

Fact Sheet June 2018

INTRODUCTION

Fact-checkers occupy an increasingly prominent role in the online information ecosystem, with both Facebook and Google choosing to rely on them in different ways to reduce the reach of misinformation on their platforms.

While information about individual fact-checking organizations is not usually hard to find — verified signatories of the International Fact-Checking Network's code of principles are required to publicly list details about their funding and organization — relatively little is known about the aggregate situation of this fragment of the media ecosystem.

Currently, the most comprehensive snapshot of the fact-checkers of the world is provided by the Duke Reporters' Lab ongoing database. Launched in 2014 and frequently updated, it contains important information about most active and inactive projects around the world. At the moment of publication, it reported 149 active fact-checking projects.

This fact sheet, compiled through a survey of fact-checkers attending the Fifth Global Fact-Checking Summit organized by the IFCN, seeks to complement that database with aggregate figures on the budget and staffing of major fact-checking projects.

The key takeaway from this exercise is that, despite their increased prominence, fact-checking projects are still predominantly small: The largest organization surveyed employs 21 full-time employees but the average for verified signatories is just over five; Two thirds of the signatories surveyed operated with a budget of \$100,000 or less in 2017.

METHODOLOGY

- The aggregate figures below are based on survey data collected in April and May 2018. The data covers the latest full year of operations (Jan-Dec 2017).
- Respondents are a self-selected subset of the global fact-checking ecosystem, specifically the 42 organizations that are verified signatories of the IFCN code of principles and attending the Global Fact V conference.
- All data is relative to these participating verified signatories. They represent a significant subset of the total number of IFCN verified signatories. (42 out of 57)

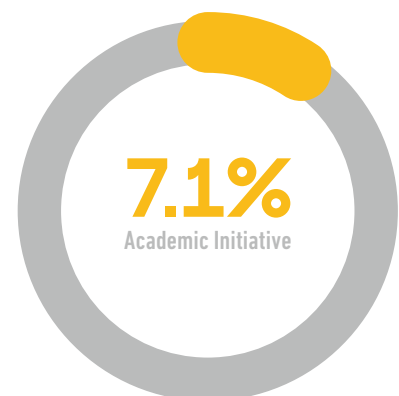
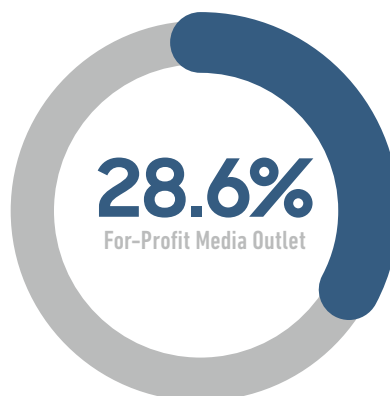
KEY FINDINGS

Organizational Form

A clear majority of the participating verified signatories — 30 out of 42 — are nonprofits or affiliated to an academic initiative.

A substantial minority (16 out of 42) are standalone initiatives, not owned by a parent group.

WHAT IS THE BEST DESCRIPTION FOR YOUR FACT-CHECKING INITIATIVE?



Fact Sheet June 2018

Distribution

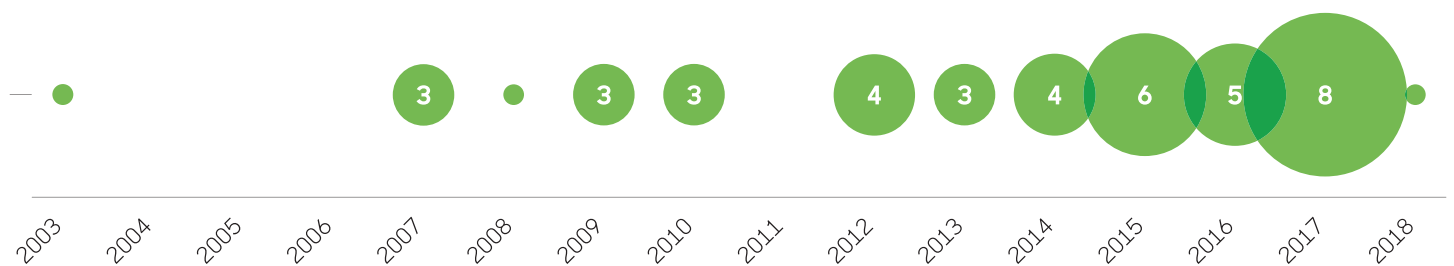
The fact-checkers are a digital-first bunch. All but one of the 42 fact-checking in this sample declared that they publish their fact checks primarily online (the exception being El Objetivo de Ana Pastor, a Spanish TV show).

It is worth stressing that most of these projects also have strong recurrent partnerships in place with television, print and radio as well as other online publishers. But the statistic serves nonetheless as a reminder that most fact checks are seen by an online audience — even if a different public is frequently reached through other channels.

Timeline of launches

11 out of 42 participating verified signatories have been around for eight years or more. The sample has a “survivor bias” — shuttered fact-checking projects don’t attend fact-checking conferences — so this undercounts the amount of fact-checking projects active in the early 2000s. At the same time it exaggerates the frequency of recent projects. Per our count, 2017 was the year that saw most fact-checkers launch (eight), followed by 2015 with six.

YEAR OF LAUNCH



Employees

As pervasive as political falsehoods and online fakery are, they are being fought by a relatively small group of dedicated professionals. The 42 fact-checking projects employ 229 people across 28 countries. That averages out to five or six employees per organization.

While these organizations also rely on part-timers and volunteers (see below), it seems fair to say that most are understaffed for the task at hand.



Fact Sheet June 2018

Funding

The financial condition of participating verified signatories echoes their staffing situation. More than three out of five fact-checkers (26 out of 42) operated with a budget smaller than US\$100,000 in 2017. Two caveats should be made here: This snapshot doesn't capture the fact that the sample is composed of countries with very different purchasing powers nor any indirect budgetary support fact-checking projects might receive.

At the same time, it's worth noting that 8 out of 42 fact-checkers operated with a budget of half \$1 million or more.

WHAT WAS THE BUDGET OF YOUR FACT-CHECKING INITIATIVE (NOT THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION) IN 2017?



LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS CONSIDERED

IFCN verified signatories attending Global Fact V

Africa Check | Agência Lupa | Aos Fatos | CheckNews | Chequeado | Climate Feedback | Demagog.cz | Dogruluk Payi | EchtJetzt | El Objetivo de Ana Pastor | El Sabueso | FactCheck Georgia | Factcheck.kz | FactCheck.org | FactCheckNI | Factual | Faktisk.no | Faktograf.hr | Ferret Fact Service | Full Fact | Istinomer | Istinomjer | Krypometer | Lavoce.info | Lead Stories | Les Décodeurs | Maldito Buló | Nieuwscheckers | Pagella Política | PesaCheck | PolitiFact | Rappler | RMIT ABC Fact Check | South Asia Check | teyit.org | The Conversation FactCheck | The France 24 Observers | The Whistle | Truco | VERA Files Fact Check | VoxCheck | Washington Post Fact Checker