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Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences

Teens credit social media for helping to build stronger friendships and exposing them to a more diverse world, but they express concern that these sites lead to drama and social pressure

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Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences

Teens credit social media for helping to build stronger friendships and exposing them to a more diverse world, but they express concern that these sites lead to drama and social pressure

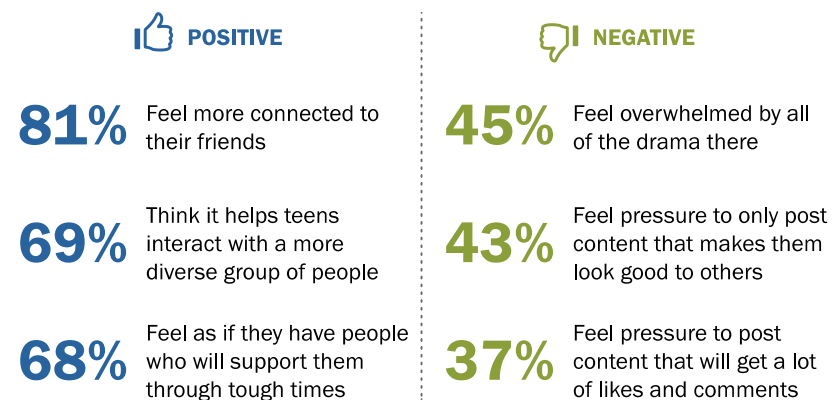
Amid growing concern over social media's impact and influence on today's youth, a new Pew Research Center survey of U.S. teens finds that many young people acknowledge the unique challenges – and benefits – of growing up in the digital age.

Today, social media use is nearly universal among teens.¹ While notable shares say they at times feel overwhelmed by the drama on social media and pressure to construct only positive images of themselves, they simultaneously credit these online platforms with several positive outcomes – including strengthening friendships, exposing them to different viewpoints and helping people their age support causes they care about.

Roughly eight-in-ten teens ages 13 to 17 (81%) say social media makes them feel more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives, while around two-thirds say these platforms make them feel as if they have people who will support them through tough times. And by relatively substantial margins, teens tend to associate their social media use with positive rather than negative emotions, such as feeling included rather than excluded (71% vs. 25%) or feeling confident rather than insecure (69% vs. 26%).

Teens say social media helps strengthen friendships, provide emotional support, but can also lead to drama, feeling pressure to post certain types of content

% of U.S. teens who say the following about social media



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7–April 10, 2018.

"Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences"

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¹ Social media use is nearly ubiquitous among today's teens: 97% of 13- to 17-year-olds use at least one of seven major online platforms. See Pew Research Center's report "[Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018](#)."

Young people also believe social media helps teens become more civically minded and exposes them to greater diversity – either through the people they interact with or the viewpoints they come across. Roughly two-thirds of teens say these sites help people their age interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, find different points of view or show their support for causes or issues. And they see digital environments as important spaces for youth to connect with their friends and interact with others who share similar interests. For example, 60% of teens say they spend time with their friends online on a daily or nearly daily basis, and 77% say they ever spend time in online groups and forums.

The survey also illustrates the ways in which teens navigate social norms around what – and how often – they post to these sites. It is much more common for young people to post about their accomplishments or family life than to discuss their personal problems or political beliefs on social media. And while Millennials – some of whom are just older than teens – have been deemed the “selfie generation,” roughly half of today’s teens say they rarely (25%) or never (26%) post selfies on social media.

For some teens, sharing their life online can come with added social burdens: Around four-in-ten say they feel pressure to only post content on social media that makes them look good to others (43%) or share things that will get a lot of likes or comments (37%).

At the same time, the online environment for today’s teens can be hostile and drama-filled – even if these incidents may fall short of more [severe forms of cyberbullying](#). Some 45% of teens say they feel overwhelmed by all the drama on social media, with 13% saying they feel this way “a lot.” And a similar share of teens (44%) say they often or sometimes unfriend or unfollow others on social media. When asked why they’ve digitally disconnected from others, 78% of this group report doing so because people created too much drama, while 52% cite the bullying of them or others.

These are some of the key findings from the Center’s survey of 743 teens, ages 13 to 17, conducted March 7–April 10, 2018. Throughout the report, “teens” refers to those ages 13 to 17.

1. Teens and their experiences on social media

Social media has given teens the ability to instantly connect with others and share their lives through photos, videos and status updates. Teens themselves describe these platforms as a key tool for connecting and maintaining relationships, being creative, and learning more about the world. But they also must contend with more negative aspects of social media use, such as drama and bullying or feeling pressure to present themselves in a certain way.

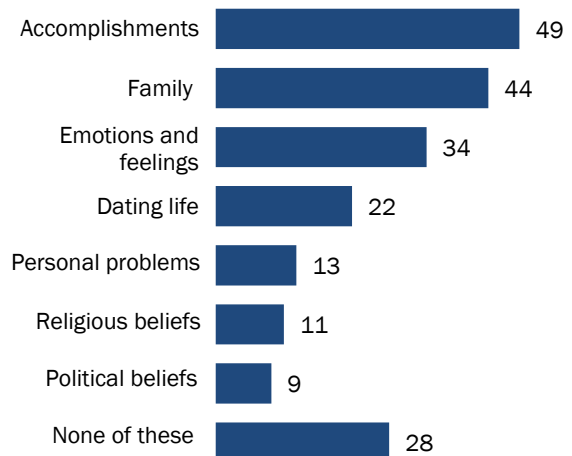
Teens post about a range of topics on social media, with posts about their accomplishments or family playing an especially prominent role

When asked what topics they post about on social media, roughly half of teens say they post about their accomplishments on social media, while 44% say they post about their family. Around one-third (34%) say they share things related to their emotions and feelings on these sites, while 22% report posting about their dating life. Relatively few teens – around one-in-ten – say they share things related to their personal problems or their religious or political beliefs on social media.

There are some age and gender differences in the topics teens share on social media. Older teens are more likely than their younger counterparts to post about their romantic relationships: 26% of teens ages 15 to 17 say they post about their dating life on social media, compared with 16% of 13- to 14-year-olds.

While about half of teens post their accomplishments on social media, few discuss their religious or political beliefs

% of U.S. teens who say they ever post about their ___ on social media



Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple options. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey conducted March 7–April 10, 2018. “Teens’ Social Media Habits and Experiences”

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Meanwhile, girls are more likely than boys to say they post about their family (53% vs. 36%), their emotions and feelings (40% vs. 29%) or their religious beliefs (14% vs. 7%). And older girls are especially likely to post about a variety of subjects – including their dating lives, their family, their emotions and their religious or political beliefs, compared with older boys or younger teens.

Selfies may be popular on social media, but around half of teens say they rarely or never post these images

Although the [proliferation of smartphones](#) has given teens the ability to constantly share different aspects of their lives, this survey finds that many teens regularly forego posting selfies, videos or other updates of their lives to social media.

Some 45% of teens say they often or sometimes post selfies on social media, with 16% saying they do this often. Similar shares of teens say they at least sometimes post things only their closest friends would understand (50%), updates on where they are or what they're doing (42%) or videos they've recorded (41%). A smaller share of teens report regularly posting things that they want to go viral (29%). Notably, in each instance close to half or

Older girls especially likely to post a variety of subjects on social media

% of U.S. teens who say they ever post about their ___ on social media

	13-14 Boys	13-14 Girls	15-17 Boys	15-17 Girls
Accomplishments	42	41	49	59
Family	28	46	40	57
Emotions and feelings	25	34	31	44
Dating life	18	13	19	33
Personal problems	14	11	11	17
Religious beliefs	5	10	8	17
Political beliefs	11	8	4	16

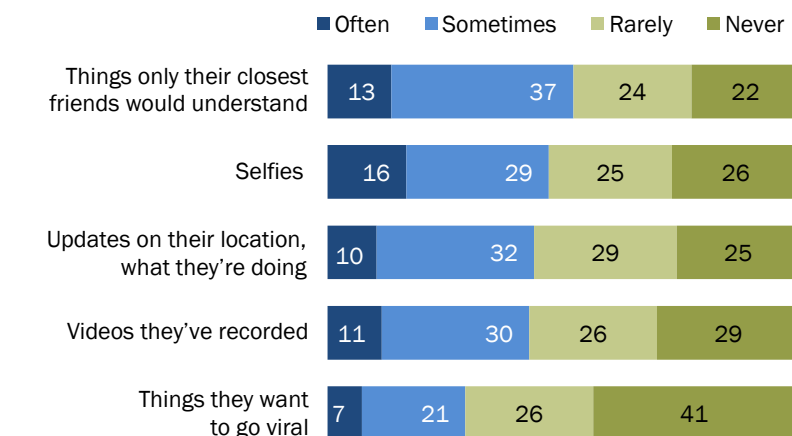
Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple options. Respondents who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7–April 10, 2018. “Teens’ Social Media Habits and Experiences”

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Roughly half of teens at least sometimes post selfies and things only their closest friends would understand, but relatively few say they do this often

% of U.S. teens who say they ___ post the following things on social media



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7–April 10, 2018.

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more of teens say they rarely or never share these types of posts on social media.

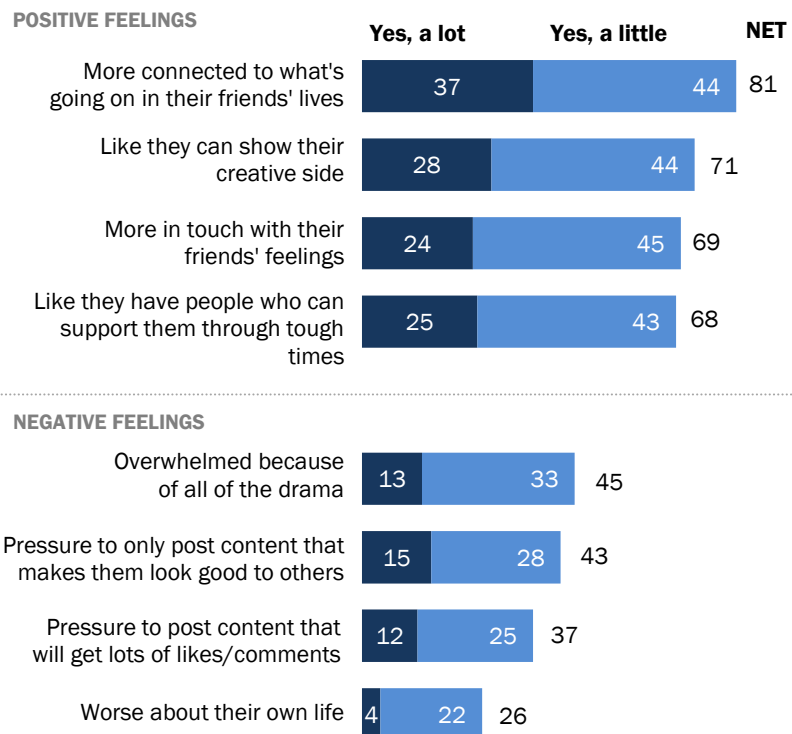
There is some demographic variation in the types of content teens say they post to social media. Girls are much more likely than boys to post selfies: Six-in-ten girls say they often or sometimes do this, compared with 30% of boys. And while two-thirds of black teens and about half (51%) of Hispanic teens report regularly sharing selfies on social media, that share drops to 39% among white youth. Black teens are also much more likely than whites to say they at least sometimes post things they want to go viral (41% vs. 25%).

Teens generally believe social media helps deepen friendships and are more likely to equate their social media use with positive emotions – but this positivity is far from unanimous

A central conversation surrounding social media and young people is the impact these platforms may be having on the emotional well-being of teens. A majority of teens believe social media has had a positive impact on various aspects of their lives, the survey finds. Fully 81% of teens say social media makes them feel more connected to what’s going on in their friend’s lives, with 37% saying it makes them feel “a lot” more connected. Similarly, about seven-in-ten teens say these sites make them feel more in touch with their friends’ feelings (69%), that they have

Most teens say social media better connects them to their friends’ lives and feelings, but some also feel overwhelmed by the drama on these sites

% of U.S. teens who say social media makes them feel ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.
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people who will support them through tough times (68%), or that they have a place to show their creative side (71%).

But although sizable shares of teens encounter positive experiences on social media, some report encountering drama or feeling pressure to present themselves in a certain way. Some 45% of teens say they feel overwhelmed by all the drama on social media, while roughly four-in-ten say they feel pressure to only post content that makes them look good to others or that will get lots of comments or likes. Others believe social media has had a negative impact on their self-esteem: 26% of teens say these sites make them feel worse about their own life. Still, just 4% of teens indicate these platforms make them feel “a lot” worse about their life.

The survey also presented teens with four pairs of words and asked them to choose the sentiment that most closely matches how they feel when using social media. In each instance, teens are more likely to associate their social media use with generally positive rather than negative feelings. By relatively large margins, teens indicate that social media makes them feel included rather than excluded (71% vs. 25%), confident rather than insecure (69% vs. 26%), authentic rather than fake (64% vs. 33%) and outgoing rather than reserved (61% vs. 34%).

Teens are more likely to say social media makes them feel more included and confident rather than excluded or insecure

% of U.S. teens who say that social media makes them feel more ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

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Interestingly, there are few demographic differences on these questions. For example, teen boys and girls are similarly likely to view their social media use in these ways, as are older and younger teens.

Roughly four-in-ten teens say they regularly unfriend or unfollow people on social media – citing drama as their most common reason for doing so

Just as relationships get forged and reinforced on social media, friendships can turn sour and require teens to prune their friend or follower lists. More than four-in-ten teens (44%) say they at least sometimes unfriend or unfollow people on social media, including 14% who say they do this often. But a somewhat larger share of teens say they engage in this behavior relatively sparingly. Just over half of young people report that they rarely (39%) or never (14%) unfriend or unfollow people on social media.

Teens who at least sometimes unfriend or unfollow people provide several reasons for deleting people from their friend lists on social media. But by far the most common reason (mentioned by 78% of teens who engage in this behavior) is that the person in question is simply creating too much drama.

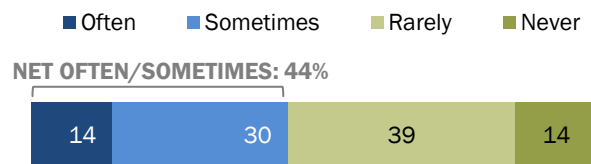
In addition, more than half of these teens (54%) say they have unfriended or unfollowed someone because that person posted too much or too often, and a similar share disconnected from someone because the person bullied them or others.

A smaller share of these teens say they unfollow others because they act differently online than in person (43%) or post political views they disagree with (22%).

In general, girls are more active than boys at disconnecting from others on social media. Roughly half of girls (52%) say they at least sometimes unfriend or unfollow people, compared with 35% of

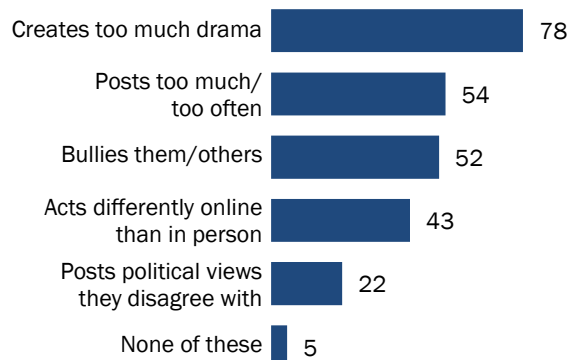
44% of teens say they at least sometimes unfriend or unfollow people on social media ...

% of U.S. teens who say they ___ unfriend or unfollow people on social media



... with drama being the top reason for doing so

*Among the 44% of teens who say they **often or sometimes** unfriend or unfollow people on social media, % who say they do so because the person ...*



Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple options for reasons why they have unfriended or unfollowed. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

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boys. And girls are nearly twice as likely as boys to say they often unfriend or unfollow people on these platforms (18% vs. 10%). But among youth who do engage in this practice, boys and girls largely do so for similar reasons – with one exception. Boys are more likely than girls to say they’ve unfriended or unfollowed someone because that person posted too much or too often (67% of boys who regularly unfriend say this vs. 46% of girls).

Majorities of teens say social media helps them find different points of view and show support for causes, while fewer think of these sites as a source of trustworthy information

Majorities of teens believe social media helps people their age diversify their networks, broaden their viewpoints and get involved with issues they care about. Roughly two-thirds of teens say social networking sites helps teens at least some to interact with people from different backgrounds (69%), while a similar share credits social media with helping teens find different points of view (67%) or helping teens show their support for causes or issues (66%).

But much like [older](#)

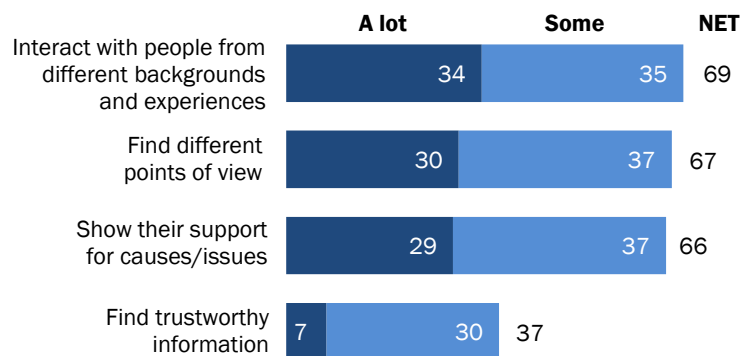
[generations](#), relatively few teens think of social media

platforms as a source of trustworthy information. Overall, 37% of teens think that social media helps people their age find trustworthy information – and only 7% think these sites help “a lot” in that respect.

Older teens are more likely than their younger peers to believe social media helps teens interact with people from various backgrounds. Fully 76% of 15-to 17-year-olds say this, compared with 59% of those ages 13 to 14. By a slightly lesser margin, older teens are more likely to say these platforms help people their age find diverse viewpoints (71% of older teens say this, vs. 60% of

Majorities of teens say social media helps peers talk to a diverse group of people, support causes; fewer think it helps teens find trustworthy information

% of U.S. teens who say social media helps people their age a lot or some to do each of the following ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown.
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younger teens). Meanwhile, teens of all ages are similarly skeptical about social media’s role as a source of trustworthy information.

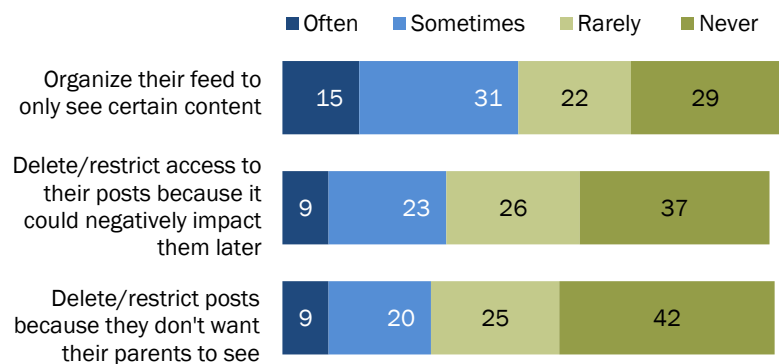
Only minorities of teens regularly restrict access to their social media posts to prevent parents or other people from seeing the content

While some youth play an active role in controlling the content they see in their social media feeds and preventing various figures of authority from viewing what they post there, a large share of teens rarely curate their online presence in this way.

At a broad level, 46% of teens say they at least sometimes organize their feeds to only see certain types of content, although just 15% say they do this often. Indeed, 29% of teens say they never organize their social feeds in this way.

Among teens, deleting or restricting their social media posts is relatively uncommon

% of U.S. teens who say they ever do the following on social media



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7–April 10, 2018.

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It is even rarer for teens to delete or restrict access to their posts because they might be seen by their parents or negatively impact them in the future. Just one-third of teens say they often or sometimes delete or restrict access to things they share on social media because they are concerned it could negatively impact them later in life. And about three-in-ten teens say they delete or restrict posts because they don’t want their parents to view them. In both cases, only around one-in-ten young people say they do this often – and a plurality says they never do so.

There are also few demographic differences in deleting or restricting social media posts because it could negatively impact them in the future or because they don’t want their parents to see what they’ve posted. But there are some age differences when it comes to taking steps to organize social media feeds. Older teens are more likely than their younger peers to say they regularly organize their feed in this way (51% of 15- to 17-year-olds do this vs. 37% of those ages 13 to 14).

2. Teens, friendships and online groups

Friendship is a crucial part of adolescence. Teens explore friendships to navigate their identity and their role in society. This survey finds that about half of U.S. teens (51%) see themselves as someone who tends to fit in “pretty easily” among their peers, while an almost identical share (48%) says they tend to stand out. But regardless of how they perceive their relationship with others their age, majorities of teens say they have at least one person they consider to be a close friend and keep in touch with a broader circle of friends regularly – both online and offline.

Meanwhile, about six-in-ten teens have at least one close friend of a different racial or ethnic background, or who is a different gender from them. Teens also identify online groups and forums as an important part of their social lives, and as spaces where they can meet new people and receive support to cope with tough times.

Majorities of teens have a close friend of a different gender or a different race or ethnicity

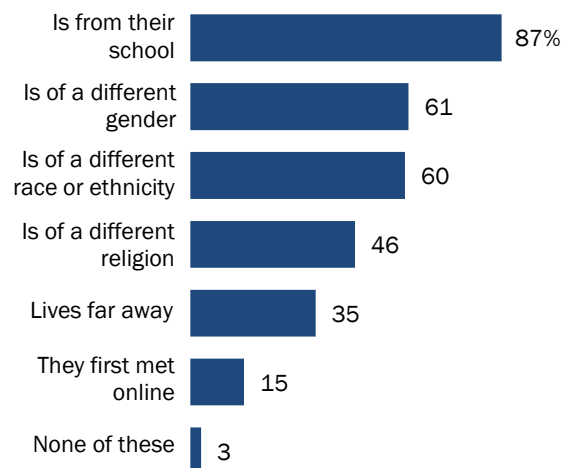
Fully 98% of teens say they have one or more close friends: 78% say they have between one and five close friends, while 20% have six or more close friends. Just 2% of teens say they do not have anyone they consider a close friend.

Similar majorities extend across various demographic groups. However, there is some variation on this question based on household income. Teens from lower-income families (those earning less than \$30,000 a year) are significantly more likely than teens in other income groups to report that they *do not* have any close friends (7% of lower-income teens say this, compared with 1% of teens from higher-income households). By the same token, teens from households earning more than \$75,000 per year are more than twice as likely as low-income teens to say they have more than five close friends (24% vs. 11%).

Teens typically point to their school as an important venue for making friends – 87% say they have a close friend from their school. Today’s

Roughly six-in-ten teens say they have a close friend of a different gender or a different race or ethnicity

% of U.S. teens who say they have a close friend who ...



Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple options. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

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teens are a part of the most [racially and ethnically diverse](#) generation in American history, and this reality is reflected in the fact that six-in-ten teens report having a close friend who is of a different racial or ethnic background than they are. A similar share of teens (61%) identify someone of a different gender as a close friend, and close to half (46%) say they have a close friend of a different religion.

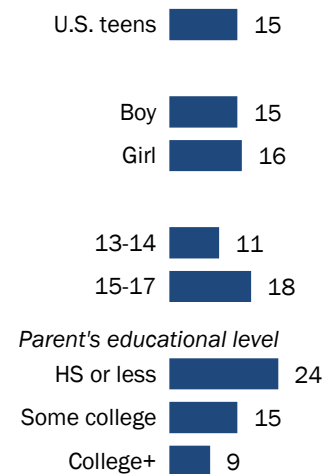
Despite the prominence of school as a venue for friend formation, teens' friendships are not confined to school campuses or local neighborhoods. Around one-third (35%) of teens say they have a close friend who lives far away, while 15% say they have a close friend they first met online.

In some cases, the nature of teens' friendships varies little based on their demographic characteristics. For instance, white, black and Hispanic teens are equally likely to say they have a close friend of a different race or ethnicity. Similarly, comparable shares of boys and girls have a close friend of a different gender. But in other cases, these differences are more prominent. Most notably, white teenagers (52%) are significantly more likely than blacks (25%) to report that they have a close friend with a different religious background. And mixed-gender friendships are more common among older teens: 67% of teens ages 15 to 17 have a close friend of a different gender, compared with 52% of teens ages 13 to 14.

Looking specifically at the role of the internet in the formation of close friendships, the likelihood of a teen developing a close friendship with someone they first met online varies by a number of factors. Teens ages 15 to 17 are more likely than those 13 to 14 to say they have a close friend they first met online (18% vs. 11%). These online-first friendships are also more common among teens whose parent holds a high school diploma or less (24%) than among teens whose parent has a bachelor's or advanced degree (9%). And teens who use the internet "almost constantly" are more likely than those who go online several times a day or

The likelihood of forming online friendships varies by the educational level of a teen's parent

% of U.S. teens who say they have a close friend who is someone they first met online



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Parent's level of educational attainment based on highest level of education associated with a teen's parent.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

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less to have formed a close friendship with someone they first met online (23% vs. 9%).² (For details on other demographic differences, see Appendix.)

Teens are more likely to spend time with their friends online on a daily basis than to do so in person

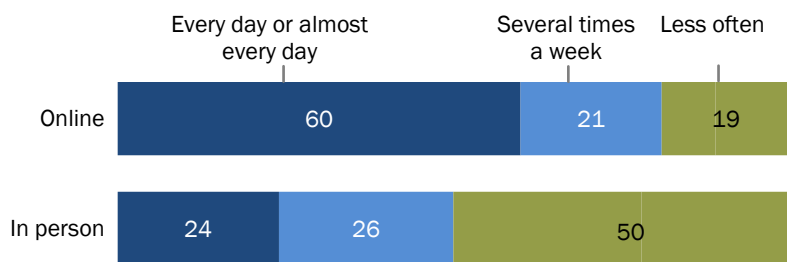
This survey explored the way teens interact with their friends apart from school activities or those directly related to school. Sizable majorities of teens spend at least one day per week with their friends online (88%) or in person (77%). But when it comes to daily interactions with their friends, teens are much more likely to report that those interactions take place online. Six-in-ten teens say they spend time with their friends online every day or almost every day, compared with 24% who spend time with their friends in person with the same frequency (not including school or school-related activities).

Despite the relative infrequency of their in-person interactions with friends, a majority of teens (57%) say they spend about the right amount of time with their friends face-to-face. But roughly one-third of teens (36%) think they have too little face-to-face time with their friends. A small share (just 7%) believe they spend *too much* time seeing their friends in real life.

The largest shares of teens in a variety of demographic groups indicate they spend about the right amount of time with their friends in person. Nonetheless, many teens who see their friends on a less-than-daily basis express a desire for more time together in person. Just 17% of teens who get together with friends on a daily basis say they spend too little time together – but that share rises to 42% among teens who get together with friends less often.

Six-in-ten teens spend time with their friends online on a daily or near-daily basis

% of U.S. teens who say they get together with friends online or in person (outside of school or school-related activities) ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

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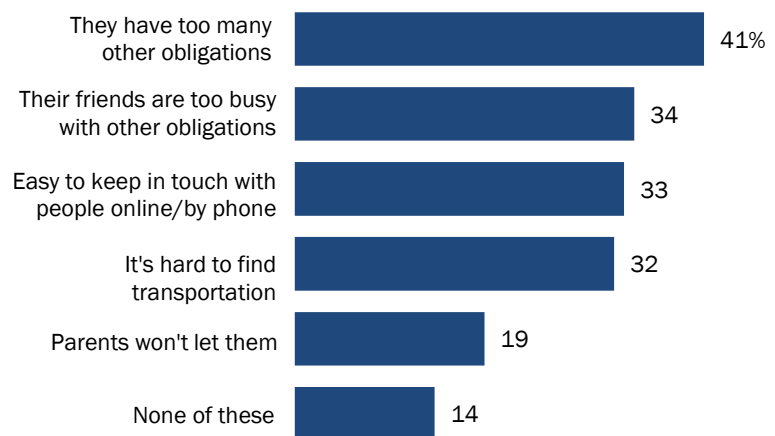
² 45% of U.S. teens say they use the [internet "almost constantly"](#) either on a computer or a cellphone, while 55% use the internet several times a day or less often.

Some critics have argued that the internet and social media are to blame for teens' [diminishing real-life interactions](#) with others. But teens themselves point to a variety of reasons for why they do not spend more time with their friends in person. The most common of these (cited by 41% of teens) is that teens themselves report they simply have too many other obligations to find time to hang out with friends. Meanwhile, 34% say their friends are too busy with their own obligations to find the time for friend activities, and 32% say the difficulty of finding transportation prevents them from seeing their friends more often. Still, the ease of digital communication ranks among the top reasons given by teens when asked why they do not spend more time with their friends in person – 33% of teens note that it is simply easier to connect with a friend online than to attempt connecting with them physically.

Hispanic teens are especially likely to say that several of these factors prevent them from seeing friends in person as much as they would like. While 46% of Hispanic teens say the ease of talking to their friends online or on their phone is a factor in not seeing their friends more often, just 30% of whites cite the same reason.³ Hispanic teens are also more likely than white teens to cite parental intervention as a barrier to seeing their friends in person (25% vs. 13%). By contrast, white teens are more likely than black teens to say that their friends' busy schedules are a major factor preventing them from seeing friends more often (37% vs. 20%) and are more likely than Hispanics to point to transportation challenges as an issue (36% vs. 16%).

Roughly four-in-ten teens cite 'too many obligations' as a reason they don't spend more time with friends

% of U.S. teens who say they do not spend more time with their friends in person outside of school because ...



Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple options. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018. "Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences"

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³ Similar shares of teens [across racial and ethnic groups](#) say they use the internet, own a smartphone, and use social media, respectively.

And although teens from a wide range of groups cite personal obligations as a factor preventing them from seeing friends in person more often, this is an especially common response from teens living in higher-income households. Nearly half (48%) of teens living in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more cite this as a factor, compared with 33% of those living in households that earn less than \$30,000 annually.⁴

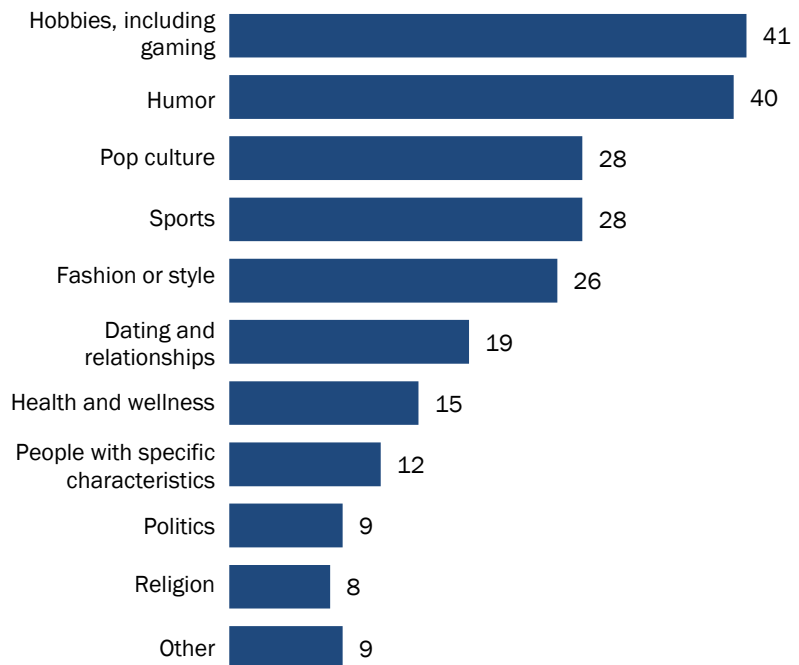
Nearly half of teens say they at least sometimes spend time in online groups or forums, and the types of forums they gravitate toward tend to vary by gender

Online groups and forums allow teens and adults alike to interact with a broad pool of people who share common traits, interests and experiences. Teens and young adults in particular have access to a wide range of age-specific online forums where they can seek out [health-related information](#), [discuss political and social issues](#), [play games with their friends](#) or have a safe haven to [explore their identity](#). This survey finds that around half of teens either often (12%) or sometimes (34%) spend time in online groups or forums, with another 31% indicating they rarely take part in these groups.

Different demographic groups take part in online communities at different rates. For example, a larger share of Hispanic teens (86%) than white (76%) or black (69%) teens say they have ever visited online groups or forums.

Online groups that focus on hobbies or humor are most popular among teens

% of U.S. teens who say they ever spend time in online groups or forums that are focused on ...



Note: For "people with specific characteristics," question wording is "people with specific characteristics (e.g., LGBT, people of color)." Respondents were allowed to select multiple options. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

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⁴ Extracurriculars are [on the rise](#) for school-age children, especially in well-off communities. A [Pew Research Center study](#) in 2015 finds that parents from higher-income families are more likely to enroll their kids in after-school activities than those from lower-income households.

And although boys and girls are equally likely to ever join an online group, boys are twice as likely as girls to say they *often* spend time in these groups (15% vs. 8%).

Certain types of online groups are particularly popular among teens today. About four-in-ten teens (41%) report participating in online groups that center around hobbies such as gaming, and a similar share (40%) participates in groups with a focus on humor. Around one-quarter of teens say they spend time in groups talking about pop culture, sports or fashion. More modest shares – around one-in-ten – report being involved in online groups that focus on identity, politics or religion.

Participation in different types of online groups varies by gender; certain types of online groups are more appealing to boys than girls, and vice versa. Boys are roughly twice as likely as girls to visit online groups centered around hobbies, including gaming or sports, whereas girls are more likely than boys to visit online groups about fashion and health and wellness, as well as groups oriented toward people with specific characteristics (such as LGBT or people of color). At the same time, online groups that focus on humor and pop culture draw similar interests from boys and girls.

Teen boys and girls tend to spend time in different types of online groups

% of U.S. teens, by gender, who say they ever spend time in online groups or forums that are focused on ...

	Boys	Girls	Boy-girl difference
Hobbies, including gaming	54	29	+25
Sports	36	19	+17
Humor	41	39	+2
Politics	10	8	+2
Pop culture	26	31	-5
Religion	5	11	-6
Dating and relationships	15	23	-8
Health and wellness	10	20	-10
People with specific characteristics (e.g., LGBT, people of color)	6	18	-12
Fashion or style	18	34	-16

Note: Those who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown. Statistically significant differences between boys and girls at the 95% confidence level are in **bold**.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

"Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences"

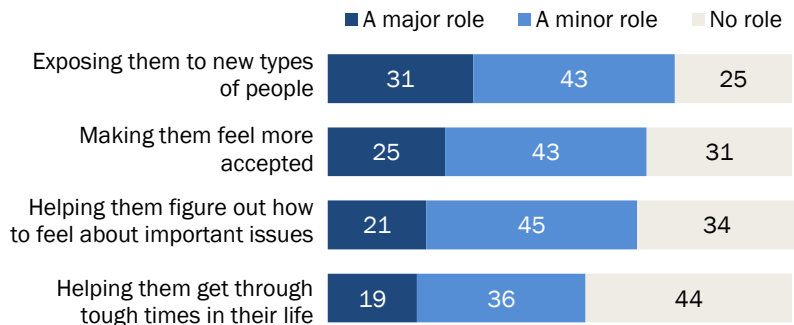
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Teens credit online groups for introducing them to new people and making them feel more accepted

Teens who are part of an online group tend to have positive attitudes about their experiences in these groups. Roughly three-quarters of online group participants (74%) say these groups play a role in exposing them to new types of people, including 31% who say online groups play a *major* role in this regard. Apart from meeting new people, majorities of teens who belong to an online group say these communities play a role in making them feel more accepted (68%), helping them figure out how to feel about important issues (65%) or helping them get through tough times in their life (55%).

Majorities of teens who spend time in online forums say they play a role in exposing them to new people

Among U.S. teens who say they ever spend time in an online group or forum, % who say online groups play ___ in ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

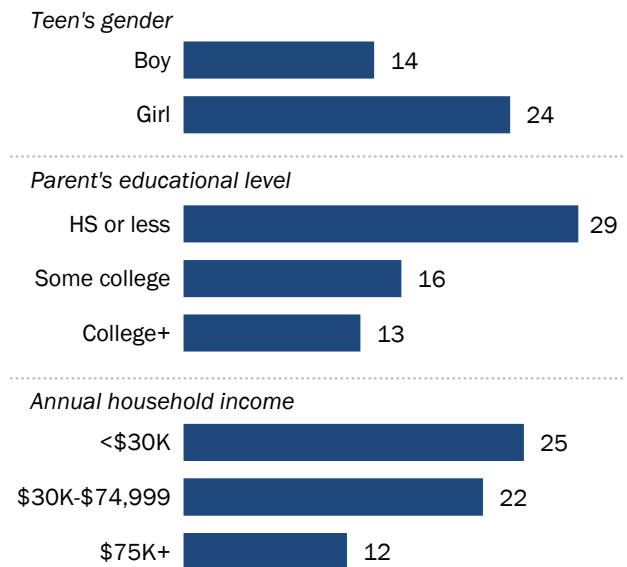
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Online group participants who are black are more likely than white participants to say these groups play a major role in introducing them to new people (46% vs. 28%). Meanwhile, online communities are particularly beneficial in helping certain populations get through tough times. For example, 24% of girls who belong to an online group say it plays a major role in this regard, compared with 14% of boy participants. Similarly, lower-income teens who visit online communities are around twice as likely as teens from higher-income families to say online groups play a major role in helping them through tough times (25% vs. 12%).

Girls who use online groups are especially likely to say they've helped them through tough times

Among U.S. teens who say they ever spend time in an online group or forum, % who say online groups play a **major role** in helping them get through tough times in their life



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown. Parent's level of educational attainment based on highest level of education associated with a teen's parent.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

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Methodology

This Pew Research Center analysis is based on surveys of parents and teens that were conducted using the NORC AmeriSpeak panel. AmeriSpeak is a nationally representative, probability-based panel of the U.S. household population. Randomly selected U.S. households are sampled with a known, nonzero probability of selection from the NORC National Frame, and then contacted by U.S. mail, telephone and field interviewers (face to face). More details about the NORC AmeriSpeak panel methodology are available [here](#).

This particular survey featured interviews with 1,058 parents who belong to the panel and have a teen ages 13 to 17, as well as interviews with 743 teens. Parents who have multiple teenage children were asked to provide information about each of these teens. The panel randomly selected one of these teens, and parents were instructed to respond to all survey questions with this teen in mind. Interviews were conducted online and by telephone from March 7 to April 10, 2018.

The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 5.0 percentage points for the full sample of 743 teen respondents and 4.5 percentage points for the full sample of 1,058 parent respondents.

The data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with the panel base sampling weights. Panel base sampling weights for all sampled housing units are computed as the inverse of probability of selection from the NORC National Frame (the sampling frame that is used to sample housing units for AmeriSpeak) or address-based sample. The sample design and recruitment protocol for the AmeriSpeak Panel involves subsampling of initial nonrespondent housing units. These subsampled nonrespondent housing units are selected for an in-person follow-up. The subsample of housing units selected for the nonresponse follow-up (NRFU) have their panel base sampling weights inflated by the inverse of the subsampling rate. The base sampling weights are further adjusted to account for unknown eligibility and nonresponse among eligible housing units. The household-level nonresponse adjusted weights are then post-stratified to external counts for number of households obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. Then, these household-level post-stratified weights are assigned to each eligible adult in every recruited household. Furthermore, a person-level nonresponse adjustment accounts for nonresponding adults within a recruited household. Teen panelists carry over the parent's panel weight.

Finally, panel weights were raked to external population totals associated with age, sex, education, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status and census division. The external population totals were obtained from the Current Population Survey. The weights adjusted to the external population totals are the final panel weights.

Study-specific base sampling weights are derived using a combination of the final panel weight and the probability of selection associated with the sampled panel member. Since not all sampled panel members respond to the survey interview, an adjustment is needed to account for and adjust for survey nonrespondents. This adjustment decreases potential nonresponse bias associated with sampled panel members who did not complete the survey interview for the study. Thus, the nonresponse-adjusted survey weights for the study were adjusted via a raking ratio method to general population totals associated with the following socio-demographic characteristics: age, sex, education, income, race/Hispanic ethnicity and census division for the parent respondents, and the following socio-demographic characteristics for the teen respondents: age, sex, race/Hispanic ethnicity, highest level of education associated with teen's parents and census division associated with the teen's household. The weights adjusted to the 2017 March Current Population Survey population totals are the final study weights, which were used to produce the estimates in this report.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for teens and parents in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Teens sample	743	5.0 percentage points
Boys	348	7.2 percentage points
Girls	393	6.8 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	355	7.2 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	129	11.9 percentage points
Hispanic	202	9.5 percentage points
13-14	301	7.8 percentage points
15-17	442	6.4 percentage points
<i>Household income</i>		
Less than \$30K	199	9.6 percentage points
\$30K-\$74,999K	266	8.3 percentage points
\$75K or more	278	8.1 percentage points
<i>Parent's level of educational attainment:</i>		
High school or less	142	11.3 percentage points
Some college	265	8.3 percentage points
College graduate+	329	7.4 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The parent survey had a survey completion rate of 83% (1,058 completed interviews out of 1,274 screened eligible panelists). Taking account of the combined, weighted response rate for the recruitment surveys (34%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the weighted cumulative response rate for the parent survey is 8%.

The teen survey had a survey completion rate of 69% (743 completed interviews out of 1,075 screened eligible panelists for whom parental consent was granted). Taking account of the combined, weighted response rate for the recruitment surveys (34%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the weighted cumulative response rate for the teen survey is 18%.

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Appendix A: Detailed tables

Teens and the characteristics of their close friends

% of U.S. teens who say they have a close friend who ...

	Is from their school	Is of a different gender	Is of a different race or ethnicity	Is of a different religion	Lives far away	They first met online	None of these
U.S. teens	87	61	60	46	35	15	3
Boys	88	61	59	44	37	15	4
Girls	86	62	61	48	34	16	2
White	90	65	58	52	38	15	2
Black	88	67	64	25	28	10	2
Hispanic	80	51	61	40	34	19	2
13-14	87	52	55	42	34	11	2
15-17	87	67	63	49	36	18	3
Less than \$30K	82	61	61	37	40	20	2
\$30K to \$74,999	84	57	53	39	33	15	4
\$75K and up	93	65	65	57	35	13	2
<i>Parent's educational attainment:</i>							
High school or less	86	57	59	35	37	24	3
Some college	88	71	61	48	33	15	2
College graduate+	88	58	59	53	35	9	4

Note: Those who did not give an answer or gave other responses are not shown. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Parent's level of educational attainment based on highest level of education associated with a teen's parent.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

"Teens' Social Media Habits and Experiences"

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Topline questionnaire: Teens survey

2018 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S Teen Survey

TOPLINE

March 7 – April 10, 2018

Teens ages 13-17 N=743

ASK ALL:

SNS1 Do you ever use any of the following social media sites? **[RANDOMIZE 1-7 WITH ITEM 8 LAST]**

		<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected</u> <u>/No answer</u>
1.	Twitter March 7-April 10, 2018	32	68
2.	Instagram March 7-April 10, 2018	72	28
3.	Facebook March 7-April 10, 2018	51	49
4.	Snapchat March 7-April 10, 2018	69	31
5.	YouTube March 7-April 10, 2018	85	15
6.	Tumblr March 7-April 10, 2018	9	91
7.	Reddit March 7-April 10, 2018	7	93
8.	None of these March 7-April 10, 2018	3	97

ASK ALL:

FITIN

In general, which of the following statements comes closest to describing how you see yourself compared with other people your age where you live? **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS]**

March 7-
April 10, 2018

51	I tend to fit in pretty easily
48	I tend to stand out
1	DK/Refusal

ASK ALL:

FRIEND1

In a typical week, how often do you get together with friends in person (outside of school or school-related activities)? [**RANDOMIZE FRIEND1 and FRIEND2**]

March 7-
April 10, 2018

24	Every day or almost every day
26	Several times a week
28	About once a week
23	Less often
0	DK/Refusal

ASK ALL:

FRIEND2

In a typical week, how often do you get together with friends online (including on your cellphone, on social media, or through online gaming)? [**RANDOMIZE FRIEND1 and FRIEND2**]

March 7-
April 10, 2018

60	Every day or almost every day
21	Several times a week
8	About once a week
11	Less often
*	DK/Refusal

ASK ALL:

FRIEND3

In general, how much time would you say you spend with your friends IN PERSON?

March 7-
April 10, 2018

7	Too much
36	Too little
57	About the right amount
0	DK/Refusal

ASK ALL:

FRIEND4

Which of the following, if any, is a reason why you do not spend MORE time with your friends in person outside of school? [**RANDOMIZE 1-5 WITH ITEM 6 LAST**]

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected</u> <u>/No answer</u>
1. Your parents will not let you March 7-April 10, 2018	19	81
2. It's hard to find transportation March 7-April 10, 2018	32	68
3. It's easy to keep in touch with people online or on your phone	33	67

March 7-April 10, 2018

4.	You have too many other obligations March 7-April 10, 2018	41	59
5.	Your friends are too busy with other obligations March 7-April 10, 2018	34	66
6.	None of these March 7-April 10, 2018	14	86

ASK ALL:

FRIENDS5

How many people would you consider to be your close friends?

March 7-
April 10, 2018

2	None
78	1-5
15	6-10
5	More than 10
0	DK/Refusal

ASK IF HAVE CLOSE FRIEND(S) [FRIEND5=2,3,4]

FRIEND6

Are any of your close friends...? **[RANDOMIZE 1-6 WITH ITEM 7 LAST]****Based on total [N=743]**

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected /No answer</u>
1. A different gender than you March 7-April 10, 2018	61	39
2. A different race or ethnicity than you March 7-April 10, 2018	60	40
3. A different religion than you March 7-April 10, 2018	46	54
4. Someone you first met online March 7-April 10, 2018	15	85
5. Someone who lives far away March 7-April 10, 2018	35	65
6. Someone from your school March 7-April 10, 2018	87	13
7. None of these March 7-April 10, 2018	3	97

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

POST1 How often, if ever, do you post the following things on social media? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

Based on social media users [N=720]

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>DK/Refusal</u>
a. Selfies March 7-April 10, 2018	16	30	26	27	*
b. Videos you've recorded and created March 7-April 10, 2018	11	31	26	30	1
c. Updates on where you are or what you're doing March 7-April 10, 2018	10	33	30	26	*
d. Things that only your closest friends would understand March 7-April 10, 2018	14	38	25	23	*
e. Things you want to go viral March 7-April 10, 2018	8	22	27	43	1

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

POST2 Which of the following things, if any, do you ever post about on social media? **[RANDOMIZE 1-7 WITH ITEM 8 LAST]**

Based on social media users [N=720]

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected</u> <u>/No answer</u>
1. Your accomplishments March 7-April 10, 2018	51	49
2. Your dating life March 7-April 10, 2018	22	78
3. Your family March 7-April 10, 2018	46	54
4. Your political beliefs March 7-April 10, 2018	10	90
5. Personal problems you're having March 7-April 10, 2018	13	87
6. Your religious beliefs March 7-April 10, 2018	11	89
7. Your emotions and feelings March 7-April 10, 2018	36	64

8. None of these 29 71
March 7-April 10, 2018

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

SOC2POS In general, does what you see on social media make you feel... **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS]**

Based on social media users [N=720]

	<u>Yes, a lot</u>	<u>Yes, a little</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Refusal</u>
a. More in touch with your friends' feelings March 7-April 10, 2018	25	46	28	1
b. Like you have a place where you can show your creative side March 7-April 10, 2018	29	45	26	*
c. More connected to what's going on in your friends' lives March 7-April 10, 2018	38	46	16	*
d. Like you have people who can support you through tough times March 7-April 10, 2018	26	44	29	1

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

SOC2NEG In general, does what you see on social media make you feel... **[RANDOMIZE OPTIONS]**

Based on social media users [N=720]

	<u>Yes, a lot</u>	<u>Yes, a little</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Refusal</u>
a. Worse about your own life March 7-April 10, 2018	4	22	73	*
b. Overwhelmed because of all the drama March 7-April 10, 2018	13	34	53	*
c. Pressure to post content that will get lots of comments or likes March 7-April 10, 2018	13	26	60	*

- d. Pressure to only post content that makes you look good to others 15 29 55 *
- March 7-April 10, 2018

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

SOC4 Here are a few different pairs of words. For each pair, please select the one that most closely matches how you feel when using social media – even if neither is exactly right.

Does social media make you feel more... **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS AND OPTIONS]**

Based on social media users [N=720]

SOC4a

- | | |
|---------------|----|
| 1. Authentic | 66 |
| 2. Fake | 34 |
| 3. DK/Refusal | * |

March 7-April 10, 2018

SOC4b

- | | |
|---------------|----|
| 1. Confident | 72 |
| 2. Insecure | 27 |
| 3. DK/Refusal | 1 |

March 7-April 10, 2018

SOC4c

- | | |
|---------------|----|
| 1. Reserved | 36 |
| 2. Outgoing | 63 |
| 3. DK/Refusal | 1 |

March 7-April 10, 2018

SOC4d

- | | |
|---------------|----|
| 1. Included | 74 |
| 2. Excluded | 26 |
| 3. DK/Refusal | * |

March 7-April 10, 2018

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

SOC5 Thinking about your experiences on social media...

How often, if ever, do you do each of the following? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

Based on social media users [N=720]

- | | <u>Often</u> | <u>Sometimes</u> | <u>Rarely</u> | <u>Never</u> | <u>DK/Refusal</u> |
|--|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|
| a. Organize your feed to only see certain types of content
March 7-April 10, 2018 | 15 | 32 | 22 | 30 | * |

b.	Delete or restrict access to things you post because you are concerned they could negatively impact you later in life March 7-April 10, 2018	10	24	27	39	*
c.	Delete or restrict access to things you post because you don't want your parents to see them March 7-April 10, 2018	9	21	26	43	*

ASK IF SOCIAL MEDIA USER [Yes to any in SNS1_1-7]

SOC6 How often, if ever, do you unfriend or unfollow people on social media?

Based on social media users [N=720]

<u>March 7- April 10, 2018</u>	
14	Often
31	Sometimes
40	Rarely
14	Never
*	DK/Refusal

ASK IF OFTEN OR SOMETIMES UNFRIEND ON SOCIAL MEDIA [SOC6=1,2]SOC7 Have you ever unfriended or unfollowed someone on social media because...
[RANDOMIZE 1-5 WITH ITEM 6 LAST]**Based on those who often or sometimes unfriend on social media [N=319]**

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected /No answer</u>
1. They create too much drama March 7-April 10, 2018	78	22
2. They act differently online than they do offline March 7-April 10, 2018	43	57
3. They post political views you disagree with March 7-April 10, 2018	22	78
4. They bully you or others March 7-April 10, 2018	52	48
5. They post too much or too often March 7-April 10, 2018	54	46
6. None of these March 7-April 10, 2018	5	95

ASK ALL:

SOCEXP

How much, if at all, do you think social media helps people your age do each of the following? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Only a little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>DK/Refusal</u>
a. Interact with people from different backgrounds and experiences March 7-April 10, 2018	34	35	18	3	9
b. Find trustworthy information March 7-April 10, 2018	7	30	41	12	10
c. Find different points of view March 7-April 10, 2018	30	37	20	6	7
d. Show their support for causes or issues March 7-April 10, 2018	29	37	21	6	8

ASK ALL:

GROUP1

How often, if ever, do you spend time in any groups or forums online (including on blogs, social media, or online gaming forums)?

<u>March 7- April 10, 2018</u>	
12	Often
34	Sometimes
31	Rarely
22	Never
*	DK/Refusal

ASK IF EVER USED AN ONLINE GROUP [GROUP1=1,2,3]

GROUP2

Thinking about the groups or forums online where you spend time, are any of them focused on... **[RANDOMIZE 1-10 WITH ITEM 11 LAST]**

Based on online group participants [N=574]

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected /No answer</u>
1. Sports March 7-April 10, 2018	36	64
2. Fashion or style March 7-April 10, 2018	34	66
3. Hobbies, including gaming March 7-April 10, 2018	53	47
4. People with specific characteristics (e.g. LGBT, people of color)	16	84

		March 7-April 10, 2018	
5.	Politics March 7-April 10, 2018	12	88
6.	Humor March 7-April 10, 2018	52	48
7.	Health and wellness March 7-April 10, 2018	19	81
8.	Religion March 7-April 10, 2018	10	90
9.	Pop culture March 7-April 10, 2018	37	63
10.	Dating and relationships March 7-April 10, 2018	24	76
11.	None of these March 7-April 10, 2018	11	89

ASK IF EVER USED AN ONLINE GROUP [GROUP1=1,2,3]

GROUP3 Thinking about online groups where you spend time, how much of a role, if any, have they had in... **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

Based on online group participants [N=574]

	<u>Major role</u>	<u>Minor role</u>	<u>No role</u>	<u>DK/Refusal</u>
a. Helping you get through tough times in your life March 7-April 10, 2018	19	36	44	1
b. Making you feel more accepted March 7-April 10, 2018	25	43	31	2
c. Helping you figure out how to feel about important issues March 7-April 10, 2018	21	45	34	1
d. Exposing you to new types of people March 7-April 10, 2018	31	43	25	1