

A close-up, warm-toned photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair, smiling as she looks down at a smartphone held in her hands. She is wearing a mustard-colored button-down shirt with white polka dots. The background is softly blurred, showing a desk lamp and some greenery.

COMMUNITIES INSIGHTS SURVEY

Communities in our digital age

FACEBOOK



COVID-19 has brought out the best in many of our most important communities

Communities have been at the heart of how people have kept one another safe during the COVID-19 outbreak.

91% of respondents said they have given some form of support to others during the COVID-19 pandemic through their preferred group/ community, whether it's helping local vulnerable residents with their groceries during lockdown, sharing vital information from health authorities, or providing financial support to local business. 86% have received some form of support. 49% received emotional support from groups during the pandemic, and as many as 57% gave emotional support to others.



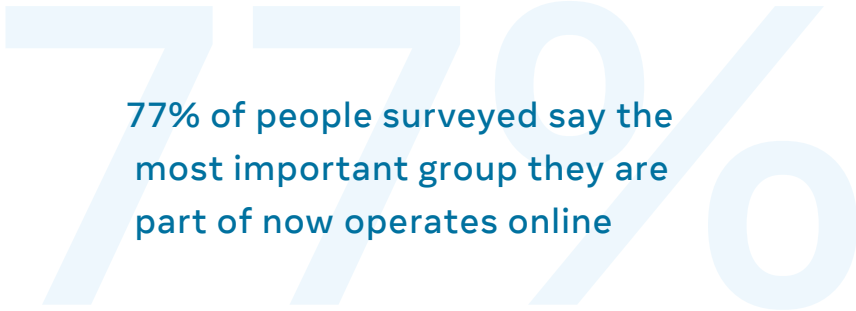
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of respondents said they have given some form of support to others during the COVID-19 pandemic through their preferred group

Online communities are thriving - and this looks set to continue

Online communities have continued to grow, especially during the pandemic. Three quarters (77%) of people surveyed say the most important group they are part of now operates online (44.3% primarily online, plus 32.4% both online and offline). And 70% said digital tools were very important for helping their communities thrive during the pandemic.

This increased participation in online community groups is here to stay: over the next 12 months, 86% of people whose most important community group is primarily online say they'll continue engaging with that group at the same level (48%), or even more frequently (39%).



77% of people surveyed say the most important group they are part of now operates online



They can be like friends and family

Online groups like these connect people and can make their lives better. And some people have come to rely on them in much the same way they do friends and family.

Communities provide a safe space where people can share how they really feel. One in three respondents (33%) whose preferred group operates primarily online told us they feel more comfortable sharing their feelings and perspectives with their group than with their friends and family. And they are just as much a part of our day-to-day lives: 57% of those whose most important group is primarily online actively participate in it every day.

While many people are practicing social distancing, these communities have helped many people stay connected. Two thirds (67%) whose preferred group operates primarily online said groups have become more important to them since the COVID-19 outbreak began.

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98%

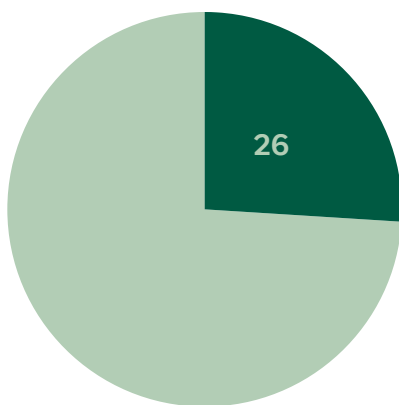
of people whose preferred
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Online community groups provide a sense of belonging and connection to others around the world who share what we love, but they also provide a powerful link to our local, offline world

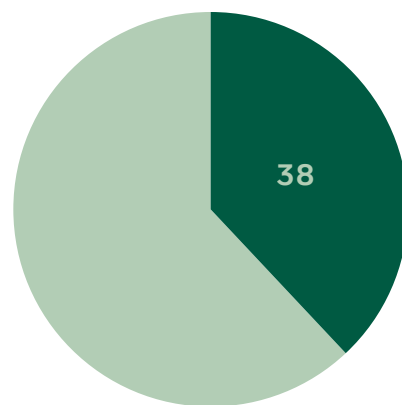
Millions of people now rely on the support, connections and inspiration of online groups. 98% of people whose preferred community group is primarily online say they feel a sense of belonging to that group, with a third (33%) feeling 'a great sense' of belonging to that group. Globally, more than half of people who use Facebook are members of five different Facebook Groups.²

It's no surprise that we're drawn first and foremost to online community groups that reflect our passions, hobbies and interests, with one in four (26%) people saying their most important primarily online group is built around a similar hobby or activity.

But while online communities are able to connect people across the world with the same passions and interests, local community still matters. More than one-in-three (38%) said the most important primarily online group they are a part of has its members principally drawn from their local area or city.



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2. Facebook data, August 2020.

A new generation of under-appreciated community leaders are bringing people together across the world

On the Facebook app alone, more than 70 million people now lead Facebook Groups as active admins and moderators.³ Millions more are bringing people together on other platforms and offline. And 58% of people agree that one of the top qualities that make a community successful is having effective leaders.

The vast majority of digital community leaders are volunteers, many of whom never expected or planned to end up running communities around the world.

Qualitative research has found for admins and moderators their skillset is largely self taught, with little formal academic or vocational training available to people in community management, organizing and strategy.⁴

Yet the skills community leaders acquire are rare, highly valuable and increasingly sought after. Globally, respondents in our survey listed “welcoming differences of opinions among members,” “being visible and communicating well” and “acting ethically at all times” as the three most essential traits for a leader to have in the groups they belong to.

Tens of millions of people are stepping up into public life, doing the slow behind the scenes work of bringing us together. This knowledge is both cause for celebration and a challenge. Public and private sectors, academia and philanthropy all have critical roles to play in supporting and enabling these new leaders.



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3. Facebook internal data, September 2020

4. Facebook internal qualitative research, 2019. 5 focus groups were conducted with participants from over 15 countries.

CONCLUSION

This survey shines a light on the reality of thriving community building in our digital age, which has played a vital role connecting people and providing emotional support during a difficult 2020. The leaders at the heart of these communities have been critical in bringing people together, and often go under-appreciated. Their accomplishments should be celebrated, and should be given support to help them build, grow, scale and connect their communities as they bring the world together through the pandemic and beyond.

OUR METHODOLOGY

This report primarily drew from an unbranded survey administered by YouGov across 15 countries (UK, DE, FR, AR, BR, MX, AU, ID, IN, ZA, KE, NG, EG, MO, US) with 15,000 respondents that currently are part of both online and offline communities. The majority of trends and insights are driven by survey respondents, supplemented with a selection of Facebook specific proprietary stats.