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WHERE ARE PEOPLE GETTING THEIR COVID-19 INFORMATION FROM?

Misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine is prevalent in Canada and the United States (Garneau & Zossou, 2021; Rzumski et al., 2021). We have found that those who rely on social media for their COVID-19 news are less likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine, with rare exceptions. Conversely, our study has found that those who rely on traditional media sources (including radio, television and print news) and governments for their COVID-19 information are more likely to get vaccinated. Friends and family can also be a source of information for many people. Unfortunately, when respondents relied on friends and family for their COVID-19 information, their likeliness to get vaccinated tended to go down.

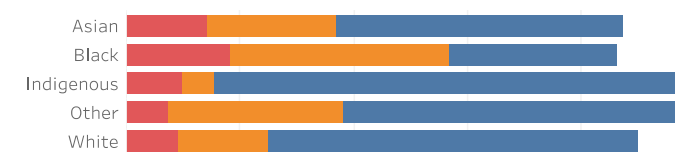
NEWS SOURCE BY ETHNICITY

In Canada, traditional news sources were the most often consulted forms of news across ethnicities. However, there was a difference amongst the groups. White respondents were the most likely to use these sources (63%), followed by Black (53.4%), Asian (53%), Indigenous (47.8%) and other people of colour (46.2%).

Social media was the second most common news source across ethnicities. This was represented as people of colour (26.1%), Asian (24.4%), Black (20.4%), Indigenous (19.5%) and white (14.3%). While there has been concern over the influence of misinformation on social media, the respondents in this survey were more likely to use traditional media sources when examined by ethnicity.

When looking at what social media apps people got their information from, Facebook and Instagram were the most popular. While white, Indigenous, Asian and other people of colour were most likely to use Facebook for news, Black respondents were most likely to use Instagram. They were also more likely to report using Twitter than the other ethnic groups.

Most Commonly Used Social Media for News, Canada, 2021



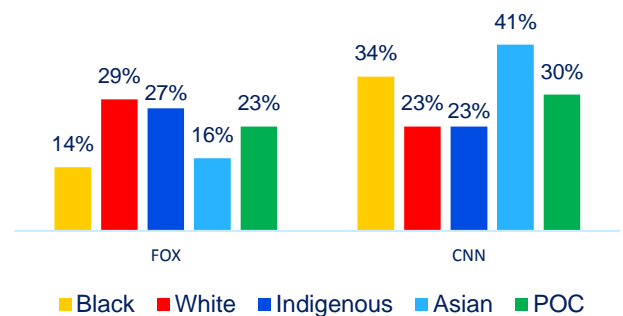
Question: Please name which social media you consult most often.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter

In the United States, traditional media use hovered around the 50% mark for all ethnicities with Indigenous (53.8%), Asian (51%), Black (46.8%), white (53.7%) and other people of colour (44.6%) respectively. Social media news was also relatively close to Canada's results for Indigenous (15.4%), Asian (20.3%), Black (26%), white (16.2%) and other people of colour (11.7%).

When asked about top news sources of information in the US, white (29%) and Indigenous participants (27%) reported reliance on FOX News, while Black, Asian and other people of colour reported CNN. This is important as research demonstrated that exposure to FOX News has a harmful effect on public health efforts to contain the pandemic by sharing misinformation (Ananyev & Tian, 2021).

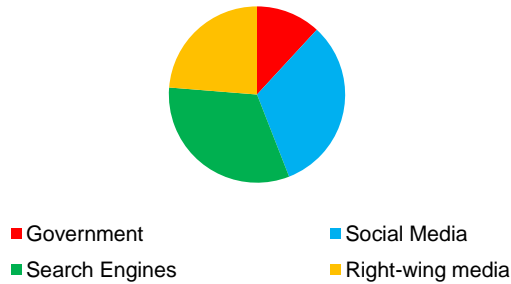
Fox News and CNN for COVID-19 Information, USA, 2021



Respondents across ethnicities in the USA were more likely, in some cases 2-3 times, to report getting news from friends and family members. While the percentages range between 3.5% (Black respondents) to 7.7% (Indigenous respondents), this can spread misinformation among family and friends. While rates

were comparable for state/provincial government as a source of information, Canadian respondents were more likely to report getting news from their local government (city or town).

Online Sources, USA, 2020 (White)



When white people relied on social media in either country, they were less likely to report vaccine intention. While that trend is seen in other ethnicities, it was not statistically significant. When asked in an open-ended question what sources they use online, 24% of white respondents listed a right-wing media source including NewsMax, One America News and the Drudge Report.

Unsurprisingly, those who trust public health and government officials are more likely to get vaccinated than those who do not.

LOCATION

Provincially, there is a difference across Canada. While Quebec respondents were most likely to use traditional media (65.9%), respondents in the Maritimes were least likely (48.4%) while relying more heavily on their local city or town governments than other provinces. Social media hovered between 15.7% (Ontario) and 18.8% (Prairies). Again, Facebook and Instagram saw the most reported usage for news. Ontario was more evenly split than other provinces, with 38% reporting Facebook, 29.3% reporting Instagram and 19% using Twitter for their information.

In the US, traditional media was the most commonly reported news source. However, there was variance depending on location. For example, the East South Central region reported the most reliance on social media (24.2%), while New England reported relying on state government the most (25.8%) as well as their local governments (8.1%). Trust in governments could be the reason behind the strength of their COVID vaccine success, where each state has vaccinated at least 60% of their population (CDC, 2021).

The two areas reporting the highest social media reliance, East South Central (24.2%) and West South Central (23.2%), relied significantly less on their state governments. They are also reporting meagre vaccine uptake rates (less than 50% across all states). Several, including Texas and Louisiana, are currently having severe fourth waves due to the Delta variant. Facebook was again the most popular social news source across the US.

GENDER

In Canada, there was very little difference between where men and women got their news. For example, men were slightly more likely to rely on their provincial governments (11.9% vs. 9.5%),

while women were more likely to rely on local governments (6.9% vs. 4.4%). Overall though, the percentages for traditional media and social media were within 1% of each other. As of July 31, 2021, the Canadian government reported that 62.4% of all women and 56.7% of all men had been fully vaccinated from COVID-19 (Government of Canada, 2021). Men in Canada who do not intend to get vaccinated are more likely to rely on social media for their news (35.5% vs 12.3% of men who intend to get vaccinated). Women also reported an increase, but it was not as large as men.

In the United States, though, there was a difference between genders. Men were more likely to rely on traditional media than women (54.9% vs. 49.6%) and were slightly more likely to rely on social media. Women, on the other hand, relied more heavily on local government and friends and family. Men who do not intend to get vaccinated relied significantly more on their friends and family for COVID-19 information than men who intend to get vaccinated. Women who did not intend to get vaccinated tended to get more information from social media but did not report a significant difference from other women in reliance on friends and family.

In terms of social media usage, women were almost 20% more likely to report Facebook as their app for COVID-19 information, while men were over twice as likely to report using Twitter. While we know misinformation is prevalent on social media, and especially Facebook, this could be where some women heard about the alleged fertility issues caused by the COVID-19 vaccine. However, the CDC reports that women have a higher vaccination rate than men in the US (52.5% vs 48.3%), so this may be an overblown concern.

AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

In Canada, those between 18 and 24 relied more heavily on social media than traditional news sources (40.7% vs. 29.3%). They were also twice as likely as other groups to rely on family and friends. This reliance on friends and family instead of official channels could be leading to their lack of trust in the COVID-19 vaccines. While they are catching up to the rest of the adult population, as of August 3, 2021, there is still only 50% reporting being fully vaccinated (COVID-19 Tracker, 2021). Looking at social media, 42.4% use Facebook for their news, 32.3% use Instagram and 10.1% use Twitter.

The use of traditional news sources increases dramatically with age. For example, those between 25 and 34 rely on conventional news, 42.4% for their information. Meanwhile, 71.1% of those who are 75 and older use traditional media. Those 75 and older are also most likely to rely on their local government for COVID-19 information. As is known, that age group has an incredibly high vaccination rate, at over 90% (COVID19tracker, 2021).

Interestingly, respondents within the 18 and 24 age range in Canada and the USA were more likely to get vaccinated if they got their news from social media rather than traditional media. However, when we look at other age groups, reliance on social media for information reduced their likeliness to get vaccinated. For example, 25.6% of those between 65 and 74 in Canada who did not intend to get vaccinated got their news from social media. In the USA, when looking at those between 45 and 54 who did not intend to get vaccinated, 18.4% relied on friends and family

for news compared to 4.3% of those who did intend to get vaccinated.

We saw the same trends in the United States. Those between 18 and 24 were more likely to use social media with an even more significant split than Canada (46.9% vs. 23.3%). However, most age groups are less likely than Canadians in the same age cohort to rely on traditional media. Overall, American respondents were more likely to rely on family and friends and their local governments. Every age group was also more likely to choose 'other' than Canadian respondents. A deeper dive into the other category could be helpful in the future.

Americans under 45 were more likely to report getting their news from Twitter and were less likely to use Facebook. However, there is one exception, those between 35 and 44, where 80.4% of respondents reported using Facebook for their news.

Respondents in both countries who reported never been married were more likely to report using social media for their news. They were also more likely to rely on family and friends for information.

EDUCATION

Respondents in both countries who had not graduated high school were the least likely to use traditional media. Those who did rely on social media were less likely to report vaccine intention, regardless of education level. Relying on friends and family also reduced vaccine intention across education levels in Canada.

However, in the US, the difference is quite drastic. 31.3% of those who had not graduated high school reported using traditional media, but 34.8% reported social media. In both countries, those with a university degree were most likely, behind traditional media, to get their information from their state or provincial governments.

Even for those with college or post-graduate degrees, relying on friends and family significantly reduced vaccine intention. In addition, getting news from social media reduced the likelihood to vaccination, except for those with college or post-graduate degrees where those who have post-graduate study, for example, 15.2% reported social media for their news and had the intention to get vaccinated.

IMMIGRANT STATUS

In Canada, those born in the country were more likely to use traditional media, while those who immigrated did not report more social media use. Canadian-born respondents were also more likely to rely on friends and family for their information. When looking at vaccine intentions, those born in Canada were less likely to report getting vaccinated if they relied on social media or their friends and family. Social media influence against vaccination is more substantial amongst immigrants. 39% of immigrants who did not intend to get vaccinated reported getting their news from social media. Compared to 17.6% of those who did intend to get vaccinated.

In the USA, those born in the country reported higher social media reliance, while immigrants were more likely to rely on their governments (both state and city). In addition, those born in the USA were significantly less likely to report wanting to get a

vaccine if they relied on friends and family. For those who do not intend to get vaccinated, 43.3% got their news from traditional media, 18.9% got news from social media and 12% from friends and family (compared to 3.6% of the USA-born respondents who did intend to get vaccinated).

For those born outside of the country, social media played a more decisive role in vaccine intentions. Among immigrants who did not intend to get vaccinated, 41% relied on traditional media, and 39% relied on social media. This changes when looking at those who intended to get the vaccine, where 57.6% relied on conventional media and 17.6% on social media.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The researchers: A cross-national team of over 30 researchers led by Dr. Lori Wilkinson, Dr. Kiera Ladner and Dr. Jack Jedwab, received funding from CIHR for this study *COVID-19's differential impact on the mental and emotional health of Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers: A socioeconomic analysis of Canada, US and Mexico*.

The study: The team has been collecting data in Canada since March 9 and the United States since March 27, 2020. Ongoing survey waves now include Mexico. Our goal is to measure and follow the changes in attitudes, behaviours, health and socioeconomic outcomes among persons living in all three countries using a mixed methodology of surveys and unstructured interviews.

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