

National Survey of School Social Workers on Generative Artificial Intelligence

About the Research

01

School Social Workers play a crucial role in advancing a school's mission of fostering an environment conducive to learning and the development of student competence and confidence.

02

School Social Workers are skilled mental health professionals trained to address various mental health and behavioral issues, offer positive behavioral support, provide academic and classroom assistance, collaborate with teachers, parents, and administrators, and deliver individual and group counseling or therapeutic interventions.

03

Given School Social Workers' unique skills, role, and proximity to students, staff, and families, Opportunity Labs conducted a nationwide survey of School Social Workers to understand their views on the effects of emerging technologies, specifically generative AI, on student wellbeing.

04

The survey was distributed in partnership with the School Social Work Association of America and fielded between March 5 - April 12, 2024 with N:511 respondents. Responses were collected via SurveyMonkey.

Executive Summary of Findings

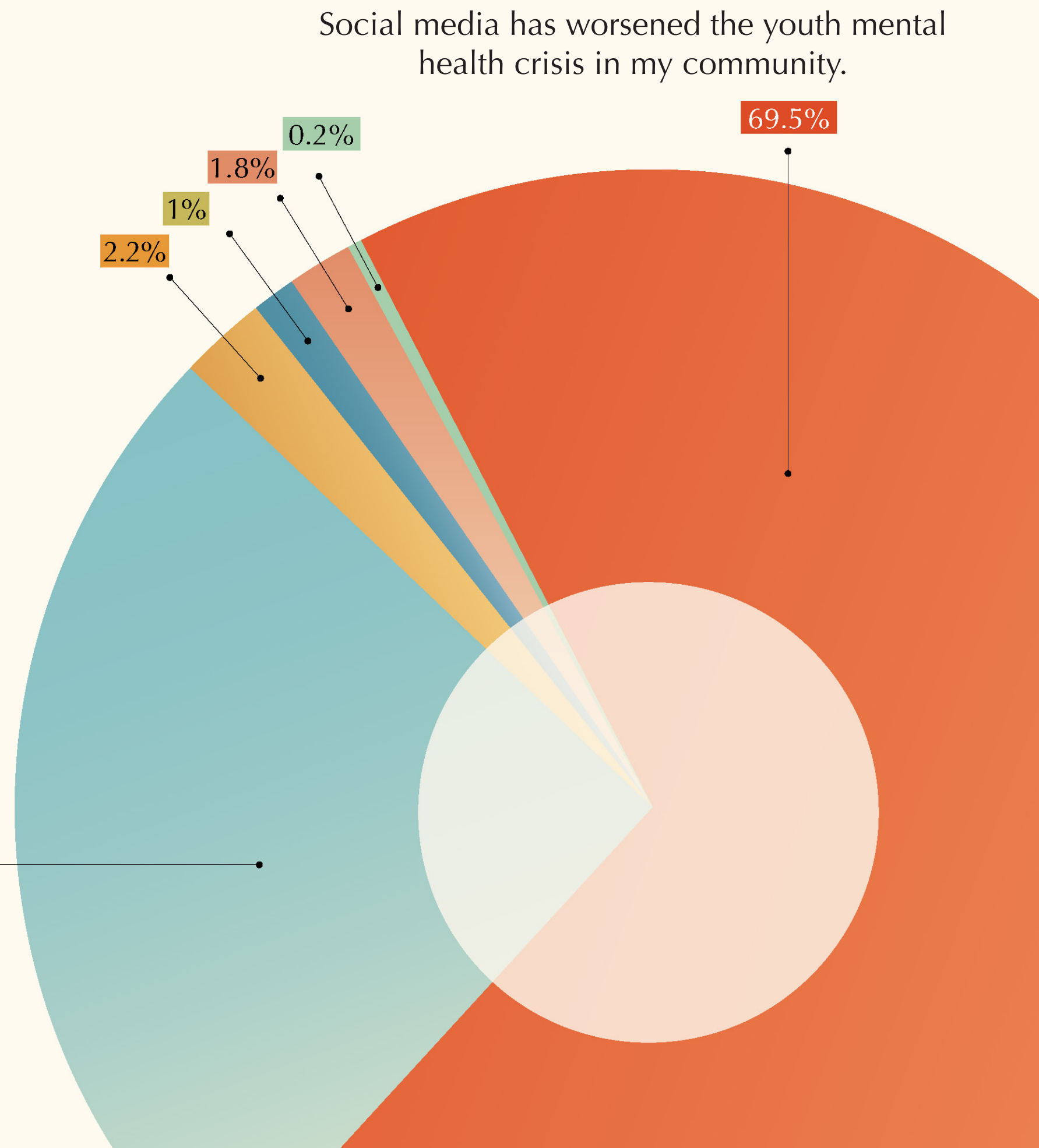
- School Social Workers overwhelmingly agree that social media has worsened the youth mental health crisis in their community.
- School Social Workers are concerned about generative AI's potential impact on youth mental health and cognitive development.
- A majority of School Social Workers are unsure about how generative AI might impact children's safety.
- A majority of School Social Workers believe that there are content challenges associated with generative AI.
- Despite acknowledging potential risks, School Social Workers exhibit divided opinions on whether generative AI could positively affect childhood wellbeing, highlighting a tension between challenges and opportunities associated with the technology.
- School Social Workers overwhelmingly agree that families are not adequately informed about the opportunities and risks associated with generative AI.
- Over half of School Social Workers report not being consulted by administrators about the role of technology on students' wellbeing and have not engaged stakeholders.

School Social Workers overwhelmingly agree that social media has worsened the youth mental health crisis in their community.

95% of respondents agree that social media has worsened the youth mental health crisis in their community.

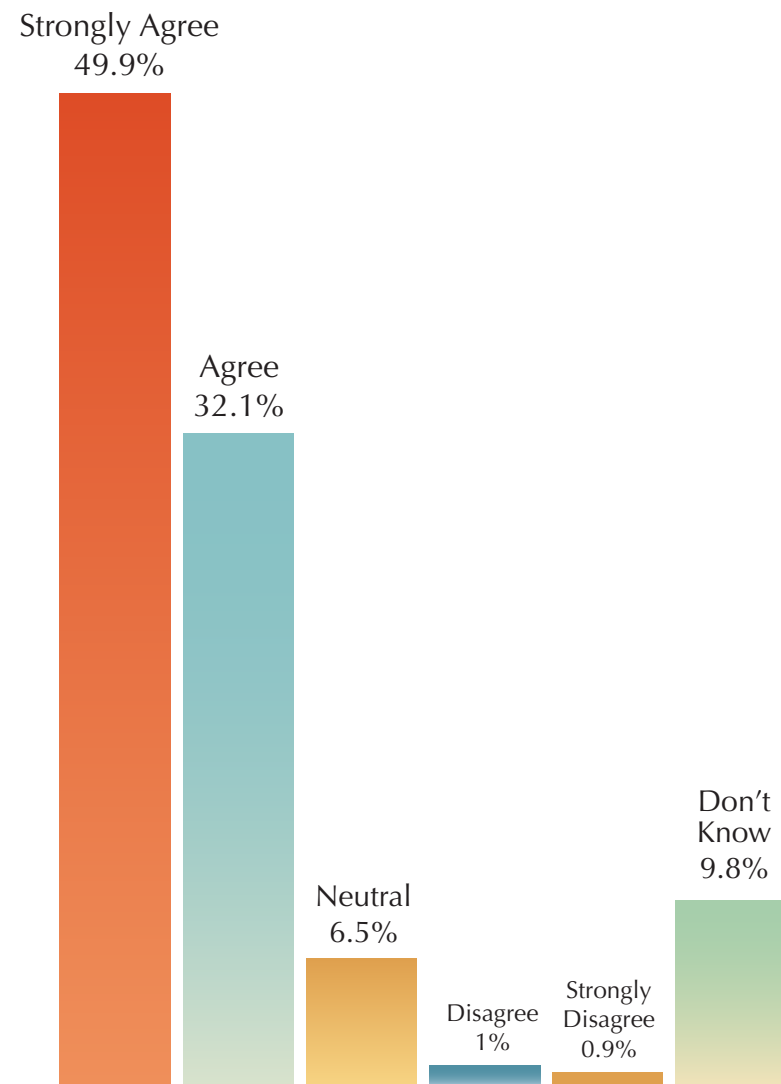
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know

25.4%



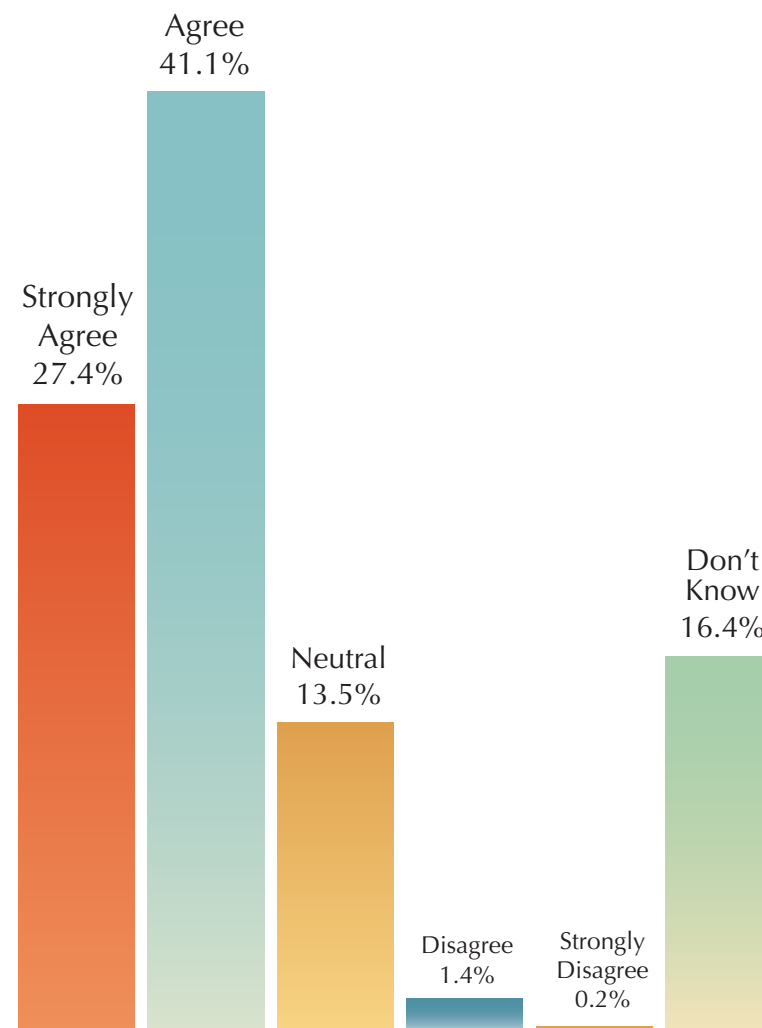
School Social Workers are concerned about generative AI's potential impact on youth mental health and cognitive development.

GenAI technologies will impact students' mental and emotional health in ways we don't understand yet.



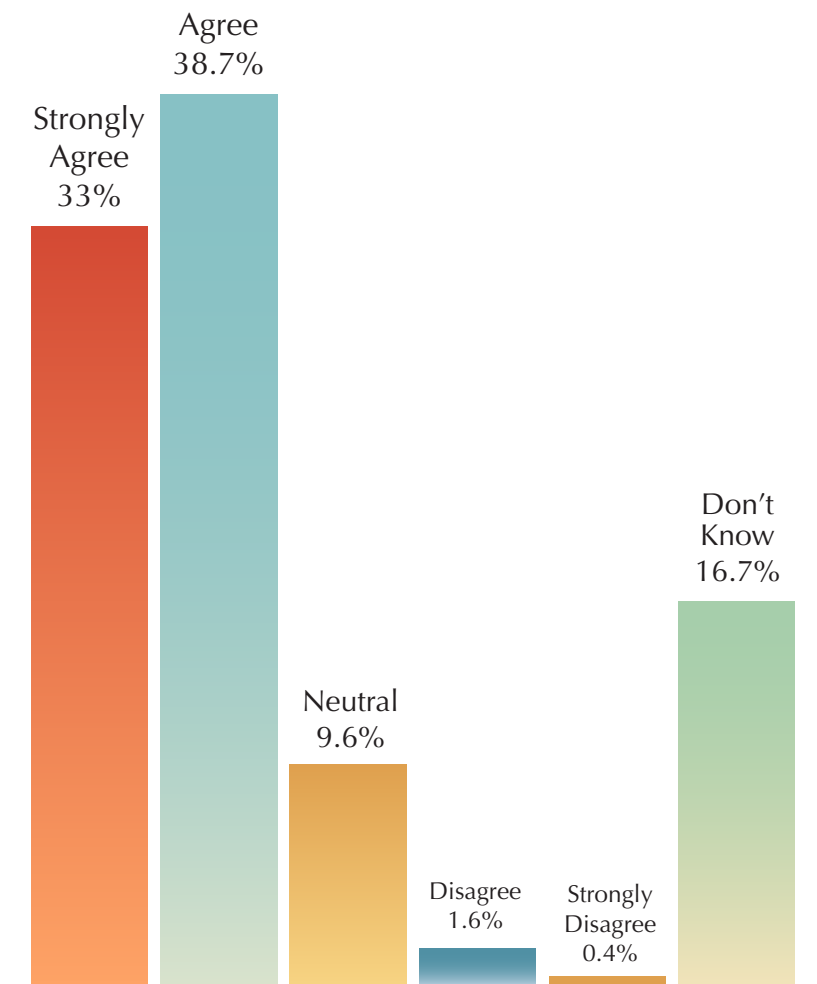
82% agree that we don't yet understand the impacts of generative AI on students' mental and social emotional health.

GenAI has the potential for children to feel more isolated and anxious.



68% agree that generative AI has the potential for children to feel more isolated and anxious.

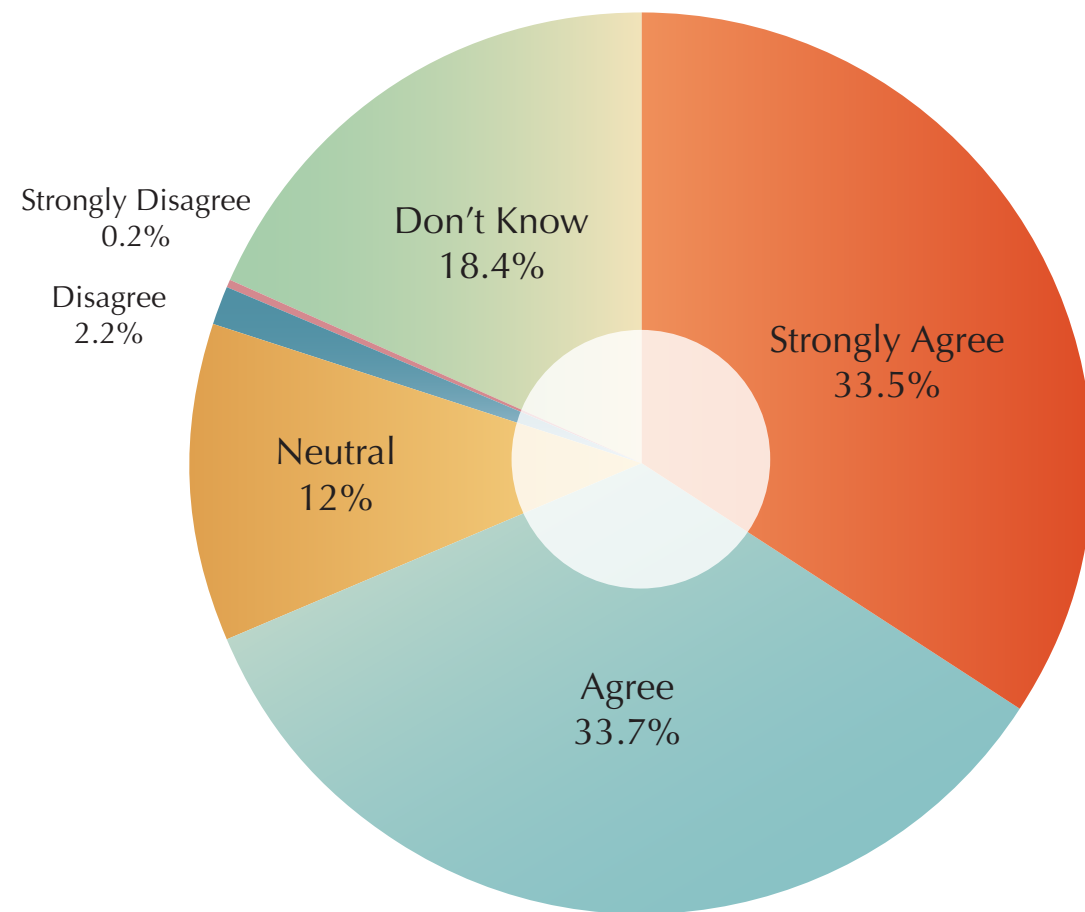
GenAI will impact students' cognitive development in ways we don't yet understand.



95% agree that we don't yet understand the impacts of generative AI on students' cognitive development.

A majority of School Social Workers believe that there are content challenges associated with generative AI.

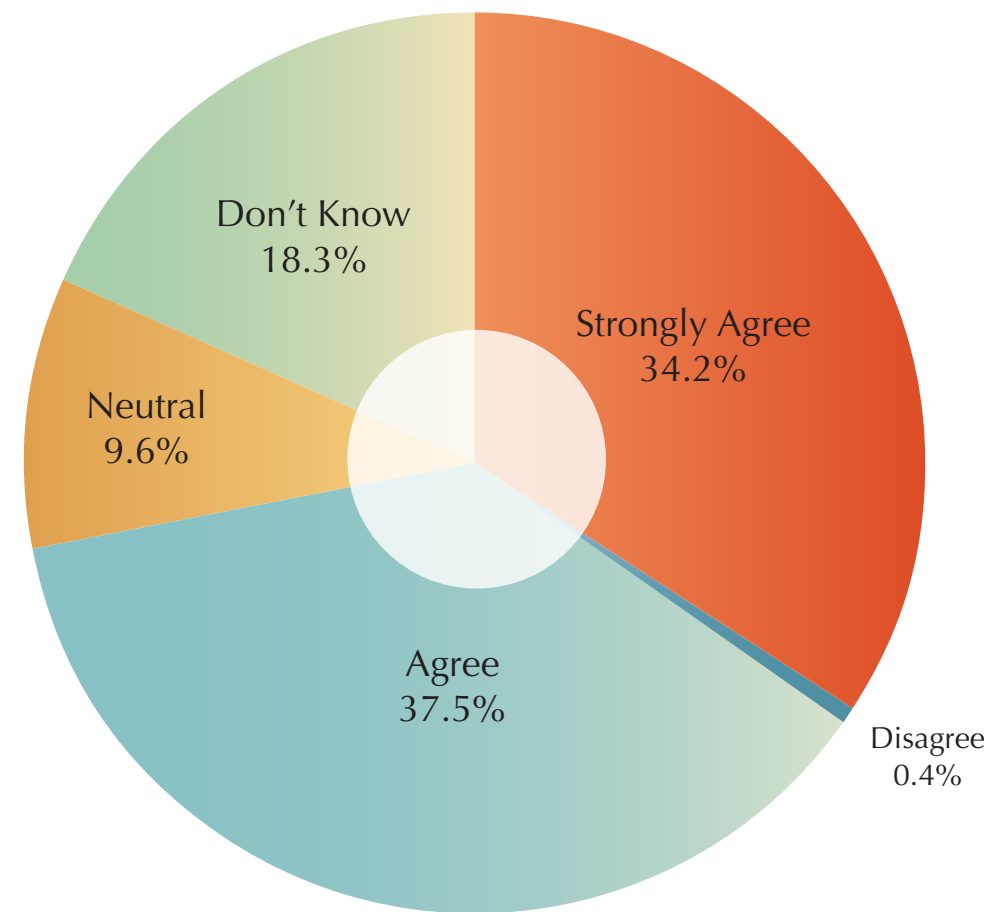
GenAI will increase children's exposure to inappropriate content and misinformation.



67%

agree that generative AI will increase children's exposure to inappropriate content and misinformation.

GenAI has the potential to perpetuate and spread biases and stereotypes that impact children.

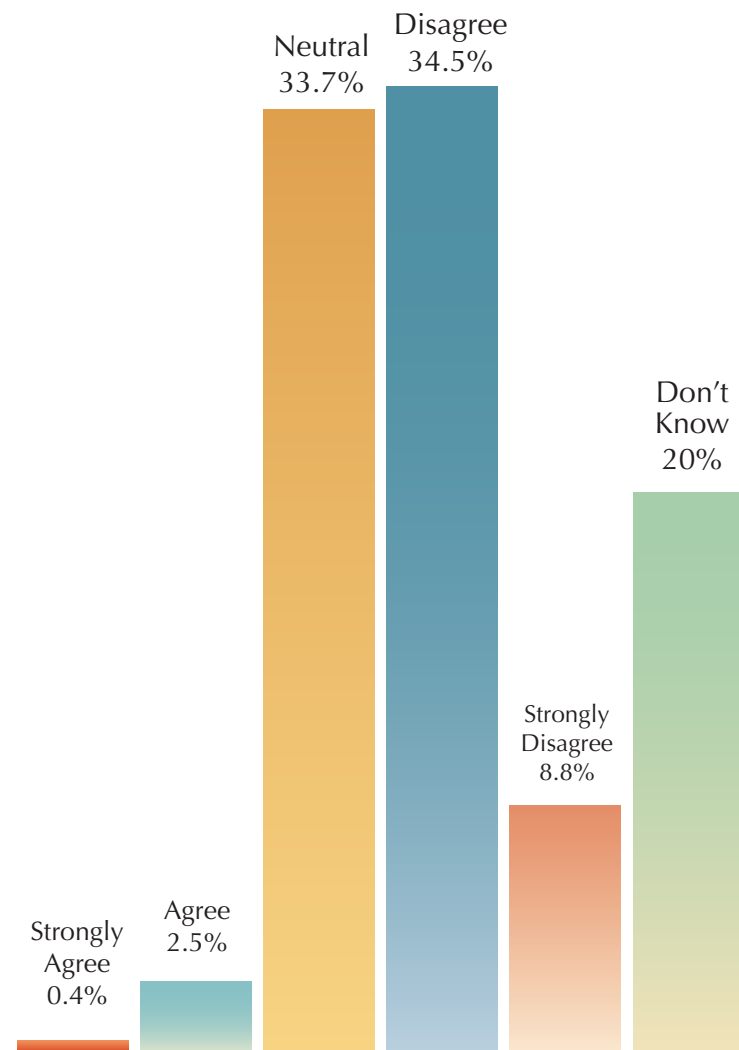


72%

agree that generative AI has the potential to perpetuate and spread biases and stereotypes that impact children.

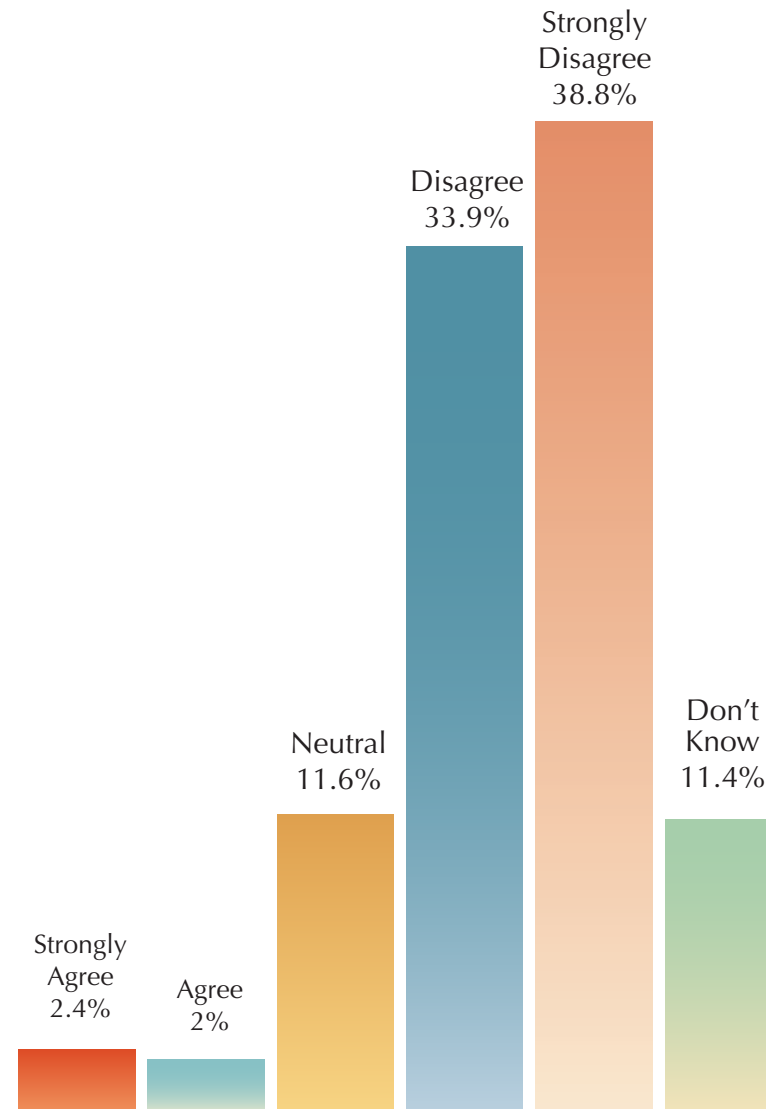
A majority of School Social Workers are unsure about how generative AI might impact children's safety, specifically...

I believe GenAI technologies are safe for children.



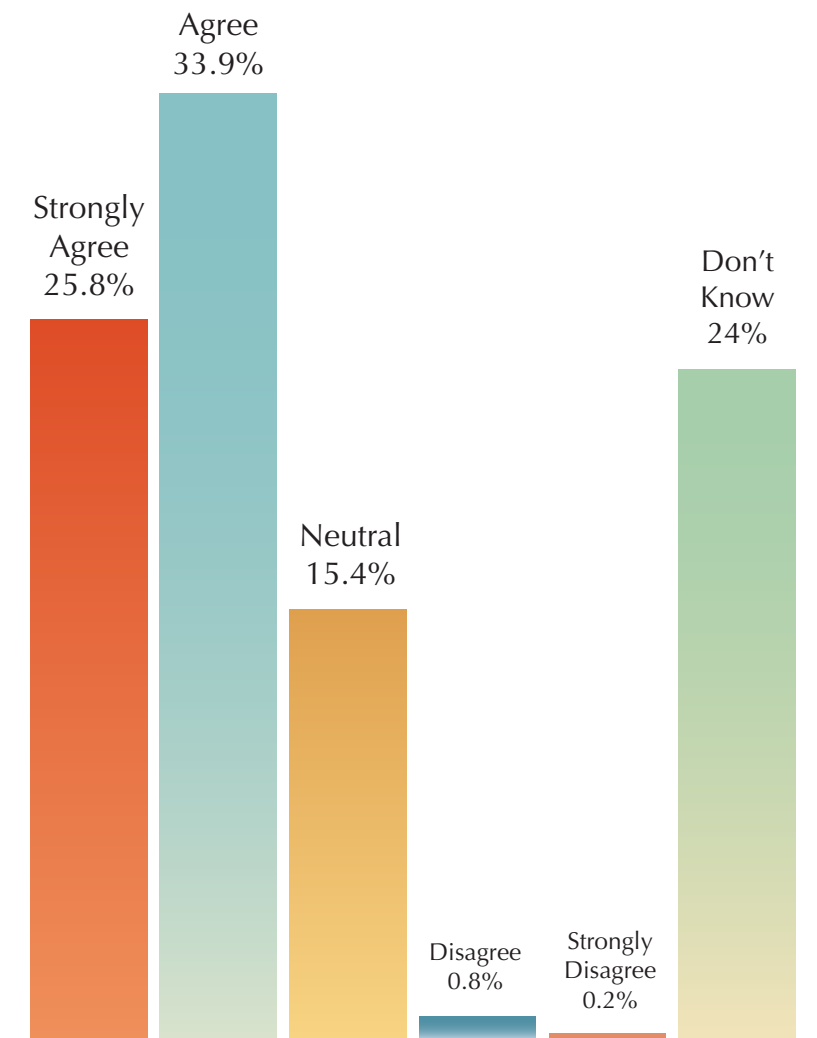
Fewer than 3% agree that generative AI technologies are safe for children.

I trust the developers of GenAI technologies to prioritize child safety and wellbeing.



Fewer than 5% agree that they trust generative AI developers to prioritize child safety and wellbeing.

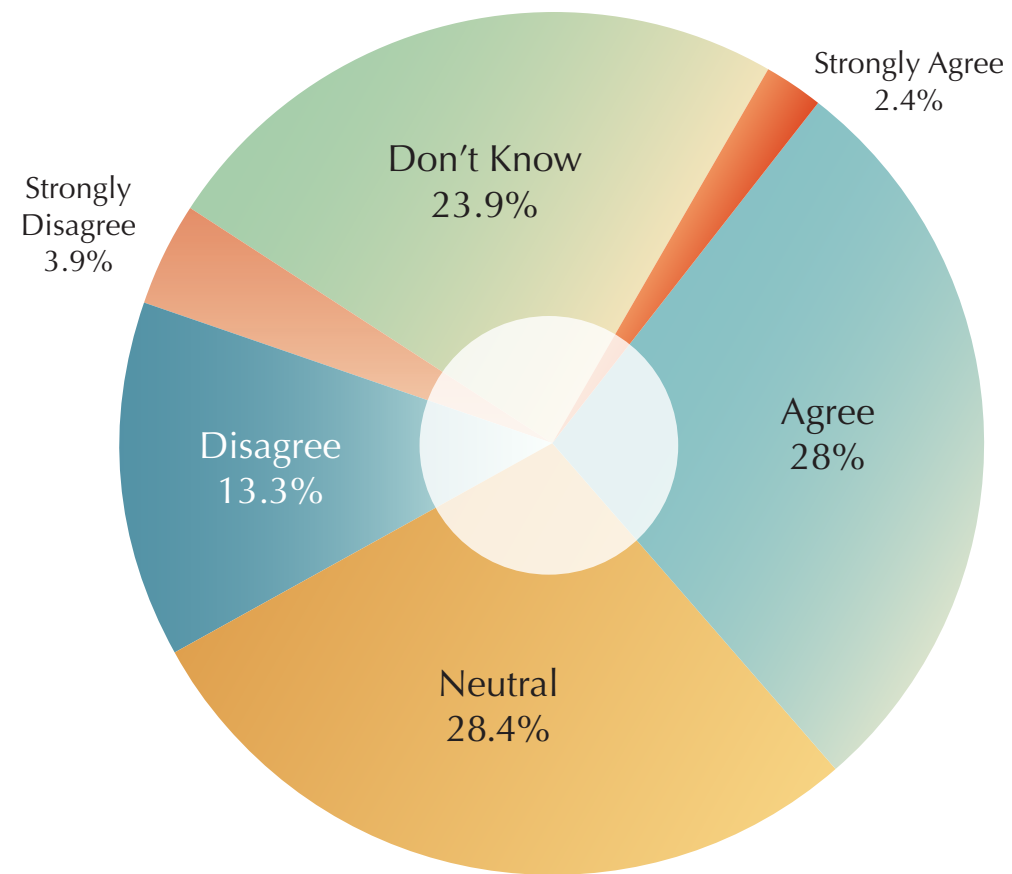
GenAI will put children's private information at risk.



Fewer than 1% disagree that generative AI will put children's private information at risk.

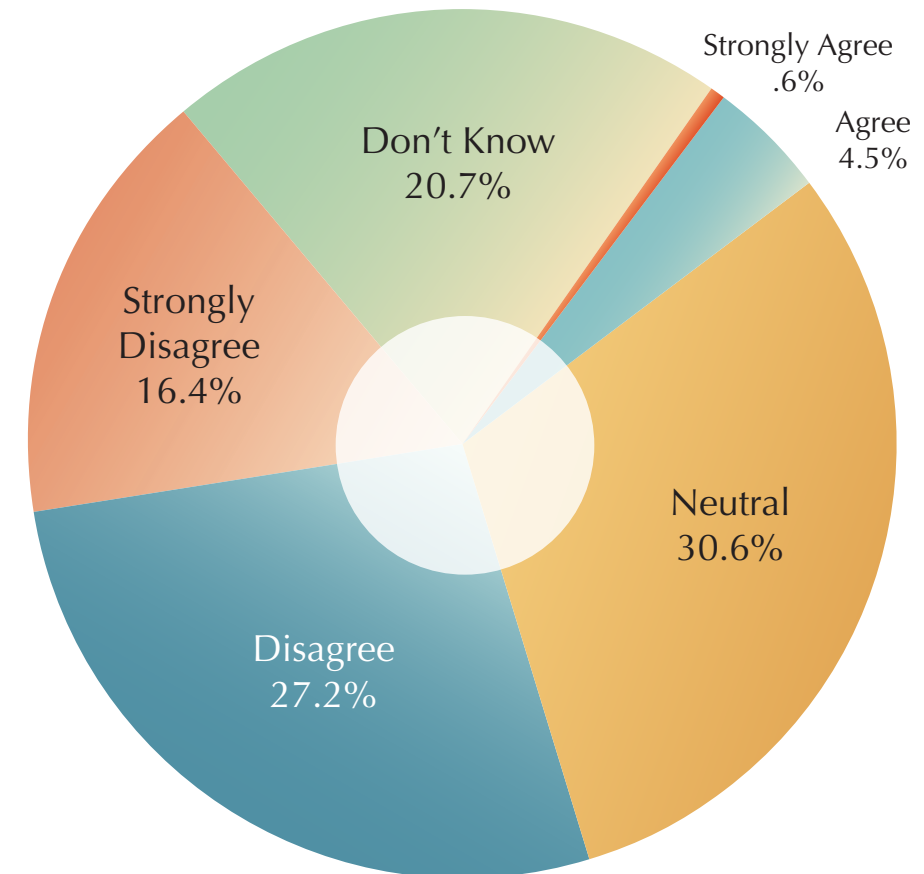
Despite acknowledging potential risks, School Social Workers exhibit divided opinions on whether generative AI could positively affect childhood wellbeing, highlighting a tension between challenges and opportunities associated with the technology.

GenAI has the potential to make a positive impact on childhood wellbeing.



30% agree, 17% disagree, 52% are neutral or don't know generative AI's potential to positively impact childhood wellbeing.

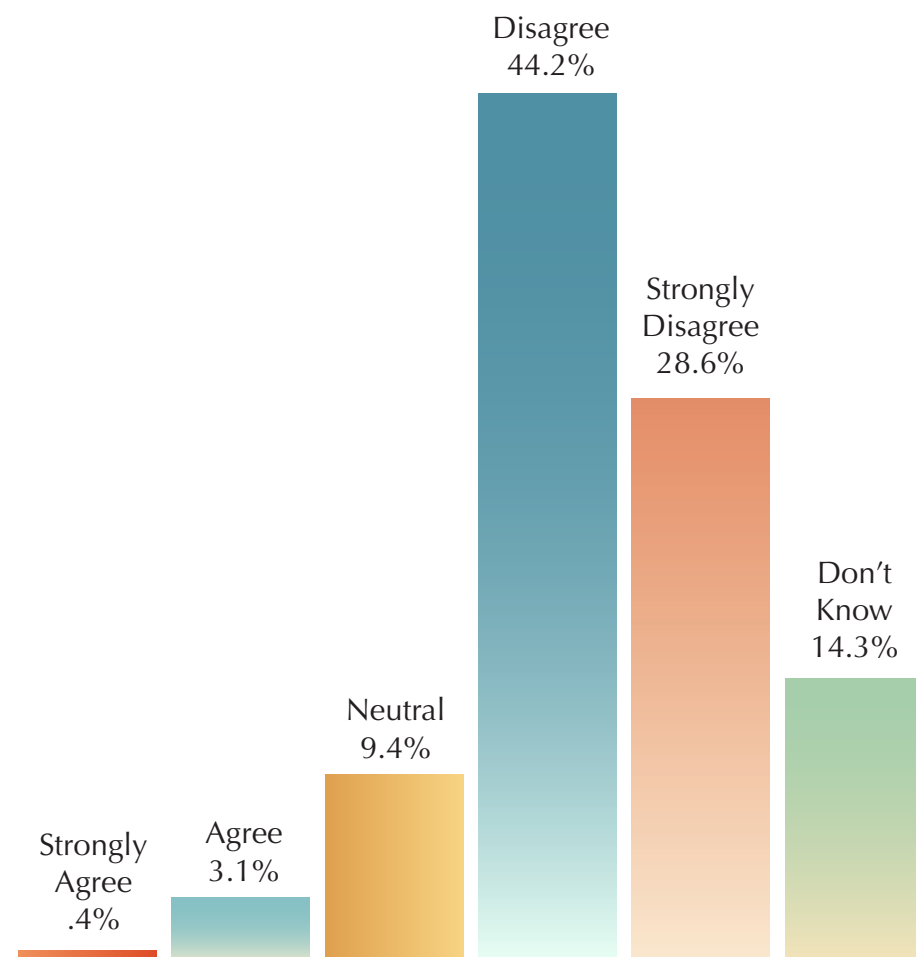
GenAI will improve social connection among students.



5% agree, 44% percent disagree, and over 51% are neutral or don't know whether generative AI improves social connection among students.

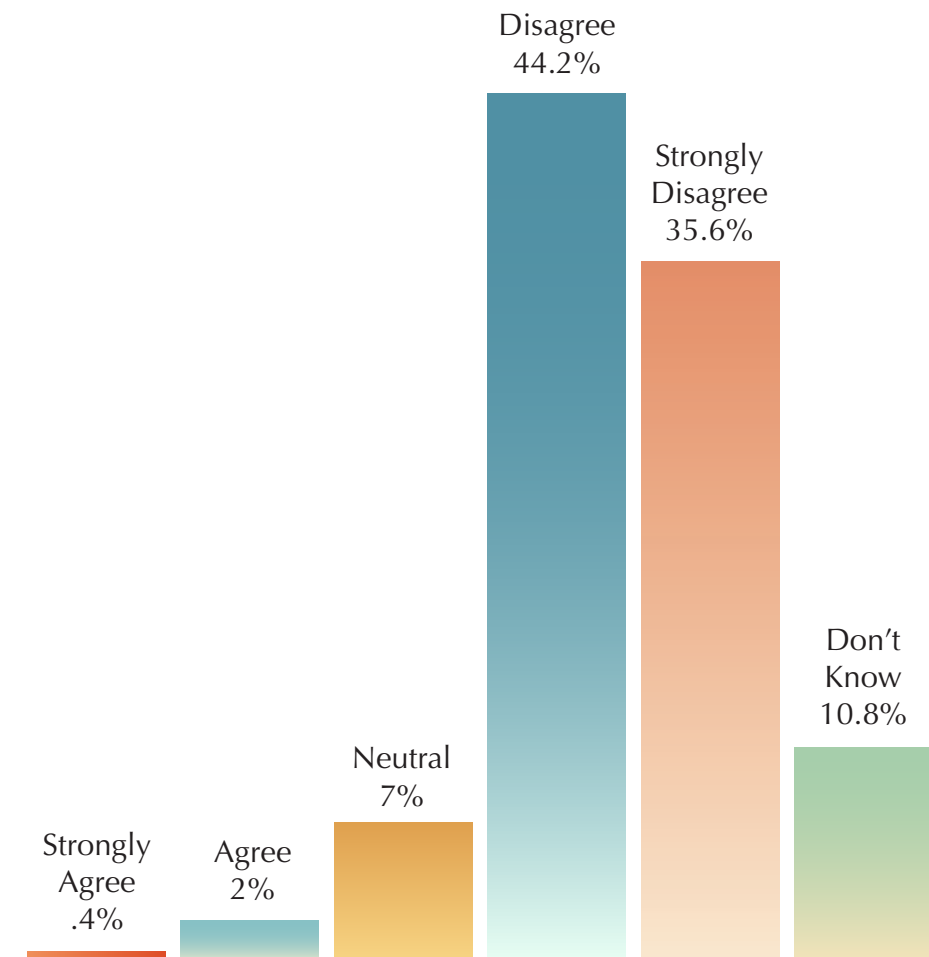
School Social Workers overwhelmingly agree that families are not adequately informed about the opportunities and risks associated with generative AI.

Families understand the *opportunities* associated with GenAI technologies.



Fewer than 4% agree that families understand the opportunities associated with generative AI.

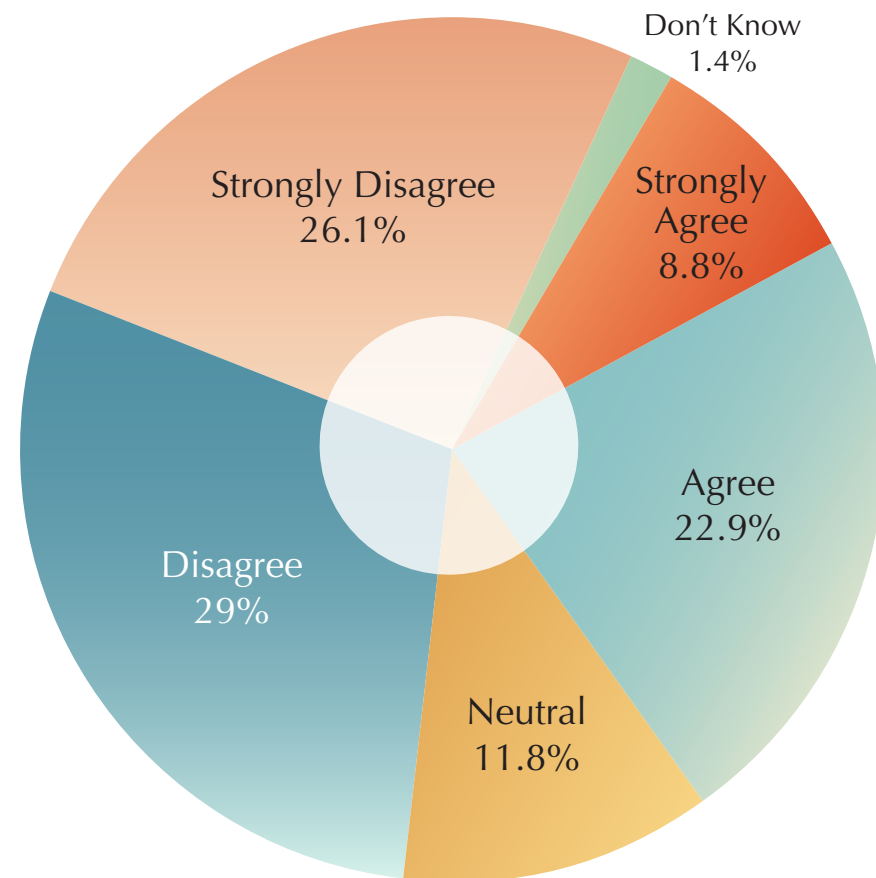
Families understand the *risks* associated with GenAI technologies.



Fewer than 3% agree that families understand the risks associated with generative AI.

Over half of School Social Workers report not being consulted by administrators about the role of technology on students' wellbeing and have not engaged stakeholders.

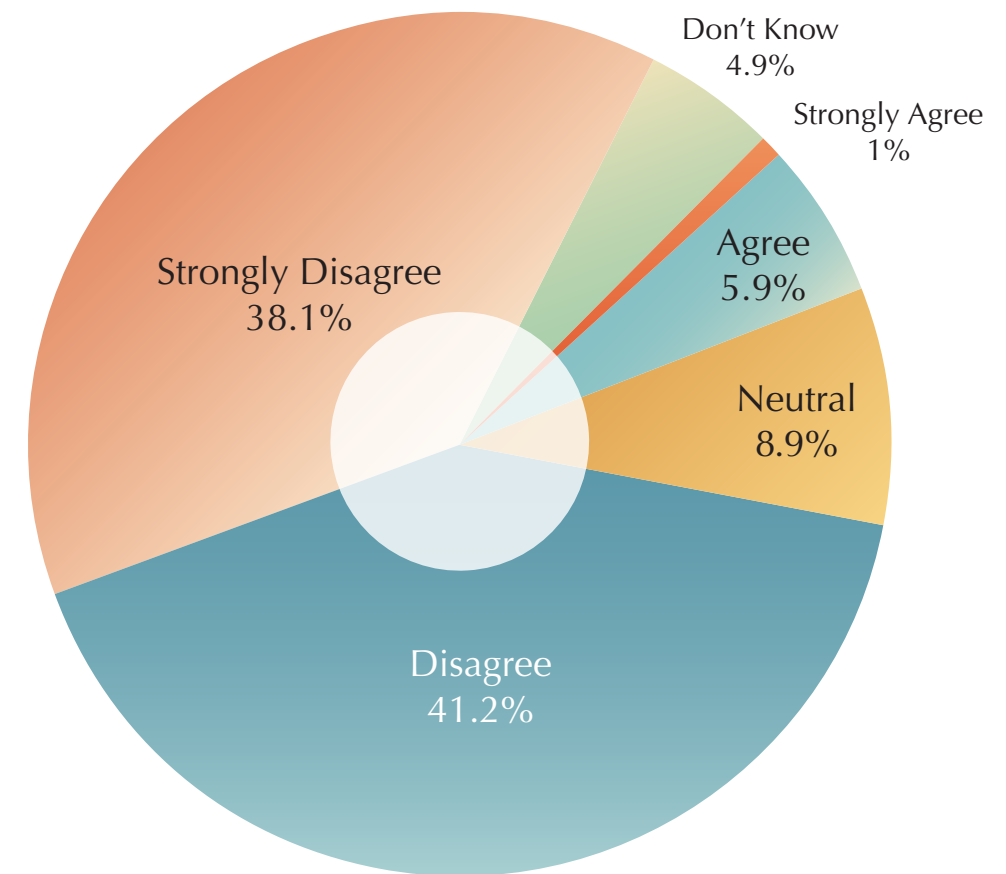
I have been consulted by administrators about the role of technology on students' wellbeing.



55%

report they are not consulted by administrators about the role of technology on students' wellbeing.

I have formally engaged educators, students, and families about the implications of GenAI on student wellbeing.



79%

say they have not formally engaged educators, students, and families about the implications of generative AI on student wellbeing.

School District Policy Considerations:

- Include School Social Workers in district and school-level working groups on adoption and responsible use of generative AI.
- Include School Social Workers in generative AI literacy professional learning and development opportunities.
- Include School Social Workers as subject matter experts in establishing district-level procurement benchmarks to inform purchasing decisions of generative AI-powered tools and products.
- Include Social Workers as subject matter experts in district-level assessments of generative AI-powered tools and products for purchase.
- Create opportunities for School Social Workers to communicate the risks and benefits of generative AI to families (after receiving AI literacy training).

Contact:

hello@opportunitylabs.co

OPPORTUNITY LABS

Opportunity Labs Foundation, Inc. is a national 501c3 nonprofit research, policy, and consulting lab established in 2019 with a mission that is simple yet powerful: to increase the measurable impact of individuals, organizations, and institutions working to help children and young adults thrive. We focus on building and championing practical, holistic solutions at the intersections of education, health, housing and work.