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Facebook Ranks Last in Digital Trust Among Users

LinkedIn is the most trusted digital platform

ARTICLE | **SEPTEMBER 23, 2020**

eMarketer Editors

When it comes to protecting users' personal information and providing a safe online environment, social network users in the US give lower marks to Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter. According to Insider Intelligence's annual "US Digital Trust Survey," LinkedIn is the most trusted social platform overall. We define digital trust as the confidence users have in a social media platform to protect their information and provide a safe environment for them to create and engage with content.

The 2020 "US Digital Trust Survey," we evaluated consumer perceptions of the major social networks within five categories of trust: security, legitimacy, community, ad experience, and ad relevance*. We ranked nine platforms—Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, reddit, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube—according to how our respondents perceived them along those five pillars of digital trust. We fielded the online survey of 1,865 US respondents ages 18 to 74 between May 28, 2020 and June 3, 2020, using a sample provided by a third party.
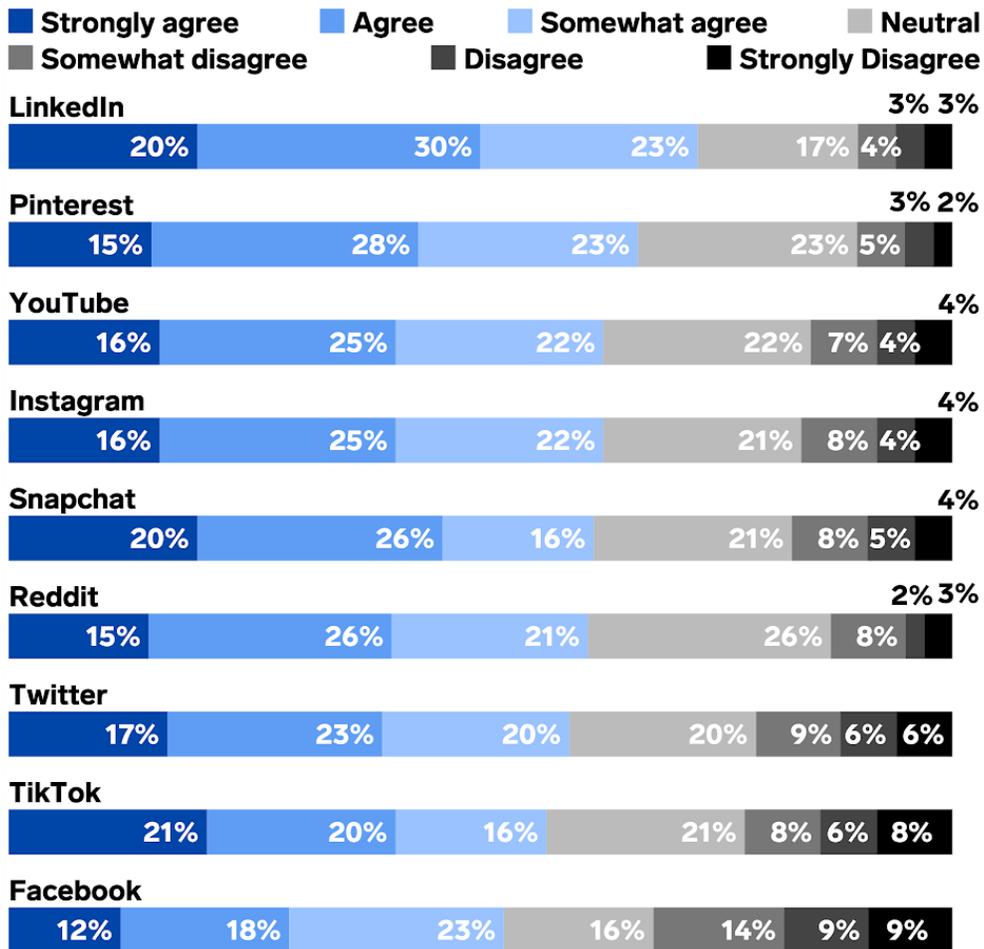
SECURITY

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Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement about the platform: **I am confident that this platform protects my privacy and data.**

We found that Facebook was the least trusted social media platform regarding data privacy. Nearly one-third (32%) of US Facebook users at least somewhat disagreed that they had confidence in the platform to protect their data and privacy. Just 10% of LinkedIn's users said the same of the professional network.

How Much Do US Social Media Users Agree That Social Media Platforms Protect Their Privacy And Data?

% of respondents, by platform, June 2020

**■ Strongly agree   ■ Agree   ■ Somewhat agree   ■ Neutral
■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree**

LinkedIn   3% 3%
| 20% | 30% | 23% | 17% | 4% |

Pinterest   3% 2%
| 15% | 28% | 23% | 23% | 5% |

YouTube   4%
| 16% | 25% | 22% | 22% | 7% | 4% |

Instagram   4%
| 16% | 25% | 22% | 21% | 8% | 4% |

Snapchat   4%
| 20% | 26% | 16% | 21% | 8% | 5% |

Reddit   2% 3%
| 15% | 26% | 21% | 26% | 8% |

Twitter
| 17% | 23% | 20% | 20% | 9% | 6% | 6% |

TikTok
| 21% | 20% | 16% | 21% | 8% | 6% | 8% |

Facebook
| 12% | 18% | 23% | 16% | 14% | 9% | 9% |

Note: Facebook n=1,616; YouTube n=1,445; Instagram n=1,064; Twitter n=841; Pinterest n=746; Snapchat n=650; LinkedIn n=574; TikTok n=482; Reddit n=384; ages 18–74; among respondents who have used each social media platform in the past 12 months; numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding; respondents were asked to respond to the question: "Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: 'I am confident that this social platform protects my privacy and data.'"
Source: Insider Intelligence, "US Digital Trust Survey," June 2020
Methodology: Data is from the June 2020 Insider Intelligence survey titled "US Digital Trust Survey." 1,865 US social media users ages 18–74 were surveyed online during May 28–June 3, 2020. Respondents used a social media platform in the past 12 months and closely resemble US demographics on the criteria of gender, age, and household income. The sample of this study was provided by a third-party provider.

"Two years after the Cambridge Analytica scandal, we expect that Facebook's massive data privacy issues during that time have persisted in public memory and continue to be a black mark on its record," said Audrey Schomer, senior research analyst at Insider Intelligence. "This is likely driving nearly one-third of US Facebook users to continue to view Facebook as a platform that doesn't adequately protect their data. Our research highlights the great importance of data privacy protections by social networks to ensure that user engagement data isn't mishandled or misappropriated."

A majority (53%) of US Facebook users at least somewhat agreed that the platform protects their data and privacy, but this was the lowest share of respondents among all platforms we measured.

"To Facebook's credit, it has made efforts to give users more control over their data through opt-in and opt-out features tied to what data is shared and what ads they're shown, as well as by increasing its own transparency into what data is collected," said Daniel Carnahan, research associate at Insider Intelligence. "Nevertheless, it appears that these efforts are still having only minimal effects on US user sentiment."

TikTok and Twitter were the next-to-worst performers when it came to confidence in their user data and privacy handling. About one in five US TikTok and Twitter users (22% and 21%, respectively) at least somewhat lacked confidence in the platforms to protect their data and privacy. While majority shares of the two platforms' respective users felt confident that their data and privacy was being protected, they were still less confident compared with users of other platforms. For TikTok, intensifying scrutiny from the US government has likely had a negative impact on some users' confidence in the app. When our survey was conducted, many US legislators were voicing their concerns about TikTok's connections to the Chinese government. As for Twitter, it had already come under fire in 2019 for sharing some users' data with advertisers without their permission. It also fixed a bug that accidentally collected and shared user location data.

LinkedIn and Pinterest ranked highest when it came to confidence in their ability to provide security. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of LinkedIn

users and 66% of Pinterest users at least somewhat agreed that the respective platforms protect their privacy and data. LinkedIn and Pinterest have each received very little media attention related to data privacy issues, which likely contributes to their more positive perceptions among users.

What the Results Mean

Digital trust is important for brands and advertisers to consider because US social users say it impacts whether they will interact with the ads they see on social platforms. Even if security scandals don't drive users to cease engagement, our data indicates that the trust users have—or don't have—in social platforms could impact their interactions with ads or sponsored content. In fact, 79% of respondents said whether a platform protects their privacy and data was either extremely or very impactful when it comes to their decision to engage with ads. And 30% of respondents said that whether a platform shows them relevant ads had an extremely or very high impact.

What Most Impacts US Social Media Users' Decision To Engage* With Ads Or Sponsored Content On Social Media Platforms?

% of respondents, June 2020

■ **Extremely impactful** ■ **Very impactful** ■ **Moderately impactful**
■ **Slightly impactful** ■ **Not at all impactful**

The platform protects my privacy and data

| 52% | 27% | 13% | 5% | 4% |

The platform shows me deceptive content

| 38% | 31% | 18% | 8% | 5% |

The platform makes me feel safe to participate and post

| 37% | 32% | 19% | 8% | 4% |

The platform shows me annoying ads

| 25% | 30% | 27% | 13% | 6% |

The platform shows me relevant ads

| 12% | 18% | 32% | 21% | 17% |

*Note: n=1,865 ages 18–74; numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding; *watch, click, share, comment*
Source: Insider Intelligence, "US Digital Trust Survey," June 2020
Methodology: Data is from the June 2020 Insider Intelligence survey titled "US Digital Trust Survey." 1,865 US social media users ages 18–74 were surveyed online during May 28–June 3, 2020. Respondents used a social media platform in the past 12 months and closely resemble US demographics on the criteria of gender, age, and household income. The sample of this study was provided by a third-party provider.

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