



Ecosystem Brief



ECOSYSTEM BRIEF

An Independent Digital Media Ecosystem?

Canada's Online Discourse in the Shadow of the United States

Diya Jiang, Esli Chan, Bradley Wood-MacLean,
Chris Ross, Eric Merkley, Jérémie Drouin, Saewon Park,
Zeynep Pehlivan, Aengus Bridgman

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Executive Summary

Is Canada's digital conversation truly its own, or is it shaped by the influence of the United States' information ecosystem? Canadians report encountering just as much American as Canadian political content on social media, despite a majority wishing to see less. These findings motivated our analysis of over 8.8 million social media posts from the Canadian information ecosystem. We find that Canada's

Un écosystème médiatique numérique indépendant ?

Le discours en ligne au Canada à l'ombre des États-Unis

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Résumé exécutif

La conversation en ligne au Canada est-elle véritablement la nôtre, ou est-elle façonnée par l'influence de l'écosystème d'information des États-Unis ? Les Canadiens déclarent voir autant de contenu politique américain que canadien sur les médias sociaux, bien qu'une majorité souhaiterait en voir moins. Ces constats nous ont amené à analyser plus de 8,8 millions de publications dans l'écosystème d'information canadien sur les médias sociaux. Nos résultats montrent que

media ecosystem, and Canadians' views on the topic, is more complex than a simple story of a loud and tumultuous neighbour to the south shaping Canadian discourse.

This report considers whether Canada has an *independent digital media ecosystem*: measured by the extent to which Canada's digital information environment is shaped by domestic actors, narratives, and attention patterns rather than external ones such as the United States' media ecosystem. When media ecosystems develop their own independent structure, they are more resilient to external influence. In contrast, when media ecosystems are highly susceptible to outside actors, they are more vulnerable to cross-border influence and less able to sustain a distinct, and independent, national conversation.

Using large-scale social media monitoring of influential accounts, semantic network analysis (mapping which accounts talk most like one another), and nationally representative survey data, we find that ecosystem independence is not a binary condition and varies over topic and time—Canadians drive robust discussion on news cycles centered on Canadian issues, but domestic anchoring is uneven on cultural topics that span borders.

When a Canadian story breaks, Canadians overwhelmingly drive the conversation. However, some domestic topics attract the attention of major American political influencers, which can inject American framings into our national conversation online. The challenge is not a cross-border flooding of American perspectives into Canadian social media conversations, but an unevenness in our resilience to American influence on issues that span the anglosphere of North America.

Key Takeaways

- **Canada's online conversation is distinctively self-organizing.** Despite the average top-50 American influencer having 18 times the reach of the average Canadian one on X, Canadian discourse forms a dense, tightly-clustered domestic core built on its own institutions and frames rather than orbiting American reference points.
- **When a Canadian news story breaks, Canadian influencers drive the story.** Of 41 domestic Canadian news events, not a single one was majority-American: 40 were led by Canadian influencers and

l'écosystème médiatique canadien, et la façon dont les Canadiens le perçoivent, est plus complexe que le simple récit d'un voisin américain bruyant et omniprésent qui façonnerait les discours publics au Canada.

Ce rapport examine si le Canada dispose d'un *écosystème médiatique numérique autonome*, c'est-à-dire dans quelle mesure son environnement informationnel est façonné par des acteurs, des récits et des dynamiques d'attention nationaux plutôt que par des influences extérieures, notamment américaines. Lorsque les écosystèmes informationnels développent leur propre structure indépendante, ils sont plus résilients face aux influences extérieures. À l'inverse, lorsqu'ils sont fortement intégrés avec des acteurs externes, ils sont plus vulnérables à l'influence transfrontalière et moins en mesure de maintenir un discours national distinct.

À partir d'une analyse à grande échelle des médias sociaux, d'une analyse de réseaux sémantiques (qui cartographie les comptes utilisant un langage similaire) et de données d'enquête représentatives à l'échelle nationale, nous constatons que l'indépendance de l'écosystème est une question de degré. Elle varie selon les sujets et dans le temps : les Canadiens dominent les conversations portant sur des enjeux nationaux, mais cet ancrage est plus inégal lorsqu'il est question d'enjeux culturels qui traversent les frontières.

Lorsqu'un événement d'actualité survient au Canada, les Canadiens dominent massivement la conversation. Cependant, certains sujets nationaux attirent l'attention d'influenceurs américains possédant de larges audiences, ce qui peut introduire des cadrages américains dans notre conversation nationale en ligne. Le défi n'est pas un afflux massif de perspectives américaines dans les conversations canadiennes sur les médias sociaux, mais une résilience inégale face à l'influence américaine sur des enjeux communs au sein de l'espace nord-américain anglophone.

Principaux constats

- **Le débat en ligne au Canada se caractérise par une auto-organisation marquée.** Bien que la portée moyenne d'un influenceur américain du top 50 soit 18 fois supérieure à celle d'un influenceur canadien sur X, le discours canadien forme un noyau national dense et resserré, fondé sur ses propres institutions et cadres de référence plutôt que gravitant autour de repères américains.
- **Lorsqu'une nouvelle canadienne fait la une, ce sont les influenceurs canadiens qui en sont les moteurs.** Sur 41 événements d'actualité nationaux canadiens, aucun n'a été dominé par des Américains: 40 ont été menés par des influenceurs canadiens et un était réparti presque à part égale. Les voix canadiennes se

one was a near-even split Canadian voices focus on domestic stories and dominate the conversation on social media.

- **Yet Canadians don't feel that independence.** Survey respondents report seeing about as much American as Canadian political content, and a majority would prefer to see less of the former. Much of that American content reaches them through Canadian news organizations themselves.
- **A distinct subset of Canadian influencers is more closely integrated with U.S. influencers.** Those with the closest semantic ties to U.S. influencers are disproportionately commentators and podcasters rather than journalists. They are almost all English speakers and are twice as likely to be right-leaning.
- **Cross-border influence follows distinct patterns by topic.** On tariffs, Canadians generate their own counter-narratives to Americans. On vaccines, the Canadian conversation had no independent peaks of attention, closely aligning with the U.S. In our case studies, conversation independence was strongest when interests diverge, such as in trade wars.

Why It Matters

Canada is in the middle of a live debate about digital sovereignty: in the CUSMA joint review, in Parliament with Bill C-34, and in Quebec with Bill 109. That debate has been argued almost entirely at the level of infrastructure: clouds, data, and platform ownership. This brief measures the layer the debate is actually about, and whether Canadians still anchor their own online political conversation.

The answer changes the policy diagnosis. Canadians feel swamped by American content, and majorities want less of it. But on domestic news, Canadian voices dominate overwhelmingly. These findings are not contradictory: much of the American content Canadians see concerns American stories, where the far larger U.S. ecosystem naturally leads. The vulnerability we find is topic-specific: on transnational issues like vaccine safety, where Canadian institutions generate little sustained discourse, American narratives fill the space and are relayed onward through Canadian channels.

concentrent sur les sujets nationaux et dominant la conversation sur les médias sociaux.

- **Pourtant, les Canadiens ne ressentent pas cette indépendance.** Les répondants au sondage indiquent voir à peu près autant de contenu politique américain que canadien, et une majorité préférerait voir moins de contenu américain. Une grande partie de ce contenu américain leur parvient par l'intermédiaire des organismes de presse canadiens eux-mêmes.
- **Un sous-groupe distinct d'influenceurs canadiens est plus étroitement intégré aux influenceurs américains. Ceux qui présentent les liens sémantiques les plus étroits avec les influenceurs américains sont, de manière disproportionnée, des commentateurs et des animateurs de balados plutôt que des journalistes. Ils sont presque tous anglophones et deux fois plus susceptibles d'être de tendance conservatrice.**
- **L'influence transfrontalière suit des schémas distincts selon les sujets.** En matière de droits de douane, les Canadiens génèrent leurs propres contre-récits face à ceux des Américains. Concernant les vaccins, le débat canadien n'a pas connu de pics d'attention indépendants, s'alignant étroitement sur celui des États-Unis. Dans nos études de cas, l'indépendance du débat était la plus forte lorsque les intérêts divergeaient, comme dans le cas des guerres commerciales.

Pourquoi c'est important

Le Canada est engagé dans un débat de fond sur la souveraineté numérique : dans le cadre de l'examen conjoint de l'ACEUM, au Parlement avec le projet de loi C-34, et au Québec avec le projet de loi 109. Ce débat s'est principalement concentré sur les infrastructures : l'infonuagique, les données et la propriété des plateformes. Ce rapport examine une autre dimension centrale de cet enjeu : dans quelle mesure les Canadiens continuent de façonner leur propre conversation politique en ligne.

La réponse modifie le diagnostic sur lequel devraient reposer les politiques publiques. Les Canadiens se sentent submergés par le contenu américain, et une majorité souhaite en voir moins. Mais lorsqu'il est question d'actualité nationale, les voix canadiennes dominent largement. Ces constats ne sont pas contradictoires : une grande partie du contenu américain que voient les Canadiens concerne des actualités américaines, où l'écosystème américain, beaucoup plus vaste, occupe naturellement une place dominante dans la conversation. La vulnérabilité que nous constatons est propre à certains sujets. Sur des enjeux transnationaux comme la sécurité vaccinale, où les institutions canadiennes ne génèrent pas de discours de manière aussi soutenue,

That distinction matters for what governments do next. Blanket responses aimed at reducing American content overall would miss where our data locate the vulnerability. The gap our case studies point to—domestic institutional voice on transnational topics such as health—is narrower, more tractable, and largely absent from the current debate, though with two contrasting cases it is a hypothesis to test rather than an established diagnosis.

A note on AI tools in this research. Claude (Anthropic) was used in this project for building and running parts of the data pipeline, drafting data queries, generating the case-study peak annotations (drafted by Claude Sonnet from the highest-engagement posts at each peak, with all labels and underlying evidence reviewed by the research team), prototyping figures, and editorial assistance. Semantic analyses rely on the open-weight Qwen3 embedding model, as documented in the Methodology section. All analysis, code, and text were reviewed and verified by the authors. We will continue to use these tools in future work and to disclose when we do.

les discours américains occupent l'espace et sont relayés par des canaux canadiens.

Cette distinction est importante pour orienter l'action des pouvoirs publics. Des mesures générales visant à réduire l'ensemble du contenu américain passeraient à côté des vulnérabilités que mettent en évidence nos données. La lacune observée dans les études de cas, soit la capacité d'avoir une voix institutionnelle canadienne sur certains enjeux transnationaux, notamment en santé, est plus circonscrite, plus susceptible d'être comblée et demeure largement absente des débats actuels. Cela dit, nos conclusions reposent sur deux études de cas et constituent donc une hypothèse à vérifier plutôt qu'un diagnostic établi.

Note sur les outils d'IA utilisés dans cette recherche. Claude (Anthropic) a été utilisé dans ce projet pour la construction et l'exécution de certaines parties de la chaîne de traitement de données, la rédaction de requêtes, la génération des annotations des pics dans les études de cas (rédigées par Claude Sonnet à partir des publications ayant obtenu le plus d'engagement pour chaque pic; toutes les annotations et les données probantes sous-jacentes ont été revues par l'équipe de recherche), la production de versions préliminaires des figures et l'assistance éditoriale. Les analyses sémantiques reposent sur le modèle d'encodage ouvert Qwen3, tel que documenté dans la section méthodologique. L'ensemble des analyses, du code et des textes a été revu et vérifié par les auteurs. Nous continuerons à utiliser ces outils dans nos travaux futurs et à en faire état lorsque ce sera le cas.





Context

Digital sovereignty is broadly understood as the capacity of states and citizens to exercise meaningful autonomy over their digital environments, including their information flows and public communication (Pohle & Thiel, 2020; Couture & Toupin, 2019; Glasze et al., 2023). It has emerged as one of the defining policy debates of the 2020s. Governments across the democratic world have introduced legislative frameworks to regulate platform power, protect national data, and preserve space for domestic culture and political discourse.

For Canada, this debate carries particular urgency. The Government of Canada has formalized this concern, defining digital sovereignty as the capacity to exercise autonomy over digital infrastructure, data, and intellectual property, and identifying it as a core governance priority (Government of Canada, 2023). Legislative efforts such as Bill C-11 and Bill C-18 reflect the same impulse at the level of cultural and media policy, and the debate has since intensified: the joint review of the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) launched in July 2026 has made Canadian digital sovereignty measures a named bilateral trade issue (Global Affairs Canada, 2026), Parliament is debating Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act (Canadian Heritage, 2026), and Quebec’s Bill 109 mandates the discoverability of French-language content on platforms (National Assembly of Québec, 2025). Yet the empirical question at the heart of these debates, whether Canada’s political information environment is in practice independent from external actors, has received less systematic attention.

A Canadian information ecosystem without independence will have difficulty navigating national crises and responding to moments of political

and economic shock such as trade wars. Canada’s proximity and deep ties to the United States make it particularly vulnerable to cross-border information flows, given the sheer scale of the American media system. This level of integration has implications for how Canadians encounter political information, make sense of it, and participate in public discourse.

This brief examines how political information actually moves across the border.

Measuring Digital Independence as an Empirical Question

To examine this empirically, we focus on observable features of the Canadian information ecosystem and its interaction with U.S. actors. Rather than relying on institutional or regulatory indicators, we assess digital independence by measuring whether Canadian online conversations are distinct in discourse production, network structure, and attention dynamics within online political communication.

Specifically, we assess digital media independence along three dimensions. First, we examine the structural positioning of Canadian and American influencers (defined here as individuals or accounts with sustained public followings and regular engagement on political topics, as opposed to news outlets, government accounts, or civil society organizations, which we track separately) within the Canadian information ecosystem, evaluating the extent to which domestic discourse is internally cohesive or integrated with external actors. Second, we analyze the volume of discussion on domestic Canadian topics by Canadian and American influencers. We broadly consider which voices are central to the news cycle in Canada and whether outside voices displace domestic

perspectives. Third, we assess attention dynamics and patterns over time using case studies. We provide examples where Canadian discourse operated independently of American perspectives and moments when both countries' conversations were closely aligned.

Before showing our digital trace data analysis, we begin with nationally representative survey data showing self-reported exposure, consumption and favourability of American political content, allowing for our social media data findings to be contextualized within Canadian public opinion.

Structural Asymmetries in the Canada–U.S. Ecosystem

The United States has a substantially larger population, political media market, and influencer ecosystem, which produces a far greater volume of political content across major social platforms. Any assessment of cross-border information flow must therefore account for the substantial structural differences of the digital ecosystem in which Canada and the United States operate.

These differences are reflected not only in population scale, but also in reach and visibility. Even when accounting for the difference in population, the gap in social media influence is stark. According to our data, the average top-50 American influencer has 10.5 million followers on X (formerly Twitter), nearly 18 times the average top-50 Canadian influencer at 586,459 followers. This ratio far exceeds the roughly eightfold difference in population between the two countries, suggesting that the relative scale of Canada's digital influence cannot simply be attributed to population size.

This asymmetry shapes how independence should be interpreted. Some cross-border information flow between Canada and the United States is a given. Cross-border visibility or narrative uptake does not necessarily indicate a loss of digital independence, but may instead reflect underlying differences in scale and amplification capacity, or simply the natural interest of a smaller country in the politics of its largest neighbour and trading partner. Indeed, the U.S. and Canada share a common language and have deeply overlapping cultural products, from film, to television, to celebrity and entertainment media—making American political content legible and readily available to Canadian audiences without any deliberate cross-border search. At the same time, structural imbalances can increase the likelihood that externally generated narratives gain traction within smaller ecosystems, particularly in issue areas where domestic discourse is sparsely supplied with domestic voices. The concern is not cross-border flow itself, but what happens when that flow becomes unidirectional: when Canadian discourse on a topic lacks independent national perspectives. The case studies in this brief illustrate both possibilities: on tariffs, Canadian and American discourse evolved distinct conversations in parallel; on vaccine misinformation, the Canadian conversation had no independent volume patterns and closely tracked U.S. political developments.

Questions

Canadians themselves report high exposure to American political content and widespread concern about its influence, as shown in findings below. Those self-reported patterns raise a structural question: does the Canadian information ecosystem reflect what Canadians perceive? To answer it, this brief draws on large-scale social media monitoring of influential accounts, semantic network analysis, and event-level participation data. Focusing on cross-border information flows between Canada and the United States, we examine how discourse is structured, how narratives move, and where the ecosystem is most vulnerable.

Specifically, we ask the following questions:

- **How are Canadian and American influencers positioned within the Canadian digital space?** Using semantic similarity network analysis, we examine whether and how American influencers are embedded within the Canadian information ecosystem.
- **What are the characteristics of Canadian influencers positioned at the cross-border boundary?** We examine the demographic, geographic, and political attributes of Canadian influencers who occupy boundary positions in semantic space, to evaluate whether certain issue domains are associated with greater cross-border proximity.
- **How do cross-border attention patterns unfold during high-salience events?** We examine cross-border participation across 112 news events and three case studies representing distinct types of cross-border dynamics: joint bilateral attention, U.S.-driven spillover, and domestically anchored Canadian discourse.

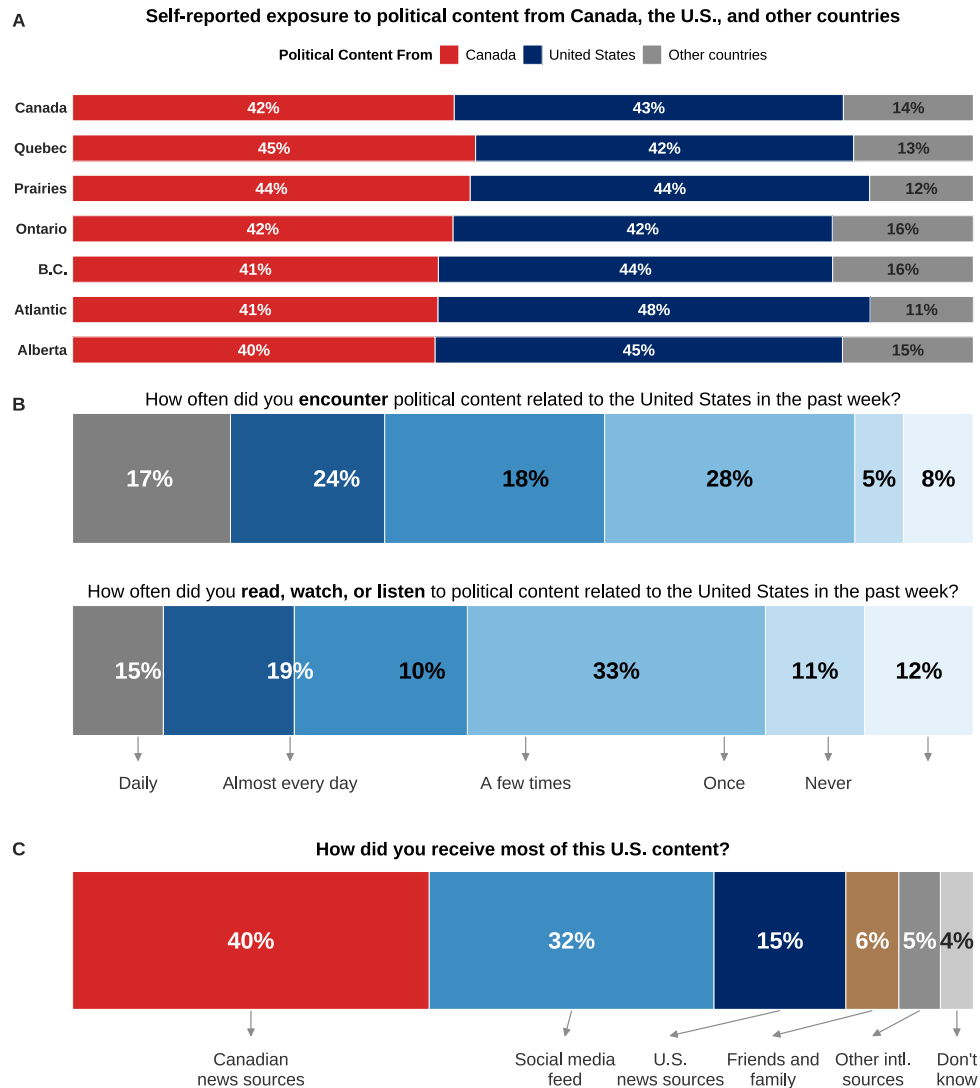
Analysis

What Canadians Report: Exposure and Concern

Understanding digital independence requires examining both sides of the information equation: the demand side, what audiences perceive, consume, prefer, and are concerned about, and the supply side, how the ecosystem is actually structured and what actors drive its content. We begin with the demand side. A nationally representative survey of Canadians (n = 1,471) fielded by Léger from Feb. 8 to March 4, 2026 reveals what Canadians themselves report about their digital media environment: they are exposed to substantial quantities of American political content, and they are broadly concerned about it. These self-reported perceptions motivate the structural question that the rest of the analysis addresses: does the Canadian information ecosystem reflect what Canadians experience?

Survey respondents' self-reported measures show that 43.2% of the content they encounter on social media concerns the United States, slightly

Figure 1: Canadians report encountering as much American as Canadian political content. *Léger nationally representative survey, February 2026.* (A) Self-reported share of political content from Canada, the United States, and other countries — overall ($N = 1,471$; margin of error ± 2.6 pp, 95% CI) and by province ($N = 93\text{--}554$; $\pm 4.2\text{--}10.2$ pp). (B) Frequency of passively encountering versus actively reading, watching, or listening to U.S. political content in the past week (encounter $N = 722$, ± 3.6 pp; read/watch/listen $N = 749$, ± 3.6 pp). (C) Primary source through which Canadians encounter U.S. content ($N = 1,334$; ± 2.7 pp). Margins of error are conservative ($p = 0.5$) and approximate for a non-probability panel.



higher than Canadian news content (42.4%). These results are consistent across regions. With the exception of Quebec, province of residence does not affect reported exposure to American or Canadian content in the Canadian information environment (CIE), with Quebec respondents reporting a prevalence of Canadian over American content, consistent with the increased salience of provincial politics and a distinct media ecosystem (Thibault et al., 2020).

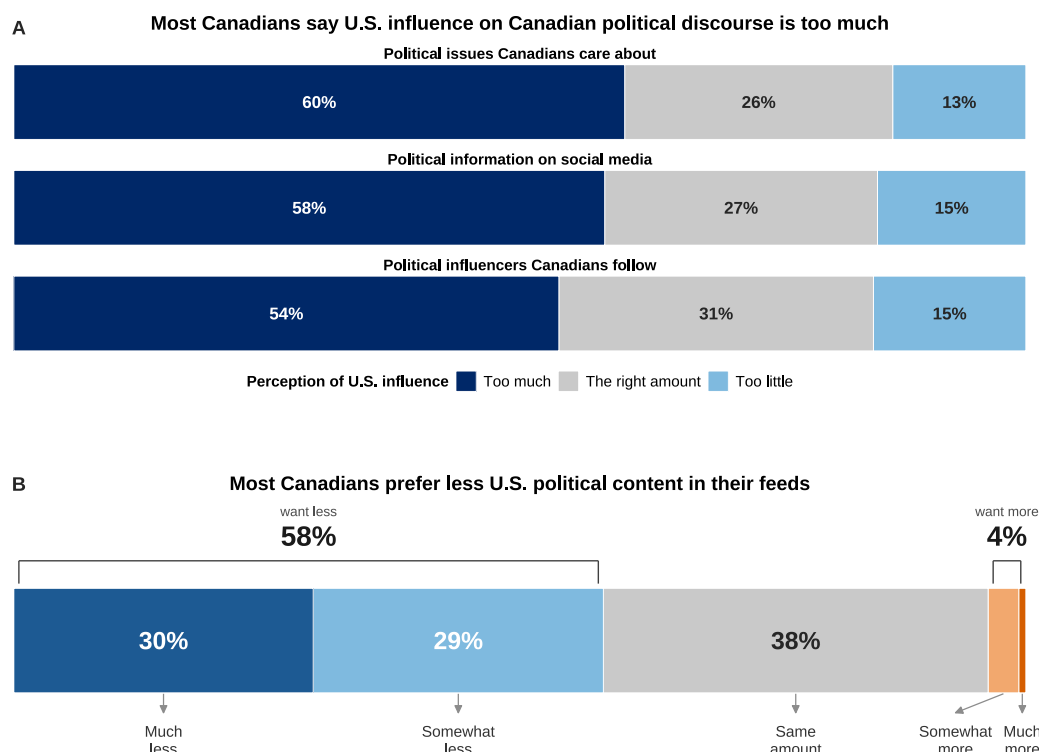
However, this exposure seems to be largely passive. While Canadians report high levels of U.S. political content exposure, they report much lower rates of active consumption. At the high-frequency end of the distribution, 17.5% of respondents report encountering American political content multiple times a day, yet 10.1% report actively reading, watching, or listening to it at that same frequency. Canadians report that this exposure occurs mainly through Canadian media intermediaries, particularly

domestic news sources, suggesting that Canadian outlets, rather than American accounts directly, are the principal channel through which American content reaches Canadians.

Canadians do not simply report frequent encounters with U.S. political content. They are also concerned about its implications. Approximately half of respondents would prefer encountering fewer posts concerning the United States on their social media feeds, while only 3.7% would like to see more American content. A majority also indicate that the U.S. has too much influence on the issues Canadians care about (60%), the influencers Canadians follow (54%), and the information available on social media (58%).

These findings establish that Canadians are not passive or indifferent to the question of American influence in their digital environment. A

Figure 2: A majority of Canadians say U.S. influence is too much and want less of it. *Léger nationally representative survey, February 2026.* (A) Perceptions of whether U.S. influence is too much, too little, or the right amount across three domains ($N = 1,468$; margin of error ± 2.6 pp, 95% CI). (B) Preference for more or less U.S.-related content ($N = 1,471$; ± 2.6 pp). Margins of error are conservative ($p = 0.5$) and approximate for a non-probability panel.



majority are concerned, exposed, and would prefer less U.S. content in their feeds. Having established the demand side, we now turn to the supply side: how the Canadian information ecosystem is actually structured, where American actors are positioned within it, and which topics lack independent domestic anchoring. Examining both sides is essential to understanding whether the Canadian information ecosystem is truly independent. Perceptions of exposure do not automatically translate into structural penetration, and structural vulnerabilities may exist even where audiences do not report concern.

Mapping Cross-Border Information Flows in the Canadian Digital Space

This section examines how U.S. political influencers are positioned within the CIE using a semantic network approach that evaluates similarity in language use across Canadian and U.S. political influencers.

The network shows that Canadian political discourse remains largely self-organizing, meaning it emerges organically from interactions among users rather than being centrally coordinated or controlled by a few dominant actors. Most Canadian influencers cluster tightly with other Canadian actors, forming a dense domestic core anchored in nationally specific frames and institutional concerns, such as discussions referencing federal political actors, parliamentary institutions, and Canadian news

media. This internal cohesion is consistent with a structurally independent information ecosystem: Canadian discourse largely reproduces itself without relying on foreign reference points.

At the same time, the network reveals limited regions of cross-border semantic alignment. A subset of Canadian influencers are positioned closer to U.S. actors than to most domestic peers, indicating sustained convergence in framing, vocabulary, and rhetorical orientation. These cross-border ties are sparse and organized around a small number of bridging clusters. This pattern is unlikely to be driven mainly by shared attention to global events such as the U.S. Presidential Election. Because text representations are averaged over two years and connections are restricted to only the strongest semantic neighbours, short-lived topical convergence is largely filtered out (meaning temporary shared attention to breaking news does not drive these results). If Canadian influencers were primarily interpreting U.S. events through a domestic lens, their semantic profiles would remain closer to the Canadian core. Instead, cross-border proximity in the network is more plausibly a matter of how political issues are framed than of mere overlap in topics.

Overall, the network indicates uneven digital independence within the CIE. Institutionally grounded discourse remains strongly national, while certain ideological or polarized segments, for example highly partisan debates and narratives circulating around issues such as vaccines and

media criticism, exhibit durable semantic alignment with U.S. political language. This suggests not a foreign takeover of Canadian discourse, but selective permeability in areas where domestic discursive density is lower.

Influencers at the Boundary

To identify which Canadian political influencers sit closest to the U.S. semantic space, we extracted the strongest cross-border connections from the network data. We isolated all edges connecting these two groups and ranked Canadian influencer to U.S. influencer ties by edge weight (cosine similarity) and selected the top 100 Canadian influencers. This produces a concrete operational definition of “U.S.-adjacent” within the semantic network: Canadian influencers whose strongest semantic neighbours include U.S. influencers with unusually high similarity.

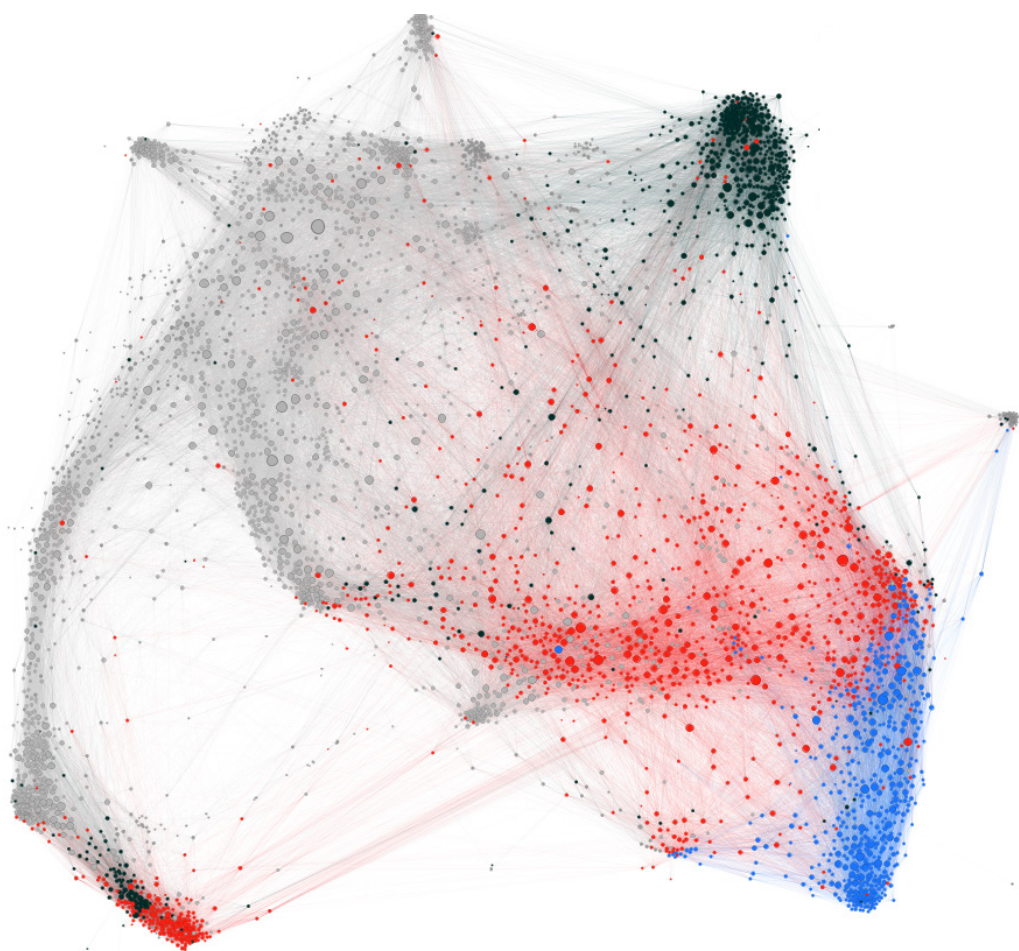
An important caveat: in any semantic network that includes actors from two countries, there will always be a boundary region. In other words, some Canadian influencers will be closer to American ones simply by virtue of covering shared topics like trade, climate, or geopolitics. The

existence of a cross-border boundary is a structural feature of a mixed-nationality network, not itself evidence of influence or a loss of independence. If the boundary group were populated by journalists, policy experts, or politicians whose institutional role involves engaging with bilateral issues, proximity to U.S. discourse would be expected and unremarkable.

What makes the boundary analytically meaningful is *who occupies it*. Canadian influencers at the U.S. boundary have distinct demographic characteristics that are difficult to reconcile with normal bilateral engagement alone. Compared to the entire set of Canadian influencers in our dataset, influencers most similar to U.S. influencers are slightly more likely to be from Ontario (41% for influencers closest to the United States vs 35% for all Canadian influencers) or Alberta (15% vs 9%).

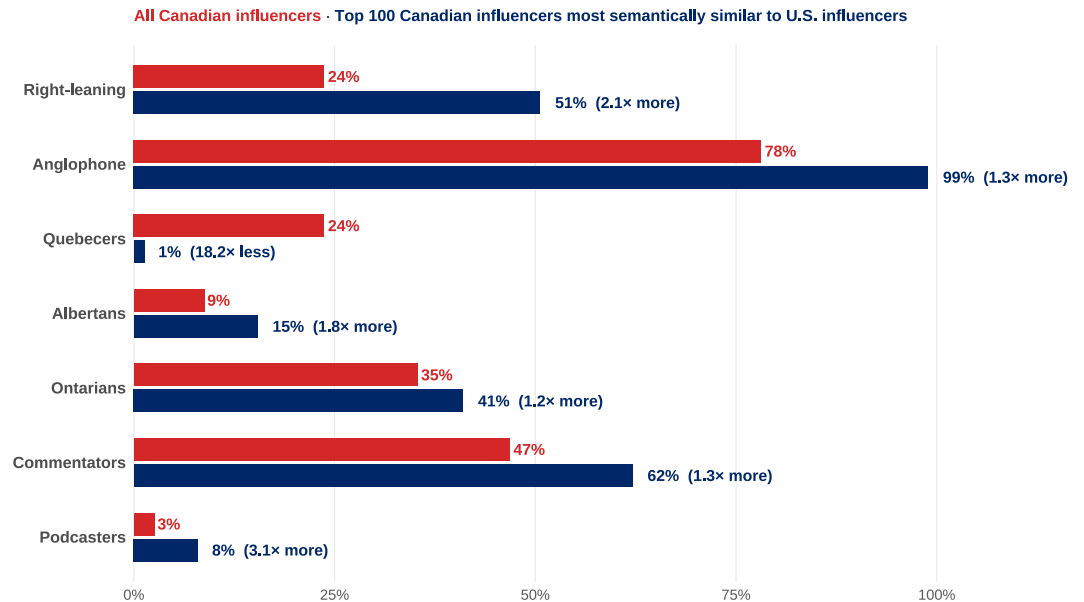
By contrast, Quebec-based influencers account for only 1% of the U.S.-adjacent Canadian group, compared to 24% in the full Canadian influencer dataset. Similarly, French-speaking influencers represent 1% of the U.S.-adjacent group, compared to 22% in the overall Canadian influencer population. Quebec’s under-representation should not be interpreted solely as a byproduct of language-processing constraints. While

Figure 3: Canadian discourse forms a dense domestic core with a sparse U.S.-adjacent boundary. *Semantic similarity network of 4,771 accounts in the Canadian political information ecosystem, based on posts from January 2024 to December 2025. Each node is an account, positioned near accounts whose posts use similar language (k-nearest-neighbour links over text embeddings, ForceAtlas2 layout); node size reflects connectivity. Canadian influencers are red, U.S. influencers blue, news outlets black, and politicians, government, and civil society actors gray.*



- Canadian influencers
- U.S. influencers
- News outlets
- Politicians, gov't & civil society

Figure 4: U.S.-adjacent Canadian influencers skew right-leaning, anglophone, and toward commentators and podcasters. Demographic comparison of the top 100 Canadian influencers by semantic tie strength to U.S. influencers (navy) against 1,070 Canadian influencer seeds with demographic data (red), based on posts from January 2024 to December 2025 (MEO seed list). Ratio labels give each characteristic's prevalence in the U.S.-adjacent group relative to all Canadian influencers.



linguistic differences may contribute to lower measured similarity, the pattern is more plausibly consistent with structural differences in political ecosystem, cultural identity, and discursive reference points. Influencer discourse in Quebec appears to be more internally oriented, drawing on distinct reference points and debates, and therefore less semantically aligned with U.S. rhetorical clusters. In other words, the embedding model accounts for French-language content, suggesting that Quebec's lower semantic proximity to U.S. influencers reflects a genuinely distinct discursive universe rather than a methodological artifact of language.

Politically, U.S.-adjacent Canadian influencers are also more right-leaning (51% vs 24%). Most critically, the adjacent group is disproportionately composed of commentators and podcasters rather than journalists, politicians, or policy experts. These are not actors whose institutional function requires engagement with American politics; they are influencers whose sustained rhetorical alignment with U.S. discourse is consistent with a style of political communication rather than a professional mandate. They do not appear to be covering the United States so much as talking *like* U.S. influencers, though semantic similarity alone cannot distinguish adoption of American styles from affinity with them. This distinction is what elevates the boundary finding from a methodological artifact to a substantive one: cross-border semantic proximity is concentrated among actors whose institutional role does not require it. We characterize this group only in aggregate; the pattern implies no coordination, impropriety, or foreign direction on the part of any account. No substantial differences were observed in age group and gender distributions between the U.S.-adjacent group and the broader Canadian influencer population.

Who Talks About What? News Events and Cross-Border Participation

To assess digital ecosystem independence at the level of concrete events, we ask a simple question: when a news story breaks, are the online conversations about it held primarily by Canadian or American influencers?

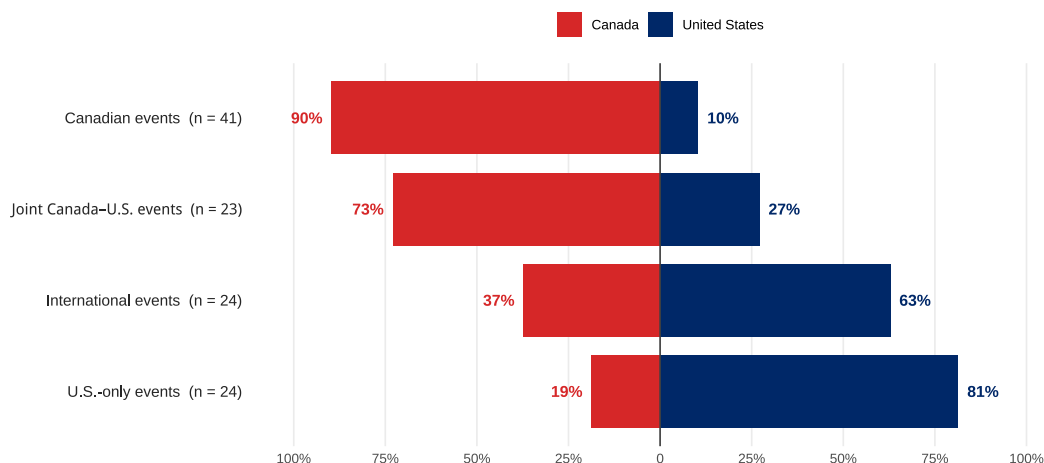
We compiled 112 major news events from MEO's ongoing monitoring between January 2024 and December 2025, drawing on the set of major Canadian news events identified in a companion MEO brief on Canadians' news consumption (Lavigne et al., 2026), and spanning domestic Canadian stories, joint bilateral events, and international or U.S.-only stories. For each event, we drew on a symmetric panel of the 485 most active Canadian and 485 most active American political influencers. We identified panel posts that matched at least two of six event-specific keywords within an event window running from 24 hours before to 72 hours after the event date. We then calculated account-normalized participation shares: the per-account posting rate for Canadian and American influencers, expressed as a proportion of the combined rate. This normalization ensures that the metric reflects how broadly each country's influencers engage with a story, rather than being driven by a small number of highly prolific accounts.

Events were classified by national context into three categories: Canadian events (stories originating in and primarily concerning Canada), joint Canada–U.S. events (stories with clear bilateral relevance), and international or U.S.-only events.

The results reveal a clear and consistent pattern: the origin of a story strongly predicts who drives its online conversation. Of the 41 domestic

Figure 5: Story origin strongly predicts who leads the conversation: Canadian events are Canadian-led.

Average activity-normalized share of conversation across 112 news events (January 2024–December 2025), grouped into four types by story origin. Each bar shows the mean Canadian (red) versus U.S. (navy) influencer share for events of that type; the two sum to 100%, and the number of events per type is shown beside each label. Shares are activity-normalized — each event's posts as a fraction of everything that panel posted in the window — from a symmetric panel of 485 Canadian and 485 American political influencers, matched by keyword within a window from 24 hours before to 72 hours after each event. Event list drawn from Lavigne et al. (2026).



Canadian news events, from the Jasper wildfire evacuation to Mark Carney's swearing-in to the 2025 federal election, 40 were led by Canadian influencers. The lone exception, the University of Toronto pro-Palestinian encampment, was a near-even split (47% Canadian). The picture is strikingly different for international and U.S.-originating stories: 44 of 48 were U.S.-led, with Canadian influencers accounting for a mean of just 28% of conversation on those events.

Aggregating across event types makes the pattern unmistakable: Canadian influencers dominate the conversation on domestic Canadian stories, hold a near-majority share on joint bilateral events, and recede to a minority on international and U.S.-only stories—where the larger American influencer ecosystem leads.

Taken together, these findings are consistent with digital ecosystem independence in the Canadian information environment. Canadian stories generate Canadian conversations, and even on shared bilateral issues, Canadian influencers participate at rates that exceed what population ratios alone would predict. The asymmetry on international events reflects structural scale differences rather than a failure of Canadian discourse to organize independently, but it also illustrates the ceiling on Canadian reach when stories originate outside the domestic agenda.

Case Studies

Not all cross-border media dynamics follow the same pattern. To illustrate the different ways American digital discourse intersects with Canadian public conversation, we present three case studies drawn from our monitoring

of 4,522 prominent American and Canadian political accounts. Each represents a distinct type of cross-border attention dynamic: joint interest driven by events affecting both countries (Type I), Canadian conversation shaped almost entirely by American political actors (Type II), and a purely domestic Canadian story that attracted American notice (Type III).

Type I: U.S.-Canada Economic Relations and Tariffs—Joint Interest Driven by Events on Both Sides of the Border

The first case examines online discussion surrounding U.S. tariffs and trade disputes between Canada and the United States since President Donald Trump's electoral victory in 2024. Trade disputes over tariffs have historically been a recurring source of tension in Canada–U.S. economic relations, particularly in sectors such as steel, aluminum, and manufacturing. These tariff measures clearly affect workers and consumers in both countries, making this an appropriate case for joint interest (Type I). The figure tracks 87,015 posts mentioning U.S. tariffs on Canada from September 2024 to December 2025.

This is the canonical case of shared bilateral interest: events on both sides of the border independently generate peaks on both the Canadian and American curves. When Canada announced \$30 billion in retaliatory tariffs in early February 2025, Canadian discourse surged with nationalist sentiment—fans booed the U.S. anthem at hockey games, premiers announced countermeasures, and a “buy Canadian” movement took hold. American accounts responded almost simultaneously, debating whether Canada's retaliation would hold or collapse. By early March, Ontario Premier Doug

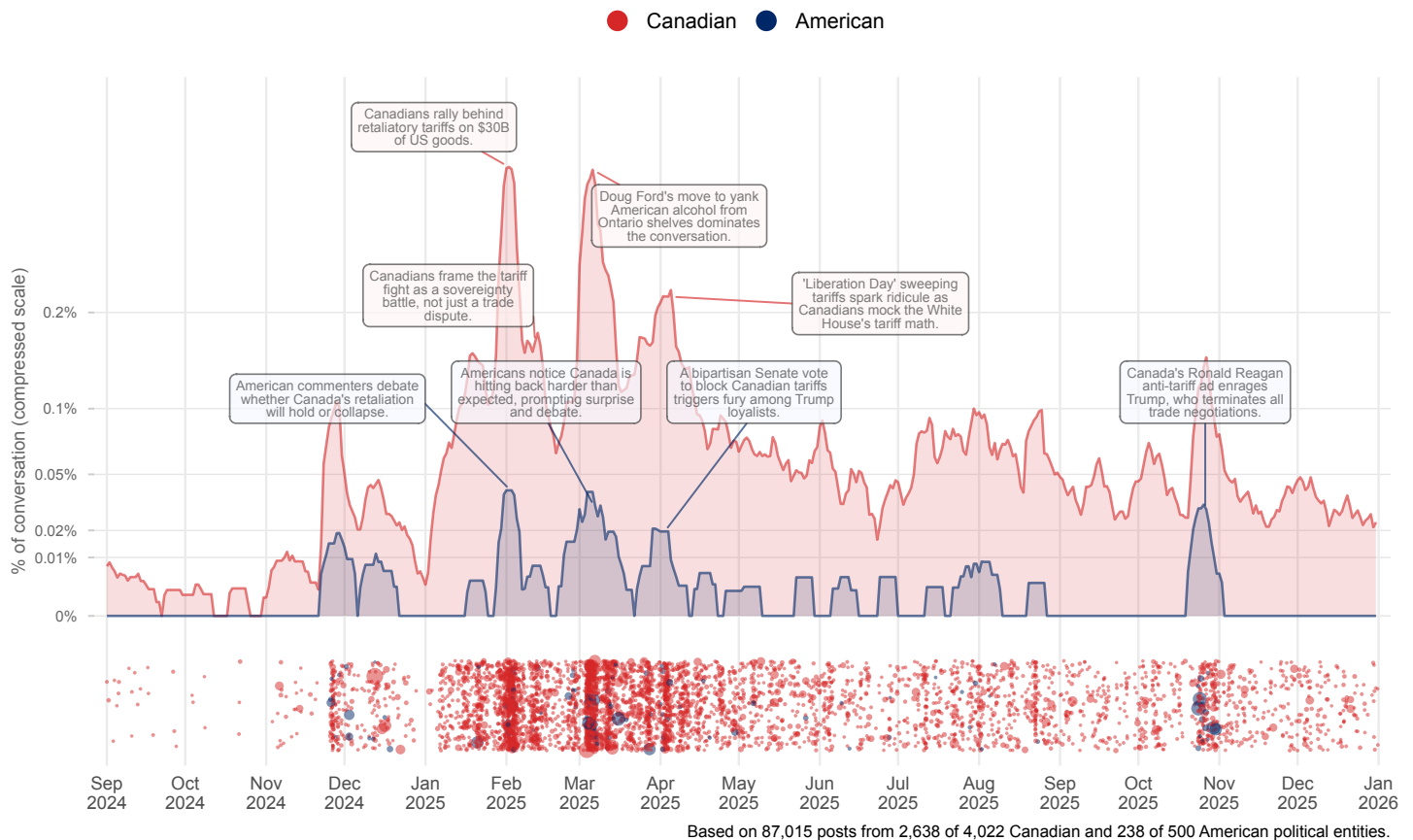


Figure 6: Canadians and Americans reacted in parallel to tariff escalations, each responding most to actions against their own economy. Conversation about U.S. tariffs on Canada, September 2024–December 2025 ($N = 87,015$ posts), from MEO monitoring of ~4,500 Canadian and 500 American political accounts across five platforms. The y-axis shows daily posts on the topic as a percentage of all tracked posts, power-transformed to highlight low-frequency variation; the dot strip below the axis shows individual posts sized by engagement, and peak labels describe the highest-engagement posts at each peak.

Ford's decision to pull American alcohol from Ontario shelves and threaten electricity surcharges generated the largest Canadian peak, while American accounts registered surprise at the scale of Canada's response. A bipartisan U.S. Senate vote to block tariffs on Canada in April triggered fury among Trump loyalists. Canadians, meanwhile, ridiculed the White House's "Liberation Day" tariff formula and celebrated counter-tariffs on non-CUSMA vehicles. As late as October 2025, Ontario's Ronald Reagan anti-tariff ad provoked Trump into terminating all trade negotiations, generating a final American spike.

The two curves move in rough tandem but are not identical, with each country's discourse responding most strongly to actions taken by its own government or directed at its own economy. Some escalations registered in only one country: Trump raising tariffs on Canada to 35% in August 2025 drew almost no American attention.

Type II: Health Discourse in the United States— Entirely Driven by American Events

The second case focuses on online discussions linking vaccines and Tylenol use to autism. These claims circulated widely in American digital space, particularly as prominent American political figures questioned vaccine safety. The issue gained visibility during congressional hearings and public statements by senior officials. This is a clear example of a distinctively American discussion (Type II).

The figure tracks 4,824 posts discussing the intersection of vaccines, autism, and Tylenol from January 2024 to December 2025. Here the dynamic is strikingly different: virtually every peak in Canadian attention is a delayed echo of an American event. In April 2025, RFK Jr.'s press conference on rising autism rates generated an American spike that Canadian accounts amplified days later, spreading claims about CDC

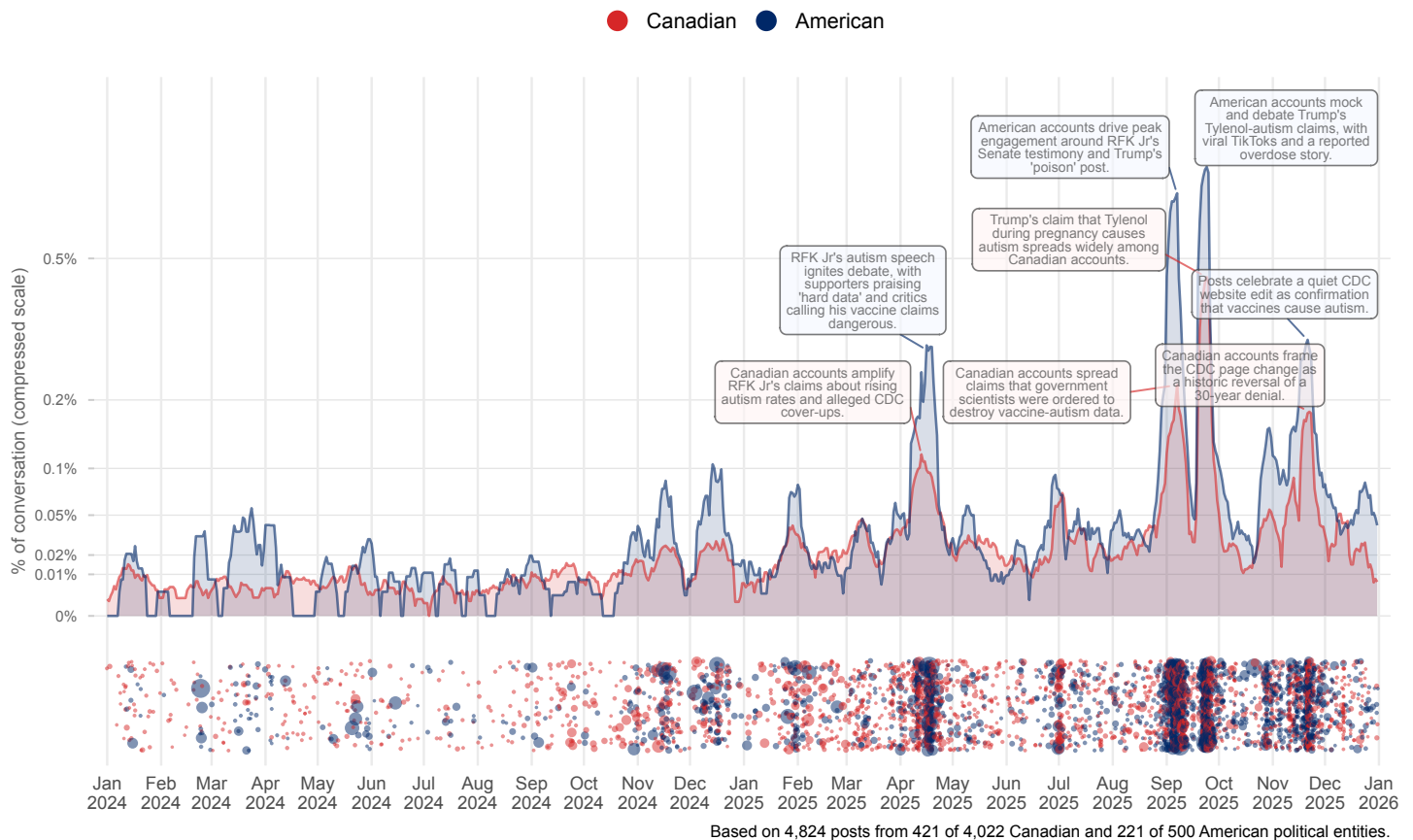


Figure 7: Canadian attention to vaccine controversies tracked American political events, with no independent Canadian peaks. Conversation about vaccines, autism, and Tylenol, January 2024–December 2025 ($N = 4,824$ posts), from MEO monitoring of ~4,500 Canadian and 500 American political accounts across five platforms. The y-axis shows daily posts on the topic as a percentage of all tracked posts, power-transformed to highlight low-frequency variation; the dot strip below the axis shows individual posts sized by engagement, and peak labels describe the highest-engagement posts at each peak.

cover-ups. In September, RFK Jr.'s Senate testimony—where he was confronted with contradictions of his own prior statements—drove the largest American peak, while Canadian accounts circulated claims that government scientists had been ordered to destroy vaccine-autism data. When Trump claimed that Tylenol use during pregnancy causes autism later that month, both curves spiked simultaneously, but the catalyst was entirely American; Canadian accounts spread the claim alongside rebuttals, while American accounts debated it with viral TikToks and a condemnation from Obama. In November, a CDC website edit perceived as acknowledging a vaccine-autism link generated a final wave: American accounts celebrated it as confirmation, while Canadian accounts framed it as a historic reversal of decades of denial.

The Canadian curve has no independent peaks. It responds to American political developments and amplifies them into the Canadian media

environment, suggesting that on this topic, Canadian discussion is largely reactive to American political developments rather than generating distinct domestic narratives. This pattern illustrates the clearest form of information independence concern: American political actors setting the terms of a health debate that Canadian accounts in our panel then amplify and reproduce—though both countries' accounts may be responding to the same American political events.

Type III: Ostriches and Avian Influenza in BC—Entirely Driven by Events in Canada

The third case study focuses on the controversy surrounding a cull of a flock of ostriches in British Columbia following concerns about avian influenza. The issue was highly visible in Canada, and because the events took place entirely within Canada, this qualifies as a domestic story (Type III).

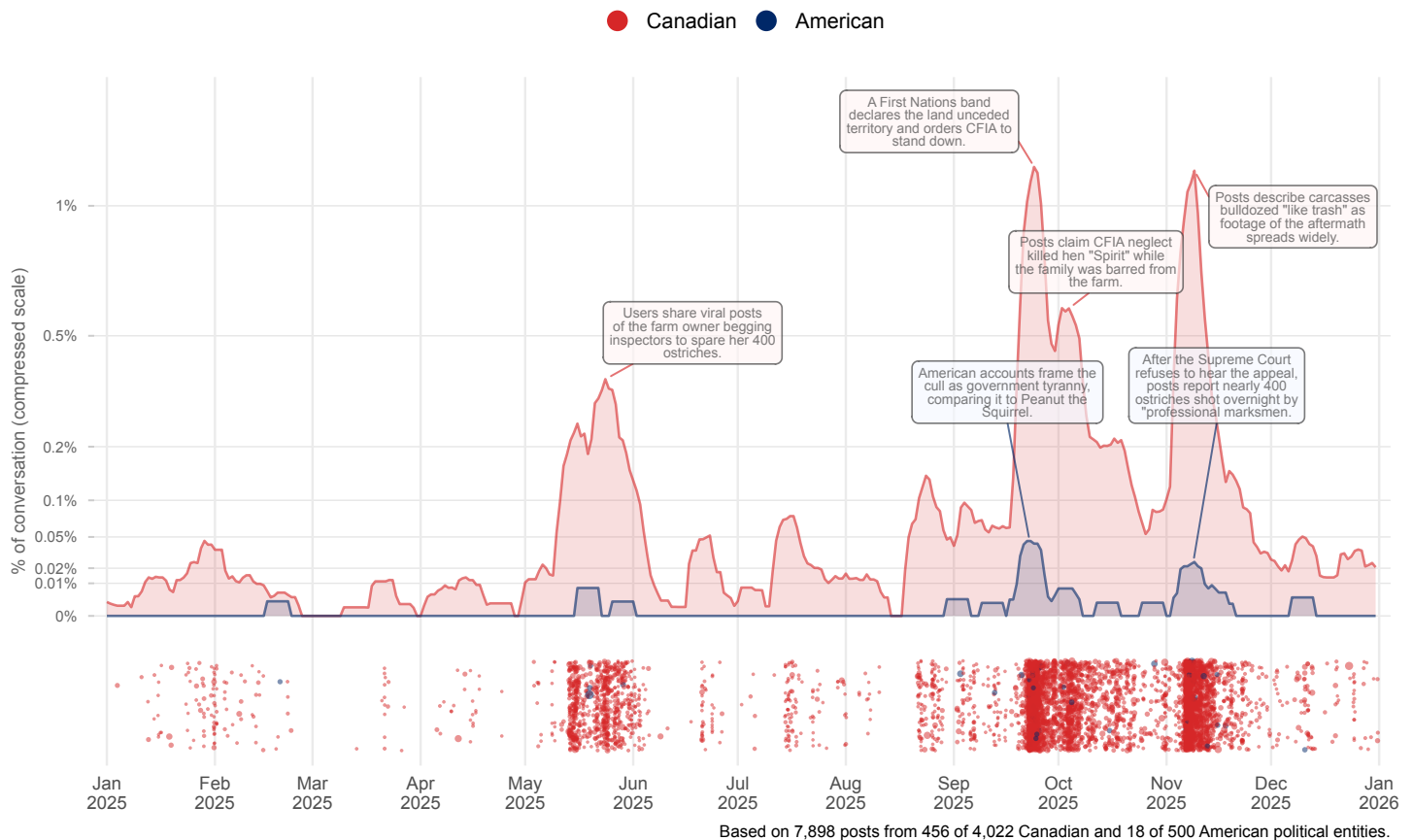


Figure 8: The B.C. ostrich cull was an almost entirely Canadian conversation. Conversation about the B.C. ostrich cull, January–December 2025 ($N = 7,898$ posts), from MEO monitoring of ~4,500 Canadian and 500 American political accounts across five platforms. The y-axis shows daily posts on the topic as a percentage of all tracked posts, power-transformed to highlight low-frequency variation; the dot strip below the axis shows individual posts sized by engagement, and peak labels describe the highest-engagement posts at each peak.

The figure tracks 7,898 posts about the B.C. ostrich cull over the course of 2025. This is the inverse of Type II: an entirely domestic story in which Canadian posts massively outnumber American ones. The timeline is driven by Canadian legal and political milestones. In May, viral posts of the farm owner begging inspectors to spare her 400 ostriches generated the first spike, accompanied by conspiracy claims that ostriches held a bird flu cure. The story escalated dramatically in September when a First Nations band declared the land unceded territory and ordered the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to stand down, and the Supreme Court granted a temporary stay—Canadian posts erupted, calling the seizure “full-blown tyranny.” In October, posts claimed that CFIA neglect killed an ostrich named “Spirit” while the family was barred from the farm, and Transport Canada’s decision to restrict airspace above the property was framed as a cover-up of a “militarized” operation. The final

and largest peak came in November after the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal and the remaining ostriches were culled, with footage of the aftermath spreading widely.

American attention was negligible throughout, appearing only as scattered commentary—some comparing the situation to the viral “Peanut the Squirrel” case—well after each Canadian peak. This illustrates how a Canadian-led topic can unfold with little American involvement. While this finding is not generalizable across all Canadian stories, it shows that Canadian voices still hold attention and engagement when shaping the national conversation.

Conclusions

Some cross-border information flow between Canada and the United States is inevitable, normal, and healthy. The two countries share a language, a continent, and deeply integrated economies. Canadians have always followed American politics, and many issues, from trade to climate to public health, genuinely require cross-border awareness. The question this brief addresses is not whether Canadians see American content, but whether Canadian voices retain the capacity to anchor domestic discourse on the topics that matter to Canadian democracy.

Our findings show that the demand side and the supply side of this question yield different, but reconcilable pictures. On the demand side, Canadians report seeing as much American as Canadian political content online, and a majority are concerned about the influence of U.S. discourse on Canadian public life. On the supply side, our analysis of 112 news events shows that across domestic Canadian and joint bilateral stories, Canadian influencers overwhelmingly lead the conversation. Not a single Canadian news event was majority-American. The ecosystem, measured by who produces discourse, remains largely self-organizing.

These two pictures fit together once the scale of the two ecosystems is taken into account. Canadians may be actively seeking out American political content, the world's largest political media ecosystem, alongside domestic coverage. The sheer scale of the U.S. influencer ecosystem means American content saturates platform recommendation systems, reaching Canadian users even without deliberate search. And the major platforms themselves are American, and their recommendation systems may surface content that resonates with their much larger U.S. user base. Taken together, these structural forces mean that Canadian audiences encounter substantial American content even when the Canadian side of the conversation is healthy.

But this does not mean independence concerns are unfounded. The case studies point to where the supply side fails. On vaccines and autism, the Canadian conversation had no independent peaks: it tracked American political developments almost entirely, amplifying claims originating from U.S. political figures without generating distinct domestic narratives grounded in Canadian public health evidence. On tariffs, by contrast, Canadian institutions mobilized and the conversation remained self-anchoring. One plausible interpretation is a difference in institutional supply rather than audience demand: when Canadian influencers, media, and institutions generate sustained independent discourse, the Canadian information ecosystem remains independent; where they do not, American narratives appear to fill the vacuum through Canadian intermediaries. With two contrasting cases, this reading is a hypothesis rather than an established mechanism.

The pattern, in other words, points to an indirect pathway rather than direct American penetration of Canadian audiences. Survey respondents report encountering U.S. content primarily through Canadian news sources,

not through American accounts directly. This suggests the vulnerability lies on the supply side: on topics where Canadian institutions generate less domestic discourse, American narratives are redistributed through Canadian channels.

Independence in the Canadian information ecosystem is not an all-or-nothing condition: it holds robustly on topics where Canadian institutions generate sustained domestic discourse, and erodes on topics where they do not. The question of whether Canada has an independent digital information ecosystem cannot be answered with a single yes or no: it depends on the topic, the institutional density of domestic coverage, and whether Canadian voices are present to anchor the conversation before external narratives fill the space.

Methodology

This study combines five methodological components: large-scale social media data collection, semantic network analysis, news event share analysis, case study timeline analysis, and nationally representative survey data. Each is detailed below.

Dataset

Social media data cover January 2024 to December 2025 across five platforms: X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Bluesky. Data collection is based on a comprehensive seed list of entities relevant to the Canadian media ecosystem (see Pehlivan et al., 2025) supplemented with 500 U.S. political influencers. An entity is defined as a person, group, organization, or media product of substantive interest to the ecosystem, and must be active on at least one platform. The monitored universe comprises 4,522 unique entities: 4,022 Canadian entities—including 1,141 Canadian political influencers, with the remainder consisting of politicians (1,029), news outlets (838), civil society organizations (636), government accounts (226) and 500 U.S. political influencers.

Data were collected through platform-specific methods: official APIs for Bluesky and YouTube, and custom web scraping infrastructure for X, Instagram, and TikTok. Collection was organized into two streams: a broad Canadian account monitoring collection (main) and a U.S. influencer subset (us_influencer). In total, the main collection includes 8,804,918 posts from the Canadian information ecosystem and the us_influencer collection contains 3,414,514 posts from U.S. influencers.

Several limitations apply. Platform access restrictions affect data completeness: X's API changes reduced accessible historical data, and TikTok's scraping constraints may underrepresent certain content types. The seed list, while comprehensive, necessarily reflects curatorial judgments about which entities are relevant to the Canadian media ecosystem. Entities that were inactive, suspended, or created after the seed list was compiled are not captured. The dataset provides a representative but not exhaustive snapshot of the Canadian information ecosystem.

Semantic similarity network

The network analysis proceeds in three steps: embedding, similarity computation, and graph construction. First, each influencer's posts over the full two-year period were converted into numerical language embeddings using Qwen3-Embedding-0.6B, a multilingual transformer model capable of processing both English and French content; the same model and embedding index are used for the case study semantic expansion described below, so all analyses share a single embedding space. All posts by a given influencer were embedded individually and then averaged into a single mean vector representing that influencer's long-term discursive profile. This averaging is a deliberate design choice: by collapsing two years of content into a single representation, short-lived topical convergence (e.g., both Canadian and American influencers discussing a breaking news event for a few days) is largely filtered out. Persistent discursive alignment—sustained similarity in framing, vocabulary, and rhetorical orientation—is what survives the averaging process.

Second, pairwise cosine similarity was computed between all influencer embeddings. Third, a k-nearest neighbour (kNN) network was constructed by retaining only the 50 most similar neighbours for each actor ($k = 50$). This strict threshold further filters incidental overlap: an influencer must be among another's 50 closest semantic neighbours to appear as a connection. The resulting network contains 4,771 nodes and 167,286 undirected edges (reciprocal nearest-neighbour links are collapsed into a single edge).

For visualization, the network was imported into Gephi and laid out using the ForceAtlas2 algorithm, a force-directed layout that positions densely connected groups closer together in the plane. Node colors distinguish U.S. influencers (blue), Canadian influencers (red), news outlets (black), and politicians, government, and civil society actors (gray). Node size is scaled by degree (the number of semantic connections each node has).

The boundary analysis identifying U.S.-adjacent Canadian influencers was conducted by extracting all cross-border edges (Canadian-to-U.S. influencer connections), ranking them by cosine similarity weight, and selecting the top 100 Canadian influencers with the strongest U.S. ties. Demographic attributes—province, political leaning, language, and influencer type—were then compared between this boundary group and the full set of 1,070 Canadian influencer seeds with available demographic data (of 1,380 Canadian influencer seeds in the full seed list; the remainder lack demographic metadata).

News event share analysis

To assess cross-border participation at the event level (Figure 5), we compiled 112 major news events from MEO's ongoing media monitoring between January 2024 and December 2025. The event list is drawn from the set of major Canadian news events identified and validated in a companion MEO brief on Canadians' news consumption (Lavigne et al., 2026);

we retained those events for which our symmetric influencer panel produced sufficient matched posts. Each event was assigned six keywords capturing its core terms (including French-language equivalents where applicable) and classified by national context: Canadian events (stories originating in and primarily concerning Canada, $n = 41$), joint Canada–U.S. events (stories with clear bilateral relevance, $n = 23$), U.S.-only events ($n = 24$), and international events ($n = 24$).

Panel construction. We selected the 485 most active Canadian political influencers and the 485 most active American political influencers by total post count over the study period. The symmetric panel ensures that differences in participation rates are not driven by unequal panel sizes.

Event matching. For each event, we queried posts from the panel that matched at least two of the six event keywords within an event window (24 hours before to 72 hours after the event date). The minimum-two-keyword threshold reduces false positives from single common terms while remaining inclusive of multilingual coverage.

Account normalization. We compute per-account posting rates rather than raw post counts. For each event, the Canadian posting rate is the number of matched Canadian posts divided by the Canadian panel size (485), and likewise for the American rate. The account-normalized Canadian share is then the Canadian rate divided by the sum of both rates. This prevents a small number of highly prolific accounts from inflating one country's apparent participation.

Case study timeline analysis

Each case study (tariffs, vaccines, ostrich cull) follows a shared analytical pipeline designed to trace cross-border attention dynamics at high temporal resolution.

Data collection. Posts were retrieved from the MEO Elasticsearch index using keyword queries, chunked into three-month windows to manage query volume. Queries were: (tariff OR tariffs) AND (Canada OR Canadian) for tariffs; (vaccine OR vaccines) AND (autism OR Tylenol) for vaccines; and ostrich AND (cull OR avian OR influenza OR farm) for the ostrich case. Posts were split by country of origin (Canadian vs. American) using the collection metadata from the seed list.

Peak detection. Initial peaks in daily post volume were identified, applied separately to Canadian and American time series, with a minimum distance of 10 days between peaks, a prominence threshold of 0.5, and a minimum height of the series mean plus half a standard deviation. Peaks were detected on daily counts smoothed with a 7-day rolling average. (The three case studies were run with these pipeline defaults; the 7-day rolling average shown in the timeline figures is applied independently at visualization time.)

Semantic expansion. To capture thematically related posts that did not match the keyword query, we applied peak-anchored k-nearest neighbour (kNN) expansion. For each detected peak, the 10 highest-engagement

posts within the peak window were embedded using Qwen3-Embedding-0.6B, and their mean vector was used as a query against the MEO embedding index, retrieving up to 500 nearest neighbours from 2,000 candidates. KNN search was restricted to posts within ± 7 days of the peak and filtered by keyword match (at least one query term must appear in the post text) to prevent semantic drift into unrelated topics. Peaks were re-detected after expansion.

Label generation. Peak labels were generated using a two-step process. For each peak, the 20 highest-engagement posts were extracted and passed to a Claude Sonnet subagent with instructions to write two-sentence descriptions characterizing what people were saying (not what objectively happened). The first sentence serves as the chart annotation. Evidence posts used for labeling are preserved for human validation. All labels were reviewed by the research team.

Visualization. The y-axis in each case study figure shows daily posts on the topic as a percentage of all tracked posts that day, rather than raw counts. This normalization controls for variation in overall posting volume. A power transformation () is applied to the y-axis to highlight low-frequency variation that would otherwise be compressed by high-activity peaks. A 7-day rolling average smooths daily noise.

Survey data

The survey component is drawn from the MEO tracking survey, a recurring nationally representative survey of Canadian media consumption habits fielded by Léger. The wave used in this brief was fielded from February 8 to March 4, 2026, over 16 days of data collection (February 8–9, 13–14, 16–17, 20–23, 27–28, and March 1–4, 2026).

Sample. Respondents were recruited from Léger’s online panel. Of 1,514 eligible completed responses (excluding respondents screened out or terminated at demographic quotas), those who failed either of two attention checks or had incomplete weighting demographics were excluded, and a small number with incomplete weighting demographics (region, age, or gender) were dropped, leaving an analytic sample of 1,471 respondents who report being Canadian residents. The sample was weighted by age and gender within province groups at rates determined by the 2021 Canadian Census using a raking procedure, with each region’s weights normalized and scaled to its census population share.

Survey items. The survey included purpose-built items measuring: (1) estimated proportion of political content from Canada, the United States, and other countries (us_estimate_1--3); (2) frequency of encountering and actively engaging with U.S. political content (us_content1--2); (3) primary source through which respondents encounter U.S. content (us_source); (4) preference for more or less U.S. content (us_pref); (5) perceived U.S. influence on Canadian issues, influencers, and information (us_influence_1--3); and (6) trust in social media influencers (trust_inst_10).

Analysis. All survey estimates are weighted using post-stratification weights constructed via raking on province, age, and gender against 2021

Canadian Census benchmarks. Reported margins of error are computed conservatively as percentage points, corresponding to a 95% confidence interval at the point of maximum variance (); at the full analytical sample of 1,471 respondents this is approximately ± 2.6 percentage points, and it is wider for provincial and other subgroups with smaller . Because Léger’s panel is a non-probability online sample, these margins of error are approximate and assume a simple random sample design. Provincial breakdowns use a six-category grouping: Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Prairies/North (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Yukon, NWT, Nunavut), and Atlantic (New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island).

For methodology and data inquiries regarding the survey, please contact Eric Merkley (eric.merkley@utoronto.ca).

Limitations

Several design limitations should be noted beyond those outlined in specific sections above.

First, the seed list determines the boundaries of the analysis. Our findings describe the information ecosystem as constructed through curatorial decisions about which entities to track. Influencers who are not on the seed list—including emerging accounts, anonymous accounts, and accounts active primarily on platforms we do not cover (e.g., Reddit, Facebook groups)—are not captured. The 500 U.S. influencers were selected for their prominence in American political discourse, but the selection necessarily shapes which cross-border connections are observable.

Second, semantic similarity is not the same as influence. The network analysis identifies sustained discursive alignment between actors, but alignment can reflect shared exposure to the same events, ideological affinity, or direct influence—the method cannot distinguish between these mechanisms. Similarly, temporal co-occurrence in the case studies (e.g., Canadian peaks following American ones) is consistent with but does not prove causal influence; both countries may be responding independently to the same underlying developments.

Third, the two-year averaging window used for network embeddings prioritizes long-term discursive profiles over temporal dynamics. An influencer who shifted their rhetorical orientation during the study period would appear at their average position rather than at either endpoint. This is appropriate for identifying persistent alignment but may understate recent changes in cross-border positioning.

Fourth, platform coverage is uneven. X provides the richest data due to the volume of political discourse on the platform, while TikTok and Instagram data are more constrained by scraping limitations. Facebook is not included in this analysis despite its large Canadian user base. Results may therefore overrepresent the discursive dynamics of text-heavy platforms relative to video-first or image-first platforms.

Fifth, the survey measures self-reported exposure and perceptions, which

may diverge from actual behavior. Respondents may overestimate or underestimate their exposure to American content, and perceptions of influence may reflect broader anxieties about Canada–U.S. relations rather than direct observations about their media diets. The survey was fielded during a period of heightened bilateral tension (February–March 2026), which may have elevated concern about U.S. influence relative to calmer periods.

Sixth, the keyword matching approach used in the news event share analysis may introduce false positives (posts that match two keywords but are not substantively about the event) and false negatives (relevant posts that use different vocabulary). The minimum two-keyword threshold reduces but does not eliminate this noise.

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Contributors

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