



MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties
From: Coalition to Empower our Future
Re: Three-in-Four Voters and Parents Want Comprehensive Solutions to Youth Mental Health Challenges and Agree Narrow Solutions May Carry Unintended Consequences
Date: May 2026

Overview

In February 2026, the Coalition to Empower our Future conducted conversations with parents across the U.S. to discuss the youth mental health and wellbeing challenge and their perspectives on solutions. Additionally, in partnership with Mercury Analytics, the coalition conducted an online survey among 2,000 registered voters nationwide and an additional 600 parents nationwide.

This research finds that voters and parents strongly support both a comprehensive approach and comprehensive solutions to youth mental health challenges. Parents, in particular, are concerned that narrow solutions focusing singularly on banning or heavily regulating technology will cause negative unintended consequences.

Key Research Insights

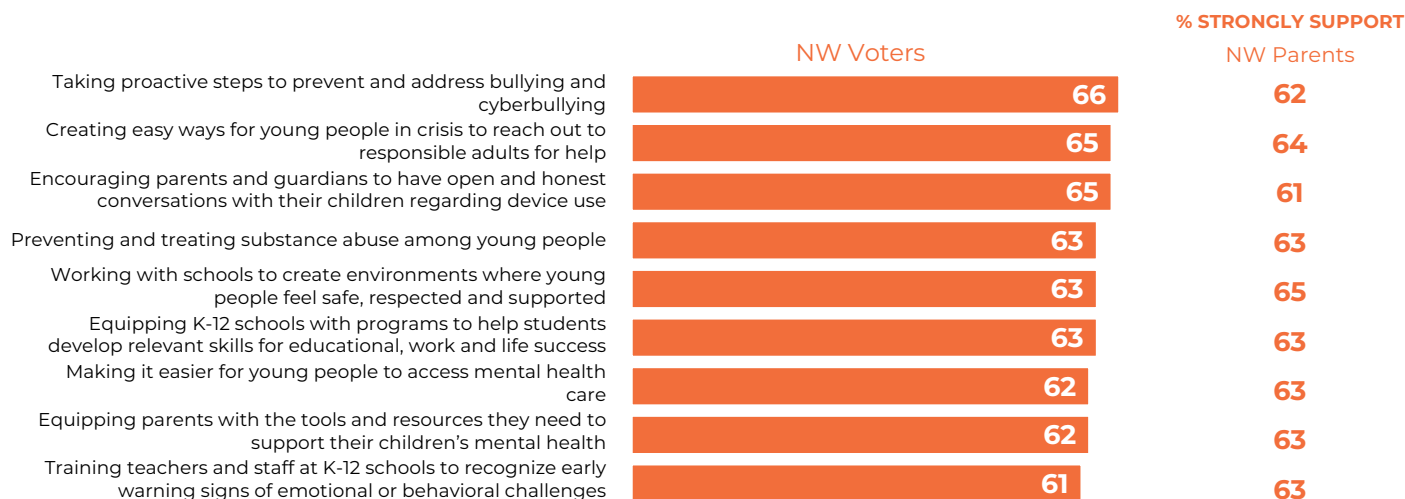
Nearly three-quarters of voters and parents support a comprehensive approach and solutions to youth mental health. They prefer a comprehensive approach over a narrow approach that specifically targets youth access to phones and technology, and they say solutions to youth mental health challenges should be comprehensive, not targeting a single factor.

Q: Thinking about solutions to youth mental health challenges, which of the following do you think is the best approach, even if neither is perfect?



There are many popular solutions to youth mental health challenges, highlighting consensus around a comprehensive approach. Voters and parents support solutions that address what they feel are the root causes of the youth mental health challenge, including bullying and substance abuse. They want young people to have access to timely and relevant care, and they want parents and educators to be equipped with stronger tools and resources to support young people.

Q: Please indicate if you **support or oppose** each as a solution to improving youth mental health. *(Among Nationwide Voters, Top Eight Solutions, % STRONGLY SUPPORT)*



Strong majorities of voters (71 percent), and parents in particular (79 percent), say that a narrow approach focused on banning or heavily restricting youth access to phones and technology can have unintended negative consequences. Voters and parents say these narrow, ban-based approaches will fail to set young people up for the future when it comes to using technology responsibly and knowledgeably.

Q: Please indicate if you **agree or disagree** with the following statement –

*“A narrow approach to youth mental health and wellbeing that **bans or heavily restricts youth access to phones / social media** will cause negative unintended consequences for young people.”*



QUOTES FROM PARENTS ON WHY A NARROW, BAN-BASED APPROACH CAN HAVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

*“By completely denying them access, **I would not be setting them up for success in the future.**” – Republican Parent*

*“**The more you deny them access, the more they want it.**” – Democratic Parent*

*“Information is moving so fast right now that **if you don’t have access, you’re at a disadvantage.**” – Republican Parent*

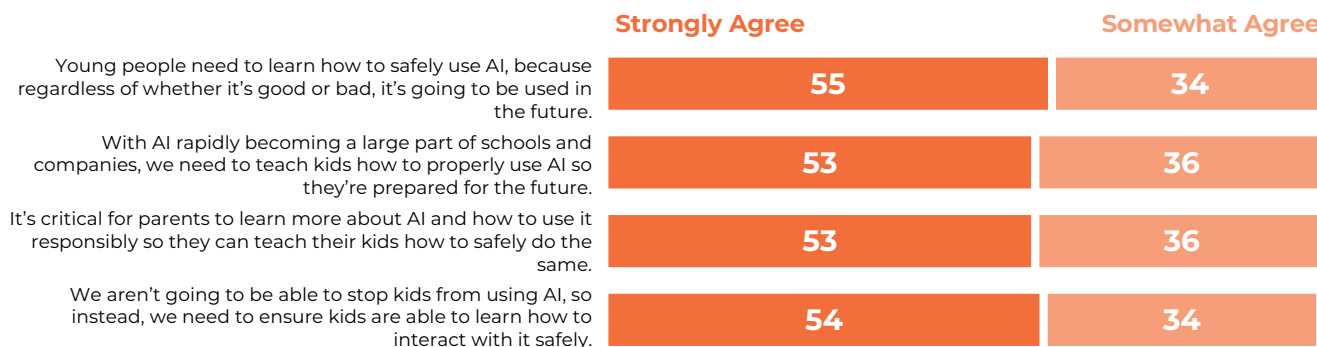
*“Banning tech isn’t the only solution – **they still need to learn how to use it because that’s the future.**” – Democratic Parent*

*“One day they [won’t be] living in your house anymore – and they’re going to have a smartphone. **It makes more sense to teach them to use it responsibly while they’re still at home.**” – Republican Parent*

Nine in 10 voters say that rather than focusing on banning or heavily regulating phones and technology, we need to prioritize stronger digital literacy tools and resources – not just for young people, but for their parents too. They agree that young people need to know how to use technology responsibly, especially artificial intelligence (AI), because we aren’t going back to a world without it.

Parents say they feel responsible in this effort as well, but they, too, are still learning how to navigate an increasingly digital environment. Parents emphasize they need to be properly equipped and educated on these tools in order to support their kids.

Q: Please indicate if you **agree or disagree** about the ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) can support youth mental health.
(Among Nationwide Voters)



QUOTES FROM PARENTS ON WHY DIGITAL LITERACY IS NECESSARY FOR BOTH YOUTH AND PARENTS

*“I think we need to figure out as parents and adults **how to responsibly use social media and AI before we teach our kids.**” – Republican Parent*

*“**Schools should create seminars or modules on digital literacy, like a media literacy class.**” – Democratic Parent*

Voters and parents agree that the singular solution of banning or heavily restricting phones and technology will result in a number of specific unintended consequences. Around three in four agree that it will fail to address the underlying challenges kids face, fail to address the need for more accessible mental health services and reduce opportunities to find belonging and navigate a digital world. This data reinforces that **voters and parents view the youth mental health challenge comprehensively – not as a single problem with a single solution.**

Q: Please indicate if you **agree or disagree:** Banning or heavily restricting youth access to phones / social media as a singular solution to improving youth mental health will...

	NW Voters	% AGREE NW Parents
Fail to address many of the unique underlying challenges kids face, like the need for more stability at home or a mentor or role model	81	82
Fail to address our broken and outdated mental health care system that is catered to adults	80	80
Fail to address deeper economic and social issues that are causing youth mental health challenges	79	81
Fail to address the need for more accessible mental health services, like school counselors and mental health professionals	78	80
Cause kids to lose access to affordable resources and support, especially in rural communities	74	77
Make it harder for kids and their parents to navigate an increasingly digital world	72	76
Reduce opportunities for kids to access online communities where they feel safe and supported and find belonging	72	78
Put kids and parents at a disadvantage, and possibly even put them at greater risk, in an increasingly digital world	72	77