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Mr. Baldwin

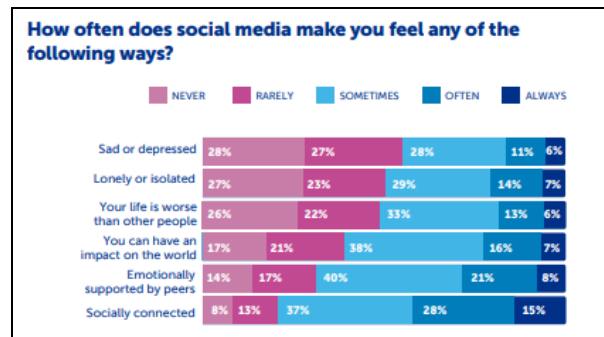
Journalism

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### The Social Disconnect: The Cost of Social Media

All across the world, human connections are lost as social media's presence continues to grow. Students at Florida Southwestern Collegiate High School (FSWC) in Fort Myers are one example of youth's struggle to connect due to social media. From submitting assignments online to texting friends, students cannot escape technology. The addictive nature of social media worsens this unhealthy dependence. Technology has become a social barrier separating teenagers from each other in reality, as they rely on communication platforms like Snapchat.

A survey conducted on FSWC students of all grades (graphed below) shows students' diverse experiences with social media; sometimes feeling lonely, while other times feeling connected through their devices. Compared to the average of a national digital wellness survey of ages 13-17 conducted by the Boston Children's Hospital (graphed to the right), FSWC students felt about the same rate of isolation and emotional support, more depressed (sometimes), like their lives were worse, and they could have a stronger impact.



A lack of technology causes stronger connections as shown by William Erickson, a sophomore at Florida Southwestern Collegiate High School. Erickson, who has no social media,

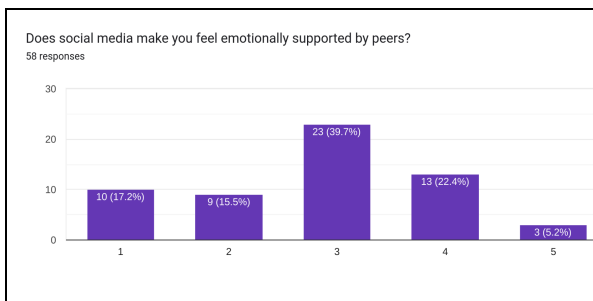
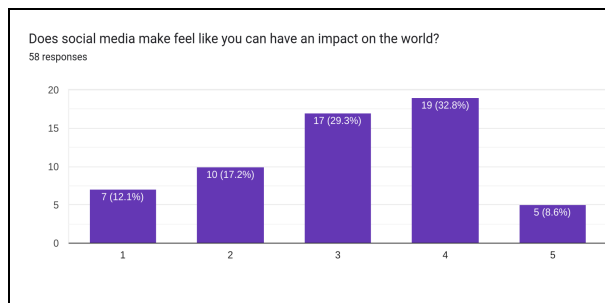
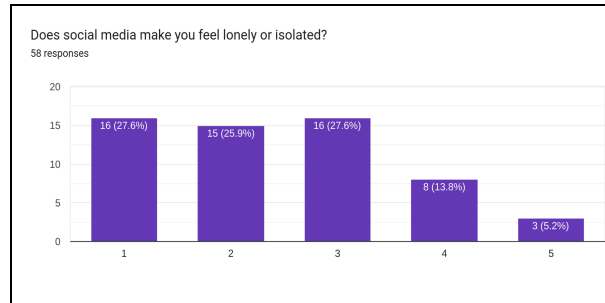
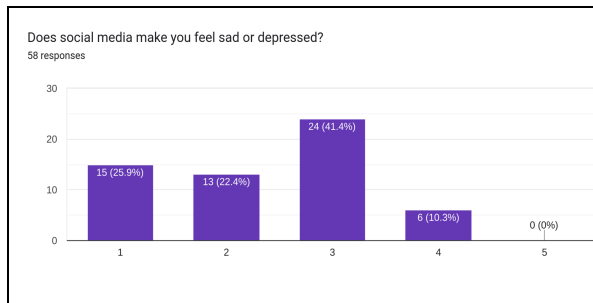
reported, “I socialize during school every school day and outside of school at least two times a week, in my youth group and Boy Scouts. I use Canvas to chat with my friends about homework if any of us need help.” In his case, an absence of technology brought him closer to his community. He does not feel the isolation many other teens experience when relying on social media for connection.

Another sophomore at FSWC, Nivedika Babu, remarked, “The first thing I see when I walk into school is everyone on their phone. Couples sit next to each other and go on their phones. Also, a lot of kids have become socially awkward ever since they acquired social media. I know I feel a little bit isolated and addicted.” Many students turn to devices for connection and entertainment. This causes adolescents to struggle with social interaction.

When questioned about how students should overcome the social barriers created by technology, Erickson replied, “Try to arrange meetups in real life by contacting friends on social media” while Babu said, “Consider getting a hobby and trying to join clubs outside of school.” Students should try to separate themselves from technology by having screen-free days and socializing in real life. Real human connection is rare and should be prioritized.

### FSWC Survey Results

(58 FSWC students of all grades ranked how social media made them feel, 1 being never and 5 being always).



Work Cited

Bickham, D.S., Hunt, E., Bediou, B., & Rich, M. "Adolescent Media Use: Attitudes, Effects, and Online Experiences." *Boston Children's Hospital Digital Wellness Lab*, Aug. 2022, [digitalwellnesslab.org/wp-content/uploads/Pulse-Survey\\_Adolescent-Attitudes-Effects-and-Experiences.pdf](https://digitalwellnesslab.org/wp-content/uploads/Pulse-Survey_Adolescent-Attitudes-Effects-and-Experiences.pdf).