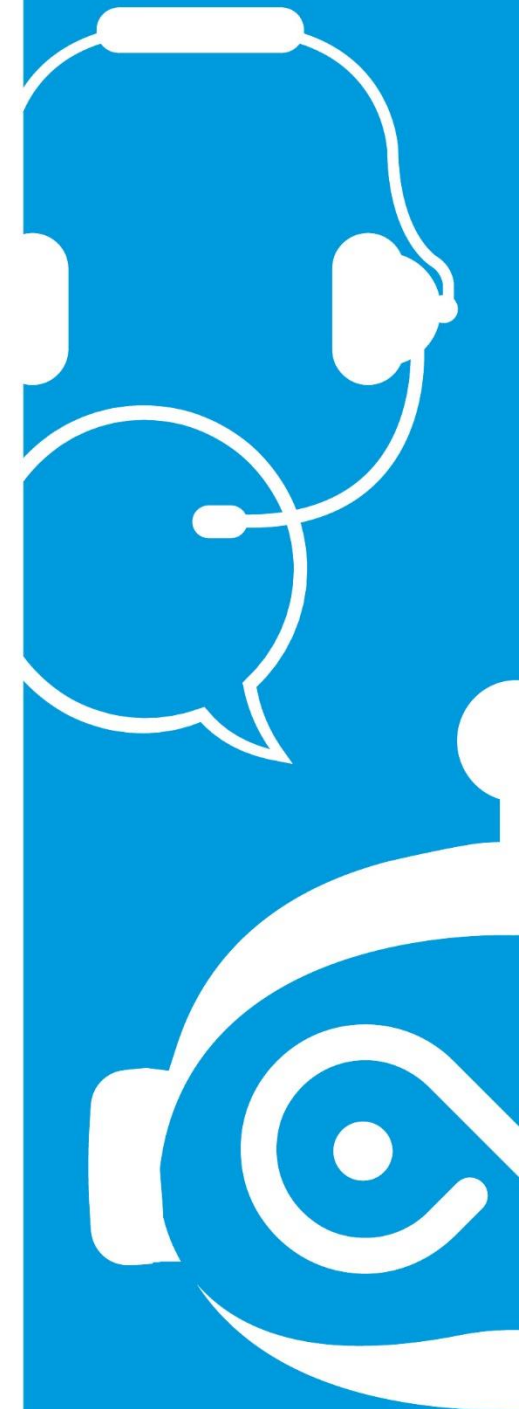




ONLINE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: #METOO

What is it?

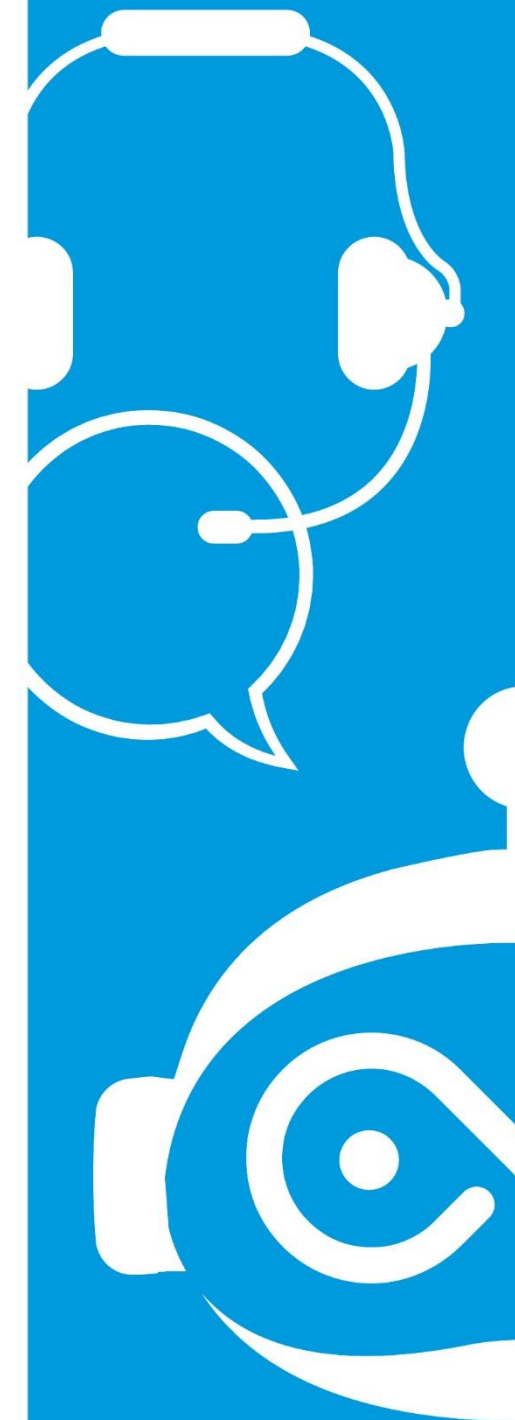
On 5 October 2017, the New York Times featured an article on Harvey Weinstein which collected the confessions of women who had been sexually harassed by the film producer. This triggered an avalanche of testimonies from women who had remained silent for years intimidated by Weinstein or paid large sums of money for their silence. This text was followed by the #MeToo movement, a **digital phenomenon** where women online used the # symbol on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) to share their stories of sexual harassment which became a tool against the humiliation and exploitation of women and against gender-based discrimination of any kind.



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

The #MeToo movement has shown to have a positive impact on the SRH of young people because it demonstrates the importance of consent for sexual activities, and shines a light on what constitutes as a non-consensual or forced sexual encounter. It highlights that the decision to engage in sexual intercourse should be a voluntary choice, not a form of emotional or financial blackmail, and that victims of sexual violence are not to blame and should not feel ashamed, as the perpetrator bears full responsibility. By hearing about the stories of others who have gone through similar experiences, young people who have experienced sexual violence, feel more understood and emboldened to seek therapy to help them overcome the challenges in their SRH caused by traumatic experiences. They can see that their difficult experience is not isolated, as many people worldwide have similar challenging experiences.

A shocking realisation for many may be the awareness that there is such a high percentage of people in the world who have experienced sexual harassment. The difficult stories of other individuals that have had a traumatic impact on their sexual lives helps raise awareness and educate others on SRH concepts such as the importance of sexual accountability, informed consent, and exploitation of power and power imbalances in the professional world.



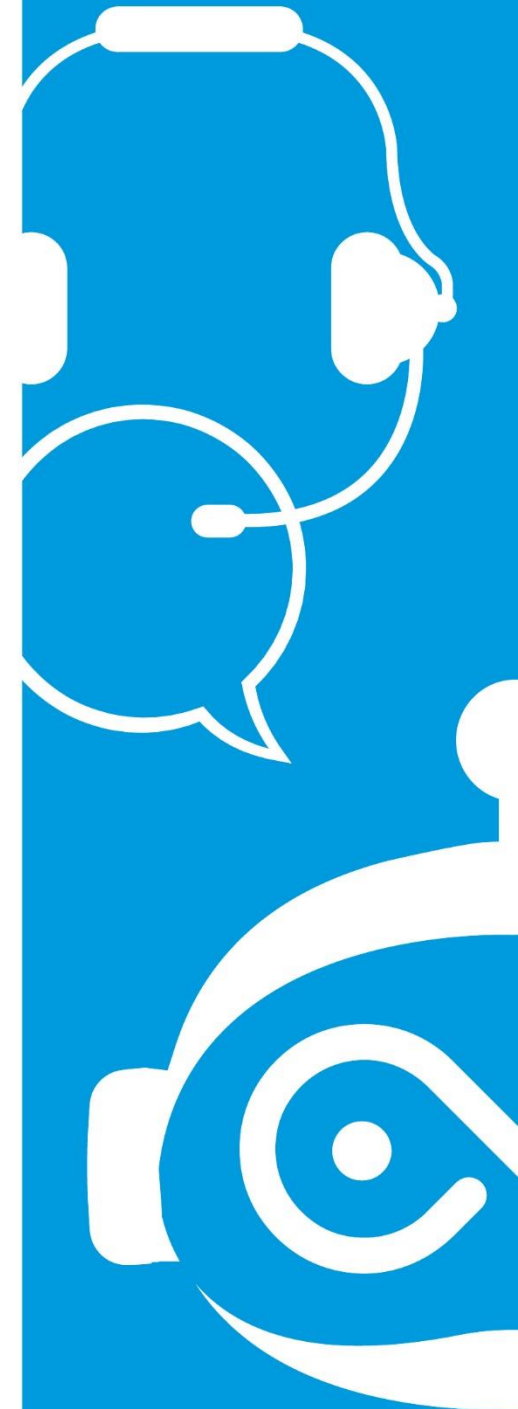
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Encourage young people that it's worth summoning up the courage to disclose instances of sexual abuse to a trusted individual or law enforcement, and not to hide, suppress, or silence incidents of abuse.
- Discuss the prevalence of sexual violence, which affects individuals regardless of their social status, level of education, or wealth.
- Raise awareness that sexual exploitation is a punishable offense, and the perpetrator should not feel immune from consequences.
- Emphasise that sexual exploitation can take various forms and is not limited solely to traditional rape.
- Educate on SRH concepts that have gained relevance in the #MeToo age, such as: consent, exploitation of power and accountability of actions.

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Online social movements: Women's march
- Online social movements: Black Lives Matter
- Gender-based violence: Coercive control of technology



Further reading:

- Bartczak, Magdalena. “Zdemaskuj Swoją Świnie’ i ‘Efekt Weinsteina’, Czyli Trzy Lata Ruchu #MeToo Na Świecie.” HelloZdrowie, January 3, 2021. <https://zycie.hellozdrowie.pl/trzy-lata-ruchu-metoo-na-swiecie/>.
- European Parliament. “MeToo: MEPs Call for More to Be Done to Tackle Sexual Harassment in the EU | News | European Parliament,” 2023. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230524IPR91911/metoo-meps-call-for-more-to-be-done-to-tackle-sexual-harassment-in-the-eu>.
- Lewestam, Karolina. “#MeToo: Kobiety Przeciwko Molestowaniu. Jakie Efekty Przyniosła Internetowa Akcja?” Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 2017. <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/1082433,metoo-kobiety-przeciwko-molestowaniu.html>.

