Canadian Medical Association
2024 Health and Media Annual Tracking Survey
Methodology

• The survey was conducted online with 2,500 Canadians (including oversample of Gen Z) from Sept. 19-26, 2023.
  – **Gen Z** (18- to 26-year-olds)
  – **Millennials** (27- to 43-year-olds)
  – **Gen X** (44- to 58-year-olds)
  – **Boomers** (59- to 75-year-olds)

• The survey was fielded in both official languages.

• The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 1.96%, 19 times out of 20.

• The data was weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada’s population.

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

• For context, during the survey some major news stories were:
  – Growing tensions between Canada and India
  – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressing Canadian Parliament
  – A focus on health care during the provincial election in Manitoba
  – Lingering concerns following the e.coli outbreak in Alberta daycares
Key findings

1. Age is the most influential factor in news and information consumption behaviour. It influences channel preferences which has consequences on exposure to misinformation.

2. Canadians are passive consumers of health news and information. Canadians are most likely to consume health/health care news and information when a specific situation arises or if they are ‘served’ this content in the communications channels they frequent.

3. Canadians believe misinformation is common in health and health system news/information. Exposure is common and most Canadians have accepted the presence of misinformation.

4. Canadians feel confident in their ability to navigate this misinformation but there are clear signs they look for to signal accuracy. Trust in source is one of them.

5. Given the presence of misinformation, building trust with audiences is critical in health care communications. Establishing trust in health care communications is largely dependent on the communicator and their proximity to health care.
THE VAST MAJORITY OF OLDER CANADIANS STILL PERCEIVE NEWS AS TV

Q: Which of these was the main way in which you came across news in the past week?  
 n = 2,500

Dominant source of news by generation:
- Boomers- TV (59%)
- Gen X- TV (42%)
- Millennials- TV (25%)
- Gen Z- Social media (34%)
MEDIA HABITS VARY BY GENERATION

Facebook is used across generations.

YouTube and Instagram hold power with younger generations.

Watching news on TV is more common among Boomers.

Q: How often do you do the following % check Facebook, % watch news on TV, % watch YouTube, % scroll Instagram
n = 2,500

% at least daily
- Gen Z
- Millennials
- Gen X
- Boomers
NEGATIVE OR OVERWHELMING NEWS CAN IMPACT CONSUMPTION

Q: How often do you avoid consuming news because you felt it was too negative or overwhelming?

n = 2,500

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

News avoidance is associated with higher social media use, and consequently, is higher among younger Canadians.
RELATIONSHIP WITH HEALTH/WELLNESS NEWS MORE POSITIVE, IT IS ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING NEWS TOPICS FOR CANADIANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very/quite interested</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>A little/not at all interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local news</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellness</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International news</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics and government</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and entertainment</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q: How interested would you say you are in news and information about the following topics?

n = 2,500

Interest in health and wellness is stable across generations, is particularly high among women, those in Ontario, and much stronger among those who have a higher understanding of the health care system (self-reported).
MAJORITY OF CANADIANS SEE HEALTH OR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM NEWS AT LEAST OCCASIONALLY IN CANADIAN NEWS

Q: How often would you say you see content or information about health or the health care system in Canadian news?

n = 2,500

- All the time: 6%
- Often: 31%
- Occasionally: 47%
- Rarely: 14%
- Never: 3%

Q: How often would you say you see content or information about health or the health care system in Canadian news? n = 2,500
Q: Which of the following best describes your relationship with news and information about health and the health care system?

- Something I actively seek out often: 12%
- Something I actively seek out, but when needed: 39%
- Something I would consume (watch/read/listen) if I happened to come across it: 39%
- Something I would scroll past/not engage with if I saw it, I'd rather see content about other things: 9%

n = 2,500

MOST CANADIANS ARE SELF-DESCRIBED ‘PASSIVE CONSUMERS’ OF HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM NEWS
PERSONAL HEALTH CONCERNS DRIVE CONSUMPTION OF HEALTH AND HEALTH SYSTEM INFORMATION

Q: Have you ever gone online specifically to try to figure out something related to the following?

*Information about a health condition or symptom* 75% Yes, 25% No
*Treatment options for a specific ailment or condition* 69% Yes, 31% No
*Tips for managing chronic conditions or diseases* 54% Yes, 46% No
*Information about getting access to the health care system* 52% Yes, 48% No
*News about your local or provincial health care system* 49% Yes, 51% No
*Reviews or opinions about specific doctors, clinics, pharmacies or hospitals* 48% Yes, 52% No
*Understanding health insurance coverage or policies* 46% Yes, 54% No

n = 2,500
Q: How important do you think the news media or news organizations are in providing and sharing information and news about health and the health care system with Canadians?

n = 2,500

Involvement of news media/news organizations is more important for Boomers than Gen Z.
Q: And when you’re looking for information online about health-related issues, which of the following BEST describes your thinking? n = 2,500

A MAJORITY OF CANADIANS SAY THERE ARE EQUAL AMOUNTS OF ACCURATE AND INACCURATE HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION ONLINE

Those who have a higher self-assessed understanding of the health care system are more inclined to say most of the available information is accurate and good.
CANADIANS ARE HESITANT TO FULLY TRUST HEALTH NEWS STORIES

- Reports about burnout of health professionals, like physicians and nurses: 26% Fully trust, 43% Generally believe, 15% Take with a grain of salt
- Stories about the health effects of forest fires and poor air quality: 24% Fully trust, 45% Generally believe, 16% Take with a grain of salt
- Reports about the health impacts of environmental factors, like pollution or water quality: 16% Fully trust, 47% Generally believe, 20% Take with a grain of salt
- The safety of a new vaccination: 13% Fully trust, 39% Generally believe, 19% Take with a grain of salt
- Stories about patient experiences or testimonials in a particular hospital or clinic: 10% Fully trust, 42% Generally believe, 28% Take with a grain of salt
- Comparisons of health care services or patient satisfaction between provinces or regions: 9% Fully trust, 41% Generally believe, 29% Take with a grain of salt
- Explanations by government officials and hospital administrators about why an emergency department was...: 8% Fully trust, 35% Generally believe, 25% Take with a grain of salt

Q: Now we want you to think about some specific examples of news stories you might see in the news about health or the health care system. For each, tell us how you typically react when you see a story about the following?

n = 2,500
Q: How often, if at all, have you ever encountered health information or news that you later found out was false or misleading?

*n* = 2,500

Occasionally +:
- English- 57%
- French- 48%

The more health news you consume the more false/misleading health news you consume*.
Q: How often, if at all, have you ever encountered health information or news that you later found out was false or misleading?

n = 2,500

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>All the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen Z</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q: How much of the content or information about health issues you see or hear in your life – from friends, family, news media, social media and other sources – do you feel is wrong, misleading, or misinformation?

n = 2,500
MAJORITY OF CANADIANS BELIEVE HEALTH-RELATED MISINFORMATION IS HERE TO STAY AND MANY BELIEVE IT IS GETTING WORSE

Q: Do you think misinformation about health and the health system in Canada is getting better, worse, or not changing much?

- Getting much better: 3%
- Getting a little better: 16%
- Not changing: 38%
- Getting a little worse: 20%
- Getting much worse: 14%
- Don’t know: 8%

n = 2,500
WITH MISINFORMATION HERE TO STAY, MOST FEEL THEY ARE ABLE TO NAVIGATE AND FIND INFORMATION THAT IS ACCURATE, UNBIASED, AND HELPFUL

Q: More generally, if you needed to find out something about a health-related or health care system topic – do you think it would be easy or difficult to find information that was accurate, unbiased, and helpful?

n = 2,500

Gen Z and men are the most confident in their ability to find accurate information.
STILL, THERE ARE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES TO MISINFORMATION

Health related misinformation has led to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Mental distress or increased anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>Lower trust in health professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Delay in seeking appropriate medical care or treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Strained relationships with family or friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Difficulty discussing health issues with health care providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Avoidance of effective treatments due to misinformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% yes

Q: Over the past three years, has misinformation about health issues led to any of the following?  
\[ n = 2,500 \]
THE EXPERTISE OF THE PERSON SHARING THE HEALTH INFORMATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SIGNAL OF ACCURACY

Who authored the information (doctors, academic researchers, nurses, pharmacists) 54%

Where you accessed the information (news, social media, etc.) 28%

If you see the information mentioned in multiple places or platforms 12%

How many times the information was shared or viewed 6%

Q: When you see health and health system information, what is mostly likely to signal to you how accurate it is?  
n = 2,500
WHEN YOU SEE HEALTH AND HEALTH SYSTEM NEWS FROM THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK IT IS ACCURATE?

Q: To what extent do you trust the following to provide or share accurate information about your health and the health care system?

Tier 1: Medical Professionals
- Physicians
- Pharmacists
- Nurses

81% a great deal/somewhat

Tier 2: Medical Community
- Health Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Local public health organizations
- Provincial public health organizations
- National or provincial associations
- Hospital administrators
- Academic researchers

77% 75% 74% 73% 68% 65% 65%

n = 2,500
WHEN YOU SEE HEALTH AND HEALTH SYSTEM NEWS FROM THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK IT IS ACCurate?

Tier 3: News Media

- Community leaders: 48%
- Journalists: 47%
- Political leaders: 31%
- Canadian news organizations: 58%
- Wikipedia: 35%
- American news organizations: 33%

Tier 4: Social Media

- YouTube: 32%
- Facebook: 23%
- Reddit: 21%
- Instagram: 21%
- X (formerly Twitter): 20%

Q: To what extent do you trust the following to provide or share accurate information about your health and the health care system? And to what extent do you trust the following to provide or share accurate information about your health and the health care system?

n = 2,500
WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTING AGAINST MISINFORMATION, CANADIANS RANK GOVERNMENT MOST RESPONSIBLE

Q: Who do you feel is most responsible to safeguard Canadians against health misinformation? Rank the top 3 you feel are MOST responsible

n = 2,500

Health Canada 73%
Provincial ministries of health 58%
Professional regulatory bodies and colleges 39%
Associations and groups representing health professionals 37%
News organizations and journalists 29%
Universities and academic researchers 27%
Individual Canadians 24%
Platforms/channels owners 15%

Younger Canadians are more likely to believe responsibility lies within news organizations and journalists.
MOVING FORWARD

1. Social media use, including for health and health system information, is trending upward as the preferred news source for young Canadians. It is also the least trusted source of health and health system information. How can we bring trusted information to the channels Canadians frequent?

2. Canadians are still interested in consuming news despite an overall news environment that feels increasingly negative. The pandemic was a positive experience for health news, with many applauding the media on its coverage. Following the pandemic, how can we keep up this momentum and build on it with everyday health reporting?

3. With authorship being the pillar of trust, how do we authenticate authors in a world of misinformation?

4. Most Canadians can point to a bad consequence of misinformation but seem to have accepted it is here to stay. How can we create a healthy information environment that acknowledges misinformation is here to stay?