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# Twitter and Status Updating, Fall 2009

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**Some 19% of internet users now say they use Twitter or another service to share updates about themselves, or to see updates about others—up from 11% in April.**

**October 2009**

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## Twitter and Status Updating, Fall 2009

### **One in five internet users are now on Twitter or another status update service**

Some 19% of internet users now say they use Twitter [or another service](#) to share updates about themselves, or to see updates about others. This represents a significant increase over previous surveys in December 2008<sup>1</sup> and April 2009, when 11% of internet users said they use a status-update service.

Three groups of internet users are mainly responsible for driving the growth of this activity: social network website users, those who connect to the internet via mobile devices, and younger internet users – those under age 44.

## Who tweets?

The percentage of online adults in each demographic group who use Twitter or another status update service

♦ indicates a significant difference.

% of U.S. adults

All online adults		19%
<b>Sex</b>		
Men		17%
Women		21 ♦
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White (non-Hispanic)		19%
African American (non-Hispanic)		26
Hispanic		18
<b>Age</b>		
18-29		33% ♦
30-49		22 ♦
50-64		9 ♦
65+		4
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school		18%
High school diploma		17
Some college		21
College graduate		21
<b>Household income</b>		
Less than \$30,000		22%
\$30,000-\$49,999		21
\$50,000-\$74,999		20
\$75,000 or more		20

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey conducted from August 18-September 14, 2009. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, on landline and cell phones. N=1,698 and margin of error is ±3% based on adult internet users.



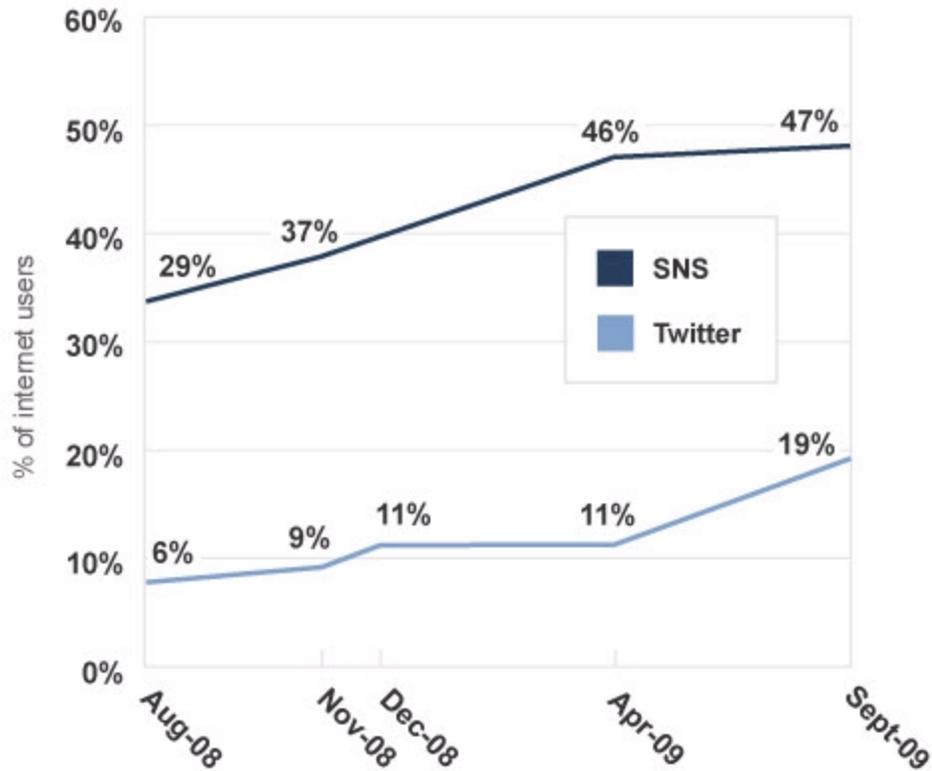
### Social network users

Internet users who already use social network sites such as MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn are likely to also use Twitter: 35%, compared to 6% of internet users who do not use such social network sites.

Statistical analysis of the Pew Internet Project's September 2009 survey data shows that internet users who use social network sites are more likely to use Twitter or another status updating service, independent of other factors such as that group's relative youth or propensity to go online via mobile devices.<sup>2</sup>

## Social network use and status updates, 2008-2009

Twitter does not rival mainstream online communications activities, but internet users are adopting status updates at a healthy clip.



Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys, 2008-2009.

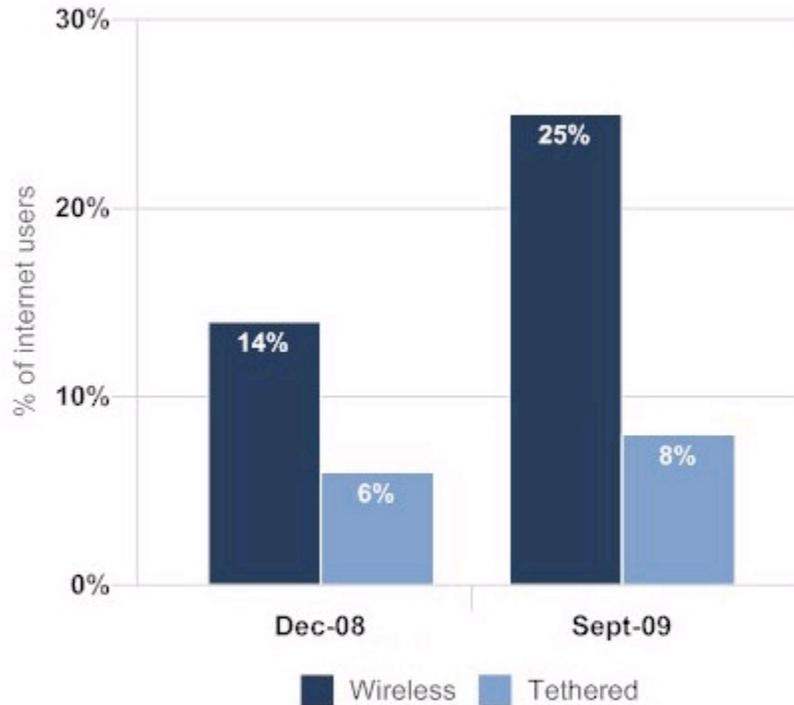


### Mobile internet users

As of September 2009, 54% of internet users have a wireless connection to the internet via a laptop, cell phone, game console, or other mobile device. Of those, 25% use Twitter or another service, up from 14% of wireless users in December 2008. By comparison, 8% of internet users who rely exclusively on tethered access use Twitter or another service, up from 6% in December 2008.

## Mobile users more likely to tweet

Twenty-five percent of internet users who have wireless access use Twitter or another service.



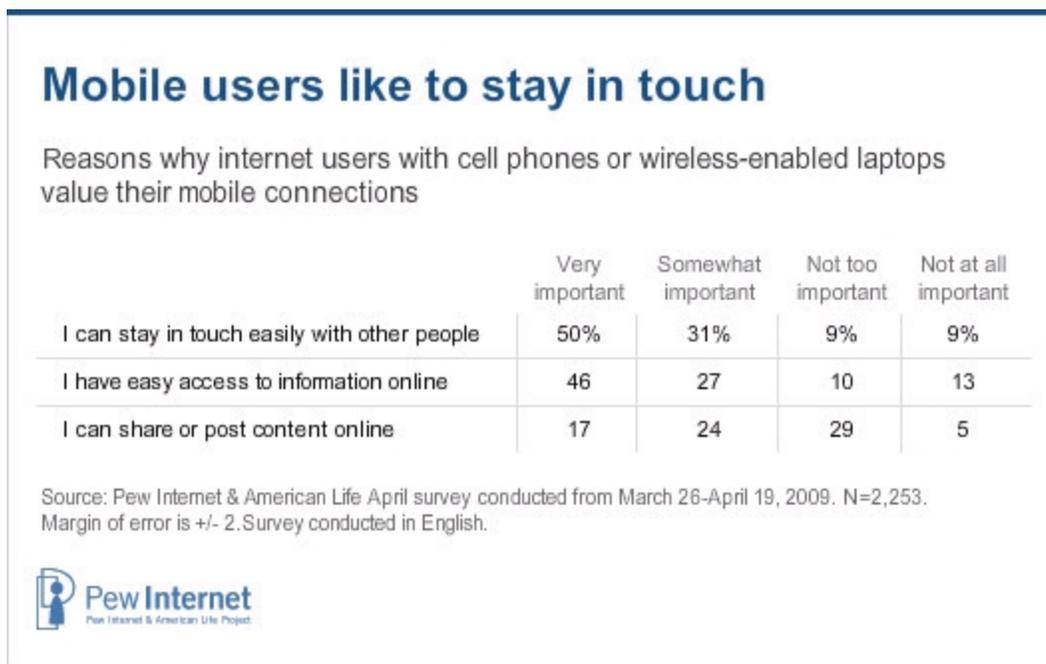
Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys conducted from November 19-December 20, 2008, and August 18-September 14, 2009. For 2008 survey, N=927 wireless users and 723 tethered users and margin of error is  $\pm 4\%$ . For 2009, N=1,113 wireless users and 621 tethered users and margin of error is  $\pm 3\%$  and  $\pm 4\%$ , respectively.



Statistical analysis also shows that wireless access is an independent factor in predicting whether someone uses Twitter or another status update service. It is not simply because this group is likely to be young or tech-savvy. Owning and using a wireless internet device makes an internet user significantly more likely to tweet.

In April 2009, the Pew Internet Project asked wireless internet users why they value

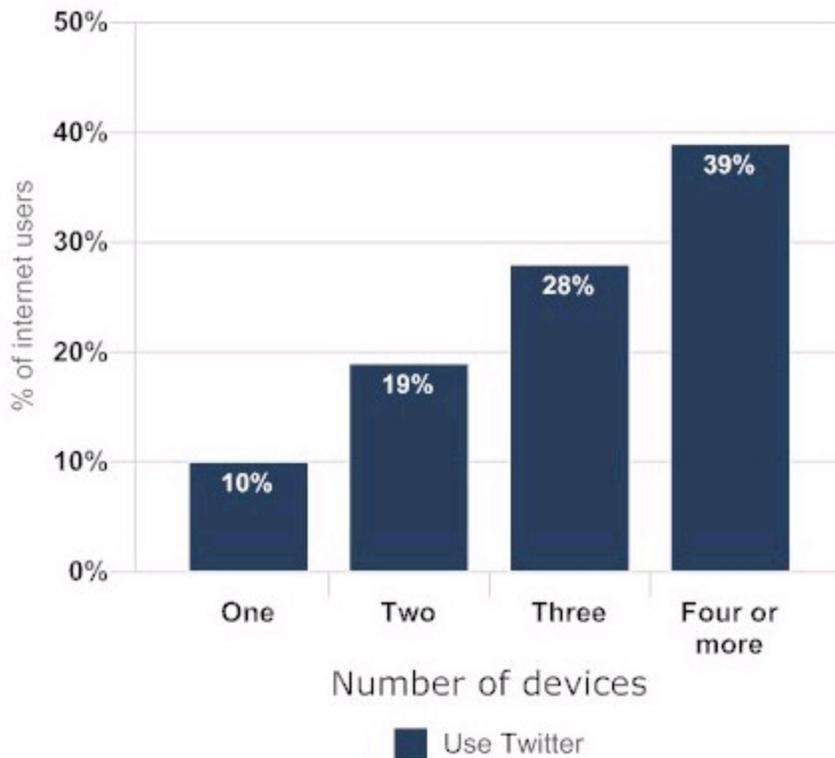
their mobile connections.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, Twitter scratches an itch among mobile internet users to stay in touch with other people and to share or post content online.



Indeed, the more devices someone owns, the more likely they are to use Twitter or another service to update their status. Fully 39% of internet users with four or more internet-connected devices (such as a laptop, cell phone, game console, or Kindle) use Twitter, compared to 28% of internet users with three devices, 19% of internet users with two devices, and 10% of internet users with one device.

## More devices, more likely to tweet

The more internet-connected devices someone owns, the more likely she is to use Twitter or another service to update her status.



Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project survey conducted from August 18-September 14, 2009. N=1,698 for all internet users. Margin of error is +/-5% based on subgroup (see methodology).



### Younger internet users

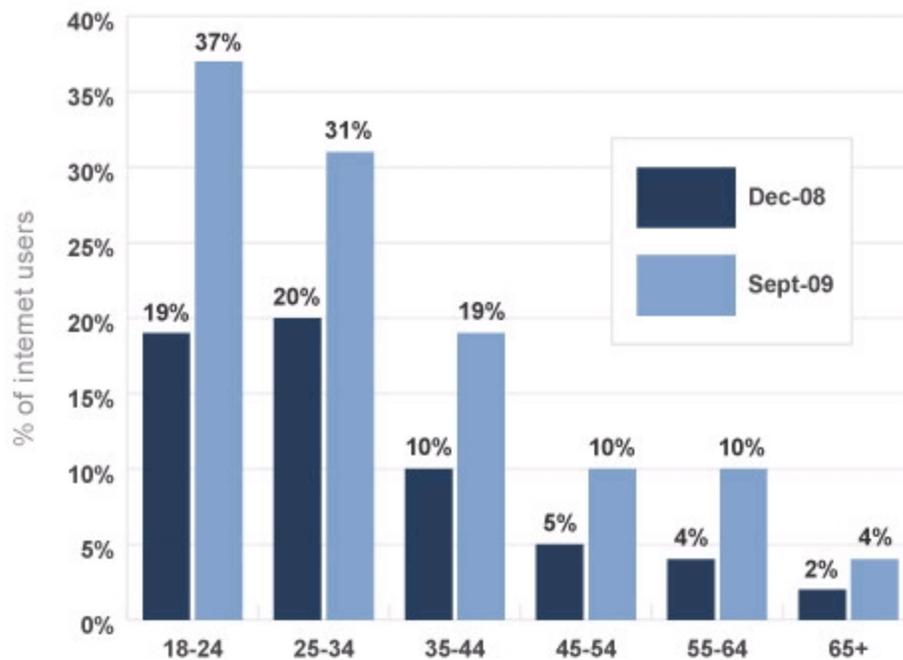
Age is another strong, independent predictor for use of Twitter and other status updating services. Internet users age 18-44 report rapid uptake of Twitter over the last nine months, whereas internet users ages 45 and older report slower adoption rates. For example, 37% of internet users age 18-24 use Twitter or another service, up from 19% in December 2008.

# The median age for Facebook is now 33, up from 26 in May 2008.

The median age of a Twitter user is 31, which has remained stable over the past year.<sup>4</sup> The median age for MySpace is now 26, down from 27 in May 2008, and the median age for LinkedIn is now 39, down from 40. Facebook, however, is graying a bit: the median age for this social network site is now 33, up from 26 in May 2008.

## Young people flock to Twitter

Internet users age 18-44 are more likely than older users to use Twitter or another status update service.



Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys conducted from November 19-December 20, 2008, and August 18-September 14, 2009.



### Further research

Twitter has attracted the attention of other researchers, who find that it is a widening network with as many listeners as contributors:

- comScore's continuous surveys of internet users and real-time network data capture confirm our findings: Twitter traffic exploded over the last year, going from about 2 million unique visitors per month in December 2008 to over 17 million in May 2009.<sup>5</sup>

- Harvard Business School researchers analyzed a random sample of 300,000 Twitter accounts and found that “the top 10% of prolific Twitter users accounted for over 90% of tweets.”<sup>6</sup>
- Sysomos analyzed 11.5 million Twitter accounts and found that most people post just once per day (and one in five have never posted).<sup>78</sup>

It will probably become more difficult to track status updating as an independent activity as social network updates feed into Twitter and vice versa. For now, it is clear that a “social segment” of internet users is flocking to both social network sites and status update services. This segment is likely to grow as ever more internet users adopt mobile devices as a primary means of going online.

## Infographic

### Portrait of a Twitter user: Status update demographics

Some 19% of internet users now say they use Twitter or another service to share updates about themselves, or to see updates about others. This represents a significant increase over previous surveys in December 2008 and April 2009, when 11% of internet users said they use a status-update service.

[View »](#)

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Amanda Lenhart and Susannah Fox, “Twitter and status updating” (Pew Internet Project: February 12, 2009). See: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Twitter-and-status-updating.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> The median age for an internet user is 41; the median age for a wireless internet users is 37; the median age for a social network site user is 34.

<sup>3</sup> John Horrigan, “Wireless Internet Users” (Pew Internet Project: July 22, 2009). See: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/12-Wireless-Internet-Use.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Lenhart and Fox, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Personal communication on October 16, 2009, with Sarah Radwanick, Senior Marketing Communications Analyst, comScore, Inc. See also: [http://www.pcworld.com/article/162785/twitter\\_use\\_explodes.html?tk=rel\\_news](http://www.pcworld.com/article/162785/twitter_use_explodes.html?tk=rel_news)

<sup>6</sup> Bill Heil and Mikolaj Piskorski, “New Twitter Research: Men Follow Men and Nobody

Tweets” (Harvard Business Blog: June 1, 2009). See:

[http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/cs/2009/06/new\\_twitter\\_research\\_men\\_follo.html](http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/cs/2009/06/new_twitter_research_men_follo.html)

<sup>7</sup> Alex Cheng and Mark Evans, “An In-Depth Look Inside the Twitter World” (Sysomos: June 2009). See: <http://www.sysomos.com/insidetwitter/>

<sup>8</sup> See also: danah boyd’s list of research studies related to Twitter and microblogging:  
<http://www.danah.org/TwitterResearch.html>

# Methodology

## Fall Tracking Survey

This report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the internet. Unless otherwise noted, the results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research International between August 18 to September 14, 2009, among a sample of 2,253 adults, 18 and older. The survey was conducted on landline and cell phones. Interviews were conducted in both English (n=2,179) and Spanish (n=74). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points. For results based on internet users (n=1,698), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. The response rate to the survey was 15.6%.

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## September Tracking Survey 2009

Princeton Survey Research Associates International for the Pew Internet & American Life Project

Sample: n= 2,253 national adults, age 18 and older, including 560 cell phone interviews  
Interviewing dates: 08.18.09 – 09.14.09

- Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on Total [n=2,253]
- Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet

users [n=1,698]

**Q6a** Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?

**Q6b** Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?<sup>9</sup>

	USES INTERNET	DOES NOT USE INTERNET
Current	77	23

**WEB1** Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things. Do you ever use the internet to.../Did you happen to do this **yesterday**, or not?<sup>10</sup>

*Based on all internet users [N=1,698]*

**Use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or LinkedIn.com<sup>11</sup>**

	TOTAL HAVE EVER DONE THIS	----- DID YESTERDAY	HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
Current	47	27	52	*	*
April 2009	46	27	54	*	*
November 2008	37	19	63	0	0
May 2008	29	13	70	*	--
August 2006	16	9	84	*	--
September 2005	11	3	88	1	--

**Use Twitter or another service to share updates about yourself or to see updates about others<sup>12</sup>**

	TOTAL HAVE EVER DONE THIS	DID YESTERDAY	HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
Current	19	9	80	*	0
April 2009	11	5	88	1	*
December 2008	11	4	89	1	--
November 2008	9	3	90	*	*
August 2008	6	2	93	1	--

For more information on survey design, please see: [The Twitter Question](#)

#### NOTES

<sup>9</sup> Prior to January 2005, question wording was “Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?”

<sup>10</sup> Prior to January 2005, question wording was “Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever...?/Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?”

<sup>11</sup> In August 2006, item wording was “Use an online social networking site like MySpace, Facebook or Friendster”. Prior to August 2006, item wording was “Use online social or professional networking sites like Friendster or LinkedIn”

<sup>12</sup> In August 2008, item wording was “Use Twitter or another “micro-blogging” service to share updates about yourself or to see updates about others”