The Impact of Social Media Usage on Political Participation

Nicholas Meshcheryakov

Department of Political Science, University of California, Irvine

POL SCI 190W: Senior Thesis

Dr. Elizabeth Jordie Davies

June 13, 2025

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thank you to my incredible advisor Dr. Davies. Without you I don't think I would ever have been able to write this thesis. There were many times I turned to you for help, and every time you were willing and able to assist me or point me in the right direction. Thank you to my Mom, who supported me throughout the entire process of creating this thesis. Thank you Angel, who encouraged me to sign up for the honors thesis. Thank you Zeynep, for agreeing to go into the thesis program with me and helping me feel less alone throughout the process. Special thanks to Eileen, who helped teach me various STATA techniques and put up with a lot of stupid questions. Finally, thank you to everyone who helped share my survey and encouraged me throughout the process, especially Andreas and Luke.

Table Of Contents

Abstract

Due to the ever-increasing presence of social media in both daily life and politics, I examine the relationship between social media usage and political action. In this paper, I argue that increasing social media usage will lead to increased political participation, and that this relationship will be especially prevalent among young people. I use original survey data and statistical analyses to assess the ways that young adults use social media, especially in relation to their political actions. In addition, I examine the relationship between political participation and other factors, such as income. My findings do not provide evidence for increasing social media use increasing political participation. However, I do find evidence of shifts in the platforms being used among young people.

Introduction

In 2025, where the Internet and social media are more prevalent than ever, and young people spend more and more time on their phones, it is necessary to understand the relationship between social media and political participation. We know that young people are spending their time on platforms like TikTok instead of watching CNN, and many people get their news from their phones instead of the TV or print news (Gottfried 2024). But does this impact their political actions?

By examining what platforms Gen Z Americans (born from 1997-2012) consume their media from, we can better understand what information they are consuming, what political content they are interested in, and where they choose to share or consume political content. This also allows us to know how to target political messaging (whether that is from the government or non-governmental political movements). The role of the Internet in social movements is a question that has been debated since its inception, and this paper aims to better understand the role that social media plays in political participation, especially in a social media landscape that has been rapidly shifting. Ever evolving algorithms and news apps have created new opportunities for network building and social movements to arise. At the same time, social media sites have a history of digitally repressing various groups, through a multitude of tactics, such as discouraging violence or attempting to fully constrain the groups (Earl et al. 2022).

While there has been myriad discourse about the potential uses of the Internet and social media in political organizing, messaging, and social movements, and especially the viability of social media for political organizing, this paper instead aims to examine social media usage. Young people are spending a significant amount of their time on the Internet. This paper seeks to understand what social media platforms Americans use to consume and share political content,

as well as the relationship between online social media use and offline political actions. Although research has been done on social media's use in politics (Earl et al. 2017; Greijdanus et al. 2020), the landscape has changed drastically over recent years. Congress's recent unprecedented effort to ban TikTok, recent presidents including President Trump using X (formerly Twitter) to make executive announcements, and ever evolving algorithms underscore these shifts in social media (Caton & Stolee 2025). Social media has been used for surveillance, political campaigns, and is where many people get their news. It is imperative that we better understand this landscape and research how generations raised on the Internet use social media for news, politics, and their lives. In this paper, I use original survey data and statistical analyses to assess the ways that young adults use social media, especially in relation to their political actions. I find some evidence of a relationship between the two, namely between social media usage and donations to political causes or campaigns, and social media usage and working on political campaigns.

Literature Review

Internet Consumption + Political Participation

Pew Research on U.S. adult social media use found in 2023 that 83% of U.S. adults use YouTube, 47% use Instagram, and 33% use TikTok (Gottfried 2024). However, among Gen Z adults those numbers jumped to 93% using YouTube, 78% using Instagram, and 62% using TikTok (Gottfried 2024). News consumption has had a noticeable shift to digital devices, with 86% of U.S. adults getting news at least sometimes from digital devices, compared to 63% for television. 78% of Gen Z adults get at least some news from social media, compared to 74% sometimes using search and 62% using dedicated news websites and apps (Pew Research 2024).

News consumption and social media use have undeniably shifted, but questions have been bubbling about what this means for collective action, social movements, and politics.

Some scholars have argued that there is a negative relationship between online and offline political action. They argue that online actions such as posting infographics or signing petitions take away from the amount of offline political action that these individuals will partake in, or that these actions simply have little impact offline (Shulman 2009). Shulman (2009) argued that mass email campaigns directed towards government agencies failed to provide them with new information, and instead wasted their limited time and resources with redundant information. Arguments have also been made that simply by participating in so-called "slacktivism," such as signing on to petitions or email campaigns, participants will be less likely to donate or engage in other actions. However, a 2013 study from Lee and Hseih found that there was no evidence that signing online petitions made people less likely to donate to a cause, and instead found that those who participated in slacktivism were more likely to participate in subsequent collective action (p. 818).

Scholars have also argued that there are key differences with the way that young people utilize the tools of the Internet for political action. Earl et al. (2017) found that there are key differences in the ways that youth and adults organize, the online tactics they utilize, and the agency they have in organizations. The authors stressed the importance of these cleavages in tactics not only along age, but also along factors such as race and gender. For instance, Earl et al. (2017) found that youth had a large role in "tactical innovation" for online social movements, and that these movements among fan communities help society at large better understand "cultural contention and the politicization of markets" (pp. 7-8).

Fan communities and the potential for online activism is a key part of Earl and Kimport's (2011) book *Digitally Enabled Social Change*, which examines the positive use of the Internet to more effectively organize and participate in protest. They argue that the low costs of organizing on the Internet allow for quicker, cheaper, and larger scale organizing (Earl and Kimport 2011). To Earl and Kimport (2011), social media and online organizing generally can play a huge role in collective action, especially when the low-cost advantages of the Internet are fully utilized.

Political Campaigns

As social media's prevalence has increased, it has become an integral part of political campaigns. McGregor (2020) conducted a review of the various ways that social media was used in 2016 US presidential campaigns. This included monitoring opinions of their candidates and opponents, message testing, getting direct feedback from supporters, and many more functions (McGregor 2020). Crucially, McGregor (2020) found "less interaction and more top-down manipulation of social media posts and metrics for symbolic ends - taking up the work of supporters to symbolically speak for the public on behalf of the candidate" (p. 249). As social media has become important to campaigns, it has allowed for a large amount of manipulation, such as by Russia or other bad actors (McGregor 2020).

Social Movements

The rise of the Internet brought with it a wave of anticipation about the role it could play in social movements. As discussed earlier, Earl and Kimport (2011) spoke about the potential benefits of the lower costs, quicker speeds, and wider spread of activism among online communities. Some scholars hoped that the Internet would allow for new ways of fighting authoritarian regimes through online communities, online organizing, and the potential of broadcasting human rights abuses. The Arab Spring in particular was seen as clear evidence that

social media was allowing for a new wave of revolutions, although this has since been strongly contested by digital pessimists (Segev et al. 2013). The Save Darfur campaign, as well as Arab feminists in North Africa provide evidence of some of the uses of social media globally (Lengel and Newsom 2012). Social media allows for groups to raise awareness about their causes, and in some cases subvert repressive regimes. #HashtagActivism, by Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles, focused on the role that social media can play in exposing counternarratives and empowering minority communities. They examined the #SayHerName movement, as well as other online movements, to discuss the role that social media played in fostering community and mobilizing people for a cause. Another key example discussed in the book is the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which gained widespread traction through social media, that organizers were able to channel into protests and other forms of offline political action. These movements all show the way that social media can be used as a tool to raise awareness and organize for a cause.

Suppression

However, as was seen in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, authoritarian regimes are also capable of cracking down on social media sites. The Internet's ability to empower authoritarian regimes is a key argument of Morozov's *The Net Delusion* (2012). He discusses how public Western optimism about the Internet led to Iran cracking down heavily on Internet usage. There is also the potential use of the Internet as a surveillance tool, serving to quash social movements that leave a digital footprint (Morozov 2012). In America today, certain phrases related to the Black liberation struggle or the Free Palestine movement have been censored on social media sites, and American politicians made a huge effort to ban TikTok due to the proliferation of the Free Palestine movement on the platform (Alberty 2024). Social media also has the capability to

spread misinformation in a variety of ways (Aïmeur et al. 2023). For example, The January 6th insurrection was discussed online prior to the attack, and was later incited by tweets from President Donald Trump.

This conversation around the role of the Internet and social media has created a rift between scholars that view it as a surveillance tool of oppressive or authoritarian regimes, and those that view social media as the tool of liberation and revolution. Examples that were once pointed to as evidence of the success of social media in revolution (the Arab Spring) are now cornerstones in the argument against this very idea. In Malcolm Gladwell's New Yorker piece, "Small Change," he discusses what he sees as the key difference between online and offline action. Gladwell argues that social media is driven by weak ties, which allow for a great number of connections but not necessarily the willingness to engage in high-risk activism that stronger ties allow for. Additionally, social media-driven movements do not contain the same hierarchical organizing and power structure that traditional offline activism has, meaning that these movements are less adaptable and strategic, and more prone to conflict and error (Gladwell 2010).

One of the key pieces of evidence for so-called "Internet Skeptics" is the Iranian revolution, during which Western media and the US government believed Twitter played a crucial role in the revolution. Skeptics, on the other hand, point out that Western journalists made the assumption that Twitter was playing a pivotal role due to #iranelection going viral. However, nearly all of these tweets were in English, while we would expect organizers in the country to be communicating in Farsi (Gladwell 2010). Gladwell echoes points made by Morozov, using this example to argue that the role of Twitter in this revolution, and by extension other revolutions, has been greatly overstated. Many internet skeptics do not argue that the Internet is purely bad

for the spread of democracy or activism, but rather that many have been too optimistic about its potential and have overlooked the more insidious aspects of this tool.

The debates among scholars about the potential uses of the Internet for marginalized and oppressed groups, as well as the ways that these tools can be used against these marginalized groups, make it more important than ever to understand the landscape of Gen Z social media use. What sites are they using, and how can this be impacted by crackdowns on apps like TikTok? Regardless of what scholars believe the efficacy of online political organizing to be, it is necessary to understand what sites Gen Z turns to to consume and share political content.

Theory

I argue that as social media has evolved and its algorithms have shifted, the potential for political organizing through these platforms has increased. Not only this, but society at large has adapted to social media's increased prevalence. With more people getting their information from their phones, communicating with friends through Instagram messages, and keeping up with politicians by checking their feeds, it is inevitable that social media and politics have become more and more intertwined.

I posit that increasing social media use will lead to higher political participation, especially among young adults. While most popular social media is not organized in a way that allows for traditional social movements to form, and instead relies on weak-ties, this does not mean that it will not increase political action among individuals. It may allow for people to have increased awareness about political events in their areas, local political groups, or processes including calling representatives or registering to vote. In other words, my theory of "social media ubiquity" is that as social media becomes more integral to the functions of society, political participation among its users will increase, due to increased awareness and access. This

will not apply evenly across all types of political participation, some of which require more hierarchical organization or stronger ties than popular social media currently allows for. I expect that the strongest evidence for this theory will be present among young adults, who use social media more than their older peers.

Hypotheses

Social media has only increased in prevalence, and understanding its relationship to political action is crucial for any kind of organizing and mobilization. In order to understand the relationship between time on social media and political participation, as well as what apps are correlated with more political participation, I chose to test the following hypothesis:

H_1: Political participation increases as time spent on social media increases.

I also tested political participation against other variables, such as income, gender, and political ideology. In additional models I tested if political participation increases as usage of specific social media sites (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) increases.

Methodology and Analysis

In order to understand social media use among young adults in the U.S., I created and distributed a survey through QuestionPro. This allowed me to gather survey data about young adults in the U.S. to determine if there was a relationship between political participation and time spent on social media. The survey asked respondents about the amount of time they spend on various social media sites, how likely they are to share content on social media, how likely they are to consume and share political content on social media, and what social media sites they prefer to share political content on. It then asked respondents to self-identify their political participation, as well as some general questions about their political orientation and their opinion

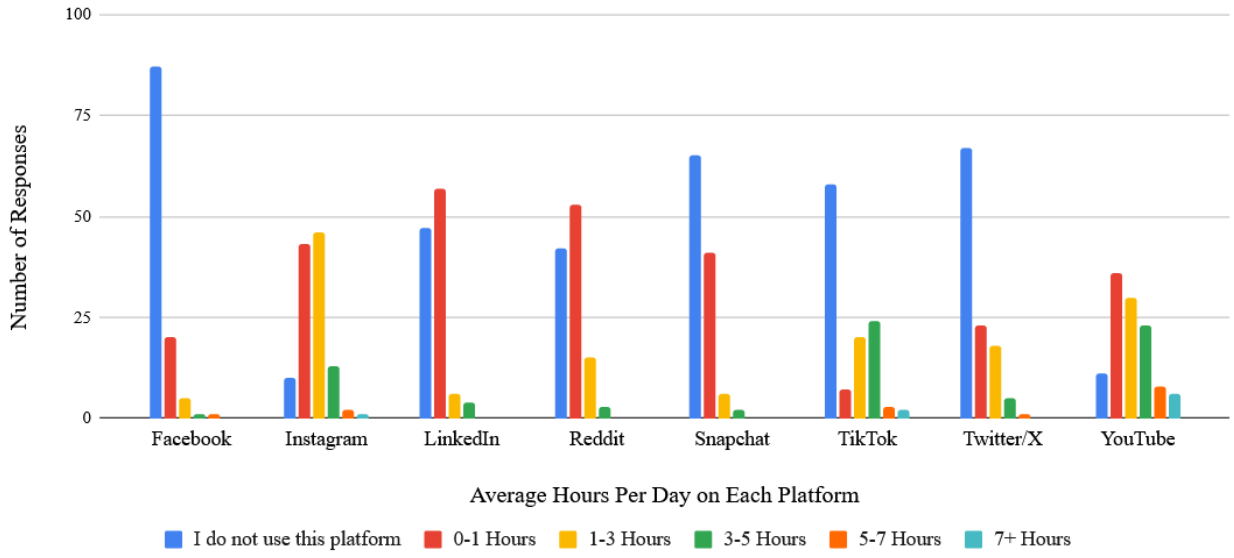
on the state of the country. The survey ends with various demographic questions (age, race, gender, income, education).

In total, the survey had 119 respondents, and was fielded from March 3, 2025 to March 24, 2025. It was posted on my personal Instagram account multiple times, spread through flyers around the UC Irvine campus, sent out through the Social Science Academic Resource Center weekly emails, and spread through word of mouth. A majority of the respondents are from the San Francisco Bay Area or Orange County – representing a convenience sample of my networks. This means the survey is not representative of the general US population but may still provide understanding of the attitudes of young adults in these areas.

Demographics

42% of survey respondents identified as white, while 31% identified as Asian (N=102). 36% of respondents identified as men, while 64% identified as women (N=100). 10% also identified as non-binary (N=109). 77% of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24, and 84% of respondents had completed at least some college (N=110). The survey encompassed a wide distribution of incomes, with 35% reporting annual household incomes above $150,000 and 44% below $100,000 (N=86). Politically, 82% of respondents identified as Democrats or leaning Democrat, while only 9% identified as Republicans (N=100). 78% of respondents identified as liberal or very liberal , and only 4% identified as conservative (N=109). Figure 1 shows the distribution of social media usage across sites, while Figure 2 shows the political participation of survey respondents over the past year. Figure 1 shows that the platform that the most people used (as opposed to not using the platforms at all) was Youtube, followed closely by Instagram.

Figure 1 Average Hours Per Day Per Platform



While many respondents did not use TikTok, those that did had higher average hours per day than any platform other than YouTube. Respondents were asked about several other platforms, such as RedNote and Threads, that are not displayed in Figure 1 due to very few respondents reporting using these platforms.[1]

There are some important differences between the social media usage among my sample and the general population, reported by Pew Research Center in 2023. According to Pew, 83% of adults use YouTube, 68% use Facebook, 47% use Instagram, and 33% use TikTok. When looking at ages 18-29, Youtube goes up to 93%, Instagram rises to 78%, TikTok nearly doubles to 62%, and Facebook stays about the same. These are staggering differences compared to the respondents of my survey. YouTube usage is about the same, but TikTok is lower at 49%, Instagram is much higher at 91%, and Facebook is far lower at only 23% of users reporting using the platform. This means that my results are closer to the usage among young adults, likely due to the high proportion of respondents aged 18-24 - although there is still a large gap in Facebook

[1] See Figure 3 in the appendix for more information

usage especially.

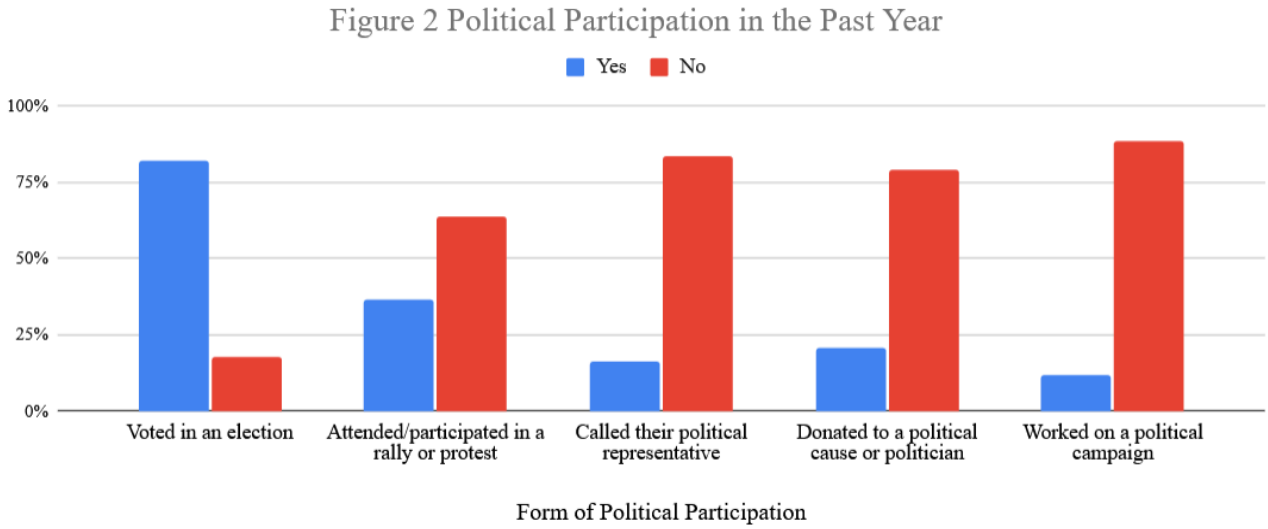


Figure 2 shows that most of my sample, around 82%, voted in an election in the past year. Since this survey was fielded shortly after the 2024 election, it is not surprising that a high proportion of respondents voted. Pew Research Center's voter turnout polls show that 66% of eligible voters voted in the 2020 election, which is far lower than the 82% that my sample has. This means that my sample contains people who are particularly politically participatory, which can impact the final results of this research. Notably, over a third (36%) of my respondents attended or participated in a rally or protest, which is also quite a bit higher than the 13-17% that the APM Research Lab found had attended rallies or protests during the 2024 election season. According to the APM Research Lab, 19-23% of Americans also donated to a political campaign or cause, which is about the same as the 21% that my sample had. While the APM Research Lab asked respondents about their behavior over the past 6 months, as of late September 2024, my survey asked about the past year as of March 2025. For this reason, we would expect my larger window to yield higher results, although this certainly cannot explain the 20+% jump in respondents who attended or participated in rallies or protests. Some of this may be explained by

the proportion of my respondents who are college students, where many protests and other political events have taken place in the past year.

Following data collection, I exported the survey responses into STATA. I recoded the variables, and then ran ordinary least squares regression models in order to determine if there was a relationship between the various dependent variables of political participation and independent variables including time on social media and demographics. Social media usage was broken down by average daily usage per app. For each app, respondents reported a range of time: No Platform Use, 0-1 hours, 1-3 hours, 3-5 hours, 5-7 hours, or 7+ hours. These ranges were assigned numbers 0-5, in the order listed above. I added these numbers across all the apps for each individual to create a scale, called the "usage" variable. While this does not give us a precise number of hours spent per day per person, it allows us to see a rough distribution of time spent on social media in the sample.[2]

In order to measure political participation, I asked participants if they had voted in an election, attended or participated in a rally or protest, called their political representatives, donated to a political cause or campaign, or worked on a political campaign in the past year. Each participation variable was coded as a dummy, with a 0 meaning that the subject had not done that political action in the past year and a 1 indicating they had. For example, "voted" was coded from 0 to 1, with a 0 meaning that the respondent had not voted in the past election, while a 1 meant they had voted. The "participation" variable summed the 5 types of political participation, with a 0 indicating that the respondent had done none of them and a 5 indicating they had done all of them. This gave equal weight to each type of participation. Notably, this data was collected shortly after the 2024 presidential election, meaning that participation results were likely higher than they would have been in a non-election year. I ran regressions for these

[2] See full variable scales and distributions in the Appendix.

dependent variables against total time spent on social media, gender, income, education, age, and political ideology, as well as time spent on several specific social media sites - Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. The results of these regressions are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 Regression Table

	Overall Political Participation		*Voted in an Election*		*Attended a Rally/Protest*		*Called your Political Representative*		*Donated to a Political Cause or Politician*		*Worked on a Political Campaign*	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Usage	-0.04	0.04	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	-0.03*	0.01	0.03*	0.01
Gender	0.67*	0.28	0.15	0.10	0.17	0.11	0.11	0.09	0.16	0.09	-0.03	0.08
Income	-0.18*	0.07	-0.01	0.02	-0.08*	0.02	-0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02
Education	-0.01	0.12	0.00	0.04	-0.02	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.04	-0.02	0.03
Age	0.04	0.11	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.05	-0.01	0.03	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.04
Liberal	0.08	0.99	0.29	0.45	0.16	0.11	0.02	0.08	-0.38	0.49	-0.08	0.08
Constant	2.00	1.15	0.55	0.49	0.45*	0.20	0.02	0.23	0.74	0.52	1.75*	0.16
Prob > F	0.14		0.33		0.00		0.10		0.06		0.33	
R^2	0.18		0.10		0.18		0.14		0.15		0.08	
N	67		70		70		68		70		70	

* p<0.05

As shown in Table 1, I found that total social media usage was not significantly correlated with overall political participation. Gender, with a coefficient of 0.67, and income, with a coefficient of -0.18, were correlated with overall political participation. Both were significant at a significance level of 0.05. In other words, women were more likely to participate politically and likelihood of political participation increased as income decreased. Likelihood of attending or participating in a rally or protest also increased as income decreased (Coefficient = -0.08, $\alpha = 0.05$). Social media usage was correlated with likelihood to donate to a political cause or politician, with decreasing social media use increasing the likelihood of donating (Coefficient = -0.03, $\alpha = 0.05$). On the other hand, as social media usage increased, the likelihood of working on a political campaign also increased (Coefficient = 0.03, $\alpha = 0.05$). These results indicate that there is not enough evidence to prove my hypothesis that increased social media use results in

higher overall political participation. The relatively low R^2 values, ranging from 0.08 to 0.18 also indicate that there are more variables explaining political participation than this model accounts for. However, we do see that higher social media use means that respondents were more likely to have worked on a political campaign.

In Table 2[3] I tested a similar regression, aiming to measure how people's preferred method of sharing political content on social media affected their likelihood to participate politically. I asked survey respondents what social media platform they preferred using to share political content, and ran regressions (N=48) to see how people's preferred platform for sharing political content (Facebook, Instagram, or Tiktok) impacted their overall political participation. None of these variables were significant at a significance level of 0.05, and the models had low R^2 values ranging from 0.14 to 0.19. Therefore, I did not find evidence supporting the claim that one's preferred social media platform for sharing political content impacted how likely they were to participate politically.

Limitations

Notably, there are several limitations to this survey and regression. For one, the sample size is quite small. Although the survey had 119 respondents overall, some chose not to answer certain questions, especially those relating to political beliefs, which decreased our N to 67-70 for these regressions. In addition, these respondents are overwhelmingly from the San Francisco Bay Area and Orange County, and are not necessarily representative of the attitudes of people across the entire United States. There is bias inherent in the sampling method - many respondents found the survey through Instagram, meaning that they are likely to spend more time on social media than those who found it through other means. This could also potentially explain to some extent why Instagram is the most popular social media site for sharing political content in the

[3] See appendix for Table 2

sample, and why it is the second highest for average usage. However, many respondents were also found through other means, and the actual highest average usage platform, YouTube, is more difficult to share content on compared to Instagram. Despite having the highest overall average usage, only 2 out of 119 respondents reported that they were most likely to share political content on YouTube. While there are certainly limitations inherent to this study, it can still help us better understand social media's relationship to political actions and help point us to areas of further research.

In additional models, I also tested the likelihood of someone to participate politically if they were most likely to share political content on Instagram, on TikTok, and on Facebook. The results are shown in Table 2 in the appendix. The number of observations for sharing political content on a particular site is low, since the goal was to test if sharing content on specific sites had an impact on political participation compared to sharing on other sites. This means that there were only 48 observations for this test, since people who do not share any political content were not factored in for this model. Ultimately, my regressions found that there was no significant evidence to prove that people who primarily shared political content on one of these three sites were more likely to participate politically. It certainly is still very possible that a relationship does exist, but due to a low number of respondents who actually share political content, there is insufficient data to prove the significance of sharing political content on a particular site on overall political participation. Based on the findings of Lee and Hiesh's 2013 study, we would expect someone who shares political content often to be more likely to participate generally - but my findings do not support this relationship.

Conclusion

The literature around the role of the Internet in political participation has been long and divisive. Scholars have examined everything from the ability of authoritarian regimes to suppress and surveil through the Internet, to its role in social movements. Arguments and evidence have been presented showing that political activity on the Internet takes away from offline political action, while other evidence has shown the exact opposite relationship. Since the Internet is not a single, static being but rather an ever-evolving world of websites and applications that continue to change over time, my research was aimed at understanding how this relationship between political action and social media exists in its current form. In the wake of a massive social movement (the Free Palestine movement) that led to a TikTok ban (which has been delayed multiple times but continues to loom over the platforms' users), I believe that it is necessary to review and continue to observe the social media space. I especially hoped to examine how factors such as race, gender, age, and income could affect political participation alongside social media usage.

My research did not find enough evidence to prove that increasing social media usage led to an increase in political participation. I also was not able to find significant evidence that there was a relationship between the platform that users share the most political content on and their political behavior. However, I did find evidence that women and lower income individuals were more likely to participate politically and that lower income respondents were more likely to attend rallies or protests. Crucially, I did find significant evidence that increasing social media usage was correlated with an increased likelihood of working on a political campaign and that decreasing social media usage led to increased likelihood of donating to a political campaign or cause. I proposed a theory of social media ubiquity, where social media usage will increase

political participation as it becomes more integral to society and allows for new types of organizing and awareness. I expected this relationship to be stronger among young people, who will be the first to become more reliant on social media., My evidence does not demonstrate this theory, but there are still some pieces of evidence supporting it and I believe that further research could shed more evidence in favor of this theory.

The large social media presence among the people I surveyed may offer further evidence for the ideas presented in *Digitally Enabled Social Change* and *#HashtagActivism* of using social media as a tool for collective action and community-building. However, it also shows a shift in the platforms being used. While #HashtagActivism focused on Twitter hashtags, a majority of my sample does not use Twitter at all. This could be partially explained by the left-leaning sample I had and Elon Musk's purchase and right-wing takeover of the platform. Regardless of the reason, it is fair to assume that online social movements will take place more and more on other platforms - such as TikTok, Instagram, and even platforms that have yet to be created. The benefits of social media not only for political organization, but also other aspects of political participation will continue to change as platforms, algorithms, and people's behavior evolves. Likelihood to attend a rally increasing with decreasing income shows a clear spot of potential for social media-driven change, which allows for lower cost organizing than previously possible.

There are many opportunities for further research in the topic that I hope both I and other scholars can explore. I chose to focus on five types of political participation - but these are not the only options, and further research could either examine one in-depth, such as the relationship between attending a rally and time spent on TikTok, or could examine other forms of political participation, such as running for local office or various forms of civil disobedience. Future

studies should pursue these questions in order to clarify the relationship between the “new” social media - both platforms and algorithms - and political participation.

Appendix

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
bluesky	113	0.39	1.05	0	5
facebook	114	0.33	0.69	0	4
instagram	115	1.63	0.92	0	5
linkedin	114	0.71	0.73	0	3
nextdoor	114	0.13	0.37	0	2
reddit	113	0.81	0.76	0	3
snapchat	114	0.52	0.68	0	3
threads	114	0.08	0.30	0	2
tiktok	114	1.24	1.42	0	5
twitterx	114	0.68	.953	0	4
rednote	114	0.061	.275	0	2
youtube	114	1.99	1.29	0	5
age	110	0.53	1.16	0	5
education	110	2.73	1.24	1	5
income	86	3.60	2.22	0	6
voted	112	0.82	0.38	0	1
rally	110	0.36	0.48	0	1
called	110	0.16	0.37	0	1
donated	111	0.21	0.41	0	1
workcampaign	111	0.12	0.32	0	1
participation	107	1.62	1.22	0	5
usage	111	8.62	4.12	1	22
gender	100	0.64	0.48	0	1
enby	109	0.10	0.30	0	1
liberal	102	0.96	0.20	0	1

polparty	100	1	0.43	0	2
shareig	67	0.57	0.50	0	1
sharefb	67	0.04	0.21	0	1
sharetiktok	67	0.12	0.33	0	1

Figure 3 Average Hours Per Day Per Platform - Extended

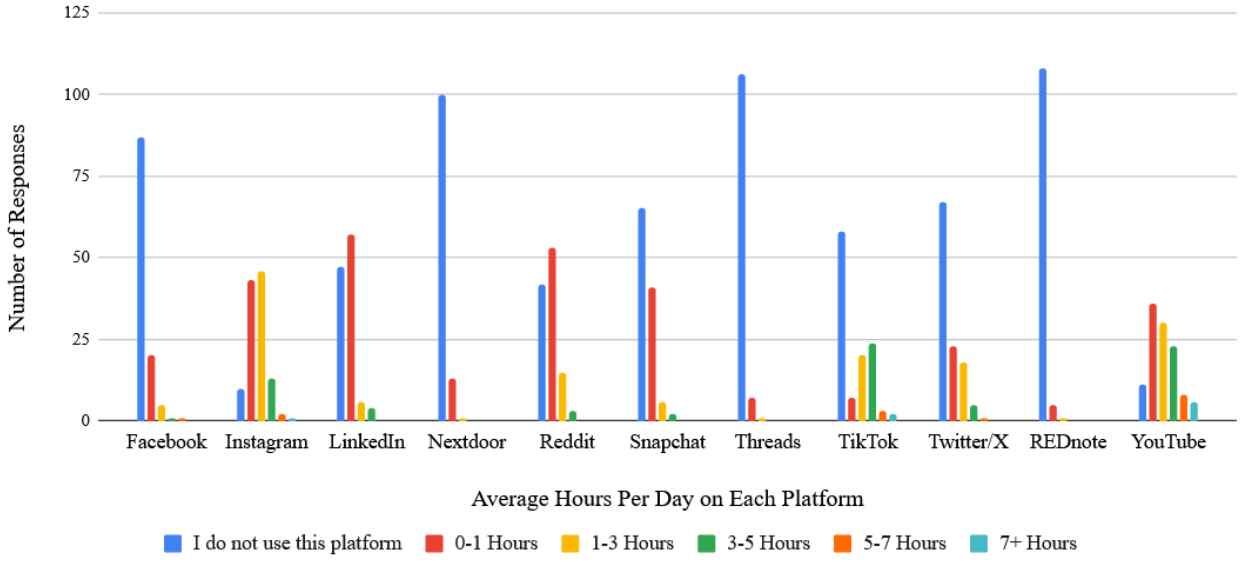


Table 2 Share Political Content Regression Table

	Overall Political Participation			*Overall Political Participation*			*Overall Political Participation*	
	Coef.	SE	.	Coef.	SE		Coef.	SE
Usage	-0.04	0.05	Usage	-0.04	0.06	Usage	-0.05	0.56
Gender	0.76*	0.36	Gender	0.91*	0.38	Gender	0.86*	0.41
Education	-0.07	0.16	Education	-0.07	0.17	Education	-0.08	0.17
Age	0.09	0.15	Age	-0.11	0.14	Age	-0.07	0.14
Liberal	-0.33	0.91	Liberal	-0.26	0.75	Liberal	-0.3	0.81
Share Instagram	0.60	0.36	Share Facebook	0.55	0.46	Share TikTok	-0.12	0.64
Constant	1.82	1.25	Constant	2.09	1.19	Constant	2.24	1.24
Prob > F	0.11		Prob > F	0.20		Prob > F	0.23	
R^2	0.19		R^2	0.15		R^2	0.14	
N	48		N	48		N	48	

* p<0.05

Survey Questions

On average, how many hours per day do you spend on the following social media platforms?

	I do not use this platform	0-1	1-3	3-5	5-7	7+
Bluesky	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Facebook	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Instagram	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
LinkedIn	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Nextdoor	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Reddit	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Snapchat	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Threads	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
TikTok	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Twitter/X	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Xiaohongshu/REDnote	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
YouTube	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

How likely are you to share content on social media?

1. I do not share content on social media
2. I rarely share content on social media
3. I occasionally share content on social media
4. I frequently share content on social media

How likely are you to consume political content on social media?

1. I do not consume political content on social media
2. I am unlikely to consume political content on social media
3. I am somewhat likely to consume political content on social media
4. I am very likely to consume political content on social media

How likely are you to share political content on social media?

1. I do not share political content
2. I rarely share political content
3. I occasionally share political content
4. I frequently share political content

On what social media site are you most likely to share political content?

1. Bluesky
2. Facebook
3. Instagram
4. LinkedIn
5. Nextdoor
6. Reddit
7. Snapchat
8. Threads
9. TikTok
10. Twitter/X
11. Xiaohongshu/REDnote
12. YouTube
13. Other _____

On what social media site are you second most likely to share political content?

1. Bluesky
2. Facebook
3. Instagram
4. LinkedIn
5. Nextdoor
6. Reddit
7. Snapchat
8. Threads
9. TikTok
10. Twitter/X
11. Xiaohongshu/REDnote
12. YouTube
13. Other _____

On what social media site are you third most likely to share political content?

1. Bluesky
2. Facebook
3. Instagram
4. LinkedIn
5. Nextdoor
6. Reddit
7. Snapchat
8. Threads
9. TikTok
10. Twitter/X
11. Xiaohongshu/REDnote
12. YouTube
13. Other _____

In the past year, have you done any of the following?

	Yes	No	Unsure
Voted in an election	❑	❑	❑

Attended/participated in a rally or protest	❑	❑	❑
Called your political representative	❑	❑	❑
Donated to a political cause or politician	❑	❑	❑
Worked on a political campaign	❑	❑	❑

How do you identify politically?

1. Very Conservative
2. Conservative
3. Moderate
4. Liberal
5. Very Liberal
6. I don't know
7. Other, Please Fill In

In politics today, do you consider yourself a(n):

1. Republican
2. Lean Republican
3. Independent
4. Lean Democrat
5. Democrat
6. I don't know
7. Other, Please Fill In

How would you describe the direction the country is currently going?

1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Okay
4. Good
5. Very Good
6. Unsure/Indifferent

What term best describes your race and/or ethnicity? Check all that apply:

1. Asian/Pacific Islander
2. Black/African American
3. Hispanic/Latinx
4. Native American
5. White/Caucasian
6. Prefer not to say
7. Other _____

How do you describe your gender identity?

1. Man
2. Woman
3. Non-binary
4. Prefer not to say

5. Other/Please describe _____

What is your age?

1. 18-24
2. 25-34
3. 35-44
4. 45-54
5. 55-64
6. Above 64

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

1. Less than a high school degree
2. High school or equivalent (e.g., GED)
3. Some College
4. Associate Degree
5. Bachelor Degree
6. Graduate or Professional Degree (e.g., Masters, PhD, M.D.)
7. Prefer Not to Say

What is/was your undergraduate major?

What is your annual household income?

1. $0-$24,999
2. $25,000-$49,999
3. $50,000-$74,999
4. $75,000-$99,999
5. $100,000-$124,999
6. $125,000-$149,999
7. $150,000+
8. Don't Know or Prefer Not to Say

References

Aïmeur, E., Amri, S., & Brassard, G. (2023). Fake news, disinformation and misinformation in social media: a review. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, *13*(1), 30. doi.org/10.1007/s13278-023-01028-5

Alberty, E. (2024.). *Sen. Romney Links Tiktok ban to pro-Palestinian content*. Axios. https://www.axios.com/local/salt-lake-city/2024/05/06/senator-romney-antony-blinken-tiktok-ban-israel-palestinian-content

Barberá, P. A., Roberts, M. E., Theocharis, Y., & Tucker, J. A. (2017). From liberation to turmoil: Social media and democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, *28*(4), 46–59. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0064

Caton, S., & Stolee, G. (2018). Twitter, Trump, and the base: A shift to a new form of presidential talk? *Signs and Society*, *6*(1), 147–165. https://doi.org/10.1086/694755

Daniller, A., Hartig, H., Keeter, S., & Van Green, T. (2023). *Voter turnout, 2018-2022*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/07/12/voter-turnout-2018-2022/

Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). *Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the Internet age*. The MIT Press.

Earl, J., Maher, T. V., & Elliot, T. (2017). Youth, activism, and social movements. *Sociology Compass, 11*(4). doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12465

Earl, J., Maher, T. V., & Pan, J. (2022). The digital repression of social movements, protest, and activism: A synthetic review. *Science Advances*, *8*(10). https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abl8198

Ekman, M. (2014). The dark side of online activism: Swedish right-wing extremist video activism on YouTube. *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, *30*(56). doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v30i56.8967

Gladwell, M. (2010). *Small change*. The New Yorker. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell

Gottfried, J. (2024). *Americans' social media use*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/01/31/americans-social-media-use/

Greijdanus, H., de Matos Fernandes, C. A., Turner-Zwinkels, F., Honari, A., Roos, C. A., Rosenbusch, H., & Postmes, T. (2020). The psychology of online activism and social movements: Relations between online and offline collective action. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 35*, 49–54. doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.003

Helmstetter, C. (2024). *Poll: A majority of Americans have participated in democracy this campaign season*. APM Research Lab. (n.d.). https://www.apmresearchlab.org/motn/poll-a-majority-of-americans-have-participated-in-democracy-this-campaign-season

Jackson, S. J., Bailey, M., Welles, B. F. (2020). *#HashtagActivism: Networks of race and gender justice*. The MIT Press.

Klein, E., & Robinson, J. (2019). Like, post, and distrust? How social media use affects trust in government. *Political Communication*. doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1661891

Lee, Y., & Hsieh, G. (2013). Does slacktivism hurt activism?: The effects of moral balancing and consistency in online activism. *Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems - Proceedings.* 811–820. doi.org/10.1145/2470654.2470770

Lengel, L., & Newsom, V. A. (2012). Arab women, social media, and the Arab Spring: Applying the framework of digital reflexivity to analyze gender and online activism. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 13*(5), 31-45. vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol13/iss5/5

Lewis, K., Gray, K., & Meierhenrich, J. (2014). The structure of online activism. *Sociological Science*, *1*, 1–9. doi.org/10.15195/v1.a1

McGregor, S. C. (2020). "Taking the temperature of the room": How political campaigns use social media to understand and represent public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *84*(S1), 236–256. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfaa012

Morozov, E. (2012). *The net delusion*. PublicAffairs.

Pew Research Center. (2024). *News platform fact sheet*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/news-platform-fact-sheet/

Segev, E., Sheafer, T., & Wolfsfeld, G. (2013). Social Media and the Arab Spring: Politics Comes First. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *18*(2), 115–137. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161212471716

Shulman, S. W. (2009). The case against mass e‐mails: Perverse incentives and low quality public participation in U.S. federal rulemaking. *Policy & Internet*, *1*(1), 23–53. https://doi.org/10.2202/1944-2866.1010