

## New immigrants could be hit harder by Meta cutting off access to Canadian news

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Research suggests newcomers rely on social media, particularly Facebook, for news more than other Canadians, raising questions about how diaspora communities may be affected by tech giants' response to new federal legislation. Bill C-18, or the Online News Act, would force tech companies like Meta and Google to make deals with news publishers to compensate them for sharing news on their platforms.

After the act became law, both Meta—which owns Facebook and Instagram—and Google announced they would completely block access to Canadian news on their platforms across the country once it takes effect. The comments concern Saranaz Barforoush, an Iranian immigrant and a professor in the University of British Columbia's School of Journalism, Writing and Media.

Losing access to reputable Canadian news sources on social media could lead to a void in which misinformation spreads, especially among newcomers who may be less familiar with Canadian news, Barforoush warns. This could in turn make diaspora communities lose interest in the news, she adds. "The less interaction for newcomers, for immigrants with news in another language, news about another country that they're starting to call home, it will really derail this effort of helping citizens verify information because they're not seeing it all the time," she says.

Research by the Media Technology Monitor, a product of CBC / Radio-Canada, shows newcomers to Canada are more likely than other Canadians to access news via social media. The findings come from a poll released in February which surveyed nearly 4,000 people who had immigrated to Canada in the last five years about their news consumption habits. For the Canadian-born sample, 800 people were surveyed.

Forty per cent of newcomers surveyed said they primarily used social media to find news, compared to only 17 per cent of those born in Canada. Facebook is the first place newcomers go for news, followed by Google News, which is also at risk of being blocked in response to the bill. The poll takes place annually and has shown similar results in the past. Barforoush says social media has been essential in connecting immigrant communities with others back home or across the diaspora as well as in helping newcomers find relevant information.