

Three out of four parents say social media is a major distraction for students, according to new study

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The vast majority of parents believe social media is a major distraction for students, according to a new nationwide study.

The online study, conducted in November and December, surveyed a nationally representative sample of more than 10,000 parents of K-12 students. An overwhelming majority from across [racial groups](#)—African American (70%), Asian (72%), white (75%), Hispanic/Latino (70%)—agreed that [social media](#) is a distraction.

Parents of children who attend [private schools](#) (82%) were more likely to see social media as a distraction than parents of children in [public schools](#) (73%) or [charter schools](#) (73%) or those being homeschooled (67%). Interestingly, parents with children in [high school](#) (74%), middle school (73%) and elementary school (73%) were equally concerned about the issue.

School leaders are also worried. Last week, Seattle Public Schools sued the tech giants behind TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat, claiming they've created a youth mental health crisis. Most schools prohibit cellphone use in the classroom.

"Suing social media companies or banning cellphones in classrooms may be trendy, but is unlikely to help students," said Vikas Mittal, a professor of marketing at Rice's Jones Graduate School of Business, who conducted the [2022 Collaborative for Customer-Based Execution and Strategy \(C-CUBES\) K12 Parent Voice Study](#).

Cellphone usage and social media browsing is ingrained among school-age children, he argues. A Pew Research Center study of teens found more than 95% have access to a cellphone, 94% use the internet almost constantly or several times a day and 54% say it would be hard for them to give up social media.

"Many years ago, schools were in a race to provide every student with internet access," Mittal said. "It was seen as a panacea for improving academic achievement. That policy seems to have had some unintended

consequences.

"The distractive effect of social media is only exacerbated due to widespread internet access, and today's school leaders must thread a difficult needle," he continued. "They must continue providing students with high-quality and equitable [internet access](#) due to its potential educational benefits."

"Policies like curtailing cellphone usage in classes to ensure teachers can teach effectively are necessary but quite limiting," he added. "School leaders must proactively work with parents to educate children about the potential downside of social media usage and teach them strategies to self-manage potentially addictive behaviors associated with social media."

Provided by Rice University

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