In fall 2014 the IACP conducted its fifth annual survey about law enforcement’s use of social media. The survey addressed the current state of practice and the issues agencies are facing in regards to social media. The survey was sent electronically to law enforcement executives across the United States. A total of 600 law enforcement agencies, representing 46 states, participated in the survey.

For more information about the survey or IACP’s Center for Social Media, visit www.IACPsocialmedia.org or e-mail us at socialmedia@theiacp.org.

**SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS**

- 95% of agencies surveyed use social media in some capacity.
- The most common use of social media is for criminal investigations at 82.3%.
- The most frequently used social media platforms are Facebook (95.4%), Twitter (66.4%), and YouTube (38.5%).
- 55.9% of agencies not currently using social media are considering its adoption.
- 71.7% of agencies surveyed have a social media policy and an additional 12.2% are in the process of crafting a policy.
- 78.8% of agencies report that social media has helped solve crimes in their jurisdiction.
- 77.5% of agencies state that social media has improved police-community relations in their jurisdiction.
**Demographic Information**

Which of the following best describes your agency?

- Municipal police department: 83.8%
- Sheriff’s department: 3.6%
- County law enforcement agency: 1.2%
- State law enforcement agency: 2.5%
- Federal law enforcement agency: 0.5%
- Tribal law enforcement agency: 0.5%
- University/college law enforcement agency: 6.3%
- Primary/secondary school law enforcement agency: 0.5%
- Transportation-related law enforcement agency: 0.7%
- Other: 0.8%

Please indicate the number of full-time sworn personnel in your agency.

- 1-5: 3.5%
- 6-15: 17.8%
- 16-25: 16.5%
- 26-49: 20.5%
- 50-99: 17.7%
- 100-249: 13.5%
- 250-499: 6.5%
- 500-999: 2.3%
- 1000+: 2.3%

2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results
Please indicate the population served by your agency.

- Under 2,500: 3.6%
- 2,500-9,999: 23.0%
- 10,000-48,999: 43.3%
- 50,000-99,999: 13.0%
- 100,000-249,999: 8.5%
- 250,000-499,999: 3.2%
- 500,000+: 5.2%

Which of the following activities does your agency use social media tools for? (Select all that apply)

- Crime
- Incident investigations
- Leaks/leaks
- Communications
- Holding public of crime largely
- Providing necessary information
- Preventing and reducing crime
- Case prevention/stop
- Community/neighborhood
- Criminal/terror investigation
- Public assistance
- Information seeking
- Disaster
- Planning/management
- Social media tools use

2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results
Compared to one year ago, complaints to my agency about “sexting” (the sharing of sexually explicit photos, primarily via a mobile device) are:

- More prevalent: 56.5%
- Lees prevalent: 7.2%
- About the same: 15.5%
- Not an issue in my jurisdiction: 21.7%

Compared to one year ago, complaints to my agency about online stalking are:

- More prevalent: 64.9%
- Less prevalent: 16.6%
- About the same: 4.3%
- Not an issue in my jurisdiction: 16.6%
Compared to one year ago, complaints to my agency about online bullying/harassment are:

- More prevalent: 58.8%
- Less prevalent: 4.1%
- About the same: 27.1%
- Not an issue in my jurisdiction: 10.1%

Compared to one year ago, complaints to my agency about flashmobs (large groups of individuals quickly mobilizing in a specific location) are:

- More prevalent: 77.7%
- Less prevalent: 12.4%
- About the same: 6.9%
- Not an issue in my jurisdiction: 3.0%
AGENCIES NOT USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Is your agency considering the adoption of social media?

- Yes: 44.1%
- No: 55.9%

Which tools is your agency considering for adoption? (Select all that apply)

- Facebook: 89.5%
- Twitter: 87.9%
- Apps: 15.8%
- LinkedIn: 15.8%
- Google+: 10.5%
- Instagram: 10.5%
- Nixle: 10.5%
- YouTube: 10.5%
- Flickr: 0.3%
- All Other Responses:
What are the barriers to using social media in your agency? (Select all that apply)

- Security concerns: 26.7%
- Privacy concerns: 33.3%
- Liability concerns: 26.7%
- Legislative considerations: 6.7%
- Resource constraints (time): 53.3%
- Resource constraints (personnel): 66.7%
- Not appropriate for my community: 6.7%
- Other (please specify): 26.7%
2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results

When did your agency start using social media?

How many hours are spent maintaining (developing and posting content, responding to comments, etc.) your agency's public social media presence on a weekly basis?
How many hours are spent using social media tools for intelligence or investigative purposes on a weekly basis?

- 1-5 hours: 66.3%
- 6-10 hours: 20.0%
- 10-20 hours: 7.3%
- 20-30 hours: 3.2%
- 30-40 hours: 0.6%
- 40+ hours: 2.6%

How does your agency use social media in investigations? (Select all that apply)

- Undercover identity to monitor or gather information: 62.0%
- Posting surveillance video or images to solicit assistance from the public: 67.7%
- Review social media profiles/activities of suspects: 87.1%
- Review social media profiles/activities of victims: 49.4%
- We do not use social media for investigations: 4.4%
- Other (please specify): 2.0%
Has your agency identified goals and/or outcomes related to the use of social media?

- Yes: 51.3%
- No: 45.0%
- I don't know: 3.7%

How valuable a tool is social media for your agency?

- Investigations
- Emergency/disaster notifications
- Information dissemination
- Community outreach/public relations
- Crime prevention
- Recruitment
- Vetting/background investigations
- Inservice training

2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results
Has social media helped your agency solve crimes in your jurisdiction?

- Yes: 78.8%
- No: 12.9%
- I don't know: 8.3%

Has social media improved police/community relations in your jurisdiction?

- Yes: 77.5%
- No: 17.6%
- I don't know: 4.9%
Please identify any concerns your agency has about social media.

- Hacking/security
- Privacy
- Civil liability
- Resource commitments
- Legislative challenges
- Public records/archiving
- Employee safety
- Availability of social media training
- Criminal use of social media
- Online radicalization and violent extremism
- All Other Responses

Legend:
- Undecided
- Not concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned

2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results
**General Questions**

**Does your unit of government, beyond your agency, use social media tools?**

- Yes: 79.2%
- No: 17.0%
- I don't know: 6.8%

**Does your agency have a written social media policy?**

- Yes: 71.7%
- No: 16.1%
- We are in the process of developing a social media policy: 12.2%
Compared to one year ago, concerns about employees' personal use of social media are:

- More prevalent: 60.0%
- Less prevalent: 9.5%
- About the same: 6.2%
- Not an issue in my jurisdiction: 24.3%

Has your agency dealt with negative attention related to the use of social media by agency employees on-duty or off-duty?

- Yes: 37.1%
- No: 58.8%
- I don't know: 4.0%

2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results
Does your agency provide academy training on on-duty or off-duty use of social media?

- Yes: 17.6%
- No: 84.5%
- I don't know: 8%

Does your agency provide inservice training on on-duty or off-duty use of social media?

- Yes: 44.8%
- No: 33.3%
- I don't know: 22.9%

2014 IACP Social Media Survey Results