TSWD. Presentation content.

Poke me. The effects of social media on children\* in the U.S.

Almost everyone in the U.S. has activity in at least one social media outlet.

### And this is also reflected in children...

90% of them have used social media, and 75% are active on at least one social media outlet

#### **If we consider only leisure screen time, this is how it looks like for the average 10-18-year-old.**

The average time spent in front of a screen for entertainment purposes reached 8:39 hours n 2021.

This is a surprisingly high number, but it is consistent across different sources.

[This article](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2785686) published at JAMA Pediatrics calculates 8:10 hrs on average, every day. According to the [AACAP](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Social-Media-and-Teens-100.aspx)\*, "on average, teens are online almost 9 hours a day, not including time for homework."

This already high number represents a 17% increase from pre-pandemic levels.

If we look closer into how this time is allocated between leisure activities, they spend 3 hours 16 minutes watching TV and videos, an hour and forty-five gaming, and 1 hour and 41 minutes on social media; this is almost 20% of total entertainment screen time.

By far, TikTok is the main app used by kids in the U.S.

What is perhaps more surprising is the spike in screen time: it went from 44 minutes a day on average in 2019 to 99 minutes per day.

In third place, Instagram has stayed relatively stable at around 40 minutes per day.

In what follows, this document focuses on Instagram and Tiktok

**Instagram**

[Multiple publications](https://ribarrag.github.io/portfolio/social_media_icons/references.html)indicate associations between Instagram and higher levels of depression, anxiety, and negative body image.

Spending more time on Instagram is also linked to higher levels of loneliness, low self-esteem, and poor sleep quality.

The [results of internal investigation](https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739) carried out by Meta (Instagram's parent company) were revealed by the Wall Street Journal. Some of which are presented next

Spending time on Instagram is not always a joyful activity. According to this investigation, 14% of boys in the U.S. end up feeling worse or much worse about themselves.

And it affects girls more: a bit more than 1 in 5 girls in the U.S. feels worse or much worse about themselves after using it.

When girls are scrolling through their Instagram stories, a plethora of negative thoughts emerge.

42% of teenagers experience thought related to not having enough money.

41% feel like they are not attractive, and 39% worry about not having the perfect image.

Some even have thoughts about hurting themselves (9%) or think about suicide (6%)

**TikTok**

1. The algorithm used by TikTok is associated with activity in the brain that relates to addictive behaviors.

2. The algorithm used by TikTok leads people into rabbit holes of less vetted and more extreme content.

TikTok uses data such as how much a person lingers over a piece of video or rewatch, hashtags, profile description and location to learn emotion and interests.

It shows the user a wide array of curated and approved videos, and then quickly narrows to specific interests.

According to WSJ, as much as 93% of videos that users are exposed to are recommended by TikTok, and, these videos rapidly start being less vetted and show more extreme content: rabbit hole. It quickly finds pieces of content that users are vulnerable to.

Less vetted by moderators, more probable to find potentially dangerous content.

[This paper](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053811921004134)shows that: when watching personalized videos: the part of the brain that regulates self-control is less engaged.

Higher activation of the default mode network: brain regions used when a person is not focused on a specific task.

Higher activation of the Ventral Tegmental Area (VTA)\*, which contains dopamine neurons: involved in the experience of pleasure.

All in all, this is consistent with the generation of addictive behavior.

According to the same research: 5.9% of all interviewed users have serious addiction problems to TikTok.

### Eight states have launched investigations on TikTok’s effect on children's mental health...

### **With all this information, it is surprising that:**

### **69% of parents in the U.S.** are only slightly or not concerned at all about their children's time spent on-screen use of technology.

### **For** **61% of parents,** **children aged 16 or above don't need any supervision in their use of technology.**

While the solution to this problem is way more complex and might involve family dynamics, children's context, and an individual mental health assessment, using parent control tools is an important step in the right direction.

And every major social media app has it.