

Re-connecting in a crisis: Global study reveals that Covid-19 has led to more positive relationship with technology

Issued by [Dentsu](#)

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- Survey of 32,000 people across 22 markets by Dentsu Aegis Network reveals more positive interaction with technology than ever before
- People in emerging markets are leading the way, especially in terms of using technology to upskill and monitor their health during lockdown
- Beyond the crisis, two-thirds expect brands to ensure their use of technology benefits society as a whole-a similar proportion believe all brands must develop products and services that support well-being
- There are still concerns over longer term negative impacts of tech: over half (57%) of people worldwide believe the pace of tech change is too fast and that it is encouraging inequalities across the globe



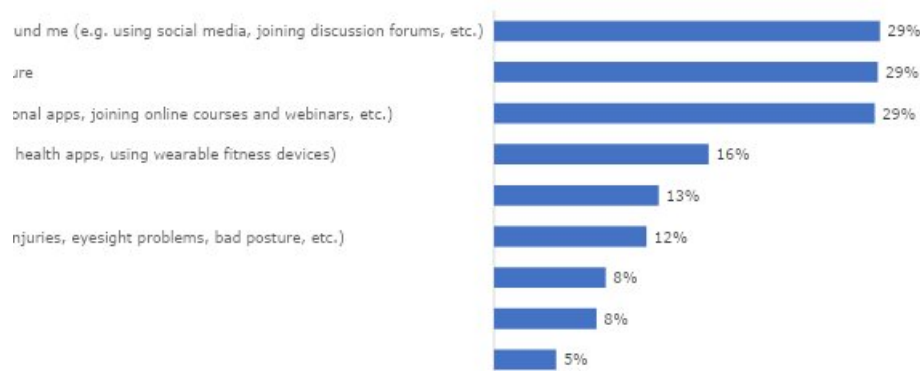
The latest edition of the [Digital Society Index \(DSI\)](#) survey by global marketing agency Dentsu Aegis Network has launched today. The study highlights how, during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have entered a new period of 'tech-love', interacting with technology in a more positive way than ever before, revealing one-third (29%) believe tech has enabled them to connect with friends, family and the world around them during lockdown, while a similar proportion (29%) of people globally believe tech is enabling them to relax and unwind at a time of potential stress.

The survey ran between March-April 2020 – the peak of the pandemic around the globe – analysing the views of 32,000 people across 22 markets in terms of people's relationship with technology, the knock-on effect on their well-being, as well as their connection with friends and family.

The study reveals that people in emerging markets are learning new skills and improving their knowledge, fuelled by the rise in digital solutions and online courses. With more time at home to learn and self-improve, almost half of people surveyed in South Africa (46%), Mexico (44%) and Brazil (43%) have been using tech in this way. That compares to one fifth of people in the UK (18%) and a quarter in the US (24%) have also been using technology to upskill using educational apps and webinars, for example.

In what ways is your personal use of technology impacting your sense of well-being?

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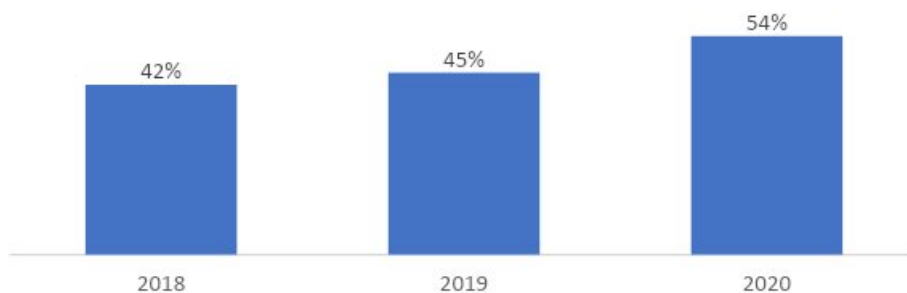
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In terms of gender differences, women (32%) are more likely than men (27%) to say they feel more engaged with friends, family and the world around them due to technology. This is particularly the case in Eastern European/Scandinavian markets, for example in Poland (female 38% vs male 27%) and Finland (female 37% vs male 20%).

People in South Africa appear to be using technology to monitor their physical and mental health more than any other country, with a third (29%) of survey respondents saying they check health apps or use wearable devices. This is followed by a fifth of all Polish, Singaporeans and Brazilians (22%). Almost a fifth (17%) of all Americans say they do the same.

Reflecting positive engagement with technology during the pandemic, people are increasingly optimistic about the role of tech in society. A growing share of people globally believe in tech's ability to solve societal challenges, such as healthcare issues like Covid-19 – 42% in 2018 vs 45% in 2019 and now 54% in 2020.

% agreeing they are optimistic that digital technology will help solve the world's most pressing challenges (e.g. health issues, poverty, environmental degradation)



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New brand expectations

This optimism translates into increased brand expectations. The pandemic has forced businesses to reconsider their interactions with consumers. When it comes to providing new services to help people mentally and physically, a massive 66% of people globally say they would not just 'want' but expect organisations to use tech in a way that has a wider positive societal impact in the next five to 10 years. Over half in the US (60%) and UK (59%) feel this way, with people in China (84%) and South Africa (82%) needing it most.

Furthermore, in the future, every brand is a health brand. Two-thirds of consumers will expect brands to develop products and services that enhance their health and well-being. This is particularly the case in emerging markets—for example, eight out of 10 people in China, Brazil and South Africa have this expectation.

Masaya Nakamura, CEO Global Solutions, Dentsu Aegis Network, said: *"The pandemic has forced us to become more*

conscious of the role technology can play in meeting our fundamental human needs. There has been a period of ‘techlove’ during the Covid-19 crisis, with brands using technology to pivot their relationship with consumers to support and empower their well-being. If this is to endure into the recovery, the challenge for brands is to humanise technology and ensure it is being deployed in service of people’s needs. That also means ensuring that increased investment in functional capabilities like ecommerce is matched by equal focus on building a truly empathetic brand.”

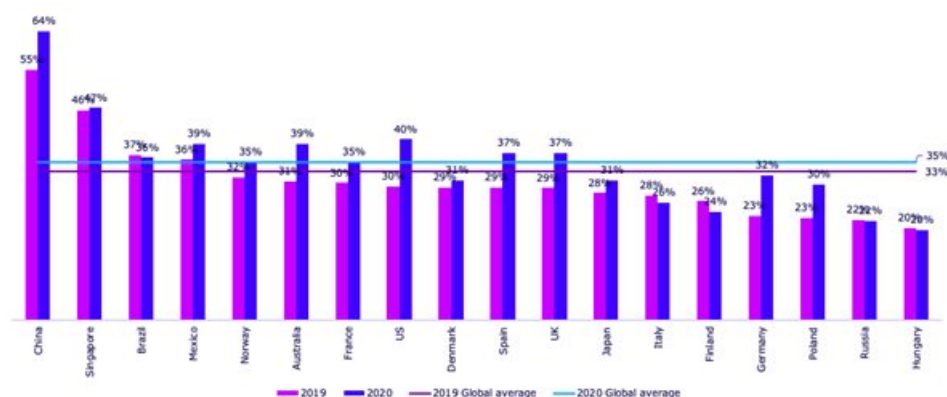
Beware the techlash

Despite the shorter-term benefits of technology during the pandemic, Dentsu Aegis Network’s report shows that there is a longer-term trend of a ‘techlash’ - a negativity felt towards technology that has been felt across the globe in some countries more than others.

Across the globe, 57% of people today believe the pace of tech change is too fast (a level that has been consistent since 2018). Nearly half of the people surveyed also believe that digital technologies are increasing the inequality gap between rich and poor, a sentiment seen most in South Africa (61%), China (61%) and France (57%).

While people in emerging economies have embraced technology the most during lockdown, they are also the ones most likely to have the most negative perceptions of technology. For example, 64% (vs 55% in 2019) of people in China believe technology has had a negative impact on their health and well-being, followed by Singapore (47%) and Hong Kong (41%) - see:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your personal use of technology has a negative impact on your own health and well-being?



*Global averages of all 22 markets surveyed

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And even though social media is helping people stay connected, almost a fifth of people in the UK (17%) and US (14%) have found technology has caused them to feel more mentally stressed and harder to switch off. This is higher than the global average of one in every 10 people (13%).

Nakamura continues: “As we look to the recovery, brands need to put more focus on creating bespoke solutions that aim to help people lead better lives, rather than pushing a product or service on them. Brands need to think about the full lifetime value they can provide to consumers, integrating all elements of marketing, sales and service. Providing helpful experiences is at the forefront of every businesses’ mind during the current pandemic and should be for the next decade and beyond.”

Koo Govender, CEO of [Dentsu Aegis Network South Africa](#), said: “I am ecstatic that the South African market has been included in the 2020 Digital Society Index. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a time for opportunity. As an agency, we have been forced to halt, refocus and to reflect on what is important which has resulted in forced new beginnings.

“As an industry, technology has given us the unique opportunity and position to gain insights, shifts, consumer habits

and behaviors which results in the opportunity to identify the optimal approach.

“Consumer behavior has changed overnight, we as an agency need to be at the pulse and to embrace the importance of technology during this time. Our clients are our heartbeat to the SA economy. Brands should show up, be nimble, pivot and be true to their purpose. We are seeing now, more than ever, consumer shopping habits are constantly evolving online which results in agencies needing to be more agile and to come up with different, creative, and interesting ways to engage with their audience.”

For more information on the Dentsu Aegis Network survey and to download **Techlash or TechLove?** please [click here](#).

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