

Social Media Bots Draw Public's Attention and Concern | Pew Research Center

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Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, many Americans have expressed concern about the presence of misinformation online, particularly on social media. Recent Congressional hearings and investigations by social media sites and academic researchers have suggested that one factor in the spread of misinformation is social media bots - accounts that operate on their own, without human involvement, to post and interact with others on social media sites.

This topic has drawn the attention of much of the public: About two-thirds of Americans (66%) have heard about social media bots, though far fewer (16%) have heard a lot about these accounts. Among those aware of the phenomenon, a large majority are concerned that bot accounts are being used maliciously, according to a new Pew Research Center survey conducted July 30-Aug. 12, 2018, among 4,581 U.S. adults who are members of Pew Research Center's nationally representative American Trends Panel (the Center has previously studied bots on Twitter and the news sites to which they link). Eight-in-ten of those who have heard of bots say that these accounts are mostly used for bad purposes, while just 17% say they are mostly used for good purposes.

To further understand some of the nuances of the public's views of social media bots, the remainder of this study explores attitudes among those Americans who have heard about them (about a third - 34% - have not heard anything about them).

Source: Social Media Bots Draw Public's Attention and Concern | Pew Research Center