

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the index produced by GDI?

The Global Disinformation Index (GDI) assesses the risk of news domains disinforming their public in media markets around the globe. The index is structured as a neutral, independent and transparent assessment of a news domain's disinformation risk, at the site level. The index does not assess the truthfulness or accuracy of a site.

How is the GDI computed?

The GDI risk rating is determined by a manual assessment of the news domains in any given media market. The media market is defined as ~30 of some of the most popular news sites in a country, based on their Alexa rankings and other indicators. The assessments for each domain are applied to different elements or “pillars” of the index: content, operations and context of a news domain. Each news domain is rated on a score of 0 to 100. A lower score indicates a higher risk of disinformation. A higher score indicates a lower risk. Based on the aggregate score across the three pillars, each news domain is assigned a risk-level for disinformation: minimum risk, low risk, medium risk, high risk, maximum risk. The risk level is based on the score of a site and its distance from the mean of all scores.

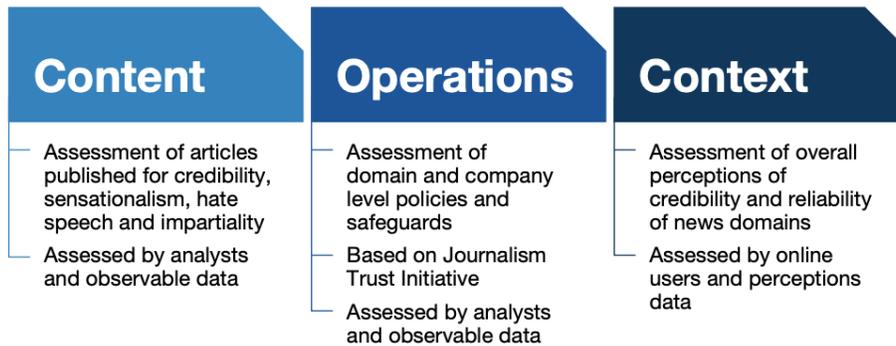
What are the pillars of the GDI and why is it based on these?

The GDI rating is based on the manual assessment of various indicators of disinformation risk spread over three pillars, namely “Content”, “Operations” and “Context”.

- **The “Content” pillar** contains indicators that assess different elements of articles published to a specific domain, including their *credibility*, *sensationalism*, *hate speech* and *impartiality*. To compile the articles, the index takes a sample of articles published to a news domain over a two-week period, combining the most frequently shared content along with content covering a number of major topics that may include disinformation. These articles are then manually reviewed by local researchers trained in GDI's methodology.
- **The “Operations” pillar** assesses the underlying policies and rules that domains abide by to establish trust and reliability in the quality of news being published. We have applied a sub-set of indicators selected from the [Journalism Trust Initiative \(JTI\)](#) that serve as good proxies to assess the risk of disinformation arising from lapses in

journalistic integrity. The operations pillar captures *conflict of interest, lack of operational integrity, inaccurate reporting, and lack of accountability*.

- **The “Context” pillar** assesses the overall credibility and reliability of news-related information provided by a specific domain. This pillar and the questions in it are connected with the broader context in which content is presented on a site and whether it is done in a way that is accurate and trustworthy. The disinformation flags assessed are related to: *reputation of brand, credibility, trustworthiness, conflicts of interest and biasedness*. This pillar relies on informed online users - between 200 and 1,000 respondents per country - to score domains’ performance. The respected polling firm [YouGov](#) is conducting the survey in larger markets. Local independent and trusted survey companies are used in smaller media markets.



How are the domains scored and rated by GDI risk ratings?

The domains are placed into a fivepoint risk scale based on their final index scores. In order to determine a domain’s risk rating, it is assumed that the factors influencing disinformation risk are similar across all domains, independent of the media market they belong to.

The final score per domain is standardised to fit a standard normal distribution with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1.¹ The resulting standardised score and their distance from the mean standardised score is used to determine the risk rating for a domain.

TOTAL DOMAIN SCORE	DISINFORMATION RISK LEVEL	DISINFORMATION RISK CATEGORY
< -1.5 SD from mean	5	Maximum risk
≥ -1.5 and ≤ -0.5 SD from mean	4	High risk
> -0.5 and ≤ 0.5 SD from mean	3	Medium risk
> 0.5 and ≤ 1.5 SD from mean	2	Low risk
> 1.5 SD from mean	1	Minimum risk

¹ The domains from all media markets are combined together to compute the mean and standard deviation of the distribution of index scores and those estimates are used for standardisation.

Which countries are included in the GDI risk ratings?

The first pilot of the GDI risk ratings in 2019 assessed news domains in the UK and South Africa. It led to the production of national media market reports for each country:

<https://disinformationindex.org/2020/01/rating-disinformation-risks-in-south-africa-and-the-uk>.

The GDI risk rating was expanded to cover an additional 8 countries in 2020: Argentina, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, India, Latvia, South Africa. GDI aims to cover at least 20 major online advertising markets by the end of 2021, with funding secured so far for: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Spain.

Does GDI tell me whether a site or domain carries disinformation?

The rating given to a domain refers to its risk of exposure to disinformation: the different strengths or weaknesses of the content, operations and context of a news domain. The GDI rating does not assess whether a specific news domain is actually carrying disinformation. **This differentiation is critical.** It does not determine which news stories are inaccurate or which news domains are carrying disinformation. It is not attempting to be the arbiter or judge of what is “accurate” news.

How often will the GDI risk rating be produced/updated?

The full GDI risk ratings will be produced every other year with the number of countries being covered expanded in each iteration. Real-time lists assessing structural features of sites are produced constantly and made available to brands and ad exchanges. These are global and will cover all countries. The GDI is currently trialing the real time lists with various ad tech companies.

How does the GDI risk rating differ from other disinformation initiatives?

Based on our review of current initiatives to [assess the approaches](#) used to measure disinformation, they can be broadly seen as doing the following: understanding the reach and impact of disinformation; fact-checking various domains; defining and measuring the quality of journalism; and developing indicators to measure disinformation measurement. Most efforts are focused on assessing the quality of journalism or the measures in place that contribute to high-quality journalism. None of these initiatives use a hybrid approach such as the GDI. Those initiatives that use automated methods are focused on analysing the news content and do not seem to take a comprehensive view of various disinformation risks or attempt to assess the overall disinformation risk at the site level.

Why should anyone trust the GDI index?

The GDI is a not-for-profit organisation funded by a range of entities that include governments, philanthropic organizations and the private sector. We operate on three principles of neutrality, independence and transparency.

GDI is non-political. Its governing board comprises independent trustees with no commercial link to the media. Our Technical Advisory Group (TAG) comprises experts in disinformation, indices, fact-checking and technology from around the globe. For more on the index, see: <https://disinformationindex.org/about/>.

The index methodology is transparent and publicly available. All media sources rated will receive the scores behind their rating based on the three pillars of the index.