

‘Dark personalities’: When are destructive traits like narcissism and psychopathy most likely to appear?

Stories about insufferable teenagers, selfish college students, or inconsiderate older adults have one thing in common: They attribute the presence of socially undesirable [personality](#) features to age. But is there evidence supporting such claims?

We had more than 4,000 Dutch and Belgian people complete questionnaires to dive into this question and examine age differences in so-called “dark” personality features and published our research in the [Journal of Research in Personality](#).

We focused on the personality features related to [narcissism](#), [psychopathy](#), and [Machiavellianism](#), collectively known as the Dark Triad.

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Our participants rated themselves on those features. You might think that’d lead to no one admitting how egocentric, manipulative, and callous they really are, but that’s not true: Research strongly suggests that people with “dark” personality features will admit they have them, likely because they don’t see them as problematic.

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Simply put, average levels of egocentricity, manipulation, and callous affect appeared to be low among the youngest people in the sample, the 11-to-13-year-olds. Among somewhat older youth, average levels gradually get higher. Among adults, average levels were a little lower again. This suggests that levels of “dark” personality features peak in young adulthood, so the college student age.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post [here](#).