



Greater Victoria
Local Immigration
Partnership



Inter-Cultural
Association
of Greater Victoria

Misinformation and Its Impact on Community Well-Being



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Land Acknowledgement

Vancouver Island is the territory of many Coast Salish Nations, including the Songhees and Kosapsum Nations, whose historical and ongoing relationships with the land continue to this day.

As organizations supporting newcomers to settle and build lives here, we acknowledge that this work takes place on stolen land. We recognize our responsibility to understand the ongoing impacts of colonization and to ensure that settlement, housing, and community-building efforts do not reproduce harm or exclusion.

We commit to approaching this work with humility, accountability, and a willingness to learn, and to building respectful relationships with Indigenous communities as part of creating more just, inclusive, and welcoming communities for all.

Purpose of this Document

This document was developed as part of the **Community Amplifier Grant**¹ from the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. Through this grant, the Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership (GVLIP) supports community partners in addressing misinformation that can affect access to housing, services, and rights, especially for newcomers.

This document supports discussions at the GVLIP Housing Event [“From Housing to Home: Fostering a Newcomer-Inclusive Community”](#) and provides practical guidance that aligns with GVLIP’s commitment to building inclusive communities where newcomers feel supported.

Misinformation can spread quickly and create confusion, barriers, and harm. This resource encourages shared responsibility and practical actions to help stop misinformation and promote informed, inclusive communities.

I. Why Countering Misinformation Matters

Many newcomers experience prejudice soon after arriving in Canada. They may be perceived as people who are “taking jobs” or “increasing housing prices,” or as a burden on the economy, especially during times of social or economic pressure.

These attitudes are often shaped by false or misleading information. Information shared unintentionally (misinformation) or deliberately to cause harm (disinformation) influences how newcomers are viewed and treated. In this document, both are referred to as **misinformation**.

Misinformation causes real harm. It undermines human rights, fuels discrimination, and weakens community trust. By promoting stereotypes and false narratives about specific groups, misinformation can contribute to discrimination and hate crimes.

Misinformation and Housing

In housing discussions, misinformation often frames newcomers and immigrants as a “problem” rather than as community members. Claims such as “immigrants are responsible for the housing crisis” circulate widely despite lacking evidence.²

These narratives spread quickly through social media and everyday conversations, making them easy to normalize and difficult to challenge.

From a human rights perspective, this is critical. When misinformation spreads, it contributes to exclusion and unequal treatment. It undermines dignity, equality, and the right to live free from discrimination, including the right to safe and adequate housing.

In Canada, adequate housing is recognized as a fundamental human right under national housing policy and international law.³

Misinformation, NIMBYism, and Housing Development

Misinformation fuels resistance to affordable, supportive, and newcomer-inclusive housing. This resistance, often described as “Not In My Back Yard” (NIMBYism),⁴ is frequently driven by assumptions about who will live in the house rather than by evidence-based concerns. Newcomers, refugees, and low-income families are often framed as risks instead of neighbours.

Impacts on Newcomers and Communities

For newcomers, misinformation has direct and personal consequences. It can influence landlord decisions, neighbour interactions, and access to housing.⁵ This may result in fewer housing options, informal discrimination, social isolation, and reluctance to speak up or seek help.⁶

Fear and false narratives can also discourage newcomers from accessing essential supports such as healthcare, legal assistance, or employment services. In some cases, fear of being targeted or misunderstood reduces willingness to interact with authorities or report crimes.

System-Level Impacts

False narratives about immigrants and refugees affect the organizations that support them. Misinformation can reduce public trust and funding, limiting the ability of non-profits to provide housing, settlement, and legal services.⁷ At the same time, increased fear and discrimination raise demand for support, creating additional strain on an already stretched sector.

Misinformation also shapes public opinion and policy.⁸ Research shows that inaccurate perceptions about immigration influence attitudes toward housing, social services, and integration supports. These misperceptions affect how policies are debated, developed, and experienced by newcomers.

Studies show that many Canadians overestimate the number of refugees and asylum seekers and hold inaccurate views about immigration.⁹ These misperceptions influence attitudes toward immigration policy, housing, and social services, and can contribute to conditions that make it harder for newcomers to access stable housing and community supports.

Shared Responsibility and Collective Action

Countering misinformation is a shared responsibility. Organizations working in housing, settlement, health, and community services can help by verifying information before sharing it, challenging harmful narratives, and supporting access to accurate, reliable information. Even small actions like pausing before sharing, checking sources, and centering lived experience can reduce harm and strengthen trust.¹⁰

Across Canada, organizations and communities are working together to counter misinformation and promote inclusion. The Canada We Believe In is a national movement that brings civil society organizations together to support fact-based dialogue and welcoming communities.¹¹

The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) participates in this movement and is committed to challenging misinformation and strengthening social cohesion.

Creating inclusive communities requires more than building housing. It requires building understanding. Countering misinformation is a key step toward ensuring newcomers are not only housed but welcomed, and that housing systems work for everyone.

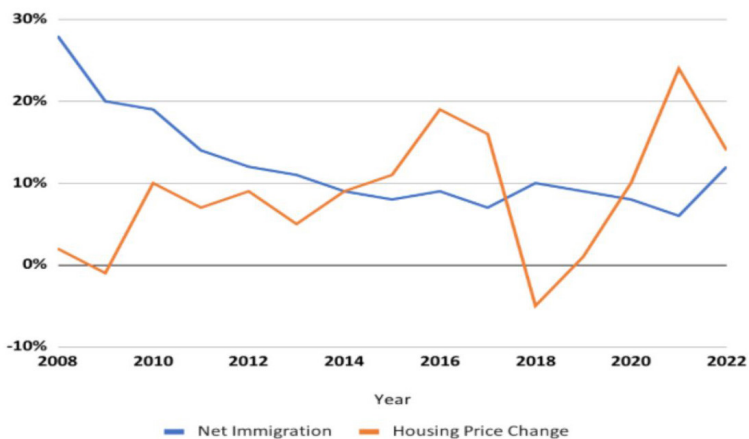
II. Common Myths and Realities

Myth: Immigrants and newcomers are the main cause of Canada's housing crisis.

Reality:

Research shows that while immigration contributes to housing demand, it is not the main cause of Canada's housing crisis. Studies from the Toronto Metropolitan University Diversity Institute indicate that even large increases in immigration have not consistently driven housing prices upward.

Net immigration vs housing price changes, Toronto



Experts identify the primary drivers of the housing crisis as long-term underinvestment in housing supply, zoning and land-use restrictions, rising construction costs, and population growth that has not been matched by sufficient housing development. Immigration plays a role in demand but is not the root cause of the crisis.

Source: Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

Sources:

Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University. (2025, July 21). "Immigration and the housing crisis: Debunking myths to advance an inclusive economy." Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University. <https://www.torontomu.ca/diversity/news-events/2025/07/immigration-and-the-housing-crisis>

Myth: Affordable or newcomer-inclusive housing lowers neighbourhood safety.

Reality:

Evidence does not support this claim. A Canadian study examining 146 supportive housing sites found no statistically significant increase in violent crime, property crime, disorderly conduct, or overall crime following the introduction of supportive housing.

Research also shows that people moving into new affordable housing often already live in the same neighbourhood, meaning such housing does not introduce new safety risks.

Sources:

Ontario Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). "Overcoming Opposition to Affordable Housing." Ontario Human Rights Commission. <https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/zone-housing-human-rights-and-municipal-planning/overcoming-opposition-affordable-housing>

Myth: Newcomers receive unfair advantages in housing access.

Reality:

Newcomers often face greater housing challenges, not advantages. In 2021, more than 37% of recent immigrant renter households spent over 30% of their income on housing, compared to 23% of longer-term renter households.

This data highlights affordability pressures and barriers faced by newcomers, rather than preferential access to housing.

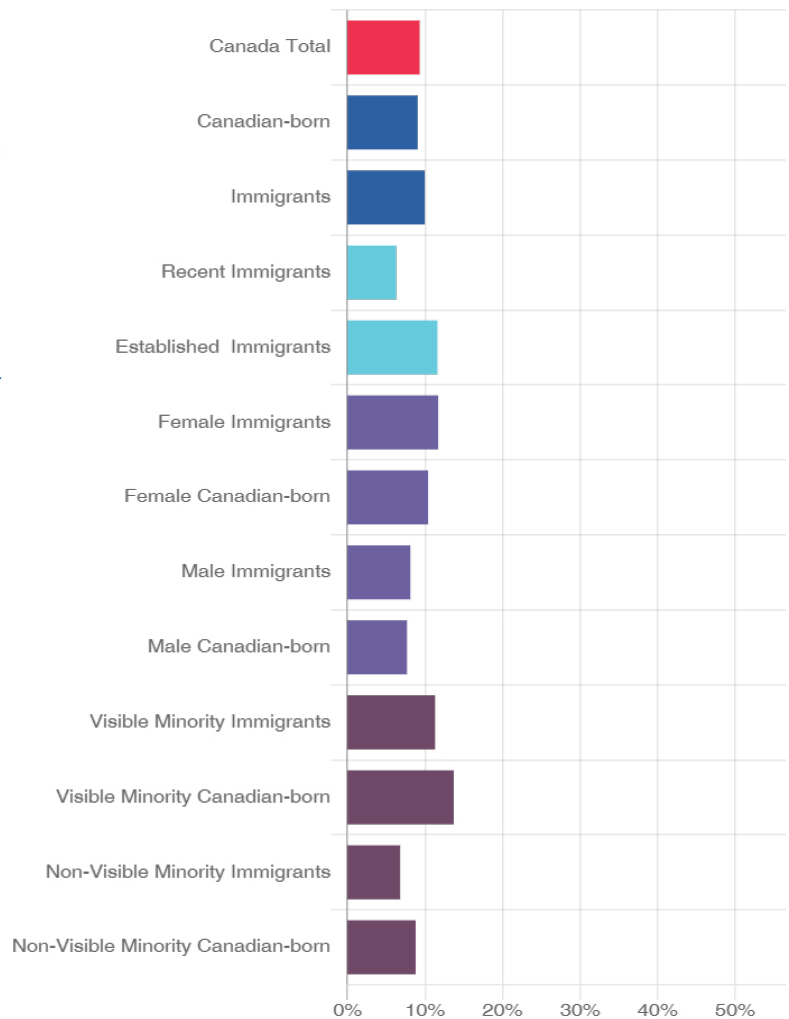
In 2016, 4.3% of immigrants in Victoria were living in subsidized housing compared to 6.8% of the Canadian-born population. Thus, immigrants were 2.6% less likely to be living in subsidized housing than non-immigrants.

Source:

Statistics Canada. (2023, October 4). "A tale of two renters: Housing affordability among recent and existing renters in Canada." Statistics Canada, Census in Brief, 2021 Census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021016/98-200-x2021016-eng.cfm>

Canadian Index for Measuring Integration and Inclusion (CIMII). (n.d.). "Economic Dimension for Victoria (Unadjusted Data, Subsidized Housing)." Canadian Index for Measuring Integration and Inclusion. <https://integrationindex.ca/search-rank-compare/search/>

Subsidized Housing



Source: Canadian Index for Measuring Integration and Inclusion (CIMII)

III. How to Stop Misinformation

Stopping misinformation starts with actionable steps that individuals and organizations can use in everyday communications. These steps help reduce harm and build community trust.

Practical Actions for Individuals

Individuals can influence how information spreads in their networks. Before sharing information, especially about housing, immigration, or policy, pausing to check reliability can make a big difference.

A. Recognizing Misinformation: STOP Method¹²

To help STOP misinformation from spreading, you need to be able to recognize misinformation. The STOP method is designed to help you.



Share (only) when you're sure

Is this really true?



Track down the truth

Do other reliable sources have the same information?



Outsmart the outrage

Have strong feelings about this? Are those feelings based on facts?



Poke at the point of view

What's it trying to say? Who's saying it? Who benefits from it being said?

B. Responding Effectively: Fact–Myth–Fallacy–Fact (FMFF) Method

When misinformation is circulating and you choose to respond, the FMFF method¹³ provides a simple structure:

1. **Fact** – Start with accurate information
Example: "Immigrants do not cause housing shortages..."
2. **Myth** – Name the false claim briefly
Example: "...despite rumors that they are 'taking all the housing'..."
3. **Fallacy** – Explain why it's false or misleading
Example: "...research shows housing shortages are caused mainly by underinvestment, not newcomers."
4. **Fact** – End by restating the truth
Example: "...so immigrants are part of the community, and policies support housing for everyone."

Why it works:

- Keeps responses short, factual, and clear
- Avoids repeating the myth unnecessarily
- Reinforces the correct information

Practical Actions for Organizations and Community Groups

Based on the Government of Canada's Countering Disinformation Guidebook¹⁴

Organizations can play a key role in stopping misinformation and disinformation about housing, newcomers, and community services. The goal is to share accurate information, reduce confusion, and build trust.

1. Prepare Your Organization

- Identify areas of vulnerability, where false information could affect your work.
- Monitor public conversations: track emerging narratives in media, social networks, and community discussions.
- Develop proactive messages to pre-empt potential misinformation (pre-bunking).

2. Build Resilience

- Share accurate information ahead of time to prevent misinformation from taking hold.
- Support audience digital and media literacy, helping them recognize false claims.
- Be open and transparent about decisions, policies, and uncertainties.
- Engage regularly with your audience; repeat key messages to reinforce accuracy.
- Acknowledge what you don't know instead of leaving gaps for rumors.

3. Take Action Against Misinformation / Disinformation

Assess whether action is needed:

- Confirm whether the content is false or misleading.
- Evaluate its reach, impact, and potential harm.
- Understand the context and audience perception.

Tactics for responding:

- Make accurate information available quickly.
- Ensure consistency and repetition across platforms.
- Debunk calmly and factually: explain why claims are false and provide evidence.
- Create public awareness campaigns to reach wider audiences.
- Engage directly with your audience through Q&A, meetings, or social media.
- Collaborate with trusted sources and community leaders to amplify correct information.

Resources

- 1 BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. (n.d.). "Misinformation: Can you STOP it?" BC OHRC. <https://bchumanrights.ca/resources/awareness-campaigns/stop/>
- 2 Prentiss Dantzler, Director of the Housing Justice Lab at the University of Toronto says that with "some areas hav[ing] a higher percentage of population of new immigrants than they used to... they [new immigrants] get used as a scapegoat for the housing crisis. People forget that this housing crisis is not new: we've been dealing with this for a long time. There's a lot of blame to go around, but a lot of time people are focusing on other individuals and not focusing on the housing system itself." Burrati, G. (2024, October 3). Majority of new Canadians feel they are being unfairly blamed for housing crisis: OMNI poll. OMNI News. <https://edmonton.citynews.ca/2024/10/03/majority-new-canadians-unfairly-blamed-housing-crisis-omni-poll/>
- 3 Government of Canada. (2019). National Housing Strategy Act. Government of Canada. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-11.2/FullText.html>
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- 6 Verhage, F. (2025). "A qualitative look at serious legal problems faced by Chinese Canadians in Greater Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia." Government of Canada, Department of Justice Canada. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/qlslpfccgvbc-egpojgahcocrgvgvcb/index.html>
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- 8 CBC News. (2021, September 20). "Canada election: 3 in 4 Canadians say misinformation affected race." CBC News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/federal-election-2025/article/three-quarters-of-canadians-say-misinformation-affected-the-federal-election-poll/>
- 9 Esses, V. M., Hamilton, L. K., & Gaucher, D. (2017). Numbers and images: Representations of immigration and public attitudes about immigration in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, 50(2), 523–548. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/article/numbers-and-images-representations-of-immigration-and-public-attitudes-about-immigration-in-canada/800BAF12269D411AC5EBAFD2A4E3DFEA>
- 10 BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. (n.d.). "Misinformation: Can you STOP it?" BC OHRC. <https://bchumanrights.ca/resources/awareness-campaigns/stop/>
- 11 The Canada We Believe In Coalition. (2025). The Canada We Believe In. Believe-In-Canada.ca. <https://believe-in-canada.ca/>
- 12 The Canada We Believe In Coalition. (2025). The Canada We Believe In. Believe-In-Canada.ca. <https://believe-in-canada.ca/>
- 13 Wodak, S., Erdene-Ochir, M., Fung, B., Ghezelbash, D., Martin, L., & Voon, F. (2025). Countering misinformation about refugees and migrants: An evidence-based framework. Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, UNSW Sydney & Behavioural Insights Team. <https://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/law/kaldor/resource/2025-03-countering-misinformation-refugees.pdf>
- 14 Government of Canada. (2024). Countering disinformation: A guidebook for public servants. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/democratic-institutions/services/protecting-democratic-institutions/countering-disinformation-guidebook-public-servants.html>



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GVLIP Resources

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