November 22, 2021
Social Media Survey – Social and Political Impacts

Summary : Researchers at the University of South Florida surveyed (at) 1,000 U.S. adults to better understand patterns of social media usage, including the management of online privacy and security, as well as the effects of social media usage on social and mental well-being. This report summarizes common uses of social media – including e-commerce and political engagement – as well as some effects of social media usage on social and mental well-being. The survey included a representative sample of 1,000 adult social media users, fielded between November 2nd and 8th of 2021. Topline results are reported below with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 3.

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Social media is increasingly used for e- commerce. Over half of Americans (54%) report having clicked on a link to an advertisement in their "feed" during the past month, and nearly half (47%) report having shopped for a product or service on social media in same time period.

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Summary of Responses

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements: *(reported as percentages)*

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I pay close attention to the amount of time I spend on social media.	16.4	37.1	29.6	16.9
I pay close attention to the number of likes, retweets, and/or comments that I receive on social media.	14.2	30.6	27.7	27.5
I sometimes feel pressure to post interesting content on social media.	7.2	19.0	26.1	47.7
In general, I think that what people post on social media is an accurate portrayal of their real lives.				

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Have you done each of the following on social media in the past month? *(Reported as frequency/percent who answered "yes")*

	Frequency	Percent
Shared a link to a news story, article, etc.	495	49.5
Posted your opinion on current events	418	41.8
Debated politics or current events with someone in your social network	214	21.4

N = 1,000

How much do you rely on Facebook to stay informed about news and politics?

	Frequency	Percent
A Great Deal	64	7.5
A Lot	99	11.6
A Little	329	38.5
Not at All	362	42.4

N = 854 (Facebook users only)

How confident are you in the accuracy of the political information that you encounter on Facebook?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	44	5.2
Somewhat Confident	173	20.3
Not Very Confident	328	38.4
Not at All Confident	309	36.2

N = 854 (Facebook users only)

In the past 6 months, have you "unfriended" or "unfollowed" someone on Facebook because of their political posts?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	204	23.9
No	650	76.1

N = 854 (Facebook users only)

For which of the following reasons have you "unfriended" or "unfollowed" someone in the past 6 months?   *(Reported as frequency/percent who answered "yes")*

	Frequency	Percent
Posting political content that I disagree with.	118	13.8
Posting political ideas that I find morally objectionable	155	18.1
Posting political content that was untrue	154	18.0
Posting about politics too often	129	15.1

N = 854 (Facebook users only)

Which types of accounts/users have you "unfriended" or "unfollowed" because of their political posts in the past 6 months?   *(Reported as frequency/percent who answered "yes")*

	Frequency	Percent
Acquaintances	143	16.7
Strangers	79	9.3
Close Friends	74	8.7
Members of Your Family	54	6.3
Political Commentators	45	5.3
Elected Officials	43	5.0
News Organizations/Journalists	42	4.9

N = 854 (Facebook users only)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I often encounter political views on Facebook that are different than my own.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	309	36.2
Somewhat Agree	362	42.4
Somewhat Disagree	125	14.6
Strongly Disagree	58	6.8

N = 854 (Facebook users only)

How confident are you in the ability of social media companies like Facebook and Twitter to keep your personal information secure?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	79	7.9
Somewhat Confident	302	30.2
Not Very Confident	382	38.2
Not at All confident	237	23.7

N = 1,000

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

Survey Information

1,000 adult social media users were surveyed via an online web-panel using Prodege MR, an industry leading market research provider. The survey was fielded from November 2nd through 8th, and the results are reported with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 3.

Respondents were selected via a stratified, quota sampling approach to ensure a representative sample of Americans. Balanced quotas for gender, age, race, ethnicity, education, and political affiliation were determined based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 *American Community Survey* (ACS). The quotas were stratified by census region to ensure geographical representativeness: [Northeast – 17.1%; Midwest – 21.3%; South – 38.1%; West – 23.5%].

Table A1
Sample Comparison

	USF Survey Sample	American Community Survey (2019)
Gender		
Female	51.0 %	51.1 %
Male	48.6 %	48.9 %
Other/Non-Binary	0.4 %	-
Age		
18-24	10.6 %	11.9 %
25-34	17.9 %	17.8 %
35-44	16.4 %	16.5 %
45-54	16.3 %	16.0 %
55-64	17.6 %	16.6 %
65+	21.2 %	21.2 %
Race		
Black/African American	15.1 %	15.1 %
White/Caucasian	73.9 %	76.4 %
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.5 %	7.6 %
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.9 %	0.8 %
Other	2.6 %	0.2 %
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	18.0 %	17.5 %
Non-Hispanic	82.0 %	82.5 %
Education		
Less than High School	9.5 %	11.4 %

About our Research Team

Zach Blair -Andrews is a student in the Judy Genshaft Honors College at the University of South Florida. He is majoring in Political Science and minoring in Public Administration. Zach has been actively involved in Student Government, and he is currently interning with a member of the Florida House of Representatives through the USF Legislative Internship Program.

Stephen Neely (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2013) is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. He is coordinator of the School's undergraduate program in *Leadership and Public Service*. His areas of specialization include survey research, quantitative data analysis, and public policy. He has conducted survey research on behalf of local governments in the Tampa Bay region. Dr. Neely can be contacted by email at