

How the Coronavirus is Changing US Social Media Usage

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Alexandra Samet

When US consumers started spending more time at home during the pandemic, they also started using social media more, providing an unexpected boost to engagement on these platforms. The coronavirus has hastened the development and popularity of new live streaming, video chat and gaming features on social networks.

The Harris Poll conducted between late March and early May, found that between 46% and 51% of US adults were using social media more since the outbreak began. In the most recent May 1–3 survey, 51% of total respondents – 60% of those ages 18 to 34, 64% of those ages 35 to 49, and 34% of those ages 65 and up – reported increased usage on certain social media platforms.

US Adults Who Are Using Social Media More Since the Coronavirus Pandemic, March-May 2020

% of respondents

Wave 5 (March 28-30)	46%
Wave 6 (April 3-5)	50%
Wave 7 (April 11-13)	51%
Wave 8 (April 18-20)	47%
Wave 10 (May 1-3)	51%

Note: ages 18+

Source: The Harris Poll, "COVID-19 Wave 10," May 4, 2020

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However, it's important to keep in mind that certain social media sites will sustain more engagement than others, and time spent on these social networks and messaging may change as people start to go back to work and school. Which consumer behavior trends on social media will continue after the pandemic and how can we prepare for any expected shifts?

eMarketer's report ***US Social Media Usage Report 2020*** explores US social media usage patterns during the start of the coronavirus pandemic and discusses three activities to pay attention to moving forward.

Here are some key takeaways from the report:

- With business traveling curtailed in 2020, consumers who learned how to video chat on platforms like Zoom during the pandemic are likely to continue this behavior. However, people may spend less time video chatting in groups as they get back to normal routines and feel more comfortable with in-person interactions.
- We have increased our forecast on mobile messaging and now believe time spent by US adults will grow by 4 minutes in 2020, to 24 minutes per day, not only due to the pandemic but also data showing strong engagement on messaging services like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Apple iMessage.
- This year, US adult social network users will spend 7 more minutes per day on social networks than in 2019, but time spent will start declining again in 2021 as the pandemic boost wears off.

- Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat will see a more sustained boost than Facebook from the coronavirus, as US adult Facebook time spend is up just 1 minute from our previous forecast, at 34.4 minutes per day. However, the pandemic has helped to flatten their significant 2017-2019 decline of time spend, and any growth at all for Facebook is considered positive.

For more insights on social media usage in the US, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

Report by Debra Aho Williamson Jun 02, 2020

US Social Media Usage

