



# DIGITAL YOUTH INDEX

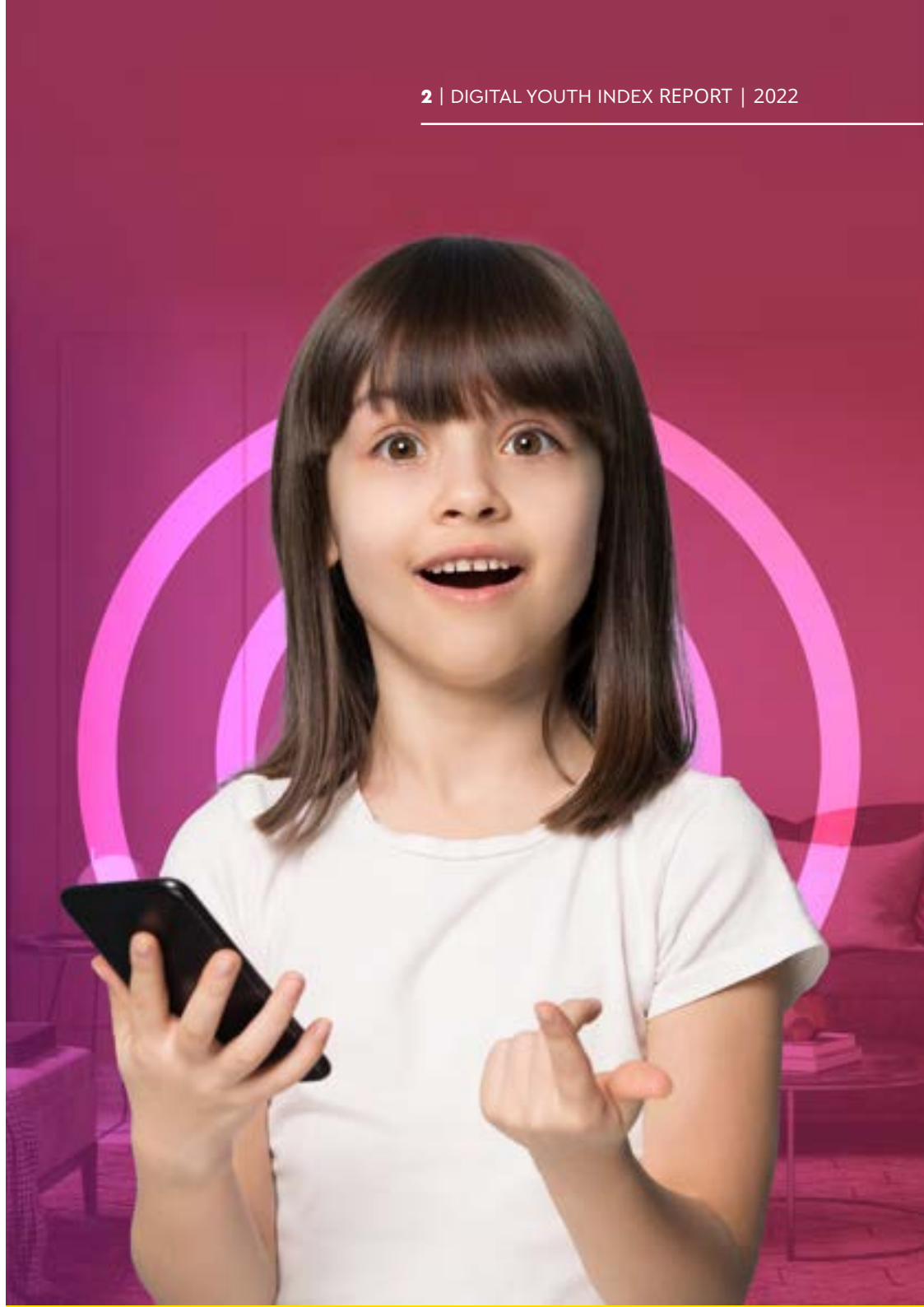
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**REPORT 2022**



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# Introduction

## **THE UK'S YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GROWING UP IN A SOCIETY GRIPPED BY A COST OF LIVING CRISIS, AND STILL REELING FROM THE IMPACT OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

They are also growing up in an increasingly digital world, and their experiences cannot be interpreted without considering how young people connect, access information and harness opportunities.

Like the rest of society, the digital landscape is changing constantly. While the pandemic accelerated changes in the way young people rely on digital technology, the cost of living crisis is sharpening digital inequalities. The rising cost of data and devices is forcing families to self-disconnect. Money worries impact the things we need to access online – from benefits to mental health support – and these tasks demand new digital skills.

In this shifting landscape, it is hard for policymakers and those delivering youth services to predict what the lasting impact will be, let alone the uncertainty to come. This makes intervention challenging – but understanding the issues in detail is a vital starting point. The first step is listening to what young people have to say.

The Nominet Digital Youth Index offers this data, providing a rich snapshot into the complex and ever-shifting relationship young people have with digital technology in 2022.

## **THE INTERNET IS ESSENTIAL – BUT IT DOES CARRY RISKS**

Young people are using the internet in ways which support them: from getting access to counselling, to making likeminded friends, to studying and working. However, they are also calling for balance – many young people are unhappy with the amount of time that they are spending online, as well as some of the negative experiences it leads to. The Nominet Digital Youth Index explores the reasons behind these trends.







Online safety is a key focus of the report this year. One of the most concerning findings is the reality of the risks that young people are being exposed to, compared with the high level of safety young people perceive they have in digital spaces.

This year, the Nominet Digital Youth Index explores the motivation to pursue advanced digital careers – but also reveals that this is not always matched by the number of young people undertaking relevant education and training. We also explore young people's experience of formal training and education compared to self- or peer-led learning.

### **DIGITAL SPACE IS NOT A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD**

Our analysis reveals that young people who face systemic barriers to inclusion – such as LGBTQ+ young people, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities – are generally the most affected by digital challenges, though they also find community and resources they can't always access in the offline world. The internet and digital technology have changed how young people access opportunities and support; the Nominet Digital Youth Index helps to uncover where this works, and where it doesn't – who benefits, and who misses out.

### **THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IS NOT A STRAIGHT LINE**

Our findings reveal that the divide between the digital 'haves' and 'have nots' is complex; the spectrum of inclusion is neither binary nor static. A young person may own a device yet have limited and sporadic connectivity, or rely on connectivity in public spaces, impacting privacy. There may be WiFi at home, but a device inadequate to access online learning. And these factors can shift and change on a weekly or even hourly basis. By exploring behaviours, attitudes, relationships and situations, the methodology for the Nominet Digital Youth Index goes beyond neat statistical tick-boxes to how these concepts play out amidst all the complexities of real life.

It's never been more important for young people to feel connected, included and secure when they're online. The Nominet Digital Youth Index provides insight from young people themselves to guide strategies and policies to ensure they can thrive online.

# Foreword

## The UK's cost of living crisis requires us to urgently understand the role and impact of digital on young people's lives

Digital spaces present essential opportunities for young people to learn, connect, work, seek support and socialise – preparing them for adult lives which will most likely also be highly digital. But not everyone has an equal chance to harness the value on offer, and the current crisis is widening the gap between those who can access digital resources and those who can't. Further, new pressures are changing the types of support people need, from financial advice to mental health support.

Young people are trying to make sense of the role digital plays in their lives. Wellbeing is a key concern – whether that's tackling cyberbullying, avoiding scams or spending too much time on devices. We are seeing how young people's perceptions of safety seem to differ from the adults in their lives – or how in some cases, misunderstandings come down to the language used. The research also shows that young people feel they are struggling to strike the right balance, with too much time online impacting their wellbeing. But when it comes to the risks and harms young people might face online, parents, guardians and teachers are generally more concerned than the young people are themselves.

The 2022 Nominet Digital Youth Index, delivered in partnership with Opinium, offers crucial insights from young people in their own words. Shining a light on complex realities gives some helpful insights into the behaviours, attitudes, relationships and situations young people face in their digital lives.

The Nominet Digital Youth Index will build a picture of trends as they change, year on year.

Completing this research over a number of years allows us to compare young people's digital skills, their use of online services, and their mental health and overall wellbeing over time.

Society depends on young people learning to thrive in our increasingly digital world. Growing the diversity of the UK's digital talent pool and increasing digital skills for all young people is vital – not just for improving social mobility and the economy, but for building the kind of society we need, today and tomorrow.

The Nominet Digital Youth Index is an invaluable resource that supports practitioners and policymakers to empathise with young people growing up in a rapidly changing digital world.



**PAUL FLETCHER**  
CEO | NOMINET

# Key findings

## YEAR-ON-YEAR DATA

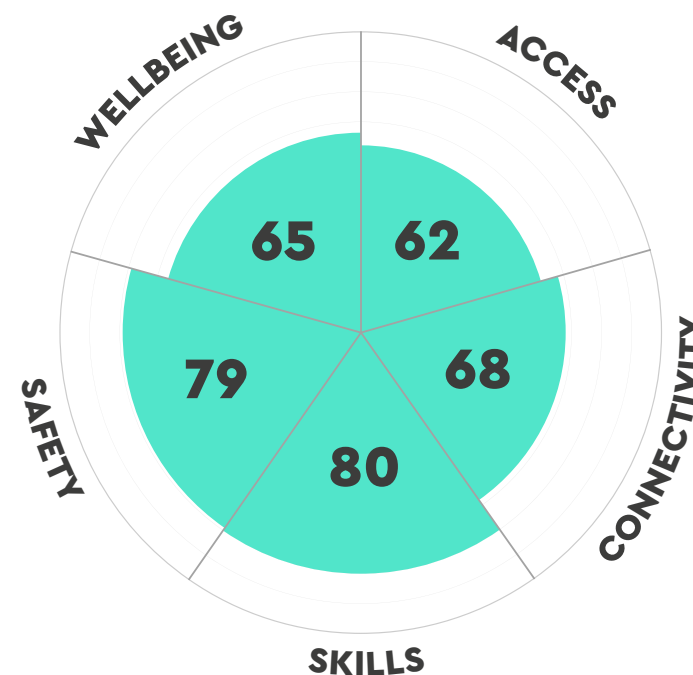
While year-on-year changes in scores can be used as indicators for comparison, multiple years of research is required to substantiate recurrent patterns in data, and therefore our reporting does not yet identify trends. To understand some of the changes in Index scores year on year, direct comparisons are made and interpreted at a question level in the following chapters.

In 2022 a number of improvements were made to the quantitative study based on learnings from the first year of the Digital Youth Index. The questions used to calculate index scores both at a total level, and at an individual pillar level, were changed. This means that the Index scores stated above are indicative and not directly comparable between 2021 and 2022. For full details on how the formation of the Index scores changed between Year 1 and Year 2, please refer to the Appendix.

The Nominet Digital Youth Index measures young people's digital access and inclusion, their ability to conduct certain digital skills, how safe they feel online and their related physical and mental wellbeing.

Individual questions and combinations of questions are spread across five broad pillars of wellbeing, safety, skills, connectivity and access. This report helps us to understand these areas in greater depth, identifying which young people are most at risk of being excluded digitally and allowing us to measure how these things change over time.

Were all things perfect, each pillar would have a score of 100. This year's Index scores tell us that, while the pandemic accelerated young people's levels of digital access, it is not distributed equally, with those already facing systemic barriers most at risk of missing out. Many young people feel the internet supports them in school, work and relationships, but are aware that a balance is needed to ensure that they engage with the digital space in a way which supports their wellbeing and development while keeping them safe. Despite most feeling confident about where to access help, many young people find it difficult to take practical or technical steps to protect themselves online.



(Source: Digital Youth Index 2022, n= 4,105)

PILLAR	2021	2022
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>71</b>
Access	78	62
Safety	77	79
Skills	69	80
Connectivity	53	68
Wellbeing	50	65



## DIGITAL WELLBEING

**53%** of young people say online life has a positive impact on their relationships with friends, but 865,000 young people (6%) say it has a negative impact (and 41% no impact).

**One in four** young people would like to spend less time on their digital devices (27%), down from 39% in 2021.

**Nearly three-fifths (58%)** of parents with children under 16 limit the hours their children spend using their digital devices.

The internet and digital devices negatively impact the sleep of **three in ten** young people.



## SAFETY

**95%** of young people say they feel safe online, yet **4.2 million young people (29%)** have experienced hate speech online.

Around **1 in 4** young people have experienced violence (**26%**), trolling or abuse (**23%**), and/or sexual content (**23%**). Minority groups are most vulnerable to seeing negative content online, aided by the anonymity of the digital landscape.

**Three-quarters** of young people state that they feel 'in control' of what they see online (**73%**) and recognise the steps needed to protect their security.



## SKILLS

**57%** of young people want a job that uses advanced digital skills...

...but **a fifth (20%)** of young people do not feel that they have received good foundational training from school to help them use digital technology.

**Half** of young people (**51%**) still report teaching themselves digital skills (up from 48% in 2021).



## DEVICE ACCESS

**A quarter** of young people (**26%**) do not have access to a laptop or similar device.

Reasons for not having a smartphone include parents not allowing it and/or believing they are not safe to use, and expense.

Young people are most concerned about having access to a smartphone, or having the latest version to keep up with peers.



## DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

For just **under three-quarters** of young people, the type of internet connection they use most frequently is WiFi/wired internet at home (**72%**).

**More than a third (35%)** of young people cannot do everything that they want to online because of the limits of their family's data allowance.

**One in six (16%)** use mobile data as their primary way of connecting to the internet – that's 2.3 million young people.



# An overview of the Index

The Nominet Digital Youth Index gives a holistic picture of young people's use of technology and the internet. The 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** – the means young people access the internet, whether WiFi, mobile data or other, and how this differs based on place and time
- **Access** – critical devices required to use the internet relevant to different groups of young people based on their needs.

The Index combines a total of 44 data points across a sample of 4,105 young people. This allows us to show how these areas are changing over time, while pinpointing how different groups compare to one another. Not all of the questions from our online survey were included in the Index and data from these questions is reported separately.

Using the questions we asked, we developed a framework covering 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.

The Index provides a score for each pillar. If a young person never has any problems with access to fit-for-purpose digital devices or high-quality, unlimited internet connection, for example, they would achieve a score of 100 for the digital access pillar.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Opinium conducted the 2022 Nominet Digital Youth Index in two phases: an initial quantitative survey, followed by a qualitative phase. The online survey differs slightly from the first year of the Index, to better consider the experiences of young people across different life stages. Doubling the sample size has further improved the robustness of the research.

The qualitative phase included:

- Pop-up communities – an online community for 30 young people who were asked questions via an online platform over a period of 3 days
- Ethnographic interviews – more detailed qualitative interviews with a small number of young people
- Focus groups conducted with young people, parents, carers, teachers and youth workers.

In addition to surveying a nationally representative sample of 8- to 25-year-olds, we conducted an offline survey of 105 young people who are most under-represented (based on criteria such as having no personal access to digital devices at home) using a mixed approach (telephone/online) based on the young person's ability to access an appropriate device.

We took a fresh look at the questionnaire for this year, maintaining as much consistency as we could with Year 1 for comparison, but with the aim of making it as simple as possible for participants to complete. This resulted in a change to some of the inputs to the pillars and a simplification of the weighting process that had been used in Year 1. This will futureproof the survey, the reporting and the Index for years to come.

For more on the methodology, please see the Appendix.





## Key findings

### Index score: 65

**53%** of young people say online life has a positive impact on their relationships with friends, but **865,000** young people (**6%**) say it has a negative impact (**41% no impact**).

**One in four** young people would like to spend less time on their digital devices.

**Nearly three-fifths (58%)** of parents with children under 16 limit the hours their children spend using their digital devices.

The internet and digital devices negatively impact the sleep of **three in ten** young people.

# DIGITAL WELLBEING



There is widespread concern about the potential negative impacts of spending too much time online, especially for young people. Governments in the US, Canada and Australia have advised parents to limit their children's screen time. However, young people feel the internet supports their relationships, health and wellbeing in many ways. More than half of young people (53%) say online life has a positive impact on their relationships with friends (whereas 6% say online life has a negative impact and 41% say there is no impact) – though this has dropped from 58% last year. A balancing act is needed to glean the benefits of accessing services or connecting with others online, while mitigating the negative impact and risks of spending too much time doing so.

To understand these tensions around wellbeing, we explore the idea of how young people perceive their balance of offline life and screentime. We then look at how happy young people are in general, before exploring some of the risks and negative impacts of the internet which can affect wellbeing. We also discuss the ways in which young people are using digital to improve their wellbeing.

## 1 in 4 young people would like to spend less time on their digital devices

The 2022 Nominet Digital Youth Index found that many UK parents are concerned about their child's screen time. Nearly three-fifths (58%) of parents with children under 16 limit the hours their children spend using their digital devices.

Discussions with parents of under-18s reveal that measures to limit screen time often come in the form of a verbal timer. More severe consequences, involving disconnecting devices from the internet, follow when instructions to come off devices are ignored. Only a few parents use automated controls that automatically disconnect devices at a set time. Limiting the amount of time young people spend on their digital devices can be a source of conflict; parents complain of arduous conversations and some young people feel hard done by when connectivity has been disabled mid-task or when their access to devices is postponed.







*"It always causes problems. Whatever time I say is **never enough for them.**"*

PARENT TO 14-YEAR-OLD TWINS (ONE BOY, ONE GIRL)

*"We use verbal warnings here. If they are ignored, we have started disconnecting the device from the internet remotely. **You quickly get a reaction.**"*

PARENT OF 12-YEAR-OLD BOY

*"I am always happy to go online. **I get cross when I have to come off** because sometimes I am in the middle of doing something and my mum and dad don't let me finish."*

9-YEAR-OLD BOY

Parents and professionals agree that screen time is harder to control, post-pandemic. Young people's digital habits became embedded during lockdowns and many continue to socialise and entertain themselves digitally. Similarly, some parents share that due to the blurring of work/life boundaries during the pandemic, they have relaxed their rules around screen time.

*"I also think that my own children increased screen time following Covid as there was **less opportunity to go out and do things as a family and then it just becomes habit.** Also, many parents working from home do not have to think about occupying the children if they are quiet in their rooms on devices."*

SOCIAL WORKER

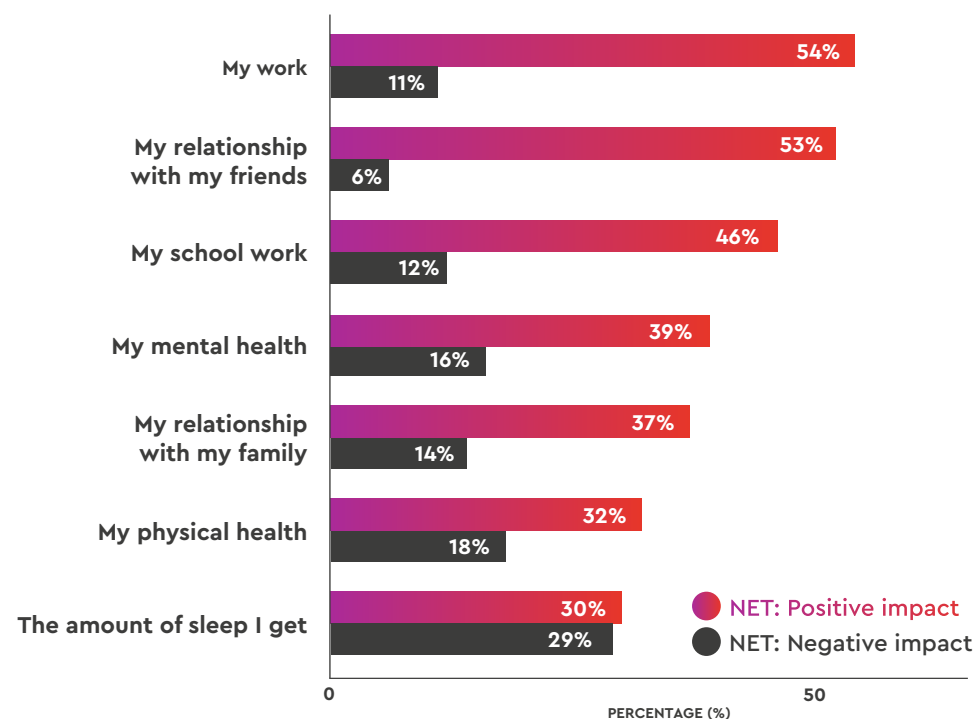
Young people are concerned about their own increased screen time too: our research found that one in five young people claim that they are unhappy with the amount of time that they spend online (21%). This is even higher among young LGBTQ+ people (32%), those with a mental health condition (31%), and those who have difficulty learning, understanding, or concentrating (28%). One in four young people would like to spend less time on digital devices (27%). Again, this figure is notably higher among those who are LGBTQ+ (42%) and those who have a mental health condition (41%).

## HARD TO UNPLUG

### The internet and digital devices negatively impact the sleep of 3 in 10 young people

Many young people recognise the impact, both positive and negative, that time online has on their lives.

#### IMPACT OF INTERNET AND DIGITAL DEVICES ON OTHER AREAS OF LIFE



Q34. HOW DOES YOUR USE OF THE INTERNET AND DIGITAL DEVICES IMPACT OTHER AREAS OF YOUR LIFE? BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (4,105)



3 in 10 young people find their use of the internet and digital devices negatively affects their sleep (29%). This number is higher among LGBTQ+ young people (44%), as well as those with a mental health condition (41%).

Teachers see the consequences of a lack of sleep during school:

*"We have students falling asleep in class because they have stayed up gaming or on their phones."*

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, ACADEMY (35% PUPIL PREMIUM)

There are multiple theories which seek to explain the harmful effects of screen time, with most suggesting that it is the displacement of other activities such as exercise and sleep that produces negative effects<sup>1</sup>, although methodological limitations have often prevented researchers from drawing firm conclusions<sup>2</sup>.

Yet nearly a fifth (19%) of young people feel that their physical health is negatively impacted by their use of the internet and digital devices. This figure is significantly higher among LGBTQ+ young people (29%), and those with a mental health condition (27%). It is also higher among those who said they would like to spend less time on the internet, and those who are unhappy with the amount of time that they spend online (36% and 34% respectively).

Parents express similar concerns around physical health and are keen for their children to maintain an active lifestyle:

*"[It was a hard decision [getting my son a games console] because I didn't want him in front of a screen all the time. My kids are super active and out a lot of the time; I wanted to maintain this. It is harder to get him away from the screen. [Technology] is good for connecting with friends but it turns them lazy. They just sit with the screen for far too long."*

PARENT TO AN 11-YEAR-OLD GIRL AND 12-YEAR-OLD TWINS (ONE BOY, ONE GIRL)

Young people aged 16+ express frustration at spending too much time online. They acknowledge that time spent online (for example, scrolling social media) is unproductive and could instead be used for their personal progress. At key life stages, such as during further or higher education, the pressure young people put on themselves to overcome procrastination can compound the stresses that they are already feeling around the need to achieve and succeed.

*"I will get angry about the time I spend online if I know that I am just wasting my time and avoiding the things I should be doing."*

18-YEAR-OLD MALE (STUDENT)

*"I spend way too much time online. I could be learning new skills or languages."*

21-YEAR-OLD MALE (STUDENT)

<sup>1</sup> Net Gains? Young people's digital lives and well-being | The Children's Society ([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk))

<sup>2</sup> Net Gains? Young people's digital lives and well-being | The Children's Society ([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk))



## Working and playing online

More than half of young people who are employed feel that the way they use the internet and digital devices positively impacts their work (54%). This is higher among LGBTQ+ young people (73%) and those with a mental health condition (70%).

Many young people are enthusiastic about using digital devices and use technology constructively and creatively. Whilst some use tools and programmes to support their education, others develop skills that allow them to create hardware and/or software for enjoyment. Most excited about the available opportunities are 8- to 11-year-olds and, protected by their parents, are keen to learn more. Some older young people recognise that the way they use technology could boost their CV and make them more attractive to future employers.



# Case study:

## AR, 10, South East



### DEVICES OWNED:

- Has her own Amazon Fire to play games and browse the internet
- Sometimes uses one of her parent's phones to WhatsApp friends or play games
- Is looking forward to getting her own mobile phone next year when she goes to secondary school
- When staying with her mother, she also has access to the family Chromebook.

### TECH FUELS AR'S CREATIVITY

- AR has created a couple of YouTube videos using her dolls. She created these videos for fun, but she learnt a lot about getting the timing of the video right and about making sure the communication between scenes made sense.
- AR loves to draw and uses YouTube to inspire her next drawings and designs.
- AR is the only vegetarian in her family. AR uses the internet to look for veggie recipes that she can cook with her mum. She likes to try the dishes that her favourite influencer (SSSniperWolf) has tried, tested and spoken about on YouTube.

### AR USES TECHNOLOGY IN HER EDUCATION

- AR uses Mathletics at school. She completes the set activities on a school laptop or school tablet. She sometimes feels embarrassed that she doesn't have a phone to complete school tasks, but isn't the only one in class who doesn't have a smartphone.
- While completing schoolwork via apps makes learning more fun, AR sometimes finds it harder as she has to learn how to play and navigate the game as well as compete the online lesson. She thinks that she will be able to get a better understanding of how to play once she is accustomed to regularly using a phone.

### AR CONNECTS WITH FRIENDS THROUGH MESSAGING

- AR has recently moved house and will be going to a different school. She sometimes messages her closest friends on her mum's phone and thinks that a phone will be key to keeping friendships.
- A phone will also help her develop new friendships. AR will meet new people through 'friends of friends' when she's out socialising or attending events. Once she has a phone, she plans to get people's numbers from her friends and drop them a message, reminding them who she is and giving them her number.

# Case study:

## ZC, 21, London

### DEVICES OWNED:

iPhone 13, MacBook Air and an Xbox One.

### TECHNOLOGY IS CENTRAL TO ZC'S LIFE

- ZC uses the calendar on his phone to plan for events in the future.
- ZC uses Waze to get from A to B and values the convenience of the navigation.
- ZC accesses social media via his phone to keep up to date with friends. He is a fan of Snapchat and uses it daily to share images with friends, see what they are up to and make plans. ZC will also call old friends and family members.

### ZC USES TECHNOLOGY TO BOOST HIS EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

- ZC has learnt to code as he thinks this will boost his CV and help him when he starts working. He did this through self-directed learning using internet tools. He also taught himself about blockchain and how to use Excel effectively online.
- ZC has used thestudentroom.com to access advice about job applications. He found the replies helpful and motivating, and the positive experience boosted his confidence throughout the process.



*"A-levels and university made me fully realise the importance of being digitally intelligent as it's such a vital skill in the workplace. I knew it would be important for me to better my digital skills to improve my chances of getting the job I wanted."*





Young people spontaneously mention that spending virtual time with others makes them happy. Being able to connect with others outside of school or college is a big driver. There are also some examples of young people blending their virtual and physical lives, for example, taking part in physical tasks whilst communicating online.

*"Sometimes when I'm at home I get bored but when I ask my mum if I can go in my iPad [sic] and she says yes, **I get excited and feel happy because I'm going to have fun on my iPad.** I can FaceTime my cousins and we can do TikTok dances together and we can play Toca Boca together."*

**8-YEAR-OLD GIRL**

At secondary school, children will start to want to make plans to meet friends before and/or after school, or during breaks. Parents recognise the importance of technology in maintaining friendships as children transition from primary school to secondary school. Being able to communicate freely with friends is especially valued among those who have friends who don't attend the same school.

*"There is more to being online than watching videos, like **if I'm talking to a friend I haven't spoken to in a while online, that will make me happy.**"*

**18-YEAR-OLD MALE (STUDENT)**

*"Her friends mostly are going to other schools due to catchment area, so to be connected is very important **especially when you are in a new school with new people, so you don't feel alone.**"*

**PARENT TO AN 11-YEAR-OLD BOY AND 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL**

However, there can be a lot of volatility in young people's interactions online, which is exacerbated by the loss of emotional nuance and the very public nature of social media.

"My daughter just fell out with a friend over a picture that was posted on social media and **actually then got bullied in school because of it**. However, [she] has become really good friends again with another friend she lost contact with via social media."

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PARENT TO A 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL

"[The impact on relationships is] again, a real mix as **some may have a really positive experience and feel connected, and others feel overwhelmed by the constant ping/ding of the phone and the toxic content sent to them.**"

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SOCIAL WORKER

"I think in some ways they are closer because they share more facets of their life. **[They have] constant 24-hour access to each other.** But then also it exacerbates the negatives, i.e. bullying."

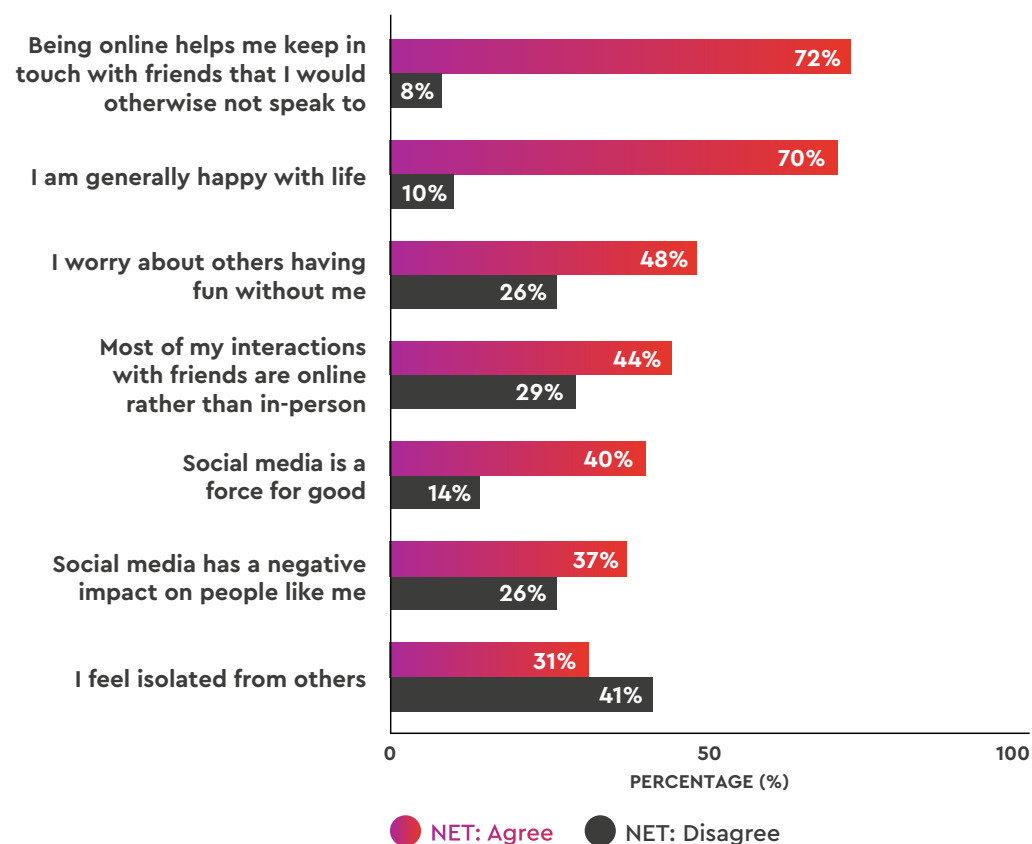
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SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, ACADEMY (28% PUPIL PREMIUM)

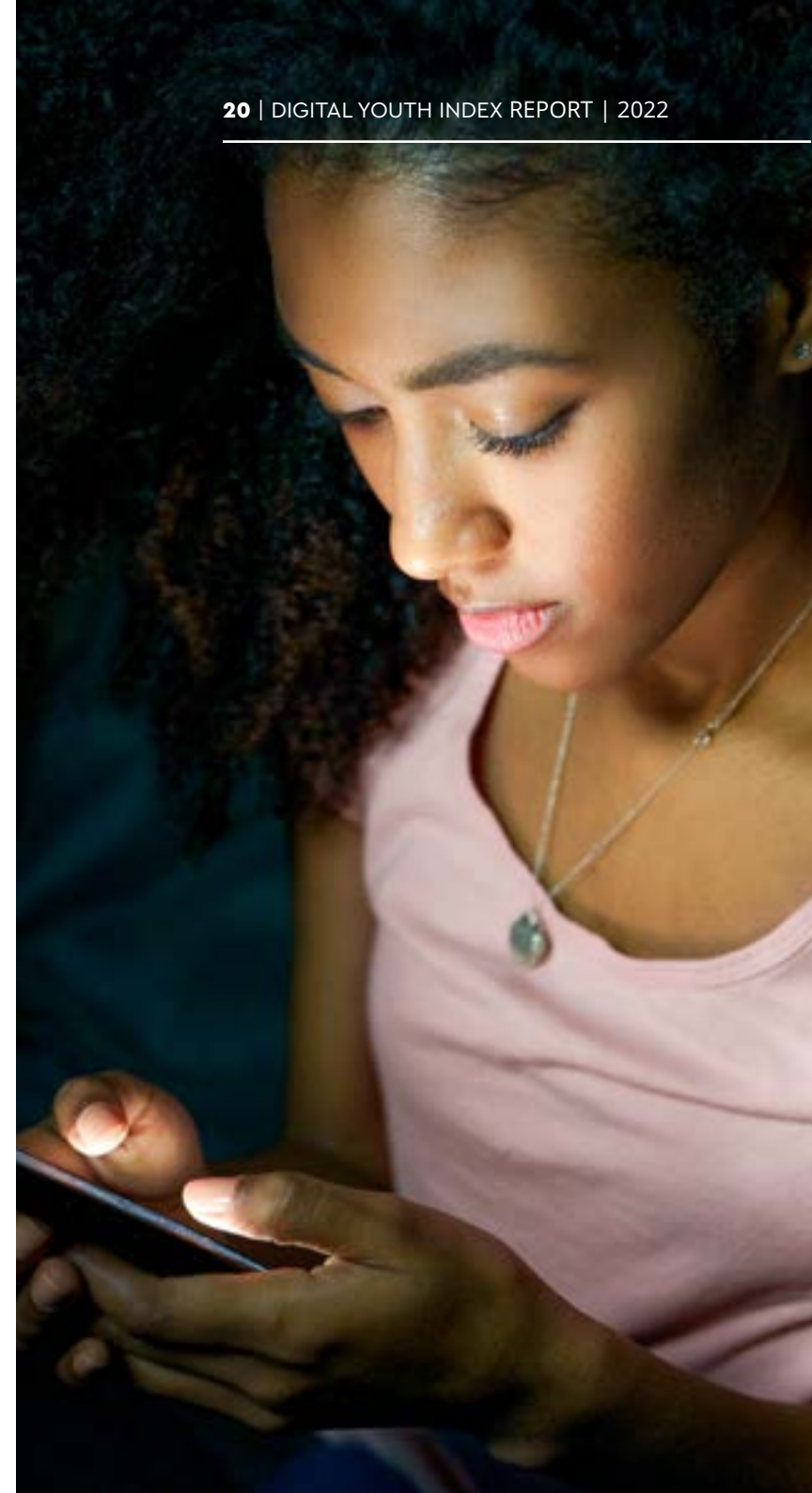


Almost half (48%) of young people with a mental health condition think the internet has a negative impact on people like them

### THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL AND INTERNET ON WELLBEING



Q35. HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?  
BASE: ALL ONLINE RESPONDENTS (4,000)





More than one in three young people (37%) agree that going online has a negative impact on 'people like them'. This rises to over two in five among LGBTQ+ young people (44%), and almost half (47%) of young people with a mental health condition. Young people are feeling the impact of social media on people they can relate to, and it is affecting how they feel about themselves.

How young people feel about going online can vary day-to-day depending on many factors, including the content they see, the interactions they have and their own mental health. For example, nearly a third (31%) of participants feel isolated from others in general – with a higher proportion of young people who feel unhappy with the amount of time they spend online (39%) reporting feeling this way.

*"My feelings change depending on my mood. If I'm low and I am talking to someone I know and trust, **it can give me that feeling of security.** But if I'm low and see something or someone says something horrible, **I will not react very well and my feelings will change negatively.**"*

16-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (MENTAL HEALTH)

Despite parents warning their children that social media paints a false reality, young people can feel pressured into looking and acting a certain way. When they don't meet the high expectations they have set for themselves based on things they've seen online, it can have a negative impact on their self-esteem and self-confidence.

However, young people do recognise the danger in comparing themselves to images they see online, whether that's content posted by peers or by celebrities, who can encourage young people to aspire to unrealistic body images and unattainable lifestyles.

*"There is **a huge amount of pressure** from people around them to act a certain way and look a certain way especially online, **which can drive their mental health into the ground.**"*

18-YEAR-OLD MALE (COGNITIVE DISABILITY)

*"I tell the kids that **a lot of the images online are what people want you to see.** They are not all real and not everyone is having an amazing life. I think **it can make people feel lonely** and wonder why friends may have not invited them out with others."*

PARENT TO AN 11-YEAR-OLD BOY AND 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL

*"Celebrities...are posting suggestive content which gets them millions of followers and **I think that filters down to young girls who need that kind of validation.**"*

SOCIAL WORKER



## GROWING UP ONLINE

### Young people are learning how to 'grow up online'

Some 19–25-year-olds feel they are 'coming out the other end' of challenging dynamics which impacted their online experiences when they were younger. Now, they are reaching a place where they have established a relationship with the digital landscape that works for them. Some have been able to resolve issues that bothered them when they were younger by unfollowing influencers and appraising content with a wider perspective.



*"When I was younger, **there was a time where I would compare my body to models on Instagram**, which impacted my mental health. I've stopped following such people and after speaking to friends/family it doesn't affect me nearly as much as it used to."*

21-YEAR-OLD MALE

*"I think young people who are impressionable and have **not been warned of the dangers of comparing your lives to others' on social media**, might be less happy online. But I think once you break that cycle being online can be positive."*

22-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

Social workers describe how some young people in care use social media as a way of escaping their lived experiences. They share how some of the young people they work with don't want others to know that they live in the care system and/or in poverty and so create 'glamorous, popular and confident' personas that show them to be 'living their best lives', yet these personas are not always realistic or maintainable.

*"Many will take photos next to expensive cars, or take pictures of them in expensive shops trying on designer clothes, etc. **They want to show the world that they are something that they are not.**"*

SOCIAL WORKER

## Bullying on the digital playground

Young people across all age groups are aware of cyberbullying and it is a subject that is often addressed early on at school. Bullying is a major concern for parents and carers, who worry that the ubiquity of technology means there is no escape for their children should they become a target. This is reinforced by professionals working with young people; teachers, social workers and youth workers see how cyberbullying can have real-world consequences and severely impact how young people see themselves in the world.

Picture and video content exacerbates online bullying. Young people and adults alike report 'friends' posting unflattering or unkind pictures, as well as videos of bullying taking place. Several teachers reported instances of students posting inappropriate videos taken during class and/or attributing unfounded accusations to videos and images which have been circulated online.

*"The bullying aspects are so brutal they **almost outweigh the positives.**"*

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, STATE SCHOOL (33% PUPIL PREMIUM)

*"[Bullying] is awful and the **impact on the mental health of the child who was subject to the bullying is massive.**"*

SOCIAL WORKER

*"Within their circles they can have great relationships, but my experience has been that things can change very quickly and for the littlest reason, which **tends to result in bullying or sometimes violence.** The feuds or issues they have online often spill over into real life and **that's where the danger lies.**"*

YOUTH WORKER





## Young people go online for help and information they can't find elsewhere

It feels natural for young people to go online for information, help and support. Children observe their parents and guardians turning to resources like Alexa and Google for information and help, so it becomes ingrained in young people's problem-solving.

Being able to look for help, advice and information online is empowering; it helps young people become independent and develop key skills for life. Young people also use the internet for essential services that would otherwise be difficult to access.

### INFORMATION AND HELP IS QUICK AND EASY TO ACCESS

When searching online, young people don't need to know the specifics of what they are looking for. Intelligent search functions lead people to the content they need and accessibility barriers, such as not knowing how to spell something, are removed.

Young people aged 8 to 11 tend to use the internet very functionally – they look for information on how to find things, or how to do things such as editing a video, overcoming a gaming challenge, changing their settings or fixing their device. Information is presented in a format that makes it easy to digest and understand. Young people particularly value the power of video.

*"If I am on an app and don't know how to change a setting (for example: Ghost Mode on Snapchat) then I find it more useful to search up how to do it online. There is [sic] usually videos online of how to do simple things like this and is **quicker than talking to someone about it.**"*

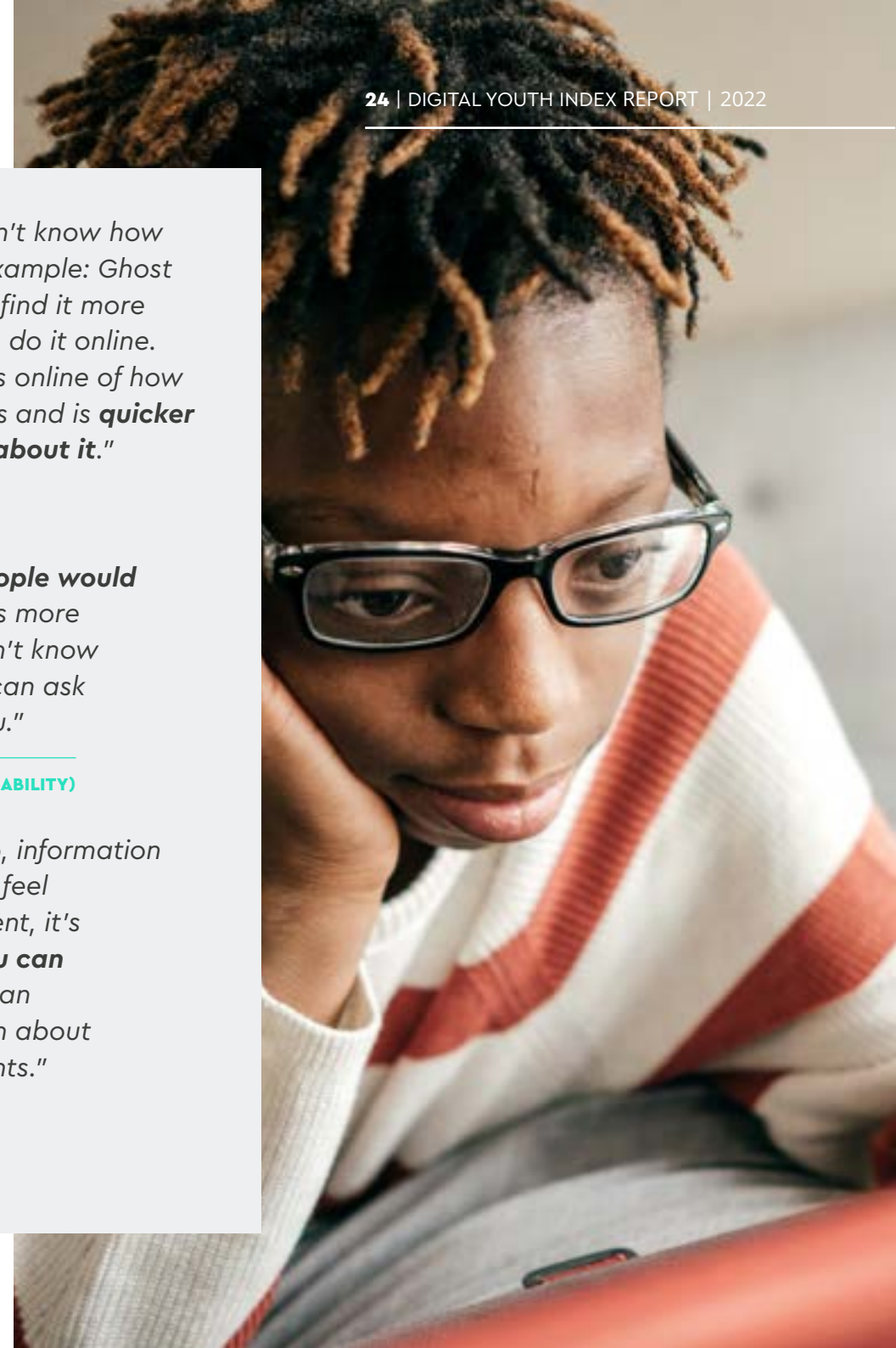
14-YEAR-OLD GIRL

*"I completely get why people would go to the internet first. It's more accessible, even if you don't know how to spell a word, you can ask Alexa to spell it out for you."*

21-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (COGNITIVE DISABILITY)

*"[People go online for help, information and advice] because they feel embarrassed, it's convenient, it's all at your fingers [sic], **you can be more specific** rather than have a whole conversation about something with your parents."*

10-YEAR-OLD GIRL



## YOUNG PEOPLE CAN SEEK HELP ANONYMOUSLY

Young people across age groups recognise and value the anonymity the online environment can provide. Going online for information and support removes fear of judgement. This becomes increasingly important for older young people 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.

Our qualitative research supports this, where young people describe how going online for help, support and information allows them to ask questions they may not otherwise have the confidence to ask someone face to face.

*"I think people prefer going online for support because it is **convenient**, and you don't have to go to someone that you know with **a question that you feel is embarrassing** or something that you feel you should already know about. **Especially for difficult topics such as mental health, sexuality or health questions**, because it can feel embarrassing to voice them to people that you know and are close with."*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (COGNITIVE DISABILITY)

*"I think people prefer going online for support as some people don't know how to ask for it in person and **don't like asking people questions**."*

15-YEAR-OLD GIRL

*"[People prefer going online] to remain anonymous, so **others don't know they are struggling** or maybe because they **don't have people in their life that they can trust/rely on for advice**."*

22-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (LGBTQ+)

*"I think maybe [people go online for information and help] because they don't have friends to talk to and maybe because they can't talk to their parents **because their parents are too strict**."*

8-YEAR-OLD GIRL (BRITISH ASIAN)

## YOUNG PEOPLE CAN FIND A COMMUNITY WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH SOMETHING SIMILAR

There is value in hearing from others who have had a similar experience – young people trust the advice they may offer, and it's comforting knowing that they aren't alone.

*"People prefer to go online for support because it [provides access to] a big network of people and you are bound to come across people and support **who are going through the same process and can give advice and guidance**."*

15-YEAR-OLD GIRL (MENTAL HEALTH, COGNITIVE DISABILITY)

# Case study:

## BV, 9 years old

### DEVICES OWNED:

Smartphone, laptop, PC, tablet

BV is a 9-year-old boy with a cognitive disability. BV lives with his mum and stepdad. He loves to skate and often goes to the skate park on the weekends.

BV used the internet to explore his interests and his local area.

- With the help of his parents, BV used the internet to find a new skate park to explore in the local area through Google.
- He needed to go online for this information as it is not something that his family or friends would have known.
- When they arrived, they found parking difficult so BV would ideally like more information on the parking situation.

*"I wanted to go to a new skate park last weekend so **I looked it up online with my mum and dad.** We found one that we didn't know about so we went and checked it out. It was so much fun and I really enjoyed it."*





# Case study:

## EB, 16 years old

### DEVICES OWNED:

Smartphone, laptop, tablet

EB has mental health challenges and lives in supported care.

EB used her devices to access a critical service.

- EB once contacted Childline when she was having a mental health crisis, which resulted in an ambulance being sent. Being able to access this timely support provided the help that EB needed.
- She also uses the online tools and resources provided by the mental health charity, Mind, to help manage her mental health.



# Case study:

## KD, 21 years old

### DEVICES OWNED:

Smartphone, laptop, PC, tablet, games console

Access to online services allowed KD to get medical help.

- KD is non-binary and lives alone.
- Researching health symptoms KD was experiencing provided the validation needed to book an appointment with the GP.

*"The anonymity of seeking support online comes without judgement from friends and family. **Being able to ask a stranger questions without them knowing who you are provides a form of comfort.** The NHS website is the perfect example for this. After experiencing some health concerns I took it upon myself to look up my symptoms, **which was very easy to do.** The website was simple to navigate and gave an excellent breakdown of everything in between.*

*My worries were met with facts and so I took it upon myself to see my GP. I do not like going to see the doctor **because I believe there is always somebody that needs their time more than me.** On this occasion I was presented with the facts I needed to push me to making an appointment."*



## THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE INTERNET AND DIGITAL DEVICES VARIES CONSIDERABLY

Young people's experiences online are extremely diverse and perceptions of the impact of social media are polarising. Many feel more connected to friends and family, are better able to do their jobs or schoolwork and have greater access to the resources they need to thrive.

However, for others, the internet and digital technology has a much more mixed impact, particularly for those facing forms of marginalisation. Digital technology may also serve to amplify negative aspects of young people's lives – poor relationships or mental health can be exacerbated and societal inequalities made starker. And while many young people recognise the dangers associated with social media, such as viewing distressing content (see 'Internet Safety and Resilience') and the potential damage of seeing such content, one in three (26%) still feel that it does not have a negative impact on people like them.

## What's changed from last year?

The proportion of young people saying most of their interactions with friends are online rather than in person has fallen from 56% to 44%, suggesting that emerging from the pandemic, young people are interacting face-to-face more frequently. On a similar note, the proportion saying they feel isolated from others has also fallen by 13% this year, from 44% to 31%.

Last year, 47% of young people said that they feel social media was a force for good; this year, that number fell to 40%. But at the same time, fewer young people feel that social media has a negative effect on 'people like me', falling from 45% in 2021 to just over a third (37%).

## NOMINET/PARTNER PROGRAMME EXAMPLES

Mental health charity Samaritans are transforming their emotional support and listening services in an increasingly digital age.

Samaritans and Nominet established a [digital transformation partnership](#) in 2019 that has had a wide-reaching impact on those accessing support. This includes six projects ranging from a self-help app, online chat, email support and peer-led training, as well as an intelligent dashboard and knowledge base. The organisation's experiences offer many learnings to share with the sector and beyond.



[Read about the digital transformation partnership](#)





## Key findings

Index score: 79

**95%** of young people say they feel safe online, yet **4.2 million young people (29%)** have experienced hate speech online.

**Around 1 in 4** young people have experienced violence (26%), trolling or abuse (23%), and/or sexual content (23%).

**Minority groups are most vulnerable** to seeing negative content online, aided by the anonymity of the digital landscape.

**Three-quarters** of young people state that **they feel 'in control' of what they see online (73%)**.

**6%** of young people would **not trust** anyone to help them if **they saw something that made them feel unsafe online**.



# INTERNET SAFETY

Young people report feeling generally safe online. They also describe the different safety risks quite broadly, whether that's avoiding distressing content, knowing who to trust or being aware of misleading information. However, teachers and parents/guardians are concerned about these threats. A question emerges about whether young people's perceived levels of safety reflect their actual online safety.



# 95% of young people say they feel safe online\*

## TOP FIVE TYPES OF DISTRESSING CONTENT SEEN ONLINE

CONTENT TYPE	CONTENT SEEN	NOT CONFIDENT IN DEALING WITH CONTENT*	NEEDED HELP DEALING WITH CONTENT*
Fake news, misinformation, or disinformation	35%	17%	23%
Hate speech	29%	19%	23%
Violent content	26%	19%	21%
Trolling or abuse	23%	19%	24%
Sexual content	23%	18%	18%

\*AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN CONTENT

Q22A. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN OR EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WHILE ONLINE? BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (4,105)

Q22B. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN DEALING WITH THE FOLLOWING...? BASE: ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED SITUATION (966-1434)

Q23A. DID YOU NEED ANY HELP OR SUPPORT TO DEAL WITH THE FOLLOWING...? BASE: ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN OR EXPERIENCED SITUATION (966-1434)

Most young people recognise that preventing exposure to false or misleading information is an important part of staying safe online (85%). However, this is also the type of content that young people are most likely to have experienced online (35%). This self-reported number should be seen as a positive indicator of the ability to recognise misinformation and doesn't include those who don't recognise the incorrect information that they are seeing as 'fake'.

In qualitative discussions with young people, 12–18-year-olds are the most anxious about seeing content that they don't want to see. Younger age groups feel more protected from negative content as access to websites, apps and social media platforms is more likely to be heavily vetted by guardians. But as young people become more independent and have the freedom to explore, they are also more at risk of exposure to negative content and upsetting interactions.

Young people's definition of distressing content is broader than one might first expect. Young people talk about media coverage and cite fake news and clickbait as being responsible for eroding people's happiness online. However, news reports from established media outlets can also negatively impact young people when the coverage relates to socio-economic and/or environmental matters that they find concerning, such as poor human rights, animal endangerment and climate change.

*"Sometimes you see **scary and inappropriate things** that you don't want to see, stories in the news feel quite scary too and, especially on Twitter, sometimes you are **surrounded by people who have opinions that to you seem crazy and wrong.**"*

17-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (BLACK BRITISH)

*"What people would class as '**Karens**' – people who go online, look at clickbait, anger themselves, comment (often hatred) and allow it to affect their way of thinking **without looking at the bigger picture...**"*

24-YEAR-OLD MALE

*"Finding out about **upsetting things**, mostly things that are happening in the world, such as what the governments are doing in the UK and USA to women's and LGBTQIA rights. **People being hurtful about me.**"*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (COGNITIVE DISABILITY)



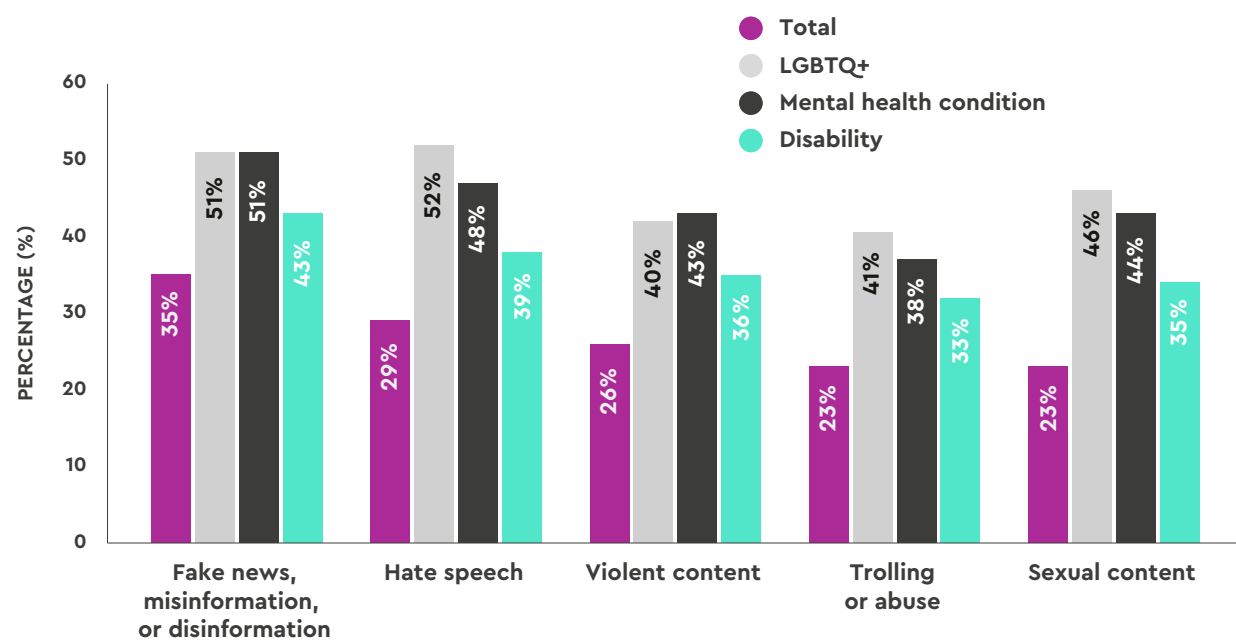


The social media platforms where young users are most likely to have seen distressing content are:

- Reddit (70%)
- Twitter (70%)
- TikTok (66%)
- Tumblr (63%).

Many young people are accessing these platforms at an age lower than is imposed by the social media company. For example, a third of primary school children are accessing TikTok, despite the platform requiring that users be 13 or older.

### TOP FIVE TYPES OF DISTRESSING CONTENT SEEN ONLINE



Q22A. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN OR EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WHILE ONLINE? BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (4,105); LGBTQ+ (502), MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION (805), DISABILITY (1453)

## The problem with anonymity

In qualitative research, young people say that they agree that minority groups are most vulnerable to seeing negative content online as the anonymity provided by the digital landscape creates an environment in which some feel able to share harmful content and intolerant opinions with little consequence.

Young LGBTQ+ people and those who have a mental health condition and/or a disability are more likely to have seen distressing content. These groups are also more likely to have experienced bullying online, and to see content promoting self-harm or suicide.

*"I think the removal of a person's anonymity would make the internet a much happier and safer place. **People hide behind their anonymity** and say whatever they want to whoever they want because there are no repercussions. **The removal of anonymity would make people mindful of what they are saying**, hopefully making social media a friendlier place to be."*

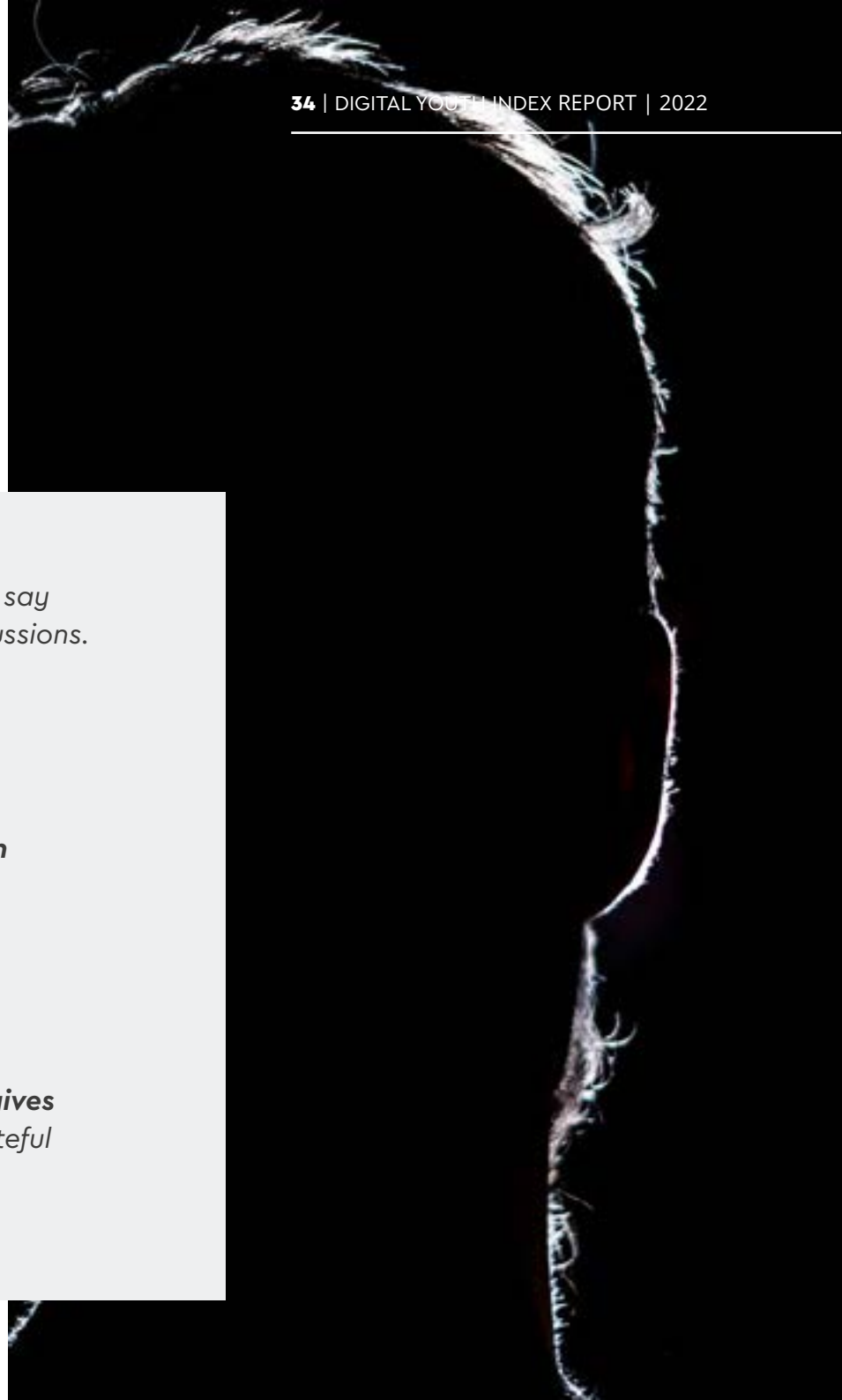
21-YEAR-OLD MALE

*"In terms of hate speech **racist, homophobic and ableist people exist on the internet** just as much as they exist in real life. It's really unfortunate but sadly **there is no escaping** that these kinds of people exist."*

17-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (BLACK BRITISH)

*"I think some groups are more exposed as hate speech in real life is no longer tolerated and will have serious repercussions, however, **online it gives these hurtful people a mask to hide behind** so they can preach their hateful content/ideas **without facing any real repercussions to their lives.**"*

18-YEAR-OLD MALE (BRITISH ASIAN)



Content creators who identify as belonging to a minority group may become targets for those who feel entitled to share their harmful views; one young person describes their challenge with wanting to be vulnerable and visible online and at the same time needing the resilience to manage hurtful comments.

***"I think people who are more likely to be targeted for criticism and hate online are more likely to feel less happy online. This includes groups such as women, LGBTQIA, disabled people, BIPOC [black, indigenous and people of colour] communities, people from religions other than Christianity, and other minority groups because they are more likely to be targeted for hate... The content that I create online can make me feel sad and angry, mostly at the people doing it but also at myself because it can be hard to want to continue putting yourself out there when people are going to be mean and hurtful."***

**24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (COGNITIVE DISABILITY)**





Despite these concerns, three-quarters of young people state that they feel 'in control' of what they see online (73%). They recognise the importance of taking steps to protect their security, such as ensuring that their personal information is kept safe (87%), protection from cyberbullying/hate (86%), protection from viruses (86%) and protection from harmful content (86%). However, many young people find it difficult to take practical or technical steps to protect themselves online. One in ten do not find it easy to adjust their social media privacy settings (11%), and a similar proportion do not find it easy to identify whether a website is secure (10%).

Many young people often lack reliable and authoritative sources to learn about staying safe online. They are most likely to learn about internet safety from their parents (51%) and/or teachers (37%). However, more than two in five (43%) teach themselves, and over a quarter (28%) learn from the internet.

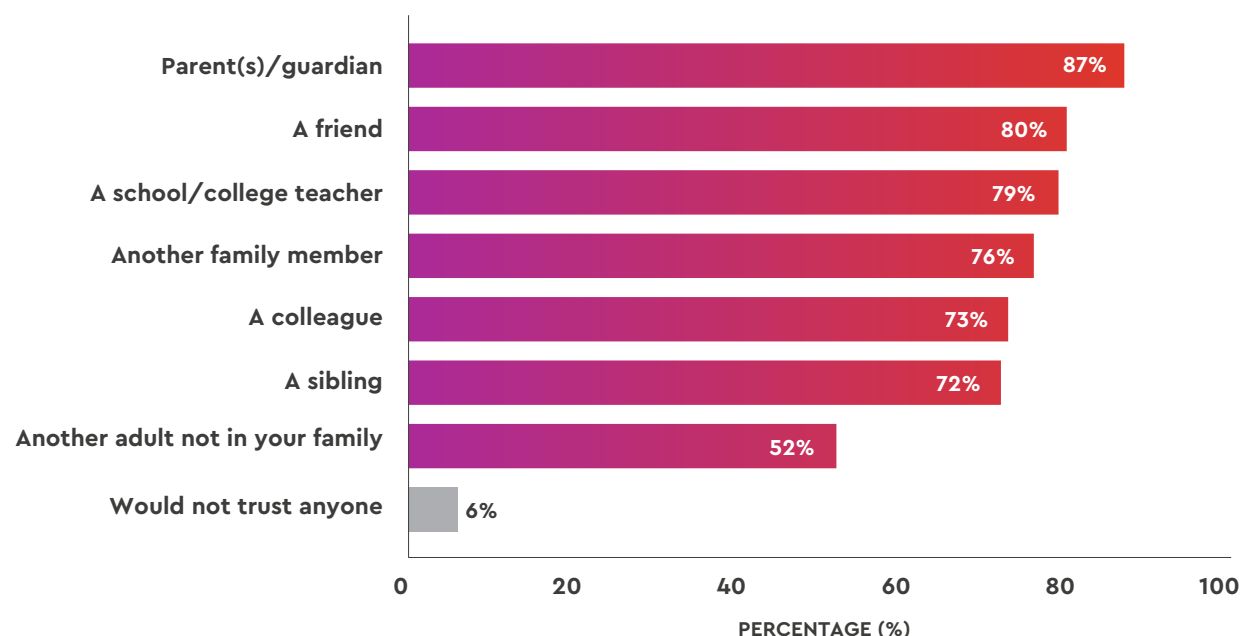
Schools address the issues of cyberbullying and 'stranger danger' from an early age. At secondary school, students are taught about fake news and are warned about the dangers of revealing their identity, sharing personal details and posting images online. Young people report how they are not always taught how to deal with seeing negative content online, and any support they receive in how to respond seems to often be reactionary following an incident. Those who feel confident in dealing with negative content say that they would block and report posts. Under-11s are more likely to tell a parent or guardian and look to them for advice on what to do next.



As many as 870,000 of the UK's young people (6%) would not trust anyone to help them if they saw something that made them feel unsafe online.

Most young people say they would know where to go and/or have someone to turn to if they see something which makes them feel unsafe online. But a sizeable minority of those who have seen distressing content say they are not confident in how to deal with it (15–29%) and/or have needed help dealing with it (18–39%). Further, 6% say they would not trust anyone, and one in five (19%) would not know where to go for support. This means there are hundreds of thousands of young people who could find themselves dealing with an internet safety risk alone.

### WHO YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD TRUST IF THEY EXPERIENCED SOMETHING THAT MADE THEM FEEL UNSAFE ONLINE



Q25. TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU TRUST THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE TO HELP YOU IF YOU EXPERIENCED SOMETHING THAT MADE YOU FEEL UNSAFE ONLINE? BASE: ALL ONLINE RESPONDENTS (4,000)

## Young people may avoid seeking help if they think that there is a risk their devices would be taken away from them

When it comes to safety, young people feel they cannot rely on the privacy of their devices or connections. They express concern about the repercussions of open discussions about safety with their parents or carers, for fear of their internet usage being limited or monitored by adults as a safety measure or punishment.

*"Yes, I do believe most people say this as I feel if they were to say they weren't feeling safe **it would look like an issue** and **their guardians may make them delete it** and they may not like that."*

16-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (LIVING IN CARE)

*"Yes [people might claim to feel safe when they don't feel it], **because they might want to be trusted by their parents** and they might **not want people to worry about them.**"*

10-YEAR-OLD GIRL





There is also a question around the perceived credibility of older generations to help with these issues. Some young people reference that advice offered by parents and/or society may no longer be relevant for modern times, especially as the norms around meeting strangers through the internet have changed.

*"I was talking to my mum and she said 'I'm not tech savvy' but we literally learnt this as we were growing up... **She has different views**, when I was making friends online, she was like **'stop talking to strangers online'.**"*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

*"Internet safety was taught in primary school, the main thing being not to meet or talk to people you do not know... **In today's day and age, [it is] not at all [useful].** I can understand it in respect of a child; don't meet or talk to strangers but this does not necessarily apply as an adult... **Obviously the entire online dating community relies on this now.**"*

21-YEAR-OLD NON-BINARY

EASE OF CONDUCTING SECURITY TASKS

SECURITY TASK	% WHO FIND IT HARD
Setting privacy settings on my social media and other accounts	11%
Identifying secure websites by looking for the padlock and https in the address bar	10%
Recognising suspicious links in emails, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and knowing that clicking on these links or downloading unfamiliar attachments could put me and my computer at risk	10%
Keeping the information I use to access my online accounts secure, using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts	9%

Q18B. HOW EASY OR HARD DO YOU FIND THE FOLLOWING TASKS ON YOUR OWN WITHOUT ANY HELP?  
BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (4,105)

## SCHOOLING YOUNG PEOPLE ON STAYING SAFE

### Views differ on the effectiveness of safety training given in schools

At secondary school, practical training is valued over top-down theoretical teaching. Young people report how online safety education and training in schools focuses on raising awareness of online dangers, with grooming, phishing and fraud being the key areas of focus, but not necessarily preparing for how to react should these things happen. These topics and themes are reinforced at home to different degrees.

*"My parents, my older cousins, and my teachers, they taught me not to talk to strangers, not to give out my personal details to anyone online, not to say anything mean to anyone online. **To always be kind and to always be careful.**"*

8-YEAR-OLD GIRL (BRITISH ASIAN)

*"We have had prevention training to tackle radicalisation. Students can easily share and post things **without knowing true intentions of whether something is 'fake news'.**"*

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, LA-MAINTAINED (20% PUPIL PREMIUM)

*"School educated us on this but only told us the basics, i.e. don't share your password and don't share valuable information... **[it's] not very useful because they are already commonly known.**"*

15-YEAR-OLD BOY

*"My school has taught me about internet safety, and they have taught me to [not to go] on scam websites and **not to talk to people that you don't know.** I found these useful because they explained ways that you can tell if a website or link is **untrustworthy.** An example of this is if an email address has a weird spelling or a typo in the email/website... [but] **what to do if once you've talked to someone for a long time and they lied about who they are. What do you do?"***

12-YEAR-OLD BOY

*"Now **I would like practical tips for staying safe online,** such as using VPNs, password managers, using the cloud, how to engage with social media safely, how to date online in a safe way."*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

There is also a desire for training to be embedded in real-life scenarios to make it more relevant to young people. Despite online safety training, some have been vulnerable to malicious online behaviour. Others want to explore and understand the impact of malicious behaviour and the consequences of not following best practice, such as clicking untrustworthy links. It's important that young people feel supported when they find themselves in difficult situations and don't feel blamed for acting irresponsibly.

*"[Online safety training was] quite useful, however, I wasn't told about how easy it is to be scammed over social media through identity fraud. **My friend was hacked on his Snapchat and asked me to send him money** but I thought it was legitimate because it was from his account. If I had been taught more about this, **perhaps this could've been avoided.**"*

21-YEAR-OLD MALE

*"**I learnt a lot by doing.** I think schools claim they teach online safety, but I don't think it really covers the basics. I think they assume kids have a certain level of knowledge, **but sometimes they don't.** For example, I learnt pretty quickly not to talk to strangers through a situation that happened... **For me, how can that experience be improved for others – [by] not blaming or telling off.**"*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE

*"I want to know what can happen if you do click on **an untrustworthy link.**"*

12-YEAR-OLD BOY





## NOMINET/PARTNER PROGRAMME EXAMPLES

Barnardo's, the UK's largest children's charity, is creating a new digital service called [Project Backpack](#) that will help professionals respond with confidence to the continuously evolving challenges young people face online by giving them instant access to advice. Funded by Nominet and working with Parent Zone, Barnardo's Project Backpack will combine expert knowledge and data with children's views and feedback to transform how young people are supported in their digital lives.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre \(SIC\)](#) is a unique partnership of three world-leading charities (SWGfL, Childnet, and the Internet Watch Foundation) working together to deliver critical advice, resources and interventions to help keep everyone safe online, especially children and young people. Nominet is a long-standing supporter and sponsor of [Safer Internet Day](#), and has pledged £5.1 million to help fund the UK Safer Internet Centre for the next three years as part of its commitment to ensuring the online world is connected, inclusive and secure for all.



[Read about  
Project Backpack](#)





## Key findings

### Index score: 80

More than **half (57%)** of young people want a job that uses advanced digital skills...

... But a **fifth (20%)** of young people do not feel that they have received good digital skills training from school.

**Half of young people (51%)** still report **teaching themselves** digital skills (up from 48% in 2021).

**The second most common place** that young people **learn digital skills is through teachers (43%).**

# DIGITAL SKILLS



A fifth (20%) of young people do not feel they had the basic training on digital skills relevant to everyone, let alone the opportunity to explore advanced skills for careers like coding. More than half (57%) of young people want a job that uses advanced digital skills. Since there are currently [870,000 tech vacancies in the UK](#), this appears to be important for the future of digital talent pipelines. However, there is a gulf between the demand for digital skills and the supply of young people who believe they are sufficiently trained for such jobs. It's vital to understand exactly what these skills shortages are so that schools and other organisations can help to ensure that young people have the skills they need to flourish – both for universal, essential skills in all manner of jobs as well as advanced skills for specialist digital careers.

## A fifth of young people do not believe school has given them adequate digital skills

20% of young people do not feel that they have received the grounding they need through foundational training in school to help them to use digital technology through essential digital skills relevant to everyone. Marginalised young people are particularly likely to feel that school training was not enough – this includes LGBTQ+ young people (31%), and those with certain disabilities such as mobility (30%) and mental health challenges (30%). The same is true among those who are not currently in education or employment (34%).

Beyond the basics, young people have high levels of motivation to pursue a career that uses advanced digital skills, such as software development (57%). This is particularly true for young people whose first language is not English (72%), as well as those from an ethnic minority group (69%). Young people from households where the chief income earner has higher qualification levels (67% post-graduate degree and 70% professional qualifications) are also more likely to be interested in this kind of career, compared to no formal qualifications or GCSE or equivalent (46% and 53% respectively).

The high level of interest in digital careers is not reflected in the proportion of young people choosing IT as a subject of study. According to the Learning and Work Institute (LWI), the number of young people taking IT at GCSE dropped by 40% between 2014 and 2021, and the number of young people taking A-levels, further education courses and apprenticeships in IT is also declining. Of those, young women account for just 22% of GCSE entrants in IT subjects, 17% of A-level entrants and 23% of those starting IT apprenticeships.






## 70% of young people expect employers to provide on-the-job digital training

One factor which may contribute to this discrepancy is that, according to the same study, 70% of young people expect employers to invest in teaching them digital skills on the job. However, only half of employers surveyed are able to provide that training.

This year's Nominet Digital Youth Index supports the findings of the LWI study. Despite the initial enthusiasm for digital careers, many young people doubt their ability to secure and succeed at these types of jobs. Many are not confident in their skills and question whether they would be able to learn the necessary skills quickly enough.

Teachers agree that lack of confidence prevents young people from considering these types of roles.



*"I think I would need it to be more manageable. **High pressured, high stake jobs come with so much responsibility and skills that I don't have.** It doesn't feel very achievable to be in a job like that. It feels like more of an outcome if you're from a higher achieving/higher earning background. **Until society changes that, we're going to be of this same mindset.**"*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (EMPLOYED)

*"I would need to know that I'm good at subjects relating to tech (e.g. maths and computing science). I would need to see that I get good grades from school on said subjects and **I would need to hear positive [feedback] from my peers/parents/teachers that it would be a good field for me to go into.**"*

18-YEAR-OLD MALE, BRITISH ASIAN (STUDENT)



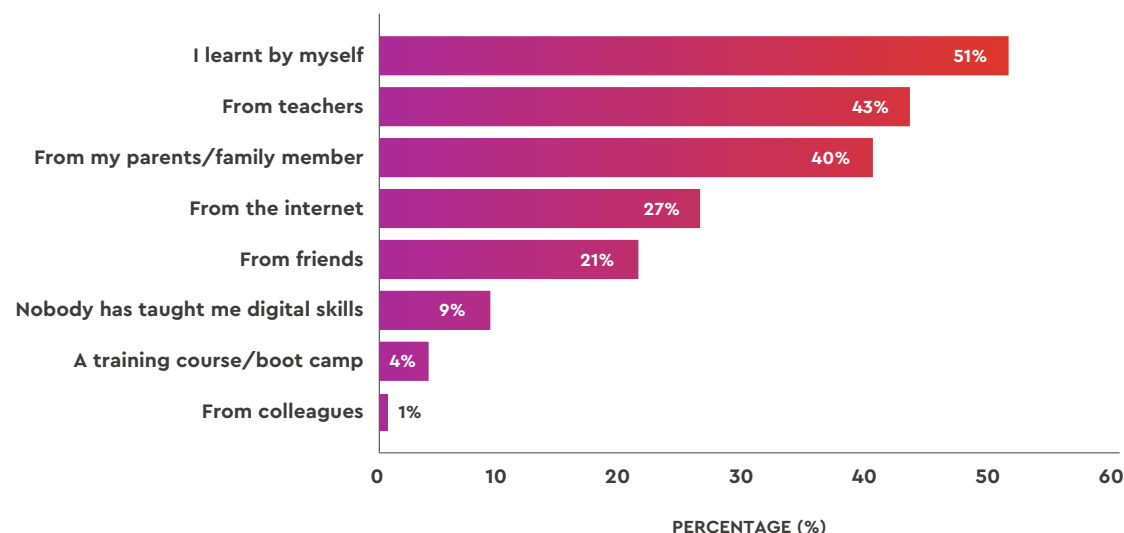
## LEARNING AS THEY GO

Despite the pandemic accelerating our adoption of digital technology, half of young people still report teaching themselves digital skills

Understanding how young people are learning digital skills will help us to understand this skills gap.

In line with last year's Nominet Digital Youth Index, half of young people learnt their digital skills themselves (51%). This is even higher among LGBTQ+ young people (63%) and those with a mental health condition (57%).

## HOW DIGITAL SKILLS WERE LEARNT



Q14. HOW DID YOU LEARN DIGITAL SKILLS? DIGITAL SKILLS ARE SKILLS YOU USE ONLINE AND WHEN USING DIGITAL DEVICES. (E.G. USING MICROSOFT WORD, SEARCHING ON GOOGLE, CONNECTING TO THE INTERNET) BASE: ALL ONLINE RESPONDENTS (4,000)

## THE UNIVERSITY OF YOUTUBE

### Young people are most confident in teaching themselves digital skills for fun, with YouTube being their go-to teacher

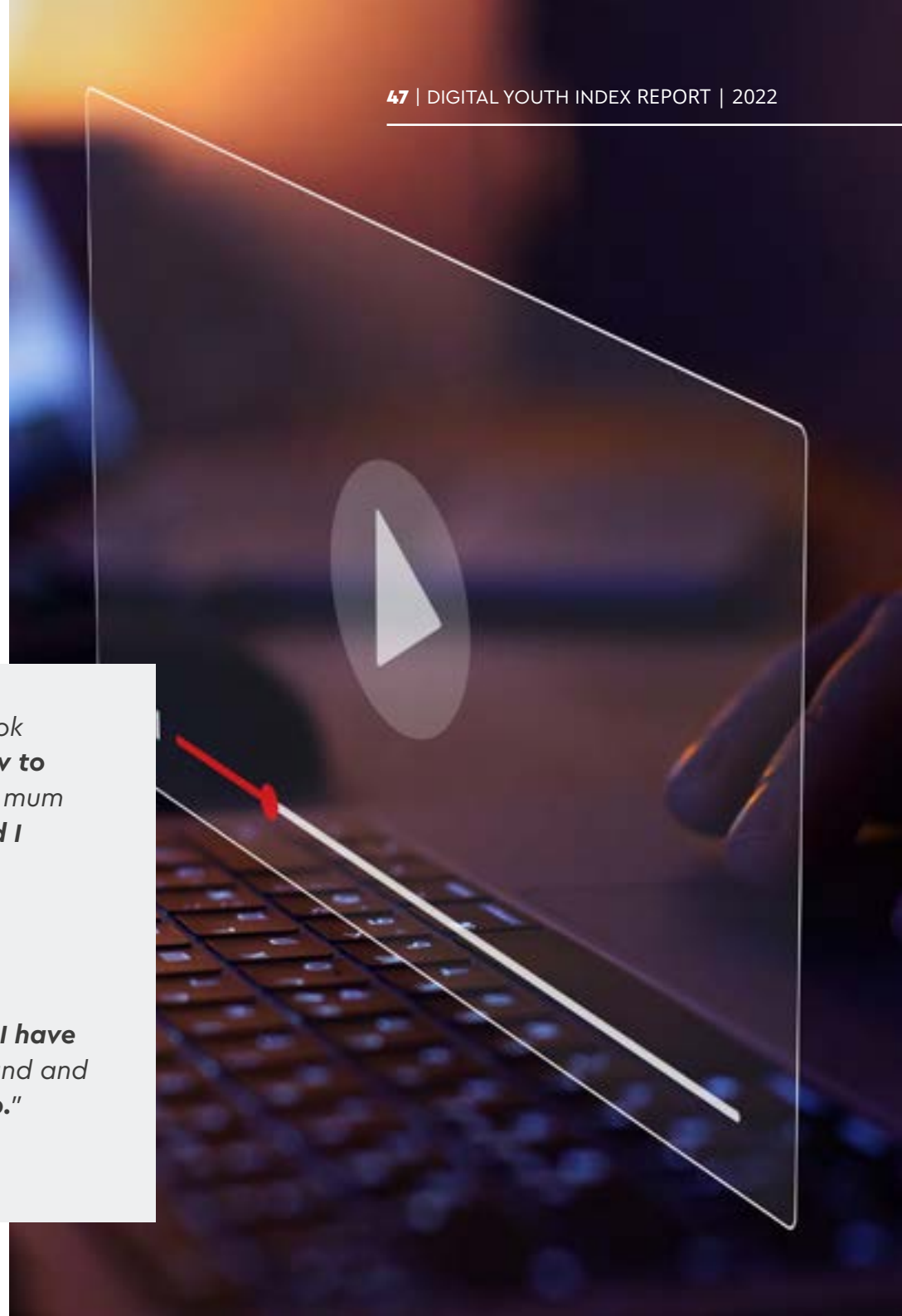
Young people rely heavily on platforms such as YouTube for online tutorials to teach themselves skills like how to record a great TikTok video or improve on gaming. The key motivation for learning these skills is being able to fit in with their peers and connect socially. Some feel a sense of pride in being able to solve problems for themselves.

*"I taught myself how to download apps, create videos on TikTok and edit them. **I taught myself how to play Toca Boca and how to buy things on there.** I wanted to play on the new apps and my mum didn't know how to set it up for me **so I had to learn myself and I watched YouTube to learn how to build things** on Toca Boca."*

8-YEAR-OLD GIRL

*"I cannot remember a time where I didn't know how to use the internet. **I cannot remember needing to learn, I feel as though I have always just known.** But when I do hit a wall, I tend to play around and figure things out myself **rather than trying to find external help.**"*

21-YEAR-OLD MALE







The second most common source of digital skills is teachers (43%), though this varies depending on the type of school attended. Those from a faith school/academy are more likely to have learnt digital skills from teachers (58%) than those at a selective school (37%). This is also true for non-selective schools or colleges, where 55% of young people learn digital skills through teachers.

However, teachers do not feel that they have the knowledge or skills to fill the gaps. While they will teach what they know, teachers at schools do not feel they have training that reflects how quickly things are changing or know which skills are needed from an employment perspective.

For teachers to be a primary source of IT skills learning, teaching must be aligned to what employers need. The LWI findings show that less than half of young people in the UK leave full-time education with the advanced digital skills they need. This tells us that there is a gap to fill. To understand how this gap can be filled, we need to know exactly what skills gaps currently exist, and which groups are most affected.

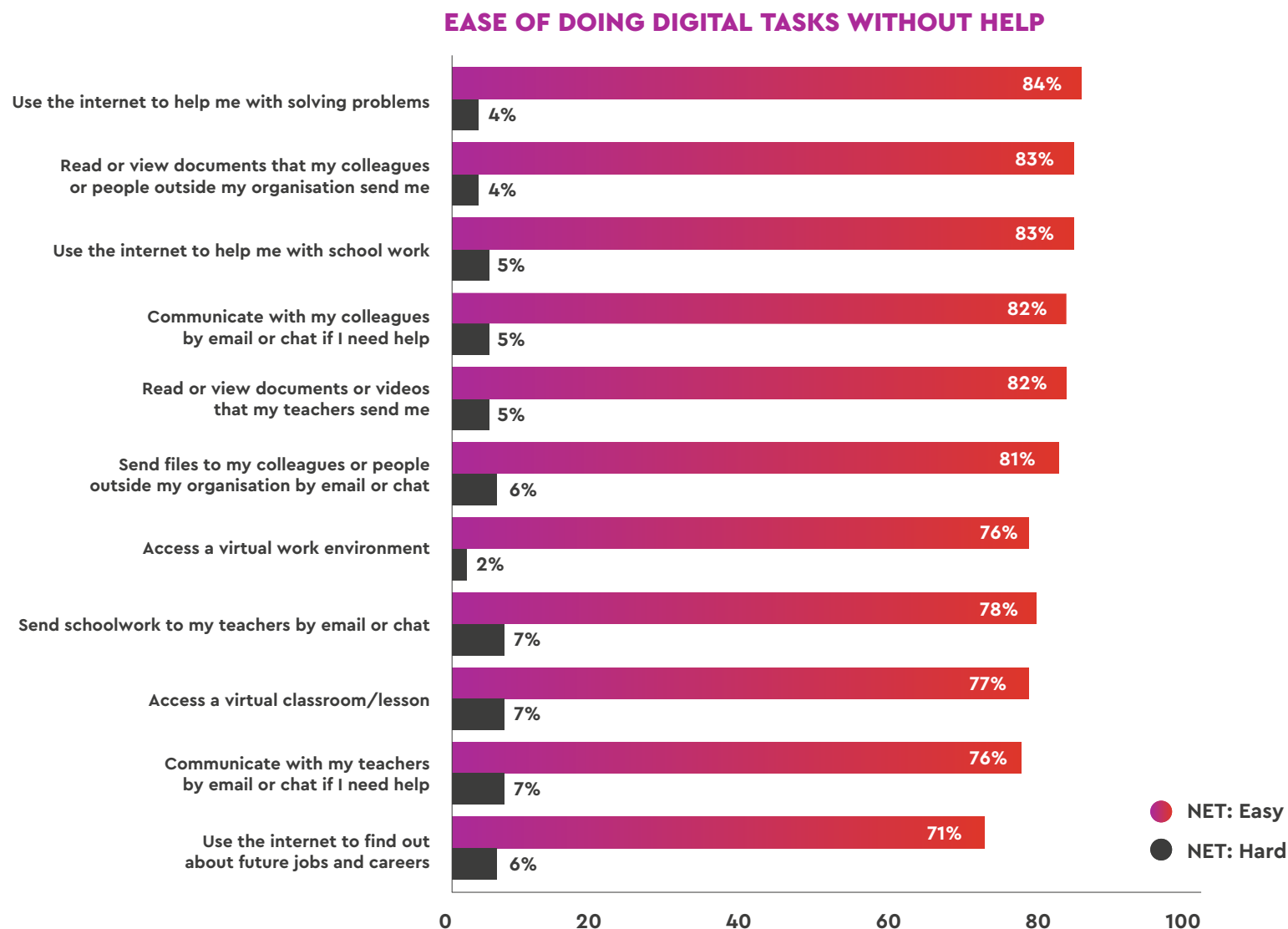
*"The students we teach are developing for jobs **that haven't been created yet** and are more than likely going to be **a majority involvement with tech...**"*

**SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, ACADEMY (40% PUPIL PREMIUM)**

*"In schools we don't always have up-to-date information about relatively new careers... **Unfortunately I think the majority of [my students] (apart from a handful with a real passion and interest in computing/programming) wouldn't feel prepared or confident enough [for a career that involved advanced digital skills].** Maybe introducing a national qualification that could be taken alongside studies/other subjects to develop and promote tech skills. It could be tiered and work with bronze-silver-gold [levels] (like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award) and students could work through to achieve their tech skills award? Then it might create opportunities for other agencies or big companies to get involved and support the process, or for the learning to be quality-assured and to provide a benchmark for students and what skills they can acquire while at school."*

**SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, ACADEMY (35% PUPIL PREMIUM)**

## More than 7 in 10 young people perceived the digital tasks tested in the Nominet Digital Youth Index to be easy to do without help



Q13B. HOW EASY OR HARD DO YOU FIND IT TO DO THE FOLLOWING TASKS ON YOUR OWN WITHOUT ANY HELP? BASE: ALL WHO EACH SKILL IS APPLICABLE TO (193-4,105)



Young people find some of the basic tasks that many office-based employers would expect their staff to be proficient in easy. This includes tasks that involve using the internet to help solve problems or conduct schoolwork (84% and 83% respectively), reading documents for work (83%) and school (82%) and communicating with colleagues via email or chat (82%).

A better understanding of Microsoft Office applications like Word, Excel and PowerPoint is desired among young people, with teachers reporting that pupils' confidence of these types of programmes varies due to differences in home learning and access to devices.

*"I still think **the majority of digital skills** are taught and learnt at schools, **but there are definitely gaps** at secondary school age because students have had **a different experience over the last few years** in terms of home schooling, access to tech at home and different primary/secondary curricula in terms of IT and computing."*

**SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, ACADEMY (35% PUPIL PREMIUM)**

Whilst Covid lockdowns forced young people to troubleshoot and get creative with learning in online classroom environments, teachers reported that young people struggle with basic tasks such as being able to craft an email and file/edit and print documents when needed. Teachers report that young people find it particularly hard to:

- search for the correct information
- access files
- effectively manage a filing system, and
- search for documents to help with homework and online learning.



Young people also report finding it difficult to focus and to avoid getting distracted online. They also don't feel confident in their organisational skills – this was particularly common amongst those with mental health needs.

Forgetting usernames and passwords was also reported. This contrasts with their skills and abilities when it comes to navigating social media and online gaming.

*"Students can record TikToks very skilfully, but ask them to type a response to a formal email or create a presentation or research a topic in depth and **some students lack the skills to do so and/or are unable to recognize reliable sources of information.**"*

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER, ACADEMY (48% PUPIL PREMIUM)

*"The skills I need for education is to know how to search for information for my homework on Google. And to know how to do projects online. **I sometimes struggle when I get stuck on a page and I don't know how to get [off] it.**"*

8-YEAR-OLD GIRL

*"It became very clear during lockdown that some **young people can easily use their devices** to access social media/create content **but were not able to open a Word doc or create a folder.**"*

YOUTH WORKER



## Young people don't always know how to navigate the digital world safely and this worries them

Young people highlighted that being able to access trusted websites and having online safety skills were essential both to having the confidence to be themselves and to enjoy themselves online. Young people want to be better in these areas and want to be more confident in asking for help when needed, particularly when it comes to preparing themselves for the world of work. Digital safety and digital intelligence skills such as knowing how to minimise the risk of getting hacked, click on viruses or accidentally leak passwords, were highly sought.

Young people feel that school education on online safety is rather 'surface level', and social workers worry that despite their confidence in gaming and social media, young people may struggle to know who they are really talking to when interacting with people online.

*"School has warned me of the dangers of the internet, but not in very much detail... **Schools need to do more on it in my opinion.**"*

18-YEAR-OLD MALE (STUDENT)

*"My friends have taught me about different settings on social media which help you to keep safe. An example of this is '**Ghost Mode**' on Snapchat which hides your location on this app. Another thing they say is to always keep your location off."*

14-YEAR-OLD GIRL, SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD

*"There should definitely be **more education in schools around internet safety and life skills** in general."*

PARENT OF 11-YEAR-OLD GIRL

### NOMINET/PARTNER PROGRAMME EXAMPLES

[The Prince's Trust](#) has developed the Digital Employability Pathway with support from Nominet, offering practical resources, advice and information about skills development and job opportunities to support young people into digital careers. This data transformation collaboration aims to create more effective ways to understand the challenges faced by young people, to help them make the most of education training and support.

Social business Catch22 has launched a research series with Nominet on barriers to [digital skills](#) which highlights that poverty is the most fundamental barrier young people face.



[Read about  
The Prince's Trust](#)



## Key findings

### Index score: 62

**A quarter of young people (26%)** do not have access to a laptop, Chromebook or similar device.

Among those who don't have access to a smartphone, the key reasons include **parents not allowing it** or **not believing they are safe to use**, and **expense**.

Young people are most concerned about having access to a smartphone, or **having the latest version** to keep up with peers.



# DIGITAL ACCESS

This pillar reveals where inequalities of access exist, and shows that for many young people, access to devices can change based on circumstances and location, even throughout the day.



## Device access in a post-pandemic world

The Covid-19 lockdowns catalysed a remarkably swift transition from activities taking place in-person to online – from digital learning to entertainment and socialising. In 2020 the UK Department for Education distributed 1 million laptops to support adaptations to education, and huge community drives took place to provide refurbished machines to families. But what has the longer-term impact of this been on young people's access to devices?

Whilst there is a plethora of digital devices available to young people, some offer greater and more effective access and connectivity than others. We have labelled these 'critical devices' and define them as those which are perceived to be a determinant of having 'adequate' access.

These are:

- Smartphones
- Tablets
- Desktop computers
- Laptops/Chromebooks/similar devices.

All these devices are 'critical' but serve different purposes: for example, a laptop or desktop is a critical device for learning, while a smartphone is critical for communications. It is crucial to understand what constitutes a 'critical device' based on age group – for example, which device is critical for primary education tasks, versus job applications.

To ensure that all young people can thrive in a digital age, we must understand both the extent to which inequality exists when it comes to accessing 'critical' digital devices, and how this is changing.





## Smartphone access remains consistent with last year – however 5% lack access to other critical devices

Access to a smartphone remains at the high level reported last year – 86%. However, 5% of young people report not having access to other critical devices (laptop/Chromebook, tablet and desktop). This could mean not being able to keep up with their peers socially and in education because they have to complete tasks such as schoolwork or applying for jobs on a mobile phone, rather than a more appropriate device like a laptop.

What constitutes an appropriate device varies for different groups of young people. For example, primary school children are not as dependent on laptops for education compared to young people in secondary school and above, for whom the advanced functions of a laptop may be required for essential tasks for school, life, and work. This means that lack of laptop ownership on its own will not automatically put children at a major disadvantage – according to this year's Nominet Digital Youth Index, almost half of those who do not have a laptop or Chromebook do not feel that they need it (47%). However, this varies by age. While nearly six in ten (57%) young people aged 8–10 years feel they do not need a laptop or Chromebook, this decreases to four in ten (37%) among those aged 20–22.



## Access to appropriate devices remains inconsistent, impacting students' ability to learn and keep up with their peers

Although much remains unclear, conversations with professionals, parents and young people tell us that use of technology in the classroom is very likely here to stay, and that access to devices and internet connectivity will remain fundamental to many aspects of education. This spills over from the classroom into the home, as coursework, projects and homework will need to be assessed consistently.

One in four young people do not have access to a laptop (26%). The key reason among those who do not have a laptop is cost (27%). This is more the case for secondary students (26%) than primary students (19%).

Whilst the roll-out of devices during the pandemic has had a positive impact, it has often been too slow, with not enough devices of sufficient quality being provided and some young people going without. Some schools have had to raise funds themselves or accept donations to buy the critical devices their students need. In qualitative focus groups conducted with teachers, social workers and youth workers, we heard about the impact that a lack of device provision has on quality of learning.

***"Pupils without access to technology miss out on learning. They are unable to access homework, extra resources, have less lunchtime because they have detentions, less socialisation time, etcetera."***

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER ACADEMY (28% PUPIL PREMIUM)

***"There is a great discrepancy between opportunities. We try to focus on 'non digital' working so as to try and create an even playing field."***

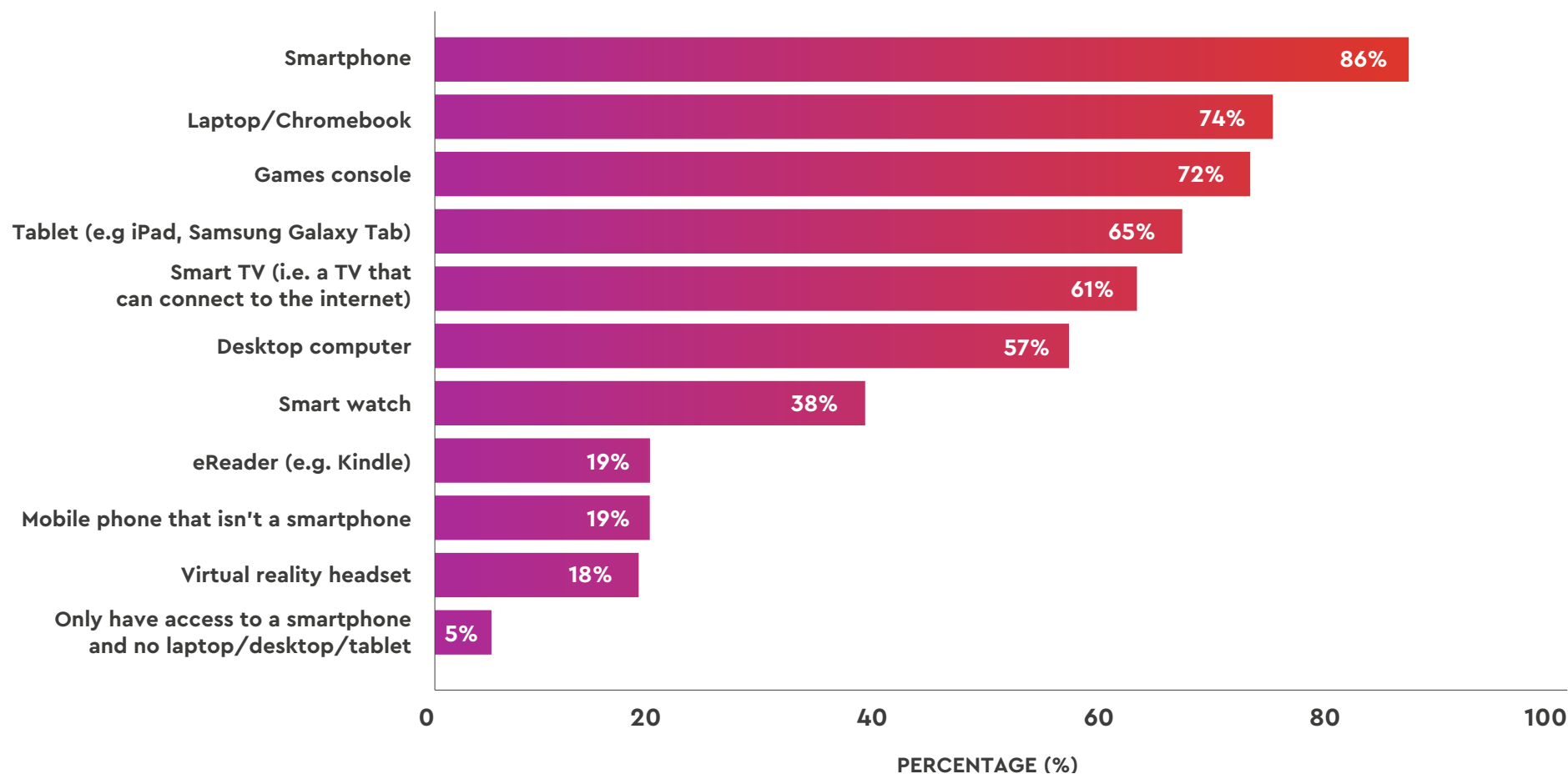
YOUTH WORKER

While most young people do have a smartphone, ownership is lower among those with specific disabilities such as mobility (71%) and dexterity (73%) disabilities and those attending a faith school (71%).

Among those who do not have access to a smartphone, key barriers to access are:

- Parent or guardian not allowing them to have one (33%)
- Parents being concerned that they are not safe to use (19%)
- Expense (17%).

## ACCESS TO DEVICES IN SCHOOL OR AT HOME



Q1A\_2/Q1A\_2A/Q1A\_2B/Q1\_2B WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DIGITAL DEVICES DO YOU PERSONALLY USE AT HOME / PERSONALLY USE AT SCHOOL / HAVE ACCESS TO AT HOME / HAVE ACCESS TO WHEN YOU'RE NOT AT HOME? BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (4,105)



## Young people are particularly concerned about having access to smartphones – including having the latest version to keep up with their peers

When talking to young people about the technology they don't currently have access to but want, those aged 8 to 11 were most likely to want a smartphone. Those aged 12 and upwards who already own a smartphone said they wanted the latest version to keep up with their peers. Some parents also feel a pressure to provide the latest devices to their children.

*"The older they get, **the latest phone they want.** I had to keep up with them in secondary school **as they wanted better phones.**"*

PARENT TO A 16-YEAR-OLD MALE

*"**100% there is a lot of peer pressure** to have the latest branded things, **including technology.**"*

YOUTH WORKER

More than nine in ten (92%) young people claim they are able to use their smartphone whenever they need to, compared with 79% who are able to use their laptop or Chromebook whenever they need to. One in five (20%) can only use it at certain times or are sharing it with other people. This is higher among primary school students (43%), faith school/academy students (41%), and young people with a dexterity disability (31%).

The device needs of primary school students may be very different to those at secondary school and beyond, who are more likely to depend on a laptop. For example, 57% of those aged 8 to 10 years old do not think they need a laptop or Chromebook, compared to only 44% of those aged 11 to 13 years.

Conversations with parents and young children reveal that many households share digital resources, especially those with younger children. Parents tend to only purchase technology when a need has presented itself. Not being able to complete schoolwork is the main trigger for purchasing a laptop amongst households that can afford it. Other activities (such as gaming and social media) can be completed effectively on other devices.

*"We got them an old laptop when our desktop pretty much grinded to a stop. **Then they each got their own in lockdown otherwise they couldn't do all their home schoolwork in a day.**"*

PARENT TO AN 11-YEAR-OLD GIRL

*"If a device became outdated and **only if it was seriously stopping him completing homework** [would I buy a new one]."*

PARENT TO AN 11-YEAR-OLD BOY

Those with a disability may struggle to use their devices due to accessibility challenges. Most of these young people have learnt to adapt by sourcing additional technology to help them access their main devices.

*"Where it [technology] is not [suitable for my needs], I have adapted, such as **buying a separate keyboard** for my laptop **because I can struggle to type with the built in one.**"*

24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (COGNITIVE DISABILITY)

Generally, those who have access to 'critical' devices are satisfied with their performance. More than nine in ten (92%) agree they can do everything they need with their smartphones. Satisfaction is slightly lower with other devices, with only 86% being satisfied with their laptops and satisfaction with desktop computers is lower than laptop/Chromebook at 81%.



## 2022: What has changed since 2021?

The proportion of young people with access to smartphones and laptops remain consistent with last year. There has been an increase in access to games consoles, tablets, smart TVs, and a variety of other devices.

DEVICE	% WITH ACCESS 2021	% WITH ACCESS 2022
Smartphone	<b>87%</b>	<b>86%</b>
Laptop	<b>72%</b>	<b>74%</b>
Games console	<b>56%</b>	<b>72%</b>
Tablet	<b>57%</b>	<b>65%</b>
Smart TV	<b>53%</b>	<b>61%</b>
Desktop	<b>39%</b>	<b>57%</b>
Smart watch	<b>26%</b>	<b>38%</b>
eReader	<b>14%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Mobile phone (non-smart)	<b>16%</b>	<b>19%</b>
VR headset	<b>N/A</b>	<b>18%</b>

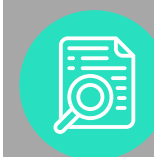
When it comes to whether young people can use their device whenever they want to, there has been little change on last year, with a slight decrease when it comes to use of some critical devices:

DEVICE	% CAN USE DEVICE WHENEVER THEY WANT TO 2021	% CAN USE DEVICE WHENEVER THEY WANT TO 2022
Smartphone	<b>93 %</b>	<b>92%</b>
Mobile phone that isn't a smartphone	<b>78 %</b>	<b>73%</b>
Laptop / Chromebook	<b>84 %</b>	<b>79%</b>
Tablet	<b>85 %</b>	<b>81%</b>
Desktop computer	<b>75 %</b>	<b>62%</b>
eReader	<b>86 %</b>	<b>70%</b>
Smart TV	<b>82 %</b>	<b>77%</b>
Smart watch	<b>90 %</b>	<b>88%</b>
Games console	<b>84 %</b>	<b>81%</b>

### NOMINET/PARTNER PROGRAMME EXAMPLES

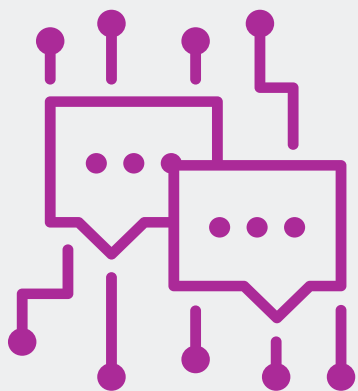
Nominet has partnered with [Getting Oxfordshire Online](#) to scale up its device pipeline and reach new communities across Oxfordshire to support digitally excluded individuals of all ages. Getting Oxfordshire Online aims to address the needs of thousands of people in Oxfordshire who are not online by refurbishing donated devices and passing them to people who need them. The aim is to provide upwards of 2,880 devices per year. It also helps people to access the data, training and support they need to get online.

Nominet's [Reboot platform](#) is a long-term approach to tackling device poverty. Rather than fundraising and appealing for new devices from manufacturers and investors, Reboot supports the hundreds of community groups addressing the issue locally by seeking out and 'rebooting' some of the millions of unused digital devices already in people's homes and offices.



[Read about Getting Oxfordshire Online](#)





## Key findings

### Index score: 68

For just **under three-quarters** of young people, **the most frequently used type of internet connection is WiFi/wired internet at home (72%)**.

**More than a third (35%)** of young people cannot do everything that they want to online because of **limits to their family's data allowance**.

**One in six (16%)** use **mobile data as their primary way of connecting** to the internet – **that's 2.3 million young people**.



# CONNECTIVITY

Even if young people have access to a device, they need to be able to connect to that device and have an internet connection that facilitates everything they need to do online.

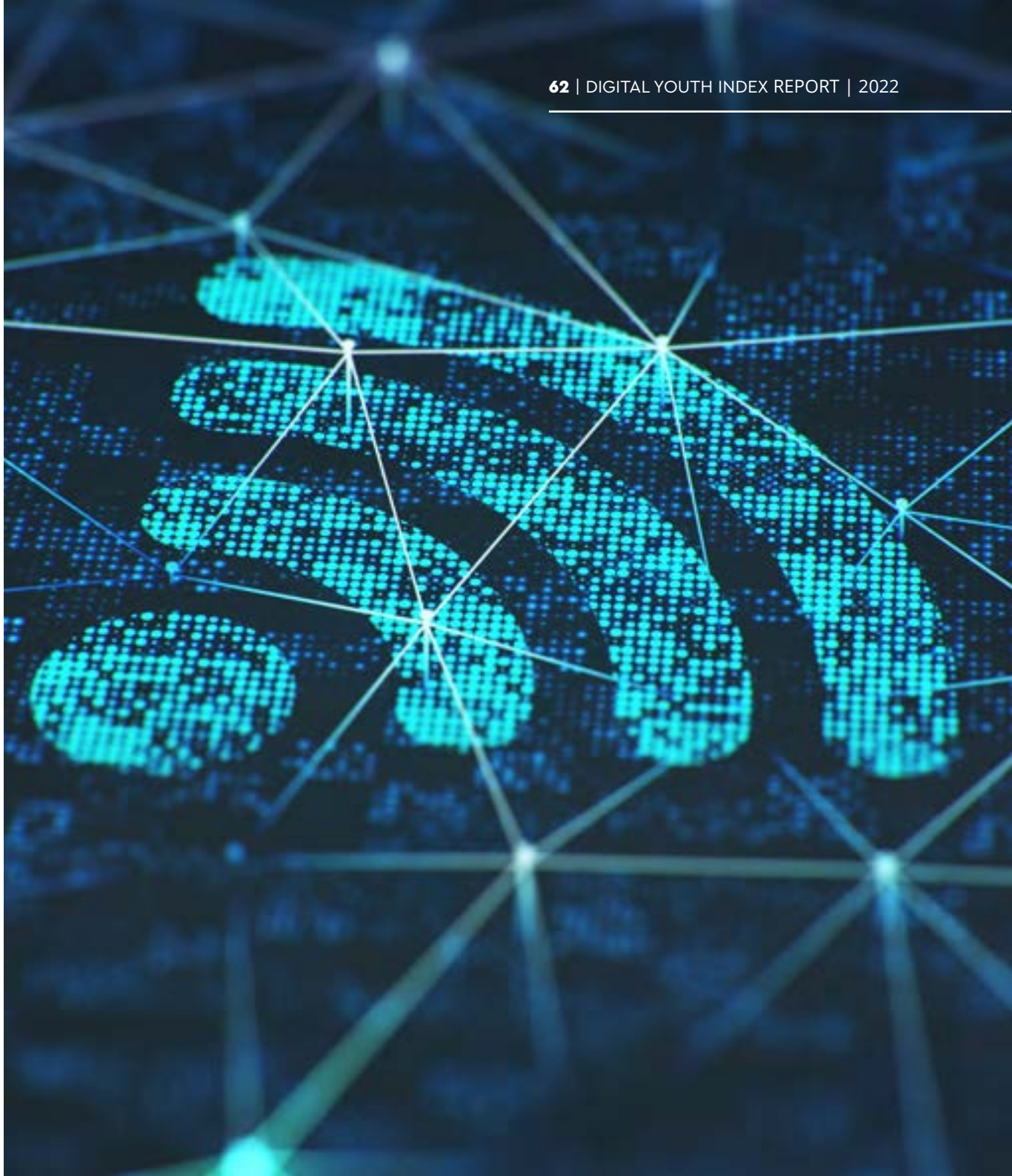
This pillar reveals that for many young people, connectivity is not static. It will change based on location and/or context – for example, living in a multiple-occupancy household, or accessing the internet from a public space.

## 25% of young people rely on an out-of-home internet connection

For three-quarters of young people, the most frequently used type of internet connection is WiFi/wired internet at home (72%). Mobile data is the second most frequently used means to connect (16%), followed by WiFi at school, university or college and/or WiFi in public places (both 6%).

While WiFi at home is the most frequently used internet type overall, there remains inequalities in access. Those who live with a guardian or carer are significantly less likely to use WiFi at home, with less than half of young people (48%) in this situation citing this as their most frequently used connection, and a greater proportion making use of WiFi in public spaces (19%) and other locations such as school or work, than young people in other living situations.

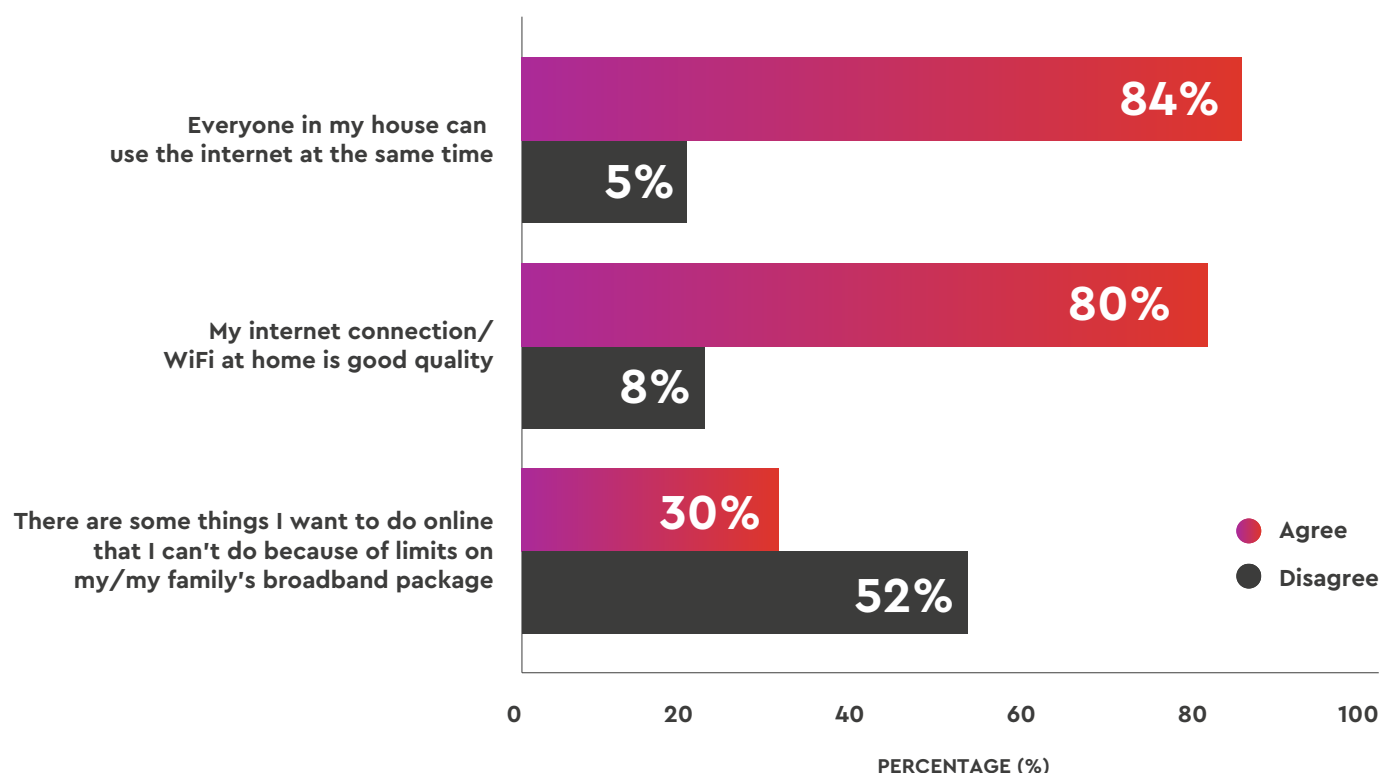
WiFi available in public places may provide poorer security, putting those who rely on this way of connecting at a disadvantage. Further, research from the Alliance for Affordable Internet has shown that having WiFi at home increases confidence and usage compared to using the internet in public spaces, where time or privacy may be limited.



## Fewer young people than last year report being able to complete all the tasks they want to through their internet connection

We know from Year 1 of the Nominet Digital Youth Index that having access to the internet is not the full story – the data must also be of 'sufficient quality', which means it must enable them to do all the essential things they need to do.

### INTERNET QUALITY AT HOME



Q9. HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. BASE: ALL WITH ACCESS TO INTERNET TYPES (3466)



The majority of young people with internet access at home say they can use the internet at the same time as others in their home (84%) and feel that it is good quality (80%). However, more than a third (35%) still feel that their home broadband limits them from doing some things. When discussing connectivity issues in the online community, those aged under 15 most frequently mentioned issues in the context of gaming – for example, when a game 'glitches' or freezes.

These questions measure self-perception of quality and connectivity, as opposed to actual connectivity. Whilst we cannot determine through this study any discrepancy between perception and reality, these perceptions attest that connectivity can have an impact on what young people can do online – and even on their relationships. For some families, arguments have started over loss of internet connection in the house.

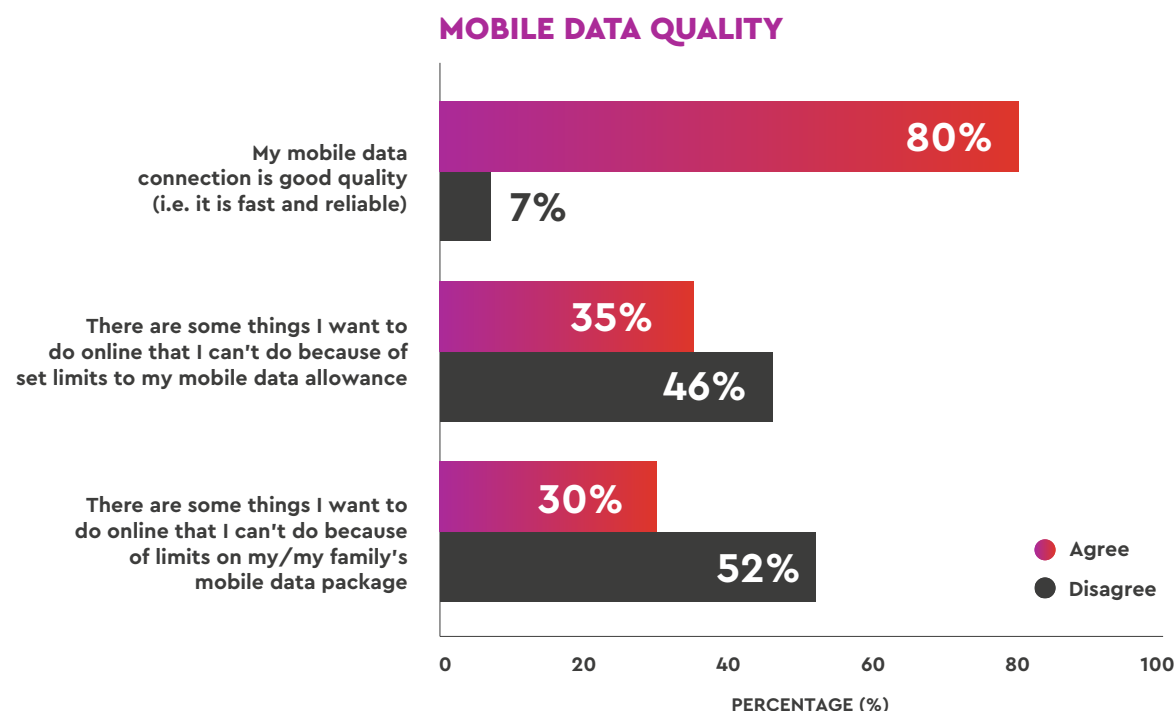
*"Honestly, if the internet goes down here **it's World War Three.**"*

**24-YEAR-OLD FEMALE (PHYSICAL DISABILITY)**



## One-sixth of young people use mobile data as their primary way of connecting to the internet

16% of young people use mobile data as their primary source of internet. Young people use mobile data for a wide range of reasons, with stark differences between those aged under 15 and those aged 16 and above



Q9. HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. BASE: ALL WITH ACCESS TO INTERNET TYPES (3466)

When out of the home, under-15s typically use mobile data for communicating with friends and family, playing games and accessing social media. Those aged 16 and above also use mobile data for these tasks, and also use their data to access key digital services and tools. They use their mobile for more functional reasons such as using maps and travel planning apps, online banking and sending emails. As young people become more independent and transition into adulthood, being able to connect to the internet is fundamental to becoming a confident digital citizen.

### NOMINET/PARTNER PROGRAMME EXAMPLES

The [National Databank](#) provides a central hub where community groups can access free 'data voucher codes' and SIM cards for anyone who needs them. It is providing free data to 500,000 people via Good Things Foundation's network of community partners, in partnership with Virgin Media O2, Vodafone and Three. Think of it like a 'food bank' but for internet connectivity data, texts and calls. Community organisations can apply to access the databank, enabling them to provide data to people in their communities who need it. The Data Poverty Lab developed the National Databank in partnership with the Good Things Foundation and continues to explore ways of ending data poverty.



[Read about the National Databank](#)



# CONCLUSION

**Wellbeing, safety, skills, digital access and connectivity – the second year of the Nominet Digital Youth Index has revealed how intricately connected these themes are**

Having a top-of-the-range laptop does not teach young people how to protect themselves from fraud; relying on the internet for support does not stop young people from seeing hurtful content online.

The Nominet Digital Youth Index offers nuance to our understanding of the internet's all-encompassing, ever-evolving impact. Young people are not a homogenous group with identical needs and aspirations. We need to understand their unique realities.

This is the first year that we can compare data with last year's baseline to understand the directions of change and shift. This makes the data even more valuable for policy development, strategy and the prioritising of resources.

## **UNDERSTANDING INEQUALITIES IS VITAL**

The Nominet Digital Youth Index is a powerful resource for programme designers and policymakers seeking to level the playing field. There is an opportunity for policymakers, charity workers and other organisations to work together to identify ways of mitigating negative effects without diminishing the positive. The first step is listening to what young people have to say.

We have explored key issue areas in this report. But the Nominet Digital Youth Index is also an invitation to explore the data yourself. Our data visualisation tool allows you to segment the data by age, gender, location, ethnicity, education status and more, so you can find the insights that matter most to you.

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

Educators, policymakers, digital services companies, parents, carers and young people themselves urgently need access to better data. The Nominet Digital Youth Index provides that data, and can highlight areas of disadvantage, inform policymaking and help to improve education and life outcomes for young people today and in the future.

We encourage you to engage with this report and explore the raw data using our custom data visualisation tool. You can also find data snapshots, expert blogs and further resources at our dedicated website, [www.digitalyouthindex.uk](http://www.digitalyouthindex.uk).

**Join the conversation as we seek to make the digital landscape a place where all young people can thrive.**



# Acknowledgements

Nominet and Opinium would like to express their appreciation to the following, whose invaluable contributions have made the 2022 Nominet Digital Youth Index possible:

## EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL

Our Advisory Panel is made up of 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.

Dr Kira Allmann, Senior Digital Strategy Officer at Manchester City Council

Danielle Antha, Childnet

Kat Dixon, Catch22

Cliff Manning, Parent Zone

Tom McGrath, Good Things Foundation

Ram Puvinathan, PUBLIC

Elisabeth Rochford, Virgin Media O2

Justin Spooner, Unthinkable

Dr Emma Stone, Good Things Foundation

Maeve Walsh, Policy and government relations consultant

## YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

Our Youth Advisory Panel is made up of 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:

Jessica Ballasi

Bella Bennet

Aaron Blackett

Natasha Kahn

Eleanor Ladd

Blessing Lunghy

TPM

Joss Welburn

Hannah Wilson

Yubal Yemane

And thank you to those who prefer to remain anonymous.

Catch22 is a social business with a social mission, designing and delivering services that build resilience and aspiration in people and communities. Catch22 works in five areas: from Justice; Education; Vocational Training and Employability; Young People and Families; and the National Citizen Service (NCS) supporting services users with good people around them, a purpose in life, and a good place to live. Running for over 200 years, they now work across the UK to support individuals with a variety of needs from developing employment opportunities and building strong communities to delivering social justice and rehabilitation services.

# Appendices

## Methodology

Opinium conducted the 2022 Nominet Digital Youth Index in two phases: an initial quantitative survey, followed by a qualitative phase including pop-up communities, ethnographic interviews, and focus groups.

### PHASE I: QUANTITATIVE STUDY

The main part of Phase I was a quantitative survey which put the Nominet Digital Youth Index questions to a robust audience, using an online methodology for the majority, with alternative data collection methods used to reach those with limited digital access and abilities. Using index calculations generated in the first year of the study, scores were then generated to allow year-on-year comparisons. On top of the tracked index questions, additional topical questions were bolted onto the survey, to allow the Nominet Digital Youth Index to generate the most up-to-date and relevant insights on what young people need in terms of intervention, policy change and support.

### ONLINE SURVEY

To ensure we captured a 'state of the nation' benchmark on the role of digital technology in young peoples' lives, we took a nationally representative sample of 4,000, 8- to 25-year-olds (doubled from 2,000 in 2021). We understand that digital access and usage differs vastly at different life stages within this age bracket, so the second year of the study differs slightly from the first to consider the experiences of those at different life stages. In these ways we improved the robustness of the research, providing an essential reference for thought leaders in digital spaces.

### OFFLINE SURVEY

For our results to be truly reflective of all young people in the UK, we heard from those who are most under-represented, having limited access to the internet and digital devices, lacking digital skills, and those most at risk of online harm. We learned from the first year of the study that, by the very nature of having limited access to digital devices, certain groups of children and young people are not always possible to reach online, so we reached these people through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). To further improve the robustness of the Nominet Digital Youth Index, we increased the sample size of the offline survey to 105 young people.

Participants qualifying for the offline sample fit into one or more of the following criteria:

1. No personal access to digital devices\* at home
2. No personal access to a smartphone, laptop/Chromebook, tablet, or desktop computer
3. Type of internet connection currently accessible at home is mobile data via Pay As You Go, or no access to the internet at home only
4. In the last year, have experienced the following with regards to connecting and accessing the internet at home for a sustained period, rather than a temporary interruption:
  - a. Only being able to access the internet via mobile data (e.g. 3G, 4G) via a Pay As You Go phone (either yours or someone else's in the household)
  - b. Not being able to access the internet via any means when at home
  - c. Both a and b.
5. Strongly agree with the statement 'There are some things I want to do online at home that I can't do because of slow or no internet.'

\*Digital device list = smartphone, mobile phone that isn't a smartphone, laptop/Chromebook, tablet, desktop computer, eReader, smart TV, smart watch, games console, virtual reality headset

## PHASE II: QUALITATIVE STUDY

To explore emerging patterns from the Nominet Digital Youth Index and to illustrate similarities and differences across Year 1 and Year 2, we conducted follow-up qualitative research. The qualitative phase helped to provide a rich, comprehensive view of digital connectivity, inclusivity and security in young people's own words.

### POP-UP COMMUNITY

Following the quantitative research, we launched an online pop-up community with 30 marginalised or digitally disadvantaged young people aged 8–25.

Young people, supported by their caregiver where necessary, logged into an interactive online platform and completed 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 moderated by Opinium's expert qualitative researchers, who probed for detail as needed and created rapport with participants.

The discussion guide was developed iteratively following insights from the quantitative phase of research. Rather than profile behaviours in a diary format (as done in Year 1), the discussion guide was designed to dig deeper into Index findings and allowed us to explore the reasons behind, and the impact of, significant factors in young people's digital lives. Responses were analysed using thematic analysis and insights added depth to the narrative in snapshot reports. Quotes and written case studies helped to communicate key findings and place them within context by bringing the lived experience of disadvantaged young people to life. Permissions were also gained to use written, picture and video output in materials published on the Nominet Digital Youth Index website and at Nominet Digital Youth Index events.

## ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS

We conducted follow-up ethnographic interviews with six young people/families of young people who took part in the community to bring their experiences to life in a powerful and impactful way.

Opinium conducted and filmed in-home interviews with individuals selected from their responses within the community. Interviews were 90 minutes in length; with approximately 60 minutes spent in conversation and 30 minutes reserved for taking cut-away shots that were used to stitch together powerful video outputs.

These interviews provided rich, granular data on what people think, feel and do, and why. Interviews were professionally filmed to create high-quality video case studies (up to five minutes in length), that will be published on the Nominet Digital Youth Index website and used at Nominet Digital Youth Index events. Opinium worked in collaboration with Nominet to design the discussion guide and finalise edits.

### ONLINE, TEXT-BASED FOCUS GROUPS

We also conducted four text-based focus groups to capture the views of parents, secondary school teachers, youth workers and social workers. Including the input from caregivers and professionals provides a 360-degree view on the issues facing young people and allows us to explore how views align across audiences.

Between 7 and 12 people took part in each online discussion, with each lasting around 90 minutes. The text-based online focus groups involved a synchronous text-based discussion; participants simultaneously typed their responses to questions asked by the moderator (also in text form).

Findings from the survey were presented to record participants spontaneous reactions to the Index data.



# Glossary of terms

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
DYI	Digital Youth Index
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)
BAME	Black, Asian, and minority ethnic
NEETs	Not in education, employment or training
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
EAL	English as an Additional Language
SEN	Special Educational Needs
BARS	A framework covering behaviours, attitudes, relationships and situations
Critical device	Smartphone, laptop, desktop, Chromebook/tablet – devices most commonly used for developmental purposes as found by the Nominet Digital Youth Index



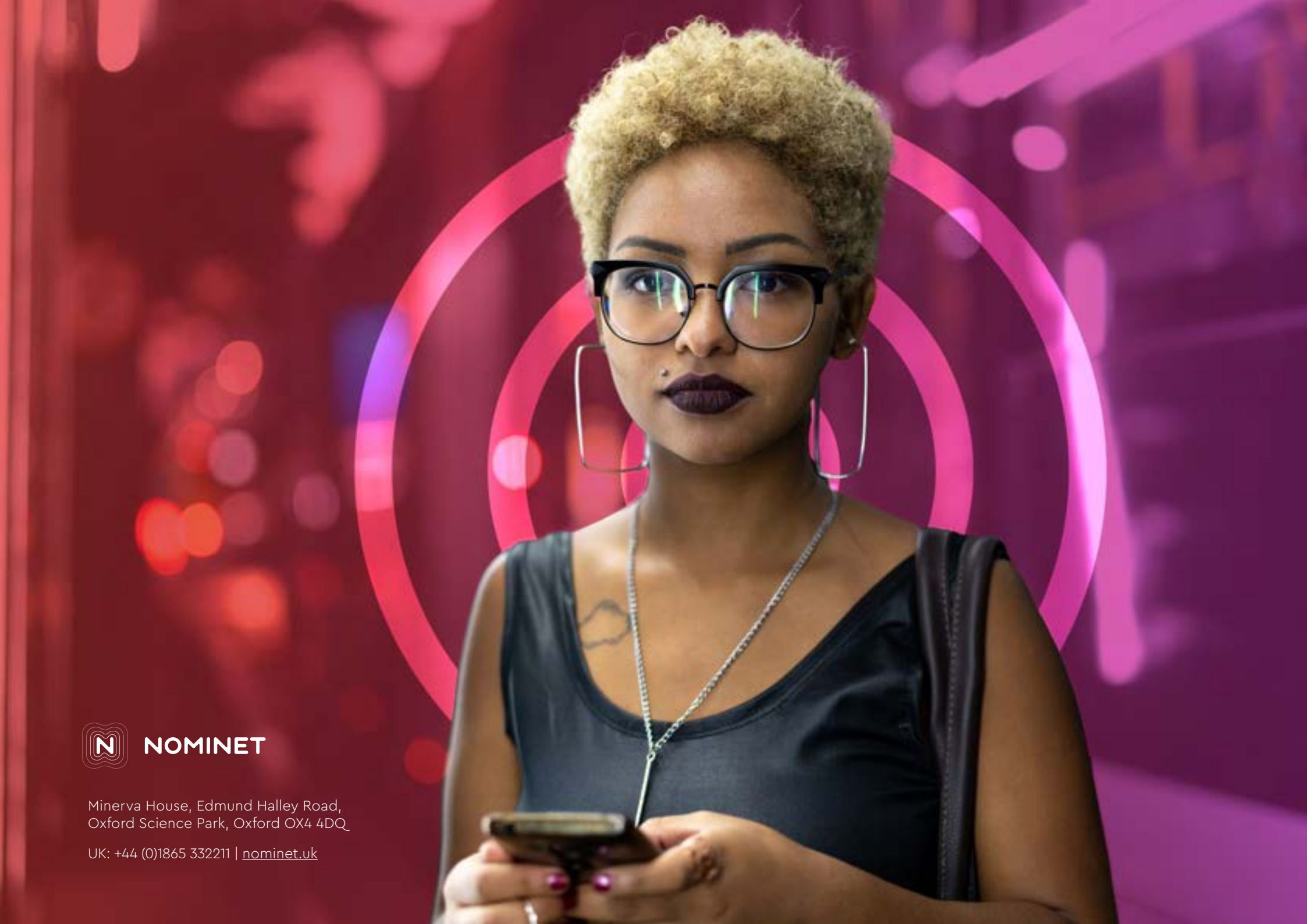
Nominet is driven by a commitment to use technology to improve connectivity, security, and inclusivity online. For 25 years, Nominet has run the UK internet infrastructure, developing an expertise in the Domain Name System that now underpins sophisticated threat monitoring, detection, prevention, and analytics that is used by governments to mitigate cyber threats. Our public benefit programme aims to improve the lives of one million people, providing support and opportunities to tackle some of the most important digital issues facing young people in the UK today.

[www.nominet.uk/social-impact/](https://www.nominet.uk/social-impact/)



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**NOMINET**

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

UK: +44 (0)1865 332211 | [nominet.uk](https://nominet.uk)