

# CREATORS SUMMIT ON MENTAL HEALTH

## Social media and well-being: What we know

45%

Of people over 65 in the US use social media

84%

Of people 18-29 in the US use social media

35%

Of US teens report using at least one of the top 5 social platforms "almost constantly"

>50%

Of teens say it would be difficult for them to give up social media

8.74

Years of the average person's life on a smartphone

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### SOCIAL MEDIA USE CAN HAVE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON WELL-BEING

- Scientific research mainly focuses on the negative effects of social media use on well-being. Far fewer studies look at the positive effects of social media use.
- In a recent review of 233 studies, regular use of social media was positively associated with well-being in only 10% of the studies, whereas the majority (60%) found a negative association, 21% found mixed results, and 9% found no association.
- The quality of online social experiences is crucial to well-being. Positive social experiences include having avenues for social connection, having people to talk to when feeling lonely, and receiving support and appreciation.
- Negative effects of social media use are mainly driven by social comparison or feeling left out or ignored.
- Positive effects related to enhanced social connections are particularly relevant for minorities and people experiencing health disparities.

#### Content Resources:

- Bekalu, M. A., Sato, T., & Viswanath, K. (2023). [Conceptualizing and Measuring Social Media Use in Health and Well-being Studies: Systematic Review](#). Journal of Medical Internet Research
- Marciano, L., Albanese, E., Viswanath, K., & Camerini, A.-L. (2023). [The Protective Role of Social-Oriented Digital Media Use in Children's and Adolescents' Life Satisfaction During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#). European Journal of Health Communication
- Marciano, L., & Viswanath, K. (2023). [Social media use and adolescents' well-being: A note on flourishing](#). Frontiers in Psychology



**CREATOR ASSETS**



---

### Audience Calls to Action:

- [Maintain your mental health while using social media](#)
- [Be aware of social media use effects in adolescence](#)
- [Look at social media usage rates](#)
- [Social media and teens](#)
- [Keep social media “social”](#)

### Hashtags:

#WellBeing #MediaEffects #HSPHCreatorsSummit

### THERE ARE NO EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE THAT APPLY TO EVERYONE

- Effects of social media use vary across individuals, and according to gender, age, socio-economic status, education, race, and culture. These disparities and digital divides should be considered when looking at social media effects on well-being.
- Translating results of social media effect studies into practical information for interventions (e.g., digital detox) is not a straightforward process.
- Published data are often limited to WEIRD (White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) populations.
- The lack of data from populations in the Global South and minority groups, also known as data absenteeism, limits data quality.

### Content Resources:

- Marciano, L., Driver, C. C., Schulz, P. J., & Camerini, A.-L. (2022). [Dynamics of adolescents’ smartphone use and well-being are positive but ephemeral](#). *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), Article 1
- Viswanath, K., McCloud, R. F., Lee, E. W. J., & Bekalu, M. A. (2022). [Measuring What Matters: Data Absenteeism, Science Communication, and the Perpetuation of Inequities](#). *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 700(1), 208–219

### Audience Calls to Action:

- [Keep a global eye on social media use stats](#)
- [Adolescent mental health at the global level](#)
- [Look at whose data are not represented in social media research](#)

### Hashtags:

#DigitalDetox #HealthEquity #DigitalDivide #HSPHCreatorsSummit



CREATOR ASSETS



---

## **MOST RESULTS COME FROM SELF-REPORTED DATA**

- Studies assessing the effects of social media use are largely based on measures of time spent on social media, which do not provide insight into what people do or see on social media.
- Social media features/elements constantly change, thus making it difficult to develop enduring interventions and understand what users are doing.
- Since social media platforms are not willing to share data transparently with the research community, objective and reproducible results are rarely obtainable.
- Today, research on social media is going through a replication crisis. Therefore, when communicating information, influencers should consider what the evidence they are sharing is based on.
- To overcome these limitations, researchers can ask participants to donate their social media data to scientific research, in order to provide further insight on how well-being is related to specific activities and content shared.

### **Content Resources:**

- Marciano, L., & Camerini, A.-L. (2022). Duration, frequency, and time distortion: Which is the best predictor of problematic smartphone use in adolescents? A trace data study. PloS One
- Parry, D. A., Davidson, B. I., Sewall, C. J. R., Fisher, J. T., Mieczkowski, H., & Quintana, D. S. (2021). A systematic review and meta-analysis of discrepancies between logged and self-reported digital media use. Nature Human Behaviour

### **Audience Calls to Action:**

- Donate your social media usage data to research

### **Hashtags:**

#DataDonation #CallForResearch #HSPHCreatorsSummit

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Learn about the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness**

**Find resources to improve your mental wellbeing at Project Healthy Minds**



**CREATOR ASSETS**



**CREATORS SUMMIT ON  
MENTAL HEALTH**



**HARVARD  
T.H. CHAN**

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
Center for Health Communication