

An Overview of Social Media Trends

Executive Summary prepared by the Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Program (02/2020)

Youth and New Recruits use a range of social media sites; however, usage rates of these sites differ by key demographic groups. Each site is used for a distinct set of reasons, but social media is largely used for entertainment and connecting with others. Across Youth and New Recruits, YouTube is the most used social media site. Social media plays an important role for many new recruits' decision-making, as well as recruiters and other military connections.

Table 1. Youth Social Media Platform Usage

(% Use)

	All Youth	Teens (Ages 16–18)	Emerging Adults (Ages 19–21)	Young Adults (Ages 22–24)	Male	Female	WNH	BNH*	Hispanic
YouTube	86%	85%	83%	90%	87%	85%	88%	89%	81%
Instagram	72%	74%	74%	69%	70%	75%	71%	79%	69%
Snapchat	68%	72%	71%	61%	67%	69%	71%	68%	62%
Facebook	68%	58%	68%	79%	65%	71%	73%	64%	55%
Online Console Gaming Network	42%	44%	48%	33%	57%	26%	40%	42%	46%
Social News	40%	39%	45%	37%	39%	41%	40%	32%	42%
Twitter	38%	41%	43%	29%	39%	36%	38%	33%	36%
Pinterest	36%	34%	38%	37%	18%	55%	41%	33%	32%

Source: DoD Youth Survey (October–December 2018). WNH = White, non-Hispanic; BNH = Black, non-Hispanic.

Note: The percentage who use each site consists of respondents who indicated using each site “Less than once per week” to “Almost constantly.”

The top eight most commonly used sites by all youth are displayed.

*Note: Black youth comprised a small sample size ($n < 100$). Interpret with caution.

Table 2. New Recruit Social Media Platform Usage

(% Use)

	All New Recruits	Teens (Ages 17–18)	Emerging Adults (Ages 19–21)	Young Adults (Ages 22–24)	Male	Female	WNH	BNH	Hispanic
YouTube	93%	94%	93%	92%	94%	92%	92%	94%	95%
Snapchat	79%	86%	82%	71%	78%	85%	79%	79%	82%
Instagram	79%	84%	80%	71%	77%	86%	76%	83%	82%
Facebook	67%	60%	70%	78%	65%	75%	68%	66%	64%
Social News	39%	37%	39%	44%	38%	43%	37%	38%	43%
Twitter	37%	37%	42%	33%	37%	40%	34%	45%	39%
Pinterest	22%	20%	22%	24%	15%	47%	20%	27%	21%

Source: DoD Active Duty New Recruit Survey (Fall 2018, October 2018–March 2019). WNH = White, non-Hispanic; BNH = Black, non-Hispanic.

Note: The percentage who use each site consists of respondents who indicated using each site “Less than once per week” to “Almost constantly.”

Table 3. Youths' Main Reason for Using Social Media Sites

	Share personal updates	Communicate with connections	See current events updates	General entertainment	Learn new information	Pass time
YouTube	2%	2%	5%	57%	10%	22%
Instagram	30%	11%	8%	17%	<1%	28%
Snapchat	26%	35%	3%	13%	<1%	20%
Facebook	24%	21%	7%	15%	2%	26%
Online Console Gaming Network	3%	6%	1%	63%	1%	22%
Social News	1%	2%	20%	25%	10%	38%
Twitter	20%	6%	24%	16%	4%	24%
Pinterest	3%	2%	5%	19%	29%	36%

Source: DoD Youth Survey (October–December 2018)

Note: Proportions are out of those who indicated using each site/platform. Proportions might not add up to 100% because of other reasons selected, refusals, and rounding. The top eight most commonly used sites by all youth are displayed.

Table 4. Importance on New Recruits' Decision to Enlist

(% Important/Very Important)

	All New Recruits	Teens (Ages 17–18)	Emerging Adults (Ages 19–21)	Young Adults (Ages 22–24)	Male	Female	WNH	BNH	Hispanic
Information from a recruiter	85%	86%	84%	83%	84%	88%	84%	83%	85%
Information from the [Service]'s website	66%	65%	64%	66%	64%	72%	64%	67%	66%
Information from a family member who served/is serving	61%	61%	61%	62%	61%	62%	62%	62%	57%
Information from a friend who served/is serving	61%	58%	62%	63%	61%	62%	61%	60%	59%
Information I read on the internet	58%	57%	57%	60%	58%	58%	58%	59%	57%
Information from social media sites	36%	38%	35%	35%	36%	37%	34%	39%	38%

Source: DoD Active Duty New Recruit Survey (Fall 2018, October 2018–March 2019). WNH = White, non-Hispanic; BNH = Black, non-Hispanic.

Note: Proportions are out of those who indicated receiving information from each source. It's important to note that communication with family and friends may incorporate social media usage.