

## What?

A team of researchers at the University of Bath (UK) have **studied the effects of a weeklong social media (SM)** (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok) **break on mental health.**<sup>4</sup>



## Why?

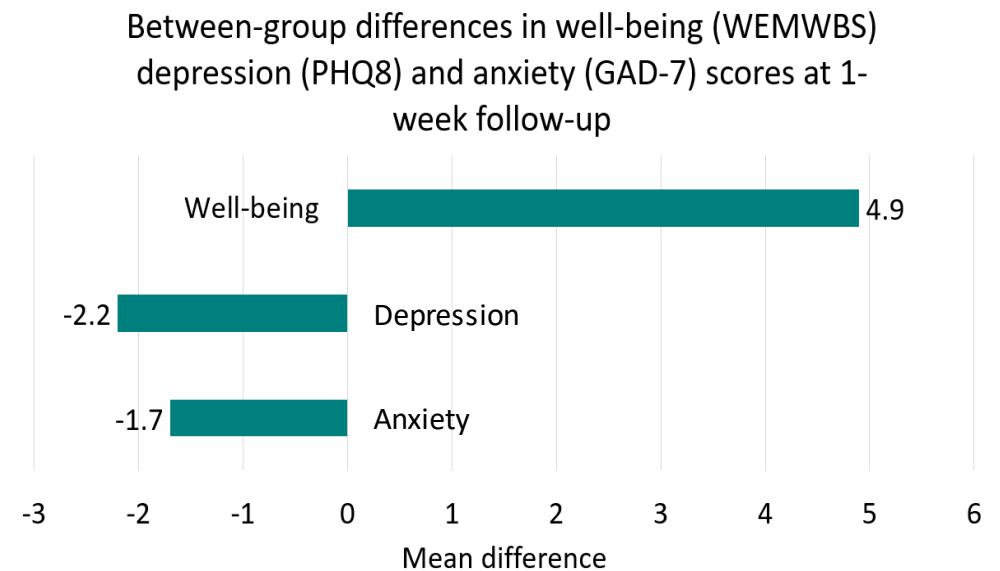
Several studies report associations between increased time spent on SM and heightened levels of depression and anxiety.<sup>1</sup> The **link between SM and mental health** is also evidenced by high profile news articles with headlines such as “Social Media Linked to Rise in Mental Health Disorders”.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers **randomly allocated** 154 individuals aged 18 to 72 who used SM every day into either an intervention or control group<sup>4</sup>

**Intervention**  
Asked to stop using all SM for one week

**Control**  
Could continue using SM as normal

Measures	PRO tool	Full name
Well-being	WEMWBS	Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
Depression	PHQ8	Patient Health Questionnaire-8
Anxiety	GAD-7	General Anxiety Disorder Scale-7



## Who?

In 2022, **there are 4.62 (58.4%) billion SM users globally.** This total is 3.1 times higher than the 1.48 billion figure published in 2012.<sup>3</sup>

**SM usage** in the UK **is highest among young adults**, aged 16 to 24 years old, decreasing steadily within older age groups.<sup>5</sup>

## Author Comments

Findings suggest that **even a short break in SM usage can have a positive impact on mental health.**

Further research should incorporate longer follow-up to establish whether the benefits of a SM break persist over time. If the improvement is lasting, taking **a break from SM could be recommended for managing mental health in future.**

## References

- Barry, C. T., Sidoti, C. L., Briggs, S. M., Reiter, S. R., & Lindsey, R. A. (2017). Adolescent social media use and mental health from adolescent and parent perspectives. *Journal of Adolescence*, 61, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.08.005>.
- Charles, S. (2019). Social media linked to rise in mental health disorders Accessed online at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/mental-health/social-media-linked-rise-mental-health-disorders-teens-survey-finds-n982526>.
- Datareportal (2022). Digital 2022: Global Overview Report. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-global-overview-report>
- Lambert J, Barnstable G, Minter E, Cooper J, McEwan D. Taking a One-Week Break from Social Media Improves Well-Being, Depression, and Anxiety: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw*. 2022 May;25(5):287-293. doi:10.1089/cyber.2021.0324.
- Statista Research Department (2022). Looking at social media sites or apps in the prior week in the UK 2020, by age group. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/506329>