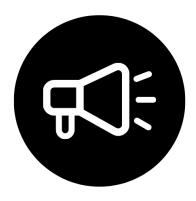
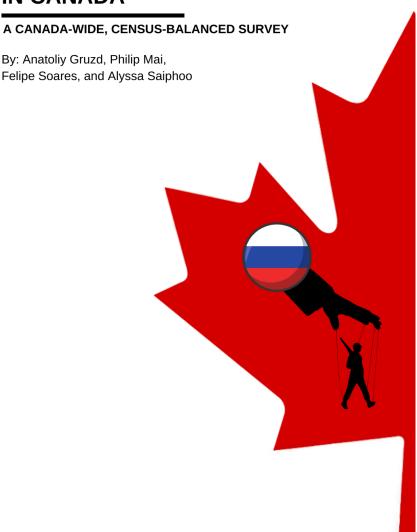
**July 2022** 





# THE REACH OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA & DISINFORMATION IN CANADA



FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRES: EMAIL: info@socialmedialab.ca





RECOMMENDED CITATION: Gruzd, Mai, Soares & Saiphoo. (2022). The Reach of Russian Propaganda & Disinformation in Canada. *Social Media Lab Toronto Metropolitan University*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.20277855



## **Table of Contents**

2. Russia-Ukraine War Disinformation
2.1 When using social media platforms / messaging apps, have you encountered any of the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine war?
2.2 How much do you believe in the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine war?11
2.3 Political Ideology and Belief in Pro-Kremlin Propaganda 12
2.4 Preferred News Source and Belief in Pro-Kremlin Propaganda. 13
2.5 When faced with what you think is misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine war on social media platforms/ messaging apps, how likely are you to do the following? 15
Appendix A: Method 16
Appendix B: Survey Questions 17
Funding 19
Acknowledgments

### **About this Report**

This report was produced by the <u>Social</u> <u>Media Lab</u> at Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University.

The report is based on a census-balanced online survey of 1,500 online Canadian adults (18+). The survey was conducted between May 12–31, 2022. See Appendix A for more information about data collection. Appendix B includes the survey questions used in the report.

### **Social Media Lab**

The Social Media Lab is an interdisciplinary research laboratory at Ted Rogers School of Management at Toronto Metropolitan University. The lab studies how social media is changing the ways in which people and organizations communicate, information, conduct business and form communities, and how these changes impact society. The broad aim of the lab's various research initiatives advance the public's to understanding of the benefits and pitfalls of social media adoption.

### **Authors**

The report is written by Anatoliy Gruzd, Philip Mai, Felipe Bonow Soares and Alyssa Saiphoo.

Anatoliy Gruzd, PhD is a Canada Research Chair (CRC), Professor and Director of Research at the Social Media Lab at Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University.

Philip Mai, JD is Senior Researcher and Director of Business and Communications at the Social Media Lab at Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University, and a Co-Founder of the International Conference on Social Media & Society.

Felipe Bonow Soares, PhD is a postdoctoral fellow at the Social Media Lab at Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University.

Alyssa Saiphoo, PhD is a postdoctoral fellow at the Social Media Lab at Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University.

### **Foreword**

Ukraine and the West have long been a target of the Kremlin's disinformation campaigns. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has used a variety of information warfare tactics to destabilize the Ukrainian government and undermine the legitimacy of democratic governments.

In recent years, as part of Russia's bid to shape public perception of their action on the world's stage, Russia has deployed an army of bots, trolls, hackers and other proxies to create a more favorable information environment for their agenda in Ukraine and other areas of geopolitical interests. For example, during the lead up to the 2016 U.S. federal election, the Kremlin used the now infamous "Internet Research Agency" to sow discord online and on the streets of America.

The use of such hybrid warfare tactics has intensified since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. For instance, since the start of the invasion, the Social Media Lab's Russia-Ukraine Conflict Misinformation Dashboard has tracked over 1000 false, misleading, and unproven claims related to the Russia-Ukraine war. Furthermore, in April of 2022, Canada Communications

Establishment noted the presence of numerous Russian state-sponsored disinformation campaigns online aimed at distorting Canada's effort to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia's war of aggression.

This report examines the extent to which Canadians are exposed to and might be influenced by pro-Kremlin propaganda on social media based on a census-balanced national survey of 1,500 Canadians. Among other questions, the survey asked participants about their social media use, news consumption about the war in Ukraine, political leanings, as well as their exposure to and belief in common pro-Kremlin narratives.

The data collected shows that Canadians who hold right-leaning ideology are more likely to believe in pro-Kremlin propaganda overall as compared to Canadians who hold mixed or left-leaning views. It also shows that those who believe in pro-Kremlin propaganda are more likely to rely on social media for news about the war than those who do not believe.

Finally, the report delves into what Canadians might do when encountering what they think is misinformation about the war on social media.

## **Highlights**

- About half of Canadians (51%) reported encountering at least one pro-Kremlin claim about the Russia-Ukraine war on social media. The most prevalent claim, encountered by 35% of Canadians, was "Ukrainian nationalism is a neo-Nazi movement...". see Section 2.1
- Nearly half of Canadians (49%)
  believe to some extent that "Since
  the end of the Cold War, NATO has
  surrounded Russia with military
  bases and broken their promise to
  not offer NATO membership to
  former USSR republics, like
  Ukraine". see Section 2.2
- Left-leaning Canadians are consistently less likely to believe in pro-Kremlin propaganda overall as compared to Canadians who hold mixed or right-leaning views. - see Section 2.3
- Those who believe in pro-Kremlin propaganda are more likely to turn to social media as a news source about the war than those who do not believe. - see Section 2.4

- When faced with what they think is misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine war on social media, more Canadians (47%) indicated they would likely consult other sources to verify information about the war than to take any other remedial action (e.g., mute, unfollow, block, report). - see <u>Section 2.5</u>
- Most Canadians trust the Canadian (66%) and Ukrainian (64%) governments as well as mainstream media (66%) for providing accurate news about the Russia-Ukraine war.
   see <u>Section 1.1</u>
- Most Canadians reported that they prefer to get news about the Russia-Ukraine war from television (68%).
   Only 35% prefer social media as a source of news about the Russia-Ukraine war. - see <u>Section 1.2</u>
- Twitter is the most popular platform to follow news about the Russia-Ukraine war among its users (53%), closely followed by TikTok (51%). see Section 1.3

### 1. Russia-Ukraine War News Media Consumption

# 1.1 How much do you trust the accuracy of news about the Russia-Ukraine war from ...?

When asked about what sources Canadians trust to get news about the Russia-Ukraine war, most (66%) reported that they trust<sup>1</sup> news coming from **mainstream media**, followed by **friends and family** who are trusted by 63% of respondents.

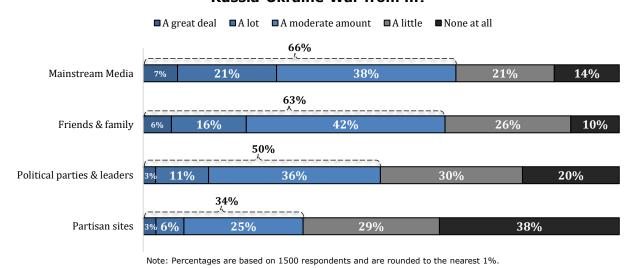
**Political parties** and their leaders were trusted by 50% of Canadians as a source for accurate news about the war. In contrast, **partisan sites** were viewed as trustworthy by just over a third of Canadians (34%).

There are two concerning trends in this data. The first is the high proportion of Canadians (63%) are reporting that

they trust news about the Russia-Ukraine war coming from **friends and family**. This is concerning because friends and family may not have the most accurate or up-to-date information due to the chaotic and dynamic nature of war.

The second concerning trend is that about a third of Canadians reported that they trust the accuracy of news about the war from **partisan sites**. This is problematic because such sources, especially hyper-partisan outlets, <u>have shown</u> to be a major vector for launching and amplifying disinformation online.

Part 1: How much do you trust the accuracy of news about the Russia-Ukraine War from ...?



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Trust" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents who trust a source "a great deal", "a lot", or "a moderate amount".

# 1.1 How much do you trust the accuracy of news about the Russia-Ukraine war from ...? (Cont.)

When asked how much they trust the accuracy of news about the war from governments with direct or close ties to the war (Canada, United States, Ukraine, or Russia), most Canadians reported that they trust<sup>2</sup> news from the Canadian (66%) and Ukrainian (64%) governments. Interestingly, despite Canada's long historical and geopolitical affinity with the United States, the U.S. government falls behind the Canadian and Ukrainian governments, trusted by 56% of Canadians. Only 22% of Canadians indicate that they from the trust news Russian government.

The large difference between how many Canadians trust the Ukrainian versus Russian government for news about the war indicates that Russia was not effective in gaining the trust of Canadians. However, this result should not be interpreted as failure on the part of the Kremlin, as the objective in any information operation is not necessarily to make everyone believe. Even a relatively small percentage of "believers" may suffice in reaching one of the desired outcomes of an information operation, which is to sow doubt and delay or derail consensus amongst one's adversaries, their allies, and bystanders.

Furthermore, while government entities are important vector in the spread of sanctioned narratives, statesponsored disinformation campaigns often use multiple channels and an array of non-governmental actors to gain people's trust, including online influencers, "fake news" websites, and even bots (automated accounts).

■ A great deal ■A lot ■ A moderate amount ■ A little ■ None at all 66% Canadian Gov 24% 35% 64% Ukrainian Gov 22% 56% U.S. Gov 16% 36% 22% Russian Gov 62% 14% 16%

Part 2: How much do you trust the accuracy of news about the Russia-Ukraine War from:

Note: Percentages are based on 1500 respondents and are rounded to the nearest 1%.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Trust" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents who trust a source "a great deal", "a lot", or "a moderate amount".

## 1.2 Where do you prefer to get your news about the Russia-Ukraine war from?

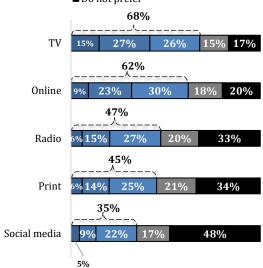
Most Canadians reported that they prefer<sup>3</sup> to get news about the Russia-Ukraine war from **television** (68%), followed by **online** sources such as news websites and mobile apps (62%).

While nearly all respondents reported having a presence on social media (94%), only 35% prefer **social media** as a source of news about the Russia-Ukraine war. Interestingly, this is fewer than the number of Canadians that prefer to get news on this topic from traditional sources, like **radio** (47%) or **print** publications (45%).

These findings may suggest that Canadians prefer to get their news on this topic from more traditional sources of news rather than from social media.

### Where do you prefer to get your news about the Russia-Ukraine War from?

- Prefer a great deal
- Prefer a lot
- Prefer a moderate amount
- Prefer slightly
- Do not prefer



Note: Percentages are based on 1500 respondents and are rounded to the nearest 1%.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Prefer" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents who prefer a news source "a great deal", "a lot", or "a moderate amount".

# 1.3 How often do you get news about the Russia-Ukraine war from social media platforms / messaging apps?

Twitter is the most popular platform to follow news about the Russia-Ukraine war among its users, closely followed by TikTok. Fifty-three percent of Twitter users and 51% of TikTok users get news on this topic from these social media platforms "sometimes" or more frequently.

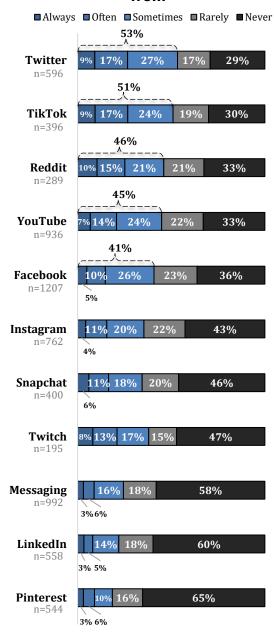
Despite having a smaller user base compared to other, more popular social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, Twitter's strong showing in this question demonstrates its importance as a go-to source for news for Canadians, living up to its claim to be the place to share and find out "What's Happening?" right now.

While Twitter is well-documented as a platform where their users share breaking news on a wide range of topics, TikTok's appearance in the list comes as a surprise. A relative newcomer to the social media scene (est. 2017), this video-sharing app is normally billed as a platform for entertainment. But as the data shows, about half of TikTok users get news about the war "sometimes" or more frequently from the app.

Rounding out the top 5 most common social media sources for news about the Russia-Ukraine war are: **Reddit**, **YouTube** and **Facebook**, consulted at least "sometimes" or more frequently

by 46%, 45% and 41% users of these platforms correspondingly.

# How often do you get news about the Russia-Ukraine war from



Note: Percentages are based on the number of users of each social media platform and are rounded to the nearest 1%. The platforms in the chart are listed in ascending order based on the percentage of users of each platform who selected "Never" as their response to this question.

### 2. Russia-Ukraine War Disinformation

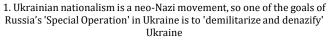
# 2.1 When using social media platforms / messaging apps, have you encountered any of the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine war?

To assess the prevalence of Russian disinformation<sup>4</sup> claims related to the Russia-Ukraine war circulating on social media in Canada, we asked participants if they encountered any of seven persistent and prevalent claims pushed by the Kremlin and pro-Kremlin accounts (see the chart below).

About half (51%) of Canadians reported encountering at least one pro-Kremlin claim on social media. This suggests that concerns about the prevalence and reach of Russian propaganda and disinformation in Canada is warranted. The most prevalent claim, encountered by 35% of Canadians, was "Ukrainian nationalism is а neo-Nazi movement...". The least prevalent claim, encountered 24% bv Canadians, was "The United States has a network of biological weapons labs in Ukraine".

The next three sections (Sec. 2.2-2.4) delve deeper into how much Canadians believe in each of these claims, and whether their political ideology or preferred sources to get news about the war relate to their beliefs in Russian propaganda.

## When using social media, have you encountered any of the following claims?



2. Russia is defending ethnic Russians in Ukraine

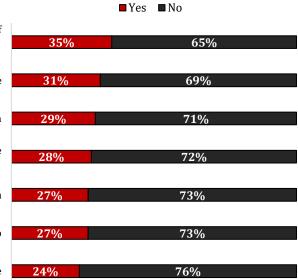
3. The Kyiv regime is spreading doctored photos and videos of supposed atrocities by Russian troops as part of staged production and provocation for Western media

4. Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine conflict

5. The West pushed Ukraine toward a conflict with Russia

6. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has surrounded Russia with military bases and broken their promise to not offer NATO membership to former USSR republics, like Ukraine

7. The United States has a network of biological weapons labs in Ukraine



Note: Percentages are based on 1500 respondents and are rounded to the nearest 1%. The claims are numbered in the chart to help with comparison of the results reported in Sections 2.1-2.4. In the survey, the claims were shown to respondents in a random order.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Disinformation is false, misleading, out-of-context, or biased information presented as a fact with the intent to deceive.

# 2.2 How much do you believe in the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine war?

This question examines the extent to which Canadians believe in any of the seven pro-Kremlin claims related to the Russia-Ukraine war.

The claim that "Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has surrounded Russia with military bases and broken their promise to not offer NATO membership to former USSR republics, like Ukraine" is believed at least to some extent<sup>5</sup> by nearly half of Canadians (49%), and the claim that "Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor in the

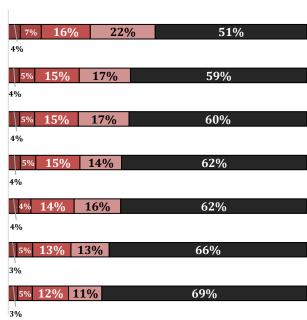
Russia-Ukraine conflict" is believed at least to some extent by only about a third of Canadians (31%).

The relatively widespread difference between the number of Canadians who believe in one claim over another suggests that some Russian disinformation claims resonated more with Canadians than others. The claim about NATO expansion is the one that gained the most traction with the Canadian public.

## How much do you believe in the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine War?

6. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has surrounded Russia with military bases and broken their promise to not offer NATO membership to former USSR republics, like Ukraine

- 3. The Kyiv regime is spreading doctored photos and videos of supposed atrocities by Russian troops as part of staged production and provocation for Western media
- 7. The United States has a network of biological weapons labs in Ukraine
  - 5. The West pushed Ukraine toward a conflict with Russia
    - 2. Russia is defending ethnic Russians in Ukraine
- Ukrainian nationalism is a neo-Nazi movement, so one of the goals of Russia's 'Special Operation' in Ukraine is to 'demilitarize and denazify' Ukraine
- 4. Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine conflict



■ A great deal ■ A lot ■ A moderate amount ■ A little ■ Not at all

Note: Percentages are based on 1500 respondents and are rounded to the nearest 1%. The claims are numbered in the chart to help with comparison of the results reported in Sections 2.1-2.4. In the survey, the claims were shown to respondents in a random order.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "Believe to some extent" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents believing a claim "a great deal", "a lot", "a moderate amount", or "a little".

### 2.3 Political Ideology and Belief in Pro-Kremlin Propaganda

To examine potential linkages between political ideology and people's propensity to believe in Pro-Kremlin propaganda, we used the Ideological Consistency Scale<sup>6</sup> developed by Pew Research Center. The scale is designed to determine the polarity of one's political ideology on a scale between -10 (mostly liberal) to +10 (mostly conservative). It is based on ten "political value" questions about social issues, military, and homosexuality, which have shown to correlate with a traditional left/right political affinity.

For reporting purposes, we grouped the respondents into three broad groups: left-leaning (scores below -2), mixed (scores between -2 and 2, inclusive), and right-leaning (scores above 2). Most respondents were in the left-leaning group (n=823), followed by the mixed group (n=548), and then the right-leaning group (n=129).

While related, political ideology is not the same as how people would vote in elections. For example, based on the Ideological Consistency Scale, out of 338 individuals who identified with the Conservative Party of Canada, 25% are left-leaning, 54% - mixed, and only 21% - right-leaning.

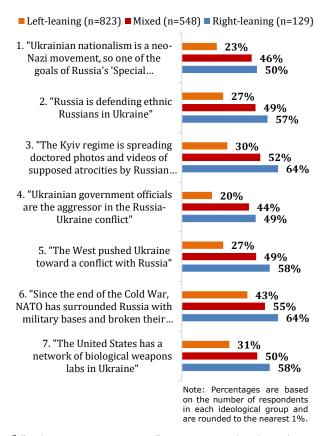
The data shows that right-leaning Canadians are more likely to believe at least to some extent<sup>7</sup> in all seven pro-Kremlin claims, relative to respondents who are ideologically left-leaning or

<sup>6</sup> You can find more information about the scale at https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/appendix-a-the-ideological-consistency-scale/

mixed. For example, 49% of right-leaning Canadians believe to some extent that "Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor" (Claim #4), while only 20% of left-leaning Canadians believe this claim.

Even though the data shows that Canadians from all three ideological groups profess belief at least to some extent in one or more of the selected claims, left-leaning individuals are consistently less likely to believe in pro-Kremlin propaganda overall as compared to Canadians who hold mixed or right-leaning views.

#### Believe to some extent that ...



<sup>7 &</sup>quot;Believe to some extent" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents who selected the following responses: "a little", "a moderate amount", "a lot", or "a great deal".

# 2.4 Preferred News Source and Belief in Pro-Kremlin Propaganda

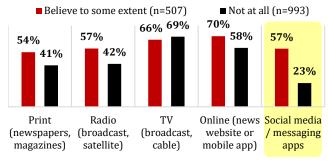
Next, we examined the potential connection between Canadians' preferred<sup>8</sup> source for getting news about the Russia-Ukraine war and their propensity to believe in the selected pro-Kremlin claims.

The charts below correspond to the seven pro-Kremlin claims and show the percentage of those who preferred either print, radio, TV, online (news website or mobile app), or social media as their news source. For ease of comparison, the percentages are shown for two groups separately: Group 1 (in red) - those who believe at least to some extent and Group 2 (in black) - those who do not believe in the Kremlin's propaganda.

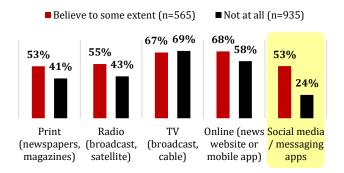
The most striking difference between the two groups is that those who believe in one or more of the pro-Kremlin claims are more likely to turn to social media as a news source about the war than those who do not believe (See the last column of each chart highlighted in yellow).

This finding suggests that there is a positive correlation between using social media for news consumption about the Russia-Ukraine war and one's tendency to believe in the Kremlin's propaganda.

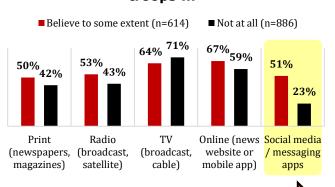
<sup>1. &</sup>quot;Ukrainian nationalism is a neo-Nazi movement ..."



## 2. "Russia is defending ethnic Russians in Ukraine"



# 3. "The Kyiv regime is spreading doctored photos and videos of supposed atrocities by Russian troops ..."

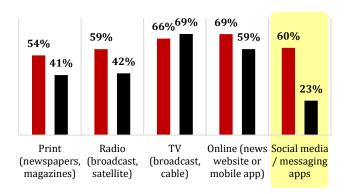


Charts for Claims 4-7 continue on the next page..

<sup>8 &</sup>quot;Prefer" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents who prefer a news source "a great deal", "a lot" or "a moderate amount".

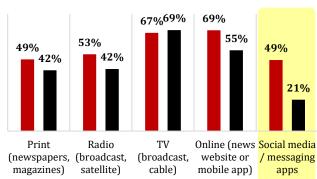
### 4. "Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine conflict"

■ Believe to some extent (n=470) ■ Not at all (n=1030)



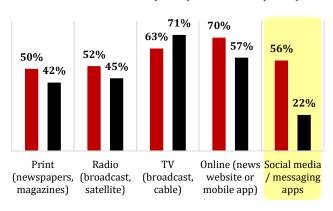
### 6. "Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has surrounded Russia ..."

■ Believe to some extent (n=739) ■ Not at all (n=761)



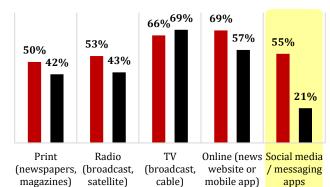
### 5. "The West pushed Ukraine toward a conflict with Russia"

■ Believe to some extent (n=569) ■ Not at all (n=931)



### 7. "The United States has a network of biological weapons labs in Ukraine"

■ Believe to some extent (n=607) ■ Not at all (n=893)



### 2.5 When faced with what you think is misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine war on social media platforms/ messaging apps, how likely are you to do the following?

When faced with what they think misinformation<sup>9</sup> about the war, 47% of Canadians surveyed indicated they would likely<sup>10</sup> consult other sources to verify. This suggests that Canadians are aware of the importance of validating information found on social media and are likely to make the efforts to do so.

Two in five Canadians are likely to mute, unfollow or block an account for sharing misinformation (40%), while about a third (32%) would limit their overall use of social media after encountering what they believe is misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine war.

While reporting accounts/posts to the media (22%) or law enforcement (20%) were expected to be less employed frequently strategies, Canadians were equally as unlikely to indicate that they would report an account/post that misinformation to the social media platform (24%). It is possible that social media users might be unaware of the available reporting features of each platform, or may believe that the reporting is ineffective, thus, becoming unlikely to employ that strategy.

Finally, the least popular option, chosen by only 18% of Canadians, was the option to directly challenge an account that they thought was sharing misinformation. This is likely due to respondents not wanting to instigate a conflict or for fear of retaliation.

### When faced with what you think is misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine War on social media platforms, how likely are you to do the following?

□ Neither likely nor unlikely

Consult other sources to verify the information

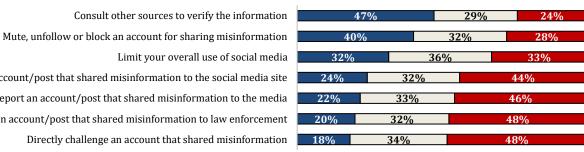
■ Likely (Somewhat-Extremely)

Limit your overall use of social media

Report an account/post that shared misinformation to the social media site

Report an account/post that shared misinformation to the media

Report an account/post that shared misinformation to law enforcement Directly challenge an account that shared misinformation



■ Unlikely (Somewhat-Extremely)

Note: Percentages are based on 1500 respondents and are rounded to the nearest 1%.

information presented as a fact. Disinformation is misinformation created with the intent to deceive.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The aim of this question was not to test people's ability to detect misinformation, but rather, to understand what strategies Canadians employ when seeing social media content about the Russia-Ukraine war that they think is misinformation. Misinformation is false, misleading, out-of-context, or biased

<sup>10 &</sup>quot;Likely" is operationalized as the percentage of those respondents who reported being "somewhat" or "extremely" likely to act when faced with what they think is misinformation.

### **Appendix A: Method**

Data was collected using Dynata, a market research firm. The survey was open from May 12-31, 2022 and was hosted on Qualtrics, an online survey platform. We received a total of 1,500 responses, excluding responses completed under 5 minutes. survey was made available to online Canadian adults in English. The term "online Canadian adults" refers to Internet users aged 18 and older. To increase the representativeness of our sample, we used proportional quota sampling to recruit respondents, with quotas based on age, gender, and geographical region that matched the distributions of the 2021 Statistics Canada population estimates<sup>11</sup>.

We recognize gender is not binary; however, the sampling question was phrased to be in line with Statistics Canada for recruiting a representative sample of Canadian adults. Later in the survey, participants were invited to self-identify as non-binary and 5 people did; 3 people preferred to self-describe themselves and 1 preferred not to answer this question.

### **Ethics**

The data is anonymized and presented in aggregate in this report. Prior to data collection, Research Ethics Board approval was obtained from Toronto Metropolitan University. Participants were shown a comprehensive consent form.

## Census-Balanced Sampling by Gender, Age, and Region

CANADA	2021
GENDER	
Female	51.24%
Male	48.76%
AGE	
18-24	10.09%
25-34	16.60%
35–44	16.50%
45-54	15.70%
55+	41.12%
REGION	
Western (Alberta, British Columbia,	31.47%
Manitoba, and Saskatchewan)	
Atlantic (New Brunswick,	6.73%
Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova	
Scotia, and Prince Edward Island)	
Ontario	38.72%
Quebec	23.08%

## **Social Media Platforms Reported in the Survey**

While the survey asked Canadians about thirteen different social media platforms, only those that reached a 10% adoption in Canada were included in the report. These are: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok, Reddit, and Twitch. Messaging apps were combined into one category called "messaging apps".

### **Percentage Reporting**

All percentages are rounded to the nearest 1%. A margin of error is not reported since an online survey is not a random probability sample.

 $<sup>^{11}\,</sup>$  Unfortunately, the study could not survey participants from Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and

Yukon due to insufficient membership in the online panel.

## **Appendix B: Survey Questions**

For this report, we analyzed the following questions from our survey:

### **Social Media Accounts**

**Q.** Do you have an account on the following social media platforms or messaging apps? [Yes; No; Unsure]

- Facebook YouTube Instagram LinkedIn
- Twitter Pinterest Snapchat Reddit
- TikTok Messaging apps Twitch

### **Russia-Ukraine War and News Sources**

**Q.** How much do you trust the accuracy of news about the Russia-Ukraine War from: [A great deal, A lot, A moderate amount, A little, None at all]

Note: The following options are displayed in a random order.

- Friends and family
- · Mainstream Media
- · Partisan sites
- · Political party and leaders
- Canadian Public Officials / Government ministries & departments
- U.S. Public Officials / Government ministries & departments
- Ukrainian Public Officials / Government ministries & departments
- Russian Public Officials / Government ministries & departments
- **Q.** Where do you prefer to get your news about the Russia-Ukraine War from? [Prefer a great deal, Prefer a lot, Prefer a moderate amount, Prefer slightly, Do not prefer]

Note: The following options are displayed in a random order.

- Online (news website or mobile app)
- Print (newspapers, magazines)
- Radio (broadcast, satellite)
- Social media platforms / messaging apps
- TV (broadcast, cable)
- **Q.** How often do you get news about the Russia-Ukraine War from the following social media platforms / messaging apps? [Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never]
- Facebook YouTube Instagram LinkedIn
- Twitter Pinterest Snapchat Reddit
- TikTok Messaging apps Twitch

### Russia-Ukraine War and Misinformation

**Q.** When using social media platforms / messaging apps, have you encountered any of the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine War?

[Yes; No]

Note: The following claims are displayed in a random order.

- The claim that "The West pushed Ukraine toward a conflict with Russia"
- The claim that "Russia is defending ethnic Russians in Ukraine"
- The claim that "Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine conflict"
- The claim that "Ukrainian nationalism is a neo-Nazi movement, so one of the goals of Russia's 'Special Operation' in Ukraine is to 'demilitarize and denazify' Ukraine"
- The claim that "Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has surrounded Russia with military bases and broken their promise to not offer NATO membership to former USSR republics, like Ukraine"
- The claim that "The Kyiv regime is spreading doctored photos and videos of supposed atrocities by Russian troops as part of staged production and provocation for Western media"
- The claim that "The United States has a network of biological weapons labs in Ukraine"
- **Q.** How much do you believe in the following claims about the Russia-Ukraine War? [A great deal, A lot, A moderate amount, A little, None at all]

Note: The following claims are displayed in a random order.

- The claim that "The West pushed Ukraine toward a conflict with Russia"
- The claim that "Russia is defending ethnic Russians in Ukraine"
- The claim that "Ukrainian government officials are the aggressor in the Russia-Ukraine conflict"
- The claim that "Ukrainian nationalism is a neo-Nazi movement, so one of the goals of Russia's 'Special Operation' in Ukraine is to 'demilitarize and denazify' Ukraine"

- The claim that "Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has surrounded Russia with military bases and broken their promise to not offer NATO membership to former USSR republics, like Ukraine"
- The claim that "The Kyiv regime is spreading doctored photos and videos of supposed atrocities by Russian troops as part of staged production and provocation for Western media"
- The claim that "The United States has a network of biological weapons labs in Ukraine"
- **Q.** When faced with what you think is misinformation about the Russia-Ukraine War on social media platforms / messaging apps, how likely are you to do the following? Note: Generally speaking, misinformation is an incorrect, misleading or unproven claim presented as a fact.

[Extremely likely, Somewhat likely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Somewhat unlikely, Extremely unlikely]

Note: The following options are displayed in a random order.

- Consulted other sources to verify the information
- Directly challenged an account that shared misinformation
- Limited your overall use of social media / messaging app
- Muted, unfollowed or blocked an account for sharing misinformation
- Reported an account/post that shared misinformation to law enforcement
- Reported an account/post that shared misinformation to the media
- Reported an account/post that shared misinformation to the social media site

### **Ideological Consistency Scale**

**Q.** Below you will find ten pairs of statements about political and societal topics. For each pair, select one statement that comes closer to your own views (even if neither is exactly right)

rigite)	
Conservative (+1)	Liberal (-1)
Government is almost	Government often
always wasteful and	does a better job than
inefficient	people give it credit
	for
Government	Government
regulation of business	regulation of business
usually does more	is necessary to
harm than good	protect the public
	interest
Poor people today	Poor people have
have it easy because	hard lives because
they can get	government benefits
government benefits	don't go far enough to
without doing	help them live
anything in return	decently
The government	The government
today can't afford to	should do more to
do much more to help	help needy
the needy	Canadians, even if it
•	means going deeper
	into debt
Indigenous and black	Discrimination is the
people who can't get	main reason why
ahead in this country	many indigenous and
are mostly	black people can't get
responsible for their	ahead these days
own condition	,
Immigrants today are	Immigrants today
a burden on our	strengthen our
country because they	country because of
take our jobs,	their hard work and
housing and health	talents
care	
The best way to	Good diplomacy is the
ensure peace is	best way to ensure
through military	peace
strength	
Most corporations	Business corporations
make a fair and	make too much profit
reasonable amount of	The state of the s
profit	
Stricter	Stricter
environmental laws	environmental laws
and regulations cost	and regulations are
too many jobs and	worth the cost
hurt the economy	
Homosexuality should	Homosexuality should
be discouraged by	be accepted by
society	society
5561669	5551507

## **Funding**

This research was undertaken, in part, thanks to funding from:







The Ted Rogers School of Management at (TRSM) Toronto Metropolitan University is Canada's preeminent entrepreneurial-focused business school that is shaping the country's next generation of global innovators and leaders. TRSM is home to six management, schools of four innovative graduate degrees (including a new PhD in Management), and 15 innovative research centres, institutes, and labs. The Ted Rogers School of Management is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and is home to 12,000+ students and 200+ industry-connected faculty members.

## **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank all survey participants for taking part in the study.

#### **Address**

Toronto Metropolitan University Social Media Lab 10 Dundas St East 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 1002 Toronto, ON M5B 0A1 Canada