2025

MENTAL HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY

Mental Health America

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mental Health America (MHA) – founded in 1909 – is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all. Our work is driven by our commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identication and intervention for those at risk, integrated care, services, and supports for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.

This report was written in June 2025 by Mika Sakamoto, John Marion, and Theresa Nguyen, Mental Health America.

Citation: Sakamoto, M, Marion, J & Nguyen, T (June 2025). Mental Health and Technology 2025 Report. Mental Health America, Alexandria, VA.

Mental Health America
500 Montgomery Street, Suite 820
Alexandria, VA 22314-1520
www.mhanational.org

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology Use, Age, and Impact

- Most of the 2,605 respondents to our survey (95%) have regular access to technology and use it for essential tasks (88%).
- Over 75% feel heavily reliant on technology and use it when they don't need to. Despite acknowledging heavy use, 44% "don't do anything to minimize the negative impact of technology."
- Youth are particularly likely to be dependent on technology, and less likely to limit use.
- People who struggle with technology and need help using it are more likely to feel frustrated, incompetent, unsafe, and overwhelmed/anxious about it.

Mental Health and Technology Reliance

- People reporting current poor mental health or a mental health condition feel more reliant on technology and feel frustrated that they are expected to be constantly productive.
- Those reporting current poor mental health are more likely to say technology makes them feel distracted, addicted, overwhelmed/anxious, frustrated, and worthless. In contrast, those with good mental health are more likely to associate technology use with feeling informed, connected, and productive.
- Despite higher reliance and experiencing negative emotions, people reporting current poor mental health are less likely to "do anything to minimize the negative impact of technology", while those with currently good mental health are more likely to "take the time to think about how I'm using technology and if it's harmful."

Disability and Technology Use

- Those with both a physical and mental disability are significantly more likely to struggle with technology, especially those with chronic pain, hearing loss, and intellectual or learning disabilities.
- Those with chronic pain and mobility challenges are more hopeful that technology will improve their health and wellness in the future.

Future Hopes and Fears about Technology

- People are hopeful about technology's potential to simplify life (32%), improve learning (31%), and boost productivity (30%).

- However, concerns are even more prominent. Loss of privacy is the top fear (46%), followed closely by losing human skills, such as socializing and writing (43%). One in three (31%) are worried about harmful brain changes, such as addiction and reduced attention span.

Responsibility for Protections in Technology

- Most respondents see mental health protection as an individual responsibility, with 63% feeling accountable for their own well-being and 52% believing parents should safeguard their children's mental health.

- Many also support external regulation, with 42% wanting to hold technology companies responsible for safer designs and stronger data privacy, while 37% want government policies to enhance technology safety.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is now deeply ingrained in modern life, shaping how people work, learn, connect, and access resources. Technology today provides enormous opportunities for economic growth, building and strengthening communities, and advancements in health and mental health. Understandably, these strengths and growth are not without potential risks. As technology rapidly evolves, it can also bring complex challenges, for example, in cognition, social connection, and the skill building required to support equal growth. This paper aims to explore the relationship between technology and well-being, moving beyond simplified narratives that frame screen time reduction as the sole solution. Instead, it highlights the duality of technology: It can be both a stress reliever and a stressor, an equalizer and a divider, a means of connection and a source of loneliness.

The key trends and insights from the survey that informs this paper highlight how individuals experience technology in their daily lives. It examines the broader societal factors influencing digital interactions, identifies gaps in existing interventions, and explores opportunities for investment in research and development. Rather than offering a single solution to the challenges posed by technology, this report encourages policymakers, industry leaders, and everyday technology users to think beyond traditional narratives. It highlights the importance of investing in digital self-awareness, designing technology with responsibility and accountability, and creating adaptable interventions that support diverse user needs. Ultimately, technology is only one piece of the larger puzzle of mental health and well-being. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that considers broader social, economic, and structural factors beyond digital tools alone.

MENTAL HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

The Mental Health and Technology Survey consisted of 20 survey questions plus optional demographic information. The survey was prefaced with definitions and examples of social media technology and **non-social media technology**. Respondents were asked to think only of their use of non-social media technology for this survey. Questions 1-7 asked respondents about various aspects of their current technology use with answers on a four-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree). For analysis of Likert scale questions, "strongly disagree" and "disagree" are grouped together as "disagree," and "strongly agree" and "agree" are grouped together as "agree." Questions 8-10 asked respondents to select their top three uses of technology and where they find technology the most helpful and frustrating. The answer options were: AI assistance, assistive technology, collaboration, communication, design and creativity, development and coding, entertainment, information, learning and education, lifestyle, and productivity. Question 11 asked for the top three frustrations with technology. Question 12 asked respondents the top three ways technology makes them feel, with the following answer options: addicted, connected, distracted, entertained, frustrated, incompetent, informed, overwhelmed/anxious, productive, relaxed, unsafe, worthless.

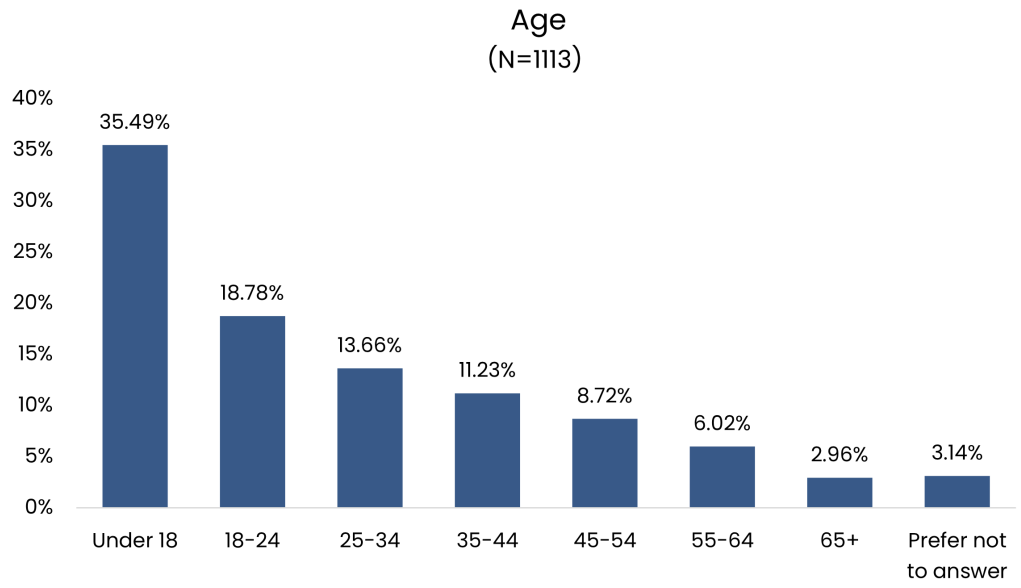
Questions 13 and 14 asked respondents what their top three hopes and fears were for the near future of technology. Question 15 asked respondents what actions they currently take to minimize the negative impact of technology. Questions 16-18 asked who respondents think is responsible for protecting the mental health of technology users, and how technology companies and the government should implement protections. Most questions had optional free response fields where respondents could elaborate on their selections. These free response fields are the source of the quotes presented throughout this report.

Demographic questions were optional and asked age, gender, race/ethnicity, household size, income, physical/mental disabilities/conditions, geographic location (country and state), and a question about mental health and wellbeing in the last two weeks (very poor, poor, good, very good). For analysis of mental health questions, "very poor" and "poor" are grouped together and called "poor mental health," and "very good" and "good" are grouped as "good mental health."

The Technology and Mental Health survey was live on the MHA website from October 2024 through January 2025. The survey was promoted through MHA's network, including through MHA's email newsletter and MHA social media accounts. The survey was taken by 2,605 respondents. Partial responses were included in analysis. Total samples for each question vary and are noted in the charts. The entire survey is included at the end of this report.

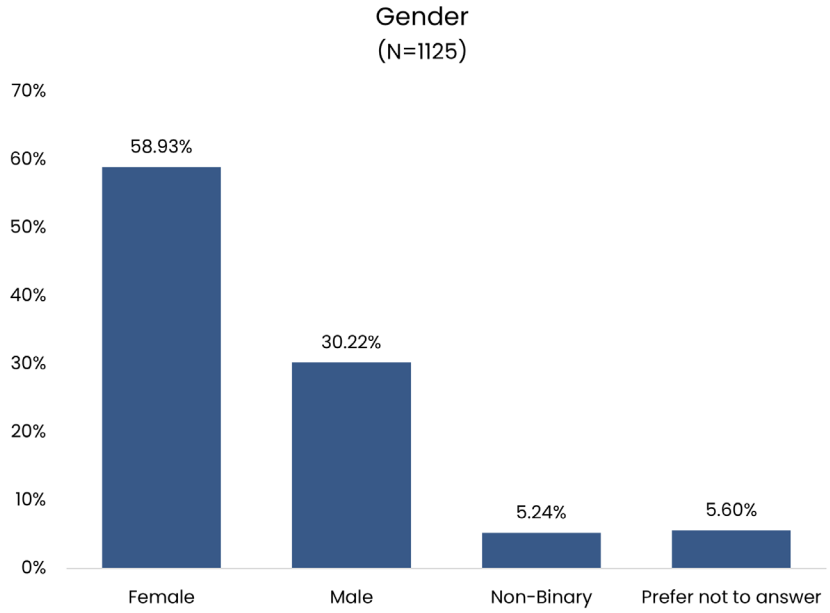
Demographics of Survey Respondents

Age



Respondents skew younger (35% under 18, 54% under 25) than the general U.S. population. However, this survey also saw a higher percentage of adults over 45 (18%) than MHA's average mental health screening population.

Gender



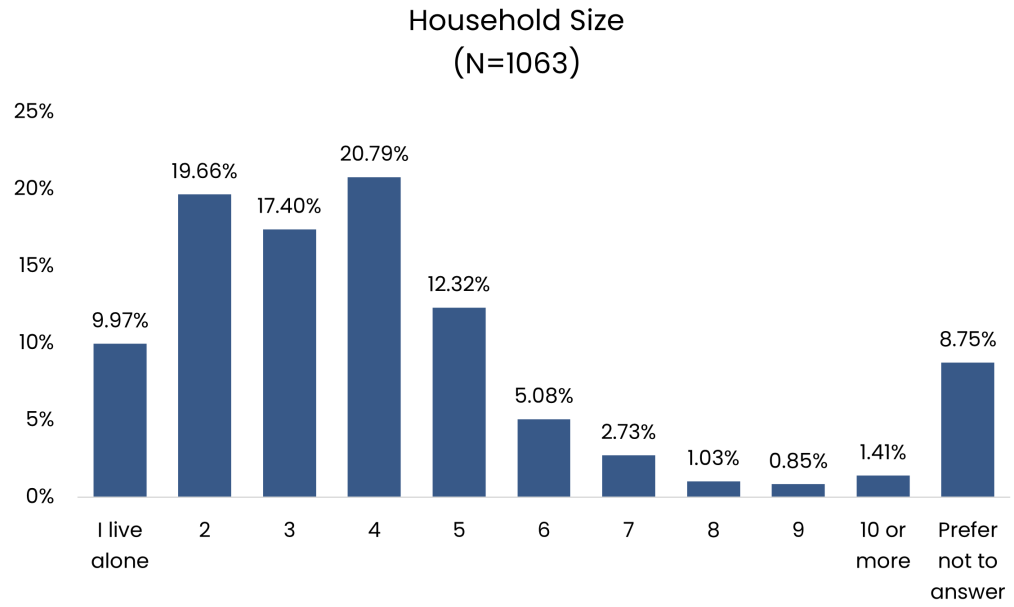
About 59% of respondents identified as female, 30% identified as male, and 5% identified as non-binary. Almost 8% (N=85) of those who answered this question identified as transgender.

Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent
White (non-Hispanic)	528	49.21%
Asian	181	16.87%
Hispanic or Latino	75	6.99%
Prefer not to answer	69	6.43%
Other	62	5.78%
Black or African American (non-Hispanic)	61	5.68%
More than one of the above	53	4.94%
Middle Eastern or North African	22	2.05%
American Indian or Alaska Native	15	1.40%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	7	0.65%
Total	**1073**	**100.00%**

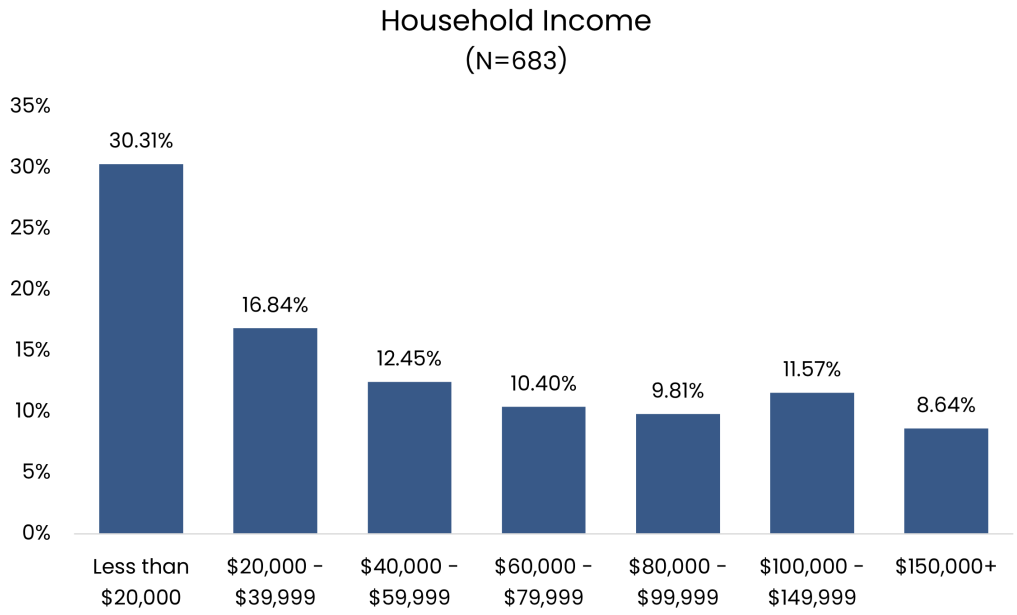
About half of respondents identified as non-Hispanic white, followed by Asian (17%) and Hispanic or Latino (7%). Compared to U.S. Census data and the general MHA Screening population, this survey sample has a higher percentage of Asian, Middle Eastern of North African, and other race and lower percentage of white, Hispanic/Latino, and Black respondents.

Household Size



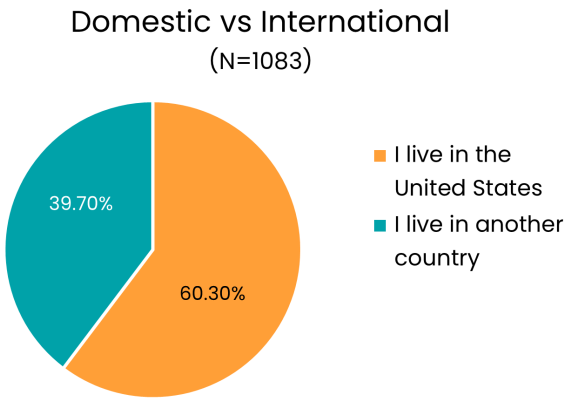
Over 80% of respondents reported living in a home with five or fewer people. The most prevalent household sizes were four people (21%), two people (20%), and three people (17%).

Household Income



Nearly 74% of respondents did not report their household income. Out of those (N=683) who did, over 30% reported an income of less than $20,000 annually. The next most prevalent income groups were $20,000-$39,999 (17%) and $40,000-$59,999 annually (12%). Household income skewed lower in this sample than the general U.S. population.

Domestic/International



Over 60% of respondents reported living in the United States, and 40% live in another country.

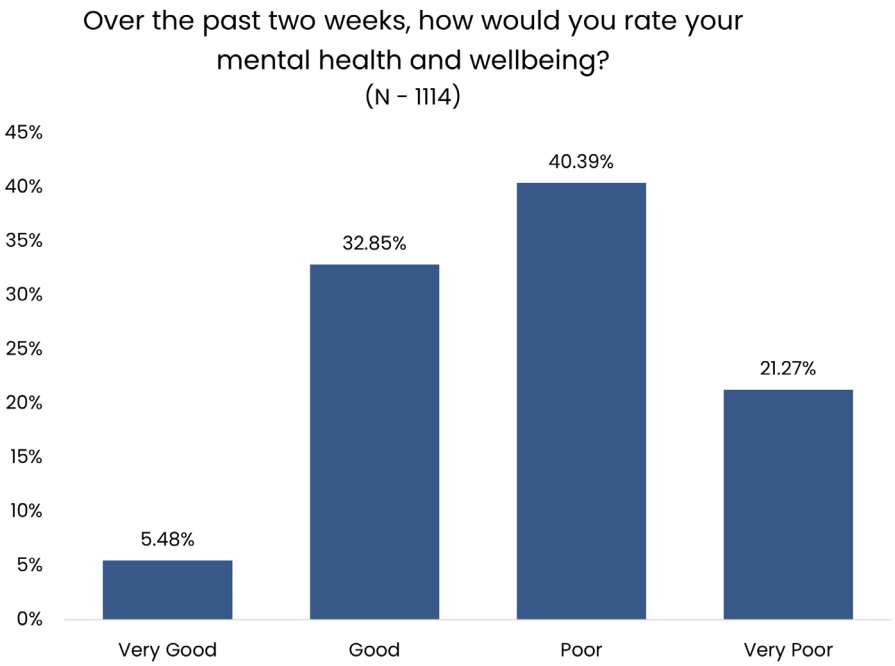
Mental and Physical Health Conditions

When asked, "Do you identify as someone with any of the following disabilities or conditions," respondents reported the following mental health and physical health conditions. Respondents were allowed to select all that applied.

Health Conditions	Count	Percent
Anxiety	577	54.38%
Mood related - depression or mania	449	42.32%
Autism spectrum or ADHD	305	28.75%
None of the above	251	23.66%
Other mental health condition (please specify)	151	14.23%
Arthritis or other chronic pain	143	13.48%
Blind/Low vision	104	9.80%
Other (please specify)	87	8.20%
Intellectual or learning	73	6.88%
Hearing impairment	66	6.22%
Neurological conditions (epilepsy, etc.) or traumatic brain injury (TBI)	49	4.62%
Mobility	46	4.34%
Total	**2301**	

Most respondents reported experiencing mental health challenges. Over half identified as having anxiety, 42% with mood disorder, 29% with ADHD or autism spectrum, and 14% had another mental health condition. The rate of physical conditions was relatively low, but the most prevalent were chronic pain or arthritis (13%) and blind or low vision (10%). About 24% of respondents reported having no mental or physical disabilities.

Mental Health Rating

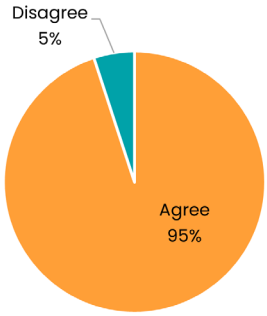


About 62% of respondents rated their mental health over the past two weeks as poor or very poor, and 38% rated their mental health as good or very good.

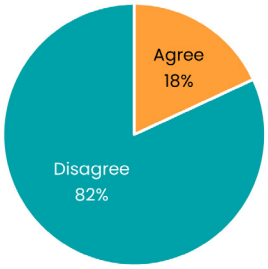
TECHNOLOGY USE, AGE, AND IMPACT

Access, Comfort, and Sentiment about Technology

I have regular access to technology or digital devices
(N=2605)

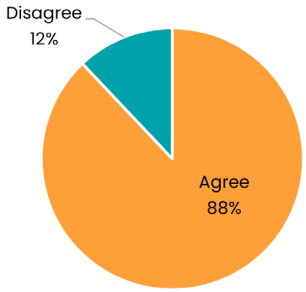


I struggle with technology and often need help
(N=2597)

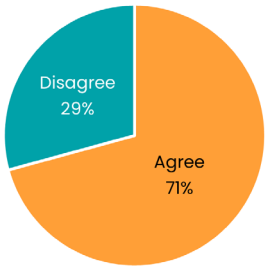


The vast majority (94.97%) of respondents reported having regular access to technology. Most respondents (81.91%) disagreed that they struggle with technology. However, a significant subset (18.10%) report struggling, indicating that while overall digital literacy is high, some individuals still face challenges.

I use technology for essential tasks like work, shopping, or managing daily life.
(N=2582)



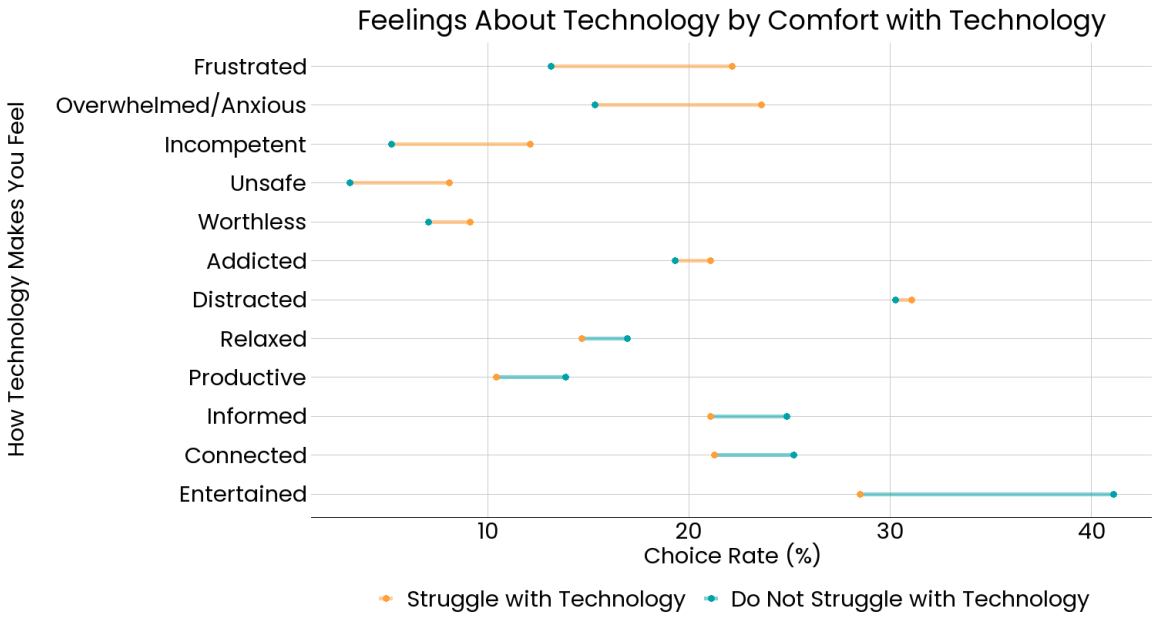
I enjoy exploring new technology, apps, or devices to enhance my life.
(N=2555)



Almost 88% use technology regularly for essential tasks, emphasizing the widespread use of technology in daily life. Many respondents (70.76%) enjoy exploring new technologies, but 29.24% do not share this enthusiasm.

Respondents were asked, “What are the top three ways non-social media technology makes you feel?” They were allowed to select up to three responses.

Feeling	Count	Percent
Entertained	1008	50.88%
Distracted	790	39.88%
Connected	636	32.10%
Informed	628	31.70%
Addicted	510	25.74%
Overwhelmed/Anxious	437	22.06%
Relaxed	429	21.66%
Frustrated	384	19.38%
Productive	344	17.36%
Worthless	193	9.74%
Incompetent	168	8.48%
Unsafe	105	5.30%
Total	**5632**	



Those who struggle with technology are much more likely to feel frustrated, incompetent, unsafe, and anxious about technology. And those who struggle with technology are significantly more likely to list “It changes so fast I don’t know how to use it” as a top frustration.

Struggling with technology appears to be correlated with age. Only 14.94% of respondents under 18 report struggling with technology compared to 35.82% of respondents aged 55-64, and 48.48% of respondents over 65.

Use, Reliance, and Self-Regulation

The following questions explored the top ways individuals use technology in their lives, reliance on technology, and self-limitation of technology.

Respondents were asked, "What are the top three uses of non-social media technology in your life?" and could select up to three responses.

Tech Uses	Count	Percent
Entertainment	1529	62.97%
Communication	1526	62.85%
Information	1120	46.13%
Learning and Education	988	40.69%
Productivity	492	20.26%
Design and Creativity	389	16.02%
AI Assistance	312	12.85%
Lifestyle	299	12.31%
Collaboration	146	6.01%
Development and Coding	125	5.15%
Assistive Technology	62	2.55%
Total	**6988**	

The two most reported uses of technology are entertainment (62.97%) and communication (62.85%). These are followed by information (46.13%) and learning and education (40.69%).

The impact of social media technology use has been called out as a concern, especially for its impact on mental health for adolescent users. In this survey, respondents were prompted explicitly to explore their "non-social media" technology use.

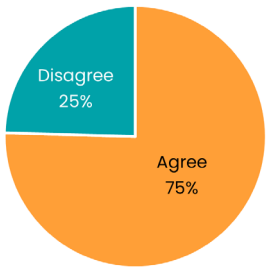
To assess what proportion of people were frequent social media users, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement "I primarily use technology to connect with others through social media or online communities."

Use Social Media	Count	Percent
Strongly Agree	834	32.43%
Agree	943	36.66%
Disagree	580	22.55%
Strongly Disagree	215	8.36%
Total	**2572**	**100.00%**

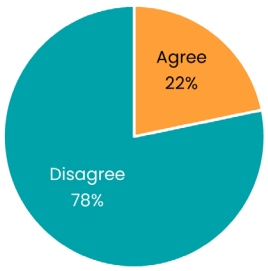
69.09% use technology primarily for social media, about one-third (30.91%) do not.

Limiting Screen Time and Reliance on Non-Social Media Technology

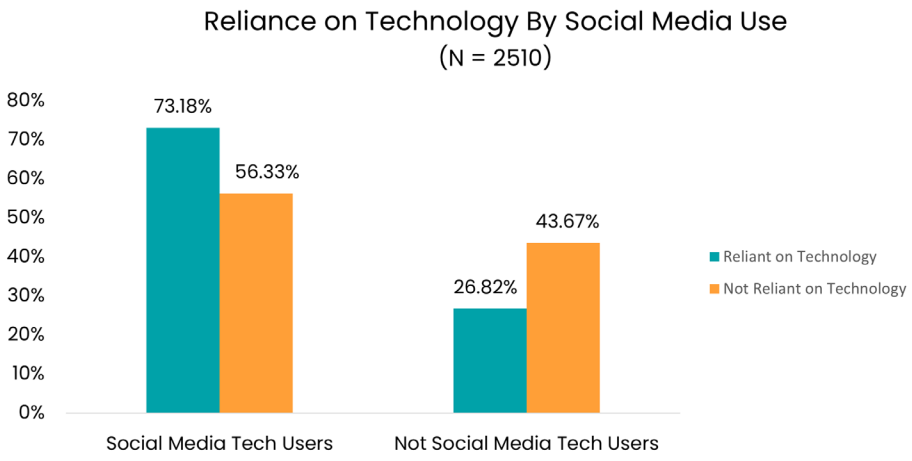
I find myself heavily reliant on technology and often use it when I don't need to
(N=2510)



I use technology only when necessary and prefer to limit my screen time
(N=2539)



Most respondents (75.46%) do not limit their screen time. Only 21.74% choose to use technology only when necessary. Similarly, a majority of users (75.46% report they strongly agree and agree) feel reliant on technology and overuse it.

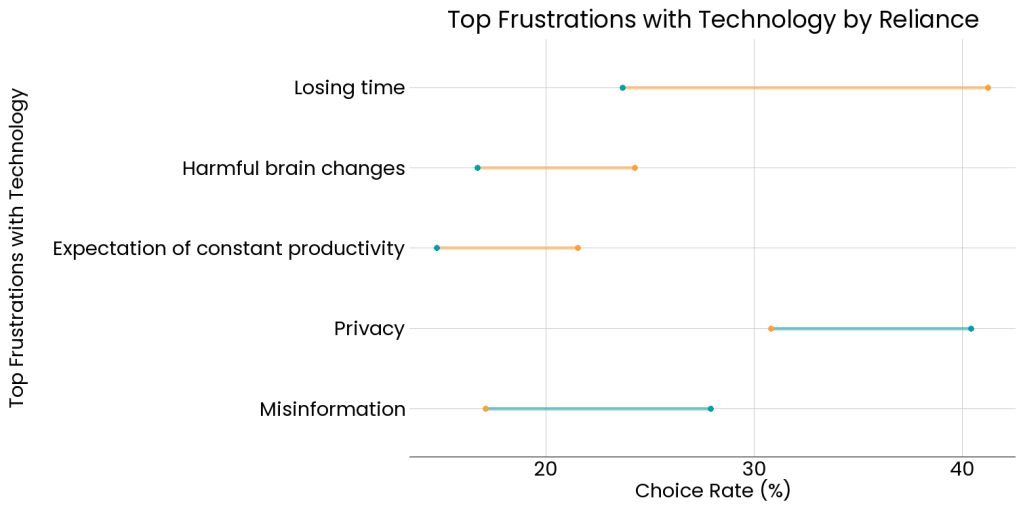


Technology has become essential in work and school, where limitation on screen time is potentially not feasible or even controllable by users. Among those who report they are regular social media users 73.18% reported feeling reliant on technology as compared to 26.82% among those who were not regular social media users.

What do you currently do to minimize the negative impact of non-social media technology **the most**?

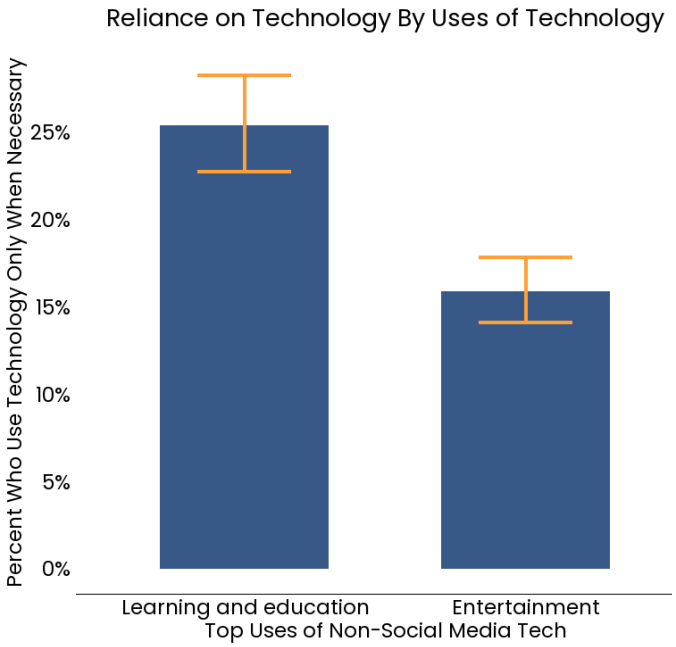
Minimize negative impact of non-social media tech	Count	Percent
I don't do anything to minimize the negative impact of technology	731	43.75%
Take the time to think about how I'm using technology and if it's hurting me	480	28.73%
Limit my use of the technology	372	22.26%
Other...	64	3.83%
Don't use the technology at all	24	1.44%
Design and Creativity	389	16.02%
Total	**6988**	**100.00%**

Just under half of respondents (43.75%) do not take any actions to minimize the negative impacts of technology. About 28.73% reflect on their usage, and 22.26% limit their use.

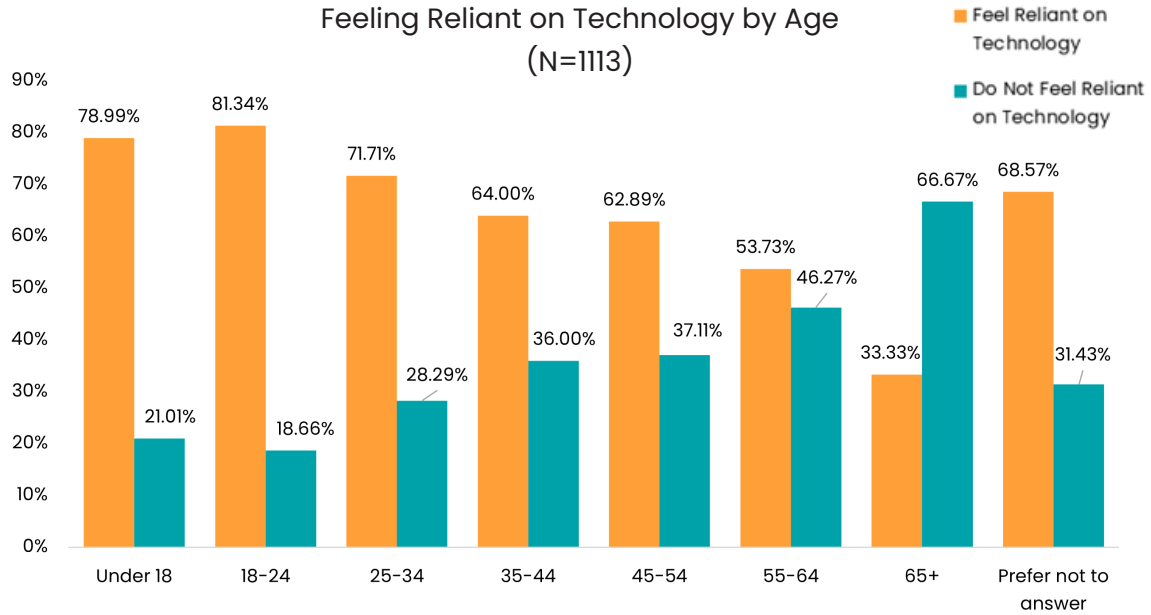


Those who feel reliant on technology were more likely to select harmful brain changes, losing time, and expectations of productivity as top frustrations. They were less likely to select privacy and misinformation.

Most respondents (75.46%) report feeling heavily reliant on technology and using it even when unnecessary. Despite recognizing overuse and other adverse effects, 43.75% do not do anything to limit their technology usage. This highlights a disconnect between recognizing problematic technology use and a lack of actionable change.

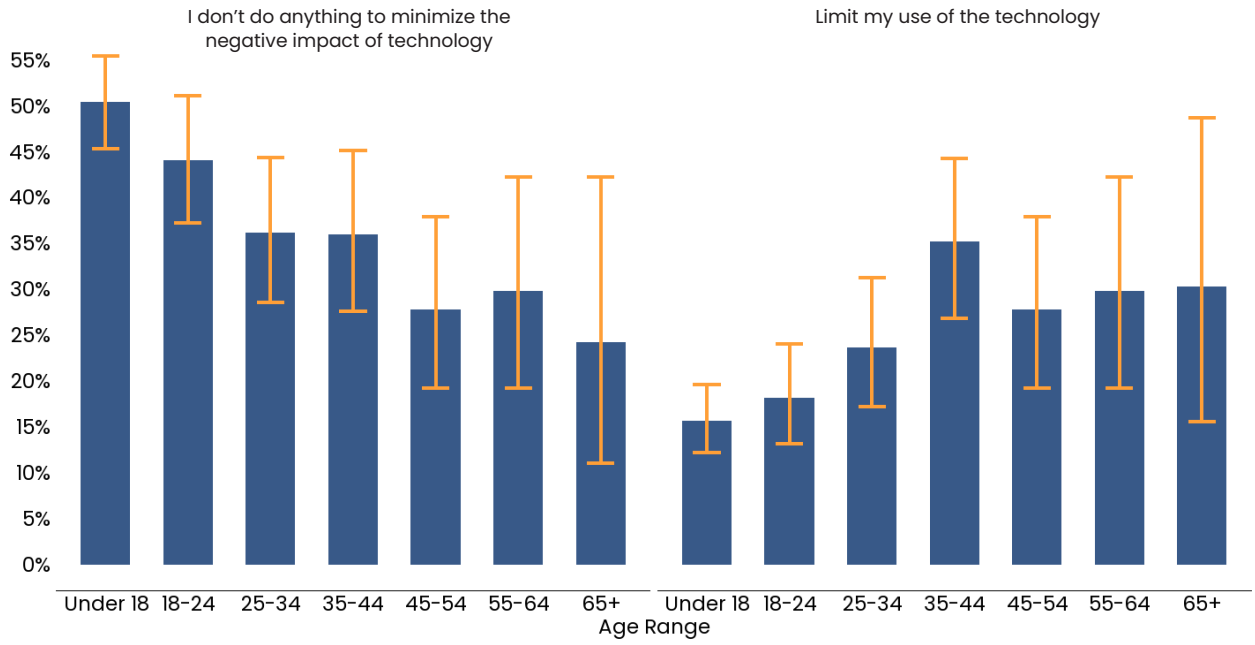


Those who only use technology when necessary are significantly more likely to use it for learning and education (25.4%), and less likely to use it for entertainment (15.89%).

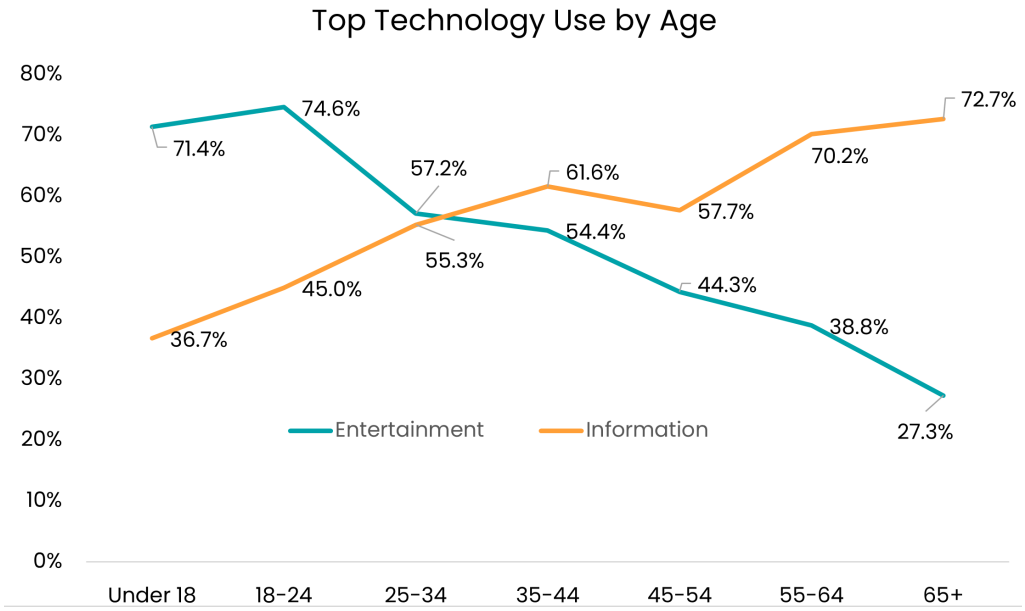


Technology reliance is also strongly correlated with age, decreasing as age increases. Respondents under 24 are especially likely to feel dependent on technology, with 80.17% agreeing that they rely on it and use it unnecessarily. Across age groups, those under 24 years old reported having significantly more reliance on technology than those between the ages of 35 and 54 years old. And those under 54 reported feeling significantly more reliant on technology as compared to those over 65 years old.

Minimize Impact of Use by Age



Across all age groups around 30% of those in each age range report they "take the time to think about how I'm using technology and if it's hurting me." Those under 18 were significantly more likely to say, "I don't do anything to minimize the negative impact of technology" (50.38%) as compared to those 25 years and older. Those who were under 18 were significantly less likely to report limiting their technology (15.70%) use as compared to those who age 35-44 (35.20%), but not significantly different compared to any other age groups.



Youth under 25 years old are more likely (73.02%) to report using technology significantly more for entertainment as compared to those over 45 (44.41%). Inversely, as age increases, using technology for information increases.

Technology Experiences and Concerns

The following section explores the ways in which people find technology helpful or frustrating in their lives, and how they feel about using technology in general.

What are the top three areas where non-social media technology is the most helpful in your life?

Where Technology is Helpful	Count	Percent
Communication	1203	53.92%
Information	1174	52.62%
Learning and Education	1081	48.45%
Entertainment	899	40.30%
Productivity	555	24.88%
Design and Creativity	357	16.00%
AI Assistance	317	14.21%
Lifestyle	296	13.27%
Collaboration	166	7.44%
Development and Coding	132	5.92%
Assistive Technology	95	4.26%
Total	**6275**	

When asked where technology is helpful, communication (53.92%), information (52.62%), and learning and education (48.45%) are the top responses, with roughly half of all respondents who answered this question selecting those areas.

Where is the use of non-social media technology the most frustrating in your life?

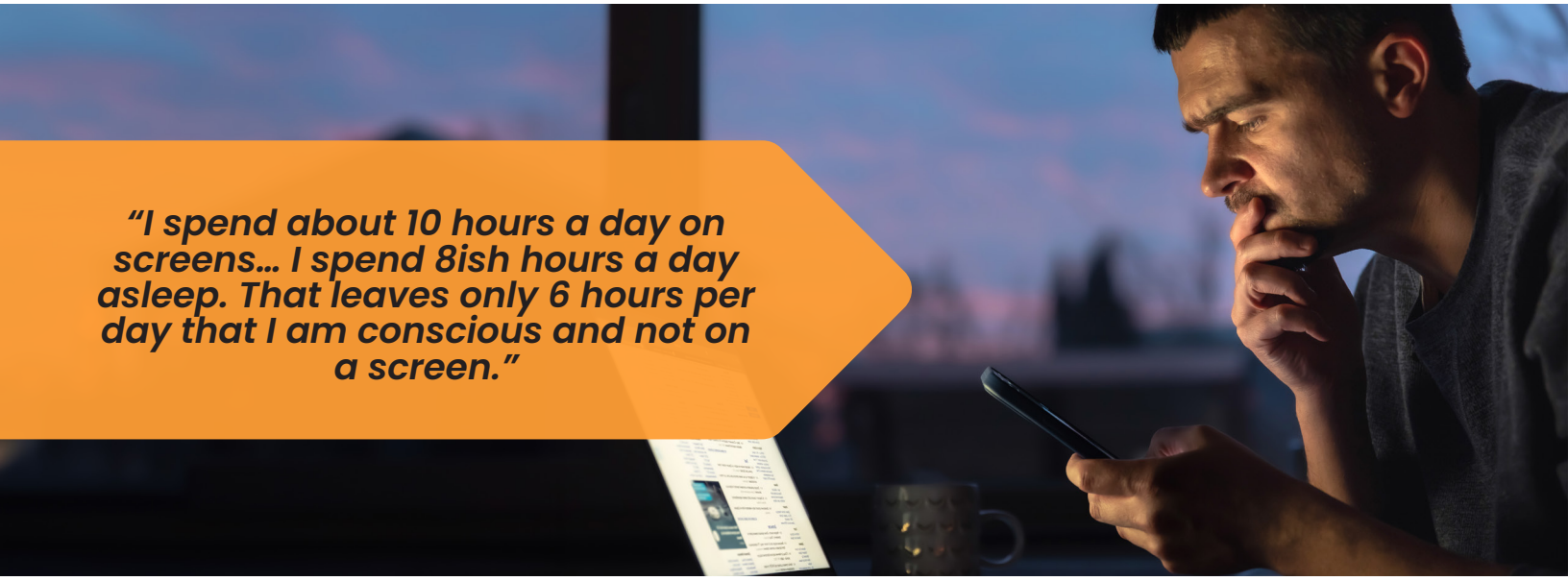
Where Technology is Frustrating	Count	Percent
Communication	645	31.25%
Productivity	619	29.99%
AI Assistance	486	23.55%
Lifestyle	479	23.21%
Learning and Education	438	21.22%
Information	420	20.35%
Development and Coding	419	20.30%
Entertainment	417	20.20%
Collaboration	374	18.12%
Design and Creativity	342	16.57%
Assistive Technology	312	15.12%
Total	**4951**	

When asked about where technology is frustrating, communication (31.25%) and productivity (29.99%) are the top selections, followed closely by AI assistance (23.55%) and lifestyle (23.21%).

What are the top three things that are frustrating about non-social media technology?

Top Frustrations with Technology	Count	Percent
Losing time (gaming or streaming more than I intended)	928	46.26%
Privacy (collecting information about me without my control)	833	41.53%
Can cause harmful brain changes (addiction, attention problems, irritability)	564	28.12%
People expect me to be productive (work or school) all the time	499	24.88%
Misinformation (false facts impact people and society)	496	24.73%
I'm exposed to or pushed to content I don't want to see	442	22.03%
Less in-person connection with other people	391	19.49%
It doesn't do what I want or work the way I expect	364	18.15%
Becoming dependent on technology (can't find my way around without maps app)	341	17.00%
Friends/family expect me to constantly be available to them	305	15.20%
I do things I don't want (falling for click bait or scams)	225	11.22%
It changes so fast I don't know how you use it	207	10.32%
Total	**5595**	

The leading frustrations with technology are losing time (46.26%), privacy issues (41.53%), and harmful brain changes (28.12%). Other common frustrations include the expectation of constant productivity (24.88%), misinformation (24.73%), and exposure to unwanted content (22.03%).



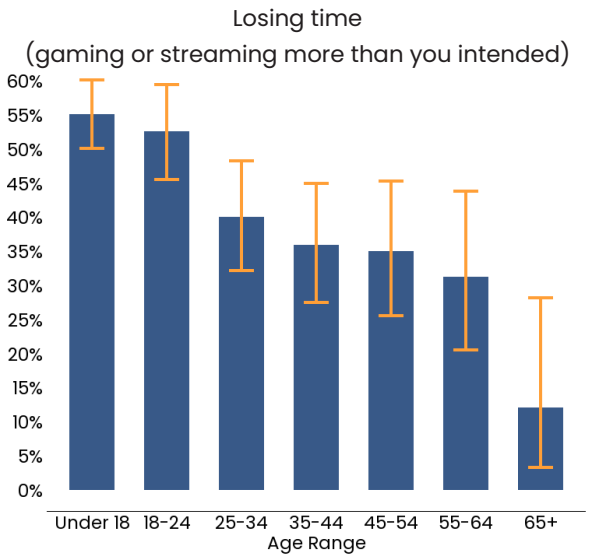
What are the top three ways non-social media technology makes you feel?

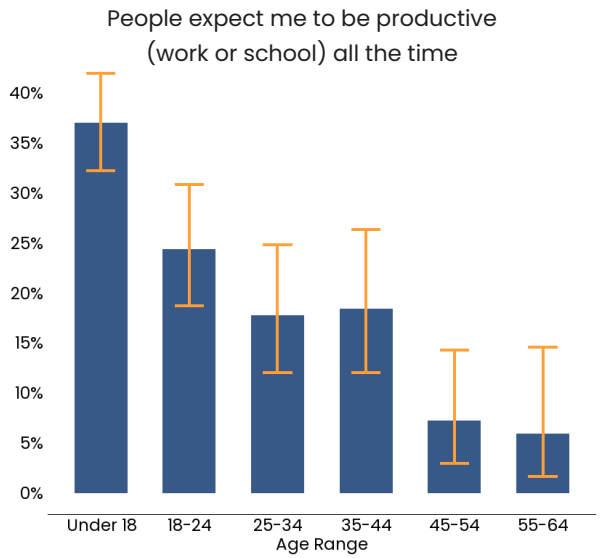
Feelings About Technology	Count	Percent
Entertained	1008	50.88%
Distracted	790	39.88%
Connected	636	32.10%
Informed	628	31.70%
Addicted	510	25.74%
Overwhelmed/Anxious	437	22.06%
Relaxed	429	21.66%
Frustrated	384	19.38%
Productive	344	17.36%
Worthless	193	9.74%
Incompetent	168	8.48%
Unsafe	105	5.30%
Total	**5632**	

The most frequently reported feeling about technology was "entertained," with about half of respondents who answered this question selecting it. The next most prevalent feelings were "distracted" (39.88%), "connected" (32.10%), and informed (31.70%).

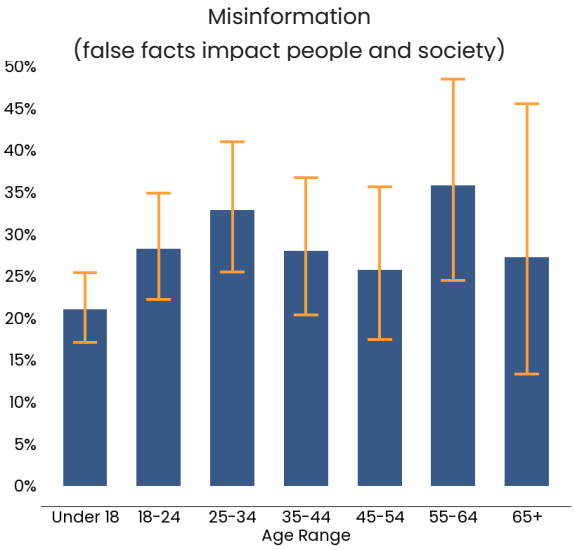
Top Frustration with Technology by Age

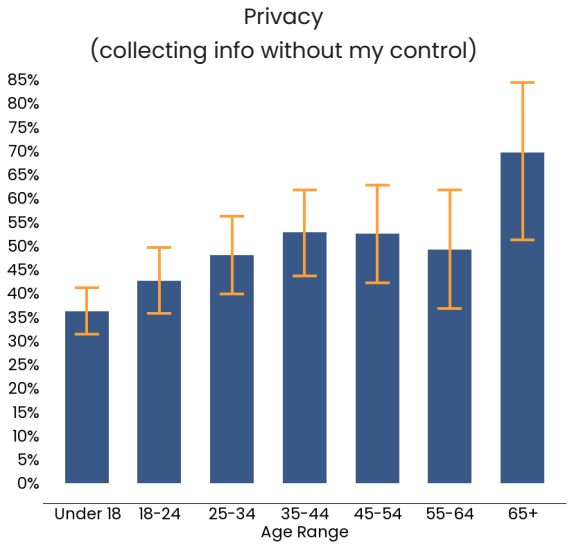
Youth under 18 are distinct in their top 3 things that are frustrating about non-social media technology.





Youth have higher rates of concern for losing time to gaming or streaming (55.19%) and how people expect them to be productive at work or school all the time (36.96%).





Youth are less concerned about misinformation (21.01%) and privacy (36.20%) as compared to older survey respondents.


“I spend hours upon hours every single day doing schoolwork on my computer… I am losing my youth just doing homework all the time, and it’s beyond draining.”

Supporting Responsible Use Among Youth

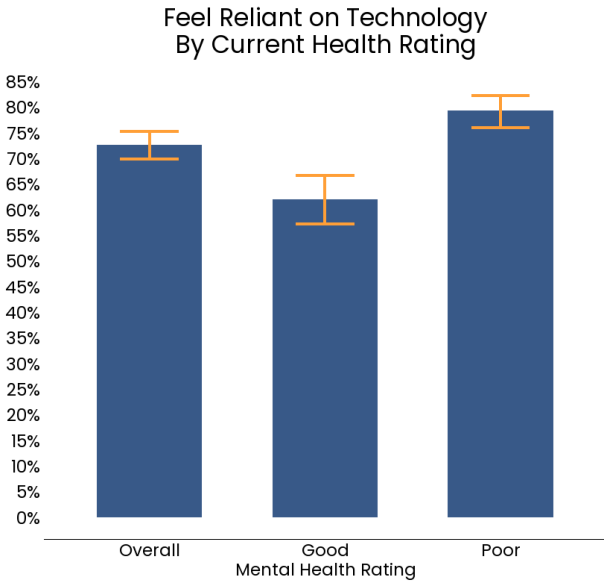
Survey respondents under 25 are more likely to use technology for entertainment, are less likely to self-limit their use, and are more concerned about harmful brain changes associated with their use than any other age group. In 2022, research of technology use among youth shows that around 70% of teens in the United States had personal use of a smartphone, a computer and a gaming console at home, that the average age of first access to a smart phone is 12.2 years old, and 33% report that necessity dictates their primary reason for introduction of smart phone use.[1,2] Screen time limitation and delay in access to technology for the purposes of social media are recommended for youth and adolescents. Research and evidence on screen time limitations outside of social media use is inconclusive.[3,4]

The following recommendations highlight opportunities to increase self-awareness and self-limitation:

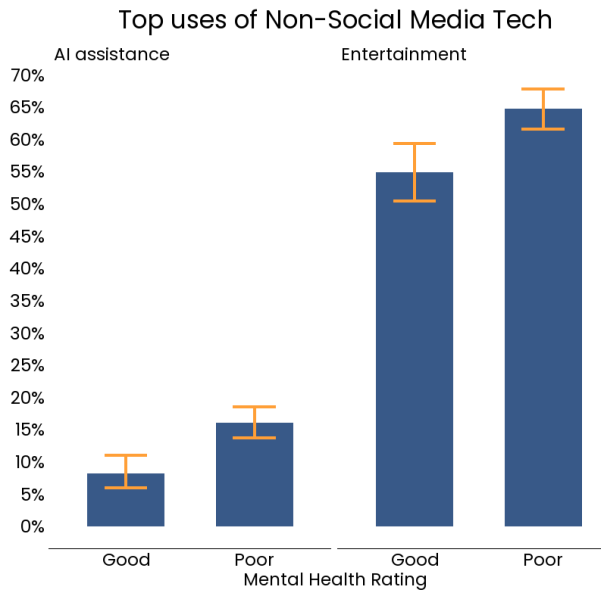
- Increase investment in research to better understand the relationship between non-social media technology use and its impact on cognition, memory, attention, addiction, and misuse.
- Encourage research and development of best practices for break-time prompts based on engagement patterns and optimal screen break intervals. While some tools offer break-time prompts, usage is inconsistent and many products lack this feature.
- Update digital hygiene guidelines to include nuances specific to non-social media technology, artificial intelligence, and learnings from communities with disabilities.
- Generate listening systems or longitudinal studies to track evolving mental health concerns and community sentiments, and to inform calls to action.
- Identify and disseminate best practices and resources for youth-parent check-ins. Example strategies include:
    - Parents can explore with children how they feel after using technology. Are you agitated? Did we get into a fight after you got off your tech? Do you feel differently now compared to how you felt an hour before using tech?
    - Have parents note how long their child has been using technology to identify the best amount of time for each child.
    - Recommendations can highlight best practices currently known based on developmental needs, age, and how parents can adjust based on individual needs of the child.

MENTAL HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY USE

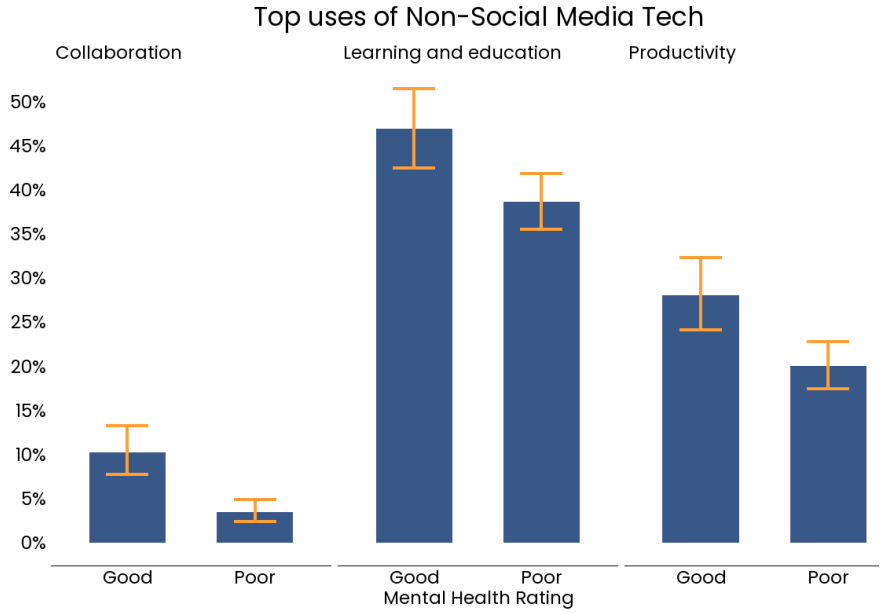
As technology becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, its impact on mental health is a growing concern. In this survey, respondents rated their mental health over the past two weeks on a four-point Likert scale. For this analysis, "very poor" and "poor" mental health were grouped as "poor mental health" and "very good" and "good" were grouped as "good mental health."



Those reporting current poor mental health are significantly more likely (79.33%) to feel reliant on technology and use it even when unnecessary, compared to those with good mental health (62.06%).



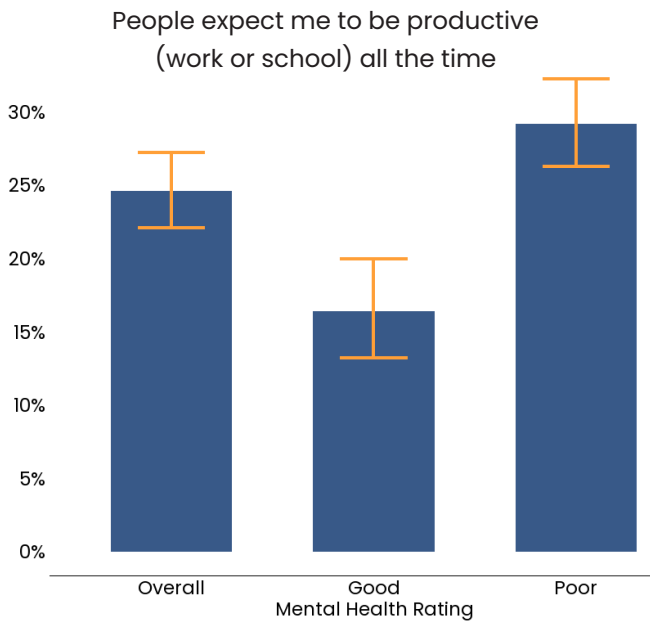
Technology use patterns also differ by recent mental health status. Those who reported current poor mental health in the past two weeks tend to use technology more for entertainment and ai assistance.



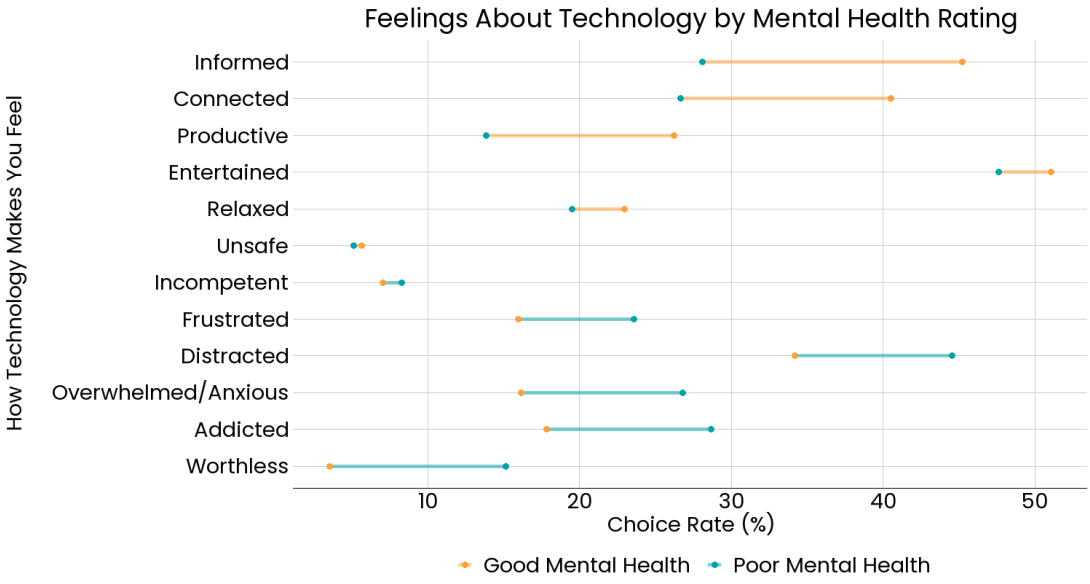
Those who reported current good mental health are more likely to use it for learning and education, collaboration, and productivity.

This trend extends to frustrations with technology, with respondents with current good mental health reporting frustrations with using technology for “design and creativity” and “development and coding” more frequently, while those reporting current poor mental health find technology frustrating in “learning and education” and “communication.” These results suggest a possible relationship between intentional, productive technology use and better mental health.

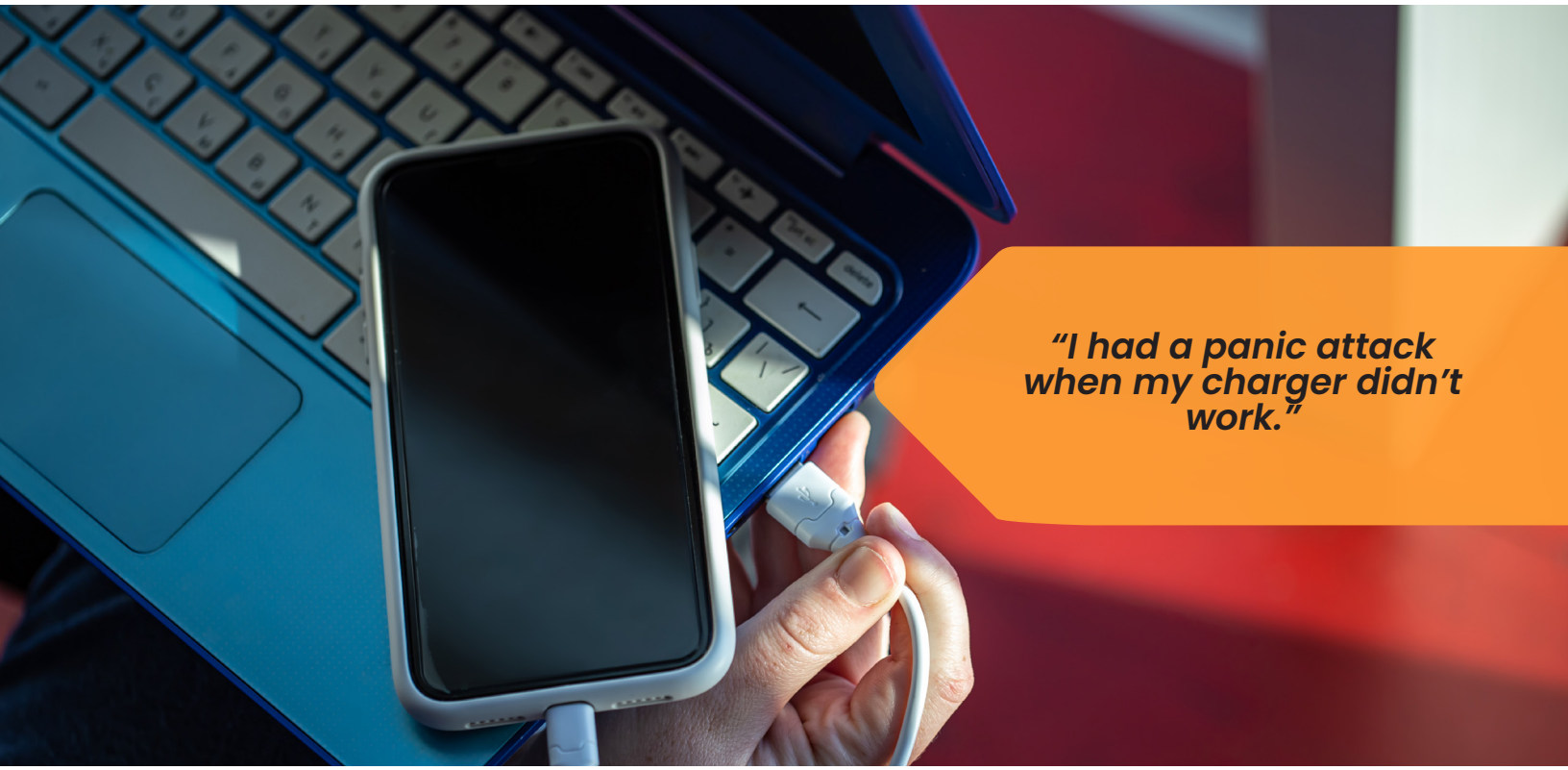
Those with a mental health condition are significantly more likely to say they feel reliant on technology and use it unnecessarily compared to those with no disabilities and those with physical disabilities. This may indicate a complex relationship between mental health challenges and technology use, where technology may serve as both a coping mechanism and a source of stress.

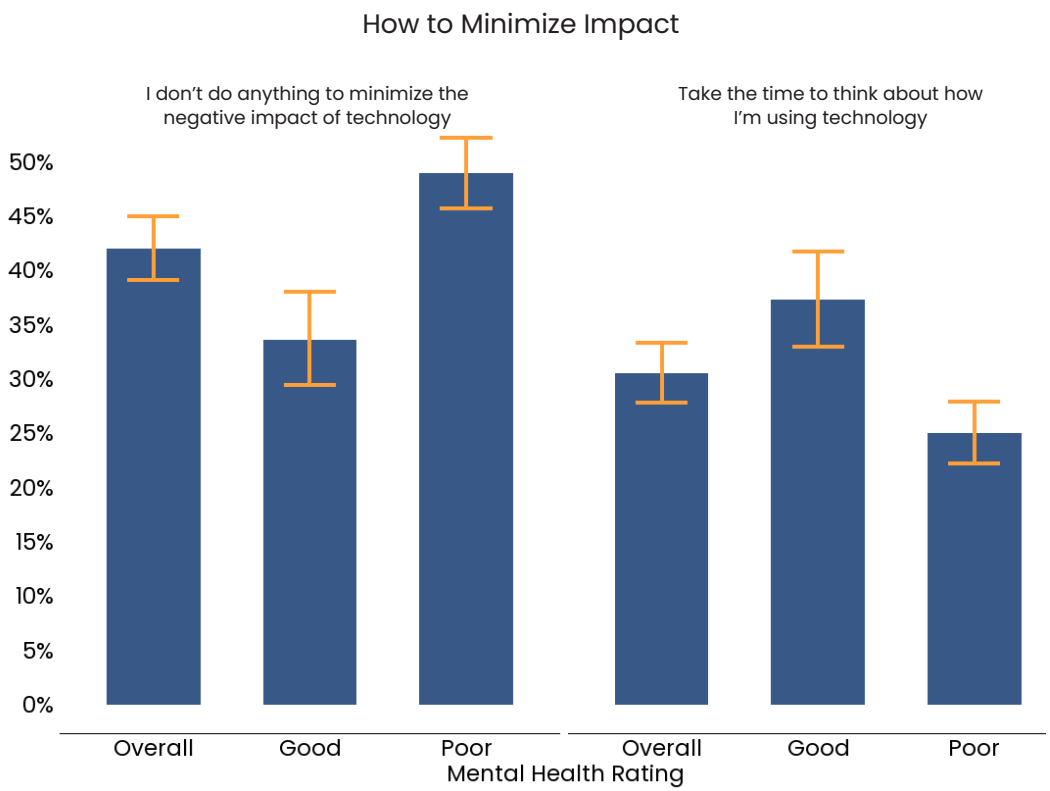


When asked about their top frustrations with technology, respondents reporting current poor mental health (29.22%) were significantly more likely to select "people expect me to be productive (work or school) all the time" compared to those with current good mental health (16.39%). Those with a mental health condition are also more likely to cite this concern compared to those with no disability. These results reflect broader concerns about technology's role in promoting constant pressure to perform, whether through online school portals, remote work, or digital communication tools that blur the line between work and personal life.



Significant differences also emerge between good and poor mental health groups regarding how technology makes them feel. Those reporting current poor mental health are more likely to feel distracted (44.54% vs. 34.19%), addicted (28.68% vs. 17.80%), overwhelmed/anxious (26.78% vs. 16.16%), frustrated (23.58% vs. 15.93%), and worthless (15.14% vs. 3.51%). In contrast, those with current good mental health are more likely to associate technology use with feeling informed (45.20% vs. 28.09%), connected (40.52% vs. 26.64%), and productive (26.23% vs. 13.83%).

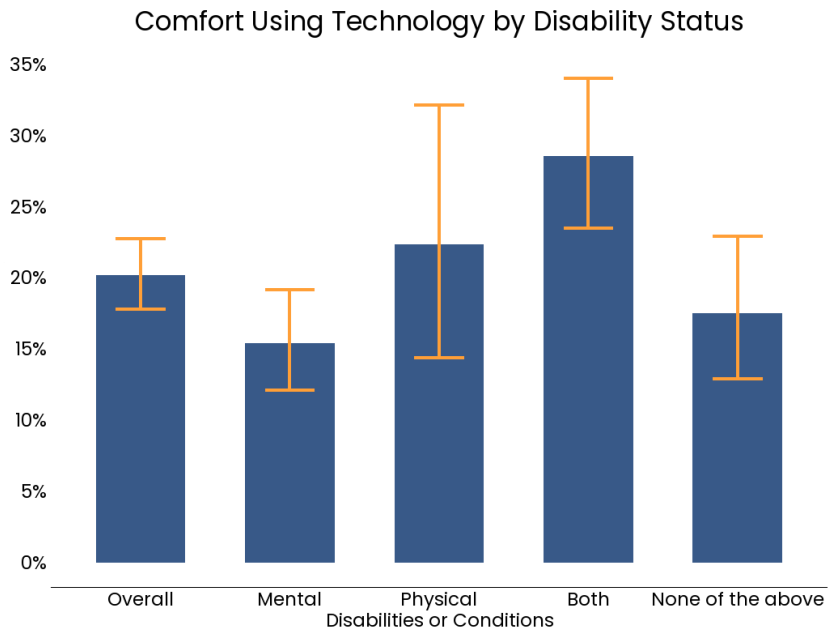




When asked what they currently do to minimize the negative impacts of technology, very few respondents said they avoid technology entirely. Technology has become a core part of everyday life now, and it is not realistic to expect not to use it at all. As a result, limiting the use of technology is only practiced by 22% of respondents. Nearly half (48.927%) of respondents reporting current poor mental health said they currently do nothing to minimize the negative impacts of technology, compared to 33.61% of those with good mental health. However, those with good mental health are more likely to take the time to think about how they are using technology and whether it is hurting them (37.3%) as compared to those reporting current poor mental health (25%). This suggests a relationship between digital self-awareness (an understanding of one's mental well-being, how technology use contributes to it, and strategies to mitigate negative effects) and mental well-being, though the direction of the relationship is not clear.

DISABILITY AND TECHNOLOGY USE

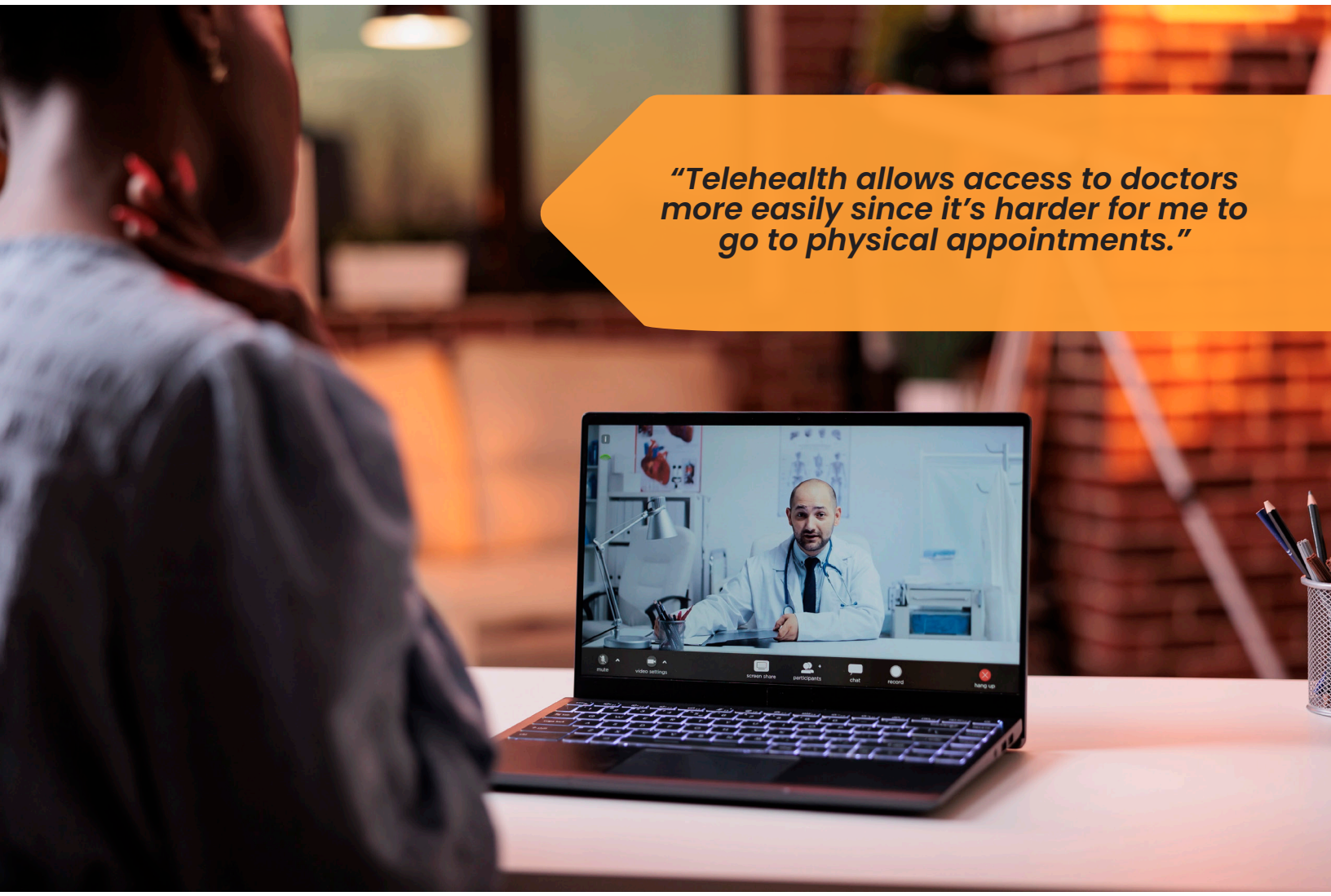
Technology has the potential to improve accessibility and quality of life, but its impact is not evenly distributed.



This survey found that those with both a physical disability and mental health condition are significantly more likely to struggle with using technology compared to the overall sample (28.52% vs 20.17%). Among those reporting a mental health condition, 15.38% report struggling with technology as compared to 22.34% of those identifying as having a physical disability. Among specific groups, individuals with chronic pain or arthritis, hearing loss, or an intellectual or learning disability were the most likely to struggle with using technology compared to the rest of the sample. This suggests that despite the increasing push for digital accessibility, many still face barriers in usability, design, or functionality that make technology more frustrating or difficult to navigate.

Those with both a physical and mental health condition are significantly more likely to say technology makes them feel frustrated compared to those with no disability. Additionally, those with a mental health condition and those with both physical and mental disabilities are significantly more likely to report feeling overwhelmed and anxious due to technology compared to those with physical disability only and those with no disabilities.

Despite these difficulties, technology remains a source of hope for some. Those with chronic pain or mobility challenges were more hopeful that in the future, technology will support health and wellness. This aligns with the increasing availability of assistive technologies, telehealth, and other digital tools that enhance independence.



However, not everyone shares the same hopes about the benefits of technology. Those without any disability are significantly more likely to be hopeful that technology will boost productivity in the future, compared to those with both a physical and mental health condition. This disparity suggests that people living with multiple chronic conditions may see fewer opportunities for technology to improve their efficiency or professional development, possibly due to existing accessibility barriers.

Taken together, these results emphasize the importance of digital accessibility, not just in terms of physical usability, but also in reducing emotional stress and cognitive load. Addressing these gaps will ensure that technology is a tool for empowerment for everyone, rather than a source of frustration or exclusion.

FUTURE HOPES AND FEARS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

In this section we explore the ways in which respondents are hopeful or fearful of technology in the near future.

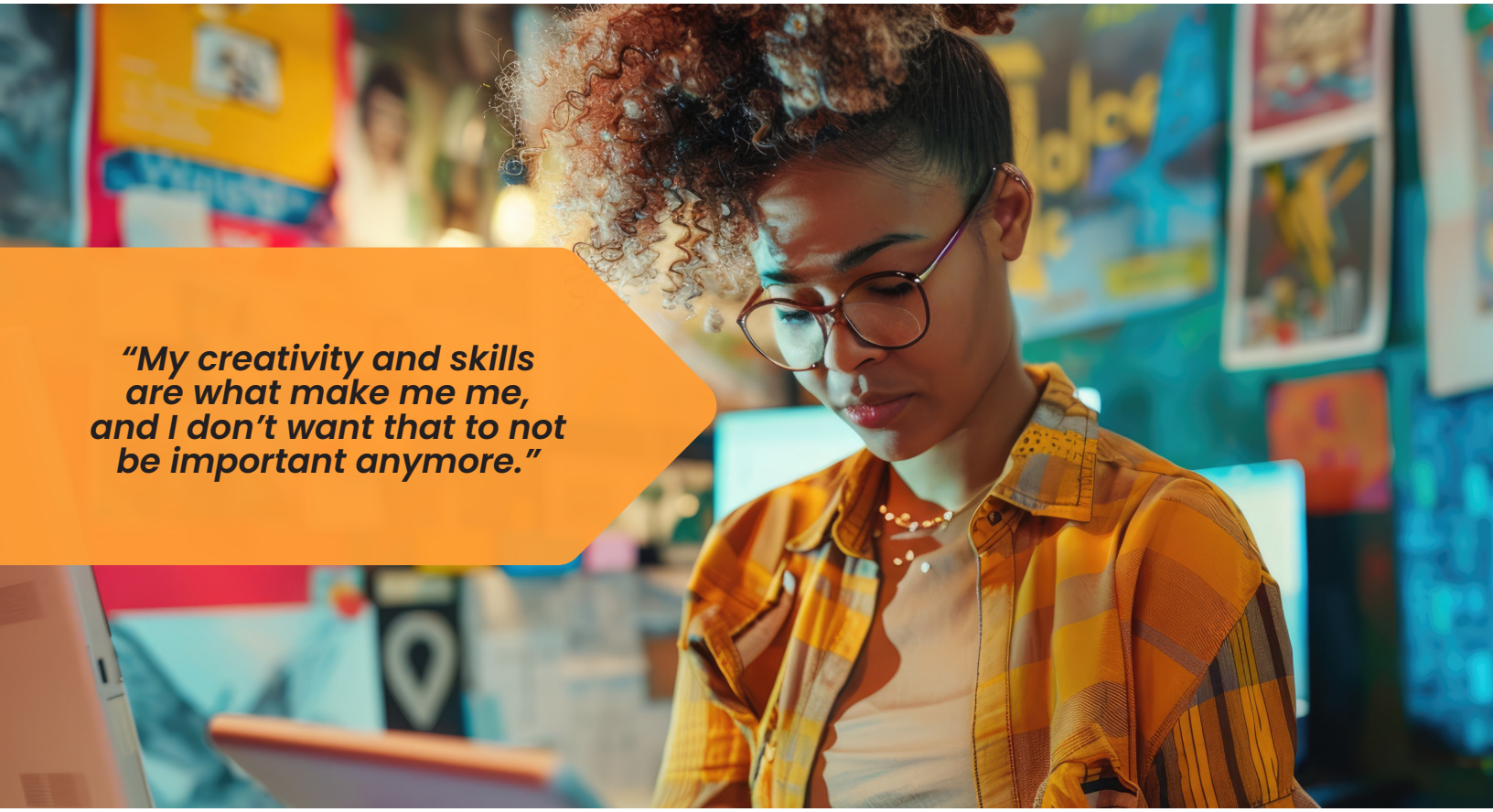
Thinking about the future (five years from now), what are the three things you are most **hopeful** about what non-social media technology can do for you and how it might help?

Future Hopes for Technology	Count	Percent
It will simplify my daily life	684	32.25%
It will facilitate my learning	666	31.40%
It will boost my productivity	635	29.94%
It will support my health and wellness	604	28.48%
It will enhance my communication	526	24.80%
It will enhance my entertainment	461	21.74%
It will encourage my creativity	452	21.31%
It will help me make informed decisions	430	20.27%
It will enable my exploration	333	15.70%
It will foster social connections	302	14.24%
It will improve my problem solving	297	14.00%
It will strengthen my sense of security and privacy	215	10.14%
Other...	148	6.98%
Total	**5753**	

Respondents are hopeful about technology's potential to simplify life (32.25%), improve learning (31.40%), and boost productivity (29.94%). These results show that people have some optimism about the potential of technology to improve daily life and drive progress.

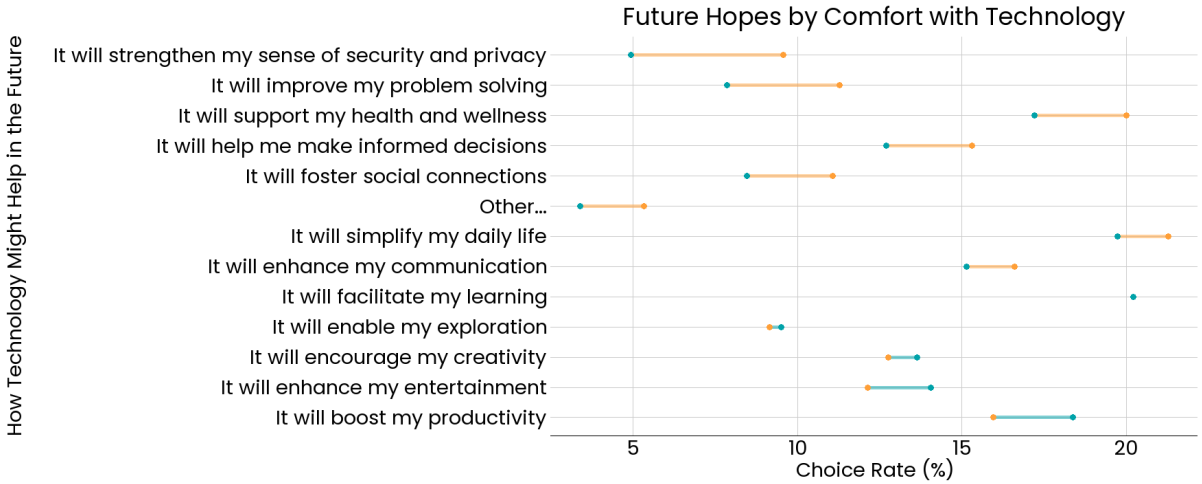
Thinking about the future (five years from now), what are the three things you **fear** the most about what non-social media technology is going to do to you and how that will happen?

Future Fears for Technology	Count	Percent
Privacy issues (being monitored and tracked online)	838	45.74%
Losing human skills (socializing, reading, writing, creating)	784	42.79%
Harmful brain changes (addiction, attention problems, irritability)	573	31.28%
Job loss or being replaced by technology	476	25.98%
Misinformation (unverified ads or facts)	436	23.80%
Less in-person connection with other people	426	23.25%
Being constantly connected to technology	395	21.56%
Losing time (streaming or gaming more than you intended)	361	19.71%
Becoming dependent on technology (can't find your way around without maps app)	303	16.54%
Identity confusion (who am I vs. my online persona)	244	13.32%
Automation replacing human decision making about things I have access to (healthcare, housing, etc.)	233	12.72%
Other...	72	3.93%
Total	**5141**	



However, concerns are even more prominent. Loss of privacy is the top fear (45.74%), followed closely by losing human skills, such as socializing and writing (42.79%). Respondents are also concerned about harmful brain changes, such as addiction and attention span reduction (31.28%).

Overall, there were few differences in hopes and fears between the disability groups. However, one exception was that individuals without any disabilities were significantly more likely to be hopeful that in the future tech will "boost my productivity" compared to those with both a physical and mental health condition. This suggests that those with multiple health conditions see greater barriers to technology improving productivity, possibly due to disappointing experiences in the present.



Both those who struggle with technology and those who don't are most hopeful about technology simplifying daily life, facilitating learning, supporting health and wellness, boosting productivity, and enhancing communication. However, those with lower digital literacy (i.e., those who struggle more) feel more hopeful about technology strengthening security and privacy and improving problem solving, albeit still at a low rate. Those with high digital literacy, on the other hand, are more hopeful about tech boosting productivity and enhancing entertainment.

When thinking about the future, those reporting current poor mental health are more hopeful that technology will enhance entertainment. Those with current good mental health, on the other hand, are more hopeful that technology will enable exploration, facilitate learning, and boost productivity. In terms of fears, those reporting current poor mental health are more concerned about harmful brain changes, such as addiction and attention problems, and identity confusion (i.e., difficulty distinguishing one's online persona from their true self). Those with current good mental health are more afraid of losing in-person connection with other people. This distinction may reflect existing social differences: Those with good mental health may already have strong in-person connections they fear losing, while those reporting current poor mental health might be struggling with social connection to begin with. Additionally, there have been discussions suggesting that individuals with mental health concerns may have greater awareness of their mental well-being, which could explain why they focus more on the potential cognitive and psychological harms.

Building Technology for Control and Mental Health

Survey respondents were more likely to be young (54% of survey respondents were under 25) and are currently struggling with mental health concerns (61% of survey respondents report poor mental health). These demographics are consistent with individuals most likely to come to take a mental health screen at MHA Screening, where the survey was posted. This help-seeking population provides an opportunity to understand how technology impacts high-risk populations and focuses on which changes have the highest chance for impact among youth with mental health concerns. In 2024, MHA launched a new experimental behavioral addiction screener. Among the 2,500 screeners who took a behavioral addiction screener (October-December 2024), 41% of screeners reported addiction to pornography and sex, 19% reported concerns about internet addiction, and 8% reported concerns about gaming addiction. Consideration for the design of features to empower users to self-monitor and self-regulate use of technology can mitigate risks associated with technology dependence.

The following recommendations can help ensure healthy technological use among those with mental health and addiction concerns:

- Re-evaluate features like infinite scroll and autoplay that encourage endless, passive consumption.
- Features that are known to encourage risk for addiction should have opt in options among users rather than provided immediately.
- Explore, develop, and research how greater parental controls beyond automatic log-out or timer restrictions can support healthier use for young children.
- Design these options to be prominently displayed and easily accessible, rather than buried in settings menus. Features could include methods for how parents and children use and access controls across users within a single platform.
- Regularly promote these tools, especially after patterns of concerning engagement behaviors, and educate users on their potential benefits.

"I've grown addicted to games and the dopamine they bring...I've done nothing to regulate my gaming time or to try and fix that addiction, only fueling it further."

RESPONSIBILITY FOR TECHNOLOGY PROTECTIONS

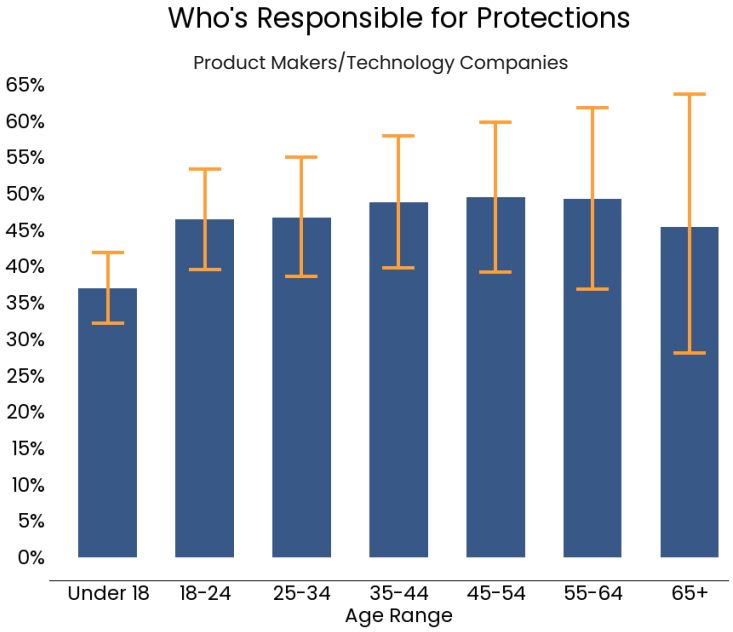
This section explores people's beliefs about who bears the responsibility for protecting technology users' mental health.

Respondents were asked, "Who do you think are the top three groups who should be most responsible for implementing mental health protections for non-social media technology, and how?" Up to three answers could be selected.

Responsibility for Mental Health Protections	Count	Percent
Me	1027	63.28%
Parents/Guardians	840	51.76%
Product makers/Technology companies	676	41.65%
Companies using software (healthcare, schools, employer)	658	40.54%
Government	607	37.40%
Teachers	286	17.62%
Other...	124	7.64%
Total	**4218**	

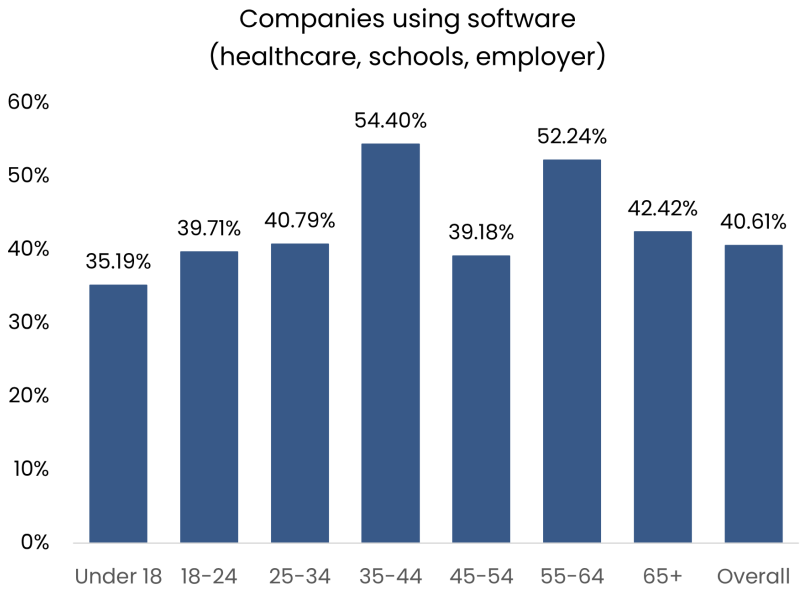
When it comes to mitigating technology's impact on mental health, most respondents believe responsibility falls primarily on individuals. The majority (63.28%) feel personally responsible for protecting their own mental well-being, and 51.76% believe that parents are responsible for safeguarding their children's mental health.

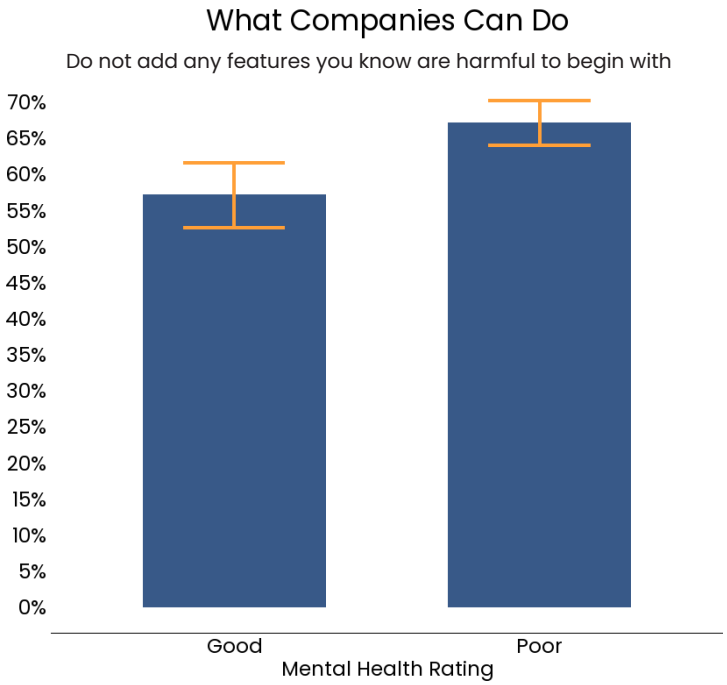
Disability and mental health status have some impact on beliefs about who is responsible for protections. Those without any disabilities are slightly more likely to view themselves as responsible for mental health protections compared to those with at least one health condition (70.83% vs. 61.03%). And those reporting current poor mental health are more likely to say the government should take responsibility (41.63% vs. 33.96% of those with good mental health). In contrast, those with current good mental health are more likely to place responsibility on themselves (67.68% vs. 62.30% of those reporting current poor mental health) or on parents (55.97% vs. 47.74%).



However, there is also a strong desire for external regulation. Many respondents believe that technology companies should play a role, with 41.65% holding them accountable for implementing better mental health protections, such as designing safer products and enhancing data privacy measures. Interestingly, respondents under 18 were less likely to assign responsibility of implementing protections to technology companies as compared to all respondents over 18 (36.96% vs 45-50%).

Evaluating responsibility for protections by age, the only significant difference in response rate shows that those aged 35-44 (possibly parents of elementary school age children) were more likely than all other age groups (54.40%) to state that the "companies using the software (healthcare, schools, employers)" should be responsible for protections.





Those reporting current poor mental health are more likely to say technology companies should not add any features they know are harmful to begin with (66.23%) as compared to 57.85% of those with good mental health.

What are the top three things that technology companies can do to protect the mental health of people who use their non-social media technologies?

What Technology Companies Can Do	Count	Percent
Do not add any features they know are harmful to begin with	964	62.52%
Ensure data privacy and safety	673	43.64%
Build in tools that users can control to protect themselves	563	36.51%
Be transparent about potential impacts of technology	518	33.59%
Make sure testing is done to remove harmful impact	499	32.36%
Develop industry standards for measuring impact on communities of users and incentives companies for good performance	376	24.38%
Regularly ask users about the harmful impact of technology to monitor areas for improvement	338	21.92%
Build in tools that others (friends or parents) can control to protect the users	254	16.47%
Other...	62	4.02%
Total	**4247**	

Government intervention is another area of interest, with 37.40% of respondents believing that the government should be held responsible for tech safety. When asked about how the government can protect users' mental health, 62.77% believe that the government should enact policies that tech companies have to follow, 46.52% want the government to create guidelines and incentives for safety, and 43.18% would like the government to invest in public education on using technology safely.

Respondents who identify as male were more likely to believe the government is responsible for mental health protections compared to female respondents (45.88% vs. 34.54% female).

Those with current good mental health were slightly more likely to believe the government should incentivize research (40.52% vs. 33.48% of those reporting current poor mental health) and invest in public education (46.84% vs. 42.21% of those reporting current poor mental health).

What are the top three things that the government can do to protect the mental health of people who use non-social media technologies?

What the Government Can Do	Count	Percent
Set policies/laws that tech companies have to follow	939	62.77%
Create guidelines and incentives for safety	696	46.52%
Invest in public education on using technology safely	646	43.18%
Fine technology companies for harm towards people	578	38.64%
Incentivize research on potential harms or positive impacts of technology	529	35.36%
Create a group of people responsible for reviewing and giving limitations on safety	436	29.14%
Other...	113	7.55%
Total	**3937**	

Technology Safeguards and Education

Sixty-three percent of respondents report that individuals should carry the primary responsibility for implementing protections for technology use. Many of the recommendations highlight areas where design features can increase awareness among users about unhealthy use and prompt users to change their behaviors. Younger children may be at higher risk for mental health impact due to unrestricted use of technology use.

The following are options for additional protections through the government, technology companies, and systems that interact with children can help to increase safety for high-risk children.

- Increase investments in research to clarify which types of non-social media technology impact cognition, memory, attention, and risk for addiction. Findings can help technology companies identify which features pose the greatest potential harm and which support engagement, growth, and learning.
- Exclude features known to promote addiction, especially those that are developed for children younger than 13. The same consideration should be made for those technologies that are not designed for children, but where high utilization by younger children is known.
- Identify and share evidence-based best practices for technology use in schools, updating guidance as new research emerges. Example strategies include:
    - Recommending appropriate types of technology by grade level.
    - Highlighting technologies that may require stricter limitations. For example, while some schools have implemented policies restricting access to cell phones on campus, these policies are not standardized.
    - Providing training for teachers to help students build self-awareness and practice mindful, intentional use of technology.

"Multidisciplinary experts, including psychologists, software designers, and ethicists, must collaborate to create technology that protects mental well-being."

CONCLUSION

This report highlights the deep and complex relationship between technology use, mental health, disability, and personal well-being. While technology is an essential part of daily life for most people, many struggle with its rapid evolution, negative psychological impacts, and the pressure to be constantly productive. Youth and those reporting current poor mental health are especially vulnerable to these effects, and report higher dependence on technology, yet are less likely to take steps to manage their use. Similarly, individuals with disabilities face unique challenges in navigating technology, emphasizing the ongoing need for inclusive design and accessibility improvements.

These findings demonstrate the importance of intentional technology design that prioritizes user well-being, self-awareness, and accessibility. Encouraging responsible technology use, teaching digital literacy and hygiene, and implementing mental health protections are a critical step towards ensuring technology serves as a tool for improving lives. That being said, technology is not inherently good or bad, and its effects cannot be simply categorized as such. It is a tool shaped by its design, implementation, and societal context. While it can play a significant role in shaping mental well-being, it is not the sole determinant. Broader systemic factors such as education, healthcare access, and social support structures must be considered when evaluating technology's impact. By shifting the focus toward evidence-based solutions and responsible innovation, we can create a more balanced, inclusive, and mentally healthy digital future.

REFERENCES

1. Richter, A., Adkins, V., & Selkie, E. (2022). Youth perspectives on the recommended age of mobile phone adoption: Survey study. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting, 5*(4). https://doi.org/10.2196/40704

2. Vogels, E. A., Gelles-Watnick, R., & Massarat, N. (2022). *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022

3. Mansfield, K. L., Ghai, S., Hakman, T., Ballou, N., Vuorre, M., & Przybylski, A. K. (2025). From social media to artificial intelligence: Improving research on digital harms in youth. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 9*(3), 194–204. https://doi.org/10.1016/s2352-4642(24)00332-8

4. *Screen Time at School.* American Academy of Pediatrics. (2025). https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/center-of-excellence-on-social-media-and-youth-mental-health/qa-portal/qa-portal-library/qa-portal-library-questions/screen-time-at-school

APPENDIX: TECHNOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY

Intro page

For the purposes of this survey, "technology" refers to digital tools, apps, and systems that can be broadly categorized into two main types: **Social Media Technology and Non-Social Media Technology**.

The following survey is focused on your use of **non-social media technology**.

Below is a full description of the differences between social media technology and non-social media technology.

"Start Survey" Button

Social Media Technology: Social media technology refers to software products and platforms primarily designed for social interaction, content sharing, and networking. These tools often allow users to connect with others, share updates, media, and engage in online communities.

These include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Messenger, Discord, Reddit, and YouTube.

Non-Social Media Technology: Non-social media technology refers to software products and digital tools designed for purposes beyond social networking or content sharing. These tools are focused on enhancing various aspects of life, including communication, entertainment, education, health, creativity, shopping, navigation, productivity, financial management, home life, work collaboration, exploration, and mental well-being. Below are examples of non-social media technology:

- **Communication:** Email (Gmail, Outlook), messaging apps (WhatsApp, Signal).
- **Work Collaboration:** Document collaboration tools (Google Workspace, Microsoft Office 365), project management platforms (Monday.com, Basecamp), video conferencing (Zoom, Microsoft Teams).
- **Exploration:** Search engines (Google, Bing), virtual reality exploration (Google Earth VR).
- **Productivity:** Calendars (Google Calendar, Microsoft Outlook), to-do lists (Todoist, Trello), task management tools (Asana, Notion).
- **Assistive Technology:** Screen readers, font changes, transcriptions, magnifiers
- **Entertainment:** Streaming services (Netflix, Spotify), gaming platforms (Steam, Xbox Live).
- **Mental Well-being:** Mindfulness apps (Headspace, Calm), online therapy platforms (BetterHelp, Talkspace), mood tracking apps (Moodfit, Daylio).

- **Financial tools, learning and education tools, navigation tools, health tools, creativity tools, and shopping tools.**
- **Learning and Education:** Online courses (Coursera, Khan Academy), research tools (Google Scholar, JSTOR), eBooks and educational apps (Kindle, Duolingo).
- **Navigation and Travel:** Mapping apps (Google Maps, Waze), travel planning services (TripIt, Skyscanner), booking services (Airbnb, Expedia).
- **Health and Fitness:** Health tracking apps (MyFitnessPal, Apple Health), fitness wearables (Fitbit), online fitness classes (Peloton).
- **Creativity:** Art and design software (Adobe Creative Suite, Procreate), music creation tools (GarageBand, Ableton Live), video editing software (Final Cut Pro, iMovie).
- **Shopping:** Online shopping platforms (Amazon, eBay), price comparison tools (Honey), review sites (Yelp, TripAdvisor).

Technology Survey (page 2)

Please choose your level of agreement to the following statements (Strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree)

1. I have regular access to technology or digital devices.
2. I struggle with using technology and often need help.
3. I use technology regularly for essential tasks like work, shopping, or managing daily life.
4. I primarily use technology to connect with others through social media or online communities.
5. I enjoy exploring new technology, apps, or devices to enhance my daily life.
6. I use technology only when necessary and prefer to limit my screen time.
7. I find myself heavily reliant on technology and often use it when I don't need to.

8. What are the top 3 areas where you use non-social media technology the most? (Choose up to 3).
    - Communication: Email, messaging
    - Work collaboration: shared documents or folders, project management, video meetings
    - Exploration: search engines or virtual reality
    - Productivity: Calendars, to-do lists, and task management
    - Assistive Technology: Screen readers, font changes, transcriptions, magnifiers
    - Entertainment: Streaming, gaming, and social media
    - Mental well-being: mental health or mindfulness apps, online therapy
    - Financial management: budgeting, online investing, or online banking
    - Learning and Education: Online courses, research, and reading educational material
    - Navigation and Travel: Maps, travel planning, and booking services
    - Health and Fitness: Health apps, fitness wearables, and online fitness classes
    - Creativity: Art, music, video
    - Shopping: Online shopping, price comparison, and reading reviews

9. What are the top 3 areas where non-social media technology is the most helpful in your life? Select up to 3.
    - Communication: email, messaging

- Work collaboration: shared documents or folders, project management, video meetings
- Exploration: search engines or virtual reality
- Productivity: Calendars, to-do lists, and task management
- Assistive Technology: Screen readers, font changes, transcriptions, magnifiers
- Entertainment: Streaming, gaming, and social media
- Mental well-being: mental health or mindfulness apps, online therapy
- Financial management: budgeting, online investing, or online banking
- Learning and Education: Online courses, research, and reading educational material
- Navigation and Travel: Maps, travel planning, and booking services
- Health and Fitness: Health apps, fitness wearables, and online fitness classes
- Creativity: Art, music, video
- Shopping: Online shopping, price comparison, and reading reviews

10. Where is the use of non-social media technology the most frustrating in your life? (Choose up to 3).
    - Communication: email, messaging
    - Work collaboration: shared documents or folders, project management, video meetings
    - Exploration: search engines or virtual reality
    - Productivity: calendars, to-do lists, and task management
    - Assistive Technology: screen readers, font changes, transcriptions, magnifiers
    - Entertainment: streaming, gaming, and social media
    - Mental well-being: mental health or mindfulness apps, online therapy
    - Financial management: budgeting, online investing, or online banking
    - Learning and Education: online courses, research, and reading educational material
    - Navigation and Travel: maps, travel planning, and booking services
    - Health and Fitness: health apps, fitness wearables, and online fitness classes
    - Creativity: art, music, video
    - Shopping: online shopping, price comparison, and reading reviews

11. What are the top 3 things that are frustrating about non-social media technology? Select up to 3.
    - It changes so fast I don't know how you use it.
    - It doesn't do what I want or work the way I expect.
    - Privacy (collecting info without my control)
    - I do things I don't want (falling for click bait or scams)
    - Losing time (gaming or streaming more than you intended)
    - I'm exposed to or pushed to content I don't want to see.
    - People expect me to be productive (work or school) all the time
    - Friends/family expect me to constantly be available to them
    - Becoming dependent on technology (can't find my way around without maps app)
    - Less in-person connection with other people
    - Can cause harmful brain changes (addiction, attention problems, irritability)
    - Misinformation (false facts impact people and society)

12. What are the top 3 ways non-social media technology makes you feel? Select up to 3.
    - Connected
    - Productive
    - Relaxed
    - Entertained
    - Informed
    - Frustrated
    - Incompetent
    - Distracted
    - Addicted
    - Unsafe
    - Overwhelmed/anxious
    - Worthless

13. Thinking about the future (5 years from now), what are the 3 things you are most hopeful about what technology can do for you and how it might help? Select up to 3. Instructions **Conditional - when item selected, show field with "How?"
    - It will enhance my communication
    - It will foster social connections
    - It will boost my productivity
    - It will support my health and wellness
    - It will facilitate my learning
    - It will simplify my daily life
    - It will help me make informed decisions
    - It will enhance my entertainment
    - It will encourage my creativity
    - It will improve my problem solving
    - It will enable my exploration
    - It will strengthen my sense of security and privacy
    - Other (field)

14. Thinking about the future (5 years from now), what are the 3 things you fear the most about what non-social media technology is going to do to you and how that will happen? (up to 3) Instructions **Conditional - when item selected, show field with "How?"
    - Losing human skills (socializing, reading, writing, creating)
    - Privacy issues (being monitored and tracked online)
    - Job loss or being replaced by technology
    - I'll be constantly connected to technology
    - Identity (who am I vs. my online persona)
    - Automation replaces human decision making about things I have access to (healthcare, housing, etc.)
    - Less in-person connection with other people
    - Can cause brain changes that are harmful (addiction, attention problems, irritability)
    - Becoming dependent on technology (can't find your way around without maps app)
    - Misinformation (unverified ads or facts)
    - Losing time (streaming or gaming more than you intended)

15. What do you do to minimize the negative impact of non-social media technology **the most**?
    - Don't use the technology at all
    - Limit my use of the technology
    - Take the time to think about how I'm using technology and if it's hurting me
    - I don't do anything to minimize the negative impact of technology
    - Other (field)

16. Who do you think are the top 3 groups who should be most responsible for implementing mental health protections for non-social media technology and how? Select up to 3. Instructions **Conditional - when item selected, show field with "How?"
    - Me
    - Parent/Guardian
    - Teachers
    - Companies using software (healthcare, schools, employer)
    - Product Makers/Tech Companies
    - Government
    - Other (field)

17. What are the top 3 things that technology designers can do to ensure safety in non-social media technology on mental health? Select up to 3.
    - Do not add any features you know are harmful to begin with
    - Build in tools to protect users that I can control
    - Build in limits to protect users that others can control (friend or parental controls)
    - Regularly ask users about the harmful impact of technology to monitor areas for improvement
    - Make sure testing is done to remove harmful impact
    - Being transparent about potential impacts of technology
    - Ensure data privacy and safety
    - Develop industry standards for measuring impact on communities of users and incentives companies for good performance
    - Other (field)

18. What are the top 3 things that the government can do to ensure safety in non-social media technology? Select up to 3.
    - Set policies/laws that tech companies have to follow
    - Create a group of people responsible for reviewing and giving limitations on safety
    - Create guidelines and incentives for safety
    - Incentivize research on potential harms or positive impacts of technology
    - Fine technology companies for harm towards people
    - Invest in public education on using technology safely
    - Other (field)

19. Is there anything else you want to share about how non-social media technology **improved** your mental health? (optional)

20. Is there anything else you want to share about how non-social media technology **harmed** your mental health? (optional)

Demographics (page 3)

Age

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to answer

Gender - Select one

- Male
- Non-binary/gender diverse
- Female
- Prefer not to answer

What is your race? Select one

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American (non-Hispanic)
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White (non-Hispanic)
- More than one race
- Prefer not to answer
- Other [Text Box]

How many people live in your home?

- Live alone
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 or more

Household income

- Less than $20,000
- $20,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$59,999
- $60,000-$79,999
- $80,000-$99,999
- $100,000-$149,999
- $150,000+
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as someone with any of the following disabilities or conditions? Select all that apply.

- Blind/Low vision
- Hearing impairment
- Mobility
- Autism spectrum or ADHD
- Mood related - depression or mania
- Anxiety
- Other mental health condition (please specify - conditional)
- Intellectual or learning
- Arthritis or other chronic pain
- Neurological conditions (epilepsy, etc.) or traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Other (please specify)

Over the past two weeks, how would you rate your mental health and wellbeing?

- Very Poor
- Poor
- Good
- Very Good