

Online trolls should be 'countered with kindness' as new survey finds society has become less kind than it used to be

Submitted by: Sunny Side Up

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Trolls, bots and bot farms seem to have overwhelmed some social media sites and have become a symbol for the darker side of online life. They seem to spread only disinformation, sow discord and be intent on aggression and upset.

Research released today, commissioned by chai brand Tea India, suggests the overwhelming majority of the nation (78%) feels the impact that society has become less kind than it used to be, with seven in 10 agreeing that social media platforms play a significant role in this shift.

In an era where online comments can be harsh and harmful, a whopping 83% of respondents strongly agree that social media companies should change their algorithms to promote kinder conversations and reduce the visibility of cruel comments.

Almost 4 in 10 (38%) would like to see 'kindness bots' on social media, designed to counteract negativity and spread goodwill online, according to the poll of 2,000 people. Much like offering someone a comforting cup of tea in the real world, these digital tools could help create a more positive and uplifting environment.

The survey findings also emphasised the need for governments to get involved with almost two-thirds of respondents agreeing that legislation should be enacted to force social media companies to adapt their algorithms towards kindness.

Speaking on the survey results, Naomi McCann, Marketing Manager at Tea India commented: "A warm cup of tea has long been a symbol of hospitality and kindness, and we want to extend that sentiment to how we interact with each other every day, whether online or in person.

"These results show people are fed-up with relentless 'bad bot' interference and are asking if we can have bad bot farms, why can't we have kind bot farms just spreading good news and trying to game the system positively. And why can't social media companies show harmony, positivity and unity?"

The survey also showed 78% of people admitted they find kindness either "a little sexy" or "damn hot" and being seen as thoughtful comes out as the top compliment people would like to receive (23%), followed by being seen as being easy to talk to (21%).

The majority of Brits would also rather give a compliment than receive one, with the average monetary value placed on being told we look good is £26.46. On average, participants said they expect to be at their kindest by the age of 50, suggesting that empathy and consideration may deepen with life experience.

Neuroscientist, Nicole Vignola, says: "It is clear that people feel as though social media is impacting our ability to be kind, with a large majority of respondents calling for governments to legislate the social media algorithm to be adapted towards more kindness.

“One of the major issues with social media is the online anonymity which can lead to dehumanisation, making it easier for people to be unkind and distanced from the effect that their words have on others. The other major issue is that our increased use of social media and screen-based communication is diminishing our ability to use and interpret essential non-verbal cues, like eye contact and body language. Without these cues, it’s hard for people to develop empathy for others, and thus, leads to a world that is slowly becoming more and more unkind.

“Even simple acts of kindness, like making someone a cup of tea just the way they like it, can go a long way in fostering connections and showing empathy. These small gestures remind us that kindness isn’t complicated and can be practiced in everyday life.”

ENDS

Research of 2,000 British adults was commissioned by Tea India and was conducted by Obsurvant in September 2024.

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