

Social media is a core part of young people's lives

Article

Young people spend an enormous amount of time on social media. Despite how it can make them (or their parents) feel and the harm it can cause, that's not likely to change.

How we define age cohorts

In this report, we define young people as individuals under 18.

Kids: individuals ages 0–11. They represent Gen Alpha, which we define as individuals born

after 2012. Age ranges from third-party data may vary.

Teens: individuals ages 12–17. They represent the youngest members of Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, per our forecast definition. Age ranges from third-party data may vary.

Social media can do both good and bad

- **Most teens are looking for entertainment and connection.** Regardless of how much time they spend on social platforms, teens are primarily there to be entertained, per July 2023 data from Gallup and the Institute for Family Studies (IFS). Since more teens prefer connecting digitally than in person—and most of their friends and family likely use social media as well—it makes sense that many are also using it to communicate with each other and make plans.

Reasons Why US Teens Use Social Media, by Daily Time Spent on Social Media, July 2023

% of respondents

	4+ hours	2-<4 hours	<2 hours
For entertainment	88%	83%	75%
Communicate with friends and family	75%	58%	47%
Relieve boredom	73%	64%	44%
Learn about different topics	55%	61%	46%
Chat or make plans with friends	46%	29%	23%
Get news or other information	44%	45%	30%
See what people in my school are doing	41%	26%	15%
Connect with strangers	13%	8%	5%
Other	7%	6%	6%

Note: n=1,567 ages 13-19

Source: Gallup and Institute for Family Studies (IFS). "How Parenting and Self-control Mediate the Link Between Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health," Oct 11, 2023

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- **Education is also a big driver of young people’s social usage.** The pandemic made many kids and teens comfortable with digital learning and drove educational providers to shift more content online. It also helped grow a new class of “edutainers,” or creators who post entertaining educational content, largely to social media. In fact, “tutorials/how-tos” is the **most searched content** on social media among 15- to 17-year-olds in the US, cited by 70.0% of respondents in our July 2023 US Gen Z Social Media survey.
- **But social media can also give bad actors and content a platform.** Few teens said they use social media to connect with strangers in the Gallup/IFS poll, but that’s not always in their or their parents’ control. The share of surveyed teens who said they use social media to relieve boredom is also alarming. The more time they spend on those platforms, the more

opportunities there are for them to be served with inappropriate or harmful content, even as the platforms try to restrict it.

Read the full report, [Youth and Social Media](#).

Report by Jasmine Enberg Mar 08, 2024

Youth and Social Media

