

APPENDIX
LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Social media use in public administration in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK

Principal Investigator:

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Purpose of the Study:

You are invited to take part in this study on the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) by government agencies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. We are hoping to learn how social media users are using government social media and why in areas of immigration, environment and climate change, and health in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

Procedures involved in the Research:

If you would like to participate in this study, you will be asked about your experiences with government social media. The interview will be held online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, or, if you prefer, via telephone or in person at a quiet location in Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, Ontario, Canada (for example, in a private room in a public library). You will be asked questions about why you decided to use government social media, what you were anticipating from leaving a post and/or reply, if you had any concerns using government social media, your overall satisfaction with government social media, and general questions about your use of social media. I will also ask you for some demographic/background information like your age, education, gender, country and current occupation.

The interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. However, you can request the recording to be terminated at any time during the interview.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You may feel uncomfortable with certain questions or feel anxious about your personal identity being revealed. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Incentive to Participate

As a token of appreciation for your time, you will be provided with an electronic gift card with the value of \$25 Canadian dollars. You will receive the gift card before we begin the interview.

Potential Benefits

The research will not benefit you directly. At the same time, you can greatly contribute to the understanding of the ways social media is used by government agencies, identify opportunities for improvement as well as best practices.

Confidentiality

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. No one but me or research assistants will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them.

This study will use either Zoom or Microsoft Teams platform to collect data, which is an externally hosted cloud-based service. Please note that whilst this service is approved for collecting data in this study by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please talk to me if you have any concerns.

We are not collecting any directly identifying information. However, through the combination of demographic information (e.g., your gender, age and occupation) it may be possible to identify some participants. Please keep this in mind when deciding whether you want to participate and what questions you answer.

Information and will kept on a password-protected USB/hard drive. Once the study has been completed, the data will be destroyed, following three years after the completion. If we meet in person, the information/data you provide will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office where only I will have access to it.

Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from the interview for whatever reason, even after giving consent or part-way through the study or up until **November 1, 2023**, when I expect to complete this study.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study. If you decide to withdraw, following the interview, please email Dr. Maria Gintova at gintovam@mcmaster.ca.

Information about the Study Results:

I expect to have this study completed by approximately **November 1, 2023**. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Dr. Maria Gintova at:

gintovam@mcmaster.ca or +1(905) 525-9140 ext. 24372

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Dr. Gintova of McMaster University.
- I am confirming that I am over 18 years old and thus eligible to participate in this study.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until **November 1, 2023**.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Consent Questions:

If yes,

1. Would you like a copy of the study results? If yes, where should we send them (email, social media account)?
2. Where can we send your gift card?
3. Do you agree to audio and/or video recording? Please note that a video recording is not required but if you prefer to project your video, this is OK as the recording will be destroyed as soon as the interview is transcribed.