

Report on the Research Findings of the  
Sensory/VisAbility Youth Advisory Committee

# Social Media Survey

## 2015



# ***Social Media Survey***

## **Acknowledgements:**

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## **Youth Advisory Committee Members**

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## Executive Summary:

A survey was conducted by the Sensory VisAbility Youth Advisory Committee; a group of high school students with a hearing loss or vision impairment. These students represent the School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory and VisAbility.

The survey responses have contributed towards a report on how high school students with a sensory disability use social media. This consultation was the first of its kind conducted with this age bracket in Western Australia and has been an opportunity for the students to have a voice on this matter. The report is to be used by the Commissioner for Children and Young People to help inform her advocacy work relating to the wellbeing of all children and young people throughout Western Australia.

Results of the survey concluded that social media is extremely important to the participants of the survey and that there may be many benefits such as communication, fun, a level playing field in that disabilities are not noted, and a reduction of isolation. The results also specified that very few of the participants reported being bullied themselves, but were aware of others who had been bullied via social media. Overall social media would appear to have many positive aspects which enhance the lives of the majority of survey respondents.

Demographic information was collected on gender, age and type of disability in order to establish any significance between these categories in relation to the social media questions.

### **1. Gender mix of survey respondents:**

Female	60%
Male	40%.

### **2. The ages of the students with sensory impairments who completed the survey were:**

Aged 13-15	60%
Aged 16-18	40%.

### **3. The types of disabilities surveyed included:**

Deaf	65%
Vision impairment	25%
Unknown	10%
Deafblind	0%.

This survey would appear to be a representative sample of the vision impaired and deaf population. It would appear that the majority (65%) of respondents were Deaf or hard of hearing and this could be due to the fact that it is harder for those with vision impairment to access social media. This could also be due to the greater number of Deaf and hard of hearing students within the general population in comparison to students with vision loss.

**4. Participants were asked to list the type of social media they used. These were then ranked and the percentage of use, as participants use multiple social media sites, was calculated:**

1. Facebook	60%
2. Skype	45%
3. Instagram	35%
4. Snapchat	30%
5. Twitter, Google Plus and LinkedIn	25%
6. WhatsApp and other	10%
7. Viber	5%.

These results suggest that participants used a variety of different types of social media depending on their needs. Sixty percent reported that they used Facebook and this is possibly due to this site allowing users to better communicate with friends. A rationale could be because it has functions such as chat and photos. It appears other social media options do not feature both functions.

Skype may also be popular with deaf students who use Auslan to communicate. It is known that Skype is popular among students who are blind due to the call function as it is easier to communicate through voice calls. In addition, students with vision impairment tend not to use image-orientated social media such as Instagram or Snapchat.

**i. Ranked female preferences for use of social media:**

1. Facebook	58%
2. Skype	42%
3. Snapchat	42%
4. Instagram	33%
5. Google Plus and Other	17%
6. Viber, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn	8%

**ii. Ranked male preferences for use of social media:**

1. Facebook	62.5%
2. Skype, LinkedIn, Twitter	50.0%
3. Instagram, Google Plus	37.5%
4. Viber, WhatsApp	12.5%.

No male participants indicated use of Snapchat and/or unlisted social media sites. However, overall there appeared to be no significant differences between social media preferred sites according to gender. Most of the sites were preferred by both genders equally.

**5. Time spent using social media on a daily basis:**

Less than one hour	45%
One to three hours	35%
Three to six hours	15%
Six or more hours	5%.

The results suggested a wide range of participation time spent engaging in social media: from less than one hour to more than six hours per day.

Eighty percent of the participants reported they were spending less than three hours a day using social media. These results could suggest that in addition to school, they were able to socialise by other means or had other interests that occupied their time. The students, who reported they spent the greatest amount of time (three to six or more hours per day), were predominantly female. This could suggest that in addition to being greater users of different types of social media, female participants are also spending more time on social media.

Greater research into how this compares to the general population and why so much time is spent online may also be of benefit. This research may help to establish what could be considered an ideal amount of time to spend online, to balance social needs and other lifestyle factors for students with sensory impairments.

## **6. Results were equally divided at 50/50 as to whether participants felt the need to constantly check social media accounts.**

Interestingly, the participants who responded that they constantly felt the need to check their social media accounts were females aged 14-18, whereas the participants who did not feel the need to constantly check were males aged 13-15.

These results would appear to support a belief that females are more likely to not only be greater users of different types of social media and for greater amounts of time, but additionally place a high priority on frequently monitoring social media. Consequently, the results would suggest males aged 13-15 years are less likely to place a high priority on social media and the need to monitor it.

**7. The majority of participants (75%) reported that they had not experienced online bullying. Only 10% reported they had and 15% reported they were unsure.**

Yes	10%
No	75%
Unsure	15%

These results would suggest that cyber bullying of the survey respondents is not a frequent occurrence, as only 10% of participants reported it. Interestingly this was reported by boys aged 13-15. No girls reported that they had experienced online bullying. This could suggest that boys are more vulnerable to social media bullying at younger ages than the rest of the sample population.

Those who were unsure whether they had experienced bullying online were 15% of the respondents. This could be due to confusion about what bullying is, or due to uncertainty of meaning due to the lack of clarity of purpose that can be communicated in the form of social media. Lack of clarity could be due to not being able to access nonverbal



prompts, such as tone of voice or body language, or poor written expression by the users of social media. Additionally, comments could be misinterpreted or misunderstood. Therefore, they may be perceived in a manner that was not intended by the author.

**8. The majority of participants reported they knew somebody who had experienced online bullying.**

Yes	60%
No	10%
Unsure	15%
Did not answer	15%

A large percentage of respondents reported that they had known someone who had experienced online bullying. This high number is concerning as it could indicate that bullying is prevalent in social media. Only 10% reported they did not know anyone who had not experienced online bullying. This could be due to the fact that some of the participants do not use social media frequently and, due to this reduced exposure, have not encountered it. It is difficult to know why many chose not to answer, or were unsure. This could be due to fear of restrictions of their access to social media or not wishing to disclose information to another person.

## **9. Interestingly three quarters of participants reported they used social media while with a friend.**

Yes	75%
No	25%

Responses were an even split between boys and girls with 40% boys and 60% girls, which is the same as the total demographic split. This could be a good representation of the sample and may indicate that 75% of the population use social media in the company of others. This could also be due to updating social media with photos/videos of friends whilst with friends or perhaps to aid communication. Therefore this would suggest that social media is important to enhance social contact not only alone but while socialising with others.

## **10. Participants could list multiple reasons for using social media when with a friend.**

The reasons participants listed are ranked and the percentage of participants from the total sample are also listed:

1. Communication with others	60%
2. Fun	55%
3. To share details of daily life	35%
4. General networking	30%
5. To share opinions	30%
6. To meet new people/boredom	20%

The vast majority of participants list *communication with others* and *fun* as the reasons for using social media with a friend. This would suggest that participants use social media to enhance time spent socialising with others and that spending time on social media is now an important part of spending time with others for this group.

Most of the participants who selected *share opinions* and *share details of their daily life* were female. This would suggest that females seem happier to share their opinions and facts about their daily life online than males. Social media acts like a conduit to allow people to express their views and opinions.

**11. Three quarters of the participants reported that they use social media to communicate with people that they don't see on a regular basis.**

Yes	75%
No	25%

A very high number of participants, 75%, reported that they use social media with people they do not see on a regular basis.

The results also indicate that it is more likely that older age groups use social media to communicate with friends they do not see on a regular basis. This could be due to the greater time to accumulate friends and that more people move to other locations due to modern society's greater transient lifestyle.

**12. Participants were asked to respond to each of the aspects of social media they enjoyed. The results were then ranked. In addition the chosen participant percentage relating to each aspect was calculated:**

1. Sense of friendship and belonging	70%
2. Sense of community	30%
3. Avoid isolation	30%
4. (Ranked equally) the desire to connect and reconnect, to promote causes and activities, and to have a voice	25%
5. (Ranked equally) real world connections, a level playing field and other	15%
6. A chance to succeed	10%

A quarter of participants reported that they only identified one aspect of social media they enjoyed, whereas other participants were able to identify up to four aspects.

25%	1
20%	2
20%	3
20%	4
15%	did not answer

These findings could suggest that there are many enjoyable aspects of social media for the participants and responses such as “a level playing field” and to “avoid isolation” may be due to the increased difficulties of socialising with a sensory loss. It is difficult to determine why 15% did not list an enjoyable aspect of social media and may indicate that they

are only participating in social media due to peer pressure or societal expectations.

**13. In response to the question “does social media make your life easier or more difficult?” it was reported:**

Did not answer	50%
Easier	35%
No difference	10%
More difficult	5%

Of the 50% of people who answered, 70% said easier, 10% more difficult and 20% no difference. The majority of females who responded reported that social media made their lives easier. This could be due to the greater use of social media by females, as females are more likely to be stereotyped as being ‘more social’ than males. Therefore the results would suggest that most users find social media makes their lives easier.

**14. 45% percent of participants stated that they did not believe that social media created more stress:**

No	45%
Yes	35%
Unsure	20%

There was an uneven gender distribution in reporting that social media can create more stress; however, it would appear to depend on factors other than gender. Many

females reported that social media created more stress whereas males did not overly report social media created more stress. These results may suggest that females are more invested emotionally in friendships through social media and are therefore more stressed regarding social media. All the people who answered 'unsure' were female. Hence there are some who appear to be ambivalent about whether stress is linked to social media. Females also have a greater tendency to feel the need to check their social media accounts, which may be a related stress level factor.

### **Interesting contrasting comments from the survey included:**

- "Social media doesn't make me stressed. This is because if I see something that bothers me, I just unfollow or block the post."
- "Because you feel obligated to join/fit in and there is all this pressure to sound cool and appear cool or even just knowing what to like, what to comment on."

These would appear to present the extremes of viewing social media to indifferent blocking of the post to trying extremely hard to meet friendship expectations. Therefore although the majority did not believe that social media did create more stress there is an expectation of meeting societal norms by some participants.

**15. The majority of respondents reported that they did not feel social media had been forced upon them.**

No	45%
Unsure	30%
Yes	25%

No male respondents said they had been forced to use social media whereas 25% of females believe that the use of social media has been forced upon them. These findings could perhaps mean that males are less likely to admit to outside influence on their lives. The older the respondent, the less pressure they felt to use social media. This could be due to the greater prevalence of social media in the current day.

Gender results were that 42% of females say social media is pressed upon them, 33% unsure and 25% don't know; whereas males reported that 0% say it is forced upon them, 75% say no and 25% were unsure.

This could suggest that potentially females see it socially convenient to use social media and felt like they needed to conform to social norms. Therefore the majority surveyed felt that social media had not been forced upon them.

**Comments included:**

- "Once again *peer pressure* we live in a time where the internet/online world is heavily relied on. It is most popular and is used by the majority of people and is especially popular amongst teenagers. I do not feel like it was forced upon me when everyone around me uses

it, not to mention I am also pressured to get even more social media accounts.”

- “Because it was my choice on whether to join or not - no one forced me. I have friends that aren’t on social media and they are doing just fine.”

## **16. Ranked responses to labelling feelings if social media was removed.**

1.	Sense of loss	45%
2.	Upset	35%
3.	Not mind	25%
4.	Angry and did not answer	15%
5.	Pleased and excited	10%
6.	Relieved	5%

Interestingly when the data was examined and categorised into gender, positive, negative and neutral (not mind) the responses were evenly matched with 25% of both males and females reporting negative feelings associated with the removal of social media. Additionally neutral responses were 15% female and 10% male whereas only 5% of the female participants reported positive feelings about losing social media and 5% reported mixed feelings.

Fifteen percent of respondents did not answer and this could be due to knowing that there are costs to using social media but also knowing that social media is an unassailable part of life. Therefore the results suggested that the majority



of participants would experience negative emotions associated with the removal of social media.

**17. Does your sensory disability affect your need to be accepted or liked on social media?**

No	65%
Unsure	25%
Yes	10%

The vast majority 65% felt they did not have a greater need to be accepted on social media because of their disability but 25% responded unsure. The need to be accepted or liked on social media is important in the general adolescent population.

**18. The majority of respondents reported no difficulty accessing social media because of their sensory disability.**

Yes	25%
No	75%

Of the 25% who reported difficulty accessing social media 60% were vision impaired, only 20% were deaf and 20% did not indicate. Social media is very 'visual' based so it may be more difficult for people with vision impairment to access. It is hoped that in the future, with increased technological gains, people with vision impairment will access social

media with ease. This may reduce potential feelings of isolation.

**Comments included:**

- “Sometimes because some things you cannot enlarge to read properly. It can be hard to read with different uses of colours such as yellow writing over white.”
- “Social media is not very accessible with the screen-reader.”

**19. The majority of participants reported that they were not treated differently when using social media because of their sensory disability.**

Yes	5%
No	80%
Unsure	15%

The majority of people felt they were treated the same on social media no matter what their sensory disability.

**Comments from participants included:**

- “You don’t really know if they do or not but maybe if you know them well you can.”
- “Online or not, there will always be differences between us and someone else and it is usually noticed. Whether it is when I have failed to respond in a conversation or struggle to read an online post.”
- “They don’t need to know.”

- “Because although there are people out there who judge there are great people who understand my disability and accept me for who I am.”

These responses would suggest diversity in experiences. One respondent liked the choice of anonymity of social media and one wasn't aware of being treated differently. Therefore the results would suggest that they are not aware of being treated differently, sometimes there is awareness of differences and would prefer not to be treated differently.

## **20. Ways to prevent social media bullying:**

Participants appeared well informed and proactive about ways to prevent bullying. Strategies demonstrated informed knowledge and varied from passive to proactive, but the responses were all appropriate and would be equally valid for all social media users.

### **Comments included:**

- “Block them or tell admin about it.”
- “Limit social media accounts/time limit. Like posts and read things rather than comment.”
- “Just leave it a couple of days don't fight them because they know it's getting to you if you do and if it gets worse tell someone don't keep it to yourself.”
- “Keep a privacy setting.”













