An online survey of young adolescent girls' use of the internet and smartphone apps for mental health support

# Details

## Year

2018

## DOI

10.1192/bjo.2018.43

## Issued

2018

## Language

English

## Volume

4

## Issue

4

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

BJPsych Open

## Publisher

Royal College of Psychiatrists

## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms
* Wellbeing

## Sample

775 girls aged 11-16 years, attending a state-funded secondary school in the south-west of England

# Abstract

Background Adolescents are digital natives, with the majority now owning their own smartphones and having internet access. Although the internet and smartphone applications (apps) can provide mental health support, little is known about how young adolescents use digital technology for mental health purposes. There are many digital health resources available for young people, but the assumption that they will be open to use them has been largely untested. Aims We aimed to explore how adolescents with and without raised symptoms of anxiety, depression and problematic eating use the internet on smartphones/tablets and mental health apps.MethodThe Bristol Online Survey tool was used to deliver an online survey to 775 girls aged 11–16 years, attending a state-funded secondary school in the south-west of England. The survey was completed in class during the winter term of 2017.Results A total of 98.7 and 97.4% used the internet and apps, respectively, although only 6% had used any mental health apps. Of those with raised mental health symptoms, 15–17% used or were using a mental health app, with 48.5% reporting that they would not use a mental health app.ConclusionsYoung female adolescents are avid users of the internet and apps but are not using digital technology for mental health purposes. Addressing concerns about digital technology are necessary to maximise the effect it can have on child and adolescent mental health..

# Outcome

Study looking into the use of mental health apps for support among young girls in England - found low levels of use. Using apps in general (97.4%) using or have used mental health apps (6%). Also nearly half reported that they would not use a mental health app. those with enxiety, depression or problems with eating were three times more likely to use a mental health app.