

Social networks a tool to energize politics: US study

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US President Barack Obama speaks during a "Twitter Town Hall" in 2011 in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are playing a growing role in US politics by helping users stay informed and energizing activists, a study showed Tuesday.

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The Pew Internet & American Life Project survey found that 36 percent of social networking [site](#) users say the sites are "very important" or "somewhat important" to them in keeping up with political news.

About one in four users of social networks said sites are "very important" or "somewhat important" to them in recruiting people to get involved in political issues that matter to them.

The survey found Democrats are more likely than Republicans or independents to say the sites are important.

It also found 25 percent of social network users surveyed said they became more active in a political issue after discussing it or reading posts about it, and 16 percent said they changed their views about an issue after discussing it or reading about it on the sites.

Among Democrats, 33 percent said they were becoming more active as a result of social networks compared with 24 percent of Republicans. That was also true for 39 percent of self-described liberals and 21 percent of moderates.

"Those who are really active in discussing and participating in politics use [social networking](#) sites pretty eagerly and report that their discussions and debates on the sites affect them," said Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet Project.

"However, for most of those who use the sites, political material is just a small portion of what they post and what they read. And the impact of their use of the sites is modest, at best."

The survey found that the vast majority of social network [users](#)—84 percent—said they have posted little or nothing related to politics in their recent status updates, comments, and links.

These findings come from a survey conducted from January 20 to February 19 among 2,253 adults.

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