Social Media and Voting

22% of registered voters have announced their vote for president on social media like Facebook or Twitter

Lee Rainie
Director, Pew Internet Project

Key Findings

Social media is a significant part of the process by which voters are talking about their ballot selections, especially younger voters:

- 22% of registered voters have let others know how they voted on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter.

Some 25% of the supporters of Barack Obama have posted their presidential preference and 20% of backers of Mitt Romney have done so. This difference is not statistically significant.

Social media platforms have also become a notable venue for people to try to convince their friends to vote.

- 30% of registered voters have been encouraged to vote for Democrat Barack Obama or Republican Mitt Romney by family and friends via posts on social media such as Facebook or Twitter.
- 20% of registered voters have encouraged others to vote by posting on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter.

Social media and voting

% of registered voters in different age groups who have used social media like Facebook or Twitter to receive/send voting messages or announce their presidential choice
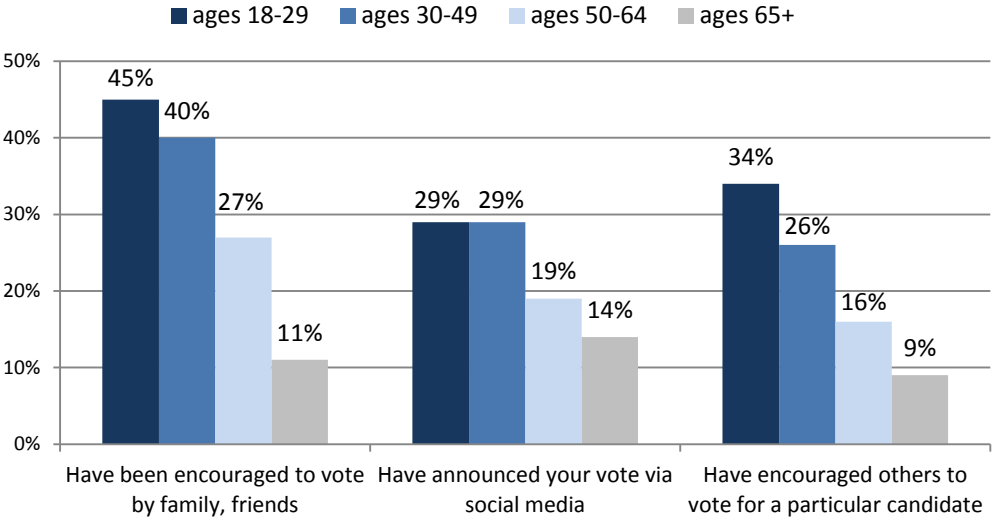
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project survey conducted on landline and cell phones in English from November 1-4, 2012. N =861 for registered voters and margin of error for entire sample is +/- 3.7 percentage points. N for ages 18-29=104. N for ages 30-49=215. N for ages 50-64=258. N for ages 65+=255.

More broadly, registered voters have used a variety of methods to talk to others about voting. Below are the ways that people are **hearing from their family and friends, encouraging them to vote**.

There is no overall partisan tilt to one candidate or the other when it comes to the "go vote" messages people are getting from their friends and family through various channels. Equal shares of registered voters were encouraged by their friends to vote for each candidate in each kind of communication:

No partisan differences in what people are hearing from family and friends

% of registered voters who are hearing from family and friends about how to vote…

	Urging Obama	Urging Romney
In face to face conversation	29%	32%
Via posts on SNS / Twitter	25%	25%
In phone calls	17%	18%
In emails	12%	15%
In texts	6%	7%

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project survey conducted on landline and cell phones in English from November 1-4, 2012. N =861 for registered voters and margin of error for entire sample is +/- 3.7 percentage points.

But some demographic groups were more likely to get these messages in different channels.

- 48% have heard from family and friends in face-to-face conversations in the last 30 days that they should vote for either Obama or Romney. Younger voters ages 18-29 were considerably more likely than others to have heard in face-to-face conversations from others in their circles about voting for Obama.
- 30% have heard from family and friends via postings on social networking sites (SNS) or Twitter in the last 30 days that they should vote for either candidate. Overall, female registered voters were more likely to hear from family and friends via social media postings that encouraged them to vote for each candidate. And registered voters under age 30 were more likely to get "go and vote" messages from family and friends.
- 29% have heard from family and friends in phone conversations in the last 30 days that they should vote for either candidate.
- 21% have heard from family and friends in emails in the last 30 days that they should vote for either candidate.
  11% have heard from family and friends in text messages that they should vote for either candidate. The registered voters ages 18-29 were more likely than their elders to have gotten pro-Obama texts from their friends and family.

Here are the ways that registered voters are **encouraging others to vote** in the past 30 days:

- 54% of registered voters have had <u>face-to-face conversations</u> in the past 30 days with others, encouraging them to vote for either Barack Obama or Mitt Romney.
- 25% have <u>talked on the phone</u> with others, encouraging them to vote for one of the candidates.
- 20% have <u>posted voting messages to others on a social networking site (SNS) or Twitter,</u> encouraging them to vote for one of the candidates.
- 12% have <u>sent emails</u> to others, encouraging them to vote for one of the candidates.
- 10% have <u>sent text messages</u> to others, encouraging them to vote for one of the candidates.

Finally, 22% of registered voters have announced on a social networking site or Twitter how they voted or planned to vote. Some 29% of those under age 50 have announced to their networks through social media how they voted or planned to vote, compared with 17% of those 50 and older who have revealed their vote by social media.

In all, those who did any of these activities related to getting messages about voting, sending out such messages, or posting their presidential choice on a social media site are part of our calculation of the "social vote" cohort. And that comes to 74% of registered voters.

Survey questions

Vote01. How much thought have you given to the coming presidential election … quite a lot or only a little?

Quite a lot	80%
Some (VOL)	2%
Little	16%
None	2%
Don't know	*
Refused	*

PIAL1. We are interested in what some people do as the election nears. In the past 30 days, have you encouraged anyone to vote for Barack Obama or Mitt Romney in any of the following ways?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Ref</u>	Not apply (VOL)
Talking with them face-to-face	54%	45%	1%	1%	
Talking with them on the telephone	25%	73%	1%	1%	
Sending them an email	12%	86%	*	1%	1%
Sending them a text message	10%	88%	*	1%	1%
Posting on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter	20%	77%	*	1%	2%

PIAL2. And have any of your FAMILY MEMBERS or FRIENDS encouraged YOU to vote for Barack Obama or Mitt Romney? Again in the past 30 days, have any of your family or friends encouraged you

to vote for Barack Obama or Mitt Romney by [INSERT ITEMS IN ORDER]? [IF YES: Have you been encouraged to vote for Obama, Romney, or both?]

Talking with you face-to-face

Yes, Obama	16%
Yes, Romney	19%
Yes, both	13%
No	51%
Refused	1%

Talking with you over the telephone

Yes, Obama	11%
Yes, Romney	12%
Yes, both	6%
No	70%
Refused	1%

Sending you an email

Yes, Obama	7%
Yes, Romney	10%
Yes, both	5%
No	76%
Refused	1%

Sending you a text message

Yes, Obama	4%
Yes, Romney	5%
Yes, both	2%
No	87%
Refused	1%
Does not apply (VOL)	1%

Posting something on a social networking site
such as Facebook or Twitter

Yes, Obama	8%
Yes, Romney	7%
Yes, both	15%
No	67%
Don't Know/refused	2%
Does not apply (VOL)	1%

PIAL3. Even if you didn't encourage people to vote one way or the other, have you let other people know who you voted for, or who you plan to vote for, in this year's election by posting that information on a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter?

Yes	22%
No	75%
Does not apply (VOL)	2%
Don't know	*

Refused   *

Methodology

November 2012 Omnibus Week 1

Prepared by Princeton Survey Research Associates International

November 2012

The PSRAI November 2012 Omnibus Week 1 obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,011 adults living in the continental United States. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (606) and cell phone (405, including 212 without a landline phone). The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). Interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source from November 1 to 4, 2012. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 3.6 percentage points.