





Based on analysis of 367 political & social issue Instagram accounts. Only 6% of the Instagram audience sees helpful content in this issue space.

- Unhelpful accounts: 101.5M followers (94%)
- Helpful accounts: 6.1M followers (6%)

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POLITICS DEC 17, 2025 11:00 AM

The Most Powerful Politics Influencers Barely Post About Politics

New research shows that social media creators have enormous influence over their audiences' politics—especially those who don't normally share political content.

“APOLITICAL SOCIAL MEDIA CREATORS WERE SEEN AS MORE INFORMATIVE AND TRUSTWORTHY, GENERATING LARGER EFFECTS PER VIDEO CONCERNING POLITICS. PARTICIPANTS ASSIGNED TO FOLLOW NON-POLITICAL SOCIAL MEDIA CREATORS INSTEAD BECAME MORE CONSERVATIVE, CONSISTENT WITH LEFT-LEANING PARTICIPANTS USING SOCIAL MEDIA MORE WHEN RIGHT-LEANING CONTENT WAS ASCENDANT.”

SOURCE: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CREATORS SHAPE MASS POLITICS: A FIELD EXPERIMENT DURING THE 2024 US ELECTIONS, JAN. 2026, CHMEL ET AL.

Americans overestimate how many social media users post harmful content

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PNAS Nexus, Volume 4, Issue 12, December 2025, pgaf310,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf310>

Published: 16 December 2025 [Article history](#) ▼

“ON AVERAGE, THEY (FREQUENT) BELIEVED THAT 43% OF ALL REDDIT USERS HAVE POSTED SEVERELY TOXIC COMMENTS AND THAT 47% OF ALL FACEBOOK USERS HAVE SHARED FALSE NEWS ONLINE. IN REALITY, PLATFORM-LEVEL DATA SHOWS THAT MOST OF THESE FORMS OF HARMFUL CONTENT ARE PRODUCED BY SMALL BUT HIGHLY ACTIVE GROUPS OF USERS (3–7%).”

“OUR FINDINGS HIGHLIGHT A MECHANISM THAT HELPS EXPLAIN HOW PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND INTERACTIONS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA MAY UNDERMINE SOCIAL COHESION.”

