



DIGITAL YOUTH INDEX

REPORT 2023



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Introduction

IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE DIGITAL YOUTH INDEX, WE SEE STRONG TRENDS EMERGING IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Digital poverty is increasing: up to 2 million young people in the UK now lack access to a device suitable for their education. There's been another steep rise in the number of families cancelling or changing their home internet package, suggesting that the cost of living crisis is contributing to digital exclusion. Online harms and distressing content are on the rise; incidents of fake news, hate speech and inappropriate sexual images all increased once again.

THE SHAPE OF THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE DIGITAL HAVES AND THE DIGITAL HAVE-NOTS REMAINS CONSISTENT.

As we've seen over the previous two years, young people who are disabled, belong to minority ethnic groups and/or are in the care system are disproportionately impacted by digital poverty.

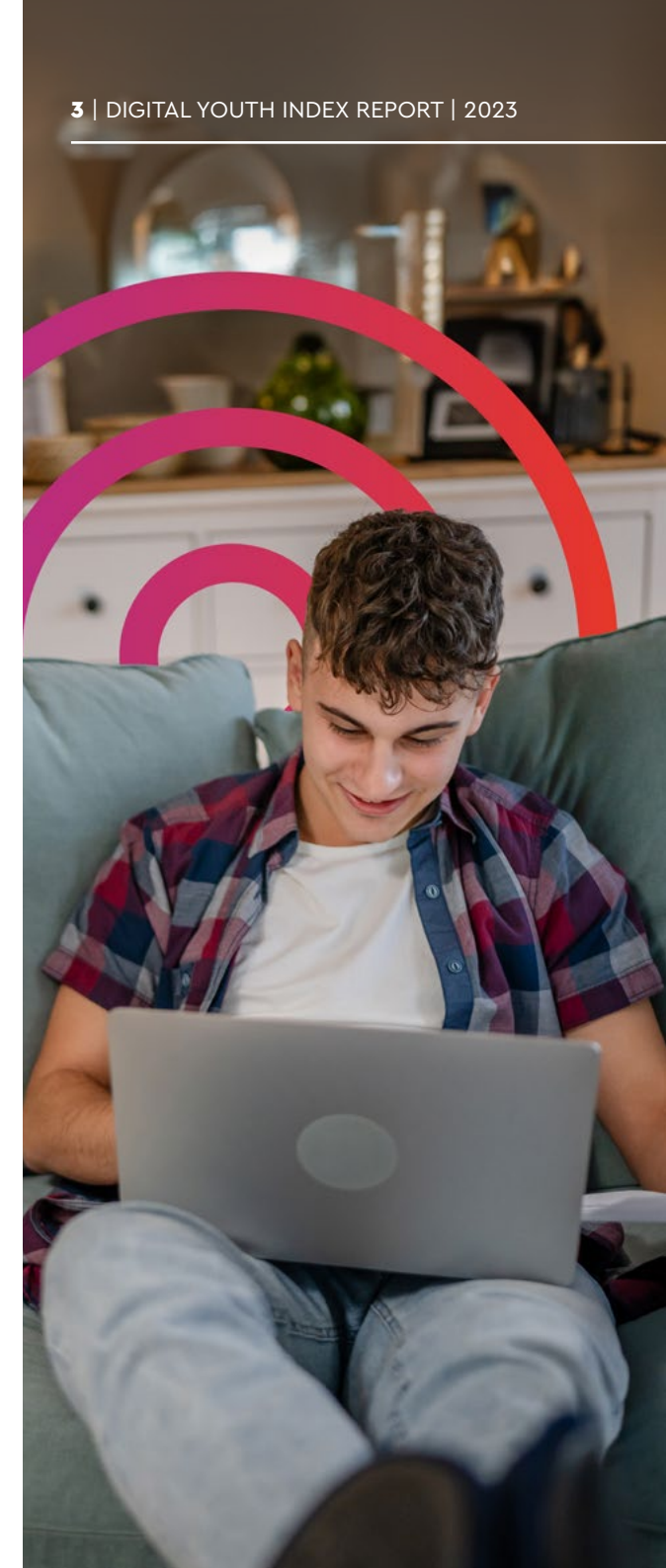
But the overall number of young people experiencing digital poverty has also increased. Young people in receipt of free school meals are most likely to go without a digital device for learning and are most likely to have had their family broadband changed or cancelled in the last year. In the context of a cost of living crisis with a sharp increase in eligibility for free school meals, more young people overall are being affected.

DIGITAL ACCESS IS NOW A PREREQUISITE FOR LEARNING, CAREER DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL CONTACT AND SO MUCH MORE THAT IS ESSENTIAL TO A YOUNG PERSON'S WELLBEING.

This year we've begun to explore a category of young people we are calling the 'conscious connectors'. These are young people who must limit their time online. They may not have a device of their own and instead rely on sharing one with family members, or they have a limited data plan and must plan their activities in advance as a result. We want to be able to identify the 'conscious connectors' and shed light on the challenges they are facing in a digital-first world. We also included questions on young people's attitudes and expectations on another rapidly changing digital frontier, AI.

THIS REPORT AIMS TO PROVIDE THE DATA THAT CAN SUPPORT RESEARCH, PUBLIC POLICY AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE UK'S YOUNG PEOPLE.

It provides just a snapshot of a wealth of information and insight provided by the Digital Youth Index. [Our data visualisation tool](#) gives you direct access to three years of data. We invite you to explore the data, export the outputs and use this information to champion and support young people.



Foreword

Dear Reader,

I am delighted to introduce Nominet's Digital Youth Index report for 2023. This report is the product of dedicated research and insightful analysis with our partners Opinium and is part of our commitment to the wellbeing and development of young people in the UK. It explores the complex and evolving relationship between our young people and digital technology.

At Nominet, we believe that the younger generation we nurture today will help to shape a brighter future. This conviction compels us to understand, support, and empower our youth in navigating the vast digital landscape that defines their world. Our aim is to ensure that we harness the opportunities and challenges technology presents to foster growth, innovation, and inclusivity for us all. This starts by listening to young people in their own words.

Our nation's young minds are not just the beneficiaries of this digital age, but the architects of its future. The majority are spending four to five hours a day online, where algorithms influence the choices they make, and where their voices have the potential to echo across the digital realm. The choices they make, their digital habits, and the skills they develop have profound implications for their own lives and our society.

Yet, as the report shows, this world is not an equal one – with 2 million young people across the UK lacking access to a learning device and 15% without broadband access at home. A young person's experience of the digital world is shaped by where they live, how they identify themselves, and how much their household earns.

This is why, as a Public Benefit company, we are committed to levelling the playing field for young people across the UK. This year, we have announced four flagship initiatives under our Social Impact work. We are ensuring future generations develop vital digital skills with micro:bit – the next gen, whilst addressing

the UK's lack of social mobility and digital skills gap with Click Start (in partnership with the Institute of Coding). We are also helping to fix the digital divide with Good Things Foundation and continuing to fund the UK Safer Internet Centre and their vital work to protect children from online abuse, sexual exploitation, and online bullying.

We must ensure that the online world remains a space for exploration, creativity, and collaboration, rather than one marred by harm or exploitation. Nominet, as guardian of the UK's critical internet infrastructure, is committed to upholding the digital space as a force for good.

The Digital Youth Index is a critical step in this endeavour. By commissioning this research and presenting it to civil society, we aspire to inform, provoke discussion, and inspire action. It presents a comprehensive view of the digital behaviours, attitudes, and skills of young people in the UK. It explores the digital challenges they face, from online safety to digital skills gaps, and highlights the remarkable opportunities digital technology offers in terms of education, personal growth, and connectivity.

As we delve into this report, I encourage you to not only consider the statistics and findings, but to reflect upon the human stories that shape the statistics. Every number represents a life, a future, and a potential that we must nurture and safeguard.



PAUL FLETCHER
CEO, NOMINET
NOVEMBER 2023

About the research

The Nominet Digital Youth Index offers a holistic picture of how young people are using technology and the internet.

The Digital Youth Index comprises five pillars:

- **Wellbeing** – how being online relates to physical and mental health and happiness
- **Safety** – perceptions of ability to avoid harm or risk online
- **Skills** – ability to navigate digital spaces and carry out different tasks
- **Connectivity** – how young people access the internet – whether via WiFi, mobile data or another method – and how this differs based on place and time
- **Access** – critical devices required to use the internet. This varies for different groups of young people based on their needs.

The Digital Youth Index provides a score for each pillar. For example, if a young person never has any problems accessing fit-for-purpose digital devices or a high-quality, unlimited internet connection, they would achieve a score of 100 for the Access pillar.

The Digital Youth Index combines a total of 44 data points across a sample of 4,000 young people. This allows us to show how these areas are changing over time, while identifying how different groups compare to one another. Not all the questions from our online survey were included in the Digital Youth Index, and data from these questions provides additional rich detail to the Index number for each pillar. Using our survey questions as the basis, we developed a framework that covers behaviours, attitudes, relationships and situations.

For example, when thinking about safety, we looked at:

- understanding of internet safety
- awareness of online risks
- ability to carry out tasks to stay safe online
- how safe young people feel online
- upsetting online experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Opinium researched the 2023 Digital Youth Index on behalf of Nominet using a two-

phase methodology – an initial quantitative survey followed by qualitative research.

PHASE ONE – QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

A robust online audience of young people were surveyed on the research questions. To ensure we captured a 'state of the nation' benchmark on the role of digital technology in young people's lives and delivered comparable results to previous years, we surveyed a nationally representative sample of 4,000 people aged 8-25.

Last year, in addition to an online study, we completed several offline interviews with young people who had limited access to the internet. We chose not to repeat this in 2023 due to the challenges in sourcing truly offline young people via a quantitative approach. Year on year, we will continue to seek the most effective ways to include the most hard-to-reach respondents. This is one of the reasons it is so important to us to pair phase one with qualitative interviews.

PHASE TWO – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

To further explore emerging patterns from the Digital Youth Index we conducted follow-up qualitative research. The qualitative phase included an online pop-up community with 20 young people. Participants were an even mix of young people in secondary school (aged 11-16), young people in further education, workplace training or work (aged 16-18) and young people aged 19-25.

Five additional in-depth interviews were conducted with youth workers to get their unique perspectives on the themes arising from the quantitative survey.

Quotes and case studies from the qualitative research feature throughout the Digital Youth Index. Age and gender remain, but names have either been removed or replaced to protect respondents' privacy.

In this research we base some categorisation on the following definitions from the Office for National Statistics.

[Social grades as a socio-economic categorisation](#)

[Young people who are not in education, employment or training](#) (NEET)

For more on the methodology, please see the Appendix.

Key findings

Overall, the Index score is in line with last year; however, Access has seen a decline and Connectivity and Safety an increase.



Pillar	2022	2023
Total	71	71
Access	62	57
Connectivity	68	71
Safety	79	81
Skills	80	81
Wellbeing	65	64

(Source: Digital Youth Index 2023, n=4,000)





ACCESS

Index score: 57%

14% of all young people lack access to a learning device (a laptop or desktop computer). This equates to **2 million young people across the UK**.

Nearly 570,000 young people lack both a learning device and home internet connection. This has worrying implications for educational equality and social mobility.

Access is the now lowest-scoring pillar in the Digital Youth Index, and a top priority for improvement.



CONNECTIVITY

Index score: 71%

This year's Connectivity Index score is higher than last year's – but this trend masks the continued impact of the cost of living crisis, and the disproportionate impact it is having on young people who are already disadvantaged.

15% of all young people are without broadband access at home. Young people in receipt of free school meals remain worse affected than the overall population (23%).

In the 2022 Digital Youth Index, 10% of respondents said they had to change or cancel their internet package. 11% stated the same this year.



SAFETY

Index score: 81%

Most young people feel safe online (94%). They feel that they understand what 'internet safety' means, they are aware of key risks, and they know how to implement basic measures to keep themselves safe online.

However, the **percentage of young people (76%) who have had upsetting online experiences is up 7 percentage points on 2022.**

Exposure to fake news (up 4% points since 2022), hate speech (up 4% points), sexual content (up 6% points) and being asked to share inappropriate sexual images (up 5% points) have all increased.



SKILLS

Index score: 81%

Aspirations for digital careers broadly mirror those found in 2022. However, aspiration differs depending on age, location and whether they are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

As young people enter the world of further education or employment, satisfaction with the training they have received for digital skills goes down.

53% of respondents have used an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot and are curious about how they can use AI tools like these in their lives. However, **many young people are worried about AI and what it might mean for future jobs.**



WELLBEING

Index score: 64%

Young people spend an average of 4–5 hours a day online. This time is mostly spent browsing social media, chatting with others and accessing entertainment.

95% of young people are on at least one social media platform. Young people strongly appreciate that social media makes them feel more connected to others, and **40% believe it can be a force for good.**

However, many young people are **experiencing distressing content on social media** (particularly on X (Twitter), Reddit and TikTok) and feel it impacts their personal health and wellbeing – particularly among over-16s.

Those in marginalised groups – such as LGBTQ+ young people and those with disabilities – **are most likely to state that social media has a negative impact on people like them (38%).**



Key findings

Access is the now lowest-scoring pillar in the Digital Youth Index and a top priority for improvement.

Our research suggests that **14% of all young people lack access to a learning device** (a laptop or desktop computer). This equates to **2 million young people across the UK**.

Nearly 570,000 young people lack both a learning device and home internet connection. This has worrying implications for educational equality and social mobility.

ACCESS

The Access pillar looks at access to the critical devices required to use the internet. These vary between different groups of young people based on their needs.

This year, we're particularly concerned with access to devices for learning and careers.

ACCESS TO LEARNING DEVICES THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVICES FOR LEARNING AND CAREERS

Last year's Digital Youth Index identified 'critical devices', including smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers.

Whilst smartphones still top the list as the most accessible device and are critical for socialising and online services, this year we want to focus on learning devices – laptops and desktops, and, for younger age groups, tablets. This is because of their importance to education and career readiness.

53% of young people say that using the internet has a positive impact on their schoolwork, which rises to 57% of secondary school children. Yet not all young people have access to devices that can connect them to the internet, with some sub-groups of young people most badly affected by lack of access.

ACCESS TO LAPTOP OR DESKTOP COMPUTERS

75% of young people in the Digital Youth Index survey have access to a laptop. This increases from 68% of 8–10-year-olds to 81% of those aged 16 years or over.

We would expect computer access to be lower among primary school students and for this to be less of an issue than for secondary school students. However, young people without access may still be at a disadvantage to their peers.

They may not be able to access learning apps and websites as readily and may be delayed in learning some of the computing skills that will be useful to them when they transition to secondary school, such as keyboard and some software skills.

In total, 14% of young people in this year's Digital Youth Index sample do not have access to either a laptop or a desktop computer.

LACK OF ACCESS TO A LAPTOP OR DESKTOP COMPUTER BY AGE GROUP

	Total	8–10	11–13	14–16	17–19	20–22	23–25
No access to laptop or desktop...	14%	17%	15%	15%	13%	13%	14%
...but can access a tablet computer	47%	66%	62%	46%	26%	31%	40%
No access to laptop, desktop or tablet	8%	6%	6%	8%	9%	9%	9%

	Total	Under 16 (8–15)	16 and over (16–25)	Adult (18–25)
No access to laptop or desktop...	14%	16%	13%	13%
...but can access a tablet computer	47%	59%	34%	34%
No access to laptop, desktop or tablet	8%	6%	9%	9%

COMPARING ACCESS TO LAPTOPS, DESKTOPS AND TABLETS

Although 14% of young people don't have access to a desktop or laptop computer, nearly half (47%) of these told us they have access to a tablet device instead. Four-fifths (80%) of primary school students have access to a tablet computer compared to 3 in 5 (60%) of those aged 16 and over. Looking at the difference by age, we can see that although primary school students are less likely to have access to a laptop or desktop computer, they are more likely to have access to a tablet computer instead.

Overall, access to a desktop computer is less likely among young people, with just over half (55%) of respondents having access to one. This varies only slightly by age, from 58% among primary school children to 64% among those aged 16 years or over.



LACK OF ACCESS TO A LAPTOP OR DESKTOP COMPUTER BY EDUCATION

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Further Education	Higher Education	Employed	NEET
No access to laptop or desktop...	14%	17%	15%	10%	7%	14%	30%
...but can access a tablet computer	47%	66%	55%	32%	27%	37%	33%
No access to laptop, desktop or tablet	8%	6%	7%	7%	5%	9%	20%

Access by level of education follows the same trend as age group. However, the difference in access to learning devices as young people move from primary school through to further or higher education and onto employment is much clearer.

8% of the young people in the Digital Youth Index sample do not have access to either a laptop, desktop or tablet computer. In UK population terms, this equates to 1 million young people aged 8-25 years old.



OUR FINDINGS SUGGEST DIGITAL ACCESS DOES NOT MEET MINIMUM DIGITAL LIVING STANDARDS

The [Minimum Digital Living Standard report](#) offers a framework for the digital needs of UK households with children and explores the implications of not meeting these needs. These findings show that two of the recommendations – for laptop access and home broadband access – are not being met in all instances. 17% of primary school students do not have access to a laptop or desktop computer, and 15% of these don't have internet access at home either.

YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING ARE PARTICULARLY DISADVANTAGED

Young people aged 16–24 years old who are not in employment, education or training are described as NEET. 3 in 10 (30%) NEET young people do not have access to a laptop or desktop computer, compared with 14% of young people overall. Only a third of those have access to a tablet instead. This leaves 1 in 5 (20%) young people who are NEET that do not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet computer.

According to the latest statistics from the Office for National Statistics (Q1 2023) there are currently 770,000 young people in the UK who are classified as NEET.¹ This means, based on our research, 231,000 of young people who are NEET do not have access to a laptop or desktop computer and 154,000 do not have access to any of these three digital devices, which might otherwise help them to prepare for and participate in education, employment or training. Given the importance of access to the online world, this may exacerbate a cycle of non-participation for these individuals.

LACK OF ACCESS TO A LAPTOP/DESKTOP AND HOME BROADBAND BY AGE GROUP

	Total	8–10	11–13	14–16	17–19	20–22	23–25
No access to laptop or desktop	14%	17%	15%	15%	13%	13%	14%
No access to home broadband	15%	15%	19%	21%	10%	11%	11%
No laptop/desktop and no home broadband	4%	4%	5%	6%	4%	3%	3%

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/latest>

LACK OF ACCESS TO A LAPTOP/DESKTOP AND HOME BROADBAND BY AGE GROUP

	Total	Under 16 (8–15)	16 and over (16–25)	Adult (18–25)
No access to laptop or desktop	14%	16%	13%	13%
No access to home broadband	15%	19%	11%	11%
No laptop/desktop and no home broadband	4%	5%	3%	3%

LACK OF ACCESS TO A LAPTOP OR DESKTOP COMPUTER BY EDUCATION

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Further Education	Higher Education	Employed	NEET
No access to laptop or desktop	14%	17%	15%	10%	7%	14%	30%
No access to home broadband	15%	15%	21%	9%	12%	11%	8%
No access to laptop, desktop or tablet	4%	4%	5%	3%	3%	3%	3%

DEVICE ACCESS IS NOT THE FULL STORY

Even among those with home broadband and access to appropriate digital devices, not all young people have access to a high-quality connection. The connection can be too slow to do the things they want to do or to connect all household members at the same time. They may also have limits to their device access that prevent them from meeting the recommendations of the Minimum Digital Living Standard – such as sharing a device with others.

See our analysis of the 'conscious connectors' in [the Connectivity pillar](#) for data that demonstrates the scale of this issue.

4% of young people lack access to a desktop/laptop computer and don't have broadband at home at all. This equates to 570,000 young people who are doubly disadvantaged when it comes to digital access.

"I wish my teachers understood why I take longer to do assignments as I don't have access to the internet as easy [sic] as everyone else."

18-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

FACTORS AFFECTING LAPTOP ACCESS

THE COST OF LAPTOP ACCESS

Laptop access is more affected by social and economic status than smartphone access. At current prices, even a budget laptop will typically cost twice as much as a budget smartphone. Laptops are more likely to be deemed unnecessary or too expensive among young people, and the parents of young people, who do not have access to them.

Across all respondents, expense is more likely to be given as a reason for not having a laptop (46%) than for not having a smartphone (31%). 36% of respondents under the age of 16 say laptops are too expensive, compared with 61% among those aged 16 and over.

Social grade has significantly more bearing on whether respondents say laptops are too expensive compared to smartphones. 53% of C2DE (working class) respondents said that laptops are too expensive compared to 40% of ABC1 (middle and upper-middle class).

The barrier of affordability is equally reflected in household income data. 30% of those living in the wealthiest household tier (over £80k per year) are likely to consider price as the barrier to laptop ownership and access, compared to 50% in the lowest (up to £20k per year). Once the barrier of price is removed, it becomes more likely that the barrier will be parents/guardians not allowing access (26% vs 15% in the lowest band).

The disparity in response between social grades (ABC1 vs C2DE) when saying that the reason they don't have access to a laptop because it is too expensive is double that for smartphones (13% compared with 7%). That being said, both demonstrate a significant gap in affordability between young people living in middle or upper-middle class households compared to working class households.

REASONS FOR NOT HAVING ACCESS TO A LAPTOP COMPUTER BY DEMOGRAPHICS

	Too expensive	Parent/Guardian won't let me	Parent/Guardian worried about safety	Too complicated to use/set up	I don't need it
Total	46%	17%	13%	14%	11%
Male	44%	18%	12%	14%	13%
Female	48%	15%	15%	14%	9%
Under 16s	36%	22%	17%	13%	12%
16+ years	61%	8%	7%	16%	10%
ABC1	40%	20%	16%	14%	12%
C2DE	53%	13%	11%	12%	11%
Free School Meals	39%	22%	21%	14%	6%
Ethnic Minority	38%	20%	17%	17%	7%
Disability	48%	19%	14%	13%	9%

REASONS FOR NOT HAVING ACCESS TO A LAPTOP COMPUTER BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

	Too expensive	Parent/Guardian won't let me	Parent/Guardian worried about safety	Too complicated to use/set up	I don't need it
Total	46%	17%	13%	14%	11%
Up to £20k	50%	15%	12%	15%	8%
£20k to £40k	52%	14%	11%	11%	11%
£40k to £60k	39%	19%	15%	15%	13%
£60k to £80k	32%	26%	15%	13%	14%
Over £80k	30%	26%	24%	10%	15%

EXTREME POVERTY IS DRIVING DOWN DEVICE ACCESS

Recent research from the charity Buttle UK estimates that 122,000 children in the UK are currently living in extreme poverty (destitution) and that this has increased 15% from the previous year due to the cost of living crisis.²

In addition to impacting their ability to afford food, utilities and rent or equivalent living costs, the report states that 65% of these young people go without IT equipment for education or employment. Access to the internet and digital devices is being compromised to afford basic provision such as housing, food and other utilities. Our own research echoes this – those who could most benefit from support and online interventions are too often the ones who can't access them.

As part of the Digital Youth Index, we interviewed five social workers from across the UK. While they were clear that moving services online has had many benefits – wider reach, more engagement and an ability to increase young people's confidence – some young people simply aren't being reached through online advertising or online courses.

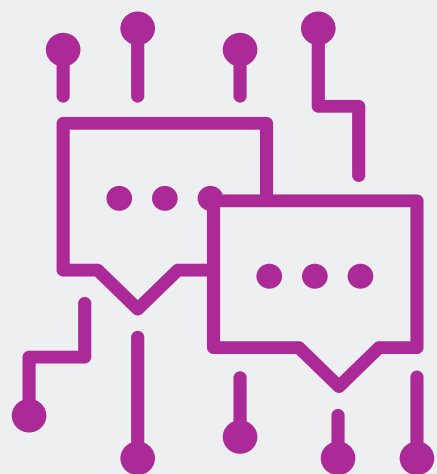
Increasingly, young people need to be 'digital citizens' to access critical services such as banking, mental health support, CV-building resources and job searches.

To become a confident digital citizen, access to devices and connectivity is essential.

"The nature of our young people... they could be homeless, they might not have access to a laptop. So, a lot of the things we're asking them to do, the likes of a business plan that is 36 pages long, so if they only have a mobile phone, there's no way you could populate a business plan on a mobile, absolutely no way."

SOCIAL WORKER WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON FIRST STEPS TO SELF-EMPLOYMENT

² [State of Child Poverty 2023 – Buttle UK](#)



Key findings

While this year's Connectivity Index score is higher than last year's, this trend could be masking a more troubling reality.

15% of all young people are without broadband access at home. Young people in receipt of free school meals remain worse affected than the overall population (23%).

In the 2022 Digital Youth Index, 10% of respondents said they had to change or cancel their internet package; 11% stated the same this year.



CONNECTIVITY

The Connectivity pillar of the Digital Youth Index examines a young person's ability to connect to the digital world, regardless of device. It explores a young person's home broadband connection, connectivity in a school or workplace setting, and their ability to access mobile data.

THE DEEPENING IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The cost of living crisis is being felt by more and more young people. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of young people say they are feeling the impact of the crisis – up from 71% in 2022. This could reflect nearly 300,000 more young people across the UK feeling the impact of the cost of living crisis in one year alone.

The proportion who said they're struggling to pay their monthly household bills has remained constant at 22%. The proportion who said they have had to change or cancel their internet package is 11%, building on 10% of respondents last year.

IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

	2022	2023
Has had an impact [NET]	71%	73%
Struggling to pay monthly bills	22%	22%
Have had to change/cancel internet package	10%	11%
We have money worries	40%	42%
We have to use less electricity	35%	36%
We haven't been able to replace/fix a broken device	14%	15%
Has had no impact	13%	14%

According to the Office for National Statistics, there are approximately 14.3 million 8–25-year-olds living in the UK.³ Based on this, we can estimate that if 73% of our sample are impacted by the crisis, that equates to around 10.4 million young people. Using the same reference point, we can estimate that 3.1 million young people are living in households struggling to pay their monthly household bills and 1.6 million have had to recently change or cancel their internet package as a direct result of the crisis.

This data also tells us that the situation has worsened for everyone over the past year, regardless of demographic profile. Even in the highest household income band (over £80k per year) the impact of the crisis has deepened, with an increase of 2 percentage points year-on-year, up to 57% this year.

³ [Mid-year population estimates from 2021](#)

Yet the crisis is undoubtedly impacting those who live in low-income households the most. 85% of those living in households with a combined annual income up to £20k per year say the cost of living crisis is impacting them. 80% of young people in receipt of free school meals say it's impacting them, compared with 66% of those not in receipt of free meals.

The percentage of young people who are classed as NEET and are affected by the cost of living crisis increased by 10 percentage points from last year. We also see the same trend for people from ethnic minority backgrounds.



HOME INTERNET IS BECOMING AN UNAFFORDABLE 'LUXURY' FOR MORE AND MORE FAMILIES

According to research from Citizens Advice, 1 million people living in the UK have disconnected their home broadband in the past year because they can no longer afford to pay for it.⁴ The cancellation rate is six times higher among people who claim Universal Credit.⁵ This aligns with the findings of the 2023 Digital Youth Index.

NET IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS BY DEMOGRAPHIC [HAS HAD AN IMPACT]

	2022	2023	YoY
Total	71%	73%	+2%
ABC1	69%	71%	+2%
C2DE	76%	80%	+4%
NEET	72%	82%	+10%
Free School Meals	78% (vs 64%)	80% (vs 66%)	+2% (vs +2%)
Ethnic Minority	69%	76%	+7%
Disability	81%	82%	+1%
Household Income: to £20k	81%	85%	+4%
£20k to £40k	78%	81%	+3%
£40k to £60k	69%	74%	+5%
£60k to £80k	62%	66%	+4%
Over £80k	55%	57%	+2%

Last year's Digital Youth Index was the first to be able to reflect that the cost of living crisis was having a negative impact on digital connectivity. In 2022, more than 1 in 5 (22%) respondents said that they were struggling to pay their monthly household bills, and 1 in 10 said they had changed or cancelled their internet package due to the cost of living crisis. This impact persists this year; the proportion of young people aged 8–25 with access to home broadband has largely stayed the same (85% compared to 84% in 2022).

While levels remain the same this year, there are some subtler signs that the situation has worsened. The cost of broadband,⁶ as one of many household bills, is a clear concern for many people living in the UK. For most, this situation has worsened compared to 2022. This is particularly true among those in receipt of free school meals, who are nearly twice as likely to report that they've had to cancel or change their internet package than those who are not in receipt of free school meals (16% vs 9%). This is up 4 percentage points on last year. Those in the lowest household income band are also particularly affected: 14% report having to change or cancel their broadband due to the cost of living crisis.

It's possible some households may have shopped around for a better deal or downgraded rather than cancelling outright – but our data seems to support the claim from Citizens Advice that up to 1 million people living in the UK (not limited to those aged 8–25) may have disconnected their home broadband in the past year due to the cost of living crisis.

⁴ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/about-us1/media/press-releases/one-million-lose-broadband-access-as-cost-of-living-crisis-bites/>

⁵ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/digital-divide-poorer-households-left-behind-broadband-race-during-cost-living-crisis>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/feb/09/mobile-broadband-prices-uk-above-inflation-rises-bills>

HAVE HAD TO CHANGE/CANCEL INTERNET PACKAGE DUE TO THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS BY DEMOGRAPHIC

	2022	2023	YoY
Total	10%	11%	+1%
ABC1	10%	12%	+2%
C2DE	10%	11%	+1%
NEET	14%	12%	-2%
Free School Meals	12% (vs 8%)	16% (vs 9%)	+4% (vs +1%)
Ethnic Minority	13%	14%	+1%
Disability	15%	15%	0%
Household Income: to £20k	11%	14%	+3%
£20k to £40k	12%	13%	+1%
£40k to £60k	10%	11%	+1%
£60k to £80k	9%	11%	+2%
Over £80k	11%	12%	+1%

THE GROWING COST OF MOBILE AND INTERNET USAGE

An estimated 11 million broadband and mobile customers faced price increases of up to 17.3% in April this year linked to high inflation rates.⁷ The UK Government plans to encourage greater use of social tariffs (cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits). Additionally in August 2022 they announced plans for a new system that will allow customers to grant permission to their broadband provider to confirm their eligibility for cheaper deals.⁸ Next year's Digital Youth Index may shed some light on whether these measures have made a difference.

⁷ <https://www.yourmoney.com/household-bills/how-millions-can-avoid-the-17-april-broadband-price-hikes/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cheaper-broadband-for-struggling-families-14-august-2022>

ALMOST A QUARTER (23%) OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN RECEIPT OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS HAVE NO ACCESS TO HOME INTERNET

This is a 5 percentage point increase compared with last year's Digital Youth Index. We do not apply quotas on this group in our research, so this may partially be due to differences in natural fallout during sampling. However, this aligns with external data that points to an increase in the uptake of free school meals nationally as a result of the cost of living crisis.⁹

Based on data from the Department for Education, we can estimate that nearly half a million (497,000) young people in receipt of free school meals lack access to an internet connection at home.¹⁰ This is consistent with the results in the 2022 Digital Youth Index. This is compared with 13% of young people not in receipt of free school meals.

From the data, we see that young people in receipt of free school meals are more likely to come from low-income households – 27% from households with an annual income up to £20,000, compared with 19% in the total sample. We also see that they are more likely to be disabled (50% vs 42% in the total sample).

The very youngest respondents in our sample – 8-year-olds – are more likely to be in receipt of free school meals and to have no access to a home internet connection (15% compared with 6% of the total sample). We can also see an over-representation of school students who are in their GCSE years, with 21% of young people aged 15 likely to be in receipt of free school meals and no access to a home internet, even though they make up only 7% of the total sample.

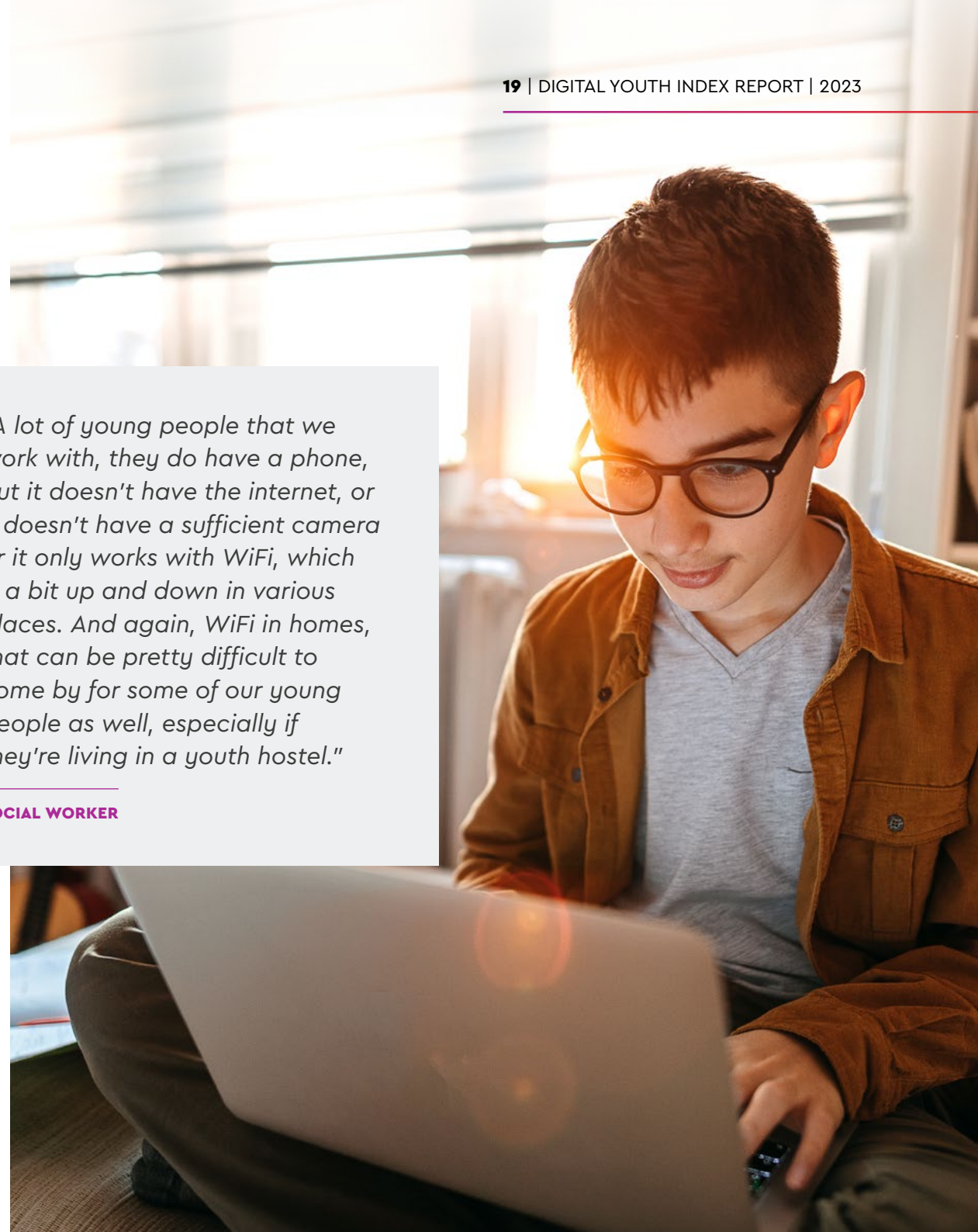
These statistics suggest that lack of access to home internet is just one example of the multiple factors of disadvantage that some of our young people face.

⁹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england>

¹⁰ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/8dd9e2ce-15b8-4918-9d67-08db63516a24>

"A lot of young people that we work with, they do have a phone, but it doesn't have the internet, or it doesn't have a sufficient camera or it only works with WiFi, which is a bit up and down in various places. And again, WiFi in homes, that can be pretty difficult to come by for some of our young people as well, especially if they're living in a youth hostel."

SOCIAL WORKER



FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) AND NO HOME INTERNET – BY AGE

	FSM + No Home Internet (n=211)	Free School Meals (n=907)	Others in Education* (n=2,107)	Total Sample (n=4000)
Under 16	93%	88%	78%	46%
8	15%	13%	10%	6%
9	7%	12%	11%	6%
10	8%	9%	9%	5%
11	5%	5%	4%	3%
12	9%	13%	12%	7%
13	15%	14%	13%	8%
14	12%	9%	9%	5%
15	21%	13%	11%	7%
16	3%	5%	7%	4%
16 and over	7%	12%	22%	54%

*FSM n=907 out of 2318 under 16s and 16+ in education not including university of which 211 do not have internet access at home.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN URBAN AREAS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED

More young people are in receipt of free school meals in urban areas – 54% compared with 45% of the total sample. Young people in urban areas are also more likely to be without home internet access (59%). Young people in suburban areas are less likely to claim free school meals or not have an internet connection at home (30%), but the incidence is lowest in rural areas, where 11% of young people are in receipt of free school meals and have no home internet.

Young people in London (18%) and the West Midlands (10%) are particularly likely to be both in receipt of free school meals and lack a home internet connection. This is much less likely if they live in suburban areas such as the South East.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) AND NO HOME INTERNET – REGIONAL SPLIT

	FSM + No Home Internet (n=211)	Free School Meals (n=907)	Others in Education* (n=2,107)	Total Sample (n=4000)
% of DYI sample	5%	23%	53%	100%
Urban	59%	54%	42%	45%
Suburban	30%	35%	43%	41%
Rural	11%	11%	15%	14%
Scotland	9%	7%	5%	7%
Northern Ireland*	2%	3%	3%	2%
North East	7%	5%	4%	4%
North West	9%	12%	11%	11%
Yorkshire and Humber	8%	9%	9%	9%
East Midlands	9%	7%	7%	7%
West Midlands	10%	9%	9%	9%
Wales	4%	5%	5%	5%
East of England	8%	7%	10%	9%
London	18%	19%	15%	14%
South East	8%	9%	14%	14%
South West	8%	7%	8%	8%

*Lowest base size is in Northern Ireland (n=98)



SOME YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO USE THEIR LIMITED DATA CAREFULLY

Through data, qualitative research and conversations with our expert Advisory Panel, we have identified a group of young people for whom the cognitive load¹¹ of accessing the internet is greater than it is for those with fewer limits on their connections. These young people could be described as 'conscious connectors'.

Our working definition of a 'conscious connector' is anyone 16 years or older for whom being online is a considered decision. They may be forced to limit the amount of time they spend online due to the cost of getting connected or because they have to share their internet connection or digital device with others.

Unlike their peers, the 'conscious connectors' have to plan ahead to ensure they make the best use of their available time online. In practical terms, this could mean having less time for homework that uses the internet than is needed, or deciding not to switch on Google Maps to navigate to their destination late at night – with implications for their safety.

They are also less likely to spend time idling on the internet like their peers, for example by browsing social media or viewing entertainment.

IDENTIFYING THE 'CONSCIOUS CONNECTORS'

We don't currently ask questions in the Digital Youth Index that easily identify young people as 'conscious connectors', but we can explore some parameters to identify young people who are most likely to fit this description based on their responses to questions about connection and device limits.

- 15% of young people in our sample aged 16 years or older cannot do what they want online due to connectivity issues. This identifies all those who agree in some way with these statements, rather than identifying the most extreme cases. It also asks about what they want to do rather than what they need to do.
- If we filter further to exclude those without an internet connection at home, we are left with 12% of the sample who are connected but the connection is inadequate.
- We then add young people who have device limits, for example limited access to the type of device that they need to carry out a particular task.
- If we look at the interconnection between young people with connection limits (Table 1) and those with device limits (Table 2) we get a total of 18% of young people.
- **This means almost one in five of the young people in the Digital Youth Index survey could be described as falling into this 'conscious connectors' category.**

¹¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0364021388900237>

TABLE 1: CONNECTION LIMITS (16+)

	2023
No internet at home	11% (n=238)
A. There are some things I want to do online that I can't do because of slow or no internet	37% (n=805)
B. There are some things I want to do online that I can't do because of limits on my/my family's mobile data package	26% (n=567)
C. There are some things I want to do online that I can't do because of limits on my/my family's broadband package	26% (n=562)
Agree with any two of these statements	26% (n=572)
Agree with all three statements [A+B+C]	15% (n=329)
Agree with all three statements but have internet at home	12% (n=261)
Agree with all three statements and have no internet at home	3% (n=68)



TABLE 2: DEVICE LIMITS (16+)

	2023
No access to laptop, desktop, smartphone, and tablet [4 key devices]	2% (n=37)
Access but unable to use whenever they need to* [all 4 devices]	0.1% (n=3)
Access but unable to use whenever they need to [excluding smartphone]	1% (n=22)
Access but unable to use whenever they need to [laptop OR desktop only]	8% (n=179)
Unable to use whenever they need to [laptop OR desktop] + Internet at home	7% (n=152)

*Answers: "I can only use it at certain times or have to share it with other people."

TABLE 3: IDENTIFYING THE 'CONSCIOUSLY CONNECTED' (16+)

	2023
Connection limits only	12% (n=261)
Device limits only	7% (n=152)
Connection OR device limits	18% (n=395)
Connection AND device limits	<1% (n=19)



Case study:

Gemma, 23 years old, North West, Social Grade D

Gemma lives with her parents and works in a semi-skilled role. She has a low-cost data plan but it doesn't meet her needs and she regularly runs out. She tries to limit how she 'spends' her data and often has to rely on free public WiFi.

LIMITED DATA:

"I'm on a £10-a-month pay as you go plan. This only comes with 2GB of data a month."

ANTICIPATION:

"I run out a lot..."

PLANNING AHEAD:

"Now I try and not use it until necessary (like needing to book an Uber or using Google Maps to find somewhere)."

TROUBLESHOOTING:

"If I run out of data when I really need it, I'll usually have to find somewhere with free WiFi, like a McDonald's or Wetherspoons."

* Names have been changed for respondent confidentiality.



UNDERSTANDING THE COGNITIVE LOAD OF STAYING CONNECTED

Many young people don't know how much data digital tasks might need. As part of the Digital Youth Index online community, we asked young people how much data they thought they would use in a 20-minute video call or scrolling TikTok for 20 minutes. Responses were mixed and illustrated the high levels of uncertainty. If young people don't know how much time they will need, how are they to plan ahead on restricted contracts?

Elsewhere in our qualitative research, concerns about privacy in public spaces came through strongly. Not having a private space to be online, having to share a connection or not having a personal device can be particularly problematic when researching topics like feminine hygiene or mental health. Other examples include tasks which involve personal data, such as creating a CV or applying for a passport. These young people have to be much more cautious about logging out of shared systems to protect themselves and their data.

Overall, the additional cognitive load of being a conscious connector might affect young people's behaviours, patterns and opportunities in multiple ways. As Gemma's case study shows, young people with limited data need to plan their actions and connectivity constantly. Trying to meet their digital needs is taking up headspace and time that their peers can be spending on other things.

"[Freedom is] doing what you want online and finding out all the information you want to, online by yourself. What gives me the freedom is me having my own electronics as this means I can do what I like in my own time whenever I want."

15-YEAR-OLD MALE



Key findings

Most young people feel safe online (94%). They feel that they understand what 'internet safety' means, they are aware of key risks, and they know how to implement basic measures to keep themselves safe online.

However, the **percentage of young people (76%) who have had upsetting online experiences is up 7 percentage points on 2022.**

Exposure to fake news (up 4% points since 2022), hate speech (up 4% points), sexual content (up 6% points) and being asked to share inappropriate sexual images (up 5% points) have all increased.



SAFETY

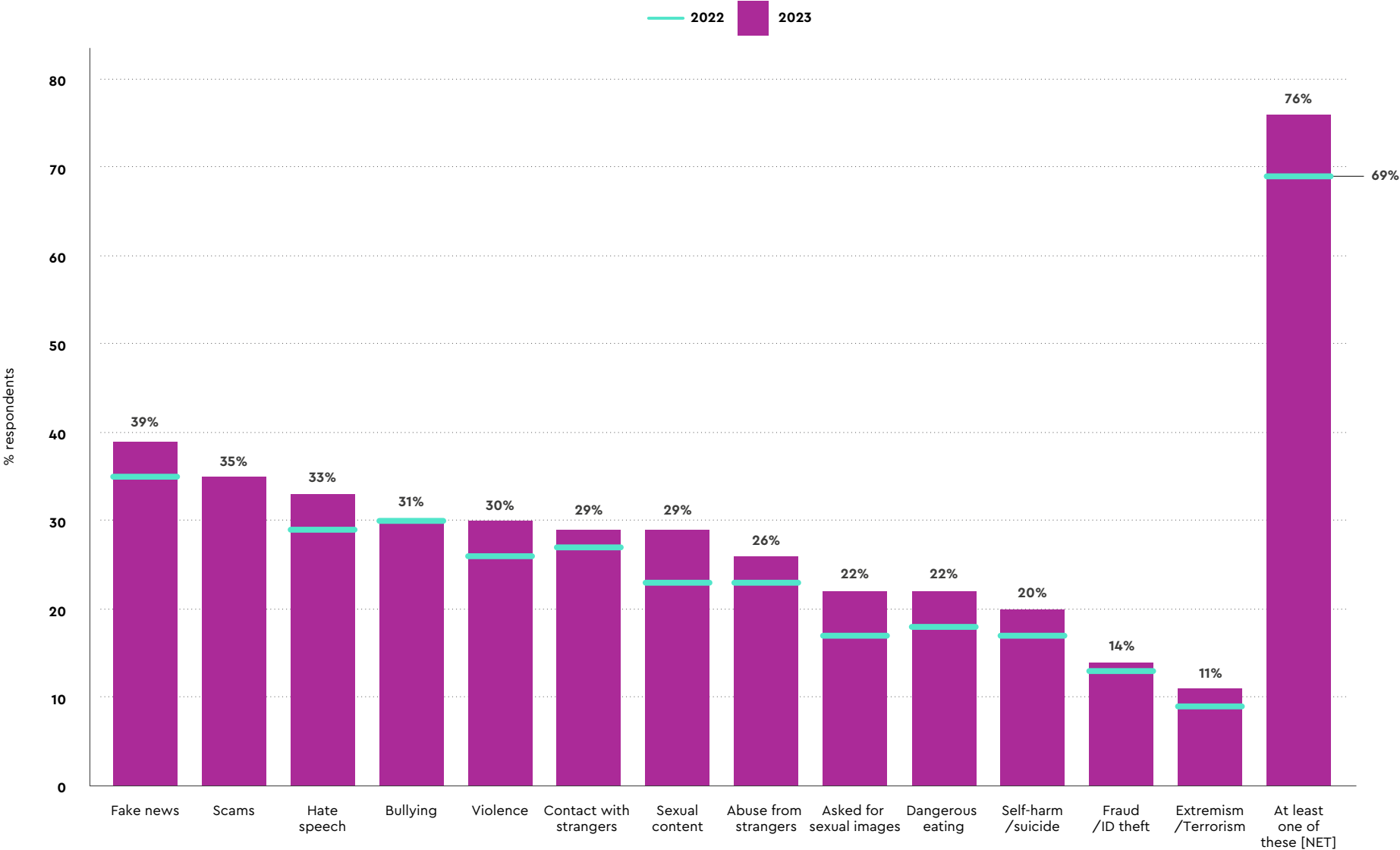
The Safety pillar examines a young person's experience of staying safe online, and tracks data including:

- their awareness of key risks
- their ability to implement basic safety measures
- their feelings of safety
- their exposure to potential harms.

ARE ONLINE HARMS BECOMING NORMALISED?

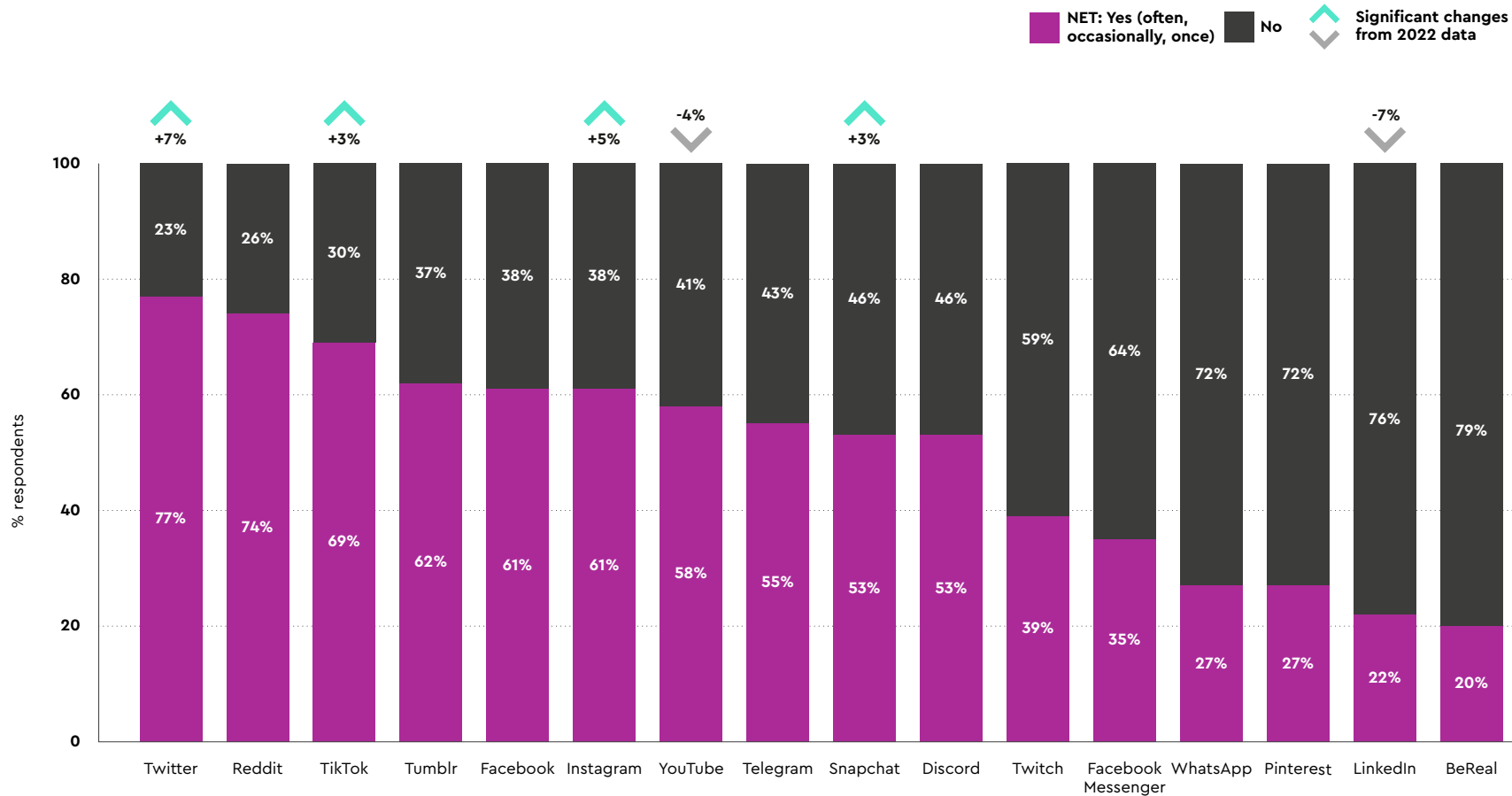
Data from this year's Safety pillar shows young people are exposed to an increasing range of potential harms. Young people are seeing a high prevalence of distressing content on social media. Most young people who use X (Twitter), Reddit, TikTok, Tumblr, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat or Discord have come across distressing content on the platform they're using. X (Twitter) tops the list – 77% of young people report they've seen distressing content on the platform. This is a rise of 7% compared to 2022.

EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE HARMS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 8-25 YEARS



Q22A. Have you ever seen or experienced any of the following while online?
Base: All respondents (n=4,000)

HAVE YOU EVER COME ACROSS DISTRESSING CONTENT ON THIS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM?



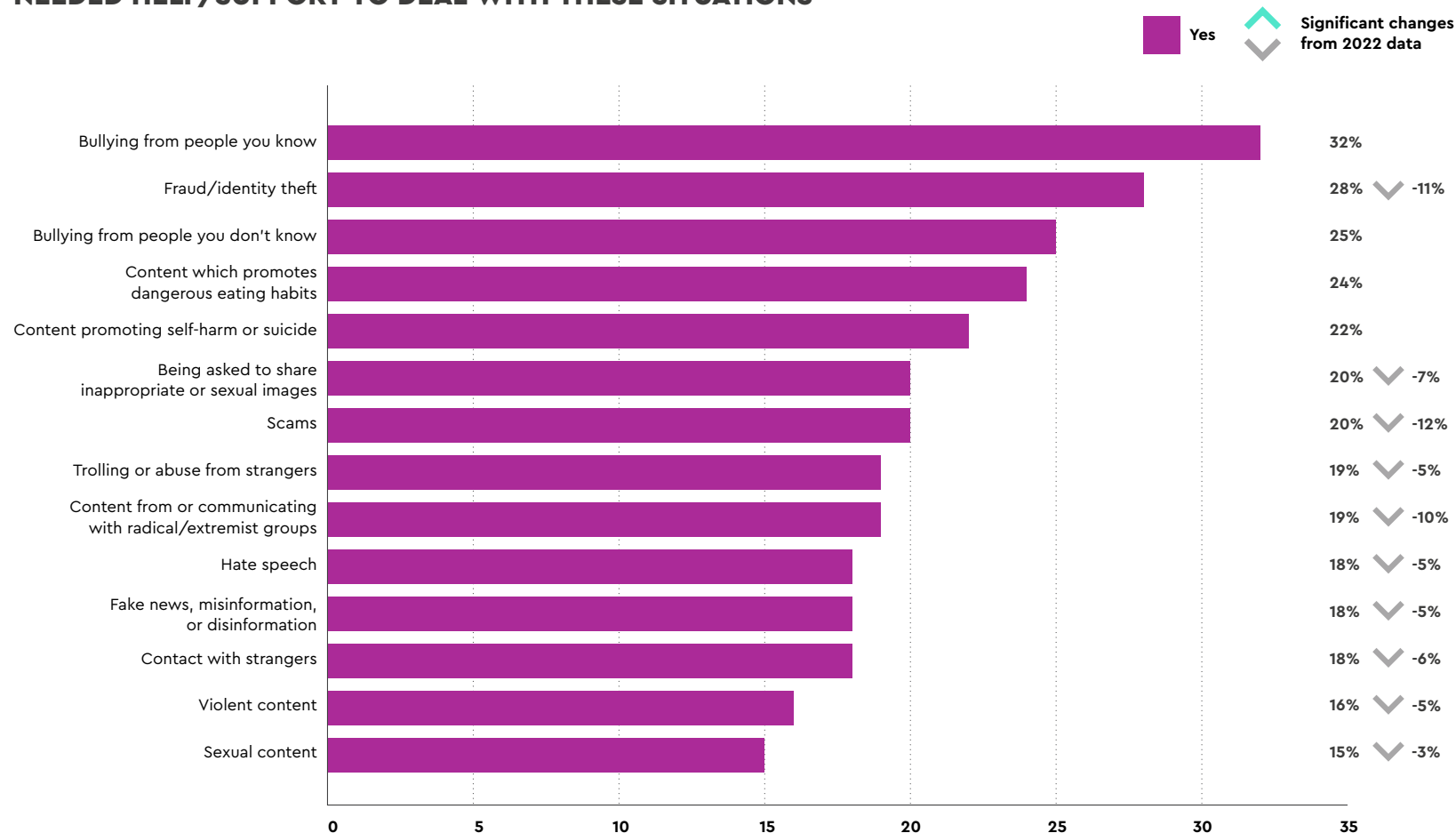
Q27. Have you ever come across content that you find distressing on the following social media platforms?

Base: Social media platform users (min. n=218 on Tumblr)

We might expect increased exposure to potential harms to correlate with young people feeling less safe online and demanding more support, but this is not the case. 94% of young people report feeling safe online (down just 1% from 2022). Substantial demand for support still exists, yet those claiming they needed help upon encountering a potential harm decreased significantly:

- 11% fewer young people reported needing help when faced with fraud
- 10% fewer young people reported needing help when receiving communication from radical/extremist groups
- 7% fewer young people reported needing help when being asked to share inappropriate or sexual images.

NEEDED HELP/SUPPORT TO DEAL WITH THESE SITUATIONS



Q22B. Did you need any help or support to deal with the following...

Base: Those who experienced online harm (min n=455 contact with radical/extremist groups)

This dynamic is particularly striking when looking at the experience of groups most affected by specific harms. For example, 24% of girls/young women have experienced bullying from people they know and 25% from strangers, compared with 15% and 18% of boys/young men respectively. However, they are less likely than young men to say they have needed help to deal with bullying.

We see a similar pattern across an array of harms from fraud and identity theft to content promoting dangerous eating habits or suicide. Increased exposure does not seem to correlate with increased demand for support.



DID YOU NEED ANY HELP OR SUPPORT TO DEAL WITH...? [ANSWERED 'YES']

	Total	Male	Female	Under 16	Primary school	LGBTQ+	Free school meals	Additional needs
Bullying from people you know	32%	34%	31%	43%	46%	27%	45%	37%
Bullying from strangers	25%	29%	22%	39%	47%	21%	45%	31%
Fraud/ID theft	28%	29%	27%	44%	38%	23%	42%	32%
Content promoting self-harm/suicide	22%	25%	20%	39%	48%	24%	45%	33%
Content promoting dangerous eating habits	24%	30%	20%	45%	46%	24%	47%	32%

The growing volume of potentially harmful content young people are exposed to, and the onus on children and young people to protect themselves from harm, appears to be having a material impact on their wellbeing.



One explanation for this might be that young people feel increasingly capable of dealing with online risks. Youth workers report that on cybersecurity courses they run, “generally speaking, the young people are way more savvy than some of my colleagues who are in their 40s and 50s”.

However, it's concerning that children and young people – whose understandings of right and wrong, of their boundaries and rights, are still elastic, might be accepting online harms simply as ‘the cost of entry’ to being online, at the potential cost of their wellbeing.

“That awareness [of potential harms] can feed into anxiety and other things... if it's affecting their mental well-being, their mental health, they're feeling anxious, if that is the outcome of that awareness, that is a negative impact”.

SOCIAL WORKER

“I never really sought out help since it felt ‘normal’ at the time and all my peers were looking at this stuff too [but it] really stuck with me and gave me nightmares.”

23-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

“Harmful or explicit content is readily available, and it makes us desensitised to it as we are used to it compared to older generation[s].”

18-YEAR-OLD MALE



CHILD FINANCIAL HARMS

Child financial harms are caused to a child through the direct loss of money and/or the introduction of risky financial behaviours.

This year we were keen to contribute to a greater understanding of child financial harms. We extended our qualitative research to explore young people's experiences of spending, making and losing money online.

"A lot of schools bring in ... drug addicts to tell their story and try and prevent people in that year from, you know, going down the same path. Same with gambling – I feel there's a lot of regulation in that and a lot of stories that are bad in that. You don't really see a lot of scamming things whereas I think it is a big thing."

15-YEAR-OLD MALE

SCAMS

A common example of a child financial harm is scams. 35% of young people, including 50% of over-16s, have experienced a scam online. Data from young people in education (12–18 years) suggests scams are a growing problem, especially among older age groups. 14% of 12–18-year-olds reported they had experienced a scam this year, up from 10% in 2022.

Our data reflects broader societal and online trends. In May 2023 the BBC reported that banks have seen a huge increase in fraud in 2022, much of it originating online.¹² Barclays report that 77% of scams now happen on social media, online marketplaces and dating apps. TSB reported that impersonation scams on WhatsApp tripled in the past year and that fake listings on Facebook Marketplace doubled. Lloyds Banking Group's fraud prevention director, Liz Ziegler, claimed that we are facing an 'epidemic of scams'. The former CEO of NatWest, Alison Rose, said that 3 million people across the UK became victims of fraud in 2022 – they have seen an 87% increase on their platforms alone, with an estimated 60% of frauds originating on social media and technology platforms.

However, child financial harms seem to be an under-recognised facet of this issue. This risks the topic being neglected in contexts where other harms are addressed.

As with other online harms, some young people are more vulnerable than others.

Scams are more likely to be experienced by:

- young women/girls (39% compared 31% by young men/boys)
- over-16s (50% compared to 18% under-16s)
- those who identify as LGBTQ+ (50% compared to 34% who do not)
- young people with a disability (40% compared to 32% without).

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-65486219>



"I think mostly about learning about financial safety online, it has been through my parents or something, so not mainly in school."

15-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

THE COST OF ONLINE GAMING

Almost half of the young people surveyed (47%) use their devices to play online games. 69% of gamers within our survey report being generally happy with life, 6% more than non-gamers. They are also less likely to report feeling isolated (31% vs 38% non-gamers).

For many young people, games are also their biggest online expense. The UK's digital games industry is valued at around £2.7 billion and grew 3% year-on-year in 2022.¹³ Many games require payments at multiple touch points across the user journey; from initial investment in hardware to the purchase of software packages or subscriptions, to in-game spending on 'skins' (changing the appearance of a character) and features that confer an advantage for in-game play ('pay to win').

Young people reflect that it's easy to spend a lot of money in games in a short space of time. "I'm awful for that, I spent thirty quid on it last month," and "I spend more money on currency in-game than I do on actual new games."

Games can also introduce risky financial behaviours such as online gambling,¹⁴ with no age verification or safety regulations in place to protect children. Financial harms such as scams appear to be on the rise, and in-game currencies are reported to be normalising risky financial behaviours.¹⁵

Young people feel the issue merits more attention from those with responsibility to help keep them safe online. The cost-of-living crisis could increase the damaging impact of child financial harms on children without a financial safety net. These risks may have a particular impact on young people from poorer households.

¹³ <https://www.uswitch.com/broadband/studies/online-gaming-statistics/#:~:text=How%20much%20is%20the%20online,positive%20growth%20for%20the%20year>

¹⁴ <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/skin-gambling>

¹⁵ <https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Internet-Matters-Free-school-meals-digital-wellbeing-report-Aug-2023.pdf>



Key findings

Aspirations for digital careers broadly mirror those found in 2022. However, aspiration differs depending on age, location and whether they are classified as NEET.

As young people enter the world of further education or employment, satisfaction with the training they have received for digital skills goes down.

53% of our respondents have used an AI chatbot and are curious about how they can use AI tools like these in their lives. However, **many young people are worried about AI and what it might mean for future jobs.**



The Skills Index measures two indicators related to digital skills:

- Basic digital skills essential for daily life
- Levels of aspiration for careers that use more advanced digital skills.

This year we also started to explore young people's views on AI and whether they feel that large language model (LLM) software such as ChatGPT may influence their lives.

DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS **YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN URBAN AREAS ARE MORE LIKELY TO ASPIRE TO DIGITAL CAREERS**

73% of young people agree that digital skills are essential for their future job or career. This statistic is higher among young people living in urban areas (76%).

This trend persists when asked if young people would like to pursue a job or career that uses advanced digital skills, such as software development or data visualisation. Young people living in urban areas are much more likely to be interested in pursuing this type of career; young people from rural areas are the least likely (66% urban vs 51% rural).

DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS [AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT]

	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Digital skills are essential for my future job/career	73%	76%	71%	68%
Would like a job/career that uses advanced digital skills.	61%	66%	58%	51%

EDUCATION LEVELS ALSO STRONGLY INFLUENCE ASPIRATION LEVELS

On average, 61% of young people want to pursue a career that uses advanced digital skills.

Young people who are NEET are significantly less likely to feel that digital skills are essential for their future job or career (61% vs 73%). They are also much less likely to want a job or career that uses advanced digital skills.

By contrast, students in higher education are significantly more likely to feel that digital skills are essential (78%). Interestingly, however, like young people who are NEET, they are less likely than the average young person to want to pursue this type of career (58%).

DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS [AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT]

	Total	NEET	Higher Education
Digital skills are essential for my future job/career	73%	62%	78%
Would like a job/career that uses advanced digital skills	61%	41%	58%



DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR MY JOB/CAREER

	2021	2022	2023
Total	82%	74%	73%
NEET	n/a*	63%	62%
Higher Education	82%	81%	78%

*Subgroup base size too small.

The total sample was doubled from n=2,000 to n=4,000 in 2022.

WOULD LIKE A JOB/CAREER THAT USES ADVANCED DIGITAL SKILLS*

	2022	2023
Total	57%	61%
NEET	54%	41%
Higher Education	65%	58%

*Note: In the 2022 Digital Youth Index, we asked respondents whether they 'would like a job/career that uses advanced digital skills such as a career in software development'. This year we made this question more specific, describing advanced skills as 'digital skills that go beyond the day-to-day use of devices, such as data visualisation, computer programming, and data engineering'. This may be a factor in the increase in positive responses from 57% in 2022 to 61% in 2023.



YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TEACHING THEMSELVES DIGITAL SKILLS

Young people are most likely to learn digital skills by teaching themselves (54%).

Young people in education are most likely to learn digital skills by themselves (50%), however this year they are also more likely to learn from teachers and parents/family than in previous years. Young people in employment aged 17–25 are less likely to learn from teachers and parents/family and are more likely to teach themselves (63%) or learn from colleagues (15%).

Young people who are NEET are significantly more likely than the average young person to learn digital skills by themselves (65%). They are also much more likely to learn from the internet than others (38% vs 31%). This is worrying, because we know that 3 in 10 young people who are NEET do not have access to a laptop or desktop computer. Their internet access, if they can get any at all, may be limited to a smartphone or tablet.

HOW DID YOU LEARN DIGITAL SKILLS – EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION STATUS?

	Total	In Education	Employed	NEET
By myself	54%	50%	63%	65%
Teachers	41%	44%	34%	32%
Parents/Family	36%	43%	17%	19%
Internet	31%	30%	34%	38%
Friends	21%	23%	19%	16%
Training course	5%	5%	5%	1%
Colleagues	3%	n/a	15%	n/a
Nobody taught me	7%	6%	9%	10%

DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS BY AGE GROUP

	Total	8–10	11–13	14–16	17–19	20–22	23–25
Digital skills are essential for my future job/career	73%	73%	76%	73%	70%	73%	73%
Would like a job/career that uses advanced digital skills	61%	63%	68%	67%	51%	58%	58%



11–13-year-olds (68%) are most likely to aspire to a digital career. This then declines up to ages 17–19. This suggests that there is either a generational difference or that interest naturally declines as young people start to narrow down their educational choices and interests, identifying, and perhaps limiting, the jobs and careers they are likely to pursue. However, these aspirations increase again among young people who are aged 20 and above. It's possible that as young people navigate the workplace, they increasingly see the opportunities that present themselves through digital careers.

It makes sense that awareness and understanding of digital skills will be higher among older respondents. Young people at junior school are less likely to have thought about their future job or career or to be aware of the jobs available. They may have less appreciation of the definition of digital skills than young people entering high school and beyond. It also seems logical that students who are pre-GCSE and have not yet had to make decisions about the subjects they are studying or left school to start a job or college education are more likely to be open to different career or job opportunities.

DIGITAL ASPIRATIONS AND SATISFACTION BY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Further Education	Higher Education	All in Education
Digital skills are essential for my future job/career	73%	73%	75%	68%	78%	74%
I received good training from [school, college/university] to use technology	69% [school] 58% [college/university]	81%	73%	55%	63%	71% [school] 60% [college/university]

If we use 'digital skills are essential for my future job/career' as a rough proxy for aspiration, we can see that this increases between primary and secondary school. We can also see that this grows to 78% among young people in higher education (which generally means university), but there's a significant decrease among young people who have left school for further non-compulsory education such as vocational training. The 7-percentage-point drop between those at secondary school (75%) and those in further education (68%) is a significant difference – even taking into account the wider age range of young people in higher education.

SATISFACTION WITH DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING GOES DOWN AFTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

The vast majority (81%) of primary school students think they have received good training to use technology. But there is a clear and significant drop in satisfaction levels between primary and secondary school, and then again between secondary school into further or higher education. Those attending further education institutions are the least likely to be satisfied, with only 55% stating that they've received good training from their college.

This issue with digital skills training in higher and further education has been recognised. A [report published by the Joint Information Systems Committee \(JISC\)](#) in January 2023 about digital strategies in higher education includes a case study of a Welsh university that identified skills gaps and a lack of digital

confidence among staff. Times Higher Education (THE) published a report on [Digital Literacy in the UK](#) in 2021 that highlights sector skills gaps and recognises that there is a lot more to do to create the next generation of digitally literate graduates. It states that higher education has an important role to play and recommends a 'more immersive and all-encompassing' approach to digital literacy.

In further education, a [2022 report from the Education Policy Institute](#) states that a third fewer 16–19-year-old students are pursuing digital technical qualifications than in 2015, a total decrease from 33,000 students to 22,000 students in 2020.

"My dad will use Zoom to talk to relatives. He can't get the hang of it and often needs me to help him navigate it. I'll go through it slowly so he can understand what I'm clicking on and why (i.e., using a drop-down menu and telling him the button with 3 dots is usually the menu for most things). Also, in the past my mum has needed me to walk her through creating accounts such as YouTube and WhatsApp."

23-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

"A young person actually taught me how to work Zoom in the pandemic, so there are certain things like that. But I think the important things of what you do need to know, like maybe where to access wellbeing services, basic life skills, we'll teach them that on a programme and then they're kind of like 'oh I didn't know that'. I think young people don't know everything, they just know what someone's taught them. Our pathway is about teaching young people the umbrella term of digital skills, not just the fine specifics."

SOCIAL WORKER

DIGITAL TRAINING IN THE WORKPLACE COULD ALSO BE IMPROVED

Young people who are 16 years old or over are only 63% likely to agree that they received good training to use technology from their workplace. This dropped significantly from 74% in 2022. These results prompt the question of whether educators and employers are preparing and training young people adequately for their first steps into employment.

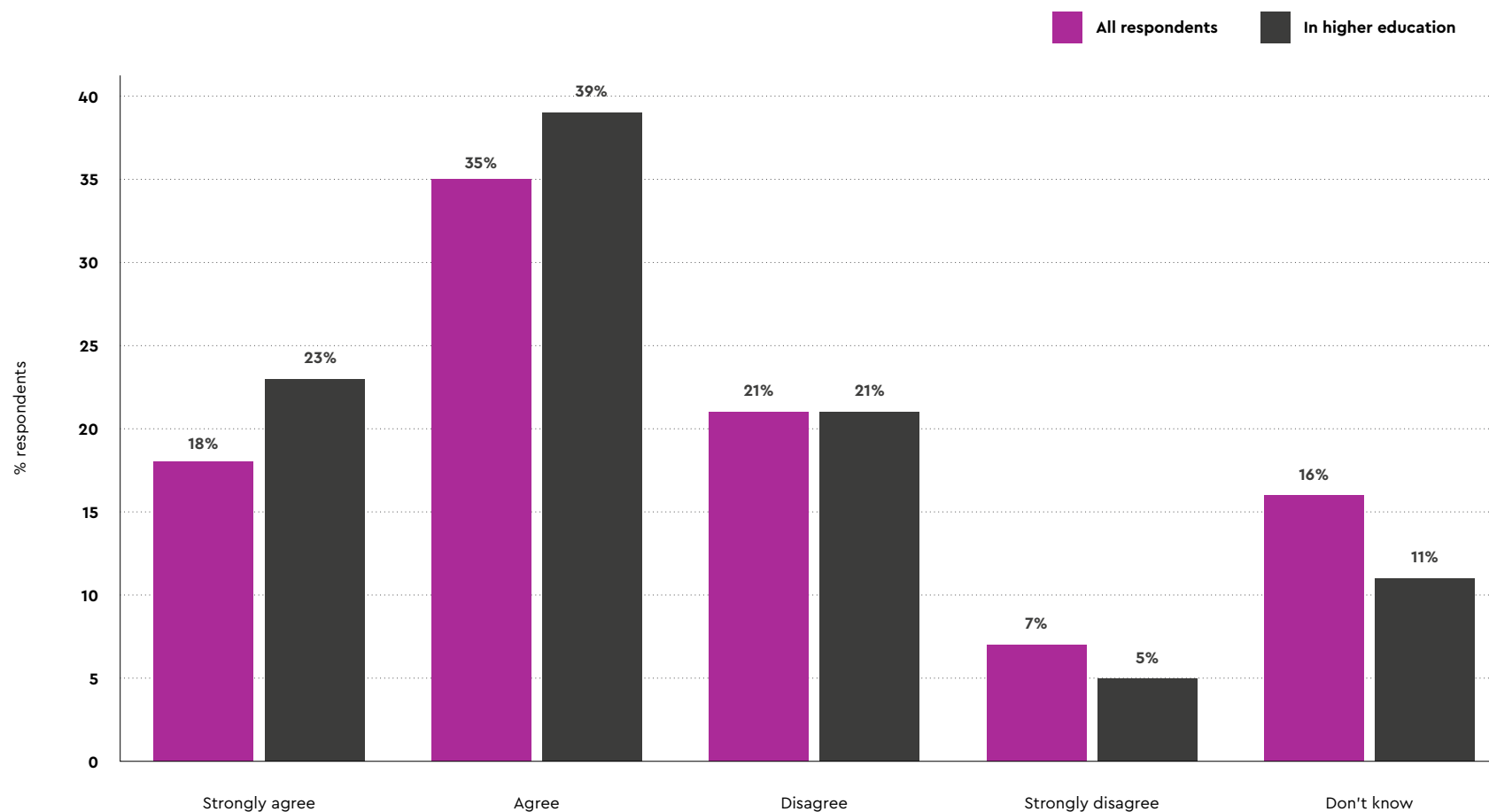
YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T AUTOMATICALLY 'DIGITAL NATIVES'

Whilst our findings show that on the whole young people are confident in their digital skills abilities, it's not the case that young people are automatically becoming 'digital natives'. Whilst young people are often equipped with basic technology skills, this is not universal. Further, while we know young people are often the ones families go to for digital information and support, our qualitative research shows that skills in one area do not automatically lead to a well-rounded skillset. Finding it second-nature to relate to their peers via a messaging app does not necessarily mean young people know how to perform important life tasks online or use workplace tools such as the Microsoft suite.

OVER HALF OF ALL YOUNG PEOPLE ARE WORRIED AI WILL REPLACE THEM IN THE WORKPLACE

Young people express some anxiety when thinking about AI and what it means for jobs in the future. More than half (54%) of the young people asked agreed that they are worried that AI will replace jobs in the future and nearly a fifth (18%) of respondents were in strong agreement. This worry seems to be more prevalent among those in higher education, with 61% showing concern. However, over a quarter (28%) of young people are not worried about artificial intelligence replacing jobs. A further 16% said they don't know.

I AM WORRIED THAT AI WILL REPLACE JOBS IN THE FUTURE

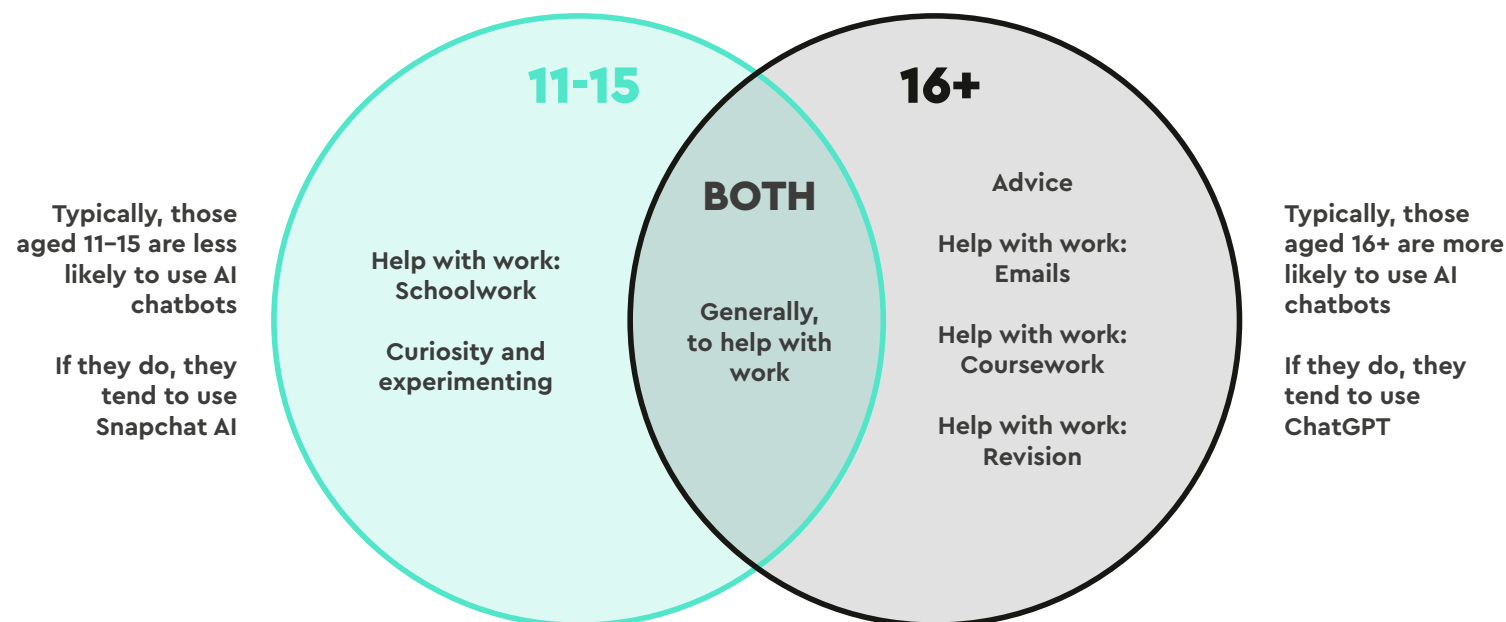


Q16A. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: 'I am worried that artificial intelligence will replace jobs in the future?'

Base: All in primary or secondary school (n=1,905)

Despite these fears, young people are curious about the technology and 53% of young people we surveyed in May 2023 had used AI chatbots in one form or another. How they use them changes slightly with age:

THE REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE USE AI CHATBOTS TYPICALLY VARIES BY AGE, AS DOES THE PLATFORM THEY ACCESS CHATBOTS ON:



CASE STUDY: YOUNG PEOPLE USING LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS (LLMs)

During a pop-up community event created for the Digital Youth Index, the Nominet and Opinium teams suspected one of the young people was using ChatGPT, an LLM, to help answer some of the questions.

The teams thought this was the case because:

- Their tone and style didn't match previous responses
- When we tried asking ChatGPT the questions, it came back with very similar answers to the young person

- The answers which didn't seem to be from ChatGPT did not start with a capital letter, but the ones which did started with a capital.
- When asked if they had used ChatGPT to answer some of the questions, the young person said: "Yes, it's quite engaging and brings more ideas. Decided to try it out again at the mention of it."

As we found in our [AI and Wellbeing](#) analysis, young people are curious about AI and are using it in a wide range of applications. This prompts questions about how young people will use tools like ChatGPT in the future. Will they use them instead of undertaking detailed research, or to support it? Will all young people be equipped to critically evaluate the information that comes back?



Key findings

Young people spend an average of 4–5 hours a day online. This time is mostly spent browsing social media, chatting with others and accessing entertainment.

95% of young people are on a form of social media. Young people strongly appreciate that social media makes them feel more connected to others, and **40% believe it can be a force for good.**

However, many young people are **experiencing distressing content** on social media (particularly on X (Twitter), Reddit and TikTok) and feel it impacts their personal health and wellbeing – particularly among over-16s.

Those in marginalised groups – such as LGBTQ+ young people and those with disabilities – **are most likely to state that social media has a negative impact on people like them (38%).**

WELLBEING

The Wellbeing pillar looks at young people's overall happiness. It also charts the effects that their digital lives have on their wellbeing.

YOUNG PEOPLE SPEND MORE TIME ON THEIR DEVICES AS THEY AGE

Young people report spending a lot of time on devices.

This changes with age. This may be because of a lessening of parental controls with age, as well as a growing requirement for those of a working or further educational age to be using devices.

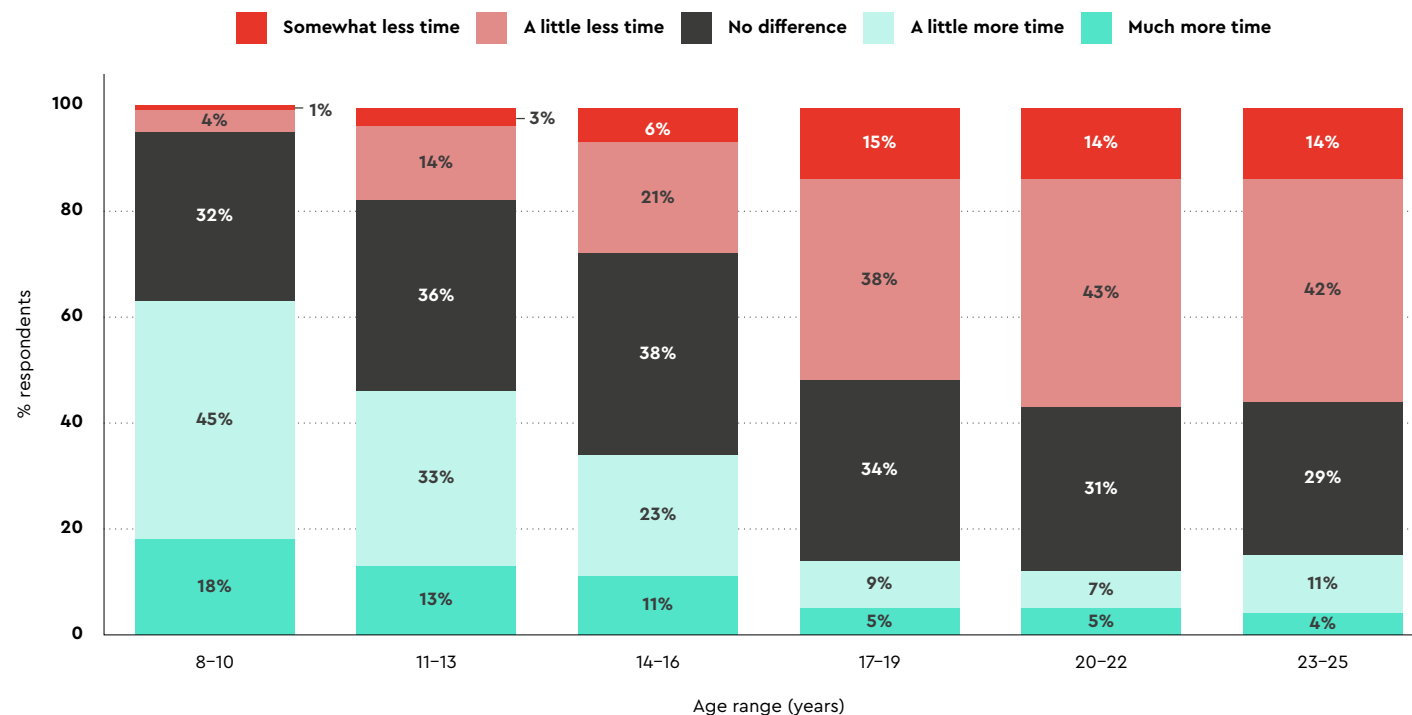
AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON DIGITAL DEVICES (IN HOURS)

	Male	Female	ABC1	C2DE	8-10	11-13	14-16	17-19	20-22	23-25
Typical weekday	3.8	4.1	3.9	4.2	2.3	3.3	3.8	5.0	4.9	4.7
Typical weekend day	4.6	5.1	4.7	5.1	3.1	4.5	4.9	5.9	5.5	5.2

Indexing versus total <95 and >105

These are self-reported numbers, but they do generally reflect the results of [Ofcom research](#) that tracked actual data usage on digital devices.

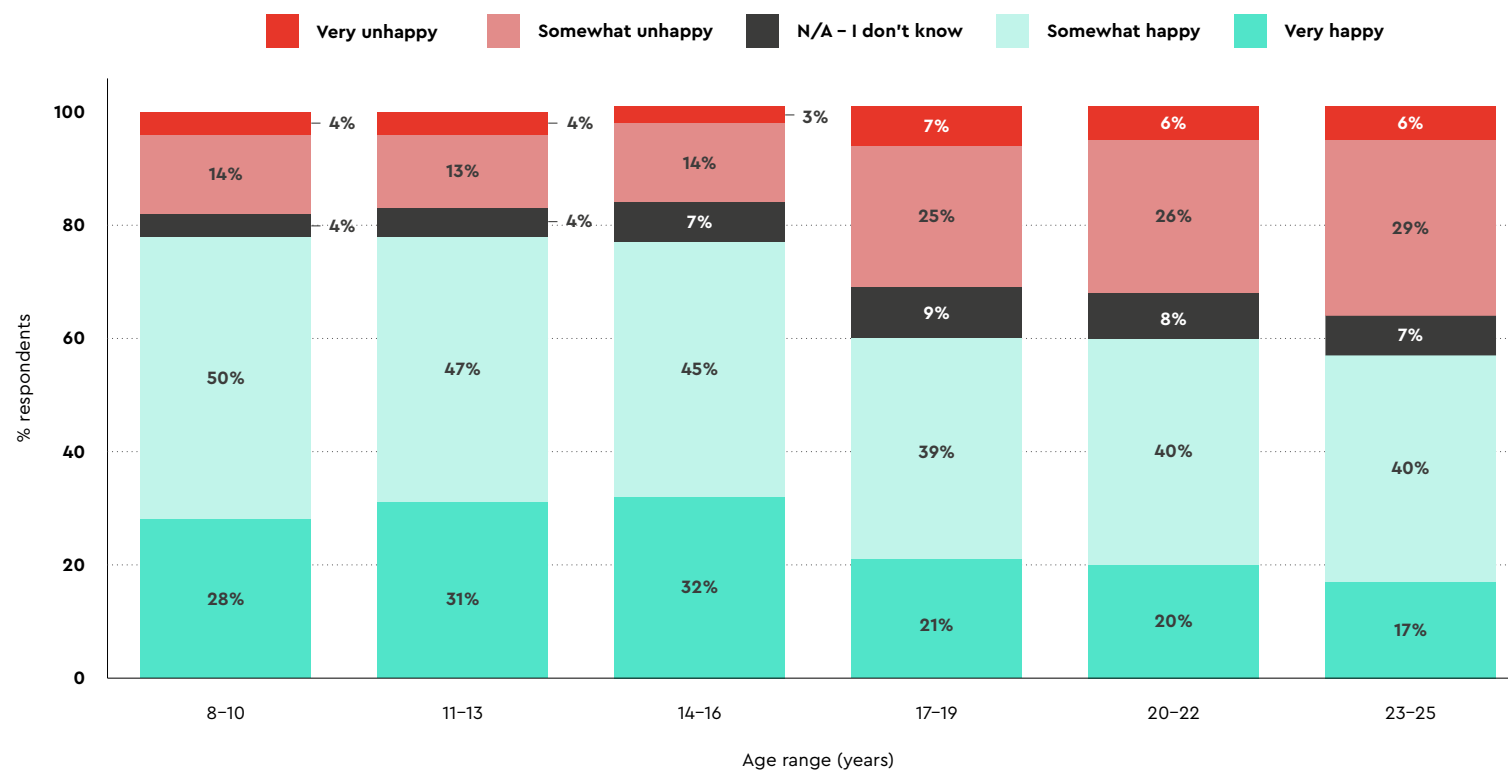
WANTING TO SPEND MORE/LESS TIME ONLINE BY AGE GROUP



Q33. Would you like to spend more or less time on your digital devices?

Base: All respondents (n=4,000)

HAPPINESS WITH THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ONLINE



Q32. Are you happy or unhappy with the amount of time that you spend on your digital devices?
Base: All respondents (n=4,000)

YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT THEIR OWN DEVICE FEAR THEY ARE MISSING OUT

Those who do not have their own device find it especially difficult to keep up with social news and worry about being excluded. They're also more likely to feel that trends change too quickly for them to keep up and often sense that their friends do not understand and aren't sympathetic to the limitations they have in how much time they can spend online.

These are self-reported numbers, but they do generally reflect the results of Ofcom research that tracked actual data usage on digital devices.

A distinct shift in attitudes to time spent online occurs as young people age. 63% of children aged 8-10 would like to spend more time online, whereas more than half of young people aged 23-25 (56%) would like to spend somewhat or a little less time online.

"It's extremely difficult for me [to keep up in my digital life] because I rarely come online, so when I do, I reply [to] messages and I go off for a long time... I feel left behind, most times my friends tell me new trends and news on the internet which I was supposed to know if I had [a] device... at night when I'm alone in my room and feel like communicating with my friends or my girlfriend before going to bed and I'm unable to, I feel really sad... I wish my friends understood I really want to communicate with them over the internet."

25-YEAR-OLD MALE



YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL MIXED ABOUT THE VIRTUES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Overall, more young people agree with the statement 'social media is a force for good' than disagree with it (40% vs 16%). However, this still leaves 44% of young people who are on the fence (neither agree nor disagree).

The same is true when looking at the statement "Social media has a negative impact on people like me." There is generally more agreement with this sentiment than disagreement (38% vs 26%) leaving 36% who aren't sure.

These perceptions vary depending on where young people live. For example, young people living in urban areas appear to be more polarised in their opinions of social media than those in rural areas. They are both more likely to agree that social media is a force for good (45% vs 35%) but also that it has a negative impact on people like themselves (42% vs 34%).

Those who are most likely to experience discrimination offline are also more likely to be aware of the negative impact of social media. LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to agree that social media has a negative impact on people like them. The same is true of young people with a disability (46% vs 33% among non-disabled young people), especially if it relates to their mental health.

% AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT

	Total	LGBTQ+	Disabled	Mental Health	London	Scotland	Urban	Rural
Social media is a force for good	40%	38%	41%	38%	47%	43%	45%	35%
Social media has a negative impact on people like me	38%	47%	46%	49%	43%	52%	42%	34%

However, there are interesting variations in these trends depending on the platform.

% AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT AMONG USERS OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

	Total	Telegram	Reddit	Twitter/X	Facebook	TikTok	YouTube
Social media is a force for good	40%	49%	43%	44%	45%	44%	40%
Social media has a negative impact on people like me	38%	54%	47%	43%	41%	39%	38%

This variation extends to the likelihood of being exposed to online harms. **Young people are more likely to come across distressing content on X/Twitter than they are on Instagram or YouTube.**

HAVE YOU EVER COME ACROSS DISTRESSING CONTENT ON THIS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM?

	Twitter/X	Reddit	TikTok	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	Snapchat	LinkedIn	BeReal
Exposed to distressing content	77%	74%	69%	61%	61%	58%	53%	22%	20%

GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO SEE HARMFUL CONTENT

Overall perceptions about social media don't differ significantly between boys/young men and girls/young women. However, girls and young women are more likely to be exposed to some online harms. **They are nearly twice as likely to see content that promotes dangerous eating habits, such as pro-anorexia websites.** To read more about the relationship between young people's perceptions of online harm versus the reality, read the [Safety pillar](#).

% AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT/% EXPERIENCED

	Total	Male	Female	Significant?
I feel in control of what I see and do online	74%	75%	73%	No
Social media is a force for good	40%	41%	40%	No
Social media has a negative impact on people like me	38%	40%	37%	Nearly
Experienced content promoting dangerous eating habits	22%	15%	28%	Yes

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE USING PLATFORMS THEY'RE TOO YOUNG FOR

Last year's Digital Youth Index highlighted that the age of users can differ significantly from the age rating given in social media platform policies, which is usually 13 years or over. This year's data tells us this continues to be the case.

AGE RATINGS AND USE BY AGE BY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

	Twitter	Reddit	TikTok	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	Snapchat	LinkedIn	WhatsApp	BeReal
Age rating	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	16	13
% use by those below age rating	12%	5%	38%	26%	26%	64%	32%	4%	58%	2%
% use by 8–10 year olds	9%	4%	30%	22%	19%	59%	22%	4%	37%	3%
Youngest user(s)	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Age ratings clearly have very little impact on whether young people access these platforms. Every platform is being used by people who are well under the age rating. This is particularly evident on WhatsApp, TikTok and Snapchat, but it is also on Facebook and Instagram where over a quarter (26%) of young people using these platforms are under the recommended age of 13 years.

More 8–10-year-olds are accessing YouTube than any other social media site – 59%. This could be using YouTube Kids parental controls¹⁶ or with direct parental supervision. However, young people could still be exposed to harms such as abusive comments or age-inappropriate content. They aren't necessarily protected from online harm. A recent [report by Ofcom](#)¹⁷ revealed that people need advanced reading skills to understand many video-sharing platforms' rules and policies, meaning that many users, including children, may not understand what is and is not appropriate content on the platform.

Despite the higher age rating on WhatsApp of 16 years, 58% of under-16s are using the messaging app, including nearly 2 in 5 (37%) 8–10-year-olds. This suggests that children or their parents/guardians are either unaware of the age rating, are not concerned or aware of the risks, or have decided that the benefits of using WhatsApp outweigh the risks – perhaps allowing use with close monitoring.

RURAL/URBAN DIFFERENCES IN ONLINE INTERACTIONS

Our interviews with social workers revealed that longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic include that young people are living in a more isolated way.

This affects some groups of young people more than others. Young people living in urban areas are 9% points more likely to feel isolated from others than their rural/suburban counterparts.

Young people living in urban areas are also significantly more likely to conduct most of their interactions with friends online rather than in-person than those living in suburban or rural areas. They are more likely to agree that being online helps them to keep in touch with friends who they would otherwise not speak to (75% compared with 71% in rural areas).

Research from the Campaign to End Loneliness reports that Londoners are more likely than others in the UK to be affected by severe forms of loneliness, with 12% of young Londoners likely to say they experience severe loneliness. Our results could suggest that connecting with others online can be a life raft for young people at risk of loneliness, particularly in urban areas.

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/intl/ALL_pk/kids/#:-:text=YouTube%20Kids%20gives%20your%20family,full%20of%20family%2Dfriendly%20videos

¹⁷ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/information-for-industry/vsp-regulation/what-we-have-learnt-about-vsps-user-policies>

% AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT / % EXPERIENCED

	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Most of my interactions with friends are online	47%	49%	46%	40%
I am generally happy with life	66%	66%	66%	67%
I feel isolated from others	35%	39%	33%	30%
I worry about others having fun without me	48%	49%	47%	47%
Being online helps me keep in touch with friends	74%	75%	73%	71%
Social media is a force for good	40%	45%	38%	35%
Social media has a negative impact on people like me	38%	42%	36%	34%

AI AND WELLBEING

In May 2023, Childnet published an article that highlights some of the risks associated with young people using chatbots. The article highlights the risk that young people will rely too heavily on them for emotional support or entertainment. This behaviour could miss the fact that AI cannot replace real conversations and AI can fail to detect subtle details in conversation or language used by young people.¹⁸

Looking at ChatGPT specifically, male respondents to the Digital Youth Index are more likely to have used ChatGPT (34% vs 19% of females). They are also more likely to consider using it if they have not already done so (23% vs 18%).

Those aged 16 or over are more likely to have used ChatGPT than younger respondents (32% vs 21%). They are also considerably more likely to have heard of ChatGPT (41% of under-16s have not heard of ChatGPT vs 24% of those aged 16 or over).

CHATBOT:

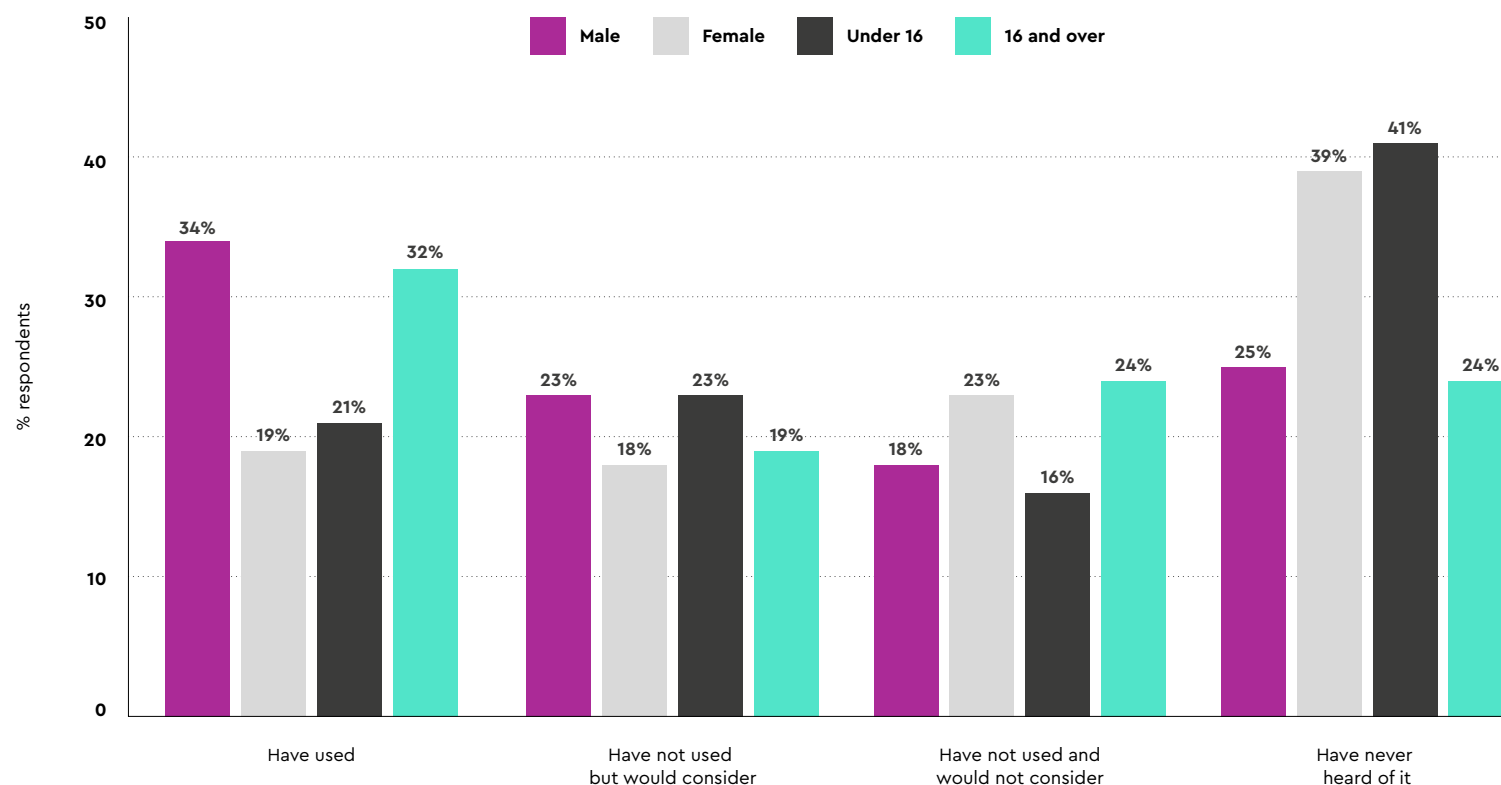
A computer program that simulates human conversation with an end user. Though not all chatbots are equipped with AI, modern chatbots increasingly use conversational AI techniques like natural language processing (NLP) to understand the user's questions and automate responses to them.

Definition provided by IBM.¹⁹

¹⁸ <https://www.childnet.com/blog/snapchats-new-ai-chatbot-and-its-impact-on-young-people/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ibm.com/topics/chatbots>

AWARENESS AND USE OF CHATGPT BY GENDER AND AGE



Q1A1. Have you ever used, or would you consider using any of these? 'ChatGPT'

Base: All respondents (n=4,000)

53% of young people have used an AI-powered chatbot. When asked what they tend to use them for, 1 in 3 (34%) responded that they don't know or cannot remember. However, among those who could remember, it was often to ask questions related to work, schoolwork such as essays, writing stories, or just for fun.

However, several qualitative comments reveal that young people have used a chatbot to seek advice varying from personal advice to computer games tips – or just to have somebody to talk to.

Some examples of the responses include:

"Asking random questions for fun and for roleplay."

"To free my feelings, to get advice and just to be able to rant to someone without getting judged."

"Help/advice with schoolwork or current personal situations, or just having fun."

"Advice and someone to talk to when I'm sad."

"I was curious and wanted to try it for fun at first, but I have also used it for specific health information before seeing a health professional."



YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GOING DIGITAL FOR NON-JUDGEMENTAL SUPPORT

Some of these statements demonstrate that young people are turning to chatbots for emotional support and entertainment. Policymakers should be aware of this usage, and the risk that some young people could come to rely on chatbots heavily or exclusively for support and guidance.

Last year's report revealed that many young people across age groups went online for information and support on issues affecting them because it was an anonymous and non-judgemental space to seek advice. This was increasingly important for young people on the older end of our sample seeking information independently around topics including sexuality and physical and mental health. Cultural differences in some households may also put young people off seeking help and advice on controversial issues.

Looked at side by side, we see young people going to digital sources to get the information they need on tough issues. It highlights the importance of a safe, private space to access the internet – something we know that not all young people have.

LIFE IS STILL TOUGH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE POST-PANDEMIC

Young people's wellbeing, on- or offline, cannot be considered without acknowledging the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

The social workers we interviewed reported high levels of social anxiety and low motivation among young people. This prevents them from trying new things, creating a downward spiral of inactivity which affects young people's confidence.

We mustn't forget or ignore the impact of the pandemic on our young people. How this intersects with the ways that young people's connections are increasingly mediated by digital feels like a rich seam that merits further study.

"Since the Covid pandemic, I'm particularly seeing an increase in the number of young people who have got more of a fixed mindset when it comes to learning...They want to do it but there's something holding them back... I think it's self-belief. They've been in an isolated situation for a prolonged period of time and then all of a sudden, we're chucking them in an environment where they have to work with other people and be self-motivated."

SOCIAL WORKER

Conclusion

AS IT HAS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, THE 2023 DIGITAL YOUTH INDEX REVEALS THE DIGITAL WORLD TO BE A MIRROR OF THE REAL WORLD.

In the Digital Youth Index's third year, we prioritised year-on-year comparability with our growing data set. Many of the stats or pillar indices have remained steady or seen slight changes overall.

However, the nuance made possible by the Digital Youth Index data reveals a more complex picture – one of deep-seated social inequalities.

GROWING UP IN A DIGITAL AGE

Last year, we concluded that young people's digital lives are not a single, homogeneous experience. This year's Digital Youth Index confirms this. Yet many aspects of the digital world are having the greatest impact on this generation of young people.

The sheer volume of insights to be found in the data made it challenging to know where to focus our efforts this year. **A common theme, though, is the growing digital divide that exists between the haves and have-nots in society.** This message, to be found across the pillars of the report, is hard to ignore – nor do we want to.

EXPLORE THE DATA YOURSELF

We invite you to explore and interrogate this data using our [data visualisation tool](#) – revamped this year – which seeks to put the data into your own hands. These resources are already being used by policymakers, educators, charities and young people themselves. We hope that this year's Digital Youth Index provides further tools and insights to support this.

Each year's report provides a snapshot. But our growing repository of data offers insights that we will continue to share over time. We expect to publish more on our [website](#) as we and our network of contributors continue to uncover more within the data.

Whilst many of the trends we've uncovered are worrisome, we also see that digital has the propensity for positive change in the world. **We press this resource into the hands of those working to improve young people's lives – including, of course, young people themselves.** We hope our data and findings will place young peoples' voices at the heart of strategy, policy and design.

Appendix A: Research methodology

The Digital Youth Index 2023 was the third year of the report.

Like last year, Opinium conducted this report in two phases: a quantitative survey, followed by a qualitative phase. The qualitative phase included a pop-up community and in-depth interviews with youth workers.

We also better utilised the Expert Advisory Panel and the Youth Panel this year by getting their unique perspectives on the data in the analysis process.

PHASE ONE – QUANTITATIVE STUDY

A robust online audience of young people were surveyed on the research questions. To ensure we captured a 'state of the nation' benchmark on the role of digital technology in young people's lives and delivered comparable results to previous years, we surveyed a nationally representative sample of 4,000 people aged 8–25.

Last year, in addition to an online study, we also completed several offline interviews with young people who had limited access to the internet. We chose not to repeat this in 2023 due to the challenges in sourcing truly offline young people via a quantitative approach. Year on year, we will continue to seek the most effective ways to include the most hard-to-reach respondents. This is one of the reasons it is so important to us to pair phase one with qualitative interviews.

As in previous years, Index scores were calculated to allow results to be tracked year-on-year. In addition to these measurable annual metrics, additional topical questions were included the survey, expanding on each of the Index pillars.

These additional questions allow the Digital Youth Index to generate nuanced insights on what young people need in terms of intervention, policy change and support based on constantly changing conditions. New questions were added this year to capture information on emerging areas of public interest such as AI.

Fieldwork ran from 17–28 May 2023. It was conducted slightly earlier than last year to allow for more reporting time. An additional wave of fieldwork was completed from 20–25 July to replace some data that had been identified as poor quality. We ran checks to make sure no significant differences were seen between data collected over the two different periods of fieldwork. They were combined into one sample without impacting on reliability.

The final data is weighted to representative criteria based on Office for National Statistics figures of young people by age, gender and UK region. The tables include statistical significance within subgroups by a 95% confidence interval.

The margin of error for scores of 50% is +/-1.5% at 95% confidence level. For 10%/90% it's at +/-0.9%.

PHASE TWO – QUALITATIVE STUDY

To further explore emerging patterns from the Digital Youth Index we conducted follow-up qualitative research. The qualitative phase helped to provide a comprehensive view of digital connectivity, inclusivity and security and provided richer detail on the issues that had arisen from the online study.



POP-UP COMMUNITY

Following the quantitative research, we launched an online pop-up community with 20 young people. Participants were an even mix of young people in secondary school (aged 11-16), young people in further education, workplace training or work (aged 16-18) and young people aged 19-25.

Young people were asked to log in to an interactive online platform and complete a series of open-ended and task-based research questions. This self-complete approach allowed participants to reflect on the questions and provide rich and detailed responses. The community was actively moderated by Opinium's expert qualitative researchers, who provided support and probed for detail as needed. For the first time this year, members from the Youth Panel also supported on moderation, seeking more information on responses that had been provided.

A discussion guide was developed iteratively following insights from the quantitative phase of research. The guide was designed to dig deeper into Index findings and allow us to explore the reasons behind, and the impact of, significant factors in young people's digital lives.

Like last year, we performed analysis to identify themes in the responses which unearthed richer insights in the data. Direct quotes help communicate key findings and bring the experiences of young people to life.

Five additional in-depth interviews were conducted with youth workers to get their unique perspectives on the themes arising from the quantitative survey. These were conducted online and lasted 30-45 minutes.

YOUTH PANEL AND EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL

As in previous years, we recognised the importance of ensuring the insights were culturally relevant to young people. We also wanted insights to take into consideration other priorities and work being done within the youth charity sector. As in year two, we convened both an Expert Advisory Panel and a Youth Panel. This year, we spent more time discussing the findings with both groups to deepen our understanding of the data and inform our initial analysis. This helped us to look at the insights through the lens of young people themselves.

This year the Youth Panel were also trained on community moderation and played an active role in moderating the online community. They also reviewed the analysis to provide their views on the findings.



Appendix B: Acknowledgements

EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL

Our Advisory Panel comprises experts from the civil society, charity and private sectors who are involved in research, services, strategy and policy related to digital and/or young people. We thank the members of the expert advisory panel for their contributions:

- Dr Kira Allmann, Senior Digital Strategy Officer at Manchester City Council
- Kat Dixon, WeAreSnook
- Cliff Manning, ParentZone
- Ram Puvinathan, PUBLIC
- Justin Spooner, Unthinkable
- Dr Emma Stone, Good Things Foundation
- Maeve Walsh, Policy and Government Relations Consultant
- Professor Simeon Yates, University of Liverpool

YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

Our youth advisory panel comprises 15 young people aged 16–25 from Catch22's employability and development programmes from across the UK.

Thank you to those who want to be named:

- Bella Bennet
- Blessing Lung'hy
- Joss Welburn
- Yubal Alemseged
- Karran

And thank you to those who choose to remain anonymous.

Nominet and Opinium would like to express their appreciation to the following organisations, whose invaluable contributions have made the 2023 Digital Youth Index possible:

Catch22 is a social business with a social mission, designing and delivering services that build resilience and aspiration in people and communities.

Catch22 works across three hubs:

- Justice and Education
- Employment and Training and Young People
- Families and Communities.

They support service users to have a decent, safe place to live, a good network of people around them and a feeling of purpose. Catch22 believes that access to these three basic things (which they call the 3Ps) is fundamental to transforming lives and communities. All Catch22 services deliver at least one – and often all three – of these outcomes.

The Prince's Trust believes that every young person should have the chance to succeed, no matter what their background or the challenges they are facing. They help those from disadvantaged communities and those facing the greatest adversity by supporting them to build the confidence and skills to live, learn and earn.

The courses offered by the Trust help young people aged 11–30 to develop essential life skills, get ready for work and access job opportunities. Since the Trust was founded by HRH The Prince of Wales (now King Charles III) in 1976, they have helped more than a million young people across the UK, and 3 in 4 of those we supported over the last five years have moved into work, education or training.



Appendix C: Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Qualitative research	Unstructured interviews generating insights through open questioning
Quantitative research	Structured questioning that generates numerical data
Index	A composite score calculated from responses to a number of questions
Pillar	A chapter, or section, in the report. Each pillar has its own Index score
ABC1	From one of the three higher social and economic groups, which consist of people who have more education and better-paid jobs than those in other groups
C2DE	From one of the three lower social and economic groups in a society
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (or questioning)
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
Critical device	Smartphone, laptop/Chromebook, desktop, tablet – devices most commonly used for developmental purposes as found by the Nominet Digital Youth Index
Learning device	Desktop and laptops/Chromebooks are considered the necessary devices for learning, with tablets also playing a role among younger age groups
FSM	Free school meals
LLM	Large language model



Nominet is committed to using technology to improve connectivity, security, and inclusivity online. Nominet has been the guardian of .UK since 1996, developing expertise in the Domain Name System (DNS) that now underpins sophisticated cyber threat monitoring, detection, prevention, and analytics used by governments. Our Social Impact programme aims to improve the lives of young people in the UK, providing support and opportunities to tackle some of the most important digital issues they face today.

www.nominet.uk/social-impact/



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Minerva House, Edmund Halley Road,
Oxford Science Park, Oxford OX4 4DQ

UK: +44 (0)1865 332211 | nominet.uk