

Survey: Half of parents believe their children's mental health suffered due to social media during the past year

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Concerns continue to grow about the impact social media use has on the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents. According to a new national survey conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of

The On Our Sleeves Movement For Children's Mental Health, half (50%) of parents of children younger than 18 feel their child(ren)'s mental health has suffered during the past 12 months because of social media use.

To best understand how social [media](#) is impacting their children's [mental health](#), On Our Sleeves encourages parents and caregivers to sit down and have regular conversations with their children about how using certain [social media platforms](#) can make them feel.

Protecting the mental health of children online has also become a conversation outside of the home and on the national level. Between April 2022 and April 2023, platforms like TikTok have introduced new safety measures, and lawmakers have discussed bills that would limit user access to social media.

"This is a positive step, but parents can't trust that this is enough," said Dr. Ariana Hoet, clinical director of On Our Sleeves and a pediatric psychologist at Nationwide Children's Hospital. "Social media has the ability to increase anxiety and depression in children when used inappropriately, as well as potentially open them up to inappropriate sharing, hurtful language, bullying and more."

Dr. Hoet says not all social media is bad. It can help in building a sense of community, relationships and self-understanding. Yet, during the past year, the survey shows the number of Americans who say children's use of social media has a [positive influence](#) on their mental health has fallen to just over one-third (35%), a drop from 43% in 2022. In an increasingly digital world, it's important for parents and caregivers to understand the pros and cons of social media use and work to maintain open communication about what children are experiencing online.

"Be curious about what your child is doing on social media. Taking an

active role in their social media engagement, instead of simply limiting their exposure, can help them feel comfortable to ask questions, report concerns and seek help when they need it," Dr. Hoet said.

Unfortunately, fewer parents say they're comfortable having conversations with their kids about mental [health](#), a drop of 5 percentage points from 91% in 2022 to 86% in 2023. To facilitate these conversations, consistent and open communication is essential. On Our Sleeves provides parents and caregivers with free, easy-to-follow guides and tools to start conversations about what's happening on social media and strategies on how to set boundaries and keep them safe. Experts recommend:

- Asking kids to show you their favorite video, channel, or online influencer and following up with open-ended questions so you listen more than you speak.
- Developing a family social media plan to minimize conflict, support good choices, and address misuse. [On Our Sleeves has a template](#) that can be modified to meet each family's needs.
- Talking to your kids about how to seek help from a trusted adult if they feel like something unsafe is happening and discussing which parental controls and settings will be in place for [social media use](#) and why.

The balance between allowing children to explore social media while avoiding potentially dangerous aspects can be difficult. Through On Our Sleeves, parents can work to build trusting relationships that allow their children to reap the benefits of social media while minimizing the risk of negative outcomes.

For more information and resources to start conversations with [children](#) about safely using [social media](#), visit [OnOurSleeves.org](#).

Survey Method:

The 2023 survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of *On Our Sleeves* from March 30-April 3, 2023, among 2,035 U.S. adults ages 18+ among whom 711 are parents of kids younger than 18. The 2022 survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of On Our Sleeves from April 5-7, 2022 among 2,063 U.S. adults ages 18 and older, among whom 686 are parents of kids younger than 18. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a [Bayesian credible interval](#). For these studies, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. For complete survey methodologies, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Molly Devaney at 614-905-8318.

Provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital

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