

Social Networking Is Nearly Ubiquitous Among Internet Users in China

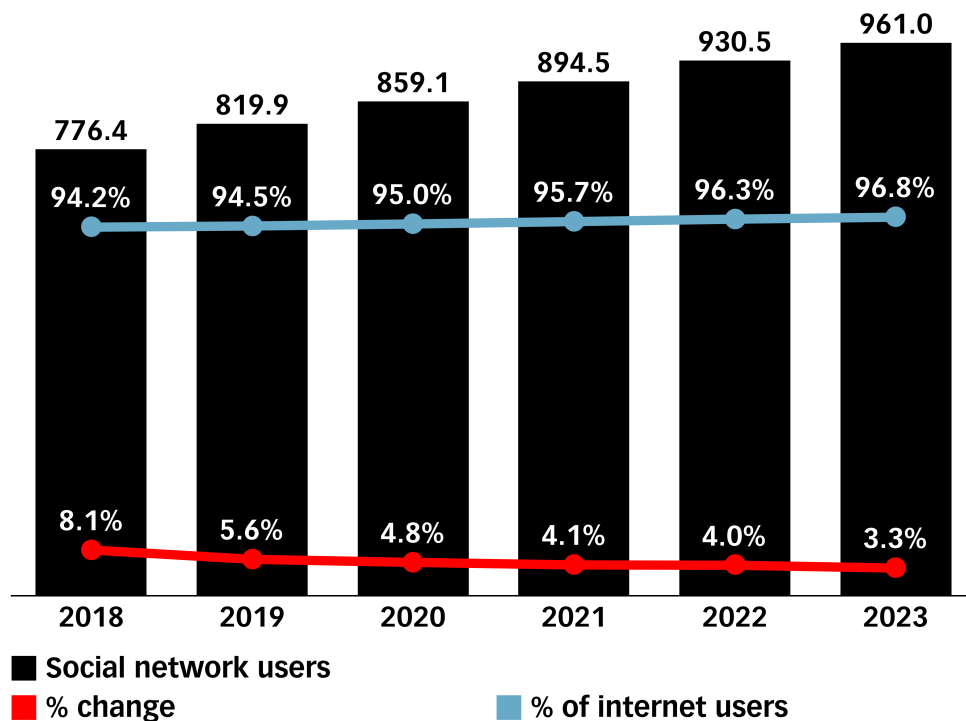
ARTICLE | **JANUARY 09, 2020**

Man-Chung Cheung

The total number of social network users in China will grow 4.8% to 859.1 million in 2020, and by 2023, nearly all internet users (96.8%) will be social network users, according to our forecast. Though the growth rate of social network users in China is slowing, there will be at least 30 million more social network users added annually between 2020 and 2023.

Social Network Users in China, 2018-2023

millions, % change and % of internet users



Note: internet users of any age who use a social network via any device at least once per month; excludes Hong Kong
Source: eMarketer, November 2019

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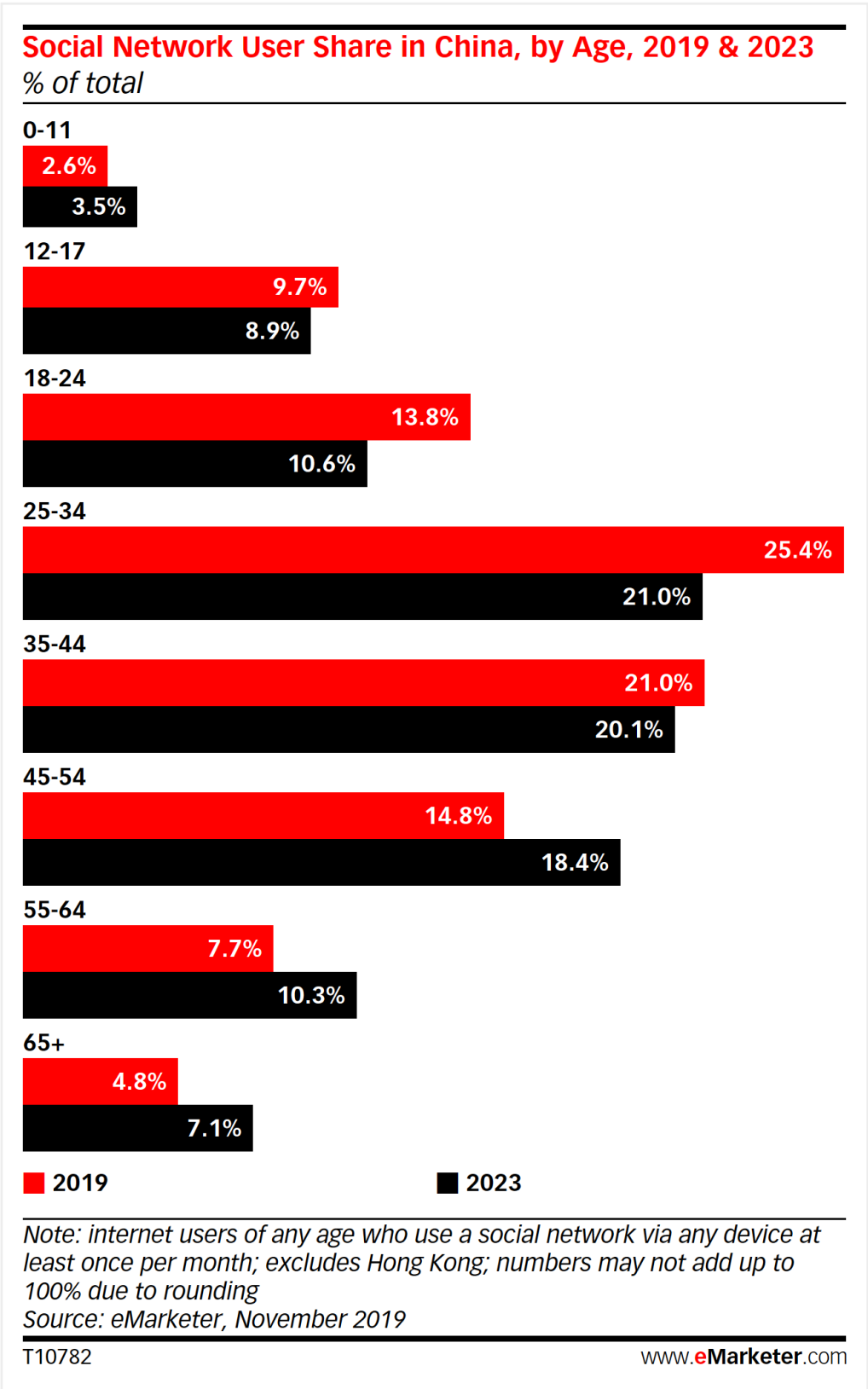
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Despite the enormous number of social network users in the country, penetration among the population will be 61.6% in 2020, due in most part to only 62.4% of the population having access to the internet.

But continued infrastructure investment from the government, especially in rural areas, will improve telecommunications, inviting more people to become internet users, which in turn will lead to greater penetration of social network users.

Social network penetration among younger generations is generally high, and the same goes for China. Social network user penetration among those ages 12 to 44 is extremely high, while all other age groups remain underindexed. In 2019, people ages 55 and older make up just 12.5% of all social network users, while those 34 or younger account for more than half. This makeup is gradually changing,

however. By 2023, the proportion of social network users who are 55 and older will rise to 17.4%, while users under 34 will drop to 44.0%.



These cohorts, particularly those ages 55 and up, will increasingly drive the future growth of social network users in China. Older demographics are “social network laggards” in every sense of the word. But as digitization sweeps across China—along with the practical convenience that social networks bring to consumers—many more will feel a strong gravitational pull to these platforms. For example, WeChat is heavily used in workplaces as a communication tool, and its in-app payment service WeChat has made cash less useful by the day.

While older people in general have a more difficult time typing in pinyin (Romanization of Chinese characters), voice-to-text technology in WeChat has helped overcome this hurdle. Voice- and video-calling features on social networks also help them keep in touch with relatives. Additionally, improvements in telecom infrastructure and further smartphone user penetration among this group should facilitate greater social network user penetration.

For more in-depth analysis on social media trends taking place in China, read our latest report.

Report by Man-Chung Cheung Dec 12, 2019

China Social Network Users 2019

**CHINA SOCIAL
NETWORK
USERS 2019**

Updates on Douyin, WeChat
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December 2019
Man-Chung Cheung
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