

Indigenous people's experiences on social media differ significantly from the mainstream population: national study

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A new national report released today on Indigenous Australians' social media practices has found social media plays a complex role in the lives of Indigenous people, and often differs considerably from non-Indigenous populations.

The report, "Social Media Mob: Being Indigenous Online" offers insight into six key themes: Indigenous identities, online communities, practising culture, racism and [violence](#), help-seeking, and political activism.

"Indigenous people must navigate many different tensions between the benefits and dangers of social media," said report co-author Professor Bronwyn Carlson from the Department of Indigenous Studies.

Identity: While some Indigenous people feel more connected to their identity online, for others, 'being Indigenous online' is a source of anxiety. More than half are selective with what they post online out of fear that others may respond with racism or violence.

Community: Many Indigenous people consider social media "a new meeting place" for communities. But there are also concerns, as one participant explained, that "it can take away onus to engage directly, and spend time on Country."

Culture: In a context in which there are concerns about the continuation of Indigenous cultures, social media offers new ways to practice and pass on cultural knowledge. In particular, social media facilitates new forms of "Sorry Business"—cultural practice around death and loss. However, these practices are also a source of tension and concern for other community members, as cultural protocols in relation to death are sometimes violated or circumvented, such as sharing images and names of the deceased.

Violence: Most Indigenous people have seen or experienced racism and violence on social [media](#). "It is often indirect but I experience it as personal [racism](#)," explained a young woman from Woy Woy.

Help-seeking: Through connecting users to friends, family, information sources and professional services, [social media](#) is important for both seeking help and providing help for a range of issues, including employment, housing, parenting, economic opportunities, relationship advice, wellbeing and legal services. In particular, it presents a potentially effective platform for developing culturally appropriate suicide interventions and prevention programs.

Politics: Almost all Indigenous people consider themselves politically active online, though many people choose to self-censor their views to avoid conflict.

More information: Social media mob: being Indigenous online. researchers.mq.edu.au/en/publications/ng-indigenous-online

Provided by Macquarie University

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