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Insights on Canadian Society

Shifting perceptions of misinformation in Canada: Trends in exposure, detection and trust

by Helen Foran and Howard Bilodeau

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INSIGHTS ON CANADIAN SOCIETY



Shifting perceptions of misinformation in Canada: Trends in exposure, detection and trust

by Helen Foran and Howard Bilodeau

Overview of the study

This study uses data from the Canadian Social Survey to explore trends in exposure to and detection of online misinformation, and how this impacts trust. It examines the sources and platforms Canadians use to access news and information, how frequently they report encountering misinformation, and whether they perceive it to be increasingly difficult to distinguish between true and false information. In addition, the paper analyzes how experiences with misinformation relate to confidence in the media and levels of interpersonal trust.

- In 2025, four in five Canadians (80%) saw news or information on the Internet that they suspected to be misleading, false or inaccurate at least monthly.
- Canadians typically obtain news or information from news organizations (66%), close contacts (62%), social media platforms (54%) and television programming (52%).
- For young Canadians aged 15 to 34 years old, social media was the most prevalent source of news or information, at 78%.
- In 2025, nearly half of Canadians (47%) reported that they were finding it harder to distinguish between true and false news or information compared with three years prior.
- More than three in five Canadians (61%) reported being “very” or “extremely” concerned about online misinformation in 2025.
- Those with a great deal of confidence in the Canadian media were less likely to report finding it harder to distinguish between true and false information, compared with those with lower levels of confidence in the Canadian media.

Introduction

Misinformation—defined as news or information that is verifiably false or inaccurate—has the potential to shape opinions and distort public discourse, making it an ongoing challenge in today’s digital environment. With the proliferation of online content, Canadians are increasingly exposed to information that may not always be reliable.¹ In fact, data from the Canadian Social Survey (CSS) showed that in 2025, 80% of Canadians reported seeing news or information that they suspected was misleading, false or inaccurate at least once a month. As a result, people now face the added responsibility of questioning whether what they see and read online is accurate, while also being more likely to encounter sophisticated forms of misleading or false content, such as fabricated content, manipulated images and deepfakes (i.e., misleading videos or images generated by artificial intelligence).

This evolving landscape underscores the growing importance of understanding how misinformation circulates, how frequently Canadians encounter it, and whether they are finding it more challenging to distinguish between true and false information. Concurrently, there is increasing interest in whether misleading content may erode public trust or confidence in the Canadian media or information sources.

A recent Statistics Canada study highlighted the widespread concern about misinformation and showed that nearly 6 in 10 Canadians reported being “very” or “extremely” worried about its presence online in 2023.² Previous research has also examined the characteristics associated with fact-checking behaviours among Canadians.³ The present study

expands this earlier work to provide a deeper understanding of how misinformation is experienced and perceived, as well as how levels of concern and challenges in identifying misinformation have evolved over time.

Using 2025 data from the CSS and 2023 data from the Survey Series on People and their Communities, this study first examines the sources and platforms through which Canadians access news and information, how often they report encountering misleading information, and whether they find it increasingly difficult to distinguish between true and false information. Second, the paper explores the relationship between misinformation, confidence in the media and trust in others—examining how challenges related to distinguishing between true and false online information may be associated with lower levels of social trust and confidence in the media.

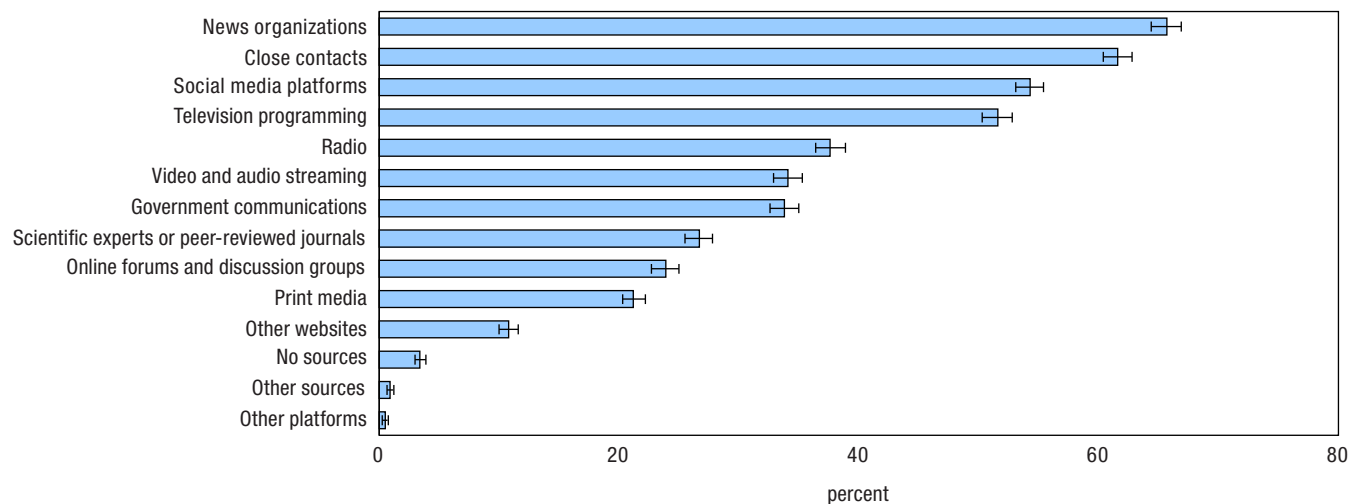
Canadians most often get their news or information from news organizations

Canadians’ preferences for sources of news or information are an important component of Canada’s information ecosystem and can affect how exposed Canadians are to misinformation.

In 2025, data from the CSS showed that Canadians most typically obtained news or information from news organizations⁴ (66%), close contacts (62%), social media platforms (54%) and television programming (52%).⁵ In contrast, some traditional information sources, such as radio (38%) and print media (21%), were less reported in 2025 (Chart 1).

Chart 1

Proportion of Canadians who typically use selected sources and platforms for news or information, 2025



Notes: Data come from two survey questions: MIS1_Q06 and MIS1_Q07. The following categories were excluded from this chart because of their conceptual similarity to more commonly selected responses: social media users; news website, app or other platform; and conversations with close contacts. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, 2025.

Canadians' typical sources of news or information differ across age groups

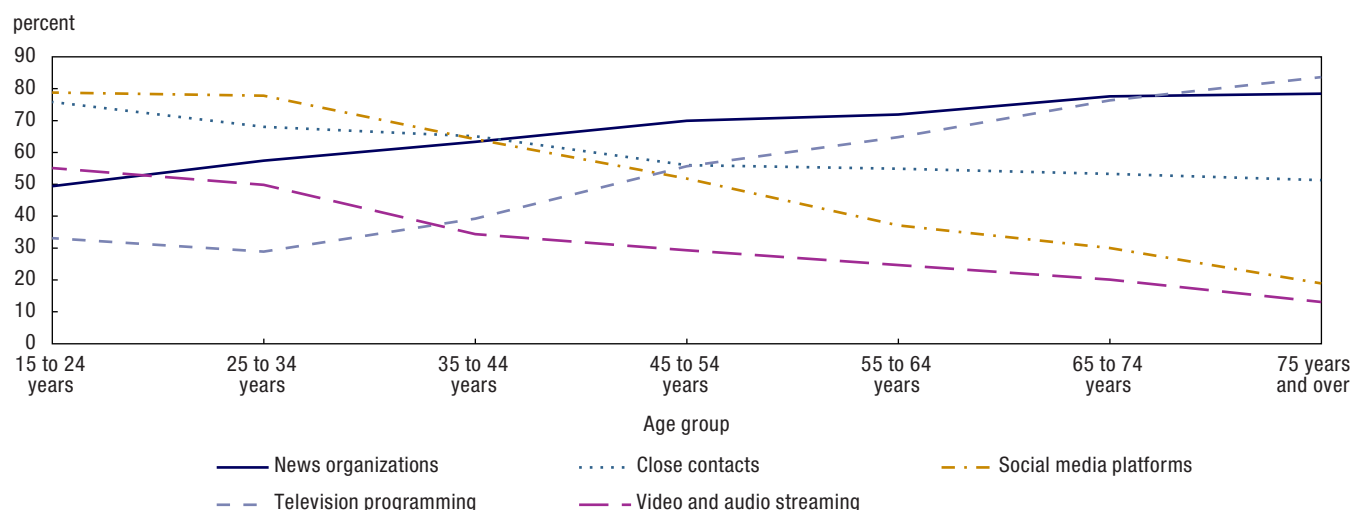
While news organizations were an important source across all age groups, the prevalence of this source of information increased with age. Canadians aged 15 to 24 were the least likely to rely on news organizations (49%), compared with over three in four Canadians aged 75 and over (78%). A similar trend was observed for those using television programming as an information source. About 3 in 10 Canadians aged 25 to 34 (29%) used this source, compared with 84% of those aged 75 and over (Chart 2).

For Canadians aged 15 to 34 years old, social media was the most prevalent source of information, at 78%. However, the proportion of Canadians using social media as a source decreased with age, down to 19% among those aged 75 and over. These findings are supported by results from the Survey of Online Harms in Canada,⁶ a study conducted occasionally by the Dais at Toronto Metropolitan University. This survey has found that social media platforms are increasingly being used as a source for news, particularly among Canadians aged 16 to 29.

Similarly, the proportion of Canadians reporting close contacts as an information source decreased with age. Over three-quarters of Canadians aged 15 to 24 used this source (76%), compared with about half of those aged 75 and over (51%).

Chart 2

Proportion of Canadians who typically use selected sources and platforms for news or information, by age group, 2025



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, 2025.

Men and women have different preferences for news or information sources

Beyond age, some smaller differences were also found in the most reported information sources of men and women. Women (65%) were more likely than men (58%) to get information from close contacts (Table 1).

Meanwhile, men (38%) were more likely than women (31%) to use video and audio streaming platforms to obtain information. Previous research by Statistics Canada also found that men (73%) were slightly more likely than women (70%) to watch user-generated videos online in 2022.⁷ Frequent consumption of this type of content could potentially lead to the formation of trusting parasocial relationships with content creators,⁸ which may be one factor contributing to video and audio streaming platforms being among the most often-cited information sources.

Social media platforms are the top news or information source for racialized Canadians

Racialized Canadians were more likely to obtain information from social media platforms (70%) and close contacts (63%) relative to other platforms or sources (Table 1).⁹ Use of social media platforms as an information source was also more prevalent for racialized Canadians (70%) than for non-racialized Canadians (48%). Conversely, getting information from news organizations was less common among racialized Canadians (60%) than non-racialized, non-Indigenous Canadians (68%).

Finally, a few differences were also observed between groups based on educational attainment. The prevalence of news organizations as an information source was greatest among those with a university certificate, diploma or degree above the bachelor's level (78%) and lowest among those with less than a high school diploma or its equivalent (53%).

Table 1

Proportion of Canadians who use selected sources and platforms for news or information, by socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, 2025

Socioeconomic and geographic characteristics	News organizations			Close contacts			Social media platforms			Television programming			Video and audio streaming		
	Proportion	95% confidence interval		Proportion	95% confidence interval		Proportion	95% confidence interval		Proportion	95% confidence interval		Proportion	95% confidence interval	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
		percent													
All Canadians aged 15 and over	65.7	64.4	66.9	61.6	60.4	62.8	54.3	53.1	55.4	51.6	50.3	52.8	34.1	32.9	35.3
Age group															
15 to 24 years	49.4	45.3	53.5	75.8	72.2	79.4	78.8	75.3	82.3	33.1	29.0	37.1	55.1	50.9	59.3
25 to 34 years	57.4	53.7	61.2	68.0	64.5	71.4	77.8	74.7	80.9	28.9	25.2	32.7	49.8	46.1	53.4
35 to 44 years	63.3	60.3	66.2	65.1	62.1	68.2	64.2	61.1	67.2	39.2	36.0	42.4	34.4	31.6	37.2
45 to 54 years	69.9	66.9	72.9	56.0	52.9	59.1	51.8	48.8	54.9	55.7	52.6	58.8	29.3	26.4	32.1
55 to 64 years	71.9	69.3	74.5	54.9	52.0	57.8	37.1	34.3	39.8	64.8	62.1	67.5	24.7	22.1	27.2
65 to 74 years	77.6	75.3	79.8	53.3	50.6	56.0	30.0	27.6	32.4	76.3	74.1	78.5	20.1	17.9	22.2
75 years and over	78.4	75.6	81.1	51.3	48.0	54.6	18.9	16.4	21.5	83.6	81.1	86.1	13.1	11.0	15.1
Gender ¹															
Men	67.3	65.4	69.1	58.4	56.7	60.2	53.0	51.2	54.7	50.5	48.7	52.2	37.6	35.9	39.3
Women	64.1	62.4	65.7	64.7	63.1	66.3	55.5	53.9	57.1	52.7	50.9	54.4	30.6	28.9	32.3
Highest certificate, diploma or degree completed															
Less than high school diploma or its equivalent	53.4	49.4	57.4	64.0	60.1	67.9	53.0	49.2	56.9	54.8	50.8	58.9	31.9	28.1	35.7
High school diploma or high school equivalency certificate	62.0	59.2	64.8	59.0	56.3	61.8	53.0	50.2	55.8	54.0	51.1	56.8	33.7	31.0	36.5
Trades certificate or diploma	61.9	58.0	65.8	55.9	52.1	59.8	50.6	46.7	54.4	55.4	51.0	59.7	27.6	24.1	31.1
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (other than trades certificates or diplomas)	66.5	63.8	69.2	61.6	58.8	64.3	52.8	50.1	55.6	56.7	53.8	59.5	30.8	28.2	33.5
University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level	66.6	60.9	72.4	57.5	52.2	62.8	55.3	49.7	60.9	50.1	44.4	55.9	31.4	26.2	36.6
Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.A. (Hons), B.Sc., B.Ed., LL.B.)	72.9	70.4	75.4	67.1	64.6	69.6	59.3	56.7	62.0	45.5	42.8	48.3	40.4	37.7	43.2
University certificate, diploma or degree above the bachelor's level	78.3	75.4	81.2	61.2	57.8	64.6	54.9	51.5	58.2	42.5	39.2	45.7	37.9	34.4	41.4
Racialized groups ²															
Racialized	60.2	57.6	62.8	63.2	60.6	65.8	70.3	68.0	72.7	45.3	42.7	47.9	47.5	44.8	50.2
Non-racialized, non-Indigenous	68.2	66.7	69.6	61.0	59.6	62.4	47.2	45.8	48.6	54.3	52.8	55.8	28.1	26.8	29.4
Province															
Newfoundland and Labrador	72.1	67.0	77.2	59.4	54.3	64.5	54.0	48.5	59.5	58.8	53.8	63.9	27.2	22.7	31.8
Prince Edward Island	72.1	66.2	78.0	64.2	58.6	69.9	53.5	47.6	59.4	47.7	42.1	53.3	31.3	25.9	36.8
Nova Scotia	72.4	67.7	77.1	62.4	57.6	67.3	54.2	49.4	58.9	46.6	42.2	51.1	32.2	27.4	37.0
New Brunswick	61.7	56.9	66.5	59.7	54.5	64.9	52.9	48.5	57.3	56.1	51.1	61.0	24.5	20.0	29.0
Quebec	59.4	56.7	62.1	61.4	58.9	63.9	49.8	47.3	52.3	61.0	58.4	63.5	27.3	24.7	29.8
Ontario	66.8	64.7	68.9	60.9	58.8	63.0	55.5	53.6	57.5	49.6	47.5	51.8	36.0	33.9	38.1
Manitoba	64.1	59.1	69.0	65.0	60.6	69.5	61.4	56.9	65.9	50.4	45.6	55.3	39.1	34.1	44.0
Saskatchewan	63.8	59.0	68.6	65.4	60.7	70.0	54.6	49.8	59.3	46.3	40.9	51.7	37.5	32.3	42.7
Alberta	67.2	63.5	70.9	62.6	58.6	66.5	54.8	51.1	58.6	45.2	41.5	48.9	37.0	33.2	40.8
British Columbia	70.0	67.0	73.1	61.7	58.7	64.7	55.7	52.9	58.4	48.6	45.5	51.6	37.5	34.4	40.7

Table 1

Proportion of Canadians who use selected sources and platforms for news or information, by socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, 2025

Socioeconomic and geographic characteristics	News organizations			Close contacts			Social media platforms			Television programming			Video and audio streaming		
	95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval		
	Proportion	Lower	Upper	Proportion	Lower	Upper	Proportion	Lower	Upper	Proportion	Lower	Upper	Proportion	Lower	Upper
	percent														
Rural or urban status³															
Rural	63.5	60.0	66.9	59.4	55.9	62.8	43.7	40.3	47.2	55.9	52.5	59.4	22.3	19.3	25.3
Urban	66.0	64.7	67.3	61.9	60.6	63.2	55.7	54.5	57.0	51.0	49.6	52.3	35.7	34.4	37.1

1. The Canadian Social Survey uses "men+" and "women+" concepts when referring to gender. For data quality and confidentiality reasons, and because of the small number of individuals identifying as non-binary on the survey, dissemination of data for non-binary individuals is not possible for this statistical program. Instead, the "men+" and "women+" categories are derived by considering several other demographic characteristics.

2. Variables for racialized groups were derived from responses to a question asking which population groups a person belongs to. Racialized groups are population groups that are classified as visible minorities under the *Employment Equity Act*. The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."

3. All areas outside population centres are classified as rural areas. A population centre has a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 people or more per square kilometre, based on population counts from the 2021 Census of Population.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, 2025.

Most Canadians see suspected misinformation at least monthly

In 2025, four in five Canadians (80%) saw news or information on the Internet that they suspected to be misleading, false or inaccurate on a regular basis—at least monthly. Across nearly all age groups (15 to 74 years), the percentage of Canadians who saw misinformation at least monthly was almost identical—at just over 80% (Table 2). Only adults aged 75 and over were different, with fewer of these Canadians reporting that they regularly saw misinformation on the Internet (62%).¹⁰

Across other socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, there were also few differences in the percentage of Canadians who saw misinformation on a regular basis. Only a few groups reported notably lower exposure to misinformation on a regular basis than the overall population: racialized Canadians

(75%) and those with less than a high school education (75%). However, the self-reported wording of the question does not distinguish between whether the respondent was less exposed to misinformation (because they visit reputable sites, for example), or whether they were simply less aware that they were seeing misinformation.

Based on a regression model, Canadians with an education above the high school level and those who were non-racialized and non-Indigenous had a greater likelihood of seeing misinformation at least monthly.¹¹ Furthermore, people in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia were more likely to see misinformation regularly. Conversely, Canadians aged 35 and over were less likely to see misinformation regularly. While people residing in Quebec (75%) and women (77%) were less likely to report regularly seeing misinformation, these differences were not observed when controlling for other characteristics.

Table 2

Proportion and predicted probability of seeing online news or information suspected to be misleading, false or inaccurate at least monthly, by socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, 2025

Socioeconomic and geographic characteristics	Proportion	95% confidence interval		Predicted probability
		Lower	Upper	
		percent		
Canadians aged 15 and over	80.0	78.9	81.0	...
Age group				
15 to 24 years (ref.)	83.5	80.5	86.6	84.0
25 to 34 years	83.5	80.6	86.3	83.9
35 to 44 years	81.2	78.6	83.7	81.9*
45 to 54 years	80.9	78.4	83.4	81.8*
55 to 64 years	81.6	79.3	83.8	82.3*
65 to 74 years	80.1	78.0	82.2	81.1*
75 years and over	61.6	58.2	64.9	63.1*
Gender¹				
Men (ref.)	82.6	81.1	84.1	82.2
Women	77.4	75.9	78.9	77.4
Highest certificate, diploma or degree completed				
Less than high school diploma or its equivalent (ref.)	74.5	70.9	78.0	72.8
High school diploma or high school equivalency certificate	78.2	76.0	80.5	76.9
Trades certificate or diploma	83.8	80.9	86.7	82.6*
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (other than trades certificates or diplomas)	82.3	80.1	84.6	81.5*
University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level	81.3	77.1	85.6	79.9*
Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.A. (Hons), B.Sc., B.Ed., LL.B.)	80.9	78.7	83.0	80.3*
University certificate, diploma or degree above the bachelor's level	82.5	79.8	85.2	82.1*
Racialized groups²				
Racialized (ref.)	74.5	72.1	76.9	73.7
Non racialized, non-Indigenous	82.5	81.5	83.6	81.4*
Province				
Newfoundland and Labrador (ref.)	79.2	74.9	83.5	78.6
Prince Edward Island	82.1	77.9	86.4	80.9
Nova Scotia	81.0	76.7	85.3	80.7
New Brunswick	78.6	74.1	83.0	77.8
Quebec	75.0	72.6	77.5	74.8
Ontario	80.8	79.0	82.6	80.6*
Manitoba	77.8	73.3	82.3	77.4
Saskatchewan	81.7	77.7	85.7	81.0
Alberta	82.0	78.6	85.3	81.7*
British Columbia	84.0	81.6	86.4	83.8*
Rural or urban status³				
Rural (ref.)	82.5	79.9	85.1	81.9
Urban	79.6	78.5	80.8	79.3

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

1. The Canadian Social Survey uses "men+" and "women+" concepts when referring to gender. For data quality and confidentiality reasons, and because of the small number of individuals identifying as non-binary on the survey, dissemination of data for non-binary individuals is not possible for this statistical program. Instead, the "men+" and "women+" categories are derived by considering several other demographic characteristics.

2. Variables for racialized groups were derived from responses to a question asking which population groups a person belongs to. Racialized groups are population groups that are classified as visible minorities under the *Employment Equity Act*. The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."

3. All areas outside population centres are classified as rural areas. A population centre has a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 people or more per square kilometre, based on population counts from the 2021 Census of Population.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, 2025.

Canadians are finding it more difficult to distinguish between true and false news and information in 2025

Frequently encountering misinformation is only part of the problem—many Canadians are also finding it increasingly difficult to tell what is real from what is fabricated. In 2025, data from the CSS showed that nearly half of Canadians (47%) reported that they were finding it harder to distinguish between true and false news or information compared with three years prior. Another 42% of Canadians reported that the challenge remained “about the same,” while 11% said they found it easier to tell the difference. For context, data from the SSPC found that in 2023, 44% of Canadians reported finding it more difficult to distinguish fact from falsehood. This finding could point to growing challenges in navigating an increasingly complex online environment. Notably, although sources of information and news vary across

the lifespan, all age groups similarly claimed difficulty in distinguishing truth from falsehoods.

Women were slightly more likely than men to report increased difficulty distinguishing between true and false information over the past three years (49% of women versus 46% of men) (Table 3). A recent study about susceptibility to misinformation found that women were more likely to believe misinformation than men. However, women also had a more accurate sense of their own abilities to detect falsehoods.¹²

Around two in five Canadians with less than a high school education (43%) found it difficult to differentiate between true and misleading content online, compared with more than half of Canadians with at least a bachelor's degree (51%). This, along with the finding that those with higher levels of education are more likely to report seeing misinformation, suggests educated Canadians may be more likely to encounter complex information environments and be more attuned to the challenges of evaluating online information.¹³

Table 3

Proportion and predicted probability of Canadians reporting finding it more difficult to distinguish between true and false news or information compared with three years prior, by socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, 2025

	Proportion	95% confidence interval		Predicted probability
		Lower	Upper	
		percent		
Canadians aged 15 and over	47.1	45.8	48.4	...
Age group				
15 to 24 years (ref.)	42.5	38.4	46.7	43.6
25 to 34 years	46.1	42.2	50.0	47.2
35 to 44 years	47.3	44.2	50.4	48.5
45 to 54 years	48.2	45.2	51.3	49.3
55 to 64 years	49.0	46.2	51.8	50.3
65 to 74 years	48.2	45.6	50.8	49.5
75 years and over	49.1	45.7	52.6	50.5
Gender¹				
Men (ref.)	45.5	43.6	47.4	47.3
Women	48.6	46.9	50.4	50.5*
Highest certificate, diploma or degree completed				
Less than high school diploma or its equivalent (ref.)	40.3	36.4	44.2	41.3
High school diploma or high school equivalency certificate	44.7	41.9	47.5	45.7
Trades certificate or diploma	48.8	44.9	52.7	49.0*
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma (other than trades certificates or diplomas)	48.3	45.5	51.1	49.3*
University certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level	46.9	41.3	52.4	48.4*
Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.A. (Hons), B.Sc., B.Ed., LL.B.)	51.9	49.2	54.7	53.4*
University certificate, diploma or degree above the bachelor's level	50.0	46.6	53.4	51.5*
Racialized groups²				
Racialized (ref.)	40.0	37.3	42.7	41.1
Non racialized, non-Indigenous	50.0	48.6	51.5	50.9*

Table 3

Proportion and predicted probability of Canadians reporting finding it more difficult to distinguish between true and false news or information compared with three years prior, by socioeconomic and geographic characteristics, 2025

	Proportion	95% confidence interval		Predicted probability
		Lower	Upper	
		percent		
Province				
Newfoundland and Labrador (ref.)	42.9	37.4	48.5	44.1
Prince Edward Island	48.3	41.9	54.6	50.2
Nova Scotia	49.5	44.1	54.9	51.4
New Brunswick	47.1	41.9	52.4	48.7
Quebec	48.7	46.0	51.5	50.7*
Ontario	46.3	44.0	48.5	48.3*
Manitoba	47.3	42.3	52.3	49.1
Saskatchewan	45.3	40.0	50.6	46.9
Alberta	45.5	41.8	49.2	47.3
British Columbia	48.1	44.7	51.5	50.1*
Rural or urban status ^a				
Rural (ref.)	49.7	46.3	53.1	50.5
Urban	46.7	45.3	48.1	48.7

... not applicable

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

1. The Canadian Social Survey uses "men+" and "women+" concepts when referring to gender. For data quality and confidentiality reasons, and because of the small number of individuals identifying as non-binary on the survey, dissemination of data for non-binary individuals is not possible for this statistical program. Instead, the "men+" and "women+" categories are derived by considering several other demographic characteristics.

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Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, 2025.

Canadians' levels of concern about misinformation show little change between 2023 and 2025

In 2023, SSPC data showed that 59% of Canadians reported being "very" or "extremely" concerned about misinformation. This proportion is similar to the proportion in the CSS data, which reached 61% in 2025.

In 2025, older Canadians, as well as people with higher levels of education, were more likely to report being very or extremely concerned about misinformation. For instance, less than half of Canadians aged 15 to 24 (48%) expressed that

they were very or extremely concerned about misinformation, compared with over two-thirds of those aged 65 to 74 years (67%).

Concern about misinformation also varied by education level; 45% of those with less than a high school diploma reported being very or extremely concerned about misinformation, compared with more than one-third (69%) of Canadians with some university-level education and above.

These levels are broadly consistent with those observed in 2023 on the SSPC, suggesting that concern by age group and education level has remained relatively stable over time.

Those with higher levels of confidence in the media and social trust are more likely to have confidence in their ability to distinguish between true and false news and information

As Canadians navigate an increasingly complex information landscape, the ability to distinguish between true and false information is tied to broader issues of trust. Confidence in the media and trust in others can shape how people experience misinformation, making these relationships important to understanding its impact.¹⁴

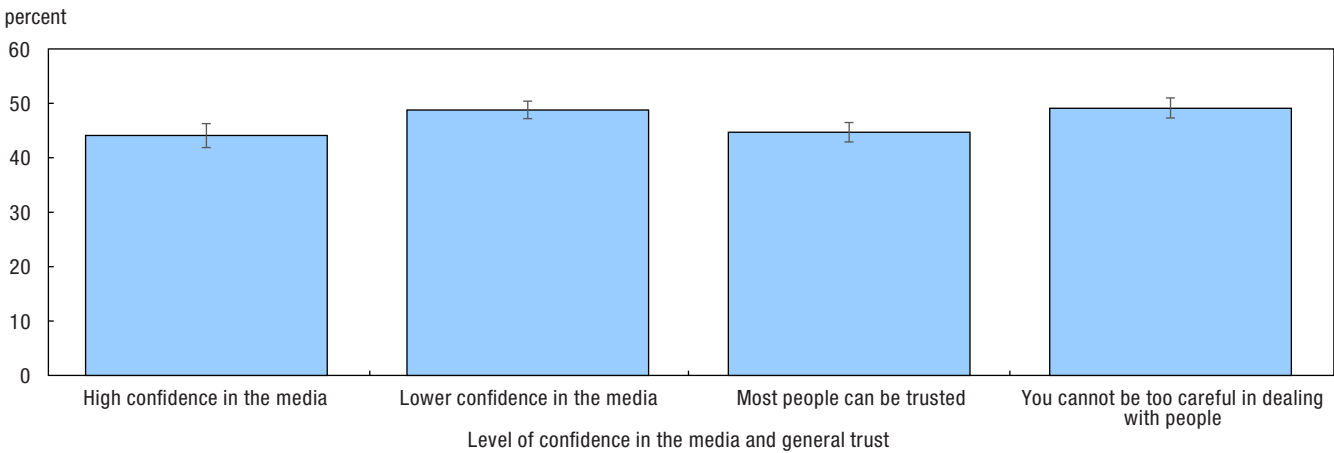
In 2025, those with a great deal of confidence in the Canadian media were less likely to report finding it harder to distinguish between true and false information in general (44%), compared with those with lower levels of confidence in the Canadian

media (49%) (Chart 3). Conversely, lower levels of confidence in the media appear linked to greater difficulty distinguishing true content from false content.

When asked generally about trust in others, people with lower levels of trust were more likely to feel it has become harder to distinguish between true and false information (49%), while those who believe that most people can be trusted were less likely to have difficulty distinguishing between these (45%). People who were more trusting may feel more confident in their ability to navigate and identify misinformation, while those who were distrustful appear to be more likely to struggle with separating accurate content from misleading content.

These findings suggest that challenges in identifying misinformation tend to appear alongside broader patterns of social distrust and lower confidence in the media, providing useful context for understanding who is more or less vulnerable to misleading information.

Chart 3
Proportion of Canadians reporting finding it harder to distinguish between true and false information compared with three years prior, by level of confidence in the media and general trust, 2025



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, 2025.

Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight how the Canadian information landscape continues to evolve in the context of misinformation. Drawing on data from the CSS and the SSPC, the analysis shows that exposure to misleading content is now a regular occurrence for many Canadians. Meanwhile, a growing share of the population is reporting difficulty distinguishing between accurate and false information, emphasizing the increasing levels of uncertainty in the digital environment.

This study also demonstrates that challenges in identifying misinformation intersect with broader attitudes towards institutions such as the Canadian media, as well as levels of trust in others. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of understanding how misinformation affects Canadians.

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Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

The data used in this article are from the 17th wave of the Canadian Social Survey (CSS), titled Quality of Life, Climate Change and Trust, which was collected in the spring of 2025. The CSS is a voluntary, cross-sectional, quarterly survey that collects information on well-being, health, time use, confidence in institutions and other social issues. The target population for the CSS is all non-institutionalized people aged 15 or over living off reserve in the 10 provinces of Canada. Exclusions represent less than 2% of the Canadian population aged 15 and over. The response rate for the 17th wave of the CSS is estimated at 40.3%, with a stratified sample of approximately 30,000 dwellings selected probabilistically. Population-level estimates in the time series were determined using survey and bootstrap weights to reflect the underlying population of Canada.

This article also made comparisons with data from the third wave of the Survey Series on People and their Communities (SSPC), titled Quality of Life, Sources of Information and Trust. The reference period for the SSPC was October 2023. The survey series target sample consisted of a total of 70,000 individuals, with a response rate of 27.2% for the third wave. Survey weighting

procedures were undertaken, including non-response adjustment and calibration, to align the sample with the target population.

Definitions

In the SSPC, **misinformation** is defined as “news or information that is verifiably false or inaccurate. The sharer of misinformation may or may not be aware that it is misinformation. When they are aware, it is often referred to as disinformation.”

Limitations

This study examines changes over time in Canadians’ experiences with misinformation by drawing on two distinct data sources: the 2023 SSPC and the 2025 CSS. While this approach provides valuable insights into evolving attitudes and behaviours, it should be noted that the SSPC and CSS use distinct sampling frames and methodologies. Additionally, each survey had its own sample size, and this may affect the precision of estimates and the comparability of results. Therefore, direct comparisons across surveys should be interpreted with caution. While the data provide useful context for understanding trends, methodological differences mean results are not strictly comparable.

Notes

1. Toronto Metropolitan University (2025).
2. Foran, Bilodeau and Pinault (2025).
3. Bilodeau and Khalid (2024).
4. The term “news organizations” was not defined in the CSS.
5. Statistics for typical information sources and platforms come from two survey questions. Sources and platforms may be used simultaneously (e.g., news organizations on television).
6. Lockhart et al. (2025).
7. Brunton and Sinha (2025).
8. de Bérail and Bungener (2022).
9. After adjusting for age, gender, education, racialized status, region, and rural or urban residence in a regression model, the observed difference in reliance on close contacts was no longer statistically significant. Racialized Canadians remained significantly more likely to rely on social media platforms as an information source, relative to other sources.
10. Statistics Canada (2023).
11. The logistic regression controlled for gender, province, age group, education level, rural or urban residence, and racialized status. Since the CSS did not ask respondents where misinformation was seen, the regression could not control for this factor. Controls for typical news or information sources were considered in a second regression specification (not shown) but ultimately excluded because of inconclusive results. This may be caused by important conceptual differences between typical sources and sources where misinformation tends to be seen.
12. Kyrychenko et al. (2025).
13. Yu et al. (2026).
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