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Young Canadians More Trusting of Information on Social Media Than Other Generations

Nine in ten (91%) Canadian Boomers say social media makes it easier to spread misinformation.

Toronto, ON, December 23, 2022 – The evolution of social media as a network to connect and share information with family and friends to becoming a budding platform of online public debate has fueled heated discussion regarding the medium's reliability to relay accurate information. A recent Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Global News asked Canadians about their opinion on social media use and how information is used and spread across the platform, and the results highlighted a generational divide: younger Canadians are more trusting of information on social media, while at the same time older Canadians are advocating for stricter regulations to protect against misinformation on the platform.

Younger Canadians more trusting of information on social media compared to other generations

Canadians are split (54% agree/46% disagree) on whether they trust the information they get on social media, with Gen Z (68%) more trusting than Millennials (55%), Gen X (56%) and Boomers (45%). Despite a global pandemic that forced individuals to rely more heavily on online networks to communicate, trust measures have declined on the whole. When asked if Canadians' trust in information they see on social media platforms has changed since before the pandemic, while 57% of Canadians say their level of trust remains unchanged, 14% are more trusting of the information they see on social media and 29% are less trusting since prior to the pandemic, outweighing those who are more trusting by a two-to-one margin.

Traditional platforms like television, newspapers, and radio, however, are still more trusted media than social media, with 73% of Canadians disagreeing (38% strongly/35% somewhat) they are more likely to trust social media than other traditional forms. A quarter (27%), however, still believe that information on social media is more trustworthy than traditional media. Gen Z (46%) and Millennials (37%) are more likely to share this sentiment than Gen X (25%) and Boomers (14%).

Canadian Boomers find it more difficult to identify accurate information on social platforms, advocating for better education

The line between accurate and inaccurate information on social platforms is blurry for many, with 71% Canadians saying it's getting harder for them to identify whether information is true or false on social media. This notion is felt more strongly among Boomers (77%) compared to Gen X (72%) and Millennials (66%). Moreover, a strong majority of Canadians (86%) say it's easier to spread information on social media than other platforms, with 91% of Boomers agreeing, more so than Gen Z (80%) and Millennials (82%).

Acknowledging the difficulty in identifying accurate information on social media, virtually all Boomers (97%) would advocate for more education on how to identify false information on social media, significantly higher than Gen X (89%), Millennials (87%) and Gen Z (75%). Moreover, 79% of

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Canadians agree that social media allows for quick, easy dissemination of information from unreliable sources, with Boomers (85%) and Gen X (80%) more likely to agree compared to Gen Z (69%) and Millennials (76%). On the other hand, two-thirds (67%) say social media allows for quick, easy dissemination of information from reputable sources, a sentiment more widely felt by younger Canadians: Millennial (75%), Gen X (70%) vs. Boomers (56%).

Millennials more adamant about free speech without consequences

The issue of free speech and censorship, particularly on social media, is a point of contention among younger Canadians. Half (48%) of Canadians believe social media platforms are too controlling of free speech, and Millennials (56%) are more likely to hold this belief than Boomers (42%). Additionally, while over a third (36%) say people should be allowed to say whatever they want to say on social media and not be penalized for it, even if it is misinformed, Millennials (47%) and Gen X (39%) feel more strongly about it than Boomers (18%).

Older Canadians say misinformation on social media is a threat to democracy and want stricter regulations to curb misinformation on social platforms

Most Canadian Boomers hold the belief that misinformation posts a serious threat to democratic values. Overall, 79% of Canadians maintain this position, rising to 87% among Boomers compared to 58% of Gen Z, 81% of Millennials and 79% of Gen X. Eight in ten (78%) go on to say that social media platforms like Twitter will continue to polarize and divide its users, a sentiment felt more strongly among Boomers (87%) than Gen Z (60%), Millennials (77%) and Gen X (79%).

Eight in ten (80%) Canadians agree with the notion of stronger regulation of social media platforms to protect against misinformation, including 87% of Canadians Boomers compared to fewer younger Canadians: Gen Z (72%), Millennial (78%), Gen X (75%). Over four in five (83%) say social media companies should take responsibility for spreading fake news, with 89% of Boomers agreeing compared to fewer Millennials (85%) and Gen X (81%).

	Total	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
There needs to be more education on how to identify false information on social media.	89%	75%	87%	89%	97%
It's easier to spread misinformation on social media than other platforms (e.g., television, newspapers, radio).	86%	80%	82%	85%	91%
Social media companies should take responsibility for spreading fake news.	83%	71%	85%	81%	89%
There needs to be stronger regulation of social media platforms to protect against misinformation.	80%	72%	78%	75%	87%
Misinformation on social media poses a serious threat to democracy.	79%	58%	81%	79%	87%
Social media allows for quick, easy dissemination of information from unreliable sources.	79%	69%	76%	80%	85%
It's getting harder for me to identify whether information is true or false on social media.	71%	63%	66%	72%	77%



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Social media allows for quick, easy dissemination of information from reputable sources.	67%	75%	75%	70%	56%
The government should regulate social media regarding information, not corporations.	61%	56%	62%	59%	64%
Social media platforms are too controlling of free speech.	48%	51%	56%	46%	42%
People should be allowed to say whatever they want to say on social media and not be penalized for it, even if it is misinformed.	36%	56%	47%	39%	18%
I am more likely to trust information on social media than other platforms (e.g., television, newspapers, radio).	27%	46%	37%	25%	14%

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between November 10th to 16th, 2022, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, the sample of 1,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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