

REVISITING NEWS CONSUMPTION AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2019, Apathy is Boring partnered with Abacus Data to survey youth ages 18-30 on news consumption and democratic engagement. In 2021, we revisited this topic by surveying 2,000 more youth. Since the last survey, disinformation is still a prevalent issue for many young Canadians: **65% of youth surveyed say they see some form of disinformation at least once a week**. This re-emphasizes the importance of data literacy education. Like the last iteration of this survey, those who consumed news were more likely to believe they have the power to make a difference and had strong opinions about issues. This can result in active engagement through voting or through other models of youth-led democratic innovation.

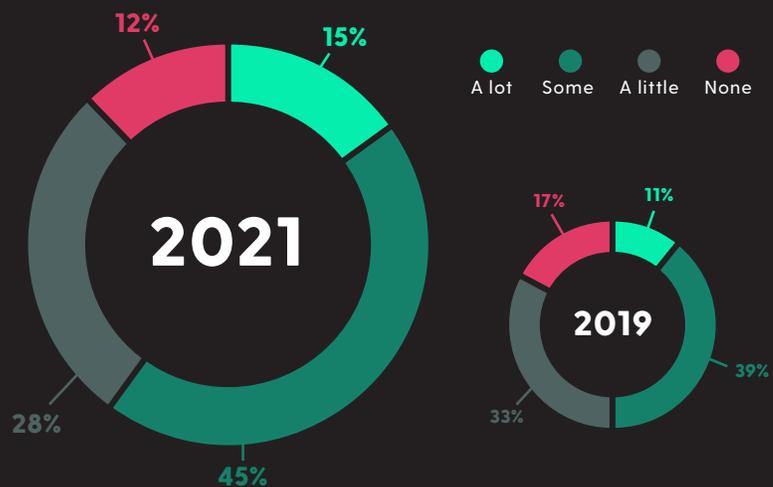
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Since 2019, there has been a 10-point increase in interest for Canadian politics - **60% of young people have at least some interest in Canadian politics**. Of those who were surveyed, 51% voted. Anecdotally, there are more reasons to pay attention to news and be politically engaged these days, especially due to the pandemic. Different factors affected young people in the last year which may cause an increase in Canadian politics, including CERB, losing jobs, the Black Lives Matter movements, Anti-Asian hate, and Indigenous rights and history. These issues impact young people's lives, and these issues can be tied to government policy and Canadian democracy more broadly.

When examining democracy and opinions about issues, **61% say they have strong opinions** about issues that impact them, but **only 44% understand the most important political issues of Canadian democracy**. This is a large increase from 2019: lots of events encouraged young people to get engaged and clearly, young people are now listening and following closely. Those who vote are more confident in the political issues in Canada, and are more likely to feel that engaging in politics allows them to make a difference.

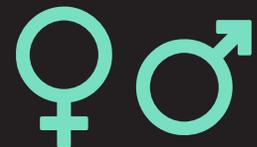
Young people who did not vote but were eligible are more likely to be apathetic and indifferent than pessimistic about their involvement. The youth who are indifferent are more likely to be **male (40%), between the ages of 21-23 (42%), lower income and unemployed**. Despite this apathy, people are more engaged in different ways. Our Together We Rise (2020) highlighted this further: young people are moving away from traditional forms of engagement with Canadian democracy like voting, but are more likely to attend protests, sign petitions and develop community projects.

MOST HAVE AT LEAST A LITTLE INTEREST IN CDN POLITICS

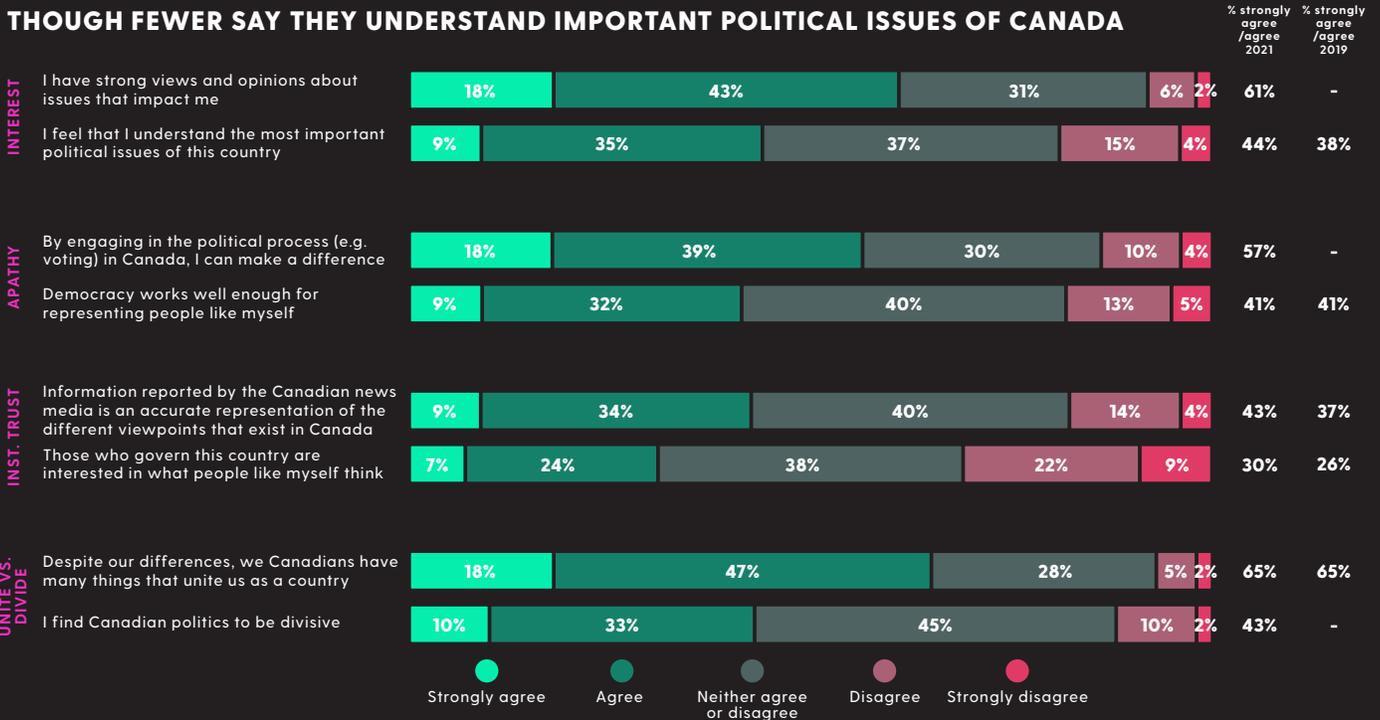


60% HAVE AT LEAST SOME INTEREST IN CANADIAN POLITICS, A 10-POINT INCREASE FROM 2019

INTEREST IN POLITICS IS HIGHER AMONG MALE-IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUALS THAN FEMALE-IDENTIFYING. IT INCREASES WITH AGE, HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EDUCATION.



NEARLY TWO THIRDS HAVE STRONG OPINIONS ABOUT ISSUES THAT IMPACT THEM, THOUGH FEWER SAY THEY UNDERSTAND IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES OF CANADA



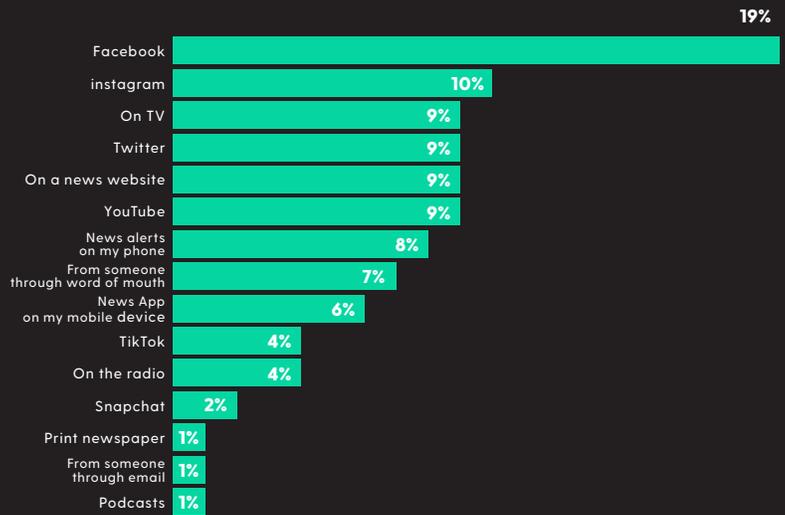
NEWS CONSUMPTION

Like the 2019 research showed, young people are learning about their news outside of traditional media. **Facebook is the most frequently used to get information, with Instagram following suit.** People are still more likely to find out about major news through Facebook first, but less so than the last iteration of this survey. This is likely due to the addition of Instagram, where 10% say that they would get their news from Instagram first.

Still, when it comes to news about political or current events, the most common source of information is a traditional news organization. Those who are skeptical about making a difference if they get involved and those without strong opinions rely less on traditional news organizations. They are not necessarily consuming political news less, but they are looking for alternative resources.

Young people seem to be spending more time online and consuming media sources. However, News Fanatics are still primarily male identifying, employed full-time, and university educated which is similar to the

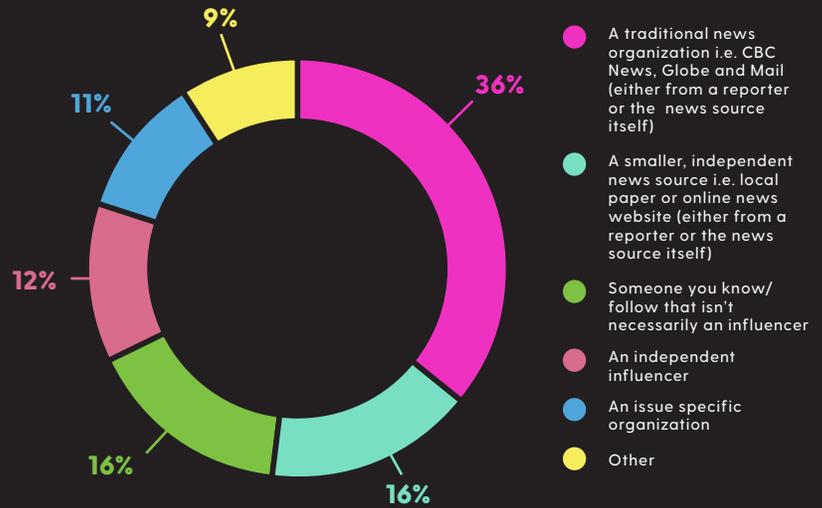
RANGE OF SOURCES FOR MAJOR NEWS EVENT, FACEBOOK STILL MOST LIKELY FIRST SOURCE



FACEBOOK REMAINS THE MOST LIKELY FIRST SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT A MAJOR NEWS EVENT, BUT IT'S DECLINED SINCE LAST WAVE. INSTAGRAM IS A POPULAR SECOND CHOICE, FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY TV AND TWITTER.

findings in 2019. This also speaks to 2019's findings that those who do consume news are more likely to be involved, vote and have strong opinions, as opposed to those who do not rely on a traditional news organization.

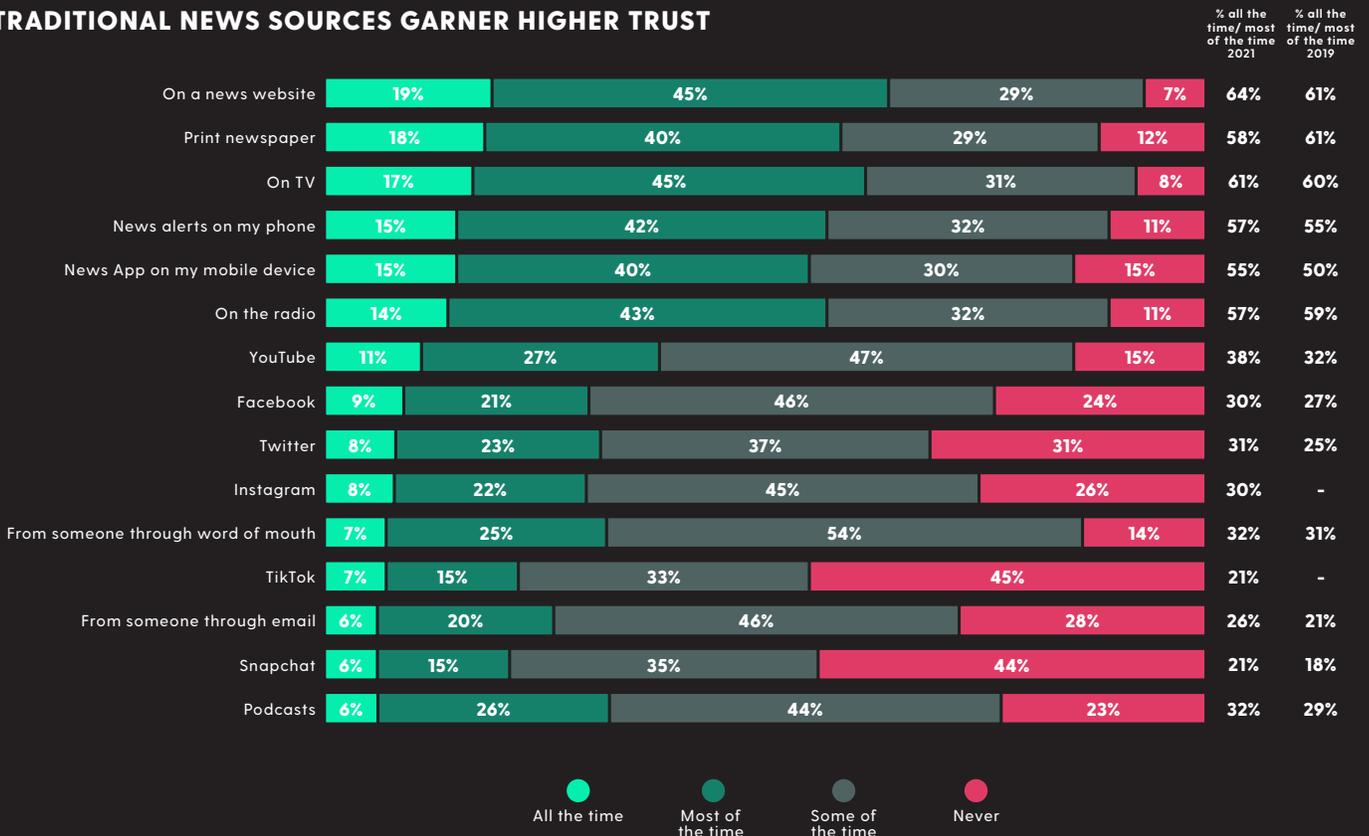
For the average young person in Canada, **36% of the online content they consume comes from traditional media sources**. While it is used the most, it still only represents a third of the content young people are consuming online about political/current events. People are aware of disinformation and indicate that they see it frequently. They jump to the sources they know are reliable, illustrating that most young people can spot disinformation.



DISINFORMATION

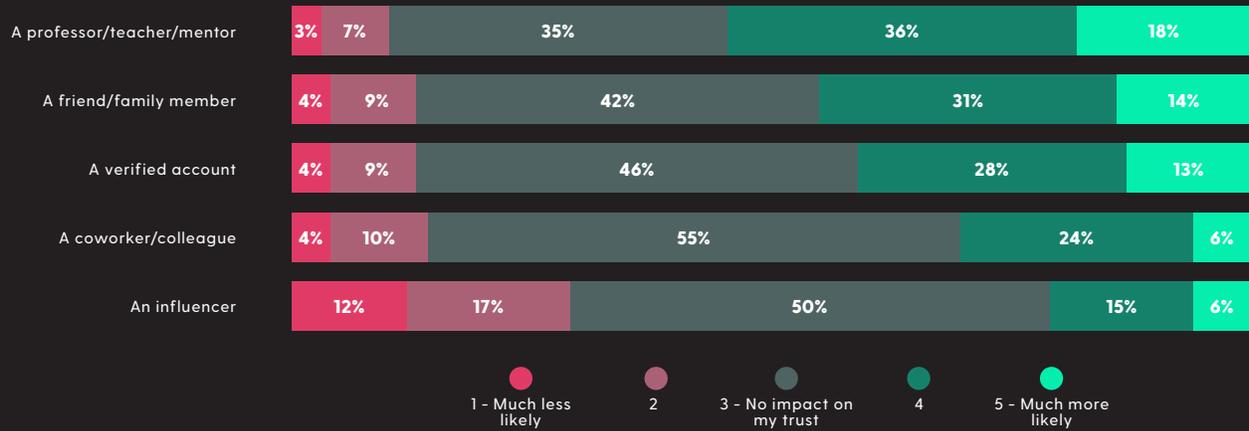
Content from traditional news sources (TV, newspaper, news website) is seen to be more accurate than information shared on social media platforms. The higher levels of trust from sources linked to traditional media even continues on social media platforms themselves. When it comes to content on social media, there is a much higher level of trust for posts from a **traditional news organization (69%)** than **independent sources (58%), or social media influencers (30%)**.

TRADITIONAL NEWS SOURCES GARNER HIGHER TRUST



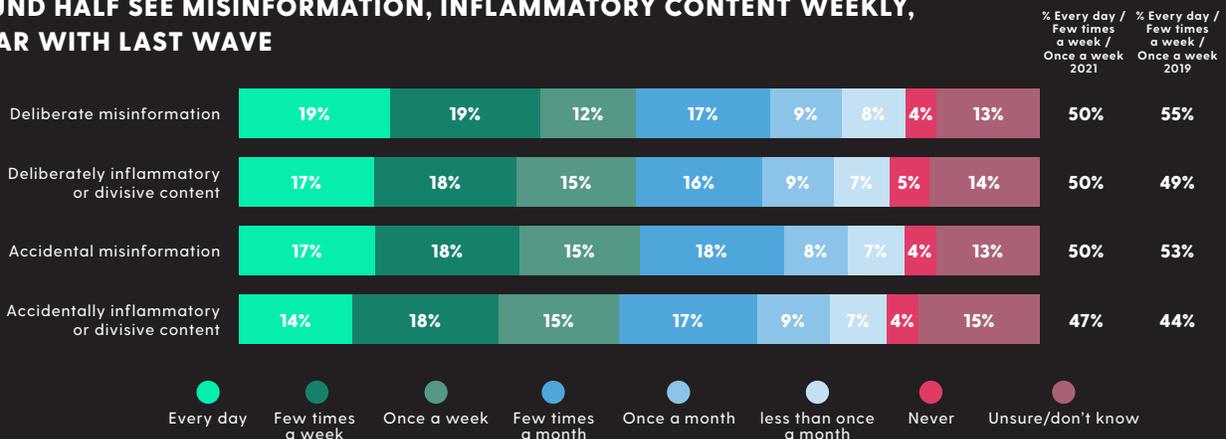
Authority and familiarity with the source seem to be the biggest factors when trusting sources who share news articles. **54%** are more likely to trust a source if it's shared by a professor/teacher/mentor. **45%** say the same about content shared by a friend or family member.

AUTHORITY, CLOSE RELATIONSHIP IMPACT TRUST FOR SHARED ARTICLES



65% of young people see misinformation/divisive content at least once a week. Very few say that they never see this type of content. This shows the prevalence of disinformation for young people, highlighting the need for more resources and tools to combat disinformation.

AROUND HALF SEE MISINFORMATION, INFLAMMATORY CONTENT WEEKLY, ON PAR WITH LAST WAVE



CASE STUDY: COVID-19 AND DISINFORMATION

Findings show that disinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic is just as prevalent. Young people are encountering misinformation and divisive content about different COVID-19 topics, but the most common topics to suffer from both are anything related to science. **Close to half of respondents have seen both misinformation and inflammatory content about vaccine information (45%) and information about the science of the virus itself (43%).**

HOW TO TACKLE DISINFORMATION?

Many think that the responsibility to decrease the spread of disinformation is shared, where individual citizens have some responsibility (56%), as do social media companies (53%), news outlets (48%), and the federal government (46%).

When it comes to combatting disinformation, young people are particularly interested in education based solutions. The results emphasize that young people are very open to education in general.

80%

**SUPPORT
INCREASING
MEDIA LITERACY
OVERALL**

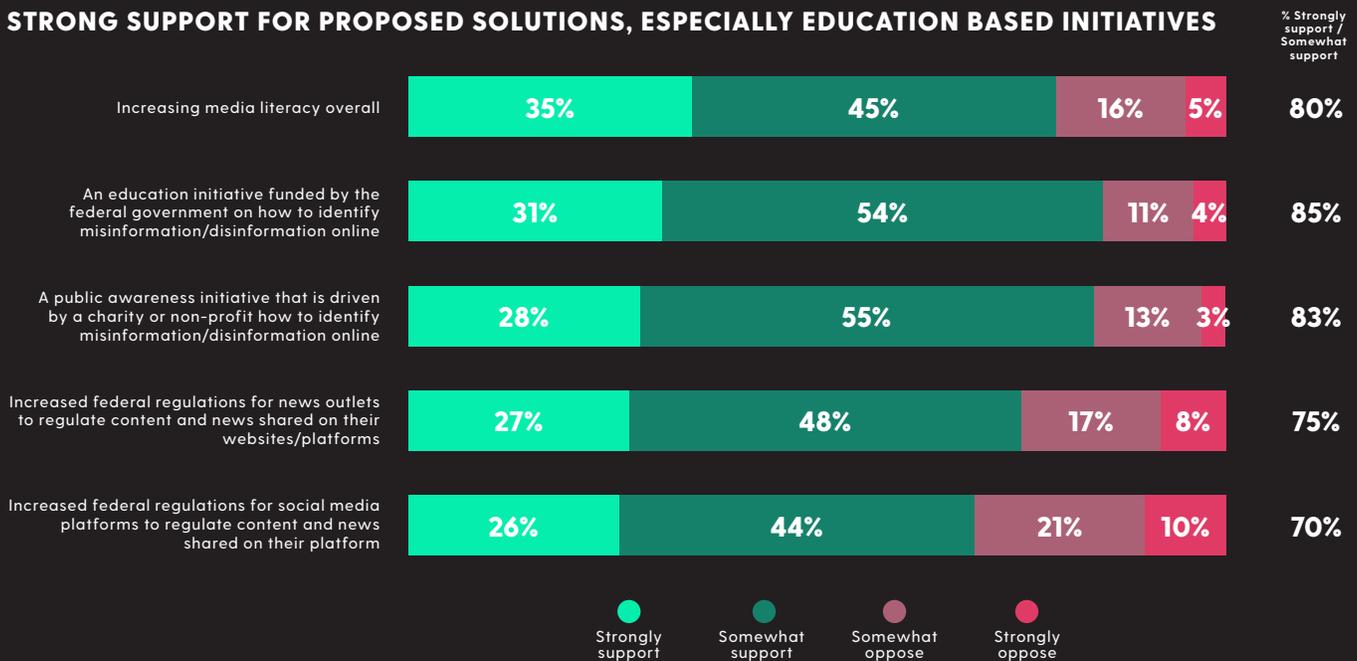
85%

**SUPPORT AN
EDUCATION
INITIATIVE
FUNDED BY
THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT**

83%

**SUPPORT
A PUBLIC
AWARENESS
INITIATIVE
DRIVEN BY AN
ORGANIZATION
OR CHARITY**

STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED SOLUTIONS, ESPECIALLY EDUCATION BASED INITIATIVES



RBC Future Launch