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Data Briefing – September to November 2024
Online Domestic Extremism in Canada

This briefing paper details analysis of Canadian domestic extremists' online activity between 1 September and 30 November 2024. It explores the platforms they are active on, the topics which galvanize them, and the ways in which they target communities in Canada. It is part of a multi-year study which will provide ongoing insight into Canadian domestic extremist activity through the ongoing delivery of analytical briefs.

Key Findings

Account Analysis

- ISD has so far identified 511 domestic extremist social media accounts and channels in Canada across 7 platforms. Where permitted by API's, we gathered data from 223 accounts and channels in Canada which published 282,288 posts. This includes 107 on X, 64 on Telegram, 29 on Facebook, 14 on YouTube, and 9 on Instagram.

- ISD identified 74 white supremacists (104,947 posts), 67 ethnonationalists (95,867 posts), 42 anti-Muslim extremists (52,075 posts), 30 Neo-Nazis (40,861 posts), 20 anti-government extremists (25,520 posts), 18 extreme right accelerationists (22,433 posts), 21 Christian Nationalists (14,972 posts), and 9 male supremacists (4,429 posts).

- However, ethnonationalists received 13 times and anti-Muslim extremists ten times more engagement than white supremacists.

- This quarter, the US election drove spikes in discussions by white supremacist, ethnonationalist, anti-Muslim, and male supremacist accounts and channels.

Key Narratives

- Analysis of key topics among Canadian domestic extremists showed they persist in amplifying grievances shared with extremist movements in Europe and North America. Common threads include discontent with government actions, perceived societal and cultural erosion, opposition to immigration, and conspiracy theories.

Hate Speech

- Of the 282,288 posts made by the domestic extremist accounts and channels between 1 September and 30 November 2024, 9,894 (3.5% of the total) were classified as containing hate speech. This is a 150% increase in the volume of hateful posts from the last reporting period (a 92.8% increase when excluding hate against LGBTQ people which were added as a target group for this briefing).

- Of these hateful posts, 2,934 (29.7%) were targeted at migrants, 2,843 (28.7%) at Jewish people, 2,149 (21.7%) at the LGBTQ community, 1,353 (13.7%) at Asian Canadians, 872 (8.8%) at Black Canadians, 421 (4.3%) at Muslims, 232 (2.3%) at Indigenous communities and 172 (1.7%) at Arab Canadians.

Note on Terminology

ISD used its definition of domestic extremism (see Annex) to decide if accounts and channels should be included. This definition states that extremism can be pursued through violent or non-violent means, thereby complementing efforts addressing political violence and terrorism by considering the broader risks to democracy, rights, and social cohesion posed by non-violent extremist ideologies, as well as aiming to highlight the continuum of ideologies and activities that inspire harm and illuminate pathways to radicalization and violence.

ISD analysts categorised all accounts and channels included into the following sub-categories: White supremacist, Ethnonationalist, Christian Nationalist, Anti-Muslim Extremists, Male Supremacism, Anti-Government Extremism. For white supremacists, ISD additionally coded for two sub-categories, Neo-Nazi and extreme right accelerationists (i.e. all Neo-Nazis are coded as white supremacists though not vice versa). Accounts and channels could also be ethnonationalist and Christian nationalist, as these categories sometimes but not always overlap. Otherwise, accounts and channels have been assigned to one sub-category.

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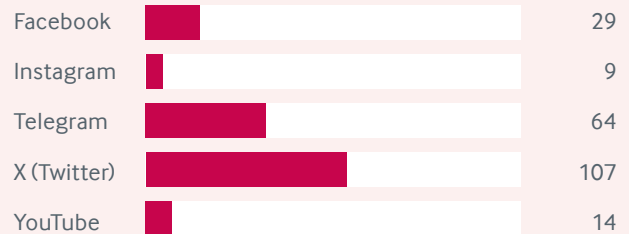
Contents

1   Account Analysis

Overall, ISD has so far identified 511 domestic extremist social media accounts and channels in Canada. This includes 157 on X, 143 on Facebook, 109 on Telegram, 31 on TikTok, 27 on YouTube, 22 on Gab, 22 on Instagram.

This list will be regularly expanded over the next four years through an account discovery exercise, (detailed in the Annex below).
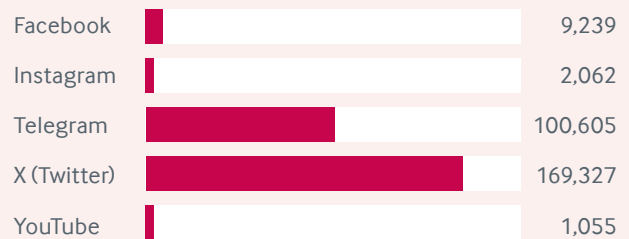
Of these, 223 were active during the period of data collection. This includes 107 on X (formerly known as Twitter), 64 on Telegram, 29 on Facebook, 14 on YouTube, and 9 on Instagram. Using the API's provided by these platforms, ISD collected 282,288 posts from 223 Canadian domestic extremist accounts and channels between 1 September and 30 November 2024. This included 169,327 posts on X, 100,605 on Telegram, 9,239 on Facebook, 2,062 on Instagram, and 1,055 on YouTube.

Of these channels ISD analysts identified 74 as white supremacists (104,947 posts), 67 as ethnonationalists (95,867 posts), 42 as anti-Muslim extremists (52,075 posts), 30 as Neo-Nazis (40,861 posts), 20 as anti-government extremists (25,520 posts), 18 as extreme right accelerationists (22,433 posts), 21 as Christian Nationalists

Bar graph & corresponding tabular view showing total active accounts per platform

Platform	Active accounts
Facebook	29
Instagram	9
Telegram	64
X (Twitter)	107
YouTube	14

Bar graph & corresponding tabular view showing total posts per platform

Platform	Posts
Facebook	9,239
Instagram	2,062
Telegram	100,605
X (Twitter)	169,327
YouTube	1,055

	Posts	Active accounts	Total engagement
Accelerationists	22,433	18	180,339
Anti-Government Extremists	25,520	20	1,052,442
Anti-Muslim Extremists	52,075	42	23,478,813
Christian-Nationalists	14,972	21	756,049
Ethno-Nationalists	95,867	67	30,394,745
Male Supremacists	4,429	9	3,674,283
Neo-Nazis	40,861	30	1,932,704
White Supremacists	104,947	74	2,309,945

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(14,972 posts), and 9 as male supremacists (4,429 posts). However, ethnonationalists received 13 times and anti-Muslim extremists ten times more engagement than white supremacists. This indicates that despite high levels of activity, overtly white supremacist accounts engage with much narrower audiences. Definitions for these categories are provided in the Annex of this report.

More than 70% of Neo-Nazi accounts and channels are active on Telegram, as well as nearly half of white supremacist and accelerationist accounts and channels. Anti-government and anti-Muslim extremists have a larger presence on Facebook. X is an important platform across ideological sub-communities, especially among white supremacists, ethnonationalists, Christian Nationalists and Extreme Right Accelerationists.
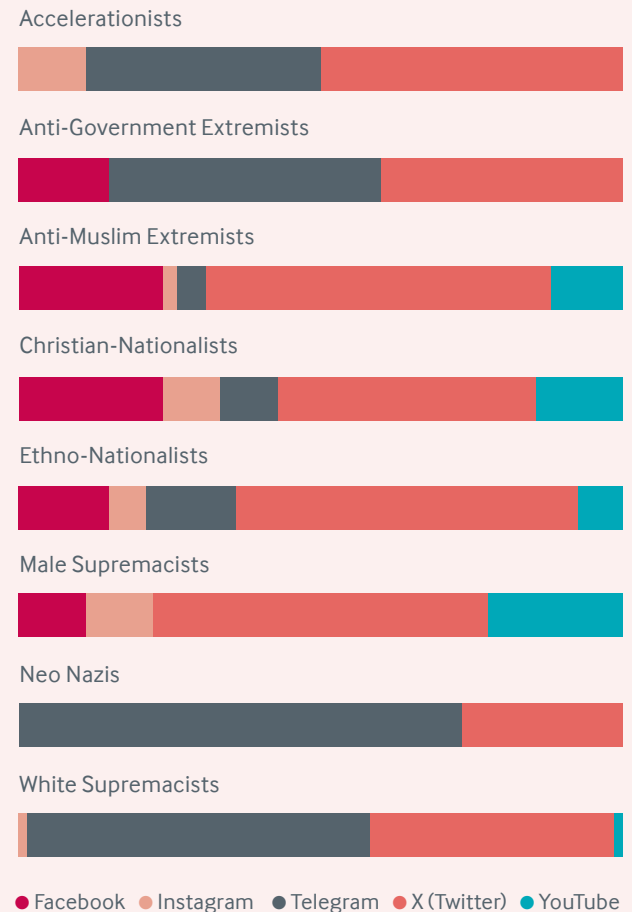
Further deep dives into the volume over time of posts made by these channels, broken down by ideological sub-community, help to highlight key events driving conversation among different domestic extremists online. This quarter, the US election (6 November 2024) drove spikes in discussions across white supremacist, ethnonationalist, anti-Muslim extremist, and male supremacist accounts on X – highlighting the importance of events beyond Canada for domestic extremist communication online (previous ISD research from 2021 had already identified discussions of US politics with a particular focus on the Trump administration as key area of conversation for Canadian extremists, as well as for US extremists).
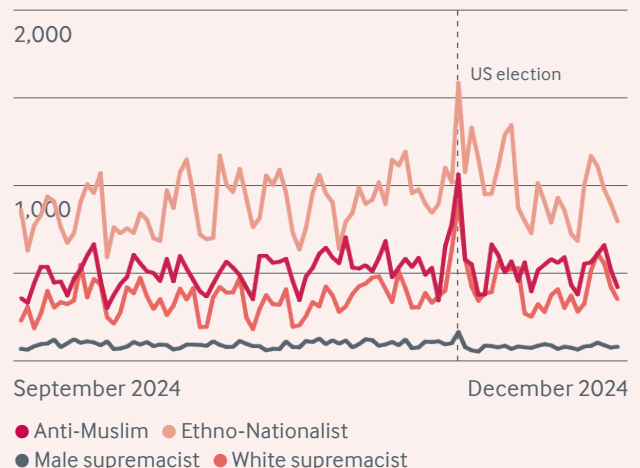
2   Hate speech

To better understand the ways domestic extremists target different communities we used Natural Language Processing to classify hate speech in the messages gathered targeting Jewish people, migrants, Muslims, Asian Canadians, Black people, First Nations communities Arab Canadians and LGBTQ communities.[1] LGBTQ communities were added as a target group for this quarterly briefing. A full breakdown of the methodology employed can be found in the technical Annex.

Of the 282,288 posts made by the domestic extremist accounts and channels between 1 September and 30 November 2024, 9,894 (3.5% of the total) were classified as containing hate speech. This is a 150% increase in hateful posts from the last reporting period.

Stacked 100% bar chart showing the % of accounts per platform per ideology

Accelerationists

Anti-Government Extremists

Anti-Muslim Extremists

Christian-Nationalists

Ethno-Nationalists

Male Supremacists

Neo Nazis

White Supremacists

● Facebook ● Instagram ● Telegram ● X (Twitter) ● YouTube

Volume over time graph showing the total number of posts on X from anti-Muslim, ethno-nationalist, male supremacist and white supremacist accounts

2,000

US election

1,000

September 2024   December 2024

● Anti-Muslim   ● Ethno-Nationalist
● Male supremacist ● White supremacist

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The increase in the share of hateful posts can likely be attributed to a combination of factors: the addition of the LGBTQ community as a target group (though even without LGBTQ hate, there was a 92.8% increase), the increased performance of our classifiers, and a general increase in the hateful content posted by Canadian domestic extremists.

Number of total posts, hateful posts and share of hateful posts across the first two ISD data briefings

Reporting Period	Total Posts	Hateful Posts	% Hateful
1 January – 30 August	1,022,427	13,055	1.4%
1 September – 30 November	282,288	9,894	3.5%

	Report 1		Report 2	
	Percent	Figure	Percent	Figure
Anti-Migrant	33.6%	4,382	29.7%	2,934
Antisemitic	35.1%	4,577	28.7%	2,843
Anti-LGBTQ	n/a	n/a	21.7%	2,149
Anti-Asian	15.0%	1,957	13.7%	1,353
Anti-Black	9.8%	1,279	8.8%	872
Anti-Muslim	20.3%	2,656	4.3%	421
Anti-Indigenous	9.6%	1,252	2.3%	232
Anti-Arab	1.7%	218	1.7%	172

Of these hateful posts, 2,934 were targeted at migrants, 2,843 at Jewish people, 2,149 at the LGBTQ community, 1,353 at Asian Canadians, 872 at Black Canadians, 421 at Muslims, 232 at First Nations communities, and 172 at Arab Canadians.
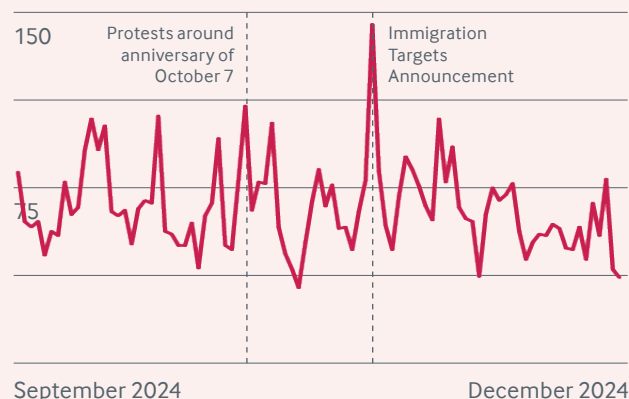
Between reporting periods, ISD noted a decrease in the proportion of antisemitic content, which dropped from the first to second most prevalent form of hateful speech. In contrast, posts containing anti-migrant hate speech increased from second to the most prevalent. Anti-LGBTQ activity was the third most prevalent form of hate speech identified (2,149 posts). There was also a marked decrease in hate targeting Muslim Canadians between reporting periods, dropping from the third (2,656 posts) to the sixth (421 posts) most targeted group. While the reason for this decrease cannot definitely be determined, the high number of anti-Muslim posts in the previous briefing may have partially been caused by the Southport riots in the United Kingdom, which led to a rise in online hate against Muslims in particular, as well as the Canada visit of the British anti-Muslim activist Steven Yaxley-Lennon (also known as Tommy Robinson).

Between 1 September and 30 November there were 5 days where Canadian domestic extremists posted more than 170 pieces of hate speech content. As noted in our first report and previous ISD work, these spikes in online hateful content often align with and respond to real-world events.

The day with the greatest volume of hate speech was October 24th, with 239 posts identified. The target group that received the most hateful messages were Jewish people who were targeted with 55.5% of the hateful content produced on this date, followed by the LGBTQ

Volume over time graph showing the total number of posts classified as hateful

community, and migrants. This does not appear to be in response to a particular event. Instead, anti-Jewish content discussed harmful conspiracies such as the alleged Jewish involvement in spreading communism and socialism, which domestic extremists see as harmful, particularly to white Canadians. The rise in anti-migrant hate was related to the release of the Government of Canada's new immigration plan and target number (CBC).
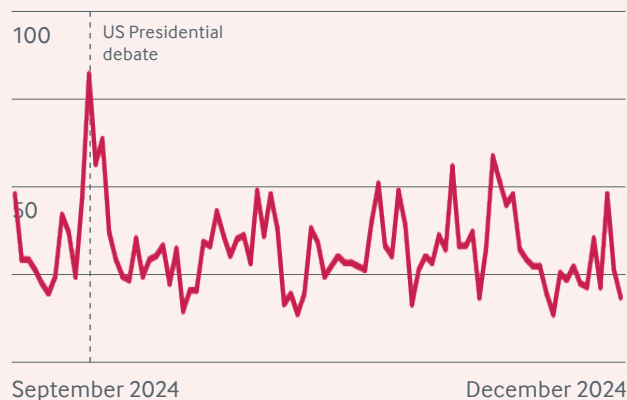
The day with the second highest number of hateful posts was October 5th, with 181. This day saw the highest recorded number of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab posts between September - November. Posts recorded on this day portray these groups as representing a violent threat to white people because the Israel-Hamas conflict has forced an increasing number of Muslims from Palestinian and neighboring countries into the West. Despite not mentioning the event, it is possible that this increase was due to the one-year anniversary of the October 7th attacks.

The highest spike in anti-migrant hate was on 12 September with 83 posts. This appears to be in response to the US presidential debate that took place on 11 September, during which former president Donald Trump spread unfounded claims about the Haitian migrant community in Springfield, Ohio. Posts made by Canadian domestic extremists the next day compared the situation in Canada to the United States, blaming PM Justin Trudeau for repeatedly increasing immigration quotas and providing immigrants with healthcare and housing. Similarly, the second highest amount of anti-migrant posts occurred two days later, on 14 September (64 posts). These posts continued along the same themes, with some calling for the immediate deportation of migrants, commonly using the phrase, "they have to go back".
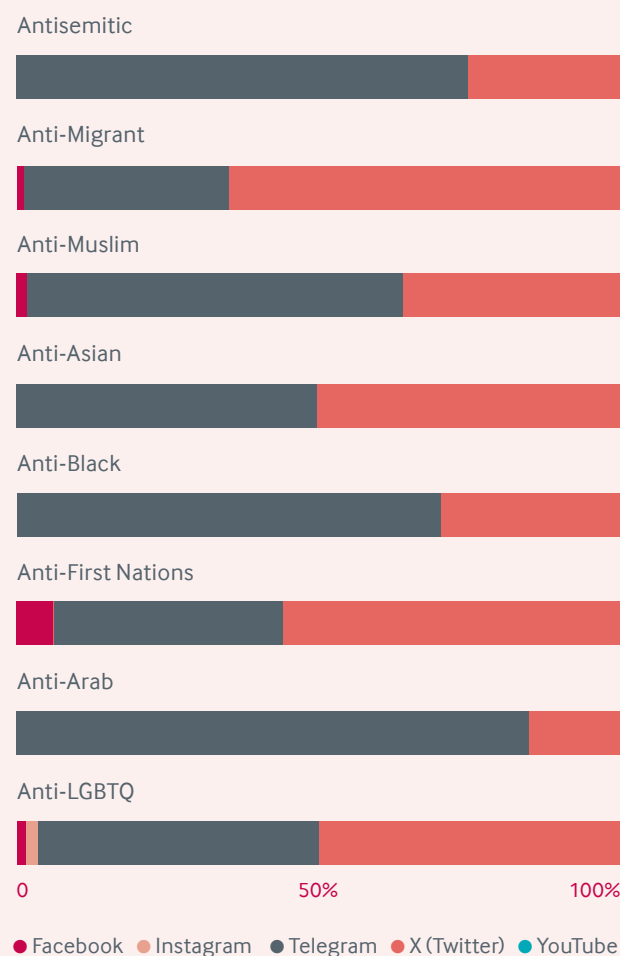
Of the 9,894 hateful messages identified by ISD, 5,128 were posted on Telegram, 4,588 on X, 81 on Facebook, 78 on Instagram, and 19 on YouTube. X hosted the most hateful content directed at migrants, First Nations communities, Asian Canadians, and the LGBTQ community. Anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, anti-Black and Anti-Arab hate were most commonly found on Telegram.

As in the previous report, white supremacists (especially Neo-Nazis) and ethnonationalists were the most prolific in terms of promoting hate speech. In fact, white supremacists published the most hateful posts across all target groups. Ethnonationalists were most prominent within the anti-migrant hate data.

Volume over time graph showing the total number of posts classified as anti-migrant

US Presidential debate

September 2024   December 2024

Stacked 100% bar chart showing the % of posts per platform per target hate group

Antisemitic

Anti-Migrant

Anti-Muslim

Anti-Asian

Anti-Black

Anti-First Nations

Anti-Arab

Anti-LGBTQ

0   50%   100%

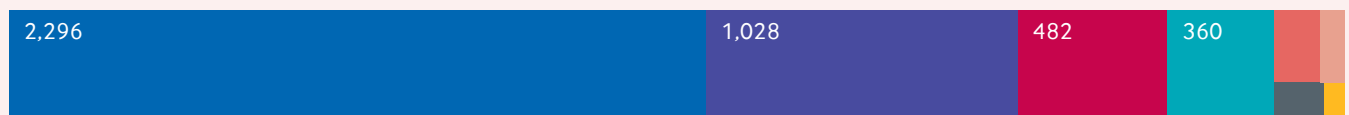● Facebook ● Instagram ● Telegram ● X (Twitter) ● YouTube

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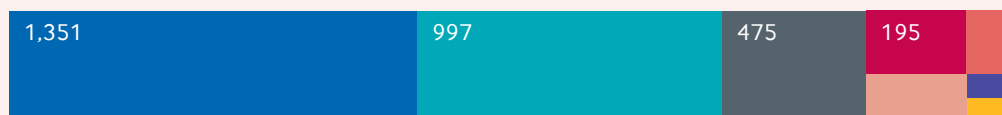## Online Domestic Extremism in Canada

Treemaps showing the number of posts per ideology per target hate group
Please note that ideology annotations are non-mutually exclusive - i.e. an account (and hence, any posts created by that account) can belong to multiple ideologies. Hence, figures within each per-hate target group treemap do not necessarily sum to the overall, un-broken-down, count for that target group.
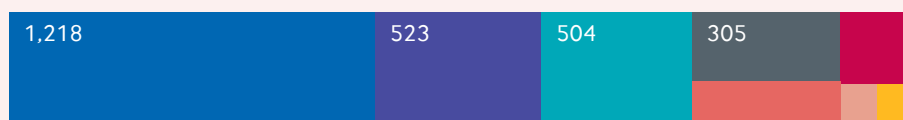
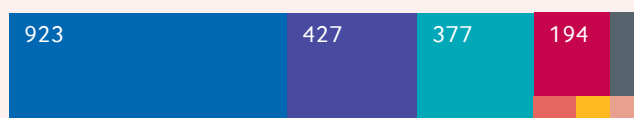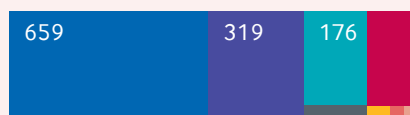Antisemitic

Anti-Migrant

Anti-LGBT
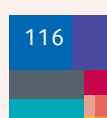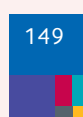

Anti-Asian

Anti-Black

Anti-Muslim

Anti-First Nations

Anti-Arab

- Accelerationist
- Anti-government extremist
- Anti-Muslim extremist
- Christian-Nationalist
- Ethno-Nationalist
- Male Supremacist
- Neo-Nazi
- White Supremacist

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3 Key Narratives

The following section outlines the findings of ISD's qualitative analysis of key narratives among Canadian domestic extremists between 1 September and 30 November identified through LLM assisted automated topic modelling (outlined in detail in the Annex).

This analysis demonstrates that Canadian domestic extremists persist in amplifying grievances similar to those found in extremist movements across Europe and North America. Common threads include discontent with government actions, perceived societal and cultural erosion, opposition to immigration, and the spread of conspiracy theories.

Political Dissatisfaction and National Identity in Canada
The analysis indicates a deep sense of political dissatisfaction and frustration regarding government policies and national identity among Canadian domestic extremists. Parallels are drawn to events such as the U.S. Capitol riot, with claims that governmental actions, such as the implementation of the Emergencies Act, are likened to 'Canada's Jan 6th' and undermine Canadian democracy. Users emphasise prioritising "native Canadians" over immigrants, alleging that policies favouring immigration exacerbate societal challenges such as housing shortages and unemployment.
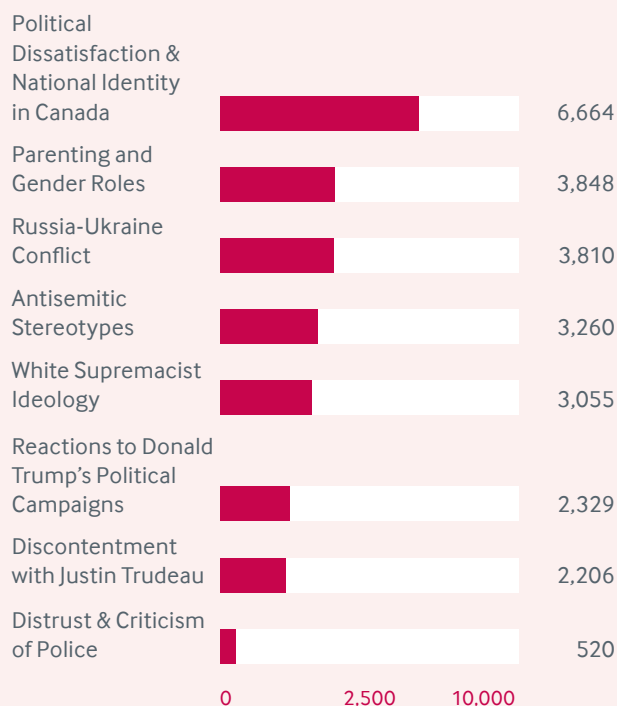
Parenting and Gender Roles
Discussions on parenting and gender roles highlight underlying cultural and ideological divisions, revealing discontent with what some perceive as a decline in traditional family values. Many comments blame modern parenting practices for societal issues, emphasising a neglect of traditional responsibilities. The perceived erosion of traditional male-female roles is widely discussed, with criticisms directed at educators promoting LGBTQ+-inclusive curricula.
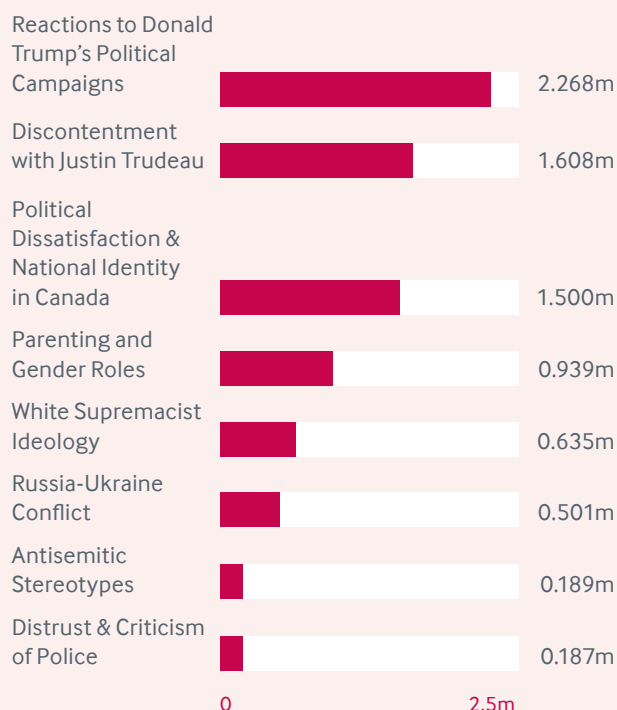
Russia-Ukraine Conflict
Discussions on the Russia-Ukraine conflict reflect geopolitical tensions and conspiracy theories. Opposition to continued aid for Ukraine is prevalent, with users perceiving it as exacerbating the conflict. Conspiracy theories accusing NATO of using COVID-19 strategies for broader manipulation further reflect mistrust in international alliances.

Total number of posts per 8 specific topics

Topic	Posts
Political Dissatisfaction & National Identity in Canada	6,664
Parenting and Gender Roles	3,848
Russia-Ukraine Conflict	3,810
Antisemitic Stereotypes	3,260
White Supremacist Ideology	3,055
Reactions to Donald Trump's Political Campaigns	2,329
Discontentment with Justin Trudeau	2,206
Distrust & Criticism of Police	520

Bar chart showing the total engagement per 8 specific topics

Topic	Engagement
Reactions to Donald Trump's Political Campaigns	2.268m
Discontentment with Justin Trudeau	1.608m
Political Dissatisfaction & National Identity in Canada	1.500m
Parenting and Gender Roles	0.939m
White Supremacist Ideology	0.635m
Russia-Ukraine Conflict	0.501m
Antisemitic Stereotypes	0.189m
Distrust & Criticism of Police	0.187m

Antisemitic Stereotypes
Antisemitic narratives shaped by prejudices focusing on persistent tropes about Jewish influence and control.

White Supremacist Ideology and Perceived anti-White Bias
White supremacist narratives centred around grievances regarding racial identity and perceived discrimination. Accounts drew parallels between the civil rights movement in the United States to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, arguing that their goal was to victimise whites. Claims of systemic bias against white individuals resonate deeply within these groups, fuelling calls for white racial unity alongside calls to protect the 'White Race.' The intertwining of anti-immigration rhetoric with white supremacist ideology underscores broader fears of cultural displacement.

Reactions to Donald Trump's Political Campaigns
Polarised perspectives on Donald Trump's political influenced discussions among Canadian domestic extremists. Trump is viewed by supporters as a champion of the working class, an outsider challenging elitist establishments. Conversely, sceptics caution against overestimating his leadership potential, warning that his polarising nature could lead to electoral losses for the Republicans.

Discontentment with Justin Trudeau
Justin Trudeau remains a target of significant criticism and is considered by many to be an 'enemy within'. He is frequently compared unfavourably to other political figures, such as U.S. President Joe Biden, with many users emphasising perceived failures in leadership.

Distrust and Criticism of Police
The narratives around law enforcement among Canadian domestic extremists are centred around perceptions of corruption and selective enforcement. Accounts and channels expressed pervasive lack of trust in justice and law enforcement. Many argue that during COVID-19, police enforcement favoured political directives over public welfare, exacerbating distrust.

4   Geographic Overview

In order to assess which places within and outside of Canada domestic extremists reference most, ISD collected all mentions of countries (excluding Canada) as well as provinces and cities within Canada between 1 September to 30 November 2024.

The top three provinces mentioned were Ontario (4,388), Alberta (2,492), and British Columbia (2,334). Posts mentioning Alberta focused on Premier Danielle Smith, including both pro and anti-Smith narratives. Content mentioning BC covered many issues areas, such as the housing crisis, the drug crisis, and the 19 October provincial election.

The top two most mentioned cities by Canadian domestic extremists were Toronto with 1,265 mentions and Ottawa with 756. Posts mentioning Toronto claimed its high immigrant population was ruining the city while the Toronto Police Department (TPD) was accused of being biased in favour of non-white immigrants, especially in the context of pro-Palestine protests. Posts mentioning both Brampton (240) and Mississauga (128), Ontario centered around the violent demonstrations on 2-3 November that took place outside of a Hindu temple and Sikh gurdwara. Many of these posts are anti-Khalistani and blame the Indian diaspora community for importing a foreign conflict into Canada.

Canadian domestic extremists mentioned the US 16,181 times, making it the most mentioned foreign country, focussing on the run-up and aftermath of the US elections. The second most mentioned country was the UK with 3,611. Posts mentioning the UK focused on negative discussion of Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Labour government. Israel was the third most mentioned country with 2,923, with a focus on the Irael-Hamas war. Interestingly, some Canadian domestic extremists are both supportive of Israel's actions, while also spreading harmful antisemitic conspiracies.

Russia was the fourth most mentioned country (2,385), while Ukraine was the fifth (1,940). In general, Canadian domestic extremists are supportive of Russia and critical of Ukraine. Posts mentioning Ukraine were critical of the both the Canadian and other governments' support of Ukraine, arguing that politicians care more about funding Ukraine than they do for their own citizens.
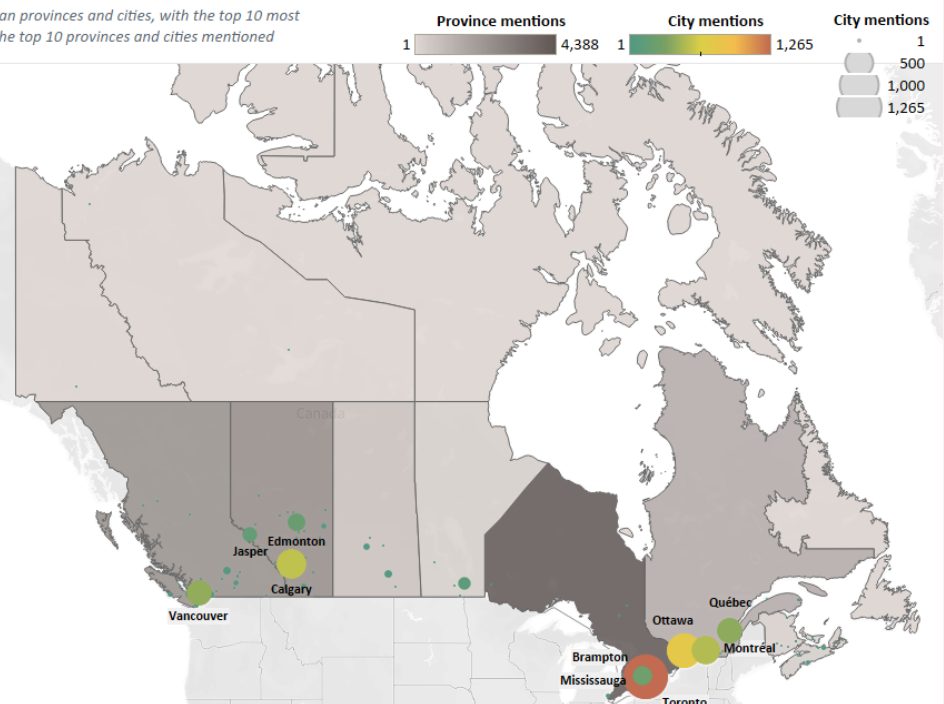
Choropleth showing the number of mentions of Canadian provinces and cities, with the top 10 most mentioned cities labelled, along with tabular views of the top 10 provinces and cities mentioned
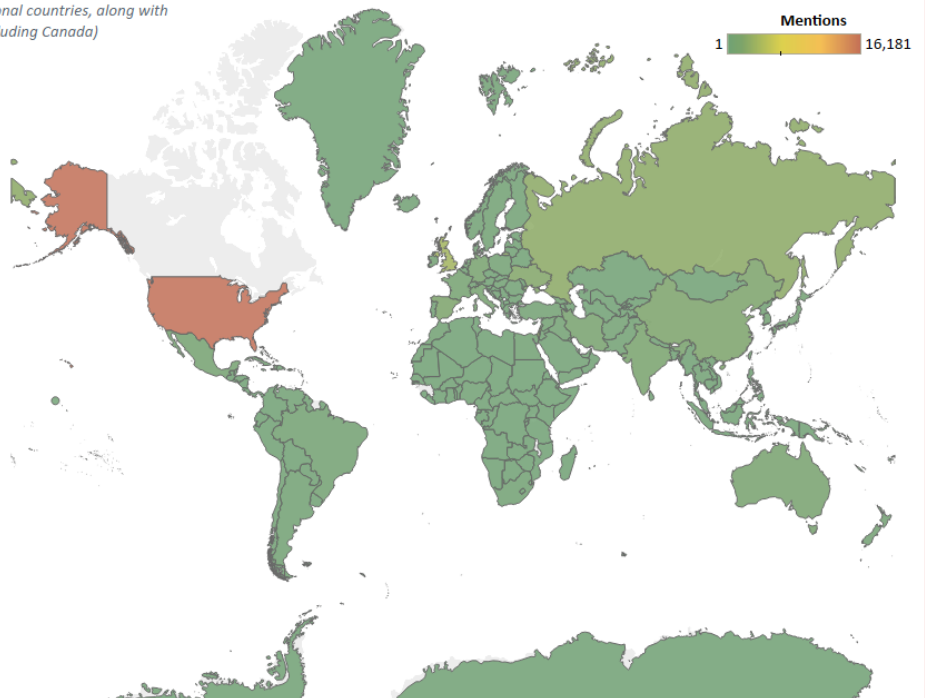
Rank	Province	Mentions
1	Ontario	4,388
2	Alberta	2,497
3	British Columbia	2,334
4	Quebec	1,391
5	Saskatchewan	612
6	Manitoba	204
7	Nova Scotia	194
8	New Brunswick	120
9	Newfoundland and Labrador	32
10	Prince Edward Island	32

Rank	City	Mentions
1	Toronto	1,265
2	Ottawa	756
3	Calgary	547
4	Montréal	505
5	Vancouver	398
6	Québec	386
7	Brampton	240
8	Edmonton	188
9	Jasper	140
10	Mississauga	128

Choropleth showing the number of mentions of international countries, along with tabular view of the top 20 countries mentioned (both excluding Canada)

Rank	Country	Mentions
1	United States of America	16,181
2	United Kingdom	3,611
3	Israel	2,923
4	Russian Federation	2,385
5	Ukraine	1,940
6	Spain	1,491
7	China	1,463
8	India	1,145
9	Iran	888
10	Australia	869
11	Germany	838
12	Palestine	823
13	Italy	682
14	Mexico	595
15	France	575
16	Lebanon	539
17	Brazil	394
18	Ireland	308
19	Netherlands	234
20	Haiti	198

5   Language-Based Communities

This section summarises the findings of a cross-platform natural language processing approach to map the location of accounts and channels within a network (outlined in detail in the Annex). In simple terms, if accounts and channels use similar language, they are grouped together. This allows the identification of communities based on common interests, even if they would not have been assigned the same ideological sub-category or use the same platform. Rather than being shaped by analysts' expertise and expectations, this approach is driven purely by the output of domestic extremists online and may therefore produce counter-intuitive findings or patterns that may have otherwise been overlooked. It thereby serves as complementary approach to ISD's account and platform focussed analysis.

ISD subject matter reviewed the clusters identified through this approach. Based on our interpretation, these are the characteristics of the 10 clusters identified.

1. **Podcasts and Livestreams (Dark Blue Cluster)**: Small Cluster of 13 accounts and channels primarily focussed on promoting podcasts and alternative media centred on accelerationism, Christian Nationalism and conspiracy movements.

2. **Race-based Antisemites (Purple Cluster)**: Small Cluster of 13 accounts and channels focussed on white supremacy, race and antisemitism.

3. **Immigration Focussed Canadian Racial Nationalists (Brown Cluster)**: Medium-sized cluster of 22 accounts and channels focussed primarily on Canadian nationalism, anti-immigration narratives and race.

4. **Christian Nationalists Focussed on Gender and Children (Orange Cluster)**: Small cluster of 12 accounts and channels focussed on gender roles, anti-trans narratives and protecting children from allegedly malign influences. Very little discussions of race, immigration or far-right ideology.

5. **North American White Nationalists (Turquoise Cluster)**: Small cluster of 17 accounts and channels, mostly ethnonationalists, focussed on the US and Canada, with anti-liberal and anti-left stances (including violent rhetoric) as well as anti-trans people and anti-vaccine narratives.

6. **Mixed Accounts and Channels Focussed on Local Grievances (Pink Cluster)**: Large cluster of 38 accounts and channels, many of which have a history of anti-Muslim activism but now primarily focussed on local grievances in Alberta and B.C., including election misinformation and conspiracy theories.

7. **Health Conspiracy Theorists (Dark Grey Cluster)**: Cluster of 5 accounts and channels focussed on conspiratorial content and misinformation regarding vaccines, including coded antisemitism.

8. **Identitarians focused on Local Issues and Canadian Decline (Brown-Green Cluster):** Small cluster of 17 accounts and channels, mainly white supremacists (including Neo-Nazis) and ethnonationalists focussed on Canadian identity and perceived white decline which frequently reference local grievances from across Canada.

9. **America First Canadian Nationalists (Green Cluster):** Small cluster of 12 accounts and channels, mainly white supremacist and ethnonationalist, focussed on US politics, are highly supportive of Trump and champion Elon's Musk's alleged role in fighting tech censorship.

10. **Internationalist Ethnonationalists (Red Cluster):** Large cluster of 45 accounts and channels focussed on international politics from an ethnonationalist perspective. Other frequent topics of discussion include alleged anti-white police bias, race and immigration and conspiracy theories.

Methodological Annex

Definitional Framework and Thresholds for Inclusion
Often, extremism has been narrowly framed around security threats related to terrorism and violent extremism. By contrast, ISD has sought to conceptualise extremism as an ideology centred around social identity that promotes supremacy of an in-group, justifies discrimination of out-groups and therefore runs counter to the very idea of universal human rights. This definition complements efforts focused on political violence and terrorism, and considers the broader risks to democracy, rights and social cohesion presented by the non-violent promotion of extremist ideologies. At the same time, the definition draws a key distinction between radical critiques of the status quo that do not promote supremacist or authoritarian societies and extremist ideologies which do.

- **ISD's Definition of Extremism** is the advocacy of political and social change in line with a system of belief that claims the superiority and dominance of one identity-based 'in-group' over an 'out-group.' Extremism advances a dehumanising 'othering' mindset incompatible with pluralism and universal human rights and can be pursued through violent or non-violent means.

These quarterly data briefings focus specifically on domestic extremism. ISD has developed a definition of **domestic extremism** that is rooted in our definition of extremism and informed by complementary work led by Professor Barbara Perry and right-wing extremism expert Cas Mudde.

> Domestic extremism is a belief system that is characterised by its reference to racial, ethnic, cultural supremacy which advocates a system of belief in inequality based on an alleged difference and the perceived threat posed by out-groups. This extremism is often framed in terms of white power and commonly exhibits nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, misogyny, hate against minority communities, and strong state advocacy.

This definition is necessarily broad and captures a range of extremist subcultures and harmful activity, which is reflective of the diversity of groups and trends within

domestic extremism. It should be noted that our definition is not limited to illegal content and behaviour but overlaps and intersects with several existing legal categories. Our definition of extremism encapsulates a spectrum of activity and related frameworks which are relevant to different stakeholders. This is intentional, as it is hoped that our analysis will demonstrate the continuum of ideologies and activity which inspires different types of harm, and evidence pathways to radicalization and violence.

Account Discovery

These quarterly data briefings draw on analysis across the digital ecosystem occupied by domestic extremists, including quantitative insights from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X and Telegram, as well as qualitative insights from platforms that do not offer API access.

ISD originally identified a list of seed accounts and channels belonging to Canadian domestic extremists for the first data briefing covering the period from January to August 2024. These were identified through a three-step process:

- ISD drew on existing lists of domestic extremists from previous projects analysing right-wing extremism in Canada, as well as an extensive review of existing research and reporting on extremist mobilisation in Canada.

- With its technology partner CASM, ISD conducted an automated account discovery analysis to identify accounts and channels that were recommended by or engaged with known Canadian right-wing extremists.

- ISD analysts then reviewed these accounts and channels against our definitional thresholds for domestic extremism.

ISD and CASM are now replicating this exercise on a quarterly basis to identify newly emerging accounts and channels missed or non-existent during the initial set-up phase

Categorisation of accounts and channels

ISD drew on its definition of domestic extremism to guide its' decisions about if a group, individual or community should be classified as domestic extremist. Decisions were made based on if an account or channel analysed:

a. Are clearly based in Canada, or are movements with transnational adherents known to have an impact on Canada (e.g. Terrorgram)

b. Explicitly self-identify as right-wing extremists (or as "domestic extremists")

c. Can be clearly characterised as such based on existing literature and previous research

d. Can be clearly characterised as such based on a review of a sample of content they have produced.

In the latter case, ISD ensured that the group, individual or community has posted 5 or more pieces of content that clearly promote features such as nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy or strong state advocacy. ISD analysts recorded a rationale in the coding document with relevant screenshots.

To account for the ideological heterogeneity within domestic extremism, ISD additionally identified ideological sub-categories. ISD analysts have therefore categorised the following sub-categories:

- White supremacist: White supremacists believe in the superiority of whites over people of colour and advocate that white people should be politically and socially dominant over people of colour. This can extend to a belief in the need for violence against, or even the genocide of, people of colour.

Sub-Categories of white supremacists[2]:

- **Neo-Nazi:** A movement promoting National Socialist ideology and symbols.

- **Extreme Right Accelerationist:** 'Accelerationism' is a term used by white supremacists and other extremist groups to refer to "their desire to hasten the collapse of society as we know it". Generally, acceleration is used in the context of white genocide conspiracy theories, which believes white people are under threat and are being systematically targeted through e.g. immigration and other means. A collapse of modern societal structures and political systems is seen as the only means through which to stop these perceived injustices against white people. Indeed, many accelerationist

groups desire this collapse and call for replacing modern society.

- **Ethnonationalist:** Ethnonationalism is a form of nationalism where the nation is defined in terms of ethnicity. Central to ethnonationalism is the belief that nations are tied together by a shared heritage and culture that is based on ethnicity. Ethnonationalists are often marked by implicit rather than explicit racism, and rarely promote overt supremacism.

- **Christian Nationalist:** According to US academic Cynthia Miller-Idriss, Christian Nationalism is based on the proposition that your country 'is and should remain a Christian nation and that Christianity should be prioritized by the state.' Christian Nationalists therefore explicitly reject the separation between the Church and the state.

- **Anti-Muslim Extremists:** The anti-Muslim movement is a loose network of groups and individuals who share the fear that Western cultures are threatened by an 'Islamic takeover'. Anti-Muslim groups are marked by their opposition to Islam as an ideology, and Muslims as a people.

- **Male Supremacism**: The manosphere is a loose collection of movements marked by their overt and extreme misogyny. Movements include 'incels', Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) and men's rights activists (MRAs).

- **Anti-Government Extremism**: Sovereigntists are marked by their and militia groups rejection of court and state authority. Joining these groups together is the rejection of the authority of the federal state, and commonly adherence to a range of conspiracy theories. In some instances, sovereigntists may mobilise as militia.

Hate speech

As with extremism, there are a wide range of definitions of hate or hate crime offered by legislators, advocacy and community groups or social media companies. Usually, hate speech is differentiated from offensive speech, based on the understanding that in democracies offensive speech must be permitted. However, speech that threatens individual's rights or may cause violence against certain groups can be regulated and prevented—often through the frame of illegal hate speech.

Over the course of this project, ISD will track the weaponization of targeted hate (including illegal hate speech) as a tactic used by domestic extremists in Canada. Hate speech spread by non-extremists is beyond the scope of this project. ISD defines targeted hate is activity which seeks to dehumanise, demonize, harass, threaten, or incite violence against an individual or community based on religion, ethnicity, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, national origin or migrant status. Targeted hate may be considered a key tool for extremists to target members of an out-group, they consider inferior or intimidate political opponents. It should be noted that our definition does not exclusively cover illegal hate speech.

This definition is generally aligned with the definition in the Canadian Criminal Code, which argues that hate crime "needs to be expressed in a public way or place, targets a group of people that have a protected characteristic (race, religion, sexual orientation); uses extreme language to express hatred against that person/group because of their protected characteristic."

ISD used keywords to filter each message in the overall dataset of 282,288 posts gathered across platforms: a message that did not have any keywords and phrases relevant to potential target groups was marked as not hateful, the rationale being that hate speech needs a recognisable target. Target groups from the previous briefing were Jewish people, migrants, Muslims, Asian Canadians, Black people, First Nations communities and Arab Canadians. For this briefing, LGBTQ communities were added as a target group.

These messages were then run through a LLM prompt classifier, based on the group the keyword was from. The LLM prompts were tested on a manually labelled dataset for each target, along with variations to the prompt such as different wording and providing more guidance and examples. The labelled dataset itself was constructed with a label to identify if the message was hateful or not, and another label to state whether it was a 'boundary case', where it could be argued whether it fell into the hateful category. The evaluations took this into account and the results were evaluated both with and without the boundary cases, where the clear-cut messages were given priority to be correct over boundary cases. The two models that were used for this were GPT-4o and GPT-4O-mini.

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Online Domestic Extremism in Canada

Topic Modelling

ISD collected 282,288 posts from 223 domestic extremist accounts and channels in Canada across X, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube and Instagram between 1 September and 30 November 2024.

The process of semantic mapping involves (1) computing numeric representations of messages that capture semantics of the text, (2) clustering message representations to identify groups of semantically similar messages, and (3) manually coding clusters into themes and subthemes. For computing numerical representations, we utilised "bge-m3". For clustering we used a widely adopted approach of applying UMAP to simplify numerical representations to a lower-dimensional space, suitable for applying HDBSCAN to identify clusters. We utilised the BERTopic package to encapsulate this process.

We applied the semantic mapping pipeline to all 495,967 messages in the dataset. We perform standard preprocessing techniques to (1) remove all hashtags, user mentions, emojis, and URLs from the text of the messages and (2) remove any subsequently empty messages. This resulted in 452,075 messages.

Semantic mapping resulted in 280 distinct clusters, with 45.6% (206,228) of the messages remaining unassigned to any cluster (assigned to an 'outlier' category). The outlier category acts as a bucket for messages that HDBSCAN doesn't consider similar enough to any of the identified dense clusters, and due to the noisy nature of social-media data is quite typical to be around half the dataset. This left us with 245,847 messages categorised into 280 clusters. These clusters were subsequently manually assessed by analysts based on a random sample of 10-20 related comments and qualitatively grouped into subthemes and themes. The 8 most popular themes are analysed in the key narratives section above.

Named Entity Recognition (NER)

We used a language model from SpaCy (en_core_web_lg) to automatically find references to people, locations, and organizations in the text. Since this approach does not attempt to canonicalise extracted entities, we additionally apply the Mordecai3 geoparsing tool to the text to identify and map **locations into countries, top-level Canadian administrative divisions (territories and provinces), and Canadian cities, where possible.**

Language-Based Account Clustering

The process of account clustering involves: (1) representing accounts by their contributions (messages) to relevant themes (identified by the Semantic Mapping process); and then (2) clustering account representations to identify groups of accounts with similar thematic profiles.

Account representations are computed as their distribution over relevant themes to which they've contributed. We do not include the commenters to YouTube videos as accounts; this results in a dataset of 282,288 messages from 223 accounts. We further exclude messages annotated to "irrelevant" themes, which results in a dataset of 60,589 messages from 212 accounts. We apply the same clustering process used during semantic mapping, identifying clusters of accounts using a combination of UMAP and HDBSCAN. This resulted in 10 clusters, with 8.5% (18) accounts remaining unassigned to any cluster (assigned to an 'outlier' category).

Endnotes

1   Please note that hate speech targeting other groups, including misogynistic speech will be added into future quarterly briefings.

2   While all accounts and channels coded as Neo-Nazi or accelerationist were also coded as white supremacist, not all white supremacists were also coded as Neo-Nazis or accelerationists.

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The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the Government of Canada.

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