

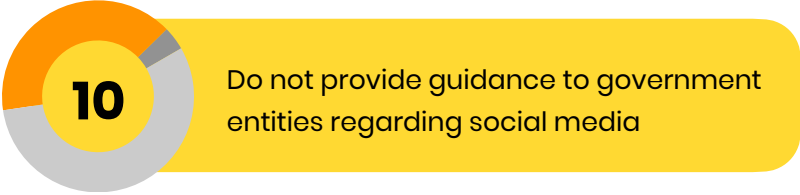
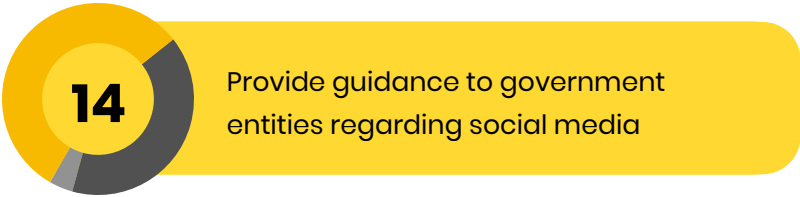
# INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) published “Social Media as State Public Records: A Collection Practices Scan.” This document provided a window into how state, territory, and the District of Columbia archives organize, retain, collect, and manage state government social media records. The information provided in the document remains relevant.

However, capturing social media continues to be an ongoing challenge to state and territorial government archives and records managers, whose mission it is to preserve and provide access to government records. In an effort to better grasp these challenges, the CoSA State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI) invited state and territorial archivists to participate in a brief survey to gather more information about their respective social media landscapes, including:

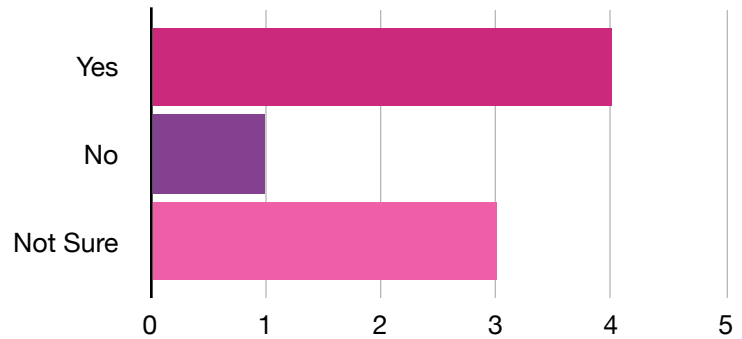
- Guidance provided to government agencies on how to manage communications on social media
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in place for handling confidential information, transfer protocols, and other aspects of social media management.

**25 states** responded to the survey. Of these respondents:

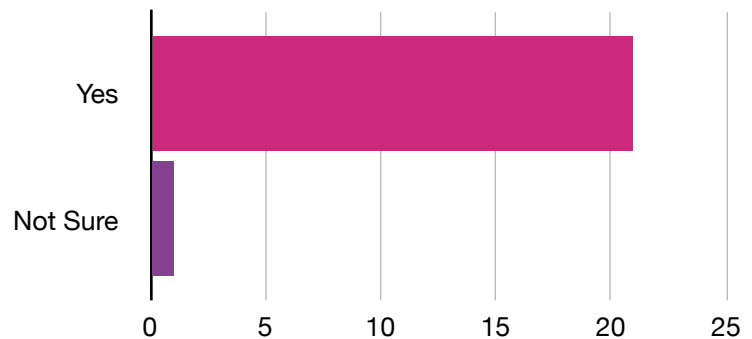


## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY STATE AND LOCAL ENTITIES

Do state and local entities determine how to manage and retain their own social media?



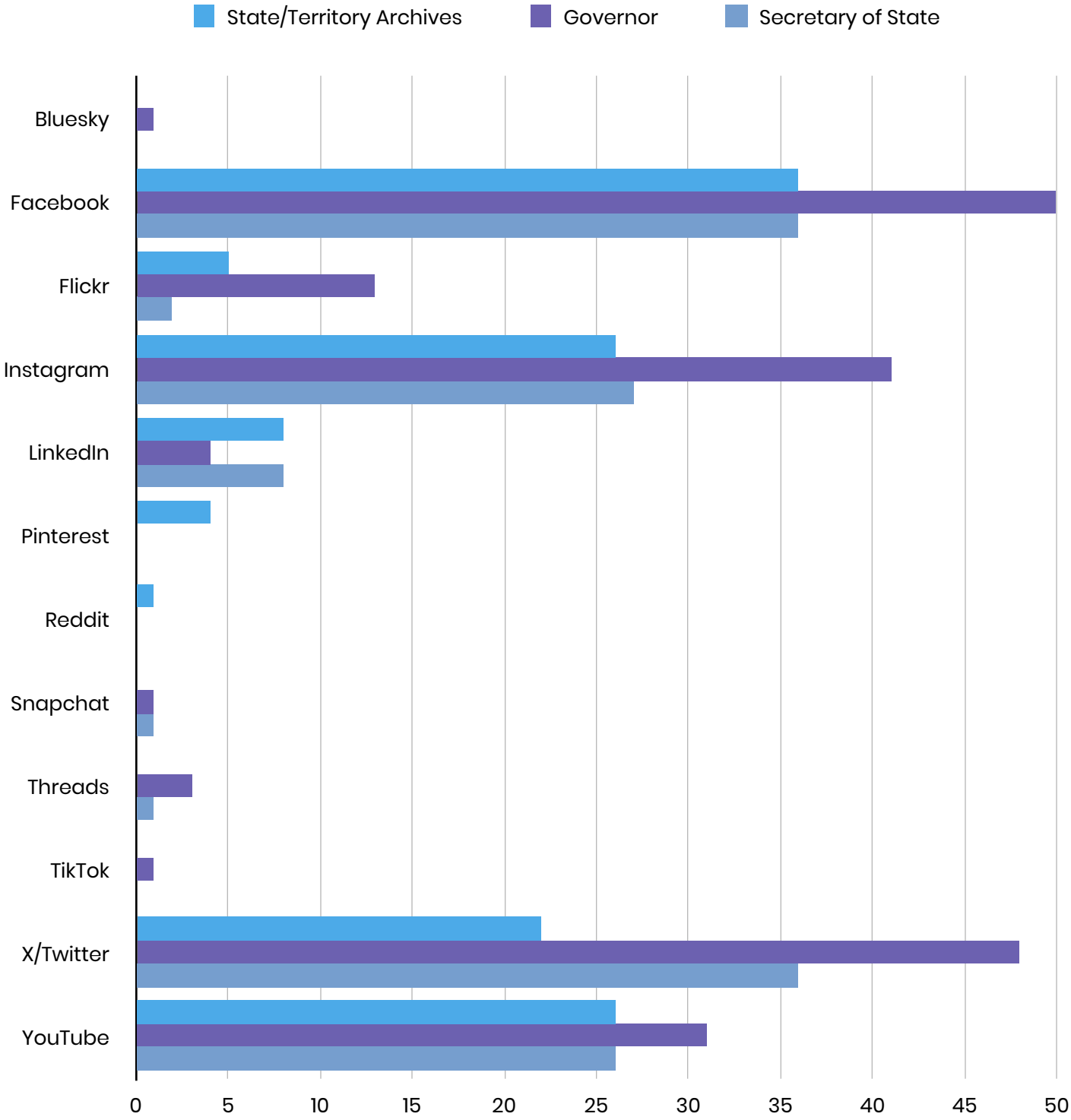
In your state or territory, is the use of social media by government entities common practice?



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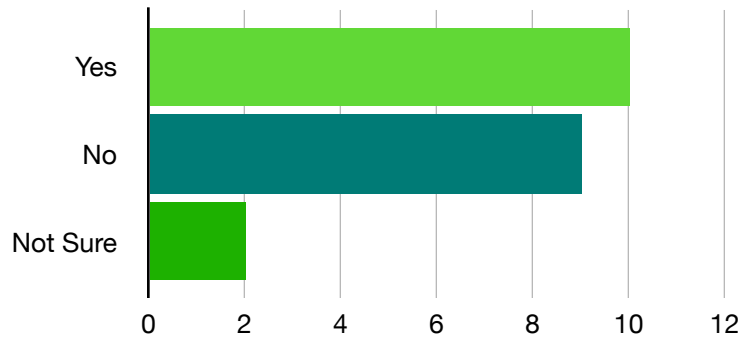
Responses indicated that use of social media was common practice for state and local agencies. Facebook and X/ Twitter were most common.

The following graph shows the social media platforms linked on the websites of the state and territory archives, Governors, and Secretaries of State.

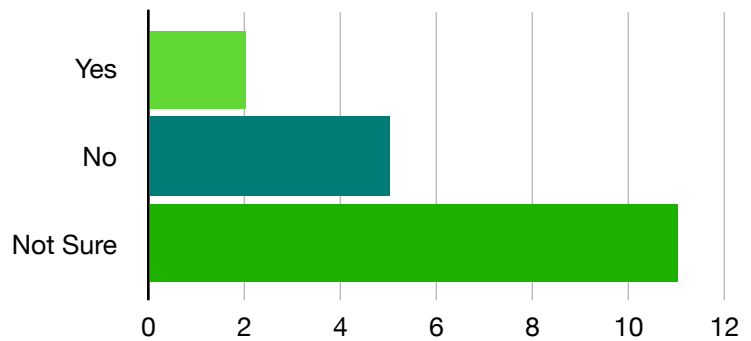


## SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LAW

Are there laws, rules, or records retention requirements that specifically address the use of social media by government entities?



Has the judicial system in your state/territory issued any rulings related to the public nature of government social media?



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States' statutes and laws are largely in a agreement that **public records are determined by the content and context rather than the medium.**

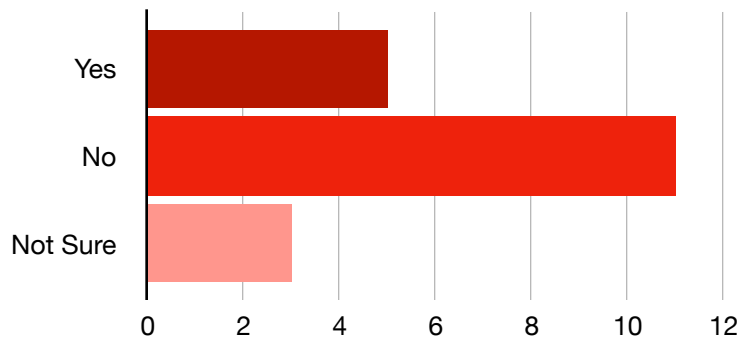
- "Social Media as Public Records: A Collection Practices Scan"

**40%** of responses agreed that social media content created and used in relation to government business is considered a public record.

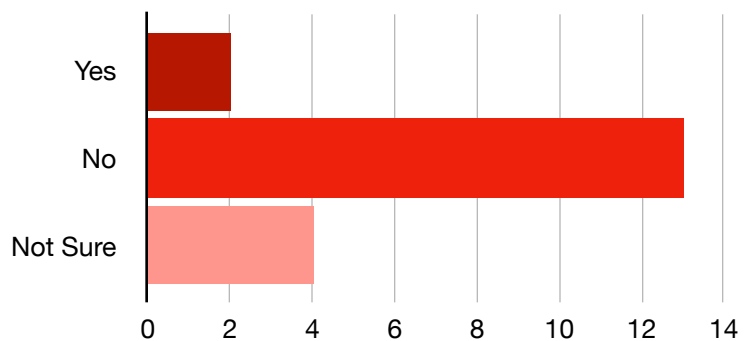
In this case, records retention schedules dictate the retention period and disposition directions to apply. Whether social media content is specifically identified or is identified by existing record types appears to vary.

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

Do you have SOPs for how to handle comments and/or messages received through social media channels that contain PII?



Do you have SOPs to address government accounts blocking users?



Much of the guidance provided by archives is regarding the appropriate retention of social media and is offered through published manuals and training. The ability and need to save social media comments varies by state and territorial archive. How an archives handles personal identifiable information (PII) depends on whether the archives retains the comments at all.

However, not all social media guidance comes from the archives; 8% of responses indicated that another agency, such as the Office of the Chief Information Officer, provides guidance and SOPs related to use and engagement, including blocking users.

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS

State and territorial archives continue to face challenges in the collection of social media content for archiving purposes. Some concerns mentioned in the survey include the **volume of social media content to capture**, **the difficulty in appraisal**, and **separating permanent and non-permanent content**. This may make it difficult to create clear guidance.

Based on “Social Media as State Public Records: A Collection Practices Scan” and the most recent survey, here are some things to consider:

- **Follow a retention schedule.** Many states and territories agree that social media content is public record. Ensure that it is retained accordingly.
- **Don't depend on the platform for permanent retention.** Do not rely on social media platforms for preservation. Social media platforms are not guaranteed to exist forever. Ensure that the platform is not the only location to access content like press releases and photos.
- **Have a plan for engagement.** Whether an archives considers comments permanent or non-permanent records, government agencies with active social media accounts should have a plan in place for how they engage the public.
- **Consider end of term plans.** Is the social media account for an individual official or for the office or department? When an official leaves office, is login information provided to the archives to aid in capture? Is a new account created for each new official? Archives may collect social media via tools like Archivelt, but government agencies should work with the archives to determine the best method of capturing an account at the end of a term.