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How U.S. Adults Use TikTok

Around half of adult TikTok users in the U.S. have never posted a video themselves. And a minority of users produce the vast majority of content

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to gain insight into TikTok users' views of and behaviors on the site, as well as how those opinions might vary based on their posting activity. To conduct this analysis, we surveyed 2,745 U.S. adult TikTok users in August 2023. Everyone who took part in this survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP) – an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses – and indicated that they use TikTok.

869 of these respondents volunteered a valid TikTok handle (their unique username preceded by an "@" sign) for research purposes. This allowed us to analyze their actual (observed) behaviors on the platform and compare them with their responses to the survey.

Here are the <u>questions used for the report</u>, along with responses, and its <u>methodology</u>.

How U.S. Adults Use TikTok

Around half of adult TikTok users in the U.S. have never posted a video themselves. And a minority of users produce the vast majority of content

A new Pew Research Center study matching the survey responses and on-site behaviors of U.S. adult TikTok users finds that a minority of avid posters create the vast majority of content on the site. And most users post seldom, if at all – instead using TikTok primarily to view and consume content made by others.

These findings come at a time when <u>one-third of U.S. adults say they use the site</u> and <u>a growing</u> <u>share get news there</u>. Among our key findings about how the American public is using TikTok:

A small share of users are responsible for producing the majority of TikTok content. The top 25% of U.S. adults on TikTok by posting volume produce 98% of all publicly accessible videos from this group. This is in line with the Center's previous research on Twitter users, which found a similar ratio of highly active users creating the majority of content on the platform.

The typical TikTok user posts seldom, if ever. About half of all U.S. adults on the site have never posted a video themselves. And the typical user has not added any information to the "bio" field on their account.

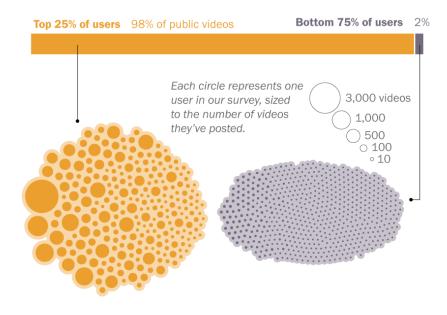
The posting behaviors of younger adults do not stand out dramatically from other age groups.

Users ages 18 to 34 are much more likely than their older counterparts to use TikTok in the first place. But around half of these younger users have ever posted on the site – similar to the share among users ages 35 to 49.

Users who have posted videos on TikTok are more active on the platform in general than non-posters. Posters typically follow more users, have more followers themselves, are more likely to have filled out their account bio and are somewhat more likely to find the content of

The most active 25% of U.S. adult TikTok users produce 98% of public content

Share of videos from U.S. adult TikTok users produced by the ...



Note: Based on respondents who provided a valid TikTok handle. Source: Survey of U.S. adult TikTok users conducted Aug. 7-27, 2023. Data on respondents' TikTok accounts collected using automated web scraping. Analysis includes all public videos accessible as of Nov. 7, 2023. "How U.S. Adults Use TikTok"

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their "For You" page extremely interesting.

TikTok users are more likely than not to find their "For You" page interesting. TikTok is defined by its algorithmically curated "For You" page, and users generally like the content the algorithm serves them. Some 40% of users say this content is either extremely or very interesting to them, far more than the 14% in total who say it is not too or not at all interesting.

The study began with a survey conducted in August 2023 of 2,745 U.S. adult TikTok users. It includes direct observation of the accounts and posting behavior of 869 respondents who volunteered to share their account handle for research purposes.

All these accounts – regardless of their privacy settings – contained basic account metadata. This includes their bio and display name fields, counts of followers and followed accounts, and the total number of "likes" the user had received on any videos they posted. For accounts set to public, we

were also able to observe any public videos posted to the account to get a better understanding of adult TikTok users' posting behavior.

Related:

- Americans' social media use in 2023
- More Americans are getting news on TikTok
- What the public thinks about banning TikTok

Who posts videos to TikTok

Around half (52%) of U.S. adults on TikTok have ever posted a video on the platform.¹ And although there are substantial differences in which groups of Americans use TikTok in the first place, there are only modest differences in the posting behavior of users based on their demographic characteristics. Notably, there are no significant differences in the share of users who have posted on the site based on gender, political affiliation or educational attainment.

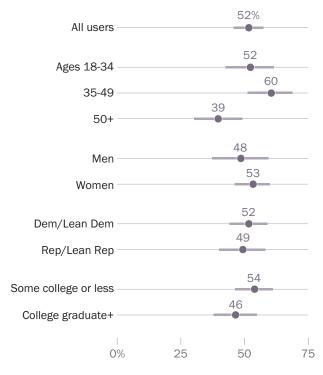
TikTok use is especially prevalent among younger adults – 56% of all U.S. adults ages 18 to 34 say they use the platform. But 52% of *users* in this age group have posted a video to their account. That is identical to the average among users overall, and similar to the share of users ages 35 to 49 who have ever posted.

A minority of users produce the majority of TikTok content from U.S. adults

While about half of U.S. adult TikTok users have ever posted a video at all, an even smaller share – 40% – have posted videos that are publicly visible. As a result, a relatively small share of users produce the vast majority of content that appears on the platform.²

About half of TikTok users have ever posted a video

% of U.S. adult TikTok users who have posted at least one video to their account



Note: Based on respondents who provided a valid TikTok handle. Lines surrounding data points represent the margin of sampling error of each estimate.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult TikTok users conducted Aug. 7-27, 2023. Data on respondents' TikTok accounts collected using automated web scraping. Users are classified as posters if they have at least one public video posted on their account, or if they have at least one like in their account metadata, indicating the existence of private videos.

"How U.S. Adults Use TikTok"

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¹ On TikTok, videos can be listed either publicly or privately, but total "like" counts for the whole account are public, even if associated videos are private. Therefore, we consider an account to have posted content if there are any public videos on the account, or if the account is set to private but there are likes recorded on the account.

² Due to the privacy settings of some accounts, we could only count videos that were publicly listed on TikTok in this analysis.

The typical TikTok user does not customize their bio

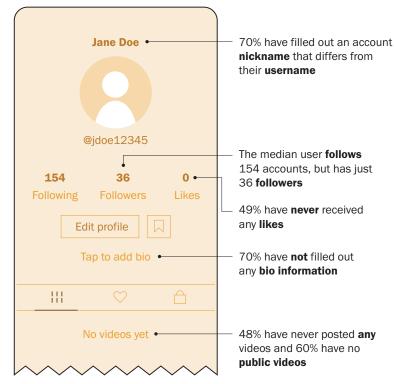
TikTok users do not tend to present a detailed profile of themselves on their accounts.

Although 70% of users have changed their account nickname from the site-provided default, an identical share have not added any information to the "bio" field on their account. The median U.S. adult user follows 154 other accounts but has just 36 accounts who follow them — and has received no likes from other users.

A profile of the average TikTok user

Among U.S. adult TikTok users ...

PROFILE EXAMPLE



Note: Based on respondents who provided a valid TikTok handle. Source: Survey of U.S. adult TikTok users conducted Aug. 7-27, 2023. Data on respondents' TikTok accounts collected using automated web scraping. Analysis includes all publicly visible account information accessible as of Nov. 7, 2023. "How U.S. Adults Use TikTok"

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How posters differ from non-posters in their use of TikTok

TikTok users who post on the platform differ from non-posters in several important ways. Those who have ever posted a video are nearly five times as likely to have customized the bio field on their profile. They are also a bit more likely to have updated their account nickname from its default.

Posters also engage with a lot more other accounts on TikTok: A typical (median) poster follows nearly four times as many other accounts as someone who doesn't post, and they have more followers as well.

Users who post content to TikTok are more active in other ways as well

Among U.S. adult TikTok users ...

	Posters	Non- posters	DIFF
Share with			
Bio info on profile	48%	10%	+38
Nickname updated from default	74%	65%	+9
Public account	81%	77%	+4
Median			
Video count	6	0	+6
Like count	149	0	+149
Follower count	103	16	+87
Following count	246	63	+183

Note: Based on respondents who provided a valid TikTok handle. "Posters" have posted at least one video to their account.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult TikTok users conducted Aug. 7-27, 2023. Data on respondents' TikTok accounts collected using automated web scraping. Analysis includes all publicly visible account information accessible as of Nov. 7, 2023.

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While it's true that a small share of U.S. adults on TikTok are highly prolific, not everyone who posts videos does this a lot. The median poster has put up a total of six public videos in the life of their accounts and received a total of 149 likes in return.

What TikTok users think of their 'For You' page

Some 85% of TikTok users say the content on their "For You" page is at least somewhat interesting, including 40% who call it either extremely or very interesting. Only 14% say it is not too or not at all interesting.

Younger users are especially interested in the content they see on the platform. Some 47% of users ages 18 to 34 say they find the videos on their "For You" page either extremely or very interesting, compared with 36% of users ages 35 to 49 and 31% of those 50 or older.

There are only modest differences on this question based on other demographic factors like gender, political affiliation or educational attainment. Similar shares of posters and non-posters find the "For You" page at

least very interesting.

But posters are slightly more likely to report the highest level of interest in the material that TikTok's content algorithm suggests to them. Some 17% of these users say they find the content of their "For You" page extremely interesting, compared with 11% of non-posters.

4 in 10 TikTok users find their 'For You' page extremely or very interesting

% of U.S. adult TikTok users who say they find the videos on their "For You" page _____ interesting



Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adult TikTok users conducted Aug. 7-27, 2023. "How U.S. Adults Use TikTok"

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Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals.

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In addition, the project benefited greatly from the guidance of Pew Research Center's survey methods team: Courtney Kennedy, Andrew Mercer, Dorene Asare-Marfo, Ashley Amaya, Arnold Lau and Dana Popky. This project also benefited from feedback by the Center's Monica Anderson and Jeffrey Gottfried.

Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

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. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from ATP Wave 133, conducted from Aug. 7 to Aug 27, 2023. A total of 11,945 panelists responded out of 12,925 who were sampled, for a response rate of 92%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is less than 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 11,945 respondents is plus or minus 1.4 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

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, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to

American	Trends	Panel	recruitme	nt surveys
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Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	1,493
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	875
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	431
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	4,096
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	1,460
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	1,535
May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021	ABS	1,329	1,162	783
May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022	ABS	3,354	2,869	1,684
April 17 to May 30, 2023	ABS	686	576	568
	Total	43,580	30,859	12,925

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. 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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address-based sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service 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.³ Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.⁴

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional effort (known as an "oversample") to boost sample size with underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 12,925 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. All active panel members were invited to participate in this wave.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or

³ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."

⁴ Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Aug. 7 to Aug. 27, 2023. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on Aug. 7.

Invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Ninety panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Aug. 7. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Aug. 8.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to five email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to five SMS reminders. On Aug. 25, interactive voice recording reminder calls were made to 39 tablet households that previously provided consent to receive these reminders.

	Soft launch	Full launch
nitial invitation	August 7, 2023	August 8, 2023
irst reminder	August 11, 2023	August 11, 2023
econd reminder	August 15, 2023	August 15, 2023
hird reminder	August 18, 2023	August 18, 2023
ourth reminder	August 22, 2023	August 22, 2023
fth reminder	August 25, 2023	August 25, 2023
iteractive voice ecording reminder	August 25, 2023	August 25, 2023

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center's researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, two ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey. These weights are then rescaled and adjusted to account for changes in the design of ATP recruitment surveys from year to year. Finally, the weights are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed)	2021 American Community Survey
Age x Gender	(ACS)
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among	
Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	2021 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2021 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration
votor rogiotation	Supplement
Party affiliation	2022 National Public Opinion
Frequency of internet use	Reference Survey (NPORS)
Religious affiliation	
Additional weighting dimensions applied w	ithin Black adults
Age	2021 American Community Survey
Gender	(ACS)
Education	
Hispanic ethnicity	
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	2022 National Public Opinion
Religious affiliation	Reference Survey (NPORS)

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 U.S. adult population.

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Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and

99.5th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

Dispositions and response rates

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	11,945
Logged on to survey; broke off	2.12	46
Logged on to survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	42
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	889
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	1
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		2
Screened out		0
Total panelists sampled for the survey		12,925
Completed interviews	l	11,945
Partial interviews	Р	0
Refusals	R	977
Non-contact	NC	1
Other	0	2
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		12,925
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		92%

Cumulative respons	se rate	as of	ATP	Wave	133

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	71%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 133	49%
Response rate to Wave 133 survey	92%
Cumulative response rate	4 %
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Analysis of TikTok behavioral data

The analysis of TikTok users' behaviors and activities on the platform is based on a subsample of 869 respondents to the main survey who said they use TikTok, agreed to share their TikTok handle for research purposes and provided a valid handle when asked. Researchers from the Center used these handles to collect information about respondents' on-platform behaviors using automated web scraping.

Of the 11,945 panelists who completed the ATP Wave 133 survey, 2,745 said they use TikTok. These respondents were asked if they would be willing to share their account username with us for this study, and 996 agreed. After the survey was fielded, researchers reviewed each provided account individually and removed accounts that were suspended, invalid, or belonged to institutions, products or international entities. The analysis of TikTok behavioral data in this report is based on a total of 869 respondents who completed the survey and provided both consent and a verifiable TikTok handle.

This final sample of 869 U.S. adult TikTok users with valid, active usernames was weighted using an iterative technique that aligns its composition with that of all TikTok users on American Trends Panel Wave 133. The sample was weighted on the following dimensions: gender, age, race, years lived in the U.S., education, region, party identification, volunteerism, voter registration, metropolitan area, religious affiliation, frequency of internet use, and how interesting they find the videos on their TikTok "For You" page. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 5.8 percentage points.

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.

Sample sizes and margins of error for users with matched TikTok handles			
Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus	
All users	869	5.8 percentage points	
Posters	446	7.9 percentage points	
Non-posters	423	8.6 percentage points	
Ages 18-34	320	9.5 percentage points	
35-49	309	9.9 percentage points	
50+	240	9.4 percentage points	
Women	591	6.8 percentage points	
Men	263	11.1 percentage points	
Democrats/Lean Dem	558	7.5 percentage points	
Republicans/Lean Rep	298	9.3 percentage points	
Some college or less	490	7.5 percentage points	
College grad+	379	8.6 percentage points	
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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. 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.

How this report defines TikTok posters and measures posting volume

This report uses two slightly different approaches to measure the volume of content users produce on TikTok due to the specific characteristics of TikTok's privacy settings. TikTok is similar to many other social media platforms in that posts and profiles can either be publicly listed or set to private. However, TikTok profiles are unusual in that they have a total "like" count that tallies up all likes on all videos, including private ones. In cases where a user has posted private videos that have received likes, it's possible for researchers to observe those likes even if they can't see the videos themselves.

For findings in this report that deal with whether or not a user has "ever posted" on TikTok, we treat the presence of publicly visible videos or any account-level likes as evidence of posting behavior.

For findings in which the volume of posts produced by a given user is referenced, we are only referring to publicly visible videos, as there is no method available to count private videos, even if the total number of likes is visible.

Question wording and respondent consent language for collection of TikTok handles

Respondents were asked to provide their Twitter handles for research purposes using the following language:

In many of our surveys, we ask about how people like you use social media. But there's a lot we cannot learn unless you allow us to connect information about your public TikTok behavior to your answers (even if you never post anything).

No matter how often you visit TikTok, would you be willing to share your TikTok username to help us with this research?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

This project will ONLY collect information that an ordinary user would see when they visit your profile (see here [POPUP] for more details). We will treat this data just like we treat your survey responses and will NEVER share anything that can be linked back to you.

[POPUP] How we will use your TikTok username

If you provide us with your TikTok username, we will only be able to collect what an ordinary user would see when visiting your profile. The specific information we will have access to depends on the privacy settings of your TikTok account.

If your account is set to PUBLIC, we will be able to see the public videos you have posted and basic information in your profile, such as your bio. Depending on your specific privacy settings, we may also be able to see the accounts you follow as well as the accounts that follow you; the comments you have posted on other videos; and the videos from other users you have liked. We will NOT have access to any private messages you

have sent or received, nor will we have access to the content of your "For You" page or your watch history.

If your account is set to PRIVATE, we will be able to see basic information in your profile, such as your bio and how many accounts you follow and how many follow you – but will NOT be able to see any of the content you have posted.

We expect that this research will be concluded in approximately 18 months. At that point we will ask you again whether or not you would like to provide your username. If you provided your TikTok username to us previously, that is why you are seeing this question again.

If at any point you wish to opt out of research related to your TikTok account, contact info@americantrendspanel.org. For more information about our privacy practices, please see our <u>Privacy Policy</u>.

Measuring TikTok adoption

Figures in this report on the share of U.S. adults who use TikTok are drawn from the National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS). Ipsos conducted the NPORS for Pew Research Center using address-based sampling and a multimode protocol.

The survey was fielded from May 19 to Sept. 5, 2023. Participants were first mailed an invitation to complete an online survey. A paper survey was later mailed to those who did not respond. In total, 2,217 respondents completed the survey online, and 3,516 respondents completed the paper survey (total n=5,733). The survey was administered in English and Spanish. The AAPOR Response Rate 1 was 31%. The full methodology for NPORS (including margin of error) can be found here.

2023 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL WAVE 133 TIKTOK TOPLINE AUGUST 7-27, 2023 N=11,945

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED. ROWS/COLUMNS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. THE QUESTIONS PRESENTED BELOW ARE PART OF A LARGER SURVEY CONDUCTED ON THE AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL. THE OTHER QUESTIONS ON THIS SURVEY HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY RELEASED.

		Margin of error at 95%
	Sample size	confidence level
U.S. adults	11,945	+/- 1.4 percentage points

ASK IF TIKTOK USER (TIKTOK1_MOD=1):

TIKTOK2 How interesting do you find the videos on your TikTok "For You" page? [RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-5 OR 5-1]

Aug 7-27	
<u>2023</u>	
14	Extremely interesting
26	Very interesting
45	Somewhat interesting
9	Not too interesting
5	Not at all interesting
1	No answer