



Broad Solutions to Smartphone Addiction

A Survey of High School Students

Michael Mercier

Screen Education



Survey Overview

Background

1. Americans have been concerned about smartphone addiction since the news media began reporting on it in 2017.

2. Screen Education's prior research has found it has a deleterious effect on young peoples' lives, including their academic experience.

3. Young people are frustrated by their smartphone addiction, and wish they could control it.

4. Unfortunately, very little has been done to address the problem.

5. We wondered whether young people were sufficiently fed up with their smartphone addiction that they were hungry for bold, broad-based solutions.

Primary Objective



To get reaction to a set of bold, broad solutions to smartphone addiction from high school students.

Secondary Objectives

1. To determine the extent of the problem of smartphone addiction among high school students.

2. To understand the negative consequences of smartphone addiction for high school students.

3. To understand the level of concern about smartphone addiction among high school students.

4. To understand the degree of desire for assistance in addressing smartphone addiction among high school students.

Research Team

Research Organizations



Research Team Members

Rahul Bhatnager, Director – Platform Solutions, *Innovate MR*

Glenn Stark, Statistician

Sheetal Gupta, Associate Project Manager – Client Services, *Innovate MR*

Molly Strawn, Senior Marketing Strategist, *Innovate MR*

Michael Mercier, President, *Screen Education*

Lisa Wilding-Brown, Chief Executive Officer, *Innovate MR*

Brittany Nicols, VP, Marketing & Communications, *Innovate MR*

Research Process

Recruitment



We recruited participants using
InnovateMR's Vision Suite™.

Participant Qualifications

- 14-19 years old
- In grades 9-12
- Have their own smartphone

Online Survey



Respondents completed an online survey that was programmed and fielded using InnovateMR's Vision Suite™ and proprietary PointClub Panel

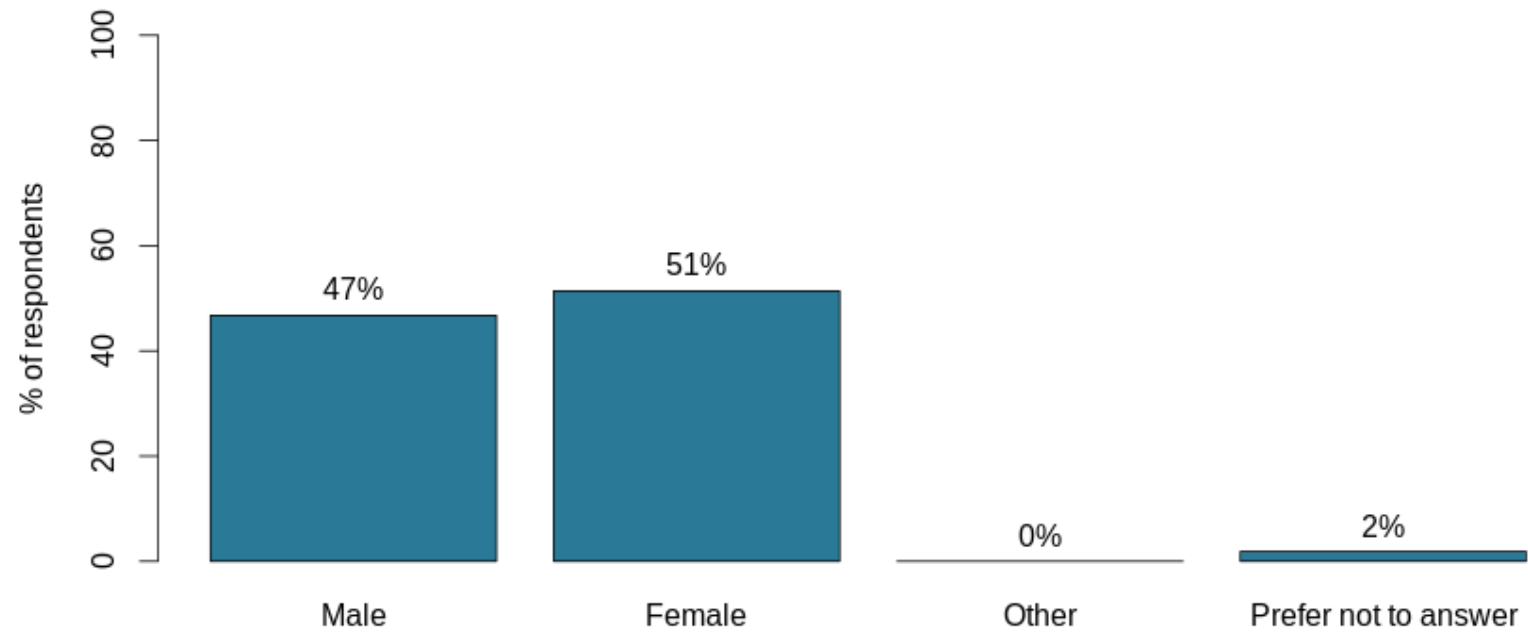
Sample Size



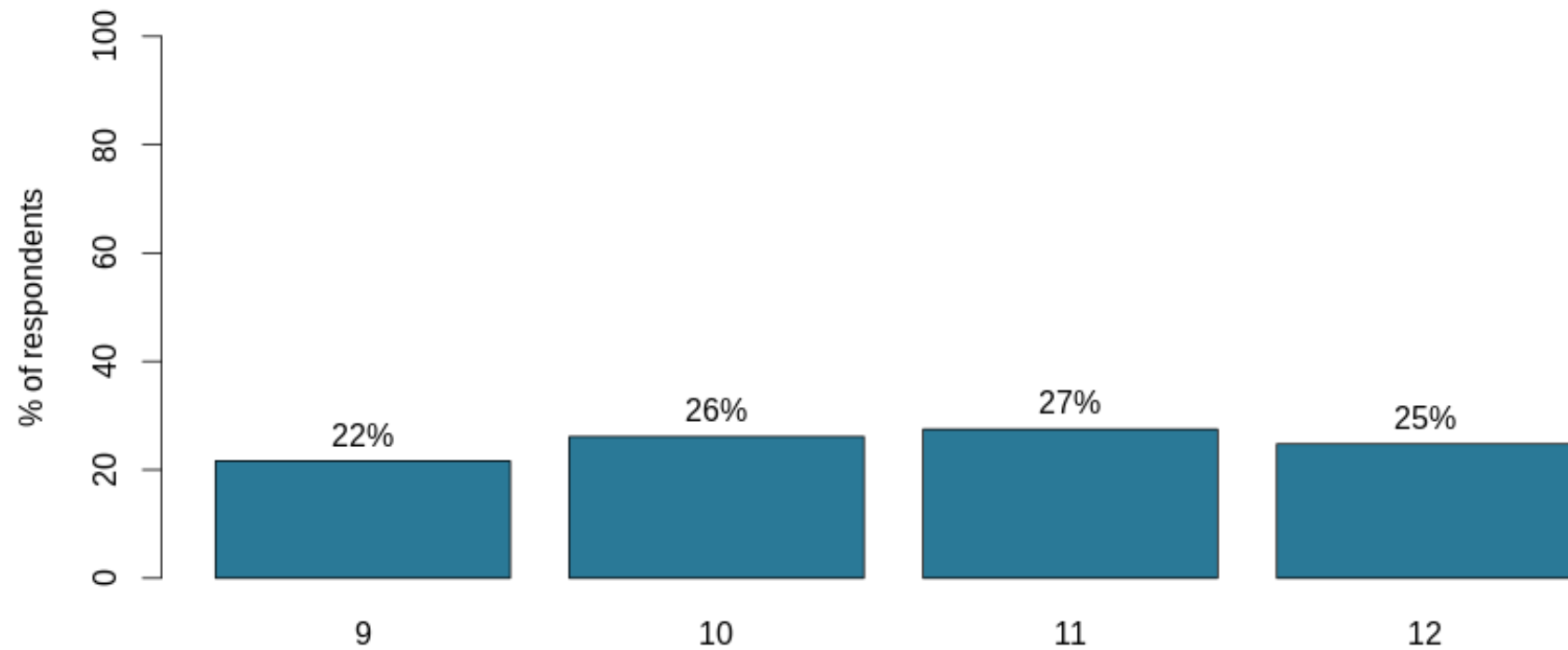
- Completed surveys: 666
- Margin of error: 4%

Respondent Demographics

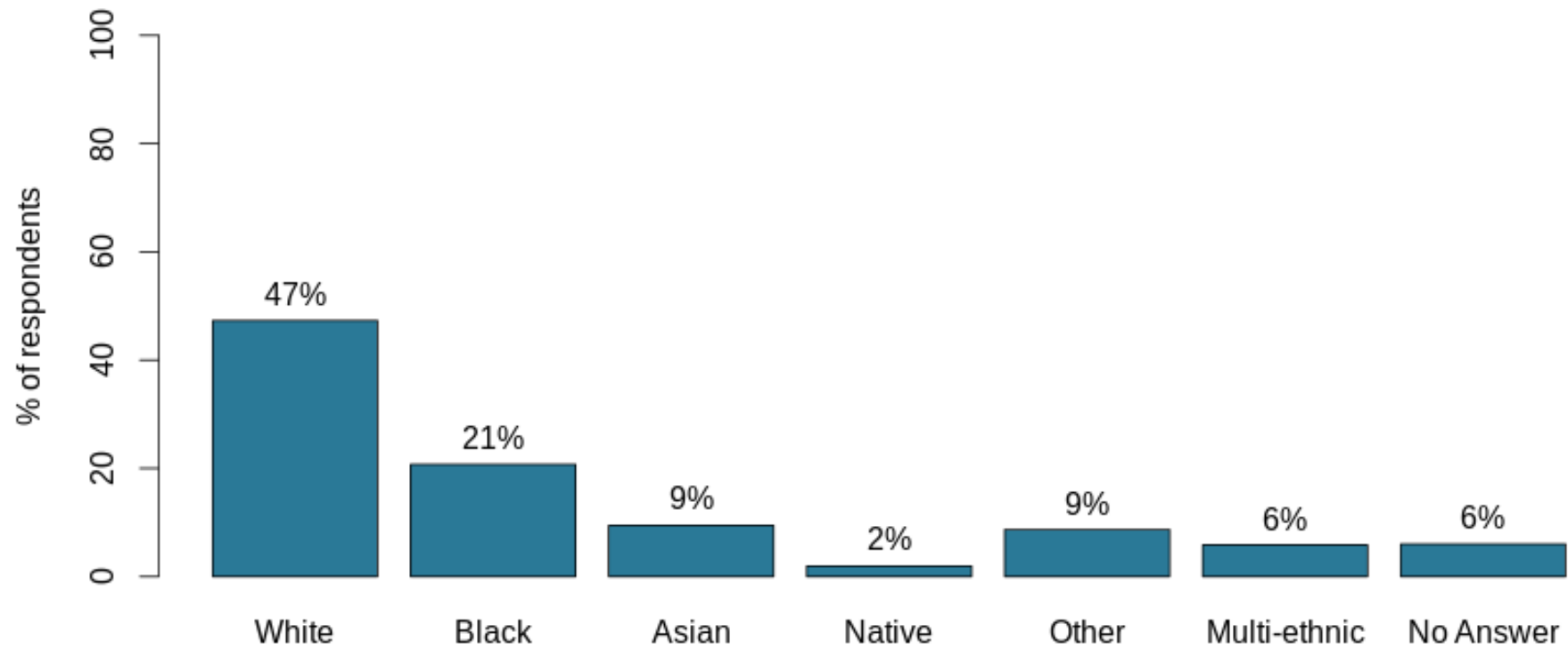
Gender



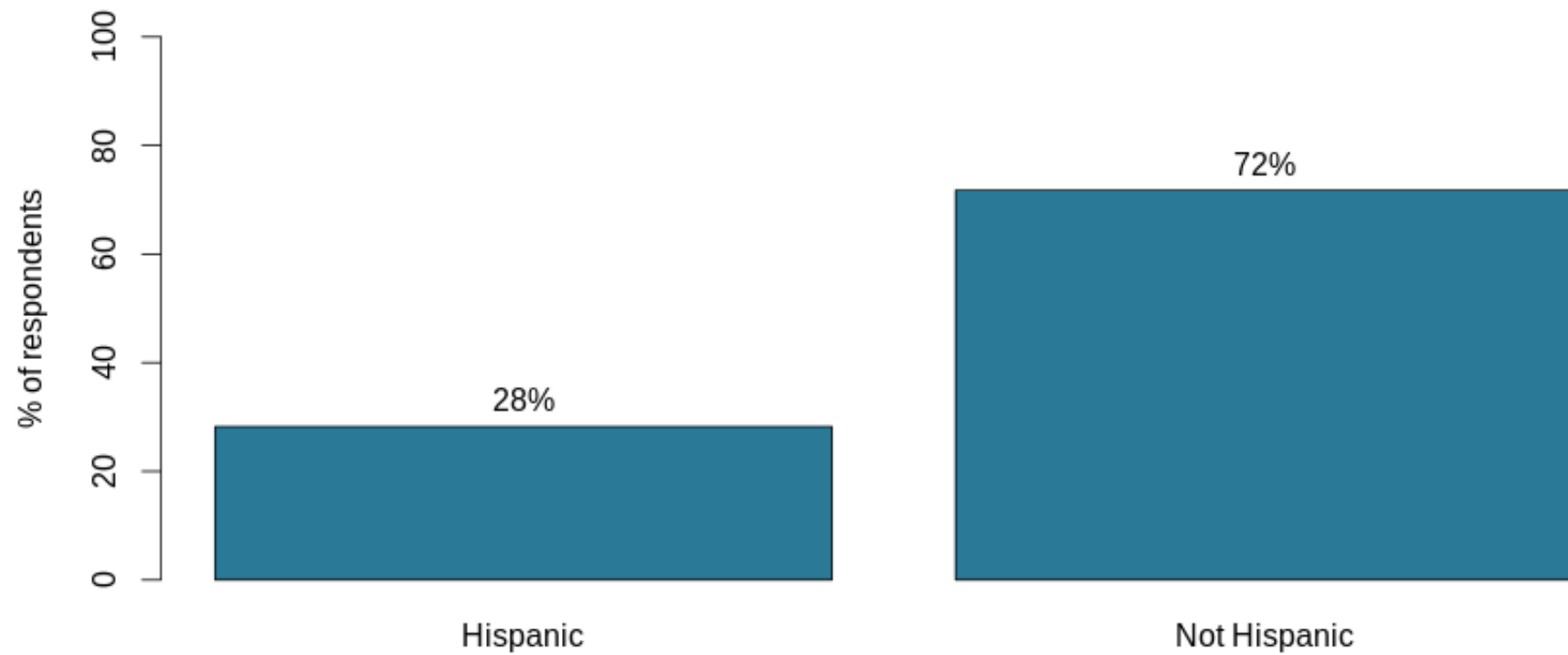
Grade




Race



Ethnicity

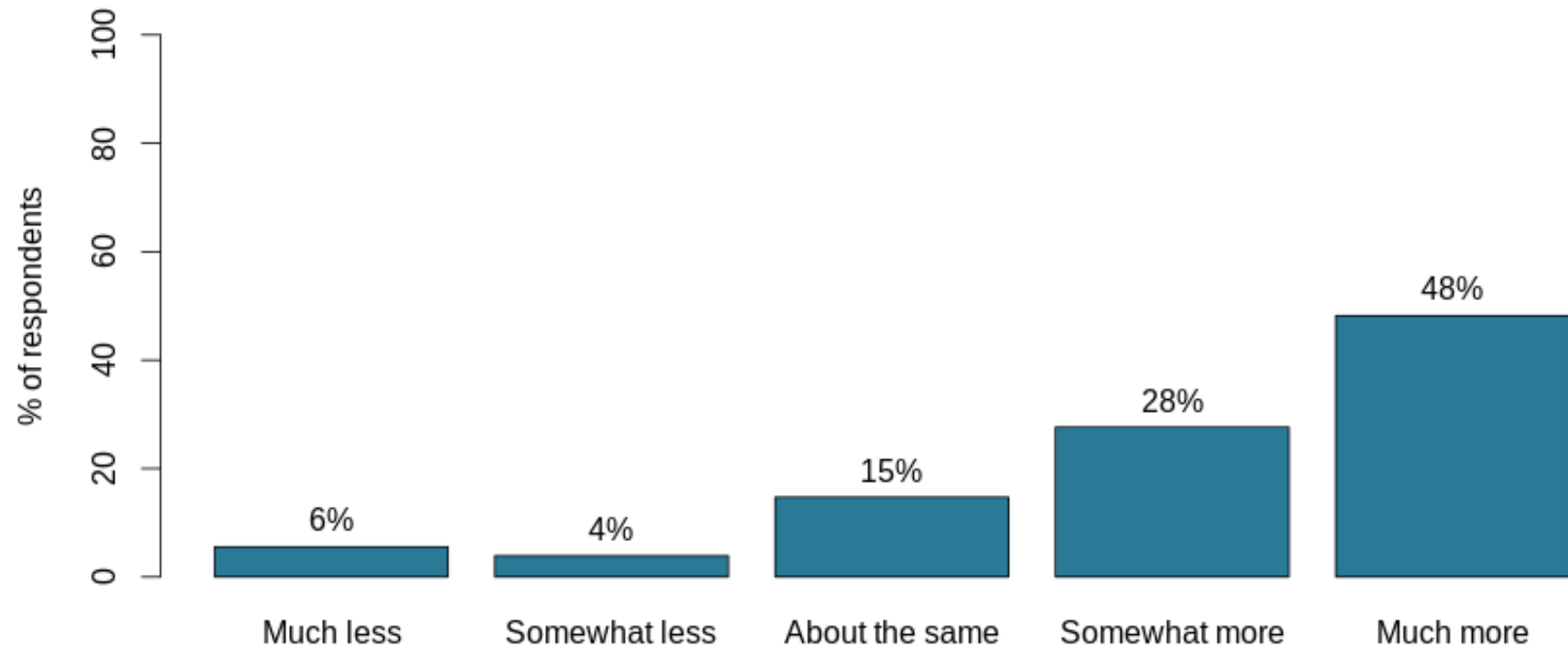



How problematic is smartphone addiction?




Respondents estimate they spend **6 hours** each day using their smartphone for purposes other than school.

Have you used your smartphone more or less during the COVID-19 era?






62% feel they will return to their pre-COVID-19 level of phone use once life has returned to normal.

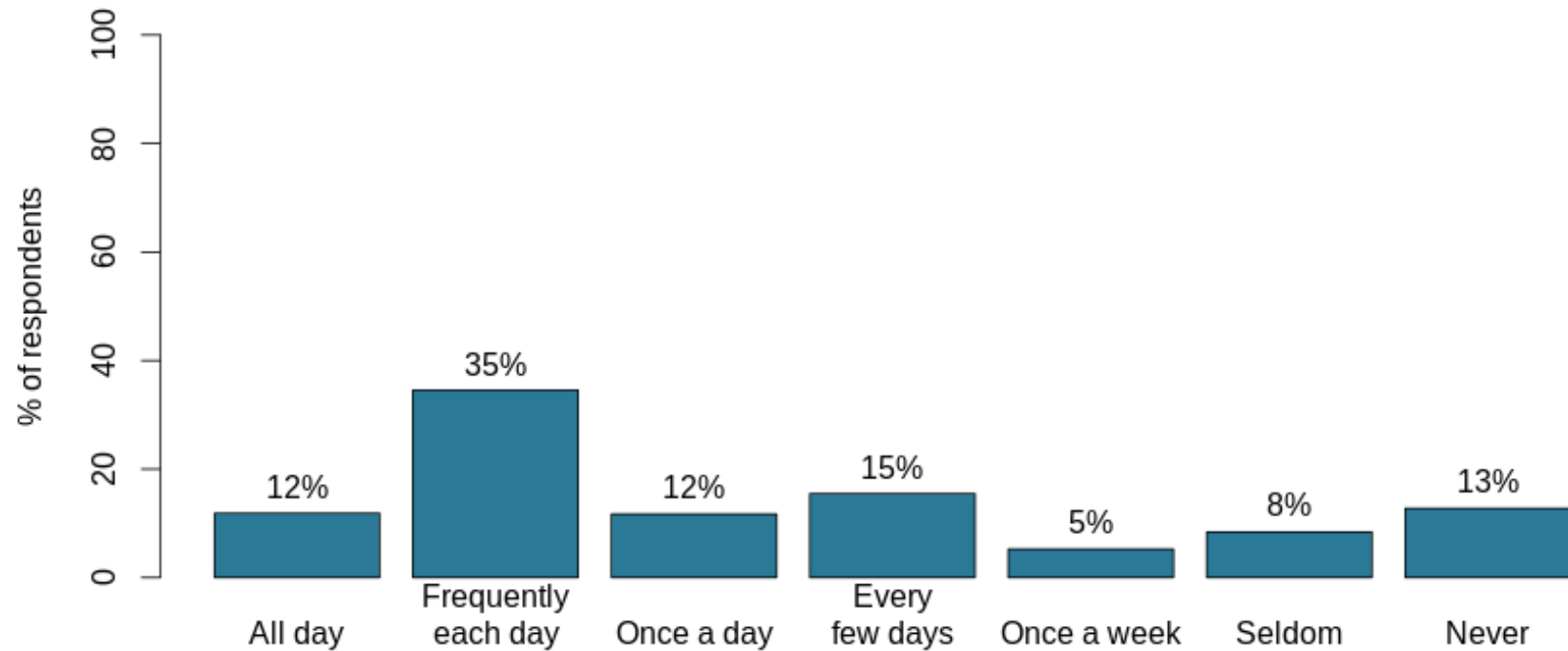


Respondents estimate **46%** of their friends have trouble controlling and limiting how much time they spend using their smartphones each day.

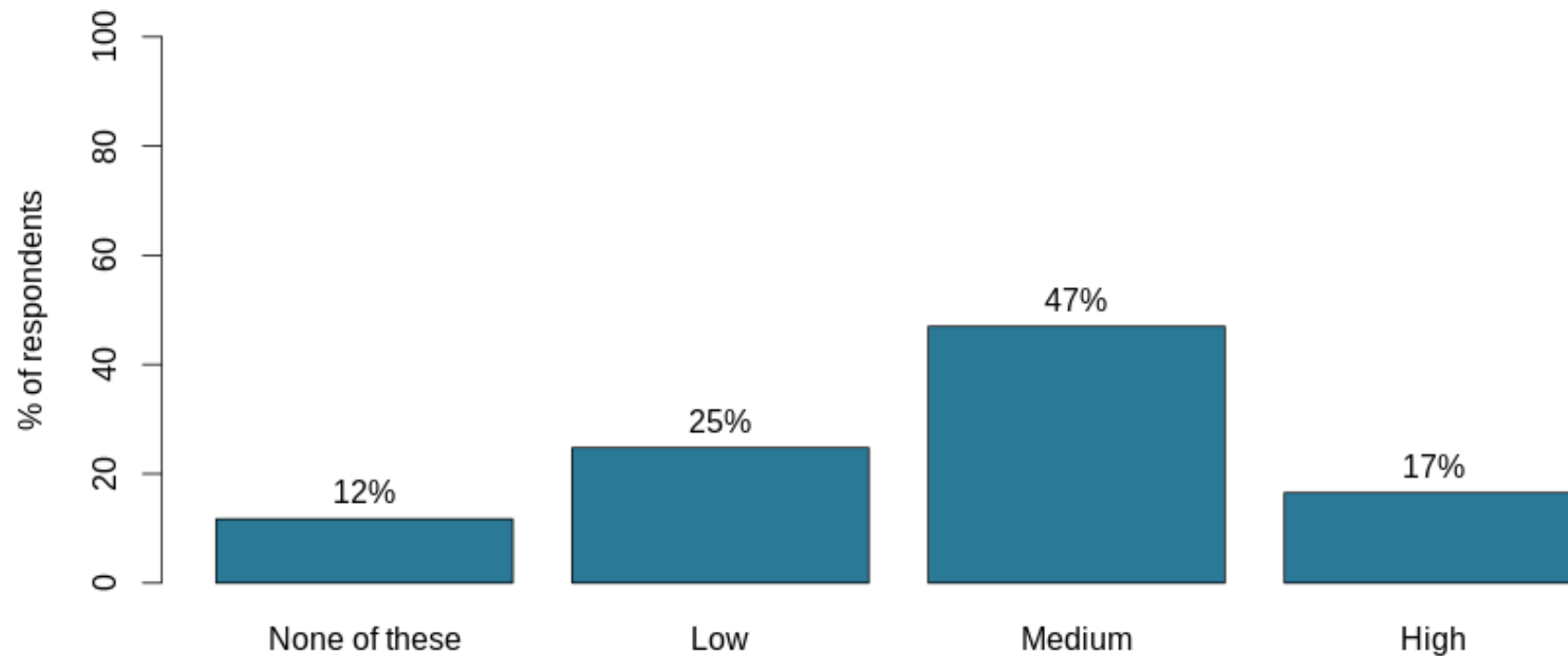


Respondents estimate **46%** of their friends are addicted to their smartphone.

How frequently do you find yourself unable to control, limit, or stop yourself from using your smartphone?

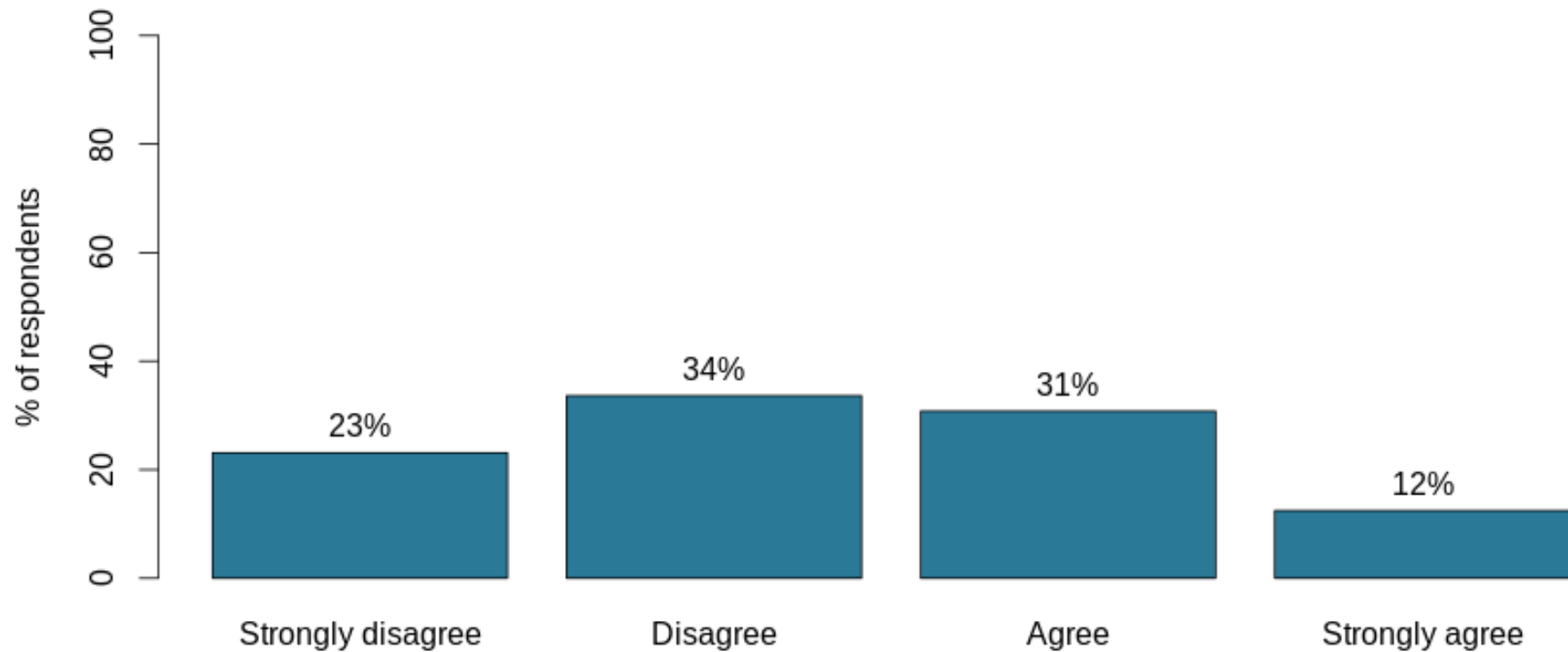


How would you characterize your level of addiction to your smartphone?

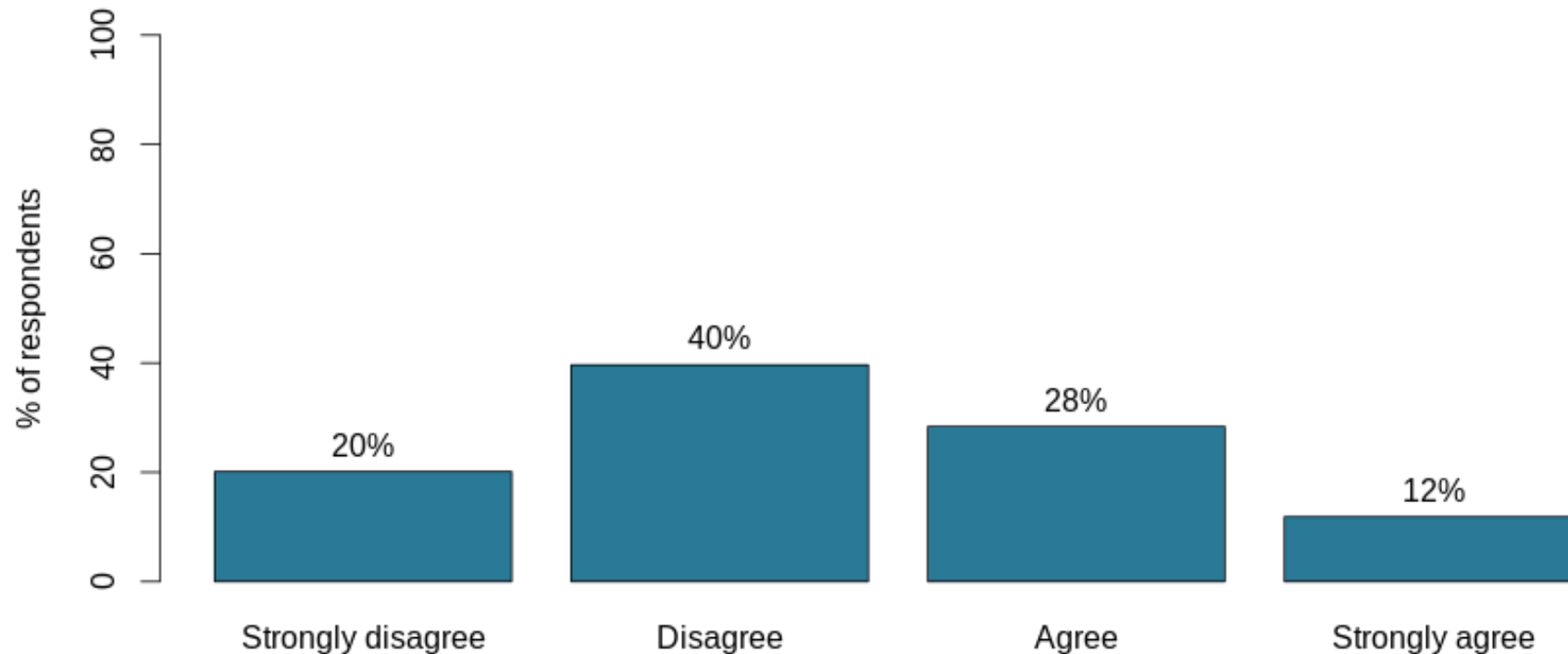



Consequences of Smartphone Addiction

Agree or disagree: My smartphone is an obstacle to my achieving the grades I know I'm capable of achieving.



Think back to the days prior to the COVID-19 lockdowns, and then indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Prior to the COVID-19 lockdowns, I spent too much time socializing with my close friends through my phone, and not enough time socializing with them in-person.





34% of respondents said they had at least once in the past decided to not participate in an organized extracurricular activity they wanted to participate in because they preferred to spend that time using their smartphone

Please list all of the organized extracurricular activities you wanted to participate in, but didn't, because you preferred to instead spend that time doing things on your smartphone.

“Party, meeting friends, movies, mall, grocery shopping, yard work, pretty much anything that has to do with leaving my room.”

“Dance and hanging out.”

“A school trip and many hangouts with my friends.”

“Learning the uke.”

Please list all of the organized extracurricular activities you wanted to participate in, but didn't, because you preferred to instead spend that time doing things on your smartphone.

“I wanted to go to the movie theater with my friends but watched it on my phone.”

“I...wanted to read a book or playing outside instead that I'm doing stuff on my phone.”

“Environmental Club, drawing.”

“Church, prom.”

“Art clubs, school plays, and football games.”

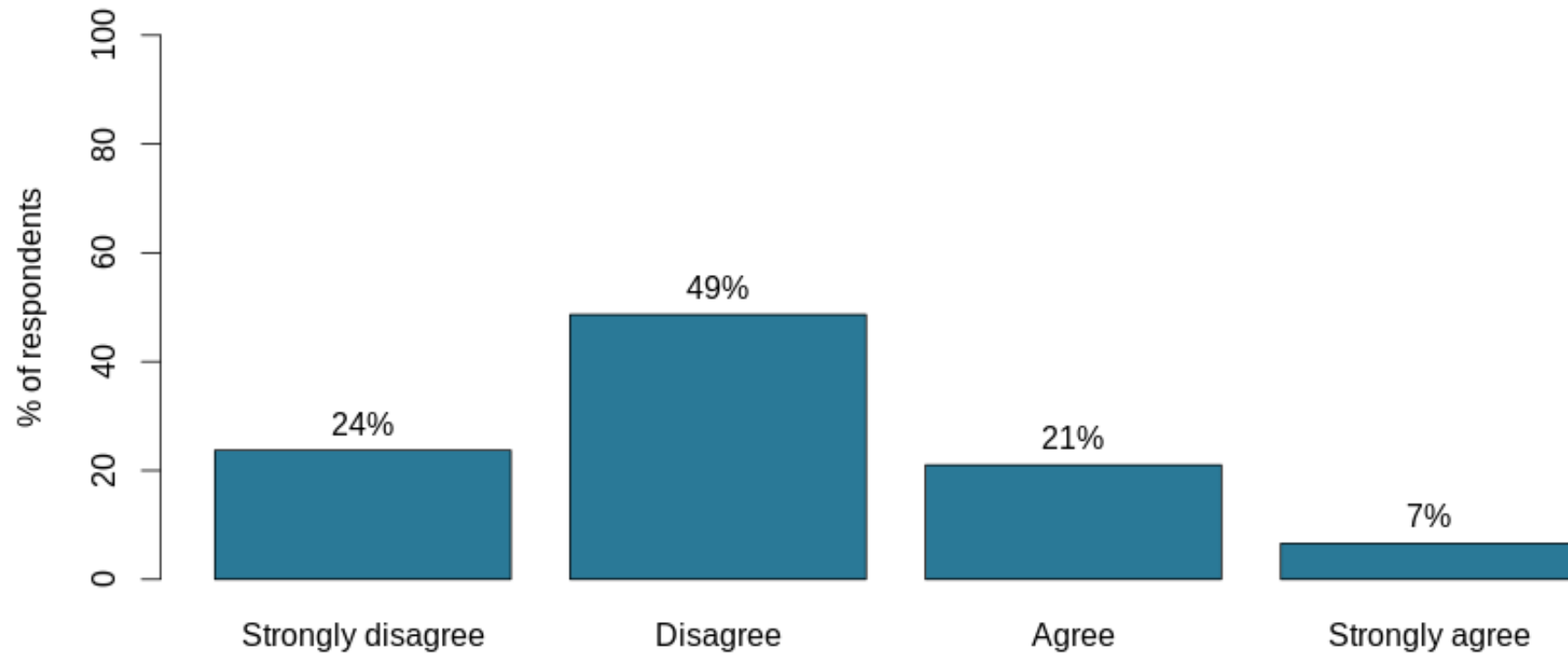
Please list all of the organized extracurricular activities you wanted to participate in, but didn't, because you preferred to instead spend that time doing things on your smartphone.


“Go to play soccer, go to the lake with my friends, find a job, do some activities outside.”

“Any sports except basketball and football I would rather sit on my smart phone.”


“Sports, Yearbook Club, and student council.”

Agree or disagree: My smartphone is an obstacle to accomplishing everything I want to in life.






60% said their life would be more joyful if they could spend less time on their smartphone and more time doing other things



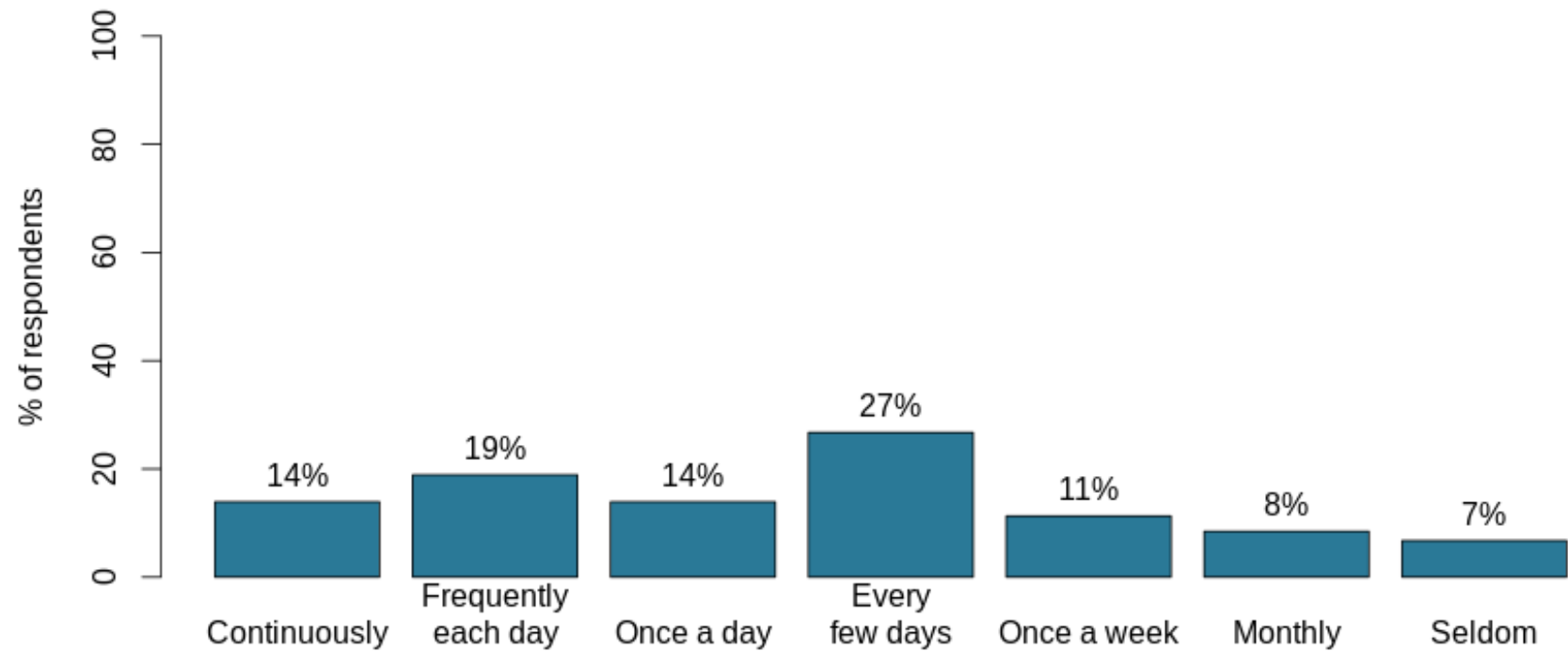
Respondents estimate **46%** of high schoolers believe their life would be more joyful if they could spend less time on their smartphone, and more time doing other things


Desire to Control Smartphone Use



69% of respondents wish they had a greater ability to self-limit the time they spend using their smartphone


How often do you wish you had a greater ability to self-limit your smartphone use?






59% of respondents have attempted to reduce their smartphone use by setting usage rules and/or limits for themselves

Do they desire help controlling
smartphone use?



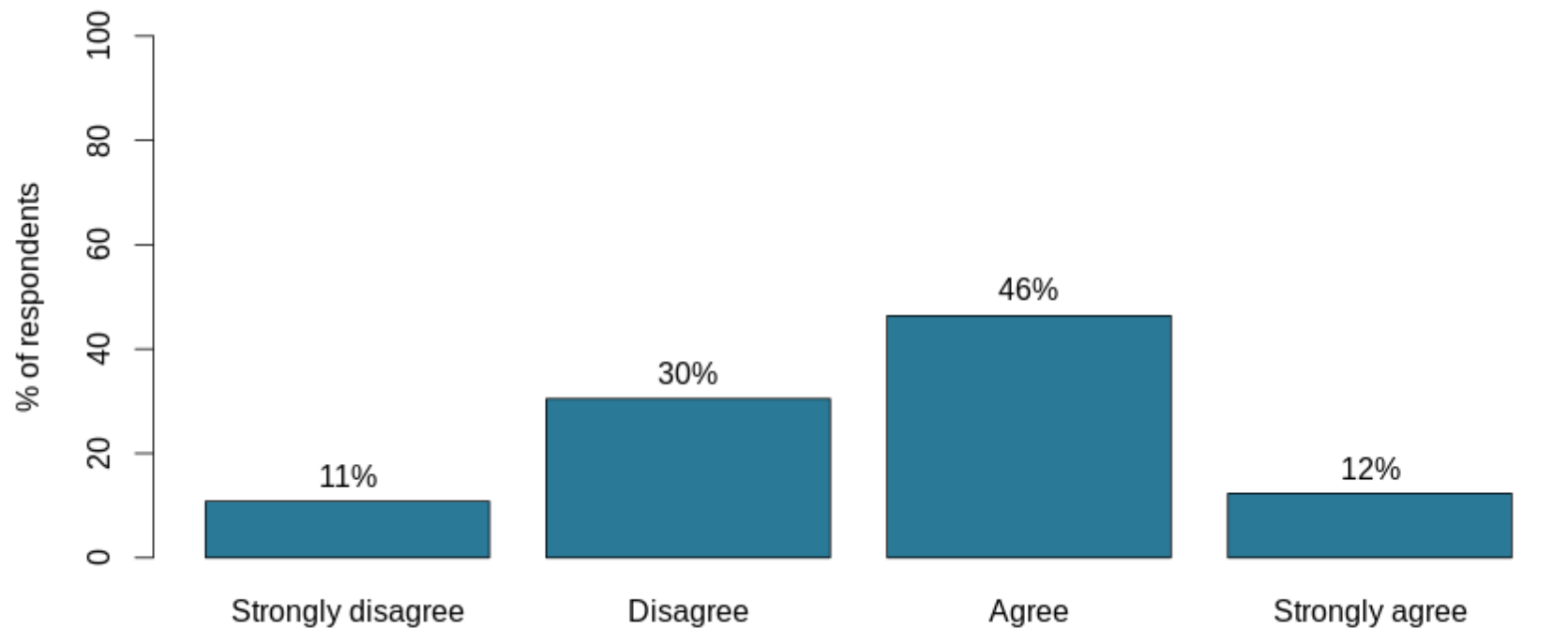
42% of respondents wish someone could provide them with guidance on how to more effectively self-limit or self-regulate their smartphone use



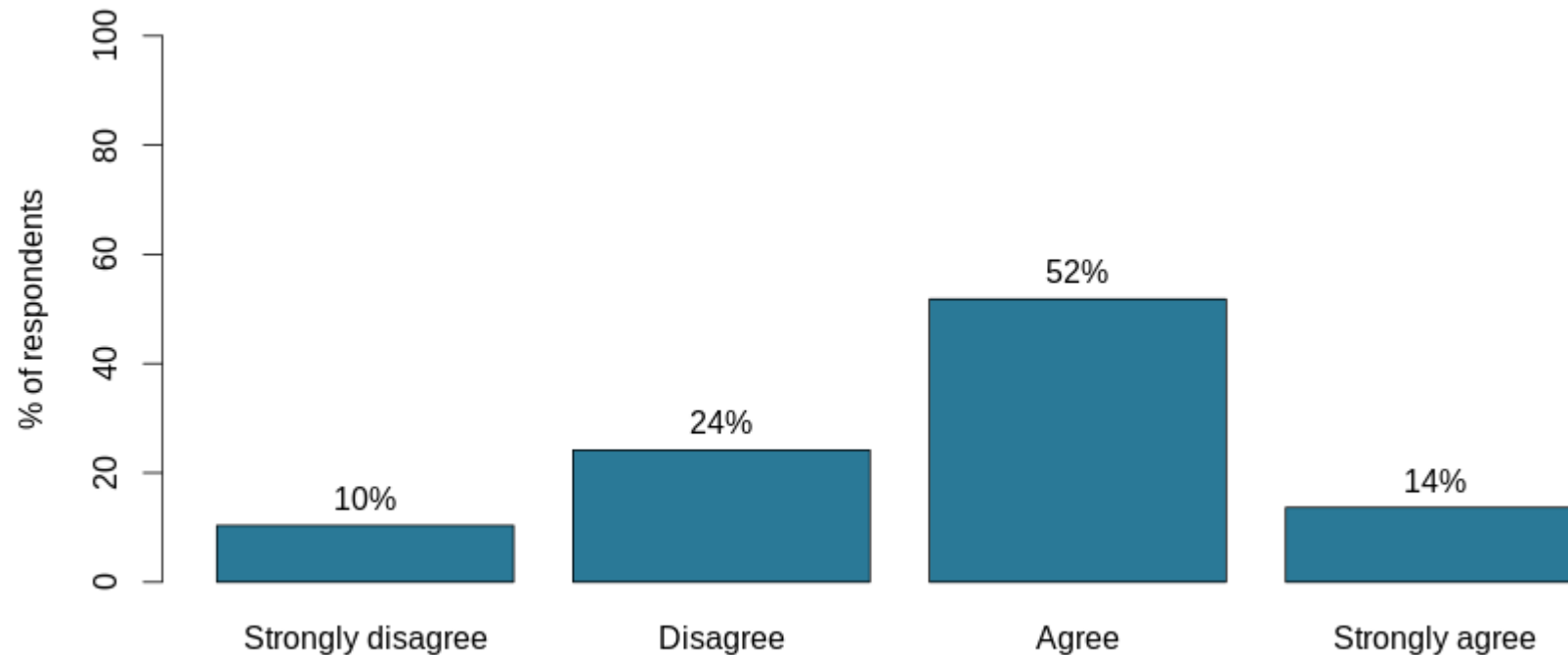
50% of respondents believe it's a good idea to impose hard limits on the time high schoolers are allowed to spend on their smartphones each day to help them reduce their screen time.

Solutions: School-Driven

Agree or disagree: Schools should play a role in teaching young people how to develop the ability to self-limit their screen time.



Agree or disagree: Schools should educate students at each grade level about smartphone addiction and try to instill in them the ability to self-limit their screen time.



What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

“Engage students in more outdoor activities...allow them to enjoy the freedom of getting off...their phone and connecting with the natural world.”

“Help students see that life is more enjoyable off...a smartphone. Let...(them) see how much fun playing games in real life and socializing with friends is.”

“Have different programs for a 72-hour phone ban.”

“They should keep teenagers more active.”

What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

“(In California) students...(must) take one semester...of health class where we learn about diet, exercise, drug addiction, mental health, etc. Including smartphone addiction as course material would allow schools to teach...this subject”

“I believe that it is something that could be discussed in English classes when reading articles to talk about its dangers, or it could be discussed in health classes because smartphone addiction can lead to less physical activity.”

What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

“(Hold) an assembly with motivational speakers or...one day take all the students’ phones to collaborate with others and see how they do in class or for maybe a week, kind of like lab rats but in a professional way.”

“Just make classes more interesting.”

“Maybe a class that talks about how...phone addiction can negatively affect other aspects of your life.”

“Maybe at the end of class the teacher could tell the students to not spend so much time on a phone.”

What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

“I think in health when talking about addiction they speak about phone limitations since technically it is an addiction.”

“School systems might go about this topic by implementing this into a class like life skills, occasionally have assemblies to educate..”

“More paper work and less work on chromebooks/computers/laptops.”

“Teach them how to find joy in other things in life. Teach them how to look up and find answers in other places than the internet.”

What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

“They could encourage students to join clubs and extracurricular activities so they can feel more motivated instead of sitting at home doing nothing all day.”

“Maybe stop doing so much online work and...(go) back to paper.”

“They should have it where no WiFi is available at schools so that students are restricted.”

“Doing more activities and field trips.”

What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

“Show them what comes later in life for a person whose time is wasted on their phone.”

“Practice free time in class where students may not go on their phones. Have class competitions to see who can have the lowest screen time.”

“Maybe tell them what's new and clubs to apply to that will maybe catch their attention.”

“I think school should do programs where you spend less time on technology and do activities outside.”

What ideas do you have in regard to how school systems might go about educating students about smartphone addiction in order to instill in them, over time, the ability to independently self-limit their screen time?

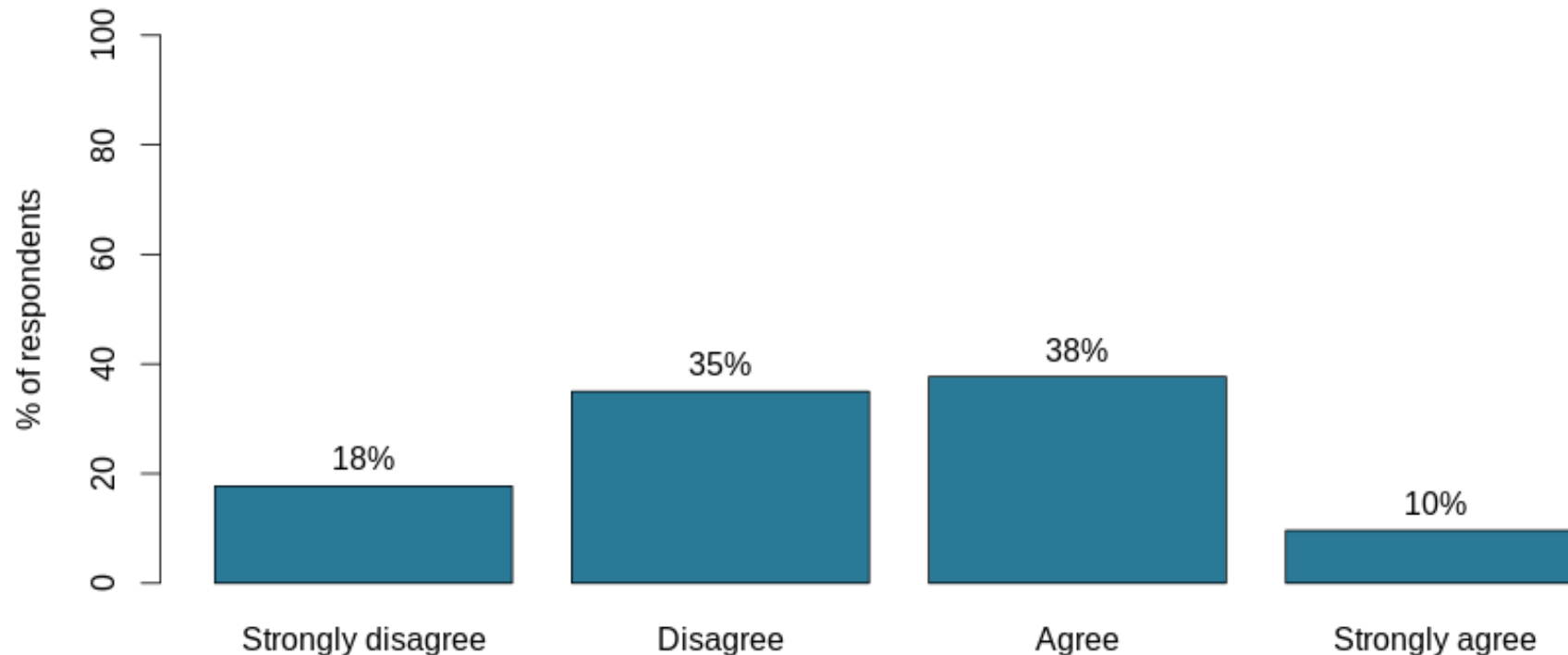
“...schools educating students on this is important for...students lives as they grow older...they should have a unit included in health class about smartphone addiction. This would be a monumental lesson that I wish my generation had growing up.”

“Grade students on how to be off phones and hows theres life.”

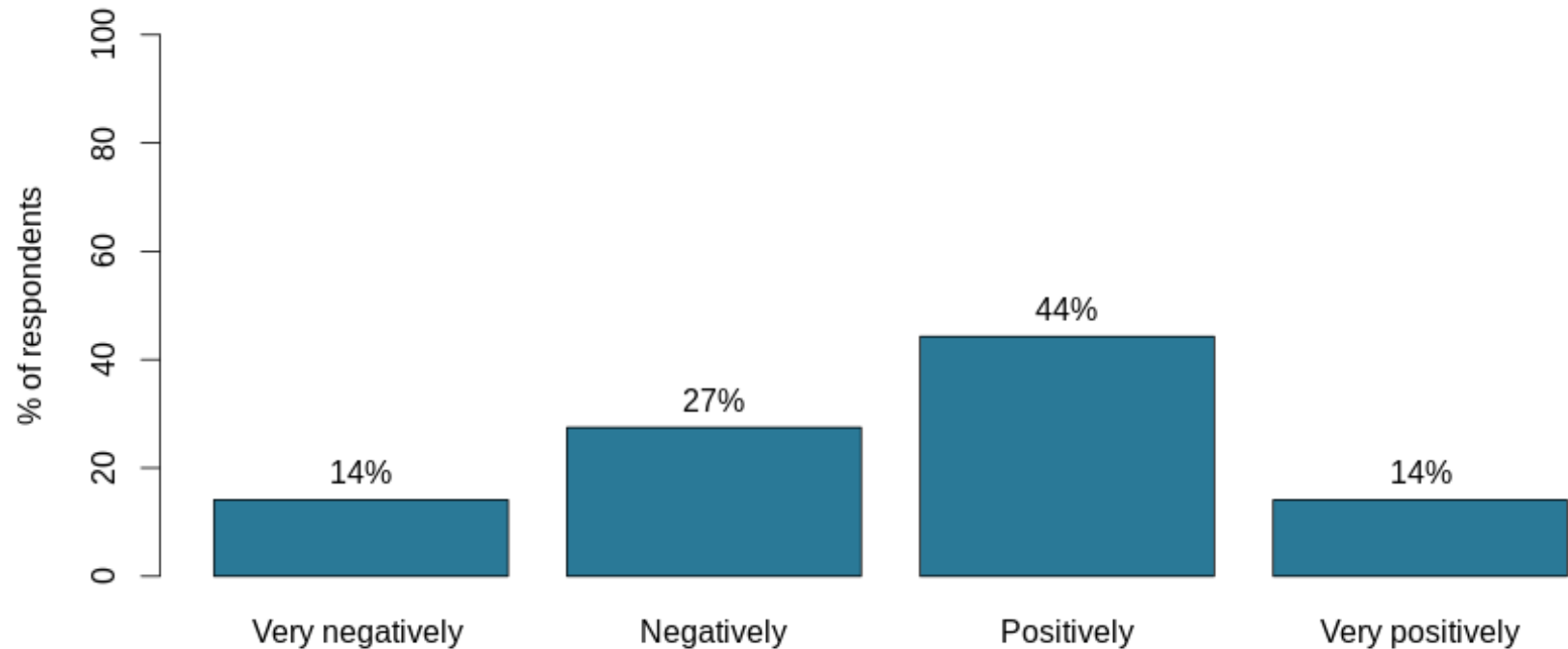
“I think schools could teach effective time management strategies in order to battle this addiction.”

Solutions: Apps-Based

Agree or disagree: The companies that create the apps that are considered most addictive --- games, social media, streaming video --- should place daily time limits on young people to help them reduce their daily screen time.

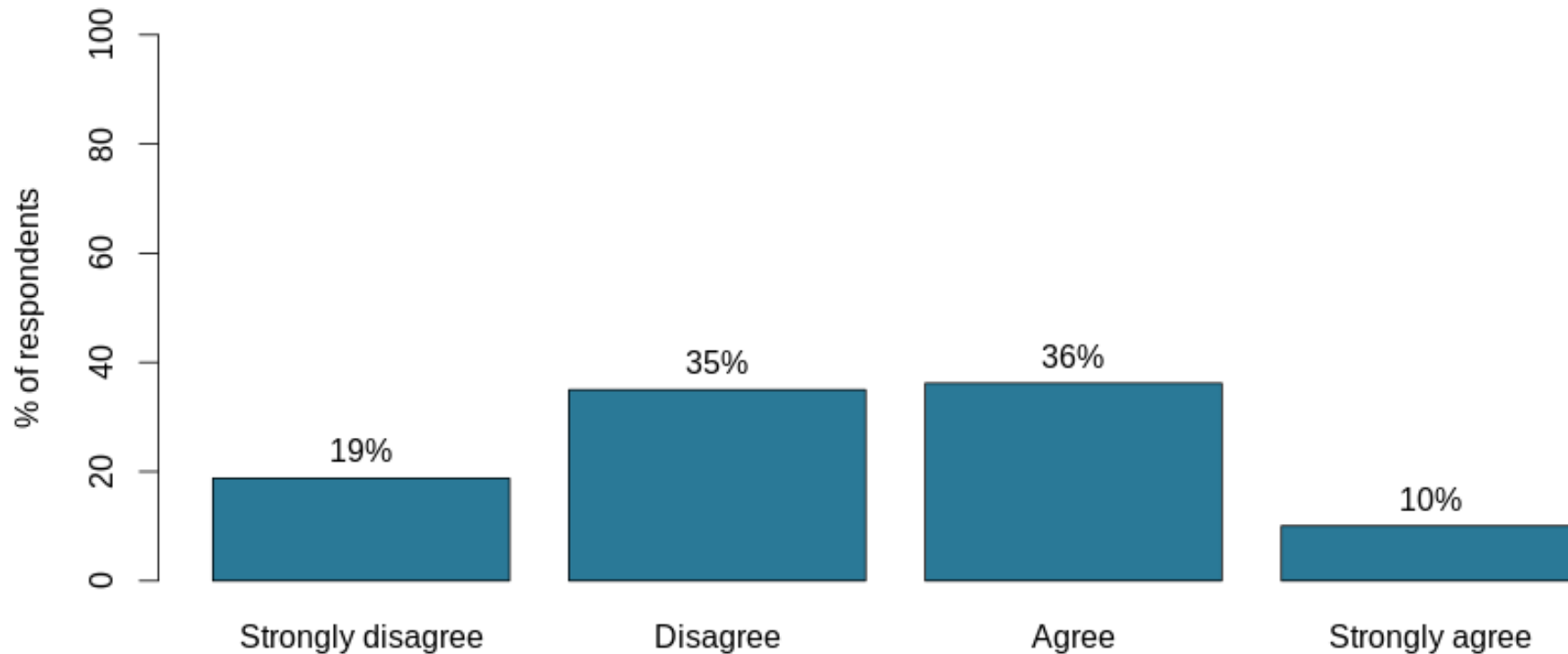


Imagine all smartphones had a built-in application that sensed when young people are using their smartphone in an addictive way, and that helped them regain control by coaching them, and by temporarily limiting their access to the addictive content. How would you react to this application?



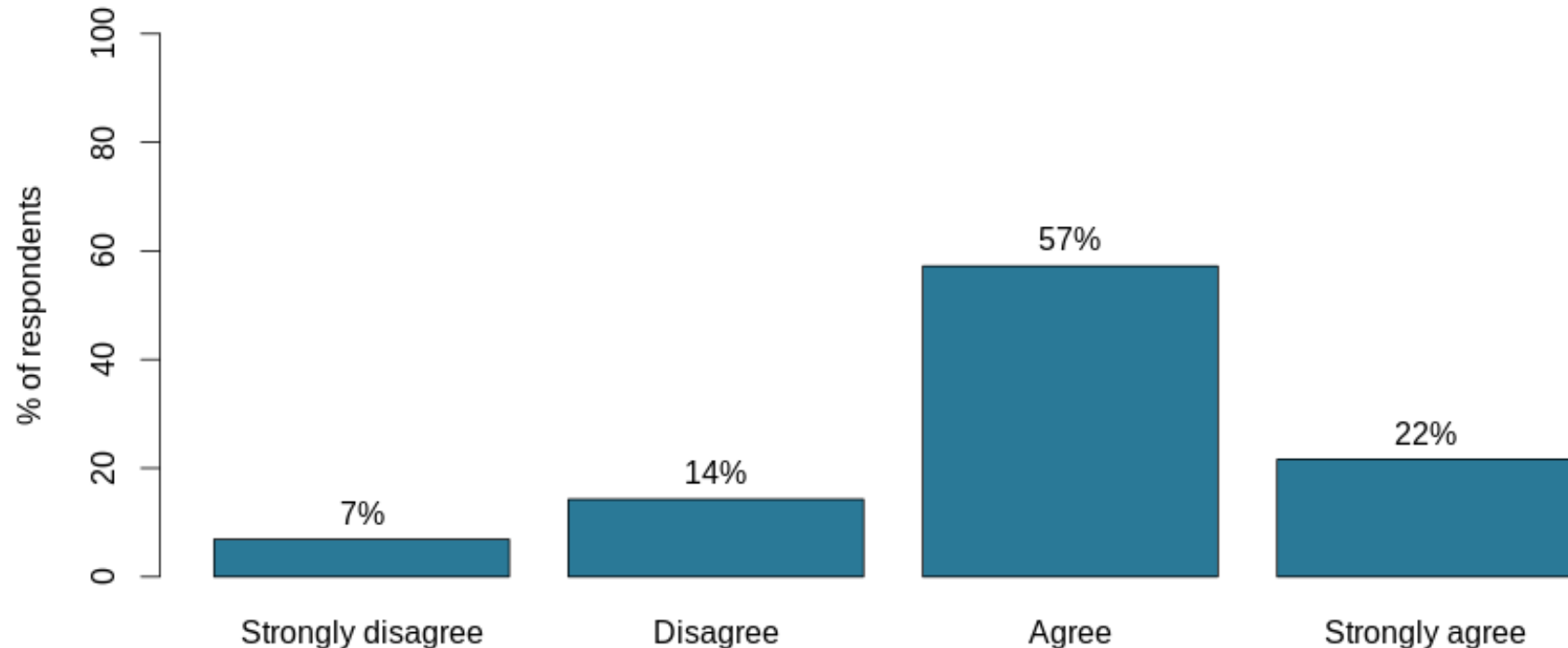
Solutions: Public Policy

Agree or disagree: There should be regulations requiring the companies that create the apps that are considered most addictive --- games, social media, streaming video --- to place daily time limits on young people in order to help reduce their daily screen time.



Solutions: Cultural Values

Agree or disagree: It would be good if society began placing greater emphasis on developing within young people personal qualities that would help them regain control of their screen time --- qualities like discipline, self-control, sacrifice, and a focus on achievement.



Summary

1. High school students spend a substantial amount of time each day on their smartphones accessing content that is unrelated to school.

2. High school students' excessive smartphone use negatively impacts their academic performance, their social lives, their involvement in extracurricular activities, and their happiness.

3. High school students are frustrated by their excessive smartphone use and wish they could control it.

4. High school students believe we should address smartphone addiction when people are young, rather than waiting until they are adults.

Summary

5. Substantial numbers of high school students, and in some cases strong majorities, strongly support organized, broad, bold initiatives that will:

- (1) impose limits on young peoples' phone use
- (2) help them develop the ability to independently self-limit their screen time

6. The broad-based solutions high school students support include the integration of principles of digital wellness into the school curriculum, apps and apps features that assist in reducing smartphone use, regulatory approaches to reducing smartphone use, and a renewed emphasis on key cultural values that would assist in controlling smartphone use.

Implications

1. Schools should develop curricula to teach students how to self-limit their smartphone use.

2. Apps providers should get serious about doing something to help young people by limiting the time they can spend each day using their apps.

Implications

3. Congress should consider regulations to address smartphone addiction among youth.

4. We should consider reviving traditional values that would help reorient the culture around spending less time on smartphones and more time being productive discipline, self-control, sacrifice, and a focus on achievement.



Michael.Mercier@ScreenEducation.org

(513) 535-7377

