

Safer Internet Day 2023

Want to talk about it?

Making space for conversations
about life online



UK Safer
Internet
Centre

Safer
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Day



NOMINET



About

This report has been published by the UK Safer Internet Centre and launched for Safer Internet Day 2023 .

The UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC), established in 2011, is a leading global partnership helping to make the internet a great and safe place for everyone. We provide support and services to children and young people, adults facing online harms, and professionals working with children.

We are unique. Formed of three charities, Childnet, Internet Watch Foundation and SWGfL, we work together to identify threats and harms online and then create and deliver critical advice, resources, education and interventions that help keep children and young people, and adults, safe. We share our best practices across the UK and globally.

The UK Safer Internet Centre coordinates Safer Internet Day each year, reaching millions of young people, parents and carers, and educators across the UK, giving them the vital information and support they need to keep young people safe online.

Methodology

The quantitative survey was conducted online by Censuswide in November 2022, with a representative sample of 2,010 parents and their children aged 8-17 years old (4,020 in total). Censuswide is a full-service research consultancy specialising in consumer and B2B research. This research was conducted on Censuswide’s education network and participants under the age of 16 were contacted via their parents or guardians.

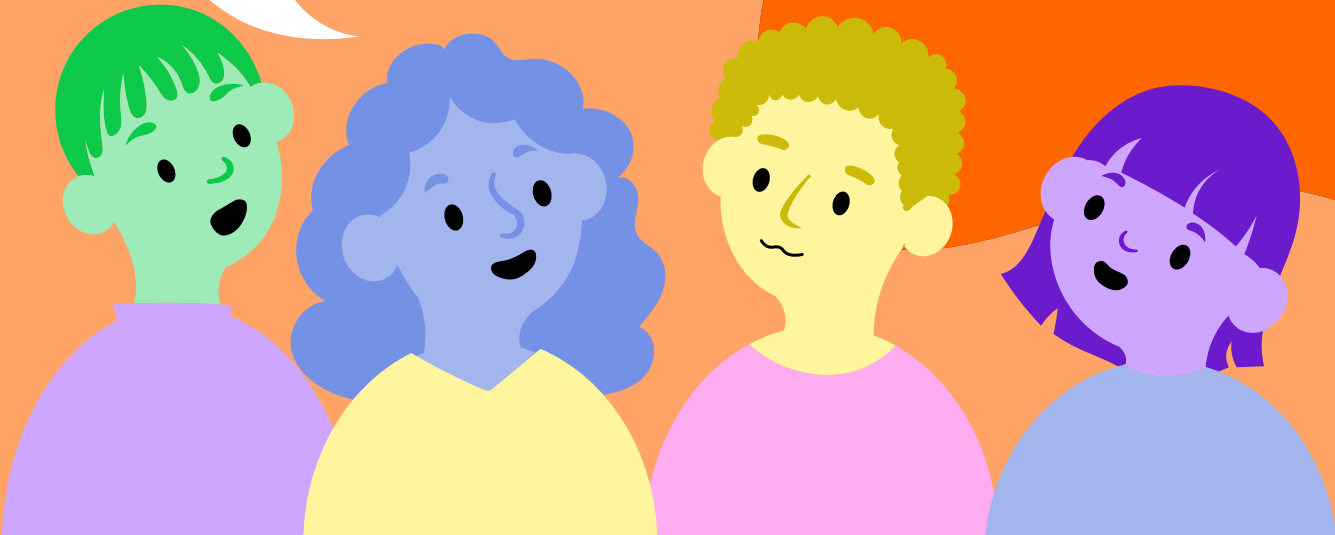
Focus groups were carried out by Childnet, with 35 young people aged 8-18 between April and May 2022, and by sexual health and wellbeing charity, Brook, with 36 young people, aged 11-18, between March and May 2022. Childnet also consulted its Digital Leaders, aged 8-17, in January 2023.

Young People

Gender				
Male	Female	Other		
977	1031	2		
Age				
8	9	10	11	12
248	248	277	223	204
13	14	15	16	17
238	184	162	136	90

Parents and carers of children aged 8-17 years old:

Gender		
Male	Female	Other
322	1687	1



Conversations about young people's online lives are more important than ever

57% of 8 to 17 year olds feel they can help their parents and carers know more about being safe online

Now, more than ever, we need to need to talk with and listen to young people about what they do, see and experience online. Conversations are key to ensuring they feel confident to speak up about anything that troubles them online and can tell us what they think should be done to make the internet safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

We know that spending time online is an integral feature of young people's daily lives from a young age, and that the amount of time they spend online each day increases steadily as they move into and through their teenage years, for example; while 47% of 8 to 10 year olds go online at least 3 to 4 times per day this increases to 76% for 11 to 13 year olds and to 86% for 14 to 17 year olds.

We also know that young people and parents and carers feel the online space holds many positive opportunities; 65% of parents and carers and 69% of young people think being online helps young people develop important skills such as independence, relationship-building and problem-solving. However, parents and carers also have concerns; 67%, for example, worry about their child talking to a stranger through interactive online environments such as chat rooms and games.

Our research highlights the critical importance of conversations at home. Parents and carers are by far young people's first port of call if they are concerned about anything online. This applies across issues as diverse as unwanted contact, bullying, content that worries or upsets children, scams and fake news. For example, at least 80% of young people would turn to a parent or carer in online scenarios that made them feel worried, bullied or uncomfortable. This support works both ways, with 57% of young people saying they feel they can help their parents and carers know more about being safe online. With young people relying on parents and carers to be ready to talk, we must support parents and carers to feel equipped for these conversations.

Young people want to make a difference through conversations and speaking up; as well as being keen to engage in conversation with parents and carers, over half (58%), feel they can help their friends know more about being safe online and 44% feel that they can make a difference in supporting or promoting being safe online at school. The vast majority (71%), feel they have a responsibility to report online when they see something offensive, mean or potentially dangerous.

With young people ready to play their part, a variety of tools must be explored to better support them to have conversations and speak up. For example, it is hugely positive that 71% of young people find online safety education lessons useful.



74% of parents and carers want to know more about what their child is doing and experiencing online

At least 80% of 8 to 17 year olds would be most likely to talk to a parent, carer or guardian if they experienced situations online that made them feel worried, bullied or uncomfortable

However, 62% think these lessons could be better and almost a third (30%), say they don't think online safety lessons allow them to talk about the things they are worried about online. This should remind us of the importance of listening to young people's voices when developing education and resources that help them navigate their online lives; they must be as relevant and engaging as possible in the context of a constantly changing online space. Young people also suggest ways in which online platforms could help them have a voice; 43% of young people want to be able to report something or someone online more easily and just over a quarter (26%), of young people say they would like relevant media to have a section, run by young people, dedicated to being safe online, which could include TikTok videos, an online blog, or a dedicated social media page.

Finally, it is important to recognise that some young people don't feel able to talk. A minority (7%), of young people told us they don't think they could have a conversation about their life online, or being safe online, with anybody. While 7% may seem small, this is still hundreds of thousands of 8 to 17 year olds across the UK*. We must make every effort to provide opportunities for the hardest to reach young people to talk with a trusted adult about what they do, see and experience online and anything that troubles them.

Young people are looking to schools, online platforms and government to play their part. We must listen to what they have to say and respond to their ideas so we can create more and better opportunities for them to tell us about their online lives, keep improving online safety education, inform policy and enable parents and carers to have important conversations and support their children at home. We hope the resources, ideas and opportunity to talk provided by Safer Internet Day will help ensure these important conversations can continue throughout the year.

Will Gardner OBE,

Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre



*Data source for 8-17 year old UK population: ONS. See: 'Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)'

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Want to talk about it?

Making space for conversations about life online



Young people need and want to talk about life online

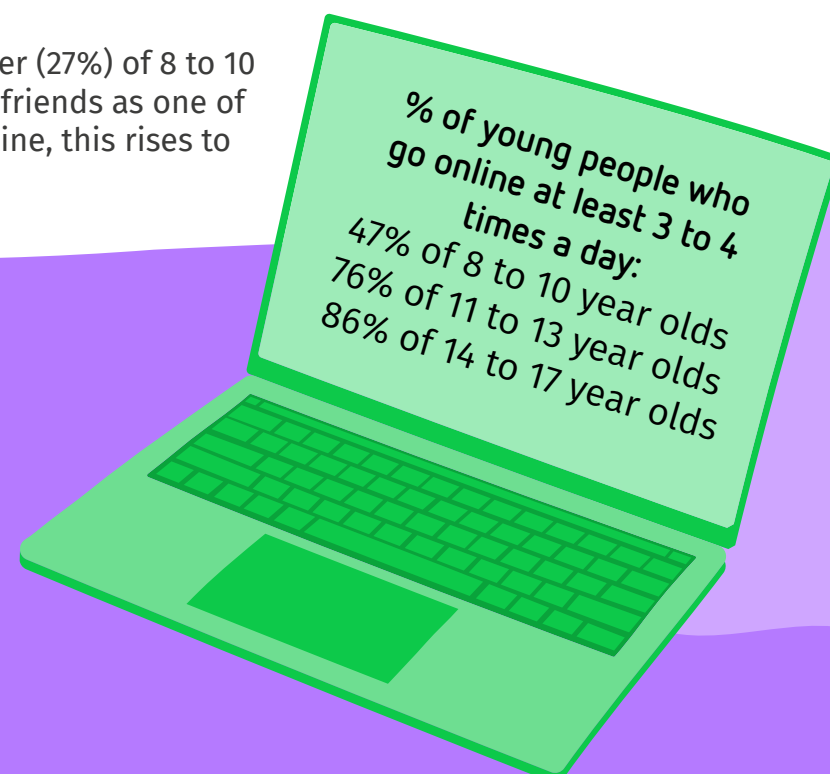
Conversations are more important than ever.

We know that spending time online is an integral feature of young people's daily lives from a young age, with the amount of time they spend online each day increasing steadily into and through their teenage years. With 91% of 8 to 17 year olds going online at least once a day, we need to ensure young people feel able to have conversations with trusted adults about what they see, do and experience and anything that troubles them or makes them feel uncomfortable, unfairly treated or unsafe.

Both young people and parents highlight the many positive opportunities of the online space. 65% of parents and carers think being online helps their child develop important life skills such as respect, independence and relationship building. 69% of young people agree that being online helps them develop important skills such as independence, problem-solving and social skills. When sharing their top three reasons for spending time online, most 8 to 17 year olds selected watching videos, for example on YouTube or TikTok (56%), playing online games (50%), and chatting with friends (45%). Other popular reasons to go online included doing schoolwork (31%), watching films or TV (21%), and scrolling on social media (21%).

Young people's reasons for spending time online change as they get older. Younger children, for example, are significantly more likely than teenagers to go online primarily to play games, with 61% of 8 to 10 year olds selecting online games as one of their three main reasons for going online, compared to just 40% of 13 to 17 year olds.

Similarly, while just over a quarter (27%) of 8 to 10 year olds selected chatting with friends as one of their top three reasons to go online, this rises to



over half (58%) for 11 to 17 year olds. Older teenagers are also more likely to spend time scrolling on social media, with 38% of 16 to 17 year olds placing this in their top three reasons to go online, compared with just 13% of 8 to 12 year olds.

While there was little variation between boys and girls in responses regarding why young people go online, our research did highlight how boys are significantly more likely than girls to spend time playing online games, with 60% of 8 to 17 year old boys selecting online games as one of their main reasons to go online, compared with 41% of 8 to 17 year old girls.

These variations in how often and why young people of different ages and genders spend time online are a reminder of how important it is to build our understanding of their real life experience. This is vital to ensure that we develop tools and opportunities that help young people talk about their online lives, which are targeted, engaging and relevant to the online activities they are most likely to engage in.

"The adults need to know how to react to various scenarios and what they can do to remedy whatever happens, and so they've got to have some kind of baseline understanding. And it's not their fault that they don't know it but it is their fault if they refuse to learn about it and listen, because young people have a lot to say."

Brook focus group participant, age 16



Ensuring every young person has someone to talk to

93% of 8 to 17 year olds talk with someone, such as a parent, carer, teacher or friend, about their life online

Almost all (93%), 8 to 17 year olds talk with someone, such as a parent, carer, teacher or friend, about their life online. 67% of young people feel like they can speak up about big or small issues that are bothering them online and the majority (84%) of young people feel that they could talk to a trusted adult if they were worried about something or worried about a friend online.

When asked where they thought the best place to talk with trusted adults such as parents, carers, guardians or teachers about their life online is, 71% of young people said they thought the best place is a safe space, such as their own home. Over a third (38%) said they would feel comfortable discussing their online life with a trusted adult while doing an activity they both like, such as on a walk, when cooking together, or in the playground. Nearly a quarter of young people (24%), specified one of their top three preferred scenarios as during their favourite lesson at school with the teacher they feel most comfortable with. Finally, 1 in 5 young people said they thought one of the best places in which to discuss their online lives is in a joint discussion with other people

their age. These responses remind us, firstly, of the importance of talking at home, with so many young people identifying this as their preferred place to talk. Secondly, they highlight the importance of opening up a variety of everyday opportunities and safe spaces, at home and at school, to have conversations with young people about what they are doing and experiencing online. We hope the resources and ideas provided by Safer Internet Day will provide plenty of inspiration and a springboard for parents, carers and teachers to do just this.

Young people's readiness to talk about their online lives is encouraging. However, a minority (7%) of young people told us they don't think they could have a conversation about their life online, or being safe online, with anybody. While 7% may seem small, this is still hundreds of thousands of 8 to 17 year olds across the UK. We must make every effort to provide opportunities for the hardest to reach young people to talk with a trusted adult about what they do, see and experience online and anything that troubles them.

*Data source for 8-17 year old UK population: ONS. See: 'Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)'

7% of 8 to 17 year olds don't think they could have a conversation about their life online, or being safe online, with anybody.

This 7% represents approximately 555,640 young people aged 8 to 17 across the UK.*

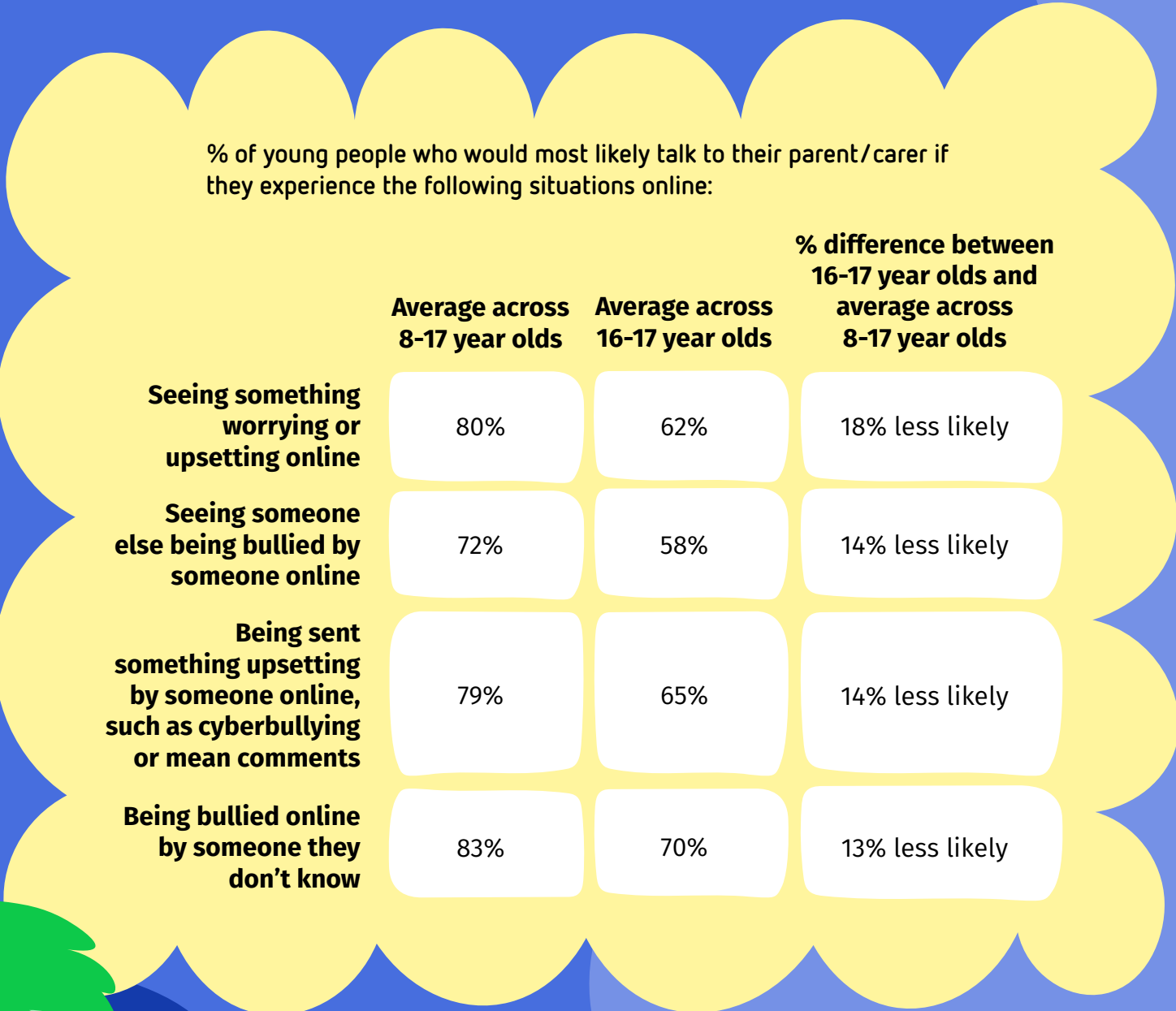
Talking with parents and carers about life online

What conversations are happening at home?

Our research shows that the regular conversations about young people’s experiences of being online are happening at home. Parents and carers show high awareness of and interest in their child’s online activity, with 82% saying they are aware of what their child is doing online and 85% saying there are open-minded about and interested in their child’s life online. Also, it is highly encouraging that 89% of parents and carers say they feel they can have an open and honest conversation about their child’s life online. The majority of parents and carers and their children told us they have regular conversations about this. 77% of 8 to 17 year olds say their parents, carers or guardians talk to them about their life online, including being safe online. 69% of parents and carers say they speak to their child about their life online at least once a week, and almost half (43%) at least every two to three days. Almost 1 in 5 parents and carers (19%) speak with their child on the subject at least once a day. Only 6% of parents and carers say they “never” speak to their child about their life online. While a small minority, this is still concerning, and we must make efforts to ensure that the hardest to reach parents and carers feel equipped and willing to have conversations with their children about their online lives.

As well as having regular conversations with parents and carers about their online lives, our research showed overwhelmingly that young people turn to parents or carers first if they are troubled by something online. This applies across a range of issues as diverse as unwanted contact, being bullied or witnessing bullying, scams, fake news, threatening messages, and worrying or upsetting content. Interestingly, responses from young people revealed no more than a 10% variation from the average across all ages from 8 to 17 on the following topics: being contacted by someone who makes them feel uncomfortable; being sent something threatening; being bullied online by someone they know; or being scammed, for example, seeing a stranger post fake news online. Where there was more noticeable variation in responses between different ages, this was the case only for the oldest teenagers on certain issues, as shown in the table.

On these topics, 16 and 17 year olds were broadly more likely than younger children to talk with a friend. Even so, the conclusion from these responses is clear: children of all ages, from 8 to 17, are far more likely to talk with a parent or carer above anyone else if they have any concerns about something they see or experience online. With parents and carers being the first port of call for young people across such a wide-ranging and complex set of online challenges, it is vital that we do all we can to support both parents and carers and young people to have helpful conversations at home about young people’s online lives.



%8 to 17 year olds said they would be most likely to talk to a parent or carer if:

69% of parents and carers speak to their child about their life online at least once a week

They were contacted by someone online who makes them feel uncomfortable: 85%

They are sent something threatening, including someone threatening to send their personal information, such as their home address, to other people: 88%

They felt they were being scammed online, for example if they saw a stranger post fake news online: 82%

They are being bullied online by someone they don't know: 83%

They saw something worrying or upsetting online: 80%

They are being bullied online by someone they know: 81%

They were sent something upsetting by someone online such as cyberbullying or mean comments: 79%

They saw someone else being bullied online: 72%

85% of parents and carers say they are open-minded about and interested in their child's life online

89% of parents and carers feel they can have an open and honest conversation about their child's life online

How can we support more and better conversations at home?

While it is positive that so much dialogue is happening at home, both young people and parents and carers tell us there is scope for more and better conversations about young people's online lives. Many young people are looking to trusted adults, including their parents and carers, for a greater degree of trust and understanding. When asked what, if anything, young people wished their parents, carers, guardians or teachers better understood about their life online they were most likely to say they wanted these adults to trust them to be safe online (42%), and to trust them to be responsible towards others online (36%). Just over a third (33%) said they wanted trusted adults, including parents and carers, to be more aware of the good things young people experience. Finally, almost a quarter (24%) said they wished trusted adults, including parents and carers, better understood that their life online helps them to be themselves. These calls from young people for a greater degree of trust and understanding are important to keep in mind when creating conversation opportunities and resources. We must ensure they feel heard and that their valuable online experience is respected.

Parents and carers also want to talk more and have concerns. 74% of parents and carers want to know more about what their child is doing and experiencing online. Despite regular conversations at home, over half of parents (55%) worry about what their child is doing online. Interestingly, this was fairly consistent for parents and carers of children across all ages from 8 to 17, including those of older teenagers; almost half (48%) of parents of 16 to 17 year olds say they worry about what their child is doing online.

In particular, parents and carers say they want to have more and better conversations with their children about the challenge of online safety. 73% of parents and carers say their child does talk to them about being safe online. However, many parents and carers have concerns, for example, 67% of parents and carers worry about their child talking to a stranger online through chat room sites, or online games. In the context of such worries, 69% of parents and carers say they want to be able to talk to their child more easily and more often about being safe online. Many young people want to have these conversations too. Over half (57%), actually feel they can help their parents or carers know more about being

69% of parents and carers want to be able to talk to their child more easily and more often about being safe online

% of 8 to 17 year olds that want their parents, carers, guardians or teachers to:

trust them to be safe online: 42%

trust them to be responsible towards others online: 36%

safe online. Over a quarter (27%) feel that having better and regular conversations about online safety education with parents and carers would help make life online more enjoyable and safer for all.

The message from our research is clear: we need to provide opportunities and better support for both parents and carers and young people to have constructive conversations at home that help young people stay safe and have positive experiences online. Our research also highlighted how we need to offer parents and carers better practical support and resources when they are faced with something concerning about their child's online life. When asked if they agreed with the statement "I know where to go for support if something goes wrong and where to access relevant resources", over half of parents and carers (64%) agreed that they did know. This is encouraging. However, 22% said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and 14% said they did not know where to go for support or where to access relevant resources. This indicates that over a third of parents and carers (36% in total) are unsure of where to turn for support, at least some of the time, if faced with a challenging situation about their child's online life.

These responses from parents and carers and young people highlight just how important it is to provide regular opportunities, such as Safer Internet Day, where we can support families to have conversations and signpost them to helpful resources and ideas. Young people have made it clear that they feel the best place to talk with a trusted adult about their life online is in a safe space, such as their own home. With young people so ready to talk at home about their online lives, we must ensure parents and carers feel equipped to have those conversations and know where to go for support if they need it.

57% of 8 to 17 year olds feel they can help their parents and carers know more about being safe online

Talking in school and with friends about life online

Online safety lessons and supporting conversations at school

The majority (80%) of young people say they have regular online safety lessons at school and most find them valuable. 71% say they help them increase their knowledge about being online, 61% say that they make them feel more confident about being online, and more than half (55%) would actually like to have more regular lessons about being safe online at school. Encouragingly, 69% of young people agree that these online safety lessons help them know who to talk to at

school with online issues and questions, demonstrating how important they are for supporting and encouraging conversations when young people want to talk about something they experience online.

While young people welcome and value online safety lessons, 62% of young people think these lessons could be better. With the range of online activities available to and popular among young people constantly changing, there is always scope for improvement and responsiveness. For example, almost half (47%) of 8 to 17 year olds feel that online safety lessons focus on the negative side of being online

and should focus more on the positive side. While, of course, online safety lessons are primarily concerned with the potentially harmful or negative aspects of being online, some focus on the positive aspects of young people being online may have a positive impact on their engagement with the topic in the classroom. Interestingly, almost a third (30%) of young people think online safety lessons don't allow them to talk about the online issues they are worried about.

44% of 8 to 17 year olds feel they can make a difference in supporting and promoting being safe online at school

% of 8 to 17 year olds who think that online safety lessons:
help them know who to talk to at school with online issues and questions: 69%
make them feel more confident about being online: 61%
don't allow them to talk about the online issues they are worried about: 30%

This further highlights that, while online safety education is proving extremely helpful for many young people, we need to pay closer attention to understanding what they most want and need to talk about when it comes to discussing their online lives at school.

Our research indicates that there is plenty of scope for further investigation with young people about their views on how online safety education and related activities in school could be made even better and to directly involve young people more. When asked if they agreed that they had been given opportunities to help promote being safe online to others, just over one third of 8 to 17 year olds (38%), said they felt they had, but 42% neither agreed nor disagreed. This suggests we need to hear more from young people about what could be done in schools to facilitate even more and better opportunities for conversations about young people's online lives. Many young people are keen to open up conversations with their peers in school and play their part. Almost half (44%) feel they can make a difference in supporting and promoting being safe online at school. Almost a third (29%) feel that having dedicated time within the yearly school timetable for young people to run a session on being safe online to others would help make life online more enjoyable and safer for all.

We must listen to what young people have to say and explore their ideas to ensure that online safety education and related school activities remain as engaging and relevant as possible in the context of a dynamic online space.

"An online presence should be something that we celebrate and are, like, excited to be a part of; this, like, change of the development of the digital world...I think this starts with, like, conversations. Not lessons and lectures in school but, like, conversations with the students."

Brook focus group participant, age 17



Talking with friends: How young people support each other.

Our research shows that peer to peer conversation is also important in helping young people navigate their online lives. 78% of young people feel they could talk to friends if they were worried about another friend online and 77% feel they could talk to friends if they were worried about something else they came across online. Young people want to support each other, with over half (58%) saying they feel they can help their friends know more about being safe online.

Conversations with friends about their online lives are particularly important to older children. While the majority of children and teenagers of all ages from 8 to 17 would be most likely to talk with a parent or carer when faced with an online scenario that is troubling or potentially dangerous, they become increasingly likely to turn to a friend in certain situations as they get older.

% of young people most likely to talk to a friend if they experience the following situations online:

	8-10 year olds	11-14 year olds	15-17 year olds
Being sent something upsetting by someone online, such as cyberbullying or mean comments	6%	14%	19%
Seeing something worrying or upsetting online	4%	12%	21%
Seeing someone else being bullied online	4%	15%	24%

While parents and carers remain the first port of call for children of all ages, we should be aware of their increasing reliance on friends as they get older. This will help ensure that we develop relevant and engaging resources and support for older children, so they feel best equipped to support each other and also understand when to ask a trusted adult for help, either for themselves or on behalf of a friend, as they navigate their online lives.



77% of 8 to 17 year olds feel they could talk to friends if worried about something online



58% of 8 to 17 year olds feel they can help their friends know more about being safe online

Young people speaking up and reporting online

How do young people speak up when they see something worrying online?

Almost three quarters of young people (71%) tell us they feel they have a responsibility to report negative online behaviour, such as something or someone breaking the rules, doing something potentially dangerous like sharing explicit photos, or being offensive, mean or nasty. Over half of young people (57%) feel they have a responsibility to take action and respond to bad things online, such as a stranger sharing fake news on TikTok. This feedback from young people shows that many take the challenges of untrustworthy online content and negative or potentially unsafe online behaviour very seriously. However, our research also suggests that most young people have never reported their online concerns in practice. When asked if they had ever reported something or someone for worrying or bad online behaviour, for example by reporting through a specific site, speaking to a trusted adult or telling a friend, 45% answered no, 33% said they had never needed to and only 22% said yes.

When young people do speak up about worrying or bad online behaviour, they do so in various ways, with reporting online directly being the most typical course of action. Of those young people that had ever reported something or someone for worrying or bad behaviour online, over half (61%) had done so through the site or app they were using. It is encouraging that, when young people do come across something online that concerns them, many are using the tools provided to report it directly through the relevant platform. However, our research also suggests that there is scope to ensure that young people can do this more often if they feel the need to. 43% of young people told us that being able to report something or someone online more easily would make life online more enjoyable and safer for all.

Young people are also responding to worrying or bad online behaviour by speaking with someone. Almost half (42%) of those who had reported something had told a trusted adult. This reminds us again of the importance of making sure parents, carers, teachers and other trusted adults are equipped to support young people who come to them with concerns. Finally, 21% of young people who had reported worrying or bad online behaviour had told

% of 8 to 17
year olds who:
Feel they have a
responsibility to report
negative or potentially
dangerous online
behaviour: 71%

Have ever reported
something or someone
online for worrying or
bad behaviour: 22%

a friend about something or someone they did not like or trust online. This further reinforces the need to equip young people to support each other and to know when and how to seek support from a trusted adult if one of their peers comes to them with a potentially serious concern.

Our research also sheds some light on the reasons why young people may choose not to report something online that concerns them. Of those 45% of young people that said they had never reported anything or anyone online for worrying or bad behaviour, not all gave specific reasons for this. However, some did, including: not knowing how or where to report (9%); thinking nothing will happen regarding the activity or person reported (11%); worrying that the person they report will target them (8%); being worried about being called a snitch (9%); or being worried that a trusted adult or their school will not take them seriously (5%). While not flagged by large percentages of young people, these responses are important. They remind us of how we must take steps to ensure that every young person knows how and where to speak up if they are worried about something online and feels confident that they will be taken seriously and offered support, especially if they fear they may be targeted for speaking up.

Our research illustrates a complex picture, where 45% of young people have not reported worrying or bad behaviour online, yet most tell us they feel a responsibility to do so when they see it. It reveals the need for more and better conversations with young people about why they may not be speaking with anyone about or reporting something that troubles them online, and how we can help them feel more empowered to report bad or potentially dangerous online behaviour if they come across it.

"I told my mum and she spoke to the police as it was threatening."

Safer Internet Day survey
respondent, age 17

"Things happen all the time, I just keep scrolling."

Safer Internet Day survey
respondent, age 11



62% of 8 to 17 year olds want to take action to help support others in being safe online.

How can we empower young people to speak up more?

While a relatively low number of young people told us that they have reported something or someone online for worrying or bad behaviour, many would like to be able to speak up more and to see changes that help them do this. 62% of 8 to 17 year olds say they actually want to take action to help support others in being safe online. Young people also shared their views on what they think online platforms could do to better facilitate action and help them speak up about bad online behaviour. 43% of young people want to be able to report something or someone online more easily, and over one third (35%) think that having more support from industry about online safety education would make life online more enjoyable for all. Just over a quarter (26%) of young people say they would like relevant media to have a section, run by young people, dedicated to being safe online, which could include TikTok videos, an online blog, or a dedicated social media page. Just under a quarter of young people (24%) would like access to a dedicated chat function within social media sites so they can ask experts about being safe online. Crucially, young people want a voice. A quarter say they don't think their voice is heard by either government or industry. This is too many, and we must do more to ensure young people can share their ideas and valuable experiences and feel heard.

Empowering young people to speak up more often if they see or experience something troubling online will require efforts from all stakeholders. Through online safety education in schools, opportunities like Safer Internet Day, and through effective signposting by online providers, we can better ensure young people know exactly where to go for support and how to report something online. We must build young people's confidence that they will be taken seriously by trusted adults and online platforms if they do come forward, taking appropriate action when they raise a concern and potentially increasing awareness of the effective outcomes of speaking to trusted adults and reporting online. Finally, we must talk with young people further about the specific ideas they have put forward for relevant and engaging online tools that help them build their knowledge of how to stay safe and have positive experiences online, as well as tools that will help them more easily seek support and expert advice when they need it.

43% of 8 to 17 year olds want to be able to report something or someone online more easily.

What, if anything, do you think would make life online more enjoyable and safer for all?

"I think they (adults), need to just work on actually listening to young people, because there are some people...that will say, "Oh, we will listen to you and put your thoughts forward," but they never do."

Brook focus group participant, age 14

"Social media being more responsible for what is posted and not just saying that they are monitoring stuff."

Safer Internet Day survey respondent, age 17

"For social media sites to act upon reports of harmful and hate crime reports rather than send a response saying they receive a high volume of reports so haven't looked into the account I've reported and (they) haven't removed anything."

Safer Internet Day survey respondent, age 14

"I mean, we all know that the report button is there, but as soon as we press that report button, it's out of our hands. There's nothing more that we can physically do about it. It's up to the social media company now to implement that change, block that person, report them, give them a message saying what they did was inappropriate, educate them. And if the social media companies aren't doing that then that accountability will never be brought forward."

Brook focus group participant, age 16

"Anonymous reporting to admins of groups. Because they know your name people don't report. It needs to be completely anonymous."

Safer Internet Day survey respondent, age 13



Conclusion

We must create more and better opportunities for conversations about young people's online lives

The online space holds valuable positive experiences for many young people, with 69% of 8 to 17 year olds saying they think being online helps them to develop new skills such as independence, problem-solving and social skills. However, many young people also want to feel better prepared to navigate potentially unsafe content or contact, with 55% of 8 to 17 year olds asking for more regular online safety lessons at school. Young people are also keen to support their peers and our research highlights significant scope for this. Just 38% of young people feel they have been given opportunities to help promote being safe online to others, yet 62% say they want to take action and help support others in this way.

Our research also shows that young people want to talk about their online lives; they are ready to have more and better conversations at home, with friends and at school. They are also receptive to online safety lessons, keen to do more in schools to help inform and educate their peers, ready to help their parents and carers learn more about being safe online, and willing to report bad or potentially dangerous online behaviour.

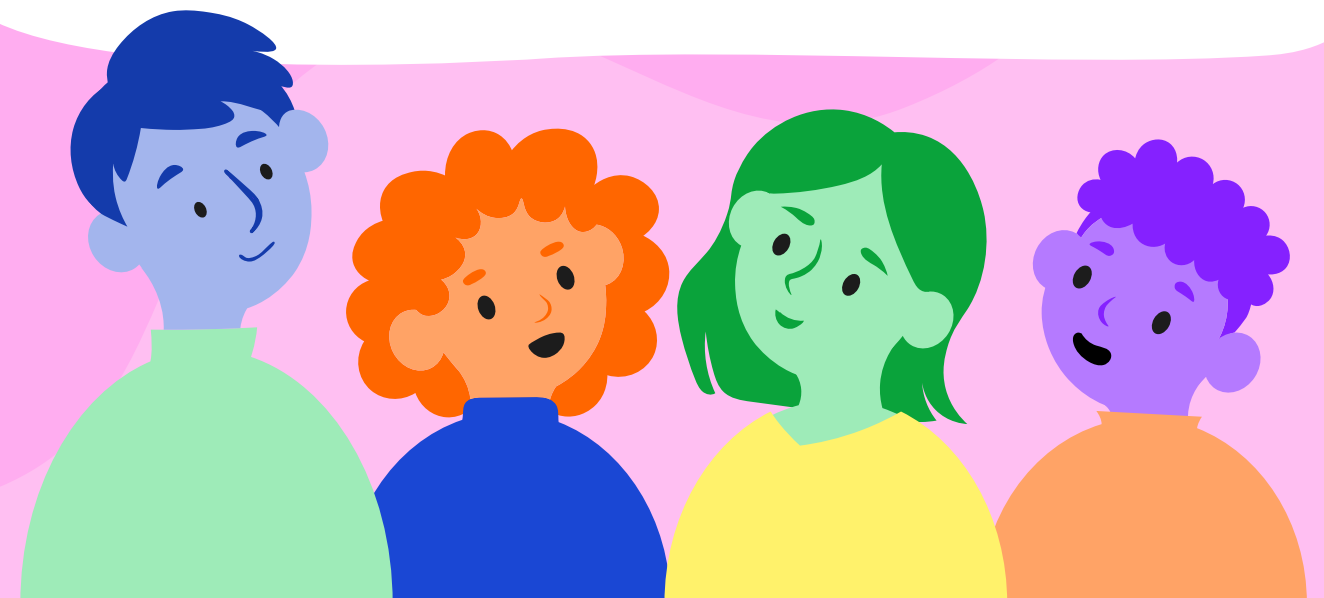
Young people identify a variety of tools that could help better facilitate conversations and reporting and are asking all stakeholders, including schools, parents and carers, online platforms and government, to play their part. For example: 43% want to be able to report something or someone online more easily; just over a quarter (26%), of young people say they would like relevant media to have a section, run by young people, dedicated to being safe online, which could include TikTok videos, an online blog, or a dedicated social media page; and one in five (21%) support the idea of a young persons' forum in parliament, dedicated to being safe online.

Our research clearly shows that young people want to talk about their online lives and want to be able to tell a trusted adult or report online with more confidence when they see something worrying or potentially dangerous online. We must learn from their experience and explore their ideas so we can create more and better opportunities for them to have conversations, as well as keep improving online safety education, informing policy and better enabling parents and carers to be ready to support their children.

Our Recommendations: Encouraging conversations beyond a single day

Young people want and need to talk about their online lives and to be able to speak up and report with confidence when they are troubled or feel unsafe online. It is clear from our research that most young people are already talking with parents or carers and friends and that they feel a responsibility to tell someone or report online if they see someone or something negative, offensive, mean or potentially unsafe online. While it is positive that these conversations are taking place, our research also shows that young people want to learn more, talk more and do more. They are asking for more regular and even better online safety education, more opportunities to help inform and educate their parents, carers and peers and more and easier ways to report worrying online behaviour. In short, young people are committed to playing their part in making sure that everyone can talk about young people's online lives. Our qualitative research further illustrates how they have valuable experience that we must learn from and ideas they want to voice in this crucial conversation.

It is vital to involve and consult with young people of all ages, given our research shows that almost all children from the age of 8 are spending time online every day, which steadily increases into and through their teenage years. The online space is an integral feature of their daily lives and they have a lot to tell us about what they need to navigate it safely and with confidence. We strongly urge all stakeholders to engage in the conversation, listen to what they have to say and explore their ideas. This responsibility must extend to supporting the minority of young people who have told us that they don't think they could have a conversation about their life online, or being safe online, with anybody. We must make every effort to ensure that even the hardest to reach young people have the opportunity to talk with a trusted adult about anything that troubles them online and to access help and support when they need it.



Parents and carers are interested in their children's online lives and are having regular conversations with their children about this. It is also clear from our research that parents and carers are by far the most likely person a child will talk to if they come across something online that troubles them. This applies across a wide range of issues; such as, if they feel worried or upset by online content they see or mean comments they receive, if they are bullied or see someone else being bullied online, if they are sent something threatening, such as a threat to share their personal information, if they feel they are being scammed, or if they are contacted online by someone who makes them feel uncomfortable. It also applies with relatively little variation across children and teenagers of all ages from 8 to 17, with even older teenagers still being most likely to talk to a parent or carer if they have concerns about their online lives.

This open dialogue at home is extremely positive, but our research also shows that both young people and parents and carers feel there is scope for more and better conversations.

Over half of young people are keen to help their parents and carers know more about being safe online and the majority of parents and carers want to be able to talk to their child more easily and more often about being safe online. Our research also suggests parents and carers would benefit from better support so they are clear on where to go for further resources or advice if needed, when helping their child with an online situation that feels challenging or potentially unsafe.

Regular and open conversations at home are the keystone in ensuring that young people can navigate their online lives safely, enjoyably and with confidence that they will be supported if they need help. Safer Internet Day is a great opportunity to start these conversations at home, which must begin from a young age, as well as a great opportunity to signpost parents and carers to further resources and ideas so they can keep the conversations going and know where to go for help and advice when they need it.

Schools are already providing young people with valuable opportunities to have conversations about their online lives. Many young people feel positive about this, telling us that they find online safety education lessons useful, that they feel more confident online as a result of these lessons and that these lessons help them know who to talk to at school with online issues and questions. This demonstrates how important these lessons are for sparking conversations when young people want to talk or seek support. However, with the online space constantly changing there is always scope for improvement and responsiveness and, while young people welcome and value online safety lessons, many think they could be better. Some, for example, feel these lessons don't always allow them to talk about the things they are worried about online, indicating that online safety education may not always reflect the reality of young people's online lives. It is vital that we do all we can to ensure that online safety education is as engaging and relevant as possible in a dynamic online context.

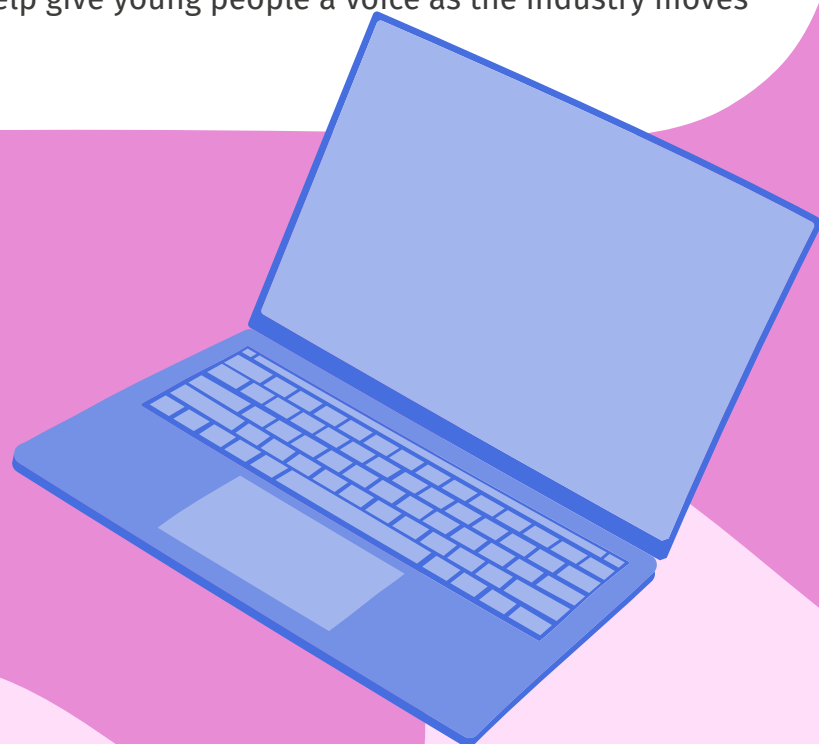
Young people are keen to play their part. Over half would like more regular online safety lessons and many feel they can make a difference in supporting or promoting being safe online at school. They are ready to learn how to be safe and responsible online, to support their friends through conversation and to help inform and educate their peers in school. We must explore what more we can do to even better facilitate this in schools and encourage conversations that help all young people feel confident and safe in their online lives.



Online platforms have a crucial role to play in ensuring young people can speak up and report online behaviour that troubles them. Young people have overwhelmingly told us that they feel a responsibility to report if they come across something or someone offensive, mean, nasty or potentially unsafe online, yet only about 1 in 5 say they have actually reported worrying or bad online behaviour. This reveals the need for more and better conversations with young people about why they may not be reporting something that troubles them online and how we can help them feel more empowered to do so.

The responsibility to ensure that young people feel able to speak up and report if they are worried about something online extends to all stakeholders, including online platforms, schools, industry and parents and carers. However, our research shines a light on some of the ways that online platforms in particular could make reporting easier and help build young people's confidence that they will be taken seriously and supported if they do report something. For example, many young people say they want to be able to report something or someone online more easily. Other ideas supported by young people in our research were sections on relevant media, run by young people, dedicated to being safe online, as well as access to a dedicated chat function within social media sites, so young people can ask experts about being safe online.

There is an enormous opportunity to learn from the online experiences and ideas of young people, with the online space being an integral feature of their daily lives. We ask online platforms and social media to not only build better tools to help young people more easily report bad or potentially unsafe online behaviour, but also to engage in the conversation and help give young people a voice as the industry moves forward and takes action.



Government has an important role to play. Through the UK's Digital Media Literacy Strategy and the governments of the UK's nations we have an opportunity to firmly gear education policies and support towards ensuring that all young people of all ages are equipped to be responsible, informed and capable digital citizens. This capability includes ensuring that all young people feel confident to have conversations with trusted adults and their peers about their online lives and to speak up if they are worried about something or someone they encounter online.

Schools need support in this area, as well as practical resources they can use in the classroom, so they can continue to open up conversations with young people about their online lives and keep providing the online safety education that young people have told us they value so highly. This will ensure it remains relevant and engaging in a constantly changing online space, which brings shifting challenges for young people as digital citizens.

Many young people would like to see government more directly involved in supporting peer-led conversations, with 1 in 5 saying they support the idea of a young persons' forum in parliament, dedicated to being safe online. We now urge government to listen to young people's experiences of life online and their ideas on how to make it safer and more enjoyable for all, as well support schools and families as they help young people navigate their online lives.



The final word

Young people want to make a difference through conversations and speaking up. They want to help their friends, parents and carers, promote online safety at school and ready to report online when they see something offensive, mean or potentially unsafe. They are looking to parents and carers, schools, online platforms and government to play their part. We must listen to what they have to say, so we can create more and better opportunities for conversations, as well as keep improving online safety education, informing policy and enabling parents and carers to talk with and support their children at home.

Safer Internet Day provides an ideal opportunity to encourage conversations that support young people to get the most out of their time online. We hope that this research and the conversations generated by Safer Internet Day will catalyse action and help our young people tell us more about what they think should be done to make the internet safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

With thanks to:



Safer
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Day



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