2019 STUDY ON SOCIAL MEDIA PRIVACY AND SECURITY CONCERNS

Research Sponsored by ID Experts®
Research Conducted by Morning Consult
01. Summary

ID Experts is pleased to release our 2019 Study on Social Media Privacy and Security Concerns. We conducted interviews with more than 2,200 adults across the country who represent a diverse sample of gender, age, race, political and religious beliefs, educational backgrounds and income levels. According to our findings, the majority of Americans are using one or more social media platforms at least once per day and are concerned about their security and privacy on social media.

AT A GLANCE:

- 63% of adults use Facebook daily.
- 68% of adults are concerned about their privacy and security on Facebook.
- 1 in 5 adults have stopped using Facebook because of security concerns.
We found that the majority of American adults today, regardless of age, gender or other demographics, are active social media users. However, despite considerable concern over social media risks, most Americans continue to use these networks.

While the vast majority of adults – from millennials to baby boomers – believe seniors, teens and children are at great risk of having their security or privacy violated on social media, most don't actually personalize it or consider themselves to be at high risk.

Interestingly, younger adults – millennials and Generation Z – are more likely than older Americans to stop using a social media platform due to concerns about security and privacy, even though their level of concern is on par with, or less than, that of older Americans.
02. Methodology

For the 2019 Study on Social Media Privacy and Security Concerns, we polled a national sample of 2201 adults, ages 18 to 65+. The poll was conducted between March 20-March 25, 2019. The interviews were conducted online, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, education, gender, race and religion.

The sample also noted respondents’ political beliefs, type of employment, level of income, military status, and region.

In the course of our interviews, we asked questions to determine how often respondents used which social media platforms, their level of concerns about each, and what they perceived to be the biggest risk factors in social media use.
03. Key Findings

1. **Adults are more likely to use Facebook than any other social network.**
   63% of adults use Facebook at least once per day. The next most popular platforms were YouTube (with 42% of adults using it daily) and Instagram (with 29% of adults using it daily). Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit and LinkedIn had the lowest usage.

2. **Adults are more concerned about their privacy and security on Facebook than on any other platform.**
   More than two-thirds of adults are concerned about the privacy and security of Facebook, and only 1 in 10 adults say they are not at all concerned about these risks. People’s amount of usage does not significantly impact their level of concern.

3. **More than three quarters of adults, regardless of age, believe they are at risk when it comes to their security on social media.**
   Seniors express the most concern, with 92% saying they believe they are at risk.

4. **Even though there is a common concern around privacy and security on social media among adults, 65% of adults say they have not stopped using a social media network in response to this concern.**
   18% of adults say they have stopped using Facebook because of privacy or security concerns. Younger adults are the most likely to stop using social media due to concerns about security and privacy.
5. **Adults are concerned about risk but don’t view themselves as being at high risk when it comes to social media security.**
Over half of respondents said they believe children, teens and seniors are highly at risk when it comes to their social media security – but less than a quarter believe adults are at high risk.

6. **People are most concerned about phishing and malware on social media, with 82% expressing concern for these risks.**
Two-thirds or more are concerned about inappropriate content; fake social media accounts impersonating them or their family members; account takeover; and bots used to steal data or send spam on social media.

7. **Three quarters of adults are interested in protecting themselves and their privacy on social media.**
Adults are most interested in the detection and takedown of fraudulent links and malware used to obtain their personal information.
04. Detailed Findings

Facebook Is The Most Popular Social Media Platform Among Adults

The most frequent users of Facebook are women (70% use Facebook daily, compared to only 56% of men); adults ages 30-44 (70% use Facebook daily); and those with an annual income under $50,000 (65% use Facebook daily).

Younger adults are the most frequent users of Instagram. Adults under 30 (Generation Z and younger Millennials) use Instagram significantly more than adults over 30, with 57% of adults ages 18-29 using Instagram once or more per day.
2 in 5 Adults Say They Are Very Concerned About Their Privacy Or Security On Facebook

Level of concern does not vary significantly by age, gender or politics, but those with a postgraduate degree (76%) are the most likely to be concerned.
2 in 3 Adults Have Never Stopped Using a Social Media Platform As A Result Of Privacy Concerns

Younger adults are the most likely to stop using social media due to concerns about security and privacy. Over a third of Generation Z (18-21) and over a quarter of millennials (21-37) have stopped using Facebook because of these concerns.
3 in 4 Adults Believe Children’s Privacy Is Highly At Risk On Social Media

Over half of respondents said they believe children, teens and seniors are highly at risk when it comes to their social media security. 92% of those over age 65 say they believe seniors are at risk when it comes to their security on social media. 89% of Generation Z (ages 18-21) believe teenagers are at risk.
Of The Risks Tested, Adults Are Most Concerned About Malware And Phishing On Social Media

Over three quarters of adults (78%) are concerned about fake social media accounts impersonating them or their family members on social media. Nearly eight in ten adults (79%) are concerned about account takeover, when someone gets access to your account to post content and lock you out. Nearly eight in ten adults (78%) are concerned about bots used to steal data or send spam on social media. Gender, age, politics and other factors had little impact on level of concern. However, those with a postgraduate degree were the most likely to be concerned about social media security risks.
05. Conclusion

Social media has become a valued part of American’s daily lives and routines, whether it is for entertainment, networking, creative expression or just staying in touch with family and friends. And yet, in recent years there have been a string of breaches that have affected millions of Americans and attracted significant media attention. As a result, most Americans are now aware that their – and their families’ – identities, records, accounts and other personal information are at risk. Americans worry about their aging parents and grandparents struggling to navigate the internet; their children who are going online for the first time; and their teenagers, recently off to college, who are online without parental supervision.

There is an overwhelming concern among Americans about how their social media use will affect their privacy and online security. This concern is comprehensive; in our study, demographics like age, gender, politics or religion had little to no impact on respondents’ level of concern.

Most Americans are not willing to give up their social media usage to avoid security risks. They are eager for a solution that addresses their concerns and minimizes risk while still allowing them to be active and engaged users on their platforms of choice. Many Americans are aware of the most common social media threats – like infected links, spam and malware meant to steal their data, post illegal content on their accounts or commit fraud. However, few Americans know what options they have to prevent or resolve these concerns, outside of awareness.

Americans need to know that risk is pervasive. Seniors, adults and children alike are all at risk of identity theft and other social media breaches. While age sometimes makes an individual less aware of a threat, and more likely to do something like click on a suspicious link, Americans of all ages are the targets of hackers and illicit online actors.
With the amount of information stored and shared online, Americans also need to know that monitoring their records, such as credit scores, bank accounts, social security numbers and medical information, is important no matter how careful they are with their security. When it comes to social media, strong, complex passwords and two-factor authentication can help mitigate security risks. It is also important to keep anti-virus software up to date, update privacy settings on accounts and secure mobile phones with a passcode.

Parents should regularly check privacy and location settings on their children’s social media accounts, as well as monitor their children’s credit, through a service or by obtaining copies of their credit reports. Americans concerned about aging parents or grandparents can also take an active part in monitoring their accounts and identities. Educating children, teens and seniors about avoiding and reporting suspicious messages or links is a key part of social media security.

By taking these measures, Americans can decrease the likelihood of a security or privacy threat.

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