

# Infodemic management & the COVID-19 pandemic

THE LATEST ON THE COVID-19 GLOBAL SITUATION  
& INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT

# Overview

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# Current global situation

As of 29 November 2020, 10:00AM CEST

- **> 61 million cases**
- 5 countries with highest cumulative number of cases



United States of America



India



Brazil



Russian Federation



France

- **> 1.4 million deaths**

- 5 countries with highest cumulative number of deaths



United States of America



Brazil



India



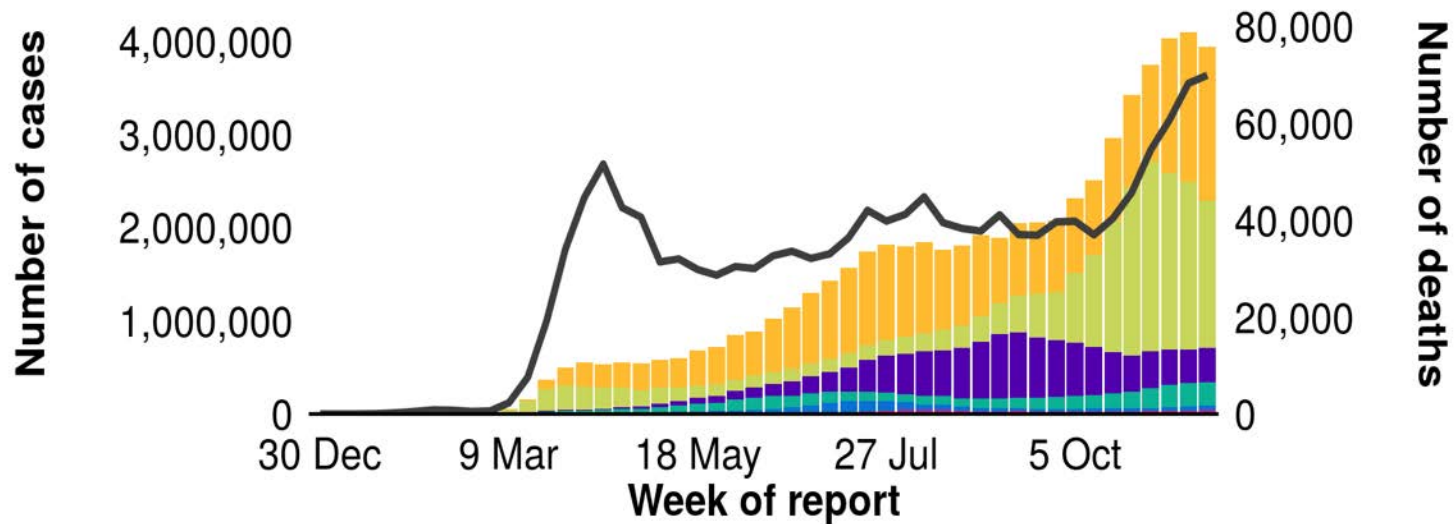
Mexico



The United Kingdom

# Current global situation

Cases reported to WHO as of 29 November 2020, 10:00AM CEST

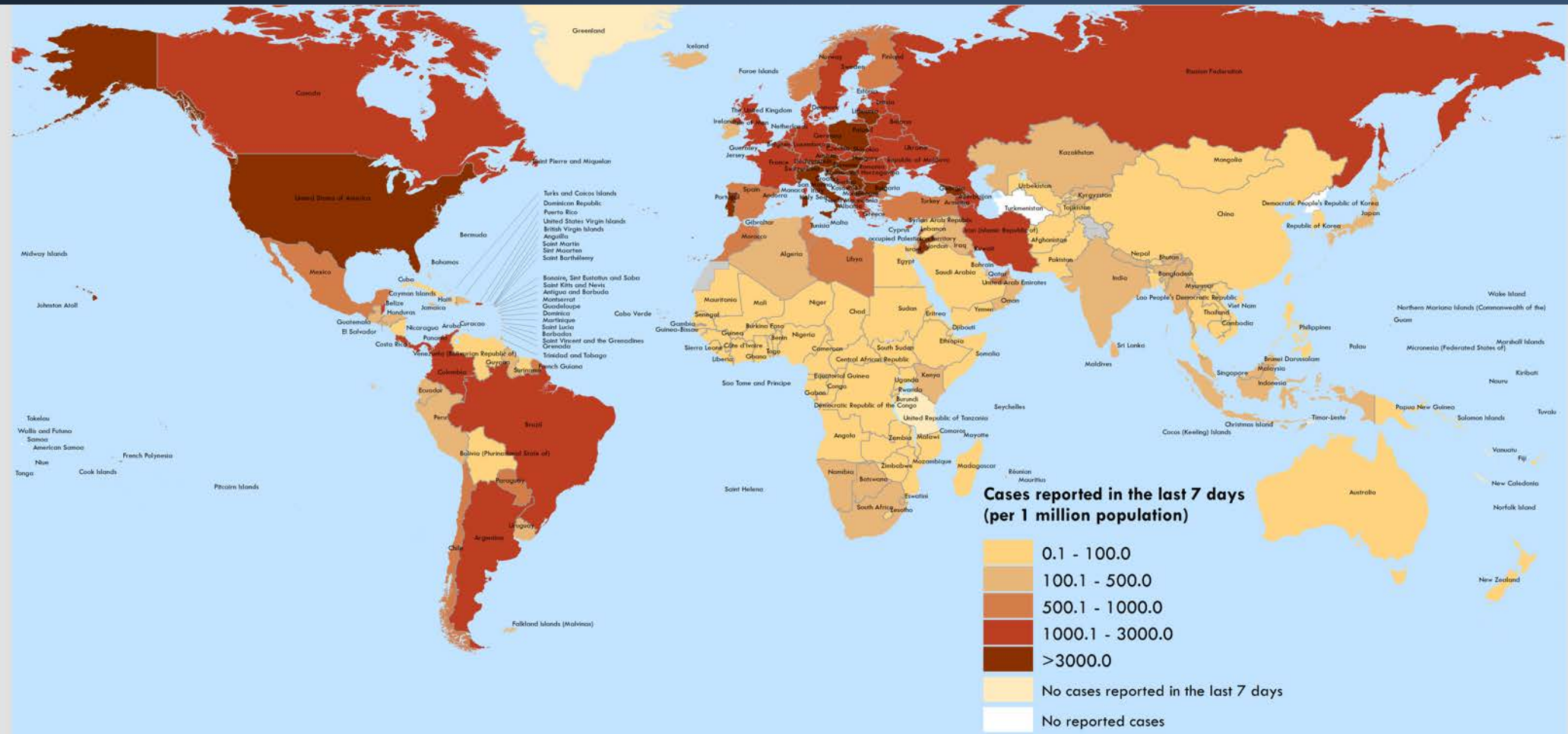


\* Cases depicted by bars; deaths depicted by line

# COVID-19 cases reported in the last 7 days

## Per million population

FROM 23 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00AM CEST to 29 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00 AM CEST



Data Source: World Health Organization,  
United Nations Population Division (population prospect 2020)  
Map Production: WHO Health Emergencies Programme

Not applicable

0 2,500 5,000 km

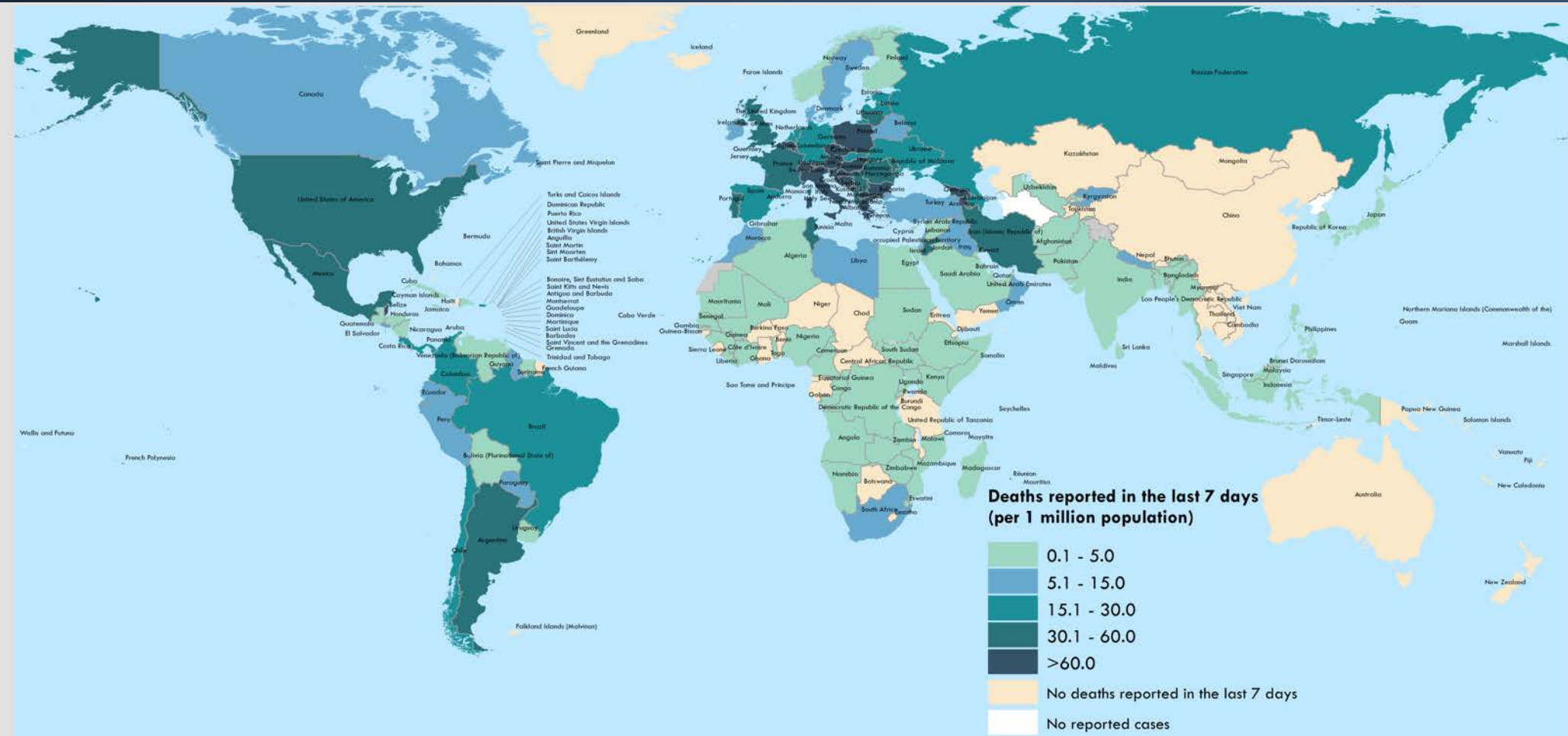
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# COVID-19 death reported in the last 7 days

## Per million population

FROM 23 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00AM CEST to 29 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00 AM CEST



Data Source: World Health Organization,  
United Nations Population Division (population prospect 2020)  
Map Production: WHO Health Emergencies Programme

Not applicable

0 2,500 5,000 km  
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# An infodemic is accompanying the pandemic

- An infodemic is an overabundance of information – good or bad – that makes it difficult for people to make decisions for their health
- Misinformation<sup>1</sup>, disinformation<sup>2</sup> and fake news can cause real harm to health, public trust, social cohesion and emergency response

<sup>1</sup> inaccurate information

<sup>2</sup> false or inaccurate information intended to mislead

”



**We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic. Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous.**

**Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**  
Director-General, World Health Organization

# The COVID-19 infodemic can harm health

- The infodemic can lead to confusion, risk-taking and harmful behaviours
- In some countries, misinformation has generated mistrust in governments, public health authorities and science



**In Iran, approximately:**

- **700 people have died**
- **5,011 have been hospitalized and**
- **90 have developed blindness or eyesight damage**

**after drinking methanol  
as a “cure” for  
coronavirus**

Photo credits:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/iran-700-dead-drinking-alcohol-cure-coronavirus-200427163529629.html>;

[https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/us-coronavirus-update-04-24-20/h\\_d3b4da7f4ba4054207abe4cf783b10f4](https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/us-coronavirus-update-04-24-20/h_d3b4da7f4ba4054207abe4cf783b10f4)

# Technology has changed the way information is produced, distributed and consumed

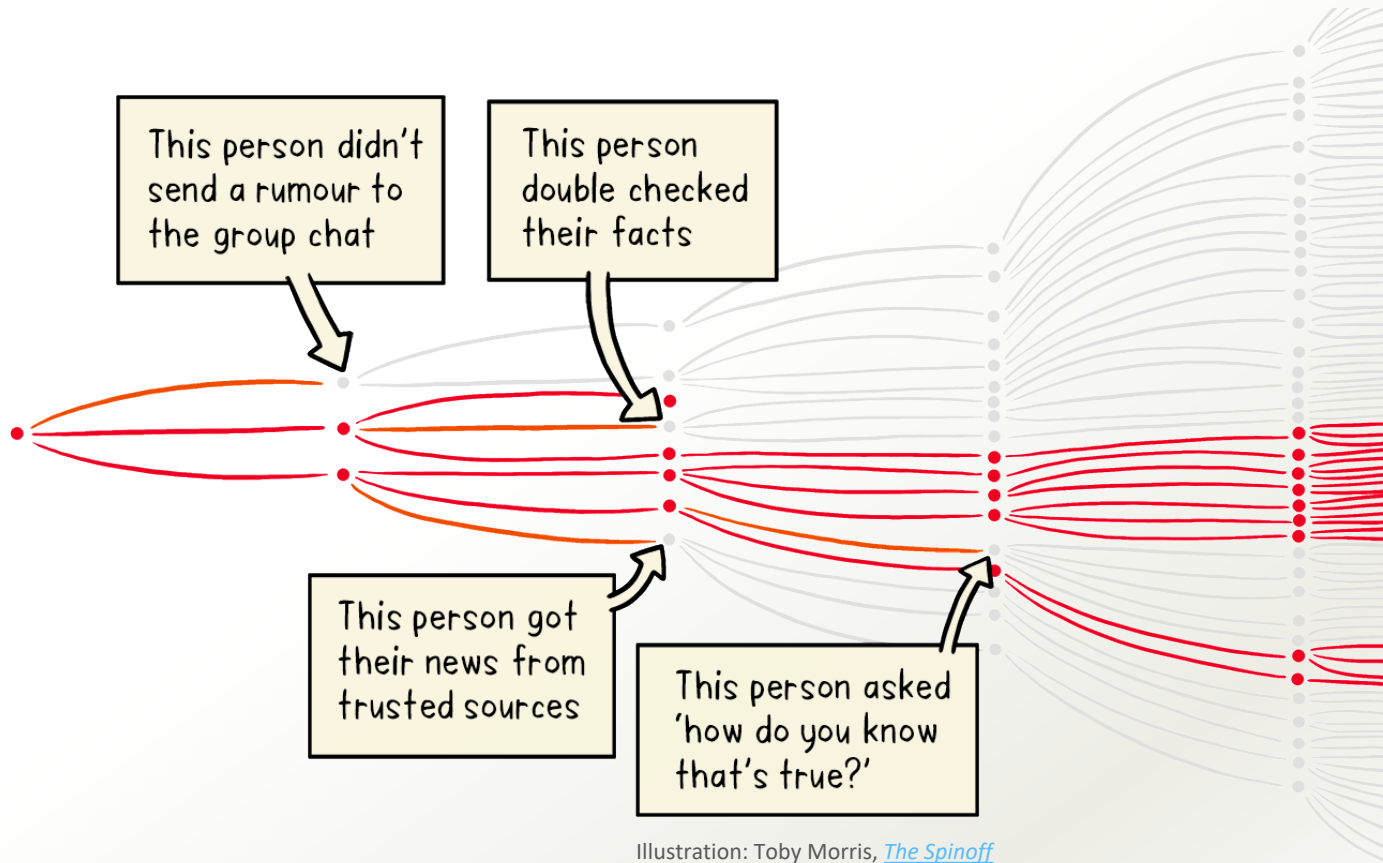


VS.



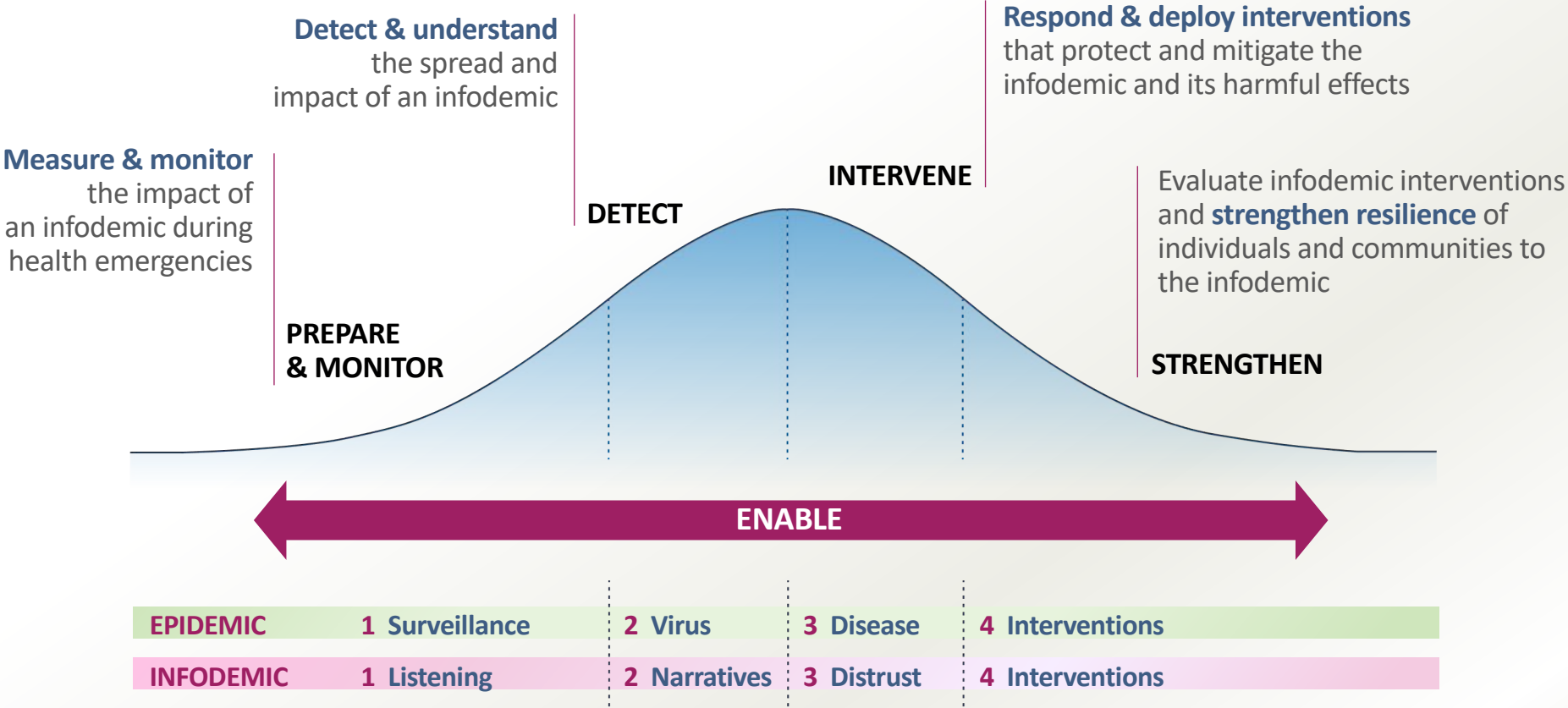
- Infodemics thrive in the virtual space
- Managing the infodemic has become more challenging with rapid spread of mis- and dis-information through social media
- Managing the infodemic is critical to managing the pandemic

# How people receive, process and act on information varies



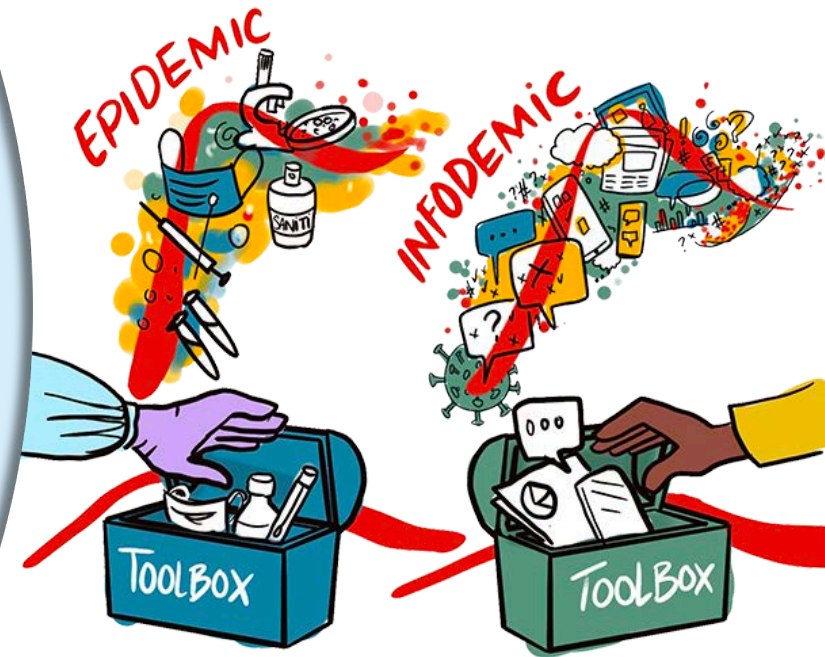
Understanding how information originates, evolves and spreads on different platforms and channels is key to managing the infodemic

# To manage the infodemic, we need an evidence-based framework, like that of epidemiologists

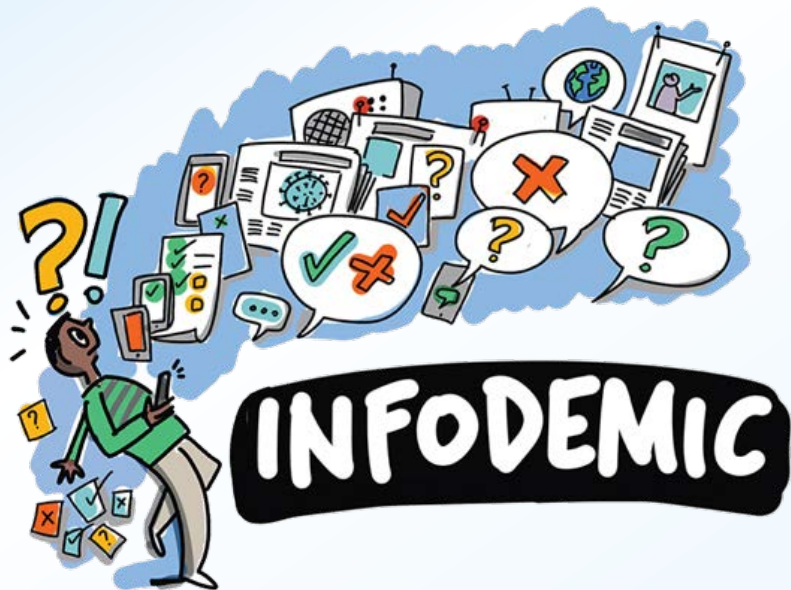


# The right information at the right time, in the right format

- While it is not possible to completely eliminate, **it is possible to manage the infodemic**
- Infodemic management aims to ensure people have **access to factual information in a timely manner that is easily understood**; so they may rapidly adopt behaviours to protect health and the health of others during an epidemic
- Infodemic management must :
  - Be backed up by science
  - Rely on evidence-based interventions
  - Make use of best practices, including sharing experiences and continuous learning



# Infodemic management interventions aim to influence health behaviour during epidemics



## Infodemic interventions

- 1 LISTEN TO CONCERNS
- 2 TRANSLATE SCIENCE & COMMUNICATE RISK
- 3 PROMOTE RESILIENCE TO MISINFORMATION
- 4 ENGAGE & EMPOWER COMMUNITIES

# Quantifying information through social listening

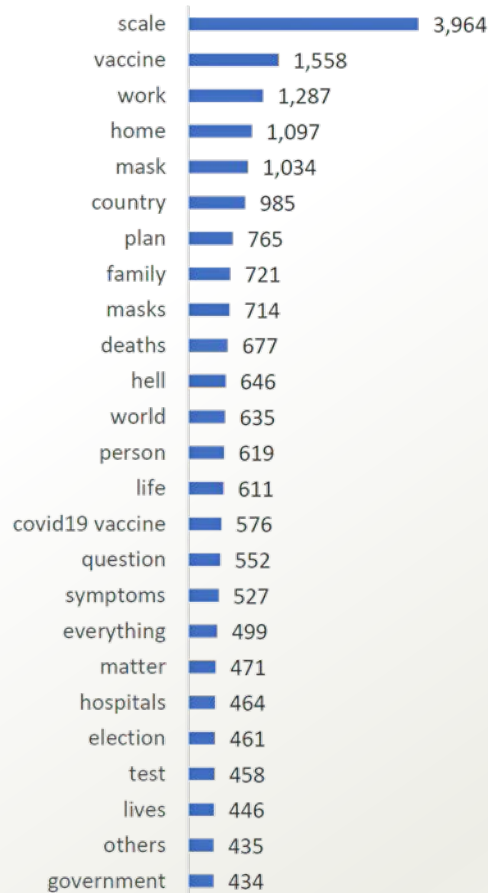
WHO uses a digital listening approach which analyses and quantifies information associated with COVID-19. For example, top keywords and topics are tracked in order to identify trends and help manage the infodemic.

## Questions on COVID-19

(12 – 18 Nov 2020)

Top key words

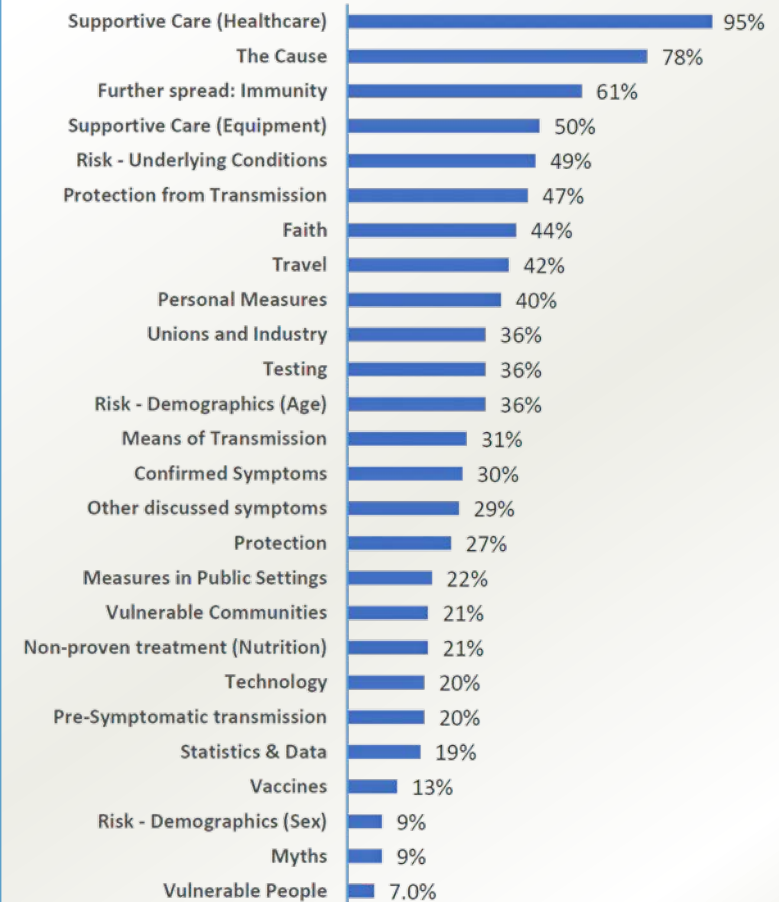
(excluding 'COVID-19', 'coronavirus' and 'virus')



## Top rising topics

(12 – 18 Nov 2020)

Based on % change of conversation volume from the previous week



# Translating science into protective measures

WHO video guidance on COVID-19

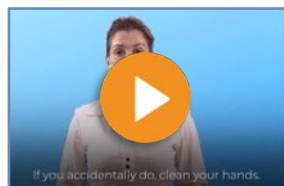
## MASKS



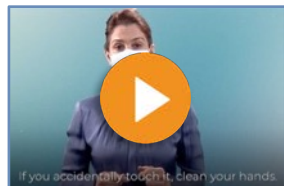
[Medical and fabric masks: who wears what when?](#)



[How to wear a fabric mask safely](#)

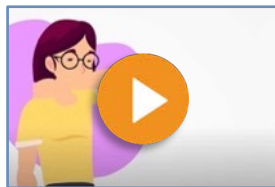


[How to wear a fabric mask](#)



[How to wear a medical mask](#)

## TRANSMISSION



[How to break the chains of transmission](#)



**NEW!**  
[Three factors help you make safer choices during COVID-19](#)

## PROTECTING OURSELVES



[How to protect yourself against COVID-19](#)



[Seven steps to prevent the spread of the virus](#)

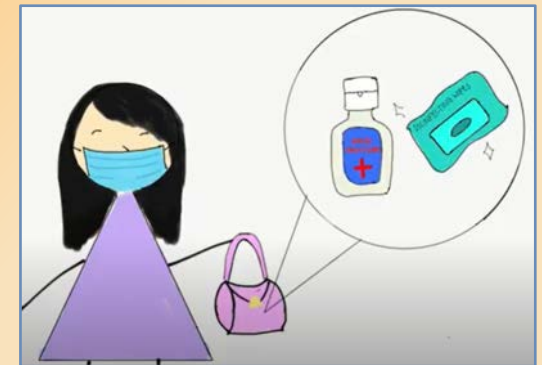


**Being resistant to misinformation** requires an understanding of how information flows, but also understanding of cognition and behaviour

# WHO works with communities to protect health during epidemics

- WHO EPI-WIN has established representative groups from key communities (faith-based, youth, employers and workers) who communicate regularly with WHO and give input on projects and initiatives. Examples:
  - **Co-development** of practical guidance on COVID-19 education, preparedness and response to support faith-based organizations and faith communities
  - **Collaborating** with young people to design creative, engaging and relevant communication around ‘reducing transmission of COVID-19’
  - **Facilitating** a virtual dialogue series together with leaders and representatives from the World of Work
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, WHO EPI-WIN has hosted **80 COVID-19 related webinars** with **participants from 149 countries**

Examples of youth entries for ‘Reducing transmission’ Design Lab



# Working together to support public health

- Launched in June 2020, the Collective Service is a partnership between the *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)*, the *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)* and the *World Health Organization (WHO)*. The Collective Service leverages active support from the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (**GOARN**) and key stakeholders from the public health and humanitarian sectors.
- The **Collective Service** works on **risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)** to ensure consistent, systematic and predictable support to partners involved in public health, humanitarian and development responses to the pandemic



# Infodemiology: the science behind infodemic management

Infodemic management is an evolving area of research and practice

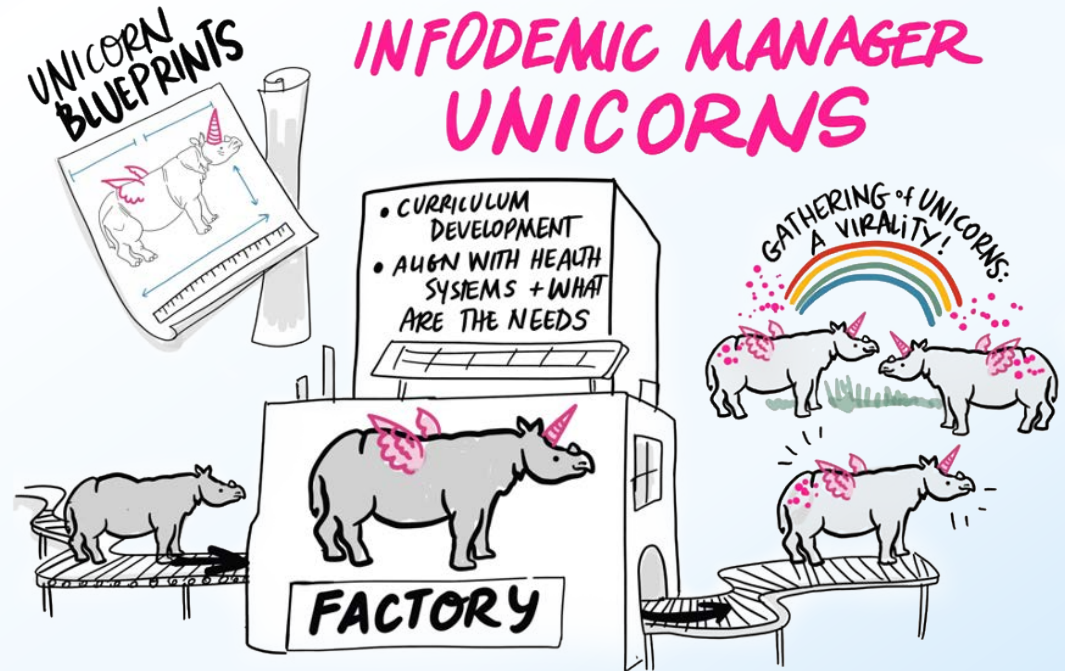
## AREAS TO FURTHER EXPLORE

- **How do overwhelming amounts of information** affect behaviour in emergencies and what interventions are effective in addressing it?
- **How does online behaviour** affect offline action?
- **How does the infodemic** affect cognition and influence seeking of health services?
- **How does the role of policy interventions** successfully address and mitigate health misinformation?
- **How does the infodemic** affect closed networks and vulnerable populations?



# First global WHO infodemic manager training completed on 26 November 2020

- 278 participants from 78 countries
- Various [lectures by infodemic management specialists](#) on topics such as:
  - [Tools for analysis of the infodemic](#)
  - [Public health and epidemiology in context of infodemic response](#)
  - Risk communication and community engagement



# Resources on infodemic management

## WHO RESOURCES

- [Infodemic management](#)

WHO infodemic management work and activities

<https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/infodemic-management>

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- [EPI-WIN updates](#)

An archive of COVID-19 related weekly updates

<https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/epi-win-updates>

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- [3rd Virtual Global WHO Infodemic Management Conference](#)

Whole-of-society challenges and solutions to respond to infodemics

<https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/infodemic-management/3rd-virtual-global-who-infodemic-management-conference>

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## OTHER RESOURCES

- [Sending SMS messages for the general public for COVID-19 response](#)

WHO, ITU and UNICEF are collaborating to facilitate sending short messages SMS to inform the general public about COVID-19

<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/ICT-Applications/Pages/COVID-19-public-SMS.aspx>

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- [When old technology meets new: How UN Global Pulse is using radio and AI to leave no voice behind](#)

UN Global Pulse can offer speech to text (radio) listening

<https://www.unglobalpulse.org/2019/04/when-old-technology-meets-new-how-un-global-pulse-is-using-radio-and-ai-to-leave-no-voice-behind/>

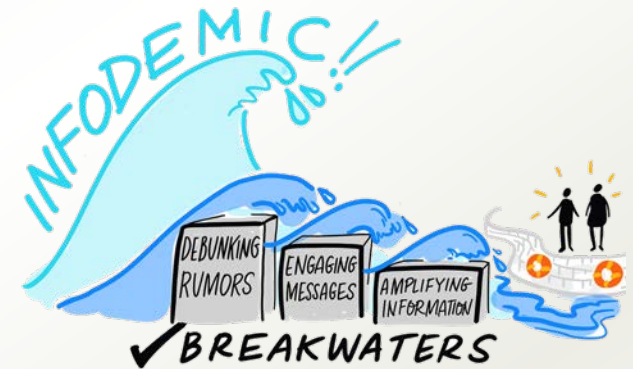
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- [UNESCO series on journalism education](#)

UNESCO medio/journalist training

<https://en.unesco.org/unesco-series-on-journalism-education>

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UPCOMING EVENT

LIVE  
WEBINAR

# 3rd virtual global WHO Infodemic Management conference

Whole-of-society challenges & solutions to respond to infodemics



**11 December 2020**

8:00 EST / 14:00 CET / 20:00 ICT

**#societyVSinfodemic**

[MORE INFO](#)

[REGISTER](#)

# How to protect ourselves & others

## 9 important COVID-19 prevention measures



**01 Stay home and self-isolate** if you feel unwell, even with mild symptoms



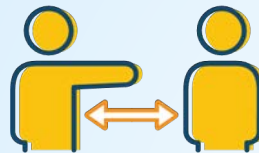
**02 Clean hands frequently** with soap & water for 40 seconds or with alcohol-based hand rub



**03 Cover your nose and mouth** with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze



**04 Avoid touching** your eyes, nose and mouth



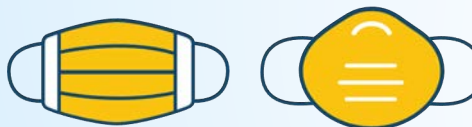
**05 Maintain a minimum physical distance of at least 1 metre** from others



**06 Stay away from crowds** and avoid poorly ventilated indoor spaces



**07 Use a fabric mask** where physical distancing of at least 1 metre is not possible



**08 Use a medical / surgical mask** if you may be at higher risk (age, medical conditions)



**09 Regularly clean & disinfect** frequently touched surfaces



**EPI**•WIN

**infodemic**  
MANAGEMENT

[www.who.int/epi-win](http://www.who.int/epi-win)