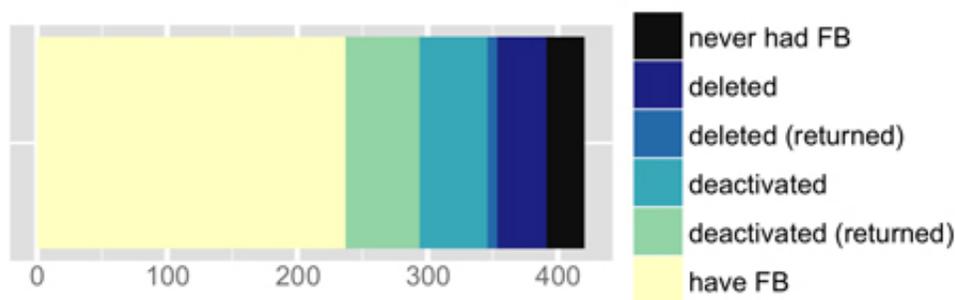


Fleeing Facebook: Study examines why users quit

May 1 2013, by Stacey Shackford



Data about the study's participants.

With more than a billion active accounts worldwide, it can be easy to forget that some people don't use Facebook. In fact, "non-use" of the social networking site is fairly common – one-third of Facebook users take breaks from the site by deactivating their account, and 11 percent completely quit, reports a study by Cornell researchers who will present their findings May 2 at the Association for Computing Machinery's Conference Human Factors in Computing Systems in Paris, France.

Of 410 people who responded to an online [questionnaire](#), 46 (11 percent) reported that they had deleted their [Facebook](#) account – and more than 90 percent said they were happy with their decision and most stayed away.

More than one-third of [respondents](#) (110) reported deactivating their account, which hides everything they have done on Facebook but retains the data and allows them to reactivate at any time. Two-thirds of deactivators reported being happy with their decision; one-third subsequently returned to Facebook.

A few respondents reported using other creative means to limit their use of the site, according to the study's lead author Eric P.S. Baumer, postdoctoral associate in communication.

"Several participants asked their significant other or spouse to change their password, only allowing them to log in on a limited basis," Baumer said. "One participant described redirecting all email from Facebook to an email address that he never checked. Others installed browser plug-ins that blocked them from visiting the site."

The motivations for leaving ranged from concerns about privacy and data misuse to problems with productivity and addiction. Some respondents said they were tired of engaging in shallow or banal social interactions. Others left or suspended activity to avoid being friended by a boss, a student or former [romantic partners](#), Baumer said.

"In some cases, people reported feeling pressured to leave based on an institutional status, such as being a military officer or parolee," he added.

There were also 75 people in the survey who reported never having an account.

"While some respondents reported simply not having a use for the site, others provided elaborate lists of reasons they would not join," Baumer said. "Some did not want to be on display or live 'life in a global aquarium.' We also observed a sense of rebelliousness and pride among those who resisted Facebook."

While previous work has compared users and non-users of [social networking sites](#), this study is one of the first to give a sense for the prevalence of non-use. It also provides some evidence that Facebook users who deactivate their account are more likely to know someone else who has also deactivated, and Baumer plans to further explore this potential network effect.

"Future work might examine whether models used to study the spread of technological innovations, infectious disease or cultural memes might similarly help understand the social dynamics of technology non-use," he said.

Provided by Cornell University

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