

PULSAR*



Eczema & Atopic Dermatitis

A once intensely private conversation moves online

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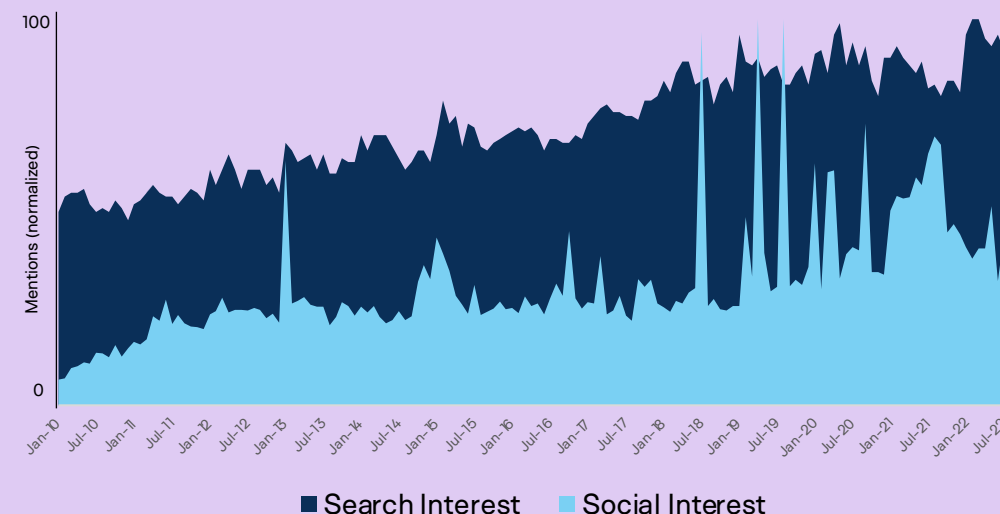
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Eczema & Atopic Dermatitis: An increasingly online conversation

Historically, skin conditions have been the subject of much embarrassment on the part of sufferers. However, the growth of online spaces in which individuals can seek advice, vent frustrations and even 'own' their condition through humor and positivity has seen a definitive upsurge in public conversations around eczema and atopic dermatitis. Both conditions center on the management and treatment of inflamed or notably dry skin – ranging from occasional irritation to debilitating lifetime issue.

Healthcare professionals and businesses join patients in contributing to online discussion, enabling us to break down the conversation into its constituent parts, whether that's the patient journey (which we'll focus on first), or the relationship between influential figures and wider audiences (which will comprise the second phase of analysis).

Mentions of Atopic Dermatitis on Twitter Jan 2010 – Sept 2022, set against Google Search interest over the same period. Source: Pulsar TRENDS and Google Trends.



Eczema & Atopic Dermatitis: An increasingly online conversation

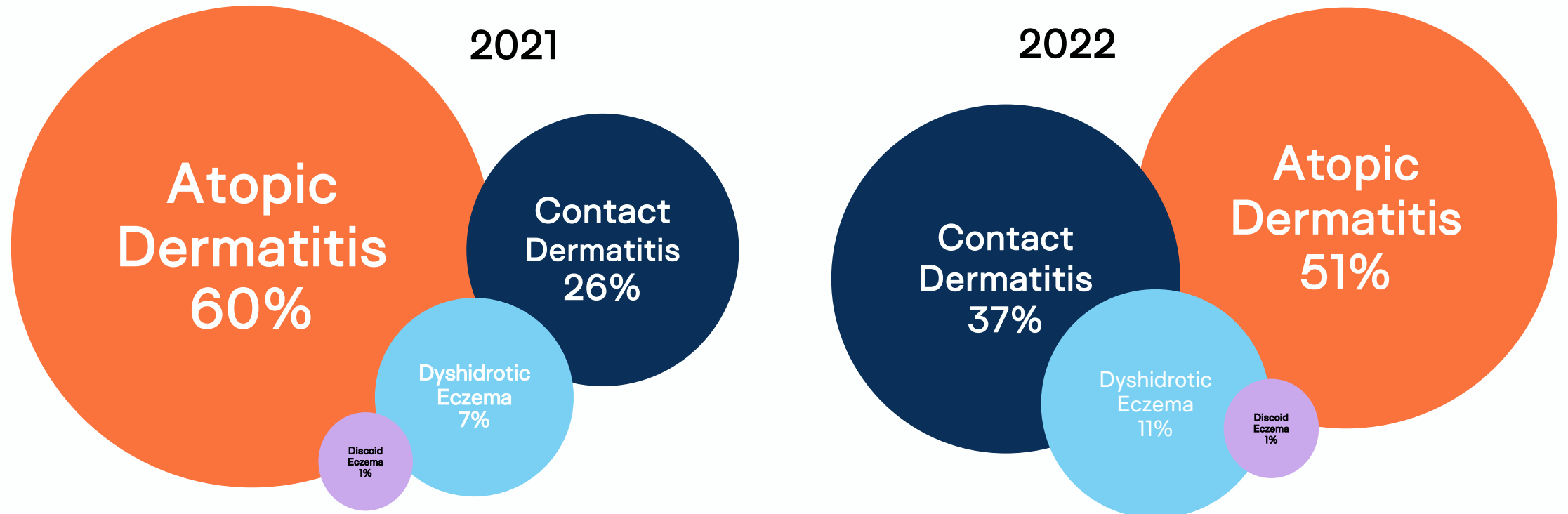
First, we want to establish our frame of reference. Research shows that atopic dermatitis, the most common form of eczema, is often used interchangeably with 'eczema' in online conversation.

By comparing the relative levels of social conversation taking place around each of the four most discussed sub-types (consensus generally refers to 7 distinct 'types'

– reflecting a spectrum of different symptoms and causes), we can quantify that atopic dermatitis is by some distance the most-mentioned.

As the spaces for online conversation around the topic grow, however, this has led to a corresponding growth in conversations around contact dermatitis and dyshidrotic eczema.

To best reflect how people talk about the topic, we opted to track global mentions of both eczema and atopic dermatitis from September 2020 –October 2022. Mentions of the 4 most discussed types of eczema on Twitter, 2020 & 2022. Source: Pulsar TRENDS.



The Data

The insights within this report were generated using Pulsar TRAC, which enabled us to analyze over **1.7 million** individual data points drawn from Twitter, Reddit, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube, VK, Naver, Amazon Reviews, News, Blogs, Forums, Trustpilot and **Google Search data**.



I (45 yo woman) have recently developed patches of eczema on my face. I've seen a derm who had me stop using my normal products, use a steroid ointment until patches were clear and then resume my products to see if the eczema recurred. I did that, and the eczema has come back



Not only skin NTDs are addressed during skin camps, but also more common skin diseases such as eczema and acne. People with skin diseases are thought to feel less reluctant to visit the events when a variety of diseases is included. The WHO is supporting this approach, stating that it is expected to result in better health outcomes and greater cost-efficiency.



What does atopic dermatitis look like?
How does atopic dermatitis spread?
How does atopic dermatitis go away?
Can you suddenly get atopic dermatitis?
What is atopic dermatitis in dogs?

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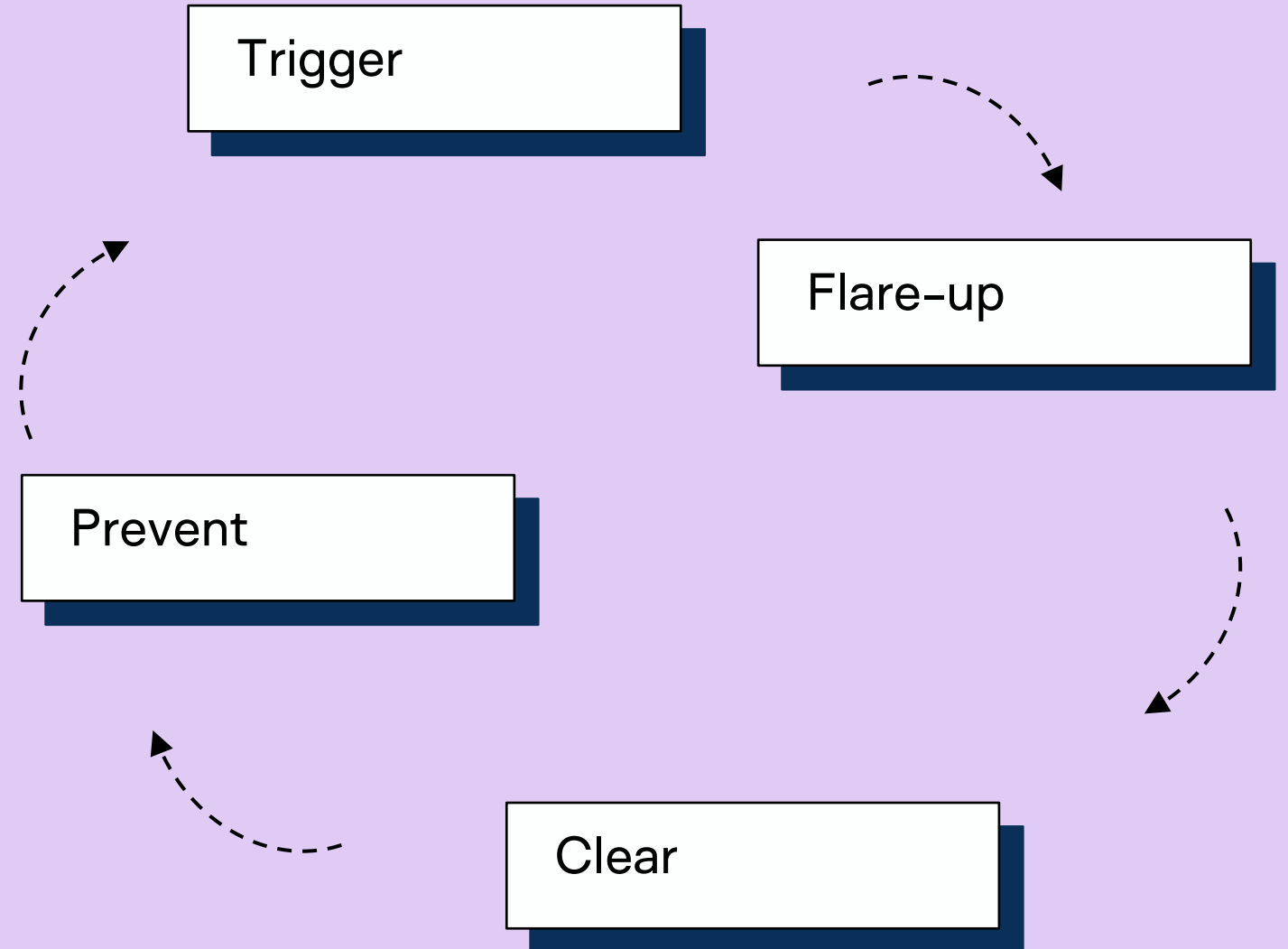
The Patient Experience

Unlike many other diseases or disorders, the patient experience for eczema and dermatitis is not linear, but rather cyclical.

As the condition is never wholly cured but rather managed, individuals can locate themselves within one of the following stages throughout their lives.

The speed of this cycle can vary from weeks and months to seemingly random flare-ups. As a result, a lot of non-medicalized attention is expended on the Prevent stage, while the Flare-Up to Clear stage can often bring the individual into the remit of healthcare professionals.

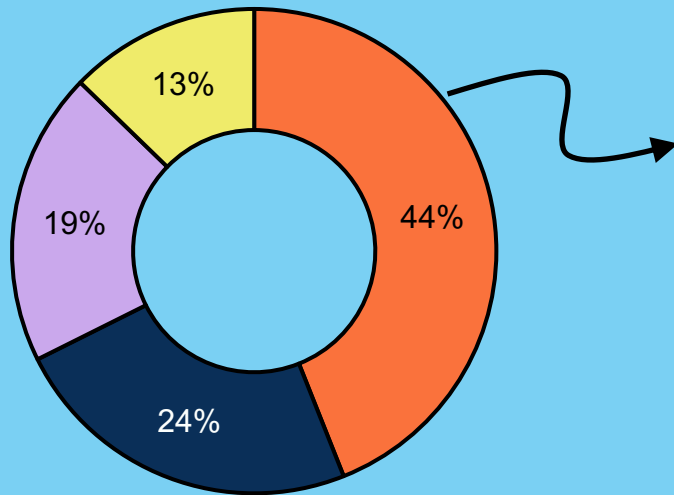
By breaking the overall patient experience down into these constituent parts, we can better understand how each discreet stage brings with it distinct behaviors, perspectives and emotions.



Triggers – different (and perceived differently) for individuals

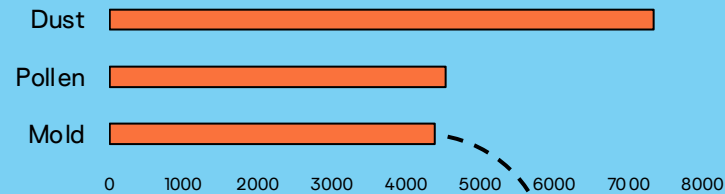
Despite the universality of triggers within the patient journey, what constitutes a trigger, or is perceived to, differs from person to person. Allergens and diet interweave, with reported negative reactions to foodstuffs comprising the single largest proportion of overall conversation.


This appears a reflection of the numerous lifestyle decisions that entail removing a certain ingredient from a diet, with advice, recipes and complaints seeing food largely outstrip dust, mold and pollen.



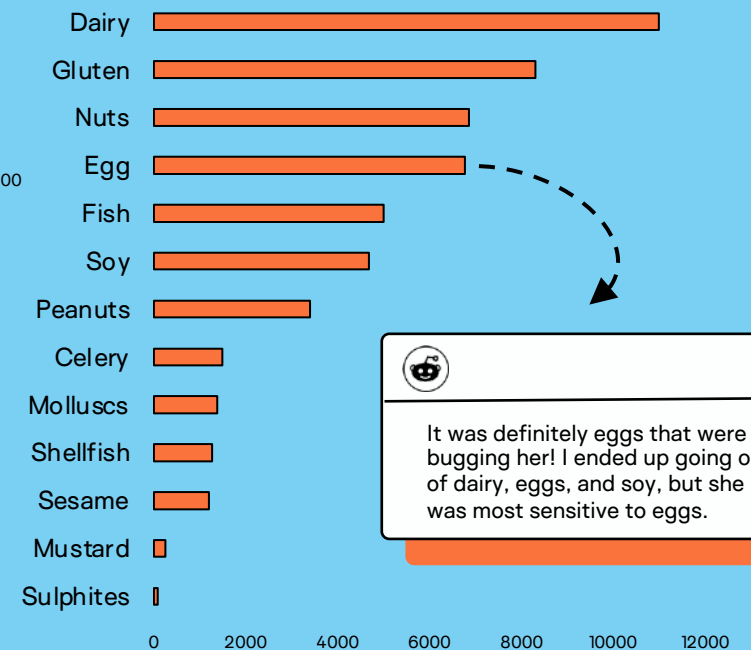
■ Allergens
 ■ Diet
 ■ Asthma
 ■ Environmental factors


Environmental Allergens




 How many times have you been told that the only way to get rid of your eczema is by using a steroid ointment and/or taking steroid drugs? 🌱Mold exposure is known to irritate the gut lining, contribute to leaky gut and high inflammation.

Diet Allergens



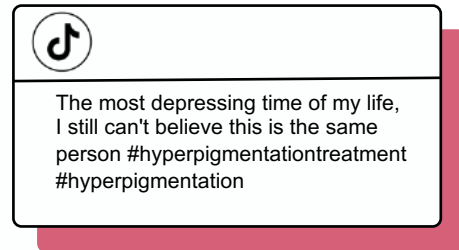
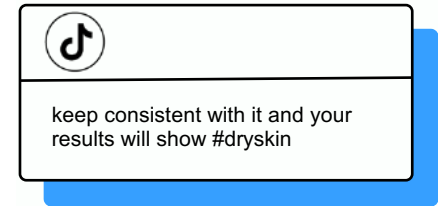
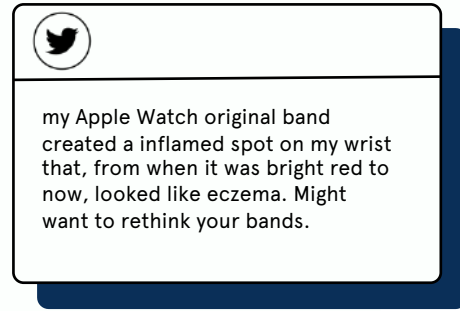

 It was definitely eggs that were bugging her! I ended up going off of dairy, eggs, and soy, but she was most sensitive to eggs.

Flare-ups: which physical symptoms are most mentioned?

The symptoms conversation indicates an openness on the part of individuals to talk about specific issues.

Not that this translates to unabashed openness. Instead, the rise in anonymized spaces, like Subreddits, has created a safe space for advice and personal experience. Users will supplement their questions with anonymized pictures, and often turn to the platform when struggling to overcome eczema using readily available medical or over the counter methods.

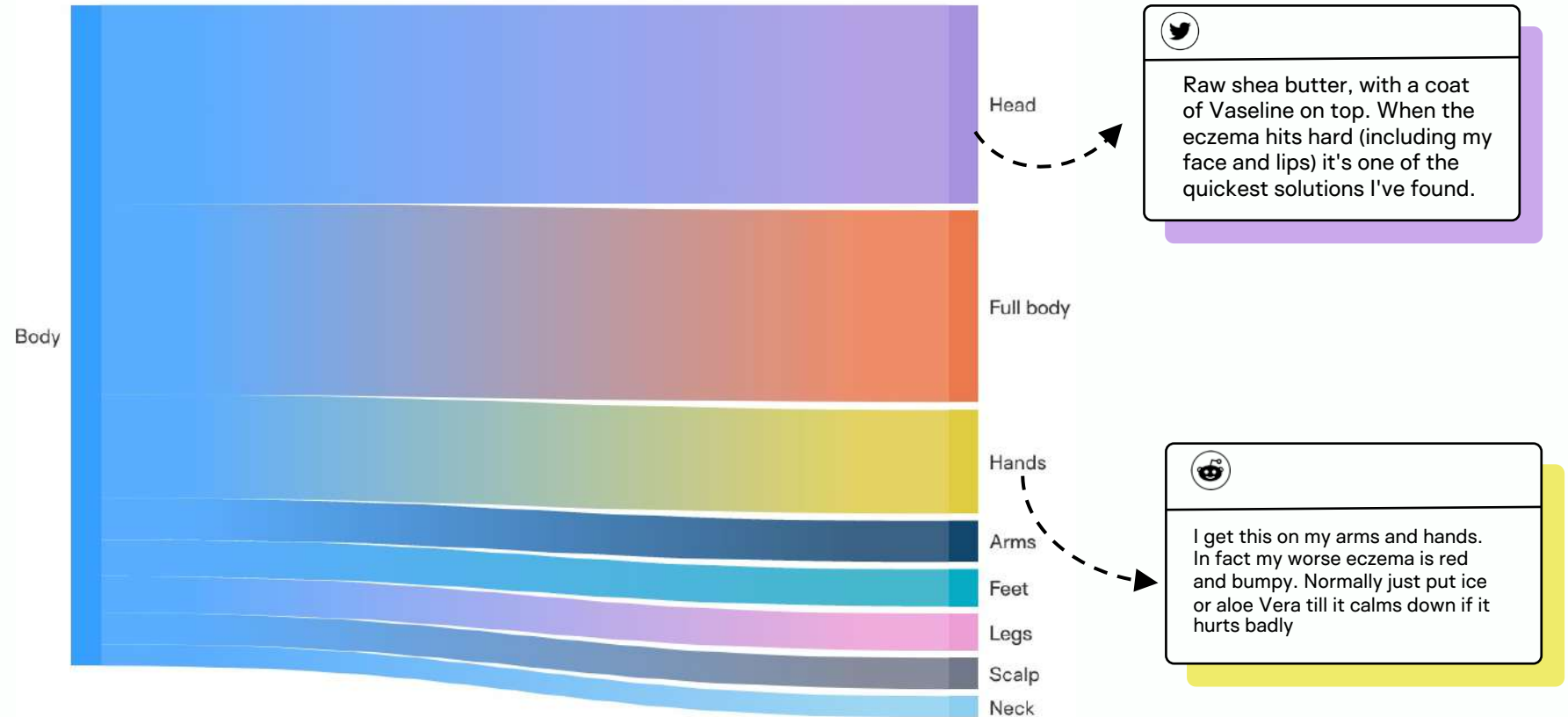
Visual-orientated platforms like TikTok and Instagram, meanwhile, play host to skincare stories in which individuals share their routines, preferred products and chart their progress. These channels are far more likely to feature identifiable pictures of individuals celebrating their improved or 'clear' skin. That said, pictures containing sudden allergy or trauma-provoked skin complaints are occasionally seen across social channels as part of customer experience (CX) conversations.



Mentions of Eczema & Atopic Dermatitis symptoms across Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, TikTok and more, Sept 2020 – Oct 2022. Source: Pulsar TRAC.

Flare-ups: where on the body do symptoms appear?

Eczema can occur across the body, and it is unsurprising to see both head and hands emerge as the two most cited areas. Not only is eczema notorious for appearing on such exposed areas, head and hands are each highly visible, ensuring that the individual can feel a greater degree of embarrassment and urge to seek resolution. In many other instances, such as references to the legs or midriff, the body part in question isn't cited in isolation but is rather listed as litany of affected areas, to illustrate the scale of the problem at hand. Some areas, meanwhile, such as the crooks of arms or legs, are commonly discussed in regard to children.





Mentions of Eczema & Atopic Dermatitis affected body parts across Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, TikTok, and more, Sept 2020 – Oct 2022. Source: Pulsar TRAC.

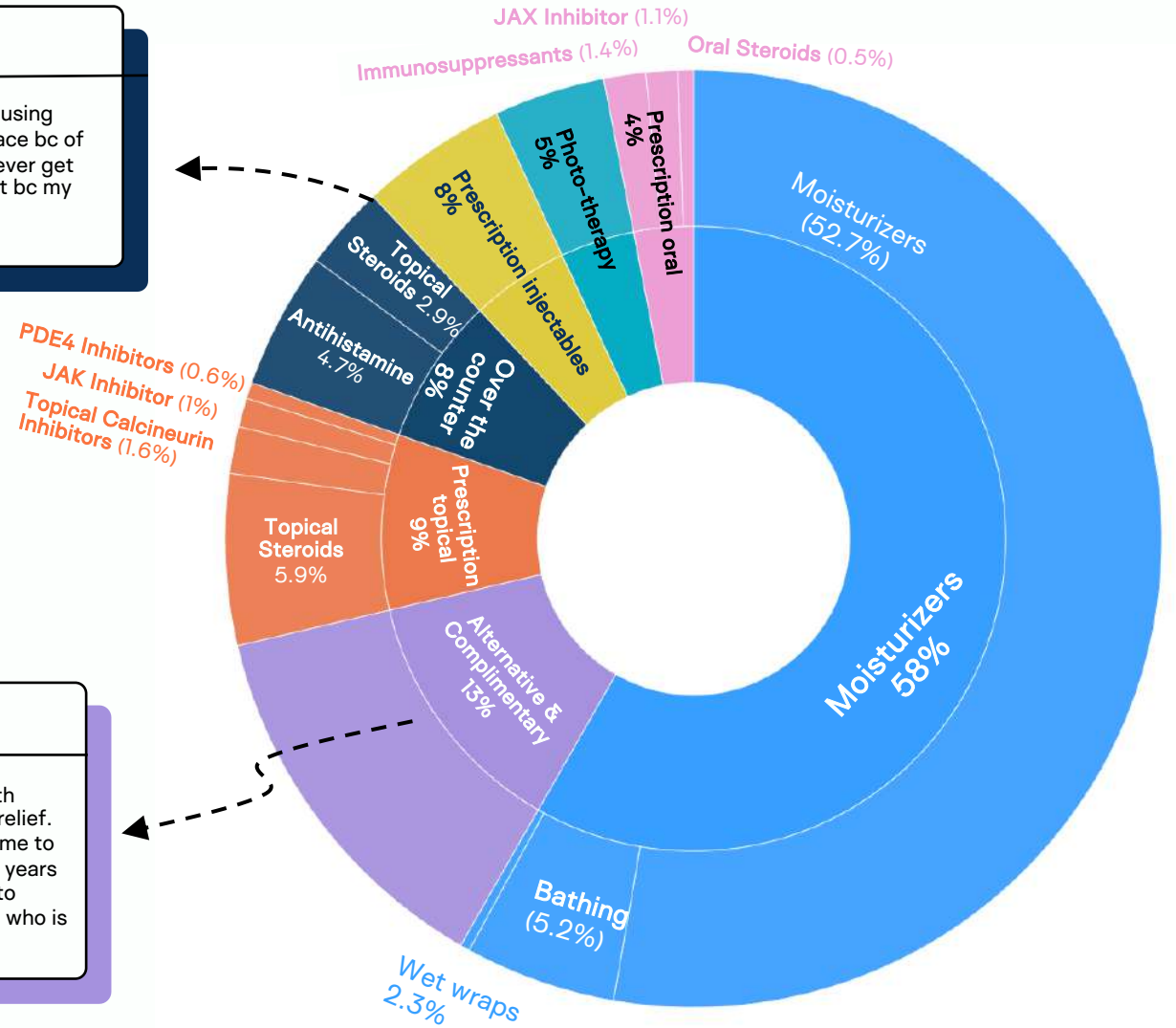
Clear: mapping treatments

Moisturizing appears as the most popular mode of eczema treatment, largely because it forms an intuitive, regular and easily available treatment of first resort. Additionally, it appears some of the skincare behaviors formed over the course of the pandemic have endured beyond it.

Prescription treatments account for a little over 21% of all mentions, with Topical Steroid Withdrawal (TSW) a common topic of concern across platforms. This fear of dependency appears correlated to the elevated interest in 'clean', 'natural' or 'alternative therapies'.

 I think it's from years of using topical steroids on my face bc of my eczema. I just can't ever get my skincare routine right bc my face is so sensitive

 Just wanted to share my experience with using Cannabis as a sleeping aid / pain relief. Using cannabis before bed has allowed me to get a full night sleep for the first time in years and allowed my skin to have more time to heal. I would recommend this to anyone who is willing to try it. (Legally of course)



Mentions of Eczema & Atopic Dermatitis treatments across Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, TikTok and more, Sept 2020 – Oct 2022. Source: Pulsar TRAC.

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Patient Journey ₅

Influential Voices ₁₂

Influential medical voices – and the audiences they speak to

How does authoritative information get disseminated within the wider eczema and atopic dermatitis conversation?

Healthcare professionals (**HCPs**) play a vital role within this process, broadcasting advice and information to both their immediate followers and audiences beyond this.

The other part of the equation centers on who it is doing the listening: the audiences and communities who gravitate towards certain perspectives on their condition, and how to treat it.

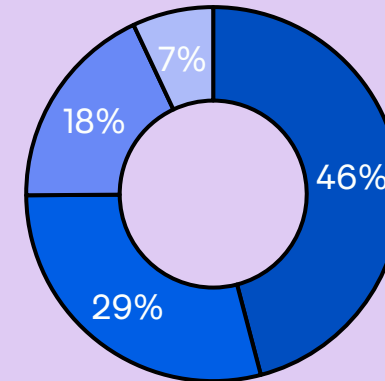
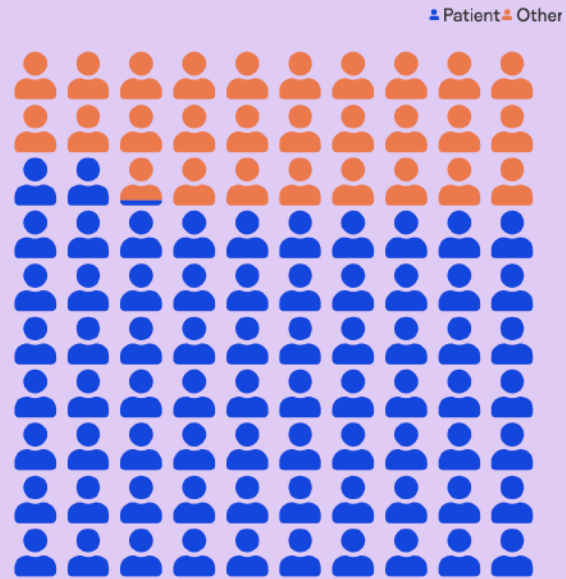
In this section, we will use audience intelligence to understand:

1. Which medical professionals are best represented in the conversation.
2. How audiences across different platforms approach the topic.
3. How these audience segments show preference for different understandings of what causes eczema, and how to treat it.

Who's taking part in the conversation?

When we identify the audience talking about eczema or dermatitis across socials, we can quickly ascertain that it's a conversation mostly engaged-with by patients. At the same time, we see a significant proportion of skincare professionals, who play a key role in shaping and driving the conversation.

Digging into this professional audience allows us to break it down into Dermatologists (doctors with skin as a specialty), Researchers (engaged in academic or private research), Mainstream Health Pros (including doctors, nurses and surgeons) and, finally estheticians. The varying levels of training required by dermatologists and estheticians, and their respective focuses on medical and purely aesthetic complaints, serves to confuse public opinion and expectations.



- Mainstream Medical Pros
- Dermatologist
- Researcher
- Esthetician

How does the public engage with experts on eczema & dermatitis?

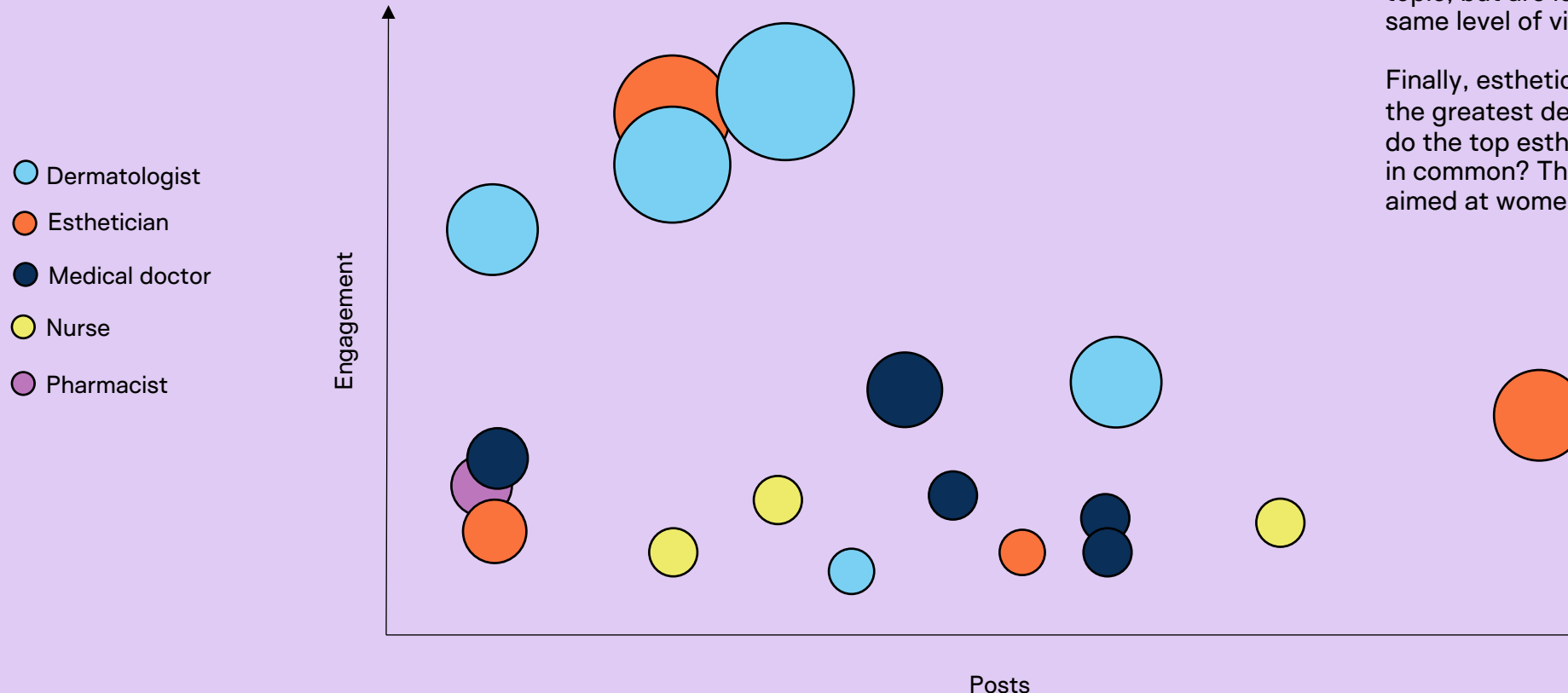
Having established how *many* skincare professionals, both HCP and otherwise, engage in this conversation, we can also investigate what the engagement metrics look like for the 19 most-engaged with accounts describable as either dermatologist, esthetician, medical doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

We can do this by identifying how many posts they have contributed to the eczema conversation over a two-year period, and ranking this against the total *engagements* (like, retweets) these accumulated. The larger the bubble, the greater the level of engagement.

What does this tell us? For one thing, it informs us that dermatologists hold authority within this conversation, with three of the highest engagement tallies originating from dermatology accounts.

We can also see that the top, non-dermatologist doctor accounts appear more likely to post regularly on the topic, but are less likely to achieve the same level of virality.

Finally, estheticians appear to exhibit the greatest degree of variance. What do the top esthetician accounts have in common? They're predominately aimed at women of color.

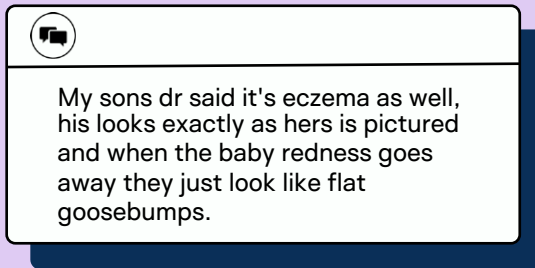


Forum Spotlights

Mothers Forum analysis



The forum whattoexpect.com saw over 33k posts relating to eczema & dermatitis. Mumsnet.com, meanwhile, accounted for almost 4.5k posts.

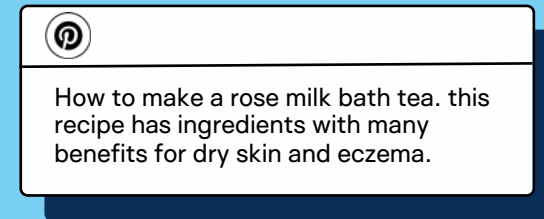


Here, posters are not necessarily referring to their own personal experience of eczema or dermatitis but rather are sharing their experiences acting as caregivers. Comments range from second-guessing medical advice, to sharing homespun solutions.

DIY Remedy Enthusiasts Pinterest Analysis



Pinterest comprises one of the of the most 'unmedicalized' forums, with HCP presence minimal. It's nonetheless full of advice.



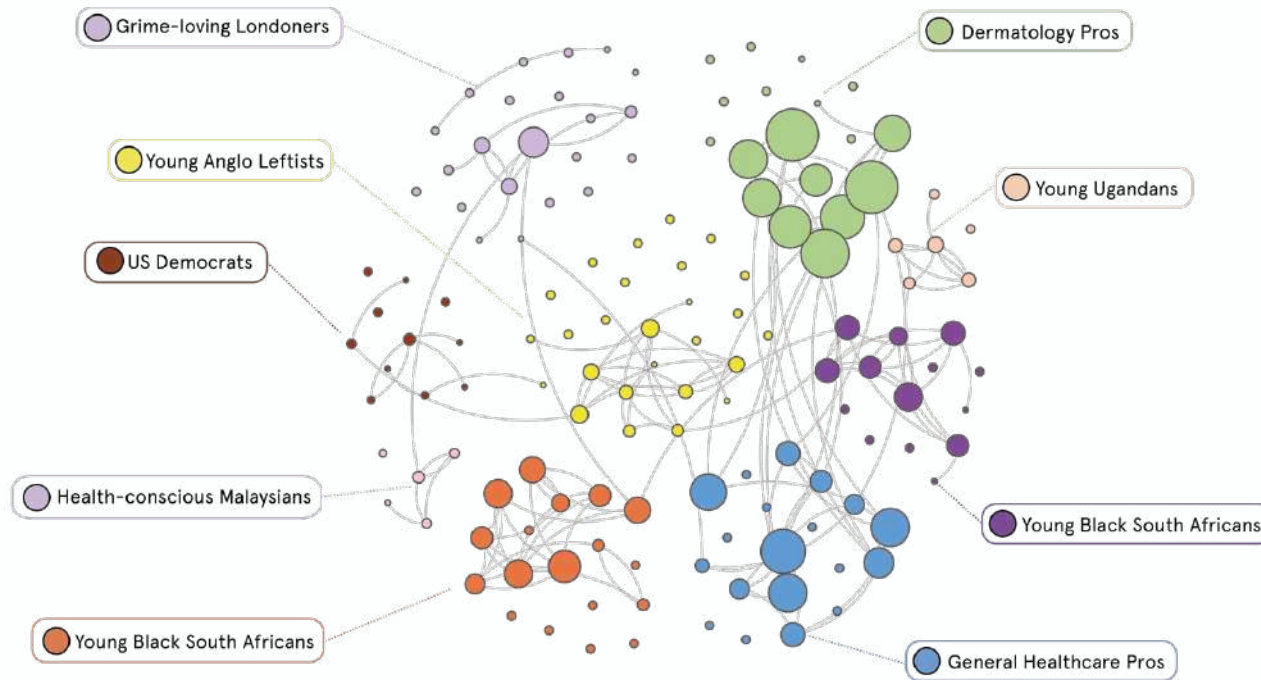
Conversation tends to split between expounding the all-round virtues of miracle ingredients, such as honey, and suggesting simple DIY that can address a plethora of different bodily complaints.

Who's talking about dermatology?

Having mapped the HCPs present in this conversation, we can turn our attentions to the audience engaging with them. We've done this by isolating the global audience who have referenced dermatology or medically-facilitated skincare in relation to either eczema or atopic dermatitis.


Using AI, we can segment this audience according to their shared online affinities and behaviors, to better understand the types of community proliferating dermatologist-derived information.

The larger the segment, the larger the community. The larger the nodes, meanwhile, the better connected that segment is.




And **Dermatology Pros** are most responsible for disseminating information. They do this in part by engaging in HCP peer-to-peer communication, fostering education around academic findings and niche case studies.

The second most interconnected segment are **General Healthcare Pros** – who, despite their similarities to the dermatologists, actually engage in a slightly different dynamic. Many of their posts are directed at caregivers of young children. Figures such as Dr. Dave Stukus – play a role as key opinion leaders in sharing educational content.



If anyone has experience of or know of any research on mindfulness techniques especially on Apps to help psychological symptoms of eczema please let me know



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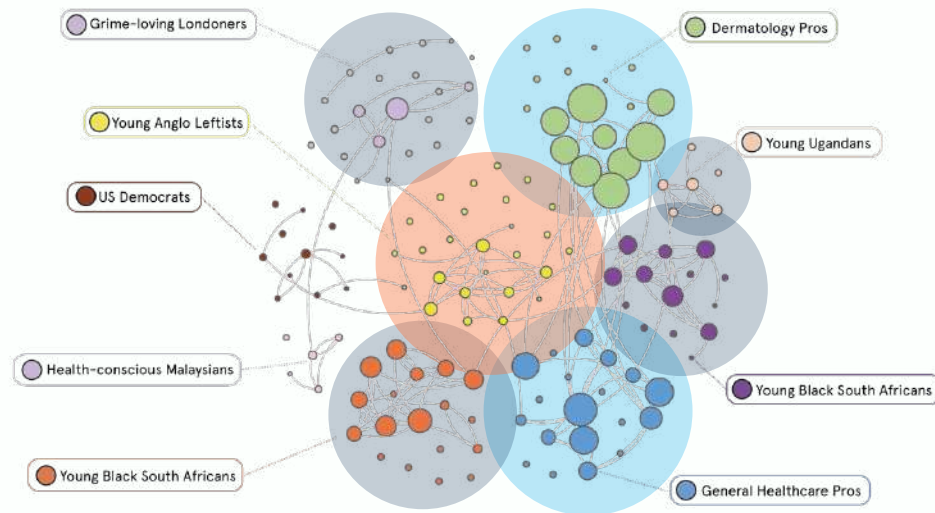
Comparing the medicalized audience with the wider audience

Having already established the central role HCPs play in the dermatological conversation, we can compare that audience with the communities engaging with eczema and atopic dermatitis more generally.

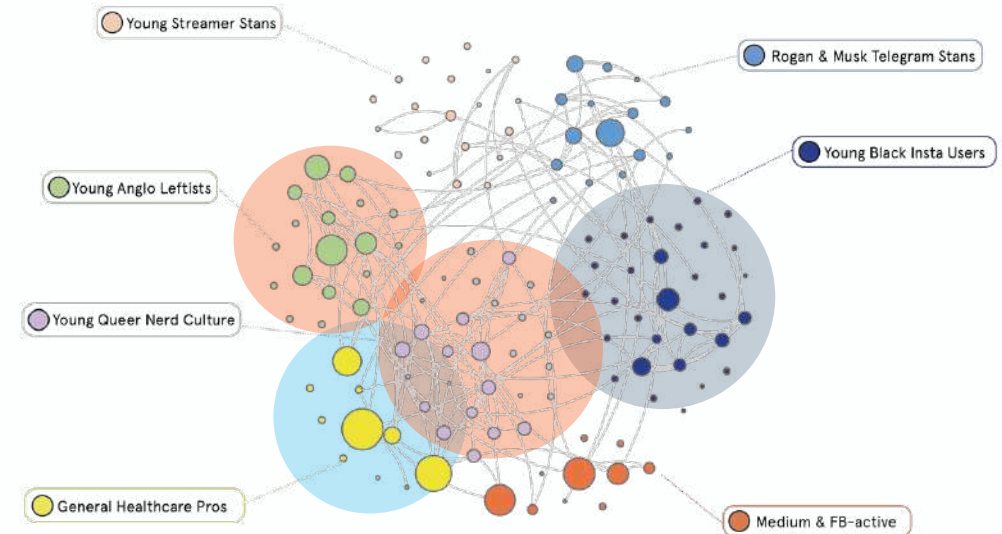
Healthcare Pros remain a significant presence, of course, but viewing the two audiences alongside one another sees **Young Black Communities** cohere into the single largest community, while **LGBTQ+ Communities** emerge as a far greater presence in the wider conversation.

While these segments, such as Young Anglo Lefties and Young Black South Africans, talk almost entirely about their own personal experience, other more politicised communities, such as Medium & FB-active Democrats and Rogan & Musk Telegram Stans, are far more likely to clash of the credibility of online eczema information in relation to Covid.

Medical



Global Overall



How are different triggers among different audiences?

These communities form distinct, culturally-conferred perspectives on eczema, that extends throughout all aspects of the patient experience. This includes discussion of triggers. Using general talk of 'triggers' as a baseline, we can see how each community over-indexes.

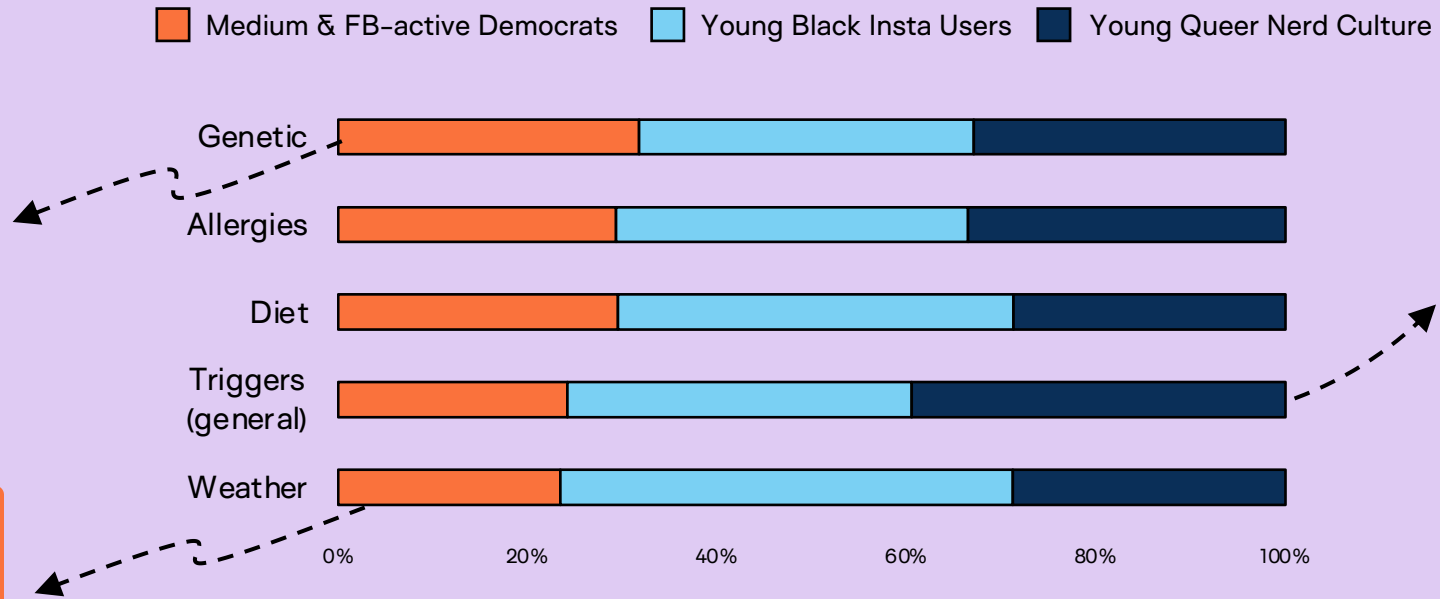
Medium & FB-active Democrats are more preoccupied with both allergies and genetics. Why? These community features many 'moms', more likely to investigate the cause of eczema or atopic dermatitis in their children. Younger communities, on the other hand, appear more likely to ascribe blame

to environmental causes with young Black Insta Users particularly likely to blame the weather, following a series of global heatwaves. Queer communities, on the other hand, identify sudden eczema flare ups with a range of factors, including exposure to new surroundings and mental health struggles.

I guess it's time for me to look into that some more! I eat a lot of dairy! I think my eczema is a genetic thing though because my father suffers from it.

This heat has caused my eczema to flare up and that hasn't happened in like 5 years

one of the biggest triggers for my eczema flare ups is stress and anxiety which is a nightmare when you're trans and in the closet



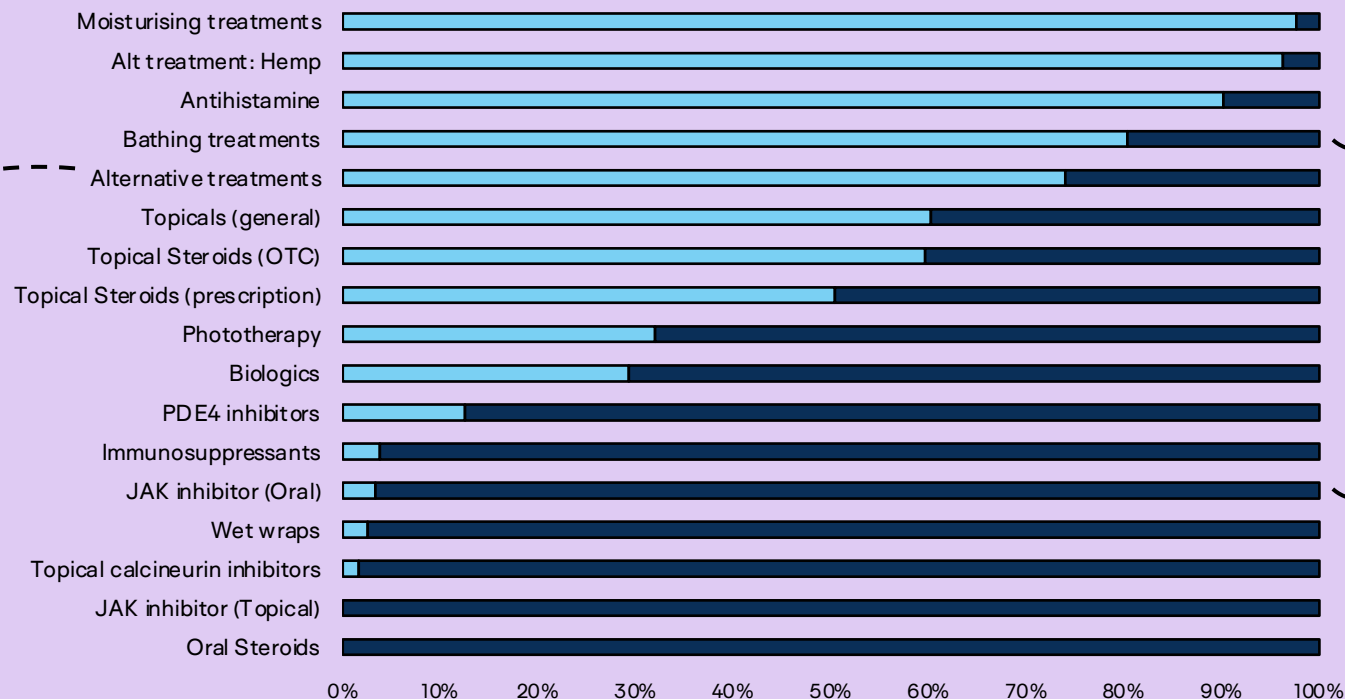
How different communities reach for separate solutions

If we narrow our focus down on the two younger groups, most concerned with personal treatment, we can reveal trends around attitudes towards these different types of treatment.

Young POC Communities display a strong tendency towards home remedies, including herbal remedies and bathing treatments. We also see growing conversations around both bleach baths and CBD-based treatments.

Young Queer Nerd Communities, meanwhile, appear more inclined to look towards medicalized treatments, such as JAK inhibitors and Oral Steroids.

- Young Black Insta Users
- Young Queer Nerd Culture



Did you know CBD Helps reduce inflammation. As an antiinflammatory, CBD may be able to help reduce swelling, pain, and redness from existing breakouts, or irritation from skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis....

I'm shocked, taking a diluted bleach bath allegedly helps eczema..

There has been a new treatment approved for eczema in USA and UK. It is called abrocitinib and upadacitinib. It works by blocking the enzyme that causes the body to attack itself and therefore causing an inflammatory response on the skin.

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Pulsar is the leading AI-powered audience intelligence platform, combining conversational and behavioral signals from the world's leading digital sources to help organizations understand their audiences and create messages that matter to them.

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