

-

In the past 20 years, social media has taken off and become a huge medium in how we retrieve information. It is how we get our news, results, advertisements, and stay connected across the world. It is a staple in lifestyles across the world to the point that companies and schools are using social media as an outlet to advertise what they have to offer. Communications interns are becoming social media interns and daily routines start and end with opening social apps. When did this happen?

Sites such as Facebook, Reddit, and Twitter were launched in the mid-2000's, with Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest coming in at the start of the 2010's decade. Now, according to [Statista](#), in 2021, 82% of US adults are on social media.

Some of the early Gen Z remembers a time when life didn't revolve around social media. "I feel that I have the ability to immerse myself in an activity or subject for an extended period of time without my mind wandering." Says Raena Bents a Journalism major at DePaul University. "Now I can pick up my phone and scroll through 10 *TikTok* videos in the span of 1 minute."

They remember watching tv or listening to the radio to get information. They remember waiting until a later age to get a phone or tablet. They remember relying on the outdoors for entertainment and not a screen. Though, they are still developing and growing during a time of social media.

Film major at DePaul University, Maddie Carter says, "I don't think I remember life much without the influence of social media because I've had access to the internet from a young age, but I would say this has influenced a lot of my social skills and how I interact with others because I've been able to view the behavior of other people for the majority of my life."

Life for students and teens right now are much different than their grandparents and even parents, due to social media. They are constantly comparing themselves and seeing others living better lives which is causing more and more mental health issues with these kids. Patterns of anxiety, depression and self-harm all point to social media use and its negative effect. According to [Etactics](#), almost 25% of teens and 38% of adults view social media as negative. So, if people know that it can cause mental health issues, why do people continue to use it?

During this digital age, retrieving information is relied heavily on social media and what social media platform. IT major at Chippewa Valley Technical College, Arianne Kornmann says she gets most of her news and information from *Instagram* and the *New York Times*. Whether it is keeping up with the news or sports scores, or staying connected with friends and family, people continue to use social media as an outlet to keep getting that information. "I feel that people need to be careful when getting information from online. It is easy for people to twist

One of the negatives of social media is that it mostly only portrays the good parts of people's lives and not the ugly which causes viewers to question whether they are truly living a good life. One example is posting vacation pictures, job promotions, new homes, etc. Those are what majority of people post, not breakups, losing a job, or a bad day. Similarly, someone wouldn't post a selfie of them as soon as they wake up, they post a selfie when they are put together. So, what does this say about how people are portrayed on social media versus real life? Amelia Hadzima, a nursing major from Marquette University elaborates on this.

"Over social media I feel the need to present a perfect life and to have everything together. In real life, I feel very casual and am unafraid to be the real version of myself." Hadzima says. "I think because of the fact things are online, you can't see people's reaction to you, so you build a wall up so they can't judge you as much."

Bents then goes onto say, "Social media's gift of time allows me to censor myself in some situations in which real life doesn't allow."

There are usually very apparent generation gaps between parents, and their children. As stated before, previous generations who have grown up without social media have developed differently than the current generation who is growing up with their life being posted.

"GenX childhood without social media was simpler. Freeform. Imaginative, somewhat sheltered and perhaps boring." Says Cindy Laun from Robbinsdale Minnesota. Laun grew up during the 1970's and 80's. "GenZ childhood with social media is entertained, somewhat structured, more opportunities, public, pressured and progressive."

This is causing the generation gap to be even wider due to parents and grandparents not knowing what it's like growing up and developing during a digital age.

Social media also affects people differently based on their race, ethnicity, and gender. Khaliya Jackson (they/them) elaborates on their thoughts about this.

Social media has truly changed how everyone views the world, metaphorically and physically. For those who remember a time before, it will continue to be an adjustment. Times are continuously changing as humans are always evolving. It's how we go about it that's what truly matters at the end of the day.