

# THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT



**CHIP50** The new home of the COVID States Project

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## THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT: A 50-STATE SURVEY REPORT #114: TIKTOK IN A TIME OF PERIL: AMERICAN USAGE PATTERNS AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

USA, January 2025

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with

**The Internet Democracy Initiative**



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on Media, Politics and Public Policy



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# THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT

Report of January 15, 2025, v.1

***The Civic Health and Institutions Project***  
**and**  
***The COVID States Project***

***A joint initiative of:***

Northeastern University,  
Harvard University,  
Rutgers University,  
University of Rochester

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Northeastern University  
Network Science Institute



# COVER MEMO

***The Civic Health and Institutions Project***  
**and**  
***The COVID States Project***

**Partners:**

Northeastern University, Harvard University/Harvard Medical School, Rutgers University, and University of Rochester

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**Note on methods:**

Between November 9, 2024, and January 10, 2025, we collected a total of 33,755 responses from individuals age 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The surveys were conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for more details, see [chip50.org](http://chip50.org) and [covidstates.org](http://covidstates.org)). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to 2020 vote choice and turnout, race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors in the United States. More information on methodology is available at [www.chip50.org/survey-methodology](http://www.chip50.org/survey-methodology).

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Or visit us at [www.chip50.org](http://www.chip50.org) or [www.covidstates.org](http://www.covidstates.org).

# TikTok in a time of peril: American usage patterns and demographic trends

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- TikTok has emerged as a major challenger to the current Meta-dominated social media landscape, capturing about 10% of all attention of American users. In contrast, we estimate that Meta social media and instant messaging properties capture about 48%.
- TikTok users skew far younger than for most other social media. TikTok is also used by more non-White respondents; people with a high school or less education, and moderately, if consistently, by more women than men, and Democrats than Republicans.

## Introduction

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As the deadline of January 19 nears for a possible ban of the TikTok app in the United States, many millions of Americans are waiting to hear how they may be affected. The app is widely used for entertainment and communication – and it is a key commercial space for advertisers and the “influencer” economy – and yet it is not clear what its fate may be.

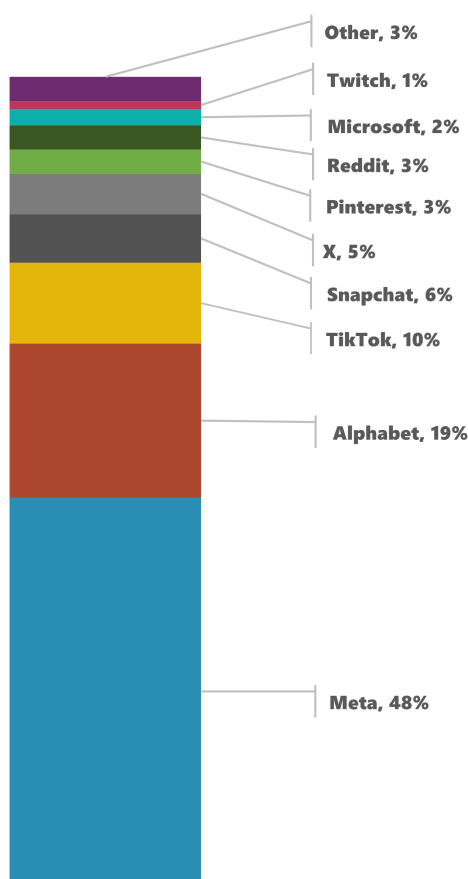
Congress has passed a law requiring that it be divested from Chinese ownership by January 19, 2025, but the U.S. Supreme Court and the incoming presidential administration of Donald J. Trump may change the overall picture in unexpected ways. TikTok is owned by parent company ByteDance, which is headquartered in China.

CHIP50 has been asking large samples of Americans about their social media use – both which apps they use and how frequently they use them – since late 2020. Our survey waves typically include more than 25,000 U.S. respondents at a time. This data report contains key contextual findings in terms of who uses TikTok and trends over time. For an examination of the demographic profile of who uses which platform, and how that changes over time, please consult the [CHIP50 social media tracker](#).

## Possible consequences of a ban: Relevant data

While the precise consequences of a ban are unclear, current trends help inform understanding about the magnitude of such a shift in the social media marketplace and the attention economy. One potential downstream effect is that users of TikTok will migrate to competitor apps such as Instagram and YouTube, both of which have short-form video products. The companies Alphabet (Google, YouTube) and Meta (Facebook, Instagram) stand to benefit.

Market Share of Public Attention to Social Media



\* Other includes all platforms with market share under 1%.  
Source: Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

**Figure 1: Market share of online attention for social media and messaging.**  
*Larger portion indicates more frequent usage (N=29,444).*  
*(by corporate grouping)*

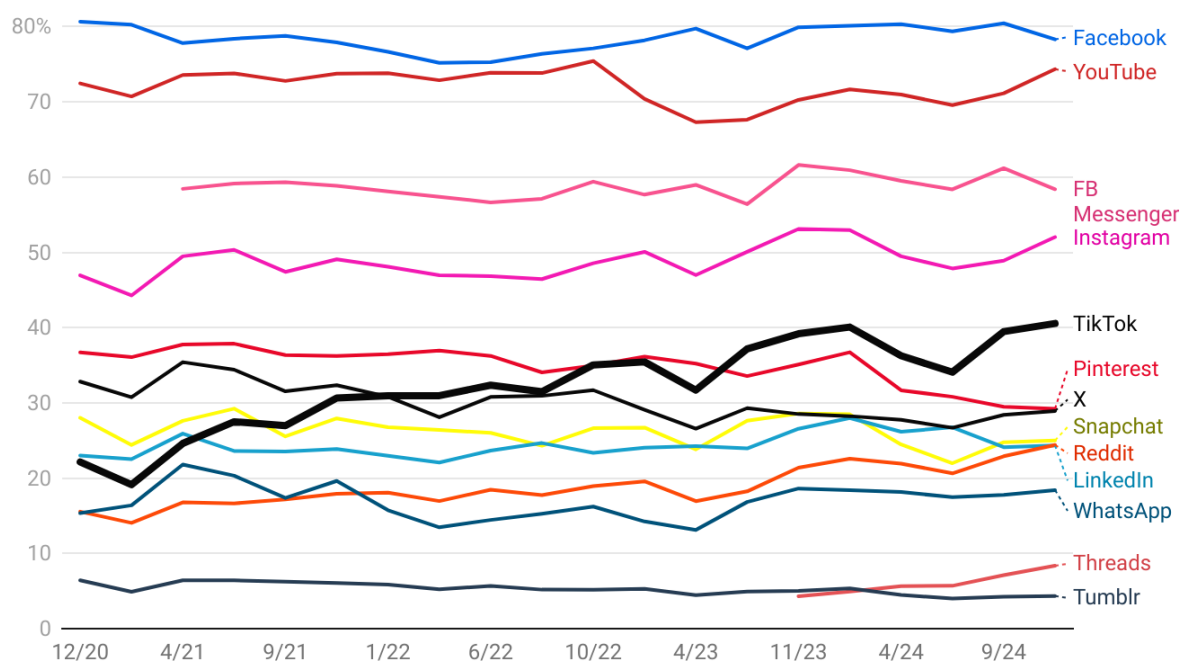
CHIP50 asks respondents which social media platforms they use and how often they use them. We use the latter measure to estimate how attention is distributed to social media and instant messaging apps across the U.S. population (see figure 1; see

summary of methodology at the end of the report). Our analysis highlights that Meta (Facebook, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, and Whatsapp) is the dominant social media/instant messaging company, controlling approximately half of all attention. TikTok is the second largest challenger to Meta, after Alphabet (Youtube). The prospective demise of TikTok thus creates significant opportunities for expansion of market share for Meta and Alphabet, in particular, given their existing dominant positions in the market.

Interestingly, although Instagram has significantly more users than TikTok (51% versus 40% of surveyed U.S. adults), estimates of the total time spent on both platforms are roughly the same, as TikTok users report much more frequent usage. This pattern indicates that TikTok users are more engaged with the app, and the data provide evidence that TikTok’s product is more “sticky,” bringing back users more regularly.

## Overall Usage

### Social Media and IM Platforms Usage



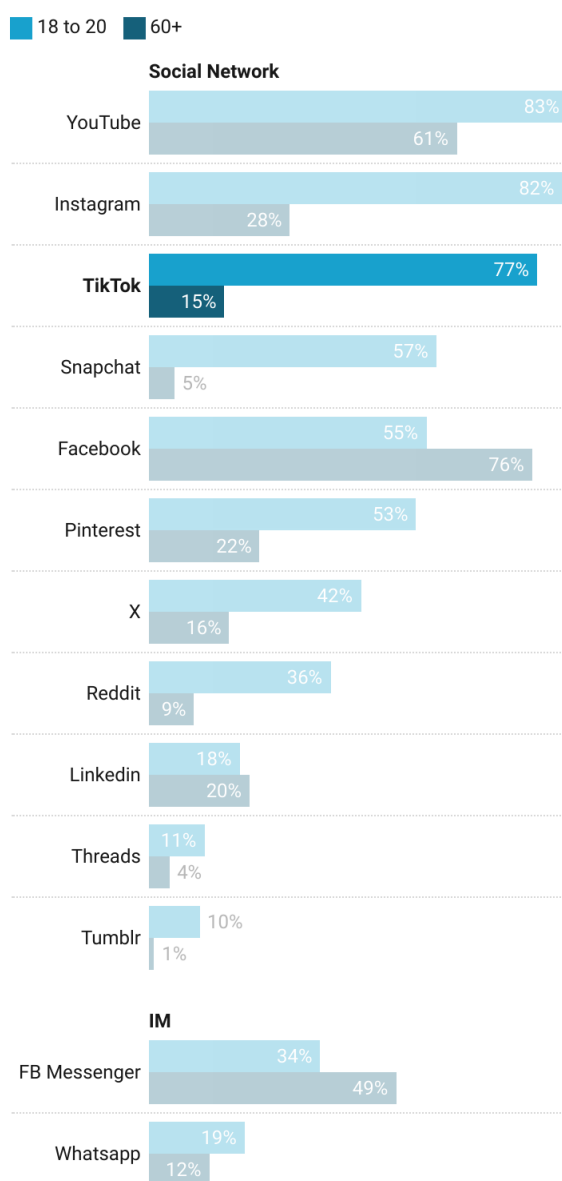
National sample, 23 waves from 12/9/2020 - 1/6/2025, average N=25,912

Chart: Civic Health and Institutions Project, a 50 States Survey (CHIP50) • Source: CHIP50 • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 2: Percent of respondents who report using each platform since December, 2020**

Over the 4+ years that CHIP50 has been tracking social media usage, generally usage patterns have been fairly steady. The exceptions are: Threads, which did not exist 4 years ago, but where now 8% of the public reports using; Reddit, which has increased from about 16% of the public using to about 24% now; X, which has slid from a peak of 35% to 29% now; and, most dramatically, TikTok, which was at 22% 4 years ago, and 41% now. Notably, TikTok usage is smaller than that of Instagram (50%) and much smaller than Facebook (80%). While TikTok has been very fast growing, its U.S. growth has plateaued over the last year or so.

### Comparison of Social Media Usage by Age: 18-20 vs 60+

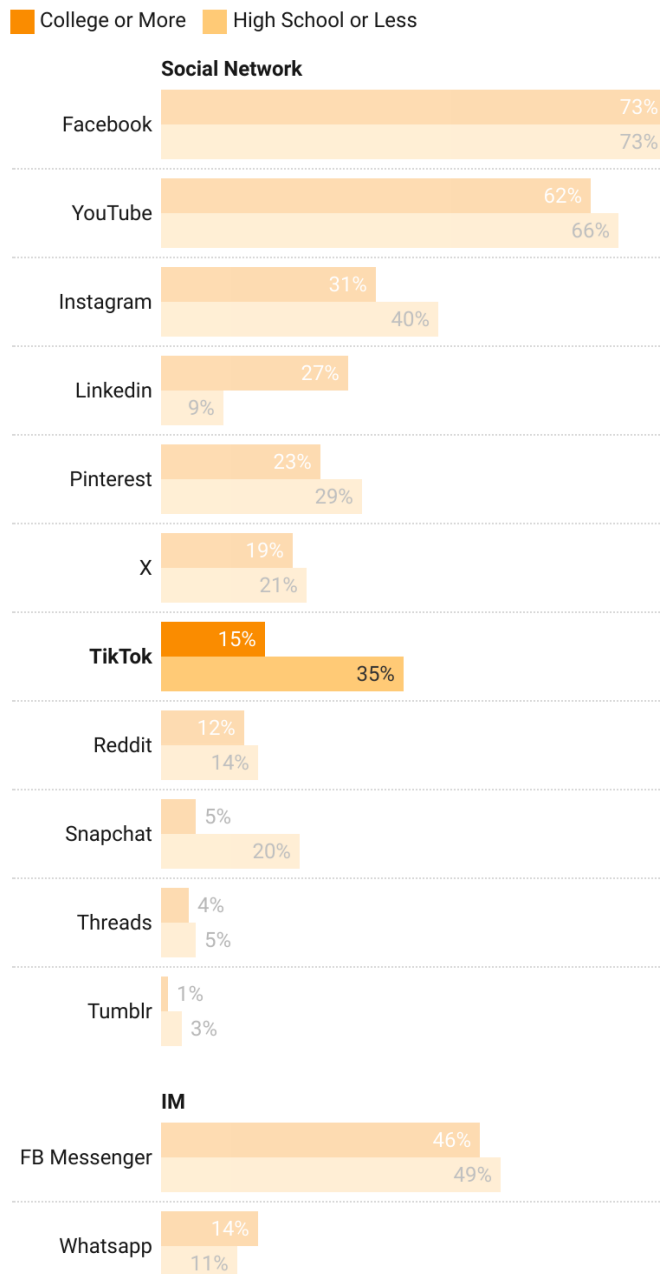


National sample, N=34,075, 11/9/2024-1/6/2025  
 Chart: Civic Health and Institutions Project, a 50 States Survey

**Figure 3: Percent of 18-20 year olds versus 60+ old that uses each platform**

TikTok is used far more by individuals with a high school or less education than college or more; though this may in part reflect the age gradient in usage (a disproportionate share of TikTok users are too young to have earned BAs or graduate degrees).

## Comparison of Social Media Usage by Education: High School or Less vs College or More



National sample, N=34,075, 11/9/2024-1/6/2025

Chart: Civic Health and Institutions Project, a 50 States Survey (CHIP50) •

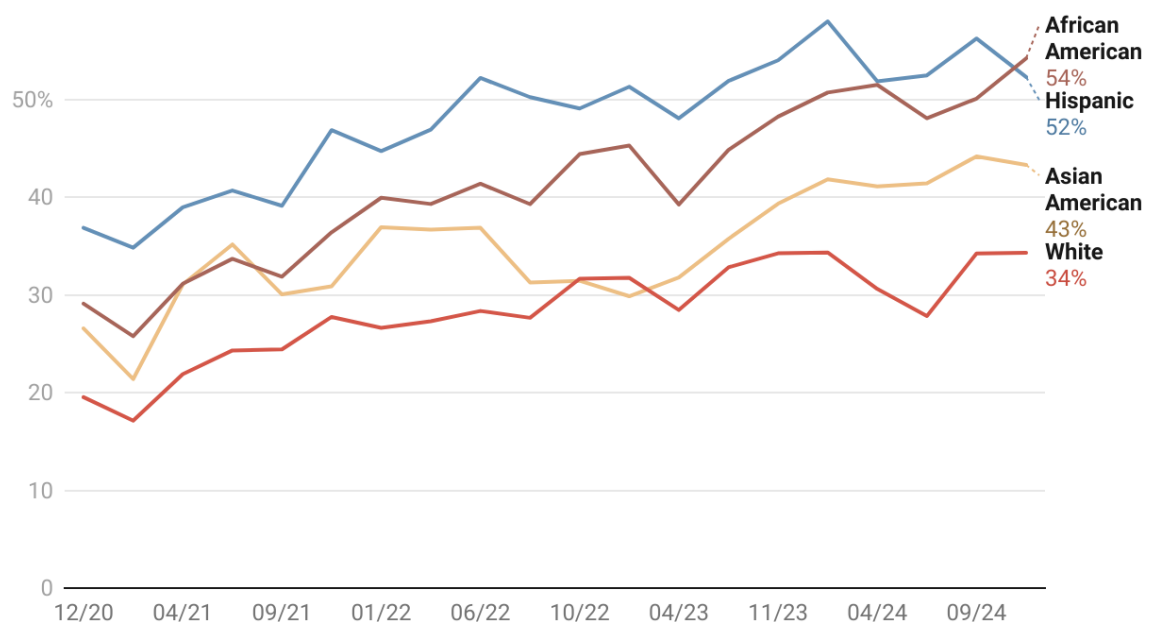
**Figure 4: Percent of high school or less versus college+ that uses each platform**



## Usage of minority Americans/Communities of color

TikTok has found a large audience among communities of color in the United States, and the app is used substantially more among non-white populations, especially African Americans and Hispanics. For example, among Black Americans of all ages, more than half use the app. This represents a sharp rise over the past four years – more than doubling from 26% in 2021 to 54% of African Americans at present. Similar patterns are present among Hispanic adult Americans, with more than half (52%) currently using TikTok. We note that this, in part, reflects that Whites skew older than non-white.

### TikTok Usage Grouped by Race



National sample, 23 waves from 12/9/2020 - 1/6/2025, average N=25,912

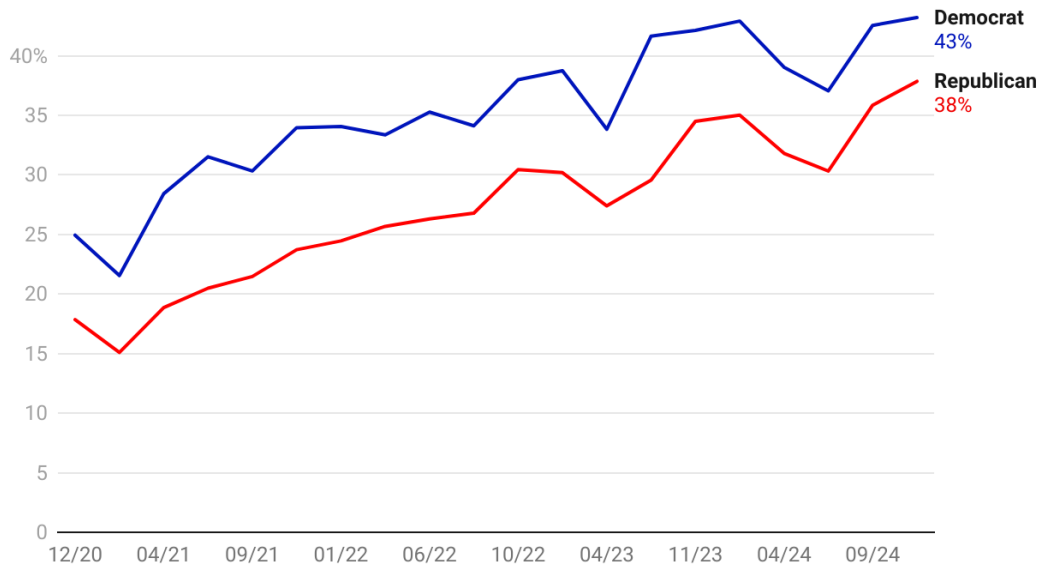
Chart: Civic Health and Institutions Project, a 50 States Survey (CHIP50) • Source: CHIP50 • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 5: Percent of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Whites that uses each platform**

## Usage patterns across partisanship

Although social media platforms sometimes have more liberal or conservative-leaning users, that is not necessarily the case with TikTok. Still, there are small but persistent partisan differences, with slightly more Democrats using the platform (43%) than Republicans (38%).

## TikTok Usage Grouped by Party Affiliation



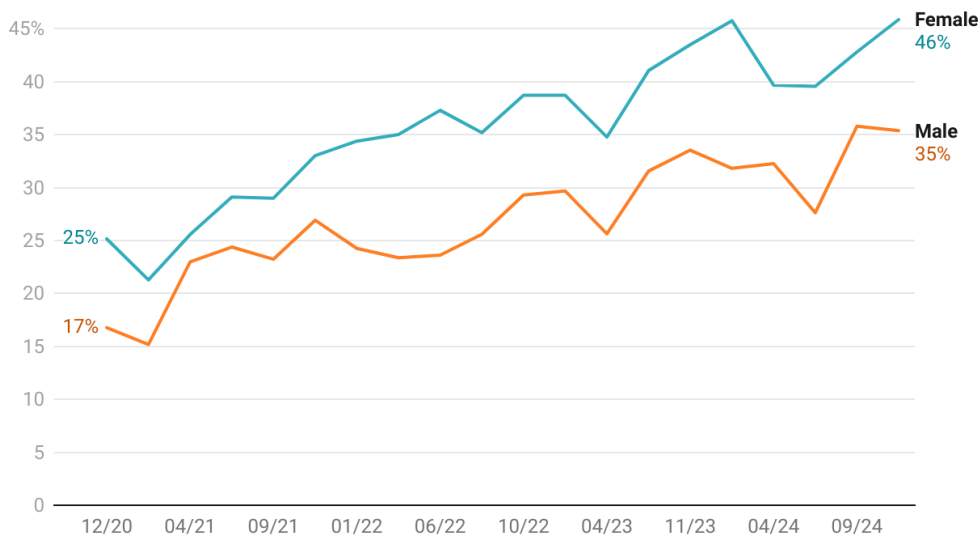
National sample, 23 waves from 12/9/2020 - 1/6/2025, average N=25,912  
 Chart: Civic Health and Institutions Project, a 50 States Survey (CHIP50) • Source: CHIP50 • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 6: Percent of Republicans versus Democrats that uses each platform**

## Usage by gender

On average, women are more likely to use TikTok than men are. There is a robust gender tilt, with more women (46%) versus men (36%) using TikTok.

## TikTok Usage Grouped by Gender



National sample, 23 waves from 12/9/2020 - 1/6/2025, average N=25,912  
 Chart: Civic Health and Institutions Project, a 50 States Survey (CHIP50) • Source: CHIP50 • Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 7: Percent of women versus men that uses each platform**

## **METHODS NOTE: MEASURING ATTENTION**

Measuring attention from self-report data is tricky. We ask people which platforms they use, and then have a follow-up question about how often they use that platform, with the following response categories: Less than once a week, once a week, several times a week, about once a day, several times a day, most of the day. To convert these response categories to “attention events,” we assume each response category is three times the size of the preceding (less than once a week = 1; once a week = 3; and so on). Most importantly, by this measure, heavy users are vastly more important than occasional users. This is likely correlated but is certainly different from “how much time” someone uses a platform; it is also very likely that there are some systematically different ways that people interpret this question, and significant noise in recall.