

## Many post on social media under the influence of drugs—and regret it

August 6 2019

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Posting on social media, texting, and appearing in photos while high is prevalent among people who use drugs—and many regret these

behaviors, according to a study by the Center for Drug Use and HIV/HCV Research (CDUHR) at NYU College of Global Public Health.

The research, published online August 6 in the journal *Substance Abuse*, points to the potential social harms associated with substance use, which are likely overlooked and go beyond well-established [health risks](#).

The use of [social media](#)—particularly among [younger generations](#)—is ubiquitous in today's culture. A recent Pew Research report found that, among 18 to 29-year-olds, more than nine in 10 use some form of social media. Meanwhile, the technology that allows people to use social media anywhere is essentially universal: 100 percent of young Americans (ages 18-29) have mobile phones, 94 percent of which are smartphones.

While technology and social media platforms offer benefits, such as enabling people to be more connected, using mobile phones to post on social media or engage in other forms of communication also can cause long-lasting social harm, a risk that may increase when people are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

"Risky social media posts, including those showing people high on drugs, have the potential to cause embarrassment, stress, and conflict for users and those in their social networks," said CDUHR researcher Joseph Palamar, Ph.D., MPH, the study's lead author and an associate professor of Population Health at NYU School of Medicine. "It can also have adverse implications for one's career, since the majority of employers now use [social media platforms](#) to screen job candidates and may search for evidence of substance use."

In this study, the researchers examined data from 872 adults surveyed while entering electronic dance music (EDM) parties in New York City who reported current or previous [drug use](#). Participants were asked if they were ever high on a [drug](#) while they posted on social media, called

or texted someone, or were in a photo. Those who had were also asked if they later regretted the behavior.

The researchers estimate that more than a third of EDM attendees (34.3 percent) posted on social media while high, with 21.4 percent regretting it. In addition, more than half (55.9 percent) had texted or called someone while high, with 30.5 percent regretting making a call or sending a text. Nearly half (47.6 percent) had been in a photo while high, with 32.7 percent regretting it.

"At least one in five experienced regret after engaging in these behaviors while high, suggesting that some situations may have resulted in socially harmful or embarrassing scenarios," said Palamar.

Females and young adults (ages 18-24) were at particularly elevated risk for posting on social media while high and were also more likely to text, make calls, and take photos while high. Although young adults are a known high-risk demographic for substance use, females are typically at lower risk than males. However, research shows that females are more likely to use social media. EDM attendees who identified as neither heterosexual, nor gay, nor bisexual were also at a higher risk for social media posting and related behaviors while high. Separately, black participants were at a much lower risk for these activities.

Compared to users of other drugs, current marijuana users were at the highest risk for engaging in these risky behaviors while high, followed by current cocaine users.

"A significant portion of our sample engaged in the use of social media while high and regretted it. While more research is needed, our findings suggest a need for prevention or harm reduction programs to educate high-risk groups not only about the adverse health effects of [substance use](#), but also about the potential negative social outcomes," said study

coauthor Austin Le, MSc, a research associate in the NYU Langone Department of Population Health and a dental student at NYU College of Dentistry.

"While prevention programs have largely focused on physical safety—for example, not driving after drinking—such programs can also stress that using a smartphone while high can increase the risk of someone engaging in regretful behavior. Tactics such as using apps to prevent texting while intoxicated or delaying posting on social [media](#) until one is no longer experiencing drug effects may help to minimize social harm," added Palamar.

Provided by New York University

Citation: Many post on social media under the influence of drugs—and regret it (2019, August 6) retrieved 16 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-social-media-drugsand.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--