



# Digital wellbeing in schools: are we asking the right questions?

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A word cloud graphic featuring various educational terms. The words are arranged in a layered, overlapping fashion. The largest words are 'Education' (top center, green), 'Digital' (middle, green), 'Learning' (bottom left, yellow-green), and 'Innovation' (bottom, yellow-green). Other prominent words include 'Classroom', 'Teaching', 'Technology', 'Assessment', 'Students', 'Teacher', 'Online', 'Knowledge', 'Skills', 'Blended', 'Curriculum', 'Future', 'STEM', 'Access', 'Equity', 'Creativity', 'E-learning', 'Interactive', 'Development', and 'Collaboration'. The colors range from light green to yellow-green, with some purple and blue accents.

# References

- Lisbon Strategy (2000),
- Europe 2020 (European Commission, 2010)
- Digital Agenda for Europe (2010)
- Opening Up Education (2013)

# A change in mood




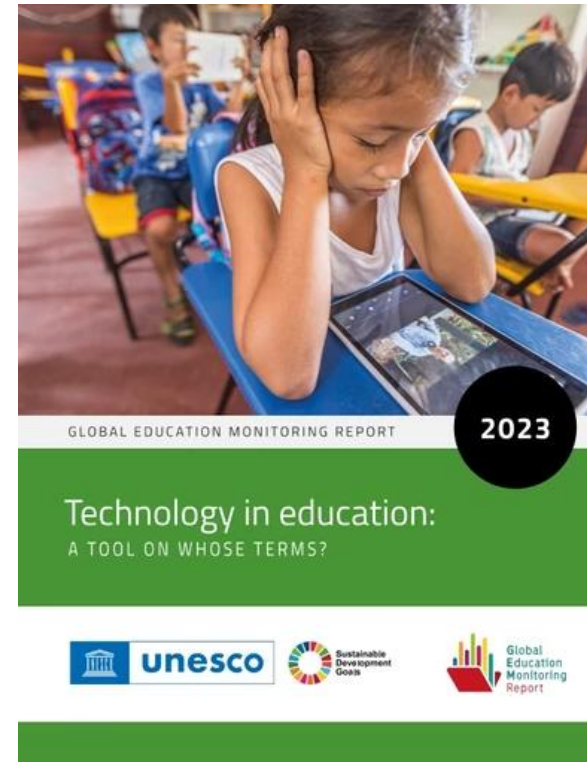
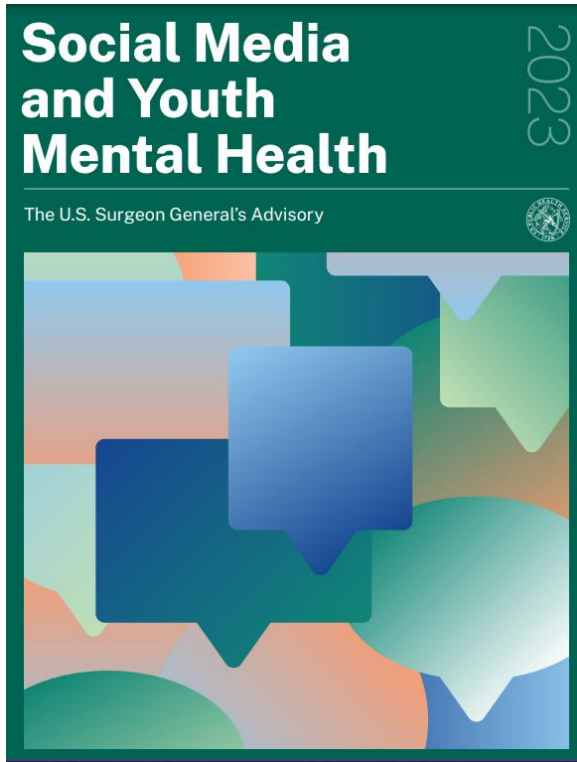
**DIGITAL INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION IS NOT IMPROVING LEARNING**

Integrating AI in educational settings should be affordable and yield tangible benefits.

There was a 2 point decline in maths performance recorded for each additional hour of digital learning per school day among 15 year olds.

We need to support teachers' development by using evidence for effective teaching in digital classrooms.





# Digital wellbeing

- Maintaining subjective well-being in an environment characterized by digital communication overabundance (Gui et al., 2017)
- Finding an optimal balance between connectivity and disconnectivity (Vanden Abeele, 2021)
- physical, cognitive, social and emotional contentment that enables all individuals to engage positively in all digital learning environments (Council of the European Union, 2022)
- Supporting subjective well-being in a social environment where digital media are omnipresent (Büchi, 2024)

# References

- Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027
- The new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) (2022)
- Council conclusions on supporting well-being in digital education (2022)
- Report on the state of the Digital Decade (2023)
- Wellbeing and mental health at school (2024)

# Current questions

How can we **digitally innovate**, also **considering wellbeing**?

How can we develop digital wellbeing **skills**?

How can we regulate **platforms**?

How can we **train teachers and parents**?

How can we **involve kids** in fostering digital wellbeing?

# An undiscussed assumption

Should we really take for granted that children are autonomously online?

# Requests of permanent connection

- student information system's parent portals
- online homework
- commercial platforms used for learning
- smartphone ownership

# 4 reasons to question children's permanent connection

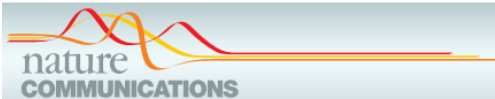
scientific

social

legal

inequality-related

# Three reasons to question children's permanent connection



ARTICLE

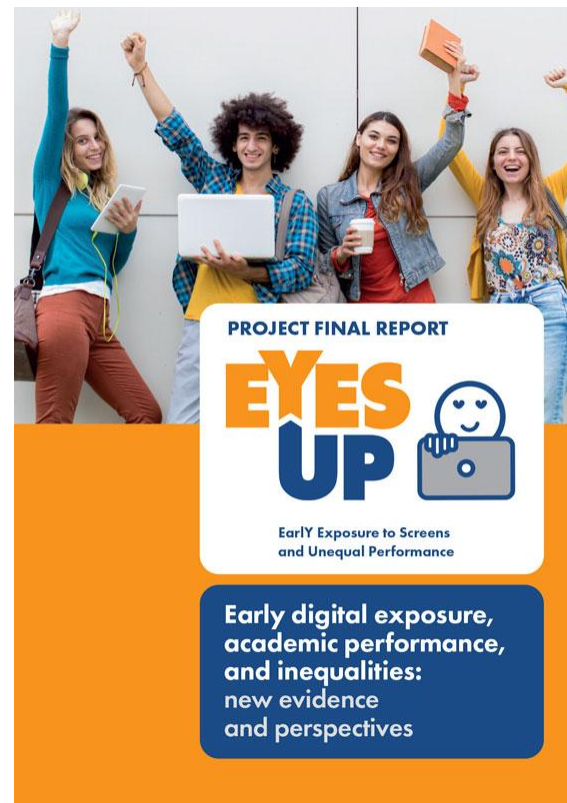


<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-29296-3> OPEN

## Windows of developmental sensitivity to social media

Amy Orben <sup>1</sup>, Andrew K. Przybylski <sup>2</sup>, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore <sup>3,4</sup> & Rogier A. Kievit <sup>5,1</sup>

The relationship between social media use and life satisfaction changes across adolescent development. Our analyses of two UK datasets comprising 84,011 participants (10–80 years old) find that the cross-sectional relationship between self-reported estimates of social media use and life satisfaction ratings is most negative in younger adolescents. Furthermore, sex differences in this relationship are only present during this time. Longitudinal analyses of 17,409 participants (10–21 years old) suggest distinct developmental windows of sensitivity to social media in adolescence, when higher estimated social media use predicts a decrease in life satisfaction ratings one year later (and vice-versa: lower estimated social media use predicts an increase in life satisfaction ratings). These windows occur at different ages for males (14–15 and 19 years old) and females (11–13 and 19 years old). Decreases in life satisfaction ratings also predicted subsequent increases in estimated social media use, however, these were not associated with age or sex.



**Early digital exposure,  
academic performance,  
and inequalities:  
new evidence  
and perspectives**

<https://digitalwellbeing.eu/eyesup-report>

# 4 reasons to question children's permanent connection

Mothers against media addiction (MAMA) - USA <https://www.joinmama.org/>

Protect Young Eyes - USA <https://www.protectyoungeyes.com/>

Smartphone Free Childhood - UK <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>

Adolescencia Libre de Móviles - Spain <https://www.adolescencialibredemoviles.es/>

No smartphone code - Ireland <https://www.stpns.ie/smart-device-voluntary-code>

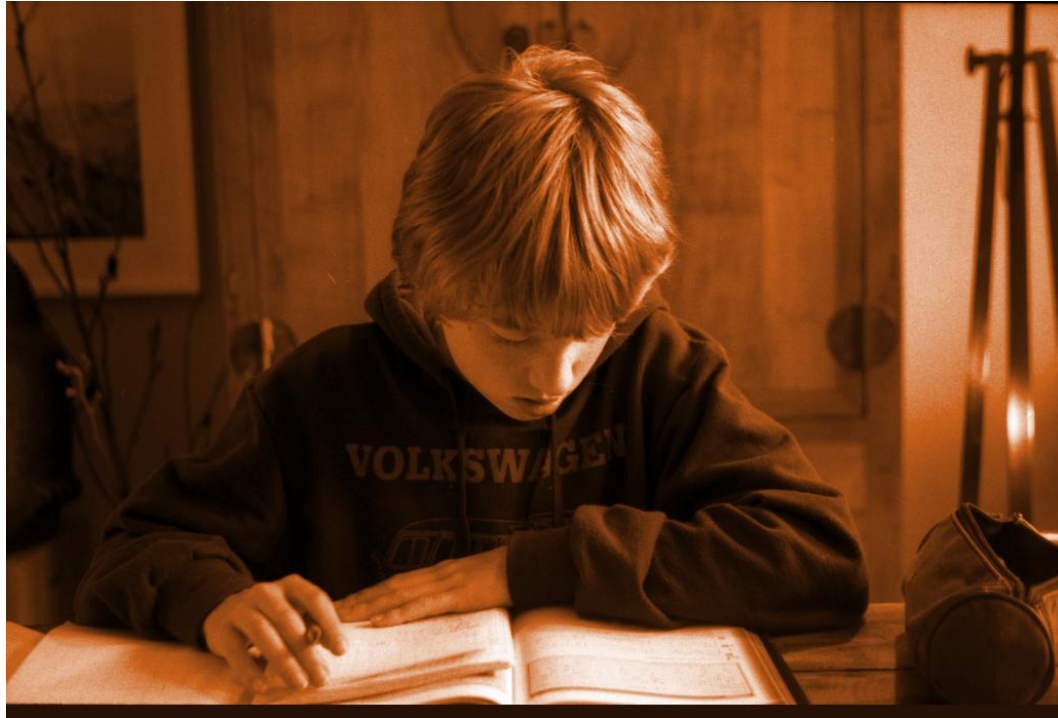
Pactes Smartphone - France <https://pactesmartphone.fr/>

Desconecta - Brasil <https://www.movimentodesconecta.com.br/>

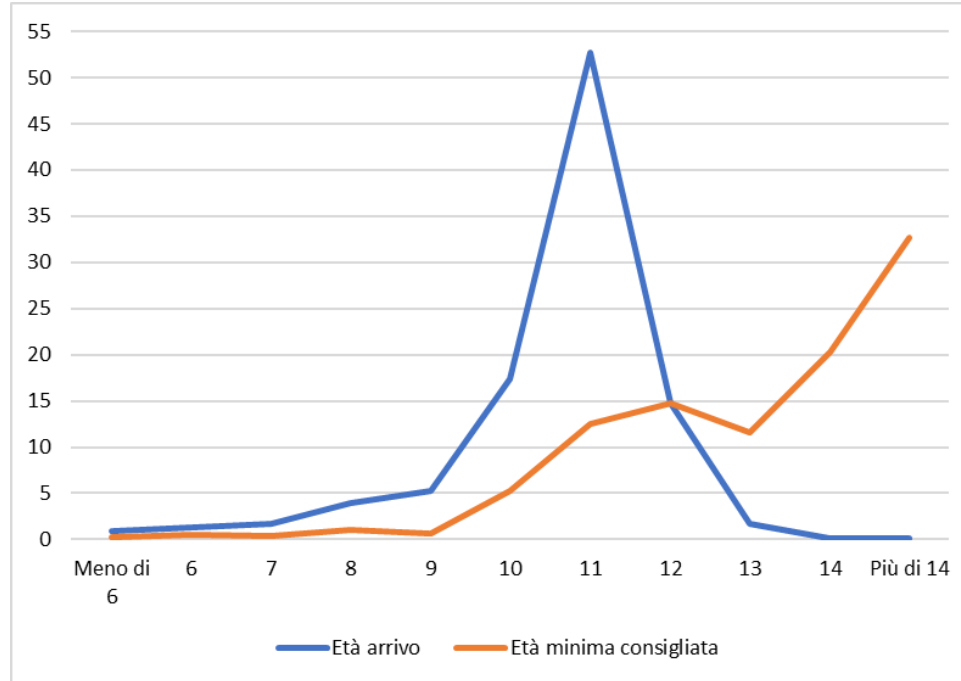
Smarter Start - Germany <https://www.smarterstartab14.de/>

Patti Digitali - Italy [www.pattidigitali.it](http://www.pattidigitali.it)

# Online homework



# 4 reasons to question children's permanent connection



Gui, M., Respi, C., Sironi, G., & Fiore, B. (2024). Report dell'indagine su genitori e figli. Patto Educativo Digitale della città di Milano - <https://www.partecipami.it/infodiscs/getfile/19242>

# 4 reasons to question children's permanent connection

GDPR: the processing of the personal data of a child are lawful where the child is at least 16 years old.

BUT: No Verified Parental Consent on Instagram or TikTok

→ LEGAL GAP!

# 4 reasons to question children's permanent connection

Students from disadvantaged families have less protection and assistance in using the Internet (Livingstone et al., 2017; Odgers & Robb, 2020; Kurten et al., 2025)



# A staged digital education

→ Developing digital competence within a structured plan of gradual digital autonomy *discussed within a community*, with safe training zones for the development of skills

e.g. *“During primary school, do not leave your children unattended when they are navigating online. Follow the laws regarding minimum age requirements for digital platforms. We are providing you with a set of meaningful activities to do with your children that help develop their digital competence. We also suggest simple ways to filter your home internet connection when they are using it”*

## Raccomandazioni di Milano

per il benessere e la sicurezza digitale di bambini/e e pre-adolescenti



PATTI  
DIGITALI

[www.pattidigitali.it](http://www.pattidigitali.it)

Presso di:



L'iniziativa fa parte del progetto MUSA (sistema dell'Innovazione, Spese 9, PNRR)

# Why we need a gradual digital autonomy approach for AI companions



# THANK YOU

[www.digitalwellbeing.eu](http://www.digitalwellbeing.eu)

<https://scholar.google.it/citations?user=Oi1GfncAAAAJ&hl=it&oi=ao>

[www.pattidigitali.it](http://www.pattidigitali.it)