



Information &
Disinformation

Strengthening Canadian Democracy

SFU

MORRIS J. WOSK
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

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Executive Summary

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- ❖ As a component of its ongoing Strengthening Canadian Democracy initiative, launched in June 2017, the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue conducted a pan-Canadian national survey of Canadians to build out its current knowledge, and to establish baseline measures that will be used to track the progress and impact of activities by multiple actors across Canada to strengthen Canadian democracy.
- ❖ The Centre developed a questionnaire with a set of key and relevant indicators designed to measure Canadians' views of and commitment to democracy. Questions touched on 8 key topic areas:
 1. Evaluation of the Performance of Canadian Democracy
 2. Commitment to Democracy as a System of Government
 3. Views on Democratic Values & Citizens Role in Democracy
 4. Trust in Institutions
 5. Participation in Democracy
 6. Engagement in Community
 7. Perceptions of the Impact of Disinformation on Democracy
 8. Key Sources of Information about Politics, Government, and Issues

The Centre worked with Advanis to collect data for the survey between July 5th and 15th, 2019 among a randomly selected representative sample of 3,524 Canadians. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of 3,524 would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current age, gender, and province/territory Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population (18+) of the Canadian population. Following is an Executive Summary of the survey findings

Trust in Information Sources

- ❖ Canadians use a wide range of sources to obtain information about politics, government and public issues in which they are interested. Traditional sources – TV (61%) and newspapers (56%) – top their list, with search engines (42%), radio (39%), and social media news feeds (35%) in a second tier. Far fewer turn to government websites (14%), video hosting websites (e.g. YouTube) or podcasts (12%), or university research (8%).
- ❖ When it comes to which information sources Canadians trust most this order changes. At the top of the list, six-in-ten or more trust university research (68%), government websites (59%), and newspapers (58%). This is followed by four-in-ten to just over half who trust information from TV, radio, or search engines. Much further down the list are video hosting websites or podcasts (23%) and social media news feeds (19%).
- ❖ Population subgroup differences:
 - Younger Canadians are more likely to use online media sources than older Canadians, who rely more on TV, radio, and newspapers.
 - Those most likely to trust information sources include: Quebecers, Atlantic Canadians, live in urban or suburban communities, born outside Canada and particularly in countries with authoritarian regimes, and self-identify as Newcomers or Indigenous.

Impact of Disinformation on Canada's Democracy

- ❖ A significant majority of the Canadian population (79%) feels the existence of news or information that is false or misleading is a problem for democracy in Canada; more than four-in-ten (46%) consider it a serious problem.
- ❖ Canadians hold somewhat mixed views on the impact they feel disinformation has on democracy in this country; a majority believe that disinformation is having a big or moderate impact on Canadians' confidence in their government institutions (53%) and in the ability of their political leaders to solve problems (57%). However, four-in-ten see little to no impact (42% and 38%, respectively).
- ❖ Similarly, Canadians perceive access to the internet, mobile phones, and social media as a bit of a double-edged sword.
 - On the one hand, they believe it contributes to greater polarization in Canada, making people more divided in their political opinions (58%) and less accepting of those who hold different views (42%). And, a significant majority thinks it increases the risk that foreign powers might interfere in Canada's elections (71%) or that Canadians might be manipulated by politicians (71%).
 - On the other hand, a majority of Canadians also believe that having access to these technologies makes people more willing to engage in political debates (55%) and increases the ability for regular Canadians to have a meaningful voice in the political process (61%).

Addressing Disinformation

- ❖ Canadians are quite mindful of the need to regulate social media companies, with most saying government should take the lead (44%) rather than letting the companies self-regulate (26%).
- ❖ In terms of the types of regulations they might prefer, Canadians are fairly clear on the action they think should be taken. For example:
 - A substantial majority place greater priority on protecting their privacy (90%) over the offer of free services the social media companies offer in exchange for using their information to sell advertising (10%).
 - They're also more inclined to wanting a system of fact checkers set up to help identify fake news (64%) though many would rather do so on their own (36%).
 - While a majority of Canadians prefer some degree of censorship to limit (60%) or remove (61%) objectionable content online, many choose free speech (40%) and self-regulation (39%) instead.
- ❖ Canadians who consider false or misleading news/information to be a “very serious problem” for democracy in Canada believe action to regulate social media companies is needed (54%); far fewer think social media companies should be left to regulate themselves (23%).
 - When it comes to how to address misinformation spread online, Canadians who are very worried about its impact on democracy want action to protect their personal information (92%), prefer limits to free speech (62%) and opt for the removal of hateful/harmful content (65%), and a system of fact checkers (68%).

- ❖ Democratic values affect Canadians' preferences for addressing online misinformation. A majority of those who believe that Canada has too much free speech and freedom of the press, and too little protection of minority rights, for example, are *more likely* to accept limits to what people can say online, to want harmful or hateful content removed, and to want a system of fact checkers to help people identify fake news. However, four-in-ten Canadians who hold these values would prefer that Canadians be able to say what they want online, to decide on their own what they see or read, and to let people distinguish facts from fake news on their own.
- ❖ Trust in democratic institutions and actors also affect somewhat what approaches Canadians would prefer as a way to address online misinformation. A majority of those who trust elected officials or Parliament "a lot" are *more likely* to support government regulation of social media companies and accept limits to what people can say online, to want harmful or hateful content removed, and to want a system of fact checkers to help people identify fake news. To contrast, only a third of those who do not trust elected officials or Parliament at all want government regulation of social media companies; fully one-in-five would prefer no regulation at all. Further, a majority would prefer that Canadians be able to say what they want online and to be left to decide on their own what they see or read. Four-in-ten feel Canadians should be able to distinguish fact from fake news on their own.

- 1. Canadians believe disinformation is a serious problem for Canadian democracy.**
- 2. Canadians are concerned about the impact and risks of disinformation on Canadian democracy and Canada's social fabric. They believe it has an impact on confidence in government and political leaders, borne of threats from foreign actors on our elections and manipulation by politicians, and is driving an increase in polarization and intolerance of different political views.**
- 3. Yet, Canadians also see access to the internet, mobile phones and social media as a positive vehicle for greater and more meaningful citizen participation in their democracy.**
- 4. Canadians think government should regulate social media companies to address disinformation rather than letting the companies self-regulate.**
- 5. In their use of social media, Canadians are very protective of their personal information, and prefer action to limit harmful and hateful content, but many value free speech and self-regulation over censorship.**

Background + Methodology

Information &
Disinformation

Strengthening Canadian Democracy

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- ❖ In June 2017, the SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue embarked on a pan-Canadian initiative called Strengthening Canadian Democracy. Since then, it has held a series of consultations and research with key stakeholders to explore the foundations of our democratic institutions and processes with an eye to understanding how citizens could play a greater and more impactful role in strengthening our democracy. In 2018, it undertook a survey of Metro Vancouver residents' views on democracy, initiated local civic engagement projects with community partners designed to build a stronger commitment to Canadian democracy, and developed an evaluation framework to gauge what types of democratic engagement activities work, in what contexts they work, and why they work.
- ❖ The overall goal of the Strengthening Canadian Democracy Project is to test intervention strategies that could have a measureable impact on the commitment Canadians have to democracy as shown through their participation in democratic processes and activities, the value they attribute to democratic institutions, and their support for the underlying principles of democracy.
- ❖ In order to meet this goal, the Project has five main objectives:
 1. Engage and leverage expertise and assets of community partners, democracy thought leaders, and the academic community in the Project's implementation.
 2. Understand and explore the commitment Canadians have to democracy.
 3. Develop a set of key and relevant indicators to measure the impact of Project activities.
 4. Develop and pilot test a core set of activities designed to build commitment to democracy and to engagement in democratic activities. This will help build an understanding of what types of approaches work, in what contexts they work, and why they work.
 5. Determine implications of the Project, and make recommendations for how this work could scale to larger populations, including its application in other geographic areas across Canada.

- ❖ In 2019, the Centre launched a pan-Canadian national survey of Canadians to build out its current knowledge from Metro Vancouver, and to establish some baseline measures that will be used to track the progress and impact of activities by multiple actors across Canada to strengthen Canadian democracy
- ❖ The Centre developed a questionnaire with a set of key and relevant indicators designed to measure Canadians' views of and commitment to democracy. Questions touched on 8 key topic areas:
 1. Evaluation of the Performance of Canadian Democracy
 2. Commitment to Democracy as a System of Government
 3. Views on Democratic Values & Citizens Role in Democracy
 4. Trust in Institutions
 5. Participation in Democracy
 6. Engagement in Community
 7. Perceptions of the Impact of Disinformation on Democracy
 8. Key Sources of Information about Politics, Government, and Issues

The Centre worked with Advanis to collect data for the survey between July 5th and 15th, 2019 among a randomly selected representative sample of 3,524 Canadians. Of these, 2,714 were completed online and 810 via phone using a random digit dialing methodology. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of 3,524 would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current age, gender, and province/territory Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population (18+) of the Canadian population. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Please consult the Appendix for a Profile of Respondents.

- ❖ The sample distribution for the survey was drawn disproportionately in order to facilitate more reliable analysis of findings at the provincial and regional levels. This means that in certain provinces the total number of completed surveys was above (or below) what would normally be the case in a perfectly representative sample. The table below shows the sample distribution.

Province/Region	Representative Sample (N=3,500)		Final Sample (N=3,524)		
	% of Population	N	%	Final Sample	Margin of Error*
British Columbia	13.1%	459	17%	600	± 4.0
Alberta	11.7%	410	11%	388	± 5.0
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	6.8%	237	9%	317	± 5.5
Ontario	38.7%	1,355	31%	1,092	± 3.0
Quebec	22.9%	801	21%	740	± 3.6
Atlantic (NB, PEI, NS, NFLD/LAB)	6.5%	228	9%	317	± 5.0
Territories (NWT, Yukon, Nunavut)	0.3%	10	2%	70	± 11.7
TOTAL	100%	3,500	100%	3,524	± 1.6

*NOTE: Margin of error is for comparison with a random probability sampling methodology.

The analysis of survey findings reveals a comprehensive picture of Canadians' perspectives on democracy. To achieve this, a number of analytic approaches were used.

- ❖ **Total Population Trends:** Interpretation of findings based on the distribution of responses to survey questions in the total population. Specific grouping of response scales (e.g. topbox, lowbox %'s) was undertaken to bring greater clarity to the interpretation.
- ❖ **Socio-Demographic Differences:** Interpretation of findings comparing responses to survey questions by different population subgroups. Comparisons were done based on province/region, gender, age, education, income, place of birth, type of community.
- ❖ **Differences based on Attitudes/Views on Democracy:** Interpretation of findings comparing responses to survey questions given by residents who held more positive views on democratic values and the role of citizens in a democracy with those who held less positive views.
- ❖ **Differences based on Participation in Democratic Activities:** Interpretation of findings comparing responses to survey responses of people who participated in various democratic activities with those who have not participated in these activities. The same dependent variable was used.
- ❖ **Differences based on Views on Misinformation:** Interpretation of findings comparing survey responses to views on the impact of misinformation and how these relate to commitment to democracy and to participation in democratic activities.

In conducting the analysis, we referenced two approaches/measures used in other survey research on democracy and democratic values:

- ❖ **Commitment to Democracy Index – PEW Centre:** The Index breaks populations into three categories – Fully Committed Democrats, Less Committed Democrats, and Non-Democrats. Here, it is commitment to “representative democracy”, where representatives elected by citizens decide what becomes law.
- ❖ **Typology of Democracies – Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU):** The typology breaks countries into four categories – Full Democracies, Flawed Democracies, Hybrid, Authoritarian. We used this typology to group respondents based on their country of birth.
- ❖ For analysis purposes, and to highlight important trends, we have done the following:
 - In tables comparing population subgroup differences, we highlighted statistically significant findings where % point difference between population subgroups is above 5 percentage points. In the tables provided, these are highlighted in yellow and bolded. An asterisk (*) indicates a statistically lower %.
 - Where appropriate, in charts, we have highlighted statistically higher percentages using a black round text box. 

Detailed Findings

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***Detailed Findings -
Trust in Information
Sources***

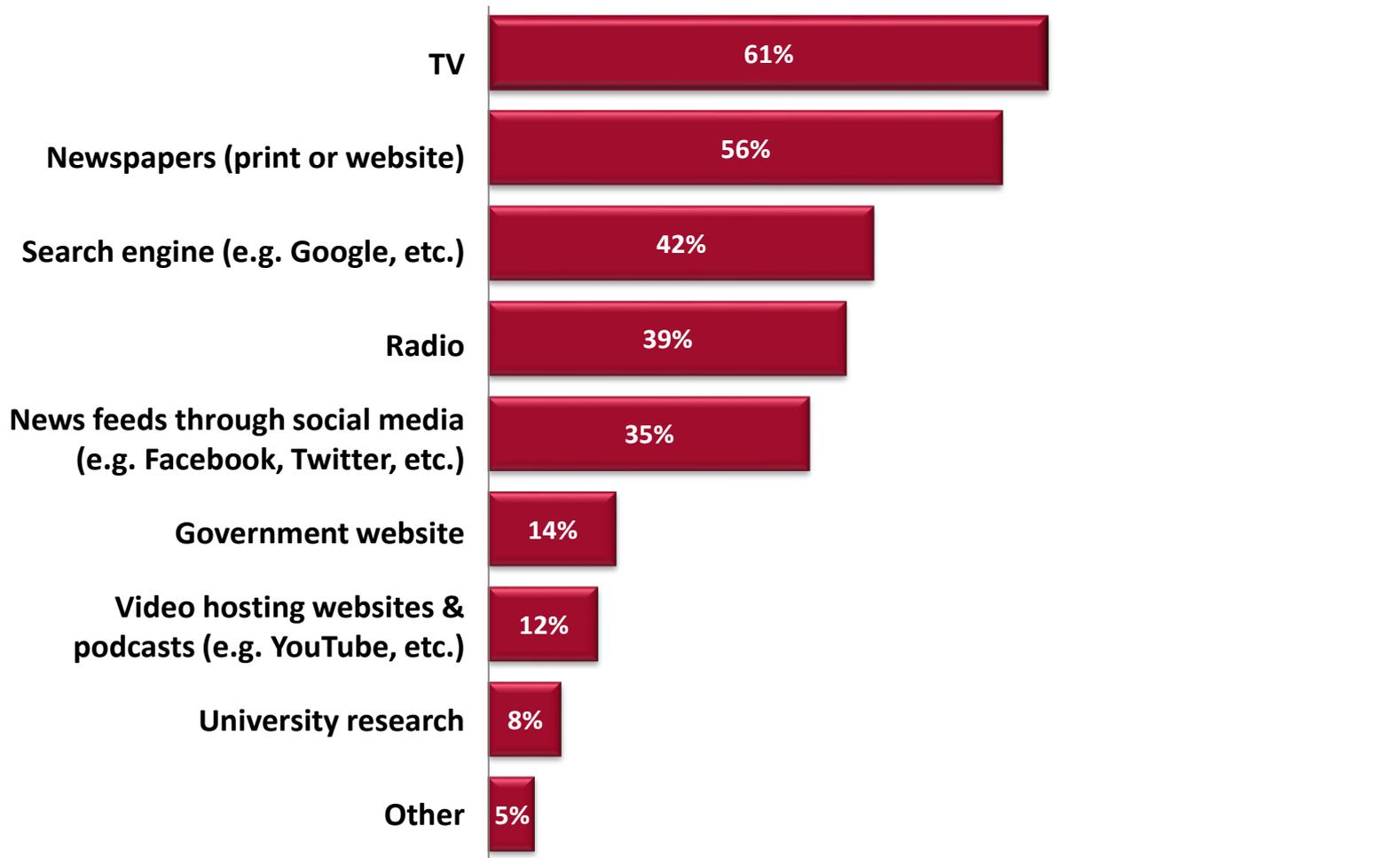
Trust in Information Sources

– Overview

- ❖ Canadians use a wide range of sources to obtain information about politics, government and public issues in which they are interested. Traditional sources – TV and newspapers – top their list, with search engines (like Google), radio, and news feeds through social media in a second tier. Far fewer turn to video hosting websites (e.g. YouTube) or podcasts, government websites, or university research.
- ❖ However, this order is somewhat flipped when it comes to which information sources Canadians trust most. At the top of the list, six-in-ten or more trust university research, government websites, and newspapers. Somewhat fewer – four-in-ten to half - trust information from TV, radio, or search engines. Much further down the list are video hosting websites or podcasts and social media news feeds.
 - When it comes to the level of trust Canadians have in their top information sources, those who turn mostly to university research, government websites, and more traditional media channels (e.g. newspapers, TV, radio), are much more trusting of the information they obtain from these sources when compared to those who get their information from search engines, video hosting sites or podcasts, and news feeds through social media.
- ❖ Socio-Demographic Population Differences
 - Those most likely to trust information sources include: Quebecers, Atlantic Canadians, live in urban or suburban communities, born outside Canada and particularly in countries with authoritarian regimes, and self-identify as Newcomers or Indigenous.

Canadians more likely to seek information on politics, government, public issues via traditional broadcast and newspaper sources. Many also turn to search engines and social media news feeds.

Canadians' top information sources on politics, government, public issues



Q16. Of the following, what are your top sources for information on politics, government, and public issues you're interested in? .

Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Top Sources of Information – Population Subgroup Differences

Region:

- Quebec residents are significantly more likely to get their news from TV and newspapers and less likely to turn to search engines than those living in other parts of the country.
- Atlantic Canadians are more likely to get their news from the radio than residents of other provinces.
- Albertans are less likely to treat newspapers as a “top source” than other Canadians and more likely to rely on government websites.

Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	PQ	ATL
TV		56%	56%	60%	59%	70%	55%
Newspapers (print or website)		54%	47%*	57%	55%	63%	52%
Radio		35%	36%	36%	39%	43%	46%
News feeds through social media		47%	47%	42%	44%	34%*	42%
Government Website		13%	19%	11%	14%	14%	14%

Top Sources of Information – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Gender:

- Women (41%) are more likely to treat social media as a top source of information than men (29%)

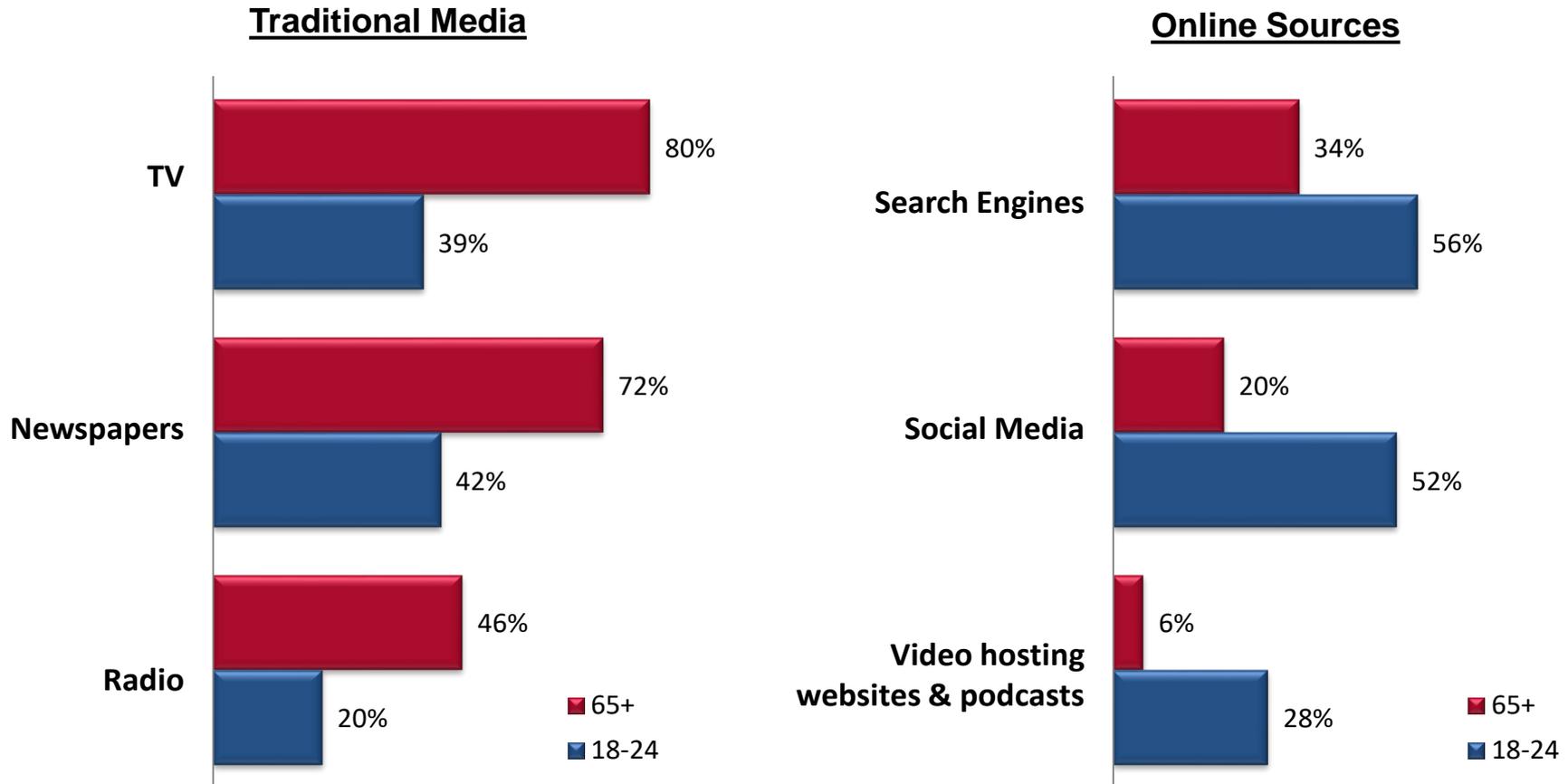
Age:

- TV is the most commonly listed source of information on government, politics, and public issues for all but the youngest age group.
- Canadians 35+ are more likely to list TV and newspapers as top sources than younger Canadians, with likelihood increasing significantly with age. The opposite trend holds with respect to university research.
- Canadians under 50 are more likely to rely on online sources.

Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
TV		39%*	45%*	54%	69%	80%
Newspapers (print or website)		42%*	41%*	53%	59%	72%
Search Engines		56%	45%	45%	40%*	34%*
Radio		20%*	34%	39%	44%	46%
News feeds through social media		52%	45%	41%	31%	20%*
Government website		19%	17%	16%	15%	7%*
Video hosting websites & podcasts		28%	18%	13%	8%	6%*
University Research		16%	13%	7%	5%	5%

Younger Canadians (18-24) much more likely to use online sources for their information on government, politics, public issues; older Canadians (65+) more likely to rely on traditional media

Sources of information for the oldest and youngest Canadians
(% listing as one of three 'top sources' for politics, government, and public issues of interest)



Top Sources of Information – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Education:

- Education level is not a significant factor affecting which information sources Canadians use to follow news on government, politics, and public issues. A few differences do emerge, nonetheless. For example, Canadians with a high school education or less are more likely to rely on TV and less likely to rely on radio as a top source of information/

Adequacy of Salary/Household Income

- Similarly, Canadians top information sources is not strongly related to the adequacy of their salary/household income in meeting their financial needs. Key differences include: those who reported having inadequate income were less likely to rely on newspapers and more likely to rely on social media news feeds for information.

	Education				Adequacy of Salary	
	HS or less	Some Post-Sec	Non-Univ Credential	BA+	Enough	Not enough
TV	68%	61%	62%	57%	61%	60%
Newspapers	51%	49%*	56%	60%	59%	49%*
Radio	33%*	41%	41%	39%	42%	35%
News feeds through social media	36%	36%	37%	34%	32%	42%

Top Sources of Information – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Mother Tongue:

- Canadians who have French as a mother tongue are more likely to rely on TV and newspapers for their information, and less likely to rely on search engines and video hosting websites and podcasts.
- Canadians with a mother tongue other than English or French are more likely to turn to search engines, as well as video hosting websites and podcasts. They are less likely to rely on radio.

Significantly Higher % *Significantly Lower %	English	French	Other
TV	59%	70%	54%
Newspapers	54%	62%	54%
Search engines	44%	34%*	50%
Radio	40%	43%	32%*
Video hosting websites & podcasts	13%	8%*	19%
University research	8%	6%	7%

Top Sources of Information – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Country of Birth:

- Where Canadians were born is not a significant factor in which information sources they choose for their news. A few differences do emerge:
 - Those born outside Canada are more inclined to use search engines and videos and podcasts for their news, and less likely to use more traditional media (i.e. TV, radio).
 - People who emigrated from fully democratic countries are those most likely to rely on newspapers, while those born in non-democratic regimes are more likely to look for information online through video hosting websites/podcasts and social media news feeds.

Significantly Higher % *Significantly Lower %	Born in Canada?		Type of Political System**			
	Yes	No	Full Democracy	Flawed Democracy	Hybrid	Authoritarian
TV	62%	54%*	52%	59%	57%	44%*
Newspapers (print or website)	55%	57%	69%	52%	54%	49%
Search engines	41%	49%	48%	49%	49%	53%
Radio	40%	32%*	33%	30%	34%	32%
News feeds through social media	36%	34%	30%	36%	30%	43%
Video hosting websites & podcasts	11%	19%	14%	24%	18%	21%
University research	8%	8%	9%	9%	2%*	8%

** Based on *The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index*

Top Sources of Information – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

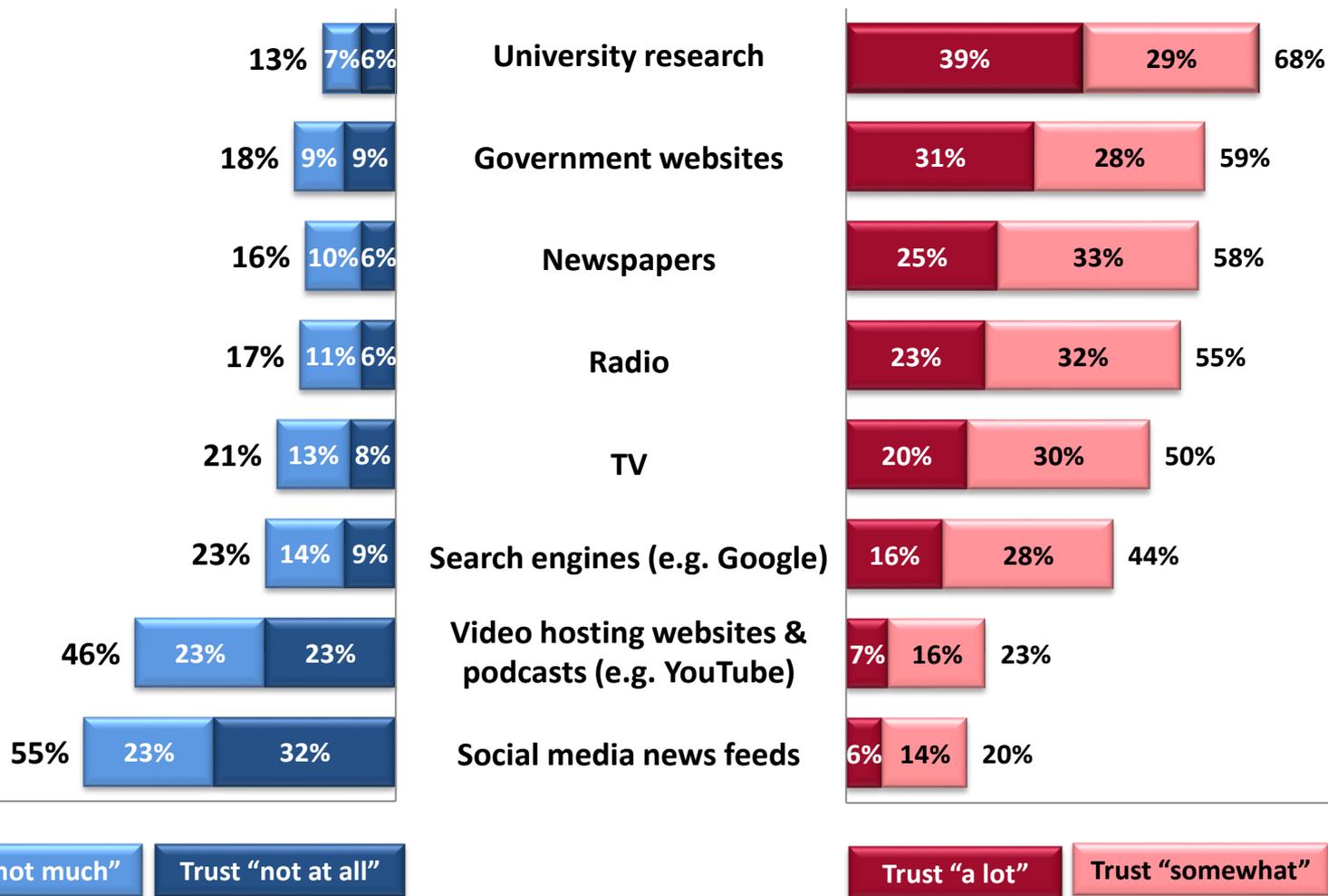
Identify with Specific Population Group:

- Canadians who self-identify as Newcomers, LGBTQ2S+, or Indigenous stand out somewhat from others in where they get their news.
 - They are more likely than others to rely on social media news feeds and video hosting websites/podcasts, and generally less likely to seek news through traditional media.
 - Newcomers and Indigenous are also more likely to turn to government websites and university research.

	None	Visible minority	Person with disabilities	LGBTQ2S+	Newcomer	Indigenous
Significantly Higher %						
*Significantly Lower %						
TV	63%	55%	56%	47%	*40%	58%
Newspapers (print or website)	58%	53%	52%	57%	*45%	*43%
Search engines	41%	48%	45%	38%	53%	39%
Radio	42%	*32%	35%	*26%	*27%	*31%
News feeds through social media	34%	39%	35%	47%	41%	44%
Government website	13%	17%	13%	21%	28%	17%
Video hosting websites & podcasts	11%	18%	16%	19%	25%	17%
University research	7%	8%	11%	14%	19%	10%

Canadians are much more likely to trust information they get from university research, gov't websites, and traditional news sources than from search engines, video hosting sites or social media news feeds

Level of trust in information sources

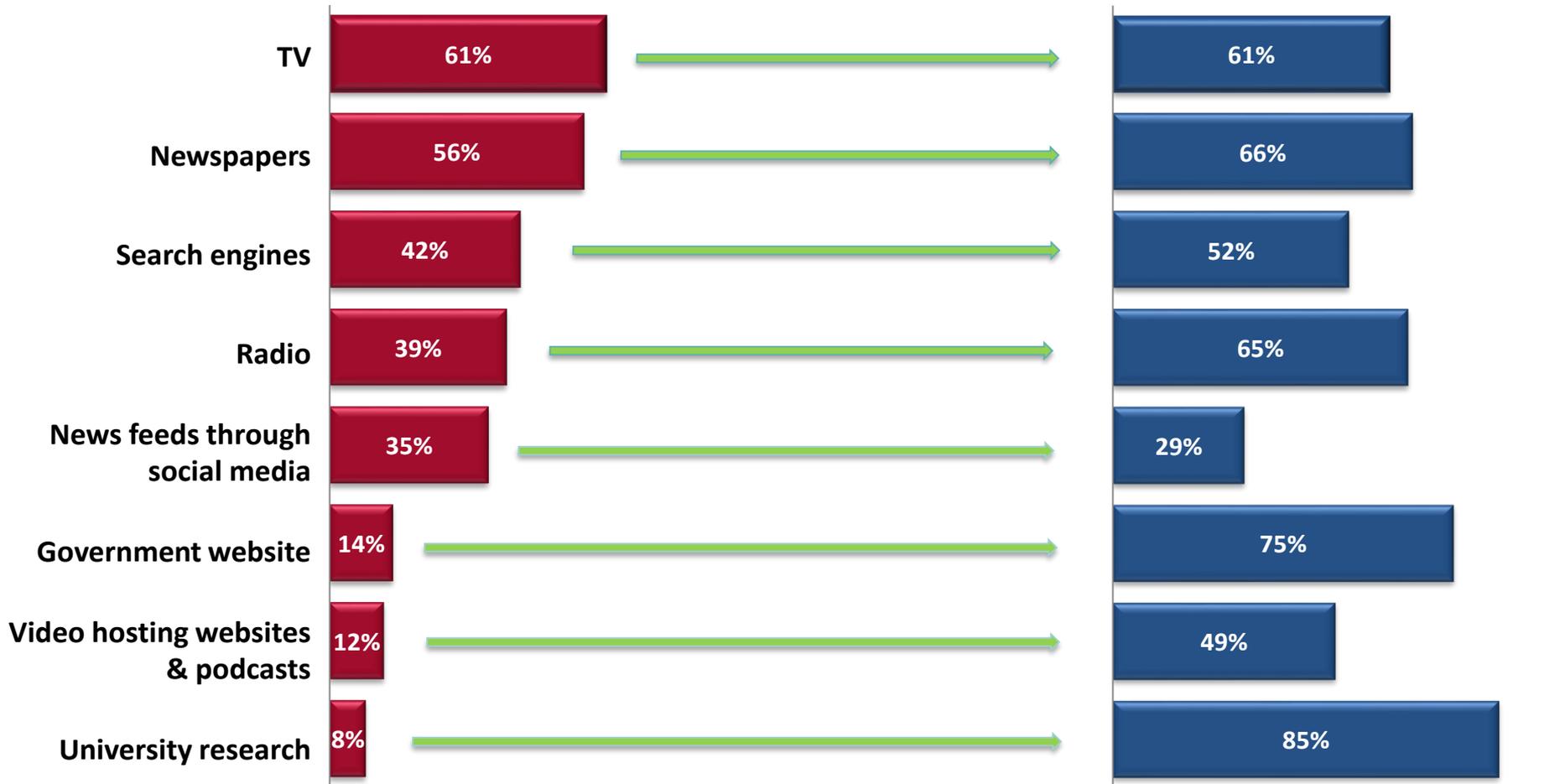


Q20abcdefg. Generally speaking, do you trust or not trust the information you get from...?
 Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Trust in top online news sources significantly lower than trust in top traditional media – notably social media news feeds. Government and university sources most trusted among their users.

Among those whose top sources for information on politics, gov't, public issues are ...

% who trust top source



Trust in Information Sources

– Population Subgroup Differences

Region:

- Generally, Quebecers and Atlantic Canadians are more trusting of information they get from most sources than those living elsewhere in the country. This is particularly true for TV, newspapers, and radio.
- Those in the Prairie provinces tend to be less trusting of information from most sources (with the exception of search engines in Alberta).
- Notably, there are no significant regional differences in the degree to which Canadians trust information they obtain from online sources (i.e., social media news feeds, video hosting websites/podcasts) or university research.

Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	PQ	ATL
		47%	*41%	47%	47%	61%	51%
		56%	*52%	*53%	58%	63%	64%
		42%	50%	*36%	42%	47%	42%
		54%	*49%	56%	53%	57%	63%
		55%	58%	*54%	57%	67%	61%

Trust in Information Sources – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Type of Community

- Canadians who live in urban or suburban communities tend to be more trusting of information they obtain from most sources than those in rural communities. This is not the case for more traditional media (TV, newspapers, radio).

Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	Type of Community		
		Urban	Suburban	Rural
% of Canadians who trust information from...				
TV		51%	48%	49%
Newspapers (print or website)		60%	58%	55%
Search engines		47%	43%	40%*
Radio		55%	55%	54%
Government Website		61%	61%	54%
Video hosting websites/podcasts		24%	23%	18%*
News feeds through social media		21%	18%	15%*
University research		69%	71%	62%*

Trust in Information Sources – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Age:

- Canadians under 35 are less likely to trust information from traditional media sources than older Canadians (especially those 65+).
- Those in the youngest age group (18-24) are more likely to trust information received from government websites, videos & podcasts, and university research.
- Notably, age is not a significant factor in the degree to which Canadians trust information they obtain from social media news feeds or search engines.

Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
TV		40%*	39%*	47%	54%	61%
Newspapers (print or website)		58%	52%*	58%	59%	64%
Radio		48%*	48%*	56%	56%	60%
Government website		71%	62%	61%	55%	55%
Video hosting websites & podcasts		32%	27%	24%	20%	17%*
University research		78%	70%	70%	64%	64%
News feeds through social media		22%	22%	21%	18%	16%
Search engines		48%	45%	44%	43%	42%

Trust in Information Sources – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Education:

- Trust in university research, government websites, and newspapers rises with level of education.
- Canadians with a high school education or less are more trusting of news obtained through social media

Adequacy of Salary/Household Income

- More financially stable Canadians trust government websites.
- Those who struggle financially show less trust in newspapers, government websites, and university research

Significantly Higher % *Significantly Lower %	Education				Adequacy of Salary	
	HS or less	Some Post-Sec	Non-Univ Credential	BA+	Enough	Not enough
TV	54%	*45%	48%	51%	52%	46%
Newspapers (print or website)	56%	51%	55%	65%	62%	*52%
Social media	24%	19%	17%	18%	19%	20%
Government website	*52%	55%	57%	66%	64%	*51%
University research	*58%	*61%	66%	77%	72%	*63%

Trust in Information Sources – Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Country of Birth

- Canadians born in another country are more likely than Canadian-born citizens to trust information from video hosting websites and podcasts, search engines, and university research.
- Those who emigrated from full democracies are less likely to trust social media news feeds and government websites. By comparison, those born in authoritarian regimes are more likely to trust information from a wide variety of sources.

Significantly Higher % *Significantly Lower %	Born in Canada?		Type of Political System**			
	Yes	No	Full Democracy	Flawed Democracy	Hybrid	Authoritarian
Search engines	43%	50%	44%	51%	53%	61%
Social media	19%	22%	*11%	26%	28%	34%
Government websites	59%	63%	*53%	66%	76%	66%
Video hosting websites & podcasts	22%	28%	19%	34%	27%	32%
University research	67%	74%	73%	75%	71%	76%

** Based on *The Economist Intelligence Unit's* Democracy Index

Trust in Information Sources

– Population Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Identification with a specific population group:

- Those who self identified as Newcomers or indigenous were more likely than others to trust a wide variety of information sources. Persons with disabilities tend to be less trusting overall.
- Members of the LGBTQ2S+ community are more likely to trust government websites and university research, similar to self-identified newcomers and indigenous persons.

	None	Visible minority	Person w/ disabilities	LGBTQ2S+	Newcomer	Indigenous
Significantly Higher % *Significantly Lower %						
TV	51%	47%	52%	47%	36%*	47%
Search engines	43%*	47%	46%	43%	54%	54%
Radio	55%	53%	56%	52%	54%	62%
Social media news feeds	17%*	23%	18%*	23%	36%	35%
Government websites	60%	60%	53%*	67%	63%	64%
Video hosting websites & podcasts	20%*	27%	22%*	25%	36%	42%
University research	68%	69%	67%	75%	80%	69%

***Detailed Findings -
Impact of
Misinformation on
Canada's Democracy***

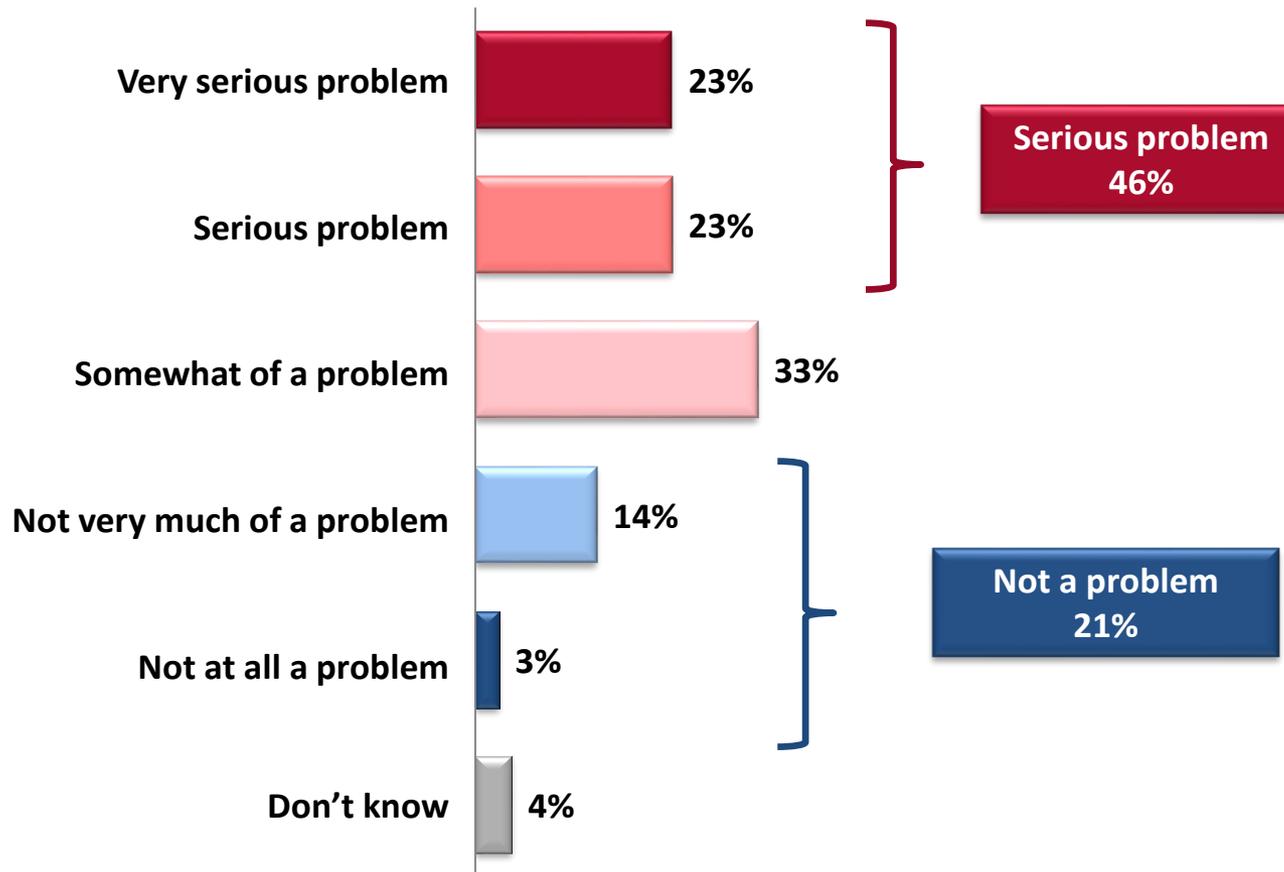
Impact of Misinformation on Democracy in Canada

– Overview

- ❖ A significant majority of the Canadian population feels the existence of news or information that is false or misleading is a problem for democracy in Canada; more than four-in-ten consider it a serious problem.
 - However, Canadians hold somewhat mixed views on the impact they feel disinformation has on democracy in this country; a majority believe that disinformation is having a moderate or big impact on Canadians' confidence in their government institutions and in the ability of their political leaders to solve problems. However, four-in-ten see little to no impact in this regard.
- ❖ Similarly, Canadians perceive access to the internet, mobile phones, and social media through two distinct lenses.
 - On the one hand, they believe this access contributes to greater polarization in Canada, making people more divided in their political opinions and less accepting of those who hold different views. And, a significant majority of the population think it has increased the risk that foreign powers might interfere in Canada's elections or that Canadians might be manipulated by politicians.
 - On the other hand, a majority of Canadians also believe that having access to the internet, mobile phones, and social media makes people more willing to engage in political debates and has increased the ability of regular Canadians to have a meaningful voice in the political process.

A significant majority of the Canadian population believes disinformation is a problem for democracy in Canada; close to half see it as a “serious problem”

Existence of false or misleading news/information is ____ for democracy in Canada



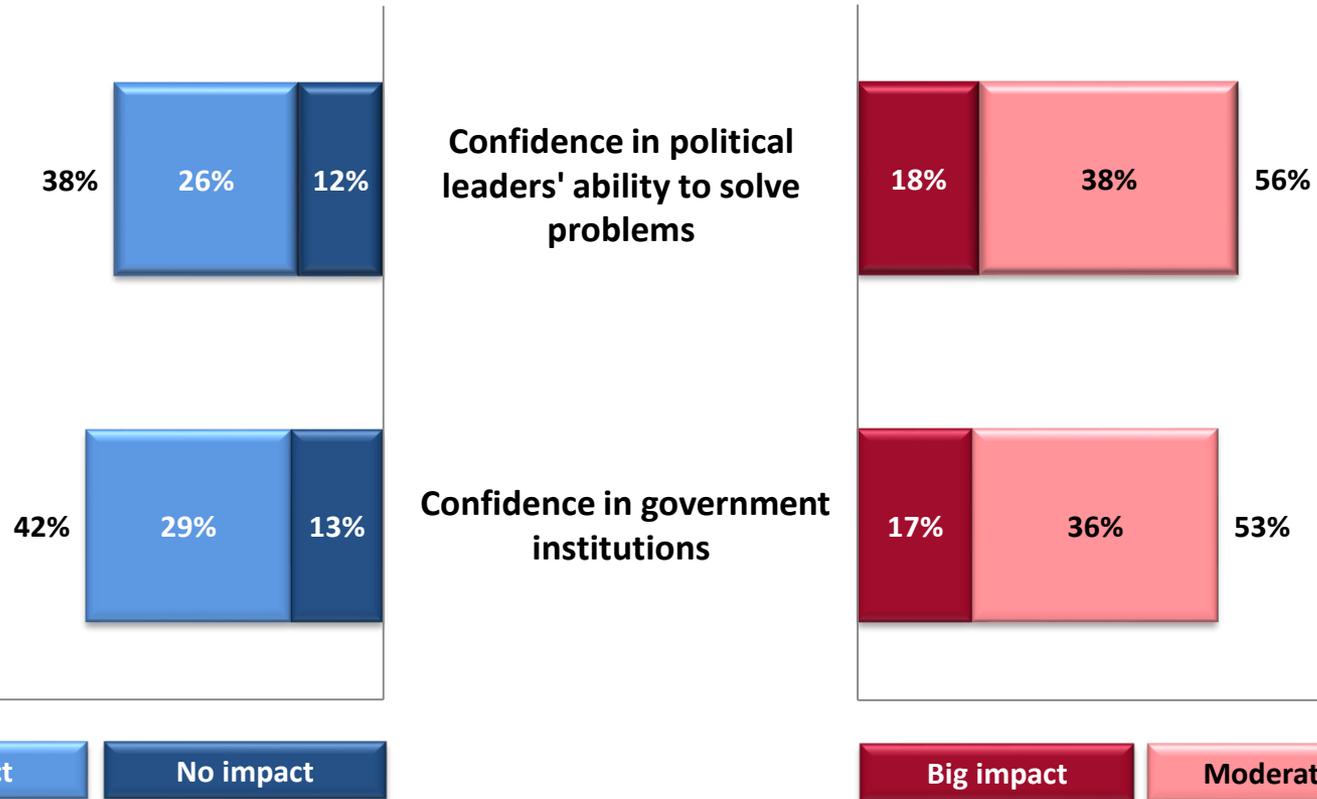
Q21. In your view, is the existence of news or information that is false or misleading a problem or not a problem for democracy in Canada?
Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Disinformation is a “Serious Problem” – Population Subgroup Differences

- ❖ Canadians’ views on disinformation and fake news as a serious problem for Canada’s democracy are commonly shared across regions and socio-demographic population subgroups. Some stand out subgroups who consider it a serious problem include:
 - Quebec residents – 51% versus 41% of those in Atlantic Canada and 44% in BC.
 - Males – 51% versus 41% of females
 - Born outside Canada – 52% vs. 44% Canadian-born
 - Newcomers to Canada – 57% vs. 44% with no self-identified group affiliation

Canadians hold somewhat mixed views on the impact false or misleading information has on their confidence in political leaders and government institutions

Impact of disinformation on Canadians' ...



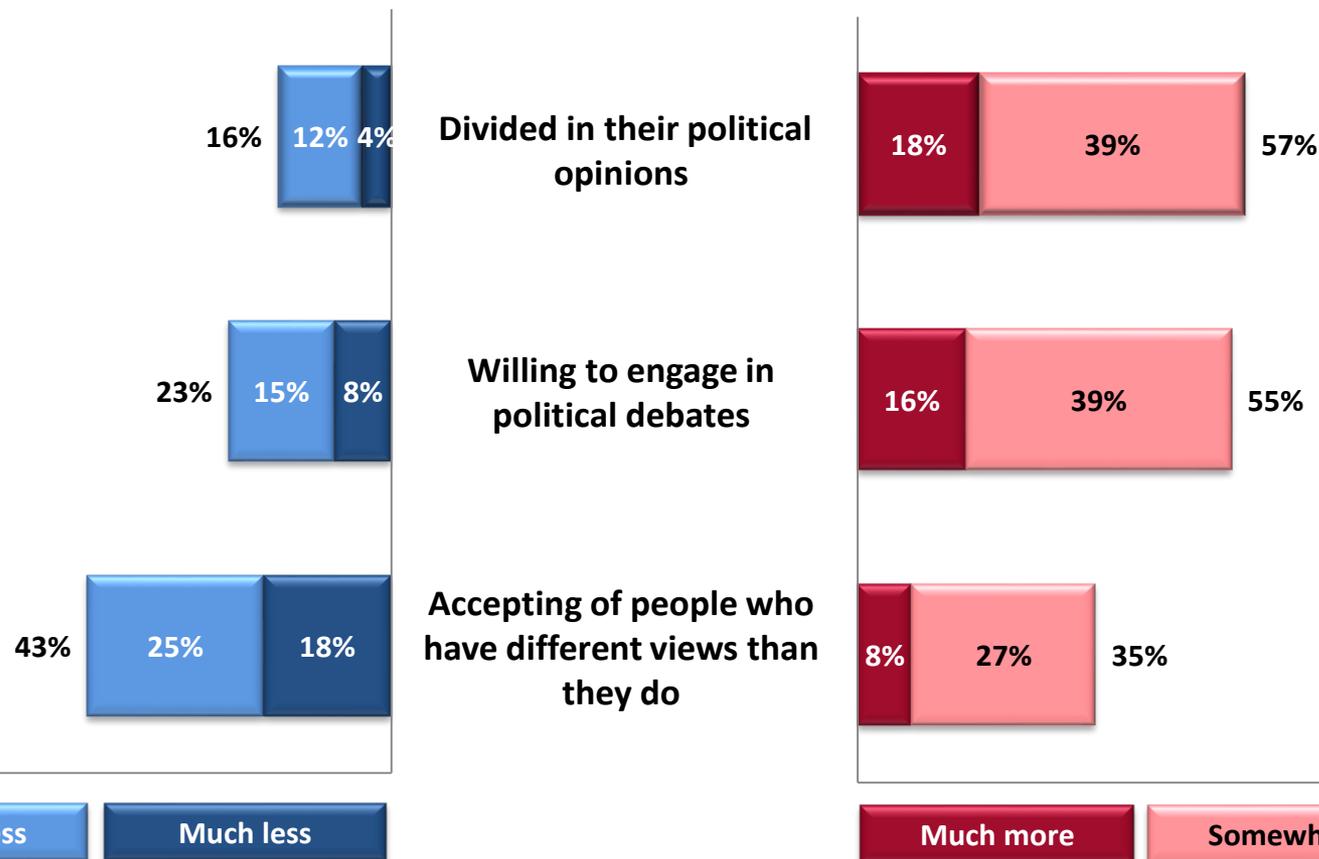
Q22ab. Does news and information that is false or misleading currently have a big impact, a moderate impact, a small impact, or no impact at all on ...?
Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Impact of Disinformation on Confidence in Institutions and Political Leaders – Population Subgroup Differences

- ❖ Canadians across all regions and socio-demographic population subgroups share similar views on the impact misleading and false information has on their confidence in government institutions and in political leaders' ability to solve problems. Some stand out subgroups who perceive a big or moderate impact include:
 - Confidence in government institutions:
 - Saskatchewan/Manitoba residents – 59% versus 49% of those in BC
 - 25-34 year olds – 59% vs. 49% of those 35-49 years of age
 - Born outside Canada in “flawed democracy” – 64% vs. 50% of those born outside Canada in “full democracies”
 - Confidence in political leaders' ability to solve problems:
 - 25-34 year olds – 61% vs. 51% of those 35-49 years of age
 - Self-identified as Indigenous (66%) or visible minority (64%) vs. 54% of persons with disabilities

Canadians feel access to internet, mobile phones, social media creates greater division of political views and intolerance towards different ideas, but also generates more interest in political debates

Access to internet, mobile phones & social media makes Canadians more/less?



Q23. In general, do you think that access to mobile phones, the internet, and social media has made Canadians more or less ...?

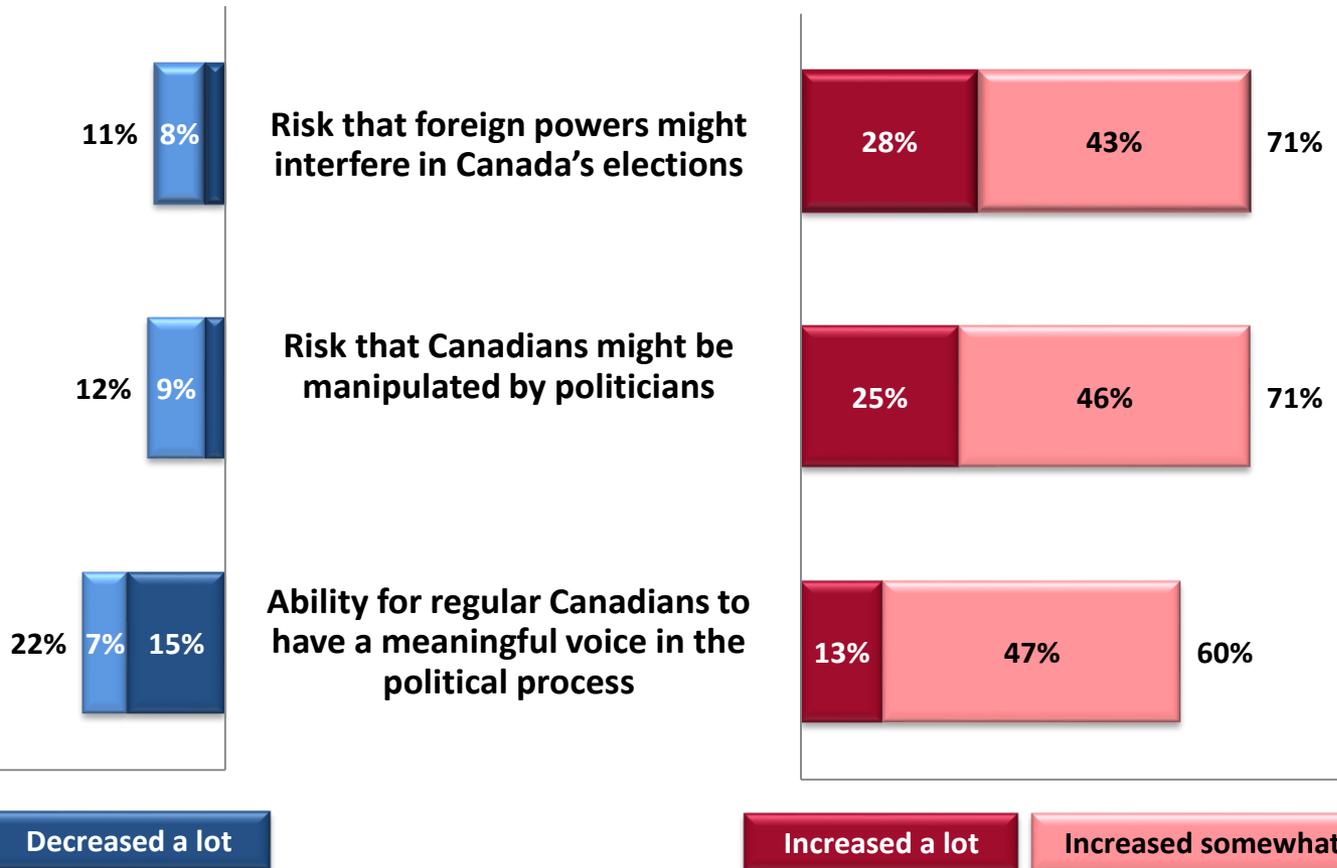
Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Impact of Access to Electronic Media on Civic Discourse – Population Subgroup Differences

- ❖ Canadians across all regions and socio-demographic subgroups share similar views on the impact access to the internet, mobile phones, and social media has on civic discourse. Stand out subgroups who believe Canadians are much/somewhat more ... include:
 - Divided in their political views:
 - Alberta residents – 65% versus 54% Quebecers, 55% of those in BC, and 58% of Ontarians
 - University graduates (BA+) – 64% vs. 50% of those with high school or less
 - Financially stable – 61% vs. 54% of those who feel their salary/household income is inadequate
 - English mother tongue – 60% vs. 54% French, 29% Indigenous language
 - Self-identify as Indigenous – 71% vs. 55% of Newcomers, 58% of visible minorities, 57% of persons with disabilities, and 60% of LGBTQ2S+
 - Accepting of people with different views:
 - Atlantic Canada residents – 42% vs. 34% of Quebecers
 - 18-24 year olds – 49% vs. 32% of those 65+
 - Self-identify as Newcomers (53%) or Indigenous (49%) vs. 34% of persons with disabilities
 - Willing to engage in political debates
 - Albertans (61%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba residents (58%) vs. 51% of Quebecers
 - 18-24 (62%) or 25-34 (63%) vs. 48% of 65+
 - University graduates (BA+) – 60% vs. 49% of those with high school or less
 - Financially stable – 68% vs. 51% of those who feel their salary/household income is inadequate
 - Self-identify as Newcomers (67%) vs. 53% of persons with disabilities

Majority of Canadians believe social media has increased the risk of political manipulation and foreign interference in our democracy; BUT also offers ability for citizens to gain meaningful voice in political processes

Social media has increased/decreased... ..?



Q24abc. Do you think that social media has increased, decreased, or not had much effect on... ?
 Base: All respondents – (N=3,524) Totals subject to rounding

Impact of Social Media on Democracy

– Population Subgroup Differences

- ❖ Canadians across all regions and socio-demographic subgroups share similar views that social media has increased the risk of foreign interference in Canada's elections and of manipulation by politicians as well as increasing the ability of Canadians to have a meaningful voice in the political process. Stand out subgroups who believe there has been an increase in ... include:
 - Risk of foreign interference in our elections:
 - Atlantic Canada residents – 77% vs. 69% of Albertans, 70% of those in Quebec and Ontario
 - 65+ - 81% vs. 55% of those 18-24 years of age
 - University graduates (BA+) – 75% vs. 67% of those with high school or less
 - Risk of Canadians being manipulated by politicians:
 - Albertans (79%) vs. 63% of Quebecers, 68% of Atlantic Canada residents, 72% of Ontarians
 - 65+ - 75% vs. 65% of those 18-24 years of age
 - Indigenous (81%) or English (73%) mother tongue vs. 63% of French mother tongue
 - Ability for regular Canadians to have a meaningful voice in political process:
 - Quebecers (67%) vs. 55% of British Columbians, 55% of Albertans, 60% of Ontarians, 60% of Saskatchewan/Manitoba residents (58%)
 - Under 35 years of age – 65% vs. 59% of 35+
 - University graduates (BA+) – 65% vs. 56% of those with high school or less
 - Financially stable – 63% vs. 55% of those who feel their salary/household income is inadequate
 - Self-identify as Newcomers (72%) vs. 57% of LGBTQ2S+

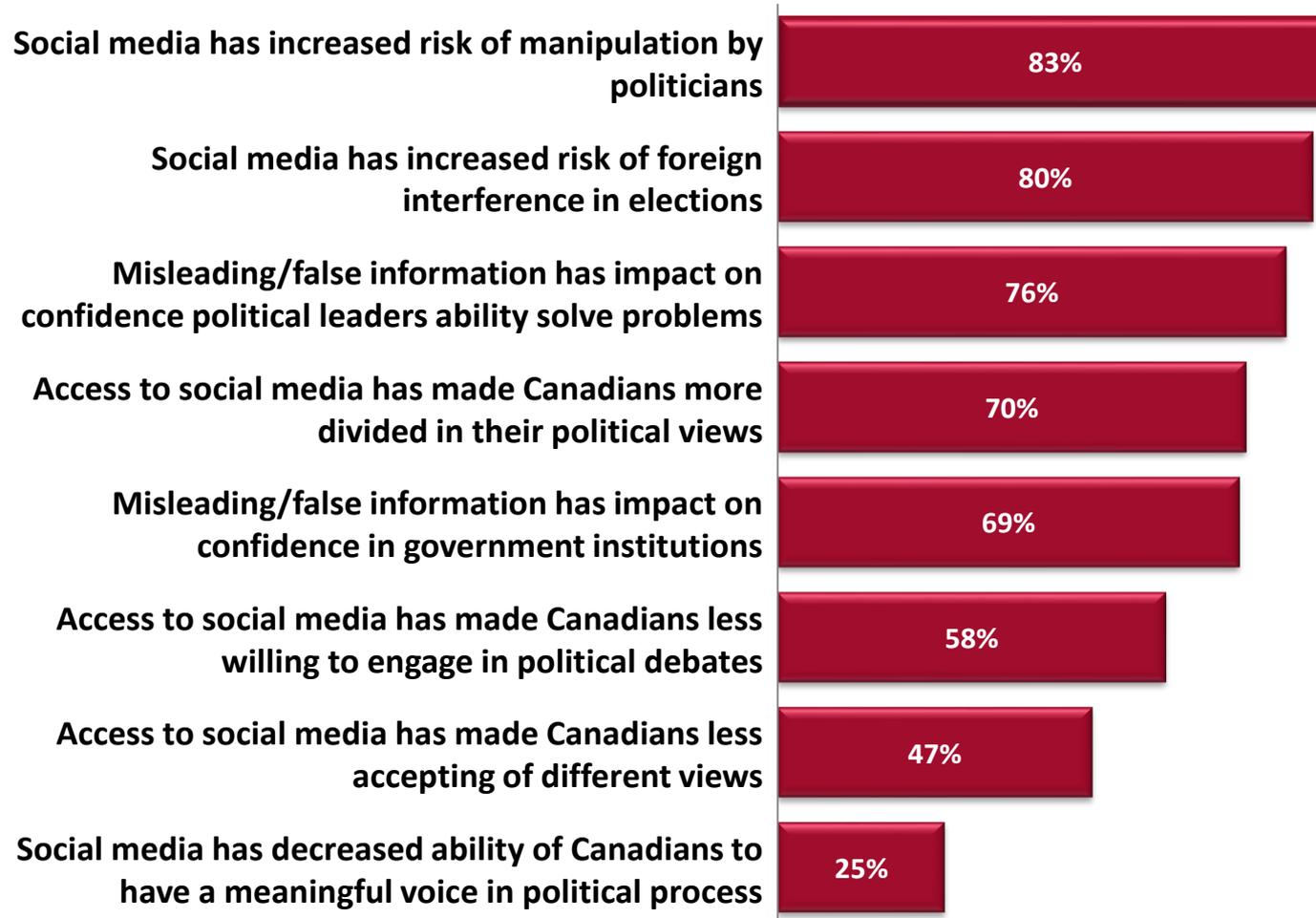
Most Serious Problems for Canada's Democracy Tied to Misinformation & Social Media

- ❖ By looking at Canadians who believe that false or misleading news/information is a “very serious problem” for democracy in Canada, it is possible to single out the most serious issues raised by misinformation and access to social media. This analysis identifies three tiers:
 - **Tier 1 Problems.** Three-quarters to eight-in-ten Canadians believe there is an increased risk of manipulation by politicians (83%), an increased risk of foreign interference in our elections, or an impact on the confidence Canadians have in the ability of political leaders to solve problems
 - **Tier 2 Problems.** Six-in-ten to seven-in-ten feel Canadians are more divided in their political views (70%), there is an impact on the confidence in government institutions (59%), or Canadians are less willing to engage in political debates.
 - **Tier 3 Problems.** Less than half the population thinks Canadians are less accepting of views different from their own (47%) or a decrease in the ability of Canadians to have a meaningful voice in the political process.

Increased risk of manipulation by politicians, foreign interference in elections, loss of confidence in political leaders to solve problems seen as most serious issues for Canada's democracy

Most Serious Problems for Canada's democracy

(Among Canadians who believe misleading or false news/information is a "very serious problem" for Canada's democracy)



***Detailed Findings -
Addressing
Misinformation***

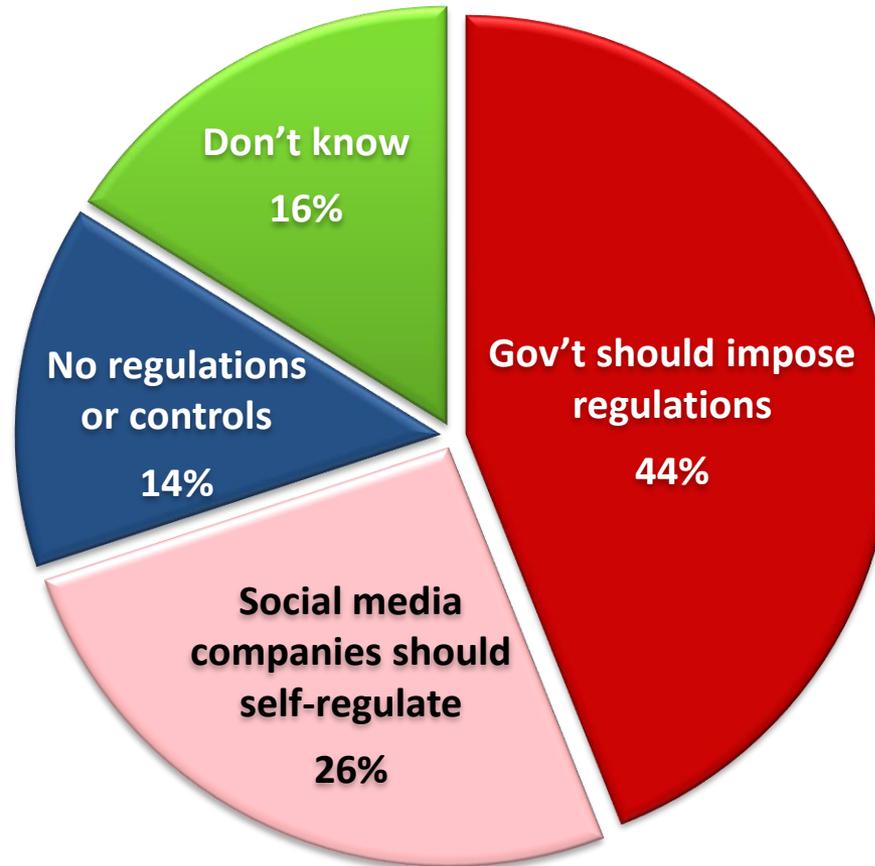
Addressing Misinformation

– Overview

- ❖ Canadians are quite mindful of the need to regulate social media companies, with the most common view being that government (44%) should take the lead rather than letting the companies self-regulate (26%), or that there should be no regulation or controls at all (14%).
- ❖ When it comes to guidance on the type of regulations they might prefer, Canadians place far greater priority on protecting their privacy over the offer of free services the social media companies offer in exchange for using their information to sell advertising. They are also more interested in having a system of fact checkers to identify fake news rather than doing so on their own. Moreover, a majority of Canadians prefer some degree of censorship to limit or remove objectionable content online (e.g. hate speech); but many choose free speech and self-regulation instead.
- ❖ However, Canadians' democratic values and their trust in institutions/actors affect their openness to regulation of social media companies as well as the specific approaches. Those who believe Canada has too much free speech, freedom of religion, and protection for minorities are more open to regulation and to various regulatory approaches. On the other hand, people who see insufficient freedoms and too much minority rights protections opt for less regulation overall and prefer to see Canadians' self-monitor their online behaviour and information consumption.

Most Canadians think government should impose regulations to address spread of misinformation on social media platforms; few opt for self-regulation or no controls

Preferred actions to address false or misleading information



Q25. There has been a lot of talk recently about what can be done to address the issue of false or misleading information being spread via social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google). Which of the following is closest to your view on what should be done?

Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Options for Addressing Spread of Misinformation on Social Media Platforms – Population Subgroup Differences

- ❖ Canadians from all walks of life hold the similar view that government regulation of social media platforms is the preferred option to address the spread of misinformation. However, some population subgroups stand out:
 - Government regulation:
 - Quebec residents – 54% vs. 34% of Albertans
 - Males – 48% versus 41% of females
 - 65+ years of age – 53% vs. 26% of 18-24 year olds
 - Financially stable – 48% vs. 37% of those who feel their salary/household income is inadequate
 - Self-identify as LGBTQ2S+ - 46% vs. 33% of Indigenous
 - Social media companies should self-regulate
 - 18-24 years of age – 37% vs. 23% of 65+
 - No regulation of social media platforms
 - Alberta residents – 19% vs. 10% of Quebecers, 11% in Atlantic Canada, 12% in BC
 - Male – 17% vs. 10% of females
 - 18-24 years of age – 24% vs. 9% 50+
 - Self-identify as Newcomers – 20% vs. 9% of persons with disabilities, 9% of LGBTQ2S+

When using internet/social media platforms/apps, which is more important?

Privacy vs. Free Services

Protecting your personal information

90%



Having free access to services offered by social media companies who want to use it to sell advertising

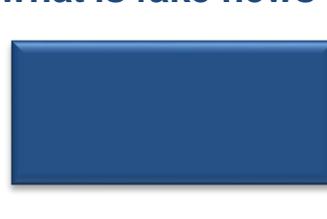
10%



System of fact checkers vs. Self-checking

Having a system of fact checkers to help you identify what is fake news

64%



Distinguishing facts from fake news on your own

36%



Q26ad. When you think of using the internet or social media platforms or apps, which is more important ...?

Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

Majority of Canadians prefer some degree of censorship to limit/eliminate objectionable content online; BUT many choose free speech and self-regulation

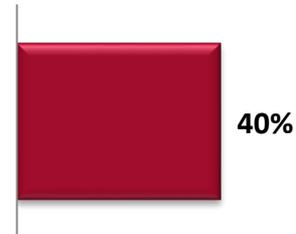
When using internet/social media platforms/apps, which is more important?

Limit expression of objectionable content vs. freedom of speech

Preventing people from saying harmful or hateful things



Being able to say what you want

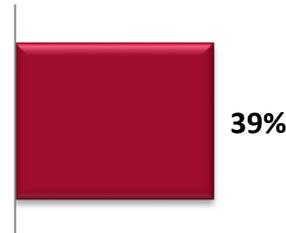


Active censorship vs. Individual choice

Removing harmful or hateful content



Letting people decide on their own what they see or read



Q26bc. When you think of using the internet or social media platforms or apps, which is more important ...?

Base: All respondents – (N=3,524)

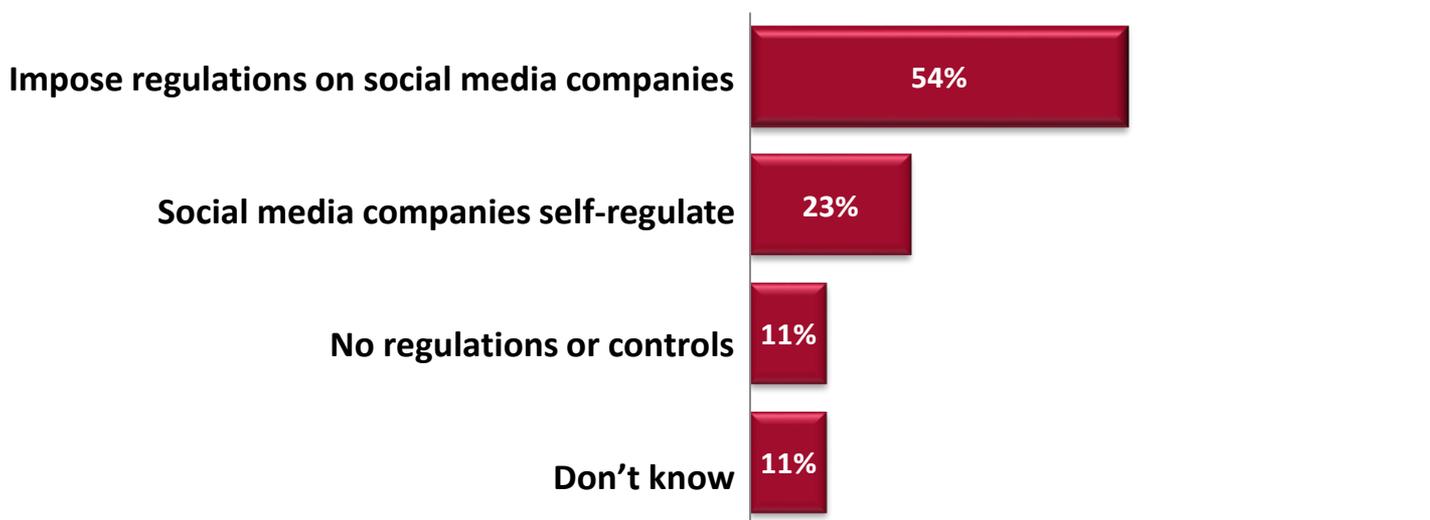
Addressing Misinformation Media – Among Canadians Who See it as “Very Serious Problem” for Canada’s Democracy

- ❖ Canadians who consider false or misleading news/information to be a “very serious problem” for democracy in Canada believe action to regulate social media companies is needed (54%); far fewer think social media companies should be left to regulate themselves (23%).
- ❖ When it comes to how to address misinformation spread online, Canadians who are very worried about its impact on democracy want action to protect their personal information (92%), prefer limits to free speech (62%) and opt for the removal of hateful/harmful content (65%), and a system of fact checkers (68%).

Majority of Canadians who see misinformation as “very serious problem” for democracy think federal government should impose regulations on social media companies

Preferred Options for Addressing Misinformation Spread Through Social Media Platforms

(Among Canadians who believe misleading or false news/information is a “very serious problem” for Canada’s democracy)



Canadians who see misinformation as “very serious problem” prefer protection of personal information, fact checkers, limits to free speech online, removal of harmful/hateful content

Preferences in Using Social Media or Internet

(Among Canadians who believe misleading or false news/information is a “very serious problem” for Canada’s democracy)

Protect your personal information

91%



Have free access to services

9%



Develop a system of fact checkers

68%



Let Canadians distinguish facts from fake news on own

32%



Prevent people from saying harmful or hateful things

62%



Let Canadians say what they want

38%



Remove harmful or hateful content

65%



Let Canadians decide on own what they see or read

35%



- ❖ Democratic values affect Canadians' preferences for addressing online misinformation. A majority of those who believe that Canada has too much free speech and freedom of the press, and too little protection of minority rights, for example, are *more likely* to accept limits to what people can say online, to want harmful or hateful content removed, and to want a system of fact checkers to help people identify fake news.
- ❖ However, there is some resistance to regulating Canadian's online behaviour among people who feel we have too little free speech or freedom of the press, and too much protection for minority rights. About four-in-ten Canadians who hold these values would prefer that Canadians be able to say what they want online, to decide on their own what they see or read, and to let people distinguish facts from fake news on their own.

Canadians who feel Canada has inadequate free speech, freedom of press, and too much minority rights protections are less open to regulation of Canadians' online behaviour

Significantly Higher %

Among Canadians who feel Canada has ____

	Freedom of Speech		Freedom of the Press		Protection of Minority Rights	
	Way too much	Way too little	Way too much	Way too little	Way too much	Way too little
% who prefer...						
Letting people say what they want	42%	58%	41%	58%	51%	40%
Preventing people from saying harmful/hateful things	58%	42%	59%	42%	49%	60%
Letting people decide on own what they read/see	41%	59%	41%	64%	53%	42%
Removing harmful/hateful content	59%	41%	59%	36%	47%	58%
Letting people distinguish facts from fake news on their own	40%	49%	40%	44%	44%	35%
Having system of fact checkers to help identify what is fake news	60%	51%	60%	56%	56%	65%

- ❖ Trust in democratic institutions and actors also affect somewhat what approaches Canadians would prefer as a way to address online misinformation. A majority of those who trust elected officials or Parliament “a lot”, for example, are *more likely* to support government regulation of social media companies and accept limits to what people can say online, to want harmful or hateful content removed, and to want a system of fact checkers to help people identify fake news.
- ❖ However, there is some resistance to these approaches that is tied to a lack of trust. For example, only a third of Canadians who do not trust elected officials or Parliament at all want government regulation of social media companies; fully one-in-five would prefer no regulation at all. Further, a majority would prefer that Canadians be able to say what they want online and to be left to decide on their own what they see or read. Four-in-ten feel Canadians should be able to distinguish fact from fake news on their own.

Canadians who trust elected officials and Parliament more open to regulation of Canadians' online behaviour; lack of trust associated with a preference for self-monitoring

Significantly Higher %

Among Canadians who trust ____

	Elected Officials		Parliament	
	A lot	Not at all	A lot	Not at all
% who prefer...				
Government regulation of social media companies	49%	36%	51%	33%
Social media companies self-regulate	29%	24%	27%	26%
No regulation	10%	21%	11%	20%
Letting people say what they want	34%	48%	36%	54%
Preventing people from saying harmful/hateful things	66%	48%	64%	46%
Letting people decide on their own what they read/see	36%	55%	35%	54%
Removing harmful/hateful content	64%	54%	65%	46%
Letting people distinguish facts from fake news on their own	31%	43%	34%	42%
Having system of fact checkers to help identify what is fake news	69%	57%	66%	58%

Preferences in Content Management when Using Social Media Platforms – Population Subgroup Differences

Region:

- Albertans take a more individual self-regulation responsibility approach to what they see on the internet compared to those living in other provinces.
- Quebecers are more interested in action that will prevent people from saying harmful or hateful things
- There are no significant regional differences when it comes to a preference for protecting personal information versus getting free services from social media companies.

Significantly Higher % *Significantly Lower %	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	PQ	ATL
Being able to say what you want	40%	51%	42%	43%	*31%	37%
Preventing people from saying harmful/hateful things	60%	*49%	58%	57%	69%	63%
Removing harmful or hateful content	61%	*54%	58%	62%	64%	63%
Letting people decide on their own what they read	39%	46%	42%	38%	36%	37%
Distinguishing facts from fake news on your own	33%	41%	39%	36%	33%	34%
A system of fact checkers to help identify fake news	67%	*59%	61%	64%	67%	66%

Preferences in Content Management when Using Social Media Platforms – Subgroup Differences (cont.)

Age:

- Protect one’s personal information (vs. receiving free services) is strongly preferred across all ages, but does rise with age.
- A majority of 18-24 year olds would prefer to “say what you want’ over preventing harmful/hateful statements – a preference that also declines with age.
- The youngest Canadians were also the only age group not to prioritize removing harmful/hateful content over letting people decide on their own what they see.
- A majority in all age groups preferred a system of fact checkers – but this preference was less pronounced in some age categories than others.

	Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Protecting your personal information			*80%	*85%	90%	94%	95%
Free services from companies	20%	15%	10%	6%	*5%		
Being able to say what you want	54%	47%	42%	36%	*32%		
Preventing people from saying harmful/hateful things	*46%	*53%	58%	64%	68%		
Removing harmful or hateful content	*44%	60%	59%	64%	68%		
Letting people decide on own what they see or read	56%	40%	41%	36%	*32%		
Distinguishing facts from fake news on your own	38%	42%	40%	32%	*30%		
A system of fact checkers to help identify fake news	62%	*58%	60%	68%	70%		

Preferences in Content Management when Using Social Media Platforms – Population Subgroup Differences

Education

- Canadians with a university education are more likely to want to remove harmful/hateful content from the internet than those with a high school education or less, half of whom wanted to let people decide on their own what they read or see.

Sex

- Canadian males are more likely than their female counterparts to want to be able to say what they want on the social media platforms, while females preferred action to prevent people from saying harmful or hateful things. Consistent with this pattern, females were more likely than males to want action to remove harmful or hateful content.

	Sex		Education			
	Male	Female	HS or less	Some Post-Sec	Non-Univ Credential	BA+
	Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %				
Being able to say what you want	47%	*34%	43%	44%	38%	39%
Preventing people from saying harmful/hateful things	*53%	66%	57%	56%	62%	61%
Removing harmful or hateful content	58%	66%	*52%	59%	61%	66%
Letting people decide on own what they see or read	42%	*34%	48%	41%	39%	*34%

Preferences in Content Management when Using Social Media Platforms – Population Subgroup Differences

Identification with a specific population group:

- LGBTQ2S+ and Indigenous people are more willing on average to give personal information to companies in exchange for free services
- Almost seven-in-ten members of the LGBTQ2S+ community favour removing harmful/hateful content, highest among all groups.
- Unlike others, Newcomers to Canada are as likely to favour letting people decide what they want to see rather than taking action to remove harmful or hateful content.

Significantly Higher %	*Significantly Lower %	None	Visible minority	Person w/ disabilities	LGBTQ2S+	Newcomer	Indigenous
		92%	87%	89%	*85%	84%	*82%
		8%	13%	11%	15%	16%	18%
		61%	65%	59%	68%	*52%	57%
		39%	35%	41%	*32%	48%	43%

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