



THE CYBERSMILE FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

The Cybersmile Foundation Publish National Digital Wellbeing 2022 Report on Stop Cyberbullying Day Examining the Impact of Social Media Use on Gen Z Wellbeing in the U.K.

LONDON, UK, June 17, 2022 - The Cybersmile Foundation have announced the launch of Digital Wellbeing 2022 - the second bi-yearly study conducted by the charity to learn about the impact that social media use has on 16 to 24-year-old users.

The Digital Wellbeing 2022 study asked 1000 participants aged 16-24 across the U.K. a series of questions relating to the way that their social media use affects them. Important topics such as mental health, body image, social comparisons, negative news consumption, social media addiction and many more were explored as part of the research project.

Holly H, Official Cybersmile Ambassador said: “I feel so lucky that I’m able to be myself and express how I feel and who I am on social media, it’s amazing to be able to see so many different people from across the world, to connect with them and share experiences. Most of the time it is an incredible experience, but now and then it can get tough online. It is important to get some extra help if you ever find yourself struggling because your mental health and wellbeing is super important. Talk to your friends or family about how you are feeling or reach out to the incredible team at Cybersmile for help.”

The study was undertaken to better understand Gen Z’s relationship with social media and how it affects the way they feel about their bodies, lives and personal wellbeing. Findings from Digital Wellbeing 2022 will be utilized to ensure that Cybersmile continues providing the most useful and effective advice, education and support services possible.

Dan Raisbeck, Co-founder of The Cybersmile Foundation said: “Our Digital Wellbeing 2022 report offers significant new insights into how social media use is impacting the daily lives of an entire generation. With evolving technology and increased platform retention times - Gen Z users are being impacted to an extent beyond anything we have previously discovered. These findings offer Cybersmile valuable insights into the digital wellbeing of 16 to 24-year-olds in the U.K. and will play a key role in helping us to tailor our support resources, develop new educational materials and create effective awareness campaigns.”

Cybersmile’s commitment to learning more about the relationship between Gen Z and social media has been supported by advisory panel member Dr Barbara Mariposa - a medical doctor with a background in psychiatry and public health, whose books include *The Mindfulness Playbook*, *The Kindness Habit* and *Leading with Presence*.

“The findings of Digital Wellbeing 2022 are stark. They underline the vital importance of education from an early age in the safe and respectful use of social media. Social media’s edited versions of reality offer perfect bodies and perfect worlds, which nearly 9 in 10 participants in the study reported had a negative impact on how they feel about themselves, their bodies and their lives. Young people are rightly concerned about addiction and increased anxiety, the amount of time taken away from studying, and the detrimental effect of this time on the basics of good self-care, such as exercise and nutrition. Cybersmile’s Digital Wellbeing 2022 report highlights the very real damage unbalanced usage of social media platforms can do,” said Dr Barbara Mariposa, Cybersmile Advisory Panel member for Wellness & Equity.

The study was conducted by Censuswide on behalf of Cybersmile between May 16th and May 24th across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The regional data offers interesting insights and comparisons for major cities across the U.K. including Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Sheffield and Southampton.

Amazing Arabella, Gen Z Influencer said: “It can sometimes be hard for us to understand the difference between the real world and the digital world as we can often become engrossed in a pixelated reality. The way we look after our own wellbeing, learn how to use the internet productively and communicate through it is key. Education should be introduced at an early age to encourage balance and knowledge as well as looking out for red flags and knowing what to do! I encourage my followers to be aware of their personal wellbeing when using social media and that my young and parent followers practice this through family activities that can be done in a fun and safe way - encouraging meaningful social and digital interactions while building trust. Your digital wellbeing is so important!”

Key findings from Digital Wellbeing 2022 include:

- 46% of respondents indicated that social media makes them want to permanently change a part of their body through surgery.
- 87% of respondents indicated that content on social media makes them feel pressured to be perfect.
- 85% of respondents indicated that social media negatively affects the way they feel about their own body.
- 89% of respondents indicated that social media negatively affects their mental health.
- 77% of respondents indicated that social media negatively affects their physical health.
- 89% of respondents indicated that they feel unsatisfied with their life when comparing it to others on social media.
- 86% of respondents indicated that social media use makes them feel anxious.
- 32% of respondents indicated that they feel addicted to bad news online.
- 33% of respondents indicated that they don't feel safe to share their opinions and views online.
- 44% of respondents indicated that they are worried they have an addiction to social media.
- 52% of respondents indicated that they feel better when they spend less time on social media.
- 51% of respondents indicated that their sleep is negatively impacted by the amount of time they spend online.
- 32% of respondents indicated that their diet is negatively impacted by the amount of time they spend online.
- 32% of respondents indicated that their exercise is negatively impacted by the amount of time they spend online.
- 40% of respondents indicated that their study is negatively impacted by the amount of time they spend online.

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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