

WhatsApp Out, Podcasts In: How Teacher Media Habits Are Changing Our Surveys

Back in 2019 - before the pandemic turned everything upside down - we launched the Teacher Tapp 7 Types of Teachers on Social Media report. Our aim? To figure out how teachers were using social and mainstream media because no one else was accurately tracking it.

Fast forward six years, however, and the world has moved on. Our questions needed looking at again. So we've been discussing, reviewing, googling, and giving the whole thing an overhaul. And here's what we've learned...

The collapse of clean categories

In 2019, it was easy enough to list platforms. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram. That was about it.

There was always one outlier: WhatsApp. We originally added it because teachers were increasingly joining groups and sharing our daily blogs on Teacher Tapp. Hence, it felt social media-ish: broadcast groups, communities; this was going to be the way forward. But now? WhatsApp is just... well, WhatsApp. It's a private messaging system - same as Snapchat, same as Telegram. They're not really what we think of as social media. So we have binned WhatsApp.

YouTube was another headache. Is it social media? Or a video library, more like iPlayer? In the past, the latter was a fair argument but now it has Shorts, which look just like TikToks, which look just like Instagram reels and those are definitely social media. So, fine - YouTube is in. (iPlayer remains out).

We've also added Reddit (because forums are back, hurray!)

Unfortunately, this does mean the platform list is now a monster. We considered splitting the sample - giving half the questions to one group and half to another - but we've gone with it as is, and hope everyone can cope.

What ARE you doing here? - A Change!

Another challenge was our old question about what teachers were doing online. Previously,

we asked if teachers were liking, reading, sharing... but we didn't separate work from non-work. Oops! This meant we couldn't tell if someone was downloading a cat meme or a serious teaching resource on Adolescence.

This year, we're going to be more intentional. We're focusing only on activities for work. We debated asking it by platform - e.g., "On YouTube, did you watch, share, download..." - but we feared it'd be long and dull to complete. So, for now, we're sticking to activity type, not platform, but we may go more granular in future.

Traditional media's slow fade - and the death of the 'trusted source'

Then there's the depressing bit (for me, at least, as a former journalist): the slow fade of traditional media. We've always asked about newspapers. Each year we had a big list that included: The Times/Sunday Times, Guardian/Observer, Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph etc.

But the Observer is no longer part of the Guardian. Most people don't know if they're reading Mail Online on a Sunday or a Tuesday. And what even is the BBC these days? Lots of teachers get their written news from BBC, but it's not a newspaper. Ugh.

So we've simplified. First, we removed a question about who you trust for news - as it often depends on topic as much as outlet - and the question was starting to feel harder to answer. We have retained questions about which media you are reading but the list now is:

- Daily newspapers only
- No Sunday papers
- No BBC. (It wasn't in before, and it's staying out. Because it's not a newspaper)
- A separate education-specific media question

Being honest, in future years we expect to face the tough question: Should we even ask about newspapers at all? But let's worry about that another day.

Podcasts and influencers: New frontiers

On the upside, one media area that has grown: Podcasts. When we started, we didn't ask about them. Now, they're everywhere. The only problem is that teachers often don't know the podcast name, only the host!

In an open question, where Tappers typed who they listened to, they often gave us the host's name rather than the podcast title. Nevertheless, we've spent time creating a proper list, trimming out dead shows and we hope people will still recognise the podcast names when they see them in the survey!

Finally, we'll be asking our type-influencers-you-can-remember question again this year. Last year only Mr P ICT stood out. But with TikTok, Instagram reels, and YouTube Shorts, maybe a new name will breakthrough?

The end of this piece is in sight...

So the bottom line is that we are still tracking social and news media among teachers. And

we're still excited to find out what's going on. Even if it's been a bit more faff this year.

The updated report is due out mid-June. Watch this space. Or TikTok. Or Discord. Or... wherever it is you hang out now. Frankly, we're struggling to keep up!