Study: Canadians' assessments of social media in their lives

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Around 1 in 5 Canadians report losing sleep and being less physically active because of their use of social media. A new study, "Canadians' assessment of social media in their lives," released today in *Economic and Social Reports*, uses data from the 2018 Canadian Internet Use Survey (CIUS) to examine individual self-reports of negative experiences resulting from use of social networking websites or apps.

Among CIUS respondents aged 15 to 64, around one-fifth reported that in the previous 12 months they had lost sleep (19%), done less physical activity (22%), or had trouble concentrating on tasks or activities (18%) as a result of social media use. Around 1 in 8 (12% to 14%) reported negative emotional experiences, including feeling anxious or depressed, frustrated or angry, or envious of the lives of others.

Age was a predominant factor in the association between social media use and these negative experiences. About 47% of respondents aged 15 to 19 and about 28% of those aged 20 to 24 reported losing sleep as a result of social media use. Lost sleep was reported by 16% to 21% of social media users aged 25 to 49. Between 24% and 36% of respondents aged 15 to 29 years reported having trouble concentrating because of social media use. This experience was reported by 13% to 18% of users aged 30 to 49 years.

Negative emotional experiences were also more prevalent among youth. Around 20% of respondents under age 30 reported feeling anxious or depressed as a result of social media use, compared with 12% to 15% of users aged 30 to 49. Of people in their teens, twenties and early thirties, 18% to 24% reported feeling envious of the lives of others as a result of their social media use; this was the case for 11% of users in their mid-thirties and forties.

In 2018, 78% of Canadians who were online regularly used at least one social networking account (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram), ranging from 68% among those in their fifties and early sixties to over 90% among those in their teens, twenties and early thirties.

Over one-half of CIUS respondents aged 15 to 24 reported using three or more social media accounts, and this higher "intensity" of usage contributed to their differences from older age groups. Among all respondents, three times as many social media users with three or more accounts reported negative experiences—lost sleep, trouble concentrating, feelings of anxiety and depression, and feeling envious of the lives of others—as did those with a single account.

Other outcomes did not vary as much across age groups. Specifically, reports of reduced physical activity and feelings of frustration or anger were not more prevalent among social media users under age 35 than they were among those aged 35 to 49, after accounting for differences in the intensity of social media usage.

In some experiences, there were modest but significant differences between women and men. Higher proportions of women reported having trouble concentrating, getting less physical activity, feeling anxious or depressed, and feeling envious of the lives of others, after accounting for differences in intensity of social media use.

For a visual representation of these findings, please see the infographic "Canadians' reported experiences using social media, 2018/2019."

For more information on other articles released today, please see "Economic and Social Reports, March 2021."

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4432.

The article "Canadians' assessments of social media in their lives," is now available in the March 2021 online issue of *Economic and Social Reports*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (36-28-0001).

Also released today is an infographic titled, "Canadians' reported experiences using social media, 2018/2019," available as part of the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics* (**11-627-M**).

For more information contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; **STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca**).

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