



More Canadians are seeing social media as a 'toxic' environment

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The promise of social networks helping users find like-minded people is being seen as increasingly untrue, according to new research from the Media Technology Monitor that found most Canadians believe platforms are getting “more toxic” than they were in the past.

Overall, social networkers are not so keen on allowing people to have unfettered freedom to speak their mind. Nearly 60% disagreed with the statement that “people on social media should be able to say whatever they want” with only 22% saying people should be able to speak their mind freely. Men are more likely to want to have full freedom to speak their mind than are women, as are younger social networkers compared to older ones.

While social media can help people find other like-minded people, most users feel that doesn't happen. Only about three in ten say social media helps them to find people who think like themselves about important issues.

Seven tenths of social networkers feel that social media has become more toxic in recent years, a feeling that is consistent across most demographics and social platform users. Instead of bringing people together, social media is making society more polarized – with 70% of social media users feeling this is the case.

While 43% of social networkers strongly agreed with the statement about the toxicity found in social media, only 3% strongly disagreed.

The research was conducted prior to major tech companies announcing plans to block news from their platforms in Canada, but among the 42% of Canadians who were using social media as a news source, only one eighth consider it trustworthy – which likely points to them using it as an aggregator of news content rather than a news source in and of itself.

Just over three quarters of Canadian adults (76%) engage in social networking. The majority of those surveyed say keeping in touch with others is their primary reason for using. Facebook (71% of users) remains the most popular social media platform, followed by Instagram (41%) and WhatsApp (30%). The other platforms used are Twitter/X (25%), LinkedIn (23%), TikTok (21%), Pinterest (20%), Reddit (19%), Snapchat (17%) and Discord (11%).