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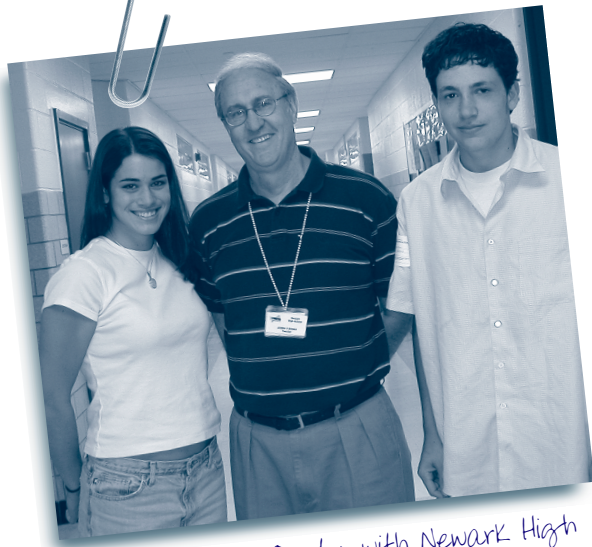
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# kids voices count

Delaware teens talk  
about social issues





Teacher James Doodly with Newark High  
School students

KIDSCOUNT in Delaware is dedicated to making our state a better place for kids. We want to focus the attention of Delaware's policymakers, community leaders and parents on issues that affect the lives of children in our state.

Kids Voices Count provides the teen perspective. This writing project began as an assignment in three Newark High School's sophomore social studies classes by teacher James Doodly. To present a wide representation of their opinions, excerpts were taken from many essays. Due to space constraints, some statements appear out of context but every effort has been made to include the true opinions of the students.





Over the last 36 years, America's economic strength has increased to unrivaled levels. But in those years, violent crime has increased 560 percent; births to single mothers are up 400 percent; divorce rates have quadrupled; children living in single-parent homes increased threefold; teen suicide has increased 200 percent; and average SAT test scores have dropped 80 points. In 1965 there was no drug problem, no AIDS epidemic, no public school collapse.

Why? What's going on here? What caused this? Is there any connection between the phenomenal economic growth and the social regression? Can your generation even relate to a not so distant past and its values? What does the future hold?

Mr. Doody assigned us, his sophomore social studies classes, this prompt and told us to write an essay on our ideas. We then presented our ideas to the class so that we could hear our classmates' points of view. Many different views emerged but approximately 3/4 of the 92 students said that the rising economy was a direct cause of our decaying society. People gave many aspects of our growing economy: greed, materialism, focus on work instead of home life, and increasing distance between the rich and the poor; as the culprit for social regression. The minority who did not blame the economy came up with several ideas such as the media, a change in people's principles or values, single parent families, and, in a few cases, the government, drugs, lack of gun control, and a change in national character since the war in Vietnam. One student pointed out that in the last ten years both the economy and social issues have improved.

Almost half blamed the social regression on bad parenting even though there was nothing regarding parenting in the prompt. Bad parenting included parents not spending enough time with their children because both of them are working, parents being too lenient with their kids or spoiling them, and parents not caring for their kids because they are too worried about other things.

There is a spectrum of our ideas printed on the following pages. Many excerpts were included and only three are printed in their entirety because of space constraints. You will notice that some ideas are contradictory to others while you are reading them; you can form your own opinions.

*-Charlie Kaler*

# 1965-2002: Economic Growth, Social Regression

The past thirty six years has brought great economic growth in the United States of America; the stock market has soared, the job market has increased phenomenally, and the United States has risen to the greatest world power. In the nineteen sixties, success, for most families, meant having a two bedroom home with one car in the driveway. In two thousand two, for most families success means having a huge four or five bedroom home, with three cars in the driveway. This growth, for the most part is very good, however, there is a huge price involved. This price includes the increase of violent crime by over five hundred percent, the increase in births to single mothers, and the huge increase of divorces. Who or what can take the blame for these problems? A huge economic growth, such as the one that has occurred in the past thirty years, has many problems attached to it, and many causes for these problems; including deteriorating family values, overall population increase, and excess money circulating among teens.



A deteriorating family is the start of a huge domino effect.

A child's family experience is extremely important. The first few years of a child's life revolve around his family, and what occurs during these first few years directly relates to what the child will amount to be. A deteriorating family is the start of a huge domino effect. Without a stable home, children can be severely damaged mentally, and from the start, they fall behind. As teenagers these children are more likely to get in to trouble and to worry less about school. One main factor that has contributed to the slump of family values is the increase of both parents in the work place. This can be attributed to families or individuals feeling the need for more money. A smaller house for a beginning family is no longer

acceptable, a bigger one is. Both parents working means more stress, and more stress means higher divorce rates. Studies have proven that a child will do much better in a two parent home, but if a single mother can make a one hundred thousand dollar salary, no one seems to care anymore. A child of this mother would have many of the same long lasting problems as a child growing up in a single parent home in the ghettos of an inner city. The problem is not a lack of money, it is a lack of basic family values that this country has been brought up on for hundreds of years.

The lack of family values is a main cause of the social regression, however there are more causes that need to be addressed. For example, the dynamics of the inner city have changed dramatically. In the early nineteen sixties the suburbs were nothing like what they are today. The same goes for cities; there was far less poverty, and crime rates were significantly lower. By the late sixties this all changed, most of the law abiding middle class citizens moved to the suburbs and lower class citizens and immigrants who were more likely to resort to crime moved in. The "ghetto" of how we think of it today was formed, and with this came a huge increase of crime, drugs, and births to single mothers.

Education in general has gotten so much better over the last thirty-five years, not worse. There are so many more opportunities today for any type of student. More students today are going to college then ever before, if not four year universities, then two year community colleges, or the armed forces. Any hard working high school student who desires



to go to college can go. If a family can not afford it, then it will be paid for. There is no relevance in the term “public school collapse” because the type of education a student gets is directly related to what kind of effort the student puts in. If a student wants a mediocre education at a public school, then they can get one, if they want the best education possible, they can get it, and if they want the worst education possible; they can also get that. It all depends on the effort of each individual student. It is impossible to measure the success of a school or education in general just by looking at test scores. SAT scores have dropped slightly over the past thirty years, however this is good in some ways. The drop in no way means that the youth of America are getting dumber; it simply means more people are taking the exam. Many of the people taking the exam would not have had the chance to take it thirty years ago. If these students score a little lower on the exam, it does not matter, it is important that more and more students are getting the opportunity to take the test and go to college.

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Economic growth means more jobs all across the board and it filters down directly to teenagers. A teen today can have a part time job during school and earn a decent amount of money. Many employers are forced to pay teens the same as other employees because of minimum wage laws. This means that teenagers today are walking around with much more excess money to spend. All the factors of social regression affect one other; for example if a teen is stressed out about a recent divorce in the family then they are likely to resort to drugs. Drugs are readily available for any middle class teen that is willing to pay, and with their extra money, they buy drugs. More drugs in the suburbs leads to more violent crime in the inner cities.

There is definitely a direct connection between economic growth and social regression; families desire more money and split up, teens have more money and buy drugs. Many things need to be done in order to get this country back on the right track. Drug cartels need to be broken up, and solid family values need to be emphasized. On the other hand, not every family in the United States is dysfunctional, and not every teenager uses drugs. People in this category need to help those who have problems simply by setting good examples. It is wrong to believe that all of today's youth has lost its values. Many realize that in order for the future to be good, change needs to be made. The economy has grown and grown, and many basic values have been forgotten, but there needs to be some way that our country can thrive both socially and economically. Until this combination is met, there will still be work to be done.

— Peter German

## Economic Strength and Social Regression

Over the last 36 years, America's economic strength has increased to unrivaled levels, but at the same time we have been pulled into a social regression. Why, with all of our technological advances and new economical knowledge have we been sucked in to so many social problems? The answer is that there must be some sort of relation between the economic boom and social regression.

One example is the correlation between single-parent homes and child poverty. When the War on Poverty began, 7.7% of American children were born out of wedlock. Today, this figure has increased to 33%. Since the 1960's, the percentage of births that were out-of-wedlock increased steadily nearly every year. This out-of-wedlock childbearing is a main cause of child poverty and welfare dependence in the U.S.

This carelessness and lack of responsibility on the parents' part takes its toll on their children. It has been proven that prolonged welfare dependence reduces a child's IQ level. It also has an effect on the child's future; the longer a child remains on welfare, the greater the chance that his earnings as an adult will be lower. Children raised in single-parent homes are more likely to experience behavioral and emotional problems, suffer from physical abuse,

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dependence in the U.S.*

engage in early sexual activity, and do poorly in school. Lack of married parents, rather than race or poverty, is a key factor in the crime rate. In a study of 11,000 individuals in 1988, researchers found that the percentage of single-parent households with children between the ages of 12 and 20 is significantly associated with the high rates of violent crime and burglary. The key factor here is not race, but rather the absence of 2 married parents and the failure to form family values and maintain a stable family. Also, poverty is not as key in the crime issue as nonexistence of married parents. A study showed that a

man raised in a single-parent home was twice as likely to be involved in crime related activities as a man who was raised in a home with two parents living at home. This proved true even after taking in a range of variables such as family income, urban residence, neighborhood environment, and parents' education.

You can see from this information that though our economy is reaching an all time high, or society is facing some negative feedback. In the new age of technology and freedom, we have become more and more dependant upon computers and machines to do the work for us and we ourselves have become lazy and careless. Essentially, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, thus defeating the whole "equal opportunity" that America is known for. We have gone against our personal morals and given up on the whole idea of a "family". We have proved that we are too ashamed to seek help when we need it and we refuse to work things out and be in the least bit reasonable. It is up to our upcoming generation to improve the conditions of the present. The time is now to start making changes. We need to share our knowledge with others so that the "oh so distant past" will be not be in the past anymore, but rather the present and the future.

*Christy*



*—Christy Williams*



# What's going on here?

Parents aren't as involved in their children's lives anymore. They are less likely to know if their child is having a hard time in school, or if they are becoming emotionally unstable, which could lead to teenage suicide. They might not realize that their child is becoming too serious in their relationships, which could lead to sex and teen pregnancy. Having two busy parents leaves teenagers with a little too much freedom and time on their hands.

—Tessa Bates

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Studies prove that the births in the U.S. have increased the population and therefore, increased the number of ideas that come forth. Put five people in a room to come up with the best band in the world, and there's bound to be some who are defensive and some who are passive, but controversy is almost a sure thing. Add fifty people, and you get an even greater mess of runny thoughts. Multiply that by four million and you almost have the population of the United States of America in your hands. That's a whole lot of ideas. More diversity in population can cause a greater number of problems and greater need of distance from one another, creating issues and sides.

— Ab-Young Song

The United States has, since its creation, been a nation associated with change. Our forefathers declaring independence from Great Britain was the first instance of the U.S. not accepting things because that's the way they were. This nation was founded from a revolution. The mid-twentieth century was also a time of revolution in the United States.

The Vietnam War changed people's thoughts that the government was always correct. As people rebelled against the war, the phrase "never trust anyone over thirty" replaced the 1950s ideal of complete respect for elders...

The ideal life of the fifties: marrying young, going to work for the local, big company, having a couple kids, then retiring at sixty-five; has changed. In today's world entrepreneurs have become much more commonplace. The increase in entrepreneurship has increased the advances of technology, which has led to enormous increase in prosperity. New technology has opened up a vast number of new fields from which workers may choose, technology has taken over in some of the manual labor jobs; this enabled women to have jobs equal to the jobs of men. Mothers, working and not being at home with their children has changed what had been thought of as the traditional family environment. Additionally, women feel that they do not have to get married, or stay married, in order to have children and to be happy, as was previously believed. This has led to the increases in births to single mothers, children living in single parent households and the rise in the numbers of divorces.

Changes are now, have always been, and will continue to be, results of a rebellion against the status quo. Since 1965, the revolt against the way things were previously done is the cause of the positive economic growth, but also familial problems, drugs, and other social problems.

—Charlie Kaler

# What's going on here?

As time went by, women started pursuing their education, attending college, and later started working jobs. This meant that the mother was no longer capable of staying home and raising the children during the day and daycare became a part of every child's life. Children were left in a less caring and loving environment and grow up feeling more abandoned than cared for. Teenagers in today's society, also, do teenager bonding without guidance, which leaves the opportunity for illegal activity open. Given that there is less supervision, crime rates increase, teenage sexual activity increases, teen births increase, and drug rates increase.

—Heather Roberts

Today both parents work and it's lucky if one of them is home before dinner. Kids come home to an empty house where they are free to do whatever they want for around five hours. This could explain the increases in teen pregnancy and drug problems. No parent is home to tell the kids not to do it, or prevent him or her.

—Kevin Davis

Kids come  
home to an  
empty house

If the economic growth has greatly flourished and there has been a drop in the acts of citizens it may be that the government is not paying attention to the constant outcries of the people in America. America is a very diverse place and not everyone has the same values of beliefs. With everyone having dissimilar beliefs and values, there is no "everyday person" and therefore it is harder for the government to take hold of a method to keep everyone in America rapturous. With the inability to keep everyone content comes a throng of despondent people who wish to have their ideas recognized.

—Jackie Custer

other countries  
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religious beliefs

It is common knowledge that other countries are much more serious about religious beliefs than the United States. Around 1965 there were many more strong religious believers and churchgoers than now a days. Without the rules of religion fresh in young minds, crime, sex, drugs, and other such things seem easier to agree with.

—Jared Frost

As a result of having their mothers home all day, every day, the children (now our parent's generation) had more attention and were disciplined better, which led them to have better morals than our generation. . . . However, not having their parents home most of the time, children began to feel neglected and started experimenting with drugs, seeking love from each other, which led to sex, the spread of AIDS, the increase in teen births, and eventually suicides. . . . I believe that women are a big part of our economy strengthening and our society growing stronger, and falling apart at the same time. Basically, since they have become more independent, it has become harder for the rest of society to adjust.

—Larkin Salemi





*Teenagers are growing  
up at a far quicker pace*

Teenagers are growing up at a far quicker pace than they were 35 years ago. Some teenagers are mature and ready for these changes and some are not, which can result in suicide, or drugs, or teen pregnancy.

*— Nora Tuke*

Personally, I cannot know what American values are from the past or today, because I have been raised by Asian immigrants . . . they pass on the best and most important of Chinese values. One of the die hard values is family. Family take care of each other for their whole lives, parents take care of their children and when they get old the children help take care of them . . . A second value is to have a successful education. Beginning a couple thousand years ago in China there were four “social levels”. The highest rung of the ladder were government officials and the educated, the next was the farmer, because it was an agricultural land, then laborers, and last businessmen. Everyone wanted to be the highest rung and families and the society encouraged studying. Today, the order is probably the educated and government officials, businessmen, workers, then farmers, because it is an increasingly industrial world.

*— Emily Tan*

In our search to “have it all,” we lose sight of the important values in life, such as family. This may be an explanation for the rising births to single mothers, divorce rates, abortions, and teen suicides. We, as a whole, do not focus our attention on our home as much as work, and the consequences are slowly building.

*— Ab-Young Song*

The cause of these impressive statistics may be TV and the fact that earning money is more important than family values, love, and common sense.

*— Jessica Sprout*

# What's going on here?

The children during the Vietnam War are now the parents of our generation. They were rebelling against their parents back then, and now are making up for their parents' mistakes. Parents today are much more liberal; they watch their kids do things that would have been strictly taboo in the 50's and early 60's. Because of the drug use and promiscuity during the Vietnam war era, many parents are regretting the foolish marriages and unplanned pregnancies. As a result, there is an increase in divorce rates and single-parent families. These two factors only contribute to the problems of today's youth. We are now so violent because America was turned into a violent country in Vietnam, and the effects have yet to wear off.

Children today are being taught that sex before marriage and drug use are normal things, therefore, the cycle will just continue. Hopefully, in the future, America will snap out of this social chaos, but there is no apparent solution to the problem. We, as teenagers now, could not relate to the generation of those pre-Vietnam, because it changed the U.S.A. forever. Before the war, riots and strikes had never been imagined. During the war, fear drove children to illegal drugs and immoral acts. Now, we do not have fear, but the possibility will always be there, because it has happened in the past.

—Katie Reinhardt

Without the presence of strong parent figures in their lives, kids can easily turn to drugs, fall in with bad friends, and drop out of school. America may have more people making money, but its families and children are suffering for it.

— Laura Abramjian



Teens became rebellious in the 1960s – 1970s, which is about the time our parents were our age. Therefore, I believe some of the problems have to do with the way our generation grew up and the way we were raised. Society was much cleaner back then, but it was our parents who actually started kicking up the dirt. That doesn't necessarily mean that our parents are to blame for teen's problems and society in general. Perhaps if our parents had a tighter grip on their kids and their actions today they wouldn't be so many cases of teen pregnancies, depressed teens, or lower SAT scores. Then again, this could backfire and make teens more frustrated than ever at their parents, making their life at home more unbearable, which tends to lead to depressed teens and stressed out parents. This only creates a lose-lose situation. If people have more respect for themselves, their parents, and their bodies, they may not be pressured into these difficult situations.

— Becket Gordon

The Vietnam War started around 1965, which eventually resulted in the loss of faith many had in the United States. This is a possible reason for our social decline.

— Nora Tuke



Where are the parents when their children are out doing drugs and having sex? Probably at home, being clueless to what is right under their noses. Family values have changed. Morals are gone. At least that's what the statistics show. Parents should be talking to their children. I know it's exactly what those celebrities preach about on those commercials, but would it hurt anyone to practice what they preach? I mean it's worth a try. What do we have to lose? We can't regress anymore. We are at an all-time low.

— *Katy Housen*

The children who have good grades, do community services, and spend their time helping other people are often overlooked. Most teenagers are concentrating on college and grades.

The drastic change in today's society has been caused by our nation's uncanny appetite for power. Everyone is in need of power. Whether it's in the workplace, at home, or at school, there are always different amounts of power available to each individual. With power comes privileges, and those privileges are what drives certain people to do dishonest or uncharacteristic things.

— *Steven Slacum*

Parents in some cases get lost in their work and forget their children. Staying at work as late as possible, trying to get that last buck in, forgetting the baseball game they promised to play with their son, or blowing off that shopping spree. What are the children doing the whole time that their parents are *still* at work? Do they know that little John is on the corner smoking a blunt with his friend Mike? Or that Ashley just met that really good-looking boy and is "studying" with him? Probably not. Now they wonder when John learned how to smoke, and why Ashley is pregnant at age sixteen.

— *Abby Grube*

The Vietnam

War resulted

in the loss

of faith

Poverty is a humongous factor that links suicide, drug, and crime rates all together. For example, many of those who have low-paying jobs often have low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness. . . . Some poor people even try to relieve their feelings of anxiety with drugs. . . . Many believe that poverty also leads people to commit acts of crime and violence.

— *Kristina Wingard*

The children who have good grades, do community services, and spend their time helping other people are often overlooked. Most teenagers are concentrating on college and grades. There will always be social problems and flaws in our world, but focusing only on them is a flaw in itself. Yes, the world has its low points, but look at how far we've come. Look around at all the positive changes people have made.

— *Lexi Bertrando*

# Is there any connection between the phenomenal **economic growth** and the social regression?

## Economic Growth & Social Problems

It may seem surprising that while the economy has grown over the past thirty-six years new social problems have developed and some long lasting problems have actually gotten worse. When we think about the relationship between economic growth and social problems, however, we should not be surprised. Economic growth refers to the increased production of goods and services in the U.S. It does not tell us what is being produced, it does not tell us who gets income and wealth, and it does not tell us about how different groups of people live their lives. To understand the problems that have grown, we have to look at more than how much the economy has grown.

One of the big changes has been the change from an industrial economy to a service economy. There has been a decline in the part of the economy based on automobiles, steel, electric appliances like TVs, and other manufacturing industries. The growth areas have been in education, health care, computers and information, banking and other service areas. The new parts of the economy need people who have college educations. This means that fewer jobs have been created for people with little education. As a result, the income and employment of poor people deteriorated. The lack of stable jobs and good incomes led to higher divorce rates, breakdown of family and neighborhoods, and more women having children without being married.

As the economy has changed, the distribution of income and wealth in the U.S. has become more unequal. Income refers to the amount of money households get during a year. In 1966, the top five percent of households got 155% of the country's income and the bottom twenty percent got 5.6% of the country's income. By the mid 1990s, the distribution of income had become even more unequal. The top five percent got 19.1% of the country's income while the bottom twenty percent got 4.2%. This inequality has been even greater in the concentration in the ownership of wealth. For example, by 1990 less than 1% of families in the US owned almost 30% of the country's wealth. The top 10% of families owned more than two-thirds of the country's wealth.



*As the economy has changed, the distribution of income and wealth in the U.S. has become more unequal.*

Over the past thirty-six years, violence has grown dramatically. For example, reported rapes have increased from 95 per 100,000 to 39.2 per 100,000. Aggravated assault has increased 85.1 to 430 per 100,000. In part, more people reporting some types of crime, such as rape, can explain increased rates of violent crime. Also, the increased number of young people as a percentage of the whole population during most of this period led to more violent crime. As criminologists have shown, violent crime varies with the age structure of a society. This kind of change in demographics can also lead to changes in illegitimate births.

Yet differences in income and wealth affect the distribution of crime and punishment. For example, it is far more likely that people who are poor and who are either Black or Hispanic will go to prison. The War Against Crime followed by the War Against Drugs led to laws that increasingly made drug use illegal and made punishments very severe.

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Even the apparent decline in SAT scores is related to economic inequality. Higher and higher percentages of high school students have been taking the SAT since getting into college is important for good employment. Because of differences in social class, schools in the U.S. do not have equal funding. To a large extent, the quality of schools vary with school funding. Generally, lower income students have not had the opportunity to go to the best schools. As a result, they tend not to do as well on the SAT as do middle class and upper middle class students.

I've suggested that economic growth does not necessarily lead to social problems getting better. Some social problems may have gotten worse because of greater income and wealth inequality. I do not mean that all problems are based on inequality. The values people have and the way they care for one another is extremely important. We must, however, consider inequality as an important issue even when the economy is growing.

Sources: Bartlett, Ronald L. and James B. Steele. 1996. *America: Who Stole the Dream?* Kansas City: Andrews and MacNeel.  
Currie, Elliott and Jerome H. Skolnick. 1997. *America's Problems: Social Issues and Public Policy*. New York: Longman.

— Eli Turkel



# Is there any connection between the phenomenal economic growth and the social regression?

One of the main reasons for the phenomenal economic growth is the fact that in most families both parents hold full time jobs. However, this is a major cause of the problems with America's youth.

—Tessa Bates

The year 1965 was a turning point in America because the entire mentality of American citizens changed. Our country was a segregated and Caucasian dominated nation. Then the minority barriers were broken down. I feel this contributed overwhelmingly to the growth of the American economy. Once sex and race were no longer issues, white-collar job opportunities became available to everyone willing to work hard enough, not just white males. With these new opportunities came a higher standard of living for all Americans.

—Natalie Eleuterio

Parents are too focused on their jobs and don't spend enough time with their children. This not only makes for a bad family environment but it also gives the unattended children a bigger opportunity to make wrong decisions, like using drugs, taking guns to school, and even taking their own lives. Although America is economically better off, society has suffered because of the time spent to achieve this level of economic strength.

—Ema Bajlovic

It seems the rich get richer, but the poor stay the same. Our vast sum of money is giving us a false sense of salvation.

—Michael Shertock

In society if a family is wealthy and has high social status, people are much less likely to suspect that the family's children are doing drugs, committing crimes, having sex, or becoming suicidal. When in fact these are children who have more money to buy drugs. It makes it much easier for children growing up in this kind of family to get away with such acts, since these are not thought of as characteristics of a child from a wealthy family who has good, caring parents.

—Tessa Bates

There is a connection between the phenomenal economic growth and the social regression. The fact that "Money is the root of all evil," explains how the two are related. Money starts a domino effect for each one of the statistics. The more money you have, the more TV's there are in the house, the more channels you have, the longer you watch, the lower the grades. Being rich means that you have more money to buy drugs, creating the domino effect with drug use, AIDS, births to single mothers, and suicide. Marrying for money branches off into divorce and single parent homes statistics. Social regression is a direct result of economic growth. The entire fall of society snowballs from money.

—Jessica Sprout



As the American dream became bigger and bigger, families wanted more material things and wanted the things they already had to be bigger, such as houses. Instead of one house, many families expect to also have a vacation home. Instead of one family car, most families have multiple cars. In terms of education, a college education is crucial and a bachelor's degree is no longer sufficient. To compete in the ever-changing world, employers in many industries are seeking individuals with higher degrees. All this comes with a huge price tag and a huge impact on society.

—McKenzie Travis

Money is like a drug addiction, if you have some you want more. It seems the rich get richer, but the poor stay the same. I think the upper class people should help the lower class. Some people help but more should want to help instead of keeping all the money for themselves. Helping lower class families should make the world a better place.

—Rachel Lynam

You have to ask whose fault it was that the poor people are poor. Of course, the rich blame it on the poor for not working hard enough and they feel they shouldn't help them. In reality, they're hurting themselves by not helping them because this gives rise to more unemployment and makes the economy fall, which makes them lose money.

—Ryan Hamilton

The connection between this economic growth and social regression is very strong. Morals, principles and ethics are not being as strongly emphasized today. It seems as though what is most important is being the best, meaning having the most money, the biggest house and the nicest car. Whatever decisions you have to make to get there, or whomever you have to step on along the way does not matter. Competition is America's biggest theme in year 2002.

—Megan Gazdick

Morals, principles  
and ethics are not  
being as strongly  
emphasized today.

Crime can easily be linked to an accelerated economy. The reason I believe an accelerated economy causes an increase in white collar crime is simple; there are way more opportunities to commit these crimes than in an economy that is not accelerated. I also believe that an accelerated economy causes an increase in blue collar crime. The main reason for this is that in an accelerated economy the middle and upper classes are reaping all the rewards, while the lower class gets almost nothing. So in response, the lower class will generally try and catch up to the middle class and upper class by nefarious means.

—Matt Albright

Due to global economy many of the manufacturing jobs have been sent outside to countries like Mexico and China. Due to lack of opportunities to the labor class violent crimes occur so as to fulfill their needs they rob and later on lead to bigger crimes. . .

—Upasana Joneja

# parents

Parents don't bother looking after whom their kids are out with and what they are doing because they are too busy with their own lives. If parents were stricter than they have become, then there wouldn't be so many problems amongst this generation. If parents are letting their 16-year-old girl go out to a party in a midriff tube top and hootchie shorts, are they expecting drunken guys not to have negative thoughts about them? Then these parents are STRUGGLING!! Parents are no longer as strict on their children because they are too busy trying to make more money.

— Sunny Merchant

If parents were stricter than they have become, then there wouldn't be so many problems amongst this generation.

If parents are always at work, their children will go home to an empty house each night after school where there is no one there whom they can tell their problems. In what is a combination of rebelling and being out-of-control for the reason that no one will try to stop them, youth everywhere are crying out for the attention that their parents give to work. It may seem that America is a strong nation because of its wealth and high cost of living, but as you look deeper into our nation's social life, you find it is much weaker than it appears. The future of our country, the children, is being neglected and they are using their freedom to act out negatively in what I see as an attempt to get attention and a little bit of love.

— Sarah Bell

The lack of parent involvement seems to play a big role in everything these days.

The lack of parent involvement seems to play a big role in everything these days.

— Amanda Whetbam

The change in the workforce environment and the needs of family, based on the increasing economy has created an additional burden on family responsibility for parents as well as children. Parents don't have ample time for children and that has caused social problems to the upcoming generation.

— Upasana Joneja

When the women were working at home, there was always someone at the house for the children. Someone to teach the children right from wrong... Now [since the 1960s] women had gone to full-time jobs, the children went to day care or to a stranger's house to stay for the day. At day cares, there is not a lot of one-on-one attention for these children. They are not properly attended to the way they used to be when the mothers stayed at home to nurture the kids. As the older children's parents were off making money, there was no one home to supervise, and the children were left to their own devices. The parent have no idea what their children are really up to.

— Abby Grube

Despite the pushing away and trying out our own wings, teenagers need their parents for counseling and support.

— Erica Mayes

In our times, both man and woman strive to create careers outside of the home that are not tied to each other or to the family as a whole. They are no longer “parentally” involved with the everyday occurrences within the family structure. They have “figuratively divorced” themselves from involvement as a family unit, their children’s school activities, in their children’s leisure activities, and even in their spouse activities outside of work. It is no wonder that they do not recognize the signs that their family is failing.

— Steve Storck



Some of the major values that people had all those years ago, such as respecting your elders, have just been disregarded over the years because parents stopped caring about what their children do and don’t do and they let their children just walk all over them.

— Liz May

The lack of communication between parents and teens is one of the worst things present in children’s lives.

While parents sit around and work to make money, they don’t pay enough attention to what their kids are doing. Shouldn’t they get worried when their son or daughter doesn’t come home until three o’clock in the morning? The lack of communication between parents and teens is one of the worst things present in children’s lives. Most kids do listen when their parents talk to them, even if it is one of those “stupid little lectures.” How is a kid supposed to learn right from wrong if he or she is never punished for the wrong, or better yet praised when they were right!

— Cory Gregory

Both parents working is a relatively new thing in our world. The parents literally had little or no control over what their children were doing during the day. The more the family contact decreases the more the family values decrease. Children now had more time after school alone where trouble can be caused due to unbridled circumstances. Crime and sex are direct causes of the loss of family interaction.

— Lauren Beck

# single parent households

Just as there is a correlation between dual working parents and divorce, there is a correlation between divorce and depression in children. In the event of a family crisis such as divorce, children are often not provided with the necessary comfort by their parents when it occurs. Divorce rates have quadrupled in recent years, and kids are often being lashed around during the struggles that are common in divorce situations regardless of their feelings on the matter. Since many of these kids feel there is no one to talk to during those times, they begin to sink deeper and deeper into depression. Then once the children are settled with one of their parents, they begin to see the same situation they were in before. 74 percent of single parents work and many of them have to work a few jobs in order to make ends meet which was much easier when two incomes were coming in. The number of children living in single parent homes has increased three times, putting even more adolescents in the situation of having no parental figures present very often.

—*Scarab Bell*

Because women are much more independent than fifty years ago, they no longer are forced to stay with controlling husbands because of financial concerns. It has been proven that women who work are more actively involved with their communities on a direct level, and do not contribute to the social degradation of America as much as unemployed women, and men altogether. This new found independence does lead to more divorces, however. Women in loveless marriages fifty years ago were forced to stay with their husbands, or go without food. Today women have the choice, which I believe is a good thing, no matter what sociologists say.

—*Wesley Marks*

Divorce could be a  
chance to get  
out of a bad or  
abusive relationship.

Although divorce rates continue to climb, and are stressful on families and the children, it can also be for the best. It could be a chance to get out of a bad or abusive relationship.

—*Katie Lyell*

A main source of our social problems is the fact that more and more children are raised in single parent homes. The probability that these children will end up poor, without a high school education, on welfare, abusing drugs, and in conflict with the law is overwhelming. In that sense, children who are raised by only one parent are extremely likely to contribute to the other social dilemmas. Their children, in turn, are likely to fare even worse. A common-sense approach to this problem would be to decrease the number of single-parent families. Higher divorce rates contribute to the increase in single-parent families. In fact, at current rates every second marriage will fail, but it seems difficult to slow down this trend without also limiting the personal freedom of the individuals involved in marriage.

—*Ryan Vance*

The subject of divorce and single parent homes is one simply of the changes in society. In 1965, the relationships between husband and wife were not better, they were the same, just not openly discussed. Expectations were different then, and women were not equal to their husbands, and often could not support themselves without a spouse. As women began to become more independent, the divorce rate rose.

—*Nora Tuke*





Divorce rates and single parent homes are at an uncanny level. This is because women today are more independent and mature than they were over 50 years ago. They also know that in today's society they can make it on their own without the help of men.

— *Sandie Reisler*

In the year 2000, 19 million children lived in single-parent households compared to just 5.8 million in 1960. On the other hand, 70 million children under 18 lived with both parents in 2000, and 55.8 million in 1960. The great increase in the proportion of children who are living with only one parent can be attributed to higher divorce rates and children born to unmarried mothers.

Source: CH-1 Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 years Old: 1960 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census.  
Internet release date: June 29, 2001.

People marry for money and not love. They have kids and gets divorced which leads to single-parent homes. As a single parent, you are forced to work a lot which provides little time to spend with the children. Dying for attention, teenagers get involved with negative influences.

— *Sarah Mitchell*

A more significant change in our society relates to the large increase in children living in single parent households. Whether the product of divorce, or births to single mothers, these households and the children living in them suffer a much lower standard of living than children who live with two parents. The values of getting married, staying married, and raising children have decreased in our society. Back then getting a divorce was considered scandalous. Now it is not a big deal to get divorced. Half of American marriages will end in divorce. This fact of American life has impacted not just children's health and well-being but also their chances for educational success, and has contributed to the difficulties teachers face today.

— *Dave Solan*

Many may think that money equals happiness. Then I guess that getting a divorce equals happiness, too, because that is where our wealth is going. The divorce rates have tripled over the years. These divorces lead to many of the other problems that are going on today.

— *David Shinton*

Children living in single  
parent households  
suffer a much lower

Although many people view the two parent nuclear family as the ideal family, only one out of four U.S. families is composed of a married couple and one or more children under the age of eighteen. According to a sociologist (Andrew Cherlin), the family will last as a social institution because it can adapt to change and modify its form. Basically most observations have been shown to agree with the fact that family and moral values aren't decreasing, just changing, to the society around them. Studies have shown that single parent households are more likely to be poor than children in two parent households, especially when the parent is the mother.

— *Megan Wilson*

standard of living

Marriage doesn't seem to be about love all the time anymore. Many people these days marry someone for the amount of money they have, not the love they share. This causes many problems between them, which leads to divorce and the raised divorce rates, and many single parent homes.

— *Julia Willmott*

# teen pregnancy

I think births to single mothers have increased so much because people aren't getting married as young as they used to. More and more women are going to college now to get in on the money scheme. Most don't get married until their mid-twenties or even after that, but they aren't waiting to have sex until they are married. Also, teens today are more casual about sex and don't think it's bad to be sexually active while you're still in high school. Most people use birth control, but it isn't 100% effective.

— Sarah Zomchick

Recent studies have shown that many teens like to mix drugs and/or alcohol with sex. None of them are really sure why, they say it makes them feel much better about themselves and to help relax them. Well when those things mix together, people tend to do things they may not normally do, like have unprotected sex. This may lead to births to many teen girls.

— Julia Willmott

The current generation of teenagers is beyond spoiled. Because they are given pretty much everything, they feel they need to act grown-up. This grown-up feeling causes premature sex, jobs, "I know it all" outlook on life, and school becomes less important. I believe this is one of the biggest factors of social regression. The sex leads to unwanted pregnancy, and that is simply a baby raising a baby. With sixty percent of the average graduating class being or having been sexually active at some point, this can lead to many of the problems (suicide, violent crimes, etc.)

— Holly McMillan

Television gives society what they want to see, but there's a lot of sex advertised, and unless parents are there to supervise their children's viewing, their children are being influenced in this area.

— Allison Cramer



From my point of view, the rates of teen births and children living in single parent families are mostly the result of acts that teenagers do. They act in this way because their parents do not take care of them. Kids have sex just because they think that they have to do it or they would not be accepted in the community, that means they do things without being quite sure about it.

— Nadinne Fayad

Teen births are up because when you don't get attention from parents then you look for love somewhere else.

— Erica Mayes

There's been a chain reaction. When our economy started to grow, more jobs were available. Women started working, which created a two-income family. Unfortunately because the couple didn't see each other as often, divorce became an option. Now a lot of children in America are growing up in one-parent homes. This started causing emotional issues in children. Because their parents had to work twice as hard to support them they weren't getting the appropriate attention they thought they needed. Teenagers would find anything to make them feel as though someone loved them. Some teenagers turned to sex. This led to teen pregnancy and a growing rate of AIDS.

— Erin Toole

National polling shows that one third of teens believe that lack of parent supervision contributes to high teen pregnancy rates. Teens rate their parents as the most influential in their decisions about sexuality. Furthermore, 95% of parents and 93% of teens agree that parents can have the largest impact in eliminating pregnancy among teens.

Source: With One Voice: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy (April 2001).  
[www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)

Teen births can also be blamed on a lack of a parent present in the home. Without an adult around, kids who aren't ready for marriage have the freedom of an empty house to do whatever they want.

— Kyle Welch

Teen births can  
also be blamed on a  
lack of a parent  
present in the home.

Illegitimate births are higher than ever, this also links to our economic level. Since women are off on their own being independent, they feel they have the power to do anything they wish.

— Rachael Finkley

I think children born out of wedlock are the result of young people becoming disillusioned with cultural rules and looking for answers by breaking social rules. This is a result of culture having lost its credibility over time because of divorce, single-parent homes, suicide, violence, etc. It evolved more and more over time.

— Robin Cebula

TV is also a big  
advertisement  
and what catches  
our eyes is sex

TV is a source of entertainment and what we have found to be the most entertaining is probably sex and violence. The result is having us kids going out and doing what we see. TV is also a big advertisement and what catches our eyes is sex and sex sells, so we see this everywhere and monkey see, monkey do.

— Alan Higgins

# schools

Public schools have had a downfall because the government hasn't been giving public schools enough money to provide everything needed for a proper education. Unlike private schools, public schooling depends on funds from the government, which aren't always sufficient.

— Sunny Merchant

the government hasn't  
been giving public  
schools enough money

Since 1965, more moms work rather than being the traditional stay-at-home mom and kids have been deprived of attention during the period when attention is paramount to a strong upbringing and maturity. Less parental attention makes parents not able to instill in their children the magnitude of the importance of school. Success in school requires the continuous support of students' parents.

— Darren Mooney

Teens in today's society do not take school as seriously as they did 20 years ago. Athletics and activities outside school are more important than school itself. Students are more focused on sports, which leads to generalized classes and lower test scores. It seems the only way to receive a good scholarship to college is to be a star athlete, when it should be easiest to receive a scholarship for outstanding grades.

— Laura Campbell

Children's attitudes toward school are a lot different than in the past. In some cases at home they are not forced to study or do well in school. Sometimes the answer is to send them to a private or Catholic school but when they misbehave there, they are kicked out and sent to a public school. The public schools are forced to keep them because there is nowhere else for them to go.

— Melissa Kelly

If I can  
study hard  
these six  
years, then  
I will have  
60 years of  
easy life.

I grew up in China. The key difference between Chinese students and American students is that the Chinese students' parents have always pushed them to be the best students. Because the students and their parents all understand that the only way to survive in the future is to study hard and make it into the best college. The future world to us is just like natural selection. Only the strong ones survive and the weak ones have to die. So that makes Chinese parents put all their money on their children's educations. Here in the United States is a different story. Some parents just can not realize the importance of education. They don't understand what kind of future will be in front of their children, so their children will not understand that either. In China, teachers and parents have always told me that I have two years of high school and four years of college left. If I can study hard these 6 years, then I will have 60 years of easy life. But if I made this 6 years easy, then I will have 60 years of hard life left for me. I think there will not be many American parents or teachers that can tell a story like this.

— Charlie Chu





Young adults from a less affluent country seem to work much harder than American students. Why is this? Perhaps they feel a greater need to work hard to survive in life.

—Joe Matterer

The public school collapse is also an outcome of the increase in wealth our country experienced. Private schools are now available in most regions, so the wealthy choose to send their kids there to get a “better education.” That leaves the middle and working class in the public schools and makes them feel inferior. These children are brought up differently, and some act in ways that turn teachers off. Teachers in private schools also get paid more, so teachers in public school are resentful, unhappy, and less enthusiastic about their jobs. The ironic thing about this is that even though our country has huge amounts of money, public schools still don’t have enough to amply supply their schools and keep their facilities in working order.

—Sarah Zomchick

The downfall of public schooling is probably due to the economic increase as well. The demand on students to succeed when they get older is smothering, and parents feel the pressure, too. Since most people feel that the more something costs, the better it is, parents send their children to tuition-based private schools. The children that are left at public schools are uninterested or have personal reasons for not attending private schools, the latter of which is a small minority. The collapse could also be due to the indifference among teachers. It is commonly known that public schools pay more money to teachers than private schools. With that acknowledged, it is safe to say that public school teachers—not all of them, of course—teach for money, while private school teachers teach for pleasure. With those kinds of attitudes, it is no surprise that public schools are collapsing.

—Caitlyn Scherer

Since most people feel that the more something costs, the better it is, parents send their children to private schools.

# schools

If a parent does not value education or responsibility, then he will not teach his children to value them either. The cycle continues for each generation and magnifies the problem. Fortunately, awareness of society's problems has led to an increase in programs and education on them, but it's up to people to become aware of their own problems.

— *Patrick Hauske*

With the population more involved in the government and the managing of our towns and cities, more people are utilizing the ability to protest and change procedures. For example, no one questioned the public schools until after 1960 given the belief that many Americans felt that traditions and past procedures must be maintained.

— *Justin Tanjuakio*

In 1965 about 50% of my parents class went to some sort of post high schooling. Now its about 80–90% of high school students that will go to some sort of schooling. That means there are less spots open and that means we need to do better just to get in to college. This leads to kids doing drugs to try and relax themselves, suicides due to pressure from the home, themselves, and school.

— *Andrew Hodgkins*

These charter  
schools only look  
better because  
they can choose  
the best students

The government believes that public schools are dangerous and to some extent they are, but they prepare their students for the temptations and harsh realities of a real world. It is also the parents' faults for being overprotective and not voting for referendums that will improve the schools, causing the regression of the quality of our schools. These charter schools only look better because they can choose the best students from the upcoming classes. Private schools kick out the children who do not meet their criteria.

— *Erica Mayes*

Because of the increase in crime, drugs, and other problems, some parents feel the need to put their children in private schools. When their children are in private school, they feel safer, more secure than the public schools. Parents feel that when you invest more money in something, it has to be better even though it's not always better.

— *Elizabeth Cao*

According to a report from US Department of Education titled, "The Condition of Education 2001", parental involvement in education decreases as the student progresses in grades. Parent/guardian attendance at school meetings drops by 27 percent by the time a student reaches high school and attendance at school events/activities drops by 26 percent once a child begins high school. The report also indicates that parent(s) of lower income levels tend to have less involvement in their children's education in general. Moreover, there are less parents/guardians of color involved in their student's education overall.

Source: [http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/tables/39\\_Table\\_1.htm](http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/tables/39_Table_1.htm)

# SAT scores

The SAT test score

The SAT test score average dropping eighty points is because more people are taking the test. Twenty or thirty years ago many people did not go to college, so there is a wide range of intellectual ability causing the average score to differ.

—Melissa Kelly

average dropping  
eighty points is

Studies show that SAT scores began to drop and I think that was because kids got into other things like drugs and decided that they had better things to do than study.

—Nick Taylor

because more people  
are taking the test.

SAT scores have dropped due to the fact that parents are so well off that the students just figure that if they don't do well it's no big deal because their parents will just pay for it. So that way many students have just stopped trying all together, because they know that they are going to get in [to college] regardless with the help of their parents.

—Lara Van Dover

Forty years ago only  
smart children from  
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almost 70 percent of  
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One of the major causes of the 80-point decrease in SAT scores is that more people take them. Forty years ago only smart children from wealthy families went on to college. Today with financial aid, almost 70 percent of high school graduates go on to college. Since more students (even the less intelligent ones) are taking the SATs, it is only logical that the scores would go down.

—Tessa Bates

Along with divorce comes a lot of anger, especially from the kids, and this is another reason why suicides have increased and SAT scores have dropped. Most of them just stopped caring about school and their future because they don't have a lot of support coming from home.

—Larkin Salemi

SAT scores were 80 points higher in the sixties because much fewer high school graduates took them as compared to today. The only people who took them were people going to college, which not nearly as many did compared to now. Many jobs back then did not require a college education, so the people taking the SATs would most likely be going into a more intellectual career, and therefore be more intelligent. Now, most jobs do require a college education and the majority of students do go to college, so everyone takes the SATs, not only the top students. This does link social regression to economic growth, because the job world has changed in that a college education is a necessity.

—Andrew Thomson

# SAT scores

SAT scores are lower because some parents are not spending enough time with their children at a young age and stressing education throughout the elementary and middle school years. Children do better when the parents spend quality time with them and read to them when they are babies. Stressing education makes the child develop an initiative to excel at school and get the most of their education.

—*Erica Mayes*

Kids now a days (well most of them) could care less about the SATs because they know the truth behind them. Ever since we found out they have nothing to do with school and everything to do with what colleges want.

—*Liz May*

I think the reason SAT scores have dropped is because of overcrowded classrooms and over reliance on technology rather than interaction between students and teachers.

—*Robin Cebula*

From College Board statistics, average math SAT scores have hit a 32-year high. Verbal scores on the other hand, are still 40 points lower than 30 years ago. The dip in scores began in the 1970's, but math scores began to rise after educators focused on math in schools. However, verbal achievement has not improved, but rather, has remained stagnant over the last decade after the initial plunge in the 1970's. Researchers attribute the drop in scores to an increase in under prepared test-takers. The problem in verbal scores is most likely due to decreased enrollment in Grammar and English classes leading to under-prepared students.

Source: Carnahan, K., and Coletti, C. (August, 2002).  
10-year trend in SAT scores indicates increased emphasis on math is yielding results; Reading and writing are causes for concern. The College Board.

The drop in SAT scores can be spun as a positive. In the 50s and 60s the only people who took the SATs and went to college were upper middle class students. Graduating from high school used to be a great accomplishment. Now, however, to really succeed, the high school graduate needs a post high school education. There has been a growth in both expansion in access to college (from community colleges to universities) and increasing access to government funded financial aid since 1957 for lower income students, who could not otherwise afford college costs. As a result, there is a significantly greater percentage of people who take the SATs now as opposed to 36 years ago. Students who wouldn't have taken the SATs and gone to college are now taking them.

—*Dave Solan*





# suicide

Teen suicide is a major problem that I think is partly caused by the increase in wealth. People that commit suicide have extremely low self esteem. Teens have a tremendous amount of pressure to be successful and earn huge amounts of money, and in some cases if a person does not achieve this they become so depressed that they feel they have no other choice but to take their own lives. I think other factors are also involved, such as a parent divorce, loss of a loved one, and the way a person is treated by other people.

— *Sarah Zomchick*

Teen suicide has increased 200 percent due to many things. First and foremost, there is divorce. When couples get divorced it can get ugly and this bothers the children causing them to hurt themselves in ways like suicide. Drugs are another reason why teen suicide is up 200 percent. For instance, when kids take drugs it alters their minds and leaves them vulnerable for causing pain to themselves. Teenagers have been known to get high on drugs and then commit suicide. Two other things that may cause teenagers to commit suicide are discrimination (outcasts) and abuse. Teenagers might commit suicide so they can get away from their abusers; they see it as their way out. Other teenagers get discriminated against so horribly that it makes them feel like they are nothing which makes them commit suicide.

— *Kaleigh Witting*

When a child brings home a good report card and the mom or dad does not tell them that they did well or say they are happy they are doing their best, they feel bad that their own parents don't care about their work. Kids also get teased at school. When you mix that with a that there is no love and care to go to, it could be a deadly combination.

— *Adam Protano*

Kids also  
get teased  
at school.

Teen suicide has increased 200 percent because the high school world of today can be the worst experience of a teen's life. The average teen of today has, honestly, lost a lot of faith in the world he/she lives in. All teens are surrounded by are rules, restrictions, and "don't dos." In 1965, teens had so many more freedoms compared to teens today. Also, the desire to be in the "in crowd" and "cool" has become one of the more important issues of teen life and money does have a lot to do with it. The economic growth has caused the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer and being on the poor side of the spectrum can kill someone's self esteem. Teenagers of today are rough, they will pick on you until there is nothing left, and that could cause serious problems when growing up. Mental stability in teens is dropping because of the experiences they have to go through, that is why suicide rates have gone drastically up. It is shocking, but also true. It is a war between the "haves" and the "have nots" and hopefully you won't be on the wrong side.

— *Quinn Logan*

The Center for Disease Control and prevention found that the percentage of youth who report that they had thought seriously about committing suicide in the last year has declined from 27 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 2001. However, the number of youth who reported having attempted suicide has remained steady at 8 to 9 percent. A much smaller proportion, 2 to 3 percent, reported requiring medical attention as a result of the suicide attempt.

Females are more likely to consider and/or commit suicide than males, and overall, Hispanics are more likely to consider and/or attempt suicide than other racial group.

Source: <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/health/mental/34SuicidalTeens.htm>

The 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System found that in Delaware, 16 percent of high school age students reported having seriously considered attempting suicide and that 7 percent reported having attempted suicide.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab13>

# drugs

Drugs have become a major part of our culture. Many famous musicians, especially rock stars from the late 60's/early 70's have been known drug users. Jimi Hendrix died of an overdose on Quaaludes. Many rappers talk about marijuana in their songs. This celebrity influence has put peer pressure on a lot of teens, especially those who want to impress their friends or imitate their favorite rappers/musicians. Most drugs change the mood of the user, and can cause erratic, violent behavior.

—*Scott Lynch*

I think that some of the kids that don't play sports or have jobs after school are more likely to get into drugs and crime.

—*Amber Walker*

Laziness is everywhere; selling drugs will always be an easier job than being the CEO of a major company. It's a well known fact that where there are drugs, violence soon follows.

—*Darren Mooney*

With the amount of money being made, parents are replacing their time with money. Instead of spending time with their children, they will just give them money or buy them things. Teenagers are likely to buy drugs with this money they have not earned. If you do not earn money, it is a lot easier to spend someone else's money on something stupid like drugs. Some teenagers are using drugs as a way to deal with their parents not loving them or being there for them. Even middle and high-class people sell or buy drugs all the time. Drugs are a way to get away from everyday life. Not just teenagers do drugs to be cool. Adults do drugs to feel better and as a stress reliever.

—*Brennan McKone*

Drug use has increased greatly. Kids with more money look for new ways to spend it. Society has become more competitive and there is more pressure to do good and people look for a way out. Society and family values have changed and things seem more acceptable.

—*Spencer Jacobson*

According to a study done by Child Trends Databank Organization and the University of Michigan, the use of marijuana among 9th–12th graders has doubled over the last decade. In the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System almost 50 percent of students in the study reported having tried marijuana. Males reported having used marijuana more than females and overall more African-Americans reported having used the drug.

Sources: Child Trends Databank Organization;  
<http://www.childtrends.databank.org/health/drugs/46MarijuanaUse.htm>; Center for Disease Control; <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab20>

In Delaware, approximately 25 percent of 11th graders reported using marijuana once a month or more often. Most young teens (ages 12–14) believe marijuana to be a harmless drug, while older teens (ages 15–19) believe the effects are minimal and continue their use of the drug.

The increase in marijuana use among teens may be due to:

- the increasing availability of the drug. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, almost 80 percent of teens indicated that drugs are used, sold, and kept on school grounds.
- the continuous promotion or exposure of drug-use from pop culture and other various media images; and
- the lack of parental discussion about drugs. The Center also reported that students are more likely to learn about drugs from peers or via the media before ever having a conversation about drugs and drug use with a parent.

Source: The Center for Drug and Alcohol Studies; <http://www.state.de.us/drugfree/pdfs/mjgetinfo.pdf>

Similar trends are also found in the use of other illicit drugs.\* The Monitoring the Future Study by the University of Michigan showed that in 1990 less than 8 percent of 12th graders indicated having used illicit drugs, and that in 2001, almost 11 percent of 12th graders indicated having used illicit drugs. However, contrary to marijuana use, White teens are more likely to use illicit drugs (11 percent) than African-Americans (3 percent).

\* Includes any forms of cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, and or any use of other narcotics, amphetamines, barbiturates, or tranquilizers not under a doctor's orders.

Source: Child Trends Databank Organization;  
[http://www.childtrends.databank.org/tables/58\\_Table\\_1.htm](http://www.childtrends.databank.org/tables/58_Table_1.htm)

Children today spend much more time home alone after school. This gives them the opportunity to start experimenting with drugs.

—Tessa Bates

The severity of drug laws, passed in the 70s, sent to jail rather than rehabilitated the addict to often destructive effect to the social fabric of communities and families.

—Dave Solan

I believe drugs, and the fact that they are outlawed, has a strong effect on the increase in violent crime. The harsh reality of drugs being banned makes any user a criminal, and the drug trade is where much of today's violence occurs. . . .legalization and regulation of some drugs would seriously improve this aspect of violent crimes. The total ban we have now is very similar to prohibition, which terrorized the 1920s and was a complete failure. . . . Im not saying that full fledged legalization of drugs is appropriate, but I think it is time for some change to come about.

—Doug Charles

Another reason for the recent problems of our nation is the accessibility to drugs and alcohol. A while ago there was no easily available cocaine, heroine, and ecstasy. Now a trip to someone you know will get you any one of these those. When our parents were young, half these drugs weren't even know, and if they were it was only for a few people. They did not have to worry about the person down the street having a few pounds of marijuana in their house, like someone I know. Drugs have had a huge relation to grades going down, teen suicide, and sexually transmitted diseases.

—Kevin Davis

The drug problem and economic strength are, in my perspective, very much related. The economic wealth has brought perfect conditions for drugs to surface in America. Drugs provide relief from the stress of everyday life and these days so many more people are looking for a way out. Since the economy has grown, people, especially teenagers, have the extra cash to spend on drugs. Instead of buying that new Beatles record, kids today are buying drugs as an escape from all the pressure. However, not just wealthy kids are buying into the drug problem, Drugs are also found in the impoverished suburbs and cities. Poverty-stricken people seem to flow into the drug business to make that extra cash, even if that means selling to kids. The huge drug problem is not just because of the economic boom, but the economic downfall in some parts of the country as well.

—Quinn Logan

With life made so easy for them, kids are becoming lazier and have less drive to succeed because they already have the things they want. Drugs and crime become the things to do for kids that do not have focuses in their lives.

—Laura Abramjian



# television

Television is the only leisure activity that inhibits social interaction. As one generation turns into another, the average viewing hours a week increases, decreasing social interaction . . . Because television privatizes our leisure time, we have less of a need to involve ourselves with others which weakens our social structure.

— Wesley Marks

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The same horrible things that happen today happened years ago. Media shows these horrible events so openly that people become immune to them. . . . There is much violence, drug usage and premarital sex in society. However, there is no more today than there was years ago. Everything is in proportion. Because the media today shows so much violence, drug usage, and premarital sex, the country has become desensitized to it.

— Jessica Lapointe

One thing a house will not be void of is entertainment. As the economy has risen, nearly every house has a television, a stereo and a VCR. These things are a mark of wealth, however, they have done much to aid America's moral collapse. Television is increasingly violent, as what was once unacceptable viewing is now being promulgated from every TV set. The same thing occurs on the radio, as lyrics have become more and more obscene. Children coming home to empty households likely spend more time with those devices than they do with their families.

— Jeremy Penna

Who knows how many births to teens and violent crimes have occurred because of television? . . . It seems like censors are getting more and more lenient, and the target audience for graphic scenes is getting younger and younger.

— Ab-Young Song

Once again, the blame goes  
to the media for flooding our  
lives with such trash.





Research suggests that children and adolescents watch television, work on the computer and play video games for 6.5 hours a day. This takes away from activities like reading, exercise and social interaction. Media has a positive effect in areas such as education and personal social development, but research also shows it can lead to negative effects in sexual and aggressive behavior, substance abuse and body image.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics (2001). Children, adolescents, and television. *Pediatrics*, 107 (2), 423-426.

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While all the parents are working hard to fulfill their American dream they do not pass their morals or values on to their children. These kids must get their values and beliefs from somewhere and if their parents are not around to give it to them the next easiest place to get it is from the media. I think that many of the downfalls of our nation are a direct result of TV and other forms of media. TV, movies, and the Internet all display messages not necessarily conveyed by our parents... TV shows violence on a regular basis as if it were something great. They show that sex is a cool thing to do and that everyone who is anyone is doing it. Births to single mothers and single family homes skyrocketing is directly related to this. The showing of beautiful people on TV and movies lowers the self esteem of some individuals. Also if you are not good looking you are looked down upon which adds to the lowering of self esteem until they see no reason in living and that is why teen suicide has increased 200%.

— *Andrew Hodgkins*

Our social decline is a result of the media. Too many of our youth watch violent TV... The top movies are filled with violence. Body parts fly in a mist of blood. One of the most popular video games, Grand Theft Auto 3, contains profanity, encourages car theft, soliciting prostitution, killing police officers, killing civilians and reeking general havoc on everyday life. Magazines promote Machiavellian ideals.

— *Chris Ferich*



# violent crime

Every school has a bully, a dork, a snob, and a jock. Who would have thought to add a killer to that list? Sure, there has always been that one kid who got picked on, who was always picked last in gym class. But, one day I guess all those kids had enough. Tragedies like Columbine started to happen. . .

— *Amanda Whetbam*

Over the past 30 years, violent crime has increased 560%. Possible causes of this growth are increased violence in the media, negative attitude of the government, and the impotence of the juvenile courts. . . Teenagers figure that the probability of being convicted is so small that the benefits of being involved in crime outweigh the risks of being caught.

— *Stefanie Busch*

Weapons  
are easily  
purchased  
in the U.S.

Automatic weapons, the only purpose of which is to murder people, are easily purchased in the U.S. This is due to a lack of adequate national gun control laws. The number of gun-related deaths are much greater now. . . The higher suicide rate can also be tied to the greater access to guns in American households.

— *Dave Solan*

Violent crimes happen often due to extreme jealousy.

— *Lara Van Dover*

As parents are becoming more and more concerned with making money to make sure their child has a good life instead of participating in it to make life better, the youth have become more and more out of control once they realize there is no one in their lives that will punish them for making bad decisions. 22 percent of violent juvenile crimes occur between the hours of 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., the hours between the time kids get off of school and parents get off of work.

— *Sarah Bell*

Americans have many freedoms resulting from the country's focus on civil rights as opposed to social responsibilities. As a result, penalties are not as strict as they were in the past, and the desire to be and act properly has diminished, all in the aura of no respect for authority.

— *Darren Mooney*

Various sources, including the Delaware's Statistical Analysis Center, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and The Child Trends Databank Organization showed that nationally, violent crimes by juveniles have declined after experiencing historic peaks in the 1980s and 1990s. Overall African-Americans and Hispanic students ages 12–18 were twice as likely as white students to fear attack or harm at school and almost four times as likely as white students to fear being attacked or harmed on the way to and from school.

However, in Delaware, juvenile violent crime arrests increased after 1998 and have only recently begun to decline in 2000. During the 1999–2000 school year, 47 percent of student weapon offenses were due to possession and/or concealment of a knife, while firearms possession constituted 5 percent. Approximately 84 percent of student violence and/or possession offenses occurred inside school buildings or on school grounds. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study, 30 percent of Delaware high school students also reported having been engaged in a physical fight in school.

Sources: <http://www.childtrends.databank.org/figures/38-figure-1.gif>;  
Kids Count in Delaware Fact Book 2002

To keep a certain standard of living, both parents must work, leaving kids at home and unsupervised. There is more free time for teens to explore and be influenced by others.

— Allison Cramer

Violent crimes may have increased so much because a child had a bad childhood. Their parents weren't around enough to teach them right and wrong, so they don't know any better about certain things. Or, the parent wasn't there to help encourage the child to do well in school. Either of these could potentially lead to a violent and careless childhood.

— Kyle Welch



What is the major reason why violent crimes occur?

What is the major reason why violent crimes occur? Respect. No one seems to have respect for other's belongings.

— Becket Gordon

Respect.

The reason there is more crime is that an inequality exists within the economic system. In this case, the "have-nots" are committing crimes against the "haves."

— Joe Matterer

Increases in technology bring numerous changes to a country economically. For the same amount of resources, a firm can produce more of a product, faster, easier, and cheaper. Thus, it enlarges profits and makes the product more available. Violent crime has increased 560 percent. Why? Because technology has created more efficient weapons and made them accessible to society. Technology also provides a desire for the newest products. More workers are hired to meet our country's demand. Populations of already overcrowded cities increase. Naturally, crime increases. While technology does produce more jobs and greater profits, like everything else in life it has a consequence.

— Katie Clark

Image also contributes to some of society's problems. While it seems silly and grade school, it is very true, being "cool" plays a big part in drugs, AIDS, and crime. Young people, in an effort to seem bad-ass or macho, are led to use drugs, have sex, and insist on keeping various weapons on hand. People have become prone to violence in an effort to earn "street respect."

— Patrick Hauske

# Can your generation even relate to a not so distant past and its values?

Every generation changes, so our current generation can't relate to our parents' generation, just as our parents' generation couldn't relate to our grandparents' generation.

—Michael Shertock

I feel that my generation can not relate to the generation before us and their values, because it is so different on an economic and social level. I ask my parents frequently to do different things and they are always saying, "Well, I couldn't do that when I was your age." That is probably true, but times have changed, things and people are different. The morality of people is different. We now live in a much more free society.

—Melissa Kelly

People have constructed a view of the past, which has put it in an idealistic form, overlooking the institutional

inequalities. Races were segregated. Most women were not treated fairly...

We shouldn't have to relate to those values

Years ago, divorce was not frequent. The wife worked in the house and the husband went to work. Everyone lived the perfect Brady Bunch life... People of my age are growing up not recognizing right from wrong because they have never known how a family is ideally supposed to function.

—Rachael Finkley

It is not what is true that is important, but what is perceived to be. People have constructed a view of the past, which has put it in an idealistic form, overlooking the institutional inequalities. Races were segregated. Blacks had to eat in different restaurants, were blocked from entering universities, and were coerced from exercising their right to vote. Most women were not treated fairly, did not work, and felt as if they were beneath their husbands. Public health wasn't even instituted until the turn of the century and people lived in slums. We shouldn't have to relate to those values, because they're not under the same circumstances.

—Allison Cramer

Within a village of three hundred people, any adultery is noticed; any deviance is marked down; and any deed whatsoever is insupportable save it be inside the village's strict code. How did all of Europe's little villages survive? Strict Catholicism. Africa? Tribal councils. Nowadays, and even throughout history, we have cities full of variety, veritable societies unto themselves. If large enough, a society can support itself even if a woman has a child out of wedlock, another kid offs himself with some pills, or a couple breaks up. No one notices. There are enough groups to pull each other up. Morality has gone the way of the plow and the town elders.

—Andy Sacher

My generation was once dubbed “Generation X.” Some say that we are wild, irresponsible youth, with little, if any, grasp on reality. All we care about is partying, toking up, and getting completely and utterly wasted. However, this is far from the truth. In my mind, this generation has become more responsible because of the exposure to these things that we’ve had to deal with. The problems of our society have given us a way to prove ourselves, for better, or for worse.

— *Emily Zarek*



If we were to rewind time and have the people of today switch places with the people who lived then, and like them not know what was to come, we would pretty much act the same way they did, and they would act the way we do now. So they weren't necessarily more well-behaved than us is what I'm trying to say. They just weren't given as much opportunity as us to be the way we are.

— *Sarah Black*

Getting into an argument with your parents is pretty much an everyday thing these days. But, back in the 1960's, kids wouldn't be caught dead talking back to their parents. Back then, values were different, parents and teachers had more respect, and students took school completely seriously. It's about time we all face reality, and realize that things have changed for the worse.

— *Amanda Whetbam*

Our generation can't relate to the values of the past because so few of us have been exposed to morals by two parents who value them themselves.

— *Gabe Bercy*

Without the changes that have taken place, women would not have as many opportunities as men, not all races would be allowed to go to the same school, and many more bits and pieces of our history as America would not be here. Yes, some of today's society is bad, but sometimes what is normal is not always best. When this is the case it takes a generation to stand up and make a difference.

— *Katie Lyell*

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# Can your generation even relate to a not so distant past and its values?

My generation cannot relate to the previous generations. We are too lazy. We have remote controls, video games and computers. We have most of the work done for us. The focus of the work place isn't on teamwork and ethics, it's on getting ahead by any means necessary. They grew up watching "Leave it to Beaver." We watch "South Park." They listened to Bob Dylan and other singer/songwriters. We listen to Jay Z, Eminem and other rappers. They worried about the Soviet threat. We worry about the Terrorist threat. The Soviets were just a shadow in the night. Terrorism is all too real. In school, they wore slacks and a collared shirt or dress. We wear baggy jeans and a t-shirt, or halter-tops and short shorts. Once again, the blame goes to the media for flooding our lives with such trash.

—Chris Ferich

Can my generation relate to the values of the past generation? I believe that we can though we may have changed some of them to fit the modern standards of society in general. I also believe it has to do with the way your parents guided you and what kind of virtues they impressed upon you. Such virtues like honesty, kindness, respect, and others still hold true for the majority of my generation.

—Erica Mayes

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# What does the future hold?

In the future, the lower classes and upper classes will continue to stratify. The rich will get richer, and the poor will remain poor. This situation, however, can be alleviated by a massive public and private investment in our education system. Many public schools, especially in the inner city and rural southeast, act as babysitters and not educators. We must expect more from poorer performing schools for the next generation so everyone can relate to the American dream.

— Michael Shertock

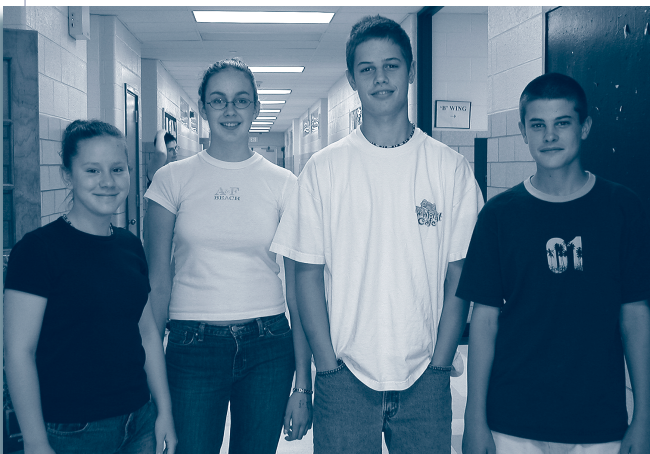
This situation can be alleviated by a massive public and private investment in our education system.

My generation is growing up in an economic boom; we are the wealthy generation. With this position comes certain obligations, such as attempting to do something about social regression. With all the money we have, we should start distributing wealth more equally so that inner city schools can educate their student better which may, in turn, lower the rate of serious problems. I hold fast to my opinion of economic growth and social regression being coincidental but that does not mean that there are not factors that contribute to social regression from an economic boom. Because we have the means to see a problem and fix it, we should. If we choose to ignore it, then society deserves all the repercussions of regression.

— Rebekah Kaplan

I believe that a good home life will affect the way you turn out, and until parents spend more time at home instilling good values in their children, and families instill good values into their larger communities, these problems will continue and magnify within the younger generations.

— Allison Cramer



I think that the only thing that can save America and its greatness is the involvement of parents in their children's lives.

— Doug Charles

# What does the future hold?

If parents and role models can step into a situation where there is a reason for concern we can still save the misguided youth of America who have been so swiftly thrown off course throughout their search for new thrills. With the hope and support of people they respect and of people who care too much to let them fail, teens with problems can get the help they need to live rewarding lives. It is also important to stop the problem in the next generation before it begins by helping parents realize that sometimes giving kids everything that they want can be the worst thing that can be done. Parents must focus on the end result of rearing children in our nation to prevent kids from seeking progressively greater and more dangerous excitement that may lead to hazardous activities in later years when parental involvement is more difficult.

— Sarah Robinson

sometimes giving kids everything that they want can be the worst thing that can be done

Respect is the bottom line. If we learn to respect each other as unique individuals with our own set of morals and ideas, a generation will emerge and the people of that era will be living in a cleaner society.

— Becket Gordon

Nothing ever stays the same. Values are constantly changing based upon the new generation. A parent's instinct is to raise a child that will eventually turn out better than themselves. If this idea continues, each generation can only get better and better. The future will always hold a new generation, with new ideas, creating a new America.

— Elizabeth Cao



The future will bring us many worthwhile experiences, but it will also teach us a lot of lessons along the way.

— Jen Baird

If everyone can take responsibility for their own actions instead of blaming the system, the media, their upbringing, then there will be far fewer problems to worry about.

— Emily Peterson

The future will always hold a new generation, with new ideas, creating a new America.