



TV IS DOMINANT FOR NEWS IN THE TIME OF COVID: STUDY

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It's no surprise to anyone that the consumption of news in Canada has greatly increased since March of this year. But a new report by the Media Technology Monitor (MTM) gives insight into just how big that increase is.

For nearly half of online Canadians, TV news programs are their main source for COVID-19 updates. This is more than twice the incidence of news websites and apps, with social media coming in third.

The study found a 47% increase in online Canadians 18-plus watching local TV news programs during the pandemic than in the fall of 2019 in addition to a 27% growth in the viewing of Canadian specialty TV news channels.

While smaller than seen in the Anglophone market, there was a 45% surge in use of Canadian news specialty channel by Francophones. Specialty news also saw a 48% increase in use by 18-to-34-year-olds. Older Canadians were already likely to be watching – ages 50 to 64 viewed 81% versus 66% last fall and those 65-plus 83% in spring versus 79%.

There wasn't an obvious increase in the number of Canadians getting news online, those that did say they were doing so more often.

Online, Anglophones are more likely to be getting news from news websites than are Francophones, while Francophones are more likely to be streaming TV news online. Four-fifths of online Canadians use a traditional broadcaster such as CBC/Radio-Canada, CTV, TVA Nouvelles or Global News. This could be on any platform offered by the broadcaster – TV, online or radio.

Social media is the second most cited source for pandemic updates. Nearly a quarter of online Canadians said that they get news from sites like Facebook, Twitter or Reddit. Government public health agencies are also a popular source of news updates on the subject and a fifth of online Canadians say they are getting news from a local, provincial or national health agency.

The MTM also found some regional differences in terms of the primary medium for COVID-19 news. Online Quebecers had the highest levels of use of linear and online TV. Albertans had the lowest use of linear TV as their primary news source but the highest use of news websites and apps. Manitoba and Saskatchewan report the lowest use of news websites and the highest use of social media for COVID-19 news.