Rutherford Public Schools
Rutherford, NJ

Parent Academy

The Anxious Generation
November 15, 2024

The Anxious Generation

Mr. Jack Hurley, *Superintendent of Schools*
Mrs. Megan Caughey, *Supervisor of Elementary Education*
Mr. Brian Ersalesi, *Supervisor of English and Arts*
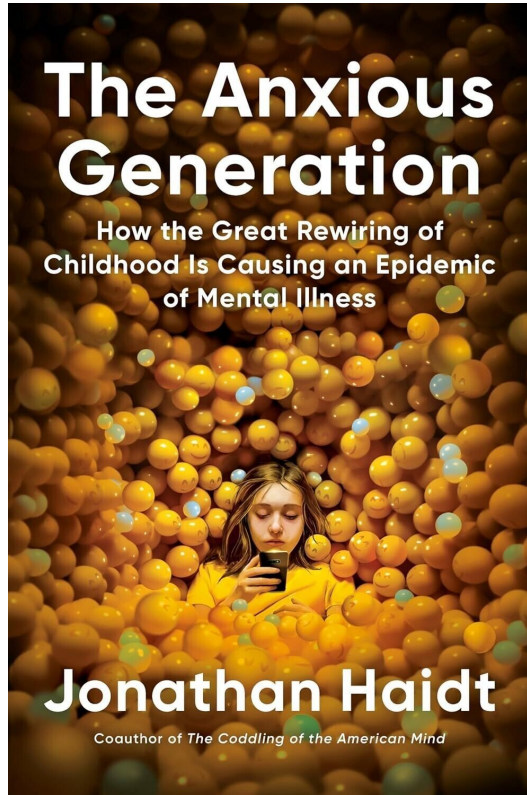Mrs. Kim Huzzy, *Student Assistance Counselor*
Mrs. Keri-Ann Romano, *Student Assistance Counselor*
Mr. Charles Ryan, *Supervisor of Planning, Testing, and Research*

Overview

Jack Hurley

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt

- Released March 26, 2024

- Jonathan Haidt
  - NYU Stern Professor of Ethical Leadership
  - Research on morality, politics, and social psychology

His message: I am a social psychologist at New York University's Stern School of Business. My mission is to use research on moral psychology to help people understand each other and to help important social institutions work better. To see my current work on social media, visit anxiousgeneration.com.

Definitions

"Real World"

- Embodied
- Synchronous
- One-to-one or one-to-several communication
- High bar for entry and exit

"Virtual World"

- Disembodied
- Asynchronous
- One-to-many communications
- Low bar for entry and exit

Let's Begin at the End … What are the end goals?

1. No smartphones before high school
2. No social media before age 16
3. Phone-free schools
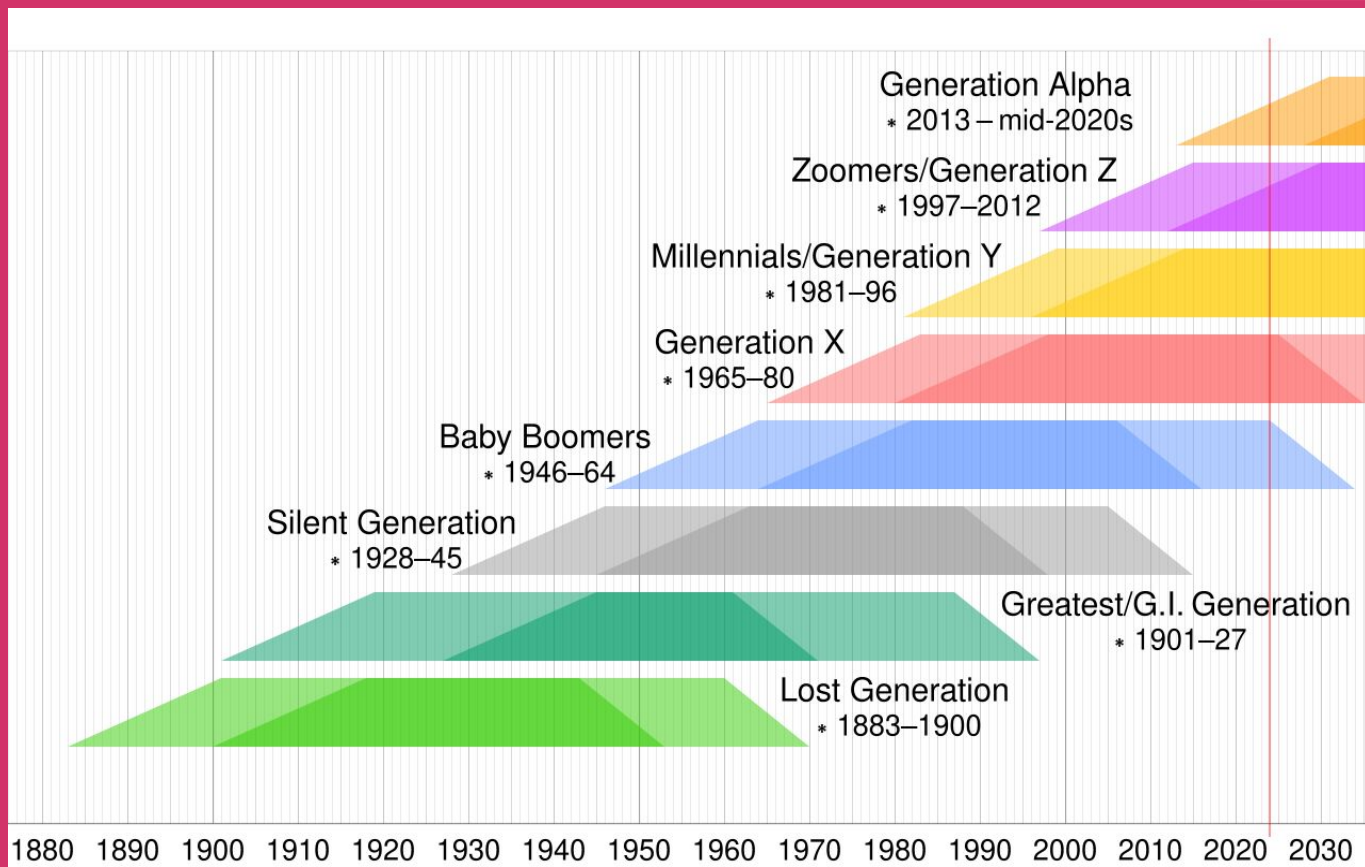4. Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence

The History

Charles Ryan

Key Point

The central claim of this book is that ***overprotection in the real world*** and ***underprotection in the virtual world*** are the major reasons why children born after 1997 (Generation Z and Generation Alpha) have become The Anxious Generation.

Who's Who

Gen Z 1997-2012

Gen Z is the first generation in history to go through puberty with a device in their pockets that pulls them away from people physically around them and into an alternative universe that is exciting, addictive, unstable, and unsuitable for their developmental ages.

Generation Alpha (2012-2024) is on target to continue that trend.

"I'm so glad smartphone cameras and video weren't around in high school or college!"

- **Technology Immigrants:** The adults (Boomers, Gen X & Millennials) do not know what it is like to have this kind of technology and social media readily available as a preteen/teenager.

- **Technology Natives:** Kids can not imagine a world without this technology.

"Kids these days…"

- Kids have always done things that parents don't like or don't understand.

- **1950's** rock and roll was the devil's music; the **transistor radio** and **record players** enabled kids to listen to their own music with their friends in bedrooms or at parties and not gather around the **radio** in the living room like families did in the **1930's** and **1940's**.

- 1**960's to 1970's** TV highlighted youth culture seen on *American Bandstand* and reflected and shaped family dynamics like the *The Brady Bunch*. The explosion of youth culture and the counterculture; the fear of kids being long haired hippies.

- **1980's cable television** and the birth of **MTV** the concern of kids becoming **couch potatoes**. Movies like *The Breakfast Club* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* solidified teen culture in mainstream media.

- **1990 -2000's the internet** changed how society distributes information and communicates; **personal computers** were in the living rooms much like the **radios** of the **1940's** and **TVs** the last half of the **20th century.**

"Back in my day…"

- **2011-present;** this powerful technology is now interactive not passive **(radio, TV, PC)** and can fit in the palm of your hand. Preteens and teens can now access all the world's information and communicate with anyone, anywhere, all the time. **Social media** effects humans' social norms in ways we've never seen. We are never away from the **smartphone** or the temptation of using it.

- Generations have always looked back and said ***"Back in my day things were better"*** and there is some of that happening here, *technology free childhood was simpler*.

- But that's not the issue we are concerned about.   This is a **collective action problem** the adults need to understand what is going on and The Anxious Generation articulates the issues very well.

- Haidt presents an excellent sociological account of our modern times.

Other resources

iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy-and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood
by Jean M. Twenge 2017

The Art of Screen Time: How Your Family Can Balance Digital Media and Real Life
by Anya Kamenetz 2018

The Coddling of the American Mind by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt 2018
"Prepare the child for the road, not the road for the child."

Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls
by Lisa Damour 2019

We are not anti-technology

- Harnessing **fire** advanced human civilization; great tool but is also very dangerous.
- Modern American society was built around the **automobile**; evolution of safety regulations and laws to protect people; stop signs, seat belts car seats etc. Model T to the SUV.
- Not to hammer the point home…but the **hammer** is a great tool but we don't go around pounding walls with it all day.
- **Smartphones** are a tool; the advancements of technology we have in our hands is incredible!
- Unlike any other youth centered technological advancement or trend in history there are *real negatives* with **smartphones** and **social media.** This technology is changing the **brainwaves**, **behavior** and **emotional state** of our kids.

The Data

Brian Ersalesi

Haidt calls it - *The Surge in Suffering*

- In 2010-2015, the social lives of American teenagers moved online.

- It was the FIRST generation to go through puberty with the entire Internet in their pockets.

- They became more anxious, depressed, self-harming, and suicidal.

- The unfettered access hit girls harder than boys. Preteen girls were hit the hardest of all.

- Boys were not immune. They use technology in different ways and they suffer in different ways.

A Tidal Wave

Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety and/or Depressive Disorder, February 2023

All Adults

All Adults — 32.3%

Age

18-24 — 49.9%

25-49 — 38.0%

50-64 — 29.3%

65+ — 20.1%

NOTE: Adults having symptoms of depressive or anxiety disorder were determined based on having a score of 3 or more on the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) and/or Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2) scale.

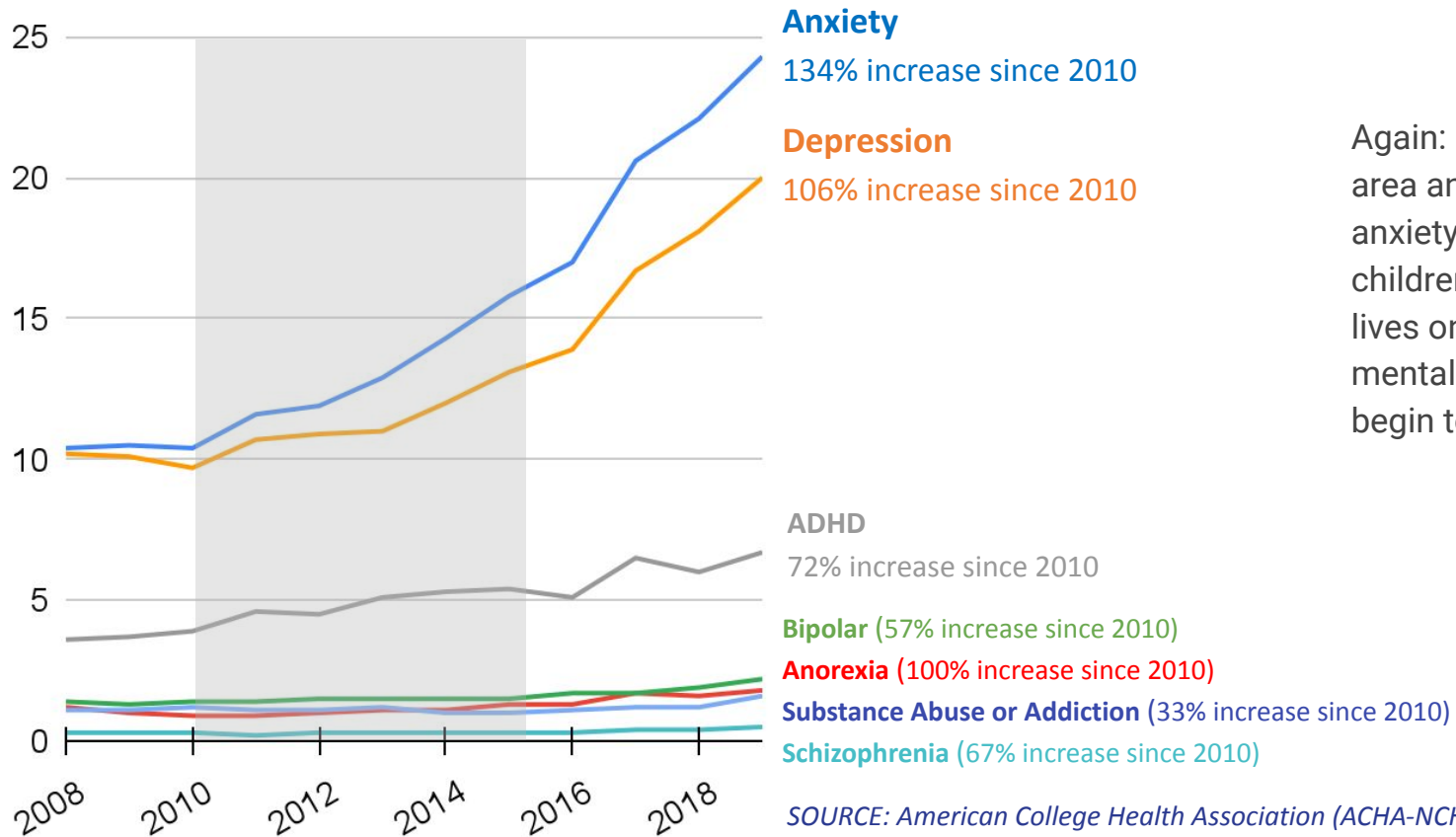SOURCE: KFF analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2023

KFF

Major Depression Among Teens

Girls
145% increase since 2010

Boys
161% increase since 2010
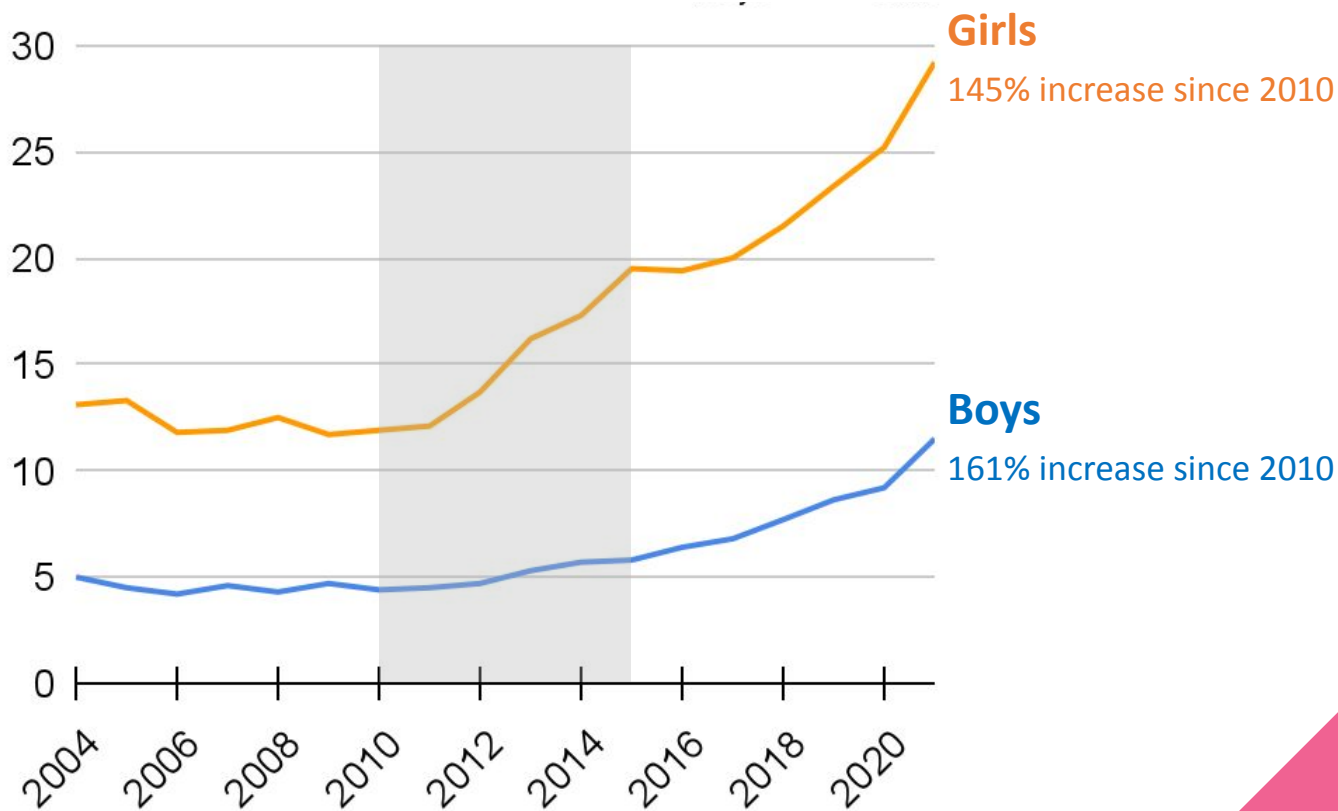
Look at the shaded area. Note the spike in numbers beginning in 2010 which is when the social lives of children and adolescents firmly moved online.

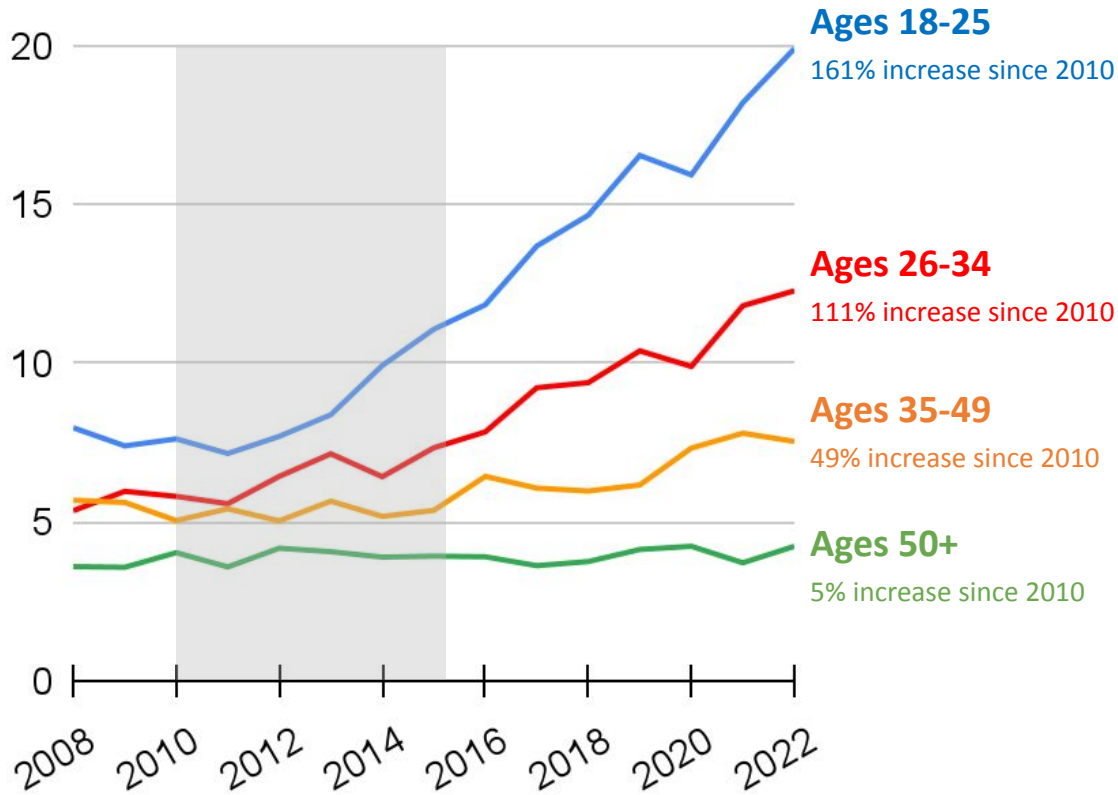*SOURCE: American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA II)*

Percent of U.S. Undergraduates Diagnosed with a Mental Illness

Anxiety
134% increase since 2010

Depression
106% increase since 2010

ADHD
72% increase since 2010

Bipolar (57% increase since 2010)
Anorexia (100% increase since 2010)
Substance Abuse or Addiction (33% increase since 2010)
Schizophrenia (67% increase since 2010)

Again: Note the shaded area and the spikes in anxiety and depression as children begin living their lives on devices. Other mental illnesses also begin to grow.

SOURCE: American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA II)

Percent U.S. Anxiety Prevalence

Ages 18-25
161% increase since 2010

Ages 26-34
111% increase since 2010

Ages 35-49
49% increase since 2010

Ages 50+
5% increase since 2010

Think back to the generational breakdowns discussed earlier. Which generations are chronically online?

SOURCE: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health
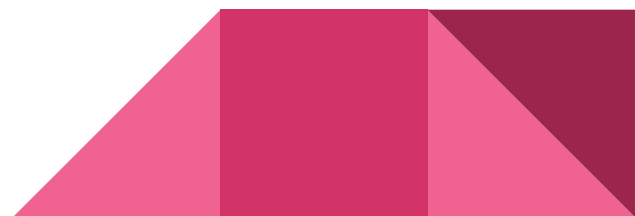
U.S. Teens Admitted to Hospitals for Nonfatal Self-harm (Ages 10-14)

Girls
281% increase since 2010
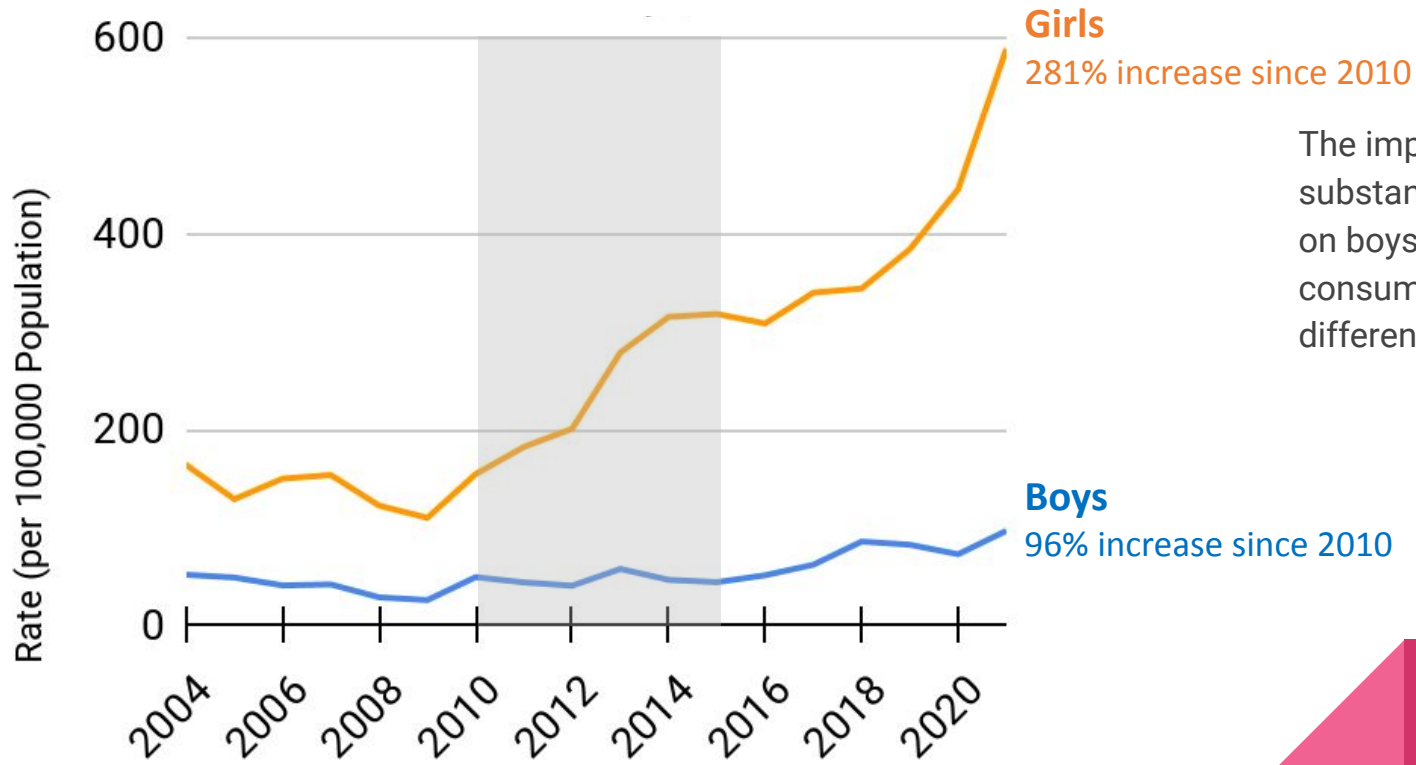
The impact on girls is substantially greater than on boys; however, boys consume social media in different ways.

Boys
96% increase since 2010

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

U.S. Suicide Rates (Ages 10-14)
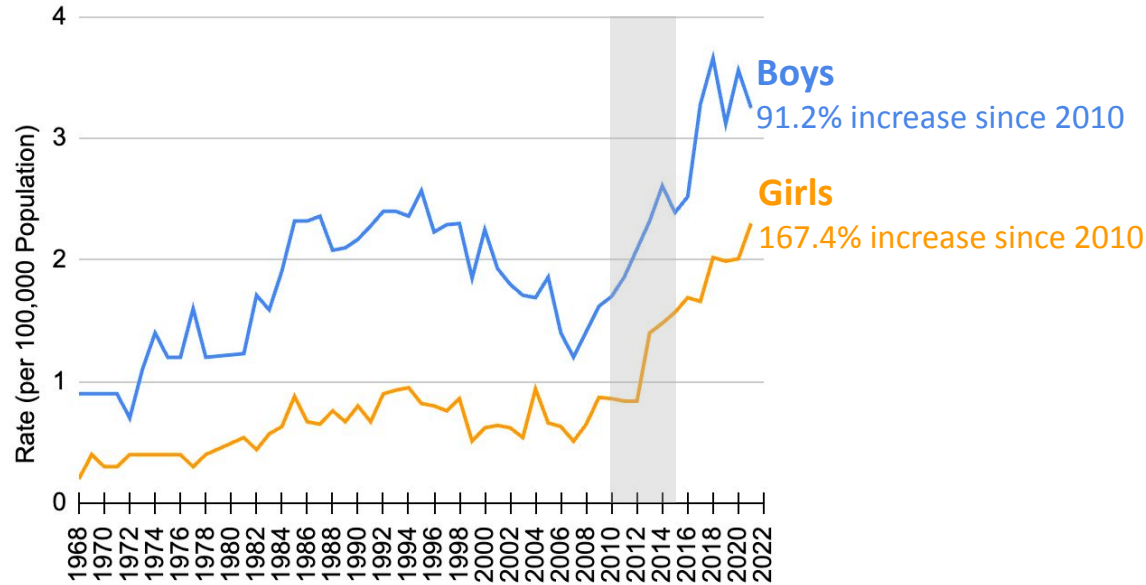
Note the shaded area once more: This is one instance where the trends show boys are negatively impacted more than girls.

SOURCE: CDC Wisqars Fatal Injury Reports

Why Not Millenials? They were online, too!

- Mental health crisis coincides with Gen Z, smartphones, and social media

- 46% of American teens say they are online "almost constantly." Ironically, this is the opposite of connection. "We are forever elsewhere."

- Millennials came of age in roughly the same socio-economic conditions with virtually none of the same ill-effects (9/11, global financial crisis, climate change, etc)

The 4 Foundational Harms

- **Social Deprivation –** Face-to-face exposure to friends dropped from 122 to 67 minutes per day between 2012 and 2019.
- **Sleep Deprivation –** Sleep quality and quantity declined after arrival of smartphones and social media. Negative effects of sleep deprivation are well understood.
- **Attention Fragmentation –** Phones constantly vie for attention. Executive function and maturity depends on being able to stay focused.
- **Addiction –** Most successful social media apps use behaviorist techniques to hook users into spending more of their time there.
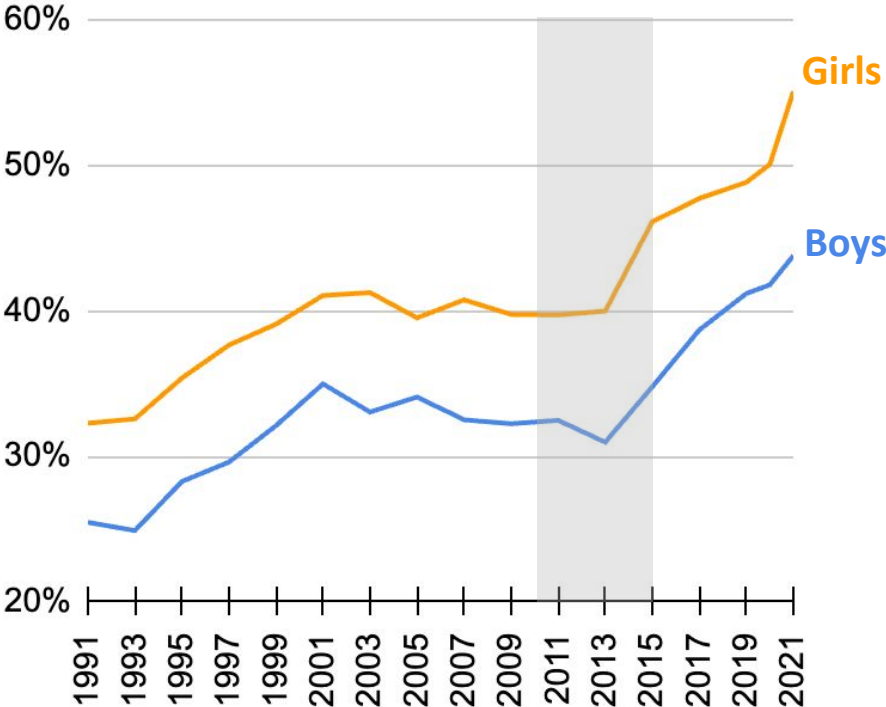
Social Deprivation - Daily Avg Time with Friends (minutes)
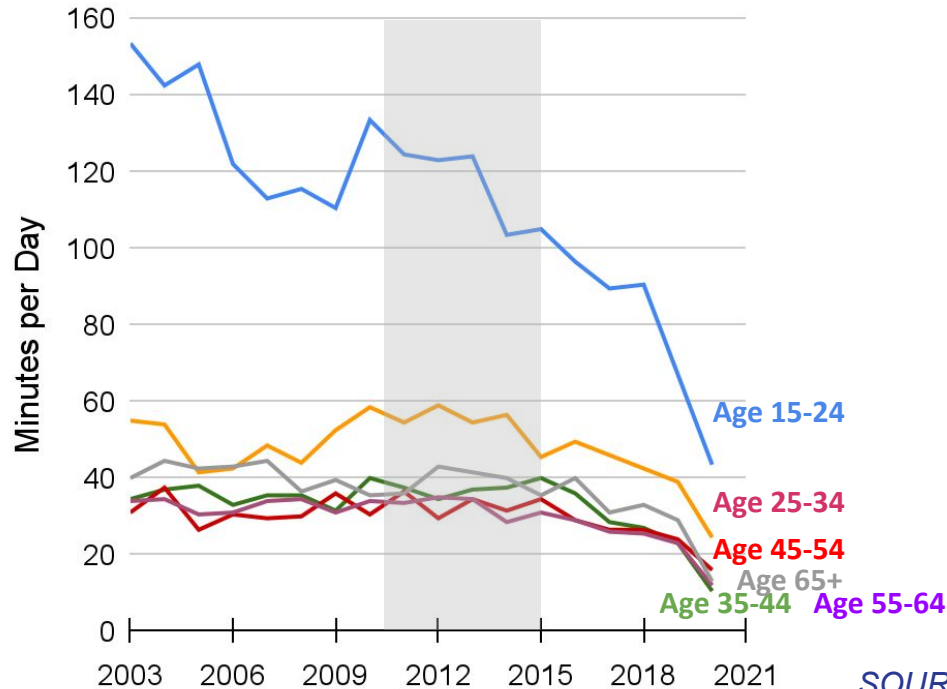
This is the total number of minutes respondents say they spend with friends IN PERSON per day.

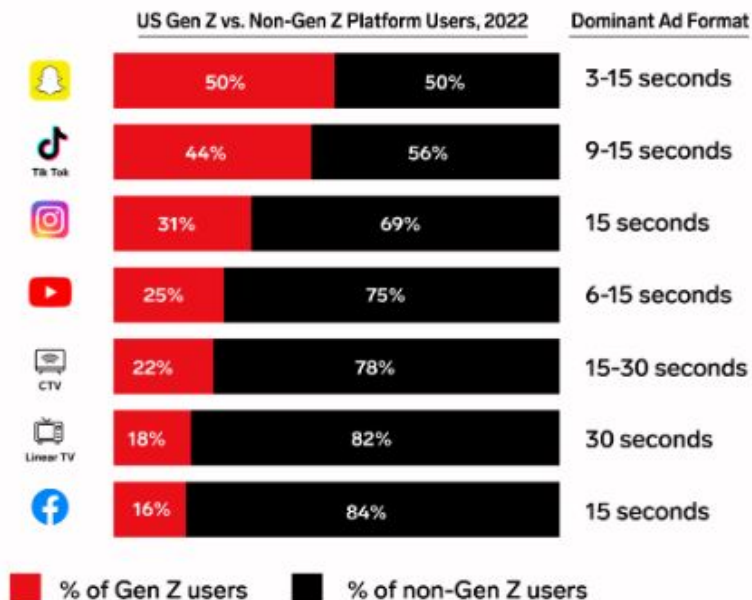*SOURCE: Kannan & Veazie (2023) analyzing the American Time Use Study.*

Sleep Deprivation - Sleep Less Than 7 Hours a Day (USA 8th, 10th, and 12th Graders)

SOURCE: Monitoring the Future, Pooled Average, Weighted, 2020 and 2021 separate, 2-year-buckets

Attention Fragmentation

Social Platforms Shape Gen Z Ad Expectations

US Gen Z vs. Non-Gen Z Platform Users, 2022 — Dominant Ad Format

Platform	% of Gen Z users	% of non-Gen Z users	Dominant Ad Format
Snapchat	50%	50%	3-15 seconds
TikTok	44%	56%	9-15 seconds
Instagram	31%	69%	15 seconds
YouTube	25%	75%	6-15 seconds
CTV	22%	78%	15-30 seconds
Linear TV	18%	82%	30 seconds
Facebook	16%	84%	15 seconds

■ % of Gen Z users   ■ % of non-Gen Z users

Source: eMarketer, 2022; platform ad guidelines
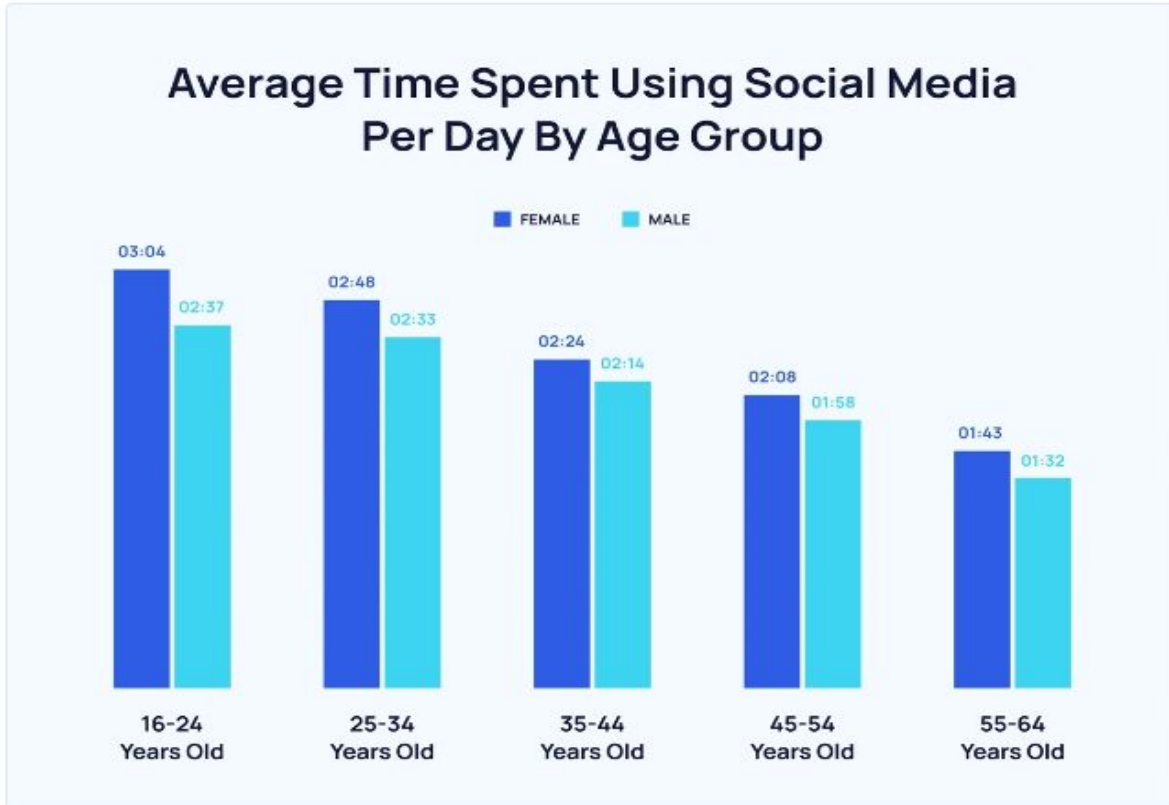i279118

INSIDER INTELLIGENCE | eMarketer

The kids REALLY can't pay attention. Gen Z loses active attention for ads after just 1.3 seconds—less time than any other age group, according to a global study by Yahoo and OMD Worldwide.

Addiction

Average Time Spent Using Social Media Per Day By Age Group

■ FEMALE   ■ MALE

Age Group	Female	Male
16-24 Years Old	03:04	02:37
25-34 Years Old	02:48	02:33
35-44 Years Old	02:24	02:14
45-54 Years Old	02:08	01:58
55-64 Years Old	01:43	01:32

Addiction

Spending more than three hours per day on social media increases the risk of mental health problems in adolescents (JAMA Network)

A 2019 study found that adolescents who spend more than three hours per day on social media are more likely to "internalize problems," which could lead to anxiety and depression. One in four people said they felt social media has a negative effect on people their age and also that social media could be a cause of increased rumor spreading, peer pressure, unrealistic expectations, and other related issues.
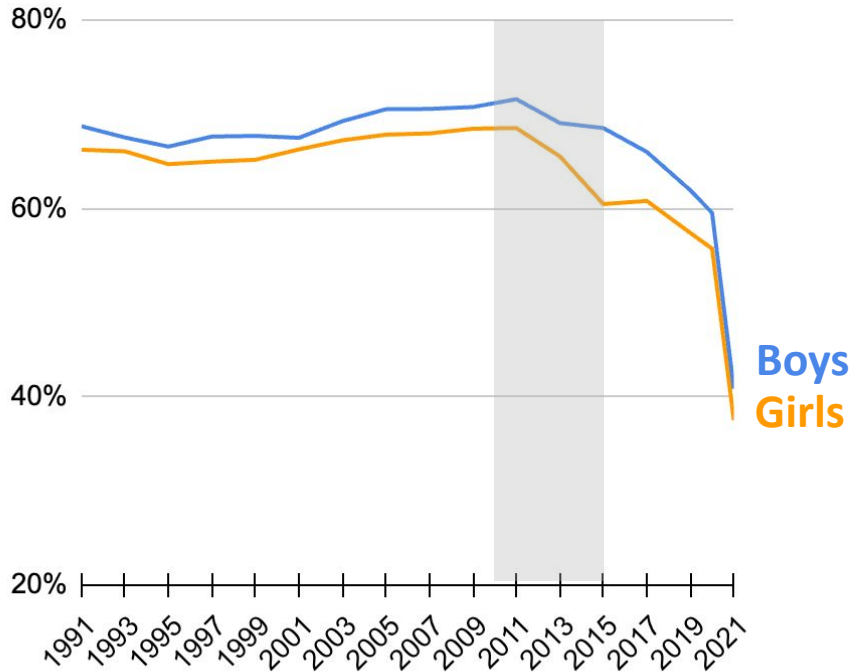
Benefits?

- In 2023, 58% of teenagers reported social media helps them feel more accepted, 71% see it as a creative outlet, and 80% feel more in touch with their friends' lives.

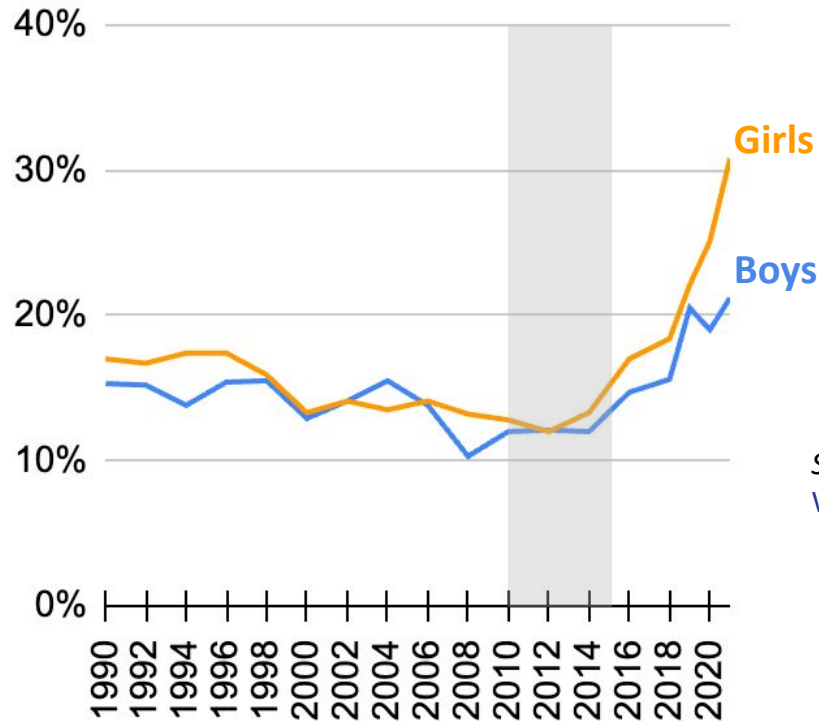- 21% say their "lives would be worse" without it.

Percent Satisfied with Themselves
(USA 8th, 10th, and 12th Graders)

SOURCE: Monitoring the Future (MTF), 2 year buckets, Weighted

"Life Often Feels Meaningless" (USA 12th Graders)

Girls

Boys

SOURCE: Monitoring the Future (MTF), 2 Year Buckets, Weighted

The Anxious Generation: Exploring the Impact of Cell Phone and Social Media Use on Mental Health

Kimberly Huzzy

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

- FOMO arises from the constant visibility of social events and achievements online.
- Social media showcases idealized lives, creating a sense of exclusion for adolescence/teens.
- Teens feeling anxious when they see friends are out and they were not invited-Snapchat, Instagram, Life360, etc.
- Contributes to compulsive social media use and increased feelings of loneliness.

Anxiety and Mental Health

- Social media use increases anxiety due to comparisons and negative feedback loops.

- Teens often feel pressure to present a perfect image online.

- Increased self-doubt after receiving fewer likes or comments than expected on a post.

- Heightened anxiety levels can lead to sleep disturbances and depression.

Pressure and Comparison

- Social media fosters a culture of comparison, especially around appearance and achievements.

- Teens compare themselves to the curated and filtered lives they see online.

- Feeling inadequate when comparing their real life to influencers' idealized posts.

- Leads to reduced self-esteem and a focus on external validation.

Executive Functioning Challenges

- Executive functioning involves skills like planning, focus, and self-regulation.

- Excessive cell phone use disrupts these skills by promoting multitasking and attention fragmentation-

- Constant notifications during homework reduce focus and productivity.

- Long-term effects include difficulty managing tasks and decision-making.

Strategies to Help Manage Social Media/Device Use

Keri-Ann Romano

Phone/Device free times for your family

- Have phone free times of day (dinner, bedtime, car rides).
- Schedule phone free family activities a few times a week (board games, cooking, hiking, movie night, etc).
- Outdoor activities & activities that foster independence and increase confidence are encouraged.

Discourage multitasking screens

- Encourage students to complete homework/studying while the phone/device is in a different room. Music is okay.
- Even watching television, while scrolling through social media can impact attention.

Appropriate behavior regarding responding to notifications/messages

- Turn off social media notifications.
- Modeling/teaching appropriate manners when having face to face conversations on checking your phone or texting back.

Utilize device controls & parent restrictions

- Set up screen time, parent controls for apps, bedtime mode, etc. This takes the debate out of it.
- Take devices out of bedrooms at night, phone, ipad, etc. If they use it as an alarm, set up a different way to use an alarm.
- Setting boundaries is okay and part of our job as adults in their lives. It's okay for you to change course of your family's rules.

Talk with your kids regularly about what they see on social media/online

- Talk with your child on a regular basis about how social media platforms work, what they like to view, and how they would respond in various situations.
- Watch out for problematic behavior-such as social media interfering with sleep time, regular physical activity, in person social interaction and/or commitments, etc.
- It may be helpful to have your child log their daily time on the phone for a few days (most people underestimate the hours on the phone).

Help your child build a positive online presence/portfolio

- Talk with your child about building a positive online presence, which jobs/colleges may search.
- Follow/friend your child on their social media platforms.
- Help them highlight some of their hobbies, accomplishments, volunteer work, etc. This allows them to brand themselves in a positive way.

Questions?

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