



9 New Facts on How Teens Use the Top Social Networks

In the tech world — and particularly in the social media sphere of “Facebook killers” — the whims and habits of teens can make or break a social media platform. So social networking giants and up-and-coming startups alike pay close attention when teens’ tastes change, trying to determine not just what will be the next top social network or app, but which will have staying power among the youngest tech consumers.

The findings of a recent survey shed some light on how teens use popular social media platforms. A report released by the Pew Research Center, called “[Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015](#),” is full of interesting insights into how teens use their mobile devices to connect and communicate. The survey found, for instance, that the overwhelming majority of teens go online daily, thanks to the proliferation of mobile devices. Drawing on data collected from a nationally representative sample of over 1,060 teens, 24% of teens say that they’re online “almost constantly,” while a full 92% of teens report going online daily. Fifty-six percent of teens go online several times per day, while only 12% report just once-a-day use of the Internet. Even fewer — just 6% — go online only weekly, and 2% go online less often than that.

But despite the ubiquity of mobile devices and the high rate at which all groups of teens go online, Pew found that gaps in access to technology fall along socio-economic, racial, and ethnic lines. And while a large number of teens use platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, they also continue to use Facebook, which is more likely to be cited as the most-used site by lower-income teens than by higher-income teens, while Snapchat is more likely to be used frequently by teens from more affluent families. Read on for nine insights into how teens use social media, drawn from Pew’s latest research into the tech world’s most closely-followed demographic.

1. Few teens don’t own or have access to a phone

A full 88% of teens ages 13 to 17 have or have access to a mobile phone of some kind. 73% of teens have, or have access to, a smartphone, and 30% have a basic phone. About 15% of teens have or have access to both types of phone. Just 12% of teens ages 13 to 17 say that they have no cell phone of any type. Smartphone users skew toward older teens, with 76% of teens ages 15 to 17 having a smartphone, compared with 68% of those ages 13 to 14. Seventy-seven percent of teens whose families earn more than \$50,000 per year own a smartphone, compared to 64% of teens from families earning less than that. Teens with lower incomes are the most likely to own a basic phone. African-American teens are the most likely of any group to have a smartphone, with 85% having access to one versus 71% of white or Hispanic teens. This broad ownership of and access to cell phones undoubtedly drives teens’ social media activity. Ninety-one percent of teens go online via a mobile device at least occasionally, and among this group, 94% go online either daily or more often.

2. Teens’ social networking activities are diversifying

Though Facebook remains popular, teens are branching out to other social networks, as well. When asked about seven sites — Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Google+ and Vine — and given the option to report another site used, 89% of all teens reported that they used at least one of the social media platforms. Seventy-one percent of teens say that they use more than one social network out of the seven platforms the survey asked them about. Among the 22% of teens who use only one social networking site, 66% use Facebook, 13% use Google+, 13% use Instagram, and 3% use Snapchat. When asked which platforms they use the most often, 41% of teens said that Facebook was the site that they used most frequently. But 20% pointed to Instagram as their most-used social network, and 11% said Snapchat was the platform they use the most. Boys were more likely than girls to report that they visited Facebook most often, and girls were more likely to say that they use Instagram and Tumblr. Older teens, ages 15 to 17, were more likely to say Facebook, Snapchat, or Twitter was their most-used platform, while younger teens, ages 13 to 14, were more likely to list Instagram as the platform they visit most often.

3. But Facebook still dominates among teens

Facebook is the most popular and most frequently-used social network among teens, with 71% reporting that they use Facebook. But some of the other mainstays of the social media space are gaining ground among teens. (Compare that to the 52% who say that they use Instagram, the 41% who report using Snapchat, the 33% who use Twitter, the 33% who use Google+, the 24% who use Vine, the 14% who use Tumblr, and the 11% who report that they use a different social media site not on Pew's list.) Boys and girls are equally likely to report using Facebook, but teens ages 15 to 17 are more likely to use it than teens 13 to 14. Much of the difference is attributed to the 13-year-olds, of whom only 44% use Facebook, compared to the 77% of 14 to 17 year-olds who report using Facebook.

4. More affluent teens tend to use Instagram and Snapchat

The survey found distinct patterns in social media use by teens' socioeconomic status. Teens from households earning less than \$50,000 were more likely than others to say that they visit Facebook the most often out of the social networks that they use, with 49% of these teens saying it's their most-frequently platform versus 37% of teens from families earning \$50,000 or more. Teens from more affluent households are more likely to say that they visit Snapchat the most, with 14% of teens from households earning more than \$75,000 reporting that Snapchat is their most-used platform, compared with only 7% of teens from households earning less than \$30,000 annually.

5. Girls dominate visually-oriented social networks

Teenage girls use social media platforms, particularly visually-oriented ones, more frequently than their male counterparts. Sixty-one percent of girls use Instagram, versus 44% of boys while 51% of girls and just 31% of boys use Snapchat. While 33% of girls use online pinboards, like Pinterest and Polyvore, only 11% of boys do so, as well. And while 23% of girls use Tumblr, only 5% of teens also use the platform. (For their part, Pew notes, boys are more likely than girls to own gaming consoles and video consoles.)

6. Messaging apps are catching on among teens

Texting is changing thanks to smartphone-based messaging apps that add features, change the cost, and eliminate the constraints on the messages users can send each other. 90% of teens with phones exchange texts, and the typical teen sends and receives 30 texts per day. But they aren't just sending messages through the traditional texting system. Seventy-three percent of teens have access to a smartphone, and messaging apps like Kik and WhatsApp are catching on among these users. And 33% of teens with phones have such messaging apps. Hispanic and African-American teens with phones are substantially more likely to use messaging apps than white teens — 46% of Hispanic teens and 47% of African-American teens use a messaging app, compared with just 24% of white teens.

7. Anonymous sharing apps are used by a small portion of teens

Just 11% of teens with cell phones report using anonymous question or sharing apps, like Whisper, Yik Yak, and Ask.FM, where users can ask questions or post confessional text or images anonymously. Girls are slightly more likely to use these platforms than boys, with 13% of girls with cell phones using them and only 8% of boys with cell phones reporting the same. Hispanic teens are almost twice as likely as white teens to use these platforms, with 16% of Hispanic teens using anonymous platforms, compared with 9% of white teens. And only 6% of teens from families earning less than \$30,000 annually visit these anonymous platforms, compared with 12% of teens from more affluent homes.

8. Almost half of teens talk with others via video chat

Forty-seven percent of teens report that they connect with others via video platforms like Skype, Oovoo, FaceTime, and Omegle. Older girls are the most likely to use these platforms, with 54% video calling or chatting with others, compared with 44% of all other teens. Fifty-three percent of Hispanic teens using video chat and video calling platforms, a higher proportion than the 43% of white teens who report talking via video.

9. Many teens report “overlap” across social networks

When asked to think about how much overlap they have with various friends on the different social networks that they use, the largest group of teens who use multiple social media platforms said that there is “some” overlap in their friends on the different social networks. Fifty-seven percent of teens said that there is some overlap across their social networks, while a full 29% of teens have tight social networks and report that their networks are composed of the same people on every social network they use. Only 9% say that there is “not a lot” of overlap in their friends between social networks, and another 4% of teens are characterized as “compartmentalizers,” and report no overlap in their friends across social media platforms.