

Digital Deception Survey Factum

Summary results of Canadian general population

Prepared for Canadian Journalism Foundation



Misinformation and clickbait are widespread while deepfakes/AI-manipulation are visible and rising, especially among young Canadians

Encounters with misinformation are widespread across Canada, cutting across all age and demographic lines. Younger Canadians report frequent encounters, underscoring that “fake news” is becoming a normalized feature of Canada’s online environment. Regionally, Quebecers appear most exposed, suggesting either greater awareness or better recall of deceptive content.

“Fake news” (56%) and clickbait headlines/articles (51%) are the most common types of digital deception Canadians say they’ve personally encountered online, followed by deepfake videos/altered images (44%), AI-manipulated content designed to deceive (43%), and political disinformation campaigns (40%). About one in five report contact from a fake news organization or personality (22%).

Recognition to “fake news” is consistently high across generations, with no major gaps. For AI-manipulated content, Gen Z (53%) reports higher recognition than Millennials (46%), Gen X (44%), and Boomers+ (35%)—consistent with a younger-skew on this format. Clickbait is least reported by Boomers+ (44%) with more than half of younger cohorts citing (Gen Z 55%, Millennials 54% and Gen X 53%).

Quebec stands out on deepfakes/altered images (54%), running higher than all other regions reported (36%-46%). For contact by a faux news organization/personality, Quebec (36%) is also higher than the all other regions (10%-22%).

Types of digital deception encountered	Total	Gen Z (18 to 28)	Millennials (29 to 44)	Gen X (45 to 60)	Boomers+ (61+)	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Misinformation or "fake news"	56%	52%	54%	60%	56%	54%	61%	57%	54%	52%	68%
'Clickbait' online headlines/articles	51%	55%	54%	53%	44%	54%	54%	44%	48%	53%	54%
Deepfake videos or altered images	44%	45%	46%	44%	42%	46%	39%	36%	41%	54%	37%
AI-generated content used to deceive (e.g., fake voices, fake news anchors)	43%	53%	46%	44%	35%	44%	44%	40%	40%	48%	45%
Political disinformation campaigns	40%	34%	39%	45%	40%	44%	50%	37%	39%	35%	44%
Contact from fake news organization or personality	22%	31%	25%	20%	17%	22%	16%	20%	19%	36%	10%

Deceptive content is routine, and many Canadians encounter it daily to weekly

Deceptive content is routine in Canadians' online lives. In the past month, 30% say they see misleading or false information presented as legitimate news several times a week, and 17% say daily. A further 21% report seeing it a few times a month, 6% once a month, and 6% less than once a month. Only 7% say never, while 14% are unsure.

Younger Canadians (18–34) are most likely to report frequent recognition (daily/weekly: 58%), compared with 35–54 (42%) and 55+ (41%). Uncertainty rises with age (unsure: ~5% among 18–34 vs. ~15%–18% among 35+), indicating older Canadians are less likely to recall the frequency of recognition of misleading news so more likely to be unsure.

Trust centers on people and institutions, not platforms

Canadians place the most trust in recommendations from family and friends (77%), closely followed by traditional Canadian news outlets (75%), which Canadians place their complete trust in more in than any other source (31%). Next are international outlets (67%), news aggregators (59%), and news directly from journalists on social media (49%). Social media platforms themselves are least trusted (27%).

Trust in the news sourced from family and friends is lowest among Gen Z (71%) compared to Millennials (81%) and Boomers+ (80%). However, Gen Z (58%) and Millennials (64%) are more likely to trust news directly from journalists on social media than their older cohorts (Gen X 41%

and Boomers+ 42%). The gap is wider for social media where about half of Gen Z (48%) and almost two-in-five Millennials (37%) have trust in the platforms (compared to Gen X: 17% and Boomers: 15%).

A majority are very concerned and feel a shared responsibility, led by the federal government, is needed to protect Canadians citizens

Nearly 9 in 10 Canadians (88%) are concerned about AI deception in the news, including about half who are very concerned (52%). Only 9% are not concerned, and 2% are unsure. Concern is highest among adults 55+ (94%), but it is elevated across every demographic, making this a mainstream public worry.

With regards to who is responsible for protecting Canadians against digital deception, Canadians envision a whole-ecosystem response, led by public institutions but with shared responsibility.

- The Federal government (60%): sits at the top, a clear appetite for national-level standards and enforcement.
- Canadians themselves (55%): Canadians believe they must protect themselves, reinforcing the need for public literacy tools and clear guidance.
- Provincial governments (50%), social platforms/online marketplaces (49%), internet providers (44%), and cybersecurity companies (44%) form the next tier where expectations that these are gatekeepers to reduce the harm caused by the misinformation.
- Banks/financial institutions (38%), email providers (36%), consumer-protection NGOs (35%) play supporting roles.
- Employers (30%), local police (26%), and schools/educators (25%) are important context-specific protectors.

Methodology

This survey was undertaken by The Harris Poll Canada. It ran from September 24th to 26th, 2025, with 1,573 randomly selected Canadian adults who are aged 18+. The results have been weighted by age, gender, region, and education (and in Quebec, language) to match the population, according to Census data. This is to ensure the sample is representative of the entire adult population of Canada. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error (which measures sampling variability) of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals when compared to the data tables are due to rounding.

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