



# Social Media Survey

2019 Nationally Representative Phone Survey (Follow-Up)

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department

March, 2019

## INTRODUCTION

In January 2019, Consumer Reports conducted a follow-up nationally representative phone survey to assess the behaviors and experiences of social media account holders and their viewpoints, concerns, and expectations regarding privacy.

Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) of Princeton, New Jersey administered the survey (from January 10-13 & 24-27, 2019) to a nationally representative sample of 2,015 adult U.S. residents through its CARAVAN Omnibus Survey. Respondents were selected by means of random-digit dialing and were interviewed via phone. The data were statistically weighted so that respondents in the survey are demographically and geographically representative of the U.S. population.

This is the second Social Media Survey (SMSII) that we fielded. The previous Social Media Survey (SMSI) was administered using the same methodology to a representative sample of 2,014 U.S. adult residents in May, 2018. The two surveys are identical with the exception of timing, dropping one question from SMSI to SMSII, and minor rephrasing on four questions that specifically referenced the Cambridge Analytica data scandal. Since the Cambridge Analytica scandal is somewhat dated, four questions that reference it in SMSII include the wording "or any other social media data scandals" wherever the phrasing Cambridge Analytica appears in the survey.

# HIGHLIGHTS

## Changes from SMSI to SMSII

### Permissions

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Facebook account holders DO NOT think Facebook should be allowed to collect data about them when they are not on Facebook. This percentage is higher than reported in the 2018 SMSI (59%).

### Changes in Behaviors on Facebook Due to Social Media Data Scandals

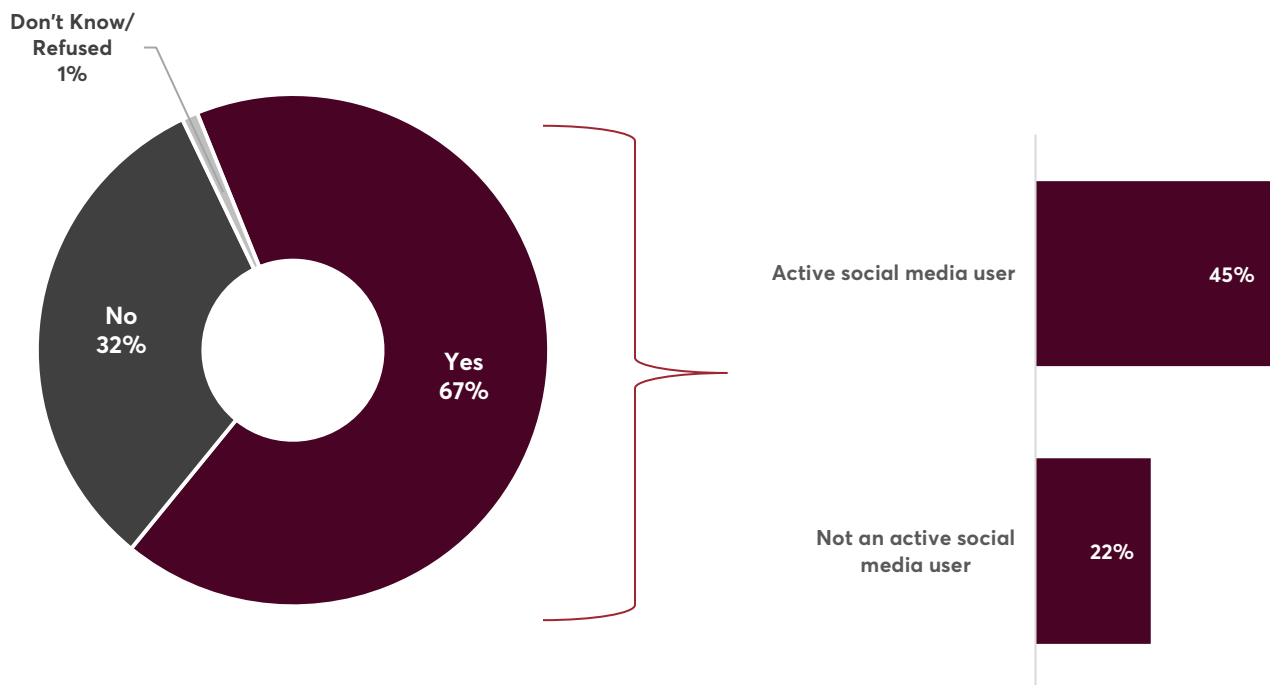
- This latest survey finds that nearly three-quarters (74%) of Facebook account holders who are aware of a social media data scandal say they have changed their behavior in some way in comparison to 69% who had done so in the 2018 SMSI.
- Overall, this new survey also shows that due to privacy concerns raised by social media data scandals, a larger percentage of Facebook account holders in 2019 compared to 2018 have engaged in cautionary behaviors such as:
  - Changing privacy settings on social media accounts: 44% in SMSII vs. 37% in SMSI
  - Using more caution about posting, commenting, and viewing: 42% in SMSII vs. 38% in SMSI
  - Blocking other users: 39% in SMSII vs. 30% in SMSI
  - Cutting back on amount of time posting, commenting, and viewing content: 38% in SMSII vs. 32% in SMSI
  - Blocking advertisers: 34% in SMSII vs. 28% in SMSI

# FINDINGS

## Social Media Usage

More than two-thirds (67%) of Americans say they have an account on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, or Snapchat and more than four in 10 of them are active users. A larger percentage of females (52%) than males (37%) are active social media users.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT HOLDER?      TYPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USER

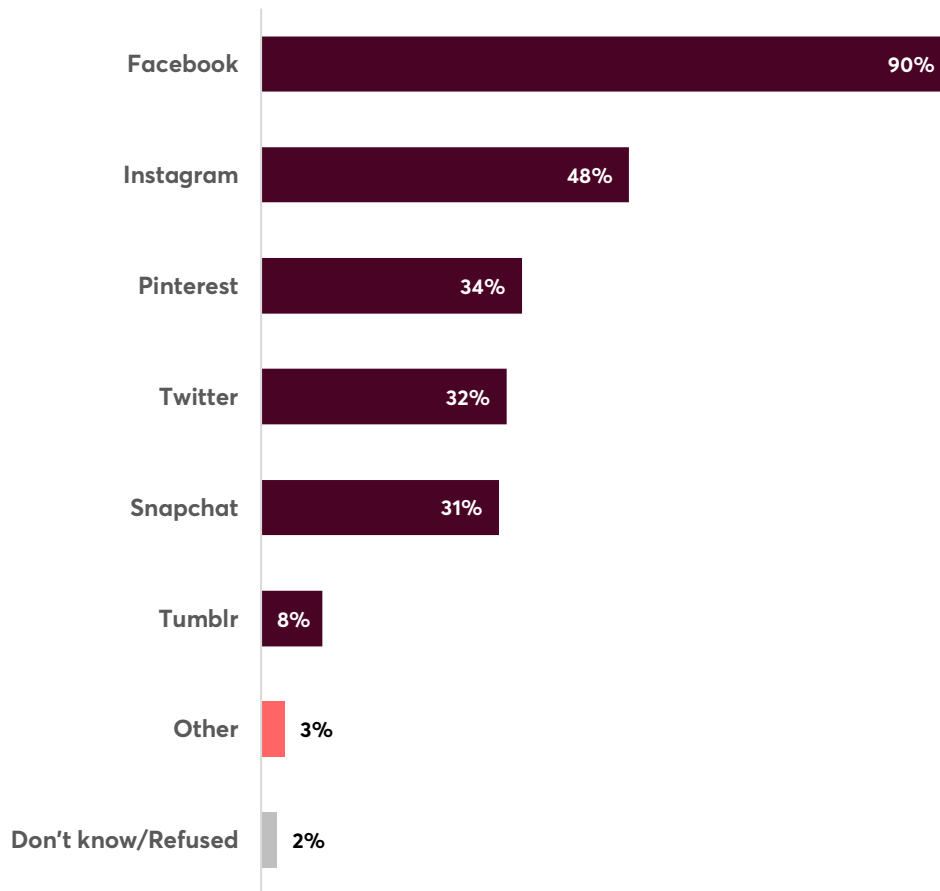


Base: All respondents

## Most Popular Social Media Sites

Facebook is still the most popular social media site according to Americans who say they have an account on social media. Most (90%) Americans, who say they have an account on social media, have a Facebook account. Nearly half (48%) of Americans who have an account on social media have an Instagram account.

### MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



Base: Respondents who have a social media account

## Privacy

### Awareness about Data Collection & Storing

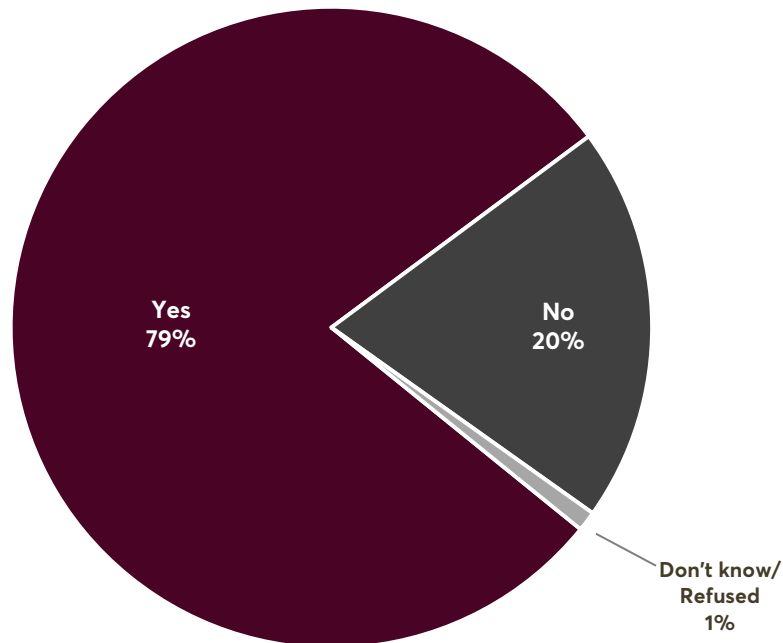
We read the following statement to respondents:

*"Social media sites like Facebook have privacy agreements that give Facebook the right to collect data from other websites. For example, social media sharing buttons, 'cookies,' and other elements of a web page contains a code that transmits such information."*

Then, we asked respondents *"Are you aware that Facebook does this?"*

More than three-quarters (79%) of Facebook account holders say they are aware that Facebook collects their data from other websites they visit. A larger percentage of males (83%) than females (76%) say they are aware of this.

### AWARE THAT FACEBOOK COLLECTS DATA FROM OTHER WEBSITES VISITED

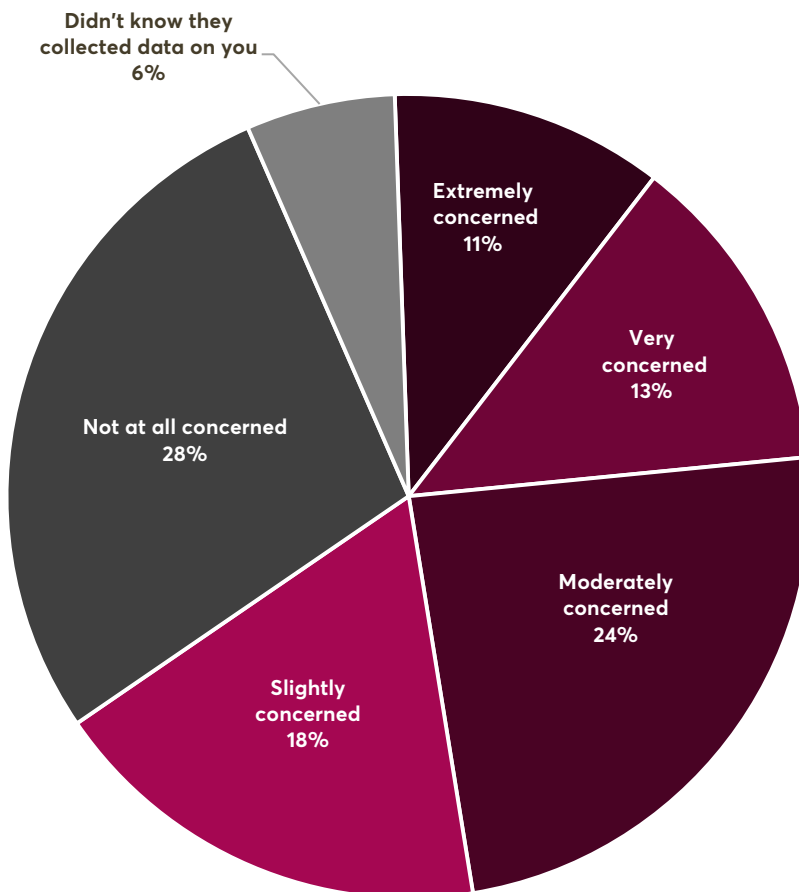


Base: Respondents who have a Facebook account

Concerns<sup>1</sup>

Nearly one in four say they are "extremely" or "very" concerned about how much data Facebook collects and stores about them. However, more than a quarter (28%) of Facebook account holders say they are "not concerned at all." A larger percentage of females (8%) than males (3%) say that they did not know that Facebook collects information about them.

**LEVEL OF CONCERN  
ABOUT FACEBOOK COLLECTING AND STORING PERSONAL DATA**



**Base: Respondents who have a Facebook account**

<sup>1</sup> The response scale was randomly flipped.

Permissions<sup>2</sup>

While many people are aware that Facebook collects data on them when they are not even on Facebook, most (92%) Facebook account holders do not think Facebook should be allowed to do this at all or at least without some restriction. While this overall sentiment has not changed since the 2018 SMSI, a larger percentage of Facebook account holders now express stronger views on the matter with 63% of Facebook account holders saying that Facebook should NOT be allowed to collect data about them when they are not on the Facebook site.

2019 SMSII

6%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS  
SAY FACEBOOK SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS  
WITHOUT RESTRICTION

2018 SMSI

7%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS  
SAY FACEBOOK SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS  
WITHOUT RESTRICTION

29%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS  
SAY FACEBOOK SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS  
ONLY IF THEY GET PERMISSION EACH TIME

32%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS  
SAY FACEBOOK SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS  
ONLY IF THEY GET PERMISSION EACH TIME

63%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS  
SAY FACEBOOK SHOULD  
NOT BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS

59%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS  
SAY FACEBOOK SHOULD  
NOT BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS

<sup>2</sup> The response scale was randomly flipped.



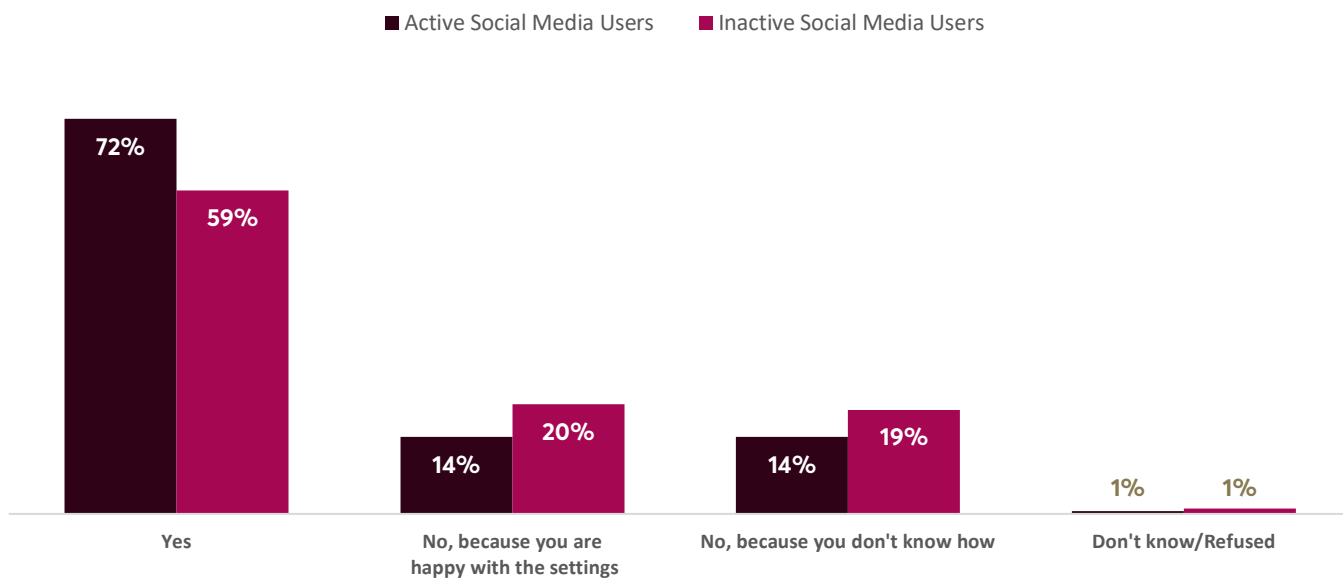
### Privacy Policy and Service Agreement

Almost two-thirds (64%) of Facebook account holders say they have never read the privacy policy or service agreement. A larger percentage of females (38%) than males (31%) say they have read them.

### Adjusted Privacy Settings

More than two-thirds (68%) of Facebook account holders say that they have adjusted the privacy settings on their account at one time or another. A larger percentage of females (74%) than males (59%) say that they have adjusted their Facebook privacy settings. In addition, a larger percentage of active social media users (72%) than inactive users (59%) are more likely to do so.

## EVER ADJUSTED FACEBOOK PRIVACY SETTINGS?



Base: Respondents with a Facebook account

### Is the Cost of Privacy Worth the Benefit?

We asked Facebook account holders:

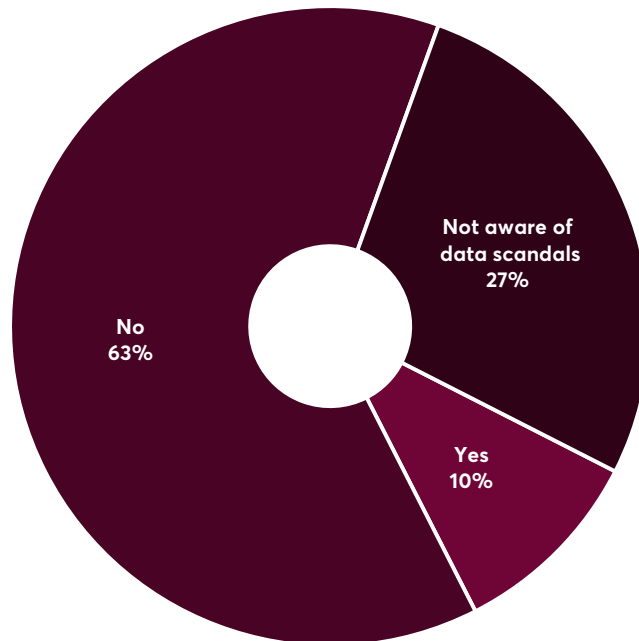
*"Would you be willing to pay to use Facebook, instead of Facebook making money by showing you targeted ads based on data they've collected about you?"*

About one in 10 Americans (12%) who have a Facebook account say they would be willing to pay to use Facebook instead of Facebook collecting information about them.

## The Impact of Cambridge Analytica or Other Social Media Data Scandals on Facebook

We asked Americans "Have you stopped using Facebook in response to the Cambridge Analytica or any other social media data scandal?" Of those who say they were active Facebook users at the time of the Cambridge Analytica scandal or other social media data scandals, one in ten have stopped using Facebook in response to these scandals.

### DID AMERICANS STOP USING FACEBOOK IN RESPONSE TO SOCIAL MEDIA DATA SCANDALS?

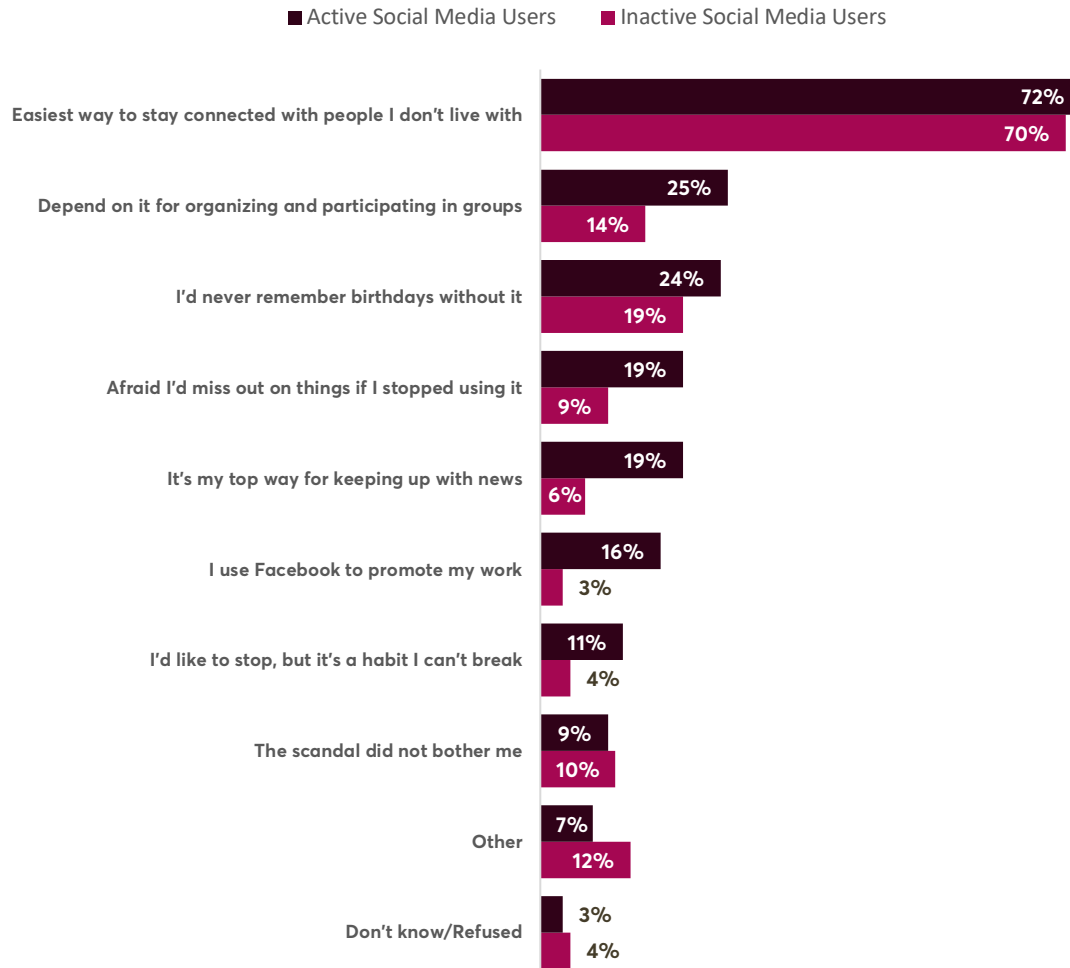


Base: Facebook users at the time of a social media data scandal  
\*Don't know/Refused were removed from base

## Reasons Facebook Users Haven't Stopped Using Facebook Despite Social Media Data Scandals

The top reason that Facebook users have not stopped using Facebook despite social media data scandals is that they say it is the easiest way to stay connected with people they do not live with. This is the main reason given by both active and inactive social media users.

### REASONS PEOPLE HAVE NOT STOPPED USING FACEBOOK DESPITE DATA SCANDALS



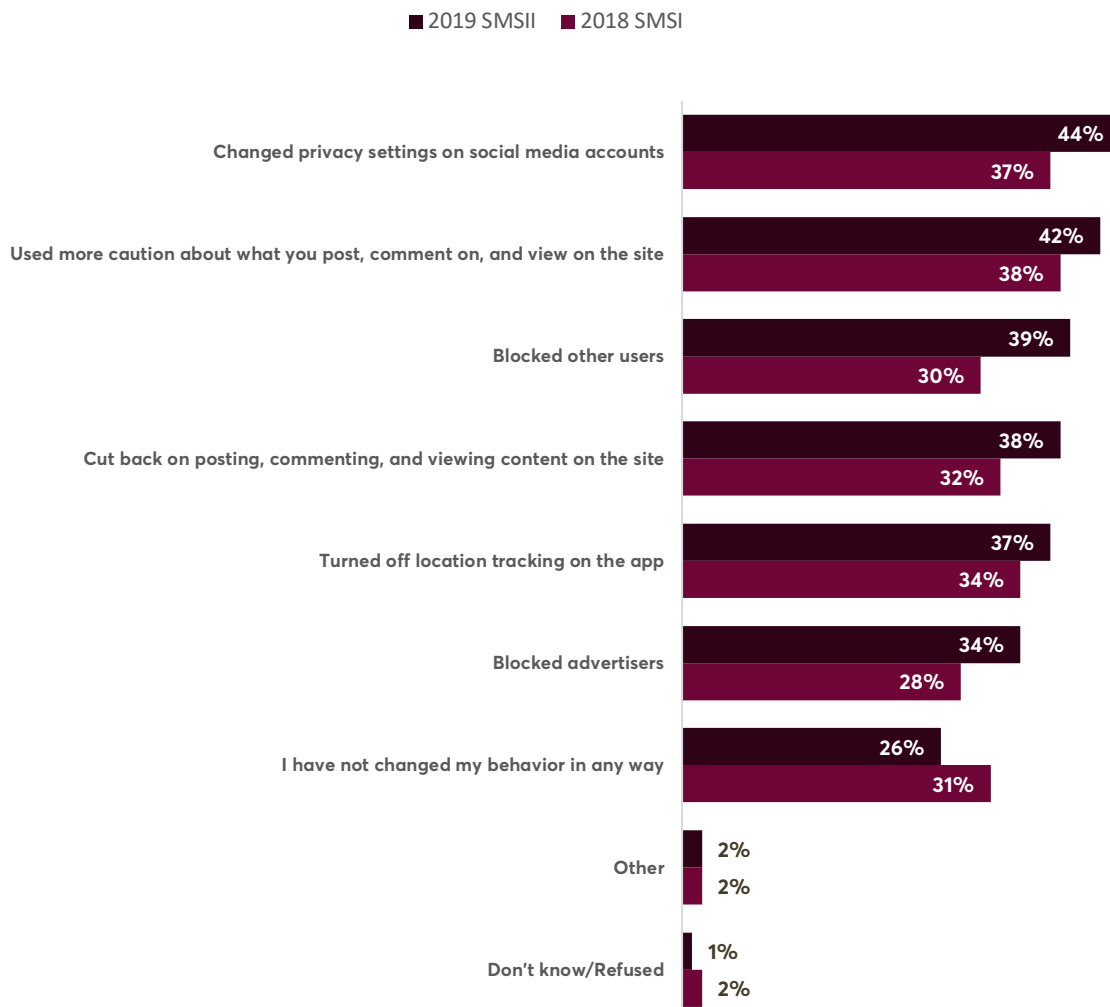
Base: Respondents with a Facebook account and have not stopped using it even though they are aware of the Cambridge Analytica or other social media data scandals

### Changes in Behavior on Facebook due to Data Scandals

We asked Facebook account holders who were aware of the Cambridge Analytica or any other social media data scandals "Which, if any, of the following have you done on your Facebook account in response to privacy concerns raised by the recent Facebook/Cambridge Analytica or any other social media data scandal?"

This latest survey finds that nearly three-quarters (74%) of Facebook account holders who are aware of a social media data scandal say they have changed their behavior in some way in comparison to 69% in the 2018 SMSI. Overall, this new survey also shows that a larger percentage of Facebook account holders in 2019 compared to 2018 have engaged in the cautionary behaviors that we ask about.

## CHANGES IN FACEBOOK BEHAVIOR DUE TO DATA SCANDALS



Base: Respondents with a Facebook account and are aware of the Cambridge Analytica or any other social media data scandal

## Social Media Behaviors/Experiences

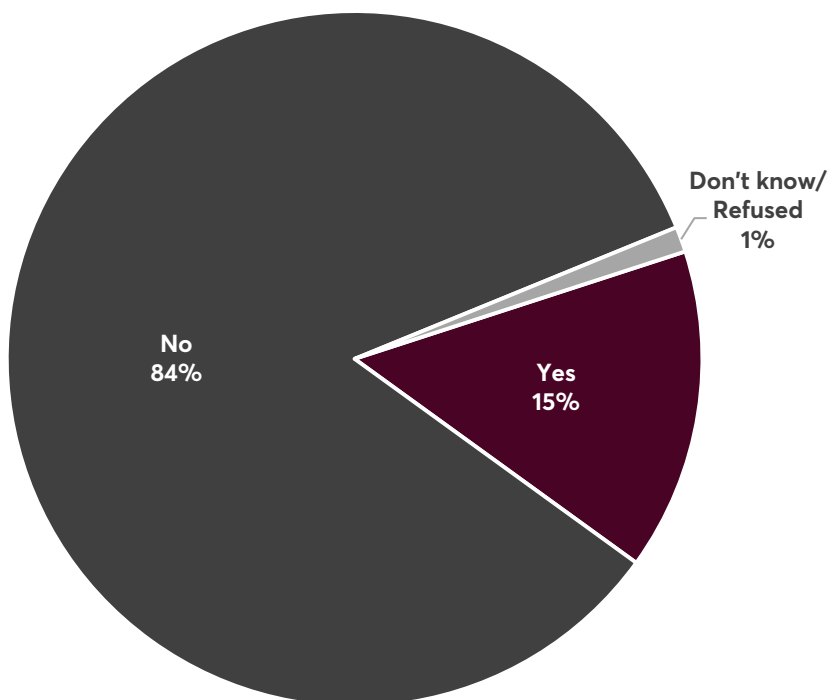
### Fake News

More than half (54%) of Facebook account holders admit that they been subject to believing fake news on Facebook. A larger percentage of active social media users (60%) than inactive social media users (42%) say that they have read news on Facebook that they initially believed to be true but later realized it was a fabrication.

### Jealousy

Most (84%) Facebook account holders say they have never felt jealous or bad about themselves after looking at someone else's Facebook posts. However, a larger percentage of females (17%) than males (11%) admit to feeling jealous or bad and a larger percentage of Millennials (22%) than other generational group (Gen X; 13%, Baby Boomers; 6%, Silent; 1%) admit to this.

### DOES FACEBOOK EVER MAKE YOU FEEL BAD?



Base: Respondents with a Facebook account

## Governmental Oversight

Only twenty-six percent of Facebook account holders say they think the government should have more oversight over social media. A larger percentage of the Silent (35%) and Baby Boomer (31%) generations than Millennials (22%) support this view.

## Democratic Ideals vs. Social Media

Respondents were read two statements <sup>3</sup> and then asked, "Which one best describes your view about Facebook's impact on society?"

Nearly identical to the 2018 SMSI results, this year, Facebook account holders are once again divided down the middle. In addition, a larger percentage of active social media users (52%) than inactive users (34%) selected Statement 2.

### FACEBOOK'S IMPACT ON SOCIETY

2019 SMSII    2018 SMSI

#### STATEMENT 1

*"Facebook fosters division in society by showing people only certain issue-oriented news items and advertising based on factors such as demographics and interests."*

44%    45%

#### STATEMENT 2

*"Facebook creates an environment that fosters free speech where people can hear and share perspectives on all sides of an issue."*

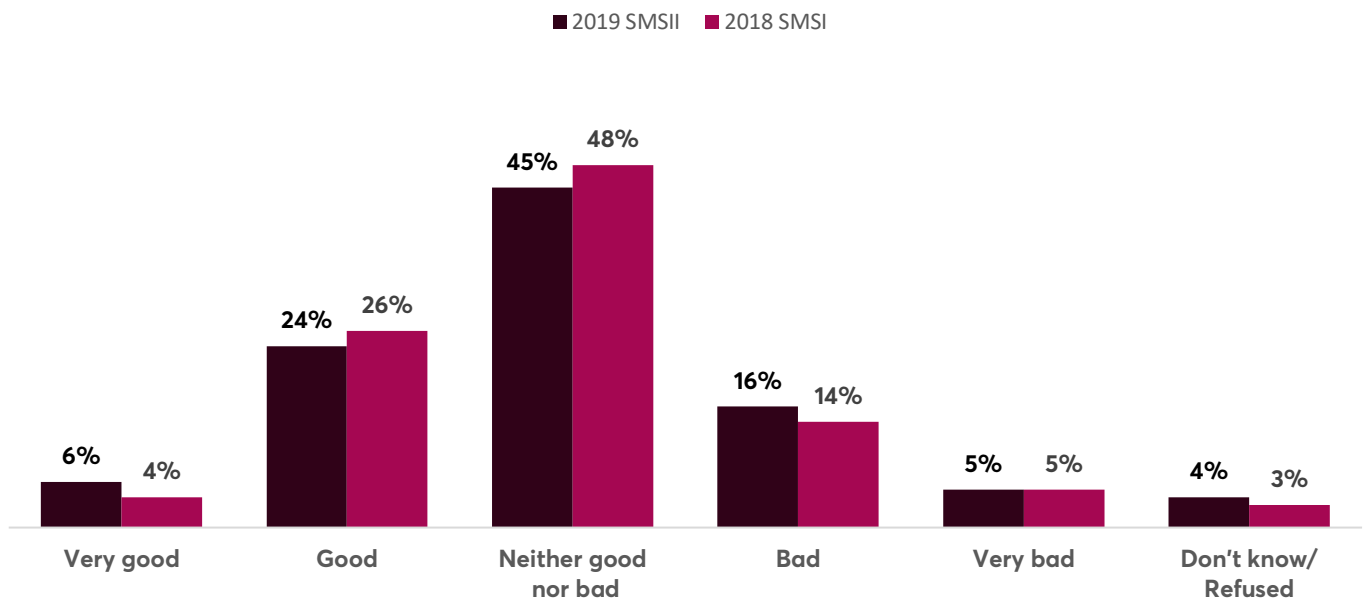
46%    46%

Base: Respondents with a Facebook account

<sup>3</sup> The presentation order of the two statements was randomized.

When we specifically asked Facebook account holders if they think social media is good or bad for democracy,<sup>4</sup> forty-five percent of Americans who have a Facebook account say it is neither good nor bad. More respondents leaned toward social media being good for democracy—in both 2018 and 2019 surveys, a third (30%) said it was very good or good for democracy.

## IS SOCIAL MEDIA GOOD OR BAD FOR DEMOCRACY?



**Base: Respondents with a Facebook account**

In addition, individuals who said social media is good for democracy are more likely to select Statement 2 concerning Facebook’s impact on society —61% of Facebook account holders who said social media is very good/good for democracy selected Statement 2.

### Very Good/Good for Democracy

Statement 1: 39%  
Statement 2: 61%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS

### Very Bad/Bad for Democracy

Statement 1: 67%  
Statement 2: 33%

OF FACEBOOK ACCOUNT HOLDERS

STATEMENT 1: Facebook fosters division in society by showing people only certain issue-oriented news items and advertising based on factors such as demographics and interests.

STATEMENT 2: Facebook creates an environment that fosters free speech where people can hear and share perspectives on all sides of an issue.

<sup>4</sup> The response scale was randomly flipped.

## SUMMARY

We launched our first Social Media Survey (SMSI) in 2018 shortly after the Cambridge Analytica data scandal story broke in the news to assess behaviors and experiences of social media account holders and their viewpoints, concerns, and expectations regarding privacy. Less than one year later with more data scandals making headlines, we fielded the second Social Media Survey (SMSII) to once again take the pulse of American social media account holders on these matters.

We asked Facebook account holders how concerned or not concerned they are about how much data Facebook collects and stores about them. While the level of concern has not changed over the past year, some behaviors have. We found a general trend from 2018 to 2019 of more social media account holders who have stopped using Facebook in response to the Cambridge Analytica or other social media data scandals. In addition, for those who have not stopped using it, we found a larger percentage of Facebook account holders in 2019 changed their behavior in some way in response to privacy concerns raised by these scandals.

## METHODOLOGY

This phone survey was fielded by ORC using a nationally representative sample. The survey fielded from January 10-13 & 24-27, 2019 using two probability samples: randomly selected landline telephone numbers and randomly selected mobile (cell) telephone numbers. The combined sample consists of 2,015 adults (18 years old and older) living in the continental United States. Of the 2,015 interviews, 815 were from the landline sample and 1,200 from the cell phone sample. The margin of error for the sample of 2,015 is +/- 2.18% at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins.

Key demographic characteristics (after weighting was applied) of this sample are presented below:

- 52% female
- Average age of 48 years old
- 32% 4-year college graduates
- 47% have a household income of \$50,000 or more