

Internet and Society Panel Project

The impact of participation and use of social networking sites on well-being and life satisfaction

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Executive Summary

The Internet and Society Panel Project (ISPP) is a stand-alone project that builds upon the credibility and output of the World Internet Project New Zealand (WIPNZ). The focus of the first survey was to examine the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and their effect on life satisfaction, well-being and identity formation. Participants were drawn from those respondents to the main WIPNZ survey who had agreed to the possibility of being approached again. The questionnaire included multi-choice questions, Likert-style ratings and a large number of open-ended responses.

131 respondents undertook the online survey, with 67 being SNS users. More females than males undertook the survey with the majority of respondents being Pākehā. Since the mean age of this sample is 49, and since the mean age of SNS users in this sample is 43, the results should not be treated as representative of the majority of SNS users in New Zealand.

Just over half of the respondents stated that they use a social networking site (SNS), the majority using Facebook. The results show that there is a correlation between the number of friends one has, and the amount of time spent on a SNS. Most SNS users (90%) said that their main location for using their SNS was at home on a computer. The majority had received 'invitations' on their SNS, although email remains more important than SNS for contacting friends and family. Few users were comfortable with any kind of marketing activity and most respondents indicated some concern over trustworthiness of information on sites. Most SNS users (82%) make use of the privacy settings on their sites, with the majority (88%) of users using their own name. Over half of the respondents stated that they make status updates at least a few times a week.

The main reasons for not using SNSs are a lack of interest or perceived usefulness (34%), concern about privacy (31%) or being too busy (24%). 36% said they are glad, overall, to be a part of a SNS, while very few people felt that their SNS was an important part of who they are. Just over a third agreed that it is easier to make new friends on a SNS than in real life. SNSs facilitate more contact with people overseas, reconnections with old or lost friends, sporadic acquaintances, and the enhancement of existing friendships. Overall, only a very small proportion of the SNS users felt that their SNS allowed them to be more emotionally supported than they would be in their everyday life.

There were some significant differences between SNS users and non-users for the questions about self-esteem, sociability and overall happiness. All SNS users said that they at least sometimes feel that they are a part of a group of friends, while 17% of non-users felt this way rarely or never. 51% of users said they always feel close to people, compared to 31% for non-users. 47% of non-users said that they at least sometimes feel that their relationships with others are not meaningful, compared to 28% of SNS users.

The open-ended questions elicited varied comments. An assessment of the data revealed that about 47% of the 60 SNS users said that SNSs had no effect on their life and 52% said that there was a positive effect.

1. Introduction and Methodology

This report outlines the combined quantitative and qualitative findings of the Internet and Society Panel Project (ISPP). The ISPP is a stand-alone project that builds upon the credibility and output of the World Internet Project New Zealand (WIPNZ), by researching specific issues in more depth. Findings from the WIPNZ study of 1500 New Zealanders in 2007 and 1250 in 2009 indicate that the provision and use of the Internet in New Zealand is having an impact on social change. Government and other stakeholders have indicated a strong interest in further analysis of certain issues and this smaller-scale study provides input to the policy and practices within government and other organisations.

A successful application was made to the AUT Faculty of Applied Humanities contestable research fund to allow a prototype study to be launched. ICDC joined with Phoenix Research to explore technical and methodological possibilities for carrying out such web-based panel studies, and to carry out at least one exploratory study and possibly a series.

The aim of the project was to investigate distinct but interrelated issues, at different times, using a panel of respondents. The panel was developed by approaching those respondents to the main WIPNZ survey who had agreed to the possibility of being approached again and inviting their participation for multiple data collection on an ongoing basis.

This report documents the findings of the (first component of this) study which focused on the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Twitter and the like. The aim was to examine why and how often New Zealanders use these sites, in what ways these sites are utilised and how participation in these social networking sites impacts on their users. The findings provide insight into the effect of social networking on life satisfaction, well-being and identity formation.

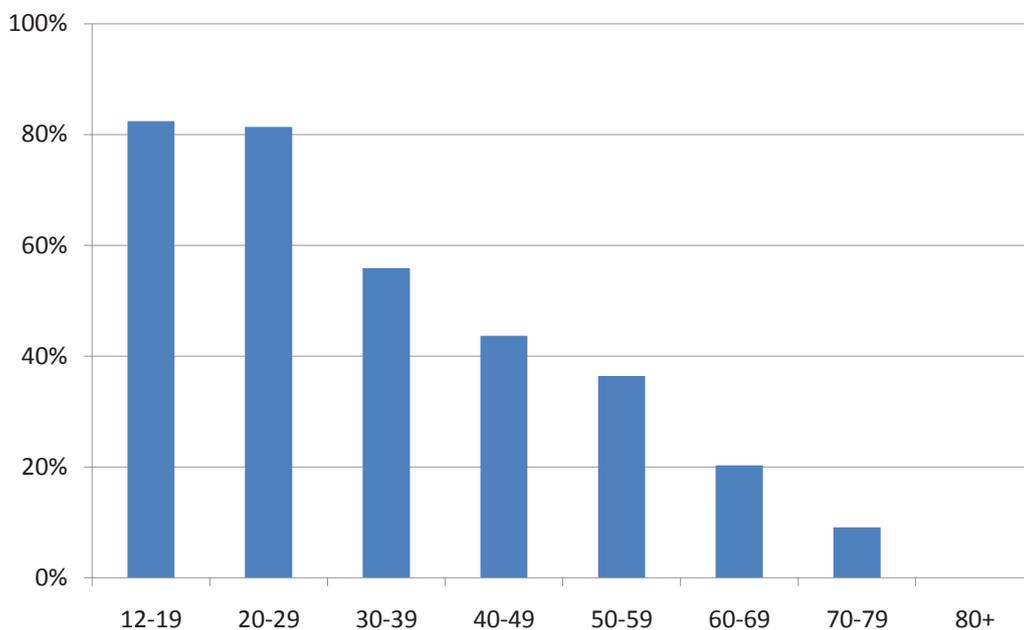
The project used a longitudinal approach with a survey methodology. The set of questions were related to the selected topic focus and informed by the relevant literature. The questionnaire included multi-choice questions, Likert-style ratings and a large number of open-ended responses.

131 respondents undertook the survey online with an additional respondent who said they did not know if they used a Social Networking Site (SNS). That respondent is not included in the findings reported here. 95% confidence intervals of proportions from such a sample size are approximately $\pm 9\%$. The response rate from the 534 email addresses who were sent invitations to participate was 25%. This is an expected level of response. Several reminders were sent. Sample characteristics are as follows:

- All participants are Internet users.
- Mean age is 43 for SNS users and 56 for non-users. Mean age overall is 49.
- 50 males (24 users, 26 non-users) and 82 females (43 users, 38 non-users).
- 99 Pākehā, 3 Māori, 5 Pacific Islander, 5 Asian, 2 MELAA, 17 other.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of Internet users who were members of a SNS in the 2009 World Internet Project New Zealand (WIPNZ) survey. Use of, and opinions about, SNSs are likely to be very different for those under 30, where the survey found that four out of five people in their age cohort were members, as compared to those over 40, for whom less than half had a SNS membership. Since the mean age of this ISPP sample is 49, and since the mean age of SNS users in this sample is 43, the results should not be treated as representative of the majority of SNS users in New Zealand.

Figure 1: Percentage of Internet users who are members of a SNS by age, from the 2009 WIPNZ survey



Base: Internet users from the 2009 WIPNZ survey, n=1025, Q22

Source: Smith, P., Smith, N., Sherman, K., Goodwin, I., Crothers, C., Billot, J., Bell, A. (2010). *The Internet in New Zealand 2009*. Auckland, New Zealand: Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication, AUT University.

The following analyses are designed to:

- report on the distribution of responses across the sample; and
- compare SNS users and non-users within this sample.

For non-coded questions, themes were found by going through the qualitative data and naming coherent categories for themes mentioned by at least three respondents. Underneath each graph, there is a description of the ‘base’ – the sample to whom a question was asked. In most cases the base is one of the following:

- all respondents (n=131);
- SNS users (n=67);
- SNS non-users (n=64); or
- Facebook users (n=59).

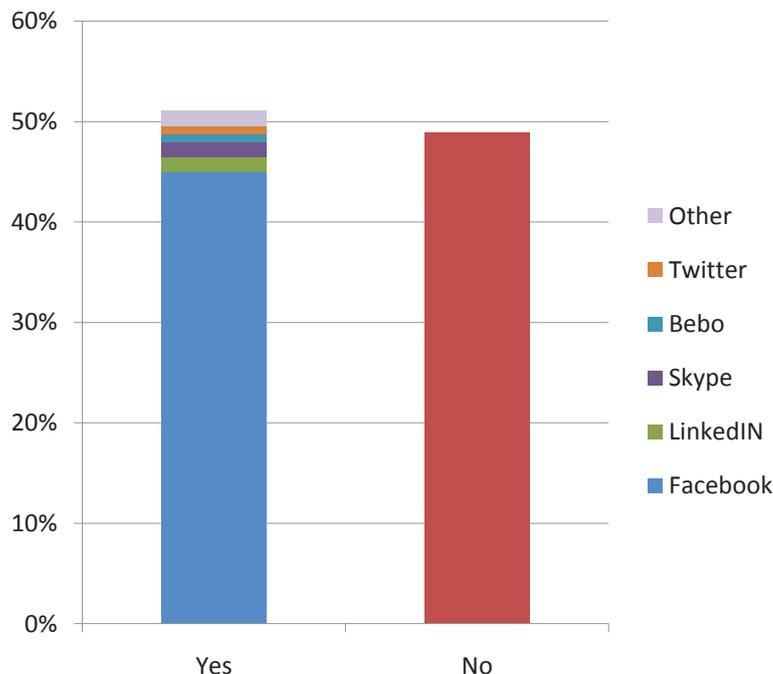
Note that responses of ‘Don’t Know’ (DK) and ‘Refuse’ (RF) are removed throughout this report, which means that in some cases the number of responses reported is slightly lower than those mentioned here. In cases with an unusual base, the n is given under the graph.

Further analysis might involve linking answers from this SNS panel study to the social and other characteristics found in their answers to the WIP 2009 survey. There are also methodological aspects of this study which deserve future attention.

2. Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

Just over half of the respondents (67 out of 131) stated that they use a social networking site (SNS). The large majority of these SNS users said that Facebook was the site they use most often, only eight people named a different site (see Figure 2). There was only one respondent for each of Bebo and Twitter, and nobody said that MySpace was their most-used SNS.

Figure 2: Do you use SNSs? If yes, which one do you use the most?



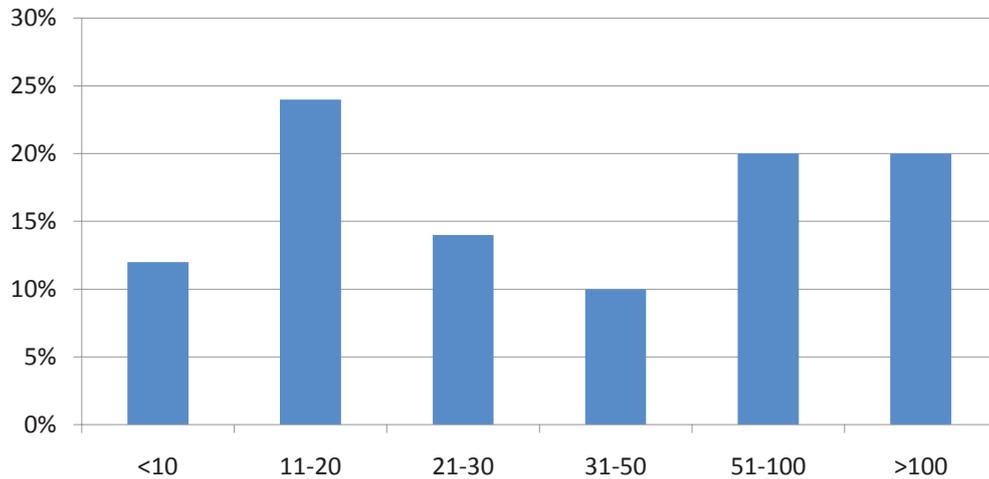
Base: all respondents. Q1, Q1b.

SNS non-users are older, on average, than users in this study. The mean age of non-users was 56 years old, compared to a mean of 43 for users. A t-test of age according to user status was significant ($p < .001$). The percentage of SNS users was slightly higher for the female respondents (53%) than for males (48%), however this difference was not significant.

Number of friends on SNS

Of the 50 Facebook users who answered the question about their number of friends, 20 had more than 50 friends, with one outlier claiming 3471 friends. The mean number of Facebook friends was 172 while the median number of friends was 40 (Figure 3). 28 users (42%) had used their SNS for less than 10 minutes per day in the week leading up to doing the questionnaire, while 13 respondents (19%) had used it for an hour or more (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Number of Facebook friends



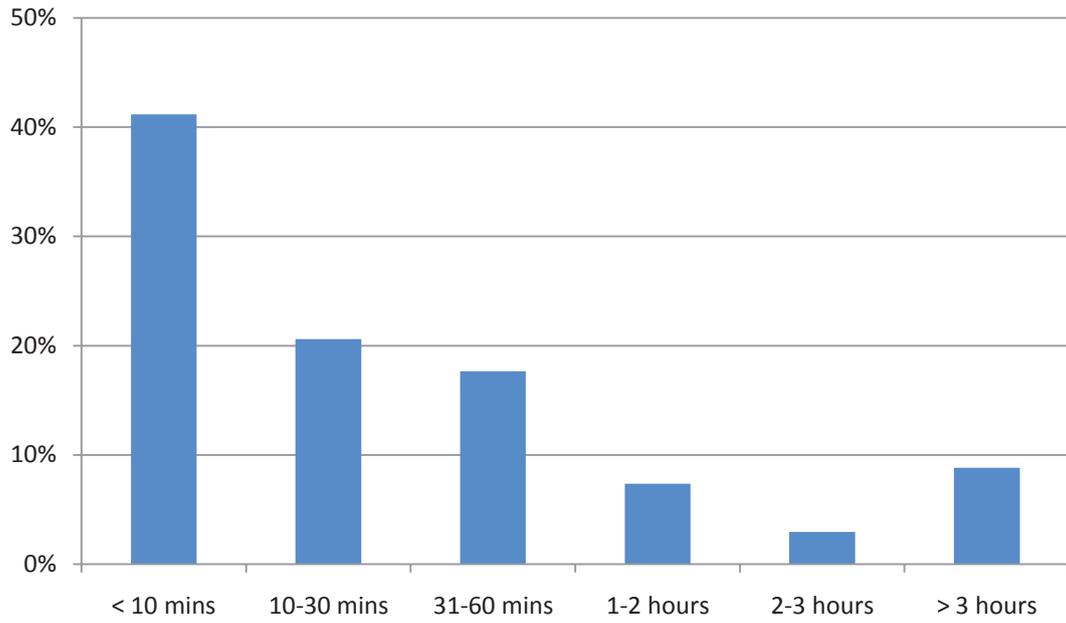
Base: Facebook users. Q5.

There is a significant positive correlation between the number of friends a person has on their SNS and the amount of time they spend on the SNS (Pearson correlation $+0.46$, $p = .001$; two outliers, having 1800 and 3471, were not included in this test).

Importance of SNS

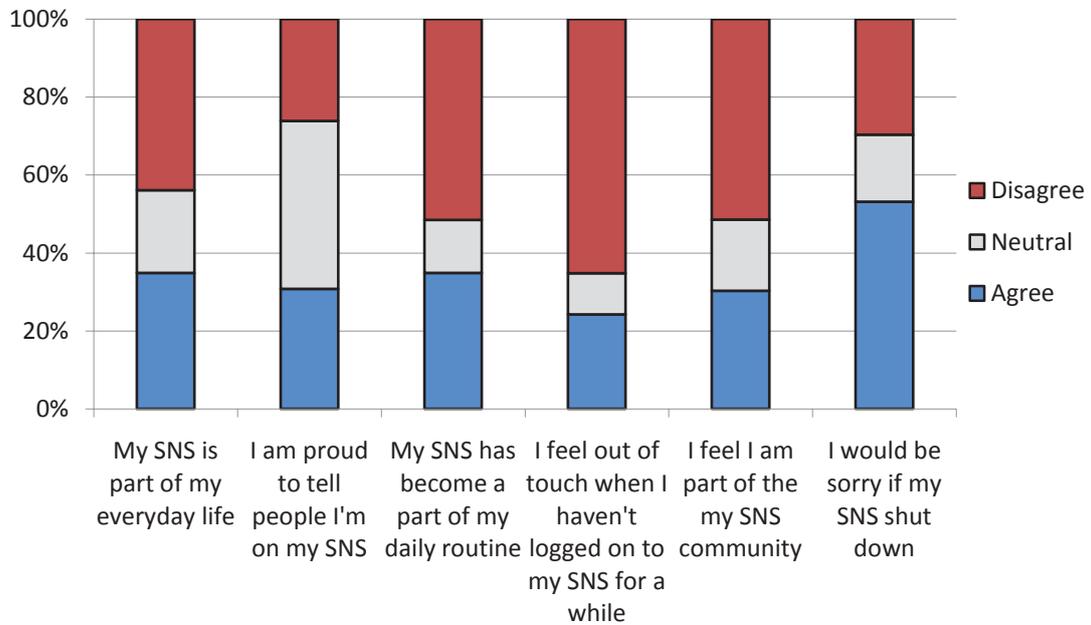
More people disagreed than agreed with several questions about how SNS users feel about their site (Figure 5): a quarter of users said they feel out of touch when they have not logged on to their SNS for a while, but 65% of users disagreed with this statement. On the other hand, a majority of users (53%) said they would be sorry if their SNS shut down, while 30% disagreed with this statement. 30% of users feel that they are part of their SNS community, while 52% do not.

Figure 4: Amount of time spent per day on SNS



Base: SNS users. Q6.

Figure 5: Agree/disagree with statements about SNSs



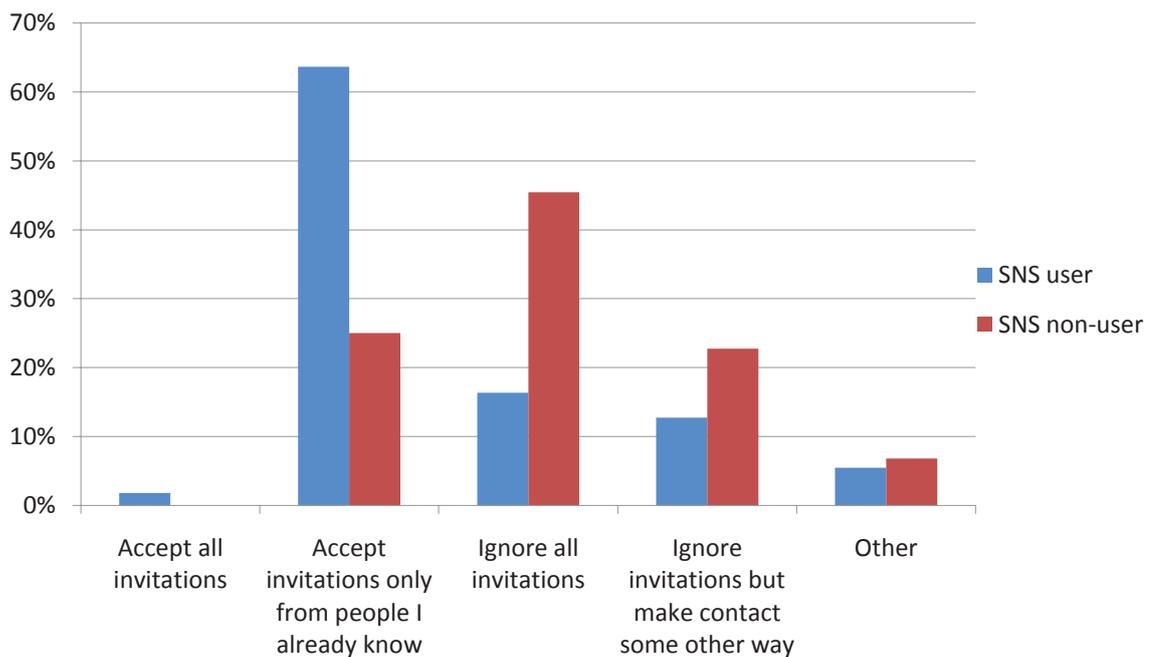
Base: SNS users. Q7.

Invitations to join SNSs

All respondents were asked whether they had received invitations to join any SNSs. 76% of all respondents (99 out of 131) said they had. This included 55 SNS users and 45 non-users. 64% of SNS users who had received invitations said they accept invitations only from people they already know. 45% of non-users said they ignore all invitations, while a further 23% said they would ignore invitations but make contact with that person some other way. Strangely, there were 11 non-users who said that they accept invitations from people they already know – despite their previous response that they do not use SNSs (Figure 6).

Varied comments were made concerning responses to invitations. These included: a willingness to accept an invitation from someone already known; an unwillingness if there is a risk to security; a decline, followed by advice of the decline to the inviter; an evaluation of the site prior to acceptance; and no need to accept as they already have enough friends.

Figure 6: Responding to invitations to join SNSs



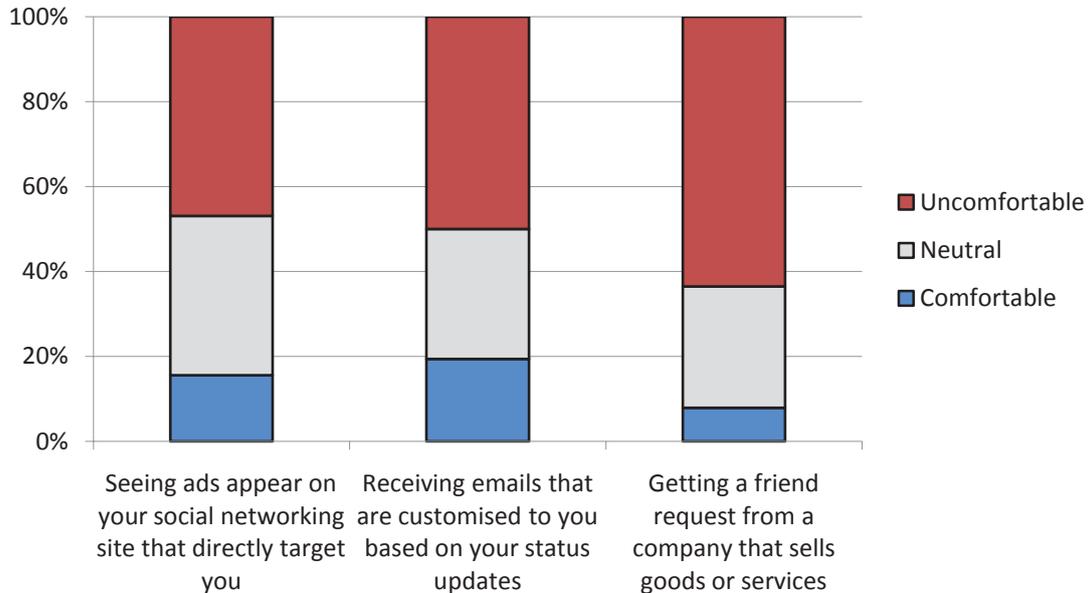
Base: those who said they had “received invitations to join any social networking sites” in Q13, n=100.

Marketing on SNSs

Few users were comfortable with any kind of marketing activity through SNSs (Figure 7). This perspective was particularly strong in relation to friend requests from a company that sells goods or services, with 64% of users being uncomfortable, and

8% being comfortable with this approach. Some people were comfortable with receiving emails customised on the basis of status updates, although 50% of users were uncomfortable with this issue.

Figure 7: Level of comfort with marketing strategies



Base: SNS users. Q14.

Comments made by respondents on approaches made through SNSs included:

[I don't like ...]

- *The amount of rubbish you have to sift through. The only reason I am on Facebook is to keep in touch with friends and family who live in different countries from me but I dislike all the silly games and pop-ups.*
- *I am on the site to relax – not to be bombarded with advertising.*
- *Adult Site: I don't mind but if the Mrs found out... I'm in trouble.*
- *The site contacting me as if it was one of my friends.*
- *When a company or business tries to ADD you as a FRIEND on Facebook. I'm not going to be your friend – I'm your customer. Figure it out.*
- *Targeted advertising is annoying.*
- *Unknown people contacting me.*
- *Not being able to easily get rid of advertising or suggested friends – cluttered and overwhelming.*
- *Being invited to quizzes by friends that end up costing you money in the very small print.*

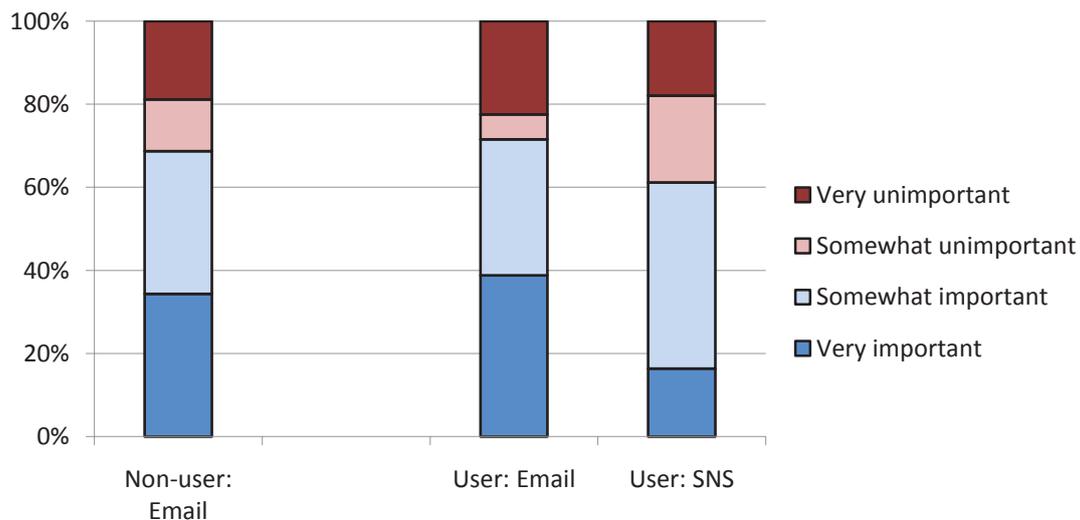
Being a fan of a website

Of the 67 SNS users, 11 said they are a ‘fan’ (or in more recent terminology, that they ‘like’) a website or company that is mostly for a commercial product or service. Several people had become a fan because the product or service related to a hobby or special interest such as gardening or craft – or, in one case, a daughter-in-law’s wedding photographer. The other reason mentioned by a few people was that they wanted to be up-to-date with new products.

Importance of SNSs for contacting family and friends

Email is more important than SNSs for contacting friends and family for the respondents in this study (Figure 8). 39% of SNS users said email was very important, while 16% said that SNS was very important. For those SNS users who did not think email was important, most were definitive about it, with 22% saying it was very unimportant, and only 6% said it was somewhat unimportant.

Figure 8: How important is email/SNS for contacting your friends and family?

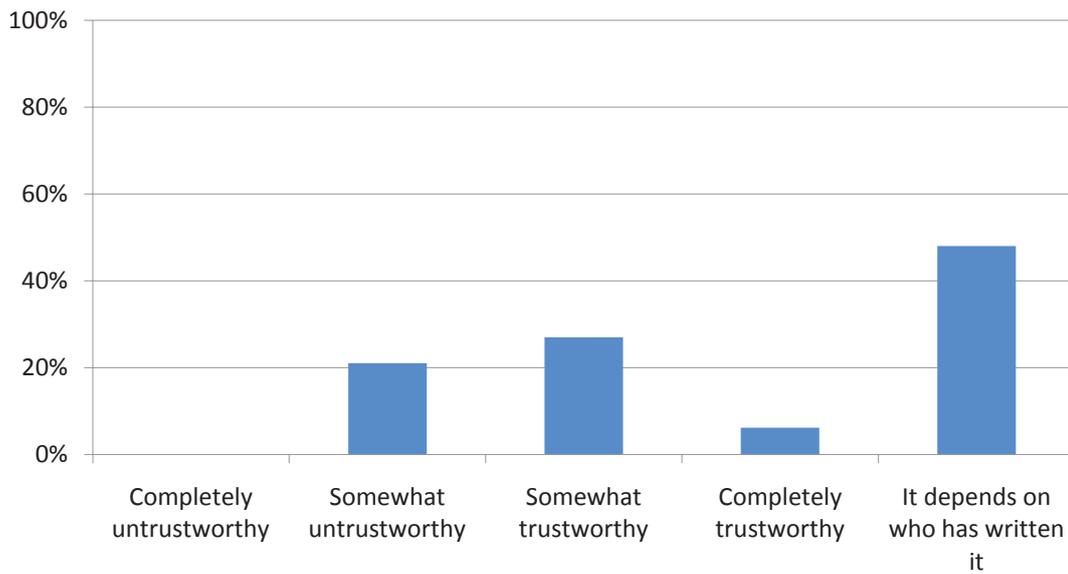


Base: all respondents (SNS users on right, non-users on left). Q16.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of information read on SNSs, for just under half of SNS users, is determined by the author of said information. Of those who did respond to the question with an overall level of trust, 13 people said that the information was somewhat untrustworthy, while 17 said it was somewhat trustworthy and two said it was completely trustworthy (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Trustworthiness of information on SNSs

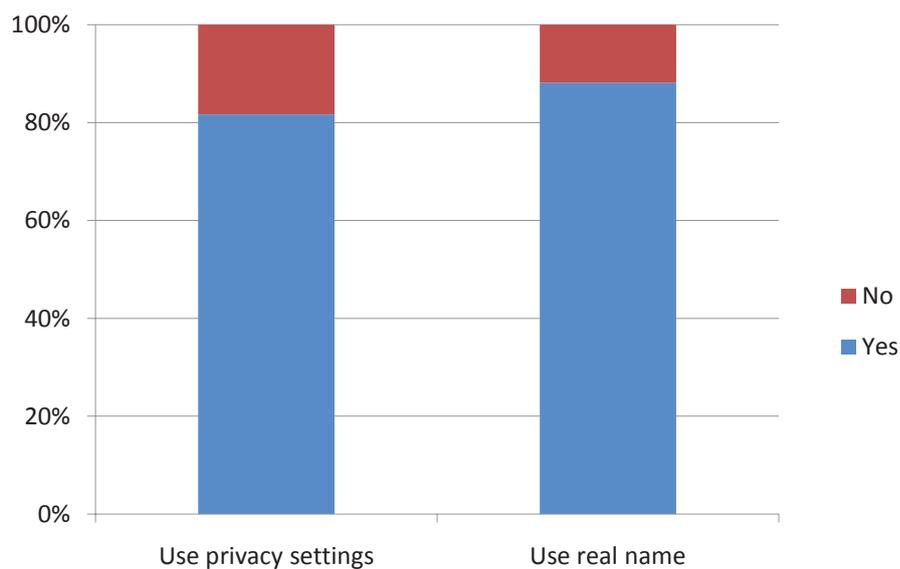


Base: SNS users. Q18.

Privacy and use of name

Most SNS users (82%) make use of the privacy settings on their SNS, with the majority (88%) of users using their own name (Figure 10). Of the eight people who do not use their real name, five said that the name they use on their SNS was one that most people there would know them by.

Figure 10: Use of the available privacy settings and use of real name on SNS

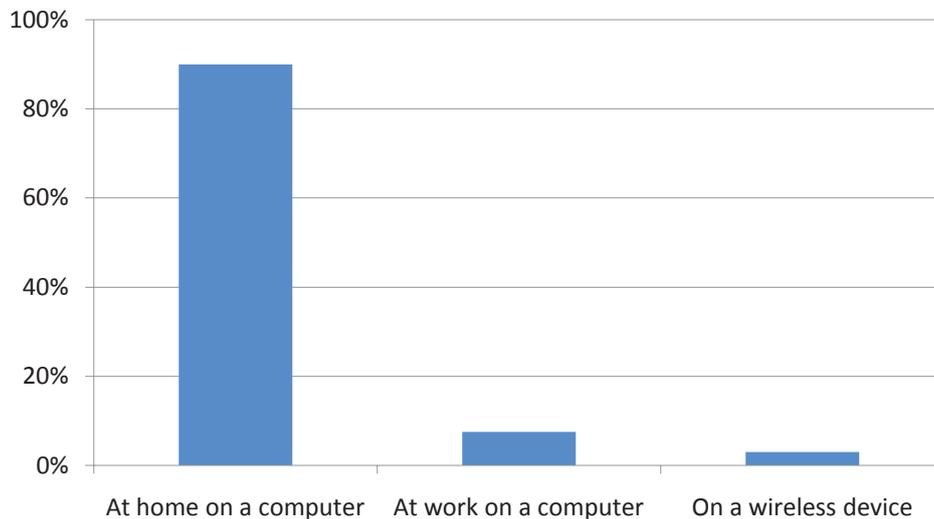


Base: SNS users. Q19.

Location

Most SNS users (90%) said that the main location for using their SNS was at home on a computer (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Means of accessing SNS



Base: SNS users. Q20.

Inappropriateness

An open-ended question was asked of SNS users about what would be inappropriate on a SNS. The most commonly mentioned inappropriate behaviours were the posting of sexual content or bad language, the posting of private information about other people, and using the SNS for advertising purposes.

With regard to advertising, respondents stated that they disliked the abuse of trust associated with using a SNS for unsolicited targeted advertising, advertisements of an adult nature, and ‘hard’ selling or incentivised selling through ‘freebies’ or ‘gifts’.

Respondents disliked being contacted or invited to be a friend by people they don’t know or any “*obvious spam friendship offers*”. Comments about bad language focused on the preference for an acceptable standard of language and the dislike of obscenities, while, in general, personal insults or attacks were not welcomed.

When using SNSs, respondents had a number of dislikes with regard to sexual content. In particular they disliked: lewd comments; advertisements for dating, sex or of an adult nature; overt sexual messages; sexual content; inappropriate photos or images; or even people who get “*rather too personal and sexy*”.

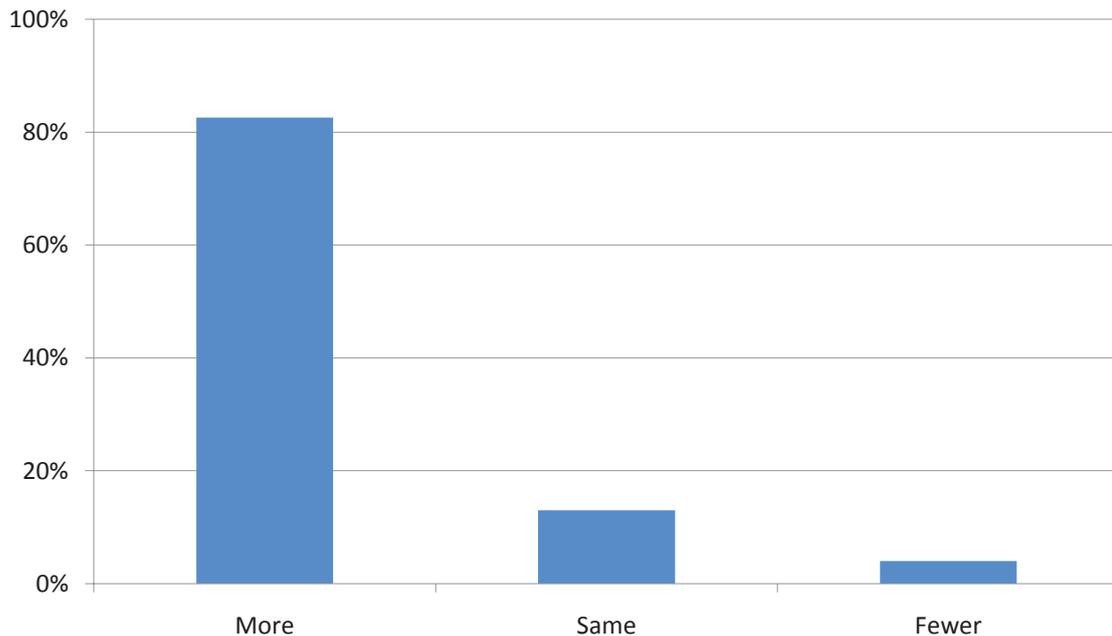
Privacy was seen as an important issue on SNSs. Respondents preferred not to: give out personal information publicly or have confidential comments made on their life; allow unknown people access to private information; or disclose very personal

information liable to cause harm in some way or other. One respondent claimed that “*I think there are serious privacy issues on many social networking sites*”, while another said “*I’m open minded and know that from time to time you’ll receive some dodgy information. But that’s the norm so I don’t take it too seriously.*”

3. Interactions amongst Users

When asked about the number of friends on their SNSs and the number of friends listed by their friends, of those who responded to the question, 83% said that their Facebook friends had more Facebook friends than they did themselves (Figure 12). Only two respondents felt that their friends had fewer friends than they did. All respondents, except one, claimed that it “*doesn’t affect me in the slightest*” that their friends have more friends than they do. One person said that it did have a negative impact on them. The two people that felt their friends had fewer friends than themselves, said that it did not affect them.

Figure 12: Does it seem like your Facebook friends have more, same, or fewer Facebook friends than you?



Base: Facebook users. Q23.

Status updates and comments on Facebook

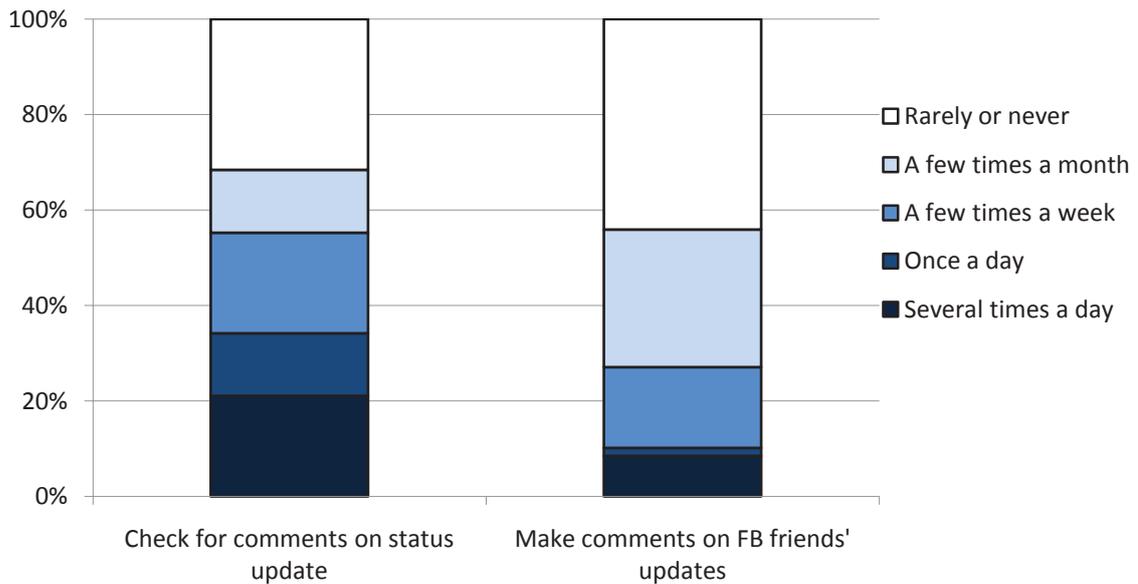
When asked about how many comments their friends receive on their status updates in comparison to their own status updates, 18 said that their Facebook friends get more comments on their status updates than they do, while 10 said that they get the same

number (there were 11 DKs). The majority of respondents stated that they receive one to four comments on their status updates. Four respondents said they get no comments and two respondents said they get more than 10. The number of comments received on status updates decreases with age, echoing the earlier findings about number of friends and time spent on SNS, suggesting that younger users are more engaged with their SNSs. There is also a significant positive correlation between number of friends and number of comments received on updates made.

Frequency of checking updates

Those who update their status were asked how often they check for comments (Figure 13). 21% said they do so more than once a day, while a total of 55% of those status updaters do so at least a few times a week. All Facebook users were asked how often they comment on their friends’ status updates. 27% of all Facebook users do so at least a few times a week, while 44% do so only rarely (this 44% is comprised of 5% that never do it, and 39% that do so ‘rarely, if ever’).

Figure 13: How often do you check to see if someone has commented on your status updates? How often do you comment on your friends’ updates?



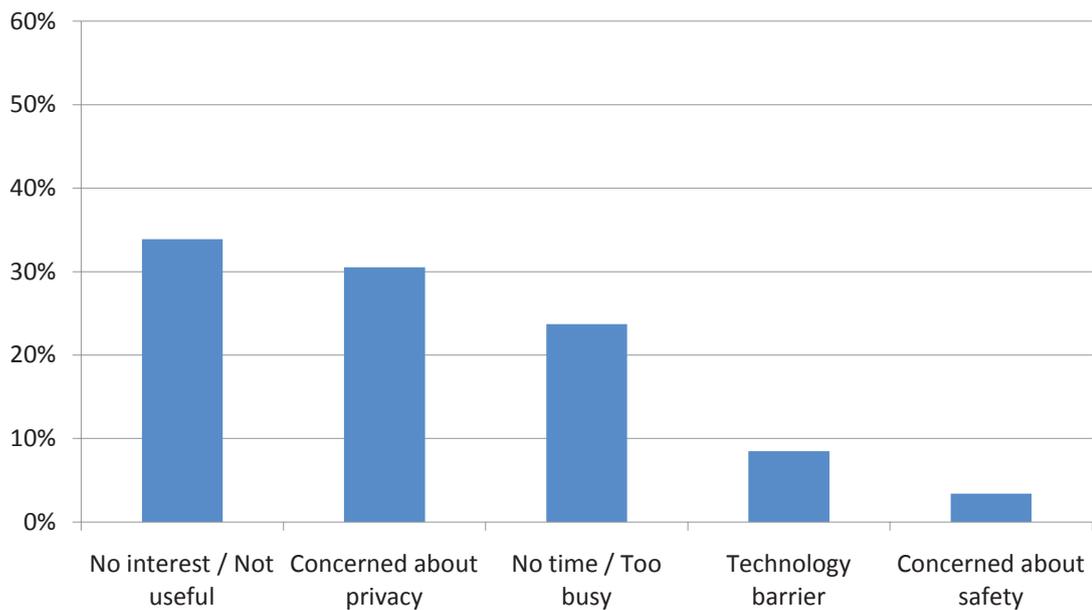
Check for comments, Base: Facebook users who do status updates, n=38. Q26.
 Make comments, Base: all those who gave 'Facebook' in 1b, n=59. Q26.

The ‘status updaters’ were also asked how they felt about responses to their status updates. If no comments were made on the update, 35 were not affected in the slightest, two were negatively affected and one was positively affected.

4. Non-users and Ex-users

The main reasons (Figure 14) given by non-users for not using SNSs were a lack of interest or perceived usefulness (34% of non-users) and concern about privacy (31%). Being too busy or not having enough time was also a common response (24%). There were some ‘other’ responses, which included “*bad behaviour*”, “*confidence*”, and “*I perceive it promotes shallow relationships*”.

Figure 14: Main reason for not using SNS (%)



Base: SNS non-users. Q29.

In an open-ended question about the concerns non-users have about SNSs, by far the most frequently raised concern was with privacy, as in comments such as “*don’t want everybody knowing my business*” and “*My life is my own, I don’t wish to share it with all and sundry*”, or on the more concerned end of the spectrum “*Information gets out there, and once out there cannot be recalled*”, “*I don’t like the risk to young people posting information today that may be harmful to them in the future*”, and “*Any person can pick up any personal details*”. Many of the concerns about privacy were related to uncertainty around the functioning of the websites, illustrated in comments such as “*I am concerned about the privacy and security aspect and I do not have a great understanding of how they work*”, and “*I find it hard to establish how my privacy is protected*”.

Concerns about security, and having trouble with the technology were also both raised by several respondents. Others see it as a frivolous activity, as in comments such as “*[SNSs] appear to be an opportunity for people to vent*”, and “*Not interested in people’s day-to-day rubbish*”.

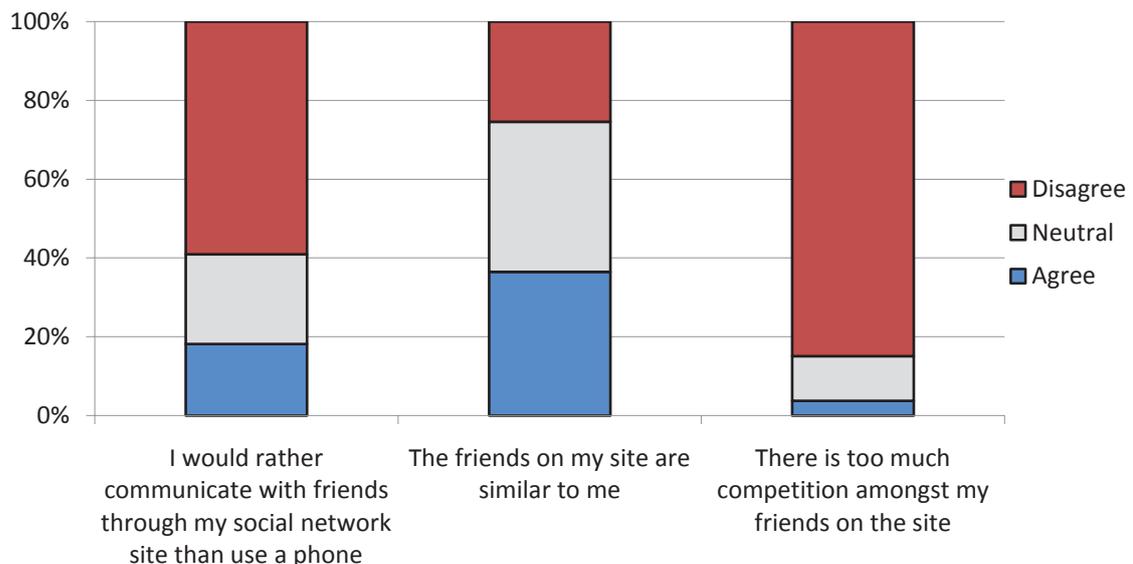
Of the 65 non-users, 15 had used SNSs in the past. All of these respondents had stopped using the SNS within the last 2.5 years, with most having stopped a year ago. Length of use ranged from two hours to three years, but most ex-users had used it for one to two months before stopping.

Reasons for stopping reflected the non-users' concerns. The only reason for stopping given by more than two of the ex-users was a concern for privacy, with seven of the 15 ex-users stating this as their main reason for stopping. Seven of the non-users said they were somewhat likely to start using a SNS in the next year, while five said that this was not at all likely. Three stated that they did not know, but none said that it was very likely.

5. Opinions (Thoughts and Feelings) about SNSs

Only 18% of SNS users agree that they would rather communicate with their friends on their SNS than on the phone (Figure 15). Very few people felt that there is too much competition amongst their friends on their SNS.

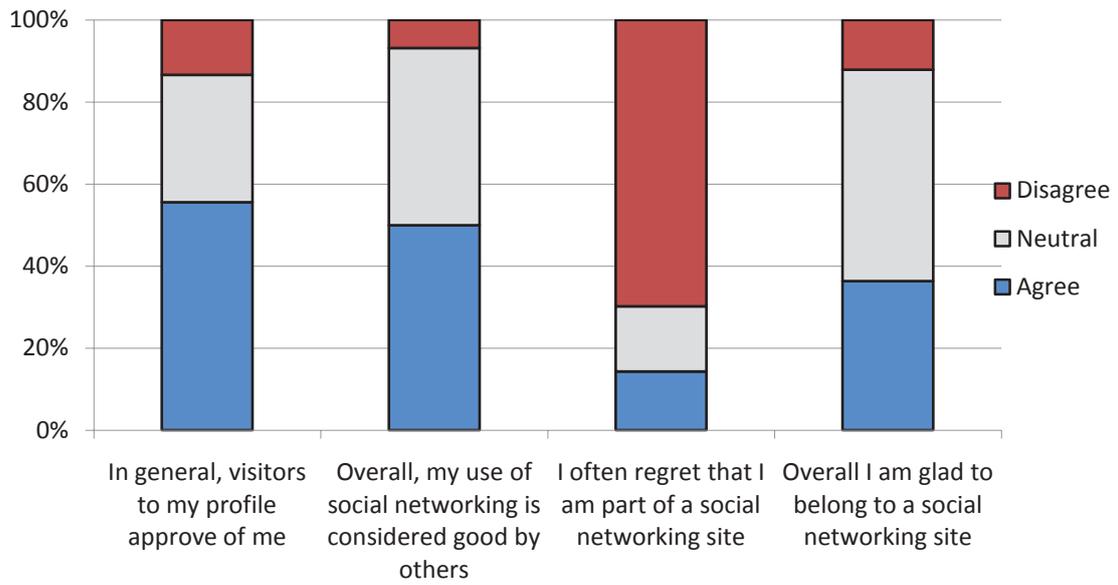
Figure 15: 'Thoughts and feelings' about SNSs



Base: SNS users. Q35 & Q38.

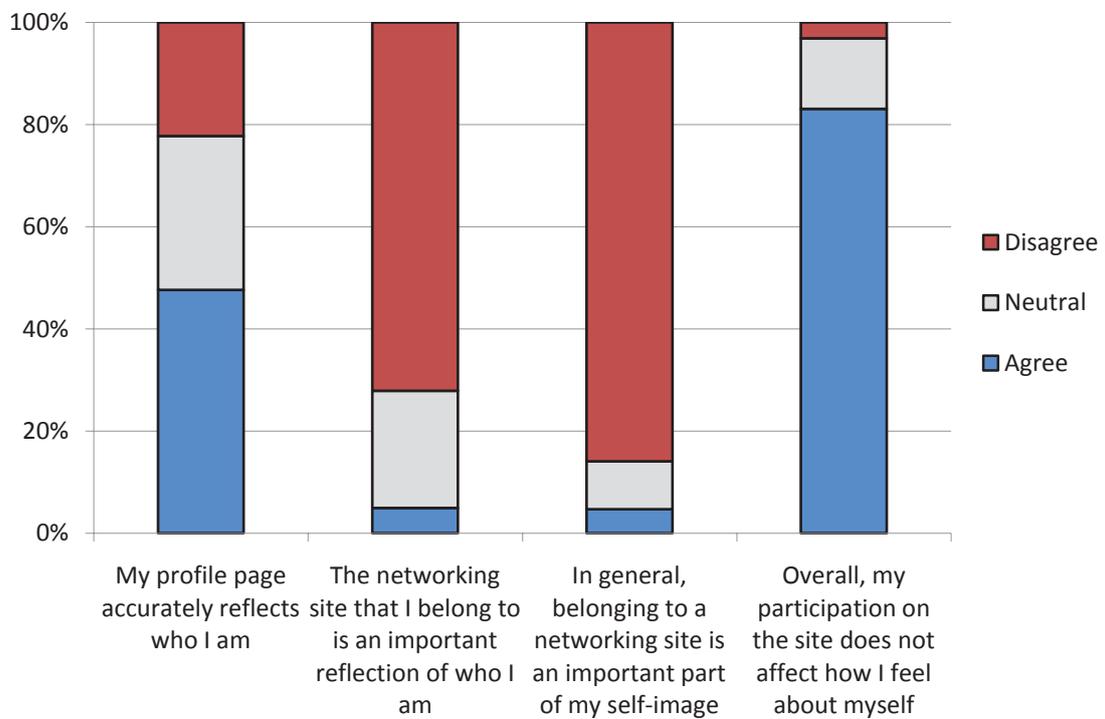
Users tended to agree that their use of a SNS was seen as good, and that visitors to their profile approved of them, and most people said they do not regret being part of a SNS (Figure 16). Despite this lack of regret, only 36% said they are glad, overall, to be a part of a SNS. Very few people felt that their SNS was an important part of who they are, despite the perception that their profile page accurately reflects who they are (Figure 17).

Figure 16: Thoughts and feelings – approval and overall



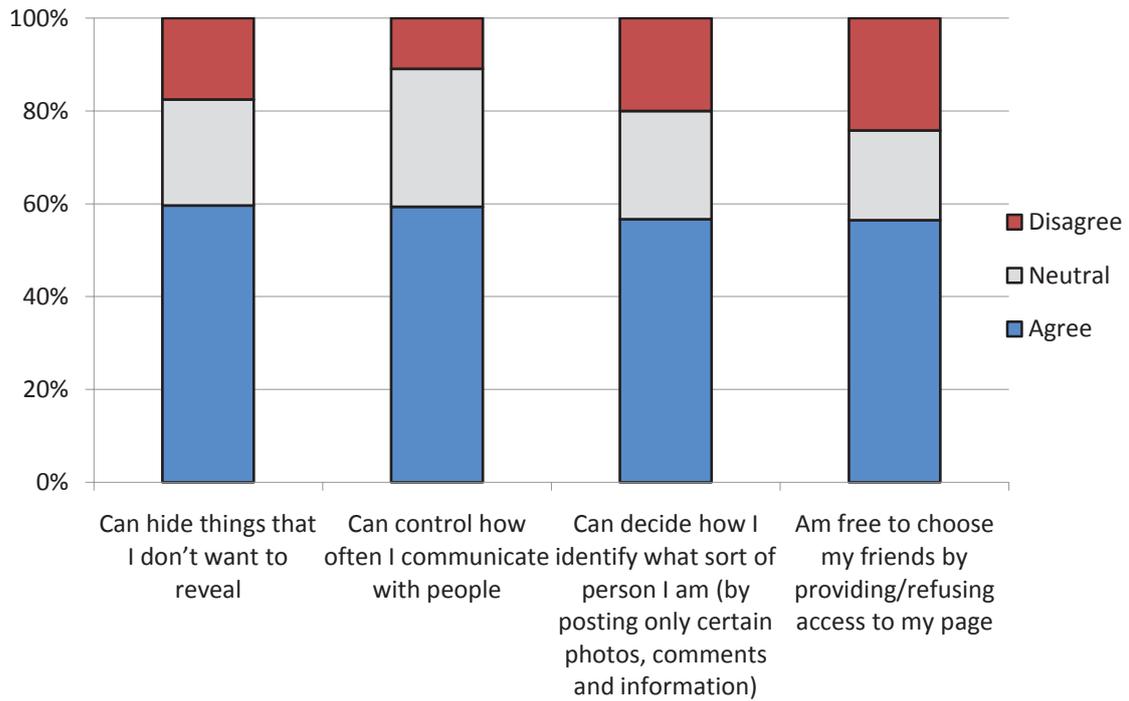
Base: SNS users. Q38.

Figure 17: Thoughts and feelings about SNS – self-presentation



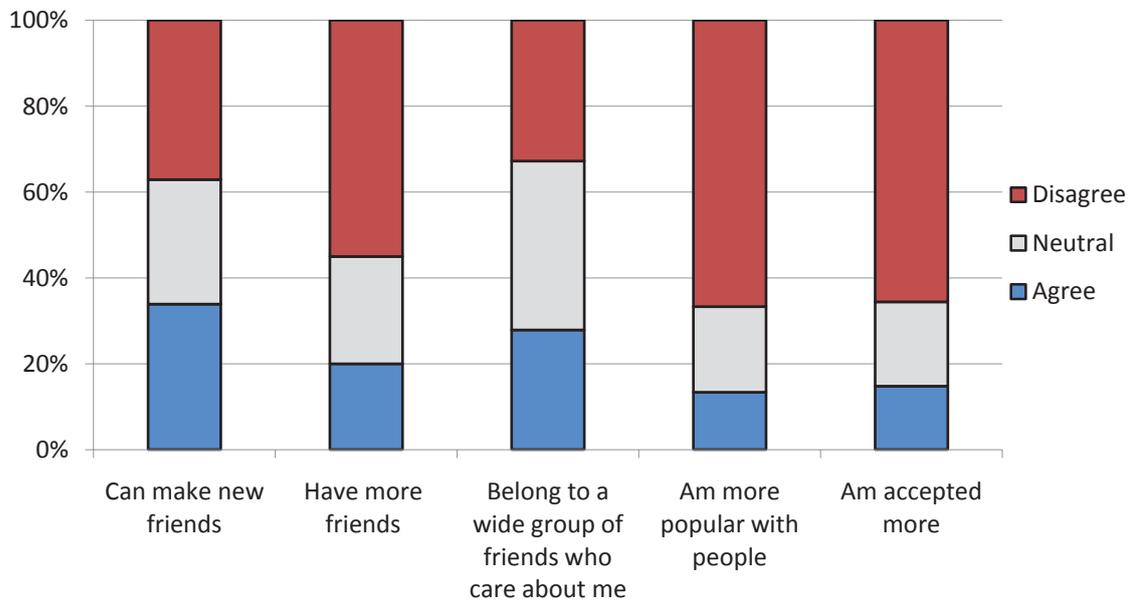
Base: SNS users. Q35 & Q38.

Figure 18: Choices – compared to my everyday life, when using my SNS I feel that I:



Base: SNS users. Q37

Figure 19: Friendships – compared with my everyday life, when I use my social networking site I feel that I:



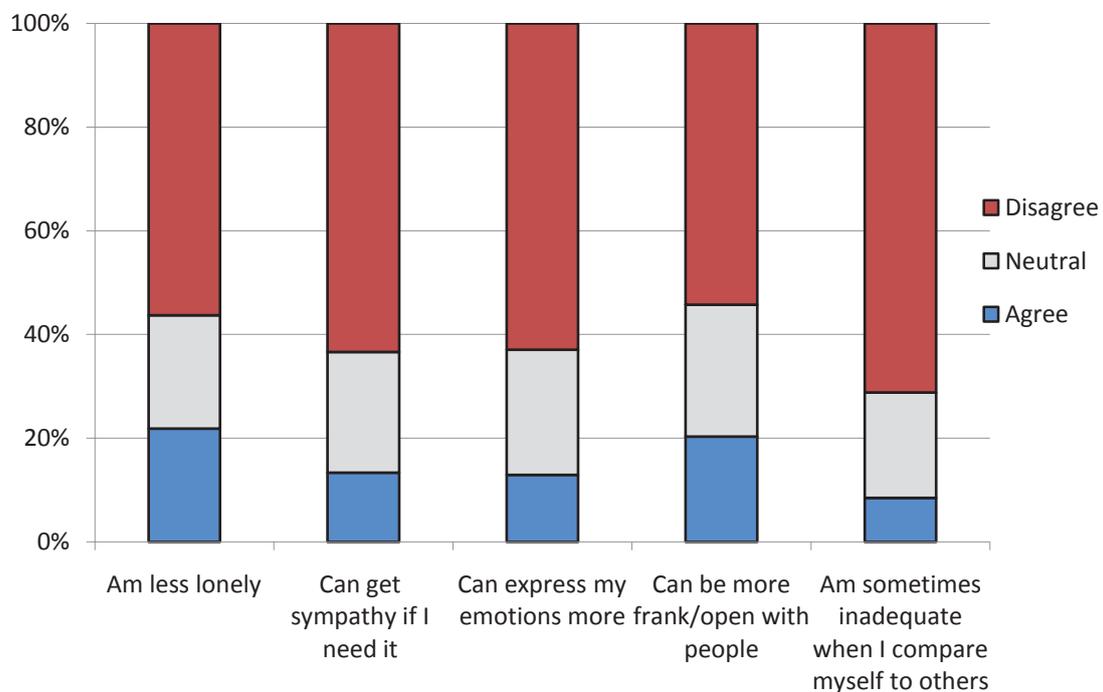
Base: SNS users. Q37.

A higher proportion, just over a third, agreed that it is easier to make new friends on a SNS than in real life. In particular, SNS sites facilitated: more contact with people overseas; reconnection with old or lost friends; learning more about friends; making friends with sporadic acquaintances; sharing photos and news; and enhancing existing friendships. Some typical comments include:

- *It has made connections between friends I did not know who knew each other more evident.*
- *It has made friendships stronger.*
- *It has enhanced my existing friendships because I am able to share some of my experiences with my friends by way of photos and status updates.*
- *Make arrangements to meet with friends.*
- *As a stay-at-home mum it provides me with a way to easily make contact with other mums with whom I can share day-to-day experiences.*
- *I probably spend more time on the computer than talking to my family.*

Overall, only a very small proportion of the SNS users felt that their SNS allowed them to be more emotionally supported than they would be in their everyday life (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Relationships and support – compared with my everyday life, when I use my social networking site I feel that I:



Base: SNS users. Q37.

6. Effects of SNSs on Life

The qualitative section was completed by fewer respondents (60). An assessment of the data revealed that about 28 (47%) of the 60 respondents said that SNSs had no effect on their life, one said that it had a negative effect, and 31 (52%) said that there was a positive effect.

Respondents were asked how their **participation in a social networking site affected the way in which they thought about themselves**. There were varied answers which can be grouped as either no effect or as a positive effect.

Those who believe that SNSs have no impact on how they think about themselves, suggested that a SNS is useful for keeping contact or “*glimpsing into people’s lives to see where they are at and to keep in touch*”. Several respondents referred back to their self-confidence and how “*I am old enough to not be affected by peer pressure and don't have self-esteem issues*”. This last comment may well reflect the mean age of the sample in the study.

Positive effects included: the benefit of keeping in contact with others; broadening perspectives through global contact; the ability to increase emotional expression; and sharing ideas with others. Two further comments are expressive: “*It's developed my identity with other people, especially those friends overseas who I no longer have face-to-face contact with.*” “*It has updated my self-perception. I am an older user and used to think the Facebook set was young only--but I now see it is for everyone--and I like that I can learn /have learned to use it--it lets me see the world is not just for the young but for the living.*”

Respondents were asked: **In what different ways, if any, do you present yourself on a social networking site, compared to the way you present yourself at other times?** 39 out of 49 said that there was no difference and comments included:

- *I am the same in both places. If you need to present yourself in different ways, it means that you have a multiple personalities. If you know yourself and like who you are there need be no differences.*
- *No difference – I try to be consistent – why fake being someone else? That's so Hollywood. I am me, I don't change for anybody.*
- *I am who I am. I prefer people to tell me if I'm being an ass, so I can adjust and/or change (depending on the situation of course).*
- *I have the absolute minimum information about myself on my profile. I try NOT to have a 'presence'. I prefer face-to-face contact to decide what I share about myself with others.*

The four negative differences were mainly about being more guarded or less open, while the positive differences include increased freedom and presenting a professional or work persona. One person stated that “*I share things that I wouldn't normally at my workplace*”.

7. Life Experiences More Generally

All respondents were asked a series of questions about their overall life experiences. There was reported:

- high satisfaction with life (70% agreeing or strongly agreeing);
- that they had all the important things they wanted in life (58%);
- that conditions in life are excellent (49%);
- that in most ways their lives were close to their ideals (43%) and
- that if they could live their life over, they would change almost nothing (35%).

And further:

- overall, satisfaction with the balance between work and other aspects of life such as time with family or leisure (69%);
- being in general, happy (83%);
- taking everything into account, being satisfied with life in general these days (86%);
- overall quality of life is good (82%).

There was a significant difference between SNS users and non-users on only one of these variables – 92% of users said their life was good or extremely good as opposed to only 80% of non-users.

8. People's Feelings

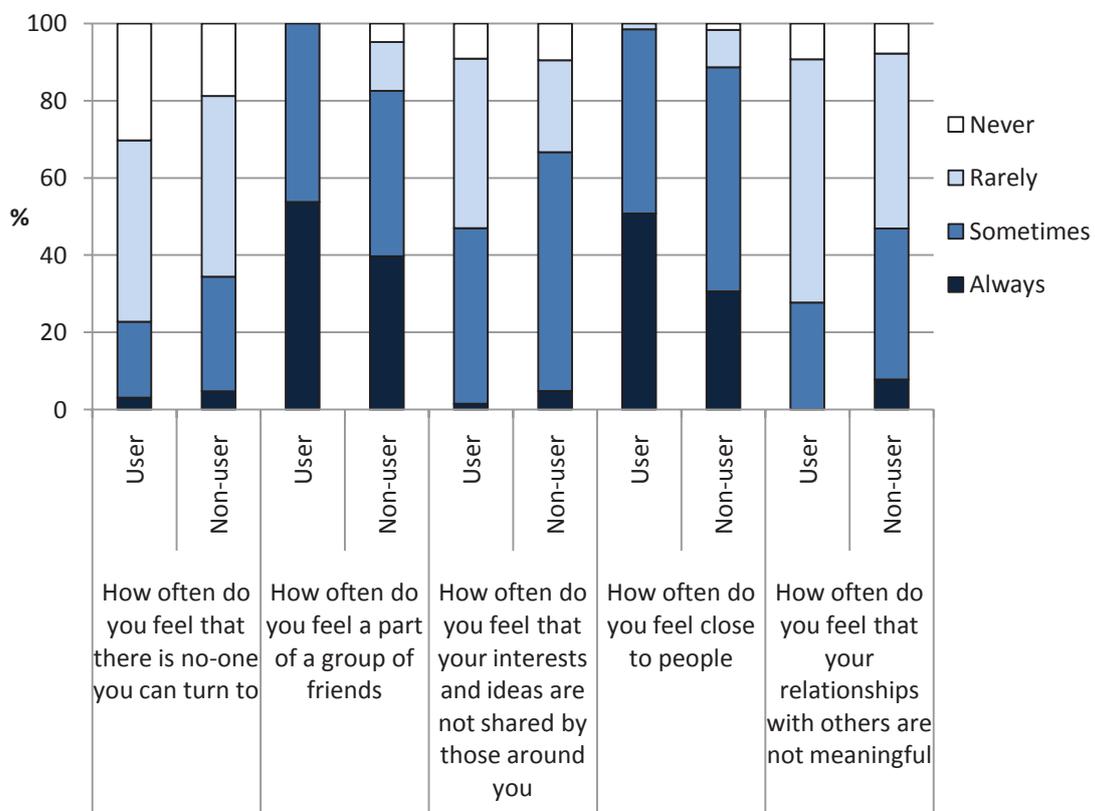
A series of questions about self-esteem, sociability, and overall happiness were asked of all respondents. With the direction of negatively-phrased answers being changed to allow consistency in understanding, these are the percentages of those replying 'always' to the following questions:

- How often do you feel that you are 'in tune' with the people around you: 32%
- How often do you feel that you have a lack of companionship: 55%
- How often do you feel that there is someone you can turn to: 25%
- How often do you feel alone: 22%
- How often do you feel a part of a group of friends: 47%
- How often do you feel that you have a lot in common with those around you: 34%
- How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone: 35%
- How often do you feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by those around you: 39%
- How often do you feel outgoing and friendly: 44%
- How often do you feel close to people: 42%
- How often do you feel left out: 56%

- How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful: 4%
- How often do you feel that everyone really knows you well: 5%
- How often do you feel isolated from others: 5%
- How often do you feel you can find companionship when you want it: 50%
- How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you: 36%
- How often do you feel shy: 86%
- How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you: 58%
- How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to: 59%
- How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to: 61%

There were some significant differences between SNS users and non-users for the questions about self-esteem, sociability, and overall happiness. Figure 22 illustrates those items on which differences were found. All SNS users said that they at least sometimes felt that they were a part of a group of friends, while 17% of non-users felt this way rarely or never. 51% of users said they always felt close to people, compared to 31% for non-users. 47% of non-users said that they at least sometimes felt that their relationships with others are not meaningful, including 8% who always felt this way. This is only the case for 28% of SNS users, and no SNS user reported having this feeling all the time.

Figure 21: Responses to emotion questions for users and non-users



Base: all respondents. Q51.

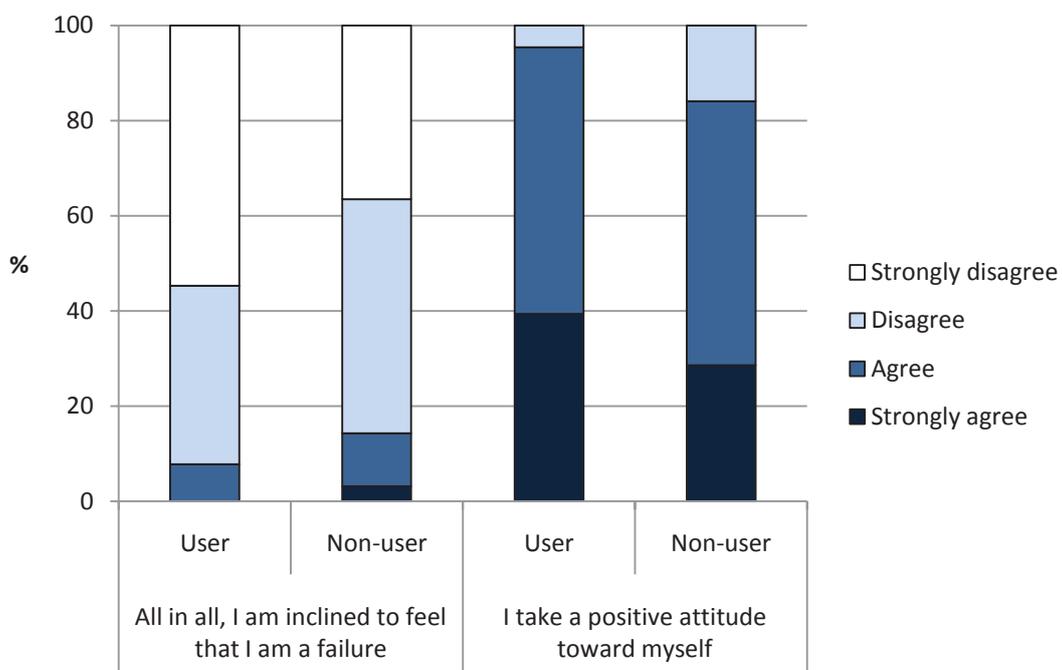
9. Self-perception

A series of questions about peoples' perceptions of themselves was asked of all respondents. The proportion *disagreeing* with these statements are:

- I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane or level with others: 4%
- I feel that I have a number of good qualities: 1%
- All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure: 87%
- I am able to do things as well as most other people: 2%
- I feel I do not have much to be proud of: 87%
- I take a positive attitude toward myself: 10%
- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself: 14%
- I wish I could have more respect for myself: 78%
- I certainly feel useless at times: 73%
- At times I think I am no good at all: 80%

Turning again to differences between SNS users and non-users, the large majority of people disagreed with the statement that they are failures, but a higher percentage of non-users agreed with it (14%) than did users (8%). Also, more users disagreed strongly with this statement (55%) than did non-users (37%). Correspondingly, most people said that they take a positive attitude toward themselves, but more non-users disagreed with this statement than users (16% compared to 5%).

Figure 22: Self-esteem of SNS users and non-users



Base: all respondents. Q52.

APPENDIX

Comments and Suggestions on Survey

The final section of the questionnaire sought reactions to the survey itself and suggestions for further research topics. Nearly two thirds found the survey either very or moderately interesting. Just over half made suggestions about further topics that they considered deserved attention. Almost all respondents were prepared to be surveyed again.

The array of topics suggested partly relate quite closely to this particular questionnaire, while others are more wide ranging. As often happens when comment on a survey is asked for in a final open-ended commentary format, some valuable broad reactions to the topic are indicated and are worth consideration for further research work in this area.

- *What initiates someone to start social networking – particularly at different ages and life stages of people? I am very, very new to it and haven't been compelled to get into it until I started receiving invites then got curious. Don't see it as a huge part of my life, but starting to see its relevance.*
- *The balance of usage between age groups and sexes.*
- *I think it could be interesting to find out how people use these sites. Is it to discuss issues like conservation, politics or to gain knowledge about people, issues, friendship, romance or travel? Personally, by using Skype I can find out about living in other countries and its politics and problems as well as benefits.*
- *My age and habits probably turn me off SNW but I certainly value email and have used the Internet since its conception. One reason for avoiding SNW is the integration between 'friends' and that someone may see something stupid written by an acquaintance or family member that might impact negatively on me.*
- *Peer pressure to participate with social media websites – inclusion/exclusion from a social group by social networks. Are social media websites replacing traditional family communication such as talking or phone conversations? Where does work and social life begin and end, when work colleagues communicate via social networks outside work?*
- *I am interested on the effect the Internet and access to it has had on society, I frequently hear people discussing with frustration the amount of time their loved one is spending on the computer and wonder what is the cost of this technology on relationships within families. Are people finding balance?*
- *How effective/meaningful, in contrast with other social approaches, are they (SNSs) in terms of individual well-being/goals.*
- *What do people actually want from social networking sites? Should there be limitations as to what people can put on a social networking site?*
- *The economic and cultural use of social networking.*
- *Attention to the elderly.*
- *Issues of isolation, low self-esteem/worth, lack of companionship, lack of support. Going out and physically interacting with people is a very important part of being and feeling connected and valued. Social networking sites are*

important for staying in touch with, or reconnecting with friends or family who are physically distant or at a busy stage in their lives. But can they be a substitute for the physical connection i.e. being physically present with friends and family? This is the main question.

- *Freedom of social networking; promotion in social networking; the lack of real communication through social networking.*
- *Social issues towards the younger generation (people who still attend college etc.).*
- *Comparing how much time people network online to networking face-to-face – with friends, whanau, etc.*
- *How many real-life relationships has the Internet destroyed?*
- *Aspects of photo recording--how SN sites provide a global display of world-wide current affairs--on all continents and for all ages; aspects of how the postings have replaced the diary and the letter; aspects of how language has changed (abbreviations etc.); aspects of how private and public have merged.*
- *Do people feel more confident conversing online rather than in person?*
- *What are acceptable standards on Facebook?*
- *How the network is used by different age groups.*
- *Privacy.*
- *How Facebook etc. expose people to unnecessary risks from net pirates stealing identity. How people are infatuated by Facebook and play meaningless time-wasting games.*
- *What kind of conversations people have on SNSs.*
- *Helping older people use technology [esp. in rural areas].*
- *Relationship with opposite sex, at different ages.*
- *Does it improve the cohesiveness of the community as a whole?*
- *More one-on-one network facility similar to the emails.*
- *How consensus on good governance/acceptable/unacceptable behaviour is reached?*
- *To what extent does the use of the Internet for relating to others affect people's ability to relate 'in the real world'? To what extent does social networking aid or help the socially inept and the lonely?*
- *Relationship between social networking activity and sense of connectedness to society; explore the idea that social networking appears to bring people closer together or is social networking making us further apart? I find these studies fascinating, thank you for inviting me to participate.*
- *As an elderly widow I'm probably at the blunt end of this sort of research: healthy, reasonably content with my lot, blessed with family, albeit at a distance, and with the resources to keep myself occupied and amused most of the time.*
- *Broaden it ... include other types like dating sites ... joke circuits ... not just Face book ... which seems to be more for kids.*
- *Nothing really. I use it for keeping up with family overseas, so long may it continue.*
- *All that you have investigated was pretty good. No complaints here.*
- *Issues associated with information; people getting into situations that cause stress and make people less confident about their lives. Privacy issues.*

- *The impact on people's lives with regards to bullying, predators, government departments/employers' abilities to use social networking information to prosecute/dismiss people. This survey would hopefully show whether people are happy but unfortunately respondents may answer questions regarding happiness and 'having people to turn to' and then find out when needed, the social networking 'friends' may not actually be someone you can 'turn to'. Misled into believing they are friends when in reality they are acquaintances.*
- *Find out how many people get on a networking site and decide they are more trouble than they are worth! Some may also feel torn if they want to keep only friends on such sites and have difficulties turning down family members who want to be 'friends' ... how do they manage to keep two aspects of their lives separate?*
- *The effect of Facebook groups on companies. Production of new products, change in products, changes in business practices. Does Facebook really have enough people power to change what companies do? The effects of self-esteem on teenagers. Media phenomena such as the Ashling Symes case.*
- *Privacy. Making access easier.*
- *Ownership of information. Respecting others. How you feel about other people posting photos of you in private circumstances.*
- *Connections between generations – are they very different now than twenty, thirty years ago?*
- *Something that I've noticed about the folk who indulge seriously in these sites is that they have very different faces for their various 'worlds'.*
- *How social networking is used for community activism – e.g. the Cadbury chocolate campaign over palm oil. Sometimes that has been manipulated, but there are clear signs that some of these are genuine groundswell of public concern.*
- *Advice on how to operate things in the new networks.*
- *I wonder why people think communication on the computer is more relevant than meeting face to face and how come they will find old acquaintances from years ago that they would not have looked for personally but suddenly start communicating as if they are really interested in one another's lives through social networking sites.*
- *How people who do not have self-confidence in themselves can have easier access to people or groups that can help with issues when people feel left alone.*
- *The relationship of age/generation with electronic social networking.*
- *You have only touched on the family side of social networking; what about the adult side of social networking which for a lot of people is almost like a release from what is not working in their life?*
- *How much time people spent on virtual relationships compared to real relationships. How do people evaluate the quality of their virtual relationships compared to their real relationships? Investigate some of the different ways different age groups use social networking sites. Does social networking permanently increase people's connectedness in the world and their feelings of well-being?*
- *How much time people spend playing games on the sites.*
- *Different attitudes at different ages.*

- *Whether people have less 'non social network' friends when they have more 'social network friends'.*
- *The use of technical knowledge in a destructive manner e.g. hacking, virus, untruths, etc.*
- *Harmless versus harm to individuals.*
- *The expansion of social intercourse from a person's immediate circle of friends to hitherto total strangers in cyberspace – what proportion, for instance, of cyber friends actually achieve eventually the same level of closeness as a person's immediate physical circle of friends?*
- *What and how much time is involved in other activities?*
- *Privacy, confidentiality and alienation of the Internet.*
- *How social networking sites affect people's (especially children and teenagers) views of their reality and whether it improves or has a negative effect on their social skills in real-life situations.*
- *Comparing social networking through the Internet versus person-to-person.*
- *How networking sites may hinder or stop people learning to communicate directly face to face with others. Networking sites can make people feel there is a veil or screen between themselves and the other members and therefore feel safer.*
- *Privacy – why do people put their lives up there, apparently openly? Don't they wonder who can see and judge them?*