COVID – 19: Disinformation and Discrimination

EDUCATIONAL BOOKLET

Author: Kevin Holowack
PUBLISHER: UNITED CULTURES OF CANADA ASSOCIATION
UNIT # 810, SADDLEBACK ROAD NW, EDMONTON AB T6J 4W4

Table of contents:

Chapter 1 | What is disinformation?

Today, we encounter more information than ever before. We learn something about the world almost every time we open social media, scroll through our smartphones, or talk with our friends and family. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok allow us to share news articles with friends and strangers around the world with the click of a button.

The internet is a great tool for sharing knowledge, but it comes with risks. A lot of the information we encounter is untrustworthy. Some of it gets the facts wrong, and some of it lies to us on purpose. Some of it has led to severe divisions and violence in our society. To make things worse, most of the bad information we see in our daily lives is either mixed with true information or designed to look believable.[1]

False and dangerous information is so widespread that almost everyone who uses social media has seen it at some point in their life.[2] Most likely, you or someone you know has believed false information and even shared it with friends. If we are not careful, we may have our perspective of the world shaped by lies.

The three types of information

To understand how information can affect our lives in good and bad ways, we can identify three types of information.

1. Disinformation is information that is intentionally false and created to harm individuals, communities, or societies.[3] Disinformation often targets specific groups or individuals. It can be racist, conspiratorial, or dangerous to public safety. It usually ignores the advice of experts, scientists, and medical professionals.

Examples of disinformation include:

➢ false claims that 5G cellular networks are related to COVID-19, which has led people in several countries to destroy 5G cellular towers,[4]
➢ false claims that methanol and ethanol cure COVID-19, which has led to over 2000 people getting poisoned and almost 300 deaths,[5]
➢ false claims made that hydroxychloroquine[6] or household cleaning products[7] can cure COVID-19,
➢ false claims that COVID-19 was created in a laboratory in China or that it was created by the American military,[8]
➢ false claims made by many people that COVID-19 is only as dangerous as the flu.[9]

2. Misinformation is information that is false, and it can be as dangerous as disinformation. Unlike disinformation, misinformation is not intended to cause harm. Misinformation can often *look* true even if it is not. Many of us have shared misinformation with friends and family

because we want to help them. This is an honest mistake, but it can be avoided if we know how to spot it.[10]

Examples of misinformation include:

➢ incorrect statistics about COVID-19 transmission and mortality rates,
➢ incorrect advice about mask use, social distancing, and handwashing,
➢ incorrect claims about "alternative" treatments for COVID-19, such as claims that certain foods prevent the disease,[11]
➢ sensationalized news stories about panic buying at grocery stores.

3. True information is information that comes from reliable sources like public health experts, scientists, medical professionals, and responsible journalists. This is information everyone can trust. Finding and sharing true information can help you stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can also help slow the spread of disinformation.

Examples of true information:

➢ the most up-to-date research and recommendations about COVID-19 provided by global health organizations like the United Nations or the World Health Organization,
➢ information provided by public health officials like Alberta Health Services and the Government of Canada,
➢ information provided by reputable scientists, researchers, and medical professionals,
➢ information provided by legitimate media organizations, trusted journalists, and fact-checkers.

A short history of disinformation

Today, it is not hard to find organizations that provide true information. However, the problem of disinformation seems to be getting worse and worse. To understand the unique situation of people in the twenty-first century, we must consider where disinformation comes from and why it exists.

Disinformation has existed as long as humans have had ways to share information on a large scale.[12] Disinformation has been used to influence the views of large groups of people, promote violence and discrimination against marginalized groups, create disorder in society, and encourage people to engage in extremist or unsafe behaviour.[13]

Throughout history, disinformation has been spread by governments, religious groups, conspiracy theorists, corporations, politicians, terrorist groups, and others.

Examples of disinformation throughout history include:

➢ government propaganda that portrays marginalized groups in a negative way—for example, in the 1930s and 40s, the Nazis spread disinformation about Jews, which encouraged racist stereotypes and violence,

➤ cover-ups and lies by powerful organizations—for example, in the twentieth century, cigarette companies lied about the harmful effects of smoking, which has led to increased illness and death around the world,[14]

➤ popular conspiracy theories—for example, conspiracy groups who believe a "deep state" controls the world often spread misleading information about political events.

Disinformation becomes more popular during major world events like elections, war, or health crises. This could be because people like to have answers during difficult times, even if the answers are not based on truth. It could also be because reality is too complex and difficult to understand. Disinformation increases when people feel threatened or unsafe because bad actors know we are more vulnerable to lies and misleading ideas.

Past events that came with a lot of disinformation include:

➤ epidemics and pandemics—for example, the influenza epidemic in the 1920s[15] and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s[16] both generated a lot of "fake news" and false facts about the origins and treatments of the illness,

➤ major world disasters—for example, many conspiracy websites and videos appeared after the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001,[17]

➤ various significant political, scientific, and cultural events—for example, disinformation often spreads after the death of high-profile politicians and celebrities,

➤ technological advancements—for example, microwaves, televisions, and cellphones have all been blamed for human health problems.[18]

In the past, tools like telegrams, telephones, and computers all changed the way we engage with information and disinformation. Today, the internet is the most powerful tool we have for finding and sharing information. The internet influences how we learn things. We scroll through information much faster than we did in the past, which means we take less time to verify if it is true or not. The internet also makes it easier for people to spread disinformation. For example, bad actors can use social media to make their content go "viral." This means that it spreads quickly to many other users and is difficult to stop.

Researchers find that disinformation spreads faster through social media platforms like Twitter than it does through older kinds of media like newspapers and television.[19] Everyone who uses social media has seen a misleading article or "meme" at least once. Recently, disinformation has been spread by "bots," which are computer programs created to spread false information. For example, bots can create fake social media accounts.[20] Bots can also leave comments on videos or other social media posts. These comments often contain disinformation or hurtful language. Researchers think around 45% of the Twitter accounts that talk about COVID-19 are controlled by bots.[21]

Another reason why the internet has changed the way we learn is that most of us tend to see information we already agree with. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter use complex algorithms

that influence our news feed and advertisements.[22] These algorithms are designed to filter out content we do not like and give us more content we do like.[23] Social media also lets users filter their own content. This makes it easier for people to find perspectives similar to theirs, even if it means finding disinformation.[24] Because of this, some people say we are living in "social media bubbles" or "echo chambers." This is especially a problem for young people because they get more of their information from social media on average.[25]

What is the purpose of disinformation?

Information always exists for a reason. For example, true information exists to provide society with accurate and up-to-date details about COVID-19, including transmission rates and rules to keep our communities safe. True information is shared by health officials and experts.

Disinformation also exists for a reason. However, it is **not** designed to keep us safe.

Disinformation usually exists to:[26]

➢ influence people to support an individual, group, or idea,
➢ influence people to oppose an individual, group, or idea,
➢ produce a strong emotional response toward an individual, group, or idea,
➢ exaggerate the seriousness of a particular event or statement,
➢ create doubt or confusion around current and past events.

There are many reasons why someone would create and share disinformation. Common reasons include:[27]

➢ to make money,
➢ to promote a politician or political idea,
➢ to lower trust in the government, media, or science,
➢ to blame a person or organization for a bad event,
➢ to create divisions in society or damage democracy,
➢ to create confusion around the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent professionals from dealing with the threat of the virus.

There are also less severe reasons why someone would share disinformation. For example, someone might create shocking or controversial content because they want attention. Someone might also create disinformation as a joke.[28] Others might enjoy being part of an online community, even if the community is based on disinformation. These reasons for spreading disinformation are not always malicious, but they can still be dangerous.

Who is influenced by disinformation?

Ultimately, everyone can be influenced by disinformation, regardless of your age, beliefs, education, or political opinions. Disinformation spreads across media platforms, languages, and

cultural communities. However, researchers found a few factors that influence how likely you are to be influenced by disinformation.

Here is what researchers found:

➢ people who distrust science, media, or government are more likely to be influenced by disinformation,[29] while people who trust science are less likely to believe disinformation,[30]
➢ people who distrust "experts" are more likely to be influenced by disinformation,[31]
➢ people who support political and cultural leaders who frequently spread disinformation are more likely to believe that disinformation,[32]
➢ people who already believe one piece of disinformation are more likely to believe other pieces of disinformation.[33]

Researchers also studied disinformation about COVID-19. Here is what they found:

➢ people who get information about COVID-19 on social media are more likely to believe false information than people who get their information from other sources, like news articles and television,[34]
➢ people who get information about COVID-19 from reputable media sources are less likely to believe false information,[35]
➢ people with strong critical thinking skills and a good understanding of numbers and statistics are less likely to believe false information.[36]

Disinformation also affects peoples' responses to the pandemic. Researchers found that people who consume a lot of disinformation are:

➢ less likely to follow public health guidelines like social distancing, mask-wearing, hygiene, and self-isolating,[37]
➢ less likely to get vaccinated or trust vaccine technology,
➢ less likely to look for true information about COVID-19,
➢ more likely to do things that increase the spread of COVID-19, like going to large gatherings.[38]

Chapter 2 | What is the infodemic?

COVID-19 changed the way we work, socialize, spend our spare time, and think about politics, health, and science. Naturally, people around the world have big questions about the virus. Where did it come from? How does it spread? How dangerous is it? Is the government making the best decisions when it comes to handling the pandemic?

It is important to ask questions like this. Understanding the virus from various perspectives helps us figure out the best way to respond to it. However, we also need to be careful because many answers that we find in the media are based on misinformation and disinformation.

In September 2020, the World Health Organization and the United Nations declared that we are living in an "infodemic." An infodemic means an excess of information about COVID-19 both online and offline, which makes it harder for society to deal with the pandemic.[39] By using the word "infodemic," health experts are suggesting that COVID-19 is the first pandemic in history that is deeply connected to technology and media use.[40]

The infodemic is strongly tied to the internet because most of us use the internet to get information about COVID-19. In fact, internet use and media consumption have greatly increased since the beginning of the pandemic. Researchers found that in the United States, Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, and China, around 95% of people started consuming more news and social media content after the outbreak of COVID-19.[41] Sometimes it is easy to spot disinformation, but usually it is not. However, it is around us all the time. For example, researchers found that almost 30% of the most popular YouTube videos about COVID-19 contained some misinformation or disinformation.[42]

The infodemic is a public health threat. Disinformation about a public health crisis like COVID-19 can be especially dangerous. The infodemic is already responsible for:

➢ encouraging people to ignore government restrictions, which increases the spread of the virus and leads to more deaths,
➢ damaging the public's trust in medicine, science, and health experts,[43]
➢ making it easier for malicious actors to spread disinformation that promotes racism and hatred in society,[44]
➢ fueling racist sentiment toward Chinese people and culture (see Chapters 6–8),[45]
➢ making it easier for corrupt governments, scammers, organized crime groups, racist extremist groups, and terrorist groups to spread disinformation for their own gain,[46]
➢ creating general disorder in the media, leaving the public confused and uninformed,
➢ causing divisions and arguments between groups in society who have different understandings of the pandemic,
➢ creating confusion in the political sphere, preventing politicians from effectively responding to COVID-19.

The infodemic is also related to issues of inequality in our society (see Chapters 6–8). It is a fact that COVID-19 is causing more harm to marginalized communities. For example, in the United States, Black and Hispanic communities are more likely to get infected and die from COVID-19 than other groups.[47] In Canada, Asian Canadians, Black Canadians, and Indigenous people[48] have experienced discrimination because of disinformation about the origins and effects of COVID-19. Therefore, in many instances, the COVID-19 pandemic and the infodemic can be directly related to issues of discrimination and racism.

Organizations around the world are working to fight the disinformation (see Chapter 4), but the infodemic may not be over anytime soon.

Common themes in the COVID-19 infodemic

Here are some of the most common types of disinformation to emerge from the infodemic.

1. Disinformation about the origins of COVID-19

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a lot of disinformation about where the virus comes from. For example:

➢ in Canada, the United States, the Philippines, India, and elsewhere, many people on social media said that the virus was intentionally made in China;[49] in China and Russia, many people said that the virus was intentionally made in the United States,[50]

➢ around the world, disinformation claimed that 5G cellular towers are somehow related to COVID-19.[51]

Claims like this not true. Most scientists agree that COVID-19 started in an animal species and was first detected in Wuhan, China.[52] Scientists are still researching more about the origins of COVID-19.

2. Disinformation about COVID-19 transmission

In many countries, there is disinformation that mischaracterizes the way COVID-19 is transmitted. Sometimes, disinformation denies that COVID-19 can be transmitted at all. Other disinformation provides false or misleading details about where COVID-19 is spreading and why. For example:

➢ in Taiwan, false information on social media suggested that the rates of COVID-19 infection were much higher in certain areas than they were,[53]

➢ in Canada, disinformation was spread on Facebook saying that COVID-19 is frequently transmitted through shoes,[54]

➢ in India, disinformation on WhatsApp provided fake statistics about transmission and mortality rates in the country.[55]

The best way to learn how COVID-19 is transmitted is to go to scientific and medical sources. These sources have the most up-to-date research on the virus. Good sources include the World Health Organization, the United Nations, or local sources such as Alberta Health Services.

3. Disinformation about the severity of COVID-19

A lot of disinformation on social media encourages people to not take the virus seriously. For example:

➢ across the world, misleading sources claim that COVID-19 is no more dangerous than the flu,[56]
➢ in June 2020, a popular post on Facebook contained incorrect information about the mortality rate of COVID-19—this post skewed official information from the American Centre for Disease Control (CDC).[57]

In reality, COVID-19 is a severe risk to public safety. COVID-19 is related to the flu (they are both coronaviruses), and the viruses can cause similar symptoms. However, COVID-19 has a much higher mortality rate. This is because people have no pre-existing immunity to COVID-19 and because COVID-19 often causes more severe health problems than the flu.[58]

4. Disinformation about COVID-19 vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines are now available to the public in some parts of the world. However, disinformation about vaccines is also widespread. Much of this disinformation is linked to conspiracy theories and disinformation about vaccines that predates COVID-19. For example:

➢ many fake or misleading stories on social media claim that COVID-19 vaccines cause a variety of health issues[59] or alter your DNA,[60]
➢ many anti-vaccine groups on social media spread misleading information about the effects of vaccines, which lowers public trust in medical technology.[61]

In reality, vaccines have been used to fight diseases since the nineteenth century.[62] As long as there have been vaccines, there has been disinformation about vaccines, which is eventually debunked. Today, vaccines used on humans have all been rigorously tested by scientists and researchers.[63]

5. Fake cures and treatments for COVID-19

There are many fake cures and treatments for COVID-19 promoted on social media. These "cures" are never grounded in reputable science. For example:

➢ early in the pandemic, many posts on social media said that hot air or hot temperature can defeat the virus,[64]

- in the United States, politicians and untrustworthy news sources said that the drug hydroxychloroquine is an effective treatment against COVID-19 (this claim was quickly debunked),[65]
- around the world, posts on social media said that a variety of common household items—including garlic, alcohol, and bleach—can cure COVID-19.[66]

6. Disinformation about social distancing

Much disinformation tries to cast doubt on the importance of social distancing. Some people believe social distancing in schools, workplaces, and social gatherings is causing more harm than good. Often, these ideas are inspired by disinformation. For example:

- some media outlets in the United States incorrectly said that there is no scientific basis for social distancing,[67]
- many posts on Twitter and elsewhere cast doubt on social distancing and other strategies to slow the spread of the virus.[68]

In fact, social distancing and lockdown measures have been well studied by researchers in regard to COVID-19 and previous pandemics like the 1918 Influenza.[69]

7. Disinformation that discredits health authorities and scientists

A lot of disinformation preys on peoples' distrust of large institutions like governments, universities, and health organizations. There are many reasons why someone would distrust these institutions, but disinformation exploits this distrust by providing alternative claims that are unfounded and dangerous. Some disinformation directly contradicts the claims of scientists and medical experts.

One study found that almost 40% of disinformation about COVID-19 also contains misleading information about important health organizations, government agencies, the World Health Organization, or the United Nations.[70]

8. Disinformation involving celebrities and cultural influencers

Much disinformation involves celebrities and other figures who are in the public eye. Celebrities' social media accounts have many followers, so disinformation shared by celebrities has a wide reach. Conspiracy theorists also like to promote false information about celebrities. For example:

- some conspiracy theorists share disinformation on social media suggesting Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, is involved in an evil plot involving COVID-19 vaccines,[71]
- there are many fake stories about celebrities contracting or dying from COVID-19,[72]
- well-known celebrities, including Woody Harrelson, the British singer MIA, and a variety of popular Instagram influencers, have been caught spreading disinformation about COVID-19.[73]

9. Disinformation about masks

In some parts of the internet, masks are a controversial issue.[74] Some people believe masks are not effective. This has led to real-life conflicts. For example, businesses and retailers are occasionally harassed by customers who refuse to wear a mask.[75] These conflicts are fueled by disinformation about masks.

Disinformation about masks includes:

➢ around the world, disinformation on social media suggested that people who wear masks are *more* at risk than people who do not wear masks,[76]
➢ in Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, France, and many other countries, disinformation on social media said that wearing masks can lower oxygen levels and even cause hypoxia.[77]

In reality, masks have been used for a long time in many parts of the world to slow the spread of viruses. Scientists are still researching how masks relate to the spread of COVID-19. Right now, the World Health Organization and Alberta Health Services say that masks, social distancing, and handwashing are the best ways for individuals to prevent the spread of COVID-19.[78]

10. COVID-19 disinformation used to fuel racism and discrimination

Researchers find that when disease rates increase, racial and religious discrimination often increases as well.[79] Disinformation about COVID-19 has been used to encourage racism around the world. Much of this disinformation targets people of East Asian descent, including Asian Canadians. Around the world, other marginalized groups have also been targeted by disinformation during the pandemic including Muslims,[80] Black people,[81] Jews,[82] and refugees.[83]

Here are some examples of how COVID-19 has fueled discrimination:

➢ some American politicians and media outlets call COVID-19 the "Wuhan virus" or the "China virus"[84]—these terms became popular on social media sites, leading to discrimination against Asian people across the world, including in Canada,[85]
➢ disinformation around the world has blamed Muslims, Jews, and LGBTQ people for creating or deliberately spreading COVID-19[86]—some of these claims sparked online attacks and real-world violence against these communities.[87,88]

11. Information that ignores the impact of COVID-19 on marginalized communities

Studies show that race, ethnicity, and culture are tied to rates of transmission and death due to COVID-19. In Canada, people who are part of a visible minority report more economic hardship because of the virus than other groups.[89] Studies in Toronto show that COVID-19 spreads quicker and causes more death in low-income neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods with a high percentage of racial and ethnic minorities.[90] Indigenous people in Canada experience some of the highest levels of transmission in the country.[91] In the United States, Black populations experience significantly higher infection and mortality rates than other groups.[92]

Therefore, information saying COVID-19 affects all groups equally is false or misleading. The pandemic disproportionately hurts groups who have already experienced historical discrimination and have less access to education and healthcare (see Chapters 6–8).

12. Disinformation about COVID-19 spread by scammers

The pandemic has increased fear and anxiety around the world. Many scammers take advantage of these fears for their own gain. Often, scammers spread disinformation to trick people into giving them money.

Common scams related to COVID-19 include:[93]

➢ disinformation about "miracle cures" for COVID-19,
➢ fake vaccines, test kits, and cleaning supplies to protect against COVID-19,
➢ fake charities spreading false information about COVID-19 to trick people into giving them donation money.

13. Disinformation about COVID-19 involving political figures

Disinformation campaigns often involve politicians and powerful figures. Many politicians have also been caught spreading disinformation for their own gain. Disinformation in politics is dangerous because it prevents the government from responding effectively to COVID-19. It also lowers the public's trust in democracy.

Examples of political disinformation include:

➢ disinformation that spreads false details about politicians' personal lives and conduct—for example, a fake report in 2019 said that Justin Trudeau was fired from a previous job,[94]
➢ disinformation that takes politicians' quotes out of context or invents quotes to damage the politician's reputation.

14. Misinformation about COVID-19 on traditional news platforms

Mainstream media sources, even if they are reputable, can still contain false information. When the pandemic began, journalists needed to learn about COVID-19 very quickly. This led to early errors in reporting. For example, many media outlets claimed that dolphins were sighted in Venice, Italy because of the drop in tourism due to COVID-19. Later, we learned that was not true.[95]

Likewise, most journalists are not medical experts. This means that they could spread inaccurate scientific information about the virus, even if they are trying to be helpful.

If you are unsure about information you encounter in the news, it is a good idea to verify the information using reputable health sources like the World Health Organization and Alberta Health Services.

Chapter 3 | How to recognize common forms of disinformation

Now that we know disinformation about COVID-19 is widespread, we need to know how to recognize it. This chapter looks at the most common forms of disinformation about COVID-19. This list is not complete. Disinformation about COVID-19 is always evolving. However, there is a good chance you have encountered some types of disinformation discussed in this chapter.

Disinformation is effective for a good reason. People are not being silly or gullible when they believe disinformation. Some false claims can be easy to debunk, but a lot of disinformation is created using advanced technology and strategies that make it hard to detect. Also, even poorly disguised disinformation is dangerous when it taps into beliefs, fears, and political ideas that people already have. For example, disinformation often depends on stereotypes, distrust of institutions, or skepticism about medicine and science.

We should also keep in mind that a lot of disinformation contains some amount of truth. False information often looks like trustworthy forms of information like new articles, photographs, informational videos, and statistics. Researchers found that, in English-language media, almost 60% of disinformation contains some *true* information that is recontextualized or misrepresented.[96] Disinformation that is packaged with true information is more likely to be shared on social media than disinformation that is completely made up.[97]

For example, at the start of the pandemic, there was a lot of disinformation claiming that hot baths, hot weather, hot peppers, and hot air can cure COVID-19. However, these claims were based on the true fact that high temperatures can kill coronaviruses under some conditions.[98] But the temperature needed to kill the SARS-CoV-2 (the name of the virus that causes COVID-19) is higher than anything humans can put in or around their bodies, and heat is not the most effective way of killing the virus.[99] Therefore, this is a case where one small piece of true information was twisted into a lot of disinformation and dangerous advice.

Here are some popular forms of disinformation we might encounter in the infodemic:

1. Fake news

Nowadays, many of us know the term "fake news." It is often used by politicians to discredit media sources that challenge their political power and influence. However, these politicians are *not* using the term correctly. According to professional journalists and researchers, "fake news" simply means any news that is *intentionally* false and designed to mislead readers.[100]

Fake news appears on various popular news websites. This is because some news websites have low editorial standards and are not effective at fact-checking.[101] Some news platforms are also biased or unprofessional and do not take steps to counter fake news on their website.

There are also entire websites and social media accounts dedicated to spreading fake news stories. Anyone with internet access can create a fake news website using easy-to-use tools.[102] The goal of fake news articles, accounts, and websites is to spread their disinformation as far and wide as possible.[103]

2. Imposter content

Some disinformation is disguised to look similar to a trustworthy source. This is called "imposter content." Imposter content comes in many forms. For example, a scammer might create a fake website or social media post that looks like it was made by a popular news outlet.[104] Some imposter content steals the logos and images from real news sources.

Imposter content might use a lot of statistics, images, and quotes from supposed "experts" to make the source seem more credible. Imposter content might also use popular keywords (like "COVID-19" or "vaccine") to attract more people. Some imposter content also uses misleading web addresses. For example, an imposter website may have a URL that looks similar to the website it is trying to emulate.

Here are some examples of imposter content:

➢ in 2017, websites appeared that looked like real Quebec newspapers; however, these websites were based in Ukraine, and the people who created them were tricking people into visiting their websites,[105]
➢ in 2019, a fake version of *The Washington Post* was created and distributed throughout Washington, D.C., spreading disinformation about various political figures,[106]
➢ since the COVID-19 pandemic began, tens of thousands of websites have been created that contain keywords like "coronavirus," "covid," and "vaccine" (researchers found that around 90% of these websites were selling fake cures or being used to scam people).[107]

3. Scams

Scammers are people who use tricks and lies to steal your money or personal information. The popularity of scams has increased since the beginning of the pandemic because many of us are working from home and using the internet more often. More and more scams are targeted at younger people through social media platforms like YouTube and TikTok.[108]

Here are examples of scams that rely on disinformation:

➢ fake online stores or products claiming to prevent or cure COVID-19,[109]
➢ scammers posing as charities, universities, government officials, or health officials, who give misleading or false information to pressure you into giving them money or information.[110]

Many scammers also use a trick called "phishing" to get people to give away personal information. Phishing is when scammers send you emails or social media messages pretending to

be a reputable organization. The scammers can use this disguise to get you to send them credit card details, passwords, and other information.

4. Articles and memes linked to conspiracy theories

There are many influential conspiracy theories online today. From a distance, conspiracy theories can appear strange and cause people to do unusual things. However, the people and groups supporting these theories often have complex reasons for believing them. Researchers find that almost 50% of Canadians believe at least one conspiracy theory related to COVID-19.[111] This means that disinformation related to conspiracy theories is very popular on social media.

Here are examples of disinformation related to conspiracy theories:

➢ memes using images and misleading statistics to promote conspiratorial ideas—for example, memes saying that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is using COVID-19 data to spy on Canadians or memes suggesting that "mainstream media" is intentionally lying to the public,[112]
➢ websites, forums, and social media pages dedicated to conspiracies—for example, Facebook groups that spread false information about vaccines,[113]
➢ YouTube videos with false information presented in a way that seems true—for example, interviews with people posing as "experts" and spreading false information about vaccines and political events.[114]

5. Disinformation or propaganda campaigns by political actors

Governments and political groups around the world are responsible for a lot of disinformation. In 2019, researchers found that political groups manipulated social media in at least 70 counties.[115] This number is likely growing.[116]

Politicians can spread disinformation in their own country to damage the reputation of their opponents.[117] They can also spread disinformation abroad to draw attention away from issues in their country, such as human rights abuses.[118] Political groups have also used disinformation to create confusion in democratic societies and prevent democracies from working properly.[119]

Governments and politicians often use advanced tactics to spread disinformation. Some governments hire groups of people to create fake news websites, memes, and social media accounts. Governments also use automated bots to spread disinformation.

Here are examples of disinformation spread for political reasons:

➢ social media posts promoting violence or distrust of a particular group, such as journalists, minority communities, or opposing political parties,[120]
➢ hurtful or dangerous comments on videos and social media posts (many bots are designed to spread disinformation in internet comment sections),[121]

> false or suspicious accusations against foreign governments—for example, American media said COVID-19 was intentionally made in China,[122] and Chinese media said COVID-19 was intentionally made in the United States.[123]

6. Manipulated photos and videos

On average, videos and images get more attention online than text does.[124] New technology makes it easy for anyone to manipulate photos and videos to spread disinformation.

Manipulated images are often used to misrepresent a person or event. For example, one American media platform spread images of a protest in Seattle that had been altered using Photoshop.[125]

However, videos and images do not need to be digitally altered for them to be dangerous. In fact, most disinformation does not involve digital manipulation at all. Minor edits or captions are often enough to mislead the viewer.

Some examples of this include:

> short clips taken from a longer video—for example, excerpts can be taken from a politician's speech and presented in a way that misrepresents their message,
> many short clips edited together to create a misleading narrative,
> images that are cropped (this means that part of the image is removed) so that the viewer does not have enough context.

We should also pay attention to timestamps and locations.[126] For example, someone could take a picture of a protest in 2007 and say it was taken in 2020. Or someone could take a picture in one country and say it is from a different country. Tricks like this are common, and they can give us the wrong impression of current events.

Incorrect timestamps have been used to spread disinformation about COVID-19. In December 2020, there were images on social media showing three people with muscular problems in their faces. The content claimed that these people were damaged by a COVID-19 vaccine. However, the images have been on the internet since 2000, long before COVID-19.[127] The images are real, but they were presented in a misleading way.

7. Deepfakes

Today, it is possible to use artificial intelligence (AI) to create fake videos of celebrities and politicians. AI can recognize face movements and put one person's face on another person's body. It is also possible to create fake "voice-overs" to impersonate people. This new technology means that videos of people can be completely fabricated. Videos like this are called "deepfakes." Experts believe they will become more common in the future.[128]

Videos have appeared recently that artificially recreate famous figures, including Barack Obama and Mark Zuckerberg. In December 2020, British media sources even circulated a deepfake video of Queen Elizabeth II.[129]

8. Satirical or comedic content

Some websites and media outlets produce satirical news. This means that they look and feel like a trustworthy news website, but they are not supposed to be taken seriously. Satirical websites often invent details or exaggerate details to be funny. Satirical news is usually harmless, but sometimes it is mistaken for real news.

Tips for spotting false information

Here are some simple ways to determine if something contains disinformation or misinformation:[130,131]

1. Evaluate the source

Ask yourself: Where did this information come from? Can it be traced to an original source? Is the original source trustworthy? If the content does not say where it got its facts, it may be disinformation.

Sometimes, disinformation hides the name and identity of the person who created it. If the author uses a fake name or a nickname, this is a sign that the information is untrustworthy.

If you find a website that seems suspicious, check to see if it has an "About Us" page where you can learn more about the individual or organization that created it. If there is no information about the website's creators or ethical standards, the site may be a source of disinformation.

A Google search for a source or author will often tell you whether they are known for spreading disinformation. If a writer or source has a good reputation, it is usually possible to find more information about them online.

2. Think about who shared the information

If a piece of information is shared on social media, pay attention to who shared it. Is the account trustworthy? Have they shared disinformation in the past?

Remember that information shared by politicians or special interest groups is often biased and misrepresents the views of other politicians.

3. Be skeptical of headlines

A lot of disinformation uses shocking, controversial, or exaggerated headlines to get your attention. When you see this, it is a good idea to ignore the article or read it before you share it. Often the contents of the article are not as extreme as the headline suggests.

4. Be wary of clickbait

Clickbait is anything that uses deception, mystery, or exaggerated language to get you to click on a link. Common examples are headlines like "You Will Never Believe What Happens Next." Clickbait is often used to promote "miracle cures".

Organizations that use clickbait are unprofessional and untrustworthy. Clickbait can also be harmful if it sensationalizes events or provides disinformation about COVID-19 and other illnesses.[132]

5. Pay attention to URLs

URLs are web addresses that appear at the top of your browser. They provide information about the kind of website you are on and how reputable it is. Most URLs begin with HTTP or HTTPs, which tells you whether the site is encrypted or not. URLs end in a domain name that tells you where the site comes from and what its purpose is.

- **HTTPS** means the site is encrypted. There is a relatively low chance that someone will steal personal data that is transferred between your computer and the website.
- **HTTP** means the site is *not* encrypted. This means there is a higher chance that someone can steal your information.
- **.com** means the page belongs to a commercial website. The goal of commercial websites is to make money. Many informational websites and news websites end in .com because they make money through subscriptions, product sales, or advertising. Information found on a website ending in .com is not always false, but you should not believe everything you read.
- **.org** means the page belongs to a non-profit organization or special interest group. Websites ending in .org are sometimes reputable but not always. If you find a page ending with .org, think about whether the organization has any biases that could influence the information on their website.
- **.edu** means the page belongs to an educational institution like a school, university, or library. Information on .edu pages is trustworthy if it is written by a professional scholar or researcher. But not all information on .edu websites is written by experts. If you find a page ending in .edu, check to see who wrote the information.
- **.ca** means the web page is registered with the Canadian Internet Registry Authority. This usually means the page belongs to a Canadian citizen, organization, or government body. For example, the Government of Canada and provincial governments use .ca. However, .ca does not tell us anything about the content of the website. If you find a page ending in .ca, check to see who owns it.
- **.gov** means the page is run by a government body in the United States. Information on a page ending in .gov is usually maintained by the American government. This information is usually considered trustworthy, but it can still contain political bias.
- Many countries have their own domains. For example, **fr.** means France, **.br** means Brazil, and **.ke** means Kenya. If you find a website with a country-specific domain, apply the same caution as you would to websites ending in .ca.

- There are other less common domains including **.net, .biz**, **.info**, and hybrid domains like **.com.co**. Experts do not agree on what these domains mean. If you land on a website with an unusual domain, it is best to assume the information is not trustworthy.

6. See if the content is up-to-date

Most reputable news articles include the publication date. If you find information that seems suspicious, check the date. If the information is old, then you should question why it is circulating on the internet again.

Sometimes images, videos, and quotes related to past events reappear on social media, giving the false impression that they relate to more current events.

7. See if the content uses supporting evidence

Trustworthy sources always use evidence to support their claims. If an article makes strong claims but does not provide evidence or link to a source that provides evidence, then it may be spreading false information.

However, not all evidence is the same. Evidence that draws on scientific research, accurate reporting of events, and peer-reviewed academic studies is more reliable than evidence that draws on personal experience, vague numbers, or quotations. Also, articles that use a lot of evidence from different perspectives are more trustworthy than articles that rely on only a few sources.

Unfortunately, even articles with a lot of supporting evidence can spread disinformation. Numbers and citations can make a source appear more legitimate, but even good evidence can be turned into disinformation.

If you are unsure whether something is true or false, it is a good idea to check other media sources. If you can find a piece of information in only one source, there is a higher chance that it is false. If you can find a piece of information in many sources from a variety of perspectives, there is a higher chance that it is true.

8. Look for discrimination, stereotyping, or scapegoating

Sources that promote stereotypes, encourage discrimination, or blame entire communities for an issue are untrustworthy. No reputable journalist or writer would intentionally spread harmful or racist ideas.

If a source contains racist language or mentions popular stereotypes, it is disinformation. It is likely trying to promote fear and divisions in society.

9. Pay attention to charged and emotional language

A lot of online content uses strong emotional language. Emotional language is common in some types of journalism, such as opinion pieces and editorials. Emotional language is especially common on social media. Strong language does not mean that the source is untrustworthy, but it does influence how we understand world events. For example, one source might say "protest" while another source says "mob." Both of these sources are talking about the same event, but their interpretation is different.

Strong language is not a substitute for true facts. Sources that rely only on strong language can distort reality and are usually untrustworthy.

10. Consider your own biases

Everyone has biases. This means that we prefer some ideas to other ideas. Our biases greatly influence how we engage with information.

If you come across an article about a controversial topic, it is good to think about your own biases. Make sure that not all information you consume simply confirms what you already believe. If you find yourself agreeing completely with a meme or article, it can be helpful to consider it from other perspectives or search for other sources about the same topic.

11. Consult a fact-checking website

Fact-checking websites are tools to help us debunk false information. Fact-checking websites are run by people who are trained to investigate disinformation. There are many fact-checking websites, and their work is freely available online.

Some fact-checking websites in Canada include:

- FactsCan - factscan.ca/
- AFP Fact Check - factcheck.afp.com/afp-canada
- Les décrypteurs - ici.radio-canada.ca/decrypteurs

12. Apply common sense.

Sometimes the best defence against disinformation is common sense. If the information seems outrageous or impossible, it is probably is.

Chapter 4 | How are people fighting the infodemic?

Many people are working to fight the infodemic. Governments, tech companies, and news organizations lead this fight by finding ways to reduce the amount of disinformation and promote media literacy.[133] Social media companies have changed their policies in response to COVID-19, and governments have created task forces and drafted legislation to combat disinformation. The pandemic has also started new trends in journalism.[134] For example, many news organizations have joined international fact-checking networks to improve their response to the infodemic.[135,136]

However, fighting disinformation can have negative consequences. Most importantly, controlling the public's access to information can also mean limiting our freedom of expression. Our freedom of expression includes the right to share our opinions and ideas using the internet and other media platforms.[137] The United Nations warns that responses to the infodemic should cause more damage than the infodemic itself.[138] This means that any limitations to our freedom of expression should be justified.[139]

Therefore, fighting the infodemic means:

- reducing the spread of disinformation,
- improving the public's access to trustworthy information,[140] and
- protecting the public's freedom of expression.

It is important to remember that disinformation involves more than COVID-19. More and more people around the world are worried that disinformation is influencing their elections,[141] lowering trust in democracy,[142] and encouraging violent radical groups.[143] These are ongoing issues. Questions about how to deal with disinformation will be important in the future, even if COVID-19 is no longer a threat.

Strategies to fight the infodemic

Here are some strategies used to fight disinformation around the world.

1. Fact-checking

News organizations started fact-checking in the early twentieth century,[144] but "fact-checking" was not a well-known word until recently. This is because the COVID-19 pandemic and other events in 2020 made people more interested in how journalists find and verify information.[145]

Fact-checking means looking at statements made by public figures or institutions and deciding whether they are true. Fact-checking is especially important if the statements are about public health and safety. Fact-checking can also include debunking memes or popular social media posts.[146] People who do fact-checking are called fact-checkers. They can either be paid employees or unpaid volunteers.

Fact-checkers ask questions like this: Does the claim provide context? Is the claim supported by evidence? Could the claim possibly lead to disorder and confusion in society? Is the statement designed to deceive me? Does the person making the claim have a history of spreading disinformation?[147]

Many organizations hire fact-checkers. News organizations hire fact-checkers to review articles before they are published.[148] Facebook partners with fact-checkers to help identify false information shared by users.[149] And many independent have formed national and international fact-checking organizations.[150] These organizations' goal is to fact-check as much information on the internet as possible while remaining unbiased.[151] In 2015, there were 44 fact-checking organizations. Today, there is around 200.[152]

One of the most important fact-checking organizations is the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). The IFCN is based at the Poynter Institute in the United States. It promotes collaboration between fact-checkers and journalists around the world.[153] The IFCN makes all members follow an ethical code. The code guarantees that fact-checkers in the IFCN are honest about where they got their facts, admit when they make mistakes, and tell us where their money comes from.[154]

Here are some fact-checking websites that are part of the IFCN:

- *AFP Fact Check* (Canada)
- *Les décrypteurs* (Canada)
- *Africa Check* (South Africa)
- *Chequeado* (Argentina)
- *FactCheck.org* (United States)
- *Politifact* (United States)
- *Full Fact* (United Kingdom)

These websites are valuable tools for helping us fight disinformation. They often focus on things we encounter in daily life, including rumours, viral content, memes, and fake news articles.

Limitations of fact-checking

➢ Not all languages have equal access to fact-checking. Most fact-checking websites are written in English. The information is mostly about events in the United States, Europe, Canada, and other Western countries.

➢ Fact-checking cannot address deeper biases or skepticism. People with extreme views and people who are suspicious of the media are unlikely to be convinced by fact-checking alone.[155]

➢ Fact-checkers have limited time and resources. There will always be more disinformation on the internet than fact-checkers can address.

➢ Fact-checkers, like journalists, have beliefs that influence what they choose to write about.[156] When you are reading a fact-check, you still need to consider the writer's biases.

2. Investigating disinformation campaigns

Governments, journalists, and researchers sometimes investigate where disinformation comes from. Investigations involve learning who created the disinformation, how it is spreading, and who is impacted by it.[157] Investigations focus on *disinformation campaigns*, which are usually large, organized operations that spread disinformation for a political, economic, or financial gain. Disinformation campaigns are often done by political groups.

The number of investigations into disinformation campaigns increased after 2016, when there was evidence of Russian interference in the American elections.[158] Some other countries also suspect that disinformation has impacted their elections, including Argentina, India, Mexico, and Sweden.[159,160] Researchers say that disinformation campaigns have had the biggest impact in the United States, Venezuela, Indonesia, and Mexico.[161] Disinformation campaigns are common in the Middle East as well.[162]

Disinformation campaigns affect Canada, too. One year, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) found at least 21,600 tweets spreading disinformation about Canadian issues, including pipelines and immigration.[163] Investigators found that these tweets came from disinformation campaigns started in Russian, Iran, and Venezuela.[164]

COVID-19 disinformation has been linked to disinformation campaigns. According to the United Nations, many disinformation campaigns come from right-wing extremists and terrorist groups.[165] These groups create lies about COVID-19 to promote their violent view of the world. They have used COVID-19 to encourage racism and anti-democratic ideas.[166]

Large criminal organizations have also created disinformation about COVID-19. Drug cartels in a few countries used disinformation to make the public distrust the government's response to the pandemic.[167]

3. Legal and political responses to disinformation

Some governments use their legal and political power to fight the infodemic. Governments have the power to censor disinformation from the media,[168] fine or arrest people who spread disinformation,[169] or prevent the public from accessing the internet.

Legal and political responses to disinformation often have severe consequences. Many governments have taken their power too far. They have used COVID-19 as an excuse to limit freedom of expression and to persecute people.[170] For example, many governments have severely punished people who disagree with official messages about COVID-19. Governments have arrested journalists, activists, and healthcare workers around the world.[171,172]

The media in Canada is one of the freest in the world.[173] There are laws to punish people who use hate speech, but there are no laws to censor or punish people who spread disinformation. Some politicians believe there should be more laws to prevent disinformation, but this issue is still being debated.[174]

4. Curation of content by media providers

Some news organizations gather the newest and most trustworthy information about COVID-19 and share it with the public. These "curated" resource banks get updated frequently as we learn more about the virus, vaccines, and transmission and mortality rates.

Curated content has already been reviewed by experts, so it provides the public with a reliable stream of good information. Curated content includes:

➢ Official statistics related to COVID-19
  • The World Health Organization's COVID-19 dashboard shows up-to-date statistics about the virus in countries around the world.[175]
  • Alberta Health Services' website contains the most recent information about COVID-19 as it relates to Albertans.
  • The City of Edmonton has a data dashboard of COVID-19 statistics.[176]
➢ Newsletters
  • Many news networks have newsletters with the newest pandemic news.
➢ Podcasts
  • Many news networks have created COVID-specific podcasts with frequent updates.

5. Preventing people from profiting from the pandemic

Social media platforms discourage some people from profiting from the pandemic. Their goal is to stop scammers and other malicious actors from taking advantage of peoples' fears and confusion. Companies do this through:

➢ Advertising bans
  • Google and Twitter banned all advertising that mentions COVID-19 unless the advertising is paid for by the government (Google later removed this ban).[177]
  • Facebook allows some advertising about COVID-19 but not advertising for fake cures or test kits.[178]
➢ Demonetizing of COVID-19 content
  • Early in the pandemic, YouTube stopped advertising revenue from going to people if their videos mentioned COVID-19 at all. Now, YouTube limits who can make money from videos mentioning COVID-19. According to YouTube policy, all videos related to COVID-19 must be ethical and fact-checked. If not, YouTube can still demonetize the video.[179]

Despite their efforts, social media platforms cannot completely stop people from profiting from the pandemic. A lot of disinformation on these platforms is still spread by clickbait and scams.

6. Labelling disinformation

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube put "warning labels" on content if they believe it contains disinformation about COVID-19. Warning labels are blocks of text that appear around the content, usually at the bottom. These platforms also put warning labels on hashtags (#) linked to disinformation, including hashtags used by extremist groups and conspiracy theorists.

Warning labels sometimes appear on content if it is considered suspicious or has spread disinformation in the past. These labels increase transparency and accountability by telling us who is behind the information and who is paying for it.[180] YouTube decided to put warning labels on content that is funded by powerful organizations. For example, videos from the Russian news channel *RN* come with a label indicating that the platform is owned by the Russian government.[181]

Some people argue that warning labels have not helped slow the spread of disinformation. It is likely that many people will share disinformation even if it has a warning label.[182]

Labelling disinformation on social media is a new strategy. Platforms will likely continue changing their labels in the future.

7. Supporting the public

Many organizations are fighting the infodemic by teaching the public about media literacy and showing people how to debunk false information. These efforts include creating educational resources about COVID-19 or giving money to organizations to create media literacy programs.[183]

Supporting the public is the Government of Canada's primary way of fighting the infodemic. The government has given $7 million to organizations in Canada that provide media literacy education.[184]

8. Supporting responsible journalism

Journalism has become more difficult since the beginning of the pandemic. Some organizations have focused on supporting journalists and encouraging them to follow ethical standards.

The Government of Canada passed legislation that gives various tax benefits to journalists and news organizations.[185] Google, Facebook, and Amazon donated a small portion of their profits to journalists around the world.[186] WhatsApp donated money to the International Fact-Checking Network.[187] A variety of organizations also built training materials specifically for journalists covering COVID-19.[188]

Chapter 5 | Disinformation and social media

Early in the pandemic, most social media platforms announced that they would work to fight disinformation.[189] Since then, companies have tried a variety of strategies, including promoting trustworthy information and "de-platforming" users who spread disinformation. Today, there is debate about the best way for social media companies to respond to the infodemic. There is also debate about whether or not social media platforms are even responsible for disinformation shared by users.

When social media was first created, most people agreed that these companies should not censor content. Popular opinion has changed recently because social media is now where most people get their news.[190] Many people, including Mark Zuckerberg (the founder of Facebook), believe the government should do more to regulate social media.[191] One survey in 2019 showed that around 60% of Canadians want the government to regulate social media.[192] However, others believe that regulating social media will have negative consequences, and the best option is for social media companies to regulate themselves.[193]

Social media regulation became a controversial political issue in January 2021, when Twitter and Facebook blocked the former President of the United States. We do not know if this decision will affect the way social media companies handle disinformation in the future. For example, will Facebook and Twitter censor other political leaders known for spreading disinformation?[194]

It is important to remember that social media companies are private companies. They must make decisions based on what is good for their business, not only what is good for public health. People sometimes criticize social media companies for making decisions that harm public health. For example, the Centre for Countering Digital Hate criticized Facebook for allowing anti-vaccine content. Anti-vaccine content can be extremely dangerous, but in 2019 Facebook made around $1 billion from advertising paid for by anti-vaccine groups.[195]

Because social media companies are private, it also means that they are not responsible for protecting our freedom of speech.[196] They do not follow the same rules as the government. For example, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* says that the government will not restrict Canadians' freedom of expression, but it does not say that private companies must allow users to say anything they want.[197] This means that Facebook, Reddit, Twitter, and TikTok are allowed to choose what content they censor or do not censor.[198]

In sum, social media companies have a lot of power over the kind of information we see, but it is not clear how they should handle this power. Social media companies are trying a variety of strategies to fight the infodemic, but we do not know if these approaches will be effective in the future.

Here is how the major social media platforms are handling the infodemic:

Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the world, with around 2.5 billion users.[199] Facebook's strategy involves preventing people from making money from the pandemic, directing users to trustworthy information, and hiring fact-checkers to review content posted by users.[200]

Facebook banned advertising for harmful or predatory content such as "miracle cures" for COVID-19 or facemasks at inflated prices.[201] When users search for information about COVID-19, the first results are always from reputable health sources like the World Health Organization.[202] This helps ensure people find accurate information before finding disinformation.

Facebook partnered with around 60 independent fact-checking organizations in 50 different languages.[203] The fact-checkers determine whether a piece of content is true, false, misleading, or missing context, but Facebook decides how to deal with the disinformation.[204] When a piece of disinformation is identified, Facebook can censor the content or apply a warning label. Facebook can also send you a notification if you accidentally share or engage with a piece of disinformation.[205]

Facebook does not fact-check politicians. Facebook believes that fact-checking politicians would be bad for democracy because the public should know what politicians say and think.[206] However, some people believe that Facebook should also fact-check politicians.[207]

Instagram

Instagram is owned by Facebook and has a similar strategy for fighting disinformation. Instagram puts labels on content that mentions COVID-19. The labels bring users to reputable health sources.[208] Users who search for terms related to COVID-19 are shown reputable sources.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is also owned by Facebook. It is the most popular messaging app in the world, with about 1.6 billion users.[209] It is popular in South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe.[210] A significant amount of disinformation about COVID-19 is spread on WhatsApp.[211]

WhatsApp is an encrypted messaging service. This means that the company cannot see messages that are sent between users. WhatsApp cannot fact-check or put warning labels on content that is sent between users.[212] WhatsApp cannot reduce the amount of disinformation, so its goal is to provide users with more reliable information. For example, WhatsApp created the World Health Organization's Health Alert. This is a free service that lets users text the World Health Organization to get information about COVID-19.[213]

WhatsApp also limits how many times a piece of information can be shared. Users cannot share content if the content has already been shared a lot. If a message has already been shared five times, you are not able to share it again with a large group. But you can still send it to one other user at a time.[214]

YouTube

YouTube, which is owned by Google, is the largest video-sharing website in the world. It has around 2 billion users.[215] Since the pandemic started, YouTube has promoted reputable health sources on its homepage.[216] Like other platforms, YouTube also brings you to reputable health sources if you search for information about COVID-19.[217] Videos about COVID-19 usually come with labels.

YouTube sometimes demonetizes videos about sensitive information such as viruses and vaccines. This means that the video's owner cannot make money from advertising. YouTube demonetized many videos at the beginning of the pandemic, but now users can post videos about COVID-19 even if they are not health experts.[218] YouTube also bans videos that promote popular conspiracy theories, such as the idea that 5G networks are related to COVID-19.[219]

Despite these efforts, YouTube is frequently criticized for hosting content that conflicts with the advice of health experts.[220]

Twitter

Twitter has around 330 million regular users around the world.[221] Twitter is mentioned a lot in the media because it is very popular among politicians and health officials.

Like other platforms, Twitter brings users to reputable health sources if they search for information about COVID-19.[222] Twitter also puts informational labels on tweets that mention COVID-19.

Twitter bans content that conflicts with the advice of health authorities and scientists, promotes unproven cures, or encourages unsafe activity that could increase the spread of COVID-19. Twitter also bans content that blames specific groups for the pandemic or impersonates government or health officials.[223] Like Facebook, Twitter does not always censor political leaders, even if they are spreading disinformation. But Twitter does put warning labels on disinformation shared by politicians.[224]

TikTok

TikTok is a new social media platform that focuses on short videos. TikTok was created in China and has about 625 million users around the world. In China, TikTok is called Douyin. It is especially popular with teenagers, who are more vulnerable to disinformation in general.[225]

Like other platforms, TikTok directs users to reputable health sources when they search for words related to COVID-19. Since April 2020, TikTok has also allowed users to report disinformation when they see it.

TikTok has policies to remove content that includes hate speech and hoaxes.[226] Unlike Facebook and Twitter, however, TikTok does not have any policies to ban misleading advertising related to COVID-19.[227]

Reddit

Reddit has around 330 million users[228] and is the second most popular social media platform in Canada, after Facebook.[229] Reddit is a large online discussion board where users can talk about many subjects. Reddit has been criticized for attracting conspiracy theories,[230] hate speech,[231] and misinformation about COVID-19.[232]

Unlike other social media platforms, Reddit is not moderated by a central authority in the company. Instead, unpaid volunteers moderate each individual discussion forum or "subreddit."[233] Moderators have the power to ban users who spread disinformation from their subreddit.[234] Entire subreddits can also be censored for spreading disinformation, violating website rules, or promoting hate.[235]

Reddit to educate users rather than block them. If a subreddit has problems with disinformation, Reddit moderators will try to promote more reputable sources. Reddit can also "quarantine" a subreddit, which means it cannot be found in search results. If you visit a "quarantined" subreddit, you will get a warning message that the subreddit contains disinformation.

Pinterest

Pinterest allows users to share inspirational images, quotes, and videos. Pinterest has about 400 million users around the world.[236] According to reporters, misleading political and health information are big problems on Pinterest.[237]

Like Facebook and Twitter, Pinterest uses algorithms that push users toward information they already agree with, even if the information is false.[238] But users searching for information about COVID-19 on Pinterest are brought to resources from reputable health organizations.

Since 2017, Pinterest has been removing disinformation about vaccines.[239] Pinterest also started removing disinformation about fake cures and treatments for COVID-19.[240]

WeChat

WeChat is an app for messaging, video calls, shopping, and news. WeChat has over 1 billion users and is the most popular social media platform in China.[241] (The Chinese government blocks Facebook and Twitter.)

WeChat has taken extreme measures to combat COVID-19 disinformation. When the pandemic began, WeChat blocked most content related to the virus, including disinformation and true information.[242] WeChat also blocks information for political reasons. For example, WeChat blocks content that criticizes the government's response to the virus.[243]

WeChat can also block information sent privately between users. Unlike WhatsApp, WeChat is not encrypted. Messages sent between users are filtered if they contain words related to COVID-19 or the Chinese government's response to the pandemic.[244]

Researchers found that WeChat was used to spread disinformation about COVID-19.[245]Chinese speakers in North America have also been targeted by disinformation campaigns on WeChat.[246]

Chinese-language journalists are working to fact-check and debunk false information on WeChat.[247]

Other social media platforms

Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, and YouTube are the most popular and influential social media platforms in the world, but there are other social media platforms that are important within certain cultural communities.

Twitch (United States) is used for live streaming. It is popular among people who play video games. Twitch has been criticized for allowing conspiracy theories to circulate and for not doing enough to stop the spread of disinformation.[248]

QZone (China) is an app that lets users write blogs, share music, and more. QZone is owned by Tencet, the same company that owns WeChat.

Weibo (China) is an app that lets users write and share blogs. Like WeChat, Weibo has been used by government officials to spread disinformation about the origins and effects of COVID-19.[249]

VKontakte (Russia) is similar to Facebook and is popular in Russia and Russian-speaking regions. VKontakte has been used to spread disinformation about COVID-19 and other political issues within Russian-speaking communities.[250]

Ondoklassniki (Russia) is a social networking platform based in Russia. It is the most popular social media platform in Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries.

Chapter 6 | COVID-19 and discrimination

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is a big concept. Generally, it means treating a person or group unfairly because of their race, skin colour, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, or other characteristics.[251] Some groups are called "marginalized" if they have a characteristic that is frequently targeted by discrimination. This includes racial minorities, religious minorities, LGBT people, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and women.

Acts of discrimination include mean or aggressive language, physical harassment, blocking someone from accessing a service, and treating someone unfairly at work. Many people can be responsible for discrimination, including individuals, businesses, governments, and government-regulated organizations like schools and the police. Discrimination happens everywhere in the world. It can be an isolated act or an ongoing story with deep historical roots. Regardless of its nature, discrimination prevents people from fully participating in the society they live in.

Most countries have human rights laws to protect people against discrimination. In Canada, we are protected from discrimination by the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (1977), the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), and various provincial laws. Human rights laws exist to prevent acts of discrimination by individuals, governments, businesses, and other organizations. These laws are important, but they have not eliminated discrimination in Canada. We will learn more about these laws in Chapter 7.

What is coronaracism?

Since the beginning of the pandemic, discrimination related to COVID-19 has increased around the world. Much of this discrimination targets racial minorities, religious minorities, and immigrants. Some people use the term "coronaracism" to describe the increase in racial discrimination caused by COVID-19.

One group to be greatly affected by coronaracism is people of East Asian descent.[252] This includes Asian Canadians and especially Chinese Canadians. One survey found that almost half of Chinese Canadians have been called names, harassed, or threatened since the beginning of the pandemic.[253] People of Chinese descent have also been targeted by racism in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, India, Israel, Egypt, the Philippines, and many other counties.[254] Other groups who experience coronaracism include Black people,[255] Muslims,[256] Jews,[257] Indigenous people,[258] and refugees.[259]

In September 2020, Statistics Canada surveyed 35,000 Canadians from various racial groups. The survey found that minority groups were twice as likely as white Canadians to experience discrimination related to COVID-19. The groups who experienced the most discrimination were Asian Canadians, Black Canadians, Arab Canadians, and Indigenous people.[260] These groups experience discrimination in different ways and in different places. However, the survey found

that most discrimination happens in businesses (banks, restaurants, stores), public places (sidewalks, parks, busses), workplaces, and on the internet.[261]

How COVID-19 fuels discrimination

Discrimination occurs in many forms, from physical violence to offensive language and "microaggressions" (small everyday acts of discrimination). All forms of discrimination prevent a person or group from enjoying their life and participating in society.

Here are some ways the COVID-19 pandemic fuels discrimination:

➢ **Verbal harassment**

Verbal harassment includes name-calling, insults, and using racist words. A survey of 500 Chinese Canadians in June 2020 found that around 50% had been called names or insulted as a result of the pandemic.[262] Verbal harassment can cause deep anxiety and discomfort. Many participants in this study had to change their daily routines to avoid facing racism due to COVID-19. Many were also worried that their children would be bullied at school.

➢ **Physical harassment** (unwanted touching)

The same survey found that 8% of Chinese Canadians experienced frequent physical harassment, and 21% experienced occasional physical harassment.[263] Canadians of East Asian descent have reported being pushed, abused, and spit on since the beginning of the pandemic. In Vancouver, an elderly Asian Canadian man with dementia was forced out of a convenience store.[264]

➢ **Violence**

Life-threatening violence is less common than physical harassment, but it still happens in Canada and around the world. Violence against people of East Asian descent has been reported in nearly every country with a significant population of East Asian citizens or visitors.[265] This includes Canada. In March 2020, two Korean men were attacked in Montreal.[266]

Around the world, COVID-19 lockdown measures have also increased the amount of domestic violence, which is usually targeted against women and children.[267]

➢ **Stigmatization**

A "stigma" is a negative stereotype or bias against a particular group. Stigmas often appear in society when there is widespread fear and uncertainty. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people seen to be associated with the virus are often stigmatized, including people of East Asian descent, people who have been to China, and people who work in healthcare (who are often from marginalized groups).[268]

Stigmatized groups are frequently targeted by harassment and microaggressions. Some people may avoid public places or hospitals because they are afraid of facing discrimination.[269]

> ➤ **Microaggressions**

Microaggressions include subtle looks, words, or behaviours that reveal a person's negative bias toward a group. For example, Asian Canadians have reported being stared at, talked down to, or treated with suspicion since the beginning of the pandemic.[270] Microaggressions are small but they accumulate over time. They can make someone feel like they do not belong.[271]

> ➤ **Denying service**

In many countries, stigmatized groups are denied service at stores, restaurants, hotels, and more. In some East Asian countries, businesses put up signs saying Chinese customers are not welcome.[272] Reports from Alberta say that some businesses discriminated against members of the Siksika First Nation because of COVID-19.[273] In British Columbia, various businesses, including grocery stores, were accused of denying service to Indigenous people.[274]

> ➤ **Racist language in politics**

Some politicians are responsible for spreading racist language. American politicians have been criticized for calling COVID-19 the "China virus" or the "Wuhan virus." Since 2015, the World Health Organizations has said we should not name viruses after people or locations.[275] Naming a virus after a group of people can easily lead to stigmatization. This is especially true if the group already experiences discrimination around the world.

> ➤ **Disinformation**

Disinformation often relies on racist stereotypes (see Chapters 1–4). Many minority groups have been targeted by disinformation that incorrectly links them to COVID-19. In the United Kingdom, disinformation on social media spread false information about Muslims spreading COVID-19.[276] Disinformation related to conspiracy theories has blamed Jews for spreading COVID-19.[277] In China, disinformation on social media blamed people of African descent for spreading COVID-19 or breaking quarantine rules.[278]

> ➤ **Property damage**

Around the world, people of East Asian descent have reported property damage and vandalism since the beginning of the pandemic. This often includes racist graffiti.[279] In Montreal, statues outside a Vietnamese Buddhist temple were vandalized in March 2020.[280] In Vancouver, a Chinese Cultural Centre was vandalized with racist graffiti.[281]

> ➤ **Economic impact**

Business owners impacted by disinformation and stigma report a drop in business compared to businesses owners not impacted by stigma. In Vancouver, many Chinese-owned businesses reported a 50–70% drop in business.[282]

Minority groups are more likely than white Canadians to experience financial difficulties due to COVID-19. In one survey, 56% of Black Canadians said that they or someone they know has experienced financial insecurity since the beginning of the pandemic, compared to the national average of 46%.[283]

Why has COVID-19 increased discrimination?

The link between discrimination and diseases goes beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout history, people have often blamed minority groups or "outsiders" for creating and spreading diseases. Discrimination increases during public health crises because our society already treats people differently based on their ethnicity, culture, age, or nationality. When diseases enter society, they create new forms of discrimination and make pre-existing discrimination much worse.

For example, during the bubonic plague in the Middle Ages (1347-1351), many Europeans blamed Jews for spreading the disease. Europeans destroyed Jewish neighborhoods. Thousands of people were killed. These actions were motivated by fear and many false beliefs and stereotypes about Jews. In the 1800s, the bubonic plague appeared again in the United States. This time, many Americans blamed Chinese immigrants for spreading the disease.[284] Again, these ideas were motived by fear and false information.

Other epidemics have also resulted in discrimination. The yellow fever epidemic in the 1700s led to discrimination against Black people in the United States.[285] The typhoid epidemic in the 1800s led to discrimination against immigrants and people who were living in poverty.[286] The AIDS epidemic in the 1980s led to discrimination against LGBT people and people from Haiti living in the United States.[287] The "swine flu" epidemic in 2009 led to discrimination against people from Mexico.[288] The Ebola epidemic in 2014–2016 led to discrimination against people from West Africa.[289]

Like past health crises, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased discrimination against certain groups. However, COVID-19 is also unique because it affects everyone on earth. COVID-19 is also the first international health crisis to be accompanied by an "infodemic" (see Chapter 2). Modern technology has spread discrimination and racism more quickly than ever before.

COVID-19 and systemic racism

COVID-19 does not discriminate. Discrimination is caused by human actions and behaviour. However, discrimination is also caused by the way humans structure our society. It is hard to understand the link between COVID-19 and discrimination without thinking about *systemic racism*, which is sometimes called "structural racism" or "institutional racism."

Systemic racism is complicated, but it generally refers to the way racism is built into the structure of society. Discrimination can be made worse by the way society delivers healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and law enforcement. Countless studies have shown that

marginalized groups are consistently mistreated or put at a disadvantage by hospitals, schools, the police, government organizations, and the media. Systemic issues are usually rooted in history but continue to the present day. Groups who are disadvantaged by systemic racism have often been the target of discrimination for many years.

There is a lot of data on systemic racism in the United States. For example, researchers find that Black and Latino populations are more affected by COVID-19 than other groups. In some areas, Black people were hospitalized twice as often as other groups due to COVID-19.[290] Black and Latino Americans are twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as white Americans.[291] These are issues of systemic racism because Black and Latino populations have been discriminated against for hundreds of years. Because of this, they are more likely to experience poverty, stigma, and other barriers to healthcare.

In June 2020, the Prime Minister of Canada said that there is also systemic racism in Canada.[292]

Like the United States, Canada has historically discriminated against minority groups and people who are not white. These groups continue to face discrimination today. As a result, marginalized groups in Canada are more likely to get sick from COVID-19 or have financial difficulties related to the pandemic. Today, marginalized groups are more likely than white Canadians to live in poverty or have unstable work situations.[293] Poverty, stigma, and discrimination contribute to poor health and higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, and other conditions that increase the risk of becoming very sick from COVID-19.

Many reports show that Indigenous people, Black people, and newcomers to Canada have a harder time getting good healthcare. They are also more likely to face discrimination from hospital staff.[294]

Until recently, the Canadian government has not collected much health data that reflects race or ethnicity.[295] However, some studies in Toronto show that Black people in the city are much more likely to be affected by COVID-19 than other groups. Around 21% of COVID-19 cases in Toronto affect Black Torontonians, who only make up 9% of Toronto's population. Also, 11% of cases affect people of Arab, Middle Eastern, or West Asian descent, even though these groups make up only 4% of Toronto's population. It is very likely that other Canadian cities have similar issues.

If you look up "systemic racism" on the internet or in the library, you can find countless organizations and activists working to eliminate it.

Chapter 7 | Human rights and coronaracism in Canada

Like many counties, Canada tries to promote human rights inside our borders and around the world. Many of Canada's human rights laws are based on international documents, such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which many countries signed in 1948.[296] Canadian human rights laws often focus on discrimination.

The word "discrimination" can refer to many things (see Chapter 6), but it has a specific meaning when it comes to the law. Legally, discrimination is when a person or organization treats someone else unfairly and to their disadvantage because of a series of protected characteristics, which the government calls "protected grounds." The protected grounds include:[297]

- ➢ Race
- ➢ National or ethnic origin
- ➢ Skin colour
- ➢ Religion
- ➢ Age
- ➢ Sex
- ➢ Sexual orientation
- ➢ Gender identity
- ➢ Marital status (i.e. whether you are married or not)
- ➢ Disability

There are a few more characteristics that are protected from discrimination. For a full list, visit the website of the Canadian Human Rights Commission or the Alberta Human Rights Commission (see Chapter 9 for more information resources).

If you experience discrimination in Canada, you can file a human rights complaint. This means you can take legal action against the person, organization, or institution responsible for the discrimination.

Here are some situations where you could file a human rights complaint:[298]

- ➢ you are denied goods or services because of your race or skin colour,
- ➢ a business treats you poorly because of your national origin,
- ➢ an employer has practices that prevent you from getting promoted because you are a woman or a non-binary person,
- ➢ a landlord refuses to rent to you because you are in a same-sex relationship,
- ➢ your employer fails to reasonably accommodate you for a mental or physical disability.

A common type of discrimination is **harassment**. Harassment refers to words or actions that are insulting or humiliating. You can file a human rights complaint if you get harassed. Harassment often occurs in the workplace.

Here are some situations where you could file a human rights complaint for harassment:[299]

- ➢ your boss makes fun of your race, religion, gender identity, or any other protected ground,

> ➢ a supervisor threatens you or makes insulting comments about your race, religion, gender identity, or any other protected ground,
> ➢ a co-worker touches you in ways that make you feel threatened or uncomfortable.

Types of human rights legislation in Canada

In Canada, we are protected from discrimination by both federal laws and provincial or territorial laws.

The two sets of federal laws dealing with discrimination are in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (1977) and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). Each province also has it's own human rights legislation.

The ***Canadian Human Rights Act*** says that everyone in Canada should have an equal opportunity to pursue the life they want and participate freely in society.[300] The *Act* protects people who work for the federal government or receive services from the federal government. It also applies to organizations regulated by the federal government, including government departments, airlines, and most of the major banks in Canada.

The ***Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*** is part of Canada's Constitution, which is the highest law in the country. No other laws in Canada can conflict with the Constitution, so all other human rights laws in Canada must follow the *Charter*. The *Charter* says that every Canadian must be treated equally under the law. It guarantees fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

Provincial and territorial human rights laws exist across Canada. For example, there is an *Alberta Human Rights Act*, a British Columbia *Human Rights Code*, an Ontario *Human Rights Code*, and so on. Provincial human rights laws are similar to federal human rights laws. But these laws protect us from discrimination in the areas where province has jurisdiction. Provincial human rights laws apply to provincial and municipal institutions, private organizations and businesses inside the province.

Provinces and territories in Canada all deal with human rights differently. Every province has a unique set of "protected grounds." For example, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* protects us from discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, and more.[301] Other provinces' human rights are slightly different from Alberta's. For example, some provinces also protect you from discrimination based on political belief.[302]

Human rights institutions in Canada

There are several governmental institutions whose job is to protect people from discrimination and educate the public about human rights.

The **Canadian Human Rights Commission** was created as part of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in 1977. The commission's job is to investigate human rights complaints involving the federal government and organizations that are regulated by the federal government.

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* also created the **Human Rights Tribunal**. A "tribunal" is similar to a court. The Human Rights Tribunal's job is to apply the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. If you submit a human rights complaint and it is investigated by the commission, your case may eventually go to the tribunal. The tribunal ultimately decides whether you have been targeted by discrimination or not.

Individual provinces also have human rights commissions, whose jobs are similar to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. For example, the **Alberta Human Rights Commission** exists to apply the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. Provincial human rights commissions also have tribunals.

How to file a human rights complaint

In Alberta, you can file a human rights complaint by contacting the Canadian Human Rights Commission or the Alberta Human Rights Commission. You can file a complaint online, by phone, or by mail.

You can file a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission if:

➢ the discrimination involves the federal government, services received by the federal government, or an organization regulated by the federal government, or
➢ the discrimination involves one of the protected grounds set by the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

You can file a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission if:

➢ the discrimination involves a provincial or municipal government, services received by these governments, or organizations regulated by these governments, *or*
➢ the discrimination involves a private individual or business (ex. retailers, businesses, schools, private employers, landlords), and
➢ the discrimination involves one of the protected grounds set by the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

To file a complaint, you need to submit some information, including:[303]

➢ what characteristics of yours were targeted by discrimination (ex. race, sex, disability),
➢ a detailed description of what happened, and
➢ an explanation of how the discrimination negatively impacted you.

After you submit a complaint, the commission will contact the person or organization you complained against. The commission will then decide how to proceed with the complaint. The commission can:

- ➢ dismiss the complaint (i.e. choose not to investigate it),
- ➢ investigate the complaint, or
- ➢ suggest that you and the person you complained against settle the dispute without an investigation.

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* and provincial human rights laws also protect you from negative treatment if you submit a complaint. For example, you are not allowed to be punished by an employer or evicted by a landlord for filing a complaint against them.[304]

Canadian human rights laws and COVID-19 restrictions

The goal of the government and the human rights commissions is to respond to COVID-19 without putting too many restrictions on our freedoms. The government has already limited some freedoms. For example, our freedom of movement is restricted because we cannot travel freely between provinces, and our freedom of assembly is restricted because we cannot gather in groups. Most people agree that these are reasonable restrictions because they are necessary to protect our health and safety.

Some government decisions are more controversial. For example, many people are concerned about the government's enforcement of mask-wearing. Some people think that regulations around masks are a human rights abuse. However, the Alberta Human Rights Commissions says that rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19 do not qualify as human rights abuses.[305] Legally, the government and businesses are allowed to enforce restrictions like mask-wearing and social distancing.

However, there are a few cases where people do not need to wear masks. This includes people with respiratory issues, allergies, or other serious health concerns that prevent them from safely wearing a mask.[306] If someone wants to file a human rights complaint about mask-wearing, they need to provide medical information to confirm they cannot wear a mask. They also need to prove that they have tried to be accommodated in other ways.[307]

In rare circumstances, people can choose not to wear a mask for religious reasons. In this case, the person will need to prove they have tried to be accommodated in other ways before filing a human rights complaint.[308] No one has successfully filed a human rights complaint in Canada for reasons related to mask-wearing and religious freedom.

Human rights risks in Canada due to COVID-19

We know that COVID-19 has greatly increased the number of human rights abuses around the world (see Chapter 6). The government and the human rights commissions have expressed concern that COVID-19 will lead to more human rights abuses in Canada as well.[309]

These risks include:[310]

- ➢ an increased risk of domestic violence and abuse due to lockdown measures, especially against women and children,
- ➢ an increased risk of harassment and stigma, especially against minority communities or communities seen to be somehow associated with COVID-19,
- ➢ an increased hardship and risk of discrimination against vulnerable communities, including people who are unemployed, people with disabilities, people with addictions, people who are in jail, or elderly people,
- ➢ an increased risk of people using COVID-19 as an excuse to discriminate against marginalized groups,
- ➢ an increased risk of discrimination in the workplace due to misinformation about COVID-19 (ex. getting fewer shifts because your employer mistakenly believes you are potential carrier of COVID-19 or being punished by an employer for contracting COVID-19),
- ➢ an increased risk of discrimination in the workplace due to the need to take care of a family member or dependant (ex. getting punished by an employer because you need to take time off to care of someone affected by COVID-19).

Chapter 8 | How to fight coronaracism and discrimination

What everyone can do to fight discrimination

➢ Respond to discriminatory comments and actions

If you hear someone saying something discriminatory, you can point out how their actions or words harm groups who are already disadvantaged. Explain how discriminatory comments reinforce inequalities and stigma in society. Only respond to discriminatory comments and actions if it is safe. Do not respond to discrimination if it puts you or others at risk.

➢ Create distance[311]

If you notice someone being discriminated against, you can sometimes defuse the situation by creating distance. For example, if a co-worker is being harassed, you can suggest that everyone step away and stop engaging. This can help you find a solution to the problem without letting the issue escalate. Creating distance may also protect the person being harassed from further abuse.

➢ Support businesses tied to marginalized communities, even after the pandemic is over

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major financial difficulties for some business owners, especially if they are targeted by stigma and discrimination. You can help businesses linked to marginalized communities by continuing to support them and encouraging your friends to support them.

➢ Consider whether you are also responsible for discrimination

Discrimination is so widespread in our human society that many of us engage in it without intending to. This can often be hard to detect. For example, we may accidentally use offensive language or commit microaggressions (ex. staring, asking inappropriate questions, or treating someone in a way that reinforces stereotypes). Paying attention to our own biases can help us treat everyone with the same amount of respect.

➢ Adapt your language to avoid using words linked to discrimination

Words have power. The language we use can easily enforce negative stereotypes. For example, calling COVID-19 "China virus" creates a misleading link between people of Chinese origin around the world and COVID-19. Such behaviours can create stigmas around already disadvantaged communities.

Likewise, we can avoid using words that create stigmas around people who are sick from COVID-19. Instead of calling people "COVID victims," we can say "Someone who contracted COVID-19" or "Someone who is sick with COVID-19."

➢ Learn more about Canadian and provincial human rights laws

Canadian human rights laws (see Chapter 7) can protect us from acts of discrimination and harassment. Any Canadian can file a human rights complaint if they are being treated unfairly because of their race, sex, gender identity, and more.

➢ Learn more about systemic and historical discrimination in Canada

Canada can be a nice and safe place to live, but there is a long history of racism and discrimination in this country. Many marginalized groups—including Indigenous people, women, Black people, Asian people, Muslims, Jews, LGBT people, and people living in poverty—have experienced discrimination in Canada for hundreds of years and continue to experience discrimination today. Learning more about the experiences of marginalized groups in Canada can help us get a more accurate picture of our society.

➢ Encourage the government to collect data and create targeted policies to address systemic discrimination

Government actions are more effective if they are based on good data. Before the pandemic, the government did not collect much health data based on race and other characteristics. But since the pandemic began, the Canadian government and some provincial governments have begun collecting some data based on race.[312] This data is essential for fighting systemic discrimination. With accurate data, the government can create better policies for fighting discrimination and unequal treatment in our society and healthcare systems.[313]

How to fight discrimination on the internet

Because of the pandemic, most of us have been spending more time on the internet. The internet has become the main place where discriminatory language and ideas are spreading. Here are some ways to fight disinformation on the internet, especially social media.

➢ Only share reputable information about COVID-19

A lot of information available about COVID-19 is based on misleading ideas and disinformation (see Chapters 1–5). Often, disinformation relies on discriminatory or racist stereotypes. Avoid sharing this kind of information.

➢ Try to elevate marginalized voices

Historically, it has been much more difficult for marginalized groups to have their voices heard than it has been for white Canadians. If possible, try to promote content created by marginalized writers and content that addresses COVID-19 from the perspective of marginalized groups.

➢ Share content that acknowledges the link between COVID-19 and discrimination

Although COVID-19 affects everyone on earth, it has a much greater impact on marginalized groups. Much content about COVID-19 is general (ex. Canada-wide statistics, global statistics). This info is helpful, but COVID-19 statistics that do not acknowledge discrimination only

provide part of the picture. Try to promote content that explains the ways COVID-19 is made worse by discrimination.

➢ Report disinformation and racist content when you see it

Most social media platforms and news websites allow you to report information that you find discriminatory or inaccurate. Once reported, the information is usually sent to editors or fact-checkers.

➢ Support independent media and media that elevates marginalized voices

There are many media sources (newspapers, websites, podcasts, videos) that focus on reporting the news or discussing current events from a marginalized perspective. For example, *New Canadian Media* focuses on news related to newcomers to Canada, and *Turtle Island News* reports on issues affecting Indigenous People.

What to do if you experience discrimination

Fighting discrimination is a responsibility of all Canadians. However, only some of us will experience discrimination first-hand. Discrimination can happen once or it can last for months or years. This can often be a difficult, troubling, or traumatizing experience. Here are some things you can do if you experience discrimination.

➢ Recognize that racism and discrimination are real[314]

Discrimination can make you feel less than other people. It can also lead to anxiety and other mental health issues. If you feel hurt by discrimination, it can be important to remember that racism and discrimination are real problems in Canadian society and around the world. You have a right to be seen and heard.

➢ Celebrate your community and reject ideas that criticize your values[315]

If you experience discrimination, it can be helpful to reach out to other people in your community who experience a similar kind of discrimination. By coming together, sharing ideas, and organizing culture and political events, marginalized communities in Canada can resist discrimination and help lead us all into a better future.

➢ Look for resources from a community you identify with[316]

Many groups have organizations, committees, and cultural centres that promote their interests in Canadian society. Cultural organizations can have educational and practical resources for helping fight discrimination. They can also help you network with other people in your community.

Chapter 9 | More resources

This is a list of organizations fighting discrimination and disinformation in Canada. Some of these organizations have created resources and programming in response to COVID-19.

Human rights organizations

➢ Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC)

The CHRC can help you file a human rights complaint involving the federal government or a federally regulated organization. Their website also contains information about human rights laws in Canada.

Website: https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng

➢ Alberta Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

The AHRC can help you file a human rights complaint involving the provincial or municipal government, organizations regulated by those governments, or private businesses and organizations. Their website also contains information about human rights laws in Alberta.

Website: https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/

Note: Most provinces have similar resources, such as http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/v1/, http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en, https://bchumanrights.ca/ and others

➢ Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (ACLRC)

ACLRC is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that researches civil rights and human rights in Alberta. ACLRC raises awareness about human rights issues through podcasts, articles, and more.

Website: http://www.aclrc.com/

➢ Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA)

CCLA is a non-profit organization that advocates for civil liberties and constitutional rights across Canada. CCLA shares educational resources and covers current events related to civil rights.

Website: https://ccla.org/

Anti-discrimination organizations

➢ The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)

The CCDI works with individuals and organizations to fight discrimination and create a more equitable Canada. Since the pandemic began, the CCDI has created resources about practicing inclusive leadership during the pandemic.

Website: https://ccdi.ca/resources/

➢ The Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC)

The ICC is a charity that promotes inclusion in Canadian society by creating programs and educational resources about citizenship and discrimination. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the ICC has created podcasts, blogs, and other resources addressing discrimination and media literacy.

Website: https://www.inclusion.ca/our-covid-19-response/

➢ Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF)

The CRRF is a government agency that does research and creates informational material related to race relations in Canada. The CRRF's goal is to fight systemic racism and individual acts of discrimination.

Website: https://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en/

Media literacy organizations

➢ Journalists for Human Rights (JHR)

JHR is a media organization that trains Canadian journalists to cover human rights issues domestically and around the world. Since the beginning of the pandemic, JHR has been focusing on training journalists to combat disinformation.

Website: https://jhr.ca/

➢ Apathy is Boring

Apathy is Boring is an organization that encourages young people to be active participants in Canada's democratic process. Since the beginning of the pandemic, they have been producing educational material to promote media literacy and fight disinformation.

Website: https://www.apathyisboring.com/

➢ Historica Canada

Historica Canada creates educational resources about Canadian history and society. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Historica Canada has focused on producing educational resources on digital media literacy, especially as it relates to history and current events.

Website: www.historicacanada.ca

➢ MediaSmarts

MediaSmarts is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on promoting digital and media literacy among young people. MediaSmarts uses videos, games, and other interactive learning tools to teach youth about staying safe and informed in a digital world.

Website: www.mediasmarts.ca

➢ Samara Centre for Democracy

The Samara Centre is a charity that produces research that can improve Canadian democracy. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Samara Centre has been focusing on producing research on the nature of social media platforms.

Website: www.samaracanada.com

COVID-19 resources

➢ The World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO is an international organization and is part of the United Nations. The WHO focuses on global health issues. The WHO's website is the world's leading resource on COVID-19 information, including mortality rates, transmission, and the latest research findings on the virus.

Website: https://www.who.int/

➢ The Government of Canada

The Government of Canada's website has the most up-to-date statistics and information on COVID-19 as it relates to Canadians.

Website: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection

➢ Alberta Health Services

Alberta Health Services' website has the most up-to-date statistics and information on COVID-19 as it relates to Albertans.

Website: https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx

References

1. Dr. J. Scott Brennan et al., "Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation," last modified April 7 2020, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation
2. Aengus Bridgman et al., "The causes and consequences of COVID-19 misperceptions: Understanding the role of news and social media," last modified June 18, 2020, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/the-causes-and-consequences-of-covid-19-misperceptions-understanding-the-role-of-news-and-social-media/
3. Michael Hameleers et al., "Feeling 'disinformed' lowers compliance with COVID-19 guidelines: Evidence from the US, UK, Netherlands, and Germany," last modified May 31, 2020, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/feeling-disinformed-lowers-compliance-with-covid-19-guidelines-evidence-from-the-us-uk-netherlands-and-germany/
4. Jeff Semple, "Coronavirus conspiracy theory linking pandemic to 5G technology sparks cell tower fires," last modified June 3, 2020, https://globalnews.ca/news/6951569/covid-19-conspiracy-theory-5g/
5. Kambiz Soltaninejad, "Methanol Mass Poisoning Outbreak, a Consequence of COVID-19 Pandemic and Misleading Messages on Social Media," last modified July 1, 2020, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7426733/
6. Christopher Giles et al., "Hydroxychloroquine: Why a video promoted by Trump was pulled on social media," last modified 28 July, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/53559938
7. Reuters Staff, "Gargling with bleach? Americans misusing disinfectants to prevent coronavirus, survey finds," last modified 5 July, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-disinfectants-idUSKBN23C2P2
8. Elizabeth Thompson et al., "COVID-19 disinformation being spread by Russia, China, say experts," last modified May 26, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/covid-coronavirus-russia-china-1.5583961
9. Andrea Bellemare, "COVID-19 is worse than a bad flu season, despite online claims to the contrary," last modified June 19, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/covid-death-rate-flu-debunk-1.5615872
10. The Global Insight Team, "Online misinformation and disinformation in the age of COVID-19: A conversation with disinformation expert Renée DiResta," last modified 9 July, 2020, https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/stories/online-misinformation-and-disinformation-age-covid-19
11. Al Donato, "How To Debunk Coronavirus 'Natural Remedies' With Your Family," last modified 16 March, 2020, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/coronavirus-natural-cures-debunk-family_ca_5e6fb273c5b6eab77939fc79
12. Julie Posetti and Alice Matthews, "A Short Guide to the History of 'Fake News' and Disinformation: A New ICFJ Learning Module," last modified 23 July, 2018, https://www.icfj.org/news/short-guide-history-fake-news-and-disinformation-new-icfj-learning-module
13. *Stop the Virus of Disinformation: the risk of malicious use of social media during COVID-19 and the technology options to fight it*, last modified November 2020, http://www.unicri.it/sites/default/files/2020-11/SM%20misuse.pdf
14. Clive Bates and Andy Rowell, *Tobacco Explained*, accessed 12 February, 2020, https://www.who.int/tobacco/media/en/TobaccoExplained.pdf
15. "Coronavirus: How they tried to curb Spanish flu pandemic in 1918," last modified 10 May, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-52564371
16. Sabra Ayres, "HIV conspiracy theories and the virus continue to thrive in Russia," last modified 12 March, 2020, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-03-12/disinformation-and-conspiracy-theories-keep-russias-hiv-inf
17. Joshua Norman, "9/11 conspiracy theories won't stop," last modified 11 September, 2011, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/9-11-conspiracy-theories-wont-stop/
18. Kaitlyn Tiffany, "Something in the Air," last modified 13 May, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/05/great-5g-conspiracy/611317/
19. Aengus Bridgman et al., "The causes and consequences of COVID-19 misperceptions: Understanding the role of news and social media," last modified 18 June, 2020, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/the-causes-and-consequences-of-covid-19-misperceptions-understanding-the-role-of-news-and-social-media/

20. Samuel Woolley, "We're fighting fake news AI bots by using more AI. That's a mistake.," last modified 8 January, 2020, https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/01/08/130983/were-fighting-fake-news-ai-bots-by-using-more-ai-thats-a-mistake/

21. Bobby Allyn, "Researchers: Nearly Half Of Accounts Tweeting About Coronavirus Are Likely Bots," last modified 20 May, 2020, https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/05/20/859814085/researchers-nearly-half-of-accounts-tweeting-about-coronavirus-are-likely-bots

22. Dr. Richard Fletcher, "The truth behind filter bubbles: Bursting some myths," accessed 12 February, 2020, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/risj-review/truth-behind-filter-bubbles-bursting-some-myths

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Kai Shu et al., *Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fake News in Social Media* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030426989

27. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, "Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/disinfodemic_deciphering_covid19_disinformation.pdf

28. Marianna Spring, "Coronavirus: The seven types of people who start and spread viral misinformation," last modified 4 May, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-52474347

29. Jon Roozenbeek et al., "Susceptibility to misinformation about COVID-19 around the world," last modified 14 October, 2020, https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.201199

30. Ibid.

31. Enders et al., "The different forms of COVID-19 misinformation and their consequences," accessed 12 February, 2021, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/enders_covid_19_misinformation_consequences_20201116.pdf

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Jon Roozenbeek et al., "Susceptibility to misinformation about COVID-19 around the world," last modified 14 October, 2020, https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.201199

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Enders et al., "The different forms of COVID-19 misinformation and their consequences," accessed 12 February, 2021, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/enders_covid_19_misinformation_consequences_20201116.pdf

39. World Health Organization, "Managing the COVID-19 infodemic: Promoting healthy behaviours and mitigating the harm from misinformation and disinformation," last modified 23 September, 2020, https://www.who.int/news/item/23-09-2020-managing-the-covid-19-infodemic-promoting-healthy-behaviours-and-mitigating-the-harm-from-misinformation-and-disinformation#:~:text=An%20infodemic%20is%20an%20overabundance,will%20continue%20to%20thrive

40. Ibid.

41. "GWI Coronavirus Research | March 2020 Release 3: Multi-market research," accessed 21 February, 2021, https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/1.%20Coronavirus%20Research%20PDFs/GWI%20coronavirus%20findings%20March%202020%20-%20Multi-Market%20data%20(Release%203).pdf

42. Sam Cooper, "Almost 30% of YouTube's popular coronavirus videos are misleading, Canadian study finds," last modified 14 May, 2020, https://globalnews.ca/news/6943311/youtube-coronavirus-video-canadian-study/

43. Richard Edelman, "Pandemic fuels culture of institutional mistrust," last modified 13 January 2020, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/01/pandemic-mistrust-government-global-survey/

44. J. Jaiswal et al., "Disinformation, Misinformation and Inequality-Driven Mistrust in the Time of COVID-19: Lessons Unlearned from AIDS Denialism," last modified 21 May 2020, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7241063/#CR10

45. Jessica Lee, "Chinese Canadians share their experiences of racism during COVID-19," last modified 12 August, 2020, https://www.macleans.ca/society/chinese-canadians-share-their-experiences-of-racism-during-covid-19/

46. *Stop the Virus of Disinformation: the risk of malicious use of social media during COVID-19 and the technology options to fight it*, last modified November 2020, http://www.unicri.it/sites/default/files/2020-11/SM%20misuse.pdf

47. Tim Nickens, "Why Black and Hispanic residents are more likely to become infected by the coronavirus," last modified 22 July, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/why-black-and-hispanic-residents-are-more-likely-to-become-infected-by-the-coronavirus/

48. Statistics Canada, "Experiences of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic," last modified 17 September, 2020, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200917/dq200917a-eng.htm

49. BBC Monitoring, "China coronavirus: Misinformation spreads online about origin and scale," last modified 30 January, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-51271037

50. Shayan Sardarizadeh and Olga Robinson, "Coronavirus: US and China trade conspiracy theories," last modified 25 April, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52224331

51. Jeff Semple, "Coronavirus conspiracy theory linking pandemic to 5G technology sparks cell tower fires," last modified June 3, 2020, https://globalnews.ca/news/6951569/covid-19-conspiracy-theory-5g/

52. World Health Organization, "Origin of SARS-CoV-2," last modified 26 March, 2020, https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/332197/WHO-2019-nCoV-FAQ-Virus_origin-2020.1-eng.pdf

53. "False: Taiwan has severe community transmission. Many people have died.," last modified February 27, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/?ifcn_misinformation=taiwan-has-severe-community-transmission-many-people-have-died

54. Alexis De Lancer, "Non, les chaussures ne facilitent pas la transmission du nouveau coronavirus," last modified 24 March, 2020, https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1684073/non-les-chaussures-ne-facilitent-pas-la-transmission-du-nouveau-coronavirus

55. "FALSE: WHO and ICMR have issued a warning. It claims that WHO and ICMR warn that India is all set to enter the third stage transmission of the coronavirus and if left unchecked, the total death count by the coronavirus outbreak in India could reach the number of 50,000 by March.," last modified February 12, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/?ifcn_misinformation=who-and-icmr-have-issued-a-warning-it-claims-that-who-and-icmr-warn-that-india-is-all-set-to-enter-the-third-stage-transmission-of-the-coronavirus-and-if-left-unchecked-the-total-death-count-by-the

56. "No, COVID-19 Is Not the Flu," last modified October 20, 2020, https://www.jhsph.edu/covid-19/articles/no-covid-19-is-not-the-flu.html

57. Alex Mahadevan, "Widely shared Facebook posts mislead on COVID-19 mortality rate," last modified June 18, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/widely-shared-facebook-posts-mislead-on-covid-19-mortality-rate/

58. "No, COVID-19 Is Not the Flu," last modified October 20, 2020, https://www.jhsph.edu/covid-19/articles/no-covid-19-is-not-the-flu.html

59. Al Tompkins, "Blaming the COVID-19 vaccine for unrelated health issues will be the next thing," last modified 10 December, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/blaming-the-covid-19-vaccine-for-unrelated-health-issues-will-be-the-next-thing/

60. Yacoub Kahkajian, "Fact-check: Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter your DNA?," last modified 15 October, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/tfcn/2020/fact-check-will-a-covid-19-vaccine-alter-your-dna/

61. Lois Beckett, "Misinformation 'superspreaders': Covid vaccine falsehoods still thriving on Facebook and Instagram," last modified 6 January 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/06/facebook-instagram-urged-fight-deluge-anti-covid-vaccine-falsehoods

62. The College of Physicians in Philadelphia, "The History of Vaccines," https://www.historyofvaccines.org/timeline#EVT_85

63. World Health Organization, "COVID-19 vaccines," https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines

64. "Fighting the Infodemic: The #CoronaVirusFacts Alliance," accessed 12 February 2021, https://www.poynter.org/coronavirusfactsalliance/

65. Daniel Funke and PolitiFact, "Don't fall for that video. Hydroxychloroquine is not a COVID-19 cure.," last modified 31 July, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/dont-fall-for-that-video-hydroxychloroquine-is-not-a-covid-19-cure/

66. "Coronavirus: Health myths you should ignore," last modified 21 March, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/51952535

67. PolitiFact and Bill McCarthy, "Fox News host Laura Ingraham said there's 'no real scientific basis' for social distancing. She's wrong.," last modified 11 May, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/fox-news-host-laura-ingraham-said-theres-no-real-scientific-basis-for-social-distancing-shes-wrong/

68. Aengus Bridgman et al., "The causes and consequences of COVID-19 misperceptions: Understanding the role of news and social media," last modified June 18, 2020, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/the-causes-and-consequences-of-covid-19-misperceptions-understanding-the-role-of-news-and-social-media/

69. PolitiFact and Bill McCarthy, "Fox News host Laura Ingraham said there's 'no real scientific basis' for social distancing. She's wrong.," last modified 11 May, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/fox-news-host-laura-ingraham-said-theres-no-real-scientific-basis-for-social-distancing-shes-wrong/

70. Dr. J. Scott Brennan et al., "Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation," last modified April 7 2020, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation

71. "FALSE: Bill Gates and global elites plan a depopulation through the vaccines; A vaccine against the coronavirus already exists, but it is intentionally hidden to fearmonger the population even more; Bill Gates, an active supporter of vaccinations, refuses to vaccinate his own children.," last modified 11 November, 30, https://www.poynter.org/?ifcn_misinformation=bill-gates-and-global-elites-plan-a-depopulation-through-the-vaccines-a-vaccine-against-the-coronavirus-already-exists-but-it-is-intentionally-hidden-to-fearmonger-the-population-even-more-bill-gat

72. "False: Actor Daniel Radcliffe tested positive for COVID-19.," last modified March 11, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/?ifcn_misinformation=actor-daniel-radcliffe-tested-positive-for-covid-19

73. Jim Waterson, "Influencers among 'key distributors' of coronavirus misinformation," last modified 8 April, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/apr/08/influencers-being-key-distributors-of-coronavirus-fake-news

74. Tara McKelvey, "Coronavirus: Why are Americans so angry about masks?," las modified 20 July, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53477121

75. Anita Balakrishnan, "Business owners on their own when it comes to mask bylaw enforcement," last modified 7 July, 2020, https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/business-owners-on-their-own-when-it-comes-to-mask-bylaw-enforcement-1.5014633

76. Noah Y. Kim, "No, face masks don't 'collect' the coronavirus," last modified 14 October, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/no-face-masks-dont-collect-the-coronavirus/

77. Ibid.

78. World Health Organization, "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Masks," last modified 1 December, 2020, https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-masks

79. Harrison Mantas, "COVID-19 infodemic exacerbates existing religious and racial prejudices," last modified 1 May, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/covid-19-infodemic-exacerbates-existing-religious-and-racial-prejudices/

80. Ibid.

81. Tina L. Cheng and Alison M. Conca-Cheng, "The Pandemics of Racism and COVID-19: Danger and Opportunity," last modified November 2020, https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/5/e2020024836

82. Daniel J. Rowe, "Anti-Semitic and anti-Asian incidents on the rise during COVID-19: reports," last modified 14 July, 2020, https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/anti-semitic-and-anti-asian-incidents-on-the-rise-during-covid-19-reports-1.4924306

83. "A Racist aspect of COVID-19 disinformation in Greek social media," last modified 1 August 2020, https://digicomnet.medium.com/a-racist-aspect-of-covid-19-disinformation-in-greek-social-media-9e5118942dbb

84. Roy Peter Clark, "The coronavirus narrative is that it came from the 'other.' It's predictable, dangerous and wrong.," last modified 23 July, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/never-equate-illness-with-evil-or-a-culture-with-disease/

85. Kathy Le, "Asian people become targets of racist attacks during the pandemic," last modified 7 November 2020, https://www.ctvnews.ca/w5/asian-people-become-targets-of-racist-attacks-during-the-pandemic-1.5176366

86. "Coronavirus Crisis Elevates Antisemitic, Racist Tropes," last modified 17 March, 2020, https://www.adl.org/blog/coronavirus-crisis-elevates-antisemitic-racist-tropes

87. Amy Woodyatt, "Coronavirus lockdowns are fueling an 'explosion' of anti-Semitism online," last modified 30 July, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/30/uk/online-anti-semitism-intl-scli-gbr/index.html

88. Alexandra Sternlicht, "With New COVID-19 Outbreak Linked To Gay Man, Homophobia On Rise In South Korea," last modified 12 May, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandrasternlicht/2020/05/12/with-new-covid-19-outbreak-linked-to-gay-man-homophobia-on-rise-in-south-korea/?sh=48e1de754909

89. Jack Jedwab, "Canadian Opinion on the Coronavirus – N°14: Economic Vulnerability Score for Selected Visible Minorities and the Effects of COVID-19," 13 April, 2020, https://acs-aec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ACS-Covid-and-Economic-Vulnerability-of-Visible-Minorities-April-2020-1.pdf

90. City of Toronto, "COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto," https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-latest-city-of-toronto-news/covid-19-status-of-cases-in-toronto/

91. Kelly Geraldine Malone, "Coronavirus: More than half Manitoba's active COVID-19 cases are in First Nations population," last modified 11 January, 2021, https://globalnews.ca/news/7569078/manitoba-active-coronavirus-cases-first-nations/

92. Karen D. Lincoln, "Racism is the most significant underlying condition in the COVID-19 pandemic," last modified 8 October, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/racism-is-the-most-significant-underlying-condition-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/

93. Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, "COVID-19 fraud," last modified 20 January, 2020, https://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca/features-vedette/2020/covid-19-eng.htm

94. Patrick Cain et al., "Conservative press release on Trudeau's teaching job amplified fake news, analysis shows," last modified 18 October, 2019, https://globalnews.ca/news/6048841/conservative-trudeau-teacher-fake-news/

95. Natasha Daly, "Fake animal news abounds on social media as coronavirus upends life," last modified 20 March, 2020, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemic-fake-animal-viral-social-media-posts/

96. Dr. J. Scott Brennan et al., "Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation," last modified April 7 2020, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation

97. Ibid

98. Dr. Jill Seladi-Schulman, "Can High Temperatures Kill the New Coronavirus?," last modified 22 October, 2020, https://www.healthline.com/health/what-temperature-kills-coronavirus

99. Ibid.

100. Kai Shu et al., *Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fake News in Social Media* (Springer International Publishing, 2020), https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783030426989

101. Binxuan Huang and Kathleen M. Carley, "Disinformation and Misinformation on Twitter during the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak" (arXiv of Cornell University, 2020), https://arxiv.org/abs/2006.04278

102. Center for Information Technology and Society at UC Santa Barbara, "Where Does Fake News Come From?," accessed 12 February, 2021, https://www.cits.ucsb.edu/fake-news/where

103. Ibid.

104. Cale Guthrie Weissman, "Watch out for this fake news website masquerading as The New York Times," last modified 29 July, 2015, https://www.businessinsider.com/nytimescomco-posts-fake-news-articles-pretending-to-be-the-new-york-times-2015-6

105. Jeff Yates, "These fake newspaper sites want you to believe they're based in Quebec — but they aren't," last modified 14 December, 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/fake-news-websites-not-quebec-1.4447514

106. "Fake editions of The Washington Post handed out at multiple locations in D.C.," last modified 17 January, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/fake-editions-of-the-washington-post-handed-out-at-multiple-locations-in-dc/2019/01/16/1d6a0402-19a5-11e9-88fe-f9f77a3bcb6c_story.html

107. Catalin Cimpanu, "Thousands of COVID-19 scam and malware sites are being created on a daily basis," last modified 18 March, 2020, https://www.zdnet.com/article/thousands-of-covid-19-scam-and-malware-sites-are-being-created-on-a-daily-basis/

108. "2020: The Year of Fake News, Covid-related Scams and Ransomware," last modified 25 November, 2020, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/2020-the-year-of-fake-news-COVID-related-scams-and-ransomware-301180568.html

109. Ibid.

110. Stu Sjouwerman, "How Disinformation Is Fueling A Fresh Wave Of Phishing Scams," last modified 13 November, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/11/13/how-disinformation-is-fueling-a-fresh-wave-of-phishing-scams/?sh=64a1e5de7ffa

111. Stephanie Thomas, "Survey reveals half of Canadians believe at least 1 of 4 online conspiracy theories," last modified 21 May, 2020, https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/survey-reveals-half-of-canadians-believe-at-least-1-of-4-online-conspiracy-theories-1.4949550

112. Janna Frenzel, "Memes in the Infodemic: Circulation of Conspiracy and Misinformation," last modified 9 July, 2020, https://www.amo-oma.ca/en/2020/07/09/memes-in-the-infodemic/

113. Alexis C. Madrigal, "The Small, Small World of Facebook's Anti-vaxxers," last modified 27 February, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/02/anti-vaxx-facebook-social-media/583681/

114. Abby Ohlheiser, "How covid-19 conspiracy theorists are exploiting YouTube culture," last modified 7 May, 2020, https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/05/07/1001252/youtube-COVID-conspiracy-theories/

115. Samantha Bradshaw and Philip N. Howard, "The Global Disinformation Order

2019: Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation," accessed on 13 February, 2021, https://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2019/09/CyberTroop-Report19.pdf

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Canada Security Intelligence Service, "Who Said What?: The Security Challenges of Modern Disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/csis-scrs/documents/publications/disinformation_post-report_eng.pdf

120. Carly Nyst and Nick Monaco, "State-Sponsored Trolling: How Governments Are Deploying Disinformation as Part of Broader Digital Harassment Campaigns," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/images/DigIntel/IFTF_State_sponsored_trolling_report.pdf

121. Ibid.

122. Shayan Sardarizadeh and Olga Robinson, "Coronavirus: US and China trade conspiracy theories," last modified 25 April, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52224331

123. Elizabeth Thompson et al., "COVID-19 disinformation being spread by Russia, China, say experts," last modified 26 May, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/COVID-coronavirus-russia-china-1.5583961

124. Jack Stubbs, "Viral visuals driving social media manipulation on YouTube, Instagram: researchers," last modified 25 September, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-disinformation/viral-visuals-driving-social-media-manipulation-on-youtube-instagram-researchers-idUSKBN1WB0ED

125. Andy Day, "Fox News Fails at Photoshopping Fake News," last modified 17 June, 2020, https://fstoppers.com/news/fox-news-fails-photoshopping-fake-news-493684

126. "Seeing Isn't Believing: The Fact Checker's guide to manipulated video," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/politics/fact-checker/manipulated-video-guide/

127. AFP, "Old Photos Shared As COVID-19 Vaccine Volunteers Developing Paralysis," last modified 19 December, 2020, https://www.boomlive.in/world/pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine-bells-palsy-11220

128. Ian Sample, "What are deepfakes – and how can you spot them?," last modified 13 January, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/13/what-are-deepfakes-and-how-can-you-spot-them

129. "Deepfake queen to deliver Channel 4 Christmas message," last modified 23 December, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-55424730

130. World Health Organization, "Let's flatten the infodemic curve," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/let-s-flatten-the-infodemic-curve

131. Andrea Bellemare, "So, you think you've spotted some 'fake news' — now what?," last modified 5 July, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/fake-news-disinformation-propaganda-internet-1.5196964

132. "Misleading: Several clickbait websites published misleading headlines claiming that "cigarettes block the coronavirus," last modified 4 April, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/?ifcn_misinformation=several-clickbait-websites-published-misleading-headlines-claiming-that-cigarettes-block-the-coronavirus

133. Clea Skopeliti and Bethan John, "Coronavirus: How are the social media platforms responding to the 'infodemic'?," last modified 19 March, 2020, https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/how-social-media-platforms-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-infodemic/

134. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, "Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/disinfodemic_deciphering_covid19_disinformation.pdf

135. "The International Fact-Checking Network," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/#:~:text=The%20International%20Fact-Checking%20Network

136. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, "Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/disinfodemic_deciphering_covid19_disinformation.pdf

137. Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, "Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/working-groups/FoE_Disinfo_Report.pdf

138. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, "Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/disinfodemic_deciphering_covid19_disinformation.pdf

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.

141. "Disinformation and Electoral Integrity: A Guidance Document for NDI Elections Programs," accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Disinformation%20and%20Electoral%20Integrity_NDI_External_Updated%20May%202019%20%281%29.pdf

142. Katherine Ognyanova, "Misinformation in action: Fake news exposure is linked to lower trust in media, higher trust in government when your side is in power," last modified 2 June, 2020, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/misinformation-in-action-fake-news-exposure-is-linked-to-lower-trust-in-media-higher-trust-in-government-when-your-side-is-in-power/

143. Abigail Griffin, "The Tragedy of Social Media Moderation," last modified 8 January, 2020, https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column_article/the-tragedy-of-social-media-moderation

144. Merrill Fabry, "Here's How the First Fact-Checkers Were Able to Do Their Jobs Before the Internet," last modified 4 August, 2017, https://time.com/4858683/fact-checking-history/

145. Baybars Örsek, "What to expect from fact-checking in 2021," last modified 1 January, 2021, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2021/what-to-expect-from-fact-checking-in-2021/

146. Poynter, "The commitments of the code of principles," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/know-more/the-commitments-of-the-code-of-principles

147. https://factscan.ca/about/faq/

148. "About Reuters Fact Check," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/about

149. Facebook Business Help Centre, "Fact-Checking on Facebook," accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/business/help/2593586717571940?id=673052479947730

150. Emily Bell, "The Fact-Check Industry," last modified in 2019, https://www.cjr.org/special_report/fact-check-industry-twitter.php

151. Poynter, "The commitments of the code of principles," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/know-more/the-commitments-of-the-code-of-principles

152. Emily Bell, "The Fact-Check Industry," last modified in 2019, https://www.cjr.org/special_report/fact-check-industry-twitter.php

153. Poynter, "About the International Fact-Checking Network," accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.poynter.org/about-the-international-fact-checking-network/

154. Poynter, "International Fact-Checking Network fact-checkers' code of principles," accessed February 13, 2021

155. Andrew Tompkins, "Is fact-checking effective? A critical review of what works – and what doesn't," last modified 10 December, 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/is-fact-checking-effective-a-critical-review-of-what-works-and-what-doesnt/a-55248257

156. Alex Pareene, "How Political Fact-Checkers Distort the Truth," last modified 8 January, 2020, https://newrepublic.com/article/156039/political-fact-checkers-distort-truth

157. Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, "Balancing Act: Countering Digital Disinformation While Respecting Freedom of Expression," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/working-groups/FoE_Disinfo_Report.pdf

158. Chris Tenove, "Protecting Democracy from Disinformation: Normative Threats and Policy Responses," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/acrtc/prx/2020tenove.htm

159. Ibid.

160. Library of Congress, "Government Responses to Disinformation on Social Media Platforms: Comparative Summary," accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/social-media-disinformation/compsum.php

161. Rocky Taylor Cole and Andrew Gully, "Dichotomies of Disinformation: Project Overview & Codebook," accessed February 13, 2021, https://github.com/DFRLab/Dichotomies-of-Disinformation

162. Ibid.

163. Library of Congress, "Government Responses to Disinformation on Social Media Platforms: Comparative Summary," accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/social-media-disinformation/compsum.php

164. Ibid.

165. United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, "Stop the Virus of Disinformation: the risk of malicious use of social media during COVID-19 and the technology options to fight it," accessed February 13, 2021, http://www.unicri.it/sites/default/files/2020-11/SM%20misuse.pdf

166. Ibid.

167. Ibid.

168. Daniel Funke and Daniela Flamini, "A guide to anti-misinformation actions around the world," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/anti-misinformation-actions/

169. Africa Times Editor, "Kenya warns of up to $50K fines for spreading fake COVID19 news," last modified 3 March, 2020, https://africatimes.com/2020/03/03/kenya-warns-of-up-to-50k-fines-for-spreading-fake-covid19-news/

170. Justin Sherman, "Government Information Crackdowns in the Covid-19 Pandemic," last modified 25 October, 2020, https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/research/57/

171. Kenneth Roth, "How Authoritarians Are Exploiting the COVID-19 Crisis to Grab Power," last modified 3 April, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/03/how-authoritarians-are-exploiting-covid-19-crisis-grab-power

172. Joel Simon, "COVID-19 is spawning a global press-freedom crackdown," last modified 25 March, 2020, https://www.cjr.org/analysis/coronavirus-press-freedom-crackdown.php?utm_source=Daily+Lab+email+list&utm_campaign=c64ffaee17-dailylabemail3&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d68264fd5e-c64ffaee17-396039981

173. Solarina Ho, "COVID-19 eroding global internet freedom, Canada among the most free, report says," last modified 14 October, 2020, https://www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/covid-19-eroding-global-internet-freedom-canada-among-the-most-free-report-says-1.5145180

174. Elizabeth Thompson, "Federal government open to new law to fight pandemic misinformation," last modified 15 April, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/covid-misinformation-disinformation-law-1.5532325

175. World Health Organization, "WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard," accessed February 13, 2020, https://covid19.who.int/?gclid=CjwKCAiAxp-ABhALEiwAXm6IySzvTVOdUOEtIyWT_xZfJXDpxCzXYOvq8pRYkqI2SBIB8G7qT635wxoCZ0QQAvD_BwE\

176. City of Edmonton, "COVID-19 Dashboard," https://public.tableau.com/profile/city.of.edmonton#!/vizhome/CityofEdmontonCOVID-19Dashboard/Summary

177. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, "Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/disinfodemic_deciphering_covid19_disinformation.pdf

178. Ibid.

179. YouTube Help, "Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) updates," accessed 13 February, 2020, https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/9777243?p=covid19_updates

180. Jack Nassetta and Kimberly Gross, "State media warning labels can counteract the effects of foreign misinformation," last modified 30 October, 2020, https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/state-media-warning-labels-can-counteract-the-effects-of-foreign-misinformation/

181. Rachel Kraus, "There's a problem with YouTube's new anti-propaganda initiative," last modified 2 February, 2018, https://mashable.com/2018/02/02/youtube-government-funding-notices-fake-news-russia/

182. Peter Dizikes, "The catch to putting warning labels on fake news," last modified 2 March, 2020, https://news.mit.edu/2020/warning-labels-fake-news-trustworthy-0303

183. Julie Posetti and Kalina Bontcheva, "Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/disinfodemic_deciphering_covid19_disinformation.pdf

184. Government of Canada, "Online disinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/online-disinformation.html

185. Department of Finance Canada, "Government of Canada Clarifies Support for Canadian Journalism," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/04/government-of-canada-clarifies-support-for-canadian-journalism.html

186. Peter Kafka, "Facebook made a $300 million pledge to help journalists — just like Google did last year," last modified 15 January, 2019, https://www.vox.com/2019/1/15/18182973/facebook-journalism-300-million-google-advertising-subscriptions

187. The International Fact-Checking Network, "IFCN receives $1 million from WhatsApp to support fact-checkers on the coronavirus battlefront," last modified 18 March, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/ifcn-receives-1-million-from-whatsapp-to-support-fact-checkers-on-the-coronavirus-battlefront/

188. "Coronavirus: Resources for reporters," accessed February 13, 2021, https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/coronavirus-resources-for-reporters/

189. Clea Skopeliti and Bethan John, "Coronavirus: How are the social media platforms responding to the 'infodemic'?," last modified 19 March, 2020, https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/how-social-media-platforms-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-infodemic/

190. Niam Yaraghi, "How should social media platforms combat misinformation and hate speech?," last modified 9 April, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2019/04/09/how-should-social-media-platforms-combat-misinformation-and-hate-speech/

191. Mae Anderson, "The internet needs more regulation, Facebook CEO argues," last modified 30 March, 2019, https://globalnews.ca/news/5114418/facebook-internet-zuckerberg/

192. Tony Wong, "Majority of Canadians want government to regulate social media, poll says," last modified 25 September, 2019, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2019/09/25/majority-of-canadians-want-government-to-regulate-social-media-poll-says.html

193. John Samples, "Why the Government Should Not Regulate Content Moderation of Social Media," last modified 9 April, 2019, https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/why-government-should-not-regulate-content-moderation-social-media

194. Tom Phillips et al., "Trump social media ban sparks calls for action against other populist leaders," last modified 17 January, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/17/trump-social-media-ban-jair-bolsonaro-narendra-modi

195. Centre for Countering Digital Hate, "The Anti-Vaxx Industry: How Big Tech powers and profits from anti-vaccine misinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.counterhate.com/anti-vaxx-industry

196. Lata Nott, "Free Expression on Social Media," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/first-amendment-center/primers/free-expression-on-social-media/

197. Noor Ibrahim, "Fact or Fiction: Does Trump's social media ban threaten our freedom of expression?," last modified 25 January, 2021, https://globalnews.ca/news/7589161/fact-or-fiction-trump-ban-freedom-of-expression/

198. Ibid.

199. "World Map Of Social Networks," accessed 13 February, 2020, https://vincos.it/world-map-of-social-networks/

200. Facebook, "Working to Stop Misinformation and False News," accessed 13 February, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/formedia/blog/working-to-stop-misinformation-and-false-news

201. Clea Skopeliti and Bethan John, "Coronavirus: How are the social media platforms responding to the 'infodemic'?," last modified 19 March, 2020, https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/how-social-media-platforms-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-infodemic/

202. Ibid.

203. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: Facebook," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/facebook/

204. Facebook Journalism Project, "How Our Fact-Checking Program Works," last modified 11 August, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking/how-it-works

205. Ibid.

206. Facebook Business Help Centre, "Program Policies," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/business/help/315131736305613?id=673052479947730

207. Harrison Mantas, "Researchers say Facebook should allow fact-checkers to fact-check politicians," last modified 21 January, 2021, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2021/researchers-say-facebook-should-allow-fact-checkers-to-fact-check-politicians/

208. Clea Skopeliti and Bethan John, "Coronavirus: How are the social media platforms responding to the 'infodemic'?," last modified 19 March, 2020, https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/how-social-media-platforms-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-infodemic/

209. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: WhatApp," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/whatsapp/

210. Mansoor Iqbal, "WhatsApp Revenue and Usage Statistics (2020)," last updated 25 January, 2021, https://www.businessofapps.com/data/whatsapp-statistics/

211. Reuters, "Fake news spread on WhatsApp to Indian Americans plays stealth role in U.S. election," last modified 27 October, 2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/fake-news-spread-whatsapp-indian-americans-plays-stealth-role-us-elect-rcna166

212. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: WhatApp," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/whatsapp/

213. WhatsApp, "The World Health Organization launches WHO Health Alert on WhatsApp," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.whatsapp.com/coronavirus/who/?lang=en

214. Ibid.

215. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: YouTube," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/youtube

216. Clea Skopeliti and Bethan John, "Coronavirus: How are the social media platforms responding to the 'infodemic'?," last modified 19 March, 2020, https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/how-social-media-platforms-are-responding-to-the-coronavirus-infodemic/

217. Ibid.

218. Ibid.

219. Leo Kelion, "Coronavirus: YouTube tightens rules after David Icke 5G interview," last modified 7 April, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52198946

220. Nico Grant and Mark Bergen, "YouTube tries to counter COVID-19 misinformation with new videos," last modified 13 January, 2021, https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/youtube-tries-to-counter-covid-19-misinformation-with-new-videos-1.1547846

221. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: Twitter," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/twitter

222. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: Twitter," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/twitter

223. Ibid.

224. Ibid.

225. Cristina Tardáguila et al., "Misinformation makes its way to TikTok," last modified 31 October, 2019, https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/misinformation-makes-its-way-to-tiktok/

226. Andrew Hutchinson, "TikTok Adds New Rules to Ban Harmful Misinformation in the App," last modified 9 January, 2020, https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/tiktok-adds-new-rules-to-ban-harmful-misinformation-in-the-app/570064/

227. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: TikTok," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/tiktok/

228. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: Reddit," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/reddit

229. "World Map Of Social Networks," accessed 13 February, 2020, https://vincos.it/world-map-of-social-networks/

230. Kaitlyn Tiffany, "Reddit Squashed QAnon by Accident," last modified 23 September, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/09/reddit-qanon-ban-evasion-policy-moderation-facebook/616442/

231. Adam G. Klein, "How to fight Holocaust denial in social media – with the evidence of what really happened," last modified 3 December, 2020, https://theconversation.com/how-to-fight-holocaust-denial-in-social-media-with-the-evidence-of-what-really-happened-150719

232. Emily Birnbaum and Chris Mills Rodrigo, "Reddit enlists users to combat coronavirus misinformation," last modified February 7, 2020, https://thehill.com/policy/technology/481956-reddit-enlists-users-to-combat-coronavirus-misinformation

233. New America, "How Internet Platforms Are Combating Disinformaion and Misinformation in the Age of COVID-19: Reddit," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/how-internet-platforms-are-combating-disinformation-and-misinformation-age-covid-19/reddit

234. Reddit, "Misinformation and COVID-19: What Reddit is Doing," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/ModSupport/comments/g21ub7/misinformation_and_covid19_what_reddit_is_doing/

235. Distractify Staff, "Reddit Has Thousands of Problematic Subreddits on Its Site," last modified 29 June, 2020, https://www.distractify.com/p/reddit-banned-subreddits

236. "More than 400 million users around the world connect to Pinterest each month (Number of the day)," last modified 3 August, 2020, https://news.yahoo.com/more-400-million-users-around-world-connect-pinterest-153930499.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9lbi53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAEUAK5k5MI0uBq-SzKjTs9XmTPCL1iEN5jOdpv1z9kpaQO2TtJKWb-Id8FmuwMXYu9lACFTLetHvhVh0lpj0HykUb6GGtnsAFFgTRuMYyxqgC4A3_9Nantm3nrcGRmFYmzRbc7kh12sO6IYDfFJovq7VfHfEfydHoAWDw5Aegs8I

237. Caroline Orr and Emma McIntosh, "Exclusive: Canada's government underestimated Pinterest's disinformation problem," last modified 12 December, 2019, https://www.nationalobserver.com/2019/12/12/news/exclusive-canadas-government-underestimated-pinterests-disinformation-problem#:~:text=%E2%80%9CPinterest%20is%20an%20avenue%20for%20visual%20disinformation,%E2%80%9D%20Karan,the%20platform%20doesn%E2%80%99t%20have%20a%20problem%20with%20disinformation.%E2%80%9D

238. Ibid.

239. Julia Carrie Wong, "Anti-vaxx propaganda has gone viral on Facebook. Pinterest has a cure," last modified 21 February, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/feb/20/pinterest-anti-vaxx-propaganda-search-facebook

240. Pinterest Help Centre, "Health misinformation," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://help.pinterest.com/en/article/health-misinformation

241. Nicole Jao, "WeChat now has over 1 billion active monthly users worldwide," last modified 5 March, 2018, https://technode.com/2018/03/05/wechat-1-billion-users/

242. Lotus Ruan et al., "Censored Contagion: How Information on the Coronavirus is Managed on Chinese Social Media," last modified 3 March, 2020, https://citizenlab.ca/2020/03/censored-contagion-how-information-on-the-coronavirus-is-managed-on-chinese-social-media/

243. Ibid.

244. Ibid.
245. Harper Ke and Lilly Min Chen Lee, "How China's infodemic spreads to Taiwan and Southeast Asia," last modified 14 October, 2020, https://medium.com/doublethinklab/how-chinas-infodemic-spreads-to-taiwan-and-southeast-asia-7c256f880af6#:~:text=The%20disinformation%20source%20is%20the%20WeChat%20official%20account,Singapore,%20Thailand,%20Canada,%20the%20United%20States,%20and%20Taiwan.
246. Joe Fitzgerald Rodriguez et al., "Misinformation Image on WeChat Attempts to Frighten Chinese Americans Out of Voting," last modified 2 November, 2020, https://www.propublica.org/article/misinformation-image-on-wechat-attempts-to-frighten-chinese-americans-out-of-voting
247. Chris Fuchs, "How Chinese-language media in U.S. are debunking WeChat coronavirus misinformation," last modified 13 March, 2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/how-chinese-language-media-u-s-are-debunking-wechat-coronavirus-n1156621
248. Nathan Grayson, "As Streamers Spread Dangerous Conspiracy Theories, Twitch Does Little To Stop Them," last modified 29 March, 2020, https://kotaku.com/as-streamers-spread-dangerous-conspiracy-theories-twit-1843684035
249. Julie Gerstein, "China is spreading conspiracy theories that the coronavirus was created in an American lab and that a US-created vaccine is killing the elderly," last modified 25 January, 2021, https://www.businessinsider.in/politics/world/news/china-is-spreading-conspiracy-theories-that-the-coronavirus-was-created-in-an-american-lab-and-that-a-us-created-vaccine-is-killing-the-elderly/articleshow/80448363.cms
250. U.S. Department of State, "GEC Special Report: Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pillars-of-Russia%E2%80%99s-Disinformation-and-Propaganda-Ecosystem_08-04-20.pdf
251. Canadian Human Rights Commission, "What is Discrimination?," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-discrimination
252. Isaac Yeboah Addo, "Double pandemic: racial discrimination amid coronavirus disease 2019," *Social Science & Humanities Open*, vol. 2, issue 1 (2020), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291120300632
253. Brooklyn Neustaeter, "'Raise your voice': Campaign targets anti-Asian racism heightened amid COVID-19 in Canada," last modified 27 January, 2021, https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/raise-your-voice-campaign-targets-anti-asian-racism-heightened-amid-covid-19-in-canada-1.5283974
254. Isaac Yeboah Addo, "Double pandemic: racial discrimination amid coronavirus disease 2019," *Social Science & Humanities Open*, vol. 2, issue 1 (2020), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291120300632
255. Ibid.
256. Khaled Al-Qazzaz, "Islamophobia is on the rise during COVID-19," last modified 1 October, 2020, https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/october-2020/islamophobia-is-on-the-rise-during-covid-19/
257. Bethany Dawson, "Covid fuels highest rate of online antisemitism ever recorded, says charity," last modified 6 December, 2020, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/covid-antisemitism-jewish-hate-crime-b1766987.html
258. United Nations, "COVID-19 and Indigenous peoples," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/covid-19.html
259. Kemal Kirişci and M. Murat Erdoğan, "Turkey and COVID-19: Don't forget refugees," last modified 20 April, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/20/turkey-and-covid-19-dont-forget-refugees/
260. Brooklyn Neustaeter, "What StatCan learned by asking 35,000 Canadians about pandemic discrimination," last modified 17 September, 2020, https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/what-statcan-learned-by-asking-35-000-canadians-about-pandemic-discrimination-1.5109271
261. Ibid.
262. "Blame, bullying and disrespect: Chinese Canadians reveal their experiences with racism during COVID-19," last modified 22 June, 2020, https://angusreid.org/racism-chinese-canadians-covid19/
263. Steven Zhou, "Almost One Third of Chinese Canadians Report Being Physically Attacked During Covid-19," last modified 22 June, 2020, https://www.antihate.ca/_almost_one_third_of_chinese_canadians

264. "Vancouver police investigate alleged racially motivated attack against elderly Asian man with dementia," last modified 23 April, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-police-investigate-racially-motivated-attack-against-elderly-asian-man-with-dementia-1.5541378

265. Wikipedia, "List of incidents of xenophobia and racism related to the COVID-19 pandemic," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_incidents_of_xenophobia_and_racism_related_to_the_COVID-19_pandemic#Africa

266. Daniel J. Rowe, "COVID-19: Korean consulate issues warning after violent attack in Montreal," last modified 14 July, 2020, https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/covid-19-korean-consulate-issues-warning-after-violent-attack-in-montreal-1.4856453

267. World Health Organization, "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Violence against women," last modified 15 April, 2020, https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-violence-against-women

268. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, "Stigma and prejudice," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/stigma-and-prejudice

269. Ibid.

270. Lien Yeung, "'Not always overt': Unmasking COVID racism," last modified 3 June, 2020, https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/covid-racism-not-always-overt

271. Ibid.

272. Motoko Rich, "As Coronavirus Spreads, So Does Anti-Chinese Sentiment," last modified 30 January, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/30/world/asia/coronavirus-chinese-racism.html

273. Kaylen Small, "Siksika Nation members denied service at local businesses due to COVID-19 in community: Hinshaw," last modified 14 July, 2020, https://globalnews.ca/news/7176971/siksika-nation-covid-19-discrimination/

274. Angela Sterritt, "Dr. Bonnie Henry condemns B.C. businesses for refusing entry to Indigenous people due to COVID-19 fears," last modified 14 January, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bonnie-henry-calls-out-racism-among-businesses-1.5873345

275. World Health Organization, "WHO issues best practices for naming new human infectious diseases," last modified 8 May, 2015, https://www.who.int/news/item/08-05-2015-who-issues-best-practices-for-naming-new-human-infectious-diseases

276. Birmingham City University, "COVID-19 sparks online Islamophobia as fake news and racist memes are shared online, new research finds," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/coronavirus-information/news/covid-19-sparks-online-islamophobia-as-fake-news-and-racist-memes-are-shared-online-new-research-finds

277. "Coronavirus Crisis Elevates Antisemitic, Racist Tropes," last modified 17 March, 2020, https://www.adl.org/blog/coronavirus-crisis-elevates-antisemitic-racist-tropes

278. Human Rights Watch, "China: Covid-19 Discrimination Against Africans," last modified 5 May, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/05/china-covid-19-discrimination-against-africans

279. Christine Fernando, "Racism targets Asian food, business during COVID-19 pandemic," last modified 20 December, 2020, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/racism-targets-asian-food-business-during-covid-19-pandemic

280. "Montreal police suspect hate-crimes after vandals hit Buddhist temples, Chinatown," last modified 4 March, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/vandalism-temples-1.5485151

281. Jon Woodward, "'It has escalated': Chinese Cultural Centre targeted with vandalism, hateful graffiti," last modified 1 May, 2020, https://bc.ctvnews.ca/mobile/it-has-escalated-chinese-cultural-centre-targeted-with-vandalism-hateful-graffiti-1.4920062

282. Simon Little, "Vancouver's Chinese-Canadian businesses report up to 70% business drop amid virus fears," 18 February, 2020, https://globalnews.ca/news/6560530/vancouver-chinatown-business-drop-coronavirus/

283. Andrea Huncar, "Black Canadians hit hard by COVID-19, new national study shows," last modified 2 September, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/black-canadians-covid-19-study-1.5708530

284. Justin Barr et al., "The Dangers of "Us Versus Them": Epidemics Then and Now" (SpringerLink, 2021), https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-020-06368-y

285. Craig Chamberlain, "What drives us to blame the marginalized for epidemics?," last modified 16 April, 2020, https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/807973

286. Allison Aiello, "Ebola as an Instrument of Discrimination," last modified 21 November, 2014, https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2014/11/ebola_as_an_instrume.html

287. Justin Barr et al., "The Dangers of "Us Versus Them": Epidemics Then and Now" (SpringerLink, 2021), https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-020-06368-y

288. Samuel K. Cohn, "Pandemics: waves of disease, waves of hate from the Plague of Athens to A.I.D.S.," accessed 13 February, 2020, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4422154/

289. Allison Aiello, "Ebola as an Instrument of Discrimination," last modified 21 November, 2014, https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2014/11/ebola_as_an_instrume.html

290. Leonard E. Egede and Rebekah J. Walker, "Structural Racism, Social Risk Factors, and Covid-19 — A Dangerous Convergence for Black Americans," last modified 17 September, 2020, https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2023616

291. Richard A. Oppel Jr. et al., "The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus," last modified 5 July, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latinos-african-americans-cdc-data.html

292. Sarah Turnbull, "Systemic racism exists in all institutions, including RCMP: Trudeau," last modified 11 June, 2020, https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/systemic-racism-exists-in-all-institutions-including-rcmp-trudeau-1.4979878

293. Jessica Cheung, "Black people and other people of colour make up 83% of reported COVID-19 cases in Toronto," last modified 1 August, 2020, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-covid-19-data-1.5669091

294. Sejla Rizvic, "Racism in Canada's health-care system was a risk to BIPOC Canadians before COVID-19," last modified 16 September, 2020, https://www.inclusion.ca/article/racism-in-canadas-health-care-system-was-a-risk-to-bipoc-canadians-before-covid-19/

295. George J. Sefa Dei and Kathy Lewis, "COVID-19, Systemic Racism, Racialization and the Lives of Black People," last modified 12 December, 2020, https://rsc-src.ca/en/covid-19-systemic-racism-racialization-and-lives-black-people

296. The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Human Rights," last modified 16 May, 2016, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/human-rights

297. Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, "Overview of Human Rights Codes by Province and Territory in Canada," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://ccdi.ca/media/1414/20171102-publications-overview-of-hr-codes-by-province-final-en.pdf

298. Canadian Human Rights Commission, "Complaint FAQ," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/complaint-faq

299. Canadian Human Rights Commission, "What is Harassment?," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-harassment-1

300. Government of Canada, *Canada Human Rights Act*, accessed 13 February, 2021, https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/page-1.html

301. Alberta Human Rights Commission, "Protected areas and grounds under the Alberta Human Rights Act," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/Documents/ProtAreasGrounds.pdf

302. Government of Manitoba, *The Human Rights Code*, accessed February 13, 2021, https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php

303. Canadian Human Rights Commission, "How to File a Complaint," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/how-file-compliant

304. Alberta Human Rights Commission, "The human rights complaint process: A guide for complainants," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/complaints/complainant_info/Pages/guide.aspx#:~:text=Can%20a%20person%20be%20fired,rights%20complaint%20under%20the%20Act

305. Alberta Human Rights Commission, "COVID-19 and Human Rights," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/employment/Pages/covid19.aspx

306. Ibid.

307. Ibid.

308. Ibid.

309. Global Affairs Canada, "Human rights implications of COVID-19," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2020/04/human-rights-implications-of-covid-19.html

310. Canadian Human Rights Commission, "Statement - COVID-19," accessed 13 February, 2021, https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/statement-covid-19

311. Bryan Balvaneda et al., "Responding to Anti-Asian Racism During the COVID-19 Outbreak," last modified 24 March, 2020, https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/responding-anti-asian-racism-during-covid-19

312. Statistics Canada, "Experiences of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic," last modified 17 September, 2020, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200917/dq200917a-eng.htm

313. Kwame McKenzie, "Race and Ethnicity Data Collection During COVID-19 in Canada: If You Are Not Counted You Cannot Count on the Pandemic Response," last modified 12 November, 2020, https://rsc-src.ca/en/race-and-ethnicity-data-collection-during-covid-19-in-canada-if-you-are-not-counted-you-cannot-count

314. Bryan Balvaneda et al., "Responding to Anti-Asian Racism During the COVID-19 Outbreak," last modified 24 March, 2020, https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/responding-anti-asian-racism-during-covid-19

315. Ibid.

316. Ibid.