

Have smartphones really destroyed a generation? We don't know.

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Teens in the United States are coming of age at a time when digital [technology is truly ubiquitous](#), where smartphones are our “[constant companions](#).”

These youth are also, according to national surveys, increasingly in crisis.

Here are some of the most troubling statistics. Between 2009 and 2017, the number of high schoolers who contemplated suicide [increased](#) 25 percent. The number of teens diagnosed with clinical depression [grew](#) 37 percent between 2005 and 2014. It could be that more teens are willing to admit they're struggling and are seeking help. But deaths by [suicide among teens have increased as well](#). A recent [study](#) found that poisoning attempts by girls ages 10 to 12 increased 268 percent from 2010 to 2017.

As adults have noticed these trends, they've begun to worry: It's the phones.

“Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?” the Atlantic asked in a provocative and widely read [2017 cover story](#). That article, by San Diego State University psychology professor Jean Twenge, summarized the correlational data linking teen mental health with technology and suggested the answer was yes. There's also a sense, in the conventional wisdom, that the answer must be yes.

Public fears about smartphones aren't limited to mood disorders like depression, or rates of [anxiety](#). There's panic about [gaming or tech “addiction,”](#) and that we're losing our ability to [focus](#) or [remember](#) due to the ubiquity of digital tech. These concerns are easily lumped together into one overarching fear: [Tech is messing with our minds](#).