

Poll: Teens migrating to Twitter (Update)

May 21 2013, by Jennifer C. Kerr



A view of an iPhone in Washington Tuesday, May 21, 2013, showing the Twitter and Facebook apps among others. A new poll finds that teens are sharing more about themselves on social media. They're also moving increasingly to Twitter to avoid their parents and the "oversharing" that they see on Facebook. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Twitter is booming as a social media destination for teenagers who complain about too many adults and too much drama on Facebook, according to a new study published Tuesday about online behavior. It said teens are sharing more personal information about themselves even

as they try to protect their online reputations.

Teens told researchers there were too many adults on Facebook and too much sharing of teenage angst and inane details like what a friend ate for dinner.

"The key is that there are fewer adults, fewer parents and just simply less complexity," said Amanda Lenhart of the Pew Research Center, one of the study's authors. "They still have their Facebook profiles, but they spend less time on them and move to places like Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr."

In the poll, 94 percent of teens who are social media users have a profile on Facebook—flat from the previous year. Twenty-six percent of teen social media users were on Twitter. That's more than double the figure in 2011 of 12 percent.

"Facebook just really seems to have more drama," said 16-year-old Jaime Esquivel in an interview.

Esquivel said he still checks his Facebook account daily but isn't using it as regularly as in the past. He sees teens complaining on Twitter, too, so Esquivel has been using the photo-sharing service Instagram more often, posting a couple of pictures each day and communicating with friends. Facebook purchased Instagram last year.

In what may be a concern to parents, more than 60 percent of the teens with Twitter accounts said their tweets were public, meaning anyone on Twitter—friend, foe or stranger—can see what they write and publish. About one-quarter of kids said their tweets were private and 12 percent said they did not know whether their tweets were public or private.

Teens are also sharing much more than in the past.

More than 90 percent of teen social media users said they have posted a picture of themselves—up from 79 percent in 2006, the poll said. Seven in ten disclose the city or town where they live, up from about 60 percent over the same time period. And 20 percent disclose their cell phone number—up sharply from a mere two percent in 2006.

Even so, Parry Aftab, an attorney and online child safety advocate, says kids seem to be exercising more caution about their posts.

"They are sharing. This is their life," Aftab said in an interview. "But they tend to be sharing personal stuff far better than they ever did before."

The poll suggested teens are also taking steps to protect their reputations and mask information they don't want others to see. For example, nearly 60 percent of teen social media users said they have deleted or edited something that they had published. Just over half the teens have deleted comments from others on their profile or account.

The researchers surveyed 802 parents and their 802 teens. The poll was conducted between July 26 and September 30, 2012, on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

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