

Social Media Enthusiasts Continue To Connect...

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But Privacy Concerns Persist, New uSamp Datapoint Study Reveals

Amid Facebook IPO, Are Potential Risks on Social Media Sites Tempering Users'™ Urge to Share?

Eight hundred million Facebook users can't™t be wrong, but they appear to be an increasingly cautious lot.

Indeed, while users of popular social media sites are generally comfortable with the sites and visit them regularly, they also have serious reservations about privacy and security on the social web — recent efforts by site operators to address those concerns notwithstanding. — —

These are among the top findings of the "Social Media Habits and Privacy Concerns Survey," a new nationwide study by uSamp (www.uSamp.com), a leader in providing targeted audiences for global consumer insights and innovative SaaS technologies for audience engagement and business intelligence. — Using SurveyBuilder™ (www.surveybuilder.com), its self-serve survey authoring platform with on-demand consumer audiences, uSamp surveyed nearly 600 adult men and women about the social media sites they frequent and the kind of information they share online.

The Social Media Habits survey is one of uSamp's™ Datapoint studies, conducted using SurveyBuilder. — — To view the infographic summarizing top-line findings or other Datapoint studies, please visit — <http://blog.usamp.com/blog/2012/01/30/infographic-usamp-datapoint-study-finds-gender-gap-over-social-media-privacy/>.

Facebook Firmly in Front

The good news for IPO-bound Facebook especially is that more than 80 percent of all social media buffs log on to the site. — The uSamp survey found that nearly twice as many respondents of all ages (and both genders) used Facebook as any other destination on the social web. — The nearest competitors were YouTube (46 percent of respondents), Twitter (33 percent) and MySpace (32 percent). — —

But the study also showed that Facebook and other sites face real challenges in the months and years ahead as user concerns over privacy and security grow. — — While 65 percent of respondents said they were generally comfortable with privacy protections on social media sites, they nonetheless expressed specific concerns about privacy risks. — — — —

"Our Social Media Habits survey offers compelling insights into consumer behavior and attitudes, especially given the conventional wisdom how we value — or don't™t value — privacy in the social media space," said Lisa Wilding-Brown, uSamp Vice President of Global Panel and Sampling Operations. — "User privacy is an enormously dynamic area, and even as site operators attempt to address the issue, consumer perceptions are slow to change. Using SurveyBuilder, we were able to both create a comprehensive survey instrument and tap uSamp's™ vast online panel of survey respondents rapidly — the same kind of performance our clients are experiencing as they get hands on with this powerful new platform."

Privacy has long been a thorny issue for Facebook and other social media sites. — In its SEC filing for its IPO, Facebook referenced the word "privacy" 35 times. — Some observers suggest that such concerns might prompt users to reduce their use of social media sites, or stop visiting them altogether. — Yet another worry for Facebook and other social media destinations: the coming explosion in smartphone and tablet access may pose even greater security and privacy risks. — —

While 64 percent of respondents said they were either "every comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" with the level of privacy protection on social media sites, 28 percent expressed some level of discomfort about privacy protections. — And among those who don't™t use social media at all, 73 percent cited privacy concerns as their rationale for not participating. — —

Some 85 percent of respondents said that individual users should bear primary responsibility for their own privacy, but fully 75 percent agreed that social media sites themselves should also assume responsibility for privacy protection. — —

The Demographic Divide

On matters of social media usage and security/privacy, the uSamp Datapoint survey also found significant differences among both genders and across age groups. — Women of all ages were generally more worried than men about both privacy and personal security. — While women are just as willing to provide personal information about their relationships, jobs, brand preferences and political and religious affiliations as men, when it comes to the nitty-gritty — details like phone numbers, email and physical addresses that might jeopardize personal security — women are significantly more wary than men. — —

Interestingly, the study found that three-quarters of both men and women were willing to share their relationship status, but only 20 percent of women would share their location, while 35 percent of men would part with that information. — And

although 55 percent of men don't mind revealing their email address, only 42 percent of women would do so.

The survey also found that different age groups expressed varying levels of comfort about privacy. While more than 70 percent of both men and women under 35 said they were either "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" with protections, only 54 percent women and 56 percent of men from 35-49 and 57 percent of women and 45 percent of men over 50 felt "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable" with privacy protections.

Not surprisingly, the study found younger respondents were heavier users of social media than their elders, with 86 percent of the 18-24 age group visiting social media sites daily. There were, however, intriguing differences between genders and age groups in how social media sites are used.

Older women were found to be heavier users of social media than older men – 60 percent of women over 50 visited sites daily while only 37 percent of men in the same age group were daily visitors. And 63 percent women from 35-49 visited daily while only 57 percent of men checked in every day. The study also found that women over 35 were more likely to use Facebook than men in the same age group.

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