

THE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT WE LEAVE

Everyday, people contribute to the growing portfolio of who they are online--whether they want to or not.

While social media and technology have become a normal part of most people's lives, many users are unaware of the personal information they leave behind when online.

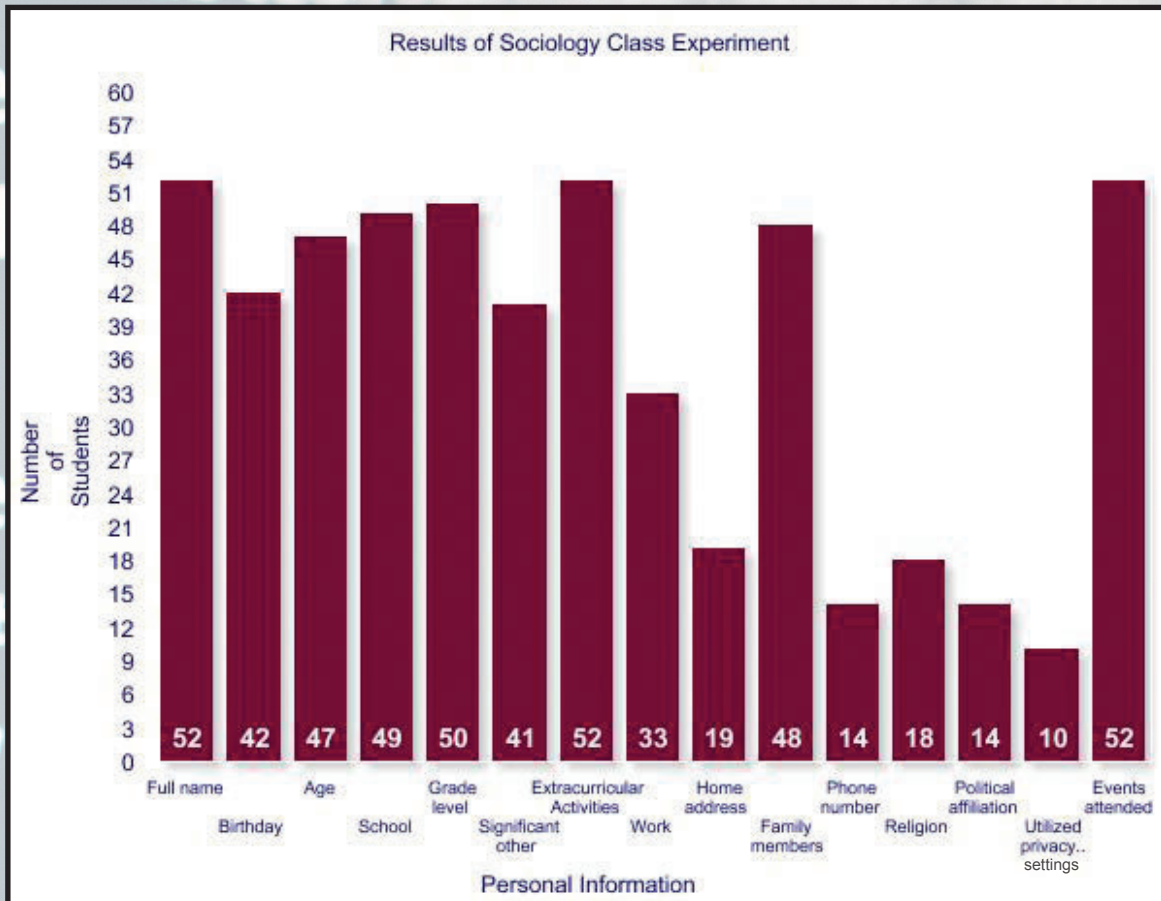
A digital footprint is the trail of data that is created when using social media and the internet. There are two types of digital footprints: a passive footprint and an active footprint. A passive footprint is created when a person's data is stored unintentionally. For example, a website can store IP addresses that provide access to a person's location or service provider. When using social media or sending an email, users are contributing to their active digital footprints.

With the boom of social media in recent years, Americans' active digital footprints are becoming quite detailed. Business Insider reported that 8,796 photos are shared on Snapchat every second by over 200 million users--and that is just one social media app.

With an increasing number of colleges and employers using digital footprints in their decision-making processes, knowing how to make smart digital decisions and stay protected online is increasingly important.



The information displayed below was gathered by students in Trevor Zahn’s sociology class. Students were instructed to gather as much information about a random Pleasant Valley student and Instagram user whom they did not already know, using only the internet as their tool for gathering information. The assignment challenged students to attempt to find specific pieces of personal information about their subject. The graph summarizes the students’ findings after researching the digital footprint of 52 Pleasant Valley students.



STUDENT REFLECTIONS...

“This showed me that people put a lot of intimate and private information on the Internet.”
- Sheridan Culp, senior

“This assignment showed me that, if I really needed to, I could find out so much on someone. It also tells me that people could do the same to me.”
- Addie Even, junior

“It makes me uncomfortable knowing that so much information about myself can be found throughout the internet. I still like social media, but it makes me feel better knowing all my accounts are private and not on display for stalkers.”
- Bri Brauner, senior

“We are not an anonymous society and so much information about us is really one click away.”
- Cade Lewis, senior

“This showed me how easy it is to find anyone’s information on the internet. I didn’t realize the only “skill” you needed was the ability to use Google. It honestly makes me want to delete everything I have and move to Cambodia.”
- Ashley Lie-Atjam, senior