

2026

State of the World's Emotional Health

How Social Media Connects to Emotional Wellbeing



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Emotional Wellbeing in a Changing World

Emotional wellbeing is an essential dimension of health. How people feel, connect and cope is shaped not only by health systems and access to care, but also by the social, economic, political and increasingly digital environments in which they live.

Digitalization has transformed our world at remarkable speed. Social media has become part of everyday life for billions of people, changing how we communicate, access information, seek entertainment, form relationships and participate in society. Understanding what this means for health and wellbeing requires us to look beyond simple assumptions and consider the broader context in which digital technologies are used.

The findings in this year's *State of the World's Emotional Health* report underline the importance of such nuance. The relationship between social media use and wellbeing is not uniform. It varies across countries and populations and is connected to factors including age, health, social support and the wider circumstances of people's lives.

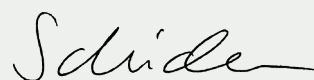
This has broader implications. Technological change cannot be considered in isolation from its social context. Innovation is not only about what new technologies can do, but also about how they are used, who benefits from them and how they interact with trust, relationships, institutions and communities. Addressing these questions requires perspectives from health and science, but also from technology, politics, civil society and many other fields.

This complexity is not a weakness of the debate. It is precisely why we need strong evidence, different perspectives and continued dialogue.

This is closely connected to the theme of the World Health Summit 2026: "From Crisis to Resilience: Innovating for Health." Building resilience means being able to understand and respond to changing realities, including the ways in which digital transformation is reshaping people's lives. It requires evidence that reflects different contexts, discussion across disciplines and sectors, and solutions that can work in diverse societies.

The World Health Summit provides a platform for exactly this kind of exchange. Our role is to bring together different perspectives, create space for evidence-based debate, and connect knowledge with the people and institutions that can act on it. The 2026 *State of the World's Emotional Health* report adds an important perspective to this broader conversation about how changing social and digital environments shape health and wellbeing.

We value our partnership with Gallup and the opportunity it provides to bring global data on people's lived experiences into the wider health discussion. By combining evidence with dialogue across sectors and regions, we can deepen our understanding of emerging challenges and contribute to approaches that strengthen health and resilience in a changing world.



CARSTEN SCHICKER

CEO, World Health Summit

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Introduction



Digital technology is embedded in daily life, influencing how people communicate, work, learn and connect with others.

The reach of social media alone is enormous: For example, Meta reports that 3.56 billion people — more than four in 10 people worldwide — use at least one of Facebook, Instagram, Messenger or WhatsApp platforms on an average day.¹

Questions about social media's effects on health and wellbeing have taken on greater urgency as its use has become widespread. Concerns about possible harms have led governments to consider or adopt measures ranging from age restrictions to efforts to limit addictive platform features.²

Research so far offers a mixed verdict on the relationship between social media use and wellbeing:

- A large meta-analysis, primarily based on studies of adolescents and college students in North America, found small associations of social media use with higher depression and anxiety, but also with greater social wellbeing.³
- A 2025 World Health Organization review of research on digital technology and youth mental health also reflects this complexity. Focused on children and adolescents, the review found both positive and negative associations between technology use, including social media, and wellbeing. Outcomes varied depending on who was using the technology, what they encountered and when, why and how much they used it.⁴
- More recent research has expanded the geographic scope while continuing to focus largely on younger people. The 2026 *World Happiness Report*, for example, examined social media use and life satisfaction among 15-year-olds in 47 countries. Higher use was generally associated with lower life satisfaction, particularly among girls, but the strength of the relationship varied across regions.⁵ In the same report, other researchers documented substantial evidence of harm in the United States using a variety of methods, including surveys of young people, parents, teachers and clinicians as well as experiments.⁶

Gallup's latest World Poll data provide a broader view, covering considerably more countries and a much wider range of ages. This report examines social media use and its relationship with life evaluations and emotional health among people aged 15 and older in 97 countries. The dataset will expand to nearly 140 countries when 2026 data collection is complete.

In 2026, Gallup asked two new questions about whether people had used any type of social media in the past seven days and, if so, how much time they typically spend using it each day. This report provides a first look at what these new measures reveal about social media's relationship with wellbeing and its connections with other aspects of people's lives.

The analysis compares these new measures with wellbeing questions Gallup has asked worldwide for two decades. People are asked about five positive and five negative emotions they experienced during much of the previous day. They separately rate their lives on a scale from zero, representing the worst possible life for them, to 10, representing the best possible life. The resulting score reflects how people evaluate their lives overall and is strongly related to other aspects of health and wellbeing.⁷

The relationship between social media and wellbeing is not straightforward. Social media use is associated with several favorable outcomes, but time spent tells a more complicated story. Moderate use is associated with relatively higher wellbeing across many measures, while high use is associated with more negative emotions and low use with fewer positive emotions and lower life evaluation.

This is an observational study, so the findings show associations, not cause and effect, and cannot determine the direction of the relationship between social media use and wellbeing. Gallup measures whether people use social media and how much time they spend using it, but not whether their use is problematic, compulsive or disruptive. It also does not measure which platforms people use, what they do online or what they encounter there.

Despite those limits, the breadth of the data offers an unprecedented view of how social media use and wellbeing are related across countries, age groups and levels of use.

Key Findings

Now in its second year, the *State of the World's Emotional Health* report examines the latest global trends in people's emotions. This year's report takes a close look at social media and wellbeing and emotional health worldwide, and in places experiencing prolonged crisis.

- 1 Social media use is widespread, but how much people use it varies substantially.** Across 97 countries, a median of 81% report using social media in the past seven days. Younger adults are especially likely to use it and to spend more time on it.
- 2 The relationship between social media use and wellbeing is modest and not straightforward.** After accounting for factors that help explain both wellbeing and social media use, such as age, gender, employment status, health status, education and household income, users report somewhat more favorable results on several positive emotions and life evaluation. Stress is slightly higher among social media users, while most other negative emotions do not differ significantly.
- 3 Time spent on social media tells a more complicated story.** Moderate social media use is associated with relatively higher wellbeing across many measures. Compared with moderate use, high use is associated with more negative emotions, while low use is associated with fewer positive emotions and lower life evaluation. More time on social media does not correspond with steadily worse wellbeing.
- 4 High social media use is associated with lower life evaluation in high-income countries.** Although life evaluation does not differ significantly between high and moderate use overall, high use is associated with lower life evaluation in high-income countries but not in countries that are not high income. High use is associated with more anger, loneliness and sadness in both groups of countries. At the country level, however, the relationship between social media use and wellbeing varies considerably.
- 5 Global emotional health remains strained, particularly in places experiencing prolonged crisis.** Negative emotions remain well above the levels Gallup measured two decades ago. Yet positive emotions can persist alongside considerable distress, underscoring the importance of considering both dimensions of emotional health.

The Digital and Emotional Landscape

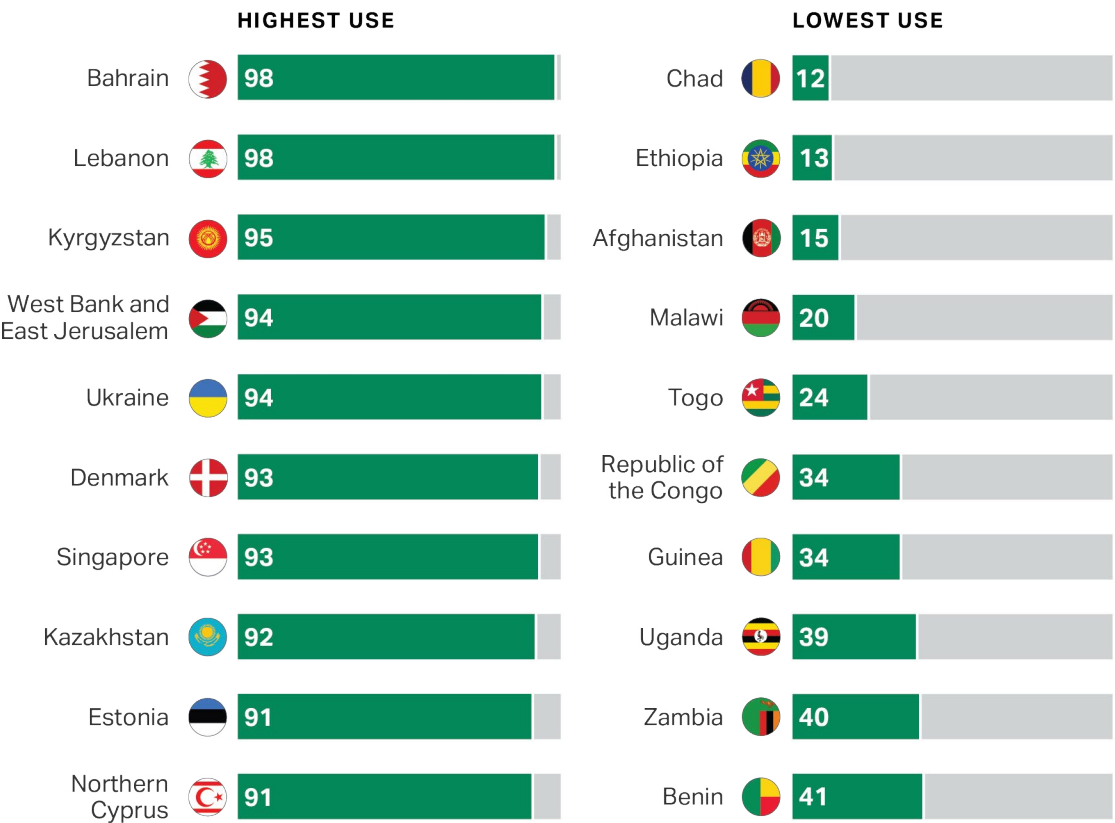
Social Media Is Widespread, but Its Reach Varies

Across the 97 countries surveyed, social media is part of life for most adults. A median of 81% say they used some type of social media in the past seven days. But its reach varies considerably, from 98% in Bahrain and Lebanon to 12% in Chad. Nine of the 10 countries with the lowest use are in sub-Saharan Africa.

FIGURE 1
Countries and Areas With the Highest and Lowest Social Media Use

Did you use any type of social media in the past seven days?

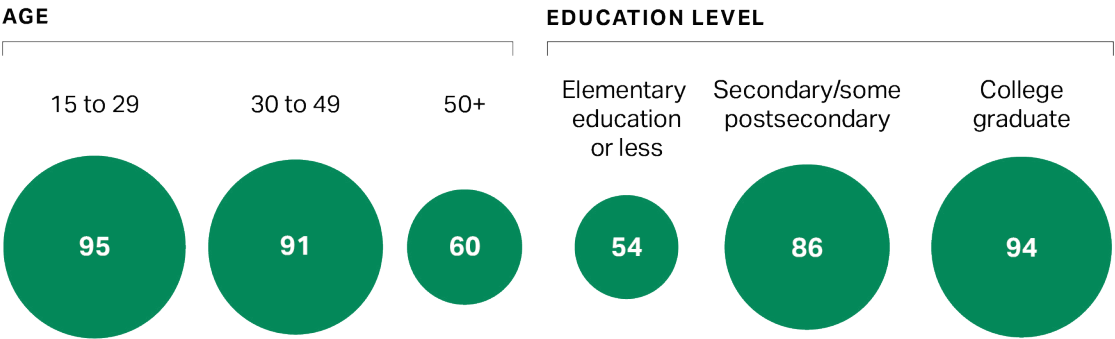
% Yes, 2026



Median across 97 countries: 81%.
Note: Ties at the cutoff may affect which country appears in the final position.
Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

Age and education account for the largest differences in social media use. Across all countries, a median of 95% of adults aged 15 to 29 and 91% of those aged 30 to 49 use social media, compared with 60% of those aged 50 and older. Use also ranges from 54% among adults with elementary education or less to 94% among college graduates. Men and women, by contrast, are about equally likely to use it.

% Use social media, median across 97 countries



Use also differs by health and access to social support. Adults who do not report health problems are more likely to use social media than those who do, 87% versus 60%. More adults who report having someone they can count on for help — Gallup’s measure of social support — also report social media use (81% versus 71% who do not have someone).

Among users, nearly two-thirds (65%) spend less than two hours a day on social media, while 35% spend at least two hours.

Younger adults spend considerably more time engaging with social media: a median of 52% of users aged 15 to 29 spend at least two hours a day, compared with 33% of those aged 30 to 49 and 23% of those aged 50 and older.



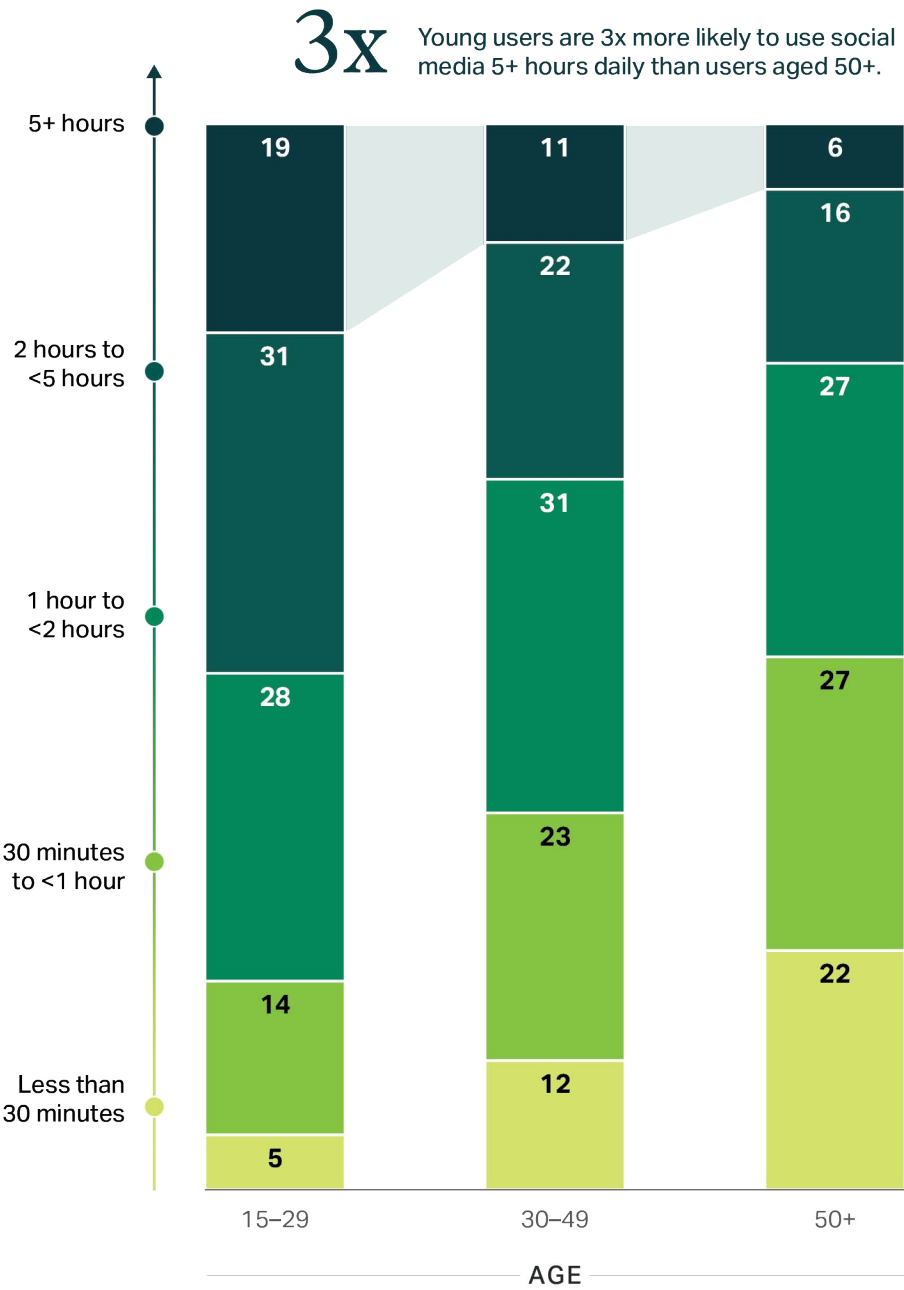
Across the 97 countries, a median of 12% of users say they spend five hours or more per day on social media. This level of use varies sharply across countries: About three in 10 users say they spend that much time on social media in South Africa, the Dominican Republic, Uganda and Lesotho, compared with 5% or less in countries including Germany, Poland and Ethiopia.

Spending five or more hours on social media is most common among the youngest users, who are three times more likely than those in the oldest age group to report this level of use. Among users aged 15 to 29, a median of 19% say they spend five hours or more per day on social media, compared with 11% of those aged 30 to 49 and 6% of those aged 50 and older. Differences by gender, education, employment, health and social support are considerably smaller.

FIGURE 2
Younger Social Media Users Spend More Time Online

About how much time would you say you typically spend using social media a day?

% Of social media users, median across 97 countries



Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

Social Media Users Fare Modestly Better Emotionally

At first glance, social media users report substantially more positive outcomes than nonusers. Across the 97 countries surveyed, users are more likely to report enjoyment (75% vs. 61%) and less likely to report sadness (20% vs. 33%) and loneliness (17% vs. 29%). Stress is an exception, with virtually no difference between users and nonusers.

But many of the same factors associated with social media use are also related to emotional wellbeing. Social media users tend to be younger and have higher levels of education, are more likely to have someone they can count on for help and less likely to report health problems. Age, gender, health and social support are also related to how people say they experience their daily lives. Social connection, in particular, is closely tied to health and wellbeing, whether those connections take place in person or virtually.⁸

Accounting for these differences changes the picture considerably. After controlling for country, age, gender, education, income, internet use, work status, reported health problems and access to social support (referred to as “after adjustment” throughout the report), many of the gaps between users and nonusers narrow but do not disappear altogether.



Some of the adjusted differences clearly favor social media users, although the relationships are small. Compared with otherwise similar nonusers, users are more likely to report enjoyment, smiling or laughing, learning something interesting and being treated with respect. They also rate their lives slightly higher on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale.⁹

The pattern is different for negative emotions. Stress is the only one significantly associated with social media use after adjustment, with users slightly more likely than nonusers to report it. Anger, sadness, worry, loneliness and physical pain do not differ significantly between users and nonusers. Overall, the adjusted relationship between social media use and wellbeing is modestly positive, while stress is unfavorable, and several outcomes show no significant relationship at all.

FIGURE 3
Social Media Use and Wellbeing

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about ...?

% Yes

		Self-reported		After adjustment
		NONUSERS	USERS	GAP
+	Positive emotions			
	Enjoyment	61%	75%	+2.6 pp*
	Learning something	45%	57%	+3.2 pp*
	Smiling/laughing	66%	76%	+3.1 pp*
	Treated with respect	81%	91%	+1.9 pp*
	Well-rested	66%	70%	0.0 pp
—	Negative emotions			
	Stress	37%	36%	+2.5 pp*
	Anger	22%	18%	+0.8 pp
	Worry	46%	36%	+1.2 pp
	Loneliness	29%	17%	+0.2 pp
	Sadness	33%	20%	+0.2 pp
	Physical pain	47%	30%	+1.2pp
H	Life evaluation			
	Life evaluation score	4.9	6.1	+0.1*

⁹Statistically significant at p < .05. Adjusted gaps account for country, age, gender, education, income, internet use, work status, reported health problems and social support. For stress, the relationship reverses after adjustment: Users are slightly less likely than nonusers to report stress before adjustment but more likely after adjustment. Emotion measures are percentages; adjusted gaps are percentage points. Life evaluation is measured on Gallup's 0-to-10 scale.

For an optimized screen reader experience, access the data table at this [link](#).

Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

The Relationship Gets More Complicated With Time

Social media use itself is modestly associated with several favorable outcomes, but the relationship becomes less straightforward when looking at time spent on social media. This aligns with the 2026 *World Happiness Report*, which found evidence that both very little and high social media use may be associated with lower wellbeing. Among 15-year-olds in 47 countries, those who spent less than an hour a day on social media reported higher life satisfaction than those who did not use it, while life satisfaction was generally lower at higher levels of use.¹⁰

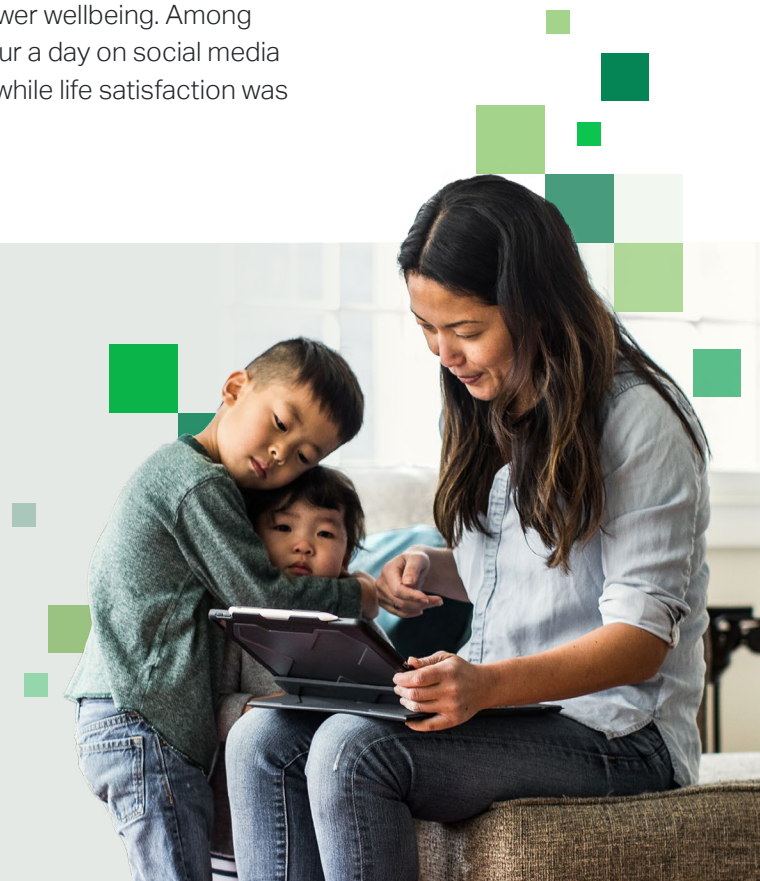
Because wellbeing does not simply rise or fall as time spent on social media increases, Gallup examines time spent in three categories:

- **No use/Low use:** No social media use or less than 30 minutes a day
- **Moderate use:** 30 minutes to less than two hours a day
- **High use:** Two hours or more a day

Across the 97 countries, people are most likely to be using social media moderately. A median of 39% of adults fall into this group, compared with 31% with low use and 27% with high use.

Time spent differs sharply by age. Across countries, a median of 47% of adults aged 15 to 29 fall into the high-use group, compared with 28% of those aged 30 to 49 and 12% of those aged 50 and older. Low use shows the opposite pattern, rising from 10% among adults aged 15 to 29 to 22% among those aged 30 to 49 and 54% among those aged 50 and older. Moderate use is most common among adults aged 30 to 49, at a median of 45%.

Moderate use serves as the comparison group, allowing the analysis to examine how wellbeing differs at both lower and higher levels of use. The differences across the three groups generally remain small after accounting for country, age, gender, education, income, internet use, work status, reported health problems and social support.



Compared with moderate use, high use is associated with more negative experiences. Adults who spend two hours or more a day on social media are more likely to report anger, loneliness, sadness, stress and worry than those who spend 30 minutes to less than two hours. They are also less likely to report being treated with respect and more likely to report feeling well-rested. Life evaluation does not differ significantly between the two groups.

Adults in the low-use group have lower life evaluations and are less likely than those with moderate use to report enjoyment, smiling or laughing, feeling well-rested and being treated with respect. They are also slightly more likely to report anger.

FIGURE 4
Wellbeing by Time Spent on Social Media

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about ...?

% Yes

	Self-reported			After adjustment	
	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	Low vs. moderate	High vs. moderate
+ Positive emotions					
Enjoyment	63%	75%	76%	-2.4 pp*	+0.3 pp
Learning something	48%	57%	59%	-0.9 pp	-0.7 pp
Smiling/laughing	67%	75%	79%	-2.9 pp*	+1.0 pp
Treated with respect	83%	92%	90%	-1.6 pp*	-1.2 pp*
Well-rested	66%	70%	73%	-1.4 pp*	+1.4 pp*
- Negative emotions					
Stress	37%	35%	37%	-0.6 pp	+2.0 pp*
Anger	21%	16%	20%	+1.0 pp	+2.2 pp*
Worry	44%	36%	36%	-0.9 pp	+1.7 pp*
Loneliness	27%	16%	17%	+0.8 pp	+2.2 pp*
Sadness	31%	19%	20%	+1.0 pp	+2.2 pp*
Physical pain	44%	30%	28%	+0.4 pp	+1.0 pp
Life evaluation					
Life evaluation score	5.1	6.1	6.1	-0.1*	-0.0

*Statistically significant at $p < .05$. Low use includes nonusers and adults who spend less than 30 minutes per day; moderate use is 30 minutes to less than two hours; high use is two hours or more. Adjusted gaps account for country, age, gender, education, income, internet use, work status, reported health problems and social support. Emotion measures are percentages; adjusted gaps are percentage points. Life evaluation is the mean rating on Gallup's 0-to-10 life-evaluation scale.

For an optimized screen reader experience, access the data table at this [link](#).

Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

Wellbeing does not steadily get worse as time spent on social media increases. Instead, moderate use is associated with a more favorable wellbeing profile across many measures. Moderate users report fewer negative emotions than high users and more positive experiences and higher life evaluation than low users.

Alternative models also find no evidence of a simple linear relationship. When time spent is analyzed as a continuous measure, it is not significantly associated with positive emotions or life evaluation among adults overall or among younger adults.

Notably, the global results mask an important difference by countries' income levels. Although life evaluation does not differ significantly between high and moderate use overall, high use is associated with lower life evaluation in high-income countries. No significant difference is evident in non-high-income countries. High use is associated with more anger, loneliness and sadness in both groups of countries.

The relationship between high use and wellbeing also varies somewhat by age. Compared with moderate use, high use is associated with more anger and sadness among adults in all three age groups, while life evaluation does not differ significantly at any age. Other associations are less consistent: High use is linked to more stress and less learning among adults aged 15 to 29; more loneliness, less respect and more feeling well-rested among those aged 30 to 49; and more loneliness among adults aged 50 and older.

These patterns illustrate how hours spent on social media may tell only one part of the story. Time spent on social media is distinct from problematic social media use, which can involve excessive, compulsive or disruptive patterns. Gallup measures how much time people spend on social media, but not whether their use is problematic or what they do or encounter online. A 2024 review of more than 250,000 people in 28 countries found that problematic social media use was moderately associated with generalized anxiety, social anxiety, attachment anxiety and fear of missing out.¹¹



A Closer Look at Countries Considering Social Media Restrictions

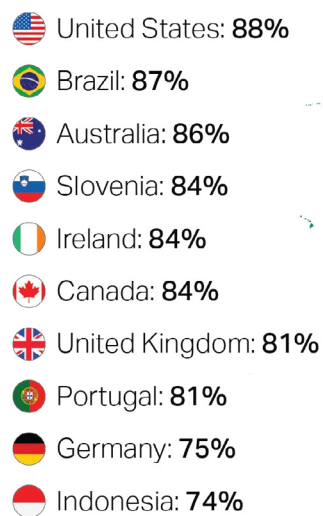
Governments around the world are increasingly considering restrictions on children's and adolescents' use of social media. Almost 40 countries are discussing, proposing, adopting or implementing age-based restrictions.¹²

To date, Gallup has sufficient 2026 data to examine 10 countries where restrictions have been imposed or are under consideration: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the United States, these efforts are occurring at the state rather than federal level.¹³

It is important to note that Gallup's data show what social media use looks like among the broader population in these countries and how use relates to wellbeing, but they do not evaluate the policies or make claims about social media's effects on young children. The World Poll surveys people aged 15 and older, and the country-level results presented here describe adult populations overall.

Strong majorities in all 10 countries use social media, ranging from 74% in Indonesia to 88% in the United States. However, time spent on social media varies more widely. Moderate use is the most common pattern in most of the 10 countries, while Brazil stands out for its relatively high level of high use. Four in 10 Brazilian adults are in the high-use group, similar to the 37% who use social media moderately. Across the 10 countries, high use ranges from 15% in Slovenia and 17% in Germany to 40% in Brazil.

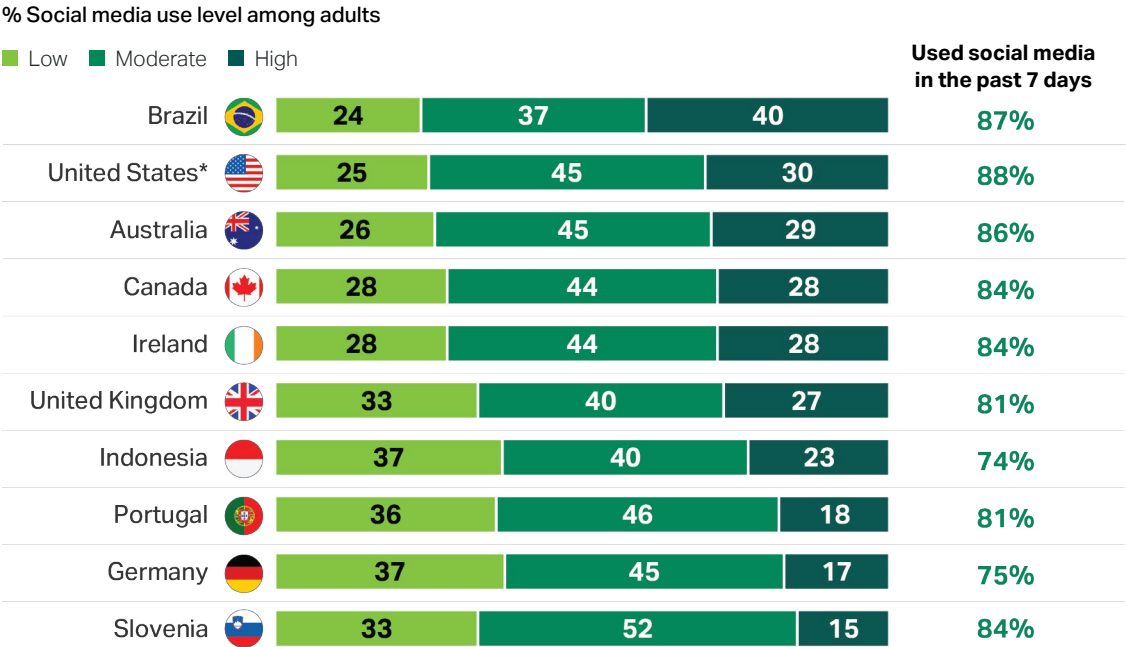
Used social media in the past 7 days



Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

FIGURE 5
Social Media Use and Time Spent in Countries Considering Restrictions

About how much time would you say you typically spend using social media in a day?



*United States included because several states have enacted or are considering restrictions on minors' access to or use of social media.
Low use = no social media use in the past 7 days or <30 minutes/day; moderate = 30 minutes to <2 hours/day; high = 2+ hours/day.
Percentages are weighted and rounded to whole numbers; totals may not equal 100% because of rounding.
Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

The relationship between time spent on social media and wellbeing also varies by country. In Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, for example, high use is not associated with emotional wellbeing after accounting for other factors.

The United States is different when it comes to life evaluation. Adults with high social media use rate their lives about 0.3 points lower on the 0-to-10 scale than moderate users. The same pattern is evident among younger adults. There is no significant difference between high and moderate users in Germany or the United Kingdom.

Earlier research confirms the variation across countries. A study linking Facebook adoption to Gallup World Poll wellbeing data in 72 countries from 2008 to 2019 found small favorable relationships with several measures of wellbeing overall, but the results varied by country.¹⁴ The study measured changes in Facebook adoption over time, rather than individuals' social media use and time spent, so the findings are not directly comparable with Gallup's 2026 analysis.

Across all 97 countries, however, there is no consistent relationship between spending more time on social media and lower wellbeing. When time spent is analyzed as a continuous measure, it is not significantly related to positive emotions or life evaluation, either among younger adults or among adults overall. However, in 16 countries, moderately large and negative associations exist between youth life evaluation and social media use, including in the United States, Canada, Israel, Australia and the Netherlands. In 71 countries, there is a small association, and in 10 countries, there is a moderately large positive association with life evaluation, including in Mexico, Poland and Ireland.

Social Media's Relationship With Wellbeing Is Relatively Modest

Gallup's findings reveal a modest and complex relationship between social media and wellbeing. Social media use is associated with several favorable outcomes after accounting for other factors, but time spent tells a more complicated story. Compared with moderate use, high use is associated with more negative emotions, while low use is associated with lower life evaluation and less favorable results on several positive measures.

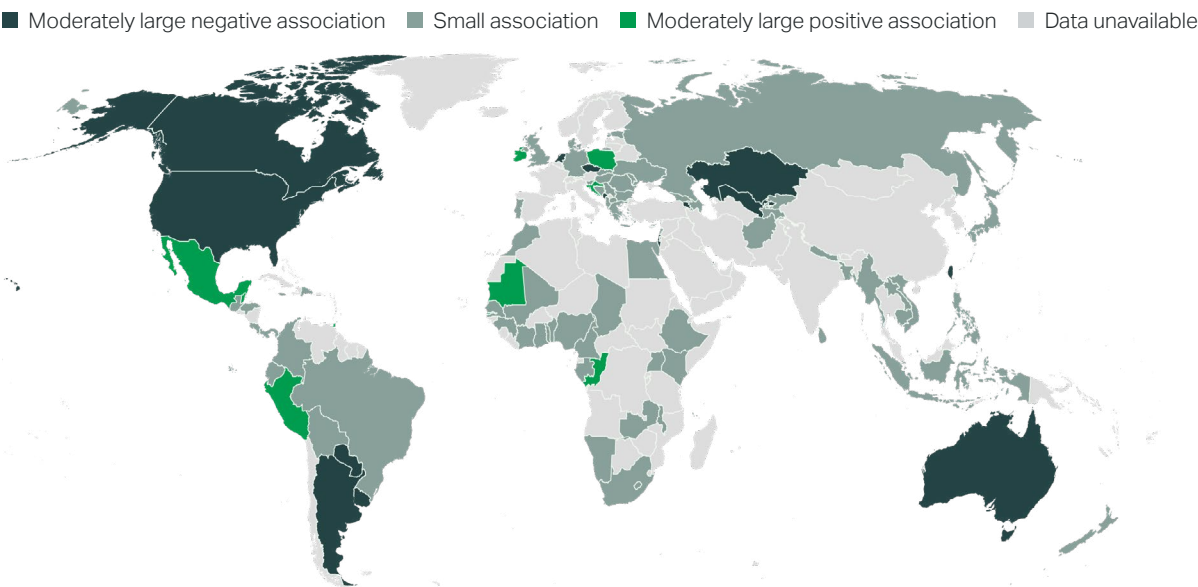
These relationships also vary across countries and populations. Country income groups provide one example. In high-income countries, high social media use is associated with lower life evaluation than moderate use, a difference that is not evident in countries that are not high income. High use is associated with more anger, loneliness and sadness in both groups of countries.

Several factors may help explain these different patterns. Age matters. Country context matters. What people do online may matter, as may the strength of their offline social connections. In 2026, Gallup did not measure what people do or encounter online, leaving important questions about the nature of social media use unanswered.

There may also be other relationships worth exploring. Confidence in national government, for example, varies with social media use and time spent. Social media users are less likely than nonusers to express confidence in their national government after adjustment. Confidence is lower among high users than moderate users and higher among low users than moderate users.

That finding raises questions beyond the scope of this report about how social media use may relate to other aspects of people's lives and societies. Much more also remains to be understood about what people do and encounter on social media across different populations and countries. Gallup's global data add an important piece to that understanding, showing that social media's relationship with wellbeing varies by use, population and place and cannot be understood by time spent by itself.

FIGURE 6
The Relationship Between Life Evaluations and Social Media Use Among Young People



Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2026

The Emotional Health Landscape in Crisis

Social media is only one part of the story of how people are feeling. Two decades of Gallup data provide a wider view of how the world's emotions have changed and how people are feeling today, particularly in places facing prolonged crisis.

The World Is Still Feeling the Strain

Gallup's latest complete global data show that negative emotions remain elevated. In 2025, worry (38%) and stress (36%) were the most common of the five negative emotions Gallup tracks, followed by physical pain (33%), sadness (26%) and anger (23%). All five were essentially unchanged from 2024.

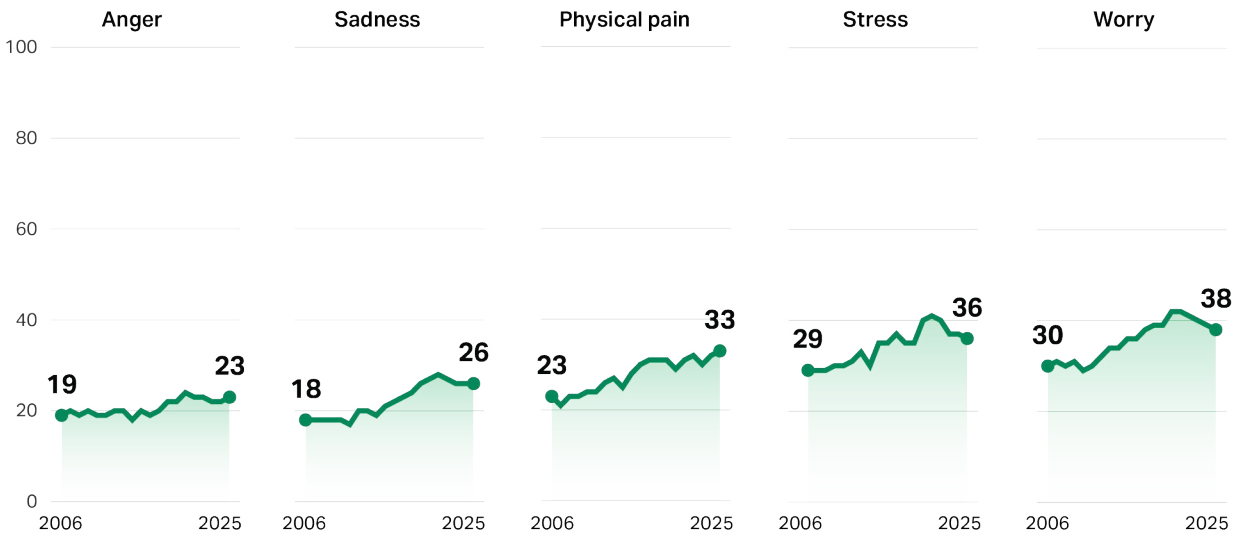
While negative emotions have eased from some of the highs reached during or around the COVID-19 pandemic, they remain well above the levels Gallup measured two decades ago. Since 2006, physical pain has risen 10 percentage points, worry and sadness eight points each, stress seven points and anger by four points.

The persistence of these negative emotions matters beyond how people experience their daily lives. Elevated negative emotions have implications for health. Prolonged stress has been linked to chronic disease, while psychological distress is associated with higher mortality.¹⁵

FIGURE 7
Global Trends in Daily Negative Emotions

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about ...?

% Yes



Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2006-2025

Positive Emotions Have Proved More Resilient

The long-term pattern is different for positive emotions. Since 2006, enjoyment has declined but feeling well-rested and smiling or laughing are essentially unchanged. Feeling treated with respect is slightly higher, while the percentage who say they learned or did something interesting has risen 10 percentage points.

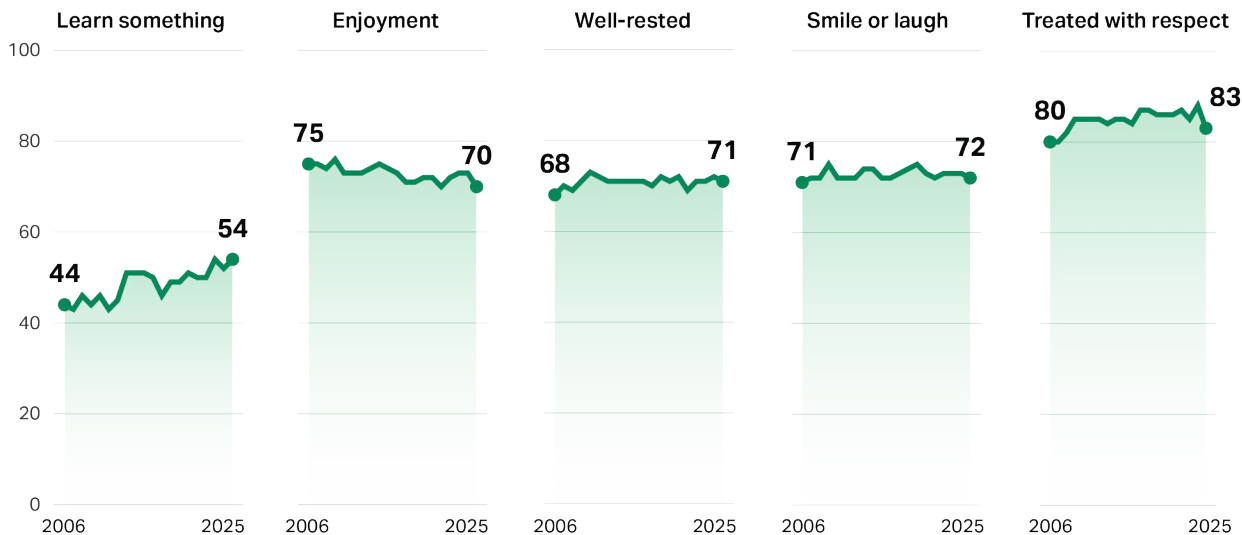
The relative resilience of positive emotions matters. Research suggests positive and negative emotions are not simply opposite ends of the same spectrum. People can experience both at the same time, particularly under difficult circumstances. Positive emotions can help people cope with stress and adversity, even when the sources of that distress remain.¹⁶

The resilience of positive emotions is especially relevant in countries experiencing war and prolonged crisis. High levels of worry, stress, sadness or anger do not necessarily mean positive emotions disappear with them. Gallup's latest 2026 data offer a closer look at how those emotions coexist under some of the world's most difficult conditions.

FIGURE 8
Global Trends in Daily Positive Emotions

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about ...?

% Yes



Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2006-2025

Spotlight

Last year's *State of the World's Emotional Health* report showed that sadness, worry and anger were more common in countries experiencing greater violence and conflict, even after accounting for GDP. Anger and sadness were also strongly related to weaker scores on both the Global Peace Index, which measures the absence of violence and conflict, and the Positive Peace Index, which assesses the institutions and structures that support long-term stability.¹⁷

Those findings suggest Gallup's emotion measures reflect more than the immediate presence or absence of conflict. They are also connected to the broader conditions that support sustainable peace, including security, wellbeing and functioning institutions.

Gallup's latest surveys provide a closer look at emotional health in a country no longer at war, but still dealing with the effects of prolonged crisis: Afghanistan. The trend shows how distress and positive emotions can coexist during war, amid continuing conflict and after war has ended.¹⁸



Distress Remains High in Afghanistan: No Longer at War, Still in Crisis

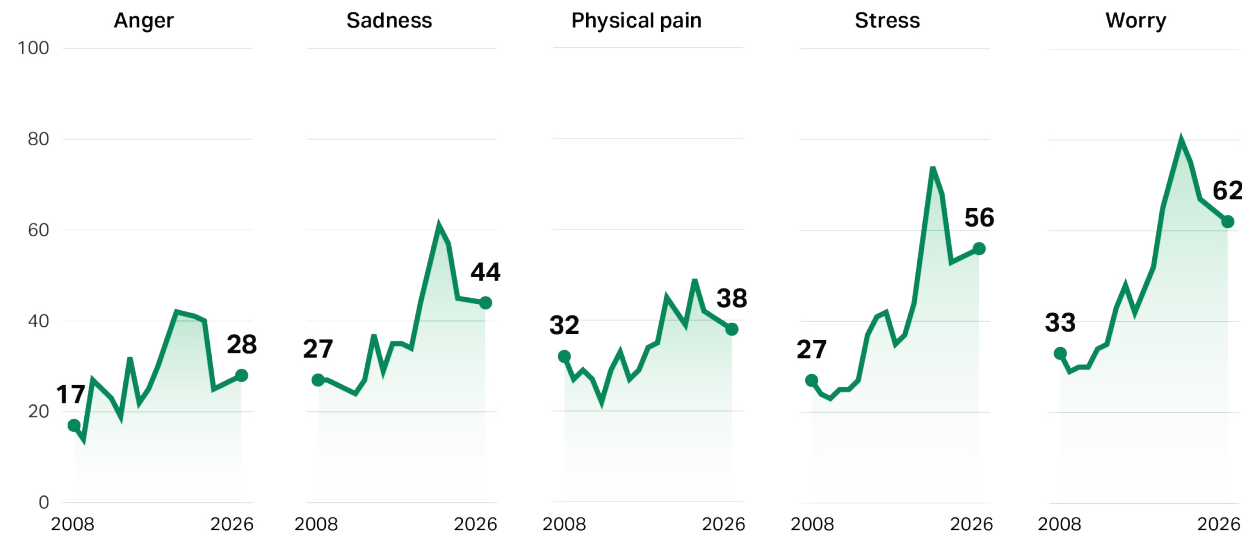
In 2026, Gallup surveyed Afghans for the first time in three years, offering a new look at how people are feeling under Taliban rule.

Afghans' emotions have changed marginally since the last time they were surveyed. In 2026, 62% report worry during much of the previous day, compared with 67% in 2023. More than half report stress (56%), while 44% have experienced sadness, 38% physical pain and 28% anger. Except for the five-point decline in worry, none of these measures differ meaningfully from 2023.

FIGURE 9
Trends in Negative Emotions in Afghanistan, 2008-2026

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about ...?

% Yes



Note: Lines connect across years when Afghanistan was not surveyed (2020, 2024 and 2025)

Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.

Source: Gallup World Poll, 2008-2026

Positive emotions remain relatively scarce as well. One in four Afghans report enjoyment (25%) or smiling or laughing (25%) the previous day.

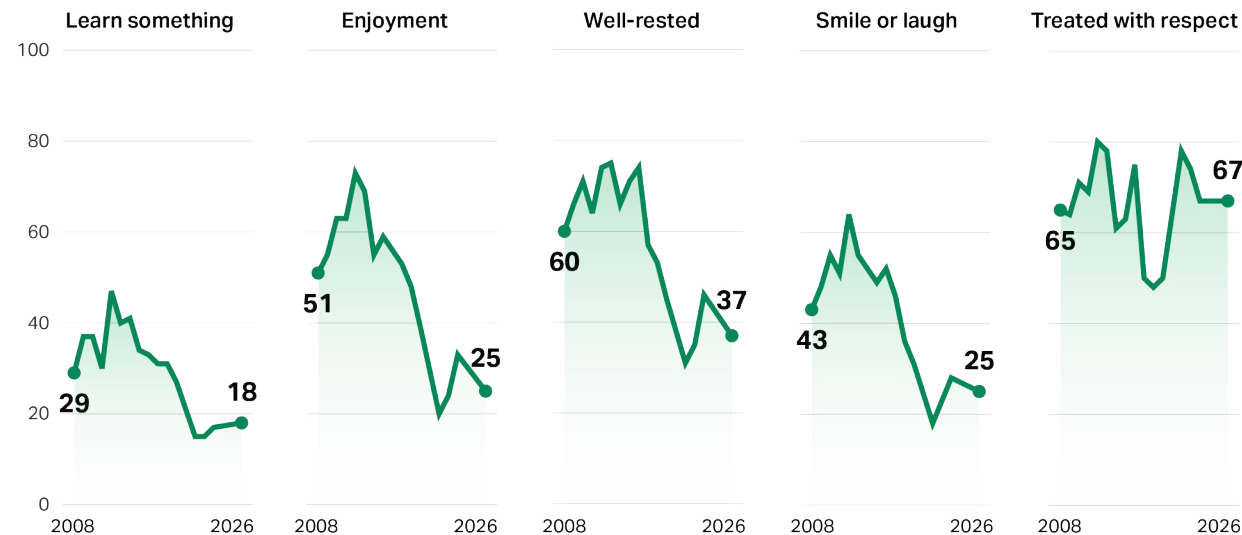
Fewer than one in five (18%) say they learned or did something interesting, 37% feel well-rested and 67% say they were treated with respect. Afghanistan ranks at or near the bottom on these positive emotions among the countries Gallup had surveyed so far in 2026.

These figures also show why negative emotions tell only part of the story. Positive emotions can persist alongside worry, stress and sadness, even under difficult circumstances.

FIGURE 10
Trends in Positive Emotions in Afghanistan, 2008-2026

Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? How about ...?

% Yes



Note: Lines connect across years when Afghanistan was not surveyed (2020, 2024 and 2025)
Click this [link](#) to view the full dataset.
Source: Gallup World Poll, 2008-2026

Conclusion

Across 97 countries, social media use has a modest, generally positive relationship with wellbeing after accounting for differences in who uses it. More time spent on social media does not correspond with steadily worse wellbeing. And neither pattern looks the same everywhere.

Country-level results vary substantially, reinforcing one of the broader findings of this report: Social media is only one part of people's emotional lives. Gallup's data cannot resolve policy questions about social media use, but they show why the amount of time people spend online provides an incomplete and varied picture of wellbeing. Still, in many high-income countries, such as the United States, time spent on social media is associated with lower life evaluation, whereas in non-high-income countries, it is associated with higher life evaluation or has no effect.

The wider circumstances of people's lives matter, too. In Afghanistan, high levels of distress reflect different experiences of war and prolonged crisis. Yet positive experiences continue alongside worry, stress and sadness, just as Gallup's earlier research shows that emotions are connected to both conflict and the broader conditions that sustain peace.

As digital life becomes increasingly intertwined with daily life, understanding how the world is feeling requires looking beyond any one technology, behavior or emotion. Social media is part of that picture, but understanding emotional wellbeing requires understanding the lives in which it is embedded.



Survey Methods

Results for the social media and wellbeing analysis are based on Gallup World Poll surveys conducted in 2026 among adults aged 15 and older in 97 countries and areas. In most countries, approximately 1,000 adults were interviewed using nationally representative probability-based samples. Interviews were conducted by telephone or face to face, depending on local coverage and conditions.

Social media use was measured by asking respondents whether they had used any type of social media in the past seven days. Those who had were also asked how much time they typically spend on social media each day. There were five response options ranging from:

- 1) Less than 30 minutes
- 2) 30 minutes to less than 1 hour
- 3) 1 hour to less than 2 hours
- 4) 2 hours to less than 5 hours
- 5) 5 hours or more

A sixth category was implied to indicate no time for those who did not use social media at all in the past seven days. Low social media use was defined as those spending no time to less than 30 minutes. Moderate use was defined as those spending between 30 minutes and two hours. High use was defined as two hours or more.



Country-level descriptive results are weighted to reflect the adult population of each country. Global descriptive estimates are reported as medians across countries rather than pooled population-weighted averages.

Regression analyses examine the relationships between social media use and emotional experiences, life evaluation and selected measures of confidence in institutions. Separate analyses among social media users examine differences by time spent using two different models. One model used moderate users as the reference group and estimated the association between low and high use. An alternative model used a linear measure of social media use.

All models are estimated using weighted least squares and include controls for internet use, age, gender, education, employment status, household income quintile, reported health problems and whether the respondent has someone they can count on.

Pooled models also account for country, using clustered errors, while country-level models are estimated separately within each country. These models were run for the full population, with age cohort effects, and separately for the 15-to-29-year-old population. This was done at the global and country levels.

Statistical significance is assessed at $p < .05$. Effects are described as small if r -values are less than 0.10 in absolute value terms and moderately small if they fall between 0.10 and 0.25 in absolute value. R -values were calculated from the models above, using the t -statistic.¹⁹

Results are observational and describe associations rather than causal effects.

For country-level subgroup comparisons, Gallup does not report results when the unweighted subgroup sample is smaller than 100.

The results for the 2025 data on global emotions are based on nationally representative, probability-based samples among the adult population aged 15 and older in approximately 140 countries and territories surveyed from 2006 to 2025. With the exception of China, 2025 results are based on telephone or face-to-face surveys of approximately 1,000 respondents in each country or territory from March 27 to Dec. 5. In China, surveys were conducted online.

For results based on the total sample of national adults in 2025, the margin of sampling error ranges between ± 2.2 and ± 5.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error reflects the influence of data weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Appendix

Appendix I: Variation in the Country-Level Association Between Social Media Use and Wellbeing

Using Gallup's preferred definition of high social media use — two or more hours per day — and comparing high users with moderate users, the country-level results show the following associations with wellbeing among those aged 15 to 29.

In 80 of 97 countries, high social media use has no substantial association with positive emotional experiences. For life evaluation, this is the case in 74 countries. This means that social media use explains less than 1% of the variation in the outcome in these countries.

High social media use, compared with moderate use, explains more than 1% of the variation in a negative direction in 14 countries for positive emotional experiences and 13 countries for life evaluation. High social media use has a substantial positive association with positive emotional experiences in three countries and a substantial positive association with life evaluation in 10 countries.

These results are similar, with some changes in the number of countries, when high social media use is defined as five or more hours per day or when time spent on social media is modeled as a continuous measure. These results are summarized in this appendix.



FIGURE 11
Summary of Country-Level Models for Population Aged 15 to 29

Number of countries with no effect of social media, negative and positive effects out of 97 tested, using various definitions of social media use, age group and wellbeing outcome. All models adjust for internet use, household income, education, gender, age, health problems, social support and employment status. R-values are partial r statistics, calculated as $r = t / \sqrt{t^2 + df}$, where t is the t-statistic and df is the degrees of freedom for the model. Moderate effects are defined as those with absolute value of r above 0.1. Significant effects are defined as p-value < .05

	+ Positive emotional experiences			Life evaluation		
	Linear effect of time spent	High use (2+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <2 hours)	Heavy use (5+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <5 hours)	Linear effect of time spent	High use (2+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <2 hours)	Heavy use (5+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <5 hours)
R-value						
Countries with no moderate or large effects, using r-values	78	80	86	71	74	66
Countries with moderate negative effects, using r-values	12	14	9	16	13	17
Countries with moderate positive effects, using r-values	7	3	2	10	10	14
P-value						
Countries with no significant effect, using p-values	90	91	91	80	83	75
Countries with negative significant effect, using p-values	6	5	5	8	6	11
Countries with positive significant effect, using p-values	1	1	1	9	8	11

For an optimized screen reader experience, access the data table at this [link](#).

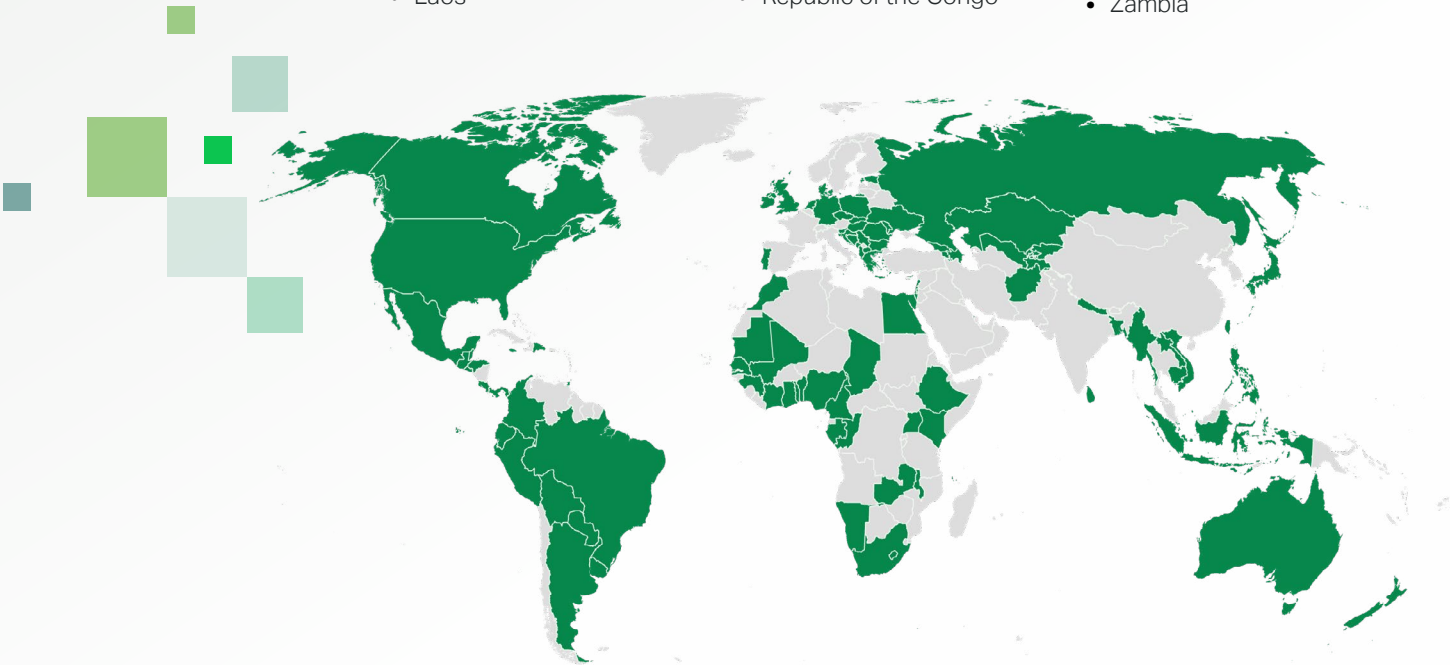
FIGURE 12
Summary of Country-Level Models for All Adults, Pooled

	+ Positive emotional experiences			🏠 Life evaluation		
	Linear effect of time spent	High use (2+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <2 hours)	Heavy use (5+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <5 hours)	Linear effect of time spent	High use (2+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <2 hours)	Heavy use (5+ hours) vs moderate (30 minutes to <5 hours)
R-value						
Countries with no moderate or large effects, using r-values	93	94	93	91	93	89
Countries with moderate negative effects, using r-values	3	2	3	3	1	3
Countries with moderate positive effects, using r-values	1	1	1	3	3	5
P-value						
Countries with no significant effect, using p-values	84	85	84	76	80	72
Countries with negative significant effect, using p-values	8	11	12	8	9	13
Countries with positive significant effect, using p-values	5	1	1	13	8	12

For an optimized screen reader experience, access the data table at this [link](#).

Appendix II: Countries/Territories in This Analysis

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Azerbaijan
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Belize
- Benin
- Bolivia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Chad
- Colombia
- Comoros
- Costa Rica
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Estonia
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Georgia
- Germany
- Ghana
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Honduras
- Hungary
- Indonesia
- Ireland
- Israel
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Kyrgyzstan
- Laos
- Lebanon
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Mali
- Malta
- Mauritania
- Mexico
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- Myanmar
- Namibia
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- North Macedonia
- Northern Cyprus
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Republic of Moldova
- Republic of the Congo
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Sri Lanka
- Taiwan, Province of China
- Tajikistan
- The Gambia
- Togo
- Trinidad & Tobago
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- United States
- Uruguay
- Uzbekistan
- Vietnam
- West Bank and East Jerusalem
- Zambia



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