

US Congress embracing social media: report

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Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate from both parties have seized on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and integrated them into their communications operations, according to a report published on Tuesday.

The survey of congressional staff by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) found that most [members of Congress](#) are using [social media](#) to "gauge public opinion, communicate with constituents, and reach new people."

It found some resistance to the new media tools among older staffers but most congressional staffers surveyed said Facebook, Twitter and YouTube now rival more traditional communications tools.

"While congressional offices may lag behind some leading private-sector organizations in their use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, the legislative branch has adopted social media much more quickly than it adopted other technologies, such as fax machines, email and websites," the report said.

"Social media tools have been adopted more rapidly than previous technologies," said Bradford Fitch, CMF president and chief executive.

"These technologies are starting to change how Congress communicates with their constituents and is allowing members to reach citizens who otherwise might not engage in the democratic dialogue," Fitch said.

The CMF, a nonpartisan group whose goal is to improve congressional office operations, surveyed 260 congressional staff on social media between October and December 2010.

Sixty-four percent of the senior managers and social media managers surveyed said that Facebook is a somewhat or very important tool for understanding the views and opinions of constituents.

Forty-two percent said that Twitter is somewhat or very important for understanding constituents' views and 34 percent said the same about YouTube.

Even higher percentages thought Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were important for communicating a members' views.

Seventy-four percent said [Facebook](#) is somewhat or very important for

communicating their members' views, 72 percent said this is the case with [YouTube](#) and 51 percent said it of [Twitter](#).

Fifty-five percent of those surveyed said they believe social media provides their offices with more benefits than risks.

The survey suggested there was a generational divide when it came to the use of social media among congressional staffers.

Sixty-six of the staffers aged 30 and younger said social media is worth the time their offices spend on it. Only 32 percent of their colleagues aged 51 and older felt the same.

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