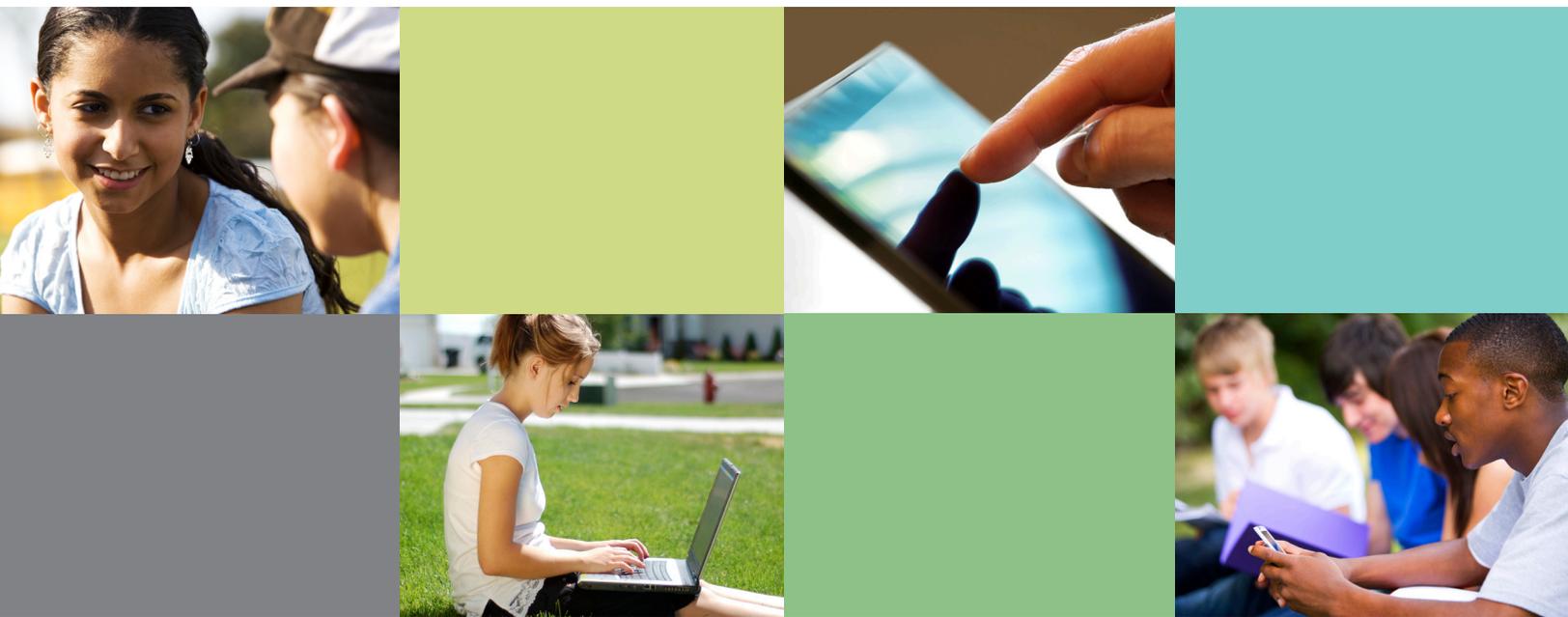


# Social Media, Social Life:

How Teens View Their Digital Lives



A Common Sense Media Research Study

SUMMER 2012



# **Social Media, Social Life:**

**How Teens View Their Digital Lives**



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# Introduction

**Adolescence is a time of life that is both exhilarating and daunting. It can be fraught with excitement and disappointment, self-confidence and insecurity, camaraderie and loneliness.**

Communications media — whether pen and paper, phone calls, Facebook, or Twitter — can exacerbate or alleviate the perils of teenage life, or even do both at the same time. But today's social media have the potential to amplify age-old anxieties and rites of passage in ways that yesterday's communications media did not — by opening once-private exchanges for an entire school to see, adding photos and videos to words, allowing an entire community the chance to comment on what is seen or heard or said online, and by maintaining a permanent record of all those interactions (boyd, 2007).

Using social media like Facebook and Twitter has become part and parcel of modern adolescence. According to the survey on which this report is based, 90% of all American teens have used social media, three-quarters of them have a social networking site, and nearly one in three teens visits their social networking profile several times a day or more.

Given how pervasive social media are today, many parents, educators, and other adults are deeply interested in the role of these media in teens' lives. Some are optimistic about the potential benefits of social media for learning, development, and creativity; others are concerned about the negative impact these media may have, especially when it comes to teens' social and emotional well-being.

An emerging set of survey research helps document and quantify young people's use of social network sites and looks at the tone of their online communications (Lenhardt, 2011). And a growing body of in-depth qualitative research helps capture the complexities and nuances of the way social media use plays out in teens' lives (boyd, 2009; Turkle,

2011; Ito, 2010). These in-depth ethnographies of young people paint a detailed portrait of how social media can affect an individual teen's life, offering the nuances that a large-scale survey can't. Some of this research has focused on young people whose social media use has led to anxiety or estrangement from family and friends (Turkle, 2011), while other research has highlighted those teens for whom social media use has facilitated important connections and amazing accomplishments (Ito, 2010).

The survey presented in this report is an attempt to complement existing research with a broad, quantitative snapshot of how U.S. teens experience the role of social media in their social and emotional lives. By using survey data from a nationally representative, probability-based sample of 13- to 17-year-olds, we are able to put a broad context around the experiences of individual teens. We offer answers to these questions:

- » How often are teens texting and using Facebook and Twitter?
- » What are teenagers' favorite ways to communicate with their friends and family?
- » How do teens think these new communications tools are affecting their friendships and family relations, if at all?
- » How does social networking make most teens feel about themselves and their relationships with their peers? Does it make them feel more connected or more isolated? Better about themselves, or more depressed and lonely?
- » How do the heaviest social media users compare to other teens in terms of their social and emotional well-being?

This generation is the first to have gone through their entire teen years with Facebook and other social networking sites at their fingertips. This survey documents, on a national scale, what these "social media natives" think about how social media use is affecting their social and emotional lives.



# Key Findings

## 1.

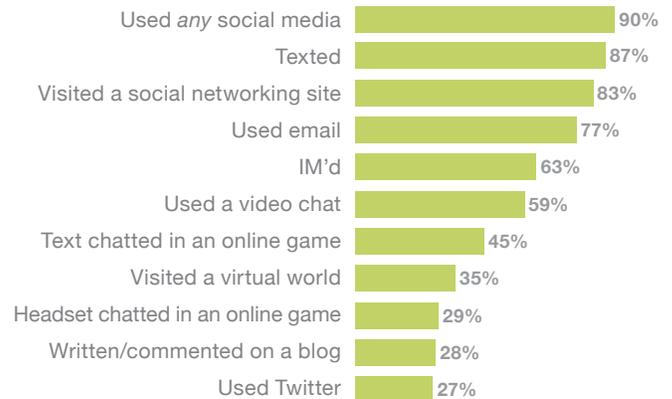
### Teens are avid, daily users of social media.

Almost all teenagers in America today have used social media. Nine out of 10 (90%) 13- to 17-year-olds have used some form of social media. Three out of four (75%) teenagers currently have a profile on a social networking site, and one in five (22%) has a current Twitter account (27% have ever used Twitter). Facebook utterly dominates social networking use among teens: 68% of all teens say Facebook is their main social networking site, compared to 6% for Twitter, 1% for GooglePlus, and 1% for MySpace (25% don't have a social networking site).

For the vast majority of teens, social and other digital communications media are a daily part of life. Two-thirds (68%) of teens text every day, half (51%) visit social networking sites daily, and 11% send or receive tweets at least once every day. In fact, more than a third (34%) of teens visit their main social networking site several times a day. One in four (23%) teens is a "heavy" social media user, meaning they use at least two different types of social media each and every day.

#### Use of Social and Digital Communications

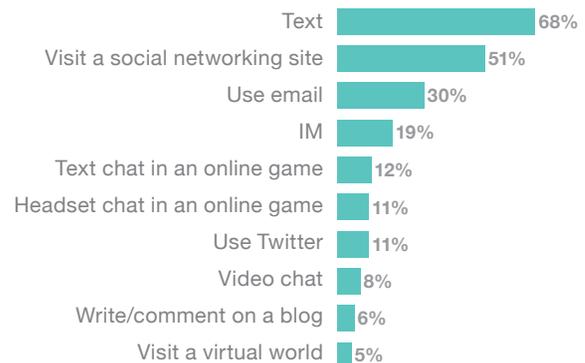
Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who have ever:



Note: Social media includes social networking, Twitter, blogs, and chatting in online games or virtual worlds.

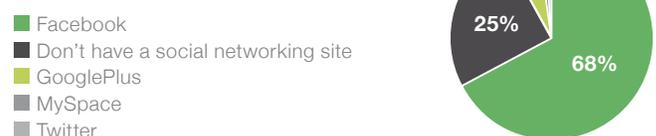
#### Daily Use of Social and Digital Communications Media

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who engage in each activity at least once a day:



#### Social Networking Sites

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say their main social networking site is:



## 2.

### Teens are much more likely to report that using social media has a positive impact on their social and emotional lives than a negative one.

Many more teens report a positive impact of social media use on their emotional well-being than a negative one. Most teens don't think their use of social media affects their social and emotional well-being one way or the other. But there are some teens who think that using social media does affect how they feel about themselves and their social situation.

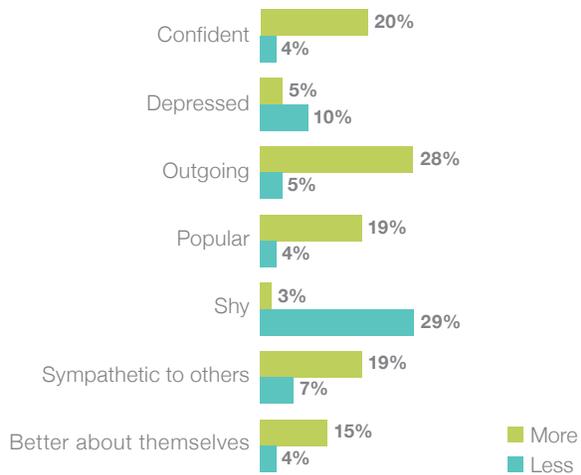
More than one in four teens say that using their social networking site makes them feel less shy (29%) and more outgoing (28%); one in five says it makes them feel more confident (20%), more popular (19%), and more sympathetic to others (19%); and 15% say it makes them feel better about themselves. By comparison, only 5% say social networking makes them feel less outgoing; 4% feel worse about themselves, less confident, and less popular after using their social networking site; and 3% feel shy.

Very few teens think that using their social network site makes them more depressed. Among all teen social network users, only 5% say using their social networking site makes them feel more depressed, compared to 10% who say it makes them feel less depressed. Even among the least happy teens in this study (the 10% of all teens who say they are often sad or depressed and aren't very happy with their lives), 18% say using their social networking site makes them feel more depressed, while 13% say it lessens their depression.

In particular, teens think that using social media has helped their relationships. Half (52%) of all teen social media users say using such media has mainly helped their relationships with friends, compared to just 4% who say social media use has mainly hurt their relationships. Similarly, more than a third (37%) say social media use has mainly helped their relationships with family members, compared to 2% who say it has mainly hurt them. In addition, a majority of teens say social media help them keep in touch with friends they can't see regularly (88%), get to know other students at their school better (69%), and connect with new people who share a common interest (57%).

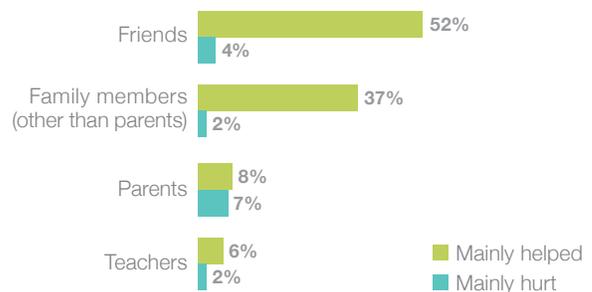
#### Perceived Effect of Social Networking on Social and Emotional Well-Being

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking profile, percent who say social networking makes them feel more or less:



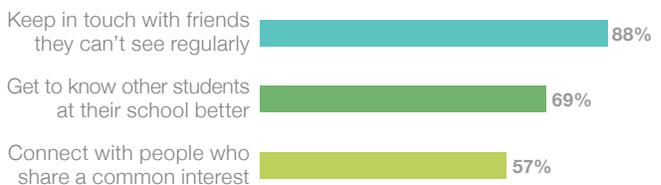
#### Impact of Social Networking on Relationships

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking site, percent who say social networking has mainly helped or mainly hurt their relationship with their:



#### Social Networking and Friendships

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking site, percent who strongly or somewhat agree that social networking has helped them:



# 3.

## Most teens prefer face-to-face communication, and many of them think using social media can interfere with that.

Despite being avid social media users, talking to each other in person is still teens' favorite way to communicate. About half (49%) of all teens say their favorite way to communicate with their friends is in person. Texting is the next favorite (33%), with social networking (7%), talking on the phone (4%), and Twitter (1%) far behind.

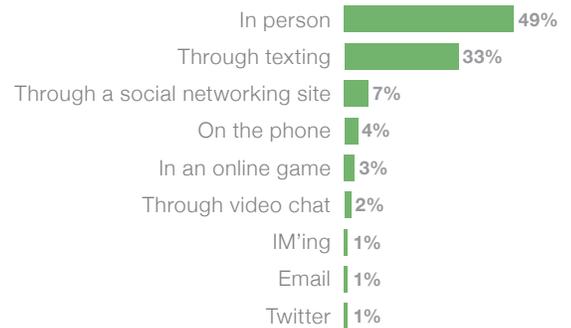
The main reasons kids prefer face-to-face conversations are that they're more fun (38%) and that they can understand what people really mean better in person (29%). The main reasons some kids prefer texting is that it's quick (30%) and easy (23%); others say it gives them more time to think about how to respond (16%) or is more private (11%).

Some teens think there is a trade-off between social media use and face-to-face communication. A third of teens (34%) agree either strongly or somewhat that using social media takes away from time they could be spending with people face-to-face, and 44% agree at least "somewhat" that using social media often distracts them from the people they're with when they do get together in person.

Social media use does affect how some teens interact with one another. Nearly a third (31%) of social media users say they've flirted with someone online that they wouldn't have flirted with in person, and 25% say they've said something bad about someone online that they wouldn't have said in person.

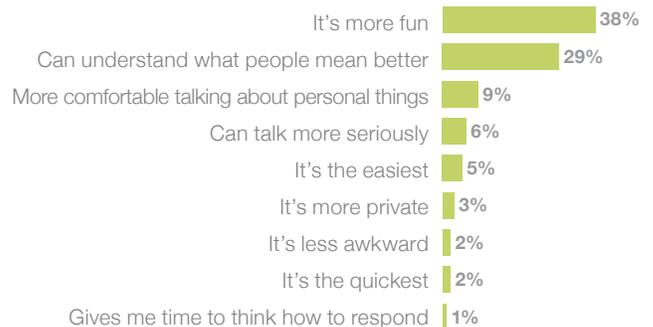
### Favorite Way to Communicate with Friends

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say their favorite way to communicate with friends is:



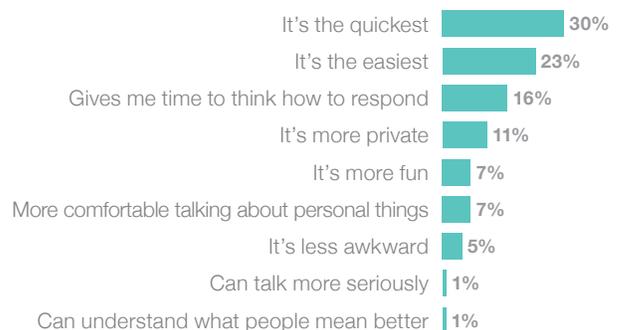
### Why Face-to-Face Communication Is Preferred

Among 13- to 17-year-olds who prefer talking to friends in person, percent who say the main reason they prefer it is:



### Why Texting Is Some Teens' Favorite Way to Communicate with Friends

Among 13- to 17-year-olds whose favorite way to communicate with friends is texting, percent who say the main reason they prefer texting is:



# 4.

## Some teens wish they could disconnect more often – and that the people around them would, too.

Many teens recognize that they and their friends and family are increasingly tethered to their electronic gadgets, and a substantial number express a desire to disconnect sometimes. Among teens who own cell phones, 41% answered “yes” when asked whether they would describe themselves as “addicted” to their phones (no definition of addiction was offered, and this certainly doesn’t imply a clinical condition). Forty-three percent of teens agree strongly or somewhat that they sometimes wish they could “unplug,” and more than a third agree at least “somewhat” that they sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook. As one teen commented, “Sometimes it’s nice to just sit back and relax with no way possible to communicate with anyone.”

The teens who are most interested in “unplugging” or going back to a time before Facebook are the ones who either aren’t using social networking themselves or have had bad experiences online. For example, 25% of teens who aren’t currently using a social networking site strongly agree that they sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook, and a total of 54% agree at least somewhat with that statement. By comparison, among teens who are currently using a social networking site, just 8% strongly agree, and a total of 31% agree at least somewhat. In addition, a third of teens who most want to unplug or go back to a time when there was no Facebook say they “often” encounter racist (32%), sexist (32%), or homophobic (31%) content in social media (compared to 8-13% among other social media users). These negative experiences may be fueling the desire to unplug.

Some teens get frustrated by how attached their friends and parents are to their own devices. For example, 28% of those whose parents have a mobile device say they consider their parents “addicted” to their gadgets, and 21% of all teens say they wish their parents spent less time with their cell phones and other devices. Nearly half (45%) of teens say they sometimes get frustrated with their friends for texting, surfing the Internet, or checking their social networking sites while they’re hanging out together.

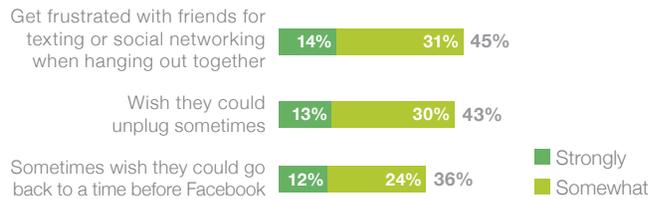
### Going Back to a Time Before Facebook

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook:



### The Desire to Unplug

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who agree that they:



# Methodology

**This report is based on a survey of 1,030 13- to 17-year-olds, conducted online by Knowledge Networks: A Gfk Company from February 22 through March 11, 2012.**

## **Sample methodology**

Unlike other online surveys that use “convenience” samples of respondents, Knowledge Networks’ panel members are randomly recruited through probability-based sampling, and households are provided with access to the Internet and computers if needed. The Knowledge Networks (KN) panel was selected by using address-based sampling and random-digit dialing (RDD). By contrast, Internet convenience panels — also known as opt-in panels — include only individuals with Internet access who volunteer themselves for research. The Knowledge Networks recruitment process uses dual sampling frames that include both listed and unlisted telephone numbers, telephone and non-telephone households, and cellphone-only households, as well as households with and without Internet access. Only persons sampled through these probability-based techniques are eligible to participate on the Knowledge Networks panel, known as the KnowledgePanel. Once households are recruited for the panel, they are contacted by email for survey taking, or panelists visit their online member page for survey taking. Parental or legal guardian consent is collected for the purpose of conducting surveys with teenage panel members, age 13 to 17.

For this study, two sampling approaches were used to achieve a sample of 1,000 teens: going directly to teen panel members and recruiting teens through parents who were Knowledge Panel members. Among teens who were invited directly, 37% responded to the survey. Among parents, 35% responded to the survey, and 49% of those resulted in a completed teen interview. After a data quality process removed extreme outliers, 1,030 cases were included in the final study dataset. These 1,030 cases were then weighted based on the Census Department’s December 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS). The benchmark distributions for Internet access are obtained from the most recent CPS supplemental survey measuring Internet access (October 2009). The estimated Design Effect for the survey is 1.7246. The margin of error for the full sample is +/-4.0 percentage points. Results that differ with statistical significance at the level of  $p < .05$  are noted in all tables.

## **Measures of social and emotional well-being**

The survey included a series of questions to measure teens’ social and emotional well-being — for example, how depressed or happy they are, whether they feel normal compared to others their age, whether they feel lonely or have a lot of friends, and other related measures. The survey items were developed combining several new measures created for this survey with those drawn from other standard scales.

The social-emotional well-being scale is based on responses to Question 18, items A–J and item M (see the *Toplines* for a copy of the complete questionnaire). Items B, D, F, and J were reverse-coded. The items were summed and a total score was created for each respondent. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .80, meaning it was highly internally consistent. Based on naturally occurring breaks in the data, 19% of respondents were designated as “high” on the well-being scale, 16% as “low” on the scale, and 62% as “medium.”

## **Definitions of media included in the study**

The primary focus of this survey was teenagers’ use of social media. “Social media” are those used to communicate with more than one person at a time. Social media include social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, micro-blogging sites like Twitter and Tumblr, blogs, text or voice chat during multiplayer online games, and communication within virtual worlds. In addition to social media, the survey also explored teens’ communications preferences more broadly, including texting and face-to-face communication.

Some findings in this report concern teens’ attitudes and experiences regarding social networking sites specifically; others concern use of social media more broadly, as defined above; and still other findings include text messaging along with social media. The media or communications tools being discussed are always identified in the text and tables in the report.

## **Limitations**

This is a cross-sectional survey occurring at a single point in time, based on self-reports. As such, it is useful for providing descriptive statistics and exploring associations between variables, but it cannot demonstrate causality between any of those variables.



## Face-to-Face Communication

**Despite their love of new technology and their seemingly constant text messaging, teens' favorite way to communicate with their friends is still to talk with them face to face.**

As one teen girl noted, "It's the only REAL way to be with each other. 'Moments' only happen in person." About half (49%) of all 13- to 17-year-olds say they prefer to communicate with their friends in person, and half choose some other method. Texting is next highest, with a third of youth preferring that method (33%). Only 7% say their favorite way to communicate with friends is through a social networking site, and just 1% say Twitter. Only 4% of teens prefer talking on the phone as their favored way to communicate with friends.

Many teens who prefer face-to-face communication say the main reason they prefer it is simply because it's more fun (38%), but others emphasize the personal nature of their dialogue, saying the main reason they prefer it is because they can understand what people really mean better in person (29%), feel more comfortable talking about personal things face to face (9%), or can talk more seriously in person (6%). Several teens mentioned the pleasures of laughing together in person; one said he preferred face-to-face communication because it's "easier to share a laugh," and another commented, "I enjoy seeing [my friends] laugh at my jokes."

**Table 1: Favorite Way to Communicate with Friends**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say their favorite way to communicate with friends is:

In person	49%
Through texting	33%
Through a social networking site	7%
On the phone	4%
In an online game	3%
Through video chat	2%
IM'ing	1%
Email	1%
Twitter	1%

**Table 2: Why Face-to-Face Communication Is Preferred**

Among the 49% of 13- to 17-year-olds who prefer talking to their friends in person, percent who say the main reason they prefer it is:

It's more fun	38%
I can understand what people really mean better this way	29%
I feel more comfortable talking about personal things this way	9%
We can talk more seriously this way	6%
It's the easiest	5%
It's more private	3%
It's less awkward	2%
It's the quickest	2%
It gives me time to think about how to respond	1%

## Social and Digital Communication

Nine out of 10 13- to 17-year-olds in this country have used social media, ranging from 27% who have ever used Twitter to 83% who have ever visited a social networking site (87% have texted, but that’s not considered a “social” medium).

**Many teens are daily users of social media,** ranging from 6% who blog or comment on blogs every day to 11% who send or receive tweets daily and 51% who check their social networking site at least once a day or more. All together, 23% of teens are “heavy” social media users (meaning they use at least two different types of social media each and every day), 24% are “light” social media users (meaning they have either never used any social media or they don’t use any type of social media more than once a week), and the rest fall in between. Besides age, there are no significant demographic differentiators between the groups.

**Table 3: Use of Social and Digital Communications**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who have ever:

Texted	87%
Visited a social networking site	83%
Used email	77%
IM'ed	63%
Used a video chat	59%
Text chatted in an online game	45%
Visited a virtual world	35%
Headset chatted in an online game	29%
Written/commented on a blog	28%
Used Twitter	27%

**Table 4: Daily Use of Social and Digital Communications Media**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who engage in each activity at least once a day:

Text	68%
Visit a social networking site	51%
Use email	30%
IM	19%
Text chat in an online game	12%
Headset chat in an online game	11%
Use Twitter	11%
Video chat	8%
Write/comment on a blog	6%
Visit a virtual world	5%

## Text Messaging

### Among all the forms of digital communication, texting is the most ubiquitous among teenagers:

It is the type of electronic communication that the largest number of teenagers have ever used (87%), it is the most frequently used (68% text daily), and, outside of visiting face-to-face, it is by far the most popular way to communicate with friends (33% of teens choose texting as their favorite way to communicate with friends, compared to 7% who like to communicate through their social networking site, 4% who like to talk on the phone, and 1% each who prefer using instant messaging or Twitter).

More than eight in 10 teenagers have ever texted, similar to the proportion who have ever visited a social networking site (83%), higher than the percent who have ever used email (77%) or instant messaging (63%), and substantially higher — at this point at least — than the percent who have ever used Twitter (27%).

Daily texting is especially prevalent among girls (77%, compared to 60% of all boys). Girls are also more likely than boys to choose texting as their favorite form of communication (39% vs. 28%).

Convenience is the main reason that many teens prefer texting, with 30% saying they prefer it because it's the quickest and 23% because it's the easiest way to get in touch with one another. As one teen noted, texting "allows you to do more than one thing at a time." But some teens value other properties of texting, including the fact that it gives them time to think about what they want to say before responding to someone (16%) and that it's more private than other modes of communication (11%).

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**Table 5: Why Texting is Some Teens' Favorite Way to Communicate With Friends**

Among the 33% of 13- to 17-year-olds whose favorite way to communicate with friends is texting, percent who say the main reason they prefer texting is:

It's the quickest	30%
It's the easiest	23%
It gives me time to think about how to respond	16%
It's more private	11%
It's more fun	7%
I feel more comfortable talking about personal things this way	7%
It's less awkward	5%
We can talk more seriously this way	1%
I can understand what people really mean better this way	1%

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## Social Networking

Social networking has clearly become an integral part of teenage life. More than eight in 10 teens (83%) have ever visited a social networking site; 75% currently have a profile on a site, half (51%) of all teens check their social networking sites daily, and one in three (34%) visit their site more than twice a day. Three-quarters (75%) of those with a social networking site say they think they understand their site's privacy policies "very" or "somewhat" well.

**Social networking starts young**, with three-quarters (76%) of 13- to 14-year-olds having visited such sites (87% of 15- to 17-year-olds). There are no differences in the percent who have ever visited a social networking site based on race, parent education, or income.

Three out of four (75%) teens currently have a profile on a social networking site. Facebook is far and away the most popular site. Among all teens, two-thirds (68%) say their "main" social networking site is Facebook, compared to just 6% who say the same about Twitter and only 1% each who name MySpace, GooglePlus, or any other social networking platform as their main site. The remaining teens don't have profiles on social networking sites.

African-American youth are more likely to say they mainly use sites other than Facebook; half (49%) of all black teens are on Facebook, compared to 70% of all white youth (a similar percent have no site, 26% of blacks and 24% of whites). Twitter has a surprisingly high share of black users (19% say it is their main site, compared to 5% of whites).

**Table 6: Main Social Networking Sites**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent whose main social networking site is:

	All	White	Black	Hispanic
Facebook	68%	70% <sup>a</sup>	49% <sup>b</sup>	72% <sup>a</sup>
Twitter	6%	5% <sup>a</sup>	19% <sup>b</sup>	5% <sup>a</sup>
MySpace	1%	1% <sup>a</sup>	5% <sup>b</sup>	*
GooglePlus	1%	1%	1%	*
Other	1%	*	1%	1%

Note: An asterisk (\*) indicates a value of less than one-half of one percent. Items with different superscripts differ significantly at the level of  $p < .05$ .

**Table 7: Frequency of Social Network Use**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who visit a social networking site:

At least once a day	51%
Once a day	17%
Two or more times a day	34%
Several times a week	14%
Once a week or less	17%
Never	16%

**Table 8: Teens' Understanding of Privacy Policies**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds who have a profile on a social networking site, percent who say they understand their site's privacy policy:

Very well	27%
Somewhat well	49%
Not too well	19%
Not well at all	5%

## Twitter

More than one in four teens (27%) have now used the increasingly popular “microblogging” service Twitter; 22% currently have an account on Twitter; 11% say they use it at least once a day; and 6% consider Twitter their main social networking site (compared to 68% who say the same about Facebook).

Girls are more likely than boys to have ever used Twitter (33% versus 22%), but **the biggest demographic differences in regard to Twitter are ethnic.**

African-American youth are much more likely to use Twitter than white or Hispanic youth: 49% of black teens have ever used Twitter, compared to 20% of whites and 27% of Hispanics. blacks are more likely to be daily users of Twitter (25%) than white (8%) or Hispanic (13%) teens. Blacks are also much more likely to name Twitter their main social networking site (19%, compared to 5% of whites and 7% of Hispanics).

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**Table 9: Frequency of Twitter Use**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who use Twitter:

At least once a day	11%
Once a day	2%
2–10 times a day	4%
11–30 times a day	4%
More than 30 times a day	1%
Several times a week	5%
Once a week or less	11%
Never	72%

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**Table 10: Number of People Followed on Twitter**

Among the 22% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a Twitter account, percent who follow:

25 or fewer people	39%
26–100 people	38%
More than 100 people	24%

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**Table 11: Twitter Use by Race and Gender**

Percent of 13- to 17-year-olds who have ever used Twitter:

Girls	33% <sup>a</sup>
Boys	22% <sup>b</sup>
Whites	20% <sup>a</sup>
Blacks	49% <sup>b</sup>
Hispanics	27% <sup>a</sup>

Percent of 13- to 17-year-olds who are daily users of Twitter:

Girls	13%
Boys	9%
Whites	8% <sup>a</sup>
Blacks	25% <sup>b</sup>
Hispanics	13% <sup>a</sup>

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

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## Mobile Communication

**Two out of three (67%) teens have their own mobile device capable of connecting to the Internet**, such as a smartphone, iPod Touch, iPad, or similar device. More than one in 10 (12%) teens has “checked in” with their location from a mobile device, meaning that advertisers and others on their network will know where they are. Among those teens who have a social networking site, half (52%) have checked their sites from a mobile device, and 43% do their social networking from a mobile device most or half the time.

The vast majority of teenagers have their own cell phone (82%) including 41% who say they have a “smart” phone, meaning they can use it to “check email, download apps, or go online.” A significant number (43%) report having an iPod Touch or similar device. And one in seven (14%) say they have their own iPad or similar tablet-style device.

Cell phone ownership varies by age (74% of 13- to 14-year-olds, compared to 87% of 15- to 17-year-olds), and by income (74% of lower-income youth, compared to 84% and 86% of middle- and upper-income youth). There are no significant differences in cell phone ownership by race or by parent education. Surprisingly, there were no demographic differences of any kind in ownership of an iPad or similar device.

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**Table 12: Mobile Device Ownership**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who have their own:

Cell phone	82%
Smartphone	41%
iPod Touch or similar device	43%
iPad or similar device	14%

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**Table 13: Mobile Social Networking**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking profile, percent who:

Have ever checked their site from a mobile device	52%
Mainly check their site from:	
A mobile device	27%
A laptop or desktop computer	57%
Both equally	16%

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Note: Mobile devices include smartphones, iPod Touches, iPads, and similar handheld mobile devices.

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## Social Networking and Social-Emotional Well-Being

Most teens don't believe that their use of social networking sites has much of an impact one way or another on their social or emotional well-being. For example, eight in 10 say using their social networking site doesn't make much difference to whether or not they feel depressed (83%) or better or worse about themselves (81%), and large majorities say it makes no difference in their level of self-confidence (76%), how popular they feel (76%), or how much empathy they have for others (74%).

Some teens do see an effect of social networking on their social and emotional lives, and for them it is largely a positive one. For example, some teens say that using their main social networking site makes them feel less shy (29%) and more outgoing (28%), or helps them feel more confident (20%), more popular (19%), more sympathetic to others (19%), and better about themselves (15%).

When it comes to depression and social isolation, **only 5% of social network users say that social networking makes them feel more depressed** (compared to 10% who say it makes them feel less depressed), and only 4% say it makes them feel less popular, less confident, or worse about themselves.

In addition to asking teens about how they think using a social network site does or doesn't affect their social and emotional lives, the survey also included a scale measuring respondents' overall social and emotional well-being. Analyses were conducted to explore whether those who are heavy social networkers differ from other young people in their degree of social-emotional well-being. Overall, teens report a high degree of well-being, and there was no difference found between those who are heavy users of social networking sites and others.

Nearly nine out of 10 teens say it is "a lot" or "somewhat" like them that they are happy with their lives (87%), get along well with their parents (88%), do lots of things well (86%), and like themselves (86%). More than seven in 10 say they have lots of friends (76%), feel normal compared to other kids (73%), and find it easy to make new friends (72%). On the other hand, about one in four kids say it is "a lot" or "somewhat" like them that they often feel rejected by kids their age (28%), often feel sad or depressed (26%), or are lonely (26%).

**Table 14: Perceived Effect of Social Networking on Social and Emotional Well-Being**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking profile, percent who say social networking makes them feel:

	More	Less	No difference
Outgoing	28% <sup>a</sup>	5% <sup>b</sup>	67% <sup>c</sup>
Confident	20% <sup>a</sup>	4% <sup>b</sup>	76% <sup>c</sup>
Popular	19% <sup>a</sup>	4% <sup>b</sup>	76% <sup>c</sup>
Sympathetic to others	19% <sup>a</sup>	7% <sup>b</sup>	74% <sup>c</sup>
Depressed	5% <sup>a</sup>	10% <sup>b</sup>	83% <sup>c</sup>
Shy	3% <sup>a</sup>	29% <sup>b</sup>	69% <sup>c</sup>
Better about themselves	15% <sup>a</sup>	4% <sup>b</sup>	81% <sup>c</sup>

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

**Table 15: Social and Emotional Well-Being**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, percent who say each statement is "a lot" or "somewhat" like them:

I get along well with my parents	88%
I am happy with my life	87%
I do lots of things well	86%
I like myself	86%
I have lots of friends	76%
Compared to other kids, I feel normal	73%
I find it easy to make new friends	72%
I often feel rejected by kids my age	28%
I often feel sad or depressed	26%
I am lonely	26%
I get into trouble a lot	18%

**Table 16: Relationship of Social Networking to Social and Emotional Well-Being Scale**

Among 13- to 17-year-olds, percent of social network users who score at the high, middle, and low end of the social and emotional well-being scale:

Level of Social-Emotional Well-Being	Heavy Social Networkers	Light Social Networkers
High	23%	20%
Medium	60%	59%
Lower	16%	20%

Note: Seventeen percent of teens are classified as "heavy" social networkers, meaning they check their social network site at least six times a day, and 26% are considered "light" social networkers, meaning they have either never used a social networking site or only do so less than once a week. For a description of the social-emotional well-being scale, please see the Methodology section of this report. There are no statistically significant differences in this table.

## Social Media and Relationships

Most teens feel that, on balance, using social media has helped rather than hurt their relationships. About half of all teens (54%) say social networking has helped them feel more connected with family and friends (2% say it's made them feel less connected, and the rest say it hasn't made much difference one way or the other). A similar proportion say social networking has mainly helped their relationships with their friends (52%), while just 4% say it has mainly hurt those relationships. Nearly nine out of 10 teens (88%) say social networking has helped them keep in touch with friends they can't see regularly, 69% say it has helped them get to know other students at their school better, and 57% say it has connected them with new people with whom they share a common interest or hobby.

In other words, while the reports of tensions and worse caused by social media are no doubt very real, they are much more the exception than the rule, and **for the vast majority of teens, the overall impact of social networking has been positive.**

At the same time, many teens do perceive an impact of social networking on the time they are able to spend with friends in person. About a third of social network users (34%) either strongly or somewhat agree that using their social network site takes away from the time they have for socializing in person, and even more (44%) say social networking often distracts them from the people they're with when they're together. As one 13-year-old boy put it, "It's boring to talk to someone that has to check Facebook every 5 minutes."

**Table 17: Impact of Social Networking on Relationships**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking site, percent who say social networking has mainly helped or mainly hurt their relationships with their:

	Mainly helped	Mainly hurt
Friends	52% <sup>a</sup>	4% <sup>b</sup>
Family members (other than parents)	37% <sup>a</sup>	2% <sup>b</sup>
Parents	8%	7%
Teachers	6%	2%

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

**Table 18: Social Networking and Friendships**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking site, percent who strongly or somewhat agree that social networking has helped them:

Keep in touch with friends they can't see regularly	88%
Get to know other students at their school better	69%
Connect with people who share a common interest	57%

**Table 19: Social Networking and Face-to-Face Time**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds with a social networking site, percent who strongly or somewhat agree that social networking:

Often distracts them from people they're with	44%
Takes away from time for in-person socializing	34%

## Online Photos

One aspect of online life that can be particularly fun and particularly nerve-wracking for teens is the constant posting of photos. Am I attractive enough? Am I with the right people? Do I seem popular? Is somebody else going to post an awful photo of me?

Most (59%) teen social media users either strongly or somewhat agree that they “love” posting photos of themselves online — with girls a lot more likely than boys to feel that way (75% of girls, compared to 42% of boys).

At the same time, however, **although a majority of teens “love” posting photos, putting pictures of themselves online does take an emotional toll on some teens.** Forty-three percent of social media users strongly or somewhat agree that they sometimes feel left out or excluded after seeing pictures of other people together online; 35% say they worry about people tagging them in unattractive photos; 27% say they get stressed out about how they look when they post pictures; and 22% say they feel bad about themselves if nobody comments on or “likes” the photos they post.

Among social network users, 17% have edited photos to make themselves look better before posting them online. And while girls are more likely than boys to love posting photos, they are also more likely to stress about it as well.

**Table 20: Posting Photos Online**

Among the 75% of 13- to 17-year-olds who currently have a profile on a social networking site, percent who agree strongly or somewhat that they:

	All	Girls	Boys
Love posting photos of themselves online	59%	75% <sup>a</sup>	42% <sup>b</sup>
Sometimes feel left out after seeing photos of others	43%	57% <sup>a</sup>	28% <sup>b</sup>
Worry about people posting ugly photos of them	35%	45% <sup>a</sup>	24% <sup>b</sup>
Get stressed about how they look when posting photos	27%	35% <sup>a</sup>	19% <sup>b</sup>
Feel bad if they don't get a lot of “likes” for photos	22%	29% <sup>a</sup>	15% <sup>b</sup>
Have edited photos of themselves before posting <sup>+</sup>	17%	28% <sup>a</sup>	9% <sup>b</sup>
Feel pressured to post photos of themselves online	12%	10%	14%

<sup>+</sup> Among social network users, percent saying “yes.”

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

## Hate Speech Online

One aspect of teens’ online life that has been relatively unexplored is the frequency with which young people come across hateful or discriminatory content — sexist, homophobic, or racist remarks, or comments criticizing someone for their religion or for not being religious enough. This survey explored teens’ exposure to hate speech in social media — in blog posts, Facebook pages, tweets, comments on photos, or in online chat in virtual worlds or multiplayer computer or video games.

About four in 10 social media users say they often or sometimes encounter sexist (44%), homophobic (43%), or racist (43%) comments, and a third (34%) say the same about negative remarks about others’ religious beliefs. **These are not rare events: One in four (24%) social media users say they “often” encounter one or more of these types of derogatory speech.**

Interestingly, there were no differences between boys and girls or white, black, and Hispanic youth in terms of the frequency with which they encountered racist, sexist, or homophobic content in social media.

**Table 21: Hate Speech in Social Media**

Among the 90% of 13- to 17-year-olds who have used social media, percent who “often” or “sometimes” encounter each type of content in social media:

Sexist	44%
Homophobic	43%
Racist	43%
Anti-religious	34%

**Table 22: Race, Gender, and Hate Speech in Social Media**

Among the 90% of 13- to 17-year-olds who have used social media, percent who “often” or “sometimes” encounter each type of content in social media:

	Boys	Girls	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Sexist	41%	46%	43%	36%	46%
Homophobic	45%	41%	43%	41%	50%
Racist	44%	42%	42%	43%	49%
Anti-religious	36%	31%	35% <sup>a</sup>	21% <sup>b</sup>	40% <sup>a</sup>

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

## “Addiction” and the Desire to Unplug

For all their love of new media, a substantial number of teens express at least an occasional desire to “unplug” or go back to a day when there was no Facebook. Some teens describe themselves as “addicted” to their cell phones and get frustrated with their friends — and their parents — for spending so much time with their phones and other gadgets instead of focusing on the people they’re with.

Teens are much more likely to say they are attached to their devices than to their social networking sites: 41% of cell phone owners say they would describe themselves as “addicted” to their phones, and 32% of iPad owners say the same. Twenty percent of social networkers say they are “addicted” to their sites.

**Many teens express an almost adult-like weariness with the pressures of the constant texting and posting involved in their modern lives.** For example, 45% either strongly or somewhat agree that they get frustrated with their friends for texting or checking their social networking sites instead of paying attention to them when they’re hanging out together, and 21% wish their parents would spend less time using their cell phones and other devices.

Forty-three percent of teens agree at least “somewhat” with the statement “sometimes I wish I could just ‘unplug’ for a while,” and 36% say they strongly or somewhat agree that they sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook. For example, one 16-year-old girl commented that “Technology and social networking has absorbed some of my close friendships, and they’ve dwindled. I miss the times where we could just go hang out and laugh.” Another 16-year-old, this one male, wrote “As a teen, life can be hell. Sometimes it’s nice to just sit back and relax with no way possible to communicate with anyone in any way. That’s why I occasionally ‘lose’ my cellphone.”

For most of the teens who agree with these statements, the desire to unplug or go back to a time when there was no Facebook doesn’t seem to be strongly held — they “somewhat” agree that they “sometimes” feel this way. But there is a small percent of teens—about one in 10 (11%)—who strongly agree with one or the other statement. On the other side of the equation is an even larger group — 27% — who strongly disagree with at least one of these statements. (Most teens — 57% — have mixed feelings.) Comparing the two groups with the most strongly held views yields some interesting insights.

Those teenagers who express the strongest desire to unplug or go back to a time when there was no Facebook are more likely than other teens to have come across racist, sexist, homophobic, or anti-religious content. They are also more likely to have had some type of negative reaction to social networking, such as feeling less confident or worse about themselves after using their social networking site. It’s possible that these experiences influenced their desire to unplug.

Overall, teens who don’t currently have a social networking profile are more likely to say they wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook: 25% agree strongly with that statement, compared to 8% among those who do have a current profile.

**Table 23: Cell Phone and Social Networking “Addiction”**

Among 13- to 17-year-olds with each item, percent who say they would describe themselves as “addicted” to their:

Cell phone	41%
iPad	32%
Social networking site	20%

**Table 24: Frustration with Gadgets and the Desire to Unplug**

Among all 13- to 17-year-olds, the percent who say they strongly or somewhat agree that they:

Get frustrated with friends for texting or social networking when hanging out together	45%
Wish they could unplug for a while sometimes	43%
Sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook	36%
Wish their parents spent less time with cell phones and other devices	21%

**Table 25: Hate Speech and the Desire to Unplug**

Among the 90% of 13- to 17-year-olds who use social media, percent who “often” encounter each type of content:

	Among those who want to unplug or go back to a time before Facebook	Among those who don’t want to unplug or go back to a time before Facebook
Racist	32% <sup>a</sup>	8% <sup>b</sup>
Homophobic	31% <sup>a</sup>	13% <sup>b</sup>
Sexist	32% <sup>a</sup>	10% <sup>b</sup>
Anti-religious	26% <sup>a</sup>	6% <sup>b</sup>

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

## Social Networking and Depression

According to the self-reports provided in this survey, most teens today are in good emotional shape: Nearly nine in 10 say it is a lot or somewhat like them that they get along well with their parents (88%), are happy with their life (87%), do lots of things well (86%), and like themselves (86%). About three-quarters say they have lots of friends (76%) and feel pretty normal compared to other kids their age (73%).

On the negative side of the ledger, about one in four teens say it's a lot or somewhat like them that they often feel rejected by kids their age (28%), are lonely (26%), or often feel sad or depressed (26%).

For many adolescents — and for many adults — occasional sadness and depression can be a normal and transitory part of life. Saying it is “somewhat” like you to “often” feel sad or depressed may not indicate an overall depressed or sad condition. For purposes of analyzing the relationship between social networking and sad or depressed youth, we started with the 26% who said that often feeling sad or depressed was a lot or somewhat like them. We then removed youth who indicated that being happy with life was *also* like them, honing in on those teens who were, at least at the time of the survey, feeling more consistently unhappy. We analyzed how these less happy young people feel about social networking and compared them to the happiest group of young people in the survey (those who said being happy with life was a lot like them and being sad or depressed was not like them).

In the end, about 10% of respondents fell into the category of “less happy” teens. The proportion of “less happy” teens tracks closely with national statistics about the incidence of depression among adolescents (for example, the National Institute of Mental Health’s Fact Sheet on Depression in Children and Adolescents states that 11% of adolescents have a depressive disorder by age 18).

These “less happy” teenagers have mixed feelings about social networking’s impact on their social and emotional well-being. They are more likely than the happiest respondents to say that using their social networking site makes them feel outgoing (50%) and popular (34%) but are also more likely to say it makes them feel more depressed (18%, compared to less than one-half of one percent of the happiest teens). At the

same time, 13% of the least-happy teens say that using their social networking site makes them feel *less* depressed and 69% say it doesn’t make much difference one way or the other.

These less happy teenagers — who are also older and more likely to be female — enjoy posting photos of themselves and their friends online (73% strongly or somewhat agree that they “love” posting photos). However, they are also more likely to feel the stresses associated with online photos: They are much more likely than the happiest respondents to agree that they feel stressed about how they look when they post photos online (54% vs. 12%), to worry they will be tagged in ugly photos (64% vs. 20%), to feel bad if no one “likes” their photos online (46% vs. 11%), and, most significantly, to feel excluded when they see photos of others online (80% vs. 22%).

In addition, these less happy teenagers are more likely to say that they sometimes wish they could just “unplug,” with 53% agreeing with that statement strongly or somewhat, compared to 34% of the happiest respondents. Similarly, 52% of less happy teens say they sometimes wish they could go back to a time when there was no Facebook (compared to 28% of happier teens).

Interestingly, **a large number of the less happy teens wish that their parents would spend less time on their phones and other devices** (42% strongly or somewhat agree with that statement, compared to 17% of the happier respondents).

**Table 26: Happy vs. Less Happy Teens and Social Networking**

Among 13- to 17-year-old social network users, percent of less happy versus other youth who say using their social networking site makes them feel:

	Least happy teens	Happiest teens
More outgoing	50% <sup>a</sup>	17% <sup>b</sup>
More popular	34% <sup>a</sup>	15% <sup>b</sup>
Less shy	49% <sup>a</sup>	21% <sup>b</sup>
Less confident	17% <sup>a</sup>	3% <sup>b</sup>
Worse about myself	15% <sup>a</sup>	1% <sup>b</sup>
Less sympathetic to others	19% <sup>a</sup>	5% <sup>b</sup>
More depressed	18% <sup>a</sup>	* <sup>b</sup>
Less popular	14% <sup>a</sup>	1% <sup>b</sup>

Note: An asterisk (\*) indicates a value of less than one-half of one percent. Items with different superscripts differ significantly at the level of  $p < .05$ .

# Conclusion

**For the generation of youth in their teens today, social media are so intricately woven into the fabric of their lives that they don't really know what life would be like without them.**

Three out of four teens have social networking sites, and half of all teens are on their sites on a daily basis.

But despite our concerns about social media, in the vast majority of cases, these media do not appear to be causing great tumult in teenagers' lives. It is a relief to learn that more than eight out of 10 teens express an overall sense of happiness with their lives, feel self-confident, and get along well with their parents. And there is a steadiness in their belief that what happens on their social networking site makes no difference in terms of how they feel about themselves.

It is especially reassuring to see that teens are so much more likely to get a positive boost from using their social networking site than it is for it to make them feel low. We know from news reports and other research that, for some young people, social networking can contribute to feelings of depression or social isolation; so it is with some relief that we find that only 5% of teens say social networking makes them feel more depressed, compared to 10% who say it makes them feel less depressed and 83% who say it doesn't make much difference one way or the other. This fact doesn't make the negative interactions that some teens experience any less significant, but it is an important lens through which to view the issue at a societal level.

And for all the difficult stories we've heard about teens whose social lives have been turned upside down by something negative that happened online, it is good to know that only 4% of teens say that, on balance, social media has had a negative effect on their relationships with their friends, while 52% say it has mainly helped those relationships.

Some observers may be surprised to learn that even these "digital natives" who have grown up with social media as a

part of their lives still prefer hanging out with each other in person. Being together in person may also involve texting and checking your Facebook site — and sometimes annoying your friends by doing so — but it is interesting that even today's teens see the value in being able to look a friend in the eye and make her laugh. Yes, texting is fast and easy, and they use it a lot, but, as one teen wrote, "'moments' only happen in person."

It is also interesting to see hints of "Facebook fatigue" among this age group. It appears that the time-consuming pressures of social media are beginning to take a bit of a toll, even among young people. Indeed, there are already sizable numbers who sometimes wish they could "unplug" or even go back to a time when there was no Facebook. Always being "on" can be tiring, and it seems that even some teens are beginning to look for relief — even if they have to pretend to "lose" their cell phones to get it.

Of course, those who are immersed in social media may not be best positioned to assess whether it is having an impact on them or not. Parents, educators, and child development experts all need to keep a careful eye on the role of social media in teenagers' lives, and these adults may offer critical insights and cautions. After all, none of us can accurately assess the impact that relentless advertising may have on our desires or behaviors or fully understand how our horizons may be limited or expanded by ubiquitous cultural messages. But hearing from teens firsthand about how they assess the impact of social media on their own social and emotional well-being is important; their perspective, while not the only one, is critical.

None of this means that there's nothing to worry about when it comes to teens and social media. The concerns are real: about privacy, bullying, hate speech, body image, and oversharing, to name a few. And we won't know for a long time how the immediacy of digital communication may be shaping interpersonal relationships and social skills. But the results of this survey do help put the challenges and pitfalls of social media into a broader perspective and offer reassurance that, for the most part, the kids are all right.



## Social Media, Social Life: How Teens View Their Digital Lives

Conducted online by Knowledge Networks: A Gfk Company, February 22–March 11, 2012

N = 1,030

*Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding, refused/don't know responses, or because multiple responses were allowed. An asterisk (\*) indicates a value of less than 0.5%.*

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### 1. Do you have any of the following items in your home?

a. A video game player such as a Wii, PlayStation, or Xbox	86%
b. A handheld game player such as a Gameboy, PSP, or DS	68%
c. A laptop or desktop computer, other than the one that was provided for your family to complete these surveys	96%

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

a. Dial up	4%
b. High-speed, such as cable, DSL, or wireless	83%
c. I'm not sure	12%

### 3. Do you personally have your own:

a. Cell phone	82%
b. iPod or other MP3 player	67%
c. iPod Touch or similar device	43%
d. iPad or similar tablet-type device	14%

### 3a. Does anyone else who lives in your home have:

a. A cell phone	98%
b. An iPod or other MP3 player	70%
c. An iPod Touch or similar device	43%
d. An iPad or similar tablet-type device	27%

**4. Is your cell phone a smartphone? In other words, can you use it to check email, download apps, or go online?**

	<b>Among those with a cell phone (n=487)</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. Yes	50%	41%
b. No	47%	39%
c. Not Sure	3%	2%
d. Don't have cell phone	N/A	18%

**5. Have you ever:**

	<b>Yes</b>
a. Sent or received email, other than emails regarding these surveys	77%
b. Sent or received text messages on a cell phone	87%
c. Visited a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace	83%
d. Chatted online through instant messaging or a similar program	63%
e. Used video chat, such as Skype, Facetime, Google Chat, or iChat with video	59%
f. Sent or received a Twitter message (or tweet)	27%
g. Used Tumblr	15%
h. "Checked in" with a location service on your cell phone, like FourSquare or Loopt	12%
i. Written a blog or commented on someone else's blog	28%
j. Played a video or computer game against other players online	66%
k. Used Formspring	8%
l. Visited virtual worlds such as Second Life, World of Warcraft, or The Sims	35%

**5a. Have you ever:**

	<b>Among those who...</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. Created a profile for yourself on a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace	have ever visited a social networking site (n=881): 94%	75%
b. Chatted through text online with other players while playing a video or computer game	have played online games (n=663): 69%	45%
c. Talked through headsets to other online players while playing a computer or video game	have played online games (n=663): 44%	29%

## 6. How often do you do each of the following activities?

*Among those who have done each activity*

	Several times a day	Once a day	Several times a week	Once a week	Less than once a week
a. Send or receive email (n=821)	26%	13%	24%	13%	23%
b. Send or receive text messages on a cell phone (n=912)	72%	6%	9%	2%	10%
c. Go to a social networking site like Facebook or MySpace (n=881)	41%	21%	17%	8%	12%
d. Send or receive instant messages (IMs) or other online chats (n=678)	22%	9%	23%	12%	35%
e. Use video chat such as Skype, Facetime, Google Chat, or iChat (n=618)	9%	5%	20%	13%	53%
f. Send or receive messages on Twitter (n=272)	34%	7%	17%	8%	33%
g. Send or receive Tumblr messages (n=169)	18%	5%	18%	14%	44%
h. Write a blog or comment on someone else's blog (n=295)	11%	11%	19%	12%	46%
i. Chat through text online with other players in a video or computer game (n=449)	19%	8%	21%	9%	43%
j. Talk through headsets to other players online in a video or computer game (n=284)	24%	14%	21%	9%	32%
k. Use Formspring (n=97)	2%	5%	2%	2%	87%
l. Visit virtual worlds such as Second Life, World of Warcraft, or the Sims (n=361)	7%	8%	12%	11%	62%

*Among all*

	Several times a day	Once a day	Several times a week	Once a week	Less than once a week
a. Send or receive email	20%	10%	19%	10%	17%
b. Send or receive text messages on a cell phone	63%	5%	8%	2%	9%
c. Go to a social networking site like Facebook or MySpace	34%	17%	14%	7%	10%
d. Send or receive instant messages (IMs) or other online chats	14%	5%	14%	8%	22%
e. Use video chat such as Skype, Facetime, Google Chat, or iChat	5%	3%	12%	7%	31%
f. Send or receive messages on Twitter	9%	2%	5%	2%	9%
g. Send or receive Tumblr messages	3%	1%	3%	2%	7%
h. Write a blog or comment on someone else's blog	3%	3%	5%	3%	13%
i. Chat through text online with other players in a video or computer game	9%	3%	10%	4%	19%
j. Talk through headsets to other players online in a video or computer game	7%	4%	6%	3%	9%
k. Use Formspring	*	*	*	*	7%
l. Visit virtual worlds such as Second Life, World of Warcraft, or the Sims	2%	3%	4%	4%	21%

**6a. Do you currently have a Twitter account?**

Among those who have ever used Twitter (n=272)	82%
Among all	22%

**6ai. About how many people do you follow on Twitter, if any?**

*Among those with a Twitter account (n=232)*

a. None	0%
b. 1–10	21%
c. 11–25	15%
d. 26–50	18%
e. 51–75	10%
f. 76–100	9%
g. 101–150	8%
h. 151–200	4%
i. More than 200	12%

**6b. About how many times a day do you send or receive Twitter messages?**

	Among those who use Twitter more than once a day (n=83)	Among all
a. 2–5	30%	3%
b. 6–10	16%	1%
c. 11–15	8%	1%
d. 16–20	14%	1%
e. 21–25	4%	*
f. 26–30	13%	1%
g. More than 30 times a day	15%	1%

**7. Do you currently have a profile on a social networking site such as Facebook, MySpace, or some other site?**

Among those who have ever used a social networking site (n=835):	96%
Among all	75%

**8. What is the main reason you no longer have a profile on a social networking site?**

1. My parents made me take it down
2. It took too much time
3. I was worried about my privacy
4. I just didn't like it
5. I got into problems with other people on the site
6. It made me feel bad
7. Other reasons (specify)

*Note: Sample size too small for reliable results (n=30).*

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

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
a. It's kind of a relief not to have to go on my social networking site any more				
b. My social life is suffering because I'm not on my social networking site any more				

*Note: Sample size too small for reliable results (n=30).*

**10. Which social networking site do you mainly use?**

	<b>Among those with a Twitter account or social networking profile (n=818)</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. Facebook	88%	68%
b. MySpace	1%	1%
c. GooglePlus	1%	1%
d. Twitter	8%	6%
e. Other (specify)	1%	1%

**11. About how many times a day do you check your social networking site?**

	<b>Among those who check more than once a day (n=368)</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. 2-5	44%	14%
b. 6-10	23%	7%
c. 11-15	10%	3%
d. 16-20	6%	2%
e. 21-25	2%	1%
f. 26-30	10%	3%
g. More than 30 times a day	4%	1%

**11a. How often do you post things to your own or someone else's social networking site?**

	<b>Among those with a Twitter account or social networking profile (n=818)</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. Several times a day	36%	11%
b. Once a day	13%	4%
c. Several times a week	22%	7%
d. Once a week	10%	3%
e. Less than once a week	19%	6%

**11b. About how many times a day do you post things to your own or someone else’s social networking site?**

	<b>Among those who post more than once a day (n=115)</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. 2–5	44%	5%
b. 6–10	29%	3%
c. 11–15	12%	1%
d. 16–20	3%	*
e. 21–25	*	*
f. 26–30	10%	1%
g. More than 30 times a day	0%	0%

**12. Have you ever checked your social networking site from your cell phone, iPod Touch, iPad, or other mobile device?**

Among those with a social networking profile and mobile device (n=742)	74%
Among all	52%

**13. What is the main way you check your social networking site?**

	<b>Among those who have checked their sites from a mobile device (n=561)</b>	<b>Among all social network users (n=818)</b>
a. From my cell phone or other mobile device	39%	27%
b. From a laptop or desktop computer	37%	57%
c. Both equally	23%	16%

**14. How well do you think you understand your social networking site’s privacy policies?**

*Among those who have a Twitter account or social networking profile (n=818)*

Very well	27%
Somewhat well	49%
Not too well	19%
Not well at all	5%

**14a. Have you ever:**

	<b>Among those who have ever used Formspring (n=115)</b>	<b>Among all</b>
a. Posted something anonymously on Formspring?	60%	5%
b. Had somebody post something anonymously about you on Formspring?	45%	3%

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

a. In person	49%
b. Talking on the phone	4%
c. Texting	33%
d. Through a social networking site	7%
e. Using IM or some other online chat program	1%
f. Using a video program like Skype, iChat, or Facetime	2%
g. Through email	1%
h. By chatting or talking online in a video or computer game	3%
i. Through Twitter	1%

**16. Which of the following, if any, are reasons why [INSERT ITEM FROM Q15] is your favorite way to communicate with your friends?**

a. It's the quickest	43%
b. We can talk more seriously that way	35%
c. It's the easiest	50%
d. It's more private	33%
e. I feel more comfortable talking about personal things that way	41%
f. It's less awkward	26%
g. I can understand what people really mean better this way	40%
h. It gives me time to think about how to respond	30%
i. It's more fun	52%
j. Other (specify)	

**17. Which is the main reason why [INSERT ITEM FROM Q15] is your favorite way to communicate with your friends?**

a. It's the quickest	13%
b. We can talk more seriously that way	4%
c. It's the easiest	11%
d. It's more private	7%
e. I feel more comfortable talking about personal things that way	8%
f. It's less awkward	4%
g. I can understand what people really mean better this way	19%
h. It gives me time to think about how to respond	8%
i. It's more fun	24%
j. Other (specify)	

**17a. Which of the following is your favorite way to communicate with your parents?**

a. In person	87%
b. Talking on the phone	6%
c. Texting	6%
d. Through a social networking site	*
e. Using IM or some other online chat program	*
f. Using a video program like Skype, iChat, or Facetime	*
g. Through email	*
h. By chatting or talking online in a video or computer game	0%
i. Through Twitter	0%

**18. Please choose the answer that best applies to your experience. Using my social networking site makes me feel:**

*Among those who have a Twitter account or social networking profile (n=818)*

a. More confident	20%
Less confident	4%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	76%
b. Better about myself	15%
Worse about myself	4%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	81%
c. More connected with my family and friends	54%
Less connected with my family and friends	2%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	44%
d. More sympathetic to what other people are going through	19%
Less sympathetic to what other people are going through	7%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	74%
e. More outgoing	28%
Less outgoing	5%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	67%
f. More depressed	5%
Less depressed	10%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	83%
g. More popular	19%
Less popular	4%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	76%
h. More shy	3%
Less shy	29%
Doesn't make much difference one way or the other	69%

**19. Some people think using Twitter or social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace helps their relationships with their friends. Other people think using social networking sites and Twitter hurts their relationships with their friends and family. We want to know what your experience has been. Has using your social networking site mainly helped or mainly hurt your relationships with your:**

*Among those who have a Twitter account or social networking profile (n=818)*

	Mainly helped	Mainly hurt	Has not made much difference one way or the other
a. Friends	52%	4%	44%
b. Teachers	6%	2%	92%
b. Parents	8%	7%	84%
d. Other family members like cousins, aunts and uncles, or grandparents	37%	2%	60%

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

*Among those who have a Twitter account or social networking profile (n=818)*

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Using my social networking site has helped me get to know other students at my school better	22%	47%	19%	12%
b. Using my social networking site has helped me stay in touch with friends I can't see on a regular basis	49%	39%	7%	5%
c. Using my social networking site has helped connect me with new people who share a common interest, hobby, or activity of mine	18%	39%	27%	16%
d. Using my social networking site often distracts me when I should be paying attention to the people I'm with	11%	33%	25%	30%
e. Using my social networking site has taken away from time I could be spending with friends in person	9%	25%	31%	34%
f. Using my social networking site has helped me be more aware of current events	26%	49%	17%	8%

**21. This next set of questions is about “social media.” By “social media,” we mean social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace; programs like Twitter or Tumblr; virtual worlds like Second Life; online chatting in video or computer games like World of Warcraft; and things posted on sites like YouTube, Formspring, or other websites. How often, if ever, have you encountered the following types of comments in social media:**

*Among those who have ever used social media (n=942)*

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly ever</b>	<b>Never</b>
a. 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	13%	30%	26%	30%
b. Homophobic comments, that is, someone putting people down for being gay or using insulting words about being gay	16%	28%	24%	32%
c. 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	15%	29%	24%	31%
d. 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	10%	24%	28%	38%

**22. Have you ever:**

*Among those who have ever used social media (n=942)*

	<b>Yes</b>
a. Flirted with someone online or through texting who you wouldn't have flirted with in person	31%
b. Said something bad about someone online or through texting that you wouldn't have said in person	25%
c. Become friends with someone you met through an online game	20%
d. Edited pictures to make yourself look better before you posted them online	17%

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

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
a. I wish my parents would spend less time on their cell phones and other devices	6%	16%	34%	43%
b. Sometimes I wish I could just “unplug” for a while <i>(among social media or cell users, n=1001)</i>	13%	30%	29%	27%
c. I get frustrated with my friends for texting, surfing the Internet, or checking their social networking sites instead of paying attention to me when we’re hanging out together	14%	31%	25%	29%
d. Sometimes I wish I could go back to a time when there was no Facebook	12%	24%	33%	30%
e. I love posting photos of me and my friends online	21%	38%	23%	17%
f. I get stressed out about how I look when I post pictures online	6%	21%	29%	43%
g. I worry about people posting ugly pictures of me and tagging me in them	10%	25%	27%	37%
h. I feel pressured to post photos even when I don’t want to	2%	9%	25%	62%
i. I sometimes feel left out or excluded after seeing photos of my friends together at something I wasn’t invited to	13%	30%	27%	29%
j. I feel bad about myself when nobody comments on or “likes” my photos	6%	16%	31%	46%

**24. Why do you sometimes wish you could “unplug” or/and go back to a time when there was no Facebook?**  
[OPEN END]

**25. Would you describe yourself as “addicted” to:**

*Among those who own/use each item*

	<b>Yes</b>
a. Your cell phone (n=847)	41%
b. Your social networking site (n=818)	20%
c. Your iPad or similar tablet-style device (n=131)	32%

**26. Do you consider either of your parents to be “addicted” to their cell phones, computers, or other devices?**

*Among those with a cell or mobile device in the home (n=1012)*

Yes 28%

**27. 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?**

	<b>A lot like me</b>	<b>Somewhat like me</b>	<b>Not much like me</b>	<b>Not at all like me</b>
a. I have a lot of friends	38%	38%	17%	6%
b. I'm lonely	6%	19%	32%	40%
c. Compared to other people my age, I feel normal	33%	40%	15%	10%
d. I often feel rejected by people my age	7%	20%	33%	37%
e. I get along well with my parents	51%	37%	6%	4%
f. I get into trouble a lot	6%	12%	28%	53%
g. There are lots of things I can do well	47%	40%	8%	3%
h. I like myself	51%	35%	9%	3%
i. I'm happy with my life	48%	40%	8%	3%
j. I often feel sad or depressed	7%	19%	32%	40%
k. I'm outgoing	33%	37%	22%	6%
l. I'm shy	16%	37%	25%	20%
m. I find it easy to make new friends	33%	39%	19%	7%

**28. What kind of grades do you usually get in school?**

a. Mostly As	30%
b. Mostly As and Bs	39%
c. Mostly Bs	6%
d. Mostly Bs and Cs	15%
e. Mostly Cs	4%
f. Mostly Cs and Ds	4%
g. Mostly Ds or lower	*
h. My school doesn't use grades	1%

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# Social Media, Social Life:

How Teens View Their Digital Lives

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## Common Sense Media's *Program for the Study of Children and Media*

The mission of Common Sense Media's *Program for the Study of Children and Media* is to provide parents, educators, health organizations, and policymakers with reliable, independent data on children's use of media and technology and the impact it has on their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. For more information about the program and to read reports on these studies, visit [www.commonsense.org/research](http://www.commonsense.org/research).

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