Information Commissioner's Office

Call for evidence:

Age Appropriate Design Code

Start date:27 June 2018
End date: 19 September 2018

ico.

Information Commissioner's Office

Introduction

The Information Commissioner (the Commissioner) is calling for evidence and views on the Age Appropriate Design Code (the Code).

The Code is a requirement of the Data Protection Act 2018 (the Act). The Act supports and supplements the implementation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (the GDPR).

The Code will provide guidance on the design standards that the Commissioner will expect providers of online 'Information Society Services' (ISS), which process personal data and are likely to be accessed by children, to meet. Once it has been published, the Commissioner will be required to take account of any provisions of the Code she considers to be relevant when exercising her regulatory functions. The courts and tribunals will also be required to take account of any provisions they consider to be relevant in proceedings brought before them. The Code may be submitted as evidence in court proceedings.

Further guidance on how the GDPR applies to children's personal data can be found in our guidance Children and the GDPR. It will be useful to read this before responding to the call for evidence, to understand what is already required by the GDPR and what the ICO currently recommends as best practice. In drafting the Code the ICO may consider suggestions that reinforce the specific requirements of the GDPR, or its overarching requirement that children merit special protection, but will disregard any suggestions that fall below this standard.

The Commissioner will be responsible for drafting the Code. The Act provides that the Commissioner must consult with relevant stakeholders when preparing the Code, and submit it to the Secretary of State for Parliamentary approval within 18 months of 25 May 2018. She will publish the Code once it has been approved by Parliament.

This call for evidence is the first stage of the consultation process. The Commissioner seeks evidence and views on the development stages of childhood and age-appropriate design standards for ISS. The Commissioner is particularly interested in evidence based submissions provided by: bodies representing the views of children or parents; child development experts; providers of online services likely to be accessed by children, and trade associations representing such providers. She appreciates that different stakeholders will have different and particular areas of expertise. The Commissioner welcomes responses that are limited to specific areas of interest or expertise and only address questions within these areas, as well as those that address every question

asked. She is not seeking submissions from individual children or parents in this call for evidence as she intends to engage with these stakeholder groups via other dedicated and specifically tailored means.

The Commissioner will use the evidence gathered to inform further work in developing the content of the Code.

The scope of the Code

The Act affords the Commissioner discretion to set such standards of age appropriate design as she considers to be desirable, having regard to the best interests of children, and to provide such guidance as she considers appropriate.

In exercising this discretion the Act requires the Commissioner to have regard to the fact that children have different needs at different ages, and to the United Kingdom's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

During Parliamentary debate the Government committed to supporting the Commissioner in her development of the Code by providing her with a list of 'minimum standards to be taken into account when designing it.' The Commissioner will have regard to this list both in this call for evidence, and when exercising her discretion to develop such standards as she considers to be desirable

In developing the Code the Commissioner will also take into account that the scope and purpose of the Act, and her role in this respect, is limited to making provision for the processing of personal data.

Responses to this call for evidence must be submitted by 19 September 2018. You can submit your response in one of the following ways:

Online

Download this document and email to: childrenandtheGDPR@ICO.org.uk

Print off this document and post to:
Age Appropriate Design Code call for evidence
Engagement Department
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow

Cheshire SK9 5AF

If you would like further information on the call for evidence please telephone 0303 123 1113 and ask to speak to the Engagement Department about the Age Appropriate Design Code or email childrenandtheGDPR@ICO.org.uk

Privacy statement

For this call for evidence we will publish responses received from organisations but will remove any personal data before publication. We will not publish responses from individuals. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our privacy notice.

Section 1: Your views and evidence

Please provide us with your views and evidence in the following areas:

Development needs of children at different ages

The Act requires the Commissioner to take account of the development needs of children at different ages when drafting the Code.

The Commissioner proposes to use their age ranges set out in the report <u>Digital Childhood – addressing childhood development milestones in the Digital Environment</u> as a starting point in this respect. This report draws upon a number of sources including findings of the United Kingdom Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) Evidence Group in its <u>literature review of Children's online activities risks and safety.</u>

The proposed age ranges are as follows:

3-5
6-9
10-12
13-15
16-17

Q1. In terms of setting design standards for the processing of children's personal data by providers of ISS (online services), how appropriate you consider the above age brackets would be (delete as appropriate):

Not at all appropriate
Not really appropriate
Quite appropriate
Very appropriate

Q1A. Please provide any views or evidence on how appropriate you consider the above age brackets would be in setting design standards for the processing of children's personal data by providers of ISS (online services),

Please see attached.

Q2. Please provide any views or evidence you have on children's development needs, in an online context in each or any of the above age brackets.

Please see attached.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Data Protection Act 2018 requires the Commissioner to take account of the UK's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when drafting the Code.

Q3. Please provide any views or evidence you have on how the Convention might apply in the context of setting design standards for the processing of children's personal data by providers of ISS (online services)

Please see attached.

Aspects of design

The Government has provided the Commissioner with a list of areas which it proposes she should take into account when drafting the Code.

These are as follows:
- default privacy settings,
- data minimisation standards,
- the presentation and language of terms and conditions and privacy notices,
- uses of geolocation technology,
- automated and semi-automated profiling,
- transparency of paid-for activity such as product placement and marketing,
- the sharing and resale of data,
- the strategies used to encourage extended user engagement,
- user reporting and resolution processes and systems,
- the ability to understand and activate a child's right to erasure, rectification and restriction,
- the ability to access advice from independent, specialist advocates on all data rights, and
- any other aspect of design that the commissioner considers relevant.

Q4. Please provide any views or evidence you think the Commissioner should take into account when explaining the meaning and coverage of these terms in the code.

Please see attached.

Q5. Please provide any views or evidence you have on the following:

Q5A. about the opportunities and challenges you think might arise in setting design standards for the processing of children's personal data by providers of ISS (online services), in each or any of the above areas.

Please see attached.

Q5B. about how the ICO, working with relevant stakeholders, might use the opportunities presented and positively address any challenges you have identified.

Please see attached.

Q5C. about what design standards might be appropriate (ie where the bar should be set) in each or any of the above areas and for each or any of the proposed age brackets.

Please see attached.

Q5D. examples of ISS design you consider to be good practice.

Please see attached.

Q5E. about any additional areas, not included in the list above that you think should be the subject of a design standard.
Please see attached.

Q6. If you would be interested in contributing to future solutions focussed work in developing the content of the code please provide the following information. The Commissioner is particularly interested in hearing from bodies representing the views of children or parents, child development experts and trade associations representing providers of online services likely to be accessed by children, in this respect.

Name – ███████████ Common Sense Media

Email – ███████@commonsense.org

Brief summary of what you think you could offer –

Views on behalf of parents, educators, and experts, as well as research findings regarding kids, technology, media, and privacy. Common Sense is America's leading organization dedicated to helping kids and families thrive in a rapidly changing digital world. We help parents, teachers, and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology positive force in all kids' lives. Since launching 15 years ago, Common Sense has helped millions of families and kids--regardless of socio-economic background or zip code-- think critically and make smart, responsible choices about the media they create and consume. We have established the largest and most trusted library of age-appropriate family media ratings and reviews (30,000+ titles) covering all media types that reach 80+ million users across the country. Additionally, Common Sense's innovative K-12 digital citizenship curriculum is currently being used in nearly 50% of US schools. Common Sense also continues to elevate the needs of children and families in state and federal public policy decision-making. And Common Sense's research reports are helping fuel discussions of how media and technology are impacting kids and families today.

Further views and evidence

Q7. Please provide any other views or evidence you have that you consider to be relevant to this call for evidence.

Please see attached.

Section 2: About you

Are you:

A body representing the views or interests of children? Please specify:	☐
A body representing the views or interests of parents? Please specify:	☐
A child development expert? Please specify:	☐
A provider of ISS likely to be accessed by children? Please specify:	☐
A trade association representing ISS providers? Please specify:	☐
An ICO employee?	☐
Other? Please specify:	☐

Thank you for responding to this call for evidence.
We value your input.

common sense®

TO: Information Commissioner's Office
FROM: Common Sense
DATE: September 19, 2018
RE: Age Appropriate Design Code

We submit these comments on behalf of Common Sense Media and its policy arm, Common Sense Kids Action (together, "Common Sense"). Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Age-Appropriate Design Code, part of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Age Appropriate Design Code puts the U.K. at the forefront of discussions around protecting children's privacy and encouraging companies to design products with their well-being in mind.

Common Sense is America's leading organization dedicated to helping kids and families thrive in a rapidly changing digital world. We help parents, teachers, and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help them harness the power of media and technology positive force in all kids' lives. Since launching 15 years ago, Common Sense has helped millions of families and kids--regardless of socio-economic background or zip code-- think critically and make smart, responsible choices about the media they create and consume. We have established the largest and most trusted library of age-appropriate family media ratings and reviews (30,000+ titles) covering all media types that reach 80+ million users across the country. Additionally, Common Sense's innovative K-12 digital citizenship curriculum is currently being used in nearly 50% of US schools. Common Sense also continues to elevate the needs of children and families in state and federal public policy decision-making. And Common Sense's research reports are helping fuel discussions of how media and technology are impacting kids and families today.

We know firsthand how difficult it is for families and teachers to make sense of today's technology and to understand the complex ecosystem of data and advertising practices to which they are exposing children, both online and off. This is why we frequently meet with industry partners and representatives to promote innovative privacy protective services, and encourage that they adopt best practices and make products that are transparent and fair, building in privacy and other safeguards that help ease the burden for families and educators.

At this point far too much of children's technology is indecipherable to teachers and families. We applaud the U.K. for adopting the guidelines and ensuring that it is mandatory for companies to keep children's digital well being, including their privacy and safety, in mind. This is particularly an increasing concern in the connected-device space, where parents frequently have already set up a product like a baby monitor or connected toy without ever receiving notice of its listening capabilities.

Young People Are Uniquely Vulnerable

As recognized in the GDPR and the UK Data Protection Act 2018, children are uniquely vulnerable, and "merit specific protection with regard to their personal data, as they may be less aware of the risks, consequences and safeguards concerned and their rights in relation to the processing of personal data." Their needs must be specifically considered, and their needs change over time.[1]

The interplay between technology and children's wellbeing/development is complicated. This is why the Common Sense Research program exists: to inform and enrich conversations we have about kids' use of media and its effects on their social and emotional well-being.

Social Media, Social Life

In our just-released 2018 survey, *Social Media, Social Life*, Common Sense surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,141 teens in the United States, age 13 to 17. We conducted a similar survey in 2012 allowing us to assess trends over time. Teens are spending far more time on social media than ever before. The percentage of teens who engage with social media multiple times a day has gone from 34 percent in 2012 to 70 percent in 2018.[2]

In general teens are more likely to say that social media has a positive effect on how they feel. However, teens' relationship with this increased use of social media is complicated. On the one hand, teens feel social media strengthens their relationships with friends and family, provides them with an important avenue for self-expression, and makes them feel less lonely and more connected. At the same time, teens acknowledge that social media can detract from face-to-face communication and make them feel left out or "less than" their peers.

And, particularly relevant as you consider putting into place designing technology for children--teens feel manipulated by tech companies. Many teens think tech companies manipulate users to spend more time on their devices and say that digital distractions interfere with homework, personal relationships, and sleep. Nearly three out of four teens (72 percent) believe that tech companies manipulate users to spend more time on their devices.[3]

And many teen social media users say that social media often distracts them from other important things: Fifty-seven percent agree that using social media often distracts them when they should be doing homework, and 54 percent agree that it often distracts them when they should be paying attention to the people they're with. A large proportion of all teens (44 percent) say they get frustrated with their friends for being on their phones so much when they're hanging out together. More than two-thirds (68 percent), regardless of whether they use social media themselves, agree

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[1] GDPR Recital 38, see also GDPR Art 8, Data Protection Act 2018 Part 7.
[2] "Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences (2018) | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 10 Sept. 2018, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-2018. See attachment A of this submission
[3] "Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences (2018) | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 10 Sept. 2018, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/social-media-social-life-2018.

with the statement "Social media has a negative impact on many people my age," including 20 percent who "strongly" agree. Many teens say digital obsession is a problem for their parents as well: Fully a third (33 percent) of teens say they wish their parents would spend less time on their devices, up from 21 percent in 2012.[4]

Although research into the manipulative practices is ongoing--and some of it appears targeted to get kids and teens to expose more information, we also expect that much of this is directed to nudge people to spend more time online.

"Always On" Digital Culture

While teens' and kids' relationship with tech is complicated and open to debate--one thing that is not in dispute is how much time young people spend online. Common Sense Research has found that nearly every child under 8 in America (98 percent) has access to a mobile device at home, a rapid rise from just over half in 2011. Kids age 8 and under spend an average of 2 hours and 19 minutes a day with screen media.[5]

In fact, many teens feel addicted— half of teens say they feel addicted to their mobile devices,[6] and those teens overall consume an average of nine hours a day of media.[7] 72% of teens feel the need to immediately respond to texts, social networking messages, and other notifications.[8] Heavy users are 56 percent more likely to say they are unhappy; twenty-seven percent more likely to be depressed; and 35 percent more likely to have a risk factor for suicide.[9]

According to research by Internet Matters, 10 is the average age British kids get their own phone. [10]The Royal Society for Public Health, found Social media use is far more prevalent among young people than older generations. In the UK, the 16-24 age group are by far the most active social

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[5] "The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Kids Age Zero to Eight 2017 | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 19 Oct. 2017, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-kids-age-zero-to-eight-2017.
[6] "Technology Addiction: Concern, Controversy, and Finding Balance | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 3 May 2016, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/technology-addiction-concern-controversy-and-finding-balance.
[7] "The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 3 Nov. 2015, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-tweens-and-teens.
[8] "Technology Addiction: Concern, Controversy, and Finding Balance | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 3 May 2016, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/technology-addiction-concern-controversy-and-finding-balance.

[9] Twenge, Jean M. IGen: Why Todays Super-Connected Kids Are Growing up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy -- and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*: *and What That Means for the Rest of Us. Atria International, 2018.
[10] "Back to School 2015: Smartphone Survey." Internet Matters, 14 Nov. 2017, www.internetmatters.org/hub/research/back-to-school-survey-reveals-parents-preferred-age-for-their-kids-to-own-a-smartphone-is-10-years/.

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media users with 91% using the internet for social media.[11] This same study found that young people themselves say four of the five most used social media platforms actually make their feelings of anxiety worse.

Arms Race for Attention

While there are steps individuals can take when it comes to maintaining their digital well being, the onus of responsibility can't be on the individual alone. It's critical there be transparency around how tech platforms operate. That's why over the last year, Common Sense has teamed up with the Center for Humane Technology, a group former tech insiders and CEOs who intimately understand the culture, business incentives, design techniques, and organizational structures driving technology. Through this partnership Common Sense and the Center for Humane Technology are working to raise awareness and catalyze change within the tech industry, specifically related to the design and safety around tech tools used by kids and families.

Most Surveilled Generation--Kids

Children today face surveillance unlike any other generation -- their every movement online and off can be tracked by potentially dozens of different companies and organizations. Young people will spend their entire lives connected in order to get an education and participate in modern society. This lengthy exposure puts them at increased risk of privacy harms--a risk that is compounded by their developing brains/mental capacity—kids are prone to sharing and impulsive behavior, more susceptible to advertising, and less able to understand what may happen to their personal information.[12] Further, the mechanisms teens use to get online--often mobile--are more likely to be "always on" and have increased tracking capabilities, including of teens' location. Significantly, teens, especially lower income teens, are more likely to have access to phones than computers,[13] and a 2015 Common Sense report found that teens spent over four hours a day on mobile media.[14] The report also found that teens were 2.5 times more likely to access social media via a smartphone than a computer, and 3 times more likely to have video game consoles as

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[11]RSPH. "StatusOfMindSocial Media and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing." RSPH, www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html.

[12] Galvan, A., et al. "Earlier Development of the Accumbens Relative to Orbitofrontal Cortex Might Underlie Risk-Taking Behavior in Adolescents." Journal of Neuroscience, vol. 26, no. 25, 2006, pp. 6885–6892., doi:10.1523/jneurosci.1062-06.2006.; Galván, Adriana, and Kristine M. Mcglennen. "Enhanced Striatal Sensitivity to Aversive Reinforcement in Adolescents versus Adults." Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, vol. 25, no. 2, 2013, pp. 284–296., doi:10.1162/jocn_a_00326; Workgroup on Children's Online Privacy Protection, Report to the Maryland General Assembly on Children's Online Privacy, 16 (Dec. 30, 2013); Ofcom, Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report 2015 (Nov. 20, 2015); Livingstone, Sonia and Kjartan Ólafsson, Children's Commercial Media Literacy: New Evidence Relevant to UK Policy Decisions Regarding the GDPR, Media Policy Project (Jan. 26, 2017)

[13] Monica Anderson et al., Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018, Pew Research Center, 14 (2018) http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2018/05/31102617/PI_2018.05.31_TeensTech_FINAL.pdf

[14] "The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 3 Nov. 2015, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-tweens-and-teens.

opposed to desktop computers in their bedroom.[15] The means and methods teens use to access social media appear to put them at greater risk.

A growing lack of privacy and distrust of the online and tech world impacts every family, and could significantly impact the personal development of young people. At Common Sense, we believe kids need the freedom to make mistakes, try new things, and find their voices without the looming threat of a permanent digital record that could be used against them. They deserve a world in which their daily musings to friends are not assessed by corporations looking to turn a profit or by nefarious actors looking to manipulate their behavior.

Common Sense is deeply committed to encouraging the digital-well being of families--and while in many instances that means teaching parents, teachers, and kids good digital hygiene practices and skills, it also means ensuring there are baseline protections in place. Even extremely savvy digital citizens are powerless if they do not know what companies are doing with their information, if they cannot access, delete, or move their information, or if they have no choices with respect to the use and disclosure of their information. And an individual has no ability to prevent a corporate or government data breach. We offer the following recommendations in response to your request for input/we believe companies seeking to make kid friendly products should follow the below guidelines.

Recommendations

1. **Companies must build in privacy protective defaults.**

The best privacy settings for young people are ones that are privacy protective from the start. Defaults are powerful and "sticky," and the presumption is that more people will choose to stay with a default than would actively choose the same settings otherwise.This certainly appears true of technology and privacy default settings. [16] A recent Common Sense/Survey Monkey poll found that more than 9 in 10 parents and teens think it's important that sites clearly label what data they collect and how it will be used. Most agree that it is at least "moderately" important for social networking sites to clearly label what information they are collecting and how it will be used (94 percent of parents, 91 percent of teens), though teens are less likely to say it is "extremely" important (41 percent vs. 58 percent). This same survey also found that a majority of parents and teens had heard of the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica controversy, and parents were much more likely to be cautious about social media as a result.However, teens were more likely to be

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[15] "The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens | Common Sense Media." Common Sense Media: Ratings, Reviews, and Advice, Common Sense Media, 3 Nov. 2015, www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-tweens-and-teens.

[16] Willis, Lauren E. "Why Not Privacy by Default?" SSRN Electronic Journal, 2013, doi:10.2139/ssrn.2349766. , (p. 71); Arthur, Charles. "Why the Default Settings on Your Device Should Be Right First Time." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 1 Dec. 2013, www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/dec/01/default-settings-change-phones-computers.

selectively cautious about using Facebook — 26% of teens said they would be more cautious about Facebook specifically but not other social media, compared to 12% of parents.[17]

Particularly for kids, who deserve special protection, the default positions chosen should be to offer greater protection, not less. The default should therefore be to minimize data collection, use, sharing, and retention. Data minimization should be built into products by design. If a company doesn't have information, it cannot misuse it and it cannot lose it.

For example, it is inappropriate for sites to track children once they have navigated away from a service. As we learned this spring, most adults did not realize Facebook tracked them when they are not on Facebook. Children certainly do not realize this. The default should be to stop tracking when a child has left a site or service.

Additionally, companies should have practices in place to purge data when it is no longer needed. Information should be deleted when it is no longer needed by the service or the user of the service. Specific practices will vary based on the services. For example, some services, it may make sense to trigger deletion after a certain amount of time has passed without use of the service (with notice to the user). For other services, information may be able to be deleted sooner without it having any negative impact on the user.

2. Notice and controls must be appropriate for the age and level of understanding of the user.
Notice and controls must be appropriate to the age and level of understanding of the user--and when that user is a child, notice "should be in such a clear and plain language that the child can easily understand."[18] While privacy-protective defaults can provide good baseline protections, when children are faced with choices they should be able to make informed decisions. Lately, it has been difficult for many adults to make sense of privacy policies, though the GDPR is hopefully simplifying policies. Indeed, a pre-GDPR on a number of popular fan creation sites sites were found on average to be written at a level that 60% of the US adult population could not understand.[19]

Indeed, Common Sense research shows very few people think sites do a good job explaining what they do with users' information. Only a third (36 percent) of teenagers agree that social networking sites do a good job explaining what they do with users' data, and nearly the same proportion (34 percent) disagree. Parents of teens are much more negative, with almost twice as many (54 percent) saying that social networking sites and apps don't do a good job explaining what they do with users' data as those who say they do a good job (32 percent).[20]

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[17] *Quarterly Survey Series*, Common Sense Media and SurveyMonkey (June 11, 2018), https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/quarterlysurveyseries. See attachment B of this submission.
[18] GDPR Rec. 58.
[19] Gilbert, Ben. "It's Not Just You: Terms of Service Agreements Really Are Confusing, Study Finds." Engadget, 14 July 2016, www.engadget.com/2014/04/17/terms-of-service-study-georgia-tech/.
[20] *Quarterly Survey Series*, Common Sense Media and SurveyMonkey (June 11, 2018), https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/quarterlysurveyseries.

Children do not engage with terms and conditions sufficiently for services to rely on consent for invasive or unexpected data practices. There are numerous studies showing adults don't read terms of service.[21] Kids lack the critical assessment skills adults have, so would far even worse--an Ofcom study demonstrated that only ¼ kids age 8-11 could pick out a sponsored ad in a search result, compared with less than half of 12-15 year olds and 60% of adults.[22] As experts like Prof. Livingstone ask, how, then, are children supposed to understand terms and conditions or privacy representations?

Companies should consider innovative ways to speak to younger users, using not only plain language but also videos, images, and other upfront and just-in-time notices that children will better be able to understand and respond to on a small device. without too much trouble.

Parents, guardians, and educators, also need better tools to help them make sense of kids' products. Common Sense often hears from parents how overwhelmed they feel in facing media and technology. In particular, we have heard of late that teachers and schools were having trouble evaluating the privacy and security practices of ed tech apps. With the launch of the Common Sense Privacy Evaluations[23], we developed a tool to enable teachers and districts to make informed decisions about what apps and technology they want in their classrooms. Innovative third-party evaluations will likely always be necessary to help families and schools make sense of technology. But companies can also be encouraged to have better parental and teacher controls and settings. This is particularly important with connected devices. Companies should make it clear at the point of sale - on packaging, or on a website - what a product's information collection capabilities are (including what triggers information collection), where more information can be found, how security patches and updates are provided (and for how long), and whether the device can be used in 'dumb' mode.

3. Certain practices are inappropriate when used on children and should be off limits.

As recognized by the Information Commissioner's Office, companies are not to exploit any imbalance of power in getting a child to consent to certain practices. Common Sense believes one way to help ensure that companies respect this is to make certain practices off limits for children. Common Sense has supported such rules in the United States in the education context (e.g., California's Student Online Personal Information Protection Act (SOPIPA), which prohibits the

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[21]Kravets, David. "TOS Agreements Require Giving up First Born-and Users Gladly Consent." Ars Technica, Ars Technica, 12 July 2016,
www.arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2016/07/nobody-reads-tos-agreements-even-ones-that-demand-first-born-as-payment/
[22] "If Children Don't Know an Ad from Information, How Can They Grasp How Companies Use Their Personal Data?" USAPP, 19 July 2017,
blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2017/07/18/if-children-dont-know-an-ad-from-information-how-can-they-grasp-how-companies-use-their-personal-data/
[23] "2018 State of EdTech Privacy Report." Common Sense Education, Common Sense Education, 6 June 2018,
www.commonsense.org/education/blog/2018-state-of-edtech-privacy-report.

commercial use of educational information; Do Not Track Kids Act of 2018, which prohibits behavioral advertising to children under 13). And this is consistent with the GDPR's direction that children require extra-special protections when it comes to commercial marketing and profiling.

Particularly invasive tracking technologies, like geolocation, raise special concerns. A person's location can reveal socio-economic status, educational attainment, medical issues, and activities -- not to mention a real world physical place where a child could be subject to risk or harm. And techniques, like commercial profiling and behavioral advertising may also be especially pernicious in the context of young people--in general, children are unable to assess advertisements for what they are--ads, so techniques that make them individually targeted and even more difficult to resist seem inappropriate for such a susceptible audience.

Specific practices that could be prohibited for children, or at the very least younger children, include: the use of geolocation to track for commercial purposes--or the commoditization of a child's past, present, or predicted location; commercial profiling (which under the GDPR should be avoided in general refrain from); and behaviorally targeted ads. If sites and services use techniques or methods that are inappropriate for children, companies should be upfront with families about the fact that services are not intended for users under a certain age.

4. Companies should be particularly cautious with user engagement strategies targeting children.

As Tristan Harris and the Center for Humane Technology have begun illuminating, companies spend a lot of time trying to get and keep users engaged. Whether it be the default settings of autoplay features on popular video streaming services, slot machine style refresh when it comes to updating our email inboxes, or social awareness cues and unlimited notifications from social media: it is clear that tech products are designed persuasively, to keep users engaged on their platforms. And when those users are young people, who are still in early stages of cognitive development, there are risks.

User engagement strategies undermine consent to data processing, particularly with children, and call into question the validity of the consent. User engagement strategies should be used sparingly with children. As part of a Data Protection Impact Assessment,companies should consider their user engagement strategies vis-a-vis their audience. They should be able to demonstrate that their services/products do not pose a risk to children in the targeted audience age.

common sense

2018

SOCIAL MEDIA
SOCIAL LIFE

Teens Reveal Their Experiences

Common Sense is the leading
independent nonprofit organization
dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world
of media and technology. We empower
parents, teachers, and policymakers by
providing unbiased information, trusted
advice, and innovative tools to help them
harness the power of media and technology
as a positive force in all kids' lives.

common
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www.commonsense.org

A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

Friends,

What goes on in the minds of teenagers when they engage with social media, seemingly lost in their screens? It's a question we as parents often ponder as we fret about the effects of social media on our children's well-being.

To find the answer, Common Sense went straight to the source and surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,141 teens in the United States, age 13 to 17. What they told us is eye-opening and vastly more nuanced than we expected.

I'm especially excited to share the results of our 2018 *Social Media, Social Life* survey with you. Considered alongside the findings from our 2012 survey of the same name, they offer a rare glimpse into our teens' worlds. Fair warning: Many of the insights are likely to challenge some parents' notions of whether social media is "good" or "bad" for teens.

James P. Steyer, *founder and CEO*

Like teenagers themselves, this research presents a complex picture that defies simplistic judgments. For example, on the one hand, teens feel social media strengthens their relationships with friends and family, provides them with an important avenue for self-expression, and makes them feel less lonely and more connected. At the same time, teens acknowledge that social media can detract from face-to-face communication and make them feel left out or "less than" their peers. In general, however, teens are more likely to say that social media has a positive effect on how they feel.

That dichotomy is amplified when it comes to more vulnerable teens who score lower on a measure of social-emotional well-being. These teens are much more likely to report feeling bad about themselves when no one comments on their posts or feeling left out after seeing photos on social media of their friends together at something they weren't invited to.

Teens are often depicted as being heedless of the consequences of spending so much time on their smartphones. In reality, our survey reveals that teens are fully aware of the power of devices to distract them from key priorities, such as homework, sleep, and time with friends and family.

Nevertheless, teens are spending far more time on social media than ever before. The percentage of teens who engage with social media multiple times a day has gone from 34 percent in 2012 to 70 percent in 2018. And whereas Facebook once played a commanding role, with 68 percent of teens in 2012 turning to the platform as their main social media outlet, today's teens have moved on to newer platforms, especially Snapchat and Instagram.

With the ever-shifting social media landscape, our research has never been more critical. As new platforms emerge, our reviewers at Common Sense Media and Common Sense Education help keep parents and educators informed of the strengths and shortcomings of the latest crop of social media tools, giving us important information to guide our children toward the best possible experience, as well as an understanding of what to watch out for. The insights contained in this report also fuel our advocacy efforts to minimize the harmful aspects of social media while promoting its potential to support our children and their connection to their communities.

This is why the Common Sense Research program exists: to inform and enrich conversations we have about kids' use of media and its effects on their social and emotional well-being. Though the insights presented here haven't been condensed into a 140-character summary or a 15-second video, I promise they will be well worth your time.

Jim Steyer

JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS SAYS SOCIAL MEDIA HAS THE POWER TO CONNECT AND HEAL

As someone who writes and talks about the importance of human connection, what do you think of the report's finding that teens today prefer texting over talking?

My work is around humans — humans thriving, humans connecting. And I worry so much about the report's findings of the lack of person-to-person contact. But in my work — and in my experience — I find that the need for human connection always wins out. Maybe kids are just taking the easy way out due to shyness, fear, or social awkwardness. We just need to make sure that we — as parents, educators, and others who can impact kids' lives — encourage those important face-to-face conversations.

There has been an uptick in teens' exposure to hate content since the last *Social Media, Social Life* research was released in 2012. How do you think that affects kids?

I think when you see hate content over and over, you become anesthetized to it. It becomes a part of the "new norm" instead of the feeling you ought to have — which is outrage and disgust. So I worry about today's teens' ability to empathize. I think that means that as parents we need to be aware of and really talk to our kids and help them process what they are reading and seeing on social media.

You have said that as a child you struggled with low self-esteem as a result of racism. The report found that social media plays a heightened role — positive and negative — in the lives of teens already struggling with social-emotional well-being. What advice would your teen self give to them?

I began to heal as a black woman and love myself finally when I was able to be in a community with other folk who had experienced what I was experiencing. So to the extent you can use social media to connect with people struggling with the same issues as you, social media can be an incredibly powerful support network. I would urge my teen self to find others online she could can relate to — whether it's racism, academic pressure, being bullied, sexism, or whatever.

As you're an author and former Stanford University dean, many people seek your counsel about how to put one's best self forward. How can teens do this on social media?

Social media is a new method of connecting and communicating with humans. Think about what kind of character you want to cultivate on social media. Are you a kind and generous person? Do you help people? Behave on social media the way you'd behave with your grandma at the dining table. Easier said than done, believe me, I know!

You said using social media reminds you of a quote by the famous spiritual leader Ram Dass, who said, "We're all just walking each other home."

Yes, because I think social media is a wonderful way to demonstrate that you care, that you take an interest in someone. This is where the positive side of social media really comes in. You can see the healing power as we start to radiate kindness and goodness and gratitude through our tweets and posts. So I think there's tremendous power in this thing — and it's our job as grown-ups to teach our kids how to be responsible citizens in this new realm.

Julie Lythcott-Haims
New York Times *best-selling author, educator, and Common Sense board member*

SOCIAL MEDIA: START CONVERSATIONS WHEN KIDS ARE YOUNG

When I was 15 years old, I was the victim of a vicious cyberbullying attack. That Halloween, a girl whom I had never met dressed up as me for Halloween and posted a picture on Facebook that went viral. Suddenly, I received hundreds, and then thousands, of cyberbullying messages. My classmates and even people I had never met told me to kill myself and that my life was worth nothing.

I was devastated. I felt like the entire world was against me. I didn't know where to find hope.

In an effort to heal, I wrote a book about my experiences titled *The Survival Guide to Bullying*. My book was published in 18 countries around the world and became a best-seller. I went on tour and spoke to students, teachers, and parents around the country and learned more than I could ever have imagined about social media and the way young people use it.

Very quickly, I went from demonizing social media to realizing the power and possibility it inhabits. Here is the truth: Social media is social currency for young people. It is a portal to potential and possibilities, even for people who feel hopeless, uninspired, scared, and alone.

When I was younger, I was enmeshed in the negativity social media can create, but today I witness tremendous positives. Many of my fans and followers have gone on to write books and create music, YouTube channels, and social justice movements purely from the power and possibility of social media and technology. This brings me great hope.

As this report from Common Sense shows, lots of negative things can happen on social media. Cyberbullying is still very real and deeply traumatic. I see the greatest opportunity for change to occur being when kids are very young — perhaps in the first and second grades — when behavioral patterns can be affected. It is crucial for parents and teachers to have conversations about digital citizenship with children as soon as they start school.

Today, when I speak to parents and educators, I urge them to recognize that social media is not going anywhere, and stopping your child from using social media is not the answer. My parents did not allow me to use social media in middle school, so I made secret accounts. (Once again, social media is social currency for young people.)

Parents and educators have the space and opportunity to have conversations with kids about social media, their behavior on it, and the pros and cons of a digital footprint. Instead of being divided by technology, be on their side and show them you care, and they will reward you by being honest with you.

Aija Mayrock
Author, The Survival Guide to Bullying: Written by a Teen

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH: RISKS AND REWARDS

"Is social media bad or good for kids' mental health?" This is one of the most common questions that parents and educators ask the child psychologists and psychiatrists at the Child Mind Institute. The honest answers are "both" and "it depends on the child."

Those answers are backed up by research, including the Common Sense Media surveys that inform this report and the academic literature described in the Child Mind Institute's 2018 *Children's Mental Health Report* on anxiety in childhood and adolescence. While most youth see social media as neutral, significant minorities believe that apps like Facebook and Instagram have either positive or negative effects.[1]

When we look at how social media behaviors correlate to mental health symptoms, we see that more time spent using social media is tied to an increase in mental health symptoms.[2] Eighth-graders who spend 10 or more hours a week on social media are 56 percent more likely to report being unhappy than those who spend less time.[3] We also see that higher emotional investment in social media is strongly correlated with higher levels of anxiety.[4] It remains unclear whether social media is causing negative outcomes or whether children with mental health issues are turning to social media to soothe their symptoms.

It is troubling that youth at the highest risk are the ones who care the most about social networking and online communities. These are the children who can be the most negatively affected by cyberbullying and who can become distraught over the expectations built into curating their online selves.

But they are also the kids who benefit from finding communities to embrace them, from being able to interact freely and practice social skills in a safe space online. It is fitting that the Common Sense Media survey finds large effects of social media on social-emotional well-being in making teens feel *less* lonely and *more* confident — and that these effects are greatest in the at-risk youth for whom social media is very important. This is our experience as mental health professionals, when children and adolescents are allowed to have developmentally appropriate, time-limited access to positive social media and online content.

Children and teens seem very grown-up these days, competent with technology and image making. But they are still our children. They do not have a "right" to make themselves anxious or depressed through overexposure to social media and the toxic messages it can bring. If we do our job as parents and educators, we can steer at-risk children toward beneficial online experiences and help them reap the rewards of this new way of communicating.

Harold S. Koplewicz, M.D.
President, Child Mind Institute

[1]Anderson, M., & Jiang, J (2018) *Teens, social media & technology.* Retrieved from Pew Research Center website: http://assets pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2018/05/31102617/PI_2018 05.31_TeensTech_FINAL pdf

[2]Vannucci, A., Flannery, K M., & Ohannessian, C. M. (2017) Social media use and anxiety in emerging adults *Journal of Affective Disorders, 207,* 163–166 Retrieved from https://doi org/10 1016/j.jad 2016 08.040

[3]Twenge, J M (2017). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy — and completely unprepared for adulthood (and what this means for the rest of us).* New York, NY: Atria Books.

[4]Woods, H. C., & Scott, H (2016) #Sleepyteens: Social media use in adolescence is associated with poor sleep quality, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. *Journal of Adolescence, 51,* 41–49. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence 2016.05 008

Credits

Authors: Victoria Rideout, M.A., VJR Consulting
Michael B. Robb, Ph.D., Common Sense

Data analysis: Melissa Saphir, Ph.D., Saphir Research

Copy editor: Jenny Pritchett

Designers: Emely Vertiz
Dana Herrick

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INTRODUCTION

THIS SURVEY IS THE second wave of an ongoing study tracking social media use among American teenagers: how often they use social media such as Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook; their attitudes about social media's role in their lives; experiences they have on social media; and how social media makes them feel. As such, it offers a unique opportunity to observe changes in social media use over time, and to deepen our understanding of the role of social media in teens' lives.

Wave one of the study was conducted among a nationally representative sample of more than 1,000 13- to 17-year-olds in 2012, when Facebook ruled the social media landscape and the fact that half of teens checked their social media sites every day was extraordinary. Wave two (the focus of this report) was conducted in March and April of 2018, among a separate sample of 1,141 13- to 17-year-olds, and offers an up-to-date snapshot of social media use among today's teens.

A lot can happen in six years. We thought at the time of our first survey that social media had pervaded teenagers' lives; but, as many of us have come to suspect and this study confirms, what we saw then was just the tip of the iceberg. Six years ago we wrote that Facebook "utterly dominates social networking among teens," and 68 percent of all young people said it was their main social media site. Today, only 15 percent do. Six years ago, four out of 10 teens (41 percent) had their own smartphones; today nearly nine out of 10 (89 percent) do, meaning that social media can be accessed anytime and any place, allowing use to grow exponentially. Six years ago, 34 percent of teens used social media more than once a day; today 70 percent do, including 16 percent who use it "almost constantly" and another 22 percent who use it several times an hour. Six years ago, about half (49 percent) of all teens still said their favorite way to communicate with friends was in person; today less than a third (32 percent) say so. Six years from now, we may see these statistics as quaint.

As social media use has expanded and evolved, concerns about its role in teens' lives have grown as well. Linking social media use to technology addiction, the decay of in-person social skills, and multiple harms to kids' mental well-being make for good headlines but may obscure and confuse the actual role of social media in teens' lives. This survey is designed in part to help shed light on some of those concerns. As technology becomes more accessible, are teens' preferences changing from face-to-face communication to online interactions? To what degree are teens occupied by social pressures regarding how they present themselves online and how they compare to others? How widespread is cyberbullying, and how are teens coping with it? Is social media contributing to or helping to alleviate depression and loneliness among adolescents, and how has this changed, if at all, over the past six years?

Many questions in the current survey replicate those asked six years ago, while others delve more deeply into new aspects of social media use. Among the topics covered:

- what teens' favorite ways of communicating with friends and family are, and whether or not they think social media detracts from face-to-face interactions;

- how frequently teens use social media, and which sites they use the most;

- what roles social media plays in their lives, including its overall importance as well as its use for creative expression and meaningful communication;

- how teens do or don't regulate their own social media use, including putting devices away at meals, when doing homework, in social situations, while driving, or when going to sleep;

- how the heaviest social media users compare to other teens in terms of their social and emotional well-being, and whether that has changed in the past six years;

- what teens themselves have to say about how social media affects their sense of depression, anxiety, loneliness, or self-image, and whether that has changed in the past six years;

- how many teens have been cyberbullied or tried to help others who have been victimized by cyberbullying;

- the degree to which teens are "chasing likes" by organizing their social media lives around building online popularity; and

- the extent to which teens encounter racist, sexist, and homophobic content in social media, and whether their experiences in that regard have changed in recent years.

The survey asked teens to report how often they engage in certain behaviors on social media, but it also asked them how using social media makes them feel. While self-reports should not be our only metric for assessing the impact of social media on young people, giving voice to teens' experiences and opinions is important and relevant. In addition to the quantitative data provided in this report, we also include direct quotes from the hundreds of survey participants who provided personal responses to open-ended survey questions or who were part of focus groups held to help refine the survey questionnaire.

Because teens' involvement with social media is something many of us have personal experience with, it can be difficult to step back and take an objective look at what is happening in the country as a whole. Our own immersion in this world can easily affect our ability to observe and understand social media's broader role in society and in the lives of adolescents. We hope that the data presented in this report offer new insights to help inform the work of all those who care about the healthy development of young people in our society.

1

Social media use among teens has increased dramatically since 2012.

A total of 81 percent of teens use social media, roughly the same as "ever" used it in 2012. But it is the frequency of social media use that has changed most dramatically. The proportion of teens who use social media multiple times a day has doubled over the past six years: In 2012, 34 percent of teens used social media more than once a day; today, 70 percent do (see Figure A). In fact, 38 percent of teens today say they use social media multiple times an hour, including 16 percent who say they use it "almost constantly." The increasing frequency of social media use may be fueled in part by the dramatic increase in access to mobile devices: The proportion of teens with a smartphone has more than doubled since 2012, from 41 percent up to 89 percent. Even among 13- to 14-year-olds, 84 percent now have a smartphone, and 93 percent have some type of mobile device such as a tablet.

Amid increased social media use, the decline of Facebook has been precipitous. In 2012, 68 percent of all teens listed Facebook as their main social networking site. Today, 15 percent say Facebook is their main site, as compared to 41 percent of all teens who say Snapchat, and 22 percent who say Instagram (which is owned by Facebook). (When one 16-year-old girl was asked in a focus group whom she communicates with on Facebook, she replied, "My grandparents").

2

Only a very few teens say that using social media has a negative effect on how they feel about themselves; many more say it has a positive effect.

Across every measure in our survey, teens are more likely to say that social media has a *positive* rather than a *negative* effect on how they feel (see Figure B). For example, 25 percent say using social media makes them feel less lonely, compared to 3 percent

FIGURE A. Social Media and Digital Device Use, 2012 vs. 2018

Percent of 13- to 17-year-olds who:

89% Have their own smartphone*

68%

70% Use social media multiple times a day*

41%
34%

17%

19% Don't use social media
15% Say Facebook is their main social media site*

2012   2018
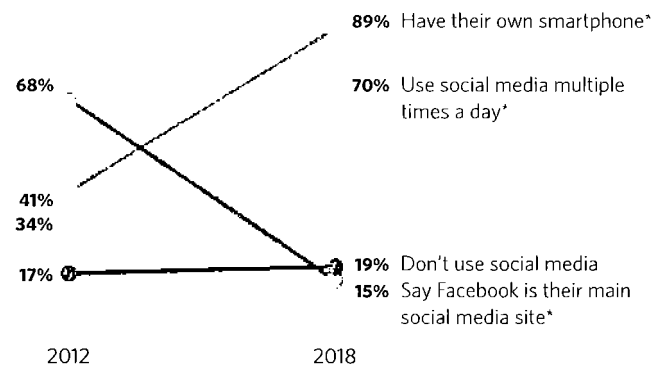
*Differences over time are statistically significant at $p < 05$

FIGURE B. Self-Reported Effects of Social Media on Social-Emotional Well-Being, 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say using social media makes them feel:

Popular
21%
3%

Confident
20%
5%

Better/Worse about themselves
Better
4% Worse

Anxious
12%

Depressed
16%

Lonely
25%
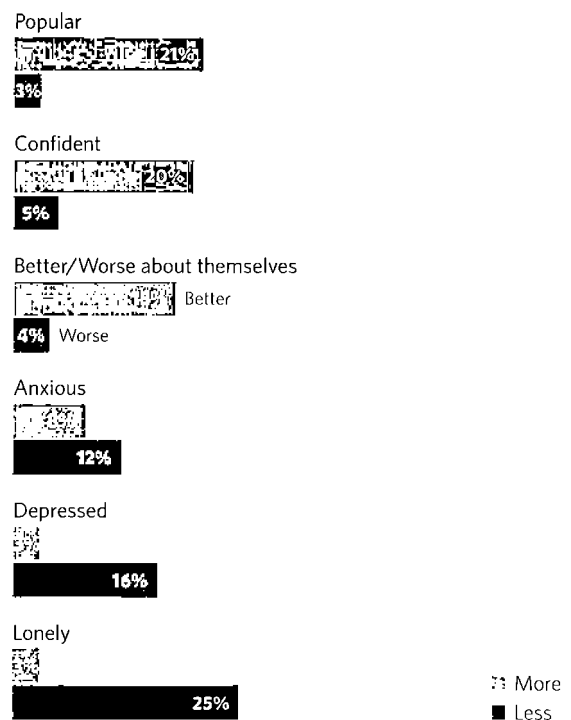
More
Less

Note: All differences are statistically significant at $p < 05$

who say more; eighteen percent say using social media makes them feel better about themselves, compared to 4 percent who say worse; and 16 percent say social media use makes them feel less depressed, compared to 3 percent who say more. (The rest say using social media doesn't make much of a difference one way or the other.) Despite the increased use of social media that has occurred over the past six years, teens are no more likely to report having a negative reaction to social media on any of these measures today than they were in 2012.

3

Social media has a heightened role — both positive and negative — in the lives of more vulnerable teens.

The survey included a social-emotional well-being (SEWB) scale based on concepts such as happiness, depression, loneliness, confidence, self-esteem, and parental relations (see the "Methodology" section, on page 11, for more details). About one in five teens (19 percent) is in the "high SEWB" group, 63 percent in the "medium" group, and 17 percent in the "low" group. Social media is significantly more important in the lives of those who are lowest on the SEWB scale. Nearly half (46 percent) of teen social media users at the low end of the SEWB scale say social media is "extremely" or "very" important in their lives, compared to 32 percent of those at the high end of the scale. Teen social media users on the low end of the scale are also much more likely to say they've had a variety of negative responses to social media (see Figure C), such as feeling bad about themselves when nobody comments on or likes their posts (43 percent agree "strongly" or "somewhat," vs. 11 percent of high-SEWB teens); feeling left out or excluded after seeing photos on social media of their friends together at something they weren't invited to (70 percent vs. 29 percent); and deleting social media posts because they didn't get enough likes (43 percent vs. 13 percent). Disturbingly, more than a third (35 percent) say they have been cyberbullied, compared to 5 percent of high-SEWB teens.

But these more-vulnerable teens are also more likely to say that social media has a positive rather than a negative effect on them. (see Figure D) For example, 29 percent of them say using social media makes them feel less depressed, compared to 11 percent who say it makes them feel more depressed (the rest say it doesn't make a difference one way or the other); twenty-two percent say social media makes them feel better about themselves, compared to 15 percent who say worse; and 39 percent

FIGURE C. Experiences on and Responses to Social Media, by Social-Emotional Well-Being Status, 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say they:

Sometimes feel left out or excluded when using social media

70%

Have deleted social media posts because they got too few "likes"

43%

Feel bad about themselves if no one comments on or likes their posts

43%

Have ever been cyberbullied

35%

■ Low-SEWB
□ High-SEWB
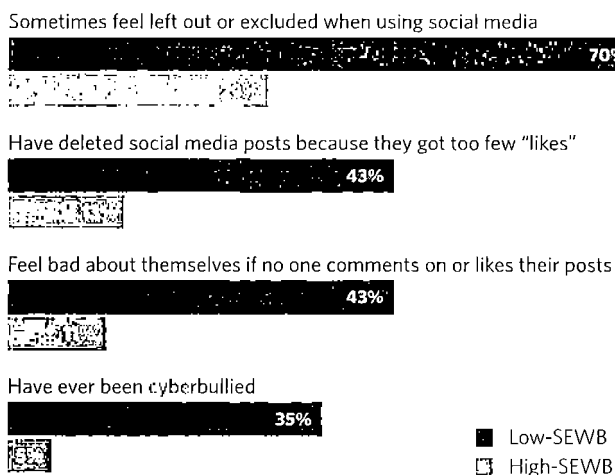
Note: "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being." See "Methodology" section (page 11) for definitions of the low-, medium-, and high-SEWB groups. All differences between groups are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

FIGURE D. Self-Reported Social Media Effects, 2018
Among low-SEWB 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say using social media makes them feel:

Lonely

13%
39%*
47%

Depressed

11%
29%*
59%

Better/Worse about themselves

Better
15% Worse
62%

⁃ More
■ Less
■ No difference
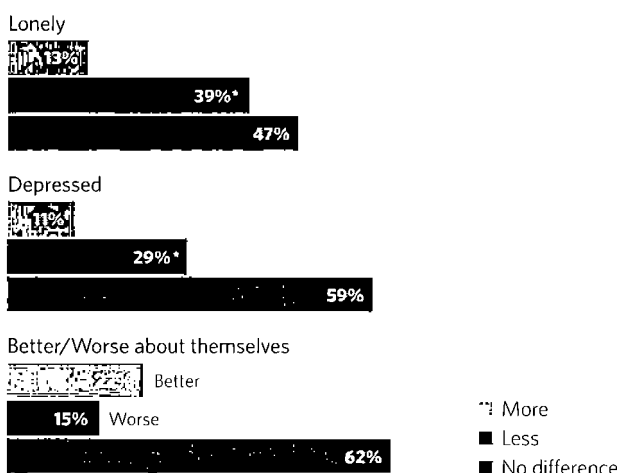
*Statistically significant compared to answers of "more" at the level of $p < .05$
Note: "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being."

say using social media makes them feel less lonely, compared to 13 percent who say it makes them feel more lonely.

Despite the increased use of social media among teens between 2012 and 2018, there has been no increase in the proportion of these more vulnerable youth who say they feel negative effects from their social media use; but there *has* been an increase in the proportion who report a *positive* effect (see Figure E). For example, in 2012, 11 percent of low-SEWB teens said using social media made them feel less depressed; today, 29 percent say it makes them feel less depressed. In other words, it is possible that the beneficial effects of social media, for vulnerable teens, have increased over the past six years.

4

Teens' preference for face-to-face communication with friends has declined substantially, and their perception of social media's interference with personal interactions has increased.

The proportion of teens who say their favorite way to communicate with their friends is "in person" has dropped from nearly half (49 percent) in 2012 (when it was their top choice) to less than a third (32 percent) today (when it's a close second to texting) (see Figure F). And teens are more likely to say they're distracted from personal relationships by social media today than they were in 2012: Fifty-four percent of teens agree that using social media "often distracts me when I should be paying attention to the people I'm with," up from 44 percent in 2012; and 42 percent agree that the time they spend using social media "has taken away from time I could be spending with friends in person," up from 34 percent six years ago.

FIGURE E. How Social Media Affects Depression, 2012 vs. 2018
Among low-SEWB 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say using social media makes them feel:

72%

59% No difference

29% Less depressed*

15%
11%

11% More depressed

2012   2018
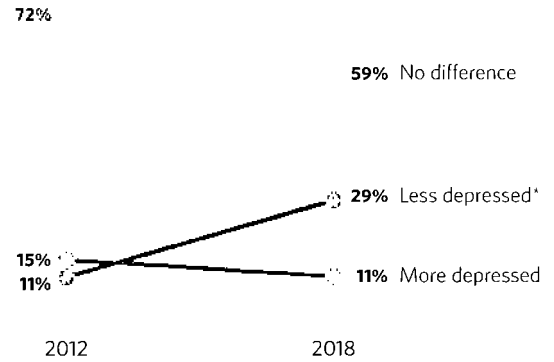
*Difference over time is statistically significant at $p < .05$.
Note: "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being." See "Methodology" section (page 11) for definitions of low-, medium-, and high-SEWB groups

FIGURE F. Preferred Method of Communication, 2012 vs. 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say the following is their favorite way to communicate with friends:

49%

33%

35% Texting
32% In-person*

16% Social media*

10% Video-chatting*

7%
2%

2012   2018
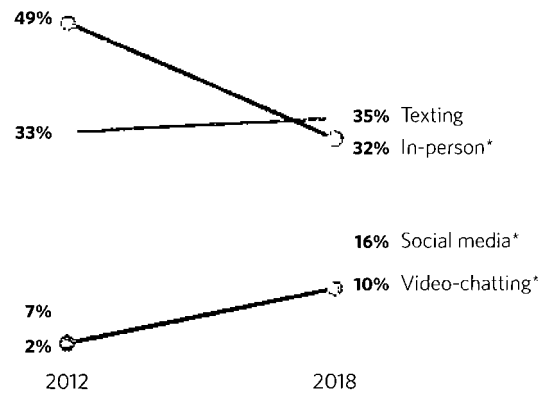
*Differences over time are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

5

Many teens think tech companies manipulate users to spend more time on their devices and say that digital distractions interfere with homework, personal relationships, and sleep.

Nearly three out of four teens (72 percent) believe that tech companies manipulate users to spend more time on their devices. And many teen social media users say that social media often distracts them from other important things: Fifty-seven percent agree that using social media often distracts them when they should be doing homework, and 54 percent agree that it often distracts them when they should be paying attention to the people they're with. A large proportion of all teens (44 percent) say they get frustrated with their friends for being on their phones so much when they're hanging out together. More than two-thirds (68 percent), regardless of whether they use social media themselves, agree with the statement "Social media has a negative impact on many people my age," including 20 percent who "strongly" agree. Nearly a third who own smartphones (29 percent) say they've been woken up by their phones during the night by a call, text, or notification. Many teens say digital obsession is a problem for their parents as well: Fully a third (33 percent) of teens say they wish their parents would spend less time on their devices, up from 21 percent in 2012.

6

Teens have a decidedly mixed record when it comes to self-regulating device use.

Many young people turn off, silence, or put away their phones at key times such as when going to sleep (56 percent do so "all" or "most" of the time), having meals with people (42 percent), visiting family (31 percent), or doing homework (31 percent) (see Figure G). But many others do not: A significant number of teens say they "hardly ever" or "never" silence or put away their devices when doing homework (37 percent), visiting family (34 percent), having meals with other people (31 percent), or going to sleep (26 percent).

7

There has been an uptick in teens' exposure to racist, sexist, and homophobic content on social media, ranging from an increase of 8 to 12 percentage points.

All told, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of teen social media users in 2018 say they "often" or "sometimes" come across racist, sexist, homophobic, or religious-based hate content in social media; one in five (21 percent) say they "often" do so. Over the past six years, there has been an increase in exposure to each individual type of content. For example, the percent who "often" or "sometimes" encounter racist content has increased from 43 percent in 2012 to 52 percent today, and exposure to content that denigrates someone because of their religion grew from 34 percent to 46 percent of teens on social media.

FIGURE G. Silencing Digital Devices, 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-olds with a cellphone, percent who say they turn off, silence, or put away their phones when:

Going to sleep

| 56% | 17% | 26% |

Having a meal with someone

| 42% | 26% | 31% |

Doing homework

| 31% | 31% | 37% |

Visiting family

| 31% | 34% | 34% |

Hanging out with friends

| | 28% | 55% |
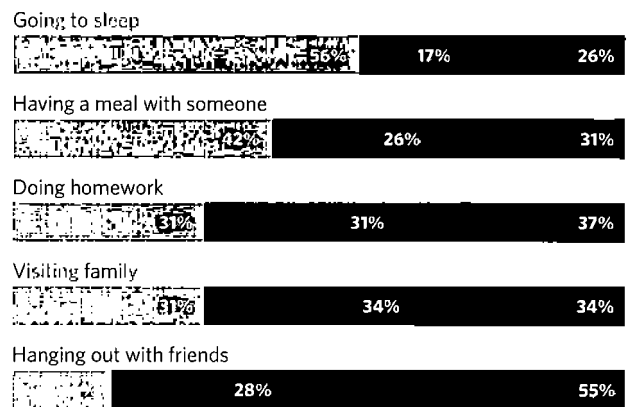
◻ All/Most of the time ■ Some of the time ■ Hardly ever/Never

Note: Segments may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

8

Some teens have been cyberbullied, including about one in 10 who say their cyberbullying was at least "somewhat" serious.

More than one in 10 teens (13 percent) say they have "ever" been cyberbullied (see the "Methodology" section, on page 11, for a definition), including 9 percent who say this has happened to them either "many" or "a few" times (the rest say "once or twice") (see Figure H). Similarly, 9 percent of teens say they have been cyberbullied in a way they consider at least "somewhat" serious (the rest say either "not too" or "not at all" serious). More than one in five teens (23 percent) have tried to help someone who has been cyberbullied, such as by talking to the person who was cyberbullied, reporting it to adults, or posting positive stuff about the person being cyberbullied online.

9

Social media is an important avenue of creative expression for many teens.

More than one in four teens (27 percent) say social media is "extremely" or "very" important to them for expressing themselves creatively. Using social media for creative expression appears to be especially important to the most vulnerable teen social media users—those lowest on the scale of social-emotional well-being. Thirty-seven percent of those teens say social media is "extremely" or "very" important to them for that purpose, compared to 21 percent of teen social media users who are high in social-emotional well-being. For example, in open-ended responses to the survey, one 17-year-old white girl wrote that one of the benefits of social media is that she can "get my artwork out to the public"; a 14-year-old African American girl wrote that "[s]ocial media allows me to have a creative outlet to express myself"; a 14-year-old white boy said he likes social media because "I get to share things that I make"; and a 16-year-old Hispanic/Latino boy wrote that he likes using social media because "I get to post my costume and design work."
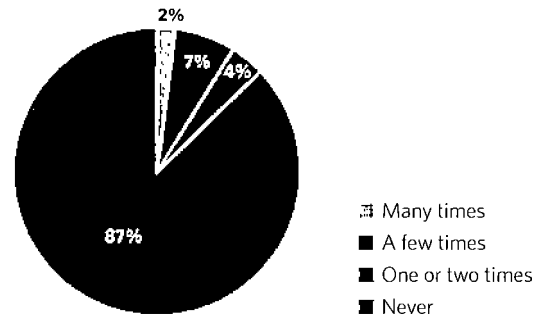
Social Media, Social Life 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-olds in the United States

Social media use among teens has increased dramatically.

% of teens with a smartphone

% of teens who use social media multiple times a day

89%

70%

41%

34%

2012   2018
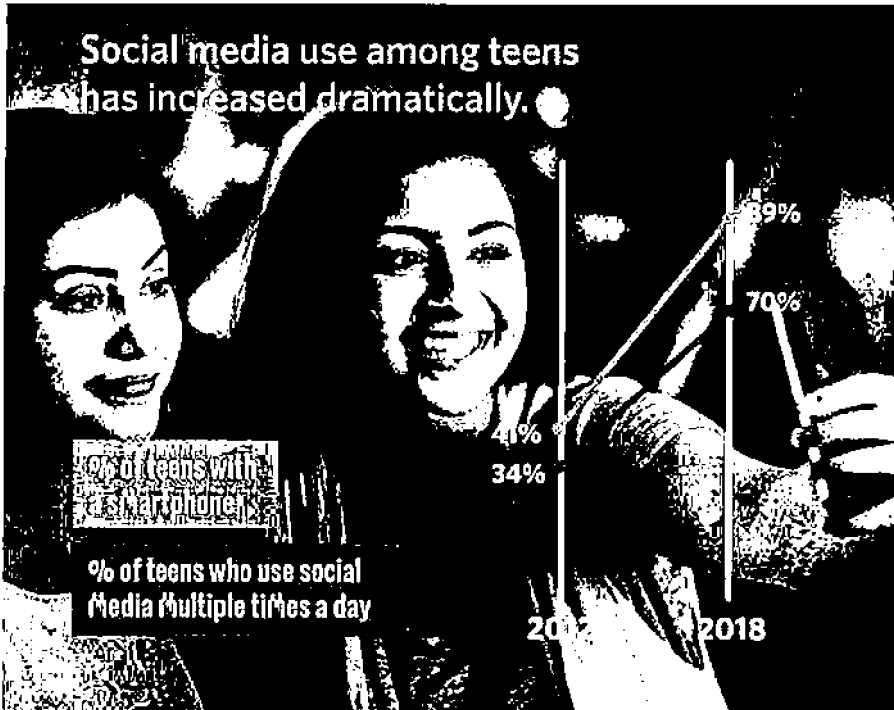
Teens overwhelmingly choose Snapchat as their main social media site.

Percent of teens who say they use each social media site the most:

41%
Snapchat

22%
Instagram

1 %
Facebook

They're being distracted from other important things and their friends.
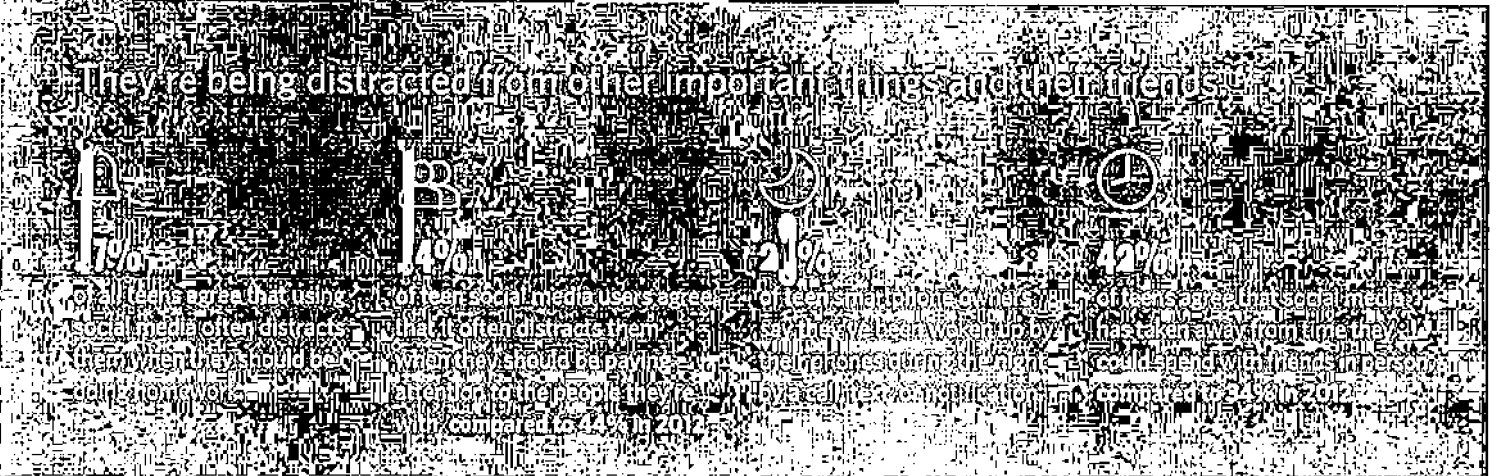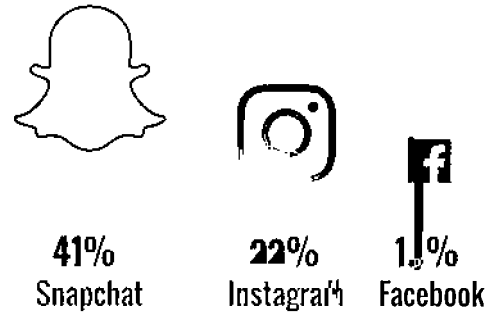
Teens don't value face-to-face communication with friends as much as they used to.

Teens favorite way of communicating, 2012 vs. 2018

IN PERSON

— TEXTING

— SOCIAL MEDIA

— VIDEO-CHATTING

49%

33% ————► 35%
32%

16%
7% ————► 10%
2%

2012   2018
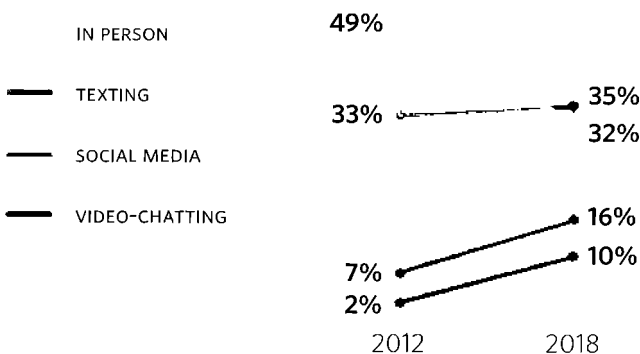
W at happens online stays online.

Wh asked to pick which comes closer to the truth, teens sa

4%
If parents knew what actually happens on social media, they'd be a lot more worried about it.

46%
Parents worry too much about teens' use of social media.

Teens are much more likely to say social media has a positive rather than a negative effect on how they feel.

Social media users who say using social media makes them feel "more" or "less":

■ LESS   MORE

Less lonely
25% / 3%

Less depressed
16% / 3%

Less anxious
12% / 8%

More confident
20% / 5%

Better about themselves
18% / 4%

More popular
21% / 3%

Hey where are you?

Hurry up!

Traffic's the worst

Smh

Bummer
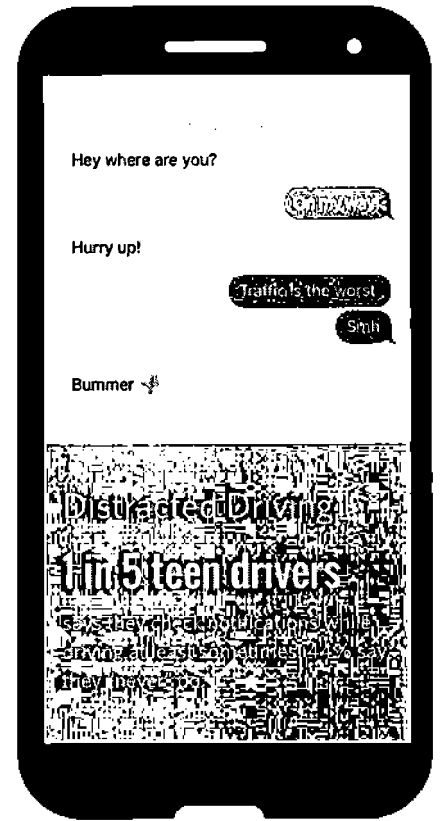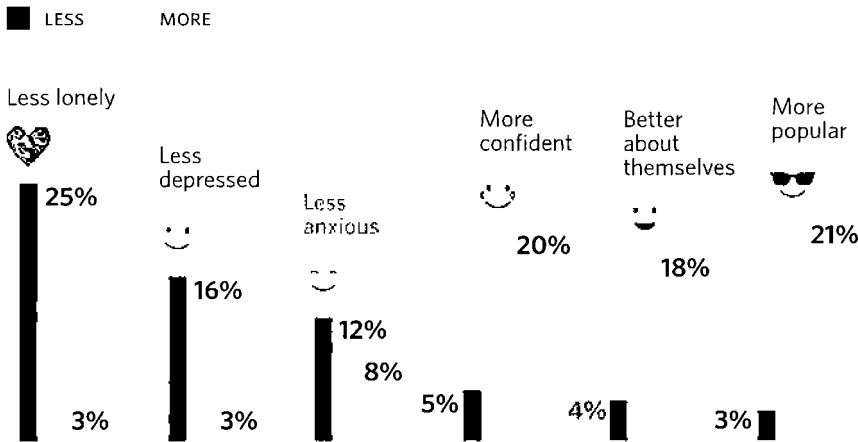
Teens think they're being manipulated.

72%

Of teens believe that tech companies manipulate users to spend more time on their devices.
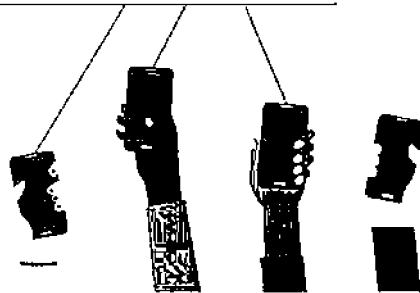
Teens with low social-emotional well-being experience more of the negative effects of social media than kids with high social-emotional well-being.

Percent of social media users who say they:

Sometimes feel left out or excluded when using social media
70%
29%
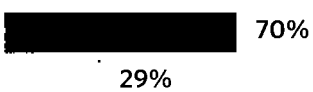
Have deleted social media posts because they got too few "likes"
43%
13%

Feel bad about themselves if no one comments on or likes their posts
43%
11%

Have ever been cyberbulled
35%
5%

■ LOW SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
HIGH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

See Methodology section for definitions of the high, medium, and low SEWB groups

🔍 **Looking closer at teens with low social-emotional well-being**

Percent who say using social media makes them feel:

Lonely   ■ MORE ■ LESS
13%
39%

Depressed
11%
29%

Better/Worse about themselves
22% Better
15% Worse
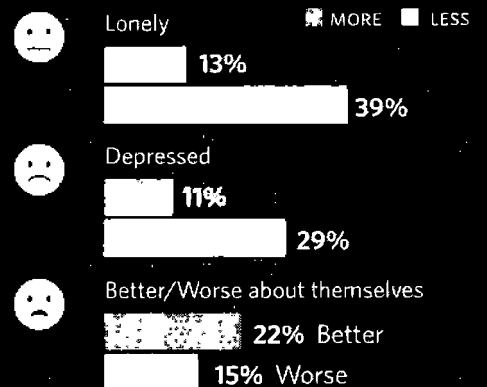
THIS REPORT IS BASED on a nationally representative survey of 1,141 13- to 17-year-olds in the United States. The survey was administered online by the research group GfK using their KnowledgePanel© from March 22, 2018, through April 10, 2018. The full text of the questionnaire and all topline results can be found in the Appendix of this report.

The 2018 survey is the second wave of the *Social Media, Social Life* survey. The first wave was conducted in 2012, and findings were presented in the Common Sense report *Social Media, Social Life: How Teens Views Their Digital Lives.* Each wave was conducted among separate cross-sectional samples of U.S. teens. A portion of the current survey repeats items from the 2012 questionnaire, for the purpose of tracking changes over time. Where available, trend data is provided in the current report.

Survey Sample

The use of a probability sample. GfK's KnowledgePanel© members were recruited using address-based sampling (ABS) methods (previously, GfK relied on random-digit dialing [RDD] methods). Once household members are recruited for the panel and assigned to a study sample, they are notified by email for survey taking. The use of a probability sample means the results are substantially more generalizable to the U.S. population than are results based on "convenience" samples. Convenience samples only include respondents who volunteer through word of mouth or advertising to participate in surveys.

Participant recruitment and respondent compensation. GfK sampled parents of 13- to 17-year-olds from its KnowledgePanel©. The survey consisted of two stages: initial screening to confirm the panelist was the parent of a teenager age 13 to 17 who was able to answer the survey, and the main survey with the study-eligible respondents GfK operates an ongoing modest incentive program to encourage participation and create member loyalty. The incentive program includes special raffles and sweepstakes with both cash rewards and other prizes to be won.

Weighting. The use of probability-based recruitment methods for the KnowledgePanel© is designed to ensure that the resulting sample properly represents the population of the U.S.

geographically, demographically (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, income), and in terms of home internet access. Study-specific post-stratification weights were applied once the data were finalized, to adjust for any survey nonresponse and to ensure the proper distributions for the specific target population. Geo-demographic distributions for this population were obtained from the March 2017 supplemental data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

Demographic of Survey Sample (Table)	Benchmark	Unweighted Survey Sample	Weighted Survey Sample
Age			
• 13	19%	19%	19%
• 14	19%	22%	19%
• 15	19%	19%	20%
• 16	21%	19%	21%
• 17	21%	21%	21%
Gender			
• Boys	51%	50%	51%
• Girls	49%	50%	49%
Race/ethnicity			
• White*	54%	60%	54%
• Hispanic/Latino	23%	16%	23%
• African American*	14%	13%	14%
• Other*	6%	5%	6%
• 2+ races*	3%	6%	3%
Household income†			
• <$25,000	13%	13%	13%
• $25,000–49,999	19%	17%	19%
• $50,000–74,999	16%	20%	16%
• $75,000+	52%	50%	53%

*Not Hispanic
†Income breaks used in data analysis were <$50,000, $50,000–99,999, and $100,000+.

Source of benchmarks: March 2017 Supplemental Data, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Margin of error, design effect, and response rate. The margin of error for the full sample at a 95 percent confidence level is +/-3.4 percent. The overall design effect for the survey is 1.4048. As a member of the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), GfK follows the AAPOR standards for response rate reporting. The study completion rate (COMR1) for this survey was 55.9 percent, the study breakoff rate (BOR) was 10.4 percent, the study qualification rate (QUALR) was 59.6 percent, and the cumulative response rate (RR3) was 4.4 percent. To calculate the cumulative response rate, GfK used AAPOR RR3 but notes that there were no cases of unknown eligibility at the profile survey and study stages.

Analyses and Presentation of Data in the Text

Analyses. In addition to providing descriptive findings for the population of teens as a whole, the data were also analyzed by demographic groups, including age (13- to 14-year-olds and 15- to 17-year-olds), gender (male and female), race/ethnicity (African American, Hispanic/Latino, and white), and household income (lower, middle, and higher). Definitions of the income and race/ethnicity categories are provided below. In addition, two scales were used to group respondents by frequency of social media use and by level of social-emotional well-being. Those scales are described in more detail below.

Income categories. For analyses, respondents were divided into three relative income categories: "lower-income" (households earning less than $50,000 a year, which is 200 percent of poverty for a family of four according to the federal poverty guidelines[1]; (thirty-one percent of our sample were in this category); "middle-income" (households earning between $50,000 and $99,999 a year, and 30 percent of our sample); and "higher-income" (families earning $100,000 a year or more, and 38 percent of our sample).

Race/ethnicity categories. The term "African American" refers to any respondents who self-identified as "black, non-Hispanic." The term "white" refers to any respondents who self-identified as "white, non-Hispanic." The term "Hispanic/Latino" refers to any respondents who self-identified as "Hispanic." The term "other" is a collapsed category that includes individuals who self-identified as another racial group or as two or more races, none of which was Hispanic. Where findings are broken out by race/ethnicity, results are presented only for white, African American,

and Hispanic/Latino teens. Respondents in the "other" category are included in results based on the total sample but not in results that are broken out by race, due to the small group size.

Social media use categories. The questionnaire included an item asking teens how often they use social media, with response options including "almost constantly," "a few times an hour," "once an hour," "a few times a day," "once a day," "a few times a week," "once a week," "less than once a week," and "never." For purposes of data analysis, respondents were grouped into three categories:

- **Heavy** social media users are defined as those who use social media "almost constantly" (16 percent).

- **Moderate** social media users are defined as those who use social media from once a day to several times an hour (57 percent).

- **Light** social media users are defined as those who either don't use social media at all or use it no more than a few times a week (27 percent).

In the 2012 wave of this survey, the frequency measures were different from those used in 2018 (for example, in 2012 there was no response option of "almost constantly"). In 2012, heavy users were defined as those who used social media at least six times a day (17 percent of teens in 2012); moderate users were defined as those who used it less than six times a day and more than once a week (57 percent); and light users were defined as those who used social media less than weekly or never (26 percent). In addition to these categories, frequency of social media use was also used as a continuous variable in both 2012 and 2018, in analyses exploring whether there is a relationship between social media use and social-emotional well-being.

Social-emotional well-being scale. The survey included a social-emotional well-being (SEWB) scale developed by the study authors prior to the 2012 survey. The 11-item scale measures attributes related to SEWB in adolescents as identified by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (such as happiness, depression, loneliness, confidence, self-esteem, and parental relations). Respondents were presented with a series of statements and asked whether each statement was "a lot," "somewhat," "not too much," or "not at all" like them. Examples of items on the scale are: "I'm happy with my life," "There are lots of things I can do well," "I'm lonely," and "I often feel sad or depressed." Several items were adapted from other scales such

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1 National Center for Children in Poverty, "Explanation of Terms and Data Sources," www.nccp.org

as the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale, the Loneliness Questionnaire, and the Kaiser Family Foundation's Contentedness Scale[2]. The full scale can be found in Q35 of the toplines in the Appendix of this report; items 35a–35j and 35n are included in the scale. This scale is not meant to be used diagnostically to assess whether respondents are clinically depressed, anxious, or lonely. However, we believe it is suggestive of participants' social-emotional well-being and points to areas of future research using other validated scales. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.87, meaning that its 11 items are highly internally consistent.

Responses to the 11 items were coded numerically and summed, and each respondent was given a mean score (items with a negative valence were reverse-coded). Respondents missing three or more items on the scale were dropped from these analyses (four individuals, or 0.04 percent of the sample). Respondents whose scores were one standard deviation above or below the mean for the entire population are considered to be in the "high" or "low" social-emotional well-being groups. About one in five teens (19 percent) are in the "high SEWB" group, 63 percent in the medium group, and 17 percent in the low group. Using this same method to group respondents into SEWB categories, in 2012 19 percent of respondents were in the high group, 62 percent in the medium group, and 16 percent in the low group. In both years, the use of one standard deviation above and below the mean also resulted in identical numerical cut points on the scale.

Statistical significance. During data analysis, findings on specific items were compared over time, between demographic groups, by frequency of respondents' social media use, and by social-emotional well-being score. Unless otherwise noted, findings based on these analyses are described in the text in a comparative manner (e.g., "more than," "less than") only if the differences are statistically significant at the level of $p < .05$. In tables where statistical significance has been tested, superscripts (using letters such as *a, b,* or *c*) are used to indicate whether results differ at a statistically significant level within a set of columns or rows (e.g., by gender, or 2012 vs. 2018). Means that share a common superscript, and means that have no superscript at all, are not significantly different from each other.

Percentages. Percentages will not always add up to 100 due to rounding or multiple response options or because those who marked "don't know" or did not respond are not included. "Nets," such as the total agreeing with a statement either "strongly" or "somewhat," may not reflect the totals of subitems due to rounding.

Definitions

Social media. The survey did not provide respondents with a formal definition of social media. In the questionnaire, respondents were simply asked, "Have you ever used social media, such as Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook?" When asking respondents which social media they use, we did not include YouTube on the list because focus groups indicated that it is most often used as a video-watching site, even though it has some social media functions. However, respondents were offered an "other" category to list sites they use that were not on our list.

Cyberbullying. The definition of cyberbullying used in the survey and presented to respondents is "bullying that takes place over devices like phones, tablets, and computers. It can happen in social media, texts, or gaming, where people can view, participate in, or share content. It includes repeatedly sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, or mean content about someone else, on purpose. It can include sharing private information about someone else to cause embarrassment or humiliation."

Limitations

This is a cross-sectional survey, which means that the survey was administered to two separate samples at two different points in time (2012 and 2018). The survey is based entirely on self-reports. As such, the survey is useful for providing descriptive statistics and trends over time, and for exploring associations among variables. It cannot demonstrate causality among any of those variables.

2. See for example Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49,* 71–75; Achenbach, T. (1991). *Manual for the youth self-report and 1991 profile.* Burlington, V T: University of Vermont, Department of Psychiatry; Roberts, D. F., & Foehr, U. G. (1991) *Kids and media in America.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press; Sawatzky, R., Ratner, P. A., Johnson, J. L., Koper, J. A., & Zumbo, B. D. (2009). Sample heterogeneity and the measurement structure of the multidimensional students' life satisfaction scale. *Social Indicators Research, 94(2),* 273–296. doi: 10.1007/s1120500894234; Ebesutani, C., Drescher, C. F., Reise, S. P., Heiden, L., Hight, T. L., Damon, J. D., & Young, J. (2012). The loneliness questionnaire-short version: An evaluation of reverse worded and non-reverse-worded items via item response theory. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 94:4,* 427–437. doi: 10.1080/00223891.2012.662188; Harter, S. (2012). *Self-perception profile for adolescents: Manual and questionnaires.* Denver, CO: University of Denver.

Frequency of Social Media Use

Eight in 10 teens (81 percent) use social media (sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook), ranging from 70 percent of 13- to 14-year-olds up to 89 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds. The survey measured frequency of social media use through two questions: how often teens "check" social media, and how often they "post" to it. Detailed response options included "almost constantly," "a few times an hour," "once an hour," "a few times a day," "once a day," "a few times a week," "once a week," "less than once a week," or "never." In this report, these responses are sometimes combined into categories such as "hourly," "daily," or "weekly or less."

Nearly three out of four teens (73 percent) use ("check") social media daily, including "almost constantly" (16 percent); "hourly" (27 percent, including 22 percent "a few times an hour" and 5 percent "once an hour"); daily but less than hourly (30 percent, including 27 percent "a few times a day" and 3 percent "once a day") (see Figure 1). Eight percent use it weekly or less, including "a few times a week" (4 percent), "once a week" (1 percent), or "less than once a week" (2 percent). Teens post content on social media less frequently than they check it, but more than a third post on a "daily" basis (39 percent); twenty-one percent post at least once a week, 17 percent post less than that, and 4 percent say they "never" post content to social media.

Nineteen percent of teens don't use social media (16 percent never have, and another 3 percent say they used it in the past but don't do so any more).

Demographic differences. In comparing the frequency of social media use among different demographic groups, we focused on total daily use (percent who check social media at least once a day) and total daily posting (percent who post to social media at least once a day). We looked for any statistically significant differences by age (13- to 14-year-olds vs. 15- to 17-year-olds), gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (household income). Using this method, we found four significant differences: Checking of social media differs by age, gender, and income; and posting to social media differs by gender. Specifically, 82 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds are daily social media users, compared to 59 percent of 13- to 14-year-olds. Similarly, 81 percent of female

teenagers use social media daily, compared to 66 percent of males. Seventy-six percent of higher-income youth use social media daily, compared to 68 percent of middle-income youth. And among those who use social media, 53 percent of teen girls post to social media daily, compared to 43 percent of boys.

Trend over time. The proportion of teens who use social media hasn't changed (83% in 2012 and 81% today), but the frequency of social media use has changed dramatically. In 2012, 51 percent of teens checked social media daily, while 73 percent do so today (see Table 1). Even more dramatically, in 2012, 34 percent of teens

FIGURE 1. Frequency of Social Media Use, 2018
Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who check social media:

- Almost constantly
- Hourly
- Daily (less than hourly)
- Weekly or less
- Don't use social media
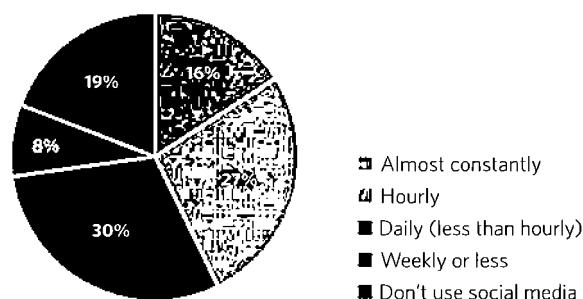
TABLE 1. Frequency of Social Media Use, 2012 vs. 2018

	2012	2018
Daily	51%[a]	73%[b]
• More than once a day	34%[a]	70%[b]
• Once a day	17%[a]	3%[b]
Weekly	21%[a]	5%[b]
• Several times a week	14%[a]	4%[b]
• Once a week	7%[a]	1%[b]
Less than weekly	10%[a]	3%[b]
Don't use social media	17%	19%

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < .05$.
Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

checked social media more than once a day, compared to 70 percent who do so today (see Figure 2).

Frequency of Texting

While the primary focus of the survey is social media such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, it also included a question about the frequency of texting. Teens are even more frequent texters than they are social media users. One in five (21 percent) say they text "almost constantly," and another 27 percent say they do so "a few times an hour" (Table 2). All told, 80 percent of teens are daily texters, up from 68 percent in 2012 (Table 3).

Specific Sites Used

The survey included two questions about which social media teens use: "Which social media do you use?" and "Which social media do you use the most?" As seen in Table 4 (see page 17), Snapchat and Instagram are the most popular social media sites among teens, with more than six in 10 teens using each site (63 percent for Snapchat and 61 percent for Instagram). Forty-three percent of teens use Facebook, and 20 percent use Twitter, with other sites far behind. When asked which site they use most often, 41 percent of all teens say Snapchat, 22 percent say Instagram, and 15 percent say Facebook. Most teens use more than one social media site—about two and a half sites (2.4) on average among teen social media users.

Instagram is mainly the high points of my life, the really big things that happen. And Snapchat is the little things ... like I went out to lunch with my friends, or I went shopping. And then I use Facebook for my family.

— 15-year-old Asian American girl in focus group

FIGURE 2. Frequency of Social Media Use, 2012 vs. 2018

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who check social media:

70% More than once a day*

34%
31%

17%

19% Don't use social media

8% Weekly or less*
3% Once a day*

2012   2018
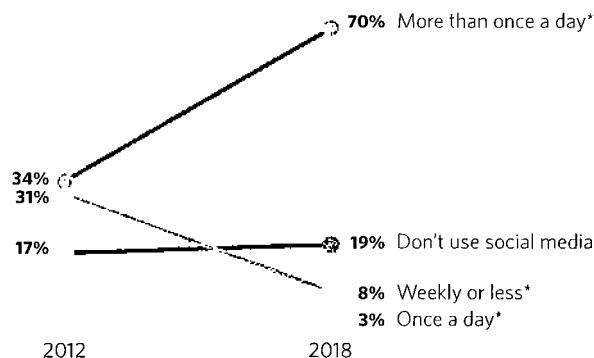
*Differences over time are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

TABLE 2. Frequency of Texting, 2018

	2018
Almost constantly	21%
A few times an hour	27%
Once an hour	3%
A few times a day	26%
Once a day	2%
A few times a week	7%
Once a week	·
Less than once a week	1%
Never	1%
Don't own a smartphone	11%

*Indicates a percentage less than 0 5 percent but greater than zero
Note: Total does not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

TABLE 3. Frequency of Texting, 2012 vs. 2018

	2012	2018
Daily	68%[a]	80%[b]
Weekly	10%	7%
Less than weekly	9%[a]	2%[b]
Never	13%	11%

*Totals may not match individual items in the previous table due to rounding
Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < 05$

Demographic differences. Among teens who use social media, there are some demographic differences in which sites they use, and which they use most often (see Table 5) Older teens are more likely than younger ones to use Instagram and Twitter; girls are more likely than boys to use Snapchat, Instagram, and Tumblr; teens from lower-income households are more likely than those from middle- and higher-income ones to use Facebook; and middle- and higher-income teens are more likely than lower-income ones to use Snapchat. Perhaps more relevant than which sites they ever use are a handful of differences in which sites teens say they use "the most." Boys are more likely than girls to say they use Facebook the most (23 percent vs. 14 percent); African Americans are more likely than whites to say they use Facebook the most (28 percent vs. 14 percent, with Hispanic/ Latinos in between at 22 percent); lower-income teens are far more likely than higher-income ones to use Facebook the most (33 percent vs. 8 percent); and higher-income teens are more likely than lower-income ones to use Snapchat the most (57 percent vs. 40 percent).

TABLE 4. Top Social Media Sites, 2018

Social media site	Ever use (percent)	Use the most (percent)
Snapchat	63%	41%
Instagram	61%	22%
Facebook	43%	15%
Twitter	20%	2%
Tumblr	4%	*
Reddit	2%	*
Other	2%	1%

*Indicates a percentage less than 0 5 percent but greater than zero
†Column totals more than 100 percent due to use of multiple social media sites
‡Column totals less than 100 percent because 19 percent of teens don't use social media at all.

TABLE 5. Use of Specific Social Media Sites, by Demographics, 2018

Among teens who use social media (percent)	Age		Gender		Race/Ethnicity			Household income		
	13-14	15-17	Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
Ever use:										
• Snapchat	70%	77%	68%[a]	81%[b]	76%	69%	78%	67%[a]	76%[b]	80%[b]
• Instagram	65%[a]	77%[b]	67%[a]	78%[b]	73%	73%	74%	71%	70%	77%
• Facebook	47%	54%	55%	48%	50%	55%	54%	68%[a]	47%[b]	41%[b]
• Twitter	17%[a]	28%[b]	22%	27%	25%	24%	23%	28%	20%	25%
• Tumblr	6%	4%	1%[a]	7%[b]	4%	3%	4%	5%	5%	4%
• Reddit	4%[a]	1%[b]	3%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	4%
Use "the most":										
• Snapchat	53%	50%	47%	55%	53%	44%	53%	40%[a]	54%[b]	57%[b]
• Instagram	24%	28%	24%	29%	28%	22%	24%	23%	26%	30%
• Facebook	18%	19%	23%[a]	14%[b]	14%[a]	28%[b]	22%	33%[a]	16%[b]	8%[c]
• Twitter	1%	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%
• Tumblr	1%	*	0%	1%	*	1%	*	0%	*	*
• Reddit	1%	0%	*	0%	*	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

*Indicates a percentage less than 0 5 percent but greater than zero
Note: Lower income is <$50,000; middle is $50,000-99,999; higher is $100,000 or more Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < 05$
Significance should be read across rows within each demographic category

Trend over time. The decline in Facebook use among teens has been precipitous. In 2012, 68 percent of all teens listed Facebook as their main social media site, and we wrote in our report that "Facebook utterly dominates social networking use among teens." Today, by comparison, only 43 percent use it at all, and only 15 percent say Facebook is their main social media site.

Duplicate Accounts

Some teens have duplicate social media accounts, second accounts on the same social media platform designed to be hidden from parents or used for a select group of close friends. A total of 16 percent of social media users say they have multiple accounts on the same platform, for the purpose of keeping one account hidden from certain people (Table 6). For example, some teens have a second, private account that they are hiding from people who are not close friends (11 percent of all social media users), and others have one that they don't want their parents to see (7 percent). Secret accounts were not asked about in the 2012 survey, so it is not possible to track changes over time.

Digital Device Ownership

As indicated in Table 7, 97 percent of all teens own some type of device capable of connecting to the internet, such as a smartphone (89 percent), a computer (61 percent), or a tablet (49 percent). Ninety-five percent own some type of mobile device, either a phone, a tablet, or both. The proportion of teens who have their own smartphone ranges from 83 percent of 13-year-olds up to 93 percent of 17-year-olds. There is no statistically significant difference by household income in teens' ownership of mobile devices (94 percent of lower-income and 96 percent of higher-income teens). Higher-income teens are more likely than lower-income ones to own a computer (67 percent vs. 57 percent).

Trends over time. Smartphone ownership has expanded dramatically among teens over the past six years, going from 41 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds in 2012 up to 89 percent today (Figure 3). Factoring in ownership of tablets, total mobile access has climbed from 67 percent of all teens in 2012 up to 95 percent today.

TABLE 6. Duplicate Social Media Accounts, 2018

Have a duplicate, hidden account	16%

Are hiding a second account from:*

• People who aren't close friends	11%
• Parents/caregivers	7%
• Ex-friends	4%
• Other	1%

*Subitems do not total 16 percent because multiple responses were allowed.

TABLE 7. Digital Device Ownership, by Income, 2018

		Lower	Middle	Higher
Smartphone	89%	88%	87%[a]	92%[b]
Tablet	49%	49%	45%	51%
Computer	61%	57%[a]	56%[a]	67%[b]
Any mobile device	95%	94%	95%	96%
Any of the above	97%	98%	96%	97%

Note: Lower income is <$50,000; middle is $50,000–99,999; higher is $100,000 or more. Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < .05$.

FIGURE 3. Mobile Device Ownership, 2012 vs. 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who own their own:

95% Mobile device (any)*
89% Smartphone
67%
49% Tablet
41%
14%

2012   2018
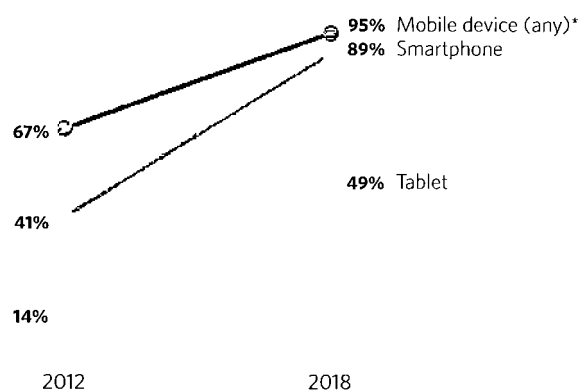
*In 2012, an iPod Touch or similar was included; those devices were not included in 2018.

Note: Differences over time are statistically significant at $p < .05$

Oversharers, Ranters, and Instagram "Baddies": Social Media Types

Social media has become such an omnipresent part of teens' lives that patterns in how kids use social media have become new markers in defining different groups of kids online, just as being a "jock" or a "geek" sometimes defines kids in the high school cafeteria. In focus groups, we explored whether teens classify their peers into different social media "types" and, if so, what those types are. A number of classifications emerged from the focus groups, so the survey included a question asking teens how often they encounter these types on social media. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of possible social media types, but the results do indicate that some sort of social media typology is developing among teens. Of the types asked about in the survey, the most frequently encountered is the "oversharer": a person who shares way too much personal information on social media (75 percent "often" or "sometimes" encounter this type, as shown in Table 8). Seventy percent "often" or "sometimes" encounter "artsy" types: people whose focus on social media is posting beautiful photographs; two-thirds (68 percent) "often" or "sometimes" encounter "socialites" (our survey wording, not a term used by focus group participants), meaning the people who always know what's happening socially and where you'll want to be; and 66 percent encounter "ranters," people who rant about things a lot, be it politics, relationships, or other topics. Most teens (57 percent) say they themselves don't fit into any of these categories, although 19 percent classify themselves as "artsy" types, 16 percent as "ghosts" (defined below), and 11 percent as "socialites."

A ghost is basically a person that looks at your pictures on your Instagram and doesn't really like it or doesn't comment on it, or basically doesn't really notify you that they're there.

— 17-year-old African American girl in focus group

TABLE 8. Social Media Types, 2018

[Percent of respondents who say they encounter the following types of people on social media]	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
Oversharers: people who share way too much personal stuff on social media	30%	45%	16%	8%
Artsy types: people who focus on posting beautiful photographs, close-ups, black-and-whites	23%	47%	22%	7%
Socialites: people who always know what's happening socially and where to be	18%	50%	22%	9%
Ranters: people who rant about things a lot	23%	43%	24%	9%
Gossips: people who spread rumors about other people	20%	41%	25%	12%
Instagram baddies: girls who post lots of selfies in which they show a lot of skin and always look perfect	23%	37%	25%	13%
Ghosts: people who follow you but never interact with you	18%	39%	27%	16%
Muscle men: guys who post lots of perfect-looking gym pictures	8%	32%	36%	23%

Importance of Social Media in Teens' Lives

Among all teens, about a third (32 percent) say they consider social media to be either "extremely" (9 percent) or "very" (23 percent) important in their lives; thirty percent say social media is "somewhat" important; and 19 percent say social media is either "not too" (15 percent) or "not at all" (4 percent) important (19 percent don't use social media) (see Figure 4).

Social Media for Creative Expression

Some teens use social media for expressing themselves creatively: Twenty-seven percent of teen users say social media is "extremely" or "very" important for that purpose, while another 37 percent say it is "somewhat" important. Girls (31 percent) are more likely than boys (22 percent) to say social media is "extremely" or "very" important to them for this purpose. An open-ended survey question asking teens to tell us about some of the negatives and positives of social media in their lives yielded numerous comments about creative expression. For example, one 17-year-old white girl wrote that one of the benefits of social media is that she can "get my artwork out to the public"; a 14-year-old African American girl wrote that "[s]ocial media allows me to have a creative outlet to express myself"; a 14-year-old white boy said he likes social media because "I get to share things that I make"; and a 16-year-old Hispanic/Latino boy wrote that he likes using social media because "I get to post my costume and design work."

Social Media and Current Events

Many teens agree that social media helps them to be more aware of current events (74 percent agree with that statement at least "somewhat"). Overall, there has been no change in the past six years in the percent of teens who agree that social media helps them keep up with current events, but there has been a drop in the percent who "strongly" agree with that statement, from 26 percent in 2012 to 18 percent today.

FIGURE 4. Importance of Social Media, 2018
Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say social media is ... in their lives:

- ▣ Extremely important
- ■ Very important
- ▨ Somewhat important
- ▧ Not too/Not at all important
- ■ Don't use social media
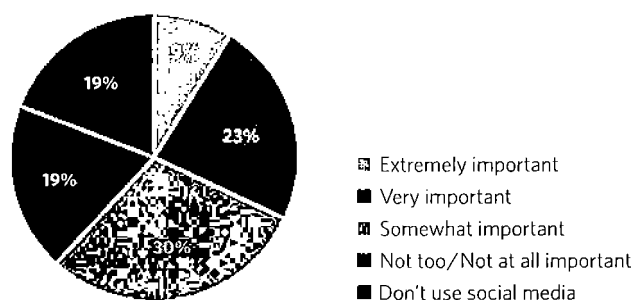
I was off [social media] for like a whole week and I didn't know about [the shooting in Florida] until yesterday. So social media does have a good impact ... to [let you] know what's going on. Because who wants to watch the news?

— 17-year-old African American girl in focus group

Social Media as a Negative Influence

Most teens believe that social media has a negative impact on some people their age. More than two-thirds (68 percent), regardless of whether they use social media themselves, agree with the statement "Social media has a negative impact on many people my age," including 20 percent who "strongly" agree. A total of 40 percent of teens agree with the statement "I sometimes wish I could go back to a time when there was no such thing as social media" (9 percent "strongly" agree). And when asked to choose which statement comes closer to the truth—that parents "worry too much about teens' use of social media" or that "[i]f parents knew what actually happens on social media, they'd be a lot more worried about it"—54 percent said parents would be more worried if they knew the truth.

Self-Presentation on Social Media

One concern many adults have about teens and social media is the pressure young people may feel to present an idealized version of themselves online, sometimes called "presentation pressure." To help shed light on this issue, the survey included an item asking teens to agree or disagree with the statement "The way I present myself on social media is an accurate reflection of who I really am." In the survey, the vast majority of social media users (75 percent) say that the way they present themselves on social media is an accurate reflection of who they really are— including 25 percent who "strongly" agree with that statement. But the focus groups added some interesting nuance to that finding. Some participants seemed to have a "what you see is what you get" approach to social media: *I like dumb jokes, fast cars, and basketball, and you can pretty much tell that if you follow me on Instagram.* But others' feelings were more along the lines of: *Of course that's not the real me Why on earth would I put my personal stuff out there for the world to see?*

Social media is not uplifting. People only uplift people if they got the right clothes, the right shoes, the right hair. No one just uplifts somebody because they wanna be nice. It's just negative.

— 17-year-old African American girl in focus group

FIGURE 5. Parents' Level of Worry About Social Media, 2018
When asked to choose which statement comes closer to the truth, percent of 13- to 17-year-olds who say:

54% 46%

▨ Parents worry too much about teens' use of social media.

■ If parents knew what actually happens on social media, they'd be a lot more worried about it.
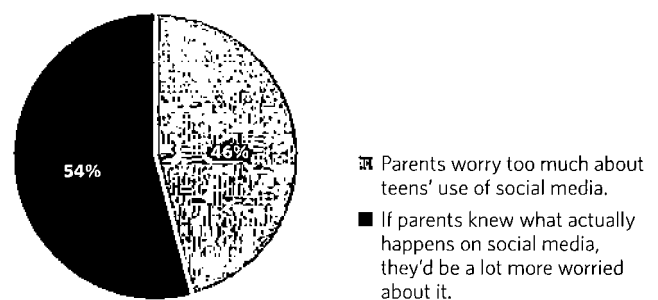
I pretty much just post stuff that makes me look good and that makes me look like my ideal self. And then every now and then I'll [post] something that's a little bit more personal.

— 16-year-old white girl in focus group

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

WHEN SOMETHING IS AS interwoven with teens' everyday lives as social media is, the issue of how it affects personal relationships is complex. In this survey, we explored that issue from multiple angles:

- We asked teens how important using social media is for keeping up with friends on a day-to-day basis, having meaningful conversations with close friends, and documenting and sharing highlights of their lives, and whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "My social life would be ruined without social media."

- We explored the issue of whether social media use distracts from face-to-face interactions by asking teens how often they turn off their devices when they are having meals with people, or visiting with friends or family; we also asked teens whether they think their social media use distracts them from people they're with in person, or if their *friends'* social media use bothers them when they are together.

- We asked teens what their favorite way of communicating with friends is: in person, talking on the phone, or video-chatting, texting, or using social media.

- We asked teens how often they feel left out when they see friends on social media doing things together that they weren't included in, and whether they have ever experienced digital "drama" in which social media is used to exacerbate negative interactions with others.

Social media helps me keep in touch with some of my friends who I rarely see or went to middle school with.

— 16-year-old white girl in survey

Importance of Social Media for Relationships

Forty percent of teen social media users say social media is "extremely" or "very" important to them for keeping up with friends on a day-to-day basis. In focus groups and open-ended comments respondents provided in the survey, examples of this day-to-day communication included things like making plans for getting together after school, letting your best friend know that the guy you like just smiled at you, or staying in contact with friends you can't see in person because they are too busy.

Some teens say the communication they have via social media goes beyond simple day-to-day exchanges, and that social media is an important vehicle for them to have meaningful conversations with close friends (33 percent). And for some, social media is an important way to document and share the highlights of their lives (23 percent) (see Table 9).

Whatever the mechanism, whether it's the constant connection to who's doing what when, the ability to keep up with old friends, or the chance to make new friendships, social media is an important component of personal relationships for many teens. In fact, some teens say their social lives would be "ruined" if they didn't have social media: Twenty-seven percent of social media users agree with that statement (4 percent "strongly" and 23 percent "somewhat").

TABLE 9. Importance of Social Media for Different Functions, by Gender, 2018

Keeping up with your friends on a day-to-day basis	40%	33%[a]	46%[b]
Having meaningful conversations with close friends	33%	27%[a]	39%[b]
Documenting and sharing the highlights of your life	23%	18%[a]	29%[b]

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < .05$. Significance should be read across rows.

Demographic differences. There were no differences by age or race/ethnicity among social media users in terms of the importance of social media for these various functions in their lives. But social media seems to have much more resonance in the lives of girls than boys, with girls more likely to say it is "extremely" or "very" important for each of the specific relationship-related functions asked about in the survey (see Table 9, page 23). There were no demographic differences in the proportion who say their social lives would be "ruined" without social media.

Digital Distractions

While digital devices can help connect teens to people they can't be with in person, the mere fact of using those devices can also distract them from the people they *are* with. Some teens who own smartphones usually put their devices away when in social situations, such as having a meal with someone (42 percent say they do so "most" or "all" of the time), visiting family (31 percent), or hanging out with friends (16 percent), but many others say they "hardly ever" or "never" do so (31 percent say that about sharing meals, 34 percent about visiting family, and 55 percent about hanging out with friends).

Perhaps as a result, many teen social media users (54 percent) admit that using social media often distracts them when they should be paying attention to the people they're actually with. Indeed, many teens complain about that same thing in reverse, with 44 percent of all teens saying they get frustrated with their friends for being on their phones so much when they're hanging out together in person (10 percent "strongly agree," 34 percent "somewhat"). In addition, 42 percent of teen social media users agree that the time they spend using social media has taken away from time they could be spending with friends in person.

Changes over time. There has been a 10-percentage-point increase in the proportion of teens who agree that using social media "often" distracts them when they should be paying attention to the people they're with (up from 44 percent in 2012 to 54 percent in 2018); and an 8-percentage-point increase in the proportion who agree that the time they spend using social media has taken away from time they could be spending with friends in person (up from 34 percent to 42 percent). The toll of digital distraction may be getting higher, or awareness of the distraction may be increasing.

[Social media] helps me to connect with people outside of my school and town—that's nice, but it seems to occupy so much of my friends' time that even when we are together they always get distracted! It makes it difficult to have a conversation with people when they can't focus on what you're telling them!

— 17-year-old Hispanic/Latina girl in survey

FIGURE 6. Social Media Distractions from Face-to-Face Interactions, 2012 vs. 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who agree that social media:

54% Often distracts when they should be paying attention to people they are with

44%

42% Has taken away from time they could be spending with friends in person

34%

2012   2018
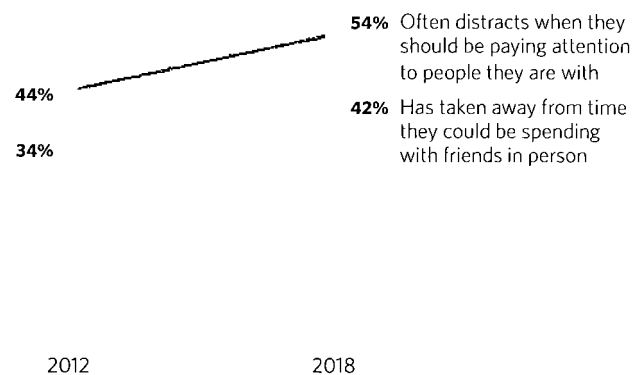
Note: Differences over time are statistically significant at $p < .05$

Favorite Way of Communicating with Friends

Six years ago when this survey was conducted, one of the most noteworthy findings was that, despite the digital revolution, teens still preferred face-to-face communication with their friends over electronic communication. Today, that is no longer the case. When teens are asked to choose what their favorite way to communicate with their friends is, the proportion who select "in person" has dropped from 49 percent down to 32 percent. Today, texting is the top choice, at 35 percent, followed by in person at 32 percent, social media at 16 percent, video-chatting at 10 percent, and talking on the phone at 5 percent (see Table 10).

Demographic differences. As indicated in Table 11, older teens (15- to 17-year-olds) are even more likely to prefer texting over face-to-face communication (39 percent say texting, while 30 percent choose in person, with 18 percent saying social media is their favorite). Boys are more likely than girls to prefer face-to-face communication (35 percent vs. 28 percent) while girls are more likely to prefer social media (20 percent of girls vs. 12 percent of boys). White teens prefer communicating in person at a higher rate than African Americans (36 percent compared to 24 percent, with Hispanic/Latinos in between at 30 percent). And African American teens are more likely than whites to say that video-chatting is their favorite way to communicate with their friends (17 percent, compared to 9 percent of whites, with Hispanic/Latinos in between at 10 percent).

Trends over time. As mentioned above, there has been a substantial drop in the proportion of young people who say that their favorite way to communicate with friends is in person: down from nearly half (49 percent) in 2012 to less than a third (32 percent) today (see Table 10). The drop has been made up for by teens who prefer to communicate through social media (up from 7 percent to 16 percent) or video-chatting (up from 2 percent to 10 percent). The popularity of texting has stayed roughly the same.

TABLE 10. Favorite Way to Communicate with Friends, 2012 vs. 2018

	2012	2018
Texting	33%	35%
In person	49%[a]	32%[b]
Through social media	7%[a]	16%[b]
Video-chatting	2%[a]	10%[b]
Talking on the phone	4%	5%
Other	5%[a]	2%[b]

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < .05$.

TABLE 11. Favorite Way to Communicate with Friends, by Demographics, 2018

	Age		Gender		Race/Ethnicity			Household Income		
	13-14	15-17	Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
Texting	29%[a]	39%[b]	35%	35%	31%	36%	36%	34%	42%[a]	30%[b]
In person	35%	30%	35%[a]	28%[b]	36%[a]	24%[b]	30%	27%[a]	31%	37%[b]
Through social media	14%	18%	12%[a]	20%[b]	18%	11%	17%	19%	13%	17%
Video-chatting	11%	9%	9%	11%	9%[a]	17%[b]	10%	12%	8%	10%
Talking on the phone	7%[a]	3%[b]	5%	4%	2%[a]	10%[b]	6%[b]	7%[a]	3%[b]	4%

Note: Lower income is <$50,000; middle is $50,000-99,999; higher is $100,000 or more Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < .05$. Significance should be read across rows within each demographic category. Columns may not total 100 percent due to rounding and because the "other" category is not included.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Another way that social media is intertwined with personal relationships is that the *content* that is posted can affect friendships—just as the content of phone calls and letters did generations ago. If there's a party you're not invited to, social media lets you know that in a visceral way. Just under half (47 percent) of teens who use social media say they sometimes feel left out or excluded after seeing photos on social media of their friends together at something they weren't invited to (8 percent "strongly" agree, 39 percent "somewhat"). This is a slight increase from 43 percent who agreed with this statement in 2012. Girls are more likely than boys to experience this sense of missing out from social media (54 percent vs. 39 percent), and white teens are more likely (52 percent) than African American (38 percent) or Hispanic/Latino (38 percent) teens to say they sometimes feel left out based on what they see their friends doing on social media (see Figure 7).

Digital Drama

Sometimes social media serves as a means for communicating ill will between teens. One person can say something nasty to another person, people can take sides, and things can escalate from there. Or the "drama" may be taking place "in real life"—couples breaking up, friends dissing friends—but the expressions of hurt and anger occur online. Many teens say they've had to take a break from their devices at some point just to give themselves some space from "digital drama." Of those with a smartphone, 61 percent have done so, including 12 percent who say they've done so "many times," 22 percent who say "a few times," and 27 percent who say "once or twice" (see Figure 8). Girls are more likely than boys to have taken "many" or "a few" breaks for this reason (39 percent vs. 29 percent for boys). This question was not asked in 2012.

FIGURE 7. Fear of Missing Out, by Demographic, 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say they sometimes feel left out or excluded after seeing social media posts of friends at events they weren't invited to

All	Girls	Boys	White	African American	Hispanic/ Latino
	54%*	39%	52%†	38%	38%
	Gender			**Race/Ethnicity**	
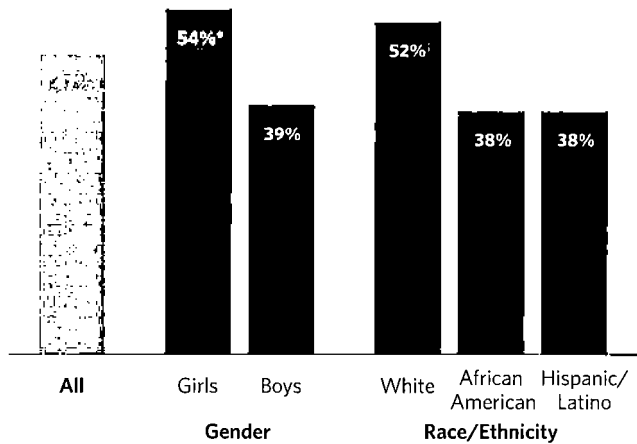
*Significantly higher than among boys, at $p < .05$.
†Significantly higher than among African Americans or Hispanic/Latinos, at $p < .05$

FIGURE 8. Taking Breaks from Digital Drama, 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-old smartphone users, percent who have taken breaks from their devices due to digital drama

- ■ Many times
- ▨ A few times
- ■ Once or twice
- ■ Never
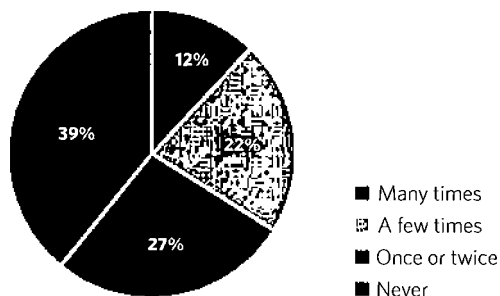
Some people in my school get too caught up in "drama." My friends prefer to avoid all that.

— 15-year-old Hispanic/Latina girl in survey

LIKES, FRIENDS, AND FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

ONE CONCERN THAT HAS been raised by the advent of social media is the extent to which teens spend their lives "chasing likes"—whether they feel constant pressure to attract a lot of online "friends" and to post things that will garner plenty of "likes." Accordingly, the survey included a number of items about friends, followers, and likes, with a special focus on how important it is to get likes, and what types of actions teens take to do so.

Number of Friends and Followers on Social Media

Most teens are aware of how many friends or followers they have on social media, but not all of them are. Forty-one percent of teen Facebook users and 35 percent of teen Instagram users say they don't know how many friends or followers they have on those platforms. Among those who *do* know, the median number of Facebook friends is 125 and of Instagram followers is 180. Fourteen percent of teen Facebook users have more than 300 friends, and 21 percent of Instagram users have more than 300 followers.

Importance of Friends and Followers

Contrary to expectations, the majority of teens say that getting new friends or followers is *not* important to them. Sixty-six percent say it's either "not too" (39 percent) or "not at all" (27 percent) important, while only 8 percent say it's either "very" or "extremely" important (26 percent say "somewhat"; see Figure 9). There are no demographic differences by gender, age, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

I honestly think that social media puts teens specifically into a position of where they no longer feel good about themselves a lot. I find myself feeling self-conscious a lot of the time because of pictures other people post.

— 16-year-old white girl in survey

FIGURE 9. Importance of Friends and Followers, 2018
Percent of 13- to 17-year-old social media users who say getting new friends/followers is ... to them:

⬛ Extremely/Very important
■ Somewhat important
■ Not too/Not at all important

66%
26%
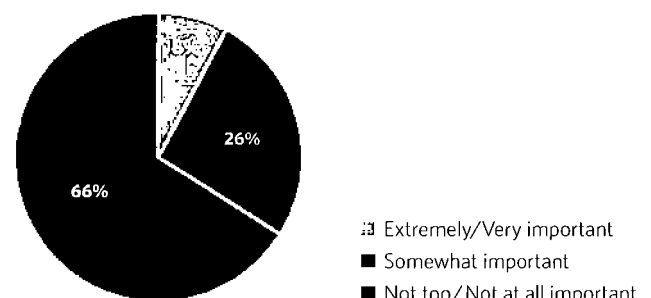
Importance of "Likes"

Also contrary to expectations, most teens (55 percent) say that getting lots of likes when they post something to their main social media site is either "not too" (34 percent) or "not at all" (21 percent) important (see Figure 10). Only 13 percent say it is either "extremely" (4 percent) or "very" (8 percent) important to them. The only demographic difference in importance of likes is that girls are more likely than boys to say it's "extremely" or "very" important—but still not many do: Sixteen percent of girls vs. 10 percent of boys say getting lots of likes is "extremely" or "very" important to them.

The vast majority of teens (74 percent) say they don't feel bad about themselves if nobody likes their photos on social media (25 percent say they do feel bad; Figure 11). One in four (25 percent) say they have deleted a post because it didn't get enough likes (8 percent say they have done so "a few" [5 percent] or "many" [3 percent] times, and the rest say they've done so "once or twice"). Girls are more likely than boys to have deleted a post for this reason (30 percent of girls vs. 20 percent of boys). And very few teens say they have done things such as do a crazy stunt just to post it online and get more likes (4 percent) or post photos that show off their muscles or "show more skin" (3 percent) to try to increase their number of likes.

I like posting things my friends will think are cool. I want to get a lot of likes — people think I'm funny and like what I post.

— 13-year-old white boy in survey

FIGURE 10. Importance of Getting Lots of "Likes," 2018

Percent of 13- to 17-year-old social media users who say getting lots of likes is ... to them:

- Extremely/Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not too/Not at all important
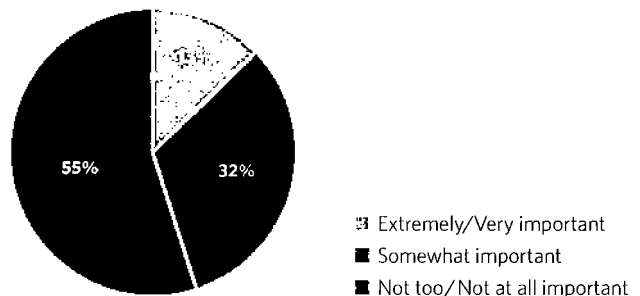
FIGURE 11. Self-Esteem and Social Media "Likes," 2018

Percent of 13- to 17-year-old social media users who agree/disagree with the statement: "I feel bad about myself if nobody comments on or 'likes' my photos."

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
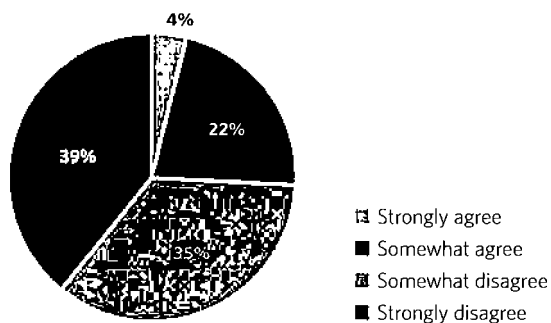
MANIPULATION, "ADDICTION," AND MODERATING DIGITAL DEVICE USE

Tech Company Manipulation

News reports lately have been filled with stories about how tech companies purposefully design their products to encourage users to stay on their devices as long as possible. One question we wanted to explore in this survey was whether or not teens observe any such manipulation by tech companies. The answer: They do. Nearly three out of four teens (72 percent) agreed with the statement "Tech companies manipulate people into spending more time on devices," including nearly one in four (23 percent) who "strongly" agree with that conclusion.

One example of tech company manipulation that was mentioned in focus groups is Snapstreaks. A Snapstreak is when Snapchat users maintain a record of the number of consecutive days they've been "snapping" with someone else. In the survey, 62 percent of Snapchat users say they have participated in a Snapstreak, including 39 percent who have done so "many times." More than a third (36 percent) of those who have participated in Snapstreaks say they found it at least "somewhat" stressful.

Instagram doesn't care how you use their app, they just care if they're getting used. If you're posting and being active, that's all they care about.

— 15-year-old Asian American girl in focus group

The companies that own these social media should stop scamming teenagers into spending a majority of their time on their sites.

— 16-year-old white girl in survey

Teen Digital "Addiction"

Nearly half (47 percent) of teens who have a smartphone say they are "addicted" to it, but far fewer say they are "addicted" to social media (24 percent of social media users)—a somewhat surprising finding given the ubiquity of social media use. Most teens say they don't have a problem unplugging from their devices when they need to: Twenty-four percent "strongly" agree and 40 percent "somewhat" agree with that statement. On the other hand, 35 percent say they do have a problem unplugging.

Trend over time. Interestingly, despite the huge increase in smartphone ownership and the explosion in social media use that has occurred over the past six years, there has been only a modest uptick in the percent of teens who describe themselves as "addicted" to their phones (up from 41 percent in 2012 to 47 percent in 2018; see Table 12). Even more surprising, the proportion who say they are "addicted" to social media has only gone from 20 percent in 2012 to 24 percent in 2018, not a statistically significant change.

TABLE 12. Digital "Addiction," 2012 vs. 2018

	2012	2018
Their phone*	41%[a]	47%[b]
Social media†	20%	24%

+Among those with a phone †Among social media users

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$

Moderating Device Use

One of the issues explored in the survey is how often teens self-regulate their device use. In particular, we asked whether teens turn off, silence, or put away their phones in certain circumstances, such as having a meal with someone, doing homework, going to sleep, visiting with family members, or hanging out with friends (see Figure 12).

A majority of teens who own smartphones (56 percent) say they turn their devices off "most" or "all" of the time when they're going to sleep; forty-two percent when they're having a meal with somebody; almost a third when they're visiting family or when doing homework (31 percent each); and 16 percent when they're hanging out with friends. But a significant number of teens say they "hardly ever" or "never" turn off their devices in these situations: when going to sleep (26 percent), having meals with other people (31 percent), visiting family (34 percent), doing homework (37 percent), or hanging out with friends (55 percent).

The findings with regard to sleep are concerning. Even though a majority of teens (56 percent) say they usually turn their phones off when going to sleep, many don't (26 percent "hardly ever" or "never" do), and plenty of teens are woken up during the night as a result. Twenty-nine percent of teen cellphone owners are woken up by their phones during the night at least "some" nights.

The homework findings also are concerning. More than half (57 percent) of teen social media users agree that using social media often distracts them when they should be doing homework.

Pretty much whenever I want to go to bed, I'll check my phone for a second, and I'll end up being on my phone for, like, a super-long time.

— 15-year-old white boy in focus group

[I put my phone on Do Not Disturb] when I'm having a meal with someone and I actually want to talk to them. Like if I'm having a family dinner or I chose to go out somewhere, I'm not gonna sit there and be on my phone.

— 17-year-old Hispanic/Latina girl in focus group

FIGURE 12. Silencing Digital Devices, 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-olds who own a phone, percent that turn off, silence, or put away their phones when:

Going to sleep

| 56% | 17% | 26% |

Having a meal with someone

| 42% | 26% | 31% |

Doing homework

| 31% | 31% | 37% |

Visiting family

| 31% | 34% | 34% |

Hanging out with friends

| 16% | 28% | 55% |

▨ All/Most of the time   ■ Some of the time   ■ Hardly ever/Never
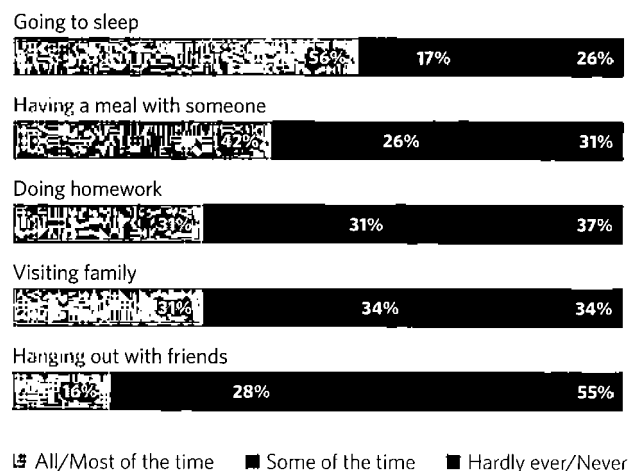
Note: Segments may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Demographic differences. As seen in Table 13, younger teens are more likely to silence their phones in almost all of these circumstances than older teens are. The difference is most pronounced for homework: Forty percent of 13- to 14-year-olds say they silence their devices "all" or "most" of the time when doing homework, compared to 25 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds. There are no statistically significant differences between boys and girls, but there are substantial differences by race: African American teens are far less likely than white or Hispanic/Latino youth to silence their devices "all" or "most" of the time when going to sleep (40 percent of African Americans, compared to 60 percent of whites and 57 percent of Hispanic/Latinos), having a meal with someone (23 percent of African Americans compared to 48 percent of whites and 41 percent of Hispanic/Latinos), or visiting family members (19 percent compared to 35 percent of whites and 32 percent of Hispanic/Latinos).

It's stressful sometimes, it's always there and pressing to reply. Sometimes it's great to just take a break for more than 24 hours from a screen.

— 17-year-old white girl in survey

Driving While Digital

Most teens who drive say they silence, put away, or turn off their phones when they drive. Nearly seven in 10 say they do so "all" (46 percent) or "most" (23 percent) of the time. On the other hand, 17 percent say they "hardly ever" or "never" do so. The survey also asked how often, if ever, teen drivers have checked a notification on their phone while they were driving. Four percent say they do so "often," and 18 percent say they "sometimes" do; the rest say they "hardly ever" (34 percent) or "never" (44 percent) do.

Parents and Digital Addiction

For all the energy parents and other adults spend thinking about teens' digital behaviors, it turns out teens notice what their parents are up to as well. About one in four teens (28 percent) say they consider their parents or guardians to be "addicted" to their own devices. And a third (33 percent) of teens say they wish their parents would spend less time on their devices. This is especially true for younger teens (38 percent wish their parents were less occupied with their devices, compared to 30 percent of older teens). More teens are saying they wish their parents would tone down their own device use today than said that in 2012: 33 percent in 2018, compared to 21 percent in 2012.

TABLE 13. Silencing Digital Devices, by Demographics, 2018

		13-14	15-17	White	African American	Hispanic/ Latino
Going to sleep	56%	61%[a]	53%[b]	60%[a]	40%[b]	57%[a]
Having a meal with somebody	42%	47%[a]	39%[b]	48%[a]	23%[b]	41%[a]
Doing homework	31%	40%[a]	25%[b]	30%	31%	34%
Visiting family	31%	33%	30%	35%[a]	19%[b]	32%[a]
Hanging out with friends	16%	20%[a]	14%[b]	17%	13%	18%

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of $p < .05$. Significance should be read across rows within each demographic category

Hate Speech in Social Media

One aspect of social media that concerns many observers is the frequency with which users encounter what we loosely call "hate speech" online: racist, sexist, homophobic, or religiously prejudiced content. The survey included items asking teens how often, if ever, they encounter each type of hate speech in social media. A total of just under two-thirds (64 percent) of teen social media users say they encounter any such content in social media at least "sometimes," including 21 percent who say they do so "often." For each individual type of hate speech, about half of teens say they encounter it at least "sometimes" (46 percent for religious-based hate speech, and 52 percent for each other type). The frequency with which teens encounter such content does not vary based on which social media site they use most often. The one significant difference by gender or by race/ethnicity is that African American teens are more likely than whites to say they "often" encounter racist content online (19 percent vs. 9 percent, with Hispanic/Latinos in between at 12 percent).

Trend over time. There has been an uptick in teens' exposure to all types of hate speech on social media over the past six years. For example, the proportion of teen social media users who say they "often" or "sometimes" come across racist content is up from 43 percent in 2012 to 52 percent today (see Table 14). The largest increase is in teens' exposure to content that denigrates someone because of their religion, up from 34 percent who "often" or "sometimes" encountered such content on social media in 2012 to 46 percent today. However, it should be noted that the question wording used in 2012 was much broader than that used in 2018, and thus the findings are not directly comparable. In 2012, the relevant question asked how often teens encountered this type of content "online" or "in various types of social media" and included "online chatting in video or computer games." In 2018, the question was limited to how often teens encounter this type of hate speech "on social media," and social media was defined in the questionnaire as "sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook." Thus, the estimate of increased exposure to hate speech in 2018 is a very conservative one, and does not include possible exposure outside of social media.

TABLE 14. Hate Speech in Social Media, 2012 vs. 2018

	2012	2018
Often/sometimes		
• Racist	43%[a]	52%[b]
• Sexist	44%[a]	52%[b]
• Anti-religion	34%[a]	46%[b]
• Homophobic	43%[a]	52%[b]
• *Any of the above*	57%[a]	64%[b]
Often		
• Racist	13%	12%
• Sexist	15%	14%
• Anti-religion	10%	11%
• Homophobic	16%	12%
• *Any of the above*	24%	21%

[a]Question wording changed substantially between 2012 and 2018, and findings should be interpreted with caution. In 2012, the question asked how often teens encountered this type of content "online" or "in various types of social media" and included "online chatting in video or computer games." In 2018, the question was limited to how often teens encounter this type of hate speech "on social media."

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$. Significance should be read across rows.

[Social media] can be a negative in the sense that many people abuse the gift of social media and take advantage of it being a big platform by exposing people or being rude online but wouldn't do it in person.

— 15-year-old Hispanic/Latino boy

Cyberbullying

One of the most devastating consequences of social media has been its use as a tool for bullying. Social media enables bullies to use photos, videos, and memes—along with words—to attack their victims, and it gives them a wide platform to disseminate their abuse. Because cyberbullying is such an important concern, the 2018 survey included several questions to assess teens' experiences with it.

Cyberbullying was defined for respondents as follows: "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over devices like phones, tablets, and computers. It can happen in social media, texts, or gaming, where people can view, participate in, or share content. It includes repeatedly sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, or mean content about someone else, on purpose. It can include sharing private information about someone else to cause embarrassment or humiliation."[3] Respondents were asked whether they had ever been cyberbullied and, if so, how often, and how serious the cyberbullying was in their assessment. They were also asked whether they had been cyberbullied in the past 12 months. Finally, all teens were asked whether they had ever tried to help someone who had been cyberbullied and, if so, how.

I have had someone secretly take a pic of me in a private situation and post it to Snapchat.

–17-year-old white girl in survey

Incidence. Thirteen percent of teens say they have been cyberbullied (Figure 13). Given that cyberbullying involves repeated occurrences of negative online actions, we also asked how frequently teens had been cyberbullied. Two percent say this has happened "many times," 7 percent say "a few times," and 4 percent say "one or two" times (86 percent say it "never" has).

Seriousness. Nine percent of teens have been cyberbullied in a way they consider at least "somewhat" serious (Table 15): Two percent say it was "very" serious, 6 percent say "somewhat" (these two categories total 9 percent due to rounding), 4 percent say "not too" serious, and 1 percent say they were cyberbullied

but it was "not serious at all." There are no differences by age or race/ethnicity in the likelihood of a teen being cyberbullied, but girls are more likely than boys to have experienced cyberbullying (16 percent vs. 11 percent for boys).

Helping others. Many teens say they have tried to help someone who has been cyberbullied. Among the ways they've helped are talking to the person who was cyberbullied (19 percent of all teens say they've done that), reporting it to adults (10 percent), posting positive stuff about the person being cyberbullied online (8 percent), and challenging the cyberbully online directly (5 percent). All told, 23 percent of teens have used one or more of these methods to try to help someone who had been cyberbullied. Girls are more likely than boys to say they have taken each of these steps, except challenging the bully directly online.

It's hard to make people understand how much bullying can affect someone's life. I stay connected to people by social media but it also allows bullies to say what they want and hide behind the computer screen.

— 13-year-old white boy in survey

FIGURE 13. Cyberbullying, 2018
Percent of 13- to 17-year-olds who say they have been cyberbullied:

2%

7%

4%

87%

⊓ Many times
■ A few times
■ One or two times
■ Never
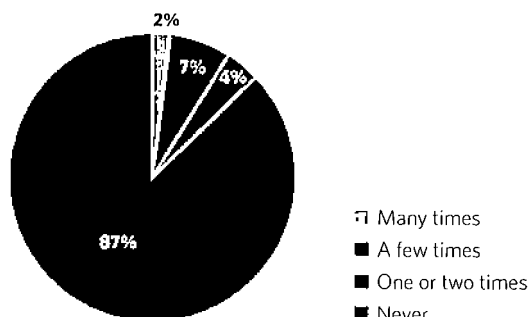
3. Our definition is adapted from the one provided by the government's anti-bullying website, www.stopbullying.gov We have simplified the language somewhat, and added the concepts of repetition and purposefulness.

TABLE 15. Cyberbullying, by Demographics, 2018

	All	13-14	15-17	Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic/ Latino
Have ever been cyberbullied	13%	11%	15%	11%[a]	16%[b]	14%	8%	12%
Have been cyberbullied in the past 12 months	8%	9%	7%	6%	9%	9%[a]	3%[b]	10%[a]
Have been cyberbullied ...								
• Many times	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%
• A few times	7%	6%	7%	5%[a]	9%[b]	7%	4%	6%
• Once or twice	4%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%	3%	2%
Say the cyberbullying they experienced was ...								
• Very serious	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%
• Somewhat serious	6%	5%	8%	5%	8%	7%	2%	6%
• Not too serious	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
• Not at all serious	1%	*	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	*
Have tried to help someone who was cyberbullied[†]	23%	23%	24%	19%[a]	28%[b]	25%	21%	22%
• Talked to them to make them feel better	19%	19%	19%	16%[a]	22%[b]	21%	18%	16%
• Posted positive stuff about them online	8%	7%	8%	5%[a]	11%[b]	9%[a]	11%[a]	4%[b]
• Challenged the cyberbully online	5%	4%	5%	4%	6%	5%	6%	3%
• Reported the cyberbullying to adults	10%	10%	11%	7%[a]	14%[b]	10%	11%	11%

*Indicates a percentage less than 0.5 percent but greater than zero.
†Subitems don't total because multiple responses were allowed.

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$. Significance should be read across rows, within demographic categories.

I'm [a] normal teenager, my friends are great, we help each other. We don't let people bully us. Or anyone we see doing it we stand up and fight back.

— 17-year-old African American girl in survey

Some people would call me names and make up stuff about me. Others would be positive and tell me not to worry about those people who were talking about me.

— 15-year-old white boy in survey

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Exploring Relationships Between Social Media Use and Social-Emotional Well-Being

One of the most important issues explored in this survey is the relationship between social media use and teens' social-emotional well-being (SEWB). It is a complicated relationship that we explore through two main types of analyses:

- Comparing heavy and light social media users on a scale of social-emotional well-being, to see whether there is an association between how often a teen uses social media and their social-emotional well-being; and

- Asking teens directly how using social media makes them feel, especially with regard to their confidence, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

Two different scales are used in these analyses: first, a scale to identify heavy, moderate, and light social media users; and second, a scale to identify teens who are at high, medium, and low levels of social-emotional well-being.

Heavy, moderate, and light social media users. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the survey asked teens how often they use social media, with response options ranging from "almost constantly" to "never." For purposes of data analysis, respondents were grouped into three categories:

- Heavy social media users are defined as those who use social media "almost constantly" (16 percent).

- Moderate social media users are defined as those who use social media from "once a day" to "several times an hour" (57 percent).

- Light social media users are defined as those who either don't use social media or who use it no more than "a few times a week" (27 percent).

High, medium, and low social-emotional well-being. The survey included an 11-item scale designed to measure social-emotional well-being, including items such as "There are lots of things I can do well" or "I often feel sad or depressed" (see Table 16 for a full list of items). The scale was developed by the study authors prior to the 2012 survey, based on several sources (see the "Methodology" section, on page 11, for more detail). Responses to the 11 items were coded numerically and summed, and each respondent was given a mean score. Respondents whose scores were one standard deviation above or below the mean for the entire population are considered to be in the "high" or "low" social-emotional well-being groups. About one in five teens (19 percent) is in the "high SEWB" group, 63 percent in the "medium" group, and 17 percent in the "low" group.

TABLE 16. Social-Emotional Well-Being, 2012 vs. 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say each statement is a lot or somewhat like them	2012	2018
I get along well with my parents.	88%[a]	93%[b]
I'm happy with my life.	87%	91%
I like myself.	86%	89%
There are lots of things I can do well.	86%	86%
Compared to other people my age, I feel normal.	73%[a]	80%[b]
I have a lot of friends.	76%[a]	71%[b]
I find it easy to make new friends.	72%	70%
I often feel rejected by people my age.	28%	24%
I'm lonely.	26%	23%
I often feel sad or depressed.	26%[a]	20%[b]
I get into trouble a lot.	18%[a]	12%[b]
Average score on SEWB scale*	**19.9**	**20.0**

*Mean scores range from 11 (the best possible) to 44 (the worst possible)
See "Methodology" section for a detailed discussion of scoring on this scale

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ at the level of p < 05
Significance should be read across rows.

Status of Social-Emotional Well-Being Among Teens

Most teens report high levels on indicators of social-emotional well-being. Based on how teens responded to our well-being scale, the vast majority of teens get along well with their parents (93 percent say that is "a lot" or "somewhat" like them), are happy with their lives (91 percent), like themselves (89 percent), and have lots of friends (71 percent). On the other hand, at least one in five teens says it is "a lot" or "somewhat" like them to often feel rejected by people their age (24 percent), be lonely (23 percent), or often feel sad or depressed (20 percent)

Trends over time. Based on the measures included on this scale, there has been no change in teens' overall social-emotional well-being scores from 2012 to 2018 (see Table 16, page 37). The average (mean) score on the scale remains almost exactly the same (19.9 in 2012 and 20.0 in 2018). Looking at specific items on the scale, there is a slight increase in the proportion of teens who say they get along well with their parents and that they "feel normal" compared to others their age; and there has been a small decrease in the percent who say they have a lot of friends, get into trouble a lot, or "often feel sad or depressed." While this survey is not intended to be a definitive measure of adolescent

depression—there are much more detailed surveys and scales to do that—it is at least heartening to see that just 4 percent of teens say it is "a lot" like them to often be sad or depressed (although another 16 percent say it's "somewhat" like them).

Relationship Between Frequency of Social Media Use and Social-Emotional Well-Being

One issue that is of increasing concern to many researchers and mental health experts is whether there is an association—or, indeed, even a causal relationship—between social media use and social-emotional well-being. As discussed above, this study included items measuring the frequency of social media use, as well as an 11-point scale designed to assess social-emotional well-being. Because the survey is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal (that is, we interviewed one group of teens in 2012 and a separate group of teens in 2018), we can explore whether there is a direct correlation between the frequency of social media use and social-emotional well-being at any one point in time, but we can't explore whether there is a causal relationship between the two.

TABLE 17. Social-Emotional Well-Being, by Frequency of Social Media Use, 2018

	Heavy	Moderate	Light
I have a lot of friends.	69%	74%[a]	64%[b]
I'm lonely.	26%	20%	25%
Compared to other people my age, I feel normal.	83%	82%[a]	75%[b]
I often feel rejected by people my age.	26%	21%[a]	28%[b]
I get along well with my parents.	92%	93%	95%
I get into trouble a lot.	16%	11%	12%
There are lots of things I can do well.	86%	87%	84%
I like myself.	86%	91%	88%
I'm happy with my life.	90%	90%	92%
I often feel sad or depressed.	26%	18%	20%
I find it easy to make new friends.	74%[a]	73%[a]	62%[b]
Average score on scale*	**20.3**	**19.9**	**20.2**

*Mean scores range from 11 (the best possible) to 44 (the worst possible)

Note: See "Methodology" section for a definition of the heavy, moderate, and light social media use categories. Percentages with different superscripts are statistically significant at the level of $p > 05$. Significance should be read across rows.

Comparing heavy, moderate, and light social media users' scores on the social-emotional well-being scale, we find almost no difference in the average score: 20.3 for the heavy social media users, 19.9 for the moderate users, and 20.2 for the light users (see Table 17).

As an extra measure of the relationship between these two variables, we also analyzed them as continuous measures (as opposed to by the broader categories such as heavy, moderate, or light social media users, or high, medium, or low SEWB scores). Using this method, we also found no correlation between the frequency of social media use and social-emotional well-being. This means that, at least for the population of teens as a whole, heavy social media users do not appear to have lower social-emotional well-being, as measured in this survey, than teens who use social media less often. One important caveat is that the survey asked respondents about the frequency with which they use social media, not the total amount of time they spend with it.

The only statistically significant differences between the heavy and light social media users on the questions that make up our social-emotional well-being scale are that light users are less likely to say that they feel normal compared to others their age and also less likely to say they find it easy to make new friends.

Trends over time. The lack of relationship between social media use and social-emotional well-being that we find in 2018 is consistent with what was found in 2012, as indicated in Table 18. In 2012, the mean score on the social-emotional well-being scale was the same among heavy, moderate, and light social media users, as it is now, and there was no correlation between the frequency of social media use and social-emotional well-being when analyzed as continuous measures, just as there is none now.

Self-Reported Effect of Social Media on Teens' Depression, Anxiety, and Loneliness

Another way we sought to explore the relationship between social media use and social-emotional well-being in this survey was through a set of measures asking teens directly how they experience the effects of using social media—whether they perceive that it makes them feel better or worse about themselves, or more or less depressed, anxious, lonely, confident, or popular (or whether it has no effect on how they feel in these realms).

Most teens say social media doesn't affect how they feel one way or the other: The vast majority say using social media makes them feel *neither* more nor less depressed (81 percent), anxious

(80 percent), confident (75 percent), popular (75 percent), or lonely (71 percent) Similarly, over three quarters (78 percent) say using social media does *not* affect whether they feel better or worse about themselves.

But across every one of these items, teens are more likely to say that social media has a *positive* rather than a *negative* effect (Figure 14). For example, 25 percent say it makes them feel less lonely, compared to 3 percent who say more lonely; twenty-one percent say it makes them feel more popular, and only 3 percent

TABLE 18. Mean Social-Emotional Well-Being Scores, by Social Media Use, 2012 vs. 2018

	Heavy	Moderate	Light
2012	19.7	19.9	19.9
2018	20.3	19.9	20.2

Note: No differences are statistically significant. See "Methodology" section for a definition of the heavy, moderate, and light social media use categories.

FIGURE 14. Self-Reported Effects of Social Media on Social-Emotional Well-Being, 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say using social media makes them feel:

Popular
3%

Confident
5%

Better/Worse about themselves
Better
4% Worse

Anxious
12%

Depressed
16%

Lonely
25%
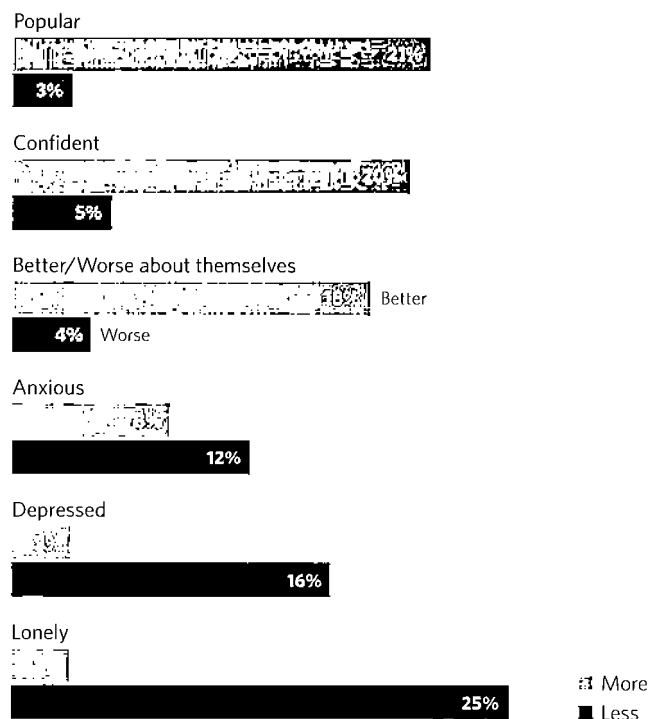
More
Less

Note: All differences are statistically significant at $p < 05$

say less popular; twenty percent say it helps them feel more confident, compared to 5 percent who say it makes them feel less confident; eighteen percent say using social media makes them feel better about themselves, while only 4 percent say it makes them feel worse about themselves; sixteen percent say social media makes them feel less depressed, and only 3 percent say it makes them feel more depressed; and 12 percent say it helps

> ## *One of the best things I ever did was learn not to compare myself to others. But, social media can make that a challenge sometimes.*
>
> — 16-year-old white girl in survey

them feel less anxious, while 8 percent say it makes them feel more anxious.

Demographic differences. It is possible that using social media affects different teens in different ways—that younger teens may be more likely to say it makes them feel more confident or that boys are more likely to say it makes them feel more popular. Therefore we explored teens' answers to these questions by age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. But analyzing the data by demographic groups revealed only three statistically significant differences, as indicated in Table 19: African American and white teens are more likely than Hispanic/Latinos to say using social media makes them feel less lonely (30 percent for African Americans and 25 percent for whites, vs. 16 percent for Hispanic/Latinos), and African Americans are more likely than whites or Hispanic/Latinos to say it makes them feel less anxious (19 percent, compared to 11 percent for whites and 8 percent for Hispanic/Latinos). The only difference by gender is that teen girls

TABLE 19. Self-Reported Effects of Social Media on Social-Emotional Well-Being, by Demographics, 2018

Percent of 13- to 17-year-old social media users who say using it makes them feel...	All	13-14	15-17	Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
Lonely											
• More		3%	3%	4%	2%[a]	5%[b]	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	4%
• Less		25%	24%	25%	26%	24%	25%[a]	30%[a]	16%[b]	21%	25%	27%
Depressed											
• More		3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	4%	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%
• Less		16%	19%	14%	16%	16%	14%	22%	13%	14%	20%	15%
Anxious											
• More		8%	9%	8%	6%	10%	8%	7%	8%	6%	10%	8%
• Less		12%	11%	12%	12%	12%	11%[a]	19%[b]	8%[a]	13%	11%	11%
Popular											
• More		21%	23%	21%	22%	21%	20%	24%	20%	20%	22%	22%
• Less		3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	1%	3%	3%	3%
Confident											
• More		20%	22%	19%	19%	21%	20%	20%	20%	19%	23%	19%
• Less		5%	3%	5%	3%	6%	4%	5%	3%	5%	3%	5%
Better/Worse about themselves											
• Better		18%	21%	16%	17%	19%	19%	13%	13%	16%	17%	20%
• Worse		4%	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%	6%	5%	4%	3%	5%

Note Percentages with different superscripts are significantly different at the level of $p <$ 05. Significance should be read across rows within each demographic category

are more likely than boys to say using social media makes them feel more lonely—but only 5 percent say that, compared to 2 percent of boys.

Trends over time. Because young people use social media so much more frequently today than they did six years ago, and because social media seems to have assumed a much larger role in teens' lives in recent years, we wanted to see whether there has been any change in how teens say using social media makes them feel, in terms of its effect on depression, anxiety, loneliness, and the other items measured in this survey (see Table 20).

Interestingly, the only change in any of these items is a positive one: Teens are more likely to say that using social media makes them feel less depressed in 2018 (16 percent) than they were in 2012 (10 percent). There has been no increase in the percent of teens who report having negative reactions to social media on any of the items measured in this survey. In other words—at least according to teens themselves—social media is no more likely to make young people feel depressed, less confident, less popular, or worse about themselves in 2018 than in 2012, despite the increase in use of social media over that time period. If anything—again, at least according to teens—the beneficial effects of social media on depression may have increased at least slightly since six years ago.

I already like myself so sharing the things I like in my life with friends makes it even better, and when I post about the bad things in my life I find comfort from my friends.

— 16-year-old white girl in survey

TABLE 20. Self-Reported Effects of Social Media on Social-Emotional Well-Being, 2012 vs. 2018

	2012	2018
Lonely*		
• More	N/A	3%
• Less	N/A	25%
• No difference	N/A	71%
Depressed		
• More	5%	3%
• Less	10%[a]	16%[b]
• No difference	83%	81%
Anxious*		
• More	N/A	8%
• Less	N/A	12%
• No difference	N/A	80%
Popular		
• More	19%	21%
• Less	4%	3%
• No difference	76%	75%
Confident		
• More	20%	20%
• Less	4%	5%
• No difference	76%	75%
Better/Worse about themselves		
• Better	15%	18%
• Worse	4%	4%
• No difference	81%	78%

*Question not asked in 2012

Note: Percentages with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

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FOR PURPOSES OF THIS report, we use the term "vulnerable" to describe teens who score at the lowest end of the social-emotional well-being (SEWB) scale used in the survey (we also refer to them as the "low-SEWB" group; see the "Methodology" section, on page 11, for more detail on this scale). The low-SEWB group includes the 17 percent of teens who scored one standard deviation below the mean for teens as a whole.

One of the goals of the survey is to explore whether these young people use social media differently from how other teens do. We have already seen, in the findings presented above, that there is no relationship, in this survey, between frequency of social media use and average score on the social-emotional well-being scale. In this section, we explore in more depth whether those teens in the low social-emotional well-being group respond to, use, or think differently about social media, and whether they are any more likely than other teens to say that social media has a negative effect on their feelings, such as their depression, anxiety, or other aspects of social-emotional well-being.

In general, what we find is that for teens who are already struggling with social-emotional well-being, social media seems to have a heightened importance in their lives and a heightened impact on their feelings—both positive and negative.

Importance of social media in their lives. Social media is significantly more important in the lives of those who are lowest on the social-emotional well-being scale used in this survey. Nearly half of social media users at the low end of the scale (46 percent) say it is "extremely"/"very" important in their lives, compared to 32 percent of social media users at the high end of the scale (see Figure 15). In particular, social media is more important to these teens for keeping up with friends on a day-to-day basis (44 percent say "extremely"/"very," compared to 31 percent for those highest on the scale) and for creative expression (37 percent say "extremely"/"very," compared to 21 percent for high-SEWB teens). And social media seems to play an especially important role in social relationships for teens with lower social-emotional well-being: They are much more likely than other teens to agree with the statement "My social life would be ruined if I didn't have social media" (37 percent "strongly"/"somewhat"

agree, compared to 19 percent of those at the high end of the well-being scale).

Chasing likes and missing out. Teens who are at the low end of the social-emotional well-being scale are much more likely to say they feel bad about themselves when nobody comments on or likes their posts (43 percent agree at least somewhat, compared to just 11 percent of those at the high end of the scale). Relatedly, they are also more likely to have deleted posts that didn't get enough likes (43 percent have done so at least "once or twice," compared to 13 percent of those at the high end). And these teens are more than twice as likely to say they sometimes feel left out or excluded after seeing photos on social media of their friends together at something they weren't invited to (70 percent agree at least somewhat, compared to 29 percent of high-SEWB teens).

Accuracy of self-presentation. Not surprisingly, these more vulnerable teens are less likely than other teens to show their true selves online. Sixty-five percent agree at least "somewhat" that the way they present themselves online is an accurate reflection of who they really are, but this is less than the 80 percent of high-SEWB teens who say the same.

FIGURE 15. Importance of Social Media, by Social-Emotional Well-Being, 2018
Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say social media is "extremely"/"very" important:
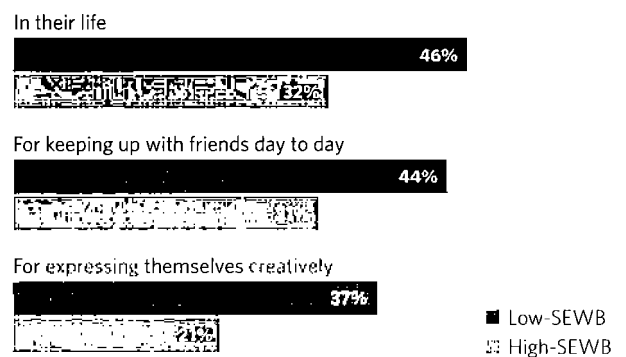
In their life

46%

For keeping up with friends day to day

44%

For expressing themselves creatively

37%

■ Low-SEWB
⬚ High-SEWB

Note: "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being". See "Methodology" section, page 11, for definitions of the low-, medium-, and high-SEWB groups. Differences between groups are statistically significant at *p* < .05

Incidence of cyberbullying. Disturbingly, more than a third (35 percent) of teens at the low end of the social-emotional well-being scale say they have been cyberbullied (see Figure 16). This is far higher than the incidence of cyberbullying among high-SEWB teens (5 percent of whom say they have been cyberbullied).

Unplugging. When it comes to making the decision to "unplug," those on the low end of the social-emotional well-being scale have a harder time doing so than other teens. About half (52 percent) of low-SEWB teens agree with the statement "I have no problem unplugging from my devices when I need to," compared to 82 percent of those at the high end of the scale. This seems to manifest itself especially when it comes time to go to sleep or do homework: Forty-eight percent of low-SEWB teens say they silence, put away, or turn off their phones "all" or "most" of the time when they're going to sleep, compared to 70 percent of high-SEWB teens; and 26 percent of low-SEWB teens do so when doing their homework, compared to 43 percent of high-SEWB teens (see Figure 17).

Self-reported effect of social media on teens' depression, anxiety, and loneliness. As mentioned above, the survey included several items in which respondents self-report how they perceive that using social media makes them feel with regard to issues such as depression, anxiety, popularity, loneliness, and confidence. In a previous section of the report (see page 40), we reviewed these findings among the population of teens as a whole. In this section, we look at responses from the most vulnerable teens (those scoring at the low end of the social-emotional well-being scale) to see whether these teens may be experiencing a more negative response to social media.

Some people seem perfect and [that] makes me feel less confident about myself.

— 16-year-old white girl in survey

FIGURE 16. Experiences on and Responses to Social Media, by Social-Emotional Well-Being Status, 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say they:

Sometimes feel left out or excluded when using social media

70%

Have deleted social media posts because they got too few "likes"

43%

Feel bad about themselves if no one comments on or likes their posts

43%

Have ever been cyberbullied

35%

■ Low-SEWB
▨ High-SEWB
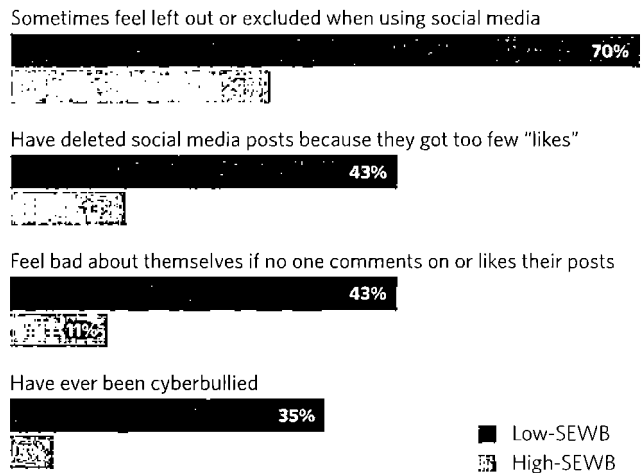
FIGURE 17. Silencing Digital Devices, by Social-Emotional Well-Being Status, 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say they silence, put away, or turn off their digital devices "all" or "most" of the time when they are:

| Going to sleep | Doing homework |
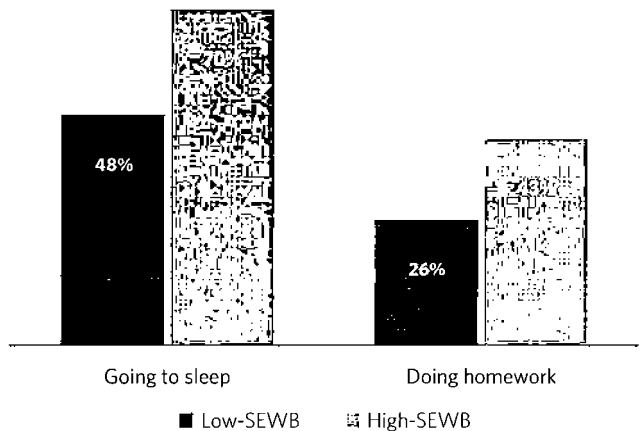
■ Low-SEWB ▨ High-SEWB

Note (Figures 16 and 17): See "Methodology" section for definitions of low-, medium-, and high-SEWB groups. Differences between groups are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

On five out of six of these measures, low-SEWB teens are more likely to say that social media has a *positive* rather than a *negative* effect on how they feel (see Table 21). For example, low-SEWB teens are more likely to say that using social media makes them feel *less* rather than *more* depressed (29 percent say "less" and 11 percent say "more"; see Figure 18) and *less* rather than *more* lonely (39 percent say "less" and 13 percent say "more"). Twenty-two percent of these more-vulnerable teens say using social media makes them feel *better* about themselves, compared to 15 percent who say it makes them feel *worse*. And they are more likely to say that social media makes them feel *more* rather than *less* popular (27 percent say more popular, vs. 8 percent who say less) and *more* rather than *less* confident (23 percent say more and 15 percent say less). The self-perceived impact of social media on anxiety is one issue the survey asked about where these more vulnerable teens are evenly split, with 21 percent saying social media makes them less anxious and 19 percent saying more.

Low-SEWB teens are more likely than high-SEWB teens to report *any* kind of influence of social media on their emotions, self-esteem, and sense of loneliness—both positive and negative (see Table 21). For example, *none* of the high-SEWB teens say using social media makes them feel more depressed, while 11 percent of the low-SEWB teens do. And only 5 percent of the high-SEWB teens say social media makes them feel *less* depressed, while 29 percent of the low-SEWB teens do.

The relationship between loneliness and social media use for these teens seems especially important. As mentioned above, 39 percent of low-SEWB teens say using social media makes them feel less lonely, compared to 13 percent who say more. Only 8 percent of high-SEWB teens say social media make them feel less lonely, compared to 39 percent of low-SEWB teens. In other words, social media appears to play an outsized role in fostering a sense of social connection for teens who are struggling with their social-emotional well-being.

Trends over time. The first wave of this study, conducted in 2012, included the same scale for assessing social-emotional well-being among teens as was used in 2018. In 2012, as in 2018, we also divided respondents into high-, medium-, and low-SEWB groups based on their total scores on the scale We used the same criteria to define the groups each year, using one standard deviation above or below the mean as the cut points for the high and low groups. In both years, this resulted in the same numerical cut points on the scale and a very similar proportion of respondents in each group. See the "Methodology" section of the report, on page 11, for more detail.

TABLE 21. Self-Reported Effect of Social Media, by Social-Emotional Well-Being Status, 2018

		High	Medium	Low
Depressed	• More	0%[a]	2%[a]	11%[b]
	• Less	5%[a]	15%[b]	29%[c]
Better/Worse about themselves	• Better	13%	18%	22%
	• Worse	0%[a]	3%[a]	15%[b]
Confident	• More	12%[a]	21%[b]	23%[b]
	• Less	1%[a]	3%[a]	15%[b]
Popular	• More	13%[a]	22%[b]	27%[b]
	• Less	0%[a]	2%[a]	8%[b]
Lonely	• More	0%[a]	2%[a]	13%[b]
	• Less	8%[a]	26%[b]	39%[c]
Anxious	• More	3%[a]	7%[a]	19%[b]
	• Less	5%[a]	11%[b]	21%[b]

Note: "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being". See "Methodology" section, page 11, for definitions of low-, medium-, and high-SEWB groups. Percentages with different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$. Significance should be read across rows.

FIGURE 18. Self-Reported Effect of Social Media on Depression, by SEWB Status, 2018

Among 13- to 17-year-old social media users, percent who say using it makes them feel:

Low-SEWB: 29%, 11%
Medium-SEWB: 15%, 2%
High-SEWB: 5%, 0%

■ Less depressed   ■ More depressed
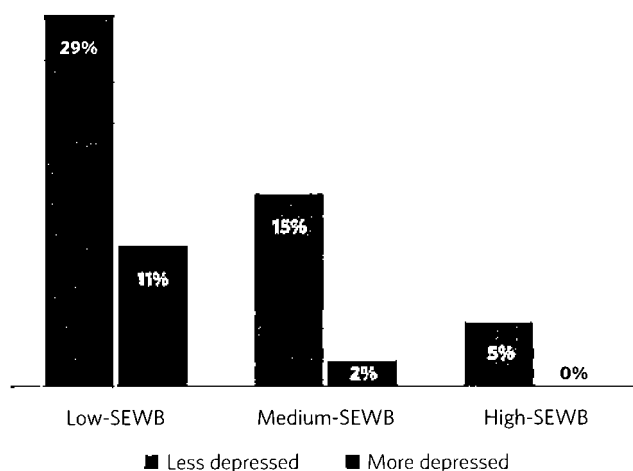
Note: The proportion saying social media makes no difference one way or the other is not included "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being". See "Methodology" section for definitions of low-, medium-, and high-SEWB groups. The differences between "less depressed" and "more depressed" within each SEWB group are statistically significant at $p < .05$

In this section of the report, we compare how the most vulnerable teens (those in the low-SEWB group) perceive social media's effects on their depression today compared to six years ago. One important finding is that despite the increase in use of social media and its more prominent role in young people's lives, vulnerable teens are no more likely in 2018 than they were in 2012 to say that social media makes them feel depressed or worse about themselves. In 2012, 13 percent of low-SEWB teens said social media made them feel worse about themselves, compared to 15 percent in 2018—not a statistically significant difference (see Table 22). In 2012, 15 percent of low-SEWB teens said social media made them feel more depressed, compared to 11 percent in 2018—again, not a statistically significant difference.

But teens at the lower end of the SEWB scale *are* more likely in 2018 than they were in 2012 to say that social media makes them feel less depressed: In 2018, nearly three in 10 vulnerable teens (29 percent) say that using social media makes them feel less depressed, up from 11 percent six years ago. At least according to teens themselves, it appears that social media may be playing a more positive role in vulnerable teens' lives today than it did in 2012.

TABLE 22. Self-Reported Effect of Social Media on SEWB Among Vulnerable Teens, 2012 vs. 2018

		2012	2018
Depressed	• More	15%	11%
	• Less	11%[a]	29%[b]
Better/Worse about themselves	• Better	19%	22%
	• Worse	13%	15%

Note: "SEWB" stands for "social-emotional well-being". Percentages with different superscripts differ significantly at the level of $p < .05$. See "Methodology" section for a definition of the low-SEWB group

The positive thing about social media is that I get to share my life and interests with other people. The negative is that too much validation comes from those likes and followers.

— 16-year-old Hispanic/Latina girl
in survey

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS BECOME such a prevalent means of communication that it is now inextricably woven into the fabric of teens' lives. Social media use is central to how teens "talk" to their friends, make plans for after school, coordinate their extracurricular activities, get their news, keep up with their cousins and aunts and uncles, organize themselves politically, learn new styles and fashions, connect with people who share their same hobbies and interests, document and share the highlights of their lives, avail themselves of inspiration, and express their creativity. The days when we could talk about a singular "effect" social media has on teens are long gone; its role in teens' lives is complex, nuanced, and varied.

This survey offers a unique opportunity to peel back the curtain and get a glimpse into that complexity and nuance. As a nationally representative probability survey, it sheds light on the social media practices of young people from all walks of life; and because it tracks changes from 2012 to today, it enables us to observe how teens' relationship with social media, and social media's role in their lives, is evolving.

The complexity of social media's role in young people's lives may frustrate those looking for easy answers or simplistic solutions. But it is a reality that this survey has made abundantly clear. According to teens themselves, using social media strengthens their relationships with friends and family at the same time it detracts from face-to-face communication. Social media makes teens feel less lonely and more connected at the same time teens sometimes feel left out and "less than" their peers. Social media helps *alleviate* teens' depression by connecting them to support and inspiration, and also *contributes* to depression for those who get stuck in a loop of isolation and self-abnegation. As noted before, this study can't say with certainty whether social media *causes* harm or improvements to teens' well-being, but it certainly points to areas where researchers can and should do additional work, helping to sort through unhelpful dichotomies about whether social media is good or bad, and getting vulnerable teens the help they need.

One reality that emerges from this survey is that while the amount of time teens devote to social media is an important measure, it is by no means the only one. Reducing the relationship between social media and teens' well-being to the notion that less social media will by itself solve teen depression and anxiety is far too simplistic—perhaps even dangerously so. For many teens, social media is a source of connection and inspiration, a chance to share their creativity and alleviate loneliness. And yet, for some, social media also sometimes raises their anxiety and increases their depression.

The survey clearly indicates that there are some teens for whom social media plays an outsized role. Young people who have less social-emotional well-being than their peers—who are more likely to say they are often sad or depressed, that they are lonely, that they feel rejected by others their age—these teens, not surprisingly, are especially vulnerable to the ups and downs of social media. But what is most important to recognize from this survey is that their relationship with social media is not uniform or one-dimensional. Social media is very important to them, helping many of them to feel less lonely, more confident, and more connected. But social media is also more likely to affect them negatively than it is for other teens—to make them feel left out, or worse about themselves.

It is these teens who deserve our special concern. And perhaps it is more important and more relevant to focus our attention on the teens rather than on social media. There are no easy answers for these young people. Less time on social media may be part of the solution—especially choosing times for devices and social media mindfully. But learning how to use social media in a way that boosts well-being rather than hinders it will likely play a part as well. Using social media to communicate with friends and express yourself are often thought of as "positive" uses, but it's not easy for some teens to avoid negative social comparisons or to look for excessive validation from others. These are skills that are difficult and take time to develop but could also potentially be improved through social media platforms' design choices.

Another important insight to emerge from the survey is the need for teens to strengthen their ability to regulate and moderate their device use—to engage with technology in general, and social media in particular, in a more deliberate way. Teens recognize that they are often being distracted from important priorities such as homework or the people they are with; yet too many of

them still don't turn their devices off or put them aside in those moments. They understand that tech companies are manipulating them into spending more time on their devices, but they aren't always able to resist. This is especially concerning when it comes to teens going to sleep or driving, where the potential health impacts for young people are substantial. But there are other, subtler ways in which teens may not even realize they're being tracked or manipulated—what will it mean to have all their online interactions stored or saved and often viewable by unintended third parties? These skills, a subset of broader digital citizenship skills, can be taught and reinforced by parents and educators and supported by policies that make it easier for teens to thoughtfully integrate technology and social media into their lives.

One of the most compelling questions about digital communication is how it will ultimately impact the way humans communicate with and relate to one another. In this sense, teens may be the proverbial canaries in a coal mine. The fact that young people's preference for face-to-face communication has dropped substantially over the past six years is therefore especially noteworthy. Are we starting to see a real shift, or will this turn out to be a temporary blip or something that teens grow out of? If teens are truly changing how they want to communicate with each other, how are technology and social media contributing to this change? And if this change is real, what will the implications be in the years ahead?

We hope this survey will help elevate the voices of youth in this national discussion. Most teens, even those who are lower in social-emotional well-being than their peers, are more likely to say that social media makes them feel *better* rather than worse, *eases* their depression rather than feeds it, makes them feel *less* lonely rather than more isolated. This is by no means definitive evidence about the impact of social media, but it is certainly an important component of what we need to know, a critical part of the conversation. And all of us—parents, educators, mental health professionals, policymakers—would be wise to listen.

N=1,141 respondents age 13 to 17

Q1. Do you drive a car?

Yes   51%

No   48%

Q2. Do you personally have your own:

Smart phone   89%

Tablet   49%

Laptop or desktop computer   61%

Q3. Which type of Internet access do you have at home?

Data plan on a smart phone or tablet   50%

High speed, such as cable, DSL, satellite, or WiFi   89%

Other   1%

Not sure   3%

Q4. Have you ever used social media, such as Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook?

Yes   84%

No   16%

Base: Q4=1 (Yes)

Q5. Which social media, if any, do you use?

Facebook   52%

Snapchat   75%

Instagram   73%

Twitter   24%

Tumblr   4%

Reddit   2%

Other   3%

None, I don't use social media any more   3%

Q6. **Which social media do you use the most?**

Facebook	19%
Snapchat	51%
Instagram	27%
Twitter	3%
Tumblr	·
Reddit	·
Other	1%

* Less than 0.5%.

Q7. **Have you ever participated in a Snapstreak?**

Yes, many times	39%
Yes, a few times	13%
Yes, once or twice	11%
No, never	30%
Don't know/not sure	7%

Q8. **How stressful is it for you, if at all, to keep Snapstreaks going?**

Very stressful	7%
Somewhat stressful	30%
Not too stressful	43%
Not stressful at all	21%

Q9. **How often do you do each of the following activities?**

a. How often do you send or receive texts

1. Almost constantly	24%
2. A few times an hour	31%
3. Once an hour	3%
4. A few times a day	29%
5. Once a day	3%
6. A few times a week	8%
7. Once a week	·
8. Less than once a week	1%
9. Never	1%

* Less than 0 5%

b. How often do you check social media like Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook

1. Almost constantly	20%
2. A few times an hour	27%
3. Once an hour	7%
4. A few times a day	34%
5. Once a day	4%
6. A few times a week	5%
7. Once a week	1%
8. Less than once a week	3%
9. Never	1%

c. How often do you post something on social media

1. Almost constantly	5%
2. A few times an hour	8%
3. Once an hour	3%
4. A few times a day	23%
5. Once a day	9%
6. A few times a week	20%
7. Once a week	6%
8. Less than once a week	21%
9. Never	5%

Base: Q5=1-7 (use social media)

Q10. **Do you have more than one account on any social media platform in order to hide a more personal account from others?**

Yes	16%
No	83%

Base: Q10=1 (Yes)

Q11. **Who are you hiding your more personal social media account from?**

Your parents/caregivers	42%
Ex-friends	25%
People who aren't close friends	68%
Other	6%

Q12. Which of the following is your favorite way to communicate with your friends?

In person	32%
Talking on the phone	5%
Texting*	35%
Through social media†	16%
Video chatting (such as Skype, FaceTime)	10%
Other	2%

* Option offered only to those who send and receive texts
† Option offered only to those who use social media.

Base: Q5=1-7 (use social media)

Q13. How important is social media in your life?

Not important at all	5%
Not too important	18%
Somewhat important	37%
Very important	29%
Extremely important	11%

Base: Q2a=1 (own smartphone)

Q14. Some people sometimes silence their phones, turn off their notifications, or put their phones away at certain times. How often, if ever, do you silence, put away, or turn off your phone when:

	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
a. You're going to sleep	33%	23%	17%	16%	11%
b. You're having a meal with somebody	18%	24%	26%	19%	12%
c. You're doing homework	12%	18%	31%	24%	13%
d. You're visiting family	11%	21%	34%	21%	13%
e. You're hanging out with friends	4%	12%	28%	34%	21%
e. [Q1=1] You're driving	46%	23%	13%	8%	9%

Base: Q2a=1 (own smartphone)

Q15. How often, if ever, are you woken up by your phone during the night (such as by a call, text, or notification)?

Every night	2%
Most nights	5%
Some nights	23%
Hardly ever	36%
Never	34%

Q16. How often, if ever, have you checked a notification on your phone while you were driving?

Very often	1%
Often	3%
Sometimes	18%
Hardly ever	34%
Never	44%

Q17. Have you ever turned your phone off, stopped checking it for a while, or deleted apps to give yourself a break from digital drama?

Yes, many times	12%
Yes, a few times	22%
Yes, once or twice	27%
No, never	39%

Q18a. About how many friends or followers do you have on Facebook?

0-100	27%
101-300	19%
More than 300	14%
Don't know	41%

Q18b. About how many friends or followers do you have on Instagram?

0-100	24%
101-300	20%
More than 300	21%
Don't know	35%

Q19. How important is it to get new friends or followers on your main social media site?

Not important at all	27%
Not too important	39%
Somewhat important	26%
Very important	7%
Extremely important	2%

Q20. When you post something on your main social media site, how important is it to get a lot of "likes"?

Not important at all	21%
Not too important	34%
Somewhat important	32%
Very important	8%
Extremely important	4%

Q21. Have you ever done any of the following to try to increase the number of "likes" you get?

Buy "likes"	2%
Show more skin	3%
Show off muscles	3%
Do a crazy stunt	4%
Use apps that promise to increase your number of followers	4%

Q22. Have you ever deleted a post because it didn't get enough "likes"?

Yes, many times	3%
Yes, a few times	5%
Yes, once or twice	17%
No, never	75%

Q23. How important is social media to you for:

	Not at all	Not too	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
Keeping up with your friends on a day to day basis	7%	14%	38%	28%	11%
Having meaningful conversations with your close friends	11%	19%	36%	24%	9%
Expressing yourself creatively	13%	23%	37%	20%	7%
Documenting and sharing the highlights of your life	13%	27%	37%	19%	5%

Q24. Please choose the answer that best applies to your experience.

a. Using my main social media sites makes me feel:

More confident	20%
Less confident	5%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	75%

b. Using my main social media sites makes me feel:

Better about myself	18%
Worse about myself	4%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	78%

c. Using my main social media sites makes me feel:

More depressed	3%
Less depressed	16%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	81%

d. Using my main social media sites makes me feel:

More popular	21%
Less popular	3%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	75%

e. Using my main social media sites makes me feel:

More lonely	3%
Less lonely	25%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	71%

f. Using my main social media sites makes me feel:

More anxious	8%
Less anxious	12%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	80%

Q25. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
[Q5=1-7] The way I present myself on social media is an accurate reflection of who I really am.	25%	50%	18%	7%
[Q5=1-7] Using social media often distracts me when I should be paying attention to the people I'm with.	9%	44%	31%	15%
[Q5=1-7] The time I spend using social media has taken away from time I could be spending with friends in person.	6%	37%	37%	20%
[Q5=1-7] Using social media often distracts me when I should be doing homework.	11%	46%	26%	15%
[Q5=1-7] I sometimes feel left out or excluded after seeing photos on social media of my friends together at something I wasn't invited to.	8%	39%	34%	18%
[Q5=1-7] I feel bad about myself when nobody comments on or "likes" my photos.	4%	22%	35%	39%
[Q2a-c=1] I have no problem unplugging from my devices when I need to.	24%	40%	27%	8%
I get frustrated with my friends for being on their phones so much when we're hanging out together.	10%	34%	41%	14%
I wish my parents would spend less time on their phones and other devices.	6%	28%	42%	24%
Sometimes I wish I could go back to a time when there was no such thing as social media.	9%	31%	39%	20%
[Q5=1-7] Social media has helped me be more aware of current events.	17%	57%	18%	7%
Tech companies manipulate people into spending more time on devices.	23%	49%	23%	4%
[Q5=1-7] My social life would be ruined if I didn't have social media.	4%	23%	37%	35%
Social media has a negative impact on many people my age.	20%	48%	26%	6%

Base: Q5=1-7 (use social media) or Q2a=1 (own smartphone)

Q26. Would you describe yourself as "addicted" to:

[Q2a=1] Your phone	47%
[Q5=1-7] Social media	24%

Q27. Do you consider any of your parents/caregivers to be "addicted" to their phones, computers, or other devices?

Yes	28%
No	71%

Q28. Which comes closer to the truth:

Parents worry too much about teens' use of social media	45%
If parents knew what actually happens on social media, they'd be a lot more worried about it	54%

Q29. How often, if ever, have you encountered the following types of comments in social media:

	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
Racist comments, that is, someone putting people down based on their race or ethnicity such as for being Black, Hispanic, Asian or White, or using insulting words that refer to race	12%	41%	29%	18%
Homophobic comments, that is, someone putting people down for being gay, or using insulting words about being gay	12%	40%	26%	20%
Sexist comments, that is, someone putting girls or guys down in a way that calls attention to their gender, or using insulting words about women or men	14%	38%	28%	18%
Anti-religious comments, that is, someone putting people down for their religious beliefs, such as for being Muslim, Jewish, Mormon, Christian, or for not being religious enough.	11%	36%	31%	22%

Q30. The next questions are about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over devices like phones, tablets, and computers. It can happen in social media, texts, or gaming, where people can view, participate in, or share content. It includes repeatedly sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, or mean content about someone else, on purpose. It can include sharing private information about someone else to cause embarrassment or humiliation.

a. Have you ever been cyberbullied?

Yes	13%
No	86%

b. Have you been cyberbullied in the past 12 months?

Yes	60%
No	40%

Q31. How often have you been cyberbullied in your life?

Many times	16%
A few times	53%
Once or twice	29%

Q32. Thinking about the worst cyberbullying that has ever happened to you, how serious/bad was it?

Very serious	16%
Somewhat serious	49%
Not too serious	29%
Not serious at all	6%

Q33. **Have you ever tried to help someone who was being cyberbullied?**

Yes	23%
No	20%
I don't know anyone who has been cyberbullied	56%

Base: Q33=1 (Yes)

Q34. **In what ways have you tried to help someone who was being cyberbullied?**

Talked to them to make them feel better	81%
Posted positive stuff about them online	34%
Challenged the cyber-bully online	20%
Reported the cyber-bullying to adults	45%
Other	3%

Q35. **How well do each of the following statements describe you? Is each statement A LOT like you, SOMEWHAT like you, NOT MUCH like you, or NOT AT ALL like you?**

	A lot like me	Somewhat like me	Not much like me	Not at all like me
I have a lot of friends	23%	48%	25%	4%
I'm lonely	4%	19%	40%	37%
Compared to other people my age, I feel normal	32%	49%	16%	4%
I often feel rejected by people my age	5%	19%	41%	35%
I get along well with my parents	52%	41%	5%	2%
I get into trouble a lot	3%	10%	29%	58%
There are lots of things I can do well	38%	48%	12%	2%
I like myself	47%	43%	8%	2%
I'm happy with my life	43%	47%	7%	2%
I often feel sad or depressed	4%	16%	43%	37%
I'm outgoing	23%	42%	28%	6%
I'm shy	13%	39%	32%	15%
I find it easy to make new friends	23%	47%	24%	6%

Q36. How often, if ever, do you come across the following types of people on social media?

	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never
Socialites: People who always know what's happening socially and where to be.	18%	50%	22%	9%
Artsy types: People who focus on posting beautiful photographs, close-ups, black and whites, etc.	23%	47%	22%	7%
Instagram baddies: Girls who post lots of selfies in which they show a lot of skin and always look perfect.	23%	37%	25%	13%
Ghosts: People who follow you but never interact with you.	18%	39%	27%	16%
Over-sharers: People who share way too much personal stuff on social media.	30%	45%	16%	8%
Ranters: People who rant about things a lot.	23%	43%	24%	9%
Muscle men: Guys who post lots of perfect-looking gym shots.	8%	32%	36%	23%
Gossips: People who spread rumors about other people.	20%	41%	25%	12%

Q37. Which, if any, of these categories of social media users do YOU fit in?
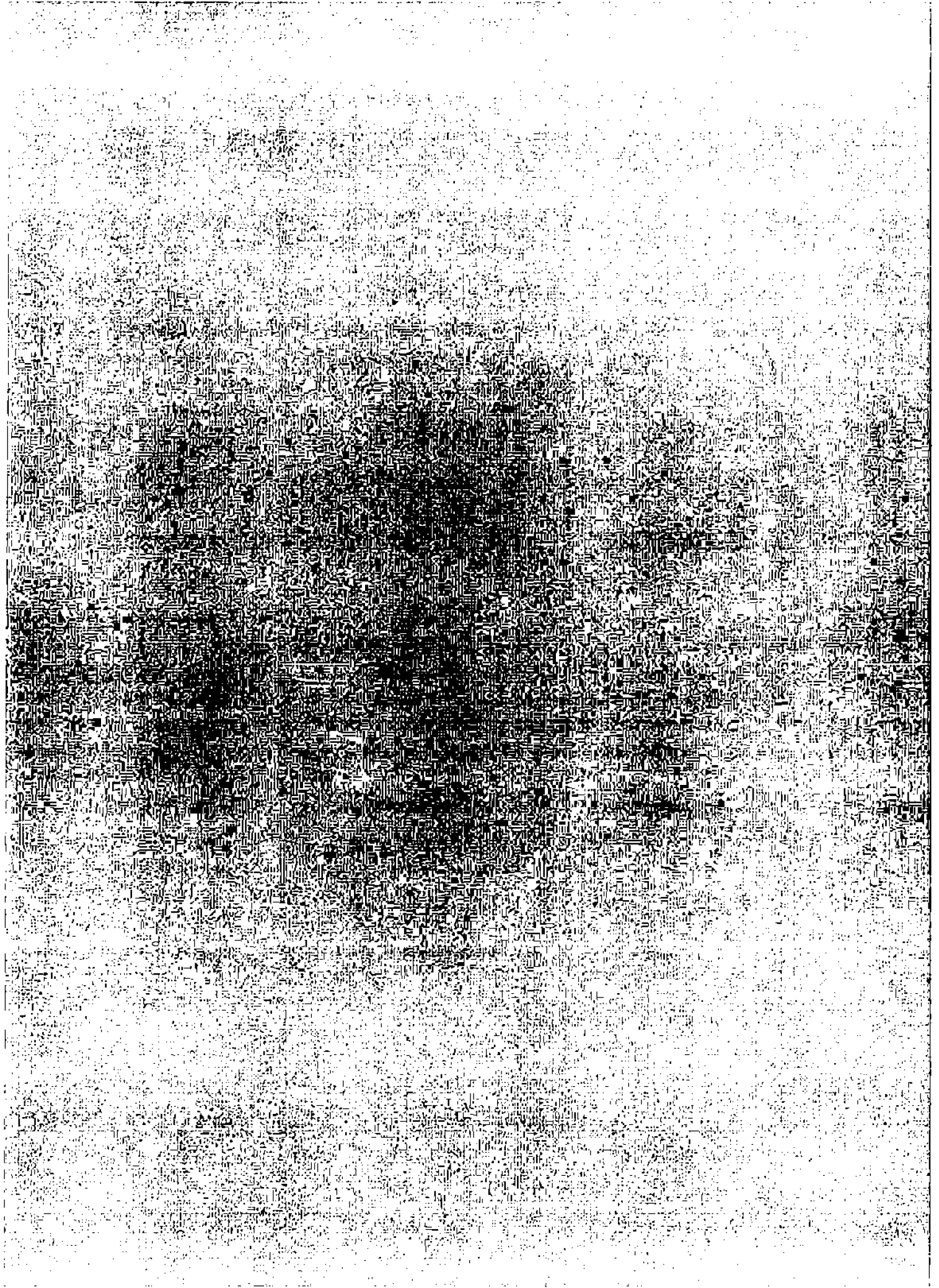
Socialite: You always know what's happening socially and where to be.	11%
Artsy type: You post beautiful photographs, close-ups, black and whites, etc.	19%
[GENDER=2 (girls)] **Instagram baddie:** You post lots of selfies in which you show a lot of skin and look perfect.	3%
Ghost: You follow people but never interact with them.	16%
Over-sharer: You share way too much personal stuff on social media.	3%
Ranter: You rant about things a lot on social media.	4%
[GENDER=1 (boys)] **Muscle men:** You post lots of perfect-looking gym shots.	2%
Gossip: You spread rumors about other people.	3%
None of the above	57%

Q38. We are interested in your own experience using social media. Tell us some of the positive and negative things about social media in your life?

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OUR OFFICES

San Francisco Headquarters
650 Townsend Street, Suite 435
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 863-0600

Washington, D.C. Office
2200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
4th Floor East
Washington, D.C. 20037
(202) 350-9992

New York Office
575 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
(212) 315-2138

Los Angeles Office
1100 Glendon Avenue, 17th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(310) 689-7535

Privacy Matters: Parents and Teens Share Attitudes and Opinions

Methodology: This SurveyMonkey online poll was conducted May 5-22, 2018 among a national sample of 19,063 adults, including 3,222 parents with children between 13 and 17 years old and 985 teenagers age 13 to 17. Respondents for this survey were selected from the nearly 3 million people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform each day. The modeled error estimate for this survey is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points among parents of teenagers, and 3.5 percentage points among teens. Data have been weighted for age, race, sex, education, and geography using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to reflect the demographic composition of the United States age 18 and over.

Which of the following social networking sites have you used in the last year? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Facebook	78%	37%
Instagram	41%	74%
Twitter	29%	36%
Snapchat	27%	73%
None of the above	14%	13%
No answer	1%	1%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In general, social networking sites and apps do a good job explaining what they will do with my data. (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Strongly agree	9%	8%
Somewhat agree	16%	28%
Neither agree or disagree	21%	30%
Somewhat disagree	22%	21%
Strongly disagree	32%	13%
No answer	0%	0%

How important is it for social networking sites to clearly label what information is collected about you and how it is used? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Extremely important	58%	41%
Very important	26%	29%
Moderately important	10%	21%
Slightly important	3%	6%
Not at all important	2%	2%
No answer	1%	0%

How important is it for social networking sites to ask for your permission before sharing or selling your personal information? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Extremely important	77%	69%
Very important	15%	15%
Moderately important	6%	9%
Slightly important	1%	4%
Not at all important	1%	2%
No answer	0%	1%

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How worried are you that social networking sites use your data to allow advertisers to target you with ads? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Extremely worried	35%	14%
Very worried	22%	17%
Moderately worried	26%	37%
Slightly worried	8%	17%
Not at all worried	9%	15%
No answer	0%	1%

Have you ever changed your privacy settings on a social networking site to limit what you share with others? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Yes	86%	79%
No	14%	20%
No answer	0%	1%

What are your reasons for not adjusting your privacy settings? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS WHO HAVEN'T CHANGED THIER PRIVACY SETTINGS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Too difficult to find	14%	10%
Hard to understand what the settings do	7%	8%
I am comfortable with my privacy settings the way they are	28%	24%
Other (please specify)	48%	56%
No answer	3%	2%

How often do you read the "terms of service" on social networking sites, which detail about what personal data social networks and apps collect? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Every time	18%	5%
Almost every time	18%	12%
Occasionally/Sometimes	33%	25%
Almost never	20%	22%
Never	10%	35%

What are your reasons for not reading the terms of service? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS WHO "ALMOST NEVER" OR "NEVER" READ THE TERMS OF SERVICE)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Hard to understand	14%	7%
Too long	8%	6%
Not interested in what they have to say	66%	65%
Other (please specify)	12%	21%
No answer	0%	0%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I will give details about myself to a website or app to be able to get something that I want. (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Strongly agree	8%	8%
Somewhat agree	30%	31%
Neither agree or disagree	25%	32%
Somewhat disagree	18%	17%
Strongly disagree	19%	10%
No answer	0%	1%

How concerned are you that there are fake accounts and "bots" on social media platforms that are used to try to sell you things or influence you? (AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS)

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Extremely concerned	40%	18%
Very concerned	25%	20%
Moderately concerned	20%	34%
Slightly concerned	7%	14%
Not at all concerned	6%	13%
No answer	1%	1%

Do any of your teenage children between 13 to 17 years old use a social networking site?

	Parents of Teens
Yes	78%
No	21%
No answer	1%

Do you believe that social networking companies should be allowed to collect teenagers' personal data for any of the following reasons? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

	Parents of Teens
To deliver better-targeted ads	8%
To allow for parental controls	45%
None of the above	49%
No answer	1%

Have you ever spoken to your teenager about how they can protect their privacy online?

	Teens
Friends	88%
Family members	10%
Businesses/Brands	1%

How much have you heard about the recent controversy regarding Facebook and Cambridge Analytica?

	Parent of Teens	Teens
A lot	38%	38%
A little	36%	36%
Nothing at all	24%	24%
No answer	2%	2%

Has this controversy caused you to be more cautious using social media, more cautious using just Facebook, or has it not affected your social media use?

	Parents of Teens	Teens
More cautious about all social media	63%	38%
More cautious about Facebook, but not other social media	12%	26%
No effect	23%	35%
No answer	1%	1%

Gender

	Parents of Teens	Teens
Male	46%	50%
Female	54%	50%

Race/Ethnicity

	Parents of Teens	Teens
White	54%	55%
Black	17%	14%
Hispanic	19%	22%
Asian	3%	4%
Other	7%	5%

What is the last grade of school you completed?

	Parents of Teens
Did not complete high school	4%
High school or G.E.D.	27%
Associate's degree	10%
Some college	22%
College graduate	27%
Post graduate degree	10%