

FOR RELEASE MAY 8, 2020

# Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age

*From distractions to jealousy, how Americans navigate cellphones  
and social media in their romantic relationships*

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**RECOMMENDED CITATION**

Pew Research Center, May 2020, "Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"

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## How we did this

Pew Research Center has long studied the changing nature of romantic relationships as well as the role of digital technology in people's lives. This particular report focuses on the patterns, experiences and attitudes related to digital technology use in romantic relationships. These findings are based on a survey conducted Oct. 16 to 28, 2019, among 4,860 U.S. adults. This includes those who took part as members of Pew Research Center's [American Trends Panel](#) (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses, as well as respondents from the Ipsos KnowledgePanel who indicated that they identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). The margin of sampling error for the full sample is plus or minus 2.1 percentage points.

Recruiting ATP panelists by phone or mail ensures that nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. This gives us confidence that any sample can represent the whole U.S. adult population (see our [Methods 101 explainer](#) on random sampling). To further ensure that each ATP survey reflects a balanced cross-section of the nation, the data is weighted to match the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories.

For more, see the report's [Methodology](#). You can also find the [questions](#) asked, and the answers the public provided in the topline.

# Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age

## *From distractions to jealousy, how Americans navigate cellphones and social media in their romantic relationships*

Amid growing debates about the impact of [smartphones](#) and [social media](#) on romantic relationships, a Pew Research Center survey conducted in October 2019 finds that many Americans encounter some tech-related struggles with their significant others.

For instance, among partnered adults in the U.S. – that is, those who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship, roughly half (51%) say their partner is often or sometimes distracted by their cellphone while they are trying to have a conversation with them, and four-in-ten say they are at least sometimes bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their mobile device.

Partnered adults under the age of 50 are particularly likely to express the feeling that their partner is distracted by their phone, with those ages 30 to 49 most likely to report this. Fully 62% of 30- to 49-year-olds and 52% of 18- to 29-year-olds who are in a romantic relationship say their partner is at least sometimes distracted by their phone when they're trying to talk them. Still, this issue is not confined to younger age groups: 41% of partnered Americans ages 50 and older say they have encountered this in their relationship at least sometimes.

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### About half of Americans in romantic relationships say they deal with their partner being distracted by their phone

*% of partnered adults who ...*



**51%**

Say their partner is often or sometimes distracted by their cellphone when they are trying to have a conversation with them



**40%**

Say they are often or sometimes bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their cellphone



**34%**

Say they have ever looked through their current partner's cellphone without that person's knowledge

Note: Partnered adults refers to those who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. These items were only asked among those whose partner has a cellphone, but are presented here among all partnered adults.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019. "Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"

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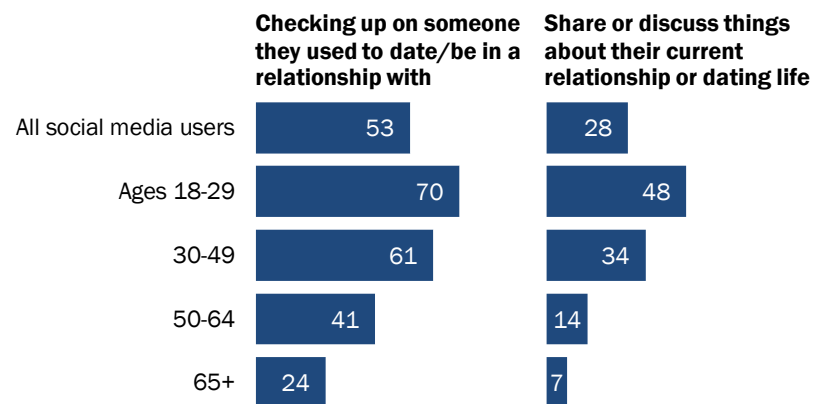
With phones being such a distraction, people might be tempted to look through their partner's phone. However, there is widespread agreement among the public that digital snooping in couples is unacceptable. Seven-in-ten Americans – regardless of whether they are in a relationship – say it is rarely or never acceptable for someone to look through their partner's cellphone without that person's knowledge. Still, 34% of partnered adults say they have looked through their partner's cellphone without that person's knowledge, with women being more likely than men to say they have done this (42% vs. 25%).

For many adults, social media plays a role in the way they navigate and share information about their romantic relationships. Roughly eight-in-ten social media users (81%) report that they at least sometimes see others posting about their relationships, including 46% who say this happens often, but few say that seeing these posts affects how they feel about their own love life.

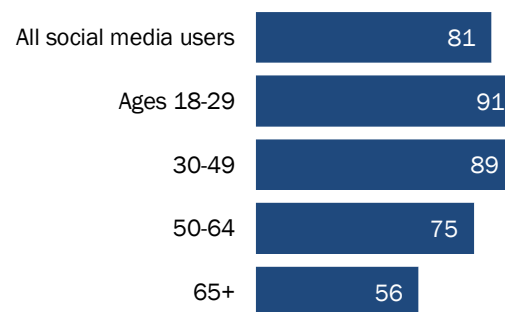
Moreover, social media has become a place where some users discuss relationships and investigate old ones. Roughly half of social media users (53%) say they have used these platforms to check up on someone they used to date or be in a relationship with, while 28% say they have used social media to share or discuss things about their relationship or dating life. For adult users under the age of 30, those shares who have used social

### Younger social media users are especially likely to check up on their exes, talk about their love life on these sites

*% of social media users who say they have ever used social media to ...*



*% of social media users who say they **often** or **sometimes** see people posting things about their romantic relationships on social media*



Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

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media to checked-up on a former partner (70%) or posted about their own love life (48%) are even higher.

But social media can also be a source of annoyance and conflict for some couples. Among those whose partner uses social media, 23% say they have felt jealous or unsure of their relationship because of the way their current partner interacts with others on these sites, and this share rises to 34% among those ages 18 to 29.

Still, some users view these platforms as an important venue for showing love and affection. This is especially true for younger users who are partnered: 48% of 18- to 29-year-old social media users say social media is very or somewhat important for them in showing how much they care about their partner.

These are some of the main findings from a nationally representative survey of 4,860 U.S. adults conducted online Oct. 16 to 28, 2019, using Pew Research Center's American Trend Panel.

### Terminology

Several terms are used in this report to describe people's current relationship status. This reference guide explains each term.

**Single** is used to describe people who are not currently in a committed relationship but may be casually dating (31% of the sample).

**Single and looking** refers to people who are not in a committed relationship (but may be casually dating) and are looking for dates or a relationship (15% of the sample).

**Casually dating** refers to single people who are casually dating someone but are not in a committed relationship (4% of the sample).

**Partnered** refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship (69% of the sample).

**Cohabiting** is used to describe people who currently live with their partner but are not married (11% of the sample).

**Committed relationship** is used to describe people who are in a relationship but are not married or cohabiting (8% of the sample).

**Unmarried** is used to refer to any adults who are not currently married – single, cohabiting or in a committed relationship (50% of the sample). This term is sometimes used in conjunction with the term “partnered” to refer to those who are cohabiting or in a committed relationship (for example, **unmarried partnered adults** constitute 19% of the sample).

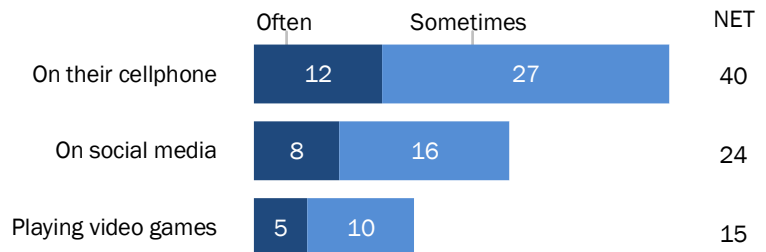
## 40% of partnered adults say they are bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their cellphone

At the time of the survey, four-in-ten Americans who are married, living with a partner or who are in a committed relationship say they are often or sometimes bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their cellphone, including 12% who say they feel this way often.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, 24% of partnered Americans report that they are at least sometimes bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on social media, while a somewhat smaller share (15%) say they feel this way about their partner playing video games.

### Four-in-ten partnered Americans say they are at least sometimes bothered by how much time their partner spends on their cellphone

*% of partnered adults who say that they are \_\_\_ bothered by the amount of time their partner spends ...*



Note: Partnered adults refers to those who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. These items were only asked among those whose partner uses these digital technologies, but are presented here among all partnered adults. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> These items were only asked among those whose partner uses these digital technologies, but are presented here among all partnered adults. This group does include portions of those who say their partner does not own a cellphone (4%), use social media (27%) or play video games (47%). Please read the [Methodology](#) section for full details on how these questions were asked.

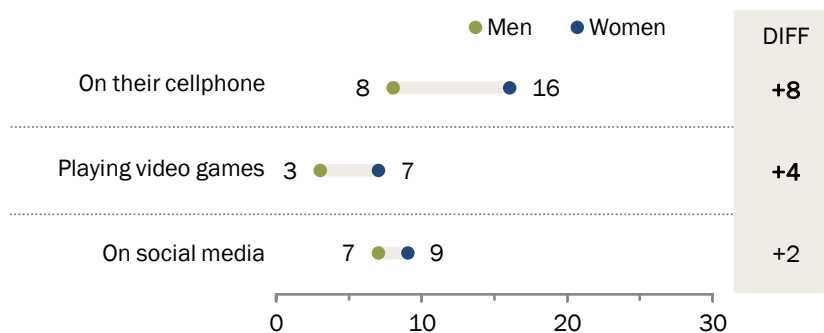
There are certain groups who are more likely to express annoyance over their partner's digital activities than others. Among partnered adults, women are more likely than men to say they are often bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their cellphone (16% vs. 8%) or playing video games (7% vs. 3%).<sup>2</sup>

Beyond gender differences, people's attitudes also vary by age. Some 18% of partnered adults ages 18 to 49 say they are often bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their phone,

compared with 6% of those ages 50 and older. Younger adults in romantic relationships also are more likely than their older counterparts to say they are often bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on social media (11% vs. 4%) and playing video games (7% vs. 3%).

### Women are about twice as likely as men to say they are often bothered by the amount of time their partner spends on their cellphone

*% of partnered adults who say that they are **often** bothered by the amount of time their partner spends ...*



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. Statistically significant differences in **bold**. These items were only asked among those whose partner uses these digital technologies, but are presented here among all partnered adults. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.  
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<sup>2</sup> Prior research from 2019 shows that the majority of both men (84%) and women (79%) in the U.S. report [owning a smartphone](#). In addition, about three-in-ten U.S. adults say they are [online almost constantly](#), and this does not differ by gender. [Prior work](#) in 2018 found that men under 50 are more likely than women under 50 to report [playing video games](#) at least sometimes.



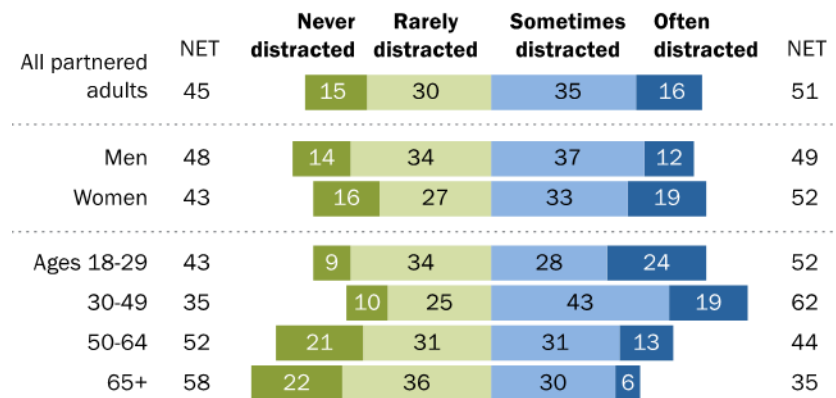
## Roughly half of partnered people say their significant other is distracted by their phone at least sometimes when they try to talk to them

While relatively few Americans are familiar with [the term “phubbing”](#) – which is the practice of snubbing others in favor of their cellphones – notable shares say they have encountered that behavior in their romantic relationships.

When asked to reflect on their partner’s cellphone use, 51% of Americans in a romantic relationship say their partner is at least sometimes distracted by their cellphone when they are trying to have a conversation with them, including 16% who say their significant other is often distracted by their mobile device.

### About half of Americans in a relationship say their partner is distracted by their phone when they are trying to talk to them

*% of partnered adults who say their partner is \_\_\_ by their cellphone when they are trying to have a conversation with them*



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. These items were only asked among those whose partner has a cellphone, but are presented here among all partnered adults. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

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This pattern differs by age: Roughly six-in-ten partnered adults ages 30 to 49 say their significant other is at least sometimes distracted by their cellphone when they are trying to hold a conversation with them, compared with 52% of those ages 18 to 29 and even smaller shares for those ages 50 and older (41%). Among those in relationships, younger adults also are more likely than older adults to assert that their partner is often distracted by their phone when they are trying to have a discussion (20% vs. 10%).

Women who are in a relationship are more likely than men to say their partner is often distracted by their phone while they are trying to hold a conversation, but this gender difference is most pronounced among younger adults. Three-in-ten partnered women ages 18 to 29 say their significant other is often distracted by their phone while they are trying to hold a conversation, compared with 15% of men in this age group who say this.

## About one-in-three partnered adults say they have looked through their current spouse or partner's phone without their knowledge, but there's strong public consensus this is unacceptable

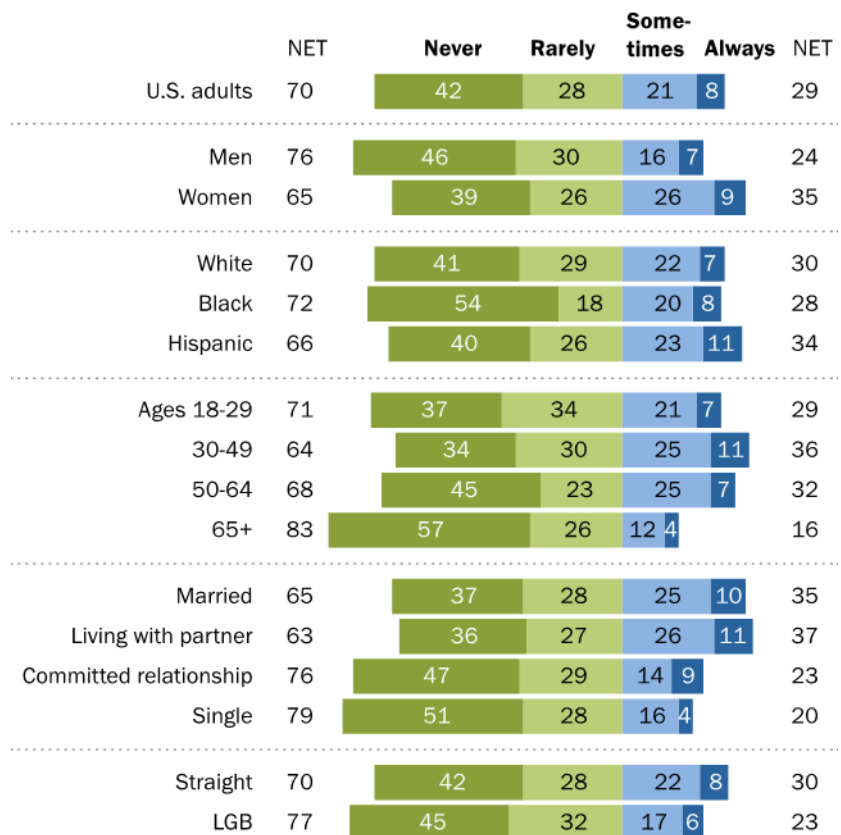
Americans – regardless of whether they are in a relationship – were asked in the survey about their views about some issues related to technology and relationships. For example, they weighed in on the acceptability of looking through a significant other's phone without that person's knowledge. Seven-in-ten U.S. adults say it is rarely (28%) or never (42%) acceptable to look through a significant other's cellphone without their knowledge. Smaller shares – about three-in-ten (29%) – view this behavior as at least sometimes acceptable.

Majorities across major demographic groups view these actions as unacceptable, but there are some Americans who are more accepting of this behavior than others.

Women are more likely than men to think it is at least sometimes acceptable for someone to look through their partner's cellphone without their knowledge (35% vs. 24%). And about one-third of adults under the age of 65 (33%) view this as acceptable, compared with 16% of those 65 and older.

### A majority of Americans think it is unacceptable for someone to look through their partner's phone without their knowledge

*% of U.S. adults who say it is \_\_\_ acceptable for someone to look through their partner's cellphone without that person's knowledge*



Note: White and black adults include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. LGB indicates those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Committed relationship refers to those in a relationship who are not married or living with a partner. Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

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Americans' views on the acceptability of looking through a partner's phone varies by current relationship status. Americans who are married or cohabiting are more likely than those who are single or in a committed relationship to say that looking through a significant other's phone without that person's knowledge is sometimes or always acceptable.

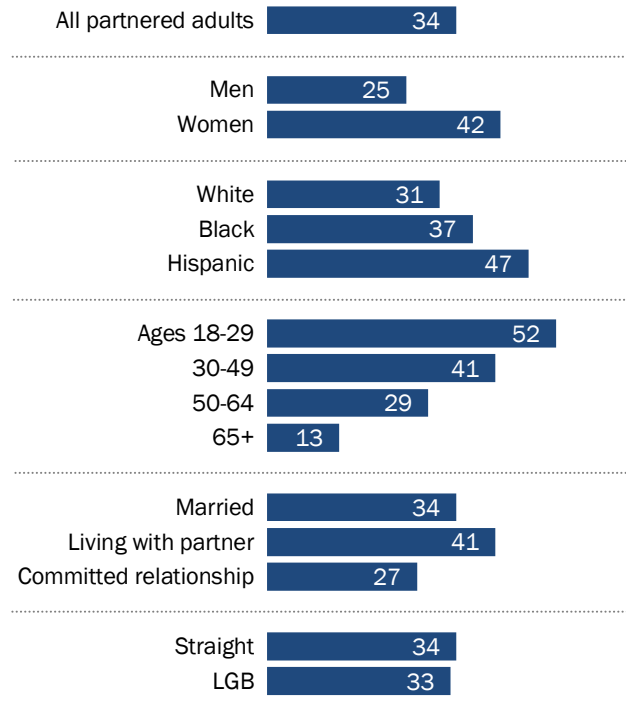
Despite the overall public uneasiness with this type of digital snooping, there are some Americans who report that they have looked through their significant other's phone without that person's knowledge. Roughly one-third of partnered adults (34%) say they have done this, but there are substantial differences by gender, age and relationship status when it comes to looking through a significant other's phone.

Among adults who are partnered, women are far more likely than men to report that they have looked through their current partner's phone without that person's knowledge (42% vs. 25%). And while 52% of partnered adults ages 18 to 29 say they have done this, those shares are 41% among those ages 30 to 49, 29% among those ages 50 to 64 and 13% among those 65 and older.

These actions also vary by the type of relationship. Roughly four-in-ten Americans (41%) who are living with a partner report that they have looked through their current partner's phone without that person's knowledge, compared with 27% of those who are in committed relationship and 34% of those who are married. However, this pattern is largely due age differences in relationship status, as twice as many adults under 50 live with a partner than do those 50 and older. While 48% cohabiters under 50 report having gone through their partner's phone without that person's knowledge, only 18% of cohabiters ages 50 and older say the same.

## About one-in-three Americans who are in a romantic relationship say they've looked through their partner's phone without that person's knowledge

*% of partnered adults who say they have ever looked through their current partner's cellphone without that person's knowledge*



Is it acceptable or not for someone to look through their partner's cellphone without their knowledge?



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. Committed relationship refers to those in a relationship who are not married or living with a partner. White and black adults include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. LGB indicates those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. These items were only asked among those whose partner has a cellphone, but are presented here among all partnered adults. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

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There also are some differences by race and ethnicity. About half of Hispanic adults who are in a relationship say they have looked through their partner's phone, compared with a third among their black or white counterparts.

Those in partnered relationships also are more likely to look through their partner's cellphone without that person's knowledge if they think it is acceptable to do so (61% say they have done this). Smaller shares of partnered adults who deem this unacceptable say they have personally gone through their current partner's phone – though still about one-in-five say they have done this.

## It is fairly common for partners to share the password or passcode to their cellphone

Overall, sharing passwords to digital devices or accounts is a fairly common practice in romantic relationships. In the October 2019 survey, a majority of Americans who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship say they have given their spouse or partner the password for their cellphone (75%), their email account (62%) or any of their social media accounts (42%).<sup>3</sup>

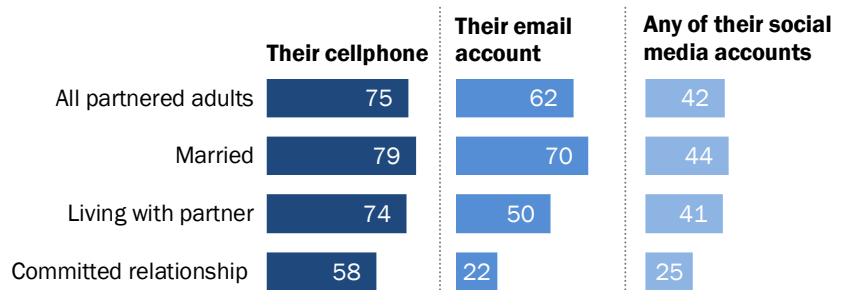
Still, experiences do vary depending on the type of relationship partnered people have. Married or cohabiting adults are much more likely to share their cellphone or social media passwords with their partner than those who are in a committed relationship but are not living with their partner. Roughly three-quarters or more of married adults (79%) or those who live with a partner (74%) say they have given their partner the password to their cellphone, compared with 58% of those who are in a committed relationship. A similar pattern is present

among partnered social media users when they are asked about whether they have shared their login information for any of their social media accounts. When it comes to email password sharing, married adults are the most likely group to say they have given their email password to their partner: 70% say this, compared with 50% of cohabiting internet users and just 22% of those in a committed relationship.

There also are some differences by age. Among partnered adults, those ages 18 to 49 are more likely than those ages 50 and older to say they have given their cellphone password to their spouse

### Adults who are in a committed relationship – but who are not married or cohabiting – are less likely to share passwords with their partner

*% of partnered adults who say they have ever given their spouse or partner the password or passcode to ...*



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. These items were only asked among those who use these digital technologies, but are presented here among all partnered adults. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

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<sup>3</sup> These items were only asked among those who use these digital technologies, but are presented here among all partnered adults. This group does include portions of those who say they do not use the internet or use social media. Please read the [Methodology](#) for full details on how these questions were asked.

or partner (81% vs. 69%). On the other hand, older adults are more likely than younger adults to say they have shared their email password with their significant other (70% vs. 59%).

## Most social media users see other people post about their relationship or dating life, but relatively few say these posts affect how they feel about their own relationship

This survey conducted last fall also examined how social media might be affecting the way people think about their own love lives. More specifically, does seeing relationship posts on social media affect the way people think about their own relationships?

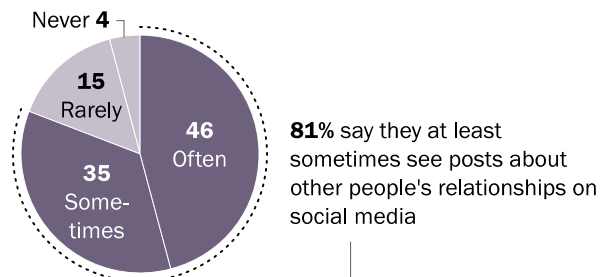
Overall, eight-in-ten social media users see others post about their relationship on social media often or sometimes. This differs by both age and gender. Women are slightly more likely than men to see these posts (84% vs. 77%). In addition, 90% of social media users ages 18 to 49 say they see these types of post at least sometimes, compared with 68% of those ages 50 and older.

A majority of social media users who are in a relationship (81%) say they see posts about other people's relationships when using social media. Among these partnered social media users, 78% of those who are married say they at least sometimes see posts about other people's relationships, compared with 89% of those who are living with partner and 86% of those in a committed relationship.

Overall, seeing these posts appears to have little effect on how people view their own romantic relationships. A large majority of partnered adults (81%) who at least sometimes see posts about other people's relationships say that these posts have not made much of difference in how they feel about their own relationship. On the other hand, relatively few say these posts make them feel better (9%) or worse (9%) about their relationship.

### Few social media users in relationships say that social media makes them feel differently about their own relationship

*% of partnered social media users who say they \_\_\_ see posts about other people's relationships on social media*



**Among this 81%**, percent who say seeing these posts makes them feel ...



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019. "Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"

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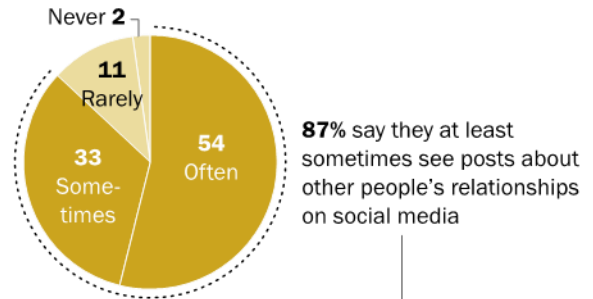
When it comes to social media users who are single and looking, 87% see other people making posts about their relationships on social media platforms at least sometimes. Social media users who are single and not looking for a relationship or dates are less likely to report seeing these types of posts at least sometimes (78%).

A third of the social media users who are single and looking and who say they see others' posts about their love life say that seeing these posts makes them feel worse. This compares with 62% who report that such posts by others do not make much of a difference in how they feel about their own dating life. Just 4% say it makes them feel better.

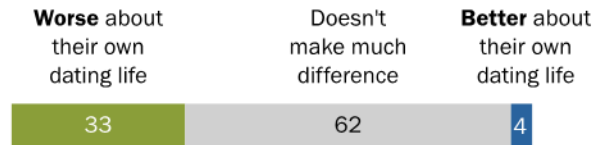
These relationship-focused posts tend to have a bigger impact on women than men. Among social media users who are single and looking, women who see relationships posts at least sometimes are more likely to report that seeing these posts on social media makes them feel worse about their dating lives than are their male counterparts (40% vs. 28%).

### 33% of social media users who are single and looking say seeing relationship posts make them feel worse about their dating life

*% of single and looking social media users who say they see posts about other people's relationships on social media*



**Among this 87%**, percent who say seeing these posts makes them feel ...



Note: Single and looking refers to people who are not in a committed relationship (but may or may not be casually dating) and are looking for dates and/or a relationship. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019. "Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"

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## About three-in-ten social media users say they have discussed their love life on social media

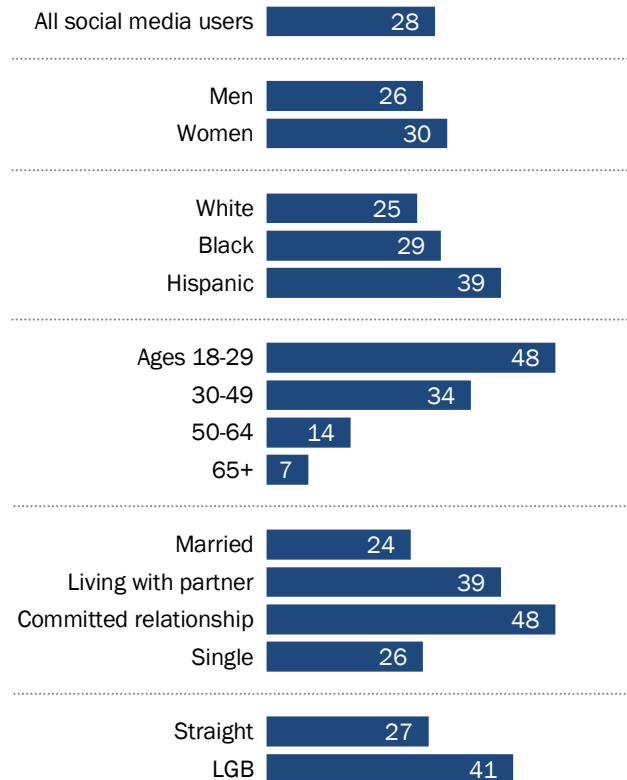
While it is fairly common for social media users to come across other people posting things about their love lives, only a minority of Americans who use these platforms (28%) say they have ever shared or discussed things about their relationship or dating life. About four-in-ten adults who are living with their partner (39%) and nearly half of those in a committed relationship (48%) but not living together say they have ever posted about their relationship on social media. Conversely, married and single adults are the least likely to post about their love lives (24% and 26%, respectively).

About four-in-ten social media users who are either Hispanic or lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) say they have ever posted about their dating life or relationship on social media, while around one-quarter of white, black and straight social media users say the same.

Younger social media users also are more likely to have posted about their love lives on social media previously. While about half of social media users ages 18 to 29 have ever posted on social media about their dating life or relationship, a third of 30- to 49-year-olds say the same. By comparison, far fewer social media users ages 50 and older (11%) say they ever post about their relationship or dating life.

## About three-in-ten social media users say they post about their love life, but this varies by age, relationship status

*% of social media users who say they have ever used social media to share or discuss things about their relationship or dating life*



Note: White and black adults include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. LGB indicates those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.  
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## Roughly half of social media users have used these sites to check up on an ex-romantic partner

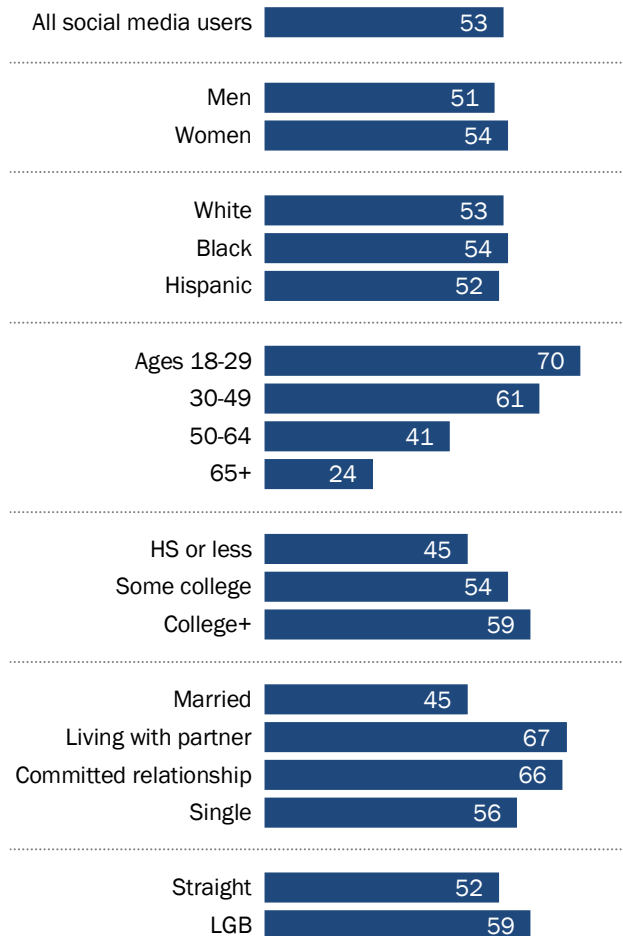
Using social media to [check up on former romantic partners](#) is a fairly common practice among social media users. About half of social media users (53%) say they have used these sites to check up on someone with whom they were in a relationship or whom they used to date.

Social media users ages 18 to 49 are far more likely than those ages 50 and older to report using social media to check up on an ex-romantic partner. Seven-in-ten 18- to 29-year-olds report that they have used these platforms to check up on someone they used to date or be in a relationship with. That share is lower – though still a majority – among users ages 30 to 49 and falls sharply among those ages 50 and older.

There also are some notable differences, depending on a person’s relationship status. About two-thirds each of social media users who are cohabiting or in a committed relationship say they have used social media to check up on someone they used to date. Meanwhile, 56% of single people, and even fewer married people (45%), say the same. In addition, social media users who have a high school degree or less education are less likely to report that they have used to social media to check up on an ex-romantic partner than those with a bachelor’s or advanced degree or who have some college experience.

## 70% of younger social media users say they’ve checked up on their exes via these platforms

*% of social media users who say they have used social media to check up on someone they used to date or be in a relationship with*



Note: White and black adults include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. LGB indicates those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Those who did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019. “Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age”

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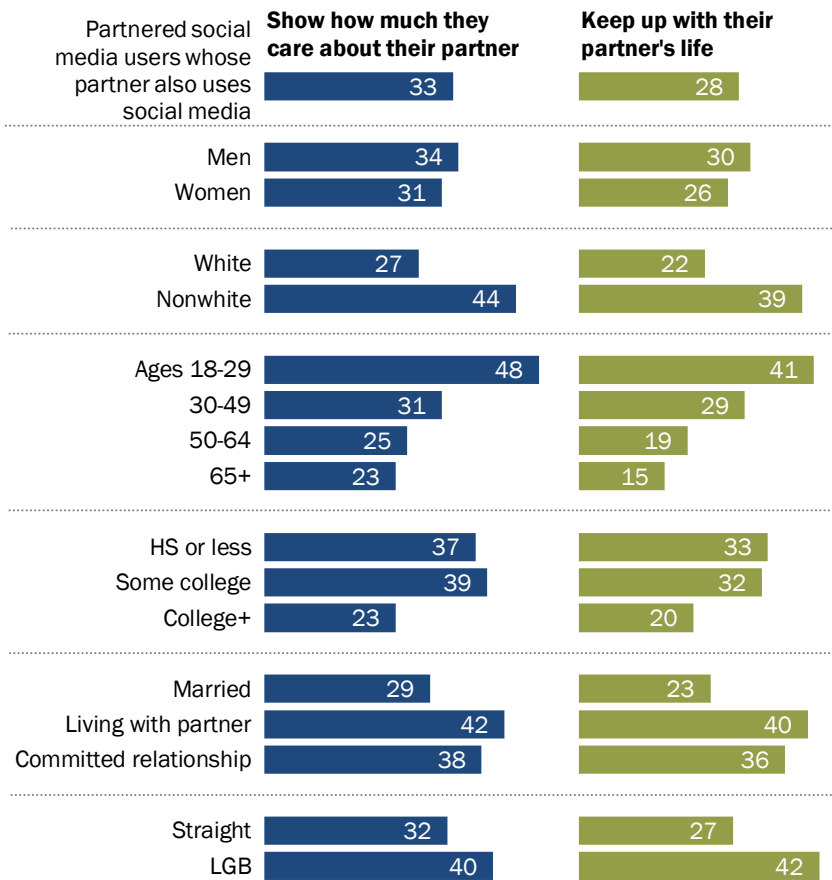
**Younger Americans in relationships are especially likely to view social media as having an important role in connecting and keeping up with their partner**

Overall, about three-in-ten partnered adults who use social media say that these sites are at least somewhat important in showing how much they care about their partner (33%) or keeping up with what is going on in their partner’s life (28%). But the level of importance that these users place on social media varies substantially by age. Among partnered social media users, 48% of 18- to 29-year-olds say these platforms are very or somewhat important in how they show how much they care about their partner, compared with 28% of those ages 30 and older who say this.

There also are age differences when it comes to the importance social media users place on these platforms for keeping up with their significant other’s life. About four-in-ten partnered users ages 18 to 29 say social media is somewhat or very important when it comes to keeping up with what’s going on in their partner’s life, compared with 29% of those ages 30 to 49 and only 17% of those ages 50 and older.

**Younger adults are especially likely to see social media as an important way to show how much they care about their partner**

*Among partnered social media users whose partner also uses social media, the % who say that social media is **very** or **somewhat important** in how they personally ...*



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. Nonwhite includes those who identify as black, Asian, Hispanic, some other race or multiple races. LGB indicates those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Those who did not answer or gave other responses are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019. "Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"

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Married social media users are more likely than those who are cohabiting or in a committed relationship to say they do not see social media as important for keeping up with what's going on in their partner's life or for showing how much they care about their partner.

The level of importance that partnered adults place on social media also varies by race and ethnicity as well as by sexual orientation. Nonwhite social media users are more likely than white users to say these platforms are a very or somewhat important for keeping up with their partner's life and showing how much they care.<sup>4</sup> Among partnered social media users, LGB adults are more likely than those who are straight to say social media is at least somewhat important for keeping up with their partner's life or showing how much they care.

Even when controlling for age, racial and ethnic differences persist when it comes to the likelihood of saying social media is a personally important way to keep up with one's partner or show how much they care. Similarly, marital status and sexual orientation are significant predictors of how important it is for people to use social media to keep up with one's partner, even after controlling for age differences.

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<sup>4</sup> Nonwhite includes those who identify as black, Asian, Hispanic, some other race or multiple races; these groups could not be analyzed separately due to sample size limitations.

## Social media can be a source of jealousy and uncertainty in relationships – especially for younger adults

Even as younger Americans value social media as a place to share how much they care about their partner or to keep up with what's going on in their partner's life, they also acknowledge some of the downsides that these sites can have on relationships.

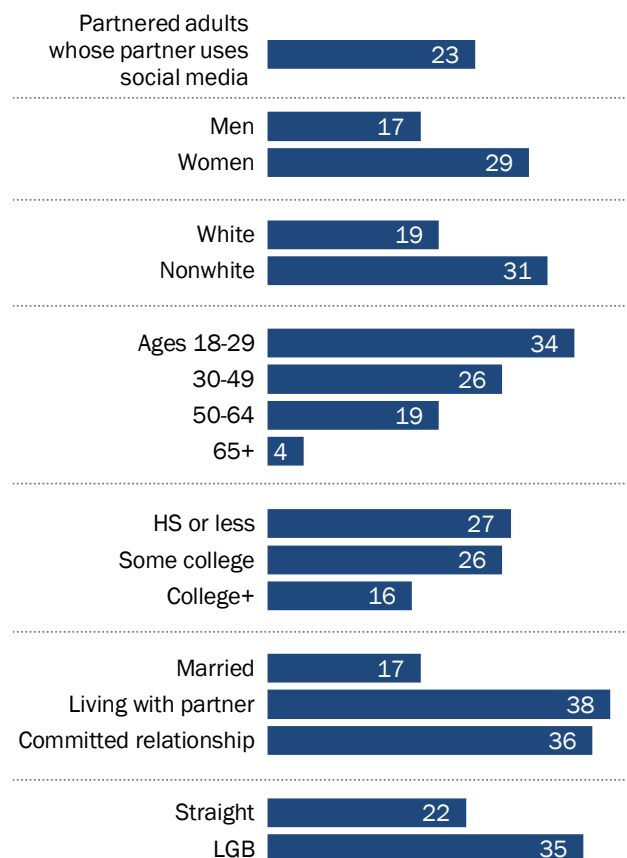
Overall, 23% of partnered adults whose significant other uses social media say they have felt jealous or unsure about their relationship because of the way their current spouse or partner interacts with other people on social media. But this share is even higher among those in younger age groups.

Among partnered adults whose significant other uses social media, 34% of 18- to 29-year-olds and 26% of those ages 30 to 49 say they have felt jealous or unsure in their current relationship because of how their partner interacted with others on social media, compared with 19% of those ages 50 to 64 who say this and 4% of those ages 65 and up. Nearly four-in-ten unmarried adults with partners who are social media users (37%) say they have felt this way about their current partner, while only 17% of married people say the same.

Women also are more likely to express displeasure with how their significant other interacts with others on social media. Women who say their partner uses social media are more likely than men to say they have felt jealous or unsure of their relationships because

### About one-quarter of partnered Americans say their partner's social media use has made them feel jealous, unsure about their relationship

*Among partnered adults whose partner uses social media, the % who say they have ever felt jealous or unsure of their relationship because of the way their current spouse or partner interacts with others on social media*



Note: Partnered adults refers to adults who are married, cohabiting or in a committed relationship. Nonwhite includes those who identify as black, Asian, Hispanic, some other race or multiple races. LGB indicates those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 16-28, 2019.

"Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"

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of how their partner interacts with others on social media (29% vs. 17%).

Among those whose partner uses social media, about three-in-ten nonwhite adults who are in a relationship report having felt jealous or uncertain in their current relationship based on their partner's social media interactions, compared with 19% of white adults who say the same. About one-third of LGB partnered adults whose significant other uses social media report that they have felt jealous or unsure in their current relationship because of how their partner interacted with others on social media, while 22% of straight people say this. College graduates are less likely to report having felt this way than those with some college experience or a high school degree or less.

## Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at [pewresearch.org/internet](http://pewresearch.org/internet).

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In addition, the project benefited greatly from the guidance of Pew Research Center's methodology team: Courtney Kennedy, Andrew Mercer, Nick Bertoni, Joshua Ferno, Nick Hatley and Arnold Lau, as well as from feedback by the following Pew Research Center staff: Jeffrey Gottfried, Baxter Oliphant, Dennis Quinn and Rachel Weisel. The Center received invaluable advice in developing the questionnaire from Amanda Lenhart, Health and Data Initiative Lead, Data and Society, and Michael J. Rosenfeld, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University.



## Methodology

### The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted Oct. 16 to Oct. 28, 2019. A total of 4,860 panelists responded out of 5,887 who were sampled, for a response rate of 82.6%. This includes 4,458 from the ATP and an oversample of 1,429 respondents sampled from the Ipsos KnowledgePanel that previously indicated that they identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). This does not include three panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 5.3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1.2%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 4,860 respondents is plus or minus 2.1 percentage points.

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#### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,318
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,337
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	685
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	6,424
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29,114</b>	<b>18,720</b>	<b>10,764</b>

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The subsample from the ATP was selected by grouping panelists into eight strata so demographic groups that are underrepresented in the panel had a higher probability of selection than overrepresented groups:

- Stratum A consists of panelists who identify as LGB, use online dating sites or apps, and are single and looking for a relationship. They were sampled at a rate of 100%.
- Stratum B consists of panelists who identify as LGB, do NOT use online dating sites or apps, and are single and looking for a relationship. They were sampled at a rate of 100%.

- Stratum C consists of panelists who do NOT identify as LGB, use online dating sites or apps, and are single and looking for a relationship. They were sampled at a rate of 41.5%.
- Stratum D consists of panelists who are non-internet users. They were sampled at a rate of 87.5%.
- Stratum E consists of panelists with a high school education or less. They were sampled at a rate of 69.9%.
- Stratum F consists of panelists who are Hispanic, not registered to vote or are non-volunteers. They were sampled at a rate of 29.2%.
- Stratum G consists of panelists who are black or 18 to 34 years old. They were sampled at a rate of 15%.
- Stratum H consists of the remaining panelists. They were sampled at a rate of 11.1%.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, and 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 18,720 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 10,764 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling](#)."

## Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 and 2017, some respondents were subsampled for invitation to the panel. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table. For this wave, an additional weighting parameter was added to adjust for oversampling LGB-identifying respondents.

Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the American Trends Panel's Hispanic sample is predominantly U.S. born and English speaking.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	4,860	2.1 percentage points
Men	2,351	3.1 percentage points
Women	2,504	2.8 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	3,321	2.5 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	519	6.2 percentage points
Hispanic	633	6.3 percentage points
Ages 18-29	802	5.4 percentage points
30-49	1,630	3.6 percentage points
50-64	1,460	3.8 percentage points

## Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2017 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	2018 CPS March Metropolitan status Supplement
Hispanic nativity	
Home internet access	
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering and Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.
LGB Orientation	ATP Wave 50

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population.

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65+	964	4.3 percentage points
HS or less	1,167	3.8 percentage points
Some college	1,452	3.8 percentage points
College+	2,237	3.1 percentage points
Partnered adults	2,932	2.6 percentage points
Married	1,963	2.9 percentage points
Living with partner	555	6.8 percentage points
Committed relationship	414	7.7 percentage points
Single	1,918	3.6 percentage points
Single and looking	1,123	4.9 percentage points
Social media users	3,660	2.4 percentage points
Straight	3,306	2.3 percentage points
Lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)	1,410	4.3 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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## Topline questionnaire

**2019 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL  
WAVE 56 OCTOBER  
FINAL TOPLINE  
OCT. 16-28, 2019  
TOTAL N=4,860**

**THE QUESTIONS PRESENTED BELOW ARE PART OF A LARGER SURVEY CONDUCTED ON THE AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL. OTHER QUESTIONS ON THIS SURVEY HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE.**

**NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED. THE PERCENTAGES LESS THAN 0.5% ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (\*). ROWS/COLUMNS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING.**

	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Margin of error at 95% confidence level</b>
U.S. adults	4,860	+/- 2.1 percentage points

**ASK ALL:**

TRACKPARTNER

Regardless of whether you would do it yourself, do you think it's ever acceptable for someone to look through their significant other's cellphone without their knowledge?

Oct 16-28, 2019

8	Always acceptable
21	Sometimes acceptable
28	Rarely acceptable
42	Never acceptable
*	No answer

**ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER (SNSUSE=1) [n=3,660]:**

SNSPOST

How often, if ever, do you see people posting things about their romantic relationships on social media?

Oct 16-28, 2019

46	Often
36	Sometimes
15	Rarely
3	Never
*	No answer

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP, AND OFTEN OR SOMETIMES SEES PEOPLE POSTING ABOUT THEIR ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ((MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) AND SNSPOST=1,2) [n=1,836]:**

SNSSEE1 In general, do the posts you see on social media about other people's romantic relationships make you feel...

Oct 16-28, 2019

9	Better about your own relationship
9	Worse about your own relationship
81	Doesn't make much difference
1	No answer

**ASK IF CASUALLY DATING SOMEONE AND/OR LOOKING FOR A RELATIONSHIP AND/OR DATES, AND OFTEN OR SOMETIMES SEES PEOPLE POSTING ABOUT THEIR ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ((CASUAL=1 OR SEEKING=1-3) AND SNSPOST=1,2) [n=763]:**

SNSSEE2 In general, do the posts you see on social media about other people's romantic relationships make you feel...

Oct 16-28, 2019

4	Better about your own dating life
33	Worse about your own dating life
62	Doesn't make much difference
1	No answer

**ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER (SNSUSE=1) [n=3,660]:**

SNSCHECK Have you ever used social media to do any of the following things?  
[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

	Yes, have <u>done this</u>	No, have not <u>done this</u>	No <u>answer</u>
a. Check up on someone that you used to date or be in a relationship with Oct 16-28, 2019	53	47	*
b. Share or discuss things about your relationship or dating life Oct 16-28, 2019	28	71	*

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP  
(MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) [n=2,932]:**

PARTNERDEVICE As far as you know, does your spouse or partner... **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a.	Have a cellphone Oct 16-28, 2019	96	4	*
b.	Use social media sites Oct 16-28, 2019	73	27	*
c.	Play video games on a computer, game console or cellphone Oct 16-28, 2019	53	47	*

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP AND USES  
SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARTNER USES SOCIAL MEDIA ((MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) AND  
SNSUSE=1 AND PARTNERDEVICEb=1) [n=1,845]:**

SNSPARTNER How important, if at all, is social media to you personally when it comes to the  
following things? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

		<u>Very important</u>	<u>Somewhat important</u>	<u>Not too important</u>	<u>Not at all important</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a.	Keeping up with what's going on in your spouse's or partner's life Oct 16-28, 2019	14	14	27	45	*
b.	Showing how much you care about your spouse or partner Oct 16-28, 2019	15	17	27	40	*

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP AND  
PARTNER USES SOCIAL MEDIA ((MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) AND PARTNERDEVICEb=1)  
[n=2,187]:**

SNSFEEL Have you ever felt jealous or unsure about your relationship because of the way  
your current spouse or partner interacts with other people on social media?

Oct 16-28, 2019

23	Yes, have felt this way
77	No, have not felt this way
*	No answer

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP AND PARTNER HAS A CELLPHONE ((MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) AND PARTNERDEVICEa=1) [n=2,850]:**

PARTNERDISTRACT How often, if ever, do you feel as if your spouse or partner is distracted by their cellphone when you are trying to have a conversation with them?

Oct 16-28, 2019

16	Often
36	Sometimes
31	Rarely
16	Never
*	No answer

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP AND PARTNER HAS A CELLPHONE, USES SOCIAL MEDIA AND/OR PLAYS VIDEO GAMES ((MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) AND AT LEAST ONE OF PARTNERDEVICEa-c=1) [n=2,887]:**

PARTNERSCREEN How often, if ever, are you bothered by the amount of time your spouse or partner spends... [RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No answer</u>
<b>ASK IF PARTNER HAS A CELLPHONE [n=2,850]:</b>					
a. On their cellphone					
Oct 16-28, 2019	13	28	32	27	*
<b>ASK IF PARTNER USES SOCIAL MEDIA [n=2,187]:</b>					
b. On social media sites					
Oct 16-28, 2019	11	22	37	31	*
<b>ASK IF PARTNER PLAYS VIDEO GAMES [n=1,593]:</b>					
c. Playing video games					
Oct 16-28, 2019	10	19	33	38	*

**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP (MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) [n=2,932]:**

PARTNERPASS Have you ever given your spouse or partner the password or passcode to... [RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

	<u>Yes, have done this</u>	<u>No, have not done this</u>	<u>No answer</u>
<b>ASK IF INTERNET USER [n=2,877]:</b>			
a. Your email account			
Oct 16-28, 2019	64	36	*
<b>ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [n=2,250]:</b>			
b. Any of your social media accounts			
Oct 16-28, 2019	56	43	*
<b>ASK ALL [n=2,932]:</b>			
c. Your cellphone			
Oct 16-28, 2019	75	24	1



**ASK IF MARRIED, LIVING WITH PARTNER, OR IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP AND PARTNER HAS A CELLPHONE ((MARITAL=1,2 OR MARITAL2=1) AND PARTNERDEVICEa=1)  
[n=2,850]:**

PARTNERTRACK      Have you ever looked through your current spouse's or partner's cellphone without their knowledge?

Oct 16-28, 2019

36	Yes, have done this
64	No, have not done this
1	No answer