Harnessing the feed

Social media for mental health information and support

REACHOUT

Harnessing the feed: Social media for mental health information and support was written by Camilla Chaudhary. The report is based on research undertaken by Camilla Chaudhary, Sandra Garrido, Rawan Tayeb, Rebecca Christidis, Stephanie Chiang, Karen Wilcox and Lucy Macken.

ReachOut would like to thank the young people who participated in this study.

Wnds, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present. We recognise connection to Country as integral to health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge people with living and lived experience of mental ill-health and recovery, along with their carers, families and supporters. We value the courage of those who share their unique perspectives for the purpose of learning and growing together to achieve better outcomes for all. We recognise their vital contribution to the sector and to the development of ReachOut's services.

Contents

Key findings

Among the 2000-plus young people aged 16–25 who participated in this research, a clear pattern emerged: they routinely rely on social platforms for mental health support. Their insights paint a compelling picture of how digital resources address their needs for information, coping tips and connection. Nearly three-quarters (73%) reported turning to social platforms (predominantly TikTok, YouTube and Instagram) as a mental health resource, reflecting the high, and rising, rates of mental distress among this age group nationally (AIHW, 2021). Nearly 40 per cent of young Australians experienced mental health challenges in 2022 (ABS, 2023), the highest of any age group. Tellingly, over half (51%) of participants with probable mental health conditions[1] cited lack of access to professional help as a reason for turning to social platforms.

A striking finding of the study was that young people are using their favourite social platforms as much as they use Google for mental health information. While these platforms can play a prominent role in promoting young people's mental health awareness, young people often approach them with scepticism and clear awareness of their limitations. Young people pointed to shortcomings in design and content quality, and proposed initiatives including tools to combat addiction, filter harmful content and promote credible information, better serving youth audiences.

73% use social media for mental health support

51% of young people facing mental health challenges use social media as a substitute for professional support

35% of young people with a probable serious mental issue use social media at least once per week

Amid declining mental health and pressing global challenges, young people look to the support that is freely available to them on social platforms, often with scepticism and clear ideas for improvement.

[1] Using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6), a six-item self-report distress measure with a possible score of 24. Scores are interpreted using dichotomous scoring, with scores of 13–24 classified as indicating probable serious mental illness or serious psychological distress.

Key findings continued

Trusting mental health information online: Misinformation is rife, but young people regularly fact-check

● Nearly two-thirds **(63%)** of young people have encountered **misleading or harmful** mental health content, and **over half (58%) report fact-checking** mental health information before following it. Many make quick judgements about trustworthiness, relying on visual cues and perceived authenticity, while applying a critical lens selectively.

● **Younger participants, aged 16-18, were more vulnerable to misinformation** than their older peers, evidenced by less fact-checking, lower preference for content from professionals, and decreased likelihood of seeking professional help for mental health issues.

Mental health awareness and pathways to professional help: the benefits of social platforms

● Two-thirds **(66%)** of participants identified **increased awareness** of their mental health as a benefit of engaging with online content. Additionally, nearly half **(47%)** said it encouraged them to **seek professional support.** Besides building mental health literacy, young people described a range of other distinct benefits social platforms offer, including **normalising mental health conversations, dissolving stigma, providing access to practical tips** and techniques, and **reducing isolation** through shared experience.

Reimagining social platforms for mental health support: Enhanced safety and content quality

● Young people are discerning about mental health information found on social platforms, often frustrated by its shortcomings and the platforms hosting it. They believe a safer online environment requires addressing design features, content quality and user education. To this end, they advocate for tools to combat **addiction, filter harmful content,** and **promote credible information.** Ideally, technology platforms, government, the mental health sector, and creators would work together to deliver these changes across social channels.

Practical coping tips, information and connection make social platforms a first resort for mental health support

● Three quarters **(73%)** of young people use social platforms for mental health purposes, motivated by seeking **practical coping strategies (72%), reassurance (71%), information on specific mental health concerns (69%), and connection with others (65%).** They value the immediate relief social media offers during times of distress.

● Who creates mental health content matters to young people. **Mental health professionals are trusted the most (53%),** followed by creators with **personal experience (47%).**

Addictiveness, misinformation and anti-social behaviour are young people's leading concerns on social platforms

● Young people, while highly engaged digitally, acknowledge the costs of being online. Their key concerns are **addiction (43%), privacy (41%), harmful content (38%)**, and **bullying (38%)**. Participants were often alert to algorithmically-driven viewing, resulting in skewed content feeds – or 'echo chambers' –where **misinformation proliferates.**

Young people's shared insights suggest reframing the questions that drive the debate about social platforms and their impact. Instead of focusing solely on restrictions, more practical, constructive questions would include:

● How can platforms be redesigned to prioritise the safety of young people and **reduce addictive and harmful features?**

● How can the **potential benefits** of social platforms – their wide reach and engaging content – be harnessed and amplified to better serve young people who seek mental health support online?

● What measures would support young people, and those who care for them, to build skills to equip them for a **digitally literate** future?

Why understanding the role of social platforms in mental health support is vital

Social platforms are an integral part of young people's lives, a resource for education, social connection, news and entertainment. Since the emergence of early networking sites like MySpace in 2003 and Facebook in 2005, then Instagram in 2010 and TikTok in 2018, platforms have shaped and reshaped the digital landscape in which today's 16–25 year-olds have lived their formative years. **Digital life is inseparable from 'real' life,** given its seamless integration into everyday routines and activities, and with wide-ranging needs converging in a few apps.

Adolescents and young people are the most active users of social media, with estimates suggesting that 12–17 year-olds spend an average of 14.4 hours per week online (eSafety Commissioner, 2021; Perrin, 2021; Rideout et al., 2022). Gender plays a significant role in determining social media usage patterns. According to a 2018 survey, young Australian women aged 14–24 spend an average of 13.5 hours per week on social media, approximately 5 hours more than males in the same age group (ACMA, 2018).

These usage patterns extend to information-seeking, with young females (59%) markedly more reliant on social media as their main news source compared to young males (27%) (Lee et al., 2023).

The reach of social platforms into young people's lives extends beyond their social, entertainment and news functions; **platforms play an increasing role in accessing health services and social support networks** (Milton et al., 2023). Research investigating how young people adopt social media platforms as sources of mental health information points to the accessibility, confidentiality and privacy that social platforms afford (Park & Kwon, 2018; Pretorius et al., 2019) and underscores the importance of platforms in providing non-judgemental resources for such information. Social media's unique appeal for young individuals struggling with mental health issues has been well documented, facilitating access to peer support and information while protecting anonymity (Pretorius et al., 2019; Naslund et al., 2020).

While research has made headway in establishing young people's patterns of using and consuming social media, it is also critical to understand how they integrate and apply in their lives the information they encounter – particularly when it concerns mental health.

The intensifying scrutiny surrounding the link between social platforms and mental health reflects a growing – and timely – recognition of the complexities involved in this relationship. Governments in Australia and around the world are contemplating imposing restrictions on social media access for younger adolescents, with proposed measures including age verification, content restrictions and tighter data protection (U.S. Surgeon General, 2023; Taylor & Rose, 2024). The debate about mental health and social media often pivots exclusively on concerns regarding young people's susceptibility to excessive engagement, data privacy and harmful content. This age group is described as a 'digitally saturated generation' (The Guardian, 2024). These are valid concerns and ones that this report does not dismiss. However, ReachOut's study aims to capture a different perspective, seeking to understand **how young people are using social platforms specifically for mental health support**, what influences their engagement with this type of content, and what this means for mental health service providers.

This report adopts the term *social platforms* to denote digital platforms enabling scalable user engagement with content and other users. This includes content-sharing platforms (e.g. Instagram, TikTok and YouTube) and discussion forums (e.g. Reddit and Discord). Messaging apps are excluded, while generative AI applications such as ChatGPT are included for their growing role in information-seeking.

About this report

This report offers an in-depth look at findings from ReachOut's study investigating the changing ways in which young people engage with social platforms to support their mental health and wellbeing. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1 How are young people using digital spaces as sources of mental health information and support?

2 What factors influence how young people engage (or don't engage) with mental health content and/or support on social platforms?

3 What are the implications of this for the mental health sector?

Young people are routinely using social platforms to support their mental health

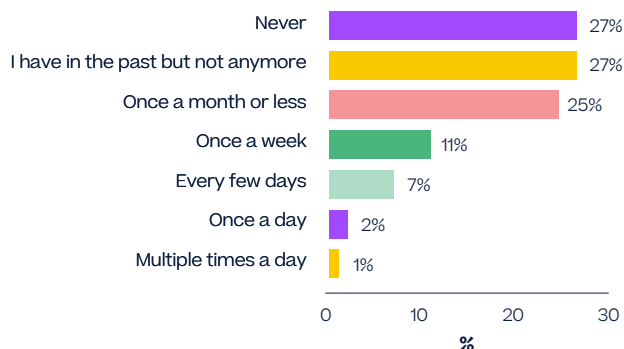## Social platforms are a key resource for information and connection

Almost three-quarters of the young people surveyed (73%) regularly use social platforms to support their mental health or have done so in the past (see Figure 1). Young people reported using their preferred social platforms to **meet an array of mental health support needs that spanned both information and connection.**

> *'Being able to read or watch about people in my situation sometimes reassures me. Being able to gain more information about how I'm feeling just enables me to be calmer.'*
>
> **(Male, 21, rural area)**

Figure 1. How often do young people search for mental health information on social platforms?

Never	27%
I have in the past but not anymore	27%
Once a month or less	25%
Once a week	11%
Every few days	7%
Once a day	2%
Multiple times a day	1%

%

Females were significantly more likely than males to search for mental health information on social platforms.

Seven in ten reported looking for information to reassure them, for condition-related information, or for coping strategies, while nearly two-thirds used platforms to connect with others. Notably, more than one-third of young people (34%) with a probable serious mental health condition[1] and almost half of young people living remotely (48%) reported using social platforms for mental health information **at least once a week**, significantly higher than the cohort overall (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. What do we know about young people seeking mental health information at least once per week?

- Remote — 48%
- Major city — 20%

- Probable serious mental illness — 34%
- No probable serious mental illness — 14%
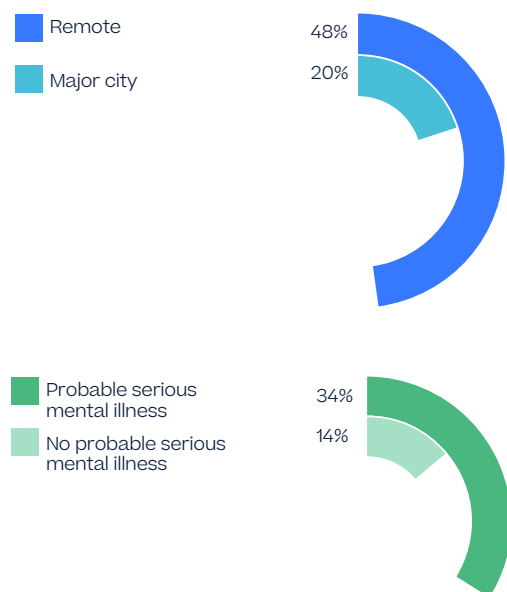
Although most young people were not turning to social platforms as a substitute for professional help (40%), among some groups, the picture looked somewhat different. Young people **facing mental health challenges**[2] or who have a diagnosed condition[3] showed a more marked leaning towards **online support.** Just over half of this group (51%) reported using social platforms because they **lacked access to professional help,** while 54 per cent were searching for information online in **preference to accessing professional support.**

> '*More emphasis [is needed] on…accessible and anonymised professional mental health advice through digital platforms, as I believe young people are more likely to use and benefit from these.*'
> **(Female, 24, major city)**

Figure 3. What kind of mental health information are young people looking for on social platforms?

	%
Practical advice about how to cope with challenges	72%
Information that makes me feel like I'm going to be okay	71%
Information about specific mental health conditions	69%
Other perspectives on mental health and wellbeing	68%
Connection with other people who have experienced the same thing	65%
Information about how to get professional help	47%
Support or information because I don't want professional help	45%
Support or information because I don't have access to professional help	44%
A place to vent/express myself	38%

%
Combined strongly agree/agree

💡 Females were significantly more likely than males to be looking for **practical advice, connection with others,** and **information** that makes them feel like they're going to be okay.

Only **1 in 4** young people say they have never looked for mental health information on social platforms

Young people also expanded on a range of motivations beyond those shown (see Figure 3) for using social platforms to support their mental health more broadly, often focusing on gaining relief from their worries. Two-thirds (66%) used social platforms for **distraction during stressful times.** Other motivations included using social platforms to **alleviate challenging habits** (e.g. overthinking) or to find **calming content:** [4] 'I feel like having social media like TikTok/Instagram are pretty good distractions from overthinking or something that's making you stressed out' (male, 18, major city). When young people use social platforms in this instrumental way, the content need not contain solution-focused mental health information in order to be considered effective – for example: 'Just some calming content sometimes. Like those piano reels' (female, 16, major city).

How do young people define mental health content?

Young people shared a broad range of types of content (video, text and discussion threads) created by individuals or organisations, which they used to support their mental health and wellbeing,[5] including:

😌 calming and uplifting content

💡 accessible tips and coping techniques

🥰 awareness-raising content, covering mental health challenges and support options

❤️ content sharing lived experience

🔍 information about specific mental health conditions.

'If I am looking for mental health information and/or hacks for myself because I want to know how to manage certain issues better… I will look for infographics that detail out how to use certain therapeutic techniques… I also look for stories that real people have shared on what has helped them.'
(Female, 23, major city)

[5] In the exploratory phase of this study.

TikTok, YouTube and Instagram are young people's main digital sources of mental health information, on a par with Google

When it comes to young people's preferred social platform for mental health information, the **trifecta of TikTok, YouTube and Instagram dominates** (see Figure 4). Together, these accounted for over 70 per cent of young people's preferred platforms, with TikTok alone being selected by almost a third (31%).[6] Strikingly, we also found out that young people are as likely to turn to their favourite platform for mental health information as they are to search on Google. This pattern is consistent with emerging evidence about changing search habits and how young people approach online information-seeking broadly (Lee et al., 2023). When searching for mental health support, our study suggests there may be a distinctly social dimension to young people's needs, which a search engine is unlikely to meet.

> '*Snapchat is a good form of telling about anxiety and mental health issues.*'
> **(Male, 16, remote area)**

> '*I occasionally use Reddit or Quora when I want direct and immediate answers for mental health information.*'
> **(Male, 18, major city)**

Only a minority (10%) of survey participants had so far adopted any of the new generation of Generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT) for mental health information-seeking. Of these young people, only 3 per cent said this was their preferred platform.

> '*Whenever I feel anxious or depressed, I look up TikTok and sometimes YouTube on how to deal with them. I also search for the causes of it on ChatGPT to avoid more situations like that.*'
> **(Female, 18, major city)**

Figure 4. What are young people's preferred platforms when searching for mental health information?

Young people were asked to identify their one preferred platform for searching for mental health information, other than Google.

Platform	%
TikTok	31%
YouTube	26%
Instagram	15%
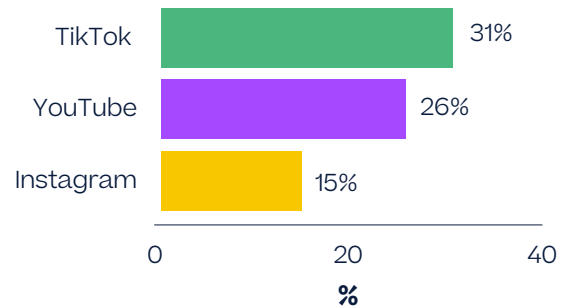
Social platforms for connection: Combating isolation through community and shared experiences

'Connection with others' was one of the main reasons young people gave for turning to social platforms for mental health support, underscoring the **high levels of social disconnection** experienced by this age group. Previous research by ReachOut found that one in two young people were experiencing **loneliness** (ReachOut Australia, 2023). In this context, social platforms offer a range of features that set them apart from other digital information sources – whether search engines or websites – in their ability to combat isolation. These features include the ability to discover and **connect with like-minded young people,** to **see their own experience reflected by others** and to **share information.**

Young people described how platforms facilitated a sense of connection with others by fostering **communities based on shared experiences.** One participant noted: 'YouTube, Reddit and Discord have a community that is sometimes very helpful and kind' (male, 19, regional area). They also highlighted the **creation of supportive spaces** where mental health challenges could be shared.

> '*I think advocating and sharing mental concerns makes people feel less alone and it's easy for people to contact others in the same situation if they need to.*'
> **(Male, 23, rural area)**

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[6] Participants were first asked to indicate all platforms they used for mental health information, before selecting their preferred one.

Those facing challenges that put them at particular risk of marginalisation (e.g. neurodivergent young people) pointed to the opportunities for connection offered by social media communities: 'You often feel incredibly isolated and like an "other", so digital/social platforms have really helped me feel less alone in my… struggles' (female, 21, major city).

Some of the forms of connection described by young people may be categorised as **parasocial relationships** – that is, relationships that may not be reciprocal, yet have a capacity to influence a young person's thoughts and feelings in a way that is similar to more traditional two-sided relationships (Lotun et al., 2024). The sense of connection may form with an individual such as an influencer or a gamer; what seems salient here is the high value young people placed on **the relatability of a creator's content**. Evidence suggests that parasocial relationships may have a genuine role to play in contributing to emotional wellbeing by helping to regulate emotions or to fulfil emotional needs (Gabriel et al., 2016).

> 'Creators I already follow that posted about mental health really helped me.'
> **(Female, 18, regional area)**

Where participants described interaction, it typically occurred within mental health-specific communities, suggesting that young people prefer 'hubs' or curated digital spaces in which to connect.[7] Participants were, overall, less forthcoming about the opportunities for direct one-to-one interaction offered by social platforms to meet their mental health needs.

> 'Groups/pages specifically for people with certain mental health conditions or diagnoses have been incredibly helpful. Not necessarily in giving me advice on how to treat myself, but to simply get validation that I am not the only one.'
> **(Female, 21, major city)**

While some young people clearly *do* fulfil their needs for supportive connection through social media platforms, **the research also highlighted some unmet needs** here. Young people's responses to the question, 'What else should social platforms be doing?' highlighted the desire for more **visible, defined – and moderated – spaces for connecting with others,** directly or indirectly, when seeking mental health support. This is explored further below (see *Meeting young people's needs on social platforms*).

[7] Based on thematic analysis of open-end questions in Phase 2 of the study.

Building awareness and pathways to support: How young people are using online mental health content

> '*Using digital/social platforms to find out about mental health and wellbeing… can enhance connection, increase self-esteem, and improve a sense of belonging.*'
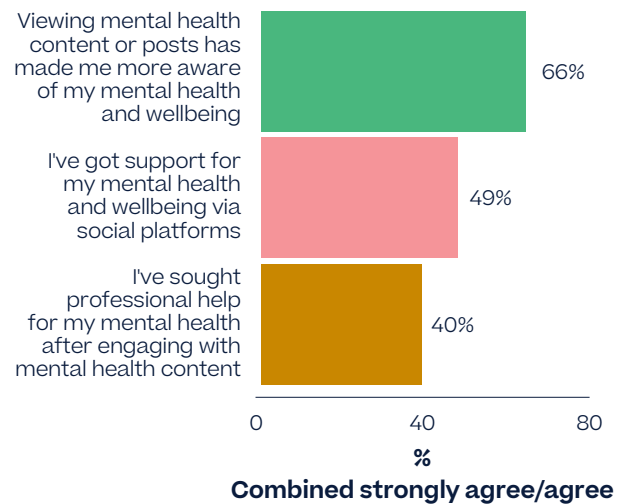> **(Male, 21, regional area)**

With young people routinely looking to social platforms for mental health information, how do they perceive the benefits of engaging with the content they encounter, and what impact, if any, does it have on their lives?

Two-thirds (66%) of the young people surveyed who used social platforms for mental health support reported **increased awareness of their own mental health,** making this the leading benefit reported among the study sample (see Figure 5). Reported increases in mental health awareness were significantly higher among young women (73%) than among young men (56%).

Figure 5. What are the benefits of accessing mental health information on social platforms?

	%
Viewing mental health content or posts has made me more aware of my mental health and wellbeing	66%
I've got support for my mental health and wellbeing via social platforms	49%
I've sought professional help for my mental health after engaging with mental health content	40%

%
Combined strongly agree/agree

> 🤗 Females were significantly more likely than males to say that viewing posts about mental health made them more aware of their own mental health and wellbeing.

Increased mental health awareness can take several forms for young people. Information on social platforms can serve as an initial reference point for those considering support: 'I follow mental health professionals… just in case I need a point to look at when in a situation where I don't know where to turn' (male, 22, major city). Additionally, online content can increase awareness of **coping mechanisms** for mental health challenges, offering readily accessible strategies, such as 'techniques and ideas that work for others and that might work for me' (female, 21, regional town). For others, increased awareness translates into reassurance that facing mental health challenges is a common experience: 'Mental health problems are normal and a part of the human cycle' (female, 21, major city).

Filling the mental health support gap, or building a pathway to professional support?

Nearly half of the study participants (47%) looked for information on social media about **how to seek professional help,** with 40 per cent actually getting help (see Figure 5, previous page). Young people with probable mental illness were more likely to have done this than those without. These findings build on research indicating that young people at risk of mental illness preferred Google over face-to-face options for initial information-seeking, though they preferred face-to-face for support (Pavarini et al., 2024).

However, for 44 per cent of young people, the support they find on social and community platforms was a **substitute for professional support.** Although the survey did not directly ask young people to give detailed reasons for choosing online support over professional options – beyond personal preference and access – some clear barriers surfaced, notably **cost** and **stigma.** These findings align with well-documented obstacles that prevent young people from seeking professional help, including cost, negative associations and poor mental health literacy (Ho et al., 2024): 'Helping make that [support] access free. Money is a HUGE factor as to why people don't seek the help they need' (female, 24, rural area).

Participants emphasised a number of additional benefits of using social platforms for mental health support, such as **distraction, normalising mental health conversations, sharing coping tips** and **providing validation.** These benefits attest to the unique short-form, visual, shareable nature of much content on social platforms, and concur with previous research into young people's digital information preferences (Lim et al., 2022).

Distraction: Temporary vs. long-lasting solutions

Young people value social platforms for offering **immediate relief from mental health challenges** through distraction, providing a temporary pause or a diversion. Some recognised the limits of this help-seeking strategy, conceding that social platforms were 'a great place to pass the time, but can hold mental consequences' (male, 16, regional area). Others noted that the relief offered by content on social platforms was short-lived and did not provide real or lasting solutions: 'People like to use humour as a coping mechanism by posting and making jokes about it; however, it doesn't really address the situation' (female, 18, remote area).

Normalising mental health conversations

Young people highlighted how social platforms can play a significant role in driving the **normalisation of discussion about mental health,** breaking down the stigma that may surround acknowledging these struggles. Some noted how social media's ability to lessen these inhibitions also facilitated taking steps towards seeking professional help.

> 'It can be daunting seeking help, but it is always better if it can be normalised.'
> **(Female, 18, unspecified location)**

Accessible coping techniques

Social platforms are a natural choice among young people seeking short-form, accessible information and resources, such as 'tips and tricks to help with mental health issues and problem solving' (female, 20, major city). Content with a practical purpose, such as managing anxiety, can have **real-life value,** while visual formats and shareability enhance reach and engagement.

> *'Some tips to deal with anxiety have really helped me and I have picked up some exercises that really work.'*
> **(Male, 22, major city)**

Additionally, likes, views and other reactions provide viewers with social proof of usefulness or popularity; conversely, absence may raise doubts: 'Without seeing how many likes and followers the creator has you can't see if they're reliable' (female, 17, regional area).

Validation

For some young people, the appeal of seeking support on social platforms lies in the affirmation offered by seeing their **personal challenges mirrored by others;** a place where they **feel less alone.** Young people valued this **sense of validation,** sometimes pointing to how their use of platforms **reduced their sense of isolation** in the challenges they were experiencing.

> *'Some people use it as a cry for help. A nice message can make anyone's day… TikTok has helped me a lot. I see people going through things I do and I see that I'm not alone.'*
> **(Male, 17, regional area)**

Addictiveness, information quality, privacy and safety are key concerns for young people seeking mental health support online

Young people using social platforms for mental health support are often well aware of its limitations. There was widespread acknowledgement of **the costs of being online,** in terms of habit-forming behaviour, the volume and variable quality of the content users were exposed to, and the resulting sense of overwhelm. Additionally, users must navigate the antisocial behaviour they encounter on social platforms and confront the question of whether to trust the advice or information they find there.

> *'It can be very useful to learn new ways of doing things but this habit can easily turn into addiction when you use it frequently for this purpose.'*
> **(Male, 21, major city)**

Addictive behaviour

The addictive nature of social platforms – particularly social media – emerged as the **leading concern among young people** in this study, of high concern to over 40 per cent of online help-seekers (see Figure 6). Where participants expanded on this concern, they cited the tendency to **scroll compulsively** on social media, the sapping effect this can have, and sometimes, to the questionable role of social platforms as conduits of serious information.
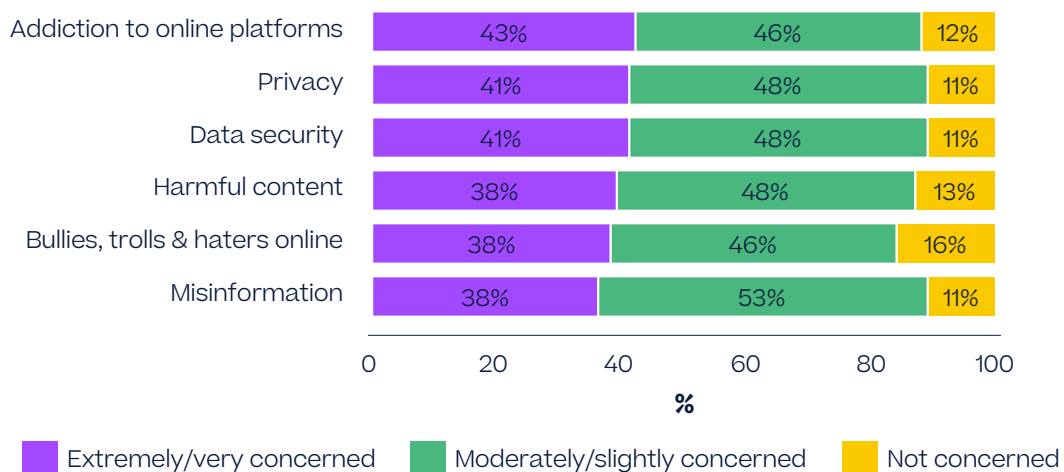
> *'I think that the addictiveness of social media platforms contributes a lot to poor mental health in a lot of young people and because of this, I don't know if it's a positive that so many people are seeking remedies for mental health on social media.'*
> **(Male, 18, major city)**

Many young people were unhappy about passive, habitual engagement, or **'doomscrolling',** promoted by the continuous stream of new content. While addictive behaviour and passive scrolling are not unique to young people using social platforms for mental health support, some evidence suggests that they are more susceptible to these habits at such times (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). One participant noted: 'When I'm in my lows I tend to just mindlessly scroll on places like Insta and TikTok' (male, 19, regional area).

Some participants were ambivalent, recognising the potential of social platforms, while harbouring reservations about their practical usage due to their addictive design. One participant observed: 'A great tool… It's also set up to be addictive … it feels like social media is controlling you since it can drag you in and keep you scrolling' (female, 19, major city).

Figure 6. What are young people's concerns about mental health information on social platforms?

Category	Extremely/very concerned	Moderately/slightly concerned	Not concerned
Addiction to online platforms	43%	46%	12%
Privacy	41%	48%	11%
Data security	41%	48%	11%
Harmful content	38%	48%	13%
Bullies, trolls & haters online	38%	46%	16%
Misinformation	38%	53%	11%

Young people showed a keen awareness of algorithms and of how they shape the content they encounter: 'The algorithm is scary. It seems to know what I want before I do!' (female, 21, major city). The algorithmically curated experience participants described was typically a negative one, resulting in skewed 'feeds' reflecting how 'algorithms prioritise views over user preferences' (female, 16, major city). When young people perceived algorithms as encouraging passive, uncritical or 'mindless' scrolling, it heightened their concerns about the addictiveness of social platforms and their value for information-seeking purposes.

Where social platforms excel – engaging young people in the moment – they can also fall short. Some young people described social media–induced scrolling in response to stress, distraction being a coping strategy shown to be less effective for dealing with mental health challenges than problem-focused strategies (Baker & Berenbaum, 2007; Richardson et al., 2020). Participants themselves were sometimes conscious of the unhelpfulness of these **avoidant behaviours,** describing a conflict they struggled to resolve: 'Just scrolling endlessly to avoid being alone with my thoughts' (male, 19, major city).

Privacy and security

How social platforms protect their users' privacy is a matter of serious concern to young people. Over 40 per cent of participants reported that they were *very* or *extremely concerned* about their privacy when searching for mental health information on platforms.

Young people raised privacy concerns centred on users' safety, pointing to **inadequate safeguards** and 'privacy features to keep young people safe' (male, 17, major city). Specifically, participants noted a lack of features designed to protect them from hostile reactions, particularly comments – for example, offering 'the option to turn off comments, [or] privacy screens on triggering content' (male, 21, major city). Another concern related to posting or sharing content, highlighting a need to 'ensure privacy and a space without judgement' (male, 25, major city). Direct communication between young people and content creators was a concern for some participants, particularly when this involved unverified accounts.

Misinformation and disinformation

When young people seek mental health information on social platforms, they typically encounter **harmful and misleading content.** Nearly two-thirds of participants (63%) reported experience of this. Over a third (38%) were deeply concerned about harmful mental health content on social media, and a similar proportion (35%) were deeply concerned about misinformation. Previous research validates these concerns, pointing to the potential for psychological harm arising from 'fake news' when it concerns health (Rocha et al., 2021).

Young people were pragmatic in recognising that **social platforms can be a fertile ground for the growth and proliferation of misinformation,** by both their design and use. Participants' experiences[8] centred on three primary categories of misleading mental health content: unreliable information, echo-chambers, and harmful or malicious content.

[8] From thematic analysis of open-ended questions.

Unreliable mental health advice

Participants criticised the abundance of **unreliable content posing as mental health advice** on social platforms, which often lacked quality evidence or any evidence at all. They were particularly sceptical about 'armchair psychologists' – typically, self-appointed mental health influencers, summed up by one participant as 'some random guy using a few buzzwords' (male, 16, major city) and dismissed by another as 'not a reliable source' (male, 16, major city).

Exposure to unreliable or misleading mental health content, according to some participants, fuelled the tendency for young people to self-diagnose their mental health conditions: 'There is a lot of misinformation and an overzealousness in self-diagnosis' (female, 16, major city). Some described how content that oversimplifies mental health conditions contributes to **over-pathologising,** by leading viewers to conflate milder symptoms with more serious ones: 'There's a lot of generalisation/trivialisation that leads to people self-diagnosing stuff like ADHD when it's just common "normal" behaviour' (female, 18, major city).

Echo chambers

Young people expressed concern about being exposed to 'echo chambers' when seeking health information online, where users' opinions, political sympathies or beliefs are reinforced by repeated interactions with like-minded peers (Gao et al., 2023; Del Vicario et al., 2016). Participants described how social media can encourage users to seek and coalesce around **mental health information that aligns with their pre-existing views,** and those who hold them.

> *'Digital platforms are poor for mental health management generally, as they allow for echo chambers to form where ideas are not challenged... maladaptive ideas [are] reinforced, while negative attitudes towards the mentally unwell can band together.'*
> **(Male, 19, rural area)**

> *'I only somewhat trust this content because often advice found on social media is... oversimplified or based on shallow knowledge of an outdated theory... Content creators may rush their research [to] speed up production of content and acquisition of views.'*
> **(Male, 19, rural area)**

Harmful content and discussions

A third category of (mis)information that troubles young people is content that exposes users to potentially harmful information or discussions. A primary component of this category is content that **romanticises mental health issues,** a social media phenomenon that has become the subject of recent research and exploration (Issaka et al., 2024). One participant remarked: 'There is an alarming [amount] of romanticisation of mental illnesses/suffering… confusing one thing for another' (male, 20, major city).

Within this category, young people highlighted specific conditions and behaviours they often saw misrepresented: eating disorders, ADHD, OCD, autism, depression and suicide. Alongside the problematic content itself, young people expressed concern about how it appears in feeds, some participants noting that **algorithms propel harmful content towards vulnerable users.**

> *'The algorithms will push stuff that is very dangerous to mental health very quickly… Particularly, content relating to eating disorders is especially harmful.'*
> **(Female, 18, major city)**

In addition to the welter of misleading information they see on social platforms, young people identified a serious problem in the **toxic culture** that can pervade social media discourse, chiefly **cyberbullying and trolling,** frequently seen in comments: 'People offer up the most harmful possible comments just to keep themselves entertained' (female, 18, major city). The documented threat to young people's wellbeing arising from antisocial behaviour online (Marrington et al., 2023) was reiterated by participants in this study. Bullying, in particular, stood out among the toxic behaviours that **undermined young people's safety on platforms.** Notably, some young people reported noticing a sharp increase in such behaviour:

> *'I am very disappointed by how slack a lot of platforms are when it comes to online bullying of disabled people. Recently I've seen a massive increase of people… making fun of autistic people like myself and when I report this nothing is done and it really brings us disabled people down.'*
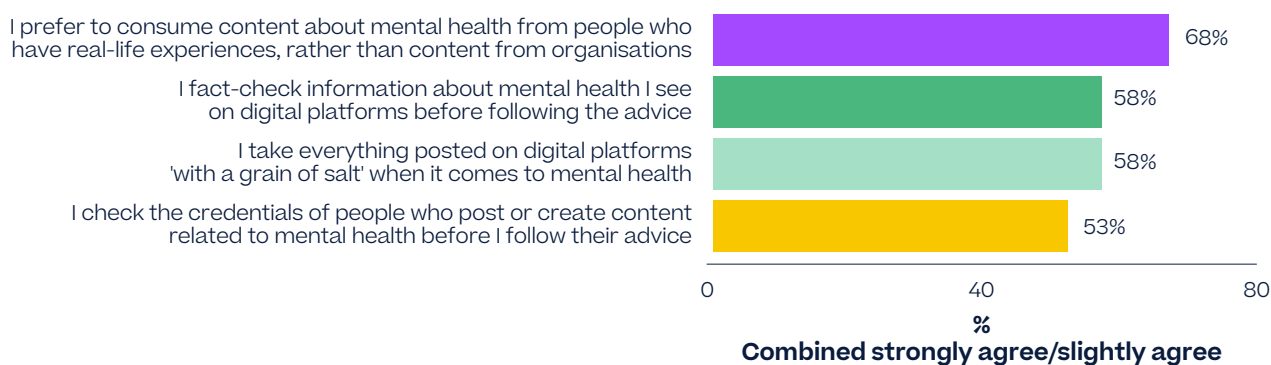> **(Female, 19, regional area)**

Caution prevails in trusting mental health information on social platforms

Young people have strategies for detecting misinformation, but scrolling often replaces critical scrutiny

As noted above, young people are highly aware of misinformation and – relatedly – the **trustworthiness of mental health content on social platforms.** As one participant admitted, 'I never truly know what to trust on TikTok' (male, 19, regional area). Nearly two-thirds (63%) reported encountering misleading or harmful content, and over half (58%) reported 'taking everything with a grain of salt' on social platforms. But turning default scepticism into active scrutiny requires extra effort,

making it all the more notable that over half are motivated to **verify mental health information** by **fact-checking** (58%) or **checking credentials** (53%) before following advice (see Figure 7). These findings taken together suggest that many young people have a critical lens but choose to apply it only in certain circumstances.

Figure 7. How do young people evaluate trustworthiness in mental health content?

Statement	%
I prefer to consume content about mental health from people who have real-life experiences, rather than content from organisations	68%
I fact-check information about mental health I see on digital platforms before following the advice	58%
I take everything posted on digital platforms 'with a grain of salt' when it comes to mental health	58%
I check the credentials of people who post or create content related to mental health before I follow their advice	53%

%
Combined strongly agree/slightly agree

Young people use a spectrum of measures to establish trust, sometimes depending on the type of mental health content

While many young people appear well-equipped with strategies for detecting misinformation, in practice they often make summary judgements about the trustworthiness of mental health content, relying on **instincts and first impressions.**[9] Sometimes, the question of trust is secondary to the question of engagement, as one participant summarised: 'It's not a matter of trusting it or not; it's a matter of being interested in what he has to say' (female, 17, regional area). The variety of content under the broad umbrella of 'mental health' also leads to different approaches for establishing trust. However, when closer scrutiny is required, young people employ a range of approaches. These approaches to determining trust can be viewed along a spectrum, with increasing levels of engagement and effort, starting from assessing commercial influence and progressing to fact-checking.
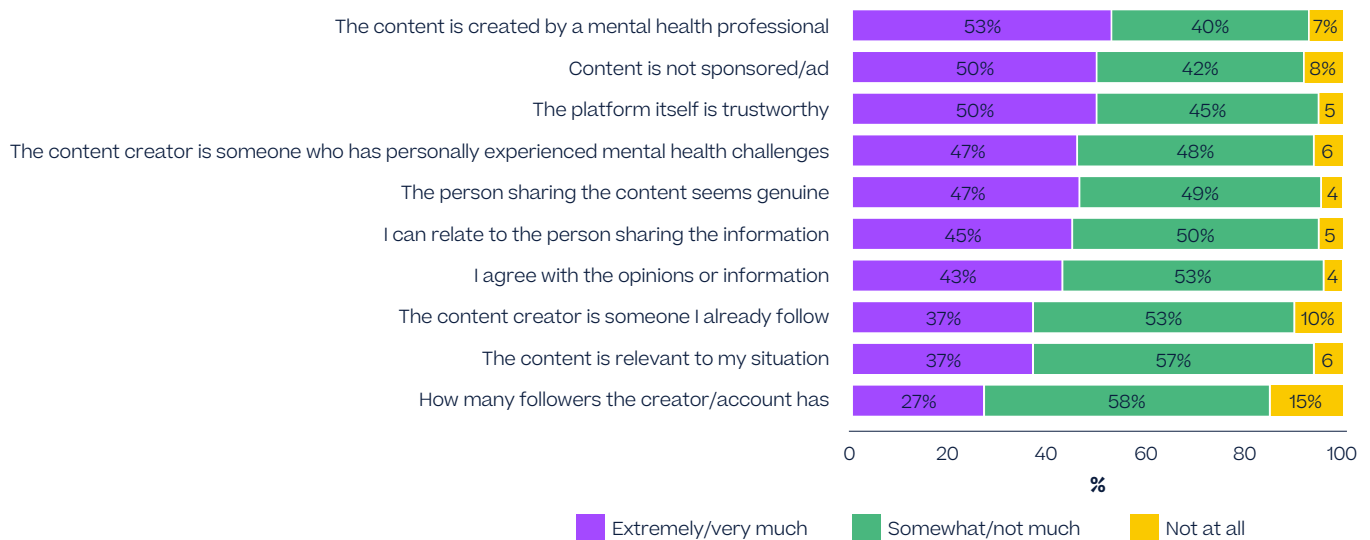
Shortcuts to establishing trust are routine

When young people evaluate content, they typically do so at speed, spending on average just 1.7 seconds on each post when scrolling (Javanbakht, 2020) – and rely on a range of impressions and indicators, often visual, to reach their decisions. These heuristics, participants shared, might include creator credentials, follower count, links, language, affiliations or sponsorship, as well as impressions of authenticity or relatability (see Figure 8).[10] As one participant outlined: 'I normally can tell if something is trustworthy or not from if the account is verified or not and if [it] has followers' (female, 21, regional area). Young people's reliance on these shortcuts may vary depending on the type of content and how motivated they are to validate its claims more thoroughly. Around half said they would fact-check before following mental health advice.

Creator attributes influence trust

Young people's trust in mental health content often hinges in part on the **creator's status or credentials.** Among the participants in this study, mental health professionals ranked highest in trustworthiness, followed by creators with personal mental health experiences (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. What influences young people's trust in mental health content on social platforms?

	Extremely/very much	Somewhat/not much	Not at all
The content is created by a mental health professional	53%	40%	7%
Content is not sponsored/ad	50%	42%	8%
The platform itself is trustworthy	50%	45%	5
The content creator is someone who has personally experienced mental health challenges	47%	48%	6
The person sharing the content seems genuine	47%	49%	4
I can relate to the person sharing the information	45%	50%	5
I agree with the opinions or information	43%	53%	4
The content creator is someone I already follow	37%	53%	10%
The content is relevant to my situation	37%	57%	6
How many followers the creator/account has	27%	58%	15%

%

[9,10] Participants were asked to evaluate two social media videos offering techniques for coping with anxiety and overthinking. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data provided insights into the criteria young people use for engagement and trust when assessing such content.

Creators on social platforms range from individuals sharing personal mental health experiences to professional psychologists and counsellors providing evidence-based resources. The rise of **mental health influencers** (Triplett et al., 2022) blurs the line between professional and non-professional creators, as they might share personal experiences, hold recognised accreditation, curate others' content, or combine all three.[11]

In shaping their opinions of trustworthiness, young people often also consider a range of other creator attributes: how **relatable** they deem the creator (45%), the **genuineness of the person sharing content** (47%), and how far their own opinions align with the poster's (43%).

Extrinsic factors, such as sponsorship and platform, also influence trust

Young people often weigh up a range of factors extrinsic to the content and its creator in determining how far they can trust mental health information. Half of the cohort considered **sponsorship links** (50%) and **platform trustworthiness** (50%) when assessing content reliability. As one participant explained: 'You can see that they are not trying to sell you anything – this is purely for the sake of educating and helping others through a grounding technique' (female, 23, major city).

Subjective trust factors: 'Would this work for me?'

Content on social platforms is sometimes is evaluated based on its relevance to the individual (37%) and how well it caters to personal preferences. Our study found that **young people's subjective assessments of mental health content** typically include asking, 'Would this work for me?' They may apply this less exacting standard to content promoting general wellbeing, rather than offering substantive advice (e.g. self-care routines or ASMR[13]). As one participant noted: 'I don't think self-care can be "trustworthy". [T]o an extent, it's about what makes you feel content' (female, 18, major city).

The common-sense test: 'Is it plausible?'

In some cases, young people subject mental health content to a common-sense credibility test: *Does it sound plausible? Is it practical? Could it do any harm?*[12] In our study, these shorthand assessments typically applied to content based on first-hand experience, or coping tips and techniques. **Content that passed the common-sense test need not be grounded in evidence or data to be credible.** One participant explained why a TikTok video on panic attacks was persuasive: 'They seem like genuine tips that would work, and he is just talking from his own experience' (male, 18, major city).

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[11] This study treats lived-experience creators and professionals as distinct categories.
[12] From thematic analysis of qualitative data.
[13] Autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) refers to the tingling sensation triggered by specific stimuli, such as audio content (Cline 2024).

Data, evidence and fact-checking

Young people outlined instances where mental health content warranted a more critical appraisal. This typically includes **looking for data or evidence to back up the information** shared or **links to sources** that corroborated the advice. Some participants applied this level of scrutiny to mental health content offering condition-specific advice. In response to advice on coping with over-thinking, one participant commented: 'Not sure that this is actually an effective technique… Would like to know his credentials/ where he's getting this info from. Has he studied psychology?' (female, 23, major city).

On occasions, young people outlined multiple steps to validate information they come across online. They might look at a combination of indicators, including presentation style, consulting the comments, creator affiliations, and **cross-verification** (such as a Google search) to confirm sources: 'I'd look at the comments/description to see if the person linked any sources or explained the technique and the comments to see if other people… say it has helped them' (female, 21, regional town).

> **Where trust is in doubt, disengaging is a common strategy**

As young people acknowledge, in reality, trust isn't always their main consideration when they see mental health content, especially if it's not actively sought. **The default option is often to ignore unwanted, unengaging or dubious information:** 'Unless I see something that seems like they are clearly promoting false advice, I don't normally pay attention to whether a post is trustworthy' (female, 16, major city). However, when faced with misleading or harmful mental health information, some reported checking the comments (50%) or fact-checking the information (29%), while 20 per cent checked the source.

Some young people went beyond caution, questioning whether social platforms are even appropriate sources for mental health information.

> *'These places aren't typically where I'm going for knowledge on mental health. The information is being given to me based on the algorithm and popular videos. Promoting mental health… in the current state, it's not what these platforms are primarily being used for.'*
> **(Female, 22, major city)**

Younger users are more susceptible to online misinformation

Among the study's youngest age group, 16–18 year-olds, a distinctive profile suggests that they are **more vulnerable to the potential harms** of seeking mental health information on social platforms. This vulnerability is due to a constellation of behaviours and preferences that differ from those of older age groups. This group tends to **employ fewer fact-checking techniques,** shows **lower preference for content from mental health professionals,** and is **less inclined to use social media as a gateway to professional help.** Three-quarters (75%) of 16–18 year-olds preferred mental health content from lived-experience creators over organisations, compared to 59 per cent of those aged 22 or over. Among this age group, just over a quarter (28%) of those with a probable mental illness were receiving professional help. They were the least likely to have sought professional help after viewing mental health information; 62 per cent had **not** done so, compared to 59 per cent of older participants.

Notably, people who *began* using social platforms like social media at a younger age (15 and under) rated factors such as content relevance, agreement with opinions, relatability to the person, and the genuineness of the content creator as having significantly more influence on their trust compared to those who started using these platforms at 16 or older: 'The tips seem appropriate, and the creator seems genuine, like they want to help and create a safe space' (male, 18, major city).
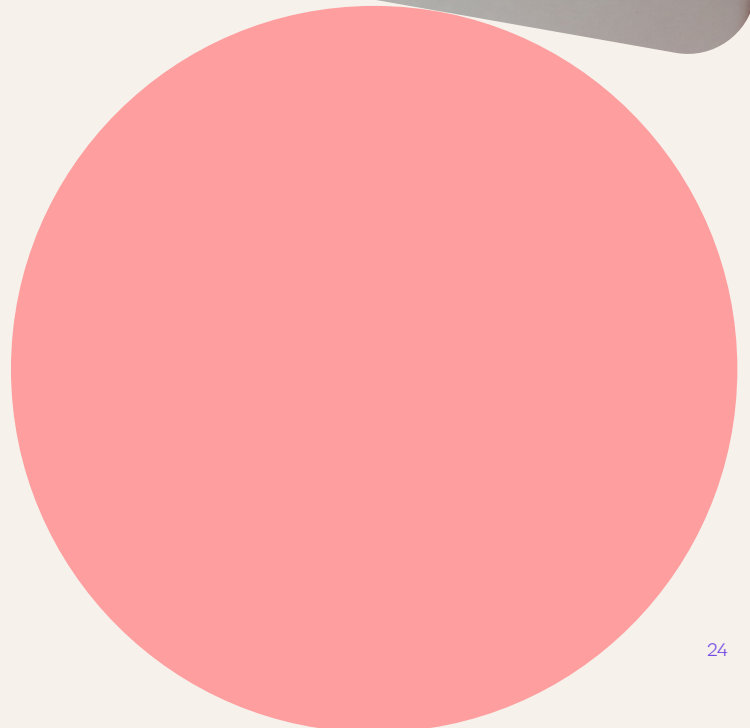
Meeting young people's needs on social platforms: Enhanced safety and content quality

Young people recognise that the platforms they use for entertainment and information are designed to maximise engagement – in time and attention – sometimes at the expense of their best interests. They emphasise the need for **better platform functionality** and content to serve as reliable mental health resources, calling on tech companies, content creators and mental health organisations to **improve the overall quality and safety of these platforms.** Some participants also emphasised a need for better user education.

> *'Social media should rework their content selection algorithms to focus less on low quality, addicting or anger-provoking content [and] focus more on helpful and thoughtful content.'*
>
> **(Male, 19, rural area)**

Platform safety features: Monitoring and filtering unhealthy content

Among the key proposals participants outlined to address the safety of social platforms were tools to better manage what they see, by **filtering or blocking particular types of content:** 'I would like there to be a setting to get rid of certain types of content like… drug addiction or eating disorders' (female, 21, major city). Some mentioned a lack of adequate safeguards and called for 'more privacy features to keep young people safe' (male, 17, major city).

> *'I love being able to control my privacy setting, as it makes me feel more secure … It makes me feel safe knowing that I can say "no" to people being able to make fun of me.'*
>
> **(Male, 17, major city)**

Algorithms and addiction: Options to prevent social media addiction and to manage content

While young people want relevant, engaging content in their social media feeds, more is not always better. Participants saw a potential benefit to **inbuilt platform tools to assist them in managing their time online.** Some pointed to the asymmetry that exists between individual users and global platforms here: 'Maybe making it less addictive (which probably won't happen because that's how they make money)' (female, 22, major city). This could be achieved by 'setting limits or making it harder for people to spend so much time on screens… Social media can get so contradictory and overwhelming' (female, 16, regional area), or, as others suggested, by reminding users to take regular breaks.

Content moderation: Curbing the spread of misinformation

Many young people believe that social platforms have a crucial role to play in curbing the spread of misinformation. They advocate for platform measures to reduce the spread of such content, and to introduce **tools to enable filtering of content,** especially to protect vulnerable users from harmful content: 'There should be content filters on all applications' (female, 17, major city).

Mental health content on social platforms varies widely, as young people recognise, ranging from entertainment to clinical information. While this array caters to individual needs and preferences, many desire **clearer labelling of credible mental health information** to help them navigate more effectively towards evidence-backed sources. This labelling, some suggested, could take the form of verification or promotion of such content: '… some way that viewers can easily identify information that has been verified … For example, if the information is from a trustworthy source, it has been fact checked, it is from a health professional, etc.' (female, 16, major city).

Raising the quality of mental health content

Young people see scope for both social platforms and creators to enhance their standing as sources of mental health information. They suggested promoting higher-quality content, including lived experiences. They also expressed a preference for content backed by credible evidence, advocating for links to sources or mental health organisations in advice posts: example:

> *'More sources and links… when people make claims about mental health and illness.'*
> **(Male, 18, rural area)**

Some recommended adding disclaimers to posts lacking scientific backing, emphasising the need for clear distinctions between opinions and factual evidence.

> *'I'd love to see platforms offering verified mental health resources prominently, integrating access to hotlines or support groups, and ensuring reliable, accurate information appears first in search results.'*
> **(Female, 20, regional area)**

> **Identifying content from credible, professional and lived-experience sources**

Collaborating with mental health professionals to create and share content was another method young people favoured for ensuring quality and tailoring information to specific age groups – for example: 'More professional content yet appealing to younger audiences' (male, 18, rural area).

> *'Social media allows us to access a quality of expertise that is lived experience, which you usually don't get at the doctor's office.'*
> **(Female, 24, major city)**

First-hand experience of mental health challenges shared on social media can be highly engaging, particularly to younger users, as the research has indicated. Reiterating this finding, young people would like to see **more lived-experience content being created and promoted,** catering to their appetite for credible, relatable material: 'I want more mental experience stories from others, sharing by… adolescents where youths could acknowledge each other and support others to pass through mental disorders' (male, 22, rural area).

Fostering mental health communities

As discussed, nearly two-thirds of participants cited connecting with others as a primary reason for using social platforms. This facet, young people believe, could be developed to create user communities on platforms where individuals facing similar mental health challenges can share information and **interact in a supportive, moderated environment,** designed to 'leverage community-style groups in the platforms' (male, 23, major city).

> *'Platforms have immense potential to provide valuable mental health information and support… [F]ostering supportive communities that prioritise empathy, respect, and understanding can significantly enhance the positive impact of these platforms on mental health and wellbeing.'*
> **(Female, 20, regional area)**

Building digital agency

A distinct viewpoint emerged among young people who saw the solution to social platforms' downsides lying with users themselves, rather than with technology companies. **Self-regulation** was a key measure proposed by some participants – for example, reducing time spent online, a measure heavily reliant on individual capacity to self-manage: 'Get off the app, and if you can't you have low self-discipline' (female, 17, remote area).

For others, **increasing users' digital literacy** was the priority for countering the potential harms of relying on social media for mental health advice. This user education might be broad-based, encouraging a more critical approach to platforms as information sources generally: 'Honestly, awareness is the big thing. [W]e need to be more aware of how social media and social platforms can alter the way we look at the world, for better or worse' (male, 22, regional area). For others, the priority was building users' capacity to discern trustworthy information when it comes to their mental health: 'Give us more options on how to get real legitimate information. A lot of people are really misinformed on mental health info and it's not healthy' (non-binary young person, 17, rural area).

> *'We lack a lot of fact checking and social media's ability to identify propaganda is not as efficient as it should be. I think... the gamifying of digital content regarding serious topics can greatly affect our perspective.'*
> **(Non-binary young person, 20, major city)**

How young people's insights reframe the digital debate

The findings generated through this study begin to reshape our understanding of how young people engage with social platforms as a resource for mental wellbeing. While previous research has established the prevalence of social media usage among this age group, the extent of their reliance on such platforms for mental health purposes remains relatively uncharted territory.

> *'Google has been pretty accurate for me in terms of finding out information, but TikTok is more personal, and I sometimes find myself relating personally to another person's experience.'*
> **(Female, 18, major city)**

The diverse range of preferences, needs and discerning attitudes exhibited by young people in this study underscores both the potential opportunities and limitations of mental health content shared on mass social platforms. The findings that surfaced in this study also disrupt some common assumptions, which are explored further below.

Young people's widespread reliance on social platforms may reflect the challenges they are confronting in emerging adulthood

The levels and patterns of help-seeking young people reported here – predominantly, reassurance, condition-related information or coping strategies – point to high unmet support needs among this cohort. Only one in four young people had never used social media for mental health information. For young people in need, online support can offer real, immediate – albeit short-term – benefits, or spur them on to seek professional help. Notably, **young people facing mental health challenges showed a stronger inclination towards online support,** underscoring the unique role social platforms play in supplementing gaps in mental health support for this demographic.

Attributing the increasing prevalence of mental illness among young people solely to social media usage overlooks the multiple, intersecting challenges they face, including rising living costs, job uncertainty, the COVID legacy, environmental crises and limited professional mental health support. Our study provided clear evidence that, against a daunting backdrop, young people use the resources that are freely available to them, even if they know these resources are imperfect.

While the focus has conventionally rested on the potential negatives of social media, emerging research (Marciano et al., 2024), including our findings, highlights potential benefits. This emerging evidence underscores the need to broaden our understanding of how different types of social media activity, such as communicative use, might promote positive outcomes for young people who use it as a mental health resource.

Young people require additional cues to discern trustworthy information

Mass uptake of social media among young people does not render them uncritical. Our study highlighted young people's varied, and often nuanced, approaches to evaluating mental health content. It also emphasised **their preferences for credible, relatable and authentic creators.** While content is sometimes subjected to credibility tests, only half of the young people surveyed reported fact-checking mental health information before using it, and twelve per cent are inclined to fact-check information they perceive as unreliable. The variance in behaviours implies that a significant amount of information remains in an indeterminate status for young people. This points to an opportunity for the mental health sector to engage young people by providing content that meets their credibility thresholds in a readily discernible way.

Young audiences are often aware that their online attention is a commodity

Young people displayed a worldly, often pragmatic, awareness of the commercial imperatives that shape and propel the content in their feeds, an awareness evident in their **tendency to discredit content affiliated to sponsors, advertisers and sometimes the platforms hosting them.** Many share the well-documented concerns about the effects of algorithms and software that is engineered to keep users engaged (Regehr & Barton, 2024).

Alongside their wariness of commercialised content, our research indicates that young people's social media use is shaped by a need for connection and a desire for authenticity. These preferences are prevalent among Gen Z broadly (Stahl & Literat, 2022) and have led to the emergence of niche communities, or **'digital campfires',** across social platforms (Green-Eneix et al., 2022). These micro-communities emphasise authentic connections and content over broad posts, attracting like-minded individuals. This type of interaction **fosters trust and social proof among peers** while sidelining branded content. Adopting this approach to communication may be essential for delivering mental health information credibly to an audience of emerging adults.

Young people are aware of the hazards associated with social platforms and want safeguards

The public discourse about mental health and social media often pivots on concerns about young people's susceptibility to the harms of excessive and uncritical engagement. By contrast, this study found that young people are often sceptical about both platforms and content, particularly for accessing mental health content. Moreover, the challenges young people themselves associate with turning to social platforms – **addictiveness, privacy concerns, algorithms, bullying and misinformation** – closely mirror those highlighted in news, ongoing debates and research literature.

Our research aligns with findings that young people are capable of taking proactive measures to safeguard themselves from over-exposure to social media, consistent with a recent study of the Gen Z and Millennial cohort, of which over half (52%) reported **taking a social media break** because of negative effects on their general health (YouGov, 2023). A viewpoint emphasised by some participants in this study is that **self-regulation is key to navigating the risks of social media exposure.** However, the research also suggests that **individual initiatives are inadequate on their own** and unlikely to prove sufficient safeguards for the most vulnerable young people.

Young people suggested thoughtful and responsive initiatives to address their main concerns about online help-seeking, focusing on reduced algorithmic manipulation and antisocial behaviour, enhancing content quality and self-regulation. This again points to an opportunity to **take on young people's perspectives,** by underpinning the potential of social platforms as a readily accessible, engaging mental health resource.

The perspectives participants shared demonstrate both the effectiveness and potential of social platforms for **raising mental health awareness, dissolving stigma and encouraging help-seeking.** Building on these benefits can form part of a comprehensive strategy to address the growing mental health needs of young people.

The proposals young people put forward highlight specific opportunities to improve mental health support on platforms they habitually use. These proposals call for a **balance between leveraging the reach of social platforms to amplify available support and implementing regulations to safeguard users.**

Safety and quality content: young people's priorities

Young people advocate for safeguards and improved mental health content from a range of creators, together with measures to support their use of social platforms as a resource. Key proposals include:

1 Platform tools and safeguards to manage addictive behaviour and filter harmful content:

- Implement screen time-management tools and content filters to discourage habitual over-use, protect vulnerable users, and reduce misinformation.

2 Enhancing credibility and quality of mental health content:

- Introduce clear labelling and verification (e.g. a tick) to distinguish professional advice from unverified information.
- Promote content that is evidence-based and linked to reputable sources including mental health organisations, professionals and lived-experience creators.

3 Normalising mental health conversations:

- Use social platforms' reach to destigmatise mental health issues and encourage help-seeking behaviour.
- Create supportive, moderated communities, which act as 'digital campfires', prioritising authentic content and connection.

4 User Education:

- Build digital literacy to improve users' ability to self-regulate and critically evaluate online mental health content.

5 Meeting young people where they are:

- Services can provide credible, engaging, co-designed mental health content through social and community platforms.

Who took part? [14]

- 😎 2078 young people, aged 16-25
- 🌟 Gender: female 50%, male 48%, non-binary 1%
- 🌏 Location: major city 49%, regional 34%, remote or rural 13%
- 🏴 6% identified as Aboriginal
- 🧑 65% categorised as having no probable serious mental illness on K6

About this study

This study employed a mixed-methods sequential design, consisting of two phases.

Phase 1

In Phase 1, 22 young people aged 16–25 years were recruited to participate in an online discussion board. Participants were recruited through a panel and selected using purposive sampling to ensure quotas were met for age, gender, occupation and location. From this group, a sub-set of ten participants was asked to provide feedback on a summary of the initial findings.

Phase 2

Based on the insights gathered in Phase 1, a survey was developed for Phase 2. Survey measures included the K6 scale to assess psychological distress, a pseudo-experiment involving the viewing of TikTok videos, and questions about the use of social platforms in two specific contexts: (i) when participants were worried, stressed or feeling down; and (ii) when participants were seeking mental health information.

How ReachOut can help

ReachOut is a leading online mental health service supporting young people during tough times. We help young people feel better about today and the future, no matter what challenge they're facing. ReachOut provides a safe online place where young people can openly express themselves, explore what's happening in their lives, connect with people who understand their situation, and find the resources to help them manage their challenges now and in the future. ReachOut has been designed specifically for – and with – young people. Resources are available on topics such as cyberbullying, body image and managing a young person's technology use, including A Parent's Guide to Instagram.

- 📷 @reachout_aus
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- f @ReachOutAUS

If you want to know more about this study, including details of research methods or data analysis, feel free to contact ReachOut's research team at research@reachout.com

[14] Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding and participants choosing not to disclose information.

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