
Teens and Social Media

— What can you do? —

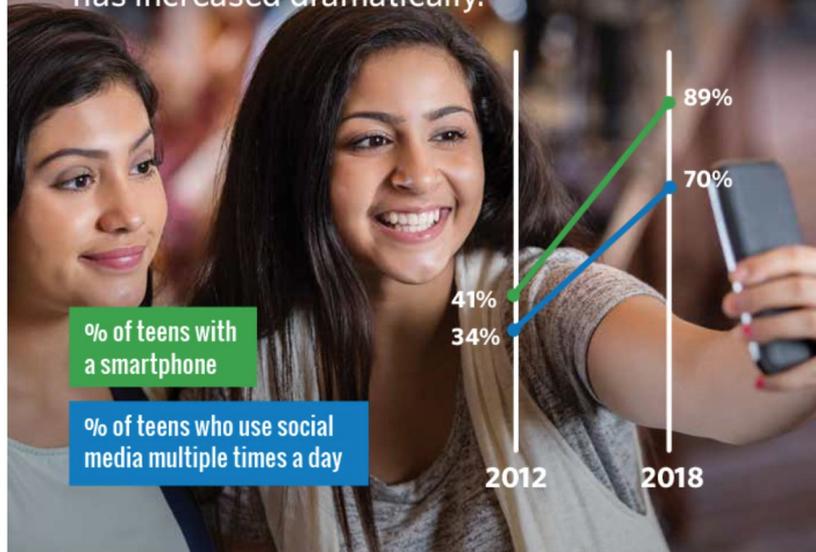
Ownership and Access

89% of teens have their own smartphone

41% did so in 2012

The latest cohort of teenagers have grown up with social media. This is the world they live and learn in.

Social media use among teens has increased dramatically.



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



15%
Facebook

They're being distracted from other important things and their friends.



57%

of all teens agree that using social media often distracts them when they should be doing homework.



54%

of teen social media users agree that it often distracts them when they should be paying attention to the people they're with, **compared to 44% in 2012.**



29%

of teen smartphone owners say they've been woken up by their phones during the night by a call, text, or notification.



42%

of teens agree that social media has taken away from time they could spend with friends in person, **compared to 34% in 2012.**

Snapchat and Instagram are where it's at

In 2012, Facebook dominated social networking use among teens.

Today, only 15% say it's their main site (when one 16-year-old girl was asked in a focus group whom she communicates with on Facebook, she replied, "My grandparents").

What can you do?

Familiarize yourself with your teen's favorite social media platform by reading reviews or downloading it and playing around with it.

Friend your teen if they'll allow it, but don't force it.

Instead, make time for regular check-ins to ask what's new on Snapchat and Instagram and share your feeds with them.

They can't stop. They won't stop.

70% of teenagers use Social Media everyday

Most teens believe that technology companies manipulate their daily habits

Many teens think that Social Media distracts them from their friends

What can you do?

Teens are aware of their habits. They have a hard time regulating their use.

So help them.

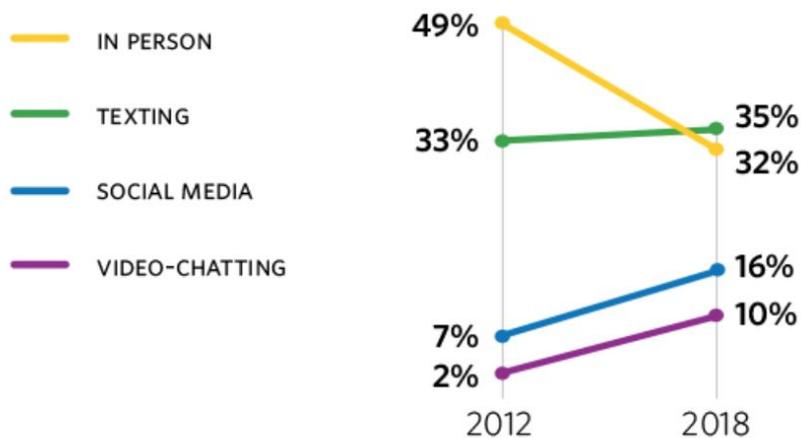
Encourage them to be mindful of how they feel before, during and after a social media session

If a certain friend or topic bugs them or brings them down, they can block that person or mute the thread.

Challenge them to do a task with focused concentration, and without interruption, for longer and longer periods (try setting a timer).

Teens don't value face-to-face communication with friends as much as they used to.

Teens favorite way of communicating, 2012 vs. 2018



What happens online stays online.

When asked to pick which comes closer to the truth, teens say:

54%

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.

Less talking, more texting

In 2012, about half of all teens still said their favorite way to communicate with friends was in person.

Today, less than a third say so.

More than half say that social media takes them away from personal relationships and distracts them from paying attention to the people they're with.

What can you do?

This is where your guidance and role-modeling of healthy online habits is really important.

Put down your own phone (better yet, set it to do not disturb) when you're with your kids.

Encourage them to be more aware about their device use, especially when they come away from interactions feeling like they were distracted.

And if you think they need a break, prompt them to go phone-free for a while.

Managing devices a hit or miss

Many turn off, silence, or put away their phones at key times such as when going to sleep, having meals with people, visiting family or doing homework.

But many others do not.

A significant number of teens say they “hardly ever” or “never” silence or put away their devices.

What can you do?

If your teen is able to manage their own use, keep encouraging them. If not, set specific screen rules for around the house.

Establish screen-free times (such as during homework) and areas (such as the bedroom).

Have device-free-dinner nights — and make sure to follow the rules yourself.

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

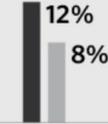
Less lonely



Less depressed



Less anxious



5%

More confident



Better about themselves



More popular



Teens think they're being manipulated.

72%

Of teens believe that tech companies manipulate users to spend more time on their devices.



Thumbs Mostly Up

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.

25% say social media makes them feel less lonely (compared with 3% who say more)

18% say it makes them feel better about themselves (compared with 4% who say worse)

16% say it makes them feel less depressed (compared with 3% who say more)

What can you do?

It's still important to check in. Ask open-ended questions about their social media lives:

What's good?

What's not so good?

What do you wish you could change?

And remember, social media is only one contributor to kids' overall wellbeing.

Vulnerable teens need more support

Social media is significantly more important in the lives of vulnerable teens (those who rate themselves low on a social-emotional wellbeing scale).

This group is more likely to say they've had a variety of negative responses to social media (such as feeling bad about themselves when nobody comments on or likes their posts).

But they're also more likely to say that social media has a positive, rather than a negative, effect on them.

What can you do?

You may not know your teen is vulnerable. In fact, they may not know it.

Because vulnerable teens can struggle more in all areas, use your intuition to dig deeper if you sense something is going on.

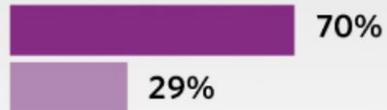
Help them get the best out of social media and minimize anything that provokes a negative reaction.

If they're creative, support their efforts to share their work online, as vulnerable teens say that expressing themselves on social media is extremely important.

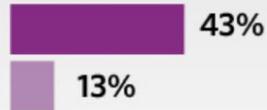
Teens with low social-emotional well-being experience more of the negative effects of social media than kids with high social-emotional well-being.

Percent of social media users who say they:

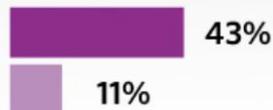
Sometimes feel left out or excluded when using social media



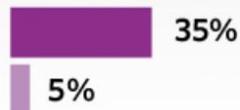
Have deleted social media posts because they got too few "likes"



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



Have ever been cyberbullied



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:



Exposure to hate speech is on the rise, while cyberbullying is less common

Only 13% of teens report ever being cyberbullied.

But nearly two-thirds say they often or sometimes come across racist, sexist, homophobic or religious-based hate content in social media.

What can you do?

Talk to your kid about being a force for good on the Internet.

Explain that it reflects poorly on them if they like, share or otherwise support messages of hate — even as a joke.

If your kid knows the person spewing hate speech, then encourage them to block, report or simply unfriend that person.

Practice how to disagree with people respectfully and constructively.

Encourage them to stand up for people who've been denigrated — without getting into an ugly war.

Express yourself

More than 1 in 4 teens say social media is “extremely” or “very” important to them for expressing themselves creatively.

What can you do?

Be supportive.

Although there are some risks to putting your work online, it's possible to do it safely, and it can actually help teens get their stuff noticed by schools, employers and mentors.

Help them use privacy settings on whatever platform they choose to share their work so they don't expose themselves to potential predators.

Offer advice on how to accept feedback and comments maturely. And find out how to protect their intellectual property.

Lastly, 5 ways social media can be good for teens

1. It lets them do good
2. It strengthens friendships
3. It can offer a sense of belonging
4. It provides genuine support
5. It helps them express themselves

Sources

[Social Media, Social Life: Teens Reveal Their Experiences \(2018\)](#)

[Commonsense Media](#)

[Caroline Knorr \(Washington Post\)](#)