theCybersurvey

Teens,
Tech
&
Wellbeing

**During
COVID Year 2**

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The backdrop to this data collection

130,000 pupils were out of school for Covid-related reasons on Thursday 11 November 2021 according to the Department for Education. By the month end this figure was 208,000.[i]

These absences were not solely due to obvious Covid-related reasons such as positive cases and isolation. Large numbers of pupils with special needs were struggling to cope with attending school, while increasing numbers of learners faced mental health difficulties. Some were bereaved. Life itself changed - contributing to the number of absentee children.

Wellbeing: In the second full year of the Coronavirus pandemic, concerns about the wellbeing of children and teens had risen, while lasting effects of the pandemic were still unknown. Children, teens and adults, faced changes to their daily lives unlike any they had ever experienced. At times they could not see their friends or relatives for weeks, schooling moved online, and many were lonely, cooped up or in crowded homes. By the year end, referrals for children's mental health problems remained higher than pre-pandemic rates.[ii] Over 350,000 children and young people were in contact with mental health services by the end of December 2021.[iii] The NHS reported an 82% rise in admissions for eating disorders in England over two years.[iv] Home might be unsafe: domestic abuse was a major concern.[v] For those with safe, loving families it was an opportunity to be closer.

Internet use became even more central to daily life, proving essential for education, socialisation and entertainment or news, along with shopping and staying connected to others. Not all had access to it, despite hastily organised schemes to provide laptops However, adults' understanding and acceptance of their children's online lives grew.

Education: Students said that they don't learn enough about today's most pressing issues, pornography (58%), LGBTQ+-relevant information (54%), and healthy relationships (54%).[vi] Only 58% of Cybersurvey 2020 participants were mostly following online safety advice. Fake news obscured messages about the virus or vaccines, requiring critical thinking from us all.

Public services and charities: Overwhelmed services reported long waiting times and backlogs meant that they struggled to cope.[vii] The impact on children and teens became increasingly apparent. Demand for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) assessments as well as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) soared. Councils were flooded with referrals for assessment for SEND support/top-up funding or an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).[viii] Waiting lists built up as reduced services struggled.

Crime: The NSPCC reported in 2022 that police records of online grooming crimes rose by over 80% in four years[ix]. In 2021/22, Childline saw a 20% increase in counselling sessions about sexual abuse compared to 2020/21. A fifth occurred while our data was collected.[x]

This report explores what teens said about their wellbeing and their online lives in our second COVID survey in a new era defined by disease, worry and technology.
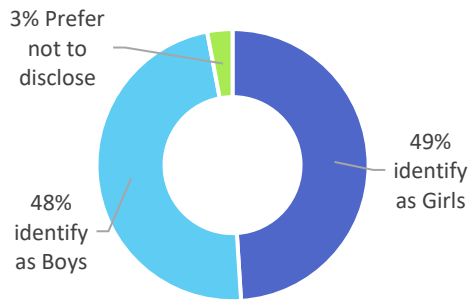
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About the Sample

In 2020, while winter lockdowns hindered sample gathering, 2,033 students participated before schools reopened in March 2021. In 2021 it remained difficult to collect responses from schools as many were overworked or struggling. We are hugely grateful to the schools who helped us reach a sample of 1,347 responses in year 2 of a pandemic.

Chart 1. Gender 2020

3% Prefer not to disclose

49% identify as Girls

48% identify as Boys

Chart 2. Gender

5% Prefer not to disclose

43% identify as Girls

52% identify as Boys
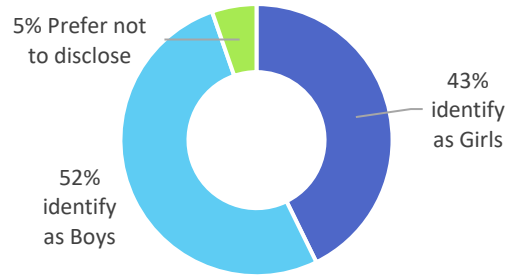
In 2021, there was an increase in young people choosing 'I prefer not to say' when it came to their gender identity. Instead of choosing 'boy' or 'girl', this 5% chose to identify as: non-binary, genderfluid, bi-gender, or transgender.

Chart 3. Sample Age: 2020 and 2021

The general distribution of ages in both years is similar. The 2021 cohort saw a smaller percentage of 14-16+ year olds overall and a greater percentage of 11-13year olds.

■ 2020 ■ 2021
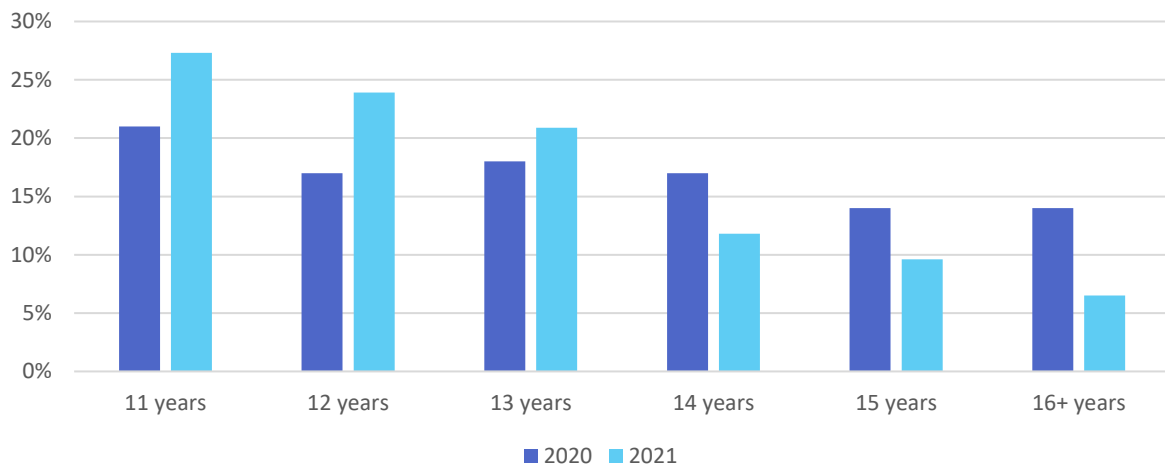
Respondents' Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities are pre-existing factors which might put young people at risk online or cause them to experience the internet differently from their non-vulnerable peers.

Table 1. % of young people self-identifying as vulnerable. 2020/2021

Vulnerability in the total sample	2021	2020
None of these apply to me	50%	56%
English is not my first language	13%	10%
I'm a carer for someone in my family	4%	3%
I have a longstanding physical illness	2%	2%
I have an eating disorder	4%	3%
I am in care or have been in care	3%	2%
I have a mental health difficulty	10%	12%
I cannot see well or at all	9%	8%
I cannot hear well or at all	3%	2%
I have speech difficulties	4%	3%
I have learning difficulties	8%	7%
I worry about life at home	8%	8%
I am autistic	5%	5%
I have anger issues	9%	9%
I have ADHD	6%	-

Note. 'I have ADHD' was added to the possible vulnerability list this year. In previous years respondents wrote it into an open question and as these numbers grew it was decided to add it as an option. Respondents may have multiple vulnerabilities concurrently.

Changes year on year in our sample:

Decreases
- 6% fewer say 'I have none of the vulnerabilities listed'.
- The percentage who said 'I have a mental health difficulty' has fallen by 2%

Increases
- There is a 3% increase in young people say English as not their first language
- 1% more children say they are carers for someone in their family; and there is a similar 1% increase in those who have an eating disorder; or who said: 'I am in care or have been in care'; 'I cannot see well or at all'; 'I cannot hear well or at all'; 'I have speech difficulties' or 'I have learning difficulties'.

No change
- There was no change in the percentage of young people who said: 'I have a longstanding physical illness'; 'I worry about life at home';' I am autistic' or 'I have anger issues.'
- The latest Cybersurvey introduced a new vulnerability after so many respondents volunteered this in the open box: 6% of the sample identify as having ADHD

Key Messages: Wellbeing and COVID impacts.

A young person may have multiple vulnerabilities

Of the 566 young people who self-identify as having a form of vulnerability: 52% have one, 27% have 2 and more than one in five (21%) have 3 or more. 6% fewer say they have none of these this year compared to the previous survey.

Chart 4. More than one vulnerability present: 2021

21% Have 3 or more vulnerabilities

52% Have 1 vulnerability

27% Have 2 vulnerabilities
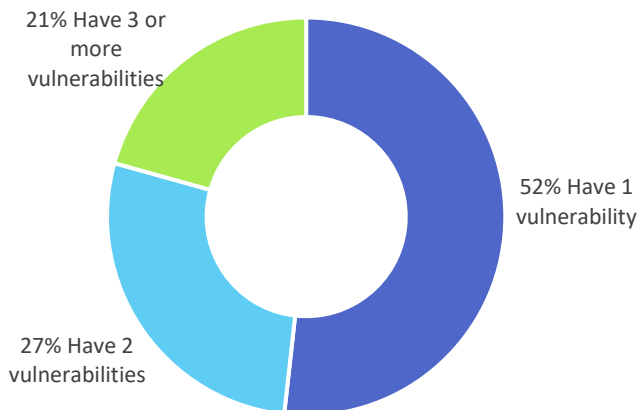
21% of those with a vulnerability have 3 or more.

Covid affected me or my family badly.

The majority said they or their family had 'not really' been badly affected by Coronavirus, while 7% had been 'very badly' affected and a further 34% had been affected 'in some way'. In 2020, 9% had been badly affected, a 2% reduction was seen in 2021.

Chart 5. COVID affected me or my family badly: 2021

5% said 'Other'

7% said 'Yes, very badly'

54% said 'Not really'

34% said 'In some ways'
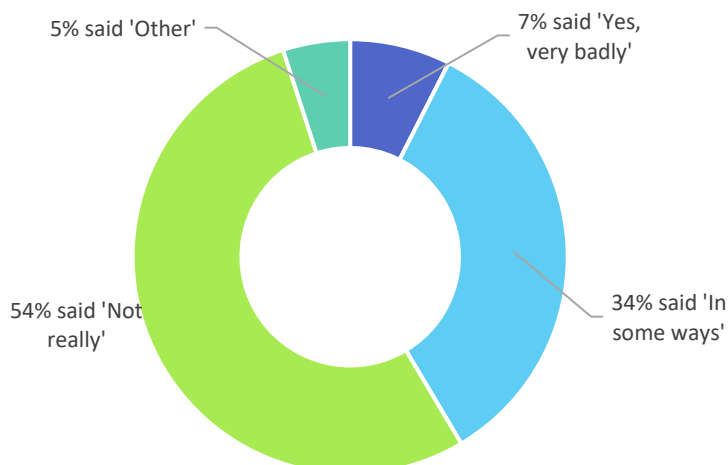
'Covid affected me or my family badly.'

Some vulnerable children continue to be badly affected by COVID.

Table 2. Vulnerable teens most likely to say COVID has affected me or my family badly (%).

	2020	2021
I have learning difficulties	16%	16%
I worry about life at home	24%	17%
I cannot hear well or at all	21%	13%
I am a carer for someone in my family	27%	22%
I have a long-standing physical illness	27%	18%

Young Carers and those with a longstanding illness remain heavily impacted.
While we note an overall reduction in teens saying, 'COVID has affected me or my family very badly' more than 1 in 5 young carers (22%) and 18% of those with a longstanding physical illness, continue to report impacts of COVID. In contrast fewer teens with hearing loss say they have been badly affected by the pandemic in 2021.

The open question gave young people opportunities to write freely:

- *"I have not been able to see my family."*
- *"Covid-19 has affected my mental health negatively."*
- *"My whole family has had it. COVID killed my aunt and my gran.'"*

Worry overwhelms children and teens

Chart 6. 'I can't make my worries go away: 2021

18% say 'Never'

22% say 'Most of the time'

34% say 'Some of the time'

26% say 'Hardly ever'
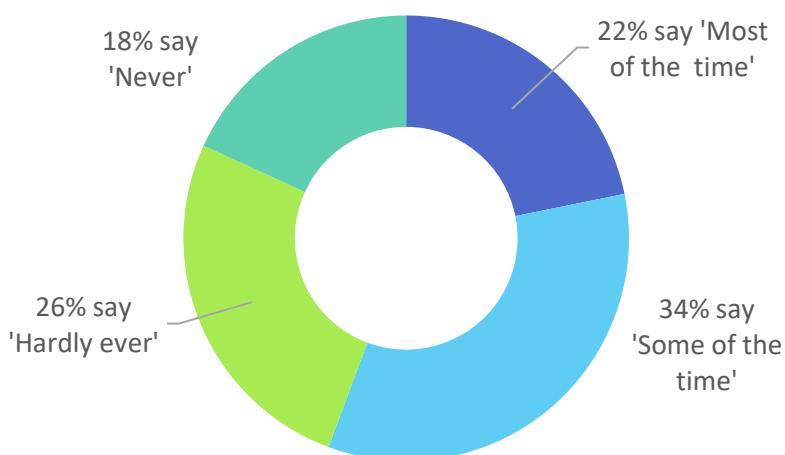
56% said: 'I can't make my worries go away.'

More than half (56%) say 'I can't make their worries go away. (More than 1 in 5 feel this way most of the time and over 1/3 some of the time) an increase from 53% in 2020. This suggests that children and teens still need significant support to manage their worries. Extra support is especially needed for the young people listed in Chart 7.
Among teens with no vulnerabilities, there is a 3% rise in those who feel 'I can't make my worries go away'. Families coming apart and bereavement mingle with fears about climate change, housing and what is happening on social media. Those who worry about life at home are most likely to say, 'I can't make my worries go away.'

Worry worsened for vulnerable groups

Chart 7. 'I can't make my worries go away. *% Answering: 'Most of the time.' By Vulnerability. 2020/2021*

	2021	2020
None of these apply to me	15%	12%
I have ADHD	41%	
Covid 19 has afffected me or my family badly		36%
I have anger issues	29%	30%
I am autistic	38%	25%
I worry about life at home	56%	47%
I have learning difficulties	42%	31%
I have speech difficulties	37%	29%
I have hearing loss	37%	27%
I have vision loss	38%	26%
I have a mental health difficulty	48%	44%
I am in or leaving care	36%	33%
I have an eating disorder	53%	41%
Longstanding physical illness	30%	21%
Young carer	35%	31%
English not first language	20%	21%

■ 2021 ■ 2020

*ADHS added in 2021

'Most of the time I can't make my worries go away.'

This feeling is more dominant in 2021 among all vulnerable groups of young people. Only those who said English is not their first language and those who have anger issues did not report an increase in overwhelming worry.
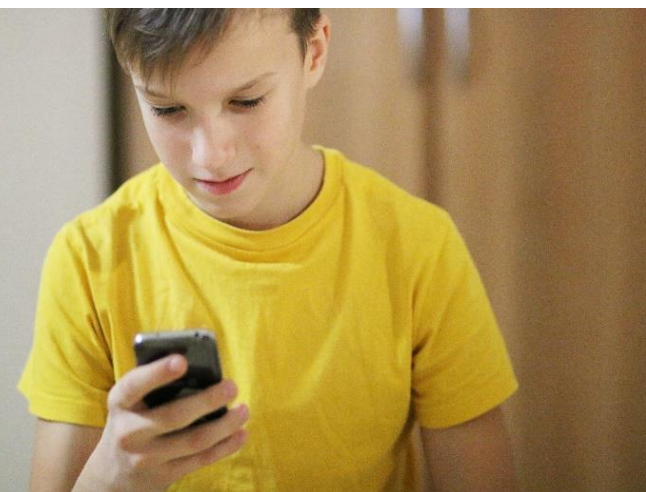
How I feel about myself

Chart 8. How I feel about myself: 2021 (%)

Legend: ■ Most of the time ■ Some of the time ■ Hardly ever/never

	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever/never
I feel nervous or anxious	24	43	32
I worry a lot	27	34	39
I get irritable and angry easily	27	33	40
I can't make my worries go away	22	34	44
I'm afraid bad things might happen	23	34	43
My worries affect my life	16	26	57

More than ¼ of the young people say: Most of the time, I worry a lot and get irritable and angry easily.' Just under a quarter say: Most of the time I feel nervous or anxious (24%), I'm afraid bad things might happen (23%) and I can't make my worries go away (22%). Worryingly, 16% told us: My worries affect my life.

'I get mad and aggressive for simple things that just might make me not able to control'

A backdrop of anxiety

As many as 2/3 (67%) of teens said they feel nervous or anxious – 43% some of the time, and 24% most of the time,

Chart 9. How I feel about myself: 2020/2021

Legend: ■ 2021 ■ 2020

	2021	2020
I feel nervous or anxious	68%	68%
I worry a lot	62%	65%
I can't make my worries go away	56%	53%
I'm afraid bad things might happen	57%	56%
My worries affect my life	43%	45%

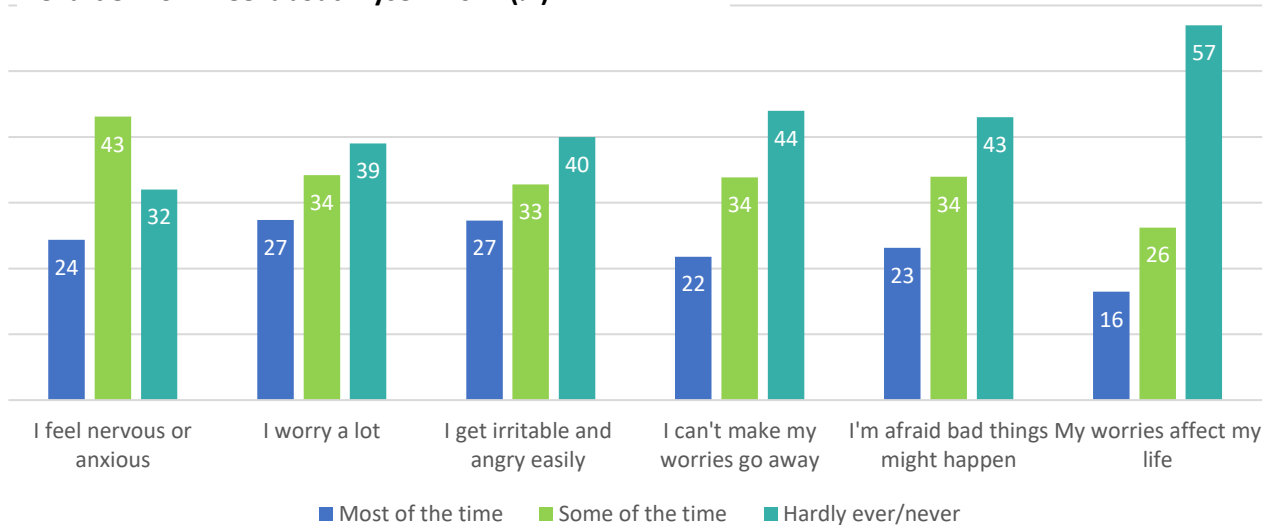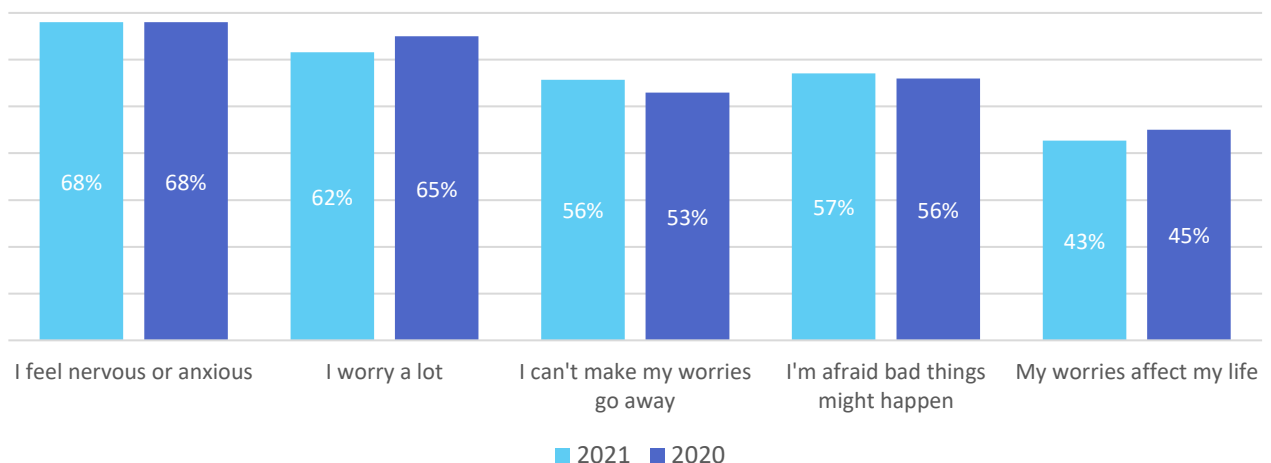When comparing our 2021 sample to the previous year's cohort (also collected during a lockdown) young people are now slightly more likely to say that they are afraid bad things might happen and 3% more likely to say that they can't make their worries go away. There is no change in the percentage who say: Most/some of the time, I feel nervous or anxious. However, this year, 2% fewer young people say my worries affect my life, and 3% fewer say they worry a lot, than in 2020.

Positive feelings: self-respect and happiness

There are levels of happiness: 47% of the sample feel this way some of the time and 44% are happy most of the time. 31% feel positive about things most of the time, while 51% chose 'some of the time'. 44% said most of the time, 'overall, I'm happy with myself', 38% some of the time. A majority feels they have self-respect and are proud of things they do.

Chart 10. How are you? Positive Wellbeing: *2021 (%)*

Legend: Most of the time · Some of the time · Hardly ever/never

Category	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever/never
I feel happy	44	47	9
I concentrate well	28	53	20
I feel positive about things	31	51	18
I'm proud of things I do	40	47	12
I feel there are some good things about me	42	45	14
Overall, I am happy with myself	44	38	18
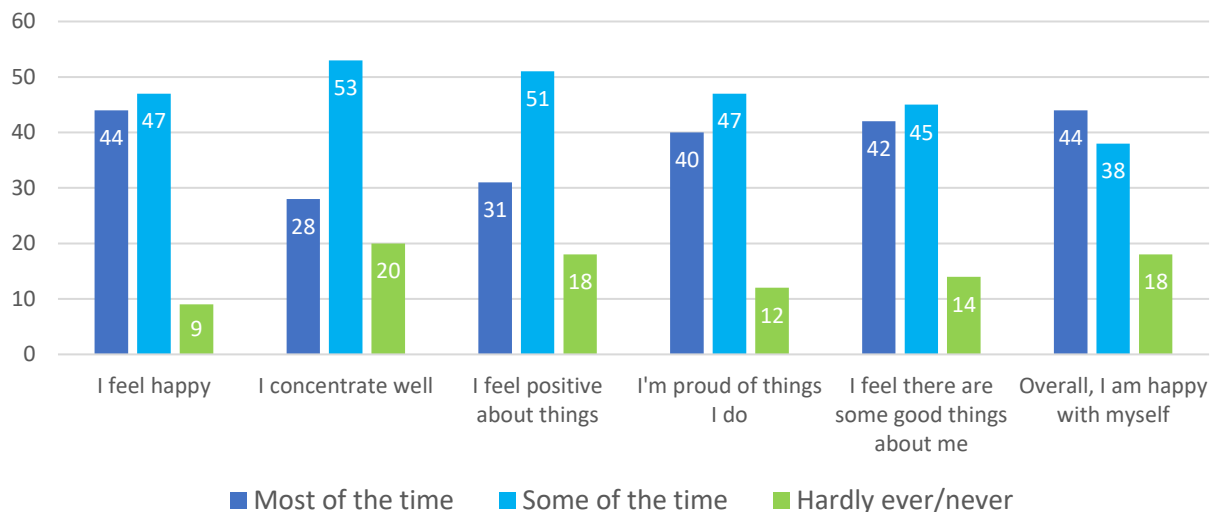
But some hardly ever feel happy

In contrast, just under 10% hardly ever/never feel happy, 20% said they hardly ever concentrate well and just under 1 in 5 do not feel positive about things.

Chart 11. How are you? Negative Wellbeing: *2021 (%)*

Legend: Most of the time · Some of the time · Hardly ever or never

Category	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever or never
I feel tired for no reason	33	39	28
I have sleep problems. i.e. I sleep too much or can't sleep	24	29	46
I forget to eat	15	22	63
I can't sit still	25	29	45
I feel it's too much effort to do anything	14	19	57
I find it hard to make decisions	27	44	28
People notice I'm not OK	14	34	51
I get irritable and angry easily	27	33	40

'Trying to find my happiness'

Technology offers anything and everything to teens who have grown up with it. Unlike adults, they see no boundary between online and offline life. Throughout the pandemic and lockdowns, young people used the internet for education and learning, for entertainment, as well as to stay in touch with their friends and family. Some learned a language, others how to play an instrument, many did fitness routines or worked out. When asked to pick their 3 top activities, the most frequently mentioned activities met very basic human needs:

- Entertainment
- Socialising: Chatting with friends or finding new ones
- Listening to music
- Playing games
- Learning and exploring

Adults tend to focus on harms, while most of the young people's experiences are fairly benign. That is not to ignore the serious harms that certain groups of young people encounter, nor the bullying and hostility that can be hidden in the innocent phrase 'chatting to my friends'. Grooming or coercion may lie hidden behind 'Talking to my boyfriend.' However socialising is possibly protective and isolation may represent a risk.

Purposeful or passive?
Online activities can be viewed as active or passive – i.e., consuming online content without any real intention or aim. For example, watching YouTube videos for hours on end, doom-scrolling social media or binging TV series. Many teens do this to relax online after school or to stave off boredom. Some fear boredom because worry might fill the void. A phone is described as a 'lifeline' or a 'companion' to those who feel lonely or isolated.

Purposeful online activities with a specific focus, might include learning new information or developing new hobbies. Creativity can also flourish online, with opportunities to create music, videos, content or websites. We are not being judgemental in delineating different types of activity – passive activities may be playing a role in connecting teens and acting as a calm space after a hectic day. Socialising kept many teens stable in lockdowns.

Most popular
The most popular online activities were watching YouTube videos and gaming (56%), followed by chatting to friends (54%) and listening to music (44%). Less popular activities were learning to build sites or code (2%) and making their own tracks (2%).

With a national shortage of computer engineers, programmers, software developers and cybersecurity professionals, a challenge exists to excite young people over these skills.[xi]

'I can get away from problems online because it makes me forget for a while'.

'I watched YouTube on my iPad on the half-term, and I do it every single day when I get back home from school and then I say hello to my mum who has a baby and hi to my dad because he goes to work, and we go to school'.

What do we get out of being online?

Chart 12. Perceived internet benefits: *2021 (%)*

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel I am like other people when I am online	26	23	29	12	10
I can be creative	5	10	28	29	28
My enterntainment is mainly online	8	13	31	32	17
Most of my social life is digital	20	28	32	13	7
I find people like me	18	14	32	23	14
I feel more confident about how I look	24	19	30	16	12
I feel closer to my friends	7	10	25	31	27
I can calm down my emotions	8	11	30	30	22
I can find music to fit my mood	8	6	17	26	43
I feel more relaxed	8	12	42	26	13

■ Never ■ Hardly ever ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always

Benefits: *Those who answered: Always or Often:*
- 69% said the internet always or often allows them to find music to fit their mood
- 58% feel closer to their friends when online
- 57% enjoy being creative
- 52% say being online helps calm down their emotions

A coping mechanism?
Online life and phones are being used by children and teens to soothe or regulate their emotions. In this sense, being online might be a coping mechanism for some.

Socially essential
It can also facilitate communication and interaction with friends, as the internet becomes even more important in young people's social lives. Just under half (49%) of the sample said that most of their social life is often or always digital, with 37% finding 'people like me' online, and 22% say they feel 'like other people' when they are on the internet, illustrating the equalising aspects of online life.

Confidence boosting and identity building
For some, being online also enhances their confidence; not only do they find 'people like me', but some also feel better about how they loo: 28% of children and teens felt that the internet always or often helped them to feel more confident about how they look.

'Behind a screen, I feel more secure than in real life.'

Chart 13. Perceived Internet benefits: *By Vulnerability*. *Answer: Always or Often (%)*

Legend:
- ■ I can calm down my emotions
- ■ I feel closer to my friends
- ■ I feel more confident about how I look
- ■ I feel I am like other people when I am online

Chart data (I can calm down my emotions / I feel closer to my friends / I feel more confident about how I look / I feel I am like other people when I am online):

	Calm emotions	Closer to friends	More confident	Like others
I am autistic	43	43	21	21
I have anger issues	34	51	28	26
I worry about life at home	43	52	15	33
I have an eating disorder	41	56	18	32
I have a mental health difficulty	47	57	12	32
I have ADHD	49	59	27	16
I have learning difficulties	45	57	28	22
I cannot hear well or at all	48	44	28	36
I am in or have been in care	44	57	30	26
I have speech difficulties	45	52	29	32
None of these apply to me	54	60	28	18
English is not my first language	54	57	33	27
I'm a carer for someone in my family	43	57	40	33
I have a longstanding physical illness	53	63	32	26
I cannot see well or at all	64	62	28	25

Do they all benefit?

Vulnerable teens often perceive fewer benefits from online life than their peers and may need help to broaden their repertoire or improve their experience. But all use it to calm down. 54% of teens without vulnerabilities often or always use the internet to help them calm down their emotions, as do:

- Teens who cannot see well or at all (64%).
- Teens who do not speak English as their first language (54%)
- Teens with a longstanding physical illness (53%)

Strengthening and reinforcing friendships

60% of teens without vulnerabilities always or often feel closer to their friends when online. 62% of teens with sight problems and 63% with a longstanding physical illness agree.
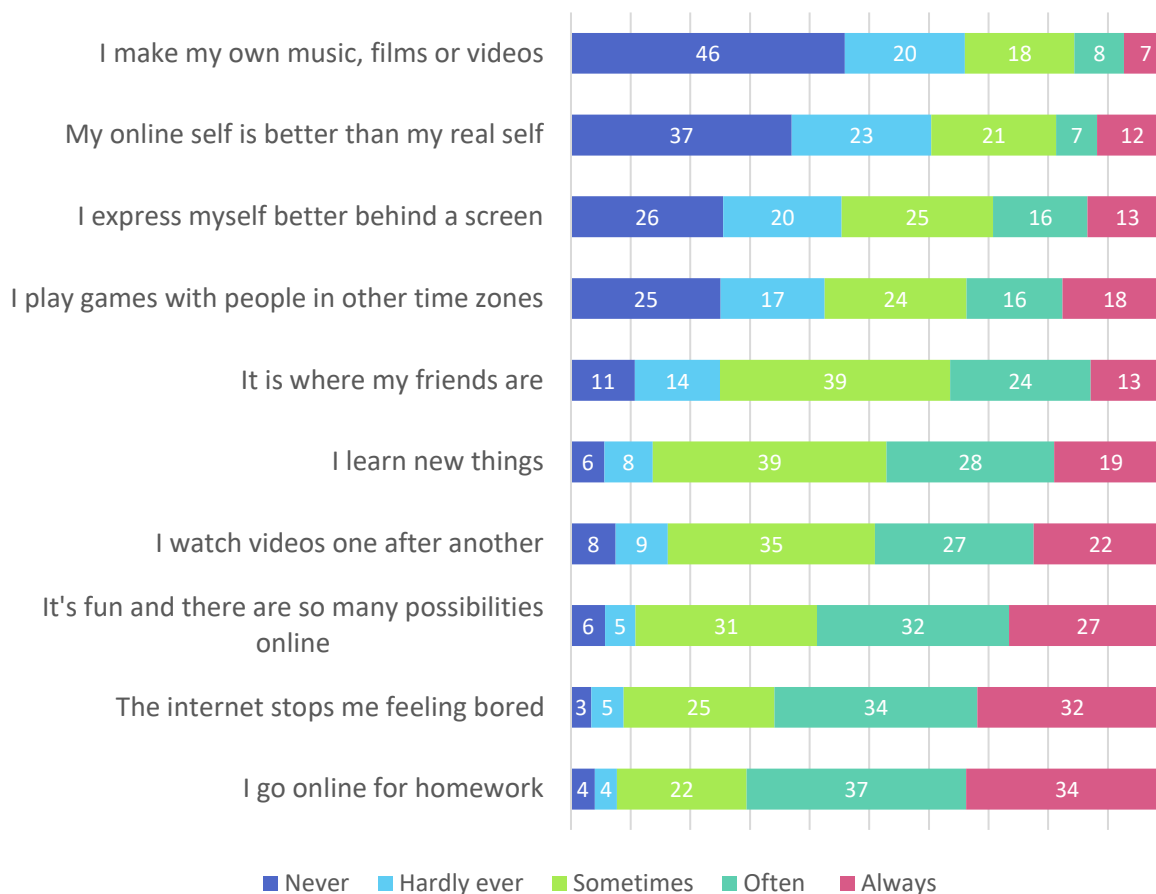
Body image

28% of teens without vulnerabilities feel confident about how they look *because* of the internet. They may get a lot of likes and feel affirmed. Yet vulnerable teens, particularly those with a mental health difficulty (12%), worries about life at home (15%) or an eating disorder (18%) are markedly less likely to say this. Elsewhere in this report we look at harmful content about body image, illustrating both positives and negatives around t.

An equaliser

Behind a screen, vulnerable teens say, 'I feel like other people when I'm online'. Around a third of those with home worries, an eating disorder, mental health difficulty, hearing difficulties, speech difficulties and young carers, say that they often or always feel more like others when online, compared to 18% of their peers.

Why are young people so attracted to the online environment?

Chart 14. Perceived benefits of internet life: *By how often they are experienced (%)*

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
I make my own music, films or videos	46	20	18	8	7
My online self is better than my real self	37	23	21	7	12
I express myself better behind a screen	26	20	25	16	13
I play games with people in other time zones	25	17	24	16	18
It is where my friends are	11	14	39	24	13
I learn new things	6	8	39	28	19
I watch videos one after another	8	9	35	27	22
It's fun and there are so many possibilities online	6	5	31	32	27
The internet stops me feeling bored	3	5	25	34	32
I go online for homework	4	4	22	37	34

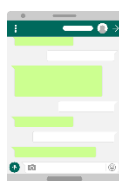■ Never ■ Hardly ever ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always

What I go online to do

- 71% of children and teens are going online for homework,
- 47% go online to learn new things
- 37% because 'my friends are online'
- 34% 'I always or often play games with people in other time zones.'
- 29% believe they express themselves better behind a screen,
- 16% go online to make their own music, films or videos.

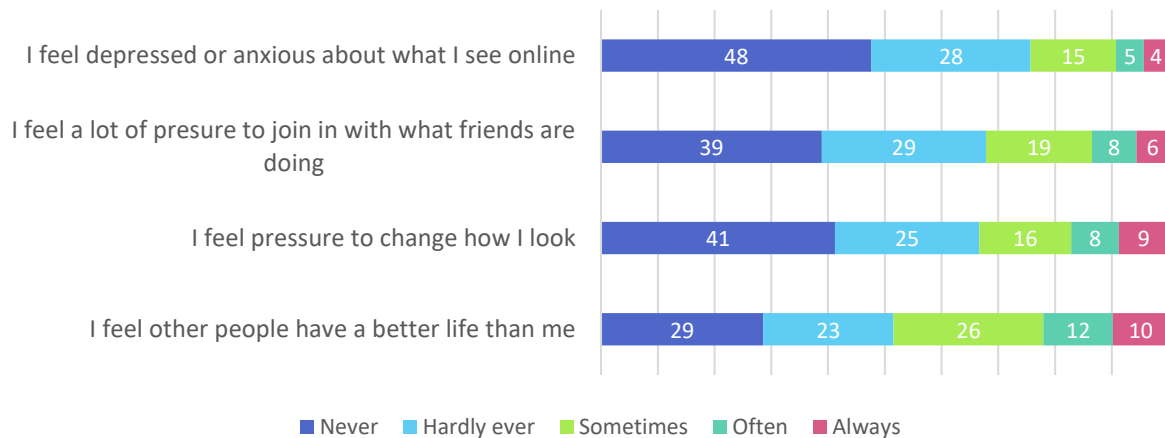### The online space encourages a curated self and chases away boredom

19% always or often think that their online self is better than their real self, whilst 66% say the internet stops them feeling bored. Just under half (49%) say that they often or always watch videos one after another. These young people find experiences online which they consider to be better than those available to them in their real, offline world.

Young people's experience of negative impacts online.

Chart 15. Perceived Negative Impact: *2021 (%)*

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel depressed or anxious about what I see online	48	28	15	5	4
I feel a lot of presure to join in with what friends are doing	39	29	19	8	6
I feel pressure to change how I look	41	25	16	8	9
I feel other people have a better life than me	29	23	26	12	10

■ Never ■ Hardly ever ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always

Other people online have a better life than I do
Almost 1/2 often or always feel that other people online have a better life than they do: Almost a quarter (22%) feel this 'often' or 'always.' Another 26% feel this way sometimes.

Social comparisons are rife; teens view the status, pictures and videos of others and compare their own life to what they see. Users curate and post only the best aspects of their lives online, and filters contribute to this false perception of 'perfection'. 17% of teens always or often feel pressured to change how they look. 16% sometimes need to do so.

Fear of missing out and social pressure
14% of young people always or often felt pressure to join in with what their friends are doing. The fear of not being included, or missing out on something that others are doing is described by the acronym FOMO. This fear may exist offline but is amplified online.
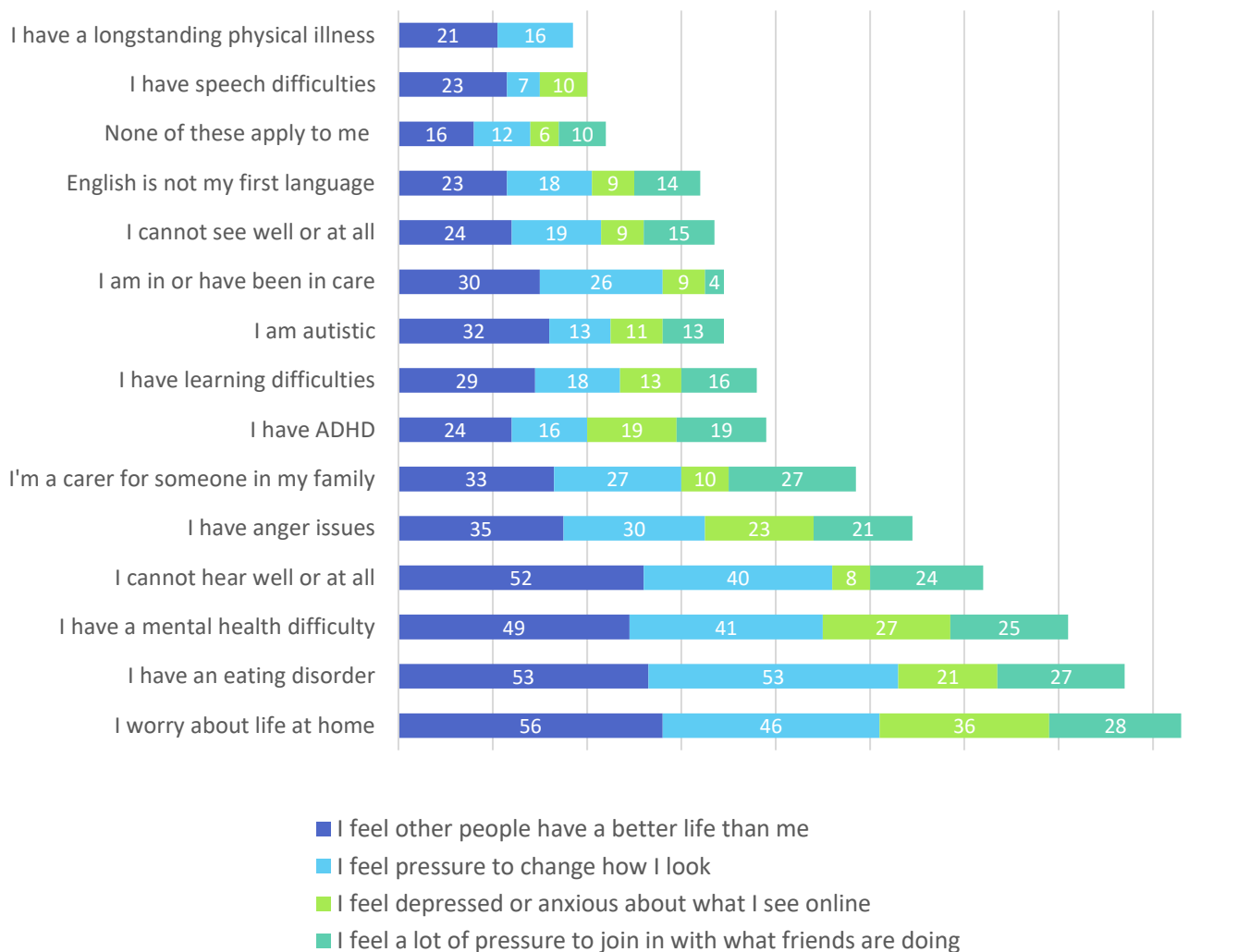
Anxiety
Yet this can make them anxious. 9% always or often feel depressed or anxious about what they see online, with an additional 15% feeling this way some of the time. These figures appear low, yet for those who do feel this way, online life may be amplifying existing depression or anxieties. We cannot infer cause and effect from this data, there is likely to be a two directional effect. Depression can be eased or made worse by online life.

- *Almost 1/2 of all our teens feel 'Other people online have a better life than I do.'*
- *56% of teens who worry about life at home feel others online have a better life than I do*
- *1/3 feel the need to change or improve themselves because of what they see online*
- *1/3 feel pressure to join in with what friends are doing online*

Chart 16. Perceived Negative Internet Impacts: *By Vulnerability (%)*

	I feel other people have a better life than me	I feel pressure to change how I look	I feel depressed or anxious about what I see online	I feel a lot of pressure to join in with what friends are doing
I have a longstanding physical illness	21	16		
I have speech difficulties	23	7	10	
None of these apply to me	16	12	6	10
English is not my first language	23	18	9	14
I cannot see well or at all	24	19	9	15
I am in or have been in care	30	26	9	4
I am autistic	32	13	11	13
I have learning difficulties	29	18	13	16
I have ADHD	24	16	19	19
I'm a carer for someone in my family	33	27	10	27
I have anger issues	35	30	23	21
I cannot hear well or at all	52	40	8	24
I have a mental health difficulty	49	41	27	25
I have an eating disorder	53	53	21	27
I worry about life at home	56	46	36	28

- ■ I feel other people have a better life than me
- ■ I feel pressure to change how I look
- ■ I feel depressed or anxious about what I see online
- ■ I feel a lot of pressure to join in with what friends are doing

A better life than mine

The feeling that 'other people online have a better life than I do' is dominant within all our vulnerable groups, particularly among:

- Teens who worry about their life at home (56%),
- Those with an eating disorder (53%),
- Or cannot hear well or at all (52%)
- Or have a mental health difficulty (49%).

Fitting in

Fewer non-vulnerable teens (12%) felt pressured to change how they look. Unsurprisingly, 53% of those with an eating disorder felt this pressure '*often or always.*'

Only 6% of the non-vulnerable teens *often* or *always* feel depressed or anxious about what they see online. Whereas, aside from teens who have a longstanding physical illness (0%), all vulnerable teens were considerably more likely to select this item, notably children and teens with worries about life at home (36%), who fare badly on these measures.

Feeling pressure to join in with what friends are doing is *always* or *often* a concern for 10% of the non-vulnerable young people. Among the vulnerable things were different: as many as a quarter of those who have a mental health difficulty (25%), young carers (27%), those with an eating disorder (27%) or worries about their home life (28%) feel this way.

The Inexorable Spread of Harmful Content

The harmful content children and teens can view online concerns us all. Reported viewing rates rise each year. Young people might intentionally seek out this content or be accidentally exposed to it on sites or social media. Friends might send links to inappropriate pictures or videos, while pop-ups or adverts might display them.

Table 3. Percentage of young people who have ever viewed harmful content year on year.

Have you seen a website, message, or post that….	2020	2021
Spreads information that might be fake about Coronavirus	42%	55%
Talks about suicide	31%	45%
Encourages people to bulk up their bodies	34%	56%
Pressures people to be very thin	27%	47%
Encourages hatred of men and boys	-	35%
Encourages hatred of women and girls	-	37%
Encourages violence	*	35%
Displays nude pictures or videos you did not search for	26%	32%
Displays very violent pictures or videos you did not search for	25%	37%
Encourages racist views	*	31%
Dares you to do risky things	15%	36%
Supports religious extremist or terrorist acts	13%	25%
Encourages people to harm themselves	13%	25%
*Encourages violent or racist views	26%	*

*Note. Percentages are the sum of 'Often,' '3-5 times',' and 'Once or twice' scores. *Due to question format changes, some comparisons are not valid i.e. question on racism and violence.*

Teens see more harmful content online each year.

! 45% of teens saw content talking about suicide and 1/4 saw content encouraging self-harm

More teens view pro-suicide and self-harm content
Once again, reports of content about suicide, or self -harm rose within a year: 45% had seen suicide content and a quarter had seen content which encouraged self-harm.

Compared to 2020, there was a 22% increase in reports of content that encourages people to bulk up their bodies. Over half (56%) of the 2021 cohort have seen such material. Almost half have seen content that pressures you to be too thin (47%).

In 2021 the Cybersurvey explored online material which: encourages racist views, encourages hatred of men and boys or women and girls, and encourages violence. Content which encouraged racist views had been seen by 31% of teens and over a third (35%) reported seeing material which encouraged violence. Questions about the latter were reformatted in the current survey, making year on year comparisons invalid.

Risky dares more than double to over a third
Reports of risky dares more than doubled to 36% since 2020.

Which vulnerable teens saw this harmful content repeatedly?
The Intense experience of seeing harmful content 'often' Is shown In Charts 17 and 18. The Impact can be very different from coming across It once or twice. Content encouraging self-harm was seen by 23% of teens with an eating disorder and by 14% and 13% respectively of those with a mental health difficulty and teens who worry about life at home. A third of teens with an eating disorder and almost a quarter of the young people who worry about life at home, had seen content talking about suicide.

Body image content – pressure to be either too thin or bulk up
Content about body image, was most likely to be viewed 'often' by teens with an eating disorder (40%) or a mental health difficulty (28%). The former also saw content about bulking up (23%). And the latter 28%.

Chart 17. Vulnerable teens most likely to have 'often' seen 4 types of harmful content compared to teens without vulnerabilities. Part 1.
By vulnerability (%).
'I have seen content on websites, messages or posts that…'

Legend:
- Pressures me to be very thin
- Encourages people to harm themselves
- Encourages people to bulk up their bodies
- Talks about suicide

	I have a mental health difficulty	I worry about life at home	I have anger issues	I have an eating disorder	I have no vulnerabilities
Pressures me to be very thin	28	20	17	40	10
Encourages people to harm themselves	14	13	11	23	5
Encourages people to bulk up their bodies	24	21	18	23	11
Talks about suicide	13	24	20	33	10

Nudity and violence
Young people may see explicit or nude images or videos they did not search for. This was most common among those with an eating disorder (13%) or vision difficulties (13%). Unwanted violent material was seen most often by teens with a mental health difficulty (16%), followed by those with an eating disorder (13%).
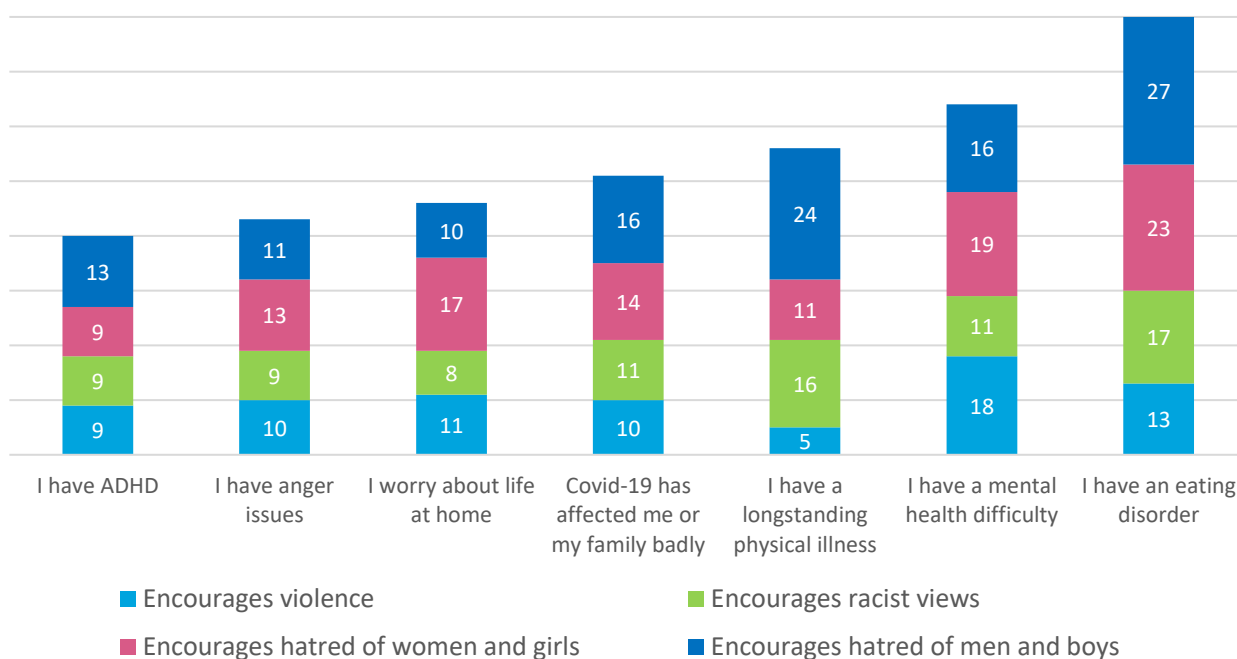
Hate Speech

The more vulnerable members of our community were most likely to report seeing harmful content encouraging hate, and troublingly, they saw it 'often'.

- Content which encourages violence was most likely to be seen 'often' by teens with a mental health difficulty (18%),
- Content encouraging racist views was likely to be seen by those with an eating disorder (17%) and of those with a longstanding physical illness (16%).
- Hatred of women and girls was often seen by 27% of those with an eating disorder and 24% of those with a longstanding physical illness.
- Content which encourages hatred of men and boys was most likely to be seen by those with an eating disorder (20%) and those with a mental health difficulty (19%).
- Content which supports religious extremist views or terrorist acts was likely to be seen by those with an eating disorder. *17% (Not shown in chart).*

Chart 18. Vulnerable teens most likely to have 'often' seen harmful content. Part 2.
By vulnerability (%).
'I have seen content on websites, messages or posts that…'

	I have ADHD	I have anger issues	I worry about life at home	Covid-19 has affected me or my family badly	I have a longstanding physical illness	I have a mental health difficulty	I have an eating disorder
Encourages hatred of men and boys	13	11	10	16	24	16	27
Encourages hatred of women and girls	9	13	17	14	11	19	23
Encourages racist views	9	9	8	11	16	11	17
Encourages violence	9	10	11	10	5	18	13

Dangerous dares

1 in 5 teens with an eating disorder and almost as many of those with a mental health difficulty 'often' encountered dares and challenges.
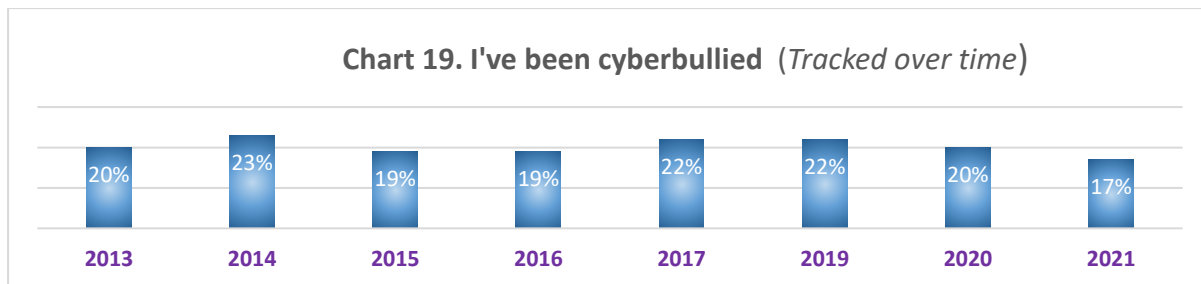
Covid misinformation

Since Coronavirus appeared, potentially fake information about it has been shared.
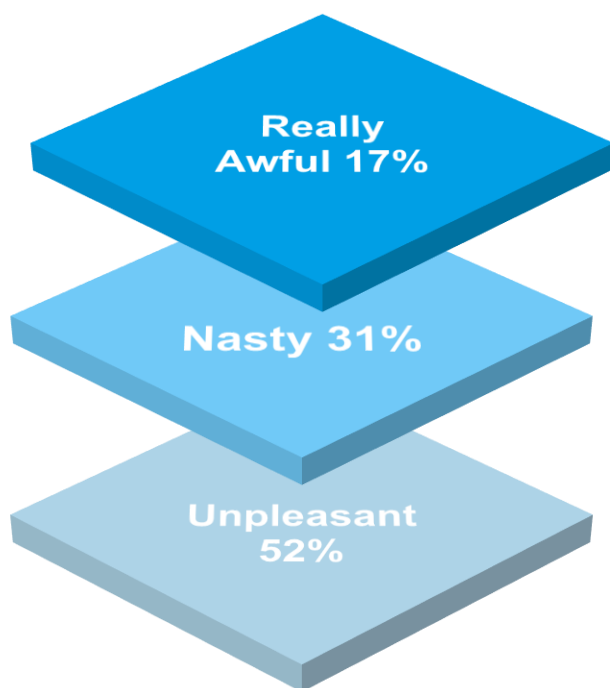- 26% of those with a mental health difficulty reported seeing this 'often' along with
- 27% of teens who have a longstanding physical illness and
- 30% who have an eating disorder

Cyberbullying

The online environment can be a platform for continuous threats, intimidations and aggressions, targeting young people. The Cybersurvey tracks it over time (Chart 19).
In winter 2021/22 reported cyberbullying decreased: 17% said it happened to them. This decrease should not obscure the very high rates reported by vulnerable children and those affected by COVID. It may be an anomaly due to lockdowns reducing social interaction.
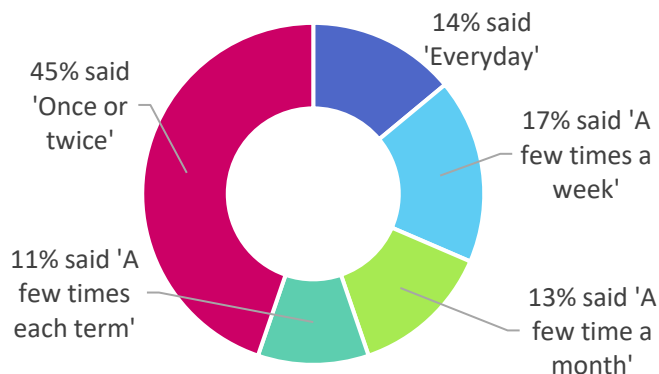
Chart 19. I've been cyberbullied (*Tracked over time*)

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	2020	2021
20%	23%	19%	19%	22%	22%	20%	17%

If you were cyberbullied, how bad was it?

Really Awful 17%

Nasty 31%

Unpleasant 52%

Cyberbullying

Reports of cyberbullying were down year on year. Over half of those who had been cyberbullied rated it as 'unpleasant' (52%). This is the weakest option, compared to nasty (31%) or really awful (17%) the most severe option.

Chart 20. How often did the cyberbullying happen?

- 14% said 'Everyday'
- 17% said 'A few times a week'
- 13% said 'A few time a month'
- 11% said 'A few times each term'
- 45% said 'Once or twice'

Almost half of those who had been cyberbullied only experienced this once or twice (49%), but 14% said that it happened every day and 17% that it happened a few times a week.

Who reports higher levels of cyberbullying?

Though levels of cyberbullying have slightly decreased to 17%, this is not the case for many vulnerable groups. Aside from those with a longstanding illness (11%) and those who are autistic (14%), our vulnerable groups are more likely to have been cyberbullied, as illustrated below. Teens who worry about life at home reported the highest levels.

Chart 21. Cyberbullying. *By vulnerability. 2021 (%)*

Category	%
I have a longstanding physical illness	11%
I am autistic	14%
None of these apply to me	16%
I cannot see well or at all	19%
I have learning difficulties	22%
I am in or have been in care	25%
I have ADHD	26%
English is not my first language	26%
I have speech difficulties	27%
I'm a carer for someone in my family	28%
I have a mental health difficulty	28%
I have anger issues	31%
Covid-19 has affected me or my family badly	34%
I have an eating disorder	37%
I cannot hear well or at all	40%
I worry about life at home	43%

Young people who worry about life at home were most likely to report being cyberbullied, along with those with hearing loss and teens with an eating disorder.

❗ Over 1/3 of teens who say COVID affected them or their family, badly were cyberbullied, illustrating how this new type of vulnerability is having an impact beyond health. Anyone who prefers not to state their gender should be in the forefront of safeguarding strategies.

Gender: Have you been cyberbullied?
19% of girls
12% of boys
47% who prefer not to say

Chart 22. What was the bullying about? 2021 (%)
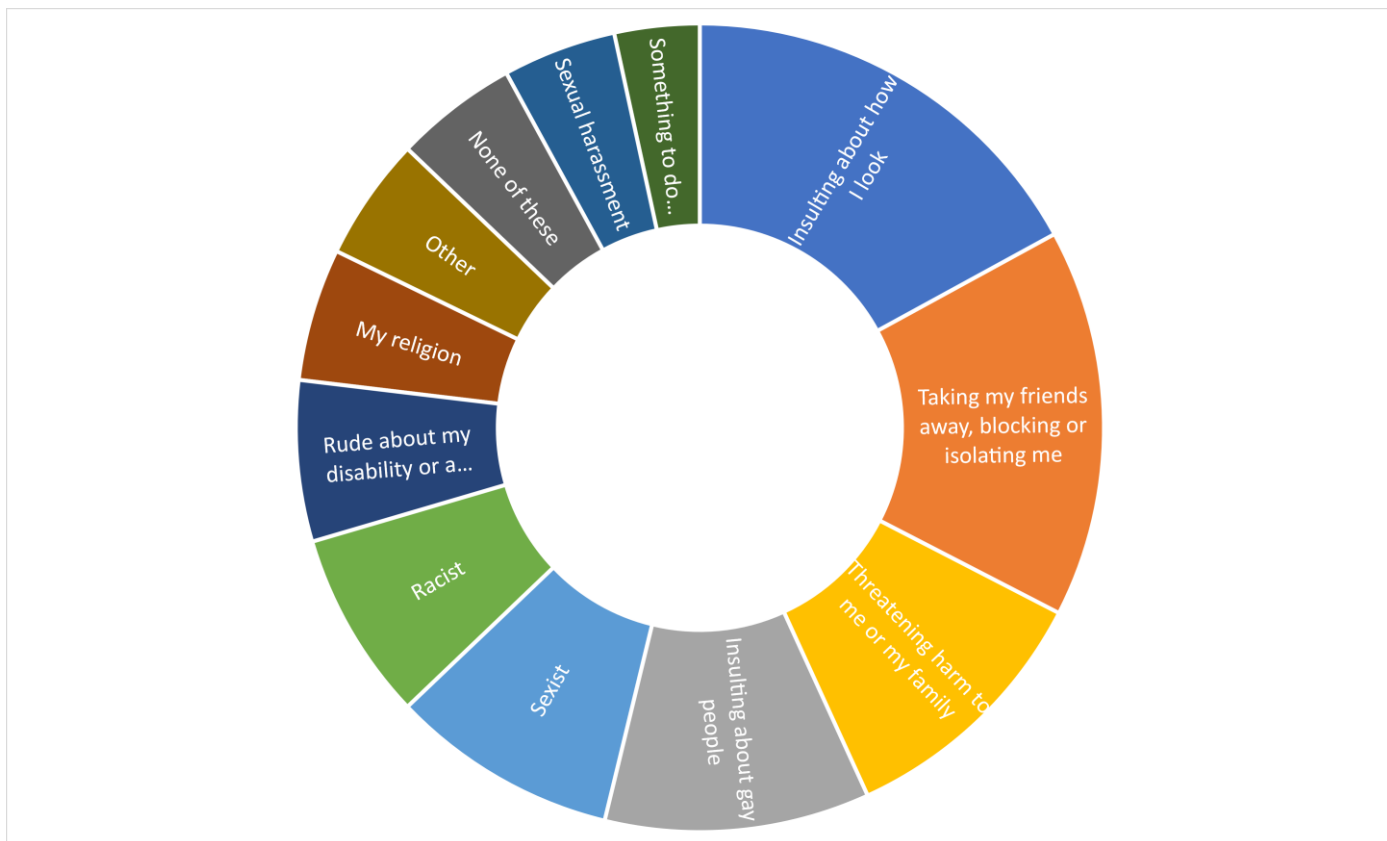
What was the cyberbullying about?

45% How I look
41% Taking my friends away
28% Threatening me or my family
28% Insulting about gay people
24% Sexist
20% Racist

17% Disability
14% Religion
13% Other
13% None of these
12% Sexual harassment
9% To do with COVID

Bullying due to appearance has been the most frequently named reason for or focus of reported cyberbullying in the Cybersurvey over many years. It manifests itself in the searches online for content about the body, whether to become thinner or to bulk up – the latter having now overtaken reports of pro anorexia content young people tell us about. Threats to family, homophobia and racism along with disablist bullying should be tackled robustly. Sexual harassment is the focus of much work in schools since the revelations of the website Everyone's Invited in 2021 led to an Ofsted Review on the issue and new efforts to address it.

When online use becomes a problem

Young people can and do spend hours of time on devices without breaks. Time flies by when gaming, exploring or connecting with friends. The heated debate over children's digital lives seldom reminds us that, while not all internet use is positive, not all use is harmful either. The focus has switched from 'screentime' – to a more measured appraisal of what children and teens do online, who they talk to; what they see, and what the impacts might be. Time online, if excessive, might be considered problematic if it interferes with a healthy balanced life. We will look at the components of problematic use.

Problematic internet use

PIU describes the development of problematic or harmful attitudes and behaviours towards the internet. This can include excessive use, an uncontrollable desire to be online, and an inability to control internet use. It may interfere with sleep, eating, socialising, physical activity or family time.

PIU can be understood and explored through three distinct areas:
- Neglect of self and others around them,
- Obsession,
- Absence of control: an inability to manage their time online.

Neglect

When children and teens spend increasing amounts of time online and become fixated with the online world, they might neglect their daily needs and activities. There is reason to be concerned if their internet use affects their health and wellbeing.

Chart 23. Problematic Internet Use. *Neglect (%) Because of my internet use…*

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
I have arguments with my family	33	31	21	9	6
I spend less time with my family	31	28	24	11	6
I feel bad about how I look	35	24	20	12	10
I forget to do my schoolwork	29	23	28	12	8
I forget to eat at the right times	43	23	19	9	6
I have problems with my eye sight	47	24	16	8	5
I do less sport or exercise	30	28	26	11	5
I sleep less	22	29	28	15	6
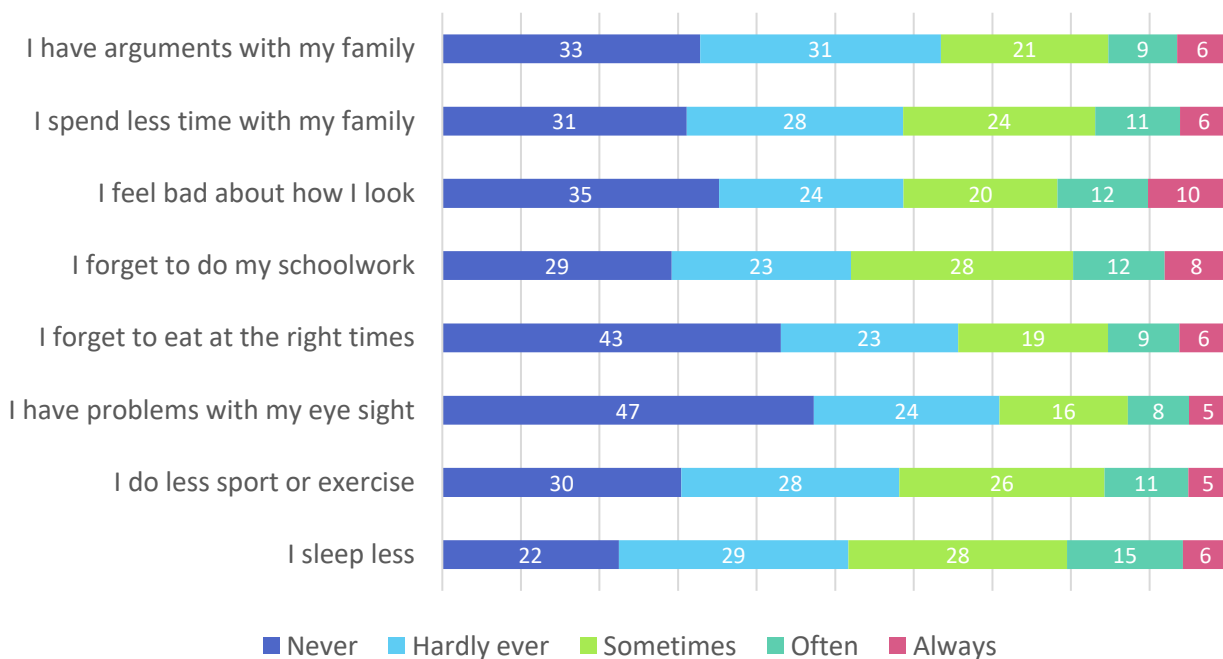
Fears about appearance, lack of sleep, family time and neglected schoolwork are the most reported impacts by teens who attribute these problems to their internet use.

Higher response rates for PIU neglect indicators among vulnerable children

The vulnerable teens who report the highest incidence of these impacts, are those with:
- an eating disorder
- worries about life at home
- a long-standing physical illness or
- mental health difficulties

Teens with no vulnerabilities were least likely to have experienced self-neglect impacts.

Sleep problems affect 14% of non-vulnerable young people, 21% of our total sample.
In contrast, sleep problems were reported by:
- 47% of those with speech difficulties,
- 44% of those with an eating disorder or hearing difficulties, and
- 42% who have anger issues.

14% of non-vulnerable teens and 20% of the total sample often or always forget to do their schoolwork due to being online. All vulnerable groups were more likely to do this, particularly those with hearing loss, 44% and those with worries about life at home, 43%..

Body image problems grow 'because of the internet'
Young people from vulnerable groups are more likely than peers to say: 'Because of the internet I always or often feel bad about how I look'. This is reported by almost two thirds of young people who worry about life at home (63%), or have an eating disorder (61%), a mental health difficulty (56%) or a longstanding physical illness (50%), There are likely to be many factors involved, as the intersectionality of body image issues is evident here.

'Because of the internet I always or often feel bad about how I look' say 63% of vulnerable young people who worry about life at home.'

Those with 'worries about life at home' may live with family problems such as parental relationship breakdown, domestic violence or poverty, job loss, illness or bereavement. Young carers have numerous worries. Here we learn that, in addition to their worries about life at home, these young people are also highly likely to feel bad about how they look.

Because of their time online:
More than 1 in 5 say their time online makes them feel bad about how they look
More than 1 in 5 sleeps less
20% neglect schoolwork
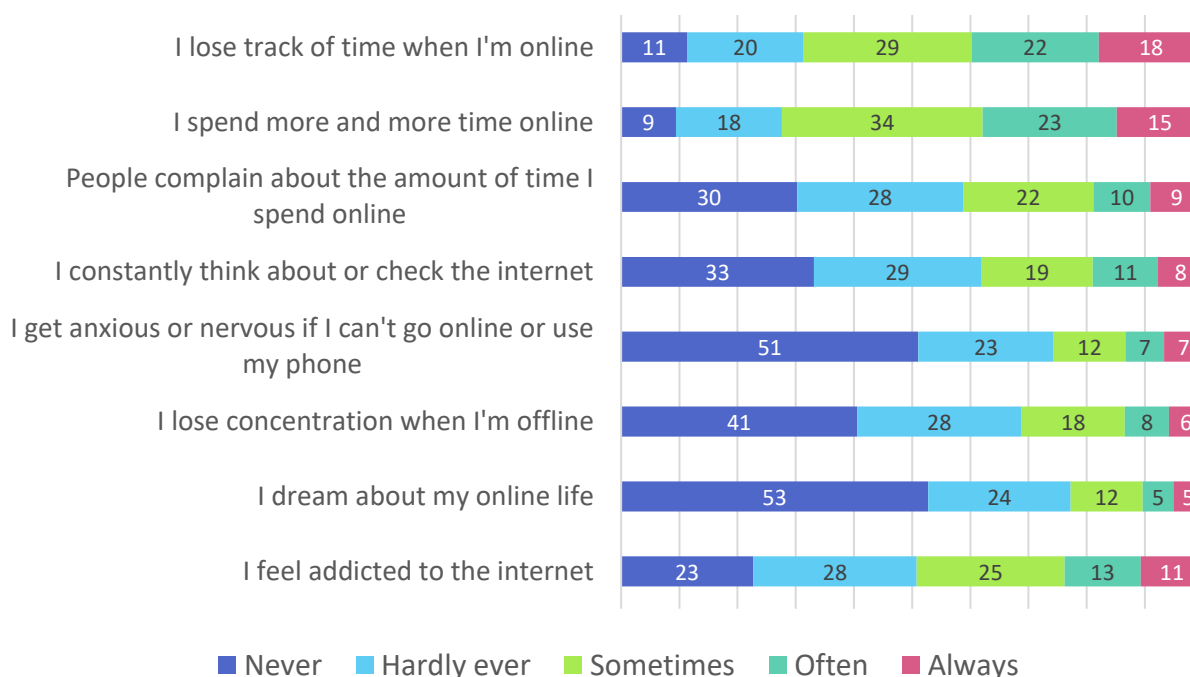*17% spend less time with family*
16% do less sport or exercise
15% forget to eat
15% argue with family about their time online
13% mention eyesight problems

Obsession

Chart 24. Problematic Internet Use: *Obsession. (%) Because of my internet use…*

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
I lose track of time when I'm online	11	20	29	22	18
I spend more and more time online	9	18	34	23	15
People complain about the amount of time I spend online	30	28	22	10	9
I constantly think about or check the internet	33	29	19	11	8
I get anxious or nervous if I can't go online or use my phone	51	23	12	7	7
I lose concentration when I'm offline	41	28	18	8	6
I dream about my online life	53	24	12	5	5
I feel addicted to the internet	23	28	25	13	11

■ Never   ■ Hardly ever   ■ Sometimes   ■ Often   ■ Always

Lost time, awake or asleep
- 40% of the sample often or always find themselves losing track of time online, and
- 38% say they are spending more and more time online.
- 24% say they feel 'addicted' to the internet, indicating their awareness of their growing obsession with the internet,
- 19% say that people complain about how much time they spend online.

If a young person is engaged in a project, learning or creating something such as a film or music, they are likely to lose track of time. Gaming too can induce a lack of awareness of time. Not all activities are harmful, it is about a balance across their lives generally.

'I constantly think about or check the internet'

Some show signs of obsession: Almost one in 5, (19%) say that they are often or always thinking about or checking the internet. The online world often or always features in the dreams of 10% of these young people as their online life transcends their waking hours.

Anxious when not connected

14% of the sample say they always or often get anxious or nervous when they are unable to go online or use their phone, with the same percentage unable to concentrate offline. Young people describe daydreaming about being online or worrying about what is going on in social media when they are not there.

More prevalent among vulnerable young people

Whilst 17% of our non-vulnerable sample say they always or often feel 'addicted' to the internet, these levels increase if vulnerability is present, particularly among young people with hearing loss, anger issues or home life worries.

More than half of those who live with hearing difficulties feel 'addicted' to the internet and being online.
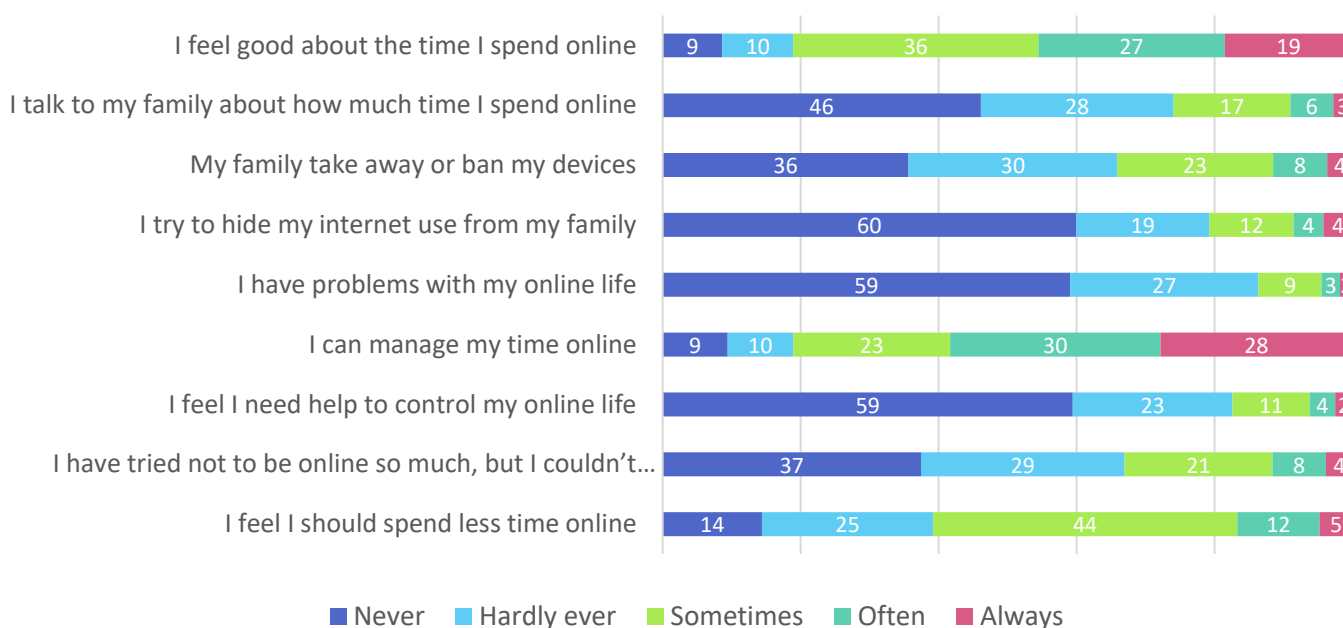
- 31% of non-vulnerable teens spend lengthy amounts of time online, in contrast to:
- 67% of those who cannot hear well or at all, and
- 58% of those who cannot see well or at all.

- 62% of those who worry about life at home say they always or often lose track of time when online, as do:

- 65% of teens with anger issues and
- 70% of teens who cannot hear well or at all

! As in previous years, we are concerned about young people with hearing and speech difficulties, alongside those with worries about life at home. Their online lives do not receive the attention and support their responses show they need.

Control Disorder

Young people may try to limit the time they spend online. A minority will struggle to manage their time online or follow rules or time limits. Control disorder describes this inability to control or limit their internet use. It is helpful not to problematise everything about the digital world. Just under half of this sample always or often feel good about the time they spend online. 59% never have problems with the time they spend online.

Chart 25. Problematic Internet Use. *Control Disorder (%)*

	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel good about the time I spend online	9	10	36	27	19
I talk to my family about how much time I spend online	46	28	17	6	3
My family take away or ban my devices	36	30	23	8	4
I try to hide my internet use from my family	60	19	12	4	4
I have problems with my online life	59	27	9	3	2
I can manage my time online	9	10	23	30	28
I feel I need help to control my online life	59	23	11	4	2
I have tried not to be online so much, but I couldn't…	37	29	21	8	4
I feel I should spend less time online	14	25	44	12	5

■ Never ■ Hardly ever ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always

46% always or often feel good about the time they spend online

Teens' views on the time they spend online

17% often think they should spend less time online (5% of whom *always* feel this way). A further 44% sometimes do. 6% often or always feel they need help to achieve this.

Research has shown parents can play a vital role engaging with their child's digital life[xii]. Yet only 9% of young people always or often speak to their family about the time they spend online. 12% said their family takes away or bans devices, so may not talk to them. One in five admit to hiding their internet use from family at least sometimes, among whom 8% do this often or always.

Reasons for hiding their use are not limited to struggling to limit time spent online, but may include issues with specific online activities, interactions with other users, or what they view. They may simply want privacy for their friendships and relationships.

Vulnerable children are more likely to say 'I feel I should spend less time online'

Some recognise that they should reduce their time online, Vulnerable teens are more than twice as likely as their peers to do so, perhaps because they have been told this?

- 14% of teens without prior vulnerabilities
- 28% of young people who are in or have been in care.
- 35% of those with a longstanding physical illness
- 37% of young people with worries about life at home

Trying to limit time spent online but failing to manage this, is a crucial feature of the Control Disorder aspect of PIU. Only 8% of non-vulnerable teens told us that this always or often happens to them. This proves even harder to navigate for vulnerable young people.

'I try to limit my time online, but I can't'

32% of the young people who worry about life at home,
28% who cannot hear well or at all, and
26% who have a mental health difficulty.
  8% of non-vulnerable teens

Table 4. **Percentage of teens with difficulties managing their time online.** *By vulnerability (%)*

Often and always	I feel I should spend less time online	I can manage my time online:	I have problems online	I've tried to manage my time online, but I can't
Not vulnerable	14%	62%	2%	8%
I worry about life at home	37%	36%	18%	32%
I have a long-term physical illness	35%	40%	10%	15%
I am in care	28%	44%	4%	12%
I have hearing loss	24%	20%	16%	28%
Mental health	25%	50%	18%	26%
Eating disorders	19%	39%	25%	22%
I am a carer for others	13%	45%	16%	19%

Executive Summary

More young people mention offline vulnerability this year than last
There was an increase in the percentage of teens who self-identified as having at least one vulnerability and, compared with 2020, a drop of 6% among those for whom 'none apply'.

Offline vulnerabilities
Among the 42% of our sample who self-identified as having any vulnerability listed, 52% have one, 27% have two and 21% have three or more. Out of a total of 1347.
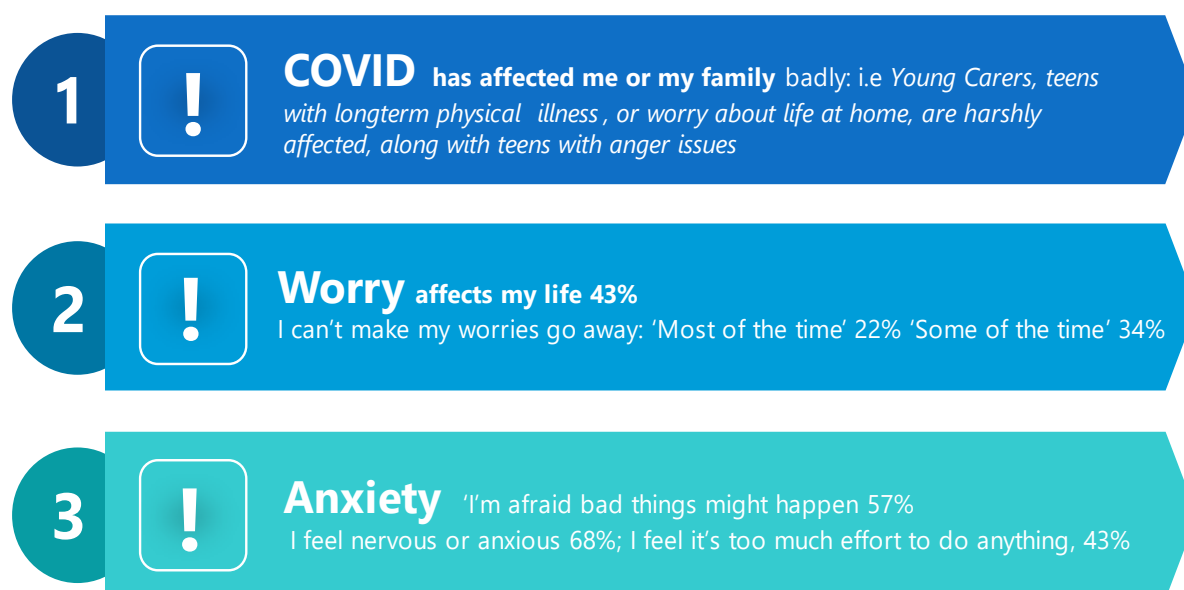
An increase in gender questioning
5% of teens said they prefer not to say what their gender is, an increase of 2% since 2020.

COVID-19 has a long impact
Coronavirus continues to negatively affect young people, though to a lesser extent than last year. 7% of the 2021 cohort said they or their family were badly affected by Covid, with an additional 34% affected 'in some ways.' Certain groups still suffer particularly harshly. 1/5 pf young carers say it affected us very badly.

The Cybersurvey 2021/22 COVID impacts and anxiety

1 **!** **COVID has affected me or my family** badly: i.e *Young Carers, teens with longterm physical illness , or worry about life at home, are harshly affected, along with teens with anger issues*

2 **!** **Worry** **affects my life 43%**
I can't make my worries go away: 'Most of the time' 22% 'Some of the time' 34%

3 **!** **Anxiety** 'I'm afraid bad things might happen 57%
I feel nervous or anxious 68%; I feel it's too much effort to do anything, 43%

Worries about the world rise, especially among vulnerable children
56% of teens 'cannot make my worries go away' (some/most of the time), up 3% on 2020. Teens with vision or hearing loss, learning difficulties or eating disorders, all reported rises of over 10%. A government report found 'indications that a range of emerging or continuing national and global issues may be causing worries and challenges for children.' [xiii] In this survey, many are worried about issues closer to home: their family or life at home.

Harmful content continues to rise inexorably

Harmful online content has been the major and increasing concern in Cybersurvey reports[xiv] and remains so. Reports increased of all types of harmful content.
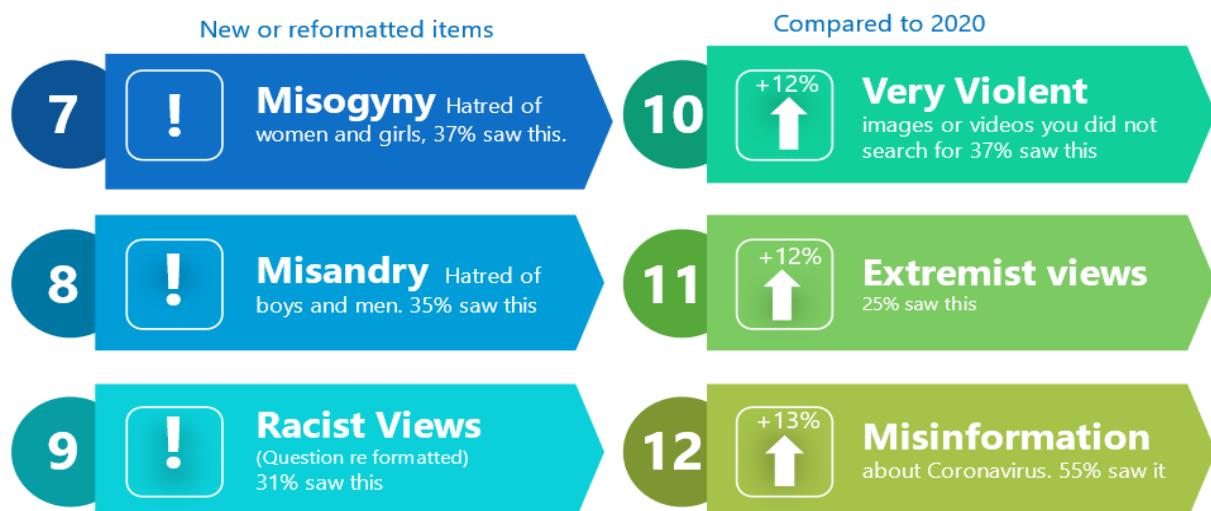
The Cybersurvey 2021/22 Changes since 2020 in online harms seen

1	-3% ↓ **Cyberbullying**
2	+22% ↑ **Body image** Pressure to bulk up
3	+20% ↑ **Body Image** Pressure to be too thin

4	+14% ↑ Content talking about **Suicide**
5	+13% ↑ Content encouraging **Self-harm**
6	+6% ↑ Unsought **Nude images or videos**

Social Media Envy

Just over a fifth of our teens think other people have a better life than they do, whilst a third feel pressured to change the way they look because of what they have seen online (of whom 17% often or always do.)

The Cybersurvey Harmful content:

New or reformatted items

7	! **Misogyny** Hatred of women and girls, 37% saw this.
8	! **Misandry** Hatred of boys and men. 35% saw this
9	! **Racist Views** (Question re formatted) 31% saw this

Compared to 2020

10	+12% ↑ **Very Violent** images or videos you did not search for 37% saw this
11	+12% ↑ **Extremist views** 25% saw this
12	+13% ↑ **Misinformation** about Coronavirus. 55% saw it

'Trying to find my happiness': How young people benefit from being online

The top three online activities teens said they do most, were generally passive, scrolling, connecting with friends or relaxing; fewer were purposeful or creative other than for homework. Passive and purposeful online activities should not be seen as opposed or good/bad. Passive uses often represent ways to help with mood, wellbeing, socialising and unwinding after school. More than 1/2 watch YouTube videos, play games or chat to friends. Over 2/3 find music online to fit their moods and over 1/2 say they feel closer to their friends online. It is where those with disabilities can feel 'like everybody else.'

'Music helps me and my ADHD calm down'

Just under ¾ go online for homework and 2/3 say the internet stops them feeling bored. Boredom can let worries or insecurities flood in. Many are fulfilling emotional or very basic needs.

What we love about being online. Answer: always or often

I feel more relaxed. 49%
It stops boredom 66%

I can find music to fit my mood 69%

Distraction

I feel closer to my friends
Social life is digital 20%
Play games with others 34%

Friends

Mood

Entertainment

My entertainment is mainly online. 49%
I enjoy being creative 57%
I learn new things 47%

I go online to find people like me 37%

Identity

Emotions

I feel like other people when I'm online 22%

I can calm down my emotions 52%

Cyberbullying reduced

We could be seeing the first signs of a fall in the rate of cyberbullying. After more than five years of hovering around or above 20%, the rate of respondents reporting that they had been cyberbullied, dropped in November 2021-Jan 222 to 17%, of whom 52% rated their experience as only unpleasant, (weakest), nasty (31%), or really awful, the most severe (17%) However many of our respondents are aged 11-12 or from a school that is particularly good at addressing bullying, equality and relationships, which may account for the apparent decrease. Teens with pre-existing vulnerabilities tend to report far higher rates of cyberbullying. Those who have an eating disorder have been cyberbullied most.

Implications and Recommendations

How can this data help you?

Children and teens have shared valuable insights into their digital experiences at an extraordinary time during the COVID pandemic. Young people can be reluctant to talk to teachers, professionals and even parents, about what they do online. That is why anonymous responses are so vital. We hope that by enhancing awareness and understanding of these insights, as part of our ongoing survey and research programme, schools, parents, professionals and frontline services will respond to the needs and concerns expressed here by young people.

Who is most at risk?

This cohort is unique. After almost two years of life with COVID, the impact is considerable. The Cybersurvey regularly studies vulnerable groups who encounter high levels of harmful content and are at risk of problematic internet use patterns. Those coming to the fore this year, include teens who worry about life at home. They join those who have eating disorders, mental health difficulties, or anger issues, about whom we have written before. In past years, we have also raised concerns about teens with hearing loss and this concern is amply illustrated again in this sample. They need effective responses to support their wellbeing and emotional health in a world changed by technology.

Education

Frank and honest education is required for teenagers on not sharing material encouraging self-harm, suicide or anorexia. Body image pressures should be explored using diverse models of beauty through the ages and cultures. The need to tackle sexual harassment remains, alongside work to understand all equality strands, reduce hate speech and address misinformation, disinformation and fake news. While misogyny and misandry are more prevalent, those questioning their gender night be also be at enhanced risk online. Vulnerable children need more attention paid to their online lives and possible problematic use.

Safeguarding

Challenging trends will test those charged with safeguarding children and young people. Among them is the spread of material containing extremist views and misinformation, the harmful content outlined above, violence against women and the availability of pornography. What is increasingly evident is the extent of risk among vulnerable youth.

Parental engagement.

Research by El Asam, Lane & Katz[X1X] demonstrates that parental engagement and attention to the child's wellbeing can reduce the chances of the child being affected by online harm. This involves parents being supportive, curious and engaged in the child's online life, with less preoccupation with clock-watching and policing time spent online. Emphasis should be on who they interact with online and what content they see. The question should be considered – is offline life attractive or enjoyable? Too many teens explain that they use the digital environment to escape their lives.

The responsibilities of online platforms

Reports of Harmful Content rose for yet another year. It is unrealistic and irresponsible, to expect children to keep themselves safe in this environment.

In our previous reports we emphasised the important role of online platforms in tackling harmful content and responding to reports of such material. But reported content often remains visible and, though a user can normally choose not to view that item again, it doesn't stop them seeing similar algorithm-generated content. Policies and guidelines are set too loosely to rule out these harmful experiences. Young people feel it is not worth reporting.

Platforms and search engines should urgently take steps to ensure that their users are not exposed to harm, in particular suicide content., pro self-harm or pro-anorexia material, sexual abuse and other harms listed in this report. As we note a steady increase each year in the percentage of children and teens who report seeing harmful content, current tools being deployed appear ineffective.

Emotional wellbeing

Wellbeing, emotional stability, and mental health are a priority this year for young people, whose worries and stresses, are impacting their daily lives and underlying many of their online behaviours. A focus on mental health and emotional needs by schools, parents and professionals could be an important step towards acknowledging what drives much of their online behaviour and encounters. As we have seen in earlier reports, emotions trump rules in the online ecosystem.

Increased vulnerability adds new strain to services

Increasing numbers of children and young people report an offline vulnerability this year. Services need sensitive responses to emerging needs and how these needs intersect. For example, teens with eating disorders or hearing loss report specific problems online that may not be apparent or obviously linked to the presenting problem when they attend a service or are assessed for safeguarding concerns. For example, 27% of the young people with eating disorders reported seeing content about hatred of women and girls.

Limited funding and shortages of capacity cause delays and bottlenecks. Vulnerable children demonstrate that offline vulnerabilities are associated with online risk in ways that should be explored in assessments and included in referrals. Children who are consumed with 'worry about life at home' are a group with their own difficulties. This may worsen in 2023. They tend to 'go online to 'escape'

Children benefit

We want children and teens to enjoy the digital environment safely and we recognise the positives they derive from the connected world. A risk averse approach will not enable this. But there is a pressing need for a change of approach.

The Cybersurvey relies on schools to participate at no cost, to gather and share this material. If your school would like to take part, please get in touch.
email: youthcybersurvey@gmail.com

List of charts and tables

i https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2021-week-48

ii https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1053302/State_of_the_Nation_CYP_Wellbeing_2022.pdf

iii https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics/performance-december-2021-provisional-january-2022

iv NHS Admissions data England. There were 7,719 admissions in 2021/22 among under-18s, up from 6,079 the previous year and 4,232 in 2019/20 - which is an 82% rise across two years.

v https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19-a-year-into-the-pandemic/

vi https://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/resources/evidence/young-peoples-rse-poll-2022

vii https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/4march2022

viii *CYP Now December 13th, 2021*

ix https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2022/online-grooming-crimes-rise/

x https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2022/thousands-children-disclose-abuse-first-time-childline/

xi There are over 1 million tech jobs in the UK that remain unfilled at any given time November 2021. www.techhq.com

xii Psychological Distress and Its Mediating Effect on Experiences of Online Risk: The Case for Vulnerable Young People El Asam, A., Lane, R., and Katz, A. 2022

xiii https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2022-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing

xiv www.thecybersurvey.co.uk

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