



UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN THE PACIFIC

A study exploring media access and use among more than 6,600 people in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands, to better understand their media habits and preferences, and what this means for who is informed, who is left out, and how people navigate trust and misinformation in a rapidly changing Pacific media landscape.

Across the Pacific, media access and use are shaped by distinct market and information ecosystem factors in each country. Fiji stands out with a comparatively large, mature and competitive media market, high mobile penetration, and near-universal network coverage, with a strong mix of print, broadcast and online outlets. Samoa and Tonga have pluralistic but smaller media sectors, where state, private, church and community broadcasters coexist within a growing digital news and social media environment. Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have smaller but active media markets, though reach is limited beyond urban centres, while PNG has the largest and most complex market in the region, with a concentration of outlets in Port Moresby, and sparse coverage across the country's vast rural and highland areas.

Connectivity in each country mirrors these differences. Urban hubs such as Suva, Apia, Nuku'alofa, Port Moresby, Port Vila and Honiara benefit from better broadcast signals, mobile networks and, increasingly, undersea cable or fibre-linked internet and satellite services such as Starlink. In all six countries, large segments of the population live in rural villages, remote inland areas, or scattered outer islands where geography, low population density, high costs and fragile infrastructure limit consistent access to both traditional media (television, radio, and newspapers) and digital services. Many communities rely on local radio, church and community networks, and word of mouth as primary channels for information. Against a backdrop of linguistic diversity, strong customary and faith-based institutions, and exposure to climate and disaster risks, this regional picture underscores both the opportunities and the persistent structural barriers that shape how Pacific audiences access, use and trust media today.

1. Research Methodology

This briefing is based on findings from a regional study that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative research conducted in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.¹ In each country, mobile phone surveys² were carried out with adults aged 18 and over who had access to a phone.³ Respondents were reached via randomly generated phone numbers. Alongside the surveys, focus group discussions were held in selected locations to include harder to reach marginalised communities, people with lower media access, and persons with disabilities.

¹Fieldwork in five of the countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu) was conducted in 2025. Fieldwork in the Solomon Islands was conducted in 2022. Over the three-year period between the two fieldwork periods, internet and smart-phone penetration in Solomon Islands is likely to have increased, given ongoing infrastructure investments and broader regional trends in mobile adoption. As a result, Solomon Islands figures in this report should be interpreted as a slightly earlier snapshot of access and use. Cross-country comparisons throughout the report are still useful to show broad patterns and relative gaps but should be made with this in mind.

²Although other data collection methods were considered for this research, the costs and logistics of face-to-face interviewing were not feasible in the scope of this study and were unlikely to be able to reach significantly more people in such geographic contexts due to the travel required.

³Gender and age quotas were applied by province using official population data. Post-fieldwork weighting was used to correct any remaining imbalances.

Study methodology and sample

	2025					2022
	Fiji	Samoa	Tonga	Vanuatu	Papua New Guinea	Solomon Islands
						
Sample size	n=1,013	n=1,068	n =1,050	n=1,073	n=1,010	n=1,013
Mobile phone penetration**	152%	85%	89%	95%	47%	72%
	10 x FGDs in Central/ Eastern, Western, and Northern areas.	10 x FGDs in two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i	12 x FGDs in Vava'u and Tongatapu divisions	11 x FGDs in three provinces, Torba, Sanma and Shefa	14 x FGDs in Port Moresby, Mount Hagen, Lae, and Buka.	12 x FGDs in Honiara and Malaita

***Mobile phone penetration is based on Datareportal figures from 2022 (Solomon Islands) and 2025 (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea).*

Due to the methodology used, survey samples are limited to adults with phone access. Because mobile penetration ranges widely across the six countries - from around 47% in Papua New Guinea to near universal coverage in Fiji⁴ - the extent to which the survey findings represent the overall adult population varies by country, with data from higher-penetration contexts like Fiji more closely reflecting national patterns than in lower-penetration settings, such as Papua New Guinea.

As such, quantitative findings are best interpreted as describing the media habits, access, and information needs of mobile-connected adults, and cross-country comparisons reflect differences **among mobile-connected populations only**.

Qualitative findings, which include representation from those who are offline and/or have very limited media access, add depth and highlight experiences of these less reached groups.

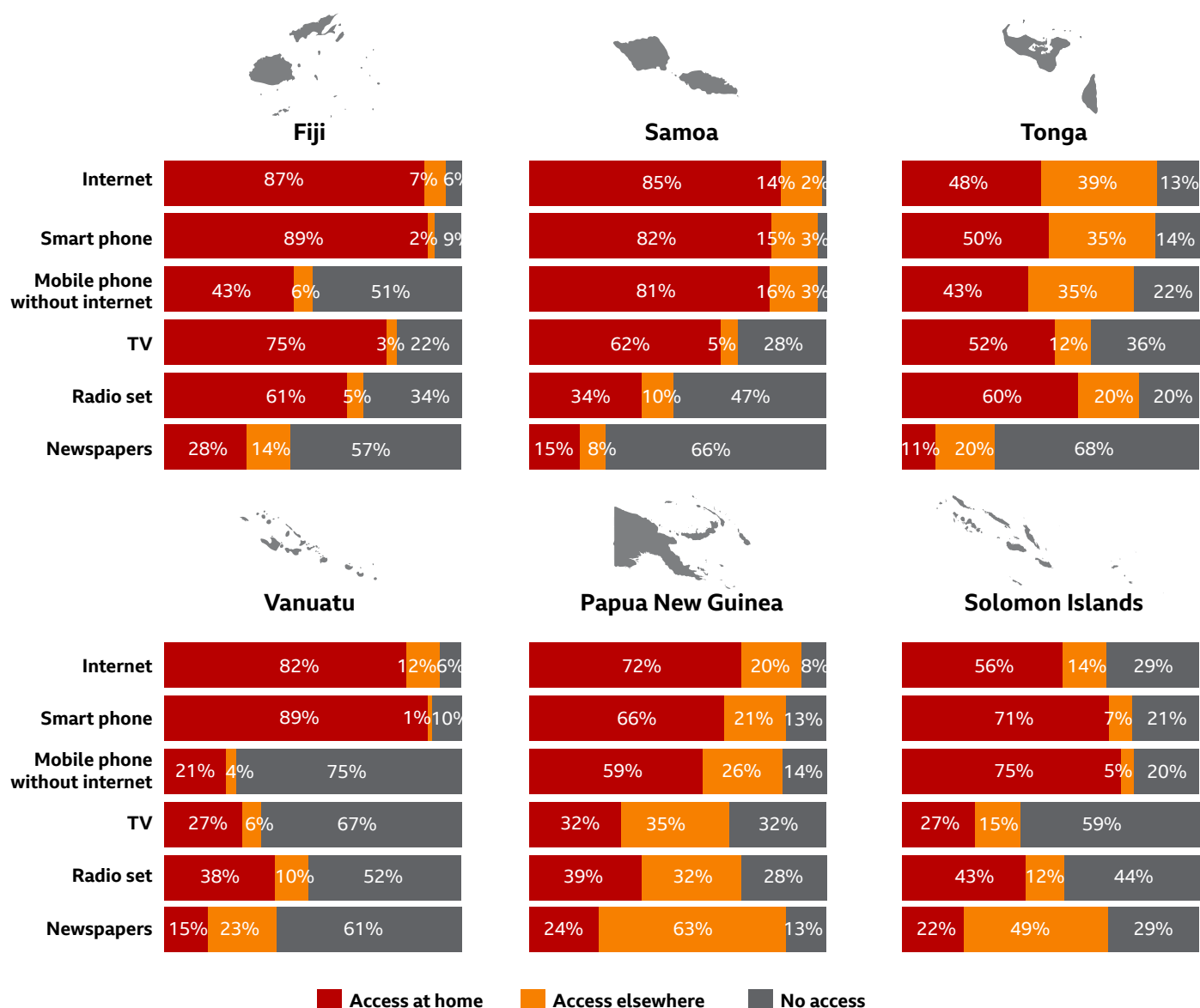


⁴These figures are based on Datareportal Digital 2025 (2022 in the case of Solomon Islands) figures, sourced from www.datareportal.com. In Fiji, mobile phone penetration is estimated at 152%, which indicates that many individuals maintain more than one mobile connection. A survey conducted by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics in May 2024 found that 98% of Fijian households own a mobile phone; the figure at 97% even in rural areas (see Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (2024-2025) <https://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/census-surveys/multiple-indicator-cluster-survey>).

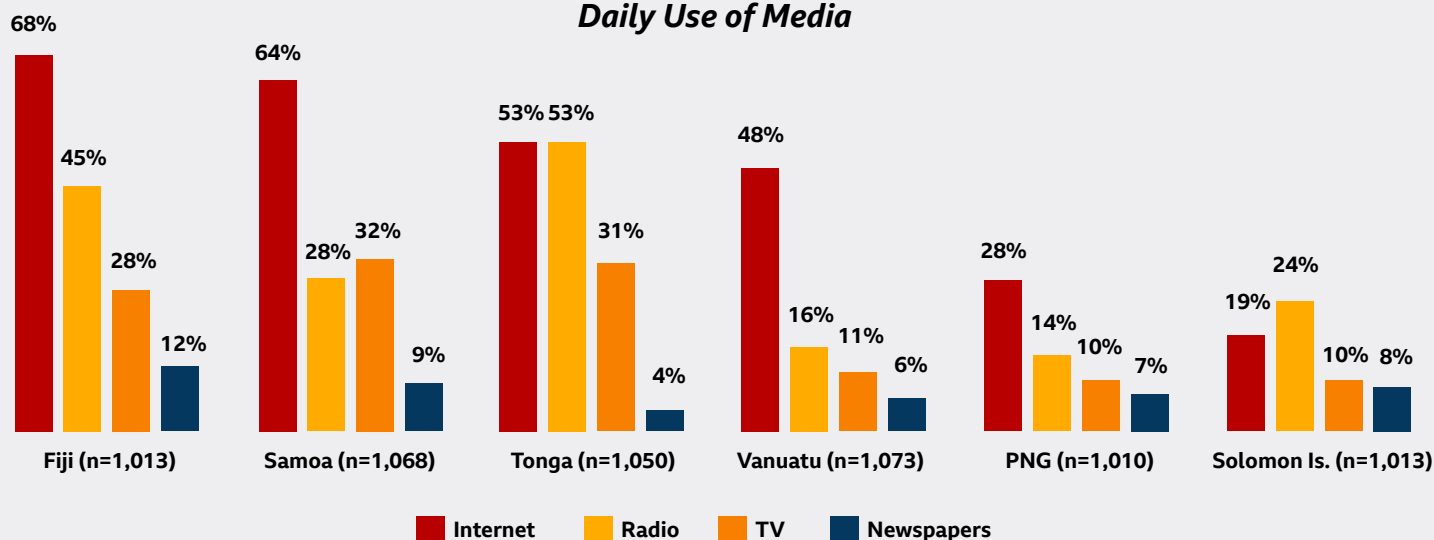
2. Findings

How do people in the Pacific access and use media?

Access to media



Daily Use of Media



Source: BBC Media Action surveys (2022 and 2025). Q: And do you have access to these media devices in your home?
 Q: How frequently do you do the following, if at all? Base: 2022: Solomon Islands (1,013);
 Base 2025: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010)

Pacific media access is increasingly mobile

Across the six countries, access to news and information is increasingly shaped by smartphones and the internet. Smartphone access is now high in all contexts, enabling most phone users to go online: reported smartphone access ranges from around four in five in Tonga to around nine in ten in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. In most contexts, access to smartphones is now higher than access to basic (non-internet-enabled) mobile phones, underscoring the central role of smartphones in connecting people.

Overall internet access (either at home or elsewhere) ranges from 70% in Solomon Islands to 98% in Samoa.⁵ In Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu, more than four in five respondents can get online at home, with Papua New Guinea not far behind at 72%. By contrast, home access is considerably lower in Tonga (48%) and Solomon Islands (56%), where many people with smartphones and internet access rely on getting online outside the home.

For many respondents, a smartphone is now the main gateway to news and information, bringing together social media, messaging, online news, radio and television in a single device. This is particularly evident in the more connected countries, where audiences describe moving easily between platforms throughout the day.

“

You carry it [phone] around all the time, on your data the radio will be there, news, even Walesi, we can listen to the radio. Everything is accessible on the phone, and it is easy.

– Man, 18-34, Urban Labasa, Fiji

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It was clear from the research overall that access and usage of smartphones vary, and this distinction is reflected in reported daily use of the internet. While around two-thirds of respondents in Fiji and Samoa go online every day, the figure is closer to half in Tonga and Vanuatu, and substantially lower in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Some audiences report not owning their own phone, relying on family or friends for access; others can only get online when they travel to places with network coverage. High data costs, unreliable electricity, limited network coverage and weather-related disruptions all constrain use, particularly in rural and outer-island communities. As a result, smartphone access should not be equated with reliable media access: people may technically have access to a phone or internet connection but still be unable to use it regularly.

“

The main problem is the cost of data. Even a small top-up finishes quickly, especially if the children use it too. And the network is weak at times, especially when it rains.

– Woman, 35-54, Rural Utulei Island, Tonga

”

“

I have a phone but only get to access Facebook when I come to town because back home there is no mobile phone network.

– Woman, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

”

⁵Solomon Islands survey data was collected in 2022, while all other countries surveys were conducted in 2025. Levels of smartphone and internet access in Solomon Islands are likely to have changed since the survey was conducted. Cross-country comparisons in this briefing should therefore be interpreted with this timing difference in mind.

Digital access is overtaking traditional media - but not everywhere

Among people with phone access, internet and smartphone access now exceeds access to traditional media hardware in most countries. Tonga is the main exception, with relatively high household access to television and radio. Papua New Guinea also stands out for the extent to which people access media outside the home. Audiences in Papua New Guinea mentioned watching TV at a friend's home or in communal spaces, including on the street, while radio access is commonly in cars and on buses.

Radio remains the most accessible traditional medium, with standalone radio access ranging from 44% in Samoa to 80% in Tonga. Notably, these figures likely understate the reach of radio because they do not include listening through mobile phones and in public places (such as on public transport, in shops and cafes), which was commonly mentioned by audiences. Radio is particularly important in rural and outer-island communities, where it can remain the most reliable source of news and emergency information.

“

I trust the radio because I don't receive the Daily Post or access television.

– Male, 55+, Lembot Gaua, Torba, Vanuatu

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Television has a stronger foothold in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, where over half of respondent's report having access to a television at home, while access is lower in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Print newspapers now reach only a small proportion of respondents as regular, personal readers, and are described by audiences as unavailable or too expensive outside major towns. However, intermittent use is more common: large sections of the population in Papua New Guinea (73%), Solomon Islands (57%), Fiji (43%) and Vanuatu (38%) report reading a newspaper weekly or monthly. In these contexts, a single newspaper may circulate widely, meaning that while personal ownership is low, newspapers can still be an important – if irregular – way to reach people with information. Fiji stands out for higher household level access, with over a quarter of respondents reporting newspapers at home, reflecting its more urbanised population, stronger distribution infrastructure and established print sector, including the century-old Fiji Times. By contrast, newspapers are least used in Tonga and Samoa, where 77% and 67% of respondents respectively say they never read them.

These patterns reflect a media landscape in transition, where access remains shaped by infrastructure, geography and affordability. The same barriers that limit internet use - unreliable electricity, weak networks, distance and cost – can also restrict access to television, radio and print. People therefore experience the media landscape very differently depending on where they live – particularly their proximity to major centres – and the resources available to them.

Mapping Pacific Media Users

To better understand patterns of media engagement within and across countries, respondents can be grouped into four broad segments according to their daily media habits.

Hybrid User



Use both traditional and digital media daily = use internet or social media AND use TV or radio or newspaper daily

Traditionalist User



Use traditional media daily = use only TV or radio or newspaper on a daily basis but digital less often or never

Phone-First User



Use digital media daily = use only internet or social media on a daily basis but traditional less often or never

Media Light User



Do not use any media on daily basis = do not use any of the platforms on a daily basis



*Male



*Urban



*Middle aged (25-59)



*Highly educated



*Male



*Older (60+)



*Lower education



*Female



*Urban



*Younger (18-24)



*Medium to high income



*Higher education



*Female



*Rural



*No income



*Low education

"I move between my phone, radio and TV all day – I use whatever is easiest to get the news I need."

"I listen to the radio every morning and watch the TV news in the evening – that's how I keep up to date."

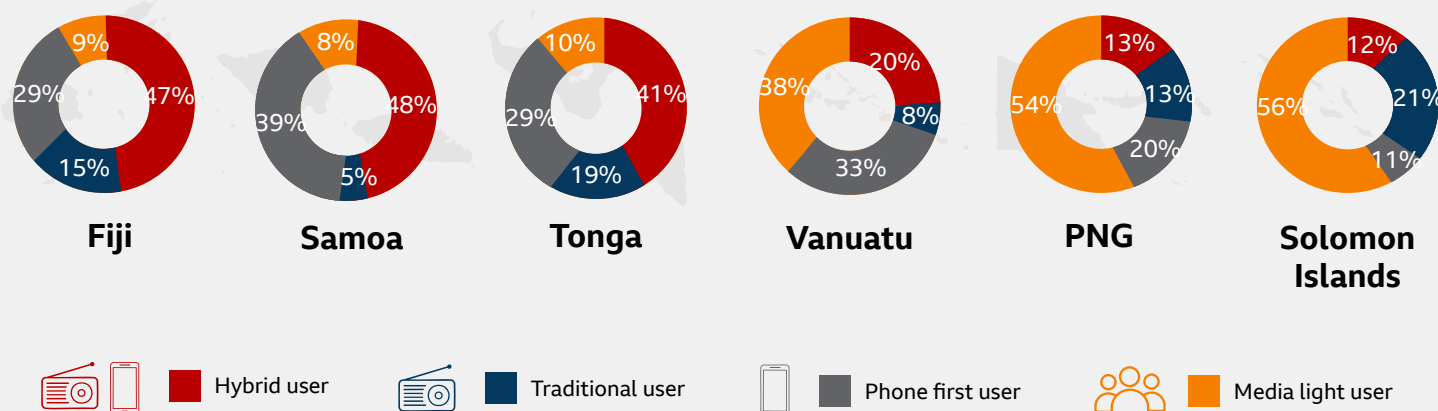
"My phone is my gateway to everything – news, radio, video and what's happening in other villages and overseas."

"I have a phone but don't use it much. Most of the time I just hear things from family or people in the community."

* These demographic descriptions highlight groups that are over-represented within each segment, compared with their share in the overall sample. They indicate the types of people who are more likely than average to be Hybrid, Phone-First, Traditionalist or Media-Light users.

Mapping these segments across the six countries highlights where media use is shifting towards a 'phone-first' environment, and where traditional media - or limited media access altogether - continues to shape everyday information flows.

Daily Media Use Segment



Source: BBC Media Action surveys (2022 and 2025).

Q: How frequently do you use the following, if at all?

Base: 2022: Solomon Islands (1,013);

Base 2025: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010)

Four distinct patterns of daily media use

Fiji, Samoa and Tonga have the most media-engaged populations. Around half of adults in Fiji (47%) and Samoa (48%), and two in five in Tonga (41%), are Hybrid Users. Phone-First Users are also common, accounting for 29% in Fiji and Tonga and 39% in Samoa. Traditionalists remain a minority, particularly in Samoa, while only around one in ten adults in each of these countries are Media Light Users.

“

When I wake up in the morning, I listen to the radio; TV and social media; get my information from my spouse or my friends... I use my phone 24/7.

– Male, 18–35, urban Upolu, Samoa

”

The pattern is markedly different in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Vanuatu has a sizeable Phone-First population (33%), but only one in five adults are Hybrid Users and 38% are Media Light Users. In Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands⁶, more than half of adults fall into the Media Light category (54% and 56% respectively). Hybrid Users account for only 13% and 12%, while Phone-First Users account for 20% and 11%. Traditional media nevertheless remains important for those who do engage daily, particularly through radio.

⁶ As data for Solomon Islands were collected in 2022, while data for Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea were collected in early 2025, Solomon Islands figures in this report should be interpreted as a slightly earlier snapshot of access and use.

“

Sometimes when there's no network signal and the phone doesn't work and boats do not come to the island for one or two months, we would be on our own without news for however long it takes until a boat arrives.

”

– Male, 18–35, Merig Island, Torba Province, Vanuatu

Media use varies across the six countries. Fiji, Samoa and Tonga are predominantly daily digital-media environments, where most adults go online every day, but traditional media remains part of their routines. Vanuatu sits in the middle, with relatively high connectivity but more intermittent use and a large group of people who rarely use any media. In Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, engagement with both traditional and digital media is low and irregular, and many people rely on information passed on through other people. Across all contexts, younger people tend to be more phone-first, while older, rural and less-connected groups rely more on radio, TV and community networks. These patterns are also shaped by culture, including the strength of village, church and kinship networks, which can either complement formal media or substitute for it where access is weak.

Traditional media remains a trusted backbone

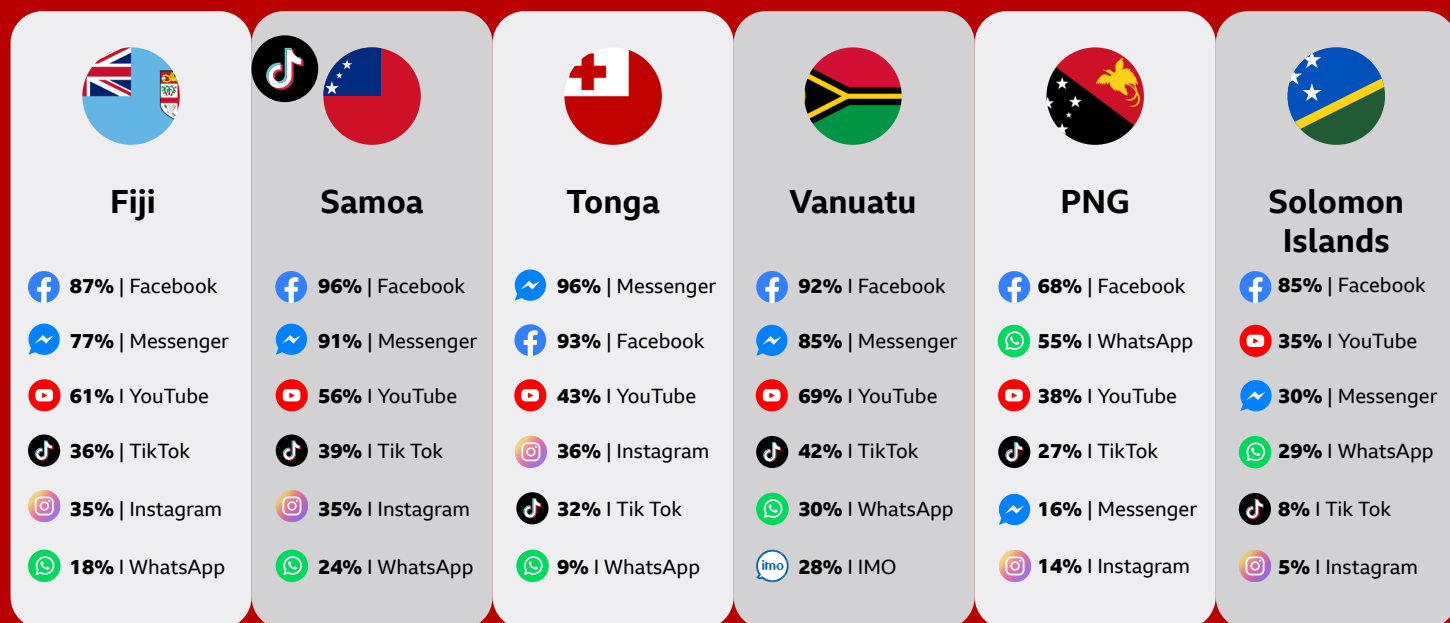
Radio and television continue to play a distinctive role in establishing credibility. Audiences described radio - and television where it is available - as generally more reliable than social media for verified or official information, particularly during crises and disasters. In Tonga and Solomon Islands, radio was cited as the most trusted information source, while family and friends were most trusted among other countries. Scheduled radio and television news remain important listening and viewing points, particularly in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Newspapers have lost much of their reach but retain symbolic value as a source of information that is seen as more factual and accountable.

Social media serves a different purpose. It is fast, convenient and useful for finding out what is happening, but audiences frequently describe it as less trustworthy and more prone to rumours, political spin and misinformation. People therefore often use social media to identify or hear about a story, then verify it through radio, television, trusted people or other sources.



Facebook is by far the most used platform among social media users in all six countries.

Top Six Social Media Platforms Used



Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2022 and 2025).

Q: Which of the following social media or messaging apps have you used in the last month, if any?

Base: 2022: Solomon Islands (619);

Base 2025: Fiji (886), Samoa (1,028), Tonga (879), Vanuatu (950), PNG (764)

Trust is consequently layered rather than attached to a single medium. In Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, family and friends are among the most trusted sources of information, while radio is particularly prominent in Tonga and Solomon Islands. Traditional media provides an important credibility anchor, while close social networks help people interpret and circulate information.

“

There is a difference between news broadcast on Tala Fou news and what's on Facebook. Tala Fou, they are well known, and they also have people here on the ground who are capturing and filming the news so it's real, but on Facebook you can't trust the sources, because too many bring lies.

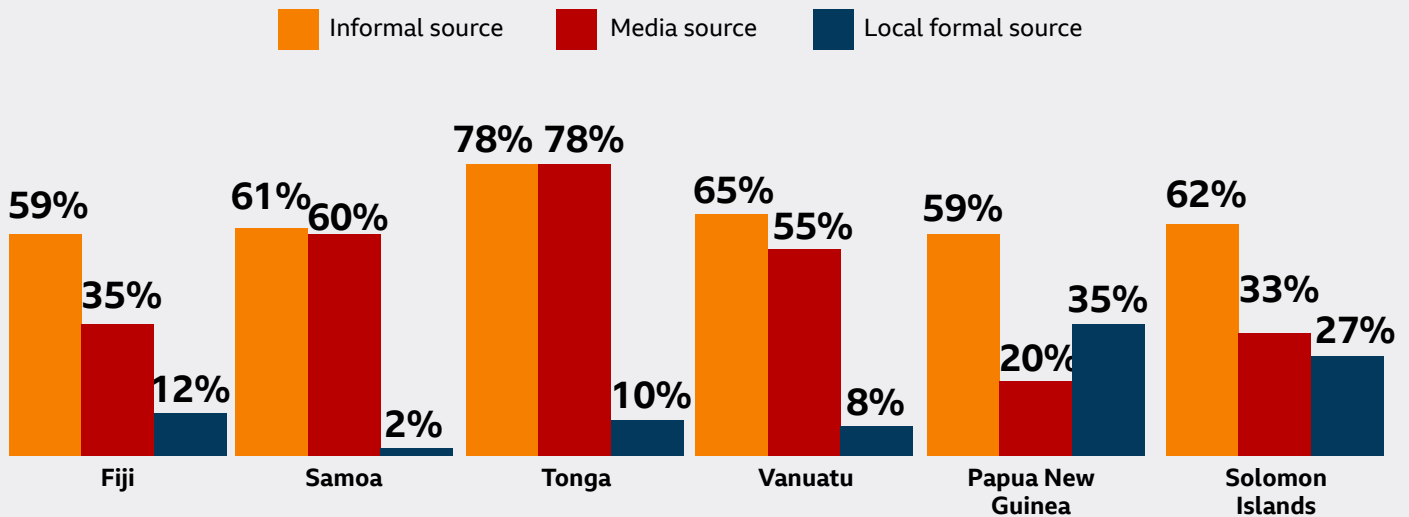
– Male, 18-34, Rural Savai'i, Samoa

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'Coconut news' - informal networks at the heart of Pacific information flows

In a context where many people have limited access to local information through formal media, they rely heavily on each other. Word-of-mouth sharing is deeply embedded in Pacific social and community life and is a primary way that news and information circulate. Family, friends, neighbours, church members, and co-workers are important sources of information in every country, and in some settings, they are more important than formal media. Informal sharing and retelling of stories - sometimes referred to locally as the 'coconut wireless' or 'coconut news' - is a longstanding and culturally embedded way of communicating and making sense of events.

Information Sources



Informal sources = family/friends, market/gossips, people in community, coworker/schoolmate, people like me on internet

Media sources = TV, radio, print, social media, internet, celebrities/influencers

Local formal sources = local officials, NGOs, community groups, community chiefs

Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2022 and 2025).

Q: Where or who do you usually go to find information about the issues?

Base 2022: Solomon Islands (1,013) ;

Base 2025: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010).

For highly connected audiences, these networks tend to complement digital media: people see something online and discuss or verify it with others. For less-connected audiences, interpersonal networks can be the primary or only route to information.

“

...Samoans always do that, if you can't get information from media sources, then you go and ask people face to face, or to your girlfriends, or to other families, that's another way to collect information, and people are seeking different opinions not just one source. You use your feet to collect the information.

– Female, 18-34, Rural Apia, Samoa

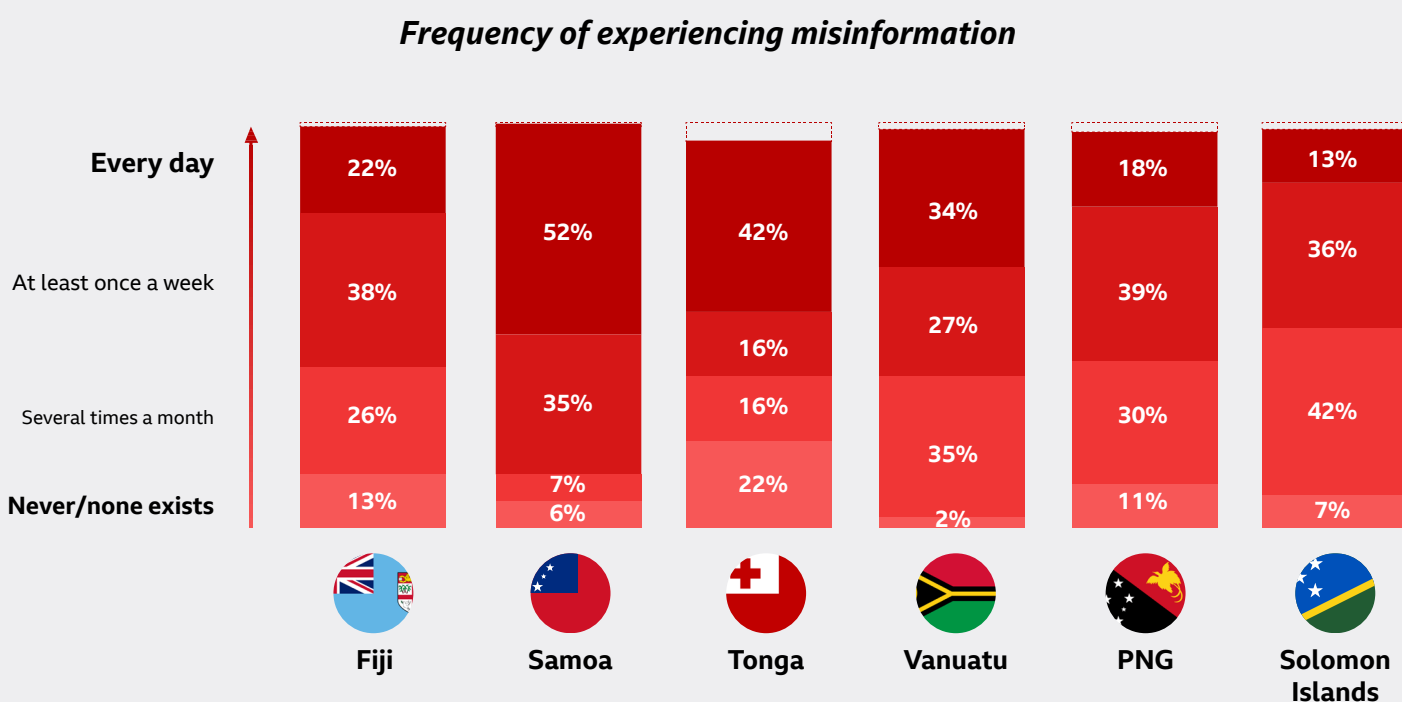
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This is particularly significant in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, where chiefs, community leaders, local officials, churches and NGOs often act as intermediaries between formal information sources and communities with weak direct media access.

This creates both benefits and risk. Close networks help fill gaps in media access and provide trusted local information, but they can also accelerate the spread of inaccurate information.

Misinformation travels through the same networks that connect communities

Across the six countries, people report frequent exposure to false or misleading information – whilst this is self-reported around half of respondents in each country say they see false information at least weekly. Social media is a major channel, but people feel that misinformation does not remain online: reporting that it can quickly move through family, community and wider social networks. In most of the countries surveyed, ‘ordinary citizens’ (e.g. family, friends, people in the community) were identified as the most likely source of false information, particularly in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.



Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2022 and 2025).

Q: How frequently do you come across information that you think is false and misleading?

Base 2022: Solomon Islands (1,013);

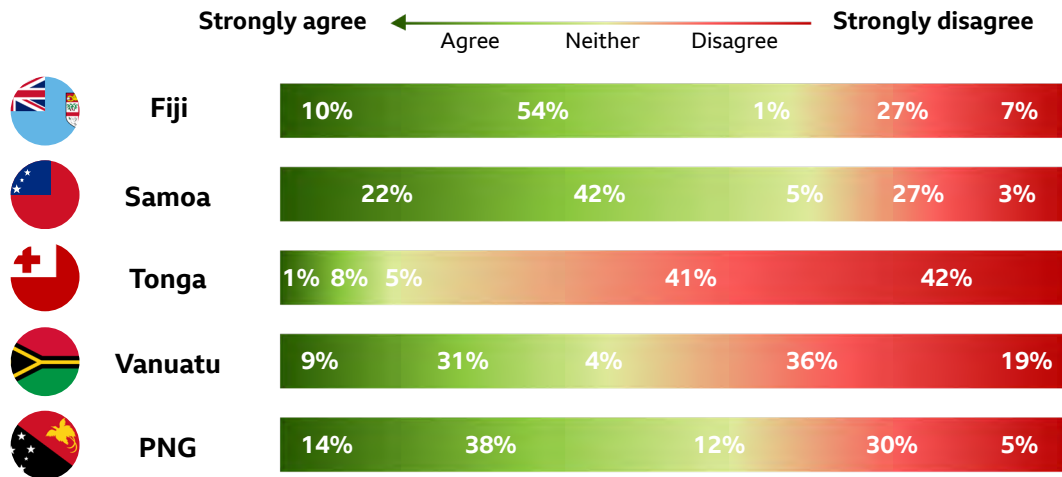
Base 2025: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010)

Exploring attitudes towards information sharing helps explain how this happens, with some countries showing a tendency to support fast, attention-grabbing sharing behaviours. Majorities in Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea agree that it is more important to share information quickly than to check it for accuracy (around two thirds in Fiji and Samoa, just over half in PNG), and large proportions also admit that they sometimes exaggerate when passing information on. In Samoa and PNG, around two in three people say they tend to exaggerate when sharing information. These attitudes create fertile ground for rumours and half-truths to be passed on quickly and with added drama.

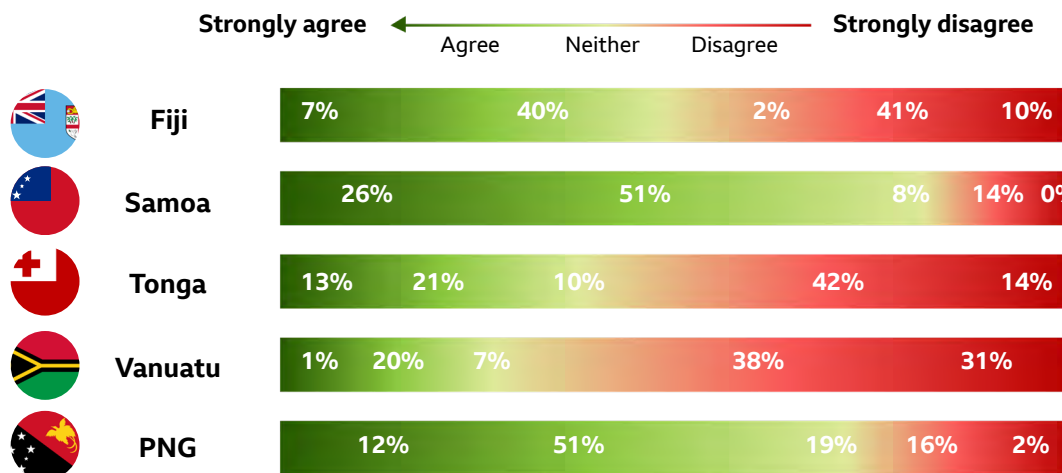
By contrast, in Tonga and, to a lesser extent, Vanuatu, most respondents reject speed over accuracy and are more likely to deny exaggerating, indicating a stronger stated norm of careful, truthful sharing.

Attitudes to information sharing

“It’s more important that information is shared quickly, rather than checking it for accuracy”



“When I share information with others, I sometimes exaggerate to make it a good story”



Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2025).

Base: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010).

These questions were not asked in Solomon Islands.

Community networks, such as friends, relatives, pastors, chiefs and local officials can therefore act both as verification brokers and as vectors for misinformation. Where direct access to media is weak, people may have little choice but to rely on whoever can bring information into the community.

“

It is very challenging to live in a place like this... To bring in information from outside, we would need the ‘bridge’ who are the boat captains... if social media is not working, communication or radio is down, the only way is to go with verbal communication. If the boat captain passes the right or wrong message, we will have to go with it.

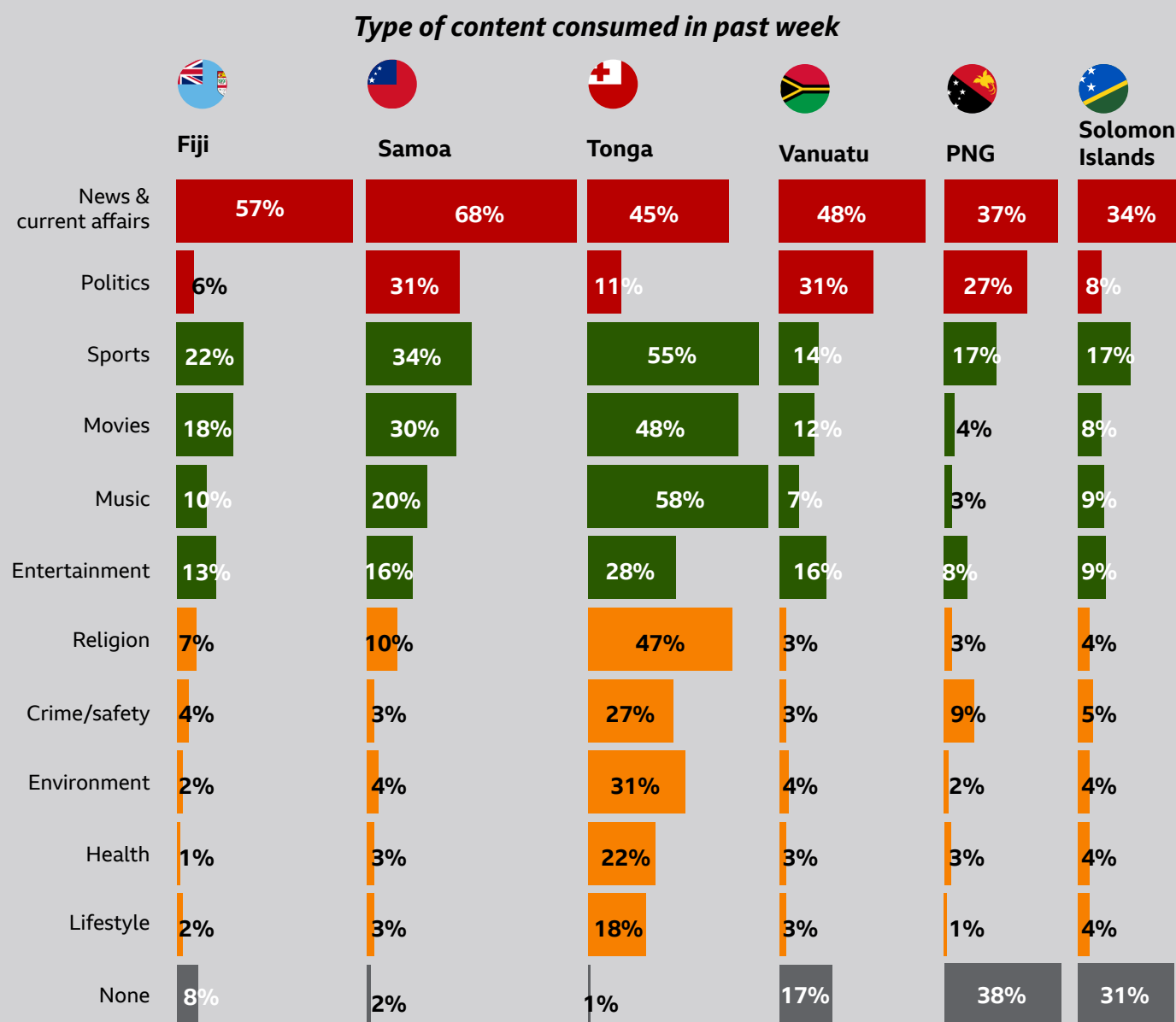
– Male, 36–54, Rural, Ngurua, Shefa, Vanuatu

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This reality makes trusted, accessible journalism particularly important. Audiences value sources that are seen as professional, locally grounded and accountable, while recognising that speed (or immediacy of information) and reach alone do not make information trustworthy.

Audiences want more relevant and locally grounded content

News and current affairs are the most commonly consumed content in most countries, particularly Samoa and Fiji. Interest in politics and governance is relatively strong in Samoa, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Tonga is somewhat different: its media diet is more diverse, with sport, movies, music, religion and other social content collectively competing with news for attention.



Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2022 and 2025).

Q: Thinking about the last week, what type of programmes or content have you listened to/read/or watched?

Base 2022: Solomon Islands (994) ;

Base 2025: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010)

Across the six countries, people report wanting news that is more closely connected to the issues affecting their everyday lives. Local priorities vary, but cost of living, alcohol and drugs, crime and security, and access to basic services consistently feature among the top concerns. While crime is seen as being reported on too heavily in the media, crime and security nonetheless remain among the issues communities worry about most

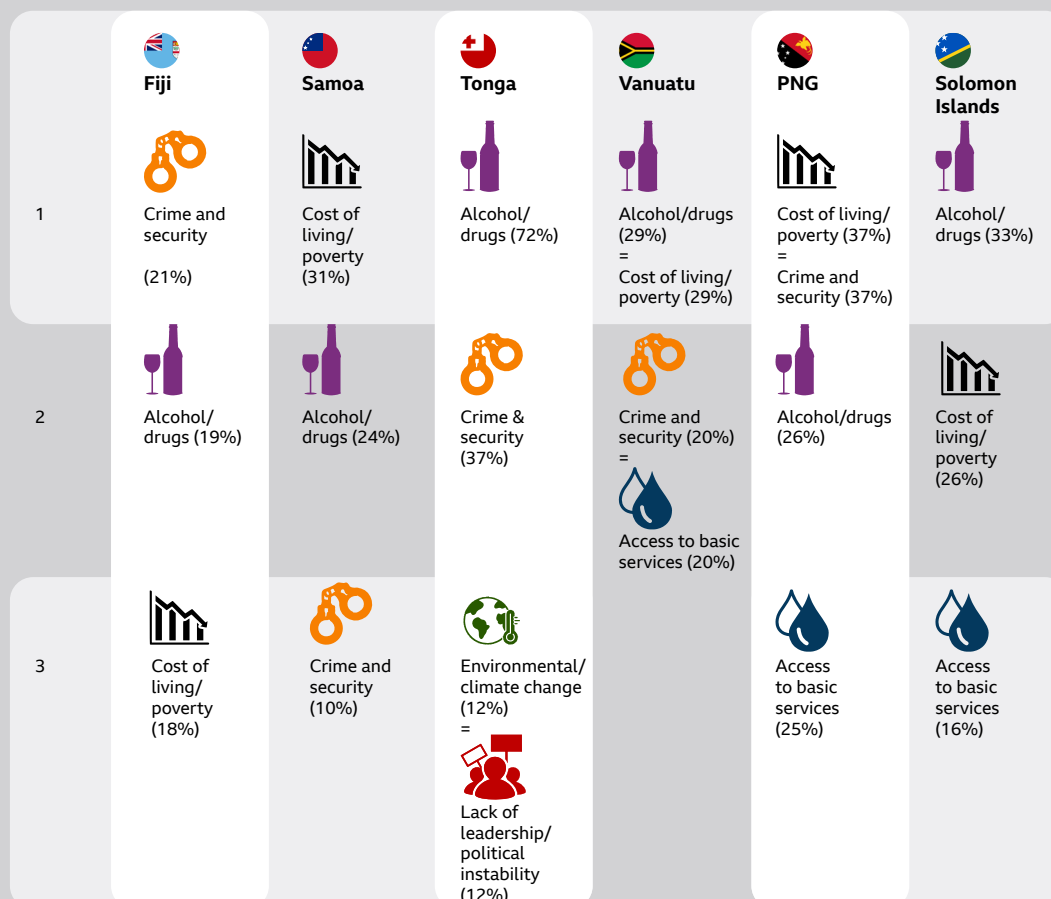
Across the region, qualitative discussions point to demand for coverage about everyday safety, livelihoods, health, youth opportunities, village and island developments and culture. Rural audiences often feel that media remains too urban-centred and focused on political conflict, crime, corruption and scandal, while giving insufficient attention to rural communities, outer islands and local initiatives. They prioritise hyper-local, livelihoods and services content. In contrast, urban audiences cite the need for more national politics, economy and international/regional coverage. Women and girls ask for more coverage of health, family economics, safety/violence, and representation of women’s roles and rights – and often feel current media overlook their perspectives.

“ We need coverage of the things that matter most to us - updates on farming, information on fishing regulations, and news of changes within the community. These are the issues that directly shape our daily lives and decisions.

– Man, 35-54, Rural Feletoa, Tonga

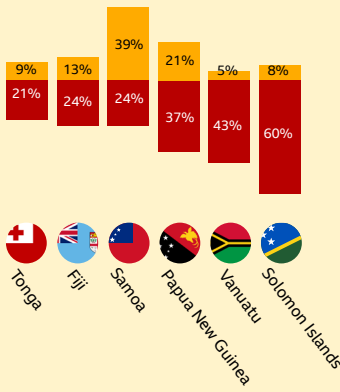
Across settings, audiences criticise news that is repetitive, shallow, or “only negative”. They ask for more explanatory and investigative reporting, and more positive, inspiring examples from their own communities.

Top Concerns vs Media Coverage: Where are the Gaps? Top three local issues

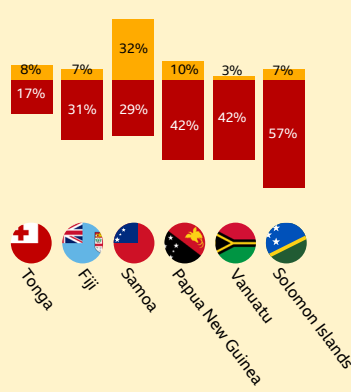


Perceptions of News & Current Affairs Coverage in Media

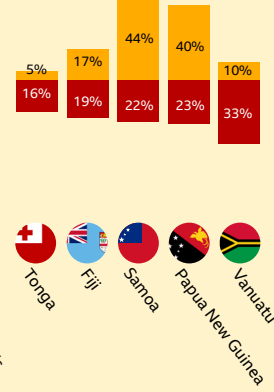
International news (outside of the Pacific)



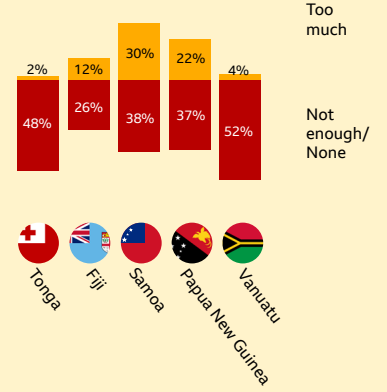
Pacific Region



Country (domestic news)*



Local area news*



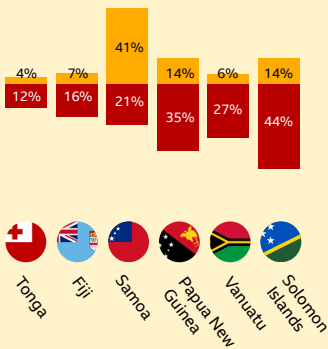
* Vanuatu and PNG audiences in particular want more international and regional news

* In every country where it was asked, local news is seen as under-reported

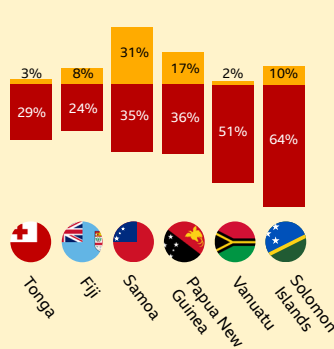
*Not covered in Solomon Islands

Perceptions of News & Current Affairs Coverage in Media

The weather

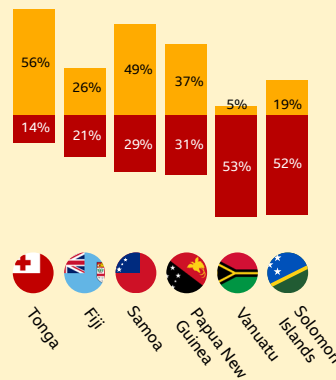


Economic/financial news, business news



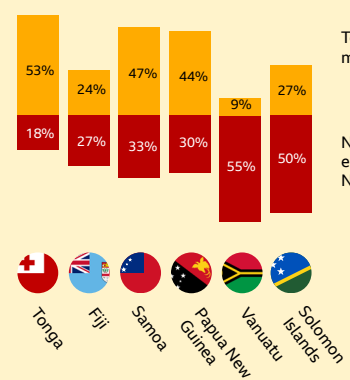
* Economic and business issues are widely under-reported

Crime and safety



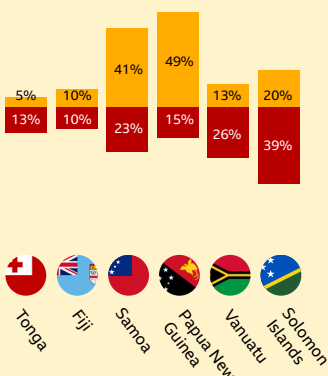
* Crime and corruption are seen as over-covered in Tonga and Samoa

Corruption and bribery

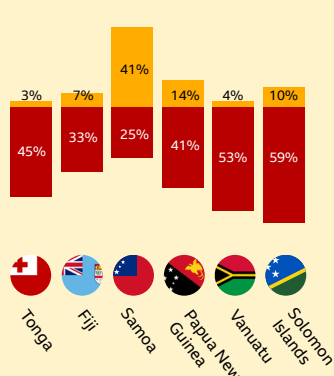


Perceptions of Entertainment Coverage in Media

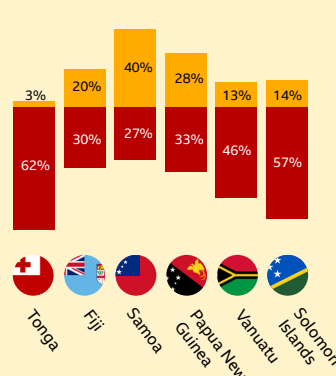
Sports



Culture & Arts

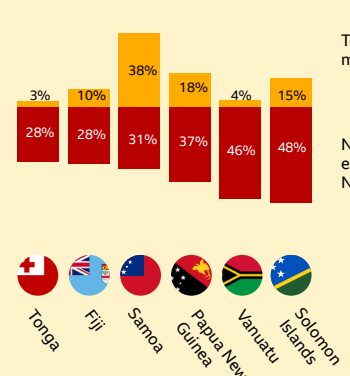


Women & girls

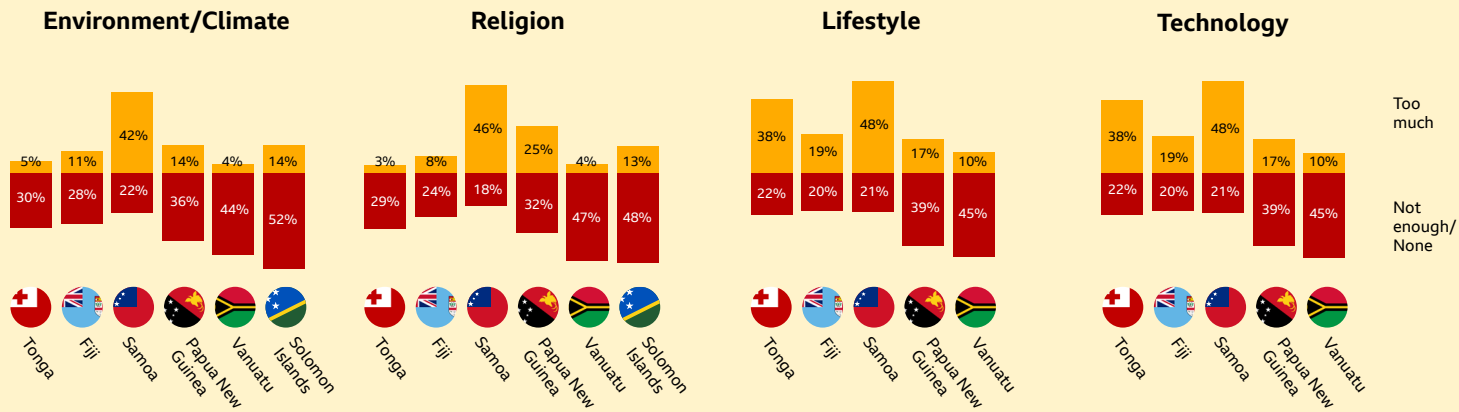


* Coverage of women and girls is widely seen as insufficient

Health



Perceptions of Entertainment Coverage in Media



Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2025).

Q: Thinking generally about the news and current affairs available in the country, do you think that there is too much, about the right amount, not enough, or no media coverage on...?

Q: Thinking generally about the entertainment available in the country, do you think that there is too much, about the right amount, not enough, or no media coverage on...?

Base 2022: Solomon Islands (993); Base 2025: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010)

Audiences identify significant gaps in current coverage. Across the region, many people feel there is not enough coverage of international, regional, and local news, with the strongest demand for “more” coming from Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Samoa stands out from this regional pattern. Compared with many neighbours, Samoan audiences are less likely to say there is “not enough” news overall, but they are much more likely to feel that there is too much coverage of international and national news.

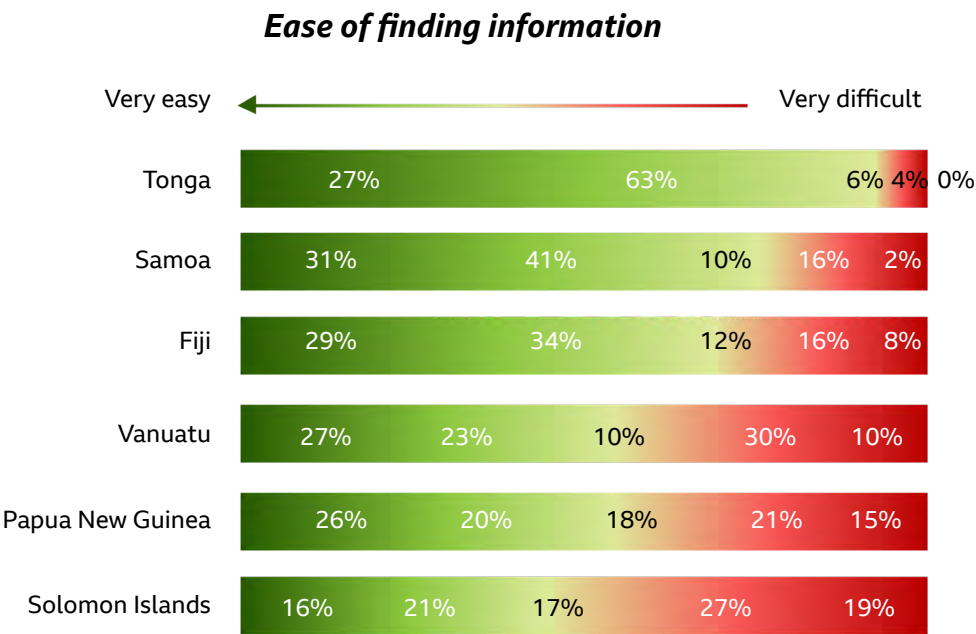
Key themes affecting daily life are also often perceived as under-reported. In Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands in particular, many people say there is not enough coverage of economic and business issues, culture, women and girls topics, health, the environment and religion, and they also want more reporting on crime and corruption. By contrast, in Tonga and Samoa audiences feel there is too much focus on crime and corruption.

Fiji stands out as the country where audiences most often describe coverage across a wide range of topics as “about right”, while Solomon Islands lies at the other end of the spectrum, with the strongest overall demand for more content on almost every issue.



Access shapes how easy it is to find information

People’s perceptions of how easy it is to find information broadly reflect the underlying differences in media access and use. In Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, where daily media engagement is higher and Hybrid and Phone-First Users are more common, people are generally more likely to say that information is easy to find. Views are more mixed in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, where media access and use are more uneven. Solomon Islands has the weakest overall media access profile and is the only country where more people say it is difficult, rather than easy, to get the information they need.



Source: BBC Media Action Survey (2025).
Q: How easy or difficult is it for you to find information about issues that matter to you?
Base 2022: Solomon Islands (993);
Base: Fiji (1,013), Samoa (1,068), Tonga (1,050), Vanuatu (1,073), PNG (1,010)

The implication is that connectivity is not simply about whether a person can get online. Reliable access to a range of trusted information sources - and the ability to use them regularly - determines whether people can find the information they need, when they need it.



A region in transition - but not at the same pace

Taken together, the findings show a Pacific media environment undergoing a significant but uneven digital transition. Smartphones and online platforms are increasingly central to everyday information use, particularly in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Yet digital adoption has not displaced traditional media: radio remains a critical source of trusted information, while television continues to structure news routines in countries where access is stronger.

There is an important divide between people who actively engage with multiple media sources regularly and those whose engagement is intermittent, indirect or absent - whether because of limited access, cost and connectivity, or simply less desire to be constantly connected. In Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands especially, large groups remain only lightly connected to both digital and traditional media. For these audiences, information more often arrives second-hand through family, community leaders, churches or other local networks.

Who is connected – and who is left out?

Across the six countries, differences in media access and use can be linked to age, location and socio-economic status, with gender compounding disadvantage in some places. Younger adults in urban centres are the most connected, using smartphones, internet and social media daily and moving easily between platforms – a “phone-first” pattern that is strongest in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, and evident among urban youth in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

By contrast, older people, rural communities, those with lower income or education, and those in remote islands or highland areas are more likely to have patchy or no direct access to media. They depend heavily on word of mouth, with radio often the only formal source where it is available. Rural and women in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands are more often irregular or ‘media-light users and rely on interpersonal networks they know can be unreliable. The result is a region where a relatively younger, urban minority lives in a dense, phone-first information environment, while many older, rural and poorer – often female – citizens remain only lightly connected or effectively media-dark.



The emerging media landscape is therefore not simply shifting from traditional to digital media, but becoming a mix of traditional media, digital platforms, and interpersonal networks. Smartphones are expanding the speed, reach and choice of information for those who can reliably access them. Traditional media continues to provide a trusted backbone. And where both are limited, interpersonal networks remain the essential bridge to information.

3. Conclusion

Across the six Pacific countries, media is becoming increasingly digital, but the transition is uneven, even among the phone-connected population. Smartphones and mobile internet are central to information access in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, while large groups in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands remain only lightly connected, going online infrequently and in a limited way. Distance, weak infrastructure, unreliable electricity and data costs continue to constrain access. Radio and other traditional media therefore remain essential, and word-of-mouth networks – family, churches, community leaders and other groups – continue to play a central role in connecting people to information, including in more connected countries like Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

To support the continued development of media – and, more specifically, to provide audiences with the information they need – this research points to the importance of a multi-channel, multi-format approach. This means maintaining trusted radio geared to local needs; affordable, reliable digital platforms where people are already online; and, in some locations such as rural and remote areas, outreach and community-based activities that equip informal networks with accurate information they can share. It also means strengthening the capacity of media organisations and sector stakeholders to provide accurate, engaging and locally relevant content across multiple platforms while supporting more open, accountable and diverse media environments.

Across countries, audiences are clear about what they want that content to focus on: more practical, everyday information on livelihoods, health, safety, youth opportunities, local developments and culture, and less repetitive, shallow or exclusively negative news. Rural communities prioritise hyper-local and service-related content, urban audiences want deeper coverage of politics and the economy, and women and girls emphasise health, family economics, safety and fair representation. Meeting these expectations will require media that is not only more accessible, but also relevant and reflective of the realities of different groups.

Strengthening information ecosystems also requires recognising the important role of local networks and community-based information sharing. These networks can help people verify and make sense of information but can also contribute to the spread of rumours and misinformation. Connecting professional journalism with trusted local intermediaries, alongside supporting media and information literacy, can help build more resilient information flows and strengthen communities' ability to identify and respond to mis- and disinformation. Together, these efforts can help ensure that people across the six countries have access to information that is trusted, relevant and useful, while contributing to stronger governance, greater social stability, and more inclusive and resilient societies.



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