Digital well-being in the Czech Republic

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Content →

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DigiWELL

Spolufinancováno Evropskou unií

MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ, MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY

01

Introduction →

The everyday lives of adults nowadays often require near-constant connectivity, characterized by having to own various digital technologies, such as a smartphone or a computer, and be connected to the internet in order to be constantly accessible to others (be it family or work) (Vorderer et al., 2018). According to the International Telecommunication Union, 68% of the world's population used the internet in 2024, representing a rise from around 37% 10 years ago (ITU, n.d.). As for the Czech Republic, in 2024, 7.6 million people over the age of 16 used the internet, which represents 88% of the population. Of these, 91% access the internet daily. Furthermore, 99% of people older than 16 years own a mobile phone, and 81% also use it to access the internet, which is slightly below the European Union average of 85.6%. People also use the internet extensively to communicate - various internet applications such as Messenger or WhatsApp were used by 78% of people, compared to only 54% in 2019 (ČSÚ, 2024).

In the context of the necessity of technology use and the need for online accessibility, we have witnessed an emergence of digital well-being. Digital well-being is a fluctuating, subjective experience consisting of the positive and negative experiences that using technology entails. Vanden Abeele (2020) defines digital well-being as "a subjective individual experience of optimal balance between the benefits and drawbacks obtained from mobile connectivity. This experiential state is comprised of affective and cognitive appraisals of the integration of digital connectivity into ordinary life." (p. 938). Digital well-being is a component of overall well-being, and people achieve it when they are able to use technology fully in a way that supports their everyday living and reduces its negative impacts. Rather than experiencing loss of time and disruptions to relationships, people with digital well-being experience fun when using technologies and use them in a way that supports managing tasks. At present, digital well-being is a quite new concept. Research on digital well-being in populations and its correlates is at the beginning, which is why our report is one of the first on this topic in the Czech Republic.

One way to regulate the use of technology and how it interferes with everyday life is through digital disconnection strategies. Digital disconnection strategies are voluntary restrictions on the use of technology in order to achieve a balance between the everyday and virtual worlds (Nassen et al., 2023). These strategies can take different forms: they can be so-called digital detoxes, the use of apps and programs to limit certain functions or access to the Internet, or perhaps agreeing on rules regarding technology use and online accessibility.

This report offers an overview of technology use, digital well-being and digital disconnection among Czech adults. The research comes from Interdisciplinary Research Team on Internet and Society (IRTIS) at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk university. The data come from the project Research of Excellence on Digital Technologies and Wellbeing (DigiWELL). Data were collected from 2000 Czech adults aged from 18 to 59 in October 2024. Research of this type provides the first insight into where Czech adults stand with their digital well-being.

Key findings

Technology use:

People mainly use the computer for work, while the smartphone is mainly used for leisure.

There are generally small differences between men and women in their use of digital technologies. However, women tend to use computers for work slightly longer than men, whereas men use computers somewhat more during their leisure time.

Digital wellbeing was examined across four dimensions: meaningfulness (eudaimonic dimension), enjoyment (hedonic dimension), functional impairment, and loss of control:

Meaningfulness: Most adults agree that using technology is meaningful and constitutes an essential part of their lives. A majority also agree that technology helps them cope with boredom.

Enjoyment: Approximately three-quarters of respondents agree that they enjoy using technology and consider it a source of entertainment.

Functional impairment: A total of 17% of adults agree that they feel stressed from having to be constantly online. However, 67% disagree with this statement. About one-fifth believe that technology hampers their performance, and roughly 11% acknowledge that technology leads to conflicts with family, friends, or colleagues.

Loss of control: In total, 13% of respondents agree that technology is a waste of time. However, about one-fifth hold a neutral view, and 65% disagree. Overall, the majority do not consider technology to be a waste of time.

Ambivalence: A significant portion of adults report experiencing both positive and negative effects of technology simultaneously. This is especially true for young adults.

Gender differences: Men are more likely to perceive technology as entertaining, while women are more likely to view it as a waste of time. However, these differences are relatively minor.

Generational differences: Younger people are more likely than older adults to perceive technology as meaningful and enjoyable, but they also report a greater feeling of losing time and control over technology use. As many as 86% of young adults aged 18–29 say they enjoy using technology, compared to 67% of adults aged 50–59.

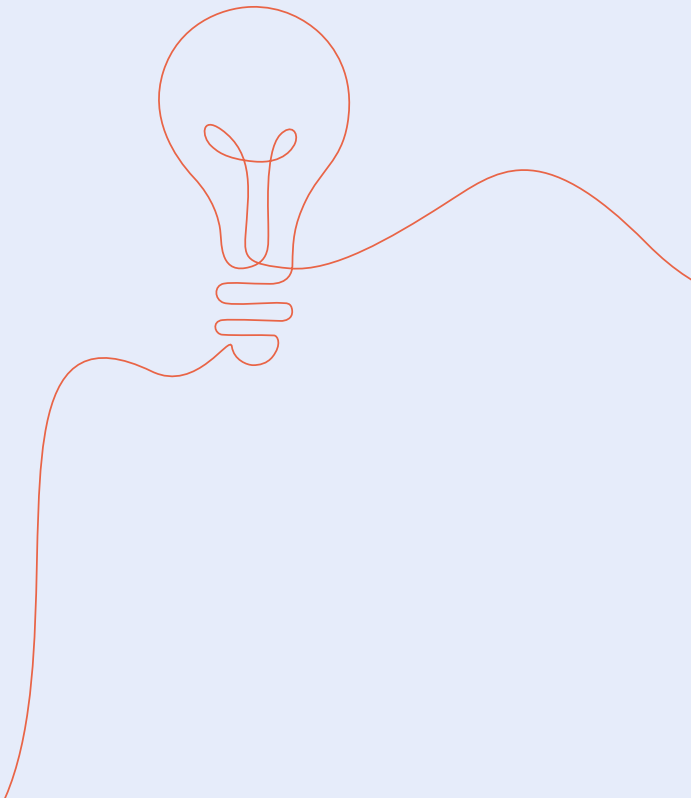
Digital disconnection:

More than 90% of people have at some point used a digital disconnection strategy, such as ignoring their phone or postponing checking it until after completing a task.

Half of adults report that they often or always set their phone to silent mode or place it screen down.

So-called "proactive strategies," where individuals set rules in advance, are less common: 65% have never used app-blocking tools, and only 10% use them often or always.

Digital disconnection tends to be more "reactive": people prefer approaches that may seem more natural to them (e.g., turning the phone screen down) over pre-set rules that require an active behavioral change.



02

Methods →

The data were collected during 14. 10. – 31. 10. 2024 using an online survey method (CAWI), which allows participants to respond to the survey using their computer or smartphone. An external agency, RESOLUTION Group, which upholds the ethical standards of ESOMAR a SIMAR, collected the data. The research was approved by the Ethical Committee of Masaryk University.

The target population was working people aged 18-59, who use digital technologies in their work. The final sample consisted of 2000 participants (M_{age} = 41,75; SD = 10,15; 56 % men) based on quotas for gender, age, education, size of place of residence, region, and net household income, all of which were verified prior to participation in the study. Participants were members of the Czech National Panel.

Due to the low number of non-binary participants (n = 4), these respondents are not included in analyses comparing gender groups, but they are included in the overall results. In the following charts, the sum of percentages may not always equal exactly one hundred due to rounding.

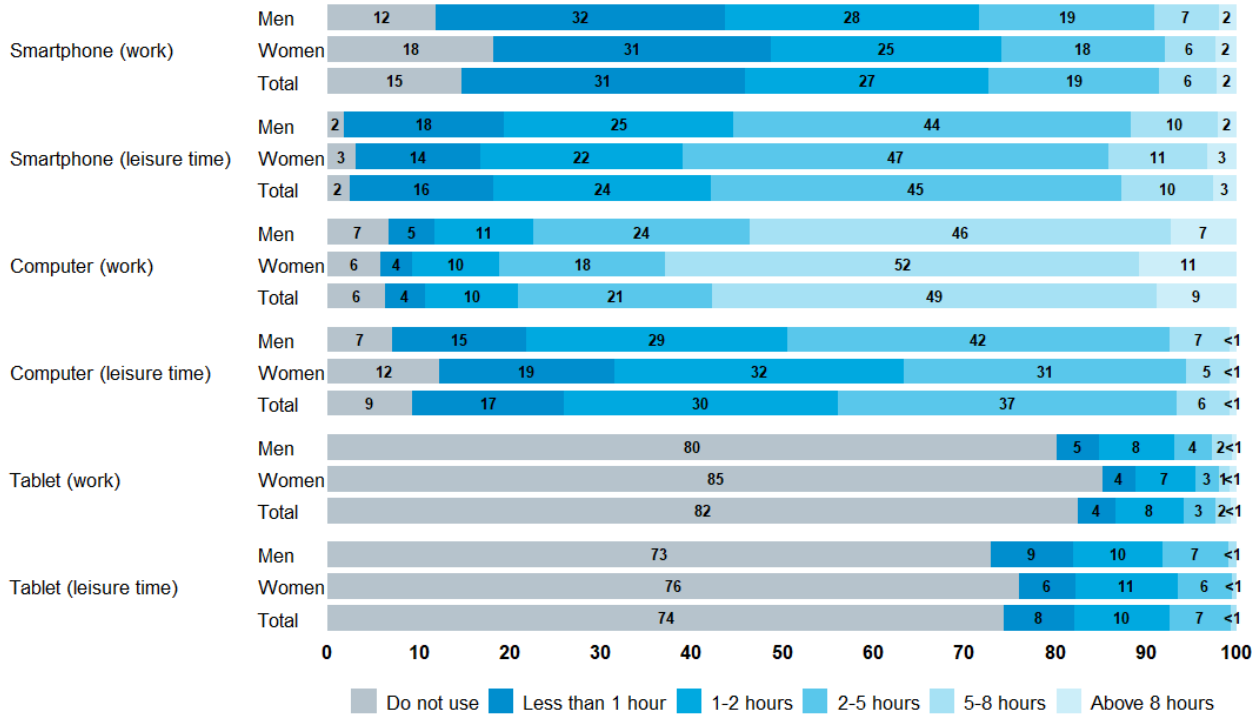
03

Results →

3.1 Time spent using technologies

The following **Figure 1** shows the amount of time spent on three electronic devices (smartphone, computer, tablet) during **a typical working day**. The time was self-reported by respondents in the survey. We distinguish between time spent on the device for work and for leisure.

Figure 1. *Time spent using digital technology during a working day by gender (%)*



Main findings:

Regarding **work**, people spend the most time on **computers** and the least on **smartphones**.

In their **leisure time**, people spend the **most time on smartphones** and the **least on computers**.

Tablets are the least used device, both for **work** and for **leisure**.

Women spend more time **using computers for work than men.** Specifically, 63% of women use a computer for more than five hours, which is 10 percentage points more than men.

Men spend more time **using computers during their leisure time**. Specifically, 49% of men use a computer for more than two hours, which is 13 percentage points more than women.

Six percent more **women** than men do not use a **smartphone** for work.

3.2 Digital well-being

Figure 2 provides a summary view of digital well-being among the adult population. Digital well-being is understood as a combination of the perceived meaningfulness of technology use and the enjoyment it brings, along with the perceived disruption of everyday functioning due to technology and the perceived loss of control over time caused by technology use (Vanden Abeele, 2020). That means that digital well-being consists of four dimensions:

Meaningfulness reflects how technology serves practical and organizational purposes and whether users find it meaningful.

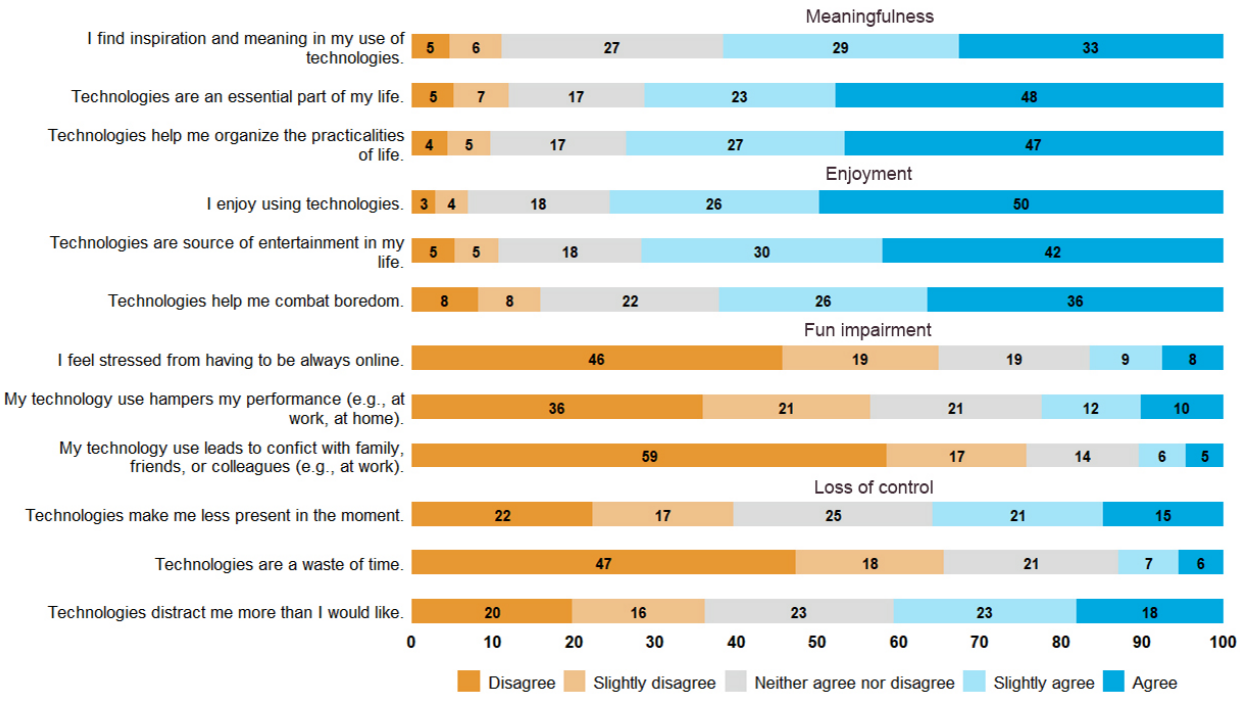
Enjoyment represents the degree of pleasure that technology brings to users. This includes how technology helps alleviate boredom.

Functional impairment indicates the extent to which technology hinders users' productivity and whether its use leads to conflict and stress.

Loss of control refers to the time users spend on technology at the expense of being present in the moment, which they perceive as "lost." It also includes the extent to which technology distracts them from other activities.

Each of the four components of digital well-being was measured using three statements. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each statement.

Figure 2. *Digital well-being of adult population (%)*



Main findings:

Meaningfulness: Most adults agree that **using technology is meaningful** and an **integral part of their lives**. A total of 62% agree that **technology brings them inspiration and a sense of purpose**. About one-quarter express a neutral stance, and only 11% in total disagree.

Enjoyment: Around three-quarters of people agree that they **enjoy using technology** and consider it a **source of entertainment**. About one-fifth are neutral, and fewer than 10% disagree. Additionally, **62% agree** that technology helps them **cope with boredom**.

Functional impairment: A total of 17% agree that they **feel stressed** because they have to be constantly online, while 67% disagree. Eleven percent agree that using technology leads to **conflicts with family, friends, or colleagues**, whereas 76% disagree. Furthermore, 22% agree that technology **hinders their productivity.**

Loss of control: Thirteen percent agree that technology is a **waste of time**. About one-fifth are neutral, and 65% disagree. However, around 40% agree that technology **distracts them more than they would like** and makes them **feel less present** in the moment, while a similar share (about 40%) disagree.

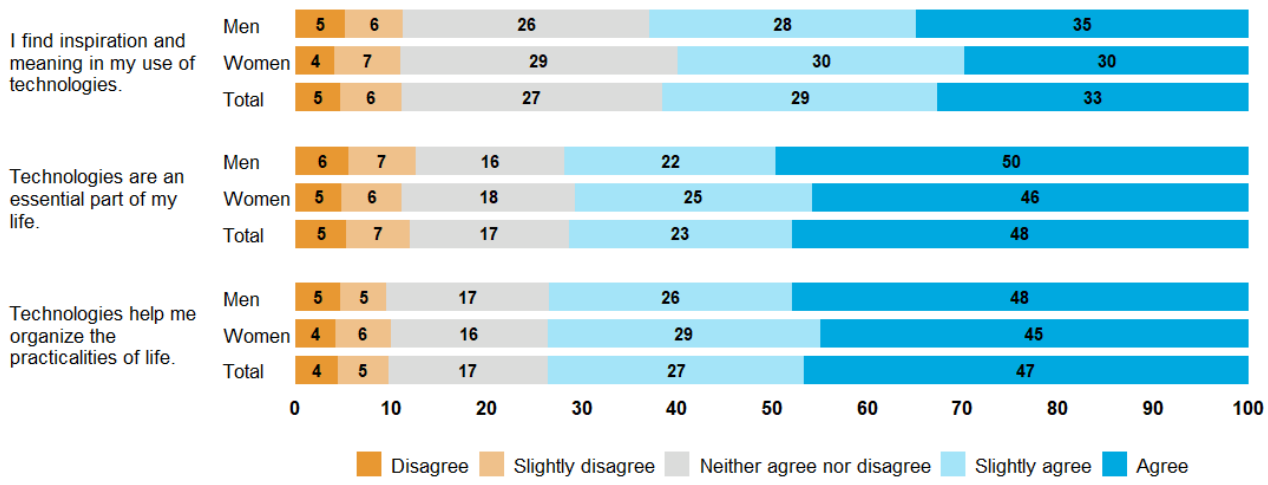
In summary, the majority of people (around two-thirds) perceive technology use as **meaningful and enjoyable**. In contrast, **fewer than one-fifth** of adults believe that technology is a **waste of time or disrupts their functioning**. The area of loss of control shows the least consensus among Czech adults: when it comes to **excessive distraction**, similar proportions of adults **agree and disagree**.

It is important to note that **positive** and **negative experiences with technology often overlap**, as shown by our data and by research from Vanden Abeele and Nguyen (2024). While some groups of adults report predominantly positive or negative experiences, **a large portion of people, especially young adults, report both types of experiences simultaneously**. Figures 3–10 provide a more detailed look at each of the four components of digital well-being. The data are broken down by gender or age group.

3.2.1 Digital well-being: Meaningfulness by gender and age

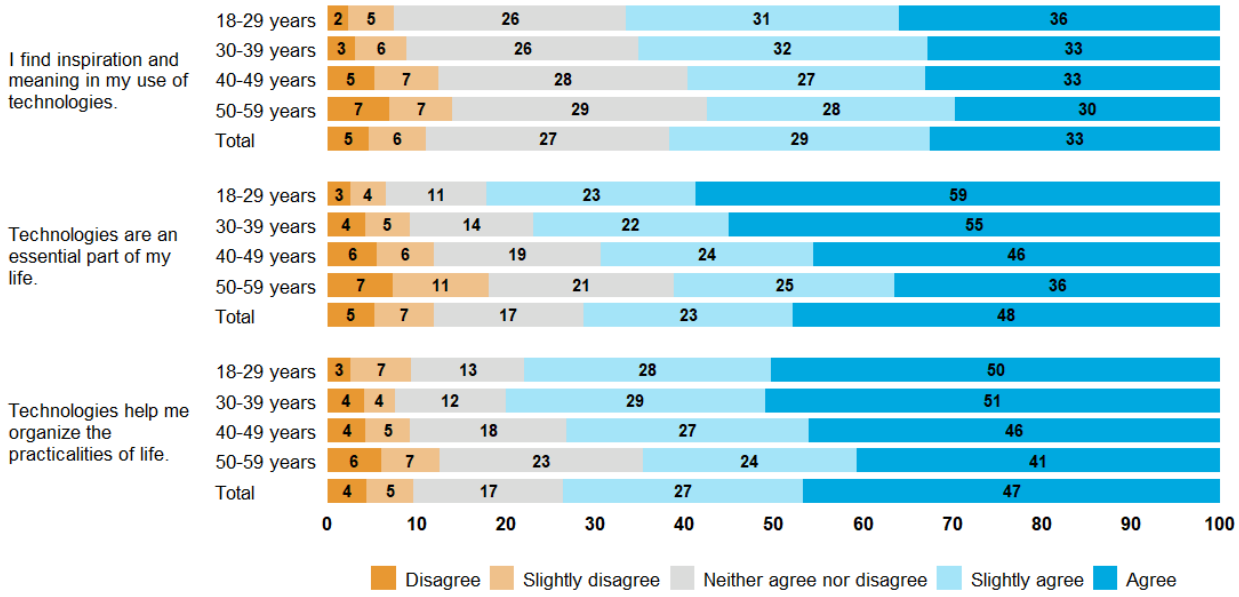
Figure 3 shows differences by gender in the dimension of **meaningfulness**, while **Figure 4** provides age differences. In terms of the perceived meaningfulness of technology, there are **no notable differences** between men and women in their responses. Most respondents view technology as a **useful tool for everyday life**. For example, approximately 74% of both **men and women** agree that technology helps them **organize practical matters**.

Figure 3. *Meaningfulness by gender (%)*



Younger people are more likely to perceive technology as an **essential part of their lives**. A total of **82% of the youngest respondents** (aged 18–29) agree with this statement, compared to 61% of the oldest group (aged 50–59). A similar pattern appears in responses to whether technology **helps organize practical matters**: 78% of the youngest group agree, compared to 65% of the oldest. In contrast, responses to the statement about whether technology brings **inspiration and meaning were balanced** across age groups.

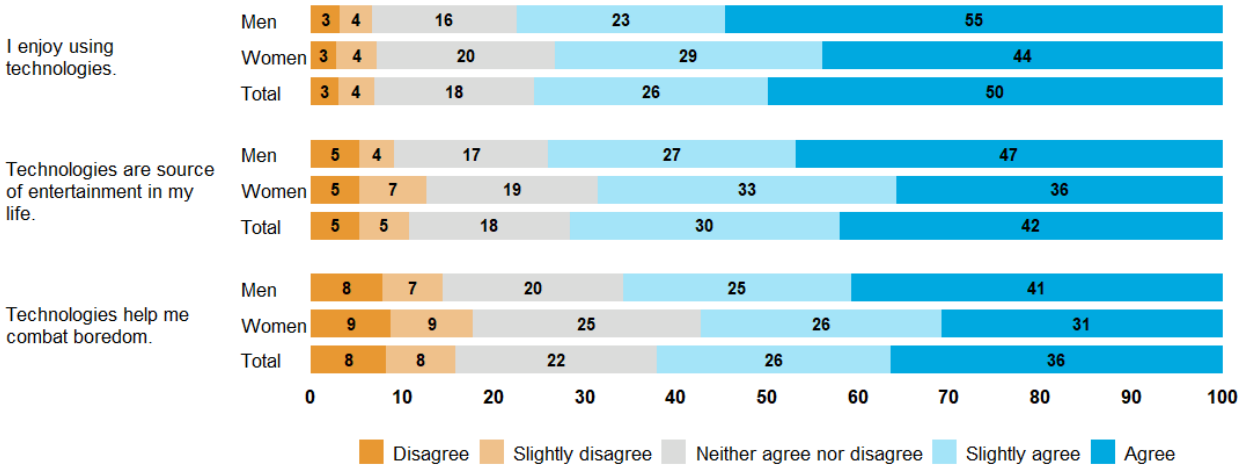
Figure 4. *Meaningfulness by age (%)*



3.2.2 Digital well-being: Enjoyment by gender and age

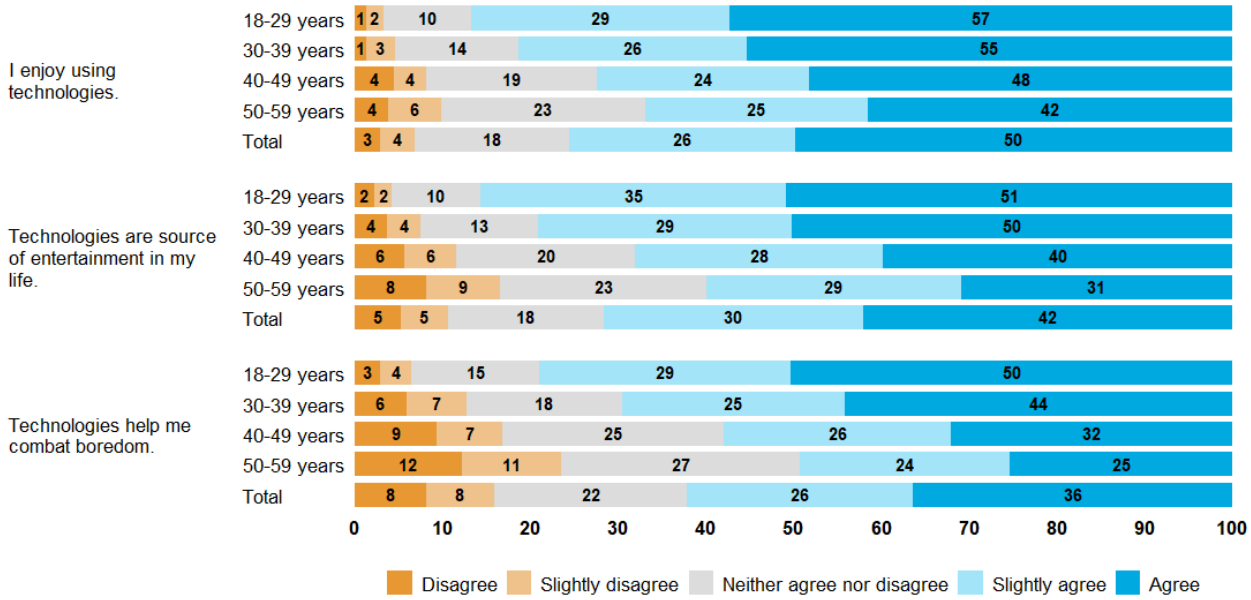
Gender differences in the **enjoyment** dimension are shown in **Figure 5**, and age differences are presented in **Figure 6**. There are **slight gender differences in the enjoyment** dimension. Most respondents perceive technology as a form of entertainment or amusement. The **largest difference** between men and women is in whether technology helps them **cope with boredom**: a total of **66% of men agree** with this statement, compared to 57% of **women**.

Figure 5. *Enjoyment by gender (%)*



Young people are more likely to perceive technology as **entertaining**. For example, 79% of the youngest respondents (aged 18–29) agree that technology helps them **cope with boredom**, compared to 49% of the oldest group (aged 50–59). These age groups also differ in whether they see technology as a source of **entertainment** (a 26-percentage-point difference) and whether they **enjoy using it** (a 19-percentage-point difference).

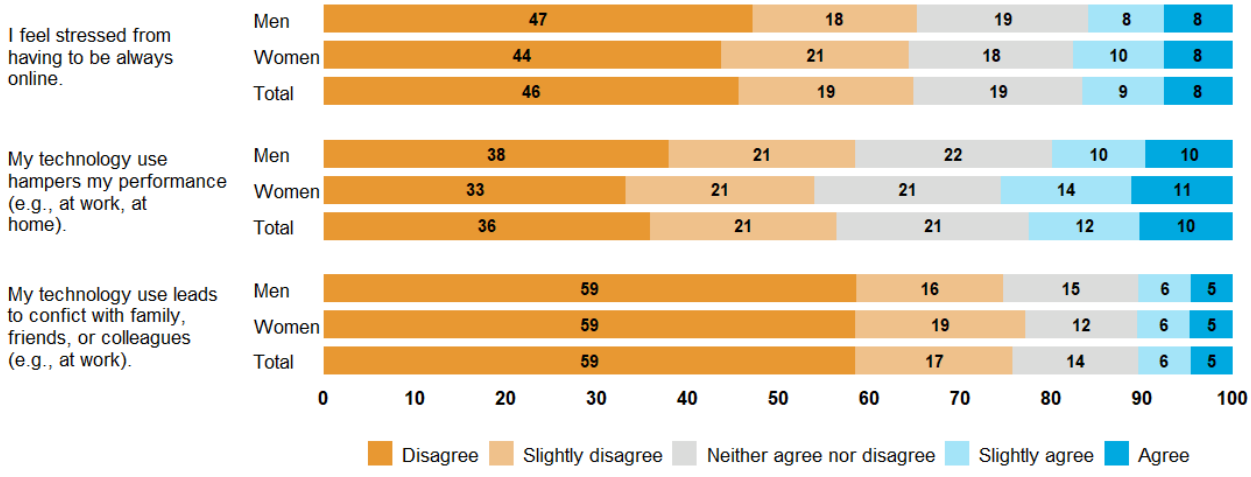
Figure 6. *Enjoyment by age (%)*



3.2.3 Digital well-being: Functional impairment by gender and age

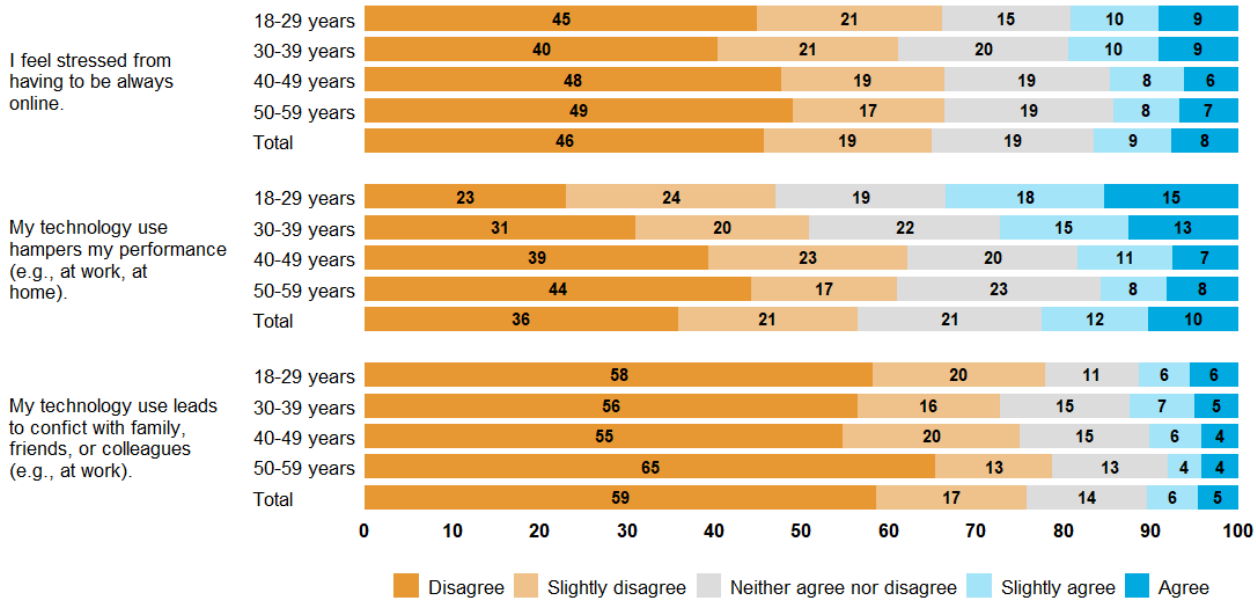
Gender differences in the **functional impairment** dimension are shown in **Figure 7**, and age differences are presented in **Figure 8**. There are **no major gender differences** in the functional impairment dimension. Most respondents do not perceive technology as disruptive to their everyday functioning. The largest gender difference appears in **whether technology hinders productivity**: a total of 25% of women agree with this statement, compared to 20% of men.

Figure 7. *Functional impairment by gender (%)*



There are only **partial differences between age groups** in the **functional impairment** dimension. For example, 33% of the youngest respondents (aged 18– 29) agree that technology **hinders their productivity**, compared to 16% of the oldest group (aged 50–59).

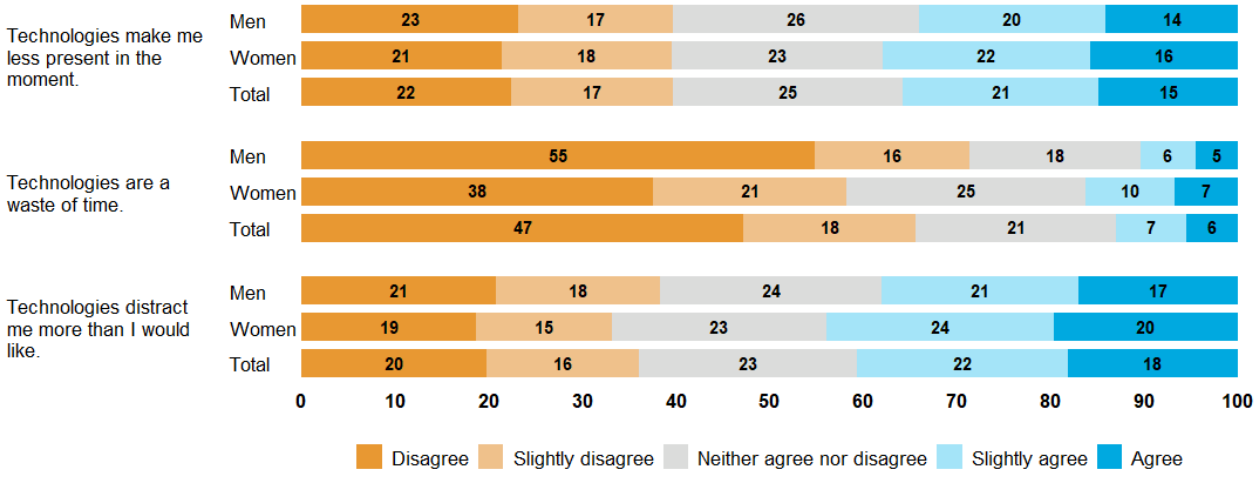
Figure 8. *Functional impairment by age (%)*



3.2.4 Digital well-being: Loss of control by gender and age

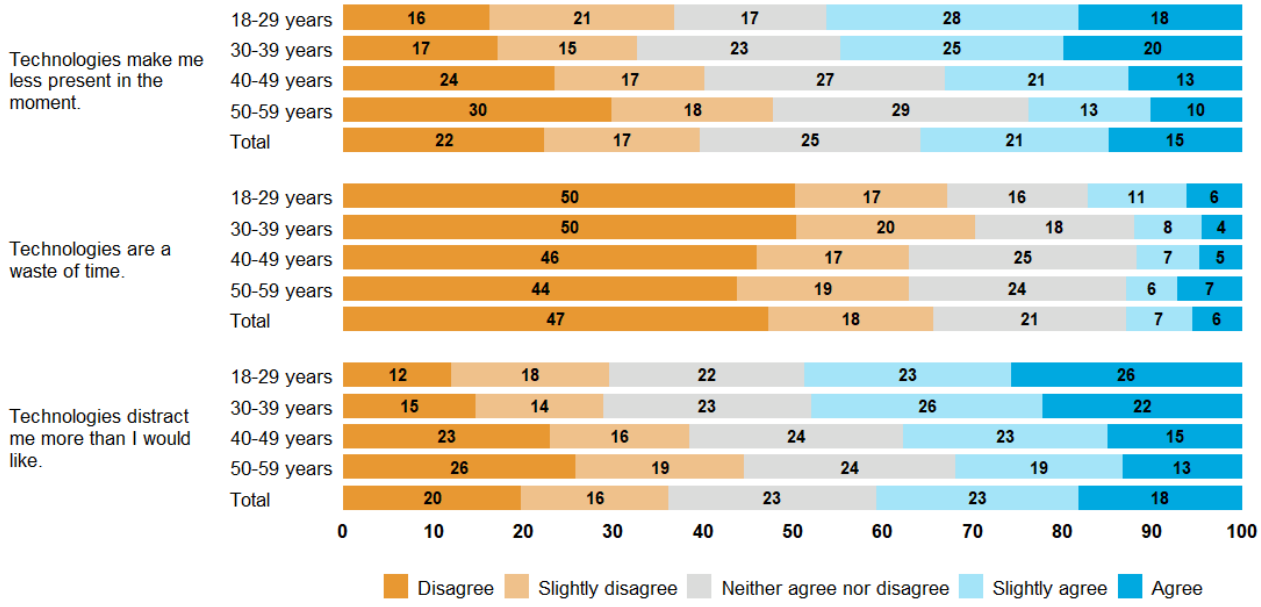
Gender differences in the loss of control dimension are shown in **Figure 9**, and age differences are presented in **Figure 10**. There are only **partial gender differences in the loss of control** dimension. The largest difference is in whether technology is perceived as a **waste of time**: a total of **17% of women** agree with this statement, compared to 11% of men.

Figure 9. *Loss of control by gender (%)*



In the loss of control dimension, the **youngest respondents (aged 18–29) differ significantly** from the oldest group (aged 50–59) in two areas: 23% more young people agree that technology **makes them feel less present in the moment**, and 17% more agree that **technology distracts them** more than they would like.

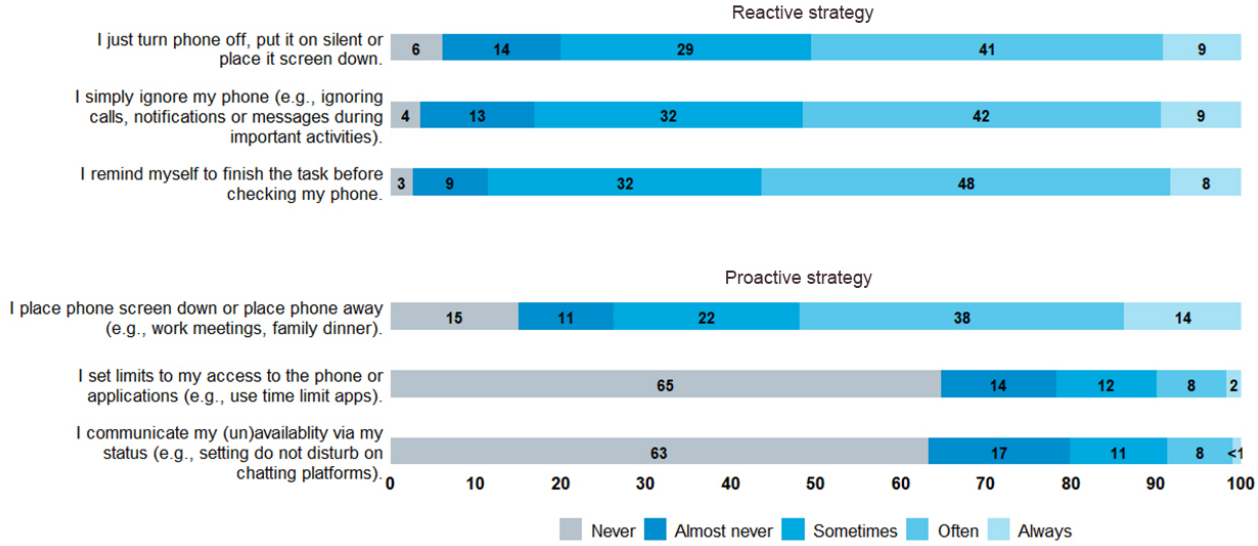
Figure 10. *Loss of control by age (%)*



3.3 Digital disconnection strategies

Figure 11 shows how regularly people use different strategies to disconnect from technology. In our report, we focus on two types of disconnection strategies: (1) strategies which rely on the user's immediate capacity to regulate their technology use (reactive strategies, based on willpower) and (2) strategies, which involve pre-set rules that regulate technology use (proactive strategies, Brevers & Turel, 2019). For each of these two main approaches, three real-life examples are provided.

Figure 11. *Digital disconnection strategies in the population (%)*



Main findings:

Over **90%** of people have tried **at least one reactive strategy** at some point. In addition, more than half of the respondents report using these strategies **often or always**.

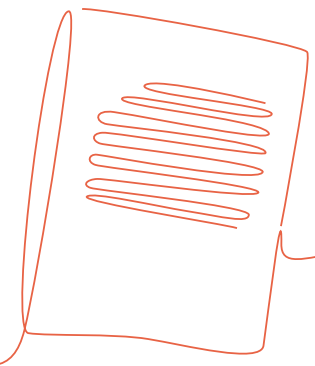
As many **as 65%** of people have **never used proactive strategies**, such as app blockers or setting their status to "Do Not Disturb." Another 11–12% use these strategies **occasionally**, and 8% use them **frequently**.

04 Conclusion →

Digital well-being is a relatively new concept (Vanden Abeele, 2020), but it has quickly gained scientific attention. This report offers the first comprehensive overview of digital well-being among Czech adults, including the most commonly used strategies for digital disconnection. Based on data from 2,000 participants aged 18–59, we show that **most adults perceive digital technologies positively**, as tools for organizing daily life and as sources of entertainment. Negative aspects, such as stress from constant online availability or conflicts caused by technology, are reported by a smaller portion of adults. Special attention should be given to the phenomenon of **ambivalence** – the simultaneous presence of both positive and negative experiences with digital technologies. Our data show that positive experiences with technology do not exclude negative ones. This pattern is especially evident among **younger adults**, who use technology intensively and often see it as an essential part of both their professional and personal lives.

Digital disconnection strategies represent an important tool for individuals to maintain balance between the online and offline worlds. Our research shows that **most adults choose reactive approaches** – immediate and intuitive responses such as placing the phone face down or simply ignoring it. These strategies are easily accessible and do not require significant behavioral change. In contrast, **proactive strategies**, which involve pre-set rules (e.g., using apps to restrict access to the phone or specific applications), are less commonly used among adults.

It is important to recognize that **digital well-being is not about whether technology is "good" or "bad" for individuals**. People often experience it as both – a helpful tool and a source of stress. For overall well-being, it is therefore **useful to reflect on how each of us can set personal boundaries and habits** that help us use technology meaningfully and in ways that support our well-being. Digital well-being is **individual and dynamic** (Vanden Abeele, 2020), meaning that what works for one person may not work for another. That's why it is helpful to view digital well-being as a continuous strive for balance between the benefits and downsides of technology use.



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