# #**Citiz**en **Resili**ence **Proj**ect

## Part **3**/4

Our aim is to **empower Canadians** to **recognize** the threats of **false information**, to **fight against it** as informed citizens, and to **engage** in **inclusive**, **productive discourse**.
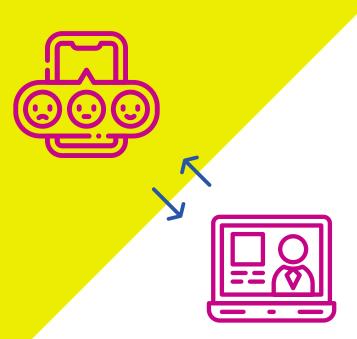
**1. Divisive digital discourse** →

**2. Your information diet** →

**3. (Mis) represen- tation** →

Who is **shaping the story**? →

→ **4. Speaking Up**

**About this project**

The **Citizen Resilience Project** originated at 6 Degrees Toronto 2019. 6 Degrees is the global forum for inclusion, and a project of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, which convenes leaders from all sectors including arts, civil society, academia, government, activism, and business. Additionally, this project has been developed through research, national polling, and consultations with new Canadian citizens cind was made possible by the Government of Canada. We encourage you to ask questions, share your experiences, and join us for 6 Degrees Montréal on March 30, 2020.

# (Mis)Representation
## Who is **shaping the story**?

Today, much of our public dialogue takes place online, but these online platforms can be hotbeds of dis- and misinformation about marginalized groups, leading to the silencing of these groups on these platforms. Healthy public dialogue on issues that affect all of us requires not just a shared set of facts, but also a diverse and representative range of voices. Diverse voices can offer new perspectives on complex issues, expose false understandings or misconceptions, and balance biased narratives.

Researchers from the Institute for the Future's Digital Intelligence Lab found that members of vulnerable groups in the U.S. — such as the Latino, Muslim, and Jewish communities — are being disproportionately targeted online with disinformation, harassment, and propaganda aiming to silence people from participating in political discourse or organizing online. Here in Canada, we have recently seen false and hateful information spread about racialized groups in relation to the coronavirus, Indigenous land claims, and immigration. This dis-and misinformation not only fuels stereotypes, hate, and racism, but can also drive underrepresented communities from online spaces.

In recent polls the Institute for Canadian Citizenship conducted with Leger, we found that visible minorities are more likely to see false or misleading information online about "people like them." 74% of Canadians say they have felt discouraged from sharing their opinion online. That number increases to 80% among those who identify as visible minorities. Top reasons cited were a lack of trust and frustration due to false or conflicting information found online and worries about being targeted or bullied online.
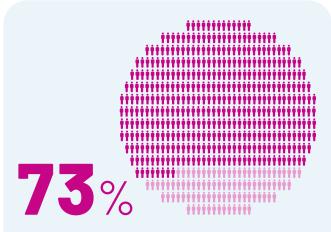
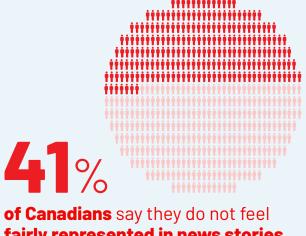**Institute for Canadian Citizenship**
March 2020

**Part 3/4**  **(Mis)Representation**
Who is shaping the story?

→ **Numbers to consider**

# 73%

**of Canadians** have seen **false or misleading information** spread online about **"people like them"**.

→ **Visible minorities** are more likely to see false or misleading information online about people like them, as well as more likely to feel bullied or targeted online.

→ **Visible minorities** are twice as likely to frequently try to correct false information online.

# 41%

**of Canadians** say they do not feel **fairly represented in news stories** they see online.

# 6/10

**Canadians are "concerned"** or **"very concerned"** that the spread of false information online is causing Canadians to be **less compassionate**.

Source: ICC-Leger, 2019

While these figures may not come as a surprise to some, it's important to understand who is being misrepresented online, on social media and in news-media, and the impacts this can have. In the same way that representation matters in the political sphere, it also matters on these platforms where public dialogue takes place.

**Institute for Canadian Citizenship**
March 2020

**Part 3/4**   **(Mis)Representation**
Who is shaping the story?

# So, who is
## shaping the story?

With 3 in 4 Canadians discouraged from sharing their opinions online, the gap left can be filled by groups pushing narratives that serve divisive aims. This litters the public square and fills news feeds with bias, as we heard at 6 Degrees Berlin last month. Participants there expressed concern over *Politkversagen*, a website that compiles articles from local newspapers about crimes done by "foreigners." The site actively encourages its readers to share this content and spread the message that Germany is under attack by outsiders. As 6 Degrees Berlin speaker Åsa Wikforss said, "the most dangerous kind of misinformation is cherry-picking real facts taken out of context." Hate can masquerade as information, that is why it's important to consider the context, source, and agenda when reading content online.

### → Examples to consider

### Coronavirus

Fear and panic, paired with misinformation, can easily lead to the spread of dangerous and hateful narratives online. Reports of a new flu-like disease called the coronavirus quickly sparked xenophobic and racist remarks on social media. Some media outlets also picked up and shared inaccurate information about the virus, which contributed to anti-Chinese rhetoric. After an inaccurate video went viral, that was said to be of a woman eating bat soup in Wuhan, "bat soup" was inaccurately deemed to be the cause of the virus. The video wasn't even filmed in China, and was not the cause of the outbreak, yet some media outlets and many social media users spread this misinformation. Hateful posts on social media led to some platforms taking positive action to combat dis- and misinformation about the coronavirus.

Twitter and YouTube responded to the spread of misinformation by directing users who searched for coronavirus-related information to credible sources. Twitter also worked to remove false information online, while Facebook opted to add labels to inaccurate media reports. Due to the prevalence of false and misleading information about coronavirus, civil society organizations, such as Teaching Tolerance, have developed resources specifically for educators to tackle racist tropes in public discourse about the coronavirus.

### Immigration

Ahead of the 2019 Canadian election, there were deliberate attempts to spread hateful and false narratives about immigrants and immigration online so as to divide voters and communities. A CBC journalist identified that "false claims about how much financial support new immigrants get, the number of immigrants coming to Canada and the process for seeking asylum have all circulated widely online in the months leading up to the election. Experts say this may be playing a role in forming misperceptions."

### Indigenous communities and their allies

The conflict involving Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, the RCMP, and Coastal GasLink Pipeline Project has given rise to the spread of false, misleading, and hateful information. In an article published on CanadaLand, "The Reporting Gap in the Wet'suwet'en Crisis", Robert Jago points to a series of examples of misinformation in the media around Indigenous governance, and questions on social media about whether train tracks were or weren't blocked on Tyendinaga territory, where arrests were made. Evan Balgord of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network also points to the increase in far-right hate crimes targeting Indigenous communities, and an uptick in the number of social media posts that call for violence against Indigenous people and their allies. He also called for a more concrete response to those threatening violence on social media.
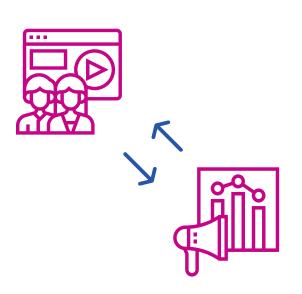
# Speak up
## and make your
## voice heard

If 3 in 4 Canadians say that they have felt discouraged from sharing their opinion online, then those in the silent majority actually have a significant opportunity to shift the public discourse. In the next couple of months, we will be sharing interviews with 6 Degrees speakers on different ways we can all speak up and make space for diverse voices, online and off.

**Follow along on social media** and share with us your tips for speaking up and combating misinformation or online hate.

🐦 **@inclusion_ca**

f **@inclusion.ca**

📷 **@inclusion.ca**

🔗 **inclusion.ca**

## → Learn More & Take Action

⊙ Use the ICC's **Disinformation & Exclusion Discussion Guide** to host community conversations about the impacts of false and hateful information on inclusion

⊙ Check out MediaSmarts' **Responding to Online Hate Guide** & **How to talk to kids about hate online**

⊙ Join **Sleeping Giants**' campaign dedicated to stopping racist, sexist, anti-Semetic and homophobic news sites by encouraging companies to pull their ad dollars.

⊙ Read **more** on why we believe false news to preserve our identity, confirm our existing beliefs, and use mental shortcuts. (In French)

⊙ Follow Radio-Canada's **Decrypteurs** team who tracks false information that spreads on social networks to fight disinformation and highlight dark corners of the web. Contact them with a story: decrypteurs@radio-canada.ca (In French)

**Institute for Canadian Citizenship**
March 2020

**Part 3/4**    **(Mis)Representation**
Who is shaping the story?