

A blue-tinted photograph of four teenagers looking at their smartphones. The image is the background for the entire page. The text is overlaid on this image.

GROWING UP ONLINE

Findings and Recommendations from
the New Jersey Commission on the Effects
of Social Media Usage on Adolescents

September 15, 2025

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Commission Members

The Commission on the Effects of Social Media Usage on Adolescents (the Commission) was established by P.L. 2023, c. 126 in response to mounting public concern over the role of digital platforms in the lives of young people. With the charge to investigate how social media affects adolescent health and academic performance, the Commission was composed of nineteen members, including education officials, medical and mental health professionals, policy experts, community stakeholders, parents, and students. The members of the Commission, who serve without compensation are:

- **Pearl Gabel** (co-chairperson) — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Executive Vice President, Moxie Strategies.
- **Charles Gelinas** (co-chairperson) — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Parent Representative.
- **Erikka Bahnuk** — Appointed by Assembly Minority Leader John DiMaio; Parent Representative.
- **Robin Cogan** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; School Nurse, New Jersey State School Nurses Association.
- **Mary Coogan** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Chief Executive Officer, Advocates for Children of New Jersey.
- **James P. Curtin** — Appointed by Senate Minority Leader Anthony M. Bucco; Chief Business and Government Relations Officer, Acenda Integrated Health.
- **Kathy Ehling, Esq.** — Designee for the Commissioner of Education, Kevin Dehmer; Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Educational Services, New Jersey Department of Education.
- **Kristine Esposito** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Immediate Past President, New Jersey Association of School Psychologists.
- **Ebony D. Grace** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Chief Executive Officer, New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition.
- **Chanta L. Jackson** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Vice President for Legislation/Resolutions, New Jersey School Boards Association.
- **Dorota Mani** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Parent Representative.
- **Heather Moran** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Coordinator of Program, Development, Design, & Implementation, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association.
- **Scott Rocco** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Superintendent, Hamilton Public Schools; Representative, New Jersey Association of School Administrators.
- **Sharon Roseboro** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; President, New Jersey Parent-Teacher Association.
- **Anjali Soni** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Student Representative.
- **Charlotte Blythe Valvanis** — Appointed by Governor Philip D. Murphy; Student Representative.
- **Dr. Mikhail Varshavski** — Appointed by Senate President Nicholas Scutari; Primary Care Physician, Chatham Family Medicine.
- Commission Secretary: **Kelly Allen**, New Jersey Department of Education.

September 15, 2025

The Honorable Philip D. Murphy
Governor of the State of New Jersey
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625



Dear Governor Murphy,

The Commission on the Effects of Social Media Usage on Adolescents (the “Commission”) is honored to submit the enclosed report as requested under P.L. 2023, c. 126. Our charge required a comprehensive review of the extent to which adolescents use social media in and outside of the classroom as well as the effects usage has on health and academics.

After careful consideration, the Commission has set forth our findings. Recognizing that the term “social media” can be ambiguous, the Commission has taken the liberty of broadly defining the term “social media” for purposes of this report to ensure clarity around the phenomenon we intend to address. We propose 20 specific recommendations to provide policymakers, education & community organizations, healthcare providers, families & caregivers, and social media companies with action steps to address this urgent issue.

Our recommendations to you and the Legislature include legislative and regulatory proposals, guidance on age-appropriate use, resources for parents and caregivers, and strengthened educational programs for students. We also highlight best practices for addressing social media within households and schools, and stress the need for greater transparency from the private sector. We hope to both improve the social media experience for youth and empower them to interact online in positive and healthy ways.

Our goal is to ensure that, moving forward, students can engage meaningfully and constructively with social media, while being protected from harm and supported in adapting to a digital world.

Thank you for your support of the Commission. We look forward to working together to safeguard the health, well-being, and academic success of New Jersey’s youth.

Sincerely,

Pearl Gabel & Charles Gelinas, Co-Chairpersons

Commission on the Effects of Social Media Usage on Adolescents

Acknowledgements

The Commission on the Effects of Social Media Usage on Adolescents extends its deepest gratitude to the many individuals and organizations whose expertise and commitment made this report possible.

We thank the staff of the New Jersey Department of Education for their guidance and support throughout the Commission's work. Their dedication ensured that our process was thorough, transparent, and well-coordinated.

We are especially grateful to the research team at Rutgers University School of Communication and Information. Their comprehensive review of the literature and survey of parents and adolescents provided essential data that shaped our findings and recommendations.

The Commission also acknowledges the contributions of our guest speakers, medical and mental health professionals, educators, legal and policy experts, parents, and students, who generously shared their time, insights, and personal experiences. Their testimony grounded our work in both evidence and lived reality.

We further recognize the many community organizations, advocates, and stakeholders who provided resources, perspectives, and examples of best practices. Their collaboration reinforced the importance of cross-sector partnerships in addressing this complex issue.

Overview of the Commission’s Methodology

From the outset of its initial convening in September 2024, the Commission undertook a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach. The core objectives included assessing the prevalence of social media use among students, evaluating its impact on both emotional and physical health, analyzing its effect on academic performance, and identifying strategies to mitigate adverse outcomes.

The Commission’s inquiry centered on several key questions: How frequently are adolescents using social media? What are the emotional, psychological, and physical consequences of this usage? How does it intersect with classroom performance and school climate? Are certain populations more vulnerable to adverse effects?

To address these questions, the Commission engaged in meaningful dialogue with experts across sectors. Guest speakers, including psychologists, legal scholars, digital policy specialists, and families directly affected by social media harms, provided crucial insight into the evolving digital landscape. These expert consultations helped validate findings, highlight unforeseen risks, and expand the scope of the Commission’s inquiry. See Appendix A for a list of the guest speakers who provided the Commission with information, insight, and their personal experiences.

To fulfill its mandate, the Commission adopted a structured methodology grounded in collaboration, transparency, and data integrity. Members were organized into four key subcommittees each tasked with conducting in-depth research and formulating targeted recommendations based on their findings. These subcommittees are:

- ▶ **Medical and Mental Health:** This subcommittee focused on the physiological and psychological impacts of social media on adolescents, examining issues such as anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and self-esteem. Drawing from clinical studies, expert lectures, and global health initiatives, this subcommittee’s recommendations aim to support healthcare providers, educators, and parents/caregivers in promoting adolescent well-being.
- ▶ **Personal and Family Impact:** Exploring the interpersonal dynamics influenced by social media, this subcommittee investigated how usage patterns affect adolescent relationships with peers, parents/caregivers, and siblings. This subcommittee’s recommendations, informed by family-based research and personal narratives, seek to empower families to navigate the digital landscape together and foster healthy communication and establish clear boundaries.
- ▶ **Legal and Policy:** This subcommittee analyzed the regulatory frameworks surrounding social media, both domestically and internationally, to identify gaps and opportunities for protecting adolescents. This subcommittee’s recommendations, rooted in legal scholarship and policy analysis, aim to guide lawmakers, tech companies, and regulators in creating safer online environments while respecting innovation and free expression.
- ▶ **Outreach and Education:** Dedicated to raising awareness and building digital literacy, this subcommittee focused on proposing strategies to enhance outreach efforts and educational initiatives. This subcommittee’s recommendations, informed by traditional outreach practices, academic research, and successful global models, aim to provide adolescents, parents/caregivers, and educators with the tools and knowledge needed to use social media responsibly and critically, while leaving the development of specific campaigns and programs to relevant stakeholders.

Each committee was responsible for investigating a distinct thematic area. These subcommittees met monthly to review data, identify emerging trends, and shape targeted recommendations.

Together, these subcommittees have synthesized their findings to produce a balanced, forward-thinking set of recommendations that reflect both the challenges and opportunities presented by social media, in order to best support the healthy development of adolescents in an increasingly digital, interconnected world.

The Commission's work was also informed by researchers at the Rutgers University School of Communication and Information (Rutgers) who the New Jersey Department of Education contracted with to conduct a comprehensive review of the research literature as well as to facilitate a study of the experiences of New Jersey parents and teens as it relates to the effects of social media use on adolescents.

In May, June, and July 2025, parents and teens were surveyed about adolescent social media use through the Rutgers-Eagleton SSRS Garden State Panel and SSRS Opinion Panel. This broad sample of over 1,100 New Jersey residents, including parents and teens, provided the Commission with critical insight. As will be detailed throughout this report, the survey explored various aspects of social media usage, including frequency as well as self-reported impacts on mental health, physical health, academic performance, and social interaction.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Consent protocols were rigorously followed, and strong privacy safeguards were applied to all data. Analytical techniques included both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Survey responses were analyzed to understand behavioral and attitudinal trends, while usage statistics and academic indicators provided measurable insights. Additional comparative analyses to explore demographic disparities in experiences and outcomes will be further explored in a future report from Rutgers.

Ultimately, the Commission's findings were deliberated and synthesized through a consensus-based process. Each subcommittee submitted draft recommendations which were then harmonized into a cohesive set of policy and practice proposals. These recommendations were designed not only to mitigate current harms but also to offer a sustainable framework for healthier digital engagement moving forward. The Commission also ensured that findings and recommendations reflected a diversity of perspectives.

The final report reflects the collective effort of study, dialogue, and critical analysis over the past year. It is the Commission's hope that these recommendations will serve as both a policy roadmap and a catalyst for continued cross-sector collaboration to safeguard the well-being of New Jersey's youth in a rapidly evolving digital world.



Introduction & Background

History of Social Media's Rise and Impact

Social media's journey from an obscure, aspirational digital experiment to cultural cornerstone represents one of the most significant technological and societal transformations in American history. What began as simple platforms for digital connection has evolved into complex ecosystems that fundamentally reshape how people around the world communicate, consume information, conduct business, engage politically and even how they think and feel. We may not all agree about the nature and severity of its impact, but we should all agree it has changed the world.

The social media revolution did not begin with Facebook or Twitter (now known as X), but with earlier platforms that established the digital groundwork. Six Degrees, launched in 1997 by Andrew Weinreich, was the first robust social network software application. Based on a "Web of Contacts" model, the software application allowed users to create profiles and connect with others, pioneering the concept of online social networking. Friendster and MySpace emerged in the early 2000s, becoming the first social platforms to gain widespread popularity with millions of users in the United States, demonstrating Americans' willingness to share personal information online. Friendster's model focused on connecting people through a "six degrees of separation" concept while MySpace connected users with common interests. These early platforms revealed a vast, untapped desire for digital connection among the American public.

Meanwhile, blogging platforms like LiveJournal and Blogger empowered ordinary people to publish content without technical expertise. These services established critical social media principles: digital identity creation, friendship networks, and content sharing—concepts that would soon revolutionize American digital culture.

Between 2002 and 2004, Mark Zuckerberg launched CourseMatch, then Facemash and then Facebook from his Harvard dorm room. CourseMatch and Facemash were intended to be used solely by his peers and classmates. Facebook's earliest iteration also focused on Harvard University students but quickly jumped to additional college campuses within a month. When Facebook was released to the general public in 2006, it experienced explosive growth nationally and then globally. The platform's easy interface and real-name policy differentiated it from competitors, helping establish social media as mainstream rather than a niche social activity. In a mere four years, from the relatively humble origins of a dorm room, the fully transformative power of social media had been unleashed onto American society.

Twitter’s 2006 debut introduced microblogging, changing expectations about information sharing with its 140-character limit. The platform pioneered real-time communication, established itself as a political space and broke news stories before traditional media, disrupting established information hierarchies. YouTube, which launched in 2005, transformed video consumption, allowing anyone to create and broadcast content without the traditional gatekeepers of television standards, journalistic ethics, product safety regulations and other protective measures, fundamentally altering entertainment creation and consumption.

During this period, internet-capable smartphone adoption—particularly following the iPhone’s 2007 release—propelled social media use by enabling constant connectivity among everyday people. Social platforms shifted from occasional desktop visits to continuous mobile companions, dramatically increasing American screen time and digital engagement as Jonathan Haidt (2024) notes in *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. This seminal work chronicles the large-scale demographic movement of children and adolescents away from unstructured, in-person play and socialization time to more convenient, continuously stimulating screen-based interaction and the negative impact this societal shift had on mental and emotional well-being for them. To date, this “Great Rewiring” as Haidt calls it constitutes the largest uncontrolled experiment humanity has ever performed on its own children.

As platforms consolidated, they also revolutionized digital advertising space. Facebook’s targeted advertising capabilities allowed unprecedented demographic precision, transforming marketing practices. Meanwhile, Instagram (acquired by Facebook in 2012) created new visual-first communication paradigms and jumpstarted influencer culture—where ordinary individuals could build personal brands and monetize click-throughs and followers, a term which we now call “social media influencers.”

The economic impact expanded beyond advertising. Entire industries have since emerged around social media management, content creation, and influencer marketing. Small businesses gained access to affordable marketing channels that were previously unavailable to them, while platforms like Etsy and Pinterest connected artisans directly with consumers, disrupting traditional retail models.

The 2016 presidential election marked a watershed moment for social media’s political impact. Campaigns leveraged sophisticated targeting capabilities while foreign entities exploited platform vulnerabilities to spread misinformation. Social media’s role in political discourse became the new normal, forcing platforms to acknowledge their influence on democratic processes. Simultaneously, movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo demonstrated social media’s power for activism and collective action. These campaigns allowed marginalized voices to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, creating unprecedented accountability mechanisms and driving national conversations on race, gender, and power at little to no cost.

By 2018, Frances Haugen, a data engineer and former employee of top social media companies, provided the Securities and Exchange Commission with documents detailing her theory that the “systemic” problems with many platforms is that the algorithms rank posts by popularity which leads to the amplification of “angry content” and the spread of divisiveness. She noted that “angry content” is more likely to receive engagement as noted by the reactions, comments, and shares those posts receive; hence, they yield wider distribution.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not just force all teens to be cooped up at home with their screens and shut classroom doors—it slammed shut the entire world of adolescence for millions. As teens found themselves isolated from friends, teachers, and activities that defined their identity, a mental health crisis quietly emerged. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data paints a devastating picture: 37% of high school students reported struggling with poor mental health during the pandemic, while a staggering 44% experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness throughout the year (Canady, 2022).

When schools went virtual, teenagers lost more than just in-person learning. They lost the hallway conversations, the team practices, the club meetings—all the crucial social connections that help young people develop. As Zhang and colleagues (2021) noted, this sudden severing of relationships with peers and mentors, combined with the elimination of extracurricular outlets, created a perfect storm for declines in adolescent mental health.

Millennials (born between 1981-1996), Generation Zs (born between 1997-2012), and Generation Alphas (born between 2010-2024) are increasingly aware of social media’s downsides, with trends toward digital detoxes, screen time limitations, and privacy-focused alternatives. Yet even as criticism mounts, social media platforms continue to reshape media consumption with algorithm-driven, uncannily appealing short-form video, demonstrating social media’s continuing evolution.

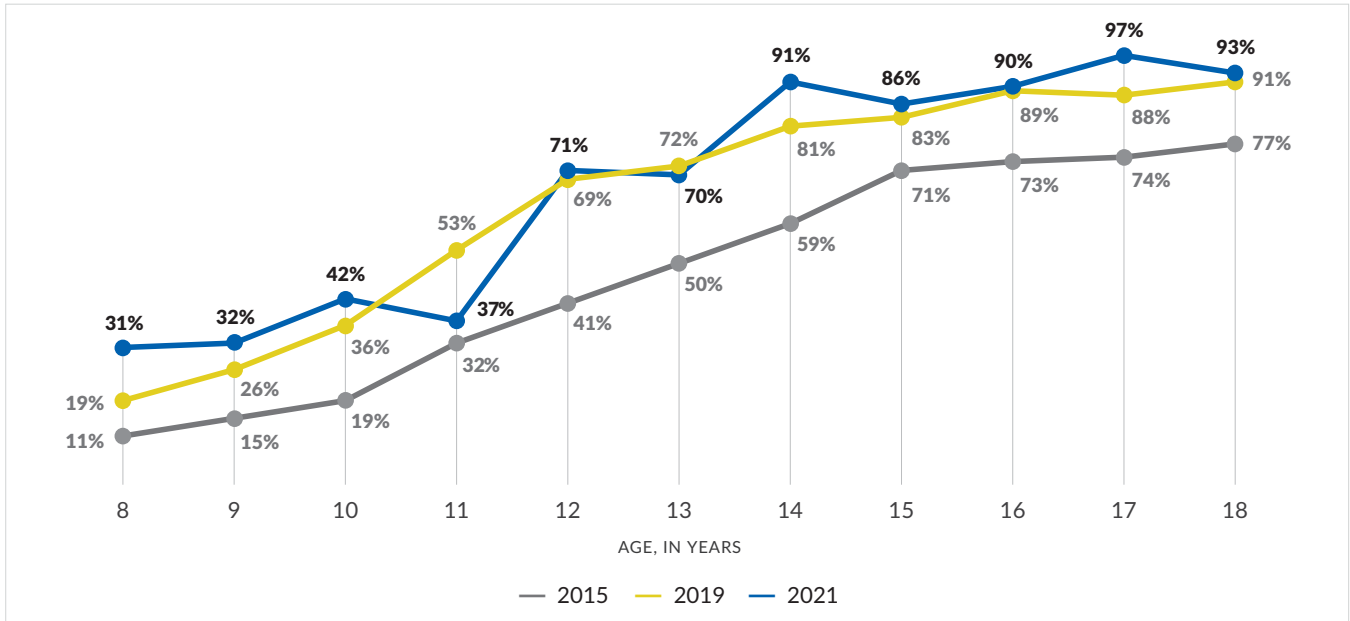
Social media’s impact on American society represents both incredible innovation and profound disruption. These platforms have democratized communication, created economic opportunities, and enabled new forms of community and activism. They have also led to polarization, denialism, cynicism, distrust, misinformation, contributed to mental health challenges, and created unprecedented privacy concerns. Social media has permanently altered American communication patterns, information consumption, and social dynamics—transforming not just how Americans connect with each other, but how they understand themselves and their place in society.

When social media first became mainstream in 2005, approximately 5% of Americans used a major social media platform. By 2021, that number skyrocketed to 72%. In 2022, an estimated 4.7 billion people around the world were active on social media platforms with the number increasing to 4.89 billion a year later.

Additionally, according to the 2021 Common Sense Media survey, among U.S. children ages 8 to 18, 30% of girls reported that they enjoyed social media “a lot,” as opposed to 19% of boys. Statistically, more Black children (35%) and Hispanic/Latino children (28%) reported that they enjoyed social media “a lot,” compared with their white peers (21%). Approximately 30% of children from families with an annual income under \$35,000 reported that they enjoyed social media “a lot”; this percentage was significantly higher than that of children from families with an annual income greater than \$100,000.

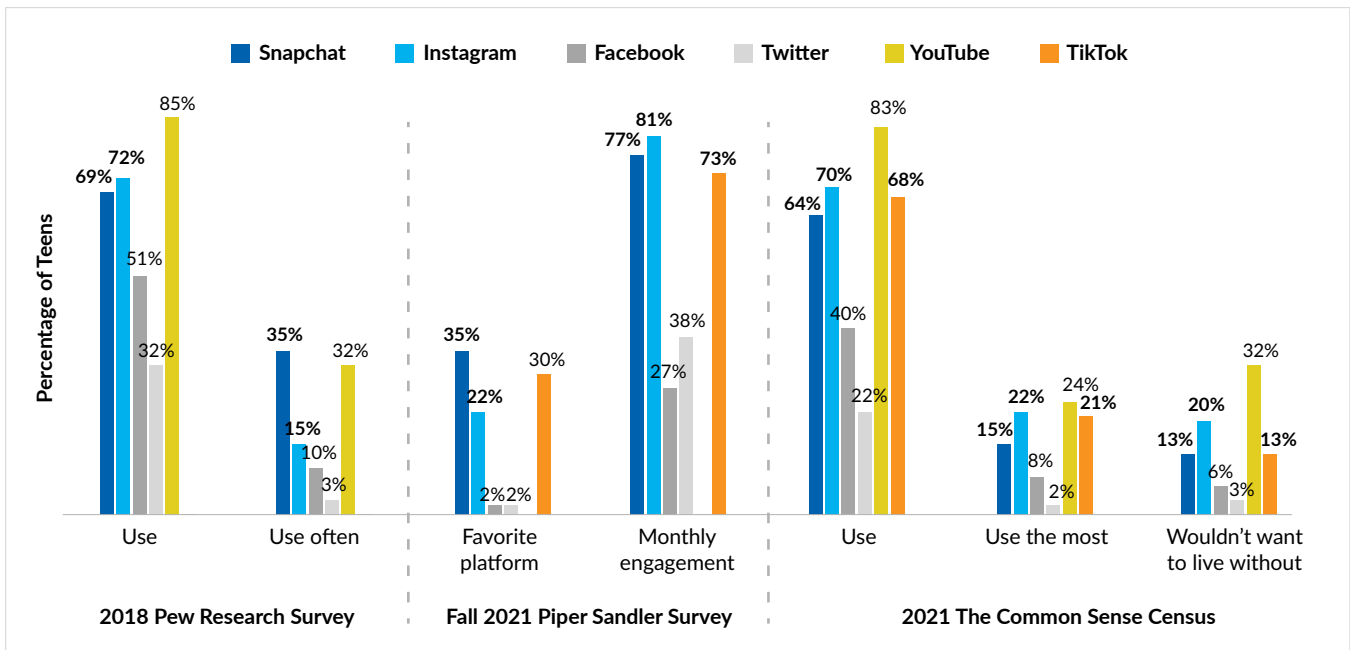
As illustrated in the below tables, excerpted from *The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens (2021)*, there has been a profound change in exposure to smartphones and social media over the last ten years. It is interesting to note that an increasing percentage of 8- to 10- years old have their own smartphones and that more teens have smartphones than ever before resulting in them being exposed to a variety of social media platforms at an alarming rate.

Figure 2. Smartphone Ownership by Children's Age 2015-2021



Source: [8-18-census-integrated-report-final-web_0.pdf \(commonsensemedia.org\)](#)

Figure 3. Percentage of Teenagers by Social Media Platform Usage (Three National Surveys): 2018 vs. 2021



Source: [Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018 | Pew Research Center](#); [Taking Stock With Teens® - Spring 2022 \(pipersandler.com\)](#); [Youth Statistics: Internet and Social Media – Adolescence – ACT for Youth](#); [More than 1 In 3 Teens Say Snapchat Is Their Favorite Social Media App, Only 2% Cite Facebook, Survey Finds \(forbes.com\)](#); [8-18-census-integrated-report-final-web_0.pdf \(commonsensemedia.org\)](#)

Table 2. Percentage of Teenagers, by Social Media Platform Usage and Demographics: 2021

Among the 79% of all 13- to 18-year-olds who use social media and online videos at least once a week, percent who say they ever use ...	Gender		Race/Ethnicity			Family Income		
	Boys	Girls	White	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Lower	Middle	Higher
YouTube*	86%	80%	82%	89%	81%	81%	85%	81%
Instagram*	62%	78%	65%	81%	77%	66%	74%	67%
TikTok	66%	70%	67%	77%	73%	68%	73%	62%
Snapchat	62%	66%	68%	58%	54%	54%	67%	64%
Facebook	40%	40%	39%	44%	39%	46%	45%	31%
Twitter	23%	20%	20%	36%	21%	16%	27%	18%
Discord*	29%	18%	26%	14%	24%	11%	24%	27%
Pinterest*	8%	30%	19%	14%	19%	16%	19%	20%
Reddit*	14%	7%	11%	10%	8%	2%	9%	15%
Percent of 8- to 18-year-olds who say they enjoy social media “alot”*	19%	30%	21%	35%	28%	30%	24%	22%

Note: *The difference between girls and boys is statistically significant. Family income: Lower income is <\$35,000 per year; middle is \$35,000 to \$99,999; and higher is \$100,000 or more. Source: [8-18-census-integrated-report-final-web_0.pdf \(commonsensemedia.org\)](#)



Social Media Use Among Youth

What is Social Media?

Technology, and adolescents' use thereof, often shifts faster, and more fluidly, than reviewers, commentators and policymakers can keep pace. Despite being deeply integrated into modern life, a universally accepted definition of "social media" has been elusive.

Numerous pieces of proposed Federal legislation over the past few years have attempted to define it, each offering a slightly different interpretation of what constitutes social media. Academic literature similarly offers a variety of definitions for social media. Even in the medical field, definitions vary. For instance, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) defines social media as "a multi-directional, multi-dimensional super highway, where audience members or individual users can both receive information as well as create and share new content with everybody else on the social media platform," while the Mayo Clinic defines social media as "a term for internet sites and apps that you can use to share content you've created." These varying definitions reflect the multidisciplinary lens through which social media is viewed and the complexity involved in developing policies and interventions that address the medical and general health implications of social media with respect to adolescents.

The goal of the Commission is to provide an assessment of the effects of social media usage on adolescents now, and to make appropriate recommendations to guide educators, medical and mental health practitioners and policymakers moving forward. To that end, we will define "social media" with a commensurate sense of its evolving nature, so as to capture a wide spectrum of technology platforms, including unforeseen technological modalities in the future.

Social media includes one or more of the following concepts:

- ▶ It encompasses any interactive platform that enables two-way communication, whether between known individuals or strangers, or offers users the opportunity for such interaction even if they choose not to engage.
- ▶ It employs algorithms (including AI-enhanced algorithms) to curate content shaping what users see based on their prior interactions.
- ▶ It is continuously accessible and delivers various forms of media and information at an accelerated pace.

“Social media,” for purposes of this report, refers to interactive digital platforms and technologies that enable users to: create profiles; produce, share, and consume content; and engage with others through comments, likes, and other forms of interaction—whether synchronously or asynchronously. These platforms facilitate connection and communication within virtual communities, often employing algorithms (especially AI-driven ones) to curate and personalize user experiences. Social media is characterized by rapid, continuous access to information and media, often delivered in visually driven or quantifiable formats, primarily and most effectively through the use of wireless media devices such as smartphones and tablets. It spans a range of environments—from traditional, name-brand platforms to gaming, chat, or comment-based spaces, and even interactive news forums. Any reference to “social media” and the regulation thereof in this report should always be deemed to include corollary reference to the use of artificial intelligence in any related platform and access of content through wireless media devices.

Frequency & Duration of Use

Christakis’ et al. (2025) passive study found that adolescents spent an average of 1.5 hours on smartphones during the 6.5 hours of school, accounting for approximately 27% of an average 24-hour phone use of 5.59 hours daily, and that 25% of the adolescents in the sample spent more than 2 hours on the phones during the school day with the average Instagram user spending 25 minutes on the app per school day. Adolescents in the sample used their smartphones for at least 66 minutes during the school day, largely connecting with messages and social media. The study suggested that while access to phones for communication and learning purposes during the school day may offer some benefits, “most school-day smartphone use appears incongruous with that purpose.”

Common Sense Media’s *2023 Constant Companion: A Week in the Life of a Young Person’s Smartphone Use*, explored the nuanced relationships young people have with their smartphones and when and where and how often they use them. Employing tracking software and following up with discussions with youth advisors, the research team gathered data on specifically how young people used their phones. Among the findings were that teens in the sample kept their smartphones close at hand, picking them up a median of 51 times per day, ranging from two to 498 times per day and that smartphone use at school is widespread, varying based on school guidelines.

The teens in the study received a median of 237 notifications per day, with about 25% of the distractions occurring during the school day. Used by 50% of participants in the sample, TikTok was the most popular of the apps because of its pleasurable and seamless interaction between the platform and the interests or mood of the user. More than half of the participants used their phones overnight on school nights, and more than half of teens used their phones primarily for social media, gaming, or YouTube.

Nearly half (45%) of the participants used apps with mature (17+) or adult only (18+) ratings, such as Pornhub, fantasy sports and betting apps, adult messaging sites and forums, and violent games. More than two-thirds admitted sometimes or often having difficulty stopping their use of technology, which offered a way “to escape from sorrow or get relief from negative feelings, and [caused them to] miss sleep due to being on their phone or the internet late at night” (Common Sense, 2023, p.9).

According to Vogels et al. (2022) research, approximately 95% of high school-aged youth use a social media platform, with approximately one-fifth reporting “almost constant” social media use. As of 2021, 8th and 10th graders spent an average of 3.5 hours per day on social media, with one in four adolescents

spending 5 or more hours per day and one in seven youth spending 7 or more hours per day on social media platforms. Although age 13 is commonly the required minimum age used by social media platforms in the United States, nearly 40% of children ages 8 through 12 use social media.

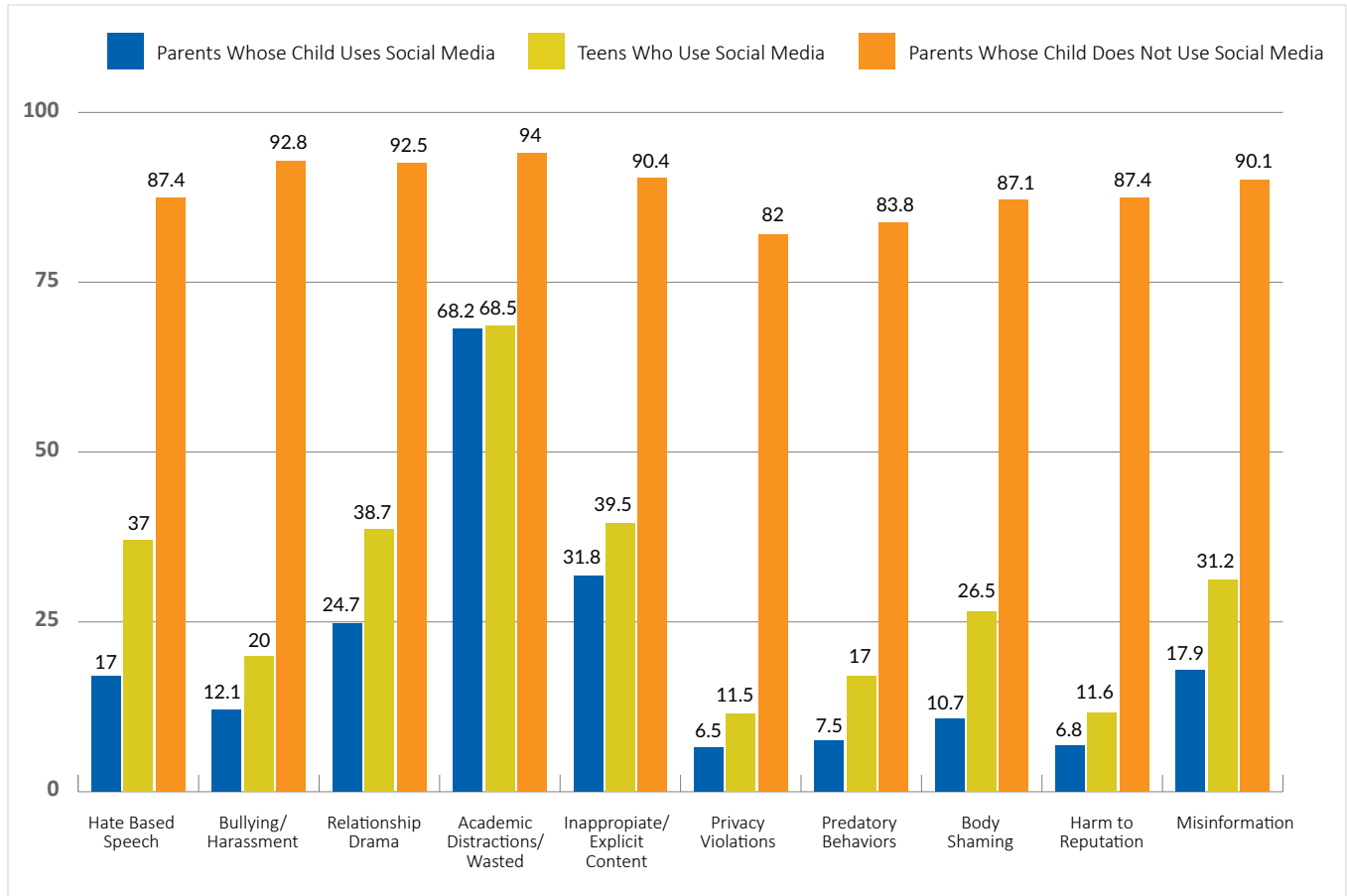
While the above research provides broad insight into adolescents' use of social media, the 2025 Rutgers study highlights the perspectives of New Jersey parents and teens. Rutgers-Eagleton | SSRS surveyed 923 parents and a subsample of 202 teens of the surveyed parents. Of the 923 parents, 589 parents reported that their child uses social media. Almost 70% of these parents indicated that their children spend less than 4 hours a day on social media and 27% shared that their children spend more than 4 hours per day on social media. Teens that use social media reported a similar amount of time as their parents reported: 62% reported less than 4 hours and 38% reported spending more than 4 hours.

However, when examining time spent on social media in class and late at night, parents and teens report different experiences. Of the parents whose child uses social media, 9.3% indicated that their child uses it in class whereas 22.3% of teens report they use social media in class. The difference between the two groups is even greater when discussing social media use after 9pm. Only 38.1% of parents report that their child uses social media after 9pm, while 65.5% of teens report using social media after 9pm.

While parents may be somewhat unaware of the time teens spend on social media and when that occurs, they report similar understanding of who teens are connecting with online and recognize that not only are teens engaged in school-related activities on social media but also in beneficial activities that promote creativity, inspiration, and connectivity. Parents also recognize that students feel bored, disconnected, and anxious when they do not have access to their phone.

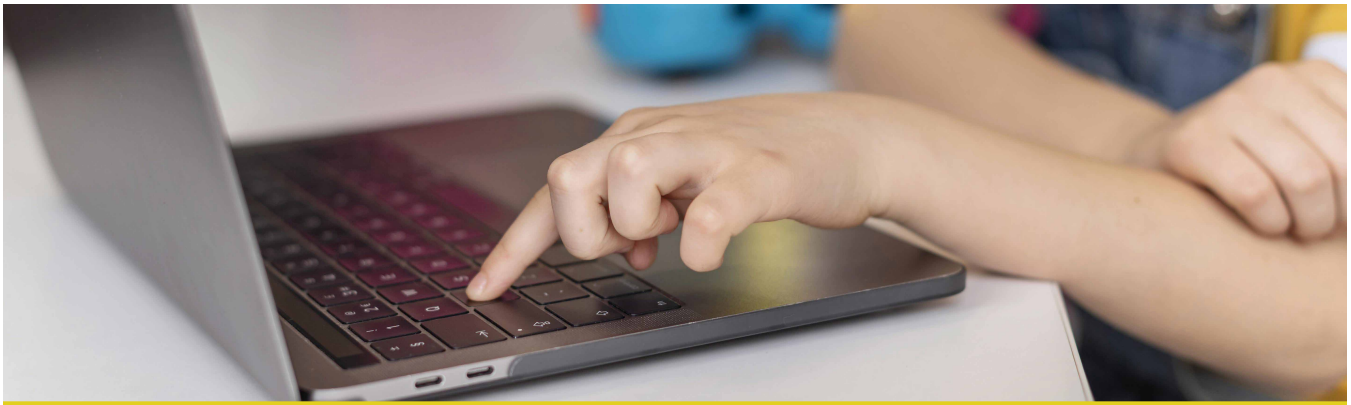
The study also examined the experiences that teens had on social media by asking both parents and teens how often the teen had specific types of experiences. The below chart depicts the percentage of people who indicated "often" or "sometimes" for the specific experience. While parents reported at an almost identical percent of the amount of time teens experienced academic distractions and wasted time as teens did, teens reported higher amounts of negative experiences than parents perceive, including hate-based speech, inappropriate content, body shaming, misinformation, among others.

Percent of people who indicate “often” or “sometimes” experiencing the following on social media



An important finding from this survey was that both parents and teens recognize that social media use harms teens’ ability to get quality sleep, be physically active, and focus. As seen in other research studies, sleep and physical activity are critical to supporting healthy youth development in the classroom and life.

Initial results from the Rutgers study provided the Commission with great insight into the experience of parents and teens in New Jersey and helped guide their review of related research. Additional comparison and analysis of the study will be released in an upcoming report from Rutgers.



Legal & Policy Landscape

Federal Regulations and Statutes

While there are no Federal laws that explicitly regulate the use of social media and cell phones in schools, the below Federal statutes influence how schools manage digital access, privacy, and online interactions for students. These laws and regulations impact social media use, online safety, and digital communication in educational settings.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) 15 U.S.C.S. § 6501

COPPA regulates online services and websites that collect personal information from children under 13. Many social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, require users to be at least 13 years old to comply with COPPA. Schools must ensure that any online tools or apps used for educational purposes also comply with COPPA restrictions.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 20 U.S.C.S. § 1232g

FERPA protects the privacy of student education records and restricts the sharing of student information without parental consent. Schools must be cautious when using digital platforms that collect or store student data, including social media platforms or apps used for educational purposes.

Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) 47 C.F.R. § 54.520 (with amendments appearing at 90 FR 27910 and 90 FR 27785)

CIPA requires schools and libraries receiving federal E-Rate funding to implement internet safety policies, including content filtering and monitoring student online activity. Many schools use filtering software to block social media platforms and inappropriate content to comply with CIPA.

Protecting Personal Information Online: The Communications Decency Act (Section 230)

The Communications Decency Act provides legal immunity to social media platforms for content posted by users while allowing them to moderate harmful or illegal content. This law impacts how schools address cyberbullying and inappropriate content on social media platforms, as schools have limited legal recourse against social media companies.

Anti-Cyberbullying and Online Harassment Laws

While no Federal law specifically criminalizes cyberbullying, states have enacted laws requiring schools to address and prevent cyberbullying. The Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages schools to implement anti-bullying programs, including cyberbullying prevention.

As we consider the impact of social media use in schools, it is important to note that regulation of cell phone access and social media use is determined at the state and local level. However, schools must be aware of Federal privacy requirements when integrating social media into education and must comply with CIPA to ensure safe internet access that protects students from harmful content.

To strengthen protections for youth on social media, Federal policymakers have introduced the bipartisan Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) S.1409 (118th). KOSA provides young people and parents/caregivers with the tools, safeguards, and transparency they need to protect against online harms and requires social media platforms to put the well-being of children first by providing an environment that is safe by default.

Introduced in 2022 by Senators Richard Blumenthal and Marsha Blackburn, the legislation:

- ▶ Requires social media platforms to provide minors with options to protect their information, disable addictive product features, and opt out of personalized algorithmic recommendations. Platforms are required to enable the strongest privacy settings for kids by default.
- ▶ Gives parents/caregivers new controls to help protect their children and spot harmful behaviors and provides parents and educators with a dedicated channel to report harmful behavior.
- ▶ Creates a duty for online platforms to prevent and mitigate specific dangers to minors, including promotion of suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual exploitation, and advertisements for certain illegal products e.g. tobacco and alcohol, i.e. a “duty of care”.
- ▶ Ensures that parents/caregivers and policymakers know whether online platforms are taking meaningful steps to address risks to kids by requiring independent audits and research into how these platforms impact the well-being of kids and teens.

In July 2024, the bill passed in the Senate 91-3 but was not acted on in the U.S. House of Representatives before the end of the 118th Congress, nullifying its progress. Senators Blackburn, Blumenthal, Schumer, and Thune reintroduced the bill in the 119th Congress (2025-2026) in May 2025.

Supporters for KOSA include over 250 national, state, and local organizations, including a broad range of nonprofits, tech accountability and parent groups and pediatricians including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Federation of Teachers, Common Sense Media, Fairplay, The Real Facebook Oversight Board and the NAACP. Some prominent tech companies, including Apple, Microsoft, X and Snap, have also signed on.

ParentsSOS, a group of some 20 parents who have lost children to harm caused by social media, has also been campaigning for the bill’s passage.

Opponents include the ACLU, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and other groups supporting free speech as they are concerned it would violate the First Amendment. Even with the revisions that stripped state attorneys general from enforcing its duty of care provision, EFF calls it a “dangerous and unconstitutional censorship bill that would empower state officials to target services and online content they do not like.”

An earlier version of the bill empowered state attorneys general to enforce KOSA’s “duty of care” provision but LGBTQ groups and others raised concerns they could be used to censor information about LGBTQ or reproductive issues. In the updated version, state attorneys general can still enforce other provisions but not the “duty of care” standard.

Broader enforcement would fall to the Federal Trade Commission, which would have oversight over what types of content is “harmful” to children.

While these federal laws provide a framework, it is important to note that state and local school districts typically set specific rules governing the use of social media and cell phones in schools.

State Laws & Policies

State Laws & Policies

In recent years, growing concerns over the impact of social media on adolescent mental health, safety, and well-being have prompted a wave of legislative action across the United States. Lawmakers in several states have introduced and enacted bills aimed at curbing minors’ access to social media platforms, often by requiring parental consent, enforcing age verification, and limiting exposure to potentially harmful content.

Utah has been a trailblazer in this space. In early 2025, the state passed the App Store Accountability Act, a first-of-its-kind law requiring app store operators like Apple and Google to verify users’ ages and obtain parental consent before allowing minors to download social media apps. This law is set to take effect in May 2026 and reflects Utah’s broader commitment to digital child safety.

New York has taken a similarly assertive approach. The SAFE For Kids Act, enacted in 2024, mandates that platforms secure parental consent before delivering algorithmically driven “addictive” feeds to users under 18. It also prohibits platforms from sending push notifications to minors during late-night hours—between midnight and 6am—unless a parent permits it.

Texas enacted the SCOPE Act in 2023, requiring parental consent for social media access by minors and mandating content filters to shield young users from material related to self-harm, suicide, and eating disorders (Office of the Attorney General of Texas, 2024). Meanwhile, on March 25, 2024, Florida passed a law compelling platforms to delete accounts of users under 14 and require parental approval for those aged 14 and 15, although it stops short of enforcing age verification methods.

Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi have passed similar laws, each demanding that platforms verify users’ ages and obtain parental consent for minors. However, enforcement in these states has faced setbacks, with courts blocking implementation over constitutional and privacy concerns—highlighting the legal tightrope these laws must walk.

Georgia has also joined the effort with its *Protecting Georgia’s Children on Social Media Act*, mandating age verification and parental consent for users under 16, alongside a provision requiring public schools to ban all social media use, including YouTube. (Georgia General Assembly, 2024).

California, known for its robust consumer privacy framework, passed a law that will go into effect in 2027. Titled, *Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act*, it aims to regulate algorithmic content delivery and protect minors from addictive digital experiences. (California Legislature, 2024).

At this time, the New Jersey legislature has not passed any legislation regarding the use of social media by adolescents but, as outlined below, there are several legislative initiatives pending.

Social Media Platform Age Verification (S1982)

This bill seeks to prohibit social media companies from allowing New Jersey residents under 18 to create accounts without explicit parental consent. To provide consent, parents or guardians would need to submit government-issued identification and credit card information, authorizing a nominal fee of up to 35 cents. Additionally, the bill mandates age verification for both new and existing account holders. For minors with accounts, it would restrict direct messaging between the minor and unlinked adult users and limit the collection of personal information to what is necessary for legal compliance. (New Jersey Legislature, 2024).

Regulation of Social Media Features Promoting Eating Disorders (S4153)

In December 2024, an Assembly committee advanced a bill designed to curb social media practices that may contribute to eating disorders among minors. The proposed legislation would prohibit platforms from employing designs, algorithms, or features that promote such disorders to users under 18. Violations could result in civil penalties of up to \$250,000. (New Jersey Legislature, 2024).

Children’s Data Protection Commission (S3493)

This pending bill aims to establish the State Children’s Data Protection Commission. The commission would be tasked with examining issues related to social media privacy and data management for children, ensuring their online interactions are safeguarded against potential data exploitation. (New Jersey Legislature, 2024).

Social Media Platforms Child User Protections (S1959)

This proposed legislation seeks to prohibit social media platforms from employing practices or features that could lead to addiction among child users. The bill underscores the state’s commitment to mitigating the potentially harmful effects of social media on minors by addressing addictive design elements. (New Jersey Legislature, 2024).

Public Awareness Campaign on the Dangers of Social Media (A2367)

This legislation appropriates \$500,000 to the Commissioner of Education for the purpose of increasing public awareness of the dangers of social media use by children. The bill specifically refers to the Social Media Commission and would allow this funding to be used to support implementation of the Commission’s recommendations. (New Jersey Legislature, 2024).

In addition to the bills discussed above which directly address the use of and access to social media by adolescents, New Jersey is also considering a ban on cellphone use in K-12 classrooms. Currently, proposed legislation would require the New Jersey Department of Education to develop guidelines for local school districts on how to effectively limit the use of cellphones during the school day. (New Jersey Legislature, 2024). Governor Murphy highlighted the negative impacts of cellphone use as part of his State of State address in February 2025 and also included \$3 million in the upcoming annual budget for school districts to explore innovative methods for eliminating cell phones in the classroom. (Carrera, 2025).

These legislative efforts reflect New Jersey’s proactive approach to understanding and mitigating the impacts of social media on adolescents, focusing on areas such as age verification, mental health, data privacy, and online safety. In the absence of federal legislation, the U.S. continues to see a patchwork of state laws—some enforceable, others stalled—reflecting a broader debate about how best to protect adolescents in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Multistate Litigation

In addition to efforts to pass Federal and State legislation, multistate litigation alleging that social media companies have harmed youth continues through the judicial process. The case titled *In re Social Media Adolescent Addiction/Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation* (MDL No. 3047) is a significant multidistrict litigation (MDL) centralized in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. Presided over by Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, the MDL consolidates over 1,700 lawsuits as of May 2025, involving plaintiffs such as minors, their families, school districts, local governments, and state attorneys general from more than 30 states including New Jersey. These lawsuits target major social media companies, including Meta Platforms (Facebook and Instagram), Alphabet Inc. (YouTube), ByteDance (TikTok), and Snap Inc. (Snapchat).

The litigation commenced in 2022, with plaintiffs alleging that the defendant companies designed their platforms to maximize user engagement, particularly among adolescents, leading to addictive behaviors and various mental health issues. In October 2022, the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation consolidated these cases into MDL No. 3047 to streamline proceedings.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the court addressed several motions to dismiss filed by the defendants. Notably, in November 2023, Judge Gonzalez Rogers denied, in part, the defendants’ motions, allowing key claims to proceed. Litigation has since progressed into the discovery phase, with parties exchanging information pertinent to the claims.

The plaintiffs assert that the social media platforms are defectively designed to be addictive, employing features such as algorithmic content delivery, infinite scrolling, and push notifications to encourage prolonged use. They argue that these design choices have led to a range of harm among adolescents, including:

- ▶ Depression and anxiety;
- ▶ Eating disorders;
- ▶ Sleep disturbances;
- ▶ Self-harm and suicidal ideation; and
- ▶ Academic decline.

Furthermore, the plaintiffs claim that the companies failed to warn users and their guardians about these risks and, in some cases, actively misrepresented the safety of their platform.

As of May 2025, the MDL is in the discovery phase, with parties exchanging documents and deposing witnesses. The court has scheduled bellwether trials to begin in late 2025, which will serve as test cases to gauge the strength of the plaintiffs’ claims and the defendants’ defenses.

For more detailed information and updates on the case, visit the official court page ([In re Social Media Adolescent Addiction/Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation \(MDL No. 3047\)](#)).

As legislation advances through the Federal and State levels, local policies are developed, and legal decisions are made, it is essential that all parties recognize that social media and technology is forever evolving and we are in the infancy of understanding its impact on adolescent development. Federal, state, and private sources must continue to fund research to better understand the impacts of social media on adolescent use and effective measures to mitigate any adverse effects.



Social-Emotional Health and Well-Being Impacts

Social media use can have a detrimental effect on the social-emotional health and well-being of youth, especially when there is excessive use. Virtually all adolescents use social media to some degree (Pew, 2025), yet not all adolescents have negative outcomes in the domain of emotional well-being.

Problematic Social Media Use

Excessive or problematic social media use is defined as “a pattern of behavior characterized by an inability to control social media usage, experiencing withdrawal symptoms when not using it, neglecting other important activities in favor of social media, and facing negative consequences in daily life due to excessive use” (Boniel-Nissim et al., 2024).

Demonstrating problematic social media use was also a risk factor for loneliness. Nearly 20% of the teens in a 2021 Dutch study reported being lonely, with loneliness prevalence being higher among girls than boys (Bayat et al., 2021). Lonely adolescents report higher rates of depression and social anxiety, and poorer health. Thus, identifying and addressing loneliness as a precursor to significant mental health issues may be crucial to heading off more significant adolescent mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidality.

Most correlational studies investigating the influence of heavy social media use on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress do find a correlation, though the authors of one systematic review caution about the limits of cross-sectional design (Keles, McCrae, and Grealish, 2020). It is important to consider not only the time on social media but the context and content of social media use. For example, the association between social media use and poor mental health outcomes may be due to problematic social media use’s impact on the development of interpersonal skills (Winstone et al., 2021) or the displacement of essential activities such as exercise (Gunnell et al., 2016) and sleep (Woods and Scott, 2016).

Research findings have consistently demonstrated that excessive social media use disturbs sleep which in turn interferes with neurological development of adolescent brains, disrupts emotional regulation, and heightens depression risk and even suicidality (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Social media’s sleep disturbances prevent teens from emotional stability and overall life contentment. The risk of social media being a distraction results in life altering consequences that can exacerbate mental health symptoms.

Anxiety and Depression

A 2020 meta-analysis of twelve research studies examining the relationship between social media use and depressive symptoms among adolescents found a small but significant correlation (Ivie et al., 2020). Though not every study examined gender differences in social media use and depression, those that did found girls more vulnerable than boys. Outside of social media use, female adolescents are twice as likely to experience depression as males, and within the context of social media use, females tend to use social media in a different way and to a different degree than do males (Riehm et al., 2019).

A 2023 scoping review found that shorter periods of social media use (particularly with purposeful or active engagement) are associated with better mood and psychological well-being, whereas longer periods of social media use (particularly browsing) predict depression. Two studies in this review found that depression predicts social media use. This review also revealed similar findings related to anxiety disorders. In quantitative studies, both social anxiety and the need for social assurance had a significant association with problematic social media use and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Another study found that adolescents (aged 12- 15) who spend more than three (3) hours per day on social media have double the risk of experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety, compared to peers who use social media less often (Riehm et al., 2019).

Body Image

Longitudinal studies reveal that body image dissatisfaction is the precursor to eating disorders, which wreak havoc on young bodies and can be extremely difficult to overcome. Body dissatisfaction often results in depressive symptoms, particularly among girls (Sharpe et al. 2014). To understand why social media use is associated with body dissatisfaction, Jarman et al. (2021) surveyed 11- to 16-year-olds at three points in time and found that teens' negative comparisons between themselves and social media images lead to body dissatisfaction. Further, this study argues for the possibility of a feedback loop, "whereby, through comparisons, higher social media use predicts lower body satisfaction, which then predicts higher social media use" (p. 308). An earlier experiment with Instagram produced similar findings (Weinstein, 2017). Teens in this study who reported higher levels of negative comparison had significantly worse "post-browsing affect" than peers who reported less negative comparison to the stimuli. Authors from both studies suggest that interventions target comparisons and encourage teens to "unfollow" Instagram and other pages that lead to negative emotional states.

Social Connections

Ehrenreich writes that teenagers use social media each day "primarily to interact with the same peers and friends they interact in their offline lives" (2022, p. 85). Teen social media use does not occur in a vacuum, but as an extension of identities and relationships rooted in a shared, online and offline experience. Different social media activities or types of content may bring about different feelings of social connection or disconnection. For instance, simply scrolling the posts of others—passive social media use—may be more harmful to adolescents' social well-being than active social media use (engaging with peers' content or creating original content), which may promote a positive sense of peer connection (Ehrenreich, 2022). Some studies link passive social media use to negative feelings of social comparison—not having what others appear to have—or to a fear of missing out, "FOMO" (Ehrenreich 2022; Weinstein, 2017).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is frequently defined in the literature as intentional and targeted acts of aggression through digital media. An extensive review of meta-analyses of cyberbullying published recently in *Nature Human Behaviour* points to demographic patterns of victimization. Girls and members of racial and sexual minorities experience cyberbullying most frequently, while contextual factors are also associated with higher rates of cyberbullying, namely unregulated school environments and unsupportive relationships with parents (Kasturiratna et al., 2025). Negative academic, social, and emotional outcomes are also associated with victimization, including lower school performance, distress, and maladaptive behaviors.

Social Media Drama

Gender also shapes differential social media experiences and impacts. Research shows that girls are more likely than boys to feel overwhelmed by social media drama. Compared to boys, girls are also more likely to report that social media has made them feel left out and worse about their own lives. At the same time, girls are also more likely than boys to report positive aspects of social media, including that they feel they have social support and can express their creativity (Faverio et al., 2025). These Pew findings are consistent with research that suggests social media plays a more important role in the social lives of girls and that girls exhibit higher levels of social media engagement than boys (Nesi and Prinstein, 2015).



Physical Health Impacts

Excessive social media and cell phone use among adolescents has been linked to a variety of negative physical health outcomes, including sleep disruption, headaches, body image issues, and other unhealthy behaviors.

Sleep Disruption

While some teens report that using platforms such as YouTube helps them fall asleep (Charmaraman et al., 2025), most studies suggest that nighttime use of screen media, especially in the hours before bed, has a detrimental effect on the quantity and quality of adolescent sleep (Scott, Biello, and Woods, 2019).

Sleep is crucial to healthy development in adolescence (Owens et al., 2014). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that teens get between eight and 10 hours of sleep each night, but data from the CDC's National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows that more than seven in ten high school students (77%) have insufficient sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation is associated with fatigue, memory problems, mood disorders, and impaired academic performance (Beebe, 2011). It has also been associated with insulin resistance (Matthews et al., 2012), being overweight (Seicean et al., 2007), and cardiometabolic risk (Countryman et al., 2013)

Teens' excessive use of screen media – including computers, tablets, video games, and smartphones – may contribute to the problem. Adolescents who engage with screens for more than three hours a day are at higher risk of sleep problems (Carter et al., 2016). Teens who are on their smartphones at night during ideal sleeping hours are especially vulnerable to sleep problems (Nagata et al., 2023; Sancho-Domingo, Garmy, and Norell 2024) and lack of sleep on school nights, when they are unable to sleep in the next day, is somewhat more affected by nighttime media use than their sleep on weekend nights (Orben and Przybyski, 2020). Buda et al. found that the effects of nighttime social media use were especially pronounced for the girls in their sample compared to boys. They hypothesized this may be due to boys' "lower emotional investment to social media compared to girls and different social media activities by gender" (2020, p. 1043).

Indeed, parental monitoring has been shown to be positively related to adolescent sleep quantity and quality. Hamilton and Lee's 2021 survey found that adolescents without household rules around bedtime technology were more likely to be affected by social media checking and more likely to experience daytime sleepiness.

Musculoskeletal Pain, Eye Strain, and Headache

Excessive use of personal computers and especially the use of cellphones is associated with the development of a complex cluster of clinical symptoms that health care providers are calling “text (or tech) neck syndrome.” This clinical condition refers to the onset of cervical spinal degeneration that results from the repeated stress of frequent forward head flexion while we look down at the screens of mobile devices and while we ‘text’ for long periods of time. Zhuang and colleagues (2021) studied nearly 2500 young patients suffering from chronic neck pain. The patients underwent a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) examination of the cervical spine to assess where they fell on the cervical disc degeneration scale (CDDS). In all, more than half of the patients fell into the “smartphone overuse” category of the scale. Moreover, those patients with overuse of smartphones had higher CDDS scores than those who did not use their smartphones excessively.

Chronic pain in the neck and shoulders can be referred to the head, causing headache, especially tension-type headache, which is quite common in adolescents. Fernández-de-las-Peñas and colleagues (2011) found that trigger points in the head, neck, and shoulders shared similar pain patterns with chronic, tension-type headaches.

Prolonged screen exposure has been found to lead to digital eye strain or what has been dubbed “computer vision syndrome” – a phenomenon that rose to greater prominence in part because of COVID-19 (Kaur et al., 2022). The symptoms of those who experience eye strain include dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches, and difficulty focusing. A one-year prospective study of more than 1500 8- to 14-year-olds studied the association between time spent on smartphones and digital eye strain over a one-year period (Cheung et al., 2023). Children and adolescents who reported spending greater than four hours per day using smartphones at Time one experienced much greater digital eye discomfort symptoms at Time two, including eye fatigue (60%), blurred distance vision (46%), irritated or burning eyes (42%), and headaches (38%).

Nutritional Choices

Choukas-Bradley and colleagues (2022) have labelled the intersection of social media cues, adolescent development characteristics, and cultural expectations related to appearance the “perfect storm.” Social media presents idealized images of peers along with quantifiable feedback at a time when teens pay heightened attention to their peer relationships and society over-emphasizes girls’ physical appearance. This “perfect storm” may exacerbate girls’ body image concerns and sets more vulnerable teens up for unhealthy relationships with food and with their bodies. Boys, too, are bombarded with unrealistic images, although they are less at risk for eating disorders (Nolan et al., 2022) and appear to feel greater agency over their bodies (Mahon and Hevey, 2021) compared to their female counterparts. Pro-ana and pro-mia social media groups on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, as well as blogs, message boards, and online forums, glorify, rather than denounce, eating disorders (Sharman, Rolfe, and Morrey, 2024). The support these groups provide puts teens at higher risk for developing or worsening existing eating disorders.

Social media affects not only adolescents’ expectations about their body, but it can also influence the choices teens make about the food and beverages they consume. Content analyses show that social media feeds are full of unhealthy product marketing, including youth-targeted advertisements for sugar-sweetened beverages like energy drinks and fast-food restaurants (Chung et al., 2021; Bleakley et

al., 2022). Exposure to such ads has been found to create more positive attitudes toward the marketed products and increase intention to purchase and consume fast food (Ellithorpe et al., 2023; Thaichon and Quach, 2016). One bright spot in the research is a study that found that users also generate content that may positively affect followers' attitudes toward food, and that an analysis of Instagram pages found that teens posted mainly images of healthy foods – fruits and vegetables – using techniques that heightened their appeal (Holmberg et al., 2016).

Physical Activity/Sedentary Behavior

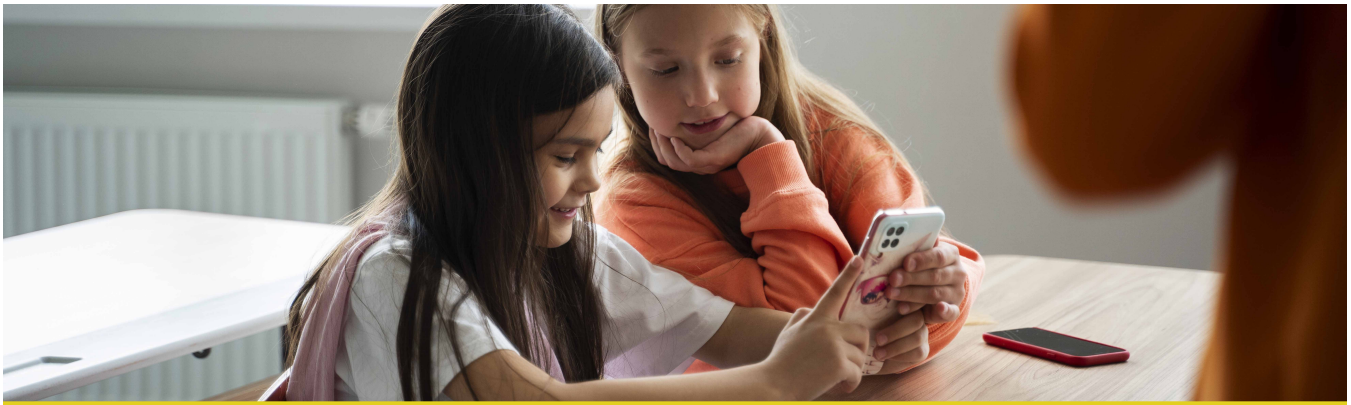
Many observers believe that increases in access and ownership of screen media by children and adolescents have resulted in the decline of physical activity, with some studies suggesting that upwards of eight in 10 adolescents are “insufficiently physically active” (Oh et al., 2022). Sedentary behavior is also a risk for the developing child. Study after study illustrates that more time spent with screens (television, computer, smartphones, etc.) is associated with poorer cardiometabolic health, insulin resistance, and unfavorable measures of adiposity (Atkin et al., 2012; Stiglic and Viner, 2019), conditions that not only affect quality of life for the adolescent but that also persist into adulthood (Reilly and Kelly, 2011).

Initiation of Unhealthy Behaviors

Studies show that through social media, adolescents can develop positive beliefs about unhealthy behaviors due to them being normalized and glamorized by people they admire, from peers to celebrities to influencers.

Alcohol use is a recurring topic in young people's social media feeds, and its use is predominantly portrayed in a social context and in a positive way (Hendriks et al., 2020). Earlier age of first drinking and weekly drinking is associated with cognitive issues, excessive consumption, and alcohol dependence in adulthood, as well as alcohol risk behavior (Geber, Frey, and Friemel, 2021; Nguyen-Louie et al., 2017). A 2021 over-time survey of high school students found an exposure effect – exposure to others' alcohol-related content on social media at time one was associated with drinking behavior at time two. Additionally, the researchers found a sharing effect: the self-effect of sharing alcohol-related content at time one affected drinking behavior at time two. As Gerber, Frey, and Friemel write: “Thus, to the extent that both processes can be thought of as occurring sequentially, this result suggests that adolescents get actively aware of their own behavior—presumably to verify and strengthen their self-concept as alcohol consumers, and that this process of self-verification, in turn, enforces their own drinking” (p. 571).

Social media has become one of the most important channels by which individuals are exposed to vape advertising, especially among adolescents and young adults. Studies estimate that upwards of two million US middle and high schoolers use vaping devices such as Juul (Park-Lee et al., 2022). The health consequences are serious: e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive, and other toxic chemicals that can cause lung disease (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Teens who vape are more likely to become adults who smoke combustible cigarettes (Soneji et al., 2017), which cause cancer, heart disease, and a host of other chronic illnesses. Finally, there is some concern that vaping is associated with poor mental health outcomes among adolescents and young adults, including internalizing problems, depression, and perceived stress. As one author notes, “Since researchers have observed a bidirectional relationship between nicotine and depressive symptoms, the role of e-cigarettes in mental health concerns remains unclear” (Ji et al., 2025).



Academic Performance Impacts

Adolescent Development

Teen social media use is a complicated issue which must be addressed while keeping in mind adolescent cognitive development. The table below provides insight as to why teens are drawn to and away from certain types of social media experiences.

Adolescent Developmental Characteristics and Implications for Teens' Social Media Use

Developmental Characteristic	What is it?	Implications for Media Use
<i>Boredom</i>	Teens seek novel experiences but they live with restrictions, and are often unable to engage in activities that they crave.	Teens often cite boredom as an entry point into – and away from – media use, especially social media, and short videos in particular.
<i>Heightened sensitivity to rewards</i>	Teens are most easily persuaded by things that are pleasing, or that “reward” them.	Short videos, personalized recommendations, features such as “likes”, shares, ForYou, Snapstreaks, etc. perform the role of rewards.
<i>Executive Functioning</i>	Teens’ ability to plan, prioritize, and manage time effectively develops gradually throughout adolescence.	Teens may find it more challenging to self-regulate when media design is “irresistible,” and removes stopping cues – as in the case of social media’s infinite scroll and the pull-to-refresh feature.
<i>Peer Orientation</i>	Teens are especially sensitive to social validation from peers; there is a shift from parent to peer focus during adolescence.	Teens’ media choices are often influenced by peers, and the pressures of “performing” friendship online.
<i>Identity Development</i>	Teens seek a greater sense of self as they become more independent.	Teens’ media environment offers opportunities for identity development, and some teens incorporate strategies that are helpful to their development.
<i>Metacognition</i>	Teens’ metacognitive skills are improving. They are thinking about their thinking, and monitoring their cognition.	Teens are constantly reflecting on their media experiences. They are introspective, and craft new media use tactics iteratively.
<i>Learning From Experiences</i>	Teens are exquisitely sensitive to experiences, and learning is particularly rapid during adolescence.	Teens’ ability to learn rapidly coupled with metacognition and improving executive functioning nudge them toward more deliberate use of media.

The intersection between adolescent development and social media design creates unique challenges for teens. Many have argued that social media apps are designed for addiction (Alter, 2017, Bhargava and Velasquez 2021; Haugen, 2021; US Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, 2021). Adolescents contend with the costs of “distracted cognition” as newer media forms compete for their attention.

From a cognitive development standpoint, teens navigate this highly targeted digital landscape at a time when reward-seeking behaviors are amplified and self-control is still gradually maturing. This presents significant challenges to the manifestation of their agency within these environments.

Adolescence (ages 10 – 19) is a critical period of brain development. The amygdala and prefrontal cortex are regions of the brain responsible for processing emotions, reward sensitivity, and impulse control. These regions of the brain are especially vulnerable to the effects of social media, which can heighten emotional reactivity and sensitivity to social rewards or punishments. This disruption in brain development can hinder the growth of essential self-regulatory skills such as persistence, focus, and task completion, all of which are important for academic success.

The pull-to-refresh feature, common to a range of digital apps, works like a slot machine in a casino. This is particularly problematic for teens, whose social development during adolescence makes them more sensitive to peers’ judgments and more vulnerable to feelings of exclusion (Blakemore, 2018). These features are designed to offer irresistible but unpredictable feedback, and the formula is not easy to crack (Alter, 2017). On social media, the only way of knowing which post becomes popular and which one languishes is to check back from time to time.

A range of cognitive development factors come together to increase teens’ vulnerability to media environments. This combination can make specific types of media and design features especially difficult for teens to resist. As a result, teen agency in media use should be seen as the outcome of multiple interacting influences, with cognitive development playing a central role.

Group chats, music streaming, text messaging, social media, video streaming, multiplayer games, and virtual pin boards offer teens ways to create peer-oriented spaces, learn new things, engage with a variety of perspectives, and develop their sense of style when identity development is being primed (Davis, 2013).

Academic Performance

Studies have demonstrated that social media use is associated with negatively impacting adolescents’ academic performance by interfering with attention, impulse control, and self-regulation. The 2025 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report: Teaching and Learning Edition points to concerns about the impact of smartphones and social media in the academic environment. Concerns include shortened attention spans, reduced memory recall and cognitive overload, with overreliance leading to impaired critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Gordon and Ohannessian (2023) analyzed survey data from 1,459 U.S. middle school students, ages 11 to 15, finding that academic achievement decreased as their use of Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter increased. Notably, parental communication played a significant role in mediating these effects.

Huang and Chen's (2024) survey of 1,200 teens aged 13-18 revealed significant negative correlations between time spent on social media and academic performance. Teens spending more than three hours daily on social media demonstrated lower GPA scores compared to peers with less media usage. The trend was consistent with an even greater effect on math and science scores than on other subjects.

Relating to academic performance, the researchers discovered that the type of media use and the amount of time spent mattered. Passive time spent with low cognitive engagement, for instance, time spent scrolling feeds and watching video, was less likely to contribute positively to academic performance than active engagement in educational content.

Yoders et al. (2022) explored the relationships between overall time spent on social media and four high-risk behaviors in a suburban/rural adolescent population as well as teens' own perception of the impact of their social media use on their own grades and homework completion. Researchers found that excessive social media use of any kind was strongly associated with negatively impacting academic performance. Even though participants acknowledged the negative impact on their academic work, they continued to engage on the platforms for large parts of their days.

While studies have found that youth social media use can negatively impact student academic performance, to better understand social media's impact on learning, more nuanced approaches are needed. Multiple studies emphasize that researchers must examine not just how much time young people spend online but instead ask more meaningful questions. In what types of activities and with whom and for what purposes are they engaging? Which young people are engaging in what types of activities? What are their individual differences? How are young people leveraging the multiple affordances of each of these platforms?

Educator Perspective

Based on analysis of polls of teachers and students, the Pew Research Center shared that high school teachers are especially likely to see cellphones as problematic. Seventy-two percent shared that student cellphone distractions are a major problem in their classroom. Thirty-three percent of middle school teachers reported similar distractions. Sixty percent of high school teachers reported challenges with enforcement (Lin et al., 2024). Anderson, Gottfried, and Park (2024) shared that 68% of U.S. adults say they support a ban on middle and high school students using cellphones during class and nearly 98% of adults back cellphone bans because they believe they would cause fewer class distractions.

Social Media Literacy Instruction

A number of studies and documents speak to the need for social media literacy instruction, especially to support students building skills in distinguishing credible information from misinformation, recognizing cyberbullying, considering the importance of maintaining privacy and protecting their reputation, understanding the influence of algorithms and persuasive design, and developing skills for ethical and effective media creation and sharing (Cho et al., 2024; Office of the Surgeon General, 2023; UNESCO 2025). The 2023 U.S. Surgeon General's Report supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of digital and media literacy curricula "to strengthen digital resilience, or the ability to recognize, manage, and recover from online risks" (p.15).

Teaching Digital Well-Being from Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Center for Digital Thriving focuses on the need for teachers to “bring into every classroom lessons that build digital agency and prepare youth to thrive in a tech-filled world. Equipping students to think critically and align their tech habits with their values and well-being.”

A key finding of the News Literacy Project’s News Literacy in America: A Survey of Teen Information Attitudes, Habits and Skill was that teens felt they needed media literacy instruction in their schools but that most were not getting it. Ninety-four percent of teens surveyed said that schools should be required to teach media literacy, but only 39% reported having had any media literacy instruction in at least one class during the 2023-24 school year. Half of the teens surveyed were unable to recognize advertisements or labeled opinion pieces. After local television news, TikTok was listed as the most trusted source of news content.

The two-decade research of the Stanford History Education Group, now known as the [Digital Inquiry Group \(DIG\)](#), alerted educators and the nation to the critical need for digital literacy instruction. Breakstone et al.’s (2021) national portrait assessed students’ evaluation strategies. High school students engaged in a range of tasks, including evaluating web content, identifying ads, and assessing claims on social media. Researchers found the students highly vulnerable to misinformation. They frequently failed to recognize fake social media accounts, doctored images, or posts from organizations with hidden motives. The report emphasizes the critical need for equipping young people with the skills necessary to identify credible sources, detect misinformation, and participate effectively in civic life online.

The consensus report for the National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine, *Social Media and Adolescent Health*, advocates for a “rigorous and evidence-based approach to digital literacy education to ensure that all children and adolescents have the knowledge they need to thrive in an increasingly digital world”.

Weinstein and James (2022) suggest that school-based interventions can effectively and tangibly reach and support young people. They conclude that potentially promising, evidence-based pedagogy relating to young people’s social media should connect to three core learning goals: critical awareness, self-reflection, and behavioral change.

In 2023, New Jersey became the first state to mandate K-12 information literacy instruction. Information literacy is a set of skills that enables an individual to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information. The information literacy skills are now integrated into the content areas on the [Standards Transparency and Mastery Platform \(STAMP\)](#). This platform provides school districts with resources and guidance documents to assist educators with understanding the standards in each content area and how they can be used as part of standards-based instruction. As these requirements are relatively new, the Commission recognizes that it will take time for them to be effectively incorporated throughout all schools in New Jersey, but we are encouraged that our state recognizes that these standards as well as the digital literacy standards are essential to prepare students for a world with ever evolving technology.



Recommendations

Based on the Commission's work over the past year studying the impact of social media use on adolescents, we recommend 20 actions that will improve the health and academic performance of students. The recommendations are grouped across five distinct stakeholder groups: Policymakers, Education & Community Organizations, Healthcare Providers, Families & Caregivers, and Social Media Companies.

A. For Policymakers

1. Encourage Federal lawmakers to support and pass the Children and Teens' Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA 2.0) and the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA).

- ▶ These two critical pieces of Federal legislation are aimed at protecting minors from online harm such as cyberbullying, dangerous viral challenges, sextortion, and other digital threats.

2. The New Jersey Legislature should pass legislation to address social media platform functions and features that may cause harm. The legislation should:

- ▶ Mandate that social media platforms create developmentally appropriate digital experiences for youth which prioritize safety and limit features that may increase harm (e.g., open chat, adult content, "likes," and follower counts) without blocking access to educational content (e.g., mental and physical health) from medical professionals.
- ▶ Require social media platforms to implement strong default privacy settings for minors, restrict data collection and third-party access, and protect against targeted advertising, invasive tracking, and addictive design features. Notifications should be restricted during designated times.
- ▶ Require social media platforms to proactively develop, implement, and continuously refine robust safety mechanisms and reporting tools aimed at identifying, preventing, and responding to cyberbullying, bias, discrimination, child exploitation and abuse on their platforms.

3. The New Jersey Legislature should pass legislation to require transparency and reporting from social media platforms. The legislation should:

- ▶ Mandate that social media platforms disclose clear, accurate, and comprehensive safety-related information—including metrics such as user polls, reports of misuse or harassment, and the effectiveness of safety features.
 - This transparency will empower parents/caregivers, youth, and regulators to make informed decisions and hold platforms accountable for user safety.

4. The New Jersey Legislature should pass legislation to establish a public awareness campaign based on the findings of the Commission.

- ▶ The public awareness campaign should aim to increase understanding of the dangers that social media use poses to minors, particularly among parents, guardians, and other adults who have frequent contact with youth outside of school (e.g., out of school time providers, Girl Scout and Boy Scout organizers, enrichment activity providers). The campaign should be administered by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families in consultation with other relevant state agencies.
- ▶ A2367/S4429 can serve as an effective starting point for this recommendation. As that bill moves through the legislative process, the Legislature should consider this Commission’s recommendations to ensure the maximum reach and efficacy of any public awareness campaign.

5. The New Jersey legislature should pass S1982 to prohibit social media companies from allowing New Jersey residents under 18 to create accounts without parental consent.

- ▶ This bill not only requires social media companies to take responsibility for verifying the age of users but also requires limitations on accounts for youth by restricting direct messaging between minors and adult users and by limiting the collection of personal information.

B. For Education & Community Organizations

6. School districts should adopt and implement policies on student cell phone use by instituting a bell-to-bell ban on the use of cell phones and social media in school. There should be exceptions for students with educational or medical needs such as an Individualized Education Program or 504 Plan or for students who use their phones for translation.

7. The New Jersey Department of Education, in collaboration with all education associations, should review and revise the standards related to digital citizenship and information and media literacy to reflect the findings of the Commission.

8. The New Jersey Department of Education, in collaboration with all education associations, should increase awareness of the above academic standards and share resources with schools to support their implementation of these key skills.

9. School districts should continue to focus their efforts to provide students with instruction on digital citizenship and information on media literacy across grades and content areas

10. Community organizations should promote resources to support teens’ healthy use of social media and develop any supplemental resources that would be most helpful and relevant to their stakeholders (e.g., Managing Screentime for Neurodivergent Youth, Supporting Teen Volunteers to Appropriately Use Social Media).

- ▶ A collection of resources can be found in Appendix B.

C. For Healthcare Providers

11. Convey the importance of age-appropriate social media engagement and encourage parents to actively monitor and guide their children’s online activity to help ensure safe and healthy digital experiences.

12. Routinely screen adolescents for signs of “problematic social media use” to identify potential risks and intervene early.

- ▶ Research from Boer et al. (2022) indicates that indicators for problematic social media use include:
 - Being on social media even though they want to stop and/or recognizes that its use is interfering with necessary tasks.
 - Taking considerable steps to ensure they have continuous access to social media.
 - Demonstrating strong desire to use social media and/or experiencing negative impacts in other activities due to missing social media use.
 - Regularly spending more time on social media than they intended.
 - Demonstrating deceptive behavior to retain access to social media use.
 - Experiencing a loss or disruption of significant relationships or educational opportunities due to use of social media.
- ▶ Family pediatricians should be encouraged to include questions related to social media use in their annual screening of teens. An affirmative response to the question, do you use social media for at least 3 hours per day, may serve as a sign that further examination of their use is needed.

D. For Parents and Caregivers

13. Delay youth access to social media.

- ▶ The recommended minimum age for using social media is 16.

14. When teens gain access to social media, parents and caregivers should monitor their use and include limitations and boundaries relative to their teens' needs.

- ▶ Age-appropriate use of social media should be based on each adolescent's level of maturity (self-regulation skills, intellectual development, comprehension of risks) as well as pre-existing strengths or vulnerabilities.
- ▶ Younger adolescents are generally more susceptible to being influenced by dangerous and negative content. Therefore, parental monitoring and setting boundaries are especially important in early adolescents.
 - Parents and caregivers may find it helpful to utilize the parental control features of social media platforms to monitor and limit teen use.
- ▶ Research recommends that adolescents should get at least 8 hours of sleep each night. Social media use is associated with sleep disruptions. Multiple studies have demonstrated that "insufficient sleep is associated with disruptions to neurological development in adolescent brains, teens' emotional functioning, and risk for suicide" (American Psychological Association, 2023, p. 7).
 - One strategy to support teens to set boundaries is to not allow cell phones while sleeping. It may be helpful to establish the routine where teen cell phones are charged each night in their parent or caregiver's bedroom. Not only will removing cell phones from teen bedrooms improve sleep quality but it may positively impact their emotional health.
- ▶ Social media use should not interfere with teens' physical activity as physical activity and exercise is essential for both physical and psychological health (i.e., lower rates of depression) (Bustamante et al., 2023).
- ▶ Research indicates that negative impacts of social media use are most prevalent in youth who spend at least four hours per day on social media so any actions to support youth to spend less than four hours per day on social media is beneficial.

15. When teens gain access to social media, parents and caregivers should model healthy social media use and teach them how to be responsible social media users.

- ▶ Healthy social media use includes setting time limits, focusing on positive content, monitoring any changes in your mood, and taking breaks to make in-person activities/relationships.
- ▶ Engage teens in conversations about the importance of protecting their personal information, using privacy settings, interacting online in appropriate ways, and seeking help if they need it.

E. For Social Media Companies

16. Ensure each social media company’s mission prioritizes the health and safety of teens in the design and development of the social media platform and all features.

- ▶ Social media companies should create developmentally appropriate digital experiences for teens which prioritize safety and limit features that may increase harm (e.g., open chat, adult content, “likes,” and follower counts) without blocking access to educational content (e.g., mental and physical health) from medical professionals. Companies must strike the balance of protecting the safety of youth while also supporting their access to valuable educational materials.
- ▶ Social media companies should implement strong default privacy settings for minors, restrict data collection and third-party access, and protect against targeted advertising, invasive tracking, and addictive design features. Notifications should be restricted during designated times.

17. Restrict access to social media platforms for any users younger than 16 years old.

- ▶ Social media companies should take responsibility for implementing age-verification technology that restricts use of those younger than 16 years old instead of relying on self-reported data.

18. Develop and continuously improve tools to foster safe and healthy online environments for teens that prevent cyberbullying, bias, discrimination, and child exploitation.

- ▶ Social media companies should proactively develop, implement, and continuously refine robust safety mechanisms and reporting tools aimed at identifying, preventing, and responding to cyberbullying, bias, discrimination, and child exploitation and abuse on their platforms.
- ▶ Social media companies should use behavioral analytics and responsive systems to prevent youth from viewing harmful content and take immediate actions when proactive measures fail.

19. Provide information and resources to support parents and caregivers on how to navigate social media use with their children.

- ▶ Social media companies should continually work to provide parents and caregivers with easy-to-use parental controls so they can support their teens to safely use social media. Efforts should be made to increase parental awareness and knowledge of how to effectively use these tools.

20. Assume responsibility for regularly conducting independent assessments of the impact of the social media platform’s use on children and adolescents.

- ▶ Transparently share the findings of the review and action plans to improve safety.
- ▶ Take immediate actions to mitigate any unintended negative effects.



Conclusion

Social media platforms have insinuated their presence into the everyday life of youth in both beneficial and harmful ways. Social media can provide a positive community and foster connections among youth who share identities, abilities, and interests. These outlets can provide a space for self-expression and encourage positive interactions with more diverse peer groups. Research has found that online social support from peers provides buffering effects against stress and adversity and can be identity-affirming. Additionally, social media can promote help-seeking behaviors to serve as a gateway to initiating mental health care. For children who struggle with face-to-face interactions or who have neuro-divergent learning strategies, screens give them an opportunity to connect with other like-minded kids who share their interests. This exposure allows them to build friendships in an environment that is less chaotic and overwhelming. Additionally, emerging literature has found that social media can be a protective tool for youth who identify as LGBTQ+ by helping them connect with their own community and decrease potential isolation.

The influence social media has on youth mental health is shaped by many complex factors, not only including the amount of time spent on these platforms but also the type of content consumed, the presence or absence of internet-capable smartphones and similar devices, the level of veracity in the content reviewed (for instance, in connection with consumption of misinformation, disinformation and fake news and so-called “AI slop”), the tenor of interactions afforded by social media among users (and, increasingly, bots), and the degree to which social media disrupts activities that are essential for physical health, psychological health, and academic performance.

Researchers have found that adolescents spending more than 3 hours per day on social media face risks of not only depression and anxiety, but also concerns regarding cyberbullying, physical and mental health disorders, poor sleep quality, lowered self-esteem, and exposure to explicit content. Frequent social media use is associated with changes in brain structure, which is critical at a time that adolescents undergo a highly sensitive period of brain development. Specifically, changes in adolescent’s brain from ages 10- 19 lead to an increase in risk-taking behaviors, fluctuations in overall experience satisfaction, and mental health challenges. Brain development is susceptible to social pressures, peer opinions, and peer comparisons.

Adolescent social media use is predictive of a subsequent decrease in life satisfaction, including girls ages 11 to 13 and boys ages 14 to 15 years old. In schools, female students who reported frequent social media use were more likely to experience bullying victimization at school and electronically compared

to male students who were more likely to experience bullying only electronically. Associations between frequent social media use and poor mental health outcomes among adolescents are increasingly documented including suicide risk and persistent feelings of hopelessness and depression. Social media-induced fear of missing out has been associated with depression, anxiety, and neuroticism. Among females, studies have revealed that exposure to manipulated Instagram photos have a direct negative impact on body image. Approximately 46% of adolescents ages 13 to 17 have indicated that social media has made them feel worse about their body image.

Overall, regulating social media use is a crucial issue for the well-being of the youth of New Jersey since it directly impacts their physical, mental, and emotional health. Their quality of life, now as adolescents and in the future as adult citizens, substantially depends on our immediately and decisively confronting the challenges posed by social media today. The recommendations proposed by the Commission represent the belief that the collective efforts of all stakeholders can positively impact the social media experience for youth and provide them with a safe online community to foster interests, connect with others, and express themselves.

Appendix A: List of Guest Speakers

The Commission thanks the following guest speakers for generously sharing their time, expertise, and lived experiences. Their contributions provided critical insights into the realities and risks of adolescent social media use, as well as practical guidance that informed the Commission’s findings and recommendations.

Dalia Hashad

Founder, Online Safety Work, Parents Together

Dalia Hashad is an attorney, activist, and advocate for online child safety. As a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ expert panel on social media and youth mental health, she focuses on crafting policies that protect children in digital spaces.

Frances Haugen

Former Data Scientist, Facebook

Frances Haugen is a whistleblower and global advocate for transparency in technology, known for releasing internal Facebook documents revealing the platform’s role in spreading misinformation and harming users. She has testified before Congress, Parliament of the United Kingdom, and the European Union, calling for stronger accountability in social media.

Alessandra Kellermann

Mental Health Counselor

Alessandra Kellermann is a mental health counselor who champions increased support for youth and brings a unique lens to how social media affects neurodivergent individuals. Her work bridges clinical insight with real-world challenges teens face online.

Erin Popolo

Founder, Emmy’s Champions

Erin Popolo is a parent-advocate who founded Emmy’s Champions after she lost her daughter in part due to harms from social media. As a member of Parents for Safe Online Spaces, she works to raise awareness and pushes for legislative reform to protect children online.

Dr. Mitch Prinstein

Chief Science Officer, American Psychological Association

Dr. Mitch Prinstein is a leading psychologist and researcher whose extensive work, over 150 scientific papers and nine books, explores how social media impacts youth mental health. He brings a data-driven perspective to the conversation around digital well-being.

Dr. M. Henry Willis

Professor of Psychology, University of Maryland

Dr. M. Henry Willis is a professor and researcher whose work examines how experiences of racial discrimination, both online and offline, impact adolescent mental health. He leads the Cultural Resiliency, Equity, and Technology Research Lab.

Staff from the Office of U.S. Senator Cory Booker

Lynda Garcia, Ian Gray, Molly Greenstein, Hanna Mori, & Durva Trivedi

Congressional staff members from U.S. Senator Cory Booker’s Washington D.C. Office with expertise in law, policy, and advancement of Federal legislation.

Appendix B: Resources

Resources for Educators

- [Standards Transparency and Mastery Platform](#) (New Jersey Department of Education)
- [Digital Citizenship Curriculum](#) (Common Sense Media)
 - Lesson plans and classroom resources on digital literacy, privacy, and online respect.
- [Digital Citizenship Resource List](#) (Making Caring Common Project at Harvard University)
 - Research-based strategies for integrating digital health into teaching practices.
- [Parent & Educator’s Guide to Media Literacy and False Information](#) (Connect Safely)
 - Easy-to-use resource designed to empower adults to build students’ critical thinking skills around media consumption.
- [Digital Safety Resources for the Classroom](#) (Be Internet Awesome with Google)
 - Interactive curriculum for grades 2-6 to promote safe and positive online behavior.

Resources for Healthcare Providers

- [Center of Excellence on Social Media & Youth Mental Health](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
 - Resources for pediatricians to support families and screen for problematic social media use.
- [Health Advisory on Social Media & Adolescents](#) (American Psychological Association)
- [Mental Health First Aid](#) (National Council for Mental Wellbeing)
 - Training programs for educators, parents, and community members to recognize and respond to signs of mental health concerns in young people.

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

- Family Digital Wellness Guide (Boston Children’s Hospital Digital Wellness Lab)
 - [Best Practices for Birth to Pre-School](#)
 - [Best Practices for Grade School to Tween](#)
 - [Best Practices for Teen to Young Adult](#)
- [Social Media Guides for Parents](#) (Common Sense Media)
- [Support to Create a Family Media Plan](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- [Digital Safety Resources for Families](#) (Be Internet Awesome with Google)
- Resources to Support Online Safety, Privacy, Security, & Digital Wellness (Connect Safely)
 - [Parent’s Guide to Social Media and Wellness](#)
 - [Family Guide to Parental Controls](#)
 - [Parent & Educator’s Guide to Media Literacy and False Information](#)

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