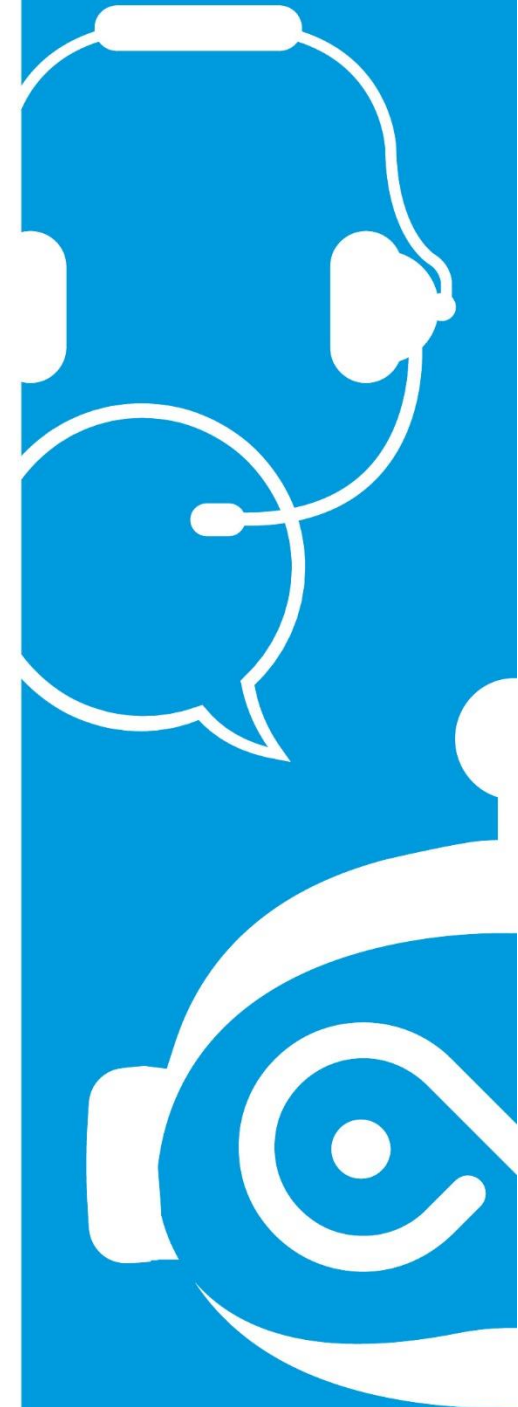




CHATBOARDS: REDDIT

What is it?

Reddit is a **digital tool** which works as a news aggregation, content rating, and discussion website. Registered users can submit links, text posts, images, and videos, which are then voted 'up' or 'down' by other members. Reddit was created in 2005 and now has more than 52 million users.



How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

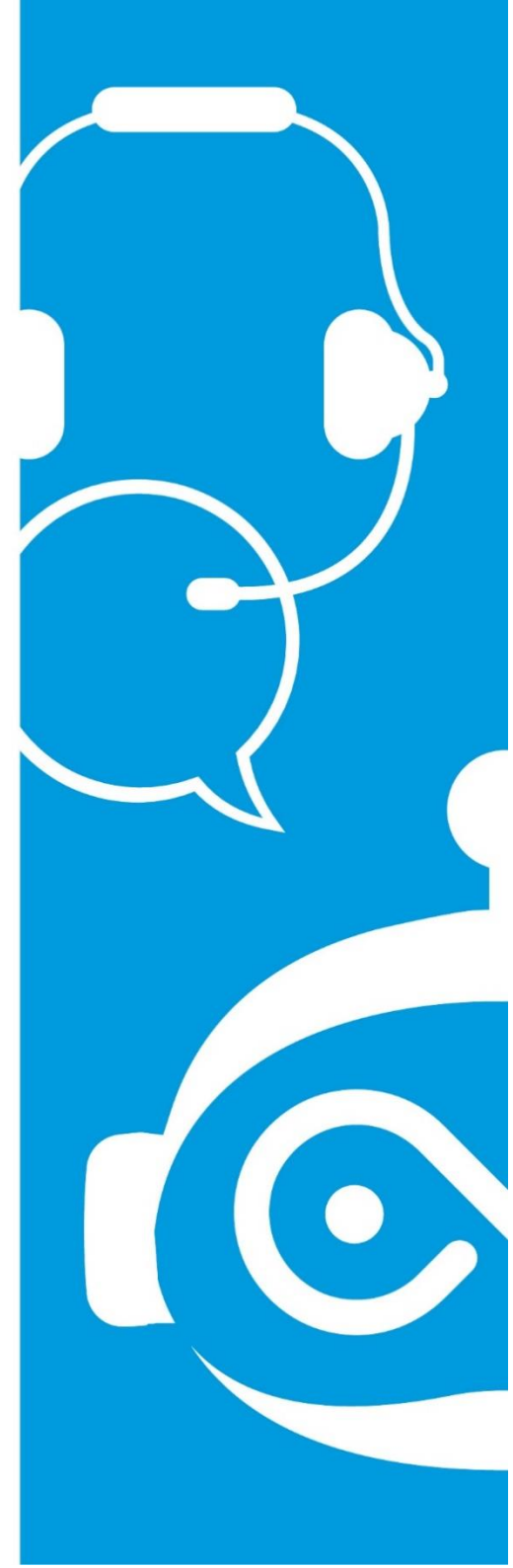
Reddit serves as a platform for exchange on a wide scope of subjects, including sexual and reproductive health. Used as such, users can create posts (titled 'threads) to ask questions which they might not have the opportunity or confidence to ask in front of a group of people. Other users from the discussion forum's large user base then have the opportunity to answer these questions and curate a flow of information on the subject. There are numerous advice communities, known as subreddits, which handle subject matter like this, including r/teenagers, r/askreddit, and r/sex.

The nature of these exchanges related to SRH on Reddit have been researched by The National Centre for Biotechnology Information¹. Their study revealed that, as Reddit use is anonymous, users are more likely to discuss sensitive topics (such as sexually transmitted diseases) with greater detail and more freely than in clinical encounters.

Yet, despite its ease of use, large user base from which to gather advice and anonymity, researchers note a few of this tool's limitations which may negatively affect users looking to get their SRH-related queries met:

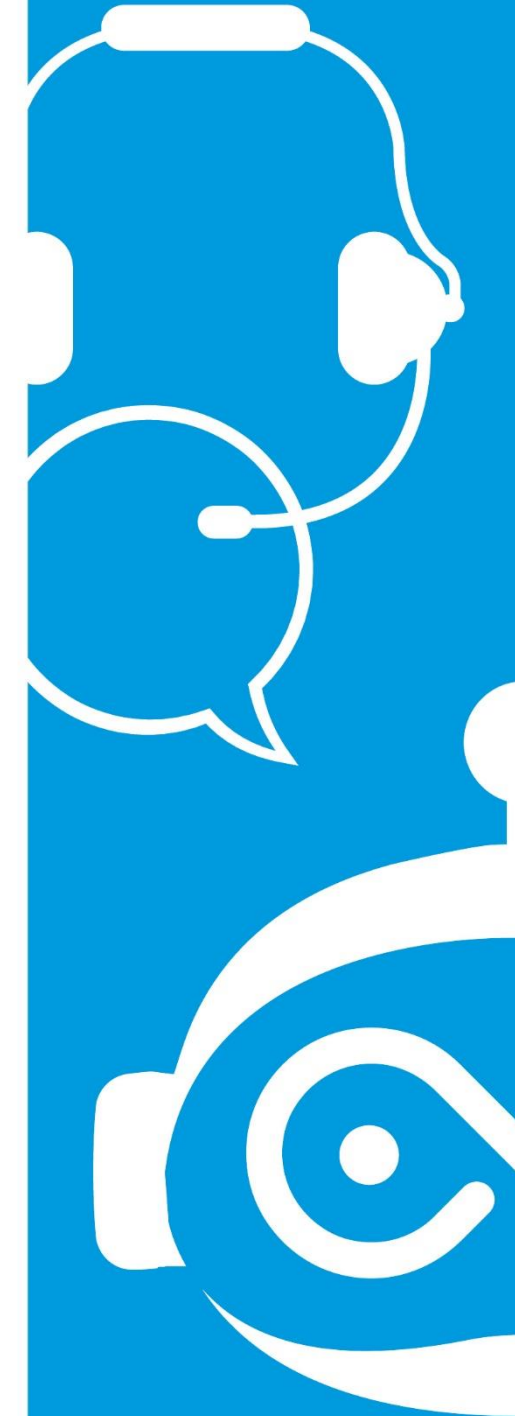
- The veracity and ambiguity of the answers given by other users can have a major influence on decision-making. Indeed, the aforementioned study revealed in its conclusion the presence of dishonest or inaccurate SRH-related responses.

¹ Johnson et al., "Sexually Transmitted Disease-Related Reddit Posts During the COVID-19 Pandemic."



Supporting youth's sexual & reproductive health in the digital age: BEST PRACTICES

- The risks of cyberbullying are amplified due to the presence of 'toxic' content. Defined as content involving insults, threats and offensive language, another study conducted by the Peer J Computer Science journal analysed over 2 billion posts on Reddit and deduced that 16% of users published 'toxic' content, deemed especially harmful for youth discussing their SRH².



²Almerekhi, Kwak, and Jansen, "Investigating Toxicity Changes of Cross-Community Redditors from 2 Billion Posts and Comments."

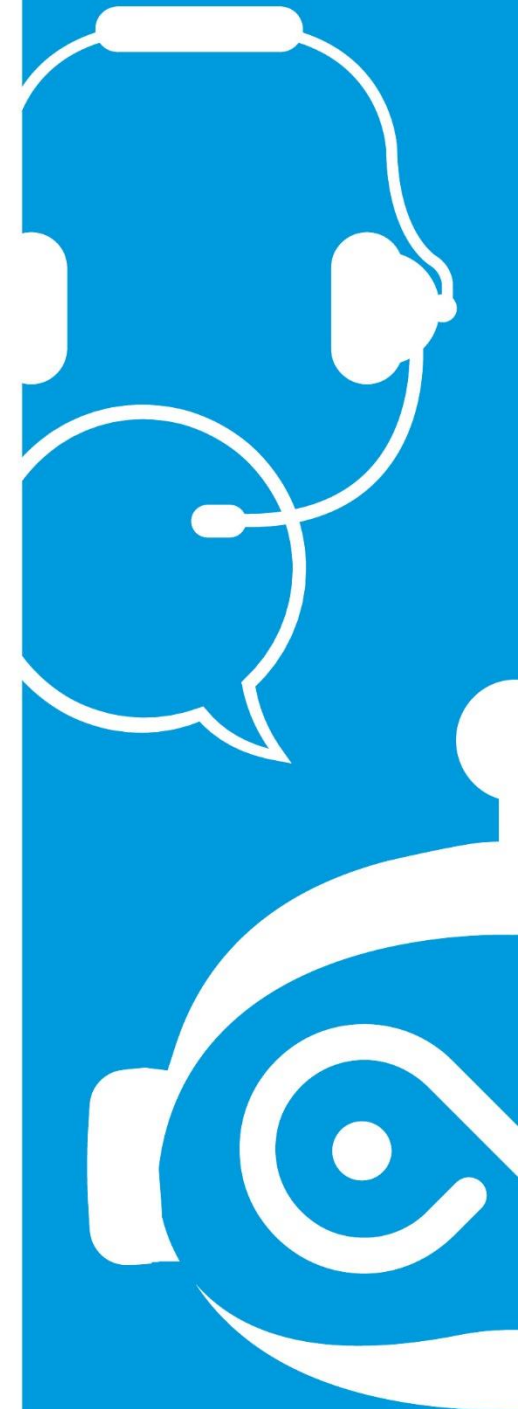
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Sort comments on Reddit threads by “Top” to view comments voted as most useful by other users. This is a good rule of thumb for helping youth ascertain which information is most reliable.
- Safeguard against cyberbullying by setting Chat & Messaging options to disallow users from sending chat or private message requests, reporting offensive posts and blocking individual users (going to their profile and clicking More Options under their avatar to select Block User).
- Educate youth on internet safety by limiting the amount of personal information they share with others online, to protect against doxxing attempts.
- Provide age-appropriate alternatives to Reddit for youth that are underage as the platform contains a lot of unrestricted sexual content and lax parental controls.

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Cyberbullying: Doxxing
- Online abuse: Hate speech
- Misconceptions & misinformation: About digital literacy



Further reading:

- Changes of Cross-Community Redditors from 2 Billion Posts and Comments.” PeerJ Computer Science 8 (August 18, 2022): e1059. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.1059>.
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- Troutner, Allison. “Is Reddit Safe? Tips for Parents to Keep Teens Safer Online.” VPNOverview.com, September 13, 2021. <https://vpnoverview.com/internet-safety/kids-online/is-reddit-safe/>.
- Widman, Jake. “What Is Reddit? A Quick Look at the Popular Online Community.” Digital Trends, December 28, 2022. <https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/what-is-reddit/>.

