A-Level Psychology

Five questions on what is happening now

DATA AS AT 15 NOVEMBER 2026 · NEW QUESTIONS EVERY WEEK

How to use this pack. Time yourself, write a full answer, then check it against the mark scheme. Questions 1 and 2 include our mark scheme. Questions 3 to 5 have mark schemes you can unlock free on the website. Marks and skills follow the Curriculum Circle framework. Exam boards set the marks and wording for real papers, so always check your specification.

In the news: does social media harm teenagers?

Dec 2025

Australia introduced a minimum age of 16 for accounts on major social media platforms

Source: University of Chicago BFI

85%+

of under-16 participants in a BMJ observational study still reported using the restricted platforms at follow-up; little evidence of immediate substantive reductions in use

Source: BMJ 2026

~6 in 100

additional cases of depression or poor wellbeing with high use (over two hours a day) in a 10-year study of almost 1,200 Melbourne students

Source: Science Media Centre Australia

100,000+

children in an Adelaide University study: up to 12.5 hours a week was linked to positive wellbeing, and no access was as harmful as excessive use

Source: AdNews

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QUESTION 1 4 MARKS · EXPLAIN · APPLICATION · EVALUATION

The Melbourne study followed almost 1,200 students for ten years. Explain one strength and one limitation of a longitudinal design for this research.

Plan for about 5 minutes. Apply each point to the study.

CC MARK SCHEME · FREE · Application 2 | Evaluation 2

- Strength (up to 2 marks): the same students are followed over time, so changes in each individual can be tracked and the order of events can be seen, and differences between participants are less of a problem than with different groups (1). Applied: it can show whether heavy use came before a fall in wellbeing (1).
- Limitation (up to 2 marks): participants may drop out over ten years, so the final sample may differ from the start (1). Applied: students who are unwell may be more likely to leave the study, which could bias the results (1). Other credit: time and cost; social media itself changes over ten years.

Common mistakes: Giving a generic strength with no link to the Melbourne study. Saying a longitudinal design "proves" cause.

QUESTION 2 6 MARKS · EXPLAIN · APPLICATION · EVALUATION

The Melbourne study found about 6 in 100 additional cases of depression or poor wellbeing with high use (over two hours a day). Explain why this finding does not show that social media causes poorer mental health.

Plan for about 8 minutes. Give up to three developed points.

CC MARK SCHEME · FREE · Application 2 | Evaluation 4

- Correlation is not causation: the finding shows an association between high use and poorer wellbeing, not that use caused it (up to 2 marks).
- Direction of cause could be reversed: teenagers who are already distressed may use social media more (up to 2 marks).
- Third variables: sleep, bullying or family circumstances could affect both use and wellbeing (up to 2 marks).
- Other credit: the measure may rely on self-report; a figure of about 6 in 100 is an increase in risk for a group, not a certain outcome for every high user.

Common mistakes: Saying "correlation does not equal causation" and stopping. Each point needs a reason applied to this study.

QUESTION 3 8 MARKS · DISCUSS · APPLICATION · EVALUATION

Discuss one ethical issue in researching the effects of social media use on teenagers.

Plan for about 10 minutes. Name the issue, apply it, and weigh it up.

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QUESTION 4 10 MARKS · EVALUATE · APPLICATION · EVALUATION

Evaluate the BMJ study as a way of testing whether Australia's minimum age for social media accounts reduces use among under-16s.

Plan for about 12 minutes. Use only what the data state.

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QUESTION 5 12 MARKS · EVALUATE · APPLICATION · EVALUATION

Using the evidence above and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate whether it is possible to conclude that social media use causes poorer mental health in adolescents.

Plan for about 15 minutes. Link each point to a named piece of evidence.

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