

The Decline in Adult Activities Among US Adolescents, 1976-2016

Jean M. Twenge and Heejung Park

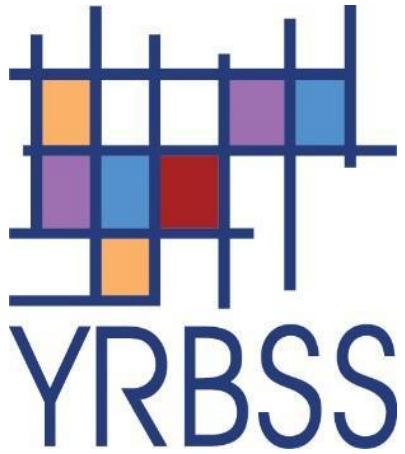


Fast Strategy



Slow Strategy





Measures:

Working at a job –
Going out – Dating –
Driving – Alcohol use
– Sexual activity

Social Context Indicators:

Life expectancy – Teen birth rate –
College enrollment – Pathogen
prevalence – Internet use – Homework –
Extracurricular activities - Violent crime

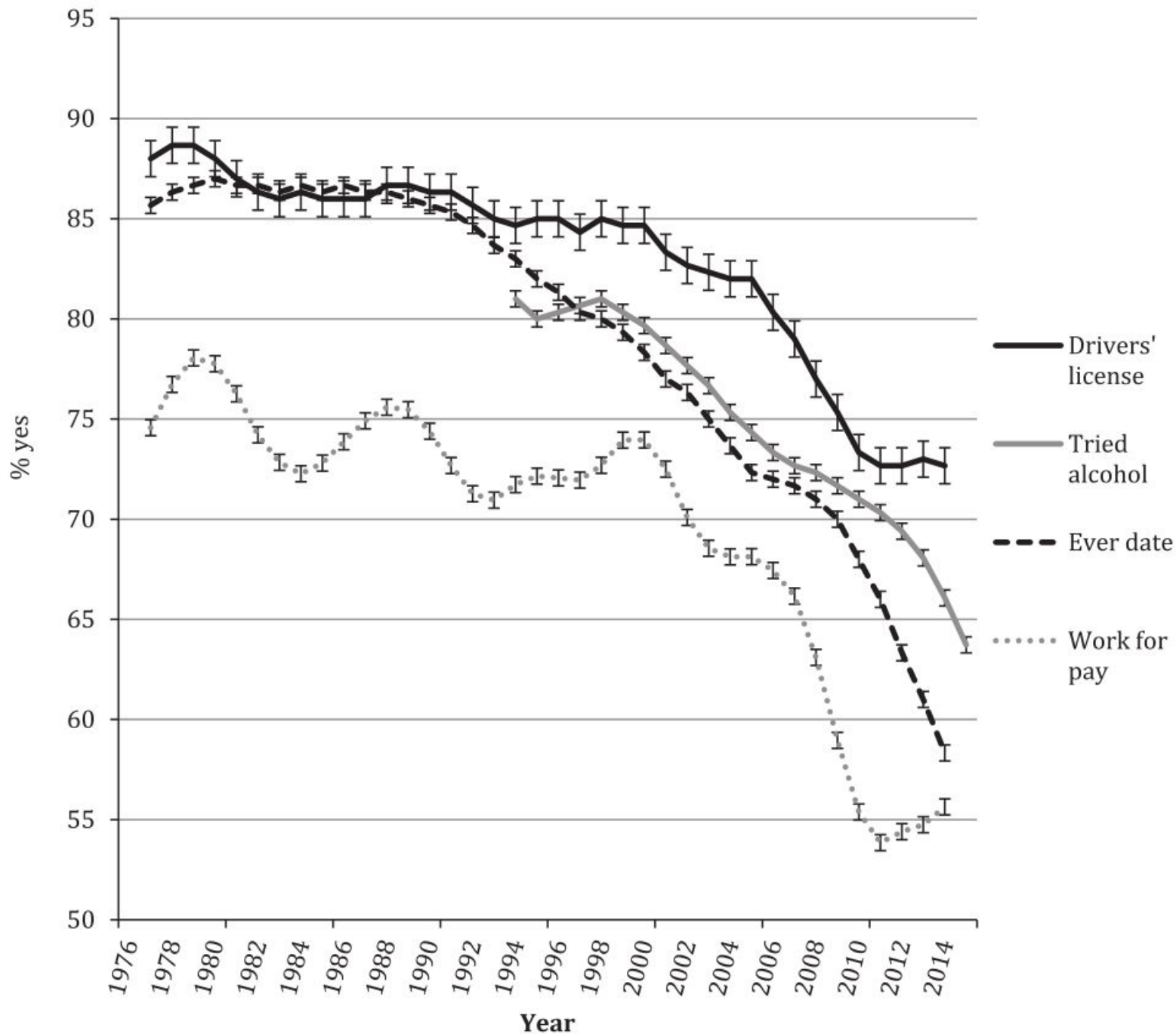
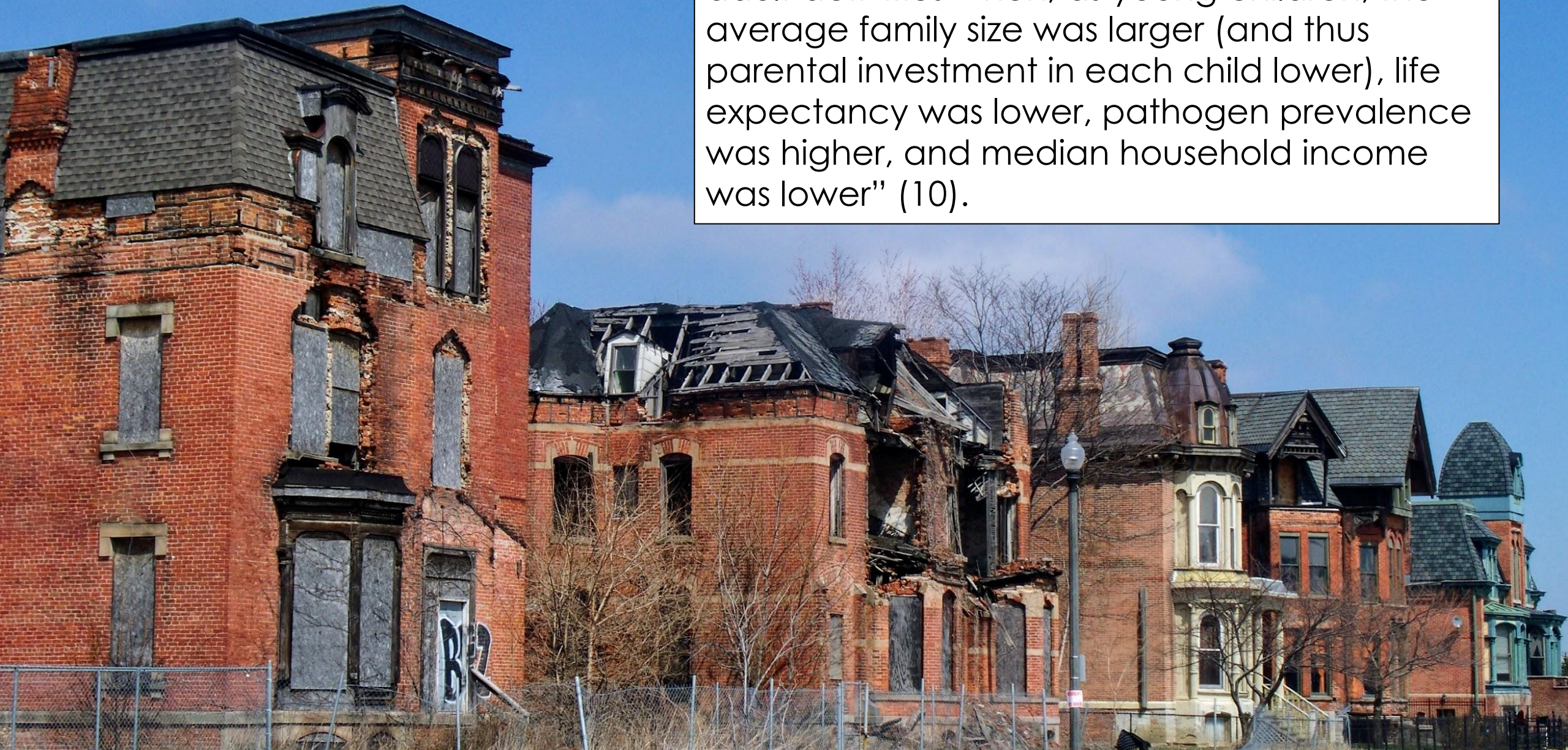


Figure 1:
Percentage of US 12th graders who have a driver's license, who have ever tried alcohol, who ever go out on dates, and who work for pay, 1976-2016

(3-year centered moving average with standard errors)

“Adolescents were more likely to participate in adult activities when, as young children, the average family size was larger (and thus parental investment in each child lower), life expectancy was lower, pathogen prevalence was higher, and median household income was lower” (10).



Generation Free Lunch?

By HEATHER WILHELM | September 21, 2017 8:00 AM



President Trump with Frank Giaccio on the White House lawn, September 15, 2017. (Reuters photo: Carlos Barria)

A new study suggests today's young people haven't learned the value of hard work.

Last week, an eleven-year-old hero meticulously pushed his way into the national spotlight, intending to inspire America and “show the nation what young people like me are ready for.” I’m referring, of course, to Frank Giaccio, the budding entrepreneur from Virginia who asked President

NATIONAL REVIEW

“A new study suggests today’s young people haven’t learned the value of hard work.”

But when you've never worked for money in your life, can you be expected to assume otherwise? Most of the news coverage surrounding the study, which was authored by Jean Twenge of San Diego State University and Heejung Park of Bryn Mawr College, has focused on the delays in driving, drinking, and dating. But when the rubber hits the road, getting a job — any job, big or small — seems to be the most important neglected milestone of them all.

“People say, ‘Oh, it’s because teenagers are more responsible, or more lazy, or more boring,’ but they’re missing the larger trend,” Twenge told the *Washington Post*. Instead, she argues, there is no survival-based reason to rush into adulthood; this new “life strategy” is a simple response to a slower, calmer environment. “Youths may be less interested in activities such as dating, driving or getting jobs,” the *Post* story continues, “because in today’s society, they no longer need to be.”

And so we have social media and internships and after-school activities and smartphones and, in some cases, college-prep courses — but for a sizeable chunk of young people, we also have almost zero immersion in the work of the real world, paired with a lack of understanding as to how that world got so slow and relatively cushy in the first place. In a fascinating poll last year, Harvard University found that 51 percent of respondents — all young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 — did not support capitalism. What they wished would replace it was, quite unsurprisingly, unclear.

We don’t “need” to do many things that are good for us, it turns out, nor do we “need” to build persistence — or, for that matter, learn about the way the world

NATIONAL REVIEW

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Quattro Musser, 17, of Portland, Ore. He and his friends don't have any interest in drinking alcohol, and he thinks serious dating in high school doesn't make sense. (Marlee Brown/Marlee Brown)

By **Tara Bahrapour**

September 19, 2017

When 17-year-old Quattro Musser hangs out with friends, they don't drink beer or cruise around in cars with their dates. Rather, they stick to G-rated activities such as rock-climbing or talking about books.

They are in good company, according to a new study showing that teenagers are increasingly delaying activities that had long been seen as rites of passage into adulthood. [The study](#), published Tuesday in the journal *Child Development*, found that the percentage of adolescents in the United States who have a

The Washington Post

"I haven't heard of anyone who goes out and specifically drinks with their friends."

The Washington Post

Teenagers are also more conscious now about the possible repercussions of their actions, said Stephanie Coontz, director of research at the Council on Contemporary Families.

"They're starting to realize, wow, they really do have to worry about their résumés," she said. "They come in without the kind of reckless disregard of consequence that a more confident generation of kids had, who said, 'I'll drop out of school and join the peace movement — what the hell?' "

With fewer career paths available to those without a college degree, Coontz said, young people can no longer afford that kind of nonchalance.

"They're absorbing the same kind of anxiety about the future that their parents have for them," she said.

Chiara Power, 15, of San Juan Island in Washington state has no interest in dating, driving, working for pay or drinking alcohol — and the rising costs of college keep her up at night.

"I'm already panicking and having nightmares about the student loans that I'll never escape, and I'm worried that I'm going to end up homeless," she said.

Her parents try to assuage her fears. "They're just like, 'Dude, that's not happening for the next three years, so chill.' I can't chill. I have no chill," she said. ". . . There's just so many people saying, 'Oh, it's going to be hard when you get out there.' "

Her mother, Penelope Haskew, 45, feels mixed about her daughter's preference for spending free time at home with her family.

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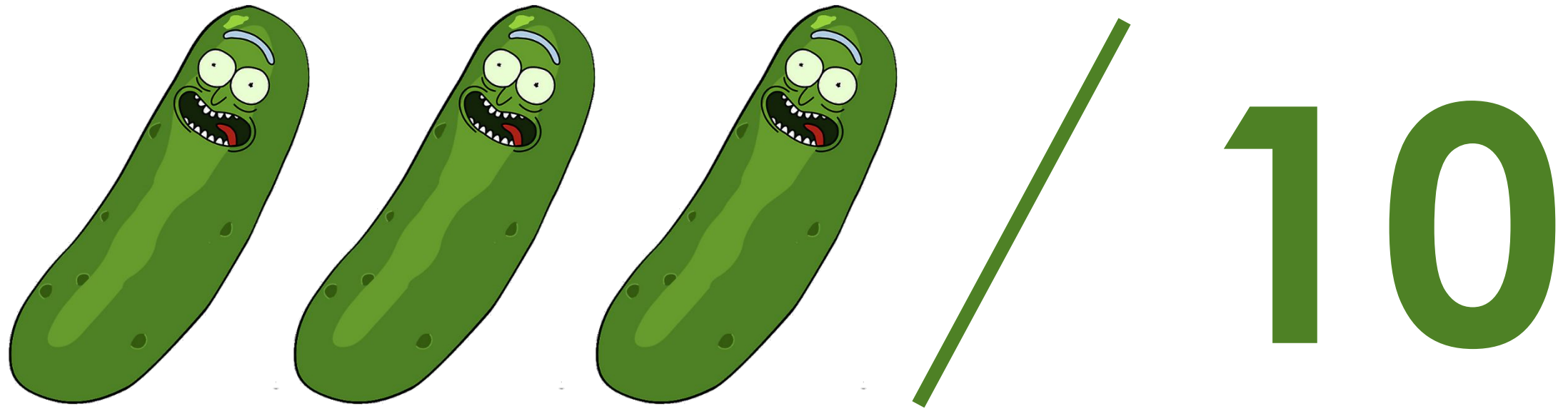
The Atlantic

“It’s not an exaggeration to describe iGen as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades.”



Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?

More comfortable online than out partying, post-Millennials are safer, physically, than adolescents have ever been. But they're on the brink of a mental-health crisis.



The Washington Post gets credit for making an effort to accurately summarize the study and discuss its limitations.

Otherwise, the media was too quick to make far-reaching, apocalyptic statements not fully justified by the research.