

BACKGROUND

- Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) callouts have **increased by 118%** over the **last decade**
- 2025** was the busiest year on record (**3968 callouts; 3175 deployments**)
- Young adults aged 18-24** are now the **most frequently rescued age group** across England and Wales [1]
- There is **no UK-based research** or **research within the mountain rescue context** examining this relationship between social media and Mountain Rescue

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Determine whether social media has influenced the increase in MREW callouts over the last 12 months
- Assess whether social media has influenced the distribution of callout causes (injury, illness, equipment issues, etc.) over the last 12 months
- Identify areas for MREW teams to focus their public safety strategies aimed at reducing preventable rescue incidents

METHODS

Setting	MREW Volunteers
Phenomenon of Interest	The impact of social media on Mountain Rescue callouts in England and Wales
Design	Retrospective cross-sectional survey
Evaluation	Perceptions, experiences, opinions, perceived impacts, quantitative measures (e.g., frequency)
Research Type	Mixed Methods

Design: 'SPIDER' framework [2].
Eligibility: MREW Volunteers who have attended at least one callout in the last 12 months
Recruitment: Online survey sent to publicly available MREW email addresses
Data Collection: Survey responses were collected between February and May 2026
Data Analysis: involved two processes:

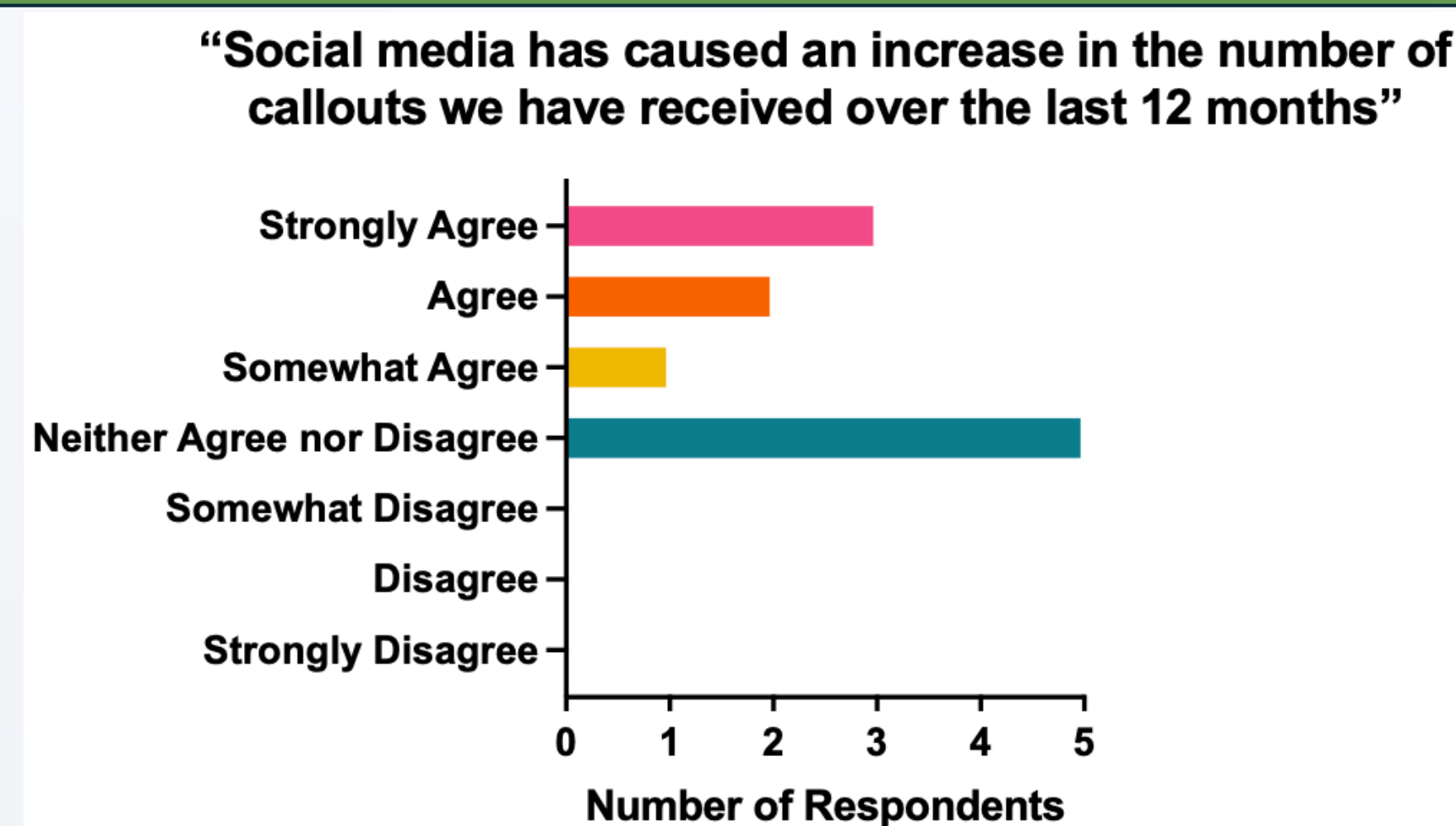
- Qualitative Data – Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark) [3]
- Quantitative Data – descriptive analysis including frequencies and percentages

Data triangulation was used in this mixed methods research

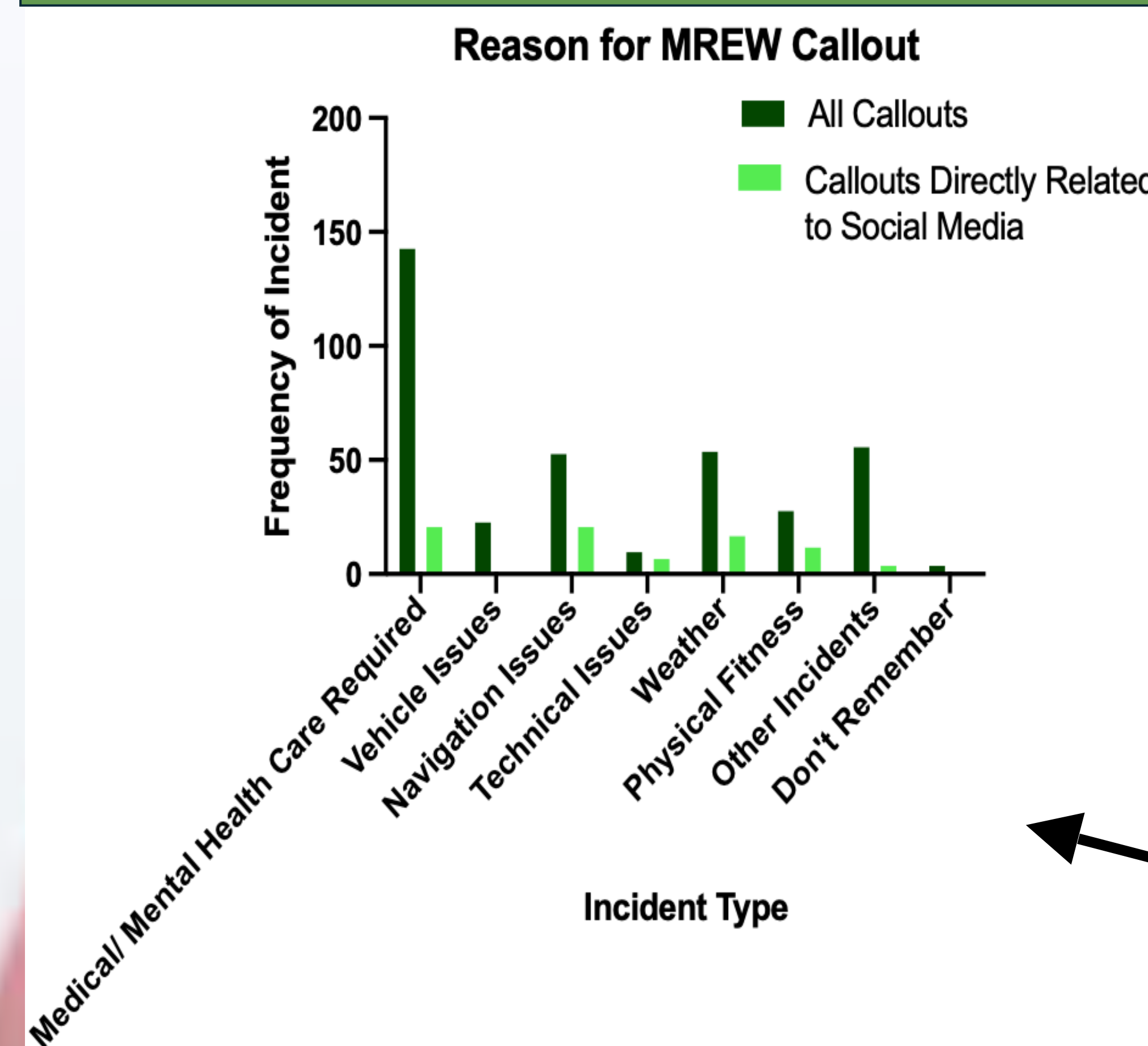
RESULTS

Overview

- 11 responses received**
- 8 MREW teams**
- Teams with higher annual callout volumes were more likely to report social media as a contributing factor to callouts**



Quantitative



Qualitative

Posts to Peaks

Exploring the Perceived Influence of Social Media on Mountain Rescue Callouts

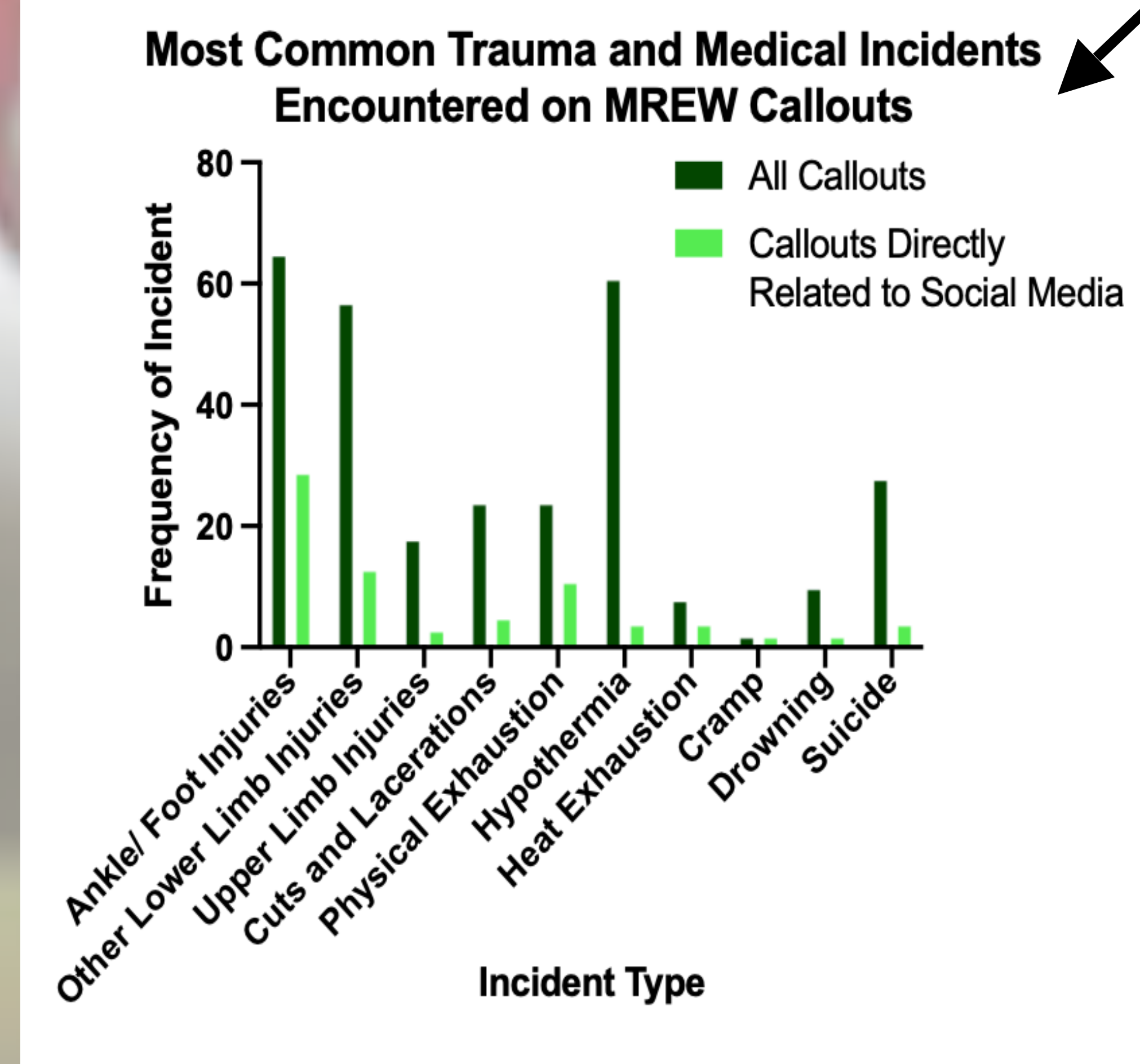
Theme 1 @Theme_1
Environmental and Situational Factors Contributing to Callouts
Weather conditions, seasonal patterns, environmental and terrain hazards, high-risk activities and multi-agency responses are all contributing to MREW callouts.

Theme 2 @Theme_2
Perceived Impact of Social Media on Callout Frequency and Incident Patterns
Social media may be increasing callout frequency and patterns of injury and illness in some national parks, but in others it has caused no observed differences.

Theme 3 @Theme_3
Social Media and Outdoor Risk-Taking Behaviour
Social media may be encouraging inexperienced and unprepared individuals who have planned poorly to take risks outdoors just to reach "Instagrammable" locations.

Theme 4 @Theme_4
Operational Impacts of Social Media on Mountain Rescue Teams
Fundraising, public awareness and education, moral support are beneficial but online content moderation increases workload.

Mountain Rescue Callouts @MountainRescueTeams



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

This study represents the **first empirical examination** of the **relationship between social media and mountain rescue callouts**

- Key Findings**
 - Social Media and Callout Demand:**
 - Social media and user generated content **may be contributing to the increase in MREW callouts** seen over the last 12 months.
 - Most participants reported some level of agreement
 - A large proportion expressed neutral views suggesting that this is a **more prevalent issue for busy MREW teams in popular national parks** [4,5].
 - Patterns of Injury and Illness**
 - The **underlying patterns** of the callouts **show little variation**
 - Ankle/ foot injuries**, and **heat exhaustion** were more common in social media-related incidents
 - Lack of experience and poor decision making** could be contributing to the increased likelihood of these injuries/ illnesses
 - Social Media as an Organisational Resource**
 - The results **suggest the need for MREW to direct public education campaigns towards social media.**
 - Collaboration between MREW and content creators** may help increase the reach of safety messaging and public preparedness
- Limitations:**
 - Small number** of respondents, sampling and recall **bias**, numerical responses subject to **overestimations or underestimations**
- Strengths:**
 - Geographical distribution** of respondents, **first study exploring the relationship** between social media and mountain rescue callouts
- Future Direction:**
 - Perceptions** of the **public/ those who have had to be rescued**
 - Long term trends**
 - Compare **MREW callout spikes** with **social media geotag surges**