

# Canada's News Media Tries to Regain Trust During COVID-19 Outbreak

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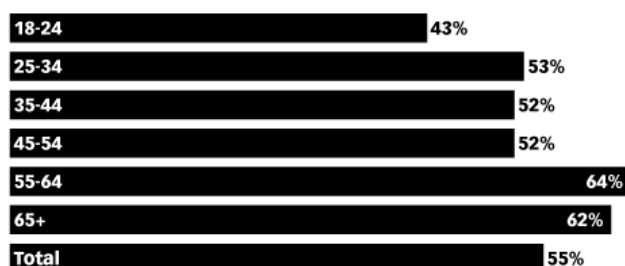
**A**t a time when reliable information about the coronavirus is critical, trust in the news media in Canada is not as high as it should be, according to new research.

According to an [Angus Reid Institute](#) poll conducted between March 13 and 15, just more than half (55%) of adults in Canada had a “fair or great deal of trust” in the news media for outbreak information. However, trust is up slightly from the same survey conducted a week before (March 5 and 6), when it was 45%.

Older respondents showed more trust than younger groups: Almost two-thirds of Canadians ages 55 and older trusted the news media vs. fewer than half of 18- to 24-year-olds. The most trusted source of COVID-19 information for all ages was a “local health authority/medical health officer,” cited by 87% of respondents.

### Adults in Canada Who Trust Information About the Coronavirus from the News Media, by Age, March 2020

% of respondents in each group



Note: trust "a great deal"/"a fair amount"  
Source: Angus Reid Institute, March 17, 2020

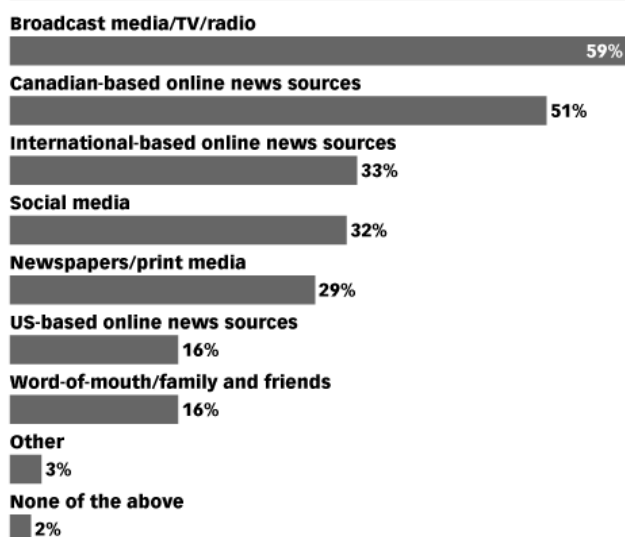
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Most Canadians turn to traditional formats like broadcast TV and radio for the latest pandemic information. According to a [Leger Marketing](#) poll from February, 59% of adults in Canada said they turned to TV and radio for COVID-19 news, followed by Canadian-based online sources (51%). Ranking well below were international online news sources (33%) and social media (31%).

### Where Are Adults in Canada Getting Information About the Coronavirus?

% of respondents, Feb 2020



Note: ages 18+; <2% selected don't know/prefer not to answer  
Source: Leger Marketing, Feb 14, 2020

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A positive sign for broadcast media is that Canadians are significantly increasing their TV news viewership to stay informed during the pandemic. According to Numeris ratings reports, viewership of national news programs was up substantially among individuals in Canada ages 25 to 54 between March 13 and 15. All major daily TV news programs nearly doubled their year-to-date average minute audience (AMA) during that period.

Consumption of digital news media in Canada is also much higher in recent weeks. According to [Comscore Media Matrix](#) website tracking from March 9 to 15, traffic on news and information sites was substantially increased vs. a benchmark week in early January 2020. A 19% jump was seen in aggregate unique daily visitors and total visits.

**Digital News Sites Audience Metrics in Canada, March 2020\***  
% change vs. Jan 2020\*\*

|                       | Aggregate daily unique visitors | Visits | Minutes | Pages |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| News and information  | 19%                             | 19%    | 10%     | 22%   |
| Business/finance news | 34%                             | 40%    | 63%     | 78%   |
| General news          | 29%                             | 41%    | 41%     | 52%   |
| Local news            | 27%                             | 33%    | 29%     | 17%   |
| Politics              | 55%                             | 61%    | 86%     | 39%   |
| Weather               | 22%                             | 28%    | 14%     | -7%   |

*Note: \*week of March 9-15, 2020; \*\*week of December 30, 2019-January 5, 2020*  
*Source: Comscore Media Matrix as cited in company blog, March 23, 2020*

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## Actions the News Industry Has Taken

The increased viewership is being met with efforts by the broadcast industry in Canada to make programming centered on COVID-19 available for free. On March 14, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Radio-Canada (CBC’s French-language service) announced that its 24-hour news services in English and French were unlocked across multiple TV distributors in the country.

“As Canadians face the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the constantly changing situation, CBC/Radio-Canada and the country's TV distributors want to ensure more Canadians have access to the latest trusted information,” a CBC release stated.

The CBC News Network was made available to all subscribers on Bell TV, Shaw, Cogeco, Eastlink, Rogers and Telus Optik TV. French-language programs from Ici RDI (Radio-Canada) were available to all subscribers on Bell TV, Vidéotron and Cogeco. CBC news content is also available online via its streaming service CBC Gem, the CBC website and mobile app, as well as [ici.radio-canada.ca](http://ici.radio-canada.ca).

Canada's daily news providers have also announced measures to make content about the outbreak more accessible. Paywalls at Canada's three largest daily news organizations were taken down in early March for stories related to the pandemic. The Toronto Star announced the release of these stories on March 4, while The Globe and Mail did the same on March 11 with National Post following suit on March 16.

The actions of Canada's traditional news media—both broadcast and daily news online—could lead to greater audiences, especially as trust erodes in social media. Décrypteurs, Radio-Canada's social media fact-checking team, has been monitoring the “unprecedented spread of disinformation and fake news” related to the crisis.

Misleading video is a particularly acute issue that Décrypteurs tracks. “Since the beginning of the crisis, Décrypteurs has received an enormous number of questions related to images or videos circulating on social media,” wrote Jeff Yates, a Radio-Canada columnist who works on the Décrypteurs team, on [CBC.ca](http://CBC.ca). “These images often purport to show what's going on in this or that country. For example, Décrypteurs has seen videos from 2018 being applied to the present crisis, presenting a false narrative.”

For their part, social media companies have announced measures to verify information spread on their platforms and remove false content. Twitter announced measures in January in advance of the pandemic to monitor and remove false information.

On March 18, Facebook launched the Coronavirus Information Center, located at the top of the News Feed featuring news from health authorities. It also blogged about measures for limiting misinformation, banning ads for items like face masks and removing misinformation about COVID-19 on Instagram.