

Do you fear you are missing out?

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Does checking Twitter and Facebook to see what your friends are up to make you feel like you are missing out on all the fun? Researchers have come up with a way of measuring the modern day concept of the "fear of missing out" (FoMO).

The rise in social media, where we can keep up-to-date with each other's every movements like never before, has led to the hidden curse of the "[fear](#) of missing out".

A relatively new concept, FoMO is a concern people have that others may be having more fun and rewarding experiences than them and is characterised as the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing.

Now, researchers at the University of Essex have devised a way of measuring FoMO for the first time, providing a reliable measure of what people are experiencing.

The research, to be published in the July issue of the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*, is the first study to delve deeper into the fear of missing out [phenomenon](#), which only came to light about three years ago as social media become ever-more accessible with the increase in [smart phones](#).

As lead [researcher](#) and psychologist Dr Andy Przybylski explained, the fear of missing out is not new, but the rise is social media offers a window into other people's lives like never before. The problem for

people with a high level of FoMO is they may become so involved in seeing what their friends are doing and they are not, they often ignore what they are actually enjoying themselves.

"I find Facebook rewarding to use, but how we are using social media is changing," explained Dr Przybylski. "It is no longer something we have to sit at a computer and log into as we have access all the time on our phones. It is easier to get into the rhythm of other people's lives that ever before as we get alerts and texts.

"We have to learn new skills to control our usage and enjoy social media in moderation. Until we do, it creates a double-edged sword aspect to social media."

The research team, which included [academics](#) from the University of California and University of Rochester in the United States, devised a way of measuring an individual's level of FoMO. Take a version of the test yourself to see what your level of FoMO is compared to the people taking part in the study at www.ratemyfomo.com.

The research found that people aged under 30 were more affected than others from the fear of missing out. This group saw social media as an important tool for them and they were more dependent on social media as part of their social development.

Dr Przybylski explained that social factors are also important. The research also found if people's "psychological needs were deprived" they were more likely to seek out social media and FoMO bridged that gap, explaining why people were using social media more than others.

To see what effect FoMO had on people's lives, the researchers found that those with a high level of fear of missing out were more likely to give into the temptation of composing and checking text messages and e-

mails whilst driving, were more likely to get distracted by social media during university lectures, and had more mixed feelings about their [social media](#) use.

The researchers hope this will study will prompt more investigation into the fear of missing out and how it affects on people's wellbeing.

Do you think you are missing out? Take the FoMO test at www.ratemyfomo.com.

More information: 'Motivational, well-being, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out', *Computers in Human Behavior*. [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.014)

Provided by University of Essex

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