

**Understanding the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* from a Student's Perspective:
The Role of Social Media on *Charter* Awareness**

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Abstract

Awareness of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, or constitutional literacy in Canada, has gained very little attention since its establishment in 1982, particularly with university-aged Canadians. Because of the important role that the *Charter* plays in individuals' lives, it is crucial every Canadian understands their rights and freedoms enshrined in law, as well as the limitations of those rights and freedoms. This study attempted to gauge constitutional literacy and social media use among Mount Royal University students, specifically on ss. 1, 2, and 7 of the *Charter* because of the overarching relevance and applicability of these sections to all Canadians. Social media was queried to ask students if it negatively influences students' knowledge of their *Charter* rights, freedoms, and limitations. The study was exploratory and incorporated a mixed methods approach to understanding the data. The conclusions from a literature review were combined with the survey data. Literature demonstrates that the public is disproportionately unaware of their rights and freedoms, while the survey results revealed that university students have either an above-average knowledge of the *Charter* or a below-average knowledge of the *Charter*. Lastly, there was no correlation between social media use and respondents' *Charter* knowledge.

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Understanding the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* from a Student's Perspective: The Role of Social Media on *Charter* Awareness

Studies, both national and international, have expressed that the public has very little knowledge about legislation, especially regarding the application of common law in legal proceedings in cases pertaining to how protected rights play a role in reducing state intrusion in a daily-life setting (Denvir et al., 2013; Patry et al., 2017; van Rooij, 2020). This study aimed to contribute to that discussion with the intention to show the level of knowledge that Canadian university students have about the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (*Charter*) and how social media plays a role in either increasing or decreasing their understanding of the *Charter*.

A mixed-methods exploratory study was conducted and a knowledge test in the survey provided quantitative data regarding how much students know about the *Charter*. Exploring the role that social media plays in understanding *Charter* rights would be achieved by asking where students get their information, how much time they spend using social media, and how well they know their rights in correspondence with the amount of time they spend on social media. The objectives of this study were to determine how much students know about their *Charter* rights, establish a framework for how best to increase education of the *Charter* (if a lack of knowledge was revealed), and ascertain if social media is important to developing knowledge on this topic.

Research Question

Studies demonstrate that, when it comes to legal literacy, an ability to articulate legal stance, and overall understanding of legal rights, people are confused in their interpretation and knowledge of legislation (Denvir et al., 2013; Patry et al., 2017; van Rooij, 2020). Despite this dearth of knowledge, it is also understood that knowing our rights is paramount in having the public engaged in active democracy, since a constitution with enshrined rights serves no purpose if no one knows that the protections exist (Fombad, 2018; Maranto, 2021).

Therefore, the research questions guiding this study were the following: How well do students know their Canadian *Charter* rights, specifically ss. 1, 2, and 7? How much of students' awareness of their *Charter* rights is a result of social media? What types of information retrieval strategies are employed by students in accessing legal information? And how are *Charter* rights relevant to the current social context?

Purpose

This is an important area of research because it applies directly to the relationship between government bodies and the public: without an idea of the rights provided under the *Charter*, the general public cannot know if the government is applying appropriate restrictions or statutes to daily living. Fombad (2018), in a review of constitutional knowledge in Africa, verifies the importance of constitutional literacy well: "It is only when citizens are adequately informed about the content of their constitutions that they can be vigilant, alert to any abuses, assert their rights and stand ready to defend these rights when they are threatened" (p. 493). Because constitutional rights lie at the core of human rights and social justice issues, it is essential that the public is aware of the protections they are provided and the limitations of these rights and freedoms that the government can justify. Because Canada acted under parliamentary sovereignty prior to the establishment of the *Charter*, Parliament could make laws that no one could invalidate or repeal. Introducing the *Charter* meant that human rights can be better served (Bayefsky et al., 1983; LaSelva, 2017) with more oversight and transparency. As such, if the *Charter* is intended to serve individual interests and protect human rights from state intrusions, the public needs to have a good understanding of these rights to be able to enact the protections afforded. If legal rights and freedoms are not clear, then behaviour, particularly compliance to the law, cannot be expected from the public, law enforcement agencies, governments, or other publicly funded institutions (van Rooij, 2020).

Reason

Because the research question is multi-faceted and pertains to several topics surrounding *Charter* rights, it is imperative that the collected data is both viewed in isolation and comparatively with outside academic sources. Van Rooij (2020) outlines the three ways with which researchers have measured legal literacy, namely through general self-reports, open questions, and factual questions using scenarios.

This survey enlists all three methods, whereby the first section measures the participants' opinions on their *Charter* knowledge and use of social media to inform this knowledge; this includes the use of one open-ended question regarding students' perceptions of the relevance of the *Charter*. The second section employs scenarios to conduct a knowledge-check, intending to measure the quantitative number of correct responses to the *Charter*-relevant situations. By studying students' actual knowledge of *Charter* rights through the survey test, a foundational context to base the *Charter* knowledge of basic Canadians will be gathered. Additionally, the literature review will supplement the survey data to establish a clearer answer to the research question. By analyzing and presenting the academic literature perceptions of legal literacy and social media sources, this will establish a framework from which to base conclusions drawn from the survey.

Literature Review

While knowledge of the Canadian Constitution, preserved under the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and particularly the *Charter*, is vital for understanding civic responsibilities and limits to government actions, a lack of knowledge is problematic for the public, the courts, and Canada's overall democracy. Since the introduction of the *Charter* in 1982, the courts have worked to consistently apply common law doctrines and establish precedents. To what extent is social media the cause of the misinformation and confusion surrounding *Charter* rights?

The study used a systematic literature review and a survey to students to observe legal literacy (application of ss. 1, 2, and 7 of the *Charter*), social media's role in current events, and where and how students access legal information. These *Charter* sections were chosen due to their overarching relevance and applicability to Canadians. Section 1 pertains to a free and democratic society, as well as the limitations that can be set upon those rights if they are justified and reasonable. Section 2 revolves around fundamental freedoms that promote personal autonomy, such as the freedoms to practice a religion or to express oneself through works of art. Section 7 protects personal security and the requirement for government to uphold the basic principles of justice. More explanation is below, but, in short, these sections are highly relevant to Canadians because they afford people fundamental principles of freedom of religion, thoughts, expression, etc., while also protecting people from intrusions or limitations upon these rights.

History and Purpose of the *Charter*

The foundation of Canadian dominion began in 1867, upon the establishment of the *British North America Act*, more commonly known as the *Constitution Act, 1867*, by British Parliament. This *Act* allowed Canada to oversee its own proceedings and reduce dependence on Britain for federal government proceedings. The *Canadian Bill of Rights* (S.C. 1960, c. 44) was then passed in 1960 in an attempt to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms not previously protected. However, the *Bill of Rights* did not produce the desired outcomes for multiple reason, namely that it only applied to federal statutes and not to provincial legislation which made it useless for protecting all Canadians. Hence, in 1982, Canada re-established its Constitution into the *Constitution Act, 1982*, with Part One being the newly created *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. This signified another step for Canadian governance to be independent of British Parliament, and the enshrining of the *Charter* in the Constitution gave it greater power to protect human rights. The *Charter* promoted the Canadian judiciary reviewing legislation and

interpreting the *Charter* apart from Parliament to ensure consistency with human rights standards and modify parliamentary supremacy (Bayefsky, 1983; Jochelson et al., 2020). This also signalled a shift from British modes of governance to a more pluralistic, liberal, individualistic, and Americanized judicial system that altered the identity of Canada (LaSelva, 2017). Before 1960, human rights were not a primary focus in law for Canadian Parliament, so it was left to the judiciary to protect human rights within case law (on a case by case basis through court trials). While the enactment of the *Bill of Rights* in 1960 was intended to move Canada away from parliamentary sovereignty and into constitutional supremacy (Bayefsky, 1983), this ideal was not realized until the formation of the Constitution in 1982. Thus, the legislated attention on individual rights is relatively new, demonstrated in how litigation for human rights became more popular since the 1970s than activism regarding civil liberties (Clement, 2018). Despite a divergence from parliamentary sovereignty, Canada maintained the British ideology of the rule of law within the context of the *Charter*, whereby the courts now administer and articulate the law (Jochelson et al., 2020; LaSelva, 2017). In its creation, former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau intended the *Charter* to allow judges the power to protect rights against violations caused by legislation and to strengthen the country's unity under a set identity of common values (LaSelva, 2017). The *Charter* gives Canadians specific rights and freedoms that, except in special circumstances, must be always upheld. The *Charter* not only provides individuals with rights and freedoms, but also restricts the government and its organizations from breaching those rights and insists on limitations when those rights are infringed upon.

The *Charter* is of paramount importance to the foundation of Canada because it expresses exactly what Canadians are entitled to and ultimately upholds Canada's democracy. As the

Charter is applied more consistently, criminal law has grown to encompass not only substantive and procedural justice, but also constitutional principles (Jochelson et al., 2020).

Section 1 Limits

Section 1 of the *Charter* is integral to the application of all other rights and freedoms, as it supplies fundamental rights and principles for all Canadians and sets a limit that government can place upon individuals' rights and freedoms. Specifically, s. 1 states:

“The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society”.

This section of the *Charter* is paramount to establishing a firm grasp of the entire *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because it expresses exactly how rights and freedoms can be limited and by whom (the courts); *Charter*-protected rights are not 100% guaranteed because sometimes the interests of society must be maintained above an individual's rights. Though the courts have had a divided approach historically to whether societal interests should be dealt with under s. 7 or s. 1, – are societal interests a part of fundamental justice (s. 7) or not? – the general consensus appears to be that determining society interest in s. 7 places too much burden of proof on the claimant, which undermines the s. 7 right since the claimant can rarely meet this burden of proof (Singleton, 1995). This means that usually, when conducting a s. 1 test to determine if a *Charter* infringement is justified in a free and democratic society, societal interests are considered in this balance. *R v Oakes* [1986] 1 SCR 103 was a court case that set an explicit test for the determination and application of s. 1 limitations going forward. As a result, courts now apply the “Oakes Test”, which consists of two stages for the court to consider if infringing upon the right or freedom is justified in law:

1. Is there a substantive and pressing need for the legislation? Essentially, is the impugned legislation so important to society that infringing upon a right can be justified due to the overriding significance of this legislation?
2. Proportionality test. This portion of the test requires the respondent to prove that the social effects of the impugned legislation are greater than or proportional to the harm of infringing upon an individual's rights.
 - a. Is there a rational connection between the limits provided by the impugned legislation and its articulated objective?
 - b. Does the impugned legislation impose minimal impairment on the individual's *Charter* rights?
 - c. Are the beneficial effects of the impugned legislation greater than the harmful effects?

If the answer to all the listed questions is “yes”, then the *Charter* infringement is deemed reasonable and justifiable. Additionally, the limitation, is usually time constrained. This is imperative for the public to know because, even though the *Charter* provides all Canadians with rights and freedoms, they are not guaranteed and, should they be infringed upon, that infringement does not last forever. Some have argued that the *Charter* can promote state intrusion, particularly in the context of police powers, because the *Charter* has allowed for lower standards of proof that has led to the public being governed by the rights outlined in the *Charter* (Jochelson et al., 2020). An example of this is in roadside sobriety tests, whereby police are able to demand the person driving submit to a breathalyzer test, regardless of evidence that the driver is intoxicated. This could be seen as an endorsement of state intrusion, whereby the reduced standard of proof (no evidence of impairment) allows police to demand drivers provide the

breathalyzer sample. However, the opposite perspective is that the *Charter* protects people from unreasonable search (including their breath or blood), but the courts have allowed this right to be infringed upon (demand a breathalyzer) because the greater interest is in protecting society from impaired drivers. In short, the courts agree that it is okay to infringe upon a driver's rights (police must perform their duties under certain limits) because the protection of the greater good is more important. The *Charter* expresses what rights are within it, what constitutes a breach, and what limitations can be placed on these rights. Roadside sobriety breathalyzer tests are constitutional because they do not unnecessarily infringe on individuals' rights, since driving is a privilege (see s. 320.12(a) of the *Canadian Criminal Code*); the *Charter* thus obstructs state intrusion in situations where an individual is entitled to the protected right.

Knowledge of the *Charter* is necessary to ensure that rights are upheld, both *ex post facto* and *ex ante*, and violations are challenged, further expressing the importance of *Charter* knowledge.

Section 2 Freedoms

Section 2 of the *Charter* has been particularly relevant over the last two years (2020-2022) due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Section 2 gives Canadians the right and freedom to practice whatever religion they choose, to express their thoughts, to assemble peacefully, and to associate with whomever they wish. However, people argued (and in several cities people protested) that the COVID mandates violated their s. 2 rights because they restricted people from practicing religion, socializing, and more (Bench, 2021). Section 2 states:

“Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;

- (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- (d) freedom of association”.

Some mandates, especially early in the pandemic, restricted the number of people allowed to congregate for religious services, weddings, and funeral. Some mandates restricted how many people could be in a home at the same time, while other mandates required people to be vaccinated or wear a mask before getting goods and services.

An argued infringement of a s. 2 right was that the government mandated people get vaccinated, while partaking in vaccinations is against a person’s religion and beliefs. The person feels that the government is dictating their religious beliefs and practices. Thus, being forced to get the vaccine was argued to violate their s. 2(a) freedom of religion.

Section 2 can be complicated in its application and though historically enshrined in the *Bill of Rights*, the rights protected by s. 2 have required thorough analysis to be able to accurately discern whose rights are protected and whose are beyond the scope of this section. Because the courts have had to confront the meanings of the freedoms enshrined in s. 2, Sharpe and Roach (2021) describe what conclusions the courts have arrived and how they got there, establishing how challenging it has been to define this section’s freedoms. For example, in terms of religious freedoms, the authors outline how s. 2(a) protects more than the ability to have religious beliefs by extending also to the expressions and participation in religious practices and observations. Additionally, they describe how expression must have *subjective* meaning to the creator for a s. 2(b) infringement to occur; regardless of if the viewer picks up on the meaning, if there is subjective meaning to the creator, then it is expression. This demonstrates just how complicated the application of *Charter* rights can be.

In the *Accepting Schools Act*, under Bill 13, the scope of the freedom of religion has been contentiously argued. This Bill was established in Ontario in 2012 with the intent to reduce bullying by promoting equity and non-discrimination, namely by encouraging Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in schools. Such clubs function as peer supports for kids who identify as gay. Because homosexual relations are forbidden in some religions, thus began a dispute over whether schools could include GSA clubs and whether families could force schools to ban such clubs due to religious beliefs of the children and families enrolled in that school. Donlevy et al. (2014) express that restricting a person's ability to adhere to their conscience in decisions, specifically moral-based decisions through religion, can obstruct a person from being able to express thought (freedom of religion; freedom of thought). Section 2 can be understood to protect an individual's right to freedom of conscience, not without restrictions, but as the foundation from which other rights are based. If freedom of conscience is restricted, then a free and democratic society is not being maintained.

Section 7 Rights

Section 7 of the *Charter* is essentially the foundation of all the legal *Charter* rights issues particularly within criminal law contexts (ss. 8-14). This makes it a highly integral piece of the *Charter* to understand for those who study or practice within the criminal justice system. Historically, a s. 7 violation has never been saved under s. 1, as a breach of fundamental justice has not been found to be proportional.

Section 7 states:

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice”.

Fundamental justice is the underlying principle of fairness paramount to Canadian court proceedings, whereby foundational values such as collective interest, dignity and worth of an

individual, rule of law, proportionality, and due process are upheld (Fehr, 2020). To qualify as being a tenet of fundamental justice, a principle must be a legal principle, be found to have a vital function within the context of social justice and be specific and precise enough to lead to predictable results, as per the fundamental justice precedent case *Rodriguez v British Columbia (Attorney General)* [1993] 3 SCR 519.

Violations of s. 7 are decided by showing that a law is overbroad, arbitrary, or grossly disproportionate, which are all principles of fundamental justice that the courts have established as mutually exclusive of each other (Stewart, 2015) and the foundation of s. 7. The violation must also be shown to have an impact on the life, liberty, or security of the individual (hypothetical or otherwise). For example, in an analysis of *Canada (Attorney General) v Bedford* [2013], Stewart (2015) asserts that *Bedford* has implications that, moving forward, s. 7 violations may be easier to justify under s. 1 due to the societal interests it balances. In this case, three women contended that the prostitution laws in Canada were unconstitutional and violated their s. 7 right to security of person due to the restrictive nature of the legislation on sex work. While the intent of the impugned legislation was to prevent community harms found to be caused by prostitution and less intrusive legislation could not be established, the court found that the s. 7 violation could not be justified under s. 1 because the legislation was discovered to be overbroad and grossly disproportionate. This case set the precedent for other s. 7 violations, installing the conversation of collective versus individual interests into the court consideration of fundamental justice.

Negative effects of grossly disproportionate laws can be justified based on the overall balance of deleterious and salutary effects. Essentially, while a s. 7 violation was historically never justified under s. 1, the *Bedford* precedent created a very distinct difference between the s.

7 test for an infringement and the s. 1 test for justifying the infringement. Following the court decision, it is now common for the courts to consider individual interests in determining s. 7 infringements, while the courts examine collective societal interests in the s. 1 analysis and justification arguments.

Section 7 now pertains only to how an individual's s. 7 rights were violated (or could be reasonably foreseen to be violated), while s. 1 deals with the collective interest: if the collective interest outweighs the damage caused to the individuals via the violation of the s. 7 right, then the infringement will be justified. This adaptation of understanding s. 7 interprets arbitrariness as being related to only one person, while s. 1 considers the effects of a law in general, so s. 7 infringements may be possible to justify in the future.

This may have implications for situations such as with the COVID mandates, which people have argued violate their s. 7 rights (Bogart, 2021; Dawson, 2022; Kost, 2021). It could be said that these mandates not only infringe on personal autonomy, but also can be found to be arbitrary, overbroad, and grossly disproportionate to the goals of the country in reducing COVID-19 infection numbers: if the goal is to limit the spread of the virus, do the vaccine and mask mandates achieve this enough to justify reducing personal autonomy? If the goal is to limit the spread of the virus, does restricting who and how people can associate with achieve this to enough extent to justify reducing personal autonomy?

Further, while the vaccine mandate may infringe on a specific claimant's s. 7 rights and personal autonomy, this has been a justified violation under s. 1 due to the balance of societal interests over individual autonomy.

Human Rights and Social Justice

The implications of parliamentary sovereignty in Canada meant that, because Parliament established the laws, these laws were not intended to serve all human rights interests: laws were

deemed valid simply on their own merit, regardless of if they restricted freedoms (Bayefsky, 1983). Thus, human rights were essentially a political responsibility instead of a judicial one, whereby the established laws may or may not have supported human rights and the judiciary had no remedial power. However, since the establishment of the *Charter*, human rights were introduced in the Canadian Constitution and, correspondingly, into the judiciary (LaSelva, 2017). This means that, while Parliament still establishes the laws, the judiciary can find laws to be unconstitutional or not adherent to human rights policies, and rule to abolish the impugned law. The difficulty with simply entrenching human rights into legislation and laws is that rights recognized by society are constantly changing; this inspired the need for separate human rights legislation that could promote adaptable interpretation as the social context changes (Bayefsky, 1983), such as the *Alberta Human Rights Act* (AHRA). The AHRA, for example, protects cultural identifications through the Alberta Heritage Day, individuals from discrimination from any person, and equal pay requirements, among other things.

Another factor that brought so much attention to human rights and the idea of a universal moral code arose from the end of World War II and the Holocaust (Grant & Gibson, 2013). The researchers outline how, because of the explicit disregard for human rights demonstrated by Germany during World War II, there was increase of media, political, and military attention given to the issue of human rights on an international scale. This attention gave rise to the outcry for legislation that could protect and ensure certain human rights that do not change as much socially over time: things like safety, non-discrimination, and practicing religion.

In a study on rights inflation and the concept that an increased number of grievances are framed as human rights violations instead of social justice issues, Clement (2018) suggests terming “social justice” the concepts that are not in actuality human rights (e.g., access to the

Internet, employment, or education). Clement expresses that our human rights have been devalued, such as in the assertion that clean and healthy environments internationally should be a constitutional right. To highlight how liberally the term “rights” has begun to be used, Clement (2018) notes how Mexico established a constitutional right to smoke marijuana under the free development of one’s personality. The question that arises, then, is whether a grievance is an infringement of human rights or a violation of social justice. This also has an impact on the required actionable response, as “The problem is that framing social problems as rights violations informs how people envision solutions” (Clement, 2018, p. 158). This means that people try to use simple legal solutions to solve complex social issues, because approaching an issue from a rights perspective does not address the root causes of social issues. Grant and Gibson (2013) note how human rights are at the core of social justice issues, whereby social justice cannot be attained until human rights are met through racial anti-discrimination policies. Fombad (2018) briefly proposes how the right to constitutional literacy should be a fundamental right and Clement (2018) compounds this by explaining how human rights are non-negotiable, while social justice issues are addressed based on availability of resources. Some examples of each type of issue are provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Comparative list of different issues common to human rights and social justice

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES	SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES
Discrimination	Climate care
Food and water	Gun violence
Safety and security	Income disparity
Slavery	Labor standards
Education	Overpopulation
Privacy	Gender inequality
Due process in legal proceedings	Obesity

Essentially, these researchers differentiate between human rights and social justice by their mode of corrective action, whereby human rights should always be protected to the greatest

possible extent while social justice issues are remedied based on resource availability. Human rights are non-negotiable and must be enforced by governments, which is poignantly highlighted by the United Nations' 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) that expressed the intention for universal adherence to human rights' principles. Alternatively, social justice issues are macro-scale concerns that require a response based on the level of ability a country/government/nation has at the time but are not as vigorously enforced by governments.

Ultimately, if the public has the right to constitutional literacy and knows their rights, and these rights are upheld, then they will be more empowered to extend resources to correcting social justice issues.

Grant and Gibson (2013) outline two theories of social justice: distributive and redistributive justice. Distributive justice is basically the provision of autonomy through the promotion of an individual's lived experience, identity, and culture, while redistributive justice is equality-based redistribution of material resources for equal access. These two theories both endorse different approaches to social justice dilemmas, but inherently address similar root issues (e.g. gender inequality). The benefits to human rights being realized is in how they provide a voice to the weak and oppressed, which must be heard for social justice issues to be addressed, that in turn lead to the ultimate human right of self-determination and human agency (Grant & Gibson, 2013) as it is enshrined in Canada's *Charter* and ss. 1 and 7 specifically.

Current Events and the Role of Social Media

Not enough scientific research exists on the topics of people's awareness of Canadian *Charter* rights and the use of social media to expand *Charter* knowledge, although a prolific amount of research has gone into the topic of general legal literacy (Fombad, 2018; Patry et al., 2017; van Rooij, 2020). Because *Charter* rights are fundamental, it is surprising to find that it is not the main topic of conversation surrounding politics. Without proper knowledge of their

rights, people cannot uphold their rights or challenge violations (Fombad, 2018), and they cannot understand the government's actions without proper knowledge.

Canadian media discusses current events and the issues facing Canadians, but often neglects to provide viewers with a realistic, educated perspective on people's rights within a *Charter* context. It is believed that constitutional literacy is no longer popular, and the rule of law is undervalued by citizens despite the impact that citizens can have on holding governments accountable for upholding constitutional rights (Maranto, 2021; Merdzanovic & Nicolaidis, 2021; Shapcott, 2019).

Social media is a prolific area of research, as it intersects with any topic today. Studies have shown that social media has many benefits for society, but it also contains a “dark side” by which society can be harmed, misled, or otherwise impeded (Baccarella et al., 2018; Dave et al., 2021). Syed-Abdul et al. (2013) comment on this by explaining how the increasing amount of information available on social media makes it more difficult to discern what is reliable and what is misleading or false, particularly with health information.

Al-Ramahi et al. (2021) discovered three primary concerns voiced on Twitter about the mask mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the number one concern being constitutional rights and freedom of choice. The researchers emphasized the relationship between social media discourse – the messages being sent and read by the public – and the potential impact on real events; they found that there was a significant increase of COVID cases in response to social media posts against mask-wearing, showing a correlation between social media activity and adherence to government mandates. Ibrahim and Hassan (2017) found that their concept of “crowd waves”, such as protests and riots, can be motivated and possibly controlled by social media, as people are more likely to give up their beliefs and join in a

collective belief if they notice a trend that is supported by their “social neighbourhood”. This form of conformity is largely influenced by social media but remains largely misinformed in law. The researchers also demonstrated how consistent, repeated, and low-intensity use of social media for one purpose can cause “Twitter revolutions”, which are further enhanced if an influential figure, such as a popular actor or famous singer, is advertised as being involved. These studies illustrate how social media can inform and shape public perceptions and beliefs, as it can spread fake news, lies, and conspiracy theories that can interrupt the dispersion of helpful information (i.e., regarding the law and the application of *Charter* rights). Maranto (2021) warns of this, “Yet without an informed elite and mass public, we suffer the untender mercies of demagogues and twitter mobs” (p. 3). Fombad (2018) also voices this concern that a lack of constitutional literacy can result in oppression by the government and with the elite manipulating political processes; higher illiteracy of rights is often linked to impoverished and marginalized communities. The alternative is to ensure higher constitutional literacy which can dispel myths, misguided assumptions, and fears that would otherwise get exploited by the elite, while breaking barriers of privilege, marginalization, and discrimination (Fombad, 2018). Knowledge of constitutional principles shared via social media is beneficial to civic participation if it can spread appropriate and accurate knowledge that can be utilized by the public (Hart, 2013).

Information Retrieval Strategies

It seems plausible that social media could increase awareness of *Charter* rights, given the amount of information present on social media and the ease at which information is transmitted, accessed, and absorbed. However, it can also be assumed that social media may reduce our knowledge of *Charter* rights due to the enormous information-overload presented by social media and inaccurate information by non-reliable or non-creditable sources. Studies have established how social media can negatively affect knowledge regarding politics (Lee & Xenos,

2019) and this concept may be transferable to Canadians' knowledge of *Charter* rights. It is also suggested that the perceived complexity of a topic can impact whether people ask further questions to clarify and find out more or not (Leonardi & Meyer, 2015). Ergo, as *Charter* rights can be understood as being complex, people would be less inclined to find out more and may simply believe the first thing they read or hear. In a study on how social media impacts consumer choices, it was found that social media directly shapes people's attitudes and social norms, through a platform that highlights concerns and persuades others to follow a specific cause (Goh, Heng, and Lin, 2013; Pop, Saplacan, and Alt, 2020). Additionally, social media can increase social interactions and create trust within groups of people, which can lead to inaccurate or ineffective information-sharing (Neeley and Leonardi, 2018). This may also result in the establishment of groups fighting for a similar cause that may not be in the *Charter*-protected interests of Canadian society. While social media can be used to positively introduce and educate Canadians on their *Charter* rights, it carries with it the all-too-common risk of misinformation being circulated (Baccarella et al., 2018).

Legal Literacy and Knowledge

Previous studies show the general population lacks knowledge of their rights and that there is a tendency for people to assume that the law aligns (or should align) with their own personal moral, ethical, or social attitudes and beliefs (Denvir et al., 2013; van Rooij, 2020). In one study, the lowest-scoring responses were in the topics of the *Bill of Rights*, religion and education, tort law, and court proceedings principles such as due process (van Rooij, 2020). Further to this, very few individuals understand their rights upon arrest, namely their right to silence and right to legal counsel (Patry et al., 2017). This lack of knowledge can lead to false confessions, as Patry et al. (2017) found that there were similar levels of confusion about rights upon arrest for respondents who read the police caution and respondents who did not.

Patry et al. (2017) conducted knowledge tests with both laypersons (community members) and legal professionals (police officers, sheriffs, and criminal lawyers) using vignettes and found that participants knew little about their rights and the application of their rights to these scenarios. It also showed that police officers usually believe the public understands their *Charter* rights.

In their study of people's knowledge of civil rights, Denvir et al. (2013) found that the highest percentage of respondents answered "not at all" when asked if they knew their rights at the onset of the problem provided by the researchers. The research found that there is no significant correlation between the kinds of responses and the level of education of respondents, a finding replicated by other studies (Maranto, 2021; van Rooij, 2020). Denvir et al. (2013) determined that most respondents felt unsure of their rights and that, despite their uncertainty, many individuals over-estimated their knowledge of their civil rights. School K-12 educators and school principals do not have a proper level of legal literacy or even specific school law, though principals were found to have higher legal literacy than educators (van Rooij, 2020).

Fombad (2018) describes constitutional literacy under four points:

1. an autonomous set of skills
2. functional literacy
3. active and broad-based learning processes
4. various texts

Essentially, this means that the public's knowledge of the *Charter* may differ in the form of knowledge; it may be basic legal learning from an education degree, it could be the applied and practised skillset from having to deal with legal situations, it could be an involvement in activities that generate legal knowledge gradually, or it may be the acquired knowledge through

reading various sources in a self-taught manner. The encouragement that can be taken away from this model of constitutional literacy is that the public can be provided *Charter* knowledge and establish awareness through many different providers.

Factors Impacting Legal Literacy

One hypothesis of why constitutional literacy is not a point of focus in teaching, particularly within the K-12 curriculum, is that educators, since around the 1920s, taught students what they would need for industrial jobs to increase social efficiency at the time (Maranto, 2021).

Maranto (2021) uses the example of Ivy League educated Donald Trump to show that education and legal literacy are not necessarily correlated, as Trump could not understand why the American system honored the peaceful transfer of democratic power in elections. Moreover, van Rooij (2020) showed that living longer in a country does not increase one's knowledge of that country's constitutional rights.

Patry et al. (2017) suggest that the lack of a standard delivery format for police cautions in Canada results in different law enforcement agencies having various levels of readability, comprehension, and verbal delivery practices for rights upon arrest. Further complicating this, laypersons interpret legal terms differently than lawyers (van Rooij, 2020). It is also posited that the ability for the judiciary to establish new police powers without having to inform citizens may be an issue with the legal system and constricts due process (Jochelson et al., 2020).

A link between social/personal norms and legal knowledge has also been established as a factor that impacts literacy, because people's feelings about what the law should be influences their inaccurate perceptions of the law (van Rooij, 2020). This, along with the copious amounts of legal statutes and legislation and the complexity of legal language, limits the accessibility of legal literacy for the average person. While it has been shown how knowledge of human rights

can reduce the risk of tyrannical governments overthrowing the democracy, Maranto (2021) also reflects on how education began its tendency of “prioritiz[ing] compliance over intelligence” (p. 3). If no one knows their rights, then the government can intrude on the rights and freedoms protected within the Charter without negative outcry from the public. According to van Rooij (2020), worrying more about repercussions for not following the law is not linked to better legal literacy, so professionals such as doctors, who worry about the legal ramifications of their health practices, do not know their legal rights any better than those who are less likely to be concerned with legal ramifications. Van Rooij (2020) also found that most laws act *ex post facto*, instead of *ex ante*, so the legislation does not work to adjust future conduct but instead punishes offences that could be a result of the inability to comprehend the law.

Suggested Future Actions

While researchers have proposed several different solutions, the main suggested action lies in distributing accurate information to the public. Because of the role that social media plays in behavior and attitudes, Al-Ramahi et al. (2021) suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the public’s perceptions of their rights on social media and to use social media to manifest compliant behavior in the physical world. However, simply translating and distributing constitutional knowledge on social media platforms is different from educating people about the purpose and content of the *Charter*, as the issues lie in the public’s inability to apply legislation to their own situations (Fombad, 2018). Public legal education in schools, taught by experienced and trained staff, would also work to improve people’s ability to articulate that knowledge, apply it to their personal circumstances, and fulfill the vision of human dignity (Denvir et al., 2013; Fombad, 2018; Grant & Gibson, 2013). This education can enable rationality and divert harmful inaccuracies from affecting civic responsibility, while dispelling ignorance and preventing

authoritarians and totalitarians from overturning Canada's democracy (Maranto, 2021). Fombad (2018) notes three levels of constitutional rights education:

1. government (e.g., Department of Justice and Constitutional Development conferences)
2. non-government organizations (e.g., training provided by NGOs)
3. university programs

Government departments should be responsible for teaching constitutional education to the public (Fombad, 2018) and Hart (2013) argues that it should be the responsibility of law schools to be the providers of constitutional education, particularly to poorer communities. The government should also establish better accessibility to correct information on social media to increase the public's awareness, with media campaigns intended to improve public awareness, spread knowledge of *Charter* rights, promote pluralism, and challenge cultural imperialism (Al-Ramahi et al., 2021; Grant & Gibson, 2013; Patry et al., 2017).

Corporate and non-profit organizations can also play a role in improving legal knowledge because they can interpret and disseminate the law relevant to the organization and the people they serve (van Rooij, 2020). Collaboration with the law enforcement community to educate them on how little the public understands *Charter* rights, specifically police cautions, may also increase the policies informing how the police communicate *Charter* rights (Patry et al., 2017). Some suggest that constitutional literacy programs be mandatory, with especial inclusion of human rights education in K-12 social justice curriculum, since schools are the primary basis of human rights education through its mandatory and universal nature (Fombad, 2018; Grant & Gibson, 2013; Hart, 2013). The entire premise of these education programs is the aligning of social norms with the law to increase compliance with the law, as many people base their

“knowledge” of law off current social norms and social media inaccuracies: if the public’s norms align with the law, compliance will be higher (van Rooij, 2020).

Methodology

Design

For this project, an exploratory and descriptive research design was used to answer the research questions. The goal was to obtain information necessary to both gaining a general overview of the topic and establish what is involved within the topic, respectively (University of Southern California, n.d.). By supplementing the literature review with a survey to Mount Royal University (MRU) students, results provided a range of knowledge regarding *Charter* awareness. This study used different approaches to achieve two purposes – complementarity and expansion – of mixed-methods research as determined by Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017).

This research was primarily exploratory in its attempt to contribute to the literature, offer new ideas, raise contemporary questions, and contribute to a long-term honours undergraduate research project (De Langhe & Schliesser, 2017).

The survey included qualitative and quantitative questions and consisted of 26 questions. 12 invitations to participate were sent to the researcher’s current and previous professors, who then indirectly recruited by supplying the survey invitation to the students in their classes. The survey invitations were sent out on January 14th, 2022, and the survey was open from January 14th, 2022, to February 28th, 2022. A semi-integrative quantitative literature displayed both objectivity and relevant explanations while maintaining academic rigor (McKim, 2017). The literature review can be understood as being semi-integrative because it took past literature, both experimental and non-experimental, to establish a more wholesome perspective of the topic based on specific keywords of search such as “*Charter* rights”, “legal literacy”, and “information gathering” (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). It cannot be defined as fully integrative, but rather as

semi-integrative, due to the reduced adherence to formal standards of inquiry common to integrative reviews: the perspective is not all-encompassing, but it provides enough of a context from which to base conclusions.

Different strategies for answering the research questions were used, as per triangulation techniques, whereby information is obtained using three sources and processes so as to reach a conclusion that demonstrates a comprehensive perspective on the subject. Thus, the generalized conclusions of literature with the more personalised responses from the survey were used to ensure that the methods complemented each other by offsetting the other's weaknesses (Turner et al., 2017). This also enhanced the research questions' validity and provided additional credibility to any established conclusions (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

Furthermore, as described by the University of Southern California (n.d.), the research design also included action aspects, through an initial exploratory strategy, as the survey included the following questions:

- Justice Canada should do more to educate people about *Charter* rights and freedoms using social media (Likert scale of agreement)
- More information about *Charter* rights and freedoms should be included in the high school curriculum (Likert scale of agreement)
- A mandatory course at MRU about *Charter* rights and freedoms should be included in every MRU student's curriculum (Likert scale of agreement)

Given the nature of the topic and the lack of prior research pertaining specifically to *Charter* knowledge and Canadians' legal literacy, it is appropriate to address this introductory expansion on the topic in both a qualitative and quantitative manner.

To gather data to answer the research questions, a structured electronic survey was distributed to MRU university students from eight different faculty departments and seven different course programs (see Figure 2) who were enrolled in the Winter 2022 semester at MRU. Participants were indirectly recruited by the professors of their classes; the professors posted the study information on the online school platform, BlackBoard (a learning management system), that is accessible by every MRU student. The survey (see Appendix A) asked participants questions in three parts: demographic information, questions about their knowledge of specific *Charter* sections, and questions regarding their social media use and source of knowledge about the *Charter*. By having participants complete the electronic survey, the data reflects not only students' knowledge of the *Charter*, social media use, and information-gathering resources, but also describe the patterns of knowledge that social media emits regarding *Charter* rights. The advantages of using the electronic survey include reducing time and costs, anonymity of responses, and access to larger and more diverse samples (Cope, 2014). This type of survey promotes varied methods of inquiry, including quantitative data and qualitative open-ended questions, that can best generate appropriate answers to the key research questions because it incorporates triangulation in combining students' perceptions of their knowledge, history of social media use, and knowledge test measuring real knowledge instead of perceptions (Nair, 2017).

The survey aimed to measure both students' knowledge and feelings about their *Charter* rights and students' social media habits. Any student, of any age and gender, who was enrolled in credit, continuing education, and/or conservatory courses at MRU were invited to participate. In general, surveys are found to result in a co-constructed design, where the ability of different researchers to elicit different responses, as well as researcher bias, can influence the kind of

responses provided (Lucas, 2014). Creating the online survey seeks to remedy these issues by maintaining one streamline set of questions per survey for every participant, whereby each participant responds to the questions in the same order and without improvised researcher prompting. This survey will best answer the research questions because it consists of the three forms typically used to study legal literacy: self-reporting, an open question regarding legal knowledge, and factual questions about law (Denvir et al., 2013; van Rooij, 2020). Additionally, the inclusion of social media use questions will help to establish an exploration for a correlation between legal literacy and social media engagement.

Participants for this study were selected from the diverse student population at Mount Royal University (MRU) in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, specifically based on the previous semester and current courses of the researcher and the current courses of the supervisor. The reason for this sample is because it will reflect the *Charter* knowledge climate of students within a university environment that may be replicated at other universities. The sample is the population of students at MRU who were indirectly recruited via MRU professors in the researcher's current and previous semester courses (see Figure 2), and the supervisor's current courses, namely one section of CRJS 2021 – Women and the Criminal Justice System and one section of CRJS 3011 – Introduction to Criminal Law, both of which are courses within the Criminal Justice Degree Program.

The researcher sent the study information via email to their current and previous professors teaching at MRU with the request to post the survey information on the online school platform, BlackBoard, for all the professors' classes. Additionally, the researcher's supervisor shared/posted the research information on BlackBoard for her students to access the survey. This, then, acted as an indirect recruitment for all the students of the contacted professors.

47 students participated in the study from a recruitment estimate of approximately 390 using this method and students from several specializations and classes were recruited, as indicated in Figure 2. This study used a form of snowball sampling, whereby interrelated networks are being reached by the passing on of the survey information from the professors to the students and students to students (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). This is useful for researching a variety of populations and attempting to create a representative sample of the MRU community (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Invited students were provided the objectives of the study, an outline of the procedures regarding the survey responses, the level of involvement required from participants (20 to 30-minute time commitment to complete the survey), how survey data was being collected and stored, consent information, withdrawal procedures, and how the information will be disseminated.

Figure 2. List of professors contacted and corresponding courses/faculties

FACULTY - DEPARTMENT	COURSE PROGRAM	COURSE CODE	COURSE TITLE	PROFESSOR
Faculty of Arts - Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies	Criminal Justice	CRJS 5020*	Honours Research Project II*	D. Scharie Tavcer*
Faculty of Arts - Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies	Criminal Justice	CRJS 4002*	Critical Analysis Forensic Science*	Tracey Lowey*
Faculty of Arts - Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies	Criminal Justice	CRJS 4003*	Advanced Criminological Theory*	Douglas King*
Faculty of Arts - Psychology	Psychology	PSYC 3320*	Topics in Death and Dying*	Janet Arnold*
Faculty of Arts - Psychology	Psychology	PSYC 3324*	Motivation and Emotion*	Donovan Lawrence*
Faculty of Continuing Education and Extension – Teaching and Learning	General Education	GNED 1201	Aesthetic Experience and Ideas	Christopher Moxham
Faculty of Arts - Humanities	General Education	GNED 1303	Conflict & the Social Context	Sean Carleton

Faculty of Arts – English and Languages	General Education	GNED 1401	Writing for Academic Success	Karen Manarin
Faculty of Health, Community, and Education – Child Studies and Social Work	Interdisciplinary Studies	INTS 2301	Violence Across the Lifespan	Patricia Miller
Faculty of Arts – Economics, Justice and Policy Studies	Political Science	PLSC 2243	Politics & Judicial Process	Lori Williams
Faculty of Science and Technology – Chemistry and Physics	Natural Science	NTSC 1115	Intro to Forensic Science	Doug Eley
Faculty of Business and Communication Studies – School of Communication Studies	Communications	COMM 3501	Intercultural Communication	Amanda Williams

* indicates current courses/professors in the Winter 2022 Academic Term; all other classes/professors are from previous semesters enrolment.

Participants were also provided a link to an electronic Google Form, which is a cloud-based Google system that can be used as part of students' MRU Gmail accounts, to electronically submit their survey responses (see Appendix A). The Google Form was constructed so that participants could supply passive consent to participate by selecting "yes" (to the consent question) prior to beginning the survey. They were again informed that selecting "submit" was indicative of their consent to take part in the survey. The consent was voluntary because participants were also informed that participation in the survey was not for school marks and there would be no consequences if they did not participate. This ensured that participant consent was ongoing, voluntary, and informed.

Individuals who wished to withdraw from the study could simply close the browser of the survey prior to clicking submit and no data was recorded. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at the beginning of the survey and at the end of the survey prior

to clicking “Submit”. During the survey, participants could withdraw at any point prior to submission; closing the survey without submitting deleted any answered responses. When participants submitted their responses, their data was anonymously stored on Google Forms and could not be withdrawn following submission because no identifying information was connected to the responses.

Data Collection

Data was collected through a mixed-methods electronic survey and a quantitative review of literature. In terms of raw data, the survey collected information based on students’ level of social media use, information retrieval strategies, knowledge of the *Charter*, and previous interactions with the *Charter* such as first exposures and recent discussions relating to the *Charter*. The benefit of conducting the survey electronically is that the respondent population (MRU students) was known/controlled, and the population was accurately represented because every student was invited to participate, so the online format allowed access to varying groups in an inexpensive manner (Granello & Wheaton, 2004).

Information was also collected from various scholarly sources, through the MRU virtual library database and physical library resources, as well as through Google Scholar. Search terms included “information retrieval strategies”, “legal literacy”, “constitutional literacy”, “political knowledge”, “Charter knowledge”, and “Charter and social media”. Databases were typically from the disciplines of criminology, criminal justice, legal/political studies, psychology, human behaviour, and public health. Recent (2010 to present day) online newspapers were also searched to establish context about current events from credible Canadian news sites such as CBC, Global News, CTV, and CNN.

Data collection occurred for approximately six weeks, during the period of January 17, 2022, to February 28, 2022. Collection took place from participants’ computers, whereby the

submission of the survey resulted in Google Forms collecting the responses. Once participants submitted their responses, the Google Form compiled the data; this data was then transferred to a password-protected Excel spreadsheet, accessible only to the researchers and stored on a secure Google Drive, for analysis purposes.

Data Analysis

The analysis was in three steps: 1) analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and information obtained from literature sources, compiled into the literature review, 2) compilation and analysis of survey responses, and 3) conclusions based on the analysis of the literature review and survey responses.

For step one, literature was collected from the above-stated sources and each source was read systematically while writing a summary of relevant findings, similar to an annotated bibliography. Once all the resources were summarized, the researcher colour-coded similarities and themes. This then established the literature review, which was divided into sections determined by the colour-coded results.

For step two, the survey responses were counted and graphed by Google Forms and this data was then transferred to a password-protected Excel spreadsheet on a secure Google Drive. Responses were divided into the three survey categories (general, knowledge, and demographic). The researcher reviewed and assessed any significant correlations or patterns on the Excel spreadsheet, using functions such as mean calculation to present data in a more palatable way, such as in graphs demonstrating mean social media use. The data was then analyzed for trends and significant correlations with the quantitative data: One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests, regression equations, and t-tests were utilized in data analysis. The qualitative responses were coded and combined, finding a limited number of differing responses.

Finally, for step three, the findings from the survey were compared with the results of the literature review and were reviewed for trends or patterns. At this point, it was decided that an actionable response section was appropriate to include in the discussion section where future research may head.

Six hypotheses were formulated and addressed via the survey data analysis:

- Students' *Charter* knowledge will be low, resulting in low knowledge test scores, with lowest knowledge about specific sections (ss. 1, 2, and 7)
- As age and level of education increase, students' *Charter* knowledge will increase
- Respondents will report a higher knowledge of the *Charter* than their knowledge test scores indicate, and higher ages will self-report a higher knowledge of the *Charter*
- Female respondents and those enrolled in the Criminal Justice program at MRU will score higher
- Those who spend more time on the news and less time on social media will have higher test scores; those who agree that social media has taught them most of their knowledge about the *Charter* will score lower
- Respondents will report contradictory information derived from social media and demonstrate uncertainty in the application of *Charter* rights and freedoms

Limitations

The research design has several limitations, being the small sample size, from one population source, the potential for “cheating”, and inconclusive literature. Because only MRU students were surveyed, the number of responses were few and not wholly representative of all universities or Canadian students. This relates to the population, whereby any data does not totally reflect the overall knowledge either of students as a whole or even MRU students;

because the majority of respondents were enrolled in the Criminal Justice Degree Program, this is essentially the one student population at MRU being examined. The survey knowledge test, utilized to establish respondents' knowledge of the *Charter*, consisted of only nine questions, and thus may have resulted in skewed data analysis results because getting even one question wrong significantly reduces the score percentage; also, the short knowledge test could not encompass every topic surrounding the *Charter* or specific to ss. 1, 2, and 7.

Additionally, because the *Charter* knowledge test relied on the honesty of participants' responses, the data may have been skewed by participants using external sources to respond to the questions to get them right, such as accessing the Internet while doing the survey. It has also been noted how self-reporting level of knowledge actually measures the level of confidence that participants have regarding their legal literacy, while the open question cannot measure the extent to which students know their legal rights (Denvir et al., 2013; van Rooij, 2020). The lack of more than one open-ended question also may reduce the amount of insight provided into the knowledge informing the response (Denvir et al., 2013). In this study, there were four open-ended questions, but three of these pertained specifically to demographics (age, gender, and program enrolled in).

Finally, little research in the specific area of *Charter* knowledge, as opposed to general legal literacy, has an impact on this research by limiting the ability to link correlations or expand on pre-determined information. This study has been demonstrated to be an introductory glimpse at *Charter* awareness, since it is possible that Canadians know their *Charter* rights better than they know general statute law and *Criminal Code* violations.

Ethical Issues

Because primary research was being conducted with human participants, additional ethical considerations had to be taken. Prior to recruiting participants, ethics approval was sought

from the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at MRU, who gave their approval on October 28, 2021 (see Appendix J). Approval was also granted by Evan Cortens, the Director of Institutional Research and Planning at MRU, to survey MRU students for this project.

To ensure confidentiality, all information collected from participants was anonymous and did not collect any email addresses. All data was anonymously collected on Google Forms and then transferred to a password-protected Excel spreadsheet, stored on a secure Google Drive, only accessible to the researcher and supervisor. No personal information, directly or indirectly linked to participants' responses, was collected or stored.

For the ethics application, the researcher ensured that the study demonstrates minimal risk, whereby any harm that could be potentially caused by completing the survey was no different than any harmful exposure the participants may experience in their everyday lives, and the procedures outlined and approved in the HREB ethics application were strictly followed throughout the course of the study. A potential risk for participants that was determined to be possible was that it may result in increased anxiety or distress resulting from heightened awareness of lack of/inaccurate knowledge of fundamental rights and freedoms granted by the *Charter*. To mitigate potential risk, a list of resources available to MRU students to support their mental health, as well as links to the *Charter* and a site outlining what *Charter* rights entail, were provided at the end of the survey.

Findings

In its entirety, this research project demonstrated very mixed results regarding the public's legal literacy and knowledge of their rights. Based on the literature review, it appears that the public may have a very basic understanding of their rights, but perhaps without the ability to apply their rights to their own situations, and it is possible that social media may have some impact on this, whether positive or negative. While literature suggests that people's

knowledge of their rights varies depending on the topic, they maintain an overall confusion about what their rights mean. The survey, on the other hand, portrays a much more optimistic perspective on how well students know their *Charter* rights. However, the sample was very small, and most of the respondents were enrolled in the Criminal Justice program, so it makes sense that they would have a better overall understanding of the *Charter* given the context of their program.

Quantitative Data Analysis

For this research project, the respondents' test scores are determined to be the indication of each respondents' knowledge of the *Charter*. It should also be noted that, although the survey included a question about respondents' places of birth (in Canada or not), the sample was too small to observe any correlations with only seven of the respondents reporting that they were born outside Canada. One hypothesis was that those born outside Canada would have a higher knowledge of their *Charter* rights than those born in Canada, since immigrants have to pass a comprehensive knowledge test about Canada's history, culture, and legal system prior to becoming a Canadian citizen. Other notable findings include that the greatest number of participants (27 = 57%) report having first heard of the *Charter* in high school, and 41 (87%) of participants disagree or strongly disagree that most of their *Charter* knowledge came from social media.

Hypothesis 1: Students' *Charter* knowledge will be low, resulting in low knowledge test scores, with lowest knowledge about specific sections (ss. 1, 2, and 7).

The knowledge section of the survey was intended to measure both students' overall knowledge of their *Charter* rights and Freedoms, and their knowledge of specific sections of the

Charter. For this research question, particular attention was paid to the responses relating to ss. 1, 2, and 7 of the *Charter*.

All but one of the respondents responded that they had heard of the *Charter* before and 38 (81%) reported having discussed the *Charter* in the past 12 months. There was a higher number of “I don’t know” responses than wrong answers. Overall, the scores of respondents were varied: the distribution of overall scores can be found in Appendix B. Consisting of nine questions, the knowledge test’s minimum score was 1 (11%), while the maximum score achieved was 9 (100%). The mean score was 4 (44%) and the median score was 5 (56%). Participants can generally be seen as either having a lower-than-average *Charter* awareness or a higher-than-average *Charter* awareness, based on the tendency to score higher in those ranges (0-2, 6-7).

Looking at ss. 1, 2, and 7, there were four questions in the knowledge question specific to these *Charter* sections. Figure 3 outlines the response accuracy to these questions.

Figure 3. Sections 1, 2, and 7 Survey Questions and Accuracy of Responses

Question Topic	Number of Correct Responses	Number of “I don’t know” Responses
Section 1	22	18
Section 2: religion	23	16
Section 2: expression	38	3
Section 7	29	13

There are a couple points of interest that can be observed in this figure: rates of certainty and rates of accuracy. The question about s. 1 has the least number of correct responses (46.8%) of these four questions, while the s. 2 expression question has the highest number of correct responses, with 80.9% of respondents getting the correct answer. Correspondingly, the highest level of certainty can be correlated also with the s. 2 expression question, with only 6.4% uncertainty. The s. 1 question portrays 38.3% uncertainty, the greatest of the four questions. This

demonstrates how specific sections are more likely to be known with certainty, whereas questions that were answered primarily incorrectly maintain the most uncertainty.

Other noteworthy data is that high school was the most prominent response regarding where the respondents first learned about the *Charter*, only one respondent had not heard of the *Charter*, 38 respondents had discussed the *Charter* in the past year, and website articles and social media were tied in responses for the main source to get news on current events (see Appendix C).

Hypothesis 2: As age and level of education increase, students' *Charter* knowledge will increase.

This hypothesis goes with the assumption that, as people go through their lives, they collect more accurate and relevant information pertaining to legal literacy. The more educated an individual is, thus, the more knowledge they will have picked up regarding *Charter* rights and freedoms. Likewise, the older someone is, the more knowledge of the *Charter* they will have. The survey results reflected that this hypothesis may be accurate, given that there is a noticeable increase in mean scores as age and level of education increase (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Age Range and Score Interpretations

Age	Score Range	Score Mean	Score Median
Under 20	1-6	3	3
20-21	1-9	4	5
22-24	1-7	5 (4.9)*	6
25-29	2-7	5 (5.3)*	7
30+	1-8	4 (4.2)*	4

* original number that was rounded to a whole number

From this analysis, it appears that the mean score generally increases as age increases and the range of scores gets smaller, showing more consistency in responses. The 30+ age group breaks this pattern; however, this data may be skewed due to the presence of outliers (range from 30-54

years old), or it may be possible that age and *Charter* knowledge correlates on a bell curve, whereby passing a certain age leads to a gradual decrease in *Charter* knowledge. More research will have to be conducted to test this hypothesis more accurately.

Regarding level of education, the researcher found a similar trend (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Level of Education and Score Interpretations

Number of Semesters Completed	Score Range	Score Mean	Score Median
2 or less	1-4	2	1
3-4	1-6	3	2
5-6	1-9	3 (3.2)*	2.5
7-8	2-8	5 (5.5)*	5.5
9+	1-8	5 (5.3)*	6

* original number that was rounded to a whole number

Here, the data reflects that the score range increases before decreasing, as the mean score usually increases with increased level of education. Most noticeable, however, is the marked increase in the median score represented by differing levels of education. This may be indicative of higher levels of education being correlated with people becoming more polarized in their *Charter* knowledge (e.g. high or low knowledge, few people with average knowledge).

To confirm this data, the researcher conducted a regression analysis of the dataset in Excel, observing the number of semesters completed (independent variable) and test scores (dependent variable), and found that there is a difference between the means and the model is significant according to the ANOVA test ($F = 10.25978$, $p < .05$). Based on the analysis, for every year (two semesters) of school completed, the predicted test score or level of *Charter* knowledge increases by one point, and with no semesters completed, the expected test score is one. 18.57% of the variance in test scores is explained by the number of semesters completed. The equation was found to be $Y' = 1.035552683 + 0.89269554(\text{number of semesters})$.

Hypothesis 3: Respondents will report a higher knowledge of the *Charter* than their knowledge test scores indicate, and higher ages will self-report a higher knowledge of the *Charter*.

To test this hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using the Excel data analysis function, comparing test scores (dependent variable) with self-reported *Charter* knowledge and age (independent variables). The self-reported *Charter* knowledge was categorized into a range of 1-4, according to how the question was phrased and with the one “None of the above” response omitted. This analysis failed to reject the null hypothesis, being that self-reported *Charter* knowledge and age would not have an impact on test scores, as the model was found statistically insignificant according to the ANOVA test ($F = 2.289793$, $p = 0.113234$).

Figure 6. Test scores by self-reported Charter-knowledge and age

Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.307033831							
R Square	0.094269773							
Adjusted R Square	0.053100218							
Standard Error	2.411699543							
Observations	47							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	2	26.6362253	13.31811265	2.289793308	0.113233506			
Residual	44	255.9169662	5.816294686					
Total	46	282.5531915						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	0.518184577	1.868804416	0.277281332	0.782862705	3.248143247	4.284512401	3.248143247	4.284512401

Self-Reported					-		-	
Knowledge	0.84418	0.49569	1.70303	0.09561	0.15482	1.84318	0.15482	1.84318
dge	2832	2892	5983	6365	055	6214	055	6214
					-		-	
Age	0.07437	0.06202	1.19914	0.23689	0.05062	0.19938	0.05062	0.19938
	895	6778	2577	0611	7807	5708	7807	5708

Two of the variables, namely self-reported *Charter* knowledge and test scores, were then compared. The self-reported *Charter* knowledge was split into two groups: low (answer 1 and 2) and high (answer 3 and 4). A one-way ANOVA test, using absolute residuals, was first conducted, in place of Levene's test (an inferential statistic used to assess the equality of variances), and determined that equal variances could be assumed ($F = 0.117451$, $p = 0.733448$). A two-sample t-test assuming equal variances was then performed, which was statistically significant and discovered a difference between the means. Hence, those who self-report a high level of *Charter* knowledge score on average 2.95 higher on the knowledge test than those who self-report a low level of *Charter* knowledge ($t = -4.94058$, $df = 44$, $p < .05$).

Figure 7. Self-reported *Charter* knowledge (low and high) and test scores

	Low SR Scores	High SR Scores
Mean	2.684210526	5.62962963
Variance	4.116959064	3.857549858
Observations	19	27
Pooled Variance	3.963671806	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	44	
	-	
t Stat	4.940580981	
P(T<=t) one-tail	5.86483E-06	
t Critical one-tail	1.680229977	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.17297E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.015367574	

Hypothesis 4: Female respondents and those enrolled in the Criminal Justice program at MRU will score higher.

A one-way ANOVA test, using the variables of gender and test scores, was first conducted to determine equality of variances and determined that equal variances could be assumed ($F = 0.832293$, $p = 0.366472$). A two-sample t-test assuming equal variances was then performed and found that there was not a statistically significant difference between the means. Because of this, the sample demonstrates that there will be no difference in average test scores for males versus females ($t = -0.0113617$, $df = 45$, $p = 0.9909851$).

Figure 8. Gender and test scores

	<i>Male Scores</i>	<i>Female Scores</i>
Mean	4.333333333	4.342857143
Variance	7.515151515	5.878991597
Observations	12	35
Pooled Variance	6.278941799	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	45	
	-	
t Stat	0.011361697	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.495492548	
t Critical one-tail	1.679427393	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.990985095	
t Critical two-tail	2.014103389	

Adjusting the variables to program enrolled in and test scores, the researcher conducted another ANOVA test and found that equal variances could be assumed ($F = 1.38427$, $p = 0.245847$). A two-sample t-test assuming equal variances was completed and found that the model was significant, with an observed difference between the means. This concludes that those enrolled in Criminal Justice at MRU score on average 3.08 on the knowledge test than those enrolled in another program at MRU ($t = -4.5397$, $df = 43$, $p < .05$).

Figure 9. Program (Criminal Justice or other) and test scores

	<i>Other Program</i>	
	<i>Scores</i>	<i>CRJS Scores</i>
Mean	2.230769231	5.3125
Variance	3.192307692	4.673387097
Observations	13	32
Pooled Variance	4.260062612	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	43	
t Stat	-4.53969956	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.24927E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.681070703	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.49853E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.016692199	

Hypothesis 5: Those who spend more time on the news and less time on social media will have higher test scores; those who agree that social media has taught them most of their knowledge about the *Charter* will score lower.

By graphing the survey data, those who spend 15-29 minutes on social media per day got the highest mean test scores, whereas those who spend 30-59 minutes on social media had the lowest mean test scores (see Appendix D). To compare time on social media and time on news with test scores, the researcher coded the different possible time responses with a range of 1-7. The three variables were first analyzed together using a multiple regression equation, which was found to be not statistically significant ($F = 0.068430616$, $p = 0.93395744$). The adjusted R square was negative, exhibiting insignificance of explanatory variables in the model.

Figure 10. Test scores by time on social media and time on news

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.055685
R Square	0.003101
Adjusted R Square	-0.04221
Standard Error	2.530168

Observations		47						
ANOVA								
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>			
Regression	2	0.876151512	0.4380758	0.06843062	0.93395744			
Residual	44	281.67704	6.4017509					
Total	46	282.5531915						
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	3.951181639	1.116440711	3.5390877	0.00096169	1.701143232	6.201220046	1.701143232	6.201220046
Time on News	0.053952694	0.376397106	0.1433398	0.88667626	0.704625829	0.812531217	0.704625829	0.812531217
Time on SM	0.067721889	0.217445519	0.311443	0.75693476	0.370510759	0.505954537	0.370510759	0.505954537

The researcher then conducted two separate ANOVA tests to discern individual significance of variables: time on social media and test scores, and time on news and test scores. It was found that there was no difference between the means for time on social media and test scores, as the model was insignificant ($F = 0.037104255$, $p = 0.847677516$). However, time spent on news and test scores was shown to be a significant model according to the Single Factor ANOVA test ($F = 47.21334368$, $p < .05$), so a bivariate regression analysis was conducted. This observed that every increase in news time (based on the 1-7 point range found in the survey: see Appendix A) increases the knowledge test score by 0.07, with the average for someone spending no time on the news being 4. The equation was thus found to be $Y' = 4.217550274 + 0.074040219(\text{time on news})$, with 0.09% of the variance in test scores being explained by time spent on the news.

Figure 11. Test scores by time on news

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.03005331

R Square	0.000903201
Adjusted R Square	-0.02129895
Standard Error	2.504653398
Observations	47

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	0.2552025	0.255202458	0.041	0.841064308
Residual	45	282.29799	6.273288645		
Total	46	282.55319			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	4.217550	0.710362	5.937176	3.86999E-07	2.78680582	5.648295295	2.78680582	5.648295295
Time on News	0.074040	0.367090	0.201694	0.841064	0.66531759	0.813398398	0.66531759	0.813398398

Finally, the respondents' levels of agreement with the statement that most of their *Charter* knowledge came from social media was compared with test scores, with the Likert scale being coded (1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-disagree, and 4-strongly disagree). An ANOVA test revealed that there is no significant difference in means between the four variables and the test scores. Finding Spearman's Correlation Coefficient (r_s), however, revealed that there is a negative correlation between the Likert scale and the test scores. It can then be understood that, as disagreement to the statement increases, test scores decrease.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative findings were based on the primary qualitative question in the survey, namely the question asking, "Identify one thing you have learned about your *Charter* rights and freedoms from social media" (see Appendix A). While the small number of responses made it difficult to gather insight on this topic, the following hypothesis represents the information that could be determined.

Hypothesis 6: Respondents will report contradictory information derived from social media and demonstrate uncertainty in the application of *Charter* rights and freedoms.

This hypothesis was based off the main qualitative question on the survey, which asked respondents the main thing they have learned from social media regarding *Charter* rights and freedoms. The qualitative responses were collected and coded together, resulting in six primary topics or themes of response: see Figure 12.

Figure 12. Survey Question: Identify one thing you have learned about your *Charter* rights and freedoms from social media

THEME	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Nothing	25
Current application of <i>Charter</i> rights	9
Judgement about others' <i>Charter</i> knowledge	6
Downfalls of <i>Charter</i> application	3
Freedom of speech/association (s. 2)	3
Equality rights (s. 15)	1

From this table, most respondents believe that social media has not impacted their understanding of their *Charter* rights and freedoms. Most of the other responses, similarly, focus particularly on how they perceive others' interactions with and applications of the *Charter*. This may be demonstrative of how social media can be used as a news delivery device, but this news can become internalized into a current understanding of how *Charter* rights and freedoms *should* be applied. It is interesting to note that the second-highest number of non-nothing responses pertained to the belief that other people do not know their *Charter* rights and freedoms well

enough: an example of a response falling into this category was “I have noticed that many individuals think they are educated enough about the *Charter* to speak about it publicly, but in reality, know very little about it.”

Another interesting finding in the qualitative data is the conflicting messages conveyed by respondents, demonstrating confusion regarding the limitations to *Charter* rights and freedoms. Consider three of the responses: 1) “masking does not violate a *Charter* right or freedom”, 2) “a national vaccine mandate would violate the Charter”, and 3) “allowed to violate our Charter rights for justifiable reasons”. These three respondents took very different messages away from social media and, while each could be argued from a legal perspective, there is a lot of information missing in each perspective that ultimately may lead to higher levels of uncertainty.

Outcome

Prominent findings from the literature include the emphasized importance of the public knowing their rights, the discerned differences between human rights and social justice issues, the issue of if constitutional literacy should be considered a right, and that social media can cause large numbers of people to respond in a particular way. The literature seems to suggest that social media could become a platform for the distribution of accurate *Charter* information, particularly because topics regarding the *Bill of Rights* and religion are areas of concern with legal literacy. Because the public are not being taught their rights as frequently or thoroughly as skills required for the job industry, this has resulted in a lapse of publicly available, and understandable, legal information. The literature suggests that education, particularly K-12 curriculum, is supplemented with additional social justice information that will better inform the public of their rights.

Similarly, notable findings from the survey show that MRU students have either an above-average understanding of the *Charter* or a below-average understanding of the *Charter*; it is possible that the Criminal Justice students are the ones representing the above-average understanding of the *Charter*, while those in other programs demonstrate the below-average understanding of the *Charter*. Further to this, those who report a high level of knowledge of the *Charter* appear to reflect this knowledge in their test scores, gender does not seem to impact *Charter* knowledge, and increased time spent on the news incrementally increases *Charter* knowledge. While the reported times spent on social media varied (see Appendix E), most respondents disagreed to some extent that their knowledge of the *Charter* came primarily from social media (see Appendix F). The survey also revealed that the respondents are largely in favour of education endeavours focused on increasing the public's *Charter* knowledge (see Appendix G).

The anticipated contribution of the research is that it will depict a level of awareness that MRU students have of their *Charter* rights. This, in turn, can promote a more realistic perception on the role that media plays in spreading awareness of the rights and freedoms that are protected under the *Charter* and may be able to demonstrate ways in which the public can be made more aware of what their rights are as a citizen. Additionally, because little research has been done on the topic of how well citizens know their rights, this research can help to establish a foundation from which another research can stem from.

Use of Social Media

The analyses showed how self-reporting that social media is not the respondent's source of *Charter* knowledge may be correlated with lower *Charter* knowledge. This was an intriguing find in that it seems to go against the logical progression of cause-and-effect, but respondents who feel that social media impacts their *Charter* awareness the least are perhaps the least aware

of the false news that they are assimilating into their belief system. Unawareness of the effects of social media may be correlated with unawareness of the *Charter*. Given that those spending 30-59 minutes on social media had the lowest mean test scores, it could be postulated that this timeframe depicts a “browsing” of social media that may make respondents more prone to believing fake news or incorporating inaccurate *Charter* information into their cognition. The highest number of respondents (13) reported spending 2-3 hours on social media per day, while six respondents reported spending under 30 minutes on social media per day (see Appendix H). This is compared with the time respondents reported spending on the news, whereby most (26) respondents said they spend 0-14 minutes on the news per day; only three respondents reported spending between 1-3 hours on the news per day (see Appendix I).

Discussion

Based on these findings, it seems the *Charter* is portrayed quite accurately on social media, or at least it is not presenting false information to these respondents. The knowledge test scores were higher than anticipated, and the lack of correlation in this sample between social media use and test scores went against the primary hypothesis proposed in this research project.

While it is possible that too many outliers existed to accurately present the data, it was unexpected to find that those who spend 30-59 minutes on social media a day score significantly higher than respondents using social media for any other amount of time. Further research may reveal that this pattern really does exist and perhaps describe why this amount of time, common to “browsing” the Internet, may have implications for higher legal literacy. The finding that respondents know their s. 2: expression *Charter* right better than their ss. 1, 2: religion, and 7 rights, while anticipated, still provides an interesting perspective that may speak to citizens’ priorities in knowing their rights. As the literature review also demonstrated, people tend to vary in their legal literacy depending on the topic, so perhaps greater attention needs to be given

regarding *which* legal principles have increased education. Because employers stress legal rights within a workplace setting, literature demonstrates that people generally understand these rights far better than other legal legislation, such as the *Bill of Rights* or rights upon arrest. With this knowledge, if Justice Canada were to implement education courses to increase *Charter* literacy, it may be wise to focus on collective rights and when rights can be justifiably infringed by a court.

Unfortunately, this research appears to have left far more to discover than it revealed. The major variables that require future exploration include how well the public (as opposed to Criminal Justice students) know their *Charter* rights, if *Charter* literacy is impacted by social media, the extent to which social media can assist with education, and what information-retrieval strategies are used to find legal information. If a better understanding of how well the public knows their *Charter* rights can be ascertained, this may be able to assist with how current and future events are dealt with and how the government communicates its agenda to the public. For example, in the case of COVID-19 mandates, the government could have more accurately presented what rights were being infringed and why it was a justifiable infringement according to s. 1 of the *Charter*. Establishing if legal literacy, specifically *Charter* literacy, is impacted by social media could provide the tools to appropriately address “fake news” and misleading information, as well as offer a *Charter* education delivery system. Further studies on this topic could also determine if social media can increase legal literacy (instead of decreasing it, as this study hypothesized) and if the social media platform perhaps leads to diminishing returns in terms of education; perhaps future studies will find that social media does, in fact, decrease *Charter* awareness. Finally, investigating what information-retrieval strategies are used by the public, not just students, may help to establish more effective curriculum for legal principles if it

can be determined how the majority of people access information (e.g. Google, Twitter, Reddit, news sites, personalized daily news).

This research created a foundation from which other studies can build off. Because of its exploratory nature, this research design promoted information-gathering from various topics, so looking at one topic specifically may be more effective in the future. Additional research with a larger sample size is necessary to ascertain any existing correlations and relationships among variables, particularly if researchers wish to generalize the findings to the public.

In conclusion, this study revealed that the public's legal literacy should continue to be explored within the context of a changing world: as technology becomes more advanced, the ways in which the public is educated will also have to advance.

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Appendix A Research Survey

Thank you for participating in my survey! The following survey should take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete and consists of twelve (12) multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blanks research questions, nine (9) multiple-choice knowledge questions, and five (5) demographic questions. The survey will be divided into the three (3) sections; once one section has been completed, the “Next” button at the bottom of the page can be selected to proceed to the next section. All the questions require an answer and so the survey cannot be submitted until every question has been answered. Click this link for the survey:

<https://forms.gle/mTv4gybfdWPikGxC7>

Research:

The next section of the survey addresses your own views on and experiences of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (*The Constitution Act, 1982*, Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11), hereafter referred to as the *Charter*, and social media.

Have you heard of the Canadian *Charter* before?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

Have you discussed the *Charter* in any of your MRU classes or with any other person, virtually or in-person, within the past 12 months?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

Which of the following best describes your knowledge about your *Charter* rights and freedoms?

- a. I did not know I had specific *Charter* rights and freedoms
- b. I have read about the *Charter* and/or read some sections of the *Charter*
- c. I have taken class(es) at MRU and read the *Charter*
- d. I could represent myself as my own lawyer
- e. None of the above

Where did you FIRST learn about your *Charter* rights and freedoms?

- 1. High school
- 2. Post-secondary school
- 3. Family
- 4. Friends
- 5. Church or religious group
- 6. Previous or current job
- 7. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.)
- 8. Other: _____

Today, most of your knowledge about your *Charter* rights and freedoms comes from social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.).

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree
5. Not applicable

Identify one thing you have learned about your *Charter* rights and freedoms from social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.)?

Fill in the blanks answer

Where do you get news on current events (politics, climate issues, crime trends, etc.)? Check all that apply.

- a. Parents/roommates
- b. International news
- c. Local news
- d. Television
- e. Website articles
- f. Newspaper
- g. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.)
- h. None of the above
- i. Other: _____

Approximately how much time **per day** do you spend on news sites/reading the news/watching the news?

- a. 0-14 minutes
- b. 15-29 minutes
- c. 30-59 minutes
- d. 60-89 minutes
- e. 90-119 minutes
- f. 120-179 minutes
- g. 180+ minutes

Approximately how much time **per day** do you spend on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.)?

- a. 0-14 minutes
- b. 15-29 minutes
- c. 30-59 minutes
- d. 60-89 minutes
- e. 90-119 minutes
- f. 120-179 minutes
- g. 180+ minutes

Justice Canada should do more to educate people about *Charter* rights and freedoms using social media.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree

- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree
- e. Undecided

More information about *Charter* rights and freedoms should be included in the high school curriculum.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree
- e. Undecided

A mandatory course at MRU about *Charter* rights and freedoms should be included in every MRU student's curriculum.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly Disagree
- e. Undecided

Knowledge Test:

The following section will test your knowledge and understanding of the *Charter*. I understand that this is an online survey so all the answers can be found on the Internet. However, because this study relies on the honesty of responses to accurately reflect your knowledge, please try to avoid searching online before responding. It does not matter whether your answer is right or wrong, only that you answer honestly and to the best of your abilities. All responses are anonymous.

How many sections are in the *Charter*?

- a. 12
- b. 34
- c. 27
- d. 19
- e. I don't know

Under what section of the *Charter* gives a person the freedom to practice any religion and hang out with whoever they choose?

- a. Section 7
- b. Section 15
- c. Section 9
- d. Section 2
- e. I don't know

Under what section of the *Charter* gives people the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty if they are arrested for a crime?

- a. Section 11

- b. Section 22
- c. Section 19
- d. Section 8
- e. I don't know

Section 7 of the *Charter* is about:

- a. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- b. Freedom of expression in print or words
- c. Life, liberty, and security of person
- d. Right to speak with a lawyer after being arrested
- e. I don't know

Section 16 of the *Charter* is about:

- a. Canadians are allowed to carry guns
- b. English and French are the official languages of Canada
- c. The right to not be searched by the police without reason
- d. Evidence can be excluded if it would make the criminal justice system look bad
- e. I don't know

After being arrested for a crime, a person is entitled to legal aid.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. I don't know

At roadside checkpoints, police are allowed to demand the driver take a breathalyzer (Alcohol-blood content screening) even if the officer has no reason to suspect the driver has been drinking.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. I don't know

Many people have used freedom of expression to justify things like hate speech. Hate speech is legal because *Charter* rights give Canadians this freedom of expression even if it negatively impacts a person or group.

- a. True
- b. False
- c. I don't know

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Canadian government limited our rights to gather in groups in order to reduce exposure to the virus. This was a limitation on our right of assembly within the *Charter*. What section of the *Charter* gives the government **justification** to limit this right?

- a. Section 23
- b. Section 1
- c. Section 14
- d. Section 6

e. I don't know

General/Demographic: (not mandatory)

What gender do you identify as?

Fill-in-the-blanks response

What is your age?

Fill-in-the-blanks response

Were you born in Canada?

- a. Yes, born in Canada
- b. No, born in another country

How many semesters have you completed at a post-secondary school, including in-person/online classes at or outside of Mount Royal University?

- a. under 2 semesters
- b. 3-4 semesters
- c. 5-6 semesters
- d. 7-8 semesters
- e. 9+ semesters

What credit or non-credit program are you currently enrolled in at Mount Royal University?

Write open studies or undeclared if you are not affiliated with a specific program.

Fill-in-the-blanks response

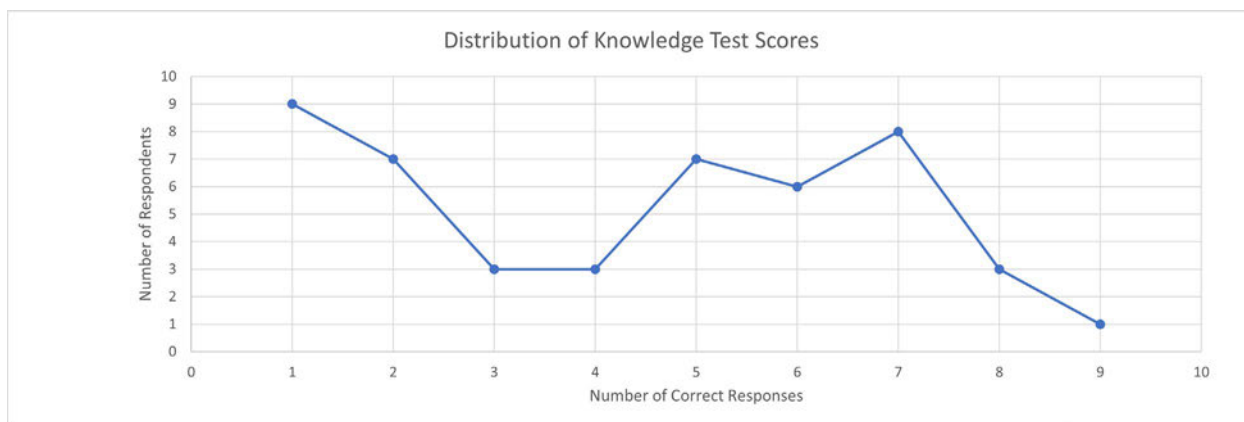
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Click NEXT for a list of resources and supports.

Should you wish to submit your answers, click SUBMIT. Should you wish to withdraw, close your browser.

Appendix B

Distribution of Overall Scores of Respondents

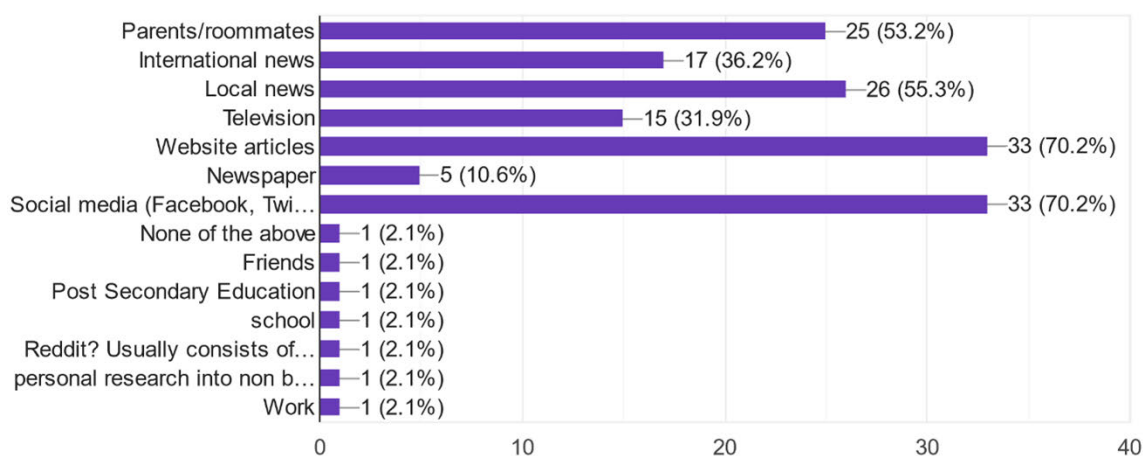


Appendix C

Respondents' Main Sources of News on Current Events

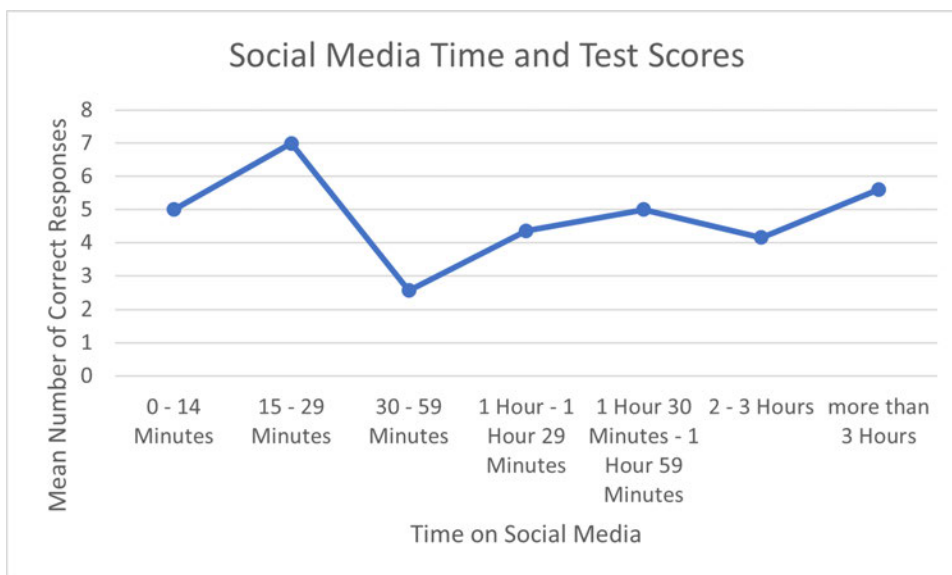
Where do you get news on current events (politics, climate issues, crime trends, etc.)? Check all that apply.

47 responses



Appendix D

Respondents' Social Media Use with Average Test Scores

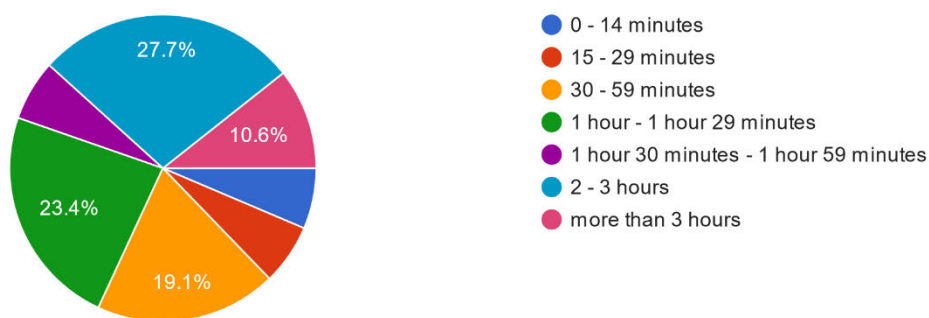


Appendix E

Respondents' Daily Times Spent on Social Media

Approximately how much time per day do you spend on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.)?

47 responses

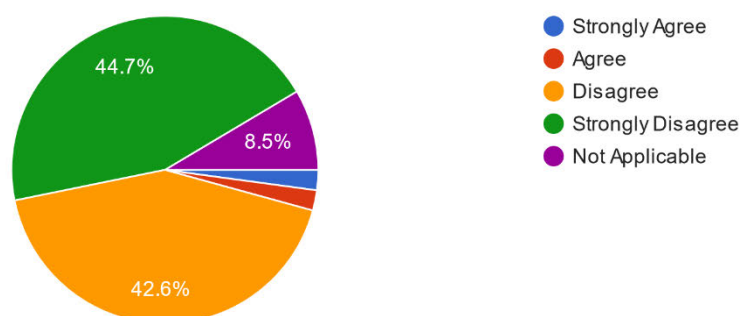


Appendix F

Respondents' Perspectives on Social Media as Primary *Charter* Informant

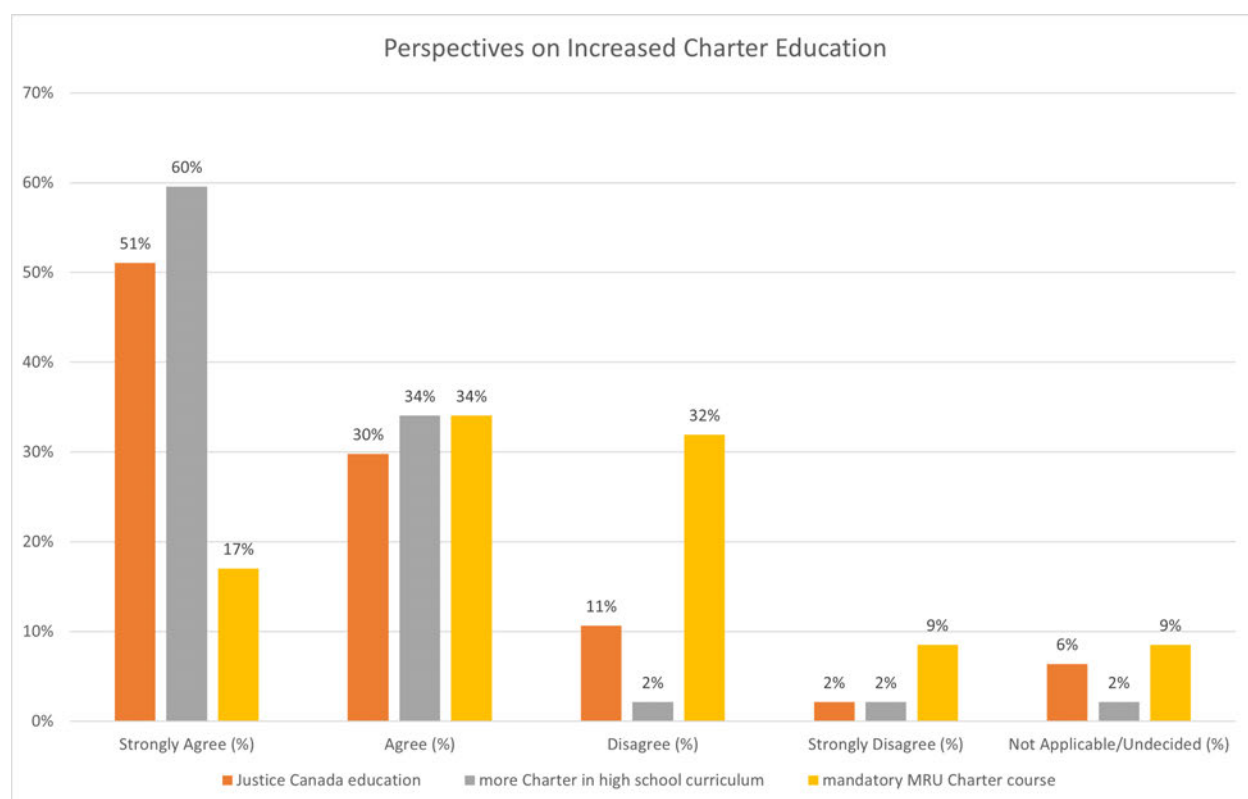
Today, most of your knowledge about your Charter rights and freedoms comes from social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.).

47 responses

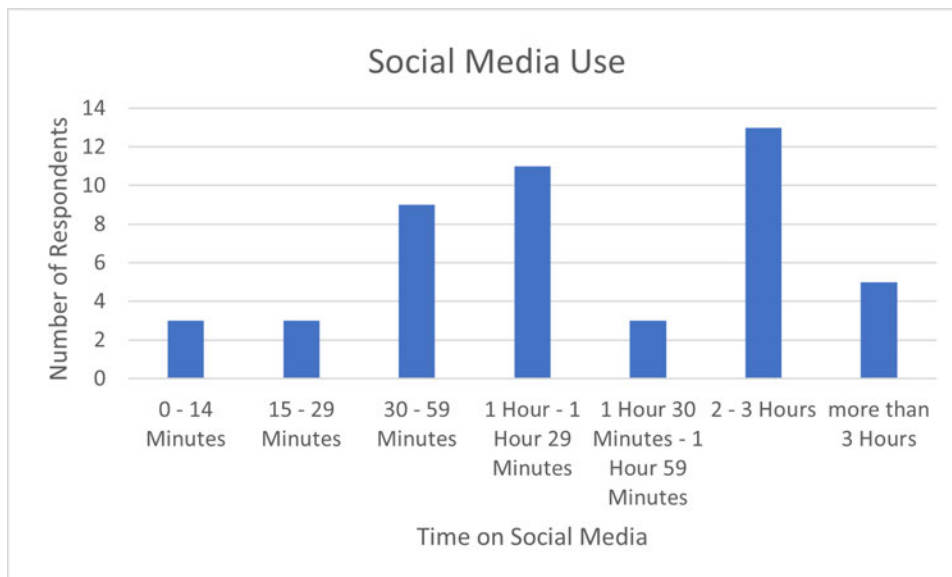


Appendix G

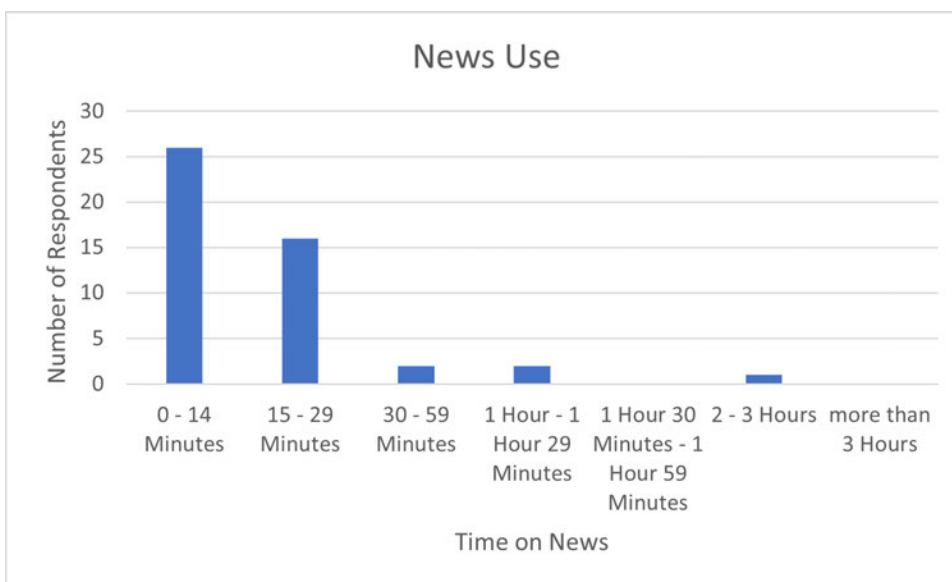
Respondents' Perspectives on Increasing *Charter* Education



Appendix H
Respondents' Daily Times Viewing Social Media by Number of Respondents



Appendix I
Respondents' Daily Times Viewing News



Appendix J

Human Research Ethics Board Approval



Human Research Ethics Board

t: 403.440.8470 | f: 403.440.6299
e: hreb@mtroyal.ca

October 29, 2021

Scharie Tavcer & Taya Onyschtschuk
Economics, Justice and Policy Studies
Mount Royal University

Dear Dr. Tavcer and Miss Onyschtschuk

Re: Application Number #102633
Understanding the Canadian Charter Rights and Freedoms from a Student's Perspective: The Role of Social Media on Charter Awareness

The above-noted ethics application was submitted for Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) review and has been found to be ethically acceptable **October 28, 2021**.

HREB and Mount Royal University adhere to the Tri-Council Policy Statement, "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans". As such, I am pleased to advise you that ethical clearance for this proposal has been granted to **October 28, 2022**. Please note that this clearance is contingent upon adherence to the submitted protocol (**Sent on October 22, 2021**). Prior permission must be obtained from the Board before implementing any modification(s) to the submitted documentation. Also note that ethics clearance does not, in itself, constitute authorization for the research to proceed. If you are recruiting from, or otherwise require support from, a group, department, or organization at MRU (such as IRP) or an external institution or organization, you must also obtain permission from that organization.

There are a few additional requirements for you to be aware of as you move forward in your research. First, if the research is funded, your institutional grants officer/ grants administrator/sponsor should be notified of clearance immediately via your forwarding a copy of this clearance letter to them for their records and release of funding. Second, researchers are required to notify the Mount Royal University HREB immediately if any untoward or adverse event occurs during their research or if data analysis or other review reveals undesirable outcomes for participants (including the researchers). And finally, you are required to submit a progress report by **October 28, 2022**. If this study is concluded before **October 2022** a study completion report will be required by **October 2022**. Study progress and completion report templates are available on-line at under the "events" tab.

Failure to submit the progress or study completion report by the due date (noted above) will result in the closure of the file for this study and no further data collection can occur after this date.

The study completion and progress reports will require the following information:

1. The number of participants that have been/were recruited;
2. Any unusual and/or severe complications, adverse events or unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others, withdrawal of participants from the research, or complaints about the research;
3. The status of the study, e.g., still collecting data, analyzing data, disseminating results;
4. The (expected) date of termination of this project.

Please accept the Board's best wishes for continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Lafave, PhD
Chair, Human Research Ethics Board

4825 Mount Royal Gate SW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T3E 6K6