MCASA
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

P.O. Box 8782	Phone: 301-565-2277
Silver Spring, MD 20907	Fax: 301-565-3619
www.mcasa.org	SALI (legal): 301-565-2277

Guidance for Online Education & Outreach During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The purpose of this document is to help sexual assault advocates and service providers use technology effectively to connect to, and engage with, survivors, other service providers, and their communities online. During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing requirements have called all of us to find new and creative ways to connect with and support one another through online means, such as video software and social media. We hope this guidance offers you helpful suggestions on how you can continue to effectively interact with your communities. If you have any questions about implementing these, please feel free to reach out to collaborate@mcasa.org.

Education & Outreach

With social distancing guidelines in place, you may be wondering how to continue educating and reaching out to your community or campus. Below are some tips to help you maintain your impact, even at a distance!

- **Be creative and flexible:** Online and in-person trainings are quite different for a learner. So while it may be tempting to take your existing slides from an in-person training and transfer it directly online, ideally you should spend time thinking about how to adapt and translate content to this new setting to make it relevant and useful.
- **Timing**: An hour on Zoom, Adobe Connect, or other webinar platforms can feel a lot longer than an interactive in-person training. Think about condensing your content into the most important, actionable takeaways, or breaking down longer trainings into multiple sessions. A bonus of short sessions: they're easier to access on a cell phone! If a longer session still makes the most sense, incorporate short breaks.
- **Ask for support**: Have another person to support you during training and outreach, particularly as you're doing live events. They can help with inevitable technology challenges, monitor the chat, keep track of questions, transcribe or take notes, or record the session for later use.
- **Incorporate interactivity and relationship-building**: Audiences will be more likely to stay focused and feel motivated if there are opportunities to interact with the presenter and their fellow participants. Try:
    - Asking people to type comments/questions into the chat.
    - Using breakout rooms for participants to have smaller group conversations.
    - Polling or quizzes.
    - Having people use reactions like thumbs up or show of hands
    - Using fun icebreakers that work with your virtual platform. For example:
        - If you have video, get participants to grab an object from their space (like a photo or favorite coffee mug) and tell a thirty second story about it.

- Use chat or polling to have participants respond to silly 'would you rather?' or trivia questions.
- Start off by doing a quick visualization or grounding exercise.

- **Use video tools strategically**: Hosts can typically control whether participants all have video and audio, and can mute and unmute participants. Use these tools strategically- having way too many people on video can overwhelm systems and senses, and having participants who forget to mute themselves can be distracting.
- **Vary technology use**: Although webinars and Zoom meetings can be useful platforms for trainings, how can you continue to reach out to your community to make connections and share important information on a larger scale? Some ideas are included in the visual below, but take time to assess what tools are accessible and relevant for your target population.

Figure 1: Outreach and Physical Distance: Flyers and signage; contact with press and other media; phone calls, emails, or direct mail; social media posts, stories, and videos; giving talking points to influential community leaders; partnering with community service providers.

Tips for Universal Design & Accessible Media

"Universal Design for Learning recognizes the different needs that are unique to those with visual, hearing, motor, or learning/cognitive disabilities while also designing for able-bodied users as well. UDL provides us, as designers, with guidelines to create an environment that is built for all users to learn, play, and develop together while reducing limitations."
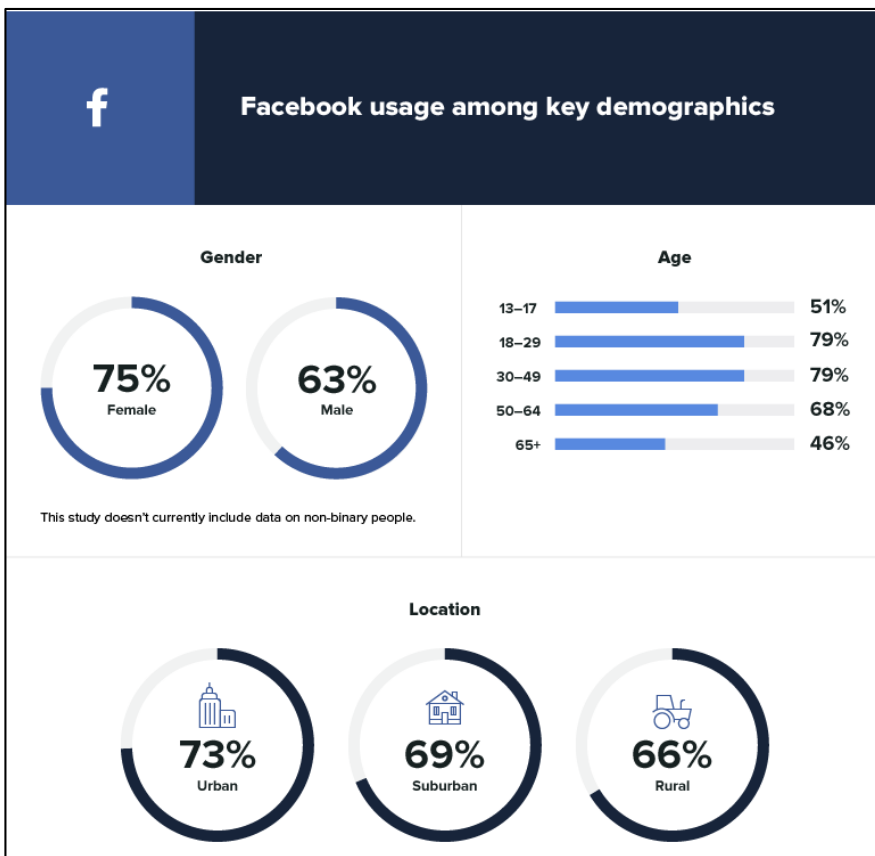
–Cindy McLoed, Schmidt Associates

- The Seven Principles of Universal Design (*adapted from the Institute for Human Centered Design*)
  - **Equitable Use**: The design does not disadvantage or stigmatize any group of users.
  - **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
  - **Simple, Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

  - **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
  - **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
  - **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.
  - **Size and Space for Approach & Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.
- Tips for Accessible Multimedia Presentations
  - For Designing Presentations
    - When using PowerPoint or Google Slides, predesigned slide layouts instead of manually creating text boxes. The layouts are specially coded to work well with adaptive technologies like screen readers.
    - Avoid using Prezi. Prezi is not accessible to screen reader technology and other accessibility needs.
    - Use high contrast colors. Avoid using color-coding as a means to communicate or emphasize information. Instead, use bold, italic, underline, or asterisks.
    - Avoid using too many distracting images or colors on slides. Avoid slide transitions.
    - Use large, sans serif fonts. Limit the number of lines of text on one slide.
    - Use captions or subtitles for all videos. Many YouTube videos have the option to enable closed captions.
    - Make sure your virtual presentation accommodates text-based screen reading software and computer devices. You can even create a QR codes for your PowerPoint so people who use these assistive devices and software can follow along on their own devices.
    - Request an interpreter for those who use Sign Language or whom English is a second language. Translate materials that are used or distributed for your training.
  - For Presenters
    - Preface each presentation with an overview of what participants can expect regarding both content as well as expected audience participation and interaction. Include content warnings when necessary.
    - Refresh and reinforce key information to help support memory retention.
    - Speak clearly and slowly.
    - Use simple language. Explain any acronyms you use that the group may be unfamiliar with.
    - People cannot read a slide and listen to a speaker at the same time. Include the most essential points on the slide and speak every word. Read long excepts aloud.

- Graphics cannot be read with screen readers. When presenting using images, shapes, charts, or graphics, explain them in as much detail as possible, and add alternative text next to each image. This is not needed for images that are solely decorative.
      - Choose clarity over quantity of content.
  - Resources
    - ACCESS Special Interest Group on Accessible Computing: https://www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-presentation-guide
    - Accessible U @ University of Michigan: https://accessibility.umn.edu/presentations/google-slides
    - ACPA Inclusive Presentations & Meetings: http://convention.myacpa.org/nashville2020/inclusive-meetings
    - National Center on Disability and Access to Education created "cheat sheets" for making Microsoft Office, Adobe, and other software accessible: http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets
    - The Learning Success Blog: https://blog.learnfasthq.com/how-to-improve-accessibility-to-online-learning-for-people-with-special-needs
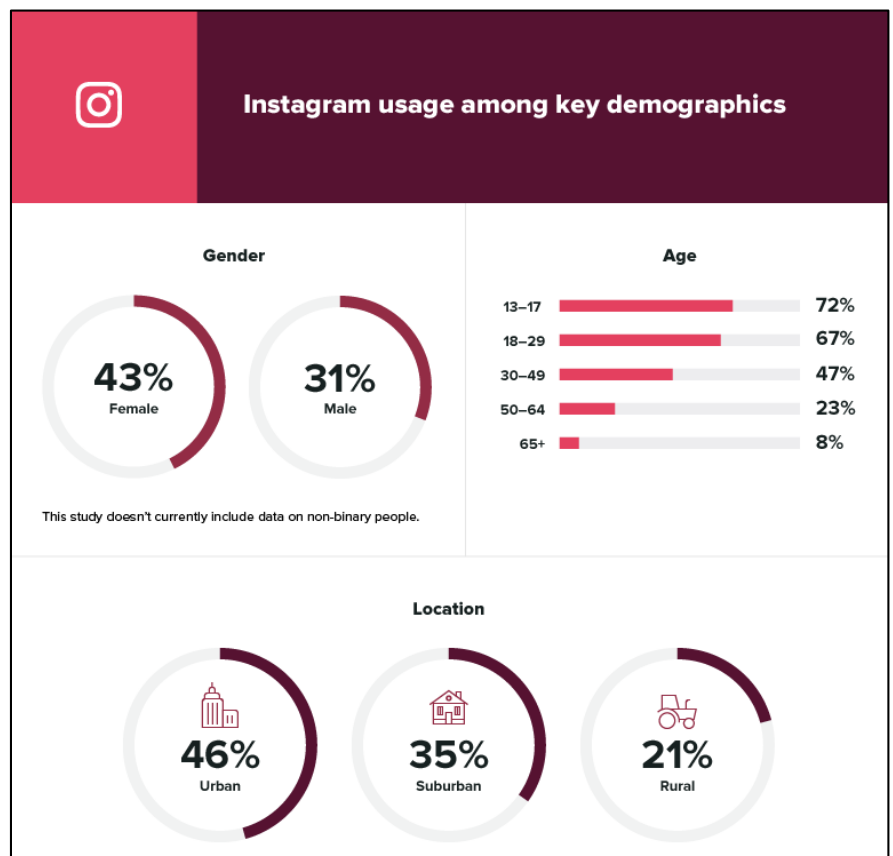
Social Media

As we continue our work from home and focus on maximizing our impact from a distance, social media is more important than ever. Below are some tips and strategies for getting the most out of your social media presence.

- Know your audience: Who are you trying to reach?
  - Plan your content accordingly; think about messaging, language, tone, and platform
  - When choosing a platform, consider:
    - Content style
      - Instagram is a visual platform ideal for graphics and photographs
      - Facebook lends itself to more complex text posts and link-sharing
      - Twitter is best for concise messages
      - Youtube is a video-based platform for both short and long-form content
      - TikTok is a video-based platform for short-form content
    - Who the users are
      - Below are some usage statistics for popular platforms Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube.
      - TikTok is another and newer platform option. According to Hootsuite:
        - The largest age group of U.S. users is **18-24 year olds**, which accounts for **42%** of their total users. That's followed by **13-17 year olds** at **27%**.
        - Approximately **60%** of U.S. users are female, versus **40%** male.

Facebook usage among key demographics

Gender

75% Female

63% Male

This study doesn't currently include data on non-binary people.

Age

13–17	51%
18–29	79%
30–49	79%
50–64	68%
65+	46%

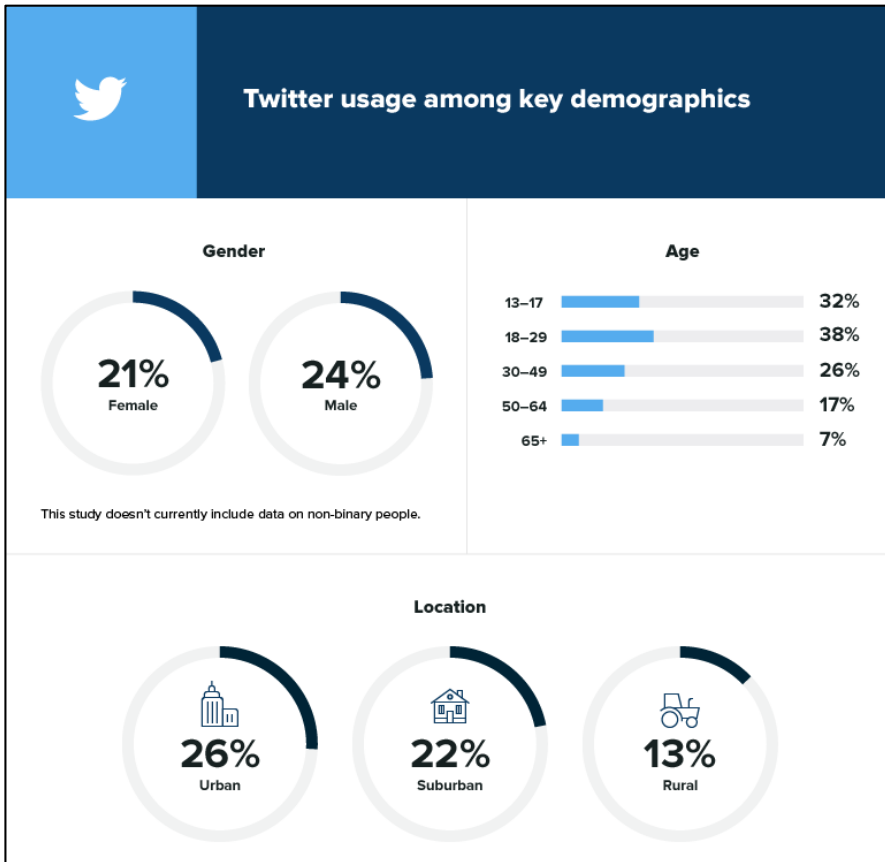**Location**

73% Urban

69% Suburban

66% Rural

- Except for those aged 65+, the majority of Americans in different age groups use Facebook.
- 75% of women and 63% of men use Facebook.
- In the U.S., 73% of those living in an urban area, 69% in suburban areas, and 66% in rural areas use Facebook.

Source: SproutSocial

- 35% of U.S. teens consider Instagram their favorite social network. 72% of those aged 13-17 use the platform.
- 43% of women and 31% of men use Instagram.
- In the U.S., 33% of those living in an urban area, 37% in suburban areas, and 43% in rural areas use Facebook.
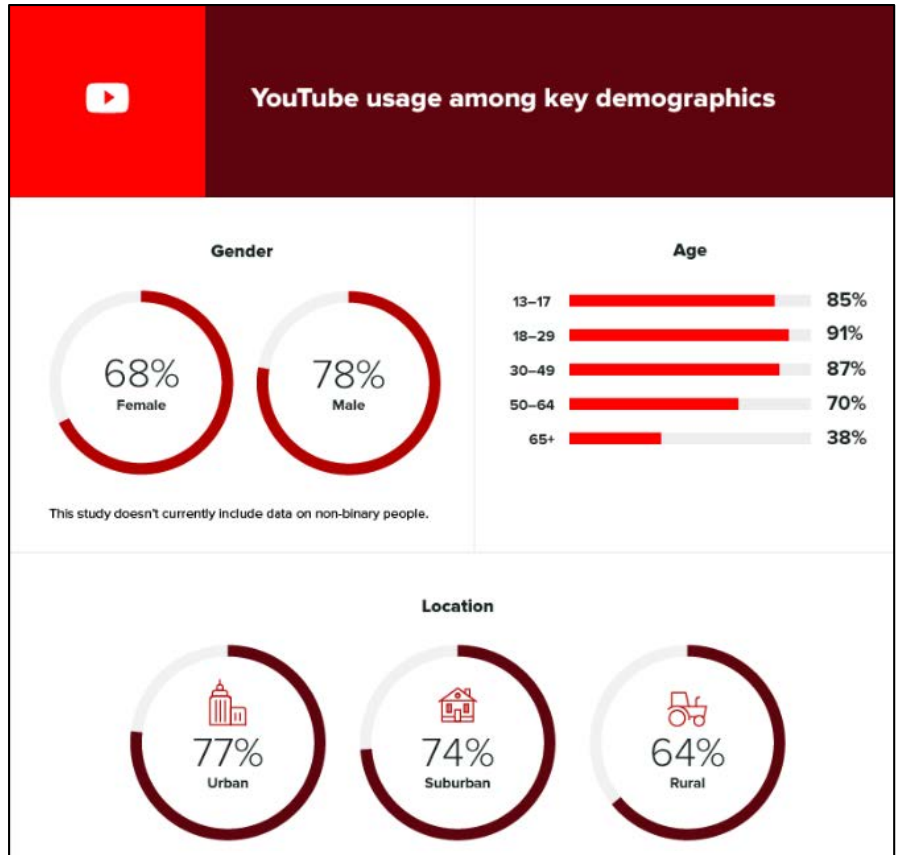

Instagram usage among key demographics

Gender

43% Female

31% Male

This study doesn't currently include data on non-binary people.

Age

13–17	72%
18–29	67%
30–49	47%
50–64	23%
65+	8%

Location

46% Urban

35% Suburban

21% Rural

Source: SproutSocial

MCASA
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Twitter usage among key demographics

Source: *SproutSocial*

- 73% of U.S adults use YouTube, and 90% of those aged 18-24 use the platform.
- 78% of men and 68% of women use YouTube.
- In the U.S., 77% of those living in an urban area, 74% in suburban areas, and 64% in rural areas use YouTube.

- 22% of U.S adults use Twitter, and 44% of those aged 18-24 use the platform.
- 24% of men and 21% of women use Twitter.
- In the U.S., 26% of those living in an urban area, 22% in suburban areas, and 13% in rural areas use Facebook.

YouTube usage among key demographics

Source: *SproutSocial*

- Social Media Guidelines
  - Keep your platforms up-to-date and maintain a coherent look via consistent logos, colors, and imagery.
  - Use hashtags when posting. Proper use of hashtags widens your reach, especially if they go viral or refer to a specific event.
  - Only post content (information, research, statistics, etc.) from trusted organizations.
  - Tag other organizations when sharing their content or referencing them.
  - Actively check and screen what is being commented, tagged, or direct messaged.
  - Have a script for responding to survivors who reach out via public post or direct message (do not ignore comments from survivors in public mentions). Here is what MCASA uses:
    - "Thank you for sharing your story, and taking the courageous step of coming forward to seek assistance. There are resources available- You can reach the Sexual Assault Legal Institute at 301-565-2277 and find your local rape crisis center on our website: https://mcasa.org/survivors/find-a-rape-crisis-center."
  - DO NOT:
    - Ignore public comments from survivors made on your accounts.
    - Disclose any confidential or office-only information.
    - Post any images, personal information, etc. of staff members.
    - Tag photos that may jeopardize the confidential location of victims, or survivors (e.g. geo-filters, tagging, pinning, etc.).
    - Include any photo, graphic, video, etc. that may contain sensitive or confidential information
    - Use copyrighted images: All images should be original, bought, or labeled for noncommercial reuse.
    - Post unverified information, research, or statistics.