Australian Government

Australian Communications and Media Authority

researchacma
Evidence that informs

Communications and media in Australia series:

How we communicate
Executive summary and key findings

DECEMBER 2024

Canberra
Level 3
40 Cameron Avenue
Belconnen ACT

PO Box 78
Belconnen ACT 2616

T +61 2 6219 5555
F +61 2 6219 5353

Melbourne
Level 32
Melbourne Central Tower
360 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne VIC

PO Box 13112
Law Courts
Melbourne VIC 8010

T +61 3 9963 6800
F +61 3 9963 6899

Sydney
Level 5
The Bay Centre
65 Pirrama Road
Pyrmont NSW

PO Box Q500
Queen Victoria Building
NSW 1230

T +61 2 9334 7700
F +61 2 9334 7799

Contents

Executive summary

Using this report

This report contains the executive summary and key findings from our *How we communicate*, which is part of our *Media and communications in Australia* series.

An interactive version of the full report can be accessed on our website. We recommend this document is read in conjunction with the entire report as the key findings reference charts in the report. The website also has links to the methodology used, a data quality statement and a glossary of terms for the report. The data for all tables in the report can be directly exported from the interactive version.

How we communicate

Apps play an increasing role in how we communicate, with more of us using voice calls via an app in 2024. While younger Australians are generally heavier users of apps to communicate, it is older Australians, who are driving this growth – an indicator that the technology divide between younger and older Australians continues to shrink.

In 2024, Facebook was Australia's most widely used communication or social media website/app. In 2023, YouTube was used by just as many Australians as Facebook, but in 2024, YouTube use declined, securing Facebook the top spot.

Overall, use of websites/apps increased across the board, including for smaller platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat.

Services used to communicate

As in 2023, nearly all of us used a mobile phone for calls (98%) or texts (SMS) (96%) in the past 6 months in 2024. However, it is becoming more common to use an app for voice calls (61%, up from 58%) or a tablet/computer for calls (33%, up from 28%). Even so, using an app for voice calls is still well below its peak of 72% seen in 2020, following the first COVID-19 wave.

While younger adults are more likely to use an app for voice calls (78% for those aged 18–24), older Australians are driving the increase. Compared to 2023, more of those aged 65–74 (47%, up from 38%), and 75 and over (38%, up from 29%) used an app for voice calls.

Australians aren't just using a mobile phone for calls with more of us are using a tablet or computer for calls (33% up from 28% in 2023). Younger adults are the biggest users and are driving this increase, with just under half (47%) using a tablet or computer to make calls (up from 35% in 2023).

There are differences in communication preferences based on where people live. Australians in metropolitan areas were more likely to use an app for messages and voice and video calls and a tablet or computer for calls, while regional Australians were more likely to use more traditional means of communications, such as a mobile for calls, a mobile for text and a landline.

Calls using a landline phone in the home continue to decline. One in 6 (15%) used a landline for calls at home, down from 18% in 2023. While Australians aged 75 and over remain the largest users of a landline for calls, many are ditching the landline, with use declining for this age group to 45% (from 58% in 2023). Landline use also declined for all those aged 45 and over.

After many years of ongoing declines, use of public payphones increased to 4% of Australian adults using one in the previous 6 months (up from 2% in 2023). Payphones were made free and introduced free wi-fi and text messaging in 2022, which has contributed to the rise in use. Females (4%, up from 2% in 2023) and those living in regional areas (3%, up from 1% up from 2023), led the increase.

Digital platform use

In 2024, nearly all Australian adults (98%) used at least one communication or social media website/app for personal purposes in the previous 6 months, up from 97% in 2023. We used 6 platforms on average, unchanged from 2023.

Facebook took out the top spot for the most popular platform with 78% of Australian adults using it in the previous 6 months. Despite YouTube’s growth in 2023 to 75%, in 2024, the proportion of Australians who had accessed it declined to 70%.

There was increased use for several platforms compared to 2023. WhatsApp use increased to 54% (up from 51%), and there were increases in use for smaller players, such as TikTok (27%, up from 21%) and Snapchat (24%, up from 19%). Younger Australians aged 18–24 are by far the biggest users of TikTok (57%) and Snapchat (60%), however increases on the previous year were largely driven by older age groups.

About the research

This report is based on an ACMA-commissioned nationally representative tracking survey seeking to understand consumer take-up, views and attitudes around communications and media services. Information about the sample and the ACMA annual consumer survey is in the methodology.

Key findings

1. Services used

Base: Australian adults, 6 months to June 2024

- Mobile phone for calls or texts were the main services used for personal purposes. Compared to 2023, more people living in regional areas used a mobile phone for texts (98%, up from 96%). Those living in regional areas were more likely to have used a mobile phone for calls (99%, compared to 97% in metropolitan areas) or a mobile phone for texts (98%, compared to 96% in metropolitan areas).
- More of us used a tablet or computer for calls (33%, up from 28% in 2023), with growth driven by those aged 18–24 (47%, up from 35%) and those living in metropolitan areas (35%, up from 29%). People living in metropolitan areas (35%) were more likely than those in regional areas to have used a tablet or computer for calls (29%).
- More females used a mobile phone for calls (98%, up from 96% in 2023) or a tablet or computer for calls (33%, up from 27% in 2023).
- Use of public payphones increased to its highest recorded level (4%, up from 2% in 2023), with more females (4%, up from 2%) and people living in regional areas (3%, up from 1%) using a payphone than the previous year.
- Landline phone calls at home continued to fall. One in 6 (15%) used a landline phone for calls, down from 18% in 2023.
- Those aged 75+ (45%) are still more likely than all younger age groups to have made a landline call. Even so, use declined for this age group (45%, from 58% in 2023).
    - Landline use also declined from 2023 for those aged 45–54 (15% from 21%) and 55–64 (16% from 22%), males (16% from 20%), people living in metropolitan areas (13% from 16%), and those in regional areas (18% from 23%). Even so, those in regional areas were more likely to use a landline for calls (18%, compared to 13% of those in metropolitan areas).
    - Use of messaging/calling apps was stable on 2023 (84%) with some demographic shifts. Those aged 75+ were least likely to have used a messaging/calling app than all younger age groups, however, their use has tripled since 2019 (56%, from 17% in 2019). Females were more likely to have used an app for messaging and calls (87%, compared to 80% of males).
- Those living in metropolitan areas were also more likely to use an app for messages and voice and video calls (85%, compared to 80% in regional areas) and a tablet or computer for calls (35%, compared to 29%).

2. Use of apps for calls or messaging

Base: Australian adults, 6 months to June 2024

- Voice calls via an app increased but were still lower than during the first COVID wave in 2020. They were used by 61%, up from 58% in 2023, but well below their use during the COVID–19 pandemic in 2020 (72%).
    - Older Australians are driving the increase, with more of those aged 65–74 (47%, up from 38% in 2023) and 75 and over (38%, up from 29% in 2023) using an app for voice calls.

    - More males used an app for voice calls (60%, up from 54% in 2023).
    - Those in metropolitan areas were more likely to use an app for voice calls (65%, compared to 55% in regional areas).
- Video calls via an app were used by almost 3 in 5 (61%). This remained stable from 2023 levels after successive years of growth. Even so, compared to 2023, fewer of those aged 55–64 used an app for video calls (53%, down from 61% in 2023).
    - Females were more likely to use an app for video calls (67%, compared to 56% of males).
    - Those living in metropolitan areas (64%) were more likely than those in regional areas (57%) to use an app for video calls.
- Use of apps for messages was stable (77%), with females (82%, compared to 72% of males) and those living in metropolitan areas (79%, compared to 72% in regional areas) more likely to have used an app for messages.

3. Which websites or apps were used

Base: Australian adults, **6 months** to June 2024

- Almost all of us used a communication or social media website/app (95%). Facebook (78%) and Facebook Messenger (74%) were the 2 most popular services.
- Use of WhatsApp, TikTok and Snapchat increased from 2023.
    - WhatsApp increased to 54% (from 51%) with growth among those aged 35–44 (66%, up from 58%), females (57% up from 52% in 2023) and people living in metropolitan areas (61%, up from 57%).
    - TikTok increased to 27% (from 21%) with growth among those aged 25–34 (44%, up from 33%), 35–44 (28%, up from 20%) and 65– 74 (9%, up from 4%), and also among females (34%, up from 26%), males (19%, up from 15%) and those living in metropolitan areas (28%, up from 22%) and regional areas (25%, up from 18%).
    - Snapchat increased to 24% (from 19%) with growth among those aged 25–34 (43%, up from 35%) and 65–74 (5%, up from 2%), females (32%, up from 24%) and those living in metropolitan areas (23%, up from 19%) and regional areas (26%, up from 19%).
- Use of Instagram was stable since 2023, though it was used by more people living in regional areas (47%, up from 41% in 2023).
- YouTube, Zoom and Skype use declined from 2023.
    - YouTube use declined to 70% (from 75%), with falls driven by those aged 25–34 (75%, from 83%), males (73%, from 78%) and females (66%, from 72%).
    - Zoom use declined to 23% (from 29%), with falls driven by males (21%, from 28%), those aged 25–34 (21%, from 29%), and those living in metropolitan (25%, from 31%) and regional areas (19%, from 25%).
    - Skype use declined to 6% (from 8%).
- Younger people (aged 18–24) were more likely to use Instagram (80%), Snapchat (60%), TikTok (57%), Pinterest (27%), X (29%) and Discord (39%), compared to all other age groups.
- Females were more likely than males to use these sites – Facebook (83%, compared to 72%), Facebook Messenger (83%, compared to 66%), WhatsApp (57%, compared to 52%), Instagram (60%, compared to 40%), FaceTime (46%, compared to 30%), TikTok

(34%, compared to 19%), Snapchat (32%, compared to 16%), Zoom (25%, compared to 21%) and Pinterest (26%, compared to 8%).

- Males were more likely than females to use these sites/apps – YouTube (73%, compared to 66%), LinkedIn (26%, compared to 21%), Reddit (24%, compared to 19%), X (20%, compared to 11%), Discord (16%, compared to 8%), Telegram (8%, compared to 5%), Twitch (8%, compared to 3%) and WeChat (6%, compared to 4%).
- Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely than those in regional areas to use these sites/apps – YouTube (72%, compared to 67%), WhatsApp (61%, compared to 41%), LinkedIn (29%, compared to 13%), Zoom (25%, compared to 19%), Microsoft Teams (25%, compared to 18%), Reddit (24%, compared to 18%), X (18%, compared to 12%), Telegram (8%, compared to 5%), Twitch (6%, compared to 4%), WeChat (7%, compared to 1%) and Signal (6%, compared to 3%).

Base: Australian adults, **previous 7 days** to June 2024

- Facebook (67%) and Facebook Messenger (63%) were the 2 most popular services.
- TikTok and Snapchat use increased from 2023.
  - TikTok use increased to 18% (from 16%), with growth among females (26%, from 21%).
  - Snapchat increased to 18% (from 14%), with growth among females (25%, up from 19%) and those aged 55–54 (8%, up from 4%).
- YouTube, Zoom and Skype use declined from 2023.
  - YouTube use declined to 55% (from 62%), with falls driven by several groups, including those aged 18–24 (69%, from 81%), 35–44 (59%, from 69%) and 65–74 (42%, from 49%); males (59%, from 68%) and females (50%, from 56%) and those living in metropolitan areas (57%, from 65%) and regional areas (51%, from 57%).
  - LinkedIn use declined to 11% (from 13%).
  - Zoom use declined to 6% (from 9%) with falls driven by those aged 18–24 (7%, from 19%), males (5%, from 10%) and those living in metropolitan areas (6%, down from 11%).
- Younger people (aged 18–24) were more likely to use Instagram (73%), Snapchat (49%), TikTok (46%), Discord (26%) and X (24%), compared to all other age groups.
- Females were more likely to use these sites/apps – Facebook (74%, compared to 61% males), Facebook Messenger (73%, compared to 54%), Instagram (51%, compared to 30%), WhatsApp (43%, compared to 37%), TikTok (26%, compared to 11%), FaceTime (23%, compared to 14%), Snapchat (25%, compared to 10%) and Pinterest (13%, compared to 3%).
- Males were more likely to use these sites/apps – YouTube (59%, compared to 50% females), Reddit (16%, compared to 11%), LinkedIn (13%, compared to 10%), X (14%, compared to 7%), Discord (10%, compared to 5%), Microsoft Teams (8%, compared to 6%), Telegram (4%, compared to 2%) and Twitch (4%, compared to 1%).
- Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely than those in regional areas to use these sites/apps – YouTube (57%, compared to 51%), WhatsApp (47%, compared to 26%), Instagram (42%, compared to 38%), FaceTime (19%, compared to 16%), Reddit (16% compared to 11%), LinkedIn (14%, compared to 6%), X (12%, compared to 9%), Microsoft Teams (8%, compared to 4%), WeChat (5%, compared to 1%), and Signal (4%, compared to 2%).

4. What we used for messages and calls

Base: Australian adults, previous 7 days to June 2024

Used for messages

- Most of us used a communication or social media website/app for messages (85%).
- Facebook Messenger (59%) was the most used, followed by WhatsApp (36%) and Instagram (24%). WhatsApp and Instagram remained steady from 2023 after increases from 2022.
- Compared to 2023, more of those in regional areas used Instagram for messages (20%, up from 16%).
- Smaller websites/apps made inroads. More of us used Snapchat for messages (14%, up from 11% in 2023). Growth was driven by those aged 35–44 (12%, up from 7% in 2023), females (19%, up from 15% in 2023) and those living in metropolitan areas (13%, up from 10% in 2023).
- More of us used TikTok for messages (5%, up from 3% in 2023), specifically females (7%, up from 4% in 2023) and those living in metropolitan areas (5%, up from 3% in 2023).
- Younger people were heavier users of website/apps for messages. Those aged 18–24 were more likely to have used Instagram (57%), Snapchat (42%), Discord (20%) and TikTok (20%) for messages than all other age groups.
- Males and females message on different websites/apps. Females were more likely than males to message using Facebook Messenger (69%, compared with 49%), WhatsApp (39%, compared with 32%), Instagram (32%, compared with 16%), Snapchat (19%, compared with 9%) and TikTok (7%, compared with 2%). Males were more likely than females to message using Discord (7%, compared with 3%), Microsoft Teams (4%, compared with 3%), LinkedIn (4%, compared with 2%) and Telegram (2%, compared with 1%).
- Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely than those living in regional areas to use websites/apps for messages. People in metropolitan areas were more likely to use WhatsApp (43%, compared with 22% in regional areas), Instagram (26% compared with 20%), Microsoft Teams (4% compared with 2%), WeChat (5% compared with 1%), LinkedIn (4% compared with 1%), Signal (3% compared with 2%), Telegram (2% compared with 1%), and Viber (2% compared with 1%).

Used for video/voice calls

- Just over half of us used a communication or social media website/app for video or voice calls (58%).
- Facebook Messenger (26%) was the most used, followed by WhatsApp (21%) and FaceTime (14%).
- Zoom declined to 3% (from 5% in 2023). Since 2023, declines were also among aged 18–24 (2%, from 11%), males (2%, from 6%) and those living in metropolitan areas (3%, from 6%).
- Skype fell to 1% (from 2% in 2023). Since 2023, declines were also among those aged 65–74 (1%, from 4%), males (1%, from 2%), females (1%, from 2%) and those living in regional areas (3%, from 2%).
- Those aged 18–24 were more likely than all other age groups to have used Discord (18%), Snapchat (12%), Instagram (13%) and WeChat (7%) for video or voice calls.

- Different genders use different websites/apps for calls. Females were more likely than males to have used Facebook Messenger (31%, compared with 21%), FaceTime (18%, compared with 11%) and Snapchat (4%, compared with 2%). Males were more likely than females to have used Discord (5%, compared with 3%) and Microsoft Teams (5%, compared with 3%).
- Where we live influenced how we use websites/apps for calls. Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely than those in regional areas to use WhatsApp (25%, compared with 12%), Facetime (16%, compared with 12%), Discord (5%, compared with 2%), Microsoft Teams (5%, compared with 2%), Zoom (3%, compared with 2%), WeChat (3%, compared with 1%), while those living in regional areas were more likely to have used Snapchat (4%, compared with 3%).

5. How websites or apps are used

Base: Australian adults, previous 7 days to June 2024

Used to actively engage with a piece of content

- 80% of us used a website/app to actively engage with a piece of content. This includes sharing, commenting, or liking a post.
- Facebook is the most popular platform to engage with content, and use has held steady at 47% overall. Even so, compared to 2023, less of those aged 18–24 engaged with content on Facebook (27%, down from 37%).
- Facebook Messenger was the second most-used app for engaging with content, however, use fell among those aged 45–54 (34%, down from 41%).
- WhatsApp use declined to 19% (from 22% in 2023), driven by males (17%, down from 21%) and those living in metropolitan areas (22%, down from 26%).
- TikTok use increased to 13% overall (from 10% in 2023), driven by those aged 65–74 (3%, up from 1%), females (19%, up from 14%) and those living in metropolitan areas (14%, up from 11%).
- Snapchat use increased to 9% (from 7% in 2023).
- Those aged 18–24 were more likely than all other age groups to engage with content on Instagram (60%), TikTok (40%) and Discord (15%).
- Females were more likely than males have engaged with content on these sites – Facebook (55%, compared with 41% of males), Facebook Messenger (42%, compared with 27%), Instagram (40%, compared with 20%), TikTok (19%, compared with 7%), Snapchat (13%, compared with 5%) and FaceTime (7%, compared with 3%).
- Males were more likely than females to engage with content on these sites – YouTube (30%, compared with 22% of females), Reddit (8%, compared with 3%), X (8%, compared with 3%), LinkedIn (6%, compared with 3%) and Discord (6%, compared with 2%).
- Living in metropolitan or regional areas makes a difference in how we engage with content. Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely than their regional counterparts to use Instagram (32%, compared with 26%), YouTube (28%, compared with 23%), WhatsApp (22%, compared with 12%), TikTok (14%, compared with 10%), X (7%, compared with 4%) and LinkedIn (6%, compared with 1%). However, those living in regional areas were more likely than those in metropolitan areas to use Facebook (52%, compared with 45%).

Used to post or create a piece of content

- Just over half of us used a website/app to post or create content in 2024 (53%).
- Facebook was most popular despite a decline (25%, from 28% in 2023), with fewer people living in metropolitan areas using Facebook to post or create content (23%, from 26% in 2023).
- Instagram use held steady at 15%, however, more people living in regional areas used Instagram to post or create a piece of content (15%, up from 10% in 2023).
- Only 1% of those aged over 75 used Instagram to post or create content, less than all younger age groups.
- Those aged 18–24 were more likely than all older age groups to use Discord (10%) to post or create content but were less likely than all other age groups to use Facebook (5%) or Facebook Messenger (7%).
- Females were more likely than males to post or create content using Facebook (29%, compared with 23%), Facebook Messenger (23%, compared with 17%) Instagram (20%, compared with 10%), and Snapchat (12%, compared with 4%).
- Males were more likely than females to post or create content using Discord (3%, compared with 1%), X (3%, compared with 1%) and LinkedIn (3%, compared with 1%).
- Where we live influenced which platform we used to post or create content. Those living in metropolitan areas were more likely to use WhatsApp (15%, compared with 8% in regional), while those living in regional areas were more likely to use Facebook (31%, compared with 23% in metropolitan) and Snapchat (10%, compared with 7% in metropolitan).

6. Number of websites or apps used – past 6 months

Base: Australian adults, 6 months to June 2024

- Three-quarters of us (75%) used an average of 4+ communication and social media websites/apps for personal purposes. This has remained steady since 2023 after an increase from 66% in 2022.
- Those aged 65–74 (55%) and 75+ (34%) were less likely than all younger age groups to use 4+ websites/apps.
- Females and people in metropolitan locations used more websites/apps. Not only did more females use 4+ websites/apps than in 2023 (81% up from 77%), but they were more likely to use 4+ websites/apps than males (69%).
- Those living in metropolitan areas (78%) were more likely to use 4+ websites/apps than those in regional areas (70%).
- On average, we used 6 communication and social media websites/apps, similar to 2023.
- Females used a significantly higher average number of websites/apps than males (6.3, compared to 5.6), as did those living in metropolitan areas compared to regional areas (6.3 compared to 5.4).
- Those aged 18–24, on average, used more social media websites/apps (8), than all other age groups.

7. Number of websites apps used – past 7 days

Base: Australian adults, previous 7 days to June 2024

Used a communication and social media website/app

- Just over half of us (55%) used on average 4+ communication and social media websites/apps for personal purposes, a similar proportion to 2023.
- On average, we used 4.1 websites/apps, similar to 4.2 in 2023.
- Those aged 18–24 used the highest number of apps/websites for personal purposes of all age groups, using 5.6 on average, however, this is a decline from using 6.4 in 2023.
- Females and people in metropolitan locations used more websites/apps. Females (62%) were more likely to use 4+ websites/apps than males (47%), they also used more on average (4.4, compared to 3.7 for males).
- Those living in metropolitan areas also used more websites/apps, with 58% using 4+ (compared to 48% of those in regional areas), and an average of 4.3 (compared to 3.7 in regional areas).

Used to actively engage with a piece of content

- One in 5 (22%) used 4+ communication and social media websites or to actively engage with content, a decline from 25% in 2023.
- Usage of 4+ websites/apps declined the most for those aged 18–24 (33%, down from 47% in 2023), 55–64 (13%, down from 20%), males (17%, down from 22%) and people living in metropolitan areas (23%, down from 29%).
- In contrast, compared to 2023, more of those aged 65–74 used 4+ websites/apps (13%, up from 8%).
- Those aged 18–24 used 2.9 websites/apps on average, a decline from 3.5 in 2023.
- Females and those in metropolitan locations use more websites/apps to engage with content. Females (26%) were more likely to use 4+ websites/apps than males (17%), they also used more on average (2.5, compared to 2.0 for males). Those living in metropolitan areas (23%) were also more likely to use 4+ websites/apps to engage with a piece of content compared to those living in regional areas (19%); those in metropolitan areas also used more on average, 2.3 compared with 2.0 in regional areas.

Used for messages

- We used an average of 1.9 websites/apps for messages, and 30% used one website/app for messages, a decline from 35% in 2022.
- Those aged 75+ were the least likely to have used a social media or communication website/app for messages, with 48% having used 0 websites/apps.
- Females (15%) were more likely than males (8%) to use 4+ websites/apps for messages and were more likely to use a higher average number (2.1, compared to 1.6). More females also used 4+ websites/apps for messages compared with 2023 (15%, up from 10%).
- Usage of 4+ websites/apps for messages was more likely for those living in metropolitan areas (13%) than in regional areas (9%), despite an increase in use for regional Australians (up from 5% in 2023). People in metropolitan areas also used a higher number on average (2.0, compared to 1.6 for those in regional areas).

Used for voice or video calls

- On average, we use 0.9 social media or communication website/app for voice or video calls.
- Two in 5 did not use a website/app to make a voice/video call (42% used 0).
- Males were less likely than females to have used a website/app to make voice or video calls (46% used 0 compared to 39%).
- Those living in regional areas were less likely to have used a website/app for voice or video calls (51% used 0 compared to 38% living in metropolitan areas).

Used to post or create a piece of content

- We used, on average 1 social media or communication website/app to post a piece of content, with almost half (47%) not using any website/app.
- Males were less likely than females to have used a website/app (53% using 0 apps, compared to 41%).
- Females are more likely than males to use 2 website/apps (20%, compared to 15%).