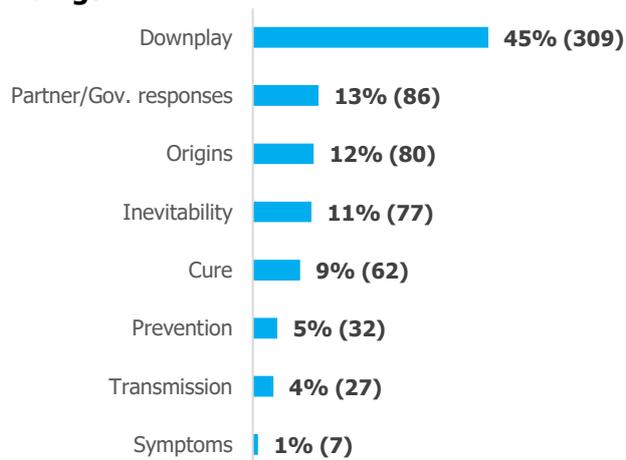


Covid-19 rumour tracking bulletin



Key findings



The most common rumours community members reported were:

- Downplaying the risk of Covid-19:** the belief that Covid-19 is being used for political motives, that it is not real, or that it is real but does not exist in Uganda. This remains the most common rumour, as was the case in previous months (April–August).
- The partner/government response to the virus:** the belief that the government will send refugees back to their countries of origin or to another country for resettlement due to Covid-19. This was the most common rumour around the response. Others say they heard there will be an increase in humanitarian assistance because of the virus or that certain groups, namely urban refugees, have received additional cash assistance. Concerns over the partner/government response were minimal in August, but we have seen an increase in this type of rumour in September and October.
- Questioning the origins of the virus:** bioweapon conspiracy theories asserting that superpowers are using the virus to promote their own interests or that Covid-19 is a punishment from God.
- The inevitability of Covid-19:** the conviction that the virus has already reached communities or that contracting the virus cannot be avoided.

Background

This is the third of a series of monthly rumour-tracking bulletins covering various refugee settlements across Uganda (see the demographic section for more information). The findings will be shared with the humanitarian community in Uganda to provide timely, relevant information about Covid-19 rumours.

As an inter-agency effort, multiple partners shared rumours documented by their staff and volunteers. Partners include Adventist Development and Relief Agency; African Women Rising; Alight; AVSI Foundation; Community Empowerment For Creative Innovation; Centre for Environmental Sustainability and Initiative; Catholic Relief Services; Danish Refugee Council; Finn Church Aid; Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism; Internews; International Rescue Committee; Oxfam; and Save the Children.

Partners are encouraged to take part in rumour collection. If you are interested in this, please contact: anna.christensen@drc.ngo.

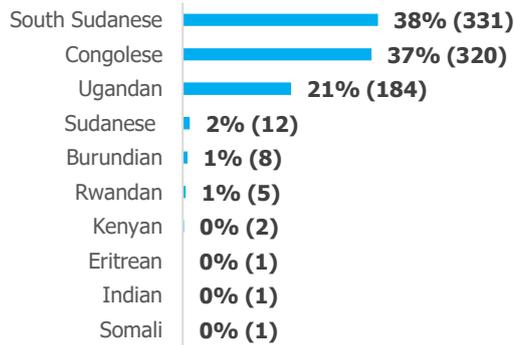
Rumour tracking is an ongoing project, and these bulletins will be updated and shared on a monthly basis. Feedback is welcome. Please send your comments to: kai.kamei@groundtruthsolutions.org.

Method

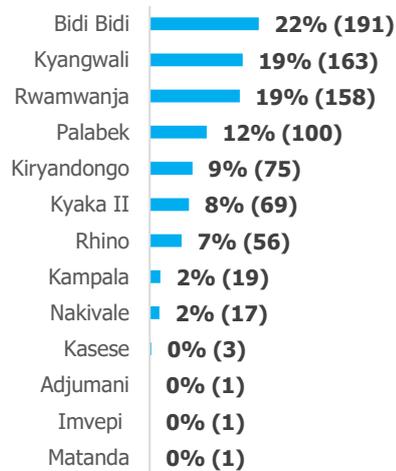
Community volunteers and NGO staff who interact daily with affected communities in Uganda captured rumours during their regular work and interaction with community members from 1 September – 31 October 2020 across various settlements.

Demographics of those who reported rumours (September–October 2020)

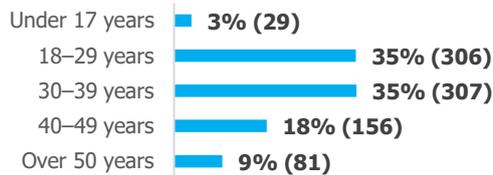
Nationality



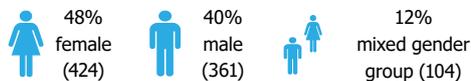
Location



Age



Gender



Humanitarian workers did not actively solicit these rumours, but rather took note as community members asked questions or made comments regarding Covid-19. Some 680 rumours were attributed to refugees from Sudan and South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Eritrea, and India, as well as to Ugandan nationals.

The method described in this bulletin does not lend itself to verifying the percentage of refugees who are sharing rumours, but it does help to highlight the types of rumours being shared.¹

We have analysed patterns in reported rumours according to gender, age, and location, but we have only included differences above 30 respondents and the threshold of 10% in the analysis.

For more information on the methodology, including the TOR for data collectors and access to the raw data, visit the [Rumour Tracking Team Folder](#).

Demographics

The demographics of those who reported rumours are different from the previous month (August), in which over half of the rumours recorded came from Congolese refugees. Rumours in September and October came from Congolese and South Sudanese refugees almost equally, followed by Ugandan nationals.

The locations where the rumours were recorded are also different. Whereas in August over half (66%) came from Kyaka II, the geographic scope was wider in September and October, as illustrated above.

We have seen a slight increase in responses from men (up from 37% in August) and mixed gender groups (up from 7% in August) in September and October.

The demographics of those who reported rumours are similar to those in the second bulletin (August 2020) in terms of age distribution.

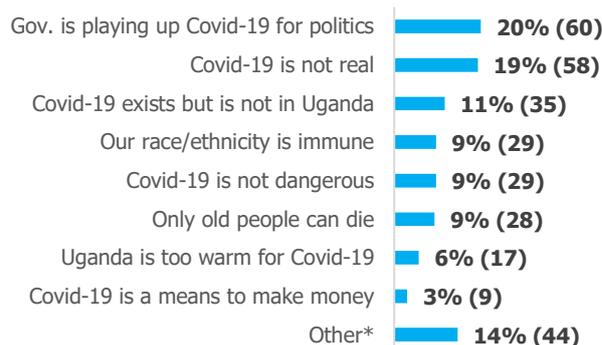
¹ While rumours are spreading in Uganda, it is important to note that recent assessments suggest that most refugees can distinguish between rumours and facts regarding Covid-19. Ground Truth Solutions' key informant interviews with communities across Uganda in June 2020 found that 81% of refugee leaders are confident that people in their communities are able to separate fact from fiction.

45% of rumours relate to:

Downplaying Covid-19

- Similarly to the findings in August, in this round we see that the most common rumour relates to downplaying the seriousness of Covid-19.
- The sentiment that the government is using the pandemic for its own political agenda was most common in this category.
- The idea that authorities and politicians are using Covid-19 as a means of making money featured among the rumours in September and October for the first time.

Breakdown of rumours relating to downplaying the virus (n=309)

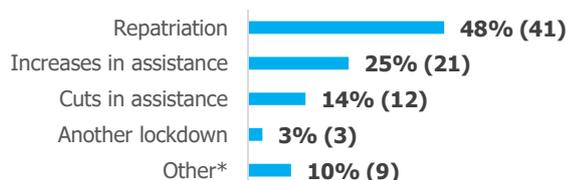


13% of rumours relate to:

Partner/government responses to Covid-19

- More rumours about partner and government responses to Covid-19 were recorded in September and October than in August.
- While very few rumours previously surfaced around people being sent back to their countries of origin or to other host countries, almost half (45%) centred around this issue in September and October. Additionally, the belief that countries such as America or Italy will be taking in refugees following a Covid-19-driven population decrease was shared this time around.
- While the previous bulletin reported people sharing the fear that assistance would be cut, more of the rumours captured in this bulletin concern the belief that assistance will be increased because of the pandemic. In particular, rumours surfaced around urban refugees receiving increased cash assistance and UNHCR rolling out blanket cash assistance.

Breakdown of rumours relating to partner/government responses (n=86)



12% of rumours relate to:

Covid-19's origins

- The belief that Covid-19 was manufactured by America, Canada, or China and is being used as a weapon to destabilise other countries was the most common bioweapon conspiracy theory.



"Covid-19 is not real, it's just the politicians who have their own interests in it." – Rwamwanja, Congolese female in her 40s



"How can coronavirus spread very fast from China to Uganda? Because it is a business, and it's a man-made disease to make money out of." – Bidi Bidi, South Sudanese male in his 40s

*Other includes the belief that Covid-19 only affects poor people, rich people, women, the young, or those with blood type O. Furthermore, some say that those with religious faith are safe or that there are no cases in their settlement, so refugees are safe.



"All the Catholic refugees are going to be resettled in Italy soon after Covid-19 has ended." – Kyangwali, Congolese female in her 20s



"I heard from the Somali community that urban refugees are being given cash to handle Covid-19 challenges. Is this true?" – Kampala, female refugee in her 20s

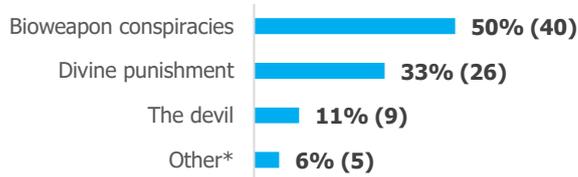
*Other includes rumours that the government will allow bars to reopen, that the government will immunise all Ugandans, or that churches are remaining closed for political reasons.



"Covid-19 is a war between America and China as a result of competing for superpower status." – Bidi Bidi, South Sudanese male in his 30s

- Other rumours around the origins of the virus include the belief that Covid-19 is divine punishment signalling the End Times or is the work of the devil.
- Both of these types of rumours surfaced during the previous round in August as the main theories around the origins of the virus, and this continues to be the case.

Breakdown of rumours relating to the origins of the virus (n=80)

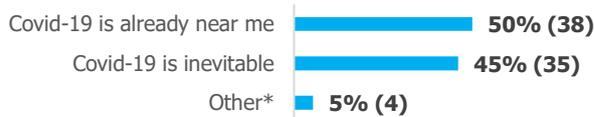


11% of rumours relate to:

The inevitability of Covid-19

- As in the previous rounds, rumours recorded in September and October which exaggerate the virus centre around the belief that Covid-19 has already arrived in communities and that contracting the virus is unavoidable.
- In Kiryandongo we see the highest proportion of rumours exaggerating the virus, making up 29% of the total number of rumours captured there.

Breakdown of rumours relating to the inevitability of the virus (n=77)

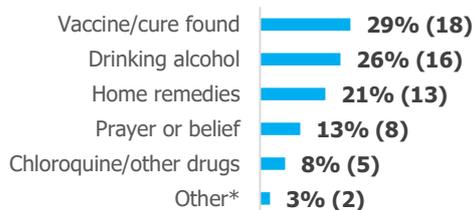


9% of rumours relate to:

Covid-19 cures

- The belief that a vaccine or a cure has been found has not surfaced in rumours recorded previously but did surface in this round. As a vaccine had not been developed at the time these rumours were shared, this is still categorised as a rumour.
- The other beliefs around consuming alcohol, home remedies, drugs such as chloroquine, and praying were all prevalent in the last bulletin as well.

Breakdown of rumours relating to curing the virus (n=62)



“In modern times a lot of bad things are taking place, and now God is tired, and this virus will end the world. People on this earth will all die – fear, worry, stress, and death will take place.” – Rhino, group of elderly South Sudanese men

*Other includes the belief that Covid-19 was caused by air pollution, 5G networks, dogs in Hong Kong, or snakes.



“Covid-19 is like HIV; it will never end.” – Rwamwanja, Ugandan male in his 30s

*Other includes the belief that lockdown measures will be extended for a long period of time, so people should stock up on reserves.



“Corona virus has a cure; medicine for it was discovered in Madagascar.” – Bidi Bidi, South Sudanese female in her 30s

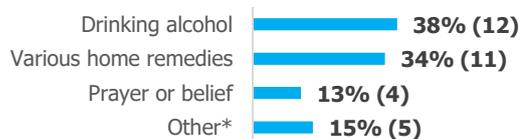
*Other includes the belief that the sun or marijuana can cure Covid-19.

5% of rumours relate to:

Preventing Covid-19

- As was the case in August, we see most rumours around preventing Covid-19 mention alcohol consumption, home remedies, and prayer.

Breakdown of rumours relating to preventing the virus (n=32)

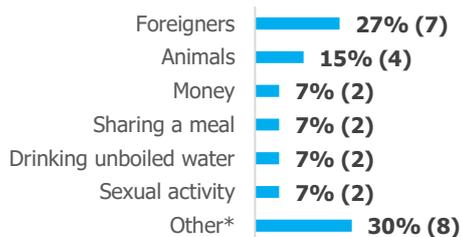


4% of rumours relate to:

Transmitting Covid-19

- The beliefs that foreigners and animals spread Covid-19 were also commonly recorded rumours in the last bulletin.
- However, the ideas that the virus is spread primarily via money, sharing meals, and sexual activity were new this time around. While these are indeed ways in which Covid-19 could be spread, they are not the primary means outlined by official risk communication and so are categorised as rumours.

Breakdown of rumours relating to how the virus is transmitted (n=27)

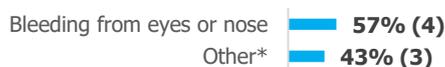


1% of rumours relate to:

Covid-19 symptoms

- The belief that people who have contracted Covid-19 bleed from their face was the most common rumour shared in September and October.

Breakdown of rumours relating to Covid-19 symptoms (n=7)



“Putting on a face mask can’t prevent Covid-19. Drinking alcohol can prevent Covid-19.” – Rwamwanja, group of Ugandan females in their 30s

*Other includes the belief that the virus can be prevented by not wearing masks, keeping milk by one’s bed, or talking, or that it is a personal choice and can be avoided by individuals who choose to do so.



“Corona is spread by visitors and foreigners.” – Bidi Bidi, elderly South Sudanese male community leaders

*Other includes the belief that Covid-19 is spread through breastmilk, mosquitos, humanitarian staff, spirits, kissing, bacteria, sweat or a high concentration of vitamin C.



“One of the symptoms of Corona is blood coming from the eyes.” – Kyaka II, Congolese female in her 30s

*Other includes the belief that those with Covid-19 have severe headaches, sweat blood, or that anyone who sneezes has the virus.