

# Uptick in US Adults' Social Media Usage Will Likely Normalize Post-Pandemic

## ARTICLE |

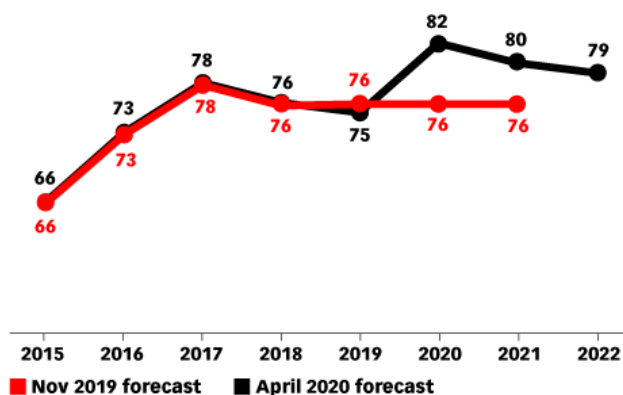
**Debra Aho Williamson**

When US consumers started spending more time at home in March and April, they also started using social media more, providing an unexpected boost to the platforms.

Depending on the research source, up to 51% of US adults are using social media at higher rates during the pandemic. But even though elevated social usage continued at least into May, causing us to upgrade our forecast for time spent on social networks by US social network users, we believe that when consumers eventually get back to their normal routines of school, work and social activities, the trends will moderate. We think this will start to happen later in 2020, with a more visible downward trend evident in 2021 and beyond.

### Social Networks: Average Time Spent by US Adult Social Network Users, 2015-2022

minutes per day, Nov 2019 vs. April 2020



Note: ages 18+ who use social networks at least once per month; time spent with each medium includes all time spent with that medium, regardless of multitasking or device  
Source: eMarketer, May 2020

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In an April 2020 GlobalWebIndex poll, only 9% of US internet users ages 16 to 64 said they expected to continue spending more time on social media after the pandemic eases. Even fewer (5%) planned to keep spending more time on messaging services. These figures were well below other activities consumers expected to continue, such as cooking, spending more time as a family and watching streaming TV services.

Americans aren't alone in thinking that their social media and messaging behaviors won't stick. Just 17% of respondents worldwide expected their elevated social media usage habits would continue, and 19% thought they'd still use messaging at high rates.

A slightly more optimistic finding comes from research by Morning Consult. It asked US adults in April 2020 what activities they thought they would continue more, less or the same post-pandemic. Nearly one-quarter said they would continue to spend more time on social media, but 51% of respondents thought their post- and pre-pandemic social usage would be the same, and 21% thought they'd use social media less after the pandemic than they did prior.

Even the leaders of the major social properties have expressed uncertainty about a sustained usage bump.

Some of the biggest social media companies' executives agree. "I don't expect this exact spike in usage will sustain over a longer period of time," said Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg during the company's Q1 2020 earnings conference call.

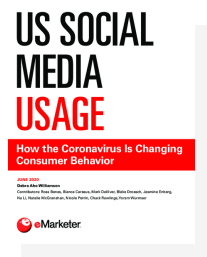
In Snap's Q1 earnings call, CEO Evan Spiegel said, "In general, across our platform, people are adopting more of our products, using them more, and so we believe that will provide a tailwind. It's just too early to say what that will look like."

Twitter reported that the Q1 gains in mDAUs had started to stabilize toward the end of March "as many people around the world settled into new routines," the company said in its shareholder letter.

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**



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