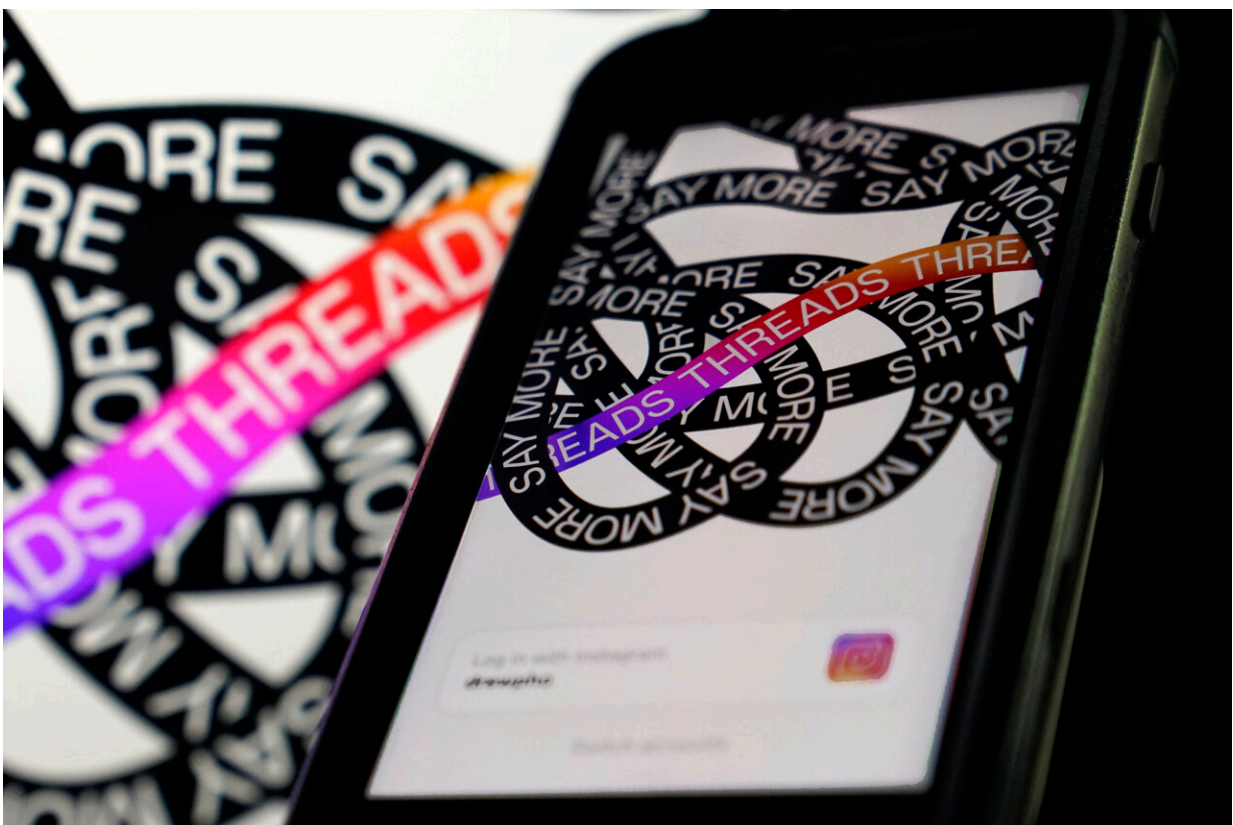


# Reluctant Twitter users, influencers and others are flocking to Meta's new Threads app

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This photo, taken in New York, Thursday, July 6, 2023, shows Meta's new app Threads. Meta has unveiled an app called Threads to rival Twitter, targeting users looking for an alternative to the social media platform owned — and frequently changed — by Elon Musk. Credit: AP Photo/Richard Drew

Celebrities, lawmakers, brands and everyday social media users are flocking to Meta's freshly minted app Threads to connect with their followers, including many Twitter refugees tired of the drama surrounding Elon Musk's raucous oversight of that platform.

But the real question is: Will they stay?

Instagram head Adam Mosseri said in a Threads post Monday that in the five days since its launch, 100 million people have signed up for Threads, which was rolled out as a companion app to Instagram.

Ann Coleman is among them. The 50-year-old, who lives in Baltimore, said she joined Threads after hearing about the platform from a comedian she follows on social media. She said she loves Twitter and has been using it for more than 10 years. She even met her husband on there.

But Coleman, who is politically progressive, has been looking to switch to a new platform because of Musk's political views and changes he's made to Twitter, like upending its verification system. She previously joined the decentralized social network Mastodon, but found it a bit confusing to use.

She said she likes Threads but wishes she could easily follow all her Twitter friends there. Threads gives Instagram users the option to automatically follow the same accounts they do on the photo-sharing app, which makes it easier for active Instagram users to replicate a similar type of engagement on Threads. But others starting from the ground up will have to do more work.

"If I'm going to leave Twitter entirely, I'm going to have to try and find some of these people" from Twitter, Coleman said.

While she said she has her own concerns about Meta—specifically pointing to the Cambridge Analytica privacy breach, among other things—"it's not with the depth of concern that I do with Musk."

Michael Evancoe, 28, said he hasn't used Twitter much since his personal page was suspended years ago for what the platform attributed to violations of its rules on spam. Evancoe, who now works in production, said he agrees with some of the changes Musk has been making on Twitter and he created a new account earlier this year. But he wasn't able to gain many followers or interactions.

He joined Threads last week, and says he's been able to interact more with other users. But he hopes that Meta does not moderate the platform overly aggressively.

"I think that would be a deterrent to both interest and engagement as well," Evancoe said.

For its part, Meta has said it will moderate using Instagram's content guidelines. In the past few days, the company has been positioning the much-hyped platform as a new digital town square that's a less toxic version of Twitter, with some executives indicating their aim isn't to replace Twitter but to offer something more palatable to a vast array of users.

"The goal is to create a public square for communities on Instagram that never really embraced Twitter and for communities on Twitter (and other platforms) that are interested in a less angry place for conversations," Mosseri said Friday.

In the first two full days that Threads was broadly available—Thursday and Friday of last week—traffic on Twitter was down 5% compared with the same period a week ago, and down 11% compared with the

same period a year ago, according to the web analytics company SimilarWeb. But it also said Twitter traffic has experienced an overall decline even in the absence of Threads.

To Jennifer Billinson, a professor of media studies at Nazareth University in New York, the first days of Threads have highlighted a potential culture clash—specifically one between Twitter refugees and what is likely a much larger number of people just clicking over from Instagram.

The idea that Threads will just become a Twitter clone, she says, is running headlong into the reality that the Twitterites are going to be "vastly outnumbered" on the new platform by those from Instagram, which has more than 2 billion monthly users. By comparison, Twitter has more than 237 million daily users, according to the most recent figures from the company's earnings report last year.

Among other things, those used to the more abrasive culture of Twitter could easily annoy more laid-back Instagram users. Of course, such tensions might be alleviated by potential platform changes that give people more control over what they'll see in their Threads feed. At the moment, users are largely at the mercy of the Threads algorithm.

Despite the influx of users, Brendan Gahan, partner and chief social officer at the creative agency Mekanism, stressed it's too early to know how successful Threads will be. He further questions whether the rapid growth of Threads is even a good thing, pointing out some other successful platforms began with a focused approach and expanded more gradually.

There's also the question of how influencers will use Threads and whether they can replicate the same following as on other platforms. Most notably, Jimmy Donaldson—a popular YouTube video maker who

goes by MrBeast—has already amassed more than 4 million followers on Threads.

By integrating the new app to Instagram, Meta made it very easy for content creators to convert their Instagram followers to Threads followers. But that can also create a situation where popular [content creators](#) gain more influence while crowding out emerging talents from cultivating their own culture on a new platform, Gahan said.

Creators might also face other challenges.

"Somebody who is purely video and photo-based may have trouble translating to a text-focused [platform](#)," Gahan said. "That said, a lot of them I see reposting the same content. Time will tell whether or not that's a successful strategy."

Asante Madrigal, a content creator who makes his living off of [social media](#) posts about pop culture, said he's been trying out the Threads app and reposting some videos he's made recently on actress Keke Palmer, among other things.

But at least for now, the 22-year-old said he doesn't plan to make Threads a priority because he can't monetize his content on there. Instead, he said he's going to focus on apps where he's actually earning money, like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, where he more than 2 million followers combined.

Madrigal said the Threads algorithm is a black box, and pointed to some things that are still lacking in the app, including hashtags and direct messaging between users. And figuring out what to do on there will take more work.

"I have a lot of friends that do pop culture as well," Madrigal said. "And

they were just like, 'Oh, my God, not another app'."

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