Disinformation, Democracy and Culture

CPAC

April 2024

abacus data

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Methodology

- Sample size: 2,001 Canadian residents aged 18 and over.

- Survey field dates: April 11 to 14, 2024.

- Margin of error +/- 2.19%, 19 out of 20.

- Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

- Throughout the report % indicates a significantly higher proportion than the % in the same segment.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Canadians are concerned about the spread of misinformation and disinformation and think there is a lot of both circulating in society. They view both forms of false information as a serious problem and are worried equally about the general dissemination of false information (misinformation) and intentional attempts to manipulate the information environment (disinformation).

While most people are confident they can discern truth from falsehood, there is underlying worry about the impact of misinformation and disinformation on various aspects of society. They believe it influences political debates, poses threats to democracy and complicates collective problem-solving efforts.

Solving for the misinformation and disinformation challenge is complicated by three factors:

- **Diverse responsibility.** While social media platforms are viewed as responsible, Canadians think special interest groups, politicians, foreign governments and even traditional news media and journalists are responsible for spreading misinformation and disinformation. For disinformation, those on the right of the political spectrum see the news media as part of the problem. Almost half (48%) admit to occasionally sharing information they later discovered to be false while 32% say they share information that might not be true. Young people are much more likely to engage in these behaviours.

- **A lack of shared experiences with news.** One in five (22%) of Canadians do not access news from any of the traditional news media sources (TV news, radio, newspapers or newspaper online sites). This rises to 39% among young adults, who are more likely to access news through social media, search engines or friends. There is not a single news and information environment, which is further complicated by a lack of trust in traditional news, especially among those who are on the right of the political spectrum.

- **A frustrated public environment.** A majority of Canadians (60%) think we are heading in the wrong direction with the cost of living dominating public consciousness. More than seven in ten are very or somewhat concerned with the state of democracy in Canada. Many (71%) believe that important information is being hidden from the public and are concerned (63%) about the erosion of their liberties and freedoms.

Together these results point to a lack of shared understanding of what is happening in Canada or what is misinformation or disinformation. Arguably, what is one person's truth is probably another person's misinformation. This is evident in that perceptions of the amount of misinformation/disinformation is perceived to be the same regardless of political affiliation. At the same time, ideological extremists and those feeling Canada is heading in the wrong direction are the most likely to think misinformation and disinformation is a problem.

Executive Summary

Many Canadians engage in active fact-checking. The main methods of fact checking is through internet searches (73%), consulting professional news sources (55%), relying on a person they think is reliable (29%), looking on social media (16%) or asking a family member (15%). Reflecting on the lack of common news sources, using the news media to check a source is more likely among those on the left of the political spectrum. Young people are much more likely to rely on social media to fact check information and much less likely to look for a news article or search the internet.

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) adds an additional layer of complexity to the issue, with concerns mounting about its potential misuse for spreading false information – particularly during elections and especially by foreign actors. On top of this, most are not confident in their ability to identify AI-generated content.

Alongside the spread of misinformation and disinformation, online bullying and hate speech are also seen as a pervasive issues. Eight in ten Canadians are concerned with online hate and bullying. In fact, 24% of Canadians and 39% of young adults have been a victim. It is no wonder that both parents and non-parents alike are worried about its impact on young people.

Online bullying and hate connects to our current political landscape. Canadians think it is a deterrent for qualified people considering running for public office. While a large majority (88%) think that disagreeing with someone's opinion is not a reason to use hateful language, 47% think that name calling an insults are a normal part of online discussions.

Concerns

Key findings

Most Canadians (60% wrong direction) are concerned about the direction of their country. Only 25% think we are heading in the right direction.

- Older Canadians are the most likely to think we are heading in the wrong direction.

- Conservative party supporters from the last election (79%) and those who identify on the right or far right (78%) are particularly likely to say 'wrong direction.'

The cost of living (75% very concerned and 96% at least somewhat concerned) is the dominant concern. Only 4% of Canadians are not concerned. It also helps understand the feeling that Canada is heading in the wrong direction. Of those who think we are on the wrong track, 84% are very concerned with the cost of living.
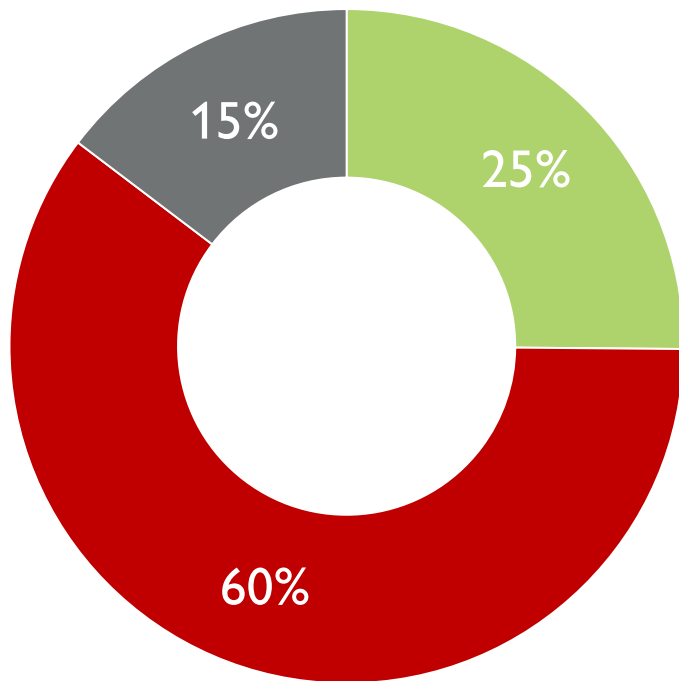
Other key worries are the spread of misinformation and disinformation (84% at least somewhat concerned), online hate and bullying (80%) and the state of democracy (71%).

- **Concern with the state of democracy** is in part driven by current political frustrations. Conservative voters from the last election are the most concerned (79%) partisans. For example, only 61% of Liberal voters are concerned with the state of democracy. It is also higher among people who think we are heading in the wrong direction (79%).

- **Concern with online hate and bullying** is slightly higher among women (86%) and among those on the left of the political spectrum but all groups are concerned.

- **Concern with the spread of misinformation and disinformation (84%)** is fairly even across groups in Canada. It is,, however, tied to perceptions of the amount of both circulating in Canada. Those who think there is a high amount of misinformation circulating are more likely (93%) to be concerned.

3 in 5 Canadians think Canada is off on the wrong track

% Wrong direction

Age group			
18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
51%	62%	63%	62%

Political spectrum		
Left + Centre left	Centre	Centre right + Right
50%	57%	78%

■ Headed in the right direction   ■ Off on the wrong track   ■ Unsure

Base n = 2001

Almost all Canadians are concerned about the cost of living in the country but there are significant worries about the spread of misinformation and disinformation in Canada, online hate and the state of democracy
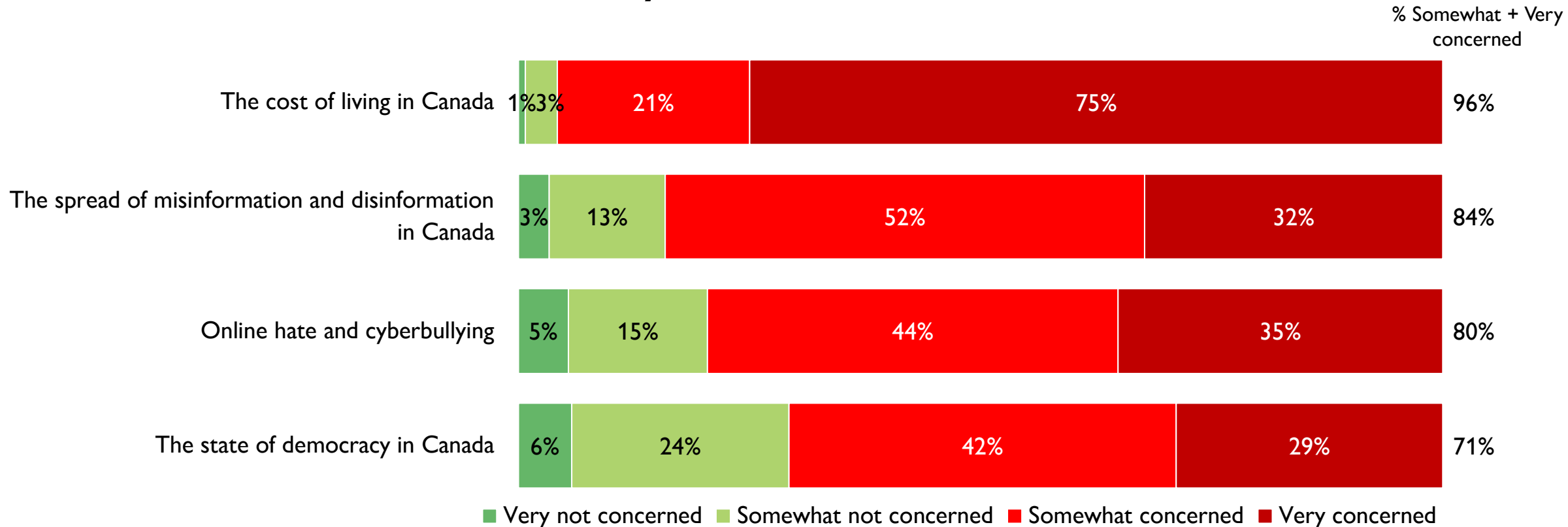
% Somewhat + Very concerned

	Very not concerned	Somewhat not concerned	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned	Total
The cost of living in Canada	1%	3%	21%	75%	96%
The spread of misinformation and disinformation in Canada	3%	13%	52%	32%	84%
Online hate and cyberbullying	5%	15%	44%	35%	80%
The state of democracy in Canada	6%	24%	42%	29%	71%

■ Very not concerned ■ Somewhat not concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ Very concerned

Base n = 2001

Concern with the state of democracy is higher among those who think Canada is off on the wrong track and Conservative voters.

%	Total	Direction of the Country		Federal Vote [2021]					
		Right	Wrong	Conservative Party	Liberal Party	NDP	Green Party	Bloc Quebecois	Peoples Party of Canada
Very concerned	29%	17%	37%	39%	19%	25%	27%	27%	36%
Somewhat concerned	42%	38%	42%	40%	42%	41%	50%	34%	59%
Somewhat not concerned	24%	35%	17%	19%	30%	27%	22%	32%	2%
Very not concerned	6%	10%	4%	2%	8%	6%	0%	7%	3%

Base n = 2001

State of Democracy and Public Debate in Canada

Key findings

Despite **a high level of skepticism about the truthfulness of the information they encounter** (80% often wonder if the information is true), many Canadians, including those who worry about the truthfulness of information, still express confidence in their ability to discern truth from falsehood (74%).

Traditional TV news outlets remain the top source (61%) for news and current affairs information. Other top sources are friends and family (47%), radio (40%) and search engines (39%).

- **22% of Canadians do not access news from any of the traditional news media sources (TV news, radio, newspapers or newspaper online sites)** while 88% use at least one of them. Among those who are 18 to 29 years of age, 39% (compared with 10% of those over 60 years) do not use a traditional news media source. Younger generations consume a much different mix of information and are more likely to see news that is curated (by technology or their friends) than older generations.

In terms of trust, mainstream news media (average of 5.2 out of 10) and the Government of Canada (4.8) are generally more trusted than online personalities (3.7) and social media (3.6) but none of these institutions are trusted.

Several broad attitudes and values provide important context for understanding the current mood of Canadians and the fertile ground in which disinformation and misinformation circulate.
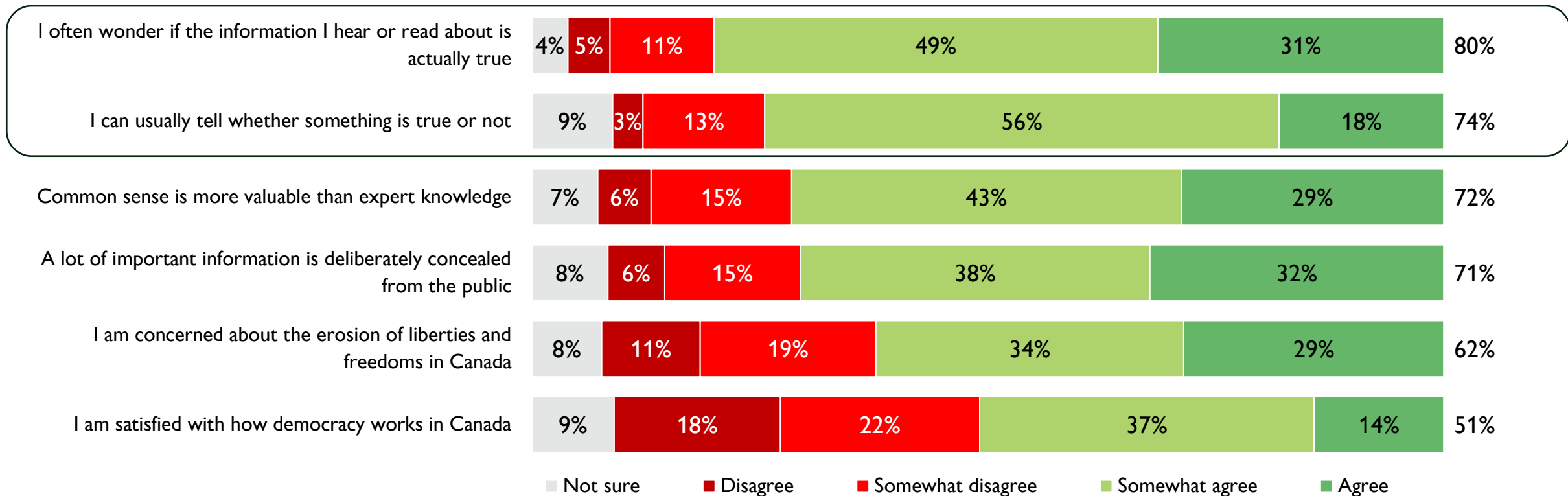
- 72% feel that common sense is more valuable than expert knowledge, which is a typical indicator of populist skepticism about political and media elites.

- 71% think that important information is being hidden from the public.

- 63% are concerned about the erosion of their liberties and freedoms.

- Only 51% are satisfied with how democracy is working.

Those who think Canada is off on the wrong track are more likely to be worried about the erosion of freedom, to have conspiratorial beliefs and to be slightly more likely to value common sense over expert knowledge

% Agree

I am concerned about the erosion of liberties and freedoms in Canada

	Somewhat agree (dark)	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Not sure	% Agree
Off on the wrong track	38%	33%	15%	8%	5%	71%
Headed in the right direction	14%	33%	29%	18%	6%	47%

A lot of important information is deliberately concealed from the public

Off on the wrong track	40%	36%	12%	5%	6%	77%
Headed in the right direction	20%	42%	21%	11%	7%	62%

Common sense is more valuable than expert knowledge

Off on the wrong track	33%	43%	14%	5%	5%	76%
Headed in the right direction	25%	45%	18%	7%	4%	71%

■ Somewhat agree   ■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ Not sure

Base n = 2001

There are modest differences in attitudes by region, age and gender. Notably, women are more satisfied with how democracy works while young people are most likely to think information is deliberately concealed from the public

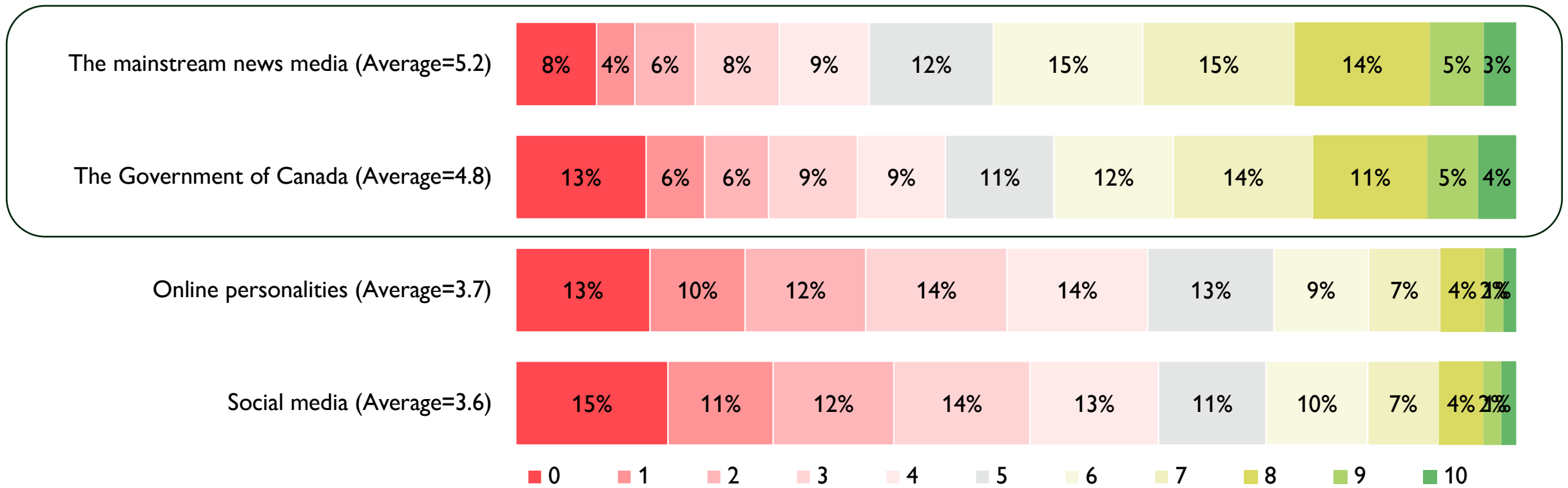| % Somewhat agree + Agree	Total	Region						Age group				Gender	
		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over	Male	Female
Common sense is more valuable than expert knowledge	72%	75%	75%	78%	75%	57%	79%	66%	69%	73%	75%	70%	73%
A lot of important information is deliberately concealed from the public	71%	67%	80%	68%	74%	62%	76%	78%	70%	70%	67%	68%	73%
I am concerned about the erosion of liberties and freedoms in Canada	62%	56%	72%	59%	63%	59%	69%	65%	67%	60%	59%	61%	63%
I am satisfied with how democracy works in Canada	51%	53%	50%	53%	51%	51%	44%	44%	48%	50%	58%	56%	46%

Base n = 2001

On a scale where 0 is no trust and 10 is an extremely high amount of trust, how much do you trust each of the following?

Canadians tend to trust mainstream news media and the Government of Canada more than online personalities or social media, but none receive high trust scores

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The mainstream news media (Average=5.2)	8%	4%	6%	8%	9%	12%	15%	15%	14%	5%	3%
The Government of Canada (Average=4.8)	13%	6%	6%	9%	9%	11%	12%	14%	11%	5%	4%
Online personalities (Average=3.7)	13%	10%	12%	14%	14%	13%	9%	7%	4%	2%	1%
Social media (Average=3.6)	15%	11%	12%	14%	13%	11%	10%	7%	4%	2%	1%

Base n = 2001

Trust in mainstream news media & government is lower among those on the right and centre right. Young people are much more trusting of social media and online personalities

Mean	Total	Ideology (Self-identification)					Age group			
		Left	Centre left	Centre	Centre right	Right	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
The mainstream news media	6.2	6.8	7.1	6.2	5.9	4.5	6.1	6.0	6.1	6.6
The Government of Canada	5.8	6.8	6.9	5.8	4.9	3.8	5.9	5.9	5.3	6.0
Social media	4.6	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.2	4.8	5.6	5.2	4.3	3.7
Online personalities	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.4	4.6	5.4	5.2	4.6	3.9

Base n = 2001

On a scale where 0 is no trust and 10 is an extremely high amount of trust, how much do you trust each of the following?
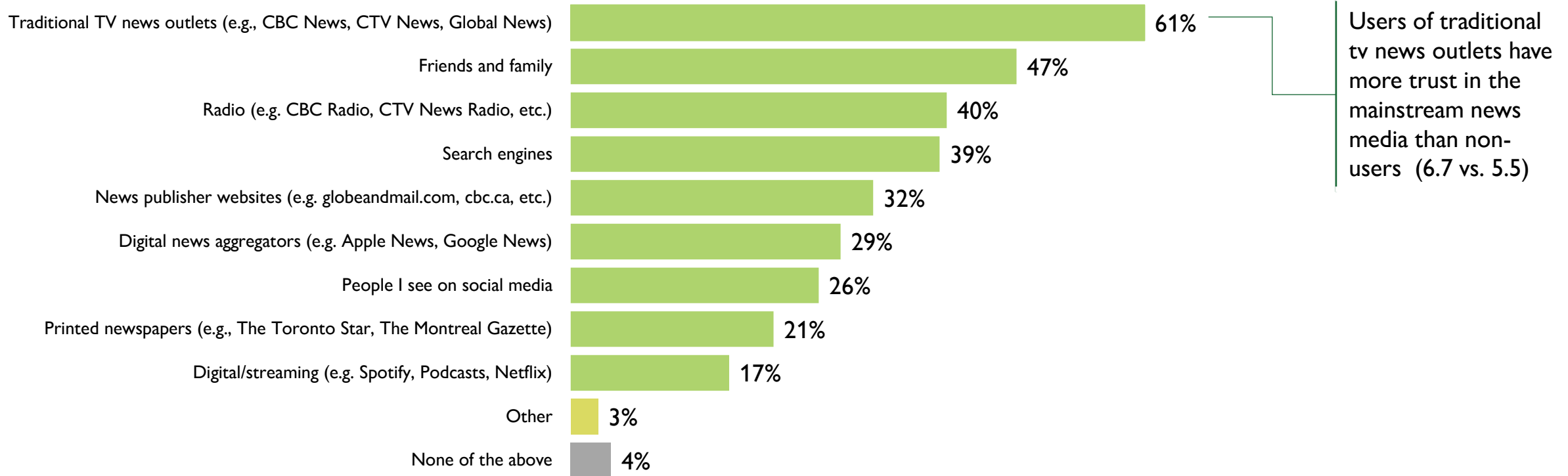
Those who hold conspiratorial beliefs about information, believe in common sense more than expert knowledge or are concerned about the erosion of liberties are much less likely to trust the mainstream news media and the Government.

Mean	Total	A lot of important information is deliberately concealed from the public		Common sense is more valuable than expert knowledge		I am concerned about the erosion of liberties and freedoms in Canada	
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
The mainstream news media	6.2	5.8	7.6	6.1	6.7	5.7	7.4
The Government of Canada	5.8	5.3	7.1	5.5	6.7	5.2	7.1
Social media	4.6	4.7	4.2	4.7	4.4	4.7	4.3
Online personalities	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.5

Base n = 2001

Only 3 in 5 Canadians (61%) learn about news and current affairs through traditional TV news outlets

Source	Percentage
Traditional TV news outlets (e.g., CBC News, CTV News, Global News)	61%
Friends and family	47%
Radio (e.g. CBC Radio, CTV News Radio, etc.)	40%
Search engines	39%
News publisher websites (e.g. globeandmail.com, cbc.ca, etc.)	32%
Digital news aggregators (e.g. Apple News, Google News)	29%
People I see on social media	26%
Printed newspapers (e.g., The Toronto Star, The Montreal Gazette)	21%
Digital/streaming (e.g. Spotify, Podcasts, Netflix)	17%
Other	3%
None of the above	4%

Users of traditional tv news outlets have more trust in the mainstream news media than non-users (6.7 vs. 5.5)

Base n = 2001

Young Canadians learn about news and current affairs in fundamentally different ways than older generations

Learn about news and current affairs	Total	Region						Age group				Gender	
		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over	Male	Female
Traditional TV news outlets (e.g., CBC News, CTV News, Global News)	61%	64%	60%	59%	62%	58%	60%	38%	53%	64%	78%	59%	62%
Friends and family	47%	41%	58%	52%	50%	36%	57%	54%	49%	47%	41%	44%	50%
Radio (e.g. CBC Radio, CTV News Radio, etc.)	40%	39%	39%	35%	39%	41%	43%	30%	35%	42%	47%	41%	38%
Search engines	39%	41%	42%	39%	40%	36%	36%	44%	44%	35%	35%	40%	38%
News publisher websites (e.g. globeandmail com, cbc ca, etc.)	32%	37%	33%	28%	32%	30%	32%	24%	38%	33%	31%	35%	29%
Digital news aggregators (e.g. Apple News, Google News)	29%	28%	35%	28%	29%	25%	31%	30%	32%	30%	24%	32%	26%
People I see on social media (e.g., TikTok, Twitch, Instagram, Facebook, Threads)	26%	27%	31%	26%	28%	20%	29%	56%	33%	18%	9%	24%	29%
Printed newspapers (e.g., The Toronto Star, The Montreal Gazette)	21%	23%	19%	21%	23%	20%	20%	16%	20%	17%	30%	24%	19%
Digital/streaming (e.g. Spotify, Podcasts, Netflix)	17%	17%	16%	21%	19%	11%	21%	28%	22%	15%	7%	19%	14%

Base n = 2001

How much confidence do you have that elections are run fairly in Canada?

Nearly 3 in 4 (72%) are confident that elections are run fairly in Canada

I am fully confident — 25%

I am somewhat confident — 47%

I am somewhat not confident — 17%

I am not confident — 11%
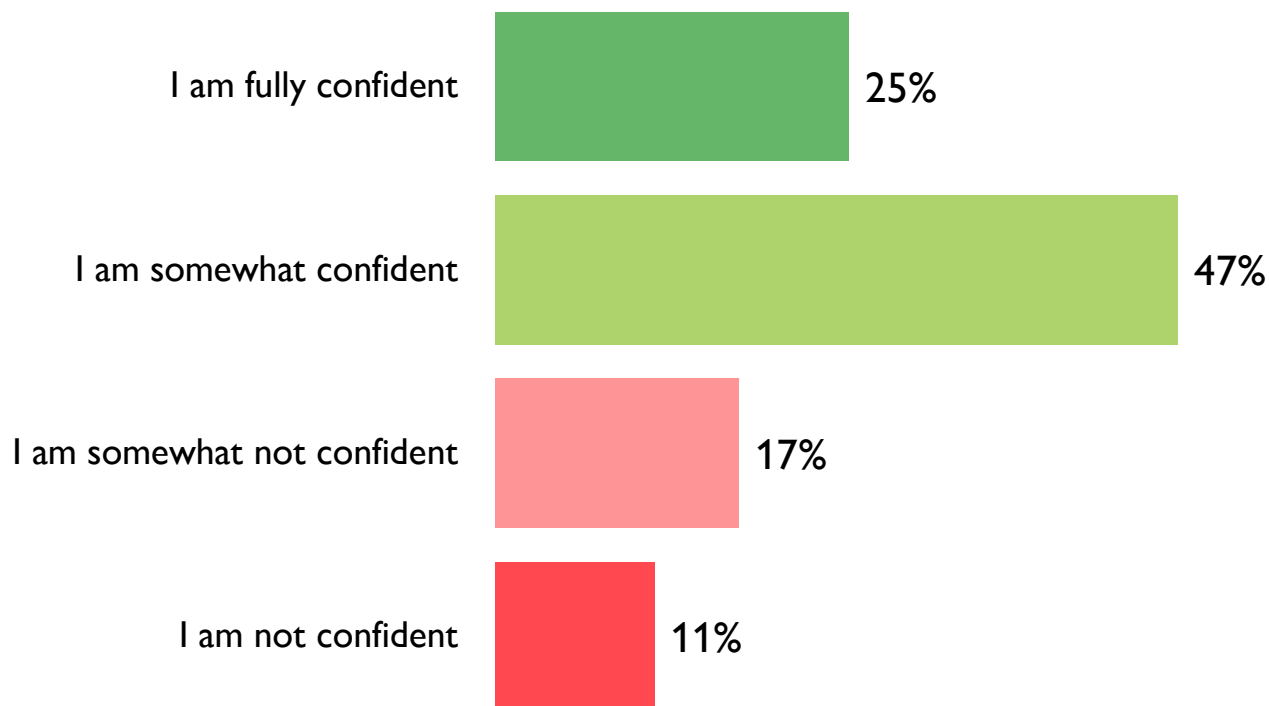
72%
Are confident that elections are run fairly

% Very or somewhat confident

Political spectrum		
Left + Centre left	Centre	Centre right + Right
85%	69%	63%

Base n = 2001

Disinformation & Misinformation

Key findings

Canadians believe that disinformation (6.4 out of 10) and misinformation (6.5) are prevalent in Canada. They view both misinformation and disinformation with equal seriousness, worrying just as much about the accidental spread of information as deliberate dissemination.

- Perceptions of the amount of misinformation and disinformation are driven by political allegiances and perspectives. Those who think we are heading on the wrong track perceive more of misinformation (6.7) and disinformation (6.6). In addition, those who identify on the right of the political spectrum think there is more disinformation (7.1) circulating.

More than 4 in 10 think that disinformation (42%) and misinformation (44%) are a serious problem. Another 3 in 10 think they are a small problem.

- Key groups that are more likely to think disinformation and misinformation are a serious problem are people who think Canada is on the wrong track (48% and 50% respectively) and those who are not satisfied with how democracy is working.
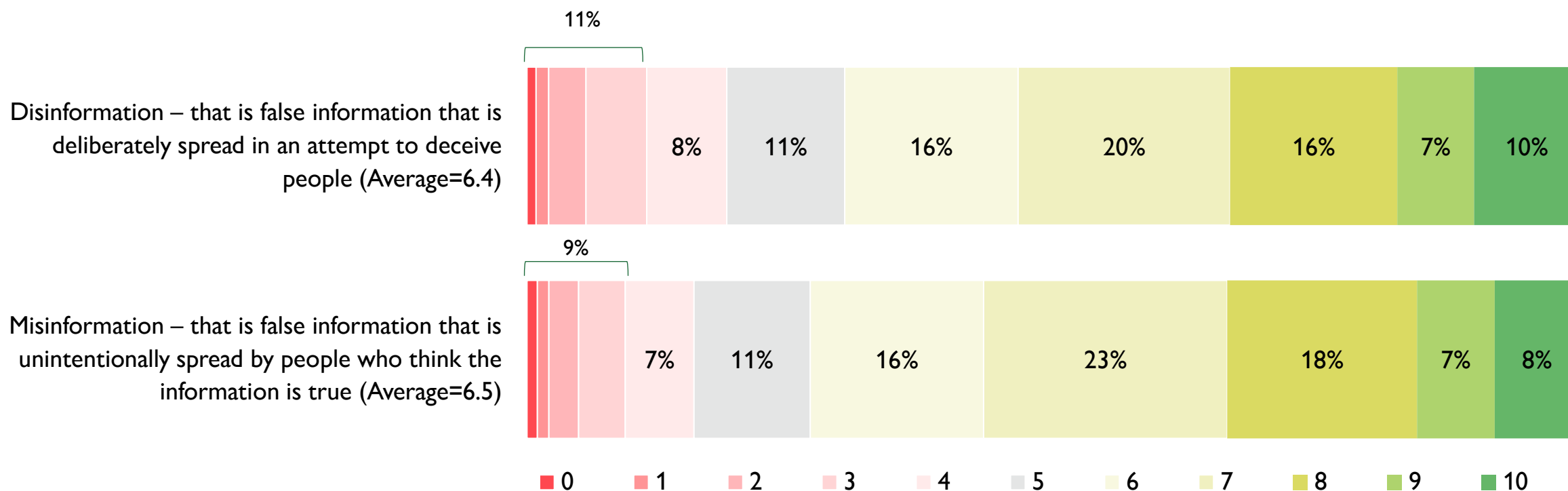
The public are most likely to choose social media if they had to choose one thing that is responsible for spreading both misinformation and disinformation in Canada. Politicians are the second most mentioned as the main actor responsible.

- For those who perceive high amounts of misinformation/disinformation, social media gets less mentions while politicians and the news media get more blame.

Nevertheless, a majority view special interest groups (60% top 2 box), politicians (58%), and foreign governments or interests (55%) as responsible for **misinformation**. Even traditional news media and journalists are viewed as responsible for circulating misinformation by 43% of Canadians. The same pattern is evident for disinformation.

On a 10 point scale where 0 is none and 10 is a lot, how much of each of the following types of information is circulating in Canada?

Canadians see disinformation and misinformation as equally prevalent in Canada

Disinformation – that is false information that is deliberately spread in an attempt to deceive people (Average=6.4)

11%

8% | 11% | 16% | 20% | 16% | 7% | 10%

Misinformation – that is false information that is unintentionally spread by people who think the information is true (Average=6.5)

9%

7% | 11% | 16% | 23% | 18% | 7% | 8%

■ 0   ■ 1   ■ 2   ■ 3   ■ 4   ■ 5   ■ 6   ■ 7   ■ 8   ■ 9   ■ 10

Base n = 2001

Most Canadians consider misinformation and disinformation as at least a small problem

Misinformation: False information that is unintentionally spread by people who think the information is true

| 3% | 21% | 31% | 44% |

Disinformation: False information that is deliberately spread in an attempt to deceive people

| 3% | 23% | 31% | 42% |
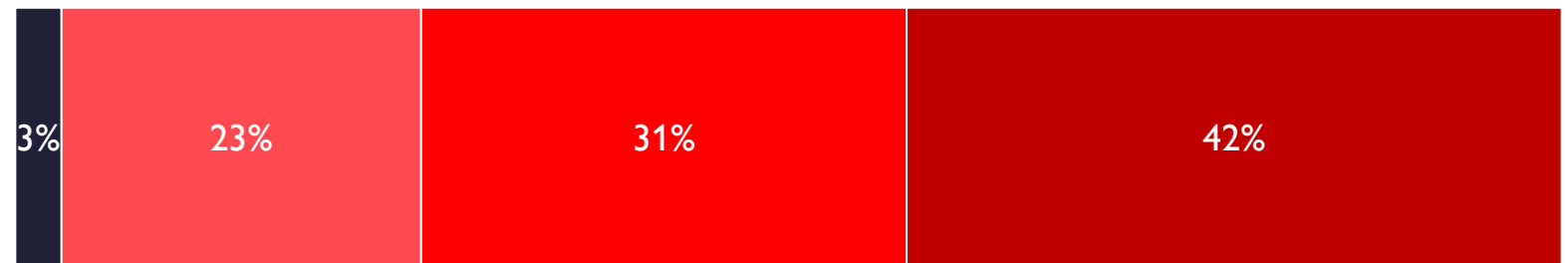
■ Not a problem   ■ A minor problem   ■ A small problem   ■ A serious problem

Base n = 2001

Perceptions that misinformation and disinformation are a problem are much higher among people who feel alienated from the current direction of the country
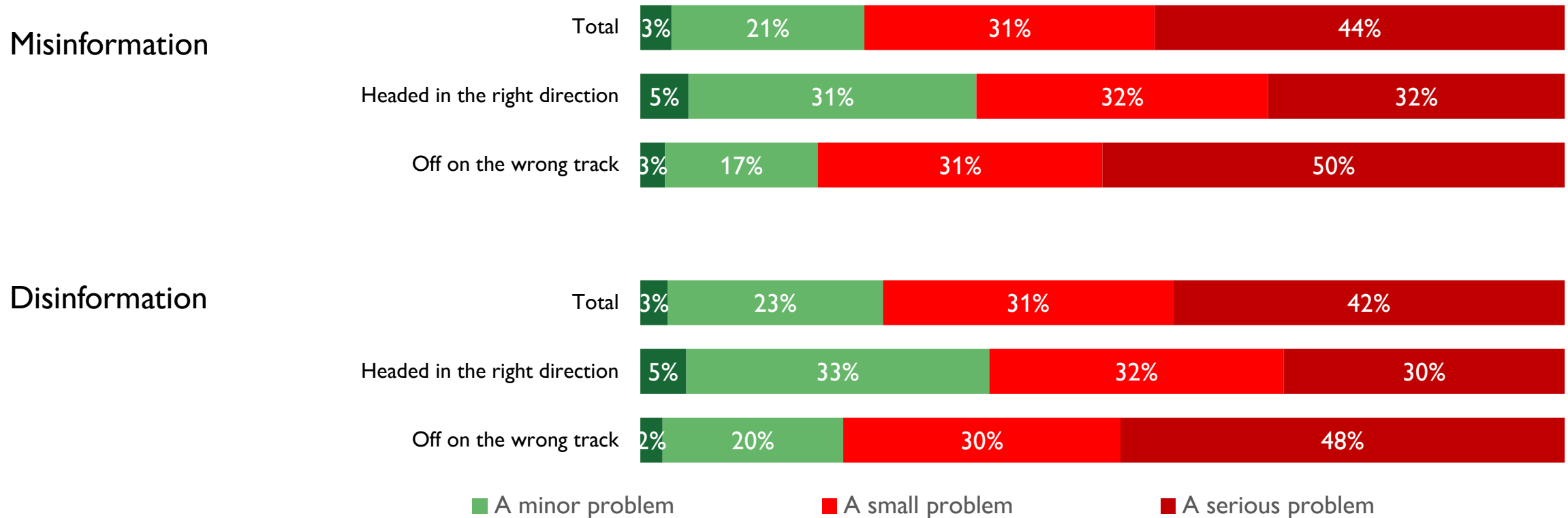
Misinformation

	A minor problem	A small problem	A serious problem
Total	3% / 21%	31%	44%
Headed in the right direction	5% / 31%	32%	32%
Off on the wrong track	3% / 17%	31%	50%

Disinformation

	A minor problem	A small problem	A serious problem
Total	3% / 23%	31%	42%
Headed in the right direction	5% / 33%	32%	30%
Off on the wrong track	2% / 20%	30%	48%

■ A minor problem ■ A small problem ■ A serious problem

Base n = 2001

The public chooses social media if they had to choose one source to be responsible for spreading misinformation/disinformation. Politicians are the second most mentioned.

Misinformation
(% most responsible)

Social media	42%
Politicians	15%
Special interest groups	11%
Word of mouth (e.g. what you hear from friends and family)	9%
The traditional news media/ journalists	8%
Foreign government(s) and interests	8%
Political commentators and pundits	4%
Other	2%

Disinformation
(% most responsible)

Social media	38%
Politicians	17%
Special interest groups	13%
Foreign government(s) and interests	11%
The traditional news media/ journalists	7%
Word of mouth (e.g. what you hear from friends and family)	7%
Political commentators and pundits	6%
Other	1%

Base n = 2001

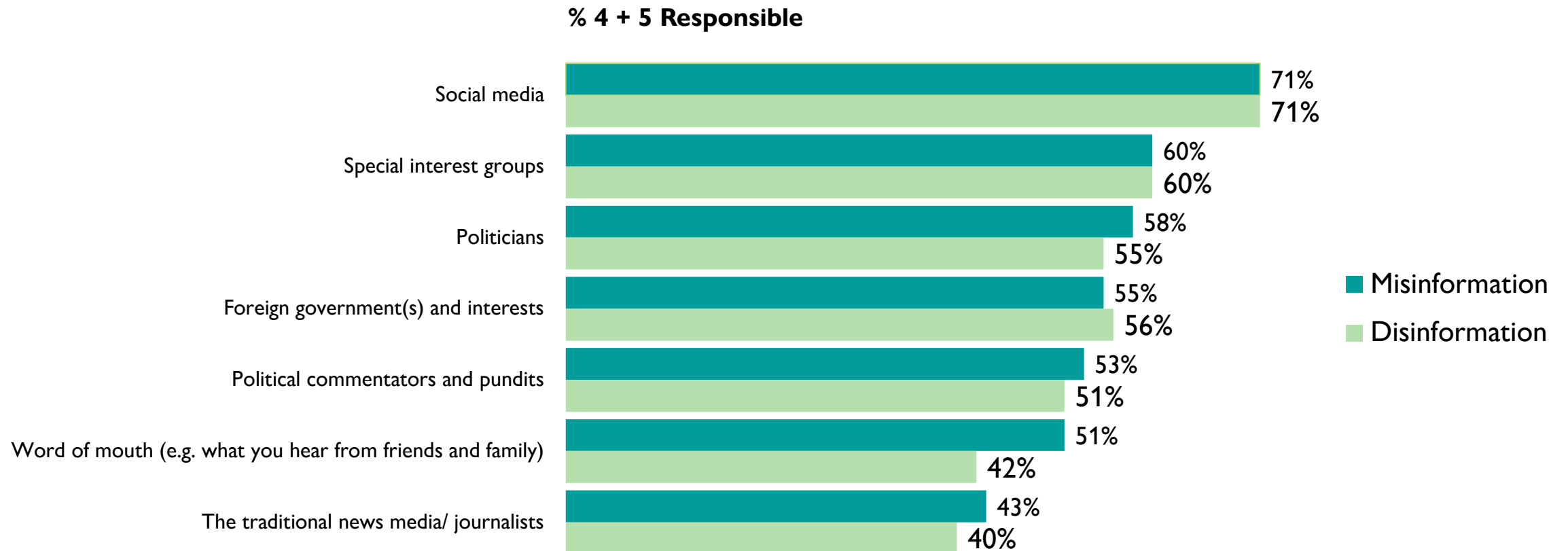To what extent are each of the following **responsible for spreading misinformation/disinformation** on a 5 point scale where 1 is not at all responsible and 5 is very responsible?

When allocating responsibility for the spread of misinformation/disinformation, the public makes little differentiation between misinformation and disinformation. While social media is allocated the most responsibility, there is considerable blame allocated to other key institutional actors.

% 4 + 5 Responsible

	Misinformation	Disinformation
Social media	71%	71%
Special interest groups	60%	60%
Politicians	58%	55%
Foreign government(s) and interests	55%	56%
Political commentators and pundits	53%	51%
Word of mouth (e.g. what you hear from friends and family)	51%	42%
The traditional news media/ journalists	43%	40%

Base n = 2001

While responsibility for misinformation is not strongly associated with ideology, disinformation is clearly related to ideology. Most notably, those on the right particularly link disinformation with the traditional news media

% 4 + 5 Responsible	Misinformation						Disinformation					
	Total	Ideology (Self-identification)					Total	Ideology (Self-identification)				
		Left	Centre left	Centre	Centre right	Right		Left	Centre left	Centre	Centre right	Right
Social media	71%	81%	76%	68%	70%	81%	71%	75%	77%	69%	72%	67%
Special interest groups	60%	67%	57%	58%	62%	67%	60%	62%	59%	55%	69%	70%
Politicians	58%	58%	54%	56%	60%	58%	55%	56%	50%	52%	57%	76%
Foreign government(s) and interests	55%	59%	53%	51%	63%	59%	56%	61%	56%	52%	62%	70%
Political commentators and pundits	53%	53%	48%	51%	59%	53%	51%	55%	46%	50%	53%	69%
Word of mouth (e.g. what you hear from friends and family)	51%	56%	58%	50%	50%	56%	42%	40%	45%	43%	36%	40%
The traditional news media/ journalists	43%	38%	36%	44%	44%	38%	40%	40%	34%	39%	39%	61%

Base n = 2001

The more misinformation/disinformation you believe is circulating the more responsibility assigned to institutions in Canada

% 4 + 5 Responsible	Misinformation				Disinformation			
	Total	Amount of Misinformation			Total	Amount of Disinformation		
		Low (0-4)	Medium (5-7)	High (8-10)		Low (0-4)	Medium (5-7)	High (8-10)
Social media	71%	63%	68%	**79%**	71%	68%	68%	**76%**
Special interest groups	60%	53%	56%	**70%**	60%	53%	55%	**72%**
Politicians	58%	43%	54%	**71%**	55%	42%	54%	**73%**
Foreign government(s) and interests	55%	43%	52%	**66%**	56%	41%	52%	**68%**
Political commentators and pundits	53%	35%	50%	**66%**	51%	39%	49%	**66%**
Word of mouth (e.g. what you hear from friends and family)	51%	41%	49%	**61%**	42%	47%	51%	55%
The traditional news media/ journalists	43%	30%	39%	**55%**	40%	28%	38%	**59%**

Base n = 2001

Key findings

Six in ten Canadians are confident (14% agree and 48% somewhat agree) that they can detect disinformation when they see it. More than a third are not confident (26%) or not sure (11%).

- Older people and women are generally less confident.
- Those on the right or centre right (68%) and those on the left or centre left (68%) ideologically are more confident that they can detect disinformation.

A majority of Canadians (63%) agree that disinformation is just political rhetoric and posturing. The more misinformation/ disinformation that one thinks is circulating, the more one believes disinformation is just political rhetoric.

Canadians view disinformation as being a problem. The majority (70%) believe disinformation influences political debates rather than just being a label applied to information that other people disagree with.

- Those in the centre, ideologically, are less likely to think disinformation is a serious problem because our political debates can be influenced by information that is not true. Those who identify on the left or centre left are the most likely to see it as a problem (78%) but even those on the right or centre right think it is a problem (72%).

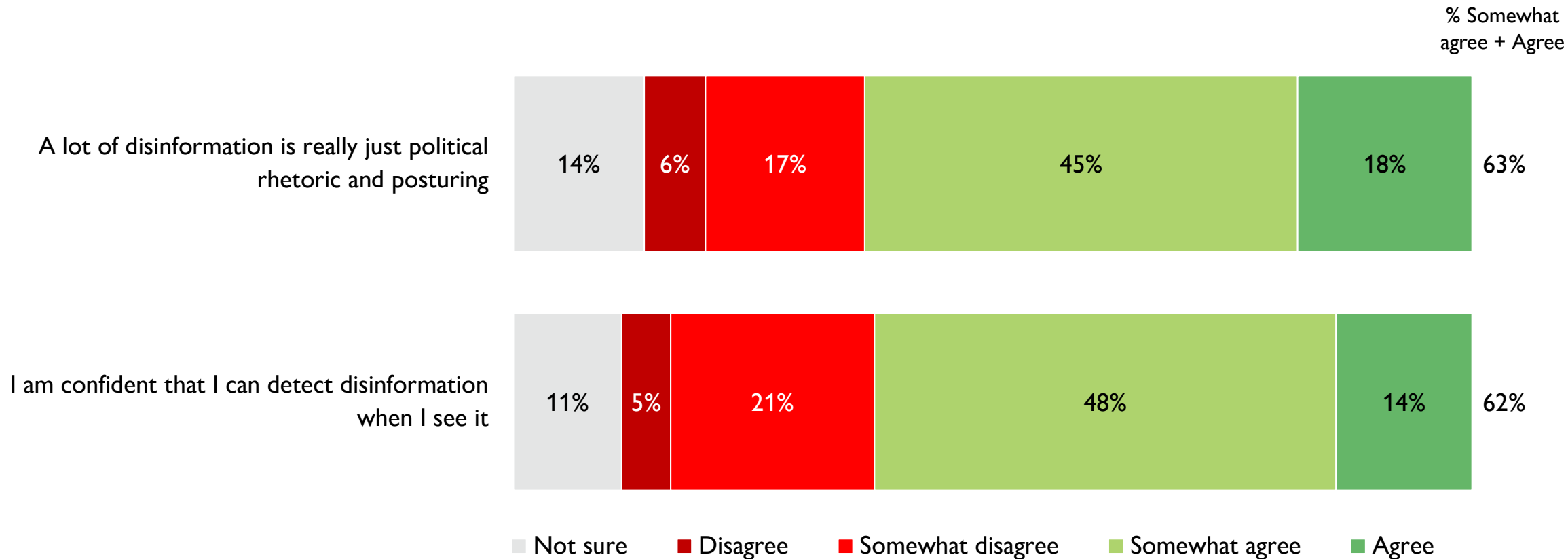In fact, 46% consider disinformation a major threat and 43% a minor threat to democracy.

- Those who think there is a high amount of misinformation or disinformation circulating are more likely to think it is a major threat.
- Those who take extreme ideological positions on the left (60%) or the right (66%) are much more likely to view disinformation as a major threat.

A majority (81%) think that disinformation makes solving collective problems more challenging and 73% suspect that disinformation is affecting upcoming elections. There is more skepticism and uncertainty when it comes to whether foreign actors are actively spreading disinformation to sway election outcomes; 63% agree it is happening.

3 in 5 Canadians agree that disinformation is political rhetoric and posturing (63%) and that they can detect disinformation when they see it

% Somewhat agree + Agree

A lot of disinformation is really just political rhetoric and posturing

| 14% | 6% | 17% | 45% | 18% | 63% |

I am confident that I can detect disinformation when I see it

| 11% | 5% | 21% | 48% | 14% | 62% |

Legend: ▮ Not sure ▮ Disagree ▮ Somewhat disagree ▮ Somewhat agree ▮ Agree

Base n = 2001

The idea that disinformation is just political rhetoric is accepted to a much higher degree among those who think there is a high amount of misinformation/disinformation circulating. Those who think there is a lot of disinformation circulating are also more likely to think they can detect it.

% Somewhat agree + Agree	Total	Amount of Misinformation			Amount of Disinformation		
		Low (0-4)	Medium (5-7)	High (8-10)	Low (0-4)	Medium (5-7)	High (8-10)
A lot of disinformation is really just political rhetoric and posturing	63%	53%	63%	**69%**	59%	60%	**70%**
I am confident that I can detect disinformation when I see it	62%	64%	59%	66%	60%	59%	**69%**

Base n = 2001

70% see disinformation as a serious problem because of its potential influence on political debates

Disinformation is a serious problem because our political debate can be influenced by information that is not true — **70%**
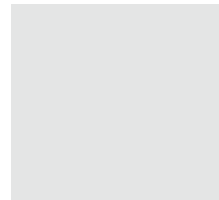
Disinformation is just a label that is applied to information that other people disagree with and is just a natural part of public debate — **16%**

Not sure — **15%**

Age group			
18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
67%	66%	68%	75%

Political spectrum		
Left + Centre left	Centre	Centre right + Right
78%	63%	73%

Base n = 2001

Almost half (46%) consider disinformation as major threat to democracy

46%

43%

4%

7%
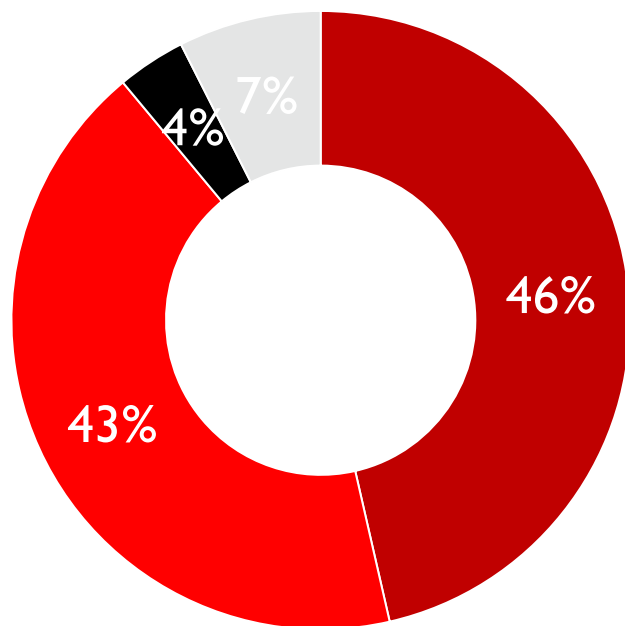
■ Major threat   ■ Minor threat   ■ No threat   ■ Not sure

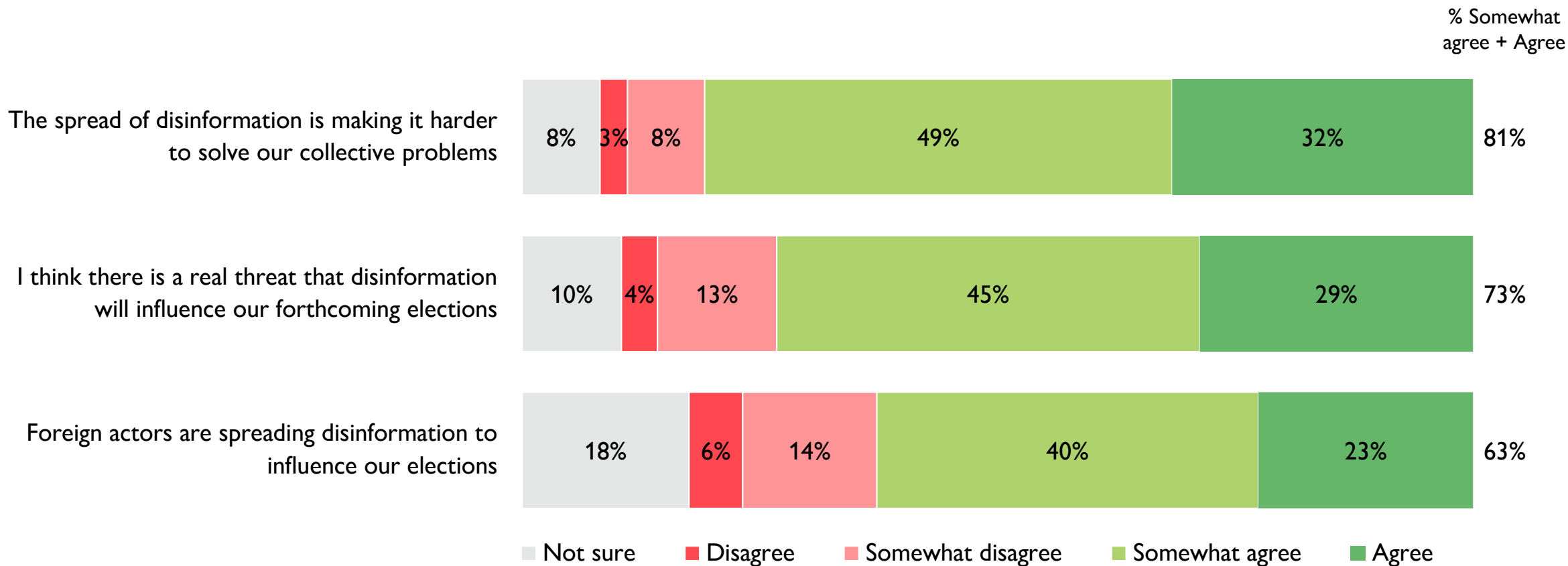% Major threat

Amount of Misinformation		
Low (0-4)	Medium (5-7)	High (8-10)
31%	39%	65%

Amount of Disinformation		
Low (0-4)	Medium (5-7)	High (8-10)
29%	38%	68%

Base n = 2001

Most see disinformation as affecting the ability to solve collective problems and poses a threat to forthcoming elections

% Somewhat agree + Agree

The spread of disinformation is making it harder to solve our collective problems — 8% | 3% | 8% | 49% | 32% — 81%

I think there is a real threat that disinformation will influence our forthcoming elections — 10% | 4% | 13% | 45% | 29% — 73%

Foreign actors are spreading disinformation to influence our elections — 18% | 6% | 14% | 40% | 23% — 63%

Legend: Not sure | Disagree | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat agree | Agree

Base n = 2001

Key findings

Half of Canadians (48%) are at least somewhat familiar with the generative artificial intelligence (11% are very familiar). The remainder have not heard of it (12%) or have heard about it but concede they know little (40%).

- Young people are much more aware (68% of those 18 to 29 are at least somewhat familiar) as are men (53%) and university educated Canadians (61%).

The implications for democracy and truthfulness are mostly understood.

- A large majority (82%) think that AI advancements blur the lines between reality and falsehood. Younger Canadians agree but not as much as older Canadians that the line is being blurred.

- 80% are concerned about the potential misuse of AI in spreading misinformation during elections. Again, younger Canadians are less likely to have this worry.
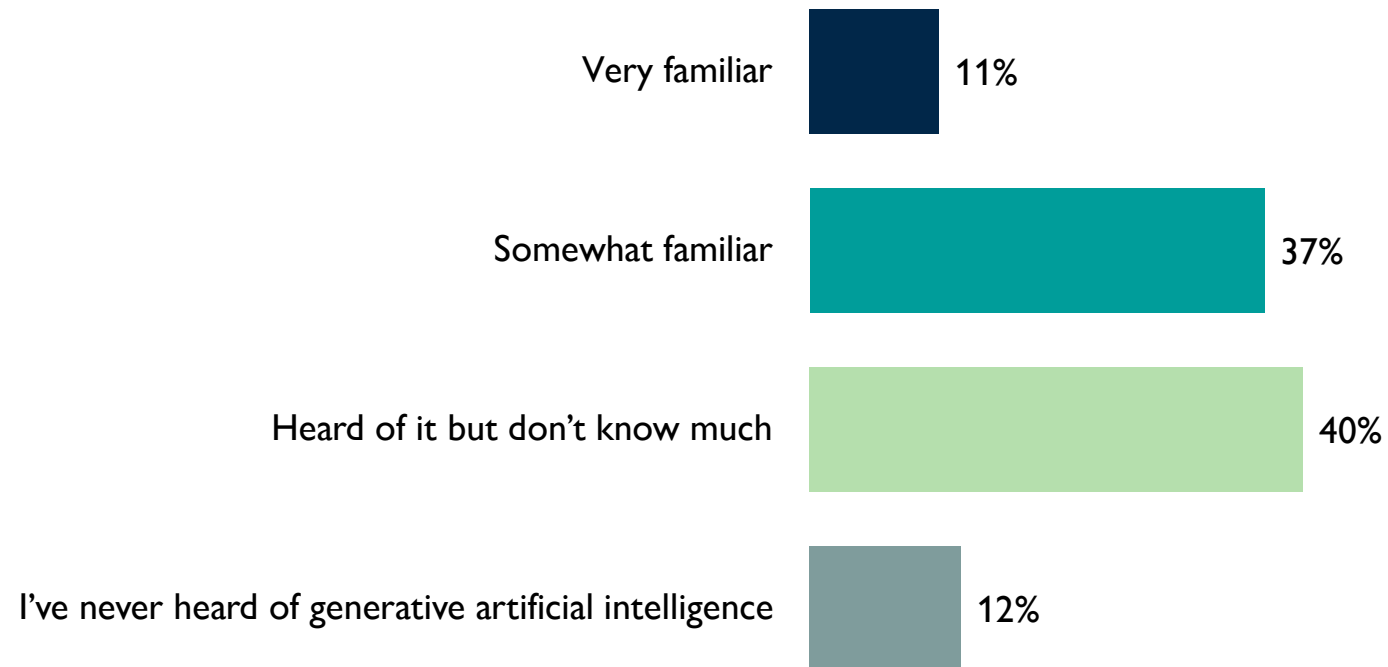
Confidence in identifying AI-generated content is mixed. While 38% agree or somewhat agree that they are confident they could identify AI-generated content such as fake news in an election, 47% are not confident and 15% are not sure.

- Confidence is almost twice as high among those 18 to 29 years old (55%) compared with those 60 and older (23%). This is likely due to the higher awareness of generative AI among younger Canadians. It is interesting, however, that knowing more about the technology produces a higher level of confidence that one could detect AI generated content that is not true.

Half (48%) are familiar with generative artificial intelligence

Very familiar — 11%

Somewhat familiar — 37%

Heard of it but don't know much — 40%

I've never heard of generative artificial intelligence — 12%

48%
Are familiar
with AI

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) describes algorithms (such as ChatGPT) that can be used to create new content, including audio, code, images, text, simulations, and videos. For the rest of the questions, this is what we mean by AI.

Base n = 2001

Familiarity with generative AI is higher among young people, men and those with higher levels of education

	Total	Age group				Education			Gender	
		18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over	High school or less	College	University	Male	Female
Very familiar	11%	21%	17%	5%	3%	9%	9%	14%	11%	15%
Somewhat familiar	37%	46%	46%	34%	26%	28%	35%	47%	37%	39%
Heard of it but don't know much	40%	24%	31%	45%	54%	45%	45%	31%	40%	37%
I've never heard of generative artificial intelligence	12%	8%	7%	16%	17%	18%	11%	8%	12%	10%

Base n = 2001

Majority agree that AI is making it harder to be sure whether something is real or not and that it could be used to spread misinformation during elections. At the same time, many are not sure they could identify AI-generated content

% Somewhat agree + Agree

Statement	Not sure	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	% Somewhat agree + Agree
Developments in AI are making it harder and harder to be sure whether something is real or fake	8%	2%	8%	42%	40%	82%
I am concerned about the potential for artificial intelligence to be used to spread misinformation during elections	8%	3%	9%	41%	39%	80%
I am confident that I can identify AI-generated content, such as fake news articles or deepfake videos, during an election	15%	18%	28%	29%	9%	38%

Legend: ■ Not sure ■ Disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Agree

Base n = 2001

Those who are more familiar with AI are notably more confident they can identify AI-generated content

% Somewhat agree + Agree	Total	Familiarity with AI			
		Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Heard of it but don't know much	I've never heard of generative artificial intelligence
Developments in AI are making it harder and harder to be sure whether something is real or fake	82%	88%	86%	81%	70%
I am concerned about the potential for artificial intelligence to be used to spread misinformation during elections	80%	85%	83%	79%	71%
I am confident that I can identify AI-generated content, such as fake news articles or deepfake videos, during an election	38%	65%	50%	26%	20%

Base n = 2001

Majority agree that AI is making it harder to be sure whether something is real or not and that it could be used to spread misinformation during elections

% Somewhat agree + Agree	Total	Region						Age group				Gender	
		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over	Male	Female
Developments in AI are making it harder and harder to be sure whether something is real or fake	82%	81%	86%	86%	84%	77%	81%	79%	78%	82%	88%	83%	82%
I am concerned about the potential for artificial intelligence to be used to spread misinformation during elections	80%	82%	87%	81%	81%	72%	81%	70%	80%	80%	86%	82%	78%
I am confident that I can identify AI-generated content, such as fake news articles or deepfake videos, during an election	38%	43%	38%	40%	42%	30%	33%	55%	48%	36%	23%	44%	33%

Base n = 2001

How Canadians Share/Deal with Misinformation Challenge

Key findings

Given that Canadians believe there is considerable misinformation and disinformation circulating in Canda, it is interesting to consider how they perceive they interact with this information.

Fact-checking
The majority (83%) occasionally or frequently fact check the information they hear or read.
- Fact checking is more likely to be reported by those who are younger and those with higher levels of education.

The main method of fact checking is through internet searches (73%) or consulting professional news sources (55%). Other approaches include relying on a person they think is reliable (29%), looking on social media (16%) or asking a family member (15%).
- Using the news media to check a source is more likely among those on the left of the political spectrum.
- Young people are much more likely to rely on social media to fact check information and much less likely to look for a news article or search the internet.

Sharing misinformation
Almost half (48%) admit to occasionally sharing information they later discovered to be false while 32% say they share information that might not be true.
- Both of these behaviours are much likely to be reported by younger Canadians.

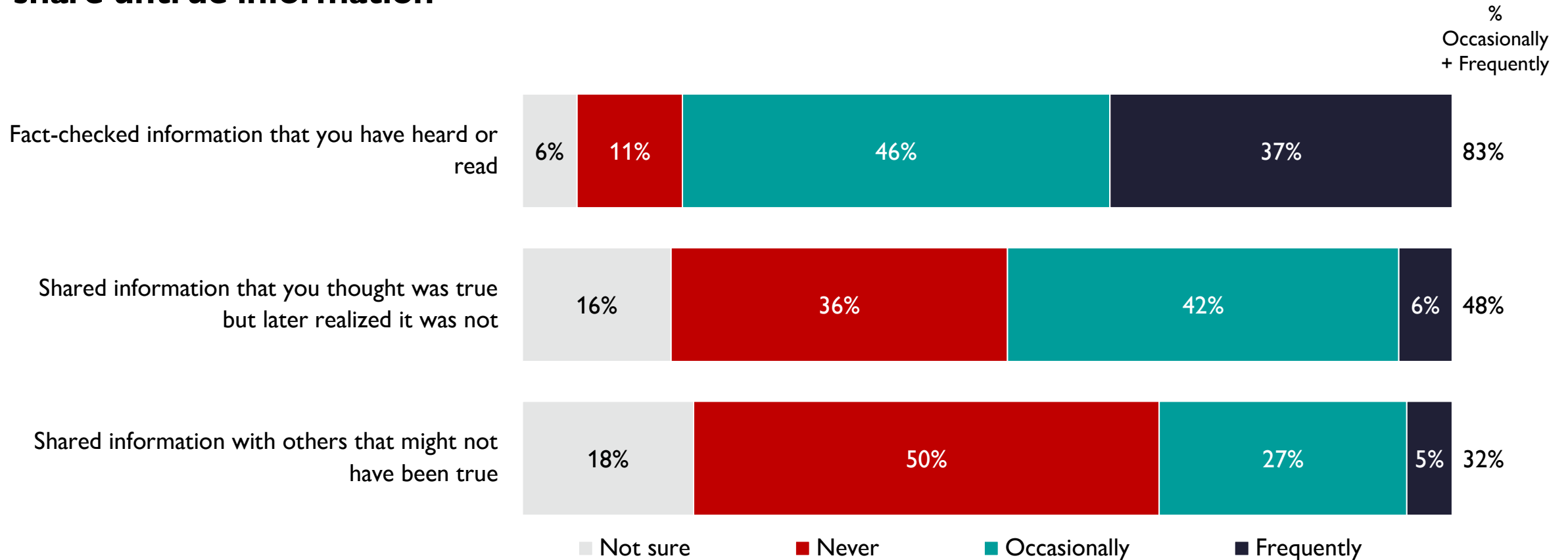**Consequences for interpersonal relationships**
Some Canadians are actively engaged in combatting wrongful information with almost half (49%) questioning the accuracy of information shared with them and nearly one in five (19%) cutting off interactions with someone because they believed they were sharing misinformation.
- Younger Canadians are more likely to have questioned others about the truth of a statement, to have been questioned by others about their own statements and to have stopped communicating with someone these believed was spreading misinformation.

In the past year, how often have you…

Young people are much more likely to report that they have shared misinformation.

% Occasionally + Frequently	Total	Region						Age group				Gender	
		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over	Male	Female
Fact-checked information that you have heard or read	83%	88%	85%	81%	83%	80%	78%	85%	87%	82%	79%	84%	81%
Shared information that you thought was true but later realized it was not	48%	48%	56%	52%	47%	47%	41%	67%	54%	44%	35%	48%	48%
Shared information with others that might not have been true	32%	32%	37%	34%	34%	23%	31%	49%	41%	28%	16%	35%	28%

Base n = 2001

Fact-checking is typically done by internet searching or looking for news articles from a professional news organization

Search the internet for collaborating information — **73%**

Look for a news article from a professional news organization — **55%**

Ask someone who I think is knowledgeable — **29%**

Look on social media for collaborating information — **16%**

Ask a family member — **15%**

Ask a friend — **10%**

Other — **3%**
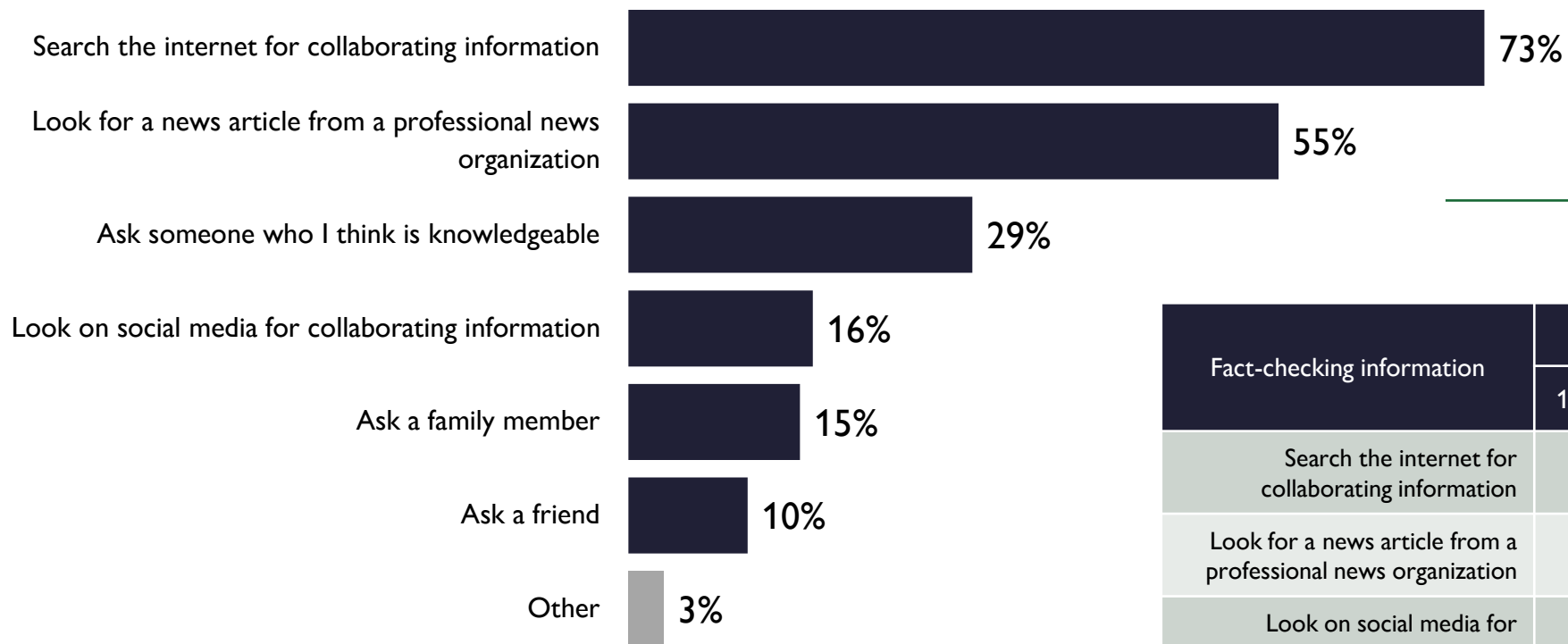
Fact-checking information	Age group			
	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
Search the internet for collaborating information	64%	69%	75%	79%
Look for a news article from a professional news organization	41%	51%	57%	67%
Look on social media for collaborating information	25%	22%	12%	7%

Base n = 1666; those who fact-checked information that they heard or read Frequently/Occasionally in the past year

Fact checking by looking for a news article from a professional news org is adopted much more frequently by those on the left of the political spectrum while those on the right are the most likely to rely on social media

Fact-checking information	Total	Ideology				
		Left	Centre left	Centre	Centre right	Right
Search the internet for collaborating information	73%	72%	73%	70%	78%	73%
Look for a news article from a professional news organization	55%	69%	61%	51%	57%	45%
Ask someone who I think is knowledgeable	29%	24%	26%	32%	30%	23%
Look on social media for collaborating information	16%	15%	12%	17%	12%	27%
Ask a family member	15%	9%	13%	16%	14%	15%
Ask a friend	10%	9%	12%	11%	6%	13%
Other	3%	2%	2%	3%	4%	4%

Base n = 1666; those who fact-checked information that they heard or read Frequently/Occasionally in the past year

Have any of the following happened to you personally as a result of the presence of misinformation and disinformation. Please select all that apply.

Half (49%) have questioned others about the truth of the information they have received

I have questioned others about the truth of information that was shared with me — 49%

	Age group		
18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
63%	53%	49%	38%

I have been told information I shared with others is not true — 21%

	Age group		
18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
33%	24%	18%	13%

I stopped talking to/interacting with a friend or acquaintance because I believed they are sharing misinformation — 19%

	Age group		
18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
24%	23%	16%	14%

None of these — 33%

Base n = 2001

Online Hate and Cyberbullying

Key findings

Online bullying remains a pervasive issue in Canadian society, with 42% reporting personal experience or knowing someone who has been a victim.
*   64% of those 18 to 29 years of age have experienced or know someone who has been a victim of online bullying (37% have experienced it themselves).
*   Those who identify as Indigenous (52%), LGBTQ2S+ (45%) and those who live with a disability (32%) have all experienced online bullying at higher rates.

Concern about children's exposure to cyberbullying is high across the board, with both parents (85%) and non-parents (86%) expressing worry. This concern reflects a widespread perception (80%) of cyberbullying as one of the most significant dangers facing young people, with an overwhelming majority (87%) recognizing its severe negative impact on the lives of youths.

Online hate and bullying is seen as a deterrent for qualified individuals considering running for public office among more than half (58%).
*   Men and those with university education are more likely to see the harmful effects of online hate on public office seekers.

88% agree that disagreeing with someone is not justify using hateful language. Almost as many think that online hate causes serious negative consequences even if not intended as a threat (87%). Nevertheless, 47% agree that name-calling and insults have been normalized.

42% have personally experienced or know someone who has experienced online bullying

Yes, I have — 24%

Yes, I know others who have been — 24%

No — 58%
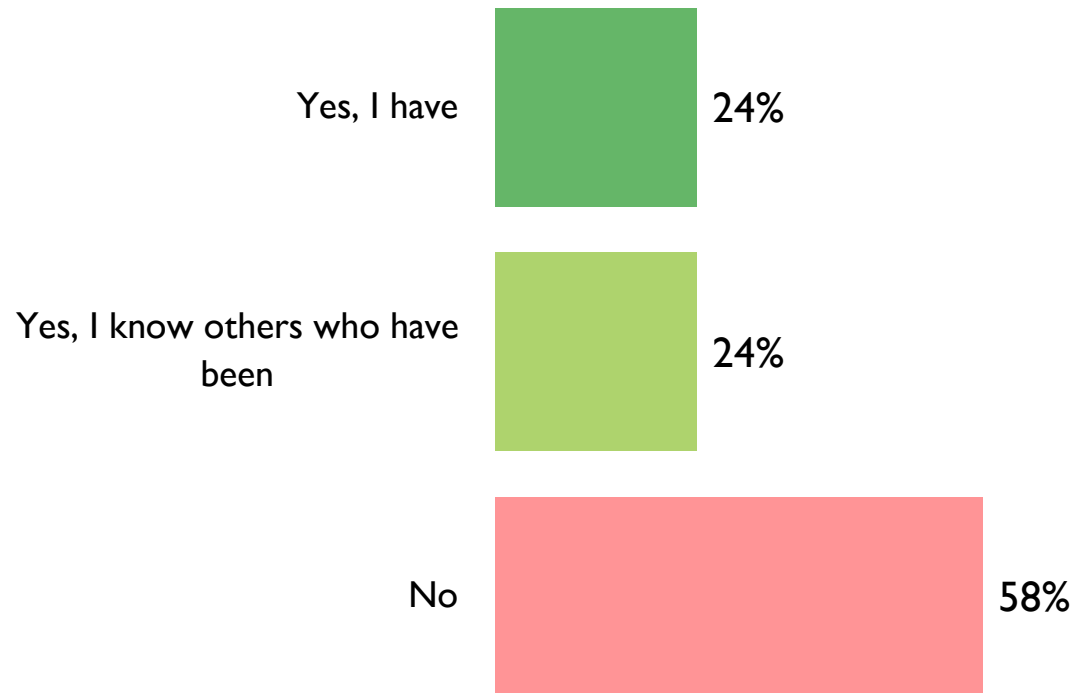
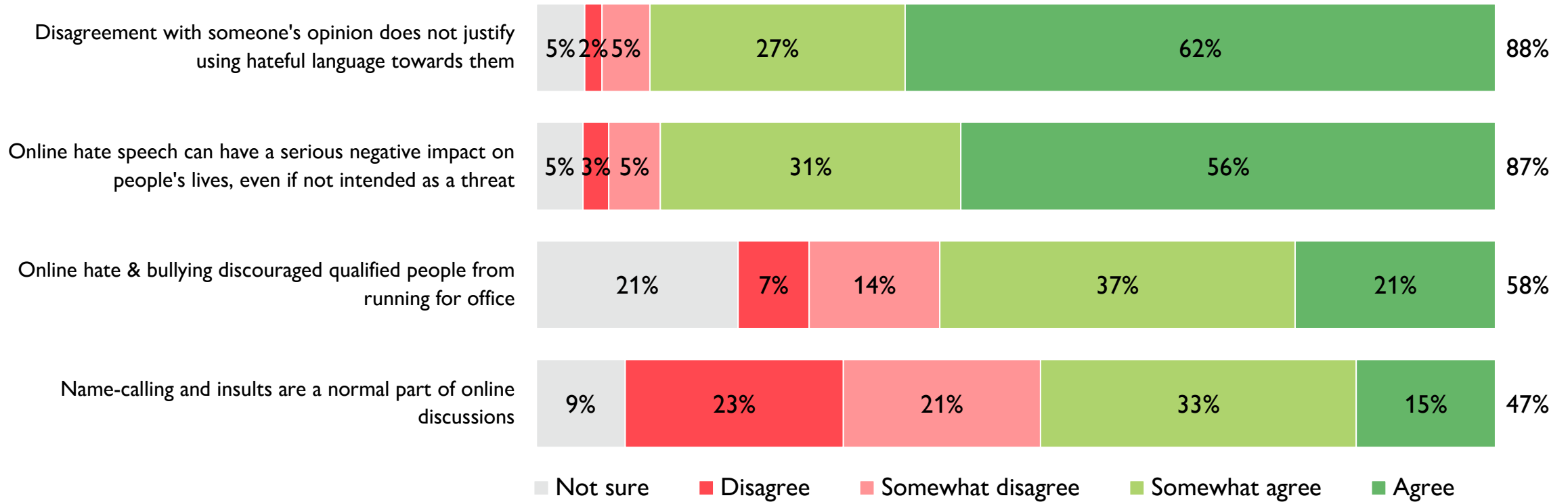| Experienced online bullying	Age group			
	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 and over
Yes, I have	37%	30%	23%	12%
Yes, I know others who have been	38%	28%	24%	12%
No	36%	49%	59%	79%

Base n = 2001

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Online hate is almost universally viewed as something unjustified and causing serious negative consequences even if not intended as a threat. Notably, 47% agree that name-calling and insults have been normalized.

% Somewhat agree + Agree

Statement	Not sure	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	% Somewhat agree + Agree
Disagreement with someone's opinion does not justify using hateful language towards them	5%	2%	5%	27%	62%	88%
Online hate speech can have a serious negative impact on people's lives, even if not intended as a threat	5%	3%	5%	31%	56%	87%
Online hate & bullying discouraged qualified people from running for office	21%	7%	14%	37%	21%	58%
Name-calling and insults are a normal part of online discussions	9%	23%	21%	33%	15%	47%

Legend: ▢ Not sure ▮ Disagree ▮ Somewhat disagree ▮ Somewhat agree ▮ Agree

Base n = 2001

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The impacts of cyberbullying on young people are widely recognized

% Somewhat agree + Agree

If I was a parent of a young child, I would be very worried that my child(ren) would be exposed to online bullying (not a parent of a child)
6% | 3% | 5% | 29% | 58% — 86%

As a parent I am very worried that my child(ren) will be exposed to online bullying (parent of a youth/child)
4% | 3% | 7% | 39% | 47% — 85%

Cyberbullying is one of the biggest dangers that young people now face
7% | 4% | 10% | 41% | 39% — 80%

■ Not sure   ■ Disagree   ■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Somewhat agree   ■ Agree

Base n = 2001

Respondent Profile

Respondent profile

Do you have children?	
I do not have children	47%
Parents	53%
EDUCATION	
HS or less	31%
College	37%
University	32%
Which of the following categories best describes your total household income?	
Under $20,000	9%
Between $20,000 and $40,000	21%
Between $40,000 and $60,000	19%
Between $60,000 and $80,000	14%
Between $80,000 and $100,000	12%
Between $100,000 and $150,000	14%
$150,000 and above	7%
Which best describes the place where you live?	
Urban	46%
Suburban	38%
Rural	16%
Do you identify as any of the following?	
An Indigenous person (First Nations, Inuit or Métis)	4%
A member of an ethnocultural or a visible minority group	14%
A member of the LGBTQ2S+ community	6%
A person living with disabilities	12%
None of the above	65%
I prefer not to answer	3%

Have you ever personally used a program like Chat GPT or Google Gemini?	
Yes, frequently	10%
Yes, occasionally	25%
No	65%
Which of the following social media platforms do you use regularly (e.g., at least once a week)?	
Facebook	72%
Instagram	45%
TikTok	28%
X (formerly known as Twitter)	22%
Other	11%
I do not use social media regularly	11%
How frequently do you use social media to learn about the news and politics?	
Not at all	35%
A little	34%
Somewhat	19%
Very frequently	12%
In the past week, how often did you share your views on current events online?	
Every day	7%
A few days	28%
Never	65%
Political spectrum	
Left	9%
Centre left	18%
Centre	49%
Centre right	17%
Right	7%