

Majority of young people want social media giants to do more to stop cyberbullying

More than 8 in 10 (83%) young people think social media companies should do more to tackle cyberbullying on their platforms, according to a poll by charities YoungMinds and The Children's Society.

The survey of over 1000 people aged 11-25, reveals the extent to which cyberbullying – from receiving threatening messages to having their account hacked – is affecting teenagers and young people.

Some 46% said they had experienced **threatening, intimidating or nasty messages** via social media, email or text and 14% of respondents said they had experienced online bullying in the last month.

Further findings include:

- 1 in 5 (20%) young people had experienced personal, private or embarrassing information being shared publicly
- 47% of young people have experienced exclusion from conversations, groups, games and activities online
- 30% of young people have experienced persistent messaging after asking someone to stop
- 40% of young people said that social media had a negative impact on how they feel about themselves
- Over half of young people (59%) had their first accounts at age 12 or under, despite social media platforms having a minimum age of 13.

However, young people still felt positively about social media with 60% saying it had a positive effect on their relationship with their friends.

The majority of respondents (82%) also thought social media companies should do more to promote good mental health.

YoungMinds and The Children's Society carried out the survey ahead of a joint **inquiry into the impact of cyberbullying on young people's mental health**, being led by Conservative MP Alex Chalk.

The inquiry in parliament kicks off next week and continues throughout Autumn. A panel will hear from young people, experts, and social media companies on what more can be done to tackle cyberbullying and promote good mental health. The charities will be publishing the results of the inquiry in a report early next year.

Alex Chalk MP, said: “These are troubling findings. Social media is a good thing, but there is increasing evidence that prolonged exposure at such a young age carries risks.

“As a society we are in the foothills of our understanding of the impact of social media on young people's mental health. This robust, evidence-based, inquiry will improve our knowledge, and help young people more safely navigate what can feel like a minefield.”

Sarah Brennan, Chief Executive of YoungMinds, said:

“From making plans with friends to scrolling through feeds, social media is a huge part of everyday life for young people. But it does come with constant pressure to create a personal brand from a young age, live their lives in the public eye and be constantly available.

“Young people must feel safe online, and more needs to be done to prevent and respond to cyberbullying when it happens. But we’re also excited to see how this inquiry can work with social media companies to find innovative ways to promote mental health among young people, empowering them to understand how to respond to what they see online and cope with the pressures that social media brings.”

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of The Children’s Society, said:

“The summer holiday will have been a welcome break from bullying in the playground for many children. But the reality is that social media has meant bullying for some has become inescapable. Today’s findings reveal the negative impact on children and young people’s well-being. The fact that young people themselves are saying social media giants must do more should be seen as a wakeup call.

“The parliamentary inquiry will give us the opportunity to hear more from experts, young people and social media companies about how young people can be better protected from these negative experiences. Social media can bring many benefits and it’s so important that young people can enjoy using it without it damaging their self-esteem or mental health.”

The survey was hosted on SurveyGizmo and completed by 1,089 young people aged 11-25, including over 500 people under 18 years old. To see the results of the survey, please visit www.youngminds.org.uk/cyberbullying