

HEARTLAND MONITOR POLL



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NEW POLL: Americans Using Social Media Are More Engaged Consumers and Citizens, But Remain Skeptical of Social Media Trustworthiness

13th Allstate-National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll Shows Opportunities for Businesses and Political Leaders, But Authenticity and Openness Are Key

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 7, 2012 – Americans believe participation in social media makes them more informed and influential as both consumers and citizens, even as they express clear skepticism about the trustworthiness of the information they find there, according to poll results announced today by The Allstate Corporation (NYSE: ALL) and *National Journal*.

The 13th quarterly Allstate-*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Poll explored how Americans incorporate social media into their consumer and community behaviors. Its findings reveal important themes about trust and influence, even as leaders in the public and private sectors increasingly use social media to engage consumers and voters.

Nearly two out of three American adults surveyed used social media in the last month. Although social media users are somewhat younger, more educated and more affluent than non-users on average, they closely align with the overall American public in their opinions about politics and the economy, as well as their perceptions of major institutions.

However, social media users report significantly higher levels of political and community activity, including volunteering for a community organization (69% of social media users versus 49% of non-users), signing campaign or community petitions (68% of users versus 50% of non-users), or attending a campaign rally (32% of users versus 22% of non-users). Social media users also are more likely to consult with others about buying a product or service (79% of users versus 60% of non-users) or change their minds about a product or service because of others' opinions (64% of users versus 47% of non-users).

More than two-thirds of social media users, and 60% of all Americans, believe the Internet and social media have made it easier for them to be well-informed consumers. A plurality of Americans (47%) and social media users (55%) say these technologies have made them more well-informed and active as citizens and in the political sphere.

"That the explosion of available information and interconnectivity through social media is changing profoundly and very quickly how we communicate with each other and with business and government is beyond dispute. The greater question is whether these amazing new tools can also help make us more trustworthy in our messaging and in the end reanimate our free press and our free enterprise even as it helps reinvent those endeavors," said **Joan Walker**, Allstate executive vice president. "This poll shows that the jury is still out on these questions but suggests strongly that in social media there is much potential for good, creating more accessibility while demanding more authenticity to be successful. This is a recipe that I believe in the long run can help strengthen our social fabric."

Despite the positive impact many Americans see from their engagement in online and social media, they remain skeptical about the trustworthiness of the information they find there. More

than two-thirds of Americans believe that major corporations and political candidates are active on social media mostly to advertise, collect information on customers or supporters, and increase their own success, either in profits or votes. They rate the trustworthiness of traditional news sources more highly than online information sources, including company or campaign websites, blogs, forums and social media sites. Americans also don't believe that social media engagement has given them more power or influence over corporations or the government, despite the personal benefits of being more well-informed.

Still, 64% of social media users say they'd like to see companies use social media for customer service purposes, and 59% say that corporate use of social media makes them more likely to see a company as "accessible and responsive." Users say the same about candidates and elected officials, but to a lesser extent.

"The results of this poll show that most Americans believe the emergence of constant communication is providing them better tools to make decisions under their immediate control, like choosing between cars or planning trips. But most don't believe these tools are increasing their leverage over the vast public and private institutions that shape the larger currents of American life," said *National Journal* editorial director **Ronald Brownstein**. "That dynamic is similar to the attitudes expressed in earlier Heartland Monitor polls about issues from retirement security to lifetime employment: in an economy that now offers individuals both more choices and more risks, most Americans have become reluctant individualists, trusting their own efforts, rather than any institution, to provide them security."

Key findings from the 13th Allstate-*National Journal* Heartland Monitor Poll ([PDF](#)) include:

1) Nearly two out of three American adults are active on social media, and use is high among all demographic groups.

- Social media users make up a large percentage of all demographic groups, including:
 - o 87% of those ages 18-29, 74% of those ages 30-49, 56% of those ages 50-64 and 34% of those ages 65 and older;
 - o 72% of college graduates, 69% of those with some college and 52% of those with a high school education;
 - o 76% of those with household incomes of \$75,000+, 65% of those in \$30,000 to \$75,000 households and 55% of those in households making less than \$30,000;
 - o 63% of whites, 70% of Hispanics and 61% of African-Americans.
- More than half of American adults (51%) are on Facebook, 28% are on Google+, 13% are on Twitter, 12% are on LinkedIn, 6% are on Pinterest, and 5% are on MySpace.

2) Social media users report significantly higher levels of political and community activity. They're also more likely to report collaborating with others on making purchases or discussing products and services.

- Social media users are considerably more likely than non-users to have:
 - o Volunteered for a community organization (69% versus 49%);
 - o Participated in a group related to a community issue (57% versus 43%);
 - o Donated money to a charitable cause (89% versus 81%);
 - o Signed a petition for a campaign or community issue (68% versus 50%);
 - o Attended a campaign rally (32% versus 22%);
 - o Volunteered for a political campaign (23% versus 15%).

- In the consumer space, social media users also are more likely than non-users to:
 - o Consult with others about buying a product or service (79% versus 60%);
 - o Change their mind about a product or service because of the opinions of others (64% versus 47%);
 - o Participate in groups of fans or users of a product or service (31% versus 17%);
 - o Participate in groups concerned about a product or service (33% versus 18%).

3) Despite skepticism about its trustworthiness, Americans recognize the value of the information they receive from institutions through social media.

- 60% of Americans and 69% of social media users agree that social media and online information has made it easier for them to be well-informed consumers, because it is now easier to research and compare, and to communicate with companies and other customers.
- A plurality of Americans (47%) and social media users (55%) say that social media and online information has made it easier for them to be well-informed citizens, because it's easier to research and compare candidates and also communicate with the government and other Americans.
- When asked about what types of content they would like to see more of on social media, 64% say they want to see companies using social media for customer service purposes and 53% say they want to see more discussion among their personal contacts about experiences with a product or service.
- 59% of social media users say a company's social media activity makes them more likely to see a company as "accessible and responsive" and 49% said it makes them more likely to see a company as "transparent and open."

4) Americans are most likely to trust information when it comes from traditional media sources. In order from most to least positive, Americans place a "great deal" or "some" trust in:

- Public TV and radio (75%)
- Newspapers (71%)
- Cable news (70%)
- Network news (64%)
- Magazines (57%)
- Talk radio (53%)
- Company websites (51%)
- Advertisements (37%)
- Blogs and online forums (34%)
- Social media sites (30%)

5) As consumers and as citizens, Americans overwhelmingly view the social media efforts of major corporations and political campaigns/elected officials as a form of advertising instead of communication, and they do not feel they have become more influential in their dealings with corporations and the government.

- 69% of Americans (and 73% of social media users) believe that major corporations are active on social media mostly so they can more easily advertise, collect information about customers, increase their profits and compete with other companies.

- Similarly, 69% of Americans (and 74% of social media users) believe that politicians are active on social media mostly to advertise their campaigns and positions, collect information about supporters and increase their chances of re-election.
- 23% of Americans (and 29% of social media users) say they have more influence in their dealings with major corporations than in recent years, while 27% (and 25% of social media users) say they have less. With the government, only 14% of Americans (and 14% of social media users) say they have more influence, while 35% (and 34% of social media users) say they have less.

6) Americans have grown slightly more optimistic about the direction of the country and they have a slightly more positive economic outlook.

- 33% of Americans now believe the country is headed in the right direction, up from 30% in the March 2012 Heartland Monitor survey. However, the optimism is exclusive to Democrats, 64% of whom say “right direction,” while 64% of Independents and 84% of Republicans say “wrong track.”
 - o 44% expect their personal financial situation to improve by this time next year, which is tied (with the December 2011 survey) for the highest percentage measured in the Heartland Monitor Poll.
 - o 62% believe the economy will improve over the next 12 months, the highest percentage the Heartland Monitor Poll has measured in two years.
- President Obama's approval rating has slipped to 47%, compared to 51% in March 2012.
- In the race for president, Barack Obama leads Mitt Romney among registered voters by a slim margin (44%-41%). Romney leads by 9 points among Independents and by 12 points among white voters. Obama leads by 1 point among men, by 4 points among women, and by wide margins among African-Americans and Hispanics.

Notes to Editors

Survey Methodology

A nationally representative survey of American adults conducted May 19-23, 2012, among 1,000 American adults age 18+. Respondents were reached via landline and cell phone. The survey has a margin of error of +/-3.1% in 95 out of 100 cases.

About Allstate

[The Allstate Corporation](#) (NYSE: ALL) is the nation's largest publicly held personal lines insurer. Widely known through the “You're In Good Hands With Allstate®” slogan, Allstate is reinventing protection and retirement to help nearly 16 million households insure what they have today and better prepare for tomorrow. Consumers access Allstate insurance products (auto, home, life and retirement) and services through Allstate agencies, independent agencies, and Allstate exclusive financial representatives in the U.S. and Canada, as well as via www.allstate.com and 1-800 Allstate®. As part of [Allstate's commitment](#) to strengthen local communities, The Allstate Foundation, Allstate employees, agency owners and the corporation provided \$28 million in 2011 to thousands of nonprofit organizations and important causes across the United States. For an overview of the other Allstate-National Journal Heartland Monitor Polls, visit <http://www.allstate.com/heartland-monitor>. Additional information is available at www.storiesfromtheheartland.com.

About National Journal Group

National Journal is Washington's premier source for 360-degree insight on politics and policy. With up-to-the-minute breaking news and analysis at NationalJournal.com, the essential intelligence of *National Journal Daily*, the knowledge and depth of *National Journal* magazine, and the comprehensive campaign coverage of *National Journal Hotline*, National Journal delivers everything you need to know to stay ahead of the curve in Washington.

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