

Introduction

Social media (SM) is used by 2/3 of the global population, with the average user accessing multiple platforms and spending over 2 hours per day viewing content (1). Social media has become an important tool for medical organisations to inform and educate patients and staff. However, in a rapidly evolving landscape, it is not clear whether professional bodies are utilising the correct platforms, or strategy, to reach their target demographic.

Aims

- Define the use of social media by parturients and maternity staff across the United Kingdom
- Gather usage information on the Obstetric Anaesthetists Association's public-facing information website; LabourPains (2).

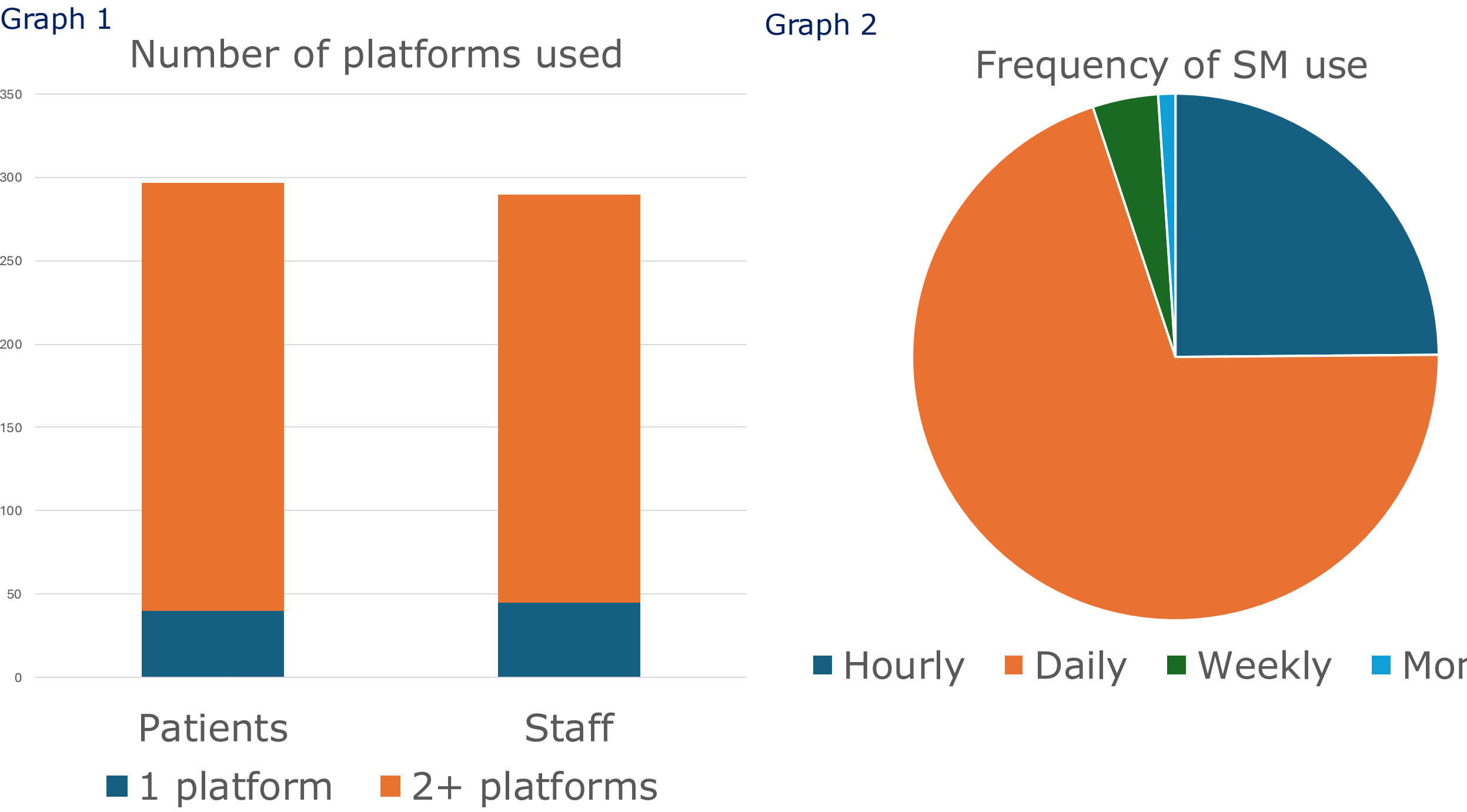
Methods

- Six sites across the United Kingdom took part: Glasgow Royal Infirmary (Glasgow), The Ulster Hospital (Belfast), University Hospital of Wales (Cardiff), Derriford Hospital (Plymouth), Liverpool Women's Hospital (Liverpool) and Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital (London)
- Caldicott Guardian approval was granted for each participating hospital
- Two separate questionnaires on social media habits were created and distributed to 50 parturients and 50 staff in each of the six centres
- A total of 300 parturients and 300 staff were sampled
- Participants were a 'convenience sample' selected at random, although not by randomisation
- Results were analysed collectively, with subset analysis of ethnic minority groups and those in the most deprived quintiles, by postcode

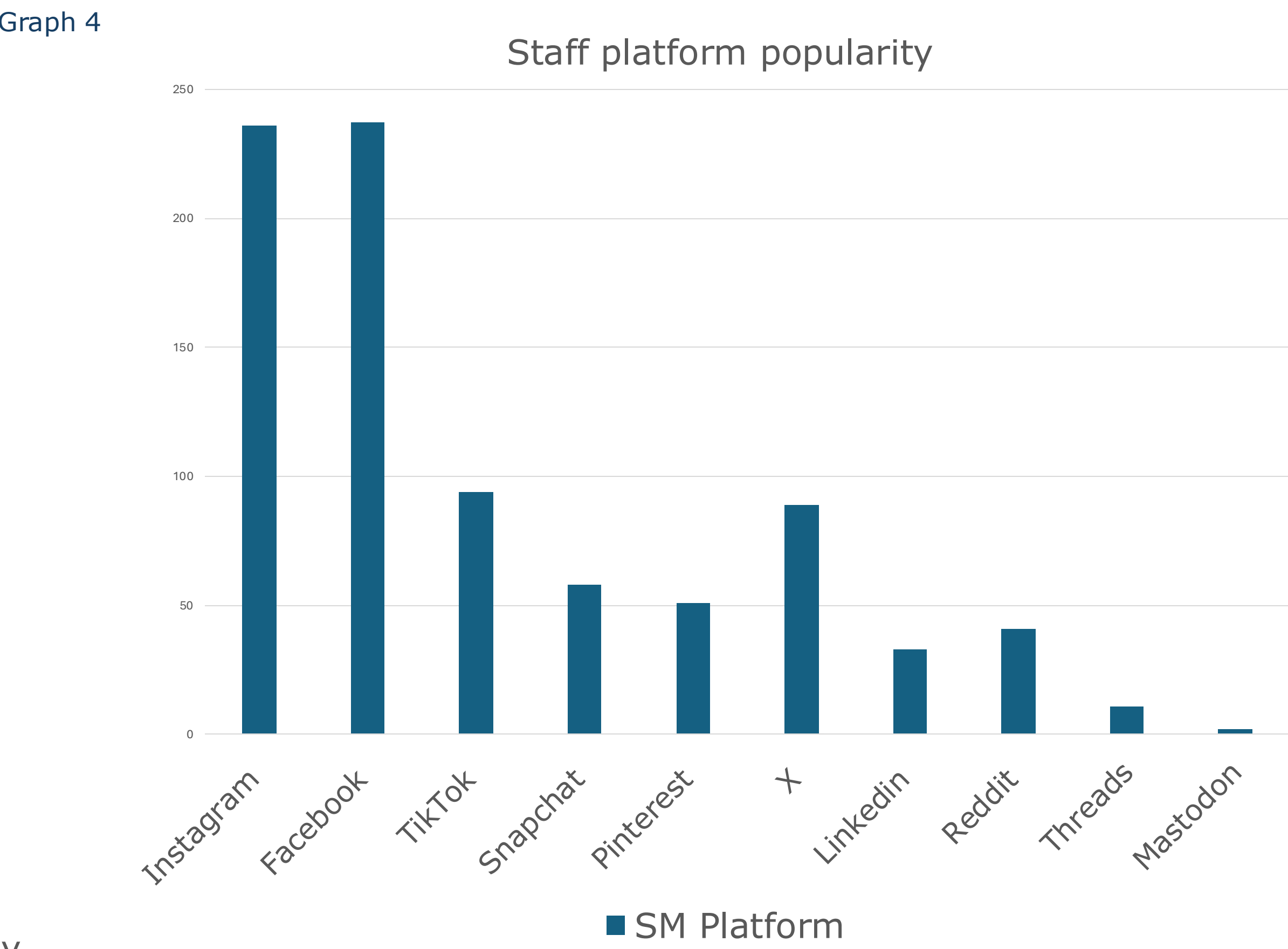
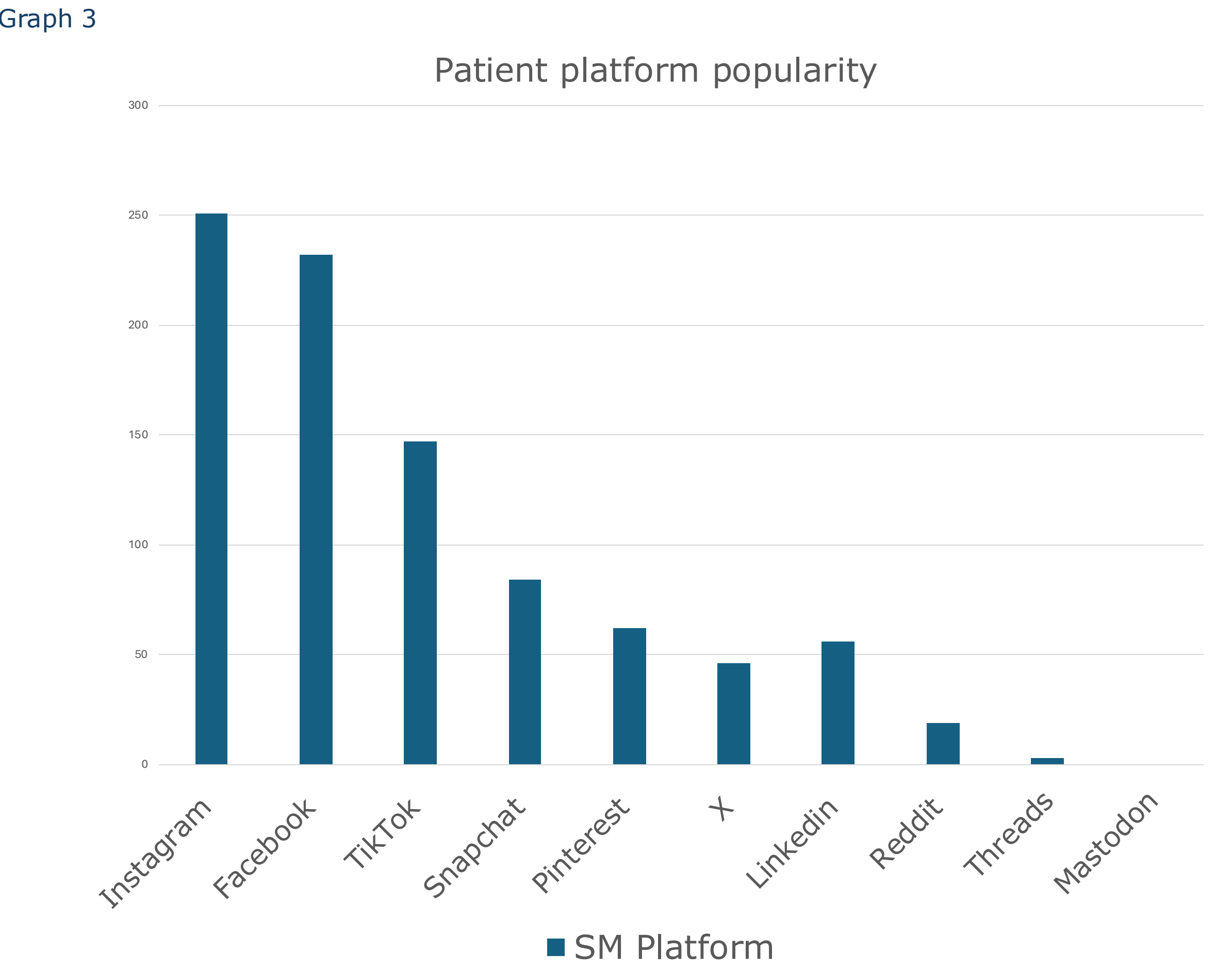
Results

Social media was used by 291 (97%) patients and 290 (97%) staff, the number of patients and staff using ≥2 platforms is demonstrated in graph 1.

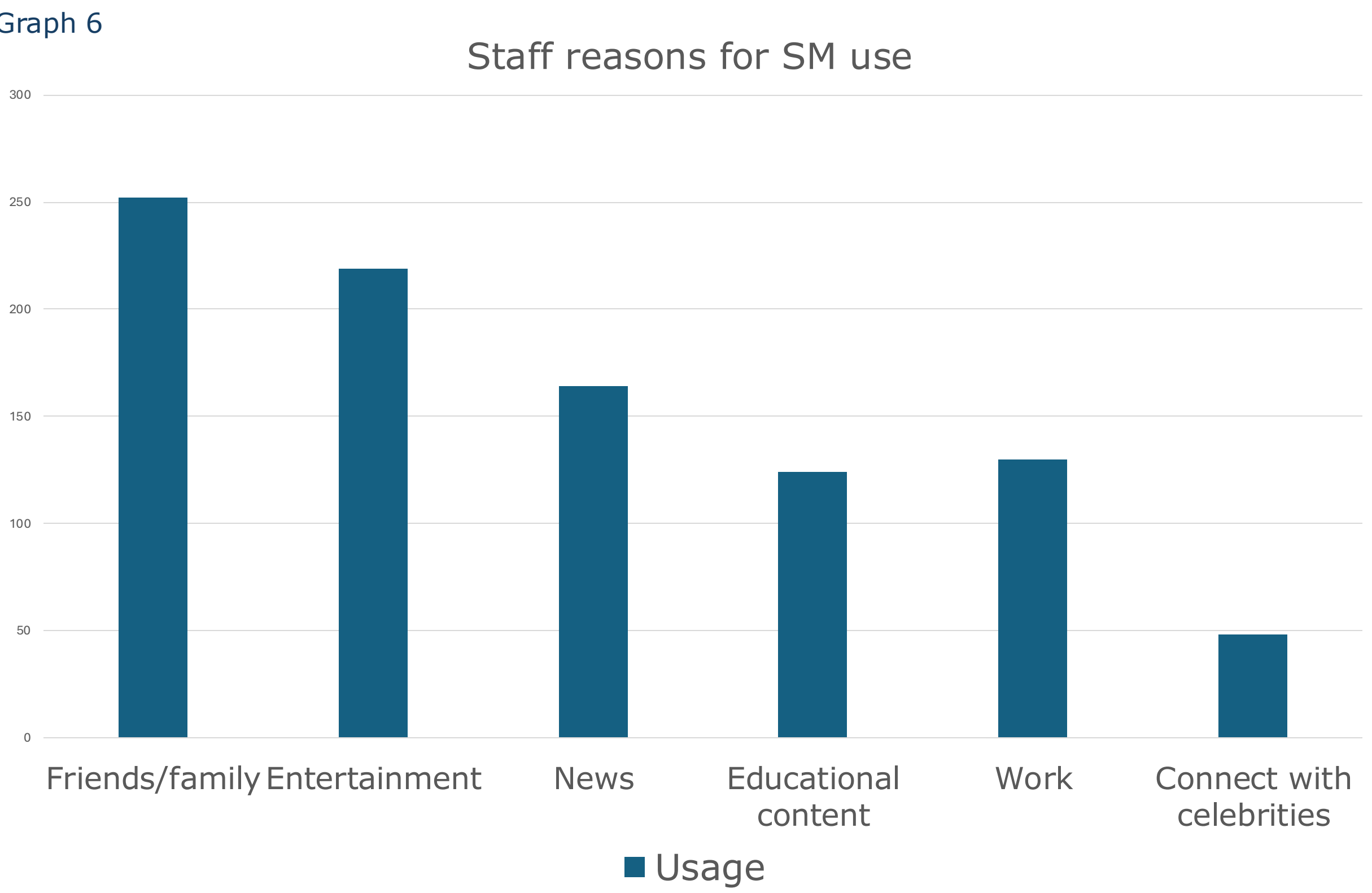
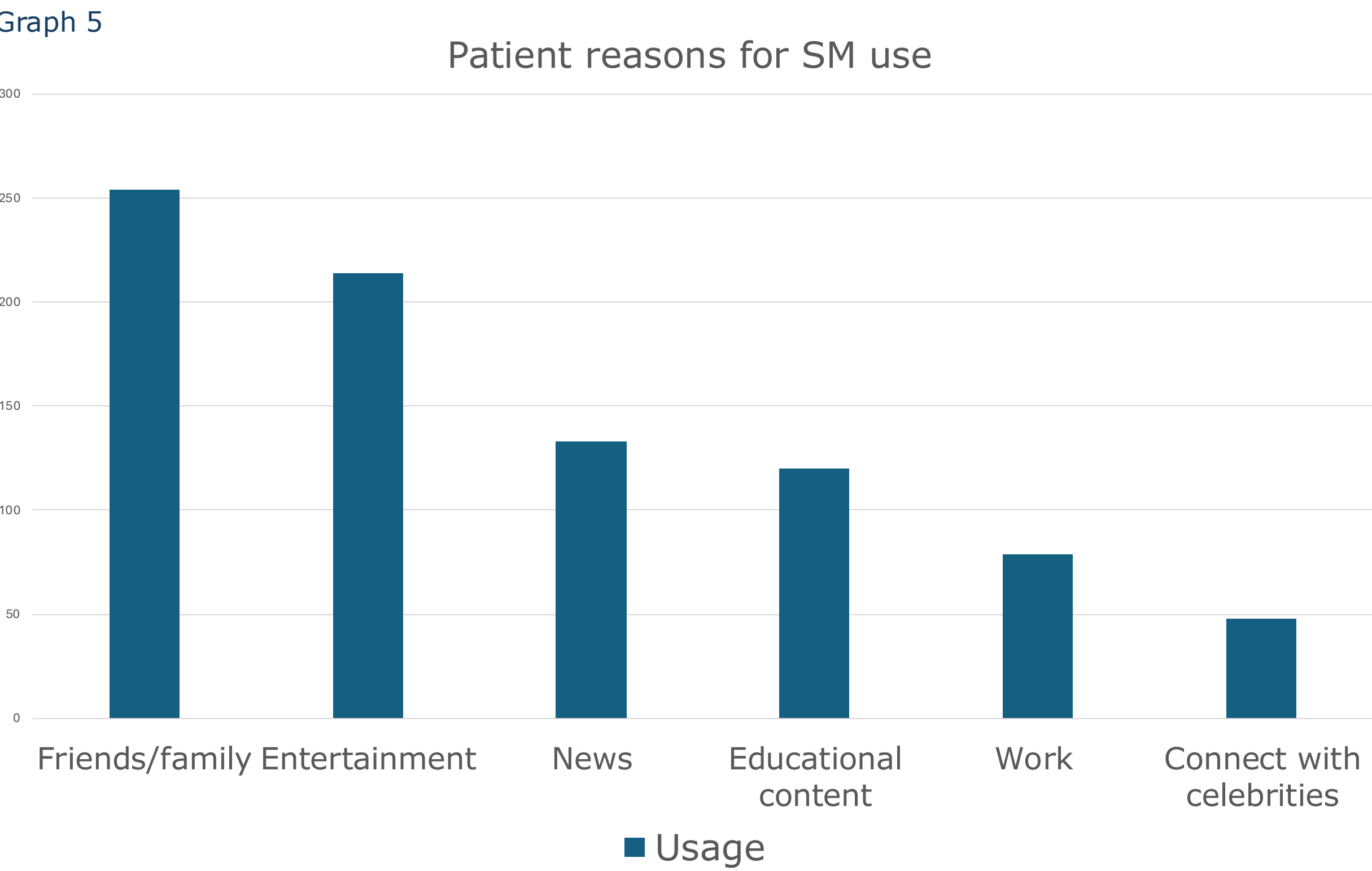
The frequency of social media use across both groups is shown in graph 2. 195 (65%) patients and 205 (68%) staff use social media every day, and 84 (28%) patients and 58 (19%) staff use it hourly.



Graphs 3 and 4 show platform popularity.



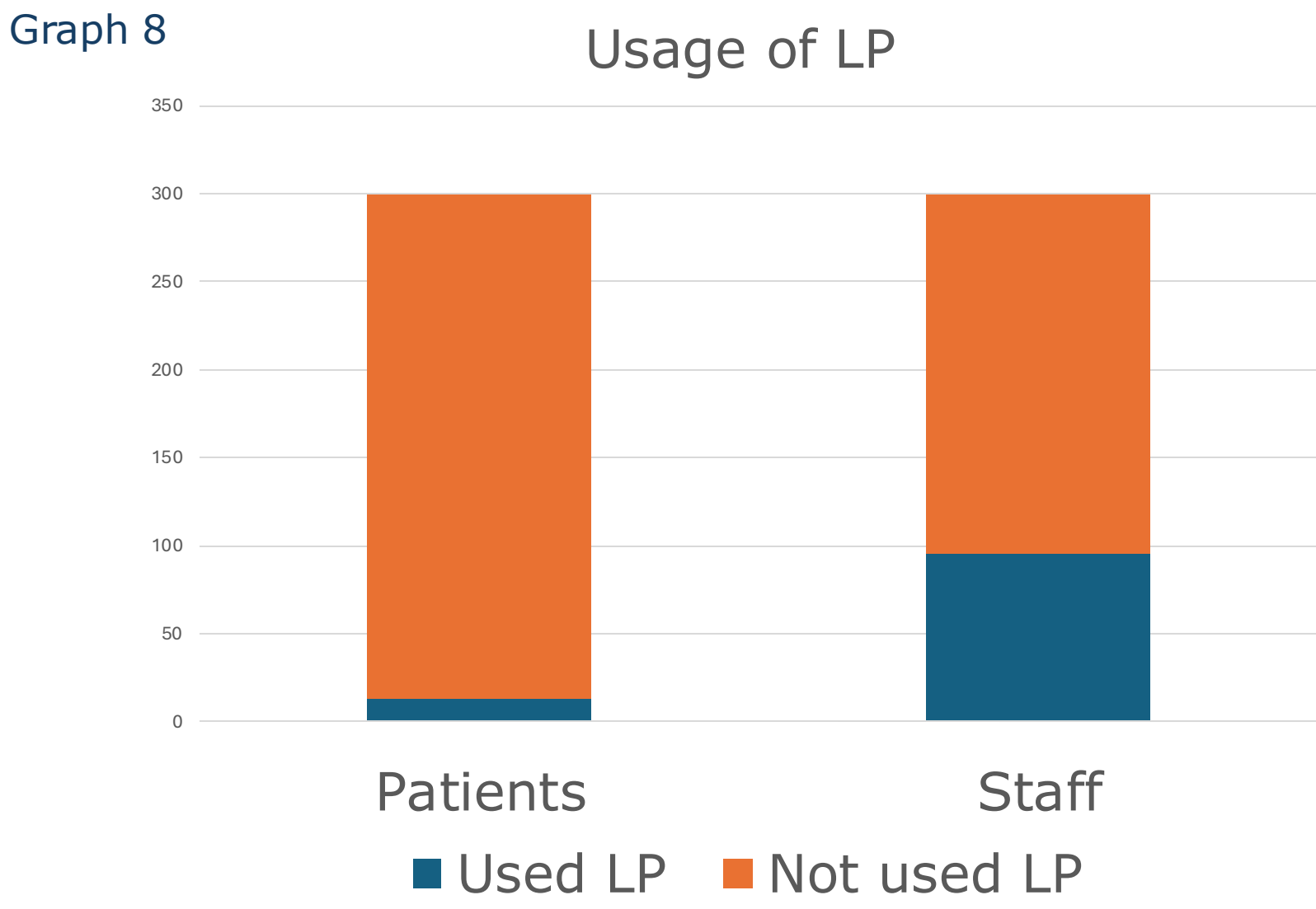
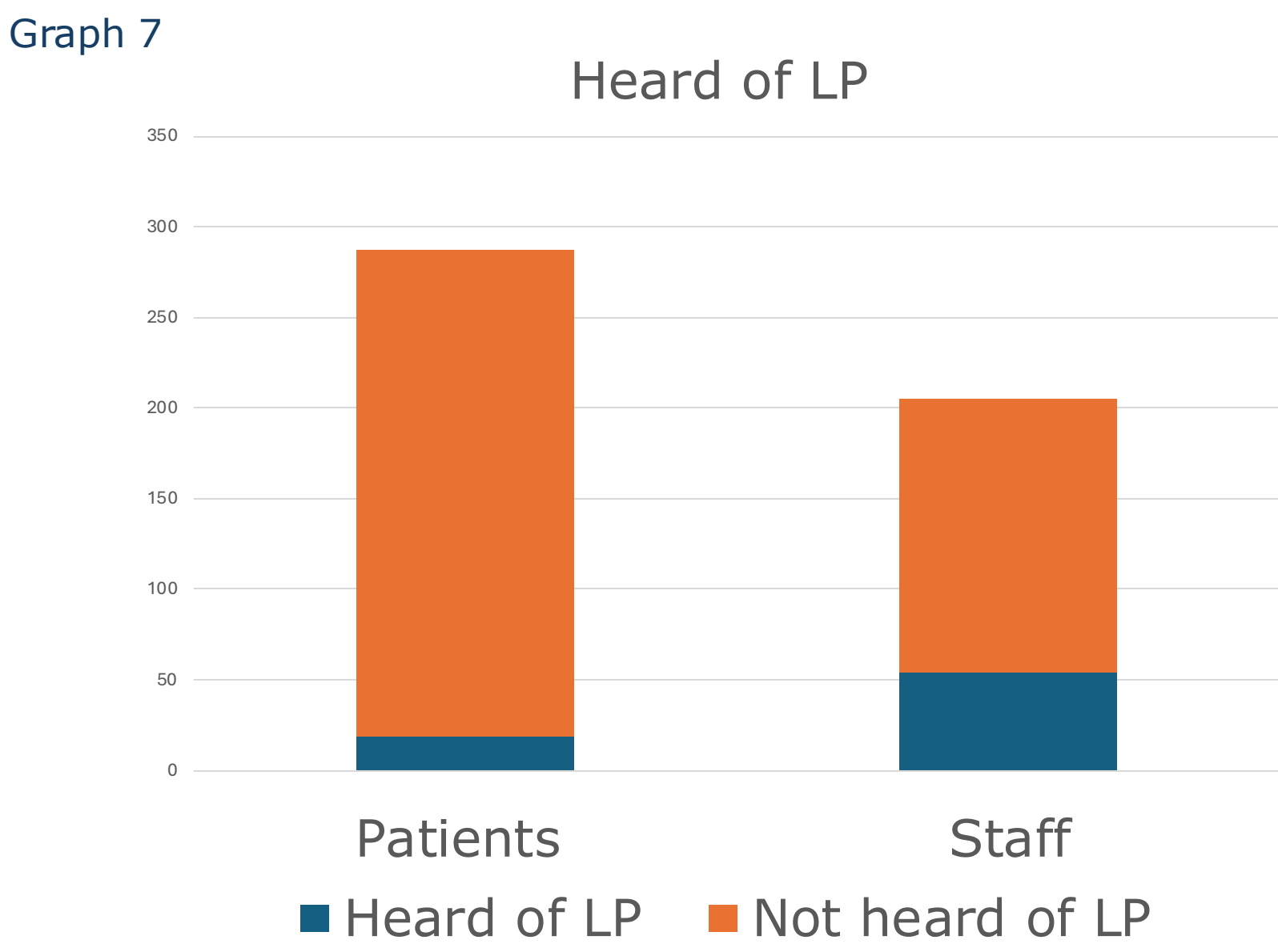
Graphs 5 and 6 show the reasons for social media use amongst both groups. When asked specifically, 217 (72%) patients used SM for pregnancy information.



The knowledge and usage of the LabourPains website by patients and staff is demonstrated in graphs 7 and 8.

When looking at specific staff groups, only 67% of anaesthetists and 45% midwives had heard of LabourPains, and only 45% and 31%, respectively, had used it.

No differences were found in any of the survey results when looking at ethnic minority groups or those in the most deprived quintiles.



Discussion

The use of social media is universal, with most people using two or more platforms and accessing content daily. Instagram, Facebook and TikTok are the most widely used platforms, and are likely to be the most useful for targeting patients and staff. These findings were true irrespective of the ethnicity or deprivation status of respondents. There was previously an idea that X was the platform to target but we wonder if information isn't reaching the correct groups through this platform.

Whilst most patients use SM for pregnancy information, the Obstetric Anaesthetists Association patient information platform, LabourPains, is largely unknown and infrequently used.

In response to the results from our surveys, the OAA has employed a social media manager to try to build a following, have greater OAA presence on the most popular social media platforms and enable better stratification and targeting of content. With time, we are hopeful that the valuable resources provided by the OAA will be better utilised by both parturients and staff.

References

1. We Are Social & Meltwater (2024), "Digital 2024: Global Overview Report," retrieved from: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report> on 28 August 2024.
2. Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association, LabourPains. Accessed from: <https://www.labourpains.org> on 28 August 2024.