication platforms have afforded a large majority of people to communicate effortlessly with a wider audience. Developing events around the world can now be tracked on the go. However, recent developments around the world have proved that media platforms have assumed a destructive dimension as information is power, misinformation could directly or indirectly influence civil unrest, mob action and in some cases violence. In line with this, the poll also revealed that social media is the platform that propagates fake news the most as stated by a larger proportion of respondents interviewed. Although radio is the main source of news for Nigerians, social media coming top in this category suggests the increasing dependence on it as a source of information in Nigeria.



Subsequently, the respondents were asked to rate their level of trust on some media platforms and the poll results revealed that the traditional media Television (59 percent), Radio (53 percent) and Newspaper (48 percent)) are the most trusted media platforms. On the other hand, Facebook (74 percent), Word of mouth (73 percent) and Instagram (70 percent) got a very poor rating as Nigerians do not trust the information from such platforms. This indicative of the lack of trust Nigerians have on some media platforms particularly the new media thus, there is need for continuous education as the importance of social media cannot be neglected in a society that is getting too busy and distracted.

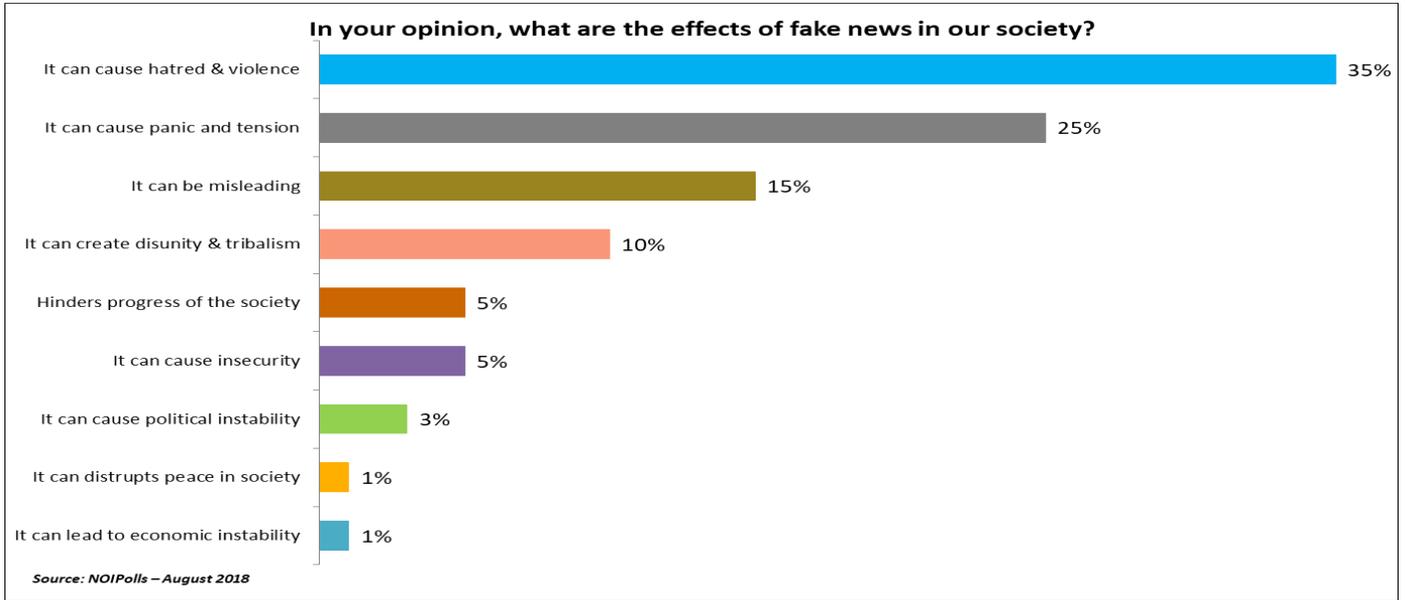


The effects or impact of fake news in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized; from its ability to impact on governance, influence corporate reputation as well as heating-up the polity. Fake news, through its altering of pictures, videos and absolute fairytale has generated tensions in Nigeria and the effects are here with us all.² Given the influence of this threat to the society, perception of Nigerians were gauged and the poll result showed that 35 percent, which formed the majority, admitted that it can cause hatred and violence. Further giving credence to this finding that fake news spreads hate and violent outbursts, is a recent report by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which reported that fake news circulating in the social media worsened the clashes between the farmers and the herdsmen in Nigeria³.

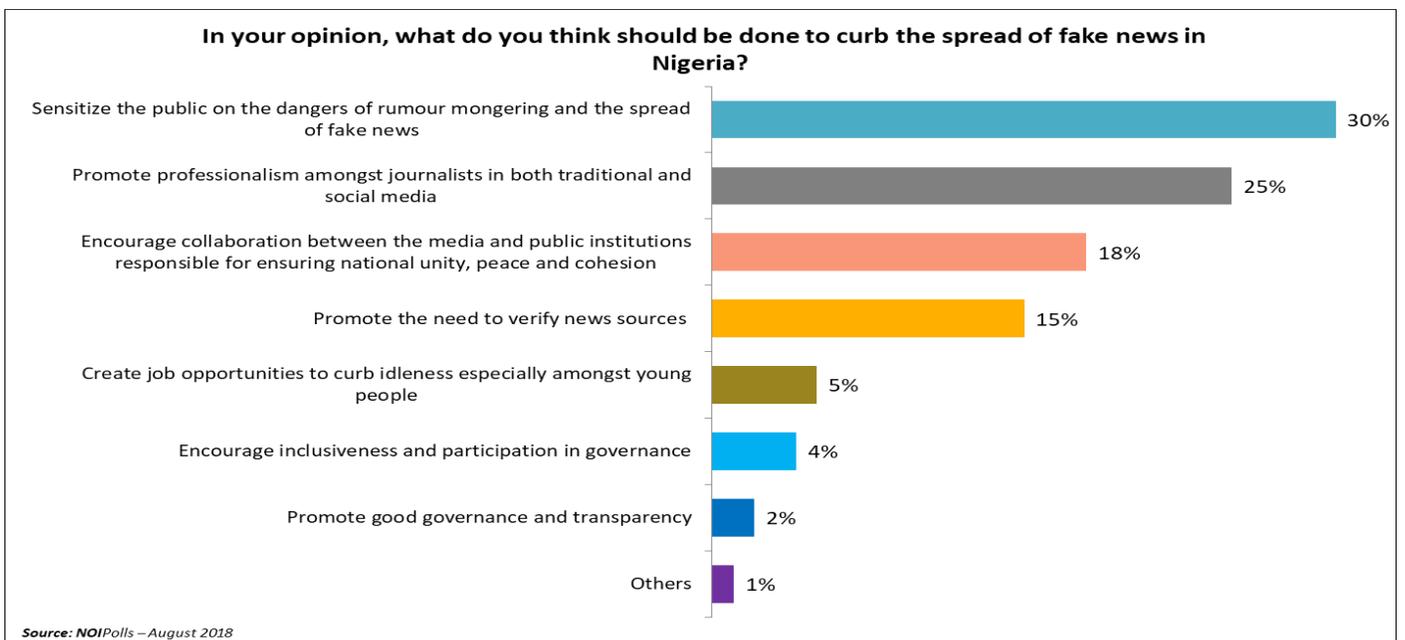
In addition, 25 percent of Nigerians stated that fake news can cause panic and tension in the society; another 15 percent of Nigerians opined that fake news can be misleading and a further 10 percent stated that it can create disunity and tribalism in the society amongst other negative effects of fakes news mentioned.

² <http://saharareporters.com/2018/07/17/it-kills-us-let%E2%80%99s-kill-fake-news-yekeen-akinwale>

³ <https://guardian.ng/news/fake-news-aggravating-herders-farmers-crises-in-nigeria-bbc/>



Consequently, having established that the impact of fake news can be devastating to a nation, the poll revealed that 30 percent of Nigerians recommended sensitizing the public on the dangers of rumour mongering and spreading fake news. Also, as a way of curtailing several extremist groups and unprofessional media outlets from spreading propaganda, 25 percent suggested promoting professionalism amongst journalists in both traditional media and social media, whereas 18 percent advocated encouraging collaboration between the media and public institutions responsible for ensuring national unity, peace and cohesion. Further analysis showed that 15 percent of Nigerians suggested that more Nigerians should be educated on the need to verify news sources amongst other recommendations.



In conclusion, the poll result has established that there is a high prevalence of fake news propagation, exposed the major sources of fake news and also highlighted the major effects of fake news in Nigeria. Hence, it is imperative that

the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and other stakeholders synergize in addressing this spreading of false of false information. As a solution to curb this menace, Nigerians are calling on the government to create an agency that will monitor the authenticity of news that comes through the traditional media and more importantly information from new media (e.g. blogs, social media, and other online news platforms). The reason for the emphasis on new media is because 67 percent of Nigerians mentioned that they get fake news mostly from this source against 12 percent who get from their news traditional media.

Furthermore, as we approach the 2019 elections, social media particularly may likely be used as a modern propaganda spreading technology. Presently, there is no consequence whatsoever for the perpetrators of false news, with the added implication that some media platforms seem reluctant to fact-check before rushing to be the first to put out breaking news. Therefore, it is pertinent that the Federal Government work with various stakeholders including media practitioners and the national legislatures to find a citizen friendly solution to this menace. Leaving the matters unaddressed will spell doom for Nigeria especially as we approach the 2019 general elections.

Survey Methods

The Poll was conducted in the week commencing **August 6th, 2018**. It involved telephone interviews of a random nationwide sample. **1,000** randomly selected phone-owning Nigerians aged 18 years and above, representing the six geopolitical zones in the country, were interviewed. With a sample of this size, we can say with 95% confidence that the results obtained are statistically precise - within a range of plus or minus 3%. NOIPolls Limited, No1 for country specific polling services in West Africa. We conduct periodic opinion polls and studies on various socio-economic and political issues in Nigeria. More information is available at www.noi-polls.com

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Press Contact

The Editor

Email: editor@noi-polls.com