

Young LGBTQ+ people more likely to face hate online

Over two thirds of young people have experienced bullying and harassment online, or viewed distressing content, reveals a major nationwide survey. The Nominet Digital Youth Index is an annual benchmarking study of over 4000 8 to 25 year-olds in the UK

This year saw a significant negative impact in the way LGBTQ+ young people experience the internet and the role it plays within their lives.

Surveying over 4,000 young people in the UK aged 8 - 25, *the data reveals include:*

Young LGBTQ+ people are also much more likely to face a darker digital world than their heterosexual counterparts with 52% of them experiencing hate speech online, compared to their peers. This striking increase is mirrored across all aspects of dangerous online content with 39% being exposed to self-harm related content, whilst this number falls to 15% amongst heterosexual youth.

LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to turn to the internet for advice than heterosexual young people, and less likely to turn to their family for help. Only 1% of heterosexual young people would go to social media groups for advice on relationships, whilst 19% of LGBTQ+ youth would. They are also

less likely to consult their family for advice, as only 44% of LGBTQ+ respondents would seek advice on feelings from a relative, whilst 77% of heterosexual participants would.

However, the internet is also a comfort for LGBTQ+ youth. Two in five LGBTQ+ young people stated that their online life had a positive impact on their relationships with friends. This suggests there needs to be a delicate balancing act that allows connection whilst mitigating the risks associated with life online.

The data also spotlights the social media companies who do the least to safeguard young people. Twitter (70%), Reddit (70%), TikTok (66%), Tumblr (63%) and Facebook (61%) are the five worst offenders for where young people have reported seeing distressing content. Additionally, many young people are accessing these platforms at an age lower than is imposed by the social media company. A third of primary school children are accessing TikTok, for example, despite the platform requiring users to be 13.

Other key findings include:

Digital wellbeing

53% of young people say online life has a positive impact on their relationships with friends but, despite this, one in four young people would like to spend less time on their digital devices (27%), down from 39% in 2021. Young people are most likely to see distressing content on Reddit (70%), Twitter (70%), TikTok (66%), and Tumblr (63%), ranging from violence, to trolling or abuse, and/or sexual content.

Nearly three-fifths (58%) of parents or carers with children under 16 limit the hours their children spend using their digital devices, with three in ten young people say their sleep is negatively impacted by the internet and digital devices

Safety

Finally, safety is a big topic. An overwhelming 95% of young people say they feel safe online, despite 29% experiencing hate speech online – representing 4.2 million young people in the UK.

Around 1 in 4 young people have experienced violence (26%), trolling or abuse (23%), and/or sexual content (23%) online, with three quarters of young people saying that they feel ‘in control’ of what they see online (73%) and understand the steps needed to protect their security.

