|  |
| --- |
| **Pro & Con Arguments: *"Are Social Networking Sites Good for Our Society?"*** |
| **PRO Social Networking Sites**1. **Social networking sites spread information faster than any other media.** Over 50% of people learn about breaking news on social media. [[1](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#1)] 65% of traditional media reporters and editors use sites like Facebook and LinkedIn for story research, and 52% use Twitter. [[2](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#2)] Social networking sites are the top news source for 27.8% of Americans, ranking close to newspapers (28.8%) and above radio (18.8%) and other print publications (6%). [[1](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#1)] Twitter and YouTube users reported the July 20, 2012 Aurora, CO theater shooting before news crews could arrive on the scene [[3](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#3)], and the Red Cross urged witnesses to tell family members they were safe via social media outlets. [[4](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#4)]
2. **Law enforcement uses social networking sites to catch and prosecute criminals.** 67% of federal, state, and local law enforcement professionals surveyed think "social media helps solve crimes more quickly." [[5](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#5)] In 2011 the NYPD added a Twitter tracking unit and has used social networking to arrest criminals who have bragged of their crimes online. [[6](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#6)] When the Vancouver Canucks lost the 2011 Stanley Cup in Vancouver, the city erupted into riots. Social media was used to catch vandals and rioters as social networking site users tagged the people they knew in over 2,000 photos posted to the sites. [[7](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#7)] [[8](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#8)]
3. **Social networking sites help students do better at school.** 59% of students with access to the Internet report that they use social networking sites to discuss educational topics and 50% use the sites to talk about school assignments. [[9](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#9)] After George Middle School in Portland, OR introduced a social media program to engage students, grades went up by 50%, chronic absenteeism went down by 33%, and 20% of students school-wide voluntarily completed extra-credit assignments. [[10](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#10)] [[11](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#11)]
4. **Social networking sites allow people to improve their relationships and make new friends.** 70% of adult social networking users visit the sites to connect with friends and family [[12](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#12)], and increased online communication strengthens relationships. [[13](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#13)] 52% of teens using social media report that using the sites has helped their relationships with friends, 88% report that social media helps them stay in touch with friends they cannot see regularly, 69% report getting to know students at their school better, and 57% make new friends. [[14](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#14)]
5. **Social media helps empower business women.**Being able to connect on social networking sites gives business women a support group not readily found offline where female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are outnumbered by male CEOs 15 to 485.[[15](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132" \l "15)] Many social media sites are dominated by women: 72% of Pinterest users are women, 58% of Facebook users, 62% of MySpace users, 60% of Yelp users, and 53% of Instagram users. [[16](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#16)] Business women useTwitter chats to support each other, give and receive peer knowledge, and have guest "speakers" share expert knowledge. [[17](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#17)] One.org helps African women entrepreneurs connect on social media to grow their businesses. [[18](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#18)]
6. **Social media sites help employers find employees and job-seekers find work.** 64% of companies are on two or more social networks for recruiting [[19](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#19)] because of the wider pool of applicants and more efficient searching capabilities. 89% of job recruiters have hired employees through LinkedIn, 26% through Facebook, and 15% through Twitter. [[20](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#20)] One in six job-seekers credit social media for helping find their current job. 52% of job-seekers use Facebook for the job search, 38% use LinkedIn, and 34% use Twitter. [[21](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#21)]
7. **Being a part of a social networking site can increase a person's quality of life and reduce the risk of health problems.** Social media can help improve life satisfaction, stroke recovery, memory retention, and overall well-being by providing users with a large social group. Additionally, friends on social media can have a "contagion" effect, promoting and helping with exercise, dieting, and smoking cessation goals. [[22](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#22)]
8. **Social networking sites facilitate face-to-face interaction.** People use social media to network at in-person events and get to know people before personal, business, and other meetings. [[23](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#23)] Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that messaging on social media leads to face-to-face interactions when plans are made via the sites and social media users messaged close friends an average of 39 days each year while seeing close friends in person 210 days each year. [[24](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#24)]
9. **Social networking sites increase voter participation.**Facebook users reported they are more likely to vote if they see on social networking sites that their friends did. [[25](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#25)] During the Nov. 2010 elections, Facebook users who visit the site more than once a day were 2.5 times more likely to attend a political rally or meeting, 57% more likely to persuade someone about a vote, and 43% more likely to say they will vote. [[26](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#26)]During the 2012 presidential election, 22% of registered voters posted about how they voted on Facebook or Twitter, 30% were encouraged to vote by posts on social media, and 20% encouraged others to vote via social networking sites. [[27](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#27)]
10. **Social media facilitates political change.**Social networking sites give social movements a quick, no-cost method to organize, disseminate information, and mobilize people. [[28](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#28)] The 2011 Egyptian uprising (part of the Arab Spring), organized largely via social media, motivated tens of thousands of protestors for eighteen days of demonstrations and, ultimately led to the resignation of Egyptian President Mubarak on Feb. 11, 2011. [[29](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#29)] A July 4, 2011 tweet from @Adbusters with the hashtag #occupywallstreet started the American Occupy movement, which gained traction in Sep. 2011 when protesters gathered at New York City's Zuccotti Park and remained there until Nov. 15, 2011. [[30](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#30)]
 | **CON Social Networking Sites**1. **Social media enables the spread of unreliable and false information.** 49.1% of people have heard false news via social media. [[1](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#1)] On Sep. 5, 2012 false rumors of fires, shootouts, and caravans of gunmen in a Mexico City suburb spread via Twitter and Facebook caused panic, flooded the local police department with over 3,000 phone calls, and temporarily closed schools. [[79](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#79)] Shashank Tripathi, tweeting as @ComfortablySmug, spread false information in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy by tweeting that the New York Stock Exchange was flooding and that the power company would cut off electricity to all of Manhattan; the bogus information was picked up by national news outlets including CNN and the Weather Channel. [[80](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#80)]
2. **Social networking sites lack privacy and expose users to government and corporate intrusions.** 13 million users said they had not set or did not know about Facebook's privacy settings and 28% shared all or nearly all of their posts publicly. [[81](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#81)]The US Justice Department intercepted 1,661 pieces of information from social networking sites and e-mails in 2011. [[82](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#82)] The 2009 IRS training manual teaches agents to scan Facebook pages for information that might "assist in resolving a taxpayer case." 4.7 million Facebook users have "liked" a health condition or medical treatment page, information that is sometimes used by insurance companies to raise rates. [[81](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#81)] [[83](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#83)]
3. **Students who are heavy social media users tend to have lower grades.** Students who use social media had an average GPA of 3.06 while non-users had an average GPA of 3.82 and students who used social networking sites while studying scored 20% lower on tests. [[84](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#84)] College students’ grades dropped 0.12 points for every 93 minutes above the average 106 minutes spent on Facebook per day. [[85](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#85)] Two-thirds of teachers believe that social media does more to distract students than to help academically. [[86](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#86)]
4. **Social networking sites can lead to stress and offline relationship problems.** A University of Edinburgh Business School study found the more Facebook friends a person has, the more stressful the person finds Facebook to use. [[87](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#87)]According to a Feb. 9, 2012 Pew Internet report, 15% of adult social network users had an experience on a social networking site that caused a friendship to end, 12% of adult users had an experience online that resulted in a face-to-face argument, and 3% of adults reported a physical confrontation as the result of an experience on a social networking site. [[88](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#88)]
5. **Social networking sites entice people to waste time.**40% of 8 to 18 year olds spend 54 minutes a day on social media sites. [[89](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#89)] 36% of people surveyed listed social networking as the "biggest waste of time," above fantasy sports (25%), watching TV (23%), and shopping (9%). [[90](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#90)] When alerted to a new social networking site activity, like a new tweet or Facebook message, users take 20 to 25 minutes on average to return to the original task. In 30% of cases, it took two hours to fully return attention to the original task. [[91](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#91)] 42% of American Internet users play games like Farmville or Mafia Wars on social networking sites.[[92](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#92)]
6. **Using social media can harm job stability and employment prospects.** Job recruiters reported negative reactions to finding profanity (61%), poor spelling or grammar (54%), illegal drugs (78%), sexual content (66%), pictures of or with alcohol (47%), and religious content (26%) on potential employees’ social media pages. [[21](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#21)] Anthony Weiner, former US Representative, was forced to resign after a Twitter sexting scandal in 2011. [[93](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#93)] Several athletes were banned from the 2012 Olympics because of their racist social media posts. [[94](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#94)]
7. **The use of social networking sites is correlated with personality and brain disorders, such as the inability to have in-person conversations, a need for instant gratification, ADHD, and self-centered personalities, as well as addictive behaviors.** [[81](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#81)] Pathological Internet Use (caused or exacerbated by social networking use) is associated with feelings of loneliness, depression, anxiety and general distress. [[95](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#95)] The 2013 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) is evaluating "Internet Addiction Disorder" for inclusion. A 2008 UCLA study revealed web users had fundamentally altered prefrontal cortexes [[96](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#96)] due, in part, to the fast pace of social networking sites rewiring the brain with repeated exposure. [[97](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#97)]
8. **Social media causes people to spend less time interacting face-to-face.**A Jan. 2012 Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School study found that the percentage of people reporting less face-to-face time with family in their homes rose from 8% in 2000 to 34% in 2011. [[98](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#98)] 32% reported using social media or texting during meals (47% of 18-34 year olds) [[99](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#99)] instead of talking with family and friends. 10% of people younger than 25 years old respond to social media and text messages during sex.[[100](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#100)] [[173](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#173)]
9. **Criminals use social media to commit and promote crimes.** Gangs use the sites to recruit younger members, coordinate violent crimes, and threaten other gangs. [[101](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#101)] Offline crime, like home robberies, may result from posting personal information such as vacation plans [[102](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#102)] or stalkers gaining information about a victim’s whereabouts from posts, photos, or location tagging services. [[103](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#103)]
10. **Social media can endanger the military and journalists.** The US Army notes that checking in with location based services on social networking sites like Foursquare or Facebook could expose sensitive whereabouts and endanger military personnel and operations. [[104](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#104)] In 2011 a Mexican journalist was murdered by the Zetas drug cartel because she used Twitter to report on cartel crime. [[105](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#105)] A blogger was found murdered by a Mexican cartel in 2011 with the note "this happened to me for not understanding that I shouldn’t report things on the social networks." [[106](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#106)] [[140](http://socialnetworking.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=005132#140)]
 |