

Young females face higher social anxiety from smartphone use, study finds

by European Psychiatric Association



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A new study presented today at the [European Psychiatric Association Congress 2025](#) reveals that gender plays a significant role in excessive and problematic (psychological or behavioral dependence) smartphone use, with young females more likely to experience higher social anxiety than other genders. In the study, it was also found that gender was significantly linked to the amount of time spent using smartphones and the fear of being judged negatively by others online.

The researchers set out to investigate problematic [smartphone use](#), [mental well-being](#), emotional regulation and [social anxiety](#) differences between genders, so that a stronger understanding can be built of the smartphone addiction process. The study involved 400 [young adults](#) (average age 25.9): 104 men, 293 women and three of another gender.

Key findings from the study include:

- Gender accounts for significant differences in the mediating factors (time of use per day, Mental Health Continuum Scale (MHC), Assessing Emotions Scale (AES), Fear of Negative Perception Questionnaire (FNPQ)), that affect problematic smartphone use
- Young females experience higher fear of negative perception online
- Gender is significantly related to the time spent with smartphones, with higher use in young females than other genders

Dr. Csibi Sándor, George Emil Palade University of Medicine, Romania, and Lead Investigator, said, "These results point to serious differences between genders in that females are much more likely to suffer mental ill health at the hands of a smartphone.

"Our study also reveals the influence of social interactivity, low emotional understanding and variations in perceived [social support](#) that could be caused by problematic smartphone use. It is important that these areas are further researched so we can work to build our understanding of these behavior differences between genders and what methods need to be put in place to support these individuals."

Co-author Ms. Neha Pirwani, Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary, added, "Our findings add to previous studies showing that females can face increased suffering and therefore need additional attention, guidance and help compared with other genders, to identify problematic smartphone use and what this may lead to. Our continued work to further understand the causes and effects of this is key to addressing these issues among the younger generation."

Professor Geert Dom, European Psychiatric Association (EPA) President, said, "Nearly 100% of Generation Z own and use a smartphone. There is already evidence from a variety of cross-sectional, longitudinal and empirical studies implicating smartphone and social media use being factors in the increase in mental distress, self-injurious behavior and suicidality among this age group. This is an area that must be given further attention so that any detrimental areas can be addressed quickly."

More information: Gender differences regarding problematic smartphone use, mediating by mental well-being, emotional regulation, and social anxiety in young adult sample [EPA2025-LB-4869]

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