

New report reveals autistic adults' social media experiences

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Research led by Queen Mary's Professor Nelya Koteyko has been published in a [new report](#), "Autistic adults' experiences with social media: Creativity, Connectedness, and Control." The report reveals how

autistic users navigate and interact with diverse social media features, unraveling the complex relationship between linguistic and digital practices, individuality, and connectedness.

While understanding and awareness of autism has majorly progressed in recent years, with about 7,000 Brits diagnosed, most [autistic adults](#) in the U.K. still don't get the support they need to be fully included in society.

Language and communication differences associated with autism can make relationships challenging and lead to isolation—but researchers on Queen Mary's "Autistic Adults Online" reveals how autistic adults creatively and strategically use language and [digital tools](#) to forge connections, raise awareness, and maintain a consistent social media presence.

Through analysis of social media posts, in-depth interviews, and workshops, Koteyko and her research team explored how autistic adults engage with social media, the perspectives on platform functionality they hold, and the impact on interactions. The findings highlight challenges experienced by autistic individuals in their use of social media and provide insights into potential enhancements for designing platforms that better support inclusivity.

"The research informs our understanding of what kinds of social media situations make autistic people feel like they fit in or feel uncomfortable. This is important for designing online environments that are inclusive of autistic communicative expectations and sensory needs and have the potential to improve the quality of online social experiences for all," explains Koteyko.

To support efforts from designers and third and public sector professionals, Koteyko and her research team in collaboration with the U.K.'s leading autism research and campaigning charity Autistica have

created a policy brief "Making online platforms autism-friendly" as well as toolkits that can help in adapting digital platforms and social media to better support the needs of neurodiverse users.

Each toolkit addresses a different area of practice. One toolkit is aimed at [software developers](#) and web designers who possess the technical skills to design and shape digital platforms.

A second toolkit has been created to support digital managers and [content creators](#) in the contexts of the third and public sectors, who might not be able to re-design [digital platforms](#), but could adapt specific features and content to better support neurodivergent users.

Koteyko said, "Through this research, we learned that autistic people are still an under-represented group both in the field of computer-mediated communication and in design studies. This needs to change so that truly diverse experiences and communicative abilities are accommodated on social media, as well as taken into account in theorizations of online behavior. We hope that the methodology developed in our project, which relies both on the analysis of language used on [social media](#) and reports of personal experiences, illustrates the great potential of working with and learning from [autistic people](#)."

The toolkits can be accessed here:

<https://autisticadultsonline.com/toolkits/>

More information: Report: autisticadultsonline.com/resources-publications/

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

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