

Special Report on Social Media and Mental Health

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Dear Fellow New Yorkers:

Social media is a dominant presence in our daily lives, reshaping the world we live in and the ways we interact with each other, bringing with it a range of unintended consequences. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (NYC Health Department's) **Special Report on Social Media and Mental Health** aims to understand these consequences – good and bad – across our city. This first-of-its-kind report utilizes data from teens, parents and caregivers to decipher the complex attitudes and usage patterns many New Yorkers have around social media, as well as its associations with mental health.



As a father of three young children, I know firsthand the pull and power social media has on young New Yorkers. While some of the negativity that young people experience on social media still exists in the real world – such as bullying and isolation – social media has amplified and exacerbated these issues. At the same time, it has created new issues, including distorting body image, damaging self-esteem and inviting addiction. Rather than protect our children from this harmful impact, social media platforms have been designed to be as addictive as possible. Like tobacco in our air, chemicals in our water or lead in our paint, social media is, no doubt, a toxin in our digital environments, impacting youth mental health.

To address this, we must know what we are up against. The NYC Health Department's Special Report on Social Media and Mental Health will lay the groundwork for understanding and analyzing social media's impact on youth and their parents and caregivers. This report is critical to addressing the mental health needs of all New Yorkers, but particularly our children and teens, and supports the commitment to address the crisis of youth mental health we laid out in "**Care, Community, Action: A Mental Health Plan for NYC.**" We can use these data to address this problem using interventions we know work – prevention, harm reduction, education, regulation and research. It will require a collaborative response from health care workers, policymakers, parents and caregivers, and business leaders. And it starts by having a common understanding of the risks and the opportunities for action.

I am proud to put this report forward as a critical step in that process, for the sake of the well-being of our youth and all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashwin Vasani'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD
Commissioner
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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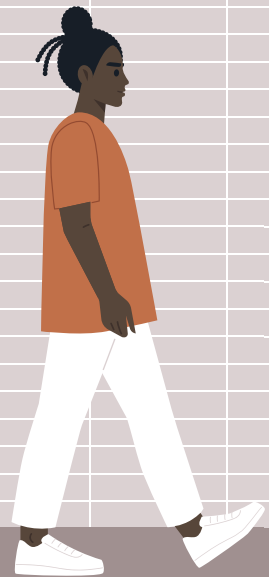
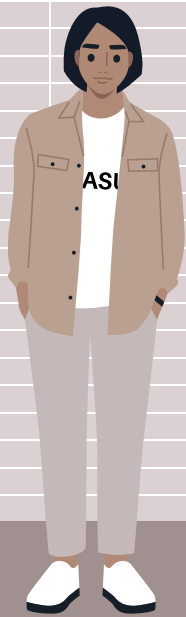
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