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# Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018

*YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among teens. Fully 95% of teens have access to a smartphone, and 45% say they are online ‘almost constantly’*

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## Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018

*YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among U.S. teens. Fully 95% of teens have access to a smartphone, and 45% say they are online ‘almost constantly’*

Until recently, Facebook had dominated the social media landscape among America’s youth – but it is no longer the most popular online platform among teens, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. Today, roughly half (51%) of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 say they use Facebook, notably lower than the shares who use YouTube, Instagram or Snapchat.

This shift in teens’ social media use is just one example of how the technology landscape for young people has evolved since the Center’s [last survey of teens](#) and technology use in 2014-2015. Most notably, smartphone ownership has become a nearly ubiquitous element of teen life: 95% of teens now report they have a smartphone or access to one.

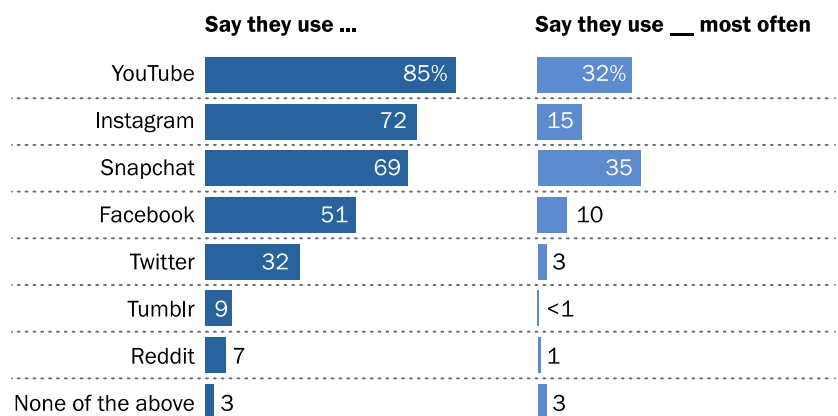
These mobile connections are in turn fueling more-persistent online activities: 45% of teens now say they are online on a near-constant basis.

The survey also finds there is no clear consensus among teens about the effect that social media has on the lives of young people today. Minorities of teens describe that effect as mostly positive (31%) or mostly negative (24%), but the largest share (45%) says that effect has been neither positive nor negative.

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

### YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among teens

% of U.S. teens who ...



Note: Figures in first column add to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Question about most-used site was asked only of respondents who use multiple sites; results have been recalculated to include those who use only one site. Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

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

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## Facebook is no longer the dominant online platform among teens

The social media landscape in which teens reside looks markedly different than it did as recently as three years ago. In the [Center's 2014-2015 survey](#) of teen social media use, 71% of teens reported being Facebook users. No other platform was used by a clear majority of teens at the time: Around half (52%) of teens said they used Instagram, while 41% reported using Snapchat.

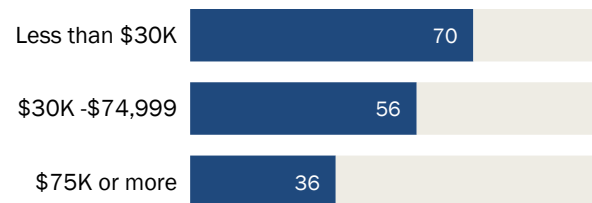
In 2018, three online platforms other than Facebook – YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat – are used by sizable majorities of this age group. Meanwhile, 51% of teens now say they use Facebook. The shares of teens who use Twitter and Tumblr are largely comparable to the shares who did so in the 2014-2015 survey.

For the most part, teens tend to use similar platforms regardless of their demographic characteristics, but there are exceptions. Notably, lower-income teens are more likely to gravitate toward Facebook than those from higher-income households – a trend consistent with [previous Center surveys](#). Seven-in-ten teens living in households earning less than \$30,000 a year say they use Facebook, compared with 36% whose annual family income is \$75,000 or more. (For details on social media platform use by different demographic groups, see Appendix A.)

It is important to note there were some changes in question wording between Pew Research Center's 2014-2015 and 2018 surveys of teen social media use. YouTube and Reddit were not included as options in the 2014-2015 survey but were included in the current survey. In addition, the 2014-2015 survey required respondents to provide an explicit response for whether or not they used each platform, while the 2018 survey presented respondents with a list of sites and allowed them to select the ones they use.<sup>1</sup> Even so, it

### Lower-income teens are more likely than teens from higher-income households to use Facebook

*% of U.S. teens, by annual household income, who say they use Facebook*



Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.  
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<sup>1</sup> These surveys also used different methods in recruiting teens, as well as different methods for interviewing those who did not have a home internet connection. In 2018, those without home internet were interviewed via telephone, while the 2014-2015 respondents were given a web-enabled device and internet service to complete the survey. Please read the Methodology section for full details on how the 2018 survey was conducted.

is clear the social media environment today revolves less around a single platform than it did three years ago.<sup>2</sup>

When it comes to which one of these online platforms teens use the most, roughly one-third say they visit Snapchat (35%) or YouTube (32%) most often, while 15% say the same of Instagram. By comparison, 10% of teens say Facebook is their most-used online platform, and even fewer cite Twitter, Reddit or Tumblr as the site they visit most often.

Again, lower-income teens are far more likely than those from higher income households to say Facebook is the online platform they use most often (22% vs. 4%). There are also some differences related to gender and to race and ethnicity when it comes to teens' most-used sites. Girls are more likely than boys to say Snapchat is the site they use most often (42% vs. 29%), while boys are more inclined than girls to identify YouTube as their go-to platform (39% vs. 25%). Additionally, white teens (41%) are more likely than Hispanic (29%) or black (23%) teens to say Snapchat is the online platform they use most often, while black teens are more likely than whites to identify Facebook as their most used site (26% vs. 7%).

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<sup>2</sup> Other studies on teens' social media use have shown a similar shift in digital platform use among teens. See The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research's 2017 report: <http://apnorc.org/projects/Pages/HTML%20Reports/instagram-and-snapchat-are-most-popular-social-networks-for-teens.aspx#footnote-1>

## Teens have mixed views on the impact of social media on their lives

Despite the nearly ubiquitous presence of social media in their lives, there is no clear consensus among teens about these platforms' ultimate impact on people their age. A plurality of teens (45%) believe social media has a neither positive nor negative effect on people their age. Meanwhile, roughly three-in-ten teens (31%) say social media has had a mostly positive impact, while 24% describe its effect as mostly negative.

Given the opportunity to explain their views in their own words, teens who say social media has had a mostly positive effect tended to stress issues related to connectivity and connection with others. Some 40% of these respondents say that social media has had a positive impact because it helps them keep in touch and interact with others. Many of these responses emphasize how social media makes it easier to communicate with family and friends and to connect with new people:

*"I think social media have a positive effect because it lets you talk to family members far away."* (Girl, age 14)

*"I feel that social media can make people my age feel less lonely or alone. It creates a space where you can interact with people."* (Girl, age 15)

*"It enables people to connect with friends easily and be able to make new friends as well."* (Boy, age 15)

Others in this group cite the greater access to news and information that social media facilitates (16%), or being able to connect with people who share similar interests (15%):

*"My mom had to get a ride to the library to get what I have in my hand all the time. She reminds me of that a lot."* (Girl, age 14)

*"It has given many kids my age an outlet to express their opinions and emotions, and connect with people who feel the same way."* (Girl, age 15)

Smaller shares argue that social media is a good venue for entertainment (9%), that it offers a space for self-expression (7%) or that it allows teens to get support from others (5%) or to learn new things in general (4%).

*"Because a lot of things created or made can spread joy."* (Boy, age 17)

*"[Social media] allows us to communicate freely and see what everyone else is doing. [It]*

*gives us a voice that can reach many people."* (Boy, age 15)

*"We can connect easier with people from different places and we are more likely to ask for help through social media which can save people."* (Girl, age 15)

There is slightly less consensus among teens who say social media has had a mostly negative effect on people their age. The top response (mentioned by 27% of these teens) is that social media leads to more bullying and the overall spread of rumors.

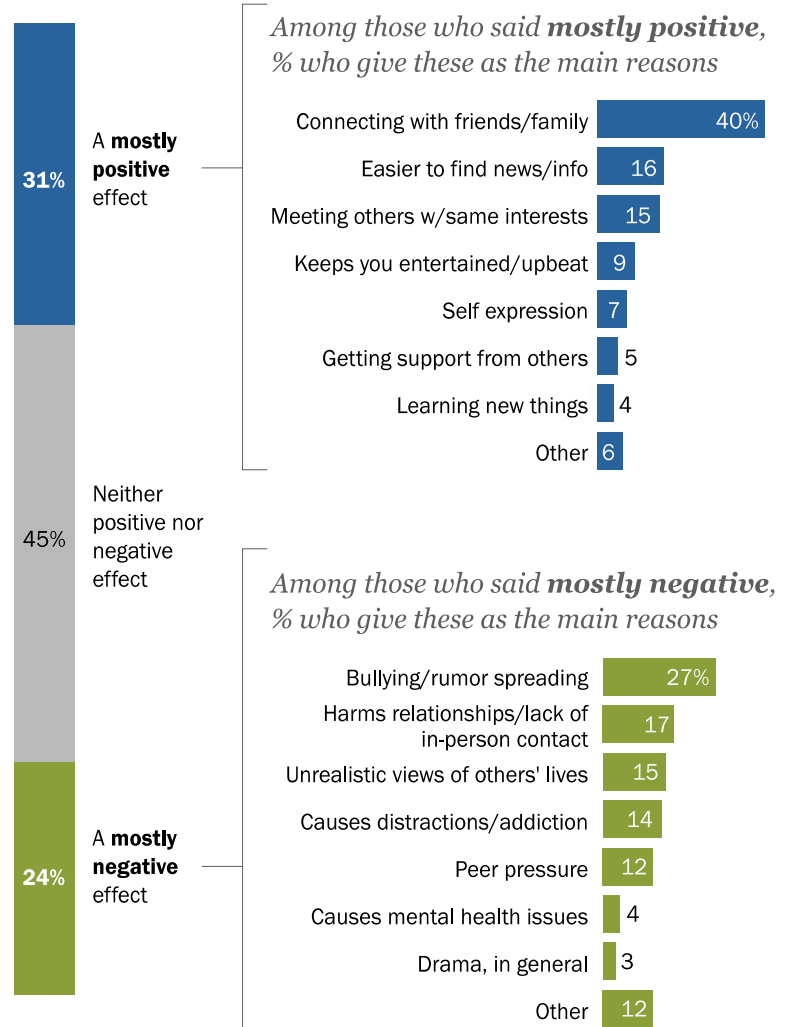
*"Gives people a bigger audience to speak and teach hate and belittle each other."* (Boy, age 13)

*"People can say whatever they want with anonymity and I think that has a negative impact."* (Boy, age 15)

*"Because teens are killing people all because of the things they see on social media or because of the things that happened on social media."* (Girl, age 14)

### Teens have mixed views on social media's effect on people their age; many say it helps them connect with others, some express concerns about bullying

*% of U.S. teens who say social media has had \_\_\_ on people their own age*



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Verbatim responses have been coded into categories, and figures may add up to more than 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018. "Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018"

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Meanwhile, 17% of these respondents feel these platforms harm relationships and result in less meaningful human interactions. Similar shares think social media distorts reality and gives teens

an unrealistic view of other people's lives (15%), or that teens spend too much time on social media (14%).

*"It has a negative impact on social (in-person) interactions."* (Boy, age 17)

*"It makes it harder for people to socialize in real life, because they become accustomed to not interacting with people in person."* (Girl, age 15)

*"It provides a fake image of someone's life. It sometimes makes me feel that their life is perfect when it is not."* (Girl, age 15)

*"[Teens] would rather go scrolling on their phones instead of doing their homework, and it's so easy to do so. It's just a huge distraction."* (Boy, age 17)

Another 12% criticize social media for influencing teens to give in to peer pressure, while smaller shares express concerns that these sites could lead to psychological issues or drama.

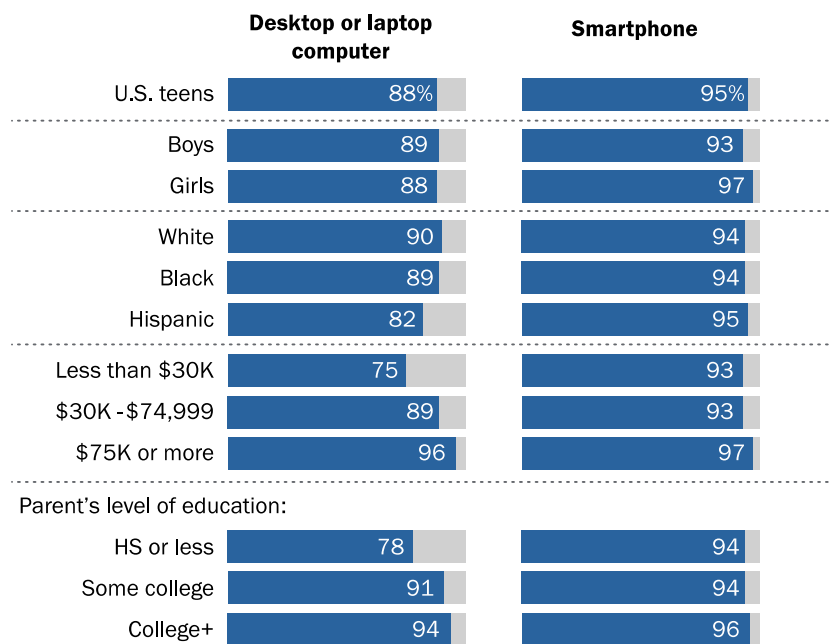
### Vast majority of teens have access to a home computer or smartphone

Some 95% of teens now say they have or have access to a smartphone, which represents a 22- percentage-point increase from the 73% of teens who said this in 2014-2015. Smartphone ownership is nearly universal among teens of different genders, races and ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.

A more nuanced story emerges when it comes to teens' access to computers. While 88% of teens report having access to a desktop or laptop computer at home, access varies greatly by income level.

### Smartphone access nearly ubiquitous among teens, while having a home computer varies by income

% of U.S. teens who say they have or have access to a \_\_\_ at home



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Parent's level of education based on highest level of education associated with a teen's parent. Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018. "Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018"

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Fully 96% of teens from households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more per year say they have access to a computer at home, but that share falls to 75% among those from households earning less than \$30,000 a year.

Computer access also varies by the level of education among parents. Teens who have a parent with a bachelor's degree or more are more likely to say they have access to a computer than teens whose parents have a high school diploma or less (94% vs. 78%).

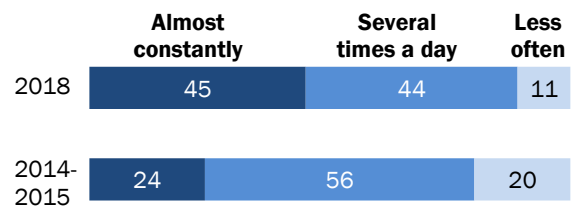
### A growing share of teens describe their internet use as near-constant

As smartphone access has become more prevalent, a growing share of teens now report using the internet on a near-constant basis. Some 45% of teens say they use the internet “almost constantly,” a figure that has nearly doubled from the 24% who said this in the 2014-2015 survey. Another 44% say they go online several times a day, meaning roughly nine-in-ten teens go online at least multiple times per day.

There are some differences in teens' frequency of internet use by gender, as well as race and ethnicity. Half of teenage girls (50%) are near-constant online users, compared with 39% of teenage boys. And Hispanic teens are more likely than whites to report using the internet almost constantly (54% vs. 41%).

### 45% of teens say they're online almost constantly

*% of U.S. teens who say they use the internet, either on a computer or a cellphone ...*



Note: “Less often” category includes teens who say they use the internet “about once a day,” “several times a week” and “less often.”

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 10, 2018. Trend data from previous Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2014-2015. “Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018”

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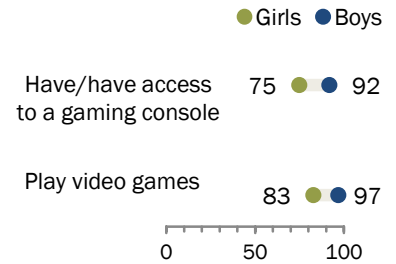
## A majority of both boys and girls play video games, but gaming is nearly universal for boys

Overall, 84% of teens say they have or have access to a game console at home, and 90% say they play video games of any kind (whether on a computer, game console or cellphone). While a substantial majority of girls report having access to a game console at home (75%) or playing video games in general (83%), those shares are even higher among boys. Roughly nine-in-ten boys (92%) have or have access to a game console at home, and 97% say they play video games in some form or fashion.

There has been growth in game console ownership among Hispanic teens and teens from lower-income families since the Center's previous study of the teen technology landscape in 2014-2015. The share of Hispanics who say they have access to a game console at home grew by 10 percentage points during this time period. And 85% of teens from households earning less than \$30,000 a year now say they have a game console at home, up from 67% in 2014-2015.

### Most teen boys and girls play video games

*% of U.S. teens who say they ...*



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

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## Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at [pewresearch.org/internet](http://pewresearch.org/internet).

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## Methodology

This analysis is based on a survey that was 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. Interviews were conducted online and by telephone from March 7 to April 10, 2018. The survey was conducted by NORC.

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 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:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Teens sample	743	5.0 percentage points
Parents sample	1,058	4.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for key subgroups are as follows:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unweighted sample size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
<b>Teens sample</b>		
Boys	348	7.2 percentage points
Girls	393	6.8 percentage points
White	355	7.2 percentage points
Black	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
Less than \$30K	199	9.6 percentage points
\$30K to \$74,999	266	8.3 percentage points
\$75K and up	278	8.1 percentage points
<i>Parent's 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

### Online platform use among U.S. teens, by demographic group

*% of U.S. teens who say they use ...*

	<b>YouTube</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Snapchat</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Tumblr</b>	<b>Reddit</b>
U.S. teens	85	72	69	51	32	9	7
Boys	89	69	67	49	33	9	11
Girls	81	75	72	53	32	9	4
White	86	73	72	48	33	10	8
Black	79	72	77	57	29	11	5
Hispanic	85	72	64	58	36	7	7
13-14	84	63	63	47	24	7	4
15-17	86	78	74	54	38	11	9
Less than \$30K	86	74	77	70	40	10	10
\$30K to \$74,999	84	72	71	56	30	8	4
\$75K and up	85	71	64	36	30	11	8
<i>Parent's level of educational attainment</i>							
High school or less	85	73	73	65	35	12	6
Some college	87	73	74	61	37	9	7
College graduate+	84	71	63	33	27	8	8

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Parent's level of education based on highest level of education associated with a teen's parent.

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

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## Device ownership among U.S. teens, by demographic group

*% of U.S. teens who say they have or have access at home to a ...*

	<b>Smartphone</b>	<b>Cellphone that is not a smartphone</b>	<b>Desktop or laptop computer</b>	<b>Gaming console</b>
U.S. teens	95	29	88	84
Boys	93	27	89	92
Girls	97	31	88	75
White	94	25	90	87
Black	94	32	89	78
Hispanic	95	34	82	81
13-14	94	26	88	86
15-17	95	30	88	82
Less than \$30K	93	38	75	85
\$30K to \$74,999	93	28	89	82
\$75K and up	97	24	96	84
<i>Parent's level of educational attainment</i>				
High school or less	94	33	78	79
Some college	94	31	91	90
College graduate+	96	24	94	82

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Parent's level of education based on highest level of education associated with a teen's parent.

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

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## Topline questionnaire

**2018 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S Teen Survey**  
**TOPLINE Draft**  
**March 7 – April 10, 2018**  
**Teens ages 13-17 N=743**

**ASK ALL:**

DEVICE At home, do you have or have access to... **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK/Refusal</u>
a. A smartphone			
March 7-April 10, 2018	95	5	*
Sept 25-Oct. 9, 2014 & Feb. 10-March 16, 2015	73	27	0
b. A cell phone that is not a smartphone			
March 7-April 10, 2018	29	70	2
Sept 25-Oct. 9, 2014 & Feb. 10-March 16, 2015	30	70	*
c. A desktop or laptop computer			
March 7-April 10, 2018	88	12	*
Sept 25-Oct. 9, 2014 & Feb. 10-March 16, 2015	87	13	0
d. A gaming console			
March 7-April 10, 2018	84	16	1
Sept 25-Oct. 9, 2014 & Feb. 10-March 16, 2015	81	19	*

**ASK ALL:**

INTREQ About how often do you use the internet, either on a computer or a cellphone?<sup>3</sup>

<u>March 7- April 10, 2018</u>	<u>Sept. 25 – Oct. 9, 2014 &amp; Feb. 10-March 16, 2015</u>	
45	24	Almost constantly
44	56	Several times a day
5	12	About once a day
5	5	Several times a week
2	3	Less often
0	0	DK/Refusal

<sup>3</sup> The survey conducted in 2014-2015 gave an explicit option for "less than a week" to be comparable with the current survey that has now been included in the "less often" category.

**ASK ALL:**

GAMING Do you ever play video games – on a computer, game console or cellphone?

<u>March 7-</u> <u>April 10, 2018</u>	
90	Yes
10	No
0	DK/Refusal

**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 IF USING MORE THAN ONE SOCIAL MEDIA SITE [Count of "Yes" to SNS1\_1-7 > 1]**  
 SNS2 Which one of these sites do you use most often?

**Based on those who use more than one social media site [N=634]**

<u>March 7-</u>	
<u>April 10, 2018</u>	
3	Twitter
16	Instagram
11	Facebook
40	Snapchat
29	YouTube
*	Tumblr
1	Reddit
*	DK/Refusal

SNSMOST **Summary of most used social media site, based on SNS1 and SNS2**

**Based on total [N=743]**

<u>March 7-</u>	
<u>April 10, 2018</u>	
3	Twitter
15	Instagram
10	Facebook
35	Snapchat
32	YouTube
*	Tumblr
1	Reddit
3	Not a social media user
*	DK/Refusal

**ASK ALL:**

SOC1 Overall, what effect would you say social media has had on people your age?

<u>March 7-</u>	
<u>April 10, 2018</u>	
31	Mostly positive
24	Mostly negative
45	Neither positive nor negative
*	DK/Refusal

**ASK IF SAYING SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A MOSTLY NEGATIVE OR MOSTLY POSITIVE EFFECT  
[SOC1=1,2]<sup>4</sup>**

SOC1a What is the main reason you think social media has a [IF SOC1=1 "mostly positive effect"; IF SOC1=2 "mostly negative effect"] on people your age?

**Based on those who say social media has a mostly positive effect [N=219]**

March 7-  
April 10, 2018

40	Communication with friends and family
16	Finding information/news/current events
15	Meeting people with similar interests
9	Happiness, entertainment, convenience
7	Self-expression
5	Getting support
4	Learning new things
6	Other
4	DK/Refusal

**Based on those who say social media has a mostly negative effect [N=211]**

March 7-  
April 10, 2018

27	Bullying/people being mean/spreading rumors Harms relationships/not enough in-person communication
17	Gives teens an unrealistic picture of others' lives
15	Distracted or addicted to devices
14	Peer pressure/teens too easily influenced
12	Causes psychological issues
4	Drama
3	Other
12	DK/Refusal
1	

<sup>4</sup> Open-ended responses were manually coded. Each open-ended response may contain reference to multiple themes.