UK Safer
Internet
Centre

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Friendship in a digital age

A survey of 1,004 young people aged 11-16 years

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Technology plays an essential role in friendships today...

Young people are using a diverse range of digital platforms to communicate with their friends, and most young people are having a positive time online.

Over a quarter (26%) of UK 11-16 year olds use **6 or more** social networks or messaging apps on a weekly basis, according to the online study of more than a thousand 11-16-year-olds conducted by ResearchBods.

When questioned about their time spent on social networks and messaging apps, 55% of young people said that they see people posting kind, positive or supportive things all or most of the time.

The majority also felt that people are kind to them (63%) and to their friends (59%) on the internet all or most of the time.
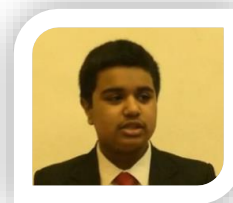
"I like to watch YouTube because they've got loads of funny films, and sometimes I like to watch music videos, and I like to comment on them"

"I like Instagram because you can get creative with photography and share it online"

"I like to share my art, my edits and make quizzes and stories and share them on websites like Tumblr, Instagram, Wattpad and Quotev."

"I can trust my friends with anything I may need to tell them, and I can trust that they won't leak it to anyone else."

% of 11 - 16s using these services weekly	
YouTube	78%
Facebook	74%
Snapchat	46%
Instagram	43%
Twitter	37%
WhatsApp	37%
Skype	32%
Minecraft	32%
Google+	20%
Tumblr	11%
Ask.fm	5%

55% of 11-16s interact with their closest friends several times an hour

63% of 11-16s say they are closer to their friends because of the internet

60% of 11-16s say they'd be lonely if they couldn't talk to friends via technology

41% of 11-16s say they communicate with their friends more online than in person

For the majority of young people, the internet is a positive place.

But there is a significant minority of young people who face difficulties.

1 in 20 11-16s feel that people are mean to them most of the time on the internet

Approximately 1 in 8 (13%) young people feel that people post negative, mean, critical or upsetting things all or most of the time on their social networks and messaging apps.

There are also some young people who feel that this abuse is targeted at them and their friends: 1 in 20 (5%) felt that people were mean to them – and 7% felt that people were mean to their friends – all or most of the time on the internet.

Although this abuse does not happen on a regular basis for most young people, the majority of 11-16s do occasionally experience mean behaviours online.

Many young people have occasionally experienced someone being mean to them (51%) or a friend (59%) on the internet, or have occasionally seen someone set up a fake profile to be mean (34%), post things that attack a certain group, e.g. racist, sexist or homophobic comments (39%), or share gossip or rumours about others (36%).

An additional survey of UK adults by ComRes demonstrates that this isn't just an issue for children

1 in 20 adults say that people are often rude or unkind to them online.

45% of adults said they occasionally see people on their social networks and messaging apps posting unkind, negative or upsetting content, and many adults have occasionally experienced someone being unkind or rude to them (25%) on the internet.

Adults are as likely as children to have occasionally seen people post things that attack a certain group, e.g. racist, sexist or homophobic comments (41%), or share gossip or rumours about others (38%) on the internet.

Experiences of 11-16s in the last year…

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Someone was mean to me	**30%**
I was deliberately left out of a conversation or group	**23%**
Someone posted something to embarrass me	**21%**
Someone I don't know said something mean to me	**19%**
Someone posted something about me that wasn't true	**19%**
Lots of people saw something mean that had been posted about me	**12%**

^^ 36% of 11-16s reported 3 or more of these negative experiences in the last year

A bad friend online would…

"Share something that you wouldn't feel comfortable speaking about or showing other people"

"Screenshot your Snapchats when you've been having a funny little Snapchat session with them, and then just be a rat and put it all over Instagram."
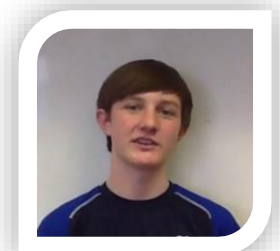
Many young people are resilient to risks on the internet and they want to make a difference in their online community.

Despite the fact that many young people do come across risks online, the majority (64%) feel able to cope with anything negative that might happen online, and 81% say they know what to do if someone is abusive towards them online. However, younger age groups are less resilient to risks online and need more support to ensure they are able to cope which negative experiences online, which they are exposed to at the same rate as older age groups.

"I feel able to cope with anything negative that might happen online"

56%	65%	70%
11-12 years	13-14 years	15-16 years

The research shows that many young people are taking positive action to combat bullying online. In the last year:

Among all 11-16s >

			< Among those who experienced mean behaviours
44%	Blocked someone who was being mean	75%	
43%	Supported someone who was being targeted online	68%	
41%	Stood up to someone who was being mean online	74%	
20%	Told an adult about cyberbullying	38%	
15%	Reported cyberbullying online	27%	

However, there is a need to continue supporting young people, as 1 in 12 (8%) do not feel able to cope with negative experiences online and 43% said they would like more information on how to deal with negative experiences online.

88% say they always try to be kind in their online interactions

This Safer Internet Day, young people are declaring "it's up to us", with 78% saying that people their age have the power to create a kinder online community. Echoing the theme of this year's Safer Internet Day, to create a better internet together, 73% of young people said they want to help create a kinder online community, with 88% always trying to be kind in their online interactions.

Methodology

ResearchBods interviewed 1,004 young people aged 11-16 from 5-11th January 2015. The data is representative of 11-16 year olds in the UK and ResearchBods are a registered member of Market Research Society.

ComRes interviewed 1,445 adults online from 14-15th January 2015. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults aged 18+. Base = 1,445 adults who use social networks or messaging apps. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

Safer Internet Day

Safer Internet Day 2015 will be celebrated globally on Tuesday 10th February with the theme 'Let's create a better internet together'. Coordinated in the UK by the **UK Safer Internet Centre** the celebration sees hundreds of organisations get involved to help promote the safe, responsible and positive use of digital technology for children and young people.