

2025 UNDP Human Development Report

A MATTER OF CHOICE: PEOPLE AND POSSIBILITIES IN THE AGE OF AI

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

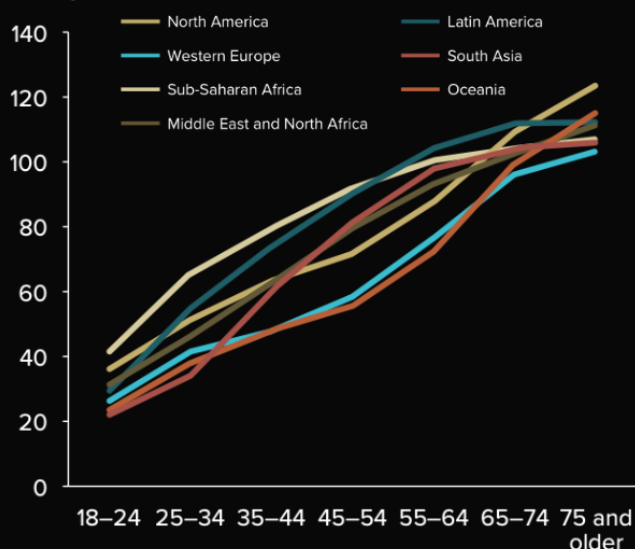
REPORT 2025



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REVERSAL OF THE U-SHAPE

Average Mental Health Quotient score



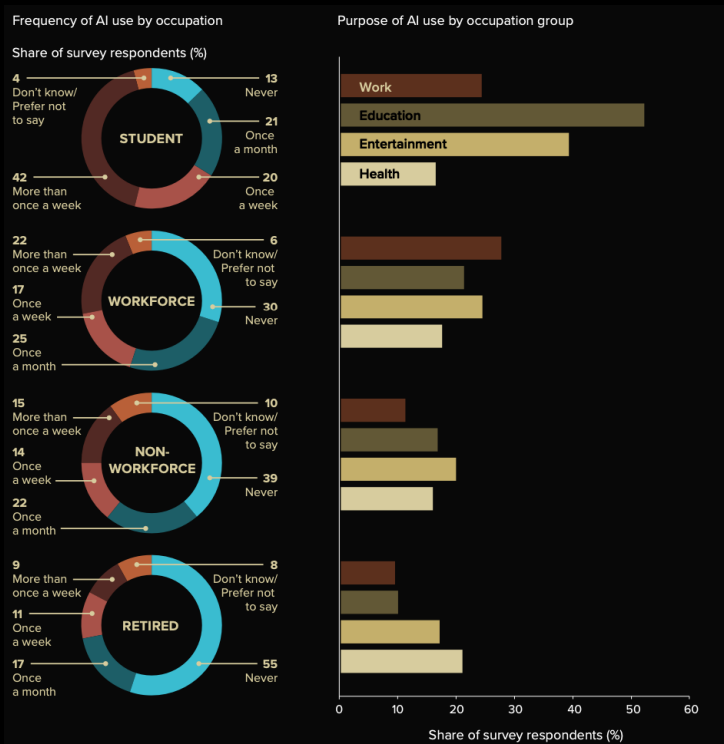
HISTORICALLY, MEASURES OF SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING (LIKE LIFE SATISFACTION) FOLLOWED A U-SHAPED PATTERN WITH AGE, MEANING YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE REPORTED HIGHER WELLBEING THAN THOSE IN MIDDLE AGE.

THIS TREND BEGAN TO CHANGE ROUGHLY 10-15 YEARS AGO IN SOME COUNTRIES. TODAY, **THE TRADITIONAL U-SHAPE PATTERN IS COMPLETELY ABSENT** AMONG PEOPLE WITH INTERNET ACCESS. INSTEAD, **YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL WELLBEING IS CONSISTENTLY AT THE BOTTOM** (FORMING AN ESSENTIALLY DIAGONAL LINE).

PEOPLE AT EACH **LIFE STAGE** USE AI AND TECHNOLOGY WITH VARYING FREQUENCY AND FOR **DIFFERENT PURPOSES**. NEARLY HALF OF STUDENTS AND A QUARTER OF WORKING PEOPLE USE AI-POWERED APPLICATIONS MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK FOR EDUCATION AND WORK. IN CONTRAST, ONLY 15 PERCENT OF NONWORKING PEOPLE AND 9 PERCENT OF RETIRED INDIVIDUALS DO SO, MOSTLY FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND HEALTH. THE LIFE STAGE PERSPECTIVE REVEALS **THREE POLICY IMPERATIVES**—THE “THREE I’S”—FOR ADVANCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: **INVEST, INFORM, AND INCLUDE**.

AI USE BY LIFE STAGE

People at each life stage use artificial intelligence (AI) with varying frequency and for different purposes



RISING DESPAIR



AMONG YOUNG INTERNET USERS AGES 18-24

45%

STRUGGLE WITH MENTAL WELLBEING AT A LEVEL THAT HAS FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

WITH EXCESSIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USE, THE ODDS OF HAVING PSYCHOSOMATIC COMPLAINTS RISE BY ABOUT

39%

LIFE SATISFACTION FALLS BY 33%.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, ONLY

15%

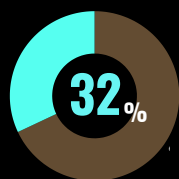
OF REPORTED POSTS WITH SUICIDAL OR SELF-HARM CONTENT ARE DELETED

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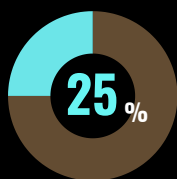
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HARMFUL AI COMPANIONS

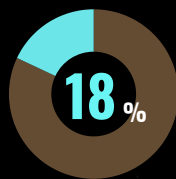
AMONG FREQUENT USERS OF AI CHATBOTS



SHOW SYMPTOMS
CONSISTENT
WITH BEHAVIORAL
ADDICTION



REPORT LESS
INTEREST IN FORMING
HUMAN
RELATIONSHIPS



REPORT
INCREASED
LONELINESS AND
ISOLATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD



INVEST

IN AI
TECHNOLOGY
THAT PROTECTS
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS IN THE
DIGITAL SPACE.



INFORM

PARENTS,
PEDIATRICIANS AND
CAREGIVERS ABOUT
RISKS RELATED TO
YOUNG CHILDREN'S
DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGY USE.



INCLUDE

THE PRIVATE
SECTOR IN
WORKING
GROUPS ON
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS AND
PROTECTION.

SCHOOL AGE



INVEST

IN UNIVERSAL
ACCESS TO
DIGITAL DEVICES
AND AI IN
CLASSROOMS.



INFORM

ABOUT POTENTIAL
BIASES IN AI
SYSTEMS AND
PREVENT THE
STIFLING OF
CREATIVITY AND
CRITICAL THINKING.



INCLUDE

RESPONSIBLE USE
OF AI IN SCHOOL
CURRICULA,
EMPHASIZING
SKILL
DEVELOPMENT.

ADULTHOOD



INVEST

IN SUBSIDIES FOR
COMPANIES THAT
OFFER HUMAN
OPTIONS TO
MAKE SURE
NOBODY IS LEFT
BEHIND.



INFORM

ABOUT ROLE
MODELING
RESPONSIBLE AI
USE TO INFLUENCE
FUTURE
GENERATIONS.



INCLUDE

EXPLANATIONS
ABOUT HOW AI
PRODUCTS AND
ALGORITHMS
WORK TO
STRENGTHEN
ADULTS' AGENCY.

GENDER MATTERS

THE DECLINE IN MENTAL WELLBEING IS PARTICULARLY ACUTE FOR YOUNG WOMEN, WHO CONSISTENTLY INDICATE LOWER WELLBEING THAN YOUNG MEN, MOST LIKELY BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOCIAL COMPARISON.

REPORTS OF DISTRESS AND STRUGGLE AT AGE 18-24

FEMALES

70
%

for those who first owned a
smartphone age 5 or 6

51
%

for those who first owned a
smartphone age 13

MALES

50
%

for those who first owned a
smartphone age 5 or 6

38
%

for those who first owned a
smartphone age 13

AI AND MENTAL WELLBEING

SUICIDAL IDEATION, DEEPFAKES AND THINSPO



AI STRUGGLES TO
DISTINGUISH
GENUINE INTENT
FROM HUMOR,
MAKING RELIANCE
ON AI WITHOUT
HUMAN
EVALUATION IN
HIGH-STAKES
CONTEXTS LIKE
SUICIDE
PREVENTION RISKY.



AI-POWERED
TOOLS SUCH AS
DEEPFAKES
USED IN
CYBERBULLYING
AND PHOTO
FILTERS
(THINSPO)
POSE RISKS TO
MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL
WELLBEING.

ADOLESCENCE



INVEST

IN PUBLIC-
PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIPS
TO MAKE AI-
POWERED SOCIAL
MEDIA SAFE FOR
ADOLESCENTS.



INFORM

ABOUT AI-
POWERED SOCIAL
MEDIA'S ADDICTIVE
FEATURES AND
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO
SOCIAL
COMPARISON.



INCLUDE

ADOLESCENTS IN
THE CRITICAL
EVALUATION OF
SOCIAL MEDIA
AND OTHER AI-
POWERED
PRODUCTS.

OLDER AGE



INVEST

IN ACCESS,
TRAINING AND
SUPPORT FOR
OLDER ADULTS TO
EMPOWER THEM
TO NAVIGATE AI
APPLICATIONS.



INFORM

OLDER PEOPLE
ABOUT AI
INNOVATIONS,
HIGHLIGHTING
APPLICATIONS IN
THEIR AREAS OF
INTEREST.



INCLUDE

OLDER PEOPLE
IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF
AI PRODUCTS SO
THAT THEIR NEEDS
ARE ADEQUATELY
REFLECTED.