

The State of the Youth 2025

Coming of Age in a Fully Connected World

New findings from Aura Parents capture the impact of an “always-on” world on kids and teens — one that introduces adult themes very early in childhood. Aura Parents data shows that nearly half of the time kids and teens use AI, it is for companionship, and when they do, the themes of discussion are primarily sexual, romantic, and violent.

Violence has entered the chat



Devices show

AI is the new imaginary friend: When kids use AI, 42% of the time it’s for companionship.

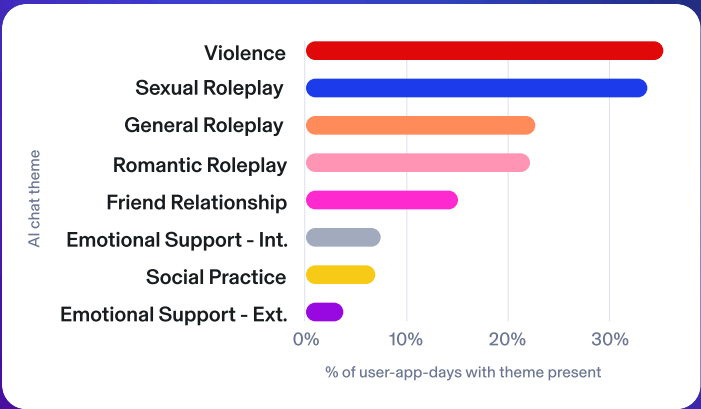
These chats regularly turn violent: Of these conversations 37% discuss violent topics.

How are we defining violent content? This includes videos or interactions with themes of physical violence, aggression, harm, serious injury, death, or coercion (sexual or non-sexual). This includes descriptions of fighting, killing, torture, and non-consensual acts.

Sex and violence go hand in hand: In half of violent AI chatbot conversations, sexual roleplay appeared too.

It drives engagement: Users discussing violent topics with companion AI apps write 1,000+ words per day — more than any other theme.

Source: Aura Parents Data



Kids say

They see violent content a lot: According to the survey responses, 59% of kids have seen at least one violent video this year, with 36% seeing multiple, most often on YouTube, followed by TikTok.

Half of kids would worry about their own screen time: 50% of kids surveyed say they’d be very or somewhat concerned if they were in their parents’ shoes.

Source: Talker Research Data

Where Violent Content Appears Most: Bubble size reflects prevalence by app.



AI is fast-tracking childhood

Devices show

Violent chat starts young: When AI is used for companionship among 11-year-olds, 44% of conversations with AI companions involve violence, the highest of any age group.

Tweens are engaged in sexual roleplay: Conversations focused on sexual or romantic roleplay peak at age 13 (63% of conversations).

Teens lose interest in roleplay: Violence and sexual or romantic roleplay as topics of AI companionship drop off significantly after age 15.

16-year-olds seek emotional support: Among 16-year-olds, 19% of AI-companion conversations focus on emotional support.

Source: Aura Parents Data

Parents say

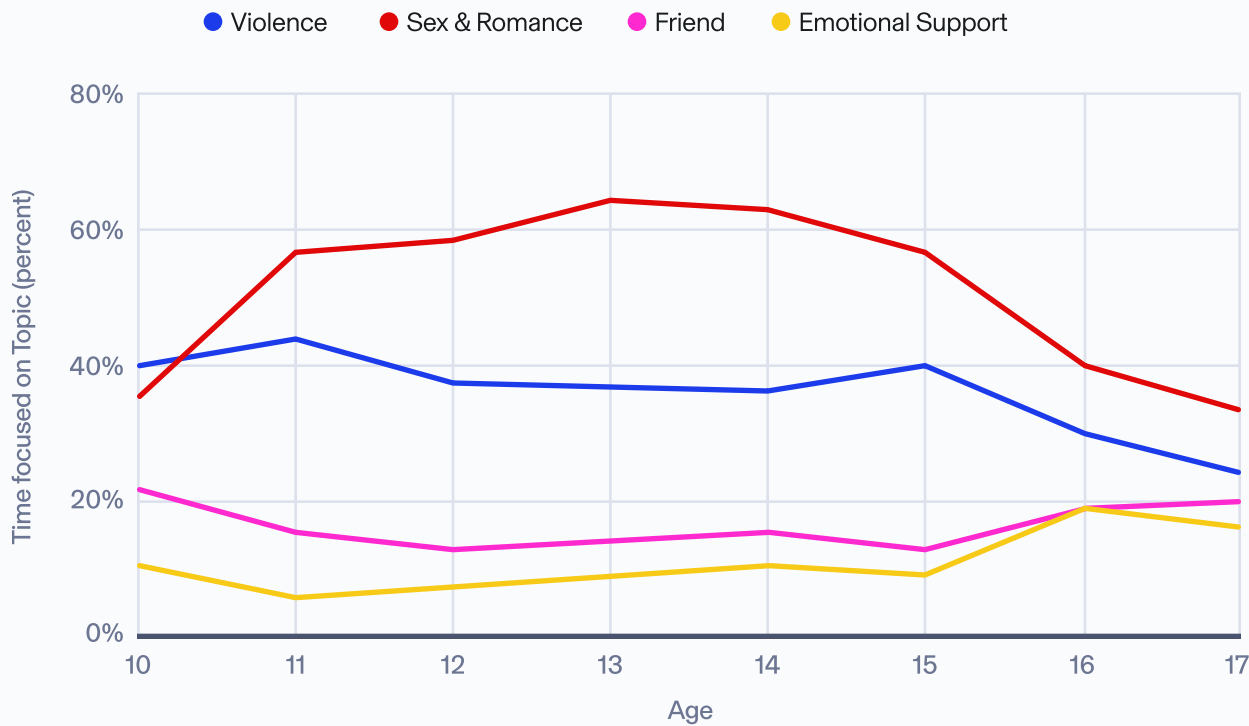
Childhood accelerated: 86% of surveyed parents agree that children are growing up faster than previous generations.

Parents think preteens hit fastforward: 34% of surveyed parents think kids start acting like teenagers at 11-12 years old.

Source: Talker Research Data



AI for Companionship Conversation Topics by Age



Kids can't unsubscribe from digital stress

Devices show

The hidden cost of being connected: For 13–17-year-olds, more screen time means more digital stress.

What is Digital Stress? It's the everyday pressure kids feel from comparing themselves online, managing social drama, interacting with AI, and using apps built to keep them engaged, driven by five key pressures: approval anxiety, availability stress, connection overload, FOMO, and online vigilance. Together, the constant connectivity can impact mood, focus, and overall sense of self. *Hall et al. (2021). Psychological Assessment 33: 230-242.*

Pre-teen peaks: Social media stress hits hardest for ages 8–12, who report nearly 40% more digital stress than peers who don't use social media.

Screen queens: Girls are on social media and AI platforms more than boys. 64% of girls vs. 52% of boys are on social media; 57% of girls vs. 41% of boys use AI platforms.

Source: Aura Parents Data



Parents say

The emotional gap is widening: Parents think tech has negatively impacted girls' emotions, like stress, jealousy, and loneliness, nearly twice as often as boys: 51% vs. 36%.

Are the kids alright?: Nearly half of parents surveyed think tech is negatively shaping kids' emotions.

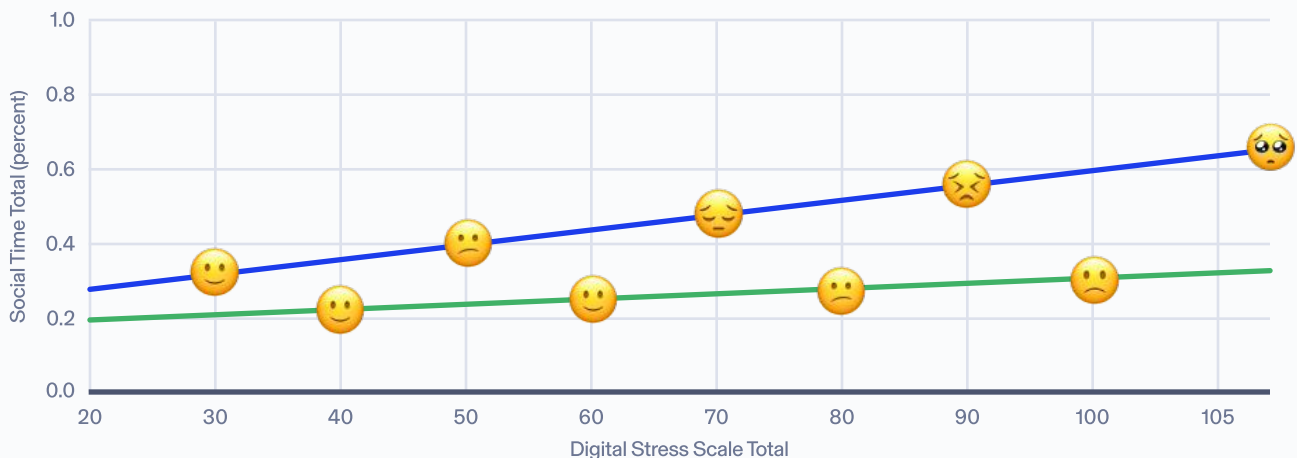
They're setting proactive tech boundaries: From screen-time limits (50%) to parental approval on purchases (64%) to limiting devices until chores and homework are done (49%), parents are trying to stay in control while kids are under their roof.

Source: Talker Research Data



Digital Stress Scale

● 8-12yo ● 13-17yo



Digital double standards are fueling family friction



Parents say

📱 **They're fighting about tech:** 9 in 10 parents report that they argue with their kids over technology use — beating out chores and homework.

👊 **Taking away devices fuels the fight:** 59% of parents surveyed say removing devices usually sparks an argument.

👉 **Do as I say, not as I do:** 57% of surveyed parents say they use their phones more than their kids, even while cracking down on kids' tech use at home.

Source: Talker Research Data

Kids say

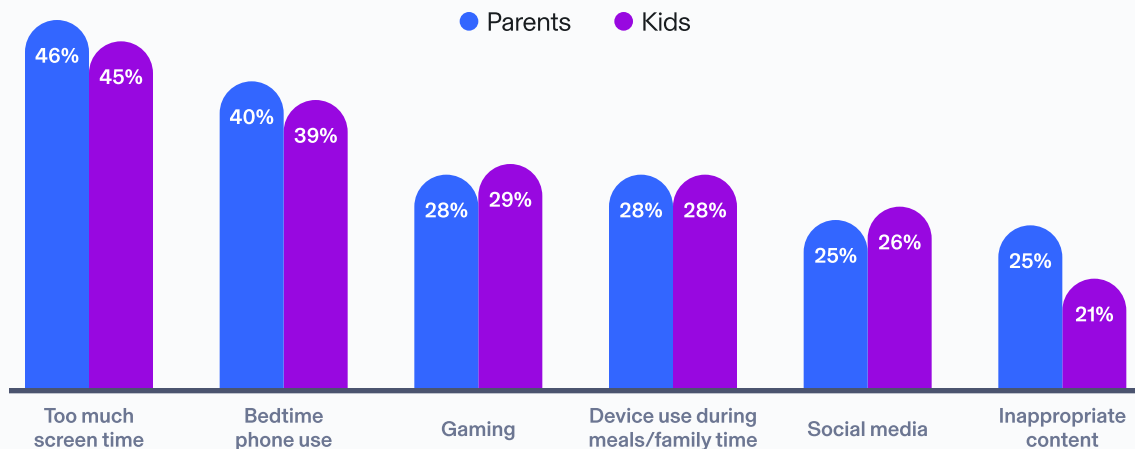
👊 **Tech starts fights:** Kids report that technology use is the number one reason they fight with their parents.

😡 **Device removal causes friction:** Kids say losing their device makes them frustrated (56%) or annoyed (50%), and only 16% find it helpful.

👉 **Double standards matter:** 62% of surveyed kids wish they could flip the script and take away their parents' phones.

Source: Talker Research Data

Causes of Tech Arguments



Parents and kids aren't speaking the same language

New slang is leaving parents puzzled. Here are the terms kids used most in 2025.

Source: Aura Parents Data



What's next for the connected childhood?

A look at predictions for the year ahead



Group 7 and AI-amplified stress: Even playful AI experiments, like TikTok's random "Group 7" picks, reveal a harsher truth: algorithms decide who rises and who falls. Personalized chatbots, AI browsers, and curated social feeds will shape kids' emotions, anxieties, and social hierarchies — long before parents even notice. AI is becoming the peer no child can ignore.

Childhood as a Service: AI isn't just a tool — it's reshaping childhood itself. Digital experiences are becoming curated, tracked, and optimized, turning play and learning into a service. Parents may spend more time managing algorithms than guiding their kids, redefining what growing up looks like in an always-on, AI-driven world.

The unplugged industry boom: By 2026, taking a child offline could cost more than college prep. A booming "digital detox" market — screen-free camps, personal coaches, curated retreats — will cater to tech-anxious parents. But most kids will return to screens, making quick-fix unplugging strategies a high-cost, short-lived fad rather than a lasting solution.

Source: Aura Parents Data



Decoding the State of the Youth

Navigating digital life is a challenge for families, and the disconnect between generations is adding tension at home while childhood speeds up. Understanding the state of today's youth means fostering open conversation, setting clearer boundaries and building healthier digital habits for both parents and children.

Aura Methodology

Data for this report derives from three primary sources. The first is Aura's data from over 3,000 children aged 5–17, representing more than 42,000 days of activity, which was analyzed to examine AI engagement and thematic content. The second source is survey and behavioral data from more than 500 participants in Aura's ongoing TECHWISE study. The third source comes from Talker Research findings, surveying 2,000 American parents of kids aged 8–17 and their children who have access to the internet; the survey was commissioned by Aura and administered online by Talker Research between Nov. 19 and Nov. 25, 2025.

About Aura

Aura is one of the fastest-growing online safety solutions for individuals and families. Whether you're protecting yourself, your kids, or your aging loved ones, Aura meets your needs at every stage of life. From real-time threat detection and scam alerts to tools that help parents protect their kids from predators, cyberbullying, and tech-driven mental health risks, Aura empowers families to thrive in the digital world. Learn more at aura.com.