



Ecosystem Brief

MEDIA ECOSYSTEM OBSERVATORY BRIEF

The News Canadians Actually See

Redefining Political
Information in the
Digital Age

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The News Canadians Actually See: Redefining Political Information in the Digital Age

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Executive Summary

The Canadian news environment is being reshaped by platform decisions, shifting audience habits, and the rise of new voices in political information. The Meta news ban removed a major distribution channel for Canadian journalism in 2023, posting by news organizations has fallen sharply on X, where the algorithm also deprioritizes news content (Gauthier et al. 2026), and local outlets—particularly in smaller communities—are disappearing from social media. At the same time, political influencers are capturing a growing share of public attention, and the formats in which Canadians encounter information are changing: younger Canadians increasingly get information about politics and current affairs through short videos and memes rather than journalistic content—content many now define as “news.”

This brief evaluates how Canadians define and engage with news and how Canadian news organizations navigate the online space

L'actualité que les Canadiens voient réellement : redéfinir l'information politique à l'ère numérique

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Résumé exécutif

L'environnement médiatique canadien est en pleine transformation. Le blocage des nouvelles par Meta a supprimé un important canal de distribution du journalisme canadien en 2023, les publications des organismes de presse ont chuté considérablement sur X, où l'algorithme défavorise également les contenus d'actualité (Gauthier et al. 2026), et les médias locaux — en particulier dans les petites communautés — disparaissent des réseaux sociaux. Parallèlement, les influenceurs politiques captent une part croissante de l'attention publique, et les formats par lesquels les Canadiens accèdent à l'information se transforment : les jeunes Canadiens s'informent de plus en plus sur la politique et l'actualité au moyen de courtes vidéos et de memes plutôt que de contenus journalistiques — des contenus que plusieurs considèrent maintenant comme des « nouvelles ».

Ce rapport évalue comment les Canadiens définissent les « nouvelles » et interagissent avec celles-ci, ainsi que la manière dont

Getty/Unsplash

amidst these changes. We draw on two main sources of evidence:

- ◆ A nationally representative survey of 1,518 Canadians examining news consumption habits, definitions of news, content preferences, and awareness of and reactions to the Meta news ban.
- ◆ A dataset of 8,961,693 posts from 856 Canadian news organizations across Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok, and Bluesky from January 2023 to December 2025, used to evaluate changes in news supply and engagement over time and across platforms.

The central finding is a growing disconnect: the content Canadians—especially younger Canadians—increasingly accept as news is systematically different from the journalistic content it is displacing. On YouTube and TikTok—where the majority of news engagement now occurs—influencer content typically carries less attribution, less specific details, and more emotional intensity than news organization content. Most Canadians remain unaware of the structural changes driving this shift, and the communities with the fewest alternatives—rural and small-town Canada—experienced the steepest declines.

Key Takeaways

- ◆ **Younger Canadians define “news” more broadly.** 18–34-year-olds are far more likely than those 55+ to rate influencer and citizen journalism content as “news”. Frequent exposure to a content type is associated with defining it as news, except for AI-generated content, which most Canadians dismiss regardless of exposure.
- ◆ **The supply of news on social media has fallen since 2023.** Beyond the Meta news ban, posts from news organizations on X dropped 55%. TikTok, YouTube, and Bluesky only partly fill the gap. News supply has become fragmented, with different outlets active on different platforms and lower access to local journalism.
- ◆ **Awareness of the Meta news ban remains low.** Only 41% of Facebook users and 26% of Instagram users know that news outlets cannot publish on Meta’s platforms. Most who are aware have adapted (45% visit news websites directly, 36% use a news app), but about a quarter have not changed behaviour or have disengaged from news.

les organismes de presse canadiens évoluent dans l’espace numérique. Nous nous appuyons sur deux sources principales :

- ◆ Un sondage national auprès de 1 518 Canadiens examinant les habitudes de consommation médiatiques, les types de contenus qui sont considérés comme des « nouvelles », les préférences en matière de contenus ainsi que la connaissance de l’interdiction des nouvelles par Meta et les réactions qui en découlent.
- ◆ Un ensemble de 8 961 693 publications provenant de 856 organismes de presse canadiens sur Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok et Bluesky, de janvier 2023 à décembre 2025, utilisé pour évaluer les changements dans l’offre d’information et l’engagement au fil du temps et entre les plateformes.

Le constat central est un décalage croissant : le contenu que les Canadiens — en particulier les plus jeunes — acceptent de plus en plus comme sources de nouvelles diffère systématiquement du journalisme qu’il remplace. Le contenu des influenceurs qui suscite le plus d’engagement comporte généralement moins d’attribution, moins de détails spécifiques et une intensité émotionnelle plus élevée que le contenu des organismes de presse. La plupart des Canadiens ne sont pas conscients des changements structurels à l’origine de cette transformation, et les communautés disposant du moins d’alternatives — les régions rurales et les petites villes du Canada — ont subi les déclinés les plus marqués.

Principaux constats

- ◆ **Les jeunes Canadiens définissent les « nouvelles » de manière plus large.** Les 18–34 ans sont beaucoup plus susceptibles que les 55 ans et plus de considérer le contenu d’influenceurs et de journalisme citoyen comme un type de « nouvelles ». L’exposition fréquente à un type de contenu est associée au fait de le considérer comme des nouvelles, sauf pour le contenu généré par l’IA, que la plupart des Canadiens refusent de classer comme tel, peu importe la fréquence d’exposition.
- ◆ **L’offre d’information sur les réseaux sociaux a diminué depuis 2023.** Au-delà du blocage des nouvelles par Meta, les publications des organismes de presse sur X ont chuté de 55 %. TikTok, YouTube et Bluesky ne comblent que partiellement le vide. L’offre d’information s’est fragmentée, avec des médias actifs sur différentes plateformes et un accès réduit au journalisme local.
- ◆ **La connaissance du blocage des nouvelles par Meta demeure faible.** Seuls 41 % des utilisateurs de Facebook et 26 %

- ◆ **Canadians' feeds do not match their preferences for political and current affairs content.** AI-generated content and posts from unknown users are encountered nearly as often as traditional media—yet 74% of Canadians want to see less AI-generated content, and 60% want to see fewer posts from unknown users. In fact, of all content types tested, traditional media and posts from friends and family are the only ones Canadians want more of.
- ◆ **Canadians turn to news organizations on video platforms during major events.** Across 135 major events (2023–2025), news organizations captured the majority of engagement on TikTok (88%) and YouTube (68%). On X, influencers captured 89% of engagement despite publishing fewer posts than news organizations.
- ◆ **News organizations and political influencers produce systematically different content.** Coding of 160,000 YouTube and TikTok video transcripts from 2025 shows news accounts focus on reporting (80%), while influencer content mixes reporting, opinion, and analysis. Influencers more often present claims without attribution (76% vs. 31%) and score higher on emotional intensity.

Why It Matters

When journalism loses visibility on social media, it is not replaced by nothing—it is replaced by content that serves a different function. Influencer content brings audience engagement, opinion, and personal voice to political topics, but it leans more toward commentary and analysis than first-hand reporting, and does not consistently follow the editorial standards of journalism. This brief documents that these are not just stylistic differences. News organization content and influencer content differ systematically in sourcing, specificity, and emotional tone.

This matters because the audiences most exposed to influencer content are also the most likely to treat it as news. Younger Canadians hold a broader definition of what counts as news, are less likely to seek news out deliberately, and are more reliant

des utilisateurs d'Instagram savent que les médias ne peuvent plus publier sur les plateformes de Meta. Parmi ceux qui le savent, la plupart se sont adaptés (45 % consultent directement les sites de nouvelles, 36 % utilisent une application), mais environ un quart n'ont pas changé leurs comportements ou se sont désengagés de l'information.

- ◆ **Les fils d'actualité des Canadiens sur les médias sociaux ne correspondent pas à leurs préférences pour le contenu politique et d'actualité.** Le contenu généré par l'IA et les publications d'utilisateurs inconnus apparaissent presque aussi souvent que le contenu produit par les médias traditionnels — pourtant, 74 % et 60 % souhaitent en voir moins, respectivement. De tous les types de contenu testés, les médias traditionnels et les publications d'amis et de proches sont les seuls que les Canadiens souhaitent voir davantage.
- ◆ **Les Canadiens se tournent vers les organismes de presse sur les plateformes vidéo lors d'événements majeurs.** Pour 135 événements majeurs (2023–2025), les organismes de presse ont capté la majorité de l'engagement sur TikTok (88 %) et YouTube (68 %). Sur X, les influenceurs ont capté 89 % de l'engagement malgré un nombre de publications inférieur à celui des organismes de presse.
- ◆ **Les organismes de presse et les influenceurs politiques produisent un contenu systématiquement différent.** Le codage de 160 000 transcriptions vidéo YouTube et TikTok de 2025 montre que le contenu des médias est dominé par le reportage (80 %), tandis que le contenu des influenceurs mêle reportage, opinion et analyse. Les influenceurs présentent plus souvent des affirmations sans attribution (76 % contre 31 %) et obtiennent des scores plus élevés d'intensité émotionnelle.

Pourquoi c'est important

Lorsque le journalisme perd en visibilité sur les réseaux sociaux, il n'est pas remplacé par rien, mais plutôt par du contenu qui remplit une fonction différente. Le contenu des influenceurs apporte de l'engagement, de l'opinion et une voix personnelle sur des sujets politiques, mais il est davantage centré sur le commentaire et l'analyse que sur le reportage de première main et n'adhère pas systématiquement aux normes éditoriales du journalisme. Ce rapport démontre que ces différences ne sont pas seulement stylistiques. Le contenu des organismes de presse et celui des influenceurs diffèrent systématiquement en matière de sourcing, de spécificité et d'intensité émotionnelle.

Cela importe parce que les publics les plus exposés au contenu des influenceurs sont aussi les plus susceptibles de le consi-

on platforms where influencers dominate engagement. If the content they consume as news increasingly lacks the sourcing and verification standards of journalism, the informational inputs to their political awareness change—even if they do not perceive the shift.

The consequences are most acute for communities with the fewest alternatives. Local news outlets in rural and small-town Canada have largely disappeared from social media, and few have the resources to produce the video content that now drives engagement. When these outlets go silent online, the information that most directly affects local communities—public safety, municipal governance, health—becomes harder to access on the platforms where most Canadians spend their time. Yet most Canadians remain unaware of the platform policies driving these changes: fewer than half of Facebook users know that news organizations can no longer publish there.

A note on AI tools in this research. Claude Opus, Sonnet, and Haiku (Anthropic) were used extensively throughout this project, including designing the data pipeline, drafting data queries, building the topic-modeling and event-detection systems, prototyping figures, and drafting prose. We also rely on open-weight models (Qwen) for content coding of YouTube and TikTok video transcripts, as documented in the Methodology section. These tools make it possible to conduct a study of this depth and breadth at a speed and scale that would otherwise require a far larger team. We will continue to use them in future work and to disclose when we do.

dérer comme de l'information. Les jeunes Canadiens ont une définition plus large de ce qui constitue de l'information, sont moins enclins à chercher activement les nouvelles et dépendent davantage des plateformes où les influenceurs dominent l'engagement. Si le contenu qu'ils consomment comme sources de nouvelles n'adhère pas aux normes de sourçage et de vérification du journalisme, les fondements informationnels de leur conscience politique évoluent — même s'ils ne perçoivent pas ce changement.

Les conséquences sont les plus graves pour les communautés disposant du moins d'alternatives. Les médias locaux des régions rurales et des petites villes du Canada ont largement disparu des réseaux sociaux, et peu disposent des ressources nécessaires pour produire le contenu vidéo qui génère désormais l'engagement. Lorsque ces médias cessent d'être présents en ligne, l'information qui touche le plus directement les communautés locales — sécurité publique, gouvernance municipale, santé — devient plus difficile d'accès sur les réseaux sociaux. Pourtant, la plupart des Canadiens ignorent les politiques des plateformes à l'origine de ces changements : moins de la moitié des utilisateurs de Facebook savent que les organismes de presse ne peuvent plus y publier.

Note sur les outils d'IA utilisés dans cette recherche. Claude Opus, Sonnet et Haiku (Anthropic) ont été largement utilisés tout au long de ce projet, notamment pour la conception du pipeline de données, la rédaction des requêtes de données, la construction des systèmes de modélisation thématique et de détection d'événements, la création de prototypes de figures, ainsi que la rédaction de textes. Nous avons également eu recours à des modèles ouverts (Qwen) pour le codage du contenu des transcriptions de vidéos YouTube et TikTok, tel que documenté dans la section Méthodologie. Ces outils permettent de mener une étude d'une telle profondeur et d'une telle ampleur à une vitesse et à une échelle qui nécessiteraient autrement une équipe bien plus grande. Nous continuerons à les utiliser dans nos travaux futurs et à le signaler lorsque nous le ferons.



Context

As digital formats have become the primary medium for news in Canada, the political information Canadians are exposed to, as well as their definition of what constitutes news, have been shifting. Platform decisions, including Meta's news ban and X's deprioritization of external links, have sharply reduced the accessibility of mainstream news across social media, while AI summaries and chatbots are expected to further reduce traffic to news websites. These changes threaten the viability of news production in Canada: roughly 30% of local news outlets are now inactive online.

At the same time, the actors and formats through which Canadians encounter political information are diversifying. Engagement with content produced by influencers, creators, and other non-journalistic voices has grown, further blurring the boundaries between news, commentary, and entertainment. The presentation of news itself has shifted from long-form text to short-form video, running the risk of oversimplifying complex political issues in the pursuit of online engagement (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2022; Klein 2026).

These shifts raise questions about the standards and norms that have long defined journalism. Influencers, creators, and citizen journalists do not necessarily set out to make news and their credibility is built differently than that of traditional newsrooms: through personal voice, sustained relationships with audiences, and visibility on the platforms where those audiences already spend time, rather than through institutional authority and editorial norms. This raises questions about how trust, accuracy, and accountability operate when news circulates outside the institutions that historically defined it—and when audiences may not consistently draw the distinction. Online information environments can support democratization and civic engagement through this expanded participation, yet they are also susceptible to disinformation and inaccur-

ate reporting. A steady stream of content on social media can increase civic awareness, but it can also produce information overload (Lee et al. 2017) and news avoidance (Zeng et al. 2024).

In this context, this brief examines how Canadians define and understand “news” in today’s online information environment, how the supply of political media content has evolved across platforms, and the diverse ways Canadians engage with political information. We also evaluate whether systematic differences exist in the nature of the content produced by different categories of news organizations and influencers on social media.

News. As this brief documents, Canadians hold widely different definitions of “news.” Rather than impose a single definition, we treat “news” as a category along a continuum—from “any information about current events” at one end to “fact-checked, attributed content from accredited news organizations adhering to shared journalistic standards” at the other.

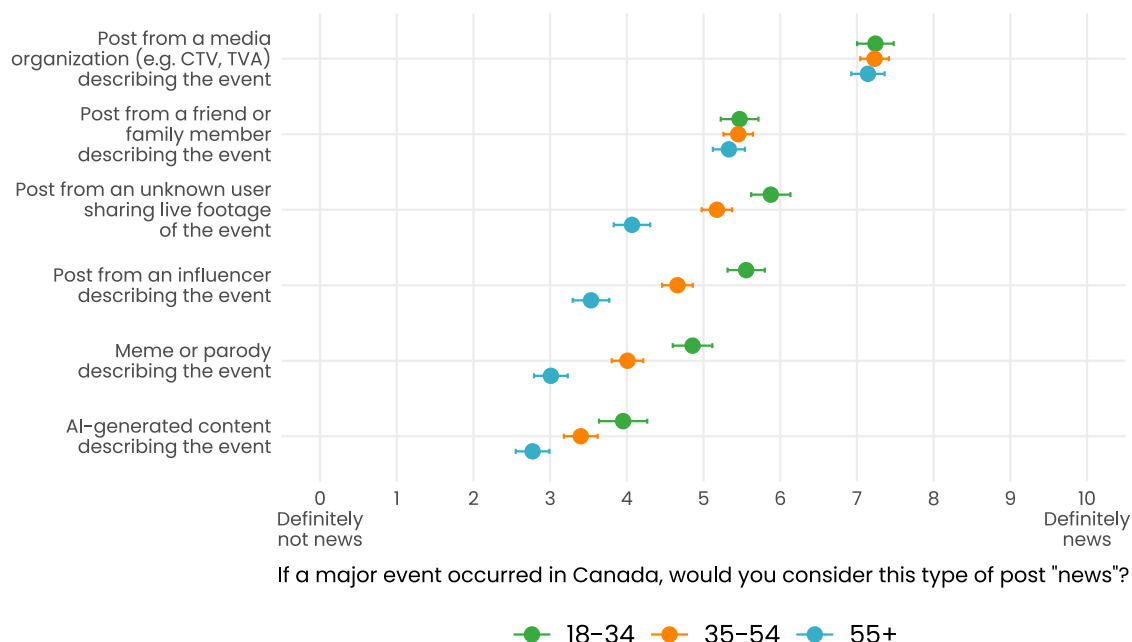
Political influencers. Entities that regularly post their own views, commentary, or explanations about political issues or public affairs to a public audience on social media. This category does not include politicians, political parties, government officials, or news organizations. Examples include creator accounts on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, as well as partisan and advocacy pages that regularly comment on politics or current affairs.

Questions

This brief focuses on five main practical questions:

- ♦ **What do Canadians define as news in today’s information environment?** Using a nationally representative survey, we examine which types of social media content Canadians

Figure 1: News definitions by age group. Public perceptions that different types of content constitute “news” by age group. Scale: 0 (definitely not news) to 10 (definitely news). N = 1,517; margin of error ±0.3 pp (95% CI).



classify and define as “news” and how these definitions may vary based on age, social media use, and content exposure.

- ◆ **How does the supply of news vary over time and across platforms?** Using a comprehensive list of 8,961,693 social media posts from 856 news organizations on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok, and Bluesky, we evaluate changes in the supply of news since the beginning of 2023, including differences between media organizations in their adoption of newer platforms and the declining availability of local news on social media.

- ◆ **How do Canadians come across news today, and what kinds of political information do they encounter and engage with?** Using our survey data, we analyze the channels through which Canadians get exposed to news today, their awareness and reactions to the Meta news ban, and the extent to which the content about politics and current affairs they see in their social media feed corresponds to the content they would like to see. Using our social media data, we show how the format of the content Canadians engage with has changed over time, following the rise of short-format video content.

- ◆ **How does engagement with news organizations and other information sources change during major news events?** Using social media data on 135 major news events in Canada (2023–2025), we analyze the relative production and engagement of news organizations and political influencers during major news events on social media.

- ◆ **What kind of content do news organizations and influencers produce and receive engagement for?** Using our social media data, we identify around 213,000 YouTube and TikTok posts generated by news organizations and influencers in 2025 including 160,000 posts about politics and current affairs. We conduct LLM-based content coding analysis along six dimensions: content function, information sourcing, specificity, topical relevance, content function, and emotional intensity. This analysis provides insight into how information is framed and presented to Canadians.

Question 1

What do Canadians define as news in today’s information environment?

News organizations have long acted as information gatekeepers, determining which information reaches the public. However, Canadians are now exposed to a wide variety of content producers, from influencers to citizen journalists, memes, and AI-generated posts, blurring the boundaries of what counts as “news” and making perceptions of newsworthiness increasingly subjective. In that context, we asked Canadians: “Suppose a major political event occurred in Canada. If you came across the following type of post on social media, would you consider it ‘news’?” Respondents rated each content type on a scale from “definitely not news” (0) to “definitely news” (10).

Figure 2: News definitions by exposure frequency. Public perceptions that different types of content constitute “news” by frequency of exposure. Same scale as Figure 1. Low = never/rarely; high = sometimes/often/very often. N = 1,517; margin of error ±0.2 pp (95% CI).

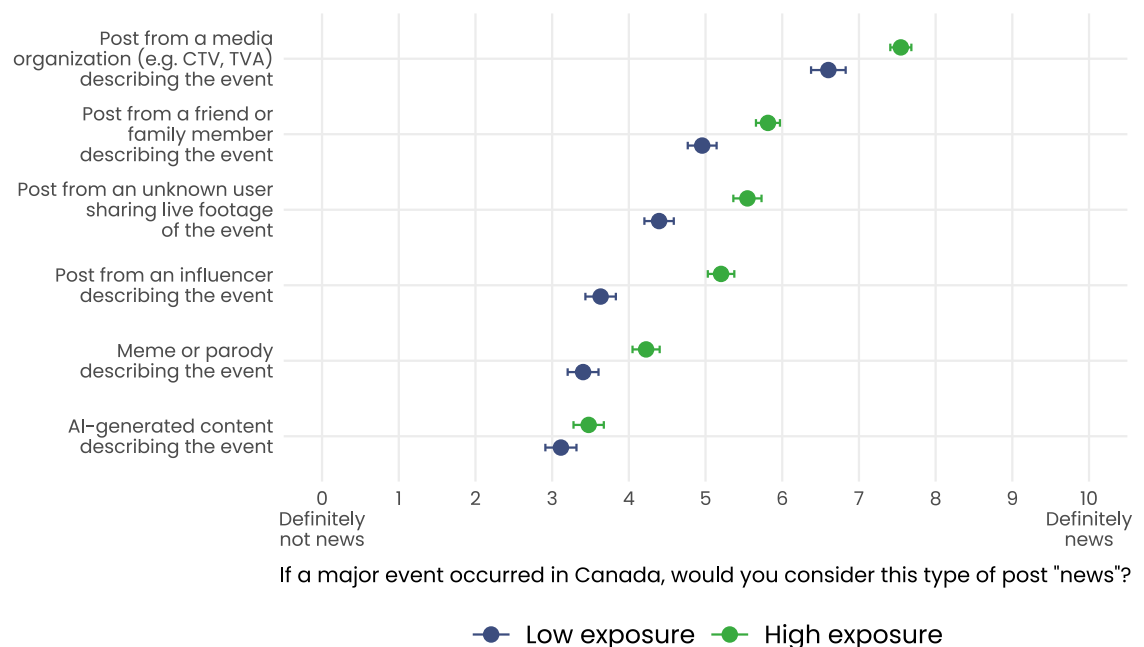


Figure 1 reveals striking age differences in how Canadians define what counts as “news,” with important variation across source types. Posts from news organizations are most likely to be considered news, receiving the highest and most consistent ratings across all age groups (more than 7 out of 10). Posts from friends or family members are also commonly viewed as news across age groups (5.4 out of 10 on average), though to a lesser extent than content from legacy media.

In contrast, perceptions diverge much more sharply by age for non-institutional sources, such as unknown users sharing live footage, influencers, memes or parody content, and AI-generated content. Younger Canadians (ages 18–34) are consistently more likely to consider these forms of content news, whereas older respondents (particularly those aged 55+) are least likely to do so. Live footage from unknown users and influencer content are generally rated above the midpoint (5 out of 10) among younger users, but not among older users, suggesting a generational openness to citizen journalism and other content that originates outside traditional media institutions. Memes, parody, and AI content are seen as less news-like, though the same age pattern holds across all categories.

Overall, the findings suggest that younger Canadians hold a broader, more inclusive understanding of what constitutes news, extending beyond traditional media to encompass a wider range of social media content. Older Canadians, by contrast, maintain a more restrictive definition that prioritizes institutional and professional sources.

To better understand these differences, we tested whether Canadians who report encountering a content type more often are also more likely to classify it as “news.” Figure 2 confirms this pattern, though the gaps are generally smaller than those across age groups. The divide is largest for influencer content, where frequent viewers treat it as news while infrequent viewers disproportionately reject it. Familiarity and perceived informativeness appear to reinforce one another: encountering a content type more often is associated with viewing it as news, and those who find it informative may seek out more of it—though the direction of this relationship cannot be determined from cross-sectional data. Similar differences appear by overall social media use, with heavier users more likely to classify most content types as news. AI-generated content is the exception: most Canadians refuse to classify it as news no matter how often they see it, pointing to a credibility deficit that exposure alone cannot overcome.

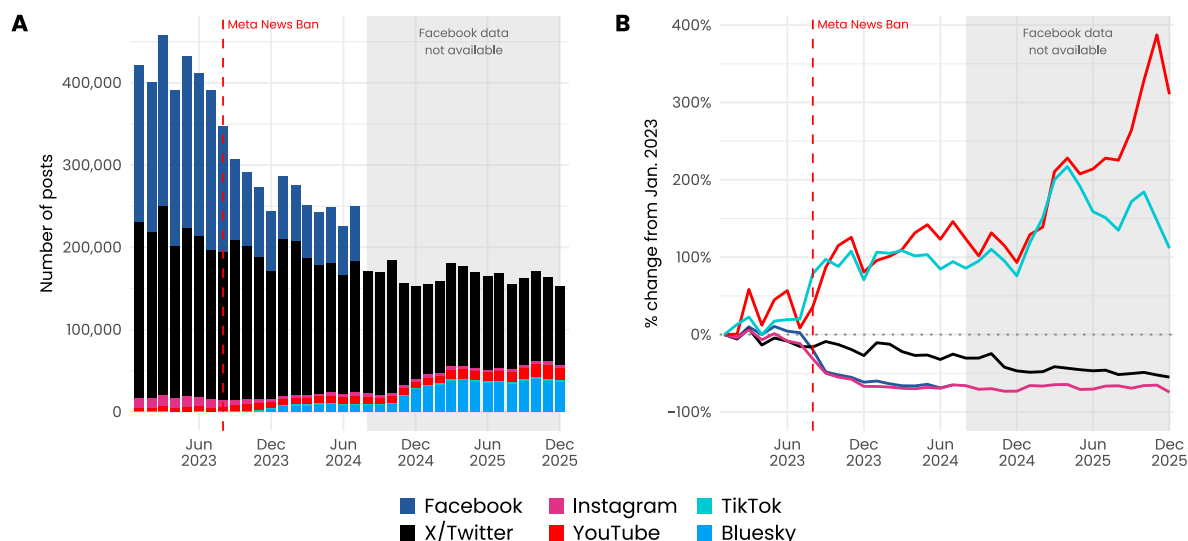
Question 2

How does the supply of news vary over time and across platforms?

The supply of news on social media has shifted markedly over the past three years. Platform-level decisions, business pressures, and the uneven adoption of newer platforms have reshaped where news organizations publish and how often.

To document these shifts, we track posting activity by 856 Canadian news organizations across Facebook, Instagram, X,

Figure 3: News supply by platform over time. Number of posts from news organizations by social media platform over time (absolute and relative to January 2023). Panel B excludes Bluesky because the platform was not publicly available in January 2023.



YouTube, TikTok, and Bluesky between January 2023 and December 2025. [Figure 3](#) shows how the volume of posts from news organizations on each platform changed over that period.

Overall, the supply of news on social media in Canada declined during this period, largely due to the Meta news ban. On Facebook, the number of posts by news organizations declined by 65% between January 2023 and July 2024, the last full month covered by our data for that platform. On Instagram, posts declined by 74% over the full period.¹

We also observe a substantial decline on X, where posting activity fell by 55% between January 2023 and December 2025. This decline accelerated in November 2024, when Donald Trump was reelected president and appointed Elon Musk to lead the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). While the cause is difficult to fully attribute, the decline coincides with growing disengagement by news organizations under Musk's ownership and the governance changes that followed. CBC and Radio-Canada, for example, paused their X accounts in April 2023 after being labelled "government-funded media," and CBC has largely remained off the platform since.

In contrast, posting by news organizations increased on three platforms: Bluesky, YouTube, and TikTok. The largest increase occurred on Bluesky, which was not publicly accessible in January 2023 but accounted for roughly a quarter (25%) of all posts from news organizations by December 2025. Posting also increased on YouTube and TikTok, although these platforms still account for a relatively small share of total posts. In December 2025, YouTube accounted for 9.3% of posts and TikTok for 1.0%.

An increasingly fragmented online environment

Beyond the overall shift in the online media environment, platform use is far from uniform across news organizations. While news readers could previously encounter most news organizations on a single platform, the current information environment is increasingly fragmented: users of any given platform now see only a fraction of available news content—if any—and must navigate multiple platforms to stay informed. Media outlets differ markedly in how actively they use each platform and in the extent to which they have adopted newer platforms such as TikTok or Bluesky.

This pattern is illustrated in [Figure 4](#), which shows the top 5 news organizations by posting volume and engagement on each platform over the last six months of 2025. Legacy broadcasters dominate TikTok—where CBC and Bell Media's CTV alone account for the bulk of posts and engagement—while Narcity captures the largest share of both metrics on Instagram. The dynamics differ on X, where right-leaning outlets such as Rebel News, The Post Millennial, and Western Standard capture far more engagement than their share of posts would predict, and on Bluesky, where smaller independent and regional outlets (e.g., Cult MTL, The Tyee, Castanet) feature prominently alongside legacy media.

A disproportionate impact on local journalism

This fragmentation of media supply has been accompanied by an overall decline in the supply of local news on Canadian social media. To evaluate the impact of the Meta news ban and other changes in the information environment on local news

Figure 4: Top news organizations by platform. Top 5 news organizations by posting volume and engagement by platform (Jul–Dec 2025).

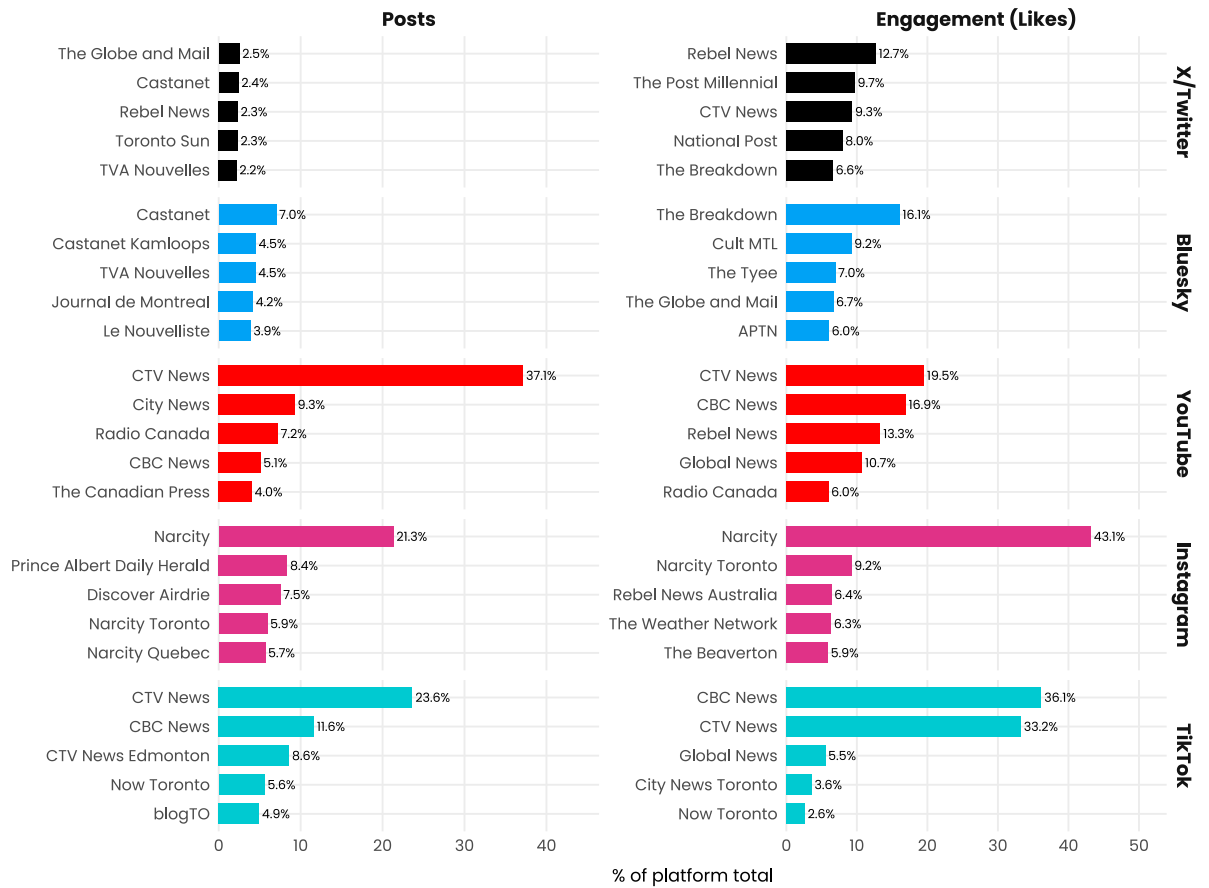


Figure 5: Local news decline after Meta ban. Change in post volume and engagement with news outlet posts by urban classification. Percent change comparing six months before vs. after the Meta news ban (August 1, 2023), all platforms.

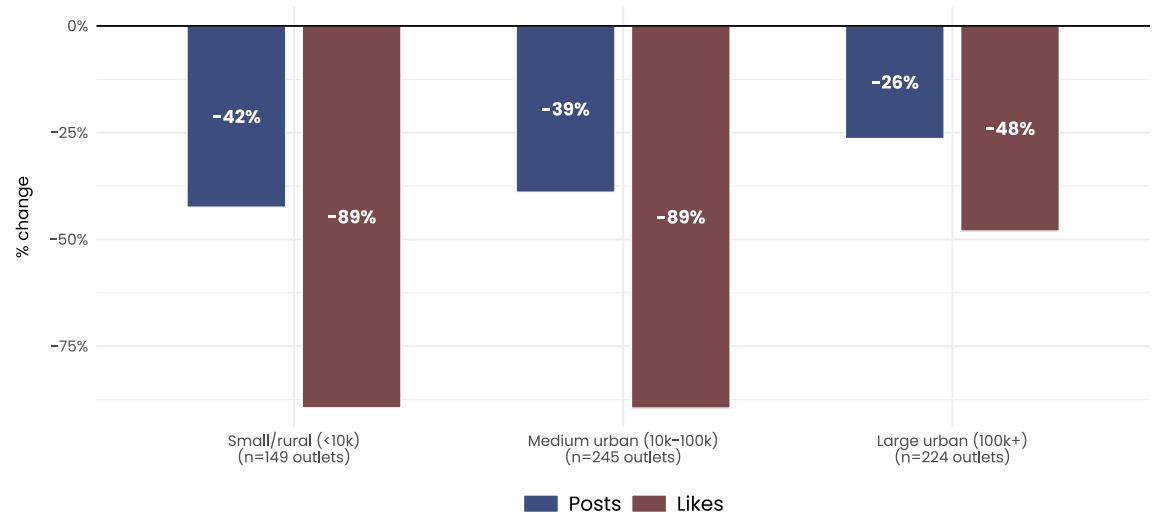
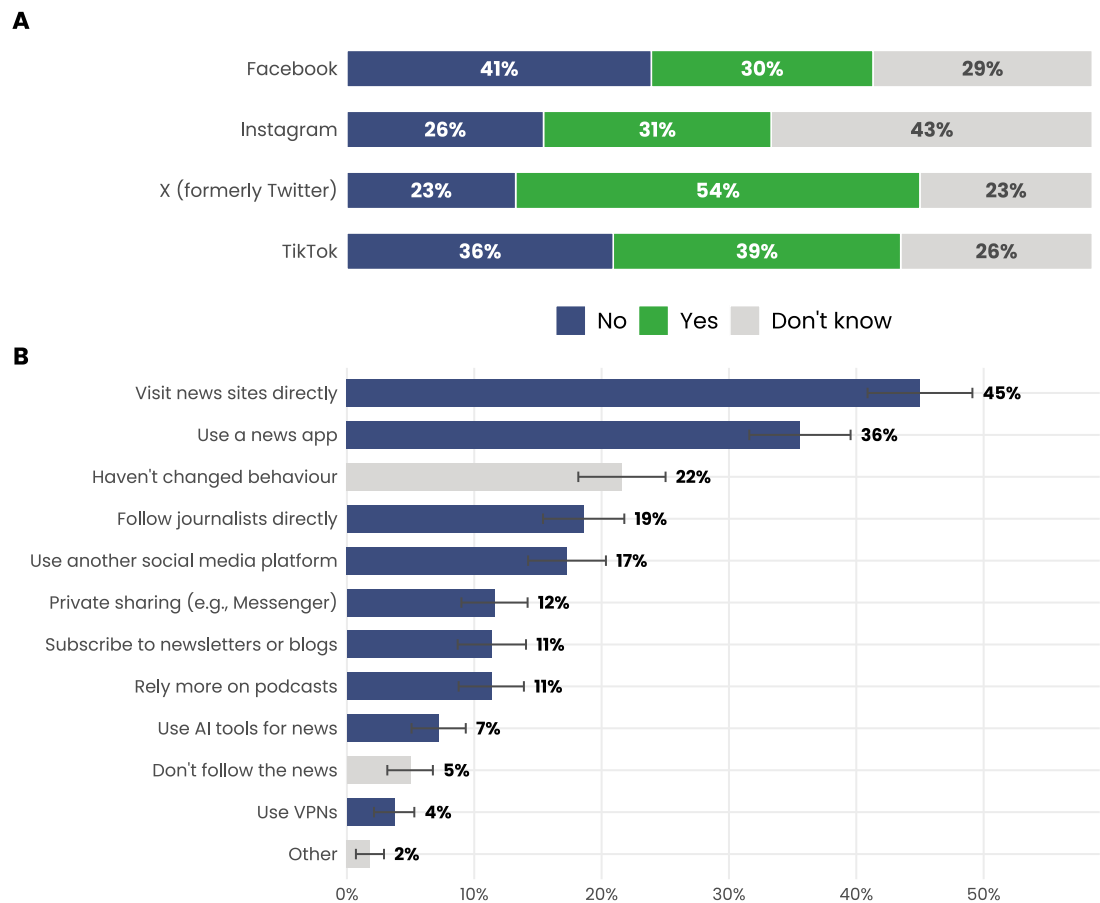


Figure 6: Meta news ban: awareness and behavioural responses. Panel A: “Are Canadian news outlets currently able to publish news on the following platforms?” among users of each platform. N = 1,241; margin of error ±2.8 pp (95% CI). Panel B: “Since Facebook and Instagram stopped allowing news links in Canada, have you started any of the following?” among Facebook/Instagram users aware of the ban. N = 605; margin of error ±4 pp (95% CI).



access, we matched our tracked news outlets with data from the [Local News Research Project](#), which provides geographic coordinates for local news outlets. We then extracted the urban classification for each city or town that includes a news outlet in our dataset based on data from the 2021 Census.

The results, summarized in [Figure 5](#), show that posting activity and engagement with content from news organizations declined sharply in the six months following the Meta news ban. News organizations in smaller towns were disproportionately affected. Engagement fell far more sharply in smaller markets, dropping 89% in both rural areas and mid-sized cities, versus 48% in large cities. This disproportionate impact also reflects financial pressures on the major owners of Canadian local newspapers during the same period—[Postmedia's debt restructuring](#), [SaltWire's creditor protection](#), and the [sale of Black Press](#)—each of which directly affected the supply of local news.

Looking at the share of local news outlets active on each platform between 2023 and 2025, very few outlets in smaller markets have adopted platforms beyond Facebook and X. By 2025,

just 27% of rural outlets (population under 10,000) remained active on X—down from 54% in 2023—and Bluesky was the only emerging platform with measurable uptake (5%); YouTube and TikTok each reached under 5% of rural outlets. Adoption is markedly higher in larger markets: in large urban communities (population over 100,000), 16% of outlets are active on YouTube and 26% on Bluesky. This gap may reflect the resource demands of producing video content, which smaller newsrooms often lack the capacity to sustain.

Question 3

How do Canadians come across news today, and what kinds of political information do they encounter and engage with?

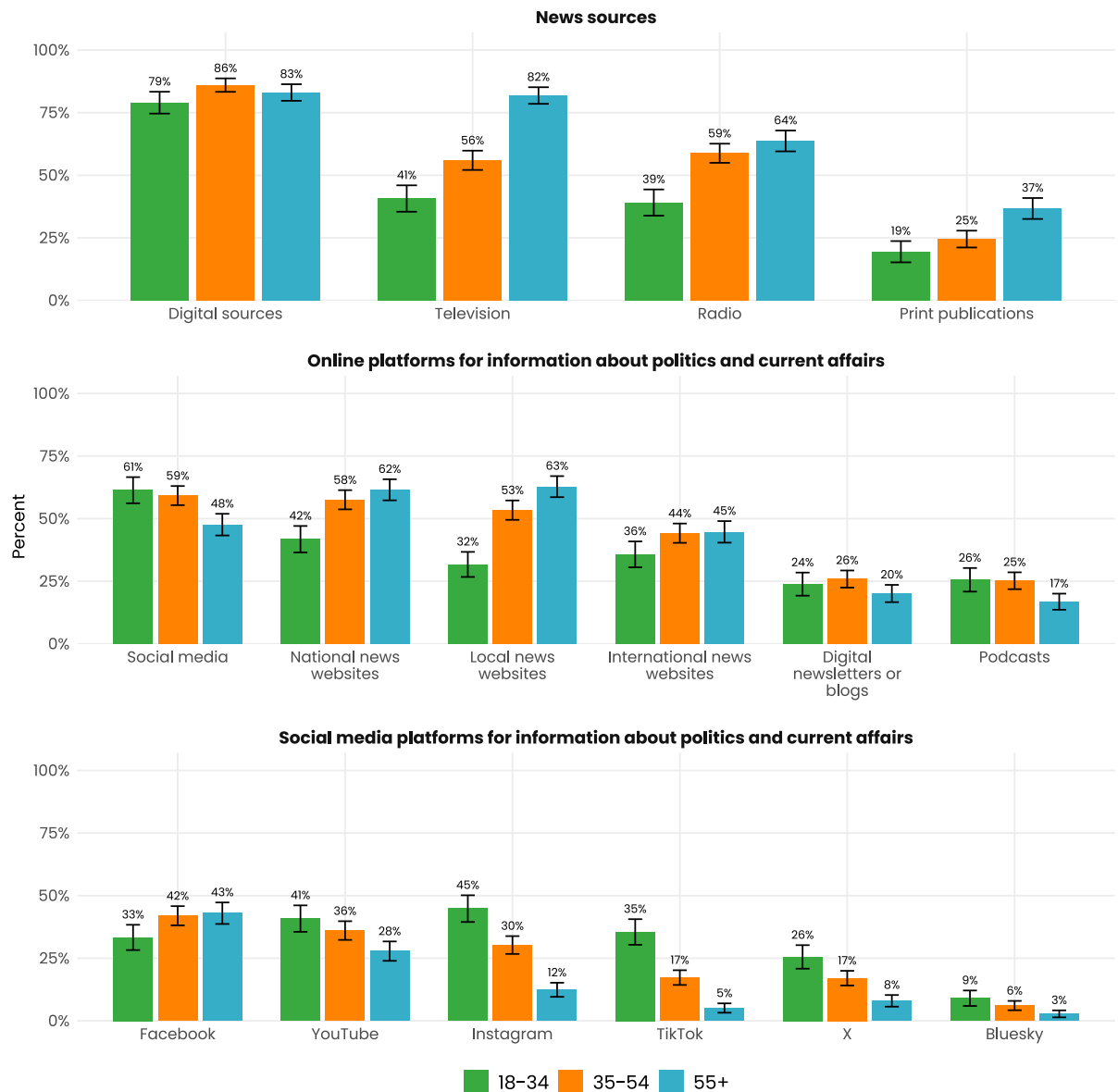
These changes in supply raise questions about the extent to which Canadians notice the major structural changes reshaping their information environment, and how they navigate news consumption in this evolving landscape.

Awareness and reactions to the Meta ban

In a [report](#) we published in August 2024, one year after the Meta news ban, we found that most Canadians were unaware that news organizations could no longer publish on Meta's platforms. We revisited these findings to examine whether awareness of the ban has changed over time, how perceptions differ relative to platforms that still allow news content, and whether users who are aware of the ban have adjusted their behaviours.

[Figure 6](#) reveals substantial public confusion and lack of awareness about the Meta news ban. When asked whether Canadian news outlets are currently able to publish news on Facebook and Instagram, only 41% of Facebook users and 26% of Instagram users correctly answered “no.” About a third incorrectly believe news outlets can still publish on Meta's platforms (30% of Facebook users and 31% of Instagram users), while many others say they do not know (29% of Facebook users and 43% of Instagram

Figure 7: Weekly news exposure by source and age.
Percent reporting at least weekly exposure by source type and age. Respondents who do not consume digital sources (middle panel) or who do not use a given platform (bottom panel) are counted as not encountering political content from those sources. $N = 1,518$; margin of error ± 2.5 pp (95% CI), all blocks.



users). This confusion likely reflects both limited attention to news among some users and the many informal ways news still circulates on these platforms—whether through private messages, screenshots of articles, or news-adjacent content that users perceive as news—even though news organizations themselves are formally blocked from posting.

We also observe surprisingly high ambiguity about whether news can be published on X and TikTok, even though news outlets are able to post on both platforms. Only 54% of X users and 39% of TikTok users correctly believe that news outlets can publish there. These patterns are concerning and suggest that many users lack a clear understanding of how platform policies shape the availability of news on social media.

Despite this general confusion, we observe clear behavioural adaptation among users who are aware of the Meta news ban. Among Facebook and Instagram users aware of the ban, 45% report that they started visiting news websites directly, and 36% say they now use a news app. Smaller but notable shares report following journalists directly (19%), using another social media platform (17%), sharing news via private messaging (12%), subscribing to newsletters or blogs (11%), or listening to podcasts (11%). Only 22% indicate they have not changed their behaviour, and very few report disengaging from news altogether (5%).

Where do Canadians get their news?

Beyond what news organizations supply and the policies reshaping that supply, the central question is what Canadians actually consume—where they turn for news today and how those habits differ across generations. Drawing on our nationally representative survey, we examine how Canadians across age groups access information about politics and current affairs. [Figure 7](#) shows that Canadians most commonly come across news through digital sources, but there are distinct age variations in how different sources are consumed. Weekly exposure to digital news is uniformly high across all age groups (about 80%). Older Canadians (55+) remain heavy users of television and radio, while younger adults (age 18–34) are far less reliant on those sources. On average, television and radio still reach a majority overall, but traditional print publications lag significantly behind other formats across all ages.

Social media, as well as national and local news websites, are predominant sources of political information. Younger Canadians (18–34) most often encounter political news via social media (61%), whereas older Canadians (55+) are more likely to access national or local news websites directly (62% and 63%, respectively). Platform use varies sharply by age: younger users mainly use Instagram (45%) and YouTube (41%) for political in-

formation, followed by TikTok (35%) and Facebook (about 33%). Across platforms, Facebook remains comparatively cross-generational (though stronger among age 35+ and 55+), and YouTube maintains broad reach. Despite Meta's ban on news in Canada, Canadians do not abandon Facebook as a source of political information. Workarounds, such as screenshots or repackaging information into images or videos, still contribute to a persistent news environment on Meta platforms.

Beyond the sources through which Canadians encounter news, we also examine whether they actively seek out or avoid news content online. Canadians are roughly evenly split: 35% report seeking news, 34% neither seek nor avoid it, and 31% actively avoid it. However, this overall balance masks sharp generational differences: older Canadians (55+) are more likely to seek out news (40%) than avoid it (27%), while younger Canadians (18–34) show the opposite pattern, with 35% avoiding news and only 25% seeking it out.

What Canadians want in their feeds

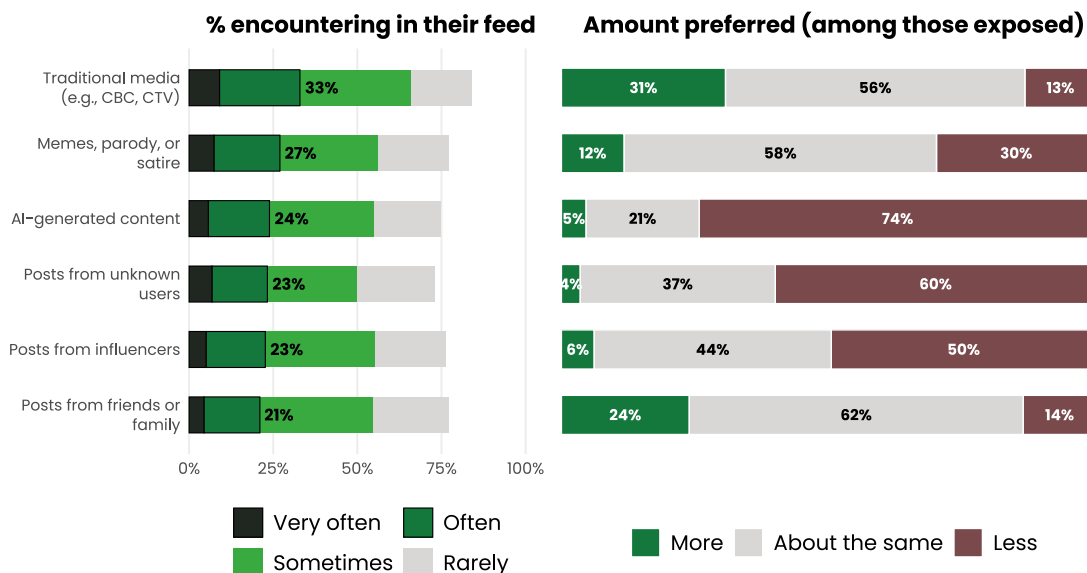
We next turn to the specific types of content about politics and current affairs that Canadians get exposed to when using social media. [Figure 8](#) shows how often people encounter content from different sources in their social media feeds and whether they want more or less of it. Between 21% and 33% of social media users report seeing each type of political content “often” or “very often,” with traditional media the most frequently encountered (33%) and posts from friends and family the least (21%). Overall, the findings suggest that newer and less conventional source types, from AI-generated content to memes to influencer posts, are perceived to be nearly as prevalent as traditional media in users’ political information feeds.

We asked respondents exposed to each type of content whether they would like to see more, about the same amount, or less of it in their social media feed. Posts from traditional media (31% vs. 13%) and from friends and family (24% vs. 14%) are the only two types of content where more Canadians would like to see more of it than less of it. The largest mismatch between the content respondents encounter versus what they would like to see concern AI-generated posts and posts from unknown users, which are encountered almost as frequently as posts from traditional media, but for which a strong majority would prefer to see less of (74% for AI-generated content, 60% for posts from unknown users).

The rise of short-form video formats

Beyond the source of posts, an equally important shift over the past few years is the rise of short-form video as a dominant

Figure 8: Exposure to and preference for political content.
Frequency of exposure to and preference for political content on social media. Panel A: N = 1,440; margin of error ± 2.6 pp (95% CI). Panel B: N = 1,065–1,201; margin of error ± 2.8 –3 pp (95% CI).



format for political content on social media. Popularized by TikTok and rapidly adopted by Instagram (Reels), YouTube (Shorts), and Facebook, short-form vertical video has reshaped how Canadians encounter news online. The format rewards quick, visual, personality-driven storytelling and is heavily amplified by platform recommendation algorithms that prioritize engagement, with research linking the shift to a tendency to oversimplify complex political issues (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2022; Klein 2026). [Figure 9](#) presents the share of posts and their engagement by format (text, images, and video) across news organizations, influencers, and politicians. Across all three groups, video content has grown substantially and now receives the largest share of engagement.

News organizations: Most posts remain text-based², typically featuring links with image previews, particularly on platforms such as X and Bluesky. However, the share of video posts has increased from 3% in January 2023 to 13% in December 2025. While they still represent a minority of posts, video content now accounts for 90% of all likes on news content. This change coincides with the Meta news ban, which prevents news organizations from posting (primarily text-based) content on Facebook, and the rise of TikTok, which now accounts for 77% of all likes on news organization posts.

Influencers: Influencers show a similar move away from text-only posts toward image- and video-based content. In contrast to news organizations, engagement levels remain stable across formats, with video content consistently receiving the highest share of engagement throughout the period.

Politicians: Among politicians, video content increases from 8% of posts in January 2023 to 21% in December 2025, although image-based posts remain the most common format. In terms of engagement, images dominated in 2023 but were overtaken by video content by late 2025.

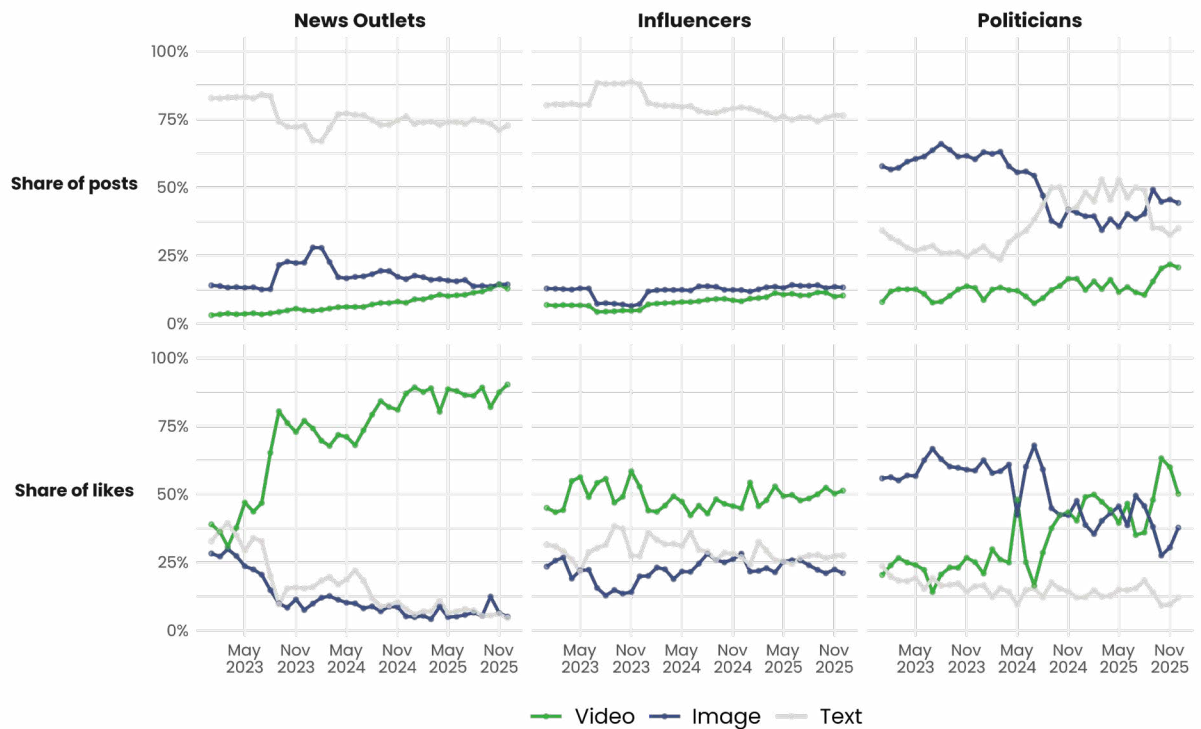
Taken together, the findings in this section show that Canadians encounter news through an increasingly fragmented environment. Generational divides shape where news is sought, platform awareness lags behind structural changes like the Meta news ban, and feeds increasingly carry content—particularly AI-generated and unknown-user posts—that audiences say they do not want. At the same time, short-form video—though still a minority of posts—now dominates engagement across actor types, reshaping how political information reaches Canadians’ attention.

Question 4

How does engagement with news organizations and other information sources change during major news events?

We wanted to evaluate whether news organizations still represent the go-to source of information on social media around major events. Our previous work measured how much engagement different actors receive across the Canadian information ecosystem, showing that political influencers receive more engagement overall than news organizations—though that report also found that the distribution of likes varies by event type, with wildfires, for example, generating relatively more attention

Figure 9: Content format trends. *Share of posts and likes by content format.*



for news outlets. The current analysis takes a complementary, event-response view: rather than averaging across the information environment, we focus on what happens when major news breaks, and whether Canadians still turn to news organizations to learn what is happening. The preferences reported above suggest they may. To test this, we use social media data to examine the engagement that news organizations and political influencers receive on social media around major news events.

We detected news events using an automated pipeline that scans our dataset for moments when discussion of a particular topic suddenly spikes. We first used topic modeling to identify the main topics of discussion across platforms during the study period, then flagged days when discussion of a given topic was at least three times higher than its recent baseline (the median daily volume over the preceding 30 days). We used a clustering algorithm (HDBSCAN) to group posts within each surge based on semantic similarity.

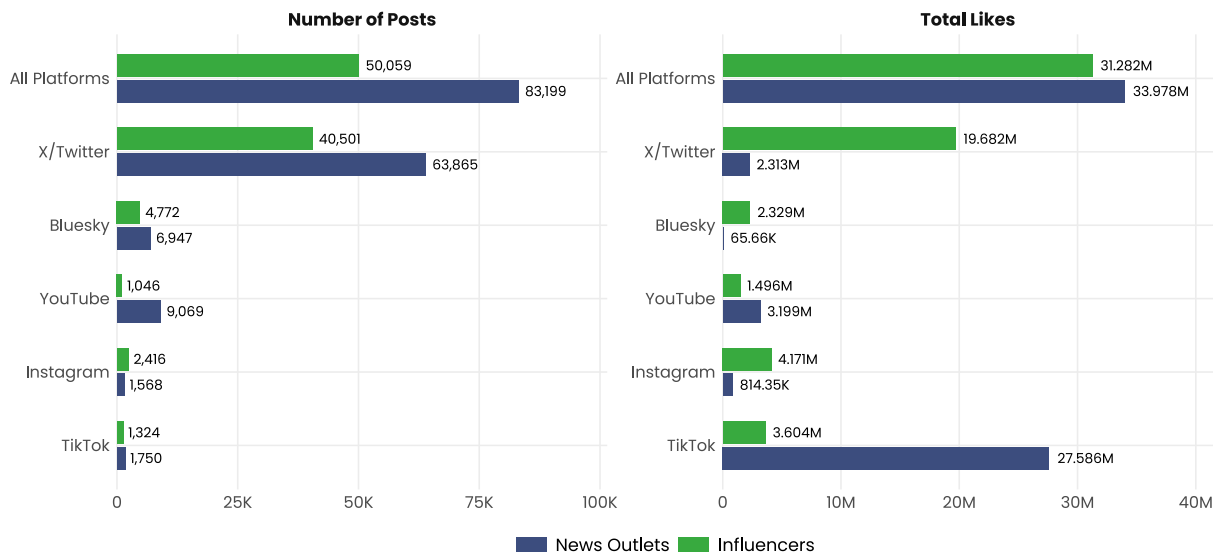
Each candidate event was validated using a large language model, which scored it on four dimensions: whether it represents a genuine news event, whether the top posts discuss the same event, whether it refers to a single identifiable event rather than a broad theme, and whether the detected time window is reasonable given the nature of the event. We retained 147 validated event detections that scored at least 4 out of 5 on all four metrics.

Several detections captured different framings of the same underlying story—for example, Trump’s 2024 election win was picked up as four overlapping detection clusters (the results, the Canadian-context discussion, and two Harris-centric framings). After consolidating these duplicate detections, we identified 135 distinct news events. The engagement analysis below aggregates posts across all 147 detection windows that back these 135 events, so each underlying event’s totals reflect all of its overlapping coverage. The full list is included in the Appendix.

These 135 events span a wide range of categories, including Canadian politics (48), U.S. politics (27), international news (19), the economy (13), the environment (e.g., wildfires; 11), sports (7), entertainment (3), science and technology (3), and social issues (4). Together, they capture the moments when public attention on social media converged most sharply on a single topic, providing a natural test case for whether Canadians turn to news organizations or to influencers when major stories break.

Figure 10 compares posting volumes and engagement between news organizations and influencers on X, Bluesky, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, across all posts related to these events. We identified 133,258 posts about these events: 83,199 from news outlets (62%) and 50,059 from political influencers (38%). The top panel in the figure shows that news organizations have posted

Figure 10: News event engagement by actor type. Posts and engagement by news organizations and influencers across 135 major news events (2023–2025). Posts within detected event windows.



more frequently about these events than influencers across all platforms, except for Instagram, where the Meta news ban since August 2023 has constrained their activity.

Despite the higher posting volume across platforms, engagement patterns vary sharply by platform and reveal important structural differences in how information circulates on each of them. On text-based platforms like X and Bluesky, influencers dominate engagement regardless of context. Although news organizations posted substantially more about events than influencers (63,865 vs. 40,501 posts on X; 6,947 vs. 4,772 posts on Bluesky), influencers captured 89% and 97% of engagement, respectively. These figures closely mirror baseline engagement distributions on these platforms, consistent with influencer dominance being a structural feature of these environments rather than a response to specific demand for information during major events.

On video-centric platforms like YouTube and TikTok, the dynamic shifts markedly during news events. News organizations capture the majority of engagement on TikTok (88%) and YouTube (68%). While TikTok accounts for only 2% of news outlet posts about major events, it generates over 80% of all their likes across platforms. Instagram is the exception: the Meta news ban has restricted the reach of media organizations, and influencers capture 84% of news-event engagement on the platform.

Within the news category itself, engagement is driven by very different types of outlets across platforms: traditional broadcasters like CBC and CTV dominate on TikTok and YouTube, right-wing outlets like Rebel News and The Post Millennial drive

most news engagement on X, and Narcity captures the bulk of the (much smaller) news engagement on Instagram.

Two robustness checks help qualify these patterns. On a likes-per-post basis, the platform rankings hold on TikTok (news outlets at about 15,800 likes per post versus about 2,700 for influencers), X (influencers at about 13× the news-outlet rate), Bluesky (about 52×), and Instagram (about 3×)—but reverse on YouTube, where influencers earn roughly 4× more likes per post, and news organizations’ majority share of overall YouTube engagement reflects their roughly 9× higher posting volume rather than higher per-post appeal. A second check, based on the median news-outlet share of likes within each event, aligns with the headline pattern on all five platforms (93% on TikTok and 76% on YouTube versus 11% on X, 9% on Bluesky, and 14% on Instagram), indicating that within any given event news content does tend to capture the larger share of engagement on YouTube as well.

Overall, although posts about detected events account for less than 1% of all content in our dataset, they generate 6.5% of all likes received by news outlets. This suggests that news organizations receive disproportionate engagement during moments of heightened public attention—particularly on TikTok and YouTube.

Question 5 What kind of content do news organizations and influencers produce?

To understand not just how much engagement different actors receive but what kind of content they actually produce, we coded 213,000 YouTube and TikTok video transcripts from news

Figure 11: Content characteristics of news organizations and influencers.
Coding across content function, information sourcing, and quality (specificity, contextualization, emotional intensity). LLM coding of 1,219,577 transcript chunks from 160,078 YouTube and TikTok videos (2025).

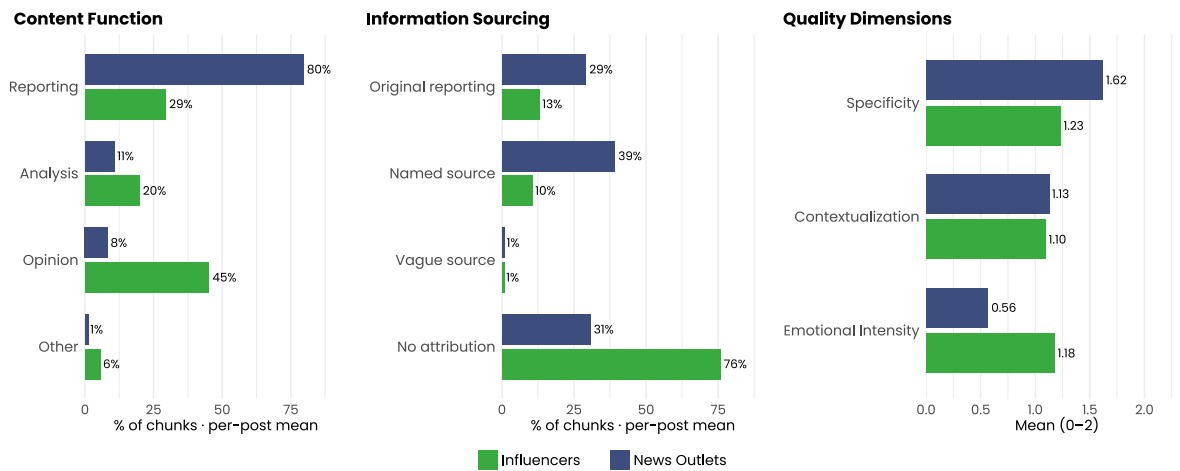
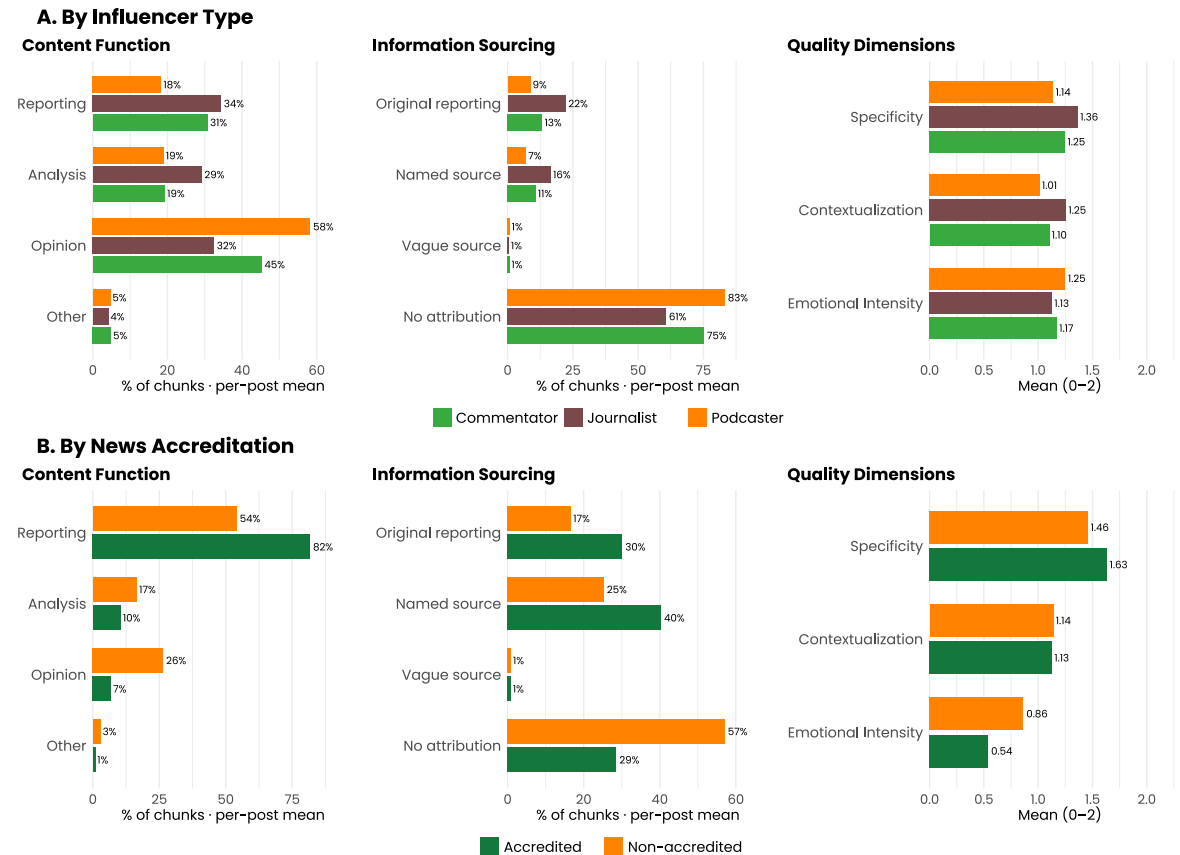


Figure 12: Content characteristics by subgroup. Panel A disaggregates influencers by type (commentators, podcasters, and journalists classified as influencers). Smaller influencer subtypes (e.g., public educators, comics) are omitted for readability. Panel B compares accredited news outlets (members of recognized Canadian journalism standards bodies) to non-accredited outlets. "Other" in Content Function pools personal reaction, humor/satire, and mobilization. Same coding and sample as Figure 11.



organizations and influencers, posted between January 1 and December 31, 2025, using a large language model. We focus on these two platforms because they are where news engagement is concentrated: as shown in Question 4, TikTok and YouTube account for the vast majority of likes on news organization content, making them the platforms where the content audiences actually engage with is produced. Each transcript was segmented into approximately one-minute chunks and coded on six dimensions: one filter category (topical relevance), two categorical (content function and information sourcing) and three ordinal (specificity, contextualization, and emotional intensity). We use the topical relevance filter to identify posts about politics and current affairs so that news organizations and influencers are compared on the same kind of content. The categorical dimensions appear as separate panels in [Figure 11](#); the ordinal dimensions, each summarized by a single mean score, share a third panel.

Not all influencers see themselves as news producers—many, particularly commentators sharing opinion or reactions, are not attempting to meet journalism’s editorial objectives. We compare them to news organizations because Canadians increasingly encounter both kinds of content side-by-side in the same feeds, and Question 1 suggests that audiences do not consistently distinguish between them. The comparison does not mean to suggest that influencers should be doing journalism but simply to highlight how, in a context of a declining supply of news on social media, the content that it is being replaced with cannot be conceived as a substitute as it does not respond to the same objectives.

[Figure 11](#) reveals systematic differences in what news organizations and influencers produce. News outlet content is dominated by reporting (80% of transcript chunks), while influencer content is spread across opinion (45%), reporting (29%), and analysis (20%). The sourcing gap is even more stark: 76% of influencer content presents information with no attribution, compared to 31% for news outlets, which are far more likely to cite named sources (39% vs. 10%) or present original reporting (29% vs. 13%). On the ordinal quality dimensions, news organizations score higher on specificity (1.62 vs. 1.23) and similar on contextualization (1.13 vs. 1.10), while influencer content registers higher emotional intensity (1.18 vs. 0.56). These patterns are consistent across both YouTube and TikTok. Influencers are not simply doing what news organizations do with more engagement—they produce systematically different content, with less attribution, less specificity, and more emotional charge.

These differences are not uniform within either category. Among influencers ([Figure 12](#), Panel A), the three types emphasize different functions: commentators—the largest group—lean

toward opinion (45%) while still doing substantial reporting (31%) and some analysis (19%); podcasters lean most heavily toward opinion (58%); and journalists classified as influencers³ are the most balanced of the three, with the most reporting (34%) and analysis (29%) and higher rates of named sourcing (16% vs. 7% for podcasters). Yet all three remain far from the news-outlet profile: even journalist-influencers devote only 34% of their content to reporting (versus 80% for news outlets) and present 61% of claims with no attribution.

To be sure, these aggregates should not obscure the variation among our relatively large subgroups of influencers. The data shows that a meaningful subset function less as opinion-givers than as explainers, producing substantive, well-contextualized analysis in a measured tone—in some cases matching or exceeding news organizations on context and emotional restraint. This content offers real informational value, even though, like influencer content generally, it less often attributes claims to explicit sources and centers on analysis and interpretation rather than first-hand reporting. The gap between journalistic and influencer content is real and, on average, large, but it is a difference in function and form rather than a blanket judgment about quality.

Among news outlets ([Figure 12](#), Panel B), accredited outlets devote 82% of their content to reporting, compared to just 54% for non-accredited outlets, which instead spread their output across opinion (26%) and analysis (17%). Non-accredited outlets also register substantially higher emotional intensity (0.86 vs. 0.54), producing content that in some respects is a middle ground between the influencer profile and the accredited news profile. Accreditation, in other words, marks a meaningful dividing line not just in institutional legitimacy but in the kind of content audiences encounter.

Conclusion

These findings describe a Canadian news ecosystem in structural transition, driven by platform-level decisions like the Meta news ban and X’s restructuring under Musk’s ownership; the migration of audiences and political content toward influencers and short-form video; and the uneven adoption of newer platforms by news organizations themselves, which has hit smaller and local outlets the hardest. Together, these forces have produced a more fragmented news landscape in which different outlets reach different audiences on different platforms, engagement no longer follows posting volume, and the line between journalism and other forms of political content is increasingly blurred, contributing to a broadening definition of what con-

stitutes “news.” While news and influencer content both serve audiences in valuable ways, our content analysis demonstrates that they serve different functions, and that one should not be considered a substitute for the decline of the other.

These shifts have begun to reshape who can produce, find, and share reliable political information in Canada. Some, like the Meta news ban itself, unfold largely outside public awareness. Others are more visible: Canadians report seeing AI-generated content and posts from unknown users in their political feeds nearly as often as traditional media, even though they say they would rather see more from traditional media and from friends and family.

These findings carry meaningful implications for platform governance and the future of journalism in Canada, marking a structural and behavioural shift in how news is disseminated and understood. As platform design and AI features continue to evolve rapidly, news organizations must adapt to keep their content accessible to Canadians. How platforms, news organizations, and policymakers respond will have lasting consequences for the information environment Canadians rely on and for the quality of democratic discourse.

Methodology

Social Media Data

Social media data in this brief covers January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025, across six platforms: Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, TikTok, and Bluesky. The data infrastructure builds on the Can-PolNews dataset (Pehlivan et al. 2025), which provides a comprehensive multi-platform record of Canadian political discourse. We extended the original dataset—which covered four platforms (X, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) through January 2025—by adding Facebook and Bluesky, extending coverage through December 2025, and incorporating political influencer accounts alongside news organizations and politicians.

Seed list construction. We identified 856 Canadian news organizations operating at national and local levels. News outlets were defined as publishing organizations registered or incorporated in Canada that produce original content on a regular basis and are publicly independent from the entities they cover. The initial list drew on Media Cloud’s “national” and “state-local” databases of Canadian news outlets, which were manually reviewed to confirm operational status. Each outlet’s social media handles across all six platforms were collected by a team of research assistants. A news outlet was categorized as accredited if it is a member of at least one professional news

or broadcasting association (the National NewsMedia Council, Press Forward, the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council, or the Radio Television Digital News Association), received funding from the Canadian Journalism Collective under the Online News Act, or is listed as a qualifying digital news organization by the Canada Revenue Agency. Political influencer accounts were identified using an operational, data-driven definition: individuals or groups who (i) consistently produce content on Canadian politics or current affairs, (ii) generate measurable audience engagement on those topics, and (iii) operate independently from established news organizations, political parties, and government. Candidate accounts were surfaced through platform-native search, engagement-based discovery within our existing dataset, and manual review against this rule; each was reviewed by research assistants before inclusion. The final dataset tracks approximately 1,000 political influencer accounts.

Data collection by platform. On X, we used a web scraping library that queries the platform’s advanced search functionality, collecting data on a bi-weekly basis. On TikTok, we used a web scraping library that performs full reverse-chronological collections for each account on a weekly basis. On Instagram, we collected data via Meta’s CrowdTangle API from January 2023 through its shutdown on August 14, 2024; after that date, we transitioned to a custom scraping solution running on a weekly basis. On YouTube, we used the YouTube Data API v3 to collect post metadata including engagement metrics. On Bluesky, we collected data via the platform’s public API. On Facebook, data was collected exclusively through CrowdTangle; all Facebook analysis therefore ends in August 2024.

We collected all data at least 72 hours after posting to ensure comparable engagement metrics. Engagement is measured via likes across all platforms; other metrics (views, shares, comments) are not consistently available and are not used. Our dataset consists of 8,961,693 posts from 856 news organizations between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025. All data are stored in Elasticsearch and normalized across platforms following the schema described in Pehlivan et al. (2025).

Survey Data

We conducted a bilingual (English and French) online survey between January 8 and January 13, 2026, as part of MEO’s monthly national tracking program. The survey was administered via Qualtrics using Léger’s online panel, with quota sampling based on Statistics Canada benchmarks for region, age, and gender. Respondents were compensated through Léger’s standard panel reward program. A total of 1,814 respondents completed the survey; after excluding those who failed either of two attention

checks (a bogus-item screen and an instructed-response item), the final analytical sample included 1,518 respondents.

All survey-based analyses use post-stratification weights constructed via raking. We raked on gender and age group (18–34, 35–54, 55+) within six regions (Alberta, British Columbia, Atlantic provinces, Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan/Manitoba), using Statistics Canada population benchmarks. Raking weights were trimmed to the range [0.1, 8] and scaled by each region's population share. The survey includes two experimental conditions for the news definition questions ([Figure 1](#)), differing in whether respondents were asked to imagine encountering the content or first hearing about the event through it. The substantive pattern across content types does not meaningfully vary between conditions—the relative ordering of content types is identical, and the joint condition-by-content interaction is not statistically significant—so the two conditions are pooled for analysis. Because Léger's panel is a non-probability sample, reported margins of error are approximate and assume a simple random sample design.

Survey questions and response categories. The following questions from MEO's January 2026 tracking survey were used in this brief.

News sources. “How often do you get news from...” Television; Radio; Print publications (e.g., newspapers, magazines); Digital sources (e.g., smartphone, computer, tablet). Response categories (stored values in the dataset in parentheses): Never (1), Monthly (2), Weekly (3), Daily (4), Several times each day (5).

Online news sources for politics and current affairs. “When you use each of these news information sources, how often do you read, watch, listen to, or share politics and current affairs content, specifically?” National news websites (e.g., CBC, CTV, Globe & Mail, etc.); International news websites (e.g., New York Times, BBC, CNN, Fox News, etc.); Local TV news and newspaper websites; Social media websites and apps (e.g., X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, etc.); Podcasts; Digital newsletters or blogs (e.g., Substack). Response categories (stored values in the dataset in parentheses, after Qualtrics zero-indexed recoding): Never (0), Monthly (1), Weekly (2), Daily (3), Several times each day (4).

Social media usage. “How often do you use each of the social media apps and websites listed below (for any reason)?” Facebook; YouTube; Instagram; X (formerly Twitter); TikTok; Snapchat; Bluesky; Reddit; WhatsApp; Telegram; VK; WeChat; Weibo; RedNote; Douyin; Line. Response categories (stored values in parentheses, after Qualtrics zero-indexed recoding): Never (0), Monthly (1), Weekly (2), Daily (3), Several times each day (4).

Social media for politics and current affairs. Shown conditionally based on platforms used. “When you use each of these social media apps, how often do you read, watch, listen to, or share politics and current affairs content, specifically?” Facebook; YouTube; Instagram; X (formerly Twitter); TikTok; Bluesky. Response categories (stored values in parentheses, after Qualtrics zero-indexed recoding): Never (0), Monthly (1), Weekly (2), Daily (3), Several times each day (4).

News definition experiment. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Each content type was shown on a separate page as a slider. Condition 1: “Suppose a major political event occurred in Canada. If the first time you heard about it was through the following type of post on social media, would you consider it ‘news’?” Condition 2: “Suppose a major political event occurred in Canada. If you came across the following type of post on social media, would you consider it ‘news’?” Content types (shown one at a time, in randomized order): A post from a media organization (e.g. CTV, TVA) describing the event; A post from an influencer describing the event; AI-generated content describing the event; A meme or parody describing the event; A post from an unknown user sharing live footage of the event; A post from a friend or family member describing the event. Response scale: Definitely not news (0) to Definitely news (10).

Feed exposure. “How often do you encounter the following types of content about politics and current affairs in your social media feed?” Stories from traditional media outlets (e.g., CBC, CTV); Posts from friends or family; Posts from influencers; Memes, parody, or satire; AI-generated content; Posts from unknown users. Response options: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Very often (5).

Feed preferences. “How much of the following types of content would you like to see in your social media feed?” Stories from traditional media outlets (e.g., CBC, CTV); Posts from friends or family; Posts from influencers; Memes, parody, or satire; AI-generated content; Posts from unknown users. Response options: Less (1), About the same (2), More (3).

Meta news ban awareness. “To the best of your knowledge, are Canadian news outlets (like CBC, CTV, Radio-Canada) currently able to publish news content about politics and current affairs on the following platforms?” Facebook; X (formerly Twitter); TikTok; Instagram. Response options: Yes (1), No (2), Don't know (3).

Meta news ban reactions. Shown to those aware of the ban. “Since Facebook and Instagram stopped allowing news links on their platforms in Canada in 2023, have you started any of the following? Please select all that apply.” Circulating news

135 Detected News Events by Category (January 2023 - December 2025)

Canadian Politics (48)			U.S. Politics (27)			International (19)		
• North American Leaders' Summit, Mexico City	Jan 04-Jan 12, 2023		• Trump expects arrest by Manhattan DA	Mar 16-Mar 23, 2023		• Wagner leader Prigozhin dies in crash	Aug 22-Aug 26, 2023	
• Pressure for inquiry on Chinese interference	Mar 05-Mar 08, 2023		• Trump indicted on hush money charges	Mar 30-Apr 06, 2023		• Hamas attack on Israel, October 7	Oct 07-Oct 13, 2023	
• Liberal MP Han Dong interference scandal	Mar 21-Mar 25, 2023		• Biden announces 2024 re-election campaign	Apr 25-Apr 27, 2023		• Milei wins Argentina presidential election	Nov 19-Nov 24, 2023	
• Biden state visit to Canada	Mar 22-Mar 26, 2023		• Trump liable for E. Jean Carroll abuse	May 09-May 12, 2023		• Russia's massive missile barrage on Ukraine	Dec 27-Dec 31, 2023	
• Alberta election: UCP wins majority	May 27-May 31, 2023		• CNN Trump town hall sparks controversy	May 09-May 15, 2023		• Second anniversary of Russia-Ukraine invasion	Feb 22-Feb 27, 2024	
• NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania	Jul 10-Jul 14, 2023		• Trump indicted on classified documents	Jun 09-Jun 14, 2023		• Baltimore Key Bridge collapses	Mar 25-Mar 29, 2024	
• RCMP officer charged with foreign interference	Jul 20-Jul 24, 2023		• Trump indicted third time (election plot)	Jul 31-Aug 05, 2023		• ICC seeks warrants; ICJ orders Israel ceasefire	May 20-May 26, 2024	
• Speaker Rota resigns (Nazi veteran scandal)	Sep 20-Oct 03, 2023		• Trump 18 co-defendants indicted in Georgia	Aug 14-Aug 17, 2023		• Venezuela disputed election: Maduro claims win	Jul 28-Aug 02, 2024	
• Carbon tax exemption for home heating oil	Oct 26-Nov 09, 2023		• Trump surrenders at Fulton County jail	Aug 23-Aug 26, 2023		• Israel pager attack on Hezbollah	Sep 17-Sep 20, 2024	
• Carbon tax exemption controversy deepens	Nov 05-Nov 09, 2023		• Trump ordered to pay \$355M fraud penalty	Feb 14-Feb 18, 2024		• Iran launches missiles at Israel	Sep 29-Oct 03, 2024	
• Canadian Dental Care Plan announced	Dec 11-Dec 13, 2023		• Biden delivers 2024 State of the Union	Mar 06-Mar 10, 2024		• ICC issues arrest warrant for Netanyahu	Nov 19-Nov 23, 2024	
• Canada votes for UN Gaza ceasefire	Dec 12-Dec 15, 2023		• Trump hush money criminal trial begins	Apr 13-Apr 18, 2024		• Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire takes effect	Nov 24-Nov 29, 2024	
• RCMP officer charged with foreign interference	Mar 30-Apr 03, 2024		• Trump found guilty on all 34 counts	May 28-Jun 02, 2024		• Syrian rebels overthrow Assad regime	Dec 07-Dec 13, 2024	
• Foreign interference inquiry report on China	May 01-May 07, 2024		• First Biden-Trump 2024 presidential debate	Jun 26-Jun 29, 2024		• Israel-Hamas ceasefire and hostage exchange	Jan 13-Jan 21, 2025	
• BC United dissolves before election	Aug 27-Sep 06, 2024		• Trump assassination attempt at rally	Jul 13-Jul 21, 2024		• Israel breaks Gaza ceasefire, resumes strikes	Mar 15-Mar 21, 2025	
• Singh ends NDP-Liberal supply agreement	Oct 14-Oct 20, 2024		• Biden withdraws, endorses Kamala Harris	Jul 19-Jul 26, 2024		• Pope Francis dies; conclave begins	Apr 21-Apr 26, 2025	
• RCMP alleges Indian diplomats in crime	Oct 15-Oct 18, 2024		• Harris picks Tim Walz as running mate	Aug 04-Aug 08, 2024		• India-Pakistan military conflict and ceasefire	May 06-May 12, 2025	
• Trudeau: Conservative MPs in foreign networks	Oct 26-Oct 31, 2024		• Harris accepts Democratic nomination	Aug 21-Aug 24, 2024		• American cardinal elected Pope Leo XIV	May 07-May 09, 2025	
• 24 Liberal MPs demand Trudeau resign	Nov 26-Dec 06, 2024		• Harris-Trump presidential debate	Sep 09-Sep 13, 2024		• Israel and US strike Iranian nuclear sites	Jun 11-Jun 26, 2025	
• BC NDP wins provincial election	Dec 16-Dec 21, 2024		• Vance-Walz vice presidential debate	Oct 01-Oct 10, 2024		Environment (11)		
• Trudeau visits Trump at Mar-a-Lago	Dec 16-Dec 20, 2024		• Trump wins 2024 presidential election	Nov 03-Nov 09, 2024		• Turkey-Syria earthquake kills thousands	Feb 06-Feb 14, 2023	
• FreeLand resigns as Finance Minister	Jan 06-Jan 11, 2025		• Biden pardons son Hunter Biden	Dec 02-Dec 04, 2024		• Tornado hits Ottawa suburb Barrhaven	Jul 11-Jul 15, 2023	
• Trump '51st state' comments provoke Canada	Jan 06-Jan 10, 2025		• Trump sentenced: unconditional discharge	Jan 08-Jan 11, 2025		• Hurricane Idalia hits Florida	Aug 28-Sep 01, 2023	
• NDP non-confidence motion against Trudeau	Jan 28-Jan 31, 2025		• Trump inauguration and first executive orders	Jan 18-Jan 23, 2025		• Iceland Fagradalsfjall volcano erupts	Dec 16-Dec 21, 2023	
• Foreign interference inquiry final report	Jan 29-Feb 02, 2025		• Trump-Zelenskyy tense Oval Office confrontation	Feb 26-Mar 07, 2025		• UN plastics treaty negotiations in Ottawa	Apr 19-May 02, 2024	
• Carney pledges to eliminate carbon tax	Mar 09-Mar 15, 2025		• Putin-Trump meet in Anchorage on Ukraine	Aug 13-Aug 26, 2025		• Jasper wildfire forces town evacuation	Jul 21-Jul 28, 2024	
• Carney wins Liberal leadership, becomes PM	Mar 12-Mar 19, 2025		• Trump and RFK Jr. link Tylenol to autism	Sep 22-Sep 26, 2025		• Hurricane Milton hits Florida west coast	Oct 08-Oct 11, 2024	
• Carney cancels carbon tax; critics react	Mar 29-Apr 09, 2025		Economy (13)			• Earthquake near Sechart, British Columbia	Feb 20-Feb 24, 2025	
• Liberal candidate Chiang's China bounty remark	Mar 31-Apr 03, 2025		• Federal public service strike ends	Apr 29-May 03, 2023		• Magnitude 7.7 earthquake devastates Myanmar	Mar 26-Mar 31, 2025	
• Carbon tax rate set to zero	Apr 15-Apr 18, 2025		• LCBO strike ends with tentative agreement	Jul 17-Jul 21, 2024		• Massive quake off Russia, BC tsunami alert	Jul 30-Jul 30, 2025	
• Federal leaders' debate	Apr 29-May 03, 2025		• Trump threatens 25% tariffs on Canada	Nov 26-Nov 30, 2024		• Massive fire in Hong Kong housing complex	Nov 18-Nov 29, 2025	
• Polievre loses Carleton seat in election	May 04-May 08, 2025		• Amazon closes Quebec warehouses, 1,800 layoffs	Jan 22-Jan 24, 2025		Sports (7)		
• PM Carney meets Trump at White House	May 12-May 16, 2025		• Trump imposes 25% tariffs on Canadian goods	Jan 31-Feb 05, 2025		• World Junior Hockey: Canada wins gold	Jan 03-Jan 08, 2023	
• Carney swears in new cabinet	May 26-May 28, 2025		• Canada retaliates with 25% tariffs on US	Mar 03-Mar 07, 2025		• NHL announces return to 2026 Olympics	Jan 29-Feb 04, 2024	
• King Charles delivers Canadian Throne Speech	Jun 14-Jun 18, 2025		• Canada responds to Trump's 50% steel tariffs	May 28-Jun 06, 2025		• Copa America: Canada reaches semifinals	Jul 04-Jul 17, 2024	
• Carney-Trump meet at G7 in Kananaskis	Jul 24-Aug 03, 2025		• Trump: Canada deal possible 'within days'	Jun 15-Jun 18, 2025		• Summer McIntosh wins three Olympic golds	Jul 27-Aug 03, 2024	
• Carney formally recognizes Palestine	Sep 19-Sep 25, 2025		• Trump terminates all trade talks with Canada	Jun 27-Jul 02, 2025		• Calgary Flames honor late Johnny Gaudreau	Dec 01-Dec 05, 2024	
• Battle River-Crowfoot by-election, 200+ candidates	Oct 05-Oct 10, 2025		• Trump announces 35% tariffs on Canadian goods	Jul 09-Jul 12, 2025		• Canada wins 4 Nations Face-Off title	Feb 18-Feb 23, 2025	
• Polievre wins Battle River-Crowfoot byelection	Oct 24-Oct 31, 2025		• Trump raises Canadian tariffs to 35%	Jul 29-Aug 03, 2025		• Blue Jays vs. Dodgers in World Series	Oct 20-Nov 02, 2025	
• Carney meets Xi Jinping at APEC	Oct 28-Nov 03, 2025		• Air Canada flight attendants go on strike	Aug 15-Aug 21, 2025		Science/Tech (3)		
• Carney's first budget passes 170-168	Nov 15-Nov 20, 2025		• Canada removes tariffs on CUSMA-compliant goods	Aug 20-Aug 23, 2025		• Meta launches Threads, Twitter rival	Jul 04-Jul 11, 2023	
• Zelenskyy meets Carney in Halifax	Dec 25-Dec 31, 2025					• Annular solar eclipse visible across Canada	Oct 11-Oct 16, 2023	
						• Total solar eclipse across North America	Apr 05-Apr 09, 2024	
						Entertainment (3)		
						• Taylor Swift releases Tortured Poets Dept.	Apr 17-Apr 22, 2024	
						• Taylor Swift Eras Tour in Toronto	Nov 11-Nov 16, 2024	
						• Taylor Swift ends Eras Tour in Vancouver	Dec 03-Dec 11, 2024	
						Social Issue (4)		
						• Antisemitic incidents surge in Montreal	Nov 06-Nov 14, 2023	
						• Pro-Palestinian encampment at U of Toronto	Apr 30-May 04, 2024	
						• Khalistani attack on Hindu temple, Brampton	Nov 02-Nov 07, 2024	
						• Canada loses measles elimination status	Nov 10-Nov 14, 2025	

Figure 13: Event table. The 135 unique news events used in the engagement analysis (Question 4).

content through private sharing (e.g., Messenger) (1); Using another social media platform to see news content (2); Visiting news websites directly instead of through social media (3); Using a news app (e.g., CBC News, Global News, Apple News) (4); Subscribing to digital newsletters or blogs (5); Following journalists or commentators directly (6); Using VPNs to bypass restrictions (7); Relying more on podcasts for news (8); Using AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google's Gemini) to get news summaries (9); Other (specify) (10); I haven't changed my behaviour (11); I don't follow the news (12).

News avoidance/selection (January 2026 MEO tracking survey). “Whenever you are online, do you find yourself trying to avoid news content or seeking it out?” Response options: Constantly

avoiding (0); Often avoiding (1); Occasionally avoiding (2); I don't try to avoid it, but I don't seek it out either (3); Occasionally seeking out (4); Often seeking out (5); Constantly seeking out (6).

Event Detection

We detected events using an automated pipeline with three stages. First, we applied topic modeling to identify the main topics of discussion across platforms during the study period, then flagged days when discussion of a given topic spiked to at least three times its recent baseline (the median daily volume over the preceding 30 days). Second, we used HDBSCAN to cluster semantically similar posts within each surge into candidate events. Third, each candidate event was validated

Figure 14: Content classification schema. Schema of the LLM-based content classification used in Question 5: extraction, sampling, and coding across six dimensions, with the prompt and category definitions used for each dimension.

Content coding scheme

LLM-based coding of full video transcripts from Canadian news organizations and influencers on YouTube and TikTok

212,764 posts coded • January – December 2025

YouTube • 151,338

TikTok • 61,426

SIX DIMENSIONS • EACH CODED INDEPENDENTLY WITH QWEN3.6-35B-A3B

Topic relevance

Is this content about news, politics, or current affairs? This screens whether the chunk is the kind of content that can be meaningfully compared against journalism, separating substantive public-affairs content from everything else a creator might post.

Political — About government, elections, political parties, candidates, public policy, legislation, courts ruling on political matters, political figures acting in their political role, protests/movements with a political aim, or partisan debate. The substance is who holds power and how it is used.

Current affairs — About real-world news events that are not primarily party-political: crime and public safety, the economy and business, disasters and weather emergencies, public health, war and international affairs, science and the environment as news, major social events, or other breaking/ongoing news. Reports on what is happening in the world.

Off-topic — Not news or public affairs. Lifestyle, entertainment, celebrity gossip, gaming, music, sports results/commentary, product reviews, promotion or advertising, giveaways, personal vlogging, relationship/wellness talk, how-to/tutorial content, cooking, travel for leisure, or reaction content with no news substance.

Content function

What is the post primarily doing? If the post serves two distinct functions, code the dominant one as primary and the other as secondary. If the post does only one thing, set secondary_function to "none".

Reporting — Conveys factual information about what happened (who, what, when, where). The primary purpose is to inform.

Analysis — Interprets or explains events: provides context, cause-and-effect reasoning, historical comparison, or expert assessment.

Opinion — Expresses a personal evaluative stance, argument, or recommendation. The primary purpose is to persuade or evaluate.

Mobilization — Calls for action: sign a petition, attend a protest, contact your MP, donate, vote, boycott.

Amplification — Shares or links to other content with minimal or no original contribution (e.g., "Check out this video", repost with no commentary).

Humor / satire — Uses humor, irony, sarcasm, or satire as the primary mode.

Personal reaction — Expresses personal emotional response without substantive information or argument ("I can't believe this", "This is insane").

Information sourcing

How does the post attribute the information it presents?

Original reporting — Contains evidence of original information-gathering: direct quotes obtained by the poster, on-scene observation, documents, or data analysis performed by the poster.

Named journalistic source — Names or links to a specific news organization, journalist, or news report as the origin of the information (e.g., "According to CBC...", "as the Globe reported...").

Named other source — Names a non-journalistic source: government press release, official statement, NGO report, court filing, academic study, etc.

Vague source — Attributes information to an unnamed or vague source ("reports say...", "sources indicate...", "people are saying...").

No attribution — Presents claims or information as self-evident with no indication of where it comes from.

Specificity

How specific is the language the post uses? Measure the density of concrete referents — named people, named organizations, numbers, dates, specific locations, direct quotes. This captures how checkable the content is in principle, independent of whether the claims are true or attributed.

0 Vague / general — No named individuals, no specific numbers or dates, no specific locations. Content stays at the level of general categories or abstractions ("the government", "some people", "recently", "in the region", "the economy is struggling").

1 Some specific details — Names a few specific people, places, numbers, or dates, but most of the post remains general.

2 Highly specific — Dense with named entities, numbers, dates, specific locations, or direct quotes throughout. The post is concrete and detailed.

using a large language model, which scored it on four dimensions: whether it represents a genuine news event, whether the top posts discuss the same event, whether it refers to a single identifiable event rather than a broad theme, and whether the

detected time window is reasonable. We retained 147 validated detections scoring at least 4 out of 5 on all four dimensions. Twelve of these detections were duplicate clusterings of the same underlying story (for example, the 2024 U.S. election

produced four overlapping detection clusters covering the results, the Canadian-context discussion, and two Harris-centric framings); after consolidating each set into a single record, we arrived at 135 distinct events. The engagement analysis below aggregates posts across all 147 detection windows that back these 135 events, so each event's totals reflect every detection cluster that captured it. The full list of events is shown below.

Content Classification

We coded 212,770 YouTube and TikTok posts that had available video transcripts, posted between January 1 and December 31, 2025, on six dimensions using a large language model (Qwen3.6-35B-A3B, a mixture-of-experts model with 35 billion total parameters and 3 billion active parameters). The model was applied in a zero-shot setting with a structured rubric specifying each dimension's categories and definitions.

Longer transcripts were segmented into approximately one-minute chunks by timestamp, with a 5-second overlap between consecutive chunks to preserve context at boundaries; each chunk was coded independently, and post-level scores were aggregated from chunk-level codings. Each of the six dimensions was coded in a separate LLM call to keep the task focused, so every chunk was passed through the model six times—once per dimension—producing a single JSON object per call. All calls shared a common preamble (“You are coding YouTube and TikTok posts of Canadian content. You must be precise and consistent. Posts may be in English or French. Given a post’s text, produce ONLY a JSON object. No explanation, no markdown fences.”), and the user message contained only the raw transcript text—no metadata (platform, account type) was passed to the model. The per-dimension prompts and category definitions are reproduced in [Figure 14](#).

Geolocating Canadian News Organizations

We geolocated news organizations using a multi-stage process: matching against the [Local News Research Project](#) database,

extracting place names from outlet names with automated geocoding via [Nominatim](#)/OpenStreetMap, and manual identification for remaining outlets. Urban classification was assigned based on 2021 Census data.

Limitations

Several design limitations should be noted beyond those outlined in the sections above. First, our survey uses a non-probability online panel (Léger) with quota sampling rather than a probability-based design; while post-stratification weights align the sample with population benchmarks, this approach may underrepresent populations with limited internet access, and the reported margins of error should be treated as approximate. Second, the content classification in Question 5 relies on LLM-based coding (Qwen3.6-35B-A3B) applied to structured dimensions; while the primary findings rest on categorical measures where LLM coding performs well, the ordinal quality dimensions (specificity, contextualization, emotional intensity) would benefit from more extensive human validation. Third, content coding covers YouTube and TikTok only—the platforms where news engagement is concentrated—and patterns on text-based platforms like X and Bluesky may differ. Fourth, Facebook data ends in August 2024 due to the CrowdTangle API shutdown; total post counts and supply trends for the subsequent period reflect the remaining five platforms only. Fifth, engagement is measured via likes, which capture one dimension of audience response and may not reflect total reach, shares, or passive consumption. Sixth, the association between exposure to a content type and classifying it as news ([Figure 2](#)) is cross-sectional; the direction of this relationship cannot be determined from a single survey. Finally, our findings reflect a specific moment in a rapidly changing information environment; platform policies, audience behaviours, and the composition of the influencer landscape may shift substantially over time.

Endnotes

- 1 Several factors explain why our data still record posts on Facebook and Instagram despite Meta’s news ban: enforcement was less forceful at first (all news content is now blocked in Canada); some news organizations continued to post automatically via scheduling tools; French-language content was less likely to be blocked initially; and some outlets (e.g., Narcity) are not Qualified Canadian Journalism Organizations, and Meta does not classify their content as news.
- 2 Link posts that display an auto-generated image preview are classified as text; only posts with user-uploaded images are classified as image.
- 3 We classify a journalist as an influencer when their social media activity centers on original commentary, analysis, or reporting produced for the platform, rather than primarily reposting links to articles published by their newsroom.

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