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# ***Reporting Platforms: Young Canadians Evaluate Efforts to Counter Disinformation***

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## **Recommendations for Platforms**

In 2023, MediaSmarts facilitated online focus groups with youth ages 16 to 29 to examine and assess reporting processes on popular apps (Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube). More specifically, we wanted to understand how young Canadians feel about current efforts to counter misinformation and disinformation online and what solutions they have regarding the problems and concerns they experience while navigating online information ecosystems and communities.

In the final part of the evaluation activity, and during our closing discussions, youth offered various solutions and recommendations in response to their own experiences and concerns with current reporting mechanisms on various platforms. We asked the following questions to prompt the development and discussion of these recommendations:

- What do you think is missing from this approach/ these processes for combatting misinformation and disinformation?
- What would make it easier to recognize, flag, or report misinformation and disinformation?
- What tools, designs, processes, or explanations would be helpful?
- What would you change?

Participants suggested recommendations specific to the platform they evaluated as well as some general recommendations for countering misinformation and disinformation online. We have listed these recommendations below and organized the general recommendations into four categories: (1) accessibility, awareness, and accuracy; (2) safety and responsibility; (3) trust; and (4) transparency.



## Instagram

- The reporting process should have an upfront and visual element to fit Instagram’s focus on graphics, perhaps by having a ‘report’ icon similar to the ‘like’ and ‘comment’ icons on posts.
- Reporting should be as clear, easy and accessible as other processes on Instagram; for example, ‘double tapping’ to like a post.
- The reporting tool should be at the right hand of every page, so users always have access to it.
- Pin Instagram posts or have pop-ups to remind people not to take anyone at their word and to think critically about the content they are consuming.
- Hackers usually send DM’s (directed messages) asking users to ‘click this link.’ There should be an option to report underneath, which says “do you think this is a scam?”
- Invest more in fact-checking and human content moderation.



## TikTok

- There should be an extra step after clicking ‘not interested’ on a TikTok post, asking ‘why?’ to help identify instances of misinformation and disinformation.
- TikTok should prompt users with videos on how to navigate misinformation and disinformation to promote user education and awareness, similar to the ‘you should take a break’ prompts.





## Twitter

- Platforms should tweet to all new users about the reporting tools and tweet regularly about the negative impact of misinformation and disinformation to educate users.
- Include misinformation and disinformation as options within the reporting tool.
- Add a textbox in the reporting tool to allow users to write in their reason for reporting if none of the provided options fit their reason.
- Collaborate with fact-checkers to identify and respond to misinformation and disinformation.
- Employing algorithmic tools to identify tweets that contain known misinformation or disinformation and flag it for human moderator review.
- Redesign recommendation algorithms so they no longer optimize primarily for engagement.

## YouTube

- Allow users to report videos when they do not have a YouTube account. If people can use YouTube without an account, they should be able to report without an account.
- Have consistency in the reporting tools. For example, there are fewer options for reporting a comment or thumbnail than a video, and reporting a YouTube video embedded on another site is more complicated.
- YouTube should use independent fact-checkers like Instagram does.
- Have a separate section on YouTube for fact-checked trending videos to encourage content without misinformation.
- Address misinformation proactively - monitor trends, auto-flag specific keywords or topics, and use bots to check videos before posting them.



## General Recommendations

### Accessibility, Awareness, and Accuracy:

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- Reporting tools should be upfront, visible, easy to use and accessible to users.
- Reporting tools should include a brief explanation of what is considered misinformation and disinformation on the platform, utilizing expert-approved, clear and simple language.
- Reporting tools should provide users with examples of reportable content to guide users who might be unsure of what should be reported.
- Platforms should prompt users regularly about reporting tools and how misinformation and disinformation spread to build awareness and accurately represent the scope of the problem.

### Safety and Responsibility:

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- Efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation should be increased for topics like health and elections that have potentially wide-spread social impact.
- There should be more serious consequences for violating community guidelines such as spreading misinformation. For example, people should not be allowed to make another account.

### Trust:

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- Platforms should invest in hiring people (experts, independent fact-checkers or content moderators) to combat misinformation and disinformation.
- There should be more checks and approval processes before content is posted publicly, especially with accounts that have a large following, accounts that regularly spread misinformation and disinformation, or content that uses key topics, words or trends that are especially susceptible to misinformation and disinformation.
  - Artificial intelligence can be used to flag known or common misinformation and disinformation for human content moderators to review, especially when content goes viral.
- The account creation process for platforms should be more rigorous and add extra steps for verification to reduce spam accounts.

## Transparency:

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- Platforms can encourage users to authenticate information by including a content rating or ranking (similar to movie rating scales), determined either by professional fact-checkers or in accordance with standards (similar to those mainstream news media are expected to follow).
- There should be more transparency about the post-report process:
  - Include more information to explain what happens *after* a report is submitted and how reports are handled.
  - Include a prompt at the bottom of reported content notifying users that the content is under review.
  - Allow users to read why content was flagged so they can better understand the reporting process.
  - Provide users with a detailed explanation of the assessment process (including when and how artificial intelligence and human content moderation occurs) so that users are aware of how a decision regarding a specific topic, piece of content or comment, was made and the actions that will follow.
- There should be greater transparency regarding how many reports of misinformation and disinformation have been made on the platform so that users have an accurate understanding of the scope of the problem.

