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Pew Internet & American Life Project

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65% of online adults use social networking sites

Women maintain their foothold on SNS use and older Americans are still coming aboard

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<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Social-Networking-Sites.aspx>

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65% of online adults use social networking sites, and most describe their experiences in positive terms.

Two-thirds of adult internet users (65%) now say they use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn, up from 61% one year ago. That’s more than double the percentage that reported social networking site usage in 2008 (29%). And for the first time in Pew Internet surveys it means that half of all adults (50%) use social networking sites. The pace with which new users have flocked to social networking sites has been staggering; when we first asked about social networking sites in February of 2005, just 8% of internet users – or 5% of all adults – said they used them.

When we asked SNS users to describe their experiences using the sites, here’s what they said:



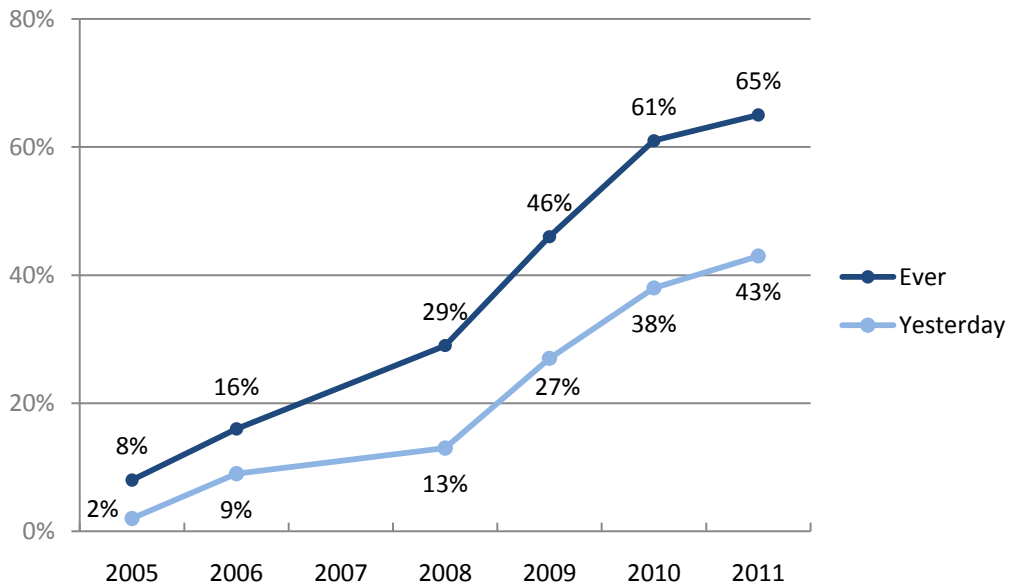
Only email and search engines are used more frequently than social networking tools.

Looking at usage on a typical day, 43% of online adults use social networking, up from 38% a year ago and just 13% in 2008. Out of all the “daily” online activities that we ask about, only email (which 61% of internet users access on a typical day) and search engines (which 59% use on a typical day) are used more frequently than social networking tools.¹

¹ See “Search and email still top the list of most popular online activities,” available at: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Search-and-email.aspx>

Social networking site use by online adults, 2005-2011

The percentage of all adult internet users who use social networking sites since 2005



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveys: February 2005, August 2006, May 2008, April 2009, May 2010, and May 2011.

Among internet users, social networking sites are most popular with women and young adults under age 30. Young adult women ages 18-29 are the power users of social networking; fully 89% of those who are online use the sites overall and 69% do so on an average day. As of May 2011, there are no significant differences in use of social networking sites based on race and ethnicity, household income, education level, or whether the internet user lives in an urban, suburban, or rural environment.

Who uses social networking sites?

% of internet users within each group who use social networking sites

All internet users	65%
Gender	
Men	60
Women	69*
Age	
18-29	83***
30-49	70**
50-64	51*
65+	33
Race/Ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	63
Black, non-Hispanic	69
Hispanic (English- and Spanish-speaking)	66
Household Income	
Less than \$30,000	68
\$30,000-\$49,999	70
\$50,000-\$74,999	63
\$75,000+	68
Education level	
Less than high school	68
High school grad	61
Some college	65
College+	67
Geographic location	
Urban	67
Suburban	65
Rural	61

Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between rows.

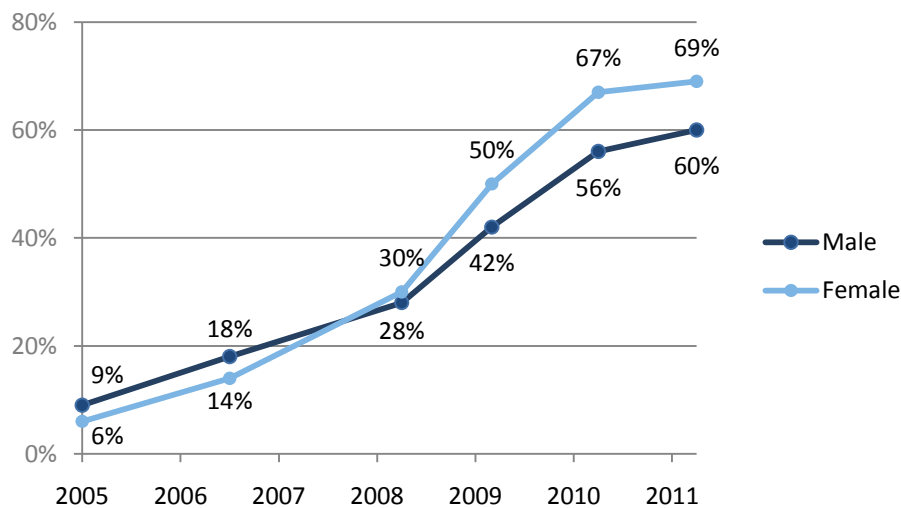
Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 26 – May 22, 2011 Spring Tracking Survey. n=2,277 adult internet users ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Women maintain a foothold on social networking sites.

Looking more closely at gender differences, women have been significantly more likely to use social networking sites than men since 2009. As of May 2011, nearly seven in ten online women are users of social networking sites (69%), compared with six in ten online men (60%). Women are also more active² in their use of these sites, with almost half of female internet users using social networking sites on a typical day (48%), compared with 38% of male internet users.

Social networking site use by gender, 2005-2011

The percentage of adult internet users of each gender who use social networking sites



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveys: February 2005, August 2006, May 2008, April 2009, May 2010, and May 2011.

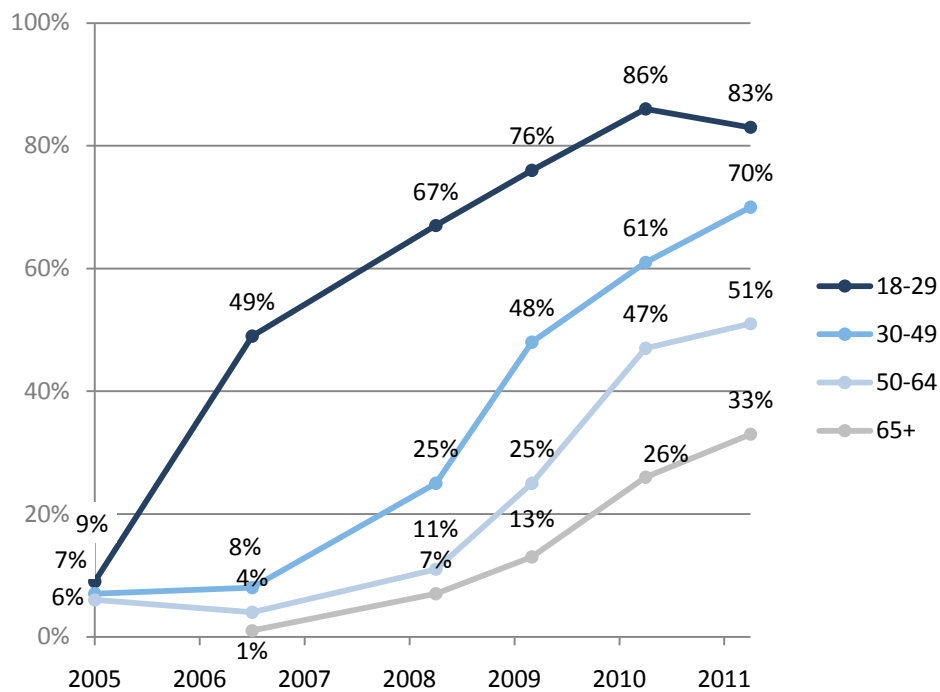
The frequency of SNS use among young adults was stable over the last year, while usage among older users increased.

Social networking sites have been very popular with young adults ages 18-29 almost since their inception. Between February 2005 and August 2006, the use of social networking sites among young adult internet users ages 18-29 jumped from 9% to 49%; during this same time period, use of these sites by 30-49 year olds remained essentially unchanged. Since then, users under age 30 have continued to be significantly more likely to use social networking sites when compared with every other adult age group. As of May 2011, over eight in ten internet users ages 18-29 use social networking sites (83%), compared with seven in ten 30-49 year-olds (70%), half of 50-64 year-olds (51%), and a third of those age 65 and older (33%).

² See also: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Technology-and-social-networks/Part-2/Facebook-activities.aspx>

Social networking site use by age group, 2005-2011

The percentage of adult internet users in each age group who use social networking sites



Note: Total n for internet users age 65+ in 2005 was < 100, and so results for that group are not included.

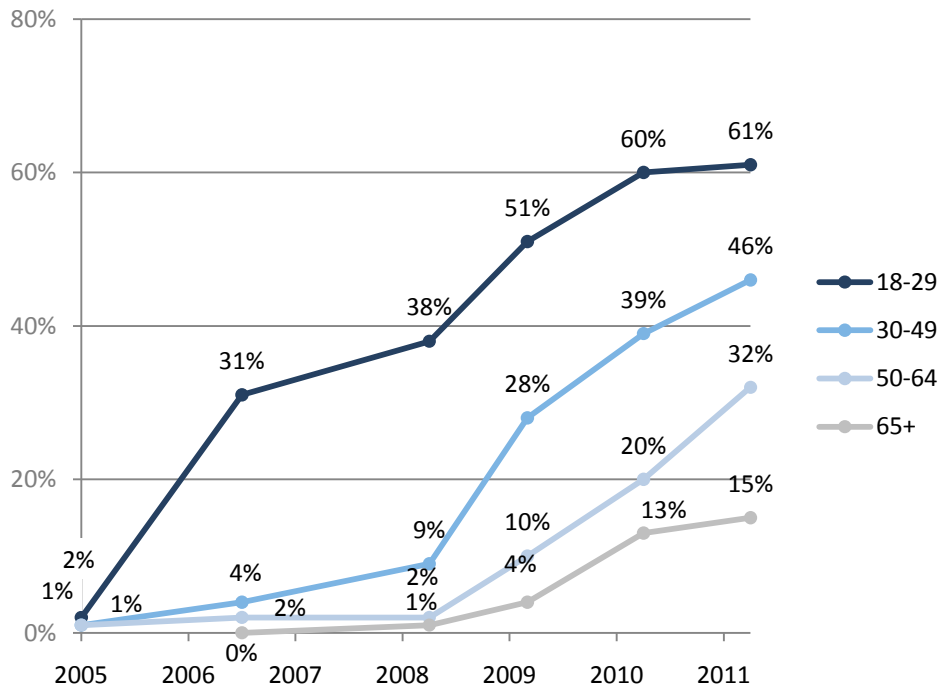
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveys: February 2005, August 2006, May 2008, April 2009, May 2010, and May 2011.

However, while young adults have consistently been the most likely to use social networking sites, internet users in other age groups have seen faster rates of growth in recent years. In the past two years, social networking site use among internet users age 65 and older has grown 150%, from 13% in April 2009 to 33% in May 2011. Similarly, during this same time period use by 50-64 year-old internet users doubled—from 25% to 51%.

Usage patterns on a typical day reveal a slightly different picture. The frequency of social networking site usage among young adult internet users was stable over the last year – 61% of online Americans in that age cohort now use SNS on a typical day, compared with 60% one year ago. At the same time, those ages 30-49 have become somewhat more likely to use the sites on an average day; the frequency of SNS use among this age group grew a modest 18% (from 39% to 46%) over the past year. However, among the Boomer-aged segment of internet users ages 50-64, SNS usage on a typical day grew a rigorous 60% (from 20% to 32%). And unlike the general growth in SNS adoption among those ages 65 and older, the frequency of use among the oldest group of internet users did not increase significantly over the past year.

SNS use on a typical day by age group, 2005-2011

The percentage of adult internet users in each age group who used social networking sites “yesterday”



Note: Total n for internet users age 65+ in 2005 was < 100, and so results for that group are not included.

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveys: February 2005, August 2006, May 2008, April 2009, May 2010, and May 2011.

Ask about social networking and good thoughts generally come to mind.

When social networking users were asked for one word to describe their experiences using social networking sites, “good” was the most common response. Overall, positive responses far outweighed the negative and neutral words that were associated with social networking sites (more than half of the respondents used positive terms). Users repeatedly described their experiences as “fun,” “great,” “interesting” and “convenient.” Less common were superlatives such as “astounding,” “necessity,” and “empowering.”



However, negative responses were recorded for roughly one in five respondents who answered this question and these answers included a far more diverse array of adjectives and, at times, expletives. Frustrations were evident among respondents who described their experiences using the networks as “annoying,” “overwhelming,” “boring,” “confusing” and “overrated.” Many respondents offered the words “addictive” or “addicting” as the first thing that came to their mind, while a sizable ambivalent group said their experiences had simply been “okay.” These neutral descriptions were also quite varied, though terms that indicated little experience with the sites—such as “Rarely,” “Seldom” or “Occasionally”—were common in this group.

Because the open-ended question asked respondents to “use one single word to describe your experiences using social networking sites,” the adjectives that were shared point to both the user’s interactions on the sites and the functionality of the interface. For instance, one user described her experiences on the sites as “noisy” while another used the word, “glitches.”

One word, many experiences using social networking sites

A selection of positive, negative, neutral and notable terms used by respondents when describing their experiences using SNS

Positive	Negative	Neutral	Notable
(top ten)	(top ten)	(top ten)	(mentioned only once)
Good	Boring	Okay	Nosey
Fun	Confusing	Fine	Omnipresent
Great	Frustrating	Adequate	Hog Wash
Interesting	Time-consuming	Family	Glitches
Convenient	Overwhelming	Rarely	Vulnerable
Excellent	Addictive	All Right	Crowded
Easy	Annoying	Communication	Stalking
Awesome	Addicting	Seldom	Influence
Informative	Mediocre	Facebook	Conformity
Useful	Overrated	Infrequent	Befuddled

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 26 – May 22, 2011 Spring Tracking Survey. n=2,277 adult internet users ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Survey questions

Spring Change Assessment Survey 2011

Final Topline

5/25/2011

Data for April 26–May 22, 2011

Princeton Survey Research Associates International
for the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project

Sample: n= 2,277 national adults, age 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews

Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on Total [n=2,277]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [n=1,701]

Form B (the form used for online phone calling question) [n=846]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on cell phone users [n=1,914]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on SNS or Twitter users [n=1,015]

WEB1 Next... Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things. Do you ever use the internet to to...[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]? / Did you happen to do this **yesterday**, or not?³

Based on all internet users [N=1,701]

	TOTAL HAVE EVER DONE THIS	----- DID YESTERDAY	HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
Use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn ⁴					
Current	65	43	35	*	0
January 2011	61	n/a	39	0	0
December 2010	62	n/a	38	*	0
November 2010	61	37	39	*	*
September 2010	62	39	38	*	0
May 2010	61	38	39	0	0
January 2010	57	32	43	*	0
December 2009	56	33	44	0	*
September 2009	47	27	52	*	*
April 2009	46	27	54	*	*
December 2008	35	19	65	*	--
November 2008	37	19	63	0	0
July 2008	34	n/a	66	*	--
May 2008	29	13	70	*	--
August 2006	16	9	84	*	--
September 2005	11	3	88	1	--
February 2005	8	2	91	1	--

³ Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever...?/Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?" Unless otherwise noted, trends are based on all internet users for that survey.

⁴ In December 2008, item wording was "Use a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook." In August 2006, item wording was "Use an online social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or Friendster". Prior to August 2006, item wording was "Use online social or professional networking sites like Friendster or LinkedIn"

IF SNS USER OR TWITTER USER, READ: I have a few questions about social networking sites...⁵

SNS1 Overall, if you had to use one single word to describe your experiences using social networking sites, what would that one word be? [IF "Don't know", PROBE ONCE: It can be anything, just the first word that comes to mind...] [OPEN-END; ENTER VERBATIM RESPONSE; RECORD FIRST RESPONSE ONLY]

Based on SNS or Twitter users [N=1015]

	<u>CURRENT</u>	
%	93	Gave response
	6	Don't know
	1	Refused

⁵ Analysis in this report was conducted on SNS users only.

Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International from April 26 to May 22, 2011, among a sample of 2,277 adults, age 18 and older. Telephone interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by landline (1,522) and cell phone (755, including 346 without a landline phone). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. For results based on Internet users (n=1,701), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. Numbers for the landline sample were selected with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 7 attempts were made to complete an interview at a sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each number received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone available. For the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male or female currently at home based on a random rotation. If no male/female was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult of the other gender. For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was an adult and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular sample respondents were offered a post-paid cash incentive for their participation. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample. The first-stage weight is the product of two adjustments made to the data – a Probability of Selection Adjustment (PSA) and a Phone Use Adjustment (PUA). The PSA corrects for the fact that respondents in the landline sample have different probabilities of being sampled depending on how many adults live in the household. The PUA corrects for the overlapping landline and cellular sample frames.

The second stage of weighting balances sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced by form to match national population parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density, and telephone usage. The White, non-Hispanic subgroup is also balanced on age, education and region. The basic weighting parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau’s 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that included all households in the continental United States. The population density parameter was derived from Census 2000 data. The cell phone usage parameter came from an analysis of the January-June 2010 National Health Interview Survey. Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Table 2: Sample Disposition

Landline	Cell	
32,909	19,899	Total Numbers Dialed
1,416	364	Non-residential
1,428	35	Computer/Fax
32	----	Cell phone
16,833	8,660	Other not working
1,629	287	Additional projected not working
11,571	10,553	Working numbers
35.2%	53.0%	Working Rate
543	96	No Answer / Busy
3,091	3,555	Voice Mail
53	10	Other Non-Contact
7,884	6,892	Contacted numbers
68.1%	65.3%	Contact Rate
489	1,055	Callback
5,757	4,618	Refusal
1,638	1,219	Cooperating numbers
20.8%	17.7%	Cooperation Rate
56	33	Language Barrier
----	426	Child's cell phone
1,582	760	Eligible numbers
96.6%	62.3%	Eligibility Rate
60	5	Break-off
1,522	755	Completes
96.2%	99.3%	Completion Rate
13.6%	11.5%	Response Rate

The disposition reports all of the sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:

- Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made
- Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused
- Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus the response rate for the landline sample was 13.6 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 11.5 percent.