



**THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **Cybersmile Publish Comparison Culture 2023 - A Report Exploring the Impact of Social Media Comparisons on Gen Z**

**Shocking report into comparison culture reveals a majority (89%) of UK Gen Z social media users feel unsatisfied with their lives with 14% experiencing suicidal thoughts as a result of comparing themselves and their lives to others online.**

- **93%** of respondents said they feel pressure to compare themselves to others online
- **92%** of respondents said they had experienced negative consequences as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- **89%** of respondents said that they feel unsatisfied with their life when comparing it to others on social media
- **74%** of respondents said that social media has made them want to permanently change a part of their body through surgery
- **59%** of respondents said that they engage in daily social comparisons online
- **50%** of respondents said that they experienced low self-esteem as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- **41%** of respondents said Instagram is the platform they are most likely to compare themselves with others online followed by TikTok at **34%** and YouTube at **6%**
- **14%** of respondents said they had experienced suicidal thoughts as a result of comparing themselves to others online

**LONDON, UK, June 16, 2023** - The Cybersmile Foundation have announced the launch of *Comparison Culture 2023* - a study conducted by the charity to learn more about the culture of comparisons among social media users and the profound impact that it is having on Gen Z across the UK.

The *Comparison Culture 2023* study asked 1000 participants aged 16-24 across the UK a series of questions relating to social media comparisons and the impact that they have on their wellbeing. Important areas such as mental health, body image, eating habits, relationships, finances, social media and others were explored as part of the research project.

Dr. Barbara Mariposa, Wellness & Equity Advisor for Cybersmile, said: “Cybersmile’s Comparison Culture 2023 survey highlights the profound impact social media can have on how young people aged 16-24 view themselves, with around 9 out of 10 responding that they see themselves negatively and feel dissatisfied with their lives, 3 in 4 wanting to change aspects of their bodies, and a very worrying 1 in 7 having thoughts about ending their lives as a result of comparing themselves with others on social media platforms. More needs to be done to educate people, especially those who are still forming their self-identity, about when and why to engage with such platforms and how to do so safely.”

The study was undertaken to learn about the role and impact that social media has on Gen Z in the context of social comparisons. Findings from *Comparison Culture 2023* will be utilized to ensure that Cybersmile continues providing the most useful and effective advice, education and support services possible to those in need.

Dan Raisbeck, co-founder of The Cybersmile Foundation, said: “The findings from our Comparison Culture 2023 report are terrifying. The stark reality is that although the internet and social media offer many incredible benefits, our research shows that there are huge numbers of people being deeply affected by their time spent online. We will, as an absolute priority, be using this data to develop educational and support solutions related to the growing comparison culture problem in the UK and beyond.”

Cybersmile’s ongoing commitment to better understand the relationship between humans and technology is supported by an international advisory panel - a team of world-renowned experts in key areas including research, internet safety, mental health, wellbeing, equity, gaming, sports, parenting and youth development.

Holly H, TikTok star and ambassador for The Cybersmile Foundation, said: “Social media is incredible at bringing people together, and giving the under-represented a voice and platform, but it can also be an incredibly fake, curated highlight reel of solely the best parts of our lives. And we often forget that! The ongoing research by Cybersmile brings much needed attention to the challenges young people face in this digital first world. As this Comparison Culture 2023 report highlights, there's more work to be done to ensure young people feel

empowered, protected and supported online which I think starts with content creators taking accountability for promoting unattainable, false standards of perfection.”

Regional data gathered as part of the study offers valuable insights and comparisons for major cities across the UK including Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Sheffield and Southampton.

The research was conducted by Censuswide across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland with 1,000 general respondents (aged 16-24) who are social media users between 23.05.2023 - 26.05.2023. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles and are members of The British Polling Council.

Insights from the report include:

**1. How often do you engage in online comparisons with others, if ever? (comparing our bodies, lives, or lifestyles with people online)**

- 89% of respondents engage in online comparisons with others online
- 59% of respondents said they engage in daily comparisons with others online

**2. In what areas of life do you feel the most pressure to compare yourself to others when online, if any?**

- 93% of respondents indicated they feel pressure to compare themselves to others online in various areas of life
- 44% of respondents feel the most pressure when it comes to their body image when comparing themselves to others online
- 34% of respondents feel the most pressure when it comes to their wealth when comparing themselves to others online

**3. How do you typically feel after comparing yourself to others online, if any way?**

- 36% of respondents said they feel jealous when comparing themselves to others online
- 32% of respondents said they feel unsatisfied when comparing themselves to others online

- 96% of respondents are emotionally impacted in some form when comparing themselves to others online

#### **4. What forms of media contribute to you comparing yourself to others, if any?**

- 77% of respondents said they feel social media impacts the way they compare themselves to others (followed by TV at 33%, movies 31%, advertising 17%)
- 92% of respondents said that a variety of different media impacts the way they compare themselves to others
- 8% of respondents indicated that no form of media contributed to comparing themselves to others

#### **5. Which negative consequences have you experienced as a result of comparing yourself to others online, if any?**

- 92% of respondents said they experienced negative consequences as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 50% of respondents said they experienced low self-esteem as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 48% of respondents said they experienced low mood as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 42% of respondents said they experienced anxiety as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 34% of respondents said they experienced feeling like a failure as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 28% of respondents said they experienced feelings of depression as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 25% of respondents said they experienced feeling like binge eating as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 23% of respondents said they experienced dietary problems as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 23% of respondents said they experienced social isolation as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 17% of respondents said they experienced financial problems as a result of comparing themselves to others online

- 17% of respondents said they experienced relationship problems as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 14% of respondents said they experienced suicidal thoughts as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 13% of respondents said they experienced school problems as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 9% of respondents said they experienced work problems as a result of comparing themselves to others online
- 8% of respondents said they experienced no negative consequences as a result of comparing themselves to others online

**6. How often, if ever, has any content on social media made you feel pressured to be perfect?**

- 86% of respondents said that content on social media made them feel pressured to be perfect
- 43% of respondents said that content on social media made them feel pressured to be perfect at least once a day

**7. How often, if ever, have you felt unsatisfied with your life when comparing it to others on social media?**

- 89% of respondents said they feel unsatisfied with their life when comparing it to others on social media
- 42% of respondents said they feel unsatisfied with their life when comparing it to others on social media at least once a day

**8. Which emotion(s) best describe(s) how you feel/you would feel about other social media users who appear to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit, or beautiful?**

- 32% of respondents described feeling jealous when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- 27% of respondents described feeling envious when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- 23% of respondents described feeling inspired when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful

- 19% of respondents described feeling uninspired when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- 18% of respondents described feeling hopeless when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- 17% of respondents described feeling hopeful when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- 10% of respondents described feeling heartbroken when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- 8% of respondents described feeling angry when other social media users appeared to be happy, wealthy, successful, fit or beautiful
- Almost twice the number of people feel jealous (32%) compared to people who feel hopeful (17%) when seeing other social media users appearing

**9. Which parts of your body has social media made you want to permanently change through surgery, if any?**

- 74% of respondents said that social media made them want to permanently change a part of their body through surgery
- 32% of respondents said that social media made them want to change their teeth
- 27% of respondents said that social media made them want to change their breasts
- 79% of female respondents said that social media made them want to permanently change a part of their body through surgery compared to male respondents (61%)
- 89% of respondents identifying themselves as 'Other' said that social media made them want to permanently change a part of their body through surgery

**10. How do/would likes and shares on your social media posts make you feel, if anything?**

- 28% of respondents said likes and shares on their social media posts made them feel validated
- 25% of respondents said likes and shares on their social media posts made them feel supported
- 25% of respondents said likes and shares on their social media posts made them feel happy
- 22% of respondents said likes and shares on their social media posts made them feel approved

- 16% of respondents said likes and shares on their social media posts made them feel excited

### **11. Which social platform, if any, are you most likely to compare yourself to others on?**

- 93% of respondents said they were likely to compare themselves to others on social media platforms
- 41% of respondents said they were most likely to compare themselves to others on Instagram
- 34% of respondents said they were most likely to compare themselves to others on TikTok with YouTube the 3rd most likely at 6%
- 6% of respondents said they were most likely to compared themselves to others on YouTube

### **ABOUT THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION**

The Cybersmile Foundation is a multi-award-winning nonprofit organization committed to digital wellbeing and tackling all forms of bullying and abuse online. We work to promote kindness, diversity and inclusion by building a safer, more positive digital community. Through education, research, awareness campaigns and the promotion of positive digital citizenship we reduce incidents of cyberbullying and through our professional help and support services we empower those affected and their families to regain control of their lives.

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The Cybersmile Foundation is an international nonprofit organization registered as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization in the U.S. and as a registered charity in the U.K. (No. 1147576)