

88%
OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH
use digital technologies
to support their health
and well-being.

ABOUT U-REPORT

U-Report is a messaging programme for adolescent, youth, and community participation. It's a key tool to share information, raise awareness, and collect quantifiable data on specific areas that impact children, including the most vulnerable. Responses received are analysed in real-time, mapped, and displayed on a public dashboard.

U-Report allows young people from all over the world to share their views with decision makers.

For more information, visit www.ureport.in



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What do you imagine **digital health** will look like in 2030?

Which **health issue** do you mostly use digital technologies for?

How can using digital technologies **negatively affect** your health and well-being?

Executive summary

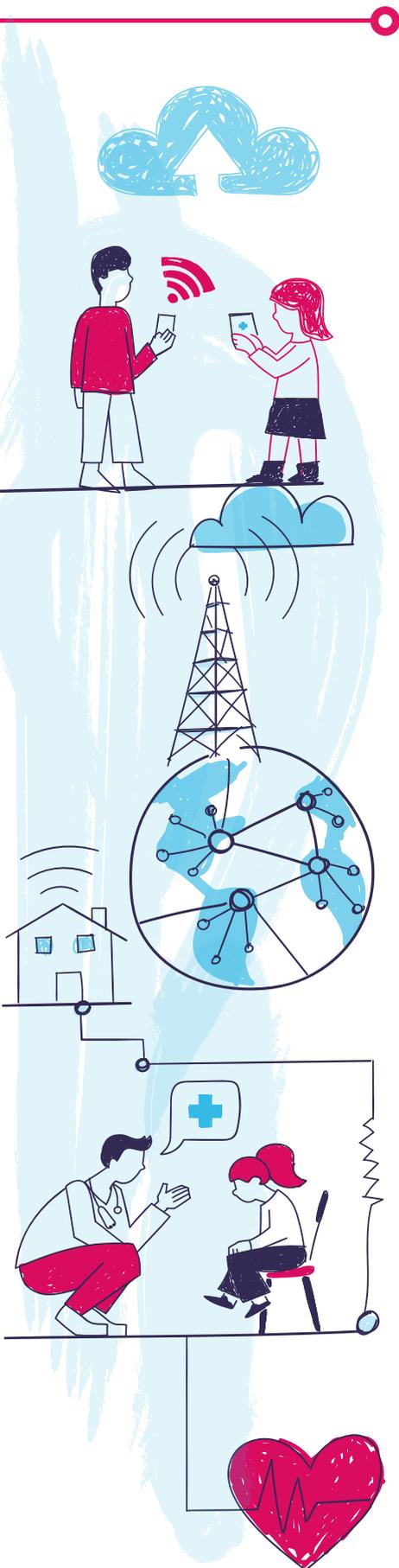
In October and November 2020, The Lancet and Financial Times Commission *Governing health futures 2030: Growing up in a digital world* collaborated with UNICEF to conduct a global poll with young people on digital health. The Commission wanted to better understand the expectations, demands, and concerns of young people in relation to the use of digital technologies and data for improving their health and well-being.

The poll asked young people to share how they currently use digital technologies for health, and their views on the benefits and risks of digital technologies. Respondents were also invited to share their opinions on what governments and technology companies should do to better govern digital health, as well as what they imagine digital health will look like in 2030.

*More than
**23,000 children
and young people**
aged 14-35 from
176 countries
participated in
the poll.*

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

- **88% of respondents** use some form of digital technology for health-related purposes.
- Smartphone apps and websites are the **most common** technologies used.
- **Improving fitness** is the most popular health-related objective for users of digital technologies.
- **Half of respondents** said that accessing health information was the biggest way that digital technologies can help young people manage their health and well-being.
- **Inaccurate health information is the biggest concern** for young people using digital technologies, followed by uncertainties about their privacy and use of digital technologies making them less physically active.
- Young people want governments and technology companies to **increase access** to the internet and to quality, trustworthy health information. They also want to see **stronger regulation of online content** and services to protect them from harm and misinformation.
- Young people expressed a high degree of **uncertainty about what the future of digital health** holds.



YOUNG PEOPLE HIGHLIGHTED SIX MAIN ISSUES

that must be addressed by policymakers, technology companies, and other digital health actors:

- 1 Reduce the digital divide** so that all young people can benefit from digital technologies.
- 2 Improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of online health information.**
- 3 Introduce or strengthen regulation and oversight** mechanisms for online content and services accessible to young people through websites, smartphones, and social media platforms so that it does not undermine their health, well-being, or other rights.
- 4 Leverage young people's interest** in their fitness and health. Involve them in finding appropriate ways to maximise the benefits of digital health and to discourage excessive or harmful use of technologies.
- 5 Build young people's trust** in governments and technology companies through involving them at all stages of digital health design, implementation, and governance, as well as demonstrating that young people's views are being listened to.
- 6 Reduce young people's uncertainty** about digital health and increase their sense of agency by increasing digital health literacy and creating opportunities (both on and offline) for young people to imagine the health futures that they do and don't want to see.

The Commission has incorporated young people's views, captured through this poll and other mechanisms, into its report. The Commission will also continue to support the provision of spaces for young people to shape the future of digital health governance so that all young people can flourish in the digital age.

For more information, visit www.governinghealthfutures2030.org

Introduction

Digital technologies—and the data they generate—are being increasingly used by health professionals, policymakers, and individuals around the world to improve health and well-being. The field of digital health includes a growing range of tools and approaches from digital health records, smartphone apps, and video consultations with health workers, to artificial intelligence and virtual reality. Whilst digital transformations offer unprecedented opportunities to expand and enhance healthcare, they also present challenges and risks for young people's health, well-being, and rights.

The Lancet and Financial Times Commission *Governing health futures 2030: Growing up in a digital world* (the Commission) was established in 2019 to explore the convergence of digital health, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies with universal health coverage. The Commission has a special focus on improving the health and well-being of children and has developed a set of recommendations on the governance transformations required to allow all young people to flourish in a digital age.



WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE THINK?

Although subjected to a significant digital divide, children, and young people are major users of digital technologies but are under-represented—and often overlooked—when it comes to design and decision-making about digital technologies and digital health.

Since young people stand to inherit the governance models being designed today, the Commission wanted to better understand the expectations, demands, and concerns of young people in relation to the use of digital technologies for improving their health and well-being.

However, evidence and insights into young people's views and experiences in relation to digital health are predominantly limited to high-income countries. To capture a broader range of voices and perspectives, the Commission partnered with UNICEF's Office of Innovation and U-Report to conduct a global survey of young people.



KEY TERMINOLOGY

Artificial intelligence

The simulation of intelligent behaviour in computers or machines

Digital health

The use of digital, mobile, and wireless technologies to monitor or improve health and well-being

Digital technologies

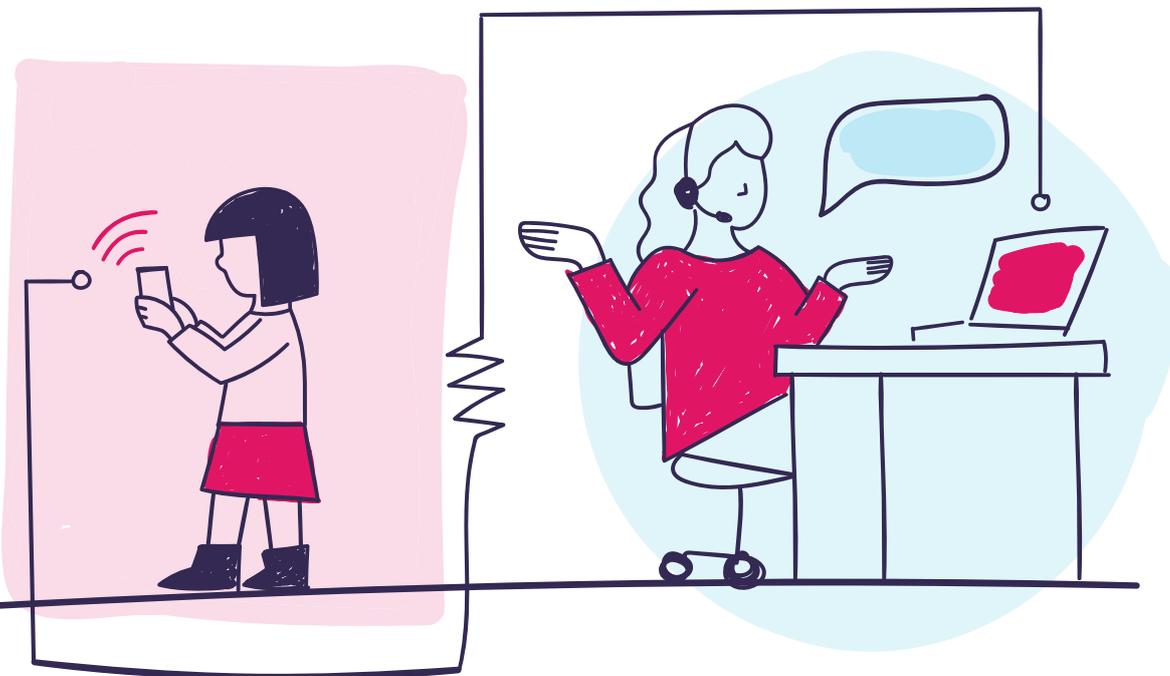
Electronic tools, systems, and devices that generate, store, or process data

Governance

The act or process of governing or overseeing the control and direction of something

WHAT WE ASKED YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1** Which of these digital technologies do you use the most for health-related purposes?
- 2** Which health issue do you mostly use digital technologies for?
- 3** What is the biggest way that digital technologies can help you manage your health and well-being?
- 4** How can using digital technologies negatively affect your health and well-being?
- 5** What should governments & technology companies do to ensure that digital technologies improve the health and well-being of young people?
- 6** Imagine the world in 2030, how do you think you will use digital technologies to get health information and advice?



○ HOW INFORMATION WAS GATHERED

In October and November 2020, a poll was distributed through seven national U-Report channels (Argentina, Brazil, France, Guatemala, Myanmar, Serbia, and Zambia) and through the U-Report global channel.

The poll included six questions: four multiple choice questions about respondents' current use and views of digital technologies for health, and two open free-text questions to capture their opinions and ideas about the present and future.

INTERPRETING THE POLL RESULTS

Poll results were translated into English and analysed by the Commission Secretariat to identify key themes and trends. The results provide rich insights into young people's experiences and opinions, but it is important to note that responses, and respondents, are not fully representative. For example, the perspectives of individuals without internet access, digital devices, and basic literacy and digital skills will not have been captured. The number of respondents per country varied from 1 to over 5,000. Findings for countries with lower numbers of participants are therefore likely to be less representative.

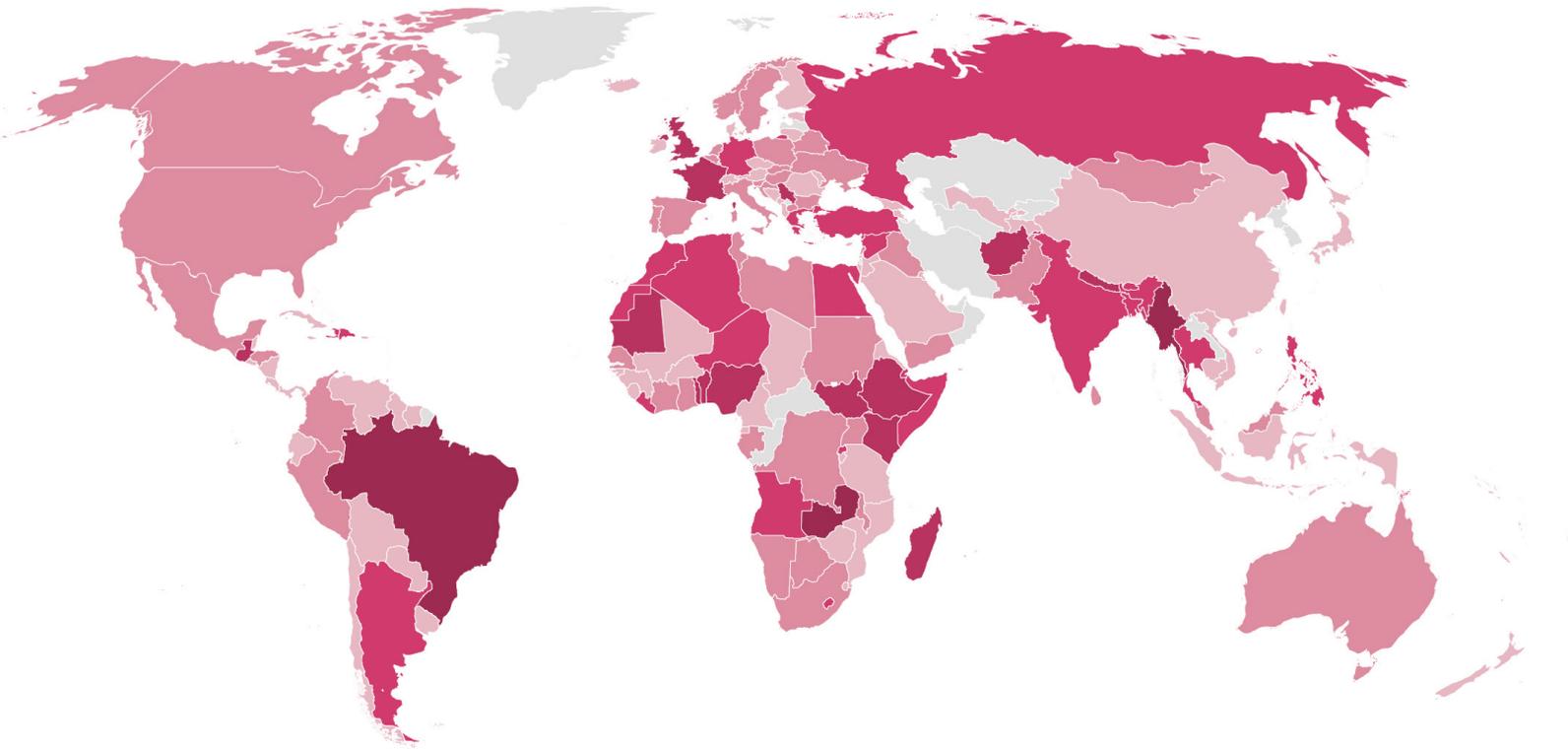
Not all respondents answered all six questions. The number of questions answered reduced as the poll progressed. The questions tended to solicit a certain type of response that showed more what young people think about digital health, rather than how they experience digital health. The poll was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The topical nature of issues such as misinformation and trust may therefore have contributed to their prevalence in poll responses.



Profile of poll respondents

Number of poll respondents per country

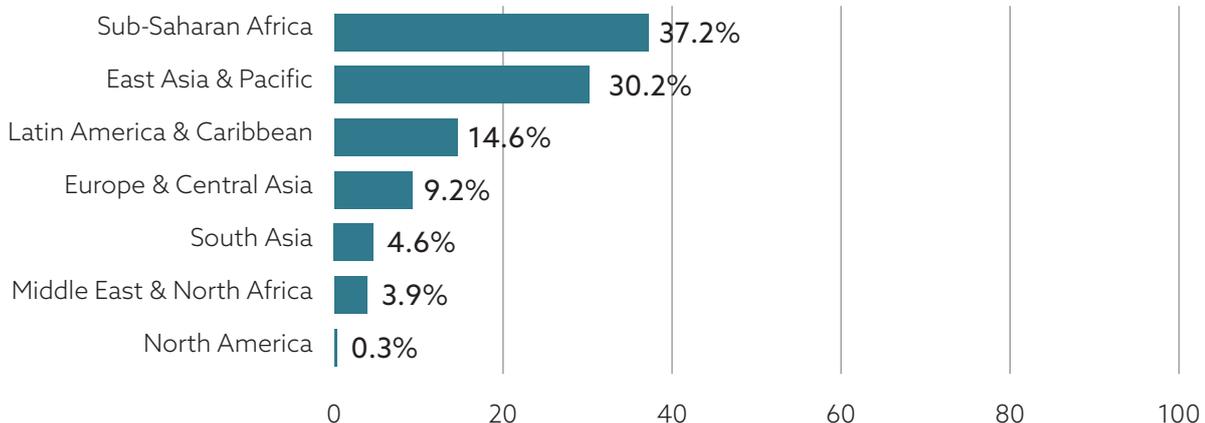
- 1-10 responses
- 11-50 responses
- 50-200 responses
- 200-1000 responses
- 1000+ responses



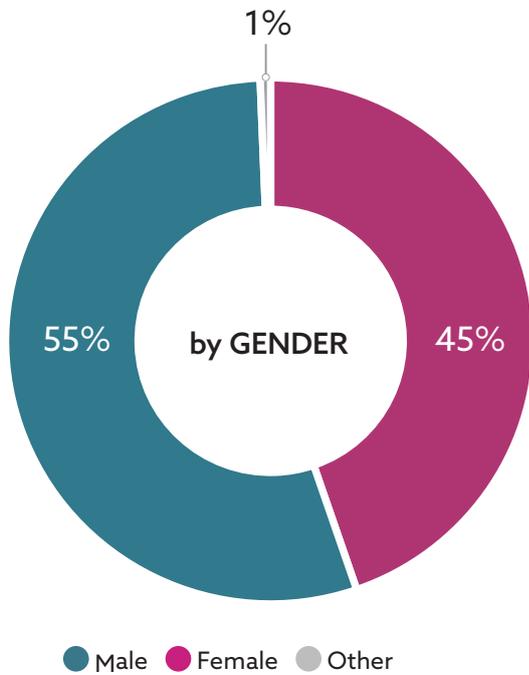
The poll had a considerable global reach.

23,435 children and young people from **176 countries** participated.

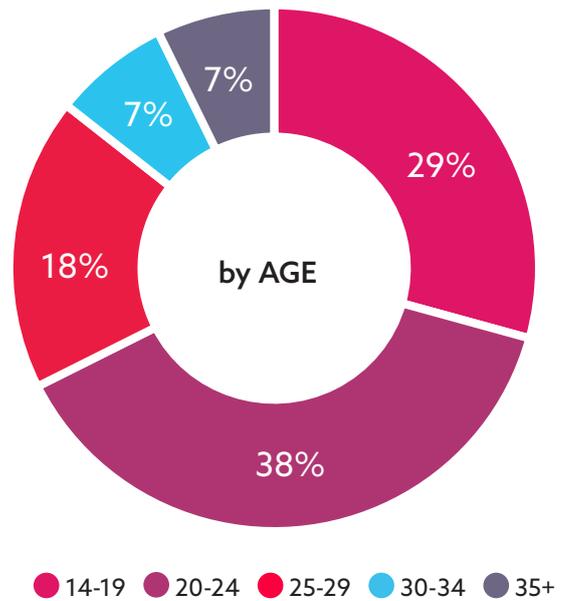
Poll respondents by REGION



More than half of respondents identified as **MALE**.

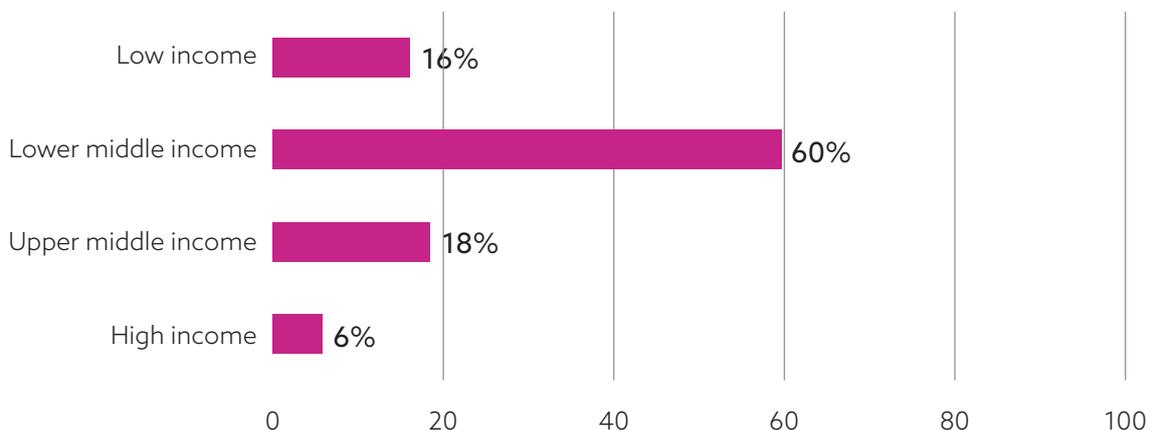


THE MAJORITY of respondents (86%) were aged **29 years or younger**.



95% of respondents came from **low- and middle-income countries**.

Poll respondents by INCOME GROUP

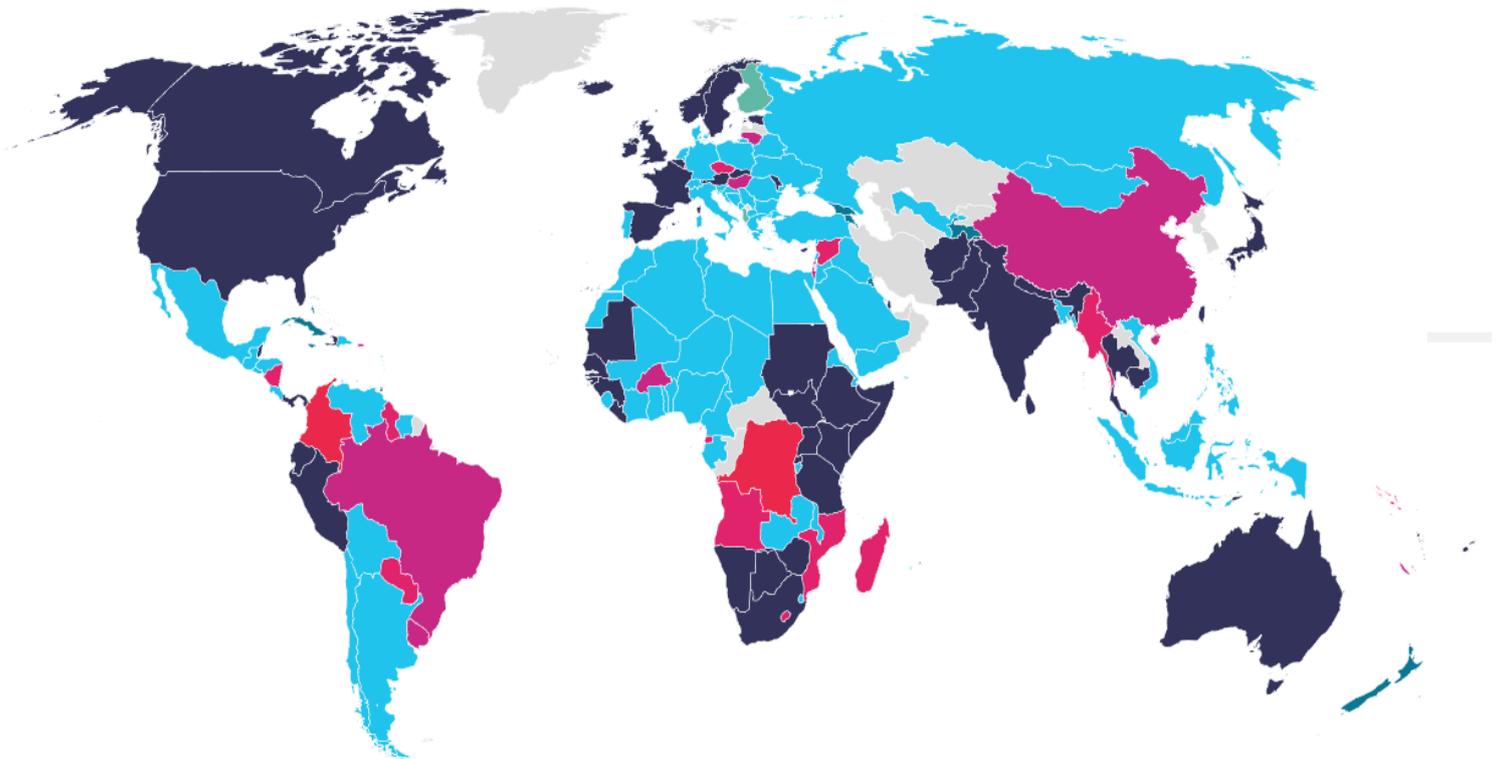


1 Which digital technologies do you use most for health-related purposes?

We asked young people to tell us which, if any, digital health tools they use most to support their health and well-being. **88% of respondents said that they were using some form of digital technology for health-related purposes.** Websites, smartphone apps, and social media are the most commonly used technologies.

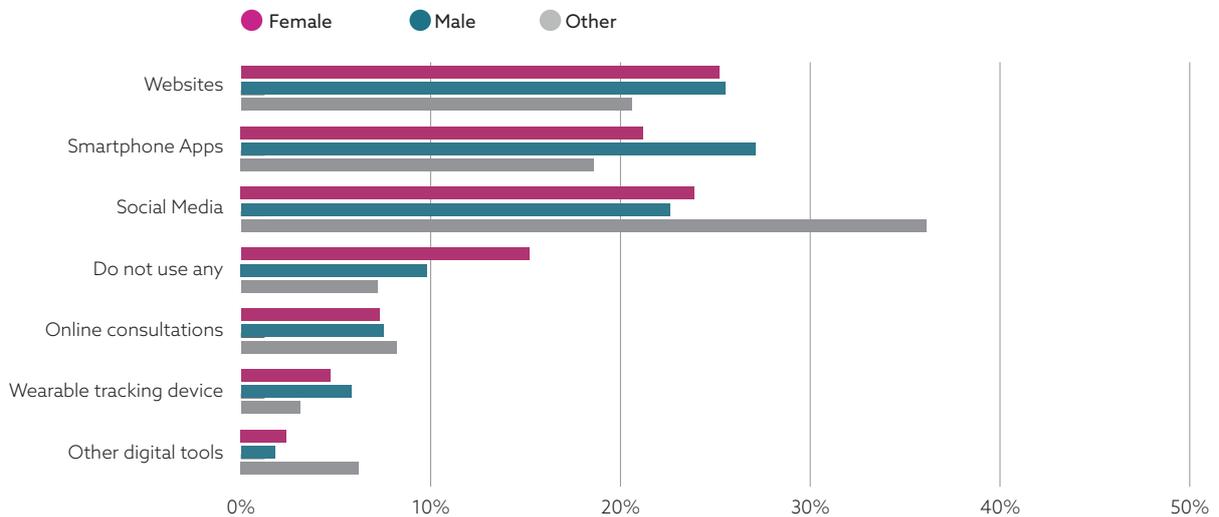
Most commonly used digital technology for health-related purposes, per country

- Smartphone Apps
- Websites
- Social Media
- Do not use any
- Online consultations
- Weable tracking device
- Other digital tools
- No response



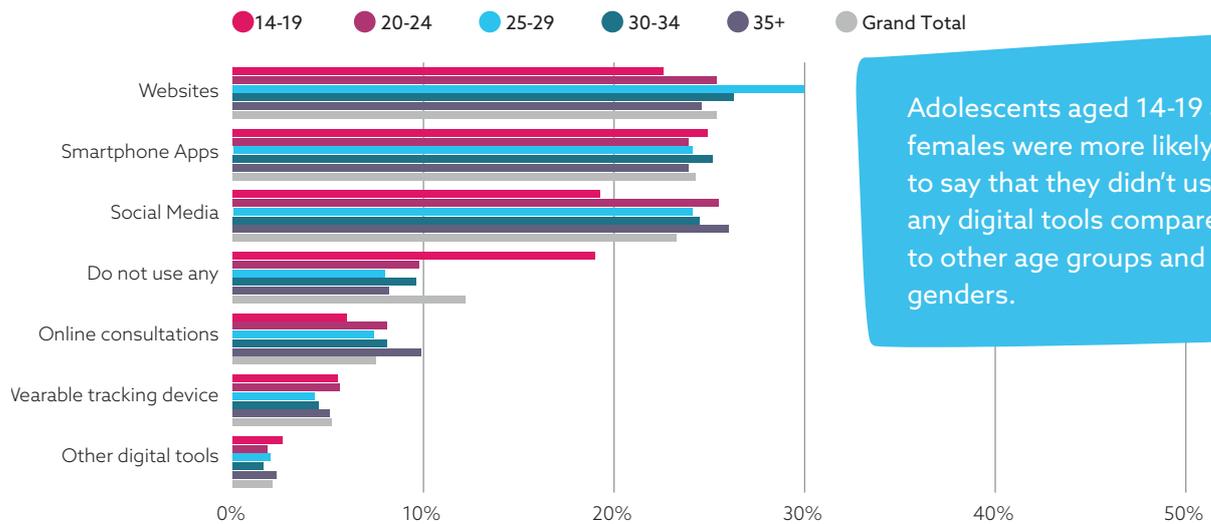
Most commonly used digital technology for health-related purposes, by gender

In percent of respondents



Most commonly used digital technology for health-related purposes, by age

In percent of respondents



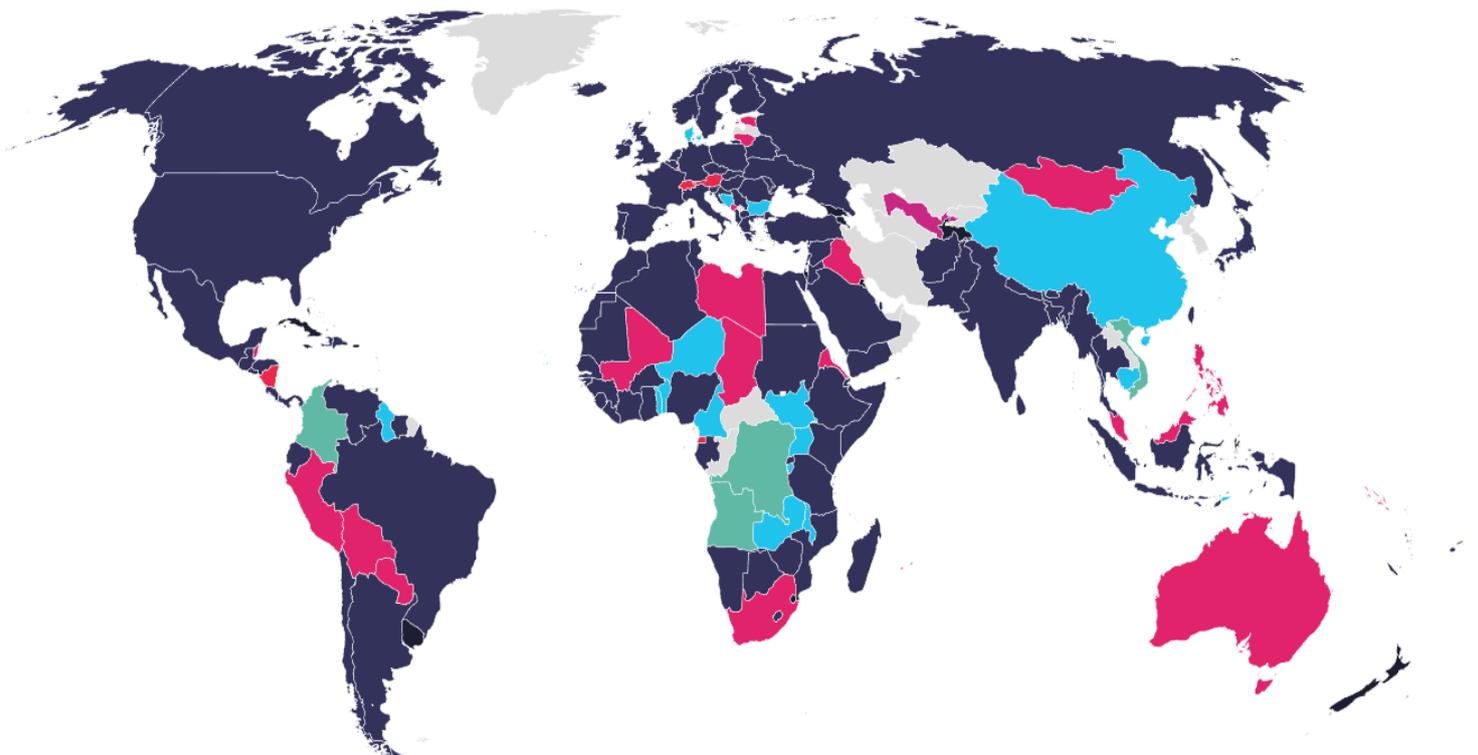
Adolescents aged 14-19 and females were more likely to say that they didn't use any digital tools compared to other age groups and genders.

POLL RESULTS

2 Which health issue do you mostly use digital technologies for?

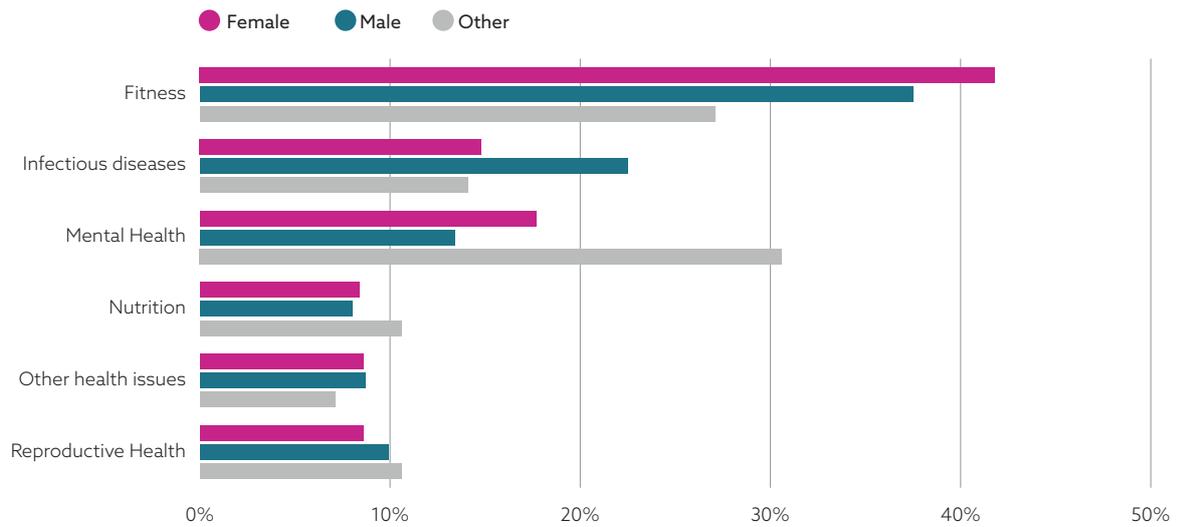
In countries at all income levels and for all age groups, **improving fitness is by far the most popular health issue for which young people use digital technologies.** Fitness was the most popular response for male and female respondents but, for those identifying with another gender, supporting mental health was the most common use for digital health tools.

Most common health-related reason for using digital technology, per country



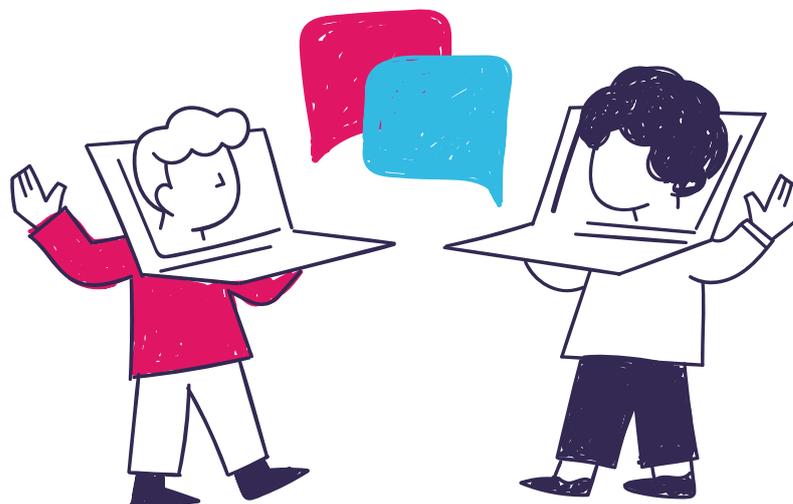
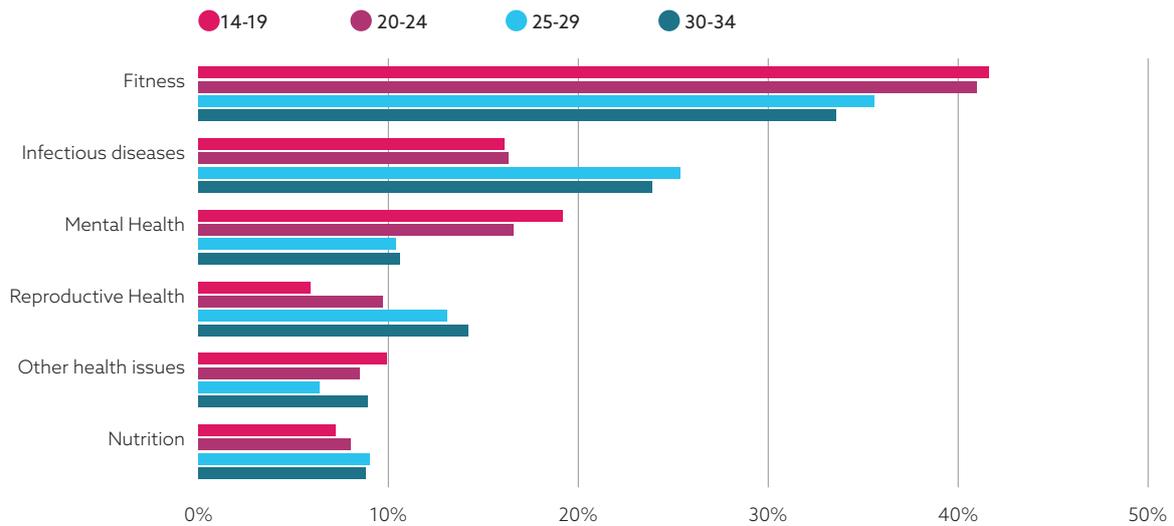
Most common health-related reason for using digital technology, by gender

In percent of respondents



Most common health-related reason for using digital technology, by age

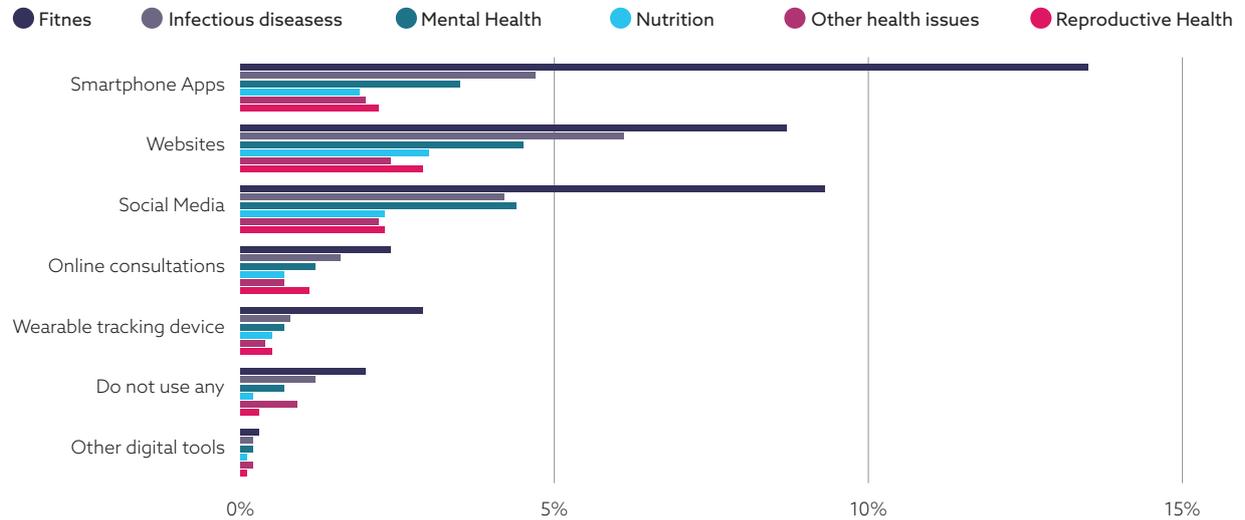
In percent of respondents



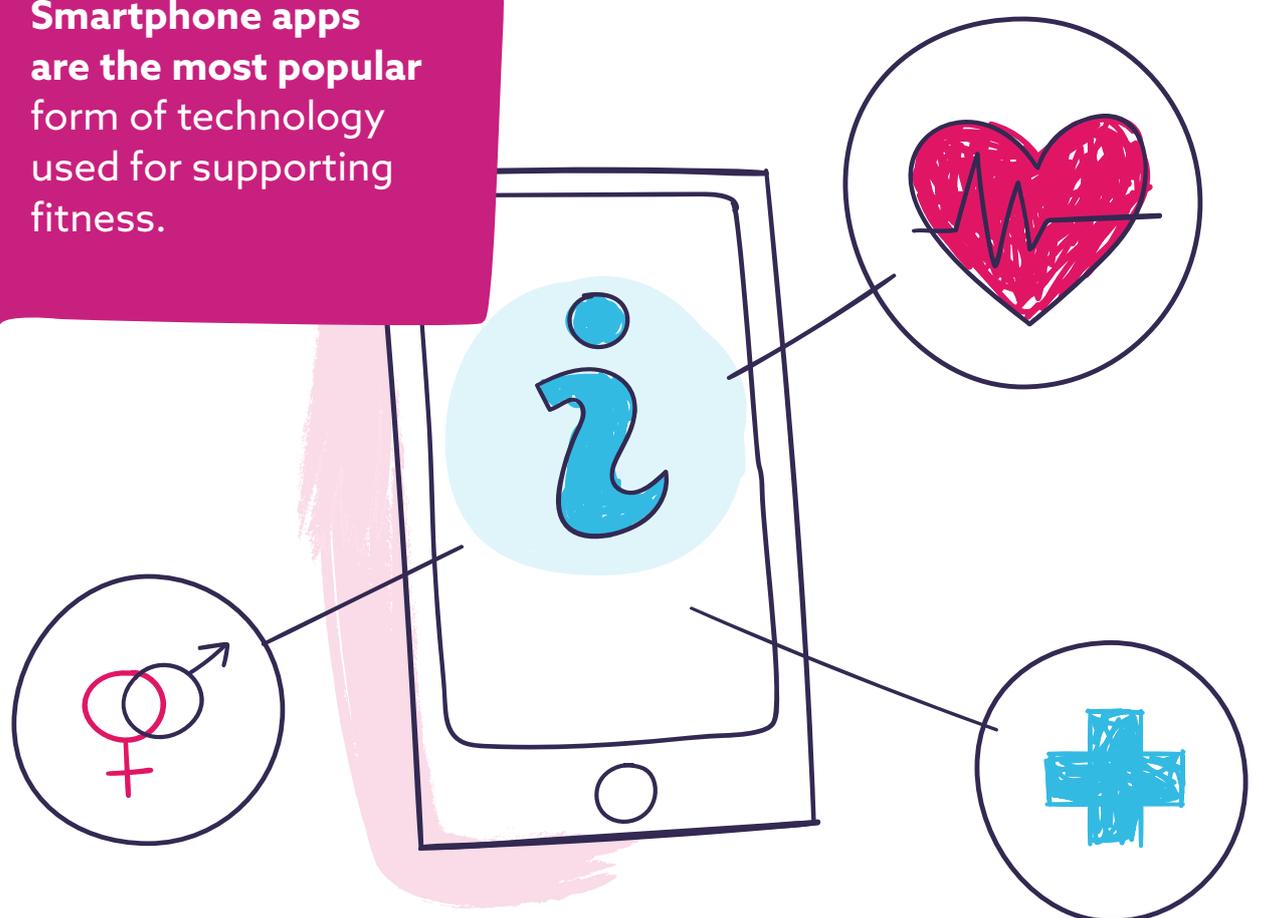
Smartphone apps are the most popular form of technology used for supporting fitness, whereas websites and social media are more widely used by young people concerned about other health issues such as infectious diseases, nutrition, mental health, and reproductive health.

Which technologies are most commonly used for different health issues?

In percent of respondents



Smartphone apps are the most popular form of technology used for supporting fitness.

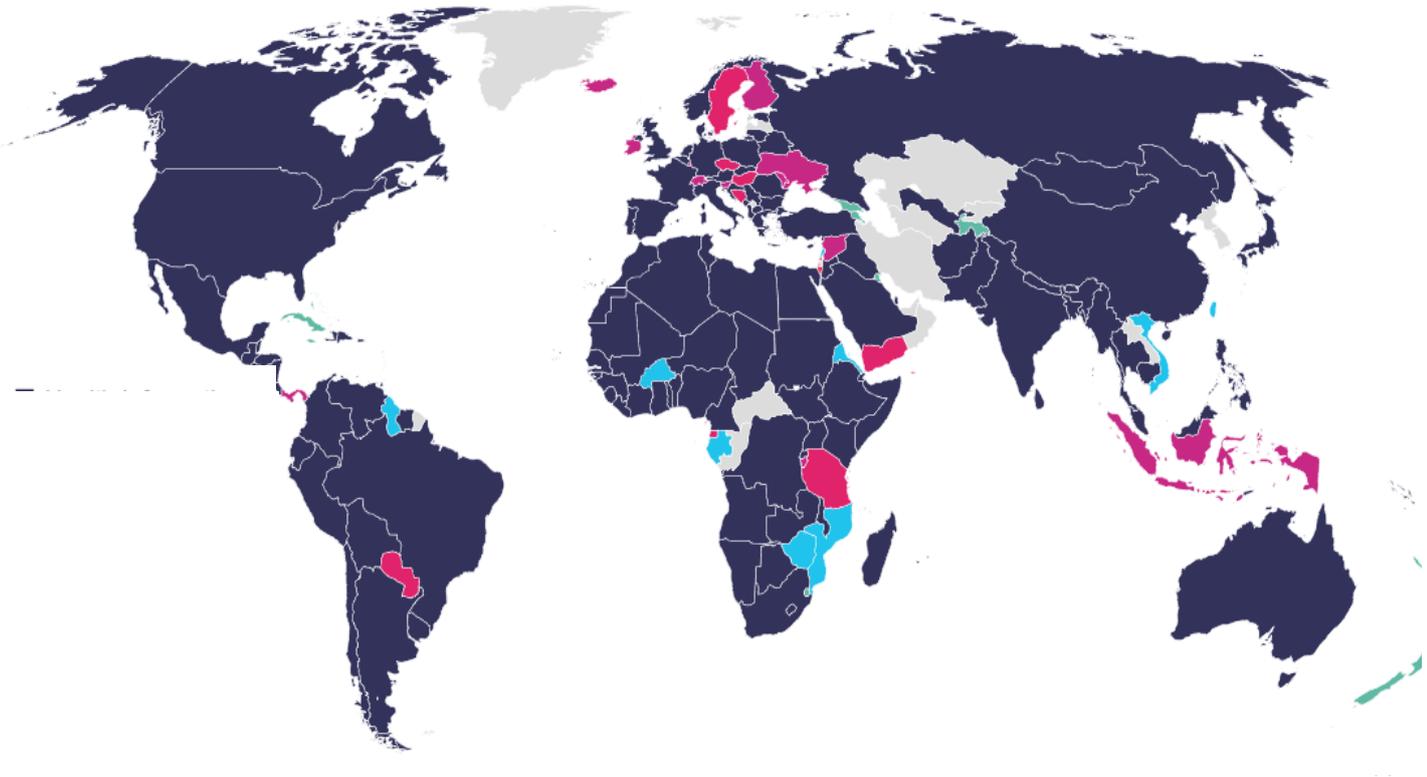


3 What is the biggest way that digital technologies can help you manage your health and well-being?

Half of all respondents said that **accessing health information was the biggest way that digital technologies can help improve young people’s health and well-being**. This was the most popular response for respondents of all genders and ages, and across all country income levels.

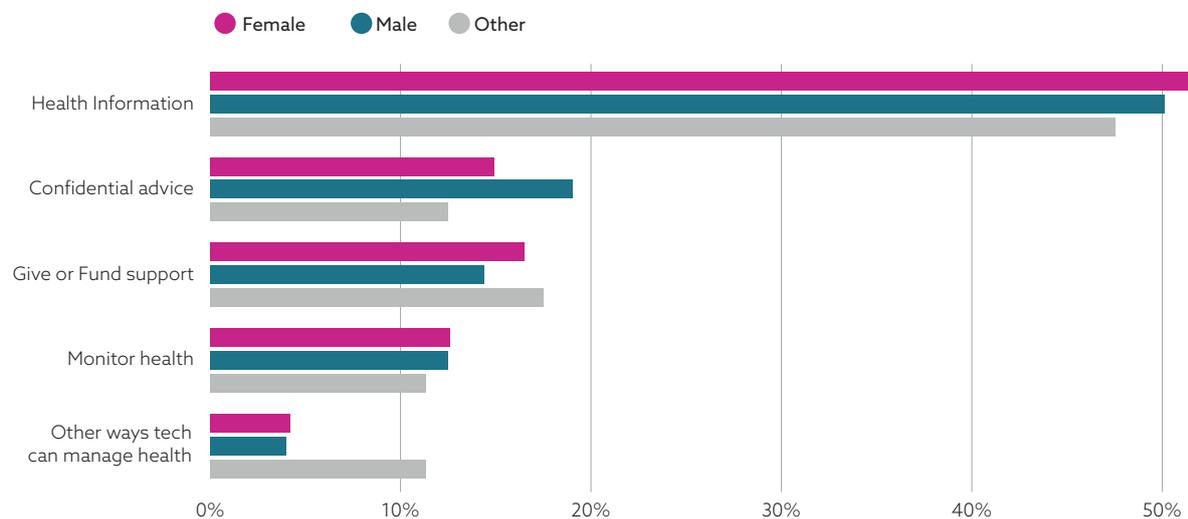
How digital technology is used to manage health and well-being in each country

- Health information
- Confidential advice
- Give or fund support
- Monitor health
- Other ways tech can help
- No response



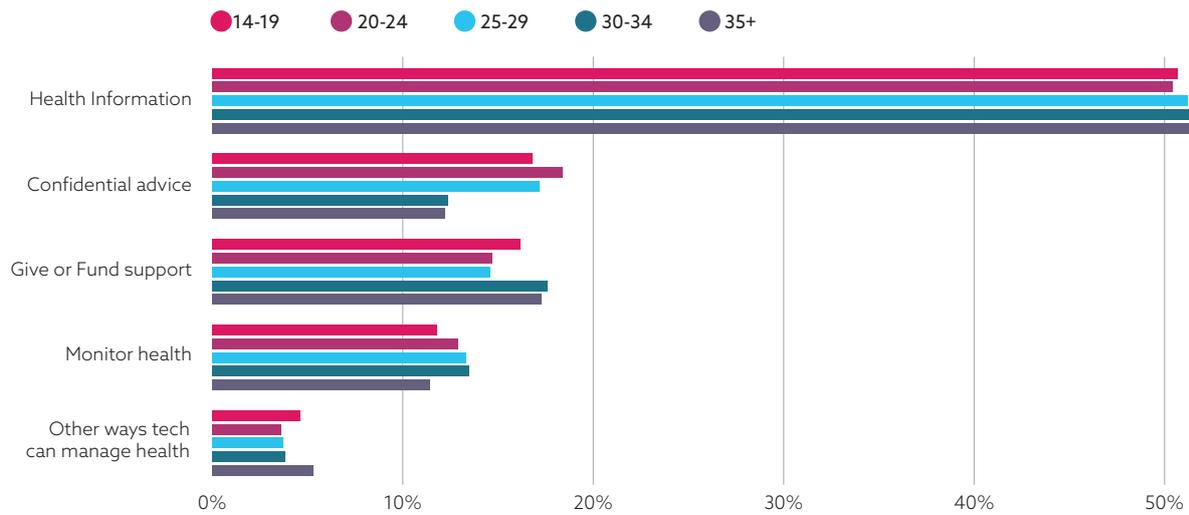
Helpfulness of digital technology for health-related purposes, by gender

In percent of respondents



Helpfulness of digital technology for health-related purposes by age

In percent of respondents



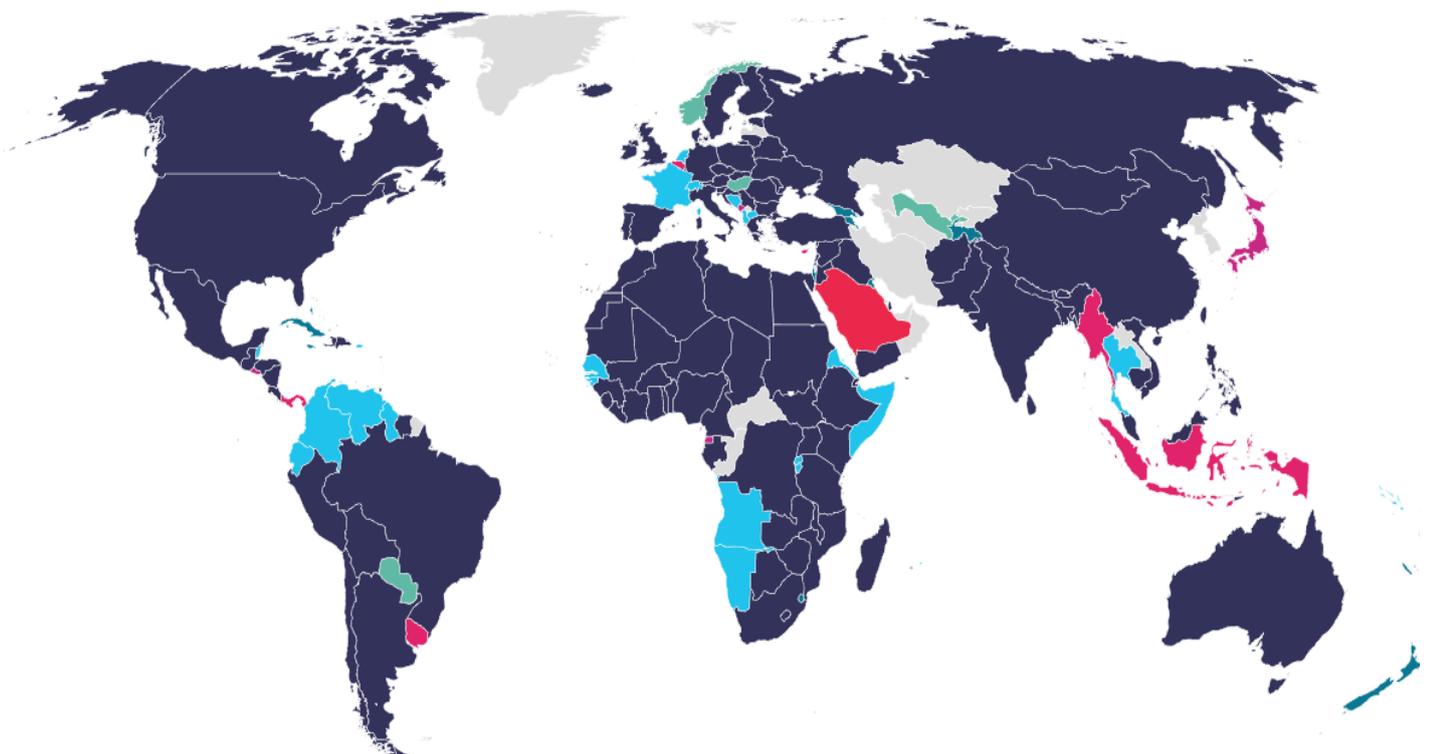
POLL RESULTS

4 How can digital technologies negatively affect your health and well-being?

Inaccurate health information is the biggest worry for young people using digital technologies, followed by concerns about their privacy and use of digital technologies making them less physically active.

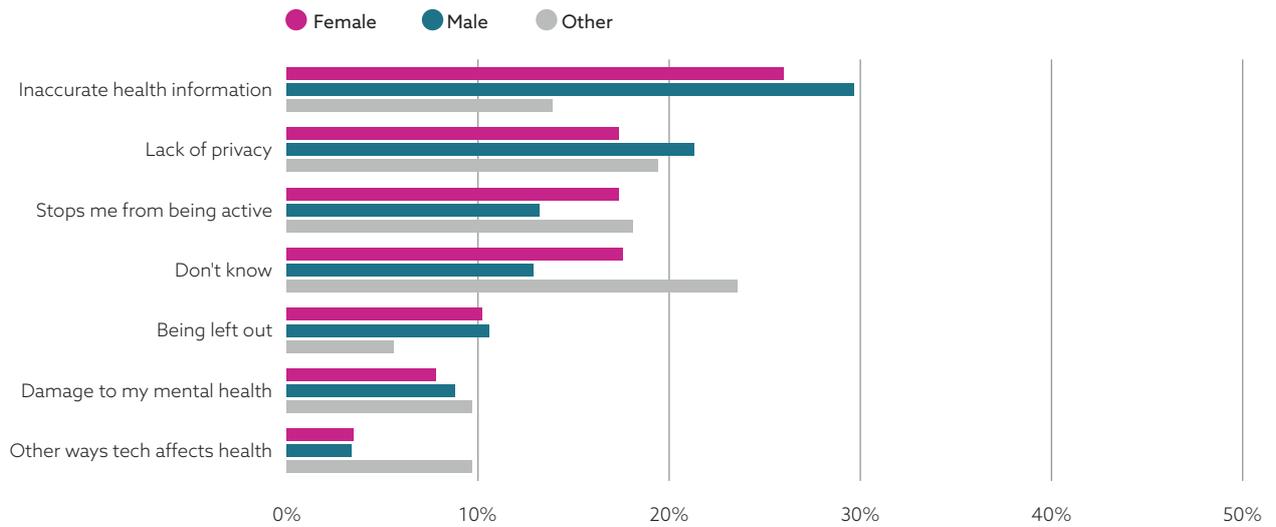
Most common concern about digital technologies in each country

- Inaccurate health information
- Lack of privacy
- Don't know
- Stops me from being active
- Being left out
- Damage to my mental health
- Other ways tech affect health
- No response



Perceived negative effects of using technology, by gender

In percent of respondents

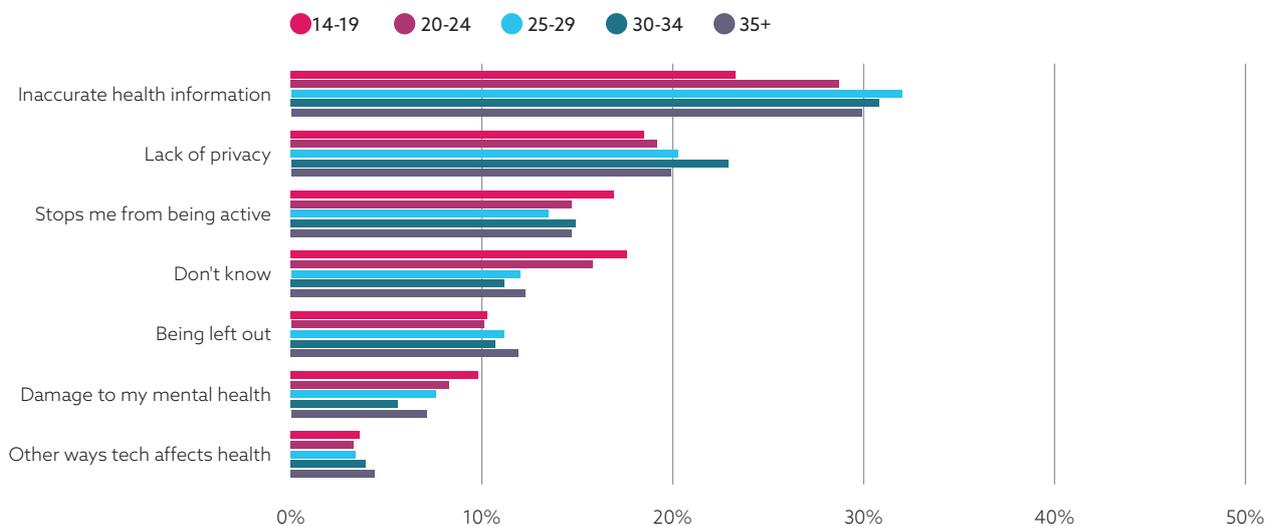


Inaccurate health information is the **biggest concern** for users of digital health technologies.

Approximately **15% of respondents** responded that they don't know what the negative health effects of technology use might be.

Perceived negative effects of using technology, by age

In percent of respondents



5 What should governments and technology companies do to ensure that digital technologies improve the health and well-being of young people?

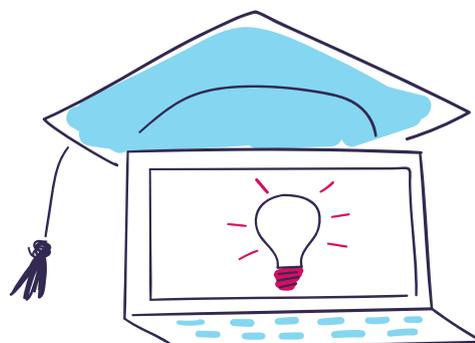
Young people's recommendations to governments and technology companies focused on improving basic things, such as internet access and the quality of healthcare, rather than on digital tools themselves. Many respondents urged governments and technology companies to mitigate harms associated with the digital environment, such as misinformation and harmful content. Overall, respondents believe stronger governance of digital technologies is required, but they expressed a high degree of cynicism about governments' commitment to act on young people's recommendations.

Open responses to this question fall into three broad categories:

- 1 Increasing access.** Young people want governments to close the digital divide and make digital services and information more widely accessible.



- 2 Improving quality of information and care.** Young people want to know that health information and advice (from the government and other sources) available through digital platforms is accurate and trustworthy. They also want health professionals to be trained to effectively use digital technologies.



- 3 Mitigating harms.** Young people would like to see stronger regulation in place to protect their privacy, discourage harmful use of technologies, and restrict exposure to inappropriate content.



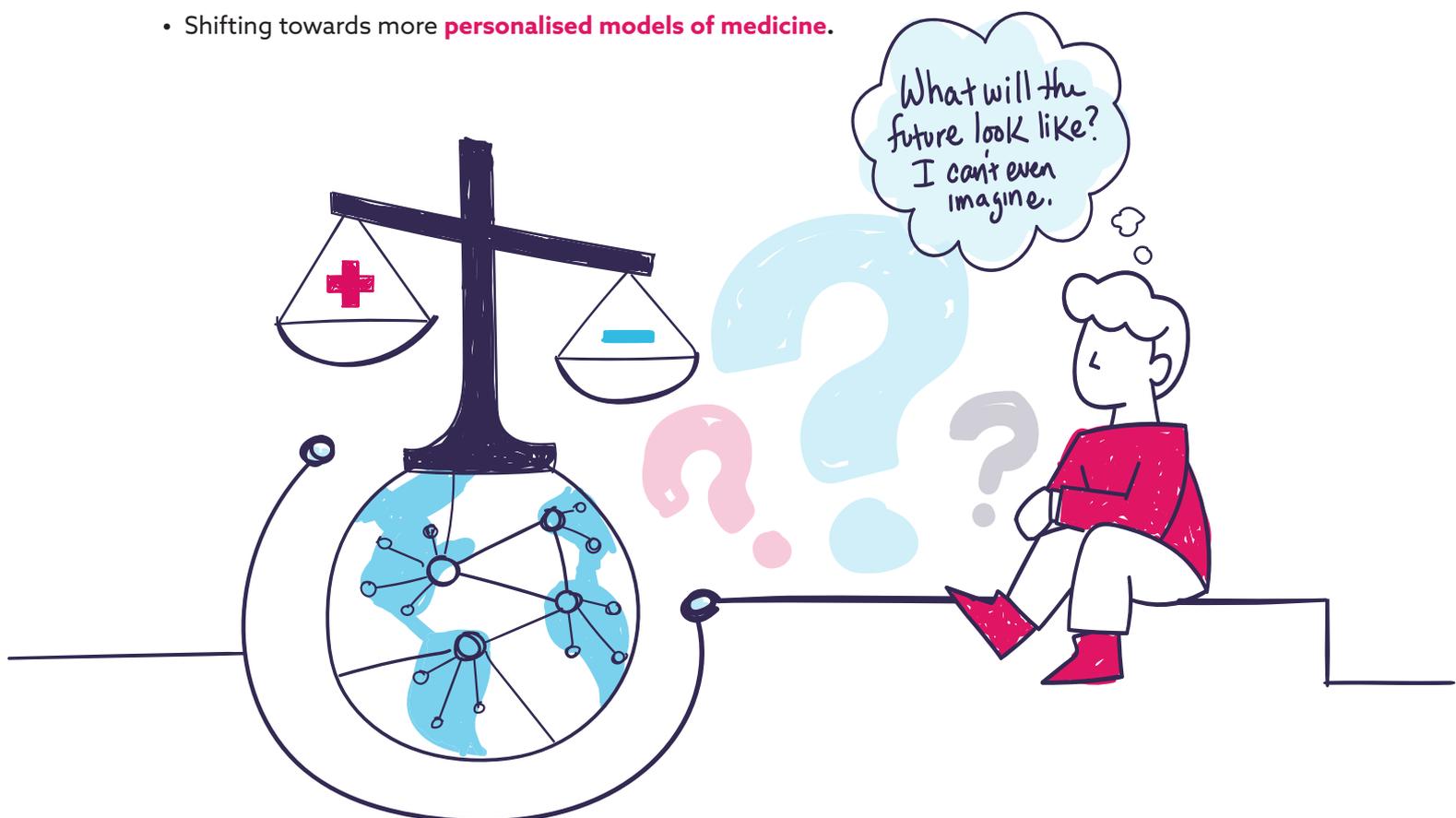
6 What will digital health look like in 2030?

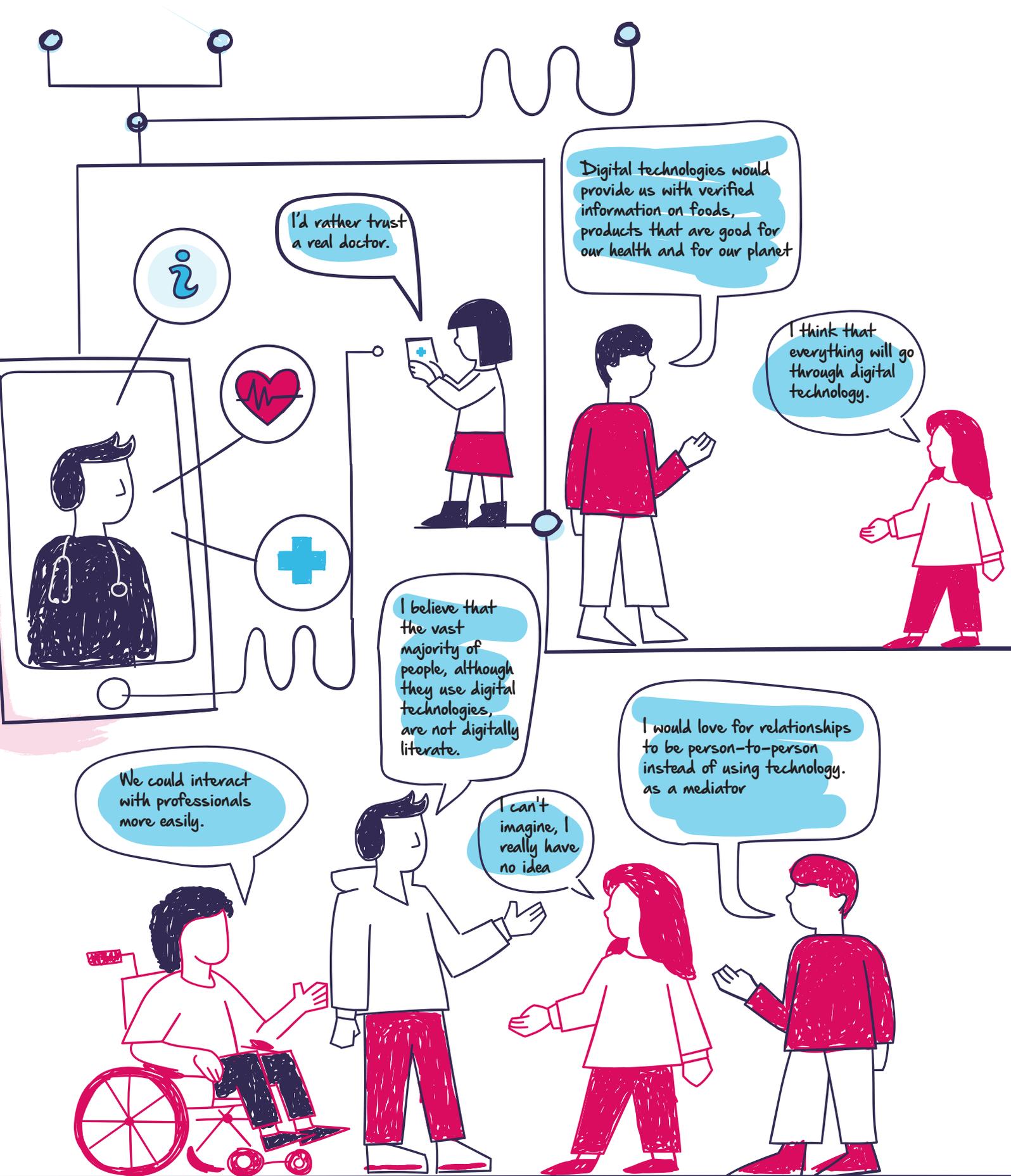
When asked to imagine a world in 2030, young people didn't seem sure how they will use digital technologies to get health information and advice in the future. Responses to this question indicated a high level of uncertainty, with a large number of open-ended responses such as 'I don't know'.

Young people tended to be polarised between highly dystopian and utopian imaginaries: with predictions for 2030 ranging from a "robotised" future where "everyone can access the internet" to "it will be chaos!" These extreme opinions are not fictional but are instead extreme expressions of young people's uncertainty about what the future holds.

Youth imaginaries on what digital health will look like by 2030 revealed a number of themes that are relevant for governing health futures, including:

- **Building young people's trust** in health knowledge and governments;
- Increasing **health and digital literacy**;
- Building basic **digital infrastructures**;
- Ensuring digital tools complement and do not undermine the importance of **face-to-face interactions** with health professionals;
- Increasing the quality of **internet access and health services**;
- Discouraging **excessive time online**; and
- Shifting towards more **personalised models of medicine**.





SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The results of this poll give us a glimpse into how young people—or at least those young people with digital access—use technologies to support their health and well-being. The results also reveal insights into young people's hopes, concerns, and expectations about the future of digital health.

Responses to the poll suggest that many young people had not previously reflected on the role that digital technologies do—and could—play in supporting their health and well-being. Further opportunities should therefore be created for young people to critically examine the potential benefits and risks associated with digital transformations in health, and to relay their ideas and concerns to policymakers and technology companies. Ways must be found to capture the perspectives of more diverse groups of young people, including those who cannot participate in online surveys such as U-Report due to insufficient connectivity and other barriers.

Young people highlighted six main issues that must be addressed by policymakers, technology companies, and other digital health actors:

- 1 **Reduce the digital divide** so that all young people can benefit from digital technologies.
- 2 Improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of online **health information**.
- 3 Introduce or strengthen **regulation and oversight** mechanisms for online content and services accessible to young people through websites, smartphones, and social media platforms so that it does not undermine their health, well-being, or other rights.
- 4 **Leverage young people's interest** in their fitness and health. Involve them in finding appropriate ways to maximise the benefits of digital health and to discourage excessive or harmful use of technologies.
- 5 **Build young people's trust** in governments and technology companies through involving them at all stages of digital health design, implementation, and governance, as well as demonstrating that young people's views are being listened to.
- 6 **Reduce young people's uncertainty** about digital health and increase their sense of agency by increasing digital health literacy and creating opportunities (both on and offline) for young people to imagine the health futures that they do and don't want to see.

Young people's voices have informed the Commission's report and will continue to shape its ongoing work. In collaboration with partners, the Commission will continue to explore the topics raised in the poll through more in-depth focus groups and consultations with young people. Commissioners and members of the newly-established GHFutures2030 Youth Network will share the issues and recommendations raised in the poll with digital health policymakers and push for their implementation.

See page 23 for more information about the Youth Network

Country snapshots

The following country profiles show the different demographics of respondents within the three countries with the largest numbers of respondents: Brazil, Myanmar, and Zambia. Poll results reinforce the heterogeneity in young people's use of digital health technologies both within and between countries. Across all three countries, the increased access to health information offered by digital technologies is perceived as both a benefit and risk.

○ **BRAZIL**

○ **MYANMAR**

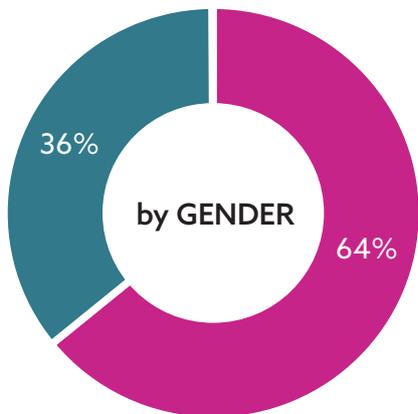
○ **ZAMBIA**

BRAZIL

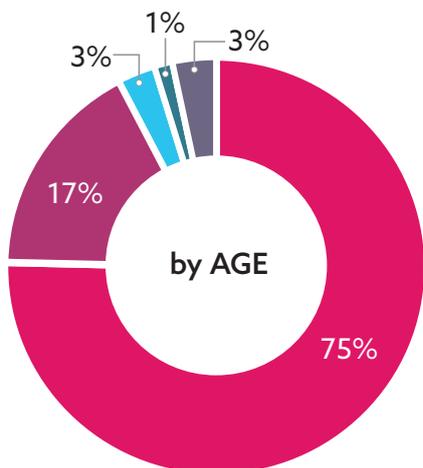
The majority of Brazilian respondents fell into the 14-19 age group. This may explain why such a large proportion said that they do not use any digital technologies for health. For those using technologies—mainly smartphone apps and websites—improving fitness is the main objective. Health information is believed to be the biggest way that technologies can help manage health and well-being, but respondents have concerns about the accuracy of information and risks to their privacy.

Profile of the 2,079 respondents from Brazil

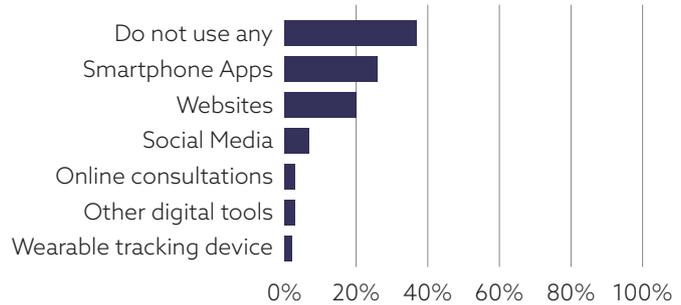
● Female ● Male ● Other



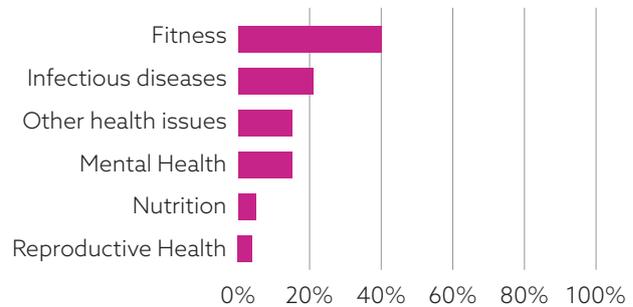
● 14-19 ● 20-24 ● 25-29 ● 30-34 ● 35+



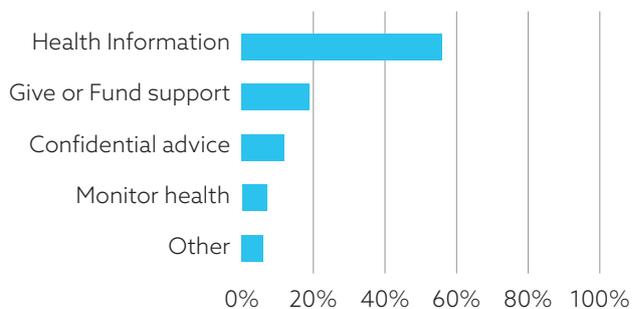
Which of these digital technologies do you use the MOST for health-related purposes?



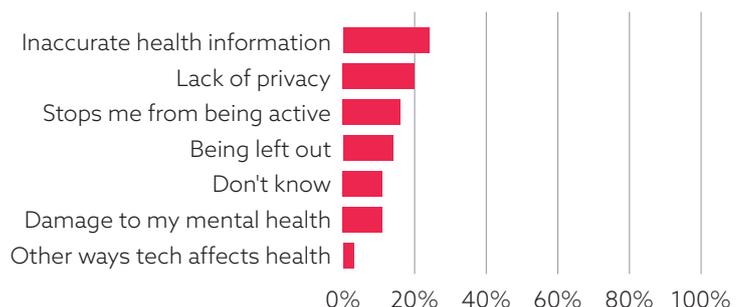
Which health issue do you mostly use digital technologies for?



What is the biggest way that digital technologies can help manage health and well-being?



How can using digital technologies negatively affect your health and well-being?

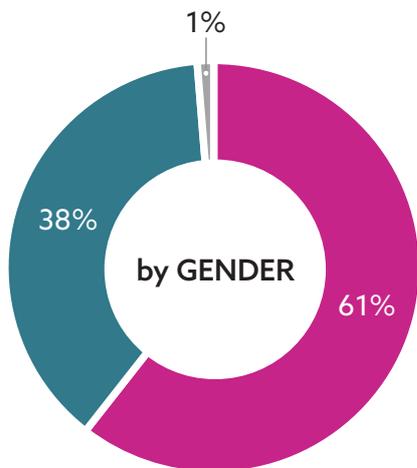


MYANMAR

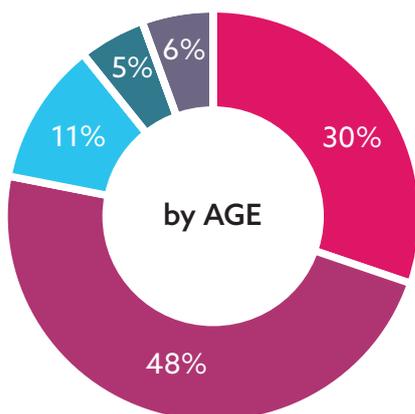
Almost half of respondents from Myanmar were aged 20-24. The most popular digital technology used for health is social media. Only 10% said they don't use any technologies. Fitness is by far the most common reason for using digital technologies and accessing health information is the biggest way young people in Myanmar think technology can help them manage their health and well-being. More than one in five respondents said they didn't know about potential negative impacts of digital health.

Profile of the 5,875 respondents from Myanmar

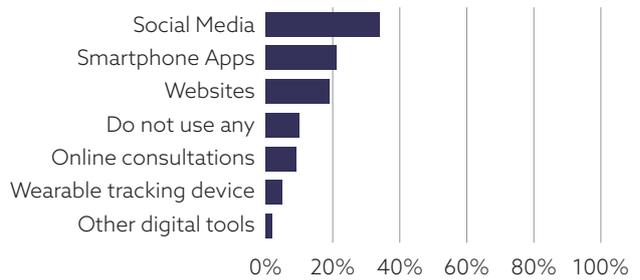
● Female ● Male ● Other



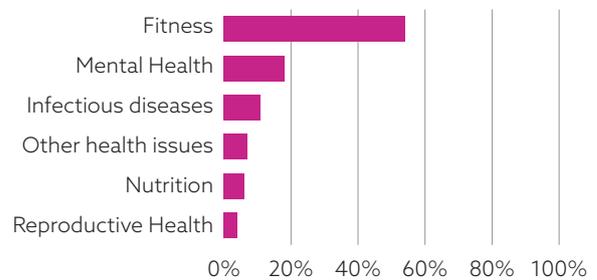
● 14-19 ● 20-24 ● 25-29 ● 30-34 ● 35+



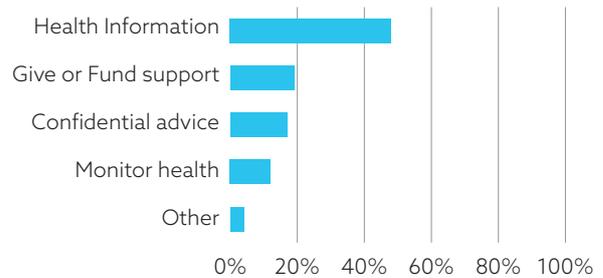
Which of these digital technologies do you use the MOST for health-related purposes?



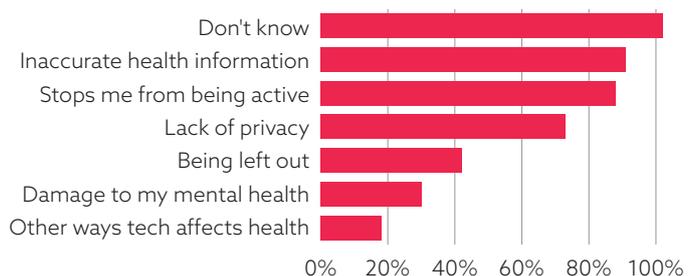
Which health issue do you mostly use digital technologies for?



What is the biggest way that digital technologies can help manage health and well-being?



How can using digital technologies negatively affect your health and well-being?

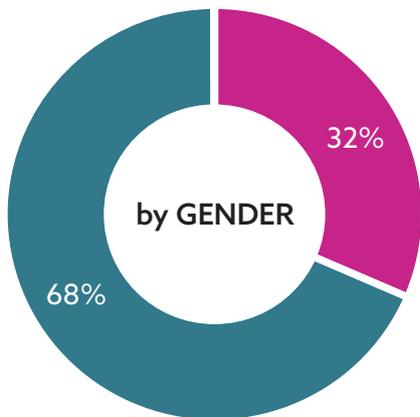


ZAMBIA

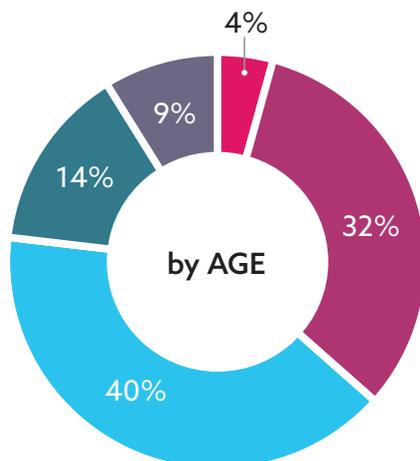
The majority of Zambian respondents were aged over 20. Websites are the most popular digital technologies used for health-related purposes. The most common health issue that respondents use digital technologies for is infectious diseases, followed by fitness and reproductive health. Health information was by far the most popular response when asked the biggest way that digital technologies can help health and well-being. The accuracy of health information was also a top concern.

Profile of the 3,386 respondents from Zambia

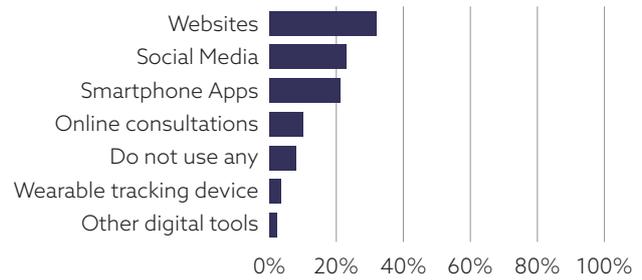
● Female ● Male ● Other



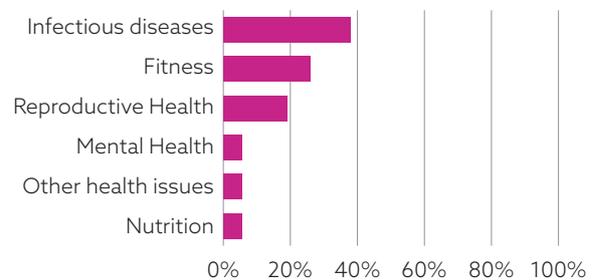
● 14-19 ● 20-24 ● 25-29 ● 30-34 ● 35+



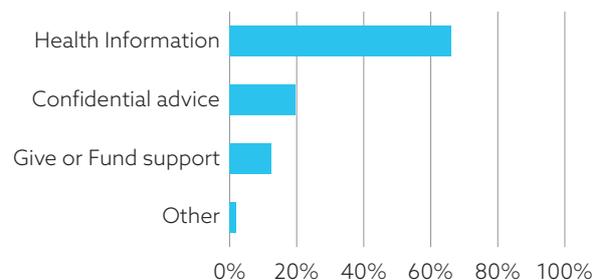
Which of these digital technologies do you use the MOST for health-related purposes?



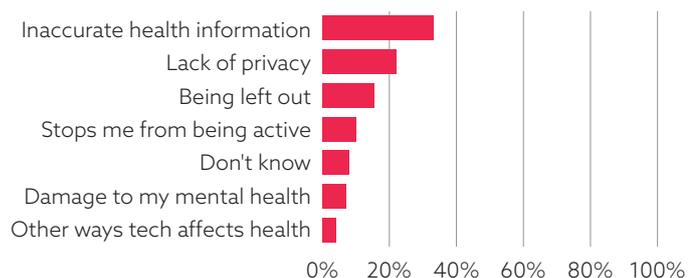
Which health issue do you mostly use digital technologies for?

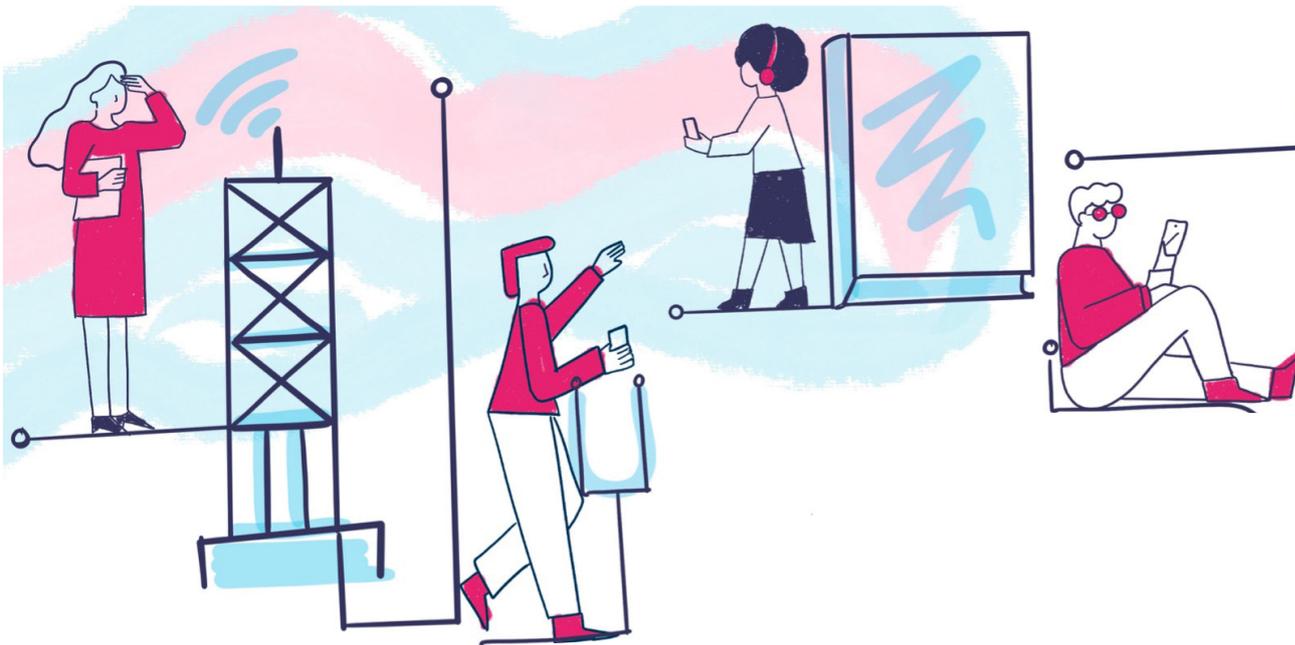


What is the biggest way that digital technologies can help manage health and well-being?



How can using digital technologies negatively affect your health and well-being?





JOIN THE **GHFutures2030 YOUTH NETWORK**

The GHFutures2030 Youth Network was launched at the ECOSOC Youth Forum in April 2021. The goal of the Network is to take forward the recommendations of the Governing Health Futures 2030 Commission. Members of the Network will co-create and co-lead future research, advocacy, and dissemination activities to steer positive health futures with and for youth.

All youth who are interested in being part of the ongoing work of the Commission are encouraged to join the Network. **To express your interest go to: [twtr.to/OvAj](https://twitter.com/OvAj)**

Young people want to see **stronger regulation of online content** and services to protect them from harm and misinformation.

Inaccurate health information is the biggest concern for young people using digital technologies.

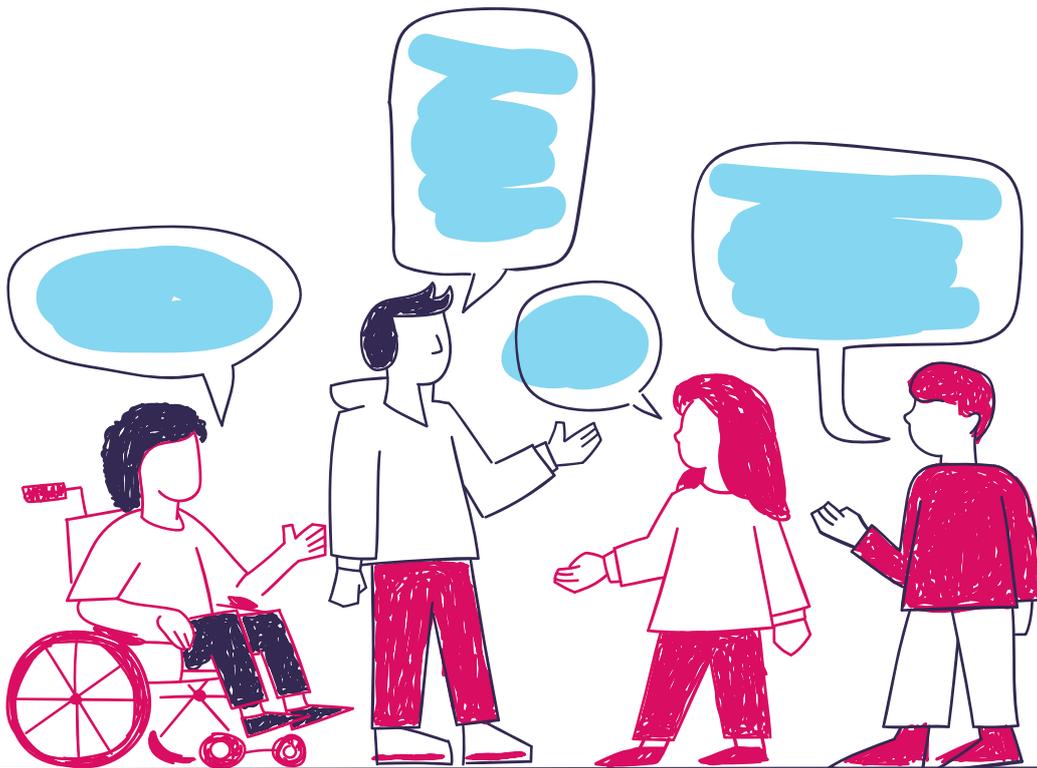
Young people expressed a high degree of **uncertainty about what the future of digital health** holds.

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Growing up **2030**
in a digital world

GOVERNING HEALTH FUTURES
THE LANCET & FINANCIAL TIMES COMMISSION

Report

VOICE MATTERS

The Lancet & Financial Times Commission
Governing health futures 2030: Growing up in a digital world

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