State food safety agencies' use of social media

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FOOD
SAFETY

Background

- Recall activities are critical for a state's food safety program, inclusive of outreach & education.
- 2017 consumer survey of 1200 Americans
  - 40% of people rank food recalls as "most important"
  - 27% think they're "technicalities" & not a public health threat
- 2020 International Food Safety Consumer Survey
  - 85% of U.S. consumers trust the food they consume
  - 69% are more worried about food safety now (vs. pre-COVID-19)
- How can regulatory agencies overcome recall fatigue & optimistic bias to reach stakeholders?
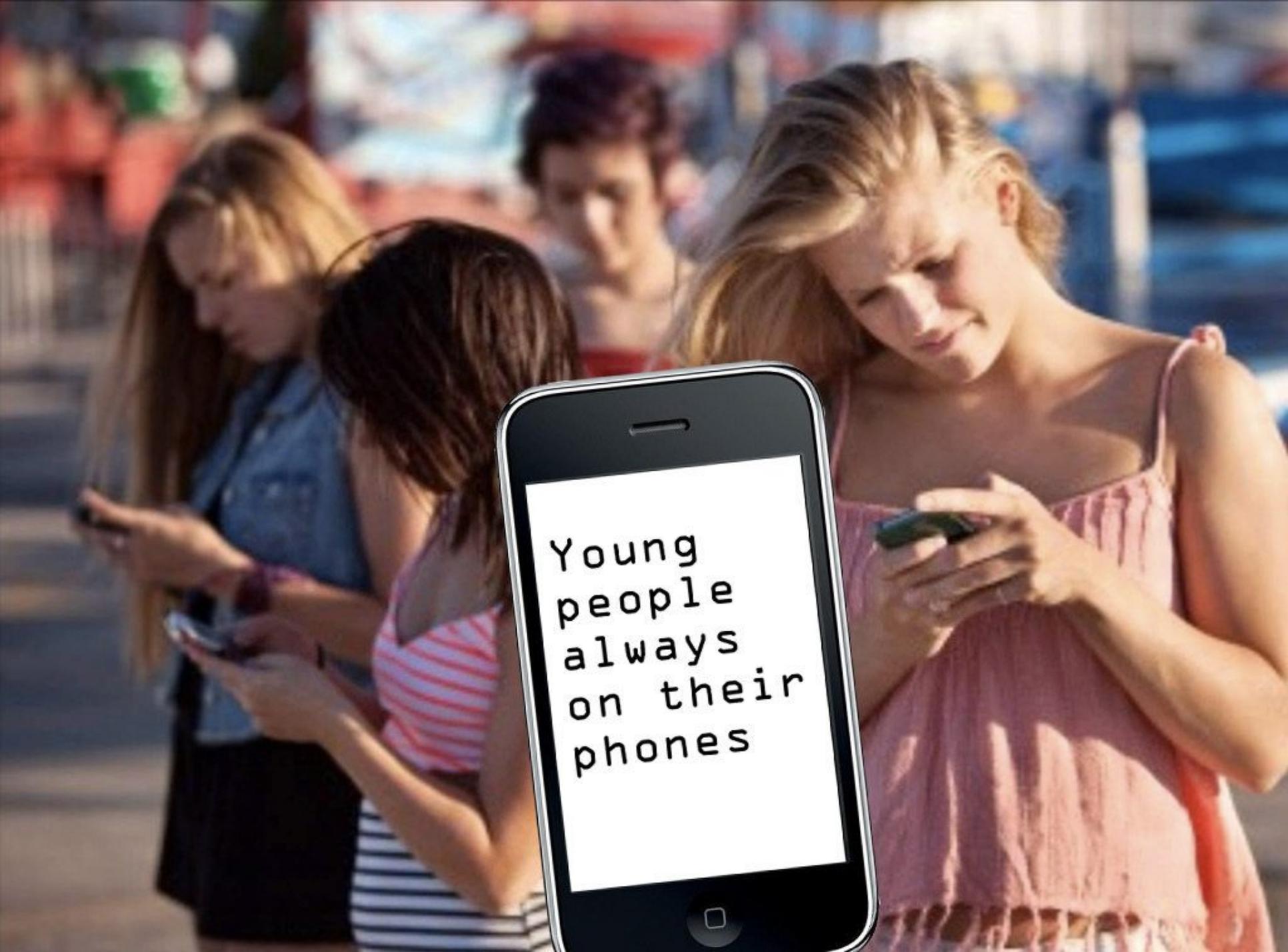
Young
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Social Media Demographics by Gender & Age Group

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
Total	69%	37%	27%
Men	63%	31%	29%
Women	75%	43%	24%

% of U.S. adults who use at least one social media site, by age
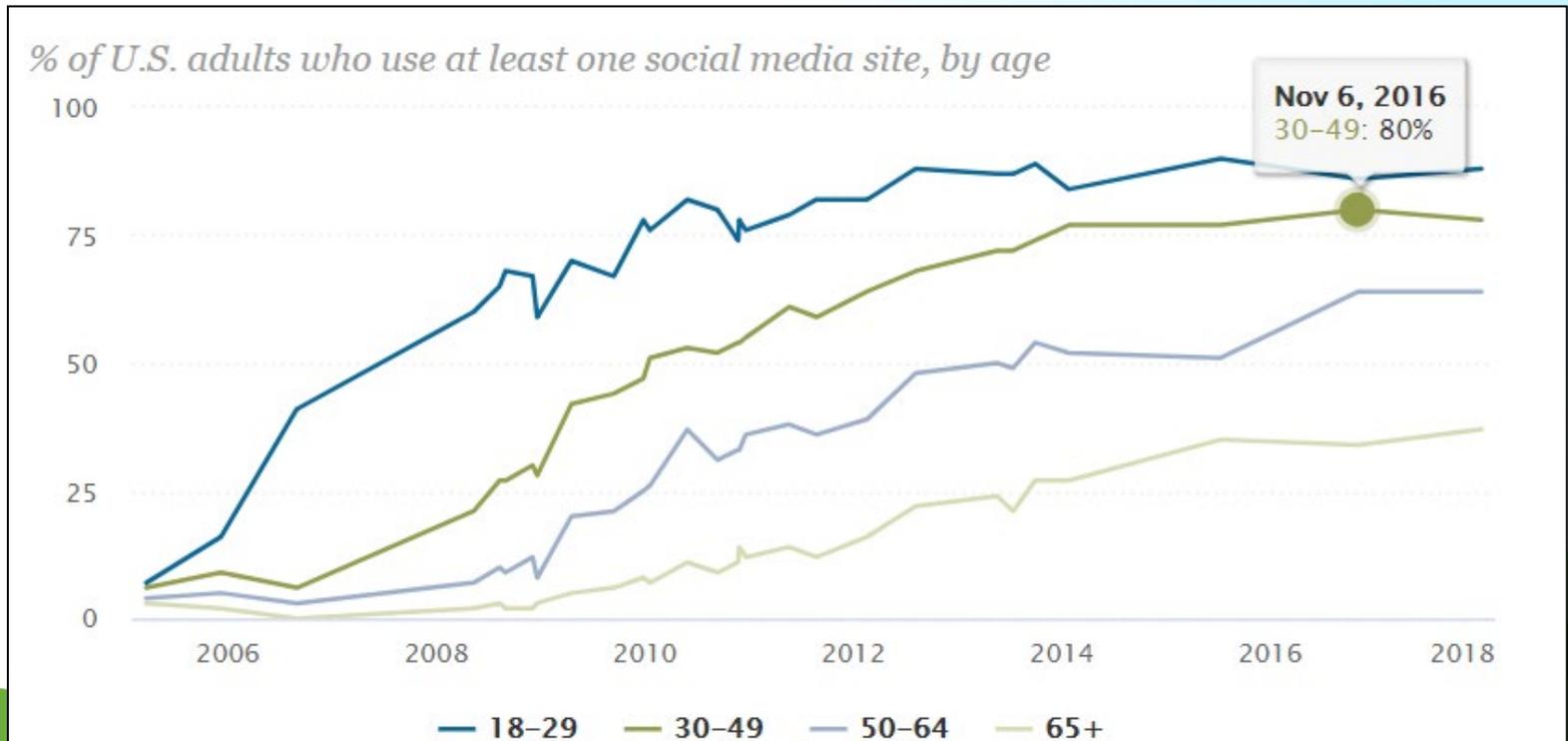
Nov 6, 2016
30–49: 80%

— 18–29 — 30–49 — 50–64 — 65+

Image Source:
www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media
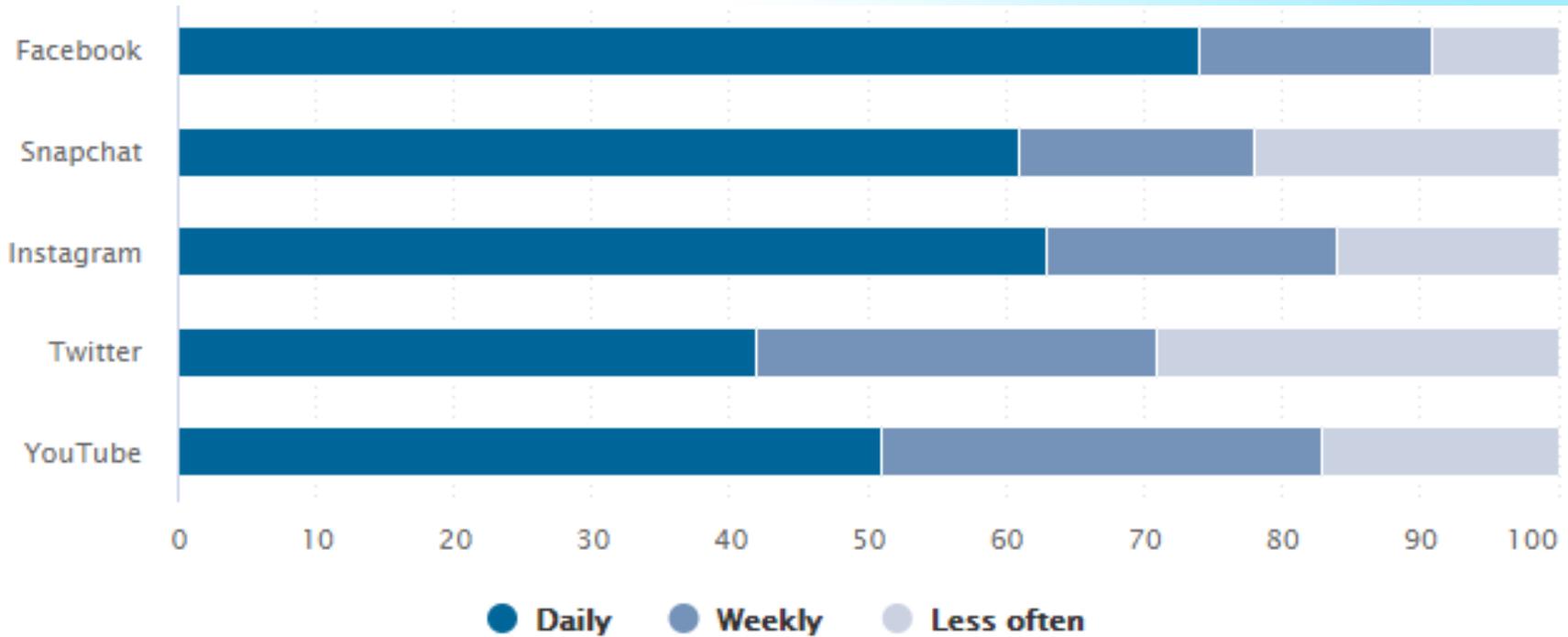Research survey conducted 2005-2019

Frequency of Social Media Use

Problem Statement

- There is no published research in peer-reviewed food safety literature regarding social media practices by state food safety agencies related to effective communication of food recalls with the public.

Food safety to me is first about protecting public health, but it's also about trust...That's why we want to tap into new technologies and data streams to identify outbreaks and trace the origin of a contaminated food to its source in minutes, or even seconds, instead of days or weeks."

-Frank Yiannas, FDA Deputy Commissioner for Food Policy

Image via Twitter @FrankYiannasFDA

Research Questions and Methods

1. What social media tools are most common & how long have these tools been used?

2. What factors play into communication & who shares the message?

3. How effective is social media/how does the agency measure success?

SurveyMonkey®

- Closed- & open-ended questions
- Email discussion
- Analysis:
  - Changing trends 2014-19
  - Perceived effectiveness
  - Organizational culture
  - Best practices

Study Populations - Comparing 2014 & 2019

2014: 68
2019: 28

- # of state food safety programs emailed

2014: 28
2019: 20

- # of completed survey responses

2014: 41%
2019: 71%

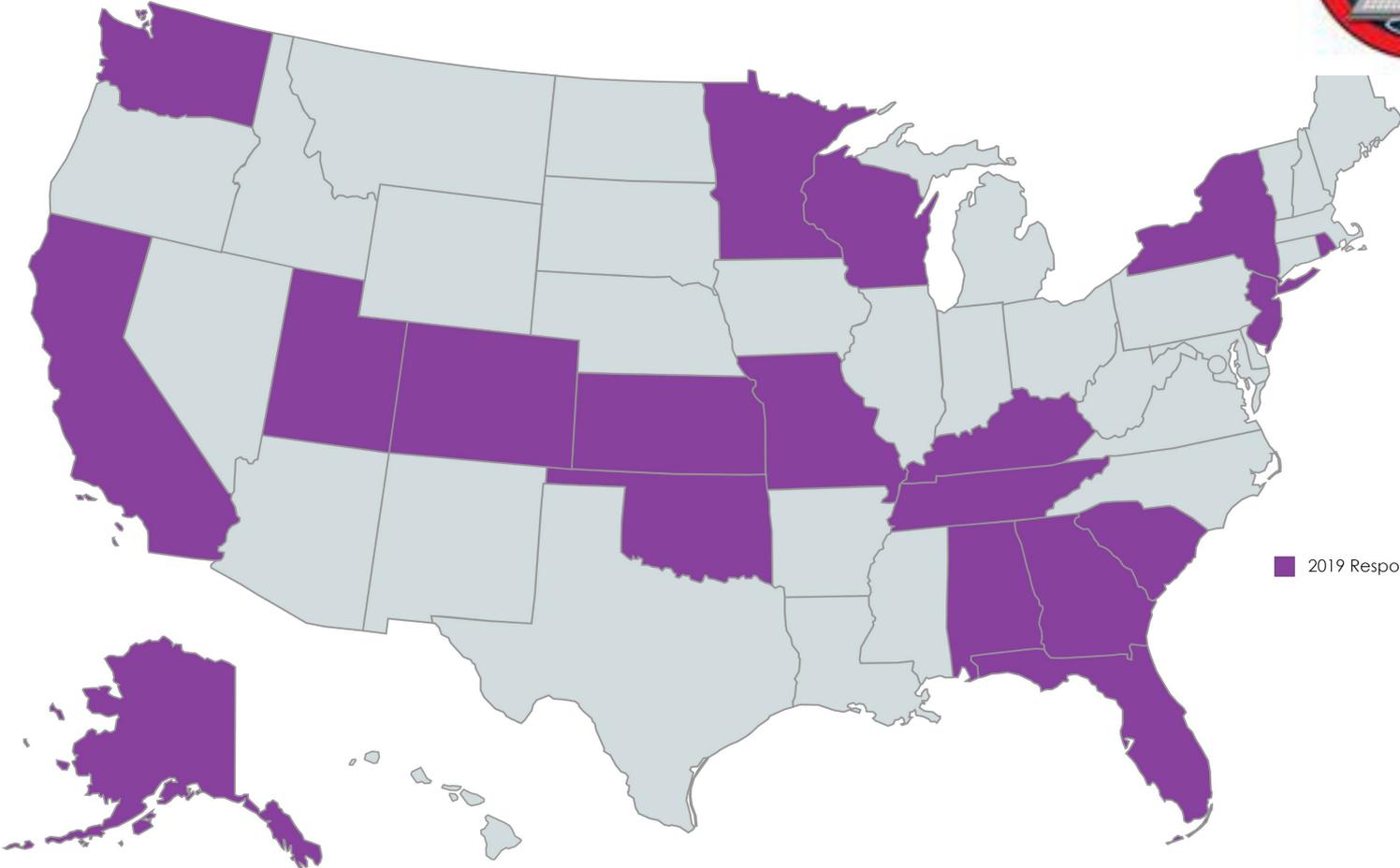- Percentage of survey response rate

2014: 15/13
2019: 10/10

- # of state Ag/Health agencies represented
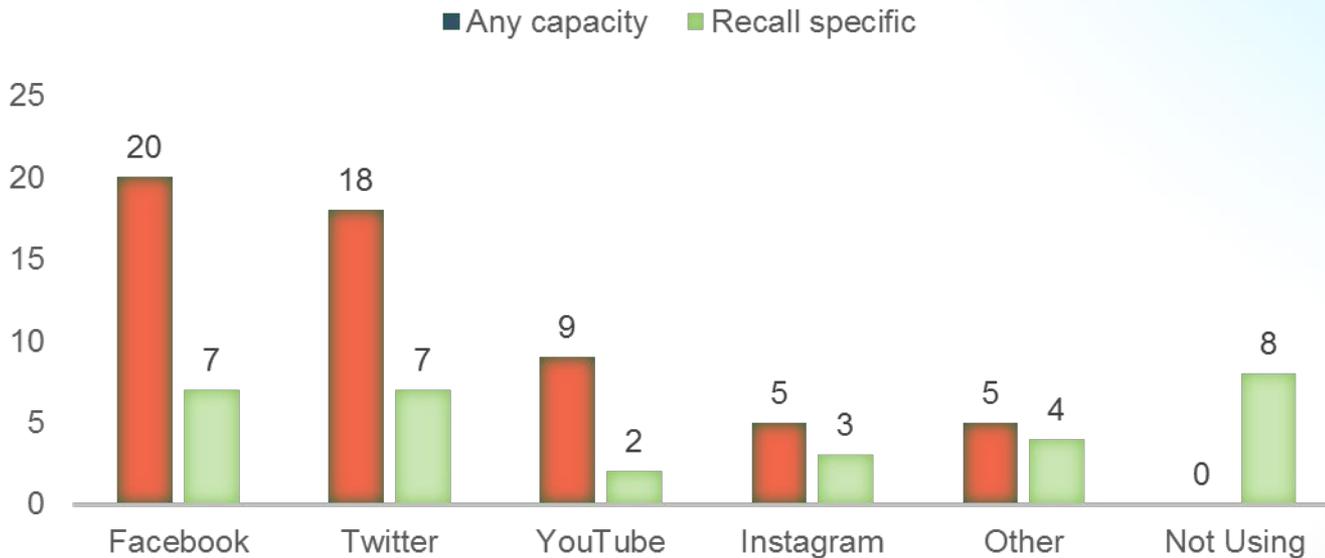
2014: 19
2019: 11

- # of agencies that gave additional feedback

Study Population Map

2019 Respondent states

Created with mapchart.net ©

Research Results

- 20/20 respondent state agencies use social media (up from 82%).
- 10/20 use social media to communicate recalls (50%, up from 48%).
- 13/20 agencies report measuring success of SM use in some capacity.
- Social media use primarily began ≥ 2010, used with traditional media.
- Handled by a PIO/Office of Communications or a combination of staff.

■ Any capacity   ■ Recall specific

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Instagram	Other	Not Using
Any capacity	20	18	9	5	5	0
Recall specific	7	7	2	3	4	8

Other:
GovDelivery
LinkedIn
Website
Email blast

Factors for Recall Communication

- In-state origination and/or distribution (55%)
- Class I recall (25%)
- Pathogen → press release → SM (esp if in-state)
- Other factors include scope of the incident, media attention, consumer interest.
- More analysis of "success" in 2019 versus 2014.
  - Likes, follows, shares, retweets.
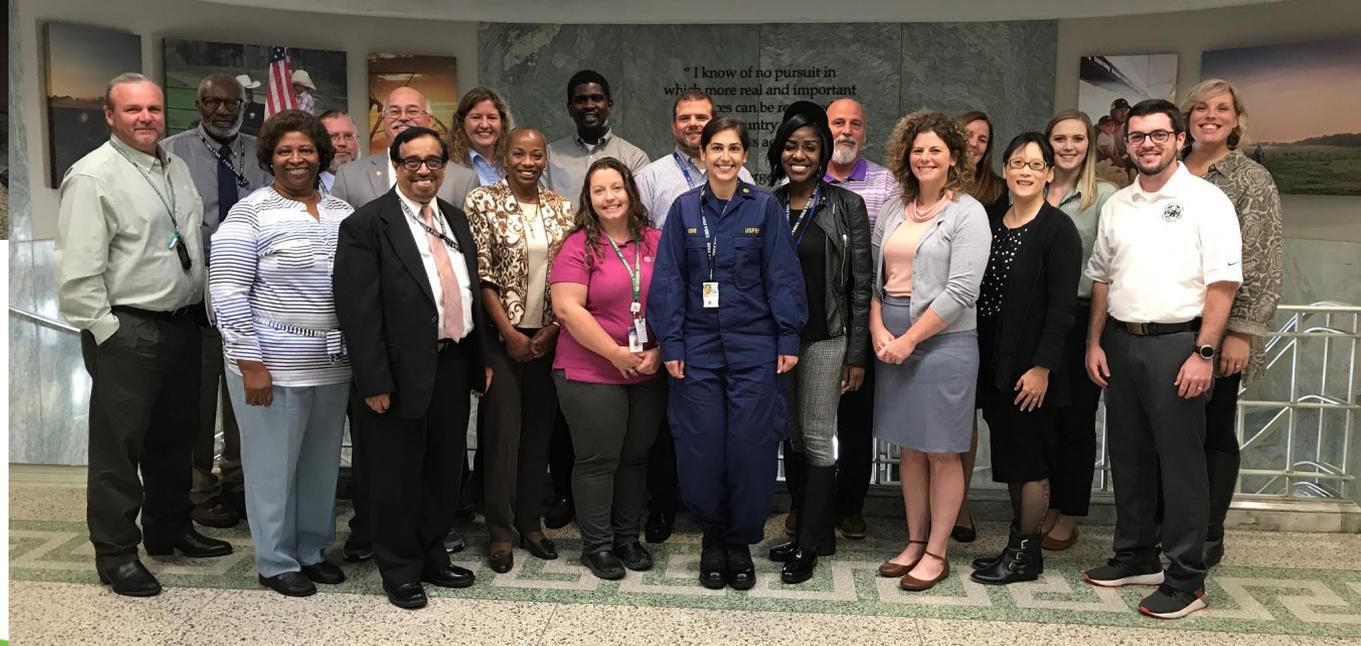 - Click rates, reach & engagement of posts.
  - Recall audit checks.

"We aren't using SM for recalls because…"

Conclusions & Recommendations

- SM is often done in concert with traditional media channels but is underutilized as a platform for two-way dialogue (*continue to implement into existing social media use*).

- There is a gap in communication; food safety regulators are rarely involved in messaging for a food related incident (*joint training creates shared responsibility/collaboration*).

- Agencies are taking greater steps to review the success of social media as an effective communication tool (*continue evaluation of SM outreach*).

- Align policies and procedures to address social media use (*provide a model example as guidance for state programs*).

USDA-GDA Meet & Greet

FDA-GDA Recall Shadowing

Information Technology as a Tool

- Distribution list information
  - Changing into a common form
  - Automatic distribution

- Recall Audits
  - Use technology such as computers, smart phones, and tablets
    - UPC codes
    - Geolocation
    - Photos

- Analysis of data

  https://www.oursafefood.com/

Acknowledgements

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