



GDI

Global
Disinformation
Index

Media Market Risk Ratings: Latvia

www.disinformationindex.org

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The Global Disinformation Index is a UK-based not-for-profit that operates on the three principles of neutrality, independence and transparency. Our vision is a world in which we can trust what we see in the media. Our mission is to restore trust in the media by providing real-time automated risk ratings of the world's media sites through a Global Disinformation Index (GDI). The GDI is non-political. Our Advisory Panel consists of international experts in disinformation, indices and technology. For more information, visit www.disinformationindex.org



Preface

Since the invention of the web, how we live our lives online—and off—has changed in countless ways. This includes how news is funded, produced, consumed and shared.

With these shifts in the news industry have come risks. Disinformation is one of them. Disinformation has been used as a tool to weaponise mass influence and disseminate propaganda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation has created an infodemic undermining public health, safety and government responses. No country or media market is immune from these threats.

To combat disinformation, we need to find ways to disrupt the system and its funding. This is where the Global Disinformation Index (GDI) has set its focus.

At the GDI, we believe that an independent, trusted and neutral risk rating of news sites' disinformation risks is needed. These risk ratings can be used by advertisers and ad tech companies to ensure that where they direct their online ad spends is aligned with their own brand safety and risk mitigation strategies for disinformation.

The GDI's research offers a trusted and neutral assessment about a news domain's risk of disinforming. By looking at structural, content, operational and context indicators, the GDI provides a domain-level rating about a news site's risk of disinforming an online user.

The following report presents the results of applying the GDI risk rating methodology to some of the frequently visited media sites in Latvia. In total we assessed 23 sites. The country was chosen because of the high levels of readers consuming their news online and Latvia's current and past experiences with countering disinformation campaigns targeting online readers and fostering public debate.^{1,2}

Figure 1. Media sites assessed in Latvia (in alphabetical order)

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. www.baltnews.lt | 9. www.liepajniekiem.lv | 17. www.rezekneszinas.lv |
| 2. www.bb.lv | 10. www.lsm.lv | 18. www.rubaltic.ru |
| 3. www.db.lv | 11. www.meduza.io | 19. www.sputniknews.ru |
| 4. www.delfi.lv | 12. www.mixnews.lv | 20. www.subbota.com |
| 5. www.focus.lv | 13. www.nasha.lv | 21. www.telegraf.bb.lv |
| 6. www.gorod.lv | 14. www.panorama-rezekne.lv | 22. www.tvnet.lv |
| 7. www.grani.lv | 15. www.press.lv | 23. www.ventasbalss.lv |
| 8. www.jauns.lv | 16. www.rebaltica.lv | |

Introduction

The harms of disinformation³ are proliferating around the globe—threatening our elections, our health, and our shared sense of accepted facts.

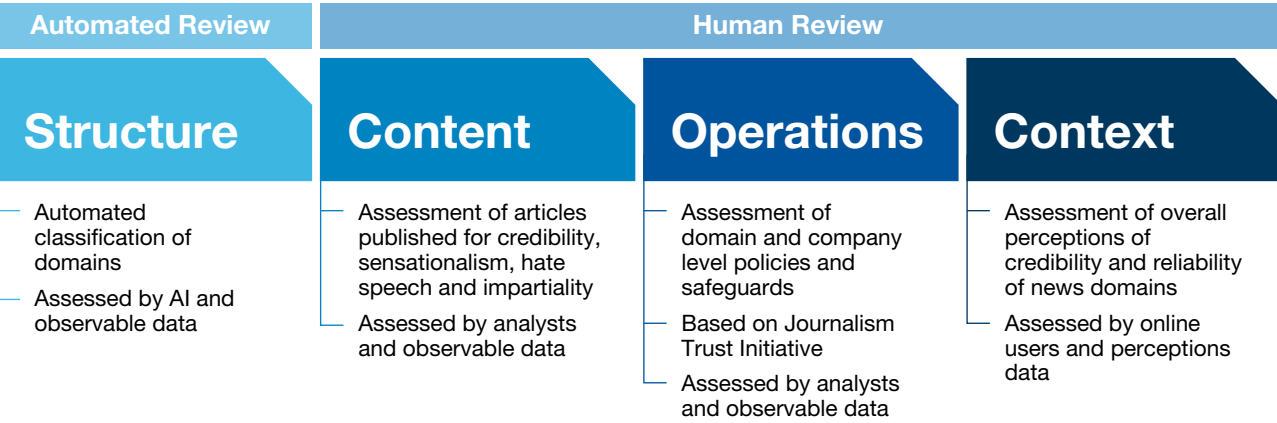
The infodemic laid bare by COVID-19 conspiracies clearly shows that disinformation costs peoples' lives. Websites masquerading as news outlets are driving and profiting financially from the situation.

The goal of the Global Disinformation Index (GDI) is to cut off the revenue streams that incentivise and sustain the spread of disinformation. Using both artificial and human intelligence, the GDI has created an assessment framework to rate the disinformation risk of news domains.⁴

The GDI risk rating provides advertisers, ad tech companies and platforms with greater information about a range of disinformation flags related to a site's Structure (i.e. metadata and lexical features),⁵ Content (i.e. reliability of content), Operations (i.e. operational and editorial integrity) and Context (i.e. perceptions of brand trust; see Figure 2). The findings in this report are based on the three pillars that were manually reviewed: Content, Operations and Context.⁶

A site's disinformation risk level is based on that site's aggregated score across all of the reviewed pillars and indicators (see figure 2).⁷ A site's overall score ranges from zero (maximum risk level) to 100 (minimum risk level). Each indicator that is included in the framework is scored from zero to 100. The output of the index is therefore the site's overall disinformation risk level, rather than the truthfulness or journalistic quality of the site.

Figure 2. Overview of the GDI disinformation risk assessment



The following report presents findings pertaining to disinformation risks for the media market in Latvia, based on a study of 23 news domains.⁸ The data provide an initial snapshot of the overall strengths and challenges that these sites face to mitigate disinformation risks.⁹

All of these findings come from the research led by the GDI with the Centre for East European Policy Studies, Austrumeiropas politikas pētījumu centrs (CEEPS - APPC), between March and June 2020. The market analysis is based on 15 disinformation flags that were assessed for Latvia by CEEPS-APPC and by an independent perceptions survey.¹⁰ The market analysis is based on 15 disinformation flags from the human review of Latvian websites performed by two researchers.¹¹ This report presents the average scores for the market sample. Sites that are rated as a minimum-risk sites and/or score above a 95 on any of the three pillars are named and profiled in the report.¹²

The GDI risk rating methodology is not an attempt to identify truth and falsehoods. It does not label any site as a disinformation site—or, inversely, as a trusted news site. Rather, our approach is based on the idea that a range of signals, taken together, can indicate a site’s risk of carrying disinformation.

The scores should be seen as offering initial insights into the Latvian media market and its overall levels of disinformation risk. The results are open to debate and refinement with stakeholders from news sites, advertisers and the ad tech industry. (The annex of this report outlines the assessment framework).¹³ We look forward to this engagement.

How to address disinformation risks from international sites

The internet is largely seamless, and so is the information that people can access. Whether you are Cape Town, Melbourne or Toronto, you may be relying on some of the same English-language media sites that are based outside your own country. The same applies to many other languages including Arabic, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

But how do you assess and address the disinformation risks that these sites pose to the local market? This issue is particularly challenging when international sites target minorities within a country with a different official language. This case is extremely relevant for understanding the assessment of the Latvian media market.

The sizeable community of Russian speakers in Latvia means that many online readers naturally use and rely on Russian-language media, including Latvian sites and those outside the country. Many of the country’s most popular Russian-language sites are based in Russia.¹⁴ For this market study, we assessed two Latvian sites (www.subbota.com and www.meduza.io), one Lithuanian-based site (www.baltnews.lt) and two Russian sites (www.rubaltic.ru and www.sputniknews.ru).

In comparison with the findings for the entire media Latvian market, Russian-language sites have a mixed performance in terms of their disinformation risks. Only one site outperforms all the market averages for the Latvian media market: www.meduza.io. The other Russian-language sites perform substantially below the rest of the market sample and present relatively higher disinformation risks. These sites lack many of the operational safeguards and journalistic practices that are associated with low- and medium-risk sites.

While it is critical to understand their risk profile, it also presents a policy challenge. As international sites, they are not part of Latvia’s media bodies or accountable to the Latvian government in cases of violations of domestic media regulations. There is no clear way to remedy any of the identified risks for these international sites unless they opt to address them. We hope these findings provide these international sites with a clear road map of how to mitigate the disinformation risks found and look forward to working with them.

Key Findings: Latvia

In reviewing the media landscape for Latvia, GDI’s assessment found that:

Nearly two-thirds of the sites in our sample have a high to maximum risk of disinforming their online users.

- Eleven sites present a high disinformation risk rating, while four sites had a maximum risk rating (see Figure 3). This group includes sites that are published in Latvian and Russian.
- Many of these sites publish biased content, thus creating an opportunity to manipulate their audience
- These same sites publish stories not covered by other outlets and often publish in Russian, creating informational asymmetries for certain groups in the country.

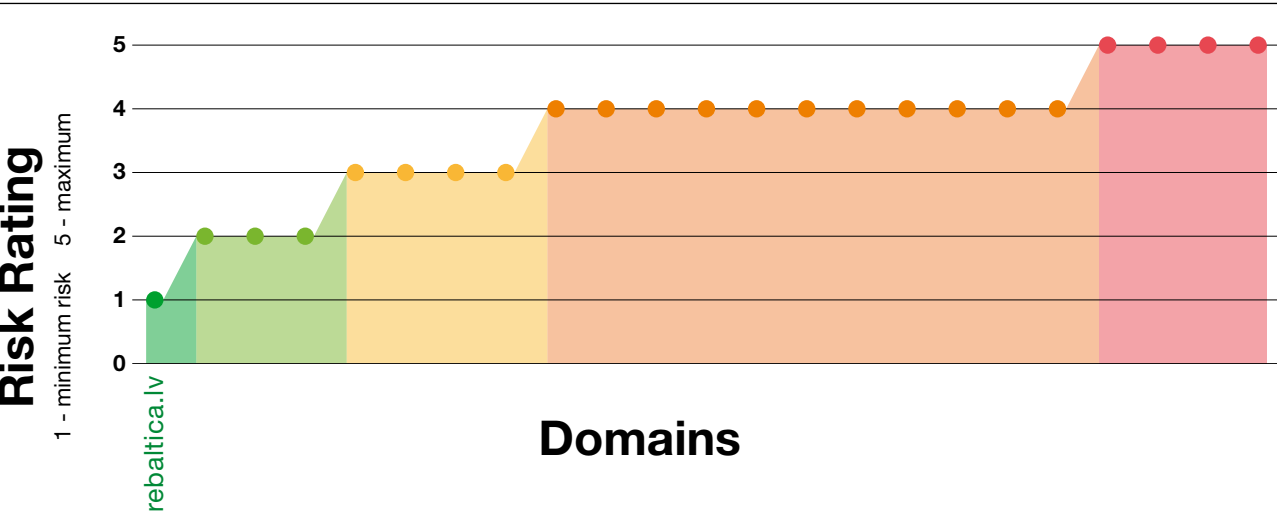
There is only a limited number of Latvian sites that present low levels of disinformation risks.

- Only one site—www.rebaltica.lv—was rated as having a ‘minimum’ disinformation risk. It scores perfectly when it comes to presenting unbiased, neutral and accurately titled articles on the site. It also has most of the operational checks and balances in place and is considered a trusted and accurate source of information.
- Three sites were rated with a ‘low’ level of disinformation risk, including sites in Russian and/or Latvian. These sites also score well overall for publishing non-sensational content, but they lack a few of the operational checks and balances that are considered critical for running an independent and accountable newsroom

The media sites assessed in Latvia tend to either perform very well or very poorly when it comes to combatting disinformation risks.

- Only four sites were rated as presenting a ‘medium’ risk of disinforming their online users.
- This finding suggests that there are very few sites which could improve their mid-range performance by addressing shortfalls, such as their operational policies, to move up to a low-risk category.

Figure 3. Disinformation risk ratings by site



Online users’ low perceptions of brand trust in Latvian news sites reflect their overall crisis of confidence in the ability of the country’s media to combat disinformation.¹⁵

- This general level of distrust can legitimise disinformation. If an online user does not consider any site to be trustworthy, content on both high-risk and low-risk disinformation sites is seen as being the same.
- Low perceptions of site trust can also fuel cynicism towards the media as a critical institutional pillar of the society.

Many sites in Latvia do not have all of the operational checks and balances in place which are needed to create safeguards against disinformation risks.

- Related disinformation flags that are common across the sample include the failure to publicly disclose a site’s sources of funding and its owners, as well as the failure to publish statements of editorial independence.
- Such information helps to establish an editorial buffer between a site’s owners and advertisers, and its content creators.

The common use of bylines on news sites is largely absent in Latvia

- We found a widespread lack of bylines for many articles that were assessed for the sample.
- Concealing an author’s identity increases the risk of disinformation since there is no way to establish who is providing the information
- To ensure credibility, additional details about the author should be provided (such as an email address, social media details, or previously published articles).

The Latvian media market: Key features and scope

The media environment in Latvia is complex. News media sites produce content in both Latvian and Russian. Russian-language content is created by media sites that are registered in Latvia, other EU countries and Russia. The greatest differences between Latvian- and Russian-language sites are their content and target audience. Data from 2017 shows that just over 61 percent of the population use Latvian at home while almost 38 percent are Russian-speakers.¹⁶

Latvian speakers admit that they mainly consume Latvian media sites, whereas Russian speakers have indicated that they consume media sites coming from both Latvia and Russia. While the majority of the society speaks Latvian and consumes local content, consuming news from Russian media sites adds another layer of complexity for understanding the disinformation risks for the country. Kremlin-controlled media sites are spreading disinformation which is targeted at Russian-speakers

living outside Russia, including in Latvia. As a result, the local Russian-speaking population are under the risk of consuming content that has been produced with a specific goal - to ensure their loyalty or at least neutrality towards Russian foreign policy while also trying to create mistrust of the Latvian government to cause a divide in the society. To further complicate the matter, many Kremlin-controlled media sites are registered outside of the EU, which limits any chances of ensuring their compliance with legislation and good practice

Additionally, the Latvian media market is relatively new, having been created following Latvia’s independence in 1991 . Many Latvians still remember when Latvia was part of the Soviet Union before it became independent. Prior to 1991, the Soviet government and media published deliberate disinformation about domestic and foreign events. This historic memory may still cause people to feel distrustful and skeptical of news in general, and to view media sites as a tool for spreading propaganda and disinformation.

Today, the local media in Latvia operate in a highly competitive media environment. Latvian sites must compete with a global media market operating on a 24/7 news cycle that anyone with an internet connection can access.

As online news has expanded, so has online advertising. Latvia has a growing market for online advertising. In 2018, the Latvian media market for advertising experienced its largest growth in recent years (up six percent). Nevertheless, internet advertising accounts for only 23 percent of the total advertising spend in the Latvian market, while advertising on television has a 41 percent market share.^{17, 18}

Similar to advertisers, Latvians prefer television over other media with 79 percent of the population watching television at least once a week.¹⁹ However, it is estimated that 79 percent of the population gets their news online and mostly via their mobile phones (77 percent).²⁰ This preference is reflected in which news sites Latvians visit most. The most popular Internet news sites²¹ in Latvia are: [delfi.lv](#), [tvnet.lv](#) and [lsm.lv](#) (respectively).²² In addition to these sites, two sites with Russian-language content figure in the top 20 most used sites in Latvia: [lv.sputniknews.ru](#) and [press.lv](#).²³

But more online news consumption does not necessarily mean more trust in online news. A recent Eurobarometer survey on trust in the media suggests that only 34 percent of people trust online news sites in Latvia.²⁴ Further research suggests that 46 percent of people in Latvia distrust online media and that 56 percent do not trust the news they see on social media.²⁵

For this study, we defined the Latvian media market based on an initial list of nearly 40 news sites, which included well-known national outlets, tabloids and regional newspapers. We then worked with local media experts to refine the list based on each site’s reach and relevance. We defined reach and relevance based on a site’s Alexa rankings and its Facebook and Twitter followers. We also consulted with local experts to identify domains with lower reach but high relevance among decision-makers, or which have been deemed relevant outlets targeting specific groups in Latvia.

Disinformation risk ratings

The findings for Latvian media sites show a polarised distribution when it comes to disinformation risks. Some sites show very limited disinformation risks, while many sites face significant challenges.

Market overview

At the same time, only a few sites were assessed with a medium risk rating. It is this group of sites which often have the greatest likelihood of reducing their risks going forward. Overall, many of the risk factors in Latvia come from weak journalistic and editorial checks and balances in their newsrooms (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Overall market scores, by pillar

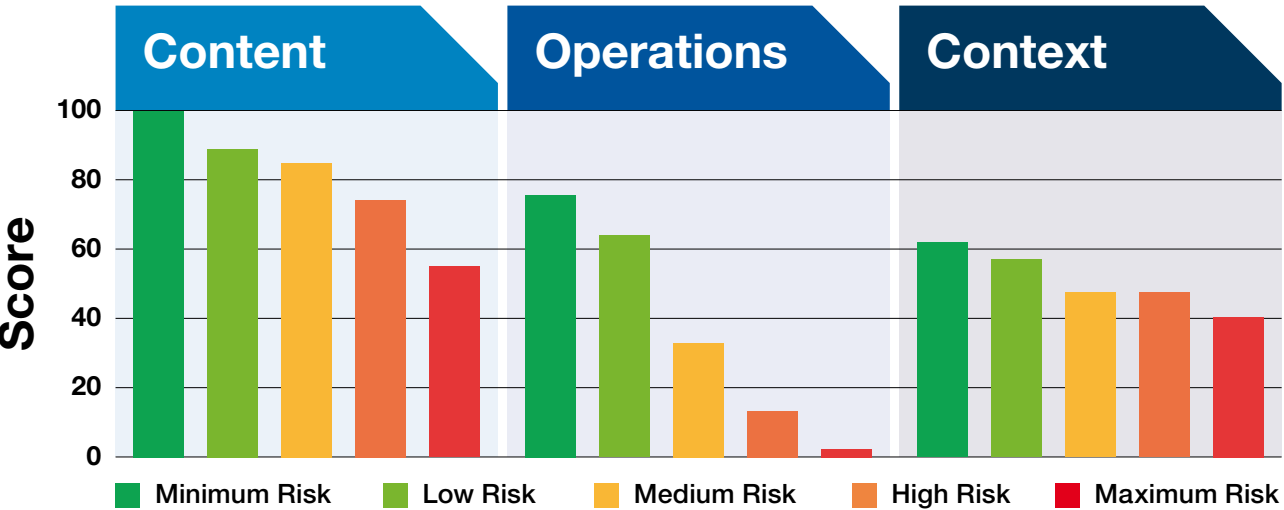


In Latvia, only one site received a minimum-risk rating: www.rebaltica.lv. The site performs perfectly on all of the content flags: all of the articles assessed are neutral and unbiased, carry bylines and headlines which match the story’s contents, and do not negatively target groups or individuals. The site also has many of the key operational policies in place, including information about its funding and ownership, guidelines for user-generated content, and a statement of editorial independence (although it does lack a clear process for correcting errors). Also, online users perceive it to be a fairly accurate source of news.

There are three sites in Latvia that were rated as low-risk sites. These sites—in Latvian and Russian—tend to perform relatively well on the content indicators, especially for having neutral and non-sensational content that does not negatively target any specific individual or groups. They are also perceived to be fairly well trusted by online users. However, they lack some of the operational transparency and editorial safeguards, including information on their sources of funding.

Only four sites were assessed with a medium-risk rating. While these sites generally perform well on providing reliable and unbiased content, they lack key operational policies, including information on their funding sources (only one Latvian site in the entire sample provides this information). Such policies are associated with strong universal journalistic standards. These journalistic standards have been set by the Journalism Trust initiative (JTI).²⁶ Most of the sites that currently fall in the middle range for risks could move into a lower-risk group with improvements to their site’s operational and editorial policies.

Figure 5. Average pillar score by risk rating level



The 15 remaining sites—nearly two-thirds of our sample—received a high- or maximum-risk rating. Eleven sites received a high-risk rating, while four sites were in the maximum-risk category. The highest-risk domains within our sample consist largely of sites that score poorly on the credibility of their content. They often publish articles that are sensational and/or biased, and which may negatively target groups and individuals. They also entirely fail to meet universal standards for editorial and operational policies (see Figure 5). For example, this group includes five sites that scored zero on the entire Operations pillar: they failed to have any of the information or policies called for by the JTI.

Pillar Overview

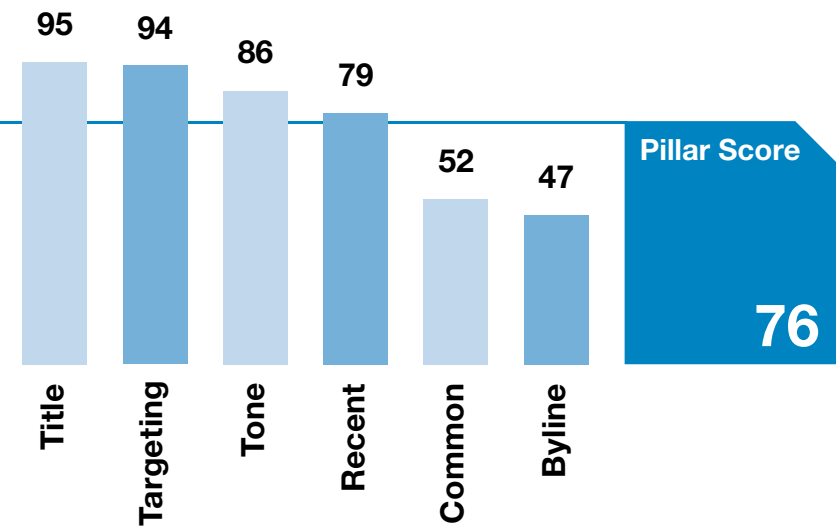
CONTENT PILLAR

This pillar focuses on the reliability of the content provided on the site. Our analysis for the Content pillar is based on an assessment of ten anonymised articles for each domain. These articles are drawn from among the most frequently shared pieces of content during the data collection period (see Figure 6). All article scores are based on a scale of zero (worst) to 100 (best), as assessed by the country reviewers.

For the Latvian media market, the articles sampled for each of the media sites generally show low disinformation risks for indicators related to their headlines, targeting of groups or individuals, and coverage of recent events (see Figure 6).

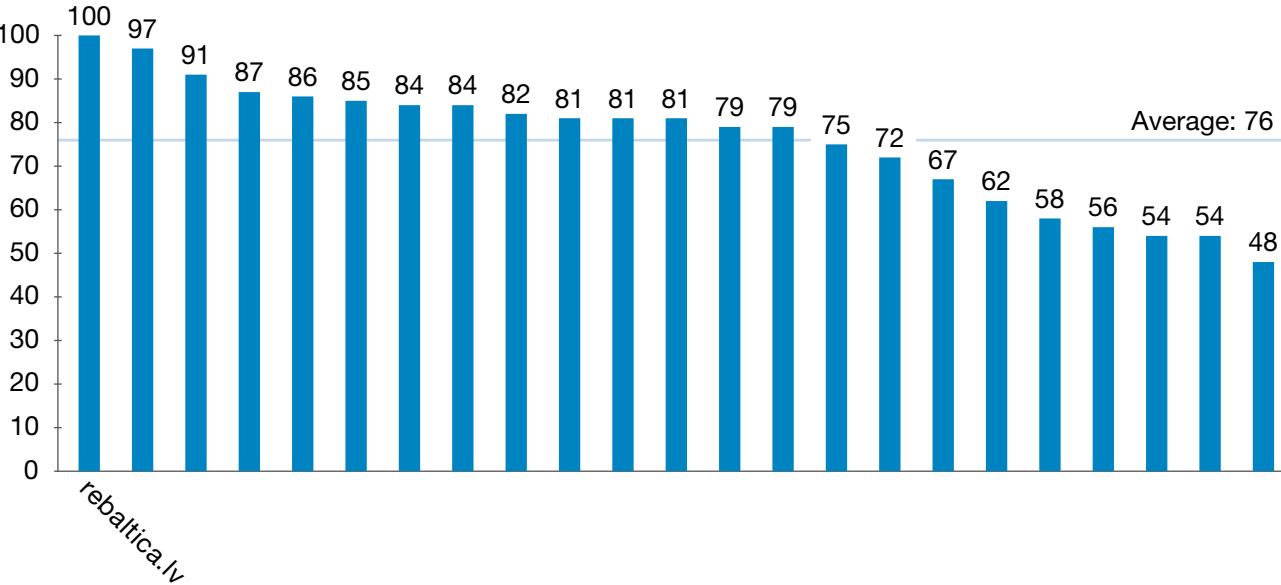
However, most sites in the Latvian media market score poorly when it comes to publishing bylines. There may be editorial reasons not to publish a byline (i.e. the story is produced by an editorial team or the site is worried about attacks on its staff). But given Latvia’s challenges with disinformation by external actors, bylines help to provide transparency about the source of the article and trustworthiness of the information. Based on our analysis, whether an article on a site carries a byline serves as a strong indicator for whether that site will have an overall lower risk of disinformation. Sites that publish bylines have an extremely strong and positive correlation with users’ perceptions that the site provides accurate information, corrects errors and clearly distinguishes news from opinion pieces (see Annex). What is more, sites that use bylines are also positively correlated with sites that publish more neutral, unbiased information and provide transparency about their owners and funding.

Figure 6. Average Content pillar scores by indicator



Additionally, several news sites in our sample receive higher disinformation risk ratings over all when the tone of their sampled articles are more emotional and/or biased. Based on our research, the tone indicator serves as a significant predictor of the other disinformation risk indicators for Latvian media sites. Interestingly, these are also the same sites that tend to not publish bylines (see Annex).

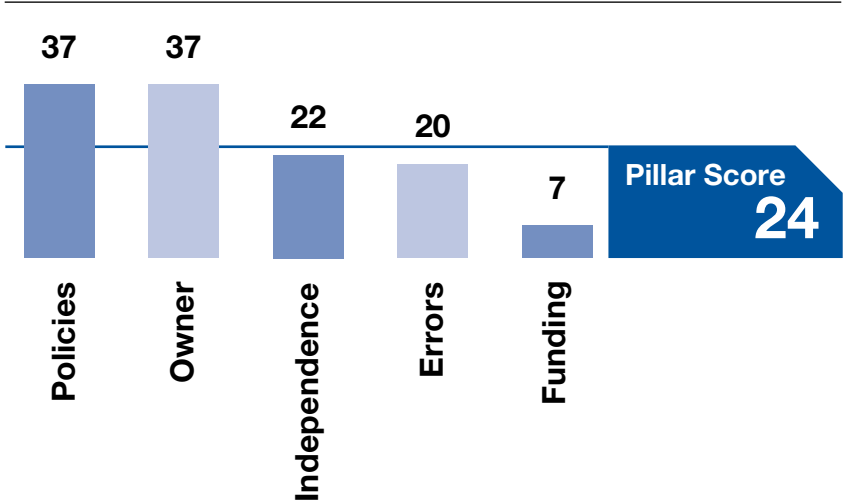
Figure 7. Content pillar scores by site



OPERATIONS PILLAR

This pillar assesses the operational and editorial integrity of a news site. All scores are based on a scale of zero (worst) to 100 (best), as scored by the country reviewers according to the information available on the site. The operations indicators are the quickest wins to reduce disinformation risk, as they represent policies that domains can immediately establish and make public.²⁷ However, many sites in our sample lack such policies. Yet the operations pillar is highly important for news sites used in Latvia (in both Russian and Latvian) to create the operational and editorial bulwark that can help to prevent disinformation stories and narratives from being published on their sites.

Figure 8. Average Operations pillar scores by indicator



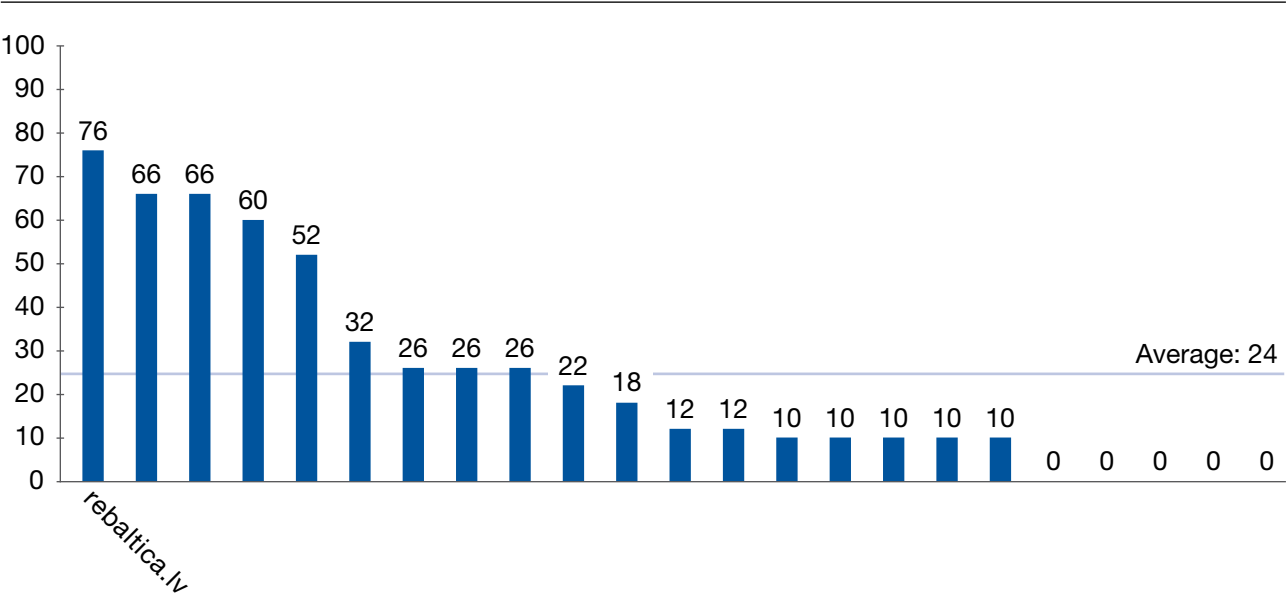
While some of the more popular sites in Latvia have established some or all of the policies as aligned with the JTI standards, other sites have not (see Figure 8). Only one site has published its corrections policy and process, while four sites (20 % of the sample) have published a statement of editorial independence. Such information is critical to ensuring transparent and accountable media. For example, a clearly-defined code of conduct for a site’s comment sections can help to keep user-generated comments civil and free of harassment. A strong editorial code of conduct can help to review and correct erroneously published content. Although the Latvian Media Ethics Council’s Code of Ethics²⁸ calls for adherence to principles such as editorial independence and transparency, the media are not specifically obligated to disclose their editorial codes of conduct.

All 23 sites in our sample have the potential to score perfectly on all the indicators of the Operations pillar if they adopt and disclose such operational policies and information. The indicators for the Operations pillar are taken from the standards which have been set by journalists as part of the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI).²⁹ As the JTI points out,³⁰ adopting these standards raises credibility in the eyes of the public, compels traditional media to reassess their practices in the digital age, and encourages new media outlets to be more transparent about their business models.³¹

Sites that perform poorly in this pillar include news aggregators, yet a number of professional news outlets also lack transparency about their operational policies. This finding suggests that in order to minimise risk in the Latvian media market, all publishers should rethink their standards for public disclosure as per the JTI’s key policies.

A shift in policies and practices could be supported by the Latvian government and press bodies. Supportive government measures could help to strengthen the transparency, independence and editorial integrity of the Latvian national media landscape. Press bodies could encourage members to proactively adopt and implement operational and editorial transparency measures.

Figure 9. Operations pillar scores by site



CONTEXT PILLAR

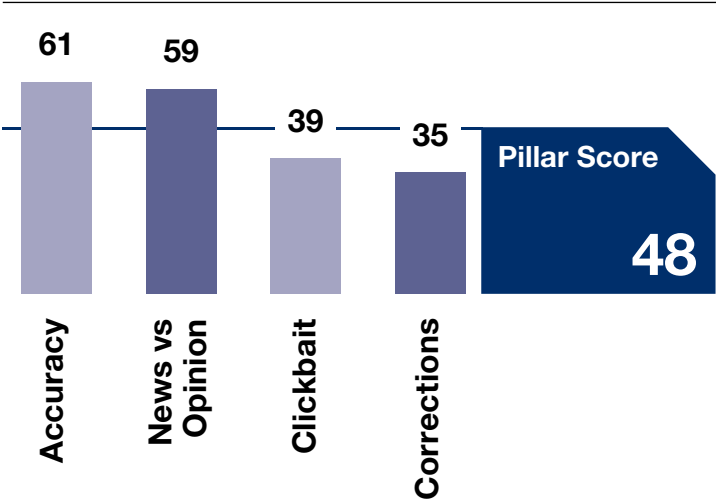
A site’s performance on this pillar is a good measure of perceptions of brand trust in a given media site. All scores are based on a scale of zero (worst) to 100 (best), as rated by online users.

Context pillar scores have significant room for improvement for many domains, although online users’ perceptions can be shifted only over the medium to long term.³² This is partly due to the fact that perceptions can be ‘sticky’ and take time to realign with a site’s current realities. That said, our statistical analysis indicates that respondents’ perceptions do reflect several of the Content and Operations indicators, so adopting the content and operations standards measured in those pillars may have the additional effect of improving perceptions in the eyes of the country’s readers.

The context pillar findings are based on an independent survey³³ conducted to measure online users’ perceptions of brand trust in the media sites included in our sample for Latvia.

The findings show that online users’ low perceptions of brand trust in Latvian news sites reflect their overall crisis of confidence in the country’s media. Only three of the sites received a ‘passing grade’ (a score of 70 or higher out of 100 points) for accuracy; two of the sites also achieved this rating level for clearly labelling news versus opinion. Online users’ responses show that many of those surveyed feel that most news sites traffic in clickbait titles and do not visibly correct their published errors (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Average Context pillar scores by indicator

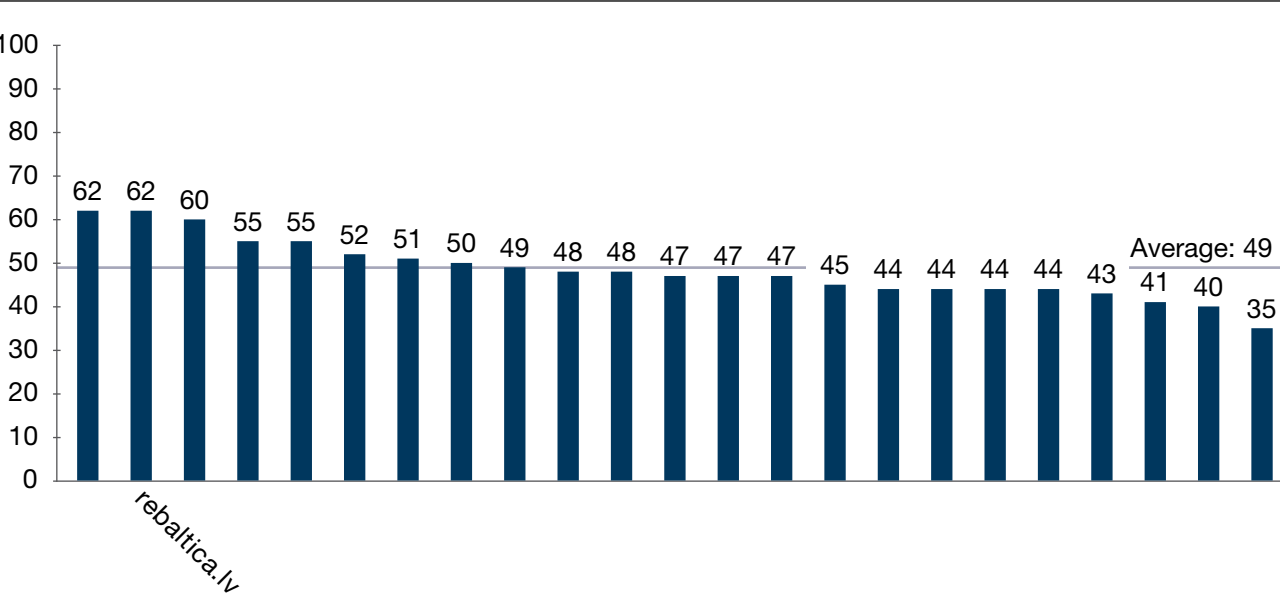


Indeed, our study did find that many Latvian news sites do not have policies regarding the correction of errors. As a result, public perception does, in part, reflect reality.

When it comes to perceptions of clickbait, however, our analysis of headlines found that the sampled news sites generally use headlines that accurately reflect the content of their stories. This discrepancy between our findings and public perceptions could be the result of a gap between what sites currently do and what they did in the past.

Overall, the low levels of brand trust suggest a risk for media sites in Latvia, since this distrust can be used to legitimise disinformation. If an online user does not consider any site to be trustworthy, content on sites with both high-risk and low-risk disinformation ratings may be construed as being the same.

Figure 11. Context pillar scores by site



Conclusion

Our assessment of the disinformation risk of news sites in Latvia finds a fairly polarised range of risks. While two-thirds of the sites show high to maximum risk levels, only four sites fall in the mid-range (i.e. medium risk).

The rest of the sites in our sample perform relatively well, with one site (www.rebaltica.lv) even receiving a minimum risk rating.

Latvian media sites typically demonstrate low risk in our framework when it comes to indicators that assess the reliability of content. Still, these domains' overall ratings are brought down by operational shortcomings, especially for transparent information about a site's true or beneficial owners, its funding, and other operational and editorial policies.

News sites could address these shortcomings by taking actions that:

- Focus on adopting journalistic and operational standards like those set by the Journalism Trust Initiative that make transparent information about overall policies of the site.
- Encourage sites to clearly publish their sources of funding on their page rather than a parent company site. This information helps to build trust in the site and dispel doubts about how it is funded.
- Ensure sites publish a statement of editorial independence, guidelines for issuing corrections, and policies for user- and algorithmically-generated content.³⁴
- Improve and make more visible a site's correction practices for errors. It is important that such site corrections are clearly seen and understood, rather than being hidden on a web page 'below the fold'.
- Ensure that sites in Latvia publish bylines. Publishing the identity of the author is an easy way to ensure transparency and accountability. Even more so, it gives the audience the opportunity to check whether the author is an actual person or a false identity being used to publish disinformation.

The need for a trustworthy, independent rating of disinformation risk is pressing. The launch of this risk-rating framework will provide crucial information to policy-makers, news websites, and the ad tech industry, enabling key decision-makers to stem the tide of money that incentivises and sustains disinformation.

Annex: Methodology

Pillar scoring

The Structure, Content, and Operations pillars of the GDI risk ratings are all designed to capture discrete, observable features of a domain by analysing a snapshot of a particular moment in time. This approach is effective at mitigating bias and standardising our analysis across domains and countries, but it is limited in scope. Historical information about a domain’s content and practices is not captured by these pillars – nor are less observable disinformation flags (such as regularly disinforming readers by saying nothing about a story or topic). Both of these limitations are addressed by the fourth pillar, Context, which assesses long-term trends and indicators that are harder to measure. In this report, two-thirds of a domain’s score is based on a snapshot of observable features (through the Content and Operations pillars), while the final third comes via a public perceptions survey that contextualizes our findings.

The Content pillar produces a score based on six indicators reviewed by two dedicated country analysts across ten articles published by a domain. These ten articles were randomly selected from among that domain’s most frequently shared articles within a two-week period and then stripped of any information that could identify the publisher. The indicators included in the final risk rating are: title representativeness, author attribution, article tone, topicality, and common coverage of the story by other domains.

The Operations pillar is scored at the domain level by the same country analysts. We selected five indicators from the Journalism Trust Initiative’s list of trustworthiness signals in order to capture the risk associated with a domain’s potential financial conflicts of interest, vulnerability to disinformation in its comments sections, and editorial standards. This is not meant to capture the

actual quality of journalism, as this pillar rates a domain based on its public disclosure of operations, which may differ from actual operations. The indicators included are: disclosure of true beneficial owners, transparency in funding sources, published policies for comments sections and the flagging of algorithmically-generated content, a clear process for error reporting, and a public statement affirming editorial independence.

The Context pillar score is based on results from a survey of online users’ perceptions of a domain’s content and operations. Incorporating survey data in calculating the risk rating is essential because it captures a wider range of opinions, and because online users’ perceptions are based on a site’s long-term behaviour and performance. This pillar offers a good complement to our Content pillar, which goes into greater depth but analyses only ten articles. The survey captures four indicators: accuracy, clear differentiation of news and opinion articles, use of clickbait titles, and error reporting.

Domains are placed into one of five risk categories based on their final risk score. The cut-offs for the categories are determined by combining the risk ratings for domains in all countries in the current version of the index, and calculating this global sample’s mean and standard deviation. Domains are placed into a category based on the number of standard deviations that separate their rating from the global mean score. The following table shows each category and its cut-offs.

Table 1: Overview of risk bands

| 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 |

Data collection

Each of the Latvian domains was assessed by two analysts who were trained on the GDI framework by our staff according to a codebook that provides detailed instructions for assessing each indicator.

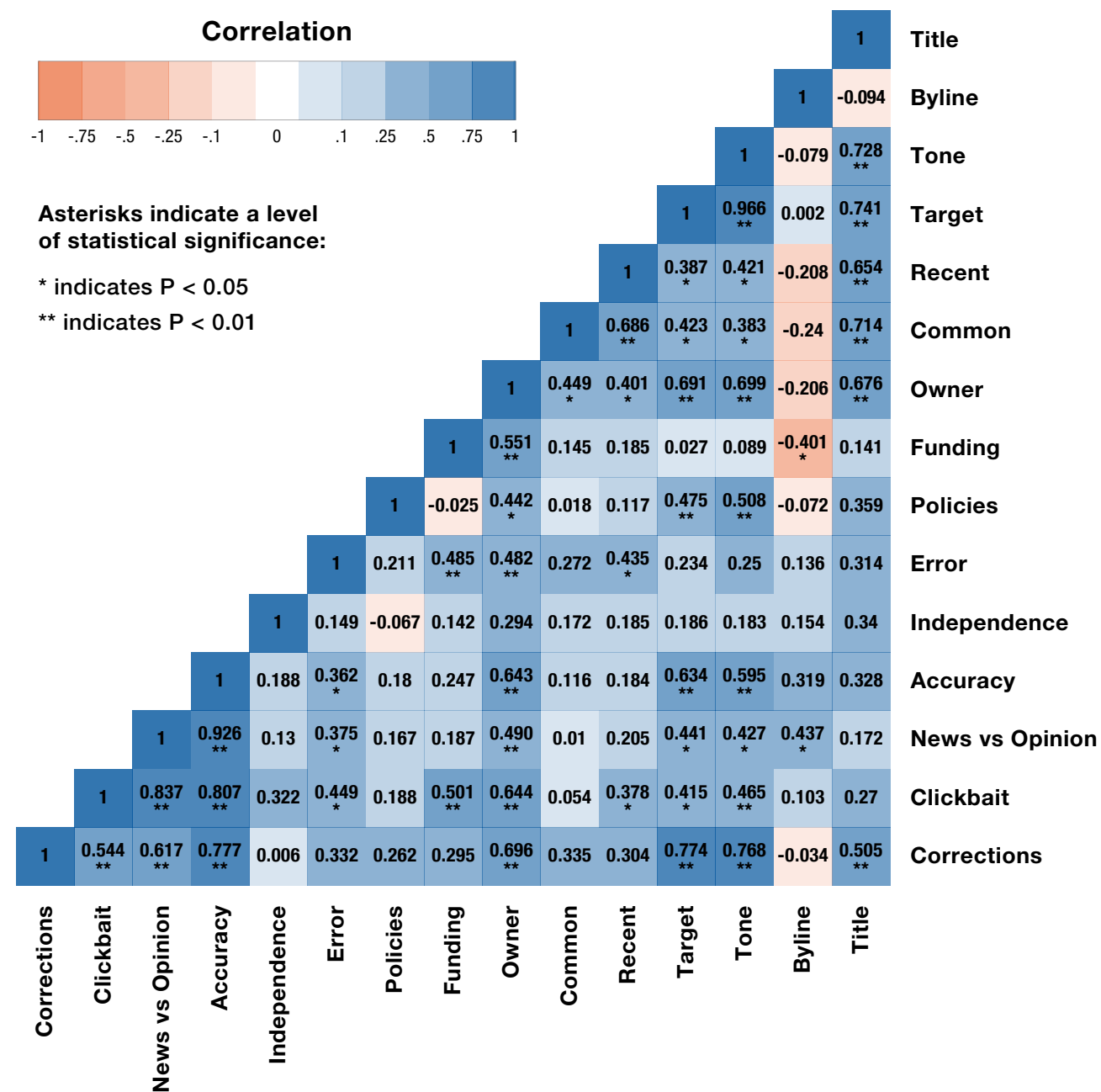
The survey was conducted by SKDS and done for 1,000 respondents drawn from a demographically representative panel in the country, including by geographic location, age, ethnicity and gender. Each respondent was asked a series of questions about domains that they indicated they were familiar with.

Each respondent assessed up to ten sites from the sample, based on their familiarity with the site. Respondents were shown the Latvian and Russian versions of the same site where they existed. These scores were then combined to form an average score for the site. There were 14 sites that had the scores for both language versions consolidated into a single score. As a result, the number of respondents for some sites is higher than 1,000 when these scores are combined. The maximum of respondents for any site was 1304 (www.delfi.lv / www.rus.delfi.lv) and the minimum was 17 responses (www.bnn.lv / bnn-news.ru). These numbers suggest a robust survey size that allows for a robust analysis.

Table 2. Surveyed sites with consolidated scores for both Latvian and Russian

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. delfi.lv / rus.delfi.lv | 8. lv.sputniknews.ru / sputniknews.ru |
| 2. tvnet.lv / rus.tvnet.lv | 9. focus.lv / ru.focus.lv |
| 3. lat.bb.lv / bb.lv | 10. lv.rubaltic.ru / rubaltic.ru |
| 4. liepajniekiem.lv / rus.liepajniekiem.lv | 11. ventasbalss.lv / rus.ventasbalss.lv |
| 5. lsm.lv / rus.lsm.lv | 12. rezesneszinas.lv / rezesneszinas.lv |
| 6. lat.grani.lv / grani.lv | 13. rebaltica.lv / ru.rebaltica.lv |
| 7. lat.mixnews.lv / mixnews.lv | 14. bnn.lv / bnn-news.ru |

Table 3. Correlations matrix



Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/latest-news/61028-zanda-kalnina-lukasevica-disinformation-campaigns-seek-to-weaken-latvia-s-position-internationally>.
- 2 <https://jamestown.org/program/baltics-call-for-unified-european-frontline-against-russian-disinformation/>.
- 3 We define disinformation in terms of the verb ‘to disinform’: ‘to deliberately mislead; opposite of inform.’
- 4 The human review elements of the framework were developed in collaboration with Alexandra Mousavizadeh (head of insights for Tortoise Media and co-founder of the GDI). The framework was advised by, vetted by, and finalised with the support of a technical advisory group (TAG), including Ben Nimmo (Graphika), Camille François (Graphika), Miguel Martinez (co-founder & chief data scientist, Signal AI), Nic Newman (Reuters Institute of Journalism), Olaf Steenfadt, (Reporters without Borders), Cristina Tardáguila (the Poynter Institute’s International Fact-Checking Network), Amy Mitchell (Pew Research), Scott Hale (Meedan and Credibility Coalition), Finn Heinrich (OSF) and Laura Zommer (Chequeado).
- 5 The Structure pillar is assessed by a machine-learning algorithm prototype that is trained on metadata from thousands of websites known for regularly disinforming readers. It identifies these domains according to technical features. For example, use of ads.txt, security protocols, and site-specific email aliases. For more on our methodology, see the appendix.
- 6 For more on our methodology, see the appendix and methodology at: <https://disinformationindex.org/research/>.
- 7 The ‘Structure’ pillar is assessed by a machine-learning algorithm prototype that is trained on metadata from thousands of websites known for regularly disinforming readers. It identifies these domains according to technical features of the website itself, and currently produces a binary assessment: it either is or is not a high-risk disinformation site. For this study, the structural indicators were used only as a filter to cross-check the domains which were selected for the human review. Their scores on this pillar were not used to calculate the final risk rating. As the sample is composed of some of the most popular sites in the Latvian media market, they would not be expected to share structural features with high-risk sites.
- 8 In this round of reports for 2020, media market assessments will be produced for the following countries: Argentina, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, India, South Africa, UK and the US. Additional countries may also be added.
- 9 All sites included in the report were informed of their individual scores and risk ratings, as well as the overall market averages.
- 10 Two researchers assessed each site and indicator. The survey was commissioned and conducted by a local independent survey company, SKDS (<https://www.skds.lv/research>). Over 1,000 Latvians completed an online survey as part of data collection. SKDS is a private and independent research company whose major fields of activity include various types of marketing and public opinion research. All respondents answered a standard set of questions used by the Global Disinformation Index (GDI) in all countries where it conducts risk ratings. Each respondent provided their perceptions of brand trust and credibility for up to 10 sites that they said they were ‘familiar’ with.
- 11 Two researchers assessed each site and indicator. The researchers were selected by CEEPS - APPC.
- 12 Minimal risk is the best risk rating, followed by a low-risk rating. Both ratings suggest a news site that has scored well across all of the indicators. For all countries, individual site scores were shared confidentially with the site operators to allow for engagement, feedback and any necessary changes. All sites were contacted in advance to provide them with information on the methodology and rating process. In all countries covered by the risk ratings, the composite scores are shared only for the sites assessed to have a low or minimal disinformation risk. As a result, the number of sites disclosed in the report will vary by country.
- 13 The GDI looks forward to working with the entire industry in this effort. There is strong demand for such a risk assessment of sites, and a notable concern that less trusted, less independent actors may seek to fill this gap
- 14 Based on the Alexa rankings for the country for the top 500 sites in Latvia: <https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries:2/LV>.
- 15 The survey was commissioned and conducted by a local independent survey company, SKDS (<https://www.skds.lv/research>). Over 1,000 Latvians completed an online survey as part of data collection. SKDS is a private and independent research company whose major fields of activity include various types of marketing and public opinion research
- 16 <https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/statistikas-temas/iedzivotaji/meklet-tema/2747-608-latvijas-iedzivotaju-dzimta-valoda-ir-latviesu>.

17 Latvian Advertising Association, ‘Summary of Latvian advertising market for 2018’, https://www.lra.lv/webroot/file/uploads/files/G_2018-gada-mediju-reklamas-tirgus-apjoms-latvija.pdf.

18 Latvijas Reklāmas asociācija, ‘Latvijas mediju reklāmas tirgus apkopojums par 2018.gadu’, https://www.lra.lv/webroot/file/uploads/files/G_2018-gada-mediju-reklamas-tirgus-apjoms-latvija.pdf.

19 National Electronic Mass Media Council, “Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju interesēm, dienaskārtību un uzticēšanos medijiem”, [https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/assets/documents/Petijumi/Mediju_lieto%C5%A1ana_atskaite_08.2018_%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/assets/documents/Petijumi/Mediju_lieto%C5%A1ana_atskaite_08.2018_%20(002).pdf).

20 Data based on 2018 figures. See: National Electronic Mass Media Council, [https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/assets/documents/Petijumi/Mediju_lieto%C5%A1ana_atskaite_08.2018_%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/assets/documents/Petijumi/Mediju_lieto%C5%A1ana_atskaite_08.2018_%20(002).pdf).

21 The monthly viewership figures for these channels is: [delfi.lv](https://www.delfi.lv) – 880,132 monthly views; [tvnet.lv](https://www.tvnet.lv) – 803,002 monthly views; and [lsm.lv](https://www.lsm.lv) – 746,655 monthly views. This is based on the data collected by the international internet research company “Gemius” in March 2020.

22 Gemius, ‘Gemius: Martā ievērojami pieaugusi TOP 20 populārāko portālu auditorija’, 16-04-2020. <https://www.gemius.lv/all-reader-news/gemius-marta-ieverojami-pieaugusi-top-20-popularako-portalu-auditorija.html>.

23 These are [lv.sputniknews.ru](https://www.lv.sputniknews.ru) (237,879 monthly views) and [press.lv](https://www.press.lv) (242,495 monthly views). See: Gemius, ‘Gemius: Martā ievērojami pieaugusi TOP 20 populārāko portālu auditorija’, 16-04-2020. <https://www.gemius.lv/all-reader-news/gemius-marta-ieverojami-pieaugusi-top-20-popularako-portalu-auditorija.html>.

24 See: <https://lvportals.lv/skaidrojumi/312475-uzticibas-limenis-medijiem-un-institucijam-baltija-2019-gada-2020>.

25 Eurobarometer 92, ‘Latvia’, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2019/surveyKy/2255>.

26 For more information on the JTI, which has adopted an ISO standard for the industry, please see: <https://jti-rsf.org/en/>.

27 The Operations pillar looks at whether relevant policies are in place. It does not assess the level of robustness of the policy based on good practice, and does not look at how the policies are being implemented. However, other indicators in the framework do capture some of the relevant practices, such as by measuring perceptions on how often sites correct errors or are viewed as presenting accurate content.

28 Latvian Media Ethics Council, ‘Code of Ethics’, http://site-775587.mozfiles.com/files/775587/Etikas_kodekss_20190227_pdf.pdf?1552826658.

29 For more information on the JTI, which has adopted an ISO standard for the industry, please see: <https://jti-rsf.org/en/>.

30 <https://www.cen.eu/news/workshops/Pages/WS-2019-013.aspx>.

31 For more information on the JTI, which has adopted an ISO standard for the industry, please see: <https://jti-rsf.org/en/>. Also see: <https://www.cen.eu/news/workshops/Pages/WS-2019-013.aspx>.

32 The survey was commissioned and conducted from 11–14 May 2020 by a local independent survey company, SKDS (<https://www.skds.lv/research>). Over 1,000 Latvians completed an online survey as part of data collection. SKDS is a private and independent research company whose major fields of activity include various types of marketing and public opinion research. All respondents answered a standard set of questions used by the Global Disinformation Index (GDI) in all countries where it conducts risk ratings.

33 The survey was commissioned and conducted from 11–14 May 2020 by a local independent survey company, SKDS (<https://www.skds.lv/research>). Over 1,000 Latvians completed an online survey as part of data collection. Respondents were 18–75 years of age. The quota sample data were weighted according to the ‘Inhabitants Register’ kept by the Department of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (27-01-2020.) Male respondents were 48 % of the sample, while female respondents were 52 % of the sample, reflecting the demographic split of the country. Of the respondents, 59 % identified as ethnic Latvians.

34 This last point is especially relevant for the Russian-language sites in our sample, which lack many of these policies.



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