

M20 Policy Brief

Information Integrity as a UK G20 priority

The case for inclusion in the 2027 agenda

United Kingdom M20

INFORMATION INTEGRITY AS A UK G20 PRIORITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The quality and integrity of information are foundational to a nation's economic growth and prosperity. Transparent and reliable information underpin investment decisions, the functioning of markets and democratic governance. As the UK prepares to host the G20 in 2027, this brief makes the case for treating information integrity as a strategic priority for economic resilience, security and democratic governance, and embedding it across relevant parts of the G20 agenda.

This brief is an extension of Media 20 (M20) processes to date, specifically the Johannesburg Declaration, which was adopted in 2025. It focuses on information integrity as a core pillar and provides a framework for ongoing advocacy, information-sharing and engagement. Six interrelated themes are addressed and together constitute a comprehensive information integrity framework: Resilience and Security, Misinformation and Media Literacy, Artificial Intelligence, Platform Accountability, Media Viability and Local Media, and Women Journalists and Safety.

Each theme has profound implications for UK economic and security imperatives and links directly to the G20 agenda-setting opportunity. The arguments made are informed by the latest international evidence.

Underlying this brief is a simple proposition: information integrity depends not only on limiting misinformation and harmful content but also on ensuring that citizens have access to trustworthy, public interest news (PIN). This is news produced and distributed by identifiable, accountable organisations operating to recognised ethical standards. That news must also be accessible and understandable to the public, who can assess its value for themselves.

The UK's 2027 G20 Presidency offers a rare window for collective action and an opportunity to build on the M20 work initiated under South Africa's presidency. Without urgent investment in information integrity as a public good, G20 countries face threats to democratic norms, slower growth, reduced investor confidence, and diminished resilience in an increasingly complex global marketplace.

The recommendations in this brief build on existing multilateral frameworks and emerging approaches to information integrity from the OECD, EU, UN and Council of Europe, including the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the EU AI Act, and US Executive Orders on AI safety. The task for the UK G20 Presidency is not to reinvent the wheel but to weave existing efforts into a coherent framework that gives the information integrity dimension the seriousness it deserves in the G20 agenda.

This requires action across relevant G20 workstreams, including those beyond the digital economy. Misleading information and weakened access to trustworthy reporting can affect progress on public health, education, trade and investment, and climate action, including public understanding of climate risks and support for the energy transition. Workstreams should assess how these issues affect their objectives and identify where joint action is needed. This agenda must also be shaped by perspectives from the Global South, including on unequal connectivity, local-language technologies and the sustainability of independent media.

KEY ASKS OF THE UK GOVERNMENT

- Include information integrity as a named priority of the UK's 2027 G20 Presidency, with commitments across Sherpa Track Working Groups and in the G20 Leaders' Declaration.
- Commit to cross-departmental coordination (DCMS, BIST, FCDO, Cabinet Office, Home Office, No. 10) on information integrity as a policy area.
- Use the UK's position to champion public interest media, regulatory approaches that strengthen information integrity, and responsible AI governance.
- Convene a G20 working group to develop practical commitments across the priorities in this brief. It should include meaningful representation from media organisations and civil society across G20 countries, including the Global South, alongside technology companies and academic experts.

The relationship between AI and media in G20 digital economy discussions, including fair treatment of news content, AI literacy and local-language AI development in the Global South, should be an early focus. G20 members and multilateral development banks should consider how to fund this work.

INTRODUCTION: THE UK MOMENT

The UK hosts the G20 Summit in 2027 against a backdrop of profound and accelerating change in the global information environment. Mis- and disinformation are spreading faster than societies' ability to assess and respond. AI is reshaping how content is produced, distributed and monetised. Digital platforms and technology companies are consolidating power in ways that weaken accountability, undermine local journalism, and expose communities to coordinated harm. At the same time, the safety of journalists, and women journalists in particular, is deteriorating, with direct implications for press freedom and democratic resilience.

These concerns carry measurable economic costs for the UK, such as reduced investor confidence, increased fraud exposure, weaker governance, and the erosion of the knowledge economy that underpins UK growth. The UK government's own priorities of economic stability and national security cannot be fully realised without a healthy global information ecosystem.

This brief adopts a positive conception of information integrity. It is not defined solely by the absence of misinformation or manipulation but by the presence of trustworthy public interest news (PIN). Building on the News Futures 2035 initiative, we define PIN as news produced and distributed by identifiable, accountable organisations operating to recognised ethical standards and accessible and understandable to the public. Strengthening information integrity, therefore, requires not only countering harmful content but also ensuring that societies continue to produce, distribute and sustain trustworthy PIN.

Measures to strengthen information integrity must protect freedom of expression, media pluralism and editorial independence. Decisions about what information or media to support, moderate or prioritise should be transparent, proportionate and subject to independent scrutiny.

The G20 offers a unique multilateral lever. By embedding information integrity in the UK's G20 agenda, the government can align civil society, industry and international partners around a shared framework that closes regulatory loopholes, sets global standards, and positions the UK as a credible leader on one of the defining challenges of our time.

The 2025 M20 Johannesburg Declaration proposed ways to track progress on information integrity and media sustainability. These include a Media Integrity Monitoring Framework (MMIF) to monitor G20 commitments on information integrity, journalist safety and media viability, and an Integrity Index to help assess progress. The UK presidency could explore these proposals with M20 and other partners as part of a wider approach to accountability.

This brief draws on the proceedings of the *M20 Challenge Event* hosted at Birmingham City University on 12 May 2026 and on analysis from across the media, policy and research community. It is structured around six thematic areas, each with:

- An assessment of the UK's economic and security needs and opportunities, with UK-specific evidence and examples;
- The G20-level opportunity; and
- Concrete policy recommendations.

The recommendations below identify both commitments the G20 could make collectively and measures its members could pursue nationally, adapted to their legal and policy contexts.

THEME 1: RESILIENCE AND SECURITY

Building robust information infrastructure against coordinated threats.

The Issue

Democracy and free expression depend on access to accurate information, and both are under systematic attack. State and non-state actors are weaponising information through coordinated disinformation, deepfakes, infrastructure interference and the targeting of journalists to destabilise democratic processes and institutional trust. Although not a new phenomenon, the scale and sophistication¹ of this contest have only recently been fully recognised by democratic governments and publics.

Key drivers of information threats include weakened national control over information infrastructure, the role of digital platforms in amplifying harmful content, AI-enabled disinformation at scale, and institutional fragility during times of crisis. Underpinning all of these is a lack of shared understanding of the threats and the coordination needed for a whole-of-society response.

UK Economic and Security Imperative

The link between information integrity and national security is direct and well documented. Electorally, foreign-state disinformation and coordinated inauthentic behaviour threaten the legitimacy of democratic institutions² as recorded in multiple UK parliamentary and intelligence committee reports; the 2024 riots³ following the Southport attack provide a prominent UK example of real-world harm caused by online mis- and disinformation in a crisis.

Economically, disinformation-driven instability reduces investor confidence and raises the cost of governance, while investment in resilience delivers measurable returns for most commercial enterprises⁴. Structurally, the UK's information ecosystem, like that of every G20 nation, depends on a small number of US-controlled technology and cloud platforms⁵, a concentration that represents a systemic vulnerability.

Information integrity also matters for climate and energy resilience. Misleading claims about climate risks, extreme weather and energy transition measures can impede public preparedness, undermine confidence in necessary investments and make it harder for communities to assess the choices affecting them. These risks cross borders and can have

direct consequences for public safety, economic planning and the delivery of climate commitments.

¹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Disinformation diplomacy: How malign actors are seeking to undermine democracy*, Fourth Report of Session 2024–26, HC 703, 27 March 2026

² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Disinformation diplomacy: How malign actors are seeking to undermine democracy*, Fourth Report of Session 2024–26, HC 703, 27 March 2026

³ Buarque, L. B. (2026) *The X factor: four ways one social media platform undermined democracy during the 2024 summer riots*. London School of Economics, 27 January 2026.

⁴ Sopra Steria. (2026, April 16). *Disinformation's global economic impact estimated at \$417 billion in Sopra Steria study* PR Newswire.

⁵ Competition and Markets Authority. (2025). *Cloud services market investigation: Summary of final decision*

G20 Perspectives and International Evidence

Recognition of information resilience as a security priority is growing across the G20. The M20 process, consolidated at the 2025 Johannesburg Summit during South Africa's presidency, has already addressed journalist safety and the security of the information environment.

Countries including South Korea, France and Germany have developed different approaches to identifying and responding to coordinated disinformation; Sweden also offers a relevant example from outside the G20. These approaches provide a basis for G20 members to compare how public bodies, independent media and civil society coordinate during information crises, and where cooperation across borders would improve their response. Geopolitical tensions, including Russia's war against Ukraine, add urgency to this work.

M20 Recommendations

We call on the G20 to agree on a shared approach to information resilience, and on its members to put that approach into practice through the following measures:

- Recognise independent public interest media as an essential public good and part of information resilience and support its institutional capacity and editorial independence.
- Integrate information integrity into relevant national security, resilience and cybersecurity strategies, with clear responsibilities and coordination between government departments, agencies, regulators and civil society.
- Establish crisis coordination arrangements that connect relevant public bodies, independent media and civil society at local, national and international levels, with safeguards for freedom of expression and editorial independence.
- Strengthen cooperation across G20 countries during information crises through secure information-sharing arrangements and compatible approaches to identifying and analysing coordinated information threats.
- Include climate information integrity in G20 work on resilience, energy transition and disaster preparedness, recognising how climate disinformation and misleading environmental claims can undermine public understanding and effective decision-making.

THEME 2: MISINFORMATION AND MEDIA LITERACY

Countering false narratives to protect democratic integrity and economic stability.

The Issue

Economic growth, social stability and human development all depend on access to accurate, reliable, transparent and trustworthy information. The current information environment is marked by the weaponisation of free speech, algorithmic amplification of harmful content, scam-driven falsehoods, agenda-driven disinformation and chronically weak platform moderation. Combined, these cost the UK economy billions each year. Discussions at the Challenge Event pointed to a shift in the nature of the problem: disinformation is now less about correcting falsehoods and more about competing narratives, meaning fact-checking alone is no longer sufficient.

Children and young people experience these pressures differently. Digital services can give them access to information and opportunities to participate, but unequal connectivity, commercial profiling and systems that amplify harmful material can limit those benefits. Building resilience therefore requires both age-appropriate media literacy and safer digital environments designed with children's rights and perspectives in mind.

UK Economic and Security Imperative

Mis- and disinformation drive fraud, distort investment decisions, damage institutional reputation and force significant public expenditure in response. The social costs, including community division, mental health harm and the erosion of civic trust, are just as serious. The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2024 riots following the Southport murders both showed how quickly online mis- and disinformation can turn into real-world violence, drawing on significant public order resources and leaving lasting damage to community relations, at a cost running into millions for local businesses and public services. From a security standpoint, coordinated disinformation from state and non-state actors threatens electoral integrity, institutional trust and social cohesion; the UK has already experienced interference across multiple electoral cycles.

G20 Perspectives and International Evidence

The UK is not alone in facing information integrity challenges. Brazil, India, the United States, South Africa and South Korea have all experienced significant mis- and disinformation crises, with tangible social, economic and political consequences. Yet in the absence of a coordinated G20 framework, national regulatory responses remain fragmented, allowing malicious actors to exploit gaps between jurisdictions. Existing international initiatives, including the UN's Principles for Information Integrity, Internews' model for building population-level resilience, and BBC World Service and BBC Media Action's work on information disorder provide a strong foundation for collective action.⁶⁷ Yet

⁶ BBC Media Action. (2024, October). *Key insights from BBC Media Action's research into information disorder around the world*

⁷ BBC Media Action. *Tackling information disorder*

implementation of efforts to reduce mis- and disinformation across G20 members remains uneven and limited.⁸⁹

A shared approach to assessing information threats would help G20 members distinguish isolated false claims from coordinated campaigns, understand their effects on different communities and decide when a cross-border response is warranted.

As the UK prepares to host the G20 in 2027, information integrity should be recognised as a strategic priority. Without a shared international framework for addressing information integrity, the UK's ambitions for economic growth, national security and democratic resilience will remain increasingly difficult to achieve.

M20 Recommendations

We call on the G20 to strengthen collective understanding of information threats and on its members to invest in responses that protect access to reliable information and people's ability to assess it:

- Support independent public interest journalism that provides communities with reliable, relevant information before and during misinformation crises.
- Work with M20 and other partners to develop the Media Integrity Monitoring Framework proposed in the Johannesburg Declaration, tracking G20 commitments on information integrity, journalist safety and media viability, and assess the feasibility of an Integrity Index to benchmark progress.
- Support independent verification organisations, public interest media and cross-border information-sharing arrangements. The G7 Rapid Response Mechanism¹⁰ model can be extended to G20 scale.
- Develop shared principles for accurate and transparent public communication, particularly during elections and crises, while protecting legitimate political debate and freedom of expression.
- Fund age-appropriate media literacy through schools, community settings and the media, with approaches that help children and adults assess information and participate confidently and safely in public life.
- Require platforms to implement effective moderation of harmful content as a condition of market access in G20 economies.
- Require digital platforms to adopt age-appropriate safety by design and child-rights-based standards, including safeguards against commercial profiling and algorithmic amplification of harmful content, while protecting children's access to information and opportunities to participate online.

⁸ Digital Policy Alert. (2023, November 6). *Data governance regulation in the G20: Fragmentation risk in G20 data governance regulation*.

⁹ UNESCO (2023) *Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms*. Paris: UNESCO

¹⁰ Government of Canada, *G7 Rapid Response Mechanism 2025 Annual Report*.

THEME 3: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Ensuring trust in digital ecosystems for a resilient global democracy.

The Issue

AI is both the greatest opportunity and the most acute threat facing the information environment, disrupting how media is produced, mediated and consumed faster than governance can keep pace. Concerns raised at the *Challenge Event* included AI-enabled mass production of mis- and disinformation, non-consensual use of images and personal data, scraping of media content without remuneration, algorithmic systems that devalue verified information, and monopolisation of AI infrastructure. Without a thriving media system producing reliable information, the wider ecosystem, including AI itself, collapses.¹¹¹² The WAN-IFRA World News Media Congress¹³ in Marseille in June 2026 stressed this pressure, framing unlicensed AI scraping and falling referral traffic as a threat to the economic sustainability of journalism, and calling for coordinated regulatory action.

UK Economic and Security Imperative

The UK's creative industries, worth over £116 billion a year and a major export sector, are directly exposed to unregulated AI scraping, and copyright frameworks built for a pre-AI world are no longer fit for purpose. Without a fair exchange mechanism, value continues to flow to large technology companies, often based in jurisdictions with lighter regulation. From a security perspective, deepfakes and AI-generated disinformation pose a direct threat to electoral integrity and public trust, and biased AI systems risk deepening existing inequalities. The erosion of journalism's economic base, through falling revenue and audiences turning to AI-generated summaries, reduces the pool of journalists able to do original investigative work, undermining the UK's soft power and, ultimately, the quality of the data AI systems depend on to remain accurate.

G20 Perspectives and International Evidence

AI governance is already on a dedicated G20 workstream¹⁴, but its information integrity dimension has not been given enough weight.

The EU AI Act, US executive orders on AI safety and emerging frameworks and draft legislation in India, South Africa and Brazil show the scale of activity already underway. The G20 is the right forum for shared principles, since AI companies operate globally and domestic regulation alone cannot solve the problem. No single nation can address these challenges alone – an effective response requires a targeted, coordinated engagement with major AI companies.

The *Challenge Event* also stressed the importance of non-Western voices in AI governance and of supporting local-language models in the Global South. Initiatives such as India's BharatGen¹⁵

¹¹ Jones, B. (2025, October 17). *Building a public interest approach to AI in the news*.

¹² Ozkaptan, M. & Sweetland, G. (2026, February 16). *Human in the loop: Radio's future with AI*. BBC Media Action.

¹³ WAN-IFRA, *77th World News Media Congress*, Marseille, 1–3 June 2026

¹⁴ G20 South Africa. (2025, September 30). *AI Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, Data Governance and Innovation for Sustainable Development: Chair's Statement*. G20 Information Centre.

¹⁵ BharatGen. (2026, June 22). *BharatGen launches Param2: 17B-parameter multilingual AI model for India's digital future*

and Sarvam AI¹⁶, and Africa's LINGUA Africa¹⁷ illustrate growing efforts to develop AI capabilities for languages and communities poorly served by dominant systems. Supporting this work would broaden participation in the development of AI and help prevent a handful of English-language systems from dominating the global information ecosystem.

Bringing AI development and AI governance within the UK's 2027 G20 agenda gives the UK government a chance to help set global standards on fair compensation and content provenance, protecting both journalism and the long-term reliability of AI itself.

M20 Recommendations

We call on the G20 to develop shared approaches to AI that sustain public interest media, protect information integrity and include the needs of different language communities:

- Develop shared principles on attribution, consent and fair compensation when AI companies use media content, drawing on initiatives such as Standards for Publisher Usage Rights (SPUR) and UNESCO's work on fair compensation for news.
- Develop a G20 approach to how social media platforms and AI services can give greater prominence to trustworthy news and information, including content carrying C2PA Content Credentials that allow its origin and editing history to be checked. The approach should use transparent criteria, protect editorial independence and enable smaller and independent news organisations to participate.
- Agree on shared principles for limiting harmful uses of AI, including non-consensual intimate images, AI-generated disinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), and encourage members to adopt and enforce appropriate national rules, while protecting freedom of expression and other rights
- Support AI literacy across G20 education systems, building on existing media and digital literacy approaches.
- Support the development of AI tools and models for underrepresented languages, with local media and communities involved in their design and governance.

¹⁶ Sarvam AI. (2025, June 7). [*Sarvam Translate*](#)

¹⁷ Microsoft Research. (2026). [*LINGUA Africa open call for inclusive AI language projects*](#).

THEME 4: PLATFORM ACCOUNTABILITY

Establishing global standards for platform responsibility, transparency and accountability.

The Issue

Platforms now hold unprecedented power over the information environment, producing three linked failures¹⁸: (i) an almost complete absence of effective accountability¹⁹ caused by regulatory gaps, ownership concentration and the entanglement of government and platform interests; (ii) the behaviours this produces, including the deprioritisation of news, algorithmic amplification of division and weak moderation; and (iii) the resulting harm to society, including division, confusion, isolation and what the Challenge Event termed the erosion of independent reasoning.

The economic benefit of this arrangement flows mainly to US and Chinese technology companies, at the expense of UK, European and Global South media industries, creators and citizens, and the political dimension has sharpened as platform owners and political actors become more visibly entangled.

UK Economic and Security Imperative

The economic cost of platform dysfunction is significant and poorly measured. Platforms draw away advertising revenue that once sustained UK media, host fraud and scam content at scale, enable coordinated inauthentic behaviour that distorts markets and politics, and place real costs on the public sector through counter-disinformation work, policing and mental health services. Participants at the Challenge Event repeatedly asked how much this costs the UK economy and taxpayers and agreed that generating this data should be a priority. What is already clear is that the current arrangement transfers significant value out of the UK economy to a small number of largely foreign-owned companies. From a security perspective, algorithms now function as de facto editorial systems, a structural threat to democratic integrity that already has visible precursors in G20 democracies.

G20 Perspectives and International Evidence

Platform accountability is a challenge shared across the G20. The EU's Digital Services Act is the most developed regulatory model to date, and Australia's platform bargaining rules and Taiwan's work on positive algorithm design offer further precedents.

The G20 is the right level for action because platforms operate globally and exploit the gaps between national regimes. Placing platform accountability on the UK's 2027 G20 agenda would let the UK build on these precedents and push for a coordinated standard, rather than leaving each G20 nation to negotiate separately with the same platforms.

M20 Recommendations

We call on the G20 to develop a shared approach to platform accountability that addresses how platforms shape, distribute and monetise information, with particular attention to transparency, independent scrutiny, media viability and the prominence of trustworthy news:

¹⁸ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. (2026, March 27). *Disinformation diplomacy: How malign actors are seeking to undermine democracy*

¹⁹ Reporters Without Borders, *World Press Freedom Index 2026*. Paris: RSF, 2026.

- Recognise platform accountability as a cross-cutting issue affecting consumer rights, public health, economic growth, national security and education, as well as content moderation.
- Require platforms to explain how they recommend, promote and monetise content, including the main factors shaping what users see, and provide secure, privacy-protecting access to relevant data for independent researchers and regulators.
- Establish effective and proportionate oversight and enforcement of platform responsibilities, including responses to coordinated manipulation and other systemic information risks, while protecting freedom of expression and users' rights over their personal data.
- Support public information infrastructure²⁰ and services that give people and media organisations more ways to produce, find and distribute reliable information, as an alternative to monopolistic platforms.
- Advance the shared principles on attribution, consent and fair compensation for the use of media content by AI systems proposed in Theme 3, alongside the measures to ensure that large digital platforms negotiate fairly with news organisations over the use of their content proposed in Theme 5.
- Support the G20 approach to giving greater prominence to trustworthy news and information, proposed in Theme 3, including content carrying C2PA Content Credentials that allow its origin and editing history to be checked. Platforms should make the criteria they use transparent and enable smaller and independent news organisations to participate.

²⁰ International Media Support (2023) *Public Interest Infrastructure*. Copenhagen: IMS.

THEME 5: MEDIA VIABILITY AND LOCAL MEDIA

Sustaining trusted local journalism as a foundation for economic resilience.

The Issue

Local and regional media are declining faster than the rest of the sector. In the UK, almost 300 local newspapers closed over a 10-year period, a direct result of an unreliable funding base that has made the industry increasingly hard to sustain²¹. The legacy advertising model has been destroyed by the flight of revenue to digital platforms. AI is accelerating the collapse further, automating content production in ways that eliminate local reporting without replacing its accountability function, and the UK has seen a corresponding rise in news deserts, communities left with no independent media able to hold power to account. The *Challenge Event* stressed the collapse of on-the-ground reporting, the algorithmic invisibility of local content, the marginalisation of minority and community voices, and the replacement of structured debate by social media comment, describing what goes unreported as both an economic and a governance failure²².

UK Economic and Security Imperative

Local journalism is a public good. Where it disappears, communities see more misinformation, weaker civic engagement, slower local growth and less scrutiny of public spending. Conversely, strong local journalism can increase participation in elections and local decision-making, and encourage people to buy local, supporting local economies directly. Without sustained local reporting, decisions about public services, local investment and how communities are governed may receive less scrutiny, leaving residents with fewer opportunities to understand and challenge choices that affect their lives.

The decline of local media also widens the gap between government and citizens, increasing corruption and weakening institutional accountability, all of which carry a direct economic cost. While the £12 million Westminster Fund is a welcome step, it is not sufficient²³ in scale, and the underlying tension between government support and government influence over local media has not been resolved.

G20 Perspectives and International Evidence

Independent journalism and PIN are essential to ensuring access to relevant, timely, local, multilingual and fact-based information. Yet the collapse of local media is a G20-wide phenomenon.^{24,25,26}

²¹ House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2023) *Sustainability of local journalism*. Seventh Report of Session 2022–23, HC 153. London: House of Commons.

²² Cairncross, F. (2019, February 12). *The Cairncross Review: A sustainable future for journalism*. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

²³ BBC. (2026, June 4). *Local Democracy Reporting Service*. Local News Partnerships

²⁴ Nowicki, L. (2023, May 16) *Drop in support from government is "devastating" for community newspapers*, GroundUp

²⁵ Australian Government (2021) *Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021*

²⁶ European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2024, April 17). *Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act)*. Official Journal of the European Union, L 2024/1083

Australia's News Media Bargaining Code²⁷ and Canada's Online News Act²⁸ offer different approaches to addressing the bargaining imbalance between large digital platforms and news publishers, with the aim of securing fair payment for news. The EU's Digital Services Act²⁹ addresses a separate but related issue by imposing greater transparency and accountability requirements on platforms, including for their recommendation systems. New Zealand's Public Interest Journalism Fund shows how direct government investment can sustain local media without compromising editorial independence.

In many Global South contexts, the pressures on local media are compounded by unequal connectivity, internet shutdowns and reductions in international media assistance. Responses developed for larger, wealthier media markets may therefore be insufficient; support must also reach independent local and community outlets that serve audiences in local languages.

Left unaddressed, the decline of independent local journalism will leave billions of citizens without reliable information, weakening economic and democratic participation. G20 members should therefore consider how public funding, platform policy and other measures can improve access to reliable local information while protecting editorial independence.

Given the scale of this crisis across G20 nations, the UK's 2027 presidency is a rare opportunity to put media viability, and the funding and platform reforms needed to sustain it, formally on the international agenda.

M20 Recommendations

We call on G20 members to strengthen the viability and independence of public interest media, particularly local and community outlets, through the following measures:

- Increase sustained investment in public interest media and the infrastructure that supports it, through funding mechanisms that protect editorial independence and respond to different national contexts. G20 members should consider measurable funding commitments, including a share of official development assistance (ODA), where applicable, and domestic public expenditure.
- Require transparency in state advertising and public spending on media and information, so that these resources can be scrutinised and are not used to reward favourable coverage or disadvantage independent outlets.
- Develop measures to ensure that large digital platforms negotiate fairly with news organisations over the use of their content and contribute to the sustainability of public interest media, drawing on lessons from the Australian and Canadian bargaining frameworks.
- Work with platforms to improve the discoverability of independent local journalism, including in local languages, using transparent criteria that smaller and community outlets can meet.
- Examine whether asset recovery frameworks could provide additional support for public interest investigative journalism, subject to safeguards for editorial independence, conflicts of interest and journalists' safety.

²⁷ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (2021) *News Media Bargaining Code*. Canberra: ACCC.

²⁸ Government of Canada (2023) *The Online News Act*. Ottawa: Canadian Heritage.

²⁹ European Commission (2022) *Digital Services Act*. Brussels: European Commission

THEME 6: WOMEN JOURNALISTS AND SAFETY

Protecting press freedom and gender equity in the information ecosystem.

The Issue

The safety of women journalists is deteriorating across digital, psychosocial and physical dimensions. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is escalating, with platforms enabling and amplifying harassment at scale, and online abuse routinely turns into offline threats and physical harm. Leadership gaps persist across media organisations worldwide, and the normalisation of misogynistic narratives, reinforced by political figures and platform algorithms, is making the problem worse. Recent research³⁰ on sexual harassment in the media reveals little progress in the last five years.

As the *Challenge Event* stressed, this is not simply a welfare issue but a structural one: when women leave or are pushed out of journalism, public discourse narrows, accountability weakens and the wider information ecosystem deteriorates.

UK Economic and Security Imperative

The economic case is straightforward: a more diverse journalism workforce produces better-quality information, reaches wider audiences and delivers greater economic value, and the *Challenge Event* identified safer working conditions and more women in journalism as a direct priority.

From a security perspective, self-censorship driven by online abuse, physical threats and legal harassment, including SLAPP suits, narrows the range of voices covering corruption, domestic abuse, conflict and other sensitive topics, and the resulting gaps in public information carry both democratic and economic costs.

G20 Perspectives and International Evidence

The situation is significantly worse in many G20 nations. The Worlds of Journalism “Journalism Under Duress”³¹ report, ICFJ and UNESCO’s “The Chilling”³² report, UN Women publications, and African Women in Media reports³³ all document the global scale of the problem and the extent to which orchestrated harassment and online violence spill offline. The normalisation of political attacks on women journalists is having local effects across G20 countries.

The Kigali Declaration on the Elimination of Gender Violence in and through Media³⁴ is an example of an industry initiative that can be drawn on. The SDGs³⁵ – particularly those on gender equality, peace and security – also provide existing policy language for G20 commitments.

M20 Recommendations

³⁰ Sexual Harassment in the Media: Global Overview (2025).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/documents/global-report-sexual-harassment-in-the-media.pdf>

³¹ Worlds of Journalism Study. (2025, November 19). *Worlds of Journalism Study 3: Global report*

³² UNESCO (2021) *The Chilling: Global Study on Online Violence Against Women Journalists*. Paris: UNESCO

³³ African Women in Media (AWiM), <https://africanwomeninmedia.com/all-research/>

³⁴ African Women in Media (AWiM), *Kigali Declaration*, <https://africanwomeninmedia.com/declaration/>

³⁵ United Nations. (2015). *The 17 Goals*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Sustainable Development.

We call on G20 members to protect women journalists from online, legal and physical threats, while strengthening women's ownership and leadership of media:

- Hold digital platforms accountable for enabling or amplifying TFGBV against women journalists, through proportionate regulation, effective reporting and redress mechanisms, and independent oversight.
- Introduce and enforce measures against strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) that are used to intimidate journalists, including women reporting on corruption, abuse and other sensitive issues.
- Include the safety of women journalists in relevant national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, where applicable, alongside other national policies on journalist safety and gender-based violence.
- Commit to measurable progress on women's representation in media ownership, boards and senior leadership, supported by transparent reporting and measures appropriate to national contexts.³⁶
- Establish a G20 initiative, with dedicated funding, to support women's media ownership and leadership, particularly where women face structural barriers to entering or sustaining independent media.

³⁶ For example, see work in Norway on a maximum threshold (60%) of media and board leadership that can be of the same gender.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

The UK has a narrow and defined window to shape the 2027 G20 agenda on information integrity. The economic and security case for addressing information integrity is clear. What is required now is political will and coordinated action across government, civil society, media and the research community.

The international news media sector has demonstrated a growing consensus on the nature of the threat and a willingness to engage constructively in developing solutions. Recent global dialogues have underscored that the sustainability of quality journalism and the responsible development of AI are not competing priorities but mutually dependent objectives. Without a thriving media ecosystem that produces reliable, verifiable information, AI systems lose an important source of training data, and the broader information ecosystem becomes untethered from factual reality. Information integrity ultimately depends on societies' capacity to produce and sustain public interest news. Protecting that capacity should therefore become one of the UK's defining contributions to the G20 agenda. This interdependence must be at the heart of the G20's approach.

The UK's 2027 G20 Presidency offers a chance to turn these proposals into practical commitments. By making information integrity a named priority, embedding it across relevant workstreams and convening an inclusive G20 process, the UK can help sustain public interest media and ensure that decisions on platforms and AI reflect the needs of societies across the G20. The M20 stands ready to help develop this agenda with partners across G20 countries.

A NOTE ON IMPLEMENTATION

The UK can build on existing international principles and regulatory work while seeking practical G20 commitments. The aim should be to connect work already underway on information integrity, media sustainability, platform accountability and AI governance, and identify where cooperation among G20 members can make a difference.

Action need not wait for agreement on every recommendation in this brief. Early steps could include recognising information integrity as a named priority of the UK's 2027 G20 Presidency, agreeing shared principles on fair compensation for the use of media content by AI systems, and developing a collective approach to non-consensual AI-generated images. The UK could also invite relevant G20 workstreams to assess how information integrity affects their objectives and identify opportunities for joint action.

THE M20 FRAMEWORK: CIVIL SOCIETY'S ROLE

Media 20 (M20) is an informal civil society parallel process to the G20, ensuring that issues related to media integrity and healthy information ecosystems are reflected in the G20 policy agenda.

M20 has been active across the last three G20 cycles. At the most recent cycle, hosted by South Africa, the M20 produced eight policy briefs and the Johannesburg Declaration, addressing the full range of themes covered in this brief.

The UK M20 group – convened and coordinated by Dr Yemisi Akinbobola at Birmingham City University, with the support of a wide coalition of media, policy, research and civil society partners – is focused on translating these priorities into G20 influence. Working through the UK Sherpa, parliamentary committees, APPGs, and parallel G20 engagement processes (e.g. B20, T20, C20), M20 provides a coordinated and credible civil society voice.

The UK should work with M20 for three reasons:

- 1- It brings international legitimacy and a network spanning all G20 nations;
- 2- It provides a coordinated and expert coalition that no single organisation can replicate; and
- 3- It ensures that UK positions are grounded in the lived experience of media organisations, journalists, civil society and citizens – not just government or industry interests.



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