Internet users' experience of potential online harms: summary of survey research

Quantitative Research Report – **ACCESSIBLE VERSION**

This is an accessible version of our results chart pack, designed to be compatible with screen reader software.

The text in this document describes the charts contained within the chart pack. It is not designed to provide a full commentary, nor does it represent conclusions of our analysis.

January/February 2020

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1 Background, objectives & approach

Background

This research was commissioned by Ofcom with advice on research design provided by The Information Commissioner's Office.

The main objective of the research was to quantify concerns about, reported experiences of and potential sources of online harm in three key categories:

- CONTENT that people view, read, or listen to online and INTERACTIONS with other users

- DATA / PRIVACY

- HACKING / SECURITY

The research also explored knowledge and opinions of the current level of regulation that applies to online environments.

Similar research was undertaken by Ofcom and the ICO during February/March 2019.

2 Methodology

Adults (16+)

- 2,080 face-to-face in-home interviews with internet users aged 16+ in the UK
- Quotas set on age, gender, region, social grade, and urbanity
- Fieldwork from 3rd January to 9th February 2020

Children (12-15)

- 2,001 online interviews with children aged between 12 and 15.
- Quotas set on age, gender, region, and social grade
- Fieldwork from 7th January to 11th February 2020

There were fewer high-profile controversies about social media during the 2020 fieldwork period than in 2019, with the news focusing on the aftermath of the general election and Brexit. This contrasts with the 2019 fieldwork period, when Molly Russell's death, the Christchurch attacks and the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica investigation were all prevalent in the news.

We think that this might have had an impact on 2020 results – for example, with the average number of concerns reducing.

Sources of potential harm – definitions

The Social media, instant messaging, video sharing and gaming platform 'nets' have been based on usage of the following services:

SOCIAL MEDIA	INSTANT MESSENGER (IM)	VIDEO SHARING	GAMING
Facebook	Discord	Youtube	Nintendo Online
Google Hangouts	Facebook Messenger	Vimeo	PlayStation Network
Instagram	Google Hangouts	Daily Motion	Steam
LinkedIn	iMessage	LiveLeak	Xbox Live
Pinterest	Snapchat	Mixer	Another gaming platform (Respondents were allowed to write in others)
Reddit	TeamSpeak	Twitch	
Snapchat	Telegram	Instabib.tv	
TikTok	Viber	Another video sharing site (Respondents were allowed to write in others)	
Tumblr	WhatsApp		
Twitch	Another Instant Messenger (IM) (Respondents were allowed to write in others)		
Twitter			
Viber			
WhatsApp			
Another social media platform (Respondents were allowed to write in others)			

Summary – Concerns about using the internet

- We first asked adults whether they had any concerns at all about the internet (including social media, using an app, video, online games, and emails). Respondents were not shown any potential harms to choose from at first, so anything they told us was top-of-mind. **In total, 81% (+3% vs. 2019) of adult internet users have at least one unprompted concern**

- We then showed adult respondents a list of potential online harms (slide 20) and asked them which, if any, concerned them specifically in relation to children, and then which concerned them* more generally. 12-15-year-old research participants were shown a similar list (slide 21), using age-appropriate language and asked to indicate which were of concern. **After prompting, the proportion of adult internet users concerned about at least once aspect of going online increases to 83% (unchanged) in relation to children and 86% (+2%) more generally. In comparison, 89% (-2%) of 12-15-year-old internet users have at least one concern about going online.**

- **However, <u>individual</u> adult concerns in relation to children and more generally have both dropped compared to 2019** (from 8 to 7 concerns in relation to children and 7 to 6 generally). This is possibly due to the timing of the fieldwork – i.e. immediately after the election, when the news agenda was focussed on Brexit / during a time when there were fewer high-profile controversies on social media

  - *NB: It is worth noting that 2020 scores remain higher than those reported in 2018**

- **As in 2019, adults and 12-15-year olds' highest level of concern is around children's exposure to bullying, abusive behaviour, or threats (45% and 52% respectively).** Adults with children in the household are especially concerned about this (54%), as are female 12-15's (59%). [1]

- Adults remain <u>more</u> concerned about potential online harms in relation to children than about the internet more generally. **However, when asked about the internet more generally, adults are more concerned about their personal information being stolen (43%), scams/frauds (42%) and their data being processed without prior consent (37%).**

- Most issues cause a significant level of concern, but **the issue causing the greatest concern is material showing child sexual abuse (83% of those expressing a concern with this were very concerned in relation to children).**

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[1] Ofcom/ICO undertook similar research during 2018, using an omnibus approach:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/120852/Internet-harm-research-2018-report.pdf

Summary – Experience of Potential Harms

- 62% (+1% vs. 2019) of adult and 81% (+2%) of 12-15-year-old internet users have had at least one potentially harmful experience online in the past 12 months.
  - Adults are most likely to have experienced spam emails* (32%), scams/fraud (22%) and fake news (16%)
  - 12-15-year olds are most likely to have experienced offensive language (39%), spam (31%) and unwelcome friend requests (29%). A quarter have experienced bullying (26%) or trolling (24%)
    - As expected, increased time online increases the exposure to potential harms

- Going online too much is the most frequently experienced potential harm (78% of adults and 53% of 12-15 year olds who are concerned and experienced it in the last year said it occurred at least weekly), but less frequent experiences have the greatest impact
  - Theft of personal information has the most severe impact on adults (59% found it very/fairly annoying, upsetting, or frustrating), along with non-consensual use of personal data (48%)
  - Bullying, abusive behaviour or threats has the biggest impact on 12-15-year olds (51%), along with viruses (46%), hate speech (42%) and content promoting self-harm (40%)

- 34% (+5%) of adult and 41% (+3%) of 12-15-year-old internet users have experienced something that impacts them (i.e. something they found very/fairly annoying, upsetting, or frustrating)

Summary – Sources of Potential Harm

- Social media sites remain the most commonly cited sources of harm
- 79% of adult internet users would like websites to do more to keep them and others safe
- Only 56% of 12-15-year olds feel safe when they go on social media and 41% are put off using social media by online bullies
- 78% of 12-15-year olds know how to change the privacy settings on social media accounts and 68% have actually done so

Summary – Reporting of Harmful Experiences

- 19% (unchanged) of adults and 29% (+4%) of 12-15-year olds have taken action to report harmful content they have seen online
  - Clicking on the report button (69%, +6%) is the most common action taken by adults, followed by blocking (22%, -6%) and informing the site (15%, -5%)
    - 16-34's, females and those with children in the household are most likely to report

- o   12-15-year olds are more likely to tell a parent (50%, -5%) or click on the report button (39%, -3%), followed by blocking (25%, -4%)

- Nearly 2 in 3 adult and 12-15-year-old 'reporters' had seen the harmful content they reported on social media

- Respondents thought that the harmful abuse

- abuse was removed in almost half of cases where it was reported (46% of adult and 12-15-year olds cases)

- 58% of adult 'reporters' were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint
  - o   NB: 12-15-year olds did not answer this question

Summary – Attitudes towards regulation

- A higher proportion of adults think regulations are now in place for the following platforms:
  - o   SVoD - 76% (2020) vs. 68% (2019)
  - o   Social media - 74% vs. 59%
  - o   IM - 66% vs. 51%
  - o   Video sharing sites - 62% vs. 54%
    - ▪   16-54s and those with children in the household are most likely to think regulations in place
      - *This is possibly due to platforms being more publicly proactive about ways to mitigate harms experienced by users*

- Although high proportions of adults think these platforms are already regulated, there is high levels of support for increased regulation, especially for:
  - o   Social media – 66% (2020) vs. 70% (2019)
  - o   Video sharing sites - 57% vs. 64%
  - o   IM - 56% vs. 61%
    - ▪   Females with kids in the household most likely to support more regulation

- The media that adult internet users feel should have more regulation – including social media sites and video sharing services – are generally the least trusted sites

- Overall, internet users have mixed views about going online:
  - o   59% (-2%) of 12-15-year-old internet users agree that the internet makes children's lives better
  - o   66% (+7%) of adult internet users agree that the benefits of going online outweigh the risks
    - ▪   However, 47% (-3%) of adults are concerned about how their info is used by organisations

3 Unprompted concerns about the internet

Unprompted concerns for Adults

Without being prompted, four fifths (81%) of UK adults express a concern about the internet.

Subgroup differences in % of adults having concerns about the internet

- o Females 84% vs. males 79%
- o ABC1 84% vs. C2DE 79%
- o Children in HH 85% vs. no children 80%
- o Taken action to report content 92% vs. not taken action 78%

Those aged 35-54, with kids in the HH, ABC1s and females are likely to have more top of mind concerns.

Unprompted Concerns (ranked on largest difference)

Elements related to hacking/security are top of mind for adults – particularly amongst those aged 55+. Concerns relating to interactions with other people and content are highest for those with kids in the household, whereas concerns relating to data/privacy are highest for ABC1s

Individual concerns for adults are generally lower than in 2019.

Unprompted concerns for children

Without being prompted, 3 in 10 12-15-year olds said they had spontaneous concerns about using the internet.

Subgroup differences in % of children having concerns about the internet

- Girls 31% vs. Boys 25%

- Visited lots of new sites/apps 38% vs. only used sites/apps used before 25%

- Experienced a potential harm 33% vs no harm experienced 6%

The most common spontaneous concerns amongst 12-15-year olds relate to bullying and their personal information being stolen.

Concerns relating to interactions with other people and content are by far the largest concern young people have on the internet.

A Selection of Concerns, voiced by children, can be found below:

"Bullying of other children online and when my friends tell me they have been bullied online and some talk about killing themselves. It makes me sad and worried about them"

"Sometimes it can used to bully people or if you have a photo taken people can be horrible"

"Getting hacked. People screenshotting messages. People tracking where I am. Believing scams. Apps not accepting my age, so have to put higher one in. Buying things by accident"

"There is always bullying and people being mean to each other - I am not allowed to talk to anyone I don't know but sometimes people I don't know are added to groups on WhatsApp"

"I am concerned that people online who I don't know are not who they say they are. But also, the people who I do know and talk to in real life can be completely different on social media. It can get very bitchy and rumours spread like lightning. You can turn up to school one day and everyone is talking about something that you know did not happen. Or happened completely differently. Or you aren't sure if it happened or not. Loads of drama happens all the time because of it. Sometimes you feel you have to be on social media just so you can stay in the loop"

"I worry that people will say something nasty about stuff I post online or that they will know personal information about me, like where I live or go to school. I also worry that someone will approach me and say something inappropriate or that they may not be who they say they are."

"Contact from people I don't know. Mean things being said to me or nasty photos or comments being posted."

4 Prompted concerns in relation to children

These terms were used for Adults' to find out their concerns about children going online and then to Children to understand their own concerns about going online.

Glossary of terms – List used in the children survey – with corresponding shorter text

Full Prompted List (children)	Short Text
Sexual\ pornographic content	Sexual/pornographic content
Imagery or videos of child sexual exploitation or abuse*	Child sexual abuse imagery
Swear words or offensive language	Offensive language
Offensive videos\pictures	Offensive videos/pictures
Violent\ disturbing content	Violent/disturbing content
Fake News i.e. stories that are false or made up, written deliberately to mislead*	Fake News
Promotion of terrorism\ radicalisation	Content promoting terrorism/radicalisation
Content promoting self-harm e.g. cutting, anorexia, suicide	Content promoting self-harm
Adverts that contain untrue information	Harmful/misleading ads
Hate speech \ inciting violence	Hate speech
Unwelcome friend\follow requests/unwelcome contact or messages from strangers	Unwelcome friend/follow/contact from strangers
Stalking/cyberstalking (harassment from other internet users)	Stalking/cyberstalking/harassment
People pretending to be another person	People pretending to be someone else
Bullying, abusive behaviour or threats	Bullying, abusive behaviour or threats
Trolling (a person who deliberately says something controversial in order to start arguments or cause upset)	Trolling
Feeling under pressure to send photos or other information about yourself to someone	Pressure to send info/photos
Cyber-flashing, i.e. receiving sexual or nude images or videos that you have not asked for from another person, for instance via Apple AirDrop or on messaging or social media apps**	Cyber-flashing
Fake images/fake videos, e.g. deep fakes**	Fake images/videos
Spam emails	Spam emails
Government\ agency surveillance	Government surveillance
My personal data being processed without my knowledge/consent	Non-consensual personal data use
People or organisations collecting data about me in unclear ways to make money	Unclear data collection (commercial use)
My personal information being stolen/hacked	Personal info stolen
Scams/ fraud	Scams/ fraud
Private information being made public (e.g. photos)	Private info made public
Viruses/ trojans/ worms/ spyware/ malicious software	Viruses etc.
Spending too much time online	Too much time online
Spending too much money online	Too much money online
Spending too much time online	Too much time online
Spending too much money online/spending money you did not mean to**	Too much money online
Other (WRITE IN)	

Prompted concerns in relation to children

As in 2019, 8 in 10 adults expressed a concern in relation to children on the internet. The majority of these are concerned about the types of content and interactions children may be exposed to online.

The most concerned adult subgroups included:

- 35-54-year olds (88%)
- Those with children (92%)
- Heavy internet users (91%)
- Those visited 1-2 new websites in past month (87%)

Both parents and non-parents are especially concerned about bullying, abusive behaviour, and threats. Parents generally have more concerns about the potential harms affecting children.

Proportion of children expressing a prompted concern

As in 2019, 9 in 10 12-15-year olds have at least one concern. In particular, they're concerned about the conduct of others, especially bullying and people pretending to be other people.

Young Girls are more likely to express concerns about the internet than boys, significantly so in many areas.

14- and 15-year olds are slightly more likely to express concerns about the internet than 12-and 13-year olds, except for unwelcome friend/follow requests.

15-year olds are significantly more concerned than 12-year olds about data/privacy and hacking/security.

SEG tends not to have a big impact on how likely a child user was to express concerns.

Adult concern regarding children vs. children concern about themselves

Children generally express higher levels of concern for themselves compared with adults on their behalf. Notable exceptions included spending too much time online, sexual/pornographic content and pressure to send photos or other information.

Adults with children in the household are significantly more likely to be concerned for children in relation to most of the potential harms listed within the questionnaire.

Total Concerns (Prompted and unprompted concerns combined)

At a total level, bullying is of concern for more than half of both adults and children. Data misuse (personal info stolen, scams and fraud) is of greater concern to adults.

Level of concern (amongst total adult sample) in relation to children

Adults are most concerned about bullying and sexual/ pornographic content in relation to children – followed by violent/disturbing content and people pretending to be someone else.

Level of concern (amongst all children aged 12-15 years)

Notable that children have less strong concerns for themselves vs. adult concerns about children. They are most concerned about bullying, people pretending to be someone else and personal information theft.

Level of concern (amongst those concerned about each) in relation to children

Most issues highlighted cause a significant level of concern. In particular, adults are concerned about child sexual abuse imagery, sexual/ pornographic content and content promoting self-harm.

Level of concern (amongst those concerned about each) about themselves

Levels of concern tend to be lower amongst 12-15-year olds (compared to the adults). They are most concerned about images of child sexual abuse and content promoting self-harm.

5 Prompted concerns more generally amongst adults

General concerns

As in 2019, adults have a higher level of concern in relation to the protection of their personal data, as well as scams/frauds. However, the average number of concerns and most levels of concern have fallen, likely because of the different news environment at the time of fieldwork.

Adult women are more concerned about hacking/security and interactions with other people. 35+ are more concerned about hacking/security and data/privacy issues.

Concern regarding children vs. general concern

Adults are more concerned about most potential online harms in relation to children, especially bullying and the suitability of online content. They are more concerned about data protection and scams/fraud in relation to themselves.

Level of concern (amongst total sample) generally

As noted in 2019, if an issue has been selected as a concern, then adults are very/quite concerned about it.

Level of concern (amongst those concerned about each) generally

Despite a reduction since 2019, almost all of those who said they are concerned by child sexual abuse imagery on the internet are VERY concerned by it.

6 Reported experience of potential harms

Incidence of experiences – Adults vs children

As in 2019, 3 in 5 adults and 4 in 5 12-15-year olds say they have had potentially harmful experiences online in the last 12 months.

Experiences relating to interactions with other people or content remain much higher amongst children.

Incidence of experiences – Adults

Spam emails, scams/fraud and fake news are the most likely to be experienced by adults. Potential online harms experienced are generally lower in relation to the interactions with other people/content compared to last year.

Younger adults, those spending more time online (weekday time spent online), those with children and ABC1 are most likely to have experienced potential online harms:

16-54s, ABC1's and those with children in their household are more likely to have experienced potential harms.

Experience vs. general concern (prompted) - Adults

As in 2019, spam emails are the only potential harm where adults have experienced them more than they are concerned about them.

Relationship between concern (general) and actual experience of potential harm - Adults

Relatively few adults have experienced the key concerns of personal information being stolen and non-consensual data use.

Incidence of experiences – Children

Offensive language remains the most common potential harm experienced by 12-15-year olds, followed by spam emails, unwelcome friend requests and fake news. Just over a quarter have come across bullying.

There is generally a correlation between being more confident internet users, visiting more different sites and the likelihood to have experienced a potential harm

Boys experienced the following more than girls:

- *Offensive language – 42% vs. 37%*
- *Spend too much money online – 12% vs. 7%*

Girls experienced the following more than boys:

- *Unwelcome friend/follow –34% vs. 25%*
- *Bullying – 28% vs. 23%*

ABC1s experienced the following more than C2DEs

- *NET data/privacy – 43% vs. 34%*
- *Spam emails – 34% vs. 28%*

C2DEs experienced the following more than ABC1s

- *Hate speech – 22% vs. 17%*

DEs experienced the following more than average

- *Bullying – 30% vs. 26%*

Although girls tend to be more concerned than boys about potential online harms, there is less of a gap around (most) experiences. Notable exceptions include *follow requests from strangers* and *bullying*, which are more likely to be experienced by girls and *offensive language* which is more likely to be experienced by boys.

Experience vs. concern (prompted) – Children

As in 2019, 4 in 10 children have experienced offensive language online in the last 12 months, significantly more than the proportion that are concerned about it.

Relationship between concern and actual experience of potential harm – Children

Unwelcome friend requests, bullying and trolling are all relatively frequently experienced and are of high concern amongst 12-15-year olds.

Relationship between concern (adults) and actual experience of potential harm – Children

Bullying and spending too much time online are relatively frequently experienced by children and are of high concern amongst adults.

Potential harms experienced – Adults vs Children

12-15-year olds are significantly more likely to have experienced a potential harm than adults, especially in relation to offensive language. Adults are more likely to have experienced scams.

Experienced any potential harm in the last year – Adults vs Children

12-15-year olds are significantly more likely to have experienced a potential harm than adults. The incidence of experiencing potential harm quickly drops after the age of 54 (as the audience becomes less confident online).

Those using new sites/apps are significantly more likely to have experienced a potential harm – across both 12-15-year olds and adults.

Increased time online increases the exposure to potential harm, notably for children.

As would be expected, undertaking activities online increases exposure to potential harm.

Frequency and impact of experiences

Incidence of experience/being concerned about potential online harms - Adults

Scams and spam are the most likely to have been experienced and for adults to be concerned about.

Going online too much is the most frequently reported type of potential harm followed by spam, for adults. Theft of personal information is, for example, experienced relatively infrequently.

Level of impact experiences have had (amongst all experienced and concerned) - Adults

Theft of personal information has the most severe impact when experienced, along with non-consensual use of personal data and then bullying, for adults.

Level of impact experiences have had (amongst those who have experienced) - Adults

Theft of personal information has the most severe impact when experienced, along with non-consensual use of personal data and content promoting terrorism/radicalisation, for adults.

Impact vs. Incidence of concern raised - Adults

Potential harms for adults with the highest levels of concern tend to have the greatest impact upon those who have experienced them.

Impact vs. Frequency - Adults

Despite the high frequency of spending too much time online and receiving spam emails, the level of impact is lower than the other potential harms, for adults.

High Impact vs. Frequency - Adults

Despite the low frequency for adults, personal info being stolen and data processing without consent are both be very upsetting. The same is true for promoting terrorism, viruses, scams, and bullying.

Impact vs. Experienced in last year - Adults

Despite the low frequency for adults, personal info being stolen and data processing without knowledge both have a high level of impact. The same is true for promoting terrorism, private info being made public and bullying.

Incidence of experience/being concerned about potential online harms - Children

Bullying, unwelcome friend/follow requests and trolling are the most likely to have been experienced by and of concern to 12-15-year olds.

Frequency of experiencing potential harms is generally lower amongst 12-15-year olds than adults. Too much time online is the most commonly reported issue.

Level of impact experiences have had (amongst all experienced and concerned) - Children

Viruses, hate speech and content promoting self-harm have the most severe impact when experienced by children, along with the theft of personal info, bullying and cyber flashing.

Level of impact experiences have had (codes 4-5, amongst all experienced and concerned) – Children

Girls are more likely to find their experiences more upsetting than boys in general. Boys are more likely to find pressure to send info/photos and government surveillance more upsetting.

Level of impact experiences have had (Base those who have experienced) - Children

Bullying is the potential harm that impacts 12-15-year olds the most, along with viruses, hate speech and content promoting self-harm.

Impact vs. Incidence of concern raised - Children

Again, potential harms with the highest levels of concern tend to have the greatest impact on those children who have experienced them.

Impact vs. Frequency - Children

Despite the high frequency of spending too much time online, exposure to offensive language and receiving spam emails, the level of impact is lower than the other potential harms for children.

High Impact vs. Frequency - Children

Despite the relatively low frequency for children, online bullying, viruses, and material promoting hate speech are the most annoying/upsetting potential harms.

Impact vs. Experienced in last year – Children

Online bullying has the greatest impact and was also experienced by more than a quarter of 12-15-year olds in the past year.

7 Sources of potential online harm

Across adults and 12-15-year olds, social media sites are the most commonly cited sources of potential online harm. 12-15-year olds have experienced more harms on social media than last year.

Places where potential online harm was experience (types of source)

Adults experience potential online harms on a range of sites/apps, but social media is most commonly identified for most types of potential harms. IM comes through strongly as a source for sexual/pornographic content, cyber-flashing, and bullying.

The same is true for 12-15-year olds, with social media being the most common source for most potential harms. IM comes through strongly for bullying, pressure to send photos and cyber-flashing.

Leading potential harms associated with source types

Social media for adults is most associated with unwelcome friend/follow requests, bullying and trolling for those who are concerned and experienced. Search is most associated with harmful ads, whilst IM is linked to sexual/pornographic content and cyber-flashing.

12-15's are less likely to experience potential harms on social media than adults, but 63% of those who are concerned, and experienced unwelcome friend/follow requests cite social media as the source.

Potentially negative experiences are encountered on a range of sites and platforms, with social media sites being most commonly mentioned by adults.

% Experienced potential harm on a platform they use - Adults

The proportion of adult users who come across potentially negative experiences varies by platform.

Individual responsible for potential harm experienced - Adults

1 in 3 of those adults that experienced stalking/cyberstalking knew the person harassing them.

Places where potential online harm was experienced (specific source) - Children

Potentially negative experiences are commonly encountered on social media sites by children.

% Experienced potential harm on a platform they use - Children

The proportion of child users who come across potentially negative experiences varies by platform.

Individual responsible for potential harm experienced - Children

2 in 5 of those children that experienced stalking/cyberstalking or bullying knew the person that was harassing/bullying them.

8 Reporting potentially harmful online experiences

Ever reported anything seen online that was offensive, disturbing, or harmful - Adults

As in 2019, 1 in 5 (19%) adults have taken action to report potentially harmful content they have seen online. 16-34's, females, those with children in the household, confident and heavy internet users are more likely to take action.

A third (33%) of those adultsvwho didn't report say they hadn't seen anything to report, while 1 in 7 'couldn't be bothered' and a further 1 in 12 'didn't think it would help'. 1 in 10 who unfollowed/blocked thought they hadn't taken action to protect themselves, when they actually had.

Clicking on the report button has increased and remains the most common action taken by adults (69%), followed by unfollowing/ unfriending/ blocking (22%) and informing the site (15%).

Nearly 7 in 10 of the adults who reported an online harm experienced it on social media. Almost half thought the content was removed but significant proportions remain unaware of what happened as a result of their reporting.

Complaint resolution by website/app or type of website/app - Adults

Instant messaging websites/apps were most likely to have removed content and these were the types of websites/apps with the highest levels of complaint resolution.

Ever reported anything seen online that was offensive, disturbing, or harmful - Children

Almost 1 in 3 12-15's have now taken action to report potentially harmful online content. C2DE's and those who have visited lots of new sites in the past month are more likely to take action.

A quarter of those children who didn't report harm say they hadn't seen anything to report, while 1 in 7 'didn't think it would help' and 1 in 8 didn't know what to do. 1 in 7 who unfollowed/blocked thought they hadn't taken action to protect themselves, when they actually had.

Telling a parent (50%), then clicking on the report button (39%) are the most common actions taken, followed by unfollowing/blocking (25%).

Almost 2 in 3 12-15s who reported online harm said the incident happened on social media. Content was removed in almost half of cases, but significant proportions remain unaware of what happened as a result of their reporting.

Complaint resolution by website/app or type of website/app - Children

News sites/apps and search engines most likely to either remove or not remove the content (fewer children did not know what happened in these situations).

Ever reported anything seen online that was offensive, disturbing, or harmful – Adults vs. Children

The proportions reporting potential harms is largely consistent across 12-15-year olds. The incidence of adults reporting reduces significantly with age.

9 Attitudes towards regulation and internet brands

Perceived regulation of different types of media

More adults think there are regulations for SVOD, social media, IM, and video sharing sites than in 2019. This is possibly due to media coverage about something needing to be done and people now thinking something is being done.

Those that think there should be some form of regulation for different types of media

16-54s, with children in household and non-white respondents are more likely to feel there is some form of regulation in place.

Desired regulation of different types of media

There is a high level of support from adults for increased regulation across social media, video sharing and IM – although the level of support is lower than that observed at the start of 2019 (NB: more people now think there is already regulation in this space).

Those that think there should be more regulation of different types of media

Adult women and those with children in household are generally more likely to want more regulation. Younger age groups are generally less likely to want more regulation.

Trust in various media brands

For all adult users answering about each brand News sites tend to be most trusted, whereas Social media and video sharing sites are least trusted.

Social media and video sharing sites are also least trusted among 12-15s.

Online attitudes

Although two-thirds of adults feel the benefits of going online outweigh the risks, almost 8 in 10 would like websites to do more to keep them and others safe.

Those aged 55+, without children in the household and certain regions are less likely to agree with the statements.

There is a clear link between the perceived level of internet confidence and most attitudes from adult users.

3 in 5 12-15-year olds believe the internet makes children's lives better – however, only half (56%) feel safe to go on social media and 2 in 5 are put off using social media by online bullies.

12-year olds and ABC1s are more likely to agree that the internet makes children's lives better. There is a clear link between the perceived level of internet confidence and most attitudes.

There is a clear link between the perceived level of internet confidence and most attitudes from child users.

Knowledge of privacy settings on social media accounts

More than three quarters of children (78%) know how to change the privacy settings on social media accounts. This is correlated with increasing age and higher levels of internet confidence.

More than two thirds of children (68%) have actually changed the privacy settings on social media accounts. Again, this is correlated with increasing age and higher levels of internet confidence. Girls are more likely than boys to have changed their privacy settings.

84% of children who know how to change their privacy settings on their social media account have done so.

10 Bad news stories about sites/apps

More than a third (36%) of adults have seen at least one bad news stories about any of the listed websites/apps in the past year.

Most of the sites we asked adult users about were associated with stories related to fake news.

Stories about inappropriate content and the conduct of other adult users also came out strongly.

More than two thirds (43%) of children claim to have seen at least one bad news story about the listed sites/apps in the past year. *Note: Some might have misunderstood this question as bad news stories they saw on sites/apps rather than about sites/apps.*

Stories about content/conduct harms come through more strongly among 12-15s than adults, but stories around fake news are less prominent.

Stories around bullying/trolling/abusive behaviour also come through more strongly among 12-15s than adults.

11 Technical appendix

Adult sample profile

Jigsaw employed a random location quota sampling approach, with quotas set to be representative of the UK adult population based on 2018 ONS/NOMIS population estimates and, for SEG, 2011 Census data. All participants were internet users.

12-15-year-old sample profile

Jigsaw employed a quota sampling approach, with quotas set to be broadly representative of UK 12-15-year olds. All participants were internet users.

12 Confidence Online

Devices used personally - Adults

4 in 5 of the adults interviewed had a smartphone and 2 in 3 had a laptop or netbook computer.

Males were more likely than females to use streaming media player, games console, wearable technology. Females more likely than males to use smartphone, tablet

Most devices associated with younger profiles (<55), higher social grades (ABC1), the presence of children in the HH and being very confident online.

Confidence as Internet user - Adults

Two fifths of UK adults feel as though they are confident Internet users (same as last year).

Very confident internet users are more likely to be male, younger, ABC1, with children in HH and not class themselves as having a disability.

They are more likely to have visited lots of new sites/apps and to have ever reported online harm.

Use of new websites/apps - Adults

45% of adult respondents only used websites they've previously used before.

The 21% (up from 16% in 2019) who have used lots of new websites/apps are more likely than average to:

- Be aged <35 (40% vs. 28% total)
- Say they are VERY confident internet users (72% vs. 48%)
- Have come across any "harms" on the internet (71% vs. 62%)
- Agree that the "benefits of going online outweigh the risks" (77% vs. 66%)

Sites/apps used nowadays - Adults

Three quarters of adult respondents use google and two thirds are on Facebook.

Females are more likely than males to use Facebook/ Messenger, Instagram, and Snapchat. Males are more likely than females to use Sky News. 55+ are far less likely to use any social media and more likely to use BBC News. 16-24s are the highest users of social media. ABC1 are more likely than C2DE to use Google, WhatsApp, Amazon, Instagram, BBC, Wikipedia, Twitter, Skype, and The Guardian

Average daily time spent online - Adults

Half of adults spend more than two hours a day online on average.

Online activities in the last week – Adults

The most common activities are getting in touch with friends/family and online shopping.

Who are the frequent users? – Adults

Frequent users tend to be aged 16-54 and ABC1

Who does what online? – Adults

16-54s, ABC1 and those with children in their household tend to be more active online.

Who is a confident user? – Adults

Very confident internet users are more likely 16-34's, ABC1s and those with children in their household. They are more likely to have visited lots of new sites/apps and to have reported more potential harms.

Devices used personally – Children

94% of 12-15 year old respondents had a smartphone and 69% had a laptop or netbook computer

Boys are more likely than girls to use game console (80% vs. 52%), whilst girls are more likely than boys to have smartphone (95% vs. 91%) or tablet (65% vs. 59%)

ABC1 are more likely than C2DE to use:

- Desktop/laptop (74% vs. 62%)
- Tablet (65% vs. 57%)
- Smart TV (55% vs. 46%)
- Smart speakers (35% vs. 28%)
- Streaming media player (29% vs. 21%)
- Smart watch (19% vs. 11%)

Confidence as Internet users – Children

More than 9 in 10 (94%) of 12-15 year olds feel confident online (no change since 2019).

Boys are more likely to describe themselves as VERY confident than girls (49% vs. 43%). Confidence increases with age. 39% of 12-year olds VERY confident compared with 45% of 13, 47% of 14 and 51% of 15-year olds

Confidence is also correlated with increasing time spent online:

- Weekdays – 36% of those spending 2 hours or less say they are VERY confident, rising to 59% of those spending 10+
- Weekends - 33% of those spending 2 hours or less say they are VERY confident, rising to 64% of those spending 10+

Use of new websites/apps – Children

39% of 12-15 year old respondents only used websites they've previously used before.

City-dwelling AB children are more likely to use websites/apps they've not used before.

The 14% who have used lots of new websites/apps are more likely than average to:

- Be AB social grade (38% vs. 29% overall)
- Be in Greater London (21% vs. 14% overall) or other large cities (24% vs. 17% overall)

- Use lots of different devices (notably more likely than average to use games console, tablet, smart TV, smart speakers, streaming media player, smart watch)
- Be VERY confident internet users (67% vs. 46% overall)
- Spend 5+ hours on weekdays (29% vs. 19% overall) or weekends (54% vs. 41% overall)

Sites/apps used nowadays – Children

Four fifths of our respondents use YouTube and almost three quarters are on WhatsApp.

- ABC1 are more likely than C2DE to use WhatsApp, Skype, BBC
- C2DE are more likely than ABC1 to use Snapchat, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, TikTok
- Scotland is more likely to use Snapchat, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and Twitter
- London is more likely to use Twitter, Skype, WhatsApp, BBC, Twitch, Google Hangouts, Daily Mail
- Girls are more likely than boys to use WhatApp, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facetime
- Generally, there is an age correlation – there is greater usage of sites as children get older

Average daily time spent online – Children

4 in 5 children (82%) spend five hours or less per weekday online.

Online activities in the last week – Children

12-15 year olds most common activities are watching video/ listening to music online, playing games online and using apps to get in touch with friends and family.

Who are the frequent users? – Children

Frequent users tend to be 14 and 15 years of age.

Who does what online? – Children

14 and 15-year olds tend to be more active online. Girls tend to be more likely to use social media and shop online, whereas boys are more likely to game.

Who is a confident user? – Children

The most confident internet users tend to be aged between 16-34 (those likely to have been the first to grow up with the internet in their home).

class themselves as 'very confident' are more likely to be older, boys, and those that have visited lots of new sites/apps in the last month.