May 21, 2025

Summary: Researchers at the University of South Florida and Florida Atlantic University conducted a statewide survey of 500 adult Floridians to measure mental health experiences and attitudes toward the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. The survey – which was sponsored by the Florida Center for Cybersecurity – included a representative sample of 500 adults in Florida, fielded between May 10th and 16th, 2025. This report provides topline results from the survey. Results are reported with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error +/- 4.3

Anxiety and depression symptoms are widespread among Floridians. More than one-third of adults in Florida report some symptoms of anxiety, with nearly 1 in 5 reaching clinically significant levels. These rates align closely with national mental health trends.

- 19% met the threshold for moderate or severe anxiety on the GAD-7.
- 30% said a doctor has told them they may be suffering from an anxiety disorder at some point in their life.

Expanded access to online information and artificial intelligence may be contributing to increased health anxiety among Floridians. Between 20% and 30% of respondents exhibited common symptoms associated with "cyberchondria".

- 33% of respondents say that they sometimes feel the need to look up the same health related symptoms online multiple times.
- 25% say that searching online for health information has made them feel more anxious or distressed.
- Even after reading online health information, 31% of Floridians say that they've still felt uncertain and kept looking for more answers.

As AI powered mental health tools become more common and accessible, nearly a third of Floridians say that they would trust AI chatbots to provide accurate mental health information, but most would still prefer a human practitioner.

- 31% say that trust AI tools to give accurate information about mental health.
- However, 83% would prefer receiving mental healthcare from a human practitioner, as opposed to an AI.
- Only 21% agreed that they would feel emotionally supported by an AI practitioner.

Floridians are cautiously optimistic - but uncertain - about AI's long-term impact on healthcare. While many believe AI has the potential to improve health outcomes, reduce medical errors, and address systemic inequality, many remain unconvinced or unsure.

- 50% agreed that AI will improve patient outcomes.
- 46% believe AI could reduce medical mistakes.
- Only 42% agreed that AI would reduce inequalities in healthcare.

Floridians have mixed opinions about the use of AI in healthcare. While many Floridians see potential benefits from the use of Artificial Intelligence in healthcare, they're more comfortable with AI being used for administrative tasks than clinical healthcare tasks.

- 83% are comfortable with AI being used to schedule appointments.
- 67% are comfortable with AI being used to collect symptom and intake information.
- Just over half (54%) are comfortable with AI *helping* doctors diagnose illnesses.
- But less than half say that they're comfortable with AI recommending treatments (48%) and administer medications (36%)

Nearly half of Floridians have tried AI health chatbots to discuss health issues, but privacy concerns hold most people back. AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini are gaining visibility, but regular use remains low – and widespread concern about privacy and data security may be limiting broader adoption.

- 42% have used an AI chatbot for health-related questions at least once; only 10% do so regularly.
- Among users, 37% found the support very or somewhat helpful.
- 75% of all respondents are concerned about privacy and data security when using AI tools.

Generalized Anxiety Among Floridians

As part of the survey, we measured Generalized Anxiety among Floridians by utilizing the GAD-7, a widely used screening tool developed by mental health professionals to assess symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. The GAD-7 is a validated instrument that provides a snapshot of anxiety symptoms in the population, helping researchers and policymakers better understand trends in mental health.
The instrument consists of seven questions, each asking how often the respondent experienced symptoms such as nervousness, restlessness, or difficulty controlling worry over the past two weeks.

Responses are scored on a scale from 0 ("Not at all") to 3 ("Nearly every day"), resulting in a total score ranging from 0 to 21. Higher scores indicate more severe symptoms of anxiety.

Scores are interpreted using standard clinical cutoffs:

0–4: Minimal anxiety
5–9: Mild anxiety
10–14: Moderate anxiety
15–21: Severe anxiety

A score of 10 or higher is commonly used as a threshold to identify individuals who may be experiencing clinically significant anxiety and could benefit from further evaluation.

Generalized Anxiety (GAD-7) Scores Among Adult Floridians

	Frequency	Percentage
Minimal/No Anxiety (0-4)	290	63.2
Mild Anxiety (5-9)	91	18.2
Moderate Anxiety (10-14)	49	9.8
Severe Anxiety (15-21)	44	8.8

Has a doctor or healthcare provider ever told you that you have depression?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	139	27.8%
No	361	72.2%

Has a doctor or healthcare provider ever told you that you have an anxiety disorder?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	151	30.2%
No	349	69.8%

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements: (as % of row total)				
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
I would feel embarrassed if people knew I was seeing a mental health professional.	4.2%	15.6%	43.0%	37.2%
I would feel comfortable talking to a close friend or family member about my mental health.	25.0%	50.0%	18.4%	6.6%
Seeking help for mental health problems is a sign of personal weakness.	2.4%	5.2%	31.8%	60..6%

Please indicate how often each of the following statements has applied to you in the past 6 months. (as % of row total)				
	Often	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**	**Never**
I have felt the need to look up the same health-related symptoms online multiple times.	7.6%	25.8%	31.0%	35.6%
Searching online for health information has made me feel anxious or distressed.	4.6%	20.2%	27.8%	47.4%
I have spent more time than I intended looking for health related information online.	5.6%	14.8%	29.0%	50.6%
Even after reading online health information, I've still felt uncertain and kept looking for more.	6.2%	24.4%	25.2%	44.2%

Thinking about your own personal healthcare, please indicate how comfortable you would be if AI were used for each of the following tasks/purposes: (as % of row total)				
	Very Comfortable	**Somewhat Comfortable**	**Not Very Comfortable**	**Not at All Comfortable**
To collect and enter patient intake data.	27.0%	39.9%	24.0%	9.2%
To assist doctors in making a diagnosis.	17.8%	35.8%	29.6%	16.8%
To schedule patient appointments and follow-ups.	44.8%	38.4%	10.6%	6.2%
To predict future medical conditions.	18.0%	35.4%	28.4%	18.2%
To recommend medication and treatment plans.	16.2%	31.8%	32.6%	19.4%
To read and interpret medical imaging.	17.4%	37.2%	28.4%	17.0%
To administer prescribed medications.	14.0%	22.2%	40.2%	23.6%
To assist doctors in conducting surgical procedures.	14.8%	35.2%	26.4%	23.6%

Thinking about the long-term potential uses of AI in healthcare, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. (as % of row total)					
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Unsure**
AI will improve patient outcomes.	14.4%	35.8%	17.4%	8.8%	23.6%
AI will reduce the frequency of medical mistakes.	13.2%	33.0%	20.8%	9.0%	24.0%
AI will reduce inequalities in healthcare and health outcomes	16.0%	26.0%	20.0%	10.8%	27.2%

Have you ever used an AI chatbot or digital assistant (e.g. ChatGPT, Replika, Woebot, Gemini, etc.) to ask questions or get supported related to your health concerns?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes, I do this regularly	52	10.4%
Yes, I do this occasionally	119	23.8%
Yes, I've done this once	40	8.0%
No, I've never done this	289	57.8%

How helpful have you found the health-related information or support provided by AI chatbots?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Very Helpful	74	14.8%
Somewhat Helpful	111	22.2%
Not Very Helpful	21	4.2%
Not at All Helpful	5	42.2%

How comfortable are you with the idea of discussing your health concerns with an AI powered tool or assistant?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Very Comfortable	80	16.0%
Somewhat Comfortable	174	34.8%
Not Very Comfortable	148	29.6%
Not at All Comfortable	98	19.6%

How concerned would you be about privacy and data security if you shared personal health information with an AI chatbot?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Very Concerned	178	35.6
Somewhat Concerned	197	39.4
Not Very Concerned	93	18.6
Not at All Concerned	32	6.4

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (as % of row total)				
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
I would rather talk to an AI chatbot than a person about my mental health concerns.	4.8%	12.2%	35.4%	47.6%
I trust AI tools to give me accurate information about my mental health.	6.6%	24.6%	38.6%	30.2%
I would feel less "judged" when interacting with an AI than with a person.	10.0%	30.2%	33.0%	26.8%
I believe that I could feel emotionally supported by an AI tool.	4.8%	16.2%	37.4%	41.6%

How likely would you be to try an AI mental health tool if it was designed to be informed by psychological research and offered 24/7 support?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
Very Likely	74	14.8%
Somewhat Likely	160	32.0%
Not Very Likely	153	30.6%
Not at All Likely	113	22.6%

Which of the following best describes your attitude toward AI tools in mental health care?		
	Frequency	**Percentage**
I trust and support their use	51	10.2%
I am curious but cautious	201	40.2%
I am skeptical and unlikely to use them	126	25.2%
I opposed their use in mental health care	75	15.0%
I haven't thought much about it	47	9.4%

Survey Information

500 adult Floridians were surveyed via an online web-panel. The survey was fielded from May 10th through May 16th 2025, and the results are reported with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of +/- 4.3. Respondents were selected via stratified, quota sampling to ensure a representative sample. Balanced quotas for gender, age, race/ethnicity, education and party affiliation were determined based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Florida's Department of State, and Florida's Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR). Quotas were stratified by region of the state for geographical representativeness.

Sample Comparison

	USF/FAU Survey Sample	Florida Demographics*
Gender		
Female	54.0%	50.9%
Male	45.4%	49.1%
Non-Binary/Other	0.6%	-
Age		
18-24	6.4%	9.9%
25-44	31.0%	31.3%
45-64	31.8%	31.7%
65+	30.8%	27.0%
Race		
Black/African American	16.0%	16.9%
White/Caucasian	75.8%	76.7%
Other	8.2%	6.4%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	20.8%	27.4%
Non-Hispanic	79.2%	72.6%
Region		
North Florida	21.2%	19.7%
Central Florida	27.6%	22.6%
West Coast	24.6%	26.4%
Southeast Florida	26.6%	31.2%

About our Research Team

Stephen Neely (PhD, North Carolina State University, 2013) is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. He is coordinator of the School's undergraduate program in *Leadership and Public Service*. His areas of specialization include survey research, quantitative data analysis, and public policy. He is a faculty researcher on the Sunshine State Survey project and has conducted survey research on behalf of local governments in the Tampa Bay region. For additional information please visit his **USF faculty page**. Dr. Neely can be contacted by email at srneely@usf.edu

Kaila Witkowski (PhD, Florida International University, 2022) is an Assistant Professor of Sustainability and Emergency Management in the School of Public Administration at Florida Atlantic University. Her areas of specialization include public health emergencies, emergency management, and visual methodologies like PhotoVoice and network analysis. Her research has been published in multiple fields, including public administration, public health, and social work, and she has worked with national and local funders to conduct engaged research. For additional information, please visit her **FAU faculty page**. Dr. Witkowski can be contacted by email at kwitkowski@fau.edu.

Grace Mercer (University of South Florida, 2025) is a recent graduate from USF's Health Sciences program, with a concentration in Social and Behavioral Healthcare. She will be earning her Bachelors of Science in Nursing beginning of January 2026.

About the University of South Florida

The University of South Florida is a high-impact global research university dedicated to student success. Over the past 10 years, no other public university in the country has risen faster in U.S. News and World Report's national university rankings than USF. Serving more than 50,000 students on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, USF is designated as a Preeminent State Research University by the Florida Board of Governors, placing it in the most elite category among the state's 12 public universities. USF has earned widespread national recognition for its success graduating under-represented minority and limited-income students at rates equal to or higher than white and higher income students. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at www.usf.edu.

About Florida Atlantic University

Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, Florida Atlantic serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students across six campuses located along the Southeast Florida coast. In recent years, the University has doubled its research expenditures and outpaced its peers in student achievement rates. Through the coexistence of access and excellence, Florida Atlantic embodies an innovative model where traditional achievement gaps vanish. Florida Atlantic is designated as a Hispanic-serving institution, ranked as a top public university by U.S. News & World Report, and holds the designation of "R1: Very High Research Spending and Doctorate Production" by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Florida Atlantic shares this status with less than 5% of the nearly 4,000 universities in the United States. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.

About Cyber Florida

The Florida Center for Cyber Security (also known as Cyber Florida) was established by the State of Florida in 2014 to make the Sunshine State one of the most cyber- secure in the nation by promoting cybersecurity education, research, and outreach in partnership with the 12 State University System of Florida (SUS) institutions. Hosted by the University of South Florida, the Center is committed to increasing the number of K-12 students interested in and prepared for careers in cybersecurity and related STEM disciplines.

***For media inquiries, please contact Stephen Neely at srneely@usf.edu and Kaila Witkowski at kwitkowski@fau.edu**