



**Environics Communications**  
**CanTrust Index**

**Trust in Information Sources**

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April 2016

# Trust in Information Sources

## The Environics Communications CanTrust Index

examines the sources that Canadians trust for important information as well as their trust in organizations and leaders. We examined several population segments, and found that Newcomers (as defined as people having arrived in Canada within the past 15 years or less) hold greater trust levels in several areas, including in large corporations, government and provincial premiers.

Environics Communications identifies and engages with audiences and influencers to build trust in companies and brands. This study is part of our service to clients and demonstrates our commitment to knowing Canadians.

## Word of Mouth and Product Sampling Most Trusted Information Sources

We trust who we know and like. Trust in word of mouth (WOM) / recommendations by someone people we know is identified by 75% of Canadians as the most trusted source of information when it comes to a product, service, brand or organization. Sampling a product or service follows closely at 73% and consumer opinion or reviews posted online at 51%. Editorial content such as newspaper articles in print or online still rank at 55%. Even among the 18-24 age group, editorial content influences 51%. Overall for Canadians, trust in traditional advertising and online advertising is relatively low at 31% and 24% respectively.

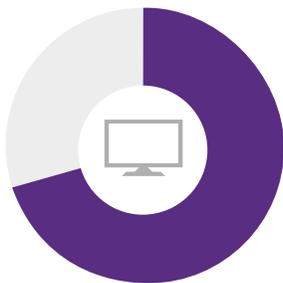
## Trust in product sampling is making gains

In a 2010 survey, we asked Canadians what influenced their product or purchase decisions, and learned that WOM was high (at 81%) while product sampling was relatively low at 34%. However, the 2016 CanTrust Index found that while trust in WOM remains high and thus continues to have influence, sampling a product is considered a highly trusted source (with 73%). Sampling a product or service yielded the highest amount of trust from Canadians 25 years and older and ranked lower among Quebecers (64%) and people ages 18 to 24 (58%).



75% of Canadians identified WOM as the most trusted source of information when it comes to a product, service, brand or organization.

The CanTrust Index found 89% of Canadians prefer editorial content, specifically:



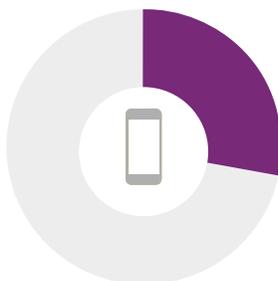
**69%**

In traditional media such as TV, radio or newspaper



**52%**

In online news sites



**29%**

In media mobile apps

#### **Blogs and bloggers are growing in trust**

Just over a third of Canadians trust blogs from bloggers they follow, whereas in our 2010 study only 10% of respondents mentioned blogs as a source that would influence their purchasing decisions. This shift could be attributed to the fact that blogs are often where consumers go to read reviews and recommendations. Interestingly, trust in blogs is highest among new Canadians at 43%, compared to all Canadians (34%). Canadians aged 18 to 49 have the highest trust in blogs compared to people 50+ where trust in blogs declines. Responses also vary depending on household income.

#### **Canadians favour editorial content over WOM and social media as their preferred news source for current events**

When looking at top sources for news about current events, the CanTrust Index found that 89% of Canadians cite editorial content as their preferred source. When this category is broken out, editorial content in traditional media – such as a story in a newspaper or on TV or radio – rank highest (with 69%), followed by editorial through online news sites (with 52%) and media mobile apps (with 29%).

WOM was another preferred source with 58%. Facebook was preferred by 31%, followed by information shared by a company or organization on social media by 25% and blogs by 14% of Canadians. Canadians ages 25 to 49 are more likely than average to prefer mobile apps (11%) and blogs (4%). Not surprisingly, 18 to 24 year olds are more likely to select Facebook as their preferred source of news (19%).

When asked about online sources of news specifically, more than eight in 10 Canadians prefer traditional news websites such as CTV or CBC. Still, a significant number (47%) prefer online-only news sites such as Huffington Post and mobile news apps (by 43%). Canadians 50+ are more likely to prefer traditional news websites (with 63%). Conversely, new Canadians are more likely to prefer online-only news sites as their first choice source.

While WOM and sampling a product or service are two of the top trusted sources of information about a product or service, the news media – whether online or in print – still reigns as the top source for information about current events. Of note, preference for online news and online-only news sites as well as mobile apps is significant, especially for new Canadians.

The most popular social channels visited by Canadians at least once a week are Facebook by 74%, followed by YouTube (64%), Google + (34%), LinkedIn (30%), Twitter (24%), Instagram (19%) and Pinterest (18%).

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#### Online Reviews Drive Purchasing Behaviour

The CanTrust Index found that about four in five Canadians check online reviews prior to purchasing a product and almost all (90%) claim it impacts their purchasing decisions.

Those who use online reviews prior to purchasing are also more likely to trust WOM or recommendations from someone they know, blogs, sampling and editorial, but less likely to trust any form of advertising, including company emails / newsletters.

Our study found about half of respondents trust consumer opinion or reviews posted online as a source of information; whereas in 2010, only about 42% respondents said independent review sites would influence their purchasing behaviour.

#### Accurate News Reporting Trumps Speed

While we operate in an “always on” news cycle, more than three-quarters of Canadians say they prefer receiving accurate information over receiving information very quickly if key details can’t be confirmed. Canadians who are more likely to prefer accurate information are Canadians aged 50+ (with 86%) and women (with 82%). Respondents who are more likely to prefer timely information are new Canadians (with 28%), Canadians 25 to 49 (with 27%), GTA residents (with 31%) and men (with 27%).

# Actionable Insights

For marketers with competing priorities, this study demonstrates that all Canadians place a high level of trust in hearing from people they know, in experiencing a brand and in what they read, hear or see in the news. Creating multiple experiences where consumers can engage with your brand and consume content easily through both traditional and online sources is paramount. Some key insights

1

Double down: Editorial remains a powerful way to educate audiences and drive awareness and action but when done in combination with direct engagement experiences where consumers are given the opportunity to share their opinions, marketers can drive greater brand trust.

2

Sampling and experiencing a brand is moving beyond the streets. Canadians of all ages and all backgrounds are engaging with brands online and sharing their opinions. Getting in front of consumers in multiple ways will lead to greater engagement.

3

Newcomers to Canada have a higher level of trust in bloggers and online-only news sites than the average Canadian and less trust in traditional media. Organizations should work to enhance online content to reach more Newcomers in order to grow meaningful connections.

For more information,  
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The Environics Communications CanTrust Index is based upon an online survey of 1,001 Canadians 18+ years of age conducted between February 29 to March 7, 2016. It is nationally representative by region, age and gender. The subsample of new Canadians (with 15 or fewer years in Canada) was 151. The subsample of Primary Shoppers was 562.