

NATIONAL STUDY

# JUST GOOGLE ME

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HOW OUR PERSONAL SEARCH RESULTS AFFECT OUR  
EVERYDAY RELATIONSHIPS, FROM WHO WE DO  
BUSINESS WITH, WHO WE VOTE FOR AND EVEN  
WHO WE DATE



BrandYourself

harris  
INTERACTIVE

By [BrandYourself](#), the only do-it-yourself platform to improve your own search results, and Harris Interactive.

BrandYourself has since published various industry-leading guides such as:

- <https://brandyourself.com/online-reputation-management>
- <https://brandyourself.com/definitive-guide-to-personal-branding>
- <https://brandyourself.com/blog/guide/what-is-thought-leadership/>
- <https://brandyourself.com/google-my-name>
- <https://brandyourself.com/how-to-brand-yourself>
- <https://brandyourself.com/blog/fixing-negative-results/remove-your-name-and-personal-information-from-google/>
- <https://brandyourself.com/blog/how-tos/8-tips-on-how-to-write-a-personal-biography/>
- <https://brandyourself.com/blog/guide/how-to-write-a-personal-mission-statement/>

## Study Overview:

The findings of this study are based on a nationally representative online survey of 2,570 U.S. adults aged 18 and older, conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of BrandYourself.com.

The research shows us that online people searches in search engines like Google are becoming a driving force behind our most important personal relationships, from who we vote for, who we do business with, and even who we date.

This report includes key findings from the study (page 3) as well as a detailed breakdown of the findings, full methodology and raw data from the study.

## Table of Contents:

<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>4-8</b>
Politics & Voting	4
Business	5
Dating & Relationships	7
Parenting	7
Vanity Searches	8
<b>Study Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Raw Data</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>About BrandYourself.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Key Findings

## General:

**Almost all online U.S. adults use search engines to look up other people:** 86% used a search engine like Google to find more information about another person.

**But most people aren't well represented:** 75% of online U.S. adults have searched their own name, yet almost half (48%) say most of the search results about them aren't positive, and nearly a third (30%) say nothing shows up at all.

## Politics/Voting:

**Online searches of candidates influence voting decisions, especially among students and young adults:** Nearly a third (31%) of US adults that have searched a person online have looked up a politician, and over half said the search influenced their voting decision. These numbers increase substantially among younger US adults, especially students.

## Business:

**Your search results affect whether or not people do business with you:** Among U.S. adults that have searched someone online, nearly half (42%) have searched someone before doing business with them, and 45% have found something that made them decide **NOT** to do business.

## Dating/Relationships:

**Online searches affect your romantic life:** Almost half (43%) of online U.S. adults that have searched someone online have searched a potential date, significant other, or ex boyfriend/girlfriend, making romantic searches the most common search among U.S. adults.

# Analysis

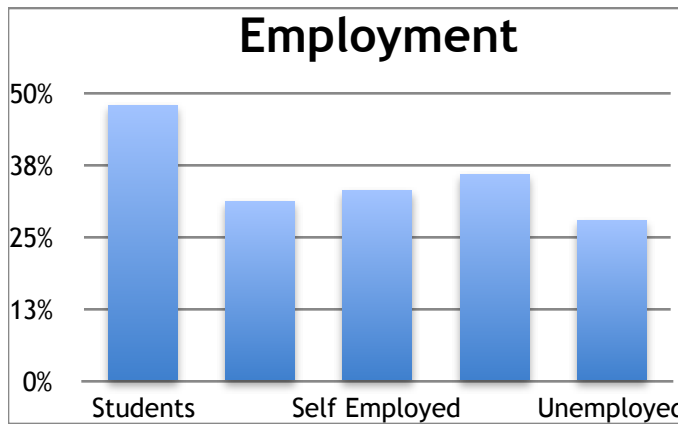
## Politics & Voting:

**1. Nearly a third (31%) of U.S. adults that have searched someone online have looked up a politician:**

- Over half (54%) found something positive that influenced them **vote for** that politician
- Over half (51%) found something that made them decide **NOT to vote** for that politician

**What this means:** Politicians need to be *proactive* about creating a strong online image because voters are searching them, and what they find is influencing their voting decisions. We see here that it's just as important for politicians to have positive results as it is for them to avoid negative results.

**2. Students are much more likely than any other group to look up a politician and be influenced by what they find:**



48% of **students** have looked up a politician vs. 28% of people that are currently **unemployed**.

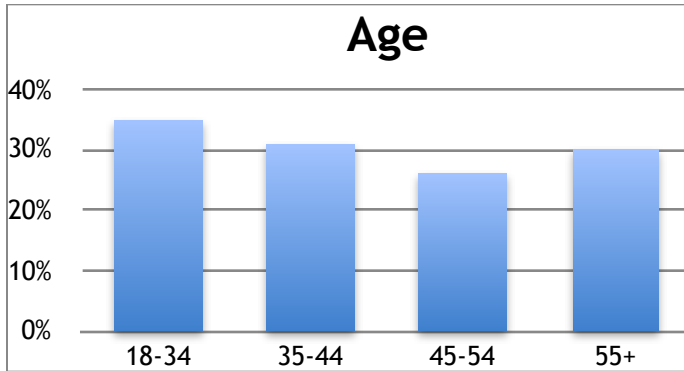
•62% of students found something positive that influenced them **vote for** that politician

- 41% of students found something that made them decide **NOT to vote** for that politician

**What this means:** Politicians that want to reach students and influence their voting decisions need to be proactive about managing their online image.

**3. Younger generations are more likely than older generations to look up a politician online:**

35% of **18-34** year olds searched a politician vs. just 26% of **45-54** year olds.



**What this means:** With the digital generation joining the voting pool, a strong online presence will only become more and more important for winning elections.

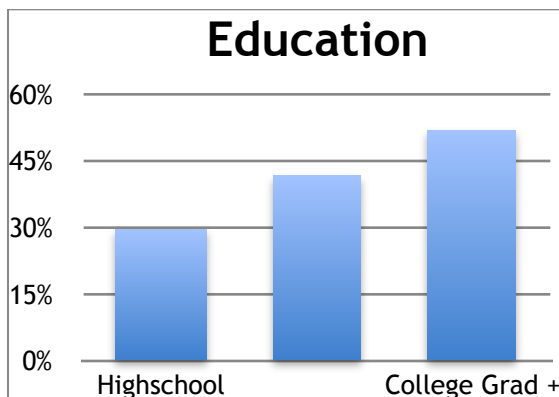
## Business:

### 1. **Nearly half (42%) of the online U.S. adults that looked somebody up in a search engine, looked someone up before deciding to do business with them:**

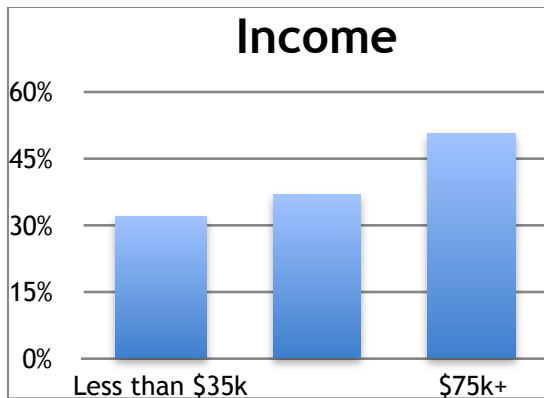
- 45% said they have found something in an online search that made them decide **NOT to do** business with the person
- 56% have found something that **solidified their decision** to do business with the person

**What This Means:** In today's professional world, anyone who isn't positively represented in their own search results will lose business opportunities.

### 2. **The higher your education level and income, the more likely you are to search someone before doing business with them:**



Over half (52%) of U.S. adults with a college degree or higher have looked someone up **before deciding to do business** with them, compared to just 30% of those with a high school degree or lower.



Over half (51%) of U.S. adults in the \$75k+ income bracket have looked someone up **before deciding to do business** with them, compared to just 32% of those in the \$35k or less income bracket.

### 3. Other common online people searches related to business:

- 23% of U.S. adults that have searched someone online have **looked up a co-worker**
- 27% have **searched someone they met in a professional setting** like a networking event

**What this means:** Even if you aren't looking for a job or new clients, about 1 in 4 of your co-workers or business acquaintances have searched you, making your Google results an important part of your professional reputation.

## Relationships/Dating:

### 1. Romantic interests are the most likely to search you online:

- Nearly half (43%) of U.S. adults that have looked someone up online, have searched a **significant other or ex boyfriend/girlfriend**, making searches related to romantic relationships the most common among online U.S. adults
  - 32% have searched an ex boyfriend or girlfriend
  - 26% have searched a current significant other

### 2. People will Google you before deciding to go on a date with you:

- 48% of US adults that have searched someone before a first date said they found something that made them **decide NOT go on a date** with the person.

- 51% said they found something that **solidified their decision** to go on a date with the person.

## Parenting:

### 1. **20% of people with children currently in their household that have searched someone online have looked up their own children:**

- 25% of those people found something that they **rather did not show up** publicly about their children.

**What this means:** As the Internet becomes a bigger part of our daily lives, parents not only need to monitor what shows up in their own results, but also what shows up about their children as well.

## Vanity Searches:

### 1. **75% of online U.S. adults have looked up their own name in search engines to see what shows up:**

- 48% said that most of the search results about them are NOT positive
- 13% said that if they could, they would change their search results to better represent them
- 30% said nothing shows up when you search them

**What this means:** Despite the importance of having a positive presence in search engines, most U.S. adults are not accurately represented online, with no clear idea what to do about it.

## Conclusion:

Our personal search results are now an important part of our reputations and a driving force behind our most important personal relationships, including who we vote for, who we do business with and even who we date.

**Takeaway #1: While negative search results *hurt* our reputations, positive results can *enhance* it:**



**Politicians** can gain an edge in the polls by focusing on a building a positive online image, especially among the younger and student voting demographic.

**Professionals** with more positive search results can gain an edge in their business and their careers.

As more of our lives move online, **parents** need to be conscious of the search presence of their children.

**Takeaway #2: Despite the importance of a strong search presence, most U.S. adults are not well represented.**

In the future people will need a better understanding of how to take better control of their new first impression, or they risk losing opportunities throughout their life.

## Study Methodology:

This survey was conducted online within the United States between September 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 among 2,570 adults (aged 18 and over) by Harris Interactive on behalf of Brandyourself via its Quick Query omnibus product. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Where appropriate, this data were also weighted to reflect the composition of the adult online population.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

### **About Harris Interactive:**

Harris Interactive is one of the world's leading custom and syndicated market research firms, leveraging research, technology, and business acumen to transform relevant insight into actionable foresight. Known widely for *the Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> and for pioneering innovative research methodologies Harris offers proprietary solutions in the areas of market and customer insight, corporate brand and reputation strategy, and marketing, advertising, public relations and communications research. Harris possesses expertise in a wide range of industries including health care, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer package goods. Additionally, Harris has a portfolio of syndicated offerings that complement our custom solutions while maximizing our client's research investment. Serving clients in more than 215 countries and territories through our North American and European offices and a network of global partners, Harris specializes in delivering research solutions that help us - and our clients - stay ahead of what's next. For more information, please visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

## Raw Data

Download the raw data tables from this study as a PDF here: <http://cl.ly/0K0o0O242v0d>

## About BrandYourself

BrandYourself.com is the first do-it-yourself platform that makes it easy for anyone to take control of their own Google results. It was founded in 2009 by Syracuse University classmates Pete Kistler, Patrick Ambron and Evan McGowan-Watson after Kistler couldn't get an internship for being mistaken in Google as a drug dealer. BrandYourself has raised more than \$1.2 million in Series A funding and been recognized for its innovative technology, including being honored by the White House as one of the Top 100 Startups in the US and being named the winner of the New York State Emerging Business Technology competition, a \$200,000 prize, **the youngest team to ever win.**