

New research about Facebook addiction

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Dr. Cecilie Schou Andreassen heads the research project 'Facebook Addiction' at the University of Bergen. Credit: Ole Kristian Olsen

Are you a social media enthusiast or simply a Facebook addict? Researchers from Norway have developed a new instrument to measure Facebook addiction, the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale.

The use of [Facebook](#) has increased rapidly. We are dealing with a subdivision of [Internet addiction](#) connected to social media, Doctor of [Psychology](#) Cecilie Schou Andreassen says about the study, which is the first of its kind worldwide.

Andreassen heads the research project "Facebook Addiction" at the University of Bergen (UiB). An article about the results has just been published in the renowned journal *Psychological Reports*.

She has clear views as to why some people develop Facebook dependency.

It occurs more regularly among younger than older users. We have also found that people who are anxious and socially insecure use Facebook more than those with lower scores on those traits, probably because those who are anxious find it easier to communicate via social media than face-to-face, Andreassen says.

People who are organised and more ambitious tend to be less at risk from Facebook addiction. They will often use social media as an integral part of work and networking.

Our research also indicates that women are more at risk of developing Facebook addiction, probably due to the [social nature](#) of Facebook, Andreassen says.

According to Andreassen, the research also shows that Facebook addiction was related to extraversion. People with high scores on the new scale further tend to have a somewhat delayed sleep-wake rhythm.

Six warning signs

As Facebook has become as ubiquitous as television in our everyday lives, it is becoming increasingly difficult for many people to know if they are addicted to [social media](#). Andreassen's study shows that the symptoms of Facebook addiction resemble those of [drug addiction](#), [alcohol addiction](#), and [chemical substance](#) addiction.

The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale is based on six basic criteria, where all items are scored on the following scale: (1) Very rarely, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, and (5) Very often:

- You spend a lot of time thinking about Facebook or plan use of Facebook.
- You feel an urge to use Facebook more and more.
- You use Facebook in order to forget about personal problems.
- You have tried to cut down on the use of Facebook without success.
- You become restless or troubled if you are prohibited from using Facebook.
- You use Facebook so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies.

Andreassen's study shows that scoring "often" or "always" on at least four of the seven items may suggest that you are addicted to Facebook.

About the Scale

In January 2011, 423 students – 227 women and 196 men – participated in tests for the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale. The scale can facilitate treatment research, clinical assessment and can be used for the estimation of Facebook addiction prevalences in the general population worldwide.

The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale has been developed at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen in collaboration with the Bergen Clinics Foundation, Norway. The researchers involved are also working with instruments measuring other addictions, such as the recently introduced Bergen Work Addiction Scale.

The researchers have developed an online web-survey where participants get immediate and concise feedback on their degree of Facebook addiction (e.g., "Test yourself here – are you addicted to Facebook?"). You are welcome to use a link to the survey in your news stories about Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale. Please contact Dr Andreassen for further information and a link to the survey.

More information: CECILIE SCHOU ANDREASSEN, TORBJØRN TORSHEIM, GEIR SCOTT BRUNBORG, and STÅLE PALLESEN (2012) DEVELOPMENT OF A FACEBOOK ADDICTION SCALE. Psychological Reports: Volume 110, Issue , pp. 501-517. [doi: 10.2466/02.09.18.PR0.110.2.501-517](https://doi.org/10.2466/02.09.18.PR0.110.2.501-517).
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