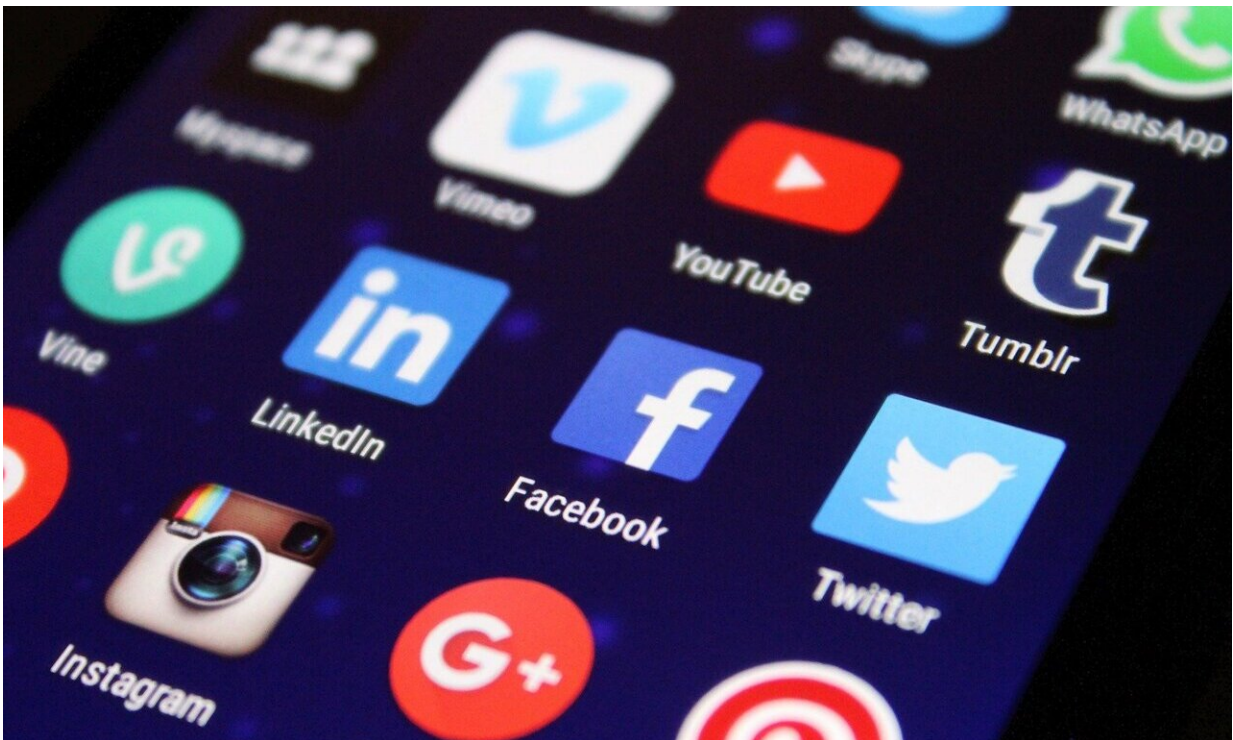


# Survey: Americans judge social media's effects on mental health and society at large

February 3 2022

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Twenty-five years after the website Sixdegrees.com began a revolution in the way people used the internet, a third of Americans say social media does more harm than good to their mental health. Nearly half said that social media has hurt society at large and 42 percent said it has hurt political discourse. This is [according to the results](#) of the American

Psychiatric Association (APA)'s February 2022 Healthy Minds Monthly, a poll conducted by Morning Consult, fielded Jan. 19–20, 2022, among a nationally representative sample of 2,210 adults.

The responses were slightly more positive when adults who indicated they use [social media](#) were asked how they personally felt while using it. Eighty percent of [social media users](#) said they felt interested while using social media, 72 percent felt connected and 72 percent said they felt happy, versus 26 percent who said they felt helpless or jealous (22 percent).

"Twenty-five years into what almost feels like a giant psychological experiment, most Americans are interacting with social media daily, and many are concerned about its effects on [mental health](#) and society," said APA President Vivian Pender, M.D. "Volumes have been written on its various impacts. The bottom line is that we know enough to say that when things get overwhelming, there are simple steps we can all be aware of and take to manage our usage."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many adults who indicated they use social media reported experiencing the positive side of it—80 percent of social media users say they used it to connect with family and friends, and 76 percent used it for entertainment. In general, they were also far less worried about their own usage of social media or their children's. For instance, they said social media has helped (31 percent) or has had no impact (49 percent) on their relationships with friends and family. Parents polled said that social media had either helped (23 percent) or had no impact (46 percent) on their child's self-esteem, although one in five indicated it had hurt their child's mental health.

"We know that social media can be very harmful for some individuals," said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A. "It has the effect of turning up the volume on conversations and connecting

people in ways that can have a negative impact. That said, these [poll results](#) seem to indicate that many Americans are finding an ability to use social media in a way that feels harmless if not helpful to their lives."

A promising result from the [poll](#) was that about two-thirds (67 percent) of Americans were confident in their knowledge of how to help a loved one if they indicated mental health challenges on social [media](#).

Provided by American Psychiatric Association

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