The Effects of Social Media on Human Wellbeing

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As the media is constantly evolving, the number of platforms the average person interacts with in their daily lives, and the amount of time they spend doing so, is always increasing. This includes things like watching television, using the internet and social media, playing video games, and listening to music and podcasts. The definition of the word "media" has expanded over the years as technology has advanced. What once only referred to printed word has continually expanded to the point that now, as of the last 30 years, it refers to the digital or electronic word as well. As these platforms have increasingly become integral parts of modern society, people have begun to rely on, and interact with them, more than ever. As this is still a fairly new concept, with new platforms developing every day, we are still discovering what impact such a substantial amount of exposure to media platforms may have on individuals. At least one outcome of this has been identified: that its content can shape the development of young minds that interact with it.

An example of this impact is what can be seen in the video game industry. Studies over a 40-year period showed that violent video games can lead to hostile or aggressive characteristics and emotions from children (Anderson 2003). In the 1960s, the motion picture industry implemented rating systems to help parents deem what was appropriate for their children to be viewing, ranking more violent themes as higher to dissuade parents from exposing their children to this type of material. Similar rating systems have also been used in the television, music, and video game industry to warn parents of content that may be considered too mature for young minds, as exposure to violence has been linked to a common thought process in children that violence or violent behavior can be seen as solutions to their problems.

This is a legitimate research endeavor because of past studies on young people and how content in the media has proven its affect. These studies report that the number of media

platforms a person, especially a young person, is exposed to has an impact on their mind. Additional research on this topic could provide more data as to how, and what, platforms can become detrimental to one's wellbeing -- which could especially aid parents of young children. More information on the subject could go a long way in preventing future negative effects of exposure to violent, harmful, or otherwise detrimental themes in the media, as well as identifying how these contribute to negative results.

Along with the increase in media platforms, there has also been an increase in the types of media. While just 10 to 20 years ago, the only media children had access to was television, print and radio, the creation and popularization of social media has given children and young adults access new methods of communicating and interacting with the world around them – in both a local and global sense. More traditional forms of media often require a team or company to approve and oversee content promoted through their platforms, ensuring messages undergo multiple rounds of editing and proofreading before they reach peoples' screens. New media, however, allows anyone to instantly post content to multiple platforms (Chassiakos, 2016). This means that media, which was once largely vetted, now contains content that has not gone through a fact checking process, meaning posts claiming truth could be completely falsified. Along with the spread of misinformation, the new forms of media, such as social media platforms, allow users to post negative and harmful content anonymously. This freedom to spread negativity and hatred online, without having to take responsibility for one's actions, has created a harmful environment in which what is posted online can affect users' mental health – especially that of children and young adults who spend much of their time on social media platforms.

This change in how users interact with media around them is still relatively new, and the first generations of children who have grown up with constant access to the internet and social media are only now becoming young adults. Because of this, only now can we begin to study long-term effects of exposure to these newer types of media (Sage, 2021). Therefore, research into this topic can provide both a larger pool of responses to analyze, as well as potentially uncover new effects that have not been observed yet, due to the rapid nature at which the number of social media platforms grows and expands.

As technology grows, and media with it, understanding of how these affect the young, developing mind is extremely important and relevant to society today. During adolescence we see a period of "cultural and social formation," (Elsayed, 2021), during which teenagers' minds are like sponges, constantly absorbing anything they encounter. The creation of new media and already established social media platforms are the perfect focus for these younger minds but can lead to issues concerning their mental health or social behavior. Since social media spans across the globe, it is easier for users to connect with people they otherwise would not be able to engage with, but there is a risk of having negative "peer to peer" or nonverbal interactions that could lead to a decline in mental health (Elsayed, 2021). For example, the constant usage of Instagram can push certain societal standards that social media frequently pushes. Body image, self-esteem, and overall satisfaction with life can be affected by these forms of media.

The number of younger teens and adults who use social media in their everyday lives is so large that most of the communication between adolescents is now done through social media platforms rather than face-to-face interactions. This communication isn't always strictly negative -- it can allow people, especially younger individuals, to meet and talk to many people they otherwise would have never met (Subrahmanyam, 2010). However, this mass intake of

information and ideologies generally affects mental health and societal standards that can impact a younger person's self-image.

The Basis of the Study

Within the last thirty years, our society has continually progressed into a more technologically focused culture. As we've transitioned from dial-up internet to touchscreen phones and completely wireless connections, it's no surprise that electronic communication becomes more and more impactful on society, and especially a society's youth.

To understand the impact of media on a developmental mind, one must understand how media has reached the point it currently stands. Media evolution begins with a first step called "market penetration," in which "the new mass medium enters the media environment, usually undergoing rapid change," (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004). As this media has evolved, it has been seen that there is an association between youth, their media use, and psychosocial effects. Those who used social media more often were likely to have low "social acceptance" and had difficulty "get[ting] new friends" or that "other children find it hard to like me,' (Brandtzæg, Endesatd, Heim, Kaare, & Torgersen, 2007). This can be attributed to the reduction in social interaction, and as a result, a slow decrease in an individual's well-being. Furthermore, the consistent use of social media can be seen as a gateway for body disorders such as anorexia and low self-esteem due to the consistent images of unrealistic body standards and the push for negative eating habits that are perpetuated by entertainment such as reality television or media like Facebook, (Ferguson, 2016). Not only is this observed by outside members, but by those who participate in social media use and are also able to see how it can have a negative impact on mental health in developing adolescents. Whether that be because of noticeable social isolation, sleep deprivation, and an increase in depression, it is seen to be a result of media content and "purpose of use," (O'Reilly, M. et al, 2018).

As technology progresses, there will always be new mass mediums to uncover and analyze as to what effect they have on our society. Whether that be regarding our youth, young adults, or those that grew up with older media and their counterparts. We have seen how school-aged children in the 2010's and early 2000's were affected by their screen time through phones and televisions due to risk-provoking content, whether that be through their normalization of unhealthy behavior or TV entertainment that, for example, premiered illicit substance use, (Chassiakos, Y., Christakis, D., Cross, C., Moreno, M. & Radesky, J., 2016). More recently research has been attempting to see how the change in media has affected millennials as well, in contrast to our youth. They grew up in an era that pivoted from Facebook and MySpace to Instagram and TikTok, both media apps that can be opened by a single tap of the finger. It increased FoMo, which despite its silly name, can cause self-esteem issues and a spike in loneliness and/or isolation, (Fathadhika, S., Hafiza, S., Rahmita, N., 2020). The presence of social media and their new platforms has raised more questions about how its evolution can provoke mental health issues and behavioral changes, and by interpreting these recent changes, it may be possible to see how those are currently affecting our society and how we may be adapting or reacting to it.

Mass Media Culture

One of the major theoretical perspectives that explains our research topic is that mass media culture has changed drastically, and a lot of new media has been made available through the Internet. This has challenged and changed ideas of the role of media in society and the formation of identity over the years (Zemmels, 2012). A reason for our research and questioning behind this topic is how we viewed the challenged and changing ideas on the topic so we felt that additional research would better our understanding. Another theory is that given the characteristics of new media, it sets a standard for individuals to feel satisfied with new media literacy (Lin, 2012). We felt this finding stuck out because it implies that people are made to

comply with certain beliefs about new media. We want to test and survey at random to see what a select number of anonymous individuals genuinely believe regarding the topic.

The more people use the internet, the less time they spend with other humans, is yet another theory. The internet causes them to spend less time watching television as well as spending less time with people. (Nie, 2002). This research is backed by statistics, but we feel for as valuable as the numbers are, we would like to conduct surveys to obtain statistics of our own to see if the frequencies have changed over a 19-year period. Another body of research stated that there is a medium, or average, negative impact of social media and internet usage on the level of the social identity of adolescents (Elsayed, 2021). This was one of the more interesting pieces of research information because of its recency (2021) and that it applies to adolescents. We would like to see if the same numbers and overall conclusion can be applied to a group of surveyed individuals between the age groups of around 18-23.

A study taken in 2000 claims that even at that time the internet would eventually be seen as important to a vast majority of the public because of all it provides (Havic, 2000). It claims that people will use the internet in the future for more and more day-to-day needs. We seek to find out just how important the internet is in the day-to-day lives of certain individuals who were born around the year this specific research was conducted. That could prove to us if his findings were true.

The piece of research that seemed to contradict the rest was one that claimed that without the internet we would not have seen such large developments in social change and structure in recent years. This claim stems from the idea that virtual life is more social than physical life because of how it can mix work and urban living (Castells, 2013). All these examples do a fair job of explaining our research topic. Each provides insight into what we currently believe but

want to further justify through surveying and some provide perspectives that we question and want to prove through the same set of surveying and research.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

A communication theory that aids our research is uses and gratifications theory. Uses and gratifications theory revolves around why and how people use or seek out various media to stimulate specific needs or wants (Ruggiero, 2000, p.3). For example, one may listen to happy music when they are in a good mood or having a momentous day. Fastforward to a week and this same person may now be listening to sad music because they just experienced a bad break up. Overall, uses and gratifications theory is all about what people choose and why they choose it to meet specific needs.

What does uses and gratifications theory have to do with our research? According to Frank Biocca (2000), ever since the internet was created, various digital environments have been constructed to meet and interact with one another. Thus, the mediums of interaction on the internet were being *used* by people to *meet their needs* of attention. E-mail is one example of these. People were able to converse with one another back and forth without having to go outside or find a time to chat with each other. Another more useful example is something called MUD (Multiuser dimension). Here, people can create digital personas that either reflect who they are or are totally made up. People enjoyed this idea because it allowed for a higher sense of security when it came to self-disclosure. This was because people were able to remain anonymous while disclosing sensitive personal information (Biocca, 2000, p. 27).

Not only has new media been used to interact with others, but it is also used by left and right party radical groups to advance their political agenda and projects (Downey & Fenton,

2003, p. 185). We saw this take place during the 2020 election, social media can either be your

best friend or your worst enemy. For people like Donald Trump, it became his worst enemy and

ignited the Capital insurrection on January 6th, 2021. Former President Trump was known to use

Twitter to bash democrats and try to win over voters in 2020. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook,

and Instagram saw his posts as a threat of spreading misinformation and banned his accounts.

This caused public outroar from the radical right leading them to create their own social media

platforms such as Parler and Gab. This just goes to show that people will find any and all ways

possible of getting what they want out of different mediums (Cacciatore & Scheufele, 2016, p.

10). As well, according to Robin Mansell (2004), the way media is consumed, and through what

mediums it is consumed through impacts our political economy. Therefore, whatever the most

highly consumed media platform is at the time is what everyone will flock to. Take Tik Tok for

example. It started out as a lip-syncing app called Music.ly. Due to Vine being alive at the time,

Music.ly was not able to keep up with Vine's target audience. When Vine suddenly died,

Music.ly hopped on the rebrand train to become the next big thing. BOOM! Tik Tok is born.

Everyone, wanting some nostalgia of Vine, went to Tik Tok and now it is one of the most

popular video creation apps (Henning-Thurau, et.al., 2010, p. 311).

Social Cognitive Theory

Another theory that is important to our research topic is the social cognitive theory. This

theory in simplest terms, shows how humans learn from their environment especially when there

are positive or negative results to the actions that are taken. Beyond that this theory also shows,

"humans can learn and be motivated to perform behaviors by observing others (Oliver, M. B.,

Raney, A. A., & Bryant, J., 2019). It has been studied that many of the media effects seen by

individuals are indirect rather than direct, meaning they don't even realize that the media has

altered their perspective on a certain matter (Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Walther, J. B., 2016).

Now, this obviously can be an issue for a child in development when they spend many hours a day using these forms of media which shifts their thoughts on many subjects. This massive intake of media causes a lot of negative effects to adolescents not only mentally through imitation but also physically. The increased use of social media has shown a decrease in happiness in life as well as obesity rates in children due to the sedentary lifestyle that social media brings on (Strasburger, V. C., Jordan, A. B., & Donnerstein, E., 2010). While happiness in life is slightly harder to study there are still considerable notions that this could be an issue and requires further research. But obesity is a very physical issue that is easily studied, and it has been, this study showed that the adolescents that used more social media on a weekly basis were more likely to be overweight or obese by a substantial margin. Not only are these habits bad at a young age but they can be carried through a lifetime causing many on-going health issues in the future (Łuszczki, E., Bartosiewicz, A., Bobula, G., Kuchciak, M., Jagielski, P., Oleksy, Ł., Stolarczyk, A., & Dereń, K., 2021).

This theory shows that media can greatly affect the youth in many ways, but we are in an age where the results of long-time use of social media can be studied as well. An example of this is that a large intake of media in adults is shown to be as to be associated with subsequent aggressive acts. A., & Bushman, B. J., 2002). Not only that but media can affect your judgment of a situation or ideology; social media is shown to greatly influence an individual's beliefs and therefore judgments (Bryant, J., & Oliver, M. B., 2009).

What Comes Next?

Based on the theories, and past research we have identified, we now have further direction of what our project should focus around and where we can obtain more information. We have previously stated that the use and gratification theory is centered around people using media to satisfy their needs or reflect their moods. While this can be helpful, gaining information to understand where this can be helpful, and where this stems into unhealthy behavior, both for the user and those surrounding them, is imperative to understand modern media, seeing as 95% of teenagers in the U.S. are reported using the internet daily, with 45% reported using it nearly constantly. (Joshi, Stubbe, Li, Hilty, 2019). While some media has reportedly built adolescents' confidence and eradicated feelings of loneliness, young people are also reported to encounter cyberbullying and develop depression and anxiety disorders (Uhls, Ellison, & Subrahmanyam, 2017). Additionally, one researcher cross-analyzed social media usage and the outcome on adolescents and found mainly "problematic" conclusions (Orben, Dienlin, Przybylski, 2019). This further proves that understanding which media platforms and which types of content cultivate negativity and harm online is necessary for communication.

While adolescents have interacted with media for years, the COVID-19 pandemic gave young people few other options for pastimes than interacting with media. College students, for example, saw a significant increase in TV and video game consumption (Fraser, Stockdale, Bryce, Alexander, 2021). This interaction with media methods proved to cause a rise in mental health issues in adolescents (Gao, 2020). Mental health problems were already on the rise due to interaction with media before the pandemic (Twenge, Joiner, 2017), so as society has started to reopen, what role will media serve for mental health? Since people are no longer stuck in their homes and have options other than watching TV and playing video games to pass their time, we hypothesize that mental health issues in relation to media usage will decrease for mediums such

as video games and TV but increase in relation to social media usage. The next hypothesis is that an increase in social media intake will reduce the quality of life for an individual. The third hypothesis of this study is that social media helps make friends for those who struggle in real world interaction. Our final hypothesis is that social media causes people to follow the influence of famous people.

Hypotheses:

For this project, we have identified four hypotheses that we will be testing. These hypotheses are as follows:

1. Frequency of social media usage has a negative correlation to mental health issues. IV: Social media usage, DV: negative feelings about self [nfs] (correlation test)

2. Higher social media intake leads to lower quality of life. Satisfaction in life scale IV: Social media usage, DV: quality of life (correlation test)

3. Increased time spent with media platforms leads to lower ability for people to engage with others. IV: social media usage DV: ability to engage with others. (Correlation test)

4. Opinion leader/seeker idea: The more time spent engaging in media, the more likely people are to exhibit negative or aggressive tendencies. IV: social media usage, DV: negative/aggressive tendencies [nat] (t-test)

Methods & Results

PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURES

We distributed our survey online through text, email, and other platforms. We received 183 responses, the majority of whom reported being between the ages of 18 and 24. Sixty people identified as male, 109 identified as female, 4 identified as non-binary, and 2 identified as

transgender females. Most participants reported being from the United States, but at least one respondent reported being from every continent besides Africa. The majority of respondents reported identifying as straight, with 25 identifying as bisexual, 11 identifying as homosexual, and 4 declining to disclose their sexual orientation.

MEASURES OR INSTRUMENTS

In our study we had 4 hypotheses, each had an independent variable and a dependent variable. Our independent variable was "social media usage," for all our hypotheses. We felt that overall behavior, or feelings in an individual's life pertaining to media, could be correlated to the total media usage and that it may have a strong correlation to our dependent variables. For our first hypothesis our dependent variable was "negative feelings for oneself," and how that may increase based on social media usage. With an environment of social media and related content, we hypothesized that it could create negative behavior and/or internal feelings with oneself. By consistently looking and absorbing media pushed through platforms such as Instagram or Snapchat, we predicted that it might enable people to see negative images or messages that would affect them, and their mindset in one's life. Our second hypothesis, using the same independent variable, had the dependent variable of "quality of life." This being a little different from the negative feelings people could potentially feel when using social media, and instead focuses on the well-being of individuals based on their social media use. Third, again, using the same IV consisted of one's ability to engage with others. We predicted that the amount of an individual's social media usage could affect how people engage and interact either in social scenes or through online means of communication. Essentially, the more social media usage the more likely someone lacks in skills needed for nonverbal and verbal communication online. Lastly, the fourth dependent variable for our last hypothesis is negative/aggressive tendencies.

With usage of social media, there is a possibility of increasingly negative behavior depending on the content and amount of use per individual.

Hypothesis 1:

In Hypothesis 1, our independent variable was social media usage, and our dependent variable was negative feelings about oneself. The frequency of social media usage having a negative correlation to mental health issues was measured by asking respondents to identify which social media platforms use and then using five items such as "When using social media, I find myself comparing myself to others" on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) (M = 18.25, SD = 4.1).

Hypothesis 2:

In Hypothesis 2, our independent variable was social media usage, and our dependent variable was quality of life. The frequency of social media usage having a negative correlation to quality of life was measured by analyzing percentages of how many participants answered questions such as "I feel that my media intake has negatively impacted my physical/mental well-being." on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) while also accounting for questions involving time such as "How much time do you spend on social media each day?"

Hypothesis 3:

In Hypothesis 3, our independent variable was social media usage, and our dependent variable was ability to engage with others. The frequency of social media usage having a negative correlation to the ability to engage with others was measured by correlation by asking questions like "How much time do you spend with friends/family per week (in-person)?" with

four options (0-5 hours, 5-10 hours, 10-15 hours, 15+ hours) and seeing how strongly they correlate with questions regarding social media usage.

Hypothesis 4:

In Hypothesis 4, our independent variable was social media usage, and our dependent variable was negative and/or aggressive tendencies. The frequency of social media usage has a negative correlation to negative and/or aggressive tendencies was measured by correlation and percentages. The primary questions being to determine our standing on this hypothesis were "I have felt the following at some point (check all that apply):" (Depression, anxiety, aggression, anti-social behavior) and "How much time do you spend on social media each day?" (30 minutes or less, 30 minutes-1 hour, 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, 5-6 hours, 7+ hours). The correlation between these two questions and others similar to them will determine the validity of hypothesis 4.

Data Analysis

For this study we will be analyzing our data mostly based off percentages and correlations between the percentage of certain responses compared to that of others, in terms of the question we are asking.

H1: Frequency of social media usage has a negative correlation to mental health issues.

The results of our survey show that correlation is significant between social media usage and mental health issues. The analysis conducted to come to this conclusion was by finding the correlation between questions. The independent variable is social media usage, the dependent variable is negative feelings about oneself. According to Pearson Correlation, a majority of responses relating to social media usage detected a significant correlation to responses to

questions based on mental health issues. This correlation would prove that Hypothesis 1 to be correct.

H2: Higher social media intake leads to lower quality of life.

The results of our survey show that a heightened social media intake leads to lower quality of life. This conclusion is based on an analysis of percentages. The independent variable is time spent on social media; the dependent variable is quality of life. 58% of participants reported that they spend over 3 hours on social media daily with 48% of participants answering that they feel negative about their quality of life after long uses of social media. 55% of participants feel their media intake has declined their physical/mental well-being. 42% of participants feel that their social media feed affects their self-esteem, 45% of participants believe their media intake affects their sleep, 72% of participants feel that the content they consume affects their thoughts, and on average 25% of participants have felt either depression, anxiety, aggression, and or antisocial behavior at some point. These percentage-based answers were taken in response to Likert Scale questions consisting of five answer choices. We can conclude that higher social media intake does correlate with lower quality of life proving Hypothesis 2 to be correct.

H3: Increased time spent with media platforms leads to lower ability for people to engage with others.

The results of our survey show that time spent with media platforms does not lower the ability for people to engage with others. This conclusion was reached by analysis of correlation and percentages. The independent variable is social media usage, the dependent variable is ability to engage with others. While social media usage tended to be consistent in terms of time

spent using it amongst our participants, it had very little correlation according to Pearson Correlation. Along with that, a majority of our participants spend over 10 hours weekly with their loved ones, a vast majority know all their friends in-person and not via the internet, and a vast majority prefer to interact with their friends and family in-person as opposed to text or facetime. While some of our participants show signs of social anxiety, an overwhelming majority still prefer face-to-face encounters which proves Hypothesis 3 to be incorrect.

H4: The more time spent engaging in media, the more likely people are to exhibit negative or aggressive tendencies.

The results of our survey show that more time spent consuming media can lead to negative/aggressive tendencies. This conclusion is based on an analysis of correlations and percentages. The independent variable is social media usage, the dependent variable is negative/aggressive tendencies. As previously mentioned, one question asked if our participants had felt either depression, anxiety, aggression, and or antisocial behavior at any point. The results of this question appear to hold the most significance as 27.25% of participants (124 people) claimed to have felt depression before, 33.41% of participants (152) with anxiety, 15.82% of participants (72) with aggression, and 23.52% of participants (107) with antisocial behavior. These numbers are important as they have a significant correlation to the question asking how much time each participant spends using social media per day. 58% of participants (105 people) use social media three or more hours daily and that does not count the additional 60 participants that spend 1-2 hours per day using social media. The heavy correlation between these two sets of results proves Hypothesis 4 to be correct.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how media platforms impact people who use them. Since technology is constantly evolving and expanding, we chose to gather our own data to understand if previously recorded data is still accurate, especially with the addition of the COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed many people, especially younger generations, to turn toward social media platforms in order to keep in touch with people they were deterred from seeing in person. Our survey consisted of 29 questions and received responses from 241 people.

To understand how our survey participants interact with and regard media, we first surveyed which online social media platforms the participants used. The most popular platform was Instagram, which 168 participants identified as a platform they use, 157 identified Snapchat, 147 identified YouTube, 127 identified Facebook, 121 identified Tik Tok as a platform they use, 97 identified Twitter, 92 identified LinkedIn, 60 identified Pinterest, seven identified Tumblr and two identified Reddit.

According to our survey results, the majority of participants tend to use multiple media platforms and spend between three and four hours a day on social media. This indicates that most of our participants spend a considerable amount of time on social media. When compared to the percentage of participants who agreed to questions indicating potential mental health issues, if they find themselves comparing themselves to others when they use social media, if they feel left out when they see people on social media post about spending time with friends or going to events, and if they feel that their media intake has negatively impacted their lives, a similar percentage of participants was identified. We believe this similarity indicates that the same participants who said they use multiple platforms and spend multiple hours a day on social media also reported negative feelings associated with social media.

However, participants reported that they generally prefer interacting with others in person rather than online. They reported While using social media, or media in general, people "somewhat agreed" frequently with questions that had negative connotations. For example, many participants said they felt negative about themselves while using media or felt jealous specifically when using social media. (Might delete this)

With the pandemic in the past few years, media usage went through the roof, including isolation due to quarantine. The everyday use of media grew to an all-time high and contributed to the change in media usage and the effect it has had on individuals in the younger age groups between 18-24 and 25-34. From previous studies we noticed that media had a negative effect on the youth but that was in an era where social media had just entered society at a new level of popularity. It had barely reached half of the amount of usage that it has today. In addition, media used by the youth 10 to 20 years ago consisted of television or sites like Facebook and MySpace, both of which have been used less over the years, being replaced by apps such as Instagram or Snapchat. From the survey we saw that the highest number of our participants use media such as Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube.

To determine if social media had a negative effect on mental health, we formulated four hypotheses that had a premise centered around the idea of detecting and correlating whether our participants' social media intake could have a negative impact on them in a variety of aspects (mental health, quality of life, ability to engage with others, and negative tendencies). The research we conducted was thorough and included references that spanned over the previous two decades and because of that we feel like our use of these studies, implementation of our own knowledge, and the results of our surveys can yield a contribution to scholarship because of how

recent our findings are compared to past studies and how we used the previous studies to strengthen our own research.

The practical and theoretical benefits that our study provides are the age range of our survey participants and how they responded to our survey. Most of our participants are between the ages of 18-24 which means many of them have not only been brought up in an age of technology and online media platforms but have also had the last two years heavily affected in many aspects of their lives by a worldwide pandemic. Getting answers to the various questions we posed to our participants greatly benefited our study given the recency of these experiences to them.

In conclusion, the process of choosing our subject, formulating these hypotheses, conducting research, making and distributing surveys, and analyzing our results we can reasonably infer that our initial thoughts, as well as the consensus thoughts from our findings, proved to be correct. Heightened social media intake causes a plethora of negative impacts on one's life including in important areas like mental health, quality of life, ability to engage with others, and an increase in negative tendencies.

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APPENDIX

Default Report

Social Media Effects on Society
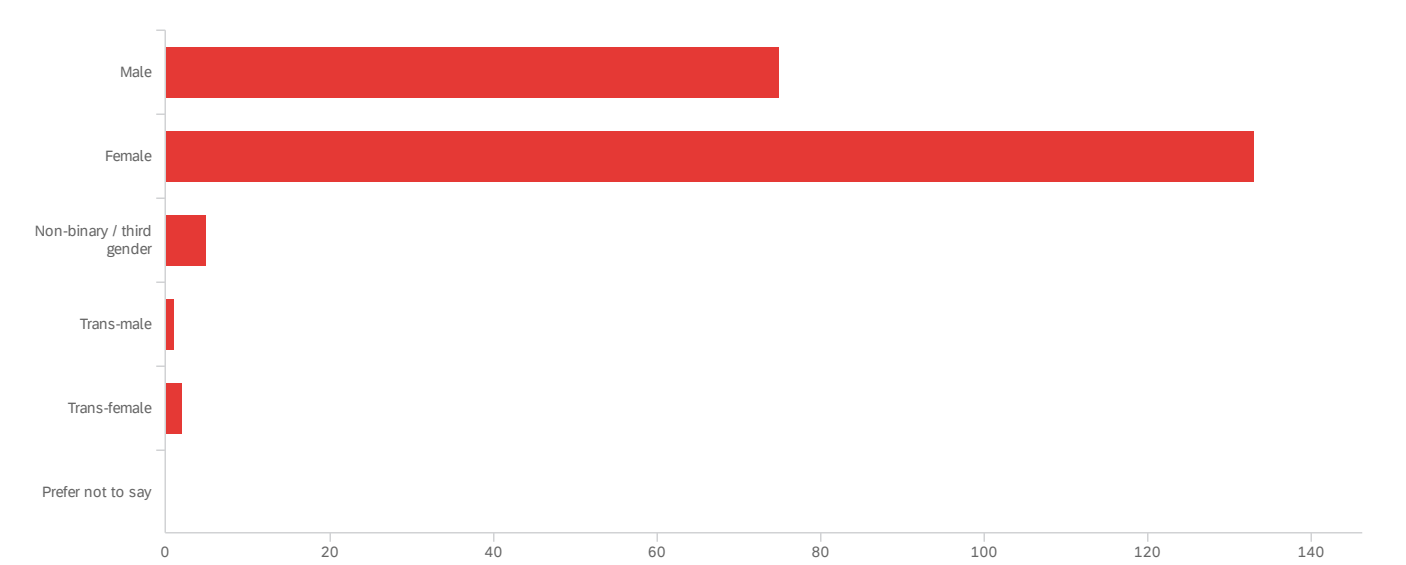April 30, 2022 12:42 PM MDT

Q10 - What is your age?
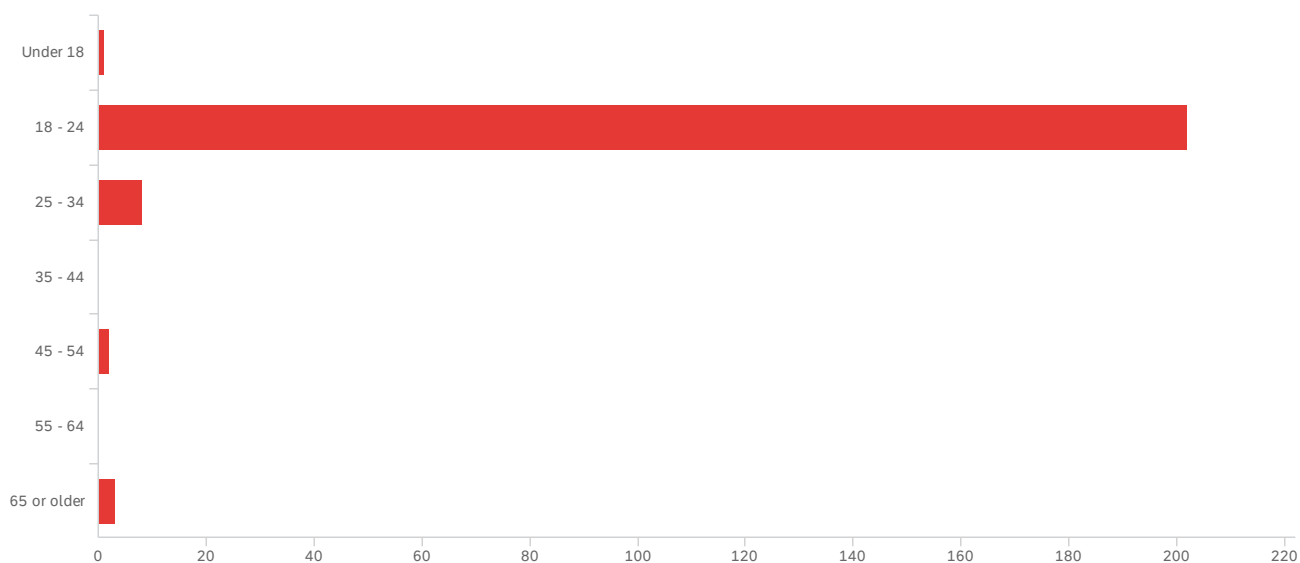
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your age?	1.00	7.00	2.13	0.67	0.46	216

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Under 18	0.46%	1
2	18 - 24	93.52%	202
3	25 - 34	3.70%	8
4	35 - 44	0.00%	0
5	45 - 54	0.93%	2
6	55 - 64	0.00%	0
7	65 or older	1.39%	3
			216

Showing rows 1 - 8 of 8

Q11 - What is your gender identity?

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your gender identity?	1.00	5.00	1.71	0.62	0.39	216

#	Field		Choice Count
1	Male	34.72%	75
2	Female	61.57%	133
3	Non-binary / third gender	2.31%	5
4	Trans-male	0.46%	1
5	Trans-female	0.93%	2
6	Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
			216

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q12 - What is your sexuality?
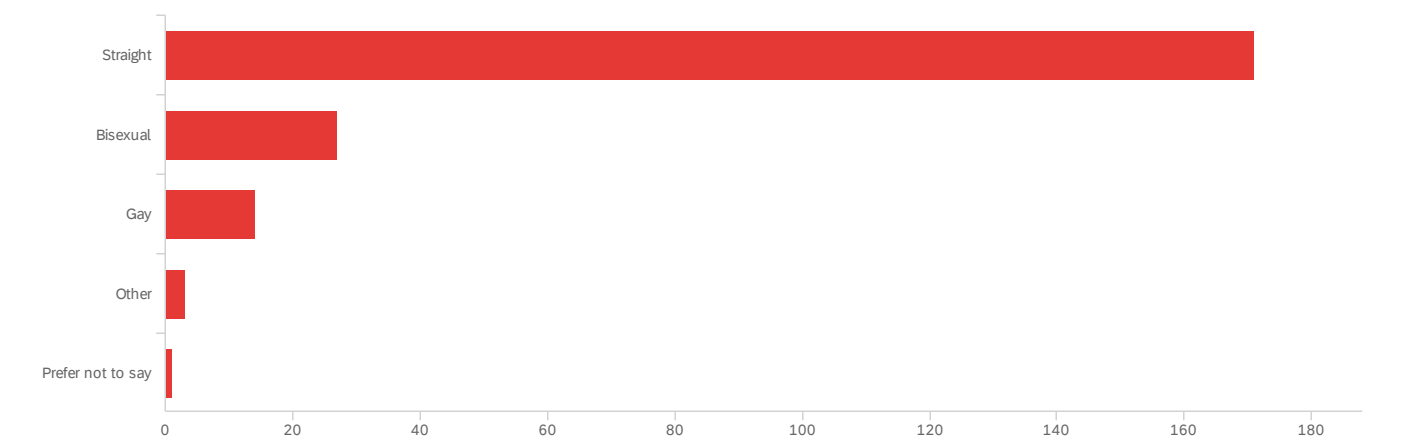
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your sexuality? - Selected Choice	1.00	5.00	1.31	0.70	0.48	216

#	Field		Choice Count	
1	Straight		79.17%	171
2	Bisexual		12.50%	27
3	Gay		6.48%	14
4	Other		1.39%	3
5	Prefer not to say		0.46%	1
				216

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q12_4_TEXT - Other

Other
Pansexual
Questioning

Q13 - What is your year in school?
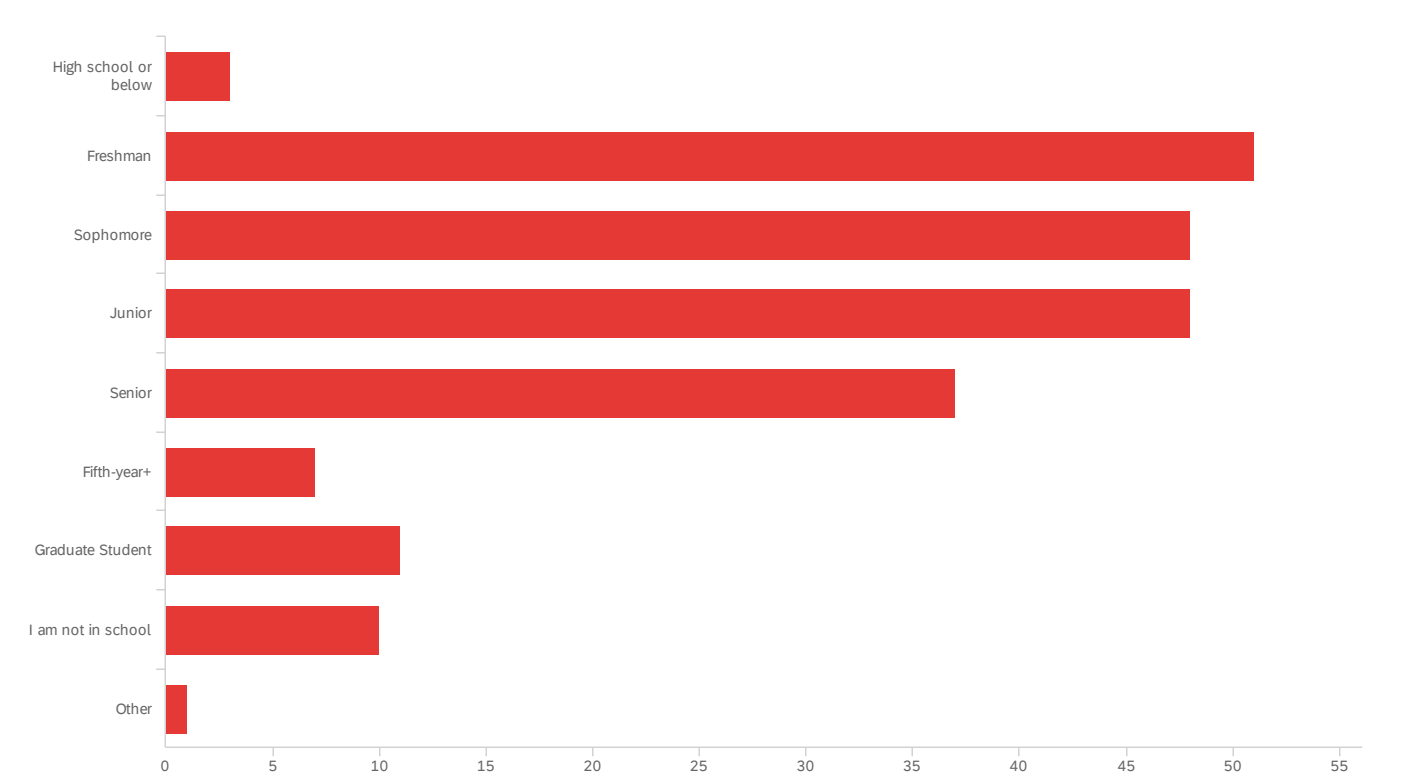
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your year in school? - Selected Choice	1.00	9.00	3.86	1.70	2.89	216

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	High school or below	1.39%	3
2	Freshman	23.61%	51
3	Sophomore	22.22%	48
4	Junior	22.22%	48
5	Senior	17.13%	37
6	Fifth-year+	3.24%	7
7	Graduate Student	5.09%	11
8	I am not in school	4.63%	10
9	Other	0.46%	1

#	Field	Choice Count
		216

Showing rows 1 - 10 of 10

Q13_9_TEXT - Other

Other
▼

#	Field	Choice Count

Q14 - What continent are you from?

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What continent are you from?	1.00	7.00	1.25	0.85	0.72	216

#	Field		Choice Count
1	North America	90.28%	195
2	South America	0.46%	1
3	Asia	6.48%	14
4	Australia	0.93%	2
5	Europe	0.93%	2
6	Africa	0.46%	1
7	Antarctica	0.46%	1
			216
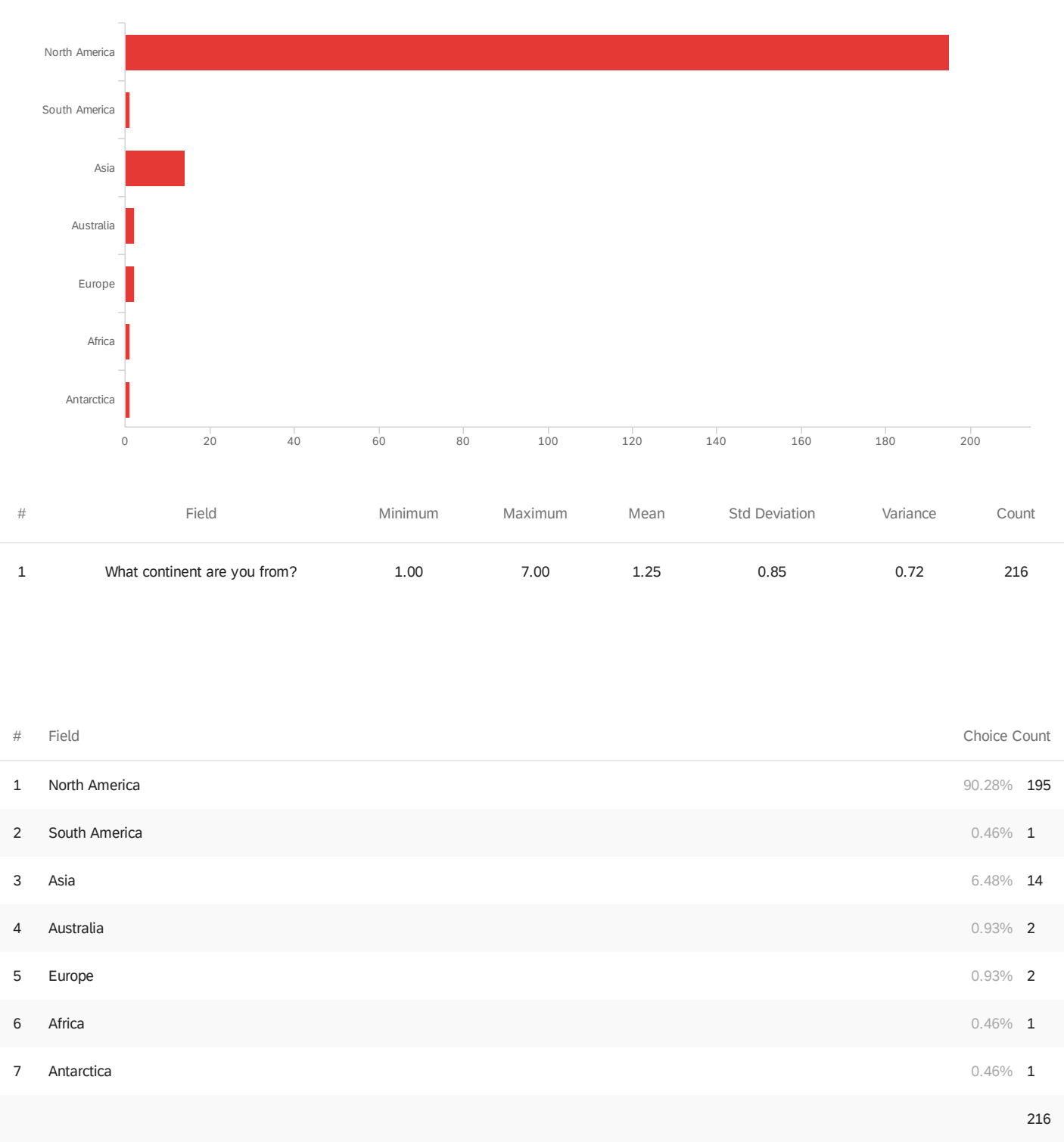
Showing rows 1 - 8 of 8

Q27 - Of the following, which social media platform(s) do you use? (select all that apply)
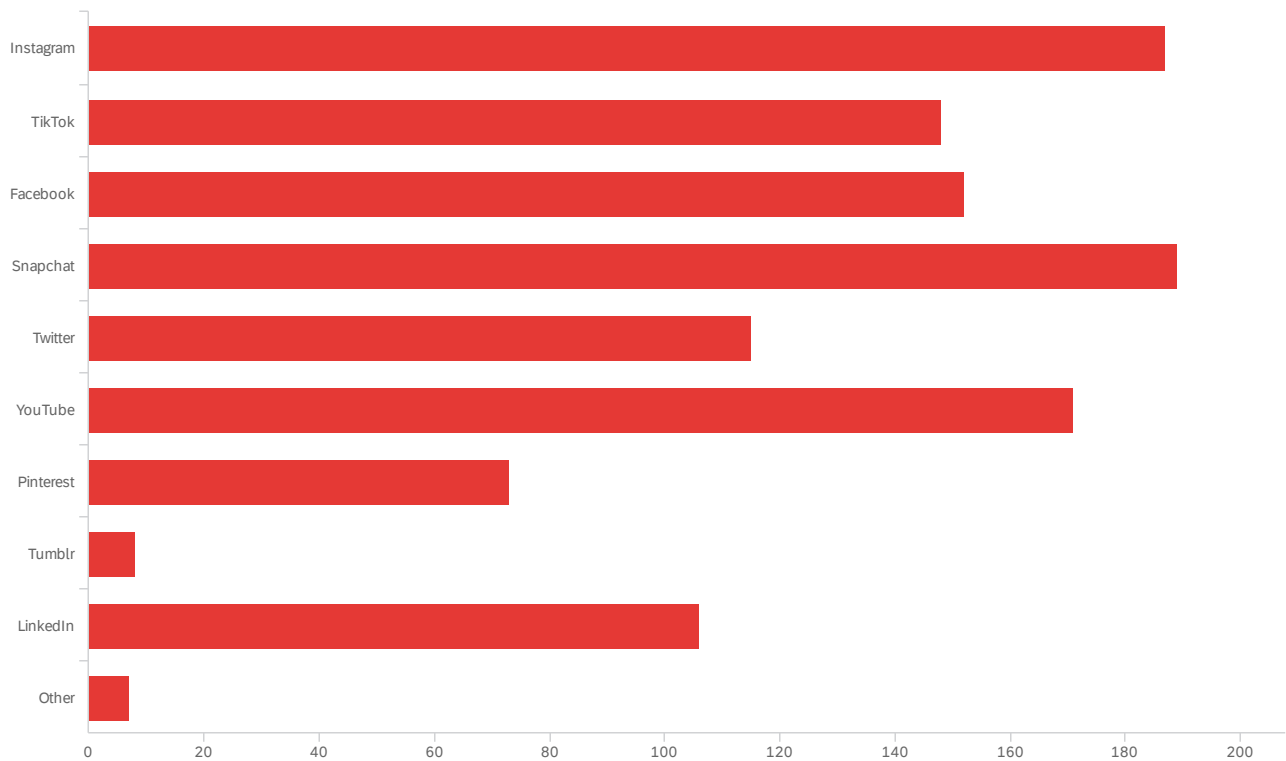
#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Instagram	16.18%	187
2	TikTok	12.80%	148
3	Facebook	13.15%	152
4	Snapchat	16.35%	189
5	Twitter	9.95%	115
6	YouTube	14.79%	171
7	Pinterest	6.31%	73
8	Tumblr	0.69%	8
9	LinkedIn	9.17%	106
10	Other	0.61%	7
			1156

Showing rows 1 - 11 of 11

Q27_10_TEXT - Other

Other

Snapchat

GroupMe

Reddit

Reddit

Grindr

Discord

Q31 - I find myself comparing myself to others when I use social media.
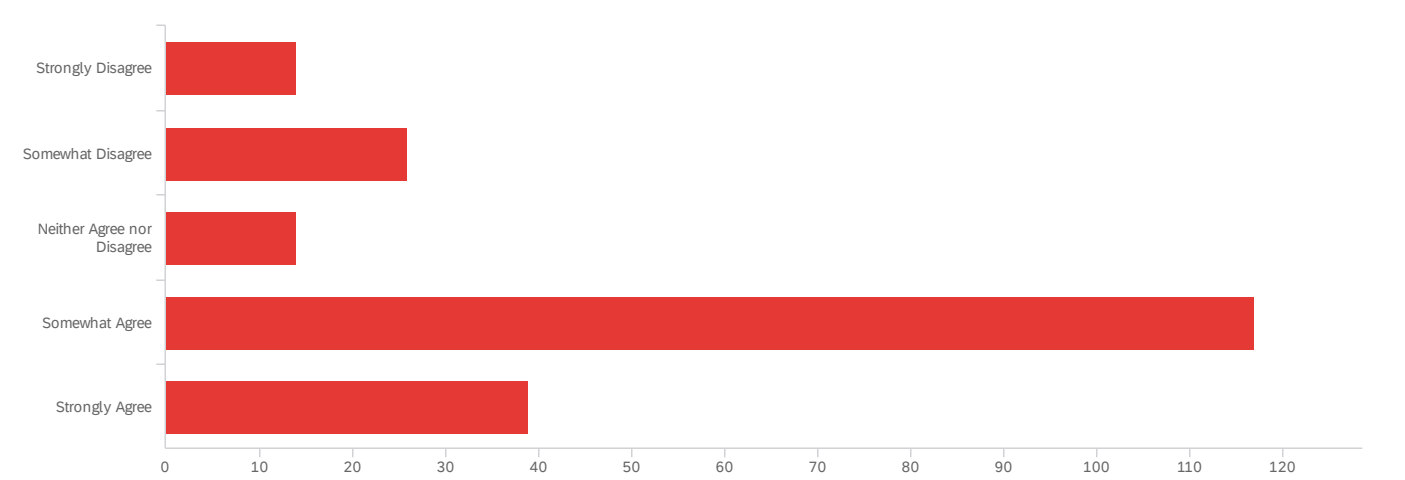
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I find myself comparing myself to others when I use social media.	1.00	5.00	3.67	1.11	1.24	210

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly Disagree	6.67%	14
2	Somewhat Disagree	12.38%	26
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6.67%	14
4	Somewhat Agree	55.71%	117
5	Strongly Agree	18.57%	39
			210

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q32 - Seeing people post about spending time with friends or going to events makes me feel left out.
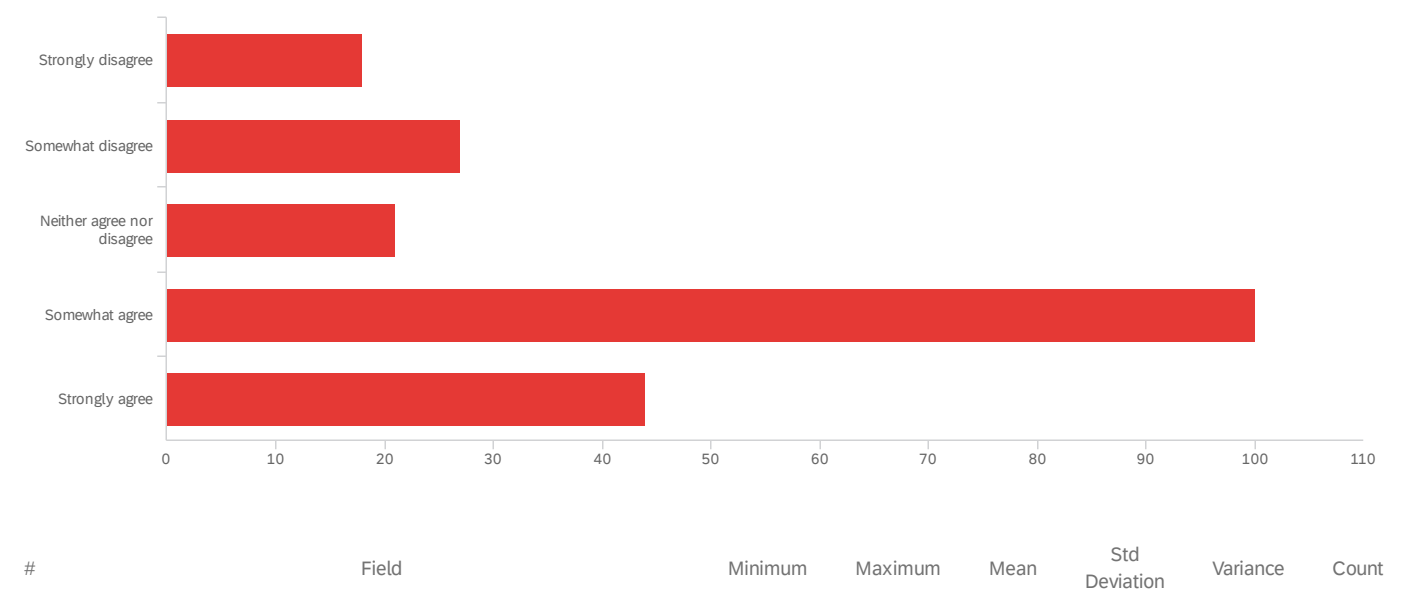
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Seeing people post about spending time with friends or going to events makes me feel left out.	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.20	1.43	210

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly disagree	8.57%	18
2	Somewhat disagree	12.86%	27
3	Neither agree nor disagree	10.00%	21
4	Somewhat agree	47.62%	100
5	Strongly agree	20.95%	44
			210

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q36 - Look at the following social media profile. Please move on to the next question when you are done observing it.

Q37 - Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or less.

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Made me love myself

Its cute

No effect

Weird

I felt nothing.

Behind

I'm not exciting enough

happy

Vibrant

Happy, simple, pizza

Nothing?

No different

It's corny

Very very fake

I don't know

Outgoing extrovert model

Honest

Positive, colorful

I didn't care

Colorful influencer happy

Smart, happy

Energized, colorful, awake

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Positive, Happy, Comfortable

Bubbly

Fun, happy, excited

Felt nothing

her outfits serve

Happy, very millennial

Poor

Adventurous, Fun, Enthusiastic

cringy

Curious and fun

influencer, rich

Cultivated, cute, fun

Happy, fun, quirky

I liked the color in her feed which therefore made me feel happy

Diversed but complex

Colorful

Curious, self conscious

Inadequate

Influence, happy, unsure

"Look at me"

Nothing

Indifferent

cringe, uninterested, bored

I want pizza

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Nothing

Happy

Slightly jelous

No feelings really.

Positive

Annoyed

Happy

Inspired, Captivated, Moved

I feel a bit indifferent, because this influencer is very different than my wants in life and my style. However I do believe the posts are very "fake".

Jealous

That I don't have the outfits to create an account like this.

she seems fake

Inauthentic, interested

Nothing

I feel empowered

Cringey, mostly neutral

Happy, interested, uplifted

Cringe, overwhelmed, millennial

Upbeat, happy

They seem bubbly and like a happy person. A little too extravagant and extroverted for my lifestyle but they seem happy and content, I hope they really are!

Unamused, confused, annoyed

Nothing

Not much honestly

Fun and exciting

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Not creative enough

Trendy, probably fake

Superficial. Playful. Creative.

Fake

Generic Instagram famous

Ugly, alone

Fashionable, trendy, feminine

She seems fake

She is outgoing

Don't feel anything

Nothing at all

Lots going on

Happy, cringey, unrealistic

happy

Happt

Fun colorful photos

Nothing really

Happy, Cheerful, Diva, Popular

Nothing

Boring and uninteresting

millennial, tacky, bold

Annoyed

Annoyed fake

too much color

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Colorful, excited, fun

staged, fake

I felt confused

Good on her

life of every girls dream 😁

nothing

Fun

Annoyed

inferior

She seems like she has fun and is pretty

Happy, vibrant, cute

happy

Happy, intrigued

Good. Its vibrant.

Less traveled

Indifferent

Happy

I don't care

Not as important

Happy, energized, fun

Meh

Staged, boring, young

Neutral, indifferent, fine

Disinterested and bored

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

no different

Literally nothing whatsoever

i thought she's super insecure

Boring

Jealous and overwhelmed

Poor, happy, bright

Happy for her

Feel no different

Sad lonely

Bitter

Not interested

She is trying to put out an image that she is not.

It made me feel jealous

Intrigued, jealous, irrelevant

This person seems to spend a lot of time on taking pictures of themselves in creative ways.

disinterested, annoyed

No real feelings

Indifferent, I would scroll past this

Just not enough.

wouldn't fillow

The bio made gave me an ick, but the pictures made me happy since she looks happy and seems to travel a lot. I'd like to be like her

Lame, bright, colorful

Inspired

Happy, alone, adventure-les

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

inspired by fashion and color

Off putting

I don't care

Fun, quirky, colorful

Positive

Nothing honestly

Overstimulated, unbothered, and content

Nothing really

colorful fun

Doesn't affect me

Like I'm boring

annoyed, cringy

Bored

Zero emotions felt

Pretty creative

Nothing much really

I feel that she has a very consistent post type.

Don't understand what's going on. Definitely wouldn't follow tho. Don't know how they have so many followers.

Overwhelmed

I don't care

Manufactured, light, fun

Unorganized, not creative, boring

Vibrant, energetic, artsy

Happy,excited

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Overwhelmed

Intrigued

Less worthy

Happy, upbeat

Indifferent

Wish my life was more exciting

Happy for her

Boring, and poor

Lot of followers

Indifferent

Couldn't care less

I don't know

Uninterested

Colorful, Dedicated, Fake

Fake persona

Happy, fun, inspired

Q39 - Look at the following social media profile. Please move on to the next question when you are done observing it.

Q40 - Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or less.

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

No effect

Why

Nothing

Normal

Aesthetic, calm, mom

Uncomfy

Very genuine and real

I don't know

Mom

Neutral

Basic, unapproachable

They look lame

Mom happy festive

Bored, cheap, weird

Mom, Disorganized, Drinks

Drinking

Mom vibes

Happy

wine mom

mom, wholesome, cute

Happy

Homely, Caring

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

mom insta

Family, boring, mom

mother, family

Annoyed

Back to 2012?

I didn't have a positive or negative reaction to this instagram profile I would say it made me feel bored

Personal

Mom energy

Intrigued and happy

Lazy

Real, calm, interested

A person wants to share bits and pieces of her life

A normal person

Indifferent

scam, old, bored

Ok

Bored

Awkward

Inspiring

Another social mom.

Cute

Annoyed by bio

Bored

Authentic, relatable, genuine

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Nothing

Normal, not fake

That I don't document and post my accomplishments.

good for her

Uninterested

Nothing

I understand her as a single mom

happy for her

Bored, not interested, meh

Cringe, bored

Just fine

Family oriented

Unbothered

Nothing

Want to travel

Motherly

Wanting to travel

Travel mom

Annoyed. Skeptic.

Virtue signaling mom

Personal

Need a vacation

Motherly, family, high heels

Modest

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Sugar mom

Feels more relatable

indifferent

Good for her

Pretty simple

uninterested

weird

Indifferent

Friends and family

Uninterested

Motherly, loving, sharing slice of life

Nothing

Not feeling much

personal, niche, conservative

Basic white girl

Angry

mom

Confusing

pretending, confused

I felt neutral

Personal life documentary

successful indeprndent woman

weird

Bored

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Calm

same as she

Small, weird, happy

Bleh

bored

Wholesome, chill

Carbon neutral

At home

Annoyed

Happy

Happy

Was not impressed

Happy, relaxed, professional

Okay

Too old, unorganized

Not especially interested

Moderately intrigued

bored

Cringe can't lie

it was weird

Cringe and unorganized

Bored, not interested

Happy but bored

Feel no different

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Relate

Nostalgia

i want drink

She uses Instagram for fun and she doesn't care what others think

It made me feel glad

Happy, mutual, sympathy

They seem to post more regular pictures that aren't just of her but also of what's she's doing or things she likes.

disinterested

Success

Oversharing

Loneliness,and behind.

wouldnt follow

I liked this profile more than the last because this seems more real I guess. They aren't posing with a high quality camera and is trying to be an influencer but is just simply sharing her life

Young, neutral

In awe

Happy to not be a mom

boring, mom,

Not my vibe

Don't care

Girl boss

Parental/motherly

Idk

Quirky, bored, and comfortable

Nothing

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

normal

Fun life

Typical, average

Gen-X, momsta (mom insta)

Bored

Cute

Humble

Nothing much again

It seems that she is still getting it together

Looks like a mom who basically only posts when they're on vacation.

Disinterested

Uninterested

Older

Honest, realistic, scattered

Indifferent, realistic

Weird

Average

Broke

Calm, curious, impressed

Stereotypical suburban mom

Jealous

Bored

Young

Living good life

Describe how the above instagram profile made you feel in three words or le...

Think it's cute

Basic, homey, relaxed

I feel nothing

Bored

Aesthetic, Advertising

Pretentious

"Eh", normal, friendly

Q41 - Alongside my social media use, I feel content and happy with my life.
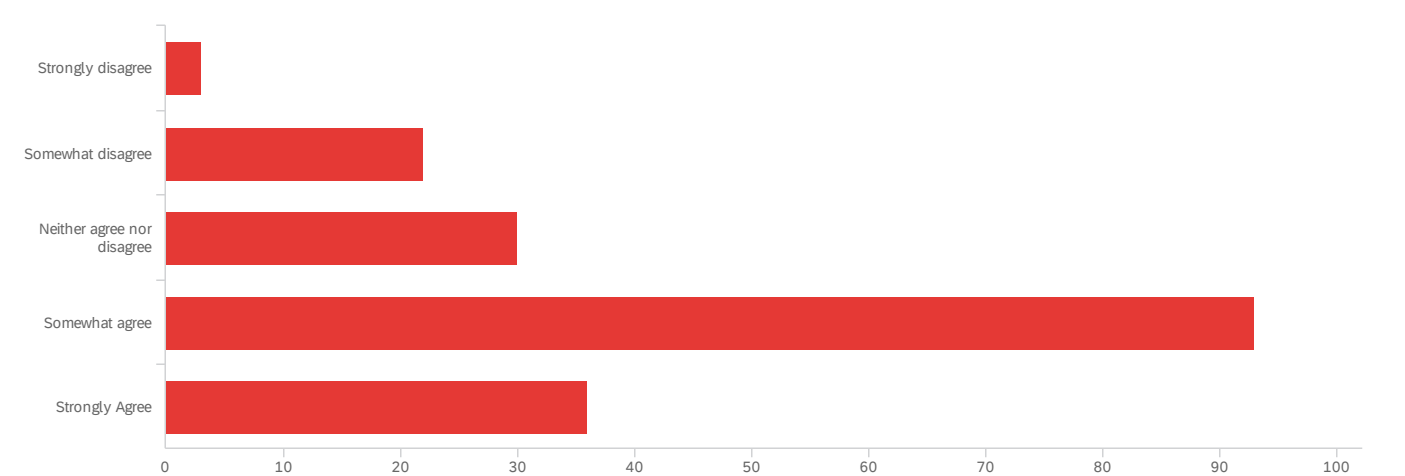
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Alongside my social media use, I feel content and happy with my life.	1.00	5.00	3.74	0.96	0.92	184

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Strongly disagree	1.63% 3
2	Somewhat disagree	11.96% 22
3	Neither agree nor disagree	16.30% 30
4	Somewhat agree	50.54% 93
5	Strongly Agree	19.57% 36
		184

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q42 - How much time do you spend on social media each day?
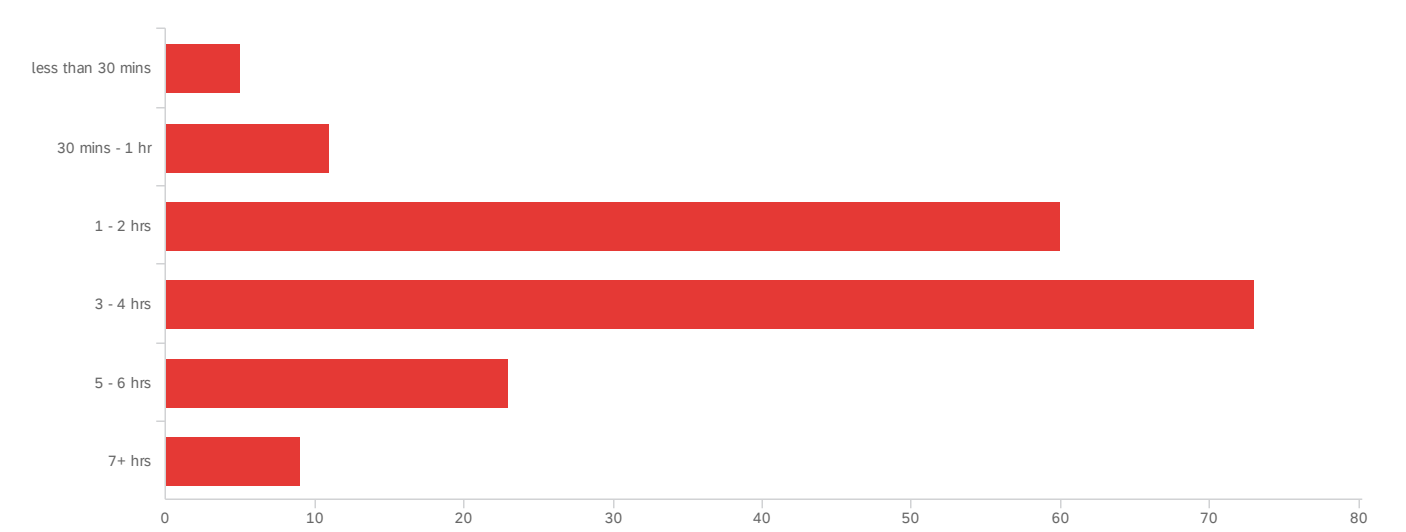
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How much time do you spend on social media each day?	1.00	6.00	3.69	1.03	1.05	181

#	Field		Choice Count
1	less than 30 mins	2.76%	5
2	30 mins - 1 hr	6.08%	11
3	1 - 2 hrs	33.15%	60
4	3 - 4 hrs	40.33%	73
5	5 - 6 hrs	12.71%	23
6	7+ hrs	4.97%	9
			181

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q43 - How do you feel after spending extended time on social media? (select all that apply)
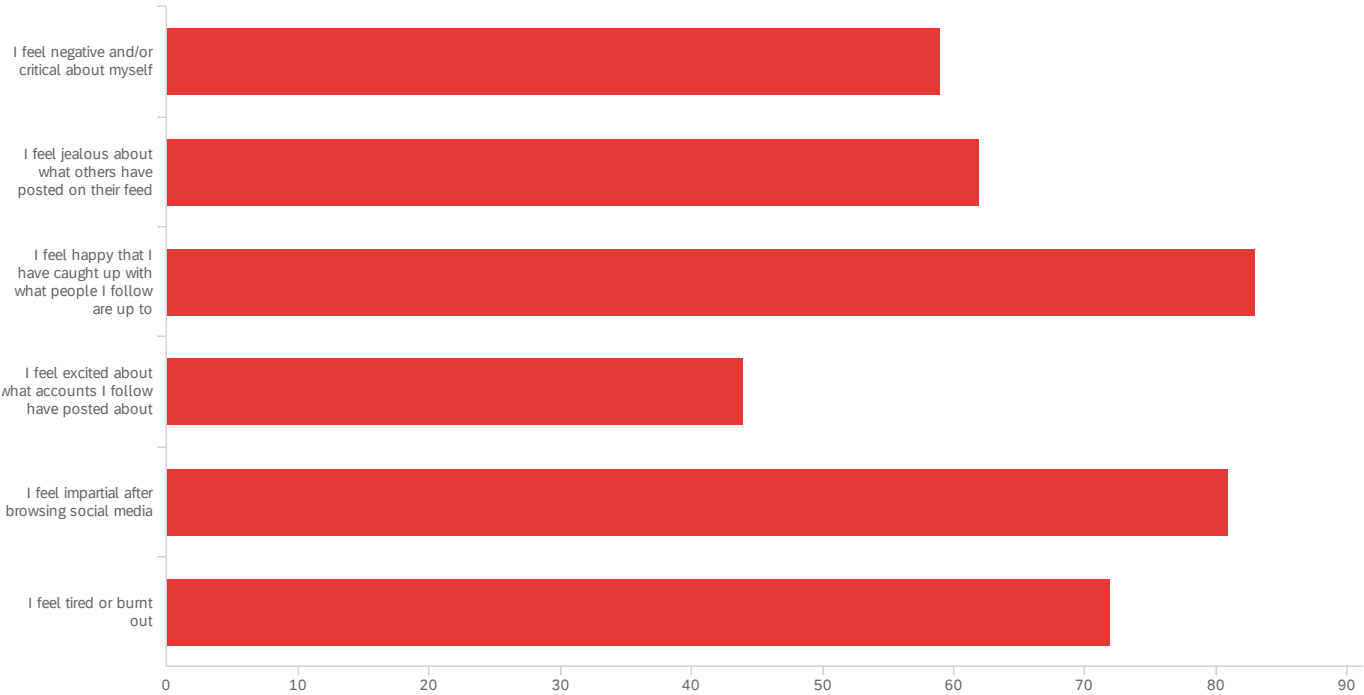
#	Field	Choice Count	
1	I feel negative and/or critical about myself	14.71%	59
2	I feel jealous about what others have posted on their feed	15.46%	62
3	I feel happy that I have caught up with what people I follow are up to	20.70%	83
4	I feel excited about what accounts I follow have posted about	10.97%	44
5	I feel impartial after browsing social media	20.20%	81
6	I feel tired or burnt out	17.96%	72
			401

Showing rows 1 - 7 of 7

Q44 - I feel that my media intake has negatively impacted my physical/mental well-being.
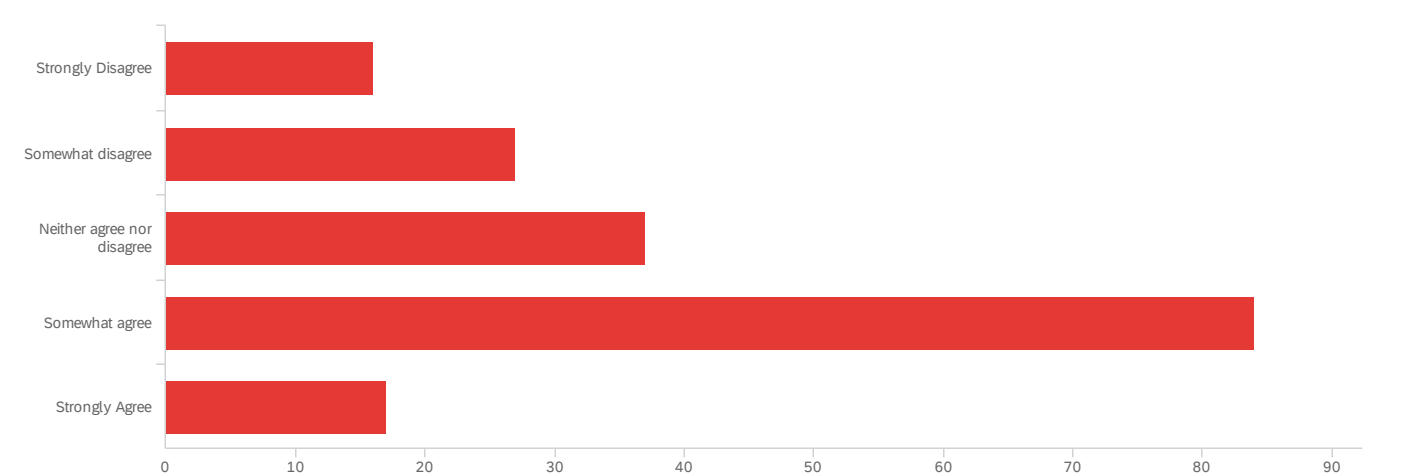
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I feel that my media intake has negatively impacted my physical/mental well-being.	1.00	5.00	3.33	1.11	1.24	181

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly Disagree	8.84%	16
2	Somewhat disagree	14.92%	27
3	Neither agree nor disagree	20.44%	37
4	Somewhat agree	46.41%	84
5	Strongly Agree	9.39%	17
			181

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q45 - I use social media in bed before going to sleep
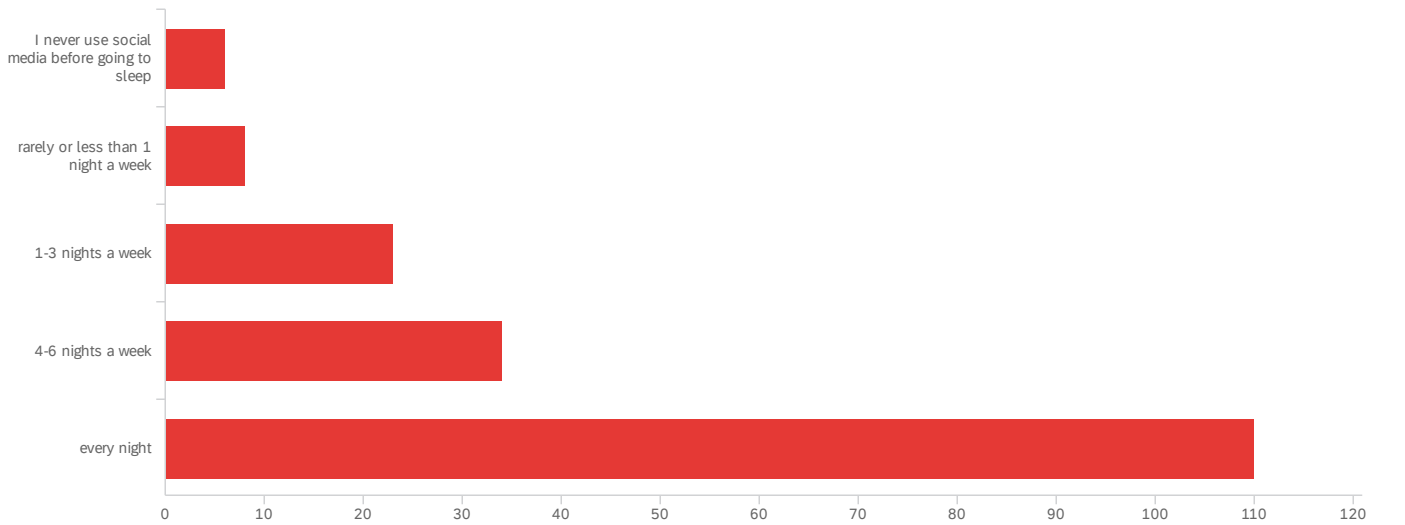
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I use social media in bed before going to sleep	1.00	5.00	4.29	1.06	1.12	181

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	I never use social media before going to sleep	3.31%	6
2	rarely or less than 1 night a week	4.42%	8
3	1-3 nights a week	12.71%	23
4	4-6 nights a week	18.78%	34
5	every night	60.77%	110
			181

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q46 - On average, how much sleep do you get a night?
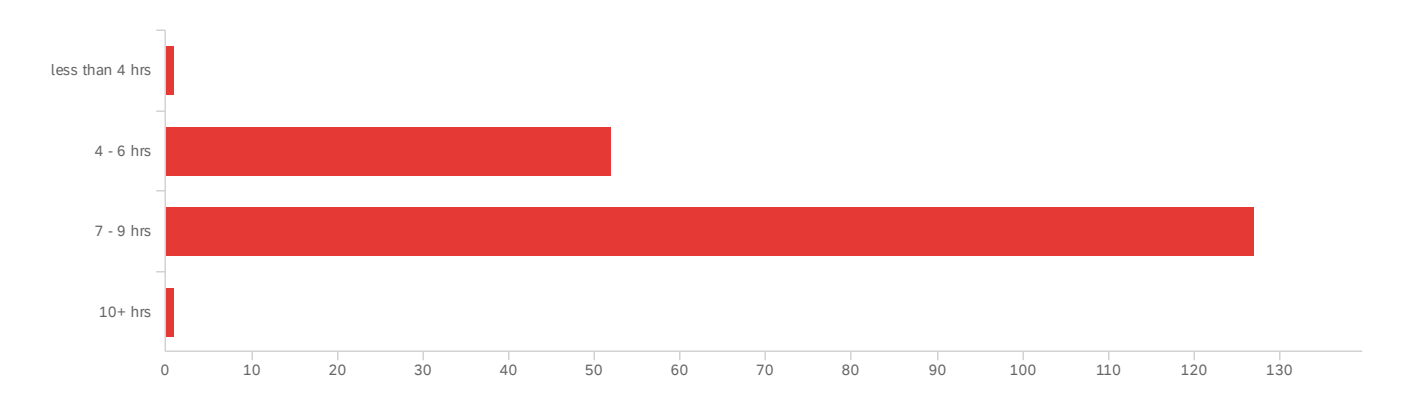
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	On average, how much sleep do you get a night?	1.00	4.00	2.71	0.48	0.23	181

#	Field		Choice Count
1	less than 4 hrs	0.55%	1
2	4 - 6 hrs	28.73%	52
3	7 - 9 hrs	70.17%	127
4	10+ hrs	0.55%	1
			181

Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

Q47 - Whenever I see a mirror selfie, it inspires me to workout.
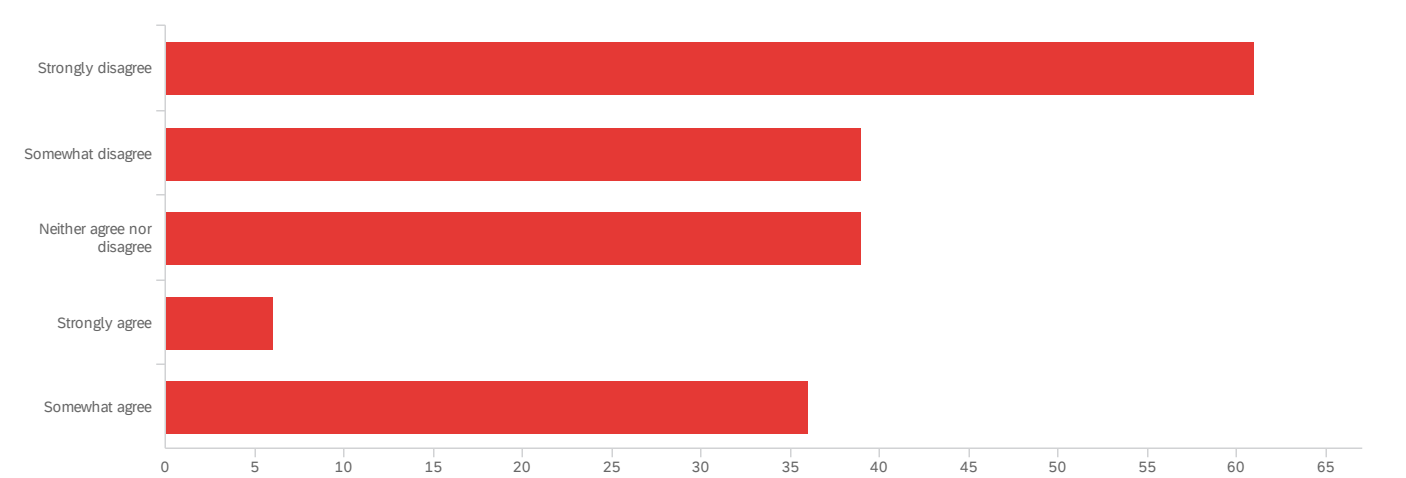
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Whenever I see a mirror selfie, it inspires me to workout.	1.00	5.00	2.54	1.48	2.18	181

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly disagree	33.70%	61
2	Somewhat disagree	21.55%	39
3	Neither agree nor disagree	21.55%	39
4	Strongly agree	3.31%	6
5	Somewhat agree	19.89%	36
			181

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q48 - How much time do you spend with friends/family per week (in-person).
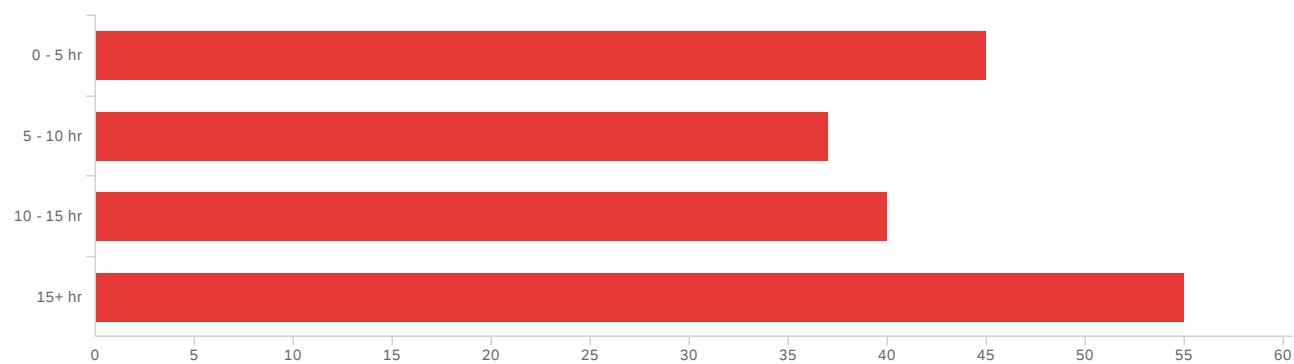
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How much time do you spend with friends/family per week (in-person).	1.00	6.00	2.63	1.21	1.45	179

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	0 - 5 hr	25.42%	45
2	5 - 10 hr	20.90%	37
3	10 - 15 hr	22.60%	40
4	15+ hr	31.07%	55
			177

Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

Q49 - How many friends do you have that you know solely through the internet?
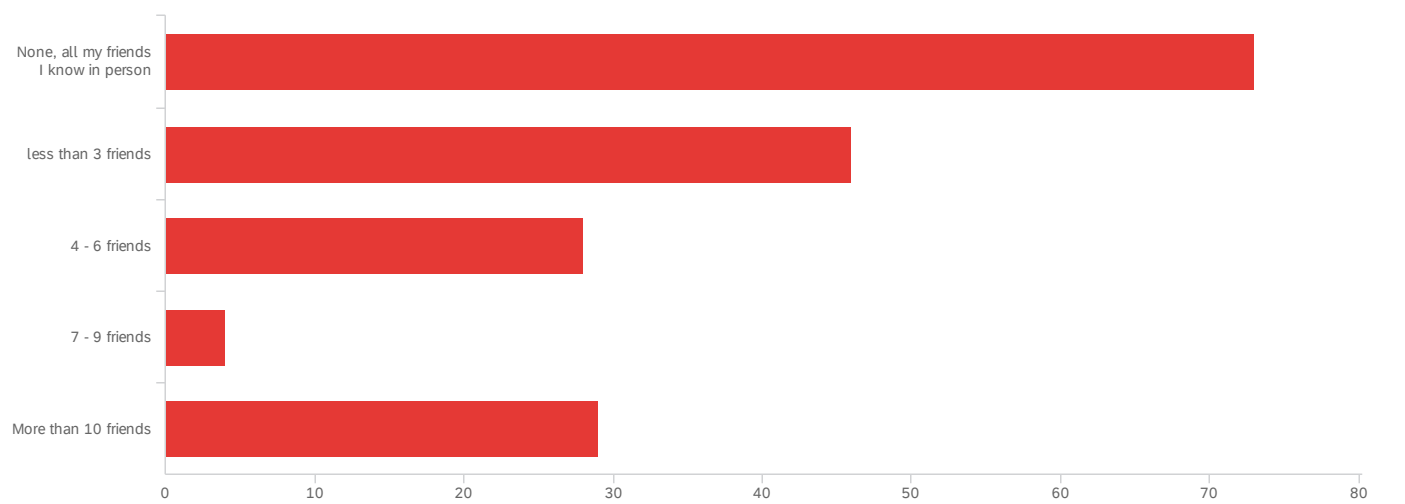
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How many friends do you have that you know solely through the internet?	1.00	5.00	2.28	1.42	2.02	180

#	Field		Choice Count
1	None, all my friends I know in person	40.56%	73
2	less than 3 friends	25.56%	46
3	4 - 6 friends	15.56%	28
4	7 - 9 friends	2.22%	4
5	More than 10 friends	16.11%	29
			180

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q50 - I prefer to talk to my family through text/facetime rather than in person.
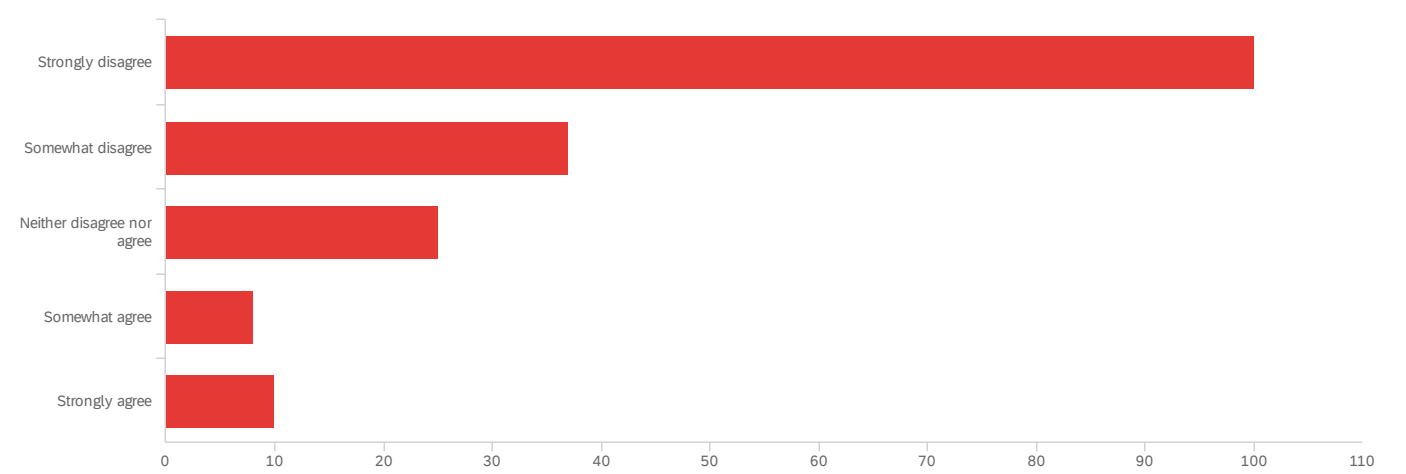
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I prefer to talk to my family through text/facetime rather than in person.	1.00	5.00	1.84	1.16	1.35	180

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly disagree	55.56%	100
2	Somewhat disagree	20.56%	37
3	Neither disagree nor agree	13.89%	25
4	Somewhat agree	4.44%	8
5	Strongly agree	5.56%	10
			180

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q51 - I prefer to talk to my friends through text/facetime rather than in person.
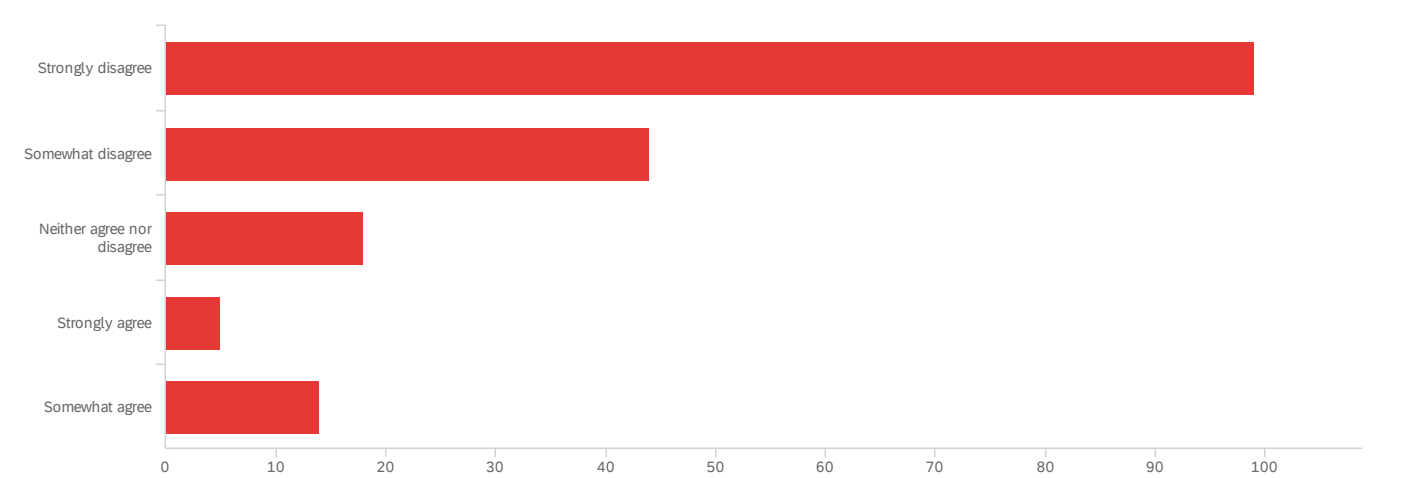
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I prefer to talk to my friends through text/facetime rather than in person.	1.00	5.00	1.84	1.20	1.44	180

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly disagree	55.00%	99
2	Somewhat disagree	24.44%	44
3	Neither agree nor disagree	10.00%	18
4	Strongly agree	2.78%	5
5	Somewhat agree	7.78%	14
			180

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q52 - I find it easier to talk about certain topics over text rather than in person.
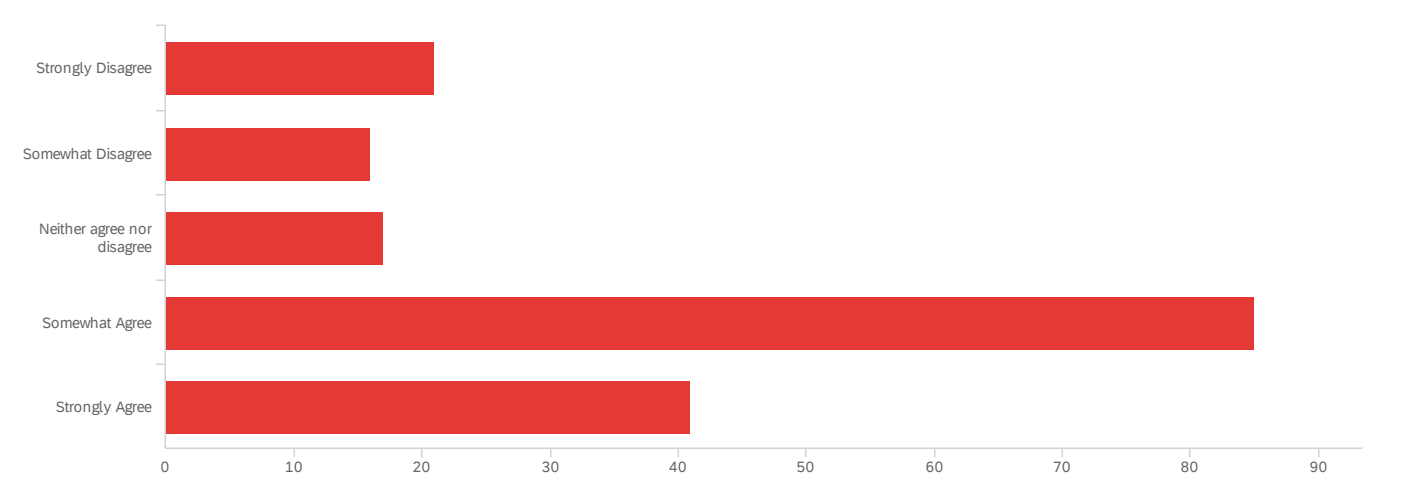
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I find it easier to talk about certain topics over text rather than in person.	1.00	5.00	3.61	1.25	1.57	180

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly Disagree	11.67%	21
2	Somewhat Disagree	8.89%	16
3	Neither agree nor disagree	9.44%	17
4	Somewhat Agree	47.22%	85
5	Strongly Agree	22.78%	41
			180

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q53 - I find it difficult at times to interact with people in-person.
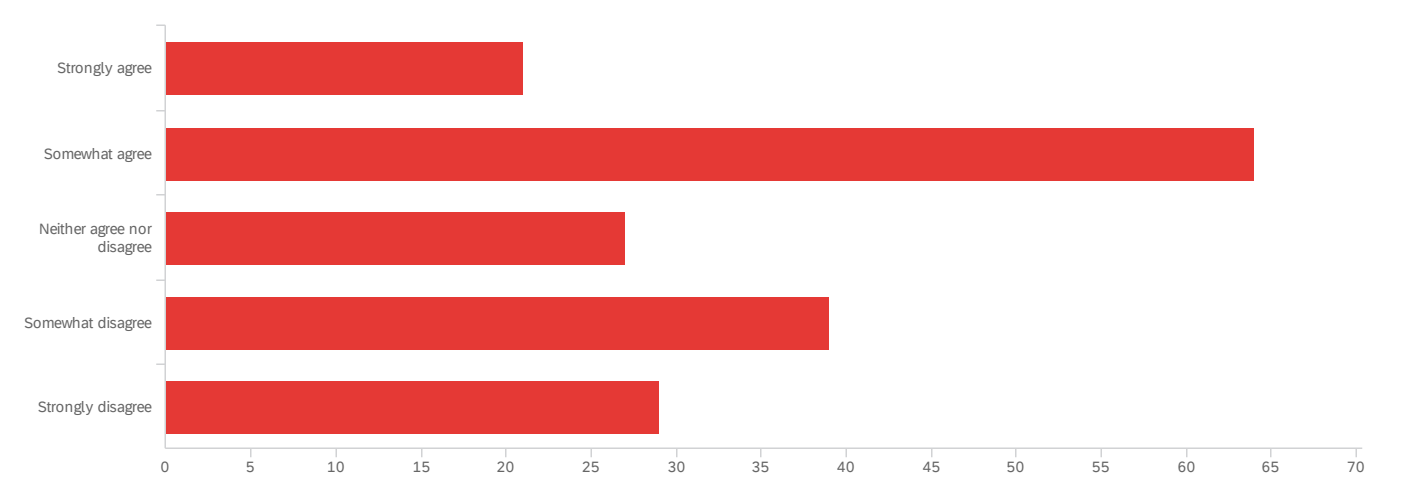
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I find it difficult at times to interact with people in-person.	1.00	5.00	2.95	1.30	1.68	180

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly agree	11.67%	21
2	Somewhat agree	35.56%	64
3	Neither agree nor disagree	15.00%	27
4	Somewhat disagree	21.67%	39
5	Strongly disagree	16.11%	29
			180

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q54 - I have been angered or saddened by a post and or comment that I saw online.
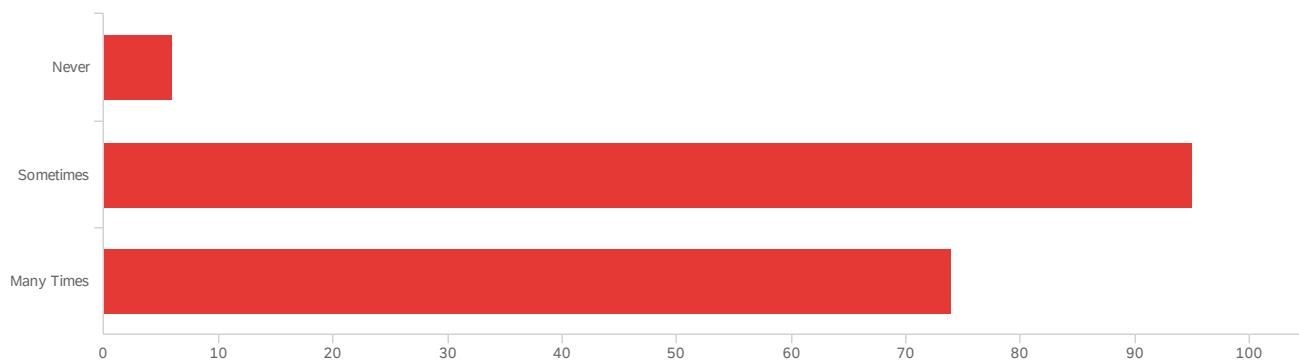
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I have been angered or saddened by a post and or comment that I saw online.	1.00	3.00	2.39	0.55	0.31	175

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Never	3.43%	6
2	Sometimes	54.29%	95
3	Many Times	42.29%	74
			175

Showing rows 1 - 4 of 4

Q55 - I have felt the following at some point (check all that apply):

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Depression	27.25%	124
2	Anxiety	33.41%	152
3	Aggression	15.82%	72
4	Antisocial behavior	23.52%	107
			455
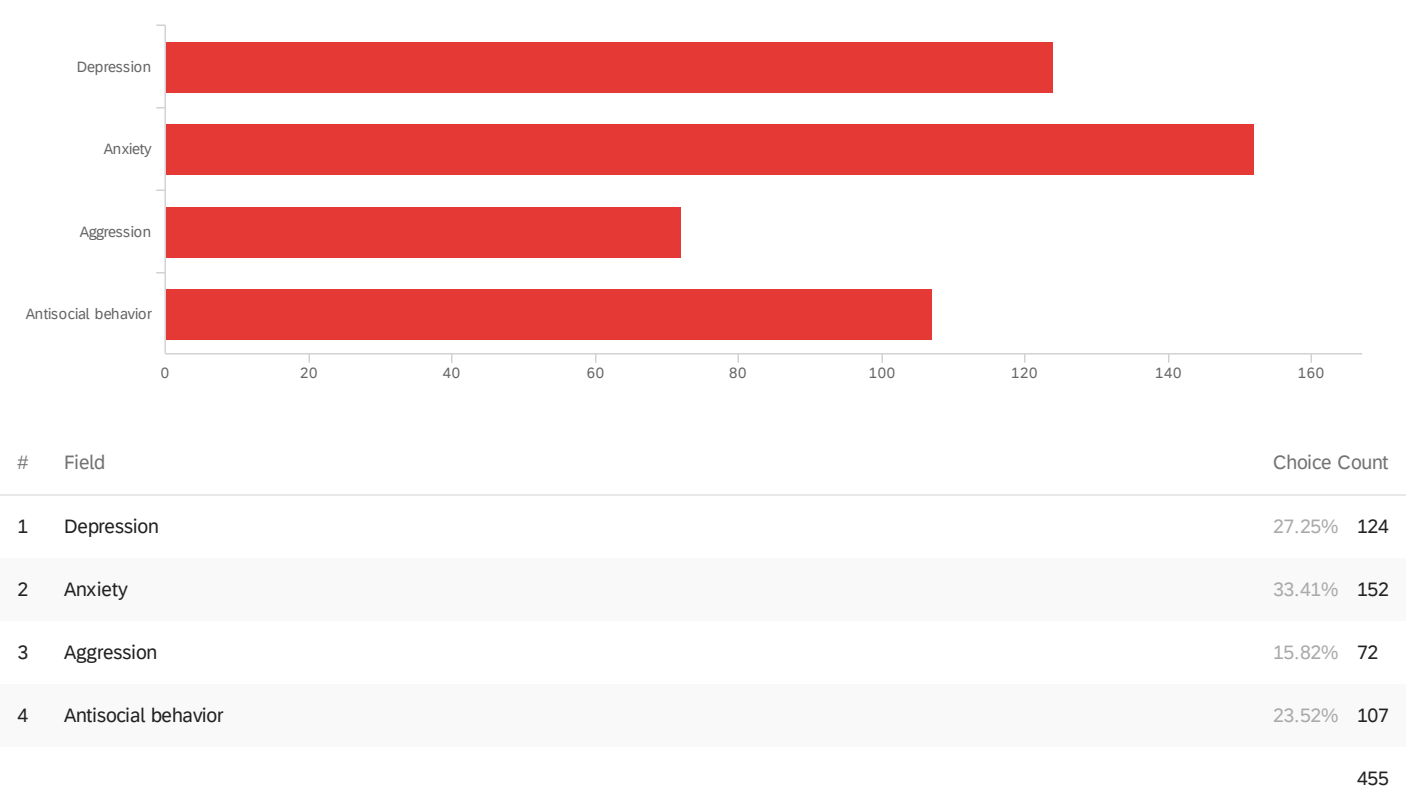
Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

Q56 - My media consumption affects the amount of sleep I get
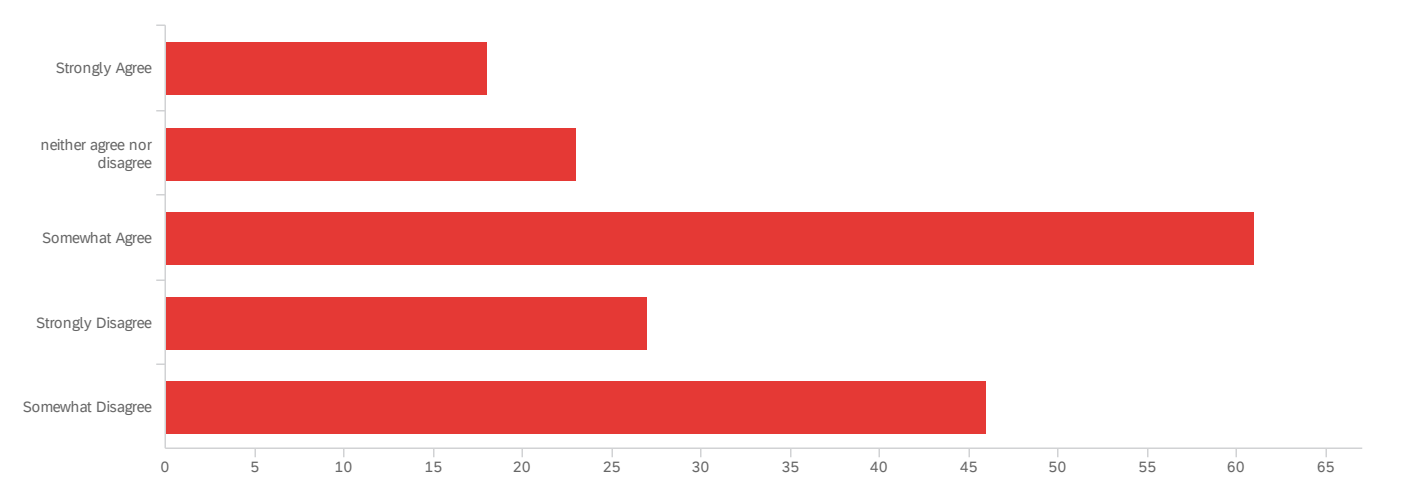
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	My media consumption affects the amount of sleep I get	1.00	5.00	3.34	1.28	1.63	175

#	Field		Choice Count	
1	Strongly Agree	10.29%	18
2	neither agree nor disagree	13.14%	23
3	Somewhat Agree	34.86%	61
4	Strongly Disagree	15.43%	27
5	Somewhat Disagree	26.29%	46
			175

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

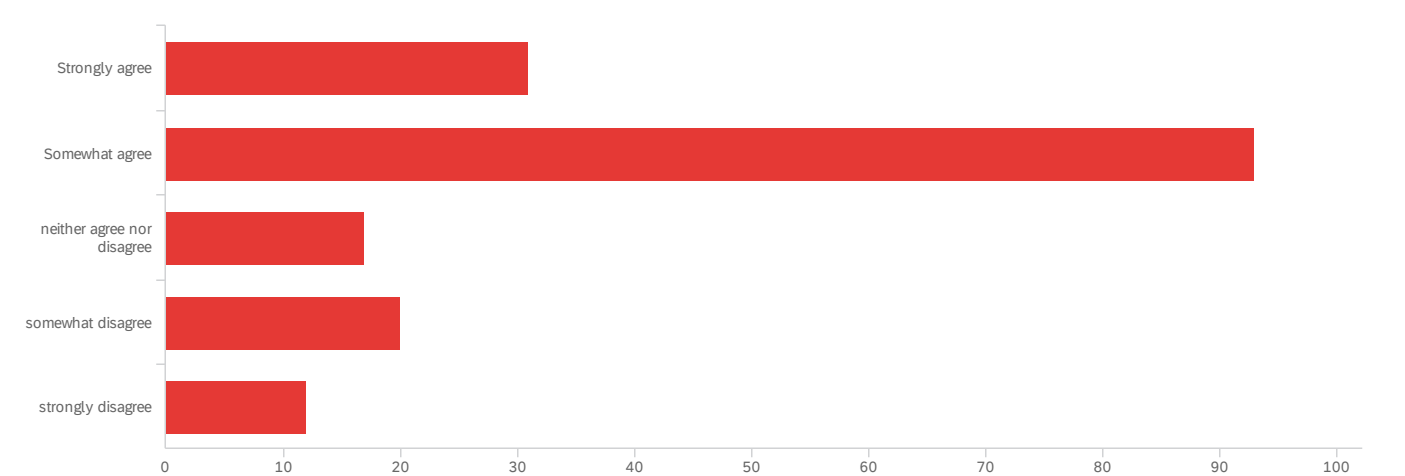# Q57 - I feel that content I consume in the media affects my thoughts.
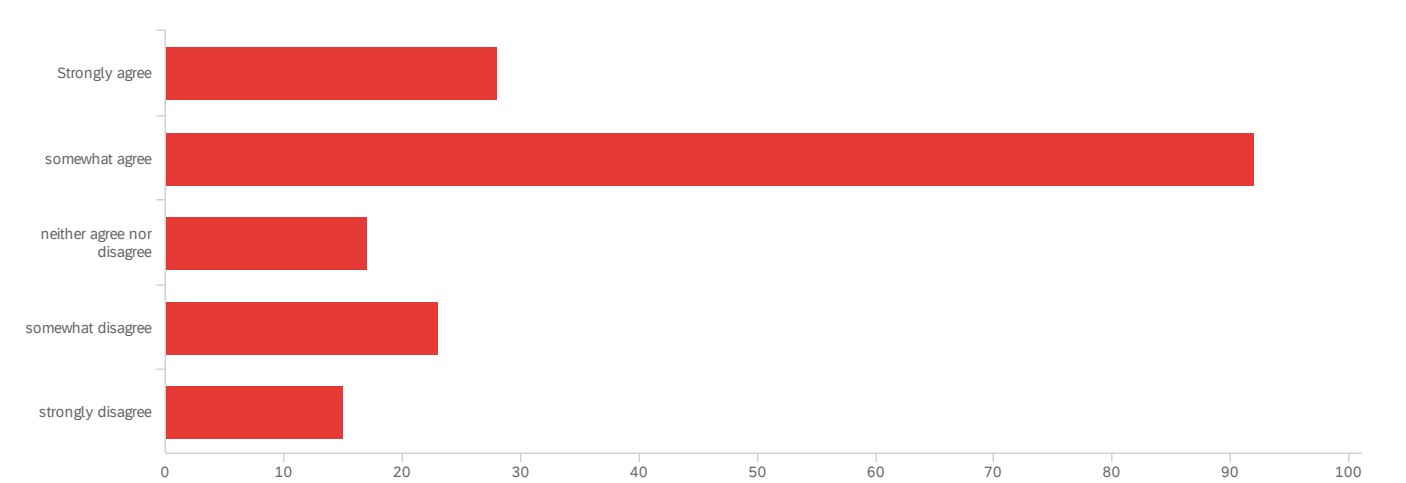
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I feel that content I consume in the media affects my thoughts.	1.00	5.00	2.46	1.16	1.35	175

#	Field	Choice Count	
1	Strongly agree	16.00%	28
2	somewhat agree	52.57%	92
3	neither agree nor disagree	9.71%	17
4	somewhat disagree	13.14%	23
5	strongly disagree	8.57%	15
			175

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

# Q58 - I feel that the content I consume in the media affects my thoughts

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I feel that the content I consume in the media affects my thoughts	1.00	5.00	2.36	1.11	1.24	173

#	Field		Choice Count
1	Strongly agree	17.92%	31
2	Somewhat agree	53.76%	93
3	neither agree nor disagree	9.83%	17
4	somewhat disagree	11.56%	20
5	strongly disagree	6.94%	12
			173

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q59 - What I see on social media lowers my self-esteem
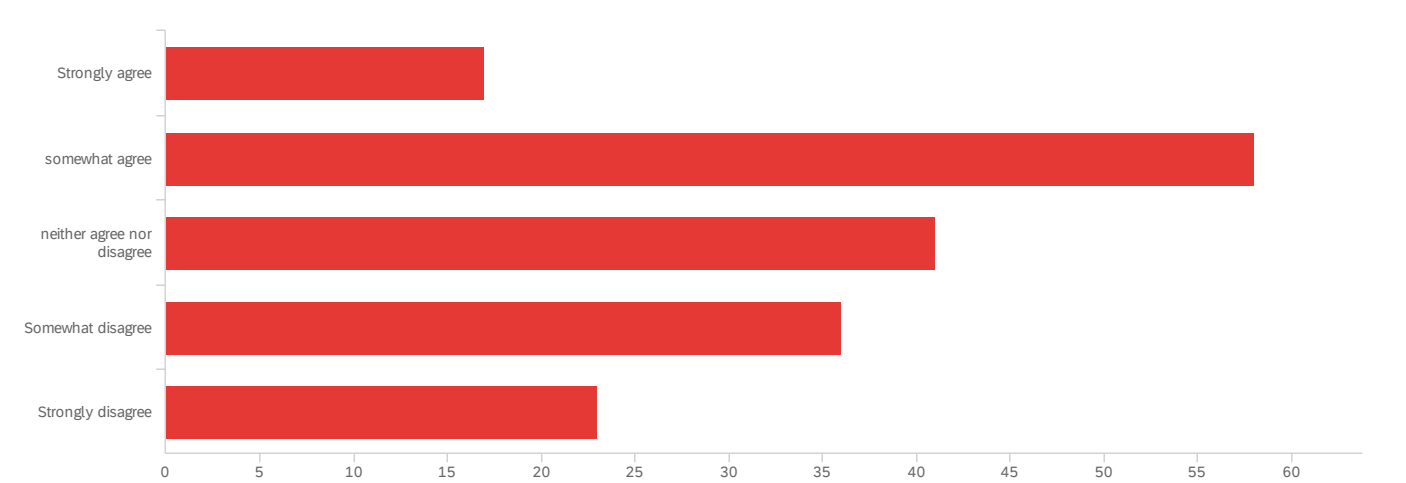
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What I see on social media lowers my self-esteem	1.00	5.00	2.94	1.20	1.45	175

#	Field		Choice Count
1	Strongly agree	9.71%	17
2	somewhat agree	33.14%	58
3	neither agree nor disagree	23.43%	41
4	Somewhat disagree	20.57%	36
5	Strongly disagree	13.14%	23
			175

Showing rows 1 - 6 of 6

Q3_11_TEXT - Parent Topics

⚠
No results to show

⚠
No results to show

Q3_11_TEXT - Sentiment Polarity

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Q3_11_TEXT - Sentiment Polarity	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

Q3_11_TEXT - Sentiment Score

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Q3_11_TEXT - Sentiment Score	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0

Q3_11_TEXT - Sentiment

⚠️
No results to show

⚠️
Data source misconfigured for this visualization.

⚠️
No results to show

Q3_11_TEXT - Topic Sentiment Label

⚠️
No results to show

⚠️
No results to show

Q3_11_TEXT - Topic Sentiment Score

⚠️
No results to show

⚠️
No results to show

Q3_11_TEXT - Topics

⚠️

No results to show

⚠️

No results to show

End of Report