

## Online concerns among young people rise as digital life grows more complex

**As Australia marks Safer Internet Day on 10 February, Kids Helpline has released new data showing that online concerns among young people are increasing, particularly in the age group most affected by the under-16s social media ban.**

Kids Helpline records show that between November and January, the proportion of counselling contacts involving worries about online activity rose for both 12 to 15 year olds and 16 to 25 year olds, compared with the same period in previous years.

- For 12 to 15 year olds, online concerns increased from around 5 per cent in previous years to 6.7 per cent this year.
- For 16 to 25 year olds, online concerns rose from 3 to 4 per cent to more than 5 per cent.

These trends highlight the increasingly central role digital environments play in young people's relationships, identity and emotional wellbeing.

**yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams said Kids Helpline continues to support children and young people experiencing a wide range of online challenges, including cyberbullying, grooming, exposure to harmful content, scams and pressure to engage in online spaces in ways they may not feel ready for.

"In the lead-up to recent changes to social media access, Kids Helpline heard from young people who were confused, worried about staying connected with friends or afraid of missing out," Ms Adams said. "For 10 to 14 year olds in particular, connection and belonging matter deeply. When something shifts in their online world, it feels personal."

Kids Helpline data also shows cyberbullying remains an ongoing issue. For adolescents, one in three bullying contacts includes a cyberbullying component, rising to two in five for older teens and young adults. These numbers have remained consistent, reinforcing that online harm continues regardless of platform rules or settings.

New digital analytics also show strong engagement with Kids Helpline online information about the social media ban. Between November and February, youth-focused content attracted more than 9,600 users and 12,700 sessions, with high interest in pages explaining the restrictions and how to cope with the changes.

Insights from My Circle, Kids Helpline's moderated peer support platform, show similar patterns of young people seeking connection during periods of online change. Engagement increased ahead of the social media ban and spiked again when it took effect, with young people posting about losing access to familiar platforms, feeling disconnected from friends and searching for reliable online communities.

“Young people are trying to understand what the changes mean for their friendships, identity, study and day-to-day life,” Ms Adams said.

“Their questions show that rules alone do not solve online challenges. Young people need support, guidance and safer platforms.”

Ms Adams said Safer Internet Day is a reminder that digital literacy, trusted adults and supportive services are vital to keeping young people safe online.

“We are also seeing rising concerns about emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence tools, that many young people access without clear guidance,” she said.

“As technology evolves, so do the risks, and children and young people need help to navigate these spaces confidently.”

Kids Helpline is considered a critical part of Australia’s mental health support system for children and young people, yet around half of the service’s funding continues to come from the community.

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, confidential 24/7 counselling service for children and young people aged 5 to 25. Young people can speak with a counsellor by calling 1800 55 1800 or via webchat at [kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au).

**ENDS**

### Media Contact

For more information or to arrange a media interview, please contact Jessica Tatzenko, **yourtown** Media & Communications Specialist.



0423 843 786



[jtatzenko@yourtown.com.au](mailto:jtatzenko@yourtown.com.au)