

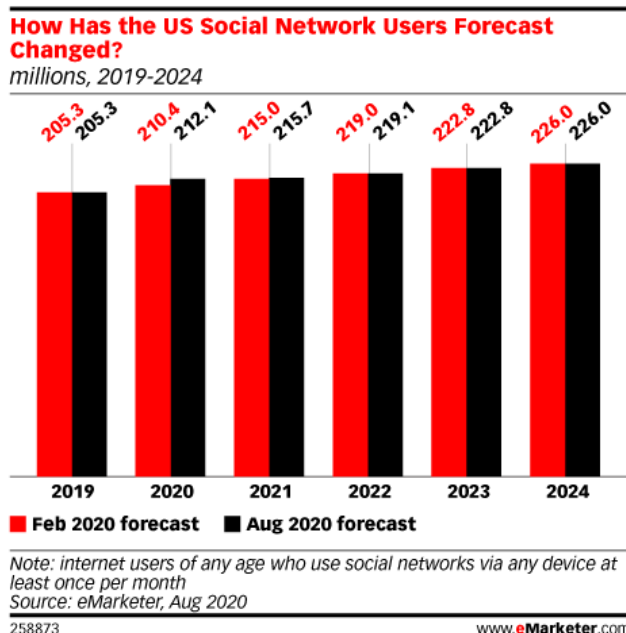
# Social Media Didn't Experience the Pandemic Bump You May Have Expected

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**Debra Aho Williamson**

**M**any people turned to social media in recent months to stay connected with friends and loved ones and to share information. But the pandemic hasn't increased the number of people using social networks or messaging apps.

There will be 212.1 million social network users in the US this year, up 3.3% over 2019. That's just a small acceleration over our February forecast of 2.5% user growth. All age groups will see only slight increases in 2020, with the lion's share of growth coming from people ages 35 and older.



The lack of user growth may come as a surprise to those who have seen recent studies showing that consumers are engaging more heavily with social media during the pandemic. For example, GlobalWebIndex found in a May 2020 study (fielded across 20 countries including the US) that 43% of social networkers ages 16 to 64 said they were spending more time on social media, and 16% said they planned to continue that behavior post-pandemic. Among heavy social network users (those who spent 4 hours or more on an average day), 54% reported spending more time, while 26% said they expected to continue that behavior post-pandemic.

In the US, the pandemic will help drive an 8.8% increase in the average amount of time adult social network users spend with social platforms this year, reaching 82 minutes per day, according to our April 2020 forecast. In 2019, time spent with social networks fell by 1.3%.

But these statistics speak to existing users' engagement, not to changes in the total number of users. The reality is that the US social network user space is already well saturated, with 73.2% penetration among internet users of any age and 81.3% penetration among adult internet users. And there is little room for new growth.

In addition, the ongoing problems of fake news, misinformation, and divisive content are creating an atmosphere where lapsed users have

likely found little reason to sign back on, and where some current users may be feeling like they need a break.

To learn more about which digital media activities got a bump—and which didn't—eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

**Report** by Debra Aho Williamson, Ross Benes and Blake Driesch Oct 20, 2020

## US Digital Users 2020

