

After scandals, many Americans step away from Facebook: survey

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A new AI tool created to help identify certain kinds of substance abuse based on a homeless youth's Facebook posts could provide homeless shelters with vital information to incorporate into each individual's case management plan. Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A large number of Americans are stepping back from Facebook in the

wake of recent scandals over the social network's handling of private user data, a study showed Wednesday.

The Pew Research Center report found 42 percent of US Facebook users said they had "taken a break" from the platform in the past 12 months, and 26 percent said they had deleted the Facebook app from their phone.

Among those in the 18-29 age group, the break with Facebook appeared more pronounced, with 44 percent claiming to have deleted the Facebook mobile app.

Although the survey did not indicate how many users were quitting Facebook entirely, the findings suggest a clouded outlook for the company which has been roiled by news of the hijacking of private data by political firm Cambridge Analytica and concerns of foreign influence campaigns on the platform.

"Significant shares of Facebook users have taken steps in the past year to reframe their relationship with the social media [platform](#)," researcher Andrew Perrin said in a blog post.

According to Pew's survey, three-fourths of US Facebook users have taken some steps to change how they interact with Facebook, including more than half who have changed their privacy settings.

Perrin said the concerns about Facebook appeared to transcend political affiliation.

"The poll found that nearly identical shares of Democrats and Republicans (including political independents who lean toward either party) use Facebook," he said.

"Republicans are no more likely than Democrats to have taken a break

from Facebook or deleted the app from their phone in the past year."

The report was based on a survey between May 29 and June 11 including 3,413 Facebook users aged 18 and older, with an estimated margin of error of 2.8 percentage points.

The [survey](#) comes ahead of a congressional hearing on foreign influence campaigns on social media, at which Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg was to testify.

And it comes with President Donald Trump stepping up his attacks on internet platforms with his unverified contention that they are suppressing conservatives and Republicans.

Facebook has already lost ground in the United States among teens and young adult users, losing ground notably to Snapchat, but with some switching to Facebook-owned Instagram.

But Facebook remains the world's largest social network with well over two billion users worldwide.

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