



UNCOVERING MENTAL HEALTH IN SINGAPORE

APRIL - NOVEMBER 2020





REPORT OUTLINE

Unlike physical wellness, the stigma surrounding mental health has been prevalent - especially among Asian communities where conversations are typically not approached and are considered taboo. The threat towards individuals' mental health was catalysed by the global pandemic, where many suffered through unforeseen challenges that led to greater awareness within the region.

This report uncovers the following insights surrounding mental wellbeing:

- What are the most prominent types of mental health issues being discussed on social media?
- Where are conversations surrounding mental health and wellbeing being discussed?
- What do people identify as the key factors and triggers of their mental health issues?
- Is there a difference between the type of issues being discussed by men and women?



REPORT METHODOLOGY

LOCATION

Singapore

DURATION

April – November 2020

DATABASE

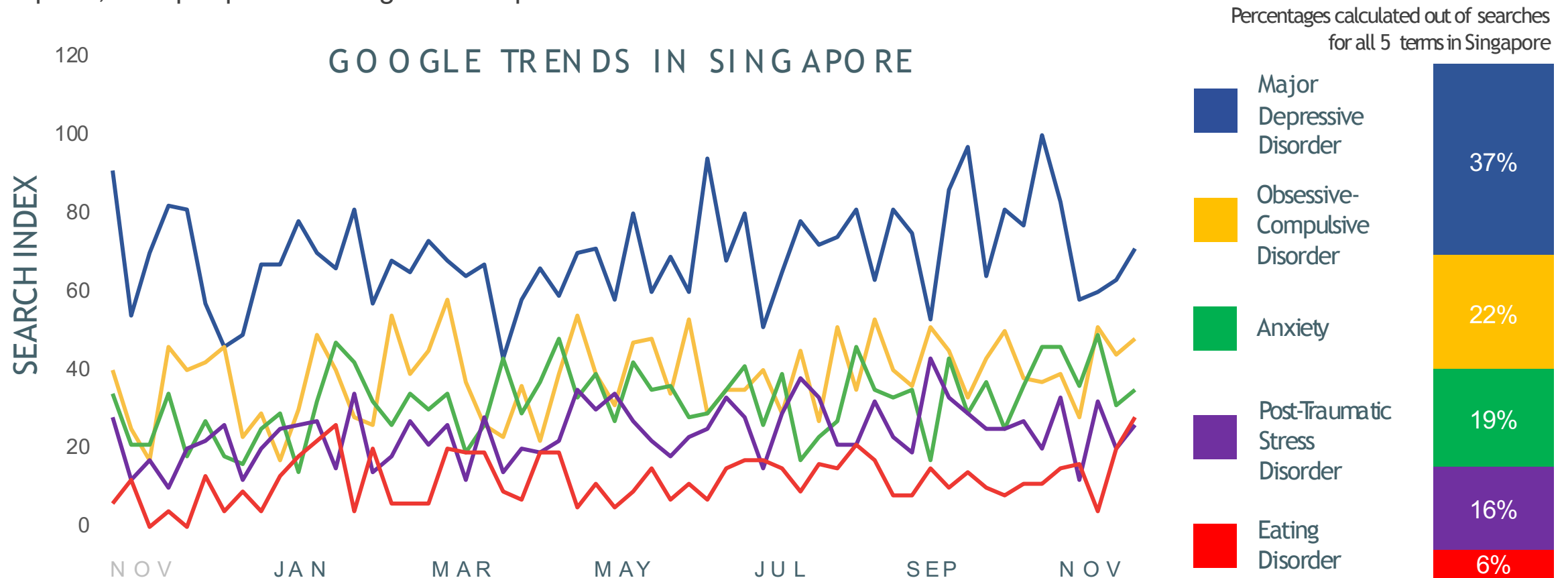
All conversations and posts containing relevant mental health related keywords

PLATFORM

- Social media sites
- Local forums

WHAT ARE THE TOP SEARCHES IN RELATION TO MENTAL HEALTH?

Searches for major depressive disorder, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and eating disorders were skewed towards symptom and treatment information. Conversely, searches for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) were more topline, with people searching for examples of OCD tendencies.



WHAT ARE PEOPLE DISCUSSING ONLINE IN RELATION TO MENTAL HEALTH?

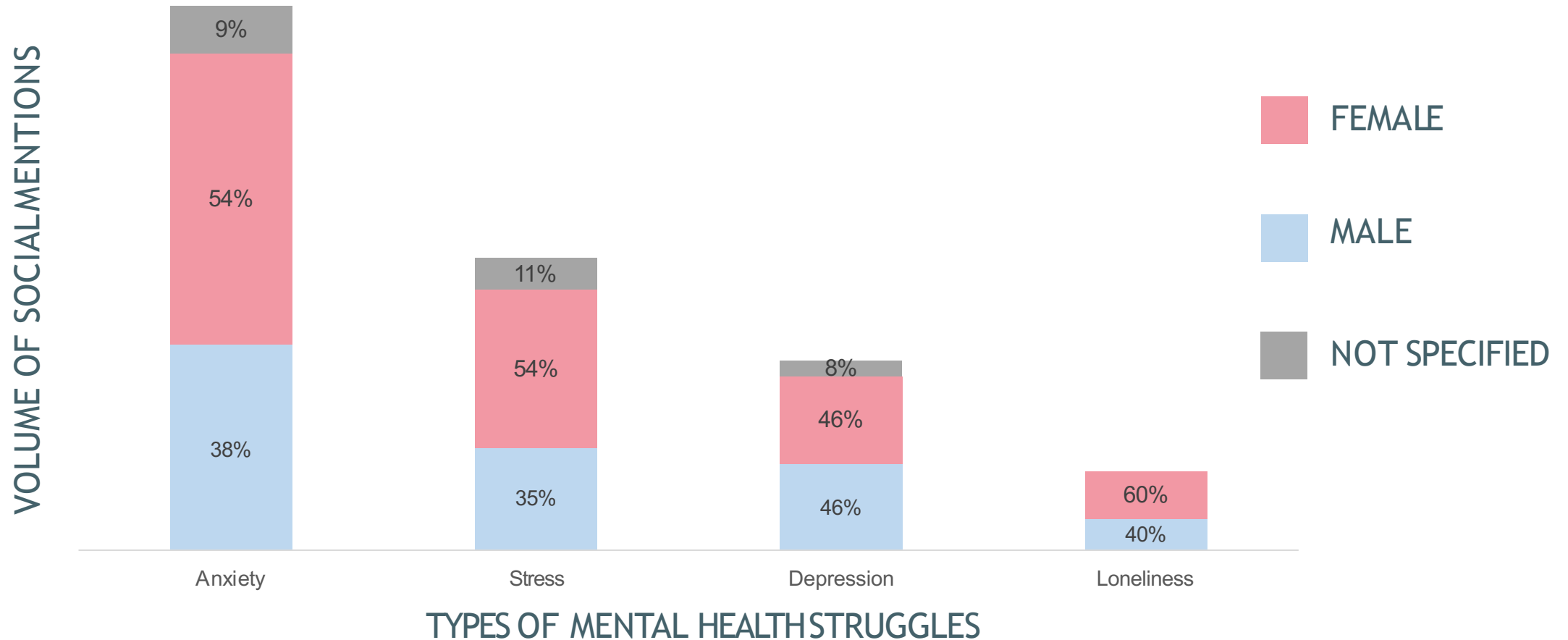
Twitter and HardwareZone were the top platforms where discussions took place, with people often seeking advice on Reddit. Men were vocal about overcoming the stigma of mental illness, while females raised the question about accessibility to mental healthcare services in Singapore, particularly due to financial barriers.

MALE (13%)	FEMALE (12%)	NOT SPECIFIED (75%)
RAISING AWARENESS <i>"How do we change the stigma of mental health in Asian countries... Stop looking down on your friends who have depression and help them. Don't cut them off."</i> – 19 October 2020, Twitter	EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA <i>"I can't stress this enough, if you want to have an improved mental health, get away from social media, especially Instagram. I feel so much better now."</i> – 23 October 2020, Twitter	ADVICE-SEEKING <i>"He told me he feels very depressed.. What should I do?"</i> – 30 October 2020, HardwareZone
	MENTAL HEALTHCARE ACCESSIBILITY <i>"What do we gain by keeping a financial and bureaucratic barrier to diagnosis (and consequently the path to healing and mental health management)"</i> – 21 October 2020, Twitter	PERSONAL EXPERIENCES <i>"Feeling like I've lost all meaning in life and the negative thoughts just keep flowing in. Initially it started with the job, then soon after things just started going downhill from there. I've dreaded this job for a while now"</i> – 25 October 2020, Reddit
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES <i>"I lost my mother to mental health. Back then, the stigma was that you're crazy if you are mentally unsound. Since then, I know better and the world too. Listen and try to understand. Don't suggest a "fix" because sometimes there isn't one."</i> – 10 October 2020, Twitter	PERSONAL EXPERIENCES <i>"My mental health, my demons, my past, they came haunting me during the weekend. And I'm here paralysed unable to function. Heck I didn't even go to work. Why. Why do I struggle with this?"</i> – 19 October 2020, Twitter	RAISING AWARENESS <i>"Discussion and efforts to promote mental health awareness shouldn't just be limited to one day. I feel that this happens too often with these commemorations, including other 'days' such as Teachers' Day and International Migrants Day."</i> – 10 October 2020, Reddit

A sample of 200 social media mentions were analysed between April – November 2020 based on relevant keyword matches

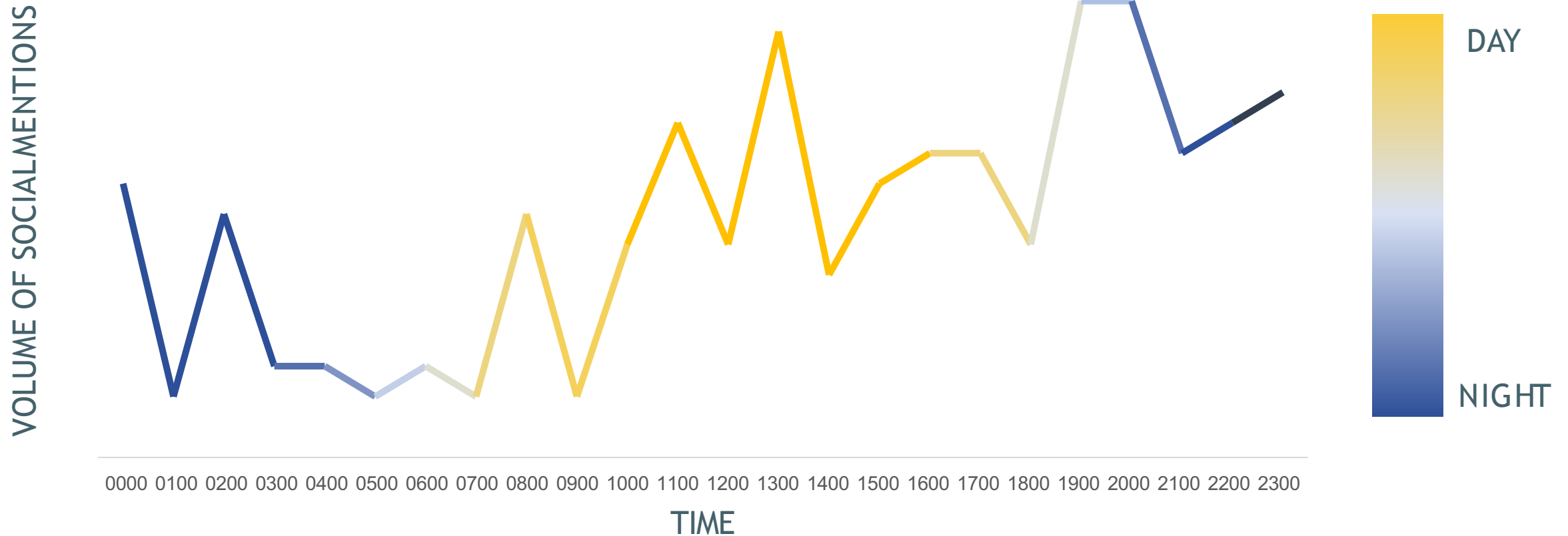
WHAT TYPE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES DO PEOPLE DISCUSS ONLINE?

The most discussed mental health issues were around anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness. While both males and females expressed issues with mood disorders, females exhibited stronger feelings of anxiety.



WHAT TIME OF DAY DO PEOPLE DISCUSS MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES?






Most conversations were observed during the time of day when people tend to **wind down**, usually during mid-day (lunch time) & late evening. Activity was also relatively high **late at night** and **early in the morning**, which may indicate higher levels of mental struggles right before and after sleeping.



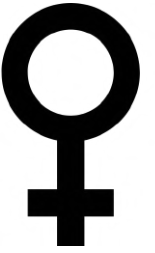
WHAT ARE THE TOP MENTAL HEALTH TRIGGERS IN MALES?





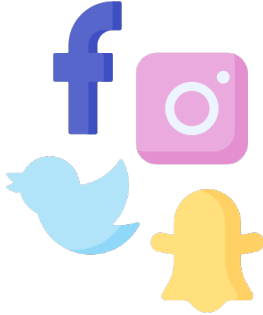
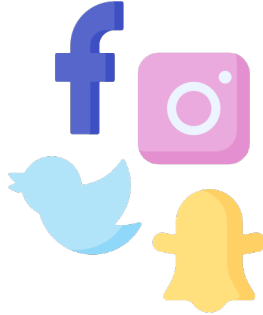


Males express their struggles with mental health around more occupational issues such as unemployment and financial worry. Anxiety resulting from COVID-19 and family issues were due to the fear that they may not be able to take care of their households.

	ANXIETY	STRESS	DEPRESSION	LONELINESS
TRIGGERS	 COVID-19			
	 Family			

WHAT ARE THE TOP MENTAL HEALTH TRIGGERS IN FEMALES?

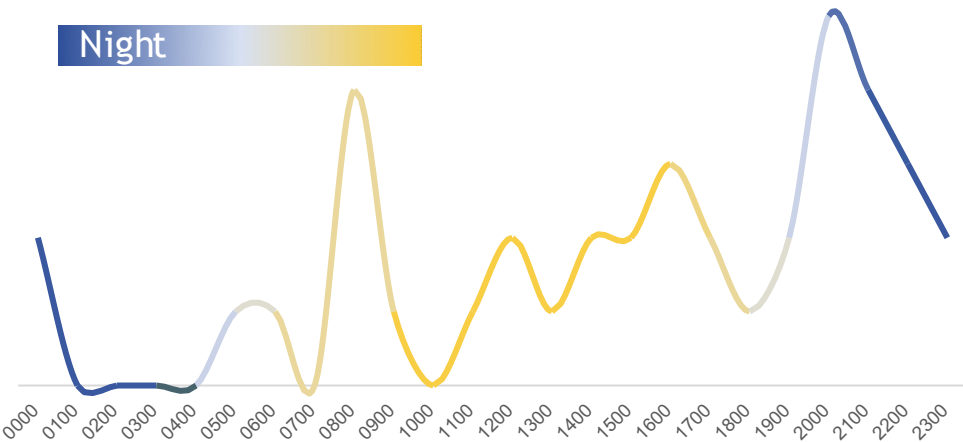


The expression of struggles with mental health among females tend to be centered around activity-based struggles, stemming from school, work, and frequent use of social media. Childhood trauma was also said to be a trigger for anxiety, which had longer lasting effects on individuals.

		ANXIETY	STRESS	DEPRESSION	LONELINESS
TRIGGERS		 Work	 School	 Social Media	 Social Media
		 Past Trauma	 Work		

CORTISOL-INDUCED DISORDERS – ANXIETY & STRESS

Expressions about **work** and **past trauma** were more **elaborate**, while mentions about **school** seemed to be more reactionary and **concise**. These conversations typically peaked early in the morning and in the evening.




SCHOOL


college stress is so ~~fucked~~
12:47 AM · Nov 3, 2020 · Twitter for Android


cb stress psl project smpi got new pimple 🤔🤔🤔🤔
2:26 PM · Nov 18, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone
“Stress due to project till I got a newpimple”

WORK


Replying to [redacted]
I'm considering quitting my toxic job where the staff is constantly yelled at for stuff that's the boss's fault. :) We've had panic attacks every other day, fallen ill... Basically, writers are his burden.
11:28 AM · Nov 12, 2020 · Twitter Web App


Pls pls pls let this job be over soon . Why isnt my boss replying?! Why does he keep asking me to mail things i already have....this is so anxiety inducing.
3:18 PM · Oct 27, 2020 · Twitter for Android

COVID-19


Replying to [redacted]
Every time I watch anything now with people in close proximity I start to have a panic attack.
7:14 PM · Nov 13, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone


i feel that my anxiety will go down now that college students are getting weekly screenings...at least a little.
6:22 AM · Nov 10, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

PAST TRAUMA

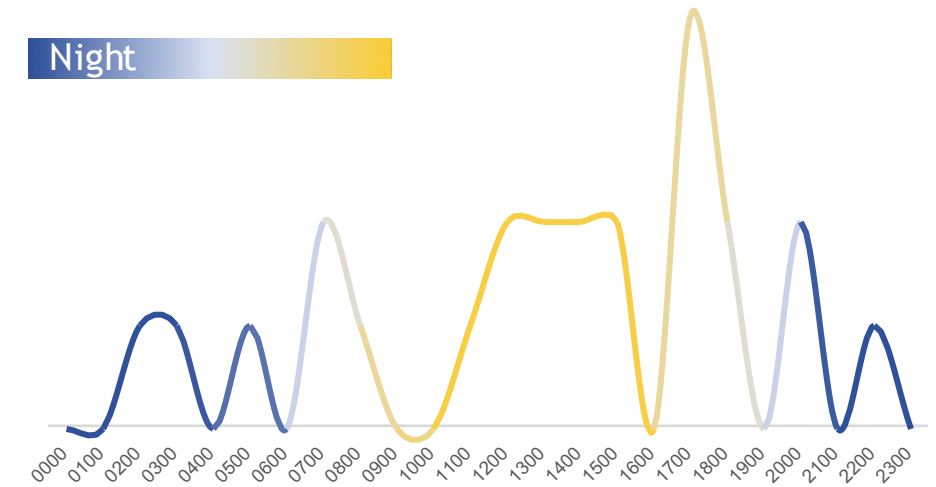

Ever since I met with an accident, every other bike accidents that I see gives me anxiety.
9:20 PM · Oct 26, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone


Replying to [redacted]
Not an issue... I had a playground bullying incident when I was 5 and many things like anxiety and hyperactivity grew from there.

Some remnants still remain but i think I'm ok.
12:37 PM · Oct 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android

MOOD DISORDERS - DEPRESSION & LONELINESS

Trends are not as apparent as anxiety disorders. However even during typical **bedtime** hours, there are still conversations surrounding **depression and loneliness**. People do not elaborate as much when discussing mood disorders, with almost 60% of people not mentioning a specific trigger.



MENTIONS WITH TRIGGERS NOT SPECIFIED



I honestly don't blame people who do not understand anxiety or depression because days like this is when I don't understand it too. But-I am always working on myself and healing doesn't happen overnight.



Nov 11

I had a choice today. To call in sick or to get up and see this day through. I got up, showered, dressed and bought cold brew before heading office.

12:50 PM · Nov 11, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone



it's tough to wake up everyday and go on with your life esp when you're battling depression.

7:35 AM · Nov 10, 2020 · Twitter for Android






Shit depression attack is back tho.

8:46 PM · Nov 12, 2020 · Twitter for Android

ONLINE SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS & STRANGERS

Support from Twitter tend to be from friends offering comfort and empathy, whereas support from Reddit leaned towards more concrete advice, with users appearing to have more knowledge around mental health. Users on local forums used humor to offer their support, which is a consistent theme of the banter on forums sites.

TWITTER	REDDIT	ONLINE FORUMS
<div><p>Replying to [redacted]</p><p>there's no rush in finding out your identity, just take a deep breathe and slowly consider everything, take your time and try not to stress about it</p><p>10:38 AM · Nov 12, 2020 · Twitter for Android</p></div> <div><p>Replying to [redacted]</p><p>Just call me when ur down ❤️🥺 we can be lonely together at least xo</p><p>8:53 PM · Oct 13, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p></div> <div><p>mental health is real.. check on ya ppl man..</p><p>1:48 AM · Oct 30, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone</p></div>	<div><p>i am planning my suicide and for some reason i can't stop</p><p>what do i do? should i tell my psychiatrist?? my psychologist?? i'm scared if i fail my attempt i would be sent to the imh :/</p><p>↑ 6 ↓ 3 Share Gift</p><p>BEST COMMENTS ▼</p><div><p>From your previous posts, you have a KKH psychiatrist and psychologist.</p><p>If you have the intention to end your life and cannot ensure that you can keep yourself safe, go to the KKH A&E asap. You can be treated there rather than at IMH.</p></div><p>... Gift Reply</p></div> <div><div><p><i>"You'd get help from either a psychologist or psychiatrist after that, your wound would be treated, and you can get MC to rest as you process the ordeal"</i></p></div><div><p>I'm so sorry to hear about your self-harm. I feel there is no age limit for mental health issues. Worse is if they are suffering in silence.):</p><p>Seeing a doctor would be a good first step - you'd get help from either a psychologist or psychiatrist after that, your wound would be treated and you can get MC to rest as you process the ordeal.</p><p>I hear you about the unmatched expectations and feeling unrecognised, sounds to me they were contributive to your act of cutting. Best to go through this with a professional or someone you trust as wise.</p><p>Tiredness could be a indication that your body and mind needs rest. Please do take great care of yourself. I can only offer these words for now.</p><p>... Gift Reply ↑ 3 ↓</p></div></div>	<div><p>I just spent 3 hrs in a crowded restaurant/ bar</p><p>Take off masks.. drink beer, chit chat for 3hrs... 🤔</p><p>Restaurant is crowded, at least 100 pax inside enclosed air-con space... 🤔</p><p>Will I tio corona?? 🤔</p><p>Think I'm having an anxiety attack 🤔</p></div> <div><p>Response #1:</p><p><i>"Scared don't come out. Come out don't scared"</i></p><p>Response #2:</p><p><i>"You very funny guy cancel dentist appointment because scared COVID but can go drinking"</i></p></div>



If you or someone you know needs support, here are a few helplines that you may reach out to:

Samaritans of Singapore: 1800 221 444

Institute of Mental Health: 6389 2222

Singapore Association of Mental Health: 6389 2222

For a more extensive list of helplines, please visit <https://www.gov.sg/article/call-these-helplines-if-you-need-emotional-or-psychological-support>